

*“Wonderful! Kin is a powerful interpretation of the events, people and issues associated with Carrie's life.”*

Dr. J. David Smith, author and expert on Carrie Buck

Kin

*the trial of Carrie Buck*

---

a two act drama

by

Jeff Barker

321 Albany Avenue NE  
Orange City, IA 51041  
712-737-8090 (home)  
712-707-7093 (office)  
712-441-3231 (cell)  
[barker@nwciova.edu](mailto:barker@nwciova.edu)

*It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind.*

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court  
Writing for the Court in the decision of *Buck v. Bell*, 1927

*...the [United States] courts have more than once ordered compulsory sterilizations. In a judgment of the Supreme Court of [1927] ...it says, among other things, "It is better for everybody if society, instead of waiting until it has to execute degenerate offspring or leave them to starve because of feeble-mindedness can prevent obviously inferior individuals from propagating their own kind."*

From Nazi defense documents submitted on behalf of Otto Hofmann,  
head of Race and Settlement Main Office of the Reichsfuehrer – SS  
Fourth volume of records of the Nuremberg Military Tribunals, 1946

*I would compare it to the Scope's trial.... Yet while books, not to mention television dramas abound about the Scope's trial, no one has yet properly presented Carrie's story to a mass audience.*

Stephen Jay Gould, author of "Carrie Buck's Daughter," in a letter to J. David Smith, March 29, 1988

*Today I offer the commonwealth's sincere apology for Virginia's participation in eugenics. We must remember the commonwealth's past mistakes in order to prevent them from recurring.*

Mark R. Warner, Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, May 2, 2002  
75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court Decision in *Buck v. Bell*

## Nazi and United States Connections

During the military trials after World War II, one of the German lawyers pointed out a connection between Nazi “racial hygiene” and United States policies. That lawyer was correct. “Good breeding” (eugenics) was a popular worldwide movement. The United States was a leader in the eugenics movement. Eugenics was fertile soil for the Holocaust.

One of the boldest strokes of the eugenics movement in the United States was compulsory sterilization. Doctors decided who was unworthy to have their bloodline continued. The case that affirmed this law at the Supreme Court level was the case of a young Virginia girl named Carrie Buck.

*Kin* tells Carrie’s story.

This drama is drawn from the transcripts of the United States Supreme Court case of *Buck v. Bell*, as well as other court documents, letters, articles, books, and personal interviews. When actual documents are used within the play, they have usually been shortened and adapted. And of course, the dialogue and moment-to-moment details of the story are invented. But the names of the people involved and the core events of this story remain, in their essence, true.

### The Development of *Kin*

This play began with two valuable staged readings (a year apart) by the Eastcheap Theatre Collection. In 2002, a version of *Kin* won the 2002 New Voices Iowa Playwrights Competition and was produced by Unexpected Company in Des Moines. The next step came later that year under the auspices of The Playwrights Center in Chicago. This was followed by three very fine college productions (Northwestern, Mount Marty and Augustana) with continued rewriting. In 2007, Sundial Theatre Company returned the story to Carrie's home state of Virginia. Sundial is a small, relatively new Washington DC area theatre company whose production of *Kin* was led by award-winning director Rosemary Hartman.

## Acknowledgements

It is difficult to craft any stageworthy play, but one drawn from history can be downright obstinate. I never cease being humbled by the people who are willing to help plays grow. I mention here with deep gratitude some of those who are behind these pages:

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Fellow playwrights at the 2001 Artistic New Directions Playwright's Retreat

Roy Mayo (Clerk of Courts, Amherst County Court)

Rob Merryman (Community Services Director of the Central Virginia Training Center)

Michael Miller

Ruby Swain

Anna (a Polish Jew, survivor of the Holocaust)

Michael Kugler (historian of Nazi holocaust)

Timothy Mooney (playwright and dramaturg par excellence)

Stuart and Mary Clark

Greg and Amy Scheer

Sarah Yocum Ellis

Jonathan D. Allsup

Dr. Harry Parker (Texas Christian University)

The wonderful ensembles of the staged readings by Eastcheap Theatre Collection

Brian Lynner, Lisa Norris and the ensembles of Unexpected Company's staged reading and then full production of the play

Sarah Gabel and The Playwrights Center

Andy Martineau, Patti Green Roth and Rosemary Hartman of Sundial Theatre Company

And ever and always Karen Bohm Barker, who is an expert dramaturg of professional stature to whom this lowly playwright just happens to be blessed to have married

I am deeply indebted to these and others. They have certainly enriched my life, and this play would not have been possible without them.

## Cast of Characters

7 males, 7 females (*with doubling; there are 26 characters*)\*

### **Family:**

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <u>Carrie Eagle:</u>     | elderly, but spry.                     |
| <u>Carrie Buck:</u>      | 17 at the start, born July 2, 1906.    |
| <u>Clarence Garland:</u> | Dobbs' nephew.                         |
| <u>Alice Dobbs:</u>      | Carrie's foster mother.                |
| <u>J.T. Dobbs:</u>       | Carrie's foster father.                |
| <u>Emma Harlow Buck:</u> | Carrie's mother.                       |
| <u>Vivian Dobbs:</u>     | Carrie's daughter, nearly 4 years old. |

### **Colony:**

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <u>Dr. Albert Priddy:</u> | Superintendent of the State of Virginia Colony for Epileptics and the Feebleminded. |
| <u>Dr. J.C. Coulter:</u>  | Doctor who commits Carrie.  |
| <u>Aggie:</u>             | A girl at the Colony with Carrie.   |
| <u>Trio Singers:</u>      | accapella singers from the Baptist Church.  |
| <u>Dr. Bell</u>           | Successor to Dr. Albert Priddy at the Colony.                                       |
| <u>Nurse:</u>             | assists Dr. Bell in Carrie's operation.   |

### **Court Officials:**

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <u>Irving Whitehead:</u>      | Lawyer appointed to defend Carrie Buck.         |
| <u>Colonel Aubrey Strode:</u> | Politician and lawyer, representing the Colony. |
| <u>Bailiff:</u>               | Amherst County Courthouse.                      |

### **Witnesses:**

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <u>Arthur Estabrook:</u> | Eugenics Record Office, Cold Spring Harbor, NY.  |
| <u>Samuel Dudley:</u>    | Relative from Ragged Mountain, VA.               |
| <u>Mrs. Harris:</u>      | Government Nurse from Charlottesville, VA.       |
| <u>Miss Wood:</u>        | Teacher from Earlysville, VA.                    |
| <u>Virginia Landis:</u>  | Teacher from Charlottesville, VA.                |
| <u>John Hopkins:</u>     | Superintendent of roads of Albemarle County, VA. |
| <u>Caroline Wilhelm:</u> | Red Cross Social Worker, Charlottesville, VA.    |
| <u>Dr. DeJarnette:</u>   | Virginia hospital system Administrator.          |

\**Doubling suggestions are at the back of the script.*

### Place

Virginia.

The Dobbs house at 1207 Grove Street, Charlottesville. The State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-minded, Madison Heights (a suburb of Lynchburg). The Amherst County Courthouse, Amherst.

### Time

1920s.

The action leads up to November 18, 1924, the day of the circuit court trial. There are also moments following the trial, in 1927. And years later, when Carrie finally tells her story.

*for Pearl,  
my maternal grandmother*

Kin

ACT I

SETTING: A courtroom. A couple of tables. A few chairs. This is the beautiful wooden furniture of an era long gone. The judge's bench is imaginary. There are benches around the playing area for actors to use after they are finished with their scenes.

AT RISE: Carrie Eagle, in her seventies, is seated far upstage alone. She relates not only to members of the audience, but she moves in and among the other characters with the ease of a shadow.

Carrie Eagle is quicker than young Carrie Buck, who is slow and naïve, but they are, after all, the same person.

Lighting or music helps move us in time and place. Scenes should overlap as much as possible.

(CARRIE EAGLE moves up onto the platform and looks around herself. Smiles at us.)

CARRIE EAGLE

They was worn spots on the floor by the lawyer tables. The room was echoey. They was flags.

(Her hand rests on the chair which Carrie Buck will occupy later at trial.)

Yes, that's, but it doesn't start, it starts with Clarence, that's where it starts. They put it out of the trial...but it was Clarence, Clarence comin' 'round to the Dobbs'. I was sixteen, he was older than me. This is more than a year before the trial.

(CARRIE runs onstage. She is behind the Dobbs' house in Charlottesville.)

CLARENCE

(off)

Wait up. Carrie!

CARRIE EAGLE

His whole name's Clarence Garland. Don't know where he is now. Oh, boy.

(CLARENCE runs onstage.)

CLARENCE

You tryin' to run away?

CARRIE EAGLE

He was a looker.

CLARENCE

(sits)  
Whew, you got legs.

(CARRIE laughs flirtingly.)

CARRIE EAGLE

Talker, too. If you asked me did I like him, well, then you would not be far from the truth.

CLARENCE

Is you? Tryin' to run away from me?

CARRIE EAGLE

I tol' him if I wanted to get away from him, I could.

CARRIE

If I was tryin' to run away from you I would.

CARRIE EAGLE

If you was not naïve at sixteen, well, then you just keep that to yourself.

CLARENCE

(laughing)  
Where you go to school?

CLARENCE

I ain't seen you at Charlottesville.

CARRIE EAGLE

Mrs. Dobbs had took me out of school to help at home.

CLARENCE

C'mon. What school?

CARRIE

I don't go to school. Mrs. Dobbs say someday I'll have a family. I don't need to worry about school.

CLARENCE

They took you out?

CARRIE

School is for boys and stuck ups.

CLARENCE

You think I'm stuck up?

I think you're a boy.

CARRIE

You think I'm a boy?

CLARENCE

You look like a boy.

CARRIE

(flirting)  
Well, I'm not a boy. I'm a man.

CLARENCE

I had not been around boys very much. So I didn't know what they was up to.

CARRIE EAGLE

(flirting back)  
I think you look like Mr. Dobbs.

CARRIE

You think I look like Uncle J.T.?

CLARENCE

Yeah.

CARRIE

In what way?

CLARENCE

They's a family resemblance.

CARRIE

They is?

CLARENCE

Yeah. In your nose. And your eyes. And around your mouth.

CARRIE

Do you go to dances?

CLARENCE

Do you?

CARRIE

What if I did?

CLARENCE

CARRIE

Then you'd better not let on.

CLARENCE

Haven't you ever been to a dance? You've never been to a dance.

CARRIE

That don't mean nothing.

CLARENCE

Do you ever do anything?

CARRIE

Nothin' to do.

CLARENCE

I mean to get out of the house.

CARRIE

I sing in the choir at church.

CLARENCE

No. I mean to get away. From Uncle J.T. and Aunt Alice. Get out from under. You're a mama's girl.

CARRIE

Am not.

CLARENCE

You oughta call Aunt Alice "Mama."

CARRIE

I call her "Mrs. Dobbs." She say it wouldn't be right for me to call her "Mama."

CLARENCE

You oughta call her whatever you want. Do you ever go out?

(Pause.)

Never mind. I was just wondering.

CARRIE

No. I just don't have time to go out.

CLARENCE

Just to take a walk on the railroad tracks?

CARRIE

I'm not allowed.

CLARENCE

It's right there. How can you not?

CARRIE

Well, sometimes I do. But I don't let 'em know.

CLARENCE

(Grins. Beat.)

Have you ever taken a walk down the railroad when a train was coming?

CARRIE

You're a moron.

CLARENCE

It's exciting, that's all.

CARRIE

You're feeble-minded.

CLARENCE

You don't want to do anything exciting. You're afraid, Carrie.

CARRIE

Am not.

CLARENCE

(sing-song)

Carrie's a scarey!

CARRIE

My real daddy got killed on the railroad.

CLARENCE

So. That just proves my point. Did you see him? All mangled up?

CARRIE

I was only three, you feeble-minded moron.

(CARRIE moves away from CLARENCE. CARRIE EAGLE moves toward EMMA BUCK who has entered, carrying a tub of wash clothes. This moment is Carrie Buck's only childhood memory of her mother. EMMA mimes hanging clothes. She takes a drink. Before the end of the scene, she will have wandered off.)

CARRIE EAGLE

If I could stop time, I would take it back to before my daddy died, before mama was drinkin' and workin' so hard to get me another daddy. And they wouldn't say she was a whore, and they wouldn't put her in the Colony, and I wouldn't live with the Dobbs, and I'd never, ever meet Clarence.

CLARENCE

I'm sorry I talked about your real daddy.

CARRIE EAGLE

Ever.

CLARENCE

Was he walkin' on the railroad?

CARRIE

He was *workin'* on the railroad. They oughta put you in the Colony.

CLARENCE

You ever visit your real mama?

(Pause.)

You ever even meet her?

CARRIE

She's a drunk.

CLARENCE

What's she like?

CARRIE

I was too young.

CLARENCE

You ever been to the Colony?

CARRIE EAGLE

You ever been to the Colony?

CARRIE

No, I never have and I'm not gonna.

CARRIE EAGLE

They don't call it that no more, but it's still there.

CLARENCE

It must be a crazy place. I think it'd be fun.

CARRIE EAGLE

It's like a big park with a lot of buildings. You could drive your car in there, walk around if you like.

CARRIE

You're a wild boy.

CLARENCE

Do you ever go down in the gully?

CARRIE

Sometimes. Mrs. Dobbs sends me down there for wildberries.

CLARENCE

I mean with boys.

CARRIE

I don't know.

CLARENCE

Well you have to know. You do or you don't.

CARRIE

I don't.

CLARENCE

Do you ever think about it?

CARRIE

Sometimes.

CLARENCE

Then why don't you?

CARRIE

I never had the time.

CLARENCE

Well, hells bells, girl! You just take the time.

CARRIE

Mrs. Dobbs keeps me busy.

CLARENCE

What?

CARRIE

(smiles, quieter)  
Mrs. Dobbs keeps me busy.

CLARENCE

(coming in closer)  
What?

CARRIE

(almost inaudible)  
Mrs. Dobbs keeps me busy.

CLARENCE

Have you ever kissed a boy?

CARRIE

That's personal.

CLARENCE

I don't care. I've kissed six girls. How many boys have you kissed?

CARRIE

Less than that.

CLARENCE

Five? Four? Three? Two? One?

CARRIE EAGLE

Keep goin', Clarence, I said.

CLARENCE

One?

CARRIE EAGLE

I told him, do you think I'm gonna tell you?

CLARENCE

You're not gonna tell me?

CARRIE EAGLE

Clarence, he was pretty dense.

CLARENCE

One? You're not gonna tell me? You ain't. You ain't kissed anybody.

CARRIE EAGLE

He wadn't the only one that was dense. And since you're polite enough to not point that out, I better do it myself. He wadn't the only one that was dense, and that's all I'm gonna say.

ALICE

(off)

Carrie!

CLARENCE

You're almost a woman. You ought to be doing things you like to do. You ought not to let my aunt Alice run your life.

(beat)

I'm glad we ain't real kin.

(beat)

If you could do anything in the world, what would you do? Anything.

CARRIE

Anything?

CLARENCE

Yes. Anything in the world.

CARRIE

They's places I'd like to see.

CLARENCE

Places? That's it? That's all?

CARRIE

They's other things.

CLARENCE

How far down the railroad have you been?

CARRIE

Not far enough.

ALICE

(offstage)

Carrie! Clarence!

CLARENCE

I like you.

ALICE

Carrie! Clarence's folks is goin'.

CARRIE

I'm comin'.

CLARENCE

I'd like to come over here by myself sometime. Can I?

CARRIE

Do what you want.

CLARENCE

Sometime when Aunt Alice and Uncle J.T. is not here to bother us.

(mocking as he exits)

“Carrie! Carrie! I'm comin'.”

(CARRIE watches him go before she exits.)

CARRIE EAGLE

I suppose some people, most people, want to stop time before somethin' bad happens. Before my daddy died. Before Hitler got ahold of Germany. Before the bomb. Everybody's got they own answer.

It would be nicer to say we'd stop time after somethin'. Maybe that makes you think of somethin'. Does it? Does me. But in our experience, that is the time we'd like things to go right on. We don't ever want it to stop then. We want things to go on forever. That's our hope. The hope in all of us.

But back then—what happened is Mrs. Dobbs has to go away. Some of her kin in the Blue Ridge is sick. She has to go to take care of 'em. Mr. Dobbs is away at work. I'm at home. So this is my chance. My chance to tell Clarence to come by. So I do, I tell him he should come by.

(Behind the Dobbs' house. There is a distant train whistle. CARRIE stumbles onto stage.)

CLARENCE

(entering)

Did you like it? It didn't hurt did it? I hear that it hurts some people the first time. I was just assuming that was the first time for you, but maybe it's not. That's okay. It's not for me. But there's a first time for everything. What's wrong? Are you going?

CARRIE

Back to the house.

CLARENCE

What do you want to go back to the house for? I thought you wanted to go all around the world. I'm showing you the world, and you want to run home. Well, alright. You're free to go. How come you was yellin.' I didn't hurt you did I – there's blood on your clothes. Did I hurt you? If Aunt Alice asks about that blood, just make up something. This is our business, right? Hey, I didn't hear your answer.

CARRIE

You go home now.

(CARRIE exits.)

CLARENCE

Idiot.

(He sits on bench at edge of stage right.)

CARRIE EAGLE

And that was the last I seen of Clarence. The Dobbs seen him, but that was between them and him. Like I said, at the trial...oh. You don't know that. That's been taken out. Well, the point is, I never seen Clarence after that. But I never stopped thinkin' about him. Couldn't if I tried. And I tried. Lord Almighty, I tried. I tried.

(Night. Inside the Dobbs' house. CARRIE is heard off – singing – slowly and peacefully. J.T. enters, sits and reads the newspaper. By the end of her song, CARRIE enters.)

CARRIE

What a fellowship, what a joy divine  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.  
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.  
Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms.  
Leaning, lean—  
(CARRIE suddenly screams and freezes in terror.)

J.T. DOBBS

What?!

CARRIE

I'm sorry, Mr. J.T.

J.T. DOBBS

Are you alright?

CARRIE

I'm sorry, I thought I saw someone. Out the window.

J.T. DOBBS

You 'bout made my heart stop.

CARRIE

I thought I did for a moment.

J.T. DOBBS  
You saw someone?

CARRIE EAGLE  
Clarence.

CARRIE  
I'm sure I did not.

J.T. DOBBS  
Well, there is no one there.

CARRIE  
I know.

J.T. DOBBS  
Do you need me to go and check?

CARRIE  
No. I'm sure there is not. I'm sorry.

J.T. DOBBS  
(laughing)  
Blazes, you 'bout made my heart stop.

ALICE  
(entering)  
What is it?

J.T. DOBBS  
It's nothing. Carrie saw something out the front window. But it wasn't anything there.

ALICE  
What did you see Carrie?

CARRIE  
There wasn't anything there.

ALICE  
What did you think you saw?

CARRIE  
A person.

CARRIE EAGLE  
Clarence, Clarence. I saw Clarence everywhere.

ALICE

Was there someone there, J.T.?

J.T. DOBBS

No, there wasn't nothing there.

ALICE

Well did anyone go out to check?

J.T. DOBBS

I'm reading the paper. She was just seeing things.

ALICE

(ALICE takes J.T.'s paper and rolls it up. To CARRIE)  
What's making you so skitty?

J.T. DOBBS

You was just seeing things, wasn't you Carrie?

CARRIE

Yes, sir.

CARRIE EAGLE

Yes, yes, I was seein' things. But that don't make 'em go away.

ALICE

Are you hiding something from me, Carrie?

CARRIE EAGLE

I figured a lie would make the best of it for all of us.

CARRIE

No, Mrs. Dobbs.

CARRIE EAGLE

So, I lied. To keep it to myself.

ALICE

You better not be lyin'. Do you know where liars go?

(beat)

Do you know?

CARRIE

To the Colony.

ALICE

(laughing as she exits)  
No, dear. They go to hell.

J.T. DOBBS

(following)  
I was reading that.

(CARRIE exits.)

CARRIE EAGLE

You think a problem will take care of itself. Let sleeping dogs lie.  
(Laughs.)  
Well, that dog lay around for only about one month.

(Morning, at the Dobbs. CARRIE enters.)

ALICE DOBBS

(entering)  
How are you feeling this morning, Carrie?

CARRIE

I am feeling much better.

ALICE DOBBS

You don't look better.

CARRIE

I feel better.

ALICE DOBBS

Well, come on downstairs and have some bacon and eggs.

CARRIE

(exiting quickly)  
I need to empty my chamber pot.

J.T. DOBBS

(entering)  
How's Carrie feeling this morning?

ALICE DOBBS

She's feeling much better.

J.T. DOBBS

She doesn't look better. Maybe she's got the morning sickness.

ALICE DOBBS

J.T.!

J.T. DOBBS

Blazes, it was just a joke.

ALICE DOBBS

Well, it's not funny.

J.T. DOBBS

Fine, it's not funny.

(J.T. turns away as CARRIE appears unseen behind ALICE.)

J.T. DOBBS (continued)

You got bacon and eggs ready?

(CARRIE immediately turns and flees as the Dobbs exit.)

CARRIE EAGLE

If I only could get out to the tracks. Out there they would not hear me. I could be at ease. If I'm sick, I'm sick. It's okay, it's okay.

(CARRIE EAGLE points to an actor at the side and closes her eyes to remember while the actor makes the train sound. CARRIE EAGLE nods and smiles.)

Maybe you've had a place of escape. A place just your own. My place was them railroad tracks. I'd pick up these little rocks. Pretty rocks. And think about where they come from far away. Where was these rocks before they was dumped on the tracks at the back of the Dobbs? Just girl thoughts about rocks, and tracks to carry people and cattle and lumber and cheese. Tracks to move the world.

(Beat.)

You know, it occurs to me that I never thought about the tracks coming from somewhere. They was always going to somewhere. I only thought about going away. The world away out there. Away, away. And then that changed. Ohhh, it changed.

(Inside the Dobbs' house. CARRIE enters, ushered in by J.T. DOBBS, followed by ALICE.)

ALICE DOBBS

J.T., don't you think we all ought to go to bed?

CARRIE

I'm tired, could I go to bed please?

J.T. DOBBS

No. No, Carrie. There are some things that have happened here. No one's quite sure how they happened. And I think it would be in the best interest of this family, of this household if we'd all know.

ALICE DOBBS

(interrupting)

J.T., could we maybe have this conversation later?

J.T. DOBBS

Alice, I wanna do this now. Carrie—

CARRIE

Yes, sir.

J.T. DOBBS

I don't wanna come off being forward....

CARRIE

Yes, sir.

J.T. DOBBS

Are you going to have a baby?

(Silence.)

I need to know how it was you got pregnant.

CARRIE

Well sir, um, I . . .

J.T. DOBBS

You been sneaking out at night? What's been going on Carrie?

ALICE DOBBS

J.T., she . . .

CARRIE

Well, sir, I . . . well, I, sir, I, you know, um, well, um, your family that's come to visit sometimes. Well, um, you know them, well, I know them. And, well, um, the one nephew, particularly, I, um, we became, uh, friendly.

J.T. DOBBS

Carrie, what are you saying?

CARRIE

Well, just, your nephew and I, we know each other, and recently we got to be friendly.

J.T. DOBBS

Are you telling me that you got a child with my nephew?

(Pause.)

Carrie?

CARRIE

No, sir.

J.T. DOBBS

Well what in the blazes are we talkin' about then?!

(Long pause.)

Well. Are you saying that Clarence is the father of this child?

CARRIE

Can I go to bed now sir?

J.T. DOBBS

I'm gonna go over and talk to Clarence about this.

CARRIE

No, he'll say it wasn't him.

ALICE DOBBS

How do we know it was, honey? Do you have some proof?

CARRIE

That's what he said he would say if I ever told anybody what he done.

ALICE DOBBS

What?

CARRIE

That's what he said he would say if I ever told anybody what he done.

ALICE DOBBS

Carrie, did Clarence make you do something you didn't want to do?

(beat)

When?

CARRIE

It was that time you went visiting in the mountain, and you were upset because I lost my apron.

(CARRIE gets up.)

J.T. DOBBS

We're not finished yet.

(CARRIE returns with a blood stained apron.)

ALICE DOBBS

(After a pause.)

This is your home, Carrie. You don't have to go anyplace.

CARRIE

I don't want to upset his family, sir.

J.T. DOBBS

Well, we'll, we'll figure it out. It'll be okay, Carrie.

CARRIE

Can I go to bed now?

(J.T. DOBBS looks to ALICE DOBBS. She nods.)

J.T. DOBBS

Yes you may, Carrie.

(CARRIE exits.)

ALICE DOBBS

What are you going to do? It's a case of her word against his. He is never going to admit it, and who's going to believe a girl like Carrie? Her own mama's in the Colony, who's gonna....

J.T. DOBBS

Nobody. That's the thing of it.

ALICE DOBBS

What are you going to do, J.T.?

J.T. DOBBS

Only one thing to do.

ALICE DOBBS

I promised her.

J.T. DOBBS

Ought not to.

(J.T. DOBBS exits followed by ALICE DOBBS. Three of the female actors enter upstage and sing an upbeat accapella version of an old hymn.)

TRIO SINGERS

I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore.  
Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more.  
But the Master of the sea heard my despairing cry,  
From the waters lifted me, now safe am I.

Love lifted me, love lifted me.  
When nothing else could help, love lifted me.  
Love lifted me, love lifted me.  
When nothing else could help, love lifted me.

(A doctor's office in Charlottesville. J.T. and ALICE DOBBS enter along with DR. J.C. COULTER.)

DR. J.C. COULTER

Alright J.T., Mrs. Dobbs.

J.T. DOBBS

Alice?

(Pause.)

Dr. Coulter, we're here as concerned – foster – caretakers – not as the child's –

ALICE DOBBS

What he's trying to say is that I think this is men's business.

DR. J.C. COULTER

(chuckle)

Oh, that's alright, Alice. It's helpful that you're here. This'll just take a minute.

(DR. J.C. COULTER sits and fills out the form as they answer his questions.)

Patient's name?

J.T. DOBBS

Carrie Buck.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Born?

ALICE DOBBS

2<sup>nd</sup> of July, 1906.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Location?

ALICE DOBBS

Well, Charlottesville, I reckon.

Color? DR. J.C. COULTER

White. J.T. DOBBS

Is she married? DR. J.C. COULTER

No. J.T. DOBBS

Present residence? DR. J.C. COULTER

Still with us. J.T. DOBBS

DR. J.C. COULTER  
J.T. Dobbs and wife of Charlottesville. At what age was mental peculiarity first noticed?

(The DOBBS look at one another, uncertain as to what to say.)

DR. J.C. COULTER (continued)  
Since birth?

ALICE DOBBS  
She didn't come to us until she was three years old.

DR. J.C. COULTER  
(close enough)  
Since birth.  
(writes it down)  
How was the peculiarity manifested?

(Again, the DOBBS look at one another, uncertain as to what to say.)

DR. J.C. COULTER (continued)  
Headaches? Nervousness?

ALICE DOBBS  
No.

DR. J.C. COULTER  
Does she recognize colors?

ALICE DOBBS

Yes.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Does she understand language?

ALICE DOBBS

Yes.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Can she do a simple errand?

ALICE DOBBS

Yes.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Is there any defect in sight or hearing?

ALICE DOBBS

No.

DR. J.C. COULTER

If female, is she pregnant or has she missed any menstrual periods?

(He knows the answer and makes a check mark.)

Name of father?

(Pause.)

J.T. DOBBS

We don't know the name of the father.

ALICE DOBBS

Frank Buck.

J.T. DOBBS

Oh.

(General laughter.)

Yeah. Frank Buck.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Maiden name of mother?

ALICE DOBBS

Emma Harlow.

DR. J.C. COULTER

What is the mental condition of parents?

J.T. DOBBS

Her father is dead. The mother is a drunk. She's at the colony already.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Has patient ever attended school?

ALICE DOBBS

Yes, six years. Through sixth grade.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Has patient ever been charged with or convicted of any crime?

J.T. DOBBS

No.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Occupation?

J.T. DOBBS

Helping around house.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Any kinship?

J.T. DOBBS

No.

ALICE DOBBS

Not kin.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Has patient now or at any time had delusions, hallucinations or outbreaks of temper?

J.T. DOBBS

Some.

ALICE DOBBS

I think sometimes she sees things.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Any outbreaks of temper?

ALICE DOBBS

Some outbreaks of temper.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Well, possible epilepsy.

(Finds another spot on form.)

Here. At what age did this first appear?

ALICE DOBBS

What did we say earlier?

J. T. DOBBS

Since birth?

DR. J.C. COULTER

Since birth. Fits or spasms?

ALICE DOBBS

No.

DR. J.C. COULTER

If no fits or spasms, how was it first manifested?

(Pause.)

J. T. DOBBS

Put down feeble-minded.

DR. J.C. COULTER

What mental change has taken place in patient?

J.T. DOBBS

Feeble-minded.

DR. J.C. COULTER

(continuing to read from the form)

Has patient ever attempted to harm himself or others?

J.T. DOBBS

No.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Is the patient incapable of protecting himself against ordinary dangers without an attendant?

J.T. DOBBS

Capable.

DR. J.C. COULTER

Well, I think that's about all we need.

ALICE DOBBS

That's all it takes? She'll be committed?

DR. J.C. COULTER

Well, ma'am, these things are hereditary. And where is her mother? I'll sign here and then you folks can sign. What is this, the twenty-third? 1924.

(The DOBBS sign.)

DR. J.C. COULTER (continued)

You folks are aware that the colony has a waiting list?

ALICE DOBBS

No, we weren't aware of that.

DR. J.C. COULTER

A long one as I understand it. And babies are not allowed. Do you know what is to be done with it?

(J.T. look at ALICE.)

ALICE DOBBS

We will keep the baby.

(ALICE crosses and sits on bench stage right. J.T. takes a breath but remains silent.)

DR. J.C. COULTER

Well, I'm sorry for your trouble.

J.T. DOBBS

Thank you, J.C.

(J.T. DOBBS and DR. J.C. COULTER shake hands. JC sits on bench stage left. JT crosses to sit on bench stage right with ALICE.)

CARRIE EAGLE

It turns out that I was correct. If you tell a lie, you go to the Colony. They said I would have to stay there for as long as it takes. And babies are not allowed. So I had a series of goodbyes. Goodbye bedroom. Goodbye baby. Goodbye house. Goodbye Charlottesville. The Red Cross nurse took me to Lynchburg. I finally got to ride the train and then a car over the river and up the hill. And there I was at the Colony. Gettin' assigned. Gettin' my uniform. Gettin' my buildin'. Busy, busy, busy.

(Supplies room at the Colony. Noise of people in the background. AGGIE enters. She is mentally sharp and uses this to control others. AGGIE wears Colony uniform.)

AGGIE  
What are you?

CARRIE  
What?

AGGIE  
What are you? What got you here, child?

CARRIE  
Oh.

AGGIE  
Huh?

CARRIE  
The Dobbs found out about my—

AGGIE  
Oh, yeah. You were that way. And they found out. Did they make you take it?

CARRIE  
No.

AGGIE  
Did you take it?

CARRIE  
No!

AGGIE  
You lost it?

CARRIE  
No. I carried it.

AGGIE  
You had the baby? What for?

CARRIE  
Where are the beds here?

AGGIE

You can't sleep now. You sleep when they tell you. There's no nappin' here. And precious sleep at night, neither. But you'll get used to the screamers. I sleep right through 'em. But you won't. Not for awhile.

(beat)

You're a good girl. You just made your mistakes. Be good and get out of here. They don't want our kind here. If you're good, they'll even get you a home to stay in and work at. You can make something of yourself. And it'll be safe. But you gotta do what they say, see? And you can't have no more babies.

CARRIE

Have you met a woman named Emma Buck?

(Pause.)

AGGIE

I can see you're gonna be trouble.

(AGGIE sits on bench on stage right. A common room at the Colony. EMMA enters.)

CARRIE EAGLE

There's a lot of buildings at the Colony, but you learn your way around. Finding mama was easy. It was finding my courage took a few weeks.

CARRIE

(finally approaching EMMA)

Hello.

EMMA

Hey.

CARRIE

My name is Carrie.

EMMA

Mmm, huh.

CARRIE

You want some gum?

(EMMA nods. CARRIE gives her a piece of gum.)

EMMA

Are you mad at me?

CARRIE

Why?

EMMA

You work in the kitchen?

CARRIE

Yeah. You work in the laundry?

EMMA

You want something fixed, you let me know.

CARRIE

You want something to eat, you let me know.

EMMA

You know who I am?

CARRIE

You're Emma Buck.

EMMA

Do you like it here?

(CARRIE shakes her head.)

EMMA (continued)

If you're good, there's movies on Friday nights. Across the river, in Lynchburg.

(Pause.)

What's your baby look like?

CARRIE

(Pause.)

You.

(Singing is heard under the remainder of the scene until CARRIE crosses Upstage and EMMA crosses to Stage Right and sits.)

TRIO SINGERS

There is a balm in Gilead  
To make the wounded whole.  
There is a balm in Gilead  
To heal the sinsick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged  
And think my work's in vain.

But then the Holy Spirit  
Revives my soul again.

There is a balm in Gilead  
To make the wounded whole.  
There is a balm in Gilead  
To heal the sinsick soul.

To heal the sinsick soul.

CARRIE EAGLE

There was a group that come there, from the Baptist church in Madison Heights. Sung pretty good.

And then the shock.

(DR. PRIDDY'S office. DR. PRIDDY is at work. He looks up and sees CARRIE standing in the doorway.)

DR. PRIDDY

What is it, Carrie?

CARRIE

Well, um, what . . .

DR. PRIDDY

Go ahead.

CARRIE

What is this word—sterilization? What does that mean?

DR. PRIDDY

Carrie, it means that you have an operation so that you won't be able to get in trouble anymore.

CARRIE

Sir?

DR. PRIDDY

I am actually quite busy, Carrie. I have an appointment with someone.

CARRIE

Am I in trouble?

DR. PRIDDY

No, you're—

(then realizing she may be talking about something else)

Oh, good Lord, I hope not. You're not are you?

CARRIE

I hope not.

DR. PRIDDY

Well, that's why you have the operation. So nobody has to wonder anymore.

CARRIE

So I won't get into trouble.

DR. PRIDDY

You understand, don't you, that I mean in trouble like having a baby.

(CARRIE is struggling not to cry.)

DR. PRIDDY (continued)

That is right. But that is not the only reason, Carrie. You're here because when you have babies you hurt them because of how you are.

CARRIE

I hurt my babies?

DR. PRIDDY

Yes, that is correct.

CARRIE

So I'm having an operation.

DR. PRIDDY

You are having an operation . . . to stop it.

CARRIE

So I won't hurt my babies?

DR. PRIDDY

So you won't hurt your babies. Does that make sense?

CARRIE

Yes.

(DR. PRIDDY sees IRVING outside.)

DR. PRIDDY

You get back to work, Carrie. Come in, Irv.

CARRIE

(exiting)  
Excuse me.

IRVING

That's quite alright, miss.

DR. PRIDDY

Close the door.

CARRIE EAGLE

I heard the Superintendent say, "Close the door," but I didn't know if he was speaking to me or to his guest, so I just went out. And left the door open.

IRVING

I've always been impressed by your office, Mr. Superintendent.

DR. PRIDDY

If you want this job, you may have it.

IRVING

Hell's fire, Doc. I don't even want my job, why would I want yours?

CARRIE EAGLE

Now I know enough to say that when the swearin' starts, some doin's is about to happen.

DR. PRIDDY

Would you please refrain from using colorful language?

IRVING

Hell's fire and damnation.

DR. PRIDDY

For the sake of the inmates.

CARRIE EAGLE

If you was there that day, you woulda noticed a girl listenin' in to something not meant for her ears.

IRVING

(taking letter out of envelope)  
The Colonel says you want me in the courtroom. You want me in the courtroom?

DR. PRIDDY

(seizing the letter and looking at it)

I see that the Colonel has precipitated my request. I meant shortly to make my solicitation in person.

IRVING

You're taking the Colonel's law to court?

DR. PRIDDY

I have been to court over sterilization already. I have no desire to return. But now that we have an actual sterilization law passed, I do wish to put this matter to bed. I have conceived a friendly test of the law—

IRVING

(as DR. PRIDDY continues)

Fine, test the law.

DR. PRIDDY

—so that the commonwealth's doctors may operate without fear. I have selected an inmate.

IRVING

(overlapping)

Test it. But—

DR. PRIDDY

And our present board heartily—

IRVING

(overlapping)

You don't want me in that court. You need trial lawyers.

DR. PRIDDY

Colonel has considerable stake in this matter. He wrote the statute. He deserves—

IRVING

(overlapping)

Every taxpayer in Virginny has a stake. You want to pick a hillbilly from Ragged Mountain to try your case for you?

DR. PRIDDY

I would hardly call the Colonel—

IRVING

If you want this case to test the statute, you need trial lawyers.

DR. PRIDDY

The Colonel will represent the Colony. You will represent the inmate. You comprehend our purpose more than any other lawyer I know.

IRVING

How many banking lawyers do you know? What do the patient's parents say?  
(taking out a letter and reading the name)

Carrie Buck.

DR. PRIDDY

Carrie's mother is also in the Colony, and together with Carrie's baby, we have a perfect example of urgency.

IRVING

She has a baby?

DR. PRIDDY

They have babies. They have babies and babies and babies.

IRVING

What about her father?

DR. PRIDDY

Deceased.

IRVING

Guardians?

DR. PRIDDY

Carrie's foster parents have stepped aside. It is now my choice. And I choose you.

IRVING

I am your friend. I am Colonel Strode's friend. I've been on the board. You got my name on the side of a building out there. Conflict of interest.

DR. PRIDDY

Alright. She is to be denied my first and best choice. I shall get some...some...some trial lawyer, who traffics in criminal law, scrapping among the vulgar and the violent. Such a person to sit next to a dear child I am attempting to restore to worthy endeavor and renewed character. She is to be denied.

(Pause.)

Alright?

IRVING

You want me to prepare a defense?

DR. PRIDDY

Posh. What has a defense attorney to prepare except, "Objection, objection, objection."

IRVING

Well, that's what an idiot defense attorney does – bumps all the idiot decisions up to the idiot judge.

DR. PRIDDY

I am merely attempting to be humorous. Tell me, Irv, what would you do?

(Beat.)

You will be paid.

IRVING

It's not money, Dr. Priddy. It's competence.

DR. PRIDDY

And I have already stated—

IRVING

Not just my competence. The Colonel's. He's a politician.

DR. PRIDDY

He will have you at his side. Between the two of you, it should be fine. How much time do you need?

IRVING

How about six years?

DR. PRIDDY

You may have six weeks.

IRVING

You'll need at least six months. No matter who you get.

DR. PRIDDY

No, Irv, no. Someone else may challenge this law, and in lesser hands, it may be struck down as it has been in other states.

IRVING

You press this too fast, and you lose.

DR. PRIDDY

There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to—  
(DR. PRIDDY suddenly coughs and cannot continue.)

IRVING

(Takes a small flask out of his coat pocket and gives it to DR. PRIDDY.)  
Take a drink. "Leads on to fortune." I know Shakespeare, Doc, but Shakespeare didn't know horse-pucky about Virginia court law.

DR. PRIDDY

(at last grown impatient)

I have invested the last ten years of my life in an idealistic cause – the health of the human family. And now I have a colony sleeping three to a bed. But may I return my inmates unchanged to society? Plant tares among the wheat?

(Shoves a paper at IRVING.)

"Whereas heredity plays an important role in the transmission of crime! Whereas defectives will likely become, by propagation, a menace to society! Whereas, whereas, whereas!"

(Coughing. Silence.)

I am more sick than you know.

(Pause.)

IRVING

(with new concern)

I didn't know. Damn.

DR. PRIDDY

You are surprisingly vulgar today, Irving.

IRVING

You're gonna get better. You're gonna whip this.

(Taking letter, putting it in his pocket.)

DR. PRIDDY

Do not do this unless you mean it.

IRVING

You can bank on it.

DR. PRIDDY

To the end of the road?

IRVING

I'm not a quitter, Doc.

DR. PRIDDY

God bless you, sir.

(Picking up his hat.)

IRVING

(starting out)

Yeah. Well. We're gonna get our asses whooped.

CARRIE EAGLE

(delighted with herself)

What'd I say?

(DR. PRIDDY sits. CARRIE shows up at the door.)

CARRIE

Sir?

DR. PRIDDY

What is it now, Carrie?

CARRIE

Why am I going to the court?

DR. PRIDDY

Were you eavesdropping, Carrie? You had no right to be doing that.

CARRIE

Am I going to the court?

DR. PRIDDY

Well, you're going to find out eventually. You are going to go to court so you can get the operation you need to have.

CARRIE

I see. The court is the one who says?

DR. PRIDDY

That is correct. We must depend on the court to give us the approval.

CARRIE

Can't I give the approval?

DR. PRIDDY

Well, that would be very helpful.

CARRIE

Is it safe?

DR. PRIDDY

Perfectly safe. You won't have to worry about a thing.

CARRIE

Will you be there?

DR. PRIDDY

I am probably the one who will do the operation.  
(He coughs.)

CARRIE

And after the operation, do I get to go home?

DR. PRIDDY

That is the plan. You will be paroled. We will attempt to find you an excellent situation. Would you like to go back to the Dobbs?

CARRIE

That's where my baby is.

DR. PRIDDY

Perhaps this is not something that you need to worry about right now.

CARRIE

I'd like to have it now.

DR. PRIDDY

Look Carrie. I cannot do that.

CARRIE

You said I could give the approval.

DR. PRIDDY

And you can. But I cannot give you that operation yet.

CARRIE

Why?

DR. PRIDDY

Because of the court.

CARRIE

But I say so.

DR. PRIDDY

Carrie, I have to be very careful. I have tried to make these decisions on my own in the past, and the court says that I must not do that anymore.

CARRIE

But you don't say. I say.

DR. PRIDDY

But you are now a ward of the state. And the state has to agree with you. The best we can do is to win this case in court, because I will not give you that operation unless we win, and if you do not have this operation, you are going to have to stay here for most of your life. We are in the winter of our discontent, Carrie, but after the winter cometh the glorious summer.

(DR. PRIDDY escorts CARRIE out. They exit.)

CARRIE EAGLE

Dr. Priddy was an old fashioned gentleman. I wished I could have been at his house at dinnertime. "Four score and seven minutes ago, our helpmate laid into the oven a fresh chicken pie." He could do it.

Well, some Yankee scientist was driving all over Ragged Mountain west of Charlottesville askin' whose kin was mine. They figured your kin passes it to you. And you pass it on. That's why they wanted me at court, to prove my mother had passed it to me. And I had passed it to baby. So we were dependin' on the court to tell us what to do. We put all our eggs in that basket.

(The courtroom. Two tables facing the judge downstage. A witness chair. Chairs for the lawyers and for CARRIE.)

IRVING

Miss Buck. Hello, dear. My name is Mr. Whitehead. Mr. Irving Whitehead. Your guardian has appointed me to be your representative here in court. Do you know why you're here today?

CARRIE

To see if I can go home.

IRVING

Well, that is correct. Is that what you want? To go home?

CARRIE

Yes.

IRVING

Where is that? Home?

CARRIE

At the Dobbs.

IRVING

Are they your relations?

CARRIE  
Sir?

IRVING  
Are they your kin?

CARRIE  
They's not my kin.

IRVING  
But that is where you want to go?

CARRIE  
That's where my baby is.

IRVING  
I see. And do you understand that you are to have an operation?

CARRIE  
Dr. Priddy told me.

IRVING  
And that is acceptable to you?

CARRIE  
If it is alright.

IRVING  
You actually want to have this operation?

CARRIE  
My baby might be walkin' now. I don't want to have an operation, but I'll let them cut off my head if I can go home.

IRVING  
Well, I trust that won't be necessary.

(CARRIE looks around the courtroom, taking off her coat.)

IRVING (continued)  
I hope you're not nervous, Miss. Have you had a pleasant morning?

CARRIE  
It's my mama's birthday. I got up early and snuck a little cake over to the laundry, where she works. I wish I could see the look on her face when she finds it. I rode here in Dr. Priddy's car. The vines on the trees was shining in the sun. It was very beautiful.

IRVING

I'm sure it was.

(COLONEL STRODE is ready to begin.)

IRVING (continued)

You'd better sit down. Right here. Oh. Carrie? Carrie is it?

CARRIE

Yes, sir. Carrie. Carrie Buck.

IRVING

Carrie. There may be some things said here in court. Things that don't sound very polite. Don't let that bother you. It's the way of the legal system to be obscenely frank. You understand?

CARRIE

Alright.

(CARRIE and IRVING are now seated. BALIFF enters carrying a flag. Once he has placed his flag in its stand, he turns and speaks.)

BALIFF

The Circuit Court of Amherst County is now in session, His Honor Judge Bennett Gordon presiding. All rise.

(Everyone stands. There is a customary pause. As CARRIE EAGLE speaks, all sit.)

CARRIE EAGLE

Now I knew my job was to keep silent, but I almost wrecked that right off, because that other lawyer was so proper.

COLONEL STRODE

(addressing the judge)

Let the record show. We are here in the great Commonwealth of Virginia, on the 18th day of November, the year of our Lord 1924. I...

(smiles)

...am Aubrey Strode. Folks call me Colonel.

(CARRIE stifles a giggle. The others look at her.)

COLONEL STRODE (continued)

I am representing the Virginia State Colony for Epileptics and Feebleminded. In a friendly legal test of the mandate of the Board of the Colony upon the person of one Carrie Buck.

Colony. What is a colony? It is a place set apart from the home place. Folks live in a colony for a specific purpose. Now, not everyone returns from a colony. But in this case, Carrie Buck wants to return from the colony. She does not want to spend her life in the colony. She wants to

return to life outside. She wants to make her own home. And she should. She can have a blessed life outside of the colony. She can make her contribution. But society asks that she make her contribution in a healthy manner. She should not be encouraged to spread her particular illness. Society asks that she be sterilized. And then she can go home. The doctors agree. The legislators agree. Carrie herself agrees. Now we have only for the courts to agree. And this thing can be done. And never undone. We are together on the road. The eyes of a hopeful world are upon us. And we invite you to help us on our journey.

(COLONEL STRODE sits. IRVING stands.)

CARRIE EAGLE

(whispered)

I did very well. And then it was my mister's turn. I have no idea what he said, but I think it was really good.

IRVING

Your honor. My name is Irving Whitehead. Folks call me Irv.

(There is general laughter at which IRVING smiles.)

Carrie Buck, of whom this man, Mr. Strode, the Colonel, speaks, Carrie Buck is my client. She has no family to speak of. No one to speak for her. The commonwealth has appointed her a guardian. And her guardian has appointed me.

It is true that Carrie Buck wants to leave the Colony. Her guardian would also like her to leave. But hold on a minute. What about the other Carrie Bucks? What about the others who follow in this Carrie's footsteps? What about precedent? What about due process? What about justice? What about the law? What, on the grand human scene, are we setting in motion in this courthouse here today? These are questions which burden us. These are questions to answer before we agree together to lay this girl on a table. We had better be sure. By God, we had better be sure.

CARRIE EAGLE

He could sneak in a little swearin', even at court.

(IRVING sits down. COLONEL STRODE stares at him. IRVING looks back and smiles.)

COLONEL STRODE

Your Honor, I call the first witness, Arthur Estabrook, to the stand.

CARRIE EAGLE

But not just yet.

(Pause. All look around.)

CARRIE

Is somebody not here?

IRVING

Shhhhhh.

COLONEL STRODE

Excuse me, Your Honor.

(COLONEL STRODE moves to IRVING.)

IRVING

Did he know we're starting today?

COLONEL STRODE

Of course. He's been in the area all week. He's been conducting interviews all week. Is Arthur Estabrook here? Could someone please look out in the hallway?

(Pause.)

Your Honor. With the agreement of counselor –

(COLONEL STRODE turns and looks at IRVING who nods in acquiescence.)

CARRIE EAGLE

Oh yes. Laughlin.

COLONEL STRODE (continued)

I would like to proceed by submitting into the record this book by Dr. Harry Laughlin. Scientist. *Eugenical Sterilization in the United States*.

(COLONEL STRODE returns to his legal papers.)

IRVING

(in an attempt to prompt)

Credentials?

(Beat.)

Objection, Your Honor. What are the credentials of Dr. Laughlin?

COLONEL STRODE

Oh, yes. Long Island, New York. Eugenics Record Office. From its beginnings. Before the war. And in recent years, he has been the Expert Eugenics Agent for the House of Representatives of the United States.

IRVING

Alright, but what does this book have to do with—

COLONEL STRODE

Of course. In official reply to Dr. Priddy, Dr. Laughlin asserts that the girl in question, Carrie Buck, fits the category of feebleminded, and by feebleminded, counselor, he means socially inadequate,

CARRIE EAGLE

And what we mean by socially inadequate is—

COLONEL STRODE

—the categories of the insane, criminalistic, epileptic, inebriate, blind, deaf, deformed, or dependant. Also—

COLONEL STRODE and CARRIE EAGLE

(looking at CARRIE)

—orphans, ne'er-do-wells, paupers, and tramps.

CARRIE EAGLE

Me.

CARRIE

Me?

COLONEL STRODE

The feebleminded.

CARRIE

Did he say, “Orphans?”

IRVING

Shhhhhh.

COLONEL STRODE

(in a flourishing conclusion)

Chapter Ten of this book discusses “the right to limit human reproduction in the interests of race betterment.”

IRVING

Your Honor, if you please. This case is not about race. It’s about one little girl. Period. And in fact, I will not object at this time, but I reserve the right to object to this Laughlin...all of it.

(IRVING looks to the COLONEL for approval.)

COLONEL STRODE

I submit as exhibit, one book.

CARRIE EAGLE

(grabbing the book to glance at it)

He got a special prize over me, Laughlin. Some people said he should have turned it down. That was the same year that Jesse Owens won the Olympic medal which also scandalized everybody.

(CARRIE EAGLE returns the book to STRODE, and BALIFF takes the book.)

IRVING

Before we go any further, Your Honor, please have the record show that the appellant is physically present in this room.

(All turn and look at CARRIE.)

COLONEL STRODE

Has Arthur Estabrook arrived?

CARRIE EAGLE

Like I was sayin', no trial yet. Break time before we begin.

(CARRIE EAGLE heads out.)

COLONEL STRODE

Did anyone look out in the hallway?

(Pause. IRVING knows that things are already falling apart. He's mildly amused.)

CARRIE EAGLE

I'd brought myself some sewing. And also a peach.

CARRIE

Is it alright if I do some sewing?

IRVING

That'd be just fine, Carrie.

CARRIE

Is it alright if I eat this peach?

IRVING

I tell you what, Carrie.

(CARRIE takes out a small piece of fabric, with a needle and thread. She will continue to work with this throughout the trial.)

COLONEL STRODE

(loudly)

Could someone please look out in the hallway?

IRVING

I think it's a perfect time for a peach.

(IRVING stands.)

COLONEL STRODE

Please. Someone.

(COLONEL STRODE strides out. CARRIE takes a bite of peach. BLACKOUT.)

## ACT II

(The courtroom. A few minutes later.)

CARRIE EAGLE

Here. If there's a train wreck, how do you know where it started? Did it start just back around the bend? Or was it somethin' that happened when the train pulled out of the station? Or when the engineer got up that morning? Or was it something all the back to when the train was made? Well. Some men said that the world is a wreck, and we're gonna find out where it started, and go back, and fix it. No more wrecks. That is what they were doin' with that trial. To find out where to fix it. And no more wrecks.

COLONEL STRODE

Your Honor. Counselor. In view of the absence of our first witness, we will proceed to call –

(ESTABROOK enters the room, and drops some of his papers. The lawyers notice this.)

COLONEL STRODE (continued)

Oh, Mr. Estabrook is – . Ah, Your Honor, our witness is – has – . May we take a brief moment to confer as counsel?

(COLONEL STRODE turns to wave ESTABROOK into the room.)

IRVING

(sotto voice to COLONEL STRODE)

Off the record.

COLONEL STRODE

What?

IRVING

Off the record.

COLONEL STRODE

Oh. Your Honor, off the record?

(Nods agreement to the judge. To IRVING.)

There. Off the record. Are you satisfied?

IRVING

I'm sorry, Aubrey.

(They turn to ARTHUR ESTABROOK who is rifling through his papers; CARRIE EAGLE goes and picks up a paper and places it among his things. CARRIE EAGLE is a freely active participant during the trial, reminding us always that although young CARRIE's body is at ease, her mind and emotions are ablaze.)

COLONEL STRODE

Mr. Estabrook, perhaps you were not aware, but we are actually holding the trial here this morning.

ESTABROOK

Very cute, very cute.

IRVING

(looking at his pocket watch)

Sleep well?

ESTABROOK

I'm sorry, what?

IRVING

I said did you sleep well.

ESTABROOK

Is that an insinuation? Where were you when I was ruining my health and my, and my automobile on the, on the Ragged Mountain roads this weekend?

IRVING

At my office!

COLONEL STRODE

And I, if I might say, was passing a pleasant Sunday, because I understood that a fine Eugenics research expert from Long Island, New York was preparing—

IRVING

(interrupting)

Please, Aubrey.

(to ESTABROOK)

Just give us the stupid witness list.

ESTABROOK

(to COLONEL STRODE)

Here is the list and the questions you should ask each one.

(to IRVING)

You are an, an, an impolite attorney.

IRVING

I'm a bankin' lawyer. And you are a dumb-ass.

COLONEL STRODE

Take the stand, sir.

IRVING

(taking papers from COLONEL STRODE)

Are you going to call these witnesses and ask those questions?

COLONEL STRODE

What?

IRVING

Are you going to call these witnesses?

COLONEL STRODE

(seizing the papers)

I'm sure everything is in order.

IRVING

Without knowing their answers?

COLONEL STRODE

These are, there are . . .

IRVING

Are you going to call those witnesses without knowing their answers?

COLONEL STRODE

What's put the bee into your bonnet today?

IRVING

Oh, nothin'. Certain death.

(BALIFF crosses to ESTABROOK carrying a Bible. ESTABROOK promptly place his left hand on the Bible and raises his right hand. He has done this before.)

BALIFF

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

ESTABROOK

I do.

CARRIE EAGLE

And so it was time for the first witness. And I put my peach pit in my pocket.

COLONEL STRODE

Please state your name and occupation.

ESTABROOK

(An intense, distracted man. Seems arrogant. And a bit paranoid.)  
Arthur H. Estabrook; age, thirty-nine. Scientific staff of the Eugenics, Eugenics Record Office,  
Cold Spring Harbor, New York.

COLONEL STRODE

What is that?

ESTABROOK

A private organization conducting research along scientific lines. Studying heredity in humans,  
animals and animals and plants.

COLONEL STRODE

(stressing the name for the record)  
How long has this study in heredity been carried on at the Carnegie Institution's Eugenics  
Record Office?

ESTABROOK

1906 with animals and plants. 1910 with human beings.

COLONEL STRODE

How long have you been engaged in that work?

ESTABROOK

19...1910.

COLONEL STRODE

Formulating the laws of heredity?

ESTABROOK

(Nods.)

COLONEL STRODE

Has there been any effort to determine—

IRVING

Objection. The witness is required to speak.

ESTABROOK

What?

COLONEL STRODE

He means you have to answer with words.

ESTABROOK

Oh. Right. Yes. Making up the laws of heredity.

COLONEL STRODE

Has there been any effort to determine to what extent feeble-mindedness is transmissible by heredity?

ESTABROOK

Fifteen years, and definite laws.

COLONEL STRODE

Have you yourself been engaged in any particular studies?

ESTABROOK

One was a degenerate group in northern, northern New York. And second was the Jukes family of criminals. The studies are published.

(Pointedly to IRVING.)

Published.

COLONEL STRODE

When was the first study made?

ESTABROOK

1912 I went to the area where this group had lived and continued to study from 1875 until that time, finishing the work in 1915.

COLONEL STRODE

You don't mean you began the work in 1875?

ESTABROOK

No, I continued the study of them since that time.

COLONEL STRODE

I see. Now, what is the result of your investigations?

ESTABROOK

Briefly, where feeble-mindedness is found in one parent, one-half of the children will be feeble-minded. Where feeble-mindedness is found in both parents, all the children will be feeble-minded. The rule, so far as we can see, has no exceptions. The blood is bad.

COLONEL STRODE

Now, as to Carrie Buck.

ESTABROOK

Yes. I visited the Colony at Lynchburg, saw Carrie Buck personally, also her mother; then I went to Albemarle County where both Carrie and her mother formerly lived. I gathered other information which—other information. The Dudley germ plasm, of which Emma Buck is a member, carries a defective strain in it.

COLONEL STRODE

Did you give Carrie Buck any mental tests?

CARRIE EAGLE

Nope.

ESTABROOK

I talked to Carrie, so that with the—yes, I did.

CARRIE EAGLE

Mmh, huhm.

COLONEL STRODE

Have you read the legal definition of a feeble-minded person in this state?

(As ESTABROOK rummages through his papers, IRVING hands it to COLONEL STRODE.)

COLONEL STRODE (continued)

Section 1075 of the Code of Virginia. “The words ‘feeble-minded person’ shall be construed to mean any person with mental defectiveness *from birth*, incapable of caring for himself and dangerous to himself, others, and the community.”

ESTABROOK

Yes, I have. I have it. I am.

COLONEL STRODE

In your opinion is Carrie Buck within that definition?

ESTABROOK

She is.

(COLONEL STRODE gestures to IRVING.)

IRVING

Doctor, you have made a test of Carrie Buck over there? In what way will society be benefited by turning her out?

ESTABROOK

You mean after sterilization?

IRVING

Yes.

ESTABROOK

By eliminating the possibility of her having feeble-minded children.

IRVING

You made a test of Emma Buck?

ESTABROOK

I made the short test.

IRVING

And of course you relied on the history?

ESTABROOK

Yes.

IRVING

You mean by that the commitment papers, and so forth?

ESTABROOK

I mean her history as she gave it to me.

IRVING

As she gave it to you?

ESTABROOK

Yes.

IRVING

Now, you did that also with the girl here, Carrie?

ESTABROOK

Yes. Carrie gave me her history.

CARRIE EAGLE

I said, "My mama is Emma Buck, and yes, I have a baby."

IRVING

And you have spent time in the Ragged Mountains studying Emma Buck's family?

ESTABROOK

Yes. The Dudley's and the Harlows.

IRVING

You say both of those strains have feeble-mindedness in them?

ESTABROOK

I do.

IRVING

Socially inadequate members of the human family.

ESTABROOK

Yes, sir.

IRVING

(to COLONEL STRODE)

Is that...?

(ESTABROOK steps down.)

COLONEL STRODE

If Your Honor please, Dr. Estabrook has brought a number of witnesses here from a distance, including from the Ragged Mountains of Albemarle county and Charlottesville, where this girl came from. I am going to put them on now, in order to allow them to get started for their homes. And I call the first of these witnesses, Eula Harris to the stand.

CARRIE EAGLE

My trial was sorta like a family reunion. When you get to know relatives you never even knew you had.

BAILIFF

(at doorway)

Eula Harris.

(BALIFF comes over with a Bible. During the following, HARRIS places her left hand upon it and raises her right one. BALIFF mouths swearing her in, and she mouths her response.)

CARRIE

Mister.

IRVING

Yes.

CARRIE

My mother's real name is Emmett Buck. In case that matters at all.

IRVING

(After a pause.)

Thank you, Carrie.

CARRIE

She gave me this bit of fabric.

IRVING

What's that you're making?

CARRIE

A baby's bonnet.

IRVING

It's pretty.

CARRIE

I hope so.

CARRIE EAGLE

A couple a years ago, I went back to the Colony, to visit mama's grave. The red brick buildings are still there. The folks is very nice. They helped me find mama's marker in the Colony cemetery. Has her number on it. Her real name was Emmett Buck.

(Suddenly waving her hand to hand to control the tears.)

Sorry.

COLONEL STRODE

Mrs. Harris, where do you live?

HARRIS

Charlottesville, Virginia.

COLONEL STRODE

Are you engaged in any work there?

HARRIS

Yes, sir, I am the government Nurse there – for eleven years.

COLONEL STRODE

You were the government Nurse there for eleven years?

HARRIS

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know Carrie Buck?

HARRIS

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

The girl involved in this proceeding?

HARRIS

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

How long have you known her?

HARRIS

For probably eleven years.

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know her mother, Emma Buck?

HARRIS

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

How long have you known her?

HARRIS

Well, probably eleven years.

COLONEL STRODE

What do you know about the Bucks, Mrs. Harris?

(Emma walks in with her laundry basket and takes a drink.)

HARRIS

Well, I know—well, I know that Emma Buck, Carrie Buck's mother, was on the charity list for a number of years, off and on—mostly on. That she was living in the worst neighborhoods, and that she was not able to, or would not, work and support her children, and that they were on the streets more or less. She did not have any idea of providing for herself and her children. She was literally on the streets with her children, and the numerous charity organizations worked for her at different times, but all that was done for her was to give her relief.

(As CARRIE speaks to IRVING, COLONEL STRODE nods and steps aside, indicating that he is finished with his questions.)

CARRIE

I'm wishing I brung me another peach.

IRVING

Yes, indeed. Maybe a whole bushel.

(to the witness)

Mrs. Harris, the woman you speak of, Emmett Buck?

HARRIS

Emma. Yes.

IRVING

Was Emmett's husband not living with her?

HARRIS

No, sir.

IRVING

Is Carrie, the girl here, supposed to be his legitimate child?

HARRIS

No, sir, she is illegitimate.

IRVING

Was Carrie born while her mother was living with her husband?

HARRIS

(obviously!)

No, sir.

IRVING

Where did her husband live?

HARRIS

In Charlottesville, I suppose.

IRVING

Of course you don't know whether he visited her?

HARRIS

I could not say definitely, no.

(IRVING turns and glares at COLONEL STRODE, who gestures, "What?")

IRVING

Now, what are the—what about this girl, Carrie, herself—is there anything about her? Is she an incorrigible?

HARRIS

I really know very little about Carrie after she left her mother.

IRVING

She was taken by—

HARRIS

She was taken by Mr. and Mrs. Dobb.

IRVING

(needling)

So far as you know, you know nothing about her after the Dobbsses took her.

HARRIS

Except one time when she was in school, in the grammar grade, The counselor called me and said she was having trouble with Carrie. She told me that Carrie was writing notes, and asked what should she do about it.

IRVING

Writing notes to boys, I suppose?

HARRIS

Yes, sir.

IRVING

Is writing notes to boys in school, nine or ten years old, considered anti-social?

HARRIS

It depends on the character of the note.

IRVING

How do you know Carrie wrote the notes?

HARRIS

Well, that's what the counselor told me.

IRVING

Has it come under your own observation in your own official capacity, any of this girl's own acts?

HARRIS

No, sir, not since the Dobbsses took her.

(IRVING starts to wave the witness off the stand.)

COLONEL STRODE

Mr. Whitehead.

(IRVING steps aside.)

COLONEL STRODE (continued)

Here it says in the notes from Dr. Estabrook....do you know a Lawrence Dudley?

HARRIS

Yes, sir, I know Larry Dudley.

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know his relationship to Carrie?

HARRIS

I think he is a distant cousin; I am not certain.

(IRVING snorts and covers by blowing his nose.)

COLONEL STRODE

What do you know about Carrie's cousin, Lawrence?

HARRIS

Lawrence has given great trouble to his family. He has been incorrigible, and they had trouble with him—he was incorrigible as a boy. He is a grown man now.

COLONEL STRODE

What is the trouble with him now?

HARRIS

I don't know anything about him now, but when he was growing up, he was a great deal of trouble.

COLONEL STRODE

Trouble in what way?

HARRIS

I don't know. He misbehaved.

(HARRIS steps down and WOOD is sworn in.)

CARRIE EAGLE

If you must know, after all these years, I would like to say that yes, I wrote those notes. I think one of them said, "Tommy Dickens has a cute butt."

(Pause.)

Don't be ridiculous. I have no idea about any notes.

(Beat.)

But Tommy Dickens was cute.

BAILIFF

Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

WOOD

Yes, I do.

COLONEL STRODE

Miss Wood, where do you live?

WOOD

I live at Earlysville.

COLONEL STRODE

I never heard of Earlysville; would you mind saying where Earlysville is?

WOOD

Yes, sir, it is in Virginia. It is in Albemarle County.

COLONEL STRODE

I see. And what is your occupation?

WOOD

Teacher.

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know Doris Buck, the half-sister of Carrie Buck?

WOOD

Yes, sir, I know her.

COLONEL STRODE

What do you know about her?

WOOD

Well, I know very little about her. She transferred to my room. I have only had her a few weeks.

COLONEL STRODE

And you know nothing about her?

WOOD

I have heard right much.

IRVING

(interrupting)  
Objection. Hearsay.

COLONEL STRODE

Won't you please tell us what you know about Carrie Buck's half-sister Doris.

WOOD

Well, she was promoted to the second grade, but I had to put her back. She couldn't do second year work.

COLONEL STRODE

Do the school records show that?

WOOD

No, sir, the school records have been lost.

(IRVING cannot contain his incredulity. It comes out in some way.)

COLONEL STRODE

Would you call her a bright child?

WOOD

No.

COLONEL STRODE

Would you call her a dull child?

WOOD

Well, I would call her dull in her books.

COLONEL STRODE

Your witness.

IRVING

(having chosen his double meaning with care)  
I have no question of this witness, Your Honor.

(WOOD steps down.)

CARRIE EAGLE

That Long Island man had brought in several witnesses. And I must say, each one entertained the crowd more than the one before.

COLONEL STRODE

(referring to his papers from ESTABROOK)  
Your honor, we call a Miss Virginia Landis.

(LANDIS comes to the stand and is sworn in.)

BALIFF

Place your left hand on the Bible and raise your right hand. Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God.

LANDIS

I do.

BALIFF

You may be seated.

COLONEL STRODE

Miss Landis, where do you live?

LANDIS

Charlottesville, Virginia.

COLONEL STRODE

What do you do there?

LANDIS

I am a grade school teacher.

COLONEL STRODE

(referring again to his paper)

Do you know a George Dudley?

LANDIS

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know his relationship to Carrie Buck?

LANDIS

No, I don't know anything about Carrie Buck?

COLONEL STRODE

What do you know about George?

LANDIS

George attended my school, and I would consider him a dull child, but a normal child.

COLONEL STRODE

Why do you say he is both dull and normal?

LANDIS

Well, I class them as normal, dull and bright, and I class him with the dull-minded, leaning toward the normal.

COLONEL STRODE

How are his grades?

LANDIS

I couldn't say. He left school.

COLONEL STRODE

(Oops. Oh, well. Try again. Refers to the paper.)  
Do you know George's brother, Arthur?

LANDIS

Just to speak to him when I see him.

COLONEL STRODE

What do you know about him?

LANDIS

Just enough to say "good morning" to him.

(In exasperation, COLONEL STRODE simply steps aside.)

IRVING

Do you even know what relation, if any, George and Arthur Dudley are to Carrie Buck?

LANDIS

I don't know Carrie Buck at all.

IRVING

Well then.

(IRVING waves her off the stand. LANDIS steps down, and HOPKINS is sworn in silently during the following.)

CARRIE

Mister.

IRVING

What is it, Carrie?

CARRIE

I may be wrong, but it seems as if you don't have many questions.

IRVING

Carrie, to be honest with you, I am a banking lawyer. I am not used to this kind of court.

CARRIE

(smiles)  
Neither am I.

CARRIE EAGLE

Now everybody has their breakin' point. And that other lawyer, the Colonel, was gettin' close to his. Even I could see that, and I wasn't payin' much attention.

COLONEL STRODE

Mr. Hopkins, where do you live?

HOPKINS

I live at –

COLONEL STRODE

Albemarle County?

HOPKINS

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

Have you any official position in that county?

HOPKINS

I am Superintendent of the public roads.

COLONEL STRODE

How long?

HOPKINS

Eight years.

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know Roy Buck, a half-brother of Carrie Buck here?

HOPKINS

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

What do you know about him?

HOPKINS

Well, I have just seen him out walking. That is the extent of my acquaintance with him.

COLONEL STRODE

You say you have seen him out walking. Do you know anything about him?

HOPKINS

I think he is a rather unusual boy.

COLONEL STRODE

In what way?

HOPKINS

Well, the only thing I know that could cause me to have an opinion about him at all is, I saw him one day after school let out in town. He was waiting by the road, and I asked him who he was waiting for. He said he was waiting on some other children, they *was* going home to spend the night with him. I said: "Boy, those children have gone home," and he said, well, they was coming with him. He had been standing there waiting I suppose twenty or thirty minutes.

COLONEL STRODE

Did you tell Dr. Estabrook that you would consider that boy mentally defective and foolish?

HOPKINS

I think so, yes.

COLONEL STRODE

(finally angry, and he takes it out on this witness)

Then why don't you tell us that? Are you averse to testifying?

HOPKINS

No, sir, but that is all I know about him.

COLONEL STRODE

But in your opinion he is mentally defective?

HOPKINS

Yes, sir, but I can't recall any other specific instance that would cause me to think so—.

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know a Richard Dudley?

HOPKINS

Yes.

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know Carrie Buck?

HOPKINS

No, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know Emma Buck, the mother of Carrie?

HOPKINS

No, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

But you do know Richard—

HOPKINS

Dudley? Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know that Richard Dudley is a relative of Emma and Carrie Buck?

IRVING

Objection.

HOPKINS

I just told you that I don't even know Emma and Carrie—

COLONEL STRODE

Withdraw the question. What do you know about Richard Dudley?

HOPKINS

Well, he strikes me as being right peculiar, but as to why, I couldn't tell you any particular case at all.

COLONEL STRODE

Is he a man above, or below, the average intelligence?

HOPKINS

I don't know, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

How far does he live from you, Mr. Hopkins?

HOPKINS

About half a mile.

COLONEL STRODE

Lives there in the same neighborhood, and you don't know anything about him?

HOPKINS

I haven't seen him once in six months.

COLONEL STRODE

Didn't you tell Dr. Estabrook yesterday—

HOPKINS

I did—but since considering....

COLONEL STRODE

It is natural that it would be embarrassing to you to testify about these people—being neighbors—

HOPKINS

I don't mind telling you what I know to be a fact.

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know Richard's son, Arthur?

HOPKINS

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

What do you know about him?

HOPKINS

Well, he always struck me as being a little peculiar. But, the only instance I can recall is I had an engine that wouldn't start, and Arthur wanted to try to start it. I knew what was the matter with the engine, but I told him to go ahead if he wanted to do it, and he cranked and cranked, and could not start it, and he told me he had found out what was the matter with the engine; that it wasn't made right.

(IRVING laughs. So does HOPKINS.)

COLONEL STRODE

(trying to keep the room serious)

Mr. Hopkins! Do you consider him above or below the average?

HOPKINS

Well, that question is exactly like the other, and I answer it the same way.

COLONEL STRODE

Yesterday you thought he was below, and today you don't know?

HOPKINS

Well, that is right. I don't know.

COLONEL STRODE

Your witness, sir.

IRVING

(setting out to fix the problem)

Do you know the people pretty generally in that neighborhood in which Carrie's uncle, Richard Dudley, lives?

HOPKINS

Yes, sir.

IRVING

What does Richard Dudley do?

HOPKINS

Well, he has a farm, but he was working on the railroad. I don't know what he is doing now.

IRVING

Is he an average citizen in that neighborhood?

HOPKINS

Well, take it in that neighborhood, I believe he is.

IRVING

"Take it in that neighborhood"—. Is that the Ragged Mountain of Albemarle?

HOPKINS

Yes, sir.

IRVING

Are the citizens of Ragged Mountain average, mentally?

HOPKINS

I don't know. I don't think so.

IRVING

Thank you very much, sir. There are no further questions.

CARRIE EAGLE

Do you think a person can get feeble-minded by living in this place or that? You don't gotta answer. I love the mountains. You know that mountain song goes, "When the curtains of night...are pinned back...by the stars."

(CARRIE EAGLE pauses and closes her eyes as TRIO overlaps her, singing the entire song as HOPKINS steps down, and DUDLEY is sworn in silently. Near the end of the song, CARRIE EAGLE wanders back to her seat.)

TRIO SINGERS

When the curtains of night are pinned back by the stars  
and the beautiful moon sweeps the sky  
And the dew drops of Heaven are kissing the rose  
It is there that my memory flies  
Go where you may on land or on sea  
I'll share all your sorrows an' cares  
An' at night when I kneel by my bedside to pray  
I'll remember you love, in my prayers

COLONEL STRODE

Mr. Dudley, where do you live?

DUDLEY

Albemarle County.

COLONEL STRODE

On Ragged Mountain?

DUDLEY

Ragged Mountain, yes sir.

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know Emma Buck, mother of Carrie Buck?

DUDLEY

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know Emma's father?

DUDLEY

Yes.

COLONEL STRODE

What is his name?

DUDLEY

Rick Harlow.

COLONEL STRODE

Rick Harlow, the father of Emma Buck.

DUDLEY

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

What did you—what is your opinion of Rick, mentally?

DUDLEY

Well, Rick is dead.

COLONEL STRODE

(shuffling through his papers)

Yes. Did you have an opinion of him?

DUDLEY

I suppose Rick had just as good ordinary sense as the generality of the people. See, Mr. Strode, he wasn't a thorough educated man. He had some little joking ways, but he was all right.

COLONEL STRODE

Didn't you tell Dr. Estabrook yesterday or the day before, that you considered Rick peculiar?

DUDLEY

No.

COLONEL STRODE

Or below the average?

DUDLEY

No, sir, I just told him that he had these joking ways. Rick was a man that transacted his own business up until his death.

COLONEL STRODE

But you told Dr. Estabrook he was peculiar.

DUDLEY

Well, possibly I did. He kept quizzing me, and I thought I would just get rid of him.

(COLONEL STRODE gestures to IRVING that it's his witness.)

IRVING

What is your name?

DUDLEY

S. J. Dudley.

IRVING

What was your relationship to Rick Harlow?

DUDLEY

He married my sister.

IRVING and COLONEL STRODE

He married your sister?

DUDLEY

Yes.

IRVING

You are testifying about a relative of yours?

DUDLEY

Yes, I am.

IRVING

A deceased relative of yours.

DUDLEY

Yes, he is.

IRVING

And Emma Buck is your...?

DUDLEY

Emma Buck is my niece.

(IRVING stands aside, but COLONEL STRODE leaps up.)

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know anything about this girl here?

DUDLEY

I never saw the child before in my life.

(COLONEL STRODE takes the remainder of ESTABROOK'S papers and tears them up and disposes of them. DUDLEY steps down, and DEJARNETTE takes stand and is silently sworn in during the following.)

CARRIE

How are we doin'?

IRVING

We're not doing very well.

CARRIE

Is that man another one of my kin?

IRVING

No. That man is a doctor. I don't think he is one of your kin.

CARRIE EAGLE

Now at this time the family reunion part of the day come to an end. I thought things might get serious and dull. But this next doctor stuck in a thing or two.

COLONEL STRODE

Doctor, what is your name and occupation?

DEJARNETTE

Doctor J.S. DeJarnette. I am a medical doctor here in Virginia.

COLONEL STRODE

Doctor, there is involved in this case the Virginia Sterilization Statute, passed at the last meeting of the General Assembly. You are familiar with that statute?

DEJARNETTE

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

What would you say was a feebleminded person?

DEJARNETTE

A feebleminded person is one who, on account of his mental condition, is unable to take care of himself properly.

COLONEL STRODE

Is it curable?

DEJARNETTE

No, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

Is a feebleminded patient likely to have socially inadequate offspring?

DEJARNETTE

An illustration was had in New Jersey – the Kallikak case. Old man John Kallikak in 1755 had an illegitimate child by a feebleminded woman. He also had offspring from his wife. That is a report that was generally published.

COLONEL STRODE

Old man Kallikak was normal?

DEJARNETTE

Supposed to be.

COLONEL STRODE

His wife was normal?

DEJARNETTE

Yes, sir, those two had 496 normal descendents.

COLONEL STRODE

None of them feebleminded?

DEJARNETTE

No.

COLONEL STRODE

None criminal?

DEJARNETTE

(with a smile)

None so far as we know.

COLONEL STRODE

And then he had relations with a feebleminded girl?

DEJARNETTE

And of their descendents—143 of them became dependents on the State of New Jersey—a little over one-fourth.

COLONEL STRODE

Could you explain to the Court what the operation of sterilization is?

DEJARNETTE

Every woman has two ovaries. Monthly a little egg comes out. The egg is passed through a small tube. Salpingectomy is the cutting of this little tube. Like a broom straw. It is very safe.

COLONEL STRODE

In what way would you say the welfare of society would be promoted by it?

DEJARNETTE

The standard of general intelligence would be lifted; and it would lower the number of our criminals.

COLONEL STRODE

Your witness, Mr. Whitehead.

IRVING

Doctor, isn't it a fact that prostitution—that the bulk of the prostitutes are more or less feebleminded?

DEJARNETTE

I would say. But I am no expert on prostitutes.

(LAUGHTER in court.)

But I do know, such women come in to our hospital having had venereal diseases, and children, and, brother, worst of all, white women having had Negro children.

IRVING

Well, this girl here has an immoral tendency. Say the girl is sterilized and turned out. She goes out and goes on a rampage—

DEJARNETTE

She has already been on one.

IRVING

Well, say she goes on another one.

DEJARNETTE

Very likely.

IRVING

And in six months, she's contracted syphilis. She becomes a distributor of syphilis to otherwise sound men. You value her liberty over her becoming a syphilitic fire-ship?

DEJARNETTE

I do.

IRVING

And society would be benefited?

DEJARNETTE

Do you mean to lock up all of them?

IRVING

Doctor, in your opinion as a physician and as superintendent of the hospital, what is the greatest cause of feeble-mindedness?

DEJARNETTE

Heredity.

IRVING

Have you ever had occasion to trace back along the lines of heredity to find out what was the beginning of the thing?

DEJARNETTE

No, sir. Adam, I think, was a little off on some things.

(LAUGHTER in the courtroom.)

IRVING

I don't believe I have a single further question.

(DEJARNETTE exits. WILHELM is sworn in silently during the following.)

CARRIE

Sir.

IRVING

Yes, dear.

CARRIE

What is my job at this time?

IRVING

Well, dear, your job is the most difficult one. Your job is to hope for the best.

CARRIE

Oh. Is that all?

IRVING

Yes. When that changes, I'll let you know.

CARRIE

(smiles)  
Alright.

IRVING

(smiles)  
Alright.

CARRIE EAGLE

Then there was a face I recognized. She was the nurse that brought me to the Colony. She knew my baby. So I got very interested in what she had to say. I wished I had not listened at all.

COLONEL STRODE

Miss Wilhelm, what is your occupation?

WILHELM

I am a social worker of the Red Cross. Secretary Superintendent of public welfare of Albemarle County?

COLONEL STRODE

Miss Wilhelm, have you any record of this girl, Carrie Buck?

WILHELM

Yes, sir. I came to Charlottesville about February of this year, and just before that time it had been reported that the girl was pregnant and that Mr. and Mrs. Dobbs, who had charge of the girl since she was three, wanted to have her committed somewhere—to have her sent to some institution. After the birth, a place had opened up for her, and I brought Carrie Buck over to the colony at Lynchburg.

COLONEL STRODE

You know that Carrie was not married?

WILHELM

No, she was not.

COLONEL STRODE

Was that child born?

WILHELM

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

She had an illegitimate child?

WILHELM

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

And her character was such that you had her committed to the institution at Lynchburg?

WILHELM

Yes, sir. There was a commission held and she was committed to the Colony.

COLONEL STRODE

From your experience as a social worker, if Carrie were discharged from the colony still capable of child-bearing, is she likely to become the parent of deficient off-spring?

WILHELM

I should judge so. I think a girl of her mentality is more or less at the mercy of other people, and this girl, particularly. I should say that Carrie would be very likely to have illegitimate children.

COLONEL STRODE

So the only way that she could likely be kept from increasing her own kind would be either segregation or something that would stop her power to propagate.

(beat)

Where is her child?

WILHELM

The child is with Mr. and Mrs. Dobbs. They kept the child.

COLONEL STRODE

How old is the child?

WILHELM

It is not quite eight months old.

COLONEL STRODE

Have you any impression about the child?

WILHELM

It is difficult to judge probabilities of a child as young as that, but it seems to me not quite a normal baby.

COLONEL STRODE

You don't regard her child as a normal baby?

(CARRIE stands in the courtroom.)

WILHELM

I saw the child at the same time as Mrs. Dobbs' own daughter's baby, very close in age, and there is a very decided difference in the development of these two babies.

COLONEL STRODE

You would not judge Carrie's as a normal baby?

(A gasp or sob is heard. It is CARRIE. IRVING attempts to bring her comfort, both now and also with his line of questioning. )

WILHELM

Not quite normal. Just what it is, I can't tell.

(COLONEL STRODE sits.)

IRVING

The baby you are talking about now is Carrie Buck's baby?

WILHELM

Yes, sir.

IRVING

What other baby was the comparison made by?

WILHELM

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dobbs. They have another daughter of their own who has a baby a few days older than Carrie's.

IRVING

You say the baby of Carrie's does not measure up to the Dobbs'.

WILHELM

Not nearly.

IRVING

Neither one of them can talk.

WILHELM

No.

IRVING

Can they walk?

WILHELM

No.

IRVING

In what way do they differ?

WILHELM

The children—Mrs. Dobbs' daughter's baby is very responsive. It is a baby that you can play with. The other baby is not.

IRVING

Now, Miss Wilhelm, the only—. You say when this girl first came under your attention she was pregnant?

WILHELM

Yes, sir.

IRVING

Now, there are records down in Charlottesville in connection with social work?

WILHELM

Yes.

IRVING

They haven't been lost or anything.

WILHELM

We have an efficient record keeping system.

IRVING

Have you? Well, have you any records against Carrie Buck, this girl here, which would tend to show she was feeble-minded or unsocial or anti-social, or whatever the term is, other than the birth of this child?

WILHELM

No, sir, our record begins on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January of this year, and that is the first knowledge we have of her.

IRVING

The girl is unsocial, or anti-social—she had an illegitimate child. You are basing your opinion on that?

WILHELM

On that fact, and that as a social worker I know that girls of that type—

IRVING

What type?

WILHELM

I should say, decidedly feeble-minded.

IRVING

But the question of pregnancy is not evidence of feeble-mindedness, is it—the fact that, as we say, she made a misstep—went wrong—is that evidence of feeble-mindedness?

WILHELM

No, but a feeble-minded girl is much more likely to go wrong.

IRVING

A feeble-minded girl is much more likely to go wrong.

WILHELM

A feeble-minded girl is much more likely to go wrong.

IRVING

Now, Miss Wilhelm, there is one more question. In what way do you think by sterilizing her, she would become an asset to the State?

WILHELM

I don't know that she would become an asset. Just less of a liability. I think it would at least prevent the propagation of her kind.

IRVING

It would undoubtedly do that. Is it your opinion that it would make Carrie herself less immoral?

WILHELM

I am afraid I am not competent to judge of that.

(IRVING waves WILHELM off the stand.)

COLONEL STRODE

I'm not sure whose side you're on, Irving.

CARRIE

Is he angry with you?

IRVING

Don't worry about him.

CARRIE EAGLE

And then, finally, the last witness.

(Smiles.)

The last one on the list.

(DR. PRIDDY is silently sworn in during the following.)

CARRIE

Mister, it's Dr. Priddy's turn.

IRVING

Yes, dear.

CARRIE

Is he the last witness?

IRVING

Yes. That is the idea. You save your best for last.

CARRIE

Are we going to lose?

CARRIE EAGLE

My mister lawyer seemed worried. Lookin' back I'd say he was coming to see that he just might win, which would have spoiled the plan.

CARRIE

When this is over, we'll ride home together, him and me.

IRVING

Yes. I know.

COLONEL STRODE

Dr. Priddy, what is your occupation?

DR. PRIDDY

Physician and Superintendent of the State Colony for Epileptics and Feebleminded here in Amherst county on the suburbs of the City of Lynchburg.

COLONEL STRODE

One of your patients, Carrie Buck, after a hearing before your Special Board, has been ordered operated upon under the provisions of this law, providing for sterilization. I wish you would state to the Court why you moved to have this girl sterilized?

DR. PRIDDY

She was eighteen last July. If the charter of this institution is to be observed, we must keep her under custody during her child-bearing years. She would receive only her board and clothes; would be denied all of the blessings of liberty, and would be a burden on the State of Virginia for about \$200 a year for thirty years. However, after the operation of sterilization, she could go out, get placed in a good home, earn good wages, possibly marry.

COLONEL STRODE

You were sued by one of your patients upon whom you had performed this operation?

DR. PRIDDY

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

That was before this law was passed?

DR. PRIDDY

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

You defended that on the ground that it was necessary for diseased organs?

DR. PRIDDY

Yes, sir, that was my defense. I have a right to do whatever is best for the mental and physical advantage of the patient.

COLONEL STRODE

The court agreed?

DR. PRIDDY

The court agreed. But the court urged us to forbear as we waited for the legislature.

COLONEL STRODE

And that has been done?

DR. PRIDDY

That has been done.

COLONEL STRODE

Meaning the law has been passed?

DR. PRIDDY

(smiles)

Well, I thought I might die while you were getting to it.

COLONEL STRODE

Girls like Carrie Buck are in the custody of the State?

DR. PRIDDY

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

And is she legally competent to consent?

DR. PRIDDY

No.

COLONEL STRODE

And unless the State settles it for her, she is deprived of the benefits of the operation?

DR. PRIDDY

Yes.

COLONEL STRODE

Now, coming individually to Carrie Buck, what led you to believe that she was a feeble-minded person?

DR. PRIDDY

She has a feeble-minded mother, in the Colony under my care.

COLONEL STRODE

What is her name?

DR. PRIDDY

Emma Buck. Right there are two direct generations of feebleminded. And I have got about eight Bucks and Harlows, all coming from the Albemarle stock.

COLONEL STRODE

What leads you to believe that Carrie Buck, if she had children, would be the parent of defective offspring?

DR. PRIDDY

The generally accepted laws of science. Heredity.

COLONEL STRODE

So far as patients are concerned, do they object to this operation?

DR. PRIDDY

They clamor for it.

COLONEL STRODE

Why?

DR. PRIDDY

Because they know that it means the enjoyment of life outside of institution walls. Without it, the door of hope is closed to them.

COLONEL STRODE

No further questions.

IRVING

Doctor, if you sterilize an idiot, would society be benefited?

DR. PRIDDY

Certainly not.

IRVING

So the ones that are contemplated getting out are the high grades?

DR. PRIDDY

Yes.

IRVING

And you can teach them to work and send them out?

DR. PRIDDY

Yes, sir, get them into good families.

IRVING

Now, this girl here, is she capable of being taught to take care of herself?

DR. PRIDDY

Yes, she is capable of being taught to earn her living under proper supervision. She is capable of going back to the home from which she came.

(IRVING turns and stares at CARRIE. Then speaks to DR. PRIDDY.)

IRVING

Doctor, are you saying that—

(Pause.)

DR. PRIDDY

What?

IRVING

No. Never mind. No further questions.

(IRVING sits.)

COLONEL STRODE

Doctor, do I understand you to say that if this girl could be sterilized the Dobbs home would be open to her?

(IRVING breaks his pencil. COLONEL STRODE looks at IRVING. IRVING glares back.)

DR. PRIDDY

Yes. It is my understanding that the Dobbs want the girl back.

COLONEL STRODE

There are no further questions.

(DR. PRIDDY steps off the stand. COLONEL STRODE shakes his hand.)

IRVING

I believe you're going to get to go home, Carrie.

COLONEL STRODE

Your Honor, at this time, we call Carrie Buck to the stand.

IRVING

(surprised; whispering)  
Aubrey. What are you doing?

COLONEL STRODE

Sir?

IRVING

You've already demonstrated that she's feeble-minded. What are you going to ask her?

COLONEL STRODE

Your Honor.

IRVING

Your Honor, I request a recess.

COLONEL STRODE

This has been a long day. May we finish?

(turning to CARRIE)

Miss Buck, take the stand if you please.

(IRVING acknowledges his temporary defeat due to the judge's allowance of this.)

CARRIE

Mister?

IRVING

You need to go sit in the chair, Carrie.

(CARRIE crosses to the witness stand.)

CARRIE EAGLE

Alright, let me—. After I first met Clarence, I took some walks on the railroad and picked up those pretty rocks. I kept all them rocks, like they was special. And they was. After I saw my baby and kissed her on the mouth, I took them rocks down to the gully and pressed them in the muddy creek bottom. And I crossed my heart and hoped I would die if I ever told my baby who her daddy was.

BALIFF

Raise that hand. Put your other hand on there. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

CARRIE

Yes, sir.

BALIFF

You say, "I do."

CARRIE

I do.

BAILIFF

Now you sit down.

(CARRIE sits.)

COLONEL STRODE

All right. What is your name?

CARRIE

Carrie.

COLONEL STRODE

Your full name.

CARRIE

Carrie Buck.

COLONEL STRODE

Now Carrie, you are here today because you have had a child.

IRVING

Objection. Statement.

COLONEL STRODE

Carrie, have you had a child?

IRVING

Objection. That's already been established.

COLONEL STRODE

Carrie, have you had a child?

IRVING

Objection. You're merely trying to embarrass the witness.

COLONEL STRODE

I am seeking to underscore the primary facts of this case which has to do with heredity. Were you married when you had this child?

IRVING

Objection. Irrelevant to heredity.

COLONEL STRODE

Alright then. To the point. Do you know who was the father of this child?

CARRIE

Yes, sir.

COLONEL STRODE

(taken off guard)

Oh, you do. Would you kindly tell the court who?

CARRIE

(silence)

COLONEL STRODE

Do you know of a certainty who it was?

(Pause.)

Answer the question.

CARRIE

Yes.

COLONEL STRODE

Then you must tell the court.

(Pause.)

You don't know who it was.

IRVING

Objection. Leading the witness.

COLONEL STRODE

Was it a nameless man you met in Charlottesville?

IRVING

Objection. How can the witness identify a nameless man?

COLONEL STRODE

Are you a prostitute, Carrie?

IRVING

Objection. This is a fishing expedition!

COLONEL STRODE

Was it your foster father?

IRVING

Objection. No foundation!

CARRIE

No!

COLONEL STRODE

Young lady, you have already testified that you know who the father is. So answer my question or face the charges of perjury or contempt. I will say it again. Do you really know who is the father of this child?

(silence)

Alright, Your Honor, we see now what this girl is.

CARRIE

Clarence Garland.

COLONEL STRODE

I beg your pardon.

CARRIE

Clarence Garland.

COLONEL STRODE

Who is that?

IRVING

Your Honor.

COLONEL STRODE

Tell us who that is, Carrie.

CARRIE

He's the Dobbs' kin.

COLONEL STRODE

Whose kin?

IRVING

Colonel.

COLONEL STRODE

I am asking a—whose kin?

IRVING

Your Honor! I respectfully request permission to confer as counsel. Off the record.

(pulling COLONEL STRODE aside)

What is your intention, Colonel Strode?

COLONEL STRODE

No, noth—, nothing, Irv. I just thought it should be in the record. It's a case about heredity. The question has been in our minds all day. This is a question of kin. Surely this basic question had to be asked.

IRVING

And you had no idea what the answer was going to be. No idea. Even a banking lawyer knows not to bring coffee shop curiosity into an open court.

COLONEL STRODE

We've been calling the girl a whore all day. How did I know she was going to come up with a name?

IRVING

Well, she has. This could change the focus of everything. This is hardly for the best. What do you propose?

COLONEL STRODE

Whatev – , what – . I'll do what you say, Irv.

IRVING

End. Just end your questions.

COLONEL STRODE

Your Honor, we have no further questions at this time.

(IRVING goes over to ESTABROOK, and they have a brief, private discussion.)

IRVING

Is Clarence Garland a nephew of the Dobbs family?

CARRIE

Yes, he is.

IRVING

That's right. He's their nephew. His name is a name that you would naturally know from living at the Dobbs, is it not?

CARRIE

Yes.

IRVING

But you don't really know him, do you?

CARRIE

Well... Once when the Dobbs were away from home, Mrs. Dobbs had to go up into the mountains, and Mr. Dobbs was at work. And I was at home alone.

IRVING

(interrupting)

Your Honor. We've spent this day attempting to determine whether this girl is feeble-minded. If she is feeble-minded, then her testimony damages the record of this trial and wrongfully impugns the character of our commonwealth's innocent citizens. May I respectfully request that her present testimony, in its entirety, be stricken until such time as the Court rules on the most basic question of this case, which is her feeble-mindedness?

COLONEL STRODE

That is excellent, Your Honor. I am through.

(The judge has given unheard instructions and banged his gavel.)

BALIFF

All rise.

(Everyone stands. BALIFF takes the flag and exits. IRVING goes to CARRIE and helps her from the witness chair. COLONEL STRODE exits.)

DR. PRIDDY

Thank you, Irving.

IRVING

Dr. Priddy.

DR. PRIDDY

It has been a long day.

IRVING

I want to get her home, Al.

DR. PRIDDY

(to CARRIE)

Carrie?

IRVING

I mean skip the high court.

DR. PRIDDY

I shall bring the car around.

IRVING

Do the operation.

DR. PRIDDY

Sir?

IRVING

Just get her home.

DR. PRIDDY

You have known what course we are on.

IRVING

Do this for me. We've put her through it.

DR. PRIDDY

You know how difficult it is to bring such an opportunity as this to fruition.

IRVING

Yeah. God—. Takes months. Years.

DR. PRIDDY

The court has stuck down other laws. We must assure our legal right. And the rights of every other state whose eyes are upon Virginia now.

IRVING

So Carrie waits in the Colony, and her little daughter grows up. And the Dobbs are thinking, this is our child now and we don't want that girl coming around here—that girl who's been pronounced feeble-minded by the Supreme Court—

DR. PRIDDY

(overlapping in exasperation)

This is not—this is for all the Carrie Bucks. It's a solution that—there is no other—

(DR. PRIDDY stops, seeing that IRVING is not about to back down. Pause as the two men stare each other down.)

DR. PRIDDY (continued)

And I promised the Dobbs that Clarence's name would not be brought into the trial.

IRVING

What?

DR. PRIDDY

I promised the Dobbs that Clarence's name would not—but you and Aubrey go blundering down the road. I sincerely doubt that she has a place in that home now.

IRVING

You knew. You knew about Clarence?

(Beat.)

What was that girl going to say on the stand? When I cut her off, what was she going to say?

DR. PRIDDY

I only know what the Dobbs told me in strictest confidence, as a doctor, and I am speaking to you as an attorney. I trust you keep your to professional oath, and I will keep to mine. I shall speak of it no further.

(Pause.)

Are you quitting?

IRVING

(forces a smile)

I got in this. And I'm a lawyer. But you, you're an idealist. I hope it makes you happy.

(DR. PRIDDY gestures graciously to CARRIE, and they exit. IRVING stands still, then he exits the other way.)

During the following, upstage in the shadows, the NURSE arrives and puts the two lawyer tables together and sets up an operating room, with a sheet to protect CARRIE from view. CARRIE lies on the operating table. DR. BELL, wearing surgeon garb, begins his work. The operation is hidden by the sheet.)

CARRIE EAGLE

The car that night is the last time I was ever with Dr. Priddy. Two months later, he died. He missed the whole Supreme Court deal. That is why my case up there don't have Dr. Priddy's name on it. The new Superintendent got his name on it next to mine. And the Supreme Court tells him he can do my operation. At last. And then I can go free.

Now I told you I was naïve. Shall I admit to you that I did not understand what they was up to?

DR. BELL

Clamp.

(CLARENCE walks on with a bottle in his hand.)

CARRIE EAGLE

(with a growing sense of horror)

How could that be? I sat through the trial, didn't I? Naïve nothing, you say. Naïve nothing.

DR. BELL

Scalpel.

(J.T. DOBBS steps from the shadows.)

CARRIE EAGLE

Well the truth is that that girl could not believe the worst. She ended up havin' a child because she could not believe the worst. Some people cannot believe the worst until there is nothing else to believe.

J.T. DOBBS

Clarence!

CLARENCE

Who the hell's that? Oh, hey, Uncle J.T. Sorry about the language. You startled me.

(CARRIE EAGLE is in a great struggle with her emotions.)

DR. BELL

Forceps.

J.T. DOBBS

Put the bottle down.

CLARENCE

What for?

J.T. DOBBS

I don't want it to break.

CLARENCE

Oh, I'm not gonna drop it. It's just soda pop. You want some?

DR. BELL

Carbolic acid.

J.T. DOBBS

Set it down.

CLARENCE

All right. I'll set it down.

(A train roars past. Or a solo woman is heard singing a spiritual with force. J.T. DOBBS suddenly and savagely beats CLARENCE with his fists and his feet.)

CLARENCE (continued)

What? What?! You crazy. You crazy.

J.T. DOBBS

Shut up. Shut up and take it.

(The beating continues during the remainder of the operation.)

DR. BELL

Alcohol.  
Suture.  
Close.

J.T. DOBBS

I seen Carrie's bloody clothes, but I didn't believe her. I ought to do worse. But I ain't, because you're my kin. Now who you gonna say done this to you?

CLARENCE

You did.

J.T. DOBBS

(kicking him)  
Who?

CLARENCE

I got in a fight. A lot of people did it.

J.T. DOBBS

Who is the father of Vivian Dobbs?

CLARENCE

You can have that baby. I don't want nothin' to do with it.

J.T. DOBBS

(an inch away)  
Carrie says it's you. What will you say?

CLARENCE

I'll say I never. It wasn't me.

J.T. DOBBS

(pouring the contents of the bottle out on the ground and handing it back)  
All right, boy. Get home.

(J.T. DOBBS picks CLARENCE up and starts him down the street. Then J.T. DOBBS turns and goes the other way. NURSE helps CARRIE up and off.

A hospital office at the Colony.)

DR. BELL

(dictating from his notes, as if to a secretary)  
October 19, 1927. Patient sterilized this morning under authority of Act of Assembly providing for the sterilization of mental defectives, and as ordered by the Board of Directors of this institution. Let us insert "as affirmed by the Supreme Court of the United States on the second day of this most recent May." The patient went to the operating room at 9:30 and returned at

10:30, recovered promptly from the anesthesia with no untoward aftereffects. One inch was removed from each Fallopian tube. Abdominal wound was united with layer sutures. She will be allowed up in fourteen days. Superintendent, State Colony, and so forth.

(DR. BELL exits.)

CARRIE EAGLE

That Laughlin wrote a book about it. And got a prize, some honorary doctor something from the Germans...an American. Someone told me Hitler liked what Laughlin wrote. The Germans and Americans was not always on opposite sides. They was all tryin' to make a perfect race. They just done it in different ways. But they was kin.

The day that they set me out of the Colony, some girls told me what it was they done on me. They said they had it done on them. And I heard them. I finally heard them. I understood. I don't hold no grudge. It just don't do no good to hold grudges.

(At the Dobbs' house. ALICE DOBBS brings VIVIAN—nearly four years old. VIVIAN carries a large doll. ALICE stops VIVIAN and gives one last little spit shine and adjusts a bow on her head. CARRIE is escorted by WILHELM. J.T. is in background, watching.)

ALICE DOBBS

This is a friend of ours. Miss Buck. Can you say hello?

CARRIE

Hello. Hello baby.

(CARRIE EAGLE breaks down sobbing. To maintain control, CARRIE speaks.)  
I had better go home, now. May I see her again?

ALICE DOBBS

That's not for me to decide, Miss Buck.

WILHELM

We'll see, Carrie. Are you sure you want to go so soon?

CARRIE

(thinks)

Yes.

(CARRIE starts to leave, turns, reaches into her pocket and takes out the little baby bonnet which she sewed during the trial. She hands it to WILHELM who hands it to ALICE DOBBS.)

CARRIE (continued)

You have a very nice daughter, Mrs. Dobbs.

ALICE DOBBS

Alright.

(CARRIE and WILHELM leave. ALICE takes a moment to tie the bonnet onto VIVIAN's doll, perhaps singing a lullaby, like "Hush, Little Baby." During TRIO SINGERS, ALICE and VIVIAN walk away hand in hand; CARRIE EAGLE watches.)

TRIO SINGERS

Life is like a mountain railway  
With an engineer that's brave.  
We must make the run successful  
From the cradle to the grave.

Heed the curves, the hills, the tunnels  
Never falter, never fail.  
Keep your hand upon the throttle  
And your eye upon the rail.

(CARRIE EAGLE speaks as TRIO SINGERS hum. Other actors filter in, watching.)

CARRIE EAGLE

I got out on what they call parole, to go to work. And if you done well, you could get married and get out for good. I married William Eagle. In Bland. That's where I got a telegram.

(She smiles.)

Had to sit down for that. Mrs. Dobbs had found out from the Colony where I was livin'. She said Vivian had got the measles. Just the measles, but it took her. She was in the third grade. Mrs. Dobbs said that she was on the Honor Roll.

(Pause.)

Mr. Eagle and me never had no children but we had love and many times of happiness. Which is a whole other story.

(CARRIE enters, carrying a wash tub, hanging clothes, like her mother when we first saw her. All actors join the song.)

TRIO SINGERS and ALL

Oh blessed Savior, Thou wilt guide us,  
'Til we reach that blissful shore,  
Where the angels wait to join us,  
In God's grace forevermore.

(CARRIE looks up from her wash, caught in a beautiful light filtering down through the trees.)

END OF PLAY

### A Note from the Playwright

*Kin* is based on history. Only a few insignificant adjustments have been made to streamline the telling of the story. Although Dr. Bell's name is not mentioned in the dialogue of the play, it is Bell's name that has gone down in history as Carrie's primary antagonist in the case that started as *Buck v. Priddy* and became *Buck v. Bell* after Dr. Priddy's death.

A very significant fact that is not explained clearly in the play is that Harry Laughlin, the chief architect of sterilization laws in the United States, was much revered in Germany. His writings became the basis of some of the hereditary health laws in Nazi Germany of the 1930's. Consequently, he was granted an honorary doctorate by the University of Heidelberg in 1936. He started his career as a high school principal in my home state of Iowa. And his first book on sterilization laws was published by the Chicago Municipal Court.

The names in the play are historically accurate. Clarence Garland's name does not appear in the trial transcripts, nor does Carrie herself use his name in the interviews she granted. She simply referred to him as the Dobbs' nephew. I have included the name on the basis of Harry Laughlin's published chart of Vivian's family tree. One can only guess how Laughlin came up with the name, but David Smith's guess is that Priddy or Strode passed the name along to Laughlin once the court case was completed and Harry Laughlin wanted to publish the results. Students of the case will notice that I have used the more conventional spellings of Earleysville and Kallikak rather than the spellings used by the court recorder ("Earleysville" and "Callicac").

Hopefully this play provides some of the emotional and human weight of these historical events. Those who wish to get a more full and precise look at the factual details should not miss *The Sterilization of Carrie Buck* by Dr. J. David Smith & K. Ray Nelson. This book provides many letters, photographs and newspaper articles relating to an astonishing chapter of American history.

One final note to the actors. Please don't lampoon or play caricatures of Ragged Mountain folk – play them as real people who have a simple but important part in a larger story.

I hope you enjoy learning about Carrie. She was quite a lady, and I'm sorry that although I shared the planet with her for almost 30 years, I never had the privilege of meeting her in person. I hope that I've honored her memory well.

Jeff Barker  
Orange City, Iowa

A suggested doubling scheme for minimum cast size of 7 males, 7 females

**Males:**

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| Actor 1 | Clarence, Bailiff                                |
| Actor 2 | J. T. Dobbs                                      |
| Actor 3 | Dr. Albert Priddy                                |
| Actor 4 | Irving Whitehead                                 |
| Actor 5 | Colonel Aubrey Strode                            |
| Actor 6 | Arthur Estabrook, John Hopkins, Dr. Bell         |
| Actor 7 | Dr. J. C. Coulter, Samuel Dudley, Dr. DeJarnette |

**Females:**

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| Actor 1 | Carrie Eagle                                  |
| Actor 2 | Carrie Buck                                   |
| Actor 3 | Alice Dobbs, Patient, Singer                  |
| Actor 4 | Emma Buck, Caroline Wilhelm, Singer           |
| Actor 5 | Aggie, Miss Wood, Singer, Nurse               |
| Actor 6 | Patient, Mrs. Harris, Virginia Landis, Singer |
| Actor 7 | Vivian Dobbs                                  |

(Note: An actual 3 year-old girl should play Vivian Dobbs. The trio singing should be live, not recorded. Sheet music is available from the playwright.)

## The real-life Carrie Buck

- July 2 1906 Carrie Buck is born.
- 1909 Carrie is taken from Emma Buck and fostered to J.T. and Alice Dobbs of Charlottesville.
- 1910 Senator Aubrey Strode sponsors a bill chartering the Virginia State Epileptic Colony. It is built near Lynchburg. Irving Whitehead is on the board of directors. Albert Priddy is selected as the first superintendent.
- 1912 The Colony's charter is expanded to include the housing of the "feebleminded" with a special emphasis on segregating those who are in their child-bearing years.
- Feb 16 1918 Dr. Priddy is sued for sterilizing some of his inmates. He wins the suit, but the judge urges Priddy to cease such operations until a more specific law is passed (*Mallory v. Priddy*).
- 1918 Carrie is taken out of school after completing the sixth grade so she can help Mrs. Dobbs at home.
- April 6 1920 Emma Buck is admitted to the Virginia State Colony for Feebleminded and Epileptics.
- 1922 Harry Laughlin publishes Eugenical Sterilization in the United States. The frontispiece says, "Keep the lifestream pure."
- 1923 Carrie is impregnated by Clarence Garland, nephew of the Dobbs.
- Jan 23 1924 Carrie's committal papers are signed. She is considered to be a "loose woman."
- Mar 20 1924 Governor signs Virginia sterilization act. The statute is written by Aubrey Strode, following guidelines provided by Laughlin.
- Mar 28 1924 Carrie's baby is born. Carrie names the little girl "Vivian Alice Elaine." She knows the Dobbs will care for the baby as if Vivian is their own.
- June 4 1924 Carrie arrives at the Colony.
- Aug 13 1924 The Colony board approves Carrie as a candidate for sterilization. At the hearing, Carrie is asked if she has any comment. She replies, "No sir, I have not. It is up to my people."
- Nov 18 1924 Carrie goes to trial at the Amherst County Courthouse as a test of the new sterilization law. It is Emma Buck's birthday.

- Jan 13 1925 Dr. Albert Priddy dies.
- Apr 13 1925 Circuit Court decision announced in favor of the Colony.
- May 2 1927 Supreme Court affirms sterilization law in *Buck v. Bell*. In the landmark decision, Oliver Wendell Holmes writes, “Three generations of imbeciles are enough.”
- Oct 19 1927 Carrie is sterilized.
- Nov 12 1927 Carrie is paroled from the Colony. That same day, some of the other girls from the Colony explain to Carrie that she will no longer be able to have children because of the operation she has had.
- May 14 1932 Carrie marries William Eagle of Bland, VA.
- July 3 1932 Vivian Dobbs dies of a childhood illness. She was in the third grade, an Honor Roll student.
- Jul 14 1933 Nazi enactment of racial hygiene sterilization law, apparently based on Laughlin’s model law.
- June 1936 Harry Laughlin receives Honorary Doctorate from Heidelberg University, Germany. In his acceptance letter, he writes of the award that, “It will come from a nation which for many centuries nurtured the human seed-stock which later founded my own country and thus gave basic character to our present lives....”
- Jan 26 1943 Harry Laughlin dies in Kirksville, Missouri.
- Apr 19 1944 Emma Buck dies at the Colony and is buried in the Colony cemetery.
- 1946 Nazi defense documents submitted at the Nuremberg Military Tribunals cite the precedence of *Buck v. Bell* for Reich sterilization policies.
- 1980 Carrie reveals to a reporter that she told her foster parents that she was raped by their nephew. But, she says, “It don’t do no good to hold grudges.”
- Mar 21 1981 Virginia sterilization statute repealed after over 8300 legal sterilizations (over 60,000 nationally).
- Jan 28 1983 Carrie Buck Eagle Dettamore dies in Waynesboro. Her body is returned to Charlottesville for burial in her second husband’s plot. Ironically, that plot is a not many steps from the gravesite of her only daughter, Vivian.
- May 2 2002 Governor Mark R. Warner issues an apology for Virginia’s participation in eugenics (on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court Decision in *Buck v. Bell*).

**For additional reading:**

Edwin Black. *War Against the Weak*. Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003.

Stephen Jay Gould. "Carrie Buck's Daughter". *Natural History*, July, 1984.

Paul A. Lombardo. *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, The Supreme Court and Buck v. Bell*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

J. David Smith and K. Ray Nelson. *The Sterilization of Carrie Buck*. New Horizon Press, 1989.