

# Father, Mother, Mother, and Mom

by Orson Scott Card  
Music by Robert Stoddard

## ACT I

(Cast is seated or standing around the stage.)

**NEPHI** *Polygamy.* (He says the word slowly, looks around for a minute, then points at someone in the audience.) Aha! I bet you're a Mormon. (To the whole audience.) You can always tell who is a Mormon by the way they react to that word. Some of them, they duck their heads and pretend it never happened—no polygamists in *my* family. And then there are the ones who kind of rub their hands together and say, "When polygamy comes back again. . . ." Well me, I know what polygamy is, and I'm not wishing for it. I never lived the Principle, myself—ended before I got married. But my father lived it. Father had three wives.

(John Monson comes out to open the furniture store. Puts a sign saying "open" downstage.)

John Monson, my father. Born in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1841. In this play he's already over forty.

(Martha enters, pulling heavy desk, as John begins to dust.)

Martha Monson, my mother. Born in Winter Quarters in 1846. Married happily to my father for twenty years. As his only wife.

(Martha exits, re-enters with large pile of chairs.)

Our furniture store in Salt Lake City, June 1887. Hotter'n hell's back doorstep.

(Martha exits and re-enters with a jar of candy.)

**JOHN** Here, Martha, let me help you with that.

**MARTHA** Where were you when I was movin' furniture?

**JOHN** Admirin' how young an' strong you still are. How do you stay so pretty?

**MARTHA** Okay, I'll bring out the other stack o' chairs.

(Martha exits. Aaron Bean saunters on.)

**AARON** Openin' kinda late, arentcha, Brother Monson?

**NEPHI** Aaron Bean, next door neighbor and a comfortable friend.

**JOHN** Mornin', Brother Bean. Don't see a line of customers here yet.

**AARON** Notice you still haven't put a new lock on the door.

**JOHN** That's right, Aaron, I didn't see a need.

**AARON** Well, John, looks to be a right hot day.

**JOHN** Right.

**AARON** Hot.

**JOHN** And downright dull.

**AARON** It ain't dull enough.

You know Rudge Clawson? Brigham City? They arrested him under the Edmunds Act.

**JOHN** Well, we knew it was coming.

**AARON** Knowin' ain't likin'. First kick all the Mormons out of office. Then go slow, gettin' evidence on the Mormon leaders.

**JOHN** The Supreme Court'll never go along.

**AARON** I don't like the idea of the whole Church payin' the price for the few that can't be happy with one wife.

**JOHN** We haven't had to pay anything yet.

**AARON** Cause *we* only got one wife each. But mark my words, someday the whole Church is gonna pay for it.

**JOHN** An' if we do, it'll be the will of God.

**AARON** Well, it just don't seem natural to me! Maybe 'cause I wasn't born a Mormon, like you. Maybe 'cause my folks was Kentucky Methodists, but polygamy seems next door to adultery to me, and it's hard to get too hot on it.

**JOHN** Now don't get upset.

**AARON** Oh, I'm not upset. I gotta look at it as kind of a joke. Polygamy must kinda grow on a man. I don't know anybody as started right out with two wives. They start out with just one—and get bored. (Sings.)

When I married the first time—  
I was in love.

Wanted seven kids

And a little log house

And a couple acres of corn.

And when I surveyed my kingdom

I'd have my arms around my Sue

And whisper in her ear, I love you,  
Sue.

And I knew as sure as the sun in the  
mornin'

I'd never love another woman like  
my Sue.

Till I met MaryAnn.

(chorus of song)

Now if marriage is good, then any  
dunce

Would know to do it more than once.  
If connubial bliss with one is sweet  
Then six in bed is bliss complete!

So marry once!

Marry twice!

Break your arms from throwin' rice!

If Brigham gets to heaven

'Cause he's got twenty-seven

Then you can't get there with less  
than two.

MaryAnn.

I met *her* in the city,

ZCMI

In a bright blue dress

And a calico coat

And a laugh right after my heart.

And somehow I got the courage

To tip my hat to MaryAnn

And ask her for her hand in  
marriage, MaryAnn.

And I knew as sure as the sun at  
noon

I'd never know a lady like my

MaryAnn.

Till I first met Colleen.

(Chorus, see above)

Colleen.

Now my first two wives had seven  
kids

Between 'em both, and friend,

If there's anything duller than one  
tired wife,

It's two.

I loved 'em both, but they were just  
too few!

So I cocked my eye

For a beautifyin',

Satisfyin'

'Lectrifyin'

Number three to add to one and two.

And I knew as sure as the sun at  
night

There'd never be a pretty lady like

Colleen.

So far there hasn't been.

So marry once!

Marry twice!

Break your arms from throwin' rice!

If you wanna get past the pearly  
gates

Have a wife in each of seven states.

Polygamy's the way to please

The Lord, and you.

(All are laughing.)

**AARON** It's a good thing that I'm the type I am. The brethren'd never call *me* to live the principle—they know I'd say no! (Ribbing John) But you, John, you obey too well.

**JOHN** (taking him seriously) I hope they never call me to live it. I have a hard enough time being a good husband to one wife. (Puts his arm around Martha.) The Lord'd never ask us to change.

**AARON** And if He did?

**MARTHA** He never will. We're gettin' on and it's time for the next generation.

**NEPHI** In those days I was the "next generation."

Nephi Monson, age seventeen.  
(Crosses to them.)

Hi, pa!

**JOHN** Hi, Nephi.

**NEPHI** It's a wonderful day!

**JOHN** Looks nice enough.

**NEPHI** It's wonderful!

**JOHN** All right, Nephi, it's wonderful.

**NEPHI** Wow! Well, excuse me. Wow!

(Nephi exits. Sariah enters, singing softly.)

**SARIAH** Hi, pa.

**AARON** Hi, Sariah.

**SARIAH** It's a beautiful day.

**AARON** Kinda hot.

**SARIAH** I heard a bird sing.

**AARON** They're known to do that.

**SARIAH** The sky is so blue.

**AARON** That's cause it's daytime.

**SARIAH** It's a beautiful day.

**AARON** Beautiful.

(Sariah sighs and exits)

**JOHN** One could suppose

**AARON** If one was to suppose at all

**JOHN** It seems to me—

**AARON** Me too.

**MARTHA** They make a lovely couple.

**AARON** He's a fine boy, John.

**JOHN** She's a fine girl, Aaron.  
(They shake on it.)

**AARON** Well, may be I have a customer.

(He exits.)

**JOHN** Seeing Nephi like that reminds me.

(Nuzzles Martha)

**MARTHA** John—

(They kiss. Stake President Goodbody and Brother White enter.)

**GOODBODY** Excuse me, Brother Monson.

**JOHN** Oh, President Goodbody; I was just—

**MARTHA** We was just—

**JOHN** Openin' the store for business.

**GOODBODY** I thought you sold furniture.

**JOHN** Well I *do*—

**GOODBODY** I guess you know Brother White, of the Council of the Twelve.

**JOHN** We've met now and then.

**WHITE** Good to see you.

**GOODBODY** Do you s'pose we could have this room to ourselves a short while?

**JOHN** Sure. Excuse us, Martha.  
(Turns "open" sign over to say "closed".) Sit down. (Takes chairs off stack.)

I s'pose I can knock a dollar off the price of these chairs and call 'em slightly used.

**GOODBODY** Do you want to handle this?

**WHITE** Might as well. Brother John, you've been on the high council of the Salt Lake Stake for a long time, haven't you?

**JOHN** Twelve years, now.

**WHITE** Have you ever done anything you're ashamed of?

**JOHN** Embarrassed, yes—ashamed, no.

**WHITE** Do you pay an honest tithe, Brother John?

**JOHN** I do.

**WHITE** Well, Brother John, you make a good living with this store. You only have one son. And you only have one wife, so far. (John sits up) You're also an exemplary man, and after much prayer, President Taylor has asked me to call you to live the Principle.

**JOHN** You mean to take a plural wife?

**WHITE** To live the new and everlasting covenant to its fullest. Spiritually and financially you're ready.

**JOHN** But Brother White, emotionally I'm not.

**GOODBODY** Nobody is.

**JOHN** Martha and I love each other very much.

**WHITE** If you didn't, you'd hardly be worthy to have a second wife.

**JOHN** But I don't *need* a second wife.

**WHITE** But she needs *you*. And most important, Brother Monson, the Lord is asking you to do this.

**GOODBODY** Do you think Martha would accept a plural wife?

**JOHN** If I ask her to.

**WHITE** Will you ask her to?

**JOHN** I can't just *decide*.

(Stands) I was afraid of this day, brethren.

**WHITE** I remember . . . Brother Brigham said on one occasion, before he died, that when the Prophet Joseph told him about the Principle, he was not happy. He said that when he found out he'd have to take another wife, it was the only time in his life he had ever envied the dead. But I can promise you this. If you live the Principle in love and righteousness, along with the increase of labor and care, it will bring you a grand portion of Celestial joy.

**JOHN** Can I have some time to think, brethren?

**WHITE** There's plenty of time, Brother John. Talk it over with your wife. Pray. Fast. And come to us to arrange a time for you in the endowment house.

**GOODBODY** Before we go, could we pray together?

**JOHN** Please do, brethren.

**WHITE** Will you offer up the prayer, President Goodbody?

**GOODBODY** Sure. (They kneel) O Father. Brother White, and Brother Monson and I are kneeling here to thank thee for thy great blessings to us. For our peace and prosperity here in the shelter of the mountains. We ask a special blessing on thy servant John Monson. Thou hast called him to live the principle; give him the faith to accept that call. Give his wife the faith to support him in it. And bless the government of the United States. Teach them not to bring Thy wrath down on their heads by listening to the skunks and scalawags who try to get them to persecute Thy people. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**JOHN** and **WHITE** Amen.

**WHITE** Pleasure talking to you, Brother John. We'll be waiting for your answer.

**GOODBODY** See you at high council meeting, Brother John.

**JOHN** Good-bye. Thanks—for coming by.

(White and Goodbody exit.)  
(Nephi enters)

**NEPHI** I don't know what father did between talkin' to Apostle White and callin' Mother in to talk to *her*, but whatever he did, he took a long time doin' it. The brethren left at nine. He called Mother in at eleven.

(Martha enters)

**MARTHA** What did they want, dear?

**JOHN** (Holds her close)

**MARTHA** They want you to live the Principle, don't they?

(Silence in the embrace. Martha walks away, and they both fiddle for a long time in silence.)

**MARTHA** What did you tell them?

**JOHN** I told 'em I'd tell 'em later.

**MARTHA** Well, what're you gonna tell 'em?

(He takes her hand)

Now don't you leave it up to me! That's a rotten trick, and I won't have it!

**JOHN** The Prophet's askin' me to do it.

**MARTHA** Then obey him. Take another wife.

**JOHN** That's your quick answer. What's your heart sayin'?

**MARTHA** My heart's sayin', what good is it to love a man for twenty years if the Lord's gonna up and put another woman in the house?

My heart's sayin' I don't want you comparin' me to a younger woman! My heart's sayin' I'm afraid you'll come to love her more than me. But you know my heart talks too much.

**JOHN** I love you too much, Martha. A second wife'd be left out. It just wouldn't be fair to her. I can't give that much.

**MARTHA** Oh, John, give a girl half what you've given me, and she's the luckiest girl in the world.

**JOHN** What'll I tell 'em?

**MARTHA** Tell 'em yes, John. I'll support you in it. I'll try to love her.

**JOHN** Who?

**MARTHA** The other woman.

**JOHN** But who? I'm forty-six years old. Who's gonna marry me?

**MARTHA** You're askin' me?

**JOHN** I don't know any women.

**MARTHA** It's a little hard to think of a wife for your husband.

**JOHN** I think of what I want in a wife, and it's always you. But there's no other woman in the world like you.

**MARTHA** There's lots of women like me. I'm just an ordinary . . .

**JOHN** Well who then?

**MARTHA** I don't know.

**JOHN** What about Rhoda Carabit?

**MARTHA** She's only twenty-five!

**JOHN** That's her.

**MARTHA** And very pretty.

**JOHN** Well, for all that, she's not *that* pretty. She's got a nice face, but she's got wispy hair, and freckles—and not at all that nice a figure, and she's tall; too tall, in fact.

**MARTHA** You seem to have taken particular notice.

**JOHN** Martha! She's twenty-five and unmarried. Because she's very proud, and very rude.

**MARTHA** I'd hate to see you marry someone so distasteful to you.

**JOHN** Don't you want me to marry someone I can love?

**MARTHA** No! I want you to hate it! (pause) No, John I don't mean that. I want you to love her, I want you to be happy. Rhoda Carabit's a good choice. Rhoda will be fine.

**JOHN** You're sure.

**MARTHA** I'm sure.

**JOHN** I love you.

(Martha clings to him. He exits.)

**NEPHI** When father decided to do something, he did it right then. Probably cause if he'd waited around, he mighta changed his mind. This is Rhoda Carabit. And her mother, the widow Annabelle Carabit.

(He and Martha start changing set. Rhoda enters with Annabelle, bringing on sofa.)

(John knocks at the door, and Annabelle Carabit enters.)

**ANNABELLE** Good morning! Brother Monson, come in!

**JOHN** Thanks. Sorry to intrude—

**ANNABELLE** Oh, that's quite all right. Sit down, please!

**JOHN** I just need to talk to your daughter.

**ANNABELLE** Oh?

**JOHN** If your husband was still alive, I'd've talked to him, but I guess I'd better discuss it with you. Your daughter's not married, is she?

**ANNABELLE** No, not yet.

**JOHN** She got anybody callin' on her regular?

**ANNABELLE** May I ask you why you're inquiring?

**JOHN** Oh, sorry—I . . . Well, I come to see if she'd like to get married. In the Principle, you see, of course, my wife Martha still bein' alive—

**ANNABELLE** Does Sister Monson *know* you're here?

**JOHN** Why—of *course*! We both talked it over, after Apostle White and President Goodbody—

**ANNABELLE** Well, that's just fine. (bellows) Rhoda. (Soft again) She'll be down in a minute. Please be seated—oh, you are. Well, if you'll excuse me—

**JOHN** Sure.

(Annabelle exits. John sits nervously until Rhoda enters from another direction.)

**RHODA** Yes, mother? Oh, good morning, Brother Monson.

**JOHN** Call me John. How are you, Rhoda?

**RHODA** Call me Miss Carabit. I'm fine. What is this about? Where's Mother?

**JOHN** Well, I don't rightly know.

**RHODA** I'll get her.

**JOHN** Miss Carabit. I said I don't know because it doesn't matter where she is, so to speak. I mean, I wanted to talk to you alone.

**RHODA** Alone?

**JOHN** I have a kind of offer—to, uh—make.

**RHODA** Alone.

**JOHN** Well, you see—I really don't know how to go about this—well, today President Goodbody came by my store just as I was openin' up. And he suggested—well, he didn't *suggest* he *called* me to, uh, take a plural wife.

**RHODA** Oh, really?

**JOHN** (Laughing nervously) Really! Ha! Uh, so my wife and I talked it through, and she and I both agreed that I oughta ask you. Seein' as I've got to obey the Lord's commands. (pause) What do you say?

**RHODA** What do I say? "No."

**JOHN** Oh.

**RHODA** Don't you think it's a bit insulting to tell a woman you're asking her to marry you just because you were commanded?

**JOHN** I, uh—

**RHODA** And that maybe I

wouldn't be too flattered to be asked out of charity?

**JOHN** Charity?

**RHODA** Just because I'm getting on in years doesn't mean I'm an old maid who'd jump at any chance—

**JOHN** Miss Rhoda, that isn't—

**RHODA** That's exactly what was in your mind, *Brother* Monson. And so I'll tell you once and for all that I won't marry a second-hand husband.

**JOHN** (hurt) Miss Carabit, I'm sorry you feel that way. I didn't know it would offend you to ask you to be my wife.

**RHODA** A woman wants to be courted, *Brother* Monson. Treated like she was special. Taken places. Be romanced a little.

**JOHN** (stiffly) I couldn't very well leave my wife at night to go courting another girl.

**RHODA** You're exactly right. (rising) Good afternoon.

**JOHN** (rising, heads for door.) Good afternoon, Miss Rhoda. Sorry I offended you. (closing door) 'Bye.

(Annabelle enters)

**ANNABELLE** Rhoda!

**RHODA** Hello, Mother, I hope you didn't burn your ears.

**ANNABELLE** What are you thinking of!

**RHODA** My happiness.

**ANNABELLE** John Monson is a good man!

**RHODA** John Monson is a married man!

**ANNABELLE** Who are you to question the Principle! It's the prophet's word!

**RHODA** It's the prophet's word, but it's my life. The Principle is for the righteous? So let me go to hell!

**ANNABELLE** Rhoda!

**RHODA** Mother, when I marry a man I want to be special, not just—one of the gang!

**ANNABELLE** It's a little late for that, isn't it? You're not exactly young any more, and if a man's willing to marry you, especially a good man, then you're a fool to turn him down!

**RHODA** I am!

**ANNABELLE** You are!

**RHODA** I don't love him!

**ANNABELLE** Learn to!

**RHODA** (Desperately) I'm not desperate yet! (long pause)

**ANNABELLE** (ashamed) I know dear. I'm sorry. (Exits)

**RHODA** (sits slowly) I won't share a man. I won't be a second wife!

Twenty-five, single girl  
Stay at home: Mama loves you.  
I'm alive! I'm a woman:  
Just as much as any woman.

I said "no" does that mean  
Suddenly I'm buried?

Where's the law that says a girl  
Has got to get married?  
I don't want someone else's husband,  
second-hand.  
But what if he's the only man  
Who'll ever ask me?  
Ever want me?  
Is my pride worth staying lonely?  
No it's not. I'd say yes—only  
Girl in the mirror,  
Lace collar and ribbons,  
A shy child;

Soon he would find her,  
Would love her and bind her,  
And I smiled.

Dance until morning  
A kiss without warning,  
His hand here;

Hide from the thunder—  
Who knew what a wonder  
Began here!

Now my dreams taunt me—  
What husband could want me?  
And yet a good man has come:  
Better half a man than  
None? Done.

Must be a blessing, but Lord,  
Maybe it was childish of me,  
Dreaming that he'd come and love  
me:

I want a man who is mine.

(Rhoda exits. Set is changed back  
to John Monson's store. Martha  
enters.)

**MARTHA** Come put this  
furniture polish on the top shelf,  
Nephi.

**NEPHI** (leaning on proscenium)  
Just a minute, Mother.

**MARTHA** You know I can't  
reach that high.

**NEPHI** Here I come! (dances  
over)

**MARTHA** Right smart on your  
feet today. New shoes?

**NEPHI** New eyes! I've  
discovered that the most beautiful  
girl in the world lives next door to  
me!

**MARTHA** Sariah Bean's lived  
there for ten years.

**NEPHI** But ten years ago she  
didn't look like she does now.

**MARTHA** She's a very sweet  
girl.

**NEPHI** If she'd only talk to me.

**MARTHA** She's probably shy.

**NEPHI** Probably.

**MARTHA** Nephi, I've got  
something to tell you. Something  
very important, that you've got to  
know before it happens to you.

**NEPHI** Yeah?

**MARTHA** It's going on all  
around you, men and women like

your father and me, and I want you  
to understand before—before—

**NEPHI** If this is about the birds  
and the bees, Pa already told me.

**MARTHA** No—President  
Taylor's called your father to take a  
second wife.

**NEPHI** Oh really? Who's it  
gonna be?

**MARTHA** Rhoda Carabit.

**NEPHI** She's a nice lady.

**MARTHA** I don't mean to upset  
you—there'll be hard adjustments for  
you to make, but I know you can do  
it.

**NEPHI** It's OK with me, Mom.

**MARTHA** You're not upset?

**NEPHI** The Principle isn't new,  
Mom. Some of my friends, the older  
ones, are taking plural wives  
themselves. Most of them won't.  
Makes no difference to me.

**MARTHA** I'm glad to hear that.  
I think.

**NEPHI** Another wife won't  
make you any less my mother.

**MARTHA** That's true.

**NEPHI** Father's back. Where's  
he been?

**MARTHA** Proposing.  
(John enters, smiling.)

When's it gonna be?

**JOHN** Never. (elated) She  
turned me down!

**MARTHA** Oh, John, I'm so  
happy!

**JOHN** And I brought you these.  
(pulls out 6 red roses.) A present for  
each and every one of my wife.

**MARTHA** I think I'm gonna cry!

**JOHN** I'm gonna dance!

(They start to polka to  
"Polygamy Song" music. Rhoda  
comes and knocks on the door.)

**NEPHI** Somebody's at the door.

**JOHN** I guess we oughta open  
up the store.

(Martha goes to the "door" as  
John turns sign around)

**MARTHA** Rhoda Carabit!

**RHODA** Good afternoon, Sister  
Monson.

**MARTHA** Come in.

**JOHN** How do y'do, Sister

Carabit.

**RHODA** I would like to talk to  
you, if I may. (Nervous and not at all  
poised.)

**JOHN** Sure. Here, sit down.

**MARTHA** Come with me,  
Nephi. (Martha hands the roses to  
John, who sets them down. Martha  
and Nephi exit.)

**RHODA** Thank you, Sister  
Monson.

**JOHN** What can I do for you?

**RHODA** I came to talk about  
your proposal to me this morning. I  
thought how difficult it must have  
been for you to come and ask me.  
And how the Principle is the will of  
God, so it doesn't matter whether  
you're happy about it or not.

**JOHN** It's supposed to make you  
happy. Somehow.

**RHODA** Well, the Lord's seen fit  
that this be the only offer of  
marriage I've had. I'm a  
sharp-tongued woman, Brother  
Monson, and I've driven beaux away  
myself. But the prophet called you to  
take another wife, and you came to  
me, in spite of the way I am. If the  
offer still holds, I accept. (John nods.)  
And Brother Monson, I wouldn't  
consent to marry you, except you're  
the only man who's come to me who's  
worth his salt, who isn't  
poppin'-buttons-in-love with himself.  
I'm proud you came to court me.

**JOHN** Thank you, Sister  
Carabit. Maybe you better call me  
John.

**RHODA** And you call me Rhoda.

**JOHN** (Takes her hand) Rhoda,  
I wouldn't've asked you if you wasn't  
a woman I thought I could love. I'm  
proud you're gonna be my wife.  
(pause) Well, I guess I oughta tell  
Martha.

**RHODA** Doesn't she know?

**JOHN** She knows I was askin'.  
She doesn't know you said yes. (calls)  
Martha!

**RHODA** Don't call her!

**JOHN** Why?

**RHODA** (pause) I'm afraid.  
(Martha enters)

**MARTHA** Do you want me?

**JOHN** Martha. (Puts his arm  
around her.) Rhoda's accepted my  
proposal.

**MARTHA** (Goes to her.  
Embraces her.) Welcome to the  
family.

**RHODA** Thank you.

**JOHN** I know this isn't easy for  
either of you. But I'm gonna leave  
the two of you alone for a couple of  
minutes.

**RHODA AND MARTHA**  
(agonized) John!

**JOHN** To get acquainted.  
(Exits. Long silence.)

**MARTHA** You're prettier than I  
remembered. (It hurts her to see it.)

**RHODA** You're very  
pretty—too—(awkward)

**MARTHA** (drily) Nice try. I  
guess we'll have to split up the work  
around here, and—we'll have to  
figure out sleeping arrangements.

**RHODA** Oh, I could sleep  
almost anywhere.

**MARTHA** I wasn't talking  
about where. I was talking about  
when, with John.

**RHODA** Oh.

**MARTHA** Monday, Wednesday,  
Friday, you. Tuesday, Thursday,  
Saturday, me. And every other  
Sunday. All right?

**RHODA** Fine—

**MARTHA** Dividing up my  
husband like a side of beef. I feel like  
a fool.

**RHODA** Sister Monson—

**MARTHA** Martha.

**RHODA** Martha, I'll try to fit  
in. And if we both work together, we

can be happy, I think.

**MARTHA** (half-smile) I hope so.  
(She picks up the roses, hands half of them to Rhoda.)

These are yours.  
(John enters)

**JOHN** Well, Martha, Rhoda?

**MARTHA** I think things'll work out good, John.

**JOHN** Good. Good then. I'll arrange with Brother White for a time in the Endowment House. (Puts an arm around each) It's a good start for us, you two gettin' along so well. Maybe the Principle can work for us, too.

**NEPHI** (to audience) It meant a lot to all of them to have it work. And for a long time they pretended that it did.

**MARTHA and RHODA** (sing)  
There are two of us  
Where there was one before.  
Behind that door  
Across the hall there is another wife.  
It's true of us:  
We get along just fine.  
There's not a sign  
Of bickering or of domestic strife.

**MARTHA** (Spoken) We need to have a fair distribution of the work here. I'll take care of helping in the store and cooking the meals. You can clean up after the meals, keep the house clean, and do the laundry.

**RHODA** That's just the division I was going to suggest. Only I thought I'd help John in the store.

**MARTHA and RHODA** (Sing)  
We smile so nicely every time we meet.

**MARTHA** I think you're sweet.

**RHODA** Oh you're too kind

**MARTHA** I know

**MARTHA and RHODA** We like to help each other when we can  
To keep things hummin' for the man  
we have in common—

**MARTHA** (Spoken) You know, Rhoda, John likes a little more starch in his collars.

**RHODA** Really?

**MARTHA** I've been doing them that way for twenty years.

**RHODA** Well, John just told me that since I took over doing the laundry his collars have been more comfortable than they've been in twenty years. (Confiding) He hates starch.

**MARTHA and RHODA** (Sing)  
It's a miracle  
How well we get along:  
Just like two birds  
There are no words  
How lovely is our song!  
It's comical  
We used to worry so:  
Though money that would last a  
Month is gone much sooner!

**RHODA** (Spoken) I see you bought a new dress.

**MARTHA** John gave me five dollars. He wanted me to look beautiful for the twenty-fourth of

July party. (Holds dress up to herself.)

**RHODA** Next time ask him for ten.

**MARTHA and RHODA** (Sing)  
Each night one wife is cold, the  
other's warm:

Our husband's arm

Is warming cause it's his.

The wife who sleeps alone can't sleep  
at all.

She keeps on dreaming and it's hard  
to keep from screaming!

John my husband!

I'm your wife!

Who's this other woman

In your life!

**MARTHA** (Spoken—shocked)

Rhoda! Is this rouge?

**RHODA** Why, yes.

**MARTHA** You mean you wear this?

**RHODA** No, I bathe in it. It gives my whole body a pink, healthy glow.

**MARTHA** You'll never wear it again! I won't have you disgracing John by appearing in public painted like a—

**RHODA** Martha! I am *not* your daughter! I am John's wife! When he wants me to stop wearing it, I will!

**MARTHA** (Sings) Oh, my husband—

**RHODA** John, my husband!

**MARTHA** If you love me—

**RHODA** John, I love you—

**MARTHA and RHODA**

Say you love me,

And tell me, who's this other woman,  
Tell me, who's this stranger in your  
life?

How can this woman be your wife?

(John enters. Martha goes to him, leaving Rhoda working on the other side of the stage.)

**JOHN** Good morning, Martha.

**MARTHA** It's not a good morning.

**JOHN** What's wrong?

**MARTHA** John, I've tried, you know I have.

**JOHN** I know you have.

**MARTHA** I just can't stand it any longer. That girl is—

**JOHN** What girl?

**MARTHA** (angrily) It's been four months and I won't stay in the same house with her another day, John. I can't do it.

**JOHN** Why not!

**MARTHA** She wears rouge!

**JOHN** Not very much.

**MARTHA** John, when you're with me, I've got to have the house to myself. And when you're with her, I don't want to see you two together.

**JOHN** What do you propose?

**MARTHA** A new house, John.

**JOHN** I can't afford a—

**MARTHA** Yes you can. It's that or I'll move out. My brother in Farmington has room for me.

**JOHN** Martha, that's the spirit of divorce.

**MARTHA** I can't help it, John. That's the way I feel.

**JOHN** Can't you keep on trying, dear?

**MARTHA** No. I can't.

(She turns away. John shakes his head, walks on toward Rhoda.)

**JOHN** Good morning, Rhoda.

**RHODA** (Working furiously) It's not a good morning.

**JOHN** Uh-oh.

**RHODA** I can't stand it any longer, John. I do the collars wrong, I don't wash dishes properly, I don't make beds right, I dress like a hussy. And I don't, John. I dress as a young woman in 1887 dresses. I *am* a young woman.

**JOHN** And a very lovely one.

**RHODA** She treats me like a servant, John.

**JOHN** She don't mean to, Rhoda.

**RHODA** Doesn't.

**JOHN** Doesn't.

**RHODA** I'm your wife, John.

But I'm not your wife in this house.

**JOHN** What do you propose?

**RHODA** Martha's the first wife.

She shouldn't have to leave, so I will. If you can't afford a new house, then an apartment.

**JOHN** (defeated) All right,

Rhoda. I can pay for an apartment.

**RHODA** Don't be disappointed with me, John.

**JOHN** I'm not, Rhoda. I guess I just can't measure out affection like flour in a cup.

**RHODA** Can we help it that we love you so much?

**JOHN** Love? You both tearin' at me, tryin' to get the biggest piece?

**RHODA** It's not like that, John.

**JOHN** If you loved me, you'd love each other.

**MARTHA** I can't love her, John.

I can't help it! It doesn't *come*!

**JOHN** Love doesn't just *come*!

**RHODA** Isn't it enough to separate? Then there'll be peace.

**JOHN** Silence ain't peace!

**MARTHA** There are some

people some people just can't love!

**JOHN** You can't love anybody

Till you love everybody. (exits)

**WIVES** (Sing)

There are two of us

Where there was one before.

**NEPHI** So Aunt Rhoda got her an apartment, and father lived at Rhoda's place on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and every other Sunday. Kind of funny what happened then. Mom took to goin' over to visit Rhoda once or twice a week, or Rhoda'd come here. And pretty soon they kinda liked each other's company, and there was peace. Not much love—but peace.

(Sariah enters. Martha is sweeping)

**SARIAH** Good afternoon, Sister Monson.

**MARTHA** How d'you do?

**SARIAH** Sweeping?  
**MARTHA** No, no, I just took the broom out for a walk.  
 (They laugh)  
 Want to set?  
**SARIAH** Oh, no—I mean . . . Do you have time?  
**MARTHA** The porch'll be here awhile.  
**SARIAH** This is going to sound silly. But . . . oh, never mind.  
**MARTHA** Where are you going? You don't have a right to get my curiosity all whetted up and then run away.  
**SARIAH** I just wanted to know—what's it like?  
**MARTHA** What's *what* like?  
**SARIAH** The Principle.  
**MARTHA** (gets up and sweeps.) (Rich with irony) Believe me, there's *nothin'* like it.  
**SARIAH** I knew I shouldn't've asked.  
**MARTHA** Somebody asked you to marry him? In the Principle?  
**SARIAH**. No.  
**MARTHA** Of they ever do, I'll expect to see your pa take off like a rocket on the twenty-fourth of July. He doesn't take too kindly to the Principle.  
**SARIAH** That's why I wanted to talk to you. He says that polygamy is heathen, that it's as barbaric as the cannibals in Africa, and that only a fool would let himself get roped into it.  
**MARTHA** Oh, that's what he says, is it? Well, if that's his opinion he can look to see no more friendship from this house!  
**SARIAH** Oh, no, Sister Monson! You know that John's his best friend! He didn't mean any harm.  
**MARTHA** "Heathen" my best blue petticoat! Cannibals in Africa! Why, there's not a gentler, finer, kinder, lovinger man than my husband!  
**SARIAH** You know how Pa gets all het up and says things he doesn't mean. I shouldn't've said anything.  
**(MARTHA** (beats the broom on the porch, then sets it down, and sits calmly.) There. You want to know what it's like?  
 (Rhoda enters unnoticed)  
**SARIAH** If you don't mind talking about it.  
**MARTHA** *Talkin'* about it's fine. (Laughs) It takes gettin' used to. Though I expect it's hardest on Rhoda. Comin' into a home like she did.  
**SARIAH** There's got to be something good about it.  
**MARTHA** Well, dearie, when you find it, you come tell old Martha.  
**SARIAH** The Lord must have a purpose.  
**RHODA** He has. He wants to make it tough to be a Latter-day Saint.  
**MARTHA** Good afternoon, Rhoda.

**RHODA** Good afternoon, Martha.  
 (Martha kisses Rhoda's cheek)  
**MARTHA** Sariah here's been wondering why the Lord gave us the Principle.  
**RHODA** Why, everybody knows *that*. George Q. Cannon explained it all in Conference awhile ago. Polygamy keeps the women off the street!  
**SARIAH** No!  
**RHODA** Kind of a shame, too. I was almost looking forward to it!  
**MARTHA** You don't listen to a word she says, Sariah.  
**RHODA** With all his dozens of wives, Brother Cannon *still* doesn't understand women.  
**MARTHA** Sariah, I'll tell you what makes it so hard. It's havin' to live so close together. Closer than sisters.  
**RHODA** It's sharing the same man.  
**MARTHA** No, it's comparing. You see, Rhoda's a lady, and I'm just an old pack mule—  
**RHODA** Martha—  
**MARTHA** If Rhoda wasn't married to my husband, we could almost be friends.  
**RHODA** Almost. (Takes Martha's hand)  
**MARTHA** (Sings)  
 I look in the mirror  
 The mirror's my friend  
 I count all the wrinkles  
 They never end.  
 He touches my forehead,  
 He kisses my cheek  
 And I know that he's thinkin' of her.  
 My lovely young sister  
 My sweet younger sister  
 My beautiful sister.  
**RHODA** (Sings)  
 We walk by the temple,  
 We rest by a tree  
 He looks like he's thinking,  
 But not of me.  
 He's been here before, and  
 The memory's good,  
 And I know that he's thinking of her  
 My kind older sister  
 My gentle-touch sister  
 My motherly sister.  
**BOTH** (Sing)  
 I can't help but like her,  
 This woman he loves;  
 But how can I bear it to know  
 His heart's for this woman  
 This terrible stranger  
 My beautiful sister.  
**MARTHA** (Sings)  
 I've seen how he watches  
 Her step and her smile  
 He laughs and he listens  
 And in a while  
 He gives her his hand—  
 But *that* hand is mine!  
 No it's not, it was given to her.  
**MARTHA**  
 My lovely young sister  
 My kind older sister  
 My sweet younger sister

My gentle-touch sister  
 My beautiful sister  
 My motherly sister  
**SARIAH**  
 He must love you so!  
 Are these broken hearts?  
 Why don't you both know  
 His love takes no parts?  
**BOTH**  
 His heart's for this woman  
 This terrible stranger  
 My beautiful sister  
 His wife.  
**SARIAH**  
 How lucky  
 How lucky  
 To be  
 His wife.  
**NEPHI** In case you didn't know, Mormons weren't the only people in Utah. We just kind of thought we were, sometimes. And the rest of the time we wished we were. But there were others: merchants, miners, farmers, and government appointees, a lot of them. Some of them were good men trying to do a good job. Then there were the others. Like a process server named Bill Skinner, a skunk if ever there was one. In my opinion, at least. Maybe his mother loved him. If he had a mother. For months he passed our house a few times a week. We never figured out why, until the Supreme Court let the Edmunds Act stand. Aaron brought us the news.  
**AARON** (enters, with Sariah)  
 Mornin', ladies. Where's John?  
 There's a cable just in from Washington. The Supreme Court turned down Brother Clawson's appeal.  
**MARTHA** Why!  
**AARON** You can read all about it in the Tribune.  
**MARTHA** Nobody reads the Tribune in this house.  
**AARON** Well, if you want to know what the Gentiles are doin', you gotta read what they say!  
**JOHN** Hi, Aaron. (Enters with Nephi) News?  
**AARON** No hope now, John. Supreme Court let the law stand.  
**RHODA** Haven't they read the Constitution? About freedom of religion?  
**JOHN** The Constitution pretty much says whatever the Supreme Court says it says.  
**AARON** You don't say.  
**RHODA** You won't go to jail, will you?  
**JOHN** Not if I can help it. I don't want to talk out here on the street. (They start in.)  
**AARON** (to Sariah) Where do you think *you're* goin'?  
**SARIAH** In—to hear.  
**AARON** No need. Polygamy'll never have any effect on you.  
**SARIAH** But father—  
**AARON** Stay outside an'—make a quilt, or something.

**SARIAH** Yes, father.  
**NEPHI** I'll wait out here, too.  
**JOHN** That's fine, Nephi.  
(John, Aaron, Martha and Rhoda exit.)

**NEPHI** Looks like things're gonna start hoppin'! (silence) Think they'll wipe out the Principle?

**SARIAH** I think it's time the federal government left us alone to practice our religion.

**NEPHI** I think so, too.

**SARIAH** They never bother to come out here and see how the Principle is lived! All they listen to are the lies that the skunks tell them!

**NEPHI** It's a shame!

**SARIAH** The Eastern papers say our men *kidnap* plural wives!

**NEPHI** They're fools, that's all! (Maneuvering to get his arm around her.)

**SARIAH** Well, I intend to live the Principle, law or no law.

**NEPHI** You?

**SARIAH** The Lord calls the best men in the church to practice the Principle. I won't marry a man unless he's worthy to live it.

**NEPHI** But your father's stood notice that his daughter wouldn't *consider* plural marriage!

**SARIAH** Father can stand notice all he likes.

**NEPHI** (Puts his arm around her.) I'm going to live the Principle, Sariah.

**SARIAH** (Gently) Nephi, please take your arm from around me.

**NEPHI** (complying) I'm sorry.

**SARIAH** I never meant for you to like me.

**NEPHI** You *used* to.

**SARIAH** That was a long time ago, Nephi.

**NEPHI** Well, what's *wrong* with likin' me?

**SARIAH** Please, Nephi.

**NEPHI** Is it somebody else?

**SARIAH** Yes.

**NEPHI** Who?

**SARIAH** You don't have a right to ask that question.

**NEPHI** Whoever it is, Sariah, he doesn't love you half as much as I do!

**SARIAH** (This hurt her deeply) I know it, Nephi. (Near tears, she turns away.) Excuse me. (She runs off.)

**NEPHI** Sariah! Wait a minute! I'm sorry—(She is gone; he whirls, slams his fist into a post.) Ow! (He sits, nursing his hand.)

(Bill Skinner enters.)

**SKINNER** Hi, boy.

**NEPHI** Hi. Can I help you?

**SKINNER** Is Mr. Monson here?

**NEPHI** (suddenly wary) *Mister* Monson isn't here, sir.  
**SKINNER** I think I'll just go in and see.

**NEPHI** I don't think so, sir!  
(Stands in the door.)

**SKINNER** It's a store, boy, I

only want to buy.

**NEPHI** Store's closed. For lunch.

**SKINNER** Let me in there, boy!

**NEPHI** Not without a warrant!

**SKINNER** Don't give me any lip, kid.

(Nephi decks him.)

**NEPHI** I have a policy of knocking down trespassers.

**SKINNER** You think you're real smart, kid. Well, I tell *you*. I'll serve these papers on your father or I'm not Bill Skinner!

**NEPHI** (tips his hat) Good morning, sir!

**SKINNER** When I come back, I'll *have* a warrant! Good morning!  
(EXITS)

(John enters.)

**JOHN** What's going on out here, Nephi!

**NEPHI** Get back inside! What do you think you're doing? Don't you ever knock?

**JOHN** Generally not when I'm goin' *out*.

**NEPHI** It was a process server, father. A skunk.

**JOHN** Right quick, aren't they? (examines Nephi's bruised hand)

**NEPHI** I hit his buckle. He said he'd be back with a warrant.

**AARON** I knew it. They got us now.

**JOHN** They don't have me yet. And *you're* not in any danger.

**AARON** I'm not, huh? You think this is just polygamy? They're out to get the whole Church! It's Nauvoo and Jackson County all over, they're gonna persecute us and drive us out just like they did before. Only now, polygamists like you are givin' 'em an excuse to make it legal. Well, John, I don't want to suffer because you can't be happy with one wife! Good-bye! (Starts to leave.)

**JOHN** Aaron, it's the will of God!

**AARON** I know, dammit! You're being *stupid* and get all the credit for being righteous, and I'm being smart, and everybody thinks I'm a sinner! I don't think it's fair! (Slams his hat on his head, exits.)

**JOHN** Nephi, go back and hitch up the wagon. Bring it around front.

**NEPHI** Where are we going?

**JOHN** Away, son. We're gonna dig us a hole and hide till this whole thing blows over. (Nephi leaves at a run. John calls out:) Rhoda! Martha! (Rhoda comes out first, followed immediately by Martha.)

**RHODA** What is it, John?

**JOHN** A process server just came by.

**MARTHA** You're not arrested, are you?

**JOHN** Nephi headed him off. But we've got to leave.

**RHODA** Where?

**JOHN** My brother Swen has a farm in Heber. We'll go there first.

**MARTHA** First?

**JOHN** We'll have to keep moving, Martha. They *know* about me. They'll chase me wherever I go.

**MARTHA** What about the store?

**JOHN** I'll leave it with Aaron. He's friend enough to keep it for us.

**MARTHA** When do we leave?

**JOHN** Today! Now. We'll only take what will fit in the wagon. Now let's pack.

(Martha exits, John follows, but Rhoda stops him.)

**RHODA** John—

**JOHN** What is it?

**RHODA** (Picks at John's lapel)

**JOHN** Rhoda, we need to hurry.

**RHODA** I can't go with you.

**JOHN** Why not?

**RHODA** I'm pregnant. (pause) I'm sorry.

**JOHN** I'm not! That's wonderful! But why can't you go?

**RHODA** I'm pregnant!

**JOHN** But you'll be all right for the first while.

**RHODA** I'm already past that. I've been meaning to tell you for months.

**JOHN** How many months?

**RHODA** Four. It's beginning to show.

**JOHN** I thought you were getting fat.

**RHODA** That's why I was sick a few months ago—

**JOHN** Why didn't you *tell* me?

**RHODA** I couldn't.

**JOHN** I'm your husband, Rhoda.

**RHODA** Martha hasn't born you a child since Nephi. We had enough problems without me having babies all over the place.

**JOHN** (Softer) That was very kind. But Rhoda, it was dangerous, you've been working hard, something might've happened.

**RHODA** I know, John.

(Releasing months-long tension.) When I was getting so sick, I thought it was a miscarriage. I didn't dare ask Martha. And I have cramps and pains, and I worry that there's something wrong—and I can't ask anyone, and I get scared, and then it turns out not to be anything, and I'm so ashamed of having been such a baby. (She's crying; he holds her.) I'm sorry for acting like this, John.

**JOHN** I'm proud of you, Rhoda.

**RHODA** But you see why I can't go.

**JOHN** But you *can*. You won't have to ride in the wagon. You'll be in the carriage.

**RHODA** John, I can't control the carriage horses—

**JOHN** I'll drive, dear. You can rest.

**RHODA** Thank you, John.

(Kisses him, goes inside as Martha comes down.)

**MARTHA** John, I need to know how many suits you'll want to take.

**JOHN** Oh, are you packing my

things? Thank you, dear.

**MARTHA** Rhoda hasn't started packing.

**JOHN** I know. She was talking to me.

**MARTHA** For this long?

**JOHN** Rhoda's going to have a baby.

**MARTHA** (stricken) Oh. (pause) When?

**JOHN** She's four months along. So she can't ride in the wagon. I'll be driving her in the carriage.

**MARTHA** While I take that wagon? I see.

**JOHN** You'll have Nephi. He's as good a teamster as I am.

**MARTHA** Then why can't he drive the carriage?

**JOHN** Martha—

**MARTHA** I see. Rhoda's having a baby, so suddenly she's the special wife. Awfully convenient of her, to announce it now.

**JOHN** Martha! She may be my second wife, but I'm her first husband, and this is her first baby. She's afraid, she needs me. But you, you're the strong one, Martha, you always have been.

**MARTHA** (with strength) I'm not strong, John. I'm afraid, too, that you'll be arrested, that we'll be separated—

**JOHN** But you *seem* strong, Martha, and it gives *me* strength. Be strong now, dear, and maybe we can get through this without losing our minds. Please.

**MARTHA** All right, John. (She exits.)

**JOHN** (Sings)  
Goin' underground, hide—  
Leave in the mornin', ride  
All day, all night,  
Prayin' for a sight  
Of a friendly man  
Who'll take you in  
Won't ask your name  
Or where you been  
Who'll let you work  
For board and bed  
Who'll let you work  
Yourself half-dead  
Until you go underground again.

**NEPHI** Father, I'm not going out in the orchard again.

**JOHN** Why not?

**NEPHI** I'm sick of getting spider webs in my face and sticky hands from sap and cherry juice. I'm tired of mosquito bites and sweat and sunburn. And if I have to climb one more rickety ladder I'm gonna break every rung on the way down.

**JOHN** In other words, you're quittin'.

**NEPHI** That's right.

**JOHN** I suppose that's your privilege, Nephi. Where do you propose to live now?

**NEPHI** You mean you'd—

**JOHN** I won't feed a grown man who ain't working.

**NEPHI** Pa, I don't know

anything but sellin' and bookkeepin'—

**JOHN** And neither do I. But there's two women to feed and a baby on the way. So I do what I can do. If you don't work, you don't eat.

**NEPHI** So you'd make me—

**JOHN** Martha and Rhoda are taking in washings! And you can't stand spider webs in your hair.

**NEPHI** All right! I'll go out and offer myself as a human sacrifice to the mosquitoes!

**JOHN** Would you really feel good about staying home?

**NEPHI** (Angry) No! (Exits.)

**JOHN** (Sings)

What about all the kids you've got?  
Did they learn the things you  
thought you taught?  
Will they be decidin'

Life is hiding  
And never call a place their own?

**NEPHI** It's a funny thing. Every time the government put on the pressure, the number of plural marriages *increased*. In easy times the Saints slacked off. I guess we've got a stubborn streak. Or else shared suffering draws folks together.

(Rhoda, seated on a chair, cries out in pain.)

Mother!

**MARTHA** Sh!

**NEPHI** I never knew it hurt so much, to have a baby.

(Rhoda screams)

Mother!

**MARTHA** She's all right. Her own mother's in there with her.

(Annabelle enters)

How is she?

(Annabelle goes to the side and, moaning, retches)

What's wrong?

(Rhoda screams)

What's wrong with Rhoda?

(Annabelle shakes her head, and retches again)

**NEPHI** What're we gonna do?

**MARTHA** I don't know!

**NEPHI** Let me get a doctor!

**MARTHA** You couldn't get back till tomorrow. (Rhoda screams)

**NEPHI** We gotta do *something*!

**MARTHA** Yes, we do. (Starts to exit)

**NEPHI** Where are you going?

**MARTHA** To find out what to do.

**NEPHI** So she went outside and prayed. And I guess she found out something. She went into Rhoda's room, and *stayed* there for *twelve* hours.

**RHODA** I fainted after every pain, and only revived in time for the next. (Screams)

**MARTHA** I think the baby isn't facing the right way.

**ANNABELLE** (weakly) A doctor would take the baby out in pieces, to save the mother.

**MARTHA** We won't do that.

**ANNABELLE** There's no hope for the baby!

**MARTHA** The baby's John's baby. And Rhoda's John's wife.

**RHODA** And finally it was over. I could see Martha and mother working over the baby. It was black. I knew it was dead. And then I fainted again.

**MARTHA** Quiet, Nephi. Don't wake her.

**RHODA** (waking) Martha.

**MARTHA** Yes, Rhoda.

**RHODA** The baby!

**ANNABELLE** Here's the baby.

**MARTHA** A boy.

**RHODA** Is it all right?

**ANNABELLE** By a miracle I don't understand.

**RHODA** Give him to me! Give me the baby!

**ANNABELLE** Martha saved him.

(Rhoda holds the baby and cries)

Martha gave you the baby.

**MARTHA** The Lord gave her and John the baby.

**RHODA** Martha. (Martha comes close. Rhoda takes her hand and kisses it, fervently.) Thank you.

**MARTHA** (Takes Rhoda's hand and kisses it gently) I never could've stood pain like that.

**NEPHI** Father came home the next day, and found that he had a family.

**JOHN** (Sings)

All you got on the underground  
Is the loving wives you have around  
Is the way they ease you  
Try to please you  
Sometimes it almost feels like home.

**RHODA** I believe that every baby is the most beautiful one in the world.

**MARTHA** He has your eyes.

**RHODA** The lucky boy!

**MARTHA** He has John's mouth—and his nose—

**RHODA** How can you tell whose nose he has? It's so small.

**MARTHA** So is John's. (They laugh) Red hair. Where does that come from?

**RHODA** A ram got over the wall.

**MARTHA** Rhoda!

**RHODA** Mother told me I had red hair, but it all fell out and came back blond.

**MARTHA** (to baby) Oh, is your hair gonna fall out? (To Rhoda) What'll you name him?

**RHODA** John suggested "Alma."

**MARTHA** (pause) That's what we were gonna name our second son.

**RHODA** (embarrassed)

Oh—well, we don't have to—

**MARTHA** But I guess this *is* John's second son, after all. (smiles)

**RHODA** (Smiles back) Guess so.

**JOHN** (Sings)

Why do my eyes keep turning back to home?

Why do I want so bad to see  
The dusty streets of Salt Lake City?  
Why do they have such a hold on me?

I want to go home, go home!

**NEPHI** In 1890, after we'd been running for three years, the Church was on its last legs. The Edmunds-Tucker Act disincorporated the Church, and took away most of the Church property. And with many of the leaders in hiding, things began to fall apart.

The Church was never so close to destruction, not in Missouri, not in the famine of 1857—and yet somehow the members found the courage to keep trying.

(Martha enters, panicked)

**MARTHA** Rhoda! Rhoda!

(Rhoda enters, carrying the baby)

**RHODA** What is it?

**MARTHA** Brother Wimble told me there's a skunk with a posse of five coming out here to get John!

**RHODA** We've got to tell him—

**MARTHA** I already told him.

Met him in the fields. He mounted a plow horse and took right off.

**RHODA** Oh! Thank heavens he got away!

**MARTHA** Don't sit down!

**RHODA** (stands up) Why?

**MARTHA** You're living proof that John lives the principle. You and the babies have gotta get out of here, *fast!*

**RHODA** Oh, no! (scurrying) Where's Alma!

**MARTHA** I don't know.

**RHODA** And little Joseph! They were right here!

**MARTHA** They could have gone anywhere, with both of them walking.

**NEPHI** Aunt Rhoda! Hurry!

**MARTHA** We can't find the children!

**NEPHI** Of course you can't! I've got 'em in the carriage!

**MARTHA** Go on, Rhoda! Hurry!

**RHODA** The baby, Amy. I can't drive with a baby in my arms!

**MARTHA** Give her to me! (she does)

**RHODA** Thanks, Martha!

**MARTHA** Just get out of here!

**RHODA** Good-bye! (stops)

Where do I go?

**MARTHA** Anywhere!  
Santaquin!

**RHODA** (exits) Good-bye!

**MARTHA** Good-bye!

**NEPHI** What do we do now?

**MARTHA** We sit.

**NEPHI** I can't sit down. I'm too nervous!

**MARTHA** Well, you're makin' me nervous standing up.

**NEPHI** Is Aunt Rhoda out of her *mind?* She took that turn on two wheels!

**MARTHA** Just in time! Here they come! Now *sit!* (He sits) And keep quiet!

**SKINNER** Well, Mrs. Monson. Which Mrs. Monson do I have the pleasure of addressing?

(Martha is cheerfully polite)

**MARTHA** It's no pleasure at all. I'm sorry that you didn't knock.

**SKINNER** (Didn't quite understand) Where's John Monson?

**MARTHA** He's in Gunnison.

**SKINNER** Gunnison! I was *told* he was right here.

**MARTHA** Then I'm sure he must be. When you find him, tell him for me that he'd better get back here right away. It isn't right, him bein' in town, and leavin' me thinkin' he's in Gunnison.

**SKINNER** Where's the other woman?

**MARTHA** What other woman?

**SKINNER** Your husband's other woman.

**MARTHA** Sir, I know my husband, and he would never have another woman without my knowledge.

**SKINNER** But *with* your knowledge?

**MARTHA** Good day.

**SKINNER** I don't see why you don't turn him in. You can't tell me you *like* polygamy!

**MARTHA** Sir, I'm sure I don't know what you're talkin' about. And now if you'll excuse me, my baby is hungry.

**SKINNER** Whose baby is that?

**MARTHA** Mine.

**SKINNER** I was told you haven't had a baby since this'n here.

**MARTHA** I found this one under a cabbage leaf.

**SKINNER** Whose baby is it?

**MARTHA** I don't know by what right you've barged into my house and asked me these questions, but right now I'm going to nurse *my* baby. (She start to unbutton her blouse)

**SKINNER** Now, you're not going to—(he sees she is—embarrassed) Well, if you'll excuse me—sorry ma'am! (exits)

**NEPHI** (Bursts out laughing) Mother! Did you ever shut him up!

That was wonderful. (Martha is shaking and whimpering) Mom, you're shaking. (Comes to her, takes her by the shoulders. She clings to him, sobs) You were scared!

**JOHN** (Sings)

Goin' underground, hide,  
Leave in the mornin', ride

All day, all night

Prayin' for a sight

Of a friendly man

Who'll take you in

Won't ask your name

Or where you been

Who'll let you rest

And stay a while

You think you've run

Your final mile.

Don't want to go underground again.

Well, my dears, it's time to pack.

**MARTHA** Again?

**RHODA** Where this time?

**JOHN** Salt Lake City.

**RHODA** Salt Lake!

**MARTHA** How can we go *there?*

**JOHN** We've been every place else.

**MARTHA** But they'll catch you there.

**JOHN** I just got a letter from Aaron Bean. He says things've eased up a little. A lot of the general authorities are livin' openly in Salt Lake City.

**RHODA** They don't have Bill Skinner after them. He's the lowest, stubbornest, orneriest skunk that ever pestered a Latter-day Saint.

**JOHN** Well, we're goin' home, and that's it. (pause) I did think you'd be a little happy about it.

**RHODA** We *are*—but it's such a *shock*.

**MARTHA** It's been so long.

**JOHN** I know.

**RHODA** Alma is three years old, and he's never *been* in Salt Lake City.

**JOHN** Don't you want to go?

**NEPHI** *Course* we want to go. We just can't believe it—

**MARTHA** Just like that, goin' home!

**RHODA** Going home! (They start to laugh) Going home!

**NEPHI** When do we go?

**JOHN** I was thinkin' of startin' out today.

**MARTHA** Then we've gotta pack!

**RHODA** Get everything together!

**MARTHA** (calling) Alma! Bart!

**RHODA** John, we're going home! (Kisses him as Martha exits, shouting:)

**MARTHA** Alma! You get back here! Right now!

**RHODA** I've got to get the babies ready. (exits)

**NEPHI** Did the letter say anything about me?

**JOHN** It did. He says here—"I hope you bring your son Nephi home soon. Sariah has been pining ever since you left. She goes over every day and sweeps out the store. And every time I mention anything about the Monson family, she perks right up." How's *that?*

**NEPHI** I'm twenty-one, father.

**JOHN** Sounds like marryin' age.

**NEPHI** I'd better go pack.

**JOHN** (Sings)

Why do my eyes keep turning back to home?

Why do I want so bad to see The dusty streets of Salt Lake City?

Why do they look like gold to me?

I'm gonna go home, go home!

(The set changes back to Monsons' store. Sariah enters, sweeping out the room. She sings.)

**SARIAH**

Every day there is sunrise

Each day there is dust

In the light from the glass

I awake with the sunrise

And labor here just

To be deep in the past.

He'll be back,  
He'll return,  
For he's in the Lord's keeping!  
And while I wait here  
What I lack  
I will learn  
In my dreams when I'm sleeping:  
My future is here.

In my dreams  
I can learn  
What he wants,  
And it seems  
That I burn,  
For my Father will reach me,  
Will teach me  
My life in my dreams.

I have seen myself sitting  
In front of a man  
And between this man's wives,  
And I felt it was fitting  
That I held his hand  
And was part of their lives.

Not to share  
In his grief,  
Nor to lean on his shoulder,  
But rather to lift,  
I will bring  
Him relief  
Be his youth when he's older:  
Myself is his gift.

In my dreams  
I can learn  
What he wants,  
And it seems  
That I burn,  
For my Father will reach me,  
Will teach me  
My life in my dreams.

In years I'm a woman  
But still I'm a child,  
With trust in the future  
For past years have smiled;  
Although there'll be sorrow,  
Although there'll be pain,  
I've tasted the future,  
There's love in my future—  
And someday I'll live it again.  
There's joy in my future  
And all that I wonder  
Is when.

I have seen myself lying  
In bed, with my hair  
White and sparsely arrayed.  
And my family, some crying,  
Were close to me there  
And I saw that they prayed.

And I looked  
In my heart  
To discover if sorrow  
Was lingering there—  
It was not!  
I could part  
With my life, for tomorrow  
Meant peace for my care.

In my dreams  
I can learn  
What he wants,  
And it seems  
That I burn,  
For my Father will reach me,  
Will teach me  
My life in my dreams. (Exits.)

(Outside Monson's store. John enters followed by Nephi, who is carrying boxes. President Goodbody is coming the other way.)

**JOHN** President Goodbody!  
**GOODBODY** John Monson!  
(shakes his hand) How long have you been in town?

**JOHN** About two minutes.  
**GOODBODY** I've been wishin' I could see you for three days, and here you are in the flesh.

**JOHN** Why'd you want to see me?

**GOODBODY** I've had a dream about you three nights runnin'.

**JOHN** (skeptical) What about?  
**GOODBODY** I saw you standing with your arms around Martha and Rhoda. But something was wrong with that. And then another woman appeared, sittin' in front of you, with her head right at your heart. And a voice said, "This is John Monson's third wife."  
**RHODA** What?

**JOHN** President Goodbody had a dream about me.

**GOODBODY** Three nights running!

**MARTHA** But John—  
**JOHN** Who was the other woman?

**GOODBODY** I couldn't tell.

**JOHN** I don't like it.

**GOODBODY** That's what I said, over and over, "He won't like it."

**JOHN** And?

**GOODBODY** The voice came again and said, "He'll have a sign."

**JOHN** What sign?

**GOODBODY** I guess you can choose the sign yourself.

**JOHN** Choose it myself!

**GOODBODY** And from now on, try to live clean enough to get your own revelations. I need my sleep. (exits)

**JOHN** Rhoda, do you have your little mirror?

**RHODA** Here, John, just a minute. Here it is.

**JOHN** (Looks at himself) Well. I'm every bit as ugly as I thought I was. So here's the sign I choose. If the Lord can get a woman to run up and kiss me on the mouth right out of the clear blue, and if she's willing then and there to marry me, why, I'd regard that as a miracle, and I'd marry her. But frankly, I don't believe the Lord can do it.

**NEPHI** You never know.

(Laughing)

**RHODA** You certainly pick difficult signs.

**MARTHA** I don't believe you can fool the Lord, John.

**JOHN** I'm not trying to fool Him, Martha. But if he wants me to marry again, he's gonna have to go out of his way to make me do it.

**NEPHI** Father. There's Sariah!  
**JOHN** Well, why don't you call to her?

**NEPHI** You call.

**JOHN** I'm not in love with her.

**NEPHI** Then call to Brother Bean.

**JOHN** I'm not in love with *him* either. Do your own callin'.

**NEPHI** I'm scared, Pa.

**JOHN** All right. (calling) Aaron Bean, you old buzzard, how are you!

**AARON** (entering) John Monson, you old turtle-eater. You're back! And Martha and Rhoda!

(striding to them. Sariah enters at a slight run, passed her father just as he reaches John—and she leans up and kisses John on the mouth, very quickly.)

**SARIAH** Welcome home, Brother Monson. Hi Nephi. (Nephi and Sariah are shaking hands, and so are John and Aaron, when suddenly all motion freezes. Nephi and John look at each other, and Nephi starts shaking his head)

**NEPHI** No. No sir—(John looks at Sariah. Nephi shouts:) No! (He runs into the store. Martha follows. Rhoda squeezes John's arm and goes out the way they came in.)

**AARON** I don't mean to pry, but what's going on here!

**JOHN** Now, I think we'd better be calm about this.

**AARON** I am calm. I just want to know why everybody left when I walked up!

**JOHN** Well, it's on account of President Goodbody—he had a vision. That I'm supposed to take a third wife. But I didn't want one.

**AARON** And?

**JOHN** And—he told me the Lord could give me any sign I chose. So I said that I'd marry again if the woman would come right up and kiss me on the mouth.

**AARON** Not a prayer, John.

**JOHN** That's why Nephi ran out—

**AARON** My daughter will *not* marry a married man!

**JOHN** But if the Lord wants it—

**AARON** The Lord didn't ask *me!* She's *my* daughter, not his—

**JOHN** There are those who might argue that point—

**AARON** John Monson, if you lay one finger—

**JOHN** Now wait a minute, Aaron. I'm not any more eager to take a third wife than you are for Sariah to be one. There was another part of the sign. I said that she'd have to be willing to marry me then and there. That clears it all up. Sariah didn't mean anything by

kissing me, she was just saying hello—

**AARON** Well, then, you don't have to—

**JOHN** I'm not obligated to—

**AARON** That's a load off my mind.

**SARIAH** But I *am* willing. Here and now. (Silence)

**AARON** Sariah, maybe you ought to come inside with me and have a talk.

**SARIAH** I made up my mind.

**AARON** Sariah, you know how I feel about this.

**SARIAH** And I don't expect you to marry Brother Monson.

**JOHN** You mean you're *willing*?

**SARIAH** I've been waiting three years for you to ask me.

**AARON** Now, look, John, I warned you.

**JOHN** But don't you see, Aaron, she's willing. It's the will of God.

**AARON** It's the will of John Monson!

**JOHN** That's not fair!

**AARON** I didn't raise Sariah up to live a life of being chased by the law all over the territory. I meant for her to marry a Monson, but I intended it to be Nephi, not you!

**JOHN** Aaron, we've been friends a long time—

**AARON** And now you're stabbing me in the back!

**JOHN** I don't mean to—

**AARON** It bleeds the same! (to Sariah) I've never commanded you in anything, Sariah, and I won't start now. But if you marry him I'll never see, write, or speak to you again as long as I live. Do you understand?

**SARIAH** Yes, father.

**AARON** Doesn't that mean anything to you?

**SARIAH** Yes, it does.

**AARON** But you'll marry him, won't you?

**SARIAH** I will.

**AARON** You're as stubborn as your mother was.

(Aaron contemplates her in silence then looks at John)

**AARON** If it's the will of God, John Monson, that the thing I've tried to keep from happening all her life has to happen anyway, I wish God would just leave me alone! (exits)

**JOHN** I'm sorry, Sariah.

**SARIAH** He never asked me.

**JOHN** I suppose I ought to propose properly.

**SARIAH** The answer is yes.

**JOHN** (walks away) Until this moment I never even *thought* of you as a wife. You're only twenty, and I'm so near fifty it's breathin' down my neck.

**SARIAH** I believe that you're afraid of me.

**JOHN** Right! You're too ready. And what about Nephi?

**SARIAH** Time will ease that.

**JOHN** How much time? He's already lasted three years.

**SARIAH** John. President Goodbody had a vision and you had a sign. Well, I had a dream, too. I saw myself sitting in front of you, with Martha and Rhoda standing on either side of you. And I was told I'd be your third wife.

**JOHN** Dreams and visions! Sariah, do you *love* me?

**SARIAH** John, I didn't complain a bit when the Lord announced his choice for me.

**JOHN** Well, you know I don't love *you*. (pause) You still want to marry me?

**SARIAH** Yes.

**JOHN** (Can't think of anything to say) Damn! (pause) Beg your pardon.

**SARIAH** That's all right.

**JOHN** All right then! (Takes her by the shoulders) The Lord knows what He's doing.

**SARIAH** And so do I. (She leans up and kisses him briefly. He leans down and kisses her rather longer. She smiles, and leaves. Nephi walks down as John stands looking after her.)

**NEPHI** Father.

**JOHN** Nephi—I— (He falls silent and stands there while Nephi knocks him flat on his back ten feet away. Nephi stands, not watching, as John slowly gets up and walks out without a word.)

**NEPHI** (Sings)

This time the day is much too clear,  
not a cloud in the sky today.

This time I was so sure the day  
would be just fine

Father had his sign today. Heaven  
has pointed the way.

Where is the sign that says what I'm  
gonna do with my own life today.

I'd just like one or two things  
explained to me

Why are things like this ordained to  
be?

I don't mean to complain

But I haven't yet seen a reason for  
pain.

These godly men who have  
prophecies and signs

Swear that God is writing all the  
lines

I'm not asking a lot

Just why what I want is what I  
haven't got.

If you've got something planned for  
me

Why don't you let me see—

Give me a sign. Father, give me a  
sign

Thy will is mine but just give me a  
sign.

That man has never been born  
Who can see the stars in a storm.

Father had his sign today  
Heaven has pointed the way  
Heaven has pointed, the man is  
anointed

But whether he's chosen or not  
Doesn't mean that I've got  
To pretend that I like it—I hate it.

Tell me where I go!  
Hell! Father I know—  
Give me a sign Father!

These godly men who have prophecies  
and signs

Swear that God is writing all the  
lines

I'm not asking a lot

Just why what I want is what I  
haven't got.

Nobody told me what to do  
I have to muddle through.  
Give me a sign Father, give me a  
sign—  
Things will be fine if you give me a  
sign!

This time the day is too clear  
Not a cloud in the sky

Thought the day was fine—

Where do I go?

Never mind, Father.

Skip it, don't bother

Father I know—

Give me a sign.

## ACT II

**MEN** (Sing)

Things're lookin' dull in Salt Lake  
City.

Things are pretty ordinary

Things're lookin' drab

From Logan to Kanab

Drab and very, very dull.

**MAN 1** Very dull

**NEPHI** Things're drab and very  
very—

**MEN**

All summer long there's dust in the  
air

Dirt on the sidewalks, sand in your  
hair

Federal agents everywhere.

But at least for now there's a  
measure of peace

Time for some pleasure, time for  
some ease

Let it go on like this, now, please.

(Men sing "We Thank Thee O  
God for A Prophet," "Come Come Ye  
Saints," and "Put Your Shoulders to  
the Wheel" behind.)

**WOMEN** (Sing)

Things're lookin' dull in Salt Lake  
City

Things're pretty ordinary.

Nothin' here that's new

For anyone to do.

Doin' nothin', and it's very very dull

**MAN 1** Very dull.

**ALL** Amen

**NEPHI** That was the summer of  
Sariah and Pa's honeymoon at Bear  
Lake. It was also the summer that

the skunks caught father.

(A cabin by Bear Lake. Sariah is brushing her hair. John enters.)

**SARIAH** Is that you, John?

**JOHN** Expectin' somebody else? Good morning, Mrs. Monson.

**SARIAH** That's getting to be kind of a common name, nowadays. (pause) This has been a very nice three days.

**JOHN** I always say that a girl's first honeymoon should be her best.

**SARIAH** Are you sure the others don't mind you taking me up here?

**JOHN** They don't complain. They know how hard it is to enter the Principle.

**SARIAH** Is it hard?

**JOHN** Maybe not for you.

(Sariah tickles John)

Sister Monson, I'll thank you to keep your hands to yourself.

**SARIAH** You're welcome. (Tickles him again)

**JOHN** (Holding her hands)

Sariah—marryin' you was the best thing that's happened to me in years.

**SARIAH** How many years?

**JOHN** Three. Since I married Rhoda.

**SARIAH** John, if the Lord hadn't called you to take another wife, would you have married me?

**JOHN** (pause) No. Martha was my wife.

**SARIAH** Aren't you happy?

**JOHN** I am happy. But you just don't go takin' extra wives for the fun of it. It ain't that fun.

**SARIAH** Do you love me?

**JOHN** More every minute.

**SARIAH** I waited a long time for you.

**JOHN** I married you the first time you asked, what more do you want?

**SARIAH** (sings)

Hold out your hand  
And mine will be there  
When we are old  
Just as now  
I vow.

**JOHN**

This is summer  
You beside me  
Love and laughter  
We'll make our summer  
Last through autumn  
Last through winter  
All our lives.

**WIVES**

All our lives can be  
Happy for whether  
Moments are trying  
Helping each other  
If we are crying  
Crying together

**ALL**

That is the reason  
This is forever.

**SARIAH**

Not just a season.

**JOHN**

Hold out your hand

And mine will be there

When we are old

Just as now I vow.

**WIVES**

You are the man I loved  
in a moment

And I'll love forever from now, so

**ALL**

Hold out your hand.

**SKINNER** (entering unobtrusively) Any idea who this hatchet belongs to? Awful careless, leaving it around like that, never know who might pick it up.

**JOHN** It's mine.

**SKINNER** And who might you be?

**JOHN** Dan Wheelwright.

**SKINNER** Well, Mr.

Wheelwright, I guess when I arrest John Monson I'll be taking you along, too. You're under arrest.

**JOHN** For what?

**SKINNER** We've been watching this cabin for three days, and I and my men can prove you did unlawfully cohabit with a woman not your wife. Do you deny it?

**JOHN** Show me the warrant!

**SKINNER** (Holds it out) Good enough?

**JOHN** You've been after me a long time, Skinner.

**SKINNER** I knew you'd make a mistake sometime, Monson. And wife number three is a big mistake.

**JOHN** Mind tellin' me what's in this for you? They givin' free pints of whiskey for every polygamist you bring in?

**SKINNER** Look, Monson, it's gonna be a long day. Don't start it out with your mouth flapping, all right? Get out on your horse. My boys are waitin'. (John exits.)

**SARIAH** (Furious) Watch your step, Mr. Skinner, and treat him right.

**SKINNER** Pretty little thing, aren't you? Boy, ol' Monson sure knows how to pick 'em. (Exits, laughing.) (Scene changes to prison.)

(John Monson sits with Garner Reid, defense attorney)

**REID** Well, that's that. They've got the evidence.

**JOHN** It's a shame when the United States of America is the only country where we can't get justice.

**REID** You broke the law, John.

**JOHN** Sometimes I find myself hatin' 'em.

**REID** Well, don't. Whatever you think of the men, respect the office, honor the law, and pray for relief. And, uh, if I were you, I'd get my plural wives out of here. They're legally not wives at all, so they can be called to testify against you.

**JOHN** I don't know where they are.

**REID** I do. They're here. In this building.

**JOHN** Garn Reid, if you weren't a man I'd kiss you! Where are they?

**REID** I'll send them in. And

remember: get the plural wives out of Salt Lake *fast*. The maximum sentence is only a year, but ten minutes in prison is too long. (He exits. John paces nervously. Rhoda appears in the door.)

**RHODA** John. (He turns, Rhoda runs to him, followed by Sariah.)

**JOHN** Rhoda! Sariah, Sariah ... (Embraces them both, all are laughing.) Where's Martha?

**MARTHA** (Offstage) I'm coming, I'm coming! (She enters) These young girls run faster than me. (John embraces her alone.)

**JOHN** (Stands back, looks at them.) My wives. The Lord and I sure pick well. I got the cream off the top.

**SARIAH** They haven't—mistreated you, have they?

**JOHN** No.

**MARTHA** I'd like to see them try!

**JOHN** That's the spirit! But listen to me—Rhoda, Sariah—you have to hide till this is over. Rhoda, your mother's in Grantsville now, isn't she?

**RHODA** Yes—

**JOHN** You'll go there. Straight from here! Brother Reid, my lawyer, he'll see to a coach. And Sariah, you can't stay in town, even with your father. I'll have Nephi drive you to Provo. Jay Spencer lives there. Nephi knows his address. All right?

**SARIAH** All right, John.

**JOHN** Good. And Martha and Nephi will run the store. They can't put me in for over a year. But when I come back, I intend to live with all of you, and they'd just love to arrest me all over again. So I figure by then Nephi'll be married, and I'll give him the store—and we can go to Canada. Charles Card talked to me a few years back. There's settlements growing, and a need for good businessmen who know how to sell a plow.

**MARTHA** You're talkin' like you're sure you'll lose.

**JOHN** Pretty sure.

**MARTHA** I don't understand it, John!

**RHODA** Why did the Lord give us the Principle just to take it away?

**JOHN** Take it away?

**MARTHA** Oh, it's just talk. But you know President Woodruff wants us to make friends with the world. Well, they say he's preparing a statement.

**JOHN** What's it about?

**SARIAH** It'd abolish polygamy, John. Revoke the Principle. No new plural marriages. (Silence)

**JOHN** (softly) I'll have to pray—about it. (pause) But whatever happens—to me, or the Church—I want you to know this: that I'm glad I married you, all of you. And if the law said, choose *one* of these women to be your wife, and send the others away, I just couldn't do it. I love you all.

**MARTHA** I'm his first wife. He married me young, we grew up together. I stood beside him when he picked out our lot in Salt Lake City, I pounded nails to build the store, I slept with him on the floor when we were too poor to afford a bed. And when we made money, he knew that I had been his true helpmeet. He calls me the strong one, his good right arm. I've been a good wife to John, and his love is all I need to be happy.

**RHODA** John loves his children. I've born him three. When he has Alma on his knee, or baby-talks to Joseph, or holds Amy's hand and says how small it looks in his, he thinks of me. He's taken the harshness out of me, and given me tenderness. I've been a good wife to John, and his love is all I need to be happy.

**SARIAH** The Lord gave me to John, as surely as if He had stood with us at the altar. I'm his girl-wife, his youth come back in his middle-age. I delight him, I make him laugh, we run together where with his other wives, he walks. I haven't shared his life, I haven't borne him children: I only make him happy, lighten his load. I've been a good wife to John, and his love is all I need to be happy.

**JOHN** Whatever is decided about the Principle by the wise men of the world, I tell them this: it's hard to live, hard on the husband, hard on the wives. But the joy that comes to you is so great you can't hold it in—(his voice shakes)—it flows out: and these are the precious vessels that hold the overflow of happiness. (Wives speak at once.)

**MARTHA** John, I won't let them take you!

**RHODA** Doesn't righteousness count for something?

**SARIAH** He'll protect you, lift you up!

**MARTHA** Hold me, John! Help me!

**SARIAH** The Lord won't let it happen, John.

**MARTHA** They can't separate us, John.

**RHODA** Why can't they leave us in peace?

**JOHN** Please! Please, let's be calm, my dears, we have to be calm, or Satan becomes our master, and drives us into fear and doubt. (Pause) When the Prophet Joseph Smith was in prison, the night before he was martyred, he had John Taylor sing a hymn to calm them . . . (he waits)

**MARTHA** (Sings softly, the others soon join.)

Our Father loveth us

**ALL**

Our Father loveth us

His hand, in weather, is our shelter.

And in the storm his sweet words

To us warm.

**MARTHA**

If we owe a debt to heaven

When will it be paid?

**RHODA**

If we have to lose you,

Why was this commandment made?

**SARIAH**

We follow well what He told us to do—

**WIVES** This hollow cell, is it all the reward that the Lord can afford you?

**JOHN** (Spoken, calming them Martha, please. Rhoda, Sariah.

(Sings)

Our Father loveth us.

In ways mysterious,

His hand is mighty in our weakness,

and yet is found in all things love

unbound.

**ALL**

His be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory

Forever, and ever, in Heaven our

Father forever,

Amen.

Amen.

Amen.

**NEPHI** And the trial. The eastern judges and the eastern lawyers had a pretty easy time of it, especially when the defendant was guilty, like father. Let me put on robes of impartiality—I'll play the judge tonight. William Jackson Skinner, U.S. Deputy Marshall. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

**SKINNER** You bet.

**JUDGE (NEPHI)** Do you know the defendant?

**SKINNER** Yes.

**JUDGE** What dealings have you had with him?

**SKINNER** I first tried to serve a summons on him three years ago, at his furniture store on Third South.

**JUDGE** This summons—

**SKINNER** For unlawful cohabitation with Rhoda Carabit, his second wife . . .

**REID** Object.

**SKINNER** Hell, Garn we all know she is.

**REID** Object.

**JUDGE** Sustained. (Skinner is disgusted.) Now, Mr. Skinner, I understand you bungled the job and Monson got away.

**SKINNER** (gloats) His kid stopped me and they high-tailed it to Heber before I could get back with a warrant. Then I made things hot there, and the day I got a witness to testify they took out for Nephi. I got a posse there, but Monson and Miss Carabit got away. They've hid out in Dixie, Gunnison, Payson, Logan, and Parowan. Then you told me hands off for a while and they came back here.

**JUDGE** Under what circumstances did you arrest the defendant?

**SKINNER** He took his third wife on a honeymoon—

**REID** Mr. Skinner!

**SKINNER** I call a spade a spade! You see a shovel and try to call it a soup spoon!

**JUDGE** Mr. Skinner, at the risk of annoying you, I remind you that the defendant is on trial for unlawful cohabitation, a misdemeanor, and not polygamy. If you have proof that these women you refer to were married to the defendant, I suggest you inform the court and charges will be drawn up accordingly.

**SKINNER** Of course they're married! Do you think a man like John Monson would commit adultery?

**JUDGE** That's precisely what the court must think.

**SKINNER** (handing the judge two depositions) He took Sariah Bean up to Bear Lake and there unlawfully cohabited with her for three days, as witnessed by myself and two others.

**JUDGE** Mr. Reid, I have here the depositions of Wayne Williams and Harrison Lloyd Maynard, Deputy U.S. Marshalls, stipulating this same evidence.

**REID** Go ahead.

**JUDGE** What were they doing when you found them?

**SKINNER** He was kissing her.

**REID** Object.

**SKINNER** And hugging her.

**REID** Object!

**JUDGE** On what grounds!

**REID** The witness is not competent to interpret what he saw as a gesture of affection.

**SKINNER** He had his arms wrapped around her, he sure wasn't cookin' breakfast!

**REID** Your honor.

**JUDGE** I believe Mr. Skinner is qualified to say whether it was a kiss or not. Overruled. Now, Mr. Skinner. Would you say the kiss was passionate or affectionate?

**SKINNER** What?

**JUDGE** Was he kissing her as a father kisses his daughter, or . . .

**SKINNER** (Laughs uproariously)

**JUDGE** Or as a husband kisses his wife?

**SKINNER** (Still laughing) It wasn't exactly fatherly, no.

**JUDGE** Cross-examine?

**REID** Mr. Skinner, how long have you been a deputy marshal.

**SKINNER** Since April 1887.

**REID** Three years. Then John Monson was one of your first cases.

**SKINNER** Yes, and he's not my last.

**REID** You've had a hard time keeping up with the defendant, haven't you?

**SKINNER** He's got a lot of friends.

**REID** You followed him to

Heber, right? And then Nephi, and Gunnison.

**SKINNER** Dixie, Payson, Logan and Parowan.

**REID** Do you follow all your cases like that? Do you chase everyone you investigate all over the territory?

**JUDGE** Mr. Reid, what is the relevance of this line of questioning?

**REID** Your honor, I am trying to show that Mr. Skinner has followed and persecuted the defendant far beyond the requirements of his official duties. It has not been justice, but a personal vendetta.

**JUDGE** The witness's motives are irrelevant to the case. You will discontinue.

**REID** I'm through with him, then.

**JUDGE** That will do, Mr. Skinner. Aaron Bean. (Aaron comes forward.) Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

**AARON** So help me God.

**JUDGE** Do you know the defendant?

**AARON** Yes.

**JUDGE** How well do you know him?

**AARON** (pause) Well.

**JUDGE** How long have you lived next door to him?

**AARON** Eight years.

**JUDGE** Friends?

**AARON** I've got a few, yes.

**JUDGE** Mr. Bean, are you and the defendant friends?

**AARON** (pause) No.

**JUDGE** Didn't you take care of his store while he was gone?

**AARON** My daughter did.

**JUDGE** Wasn't your daughter supposed to marry the defendant's son, Nephi?

**AARON** Nothing was ever set.

**JUDGE** Wasn't it understood?

**AARON** It was mentioned.

**JUDGE** Isn't it true that you planned to give your daughter to Nephi Monson?

**REID** Object! Leading the witness!

**JUDGE** All right, Mr. Reid. Mr. Bean, I remind you that this is a court of law. If you do not answer my questions, you will be declared in contempt of court. Why didn't your daughter marry Nephi Monson?

**AARON** What my daughter does is her affair.

**JUDGE** Your daughter has disappeared in defiance of a subpoena. Do you know where she is?

**AARON** No.

**JUDGE** Aren't you concerned?

**AARON** I raised her right. She can take care of herself.

**JUDGE** It is well known that you do not believe in polygamy, is it not, Mr. Bean?

**AARON** Some folks think so.

**JUDGE** Are they right?

**AARON** I refuse to answer—

**JUDGE** Mr. Bean!

**AARON** Cause it might tend to incriminate me.

**JUDGE** You don't practice polygamy!

**AARON** I can't answer on the grounds that it might—

**JUDGE** All right, Mr. Bean.

You won't be prosecuted for anything you may reveal about your own activities. Now, do you have reason to believe that John Monson illegally cohabited with Rhoda Carabit while living next door to you from June to November 1887?

**AARON** I never made it a practice to snoop on my neighbors.

**JUDGE** Isn't it true that Miss Carabit lived there from June to August 1887?

**AARON** She was there a lot. Whether she lived there I'm not the one to say.

**JUDGE** Miss Carabit has three children, all born since 1887. Do you know who the father of these children might be?

**AARON** I know I'm not. As to who is, maybe you better ask her.

**JUDGE** Why are you trying to protect John Monson! He's the man who took your daughter away to live with him in his sanctified harem.

**REID** I object to your badgering this witness.

**JUDGE** Sit down, Mr. Reid. It's obvious that this witness is singularly unaware of anything his neighbor or his daughter have done in the last several years, and I don't believe he's likely to recall anything pertinent. But before the witness steps down, let me remind him that sheltering lawbreakers is the surest way to encourage lawlessness—the law, which could protect you and your family, is useless to you when you make a mockery of it. Do you understand me?

**AARON** Sure do, Judge.

**JUDGE** Step down, Mr. Reid, have you any witnesses for the defense?

**REID** There are no witnesses of events that did not take place; how can we call someone who can say that John Monson never took a second wife, or that he did not father children outside his marriage to Martha Monson? For that matter, can this respected justice produce a witness to prove that he never fathered unrecognized children?

**JUDGE** Mr. Reid, I protest this preposterous—

**REID** I merely point this out to say that while my client cannot prove he is not the father of Rhoda Carabit's children, he is not obliged to. The prosecution has not proved the point, and my client is innocent before the law.

**JUDGE** Do you have any witnesses to call, Mr. Reid? Or is this

your summation?

**REID** I have no witnesses.

**JUDGE** All right, Mr. Reid, sum up.

**JOHN** Wait a minute, Garn.

**REID** May I—

**JUDGE** Of course.

**JOHN** There isn't too much you can do, is there?

**REID** Oh, I can try.

**JOHN** Forget it. No point pretending when they know anyway.

**REID** You're sure?

**JOHN** Yes.

**REID** Your honor, if it please the court, my client has decided to forego the final statement.

**JUDGE** (tired) Well, I'm glad to hear that. The defendant will rise. Considering the evidence presented, the court finds John Monson guilty of one count of unlawful cohabitation with Sariah Bean; the charge of unlawful cohabitation with Rhoda Carabit is dismissed because of Aaron Bean's disregard for justice. Have you anything to say before the court pronounces sentence?

**JOHN** You called me guilty—and I did the things you said I did—but I don't feel guilty.

**JUDGE** You're telling the court that you're not sorry you broke the law?

**JOHN** I mean I'm sorry that what I did was against the law—but I'm not sorry I did it.

**JUDGE** (Beginning to slip out of character, becoming Nephi) No regrets at all!

**JOHN** There's lots of things I regret. But what I did was right.

**NEPHI** It doesn't matter how many other people you hurt. It doesn't matter that you've driven away your friend Aaron, dragged your wives through the territory—and what did you do to your son?

**JOHN** I couldn't help it—I had to obey the Lord.

**NEPHI** Blame it on God! Do whatever you want, ruin everybody's lives, and then put on your halo and blame it on God.

**JOHN** You know I never wanted this. If the Lord hadn't called me—do you think it was in me to set out to take Sariah from you?

**NEPHI** No, father. You aren't cruel. You just do what you're told. They tell you to take a wife, you take a wife. If they told you to walk on the Great Salt Lake, I swear you'd do it. You'd drown, but you'd obey! Don't you think for yourself? These men don't care about us—they've got you blinded and drive you on without you being able to see left or right.

**JOHN** Nephi, I've followed the will of God.

**NEPHI** If this misery is the will of God, then God isn't love—he's fear and cruelty.

**JOHN** No! You're wrong.

**NEPHI** Wrong? Do you deny that we've suffered?

**JOHN** Yes. Just look at us. Look at Rhoda.

**NEPHI** She and Mom were torn to pieces for months—

**JOHN** But they're past that now, and stronger for it.

**NEPHI** (exploding) Wasn't one extra wife enough for you? Why Sariah?

**JOHN** I don't know why Sariah. But look at you. Three years ago you were a kid. You didn't have a single feeling worth having—cocky and shallow. Like most kids. Then you got picked up by the scruff of your neck and dumped into life. You actually did things you didn't want to do, because they were right. You learned how to feel other people's pain—and finally the Lord faced you with pain of your own. Someday you're gonna stop cringing in front of it. You'll pick up and carry it with you, and you'll be a man for the rest of your life; with a hurt hid inside you—but it'll make your joy all the richer. Do you think I didn't cry for you? At least as many tears as you shed yourself. Everything the Lord has asked me to do—break the heart of my wife of twenty years, hide like a criminal when I've always been an honest man—and this to you—Nephi, the will of God is the worst thing in the world. But obeying his will is the only good thing in the world. Nephi, I've never said no to the Lord. And someday you'll look at me and say, father, I'm willing—obey the Lord.

(Nephi turns and becomes the judge again)

**JUDGE** John Monson, the court sentences you to six months in prison. The normal sentence for your crime. However, if you're willing to swear before God that you will never again unlawfully cohabit with a woman other than Martha Monson, your legal wife, the sentence will be reduced to a fine of one dollar. Well?

**JOHN** I can't promise that.

**JUDGE** You can't deny that you've received justice.

**NEPHI** They sent a whole shipment of polygamists off together, and we all came to see father off. I brought Sariah up from Provo.

**SARIAH** It all looks so bleak.

**NEPHI** I expect it's hard to be thrilled about going to jail.

**SARIAH** Nephi, I want to thank you.

**NEPHI** Don't bother.

**SARIAH** You've been very kind to me these past few weeks. And now driving me up here to see John off to—on the train. I'm grateful.

**NEPHI** My pleasure, ma'am.

**SARIAH** Don't lie, Nephi.

**NEPHI** I'd rather.

**SARIAH** Nephi, you love your father.

**NEPHI** Oh, yeah.

**SARIAH** I wish with all my heart, Nephi, that when your father leaves today, he could leave knowing that you love him and forgive him. (pause) Please.

**NEPHI** You know I still love you, Sariah. (She nods. He takes her by the shoulders and kisses her on the forehead. In a very motherly way she takes his face in her hands, and kisses him gently on the lips. He stands straight.) You're not the only woman in the world, you know.

**SARIAH** (smiling) There he is, Nephi.

**NEPHI** For you, Sariah.

**SARIAH** For him, Nephi.

**NEPHI** For me.

(John enters, accompanied by two guards in military blue. Sariah moves back, and joins Rhoda, Martha, and Garn Reid, who are just entering from the other side. She indicates that they should wait. They watch as Nephi and John walk toward each other, both tense, but affecting a relaxed manner. They stop a pace apart.)

**JOHN** Well, Nephi, how are you?

**NEPHI** Fine.

**JOHN** The store?

**NEPHI** Well, business is down. Gentiles all shop at Auerbach's and the Saints don't do much buying now.

**JOHN** I was thinkin', Nephi, it might be a good thing to carry some farm produce too, in front of the store. That way we can build up steady customers, always have some ready money.

**NEPHI** I was kinda thinkin' along those lines myself.

**JOHN** Well, then I can go easy, with everything in your hands.

**NEPHI** Like to think so.

**JOHN** You'll look after the girls?

**NEPHI** Best I can.

**JOHN** I know you will. Well then (offers hand) I'll say goodbye to you now. (Nephi takes the hand—then puts his hand on his father's shoulder. John pulls him close) I'm proud of you, son. (Nephi can't answer. John pulls away) Well, then. Six months and I'll be out. (He starts towards the guards)

**NEPHI** Wait! (John stops) There's more'n me came to see you off. (John looks around, sees the wives)

**JOHN** (holding out his arms) You brought me my girls!

(They run to him and he holds them all)

What an armful you are! Well, now, it looks like I can go to jail as happy as a prisoner ever has. Don't cry, it's a waste of water! Brother Brigham never liked waste of water. I'm leavin' you in good hands. Not that you aren't capable of taking on the Great and Abominable with your own hands and lickin' it, but I feel safer

knowin' Nephi's there. And Garn Reid here, he'll check on you now and then. (Shakes Reid's hand) Well now, a kiss from each of you, and I'll go. These good brothers are anxious to put me on the train. (He kisses each briefly) I'll have no one grievin' like I was dead. Although I won't be much alive away from you.

**OFFICER** (Calling from near the train) Get a move on there!

**JOHN** (Looking back at them) My, but I have got a beautiful family. (He walks off with the guards as the music comes up.)

**NEPHI** (as John exits)

Rise, you women,  
Rise, you men,  
Rise from the dust of night.  
The day's relief:  
Come wash yourselves in light  
Arise from an evening of grief.

Sing, you sisters,  
Sing, you wives,  
Sing of your love for him  
Whose smile, whose touch  
Linger along the rim  
Of making you love him too much.

**ALL**

Ah—(vocalize in harmony)  
Sleep, you sorrow,  
Rest, you pain,  
You've done enough tonight;  
Let peace, let calm,  
Let morning set us right;  
The morning will soothe like a psalm.

**NEPHI**

Sing of our Father!  
Morning is His gift!  
Morning is His gift!  
And His name is Light.

Father—

**WIVES** (in turn)

Mother and Mother and Mom.

**NEPHI**

Mother, Mother, and Mom.

### Production History

The first draft of *Father, Mother, and Mom* was written in 1971, shortly before scriptwriter Orson Scott Card left for a mission in Brazil. Composer Robert Stoddard directed a reading of the script about six months afterward, but the script was not produced at BYU, the reason given being that BYU could not produce a play that seemingly condoned polygamy, for the very reasonable purpose of avoiding the appearance of giving Church sanction to the modern practice of polygamy.

Shortly after Card's return from Brazil in 1973, he and Stoddard rewrote the play from beginning to end. The extensiveness of the change

can be seen in the fact that of the songs in the original version, only five are still in the show: Aaron Bean's "Polygamy Song," "Our Father Loveth Us," Nephi's "Give Me a Sign," "Things're Lookin' Dull," and "There Are Two of Us." The songs written in 1973 clearly reflect both Stoddard's growth as a composer and Card's greater control of his lyric-writing: the sparse poetry of Sariah's "In My Dreams," the hauntingly beautiful melody in the wives' trio, "My Sister," the gentle finale, all show both improvement in skills and a greater sensitivity to the possibilities in musical plays.

Many have viewed the play as a defense of or an attack on polygamy. According to the author, it is neither. Instead, it is an examination of what polygamy did to people's hearts, and even more important, an examination of what price people will pay for obedience, and what the rewards are.

The play, in its original version, was very much a realistic, full-set type play. But in rehearsal for its first full-fledged performance by the Utah Valley Repertory Theatre Company in their first season at the Castle in Provo, the formal structure of the play was broken down, and the

flowing mood that had developed in the readers theatre production was retained. Actors remained onstage throughout; the same actor played several parts; Nephi became the judge, and then, in the middle of the trial, became himself again, in his only articulate confrontation with his father; and in the first production, dancers echoed the movements of John Monson and his wives, showing physically what the actors were singing and portraying in speech.

The first production was directed by Stoddard in 1974. The second production was directed by Card in January 1977 at the Greenbriar Theatre at 8261 South Redwood Road, West Jordan, Utah—south Salt Lake County. Much to everyone's surprise, this second production (which included extensive rewrites, including the elimination of one character) broke all attendance records at the small community theatre. As in the previous production, the author played the leading role of John Monson.

#### **Original Production Cast**

John Monson—Orson Scott Card  
Nephi Monson—Chip Boynton

Martha Monson—Patricia Cummings  
Rhoda Carabit—Christine Speirs  
Sariah Bean—Kira Pratt  
Aaron Bean—Ed McDonald  
Apostle White/Garn Reid—Scott Wilkinson

President Goodbody—Mark Howarth  
Ferrol Spoon (prosecutor)—Michael Allen

Bill Skinner—Nolan Goodwin  
Annabelle Carabit—Nina Beardall

#### **Greenbriar Production Cast**

John Monson—Orson Scott Card  
Nephi Monson—Russ Card  
Martha Monson—Nita McKenzie  
Rhoda Carabit—Kathryn Laycock  
Sariah Bean—Cynthia White  
Aaron Bean—Mike Evenden  
Apostle White/Bill Skinner—James Mills

Goodbody/Garn Reid—Mark Howarth  
Annabelle Carabit—Margaret Blair

For information on production and for additional copies of the script, write to Orson Scott Card, 475 East 500 South, Orem, Utah 84057. Without permission, all productions, readings, and duplications of this script are strictly forbidden by law.



*Sariah (Cynthia White), Martha (Nita McKenzie), Rhoda (Kathryn Laycock), and John Monson (Orson Scott Card) in Greenbriar production.*