

Maxwell Anderson

Lost in the Stars

The dramatization of Alan Paton's novel,
Cry, the Beloved Country

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Act One

SCENE 1

The curtain goes up in darkness and a picture of the Ixopo hill develops gradually in the background. From the orchestra pit a broad flight of steps leads up to the stage. A group of singers sits on these steps, so placed that they are not in the way of the action but can comment on it or ascend to take part in it at any time. The first scene is the tiny and cheap but clean sitting room in the home of Stephen Kumalo, near St. Mark's Church near Ndotsheni, Natal, South Africa. As the curtain rises, we see SINGERS entering from the pit onto the enter stairs, and also from right and if stage to position on the s. The LEADER takes his place center stage and it on a basket which he carries on stage.

LEADER

(Sings)

There is a lovely road

that runs from Ixopo into the hills.

These hills

are grass covered and rolling, and they are lovely

beyond any singing of it.

About you there is grass and bracken,

and you may hear the forlorn crying of the titihoya bird.

The grass of the veld is rich and matted.

You cannot see the soil.

The grass holds the rain and mist, and they seep into the ground, feeding the streams in every clove.

The clove is cool and green and lovely beyond any singing of it.

ANSWERER

But sing now about the lower hills.

LEADER

Where you stand the grass is rich and matted -
but the rich green hills break down.
They fall to the valley below
and, failing, change.
For they grow red and bare;
they cannot hold the rain and mist;
the streams run dry in the clove.
Too many cattle feed on the grass;
it is not kept or guarded or cared for,
It no longer keeps men, guards men, cares for men.
The titihoya cries here no more.

ANSWERER

Yes, wherever the hills have broken down and the red clay shows through, there
poor people live and dig ever more desperately into the failing earth.

LEADER

(Sings)

The great red hills stand desolate,
and the earth his torn away like flesh.
These are the valleys
of old men and old women,
of mothers and children.
The men are away.
The young men and the girls are away.
The soil cannot keep them any more.

*(STEPHEN KUMALO enters and sits on a chair behind the table. As the last of
the SINGERS go out the lights come up on the sitting room. GRACE KUMALO,
Stephen's wife, enters, and a small Zulu girl, NITA, runs in with a letter and
crosses to Stephen)*

NITA

(Handing the letter to Stephen) I bring a letter, umfundisi.

STEPHEN

Where did you get it, my child?

NITA

From the store, umfundisi. The white man asked me to bring it to you.

STEPHEN

That was good of you. Go well, small one.

(NITA starts to go, but pauses)

GRACE

Perhaps you might be hungry, Nita,

NITA

Not - not very hungry.

STEPHEN

Perhaps a little hungry?

NITA

Yes, a little hungry, umfundisi.

GRACE

There is a little bowl on the kitchen table, Nita. And a spoon beside it.

NITA

I thank you.

(NITA goes to the kitchen; Stephen sits fingering his letter; GRACE crosses to him and looks over his shoulder at the letter.)

GRACE

From Johannesburg. "Reverend Stephen Kumalo, St. Mark's Church, Ndotsheni, Natal.' It is not from our son.

STEPHEN

No. It's a writing I haven't seen.

GRACE

It may bring news of him.

STEPHEN

Yes. Let me think. Our son Absalom is in Johannesburg; my sister Gertrude is there-and my brother John is there. But he has never written to me.

Perhaps the way to find out is to open it. Read it, my helper. Your eyes are better than mine.

GRACE

It's from your brother John.

STEPHEN

Then this is truly an occasion. Read carefully, my helper.

GRACE

"Dear Stephen, you old faker. I don't know whether it was you who sent our dear sister Gertrude to Johannesburg or not, but if it was, for the love of your own Jesus send and fetch her back. She says she came looking for a husband who ran away from her. Maybe so. Anyway she's found plenty husbands, and the stories about the kind of house she keeps are not good for my business. See to

this soon, O brother in God, or I'll have the woman put away where she won't be so noticeable. Your affectionate brother, John." He's an evil man.

(She sits)

STEPHEN

(Humorously) No, he honestly thinks that I am a faker. He thinks all men are fakers, perhaps because he's one. But I am not concerned about that. I am concerned about Gertrude if she has taken to bad ways.

GRACE

What will you do?

STEPHEN

I don't know.

GRACE

(She has a plan)

If you were in Johannesburg you could find Gertrude.

STEPHEN

It's many hundreds of miles. Where would I find the money to go to Johannesburg?

GRACE

There is the St. Chad's money.

STEPHEN

Absalom's money-the money we save for his school? You would have me use that?

GRACE

Should you not, Stephen? Absalom will never go now to St. Chad's.

STEPHEN

How can you say that? How can you say such a thing?

GRACE

He is in Johannesburg. When people go to Johannesburg they do not come back.

STEPHEN

But Absalom will! I know him.

GRACE

It's nearly a year since we had a letter from him, Stephen. We do not know him now. He has been in the mines.

STEPHEN

We must not cease to believe in him. We must love him, and not doubt him. When there is love, then distance doesn't matter at all-distance or silence or years.

(He sings "Thousands of Miles")

How many miles

To the heart of a child?

Thousands of miles, thousands of miles.

When he lay on your breast

He looked up and smiled

Across tens of thousands,

Thousands of miles.

Each lives alone

In a world of dark,

Crossing the skies

In a lonely arc,

Save when love leaps out like a leaping spark

Over thousands, thousands of miles.

Not miles, or walls, or length of days,
Nor the cold doubt of midnight can hold us apart,
For swifter than wings of the morning
The pathways of the heart
How many miles
To the heart of a son?
Thousands of miles, thousands of miles.
Farther off than the rails
Or the roadways run
Across tens of thousands,
Thousands of miles
The lines on the map
stretch far and thin
To the streets and days
That close him in,
But then, as of old, he turns 'round to grin
Over thousands--thousands of miles.
Not miles, or walls, or length of days,
Nor the cold doubt of midnight can hold us apart,
For swifter than wings of the morning
The pathways of the heart!
Over tens of thousands of miles.

(NITA enters from upstage door)

STEPHEN

Is the little bowl empty, Nita ?

NITA

Yes, umfundisi. I thank you.

STEPHEN

Go well, my child.

NITA

Stay well, umfundisi.

(She skips out and off left)

GRACE

Stephen, please take the St. Chad's money, Go to Johannesburg.

STEPHEN

You're not thinking of Gertrude. You're thinking of Absalom.

GRACE

Yes. We have heard nothing from our son for a year-go to Johannesburg. Find him.

STEPHEN

I shall bring you word of Absalom. It will be good news, that I know. -

GRACE

(Her arms around him) You are my Stephen.

(The light dim)

SCENE 2

The station at Carrisbrooke, indicated only by a semaphore, as the lights come up a white STATIONMASTER announces the coming of the train and a group of ZULUS enters, singing a farewell to one of their number who has been called to work in the mines.

STATIONMASTER

Attention! The train for Johannesburg will be here in five minutes! Have your baggage ready! Train for Johannesburg

CHORUS

Johannesburg, Johannesburg.

Johannesburg, Johannesburg.

LEADER

Train go now to Johannesburg

Farewell!

CHORUS

Farewell!

LEADER

Go well!

CHORUS

Go well!

LEADER

Train go now to Johannesburg

Farewell!

CHORUS

Farewell!

LEADER

Go well!

CHORUS

Go well!

This boy we love, this brother,

Go to Johannesburg White man go to Johannesburg -

He come back, he come back.

Black man go to Johannesburg -

Never come back, never come back!

YOUNG MAN

(Speaking) I come back.

WOMAN

Please!

YOUNG MAN

All this they say -

I fool them. I come back.

CHORUS

(Sings)

Black man go to Johannesburg -

Go, go, never come back

Go, go, never come back.

Train go now to Johannesburg -

Farewell, farewell,

Go well, go well

This boy we love, this brother.
Go to Johannesburg.
White man go to Johannesburg,
He come back, he come back.
Black man go to Johannesburg,
Go, go, never come back -
Go, go, never come back, never come back
Never come back!

(JAMES JARVIS, an Englishman of about fifty-five, enters, accompanied by his Son, ARTHUR, and his grandson, EDWARD. They pause a minute to talk, the ZULUS diminish their singing to a pianissimo)

ARTHUR

We're in plenty of time.

JARVIS

Yes -- I can see the plume just over the hill. The train will be here in three minutes.

EDWARD

I'll always remember this is the year I learned to ride horseback.

EDWARD

Do you think he'll remember me?

JARVIS

I'm not sure just how much a horse remembers. But he'll be here, and we'll all be here, waiting for you. The old place gets pretty lonely with only your grandmother and me.

EDWARD

It was the best mid-term I ever had.

JARVIS

(Smiling) Thank you, Edward.

(STEPHEN KUMALO enters with his wife and crosses to center; he is carrying a small black bag)

JARVIS

It was among the best I ever had. You have a book to read on the train?

EDWARD

I have my Latin grammar-but I'm planning to look out the window a lot.

ARTHUR

There's Stephen Kumalo-and I haven't seen him for a year.

Forgive me.

(He starts toward Stephen)

JARVIS

Arthur!

ARTHUR

Yes?

JARVIS

I don't know what the customs are now in Johannesburg. They may have changed since I was there. But in our village one does not go out of his way to speak to a black.

ARTHUR

The customs have not changed in Johannesburg, Father. But I am not bound by these customs. I have friends among the Zulus. And my friends are my friends.

(He goes to Stephen and offers his hand)

Mr. Kumalo!

STEPHEN

Ah, Mr. Jarvis!

(They shake hands)

ARTHUR

You're making a journey?

STEPHEN

To Johannesburg, sir. It is my first long journey. And a happy one - I go to see my son!

ARTHUR

Ah! And Mrs. Kumalo goes with you?

GRACE

No, sir. I stay with the house.

ARTHUR

I'm leaving today, too. I wish I'd had time to see you while we were here.

STEPHEN

Sir, it is always a great pleasure to see you, Perhaps when you come again

ARTHUR

That's right-there's always a next time. And I won't forget.

(ARTHUR and STEPHEN shake hands again)

STEPHEN

I know you won't, sir.

(ARTHUR returns to his father and son)

JARVIS

If you had struck me across the face you couldn't have hurt me more-or damaged me more, in the eyes of those who stand here. I suppose you know that?

ARTHUR

I don't believe that, Father. This is an old quarrel between us. We haven't time to settle it before the train goes. Perhaps we shall never settle it.

JARVIS

What you do in Johannesburg I can't alter! But here, where every eye is on us, where you are known as my son, you could avoid affronting me in such a fashion! Will you remember that in the future?

ARTHUR

Let's shake hands and agree to disagree, Father. The train is almost here.

JARVIS

You make no promises?

ARTHUR

I make no promises.

JARVIS

Then I'm not sure that I want you to come here again, Arthur!

ARTHUR

Father!

JARVIS

I'm sorry. Of course you'll come again.

ARTHUR

Not if it offends you, Father. But - my friends are my friends.

(ARTHUR and JARVIS face each other. The CHORUS begins to imitate the approaching train)

EDWARD

Good-bye, Grandfather.

JARVIS

Good-bye, Edward.

ARTHUR

Good-bye, sir.

(He puts out his hand)

JARVIS

Good-by, Arthur.

(He shakes hands with Arthur. ARTHUR and EDWARD go to the left. STEPHEN has started to go toward the train off-stage left, but steps back to let ARTHUR and Edward precede him, as STEPHEN and his wife go out the Zulus shout to them)

LEADER

Go well, um fundisi.

STEPHEN

Stay well, you who dwell here.

(The CHORUS and the LEADER, imitating the train, sing simultaneously)

LEADER

White man go to Johannesburg,
He come back,
He come back.

CHORUS

Clink, clink, clickety.

1st VOICE

(Imitating the whistle) Whoo-oo-oo-oo!

CHORUS

Black man go to Johannesburg!
Never come back, never come back!
Clink, clink, clickety,
clink, clink, clickety

(The lights fade)

SCENE 3

John Kumalo's tobacco shop in Johannesburg. A counter with a small display of cigars, cigarette, and tobacco. John is conferring with some political lieutenants, all Zulus or Bantu.

JOHN

Don't take it so hard, gentlemen, don't take it so hard. We won't get equal suffrage, we won't get social equality, we won't get any kind of equality - but those of us who are quick in the head will get along. That's the way it is everywhere for whites and for Zulus. Use your head and you can live. Try to reform the world and somebody steals your me alies. Now suppose a Zulu says to you, "I demand equality; I want to vote and I want to be represented!" What do you say to him? You, Paulus?

PAULUS

I say to him, "We won't get it next year. But we'll get it!"

JOHN

What else do you say to him? William?

WILLIAM

I say to him, "Come and see me."

JOHN

That's right. And in ten years, gentlemen, our League will own Johannesburg. And now, gentlemen, you're part of the biggest thing that's happening in this town!

(STEPHEN KUMALO enters, holding a small Zulu boy, ALEX, by the hand. JOHN looks at Stephen without recognizing him)

Yes, umfundisi?

STEPHEN

I've come to see you, John...

JOHN

It's Stephen. It's our old gospel bird, scratching 'round in the big city. You got my letter?

STEPHEN

Yes. This is Gertrude's son. Little Alex.

JOHN

Excuse me, gentlemen. My own brother, the son of our mother, has come. Well, any rain down your way this year.

STEPHEN

Less than we needed, John.

JOHN

You should pray, brother, you should pray. Now about Gertrude, she goes back with you to Ndotsheni?

STEPHEN

She allows the child to go with me. But she stays here.

JOHN

Brother, I want our sister out of this town. There's a limit to the number of bastard nephews a respectable tradesman can have,

STEPHEN

I asked her to come with me. She would not.

JOHN

Take her son, then, and go back to your hills and your sheet-iron chapel and your rusty god. I thought you might rid me of the woman. If you can't do that I have no further use for you.

STEPHEN

Honest and straightforward, aren't you, John? I'll go, but first there are two things I must ask. I have no room to stay in –

JOHN

There's no room here.

STEPHEN

Don't be afraid. I can pay for a room.

JOHN

Perhaps I can find you one, then. What else?

STEPHEN

My son Absalom. Did you see him while he was here?

JOHN

How much have you heard from Absalom?

STEPHEN

Four letters - from the mines - nearly a year ago. He was well, and working hard.

JOHN

I see. Well—your son left the mines and went about with my son Matthew for a while. They both stayed here. But your Absalom was not a good influence on Matthew.

STEPHEN

John!

JOHN

I had to tell them to get out.

STEPHEN

You sent them away?

JOHN

Yes.

STEPHEN

Do you know - where they went?

JOHN

Yes, I've written it somewhere.

STEPHEN

I hoped you would know. That makes it all easy. Now I thank my God - I thank my Tixo -

JOHN

You can leave your God out of it. He's not interested. 14 Krause Street, Doornfontein Textiles Company.

STEPHEN

Doornfontein Textiles Company, 14 Krause Street.

JOHN

That's it. And now you want a place to stay.

(He writes an address)

You think I am a hard man.

STEPHEN

Brother, you have helped me. We do what we can

JOHN

Brother, you're right. We do what we can. I hope you know what you do. You're the white man's dog, trained to bark and keep us in order. You know that.

STEPHEN

No, brother, I do not know it.

JOHN

They pile up mountains of gold, and they pay our sons three shillings a day, and out of this wage take a heavy tax. Is that fair?

STEPHEN

No, brother, it is not fair.

JOHN

Then why do you wear their Anglican clothes and read their Testament?

STEPHEN

Because all men do evil I among them - and I wish all men to do better, I among them.

JOHN

(Giving Stephen the address) Yes, blessed are the chicken-hearted. This will give you a place to sleep. It's expensive and it's in Shanty Town and it's not pleasant. Such are the customs of our city.

STEPHEN

I shan't mind.

(He puts out his hand)

Good-bye, John.

JOHN

(Taking it) Good-bye. You old faker.

STEPHEN

The same John!

(He starts out)

14 Krause Street...

(The lights dim and go out)

SCENE 4

(The lights come up on the chorus on the orchestra pit steps.)

CHORUS

(Sings)

14 Krause Street

Textiles Company

14 Krause Street

Textiles Company

14 Krause Street

Textiles Company.

STEPHEN

(Alone on the street)

Not miles, or walls, or length of days,

Nor the cold doubt of midnight can hold us apart,

For swifter than wings of the morning

The pathways of the heart

CHORUS

(Sings)

14 Krause Street

Textiles Company

14 Krause Street

Textiles Company

(Stephen is now seen speaking with a factory foreman who stands behind a cashier's cage. He is looking up a record in a large volume)

FOREMAN

Yes, they did work here. Absalom Kumalo and Matthew Kumalo. But they left us some months ago.

STEPHEN

Sir, did they work well?

FOREMAN

Why, I think so. I rather liked Absalom. A good lad.

STEPHEN

Thank you, sir. He's my son, you know. Could you tell me where they went?

FOREMAN

They had a house address when they were here. They lived with Mrs.Mkize, 77
Twenty-third Avenue, Alexandra.

STEPHEN

Thank you, sir.

(The lights dim)

CHORUS

(Sings)

Seventy-seven, Twenty-third Avenue
Mrs. Mikize - Twenty-third Avenue.

*(Stephen is now seen at a doorway, MRS.MKIZE appears in it as the lights come
up.)*

STEPHEN

How long ago, Mrs. Mkize?

MRS. MKIZE

These many months.

STEPHEN

Do you know where he is now?

CHORUS

(Sings)

Make no doubt

It is fear that you see in her eyes!

It is fear!

MRS. MKIZE

No, I do not know.

STEPHEN

Are you afraid of me?

MRS. MKIZE

No, I'm not afraid.

STEPHEN

But you tremble when I speak of him.

MRS. MKIZE

I don't know you. I don't know why you ask.

STEPHEN

I am his father. I wish him well-and you well.

MRS. MKIZE

His father. Then it would be better if you followed him no further.

STEPHEN

Why?

MRS. MKIZE

Umfundisi, they were friendly with a taxi driver named Hlabeni who lives near the stand in this same street. At number 25.

STEPHEN

Why should I look no further?

MRS. MKIZE

Lest you be hurt by it.

STEPHEN

What did he do?

MRS. MKIZE

In the middle of the night they brought things here umfundisi. Clothes and watches and money. They left in haste. I think they were near to being discovered. Oh, follow him no further!

STEPHEN

Hlabeni, at 25 on this street?

MRS. MKIZE

Yes.

(The lights dim)

CHORUS

(Sings)

A taxi driver, known as Hilabeni,
Taxi stand; in Twenty-third Avenue,

What you must find is always a number,
A number and a name.
Though it sear the mind, say it over and over,
Over and over,
A boding song
Searing like flame.

LEADER

(Sings)

Be there, my one son, be well there -

(Stephen is now at Hiabeni's doorway)

HLABENI

I can tell you this much; they were picked up for something they'd done, and one of them went to jail for a while.

STEPHEN

What - had they done?

HLABENI

Oh, some wild trick like boys do.

STEPHEN

Which one went to prison?

HLABENI

Absalom got out of it somehow. And Absalom's out on parole.

STEPHEN

Where would he be?

HLABENI

You could ask the parole officer at the government building.

STEPHEN

Is it near ?

HLABENI

Four or five miles. I'll draw you a map. That might help.

(The lights dim)

CHORUS

(Sings)

What you must find is always a number,

 A number and a name,

In prison cells they give you a number,

 Tag your clothes with it,

 Print your shame!

LEADER

(Sings)

Be there, my one son, be well there -

VOICE

(Speaking)

But how could he be well there? How could he be well?

(The lights come up on Stephen standing before Mark Eland, the parole officer, a young white man)

ELAND

Yes, he's been paroled, umfundisi. We made an exception, partly because of his good behavior, partly because of his age, but mainly because there was a girl who was pregnant by him.

STEPHEN

He is married, then?

ELAND

No, umfundisi. But the girl seemed fond of him, so with his solemn undertaking that he would work hard to support the child and its mother-we let him go. He's living with the girl in Pimville.

STEPHEN

Is it far?

ELAND

It's some miles. I think I'd have to take you.

STEPHEN

Thank you sir.

(The lights dim out)

(sings)

But be there,

My one son, be well there,

This is news I can write to the mother at home.

This is not what I hoped for my one son,

But how much worse could have come!

SCENE 5

(The lights come up as we see STEPHEN striking a match and lighting a candle in a tiny, squalid room. Alex is with him.)

ALEX

Uncle Stephen?

STEPHEN

Yes, Alex.

ALEX

The room is very small here, and not clean. .

STEPHEN

Yes, it's the best they had.

ALEX

What will our house be like?

STEPHEN

It's a little grey house.

ALEX

Will there be grass in front of it?

STEPHEN

Yes, and flowers growing in the grass. And there's a tree that my son liked to climb. He built himself a place to sleep in it, like a nest. You will climb that tree.

ALEX

Is the nest still there?

STEPHEN

Yes, it's there.

ALEX

I see. I'm thinking about it.

(He looks out, imagining.)

CHORUS

(Sings)

What are you thinking,
Old man among the broken boxes
Of Shanty Town?

What do you see,
Child with the shining eyes,
Among the broken hopes
Of Shanty Town?

STEPHEN

(Sings "The Little Grey House")

There's a little grey house
In a one-street town,
And the door stands open,
And the steps run down;
And you prop up the window
With a stick on the sill,
And you carry spring water
From the bottom of the hill;
And the white star-of-Bethlehem

Grows in the yard,
And I can't really describe it
But I'm trying hard;
It's not much to tell about,
It's not much to picture out,
And the only thing special is
It's home.

CHORUS

It's not much to sing about,
It's not much to picture out,
And the only thing special is
It's home.

STEPHEN

It's a long road, God knows,
The long and turning iron road that lead Ndotsheni
How I came, God knows, by what ridges, streams, and valleys,
And how we shall return is in God's keeping.
Many bright days, many dark nights, we must ride on iron
Before I see that house again!

There's a lamp in the room,
And it lights the face
Of the one who waits there
In her quiet place,
With her hands always busy
Over needle and thread,
Or the fire in the kitchen
To bake tomorrow's bread.
And she always has love enough
To take you in,
And her house will rest you

Wherever you've been!

CHORUS

It's not much to tell about,
It's not much to picture out,
And the only thing special is
It's home.

STEPHEN

It's not much to tell about,
It's not much to picture out,
And the only thing special is
It's home.

(STEPHEN carries Alex up to the cot and cover him with a blanket. He blows out the candle. The lights dim out)

SCENE 6

A dive in Shanty Town. Some strange harmonies have crept into the last few bars and now we discover that they were indications of another song that begins to come from another part of the stage, still in darkness. It's sung in the manner of a night-club entertainer. The voice is a girl's. As the lights come up we see Linda, the singer, Matthew Kumalo, Johannes Pafuri, and Roe and Sitty, two girls who came with the young. Absalom Kumalo sits alone and moody. Two DANCERS, a man and a girl, dance to Linda's singing.

LINDA

(Sings "Who'll Buy")

Who'll buy

My juicy rutabagas?

Who'll buy

My yellow corn?

Who'll buy asparagus or carrots or potatoes?

Who wants my peppers and my ginger and tomatoes,

The best you bit into

Since you were born?

If you want to make a supper dish fit for a king

Look over what I offer, I offer everything!

So try my, buy my

Black-eyed peas;

The garden of Eden had nothing like these!

You'll feel like flying, like a bird on the wing;

You'll stay up there like a kite on a string:

They're satisfactory, and they got a sting!

So try my,

Buy my

Asparagus, yellow corn, black-eyed peas, tomatoes, potatoes,
beans, and rutabagas -

Who'll buy
My oranges and melons
Who'll buy
My prickly pears?
Who'll pay shillings for my lemons and persimmons,
Who wants apricots and nectarines and trimmin's,
The best you laid lip to
The last 10 years?
I haven't got a license, so I can undersell
I haven't got a license, so I treat you well!
So try my, buy my
Pure veld honey!
In the garden of Eden
They never use money!
You'll feel like flying, like a bat out of hell!
You'll own high heaven and a landing field as well!
The apples of Paradise, they always jell!

MATTHEW, JOHANNES

Try my -

LINDA

Buy my -

OTHERS

Buy my -

LINDA

Oranges, prickly pears, apricots, nectarines, tangerines, apples, groundnuts,
bananas -
Buy my -

OTHERS

Buy my -

LINDA

Oh my -

OTHERS

Oh my -

LINDA

Oh my -

OTHERS

Oh my -

LINDA

Buy my - oh my - oh my

JOHANNES

I'll take' em! I'll take' em all! You're off the market!

LINDA

(Falling into Johannes' arm.) Sold!

MATTHEW

Just one little technical problem here if you don't mind, lady. You said you have no license?

LINDA

That's right. No license. Just Johannes' little wild honey, that's all.

MATTHEW

Officer, arrest that woman and bring her before the court.

(JOHANNES brings LINDA down front as if to face the judge)

In the first place, what is a - h'm - rutabaga?

LINDA

It's a vegetable, Your Lordship.

MATTHEW

You don't give that impression.

LINDA

What impression do I give, Your Lordship?

MATTHEW

Are you trying to corrupt this court?

LINDA

Yes, sir.

MATTHEW

Twenty years, hard! Where's the persecution? Young man, will you persecute this young lady?

JOHANNES

I'd love to, Your Rutabaga. When do I begin?

MATTHEW

Woman, have you got anything to say?

LINDA

I throw myself on the mercy of the court.

(She throws herself into Johannes' arms)

MATTHEW

I'm the court, see! Throw yourself on me - not him!

ROSE

I throw myself on the mercy of the court

(Rose throws herself into Matthew's arms)

JOHANNES

I demand justice!

MATTHEW

Remove that woman out of your pocket! And somebody scrape the court stenographer from the Judge's vest! Young man you got justice, we all got justice! Justice is when the black man digs and the white man carries the brief case! Justice is when the black woman cooks and the white woman has breakfast in bed! If you want anything extra - you pay for it!

JOHANNES

Your Honor, would you accept a little money?

MATTHEW

What! Me, sir? A judge, sir? Take money, sir? - Yes, sir! All right, scrape her off your vest, Johannes! And get out of here, all of you! We'll be with you in a minute! Wait for us.

LINDA

Where are we going to wait?

MATTHEW

Outside!

LINDA

Matthew!

MATTHEW

Outside, I said!

(They go, leaving Johannes, Absalom, and Matthew)

MATTHEW

Wake up, Absalom! Now to begin with - how do we get in?

JOHANNES

You don't have to break into the house, I tell you; he never locks his doors, day or night.

MATTHEW

Why not?

JOHANNES

I don't know. He's got some theory. He says, "If anybody wants what I've got he can come in and take it."

ABSALOM

Then why would we need a gun when we go there?

MATTHEW

Because nobody ever knows when he's going to need a gun! And you've got a gun - and we might as well have it along!

ABSALOM

But Johannes says there won't be anybody there! The white man went for a trip somewhere and the servant gets home late every night.

MATTHEW

That's the way we think it's going to be, but if somebody ... happens to come in we don't want to take chances.

LINDA

(Off stage) Matthew!

MATTHEW

(Calling) We'll be right with you, pretty! *(To Absalom)* So don't come without it. We might need it. What do you say?

ABSALOM

I think it's better without the gun.

MATTHEW

Well, I don't, see? And if you don't bring it you're not in on this at all. Look, I'm going to get to those new gold fields and I'm going on my own. Now, if you want to help us raise the money to get there, you're in; you come along. But if you're scared to carry that cheap revolver of yours you're no use to us. So bring it or stay home.

LINDA

(Off stage) Matthew!

MATTHEW

(To Johannes) We'll get rid of the girls. Think it over, country boy.

(JOHANNES and MATTHEW go out to the right. IRINA, a young and pretty Zulu girl, enters from the left. She sees Absalom and crosses to him.)

IRINA

(*Timidly*) Absalom?

ABSALOM

Irina? What do you want?

IRINA

I came to tell you something.

ABSALOM

Yes

IRINA

Something about the Parole officer

ABSALOM

What happened?

IRINA

He came asking for you. And I lied. I had to lie. I told him you were at work and things were going well. But he'll be at the factory tomorrow - and if you're not there -

ABSALOM

I don't think I will be there.

IRINA

What will happen to you, Absalom ?

ABSALOM

I won't be there. I won't be anywhere where he can find me. Ever again.

IRINA

What will happen to us? You and me?

ABSALOM

We'll live in better place than in Shanty Town.

IRINA

When?

ABSALOM

When I come back.

IRINA

Are you going away?

ABSALOM

Yes, but not from you! To get something for you and me! Look, Irina, suppose I went home with you now and went to work tomorrow. What kind of life would we have?

IRINA

Like the others.

ABSALOM

Yes, like the others. Shanty Town. Crawling with boarders and bugs and children. You'd have another baby, and we'd live in the same shack and pay our taxes and our rent and pretty soon we're sleeping four in a room. Ten in a room. Filth. Nothing. And that's our fun. That's our life forever. That's what we get. Isn't it?

IRINA

I'll keep our place clean, Absalom.

ABSALOM

Nobody can keep those places clean! And I can't stand it. I don't want it that way - I love you, Irina. I want you to have something better than that. There's a new rich strike, Irina. If you go there as a free man, not in a labor gang, you can sometimes get ahead and save something -

IRINA

(Her arms about him) I'm afraid for you. Come home with me.

ABSALOM

Wait for me, Irina. I'll come home when I have something - when I am something.

IRINA

Where will you get money to go to the mines?

ABSALOM

We'll get it.

IRINA

You won't steal again .

ABSALOM

We'll get it.

IRINA

Oh, Absalom, Absalom, if you were caught once more they could keep you from me a whole lifetime! Come home with me, Absalom, come home with me!

ABSALOM

Oh, God damn this world!

(He kisses her)

Yes, I'll come with you.

(They start out as MATTHEW, followed by JOHANNES, re-enters)

MATTHEW

Where you going, Absalom?

(He sees Irina)

It's his cook! It's his little cookie!

ABSALOM

I'm out of it.

MATTHEW

She gives the orders, huh? . . . You could be rich, you know -

ABSALOM

I'm on parole. You're not.

MATTHEW

One more black boy loose in a gold field, they'd never locate you.

ABSALOM

But even if we make money in the gold fields, we still have to come back here.

And they'll get me.

MATTHEW

Why would they? You'll change your name, you'll be wearing new clothes, you'll have cash in your pocket, you can walk up and buy a shack of your own. There won't be any Absalom Kumalo. There'll be a new man! A man - not somebody's dumb ox!

ABSALOM

He's right, Irina - wait for me. It'll take a little time, but wait for me.

IRINA

Please -

ABSALOM

Go now, Irina. I'll be back.

IRINA

Oh, Absalom

ABSALOM

Go, Irina!

IRINA

Yes, I'll go.

(She goes out)

MATTHEW

That's more like it!

JOHANNES

You know what I heard? I heard there's sometimes loose gold you can pan out of a river if you get there before the land's all fenced.

MATTHEW

Some places you can take just a kitchen pan and wash the dirt around in it and there's gold at the bottom.

JOHANNES

It's that way beyond Rigval clove.

MATTHEW

And then, by God, we'll live like men. Johannes, you bring along that machinery you talked about?

JOHANNES

I've got it where I can pick it up quick.

MATTHEW

Then pick it up, and pick up your feet! This is the best time.

(The lights dim as they go out)

SCENE 7

Irina's hut in Shanty Town. We see the interior of the hut and the city behind it.

ELAND enters, followed by STEPHEN. ELAND knocks at the door.

ELAND

(At the door)

Irina!

IRINA

(Going to the door)

Come in, sir.

(ELAND and STEPHEN enter her room)

ELAND

This is the Reverend Stephen Kumalo, Irina, Absalom's father. I have told him about you, and he wishes to see you and to see Absalom. We'll go on from here to the factory. Absalom's there, of course?

IRINA

No, sir.

ELAND

But - when I was here - two days ago -

IRINA

Yes, sir. I lied to you.

ELAND

Where is he?

IRINA

I do not know. He's gone, I don't know where.

ELAND

This is another of my failures, then. They're like water. They live together, they get a child, they engage to marry, and the next day both have forgotten.

STEPHEN

Could I be alone with her a moment?

ELAND

I'll wait.

(He goes out)

STEPHEN

Irina?

IRINA

Yes - umfundisi.

STEPHEN

Perhaps my son never spoke of me to you. We love him very much his mother and I, and I have come to Johannesburg thinking I might find him. Would you help me to find him?

IRINA

Yes, umfundisi.

STEPHEN

He has lived here with you for some time?

IRINA

Yes.

STEPHEN

You were not married in the church?

IRINA

No, umfundisi.

STEPHEN

And you are to have a child?

IRINA

Yes.

STEPHEN

Why has he left you?

IRINA

I - do not know.

STEPHEN

You distrust me?

IRINA

No, umfundisi.

STEPHEN

Do you have a family?

IRINA

I have no one.

STEPHEN

But you lived somewhere-before you met Absalom.

IRINA

I lived in Sophiatown.

STEPHEN

Alone?

IRINA

(Picking nervously at the back of a chair) Nobody lives alone in Sophiatown.

STEPHEN

You lived with your first - husband?

IRINA

Yes. With my first.

STEPHEN

How many have there been?

IRINA

Three.

STEPHEN

Three. And now you will seek a fourth.

IRINA

No. I wait for Absalom.

STEPHEN

I think you would do anything! You would go to anyone! I am an old man, Absalom's father, but you would come to me if I asked you! Anything!

IRINA

No. I would not.

STEPHEN

You think an umfundisi is not a man? What if I desired you with my whole body?
What if I desire you now?

IRINA

You?

STEPHEN

Yes. I.

IRINA

It would not be right.

STEPHEN

Was it right before? With the others?

IRINA

No. It was not right.

STEPHEN

Then why would you not be willing with me?

IRINA

I do not know.

STEPHEN

Then you would be willing

(She is silent)

Would you be willing?

IRINA

No, I do not know.

(She twists her hands, looks away)

STEPHEN

(Savagely) Speak! Tell me!

IRINA

I could be willing.

STEPHEN

Yes, you are a woman who would go to anyone.

IRINA

Why did you come here? How would I know what you think - or what you want? I don't know what power you have - or what you will do! I'm alone here. I'm to have a child, and Absalom is gone -

(She sits on the chair in a passion of crying)

and I love him! I want only Absalom. He brought me only trouble - but I love him!

STEPHEN

(After a pause) Yes, I was wrong. I should not have put you to such a test. Will you forgive me? We all do what we must do. Not what we wish but what we can.

(He crosses closer to her)

Do you forgive me?

IRINA

Yes, umfundisi.

STEPHEN

I will go now, Irina, but I will come again. I'm searching for my son. If I find him I will come to tell you. My address is on this paper.

(He hands her a slip of paper)

If he comes back to you, please let me know.

IRINA

Yes, umfundisi.

(He goes out)

IRINA

(Sings "Trouble Man")

Since you came first to me,

Dear one, glad one,

You bring all the worst to me,

Near one, sad one;

There's trouble in your coming,

Trouble in your laughter,

There's trouble in your going,

And trouble after.

Since you were near to me,

Lost one, mad one,

No other is dear to me,

Loved one, bad one;

I love your dark silence,

Love your bright laughter

I love the trouble you bring me

The crying after!

Trouble man, trouble man,

Since you've been gone,

Somehow; I manage

Living here alone;

All day long

You don't catch me weeping

But, oh, God help me

When it comes time for sleeping,

When it comes time for sleeping here alone!

Trouble man, trouble man, walking out there,

Maybe in a strange place, God knows where,

Listen to my blood and my bones here talking,

Listen to the blood in my hands and feet,

Finding you out on a far, strange street;

Finding the footprints out where you ran,

Asking, "Aren't you coming home, trouble man?"

Trouble man! Trouble man! Trouble man! Trouble man!

Saying, "All day long you don't catch me weeping,

But, oh, God help me when it comes time for sleeping,

When it comes time for sleeping here alone!"

Trouble man! Trouble man!

(The lights dim)

SCENE 8

Kitchen in Arthur Jarvis' home. As the lights come up we see a SERVANT placing dishes on the pantry shelves. We then see JOHANNES, ABSALOM, and MATHEW entering from the left, handkerchiefs tied over their faces. Johannes is carrying an iron bar, Absalom carries a revolver.

SERVANT

(Turning as he hears the noise of their entrance) What do you want?

JOHANNES

We want money and clothes!

SERVANT

It's Johannes! I know you! You cannot do such a thing

JOHANNES

Do you want to die?

SERVANT

(Running to the door and opening it) Master! Master!

(JOHANNES strikes the servant over the head with the iron bar; the SERVANT falls. ARTHUR JARVIS comes into the doorway, ABSALOM fires the revolver. ARTHUR JARVIS falls to the floor)

MATTHEW

Quick! Get out!

(The three run to the left, stop in panic, turn and run off to the right. The lights go out)

CHORUS

(Sings "Murder in Parkwold")

Murder in Parkwold!

WOMAN

(Speaking)

He was shot at night!

CHORUS

Murder in Parkwold!

WOMAN

(Speaking)

Nobody knows why or by whom!

WHITES

Murder in Parkwold!

MAN

(Speaking)

There was one shot only!

CHORUS

Murder in Parkwold!

WOMAN

(Speaking)

He went to help the servant!

CHORUS

Murder in Parkwold!

MAN

(Speaking)

The servant had called out!

WHITES

Murder in Parkwold!

CHORUS

Murder in Parkwold!

ALL

In Parkwold, among the great houses,
Among the lighted streets and the wide gardens.

WOMAN

(Speaking)

There are not enough police!

(The lights dim. The CHORUS goes out. From off-stage comes a man's voice singing)

MAN

Murder in Parkwold!

ANOTHER

(Off-stage left)

Murder in Parkwold!

(The lights come up immediately on the next scene)

SCENE 9

Arthur Jarvis' library. As the lights come up we see James Jarvis seated in a chair by a desk, motionless and alone. ELAND knocks and then enters.

ELAND

Mr. Jarvis? Mr. Jarvis?

JARVIS

(Looking up) Yes, Eland.

ELAND

I could come later if I disturb you.

JARVIS

No - no. Come in.

ELAND

I have seen the police. They have arrested Johannes Pafuri, the one who used to work in your son's house - and he has been identified.

JARVIS

By whom?

ELAND

By the servant who was struck. This boy denies being involved, but he looks very guilty.

JARVIS

I differed sharply with my son concerning our policy toward the blacks, but in this I want what he would have wanted - that the guilty feel the penalty - no man else. I had quarreled with my son, I suppose you know that. I wish we'd had a chance to patch up that quarrel.

ELAND

I'm sure it wasn't serious.

JARVIS

Yes. It was serious. Over black equality. (*He rises*) And the irony of it, that an advocate of black equality should have been killed by a Negro. There's only one course with them--a strong hand and a firm policy. They understand nothing but discipline, respect nothing else.

ELAND

There are good and bad among them.

JARVIS

Are there? At this moment I wonder.

ELAND

We can know them only by their actions. There was a man who came into this house with a pistol, came with intent to steal, and ended by committing murder. Let us find this one man and see that he is punished. Let us not blame the whole race.

JARVIS

You think he will be found?

ELAND

He will be found.

JARVIS

May he suffer as we suffer. As my wife suffers now.

ELAND

Mr. Jarvis, if you'd rather not stay in this house—

JARVIS

I want to stay here. This is where he worked. He was here when he heard the cry from the kitchen and ran to help.

ELAND

He will be a great loss to us. To our country and to me personally. As a parole officer - well, many times I'd have given up in despair except for him.

JARVIS

And yet they killed him. What would he have said about a crime like this?

ELAND

He would have said, "They live in such poverty and fear. They see no way out of their poverty or their fear and they grow desperate."

JARVIS

Yes. *(He sits)* It sounds like him.

ELAND

You wish to be here alone?

JARVIS

Yes - I wish to be here alone.

(The light dim, ELAND goes out. Of stage we hear again the cries repeated)

MAN

(Sings, off-stage right)

Murder in Parkwold!

ANOTHER

(Sings, off-stage left)

Murder in Parkwold!

SCENE 10

A street in Shanty Town. As the lights come up the street is empty. A MAN and a WOMAN run through, knocking at doors. The ZULUS come out of their houses and gather in groups around three newspapers, reading intently. There is a whistle from off right - the street empties, and the houses go dark. A POLICEMAN passes through, disappears. The people emerge from the houses, cluster again around the papers. A WHITE MAN and WOMAN enter from the right.

WOMAN

These streets are full of evil; I'm afraid

MAN

It's all right, take my arm. This is a shabby neighborhood.

WOMAN

Hush!

(The POLICEMAN re-enters from left and meets the couple center stage. The WOMAN speaks with relief)

Good evening, officer.

(The POLICEMAN and the white couple go out left. The NEGRO CHORUS sings)

1ST MAN

It is fear!

2ND MAN

It is fear!

1ST WOMAN

It is fear!

3RD MAN

It is fear!

2ND MAN

Who can enjoy the lovely land,
The seventy years,
The sun that pours down on the earth,
When there is fear in the heart?

(A group of WHITE SINGERS enters)

WHITE MAN

Who can walk quietly in the dusk?
When behind the dusk there are whispers
And reckless hands?

WHITE CHORUS

Yes, we fear them.
For they are many and we are few!

NEGRO QUARTET

Who can be content
When he dares not raise his voice?

WHITE CHORUS

It is fear!

NEGRO QUARTET

For fear of the whip, the guard, the loss of his house?

WHITE CHORUS

It is fear!

NEGRO CHORUS

For fear of the mines,

And the prison,

And the cell from which there is no return?

Yes, we fear them,

Though we are many and they are few!

WHITE

Who can lie peacefully abed

When the dark without window is troubled

By those who hate you for what you are and what you do?

NEGRO

You think you know what it is to fear or to hate?

What is there you have not taken from us except hate and fear?

Yes, we fear them, though we are many and they are few!

WHITE

Men are not safe in the streets,

Not safe in their houses.

NEGRO

It is fear!

WHITE

There are brutal murders.

NEGRO

It is fear!

WHITE

Robberies!

NEGRO

It is fear!

WHITE

Tonight again a man lies dead!

NEGRO

Yes, it is fear!

WHITE

Yes, it is fear!

NEGRO

Fear of the few for the many!

WHITE

Fear of the few for the many!

NEGRO

It is fear!

WHITE

It is fear!

NEGRO

It is fear!

WHITE

It is fear!

ALL

Fear of the few for the many,

Fear of the many for the few!

(The lights go out)

SCENE 11

The lights come up on ELAND, who is pacing up and down. STEPHEN enters from the right, crosses to Eland.

STEPHEN

I came as soon as I could, sir. You say - my son is here? Absalom is here?

ELAND

Yes.

STEPHEN

Why is he here?

ELAND

The charge is that he killed Arthur Jarvis.

STEPHEN

Absalom is accused of killing Arthur Jarvis?

ELAND

Remember, it's not proved about Absalom, and I don't believe it! It cannot be true.

STEPHEN

Let me speak to Absalom.

(The lights come up on center stage; we see Absalom sitting on a stool in a cell, facing away from the entrance)

My child, my child!

ABSALOM

(Turning)

My father!

STEPHEN

At last I have found you.

ABSALOM

Yes, my father.

STEPHEN

I have searched in every place for you – and I find you here. Why have they charged you with this terrible crime?

(There is no answer)

Answer me, my child.

(Absalom is still silent)

ABSALOM

Oh, my father, my father!

(He reaches through the bars to his father)

STEPHEN

My son, my son, if I had only come sooner! But we shall make it all well yet.

(Absalom drops his father's hands)

And when it ends you will come back to Ndotsheni and be content in our quietness. For you were a boy without guile and without anger.

ABSALOM

My father -

STEPHEN

Yes?

(Silence)

Yes?

ABSALOM

I cannot say it.

STEPHEN

I know you so well, Absalom, that I know you could not be guilty of this crime, and so you need not fear what the judge will say. You will live again at Ndotsheni.

ABSALOM

I shall never come home.

STEPHEN

Why, my son?

ABSALOM

Because I am guilty.

STEPHEN

Of what, my son?

ABSALOM

(After a pause) I killed the white man.

STEPHEN

But - this cannot be true. He was shot - in his house.

ABSALOM

Yes.

ELAND

There are three men accused in this murder, Absalom. Do you try to shield someone?

ABSALOM

No, sir. There were three of us, Matthew Kumalo and Johannes Pafuri and I. It was Johannes who struck the servant, but it was I who carried the revolver, and -

STEPHEN

And - you killed this man ?

ABSALOM

I did not mean to kill him. We thought he would not be there. Then suddenly he was there, and I was frightened - and -

ELAND

It is time for us to go.

STEPHEN

My son, I stand here, and see you, and a kind of dizziness has come over me, so that I am not sure what is real, or whether this is a true place or in a dream. Did you tell me, you, my son Absalom, that you had - had killed - a man?

ABSALOM

Yes, my father, it is true.

STEPHEN

Absalom -

ABSALOM

Yes, my father.

STEPHEN

Stay well, my child.

ABSALOM

Go well, my father.

(STEPHEN turns to go. The lights fade)

SCENE 12

The light come on Stephen in his Shanty Town lodging, where he sits at a table trying to write. ALEX, in the cot near him, wakes up.

STEPHEN

O Tixo, Tixo! O God of all lost people and of those who go toward death, tell me what to say to her. How can I say this to the mother, O my Tixo? That he has done this thing! That I cannot bring him home! That he will perhaps never, never come home!

(He sings "Lost in the Stars")

Before Lord God made the sea and the land
He held all the stars in the palm of his hand,
And they ran through his fingers like grains of sand,
And one little star fell alone.

Then the Lord God hunted through the wide night air
For the little dark star on the wind down there -
And he stated and promised he'd take special care
So it wouldn't get lost again.

Now a man don't mind if the stars grow dim
And the clouds blow over and darken him,
So long as the Lord God's watching over them,
Keeping track how it all goes on.

But I've been walking through the night and the day
Till my eyes get weary and my head turns grey,
And sometimes it seems maybe God's gone away,
Forgetting the promise that we heard him say -
And we're lost out here in the stars -
Little stars, big stars,

Blowing through the night,
And we're lost out here in the stars.

STEPHEN, CHORUS

Little stars,
Big stars,
Blowing through the night,
And we're lost out here in the stars.

CURTAIN

ACT 2

SCENE 1

The curtain goes up on a dark and bare stage. The CHORUS enters in the dark. The lights come up after the music has begun.

LEADER, CHORUS

(Singing, "The Wild Justice")

Have you fished for a fixed star

 With the lines of its light?

Have you dipped the moon from the sea

 With the cup of night?

Have you caught the rain's bow in a pool

 And shut it in?

Go hunt the wild justice down

 To walk with men.

Have you plotted the high cold course of a heron's flying,

Or the thought of an old man dying,

Or the covered labyrinth of

Why you love where you love?

Or, if one love you,

Why your love is true

Only for a little, then, Tease the wild justice down to dwell with men.

When the first judge sat in his place

And the murderer held his breath

With fear of death in his face,

Fear of death for death,

And all that could be said, for and against, was said,

And the books were balanced, and two, not one, were dead,
Was justice caught in this net?
Not yet, no, not quite yet, not yet.

No, tug first at the fixed star
On the lines of its light,
Sieve the moon up out of the sea
With the black seine of night,
Snare first the rain's bow in a pool
And close it in.

The wild justice is not found
In the haunts of men.

The wild justice is not found in the haunts of men!

*(The lights come up on John's tobacco shop. John stands behind the counter,
Stephen sits before him.)*

JOHN

When you go before a judge you have to have a lawyer. Now a lawyer's paid to lie and make it sound like the truth. I'm getting a good lawyer. A white man's lawyer. And he'll do all he can for all three. There's no use trying to defend one alone - they all have to stick together in this. The fact is there's not much evidence against them.

STEPHEN

There's an identification, by the servant.

JOHN

Well, when our lawyer gets through with that, maybe not. You see, the only one the servant says he identified is Johannes Pafuri. He says he knew him because of his eyes. With the rest of his face covered it would be hard to be sure it was Johannes, wouldn't it? Well, the lawyer will bring that up. And that'll shake the identification. And there's no other evidence against them, positively none.

STEPHEN

Except that - they were there. They will have to say that they were there.

JOHN

Why?

STEPHEN

Because it is the truth.

JOHN

The truth! Why would they tell the truth in a court? Do they want to get themselves hanged? No, if they all say they know nothing about it, they'll get off.

STEPHEN

But in a court there is a plea - guilty or not guilty.

JOHN

Yes. They'll plead not guilty. Everybody does.

STEPHEN

But Absalom says he will plead guilty.

JOHN

Good God! Why?

STEPHEN

Because he is guilty.

JOHN

Will he tell them Matthew was there - and Johannes?

STEPHEN

Yes.

JOHN

Well - that changes everything. You better fix that, brother, and fix it fast, or I give you my word we'll fix Absalom. Talk to him, brother.

STEPHEN

I have. He will plead guilty.

JOHN

A man who pleads guilty to murder receives the punishment of the first degree and that's hanging by your neck with a sack over your head. They don't fool about that.

STEPHEN

He has already made a confession. He has admitted the whole charge.

JOHN

He can deny that. He can say he was out of his mind - anything.

STEPHEN

And Matthew and Johannes will plead not guilty?

JOHN

Of course they will. That's part of the game. This is what happens in a court, Stephen. The defendant may be guilty as hell but he goes in and pleads not guilty and his lawyer tries to make the evidence look as if he's not guilty. The prosecution may be weak as hell but it goes in and tries to make things look as if the defendant's guilty as a hyena. Each one tries to foul up the witnesses on the other side and make his own witnesses look good. So talk to him, Stephen, talk

to him as you never talked to anybody before. He doesn't want to die - and you don't want him to die. If you want him to live, tell him to plead not guilty.

(The lights dim. JOHN goes out. Stephen is left musing alone)

STEPHEN

(Sings "The Soliloquy")

What have I come to here,
At this crossing of paths?
Must he tell a lie and live -
Or speak truth and die?
And, if this is so,
What can I say to my son?
O Tixo, Tixo, help me!

Often when he was young
I have come to him and said,
"Speak truly, evade nothing, what you have done
Let it be on your head."

And he heeded me not at all,
Like rain he ran through my hands,
Concealing, as a boy will, taking what was not his,
Evading commands.

For he seemed to hear none of my words;
Turning, shifting, he ran
Through a tangle of nights and days,
Till he was lost to my sight, and ran far into evil
And evil ways,
And he was stricken -
And struck back,
And he loved, and he was desperate with love and fear and anger,

And at last he came

To this -

O God of the humble and the broken -

O God of those who have nothing, nothing, nothing -

To this -

To the death of a man!

To the death of a man!

A man he had given to death.

Then my words came back to him,

And he said, "I shall do no more evil, tell no more untruth;

I shall keep my father's ways, and remember them."

And can I go to him now

And say, "My son, take care,

Tell no truth in this court, lest it go ill with you here;

Keep to the rules, beware"?

And yet if I say again,

"It shall not profit a man If he gain the whole world and lose his own soul,"

I shall lose Absalom then.

I shall lose Absalom then.

(He speaks)

I must find some other way -

Some other hope.

My son did not mean to kill his son,

Did not mean to kill.

(He sings)

O Tixo, Tixo, help me!

(He speaks)

To whom can I appeal?

(He sings)

O Tixo, Tixo, help me!

(He speaks)

Where can I turn now?

(He sings)

O Tixo, Tixo, help me!

(The lights dim out, and come up on the door of a well-kept residence in Johannesburg, STEPHEN goes to the door, knocks, gets no answer, and starts to go. JAMES JARVIS opens the door.)

JARVIS

Yes? Did you knock?

STEPHEN

I - I'm sorry, sir. I - expected a servant to answer - I -

JARVIS

There are no servants here today, umfundisi. Did you wish to see one of them?

STEPHEN

No, umfundisi. I wished to see you.

JARVIS

Yes?

STEPHEN

I -

(His body fails him. His cane clatters to the ground and he sits on the step. JARVIS comes down to him)

Forgive me, umnumzana.

(His hat lies beside him, he reaches for it, leaves it)

JARVIS

Are you ill, umfundisi?

(STEPHEN doesn't answer, he is trembling, looking at the ground; finally he looks up and speaks)

STEPHEN

Forgive me - I - shall recover.

JARVIS

Do you wish water? Or food, perhaps? Are you hungry?

(STEPHEN reaches for his cane, with another effort he gets to his feet. JARVIS stands watching him, finally picks up his battered old hat and hands it to him)

STEPHEN

Thank you, sir. I am sorry. I shall go now.

JARVIS

But you said you wished to see me.

STEPHEN

Yes, sir.

JARVIS

Well, then?

STEPHEN

I have no words to say it.

JARVIS

You are in fear of me. I do not know why.

STEPHEN

I cannot tell it, unnumzana.

JARVIS

I wish to help whenever I can. Is it so heavy a thing?

STEPHEN

It is the heaviest thing of all my years.

JARVIS

You need not be afraid. I try to be just.

STEPHEN

Umnumzana - this thing that is the heaviest thing of all my years - it is also the heaviest thing of all your years.

JARVIS

You can mean only one thing. But I still do not understand.

STEPHEN

(Slowly)

It was my son that killed your son.

(JARVIS turns and walks away - then comes back to Stephen)

JARVIS

Why did you come?

STEPHEN

There were three who went to rob the house, umnumzana. Two of them have lied and said they were not there. My son has told truth, that he was there, that he fired the revolver that killed your son. He will die for this truth telling, the lawyer thinks.

JARVIS

Not for his truth telling.

STEPHEN

Umnumzana, could you intercede for him?

JARVIS

One does not seek to influence a court.

STEPHEN

He did not mean to kill. And he tells truth. Is there not a core of good in him who tells truth?

JARVIS

My son left his doors always open. He trusted his fellow men. And for this your son killed him.

STEPHEN

He never meant to kill. But the revolver was in his hand and he heard someone coming and was frightened.

JARVIS

Have you thought what it is for me that my son is dead?

STEPHEN

I have tried. I have thought of - my son -

JARVIS

Have you thought what it is for his mother? His mother will die of this. It's in her face.

STEPHEN

I know. I can see the face of my son's mother. Forgive me, unnumzana - I know what this is to you. But--if he were only to live - even shut up - even far from us. I think he did not mean evil, unnumzana. And to die - when he is loved -

JARVIS

I know about death.

STEPHEN

If I could take him back to his home, unnumzana! Away from Johannesburg. He grew up in Ndotsheni. Among the hills. There was no evil in him then. From our house we could see up through the clove to your great house. You were kind to the folk who worked the little farms. Be kind again. A terrible thing has befallen my people. We are lost. My son was lost. This would not have happened if there were not the gold mines, and the great city your people have built, and the little hope we have.

JARVIS

Umfundisi, there are two races in South Africa. One is capable of mastery and self-control - the other is not. One is born to govern, the other to be governed. One is capable of culture and the arts of civilization - the other is not. The difference between us is greater than that I live on a hill and you live in the valley. If my son had killed your son I would not have come to you for mercy. Nor to the judge. Whether it were my son or yours, I would have said, let him answer the law.

STEPHEN

You - you could save him -

JARVIS

You have neither heard nor understood me! There is only a handful of whites in South Africa to control the great tide of blacks - and the blacks have no control of their own! They have no mind to it - and no mind for it! It's their way to run and evade and lie and strike down in the dark! Those who will not keep order must be kept in order! Those who lift their hands to kill must know that the penalty for death is death!

STEPHEN

(Humbly) Umnumzana - I read my Testament carefully. Jesus has not said this.

JARVIS

No, he has not, but where there is government it's true. Have you more to say to me?

STEPHEN

No, umnumzana.

(JARVIS turns to go in. The lights dim)

SCENE 2

The lights come up on Irina's hut. We see IRINA hanging some clothes on a clothesline.

IRINA

(Sings "Stay Well")

If I tell truth to you,

My love, my own,

Grief is your gift to me,

Grief alone,

Wild passion at midnight,

Wild anger at dawn,

Yet when you're absent

I weep you gone.

Stay well, O keeper of my love,

Go well, throughout all your days,

Your star be my luckiest star above

Your ways the luckiest ways.

Since unto you my one love is given,

And since with you it will remain,

Though you bring fear of hell, despair of heaven,

Stay well, come well to my door again.

(STEPHEN enters from the left, knocks and then calls)

STEPHEN

Irina ?

IRINA

Yes?

STEPHEN

The trial will begin tomorrow. Do you wish to be there?

IRINA

He might go free?

STEPHEN

I wish I could say yes. He says he will plead guilty. He says he will speak the truth. If he does I think he will stay in the prison. For a long time.

IRINA

For a long time.

STEPHEN

For a very long time.

IRINA

So that I will never see him?

STEPHEN

It may be many years.

IRINA

Many years.

STEPHEN

Would you wait for him-- if it were so long?

IRINA

Yes, umfundisi. I would wait.

STEPHEN

He has asked me would you wish to marry him in the prison - so that your child will have his name?

IRINA

Yes.

STEPHEN

He wishes it.

IRINA

(Running to him) Umfundisi -

STEPHEN

Yes?

IRINA

Will they kill him?

STEPHEN

It's not known yet.

IRINA

I want him to live! I want him to come back to me!

STEPHEN

Even if it's many years .

IRINA

Yes.

STEPHEN

And you will wait?

IRINA

Yes.

STEPHEN

Even if he does not come back at all?

IRINA

I will still wait.

STEPHEN

(Stroking her hair) Stay well, Irina.

IRINA

Go well, my father.

(STEPHEN goes out. IRINA sings " Stay Well")

When you have fled from me,

My love, my own,

I've waited quietly,

Here alone.

Some comeback at midnight,

Or come back at dawn,

Now that you're absent

I weep you gone.

Go well, though wild the road and far

Stay well through darkening days,

Your star be still my luckiest star,

Your ways the luckiest ways,

Though into storm your lone bark be driven,

Though my eyes ache for you in vain,

Though you bring fear at dawn, despair at even,
Stay well, come well to my door again.

(The lights dim)

SCENE 3

A courtroom. The judge's bench is at the left; the judge is seated. Absalom and Matthew are in the prisoner's dock. In the courtroom are all those we have seen who are concerned with this case or related to the prisoners: Irina, Linda, John, Stephen, the servant, and many Zulu spectators. James Jarvis, Eland, and a number of whites sit on the opposite side of the courtroom. As the lights come up Johannes Pafuri is in the witness, box, center, and Burton, the defense lawyer, is questioning him.

BURTON

Johannes, you have been identified as one of three masked men who entered the kitchen of Arthur Jarvis on October eighth, between eleven and twelve. Were you there at that time?

JOHANNES

No, sir.

BURTON

Where were you?

JOHANNES

At Mrs. Ndela's house, in End Street.

BURTON

How do you know you were there at eleven?

JOHANNES

Because we had been dancing at a place in High Street till nearly eleven, and at eleven we were at Mrs. Ndela's.

BURTON

Who else was there?

JOHANNES

Matthew Kumalo was there, and the girls Linda and Rose.

BURTON

The witness is excused. Will Matthew Kumalo take the stand?

(MATTHEW KUMALO comes down into the witness box)

BURTON

Matthew Kumalo, you are accused of being one of three masked men who entered the kitchen of Arthur Jarvis on October eighth, between eleven and twelve. Were you there at that time?

MATTHEW

No, sir.

BURTON

Where were you?

MATTHEW

At Mrs. Ndela's, in End Street.

BURTON

You are sure of the time?

MATTHEW

Yes, sir. We had been dancing at the place in High Street, and when we came to Mrs. Ndela's she said, "You are late, but come in," and we saw that it was near eleven.

BURTON

Do you know Absalom Kumalo?

MATTHEW

Yes, sir. He is the son of my father's brother.

BURTON

Was he with you on this evening?

MATTHEW

No, sir.

BURTON

Do you know where he was?

MATTHEW

No, sir.

BURTON

The witness is excused for the moment.

(MATTHEW steps back to the bench and sits. BURTON crosses to the judge)

Your Honor, I am about to call the third defendant, Absalom Kumalo.

JUDGE

You may proceed.

BURTON

Absalom Kumalo, will take the stand.

(ABSALOM does so)

Absalom Kumalo, you are accused of being one of three masked men who entered the kitchen of Arthur Jarvis on October eighth, between eleven and twelve in the evening. Were you there at that time?

ABSALOM

Yes, sir.

BURTON

Who were the two masked men with you?

ABSALOM

Matthew Kumalo and Johannes Pafuri.

BURTON

What was your purpose in going there?

ABSALOM

To steal something from the house.

BURTON

Why did you choose this day?

ABSALOM

Because Johannes said the house would be empty at that time.

BURTON

This same Johannes Pafuri here?

ABSALOM

Yes, sir.

BURTON

When did you three go to this house?

ABSALOM

It was after eleven at night.

BURTON

And then?

ABSALOM

We went into the kitchen and there was a servant there.

BURTON

This man?

ABSALOM

Yes, that is the man.

BURTON

Tell the court what happened.

ABSALOM

This man was afraid. He saw my revolver. He said, "What do you want?" Johannes said, "We want money and clothes." This man said, "You cannot do such a thing." Johannes said, "Do you want to die?" Then this man called out, "Master! Master!" and Johannes struck him over the head with the iron bar.

BURTON

And then?

ABSALOM

Then a white man came into the doorway.

BURTON

And then?

ABSALOM

I was frightened. I fired the revolver.

BURTON

And then?

ABSALOM

The white man fell.

BURTON

And then?

ABSALOM

Matthew said, "We must go." So we all went quickly.

BURTON

Where did you go?

ABSALOM

I wandered about. I wanted to find a place to hide.

JUDGE

I have a question to ask, Mr. Burton.

BURTON

Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE

Why did you carry a revolver?

ABSALOM

It was to frighten the servant of the house.

JUDGE

Where did you get this revolver?

ABSALOM

I bought it from a man.

JUDGE

Was this revolver loaded when you bought it?

ABSALOM

It had two bullets in it.

JUDGE

How many bullets were in it when you went to this house?

ABSALOM

One.

JUDGE

What happened to the other?

ABSALOM

I took the revolver out into the hills and fired it.

JUDGE

What did you fire at?

ABSALOM

I fired at a tree.

JUDGE

Did you hit this tree?

ABSALOM

Yes, I hit it.

JUDGE

And when Matthew Kumalo, and Johannes Pafuri say they were not with you at the time of the murder they are lying?

ABSALOM

Yes, they are lying.

JUDGE

Do you know where they went after the crime?

ABSALOM

No, I do not know.

JUDGE

Where did you go?

ABSALOM

I went to a plantation and buried the revolver.

JUDGE

And what did you do next?

ABSALOM

I prayed there.

JUDGE

What did you pray there?

ABSALOM

I prayed for forgiveness.

JUDGE

How did the police find you?

ABSALOM

Johannes Pafuri brought them to where I was.

JUDGE

And what did you tell them?

ABSALOM

I told them it was not Johannes who had killed the white man, it was I myself.

JUDGE

And how was the revolver found?

ABSALOM

I told the police where to find it.

JUDGE

And every word you have said is true?

ABSALOM

Every word is true.

JUDGE

There is no lie in it?

ABSALOM

There is no lie in it, for I said to myself, I shall not lie any more, all the rest of my days, nor do anything more that is evil.

JUDGE

In fact, you repented.

ABSALOM

Yes, I repented.

JUDGE

Because you were in trouble

ABSALOM

Yes, because I was in trouble.

JUDGE

Did you have any other reason for repenting?

ABSALOM

No, I had no other reason.

JUDGE

I have no further questions, Mr. Burton.

BURTON

The witness is dismissed.

(The lights dim on the courtroom, and the CHORUS comes forward)

CHORUS

(Sings)

And here again, in this place,
A man who has killed takes breath
With the fear of death in his face,
Fear of death for death,
And are the terms of justice clearly met?
Not yet, no, not quite yet.

(The courtroom lights come up again. The spectators are standing; the JUDGE sits; they all sit except the three boys who are awaiting sentence.)

JUDGE

The evidence in this case is in many ways inconclusive, unsatisfactory, and fragmentary. The alibis offered by Matthew and Johannes are obviously doubtful. And yet, after long and thoughtful consideration I have come to the conclusion that the guilt of Matthew and Johannes is not sufficiently established.

(MATTHEW and JOHANNES look at each other, puzzled) There remains the case against Absalom Kumalo. No reason has been offered why he should confess to a deed he did not commit, and his own insistence that he had no intention to kill operates to validate the confession itself. Matthew Kumalo and Johannes Pafuri, you are discharged and may step down.

(They do so, move over right quietly; LINDA and ROSE rise and join them)

Absalom Kumalo, have you anything to say before I pronounce the sentence?

ABSALOM

I have only this to say, that I killed this man, but I did not mean to kill him, only I was afraid.

JUDGE

Absalom Kumalo,

(The spectators lean toward the JUDGE, who puts a little black cap on his head)

I sentence you to be returned to custody, and to be hanged by the neck until you are dead. And may the Lord have mercy on your soul.

(IRINA rises, then STEPHEN. JARVIS gets up and crosses the courtroom. As he does so he is met by STEPHEN. JARVIS steps back to let STEPHEN past. He goes to Absalom who stands stunned and motionless.)

SCENE 4

The prison cell. The lights come up on the chorus.

CHORUS

(Sings "Cry, the Beloved Country")

Cry, the beloved country,
Cry, the beloved land,
the wasted childhood,
the wasted youth, the wasted man!
Cry, the broken tribes, and the broken hills,
and the right and wrong forsaken,
the greed that destroys us,
the birds that cry no more
Cry, the beloved country,
Cry, the lost tribe, the lost son.

(The CHORUS parts, revealing the prison cell. Absalom is in the cell, Irina near him. STEPHEN is reading the marriage service)

STEPHEN

--to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honour, and keep him, and forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?

IRINA

I will.

WOMAN

(Sings)

Cry, the unborn son,
the inheritor of our fear,
let him not laugh too gladly in the water of the clove,

nor stand too silent when the setting sun makes the veld red with fire.

STEPHEN

And now you are man and wife, my son, and my daughter. Irina will come with me to Ndotsheni, Absalom.

ABSALOM

I am glad, my father.

STEPHEN

We shall care for your child as if it were our own.

ABSALOM

I thank you, my father.

STEPHEN

Will you wish to say good-bye to Irina?

ABSALOM

There is no way to say good-bye. My father, I must go to--Pretoria.

STEPHEN

There will be an appeal.

ABSALOM

But it will not help. I am afraid. I am afraid of the hanging.

STEPHEN

Be of courage, my son.

ABSALOM

It's no help to be of courage! O Tixo, Tixo, I am afraid of the rope and the hanging!

(IRINA kneels)

GUARD

You must go now,

ABSALOM

Where I go there will be no wife or child or father or mother! There is no food taken or given! And no marriage! Where I go! O Tixo, Tixo!

CHORUS

(Sings)

Cry, the unborn son,
fatherless,
let him not be moved by the song of the bird,
nor give his heart to a mountain
nor to a valley!

Cry, the beloved country!
Cry, the lost son,
the lost tribe -
the lost -
The great red hills stand desolate,
and the earth has torn away like flesh.
These are the valleys
Of old men and old women,
of mothers and children.

WOMAN

(Sings)

Cry, the beloved land.

(The lights dim)

SCENE 5

As the lights come up we see Alex playing with a little Negro boy and girl. There is a small handmade toy between them. We can see the interior of the chapel center stage.

ALEX

(Sings "Big Mole")

Big Mole was a digger of the fastest kind;
He'd dig in the earth like you think in your mind;
When Big Mole came to the side of a hill
Instead of going over he'd start in to drill.
He promised his mother a well in the town
And he brought boiling water from a thousand feet down!

Down, down, down, down,
Three mile, four mile, five mile down;
He can go through rock, he can go through coal;
Whenever you come to an oversize hole
Down at the bottom is Big Black Mole!
Big Black Mole, Big Black Mole!

When Mole was a younker they showed him a mine;
He said, "I like the idea fine,
Let me have that hose, let me have that drill."
If they hadn't shut it off he'd be boring still!
And down at the bottom he chunked all around
Till he chunked out a city six mile in the ground!

Down, down, down, down,
Three mile, four mile, five mile down;
You can bet your pants, you can bet your soul,

Whenever you come to a main-size hole
Down at the bottom is Big Black Mole!
Big Black Mole! Big Black Mole!

Big Mole had a girl who was small and sweet;
He promised her diamonds for her hands and feet;
He dug so deep and he dug so well,
He broke right into the ceiling of hell,
And he looked the old devil spang in the eye,
And he said, "I'm not coming back here till I die!"

(EDWARD JARVIS enters and stands listening)

ALEX

(Sings)

Down, down, down, down,
Three mile, four mile, five mile down;
He can go through rock, he can go through coal;
Whenever you come to a sure-enough hole,
Down at the bottom is Big Black Mole!
Big Black Mole, Big Black Mole, Big Black Mole!

EDWARD

Hi, there

ALEX

Hi.

(The other two CHILDREN get up and run off to the right)

EDWARD

I'm waiting for my grandfather now. We live up there in the hills.

ALEX

I know, I've seen you riding around up there. On a bicycle.

EDWARD

Sometimes I ride a bicycle, sometimes a horse. I can fall off both just fine.

(They laugh again) What's your name?

ALEX

Alex.

EDWARD

Mine's Edward. I guess your uncle's the umfundisi here.

ALEX

Yes, he is.

EDWARD

I know a lot of Zulu words. My father taught them to me. *Ingeli* is English.

ALEX

That's right.

EDWARD

What's the word for water?

ALEX

Amanzi

EDWARD

And how do you say to die?

ALEX

Siyafa.

EDWARD

The young *Ingeli siyafa* for *amanzi* – is that right?

ALEX

You mean the English boy is dying for water?

EDWARD

Uh-huh. I am, too.

(JAMES JARVIS enters from the left)

JARVIS

We're going now, Edward.

EDWARD

Yes, Grandfather.

(He rises. ALEX rises)

JARVIS

The car's at the market.

ALEX

(Afraid of Jarvis.) I have to go.

(He runs to the right)

EDWARD

Good-bye, Alex!

ALEX

(Stopping) Good-bye Edward!

(He runs off behind the chapel, waves to EDWARD, who also waves farewell)

JARVIS

Edward, when you are a man, you will live your own life. You will live as you please to live. But while you live with me, never let me see this again.

EDWARD

You mean talking with this boy?

JARVIS

I mean that.

EDWARD

But I like him. He's bright and he's nice.

JARVIS

There are not many rules in my house. I am lax in many ways, and not easily angered.

(He sits – his head in his hand. EDWARD sits beside him)

I have lost so much that I don't know why I go on living, or what's worth saving. I don't know any more why any man should do his tasks or work for gain or love his child. I don't know why any child should obey - or whether good will come of it or evil. But I do know this; there are some things that I cannot bear to look on.

(We hear organ music. The lights come up in the chapel. PARISHIONERS come in from the right and take their places in the chapel. STEPHEN and GRACE enter. Stephen stands before the pulpit. Jarvis still sits on the step)

EDWARD

Aren't we going, Grandfather?

JARVIS

We'll wait a moment.

STEPHEN

(Speaking from the pulpit) My son Absalom will die tomorrow morning on the scaffold for a murder to which he confessed, and of which he was guilty. You all know of this. The man he killed was known to you, too. He was Arthur Jarvis. He was a friend of our race, a friend of all men. And my son--killed him. My people, if I stay here now I become a hindrance to you, and not a help. I must go.

VOICES

You are our umfundisi. We shall understand no one. We shall want no other one. We shall be lost without you.

ALL

(In a murmur) Yes, yes.

STEPHEN

When I began to serve my God and my church I had a sure faith that the God of our world ordered things well for men. I had a sure faith that though there was good and evil I knew which was good and God knew it-- and that men were better in their heart for choosing good and not evil. Something has shaken this in me. I am not sure of my faith. I am lost. I am not sure now. I am not sure that we are not all lost. And a leader should not be lost. He should know the way, and so I resign my place.

MCRAE

Umfundisi, if you have lost your faith, I too have lost my faith.

VOICE

You have done only good.

STEPHEN

I don't know.

VOICE

You have always helped us.

ALL

Please stay!

STEPHEN

If I keep my place, and this dark thing has happened to my son, little by little the few who still worship here will shrink away, the rusty roof will leak more, the floor will break till there is none, the windows will go--they will be thrown at and broken and will go – and the unpainted sides of this chapel I have loved will stand empty, roofless-- and I shall live in despair beside it, knowing that I have done this thing to you and to my church by remaining.

VOICES

(spoken – divided between people – every two or three lines)

If the roof should rust till there is no roof

Still I will come and worship here.

If you are here,

even if the floor goes down

and the alter falls among the joints.

I will come here and worship

if you speak here.

If there is not church

and we have nothing

I will still come and worship

God in this barren place
if you worship with me.
Yes that is all true.

ALL

Yes.

VOICES

For what other choice have we?
Only to run mad
And break and destroy.
Where will my faith go if you go?

VILLAGER

(Sings "A Bird of Passage")

Lord of the heart, look down upon
Our earthly pilgrimage,
Look down upon us where we walk
From bright dawn to old age,
Give light not shed by any sun.

PARISHIONERS

Lord of the heart

MAN

Not read on any page.

CHORUS

Lord of the heart!

A bird of passage out of night
Flies in at a lighted door,
Flies through and on in its darkened flight

And then is seen no more.

(STEPHEN stands for a moment at the pulpit, then turns and goes out.)

This is the life of men on earth:
Out of darkness we come at birth
Into a lamplit room, and then

EDWARD

(Speaking through the music)

What is it, Grandfather?

CHORUS

(Sings)

Go forward into dark again,
Go forward into dark again.

(The lights dim)

SCENE 6

CHORUS

Four o'clock, it will soon be four.

IRINA

(coming in) Umfundisi.

STEPHEN

Yes, Irina?

IRINA

She has fallen asleep. She meant to sit and watch with you at this hour, and she has been awake until only now – but now she sleeps.

STEPHEN

We won't wake her, Irina. If she sleeps and the hour goes past, then at least it will be past.

IRINA

Even in her sleep she reaches for my hand.

STEPHEN

Sit beside her, Irina, if you can.

IRINA

Yes, I can *(She starts to go. Stephen stops her)*

STEPHEN

My daughter, I'm glad he found you and not some other.

IRINA

I'm glad he found me, my father
(she goes back into the kitchen)

LEADER

(Sings)
Why do they choose the morning,
The morning, when men sleep sound?

CHORUS

Four o'clock,
It will soon be four.

STEPHEN

(Speaks) If they would kill me instead
Absalom would make a good man.
But it will never be.
He is waiting now.

(JARVIS enters from left, crosses to door, knocks. STEPHEN, almost unaware of what he is doing, answers)

JARVIS

(In the doorway) I hope you will forgive me for coming at this hour, umfundisi.

STEPHEN

(Rising) Why are you here?

JARVIS

I stood outside your church yesterday and heard what you said to your people, and what they said to you. I want you to know that I will help you with the roof

and with the painting and with whatever must be done. I will do whatever my son would have done.

STEPHEN

Mr. Jarvis. (*He looks at the clock*) It's hard for me to think of the church. In a quarter of an hour my son is to die.

JARVIS

I know my presence pains you. I know I am the last man in the world you wish to see. And you – may I stay for a moment?

STEPHEN

If you wish.

JARVIS

Stephen Kumalo, my wife is dead. My son is dead. I have thought many times I would be better dead. I live in a house with a child who knows me only as an old man. I thought myself alone in this desolation that used to be my home. But when I heard you yesterday I knew that your grief and mine were the same. I know now that of all the men who live near this great valley you are the one I would want for a friend.

STEPHEN

If you were seen to touch my hand, this town, this whole valley, would turn against you.

JARVIS

I have finished with that. I haven't come here lightly. I shall take your hand wherever I like, before whom I like. I shall come and worship in your church if I wish to worship.

STEPHEN

I shall be gone. I shall never see this place again, nor the path where Absalom ran to meet me – nor the hills where he played and came late to supper – nor the room where he slept – never, never again.

JARVIS

You must stay in Ndotsheni.

STEPHEN

If I stayed, do you know what I would preach here? That good can come from evil, and evil from good! That no man knows surely what is evil or what is good! That if there is a God He is hidden and has not spoken to men! That we are all lost here, black and white, rich and poor, the fools and the wise! Lost and hopeless and condemned on this rock that goes 'round the sun without meaning!

JARVIS

Not hopeless, Stephen, and not without meaning. For even out of the horror of this crime some things have come that are gain and not loss. My son's words to me and my understanding of my son. And your words in the chapel, and my understanding of those words - and your son's face in the courtroom when he said he would not lie any more or do any evil. I shall never forget that. I shall devote myself, my time, my energy, my talents, to the service of South Africa. I shall no longer ask myself if this or that is expedient, but only if it is right. I shall do this, not because I am noble or unselfish, but because life slips away, and because I need for the rest of my journey a star that will not play false to me, a compass that will not lie. I am lost when I ask if this is safe, I am lost when I ask if men, white men or black men, Englishmen, or Afrikaners, Gentiles or Jews, will approve. Therefore I shall try to do what is right, and to speak what is true. Stay in Ndotsheni, Stephen, stay with those who cried out to you in the chapel. You have something to give them that nobody else can give them. And you can be proud of Absalom.

STEPHEN

And he is forgiven, and I am forgiven?

JARVIS

Let us forgive each other.

(The clock strikes four. STEPHEN sits and buries his head in his hands. JARVIS goes to him, puts an arm around him.)

CHORUS

(Sings)

Cry the beloved country,
Cry the beloved land,
Cry the lost son, the lost tribe, the lost

LEADER

(Sings)

Cry the beloved land

CHORUS

(Sings)

These are the valleys
Of old men and old women,
Of mothers and children

SOPRANO SOLO

(Sings)

Cry the beloved land.

CURTAIN

