

“YOUR HANDS ARE THE ROAD”

(working title)

A ride upon the stage through LGBTQ History.

Book and Lyrics by Jeffrey Solomon

Music by Raliegth Neal

(with creative contributions from youth across the USA)

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Note: We are thrilled to share the First Act (of three).

An asterisk* below indicates that the gender of many of the characters can be switched to accommodate your cast.

Cast of Characters

<u>*MR. MALMAR:</u>	High school history teacher.
<u>*AJ:</u>	A high school student, a bully.
<u>*JOSH:</u>	His buddy, a bully.
<u>*MARISOL:</u>	High school student.
<u>*PHOENIX:</u>	A nonbinary teen.
<u>*NARRATOR:</u>	Tik-Tok Vid Narrator.
<u>*TIK-TOK VID ENSEMBLE:</u>	Three or four ensemble actors.
<u>AMANDA SMITH:</u>	Phoenix's Mother, middle-aged.
<u>*NOVI:</u>	A virtual assistant.
<u>*THE QUEEN:</u>	A Drag Queen, An Ancestor.
<u>CHARLEY PARKHURST:</u>	Legendary Stagecoach Driver, 54, Lives as a man, assigned female-at-birth.
<u>MAUDE:</u>	Stagecoach Station Agent and Store-Keeper, Middle-aged.
<u>SUGARFOOT:</u>	Notorious highway bandit.
<u>ROB:</u>	Phoenix's father, middle-aged.

Musical Numbers

ACT 1:

WEIRDOS LIKE ME

Phoenix

THE BALLAD OF CHARLEY PARKHURST, or
STEADY, STEADY NOW

Charley Parkhurst and Phoenix

ACT 1
Scene 1

(A high school classroom. Now)

MR MALMAR

We only have a minute or two left. And if I didn't make it clear, the final project is a full third of your American History grade. Those of you who haven't bothered to submit your topic for approval through the portal are LATE! When I call your name, please identify the subject of your paper. AJ?

AJ

George Washington.

MALMAR

Not original, but tried and true. Josh?

JOSH

Roosevelt.

MALMAR

Which one?

JOSH

There's more than one?

MALMAR

(sighs and shakes head) ...Marisol?

MARISOL

Harriet Tubman.

MALMAR

Excellent. Phoenix...?

(PHOENIX¹ is a non-binary teen, dressed androgynously.)

PHOENIX

Actually, so... Mr. Malmar, well... I was trying to find someone who, like you asked, you know, really resonates with us, or whatever, and then, kind of by accident, I discovered this person who, you may not even- well, let me just tell you then- Charley Parkhurst!

MALMAR

Who?

PHOENIX

Charley Parkhurst. Or....One-Eyed Charley, they called him...

(Awkward Silence. JOSH and AJ, the two students sitting behind Phoenix, begin to smirk, give each other looks, and giggle.)

MALMAR

Charley Parkhurst? I'm afraid I don't know who that is.

PHOENIX

Well, they were probably like the most famous stagecoach driver in the 1800s during the Gold Rush. Like the GOAT of stagecoach drivers, really. A total badass.

MALMAR

OK, how do you know about this person?

PHOENIX

Um....

(Light shift - FLASHBACK. PHOENIX stretches out on their desk - now their bed at home, swiping vids on their phone.)

AMANDA (O.S.)

Phoenix, the dishes!

¹ The role on the page is written for an actor, assigned female at birth, but with a few tweaks to birth/deadname, pronouns, and dress/gender presentation, the role could be played by an assigned male at birth actor.

(We hear gritty old west theme music.)

(TIKTOK VID- This is staged like a radio play, with three ensemble actors² gathered around Phoenix, playing all the parts and making sound effects, decidedly low tech.)

NARRATOR

In 1852, when railroads were unknown, the only way to get past the deadly perils of the Western frontier...the rattlesnakes...

(rattle, rattle)

-the grizzlies-

(bear Growl.)

And highway bandits-

(gunshots, "stick 'em up.")

.... was the horse-drawn stagecoach.

(Sound of galloping. One of the ensemble actors spins a wagon wheel.)

NARRATOR

And the fastest, toughest, most fearless stagecoach driver of 'em all was one-eyed Charley.

(one of the ensemble actors dons an eye-patch, becoming CHARLEY.)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Though small in stature and with a face as smooth as a saloon gal's satin shoulder, Charley could outdrink, outchew n' spit, outgamble, and outshoot the foulest characters of the old west - Hell, Charley could curse to make an outlaw blush.

(CHARLEY cusses without cursing, mostly nonsense.)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

With his trusty whip and one good eye, folks swore Charley could flick the ash off a fella's cigar at twenty feet.

(crack of whip)

² These roles could be played by Josh, AJ, Marisol and/or Mr Malmar, or by other actors.

MAN

Hey, my stogie!(awed) Whoa.

(Light Shift, back to the classroom.)

MALMAR

Ah, ok... and what's your source?

PHOENIX

That's the thing, I kind of found out about it ...on TikTok.

(class laughs.)

(Bell rings.)

MALMAR

Ok, all, chapter 18 by Monday, and do the process questions!

(As they pass PHOENIX, JOSH neighs like a horse and makes galloping sounds.
AJ and JOSH crack up.)

PHOENIX

What's your problem?

AJ

What are you talking about? We didn't say anything. Are you hearing voices?

MALMAR

Good-bye, AJ. Josh, let me know by the end of the day whether it will be Teddy or Franklin.

(JOSH looks at him uncomprehendingly.)

AJ

Roosevelt, dumbass!

(AJ and JOSH exit.)

MALMAR

Phoenix, I appreciate the initiative, but we reviewed the rubric, and social media is not an acceptable source.

PHOENIX

I know. I'll find it in a book.

MALMAR

But if I don't know this person, then I doubt the school library-

PHOENIX

I'll go to the library-library...`

MALMAR

Also, you're coming to me really late with this. There's barely three weeks left.

PHOENIX

I know. But I was stuck, and now I feel unstuck.

MALMAR

You know, there's a lot of Gold Rush material in the library, so if it's just stagecoach drivers you're interested in, then-

PHOENIX

-It's not just stagecoach drivers.

(Light shift - continuation of TIKTOK video)

NARRATOR

But Charley had one secret his stagecoach couldn't outrun forever, and his small white gloves could not conceal. When Charley Parkhurst died, it was discovered that Charley was born Charlotte.

(Projection, Newspaper Headline.

30 YEARS IN DISGUISE - STAGE DRIVER IS A WOMAN!³

³ Linking to primary source material from Library of Congress.

(A few TOWNSFOLK gather, gawking at a newspaper article.)

HANK MONK (noted stage coach driver)

“Je—hosaphat! I camped out with Parkie once for over a week, and we slept on the same buffalo robe right along. Wonder if Curly Bill’s been playin’ me the same way.”⁴

NARRATOR

Now some thought Charley (or Charlotte) was just pretending to be a man for better wages and the right to vote.

(Projection, HISTORICAL PLAQUE:

[The first ballot by a woman in an American presidential election was cast on this site November 3, 1868 by Charlotte \(Charlie\) Parkhurst](#))

But others, even in the 1800’s, had no doubt that Charley was a man in the truest sense of the word.

(Projection, newspaper headline.

THE REPORTED MAN-WOMAN CASE.)⁵

(A different TOWNSPERSON in the group reads from a different newspaper.)

TOWNSPERSON (reading aloud)

Newspaper says it ‘is evident the masculine character is present in the fullest sense—and such a woman is very much more a man than anything else.’

(TOWNSFOLK nod.)

NARRATOR

So, was Charley a woman in disguise or unmistakable evidence of an early transcestor? You decide.

(Light shift back to classroom.)

⁴ Linking to primary source material from Digital Transgender Archive.

⁵ Link to Primary Source Material, Library of Congress.

PHOENIX

...See, when Charley died, they found out he was... AFAB.

MALMAR

I don't know what that is.

PHEONIX

Sorry. Charley was assigned female at birth.

MALMAR

Oh, she was a-

PHEONIX

-Well, "he" or "they," I guess, since-

MALMAR

-this person was a woman?

PHOENIX

They lived their whole adult life as a man.

MALMAR

I don't want to censor you or tell you what you can talk about... and in fact, I appreciate your enthusiasm, which I don't often see in my class, but well... the climate right now is really...would your parents be OK with you doing the topic?

PHOENIX

Well, my mom is cool...

MALMAR

...Ok...and your dad...?

(silence.)

PHOENIX

Oh, I think that was the second bell.... Thanks, Mr. Malmar. I'll just...pick someone from the textbook, I guess.

(Song - “WEIRDOS LIKE ME”)

(demo track at link)

(Music as PHOENIX stashes American History Textbook in backpack and wanders down the school hallway.)

(It’s possible the hallway could be plastered with posters of historical figures - the usual canon.)

PHOENIX

*History is dusty. It smells like attics and old drawers
And the way it's taught hasn't changed much since 1964.
History is static, like paint drying on a wall
It tastes like boiled potatoes with no flavor at all.*

Pre-Chorus:

*Hidden, forgotten, or just plain erased,
swept under the rug, overlooked, and replaced
Shoved into the closet and never reclaimed.
History is boring when the cast doesn't change.*

Chorus:

*Weirdos like me are never seen!
We're never seen!
We're never seen! X2*

(Music continues as PHOENIX enters the front door of their house.)

PHOENIX

Mom, I’m home!

(From the banister of a staircase, they read a sticky note)

“Phoenix, working double shift. Heat something up from freezer.” YAY.

(as they head up the staircase, a memory.)

*On Halloween, when I was six, I came down the stairs
When my parents saw the costume I made, god, they got scared.*

My daddy said, "Danielle, what the hell you supposed to be?"
I said, "I'm the best ⁶Pirate-zombie-ballerina-construction worker that you'll ever see!"

"That's not what I mean," (he said), "Are you a boy or a girl?"
I said, "Maybe I'm both or I'm nothing at all."

Mom said, "It's Halloween, Rob, there's nothing to fear."
Dad said, "Go put on something normal and stop being so damn —
just go change, please."

Pre-Chorus:
Hidden, forgotten, or just plain erased,
swept under the rug, overlooked, and replaced
Shoved into the closet and never reclaimed.
History is boring when the cast doesn't change.

Chorus:
Weirdos like me are never seen!
We're Never seen!
We're never seen! X2

(PHOENIX goes into their bedroom and tosses backpack on the bed. The main motifs of the room are zombie posters and all things queer- a rainbow flag, a nonbinary flag, a rainbow rug, etc. They grab game controller and begin the hard work of killing zombies.)

PHOENIX

Die Zombie, scum. Die!

(A light change, and a projection: THREE WEEKS LATER.)

(PHOENIX remains in the same spot, glued to the game, eyes glazed.)

(There is now clothing and other debris strewn about.)

⁶ These costume choices can be adapted genderwise for specific actor playing role.

AMANDA

Pheonix. Pheonix. Open the door.

(The sound of carnage continues. AMANDA pushes open the door, which is obstructed by a small mountain of dirty laundry.)

AMANDA

Do you have any idea how long you've been playing this game?

PHOENIX

I'm on the final level. I've never gotten this far, and-

AMANDA

10 hours. Shut it off.

PHOENIX

Mom, please. These zombies are super lethal. If I get distracted, like, for even a second-

(AMANDA blocks the screen. We hear the terrible sound of zombies chomping on human flesh.)

PHOENIX

Ugg. Why'd you do that? Now I have to start from the beginning.

AMANDA

Phoenix, you look terrible, and it smells like wet sneakers in here. Open the window. Let in some light.

PHOENIX

I don't even have anything this weekend...

AMANDA

(staring in disbelief)

There's nothing you need to do? Really? You're saying that to me with a straight face?

PHOENIX

Uh-huh.

AMANDA

...You're gonna play dumb with me?

(PHOENIX shrugs. Yawns.)

PHOENIX

Can you move, please?

AMANDA

I wish you cared about your schoolwork even a fraction of how much you care about killing zombies.

PHOENIX

I'm really good at it.

AMANDA

Killing zombies is not an essential life skill.

PHOENIX

It will be in the zombie apocalypse.

AMANDA

You spend all your time holed up in this room. You don't hang out with friends. All you do is sleep and play video games.

PHOENIX

Can this be over?

AMANDA

It's like you're not even here. Like you're just checked out.

PHOENIX

Huh?

AMANDA

From life. From everything. I'm worried about you.

PHOENIX

Everything is fine, Mom. It's all good.

AMANDA

Don't tell me it's all good, Phoenix. If it were all good, then your school wouldn't have called your Dad.

PHOENIX

(leaping up, alarmed)

Wait, what? Why did they call him?

AMANDA

Because I was at work and they couldn't reach me-

PHOENIX

But he doesn't even live here anymore! Why couldn't you pick up the phone?

AMANDA

Were you going to tell me you were failing American History?

PHOENIX

I'm not. I'm -

AMANDA

-Phoenix, enough. The dean told your Dad how bad it is. You really want to do summer school again? Your father is on his way here.

PHOENIX

What? No.

AMANDA

Please clean up, take a shower-

PHOENIX

-I'll do the work, I promise. Just tell Dad not to come, please.

AMANDA

It's too late. He's on the road already.

PHOENIX

What time will he-?

AMANDA

I don't know. Late. I made up the couch for him.

PHOENIX

But you two hate each other.

AMANDA

Phoenix. I can't anymore. I'm tired. I need help.

(PHOENIX sighs, shakes their head in disbelief.)

AMANDA

Just talk to him.

PHOENIX

You can't talk to him. You know how he is. He's such a ... father.

AMANDA

Phoenix, get ready.

PHOENIX

I don't want to see him.

AMANDA

You're lucky he got involved. Malmar was going to just flunk you. Your Dad convinced him to give you the weekend to finish your final project. ...Now you have until Monday.

(silence.)

I know your Dad and I have had our differences, but he loves you. You know that, right?

PHOENIX

Yah, ok, whatever.

AMANDA

Get ready. Clean up. Do NOT go back to your game, ok?

PHOENIX

Ok.

AMANDA

And Phoenix...

PHOENIX

Uhhuh?

AMANDA

Nothing. Never mind.

(She gets to the door, stops, considers, takes a deep breath.)

Maybe just...everything at work right now is –I’m so stressed out, I feel like I’m going to break.

Let’s make this easy if we can.

PHOENIX

What’s that supposed to mean?

AMANDA

Maybe just ...fix up your room a little?

PHOENIX

My room is perfect. It’s exactly how I want it.

AMANDA

You know how he is. Can’t you just-

PHOENIX

(loaded)

-“Straighten” up a little?

AMANDA

It will just be for an hour or two, and your dad will be gone before you know it. OK?

PHOENIX

Ok.

AMANDA

Really?

PHOENIX

Yeah, sure, whatever.

AMANDA

Thank you.

(We hear the melody of *Weirdos Like Me*, a more angry driving grunge version, as Phoenix begins the work of “straightening” up the room. Rainbow and nonbinary flags get shoved into the closet. The rainbow rug gets rolled up and sent into the closet along with their beloved rainbow, queer plushy.)

(PHOENIX has moved to the mirror and begins to transform physically.)

(The men’s suspenders or hoodie come off and are stashed in the closet, hair comes down into a more feminine style, and they wear a feminine blouse.)⁷

Bridge/Coda:

*One day they’ll let me cut my hair*⁸

One day I’ll wear a suit ⁹to the dance

When will the MIRROR see who I am -

who I’m meant to be.

I’ll feel free

I’ll feel like me...

(Lights fade to black.)

⁷ For assigned male at birth, long hair comes up and is hidden in cap, crop top and skirt get swapped for very baggy jeans and hoodie, and they remove makeup and feminine jewelry.

⁸ “Grow my hair” for assigned male at birth.

⁹ “Heels” for assigned male at birth.

ACT 1
Scene 2

(Lights suggest a passage of time.)

(PHOENIX is asleep, slumped over their desk by a laptop computer, textbook open. AMANDA pokes her head in, holding a plastic bag from the convenience store. PHOENIX jolts awake with a start.)

AMANDA

You ok, hon?

PHOENIX

What time is it?

AMANDA

Midnight. I brought you energy drinks, like you asked.. I don't believe in drugs... but whatever you need to get you across the finish line... ok?

PHOENIX

Ok.

(AMANDA leaves the bag on the desk, kisses PHOENIX on the back of their head, and exits.)

PHOENIX

(reading assignment)

Ok, ok, ok, ok, ok, ok ...OK. " Write a twelve-page essay on a figure from American history that really resonates with you ... "

(striking head with enormous American History textbook, like the sound of a bell or gong.)

Booooooong....

(Listens. Nothing.)

"OR a figure from the past that makes history come alive for you."

(to the textbook.)

Hello, is there anybody in there?

PHOENIX (cont'd)

... I need moral support.

(Phoenix goes to the closet. They pull out their rainbow plushy and set it on desk.)

Hello, Binkerman.¹⁰

(Looks at the computer screen. Typing)

"MAKING HISTORY Come Alive" by Danielle A. Smith.

American History Final...

(reading)

"A historical figure that really resonates with me is-"

(to rainbow plushy.)

Wow. Some of my best writing, don't you think, Binkerman? My work here is done. I'd like to thank the Academy and God. Ugghggggg. I can't. I can't. (slaps face) Wake up. Wake up. Wake up.

(Taking energy drinks out of bag, reading label)

"ZAP, a jolt for the ages, wake up, act up, it's not your grandfather's energy drink. It's your great-great-great-grandfather's." ... Whatever.

(They take a big drink out of the bottle.)

Uccccch, tastes like cough medicine with a hint of gasoline.

(Back to screen)

...I can't. I can't. I can't. I'm dead.

(talking to computer)

Hey Novi, can I use artificial intelligence to write my paper without being detected?

NOVI/VIRTUAL ASSISTANT VOICE (V.O.)

Many schools now use AI detectors that can flag AI-generated text-

PHOENIX

Search for a new AI tool- like an untapped source of knowledge or wisdom

Something reliable and trusted, but also completely unknown. To my teacher!

NOVI (V.O.)

There is an AI tool that was released three seconds ago. Generations AI. "Connecting the now to the past and seven generations into the future."

¹⁰ This name is a placeholder. You rename the beloved plushy if you have something better.

PHOENIX

That sounds promising.

NOVI (V.O.)

Would you like to try this AI program?

PHOENIX

Yes.

NOVI (V.O.)

Downloading.

(The computer seems to hum and glow.)

PHOENIX

....That's weird.

(The sound of ancestors singing faintly from the closet.)

(PHOENIX finishes off the bottle of Zap and grips their stomach.)

Uggggggggg.

(The sounds of primal, ancient rhythms.)

PHOENIX

Stupid program. (clicking review) 1 star. Frigging useless. Next....

(Slams shut computer.)

(The same music continues louder, but now it's coming from the closet, which seems to be glowing from within, behind the shut door.)

PHOENIX (cont'd)

(Freaked out, on alert) What the flip?

(A swirl of rainbow disco lights seems to emanate from the closet, and then slowly, unmistakably, movement-something straining against the closet door... is it writhing? Thrashing? Suggestions of dancing, voguing? Fists pumping in outrage. Will the closet burst? Music overlaps through the eras, ragtime, vaudeville and blues, flappers, USO music of the forties, 60s rock, disco, 90s club.)

(PHOENIX slowly approaches. As they approach, the music and lights cease. PHOENIX opens the door and is blasted by thudding disco music. Think Martha Wash: "Everybody DANCE now!! They slam shut the door. Music and lights cease.)

PHOENIX

What the hell? Who's in there?! Um, hello?

(They crack it open again, and the sound of defiant chanting rings out:
"Say it Loud! Gay is Proud! - Gay Power! - Out of the closets and into the streets!")

(PHOENIX is breathing heavily.)

PHOENIX

Novi, off! Quit Program!! Delete Program. Stop! Quit!

(Lights cease - Just a dull hum now and static.)

Novi, is this A.I.?

QUEEN (O.S.)

Yes, girl.

PHOENIX

It's not like any Artificial Intelligence I've ever seen.

QUEEN (O.S.)

That's because this is NOT artificial, darling. You are experiencing 100 percent A.I. realness - Ancestor Intelligence.

PHOENIX

Ancestor Intelligence? What does that mean? Who are you?

(Shimmering from within the closet, either by lighting effect or projection, is a fabulous queen - looks like either Marsha P Johnson or William Dorsey Swann.)

QUEEN

I am the Queen, Darling.

PHOENIX

The Queen of what? Of where? ...what's happening to me? Am I freaking out from the weird energy drink, or just sleep-deprived?

QUEEN

Why did you kill the rainbow?

PHOENIX

I didn't.

QUEEN

You did! You shoved all that fabulous into the closet. Are you trying to erase us?

PHOENIX

No, I-

QUEEN

Are you trying to erase yourself?

PHOENIX

What? No, I... I'm stuck. I'm, I'm failing. I feel... trapped. I'm afraid. Help me, please.

QUEEN

Listen carefully, Miss Thing. You will be visited by three ancestors in the night.

PHOENIX

Three?

QUEEN

Did I say three? No four, or maybe seven. They'll help you, and maybe you can help them too, because we are all giants standing on the stilettos of other giants, darling. If you still don't find that which you seek, come looking for me- The Queen of F Street in the district where all will be revealed and the deepest yearnings of your soul fulfilled. Don't forget the secret knock.

PHOENIX

Secret knock?

(The closet vibrates, awesomely, the rhythm of "shave and a haircut":
BUM-BUM-BUM-BUM-BUM - BUM-BUM.)

None of what you're saying makes any sense to me.

QUEEN

Repeat!

PHOENIX

Bum-bum-bum-bum-bum...bum-bum.

(Suddenly, we hear frantic horses neighing and the sound of thunderous, panicked galloping.)

CHARLEY (O.S.)

Whoa there—durn ye!

(Lights change. We are outside the stagecoach station stop in Livermore, California, a semi-arid valley region in Alameda County. The year is 1866.)

(Suddenly, CHARLEY PARKHURST is dragged out of the closet by some very long reins. Charley is a stage driver, 54, sun-wisened, wearing a dusty low hat over his brow and a black eye patch over his left eye. We hear the sound of galloping as Charley, clutching the reins for dear life, is dragged clear across the stage. He stops himself short on some unseen object. We hear the sound of horses straining. Note: throughout, horses are unseen, only heard and suggested by tension on the reins and actors' responses.)

PHOENIX

(screams)

Ahhhhhhhhhhh!

CHARLEY

(to Phoenix)

Hey Lunkhead! Stop yer Bellerin! Don't just stand there like a jackass. Grab the ribbons. Haul 'em in!

PHOENIX

Huh?

CHARLEY

The lines, by thunder. The reins! Grab the leaders—haul 'em in for me!

PHOENIX

The horses?

CHARLEY

No, the Buffalo. Yes, the horses!!! What in Sam Hill?

(PHOENIX grabs the reins and walks the leads back to Charley.)

CHARLEY

(to horse)

Calm down, beauty. Steady darlin. Ain't no cause to bolt.

(to Phoenix)

Mighty sorry, pardner. Somethin' spooked my leaders. Bessie's steady as a church steeple, 'cept when a rattler cuts across her path. You headed for Virginia City? They say the diggin's are bustin' with fresh strikes.

PHOENIX

I don't understand what's going on here.

CHARLEY

Charley Parkhurst at your service. You got your ticket from the stage office, didn't ya? Coach pulls out in five.

PHOENIX

Wait. You're one-eyed Charley?!

CHARLEY

Naw. I just wear the eye patch 'cause it matches with my Sunday lace. So you lookin' to ride? ...Where d'you aim to go?

PHOENIX

I don't want to go anywhere. I have to write a twelve-page paper by Monday.

CHARLEY

Mm, don't ride papers. Only horses.

PHOENIX

It's got to be about someone from history who resonates... You're perfect, really. But Malmar said you're too... controversial, or, I guess, queer.

CHARLEY

You mind your tongue, pardner. You're the one talking queer.

PHOENIX

That's not the insult you think it is. We've reclaimed the word.

CHARLEY

Talkin's free; I ain't. Get yerself a ticket. We don't hold the stage.

PHOENIX

Do you take Apple Pay?

CHARLEY

Lord, fresh fruit'd be manna from heaven. This time 'o year, all we get is dried apples tough as shoe leather. I'd haul you clear to Santa Clara for a basket of Pippins fresh off the tree.

PHOENIX

Wow. This is mind-blowingly realistic. What year are we supposed to be in?

CHARLEY

Nice try. Pretend you've gone daft and you might ride free. [I'll tell you what, plenty of miners settle fares in gold dust. Hold still.](#)¹¹

(He uses a small brush and sweeps some dust off of PHOENIX into a tiny handheld miner's scale.)

Not even a pinch. Reckon you're travelin' light, pardner. Safe travels.

(CHARLEY starts toward the stage office.)

PHOENIX

Wait, will you take me with you, please?

CHARLEY

Why you out here all alone? Don't you got people? You an orphan?

PHOENIX

No.

CHARLEY

I was. Not an easy life. You gotta have grit. Learn to fend for yourself — be your own keeper.

PHOENIX

I can do that. There's nothing for me at home right now. Take me with you, please.

CHARLEY

Wish I could. But there's a reason ol' Charley rides alone.

(Suddenly, MAUDE, the stage station agent, appears.)

MAUDE

Charley, you ol' scoundrel. You smell like horse sweat and cheap tobacco.

¹¹ Best known period account of Charley Parkhurst

CHARLEY

Maude, you old nag. You preach like a parson in a pickle jar, but damned if I don't eat every word. You got them molasses cakes for me?

MAUDE

(blushing)

I'll fetch 'em.

(But she lingers, smiling too long, before she goes.)

PHOENIX

Um...do you two need a moment?

CHARLEY

Why you still buzzing 'round like a fly on a mule's rump? Git.

(CHARLEY, trying to conceal himself from Phoenix, turns away and removes his fringed and beaded white gloves. Quickly, he unscrews a tiny flask and dabs some scented tonic on face and neck.)

(As MAUDE reenters with a basket of molasses cakes/cookies, CHARLEY quickly puts the gloves back on, hiding his hands from her.)

MAUDE

You said you'd come by two weeks ago. Why you been a stranger, Charley?

CHARLEY

Sorry, Maude. They pulled me from this route since we're gettin' clobbered by the darned steam horse.

MAUDE

You deliver letters by the dozen, Charley—yet I ain't seen one with my name on it.

CHARLEY

Sorry, ma'am. Never was one for settin' my jaw to paper.

MAUDE

Hmmmmft.

(to Phoenix)

Hello, who's this? You didn't tell me you had a son - or daughter. The spittin' image.

(introducing herself)

Maude Greely.

PHOENIX

Sup—uh, hi. Phoenix.

CHARLEY

Not my kin. Known 'em five minutes.

MAUDE

Shame. Did you think on what I told you?

(to Phoenix)

This fool's the only driver west of the Mississippi still runnin' without a shotgun messenger.

PHOENIX

What's that?

MAUDE

You know- a guard. Wells Fargo don't send a treasure box out without one these days.

(thrusting a newspaper into Charley's hands)

Charley, you seen the Union this week? Sugarfoot and his highwaymen are back at it, sticking up coaches all along the Stockton road.

CHARLEY

I ain't afeard of Sugarfoot.

MAUDE

That ain't what you said when you was starin' down the muzzle of his shotgun! You come in here white as a sheet, that's what.

CHARLEY

If Sugarfoot tries his game again, I'm ready this time.

MAUDE

That's what chills me.

(to Phoenix)

You best talk sense to him. No one's ridin' alone anymore.

CHARLEY

I'm not alone.

(to his horses)

I got my beauties...

(He passes the newspaper off to Phoenix and steps to his team
to give them some gentle strokes.)

Hey ol girl. Darlin' Bessie. Fanny. Prince. Major. Jack. Tom.

PHOENIX

(to self, reading date on newspaper)

1866.

(MAUDE hands the basket with the cakes to PHOENIX.)

MAUDE

(loudly)

Here, these are for you.

CHARLEY

Hey!

MAUDE

Not wastin' my cakes on a dead man, Charley.

CHARLEY

Alright, I surrender...

(to Phoenix)

You can ride lookout. Guard them vittles with your life.

(to Maude)

Maude... Thank you kindly for them cakes. I'll see you on the down trip.

MAUDE

Maybe you will, Charley, and maybe you won't.

CHARLEY

What d'you mean by that?

MAUDE

(to Phoenix)

Read the back page of that paper.

PHOENIX

(reading aloud)

“DR. JAYNE’S EXPECTORANT - For Coughs, Colds, Asthma, and Afflictions of the Lungs.”

MAUDE

No, at the bottom. Sheriff’s Sale.

PHOENIX

Oh. “By virtue of a decree of foreclosure and order of sale issued out of the District Court of Alameda County, State of California...

MAUDE

(pointing) Further down.

PHOENIX

“ ..for sale at PUBLIC AUCTION, at the front door of the San Leandro Court House on Thursday, the 19th day July, A.D. 1866 at 12 o’clock noon, the parcel of land with dwelling-house and store thereon, belonging to Maude Greeley-”

MAUDE

That’s my house. My store. Auctioned off on the courthouse steps like a bunch of second-hand tools.

CHARLEY

Maudy, say it ain’t so. What happened?

MAUDE

Fell behind on the payments. This new railroad’s ruining me. When the stages were steady, I couldn’t keep provisions on the shelf. Now the trains bypass Livermore, and the place sits empty as a busted stove.

CHARLEY

Don't fret. You just let ol' Charley chew on that, you hear? I aim to help.

MAUDE

Charley, now you know tongues would wag if a man came to the aid of an unwed woman — folks would question his motives — unless—

CHARLEY

Unless what?

(She won't ask, but her face is a question. He doesn't take the hint, and it stings.)

MAUDE

...Never you mind.

CHARLEY

My thoughts mix better when I chew the baccar. I'll reckon a fix — you sit tight.

MAUDE

Don't you go gettin' yourself killed, Charley. I'd like you back in one piece.

CHARLEY

That's my notion too.

MAUDE

Ride cautious.

CHARLEY

Always.

(tips his hat and climbs up in the driver's seat.)

Mam.

(to Phoenix)

Climb up in the box next to me, Kid.

(PHOENIX scrambles up beside CHARLEY.)

(CHARLEY gathers the ribbons in his left hand, wrist low, and leans forward.)

CHARLEY

Easy now, Prince... Major, stand steady... Jack, Tom, none o' your fooling.

(shifting the reins, gives a sharp click or whistle and a gentle flick of the whip.)

Gitty up! Gitalang, my beauties!

(The coach lurches forward. Sound of hooves as MAUDE fades into the distance.)

PHOENIX

Oh my god...I'm shipping you two so hard right now. She is crushing on you, bro! You have to make a move.

CHARLEY

More queer talk. Make yerself useful and read the manifest for me, please.

PHOENIX

(reading manifest)

Two sacks U.S. mail for Oakland... one sealed express box, marked "Treasure."

(looking at the locked box at their feet)

Whoa, what's in there? Treasure? For real?

CHARLEY

Not our business. Express freight. Papers needing carryin-deeds, contracts. Gold dust at times. Nuggets, maybe. When I come out here in '52, I swore off gold fever. Not for me. No sir. It's been steady work for me since I was 12.

PHOENIX

(touching the treasure box.)

Can I take a peek?

CHARLEY

No! Your job is to be my eyes and ears.

(hands Phoenix the coach horn, a long, brass tube without valves.)

You spot Sugarfoot and his boys, you blow this horn loud enough to wake the dead.

PHOENIX

What's he look like?

CHARLEY

Don't rightly know. Last time they held me up, all I seen was greedy eyes. They wore masks, cut from the legs of drawers.

PHOENIX

Drawers, like where you put your clothes?

CHARLEY

No, kid. Long drawers. Unders. Intimates.

PHOENIX

Oh! Underwear.

CHARLEY

Hideous masks, but I knew it was Sugarfoot sure enough, on account of his wicked laugh, like a wounded coyote. Then he hollered, "Hand Down Yer Treasure Box!" I weren't of a mind to oblige, 'til he jammed a sawed-off barrel in my sweet Bessie's ear. Didn't have no choice. But it won't happen again. I told Sugarfoot I'd break even with him one day, and I meant it.

(CHARLEY fetches a stogie from his coat and puts it between his lips.)

PHOENIX

Can you really grab a man's cigar with a whip?

CHARLEY

(laughs)

I'm no slouch with a whip, but the way the papers tell it, it's lotsa flap and not much jack. Still, a good yarn puts coin in my pocket.

(They ride for a while in silence, coach rocking and horse hooves on the dirt road. PHOENIX grins ear to ear, watching Charley.)

CHARLEY

Why you starin' at me, kid?

PHOENIX

I dunno-like, there's a million things I dream of doing with my life— But at night I'm just like, "yeah, right—who am I fooling? I can't do any of that." You're just so... badass.

CHARLEY

Don't sound like a compliment.

PHOENIX

It is. How'd you get so good at what you do?

CHARLEY

Hard work. Plenty of mistakes. Learnin' the hard way.

PHOENIX

Really?

CHARLEY

Sure enough. Biggest lesson's right under this patch.

PHOENIX

How'd you lose the eye?

CHARLEY

I set to shoein' an ornery stallion, even though my gut told me better. Paid no heed to my lessons and (*makes kick sound*) ! Kicked clean out my skull.

PHOENIX

Yeah, but you got bragging rights! You got stories!

CHARLEY

Everyone's got stories.

PHOENIX

Not me, really.

CHARLEY

Well, you got one now. ‘Bout the time you shared the box with Six-Horse-Charley. Think you got what it takes to be a Stage Driver?

PHOENIX

What, me?

CHARLEY

You’ll never learn by staring at my elbows.

PHOENIX

Um...

(terrified, thrilled.)

Ok.

(CHARLEY clicks/whistles to the team, drawing them down.)

CHARLEY

Easy now, Prince... Major, take it slow.

(The team drops to a walk. CHARLEY presses the brake.)

Whoa there... steady. That’s it.

(The coach sways to a halt.)

All right, kid. Let’s shift the ribbons.

(They change places.)

CHARLEY (cont’d)

Sit square. Back straight.—Six-in-hand is no schoolroom primer.¹²

(He shows Phoenix how to hold the reins.)

Near leader here, off leader there, wheelers under. Thumb down. That’s your lock. You’re the knot that ties the team to the road.

(placing the reins in Phoenix’s left hand.)

¹² Period stagecoach driving manuals: [The Badminton Library: Driving \(Duke of Beaufort, 1889\)](#)

&

[Morley Knight, Hints on Driving \(1887\)](#)

CHARLEY (cont'd)

Don't clutch the ribbons like a drowning man. Horses feel fear in the hand. Confidence too. Now—give 'em the office.

(Charley clicks/whistles very quietly to demonstrate. PHOENIX mimics.)

CHARLEY (cont'd)

Not like yer kissin' yer aunt. Sharp. Short.

(Phoenix clicks/whistles authoritatively. Horses step tentatively.)

(The coach lurches.)

CHARLEY (cont'd)

Alright, now just a slight flick of the lash.

PHOENIX

I don't want to hurt 'em.

CHARLEY

You won't. Delicate, not cruel. Like a feather stroke. Just enough to tell him you're here. Then a "Gittyup- Gitalong!"

(PHOENIX flicks the whip.)

PHOENIX

(loudly)

Gitalong!!!

(the horses lurch forward.)

Woah! It feels like they'll drag me straight off!

CHARLEY

That's six tons of horseflesh talkin.' Don't let 'em. Your hand is law. Keep the reins down, kid. Breathe with 'em. Steady. Feel the mouths in your fingers.

(PHOENIX adjusts. The coach eases into rhythm, swaying like a cradle.)

PHOENIX

Whoa...that's sick. Uh-oh. There's a turn coming up.

CHARLEY

Why you telling me? I look like a horse?

PHOENIX

We're gonna fall into the ditch!

(PHOENIX wrenches the reins and agitated horses neigh.)

CHARLEY

Easy! Not like yer hauling in a fish, Phoenix. Gentle, like pulling silk from a spool.

PHOENIX

Charley, please, take it! I can't.

CHARLEY

You can. Don't saw. Don't strangle.

(reaching over to guide Phoenix's hand.)

Shape the road with your wrist, not your arm.

(PHOENIX concentrates, loops rein, breathes heavily.)

CHARLEY (cont'd)

Good!—Small, certain—like writing yer name in the air....Horses feel the pen stroke.

(PHOENIX grits teeth, pulling with more feel than force. The team bends the curve, the coach rocking but upright. The coach steadies.)

PHOENIX

(stunned)

We... We made it.

CHARLEY

Yep.

PHOENIX

(awed)

It's like ...they can feel what I'm thinking.

CHARLEY

Sure enough. Now you know...

SONG: "The Ballad of Charley Parkhurst... or, Steady Now."

*Fear rides down the ribbons like fire.
But confidence does too.
Like a spark shoots down a wire.
What you send is up to you.*

*If you're afeared, your team'll know
If you doubt yourself, that's what you'll sew.
But if your hands don't lie, and your heart is true.
Your team'll see you through.*

CHORUS

*Knight of the Whip- Boss of the road.
You decide just where to go.
U hold the reins, go fast or slow
First Gittyup, then it's Woahhhh.*

STEADY, Steady now.

*When my mama died giving birth to me
My Daddy vowed he would be free.
Dropped me at the poorhouse door
Ain't heard from him no more.*

*They said, "Women's work is sew and thread."
From bell to bell - until you're dead.¹³
"If you're lucky you can make a life
As a mother and a wife."*

CHORUS

*Then one day I seen a boy,
(sound of galloping)
riding high, upon the stage
and I knew I had a dream.
to be this boy.
and leave my cage.*

¹³ [Period account of lived experience of factory girls.](#)

*They cut my hair to kill the lice
I seen the glass, said "I look nice!"
I stole a coat, I took some pants
On the first new moon, said "now's my chance."*

*Even courage can have a quaking heart
I'll die right here or make a start.
Is living just a pack of lies,
or was I always Charley in disguise?*

CHORUS

*Knight of the Whip- Boss of the road.
I decide just where to go.
I hold the reins, go fast or slow
First Gittyup, then it's Woahhhh.*

STEADY, Steady now.

(Horses neigh. Charley sniffs the wind.)

(Wind rises and howls. Yellow haze swallows stage.)

CHARLEY

...By thunder. We've got a blow.

PHOENIX

Huh?

CHARLEY

Dust storm. Get that kerchief over your face or you'll be chawin' grit all night.

(He passes a bandana to PHOENIX, pulls up his coat collar, and pulls down the brim of his hat.)

PHOENIX

I can't see the leaders!

CHARLEY

Then stop lookin.' Trust the feel. Keep 'em centered in the ruts—you'll hear the wheels sing when you stray.

PHOENIX

Charley, I can't—take the reins! Please!

CHARLEY

Not here. Especially not here. A blind-dust squall can spook a team. Don't abandon your beauties. Hold the ribbons. They'll feel it if you falter.

(The leaders stumble, neigh, and break into a gallop.)

PHOENIX

They're running away!

CHARLEY

Brake in bites. Do it. Drop your hand—let 'em run a shade! Then take 'em back in pieces.

(PHOENIX applies the break only a little at a time.)

CHARLEY (cont'd)

Now, steady 'em with your voice.

PHOENIX

Easy...my babies-

(add some clicks and whistles)

steady, steady now.

(The team steadies, gathers, and runs true in the ruts.)

They're listening.

CHARLEY

Not they. You. Remember that. When the world disappears, your hands are the road.

BRIDGE

When the world turns into dust, the road is in your hands.

Even though it can't be seen, your heart might understand.

But be prepared, for there's a cost

For freedom gained. There's something lost.

I ride alone.

PHOENIX

You don't have to... ride alone.

CHORUS

*Knight of the Whip- Boss of the road.
You decide just where to go.
U hold the reins, go fast or slow
First Gittyup, then it's Woahhhh.
STEADY, Steady now.*

Let's see if you got this...

You shape the road
I shape the road. (Phoenix)
You hold the reins.
I hold the reins.
To your own life.
To my own life.
To your own name.
I make my name.

You carve the road
I carve the road
In this frontier
In this frontier.
If you can tame
If I can tame.
Your quaking *fear.*
My quaking fear.

(x2)

Steady, Steady now!

PHOENIX

...They believe me.

CHARLEY

Because you spoke true. Drive on, kid. You've earned the box.

(CHARLEY puts some chewing tobacco in his cheek for a chew.)

PHOENIX

Charley, can I ask you a question, so like, when you were alive-

CHARLEY

-I beg your pardon? I am very much alive.

PHOENIX

Sorry... So like, I just have to ask, how do you identify? Trans? Non-binary. Super Butch Lesbian? A straight cis woman trying to live equal in a man's world. What's your deal?

CHARLEY

I have no idea what yer jabbering about.

PHOENIX

...Are you a boy or a girl?

CHARLEY

You got eyes, ain't ya?

PHOENIX

Do you like boys or girls?

CHARLEY

You sure ask a heap o' questions...Oh, Wind's slackenin' — best get after them molasses cakes afore it kicks up again.

(He puts the cakes on the bench between them.)

(CHARLEY pulls off one of his gloves to eat, but turns his body away from Phoenix, careful not to let his hand be seen.)

PHOENIX

Um, sweet... and kind of sandy. These are terrible.

CHARLEY

Uh-hmm. Don't tell Maude.

PHOENIX

So then why do you keep coming back for 'em?

CHARLEY

Quit pryin. You'll get dust in your eye.

PHOENIX

I see how you hide your hands. You don't have to hide around me. You can trust me.
Does Maude know about you...?

(CHARLEY shakes head.)

CHARLEY

They arrested a woman up in San Francisco just for wearin' pants. I'm just old Charley to everyone. To myself too. I'm livin' the life I want. Why go kickin' over a lantern in a dry barn.

PHOENIX

But why not take a chance? Aren't you lonely?

CHARLEY

...I ain't much of a chaser of petticoats.

PHOENIX

But you like Maude! She wants to marry you! I heard it!

CHARLEY

Not in the cards, I'm afraid, not in this life. But I just struck on a notion how you can make yourself useful... You get yourself to the courthouse in San Leandro, Thursday next, and you buy Maude's house and store.

PHOENIX

What? I'm sixteen, bro. How am I gonna - ?

(CHARLEY reaches into his coat and hands PHOENIX a pouch with gold coins.)

CHARLEY

This'll do, I reckon.

PHOENIX

Why don't you do it?

CHARLEY

I buy her place in my own name, what'll folks say? That Maude Greely's kept by ol' Charley. That I bought the woman with her house. But if you lay the coin down — You're a stranger. No one knows your face. And when the deal is done, you can sign it over, quiet-like, and Maude can keep her place.

PHOENIX

Or...you two can marry each other!

CHARLEY

Maude's fond of the ol' Charley she knows, and this thing... it could ruin us both. I been carryin' this secret on my back nigh on forty years, and I reckon some day I'll come clean — but not today.

PHOENIX

But you're Charley Parkhurst, the bravest person I ever met! You were the first person assigned female at birth to vote! That's what they say.

CHARLEY

I ain't never voted.

PHOENIX

Why not?

CHARLEY

Reckon I could...if I take a notion to.

PHOENIX

Don't you want what everyone else has?

CHARLEY

I ain't lackin much, Kid. Truth is, if Maude turned against me, it'd plumb break my heart.

PHOENIX

(feeling for Charley)

Oh. Yeah...yeah.

(The wind and dust kick in again, strong. PHOENIX coughs.
They both cover up again.)

(In the dust, the sound of a shotgun. The horses rear up, terrified.)

(A laugh, like a coyote's wounded howl, cuts through the dust.)

PHOENIX

(whispering, to Charley)

Sugarfoot?

(Charley nods.)

SUGARFOOT (unseen)

We got you surrounded, Parkie. Throw down the box and live to see supper!

CHARLEY

(quietly, to Phoenix)

Not this time. Stay with the treasure box. Guard it with your life.

PHOENIX

Charley—don't go.

(CHARLEY grabs the revolver at his feet, cocks and spins the cylinder.)

CHARLEY

I'm done with bein' hunted. If we part ways, you get yourself to the San Leandro courthouse, Thursday at noon, you hear?

(He grabs the coach horn.)

CHARLEY

Sugarfoot! I'm taking the treasure box into the dust -come find me !

PHOENIX

Charley! Come back! Don't leave me!

(CHARLEY vanishes into the dust, the sound of the coach horn trailing into the distance.)

CHARLEY (O.S.)

I got something for you, Sugarfoot!

(The sound of a shotgun rings out.)

PHOENIX

(whispering harshly) Charley... Charley...?

(PHOENIX stares at the iron-banded treasure box.)

(The sound of laughter filters through the dust.)

(PHOENIX hoists the box down from the coach, the size of a small trunk, and

staggers off with the box, swallowed by the haze.)

(The sound of laughter seems to come from all directions.)

PHOENIX

(singing quietly to self, to calm nerves)

Steady, Steady now...

(Phoenix stops suddenly. Three figures emerge from the dust, their faces concealed by the homemade long underwear masks described earlier.)

(They say nothing. There is only an eerie howling of the wind.)

(Two of the figures close in on PHOENIX. The other hangs back.)

PHOENIX

Sugarfoot, You can't have it.

(PHOENIX whirls around, trying to shield the treasure box as the masked figures circle.)

(One of the figures neighs like a horse, the other laughs hysterically.)

PHOENIX

...Who are you?

(The two figures closest to PHOENIX remove their masks. It's AJ and Josh. They surround PHOENIX.)

PHOENIX

I...I'm not afraid of you.

(The last masked figure steps forward. The other two flank PHOENIX, trapping their escape.)

PHOENIX

What do you want? I told Charley I'd protect the treasure box. You can't have it.

(The figure peels off its mask. It's Phoenix's father, Rob.)

PHOENIX (cont'd)
(thrown)

Dad...?

ROB
Danielle.

PHOENIX
Don't call me that. I'm Phoenix. That's my name now.

ROB
No. No. We're not doing that again. This is why you're failing-

PHOENIX
I'm not.

ROB
Yes. Your focus is on everything except schoolwork... I'm doing this out of love, Danielle. I'm just trying to protect you. Give me this.

(ROB grabs the treasure box and tries to open it. PHOENIX struggles with him, trying to protect what's inside.)

PHEONIX
Dad, no.

(ROB wrests an elaborate plumed Victorian lady's hat from the treasure box, festooned with ribbons and ostrich feathers, similar to [images](#) commonly misattributed to Queen of Drag, William Dorsey Swann.)

ROB
(aghast)
What is this?

PHOENIX
(uncertain, improvising)
It's my hat.

(PHOENIX wrests the hat away from ROB and places it on top of their own head.)

(A loud crack of thunder, almost like a shotgun, and lightning.)

(Phoenix appears in a single beam of light. The sound of the ancestors singing.)

(Slowly, the lights expand, and Rob, Josh, and AJ are gone. Phoenix is alone. The dust storm has dissipated. CHARLEY emerges.)

CHARLEY

Jo'hospat! I didn't know you could shoot straight, kid. I think you mighta sent Sugarfoot limp'in' into the brush to give up the ghost.

PHOENIX

Charley, you're alive!

CHARLEY

I don't reckon Sugarfoot and his boys'll trouble us again.

PHOENIX

(confused)

But it wasn't Sugarfoot. I saw-

CHARLEY

-Dust'll fool your sight out here. Now that's one outlandish hat. Where'd you fetch such a queer rig?

PHOENIX

From the treasure box, they were trying to take it, and-

CHARLEY

-And you kept the box safe — like a proper messenger. Good work, pardner. Sugarfoot and his road agents never knowed what hit 'em.

PHOENIX

Do you like it? It's my party hat.

CHARLEY

Quit yer foolin'. You'll be rufflin' some fine lady's plumes. Set it back — we've lost minutes enough. Storm's moved on... Let's get on to the next station.

(CHARLEY and PHOENIX walk back to the coach.)

CHARLEY (cont'd)

My beauties.

(The horses snort in recognition. He begins looking around, confused.)

This is curious. The road's gone.

(He kneels down to inspect the road, blowing, wiping away dust.)

No ruts. Couldn't blow that hard... (noticing the landscape) I'll be... Altamont Creek's vanished. S'posed to be yonder to the east. Don't make a lick o' sense.

(CHARLEY hops up on the box, with PHOENIX following.)

CHARLEY

Phoenix, check the way-bill for me. Where's that outlandish hat bound?

PHOENIX

(reading from manifest)

"Contents: Treasure Box: To be delivered to House of Swann at four - twelve - one thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight."

CHARLEY

Quit yer foolin', Phoenix. Let me see. Well, I'll be durned... 'four - twelve - one thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight.' That ain't no direction I ever heard of.

(PHOENIX suddenly gets an idea, and checks the inside rim of the hat.)

PHOENIX

(reading from a tag from inside hat)

"four - twelve - one thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight. A.D." Ohhhhhhh. That's not an address, Charley. It's a date, April 12th, 1888...

CHARLEY

What in Sam Hill? How the blazes am I supposed to drive to a day more'n two decades off? Just more of your foolishness.

PHOENIX

Me? What'd I do?

CHARLEY

Everything's been topsy-turvey since you come along. You know too much for your years, and at the same time, you don't know nothing at all.

PHOENIX

Why don't you just let me off at the next station, then.

CHARLEY

Don't go sulkin' now. I ain't sayin I don't like the company. I like you next to me in the box, Kid. We'll get it figured. If anyone can find the road, it's my leaders. Bess, Fanny — set us back on the track, darlins. Mountain House Station should be next. Come on, gals. Find the road.

(Charley gives a click/whistle, flick of the whip, and they're off.)

(Lights fade to black.)

END OF ACT 1