

Canyonlands by Courtney White

This play explores the American, especially western, phenomena of rootlessness and the effects it has on families and communities at the turn of the 21st century.

The play is set entirely inside a bicycle shop in a small town in southeastern Utah during a recent summer. The shop's presence has caused conflict between its owner, Joshua Rose, who recently arrived with his family from Los Angeles, and the last remaining farmer within town limits, who doesn't like the changes he sees taking place to his home.

Josh Rose is an entrepreneur with a Midas touch – every business he has started, and there have been many, has succeeded, practically without effort. He expects the bicycle shop to be the same. The trouble is Josh is incapable of settling down, emotionally or physically. Like many Americans, he has no roots – no place he calls home. Southern Utah is just another stop in a never-ending search for...something. It's in the next town, the next career, the next opportunity. The consequence of his restlessness, combined with his financial security, is that Josh doesn't have any idea of who he is.

The play starts when Leslie, his wife, decides she is sick of living “on the run” and wants to settle down and open a bookstore. Josh insists that they leave and a power struggle ensues within the Rose family. Complicating matters, Josh has ‘adopted’ a young man as the shop repairman for the summer and becomes attached to him despite, or perhaps because of, the young man's obscure origins. The young man's restlessness opens Josh's eyes to his own predicament.

Other characters include the Roses' two combative daughters, one of whom develops an attachment to the good-looking son of the farmer, with consequences of its own; the zen Buddhist bicycle salesman, Tad, who is not as clueless as he first appears; and Howard, a pushy lawyer and fellow big-city refugee who followed Joshua to the ‘wilds’ of southern Utah when his marriage fell apart. Howard too sees opportunity in redrock country, much to Josh's ultimate chagrin.

A plot twist halfway through the play turns everyone's expectations upside down. And much like the town he has invaded, Josh will never be the same again.