

BECKET, *quietly*: I started to love the honor of God.

KING, *somberly*: Come back to England. I give you my royal peace. May you find yours. And may you not discover you were wrong about yourself. This is the last time I shall come begging to you. *He cries out*: I should never have seen you again! It hurts too much. *His whole body is suddenly shaken by a sob.*

BECKET, *goes nearer to him; moved*: My prince—

KING, *yelling*: No! No pity! It's dirty. Stand away from me! Go back to England! It's too cold out here! *Becket turns his horse and moves nearer to the King.*

BECKET, *gravely*: Farewell, my prince. Will you give me the kiss of peace?

KING: No! I can't bear to come near you! I can't bear to look at you! Later! Later! When it doesn't hurt any more!

BECKET: I shall set sail tomorrow. Farewell, my prince. I know I shall never see you again.

KING, *his face twisted with hatred*: How dare you say that to me after I gave you my royal word? Do you take me for a traitor?

Becket looks at him gravely for a second longer, with a sort of pity in his eyes. Then he slowly turns his horse and rides away. The wind howls.

KING: Thomas!

STREAMERS

by David Rabe

ACT II

The setting of the play is a stateside army training barracks during the early years of the Vietnam War. But this play is not about the violent clashing of nations. Its bloody and deadly violence erupts from simple misunderstandings between individual men, from frustrations and mistrust and misguided pride. Billy,

Roger, and Richie are three young soldiers sharing a bunk room. Billy is a clean-cut country boy, afraid of being shipped to a war zone. Roger is a black man who has found a home in the army. Richie is urbane and witty—and a homosexual. He is totally out of place in this military environment. Their interactions are amiable and their arguments restrained.

Enter Carlyle—a street-hardened black draftee with intense passions, hatreds, and fears. Ultimately Carlyle, who is not drawn as an unsympathetic character, launches a siege of violence that leaves Billy and an army sergeant dead.

Just before the following excerpt, Carlyle has come into the room and found Richie alone, reading in bed. There is some conversation about a previous evening when Carlyle came in drunk and filled with self-pity, muttering on about his fears as he fell asleep on the floor. Richie gets up, closes the door to the room, offers Carlyle a cigarette, and crosses back to the bed.

CARLYLE: You know what I bet. I been lookin' at you real close. It just a way I got about me. And I bet if I was to hang my boy out in front of you, my big boy, man, you'd start wantin' to touch him. Be beggin' and talkin' sweet to ole Carlyle. Am I right or wrong? *He leans over Richie.* What do you say?

RICHIE: Pardon?

CARLYLE: You heard me. Ohhh, I am so restless, I don't even understand it. My big black boy is what I was talkin' about. My thing, man; my rope, Jim. HEY RICHIE! *And he lunges, then moves his fingers through Richie's hair.* How long you been a punk? Can you hear me? Am I clear? Do I talk funny? *He is leaning close.* Can you smell the gin on my mouth?

RICHIE: I mean, if you really came looking for Roger, he and Billy are gone to the gymnasium. They were—

CARLYLE: No. *He slides down on the bed, his arm placed over Richie's legs.* I got no athletic abilities. I got none. No moves. I don't know. HEY RICHIE! *Leaning close again:* I just got this question I asked, I got no answer.

RICHIE: I don't know . . . what . . . you mean.

CARLYLE: I heard me. I understand me. "How long you been a punk?" is the question I asked—have you got a reply?

RICHIE, *confused, irritated, but fascinated*: Not to that question.

CARLYLE: Who do if you don't? I don't. How'm I gonna? Suddenly there is whistling in the hall, as if someone might enter footsteps approaching, and Richie leaps to his feet and scurries away toward the door, tucking his shirt in as he goes. Man, don't you wanna talk to me? Don't you wanna talk to ole Carlyle?

RICHIE: Not at the moment.

CARLYLE, *he is rising, starting after Richie who stands nervously near Roger's bed:* I want to talk to you, man; why don't you want to talk to me? We can be friends. Talkin' back and forth, sharin' thoughts and bein' happy.

RICHIE: I don't think that's what you want.

CARLYLE, *he is very near to Richie:* What do I want?

RICHIE: I mean, to talk to me. *As if repulsed, he crosses away.*
CARLYLE: What am I doin'? I am talkin'. **DON'T YOU TELL ME I AIN'T TALKIN' WHEN I AM TALKIN' 'COURSE I AM.** Bendin' over backwards. Do you know they still got me in that goddamn P Company. That goddamn transient company. It like they think I ain't got no notion what a home is. No nose for no home—like I ain't never had no home. I had a home. **IT LIKE THEY THINK THERE AIN'T NO PLACE FOR ME IN THIS MOTHER ARMY BUT K.P. ALL SUDSY AND WRINKLED AND SWEATIN'. EVERY DAY SINCE I GOT TO THIS SHIT HOUSE, MISTER! HOW MANY TIMES YOU BEEN ON K.P.? WHEN'S THE LAST TIME YOU PULLED K.P.?** *He has roared down to where Richie had moved, the rage possessing him.*

RICHIE: I'm E.D.

CARLYLE: You E.D.? You E.D.? You Edie, are you? I didn't ask you what you friends call you, I asked you when's the last time you had K.P.?

RICHIE, *edging toward his bed. He will go there, get and light a cigarette:* E.D. is exempt from duty.

CARLYLE, *moving after Richie:* You ain't got no duties? What shit you talkin' about? Everybody in this fuckin' army got duties? That what the fuckin' army all about. You ain't got no duties, who got 'em?

RICHIE: Because of my job, Carlyle. I have a very special job. And my friends don't call me Edie. *Big smile:* They call me Irene.

CARLYLE: That mean what you sayin' is you kiss ass for somebody, don't it? Good for you. Good for you. *Seemingly re-*

laxed and gentle, he settles down on Richie's bed. He seems playful and charming. You know the other night I was sleepin' there. You know.

RICHIE: Yes.

CARLYLE, *gleefully, enormously pleased:* You remember that? How come you remember that? You sweet.

RICHIE: We don't have people sleeping on our floor that often, Carlyle.

CARLYLE: But the way you crawl over in the night, gimme a big kiss on my joint. That nice.

RICHIE, *he is shocked. He blinks:* What?

CARLYLE: Or did I dream that?

RICHIE, *laughing in spite of himself:* My god, you're outrageous!

CARLYLE: Maybe you dreamed it.

RICHIE: What . . . ? No. I don't know.

CARLYLE: Maybe you did it, then, you didn't dream it.

RICHIE: How come you talk so much?

CARLYLE: I don't talk, man, who's gonna talk? YOU? *He is laughing and amused, but there is an anger near the surface now, an ugliness.* That bore me to death. I don't like nobody's voice but my own. I am so pretty. Don't like nobody else face. *And then viciously, he spits out at Richie:* You goddamn face ugly fuckin' queer punk! *And Richie jumps in confusion.*

RICHIE: What's the matter with you?

CARLYLE: You goddamn ugly punk face. YOU UGLY!

RICHIE: Nice mouth.

CARLYLE: That's right. That's right. And you got a weird mouth. Like to suck joints. *Richie storms to his locker, throwing the book inside. He pivots, grabbing a towel, marching toward the door.* Hey, you gonna jus' walk out on me? Where you goin'? You c'mon back. Hear?

RICHIE: That's my bed, for chrissake. *He lunges into the hall.*