



# GOLDSBORO

*An American myth in two acts*  
By Nat Cassidy

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“There is no deformity but in monstrosity; wherein notwithstanding, there is a kind of Beauty. Nature so ingeniously contriving the irregular parts, as they become sometimes more remarkable than the principal Fabrick.”

—Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, 1642

“With the advent of this weather bats began to stir from somewhere deep in the cave. Ballard lying on his pallet by the fire one evening saw them come from the dark of the tunnel and ascend through the hole overhead fluttering wildly in the ash and smoke like souls rising from hades. When they were gone he watched the hordes of cold stars sprawled across the smokehole and wondered what stuff they were made of, or himself.”

—Cormac McCarthy, *Child of God*, 1973

"The characters in William Inge's plays are essentially good: They're nice people, but they don't always know which fork to use or how to dress for special functions, and they certainly have no comfort in loving or being loved. They cannot, almost to a person, handle their sexual desires and needs. They are lost in a way that Tennessee's characters are not. Tennessee's characters are better, I think, at faking their way through social occasions--as Tennessee did. Tennessee's characters are often not good people: Quite often they're evil or mean or greedy. The sexual problems of a Williams character are driven, rape-like, deep within the person and a fracturing begins. Dysfunction reigns. Inge's characters run free and wild across the flat landscape, fleeing their passions or running toward them, and they are shot down, as if they were wild game in escape, and die in the pursuit of surcease either through consummation or withdrawal. Maybe it has to do with access to the sun. Tennessee grew up in the sultry South and Bill had the sun, like the sermon of an angry God, bearing down on him."

—Elia Kazan on William Inge.

“Let’s all get up and dance to a song that was a hit before your mother was born. Though she was born a long, long time ago, your mother should know. Oh, your mother should know.”

—Lennon/ McCartney, 1967

—Dedicated with love to my parents—

## CHARACTERS

Jonathan Malory  
Daniel Finch

### *The Inge Family.*

Pa  
Syzygy  
Sarkic  
Puddle  
Sophia

The Wanderer  
Highway Patrolman

## Setting

With the exception of the two act-initiating monologues, the entirety of the play takes place inside the diner in which the Inge family has made their home. It should look like a typical diner from the 40s, tables and booths, windows on the US wall (behind which we can see the desert), a counter on the SL side, etc. The diner is completely filled with junk: knickknacks, filth, detritus, cacti, general insanity (have fun, set dresser), and should look dingy and rundown as hell. Think Rob Zombie's version of *Bus Stop*. The electric and/ or fluorescent lights hanging from the ceiling, however, should work (we find out how later). An American flag from the 40s hanging up in one of the corners would be a nice touch. To my mind, the ideal layout would be the door in/ out of the diner DSR, a door to what used to be the stock room and is now the hallway to everyone's individual rooms somewhere around USC, and a door to the kitchen area behind the counter. An ideal playing space would have either curtains and an apron to hide the set until it's revealed in the script, or at least a separate area for the actor to talk while the stage stays dark.

## A note to the actors

Despite the depravity and vulgarity that follows, it's important to keep in mind that all of these characters (with the exception of the Patrolman) should be played as genuinely as can be. There's an almost endearing naïvety to this family, as they exist outside of the influence of our own social norms. It's incredibly important not to comment or editorialize what happens from our own perspective. For just an example, there should be no judgment played regarding the romance between brother and sister—to them, it's not incest, it's just two young people (the only young people they've ever known) who realize they might be falling in love. I've not been too subtle, what with our main family's surname, with the playwright whom I had the most in mind while writing this script, and it's that kind of early 1950s-esque innocence that is a crucial element to the story. We will get their relative crudeness (even ugliness, at times) thanks to their exterior appearances. What this script attempts to do is to find the humanity and universality behind their mutations.  
Also, corpse fucking.

**ACT ONE**  
**Scene One**

*Darkness. We hear "Paradise" by the Ronettes. It is swallowed by static. Lights rise on a bare apron in front of a closed curtain. A well-dressed, charismatic young man, mid-30s, in a smart suit, stands before us.*

**JONATHAN**

It's like something out of a myth!

Once. There was a prince of a guy named Jonathan Michael Malory. And he was a good guy—some might say a little cocky—but hard working, a decent writer, and handsome as the dick is long. He was a member of a vaunted race whose numbers were suddenly dying out as the world moved on: what was once called a Newspaper Reporter. He was proud. His profession dated back all the way to cavemen drawing on walls. He was on the front lines of creating his own culture's mythology. But myths these days were hard to come by ... or maybe too easy—maybe *that* was the problem.

Now, this noble profession was in trouble, due a complicated monster known as the Internet. And our hero was in trouble, too. For more personal reasons. But one day ... he finds himself standing in his editor's office, pitching an idea for an article that could change everything. Everything.

He watches the way his boss's incontinent asshole of a mouth begins to pucker and he thinks, "Boy, this is a gamble ... But, fuck it, I need this." There's a very good chance he'll crumble under the pressure—despite being the sort of fellow who projects a certain confidence, there are definitely reasons why he's been stuck at this level for this long—so imagine his surprise as the words start tumbling out of his mouth—a mouth which, he hopes, less resembles a chocolate starfruit than his esteemed editor's.

No, not tumbling—flying. *Soaring*. Well-formed and cohesive. Coercive. Maybe it's the new baby at home and that feeling that he *has* to get the hell out of that house before he loses his mind, his identity, or maybe it's just what his grammy would have called good ol' fashioned kismet, but hot diggety dog, he's on fire!

It's a brilliant pitch. He's giving his editor details, projections, fucking printouts. This isn't going to be some Al Capone's Coke Can, Geraldo's Moustache bullshit. This could break them both into a whole 'nother level, maybe even save the paper! Fuck, the industry! Why not?! And the adrenaline is crashing in his ears so loudly that our hero barely hears it when he gets the go ahead. Ha! He stumbles out of his boss's office faster than he probably should, and the first thing he does ... despite everything ... is call Ellen.

The baby is screaming in the background, he has to repeat every word he, EVERY WORD HE SAYS LIKE 4 TIMES, which, god, he hates. He ends up making some half-excuse about "shit, someone needs me" and hangs up, his ears still ringing from the baby in the background. (*Beat.*)

He calls Danny next. He keeps it brief. Danny as boring as an egg-white shit.

They agree to meet at the town in three days.

In Goldsboro.

And that's when it really hits our hero. Holy shit, it's going to happen. Holy shit, he's gotta go back to Arizona—land of his birth. The next morning, he says his goodbyes,

and he's on the road. 12 hours later, he's in Phoenix. If it's at all possible, the city is even shittier than when he left it. He's surprised to not be as flooded by unwanted memories as he feared, but it still certainly doesn't feel pleasant. To make matters even trippier, the first radio station he tunes to is KOOL 94.5. His father's favorite station. That stupid, drunk, Republican cockfuck and his shitty oldies. Our hero realizes what month it is (it's hard not to, given how his skin is already crackling through the tinted windows of his car), and he wonders briefly if they still do that stupid A-Z Beatles marathon at the start of every summer. How someone as close-minded and hateful as his father could reconcile listening to all that hippy-dippy bullshit, he'll never know. For some reason, he leaves the station on. (*Beat.*) He stays in a hotel in Bisbee and debates calling Ellen. He gets drunk instead. He'll tell her he didn't have reception or something. About five hours later, he wakes up groggy and not just a little nauseous. It's that nowhere time between midnight and dawn—he's not exactly eager to find out what time exactly—and it's pitch black in his hotel room. There is nothing quite like a desert night. The moon and stars are bright enough that you can read. He turns on the TV. In the flat and featureless glow of the screen, he spreads out his papers.

The things he wants to hit in the article: the train derailment, the nuclear fallout, the years—generations now—of intense radiation, the potential tacit government coverup, and, of course, how he discovered it all. Of course, he'll leave some room for Danny's science shit, as if it really matters. He thinks of the pictures he's gonna take. He hopes, awful though it may be, that there are *people* there. Don't judge—he knows this is horrendous, especially given the fears he and Ellen had when it looked like the baby might have ... issues, but he practically prays to see mutations. (*Beat.*)

"The baby." He still can't call it by its name. That's horrible. Then and there, he decides he needs to be a better father. And husband. He should call her, but it's too late.

When he leaves the hotel the next morning, he thinks of another story: the legacy of our country's expansion. It was all for this. For fucking Bisbee, Arizona. For highways and motels: dingleberries clinging to the asshairs of Manifest Destiny. Progress. Maybe there's an op-ed to be written there. He files it away for when he gets back. After the inevitable triumph.

He is a Magellan. He is a Columbus. This was a time when men foolishly thought they had discovered it all—that it was astronomically impossible to find someplace new, undiscovered in this world—in this country! If our hero's ambition had a penis, it would be hard enough to cut diamonds. And he thinks, "I will make it all up to her—my discomfort, my distance, my paycheck. I will. The baby was too soon, but we'll have some bedrock now." He puts on KOOL 94.5 in salute to his father, that great mythical monster. And he drives deeper into the desert, further and further off the main highway, onto bumpity, barely-there roads. The radio signal is progressively washed away by rising tides of static. Surprisingly, it never fully disappears. Something Freudian about that. (*Beat.*)

And here's where the story gets scary. He pulls over, he checks his maps. He thinks about how he owes Google Earth his soul. But it looks like he's lost. It's no wonder the army didn't know about this place. Or, more likely, why they thought they could pretend they never knew about this place. He drives for a few hours. He's not sure if he's in Arizona anymore, or New Mexico, or fuckin' Sumeria. It's hot. He starts to get scared. "Where the hell am I?" he thinks. "What am I gonna do? Shitfuckshit. You failed,

you failed.” He keeps driving, but he must have gone too far, “you failed.” He backs up, retraces. More hours pass. He thought this was right where he was supposed to be, he thought he was following the directions perfectly, “you failed,” but he’s lost, he’s nowhere, “you failed,” heroes don’t get lost but he must not be a hero because he’s clueless, he’s a fucking failure, a fucking pathetic, no good failure who should just—  
(*Beat. He gives a little gasp.*)

Stop worrying. He’s here.

*The curtains behind him open. We see what appears to be an old diner from the ‘30s or ‘40s, heavily dilapidated over time and neglect, but also decorated with trash and filthy knickknacks. A sign over the counter reads “Company Is Always Welcome Here.” A busted window still displays fragments of an advertisement several decades old. It’s not just entropy, it’s insanity. The diner is still unlit. JONATHAN still faces the audience while he speaks, never turning to face the diner.*

JONATHAN (*cont’d*)

He’s here.

Holy jumping Jesus on a pogostick, he’s here. Goldsboro.

The buildings are few and far between, and they’re practically camouflaged into the hardpan and the mountains. He doesn’t see any houses, just a few old buildings. He coulda driven right by what appears to be the main road of the town, but ... (*He laughs.*) Kismet. He pulls over and gets out of the car. He looks around. His phone is now legitimately without service, so he leaves it in the car (under the seat so it doesn’t melt in the sun, old tricks resurfacing). The building he’s closest to ... he can’t quite tell, since everything within sight looks elementally faceless, probably due to the winds from the nearby detonations, but ... it looks like a restaurant, or a diner, or something. That squat, one-story, windowed façade that’s universal for small-time eatery. That means ... holy shit, that means that there *had* to have been a community here when the accidents and the testing started! Oh, my God. (*Laughs. Giddy.*) This is how a person probably feels when that final number on their lottery ticket is exactly what it’s supposed to be. He’s fuckin’ trembling! He walk towards the diner-thing. A lot of the windows are busted. No surprise. He starts to give up seeing actual life here—these buildings are a good enough find for now—but even as he thinks that, he sees a lizard run across the ground a yard or two away from him. It’s a color he’s never seen before. Ellen will be so proud, he thinks. Fuck that, *he’ll* be so proud. Ha! This all reminds him of a joke his journalism prof—

*We hear a tremendous blast. The back of JONATHAN’S head explodes. He drops to the ground, immediately lifeless. A long moment. The lights rise slightly within the diner. We can see the barrel of a single-barrel shotgun (or rifle) peeking over what the counter. A head rises up from behind it. It’s a young man, mid-to-late 20s. His name is SARKIC. When he stands further up, we see that he is*

*rather short, piebald, and has a few sores on his face. Despite the patched hair on his head, he has irregular spurts of hair all over the rest of his face: almost like a werewolf with mange. He is grinning. However, we hear a door slam in the distance. The minute he hears this, the young man is terrified. The door behind the counter opens. A late-middle-aged man, PA, enters. His skin is pockmarked, his hair is also irregular, and his left eye is bulging obscenely out of his skull. He is furious. SARKIC immediately moves away, and PA pursues.*

SARKIC (*frantic*)

What?! What?! What?!

*The pursuit takes them around the tables in the middle of the diner, but PA finally catches him and gets him in an incredibly painful-looking lock. SARKIC screams and PA increases the pressure, making him quiet. Then, PA leans close to his ear.*

PA

You're aware that Mama is sleeping right now. (*No answer. He increases the pressure.*)  
Hmm?

SARKIC

Yes!

PA

And you're aware that when Mama's sleeping, she don't like being woken up.

*SARKIC whimpers in the affirmative.*

PA

So, then tell me. Why would anyone other than the shit of the earth be thinking it's a wise idea to fire off a godhumpin' rifle in the middle of the house? Are you the shit of the earth? Hm? C'mon, // lemme know.

SARKIC (*in deep pain*)

I'm sorry, I'm sorry!

PA

I am asking a simple question here. Are you. The shit. Of // the earth?

SARKIC

There was somebody outside!

PA (*suddenly nervous*)

Say again?

SARKIC

Let me go.

*PA applies more pressure. SARKIC screams.*

SARKIC

AHHH! AIN'T THIS GONNA WAKE MAMA?!

*Beat.*

PA

That's an excellent point.

*He lets him go. SARKIC scurries away and glares at him.*

PA

Don't look at me like // that.

SARKIC

You coulda broke my arm.

*Outside, a huge manchild, PUDDLE, enters and inspects the body. PA goes to the Downstage border of the diner set, looking out a window, anxious.*

PA

Someone was outside?

SARKIC

Fuck you.

PA

Was it that cop? Please tell me it wasn't // that cop—

SARKIC

I'm never talking to you again.

PA

Puddle's out there now.

*SARKIC goes to the window, too.*

SARKIC



He is? What's he doing?

PA

Who fuckin' knows?

SARKIC

I think it mighta been a scout.

PA

A what? //

I should go check on Mama—make sure she's still //asleep.

SARKIC

A scout.

What should we do with him?

PA

With who?

SARKIC

The scout!

PA

Fuck do you mean, scout?

SARKIC

I mean the guy I shot!

PA

Where'd you shoot him?

SARKIC

Right over there—(*he indicates the counter.*) I was hiding // and—

PA

No, idiot, where did you shoot him?

*Beat.*

SARKIC (*defensive*)

I got good aim, Pa.

PA

If you shot that cop, so help me, I will rip out your godhumping // throat—

SARKIC

It wasn't the cop! I promise!

PA

Oh! Mr. Sears & Roebuck here, guaranteein' me.  
You better be fucking right, because you know what'll // happen if –

SARKIC

I know! (*Beat.*)  
What the fuck's a Roebuck?

*Outside, JONATHAN begins to seize—his legs bang on the ground and he twitches like a dying fish. PUDDLE, standing over him inquisitively, starts and jumps back, whimpering. PA notices the commotion.*

PA

Good aim, huh?

*SARKIC joins PA at the window again.*

SARKIC

What? What's he doing?

*PA (Smacking SARKIC in the head)*

You ass!

*SARKIC darts away.*

SARKIC

Don't hit me!

PA

“Don't hit you?” You're lucky I don't rip off your arms and beat you into powder with 'em! Shooting people from the godfucking window.

*PUDDLE, meanwhile, begins to poke and prod JONATHAN. The seizure slows to a halt.*

*PA (calling out the window.)*

Pud? What's he doing, sweetheart? Is he dead? (*Shoots a look at SARKIC.*) Fuckin' dead bodies we gotta deal with now. (*Back to PUDDLE.*) Bring him inside, would you, sweetheart? (*To SARKIC.*) Quit looking at me like that.

SARKIC

I'm gonna kill you. You know that?

PA

Can we deal with this first?

*PUDDLE has scooped JONATHAN up in his arms easily, and carried him offstage. In a few moments, he brings him into the diner, entering through a door in the UR wall.*

PA

Put him down on one of the tables, please.

*PUDDLE lays JONATHAN on one of the tables.*

PA

Oh, shit, there's a sorry sight.

SARKIC

Shouldn't have been nosing around our property.

PA

"Our property?" Listen to you. Ain't no such thing as property. We don't just shoot people for fuckin' *existing*.

SARKIC

I thought he was a scout!

PA

You don't make no fucking sense, "scout!"

SARKIC

From the cop! Here to spy on us or something!

*Beat.*

PA (*genuinely*)

Oh. Well, whatever he is, it's a damn shame, and I hope you're sorry.

SARKIC

Why would I be sorry?

PA

I'm sorry you're an idiot.

SARKIC

All you do is call me names and hit me!

PA

Yeah, your life is so // miserable.

SARKIC

One of these days, Pa, I swear, I am gonna kill you so fucking // hard—

PA

I am well aware of your plans, son. I am full aware of ‘em.

PUDDLE (v/o)

He looks so happy.

*NOTE: PUDDLE does not speak, per se. He communicates telepathically. We hear his "voice" loudly, though his mouth doesn't move. The sensation for all others onstage is an uncomfortable one.*

PA

Ugh, not so loud, Pud.

*PUDDLE is examining JONATHAN some more, tracing his fingers along his face and body.*

PUDDLE (v/o)

He looks so happy it's like more than happy like he's beyond happy

SARKIC

Well, see, why should I be sorry, then?

PA (with anxiety)

I think I might be sick.

SARKIC

Fine. Be angry. I'm gonna go get a salt barrel ready.

*He goes to leave.*

PA

Wait, what?

SARKIC

What? No way I'm lettin' him // go to waste—

PA

Hold on, hold on—

SARKIC

Pa—

PA

No, no, don't "Pa" me. You stay right there. We ain't doing that, no way

SARKIC

I ain't listening to you.

*PA grabs him by the arms, though not roughly; pleading, suddenly very serious and vulnerable.*

PA

No, no, no, you will listen. Listen good. I know I let you get away with a lot, but there ain't no way I'm letting you get away with *that*. Not in my house—

SARKIC

Ain't no such thing as property, Pa, remember?

PA

Remember all the things I told you? All the things I've done. My own Pa, // his brothers and sisters? Listen to me—

SARKIC

I ain't talking about your stupid stories, Pa. I'm talking about—no, you listen! I'm talking about *food*, Pa! We gotta eat! And I'm sick of eating fucking rattlers and and some skin-and-bones three-leg coyote when we're lucky.

PA

Why don't you just try trusting me for once? Can you do that?

SARKIC

How 'bout you return the favor?

PA

How 'bout this. You so much as put one grain of salt on that body and I'll get Mama to have a talk with you. A *serious* talk. How 'bout that? *Understand* that?

*Beat. That, for reasons we shall see, is a HUGE threat.*

SARKIC

You ... (*Near tears.*) I am gonna kill you. You hear me? I am.

*He storms off. Pause. PUDDLE comes over and hugs PA, nearly swallowing him in his massive arms.*

PUDDLE (v/o)

Are you really gonna tell Mama, Pa?

PA

She probably already knows, sweetheart. Don't you worry. Help me get rid of him now, wouldja?

*But PUDDLE shakes his head and holds JONATHAN close. PA groans.*

PA

Oh, shit on me.

*Lights fade.*

**ACT ONE**  
**Scene Two**

*In the transition, we hear bursts of static, as well as The Four Seasons' "Dawn Go Away" (the 1964 version with the mellow introduction) struggling to be heard through the interference. Lights rise. The song and static slowly fade. PUDDLE and JONATHAN are still at one of the tables in the diner, PUDDLE still contemplatively stroking the body. SOPHIE, a young, mutated girl in her early 20s/late teens enters. Her face is also covered in some sores, and perhaps her hair is thinning in places, but there is also something beautiful about her beneath it all. She's wearing very baggy clothing and we can see a large, misshapen lump protruding underneath on her left side. She sets herself up behind the counter, with a cutting board and a basket full of prickly pear fruits. As she speaks, she goes about getting the fruit ready: stripping its spines off with a towel, halving them, cutting the pulp out of the skin, removing the seeds, &c.*

SOPHIE (*as she enters, laughing*)

That's really what we told him! "Never again, thank you very much." Hey, Pud. (*PUDDLE waves, she begins setting up at the counter, continuous.*) Oh, Susie, it just feels so good, you know? It's like cool water; like everything's gonna be—OW FUCKING OW GODHUMPING PIECE OF BUGSHIT!! Fuckin' woodhumping cockstump!

*She angrily throws one of the fruits against the wall. As she works on getting the cactus needle out of her finger, she notices what PUDDLE is doing.*

SOPHIE

Whatcha got there, Pud? (*No answer.*) Pud. (*She heads over, still sucking on her finger.*) Whatcha doin', dummy? Find somethin' to play // with?

*PUD lifts up JONATHAN'S head. She gives a startled yelp.*

SOPHIE

SHITTING FUCKTREE

*PUD lets the head fall back to the table.*

SOPHIE (*rapidly*)

Puddle, where on earth did you find that?! Oh, Pud-baby, what'd you do? Oh, we gotta tell Pa.

*SARKIC enters.*

SARKIC

Pa already knows.

*The atmosphere is immediately tense. SOPHIE does not want to be around SARKIC and he knows it.*

SOPHIE

Oh.

SARKIC (*bitter*)

Yeah, now he's sulking around the stupid fucking car-pile, being' all moody, and I hope it all fuckin' falls in on him.

SOPHIE

Well. Never mind then.  
What's the deal with, with that—where'd it come from?

SARKIC

I think he was a scout.

SOPHIE

What does that mean, a scout?

SARKIC

From the cop. Like, a spy.

SOPHIE

Oh. Shit.

SARKIC

That's why I shot him.

SOPHIE

You shot him?

SARKIC

Yeah, I did. (*Beat. He smiles.*) Pretty neat, right?

*She walks back to the counter, disgusted.*

SOPHIE

Neat. I'm making some prickly pear. (*Beat.*) Want some?



SARKIC

Like you care if I eat. Probably be happy if I just //starve to death

SOPHIE (*firmly; annoyed*)

DON'T. Please.

SARKIC

Anyway. What we should be eatin' is meat.

SOPHIE

Heh. Wouldn't that be nice.

SARKIC

"Wouldn't that be nice." Yeah, stupid, and all we // gotta

*SOPHIE loudly puts the knife down on the counter with great, menacing control.*

SOPHIE

What. The fuck. Did you just call me?

*Suddenly, from one of the outer rooms, we hear:*

SYZYGY (*offstage*)

Sar, you son of a mongrel bitch!

*SYZYGY enters. He's a very tall, lanky young man, with oily, scraggly long hair. He is relatively sore free, but he has a large birthmark on his face, and his skin is pretty uniformly gray, almost like an alien's. His left arm is fused into a lobster-type claw. Also, he is hermaphroditic, and, given his feminine shape and facial features, it is entirely possible (in fact, 100% encouraged) for him to be played by a woman. He is holding a somewhat large scorpion by its tail and he sticks it in SARKIC'S face.*