

HARD RAIN

© 1997 John Hadden
(802) 375-4372
johnhadden@gmail.com

HARD RAIN

This play is a fiction based on the life and death of Victor Jara, a Chilean songwriter who was killed in the soccer stadium of Santiago de Chile during the Pinochet coup of 1973. Many of the scenes follow Jara and his family in a regular chronological sequence on vacation a week or two before the coup. These alternate with scenes that occur four days after the coup, in which Jara debates and gradually befriends a young American traveler who has also been rounded up into the stadium.

CHARACTERS

VICTOR JARA, 37

JOAN JARA, his wife, slightly older

MANUELA, 10, their daughter

AMANDA, 8, their daughter

MARIA, a woman in her fifties

JAMES MIDDLETON, 21

MAN IN STADIUM

The songs in the play were written by Victor Jara.

The events take place in 1973.

The play occurs in two separate arenas: the soccer stadium of Santiago de Chile, and the world of Jara's family. The stadium scenes are set in the grandstands, in the hours before dawn.

ACT I

PROLOGUE

Jara house. Day.

Joan is on the telephone.

JOAN

Hello, yes I'm trying to get through to a number and I'm having difficulty... yes... Oh would you please? You're so kind, it's Pueblo 8-3422... yes, the British Embassy, and I'm trying to – Hello? (*pause, re-dials*) Hello Operator. yes, Hello? (*pause, re-dials*) Hello would you help me place a call please? No, no the dial's been giving me trouble, Oh, Pueblo 8-3422. Sorry? Yes, it's the... it's my mother-in-law. Thank you so much. Bless you... Hello? (*exaggerating her British accent*) This is Joan Roberts. I am a citizen. May I speak to Mr. Clyde-Philips? Thanks awfully. Oh no I don't want his number. You see, the phone is... Yes, I'm prepared to wait, but please understand, this is an emergency. My husband's disappeared in the uprising and I feel that my daughters and I are in... Victor Jara. No, Chilean. But my daughters hold dual citizenship. Oh thank you so much. You are very kind. Bless you. Yes, I will hold. Thank you...
Jesus.

SCENE 1

Stadium, 3 am. Moonlight.

Victor Jara sits alone in the stands, writing on a scrap of paper. James MIDDLETON approaches him.

MIDDLETON

Hola! ...Tu eres Victor Jara?

JARA

Aha!

MIDDLETON

Jara.

JARA

A herald.

MIDDLETON

Como?

JARA

A herald. You've come to herald the end of my solitude.

MIDDLETON

Oh, you speak English.

JARA

Yes.

MIDDLETON

OK if I join you?

No answer.

MIDDLETON (*cont'd*)

It's so beautiful out here, you almost forget that...

JARA

Es la culpa de la luna.

MIDDLETON

The phase of the moon?

JARA

No, the fault. It's the fault of the moon. Es la culpa de la luna.

MIDDLETON

La culpa de la luna.

JARA

The moon deceives us with her beauty. (*pause*) It's OK.

MIDDLETON

Thanks. I mean, what's OK?

JARA

That you're American. You can't help that, can you?

MIDDLETON

Huh... I guess it's written all over me.

JARA

Thank God for it. It'll get you out.

MIDDLETON

Out of here? Maybe.

JARA

It will.

MIDDLETON

You think so?

JARA

Sit down. I said it was OK. You're a prisoner, yes? and I'm an American too, and we're both here in this stadium, and it's very late. Everyone is sleeping. It's the first time chance I've had to be alone... but you are goddamn here now, so please...

MIDDLETON

Well, I don't want to bother you...

JARA

No, no, it's OK. Sit down.

MIDDLETON

Thanks. (*He sits.*) You're American? I thought...

JARA

South American.

MIDDLETON

Right, of course... I didn't think you were, um... I mean...

JARA

It's OK.

Pause.

MIDDLETON

I've been wanting to talk to you. But you're always surrounded by people, and...

JARA

Yes, I know.

MIDDLETON

You know? What, that I've wanted to talk with you?

JARA

Yes, you're very enthusiastic. You've been threatening to talk to me for weeks.

MIDDLETON

But we've only been here a few days.

JARA

But at the café...

MIDDLETON

You saw me at the café? But I could never even get close to you.

JARA

I saw you. Your admiration was very piercing.

MIDDLETON

And you remembered me from that night?

JARA

Yes I went home and I said to my wife there was an American in the crowd. She said really? How did you know he was American? And I said, Oh you can always spot an American, they stand out.

MIDDLETON

Oh.

JARA

We have many American things down here in Chile, cars and soda pop, the Lone Ranger. Some of us pretend to be American, you know, in order to appear on television, but not many real Americans. Very rare. I have an interest in Americans. And here you are, a Real American. I have been wanting to talk with *you*.

MIDDLETON

I see.

JARA

Don't worry...

MIDDLETON

It's OK?

JARA

It's A-OK.

MIDDLETON

A real American.

JARA

Yes. Ironic, no?

MIDDLETON

Ah, yeah?

JARA

That 'real Americans' are named after an Italian.

MIDDLETON

Right, Amerigo Vespucci.

JARA

Or that 'Indians' are lit by the moon when it's broad daylight in Bombay.

Pause.

MIDDLETON

You hate us, don't you.

JARA

You? Why should I? Did you send the Lone Ranger? Do you own the copper mines? Did you send Phantom jets?

MIDDLETON

Yes, I think we did.

JARA

Ah, but who flew the planes, who fired the rockets? Who killed our Professor Allende? Did you herd 5000 people into this soccer stadium, like so much shitty cattle? No, we did that ourselves. You see, the US is not everything.

MIDDLETON

I'm sorry.

JARA

Don't be sorry. Be proud. Tonight you are an honored prisoner just like me. Enjoy the moonlight. Tomorrow will come soon enough. Have another Rum and Coke.

MIDDLETON

But I like my rum 'pero sin Coca Cola.'

Pause.

JARA

Do you... do you taunt me with my own songs?

MIDDLETON

I'm not taunting you.

JARA

What are you doing then?

MIDDLETON

Nothing. I just want to talk to you.

JARA

You came all this way to talk to me?

MIDDLETON

Yes.

JARA

But you didn't expect to get caught in the middle of a coup.

MIDDLETON

No.

JARA

So talk.

MIDDLETON

I don't know what to say.

JARA

Then do us a favor and shut up.

MIDDLETON

I was just kidding.

JARA

Of course you were. You're just a kid.

SCENE 2

Jara household. Day.

AMANDA (*running around, jumping off things*)
Ruana-dee! We're going in the car!

MANUELA
Do we have to go, Mama? I'm sick of driving in the car.

JOAN
Yes, sweetheart, we have to go, now cheer up. Help me pack the lunch.

JARA (*entering from above*)
Ah! Explorers, are you? Senor Coronado by any chance?

AMANDA
No, I'm Amanda.

JARA
And you are...

MANUELA
Don't be silly, you know who I am.

JARA
Nice to meet you. Are you going to look for the fountain of youth?

AMANDA
No we're going to look for a big volcano.

JARA
The Volcano of youth!

JOAN
The volcano of Villerica is where we're going. Will you get the raincoats, Victor?

JARA
Did Coronado take his raincoat?

MANUELA
Is it far from here?

JARA
Only a few hour's drive, Senor. Come with me, caballeros, I'll show you the secret

of eternal life.

MANUELA

I'd rather go bowling.

AMANDA

Let's go to the movies!

JARA

First eternal life, then bowling and the movies when we get back tomorrow.

Jara exits back to stands and watches the girls go, and sits.

AMANDA

OK let's go. *(singing)* Ni chicha ni linoma, ni chicha ni limona...

JOAN

Wait! The raincoats!

SCENE 3

Jara and Middleton at the stadium. Night.

MIDDLETON

I... Well, I wanted to... I wanted to talk. But it seems like you...

JARA *(quietly)*

Ni chicha ni limona, ni chicha ni limona... I think it's about time to change the oil, in the Peugeot.

MIDDLETON

Oh. When did you start playing the guitar?

JARA

Empieza la entrevista.

MIDDLETON

The opening... view?

JARA

No. The interview commences... Are you a reporter? No, too young, no Spanish. How old are you? Eighteen?

MIDDLETON

Twenty one.

JARA

We've been here 3 days, yes?

MIDDLETON

Yeah. Three days.

JARA

Have you slept alright?

MIDDLETON

No, I haven't been able to sleep much.

JARA

The beds are hard, ha? You are like the Princess and the Beanstalk.

MIDDLETON

No, I just can't seem to relax. Either I can't sleep or I can't stay awake.

JARA

Fear.

MIDDLETON

Maybe.

JARA

It's true the tension is mounting. Although nobody has been killed yet.

MAN

Hello.

The man appears suddenly, as always. He gives Jara a sandwich.

JARA

Ah, thanks. You're a genius.

MAN

Who is this?

JARA

I have not asked his name. He is an American boy. He got off at the wrong stop.

MIDDLETON

James Middleton is my name.

MAN

What's he doing here?

MIDDLETON

I was staying at the youth hostel when they came and brought us here.

MAN

Victor, keep an eye on James Middleton. We might require his services.

JARA

Yes. Any news for me?

MAN

No.

JARA

Ah... Anything else? Foreign reaction?

MAN

Plenty of journalists. But they swallow the story that Allende killed himself.

JARA

With a dozen bullets through the back of his head.

MAN

There will be no retribution. In this life.

JARA

So. They will go on killing.

MAN

There is nothing to stop them. Except their own conscience.

JARA

Ah, well then... so.

MAN

So. (*He exits.*)

MIDDLETON

What does he mean about my services?

JARA

Nothing. He is joking. (*pause*) I wonder what they're waiting for.

MIDDLETON

Do you think they'll kill us?

JARA

I don't know. It takes a lot to kill five thousand of your own people. You have to be motivated. Let's talk about something else, shall we? Here, have a bite. What were you, eighteen?

MIDDLETON

Twenty-one.

JARA

Ah yes.

MIDDLETON

And it's the pea.

JARA

Excuse me?

MIDDLETON

The pea, she slept on. Never mind.

JARA

Ah... I first picked up a guitar when I was a small boy.

SCENE 4

*The family is in the car, the two girls in the back (four chairs). Day.
They are touring the mountains of southern Chile*

MANUELA

When are we going to get there?

JARA

We *are* there my little chicken.

AMANDA

We are *where* my little chicken?

JARA

We are *here* my little rag doll.

MANUELA

I said when are we going to get *there*?

JARA

Aahhh.

AMANDA

Where are we now Papito?

JARA

We are in the middle of a mighty blue ocean.

MANUELA

Noooo

JARA

We are on the edge of a plate full of lemon drops.

MANUELA & JOAN

Nooo.

AMANDA

We are on the nothing of a nothing of nothing.

JARA

Nooo

MANUELA

We are on the wing of a dove and it's Noah's Ark.

JARA & AMANDA

Noooo

Long pause. Jara hums, then sings.

JARA

And it's a hard, and it's a hard, and it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard rain's gonna fall...

AMANDA

A hard rain? You mean like hail?

MANUELA

No dummy, like a lot of water, you know, a flood, a Hard Rain?

JOAN & JARA (*singing*)

Oh where have you been my blue eyed son?
Oh where have you been my darling young one?

JARA

I don't know the rest.

JOAN

Something about six crooked highways

JARA

Mmm. Why do I always think of Bob Dylan songs when I'm in the car?

AMANDA

Six crooked highways?

MANUELA

Better than this stupid road. It's too hot in here.

JARA

Isn't that strange?

JOAN

Roll down the window sweetheart.

MANUELA

No, it's too windy.

JARA

Whoa. Just look at that. We could be on Mars. See, now you know what it's like

down in this part of your country. You must be glad you came.

MANUELA

I'd rather stay home.

JARA

Oh no you wouldn't. How could you miss this? This is adventure. We're pioneers. We're like Zapata.

MANUELA

In a Peugeot?

JARA

Well not exactly. Zapata drove a Ford.

AMANDA

Did he drive down here with his family?

JOAN

Your father is making a joke. Zapata was an outlaw, a revolutionary. He rode a horse.

MANUELA

Papa, are you a Communist?

JARA

Yes... Booga Booga Booga.

MANUELA

No Papa really are you? It's what they say in school.

JARA

Well let's see here. I'm not sure if I'm anything-ist, but I am a member of the Peoples' Party, which is full of guess what?

MANUELA

People

JARA

Very good. Full of people. Some Communists. They have purple skin and very large noses. Easy to spot. (*pause*) Just tell them your Papa was a peasant once and he believes that all boys and girls deserve the chance to eat well and to go to school, and to say what they think without going to jail or getting killed.

BOTH GIRLS

OK.

JOAN

Darling...

JARA

Why shouldn't they say that? What's the point of having a free country if you can't speak freely?

JOAN

Oh I don't know. Would you like a sandwich or anything?

JARA

Mmmm. Sure, a sandwich. Great. Whoa. Just look at that.

Long pause.

MANUELA

When are we going to get there?

SCENE 5

Stadium. Night.

JARA

How much longer will you live?