SPUTNIK

A Love Story

By Lowell Williams

SPUTNIK: A LOVE STORY
Copyright (c) 2025 By Lowell Williams

CAUTION: Professionals and Amateurs are hereby warned that performance of **SPUTNIK: A LOVE STORY** is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth) and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation, professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic, and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission of which must be obtained from the Author in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for **SPUTNIK: A LOVE STORY** are controlled exclusively by Next Stage Press. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance written permission and paying the requisite fee.

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce **SPUTNIK: A LOVE STORY** is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing, or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The names of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in a size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author.

SPUTNIK: A LOVE STORY

Sputnik: A Love Story was originally produced by the Nashua Theater Guild in Nashua, N.H., with the following cast:

ERNEST OMOTOSO……. Jay Street
MADELINE ("MATTIE") LEE BRADFORD... Kelsey Domeny
PAUL TREMBLAY…… Greg Parker
MARIE TREMBLAY …… Deirdre Hickok-Bridge
LT. COL. ALFRED BRADFORD ……..….. Bob Frasca
Directed by Michael Curtiss

CAST (3 M / 2 W)

ERNEST OMOTOSO, 20s, Nigerian. Speaks with a British accent.
MADELINE ("MATTIE") LEE BRADFORD, 20s, white. Very much a woman of her era.
PAUL TREMBLAY, 19, white. A talented musician.
MARIE TREMBLAY, 40s, white. Born in Quebec. Widowed.
LT. COL. ALFRED BRADFORD, 50s, A career military officer.

SPUTNIK

A LOVE STORY

ACT 1

TIME: October 21st, 1957. Evening.

SETTING: The White Mountains, New Hampshire. The entire play takes place on the porch and yard behind the Skyline Motel. There are small tables and some boxes stacked for the winter. It's a cool, clear evening, just around twilight. A pulse of Morse code. Sharp, clipped, relentless. It taps out a phrase," I am the harbinger of change." Not meant to be understood, unless it is. The signal repeats, insistent, then stretches into the long, ghostly beeps of Sputnik overhead. PAUL is revealed in the dim light. He sits on a stool with a transistor radio nearby and an acoustic guitar. (Transistor radios weren't common, but they were around. Maybe he's got a Regency TR-1, an Emerson, or a Sanyo. He's plugged the radio into an extension cord. The sound is not so good. There's a book nearby that will turn out to be an accounting ledger. Maybe the pencil is behind his ear. He's practicing. There are stops and starts. He fidgets with the radio. The sound of the code dances and drifts into a newscast, cutting in and out of the static.

RADIO VOICE. Sputnik, as it is called, continually transmits...orbiting the...In other news, President Eisen...in Little Rock, Arkansas. *(More static precedes the sound, which gives way to a song like "It's So Easy To Fall In Love," and Paul begins to sing and play along. His talent is obvious. One hand is wrapped in a bandage. After a while, ERNEST enters, unnoticed. He carries a large canvas bag with some equipment. He puts the bag down. When the song finishes, he applauds wildly. Paul is startled; maybe embarrassed.)*
ERNEST. Bravo! Bravo!
PAUL. (*Paul jumps from his stool with some calamity.)* Hey!
ERNEST. That's marvelous!

PAUL. You scared the daylights out of me!
ERNEST. Sorry. I could not resist! You've got an amazing voice.
PAUL. Thanks.
ERNEST. I've parked up front and heard you singing back here.
PAUL. (*A beat.)* Did you need a room?
ERNEST. Where did you learn to sing like that?
PAUL. Sorta picked it up on my own.
ERNEST. Self-taught!? That's Splendid. Splendid!
PAUL. Yeah. Thanks.
ERNEST. *(Smiling, exploring.)* You have a wonderful concert hall.
PAUL. It's just the woods.
ERNEST. And the whole sky! You couldn't ask for better.
PAUL. Did you want a room?
ERNEST. The sky is what brings me up here tonight.
PAUL. The sky?
ERNEST. Yes. Yes! Have you ever stopped to really look at the evening sky? It's infinite. When you have spotted what you think is the dimmest, slightest object, you have to remind yourself that there is something else even further out. Perhaps you are viewing a star so far away that its light is only reaching Earth for the first time at this moment. The harbinger of things to come.
PAUL. Did you want a room?
ERNEST. I wonder if I might ask a favor of you?
PAUL. What sort of favor?
ERNEST. It involves the sky, actually.
PAUL. Huh?
ERNEST. I am here on a mission. Two missions.
PAUL. You're not from around here, are you?
ERNEST. Oh! Of course, my accent gives me away. I'm from London, although my family is from Nigeria. It's my first time visiting New Hampshire. Your mountains are very impressive. But that is not my mission. I have come to America to build rockets!
PAUL. Rockets?
ERNEST. Yes! That's right.
PAUL. Like in the Buck Rogers comics?

ERNEST (*delighted*) Exactly! Imagine there is life on other planets. How are their societies organized? How do they treat each other? Someday we may find out. And, this is precisely the spot. Although slightly off the exact latitude, which brings me back to my favor, I would beg of you.
PAUL. Ohh-Kay.
ERNEST. I want to set up my equipment here to track Sputnik.
PAUL. How's that?
ERNEST. The satellite just launched by the Russians? I'm tracking it.
PAUL. Tracking it?
ERNEST. With some radio equipment.
PAUL. It's coming here? How do you know that?
ERNEST. I made the computations myself.
PAUL. Computations?
ERNEST. Of course.
PAUL. Let me get this straight-- since that Buck Rogers spaceship launched by the Russkies took off--you looked up, went whir-whir-whir, and figured out it's gonna land here?
ERNEST. It's a satellite, not a spaceship, and it's not landing. But the rest is exactly right.
PAUL. The whir-whir-whir part is right?
ERNEST. It will fly over us. Directly over us, I think. For my experiment, I'm going to use the Doppler shift to confirm speed, altitude, and track.
PAUL. Oh, a Doppler shift, of course, that's what I would do. Listen, ah-- there's no one here at the motel. We don't get many people after leaf peeping is over. So, you can get a room. But-- I don't think Moman - uh, my Mom - will want you talkin' to no Russkies flying over our house.
ERNEST. No. We're not talking to it. It is going to talk to us! It's tiny, about the size of a basketball, they say. There's no one inside it.
PAUL. A basketball?
ERNEST. (*He retrieves a canvas bag*). About the same size. We'll be able to see it. It will amaze you, I promise.
PAUL. Wait a minute - what are the radios for again?

ERNEST. Listening to the satellite.
PAUL. But there's no one to talk to?
ERNEST. It's transmitting a code. We'll be able to hear it coming before it flies over.
PAUL. Right! They've played the beep on the radio. But, it's night? How do you see it at night?
ERNEST. *(Ernest hands Paul binoculars from out of his bag.)* Ah! It is evening! A very astute observation. Quite remarkable thinking on your part. Quite remarkable!
PAUL. Thanks.
ERNEST. You see, the satellite is so far up in the sky that from where it is, the sun is still shining upon it. It will be quite brightly lit. We'll see it all right.
PAUL. Really?
ERNEST. Yes. Yes, certainly. Look up. Look there! Can you imagine it now? A very shiny basketball shape- you can see it in your mind's eye, can't you? It has two pairs of antennae emerging from it, swooping back together forming a "V". Imagine it's spinning, too. Very rapidly.
PAUL. I can see it!
ERNEST. Yes, I think you can. You have a remarkable imagination! It no doubt helps you in your work as a songwriter.
PAUL. I'm not a songwriter. Singer, maybe, but not a writer.
ERNEST. I don't believe it! Music and lyrics must be rushing through your mind all the time.
PAUL. Sometimes.
ERNEST *(referring to Paul's hand)* You're injured.
PAUL. Oh-- yeah-- it's not too bad. I think it's just sprained. Maybe a concussion.
ERNEST. (*Ernest hands him some more items from out of his bag -- a radio, antennas, various parts of exotic and uncertain use.)* A concussion's in your head.
PAUL. That's what Moman says. She thinks I'm faking it.
ERNEST. (*Handing over more items.)* There will be antennas to mount and testing to make sure everything is in working order. Then-- If my

calculations are right-- then my theories of humanity are correct, and she'll agree to marry me. It is logical.
PAUL. Is Madeline a -- space girl, or something?
ERNEST. No.
PAUL. What's your name?
ERNEST. Of course! Ernest Omotoso, at your service.
PAUL. Paul Tremblay.
ERNEST. (*Ernest offers a handshake. Paul hesitates.)* Have you not met a Negro before?
PAUL. Not exactly.
ERNEST. You're uneasy. Perhaps I have made a mistake in assuming you would not have a racial bias against me. I'm sorry. I will go. Is there another place you could recommend? Maybe I could set my equipment up somewhere on the roadside. *(He begins to repack his equipment.)*
PAUL. Wait.
ERNEST. *(Ernest finds a pair of glasses in his breast pocket and puts them on.)* My father and I have had many discussions about the interaction between white and black. There can be distrust on both sides. I wear these glasses to help alleviate tension. We've discovered that the look socially elevates us. What do you think? *(He removes and replaces his glasses a couple of times.)*
PAUL. You mean, you just wear them to look -- claws sharp? Smart? You know. That you know your groceries.
ERNEST. Ah! I see. Yes, well...It's all about how you interpret it. Personally, I choose to ignore bias based on appearance. I find it illogical. Don't you?
PAUL. Huh, yeah.
ERNEST. My father would say: Logic. Science, and a little bit of love. Words to live by. *(They shake hands.)*
PAUL. Logic. Science. And a little bit of love. I think there's a song in there.
ERNEST. I'm certain you will find it. Do you think this place is romantic enough for a marriage proposal?
PAUL. Mister Oh-mo-

ERNEST. Please, call me Ernest.
PAUL. Ernest-- You know-- you might just as well have walked in here from another planet yourself, and then you start talking about Sputnik and getting married and-- it all sounds a little crazy.
ERNEST. It does? I have it well organized.
MARIE. (*offstage*) Paul?! Paul Tremblay!
PAUL. Back here, Moman! Chu en arrière!
MARIE. *(MARIE bustles in and, seeing Ernest, is surprised).* Mon Dieu, un homme noir. Whose car is that parked here?
PAUL. Moman, this is Mister-- uh, this is Ernest.
MARIE. *("Does he want a room?")* Veut-il une chambre
PAUL. Oui, sure he does.
MARIE. You're Negro. How did you get here?
ERNEST. I'm from London.
MARIE. Do you speak English?
ERNEST. Yes.
MARIE. *(She evaluates.)* You don't look English. You know that leaf peeping is pretty much over?
ERNEST. Yes, M'am. I'm not here for leaf peeping. What is leaf peeping?
PAUL. (*Kang-ga-Man-gus*) You drive up and down the Kancamagus Highway looking at the fall colors. (*Ernest nods. "Ah!")*
MARIE. I recognize your voice. Aren't you the one that called this morning wanting to know our latitude and longitude?
ERNEST. Yes, yes! That's right.
MARIE. I still don't know.
ERNEST. It's O.K. I have calculated it.
MARIE. Just you for the night?
ERNEST. My girlfriend, Madeline, is coming.
MARIE. Your girlfriend. Not married?
ERNEST. Not yet.
MARIE. No fornication between unmarried people in my motel.
PAUL. He's proposing to her tonight, Moman.

MARIE. If she says yes, I may make an exception. Hm. The restaurant is closed for the season. You're welcome to have supper with us. And your friend, too, when she gets here.
ERNEST. That's very kind of you.
MARIE. It will cost you two dollars. Paul will see that you get a room key. Two room keys. (*to Paul*) You have your ledger to finish. No more guitar until your work is done.
PAUL. Oui, Moman.
MARIE. Well, you're welcome to sit out here if you'd like to. No bugs this time of year. What is all of this here? In the boxes?
PAUL He's a scientist, Mah.
MARIE. Scientist?
ERNEST. I'm tracking the satellite. Sputnik? Perhaps you heard about it?
MARIE. Don't leave a mess. I have chores to do. Paul will help you to a room. Enjoy your stay. *(Marie exits.)*
ERNEST. Do you think this is O.K. then, Paul? I only have one chance at this.
PAUL. Yeah, well, you caught us on a good day. When is your girlfriend gonna show up?
ERNEST. I'm not exactly certain. Shortly.
PAUL. You sure you don't want to take her into town or something?
ERNEST. No time. The satellite will be here in about *(checking his wristwatch)* eighty minutes.
PAUL. Meet her afterwards, then.
ERNEST. She'll want to see it, too. It's important for us. We have known each other since childhood. Her father was stationed in London during the war. I promised to marry her when I was ten years old!
(Paul is hunting for something in one of the storage boxes.)
PAUL. If that's what you wanna do-- I could play some music for yah. Buddy Holly likes colored people. How about that?
ERNEST. (*Grinning*) Acceptable.
PAUL. *(Reacting to his smile)* What?
ERNEST. I guess I like that expression sometimes. Colored people. It sounds... playful.

PAUL *(considering)* O.K. So. We've got the sky, which you love, and we have an out-of-the-way place, a little B.H. to set the mood. And these lanterns. (*Lighting one)* The smell keeps the bugs away. When there are any. What do you think she'll say?
ERNEST. Why-- I think she'll say yes. I mean, we have not exactly talked about it in some time. I must say I really don't know. Our union is a logical choice. She would realize that, of course.
PAUL. Oh, sure, she will, especially after you explain about the Poppler shift and everything.
ERNEST. I'm overwhelmed by her eyes. I could look into them forever. They shimmer and oscillate. Not just the saccades that everyone has. Deeper than that. I wonder where she is.
PAUL. Where is she coming from?
ERNEST. She teaches at Exeter Academy. It is about 90 miles. But I don't know the route she would drive.
PAUL. Oh! Exeter, huh? It's a good ride from here.
ERNEST. We should get these things set up. The satellite will arrive, and I will not be at all ready. *(The chirp of a car horn is heard.)*
PAUL. Maybe that's your girl?
ERNEST. I hope so.
PAUL. I'll go and get her for you.
ERNEST. *(Paul starts out)*. Paul? Before you go -- I wanted to thank you. I was not able to do much research on the Skyline Motel. I just had to hope we could establish a rapport. It was my only unknown variable in this experiment.
PAUL. Huh. It's O.K. It's kind of exciting, actually. Can I get anything from your car? Luggage or something?
ERNEST *(handing him keys)* There's one big bag left in the trunk. I could find you a tip, I think. *(He struggles into his pocket.)*
PAUL. Don't worry about it, Daddy-oh. Nobody leaves tips around here.
MADELINE (*offstage*) Excuse me, I'm looking for a friend.
ERNEST. Thank you very much.
MARIE *(offstage; "Your crazy friend is back there."*) Tin ami le fou , y'est la-bas. In the back.

MADELINE (*offstage*) Merci, Madame.
PAUL. Good luck. *(MADELINE enters as Paul exits the opposite way.)*
MADELINE. Ernest?!
ERNEST. Hi, Maddie.
MADELINE. What are you doing out here?
ERNEST. Waiting for you.
MADELINE. Well, come here, silly! *(He does. They embrace. She kisses him carefully.)* Oh, it's been so long since I've seen you! Are you good? *(Ernest nods. What is it about him? They kiss again.)* So, tell me all about this experiment. Have you seen it yet?
ERNEST. No-- But it's coming. We'll see it together.
MADELINE. Oh, this is thrilling! Huh? What a wild spot. It's all my kids are talking about. I've had them writing essays and poems -- Oh! Ernest, you should come meet my class-- they'd love to hear you talk about Sputnik. How long can you stay?
ERNEST. Well, I did have an idea about that.
MADELINE. Tell me, tell me!
ERNEST. I mostly came to see you.
MADELINE. How long can you stay?
ERNEST. A few days. I'll have to get back to school.
MADELINE. Those university people will be so impressed when they see what you have done.
ERNEST. I should warn you, there is a little bit of risk in my project.
MADELINE. Risk? What kind of risk?
ERNEST. I used what little money I could raise to come here. I may not be able to finish my education.
MADELINE. That doesn't sound like a little bit of risk.
ERNEST. I will have to find a job soon. But I had an idea about that.
MADELINE. What kind of idea?
ERNEST. How are your parents? And your sister?
MADELINE. You're evading. Daddy continues to traipse all over the world. Lord knows where he is now. Kathleen is back in school and Momma is gossiping at the country club.
ERNEST. Have you noticed the sky here? Isn't it astonishing? So clear! It's so dark. At home, there are so many lights. Up here, in the

mountains, it seems like nothing tries to compete with the stars. There's Vega. And Deneb's there. Oh! And the dragon! Sputnik should cross just beneath her. Where's Orion? He should be just coming up for winter. The candlelight is so primitive. Goes with the stars.
MADELINE. What's that smell?
ERNEST. The candle uses an olfactory bait. Isn't that fascinating?
MADELINE. I thought the purpose of citronella was to repel the insects, not draw them in.
ERNEST. Oh? I see. I shall have to study it further. Anyway, I... Do you want a glass of wine first?
MADELINE. First?
ERNEST. Before I-- he was going to-- I wanted to talk to you--
MADELINE. What's going on with you?
ERNEST. You know-- things-- do you know what a Doppler shift is?
MADELINE. Maybe. I'm really glad you're here. *(She kisses him again and lingers near his face.)*
ERNEST. Do you remember in London, when we could come out from the Underground? When it would be quiet again? And, dark, like this? We could just sit and look at constellations?
MADELINE. I remember.
ERNEST. I memorized every one just so that we could stay up looking for them. Whenever your Mother would let us. It's amazing how much guidance we draw from our memories. Do you have to get back tonight? You must have classes tomorrow.
MADELINE. I got someone to cover for me. I've been thinking. What if I move to London?
ERNEST. Oh?
MADELINE. We'll hang around our old haunts, see your parents on Sundays and--
ERNEST. Maddie. I sent a telegram to your father.
MADELINE. What?
ERNEST. This morning.
MADELINE. How did you find him? Why did you do that?
ERNEST. I had a question for him.
MADELINE. A question? What sort of question? Did he answer?

ERNEST. No-- your mother said he was in Boston?
MADELINE. You spoke to Mother?
ERNEST. I called and spoke to your Mother. She said he had gone to Boston. That's nearby?
MADELINE. Not really. What did you say to Mother?
ERNEST. I just-- I asked if she-- I just asked for your father.
MADELINE. Oh, dear. And, then you sent Daddy a telegram?
ERNEST. Yes, to Boston, this morning.
MADELINE. Then you haven't spoken to him yet?
ERNEST. No.
MADELINE. What time? What time did you send the telegram this morning?
ERNEST. Madeline, I don't understand.
MADELINE. I would have thought that if you had sent him a telegram, he might have tried to call me. Of course, I left my last class and came straight up here. Oh, Ernest! What did the telegram say?
ERNEST. I asked him-- I wanted to ask you--
MADELINE. Ask me? Ask me what?
ERNEST. If you would--
MADELINE. Daddy knows. Ohmygod, he knows!
ERNEST. Knows about what?
MADELINE. Who would he tell? He wouldn't phone Mother. Although-- you said you talked to her? She might have put two and two together. Maybe I can phone Edith.
ERNEST Madeline?
MADELINE. We're gonna have to do something about Daddy. To put him off the scent.
ERNEST. The scent of what?
MADELINE. Oh, Ernest. I knew that's why you had come. You are so sweet and I do love you. It's not that-- it's not-- it's a beautiful thought. It is.
ERNEST. I haven't--
MADELINE. *(Gently)* No, don't. You have to listen first. There's something I have to tell you. You're not going to like it. Daddy-- My parents. They don't know we've been seeing each other. They think we

haven't seen each other since I left London when I was twelve. Not that they believed any romance was serious for a twelve-year-old.
ERNEST. But-- How can that be?
MADELINE. I suppose I knew it would happen eventually. I just thought that it would happen when I decided to tell them.
ERNEST. They don't know anything? About us?
MADELINE. No, of course not. They'd never understand.
ERNEST. You've stayed with us in London every summer. My parents wrote to your parents.
MADELINE. Edith would intercept those letters for me.
ERNEST. Edith intercepted the letters? But your parents wrote back?
MADELINE. Oh, Ernest, you don't know what I have gone through so that we can be together! I've concocted an entire history that Mother and Daddy would accept.
ERNEST. Madeline, I-- find it hard to process this information. I don't see the logic of your behavior.
MADELINE. Logic? Huh. It is logical, if you think about it. They would never approve of me seeing you! Of us dating! Oh, my. So, I just-- never told them. If they never knew, they couldn't object.
ERNEST. You have ignored an essential part of our relationship.
MADELINE. Unless we can think of something-- When Daddy gets that telegram-- you'd better be back home in London before then.
(Paul enters carrying the bags from Ernest's trunk.)
ERNEST. Madeline--
MADELINE. Ernest, I have to go back to Exeter. If you called Mother, then he probably saw that telegram. I'd better be there if they try and telephone me.
PAUL. *(Paul sets down his bundles.)* You're leaving?
ERNEST. This is Paul, from the motel. He's helping me with the experiment.
MADELINE. Oh. How do you do?
PAUL. What about the Sputnik?
MADELINE. Oh, Ernest, you should stay and do your experiment. Come to Exeter when you are done.
ERNEST. No, I-- I'll come with you.

MADELINE. No! I don't want you to miss your experiment! You came all this way.
ERNEST. But, I--
MADELINE. Come see me when you can. *(She kisses him quickly and walks.)*
PAUL. But-- You can't go!
MADELINE. Excuse me?
PAUL. My father and brothers are running the logging operation a few miles down the road. The road will be blocked while they're pulling lumber out of the woods.
ERNEST. At night?
PAUL. County won't let them block the road during the day. They'll be done by sun-up.
ERNEST. You didn't mention this before.
PAUL. I didn't think you'd be leaving. I have a room made up for you. For both of you. *(Paul hands her a key.)*
MADELINE. You've got to get them to move! *(She hands him the key back.)*
PAUL. No, I can't.
MADELINE. What do you mean, No!? Ernest, tell him.
ERNEST. Stay.
MADELINE. If he should call and I'm not there -- he'll have the National Guard looking for me!
PAUL. The road will be clogged with logs and equipment. Sorry.
MADELINE. Is there a phone?
PAUL. There's a phone in the house. Moman will show you.
MADELINE. You're sure? You couldn't take me down there and get me past?
PAUL. Wish I could. (*Madeline stares at Paul, embraces Ernest, and exits.)* What was that?
ERNEST. She has-- there is a problem.
PAUL. What kind of problem?
ERNEST *(He turns towards his equipment)* It's not your concern. Shall we?
PAUL. Shall we what?

ERNEST. *(Snapping)* Are you going to help me put up this equipment or not?!
PAUL. Take it easy, Daddy-oh.
ERNEST. Sorry-- I-- I did not expect that she would not see the logic of--. I know it's uncommon for a Negro man and a white woman to marry in this country. Do you have data on this kind of marriage? Do you know any other couples like us?
PAUL. Uh-- data? No. I don't --
ERNEST. I have considerable money at risk. I need this to work. There really is no other option. This change is unexpected. (*Ernest breathes deeply, focusing his attention. Paul tries to interrupt. Ernest ignores him, and completes his routine.)* We should focus our attention on the task at hand. *(Ernest meekly picks up one of the bags, still thinking about what's happened.)*
PAUL. What was that? All the… *(He mimics his breathing)*
ERNEST. A way to focus your thoughts. I could teach you?
PAUL. Maybe later.
ERNEST. (*Considering)* I'm sorry. I shouldn't have snapped at you. I apologize.
PAUL. It's O.K.
ERNEST. I'm very sorry. *(Then, slowly)* I did my research on the rules for marriage in the U.S.A. Customs and laws and such. I know it's currently illegal in Alabama, where Madeline is from. This is illogical and we can challenge it. I'm just-- surprised-- about how the-- what our relationship has been-- in the past. Shall we? *(They continue pulling things out of the bags.)*
PAUL. Yeah. Of course. I called some friends of mine-- to come up and see the Sputnik-- they didn't believe me.
ERNEST. You did?
PAUL. Yeah.
ERNEST. I see. Well, don't get too excited. I may have it wrong.
PAUL. I thought you had this figured out?
ERNEST. As we have seen already this evening, things don't always go as planned. I could be off by a hundred miles-- in which case we may hear the signal but actually see nothing-- There are still variables

that could disable this experiment. Do you know-- There's one thing I have learned many times now, and that is not to shrink from adversity. There is opportunity here.
PAUL. Opportunity for what?
ERNEST. I have clearly underestimated Madeline's feelings about how challenging our life together may be at first. Success here will be a big step forward. Are you ready?
PAUL. Are you kidding? This is everything plus.
ERNEST. That's good?
PAUL. My night was headed for crashville before you showed up.
(Marie bustles in.)
MARIE. *("What's going on here?")* Paul Tremblay! Que c'est qui se passe?
PAUL. It's an experiment, Moman. You told him it was O.K.
MARIE. ("*His girlfriend is in her room crying."*) Sa blonde dans sa chambre en train de pleurer. Take all this down at once!
PAUL. Moman! We're tracking the space ship. On est entrain de suivre un vaisseau spatial.
MARIE. Vaisseau spatial? What are you talking about?
PAUL. It's the Sputnik, Moman! It's been in all the papers. Simon and Papa talked about it this morning before they all left. Learn to read English!
MARIE. You should be out with them at the camp instead of here not doing your work. Did you balance the ledger yet?
PAUL. I'm helping a guest of the motel.
MARIE *("No woman would marry such a crazy man")* Aucune femme ne voudra d'un fou comme lui!
PAUL. Moman. Really.
ERNEST. *(Ernest takes a battery from a radio and examines it.)* Oh, no!
PAUL. What's the matter?
ERNEST. (*Using a battery tester.*) These batteries are dead!
PAUL. Can you plug in? I have a cord out here.
ERNEST. We can use that, but not for this radio. It only uses batteries.
(Ernest retrieves the cord and examines the battery.)

PAUL. What then?
ERNEST. I can't believe I have overlooked such a simple thing. Do you have a garage? Some tools?
PAUL. Are you going to do some science stuff?
ERNEST. With permission?
MARIE. Dépêchez-vous — O.K.
PAUL. C'mon! I'll show you! *(Ernest and Paul exit quickly. Marie calls after them.)*
MARIE. *("The hand does not hurt so much for play")* Sa main y fait pas si ma quand c'est le temps de jouer! That injury is all in his head. *(Marie takes up a pair of binoculars and looks up.)* Vaisseau spatial! Hah! *(Madeline enters from the opposite way.)*
MADELINE. Where did they go?
MARIE. Off on a foolish errand. Are you feeling better?
MADELINE. No.
MARIE. How's your room? You like the room?
MADELINE. Oh, yes. The rooms are nice.
MARIE. I redecorated last spring. May I ask you--
MADELINE. Yes?
MARIE. It's none of my business to intrude. But this is a very unusual day. I have never met a black man. If you want to go home, I can take you down the road and get Christian to let you pass.
MADELINE. Thank you. I'll stay for now.
MARIE. Men do the craziest things. More than a little trouble. I speak from the experience. Why is it we put up with them at all?
MADELINE. I don't know, Misses Tremblay. That's a very good question.
MARIE. How is it you met Ernest? Did he work for your father?
MADELINE. No. We met in London. Hiding from the blitz together. Pretty exciting stuff when you're a kid. Somehow, I always felt safe with Ernest. After the war, I found ways to get back there from Alabama most every summer. Daddy's government jobs meant he was gone most of the time and Momma was at the country club gossiping. My sister and I spent most of our time with our housekeeper, Edith.

MARIE. *("Keh-beck-whah.")* The Québécois did not fight in the war. It was part of how we came here. It led to some arguments and people making assumptions about other people based on their appearance. In my case, appearing as English. I suppose you know about that.
MADELINE. Yeah.
MARIE. In Montreal, it's not done to marry the English. Like I did. We are poor, Catholic Québécois, and they are not. Everything about my Gabriel was in my father's head before he met him.
MADELINE. I've managed to avoid that confrontation, up to now.
MARIE. Perhaps you wouldn't mind helping me make dinner? Before those two crazy boys get back? It will save you some money and we can talk some more.
MADELINE. Are you sorry you left Montreal? Misses Tremblay?
MARIE. Not all the time. C'mon. *(Marie and Madeline exit as Ernest and Paul enter from the opposite way. Ernest crosses to the radio and replaces the batteries. Paul watches intently. Ernest turns on the radio. It comes to life. They jump around, yelling.)*
PAUL. Apogee, perigee, golly gee. This is all totally mad, Daddy-oh! How did you do that!?
ERNEST. A simple matter of electron transference.
PAUL. And my Dad's electric drill will still work?
ERNEST. Of course. Daddy-oh.
PAUL. Now you've got it! That's what I want to do! Just get out there--with my music? Beebop with Charlie Parker in some smoke-filled room somewhere. That's my Sputnik.
ERNEST. I've got a test crystal in there with the local radio station--Let's see if it still works-- *(Ernest turns on the radio. A static-filled version of a song like ,"Rock-a-Billy", plays. Paul sings along. Ernest interrupts him, shutting down the radio.)*
PAUL. Hey! I was just getting started. *(He fidgets inside the radio again.)*
ERNEST. That was just a test. We take that crystal out, put in this one and we can listen for the satellite.
PAUL. What will we hear?

ERNEST. Just a ping, ping, ping. Like they play on the radio. *(Ernest turns on both of the radios and a dull static can be heard. The sound slowly subsides but does not disappear completely.)*
PAUL. Can't sing along with that. What do we do until then?
ERNEST. Wait. Listen. Watch. *(They pick up binoculars and stare up at the sky.)*
PAUL. Where do I look?
ERNEST. *(Indicating)* That way.
PAUL. It'll fly right over us?
ERNEST. I hope so.
PAUL. And we'll be able to see it?
ERNEST. I have friends who have seen it already. We'll see it. *(They watch the sky.)*
PAUL. Why didn't the Martian get burned when he visited the sun?
ERNEST. Huh?
PAUL. Why didn't the Martian get burned when he visited the sun?!
ERNEST. You've got me.
PAUL. He went at night! Get it! You see, it's dark at night, so he doesn't get burned.
ERNEST. I get it.
PAUL. We're five hundred miles from Milton Berle. That's all I got.
ERNEST. Who is Milton Berle?
PAUL. He's ah-- I don't know. On T.V.
ERNEST. Ah, television. Something else I should study further. *(They resume watching the sky.)*
PAUL. Do you think she just needs time to think about it? I mean, after you ask her. Are you still going to ask her?
ERNEST. Let's get the experiment over and then-- we'll see.
PAUL. Do you think she wants to?
ERNEST. Yes. I do. I did. There may be some trouble when her father finds out.
PAUL. What kind of trouble?
ERNEST. He may not approve. He probably won't.
PAUL. Huh? Well, he better not show up here talking like that.
ERNEST. It would be a long way for him to come.

PAUL. Try putting your glasses on for him. I think it's radical, Daddy-oh. (*Pause)* What does a Martian use to hold up his pants? An asteroid belt. You wanna try a reefer?
ERNEST. Maybe later. We don't have to keep watching.
PAUL. No? *(They put down the binoculars.)*
ERNEST. I have this clock to time everything precisely. As precise as I can manage with this, anyway. I'm going to set this alarm to ring when the satellite should be overhead. When it rings, look up.
PAUL. What if you're wrong? We might miss it.
ERNEST. It will only matter if I'm right.
PAUL. Why is that?
ERNEST. Because there are many people who can figure out the equations to show the orbit. But few can predict where it will be at any given moment. If I can do that--
PAUL. I'd be impressed.
ERNEST. In a few years, satellites will fill the sky. They will be as common as a car or the railroad. From where they are, they can see everything we do. We'll be able to talk to them, and they'll answer back. Probably on television! They will tell you what is happening on the other side of the world. Soon, the radio spectrum will be buzzing with messages aimed at satellites. And, with that communication, maybe the world will listen a little bit-- and become a friendlier place. Wouldn't you want to be a part of that?
PAUL. Yeah. Music can change the world. I think.
ERNEST. That may be just what the satellite is used for, to carry music around the world. Maybe even yours.
PAUL. Oh-- I'll never get out of here.
ERNEST. Sure you will. If you want to.
PAUL. Oh, there will always be some reason to be here. Like that ledger I'm supposed to balance.
ERNEST. I'm pretty good with ledgers. Let me take a look.
PAUL. Seriously?
ERNEST. It will pass the time. *(Paul hands the ledger to Ernest. Ernest looks through the pages. He writes in the book.)*
PAUL. Just gotta balance those pages.

ERNEST. Why did you lie about your hand?
PAUL. Huh? Oh, not fooling you anymore? I dunno. I'm just not cut out to be a lumberjack. My step-father and my three brothers are out there-- they'll be gone for days. I worked at a paper mill for a few months-- not cut out for that, either-- so I came home-- no one much interested in a guitar player around here-- sometimes I get a few dollars to play at the American Legion. My brother Simon gave me ten bucks to play at his wedding last summer. Papa gave him a hard time for "encouraging me." So, now, when I'm not out in the woods trying to keep a chainsaw from biting me, I'm here-- staring at those numbers and --
ERNEST *(Closing the book with authority)* Done!
PAUL. Huh?
ERNEST. You had some numbers transposed. Common mistake.
PAUL. You balanced it?!
ERNEST. That's nothing. I did a hundred-page ledger at the Royal Bank last summer in thirty minutes. Took the head teller four hours to verify my work.
PAUL. Holy smoke.
ERNEST. I have a head for numbers.
PAUL. *(Studying the ledger.)* I guess so. Wow! This would have taken me hours to do. Maybe a whole day. You know what this means? I got tomorrow off! Thanks, Daddy-oh. I can't believe it.
ERNEST. Glad to do it. It's fun to show off your talent once in a while. Why don't you show off your talent for me? Play me something.
PAUL. Anything, Daddy. You earned it. What do you want to hear?
ERNEST. I don't know. Anything you like. *(Paul sings Ernest a song by Buddy Holly or similar.)* Let me tell you something. I couldn't do that if I worked on it all day. Not even close.
PAUL. It's not that hard.
ERNEST. Not for you. Do you know? Buddy Holly and Chuck Berry are touring together right now?
PAUL. The Biggest Show Stars. Fats Domino, Chuck Berry-- Paul Anka, too! I know all about it.
ERNEST. You're every bit as good as they are. You should give it a try.

PAUL. My Pa keeps telling me that music is not a real job.
ERNEST. I think he's right. It's much harder than a job like I had at the Royal Bank. Someone else built the bank. Someone else opens the doors. I just go in and work the figures. If you're a musician, you have to do everything, starting from nothing. It's a job, for certain. Some can do it and some can't.
PAUL. I'll think about it.
ERNEST. I think that you have thought about it.
PAUL. Yeah. I suppose I have.
ERNEST. How long do you think it takes to drive here from Boston?
PAUL. Oh, gee, I think four or five hours at least.
ERNEST. When will the road be opened again?
PAUL. Which road?
ERNEST. Back to town. The one your brothers have blocked.
PAUL. Oh, by sunrise, for sure.
MARIE. (*offstage*) Boys!? We have supper ready for you.
MADELINE. (*offstage*;*"You still here?*") Vous etes encore ici? En pleine nuit?
MARIE. *("Which one of these boys belongs to you?")* Lequel de ces fous vous appartient?
MADELINE. *("Your son is very handsome. Perhaps I'll take him home.")* Votre fils est très beau. Peut-être que je vais le ramener chez lui moi!
MARIE. You should!
PAUL. *("I speak French, Miss.")* Je parle fran√ßais, Mademoiselle.
(A beat. The women laugh.)
MARIE. We have some supper prepared if you can leave the radar installation for a few minutes.
ERNEST. We should wait. It should only be a little while yet.
MARIE. No supper for Paul until he gets his ledger work completed.
PAUL. Oh, Moman, I'll finish it tomorrow.
MARIE. ("*You spent all day in the woods with your music."*) Have you even started it? I ask for you to do one thing. Just one thing! Tu passé toute la journée dans les bois avec ta musique.
PAUL. You know that work is hard for me.

MARIE. Oh, but your hand seems better now. So, that won't be a distraction while you are working.
PAUL. I'll get on it first thing tomorrow.
MARIE. You'll get to it right after supper and make some good progress before!
PAUL. I'm helping Ernest with his project.
MARIE. Not while there is work to be done elsewhere! You have done nothing but-- (*to Madeline*) Tergiverser?
MADELINE. Procrastinate?
MARIE. You are always with procrastinate!
PAUL. Oh, Moman, don't worry. I'll get to it!
MARIE. Yes, you will! Right now!
PAUL. Let's not argue in front of the guests.
MARIE. *("You will kill your old Mother.")* Tu vas faire mourir ta vielle mère.
ERNEST. But the ledger is done.
MARIE. Oh, please don't try and help him so you can have him for your crazy spaceship.
PAUL. Alright, Moman, I'll work on it right now.
ERNEST. He doesn't need to work on it. It's finished.
PAUL. Ernest, please, let me--
MARIE. What is he saying that it's finished?
PAUL. He's just trying to get me in trouble.
MARIE. *(to Ernest)* Do you want him to help you?
ERNEST. He has been a great help already.
MARIE. What about his hand? He can work with his hand like this?
ERNEST. His hand is not injured.
PAUL. Ernest--
MARIE. *(swiping at his bandaged hand)* Yes, of course. He is faking. This is the disgrace! All the time. The lies. The lies! This hand is not hurt. You lie all the time. All the times with the half-truth and the out and out lie. Now, you have recruited your new friend to lie for you!
PAUL. Moman, take it easy.
MARIE. I don't know what your poor dead father is thinking in his grave about his only son a disgrace.

ERNEST. *(Handing her the book)* Mrs. Tremblay-- I balanced the ledger.
MARIE. What is this?
ERNEST. It's done. Paul has been so generous with me. I have great experience working with a ledger. It's very easy for me. I was happy to do it.
MARIE. So, you knew it was done?
PAUL. Moman-
MARIE. So you lied about this, too!? You have tried to gain another day off from work for your foolishness! You will go to your room. No supper. No more spaceship foolishness. Mister can get along without you.
PAUL. No.
MARIE. Go on. Go. Your father will be home tomorrow.
PAUL. No-- and as you like to remind me, he's not my father.
MARIE. *("You will show respect.")* Tu vas respecter ton père.
Paul turns and walks a few steps away as if to go. Then, not so fast:
PAUL. Moman, I'm nineteen years old. You don't send me to my room.
MARIE. *(Shut up, have a word!)* Tais-toi, pu un mot!
PAUL. What did you have to open your big mouth for?.
ERNEST. She should know.
PAUL. So you could show your talent to her, too? Make sure everyone knows who's a genius with numbers!?
ERNEST. I knew you were lying about your hand.
PAUL. Well, thank you, Dick Tracy! Put me in the cuffs! You know, I'd like to know how you can be so smart about everything and not know why your girlfriend here doesn't want to marry you? Can't figure that one out, hey Einstein? *(A little more)* A colored man married to a white woman? That is slated for crashville. Interview your brains, man.
MARIE. (*Grabbing Paul by the collar, "Come with me")* Stop it! Vien icite. Can't you see you have done enough for one night? Leave them alone! *(Pause. Marie releases him. Marie exits. Paul exits.)*
MADELINE. Ernest? What was that all about?

ERNEST. He is angry. He tried a deception and it didn't work out. Deception is illogical. Why am I telling you? You know about that.
MADELINE. Ernest-- I should explain.
ERNEST. Did you know that they have proven that space is curved? That it can be curved. See, a mass like the earth sits in space and it affects the space that it is in. It shapes it. A massive thing like the sun affects it a lot, and they have proven this. And then, there is Quantum space. Where even the smallest things affect time and space. We don't know much about that. It's counterintuitive.
MADELINE. Ernest--
ERNEST. Small things like honesty with someone you love. Some think that there is a connection between love and physics.
MADELINE. You're hurt.
ERNEST. *(With rising emotion)* It's not the color. It cannot be the color? Can it? Still? I am not ashamed of my color. Are you ashamed of your color? Every day I wake up, and I am the same color and so are you. How does this keep coming up? We have talked about it many times! Many, many times. We have made fun of it, we have been serious about it. We have had serious discussions about your parents and the world-- and our feelings-- and all that time you had been lying to them about me, about us-- and how we feel about each other. This is not just a passing thing. Is it? Is it a passing thing? Is it?! *(Dead. Silence.)*
MADELINE. Of course not.
ERNEST. You're certain? I can pack my things and go back to London. If that's what you think is best.
MADELINE. No. Please, don't do that.
ERNEST. Then what, Madeline? Dishonesty is illogical. Nothing good can come from it.
MADELINE. You're right, we have discussed this a lot. And, we made fun of my Mother when-- Do you remember how you said to Mommy that time how you didn't hold it against her that she was white?
ERNEST. Stop distracting! Tell them!
MADELINE. This is my game, Ernest. I will tell them when I'm ready.

ERNEST. I wrote to your father about Redstone. The American rocket program -- in Alabama. I wrote to him to ask him to help me get a position working there. And, I asked permission to marry you.
MADELINE. Ernest, you didn't!
ERNEST. Madeline-- you have to--.
MADELINE. Ernest! Even if-- we can't. There are laws preventing it.
ERNEST. I know about that. These laws. We'll challenge them.
MADELINE. We'll go to London, as I said?
ERNEST. Are you asking me to choose between you and pursuing my dream?
MADELINE. I don't--
ERNEST. Madeline, this is our time.
MADELINE. Wait a second. How can you say that? How can you even think that? You don't have any idea what I have gone through so that we could be together. For years I have lied to my parents, lied to my sister, cried myself to sleep some nights because I missed you so much, every day checking the mail for letters from London so that nothing could get through to Mother's prying eyes. Worrying every holiday that you might decide to use the telephone-- not to mention the money to come to London. I know I shouldn't have but I did. I have been committed to this for a long time, and now you're going to choose some rockets over me?
ERNEST. It's not like that.
MADELINE. Ernest. This is logical. Listen to me now as you would listen to a scientist. No one we know can get around the law. My parents, my sister? They will never understand. Even if we did. They would do horrible things to you. They have all kinds of Jim Crow laws.
ERNEST. You mean like water fountains for the Negro? These things will change.
MADELINE. No, they won't. They won't.
ERNEST. When people see with their own eyes what it does to people, it will change.
MADELINE. I know you believe that.
ERNEST. Scientists are different. They are educated men.

MADELINE. You'd be surprised. It's not them you have to worry about. Have you seen the other articles in the newspapers lately? In Little Rock the president is calling out the National Guard so that Negro children can go to school. There are gonna be riots over this.
ERNEST. But that's in Arkansas.
MADELINE. It doesn't matter! It doesn't matter at all! It's probably worse in Alabama. If someone finds out just one Negro is working on that project-- they may have to send the National Guard to protect you!
(Lt. Colonel Alfred Bradford, Madeline's father, interrupts them. He's exhausted from his long drive.)
ALFRED. Madeline.
MADELINE. Daddy?!
ALFRED. How are you, Ernest? It's been a long time.
ERNEST. Yes. Good evening, sir.
MADELINE. Daddy? Daddy, what are you doing here?
ALFRED. *(Showing the paper)* I got this telegram this morning in Boston. It's from him. Then, I drove for five hours to Exeter and saw your friend, Lynette. What's going on here?
MADELINE. Ernest has-- devised an experiment-- Sputnik, that Russian satellite--
ALFRED. Don't patronize me, Madeline.
MADELINE. Of course, you know about that-- Ernest is here from the University-- and since it was so close by-- he invited me to come see it, too. He's coming back to Exeter to tell the students about the experiment. Isn't that right, Ernest?
ALFRED. *(to Ernest)* As for you--
ERNEST. It's good to see you again, sir.
ALFRED. I'm sure it's not. Or, at least it won't be. He hasn't touched you, has he? *(A long pause).* Of course not. Sorry. You see, I just spent about eight or nine hours in the car wondering exactly how I could have received a telegram like this from a kid I barely remember. I do remember your father as an aide in the War Office.
MADELINE. Daddy--
ALFRED. Please wait, Madeline. Let's see how I do. Last fall, I bumped into him again in London. I recollected a rather odd remark he

made about how he'd enjoyed having Madeline there with them. I was surprised, but not shocked, that you may have looked up our old friends while you were there. Because I was aware you spent a lot of time with those families during the war. And, of course, we knew you had an affection for London. After all, we'd sent you off to the Royal Academy of Drama one summer, and the Royal Academy of literature and science another summer, and the Royal Academy of Pinochle and Card Playin' another summer-- and whatever other bullshit names you came up with-- I did a little askin' around this morning-- and I found out that only one of those academies you attended over about the last six summers is even a real place-- and I called that one up and they said that you had never even been there! So, imagine how it musta looked, as I'm drivin' along, piecing this all together, when I stopped at a little fish and bait store and made a person-to-person phone call to my friend Mister Omotoso-- in London-- to find out just how many summers you may have spent in their house-- with their son-- and imagine how I reacted when he told me that it was six or seven, and how happy they'd been to have you, and how delighted he was that I had called-- so that he could congratulate me on the announcement of your marriage to his son!

ERNEST. Sir--

ALFRED. Your father told me they told you at the university not to come.

ERNEST. You spoke to my professors?

ALFRED. They said that your equations aren't proven. That you've dropped out of school on the wild notion that you can prove these physics--

ERNEST. But they are provable.

MADELINE. Daddy--

ALFRED. I very much doubt that.

ERNEST. I could show you.

ALFRED. I have the top people in the world. People who have finished their degrees. They are struggling with the math.

ERNEST. I'm -- I find the math exciting.

ALFRED. Uh-huh. Most of the Negroes I know can't balance their checkbook. If they even had one.

MADELINE. Daddy!
ALFRED. How are you gonna do it?
ERNEST. A Doppler shift--
ALFRED. Doppler shift?
ERNEST. I'm using the time signal. Fifteen meters.
ALFRED. The signals conflict.
ERNEST. They've turned it off.
ALFRED. They turned it on again.
MADELINE. What does that mean the signals conflict?
ALFRED. It means his equipment will be listening to the wrong frequency. He won't hear a thing.
ERNEST. I have confirmation that it will--
ALFRED. No, no, no, no, no. Sorry, son, I don't think this is going to work.
MADELINE. Daddy, you didn't even give him a chance.
ALFRED. A chance? Chances are-- It would be-- awkward.
MADELINE. Awkward having a Negro working among a bunch of white men?
ALFRED. I didn't come here to argue about this! Madeline? Can we please go?
MADELINE. I'm staying here.
ALFRED. Madeline, please!
MADELINE. You have no business coming up here and-- sticking your nose into my affairs!
ALFRED. I have every right! I'm your father!
MADELINE. Oh, Daddy, don't try that old trick with me.
ALFRED. I have so much to do in Boston-- I should really call my-- oh, right. My aide, your friend, First Lieutenant Buddy Hanlen admitted to me that you and he have not been dating-- at all!
MADELINE. Daddy!
ALFRED. My little girl is lying'to me again. Why am I not surprised?
MADELINE. This is neither the time nor the place for one of your famous tirades! You think because he's Negro he doesn't know.
(Paul enters.)

ALFRED. I have gotten used to colored in the service-- since Ike said that we had to. But Alabama law will not allow you to marry him.
MADELINE. *(Low and menacing)* So, that's what you say, and that's the law? Well, to hell with you! To hell with you and those bigoted traditions and to hell with Alabama! I hate Alabama! Why do you think I left?! I'm not goin' back there. I'm here and I'm stayin'!
ALFRED. Maddie-- be reasonable.
ERNEST. Colonel. Since you have come all this way-- I was going to send you my research paper-- the one that I mentioned in my telegram. But, since you're here, you can observe my results for yourself and--
ALFRED. I don't believe this. *(Alfred steps towards Madeline. Paul asserts himself, tapping Alfred on the shoulder. Alfred turns.)*
PAUL. So, you're the father?
ALFRED. What? Who are you?
PAUL. The desk clerk.
ERNEST. Paul--
ALFRED. The desk clerk?!
PAUL. Did you want a room?
ALFRED. Excuse me?
PAUL. I asked you-- if you need a room-- for the night?
ALFRED. No. Thanks. Won't be staying.
PAUL. Then, I'll have to ask you to leave the premises.
ALFRED. We'll be leaving-- shortly.
PAUL. You'll be leaving-- now.
ALFRED. I'll leave when I'm ready to leave.
PAUL. You'll leave when I tell you to leave.
ERNEST. Paul--
PAUL. And, I'm telling you to leave-- now.
ALFRED. Listen to me. I am Lieutenant Colonel Alfred E. Bradford, I'm here to pick up my daughter, Madeline, and then we'll be leaving. Shortly.
PAUL. Doesn't look to me like she wants to go.
ALFRED. We're-- negotiating that right now.
PAUL. I see. Well, she's already got a room. She'll have to pay for it before she goes.

ALFRED. She hasn't used this room yet, has she?
PAUL. She is the sole occupant of her room-- she used it briefly, made a long-distance call-- and the maid has already turned down the bed.
ALFRED. Alright-- fine. How much is the room?
PAUL. Fifty bucks. Off-season.
ALFRED. A little steep, isn't it?
PAUL. Fifty bucks, Captain.
ALFRED. Lieutenant. Colonel.
PAUL. *("Good for you".)* Ha ben maudit.
MADELINE. How did you get here, Daddy?
ALFRED. What are you talking about?
MADELINE. He said the roads are closed. Something about a logging operation.
ERNEST. He lied.
PAUL. No--
ERNEST. Here's the Colonel. He got past. You told me you had called and invited some friends to come up and see Sputnik. Why would you do that if the roads are closed?
PAUL. They can walk.
ALFRED. There are a bunch of ornery Frenchmen with their chainsaws down the way, but if you yell loud enough, they'll let you by.
ERNEST. So, not really closed.
PAUL. I may have exaggerated. A little. I was trying to help you out.
ALFRED. *(with pejorative emphasis)* Are your parents around, young man? Someone in charge?
PAUL. Sure. I can do that. Excuse me. Be right back. *(Paul backs off stage.)*
MADELINE. Daddy, I have my own car here. I have things to-- discuss with Ernest-- and I have no intention of leaving with you until he and I-
ALFRED. Madeline Lee.
MADELINE. Daddy, you're tired, take a room, go lie down, we'll talk about it tomorrow.
ALFRED. Madeline, I have no intention of staying here tonight or leaving here without you. Now, let's go.

MADELINE. Daddy! You aren't listening to me at all!
ERNEST. Stop! Would you both just stop!
MADELINE. Ernest--
ERNEST. Sir, if you would just listen to me for one--
ALFRED. Mind your place, boy.
MADELINE. Daddy! Don't you dare! I am not going to let you run my life! This is the last straw, I mean it! I will see whom I please, when I please, and that is final!
ALFRED. Don't you talk to me that way, young lady!
MADELINE. You've crossed the line, Daddy. Coming up here all the way from Boston to threaten Ernest? You're crazy!
ALFRED. I'm not threatening him! I came up here to save my little girl from the biggest mistake of her life! Your mother and sister are devastated. Now, c'mon, let's go!
MADELINE. You spoke to Mother?
ALFRED. Yes, of course, I spoke to your Mother and your sister as soon as I found out.
MADELINE. I just called her. She didn't say anything.
ALFRED. I told her not to until I could get you home.
MADELINE. She lied to me.
ALFRED. Don't be shocked by her performance. Both-ah-you will earn Academy Awards. I cannot imagine how all of us were taken in by your scheme.
MADELINE. I wouldn't have had to resort to such things if you weren't such a bigoted jerk!
ALFRED. You have just earned yourself a good old-fashioned whooping up on your backside.
MADELINE. You just try.
ERNEST. Sir! Please, sir!
ALFRED. Ernest-- You are gonna find yourself in jail -- or worse! What the hell is that noise? *(From offstage, there is the tremendous roar of a chainsaw, running at full power, cutting through a large tree. The sound of the chainsaw is overtaken by the terrible crash of the tree falling to earth. Paul staggers in, covered in sawdust, gleefully shouting.)*

PAUL. Yeeee-hah! Bienvenue au Skyline Motel!
ALFRED. What in the name of the good Lord was all that racket!?
PAUL. The ornery Frenchman has closed the road! Everyone is trapped here until we sort this shit out!

END OF ACT I

THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—ORDER A COPY AT WWW.NEXTSTAGEPFRESS.COM