

AIN'T YOU THE ONE?
By Jeremy Darling

Cast of Characters

5 Females; 13 Males

EGAN

BAKER

RIVER

LAURA

MARLENE

SHERIFF ROICE

ABIGAIL

FR. DOUDICAN

MURPHY

SECRETARY

CHARLIE

GRIZ

TURNER

JERRY

RONNIE

FRANKIE

GUS

JUNE

Scene Breakdown

ACT I

- Scene 1 – “Tombs”
- Scene 2 – “The Wake”
- Scene 3 – “Trembling”
- Scene 4 – “Someone New”
- Scene 5 – “Confession”
- Scene 6 – “Decisions”
- Scene 7 – “Process”
- Scene 8 – “Revelations”
- Scene 9 – “Charlie”
- Scene 10 – “Dreams”
- Scene 11 – “Drunk”
- Scene 12 – “The Search”
- Scene 13 – “Old Friend”

ACT II

- Scene 1 – “A Little Help”
- Scene 2 – “Back to Work”
- Scene 3 – “Ignorance”
- Scene 4 – “Back to Confession”
- Scene 5 – “Bail for Ronnie”
- Scene 6 – “Closer”
- Scene 7 – “Dance With Me”
- Scene 8 – “Back Into the Night”
- Scene 9 – “Let Him Sleep”
- Scene 10 – “Good Morning”
- Scene 11 – “Breakfast Is Served”
- Scene 12 – “No More Games”
- Scene 13 – “Interrogation”
- Scene 14 – “Guilty”
- Scene 15 – “It’s My Fault”
- Scene 16 – “Finding June”
- Scene 17 – “Decisions”

Approximate Length

110 minutes

Time

c. 1967

Place

Jackson Hole, WY

ACT I
Scene 1: Tombs

Setting: A graveyard.

At Rise: Two men stand in front of a tomb in silence. On the right stands BAKER KINGSLEY, sturdy and broad-shouldered. A strong, silent type if there ever was one. On the left stands his little brother, EGAN, fidgety and childlike.

EGAN

It ain't right.

(BAKER is lost in grief and can only muster a curious grunt)

BAKER

Hmm?

EGAN

You got ten years in prison and your daughter dies three days before you get out. It ain't right.

(BAKER nods in agreement)

EGAN

(Trying to make a speech)

She was a special girl. I will always remember how she liked vanilla ice cream and playing with them...with them uh...them whirly...

(BAKER puts his arm around his brother as EGAN begins to cry)

EGAN

I did my best to check in on her often, just like you asked. Aunt Edna took real good care o' her and I'd take her school on Mondays and Wednesdays so Edna could pick up hours at the drugstore.

BAKER

You done just fine, Egan.

EGAN

I don't know how you're so strong. Ain't you mad?

BAKER

(Long pause)

Course I am.

EGAN

We gonna find who did this and we gonna set it right, ain't we? We got to avenge her, right? In't that in the Bible?

BAKER

“Vengeance is mine.”

EGAN

Yeah, that's it—that's it! She is yours to avenge.

BAKER

No Egan. The Lord was speaking of Hissself. She is the Lord's to avenge.

EGAN

(Confused)

Ahh...

(Rejecting the idea at first, but then)

What does that mean...for whoever dun this?

BAKER

I don't know.

EGAN

(Confused and angry)

I don't understand you, Baker. The old you woulda already loaded yer gun, in red hot pursuit of whoever dun this. What happened to you while you was in the digger, huh?

BAKER

(Exhausted)

Let's go. Aunt Edna's waitin' fer us. She made pie.

EGAN

(Angry)

So that's it? We just gonna let whoever dun this just get away?

BAKER

No, Egan. Sheriff Roice's a good man, he's gonna handle—

EGAN

Roice? The bastard what put you in the digger?!

BAKER

(Sternly)

We've been over this. I had it comin', alright?

(Looks back at the tombstone)

I had it comin'.

EGAN

I don't like this new Baker.

BAKER

(Exhausted)

I don't need you to like me, Egan. I just need you to love me.

EGAN

(Humbled)

I'm sorry. I'm just... I'm just angry is all. I love you.

BAKER

I love you too. Come on...

(The brothers exit the graveyard)

Scene 2: The Wake

Setting: Outside a house in town, where the wake is being held.

At Rise: BAKER and EGAN approach the house where townsfolk are mourning Baker's daughter. Mumbled sounds of conversation bleed out of the house. BAKER stops short as EGAN proceeds inside.

EGAN

(Turning back)

Ain't you coming in?

BAKER

No, I think I'll just wait outside.

EGAN

Want me to bring ya a piece o' pie?

BAKER

I ain't hungry.

(EGAN walks inside. BAKER sits on a stair leading up to the porch and lights a cigarette. He gets up and paces back and forth, clearly wanting to go in but preferring not to cause a scene. A nervous boy appears behind him, having snuck around the house.)

RIVER

You Baker Kingsley?

BAKER

(Mildly startled)

Yes, I am. What's your name?

RIVER

River Kingsley.

(Pauses expectantly)

Your nephew.

BAKER

(Smiling)

Well, now that just can't be. You are far too big to my neph—

RIVER

I am thirteen years old. It's been ten years since I seen you.

BAKER

I suppose it has.

RIVER
Why are you out here?

BAKER
(Looks around)
It's a nice day.

RIVER
You scared o' what people might think?

BAKER
How's that?

RIVER
You know, you just gettin' out o' prison and all.

BAKER
(Smiling)
You are a straight shooter.

RIVER
"Crooked words, crooked man. Straight words, straight man." That's what my momma says.

BAKER
(Impressed)
That's a good rule o' thumb.
(Takes a drag)
Yes, I suppose that's why I'm out here instead o' in there.

RIVER
(Boldly)
I ain't scared o' you.

BAKER
(Noticing the boy's nervousness)
Well, I appreciate that, but why do you keep looking over yer shoulder?

RIVER
Momma says I ain't supposed to talk to you.

BAKER
I see. Well, you ought to listen to your mother.

RIVER
(Not listening)
Whatcha gonna do now that yer outta the digger?

(This is the first time BAKER has had to put his thoughts into words)

BAKER

Well...I'm gonna make amends.

RIVER

Ain't that what prison is for?

BAKER

Prison was my punishment. My job now is to reconcile and perform my penance.

RIVER

What's that?

BAKER

Penance?

RIVER

Yeah.

BAKER

Well, that's how I give back what I took.

RIVER

Is that why you were in prison? You stole something?

BAKER

(Humbly)

I've stolen a lot of things from a lot of people, River. But no, technically, that's not why I went to prison.

(Just then, a voice hollers from somewhere offstage)

LAURA

River?!

RIVER

(To BAKER)

I was never here!

(RIVER runs off stage. LAURA enters from the other side.)

LAURA

Riv...

(She pauses when she sees BAKER)

Hey sis. BAKER

(Accusatory)
What are you doin' here? LAURA

I haven't quite figured that out yet. BAKER

(At a loss for words)
Was River out here talkin' to you? Cause he ain't supposed to talk to you. LAURA

(BAKER is stung by this, only to remember what a cruel older brother he was to LAURA)

Laura, I owe you quite a few apologies... BAKER

(Angrily)
Well I don't want any from you, Baker. Just steer clear of my son. You do that—we're even. LAURA

(Exit LAURA. EGAN arrives back on the porch with a slice of pie in hand.)

You gotta try this pie! EGAN

I'm sure it's good Egan, but honest, I just ain't hungry. BAKER

Well, can I eat it? EGAN

Yes, you may. BAKER
(Trying to contain a laugh)

Scene 3: Trembling

Setting: Baker's room.

At Rise: BAKER sits alone in his dingy bedroom, staring at the wall. He has almost no possessions and was lucky to find a small place, a basement room, to rent. He reluctantly reaches for his Bible and makes a half-hearted attempt to flip through its pages, before sighing heavily and flopping it on the bed next to him. He hesitates, then grabs the phone and dials the county sheriff.

MARLENE

(A woman's voice over the phone)

How may I direct your call?

BAKER

I need to speak to Sheriff Roice.

MARLENE

(Pauses)

Is that you, Baker?

BAKER

(Mildly irritated)

Yes Marlene, it's me.

(Trying to be friendly)

How are you? How's Joe?

MARLENE

Oh, we're just fine, dear, but how are you holdin' up? We are just so sorry for your loss. That little girl of yours just lit up the room

BAKER

(Trying to hide his emotions)

I appreciate that.

MARLENE

It wasn't right how they locked you up for all that time—

BAKER

(Trying to be nice)

I need to speak to Sheriff Roice if you don't mind.

MARLENE

Oh, yes of course. I don't mean to pry. I'll connect you now.

BAKER

Thank you.

(BAKER anxiously waits for the connection)

SHERIFF ROICE

Sheriff Roice.

BAKER

Hey, it's Baker.

SHERIFF ROICE

Now Baker, I told you I'd call you as soon as I had anything worth telling you.

BAKER

I know, I know. I just...I need some light.

SHERIFF ROICE

We are doing our very best for your little girl, Baker. We gonna find out who dun this.

BAKER

Don't make promises you can't keep, Sheriff.

SHERIFF ROICE

Don't you talk to me like that, Baker. I'm good at my job and I'm gonna see this to its end.

(BAKER is incredulous)

SHERIFF ROICE

Now, listen. You got to promise me you ain't gonna do nothin' stupid. Can you promise me that?

(BAKER is barely containing his rage)

SHERIFF ROICE

I need you to promise me, Baker—

BAKER

(Quickly)

Yeah, I ain't gonna do nothing.

SHERIFF ROICE

You're a changed man now. "Vengeance is mine," sayeth the Lord. I am an instrument of the Lord, and I will deliver His recompense for you and your girl.

BAKER

(Filled with doubt)

Yeah.

SHERIFF ROICE

(Reassuringly)

You didn't deserve this, Baker. I hope you know that. You done your time and the Lord has dealt with you. This ain't punishment for your past sins.

BAKER

(Losing control of his emotions)

Ok Sheriff. I'll see you.

(BAKER quickly hangs up the phone and buries his head in his hands)

Scene 4: Someone New

Setting: The local diner.

At Rise: BAKER and EGAN are at the local diner, on a lunch break, dirty and sweaty from a long morning of work at the ranch. The waitress, ABIGAIL, enters to check on their needs and pour some coffee.

ABIGAIL

You boys doin' alright? Why ain't you eatin' with the boys back at the bunkhouse?

BAKER

(Embarrassed)

I gotta earn my place back.

ABIGAIL

(Also embarrassed)

Oh—I didn't mean to pry.

BAKER

It's alright. They gave me my job back and I am grateful for that—never thought I'd be so happy to be tyin' hay bales and muckin' out stalls.

(ABIGAIL's face falls)

ABIGAIL

We're all sorry about your little girl, Baker. Every time she come in here, she was always smilin' and with a hearty appetite.

(Realizing BAKER wants to talk about something else)

I'm sorry, you're probably sick o' talkin' 'bout it.

(She pours EGAN more coffee as he eagerly devours his food and slurps his coffee down. She moves to BAKER's mug as he silently declines, with a nod and a smile. ABIGAIL feigns surprise and looks at him with compassion.)

Baker Kingsley turning down a second cup of coffee. Now I've seen it all.

BAKER

(BAKER grins sheepishly)

I'm just trying to cut back is all.

ABIGAIL

(Impersonating BAKER)

“Just leave the pot, sweetie.” Ain’t you the one that used to say that?

(BAKER chuckles)

EGAN

It’s the new Baker.

(BAKER nods his head in embarrassment)

ABIGAIL

The *new* Baker, huh?

(Leans in)

Tell me more.

BAKER

I don’t know what he’s talking about.

EGAN

(Earnestly)

He found God in the digger.

ABIGAIL

(Disappointed)

He did, huh?

EGAN

Yup! He got religion an’ everything. He don’t cuss no more, or tell them dirty jokes, or get into fights—

BAKER

(Interrupting)

Alright, now that’s enough.

ABIGAIL

So basically you ain’t no fun no more?

(EGAN lets out a giggle)

EGAN

Ha—that’s what I said.

(BAKER has had enough)

BAKER

I'm gonna head back to work.

EGAN

We still got ten more minutes!

ABIGAIL

(Realizing he's hurt)

I was just teasin', Baker. I think it's great you turned over a new leaf.

BAKER

(Kindly)

I appreciate that. Thank you for the food.

(BAKER begins to leave. Then, to ABIGAIL)

Hey, you seen June around?

ABIGAIL

No. She's practically a ghost. I saw her at the Stagecoach a few months ago—she was pretty drunk, hanging off some guy.

EGAN

I tried to tell him. That girl's nocturnal. She sleeps all day and just wanders around at night, drinkin'. Lord knows what kinda trouble she's into, but we don't never see her no more.

(This news troubles BAKER)

BAKER

(To no one in particular)

I'll see ya around.

EGAN

(To ABIGAIL)

Well, I'm gonna stay and have some more coffee if you don't mind. And can you get me one of them muffins?

ABIGAIL

Sure.

EGAN

(Flirtatiously)

You know I ain't found religion yet. I still like to have a good time.

(ABIGAIL rolls her eyes and exits. EGAN sits alone, now a little embarrassed.)

Scene 5: Confession

Setting: Confessional.

At Rise: BAKER enters the confessional. The priest, FR. DOUDICAN, is hidden from the audience.

BAKER

Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It's been one week since my last confession.

(Takes a deep breath and pulls out a small piece of paper with his sins)

I've been angry. When I'm alone I still curse a lot. I still can't look at any girl in town without lust in my heart. And uh...

(Pauses, unsure if he wants to continue)

And I want revenge. I wanna find the person that killed my daughter. I wanna find 'em and...and I wanna hurt 'em. It's about all I think about most days. That's all.

FR. DOUDICAN

That's a natural human response, one that we would all be wrestling with in your shoes. King David wrote often about his desire for justice, and we see in his own life the terrible consequences he reaped for taking matters into his own hands. The hard part is letting go of the human and taking hold of the supernatural.

(Pauses)

David also lost a child. And what he said to his servants, I now say to you: your daughter cannot come back to you, but you can go to her someday. This is our great hope—we live not for this life, but for the life to come. Pray the rosary today and hold tight to the truth that saved you.

(BAKER struggles with this, but seems to find some peace)

BAKER

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You. I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but mostly because they offend You, my God, who are all good and worthy of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your, grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin.

FR. DOUDICAN

God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Go in peace.

(BAKER begins to exit, then stops)

BAKER

Thank you Father, for coming to see me all those years.

FR. DOUDICAN

God be with you, son.

(Exit BAKER)

Scene 6: Decisions

Setting: Baker's room.

At Rise: BAKER sits alone on his bed. He's staring at the phone, quietly arguing with himself as to whether or not he should pick it up. Finally, he relents and dials the dispatch.

MARLENE

How may I direct your call?

BAKER

Murphy's Liquor, please.

MARLENE

Oh, Baker. You don't need that stuff.

BAKER

(Holding back frustration)

I ain't goin' back to the bottle Marlene, I just wanna ask him some questions.

MARLENE

(Relieved)

That's good to hear! I'm proud of you Baker. I'll connect you.

BAKER

Hey, you seen June around?

MARLENE

Not for months darlin', I'm sorry. Rumor has it she's been bouncin' from basement to basement 'til she outstays her welcome, but no one ever really sees her around.

BAKER

Thank you, Marlene.

MARLENE

It ain't my place to say it, but yer the last person June wants to see.

BAKER

I know. I'm just...just tryin' to make things right is all.

MARLENE

I'll connect you now.

(BAKER squirms as he waits for the connection)

MURPHY

Murphy's Liquor.

BAKER

(Hesitates)

Hey, Murph.

MURPHY

Baker? Is that you?

BAKER

Yeah, it's me.

(MURPHY is old—his eyes, ears, and memory are fading—but he remembers BAKER well)

MURPHY

How are ya, son?

BAKER

I'm alive.

MURPHY

It's a tragedy about that little girl. Can't believe it happened just down the road from here. I can't stop thinking about how close it was and if I coulda dun somethin'—

BAKER

Can I ask you a couple o' questions.

MURPHY

Course you can, Baker, I owe you one. You were my best customer for a long time.

BAKER

I's just wonderin' if you could tell me who you saw that night. Who might o' come into the store.

MURPHY

I can tell ya what I told the sheriff. I don't think it was much help. Let me just get my glasses and my notes. My memory ain't so great but I tried to write it down.

(MURPHY rustles around, breathing and grunting heavily, as he searches for his glasses and notes. BAKER grabs paper and a pencil.)

MURPHY

Alright here it is. Ah let's see...there was Charlie o' course. He's still out here just about every night preaching to my customers about the wrath o' God. Jerry came in and bought a case o' beer. Old man Turner stopped in and we talked for awhile. He left his wallet at home, so he didn't buy nothin'. Then that nervous fella Gus come in, sweatin' like he always does. He bought a bottle o' wine.

(Shifting his tone)

If you ask me, there's something wrong with him. Always smilin' like he knows somethin' you don't.

BAKER

(Impatiently)

Alright, anyone else?

MURPHY

Just some girl come in. I ain't never seen her before—some outta-towner I imagine. She was wearing a hat and sunglasses. She walked slow and took her time. She ended up buying two of the cheapest bottles of bourbon I got. That's all I can remember.

BAKER

(Satisfied)

Thanks, Murph.

MURPHY

I'm sorry I can't do more to help you. Listen, I got a few bottles of your favorites set aside, why don't you come on down and—

BAKER

I don't drink no more.

MURPHY

You don't, huh? Alright, well—to each his own. If you change your mind, just let me know.

BAKER

G'night, Murph.

MURPHY

You hang in there, boy.

(BAKER hangs up the phone. He stands up and pins five names to a board on his wall: "Charlie. Jerry. Turner. Gus. Girl." Then he kneels before a small oratory, where a statue of Mary stands near a crucifix, and he prays. Meanwhile, RIVER sneaks in through an unlocked window and slowly approaches the praying BAKER. BAKER senses the boy and turns, startled.)

BAKER

River? How'd you get in here?

RIVER

Came in through the window.

BAKER

The window? Why didn't you just knock?

RIVER

Your landlord doesn't like me very much.

BAKER

Jacob? Why not?

RIVER

(Gesturing to Mary)

Why do you worship her?

BAKER

I don't worship her.

RIVER

(Accusatory)

I just saw you doin' it.

(BAKER moves to a chair, sensing a longer discussion)

BAKER

I'm gonna ignore, for a moment, that you snuck into my room. As to your question, I wasn't worshiping her, I was just talkin' to her.

RIVER

You ain't supposed to bow to no one but God.

I agree. I wasn't bowin'.

RIVER

Yes you was.

BAKER

(Slightly agitated)

I most certainly was not.

RIVER

(Confused)

But I saw you.

(BAKER moves to the floor for a demonstration)

BAKER

I think I see what the problem is.

(Kneels in front of RIVER)

Am I worshiping you right now now?

RIVER

(Confused)

No?

BAKER

(Begins to bow, with his arms outstretched before RIVER)

How 'bout now?

RIVER

(Uncomfortable)

Alright, alright, I get yer point. Stop.

(Still curious)

Momma says you can't pray to no one but God.

BAKER

Well, you can't worship no one but God. I suppose yer momma and I would agree on that. But there ain't no rule against talking to people in heaven.

RIVER

There ain't?

BAKER

Nope.

RIVER

Well, how do you know they hear you?

BAKER

I suppose their closeness to God. And their being like my family.

RIVER

(Looking at Mary)

What do you say to her?

BAKER

Well, mostly I just ask her to pray for me, and sometimes ask her to ask her Son for things I need.

RIVER

Why don't you just ask Him yourself?

BAKER

I do, but when I talk to Him I try and keep it mostly to "Thank you" and praise. If I need something I look to better folks than me. "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." James 5:16.

RIVER

Well, if you're a Christian, ain't you righteous?

BAKER

Yes, but Mary is a lot more than me. If I asked you for a favor, and you said "no," and then I went to your mom and asked her to plead with you for this favor, you think you might be more apt to say "yes" to her?

RIVER

(Thinking)

Yeah, I suppose. Hey, can I read you something?

BAKER

Speakin' of yer momma, does she know you're here?

(RIVER ignores the question and now makes himself comfortable)

RIVER

I write poems. Momma said you used to have a way with words so I thought maybe you could tell me if they're any good.

BAKER

I'm all ears.

(RIVER opens the book and takes a deep breath)

RIVER

I ain't never done this before so...

BAKER

I tell you what, I'll close my eyes. Helps me focus better anyway.

(BAKER gets comfortable and closes his eyes)

RIVER

It wasn't all that difficult
To fit the hook with twine
And I knew if I was patient
That catfish would be mine.
I set out for northern point
At the edge of Bearpaw Bay
And though my wooden boat was cracked
It took me all the way.
An hour passed, and then three more,
Until I felt a tug.
I yanked and pulled to no avail
And so deep down I dug.
I thought about my father
Who left when I was three
I thought about my mother
Who takes good care of me
I thought about the water
And I thought about the sky
And the space between the two of them
And I began to cry.
And all the rage I ever felt,
I put into my hands.
That catfish was a monster,
But he didn't stand a chance.

(BAKER is overwhelmed and begins to clap)

BAKER

Boy, that's one of the finest poems I ever heard.

(RIVER doesn't believe him)

RIVER

(Incredulous)

You don't have to say that.

BAKER

I do actually, cuz I ain't never heard a boy your age write something that beautiful. Not in my whole life.

RIVER

You really mean it?

BAKER

Yes I do. Can I keep it?

RIVER

(Stunned)

Sure!

(Carefully removes the poem from his notebook and hands it to BAKER)

BAKER

Will you sign it first?

RIVER

(Bashfully)

Sure.

(RIVER quickly signs it. BAKER takes it, looks it over, and places it on his bedside table. RIVER doesn't know what to say.)

BAKER

Thank you. Now you ought to get back to yer mom.

(RIVER reluctantly agrees and begins to leave through the window. Then stops.)

RIVER

Can I come back?

BAKER

River, I ain't never gonna turn a child o' God away.

(To himself)

I suppose I should have a talk with my sister about all this.

(Back to RIVER)

G'night River.

RIVER

'Night Baker.