

Ed Vela

Norman Maine Publishing

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Norman Maine Publishing
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*To my Father,
the original dreamer,
who always believed
fortune favors the persistent...*

Urning It

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Urning It premiered at the Jewel Box Theatre in Oklahoma City, OK on April 14, 2005: Brenda Williams, director.

GUNTHER "GUNNY" HAMMACHER: Tait Nelson

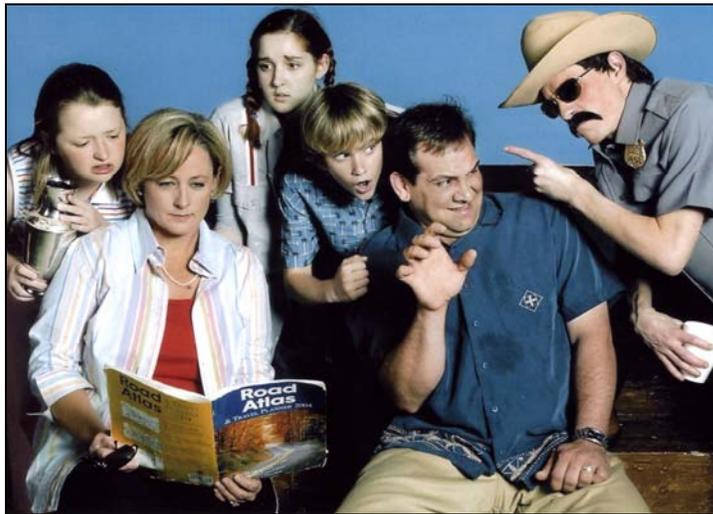
CHARLOTTE ANN "CHARLIE" HAMMACHER: Molly Dowd

WARD HAMMACHER: Morgan Brown

CALLIE HAMMACHER: Melissa Monroe

NATALIE "NAT" HAMMACHER: Kia Nelson

ROADIE: Dale Morgan



Urning It

COMEDY. This one-act version features all the quick-fire wit and hilarity that made the award-winning full-length "Urning It" so popular! Ward Hammacher has just discovered that his extremely rich aunt has died. To honor her last request, he packs up his family and treks 3,000 miles to scatter her ashes off the Santa Monica Pier and collect his inheritance. The drive proves perilous as the family experiences hilarious misadventures along the way—they get stopped in Texas, ripped off in Arizona, and jailed in Mexico. Check out the original 90-minute version listed on our Web site under Full-Lengths!

Performance Time: Approximately 50 minutes.

Characters

(2 M, 3 F, 6 flexible)

(With doubling 2 M, 3 F, 1 flexible)

WARD HAMMACHER: 44, thinks he's smart, on top of it, always right. He isn't.

CALLIE HAMMACHER: 42, Ward's wife; level-headed, pleasant, and the real power and heart of the family.

NATALIE "NAT" HAMMACHER: Eldest girl in the family; bright, mechanically inclined, a bit of a tomboy.

CHARLOTTE ANNE "CHARLIE" HAMMACHER: Middle kid; sarcastic, saavy, and a compulsive neat freak who would put Felix Unger to shame.

GUNTHER "GUNNY" HAMMACHER: Youngest in family and the only boy; acerbic, wise beyond his years, and a wellspring of useless facts culled from endless cable TV watching.

FUNERAL HOME DIRECTOR: Wears a suit; flexible.

EAST TEXAS COP: Wears a uniform and a helmet with a red flashing light; flexible.

OLD MEXICAN LADY/MAN: Wears an apron; flexible.

MEXICAN SHERIFF: Wears a Mexican federale type uniform; has a thick Spanish accent; flexible.

LUCKY MURRAY: Salesman; wears a cheesy suit; flexible.

LOS ANGELES LAWYER: Flamboyant; wears a magenta suit and a pink scarf; flexible.

NOTE: The roles of the Funeral Home Director, East Texas Cop, Old Mexican Lady/Man, Mexican Sheriff, Salesman, and Los Angeles Lawyer can be played by one actor or a combination of actors depending upon your casting needs.

Set

Urning It is a seamless, minimalist play. All that is required for the set is five chairs or stools and a small table.

Author's Note

The play is structured to be performed as continually flowing segments, not scenes. Transitions are indicated with lighting effects and sound cues. The action should never stop.

Sound Effects

Vacuum
Farting noise
Sad music

Props

Casket	Tortilla griddle
Large urn	2 Lumps of tortilla dough
Small golden bell with a handle	Tin cup
Handheld vacuum	2 Serapes
5 Chairs or stools	2 Sombreros
Map	Papers
Greasy coveralls, for Nat	Large jail key
Baseball cap, for Nat	Pen
Dipstick	Cart or table on wheels
Hotdog on a stick	Arrowhead
3 Toasted marshmallows on a stick	Lace hand fan
1 Hershey bar	Hotel hanger
Dollar bills	Plastic bank cylinder
Tote bag	Bible with "Holiday Inn" on the front cover
Gummi Bears	Rawhide necklace with two human teeth on it
Blue Pixie Stixs, or blue powder	Strongbox
Dice cup, dice	Cell phone
Score pad	Small key
Ashes	5 Cowboy hats
Roll of cash	Large belt buckle

**“But, alas,
not all of us
are cut out
for life’s
brass ring!”**

—Lucky Murray

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(AT RISE: Spot up on Gunny and Charlie, who speak to the audience.)

GUNNY: Aunt Gertie was dead.

CHARLIE: And no one was particularly sad about it.

GUNNY: She was my mother's great-aunt.

CHARLIE: And the only reason my father even let her come around the house was because she was –

GUNNY: Richer than Midas!

CHARLIE: When she died, my father thought we had hit the lottery.

GUNNY: We were her only living relatives.

CHARLIE: So it was a rather small gathering at the funeral.

GUNNY: Just Mom, Dad, Charlie, me, and our big sister Nat...uh...Natalie.

(Lights up. Gunny and Charlie join Ward, Callie, and Nat CS, who are looking somberly into an open casket.)

WARD: She doesn't look the same...

CALLIE: No, she sure doesn't...

NAT: It's not her.

WARD: Of course it's her. They just made her look good is all.

GUNNY: She never looked that good.

WARD: Gunny, shush.

NAT: It's not her.

CALLIE: Nat, please. It's just the makeup and the embalming.

GUNNY: Why's she blue?

CHARLIE: Too much embalming fluid.

WARD: Gunny, Charlie, wait outside.

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(Gunny and Charlie exit.)

NAT: It's not her.

CALLIE: Nat, will you quit saying that?

(Funeral Home Director enters, carrying a large urn.)

FUNERAL DIRECTOR: Are you the Hammacher family?

WARD: Yes, I'm Ward, this is my wife Callie, my daughter Natalie.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR: I don't care. Why are you in this room?

WARD: This is our Aunt Gertrude.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR: No, this is Mrs. Horowitz. *(Holds up the large urn.)* This is your Aunt Gertrude.

WARD: What?

NAT: I told you, Daddy, we're in the wrong room.

WARD: Shut up, Nat. And go see what your brother and sister are up to.

NAT: Why do I always have to—?

CALLIE: Just go, Nat, while we figure this out. Besides, your father's right. By now Charlie could have Gunny rearranging the caskets in the other rooms.

(Funeral Director hands Ward the urn as Nat exits.)

WARD: *(To Funeral Director.)* Wait a minute. What am I supposed to do with this?

FUNERAL DIRECTOR: I don't care. But I was talking to her estate person, and it was a stipulation in her will that she be cremated and her ashes spread across the Pacific Ocean just off the Santa Monica Pier. Happy travels...

WARD: Wait-a-minute! You don't expect us to take this, this, brass vase all the way across the country, do you?

FUNERAL DIRECTOR: I don't expect much from someone who couldn't even find the right room, but I do know that

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the final reading of her will is going to be held in Los Angeles in six days, so if I were you, I'd get going. Toodles... *(Funeral Director exits.)*

WARD: *(To urn.)* You witch! How can you still make my ulcer bleed from beyond the grave?

(The lights go down except for a spot, which comes up on Gunny.)

GUNNY: Dad started us packing as soon as the memorial service was over...

(Charlie walks into the light.)

CHARLIE: He told us to pack light.

GUNNY: And by the next morning, we were ready to roll.

CHARLIE: So we got a pretty early start that day.

GUNNY: Dad decided that flying would be too expensive.

CHARLIE: Because as he put it: "We don't have the old shrew's green yet."

GUNNY: So we drove.

CHARLIE: The five of us.

GUNNY: And the urn full of Aunt Gertie.

CHARLIE: On a road trip from Trenton, New Jersey to Santa Monica, California.

GUNNY: In a 1989 Buick Skylark, which usually has trouble making it to the Bronx.

CHARLIE: Mom decided on the southern route...

GUNNY: 'Cuz she said it was more scenic.

(Chairs are set up to represent the family car. In the front seat, Ward sits in the driver's seat and Callie sits in the passenger seat. In the backseat, Nat sits in the middle, Gunny sits left, and Charlie sits right.)

NAT: Why the heck did I have to come?

WARD: It's a 3,000-mile trip, Nat. We need another driver. You know your mother is night-blind. Besides you're the only one who can fix the car.

(Charlie takes out a small hand vacuum and begins cleaning the floor of the backseat.)

WARD: Charlie, what the blitz are you doing?

(Charlie turns off the vacuum.)

CHARLIE: Eeuuuww, the backseat is disgusting.

WARD: You brought the Dust Buster from the house?! *(To Callie.)* It's bad enough she keeps her room hermetically sealed, now she's cleaning the back of the car?

CHARLIE: Gunny was eating peanuts back here.

GUNNY: Hey, I like 'em in the shell.

CHARLIE: Well, then eat 'em with the shell on! Don't leave the residue all over the backseat. Where do you think you are? Yankee Stadium?

GUNNY: Don't I wish! *(Charlie switches the vacuum back on and begins cleaning the floor then starts to go over Gunny's lap.) (Yells over the sound of the vacuum.)* Dad! She's vacuuming my pants!!

WARD: *(Yells.)* Charlie! Could you turn that—?! *(She continues to vacuum. Yells louder.)* Charlie! Turn the—! *(She continues to vacuum. Yells even louder.)* Charlie! Turn that G-darn thing off!

(Charlie turns off the vacuum.)

CHARLIE: Sorry, Dad. Did you say something?

WARD: No, I screamed something. Put the Dust Buster away, will ya?

CHARLIE: But, Dad, it's a mess back here—

WARD: Charlie?! Quiet now. Clean later.

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GUNNY: *(To Charlie.)* See? Even Dad thinks you're a freak.

WARD: I do not think she's a freak...much.

CHARLIE: Just because you're a slob, Gunny...

GUNNY: I am not a slob. I just like peanuts!

CHARLIE: Oh, puh-lease! I've seen your room. You think mildew is a flavor!

GUNNY: And the other day you were sweeping the ceiling!

CHARLIE: It needed it!

WARD: Aaaaaall right, already! I don't want to hear any more about it. There will be no fighting for the next 3,000 miles. Am I clear?!

TRIO: Yes, sir.

WARD: Better. *(To Callie.)* I can see this is gonna be a fun trip.

CALLIE: Now, Ward...

WARD: Don't even start with me. You and your scenic route.

GUNNY: *(Sheepishly.)* Dad...?

WARD: What?!

GUNNY: I gotta whiz.

WARD: No you don't!

GUNNY: It's my bladder!

WARD: How could you need to go? Jeez, we just left the turnpike. Can't you hold it?

GUNNY: You wouldn't ask Mom to hold it.

WARD: Your mother wouldn't want to stop an hour out of Trenton. Look, nobody else needs to go, so if you can't hold it, then sit there and float!

(A few seconds of silence pass.)

CALLIE: Uh...Ward...honey...Actually, I...Do need to...

WARD: Oh, crap!

CALLIE: Ward, not in front of the children.

(Lights down. Spot up on the side of the stage. Charlie and Gunny walk into the spot.)

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CHARLIE: Despite the occasional pit stops...

GUNNY: We still managed to make it through Virginia.

CHARLIE: Through Tennessee.

GUNNY: And into Alabama on the first day.

CHARLIE: Where our slow-with-a-buck father got us a single
at the [Red Roof Inn] in Tuscaloosa. [*Or insert the name of
another motel.*] Where kids stay free...

GUNNY: And Nat had to say she was 12.

*(Lights up. Four chairs are now set facing each other to give the
appearance of a bed. Callie sits on the "bed" looking at a map, as
Ward stands holding the urn as though it was a bomb.)*

CALLIE: So, if we get an early start tomorrow maybe we
could stop for a little while and see the Creole Museum in
New Orleans.

WARD: *(Indicating urn.)* Where am I supposed to put this?

CALLIE: Well, you could've left her in the car.

WARD: Are you kidding? I'm not letting it stay in a car that
might get stolen out there.

CALLIE: Oh, please, Ward. Like anybody's going to try to
steal that car.

*(Nat enters, wearing greasy coveralls, with a turned around baseball
cap, and holding a dipstick.)*

NAT: She's throwing oil again, Dad. We're down a quart
since this morning when I checked it. It's probably just the
plug again.

WARD: How's she holding water?

NAT: I don't know. I have to wait for it to stop steaming so I
can check it.

(Charlie enters, carrying a roasted hot dog on a stick.)

WARD: *(To Charlie.)* Hey, where'd you get that?

CHARLIE: Well, we had those cold frankfurters in the ice chest...

WARD: Yeah...

CHARLIE: I just held this one over the engine block. *(She takes a bite.)* It's not bad. Once you get used to that slight taste of Pennzoil.

WARD: Aren't you afraid of germs?

CHARLIE: Heat kills germs. That's why I brought along the steamer.

WARD: The steamer?! What? You can't live one week without de-wrinkling?

(Gunny enters with three toasted marshmallows on a stick, and a Hershey bar in his other hand.)

GUNNY: Hey, we got any graham crackers? With this Hershey bar and these marshmallows, I think I can make s'mores.

WARD: Hey, will the Buick Buffet please stop. *(To Nat.)* So, what do you say, grease monkey, can we make it across the desert?

NAT: Yeah, it's just the thermostat. You can get me one of those in the next town when we stop for the U-joints.

WARD: U-joints! Since when does the Skylark need U-joints?

NAT: Since forever, but now that we're on this, this—

CHARLIE: Quest?

WARD: Look, Nat, those U-joints will last another 10,000 miles. Trust me.

NAT: Dad, if you don't let me replace the U-joints, by the time we hit Louisiana, the wheels are going to fall off.

CHARLIE: You mean like the muffler?

WARD: *(To Nat.)* The muffler fell off?

NAT: Not really.

GUNNY: But it is dragging on the ground. Makes sparks whenever we hit a chug hole.

WARD: *(To Nat.)* Can you fix it?

NAT: Yeah, but as long as I'm messing with it, I might as well get it a new gasket.

WARD: A new gasket? Just how much is your little shopping spree at [PEP Boys] going to cost me? *[Or another automotive company.]*

NAT: I could show you a picture of an arm and a leg.

CHARLIE: Why didn't we just fly?

WARD: All of us? Without three weeks advance reservations? Just who do you think is financing this trip? [Microsoft]? *[Or another company.]*

GUNNY: So far it feels more like [Enron]. *[Or another company.]*

CHARLIE: Well, just you and Mom could've gone, and we could be at home enjoying our summer vacation.

WARD: Right. Like I was going to leave you two home in the care of Penelope Pit-Stop here.

CALLIE: Now, Ward, don't start snapping at the children. They're tired.

WARD: They're tired!? Neither one of you ever took a turn at the wheel today. *(Holds up urn.)* I was about to ask Aunt Gertie if she was up for it!

CALLIE: I'll take the first few hours tomorrow so you can rest.

NAT: Yeah, Dad, give it a rest.

WARD: Fine. Fine. You think I'm being a noodge? Okay, if anyone needs me, I'll be in my office. *(He begins to cross to the offstage bathroom.)*

NAT: For pity's sake, turn the vent on.

CHARLIE: And don't be in there forever.

WARD: Hey, I poop, therefore I am. *(Noticing something in paper.)* Aw, fudge! The G-darn Mets lost again!

(Gunny cuts him off from the bathroom, as he holds out his hand.)

GUNNY: That'll be two dollars, please.

WARD: What?

GUNNY: Mom said that from now on every time you cuss on this trip, you have to give me or Charlie a dollar, and Charlie told me to do all the collecting.

WARD: But I wasn't cussing.

CHARLIE: Dad, c'mon, you think we haven't figured out after all these years that you made up your own swear words so Mom won't get on your case?

NAT: Yeah, you started way back with me, Daddy. Only now all of us know what "dastard," "blitz," "G-darn," "sun of the beach," and "fudge" really mean.

GUNNY: So for the rest of this trip, every time you cut loose, whether real or in code, it's gonna cost you.

(Gunny holds out his hand to Ward.)

WARD: *(To Callie.)* You have got to be kidding!

CALLIE: Well, Ward, the children have developed an occasional potty mouth, and I do believe it has a lot to do with you.

WARD: The hell it does!

(Gunny sticks out his hand again.)

CALLIE: But, Ward...

WARD: Forget about it. They get it from TV. To say it's me is a load of Frances Ford crappola.

CHARLIE: *(To Nat.)* Hey, you forgot about that one.

(Gunny holds out his hand.)

GUNNY: You're up to four dollars now, Dad.

WARD: Really? Well, hold your breath while you're waiting to collect it, will ya?

CALLIE: *(Threatening.)* Ward...

(Ward reaches into his pocket and peels off three bills from a wad of cash.)

WARD: This is a bunch of bull— *(Gunny puts out his hand again.)* –loney. Bologna. *(To Callie.)* Is that gonna cost me anything, dear?

CALLIE: Just be careful, Ward. You know how impressionable they are.

WARD: Yeah, impressionable. And by the end of this trip, rich!

(Blackout. Lights up on main stage. Chairs are set for the car again. Everyone is seated in the same seats as before.)

GUNNY: Day two.

CHARLIE: On the road again.

GUNNY: The three of us were catching up on the sleep we didn't get the night before.

CHARLIE: I figured out that two folded-up towels "borrowed" from the [Red Roof Inn], make a pretty good pillow. *(Charlie sleeps.)*

GUNNY: And, I discovered that Nat is good for something after all... *(He leans up against Nat's shoulder and falls asleep.)*

WARD: *(Checks backseat.)* At least Gunny stopped snoring. What a buzz saw.

CALLIE: That was Nat, dear.

WARD: Good grief, can't she even sleep like a girl?

CALLIE: Just be glad she managed to change the radiator hose last night.

WARD: Changed?

CALLIE: Well, actually she cut it where the crack was and still managed to stretch it over and clamp it into place.

WARD: That's my girl, always thinking and saving me a buck or two.

CALLIE: Ward...I was talking to the kids last night, and—

WARD: I know they'd rather be home, Callie, but this trip, the will, the inheritance...it's all going to change our lives. How long have I been working at that nowhere job at the plant?

CALLIE: A long time?

WARD: I hate my job, Callie.

CALLIE: Well, I always have my job at the library.

WARD: I hate your job, Callie. Jeez, if only I could pass the G-darn civil service exam.

CALLIE: Well, you've tried 26 times, Ward. Maybe you're not cut out for civil service. I'm not sure why you'd want to work for the government.

WARD: Because the pay's good, and the only way to get fired is if you come to work with a machine gun. But I could never catch a break in Jersey.

CALLIE: Maybe Jersey isn't the problem.

WARD: Look, all I know is that this trip, and the money, and all...it's gonna change everything for us. It's got to.

CALLIE: Oh, Ward, don't start that again...

WARD: I mean it, Callie. I'm sick of being stuck in neutral. I'm tired of waiting for my life to change. I never had a plan. Never had a mission. Never had a calling. I just...bounced from one event in my life to another, not knowing where the next bump in the road was gonna take me. Jeez, I'm not a man. I'm a pinball. It's like being stuck on a merry-go-round. Going 'round and 'round, and never once reaching out for the brass ring. I want better for us...

(Nat begins moaning and throws Gunny off of her shoulder.)

NAT: *(Talking in her sleep.)* No, I can't rebuild it! We have to buy a new one.

WARD: I even want better for them. Perhaps a nice boarding school in upstate New Hampshire... *(A loud farting sound is heard.)* Did Gunny have pork rinds for breakfast again?

CALLIE: *(Sheepishly.)* Sorry. He just wouldn't take no for an answer.

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(A louder, longer farting sound is heard.)

WARD: Next time, let me tell him. And for pity's sake, roll down your window...I'll be glad when we get this G-darn urn to San Diego...

CALLIE: Santa Monica.

WARD: Wherever. By the way, where is the urn?

(Callie looks through the tote bag at her feet.)

CALLIE: It's right...uh-oh...Ward? I thought I had it in my tote bag, but...

WARD: But, what?

CALLIE: I think I left it in the bathroom back at the [Red Roof Inn].

WARD: Aw, fudge! Now we're gonna get charged for the towels.

(Lights down. Spot up. Charlie walks into the light.)

CHARLIE: We lost half a day. And had to pay \$37.50 for all the towels Dad "borrowed."

(Gunny walks into the light.)

GUNNY: But on the positive side, we did get Aunt Gertie back.

CHARLIE: There she was...sitting on the toilet waiting for us.

GUNNY: Just like when she was alive, and we'd come to pick her up for Sunday dinner.

CHARLIE: That night, as we made it across Louisiana, Mom made Dad stop in Lake Charles so they could go to [Harrah's]. *[Or insert the name of another casino.]*

GUNNY: So while Mom and Dad were at the casino...

CHARLIE: And, Nat was outside burping the Buick...

GUNNY: Charlie, me, and Aunt Gertie sat in the room.

CHARLIE: No, not at [Harrah's], but at the [Motel 6] two exits down.

GUNNY: We were playing the travel version of Kismet.

CHARLIE: And I was eating Gummi Bears.

GUNNY: I had dumped all the powder out of a bunch of grape Pixie Stixs onto the game board, and was licking my finger and sticking it into the mound.

CHARLIE: Eeuuww, disgusting. Gunny was losing and stalling.

(They sit on the floor. Spot down. Lights come up on the main stage where the game, the Gummi Bears, the blue powder, and the urn are all on the floor. Gunny vigorously shakes the dice holder.)

GUNNY: Okay, so you're ahead on points. I can still catch up.

CHARLIE: If we play till you graduate maybe?

GUNNY: *(Still shaking dice holder.)* Just watch this come back, Charlie. How many points is it again? *(She shows him a score pad.)* Oh, sun of the beach!

CHARLIE: Will you roll already!

(As Gunny finally rears back to roll, he knocks over the urn, spilling its contents all over the board. The ashes are now mixed with the grape powder and Gummi Bears. They freeze for a second as they look at the sight.)

GUNNY: *(Noticing the dice.)* Hey, five of a kind! I finally got a good roll!

CHARLIE: Gunny! You idiot! You just knocked Aunt Gertie all over the carpet!

GUNNY: I know, I know! It was an accident. I didn't mean—I'm going to hell, aren't I?

CHARLIE: Oh, get a hold of yourself. You are not going to hell.

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(Nat stands on the side of the stage and mimes turning a door handle then knocking.)

NAT: Guys! Let me in. The door's locked.

CHARLIE: Then again...

(They both begin frantically scooping the ashes back into the urn. Grape powder, Gummi Bears, and dice also get scooped up. Nat knocks again.)

GUNNY/CHARLIE: *(Nonchalantly.)* Who is it?

NAT: What do you mean, who is it? How many people do you know in Lake Charles, Louisiana? Now open up!

CHARLIE: *(Still scooping.)* Nat? Is that you?

NAT: Yes. And you'd better decide which me you want to open the door for...the slightly ticked off me I am right now...or the homicidal me you'll see if you wait much longer!

(Gunny grabs the small hand vacuum.)

GUNNY: Just a second, Nat...

(Gunny turns on the vacuum to clean up the last of the mess. With hands shaking, Charlie tries to replace the lid on the urn. Nat begins digging through her pockets.)

NAT: What the heck are you two doing in there?!

(Gunny is still vacuuming and Charlie is still trying to attach the urn lid.)

GUNNY/CHARLIE: Nothing...

(Nat pulls out her key.)

NAT: Never mind. I found my key.

(Gunny and Charlie whimper in unison. Charlie gets the lid back on and Gunny hides the hand vacuum. They both sit down and act nonchalant on the "bed" as Nat mimes unlocking the door and bursting in.)

GUNNY: *(Matter-of-factly.)* Hi, Nat. How's the Buick?

(Lights down. Spot up. Gunny and Charlie walk into the spot.)

GUNNY: Now, I gotta admit, I did feel guilty.

CHARLIE: And he would've felt a lot more guilty if Mom had found out.

GUNNY: Oh, yeah, my Mother worked in guilt, like other people worked in marble.

CHARLIE: She could sculpt your shame.

GUNNY: And, when she was on a roll, she did everything but remind you that she breast fed.

CHARLIE: Day three...which begins the tragedy of: "Our Trek Across Texas"!

GUNNY: First up: "Dad gets lippy with an East Texas Cop."

(Lights up on main stage. Chairs are in the car configuration again, and everyone is sitting in their usual positions. From behind the car, an East Texas Cop enters, wearing a uniform and a helmet with a flashing red light on it.)

CALLIE: Now, Ward, be nice...

WARD: Nice? We were going 53 miles an hour!

COP: Mornin', folks. New Jersey plates. The Garden State, eh? Ya'll come all the way from New Jersey just to speed through Beaumont, did you?

WARD: No, officer.

COP: Are you sayin', ya'll not from New Jersey?

WARD: No. I mean, yes, we're from Jersey. I just didn't think I was speeding.

COP: Well, ya wuz. And from the sound that front end of yourn was a-makin', I'd say you need yerself some new U-joints.

WARD: *(To Nat.)* Say it, and die! *(To Cop.)* Look, officer, I couldn't have been going that—

COP: I clocked you goin' 54 in a 40. I'd say that's speedin'.

WARD: A 40?! But this is part of the interstate.

COP: Business District.

WARD: Business must be slow.

(Callie and the kids groan.)

COP: They think yer funny up thare in New Jersey, do they?

GUNNY: No, they don't.

WARD: Shut up, Gunny. *(To Cop.)* So, how much is this gonna cost me?

COP: Fine's usually ten dollars per mile you were over the speed limit—

WARD: But that's 140 dollars!

COP: Yup. Plus citation charges, and processin' fees, but yer prob'ly lookin' at not much more'n three hun' red.

WARD: What!? Look, Bubba, are you out of your redneck gourd?! I'm not shelling out 300 bucks for you and your buddies to buy deer antlers and beer with— *(To Callie.)* I didn't just say that, did I?

CALLIE: Yes, dear...

WARD: Aw, fudge! *(Gunny holds out his hand. Ward whips out his wad of bills and absently sticks a dollar in Gunny's hand, before turning back to the Cop.)* I-I-I didn't exactly mean...like it sounded.

COP: You want to step out of the vehicle, sir?

(Still holding a wad of bills, Ward unconsciously gestures with that hand.)

WARD: Look, officer, couldn't we just—?

COP: (*Sees the bills.*) Are you tryin' to bribe an officer of the law?

WARD: (*Suddenly notices bills.*) Huh? Oh, no, this is for him...for the fudge...

COP: You pay him to make you fudge? Brownies probably. With all that illegal stuff baked right inside, uh-huh?

WARD: No! No, it's not like that...

COP: (*Referring to urn.*) What's in that thare thain'g?

CHARLIE: Aunt Gertie.

COP: Is that what ya'll call it up in New Jersey?

WARD: Look, officer, you got it all wrong...

COP: Step out of the car, please, sir. I'm gonna have to administer a field sobriety test.

WARD: I'm not drunk. It's nine in the morning!

COP: You usually do yer drainkin' later, do ya?

WARD: Yes...I mean, no! I mean, will you listen to me, you stupid hillbilly hick! (*To Callie.*) I didn't just say that, did I?

CALLIE/NAT/CHARLIE/GUNNY: Yes!

COP: (*Into walkie-talkie.*) This is Grainger, I'm gonna need backup on this speedin' stop. I have reason to suspect drugs.

(*Lights down. Spot up. Dejected, Gunny appears.*)

GUNNY: Day four...still in Texas.

(*Charlie appears.*)

CHARLIE: After the arraignment, Dad paid 300 dollars for the ticket.

GUNNY: Another 500 dollars for disorderly conduct.

CHARLIE: And the judge made him sing "The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You" in front of the entire court.

GUNNY: That was kinda the best part. But we lost another half day.

CHARLIE: By that night, we'd barely made it through San Antonio, and Dad stopped for the night at a [Super 8 Motel] in Kerrville, where we had dinner.

GUNNY: A really lousy all-you-can-eat buffet.

CHARLIE: Where a really huge guy in a greasy apron...

GUNNY: Decided just how *much* you could eat.

CHARLIE: Day five...we finally made it to the tip of Texas...El Paso...

GUNNY: Where Dad insisted that he knew a shortcut, and somehow managed to get us lost across the border in Juárez, Mexico.

CHARLIE: We never even noticed we had crossed over.

GUNNY: And the government claims our borders are safe.

CHARLIE: Huh?

GUNNY: CNN.

CHARLIE: Anyway, while we were cruising Ciudad Juárez, Dad clipped a flower cart and knocked out our right front blinker.

GUNNY: So as we headed back for our own country...

CHARLIE: And we were passing the sleepy little village of Olla Lena...

GUNNY: We were stopped by a deputy sheriff...

CHARLIE: One, because Dad was speeding...again!

GUNNY: Two, because we had no right front blinker.

CHARLIE: The deputy also found Aunt Gertie...

GUNNY: Rolled up in a [Red Roof Inn] towel, laying in the trunk.

CHARLIE: He opened her up...

GUNNY: Smelled her...

CHARLIE: Stuck his finger in her...

GUNNY: Tasted her...

CHARLIE: Then took us all to jail.

(Lights up main stage. Ward, Callie, and Nat stand, holding up a cut-out section of jail bars to represent the jail.)

GUNNY: Actually, Mom, Dad, and Nat went to the jail.

CHARLIE: Gunny and I were taken by the sheriff to his mother's cantina.

(An Old Mexican Lady, dressed as a cook, comes out and puts a huge black griddle, known as a comal, and two large round mounds of tortilla masa in front of the kids and then silently exits. The kids kneel next to the masa and comal, and begin making tortillas as they speak.)

CHARLIE: Where Gunny and I were put to work in the kitchen.

GUNNY: Making these flat round things that tasted like a roof shingle.

CHARLIE: You tasted one?

GUNNY: Well...a guy gets hungry patting out this tor-TILL-a stuff.

CHARLIE: Tortilla.

GUNNY: Whatever.

OLD MEXICAN LADY: *(Yells from offstage.)* Apurense con esos tortillas!

CHARLIE: What did she say?

GUNNY: How should I know?

CHARLIE: You're the one who watches Univision.

GUNNY: Only "Lucha Libre" on the weekends.

OLD MEXICAN LADY: *(Yells louder from offstage.)* Apurense con esos tortillas!

CHARLIE: She's saying it louder. What does it mean?

OLD MEXICAN LADY: *(Yells even louder from offstage.)* Apurense con esos penche tortillas!

GUNNY: She's either saying, "Hurry up with the tor-TILL-as," or that her aunt's really cheap.

OLD MEXICAN LADY: *(Yells from offstage.)* Apurense! Apurense! Cabron, gringos!

(Charlie and Gunny look at each other.)

CHARLIE: I don't want to know.

(They begin to pat out the masa faster. Blackout. Lights up on Ward, Callie, and Nat stand forlornly behind the bars, looking out toward the audience. Nat runs a metal cup across the bars.)

NAT: *(Calls.)* Water...water...guard...guard!

WARD: Cut it out, Nat.

NAT: Why should I? We've been stuck in here for hours.

WARD: Well, one, because we're in Mexico, you don't want the water. Two, they're Mexicans. They don't know the words "water" and "guard." The only one who speaks English is the sheriff.

(Nat thinks a moment then begins running the cup along the bars again.)

NAT: Guard-o! Guard-o! El wah-wah!

(Gunny and Charlie enter, wearing serapes and sombreros.)

GUNNY: Holá, Madre y Padre. Como están?

WARD: Oh, my God. They've turned them into waiters!

CHARLIE: It's okay, Dad. He's just showing off.

GUNNY: Yeah, it's amazing what you can pick up working the kitchen of a restaurante.

CALLIE: They had you working?

GUNNY: Yeah, at first just making the tor-TILL-as...

CHARLIE: Tortillas! What do you have, a mental block?

GUNNY: But then we graduated to putting the corn husks on the tamales...

CHARLIE: And frying up the chicharrones.

WARD: The cheecha-what?

(Sheriff enters dressed in a Mexican federale-type uniform.)

SHERIFF: *(Thick Spanish accent.)* Ex-squeeze me...are jew the Hor-MIKER family?

WARD: Hammacher. Pronounced like the hem of a skirt, the speed of sound, and...er.

(Sheriff notices Gunny.)

SHERIFF: Hey, amigo mio.

GUNNY: Holá, Chavo!

(They exchange a high five.)

WARD: You know my son?

SHERIFF: Jew kidding? Señor Gunny?! Señorita Charlie?!

They were a real big help to my madre today at the restaurante. Señor Gunny makes a real fluffy tortilla, and no one fries a chicharrone like Señorita Charlie.

CHARLIE: I also warned them about the dangers of storing food uncovered. And, by the time I left, you could eat off their floor.

GUNNY: I hate to break it to you, but nobody really wants to eat off a floor.

SHERIFF: They were such buenos helpers. My madre, she never know she was supposed to change the grease every 6,000 chicharrones.

CALLIE: Oh, how nice.

WARD: Yeah, just peachy. When are we getting out of here, officer?

SHERIFF: Ay, sí, como no? I am sorry for the misundersitting, but the chamacos and I were not too chure at first what jew had in that spittoon.

WARD: It's not a spittoon—it's an urn, Pancho!

CALLIE: Ward, we are in a foreign country, please control yourself, and be a good neighbor. *(To Sheriff.)* Did everything check out all right, officer?

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SHERIFF: Ay, por favor, call me Chavo. Any madre of Gunny and Charlies is a friend to me.

CALLIE: Well, Chavo, will we be released today?

SHERIFF: Ay, sí, sí Señora Hor-MIKER. I just need to get your papel-work. And get the dice away from the chamacos. They have been chooting craps all day with them.

WARD: Dice?

SHERIFF: Jes, jew know the ones we found in the urn. I'll be right back, amigos.

(Gunny begins following him out.)

GUNNY: I'll go with you, Chavo...

WARD: Gunny!

(Gunny freezes as the Sheriff exits, then slowly turns back toward Ward.)

GUNNY: Yes, Dad?

WARD: Just how did dice get into Aunt Gertie's urn?

GUNNY: Uh...I...uh...well, you know how Aunt Gertie always liked to play Monopoly...

WARD: Gunny!

GUNNY: Uh...well, uh...she sorta...uh...spilled.

WARD: *(Shouts.)* Spilled!

(Ward begins reaching for Gunny through the bars as Callie tries to hold him back.)

GUNNY: It was an accident.

WARD: Accident?! Gunny, you little—

CALLIE: Ward!

NAT: Oh, so that's what was going on that night in Lake Charles.

WARD: Lake Charles?! You mean your Aunt Gertie has had dice in her since Louisiana?!

GUNNY: Well, uh...I, uh...yeah.

WARD: Charlotte Anne, did you have anything to do with this?

CHARLIE: Me? Uh...well, I...uh...

GUNNY: No! Charlie was in the bathroom when I spilled her. She had nothing to do with it. *(To Charlie.)* Right?

CHARLIE: *(Bewildered.)* Riiiiight...

WARD: In that case, Gunther Daniel Hammacher when I get out of here, your hinder and my belt have an appointment.

CALLIE: Oh, Ward, no, not while we're traveling.

WARD: Do you think you've earned it, Gunny?

GUNNY: *(Looking down.)* Yes, sir.

CALLIE: Oh, Ward, he didn't mean it.

WARD: But he didn't tell us, Callie, and he knows he should've.

(Before Callie can respond, the Sheriff re-enters with paperwork, dice, and a large key.)

SHERIFF: Okay, amigos, here we go. *(Sheriff mimes putting the key in the door and then opening the door.)* Jew are free to go. Just as soon as jew pay up.

(Sheriff hands Ward the paperwork, which is a glorified bill.)

WARD: Pay?!

(Ward looks over the paperwork.)

SHERIFF: Jes, speeding ticket cost, room and board for the afternoon.

NAT: Room and board? I didn't even get water.

SHERIFF: Cooking lessons for the kids, and we could not let jew go with that blinker out. My cousin Jorge, he fix it.

WARD: Yeah, I'm feeling pretty fixed right now.

SHERIFF: But, it is only a total of 10,000 pesos. (*Sheriff looks at the kids.*) But, just for jew, the padres of Gunny and Charlie, I will cut it in half: 5,000 pesos.

WARD: (*Sarcastically.*) Thanks so much, amigo.

CALLIE: (*Threatening.*) Ward.

WARD: Can we pay this on the way out?

SHERIFF: Oh, jes. Cash, or major credit card only.

(*All begin to exit.*)

WARD: (*Getting close to Gunny.*) I'll see you outside, Gunther.

(*Gunny swallows hard. All exit except for Gunny and the Sheriff, who lag behind.*)

GUNNY: Chavo?

SHERIFF: Jes, little amigo.

GUNNY: Does your madre need any permanent help?

(*Lights down. Spot up. Charlie enters.*)

CHARLIE: The exchange rate was pretty high.

(*Gunny enters.*)

GUNNY: But the bill was still more than we spent in Texas...

CHARLIE: And what Dad lost at the casino in Louisiana combined!

GUNNY: He never did get around to spanking me.

CHARLIE: Which made me feel a lot less guilty. My little brother being noble? Who would've thunk it?

GUNNY: I have my moments. And, although Dad never did belt me, he did keep looking at me and shaking his head all the way to Las Cruces, New Mexico. Which brings us to the next part of our schlep...

CHARLIE: Trip.

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(They look at each other, then around.)

CHARLIE/GUNNY: Schlep!

GUNNY: As we go across New Mexico and Arizona.

CHARLIE: A part of the adventure we like to call...

GUNNY: "Wandering in the desert longer than the Jews."

[End of Freeview]