

Plays for Young Audiences

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Average Family

By
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Average Family was first presented by The Children's Theatre Company for the 2007-08 season.

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Characters:

- Nathan Roubidoux
- Debra Roubidoux
- Mikenzie Roubidoux
- Marshel Roubidoux
- Mikal' Roubidoux
- Jack Park
- Rodney Monroe
- Jonathan Monroe
- Luke Monroe
- Sarah Monroe

* There is a brief video montage that features four different families. This can be recreated with voice-overs

PRE SHOW ANNOUNCEMENT:

MIKAL': Thanks for coming to the theater! Turn off your cell phones now.

MIKENZIE: That means you Marshel.

MIKAL': I think it's surgically attached to his face.

Mikenzie and Mikal' laugh.

MARSHEL: Yeah well if you take any pictures of Mikenzie it'll break
your camera.

MIKENZIE: (super Mikenzie sarcastic) They don't allow pictures.

MARSHEL AND MIKENZIE: I know. No you don't. Yes I do. Then why'd you say-
Etc.

Mikal' yells over the growing argument.

MIKAL': Here we go again. Just watch the show.

Act I

SCENE 1

A nice living is illuminated downstage center. NATHAN ROUBIDOUX, 40 and Native American, enters in a business suit carrying a briefcase. He plops himself tiredly onto the couch.

NATHAN: Anybody home?

A door slam is heard. MIKENZIE, 10 and Native with a distinctive Avril Levine/skater girl look storms through the light and yells without noticing her father.

MIKENZIE: Where are you Shelly!?!

Another door slam is heard from the opposite side of the stage. MARSHEL, 14 with a jock attitude, saunters into the light trying not to look bothered.

MARSHEL: Don't be sayin' that.

Mikenzie gets in his face

MIKENZIE: What'd you tell Keyanna Brian?

MARSHEL: Who?

MIKENZIE: Keyanna Brian, the queen of seventh grade? If you said anything to her then she'll decide to hate me which means the whole seventh grade will hate me which means the whole sixth grade will really hate me and my

whole life at middle school will be over and I haven't even gotten there yet.

MARSHEL: Would I seriously let anyone know I'm your brother?

Nathan sinks into the couch, shaking his head.

MIKENZIE: Don't tell them we're related, fine by me.

Marshel starts to turn away.

MARSHEL: I tell people you're from Pluto.

MIKENZIE: Well maybe you want everybody in your new high school to know your nickname is Shelly.

Marshel snaps, she got him.

MARSHEL: You know high school kids? I don't think so Freak Face.

Mikenzie flips out.

MIKENZIE: Where'd you hear that Shelly?

MARSHEL: Shut up Mikenzie.

MIKENZIE: Shelly, Shelly, Shelly...

MIKAL', a 6 year old regular kid with an explosive energy, runs into the room, indignant.

MIKAL': Don't tell her to shut up!

Mikal' launches himself over the back of the couch and at Marshel. Nathan is too stunned to react. Pandemonium.

MARSHAL: Get off!

MIKAL': Take it back!

MIKENZIE: Mikal' stop it. I can fight for myself.

grabs for Mikal 'who holds on to Marshel

Take it back Shelly.

MARSHAL: Off. I'm serious.

Marshel spins to dislodge Mikal' just as Mikenzie grabs his leg. They all

fall in a tumble. Nathan jumps up.

NATHAN: Stop! What is wrong with you kids? It never ends and I'm
sick of it!

All three kids freeze and notice their dad for the first time.

MIKAL': What're you doing here?

NATHAN: I live here.

MIKAL': But it's only like five o'clock.

NATHAN: Mikenzie, get off your brothers.

MARSHEL: Tell her to stay away from my life.

NATHAN: Mikenzie, high school is an important time.

MIKENZIE: But he called me... *(she stops herself)*

NATHAN: That's enough. Where's your mother?

MIKAL': It's Wednesday, she goes to yoga after work.

MIKENZIE: You always take Mar-SHEL's side.

Storms out, upset

NATHAN: *(calls after Mikenzie)*

Would it kill you to be a better example for your little brother?

Behind Nathan's back Marshel mouths "freak" to Mikenzie. Mikal' sees and

shoves Marshel, he shoves Mikal' back.

NATHAN: Mikal'. Mikenzie. That's enough fighting.

MIKAL': But he's like four people bigger than me.

MIKENZIE (O.S.): This house is so unfair!

Door slam

MARSHEL: *(to Mikal')* I've got four chicks texting me. Go watch TV in your room

Mikey.

NATHAN: Good...

The boys go, punching each other in the arm. Nathan drops back on the couch.

NATHAN: Wait, shouldn't you be doing home... *(he's alone)* work.

Never mind. I should've stayed at work. Less stress.

Nathan feels for the remote and aims it toward the audience. A commercial comes on two screens

on either side of the stage. On screen we see JACK PARK, 50 wanna be car sales man, but Jack's

not nearly smooth enough. He has a tendency to ramble and sells RV's.

Jack, in a brown polyester suit from the 80's, wears a safari hat in his RV

lot. He's standing in front of a banner that reads "Jack's All American

RV Super Safari, New Ulm MN". He's obviously reading off of cue cards.

JACK: Do you feel like you and your family never talk anymore? (*Nathan listens closely*) Do you feel like your kids don't appreciate you? (*Nathan nods*) Do you long to go back to a simple time, free of the rat race? Get back in touch with who you really are as a family?

NATHAN: Yeah.

JACK: Well here at Jack's All American RV Super Safari in New Ulm Minnesota, we've always been about family togetherness. So we're embarking on something big, yes, bigger than our 39 foot 2007 Fleetwood Bounder. (*gestures to an RV*) I'm producing the first cable access family reality show right here in Minnesota. That's right. (*pulls off safari hat and replaces it with big cowboy hat*) We're taking two real families back to the frontier. Yes siree, live off the land working together for a reward of simple joys. *And* a brand new RV for the winning family, fully equipped with all the latest electronics, mechanics, and luxury. Compliments of Jack's All American RV Super Safari in New Ulm Minnesota, now open for our "Midnight Madness" sale! Time's almost up to send in your application tapes. Here are some of the great (*finger quotes*) "Average Families" we've already screened. Call the number on the screen to apply.

Nathan pulls a pen out of his shirt pocket and scribbles with a smile on his face. The stage lights go dark while the screens continue.

The picture switches to grainy, amateur video. A generic house with a picturesque yard appears. The camera, obviously handheld, shakily pans to a really clean looking family of six standing in the driveway by a white Saab station wagon.

VOICE OFF SCREEN: (*loud whisper*) You're on.

The family smiles at once and waves to the camera. The dad speaks in a nervous monotone; he sneaks peeks at note cards in his hand.

DAD 1: Hi. We are the Hogan family. We live here (*awkward gesture to the house*) in Shakopee. (*checks card*) Minnesota. We would be a super Average Family. As avid bird watchers we spend a great deal of quality time outdoors.

The screens switches abruptly on a log cabin in the Northern woods. A woman stands alone wearing a Little House on the Prairie type outfit.

MOM1: Welcome to our home.

The windows and doors open revealing three kids and a dad, each in different costumes, Davie Crockett, cowboy, etc.

MOM1: We're the singing Randalls!

The family breaks into a poor, but enthusiastic rendition of 'OKLAHOMA'. Change to a family at the Renaissance Festival in full courtly apparel doing

a may pole dance.

DAD2: Thee kindly gentle folk would be greatly enriched by the courtly presence of ye olde Masters family.

Screens change and a family in Oktoberfest getups appear. The dad plays an accordion while the kids do the chicken dance.

MOM2: Guten tag. We're the Feidelhofsters and we love authentic history, ya.
The screens go dark.

SCENE 2

The lights come up on the prairie; bright sunshine, blue skies, tall prairie grass, some cottonwoods and other trees leading off upstage right to indicate water, but nothing else insight. Both screens show endless, empty prairie.

Center stage is a podium decorated with balloons and bunting. Jack, wearing his cowboy hat, puts the finishing touches on his decorations.

On either side downstage, are two mounds covered with tarps. The stage left mound is quite a bit larger. Also, slightly upstage, are two of those paper frames that football teams run through, one on each side. They look very homemade. The stage left one says "MONROE", the right "ROUBIDOUX".

Nathan enters alone, looking nervous.

NATHAN: Mr. Park, um Jack?

Jack rushes over to him.

JACK: Nathan! Where have you been? We're ready to start the opening presentation.

NATHAN: Yeah, I had a few questions about this contract we had to sign. *(pulls contract out of pocket)*

JACK: What isn't clear?

NATHAN: The part where we owe you ten thousand dollars if we drop out.

JACK: I thought that was especially clear. There are only two families. If one leaves the show is over. Ten thousand dollars doesn't even cover what I lose if this ends early. *(puts pieces together)* Are you planning to drop out?

NATHAN: No, but that's a lot-

JACK: Then it isn't an issue. *(grabs the contract from Nathan)* Where is your family?

NATHAN: They're waiting in the SUV.

JACK: Oh. Don't they want to come out and meet everyone?

NATHAN: Not so much. I think it's better if we just start, no introductions.

JACK: OK. Then let's go. I want you behind your entrance, then when I say your name you burst through. Very dramatic. The other family is standing by.

NATHAN: That's good. Let me get everyone and we'll just go right into it, no talking, right?

JACK: Sure, whatever.

Jack returns to his finishing touches. Nathan gestures off stage right for the family to come. Nothing. He gestures more emphatically.

NATHAN: *(to self)* They whine about being in the car, now they won't get out. *(calling offstage)* Look, we aren't getting dinner until we're done here so you may as well come out.

DENRA (O.S): Come on kids. I'm sure there's more to your father's surprise than..whatever this is. *(she enters, well dressed and Native with a city flair)* Right dear? I mean New Ulm was charming and this back to nature moment is nice, but it's not exactly the trip to New York we had discussed.

Nathan guides her behind the paper.

NATHAN: Just trust me. Hey kids, I'm locking you in the car in 10 seconds. 10. 9. 8.

Mikal' runs in

7.

MIKENZIE (O.S): Mikal' you traitor!

MIKAL': *(to Mikenzie)* I told you I need to go to the bathroom.

NATHAN: Stay right here, behind the screen thing.

MIKAL': *(behind screen)* Mom?

DEBRA: *(behind screen)* Let's give your father a chance.

NATHAN: 7. 6. 5. 4.

Marshel saunters in and past his dad as if he isn't even there.

MARSHEL: Let's get this over with.

NATHAN: That's my boy. 3. 2. 1. Mikenzie? Fine.

Frustrated, Nathan marches back off stage. The alarm chirps twice.

MIKENZIE (O.S.) Hey! I chose to stay in there.

NATHAN (O.S.): I've chosen to bring you outside with your family.

Nathan enters pulling the reluctant hand of Mikenzie. They are all behind the paper frame now.

Jack listens to all of this with interest.

NATHAN: OK, go Jack.

JACK: Okey dokey. *(He looks into the audience)* Roll it!

DEBRA: What is going on?

JACK: Welcome people of New Ulm and the surrounding cable access area to Average Family! Over the next three months you will see our *(finger quotes)* "average" families tough it out together. And boy do we have two great families for you, the Monroes and the Roubidoux!

The Monroe clan bursts through their paper. They are three huge men;

RODNEY, JONATHAN (12) and LUKE (10); with one small girl, SARAH (8). They

are all dressed in appropriate clothing for the period. The men tear through

the paper at once, knocking the whole frame over.

Meanwhile, Nathan punches through and steps through the paper carefully, not

too much tearing. He reaches back and pulls his family after him.

They just stand there in shock. It's so quiet you can hear crickets.

JACK: The rules are simple. No outside help. Nothing allowed that was not available before 1840. You must maintain a campsite of some kind the entire three months. Breaking any of these rules will quit the competition. In the end the team who makes the most new stuff, including food, wins the brand new RV!

MONROES: RV! RV! RV! Victory!

The Roubidoux family turn as one and glare at Nathan.

NATHAN: Surprise.

All the Roubidoux talk at once.

DEBRA: I don't understand.

MIKENZIE: Three months? That's our whole summer vacation.

MIKAL': We'll be cowboys!

MARSHEL: I'm going to basketball camp.

JACK: Hey. *(loud whisper)* We're still rolling! Shhh.

The Roubidoux look into the audience. Marshel moves away from his family as if they aren't together. Mikenzie covers her face.

MIKAL': Cool, cameras. Hi.

He smiles and waves. Mikal' makes faces at the 'cameras'.

MIKENZIE: *(to Nathan)* Have you gone completely insane?

JACK: *(to Mikal')* Stop it kid. Never look at the cameras. That goes for everyone.

Mikal' stops reluctantly.

DEBRA: Is this some kind of joke Nathan?

NATHAN: Please Debra, just give me ten more minutes. Then if you don't want to stay-

DEBRA: *(to Nathan)* Ten minutes.

RODNEY: What is going on Jack?

Jack motions for Rodney to be quiet.

JACK: *(to Rodney)* Shhh. This should be good. Rodney shakes his head, but waits silently with his kids.

MIKENZIE: You're trying to ruin my whole life!

NATHAN: Don't speak to me like that young lady.

MARSHEL: I'm out of here.

Marshel starts to go. Mikenzie and Mikal' follow him.

NATHAN: Marshel stop.

MIKENZIE: This isn't a dictatorship.

NATHAN: *(losing it)* I am your father and I am telling you to stop.

Hate me if you want, but we are going to become frontier people
and prove to the world of cable access that we are as average as
anyone. Now that is final.

Marshel turns and stares down Nathan.

The other kids are waiting to see who wins. Debra watches silently.

NATHAN: Please Marshel. Just hear it out.

This cracks Luke up.

LUKE: Pleeeaaase.

Jonathan looks directly at Marshel and laughs with his brother. Marshel pretends he didn't hear them, but he's standing straighter. He stops, aware of his siblings following him. Marshel waits.

Nathan jumps at his hesitation and pastes his smile on.

NATHAN: Keep going Jack.

Jack isn't sure. Mikenzie sulks.

JACK: OK..um..*(checking his note cards)* On my left is the Monroe family.

RODNEY: Family roll call!

LUKE: Luke!

JONATHAN: Jonathan!

RODNEY: Rodney!

SARAH: And...Sarah!

MONROES: Monroe!

JACK: The Monroes are no stranger to re-enactments. You may recognize them from Fort Snelling and rendezvous all over the area. To my right is a very special family from Minneapolis, the Roubidoux clan; Nathan, Debra, Marshel, Mikenzie, and Mi-cal, Meekal, Mike. (*sincere to the family*) We really are honored that you are sharing your knowledge with us. It will be quite an education. Here are you supplies.

Jack steps forward dramatically and pulls the tarp off of the larger mound. A pile of goods are stacked there.

JACK: For our homesteaders, exactly what would have fit in a wagon. You have tools, furniture, household basics and food including flour, corn meal, corn cobs, sugar (white and brown), bacon, dried apples, coffee, pickles, canned goods, dried beef, salt, rice, dried fruit, seeds to plant, two cows, five chickens and a rooster.

The Monroes nod at their things approvingly. They immediately start sorting through their goods.

JACK: And..ta da!

Jack pulls the other tarp away revealing a bundle of eight long, slender tree trunks still full of bark and branches. A pile of fur that looks like something dead, several leather bags and a few small items.

Everyone stares at the pile, not understanding. The Roubidoux look especially confused.

JACK: Eight lodge poles, skins and canvas to make your home, personal items for each of you, trade beads for Debbie, two bows and arrows and-

DEBRA: You've got to be kidding.

Distressed, Jack looks to Nathan.

JACK: Didn't we do it right? Sorry, I don't know Indian stuff, but you can fix it?

MIKAL': (realizing, and not happy about it) We're not cowboys; we're Indians!

JACK: Of course you are. You're my (finger quotes) "average" Indian family.

Rodney's clan are suspicious, they weren't ready for this.

MIKAL': But the Indians are the losers. I want to be a cowboy.

NATHAN: Hold it. There's been a huge misunderstanding.

JACK: On your application tape you said you were Indians. I know you did.

NATHAN: Did you Nathan?

NATHAN: I mentioned our ethnicity is Native American, because..well..I thought it might help us get on the show.

DEBRA: But I haven't been to my reservation since I was a child.

NATHAN: I know. *(to Jack)* I didn't mean we wanted to be *Indian* Indians, like this.

JACK: Well, you are Indians so..you're the Indians. Here's the best part, *(grabs bows and arrows)* no permits and no limits. I arranged it so you can shoot anything that moves. Wait till you change into the buckskin though. It'll be amazing for the cameras. Maybe paint your faces or something.

He hands the bows to Marshel and Mikal', who immediately starts to pretend shooting things.

RODNEY: Wait, can we hunt?

MIKENZIE: No one should hunt. This is unethical. Mikal' stop it.

Mikal' keeps playing. Marshel checks out the bow, it's OK.

DEBRA: She's a vegetarian.

JACK: Oh, one of *those*. *(to Rodney)* You have all this stuff.

RODNEY: I see. They can hunt because they are Indians.

JACK: *(uncomfortable)* It's the law Rodney. Treaty rights and all.

DEBRA: This has gone far enough. Go to the car kids.

NATHAN: No. You promised me ten minutes. Just let me fix this.

DEBRA: Fine. But there's nothing to fix. We aren't going to be this man's token Indians.

Debra checks her watch and waits.

JACK: What kind of Indians are you then?

NATHAN: Jack, I've lived in the Twin Cities all of my life. We can't survive with just
(gestures to their sad pile) this.

MIKAL': Yeah, they've got way more stuff.

JACK: Oh for goodness sake, animals provided everything your people needed.
You lived off the land.

NATHAN: But I've never seen half these things before.

JACK: Look, this is the deal. Take it or leave me a check. I'll be back in an hour to
collect your things.

DEBRA: Leave what?

*Jack grabs his podium and rushes off stage. Nathan looks to Debra, it's
scary.*

NATHAN: I've got a couple more minutes Deb.

He flees toward Rodney.

DEBRA: Nathan! Wait.

*Nathan extends his hand to Rodney. Debra's had enough. She rejoins her
kids.*

NATHAN: Rodney, hello. I guess we may be neighbors.

RODNEY: I'm not trying to be rude or anything, but I've seen your kind a thousand
times. You want to reclaim your roots, feel family togetherness then go
back to your comfy city life. So you need to know two things. One, we

may look like a bunch of hicks to you, but we live this life every day so respect it. Don't make a joke out of it. Two, we want that RV and we have to beat you to get it so don't quit.

NATHAN: *(annoyed)* We have no intention of quitting.

RODNEY: I didn't get that impression. But if you stay, you'll want to quit, but don't.

(before Nathan can respond Rodney turns to his kids) Who are we?

KIDS: The Mighty Monroes!

RODNEY: Frame up Monroes!

The Monroe kids have sorted out their stuff. Amazingly a whole frame is erected in front of our eyes. The sides of the cabin pop up, fully in tact. The kids fasten everything into place while Sarah hangs their cooking pans around a fire pit, complete with wood benches. While they work they sing their Monroe song.

MONROES:

We are the Mighty Monroes. We're home anywhere we go.

Frame the house and lift the wall, wood or sod we do it all.

Cowboy, frontier, we are there. We even grow authentic hair.

That is why the song still goes: we're the best, the Mighty

Monroes!

The Roubidoux are awe struck. The Monroes settle into their home. Debra speaks quietly to the kids.

DEBRA: Kids, go to the car please. Time's up Nathan.

Marshel and Mikenzie are happy to go. Mikal' keeps his bow. Over the following Mikenzie wrestles for it.

NATHAN: You haven't given it a chance.

DEBRA: You can't be serious about this.

Nathan dives into their pile of things and sorts. He avoids her eyes.

NATHAN: I should have told you, but I didn't think you'd come.

DEBRA: My job. I can't just leave.

NATHAN: I arranged everything. You're on family leave right now.

DEBRA: You went to my boss behind my back?

Nathan doesn't know what to say. The kids are almost gone. Nathan looks to

Rodney who glares back. The Monroe's are contentedly putting final touches

on their little cabin. This is Nathan's last chance. He chases down the kids and drags them back under loud protest.

DEBRA: I'm not finished speaking with you.

NATHAN: I know.

MIKENZIE: Stop it.

MARSHEL: (aware of Jonathan watching) Don't touch me.

MIKAL': Ow!

NATHAN: (*sincere*) But this is about all of us. I'm sorry. I did this wrong, and I know it's desperate, but...we need something desperate to save this family. Look at us. We're five strangers under the same roof.

The truth touches Debra.

DEBRA: I know. But for you to do something like this...we make decisions together.

Nathan looks to the kids. This is one of those conversations they'd usually have without them.

NATHAN: We haven't in years. I have a life and you have a life and sometimes we cross paths. I know you feel it too.

Debra becomes equally uncomfortable in front of the kids who watch intently.

DEBRA: Of course I do. But...this is crazy.

NATHAN: We were crazy once.

DEBRA: Can't we figure this out at home?

NATHAN: We've tried, and now it's almost too late. Please Debra. Give us this chance to save our family. Save us.

DEBRA: (*struggling*) But like this?

NATHAN: Come on Deb. Are you with me?

DEBRA: (*she breaks*) Of course I'm with you. I just didn't expect it to be on the prairie.

Nathan is greatly relieved. He grabs Debra in a hug. The kids don't know how to react. It's weird to watch your parents as a couple. Debra turns to them and switches into pep talk mode.

DEBRA: Kids you know I'm the last person to want to spend my summer as a farmer or camper or whatever, but your father is right.

MIKENZIE: Mom!

DEBRA: We'll give it a try. Maybe it can work.

MARSHEL: I'm not going to look like a loser.

MIKAL': Yeah, look at all their stuff.

Disheartened, they look toward the Monroes, then at their own small pile.

DEBRA: Who are you people? Not my kids. My kids are intelligent, successful, and self sufficient. Look at these amazing things. (kneels down and pulls out clothes) Marshel, I can see you as a young warrior. (hands it to Marshel) A leader. Girls dig that.

MARSHEL: "Dig"? You people need help.

DEBRA: Please. Your brother and sister need you. Try it on?

MARSHEL: This is a free trial, no guarantees.

DEBRA: Thank you.

MARSHEL: (looks around) Where do I go?

Nathan pulls up one of the skins.

NATHAN: Use this.

Marshel takes it and goes off to one corner. Through the following he tries

to change by holding the skin as a robe, around his waist, etc. He finally manages to change.

DEBRA: Mikal', this could be your chance to have a pet. Maybe find a frog or..

MIKAL': A pet squirrel that rides on my arm?!?

DEBRA: You never know.

MIKAL': That would be the coolest ever!

He grabs an outfit and dives under a skin to change. He wiggles on the ground under the skin.

DEBRA: *(pulls out a buckskin dress)* You would be so beautiful in this Mikenzie. Like Pocahontas.

MIKENZIE: *(sarcastic)* Perfect, my life dream.

DEBRA: My grandmother gave me a dress like this when I was your age. I wonder what happened to it. Mikenzie meets her mother's eyes. She knows this is emotional blackmail, but she won't be the one to say it.

MIKENZIE: You can save the guilt. It's not like I have a choice.

Mikenzie takes the dress and a skin as her brothers come out. They are in their roles and dig into the supplies. Nathan hands Debra an outfit.

NATHAN: You are amazing.

DEBRA: They didn't make me a partner for nothing.

NATHAN: Mikenzie, help your brothers figure out how to make a teepee. I guess we're going to be Indians.

He and Debra go behind the paper frame to change, leaving the kids alone.

MIKENZIE: This is so gross.

Rodney, Jonathan and Luke leave stage for a moment to survey things. Sarah

checks to be sure they are gone and approaches Mikenzie shyly.

Mikenzie ignores her and keeps trying to change while the boys stack their

lodge poles and sort their bags.

SARAH: *(quietly)* Hi. I'm Sarah.

MIKENZIE: Yeah, I got that. We won't be sticking around long.

SARAH: But what about the RV?

MIKENZIE: You actually want an RV?

SARAH: Have you seen it? We went to the RV lot, it's beautiful. It even has a TV and DVD player and a microwave and everything.

MIKENZIE: You live in the woods or something?

SARAH: Yeah, in a cabin on the North Shore of Lake Superior. *(suddenly aware)* I guess you guys have all that stuff already.

Mikenzie finishes changing.

MIKENZIE: Yeah. Excuse me. *(joins Marshal and Mikal')* We can't do this. This is too weird. They're some kind of woods people, or hillbillies or something.

MARSHEL: That's kind of sad.

All look to Sarah

MIKENZIE: It's not like we want an RV.

MIKAL': I do!

MIKENZIE: We need to go home. Then they get the RV, we get our lives back and it's all good.

SARAH: (*jumping in*) No. You heard Dad. We only get the RV if we win. It's the rule. If you don't play we can't win.

MARSHEL: Look kid, I'm a winner, so if we play this thing, we win. It's a fact.

SARAH: I don't know. My brothers want that RV pretty bad. We've never had a microwave before.

MARSHEL: I'm not worried about your brothers.

Jonathan and Luke return.

JONATHAN: Sarah, it isn't historically accurate for you to be talking to the enemy.

The huge boys stand protectively behind Sarah, homesteaders facing Indians.

MARSHEL: (*trying not to look intimidated*) I'm Marshel. He's Mikal' and that one's Mikenzie.

LUKE: Why do you have such weird names?

MIKENZIE: Why are you so freakishly big?

JONATHAN: Look who's calling us freaks.

MIKENZIE: Hey!

Mikenzie makes a move toward the boys. Marshel grabs her easily and yanks her behind his back. He tries to front with the guys.

MARSHEL: Ignore her, that's what I do. So, you guys must have some serious football skills huh? What high school? Maybe I've seen you play. *(both boys laugh)*

LUKE: High school? I'm in fifth grade.

JONATHAN: Seventh.

MARSHEL: *(a little rattled)* Whoa.

Rodney enters.

RODNEY: Come on Monroes. Leave the special family with their special rules alone.

JONATHAN: *(to Marshel)* We don't cheat.

MARSHEL: What does that mean?

RODNEY: You can hunt, we can't. That's two sets of rules for one game.

MARSHEL: We didn't ask for this.

RODNEY: Know what I think? I think you're scared that if me and my boys could hunt like you we'd win this thing hands down.

MARSHEL: *(standing up to Rodney)* I'm not scared of you.

RODNEY: But you're scared of losing. I can see it in your eyes.

Marshel holds Rodney's gaze.

MARSHEL: No one calls me a loser.

RODNEY: You want to play by the same rules? No hunting? (*Marshel holds out his hand to shake*) What about your dad?

MARSHEL: Don't worry about him.

RODNEY: Then it's your choice son. They shake firmly. Marshel feels like 'the man'.

MARSHEL: We've made our choice. Right team?

MIKAL': Yeah, keep your crummy special rules!

MARSHEL: Mikenzie?

MIKENZIE: No hunting? Yeah, sure.

Satisfied, Rodney and his clan go back to their camp. Marshel is totally amped up.

MARSHEL: Come on Team Roubidoux!

JACK: (*to the sound booth*) Teepee music!

Marshel grabs a pole and stands it up. Mikal' tries to and nearly topples

over. Mikenzie steps in to save him. Nathan and Debra return and jump in.

Soon they each have a pole stood up and lower them together. They form a nice

teepee looking shape. The Roubidoux let go and high five each other over their accomplishment.

Even Mikenzie feels good.

NATHAN: That's right. We're the R..rr..rockin' Roubidoux!

They throw the skins at the poles. They struggle at getting the heavy skins to 'stick'. The skins

fall back on their heads, catch on branches. They work through the following.

DEBRA: Should it be open like that?

NATHAN: Well...it's a shelter.

MIKAL': When's dinner? I'm hungry.

Nathan and Debra exchange a look. Debra moves to their small pile of belongings and searches.

NATHAN: I guess we better learn how to use these bows.

MARSHEL: I made a deal with Rodney. We're not hunting if they can't.

NATHAN: You did what?

DEBRA: (*to Marshal*) Honey, I understand how you feel, but there's just dried fruit and some kind of jerky product here. It's barely enough for a few days.

MARSHEL: (*resolute*) We don't need charity. I shook on it.

NATHAN: We haven't made that decision.

MARSHEL: If you want us to stay, we don't hunt. Period.

NATHAN: We need food.

MIKENZIE: You said you wanted us to be a family and do this together. The family voted against hunting. So, either we're smart and everything mom said or we should give up now.

Finally most of the skins are hanging in various degrees over the poles. It's rough, but livable.

Nathan and Debra start to see the potential monster they've created.

DEBRA: I guess they're right. There has to be other options for food, right?

Nathan sees his kids and the teepee. It's a start.

NATHAN: OK. We'll figure things out the Rockin' Roubidoux way.

He puts his hand out to stack hands. The kids look at him then each turns away and work at dragging their stuff inside. Nathan stands alone with his hand out.

DEBRA: Don't push it dear.

In the other camp the Monroes assemble around their fire humming the Mighty Monroe song. The stage lights and screens go dark.

MIKENZIE: Get off!

MARSHEL: You're on my foot!

MIKAL': I don't have enough room!

DEBRA: Go to sleep!

Scene Change

Confession cam. Screens come up with Mikenzie sitting alone in front of a black curtain. She looks sulky.

JACK(O.C): It's a confession cam. Every week you just come and talk.

MIKENZIE: About what?

JACK (O.C.): Anything, like what it's like being an Indian?

MIKENZIE: I don't know. I've never thought about it before.

JACK (O.C.): Really?

MIKENZIE: I don't know what being Indian's supposed to mean. I don't feel different, I mean not 'cause of that. (*suddenly more uncomfortable*) I don't want to do this.

SCENE 3

She leaves. The screens go dark.

The screens show the prairie at day break. Birds chirp. The stage lights come up to early morning light. Nathan and Rodney are alone, talking down stage. (Right now they are the only ones on stage, but otherwise family members can always be working in the background or entering and exiting their homes.)

NATHAN: If you don't let me do this we may as well start packing.

RODNEY: It can't be permanent.

NATHAN: Of course not. I work for you, you pay in food. Once we get our feet under us, it stops.

RODNEY: We choose the food we pay you with. And the work you do.

NATHAN: It's a deal.

They shake on it.

RODNEY: First thing we need is an outhouse. Start digging.

Rodney hands Nathan a shovel. Nathan takes it, yuck. Debra and the kids emerge from the teepee. Nathan puts on a brave face and approaches them. The Monroe clan enter and exit doing morning chores.

NATHAN: Good news. I'm using the Rockin' Roubidoux thinking already. I've got a job working for Rodney.

DEBRA: What does that mean?

NATHAN: We get paid with food at the end of the week. You'll have to manage until then. Got to get to work. Nathan goes to Rodney's camp. Through the following scene Nathan works in the background.

MIKENZIE: What do we do now?

DEBRA: Well, I will investigate our water and bathing situation. You kids focus on ways to improve our teepee. Brainstorm some ideas together by the time I get back.

She picks up her belongings and makes her way off toward the trees. The Roubidoux kids pull a few skins off. Mikenzie stops and surveys their situation.

MIKENZIE: Nice family togetherness.

MARSHEL: Nothing's changed but the scenery.

MIKENZIE: *(a little sad)* Guess so.

They sit with two skins and pull out an awl and some long leather strips. The kids stare at the foreign items, completely lost. Marshel looks around.

MARSHEL: There's gotta be berries or something out there. See you later.

MIKENZIE: Mom said-

MARSHEL: Men bring food. Women sew. Welcome to history.

He takes off. Mikal' looks to Mikenzie hopefully.

MIKENZIE: Fine, go with him. Stupid boys.

MIKAL': I'll pick some berries for you.

He runs after Marshal. Mikenzie tosses the stuff away from her, defeated. Sarah approaches carefully.

SARAH: I thought maybe you could use this.

She hands a book to Mikenzie. Mikenzie looks at it suspiciously.

MIKENZIE: Is this a trick? Like to get us in trouble?

SARAH: (*distressed*) No! I got it from a rendezvous, but it's about the 1840's and just made with paper so I think it's OK, not cheating or anything. Sorry. I wanted to help.

Sarah flees. Mikenzie feels a little bad. She reads the cover.

MIKENZIE: "The Dakota and Their Ways".

Mikenzie makes sure she's alone then pages through the book. She stops suddenly and studies a page. She finds the awl and holds it next to the book and names her find.

MIKENZIE: Awl. Like a needle but different.

She studies another page then puts the book down, pulls a skin over it and starts pounding holes in the skin with the awl. Debra enters and watches.

DEBRA: How did you know what that was for?

Mikenzie considers the hidden book.

MIKENZIE: It just made sense.

DEBRA: Good problem solving Mikenzie. You kids don't even need us.

Mikenzie enjoys her mother's praise. She makes a couple holes then strings the leather through to sew the pieces together. Marshel and Mikal' return empty handed.

MARSHEL: We didn't see like...strawberries or anything.

MIKAL': I'm hungry.

DEBRA: We'll eat a little of our food now, but we should be careful to make it last.

MIKENZIE: What if we can't find anything to eat?

DEBRA: I don't know. But we only have to last the week.

They all look to Nathan working very hard for the Monroes.

Stage lights go dark.

SCENE 4

Confession cam with a grumpy Mikal'.

MIKAL': This has been the longest two weeks of my entire life. No one wants to do anything fun. All Rodney gave us for food was crummy corn and rice. Dad says it'll be better this week. I hope so. It's scary being hungry all the time.

The screens go black. Lights and screens up on a bright, hot day. The finished teepee juts onto stage right. Mikenzie stands over a fire watching it nervously. She looks hot and tired. She makes sure she is alone then pulls out her book and checks a page. Mikenzie tucks the book back under

her dress as Debra enters. Mikenzie reaches into the edge of the fire and pulls out an ear of corn.

It's hot, she drops it and it falls into the fire. A puff of black smoke goes up. Debra is upset.

DEBRA: Mikenzie! That corn was half of our food.

MIKENZIE: Sorry.

DEBRA: You said you knew how to do this.

MIKENZIE: It was too hot.

DEBRA: Now we have nothing left to eat tonight. Do you understand?

MIKENZIE: Yes.

DEBRA: *(trying to calm down)* Sorry. I should have done it myself.

Debra leaves Mikenzie. Dejected, Mikenzie backs away from the fire, fanning herself. Marshal walks in holding something. He's a little on edge, but covering.

MARSHEL: Found another brown one. *(holds up a feather)* I only need six more to finish my shirt.

Mikenzie busies herself using water and dirt to put out the fire.

MIKENZIE: Could you help a little?

MARSHEL: Help you screw up? Don't think so.

MIKENZIE: I'm the one who figured out how to sew the teepee and start the fire. What are you doing, Shelly?

MARSHEL: I'm a warrior. I'm looking the part. It's better than..him.

They both look toward Team Rodney's area as Nathan carries firewood for the cabin. The kids are embarrassed.

MARSHEL (CONT'D): Rodney's screwing with us and dad keeps taking it.

MIKENZIE: This sucks.

MARSHEL: He's making us all look bad.

Marshel takes off, frustrated. Mikenzie feels bad, she's thinking it may be true. She pulls out her book and searches for something to help.

The lights go down.

Marshel comes up in the confession cam, lots of attitude covering the truth.

MARSHEL: I may not be shooting hoops, but don't worry coach, I'm totally in shape.

All day I'm walking and running. There's a lot of carrying stuff, so my arms are good. The heat is killer, so my system's totally getting stronger.

I'm on a diet..(the armor cracks, he's scared) I've maybe lost a little too much weight, but I'll get it back. I swear. I'll get it all back.

SCENE 5

The lights come up on the stage. Mikenzie and Marshel are sitting on opposite sides of their area, completely at a loss. Mikal runs in from the Mighty Monroe area wearing a huge pioneer shirt over his leggings. Mikenzie turns her frustration on him.

MIKENZIE: Where'd you get that shirt?

MIKAL': (*excited*) It's Luke's old one. Isn't it cool? He and Jonathan said maybe they'd give me a pair of jeans next week.

MIKENZIE: What'd they make you do for it?

MIKAL': (*defensive*) Stuff.

MIKENZIE: Like what? (*sees something on his neck and grabs him*) What happened to your neck? It's all red.

MIKAL': (*really small*) Cowboys need to practice roping so I was the cow so they could practice. Their cow just stands there.

MIKENZIE: (*furious*) They threw a rope around your neck? You're never going over there again.

MIKAL': I can if I want to.

MARSHEL: They're using you bro.

MIKAL': I'd rather be with them than a dumb Indian here. (*runs into teepee*)

MIKENZIE: I'll take on Jonathan and Luke together.

MARSHEL: Don't be stupid.

Nathan and Rodney walk into the background having a discussion that gets more heated.

MIKENZIE: Then do something Marshel!

MARSHEL: I'm the man around here. Don't give me attitude.

MIKENZIE: What makes you the man? This isn't home Marshel. No one cares if you can hit a three pointer.

NATHAN: (*overlapping*) We had a deal!

MARSHEL: Shut up Mikenzie.

The kids stop fighting to listen.

RODNEY: We still have a deal, but it has to change to fit the current situation.

NATHAN: That's not fair. You promised to pay us!

RODNEY: We're giving you half the garden. When it comes up you get paid.

NATHAN: But that takes..ah..a long time. My kids are hungry. We'll have to go home.

RODNEY: I knew you'd quit. You said this was temporary, but you aren't doing any better so I've got to protect my own.

Rodney storms off. Debra comes out of the teepee with Mikal'. Nathan turns to his family, embarrassed.

DEBRA: Without food, we're done.

MIKAL': But they have tons of food.

NATHAN: We can't go. We don't have ten thousand dollars to spare right now.

DEBRA: Ten thousand dollars? Why?

NATHAN: That's how much we have to pay if we quit. It's in the contract.

DEBRA: You signed a contract without showing it to me? I'm an attorney.

MARSHEL: We're trapped here?

DEBRA: There has to be a way out of it. This isn't a game anymore. Our children are going hungry.

MARSHEL: *(to Nathan)* We look like losers. Stand up to Rodney. Make them pay.

NATHAN: *(snaps at Marshel)* You made the deal not to hunt, so you figure something out because I'm out of ideas.

Nathan storms off, Debra follows him. His words hit Marshel hard.

MIKENZIE: Marshel..maybe we could use this. *(pulls out her book)* It says here-

MARSHEL: A dumb book isn't going to help us. *(grabs the book from Mikenzie and tosses it away)* The Monroes broke the deal. Anything's fair now.

MIKENZIE: You promised no hunting!

MARSHEL: I'm keeping my word. But Dad put me in charge so we're gonna get what we're owed.

The lights go dark. The Confession Cam comes on the screen. Jonathan and Luke sit squashed together reading off of a piece of paper.

JONATHAN: When we win the RV, these are the top ten things we want to cook in the microwave until they explode.

LUKE: Or catch fire.

JONATHAN: Hot dogs, those plastic cups of soup, a watermelon, two frozen teriyaki bowls-

LUKE: If dad'll let us buy them.

JONATHAN: A bag of Cheetos, bananas, a can of shaving cream-

LUKE: (*shakes head*) Metal.

JONATHAN: Right. (*thinks*) If we can find a plastic one, otherwise a tube of toothpaste, walnuts, a tennis ball, and, of course, a persimmon.

LUKE: (*smiles*) Sweet.

The screens go dark.

SCENE 6

The stage is barely lit by moonlight. A half moon shines over the prairie in the screens. The Roubidoux kids huddle center stage.

MIKENZIE: We're going to get in trouble.

MARSHEL: Mikenzie, we've been over this. It's not stealing because it's the stuff they owe us. It's ours.

MIKENZIE: I don't know...

MARSHEL: For once in your life will you be a cool sister and not embarrass us?

MIKENZIE: What about Mom and Dad?

MARSHEL: Since when do you care about mom and dad?

MIKENZIE: (*he's got a point*) Let's go.

MARSHEL: OK. We're only grabbing some food. Don't go crazy and get caught. We don't want 'em to know we're there.

MIKENZIE: I want the water bucket. We need another container.

MIKAL': I want a chair.

MIKENZIE: What would you do with a chair stupid?

MIKAL': For mom. She misses chairs.

MARSHEL: Only essentials little bro. Let's go.

The kids sneak over to the Monroe's area. They hesitantly pick up a bucket and canned goods.

They creep back and stash the stuff. They all look at each other anticlimactically.

MIKAL': That was easy.

MARSHEL: Yeah. May as well snag some more.

Mikenzie shrugs. They walk back, bolder, to grab more stuff including a glass jar of canned fruit. They return and open the jar, eating hungrily. They run back, having fun now. Marshel unties a big burlap sack. The kids suppress a laugh as Mikal' triumphantly lifts a chair over his head. Not to be out done, Mikenzie goes off left. After a moment a chicken squawks loudly, then all the chickens and the rooster start screaming. Mikenzie runs back in, eggs in both hands.

MARSHEL: Run!

Commotion is heard in the cabin. Marshel and Mikenzie run across the stage and try to hide the

stuff behind the teepee. Rodney and Jonathan stumble out. Rodney easily catches Mikal',

struggling with his chair.

RODNEY: Stop you little thieves!

MARSHEL: Let him go.

Nathan and Debra rush out. Luke and Sarah stumble in sleepily.

NATHAN: What on earth are you doing Rodney?

DEBRA: Let go of my son.

They gather their kids.

JONATHAN: That's our stuff.

Nathan realizes it's true.

NATHAN: (to his kids) Why would you steal?

MARSHEL: You quit so I figured it out, just like you told me to.

RODNEY: You sent your kids to steal for you?

Rodney marches back to his cabin and grabs his rifle.

NATHAN: No. I didn't tell them-

RODNEY: If that's how you want it...

Lowers his rifle threateningly

If I see any of you on my land I'll shoot first.

NATHAN: Rodney! You can't be serious!

RODNEY: Food's life and death on the frontier.

Debra grabs the kids close to her, horrified. Nathan seems to snap.

NATHAN: I provide for my family a lot better than you! (Nathan grabs the bows and arrows and hands one to Marshal) You stay away from us or I'll shoot!

Nathan and Marshel aim their bows toward Rodney and Jonathan.

DEBRA: Nathan, stop.

MIKAL': Go Dad!

MIKENZIE: Yeah!

MARSHEL: You heard him Jonny baby.

RODNEY: You asked for this. *(to Luke)* Luke!

Rodney grabs the table from their area and overturns it in the middle of the stage. He takes the chair Mikal' stole and piles it on top.

RODNEY: If you're staying, then stay right there.

Jonathan and Luke help stack a wall between the camps. Nathan and Marshel keep their bows on them. Sarah stays back, watching sadly.

DEBRA: *(disbelieving)* Are you trying to put us on a reservation?

RODNEY: I'm trying to protect my family.

NATHAN: So am I.

Rodney stacks the line around the front of the teepee. Nathan and Marshel stay on guard.

MIKAL': Hey! That's not fair, you have more room.

RODNEY: You aren't making use of the land. We are, so we deserve more room.

MIKENZIE: They can't keep us in here!

Mikenzie rushes around the barrier before her parents can stop her. Jonathan lowers the gun toward her. Mikenzie freezes. Nathan reaches across and pulls Mikenzie back. Rodney stands menacingly with his ax.

RODNEY: This is your last warning. Don't cross this line.

Rodney rushes upstage and chops at a tree. Nathan speaks to his family.

NATHAN: I don't want you kids out unless you are with me or Marshel. It's dangerous.

Mikenzie and Sarah lock eyes across the barrier. Debra grabs Mikenzie to get her attention back.

DEBRA: Promise us Mikenzie.

MIKENZIE: Fine, I won't go off the Rotten Roubidoux Reservation.

Suddenly a tree comes CRASHING down between the camps, enclosing the Roubidoux. The realization of their new situation sinks in as the lights go to black.

End Act I