

Morning Becomes Electa

By Alanis King

Electa W. Quinney, a teacher

Phebe Quinney, sister to Electa

John W. Quinney, brother to Electa

Louis Ducharme, brother-in-law to Electa, murderer of sister Phebe
Clerk

Jeremiah Slingerland, adopted nephew of Electa, head of Indian Party

Sarah Slingerland, wife of Jeremiah

Daniel Adams, husband of Electa

DJ Adams, middle son of Electa and Daniel Adams

John Clark, youngest son of Electa, head of Citizen Party

John Candy, husband of Electa

Chief Nau-nau neek nuk, great grandfather to Electa

This script was produced by the Electa Quinney Institute, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, who secured playwright and director Alanis King, AnishnaabeKwe, Ottawa, Canada who led a script workshop held on June 29-July 2, 2015 at the Indian Community School. The playwright wishes to thank the following participants who contributed in the collective creative process for the play workshop: Kristelle Alrich, Diane Amour, Kimberly Blaeser, Amber Blaeser, Celeste Clark, Patsy Delgado, Sommer Drake, Linda Huang, Linda Marie Langen, Cary Miller, Patricia Miller, Patricia Najera, Margaret Noodin, Karyn Saemann, Renee Zakhar and Mike Zimmerman. Also big thanks to Maurina Paradise, Electa Quinney Institute, Amy Tromp, Principal of ICS and the ICS Staff.

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Scene 1

We hear horse hooves. Chief Naunauneknuk trots into a black and white film shot projected on the backdrop. As the sun rises he then enters onstage on a horse.

NAUNAUNEEKNUK

(In his language) I'm glad I could be here today riding one of my sixty horses. Whoa! *(the horse stops downstage centre)* I'm Chief Naunauneknuk.

(Quoting himself in English) Brothers! You remember, when you first came over the great waters, I was great and you were little - very small. I then took you in for a friend and kept you under my arms so that no one might injure you. Since that time we have ever been true friends. There has never been any quarrel between us. But now our conditions have changed. You have become great and tall. You reach to the clouds. You are seen all around the world. I have become small; very little. I am not so high as your knee. Now you take care of me; and I look to you for protection. Brothers! One thing I ask of you, if you send for me to fight, that you will let me fight in my own Indian way. I am not used to a fight in English fashion, therefore you must not expect I can train like your men. Only point out to me where your enemies keep, and that is all I shall want to know. *(He sees Electa far in the distance.)* Because I'm way up here I can see farther than you. I see Wuhwehweeneemeew. She's coming to give you her final class. No it's not the end of the school year. It's the beginning of her spirit life.

He exits. An 1800's school bell clangs over and over. At first we think it's a typical signal to an obnoxious way of getting students attention but then the bell turns into a drumbeat and singing voices are heard; it's an old chant; it slowly segues into a melody of a Christian hymn.

A spotlight comes up on a trunk downstage right. The trunk lid slowly opens all on its own. Electa W. Quinney enters and looks in the trunk and takes out a book.

ELECTA

(She holds it up.) My first textbook. That was my Great-grandfather to the Massachusetts Congress – 1775. It's right in here. The Columbian Orator Containing a Variety of Original and Selected Pieces Together with Rules Calculated to Improve Youth and Others in the Ornamental and Useful Art of

Eloquence. Mastering that title alone could get you an A. First I learned from it then I taught it. *She thumbs through the pages.* My two favorites were ‘Brothers’, that you just heard from Nau Nau neek nuk. Of course I never got to teach it like that. The other was this one, ‘Dialogue Between a White Inhabitant of the United States and an Indian’.

Electa crosses the stage, as a spotlight comes up on Electa’s old classroom, a one-room log building, with wooden benches and a small wooden desk at the front before a large chalkboard. Fiddle music is heard.

ELECTA

My sister Phebe was my best friend. We trusted secrets with each other – we were as close as sisters can be. Especially moving here together as family, relocating from New York. The Fort Howard captain would invite us to their Friday night dance and she’d get giddy getting ready to go. It was a lot of fun, dancing to live music - the fiddle. That was how she met Louis Ducharme. He played right into her heart and married my girl. One Christmas came and we all have dinner then a sleigh ride – to celebrate New Year’s Eve. The next day would change my life forever.

On the other side of the stage a spotlight comes up on a small log cabin with a wooden stove at its centre. Louis enters with an armful of chopped wood and axe. He rests the axe against the back wall and throws the wood behind the stove. He puts a log in the fire.

PHEBE

Louis it’s a brand new year. All our plans and dreams - we’re going to work to get them.

LOUIS

Bien sur mon amour. (Oh yes my darling wife.) *He embraces her.*

PHEBE

Maybe announce our own little one someday.

LOUIS

You never know. *He picks up his fiddle and plays a tune Brandy Before Breakfast.*
Phebe pour me a drink would you.

PHEBE

All the spirits were drunk last night.

LOUIS

No...I have a bottle behind here somewhere. *He searches by stove.*

PHEBE

You mean this one Louis? *She holds up bottle.* No! I'm pouring this out - you had enough over the holidays.
She begins to pour it in the slop pail.

LOUIS

Non – écoutez – non! Give me that bottle!

PHEBE

No Louis – no more!

LOUIS

How dare you take what is mine!

PHEBE

We are married, what is mine is yours.

LOUIS

You will not defy me – you are my wife – you will obey me!

PHEBE

Now Louis Louis...I can make us tea. *She crosses room, her back is to him to get the kettle off the stove.*

LOUIS

I never said you could dance with anyone you wanted to last night!
Louis picks up the axe and swings it at the back of her neck. She dies from the heavy blow. It takes awhile as if frozen or deadness is cut off with a soundscore of their hearts shattering as they exit zombielike.

Scene 2

ELECTA

And how he did that...to take my precious Phebe. She was telling me only the night before how glad she was to be married to this great guy. She was a cook at the Missionary school in Shantytown and after two years there came home to us and met up with him. Married just a few years...like me. I remember how bright she was that night looking ahead to the new year together. To be a mother sometime...she was radiant in the glow of the candles and fire. But the grief I felt could not match the anger of that of my brother John.

John W. Quinney enters and stands behind the trunk.

JOHN W. QUINNEY

The moment after Louis killed Phebe he ran. The bloody axe on his shoulder. It was still dark. Soon the news spread through our settlement like wild fire. Search parties were made for the murderer but he could not be found. The next morning...we searched again...he had made tracks in the snow. We found him on Lake Winnebago...half frozen. He was brought to Shantytown. Remained in jail until the following spring. Brown County Circuit Court - trial by jury.

John W. crumbles on the trunk as if it's a coffin just as his family and a group of 20 Stockbridge people enter. They have circled John help him sit on the ground before the courthouse. The large door opens and a young court clerk rushes down the steps.

CLERK

The verdict has just been announced.

The Stockbridge people rise quickly with John W. leaping to the front.

CLERK

Louis Ducharme has been found not guilty.

A loud gasp and protest words are exulted from the gathered Quinney family and friends.

JOHN W. QUINNEY

What?!

CLERK

Yes Sir. Acquitted on plea of insanity.

JOHN W. QUINNEY

No this cannot be. Where is justice? Justice for Phebe?!!
He runs up the steps just as the court door opens, out steps Louis Ducharme. He locks eyes with John W. who swiftly takes his hatchet from his waist belt. He raises it.

JOHN W. QUINNEY

Listen you white man! I'm going to kill you Louis Ducharme! Mark my words, you will be dead before next January. You will not see a new year just like you did to our sister. You are guilty! You know!!!
He slowly looks at his hatchet for emphasis. Tension is palpable in his voice and physical threat. Louis shakes his head and dashes away to the nearest escape possible.

LOUIS

Non – non!

JOHN W.

Ahhhh! *(He tries to make a run for him)*

ELECTA

John! John no! Everyone gather round, hold him! Hold him back!

JOHN W.

Electa – let me go! He’s the one to grab!

ELECTA

No! Bekaa bekaa John! I wasn’t there to help Phebe and hold him back. But this time I will. I don’t want to lose you, stop! Stop! Please, it’s out of our hands.

They sob in each other’s arms. The Courtroom Judge, lawyers, jury members and spectators exit and shuffle quickly past the large Quinney group. They in turn exit slowly. Electa crosses stage to her desk. A keening song can be heard as the sun sets.

ELECTA *(to the audience present)*

John Quinney never had a chance to fulfill his threat. Ducharme kept himself very scarce along with a vigilant eye on his enemy Quinney. He kept away from our new tribal lands and never came to Stockbridge again. In course of time he reformed and married again. Became a good sober citizen. He was from a prominent French family. I have not heard of them since. John Quinney - he continued to work hard for the rest of his lifetime for all of us Stockbridge. For his nation, his family especially his sisters.

She sits in her chair.

Scene 3

The portrait of John W. Quinney appears larger than life, John W. the actor steps out of the frame and crosses the stage. We hear a river rushing over rocks.

JOHN W. QUINNEY (*in his original language*)

A film projected has images of water and islands.

Long, long ago, our ancestors, Muhhekaneok - Mohican, lived far to the west of their present home. One day, as they looked across the water to the east, they saw an island in the sea. With their canoes, they travelled to this island. It had many plants and animals which they could use for food. After living on the island for many years, they saw another island to the east in the water. They abandoned the first island for the second and moved there. Some time later, the first island sank beneath the waters and disappeared. They saw other islands farther beyond, and moved their villages. Whenever they moved to the new islands, the ones previously - sank out of sight. Moving continually for many centuries, they established themselves on the humongous turtle island. They spread further throughout the land...until the Whites came.

He exits. Daylight shines on Electa by the river.

ELECTA

There's no point teaching inside when we can be out here! People around the world have a migration story. This flowing river is our mother's blood. Our blood is everywhere even in times of peace. I learned to adapt quickly as a child. I guess you call this displacement nowadays – there's more to displacement than moving our bodies.

Scene 4

Daniel Adams, a young Mohawk preacher, enters paddling a canoe singing 'God in Nature'. Electa and Daniel lock eyes, their hearts are pounding.

ELECTA

Daniel.

DANIEL ADAMS

Sago (She:kon Hello) Electa. My dream became my prayer to see you again.

ELECTA

The moon heard my wish.

He pulls the canoe to shore.

DANIEL

All that time ago in New York, I never forgot your face.

ELECTA

I am deeper in the heart of the Woodlands. Yakwatereno:ten? (*questions her pronunciation of Let's sing.*)

DANIEL

Tkaye:ni! (That's right!) Yakwatereno:ten! *He takes out his guitar. Sitting on the riverbank, they sing a hymn together. He stands and takes her hand then offers her a paddle. Here. Let's go for a canoe ride.*

ELECTA

Yes and the moon will light our path.

They exit down river together.

Scene 5

John W. Quinney enters quickly reading a scroll which is his property deed.

JOHN W. QUINNEY

Kids this just came in the mail! Whereas, by Act of Congress, approved the 27th day of January, 1853 it is declared, that there shall be granted to John W. Quinney, in fee simple, to his heirs and assigns forever: the tract of land now in the possession and occupancy of the said John W. Quinney, in Stockbridge, in the state of Wisconsin and described as follows: bounded on the north by lot #33 in the Stockbridge treaty of 1848, lot numbered 74, south Numbered 37 and 70, east by the military road passing through the town of Stockbridge and west by Winnebago

Lake. Beginning at an Ironwood tree 12” and a Red oak tree 7” in diameter, bears thence East, from Green Bay to Fond du Lac, being the North East corner and the South East corner from which a Maple tree 24” in diameter, marked I.R.74 and an Elm tree 15” in diameter, marked I.R.73 – containing 360 acres of land. I’ve got to get a copy of this to Electa.

He exits. Electa re-enters to her classroom.

ELECTA

I.R. that means Indian Reserve. I wasn’t in Wisconsin anymore. Daniel and I had moved on together for the next eleven years. He serving the mission, me having babies - three boys - two years apart. But the further west we went, the fewer followers of Christ we encountered. Everyone liked Daniel, they just didn’t like the bible...preferred their old ways. Daniel took it personally until he had no one left to preach. Soon he died. What could I do? Now a widow - Alex 6, Daniel 4, John Clark 2...I lived for them.

Lights begin to fade. The soundscore and imagery support the passage of time of a year.

Scene 6

Daylight. Electa goes to the trunk and takes out a newspaper, The Cherokee Times. The publisher, John Walker Candy enters.

JOHN CANDY

Just finished pressing this one Missus. *He hands her the book.*

ELECTA

Laws of the Cherokee Nation. *(she’s a quick read)* Why was publishing this so important to you John Candy, you with the sweet name, not so sweet what I’m reading here.

JOHN CANDY

Publishing is my life. It was before we met, is going to be - always.

ELECTA

This Law prohibits teaching any free negro or negroes not of Cherokee blood, or any slave belonging to any citizen or citizens of the Nation - to read or write - under penalty of a fine. John I'm shocked. Laws of the Cherokee Nation seems to differ from all men are created equal. Besides the job John...are we still united – I mean by the same values? We got together so fast...now it feels like we're -

JOHN CANDY

Electa if we don't publish our own laws they will be imposed on us.

ELECTA

So fine me. If I teach again it will be for anyone who shows up to class.

JOHN CANDY

When we met, I had my four girls, you three boys -

ELECTA

I know – I know...*To the audience* - We were the first Brady Bunch. I could have used some Osh Kosh. (*Electa returns to her husband*) What can we do John - what's ahead? Can you see the future?

JOHN CANDY

Sovereignty. Nationhood. I fight Electa, I fight every step. I won't assimilate.

ELECTA

It's dangerous here. Lookit your ex-wife's brothers - targets shot by the tribe. For signing the Echota Treaty. Enemies are lurking - the government - who knows what on our side. The heat in Texas, massacres, assassinations, bounty ...now we're back here in Indian Territory. I've been here before. It's no way safer. I'm getting further and further away from my family. I want my boys to know their birthplace. My family. A landbase that for me was settled. Set for knowing how

society is going to operate. Here it's still unfolding. It's the gold now. The next mineral will be bigger right after the gold is all gone.

JOHN CANDY

You want me to take you home?

ELECTA

Yes. But I want all of us to go.

JOHN CANDY

Alright – I do this for our family. Let me go to Park Hill and share my news.

ELECTA

Maybe you can start a paper up there.

He exits. She crosses to her classroom and sits on a bench as if awaiting a lecture.

Scene 7

John W. Quinney projection of him in portrait with red as backdrop. A leader a la Che or Obama's Yes We Can poster design. A traditional honour song recognizes the spirit journey of Chief John W. Quinney.

ELECTA

We weren't back long before we lost my brother John. I knew I had come back for a reason. No member in the history of the Stockbridge tribe has been his equal in usefulness, in penetration of mind, in soundness of judgement.

The projected image of John W. Quinney starts to fade. Electa stands at the front of her class, she is drawing key points on the chalkboard, dates, geography, symbols for power ie. Congress etc.

In 1822, John W. Quinney with two others, formed a deputation to Green Bay, where a treaty was made and concluded with the Menominees, by which was

purchased all the Green Bay lands, designed for the future home of us New York Indians. Muhhekaneok, people of the waters that are never still – settlers called us Mohican. We first moved from Hudson River, that we once called Muheakantuck to Fox River. (*she looks out*) We're in Milwaukee - this land I'm speaking of is all around here.

He secured, in 1825, the passage of a law through the New York State Legislature, to give the Stockbridge tribe full value for their lands, which remained to them in that state, and which enabled them subsequently to remove themselves to Green Bay.

This law is memorable as being the first ever passed by the New York Legislature to give an Indian tribe full value for their lands. The lands of the New York Indians purchased of the Menominees, being endangered by a re-purchase. Yes the land was sold twice, guess to who? Why to the United States officers. He was sent in 1828 to petition Congress, on behalf of the United New York tribes, for the recognition of their rights to such lands.

He, however, failed and the Stockbridge tribe lost their home at Kaukauna, at Fox River, the General Government barely allowing \$25,000 for improvements. John Quinney seeing this, entered at once into a new plan and finally after great labor and protracted efforts, he obtained, in 1832, the grant of two townships upon the east side of Lake Winnebago, where the tribe still resides.

About the year 1833 he framed a Constitution, as the basis of a tribal government, which was adopted by his people.

In 1846, he effected a repeal of an act passed by Congress in 1843, which made citizens of the tribe and had his people restored back to enjoy their own customs and government and obtained for them \$5,000 on account of their old claims. The tribe made a treaty in 1848. In which John took a prominent part. The Government stipulating to find the tribe a new home west of the Mississippi, and to remove them within a certain time, but after many, but unsuccessful attempts, on the Government's part, to select and remove, in which my brother engaged with untiring zeal, he finally conceived the plan of getting back the township of Stockbridge.

Efforts were immediately commenced, which have finally terminated in the formation of a new treaty, by which the Government cede back to the tribe their old home.

In 1854, he succeeded in the passage of a law by Congress, which gave him a fee simple title to 460 acres of land in Stockbridge. At the election held in 1852, he was chosen Grand Sachem of the tribe, which office he honorably filled for three years, encouraging education and everything calculated to improve his people.

Electa steps back and looks at her work on the chalkboard. She turns and smiles just as Jeremiah enters sombrely.

JEREMIAH

Bohpa! (*he kneels and touches the trunk as if it's a casket*) I got here on the next stagecoach I could.

ELECTA

Jeremiah Slingerland! My nephew I'm so sorry...I'm glad you were raised by my brother... he always said you were like one of his own.

JEREMIAH

Miigwech. (Thanks.) (*He takes out the will from the trunk and stands.*) He made me executor. I, John W. Quinney give and bequeath to my sister Electa W. Candy the Lot numbering 73, my Heifer calf, two Sows with the Boar, and all the Pigs and chickens. I also give and bequeath unto my Son Osceola Lot 70 and my best Trunk. I also give and bequeath to my daughter Olive Lot 71 and my blue coverlet. (*He continues to read, his voice trailing off as he exits*) To Jeremiah Slingerland I give...

The lights dim as Electa follows him out.

End of Act I.

Act II-Scene 1

From the trunk Electa takes out a batch of letters tied together and crosses stage to her classroom desk.

ELECTA

Then the letters started to come and I loved seeing my name on the envelope. Electa W. Quinney, Electa W. Adams, Electa W. Candy - it was the W that was the most important to me. I never dropped that.

Electa opens a letter. Jeremiah re-enters opposite from Electa as if in his own home at his kitchen table. The Huron Carol underscores the scene.

JEREMIAH

December 25, 1858

Dear Aunt Electa,

You have no doubt been told that we think of making a treaty to sell out these two townships to secure one upon the Oneida Reservation at Duck Creek. How do you like this idea?

ELECTA

You want to go from a fox river to a duck creek?! Two for one doesn't sound right.

JEREMIAH

A delegation of seven was sent from here sometime since to visit our uncles, the Oneidas, to renew our friendship with them which was formed some 70 years ago, and to agree with them to hold their land in reserve, which they were desirous to sell, for the special benefit of our people.

ELECTA

What?! I hate to be suspicious of government but a new treaty could put schooling at a standstill.

JEREMIAH

After reviewing our friendship and brightening the old belt our delegation from here purchased an ox, a barrel of flour, tea, tobacco and four dozen pipes. Then we made a feast for the Oneidas. Having finished the eating part, the Oneidas then espoused their willingness to dispose of a township and seemed highly pleased at the idea of our people coming there to live. Then followed the shaking of hands. We are to meet the Oneidas again, and three of us are delegated to meet them in the presence of Indian Agent Bonesteel. My school is in progress though, not so many attend as in the fall –

ELECTA

My class used to fill right up with both Indian and white children – I wonder why aren't the children coming to school?

JEREMIAH

Because many can't get shoes. The agent will send up a box of them though.

ELECTA

Agent Bonesteel is sending shoes – he could expedite that and hire an Indian runner.

Franky, Jeremiah's son runs onstage in his pajamas to embrace his Dad. He lets him scribble his name on his letter.

JEREMIAH

We all unite in sending love to all. Franky wants me to say to you Aunt this is his birthday and is five years old. A Merry Christmas to you. As ever yours in respect and esteem, Jeremiah

ELECTA

Seven months later Jeremiah sends me another letter to my place at Stockbridge-Munsee Reservation.

JEREMIAH

July 21, 1859

Dear Aunt E,

You are doubtless surprised at my long silence but could you see my labors I think you would be more inclined to excuse than to blame. First I am obliged to preach every Sabbath here or at Shawano – then there is my school – with these my farming. Your place right over there looks lonely – growing up to a second growth of bush higher than my head.

ELECTA

Gosh soon you won't see the farmhouse. Maybe I will return to John's farm in Stockbridge. I have no one left to harbor.

JEREMIAH

Daniel Metoxen is up here on a visit and has told among other things that you was harboring Nancy Chicks and Diana Davids. People are surprised that you give them any question. But I have told them I did not believe it as you said you was going to harbor them no longer.

ELECTA

See back then he'd talk in a Yankee way. You said you was going to harbour them no longer.

JEREMIAH

And by the way I am not a little surprised that you are so willing to take up against me and blame me for causing Nancy Chicks to take the course she is following. But don't you know that every dirty creature will always want to wipe upon something?

ELECTA

Jeremiah! Such talk from a Sunday preacher!

JEREMIAH

She began her dirty life at an early day and the blame must all be thrown upon me. I want to say more by word but shall now forbear writing it. Daniel has been up here upon a visit.

ELECTA

My son, my middle boy. What was he doing there?

JEREMIAH

But don't know what else he came after than to try to steal some of our girls. Paul Quinney had the misfortune to lose one of his oxen by some complaint and the other one he has sold to Cowen for 20 dollars. So that leaves him again as flat as ever. He felt so important after he returned from Stockbridge because he had purchased the greatest part of the oxen that was for sale. He would not even let us poor scamps use the team at all. But I believe he has drivin them to death as he is such an unmmmerciful driver.

Electa laughs.

ELECTA

And which girl was the lucky one?

JEREMIAH

We have the honor to have a Sachem up – Peters. I understand was married a few nights ago to Joan Davids. O this is enough to puke. I shall be so glad when his term of office expires. Shawano appears to grow and improve slowly – as there is not one quarter the whiskey drunk that used to be a year ago. It is destined to be something and the people are seeing more clearly that no decent people will ever move up into this country so long it is so notoriously wicked. Our people are all waiting for a new treaty, I don't think that we shall succeed in getting Duck Creek as the Oneidas charge so enormously. I think we shall continue here as long as we can as our people will be deprived of schools for years should they make another treaty.

ELECTA

Deprived of schools.

ELECTA/JEREMIAH

Auntie E you was right all along!

JEREMIAH

By the way where is Uncle Candy?

ELECTA

He's left me Jeremiah. Someone used to publishing can't step back to farming – it broke him, his body, his spirit lucky not his mind.

JEREMIAH

Foolish thing. I guess I written about enough. Give my love to the boys. Olive has a thick neck growing quite fast. Franky is well. He can read with us in the Bible. Write soon. Respectfully yours, Jeremiah

He exits.

ELECTA

And just when I wondered if I'd ever hear from Jeremiah's wife Sarah.

Electa raises up envelope and opens the letter. Sarah enters to the same kitchen table that Jeremiah has vacated.

SARAH

April 11, 1860

Dear Aunt Electa,

We were very glad to get your most welcome letter. I am really very sorry that you have yet so much hardship, so many to feed, and who are so unprofitable to you. There are a number of families who are entirely destitute of bread and meat, only have potatoes and salt. Pray with us and for us. Jemy has mentioned to you

about the prevailing sickness our little boy Franky is down with it but I think he is having it very light but some of us are up with him every night and I am now so sleepy that I can hardly write. How much anxieties sickness causes. Please write soon, I hope that Mary will come, give my love to them and all, Sarah

Jeremiah trades places with Sarah at the table. She exits stuffing envelope.

JEREMIAH

April 30, 1860

Dear Aunt E,

You ask my opinion about Miller's conduct, I think he was premature in his letting out that land before he obtained license from the Judge. He is asking for permission from the Judge to sell, and in case he gets license, the land will be taken from your care and put into the hands of Miller and when it comes into his hands, then it will be time for him to let it out.

ELECTA

Stop him Jeremiah – somebody has to sit down with Mr. Miller on my behalf.

JEREMIAH

I am very busy logging and building me a log barn. I have not yet stopped preaching, only I did not wish to disturb anyone's feelings by urging myself upon the preaching staves. It would take more than Austin and Clinton to stop me, but only thought I would give back here to see what course they would take – and indeed their meetings have dwindled down to nothing. They call upon me to preach funeral sermons. Indian Agent Bonesteel seems very much put out with those who have left. He says he don't mean to pay them anymore Improvement money until they they make actual improvements. But this he has said before. Austin yet lives in your house. Give my love to the boys. Write us again soon, Yours as ever Respectfully, Jeremiah

P.S. You say something about us being bribed – I wish I was bribed enough to get a few dollars – I would then be having the game as well as the name. Yours J.S.

JEREMIAH

February 27, 1861

Dear Aunt E,

You are I suppose expecting a line from me in answer to yours and having a chance to send by Oseola who leaves in the morning, I hasten to drop you a line. I find there are something like a dozen applying for the Indian Agency – who the successful one will be, we cannot conjecture. I suppose next week will tell the story when Lincoln takes his seat and Bonesteel steps out. Our head men with those of the Menominees propose to settle upon some worthy applicant for the agency and recommend him to the President. I understand that the Fox River Improvement Co. are to receive every alternate lot in Stockbridge and that your lot will probably be among the rest.

ELECTA

Whether I have a treaty or a property deed government can still be persuaded to expropriate tomorrow morning and charge tax. Don't forget government is people and people have interests. Change is coming fast.

JEREMIAH

If so, this will be a great bother to you, though if it is so, the general Government will doubtless make it good to you. How many things you have to add to your many troubles. Respectfully yours, Jeremiah.

P.S. O I forgot to send my kindest regards to the boys. Tell us all the news – I presume Ose is going down again to live on you.

He exits.

ELECTA

And just like that sickness takes their Franky. I could feel their sorrow especially dear Sarah – or any mama – get it all out and keep your head up. It's not fair this life but staying in grief will break you –

Sarah enters.

SARAH

July 4, 1862

Dear Aunt,

How I do want to see you, if you're ever, but living up here, I should feel that we had an important acquisition made to our little society and that I had a dear friend near me with whom I could sympathize and take sweet counsel dear Aunt.

I will try to listen to your advise in not grieving too much over my irreparable loss. But thanks be to my heavenly father in the sweet submission to his will which I now feel, I am willing to leave my sweet one in his hands and wait till the morning of the resurrection for that blessed reunion for which my soul longs. My life seems all too long to live without my little comforter but yet it is well, for my heart was getting such a firm hold of this life and would that it became necessary for my souls good to interrupt my firm grasp on life by taking away my earthly treasure. Write soon, in haste, Sarah

Electa crosses stage to embrace her niece Sarah.

ELECTA

Oh Sarah my darling girl. I wish you knew how close I am then we could visit everyday.

Sarah exits. Electa remains alone onstage.

Scene 8

Electa takes a rifle from the trunk.

ELECTA

I have been hearing that Buffalo Bill is hiring. He's no ass. If women weren't as dispensable as our men we'd probably be up in arms too. *She shoots a target. Smoke rises from her rifle. We see an image of a bloodletting deer hanging.* So many of us Indians warring. The fighting never stops. If we kill ourselves the government won't need to. Where do you suppose I got this rifle?

Her son Daniel is wheeled onstage in a hospital bed inside an army ward tent.

DJ

August 8, 1862
Dear Mother,

ELECTA

Gwisson! Finally yes my boy! *She tears open the letter.*

DJ

I have just come back to Springfield from another scout. In all our travel we did not even see a rebel. I have been troubled with the billious headache and have been taking Bayers Cathartic Pills. They seem to help me little. I have also been down to the the hospital doctor – all that he gave me was powders - powders.

ELECTA

Ask the Dr. if the powders are from grey willow. That will work for your pains. Potawatamie medicine people here call it wii koop. It's easy to get.

DJ

I don't think the hospital doctors know any too much. There are a great many of our boys getting sick. I believe when they are first taken it commences with a violent headache pain in the temples, bones, ache, high fever and a chill. Do you know what would be good for them? If you do please tell me.

ELECTA

Dear Son, I will try to get a gallon of flu tonic to you boys. It is made up of twelve medicines - root, leaf and bark. I don't know how long it will take to get there or if your regiment will allow it – mama's mshkike - you have to take it.

DJ

And another disease what the boys are troubled with is the stomach complaint, what is good for that?

ELECTA

Take mint tea for now, wintergreen or wild, wing was koos. Ask if any of the other Indian boys see it in the bush when they're scouting around. Ask them to bring you some back. That will help you boys with your bellyaches.

DJ

Mother, if you are in need of more money just tell me and I will send you all that I got. I wish you all were down here you could have all the apples and peaches that you could wish for. Sherman Dodge has just got out of the Guard House He had to wear the Balls and Chains all the while he was in the Guard House. What do you think of Mr Dodge Sherm now? How does Algerina carry the day? I wonder if she has as many greasy Menominee beaus as ever. How does Osceola and Olive get along. I wrote to them both and have never received any answer yet. The Captain says that us boys are a set of high headed Indians. Give my best respects to all enquiring friends. Cavalry is not near as hard as Infantry. I will try and come home when peace is declared, if health and life is spared, and not before. I must come to a close, write soon, From Your Absent Son, D.J. Adams

A traditional lullaby song is heard. Electa crosses the stage as if in a flashback when he was sick as a boy. She administers the medicine and crosses back to sit at her desk. She bends her head in prayer. A projection of daylight shines through bush, forest and meadow. DJ bolts up and scratches his ink to paper.

DJ

September 9, 1862

Dear Mother,

I am in hospital and shall be able to walk out of doors in a few days more. I am glad that we are taken good care of - we have a very kind and good nurse, it seems that he tries to do all that he can to make us comfortable - I shall remember him as long as I live. Our company is almost ready to leave this place I am so sorry that I ain't able to go with them. The peaches and apples are ripe and nice, but the doctor will not allow us to eat any. O how tempting it does look to the other boys eating such nice fruit and we cannot get to eat any. I am willing to live so if the doctor says so because I am anxious to get well. What has become of Reddy? Here is a piece of paper will you give it to her? But don't tell anyone of it. Why is the reason that Olive will not send me letters? We have lost another man, he died

about 20 minutes ago. Our Captain has not ever been up here once since John and I have been sick. What do you think of that?

ELECTA

Dear Son, if I could be there to visit you and take you out to the bush we could find a white poplar tree. I would have you lean your back to its branches facing the direct sun. We'd pray. You could ask the tree for healing. The doctor ought to let you eat that fresh fruit. You need vitamins.

DJ

How can a Captain expect his men to like him if he will not ever visit his men when they are sick. Tell me all of the news and how your crops look like. My best respects to all inquiring friends and not forgetting yourself, Write soon to your absent son, DJ Adams

ELECTA

Maybe your Captain acts different to men who are disabled from service.

DJ

September 25, 1862

My Dear Ma,

You do not know how pleased I was to hear from you. It seems almost-like a visit to me. I am glad that you all enjoy yourselves very well. John Clark can't think that I did not do right in sending you a likeness that was not very nice. If you think so I will send you one a great deal finer that I have ever had taken. Tell Olive not to get discouraged about getting married, for I read an account of a lady 60 years old getting married to a young man 16, what do you think of that? Oh, I forgot tell her old Greely is left yet. Give my best respects to Mary and Susan and be sure and save enough for yourself. I remain your son D.J. Adams.

ELECTA

And that would be the last letter I would get from Daniel Jacob, my DJ. He died the following winter. It could have been the tree not him. Then my oldest son died too – Alex. He never wrote me letters. He didn't have to - he always lived close.

DJ's Captain sent a letter. I got it months later. The flu tonic I sent never reached him in time. The U.S. Postal service can only get better.

The song Glory Glory Alleluia plays as images of 1860's U.S Cavalry men especially Aboriginal soldiers show up on top of horses, in battles, in makeshift hospitals and as casualties.

Onstage we see Daniel's bed wheeled out like a procession.

Electa is at the trunk and holds up the mason jar of flu tonic and puts it back in. She takes another batch of letters and crosses the stage to her classroom desk. The lights begin to fade.

Scene 9

Projection of time passing, we hear and see a deep winter storm. Sarah enters back to her kitchen table.

SARAH

Decembe 19, 1865

Dear Aunt,

I am very glad that John Clark has really gone to school. I do wish you and Mary could come and visit us this winter. We cannot express how anxious we are to get loose from this poor place, and in fact we have but poor encouragement to stay here from anyone. The approach of the election seems to draw out all the enmity and prejudice, which lurks in all hearts with a few exceptions. The Slang, as usual for this time begins, and expressions like this we hear often "J. Slingerland shant smell of an office this year, he is a mean man", "a weasal", "not fit to preach". And just the other Sabbath after he preaches an excellent Sermon, Thompson in his talk gave the lie into Jemy's face, and said "the preacher did not believe what he had said himself." Darius Charles said nearly the same. Now Aunt if I am any judge of sermons I don't think I ever heard a more thorough and practical and faithful sermon.

Write soon to your affectionate niece, Sarah

Lights shift to Electa's classroom where she has been breaking up branches and tearing birchbark strips for kindling.

ELECTA

Since my sons died I've no income – it's already been five years that John Candy left me for Arkansas and the Cherokee Tribe. Private Daniel J. Adam's money he would send to me from the 2nd Regiment Wisconsin Volunteer Cavalry really used to help. Now if I am lucky this year I will sell some gardening or hay sometimes a farm animal. John Clark is young but he does have labor to offer me. This left me to appeal to Daniel's old regiment to receive his military pension. So my dear friend Mary appeared before the Justice of the Peace, John Quinney Junior did too. Anyways after laying it all out bare I declared my entire net worth and I'm glad to say that I was granted eight dollars a month backdated to the War of 1861! Well I have to insure the farmhouse, barn, shed and livestock with Madison Mutual.

Jeremiah enters and joins Sarah at the table.

JEREMIAH

April 18, 1871

Dear Aunt E,

It is no easy matter to prevail upon the government to move to make a treaty, where they don't want the land Indians have, especially where it is so poor as this. Had it not been for the pine upon this reservation, we should have got scarcely anything. But now we get the fabulous prize of about one hundred thousand dollars in the different sums stipulated. For instance, 43000 to be paid those who separate – 20000 for the Indian portion to build a school house, mill and other public improvements – 15000 to pay tribal debts, 10000 for improvements, and 10000 acres of land for the Indian portion. Have you been sorry yet that you put your name among those who separate?

ELECTA

Not yet...I believe in the Citizen Party. I'm hoping that by becoming a citizen it will help in keeping my farm intact. What I relinquish is perhaps made up by being recognized as part of society. It's really the freedom to leave the reserve when I want and not to have get a permission note like a child from the Indian Agent. I will have the right to have property in my name. 43000 dollars is a large sum for those who separate. I wonder how that will be divided? 20000 for the school and mill and improvements – that will be spent quick. I hope the children get to go to school.

JEREMIAH

How free from care about tribal interests will all such be. But I am occupying too much space with this one subject. I notice John Clark is going to school. Darius Charles told me that there was a fund under the control of the officers at Appleton designed for the education of two Indian young men. He also told me that the Indian Agent informed him that there was 200 dollars appropriated by the Indian Department for the benefit of his son Tim. Now if Tim has the letter to support him, why can't John Clark try to have the other for his education. I only hope John Clark will try to go and stay long enough to make him a scholar. My love to all enquiring friends – yours Jeremiah

SARAH

May 22, 1871

Dear Aunt,

How glad we all were to see John Clark. We are having an excellent visit with him, and I am glad that you have such a good boy, and I wish all the young men were like him, manly, enterprising, intelligent and steady. We are so anxious that John Clark should go to school to Appleton, if he is helped by the Agent - would not that be nice – Sarah

JEREMIAH

October 7, 1871

Dear Aunt E,

We reached home safely but found my barns all burnt down and everything in it, even my two colts. This is to pay me for my labors and for my influence on the side of the Indian Party whereby they have gained their property back in full. The barns were evidently set fire by the Gardners, as they have been threatening all along to do something by way of revenge – so far as I am able to learn, suspicion rests upon Simeon Gardner and his son in law Degrote, who lives in town, and left here about the time the fire took. We have written to the Agent to have him remove these citizens from off the Reserve as they have no right here, nor can they enroll. What he will do we know not, but one thing is sure that our people will organize into a Ku Klux band and help themselves in self defense. Please write us soon and let us hear about matters in Stockbridge. The Rolls are left unfinished until we can hear from Washington and have those included when the Indian Agent

has been thrown out. I am yet very glad that John Clark signed himself on the Citizen side. I am sure that he will never regret the step – Much love to all – From your unworthy nephew, Jeremiah

SARAH

March 25, 1872

Dear Aunt,

The snow is very deep here, and the Menominees have just begun to bring in sugar, those dried pears and cherries are very nice indeed. We have had quite exciting times about lumbering. The Agent and Marshal has been here, and forbid cutting timber on the reserve. They only stopped until they went back to the Bay and have been at work ever since! Write soon, Sarah

Light fades on Jeremiah and Sarah as they exit.

Scene 10

Cross fade lights on Electa in her classroom.

ELECTA

I lost two of my three sons, then my eldest John Clark started to write me letters from law school in Appleton. I want him to finish college but more importantly - to outlive me. I really like that he also took drawing and painting – case law is one thing – but to be creative at the same time can keep the fire lit. Then it became about the Indian Party led by Jeremiah and the Citizen Party led by John Clark. Both sides had their arguments, I mean isn't that what law is all about. Why did he work to get people reinstated if we had become citizens already? I don't get that...unless there was trickery at play.

JOHN CLARK

May 12, 1872

Dear Mother,

I presume you are eager to hear from me. The Agent comes up on the 8th to finish up the enrollment. I got to see him before the Indian Party seen him. The Agent assured me that he could not go any further than his instructions and asked me if I had heard what they intended to do. I told him I had understood they had said they would not certify to any roll until they should get such names as they wanted in the

roll. He then went up to Jeremiah when he seen him and Sarah and asked them if they were intending to enroll, they said they were provided. The matter stands unsettled yet. The Agent told me there were some new names that they wanted to put on the roll but I did not know who they were. He also assured me if we could get a delegation to go to Washington and try the matters before the department he has no doubt but that we could get a hearing from the commission. The Agent is well aware our cause has been misrepresented. Tribal government are now trying to get hold of that money what the pine was sold for, into their own hands, so they can spend it themselves. I found out the National matters are assuming a worn appearance the longer we keep those men in power. If I had the money I would go and spend the cause as it is in its true light. I had quite a talk with Mr and Mrs Slingerland, about that what they said. Mr Slingerland seemed to have my back about it. I talked pretty plain I did not care if it offended them or not. I only stayed to them for one night. In close please find \$6.00 for Osceola. J.C. Adams

ELECTA

Things were really at work here on the reservation, first we had the tribal government we all voted for, then we had two independent groups of people, the Indian Party and the Citizen Party, both having legitimate points of view for their future.

JOHN CLARK

Mom I've come home. I hate to read this letter sent to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs – I don't know who sent it to me. 'I would call your attention to the case in regard to the schooling of John C. Adams who has become a citizen of the United States and can go to school no longer under the expense of the Government. In my opinion he cannot: it was only intended for Indian boys. John Adams is about 35 years of age; one of two Indian boys that Mr. Mix stuck in the school at Lawrence University in Appleton at the expense of the Government to pay about two hundred each for about nine months in the year. I think that if they wish to go to school let him pay his own expenses same as the white people do. I wish the commissioner would instruct the Agent to have another Indian Boy go to school, or if that cannot be, then withdraw that appropriation. In 1867 my son was sent to the school but he being sick and could not attend it. He was dismissed from school and Absalom Quinney was allowed to come into his place without the consent of the Commissioner. Yours Respectfully, Darius Charles'

ELECTA

And just like that John Clark isn't able to complete law school anymore. Darius Charles! Politics can be treachery for old friends. Why can't we be Citizens and Indians at the same time?

JOHN CLARK

Two years go by – I'm almost done then this. *(he reads memo)*

Dear Sir,

The Department declines to pay your expenses in the Law Department of the State University at Madison. I have sent to the Commissioner the request of yourself and others for pay for time and expenses in going to the Stockbridge and Munsee reservation to attend an election. I do not think the request will be granted.

Very respectfully, U. S. Indian Agent Chase. Ma?

ELECTA

A citizen attending an election on the reservation I think that makes you an Indian after all.

The lights fade. John Clark packs up the trunk and exits. Time passes.

Scene 11

Lights come up on Electa. She is cleaning her chalkboard. She eats cherries from a bowl.

ELECTA

I, Electa W. Candy, being of sound mind, memory and understanding blessed be Almighty God for the same and being mindful of the uncertainties of human life, do make, publish and declare this my last will and testament in the manner following: I give, devise and bequeath to my son John C. Adams, my farm in the Town of Stockbridge, County of Calumet, State of Wisconsin, known and described as follows: Lot 73 to have and to hold the same unto the said John C. Adams, to his heirs and assigns forever. Good luck my boy I know my time is coming.

Projection of the milky way. Electa's journey home, the traditional song segues to a hymn like the beginning of the play. Spirit dancers circle Electa, first a rabbit dance, then a piensuk dance, then a bear dance. Each new dance is more dazzling than the one before. The dancers beckon Electa to follow them out. Instead she returns to her chalkboard and picks up a piece of chalk one last time. She crosses downstage centre and facing audience writes on an imaginary chalkboard a large W.

ELECTA

Wuh-weh-wee-nee-meew. Say it with me. Wuh-weh-wee-nee-meew. Again.
 Wuh-weh-wee-nee-meew. That's great. I know. I want all of us to be knowing.
 Muh-he-ka-ne-ok n'dow.

*Sounds of morning, a babbling brook, birds singing and chattering, then a rushing river with an animal cry and a steady heartbeat.
 Blackout. Curtain.*