

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMER

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By Rusty Harding and Marcus Ridner

Copyright © MMXIV by Rusty Harding and Marcus Ridner
All Rights Reserved
Heuer Publishing LLC, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

ISBN: 978-1-61588-291-5

Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this work is subject to a royalty. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. All rights to this work of any kind including but not limited to professional and amateur stage performing rights are controlled exclusively by Heuer Publishing LLC. Inquiries concerning rights should be addressed to Heuer Publishing LLC.

This work is fully protected by copyright. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission of the publisher. Copying (by any means) or performing a copyrighted work without permission constitutes an infringement of copyright.

All organizations receiving permission to produce this work agree to give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production. The author(s) billing must appear below the title and be at least 50% as large as the title of the Work. All programs, advertisements, and other printed material distributed or published in connection with production of the work must include the following notice: **Produced by special arrangement with Heuer Publishing LLC of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.**

There shall be no deletions, alterations, or changes of any kind made to the work, including the changing of character gender, the cutting of dialogue, or the alteration of objectionable language unless directly authorized by the publisher or otherwise allowed in the work's Production Notes. The title of the play shall not be altered.

The right of performance is not transferable and is strictly forbidden in cases where scripts are borrowed or purchased second-hand from a third party. All rights, including but not limited to professional and amateur stage performing, recitation, lecturing, public reading, television, radio, motion picture, video or sound taping, internet streaming or other forms of broadcast as technology progresses, and the rights of translation into foreign languages, are strictly reserved.

COPYING OR REPRODUCING ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS BOOK IN ANY MANNER IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN BY LAW. One copy for each speaking role must be purchased for production purposes. Single copies of scripts are sold for personal reading or production consideration only.

PUBLISHED BY

**HEUER PUBLISHING LLC
P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406
TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011**

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMER

By Rusty Harding and Marcus Ridner

SYNOPSIS: Meet Bob and Sharon Wilson, a typical middle-class couple enjoying a leisurely road-trip away from the hustle of big city life. A brief bypass through the eastern Kentucky backwoods seems like fun, but when their car breaks down in the isolated mountain hamlet of Homer, Bob and Sharon suddenly find themselves smack in the middle of hillbilly life, complete with a cornucopia of colorful mountain characters. A quick lunch at Bittie's Bistro serves up more than Moon Pies and RC Colas, including an improvised dental extraction, a raucous (and potentially fatal) church service, and a visit from the Avon lady from Hell. What's even more strange is that several of the locals seem to recognize Bob. But, why do they keep calling him Zorro? Find out for yourself, and see why *There's No Place Like Homer*...

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(EIGHT MEN, SIX WOMEN)

- BOB WILSON (m) 40-45. Chicago commodities broker.
Savvy, sarcastic, but with a secret past
he'd prefer to keep hidden. (182 lines)
- SHARON WILSON (f) 40-45. Loving, devoted, and completely
clueless as to her husband's oddball past.
(93 lines)
- MADGE PUDWALKER (f) 30-50. Friendly, outgoing, and knows all
the county's colorful secrets. (46 lines)
- RED BARNES (m) 40-45. Typical redneck good ol' boy.
Jovial, amicable, and certain he
recognizes Bob from somewhere.
(48 lines)

- TUCKER EVANS (m).....30-50. Silent, harmless, and ‘one beer shy of a six-pack.’ Or is he..? (20 lines)
- JIMMY WATKINS (m)..... 19. Dedicated to his work, but has an urgent longing to leave his small town shackles. (33 lines)
- BITTIE PUDWALKER (m)50-60. Café owner. Combination mountain preacher and entrepreneur. He has no tolerance for heathen reprobates. (59 lines)
- EMMY WATKINS (f)..... 40-45. Lonely and past her prime with an ardent longing for an old romance that really never was. (33 lines)
- SHERIFF ORLYN COBB (m) 50-60. Tough, no-nonsense gentleman with his own opinions about Bob. (37 lines)
- VIRGIL (m) 60-70. Old, crusty, and seemingly impervious to pain. (18 lines)
- WAYNE (m)..... 30-50. Pious and devout, but maybe a little too much so. (9 lines)
- LUDIE (f)..... 60-70. Old and obviously eccentric, and just a bit too fond of fire. (19 lines)
- TOOTSIE (f)..... 40-50. Ludie’s long-suffering daughter, who has a secret admiration for Bob. (18 lines)
- ABBY (f) 20-30. Ludie’s granddaughter, extremely fast on her feet, so as to (literally) keep up with her crazy grandmother. (6 lines)

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMER

SETTING: Interior of a rural Kentucky café; present day.

SET AND PROPERTY NOTES

Set design for this production can be as elaborate as your budget permits, but should encompass a modicum of detail so as to suggest realism. The entire production takes place within a single setting, so very little scene change is required. The set should resemble the interior of a rural diner/restaurant with an emphasis on rural. The cheaper it looks, the better. If possible, a backdrop wall made of light colored paneling should run the entire length of upstage. A single (functioning) screen door should be positioned upstage center and serve as the main entrance/exit. A window should be positioned upstage left with a cell phone attached to the frame via tape or Velcro for quick removal. A serving counter should be positioned in front of the window with enough room between for actors to maneuver. A minimum of three small tables (i.e., folding card tables) should be scattered across the stage, each one covered by different colored tablecloths (nothing should match). At least three chairs should be positioned at each table. Various types of signage, pictures, knickknacks, curios, merchandise, etc., all suggesting a Kentucky and/or eastern United States locale, should be strategically placed throughout the set. A movable podium/lectern and two small benches are required for the second act CHURCH SCENE each of which can be positioned at the director's discretion so as to facilitate the action.

SOUND EFFECTS

- BARKING DOG
- RATTLESNAKE RATTLE
- EXPLOSION
- CLATTERING METAL
- MUTED TELEPHONE RING

NOTE: An OFFSTAGE VOICE (male or female) is needed immediately following the ringing phone. The voice can be pre-recorded.

MUSIC

Background and/or transition music is recommended—although not required—for scene changes. There should be an emphasis on bluegrass instrumentals and/or popular country songs. Songs that emphasize moonshine (i.e., *White Lightin'*) and the region (i.e., *Blue Moon of Kentucky*) are preferred.

PROPS

DO NOT COPY

- Country Store Knickknacks
- Rural Signage/Posters/
Artwork
- Card Tables/Chairs
- Cell Phones (2)
- Velcro Tape
- Checkered/Gingham
Tablecloths
- Plates/Glasses/Utensils
- Napkins/holders
- Salt/Pepper Shakers
- Mustard/Ketchup Bottles
- Cafe Menus (single sheet)
- Food (Cheeseburgers/Fries)
- Serving Pitcher
- Moonshine Jug
- RC Colas
- Moon Pies
- Large Cloth Handbag
- Lectern
- Wicker Basket (w/handles &
lid)
- Prop/Rubber Fish
- Prop/Rubber Snake (24" long)
- Prop/Rubber Snake (48" long)
- Prop Tooth
- Pliers
- Cleaning Rags
- Serving Aprons
- Order Pad
- Whiskey Flask
- Sheriff's Badge
- Prop Gun with Holster
- Fireplace/Grill Lighter
- Tambourine
- Bible
- Suitcases (2)
- Checkbook/Pen
- Gauze Bandage Wrap
- Adhesive Tape
- Purses
- Repair Invoice/Bill
- To-go Restaurant
Container/Bag

DO NOT COPY

PRODUCTION HISTORY

There's No Place Like Homer had its world premiere at the Richardson Theatre Centre in Richardson, TX, by the Lunatic Theatre Company in October 2013. The original cast and crew:

BOB WILSON -----	Eddy Herring
SHARON WILSON -----	Janette Oswald
MADGE PUDWALKER -----	Robyn Mead
RED BARNES -----	Greg Phillips
TUCKER EVANS -----	Ben Richardson
JIMMY WATKINS -----	Brendan Perrotta
BITTIE PUDWALKER -----	Bert DeLaGarza
EMMY WATKINS -----	Gena Graham
ORLYN COBB -----	David Lambert
VIRGIL -----	LaMar Graham
WAYNE -----	Rusty Harding
LUDIE -----	Elaine Erback
TOOTSIE -----	Nancy LeVine
ABBY -----	Rebekah Michaelae

Directed by Leigh Wyatt Moore
Produced by Debra Harding
Creative Consultation by Marcus and Suzanne Ridner
Lighting Design by Emily-Ann Moriarty
Set, Sound and Properties Manager: Autumn Richardson
Marketing & Publicity: Suzanne Ridner
RTC Directors: Rachael Lindley and Lise Alexander

DEDICATION

This play is dedicated to Debra, for being such a loving and patient wife and to Suzanne, an extraordinarily brilliant wife, who encouraged the writing of these stories; to Leigh Moore, the artistic director, who gave it color; to Eddy, Janette, Gena, David, LaMar, Brendan, Robyn, Bert, Greg, Ben, Nancy, Elaine, and Rebekah, our beloved cast, who gave it life; and to our hillbilly family, relatives and friends, who were the inspiration.

NOTE: The language in this play is character driven; however, the director is given authority to change/alter any words and/or phrases as needed to adapt to the suitability of the audiences.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE:

The interior of a rural country cafe/store/church, etc. You name it, this place has it. A mish-mash of furnishings and decor: Norman Rockwell meets Grandma Moses, and they're both on acid. Card tables are surrounded by folding chairs; a crude counter supports an ancient cash register and a platter of Moon Pies; makeshift shelves hold various country-style knick-knacks and souvenirs. Hand-lettered signs are scattered throughout. One above the door proclaims: WELCOME TO BITTIE'S – THE PRIDE OF THE APPALACHIANS. Another reads: FREE WI-FI (WHEN IT WORKS). Yet another declares: LIVE BAIT (OR SUSHI) \$1 PER POUND. A fourth hangs above a rack of DVD jackets and reads: DVD RENTAL \$3 PER NIGHT. BRING THEM BACK ON TIME OR THE SHERIFF WILL COME AND GET THEM. In a far corner, a sign reads: FIRST RIGHTEOUS GATEWAY OF HOLINESS FELLOWSHIP & BISTRO – SERVICES: WEDS. EVE. 7-10, SUN. MORN. WHENEVER.

RED and TUCKER sit together at a small table. Both are obvious country boys with overalls, boots, etc. RED types in a smart phone, apparently enthralled with a video game. TUCKER sits quietly, seemingly oblivious to everything, sipping an RC Cola and munching a Moon Pie. A waitress, MADGE, wearing a checkered apron over slightly too-tight jeans stands next to one of the bistro windows. She has her head pressed close against the glass and appears to be talking, although no one is nearby.

BOB and SHARON enter the cafe. Obvious travelers – and glaringly out-of-place – they take off sunglasses and look around appraisingly. SHARON is obviously intrigued with the place, while BOB appears sullen, and more than a little anxious. He glances ever-so-furtively at the others in the room, then quickly averts his eyes.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMER

SHARON: *(As they enter.)* Oh, wow! Bob, isn't this quaint? Like stepping right into middle America.

BOB: *(Snidely.)* You mean Middle Earth.

SHARON: *(Lowered voice, reproachful.)* That's not nice. You know I don't like hillbilly stereotypes.

BOB: I'm not talking about stereotypes. I'm talking about mutants.

SHARON: *(She sits down at one of the tables.)* Bob, really! Just because these people live in rural communities doesn't make them incestuous.

BOB: Are you kidding? Sharon, there's so much inbreeding in these hills even the dogs have club feet. *(He sits.)*

SHARON: That's terrible! What's wrong with you, anyway? You've been acting weird ever since the car broke down.

BOB: I'm sorry. It's just that this place gives me the creeps. Of all the places to break down, it's got to be right in the middle of Hooterville, Kentucky.

SHARON: I think it's called Homer.

BOB: I call it Hell.

SHARON: *(Takes one of the menus from a rack on the table.)* Look, let's just get something to eat. Hopefully the mechanic will get it fixed pretty quickly.

BOB: Ah, you mean Gomer Pyle. I'd be surprised if that kid even knows which end of the wrench to hold.

SHARON: He said his name was Jimmy. And he seems like a nice young man. Besides, we're not on any pressing schedule. And you were the one who wanted to take the scenic route. Why is that, anyway? Normally you don't like traveling the back roads.

BOB: *(A beat, shrugs.)* Traffic was too heavy on the interstate.

SHARON: But this is 50 miles out of the way.

BOB fidgets briefly, delaying a reply. MADGE suddenly finishes talking.

MADGE: *(Seemingly to the window.)* Okay, sweetie! I got to go now, I got customers. Bye. *(MADGE steps away from the window, and only then can a cell phone be seen taped to the glass. MADGE presses the off button, then approaches BOB and SHARON with a beaming smile.)* Hi, there! Welcome to Bittie's Bistro.

SHARON: Hi. Are you Bittie?

MADGE: Oh, no, sweetie, I'm Madge. Madge Pudwalker. Bittie's in the back.

BOB: (*Gawking curiously at the window.*) Is that...a cell phone?

MADGE: (*Glancing back, laughing.*) Yep. Only place we can get a good signal. (*Gesturing to Wi-Fi sign.*) Mountains an' satellites don't seem to mix. Bittie decided to just tape it up there for good measure.

BOB: (*With a smug glance at SHARON – see what I mean?)* Yet another fine use for duct tape.

MADGE: I think it's actually Velcro. (*A beat, frowning curiously at BOB.*) Sweetie, do I know you?

BOB: (*With a sudden look of discomfort.*) Um, no, I don't think so.

MADGE: You look awful familiar. You sure we haven't met someplace before?

BOB: I really doubt that. I don't get to Walmart very often.

SHARON: (*Shoots BOB a glare, points to menu to change subject.*) What do you recommend, Madge?

MADGE: Sweetie, everything on the menu is A-number one. My Bittie's the best cook in Hiram County. 'Cept maybe for Carrie Lewis over in Tompkins. Ain't nobody can touch her chipotle-grilled tripe, let me tell you. 'Course, she is close to 97 and nearly blind now, so I reckon Bittie won't be havin' much competition before long.

BOB: (*Sardonic.*) Fascinating.

SHARON: (*Points to menu.*) Look Bob, soy-marinated slow-roasted possum.

MADGE: That's one of our best-sellers. Bittie puts that over hickory chips an' lets it cook overnight. Melts in your mouth, let me tell you!

SHARON: (*Still leery.*) But, possum...?

BOB: (*Absently, reading through menu.*) If it's done right, it's actually pretty good. (*Looks up quickly, obviously startled by what he's just said. Smiles and shrugs at both women.*) I mean, that's what I've always heard. (*Hurriedly.*) Not that I've ever had any.

SHARON: (*Puts menu on table.*) I'll just have a cheeseburger and fries.

BOB: Me too. No onions. (*A beat.*) And beef.

MADGE shoots an odd look at BOB and starts to leave.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMER

SHARON: Excuse me, but where are your restrooms?

MADGE: (*Gestures.*) Through that door to the left.

BOB: You sure they're not out back?

SHARON: (*Genuinely embarrassed.*) Bob!

MADGE: (*Chuckling.*) It's all right, sweetie. Funny thing is, up till about two years ago, we did have an outhouse. Local kids kept knockin' it over. (*Suddenly laughs.*) Usually when someone was inside. (*Stops laughing abruptly.*) That's a peculiar feeling, let me tell you. (*Starts to exit, then frowns again at BOB.*) Damn, you look familiar. (*Shakes her head and exits.*)

SHARON: (*Glares at BOB.*) Why are you being so mean?

BOB: (*Uncomfortably.*) I told you, this place gives me the heebie-jeebies. I keep waiting for Ned Beatty to come running out of the kitchen squealing like a pig. How much you want to bet the only thing their jukebox plays is Dueling Banjos?

SHARON: (*Anxiously, nods over BOB'S shoulder.*) Bob, those two guys over in the corner keep staring at us.

BOB: (*Glances back briefly, shrugs.*) I wouldn't worry about it. Probably just the first time they've seen clean clothes.

SHARON: They're making me nervous.

BOB: Oh, now you're starting to feel it? (*Cups hand to mouth.*) Oh, Ned, where are you?

SHARON: (*Stands.*) I'm going to the restroom.

BOB: Be sure you check the hole for snakes.

SHARON grimaces at him sharply as she exits. RED stands and warily approaches BOB.

RED: I know you...

BOB: (*Frowns at him - please go away.*) I don't think so.

RED: (*Insistent.*) No, I'm sure I seen you around here before. Tucker said he didn't recollect your face, but I sure do.

BOB: Tucker?

RED: Tucker Evans. (*Waves to TUCKER.*) Say hey, Tucker.

TUCKER: (*Laconically, hefting his RC.*) Hey.

RED: (*Lowers voice, winks slyly.*) Tucker's a good ol' boy, but just twixt you an' me, he's about a beer shy of a six-pack.

BOB: (*Flatly.*) Just one?

RED: (*Holds out his hand – after a beat.*) Red Barnes.

BOB: Aren't they all?

RED stares at BOB blankly for a moment, then suddenly howls with laughter and slaps BOB sharply on the shoulder.

RED: I like you, boy, you're funny! No, that's my name: Barnes, with one E.

BOB: (*Rubs shoulder painfully.*) Bob. That's my name. (*A beat.*) With one O.

RED: You sure we never met? I'd lay good money I know you from somewhere.

BOB: Well, you know what they say: Everyone has a double.

RED: That a fact? Hear that, Tucker? Somewhere there's two fellas just like you an' me.

BOB: (*Sotto voice.*) God help us all.

RED: How's that?

BOB: (*Smiles quickly.*) I said it's nice up here in the fall.

RED: (*Scowls at BOB anxiously.*) I know I seen you before, but where? (*A beat.*) Ah, well, it'll come to me. Just got to cogitate on it a spell. (*Taps forehead sharply, winking.*) Got a memory like an elephant. (*Can make an elephant trunk gesture and sound for effect.*)

BOB: Runs on peanuts, does it?

RED laughs and slaps BOB'S shoulder again. BOB nearly tumbles from his chair.

RED: Good one!

SHARON returns to the table and smiles nervously at RED.

SHARON: Hi.

BOB: Sharon, this is Red Barnes. (*A beat.*) With one E. Red, this is my wife, Sharon.

RED: Ma'am.

SHARON: How do you do?

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMER

RED: How do I do what?

SHARON looks at BOB, who only smiles - what did I tell you? RED starts to walk away.

RED: *(To BOB, tapping forehead.)* Just got to cogitate.

SHARON: *(Frowns curiously at RED and TUCKER.)* Who are they?

BOB: *(Still rubbing shoulder.)* I don't know, but I'm certain they're related.

A young man wearing mechanic's overalls, JIMMY enters the cafe.

JIMMY: Mr. an' Mrs. Wilson?

BOB: *(Rolls his eyes.)* And here comes cousin Cletus.

JIMMY: *(Smiles as he approaches.)* I've got good news and bad news about your car.

BOB: Why am I not surprised?

SFX: DOG BARKING. SHARON looks past JIMMY through the window.

SHARON: Oh, is that your dog out there in the truck? He's really cute. What's his name?

JIMMY: Shut the hell up.

SHARON: *(Startled.)* I beg your pardon?

JIMMY: Shut the hell up.

BOB: *(Grows indignant.)* You can't talk to my wife like that!

JIMMY: *(Shakes his head, chuckling.)* No, sir, that's the dog's name: Shut The Hell Up. When I first got him, all he wanted to do was bark, so I kept yellin' *(Yells over his shoulder.)* shut the hell up!

SFX: DOG STOPS BARKING.

JIMMY: *(After a beat.)* Name sort of stuck.

BOB: *(Glances around with a pained expression.)* I wonder if they serve liquor in this place?

SHARON: *(To JIMMY.)* You were saying about the car?

JIMMY: Oh, yeah; good news an' bad. I know what's wrong with it, an'

I can fix it.

BOB: That's not the bad news, is it?

JIMMY: No, sir, that's the good news. Bad news is I don't have the part. I can get it. Found it online an' can have it here tomorrow via FedEx.

BOB: FedEx actually makes it up here?

JIMMY: Oh, sure. Long as it ain't snowin' or there ain't a manhunt goin' on. We got a prison farm not too far from here. Inmates is always bustin' out. They always catch 'em, though. *(A beat.)* Mostly.

SHARON: Tomorrow for certain?

JIMMY: Yes, ma'am. Really wish I could fix it today, but we don't see too many BMWs around here. *(A beat, chuckling.)* 'Less you count Hetty.

BOB: Hetty?

JIMMY: Yes, sir, Hetty Potts. We call her BMW: Big Mountain Woman. Mean old gal, tough as coffin nails. She's six feet five inches tall an' weighs damn near 300 pounds. She can carry a full-grown pig under each arm all the way up Cumberland Gap Mountain without breakin' a sweat. Even the world's strongest man competition can't do that! Don't want to piss off BMW, that's for sure. *(A beat, suddenly puzzled.)* Wait, what were we talking about?

BOB: *(Flatly.)* You lost me at coffin nails.

SHARON: The car?

JIMMY: Oh, yeah. Too bad it ain't a Porsche. I got tons of Porsche parts.

SHARON: *(Incredulous.)* People around here drive Porsches?

JIMMY: Just Billy Ed Rose. He's got three of 'em. Uses 'em in his work.

SHARON: What, is he a NASCAR driver?

JIMMY: No, ma'am, he runs moonshine. It's real big in these parts. Reckon it always has been.

SHARON: But, isn't it also illegal?

JIMMY: *(Shrugs.)* Oh, yes, ma'am. *(A beat.)* Reckon it always has been.

BOB: *(Pensively, to himself.)* Billy Ed Rose.

JIMMY: You know him?

BOB: *(Too quickly.)* No! *(A beat, recovering.)* No, not at all. Just seems like an unusual name, that's all.

JIMMY: Billy Ed's a local legend. Runs what's called the Homer Express. Takes white lightning through six counties and two states. Keeps the Federal boys real busy. Used to be another fellow ran it, about twenty years back. *(Ponders.)* What was his name? Started with a Z, I believe, Zero? Real strange. In any event, this guy was the king of the runners. Think he was even on the FBI's most wanted list for a while. Had a bright red, souped-up Mustang convertible. Fastest car in these mountains. No one could even come close to catchin' him. Then one day they found his car in the Tug River, but no sign of him. *(Shrugs.)* Reckon he finally ran out of luck. Now it's just Billy Ed on the Homer Express.

SHARON: Wow! That could make a movie.

JIMMY: That's exactly what I thought! I'm thinkin' about writin' the screenplay myself.

SHARON: Oh, you're a writer?

JIMMY: *(Shrugs.)* I'd like to be. Fixin' cars pays the bills, but I plan to get out of here someday. Just up an' disappear, like that 'shine runner. *(Frowns to himself.)* What was that fellow's name?

BOB: *(Hurriedly changing the subject.)* You said we'll have to wait till tomorrow. Any chance there's a decent motel around here? Preferably with clean sheets?

JIMMY: Brand new Motel 6 just down the road. Got cable an' everything. I'll give you a lift down there whenever you're ready.

SHARON: That's very nice of you.

JIMMY: Least I can do, ma'am. *(Turns to exit.)*

SFX: DOG BARKING.

JIMMY: *(Yelling as he exits.)* Shut the hell up!

SFX: DOG STOPS BARKING.

SHARON: He's a very nice boy. *(Suddenly laughs.)* The Homer Express. Is that funny or what?

BOB: Oh, yeah. Hilarious.

A burly man, *BITTIE*, enters carrying two plates of food. The total antithesis of his name – an oak tree wearing an apron.

BITTIE: (*Approaches BOB'S table.*) Y'all folks order cheeseburgers?

SHARON: Yes, thank you.

BITTIE: (*Loudly.*) Y'all have to speak up, I'm deaf in one ear. Twenty years runnin' a jackhammer in the coal mines. Can't whisper worth a damn, neither.

BOB: We'll keep that in mind.

BITTIE: Leave what behind?

BOB: No, I said... (*Shakes his head.*) Forget it.

BITTIE: Yeah, I got ketchup. I'll bring you some.

SHARON: (*Louder.*) We ordered the cheeseburgers, thank you. And you are?

BITTIE: Pudwalker. Reverend Jeremiah Manassah Lucius Pudwalker. (*A beat.*) But folks just call me Bittie.

BOB: Of course they do.

SHARON: You've got a very interesting place here, Bittie.

BITTIE: Thanks. I'm partial to it. Could use a little more business. 'Course, I reckon I should just be thankful for the Lord's bounty, however sparsely He sees fit to parcel it out. (*A beat, frowns at them pensively.*) Y'all folks religious?

SHARON: How do you mean?

BITTIE: Y'all go to church?

SHARON: On occasion. (*Smiles in chagrin.*) We're not regular attendees.

BITTIE: We got services tonight, right here in the bistro. Yall're more than welcome to attend. Always a great victory to have new souls find the Lord. Great victory!

SHARON: Well, we'll definitely keep that in mind.

BOB: Especially if there's nothing on cable.

BITTIE: (*Scowling at him.*) 'Course I cleaned the table!

MADGE: (*Offstage.*) For God's sake, Bittie, turn up your hearing aid!

BITTIE grimaces in annoyance, tapping at his ear.

BITTIE: (*To BOB and SHARON.*) Y'all enjoy your burgers.

BITTIE starts to walk away. A wiry man, VIRGIL, old as the proverbial hills and every bit as rough, has entered the bistro. VIRGIL holds his jaw in apparent pain and calls to BITTIE.

VIRGIL: Hey, Bittie!

BITTIE: Hey, Virgil! What can I do you for?

VIRGIL: I got me a real bad toothache, an' Doc Gibbons is out of town. I went over to his office, but they's a sign on the door said he went to a dental convention in Louisville.

BITTIE: Convention, hell! He's probably gone to the race track. That dadgum backslider!

VIRGIL: Reckon you might be able to help me out, Bittie? This tooth pains me somethin' fierce.

BITTIE: Sure thing, Virgil. Just find yourself a sturdy chair an' I'll be right with you.

*BOB and SHARON gape at one another. What the ***? VIRGIL sits down in a chair near TUCKER.*

VIRGIL: Hey, Tucker.

TUCKER: *(Noshing his Moon Pie.)* Hey.

BITTIE reaches under the counter and pulls out a pair of pliers, which he briefly wipes with a bar rag.

BITTIE: *(To MADGE, gesturing.)* Hand me that jug, Madge.

MADGE takes a jug from a nearby shelf, which bears the tell-tale Xs of moonshine. She gives the jug to BITTIE, who in turn hands it to VIRGIL.

BITTIE: Just a sip, now, Virgil. This here's for pain management only.

VIRGIL: *(Nodding dutifully.)* Yes, sir. *(VIRGIL takes a short swallow, grimacing from the bite. He looks at BITTIE mournfully.)* Reckon I could have another, Brother Bittie? Pain's really bad.

BITTIE: *(Nods reluctantly.)* Well, okay, Virgil, but just a nip.

VIRGIL swiftly tips the jug and drains it completely. He hands it back to BITTIE.

VIRGIL: *(Belching.)* That's a lot better. Thanks!

BITTIE glowers reproachfully and sets the jug aside. He leans in to peer in VIRGIL'S mouth.

BITTIE: Which one is it?

VIRGIL: *(Points inside mouth.)* That one right back there.

BITTIE: *(To RED and MADGE.)* Madge, Red, you two grab hold of him an' hang on tight. He might get wild.

RED and MADGE anchor VIRGIL to the chair as BITTIE moves in with the pliers.

BITTIE: Hold on. This may hurt a might.

BOB and SHARON stare incredulously as BITTIE reaches inside VIRGIL'S mouth with the pliers. RED and MADGE hold on for dear life as VIRGIL begins to howl and struggle in pain. TUCKER remains completely stoic. BITTIE plants his foot in VIRGIL'S chest for leverage.

BITTIE: Almost got her, Virgil. Just hang on. *(BITTIE suddenly pulls away and holds up the pliers. A tooth is firmly clenched in the rusty jaws. Nods curtly.)* Got it. How you feelin', Virgil?

VIRGIL: *(Feeling inside mouth.)* Looks like you got the right one, Bittie.

BITTIE: Hell, Virgil, you only had three. *(Holds out the tooth.)* You want this?

VIRGIL: *(Takes the tooth.)* Sure thing. I'll give it to Effie. She uses 'em to make rattles for the grandbabies. *(Stands up, works jaw cautiously.)* Thanks a heap, Bittie. I knew I could count on you.

BITTIE: No problem, Virgil. *(Tosses the pliers on the counter as he exits.)* See you in church tonight.

VIRGIL: *(Nods at others.)* So long, folks. See ya, Tucker.

TUCKER: Hey.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMER

VIRGIL exits. BOB looks at SHARON blankly.

BOB: Well, how about that, honey? Dinner *and* a show.

SHARON: (*Pushes plate away with a grimace.*) I think I've lost my appetite.

BOB: (*Chuckling wryly.*) That was one tough old cob.

RED: (*Suddenly sits bolt upright.*) Cobb! That's it! (*Jumps to his feet, points at BOB triumphantly.*) Zorro Cobb!

BOB suddenly freezes with a look of absolute terror.

RED: (*Rushes to BOB'S table.*) Zorro Cobb! I knew I recognized you!

SHARON: (*Completely bewildered.*) Zorro? Bob, what in the world is he talking about?

BOB: (*Shakes head, struggles to maintain composure.*) Nothing, honey, nothing at all. The man obviously has me mistaken for someone else. (*To RED.*) Look, Red, is it? My name is Bob Wilson. I don't know any 'Zorro Cobb'.

RED: Oh, come on, boy! I'd know that ugly face anywhere, even after twenty years! (*Taps forehead again.*) Told you I never forget! We all thought you was dead, Zorro! Where the hell you been?

RED quickly sits down next to BOB, who grows more agitated.

BOB: (*To RED.*) My name is Bob Wilson, okay? (*Stands and moves behind SHARON.*) This is my wife, Sharon. I'm a commodities broker from Chicago. Chicago, you know? Big city, tall buildings, flush toilets? I'm not from these parts.

RED: (*Scoffs, taps his chest.*) Zorro, this is Red Barnes, remember? You an' me was best friends in eighth grade, right up till you dropped out.

SHARON: Dropped out? I thought you went to college.

BOB: I did! (*Leans forward, eyes SHARON desperately.*) Sharon, what did I tell you about these people? (*Nods towards RED, then mimics playing banjo and hums Dueling Banjos. Angrily stands to confront RED.*) Mr. Barnes, I'm a patient man, but I'm afraid you're starting to get a little annoying. Now, I appreciate the fact that I resemble this 'Zorro' friend of yours, but I am not him. What idiot names their kid 'Zorro' in the first place? My name is Bob Wilson, and I am simply passing through your quaint little town. Which, by tomorrow, I pray will be nothing more than a very painful memory.

RED: You ain't Zorro?

BOB: I ain't Zorro! I mean, I'm not Zorro.

RED: (*Smirks.*) Okay, if you ain't Zorro Cobb, then how do I know you got that scar on your forehead when you an' me was tryin' to break into old man Lewis's hardware store when we was fourteen?

BOB: (*Struggles to stay calm.*) I don't know what you're talking about.

RED: The hell you don't! You had your eye on that sawed-off Mossberg .20 gauge he kept behind the counter. Not to mention his vintage Playboy collection, which, as I recall, included the very coveted 1953 premiere edition with Marilyn Monroe.

BOB: You're crazy, you know that?

RED: I'm crazy? I ain't the one who dove head-first through a window when we heard the cops comin'! (*Waving his arms, mimicking.*) 'Come on, Red, they ain't takin' us alive!' You ran like hell all the way down Main Street, an' all they had to do was follow the trail of blood.

BOB: (*Finally loses it.*) A lot you cared! I nearly bled to death!

BOB'S face freezes with the horror of what he's just said. He glances around with a sheepish look. MADGE and BITTIE have stepped out from the kitchen. They stare at BOB incredulously, along with an equally puzzled SHARON. TUCKER remains totally impassive.

SHARON: (*Completely flabbergasted.*) Bob...???

BOB: (*Mouthing words.*) Oh, shit!

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMER

RED: *(Slips his arm around BOB'S shoulders and laughs.)* Damn good to see you again, boy! We all thought you was dead! Where the hell you been? *(To TUCKER, elated.)* See, Tucker, I told you it was Zorro.

TUCKER: *(A slight tip of the RC.)* Hey.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT RISE:

The interior of Bittie's Bistro. BOB and SHARON sit at their table. BOB'S head is cradled in his hands – obviously a broken man. SHARON sits next to him with a puzzled expression. She appears uncertain as to her next move, or even her next words. BITTIE and MADGE hover nearby, watching both of them curiously. TUCKER continues to lean laconically back in his chair and sip his soda. RED is nowhere to be seen.

SHARON: *(Hesitantly reaches out to touch BOB'S shoulder.)* Bob? Sweetheart? Please tell me what's going on. Is it true? I mean, are you really this 'Zorro' person?

BOB remains silent. SHARON glances back at the others with a curious frown.

SHARON: *(To BOB.)* Honey, please answer me. When we first met, you told me you were an orphan; that you grew up in an orphanage in Chicago and never knew your parents. Was that not true? Are you really from...*(A beat, glancing around.)* this place?

BOB whimpers.

SHARON: It's okay, really! I don't care where you're from. I just wish you'd told me the truth to begin with. So what if your name is really 'Zorro'? It's not like you're a criminal or something.

BOB whimpers again, louder.

SHARON: You're not a criminal, are you? (*A beat, growing more anxious.*) Bob..?

MADGE: (*Almost reverently.*) Zorro Cobb! (*Looks at BITTIE.*) Good Lord, can you believe it, Bittie? Right here in our own bistro!

SHARON: (*To MADGE.*) Why is that so significant?

MADGE: Significant? Sweetie, Zorro Cobb is a mountain legend. Like the Hatfields and McCoys.

BITTIE: (*Scoffs sharply.*) More like Bonnie and Clyde.

MADGE: That's true. But without Bonnie. Just Clyde.

SHARON: I don't understand. Those people were criminals.

MADGE: Well, that depends on your perspective. For a lot of folks around these parts, moonshine is a way of life.

SHARON: (*Horrified.*) Moonshine?

MADGE: Oh, yeah. Zorro Cobb was king of the 'shine runners. He was more famous in Hiram County than most movie stars. All the girls had a crush on him. (*Giggles.*) Even me. I remember one day he come racin' through town in that fancy convertible, top down, six girls ridin' with him...

SHARON: (*Frowning at BOB.*) Six girls?

MADGE: (*Giggles again in embarrassment.*) An' they was all buck nekkid.

SHARON: (*The frown turns to a glare.*) Naked?

BITTIE: (*Contemptuously.*) Sinner.

MADGE: My daddy wouldn't let me anywhere near him, of course. But that didn't stop a lot of other girls. (*A beat, winking at SHARON.*) Or their mamas.

SHARON: (*The glare at BOB could now freeze molten lava.*) Really...???

BOB whimpers yet again, slamming his head against the table.

BITTIE: Heathen reprobate. (*Shakes his finger at BOB.*) The wages of sin is death. Romans 6:3.

MADGE: (*Frowns at BITTIE.*) We thought he was dead, Bittie. 'Least, that's what everyone said after he disappeared. An' now he's back! (*Waves her hands gleefully.*) Oh, Lordy, I got to go call Mama! She'll have a conniption fit when she hears this! (*Another wink at SHARON.*) She liked Zorro, too! (*MADGE quickly runs to the window and pulls the cell phone from the window. She rushes outside as she starts dialing.*) Mama? Mama!

SHARON: (*Slowly turns to BOB. Her tone is measured.*) Bob? Sweetheart? I really need you to look at me. (*A beat, sharply.*) Now!

BOB slowly lifts his head. His face is contorted with sheer agony. Someone please kill me now.

SHARON: (*Sweetly, with a loving smile.*) Dearest, we've been married for twelve years, and I believe I've been a very good wife. I've always been open and honest, and I always assumed you've been the same with me. This... (*A beat.*) ...situation, has me a little concerned. I need for you to answer a few questions. Can you do that? (*BOB nods slowly. He stares straight ahead, a zombie caught in the twilight zone.*) Thank you, honey. First of all, are you really this 'Zorro Cobb' person? (*BOB nods again.*) Okay, good start. Were you an orphan like you claimed? (*BOB shakes his head. Pats his hand gently.*) See, wasn't that easy? Nice to know we're still communicating. Now, were you... (*Struggles for composure.*) ...a 'shine runner'? (*BOB winces, then quickly nods.*) I see. Okay, last question, sweetheart, I promise. (*Voice slowly rises.*) Why didn't you ever tell me, you bastard?!

BOB: (*Jumps to his feet, finally snapping back to reality.*) What was I supposed to say? Come on, Sharon, think about it. Would you have had anything to do with me if you'd known where I was really from?

SHARON: (*Incredulous.*) Where you're from? Where you're from isn't the issue. I would have still loved you even if you were from Mars. It's what you did while you were here. For God's sake, moonshine?

BITTIE: (*Scathingly.*) Your iniquities have divided between you and your God. (*A beat.*) Isaiah 59:2.

BOB: *(Rolls his eyes.)* Thank you, Bittie. I had completely forgotten that. It really puts everything in perspective. *(Scowls.)* Do you mind?

BITTIE snorts in contempt, then quickly busies himself with cleaning.

SHARON: *(To BOB, still upset.)* But you're a criminal!

BOB: Was a criminal, Sharon, was! Very important you remember the tense. Look, I did some stupid things when I was young, I admit that. Things I'm not really proud of. Yes, I hid them from you. I hid them from everyone. But I left them all behind. *(A beat.)* The minute I left this place.

SHARON: Then why did we come here? What was this all about?

BOB: *(Sighs.)* I don't know. *(Shakes his head dismally.)* We were driving along and I saw the name on the map, and I just... *(A beat.)* I don't know. I guess I just wanted to see it one more time; just to see if it was still here. *(Glances around curiously.)* Just to see what memories it brought back. Who knew the stupid car would break down?

SHARON: Were you ever planning to tell me? I mean, it's a little disconcerting to suddenly find out you're married to a man who once ran moonshine. And whose real name is Zorro. It isn't really... *(A beat, grimacing.)* ...is it?

RED: *(Offstage.)* Zorro! *(RED suddenly rushes inside with a look of triumph.)* The word is out, boy! The whole town knows the great Zorro Cobb has returned to the bosom of his family!

BOB: Say what?

RED: Yep! County, too, by now. You know how fast news spreads in these parts.

BOB: *(Obviously less than thrilled.)* Yes, I do. Red, please don't tell me you told everyone.

A middle-aged woman, EMMY, suddenly appears at the window. She looks inside and sees BOB, and her eyes widen.

RED: Why not? Ain't every day a genuine legend returns from the dead. Where the hell you been, Zorro boy?

BOB: *(Sighing.)* It's a long story...

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMER

The screen door suddenly slams as EMMY steps inside.

EMMY: Zorro?

EMMY eyes BOB hesitantly – am I really seeing this? She is naturally attractive, but she wears an overly-garish slather of makeup. Tammy Faye's sister on a bad day. EMMY carries a large cloth handbag. BOB and the others turn. EMMY carefully approaches BOB with a look of both disbelief and elation.

EMMY: Zorro Cobb? Is it really you?

SHARON: *(To BOB, warily.)* Bob...?

BOB shrugs, trying to recognize EMMY. EMMY walks closer with a spreading grin – it's actually true!

EMMY: Zorro! You really came back!

BOB: *(Still struggles to place her.)* Well, I, that is—

EMMY suddenly throws her arms around BOB and kisses him passionately. SHARON glowers in disbelief.

SHARON: Bob!

BOB: *(Pushes EMMY away frantically.)* Look, miss, I don't—

EMMY hauls back and hits BOB in the head with the handbag. He falls to the floor with a crash.

SHARON: BOB!

EMMY stands over him, glaring.

EMMY: You owe me 20 years of child support, you low-life, good for nothin', runaway hillbilly deserter!

BITTIE: *(Sharply)* Emmy!

EMMY: *(Reproachful)* Sorry, Brother Bittie.

BOB lies flat on his back, out cold. EMMY glares around at the others,

then sees TUCKER.

EMMY: Hey, Tucker.

TUCKER: *(Another wave of the RC.)* Hey.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT RISE:

The interior of Bittie's Bistro. BOB sits on the floor, cradling his head in obvious pain. SHARON crouches next to him. One hand rests gently on BOB'S shoulder, but the look on her face indicates she's not too pleased with the situation. EMMY stands nearby, still glaring at BOB, handbag poised and ready. BITTIE and RED hover just out of range, watching the scene anxiously. TUCKER continues to lounge dispassionately in his chair. MADGE suddenly enters, carrying a frozen fish. She hands it to BOB.

MADGE: Here you go, sweetie. One crappie, nice an' frozen.

BOB scowls at the fish dubiously, then takes it and holds it against his head.

BOB: Thanks.

MADGE: No problem. Let me know if it melts, 'cause we got plenty more.

SHARON: *(Glances from BOB to EMMY, warily.)* Bob, who is this woman, and why is she claiming you owe her child support?
(Helps BOB to his feet.)

BOB: I swear to you, Sharon, I have absolutely no idea.

EMMY: *(Steps forward angrily, hefting the bag.)* You lyin' sack of—

BOB: *(Holding up his hand.)* Wait a minute! Just hold off with the coal sack, sister! I'm still seeing stars! What the heck you got in that bag anyway, bricks?

EMMY: Cosmetics. *(Pulls out catalogues from her bag and hands them to MADGE and SHARON.)* I sell Avon.

BOB: (*Scoffs.*) I would have never guessed. Well, I heard that darn doorbell, let me tell you. (*A beat.*) Look, with all due respect, and at the risk of possibly dying, who are you...?

EMMY: (*Genuinely hurt.*) You really don't remember me, Zorro?

BOB: (*Starts to shake head, then winces.*) Ow! No, I'm sorry, but I don't.

EMMY: I'm Emmy. (*A beat.*) Emmy Watkins.

BOB: (*The light bulb suddenly blinks on.*) Oh, my God. Clint Watkins' daughter?

EMMY: (*Nods smugly.*) That's right.

BOB: (*Grimaces.*) Sheriff Clint Watkins' daughter?

EMMY: I take it you remember, now?

SHARON: (*To BOB.*) You knew this woman?

EMMY: (*To SHARON, indignantly.*) He most certainly did.

SHARON: I didn't mean it like *that!* (*Glares at BOB.*) Bob?

BOB: (*Begins to babble frantically.*) I didn't, she was, we were, I don't—

SHARON: Form a coherent sentence!

BOB: (*Holds up one finger.*) One time! I was with her just one time!

EMMY: That's all it took! (*To BOB, coldly.*) An' that's all you wanted, wasn't it? A one night stand with the sheriff's daughter, just to prove to your buddies you made the conquest. An' soon as you got what you wanted, you lit out an' never came back. (*Sobs wistfully.*) You had no idea how much I loved you, Zorro Cobb. No idea. (*Composes herself.*) Well, I been waitin', 'cause I knew you'd haul your sorry butt back up this mountain sooner or later. An' now you're here. (*A beat.*) An' you're gonna pay.

BOB: (*Warily.*) Your dad still isn't the sheriff, is he?

EMMY: Daddy died ten years ago.

BOB: Thank God! (*SHARON suddenly slaps him.*) Ow! I mean, I'm sorry! I'm sorry for your loss, Emmy, truly. And I don't know anything about any child support. (*Looks at SHARON pleadingly.*) Or any child, for that matter!

EMMY: Well, we'll just have to see what the new sheriff thinks about that.

BOB: Emmy, please, the past aside, there's nothing the law can do to me now. After 20 years, the statutes of limitations have all run out. (*A beat.*) I may be an idiot, but I'm not stupid.

EMMY: (*Smirking.*) We'll see.

SHARON: (*To EMMY, but scowling at BOB.*) You say that Bob...sorry, Zorro, has a child?

EMMY: (*Nods.*) A boy. He's nineteen. An' he's a good, law-abidin' young man. Got himself a legitimate job. (*Glares at BOB.*) Unlike his no-account daddy.

BOB: I've got a legitimate job! (*Nods at SHARON.*) And a wife.

SHARON: (*Flatly.*) For now.

BOB winces again. He holds the fish out to MADGE.

BOB: Madge, could you get me another crappie, please? This one's starting to get clammy.

MADGE: Sure thing, sweetie.

BITTIE enters as MADGE exits. He carries a box of canned preserves, which he takes behind the counter and bends down to put away.

BOB: (*To SHARON, exasperated.*) Okay, I admit it: I was a bad kid. I broke into stores, I ran moonshine, I played around; I was the quintessential mountain wild child! But that was 20 years ago. Things change, people change, life goes on! Can't we all just move on with it?

BITTIE'S head slowly appears above the counter as he glares coldly at BOB.

BITTIE: There is no dark place, no deep shadow, where evildoers can hide. Job, 34:22. (*Pronounces it jöb.*)

MADGE: (*Offstage.*) Oh, for God's sake, Bittie, it's Job!

BOB: (*Sarcastically.*) Do me a favor, Bittie; since you're on such intimate terms with God, why don't you just ask Him to put me out of my misery right here and now?

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMER

A tall, older man, ORLYN, suddenly enters. He wears the badge and uniform of a county sheriff, and he dominates the entire café as he slowly looks around through mirrored sunglasses. He sees BOB and slowly smiles. BOB stares at ORLYN incredulously. The twilight zone has just morphed into hell.

ORLYN: *(Pulls sunglasses off.)* Well, well, well. Zorro Cobb.

BOB: *(Glancing upwards painfully.)* You do know I was only joking?

ORLYN: I heard the news but I just had to see it for myself. How the hell are you, boy?

BOB: *(Sighs wearily, turning to SHARON.)* Sharon, sweetheart, I'd like you to meet Orlyn Cobb. *(A beat.)* My father.

ORLYN smiles/nods at SHARON, then looks around at the others. He sees TUCKER and waves briefly.

ORLYN: Hey, Tucker.

TUCKER: *(Through a mouthful of Moon Pie.)* Hey.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

AT RISE:

The interior of Bittie's Bistro. BOB sits at one of the tables by himself. SHARON hovers nearby. She's definitely not sure how to handle all of this. ORLYN leans against the counter and eyes BOB with a speculative scowl. BITTIE, RED, and EMMY watch everything curiously. EMMY'S glare at BOB could melt stone. Once again, TUCKER simply leans in his chair obliviously. MADGE enters carrying another frozen fish.

MADGE: *(Hands the fish to BOB.)* Here you go, sweetie.

BOB: Thanks. You wouldn't have a gun, by any chance?

MADGE: *(Thinking briefly.)* We do, but I believe we ran out of bullets. Bittie used the last one killin' a rat.

BOB: Just my luck. *(Scowls at the fish.)* Maybe I can just beat myself to death.

EMMY: (*Coldly, hefting the bag.*) I'd be right glad to do it for you.

BOB shoots her a glare, then looks at ORLYN.

BOB: Daddy, what the heck are you doing wearing that badge? You work in a sawmill.

ORLYN: Used to. Retired three years ago. Put in 36 years. Thirty-six legitimate years.

BOB: That word seems to be very popular around here. But really, sheriff..?

ORLYN: I got bored. Man can only watch so much Duck Dynasty 'fore it gets tiresome. Job came open, so I ran for election an' won. 'Sides, I sort of enjoy the power.

BOB: (*Shakes his head.*) Why do I suddenly have visions of water-boarding?

EMMY: (*To ORLYN.*) You gonna lock him up, sheriff?

ORLYN: Well, now, Emmy, I got to admit that nothin' would give me greater pleasure. (*A beat, grimacing at BOB.*) Almost nothin'. But I reckon I need to have a charge that would stick in court. Much as it pains me, there ain't no law against bein' a brainless, thankless, worthless, self-centered idiot.

BOB: (*Only half joking.*) Praise the Lord.

EMMY: But what about my child support?

ORLYN: Emmy, your boy is nineteen. He's supportin' himself. An' you.

EMMY: Well, then, what about mental anguish? I spent the last 20 years grievin' over what might have been. I reckon I'm owed somethin' for my pain.

BOB: (*Sotto voice.*) Have you tried Tylenol?

EMMY lunges towards him, bag poised for the kill. ORLYN quickly pulls her back.

ORLYN: All right, Emmy, settle down! Anyone's gonna beat the crap out of that boy it'll be me. (*Glances around at the others.*) Speakin' of which, I need for you folks to clear out for a while. (*A beat, smiling coldly at BOB.*) I want to talk to my son.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMER

BITTIE, MADGE, and RED quickly exit. EMMY follows reluctantly, glaring at BOB. SHARON begins to follow after them.

BOB: *(To SHARON, puzzled.)* Sharon, sweetheart, aren't you going to stay?

SHARON: I need to get some air, Bob. Zorro. *(Waves her hands with a frustrated SIGH.)* Whatever! *(Quickly exits.)*

BOB stares after her curiously, then notices TUCKER hasn't budged.

BOB: *(To ORLYN, nodding at TUCKER.)* What about him?

ORLYN: Tucker can stay. You doin' okay, Tucker?

TUCKER: *(Once again emotionless.)* Hey.

BOB: *(Shrugs.)* I suppose I could use a witness.

ORLYN and BOB stare at each other for a long moment. The tension hangs like a guillotine blade.

ORLYN: *(After a long beat.)* So.

BOB: *(Nodding anxiously.)* So.

ORLYN: How you been?

BOB: Oh, pretty good, I guess.

ORLYN: Good life?

BOB: Can't complain. Good job. Great wife.

ORLYN: She is pretty.

BOB: Thanks.

ORLYN: You look good, boy. You look damn good. *(A beat.)*

'Specially for someone who's been dead 20 years.

BOB: Yeah, Daddy, about that—

ORLYN: *(Interrupting.)* You know, when they told me they fished your car out of the Tug, first thing I thought was: well, it was bound to happen, sooner or later. Boy chooses the path you chose, not many different outcomes. But then I thought; how am I gonna tell his mama? It'll break her heart. *(A beat.)* 'Course, you'd already done that.

BOB: *(Sighs.)* How is mama?

ORLYN: She passed on, son. A couple years after you... *(A beat.)* ...died.

BOB: (*Looks away painfully.*) I'm sorry, Daddy. About everything. For whatever that's worth.

ORLYN: Why, Zorro?

BOB: Why what? Why did I disappear, or why did I rebel in the first place?

ORLYN: I'm open to both answers.

BOB: (*Gesturing briefly.*) Daddy, look at this place. From the time I was a kid, I knew I only had two choices: the coal mines or the sawmill. That's all there's ever been for anyone around here.

ORLYN: Ain't nothin' wrong with the sawmill. I made a good livin' for you an' your mama workin' at the mill.

BOB: I know that, Daddy, I know that. (*A beat.*) Now, I just knew then that it wasn't for me.

ORLYN: An' runnin' 'shine was?

BOB: It made me feel important, Daddy. I could walk down the street and people would look at me like I was some kind of rock star. I had money, women, fame. And I didn't come home at night covered in sawdust and smelling like machine oil.

ORLYN: (*Nods speculatively.*) Didn't realize I was that much of an embarrassment to you.

BOB: (*Earnestly.*) You weren't... (*A beat, sighing.*) ...an embarrassment. I loved you, Daddy, I really did. I just didn't want to be like you.

ORLYN: Fair enough. Ever occur to you to at least let your mama know you were still alive? She took it real hard, Zorro.

BOB: I thought about it. I even tried writing a couple of letters, but, I just couldn't bring myself to send them. Too afraid it would get back to the Feds.

ORLYN: Why'd you pretend to die, anyways?

BOB: (*Shrugs.*) Seemed the best way out. I crashed the Mustang running from a carload of ATF agents. Like you said, it was only a matter of time. The only reason I survived was because the top was down. Once I climbed out of the Tug, it dawned on me that everyone would probably think I was dead. So, I died. I took what money I hadn't blown and made my way to Chicago. Changed my name, finished school, got a high-paying job, married a beautiful woman, and the rest, as they say, is history.

ORLYN: Yet you still ended up back here in Homer.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMER

BOB: (*Chuckles.*) Yeah, well, I never said I was smart.

ORLYN: (*Flatly.*) You need to leave.

BOB: Sir?

ORLYN: I said, you need to leave. Go back to your high-payin' job in Chicago or wherever the hell it is. (*A beat.*) An' don't ever come back to Homer.

BOB: Daddy—

ORLYN: (*Sharply.*) I ain't kiddin', Zorro. You made it perfectly clear how you feel about us, so I'm makin' it clear how we feel about you. I ain't got nothin' I can charge you with, an' neither do the Feds, apparently, but that don't mean I have to let you stay. So unless you want me to lock your ass in a cell with Emmy for a few hours, which I am very inclined to do, I suggest you pack up an' get the hell out.

BOB: (*Scoffs.*) So much for the prodigal son.

ORLYN: The prodigal son didn't send his mama to an early grave. (*A beat.*) An' I reckon I ain't as forgivin' as his daddy.

BOB: (*After a beat, scowling at ORLYN.*) My car broke down, which is the reason we're even here in the first place. It won't be ready till tomorrow.

ORLYN: (*Frowns curiously.*) You leave it with Jimmy?

BOB: Yeah.

ORLYN: (*Nods slowly, after a moment.*) He'll fix it. He's a good boy. Well then, soon as Jimmy gets it back to you, you jump inside an' high-tail it off this mountain at top speed. (*A beat, smirking.*) Reckon that's somethin' you've always been good at.

ORLYN swiftly exits. BOB stares after him for a long moment. This wasn't in the cards, yet it wasn't completely unexpected. He glances anxiously at TUCKER, who continues to remain impassive. SHARON suddenly enters.

BOB: (*Sighing with genuine relief.*) Sharon! Thank God. I can really use a friendly face right now.

SHARON: (*Frowns at him.*) Bob, we need to talk.

BOB: (*Wincing.*) Great.

SHARON: Bob, I don't know how to deal with any of this. This morning when I woke up, I was Mrs. Wilson. Now I'm Mrs. Cobb? On top of that, my husband, Zorro, is a former bootlegger who everyone thinks is either dead or some sort of hillbilly hero. And, as if all of that weren't more than enough, he apparently fathered a child with the Avon lady from Hell! (*Desperately.*) What is going on, Bob? (*BOB struggles to answer, and finally gives up. He shrugs and SIGHS in defeat, shaking his head wearily as he looks away. After a beat.*) Look, I need some time alone, okay? I'm going to ask Jimmy to take me over to that motel. (*Flatly.*) I'm going to get my own room.

BOB: (*Shrugs and nods briefly.*) I understand.

SHARON: I'll see you in the morning.

BOB: Yeah.

SHARON stares at him anxiously for several moments, then quickly exits. BOB frowns after her, then sees TUCKER.

BOB: (*Sighs.*) Sorry, Tucker.

BOB shakes his head in disgust, then quickly exits the bistro. TUCKER lifts the RC bottle in a laconic wave.

TUCKER: Hey.

BLACKOUT.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOMER

*Thank you for reading this free excerpt from THERE'S NO PLACE
LIKE HOMER by Rusty Harding and Marcus Ridner. For
performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please
contact us at:*

Heuer Publishing LLC

P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Toll Free: 1-800-950-7529 • Fax (319) 368-8011

HEUERPUB.COM

DO NOT COPY