



LEAH PURCELL is a proud Goa-Gunggari-Wakka Wakka Murri woman from Queensland. She is an actor, writer and director. Her directing credits for Belvoir include *Radiance* (in which she also starred), *Brothers Wreck* and *Don't Take Your Love to Town* (which she also co-adapted and starred in). Her other theatre credits as an actor include, for Belvoir: *The Dark Room*, *Stuff Happens*, *Parramatta Girls*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Box the Pony* (which she also co-wrote); for Bell Shakespeare: *King Lear*; for STC: *Blood Wedding*; and for Griffin: *The Story of the Miracles at Cookie's Table* (with HotHouse Theatre). Leah co-directed season one of the acclaimed ABC series *Cleverman* and has just completed directing a new 7 Network/Screentime series, *The Secret Daughter*. She is also known for her writing and directing across *Redfern Now* (series one and two), the children's TV series *My Place*, and the award-winning short films *She.Say* and *Aunty Maggie and the Womba Wakgun*. Her film and TV credits as an actor include *Janet King*, *Black Comedy*, *Mary: The Making of a Princess*, *House of Hancock*, *Love Child*, *Last Cab to Darwin*, *The Darkside*, *My Mistress*, *Jindabyne*, *Lantana*, *Redfern Now*, *The Proposition*, *My Place*, *Love My Way*, *Starter Wife* and *Police Rescue*. She is the best-selling author of the anthology *Black Chicks Talking*, which was turned into an IF Award-winning documentary. Leah's other awards include the 2014 Balnaves Foundation Indigenous Playwright's Award, a 2013 AACTA Award for Best Female Actor in a TV Drama, a Helpmann Award for Best Female Actor, Matilda Awards for Best Actress and Director, a Film Critics' Circle Award, an IF Award, two Actor of the Year and one Singer of the Year Deadly Awards, the inaugural Bob Maza Fellowship, and the prestigious Eisenhower Fellowship for her artistic endeavours, community philanthropy and cultural activism. Leah is a proud member of Actors Equity.

‘Leah Purcell has made a bold and exciting contribution to Australian playwriting and, arguably, to Australia’s identity. She has repurposed colonial tropes and reinvented an existing form to insist that we consider a new exploration of culture ... This is a work to challenge our sense of ourselves and of our place.’ — *NSW Premier’s Literary Award judges’ comments*

‘This re-imagining of a classic Australian short story explodes out of the blocks with a moment of stark brutality and never lets up ... Relentless in its trajectory, neither characters nor audiences are let off the hook as the piece drives towards two heinous acts of violence, and then beyond them, into the beginnings of something other. *The Drover’s Wife* subverts, re-inspects and interrogates our histories through powerful storytelling.’ — *Victorian Premier’s Literary Award judges’ comments*

‘Pauses history’s accretion of half-truths and delivers our cherished classics back to us, alive with a new muse.’ — *Guardian*

‘Twisting out of the grip of Lawson’s original in surprising ways, *The Drover’s Wife* is a potent piece of storytelling ... Some of it is not easy to watch, but Purcell makes it impossible to look away.’ — *Sydney Morning Herald*

‘Purcell has embraced the full violence and terror of Lawson’s frontier myth, as well as the violence and terror he never would have committed to words ... This might be the most important new Australian play written this year, questioning how we tell and respond to the stories of our nation’s past ... It will knock the wind out of your sails, and you’ll be glad that it did.’ — *Daily Review*

‘Beautifully written, thoughtfully made, persuasively performed, and infused with the raw emotion of lived experiences ... The entire post-settlement history of Australia has been collapsed into an act of theatre.’ — *TimeOut*

THE Leah Purcell DROVER'S WIFE



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To Amanda Florence Faith

Writer's Note

Like many Australians, I've grown up with this story and love it. My mother would read or recite it to me, but before she got to that famous last line, I would stop her and say, "Mother, I won't ever go a drovin'."

I always wanted to do something with this story with me in it as the drover's wife. There were two forms of inspiration that motivated me to write this play. First came the film idea in 2006, which I wanted to shoot in the Snowy Mountains. That inspiration came when I was filming the feature film *Jindabyne*, directed by Ray Lawrence. Secondly, I was in a writing workshop. I was there as a director, but got frustrated. So I went home and said it was time to write my next play. I looked at my bookshelf and there it was: my little red tattered book of Henry Lawson's short stories. The red cover had now fallen off, its spine thread fraying and my drawings inside as a five-year-old fading.

In the original story, the drover's wife sits at the table waiting for a snake to come out of her bedroom, having gotten in via the wood heap, which a 'blackfella' stacked hollow. While she waits for the snake, she thinks about her life and its hardships. Her oldest son joins her and she shares her story with him.

This is not my version of *The Drover's Wife*.

I was heavily influenced by the original story. But I've activated all the characters. In my version, I have brought them to life for the stage and reinvented the conversations and action that might have taken place. Weaving my great-grandfather's story through the play has given it its Aboriginality so to speak, and I've embellished the story to give more depth and drama for the stage.

When I did sit down to start writing, the one thing I was conscious of was wanting to apply the stories of the men from my family. By this, I mean taking various positive traits from a particular family individual or a story, and embellishing the characters of Yadaka, Danny and the father of the drover's wife with these details.

In Henry Lawson's story, the black man is painted as the antagonist. I thought I would turn that around in my play and have our black man

as the hero. With this in mind, I was very conscious of the harshness and brutality of this time. Henry Lawson's short stories, where 'The Drover's Wife' appears, was first published in 1893. This year was also significant because of an event in my great-grandfather's life that brought him to Victoria from far north Queensland, which you will hear about in the play.

In one of my earlier drafts, I wasn't happy with the ending and my partner said, "If we as blackfellas can't tell the truth of our history, then who can?" This opened up the floodgates, and I wrote like I was riding a wild brumby in the Alpine country, and no apology for the rough ride.

I think of this play as an Australian Western for the stage. I was influenced by the HBO series *Deadwood* and the Quentin Tarantino film, *Django Unchained*. I was also influenced by the history that was taken from my great-grandfather's personal papers, and the recorded history that was documented by people of authority at this time.

This play has been described as dangerous. I love that it is, and give no apology for it. It is also a romance and a story of a mother's love.

So saddle up and hang on. We are going to come roaring down that mountain, side hit them low flats and rip onto the stage. "Hip'im Jackson!" as my mum would say.

A massive thank you to the Balnaves Foundation for the 2014 award I received to help bring this play to fruition. I also want to thank Eamon Flack for commissioning my play's premiere season. It was the first play he programmed as Artistic Director at Belvoir, allowing me to continue my 20-year working relationship there as an actor, writer and director... It means a lot. Such a lot. Thank you.

Thank you to the amazing and very talented people involved in the first production of *The Drover's Wife*. To the cast for their hard work, knowledge and dedication in bringing the characters to life under the brilliant direction of Leticia Cáceres. Thanks to Leti who brought together a team of generous experts with gentle souls – Stephen Curtis, Tess Schofield, Verity Hampson and Pete Goodwin. Thanks to the wonderful, smart and lovely ladies in stage management, Isabella Kerdijk and Keiren Smith.

To Uncle Hans Pearson and Sean Choolburra of the Guugu Yimithirr, and Paul House, Custodian of the Ngambri Walgalu, a huge thank you and much respect. To my elders Aunty Honor Cleary and

Uncle Michael Mace for your permission and support. Acknowledging Nana Hazel Mace, Uncle Michael Mace, Francis Adkins, and Lynelle Minnie Mace for your research into our family history.

I must thank my partner in business and in life, Bain Stewart. He is always there and his words of wisdom come at the right time... I fear nothing knowing he is by my side.

To my grandchildren, Wurume Rafael and Lysander Wahn, and our little Sydney silky terrier Odi: thanks for keeping Nan real.

To my daughter Amanda for putting up with me for far too long.

Thanks to my mum for giving me this story and so much more.

With great respect and appreciation to my ancestors for the stories and the ancient ancestors for their guidance.

Altjeringa yirra Baiame.

Leah Purcell

2016

Director's Note

The Drover's Wife is a postcolonial and feminist re-imagining of Henry Lawson's short story by the same name. Leah unapologetically claimed this much-loved frontier narrative and infused it with First Nations and Women's history, calling into question the shameful treatment endured by both, at the hands of white men. Brutality reels through the writing. Yet this is a work that is steeped in beauty and humanity. Leah's images, her metaphors, her meticulously crafted characters, her interplay between action, humour and drama, come together to deliver theatre at its most potent. What's most exciting about Leah's *Drover's Wife* (*TDW*) is her command of genre – the Western – its tropes so familiar, yet Leah manages to reinvigorate them so we can bare witness to the atrocities of the past from the perspective of those who have been silenced.

For me, the process of directing *TDW* was primarily about serving Leah's vision and meeting her bravery. I was determined not to get in the way of her truth. I was guided by the voices of our First Nation artists and Consultants who deepened my understanding of the inhumanity and degradation that has scarred this land.

Finding the theatrical language to stage these abuses was perhaps the most challenging aspect of directing this work. As we rehearsed some of these scenes, at times it felt like our own humanity was being tested. What kept us going was the sense of unity in our rehearsal room; the tenacity with which the entire team (creatives and actors) rallied together to tell this most urgent of stories, and the subversive power of Leah's writing.

I want to thank Eamon Flack and the Belvoir team who showed outstanding commitment to this project. Belvoir has to be commended for demonstrating genuine and ongoing commitment to telling stories by First Nation artists. These plays have continuously proven they have great power to entertain, but more importantly, to raise the difficult questions of this country's past, present and future. It is through these works of art and in the act of programming them where reconciliation can take shape, and in turn, how culture will be transformed.

I want to thank *TDW*'s team. Firstly the cast: Mark Coles Smith, Will McDonald, Tony Cugin and Benedict Hardie. Without their unwavering commitment, we would not have been able to strike the same chord with our audiences.

The creatives: Anthea Williams, who dramaturged *TDW* with great skill in care; designer Stephen Curtis who asked the hardest theatrical questions; costume designer Tess Schofield, whose every stitch was a stab at patriarchy; lighting designer Verity Hampton for her impeccable attention to detail; composer Pete from *THE SWEATS* for his ingenious weaving of Leah's vocal talent; movement director Scottie Witt who helped us depict violence with careful consideration for both actors and audience; Jennifer White, voice coach, for helping us create the tapestry of voices of the frontier. And of course, stage managers Bella Kerdijk and Keiren Smith who worked tirelessly so we could give the best of ourselves to this production.

I also wish to thank Oombarra Productions, and in particular, producer Bain Stewart who needs to be recognised as instrumental in the success of this work. Oombarra's contribution by way of expertise, consultancy, advocacy and networks guaranteed that we were always given the best advice, and that we were adhering to all cultural protocols.

But mostly, I want to thank Leah Purcell, who is simply phenomenal. It is through her that I learned the true meaning of courage and respect.

Thank you for your faith in me.

Always was
Always will be
Aboriginal land.

Leticia Cáceres
2017

Leticia Cáceres is a multi-award winning freelance stage director, with a passion for Australian writing. She is based in Melbourne.

Introduction

Artists have always had a critical role in reflecting and influencing the culture of their times. However, as in life, we often only see the dominant aspects of the culture reflected in art. The small voices or dissident voices struggling to rise above the din.

In Henry Lawson's original version, he reaches out and gives voice to the women of colonial Australia. A voice hitherto barely heard. A whisper. But the story of stoicism and fortitude in the face of abject loneliness and hardship struck a chord and was almost singlehandedly responsible for the creation of an archetype. The image of those women as vulnerable but refusing to surrender – perhaps because there is no choice – had a resonance that was reflected in images such as Frederick McCubbin's triptych *The Pioneer* (1904). The image has stuck.

These were the very visions upon which the modern Australian self-image has been built. These images were the precursor to the heroes of Gallipoli and Villers-Bretonneux. in the First World War. The newly formed federation of Australia, along with a new national parliament, developed a new national identity.

The contrast between the colonial portrayal of hard working stolid individuals surviving in a hostile and unforgiving landscape, and the ancient and loving connection of Aboriginal people with our ancestors and country, could not be more stark.

'Sinister' is a harsh word. But is there a better word in the English language to describe the fondness for a demonstrably romanticised image of colonial Australia that conveniently forgets our Aboriginal ancestors were being massacred and forcibly removed from our lands? It does not require much imagination to wonder what became of the Aboriginal people who ought to have also been in McCubbin's triptych, or in Lawson's 'The Drover's Wife'.

Indeed, we do not need tax our imagination. Frederic Urquhart, employed by the Queensland Police to lead the Native Troopers into battle against the Kalkatungu (Kalkadoon) people near Mount Isa in 1884 told us in a poem:

Grimly the troopers stood around
that newly made forest grave
and to their eyes that fresh heap mound
for vengeance seemed to crave.

And one spoke out in deep stern tones
and raised his hand on high
For every one of these poor bones
a Kalkadoon shall die.

For many Aboriginal people that period and the developing Australian identity is a source of deep and unresolved pain. It is here that the artistry and bravery of Leah Purcell's re-imagining takes a stand. The sheer audacity of taking that most iconic image of the drover's wife and turning a variety of assumptions on their heads is as wonderfully subversive as it is an act of defiance.

Prior to seeing the play I had wondered how Purcell was going to deal with the lead role of the drover's wife. I had seen the advertisements showing her dressed in the clothes of the period. It made me feel edgy. Uncomfortable. It was the same discomfort that makes many period dramas unwatchable for Aboriginal people. Reliving the injustice of those times is sometimes unbearable. Historical portrayals in which Aboriginal people have magically disappeared, been erased or have simply been forgotten are only slightly more palatable.

The lead character in this play is the archetype. She is stoic and tough. But as the layers of the character are peeled away we are given insight into the fears, the loneliness of a woman alone in the 'outback'. We see the brutality and inhumanity of colonial Australia as all-but-lawless land. The reality of colonial Australia has been described many times but brought to life in the character of the drover's wife it is extremely confronting. Her fears are not unfounded.

The supporting character of the eldest son Danny seems to be not only the literal extension of his mother but also a metaphorical tendril reaching out to connect branches of her life. His innocence and curiosity initially masks a deeper relationship to the Aboriginal intruder who arrives in the opening scene. In the final scene when mother and son make good their escape, we hope, calling on almost forgotten stories to guide them out of unbearable and unjust circumstances to which they had fallen in what seems to have been a very short space of time.

It is tempting to read into the script a commentary on the fragile existence of Aboriginal people in the colonial society. Indeed, in this regard, were such insights intended to be laid bare, the colonial Australia of the 1890s does not differ too much from that of the 2010s. The author knows as well as most other Aboriginal people that our success is tolerated, but should we get too uppity or slip up, the privilege of mainstream white recognition will be withdrawn in an instant.

But, as tempting as it is, it is likely that the tolerance afforded to the drover's wife, of which there is not a lot to start, is ultimately violently stripped away because she is a mere woman.

The subversive nature of this work is readily appreciable. It co-opts a mainstream Australian historical icon and prompts a question as to what others icons of white Australia have a black history. The defiance oozing from this piece is not so readily accessible but it is there to see for those who will look.

In modern Australia Aboriginal stories are most often relegated to the fringe. In this play the author has not only stood her ground and confronted the seemingly immovable object, but challenged it to try to and knock her down. It is conceivable that this re-imagining one of the few cultural pillars of this very young country could have been crushed under the unflinching adherence to cultural dogma that is a hallmark of our nation's insecurity. So unwilling is our nation to examine the realities of British invasion of the continent, that an assault such as this could have easily been cast as having gone that one step too far.

The act of defiance in writing and performing the piece is not disconnected from the drover's wife's refusal to go quietly into the dark night. She did not go quietly. We have not gone quietly. We are not going.

Tony McAvoy
2017

Tony McAvoy SC is the first Indigenous Australian to be appointed senior counsel. He practices in the areas of administrative law, human rights and discrimination law, coronial inquests and criminal law.

AWARDS FOR *THE DROVER'S WIFE*

Balnaves Foundation Indigenous Playwright's Award (2014).

Sydney Theatre Awards: Best Mainstage Production, Best New Australian Work, Best Director and Best Score / Sound Design (2016).

Victorian Premier's Literary Awards: Best Drama and the Victorian Prize for Literature (2017).

NSW Premier's Literary Awards: Nick Enright Prize for Playwriting and Book of the Year (2017).

The Drover's Wife was first produced by Belvoir in association with Oombarra Productions at Belvoir St Theatre, Sydney, on 21 September 2016, with the following cast:

DROVER'S WIFE	Leah Purcell
YADAKA	Mark Coles Smith
DANNY	Will McDonald
MERCHANT / LESLIE / MCPHARLEN	Benedict Hardie
MCNEALY / PARSEN	Tony Cogan

Director, Leticia Cáceres

Set Designer, Stephen Curtis

Costume Designer, Tess Schofield

Lighting Designer, Verity Hampson

Composer / Sound Designer, THE SWEATS

Dramaturg, Anthea Williams

Movement Director, Scott Witt

Traditional Movement and Language Consultant / Spear Maker,
Sean Choolburra

Dialect Coach, Jennifer White

Prop Maker, Alexi Creecy

Production Manager, Michele Bauer

Stage Manager, Isabella Kerdijk

Assistant Stage Manager, Keiren Smith

It is quite time that our children were taught a little more about their country for shame's sake.

Henry Lawson

1893 ... Alpine country, southern New South Wales.

An Australian Western for the stage.

CHARACTERS

DROVER'S WIFE (MOLLY), 40

YADAKA (BLACK), 38-45

DANNY, 14

THOMAS MCNEALY, 60, a swagman

DOUGLAS MERCHANT, 35-40, a peddler

SPENCER LESLIE, 30-35, a trooper

ROBERT PARSEN, 45-50, a stockman

JOHN MCPHARLEN, 25, a stockman

SETTING

A two-room shanty, in the dense scrubland of the Alpine country of the Snowy Mountains.

A chopping block sits in the middle of the stage. An axe buried deep in it.

SCENE ONE

The lights snap up.

Late afternoon.

DROVER'S WIFE, *heavily pregnant, aims her Martini Henry, single-shot rifle, at a badly injured Aboriginal man, YADAKA, lying on the ground. There is an iron collar around his neck.*

DROVER'S WIFE: Don't you move, ya black bastard!

He doesn't.

Oh, no ya don't. You're not dyin' here! Get up and get goin'!

Beat.

Get up. Get goin'.

He doesn't move.

She lifts his torn and tattered shirt with the rifle, and there is a very infected stab wound on his lower back.

[*Under her breath*] Good God.

Beat.

She winces with a labour pain. Takes some deep breaths, bringing the contraction under control.

Not now please.

[*To her stomach*] A few more days. Just to be sure.

She looks towards YADAKA.

Just not now.

She has a thought and looks around.

[*In a loud whisper*] Alligator?

Alligator!

No dog comes running.

Bloody mongrel dog.

There is a noise, she turns to see THOMAS MCNEALY, a swagman.

MCNEALY: I have been called so on many occasions. Sorry I'm not, the dog, you require.

She aims her rifle at him. He quickly looks at YADAKA.

He dead, missus?

DROVER'S WIFE: You will be if ya don't state ya business, sundowner.

MCNEALY: Thomas McNealy, my lady.

DROVER'S WIFE: Ain't no lady, just a drover's wife. State ya business.

MCNEALY: Looks like ya might've scored ya'self a reward.

DROVER'S WIFE: What're ya on 'bout?

MCNEALY: Felon on the run. Crimes committed. Murder, missus, murder. Murderer. Here on ya door step.

DROVER'S WIFE: Murder? Who?

MCNEALY: Where've ya been, lady?

DROVER'S WIFE: Mindin' me business. Whose murder?

MCNEALY: Whole district on the lookout; be crawlin' with troopers any second now.

DROVER'S WIFE: Who was murdered?

MCNEALY: A white woman like you. On her own with her children. Mountain country.

DROVER'S WIFE: Who?!

MCNEALY: A one Mrs Ulla Hossnaggle and her wee ones. A couple of days back now. Other side of the range.

DROVER'S WIFE is taken aback by this.

Niggers. Myall Abos. Savage bastards, just like him. Might be him. Wears the collar.

Horrific. Rape, strangulation, the boys sodomised, and the girl drowned ...

Life slipping away from piercin' sapphire blue [eyes] ...

So I'm told. The lengths people go to for detail. Me, faint at the sight of blood I do.

Broad daylight, brazen bastard. Those wee children.

I think of yours, the wee girl, so cute.

She steps closer, her grip firm on her rifle.

DROVER'S WIFE: What'd ya know about my children?

MCNEALY: Now, good lady—

DROVER'S WIFE: My children? What do you know about my children!

MCNEALY: Well, ya know the swaggy's trail, round and round we go.

But these parts, missus, hard to see who's comin'. Mountain behind ya, dense flora in front of ya, and I'd be lyin' if I said I hadn't passed here a few times.

Kept my distance, looked in though.

That's all. Truth, missus.

DROVER'S WIFE: I wouldn't trust ya as far as I could spit.

She indicates with her rifle for him to leave.

MCNEALY: Food is what I'll be requirin' and a little warmth of a comfortable bed.

DROVER'S WIFE: Mister, I'm heavy with child, and my Joe yes, is away but due back any time now.

MCNEALY: Just to rest my weary head, me lady. Nothin' more, I promise.

Beat.

DROVER'S WIFE: I recently had a kill—

MCNEALY: I seen it.

DROVER'S WIFE: What?

MCNEALY: The bullock. Out front. Beside the snow gum. Flies and birds havin' a fine time with the head. Smell of death is strong out there. I can bury it for you.

She is wondering how much more he has seen.

DROVER'S WIFE: ... I'll fix ya a small feed and I need ya to be on ya way. Any time now, my Joe be home.

She clocks him; it's like she's wanting a response.

Maybe ya seen his flock—sheep, which way did ya come?

Due back to graze further down river, along the low flats before takin' 'em to market.

And if ya head due west, walk half a day you'll find a willing woman and a comfortable bed.

MCNEALY: Got no coin to pay, missus.

DROVER'S WIFE: I'm sure you'll find a way.

She turns to go inside. She hears his steps toward her. She turns. Her rifle pointed straight at him.

Move and I'll put a bullet through ya gut, cut ya throat and bleed ya.

Big contraction.

MCNEALY: No doubt, missus.

Martini Henry, eh? One shot, accurate. Did ya use it on the black?

Pain continues. MCNEALY rips the rifle from her hands.

I'm assumin' ya hadn't time to reload.

He checks it, sees it's loaded.

Beg me pardon. I'll return it when I'm done. We'll need it for that one?

Beat.

There might be a reward, missus? Sixty-forty.

Beat.

Seventy-five, twenty-five?

DROVER'S WIFE: Ya eat and get off my land.

As she heads inside:

MCNEALY: Drop of whiskey to wash it all down, missus?

DROVER'S WIFE: No liquor here, swagman.

She exits.

He looks back to YADAKA. Gives him a nudge with his foot.

YADAKA doesn't react. MCNEALY takes in his surroundings.

MCNEALY: [*calling*] I can see ya need a few things done around here, missus. Ya woodheap needs to be stocked and stacked. Need to level the ground there though, don't want any snakes gettin' in under.

DROVER'S WIFE: [*calling back*] It'll be done when my Joe gets here.

MCNEALY: [*to himself*] And that will be very soon ... you say.

MCNEALY smiles to himself. He sits down on a stump.

DROVER'S WIFE brings out water to him. He has her rifle across his lap. She stands a distance from him and holds out the cup.

I just sat down.

He beckons her to come closer.

She hesitates, but then she does. He takes her wrist.

DROVER'S WIFE: Mister, I am about to give birth.

He takes the cup, placing it down. Taking the rifle from his lap ...

MCNEALY: All the more interested.

She stabs him in the thigh.

He drops the rifle. It goes off, missing all.

He punches her. Sending her flying.

Meanwhile, YADAKA has managed to stand. He holds an axe in his hand that was concealed under him.

MCNEALY clutches at his thigh. DROVER'S WIFE has fallen heavily on her stomach.

YADAKA, exhausted and in pain, lunges at MCNEALY. He brings the axe down onto the chopping block, missing MCNEALY as he scampers backwards off the block. The axe is buried deep into the chopping block.

DROVER'S WIFE clutching at her stomach, in extreme pain.

YADAKA tries to pull the axe free but MCNEALY comes at him, grabbing YADAKA around the waist, pushing his fingers deep into the wound on his lower back.

YADAKA yells out in pain and collapses, pulling free the axe as he falls.

DROVER'S WIFE manages to grab the rifle but fails to reload, dropping the bullet. She searches the ground.

MCNEALY runs off, limping badly.

YADAKA gives up the chase. He breathes deeply as he tries to bring his pain under control.

Another contraction collapses DROVER'S WIFE again to the ground.

YADAKA clocks her. He gets up, axe in hand, staggers toward her. She clocks him coming, fear etched in her face. She cowers, curling herself into a ball, throwing her arms over her head, protecting herself. A woman clearly showing signs of physical abuse.

DROVER'S WIFE: [petrified] Please, I have children!

This stops YADAKA in his tracks. He has no intention to hurt her.

DROVER'S WIFE's body tenses, in anticipation of the impact to come.

Beat.

She looks up.

He lowers the axe, digging it deep into the chopping block.

Move away.

He does, shifting the collar, it's rubbing on his collarbones.

She attempts to get up.

Best ya be on your way.

YADAKA goes to assist her. She swings her rifle at him.

Keep ya black filthy hands to ya'self.

Stand back.

Further.

He does. He steps on the bullet; he hands it to her. She reloads, aiming the rifle at him.

Not very bright of ya.

YADAKA: My action deliberate, missus.

Beat.

DROVER'S WIFE: You schooled?

YADAKA: A little.

DROVER'S WIFE: Huh, educated black; a danger in itself.

Beat.

Explain ya'self. Or you'll die by my bullet, right here, right now.

YADAKA: I was walkin' across country ... got blamed for that murder.

That I didn't do. They took me in. Collared me.

The trooper said I would hang, no doubt about it.

... I got away.

DROVER'S WIFE: Killed 'em?

YADAKA: I mean you no harm.

DROVER'S WIFE: Why should I trust ya?

YADAKA: Ya have no reason to.

Beat.

Can ya help me with the collar, I'll be on my way then.

DROVER'S WIFE: I will do no such thing. The collar is government property. You are theirs.