

BEAUCY DOW

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A domestic drama about the Great Accommodation

THE BEEHIVE STATE

A NEW PLAY

By Robert Frederick Lauer

INTRODUCTION

“TRUTH IS A KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS as they are, and as they were and as they are to come.” It is ironic that among the very people espousing the teachings of Joseph Smith, his definition of “the truth” is ignored, not in words but actions. Whenever religious communities embrace common creeds, values, or roles (determined by one’s sex, age, or race), Truth, to some degree, is sacrificed. History, doubts, anger, frustrations, personal aspirations are ignored and pushed down into dark little compartments. We know they are there, but if they are kept in the dark we don’t have to see them; if we keep them in separate little compartments we don’t have to deal with them for what they really are—integrated parts of our personal makeup. Honest self-appraisal is avoided and we sustain the idealized, romanticized, and sanitized vision of our situation (perhaps “predicament” is a more appropriate word).

If we are blessed (as are the characters in this play), a single event, be it great or minute, will occur, forcing light into the dark places and shattering our compartments. Because of the discomfort it inflicts, when the event occurs it is not considered a blessing; yet it finally demands that we make the most important moral decision of our lives: either to continue in our previous life as “people of the lie” or to accept the truth about ourselves. Doing the latter is frightening because the values, roles, and creeds of our community may be destroyed by the light, but in the end new values, roles, and affirmations based on things as they really are, have been, and will be take their place.

The Beehive State is about such an event in the lives of one family. The particulars of this family’s history, their various roles, and their theology are Mormon to the very root. Nevertheless, the situation—the encounter of the individual with the Truth and

the realization that one must surrender to Grace—is universal.

Dedicated to:
“The Cleavers”

(John, Kevin, Mark, Mitch, Blaine, Matt, Mike)

Tom Rogers
Robbin Olson

Pat Ryan
Tish Moger

Kristin Hill
Patty Tiffany

M’Lisa Bailey
Marilyn Fowler

Ernest and his three wives . . .

. . . all of whom inspired this little opus in prose, and all of whom made my last year and half in “Zion” the most exciting of my life; supporting me, in many ways unknown to them, through the commitments, the trials, the discoveries, and the little apostasies. If, as the prophets say, time is one eternal round, then somewhere on that orb we’re sealed forever together, living and reliving those beautiful (and sometimes bitter) days in the neighborhood.

— ROBERT FREDERICK LAUER

THE BEEHIVE STATE was first presented by The Olde Theatre Company (a division of Portsmouth Parks and Recreation Department; Portsmouth, VA) on 12 August 1989. It was produced and directed by Mr. Lauer. Lights were designed by Raymond Rodrigus and operated by Vickie Carrou. Norma Lauer and Joan Stone served as seamstresses. The cast was as follows:

TALMADGE CANNON

EVANGELINE CANNON

BEULAH CANNON

REBA CANNON

MORONI TALMADGE CANNON

MAHONRI MORIANCUMER CANNON

ETHER CANNON

JASHER CANNON

JOSEPH SMITH FLY

HELEN FLY

Russ Stine

Shirley Becker

Susan Stillman

Ann Hicks

Mark Stephen Lauer

Jim Cadenhead

Tommy Gay

Jason Askew

Bob Hill

Linda Marley Smith

The play takes place in the backyard of Beulah and Reba Cannon’s house in Provo, Utah, on 23 and 24 July 1903.

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ACT I

SCENE: *The back yard or one of the Cannon houses in Provo, Utah. The small two story house has a large back porch with two doors leading into two separate kitchens. A clothes line stands in the back yard.*

TIME: *The afternoon of 23 July 1903.*

PROLOGUE: As the audience is seated, a female voice can be heard singing the old Mormon children's hymn, "In Our Lovely Deseret."

AT RISE: MAHONRI, age 14, ETHER, age 13, and JASHER, a small boy who is also 13, are seated on the porch steps examining a collection of stones and one empty whiskey bottle.

MAHONRI: This whiskey bottle oughta bust the devil out of Aunt Evangeline's window and stink up her parlor good!

ETHER (*sniffing the bottle*): It smells like when the horses pee!

JASHER: Have you ever tasted whiskey?

MAHONRI: Nobody I know has ever tasted whiskey—least ways, nobody in Provo. It's forbidden. Gosh, Jasher, you're so puny for thirteen.

ETHER: I bet the Gentiles next door drink whiskey.

MAHONRI: Not the Steinbergs, Dummy!

ETHER: Daddy says all Gentile men get drunk and beat their wives.

MAHONRI: But Mama says the Steinbergs are so nice you'd swear they belonged to the Church, and Mama knows 'em better than Daddy. Now, who's gonna run up in Aunt Evangeline's yard and throw this bottle through her window?

(MAHONRI and ETHER look at JASHER.)

JASHER: I don't think my Mama would want me to do that.

ETHER: Of course she does, but she can't admit it or there'd be trouble in the family. You know Aunt Evangeline's proud and stiff-necked.

MAHONRI: Why else would she make our daddy build her that big house on Main Street while Ether, me, and my mama have to live here with you and your mama?

ETHER: We have to get her to move out of that big house.

JASHER: By throwing whiskey bottles through her windows?

MAHONRI: And by smashing her beehives and even tearing down her white picket fence if we have to!

ETHER: Jasher, you're not thinking of going back on our secret sacred oath and covenant are you?

MAHONRI: Aw, Jasher, you're so puny! Now come on—raise your

arm to the square and take it again! (ETHER forces JASHER's arm to the square.) Now repeat again after me!

(JASHER repeats each of the following lines after MAHONRI.)

I dedicate my life to driving Aunt Evangeline out of her fancy three story house . . . for her own good . . . so she'll repent and not be so stuck up . . . and if I ever, ever tell anyone about our mission . . . may my innards be torn out and stomped on by everybody!

Now cross your heart! There! You've taken this oath twice, so don't go breaking it unless you want to suffer the penalty twice!

BEULAH (*from inside the house*): Ether! Mahonri!

ETHER: Do you think she suspects anything?

BEULAH (*from inside*): Mahonri Moriancumer Cannon!

MAHONRI: She's calling me by my full name: she knows!

(BEULAH, an attractive woman in her early 40s, comes out on the porch.)

BEULAH: Ether! Mahonri! (*The boys start to run off.*) One more step, young men, and I'm picking a switch! (*The boys freeze.*) Where have you been?

MAHONRI: On Main Street watching them set up for the Pioneer Day Parade.

BEULAH: And then what did you do? Mahonri Moriancumer Cannon, look me in the eye. I'm giving you a chance to redeem yourself. And don't lie because I already know the truth.

(REBA, a pretty young woman in her early 30s, enters from the other back door.)

MAHONRI: It doesn't mater if I lie or not: you'll still whop me!

REBA: Mahonri, don't be fresh to your mother. What's happened, Beulah?

BEULAH: Evangeline just telephoned. They've been at it with rocks again. They set the bees swarming and she can't hang out her laundry. What if your brothers and sisters have no dry clothes for the Pioneer Day parade tomorrow?

ETHER: They're not my brothers and sisters!

BEULAH: That does it! I'm picking a switch!

ETHER: No! I didn't mean it!

BEULAH: Well, I should hope not! You may call them your "half-brothers and sisters" if you like, but you will claim them as family and you will not be ashamed!

MAHONRI: We're not ashamed exactly. We just don't like it—the Principle. Nobody else is doing it anymore—just old people.

BEULAH: Why are you complaining? If not for the Principle you'd have stayed three little spirits up in heaven waiting to be born—maybe in some awful place like New York to a Gentile father who'd drink and beat your mother. Would you like that? And you wouldn't have Moroni for a big brother.

MAHONRI: Moroni's different. We like him.

BEULAH: How do you think he'd feel about you being so hateful to his mother?

REBA: Jasher, tell me what you did.

JASHER: I can't. I took an oath.

REBA: Never mind that.

JASHER: Well, we got rocks—little ones—and threw them at Aunt Evangeline's house, and when she ran out, Mahonri threw a rock—a big one—at the hives to make the bees swarm.

REBA: You boys tried to make those bees sting Evangeline?

BEULAH (*trying to hide a smile*): Why, Mahonri, that is wicked!

That is just about the most sinful thing I've ever heard! Sinful, sinful, sinful . . .

REBA (*stiffling a laugh*): It's an abomination! That's what it is!

Jasher, are you sure you didn't throw that rock?

JASHER: Yes, ma'am. Mahonri wouldn't let me because he said I was too puny.

BEULAH: Well, you boys are certainly confined to that house until your daddy gets home. (*The boys moan.*) And there will be no weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth! I promised Sister Zanita that you'd have signs for the parade tomorrow, and paints and paper have been on the daybed since Sunday, so get to work.

REBA: You go with them, Jasher—and behave yourself.

MAHONRI (*to JASHER as they exit.*) Oath breaker!

JASHER: I took that oath twice, so I have to break it twice before you can stomp my innards!

(*The boys enter the house and the women break into laughter.*)

BEULAH: This is all your fault.

REBA: Mine?

BEULAH: All you have to do is say Evangeline's name in that tone of voice.

REBA: What tone of voice?

BEULAH: You know. You do that and my tongue starts wagging.

The boys overhear us and it gives them ideas.

REBA: Will you tell Talmadge about this?

BEULAH: No. Boys will be boys . . . (*Pause. Then laughing . . .*)

And Evangeline will be Evangeline!

REBA: She's not a bad woman.

BEULAH: But she does take advantage of being first . . . demanding things . . .

REBA: She'd do anything for you.

BEULAH: I suppose.

REBA (*in "that" tone*): Evangeline . . .

BEULAH: And never let you forget it! (*They both laugh.*) Stop! The boys will hear us and run over there to stone her.

(*BEULAH starts to the house.*)

REBA: Beulah . . . I have some things I need to discuss with Talmadge. Would you mind if he stayed with us tonight?

BEULAH: Well, he did stay with you his last night in town—

REBA: I know, and I wouldn't ask if it weren't important.

BEULAH: And Mahonri and Ether were looking forward to an evening with their Daddy. (*Pause.*) Why don't we let Talmadge decide.

REBA: Of course . . . yes . . . that's fine.

(*BEULAH exits. REBA, who has brought out a basket of wet laundry, begins hanging clothes on the line. Suddenly she drops the clothing, staggers and begins to faint. MORONI, age 23, enters the yard carrying school books under his arm. When he sees REBA staggering, he drops his books, runs and catches her in his arms. He leads her to the porch and seats her on the steps.*)

MORONI: Aunt Reba, are you all right?

REBA: Moroni . . . yes, I'm fine.

MORONI: Let me get Aunt Beulah.

REBA: No, don't! It's just this July heat.

MORONI: You look so pale.

REBA: I just need to catch my breath.

MORONI (*picking up laundry*): Let me hang these up for you. (*He takes off his jacket, neatly folds it and lays it on porch, then begins to hang up the laundry—most expertly. REBA chuckles at his fastidiousness.*) What?

REBA: It's odd seeing a man hanging out laundry.

MORONI: Do scriptures forbid it? I've always helped Mama around the house.

REBA: You're a good son.

MORONI: I don't know about that.

REBA: I hope Jasher follows your example.

MORONI: Jasher's a great kid; not the kind to ever get into trouble or be led astray by the other boys.

REBA: Have you spoken to your mother this afternoon?

MORONI: No. I just left the Academy.

REBA: I wouldn't be surprised if she stopped by here today.

MORONI: She probably has things to discuss with Papa.

REBA: Two or three little ones come to my mind. (*Smiling slyly.*)

So . . . who are you taking to the picnic tomorrow?

MORONI (*smiling, bashfully*): You know.

REBA: Yes, I suppose I do.

MORONI: Actually, we'll be picnicking with Zanita's folks. You think Papa will mind?

REBA: Well, you know he likes having the family together on holidays. If you're serious about Zanita, he'd say she should join your family . . . Patriarchal Order, you know.

MORONI: Yes, Yes! Patriarchal Order, Patriarchal Marriage, the Principle!

REBA: Is there a problem with that?

MORONI: Not with Zanita, but with her father. Brother Fly's mother was his father's fourth wife . . . and, well, you've heard about her . . .

REBA: Suicide? Well, it is hard sometimes.

MORONI: I knew you'd understand. Brother Fly wants Zanita to have it easier. He's afraid if we marry, later on I'll take after Papa and want to take other wives.

REBA: But the Church stopped performing plural marriages thirteen years ago.

MORONI: But it's said that certain Church authorities will still perform the ceremony secretly—

REBA: Those are rumors! I wish people would stop spreading them! It really bothers me!

MORONI: It bothers me, too! (*Pause.*) Honestly, Aunt Reba, don't you ever wish that things had worked out differently.

REBA: What things?

MORONI: You know . . . the Principle.

REBA (*quickly*): Moroni, it was a commandment.

MORONI: Well, if I was God, I wouldn't have commanded it.

REBA: One day when you are a God you can organize your worlds differently.

MORONI: If I ever make it that far.

REBA: What else is bothering you?

MORONI: Oh, I might as well tell you now. I invited Brother Fly to come here this afternoon to discuss the situation. Do you think Papa will be able to talk some sense into him?

REBA: It seems I remember Talmadge saying that Brother Fly's being named after the Prophet Joseph Smith had gone to his head, and that was a dangerous thing because there's nothing else up there.

MORONI: Oh, men are so frustrating! Why can't they be reasonable and easy to talk to like you and Mama?

(*MAHONRI, ETHER and JASHER run out of the kitchen with paper and pencil.*)

MAHONRI: Moroni, help us with our signs! You're an artist!

BEULAH (*off stage, from inside the kitchen*): I told you boys to stay inside till your daddy gets home!

REBA: It's all right, Beulah! I'll keep an eye on them! Moroni's here!

BEULAH (*dashing out of the house*): Moroni?! . . . Moroni, how's your Mama?

MORONI: I haven't been home this afternoon.

BEULAH (*relieved*): Oh . . .

ETHER: If you don't help us, Moroni, we'll tell Sister Zanita and then she won't kiss you!

MAHONRI (*giggling*): It's a sin to kiss before you're married!

ETHER: Mama, did you let Daddy kiss you before you were married?

BEULAH: He never tried. He's a gentleman who honors his priesthood—as is Moroni. So hush this nasty talk.

REBA: Your father never kissed me before we married.

BEULAH: For goodness sakes, Reba, don't encourage them!

REBA: There's nothing wrong in talking about it. He just held my hand. But young people are different these days. Maybe Moroni has . . .

MORONI (*embarrassed*): Aunt Reba!

REBA: Well, things are changing, even in the Church.

BEULAH: That may well be, but we don't have to talk about it in front of the children. Now, you boys hush or I'll pick a switch. Finish your signs.

ETHER: Only if Moroni will help us.

MAHONRI: Moroni's silly for Zanita! Moroni's silly for Zanita! . . .

MORONI (*taking pencil and paper from him*): All right, all right! Anything to shut you up. Let's see. How about something simple . . . like a beehive?
(*All fall silent.*)

ETHER: Why draw that?

MORONI (*as he draws*): Because the beehive's a symbol for the Kingdom of God. In the Kingdom we all have jobs like bees in a hive. If even one person fails to do his job, the Kingdom won't function properly—just as a hive won't function if every bee isn't kept busy. (*Finishing the drawing.*) There! Does that look like the hives in my mama's backyard?

REBA: They looked like that the last time I saw them. Beulah?

MORONI: I have an idea! Jasher, why don't you dress up like a bee when you carry this sign in the parade tomorrow?
(*MAHONRI and ETHER burst out laughing.*)

JASHER: No! Everyone will laugh at me!

MORONI (*to the laughing boys*): You two hush! No one will laugh.

JASHER: Then you do it!

MORONI: I'm too big. People *would* laugh at me.

MAHONRI: Do it, Jasher! That'll be your penalty for breaking your oath!

JASHER: I'd rather have my innards stomped!

MORONI: What?

BEULAH: They're just being silly!

MORONI: We could make him some paper wings to wear.

REBA: That would be precious!

MAHONRI & ETHER (*teasing*): Precious!

MORONI: You two hush or we'll dress you up like angels!

MAHONRI: We're no angels!

BEULAH: You're certainly not!

JASHER (*crying*): Mama, don't make me do it!

REBA: I won't. Don't cry.

MAHONRI (*teasing*): Don't cry, Little Jasher!

ETHER: He cries at everything!

REBA: You two leave him alone or I'll pick a switch!

BEULAH: Excuse me, Sister, but if any switches are needed for these two, I'll pick them.

REBA: They're always tormenting Jasher.

BEULAH: Maybe if Little Jasher weren't so sensitive, they'd leave him alone.

REBA: That's fine! Blame the child being picked on!

BEULAH: I'm not blaming *him*. You're too protective. He'll grow up weak and spineless—

REBA: Well, you let your two run wild like little vandals!

BEULAH: Maybe if you let Little Jasher run wild like other boys, he wouldn't be such a . . .

MORONI: All right! That's enough, both of you! Goodness! What brought that on? We were having such a nice visit.

BEULAH: Moroni, you couldn't understand. Your mama has always had it easier—

MORONI: She has not!

BEULAH: She's the first!

MORONI: And therefore has probably had a harder time of it than you!

BEULAH: Is that what she's told you?

MORONI: My mama's never said anything about it one way or the other.

BEULAH: All I know is that she has the luxury of her own house.

MORONI: I'm sure Mama hardly considers it a luxury living away from her husband two thirds of the time—

REBA: We all share *that* burden equally, Moroni.

BEULAH: It's difficult for two women to raise their children under one roof. We sometimes lose our tempers over nothing and say things we don't mean. (*Pause.*) Reba, forgive me for what I said. Little Jasher, I owe you an apology, too. Boys, apologize for making your little brother cry *again*.
(*MAHONRI and ETHER start to grumble, but BEULAH stops them with a smack on the heads.*)

ETHER & MAHONRI: We're sorry.

BEULAH: Let that be an end to the teasing.

REBA: I'm sorry, Beulah. I just have a lot on my mind today. Boys, I'm sorry for calling you vandals.

ETHER (*proudly*): We don't mind being called vandals, Aunt Reba.

MORONI: I'm sorry for starting the whole thing. I just thought Jasher would look cute dressed as the King Bee.

BEULAH (*after a pause*): Now we're all one big sorry lot. Just the type of family I'm sure Talmadge wants to come home to.

MORONI: Can't we all be patient with one another—if only for today? I need papa to be in a good mood.

TALMADGE (*voice off stage*): Lovely rose garden, Mrs. Steinberg!

MORONI: That's him now! Can we forget all this?

REBA: It's forgotten.

MORONI: Thank you, Aunt Reba. Everyone smile . . . Aunt Beulah, please? (*BEULAH smiles.*) Thank you, Aunt Beulah! Boys, run and greet him! He loves it when you do that!
(*TALMADGE enters carrying a suitcase and a banner that reads, "DESERET: This is STILL the place." He is late middle aged, handsome in a rugged way, with well groomed gray hair and beard. He is dressed like a typical American business man of the period.*)

TALMADGE (*grumbling*): Those Gentiles are bringing down the entire neighborhood! Their yard's a regular jungle! (*The boys ambush him with cries of "Daddy!" and "Father!" He lights up.*) Well, well! who have we here?

ETHER: What did you bring us, Daddy?

TALMADGE: Let me see. I have a bag of hoarhound candy for Mahonri, one for Ether, and one for Jasher!
(*He hands each of them a small brown paper bag.* BEULAH *kisses him on the cheek.*)

BEULAH (*indicating his banner*): What in the world is this?

TALMADGE: My banner for the parade tomorrow.

BEULAH: You're marching again?

TALMADGE: I'll march as long as I'm able. We have to remind the younger ones, like this fellow here—(*He grabs MORONI by the neck, playfully wrestling with him.*)—why the Saints settled here in the first place. Otherwise they'll embrace a lot of new fangled doctrines and notions, and write us clean out of the history books. (*Approaching REBA.*) You look pale, Reba. Does she look pale to you, Beulah?

REBA: I'm fine, it's just the heat. (*She quickly kisses his cheek.*)

TALMADGE: I'm sorry I didn't bring you any candy, Moroni, but I didn't expect to see you today.

MORONI: Papa, you know I hate hoarhound candy.

TALMADGE: That's right. You like that sweet sugar stuff they sell now days.

MORONI: I suppose I do.

TALMADGE: That's the problem with young folks these days: their tastes are too rich and sweet. How's your mother and brothers and sisters?

MORONI: They're getting ready for the parade tomorrow.

TALMADGE: Good! (*TALMADGE stands back and looks everyone over.*) What a picture! They say obeying the Word of Wisdom guarantees a long life, but I think a man can be a coffee fiend and live to be as old as Methuselah so long as he can gather his wives and children around him on holidays—Oh, Moroni, don't mention to your brothers and sisters that I brought these boys the hoarhound candy. I don't think the older ones would care, but the little one is still a cry baby.

MORONI: Papa, I've invited some folks in the ward over this afternoon to discuss something important with you.

TALMADGE: Oh?

REBA: Moroni's been seeing a young lady.

TALMADGE: Wonderful! It's about time! Twenty-three and still single; I was afraid you were going to stay an old bachelor forever.

MORONI: Maybe not even until the end of the summer.

TALMADGE: What a blessing! Who is she?

MORONI: Zanita.

TALMADGE: Zanita who?

MORONI: Fly.

TALMADGE: Zanita Fly . . . (*Pause. Then he realizes . . .*) Not that Fly girl?

BEULAH: She's very sweet, Talmadge. She's the boys' Sabbath School teacher and they just love her to death.

TALMADGE: Isn't her father that bastard who never shuts up in priesthood meeting?

BEULAH: Talmadge!

TALMADGE: He is one, and by his own admission. He thinks the principle was all some kind of mistake. Well, his mother was his father's fourth wife, and if the Principle was a mistake, that must mean he considers himself a bastard. Who am I to call the man a liar?

MORONI: This is exactly why you need to talk—to work out your differences.

TALMADGE: His differences are with God, not me.

REBA: Be that as it may, he has a precious daughter—

MORONI: And remember, Papa, the sins of the fathers are not passed on to their children. There's no need to assume that Zanita thinks like her father . . . unless you believe in Original Sin, and that's as apostate as believing the Principle was a mistake.

TALMADGE: Well, I'm not apostate. Oh, let the man come over. I'm sure I can set him straight.

MORONI: Thank you, Papa!

TALMADGE: "Thank you, Papa! Thank you, Papa!" Where am I sleeping tonight?

REBA: Talmadge, I have some things to discuss with you—(*Suddenly aware of BEULAH.*)—but I suppose they can wait.

TALMADGE: No, if we have things to discuss, I'll stay with you tonight.

BEULAH: Actually, Talmadge, you did stay there your last night in town.

MAHONRI: Come on and stay with us tonight, Daddy!

TALMADGE: Is that right, Reba?

REBA: Ah . . . yes. I wasn't thinking. Tonight is their turn.

TALMADGE: Then that's settled. Are you sure you're feeling all right, Reba?

REBA (*unconvincingly*): Yes, I'm fine.

BEULAH (*to TALMADGE*): Come inside. I'll fix you something to eat. (*BEULAH throws REBA a look as she leads TALMADGE and her boys into her kitchen. The banner is left propped up on the porch. REBA becomes aware that MORONI is watching for her reaction to the situation.*)

REBA: Come on, Jasher.

JASHER: I want to go with Father.

REBA: You can see him after he's eaten.

JASHER: Aw, Mama . . .

(*JASHER exits into REBA's kitchen. REBA notices that MORONI is still watching her.*)

REBA (*unconvincingly*): I'm fine, Moroni. Really I am.

(*REBA exits. Now alone, MORONI paces nervously about, then he sits on the steps and begins to pray silently, fervently. EVANGELINE enters the yard carrying a basket of wet laundry. She is TALMADGE's age, well groomed, but the years haven't been as kind to her. MORONI quickly jumps up as EVANGELINE, obviously upset, goes directly to the clothes line and begins removing REBA's clothes.*)

EVANGELINE (*without looking up*): Is your father back yet?

MORONI: He just arrived.

EVANGELINE: He really needs to discipline his sons—not *ours*—his!

MORONI: Mama, don't wrinkle those up, Aunt Reba just hung them out.

(*He helps her with clothes.*)

EVANGELINE: He would never have let you and your brothers behave like this.

MORONI: Have Mahonri and Ether been throwing rocks at the house again?

EVANGELINE: They set the bees swarming so I can't get to my clothes line.

MORONI: Well, don't say anything to Papa today.

EVANGELINE: He shouldn't know that his children are making my life a living hell? They don't get these ideas by themselves.

They hear Reba and Beulah gossiping about me—

MORONI: Oh, Mama . . .

EVANGELINE: "Oh, Mama!" They're jealous because I have my own

- house. I know what I'm talking about! My father had six wives. I grew up around that sort of thing.
- MORONI: Mama, please! I don't want Papa upset today. Brother Fly is coming over to talk to him.
- EVANGELINE: Well, let me get out of here before the bullets start flying.
- MORONI: Don't say that!
- EVANGELINE (*smiling for the first time*): I'm only joking. If it's God's will that you marry Zanita, the bishop will sanction the wedding regardless of what your father says.
- MORONI: You think?
- EVANGELINE: I *know!* (*Pause, then teasingly.*) I must say, I never thought your friendship with Zanita would ever evolve into anything so serious. She's never impressed me as the serious type.
- MORONI: You sound as though you don't approve.
- EVANGELINE: Why, she's just as sweet as she can be! A *precious* little child. Lord knows she needs someone to take care of her. She's so petite and helpless.
- MORONI: I like feeling needed. It's important to a man.
- EVANGELINE: To all of us.
- MORONI: But it's more important to a man. That's what I think.
- EVANGELINE (*handing him a dress to hang up*): Of course you do, dear. I don't know how your father and I would have survived had we been so needful of each other's constant care and attention.
- MORONI: I think you're jealous of Zanita—of girls today because they have it so much easier than you did, and because they won't have to deal with the Principle.
- EVANGELINE: Nonsense! If anything, I feel sorry for them! The Principle built characters, fostered independence and self-sufficiency—something these little girls today could use. Sister Christiansen says that her grandson's little wife sobs and sighs and throws a terrible to-do about missing him so whenever he has to travel. My heart bleeds for any woman who can't go at least a year without a man.
- MORONI: What about those years Papa was away on Church missions?
- EVANGELINE: I was happy he was serving the Lord.
- MORONI: When he married Aunt Beulah you didn't speak for a week.
- EVANGELINE: I don't remember that!
- MORONI: How about when Papa spent that year in jail for unlawful cohabitation?
- EVANGELINE: There were hard times, but the daughters of Zion were strengthened by them. We worked *with* the men back then to make the desert blossom as the rose. We were the first women to be granted suffrage. The Brethren told us to shake off the chains of male domination and *we obeyed them*. We voted, ran businesses, households—even kept the Church going when the Feds drove the men underground because of the Principle—
- MORONI: Mama, you should do lecture tours again.
- EVANGELINE: The Church doesn't need the sisters to defend themselves now that statehood's been granted. Why, not one suffragette will be marching in the parade tomorrow. Imagine! (*Pause.*) If you do marry this Zanita, treat her as if she has a mind—even if you have to act on blind faith for a time. Don't protect and pamper her. Let her be your helpmate. *Force* her to be if she puts up a fuss . . . and for goodness sakes, don't wear her out!
- MORONI (*embarrassed*): Mama!
- EVANGELINE: I know what I'm talking about! One woman is no equal for one man's passions. That's why the Gentiles keep their wives on pedestals—easy access! And the poor creatures are so worn out and confused by it all, they're in a stupor most of the time.
- MORONI: You will leave this world defending the Principle.
- EVANGELINE: I'm merely imparting some motherly advice.
- MORONI: Well, I don't think Reba's very happy . . . with the Principle.
- EVANGELINE: Oh, she's fine.
- MORONI: It's hard for her . . .
- EVANGELINE: For all of us.
- MORONI: But you do have your own house.
- EVANGELINE: They could to if they'd demand it. I know one man and all his wives can't live under one roof. The summer my Papa married wife number four, he decided to move the family to this farm by Little Cottonwood Canyon. We were going to raise silkworms by the house—this was back when the Church was promoting *that* industry. It was going to be paradise—so Papa thought. That little experiment lasted three miserable months. Mind you, not a harsh word was ever spoken, but you could cut the air with a knife at any given moment, and if we had stayed there a day longer, only the silkworms would have survived the holocaust.
- MORONI: I'm going to say something to Papa about Reba.
- EVANGELINE: No! That's between the two of them! Reba can speak for herself.
- MORONI: You know she won't.
- EVANGELINE: Then she'll have to learn. She's young and I think she still has romantic notions about your Papa—if you can imagine that! She'll have to learn that this silly Gentile romanticism is incompatible with the Principle.
- (TALMADGE, *finishing a sandwich, comes out of BEULAH'S kitchen.*)
- TALMADGE: I heard some swarming out here and thought it might be those Flies.
- EVANGELINE: No. Just the Queen Bee come to stir up the hive.
- TALMADGE: What mischief are you up to?
- EVANGELINE: My turn to house you doesn't come until day after tomorrow, I couldn't wait that long to find out how our great patriarch has been spending his summer.
- TALMADGE: Would you believe I've been feeling lonely?
- EVANGELINE: Well, you've certainly come to the right place to cure that. I haven't had time to feel lonely since 1878.
- TALMADGE (*putting arm around MORONI*): I've missed my family.
- EVANGELINE: Three days here should see you through the dog days of August.
- TALMADGE: Complain if you like, but I envy your being able to stay with the children.
- EVANGELINE: Then let's trade places. You mind the children and I'll run the "plantation" in St. George.
- TALMADGE: You'd like that, wouldn't you?
- EVANGELINE: I've done it before.
- TALMADGE: And you could do it still?
- EVANGELINE: Better than the three strongest men you know.
- TALMADGE: Believe me, if it were acceptable, I'd keep house and you could earn the bread.

EVANGELINE: In a world where Gods appear to adolescents and angels bury gold bibles, who's to say what's acceptable?

TALMADGE (*looking proudly at MORONI*): The children keep me feeling young.

EVANGELINE: Really? They're aging me prematurely—not that I'm complaining. Women accept aging more graciously than do men. Thus we have the Principle.

TALMADGE: God himself commanded that we practice the Principle.

EVANGELINE: Only because he discovered what we women have always known: keep a man feeling virile and he's your servant for life.

TALMADGE (*to MORONI*): Son, let that be a lesson to you: never discuss theology with women. They're incapable of the kind of thinking required.

EVANGELINE: On behalf of my sex, I thank you for the compliment.

REBA (*appearing at her door*): Evangeline!

EVANGELINE: Sister, you don't mind if I borrow your lines?

REBA: Of course not—

BEULAH (*voice from inside*): Evangeline?

(BEULAH *appears at her door.*)

EVANGELINE: Why, hello, Sister. Lovely day for doing laundry.

TALMADGE: Are your lines down?

EVANGELINE: No. For goodness sakes, Beulah, put your eyes back in your head. We share one husband; why not one clothes line?

TALMADGE: What are you hiding from me?

MORONI: Nothing, Papa. Isn't that so, Mama?

TALMADGE: No. There's something. She's smiling.

EVANGELINE: I'm delighted to see you.

BEULAH: Stop your games, Evangeline! Just tell him! I hate your games!

EVANGELINE: Nothing has happened so let's forget about it. That sweet little Zanita Fly and her parents will be here any time now.

JASHER (*coming out of REBA's kitchen*): Aunt Evangeline, I'm sorry we threw those rocks at your beehives today—

BEULAH, MORONI, ETHER & MAHONRI: Jasher!

REBA: Oh, Jasher, for goodness sakes!

TALMADGE: What's this?

EVANGELINE: Jasher, I wasn't going to mention it.

TALMADGE: Why not?

EVANGELINE: I promised Moroni I wouldn't.

MORONI: Mama!

TALMADGE: Moroni—

EVANGELINE: With the Flys coming over, we didn't want you falling to pieces.

TALMADGE: I don't fall to pieces!

EVANGELINE: Lower your voice, Talmadge.

MAHONRI: Jasher, you're puny!

ETHER: Covenant breaker!

TALMADGE: I've told you boys a hundred times not to throw rocks at your Aunt Evangeline's house!

EVANGELINE: Just forget it, Talmadge.

TALMADGE: I will not! You boys apologize at once!

ETHER: Only if you promise not to whop us!

EVANGELINE: Don't talk back to your father.

BEULAH: Excuse me, Sister! (*Slapping ETHER's head.*) Don't talk back to your father!

TALMADGE: I've never whopped any of you! I don't believe in spanking children.

EVANGELINE: Only because you're not around them twenty-four hours a day.

TALMADGE: I've never laid a hand on any of my children!

EVANGELINE: You've never laid a hand on any of *their* children.

TALMADGE: Or *your's!*

EVANGELINE: What about the time Moroni laughed at old Sister Kimball's mustache in Testimony Meeting?

TALMADGE: Moroni, have I ever spanked you?

MORONI: Papa, that was over fifteen years ago.

TALMADGE: Well, I don't remember having ever hit you!

MORONI: All right! You never hit me!

TALMADGE: You're just saying that to shut me up! My own family thinks I'm a tyrant!

REBA: No, we don't, Talmadge.

EVANGELINE: Far from it. If anything, you're too soft on these boys.

BEULAH: You can keep your opinions to yourself, Sister!

MORONI: Mama, please—!

BEULAH: Well, maybe if I had some property of my own!

EVANGELINE: If you want it, Sister, demand it!

BEULAH: Ladies do not go about *demanding* things!

EVANGELINE: Well, don't resent *me* because *you* insist on being a "lady"!

TALMADGE: What are you talking about?

BEULAH: Just forget it, Talmadge!

EVANGELINE: Reba, I must commend you on the fine job you're doing raising Little Jasher.

REBA (*overlapping*): That's enough, Evangeline, *please . . .*

EVANGELINE: It's a pity others in this house don't follow your example.

TALMADGE: *Evangeline*, I have had enough of this!

EVANGELINE: So it's all my fault again? I'm in the wrong for being honest?

(JOSEPH SMITH FLY, *a clean-shaven gentleman in his late 40s, and his wife, HELEN, have entered the yard unseen.*)

JOSEPH (*clearing his throat*): I hope we haven't arrived at an inopportune time.

MORONI (*running to shake his hand*): No, of course not, Brother Fly!

TALMADGE (*half-heartedly shaking his hand*): We were just having a little family council.

JOSEPH: I remember my father and his wives having many such "councils."

EVANGELINE: Hello, Helen. . . . Isn't Patriarchy a wonderful system? We women and children can express ourselves freely knowing that in the end our husbands will do whatever *they* think is best.

HELEN: Indeed it is, Sister Cannon. Why, I suppose I have just about the most kind, thoughtful husband a girl could want. He always has my best interest in mind. I'm blessed, very, very blessed.

EVANGELINE: My, but that does make you a lucky . . . "girl."

HELEN: Oh, I don't mean to flaunt my good fortune.

EVANGELINE: Flaunt? You're merely *informing* us, dear.

MORONI: Sister Fly, where is Zanita?

HELEN: She is . . . ah . . . Joseph?

JOSEPH: Zanita was too busy to come.

HELEN: She's about to work herself to death on the parade tomorrow. I tell her not to take so many Church callings, but she's so dedicated, you know.

EVANGELINE: Let's hope the little dear doesn't over-do it. We want her to have her strength for the actual proceedings tomorrow.

HELEN: Don't you worry. Joseph told her she's to stay home and get a good night's sleep tonight.

JOSEPH (*looking at MORONI*): She's been out every night for the past two weeks, you know.
(*Uncomfortable pause.*)

MORONI: Well, shall we go inside or have a seat here on the porch?

EVANGELINE (*leaving the yard*): Do whatever you like. Moroni, would you fold those clothes when they're dry and bring them home with you?

MORONI: Mama, don't you want to stay and discuss things with the Flys?

EVANGELINE: I'm sure Brother Fly wants to speak to your papa alone.

HELEN: But Sister Cannon—Evangeline, we girls could enjoy a nice little visit inside while the brethren are meeting . . . maybe inside, Sister Cannon—Beulah?

BEULAH: Of course. I've some homemade root beer inside.

HELEN: How lovely! Joseph?

JOSEPH (*helping HELEN up the porch steps*): Yes, go on, Helen. Get out of this heat and enjoy a cool glass.

EVANGELINE: Goodness, Talmadge, didn't your mother teach you any manners? Follow Joseph's example and help Beulah up the steps like the gentleman I know you are.
(*He does and EVANGELINE starts off.*)

HELEN: Oh, Sister, won't you stay?

EVANGELINE: That would be such a blessing, Helen, but my children are waiting—three boys and three girls—and the boys can't manage without their mother there. You know how dependent men are on us when it comes to doing things.

HELEN: Indeed! Why, Joseph could never put up laundry, much less take it down and fold it like Moroni here.

EVANGELINE: What a catch my son will make for some lucky young girl. Who knows? Perhaps it will be Zanita if our husbands decide in her favor.

HELEN: I suppose we'll have to leave that to the brethren, won't we?

EVANGELINE: Won't we?
(*She turns to leave.*)

REBA: Evangeline, don't leave.

BEULAH (*finally relenting*): Please join us, Evangeline. It's been a long, hot day and there's enough root beer for all of us.

MORONI: Mama? . . . please?
(*EVANGELINE looks at MORONI, then silently goes into the house with the women and children.*)

HELEN (*exiting*): Oh, how special! I've been meaning to stop by for a visit ever since you moved into this house. How long has it been?

BEULAH: Five years.
(*They are gone.*)

TALMADGE: Well, Brother Fly, I'm told we need to talk.

JOSEPH: Yes, Brother Cannon. We have a situation on our hands.

TALMADGE: Your daughter wants to marry my son. Yes, I suppose that qualifies as a "situation."

JOSEPH: Your son wants to marry my daughter. That makes it *quite* a "situation."

TALMADGE: I don't think it's as serious as all that.

JOSEPH: To be totally honest, I think my phraseology is quite appropriate.

TALMADGE: Oh, we're being *totally* honest. Then perhaps we'd best begin with a prayer.

JOSEPH: I prayed before I came over.

TALMADGE: But I did not.
(*They kneel, facing one another and clasping each other's hands.*)

JOSEPH: Shall I offer it. I don't mind.

TALMADGE: Neither do I, Brother Fly.

JOSEPH: All right . . . I just thought since I was the guest . . .

TALMADGE: But since this is *my* home . . .

JOSEPH: Whatever. (*Pause.*) At my home I let the guest offer the prayer.

TALMADGE: But you've already prayed today.

JOSEPH: That's right, and you have not.

TALMADGE: I prayed this morning upon rising, again at breakfast, again before starting my trip here, just a while ago before lunch, and I assure you, had I known you were coming here, I would have prayed again. I'm a praying man.

JOSEPH: Did I imply that you weren't? I prayed upon rising, before breakfast, before and *after* closing a business transaction, at lunch, and *twice* regarding this situation.

TALMADGE: I would have done the same, but until a moment ago I didn't know we had a situation.

JOSEPH: Indeed we do. *Quite* a situation.

TALMADGE: Shall we pray.

JOSEPH: It's your home

TALMADGE: Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can meet together as loving brothers in your priesthood. We ask that you would soften any hard heart, loosen any stiff neck, open any closed narrow mind; and show that person that it is only by obeying *all* your commandments—even the unpopular ones—that he will ever be worthy to be called your son . . . and help us straighten out this situation in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

JOSEPH (*glaring at TALMADGE*): Amen. (*Under his breath.*) I'd say the score is one to zero, your favor.

TALMADGE: Did you say something, Brother Fly?

JOSEPH (*rising*): About this situation . . .

TALMADGE (*rising*): Our children wish to marry.

JOSEPH: And you see no problem in that?

TALMADGE: Is there one?

JOSEPH: There could be a problem of faithfulness to the Church.

TALMADGE: Brother Fly, I didn't know! Zanita always struck me as being very devout.

JOSEPH: She is!

TALMADGE: Then what's her problem?

JOSEPH: My daughter has no problem!

TALMADGE: Then I see no reason why I should object to her marrying my son.

JOSEPH: Your son has the problem—excuse me. Let me rephrase that: Your son has potential for problems.

TALMADGE: Moroni is an upright young man who . . .

JOSEPH: I'm referring to his ideas on marriage.

TALMADGE: I'm still in the dark, Brother Fly.

JOSEPH: From whom did your son get his ideas about marriage?

TALMADGE: From your daughter, of course.

JOSEPH (*sighs*): Brother Cannon, you are not a stupid man.

TALMADGE: Thank you, Brother Fly. I hope the sentiment remains mutual.

JOSEPH: Men such as yourself didn't outsmart the Feds by being naive. They know exactly what and what not to hear; how to answer and how to evade a question.

TALMADGE: Brother, why don't you just ask what you want to know.

JOSEPH: Very well, but I'll need time to choose my words so you'll understand.

TALMADGE: Take all the time you need. Would you like a dictionary? I have one in the house.

JOSEPH: Thank you no, Brother. (*Pause.*) "Raise up a child in the way he should go, and when he is older he will not depart from it." Is that scripture true?

TALMADGE: All scripture is true.

JOSEPH: But that particular verse?

TALMADGE: A man has his free agency and can always reject his upbringing.

JOSEPH: But don't most people tend to live as they were raised?

TALMADGE: Sister Snow raised her children as good Latter-day Saints, but her oldest boy ran off to San Francisco and became a Catholic Priest. Tragic. Very Tragic . . .

JOSEPH: Have you raised your children to be good Latter-day Saints?

TALMADGE: I've tried my best.

JOSEPH: And you've succeeded?

TALMADGE: So far.

JOSEPH: Have you a testimony of the Church?

TALMADGE: Indeed! Have you?

JOSEPH: Indeed. Have you a testimony of the New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage?

TALMADGE: Of course.

JOSEPH: And your children?

TALMADGE: They're free to choose for themselves what they will believe.

JOSEPH: What is your testimony concerning marriage, Brother Cannon?

TALMADGE: That *all* must marry in order to enter God's Kingdom.

JOSEPH: And they must be married for time and all eternity by the priesthood—not just "until death do you part"? Why is that?

TALMADGE: So that they might become gods themselves in the next life . . .

JOSEPH: And create worlds of their own just as our Heavenly Father has?

TALMADGE: Why, Brother Fly, you're a regular gospel scholar.

JOSEPH: How were our spirits created?

TALMADGE (*with a sigh; it's all so elementary*): The Gods created our spirits in the same way our parents created our bodies: they were begotten by our Heavenly Father and born of our Heavenly Mother.

JOSEPH: I know we have the same Heavenly Father, but have we the same Heavenly Mother?

TALMADGE: I can't remember. That was before I was born. Can you remember, Brother Fly?

JOSEPH: I'm not speaking of you and me alone, but of all the world's people. Have we the same Heavenly Mother?

TALMADGE: The Church says we do not.

JOSEPH: Some past Church leaders have *speculated* that we do not.

TALMADGE: No, the prophets have always taught that we do not.

JOSEPH: Then are some of God's children bastards?

TALMADGE: I've known my share of them.

JOSEPH: I'm speaking literally now. Are some of God's children misbegotten?

TALMADGE: Certainly not!

JOSEPH (*as if winning a case*): Ahah! Then God must have more than one wife.

TALMADGE: You've been a Mormon all your life and just now realizing this?

JOSEPH: It's true?

TALMADGE: All of the gospel is true.

JOSEPH: But why does God need many wives? Couldn't one Heavenly Mother have borne us all?

TALMADGE (*chuckles knowingly*): Oh, Brother Fly, Brother Fly . . . how many people have lived on this earth?

JOSEPH: Millions.

TALMADGE: And how many other worlds has Heavenly Father created?

JOSEPH: Worlds without end.

TALMADGE: Each filled with millions of his children. Now, how long does it take a woman to carry a child to term?

JOSEPH: Nine months, of course.

TALMADGE: Of course. And isn't a man's spirit a more complicated and miraculous thing than his body?

JOSEPH: I suppose.

TALMADGE: Then it stands to reason that it takes at least nine months for a Goddess to carry it to term. Now, if Heavenly Father had only one wife, think how long it would take her to bear—oh, let's say—only a million spirits. Allowing some rest time between births, Heavenly Father would have to wait eternities just to have enough children to populate even one tiny planet. Why, he wouldn't be a very powerful God at all, and that one poor Heavenly Mother would be exhausted and probably a nag from all that birthing. She'd always be chewing on Heavenly Father's ear, and Heaven would be a living Hell. Therefore, common sense tells us that Heavenly Father must have many wives.

JOSEPH: How many?

TALMADGE (*after a thoughtful pause*): Two hundred.

JOSEPH: Two hundred?!

TALMADGE: Some gospel scholars have figured as many as a thousand or more, but if I were God, I could get the work done quite well with only two hundred.

JOSEPH: But since Heavenly Mother is powerful in her own right, couldn't she bear many spirits at one time?

TALMADGE: How many? Two? Three?

JOSEPH: A dozen . . . even a hundred.

TALMADGE: Like a litter?

JOSEPH: I wouldn't put it that crudely.

TALMADGE: NO!

JOSEPH: Why not?

TALMADGE (*with a sigh*): It's very simple. Humans are made in the image of the Gods, and humans don't have litters. A Heavenly Mother might have twins or triplets—if they run in her family—but she can't birth a litter like a sow or dog or cat, and it's blasphemy to even suggest such a thing.

JOSEPH: Does Moroni think it blasphemy?

TALMADGE: Why not ask *him*?

JOSEPH: Have you encouraged him to continue polygamy?

TALMADGE: With my children, I teach by example. Now I've some questions for you. Were the founding prophets true or false?

JOSEPH: True . . .

TALMADGE: And does truth change?

JOSEPH: What?

TALMADGE: Shall I pick my words more carefully? If two and two make four today, will they tomorrow?

JOSEPH: Of course!

TALMADGE: Why?

JOSEPH: It's a mathematical law.

TALMADGE: It's God's law and his laws never change!

JOSEPH: Oh, I know what you're driving at!

TALMADGE: Good! Then I needn't go on with these stupid questions like some damn lawyer! I know the prophets' teachings on polygamy are true!

JOSEPH: That was sixty years ago!

TALMADGE: It was true then and it's true now!

JOSEPH: Maybe God has changed his mind about it!

TALMADGE: Truth never changes!

JOSEPH: If I can change my mind, why can't God change his?

TALMADGE: Why do you think God commanded the Principle?

JOSEPH: Maybe it was to test our faith.

TALMADGE: Like Abraham being asked to sacrifice Isaac?

JOSEPH: What's wrong with that?

TALMADGE: So you're comparing marriage to human sacrifice? It was a burden placed on us as a test?

JOSEPH: It was a burden to my mother—and to many other women!

TALMADGE: It will ensure all of those women a crown of glory in eternity!

JOSEPH: But what about *this* life? The Principle had to be abandoned for the Church and our state to survive!

TALMADGE: Do you think God would have abandoned our people after all the persecution we endured? If we had held out just a bit longer, he would have saved the Church from the Feds and given us statehood—and we wouldn't have had to compromise our Faith!

JOSEPH: I *know* the Church's decision to end polygamy was God's will!

TALMADGE: You don't *know*! You *believe*!

JOSEPH: I know!

TALMADGE: You *believe* you know, and I *know* you only believe you know, because what you believe is false!

JOSEPH: It is not!

TALMADGE: I know the Principle is God's will because I've lived it! You haven't lived it, so you can never know that I don't know!

JOSEPH: But I do know!

TALMADGE: Know what?

JOSEPH: That . . . that you're wrong! I know it because the Holy Spirit is burning in my bosom! I can feel it!

TALMADGE: Holy Spirit my eye! That's the lunch you prayed over!

JOSEPH: Is not! It's the Spirit!

TALMADGE: Well, the Spirit's burning in me, too!

JOSEPH: The same Spirit can't be burning in both of us!

TALMADGE: It sure can't! It must be *another* Spirit burning in you!

JOSEPH: Oh ho! Like the Devil? Is that what you're implying?

TALMADGE: I didn't want to mention names.

JOSEPH: I know it's the Holy Spirit burning in me!

TALMADGE: I know it's the Holy Spirit burning in me!

(*The WIVES and CHILDREN come running out of the house.*)

JOSEPH: I know the Lord would never let any man lead the Church astray!

TALMADGE: Where in the Hell did you get an idea like that?

JOSEPH: I will not stand here and be subjected to profanity!

TALMADGE: Hell isn't profanity! It's a geographical location. It's where you get your far fetched ideas, and it's where you can go in a handcart for all I care!

MORONI: Papa!

JOSEPH: I should have known you'd digress to this when you delivered that sermon to me under the guise of a prayer!

TALMADGE: You were mighty anxious to pray yourself!

JOSEPH: Only so I might be spared another sermon by another over-the-hill self-righteous polygamist!

HELEN: Joseph, please!

TALMADGE: A lot of good my "sermon" accomplished!

JOSEPH: You, Brother, could learn a little humility!

TALMADGE: Why, I'm one of the most humble men there is!

JOSEPH: I'll never find out about that as I never intend to speak to you again! Helen, come on!

HELEN (*handing glass of root beer to REBA*): Well . . . ah . . . thank you for the root beer, Sisters.

TALMADGE: I guess this means we no longer have "quite a situation on our hands"?

JOSEPH: I wouldn't let my Zanita marry into your family if it were the last one on God's green earth!

TALMADGE: Thank Heaven! Otherwise, we'd have to see each other on holidays and at family gatherings, and I would have to pretend to like you for the children's sakes. I don't think I could be that much of a hypocrite!

JOSEPH: You might be surprised at how easily hypocrisy comes to you! Helen, are we going or not!

HELEN: Yes, Joseph.

(*They start off.*)

MORONI: Brother Fly, can't we . . .

JOSEPH: And stay away from Zanita!

TALMADGE: Tell her to stop chasing my son!

JOSEPH: Hardhead! Apostate!

(*The FLYS are gone. MORONI, sad and silent looks after them.*)

EVANGELINE: I knew it would come to this if they discussed theology.

REBA: Talmadge, couldn't you put aside doctrines for a moment and think of what's best for Moroni?

TALMADGE: I was thinking of what's best for Moroni. Now, leave us alone. I need to talk to him, man to man.

EVANGELINE: Oh, spare us please! *Another* man to man talk?

BEULAH: We'll be inside.

(*The WIVES and CHILDREN go into the house. TALMADGE puts his hands on MORONI's shoulders and squeezes them.*)

TALMADGE: I tried reasoning with that man, but he's no Latter-day Saint. Forty years ago they'd have slit his throat for apostasy.

MORONI (*breaking away*): I don't care about forty years ago. It's 1903, he is a Latter-day Saint, there are many more just like him and I want to marry his daughter.

TALMADGE: Marry her. I'll put up no fuss.

MORONI: But he will unless you apologize.

TALMADGE: For what? My life? Having my family? NO! I won't. I can't. (*Pause.*) You look tired. You've been losing sleep—

MORONI: Papa, all the other fellows my age are married with

children. In less than two years I'll be twenty-five, and according to Brigham Young, if I'm still unmarried, a menace to society!

TALMADGE (*chuckling*): A bachelor who's a menace at twenty-five was probably a menace at nineteen. Wild boys are like wine. They've always been seductive, they just become more so with age.

MORONI: But I've never been wild. I've never really looked at girls the way other fellows have—

TALMADGE (*chuckling*): You're a virtuous young man—

MORONI: No! I'm not! I've always felt with women . . . Numb? . . . Scared?—I don't know! They've always been so . . . above men. (TALMADGE *laughs*.) It's not funny, Papa!

TALMADGE: You just respect women.

MORONI: No! Listen to me for once! (*Pause*.) How do you do it, Papa? I mean, *three wives*?

TALMADGE: What do you mean? I just *do* it.

MORONI: But you don't seem to . . . *see* them. All of this is hard on them. I know you don't mean to, but you hurt them—in little ways you don't see.

TALMADGE: What?

MORONI: The thing is, I don't see how any man can avoid hurting women. It's as if it's in their nature. But it's not in mine. I've never wanted responsibility for hurting some girl. But Zanita's—I don't know!—so pleasant, so agreeable that it all seems . . . *safe* somehow. The Church says everyone *must* marry. Isn't that true? *Everyone*? Then I better marry Zanita—soon, or I might not ever!

(MORONI *sits on the steps and looks away, visibly shaken*.)

TALMADGE *cannot understand*. *Pause*. Then . . .)

TALMADGE (*uncomfortably*): Now don't get yourself all upset. (*Pause*.) You're always doing that . . . getting yourself upset. You've always been so . . . tender hearted. . . . So sensitive for a boy. (*Pause*.) Would you like a blessing. (*No answer*.) Why don't I give you a blessing? (*He takes a small vial from his pocket, stands behind MORONI, pours oil from the vial onto his head, places the vial back in his pocket and places his hands on MORONI's head*.) Moroni Talmadge Cannon, in the name of Jesus Christ and by the authority of the holy Melchizedek Priesthood, I anoint you with oil and seal this father's blessing upon your head. Be strengthened. Stand proud. For you are one of our Heavenly Father's choicest sons! Accept the dominion given you. Power in the priesthood be upon you now and always. You will be given beautiful, precious children numerous as the stars in the sky and *wives* to bear them for you, to be a comfort and a blessing to you . . .

MORONI (*tearing away*): No! Keep your blessing! I don't want it! Keep everything and let God keep the *wives*!

TALMADGE: Moroni, listen to me—

MORONI: I only want *one wife*—Zanita!

TALMADGE: Marry her, but know that it's your right, your privilege and *responsibility* in the priesthood to have more—many more!

MORONI: I don't believe this!

TALMADGE: The Principle is a commandment.

MORONI: Brother Fly was right about you!

TALMADGE: You have to start planning for eternity *now*—

MORONI: I don't care about eternity!

TALMADGE: That's blasphemy!

MORONI: What you're saying is blasphemy! The Church stopped performing plural marriages!

TALMADGE: Does the Church govern God?

MORONI: I won't argue theology!

TALMADGE: The Manifesto was only a trick to beat the Devil at his own game! The *Church* might not perform plural marriages, but that doesn't keep certain priesthood leaders—the apostles, even the prophet himself—from performing them by their own authority.

MORONI: Rumors!

TALMADGE: Facts! The Principle must continue—

MORONI: That's what the old timers say!

TALMADGE: That's what the prophet and apostles *now* say! I should know! I'm getting married myself when I return to St. George!

(*Silence*. Then . . .)

MORONI (*overlapping*): What?

TALMADGE (*overlapping*): I was going to tell the family tomorrow. No one else must know. (MORONI *stares at him in disbelief*.) What?

MORONI: Mama doesn't know? She doesn't even suspect?

TALMADGE: She'll have no problems with this.

MORONI: You really believe that, don't you? Who is she—this new wife of yours? Is she young and pretty? How old is she, Papa? My age? Is she more suited to be my wife than yours?

TALMADGE (*sincerely hurt*): I have sacrificed everything—*everything!*—to bring you and your brothers and sisters into this world! I deserve better than this from you!

MORONI: How many more, Papa? How many more “aunts” and brothers and sisters do I have hidden away?

TALMADGE: I only have *three*! What's wrong with you? I thought you'd be happy for me.

MORONI (*disgusted*): Well, why wait until tomorrow? Mama! Mama! The whole family's here now. Why postpone the good news? Aunt Beulah! Aunt Reba!

TALMADGE: You don't think they'll understand?

MORONI: We'll see.

TALMADGE: Son, I know women.

MORONI: And I know Mama.

(*The WIVES and BOYS come out on the porch*.)

REBA: What is it?

EVANGELINE: Uh-oh! They've had their man-to-man talk.

BEULAH: What's the matter?

MORONI: Papa has a surprise.

(*All eyes turn on TALMADGE*.)

MAHONRI, ETHER & JASHER: A surprise? What is it, Daddy? What?

BEULAH: Talmadge?

MORONI: Go on, Papa.

TALMADGE: There is to be a wedding.

BEULAH: Congratulations, Moroni!

REBA: I knew everything would work out!

MORONI: No. Aunt Reba, I'm not the one getting married.

TALMADGE (*sheepishly*): I am.

BEULAH: What?

TALMADGE: I was going to tell you tomorrow, but Moroni didn't think the good news could wait.

REBA: What?

BEULAH: Is this a joke? I don't understand.

EVANGELINE (*smiling, with calm authority*): No, Talmadge.

TALMADGE: No?

EVANGELINE: No. I forbid it.

TALMADGE: You *forbid* it, Evangeline?

EVANGELINE: As first wife it is my right to say there will be no new wives.

TALMADGE: You have no authority to *forbid* anything.

EVANGELINE: You have enough wives!

TALMADGE: I will be the judge of that!

EVANGELINE: Oh, is that the way it is now?

TALMADGE: That's the way it's always been. As first wife you are to set an example of obedience to the priesthood for your sister wives.

EVANGELINE: All my life I've been obedient! Now it's your turn!

BEULAH: She's right, Talmadge. The Church says no new plural marriages.

TALMADGE: True. But the priesthood can act independently of the Church.

EVANGELINE: Who is she, Talmadge? Some milky white, doe-eyed young thing in St. George?

TALMADGE: All of you think you know me so well, don't you? I hate to disappoint you, but, no, Evangeline. She's two years your senior: a widow with seven children.

REBA: Do you love this woman, Talmadge?

(Pause. Then . . .)

TALMADGE: Yes, Reba . . . yes, I do.

(Another pause. Then—)

BEULAH: I'm with Evangeline! I forbid it also!

TALMADGE: Now *you're* forbidding, too? What is it with you women?

BEULAH: Certainly two wives can have some say-so!

TALMADGE: Why are you so upset? Jerusha married her dead husband for eternity. Our marriage will only be for this life.

EVANGELINE: Let's strike a bargain. Forget this—Jerusha, did you say?—forget about marrying her for this life only, and we'll let you marry a dozen beautiful young girls of your choice for the next life. Once I'm dead I won't mind them a bit!

TALMADGE: No bargain!

EVANGELINE: And where will your new bride live? Surely you won't desert her in St. George during the fall and winter.

TALMADGE: During the winter she'll live here in Provo.

EVANGELINE: Oh. Here in this house?

TALMADGE: I'm renting the Cole's place on Second East . . .

BEULAH: The house with the big front porch I told you I liked so much?

EVANGELINE: I've a better idea. Let her live right here in this house.

BEULAH: Oh, that's a fine how-do-you-do!

EVANGELINE: Hear me out, Sister. You and Reba have had your eye on my big house on Main Street. There are several good sized rooms not now in use, and if Talmadge's wedding plans go through, our large bedroom will also be vacant.

MAHONRI: You mean we get to move into the big house.

EVANGELINE: That's right. You and your brother can even have our big double bed as your own. I'll sleep in your sister's old room—in the single bed.

MAHONRI: I knew this would happen sooner or later!

ETHER: And we didn't even have to use the whiskey bottle!

TALMADGE: Evangeline, be sensible. What are you going to do? Divorce me?

EVANGELINE: So you've got me trapped, do you?

TALMADGE: I don't want you trapped. I only want you to be reasonable.

EVANGELINE: In other words, submit to your will again.

TALMADGE: Not my will. The Lord's.

EVANGELINE: I know my resources are few. All I have is the house in my name. But in that house is our bedroom—

BEULAH: No more talk of bedrooms in front of the children, Evangeline!

EVANGELINE: Why not in front of the children? Let them see things as they are. Talmadge, marry this woman and my bedroom door is closed to you forever.

MORONI: Mama!

REBA: Evangeline, don't!

EVANGELINE: I must! It's all I have left with which to bargain. As it turns out, it's the only place I've ever had any power over him. Isn't that right Talmadge? (*He doesn't answer. There is a long, painful pause and Talmadge is unable to look EVANGELINE in the eyes. Finally . . . softly . . .*) Talmadge?

TALMADGE (*looking at her sadly*): Evangeline . . .

EVANGELINE: You could at least let me have that one illusion.

TALMADGE: I've never been able to lie to you.

EVANGELINE: No, you've always found it so easy to be totally honest with me. (*To MORONI.*) After all my years of defending the Principle, you must think me a great fool.

MORONI: No, Mama. Not you.

(Pause. EVANGELINE strolls over to look at TALMADGE's banner.)

EVANGELINE: So this is the Beehive State, is it? Well in the hives there's no such thing as a *king* bee. You've upset the hive, Talmadge. Don't get stung. (*Smiling.*) Boys, your wicked Aunt Evangeline is going to make you ice cream over at the big house!

ETHER: Chocolate?

EVANGELINE: Chocolate it is! Beulah, do you want to move your clothing over tonight?

BEULAH (*who has started removing clothes from the clothes line*): Tomorrow will be soon enough. Boys, help me with your Aunt Evangeline's laundry.

ETHER: We're really moving?

BEULAH: Into the big house on Main Street!

(EVANGELINE, BEULAH and BOYS exit.)

MORONI: I'm going to see the bishop. I will marry Zanita!

(MORONI exits. REBA looks at TALMADGE.)

REBA: Evangeline was wrong. You haven't always been honest with her . . . not about me. (*Pause.*) I thought I would be the last one in your life.

TALMADGE: I did, too.

REBA: You're truly in love with this Jerusha, aren't you?

TALMADGE: I am.

REBA: Maybe in love for the first time in your life?

TALMADGE: I think so.

REBA: Well, I can't fight against that.

(REBA starts off.)

TALMADGE: You're going with them?

REBA: For now. Sooner or later I'll have to tell them the truth about us. After I do, I'm sure they won't want me around.

TALMADGE: Reba, *you* at least can be reasonable—

REBA (*hurrying off*): Good-bye, Talmadge.

(TALMADGE, now left alone, flops down on the porch steps, dismally, his chin in his hands. He looks around the yard to make sure no one will hear him. Then . . .)

TALMADGE: Damn it all to Hell!

C U R T A I N



ACT II

SCENE: *The same as before. Early the next morning—24 July 1903.*

AT RISE: MAHONRI and ETHER are throwing rocks at the house. TALMADGE comes running out of the house, buttoning up his shirt and tucking it in his pants. He looks as if he hasn't slept a wink all night.

TALMADGE: Boys, stop that! You'll break a window!

MAHONRI: Good!

TALMADGE: Put those rocks down! Mahonri, do you hear me?
(TALMADGE steps towards them and MAHONRI, with stone in hand, raises his arm higher and glares at TALMADGE.) Young Man, don't you even think about it! Now both of you drop those rocks now!

ETHER: Promise you won't beat us!

TALMADGE: Have I ever beat you before?

ETHER: Promise!

TALMADGE: All right! I promise—even though you both deserve a good spanking.

ETHER: We don't deserve a spanking! You do!

TALMADGE: What did I do?

MAHONRI: You upset Mama and Aunt Reba and Aunt Evangeline, and now they're gonna be suffocates in the parade today!

TALMADGE: They're going to be *what*?

MAHONRI: Suffocates! They're gonna march like a bunch of *suffocates*!

TALMADGE: Do you mean *suffragettes*?

MAHONRI: Yeah—that! And we don't want them to!

ETHER: Nobody else's mother is a . . . one of those!

MAHONRI: They're making banners and everything!

ETHER: Daddy, tell them they can't do it!

MAHONRI: You're the Patriarch! You hold the priesthood and they're only women. They have to listen to you.

ETHER: All the other women listen to their husbands.

MAHONRI: The only reason they're marching is because of you.

TALMADGE: Is that what they told you?

MAHONRI: No. Last night we couldn't sleep, so we snuck downstairs and listened outside the kitchen door to them talking.

TALMADGE: Why couldn't you sleep? Did you miss your own bedroom?

MAHONRI (*happily*): No, Daddy. We like Aunt Evangeline's house. We got to sleep in your old bed.

ETHER: Mama says we're gonna live there from now on. Are you living here?

TALMADGE: It'll be kind of lonely.

MAHONRI: Don't worry. We'll take turns coming by to visit you, and on holidays maybe Mama will let us spend the night here.

ETHER: You can have our old bedroom, Daddy.

TALMADGE: Thank you.

MAHONRI: But first you have to stop them from marching in the parade today.

TALMADGE: What does Moroni say about all this?

MAHONRI: He isn't here?
TALMADGE: He didn't come home last night?
MAHONRI: Aunt Evangeline thought for sure he was here fussing with you again.
TALMADGE (*starting for the house*): Well, your Aunt Evangeline was wrong.
ETHER: Where are you going?
TALMADGE: To call the police.
MAHONRI: But you have to stop Mama and Aunt Evangeline and . . .
TALMADGE: Boys, you'd have more luck stopping them than I would.
(*The BOYS throw down their stones in frustration and stomp off right. TALMADGE starts up the steps when REBA enters the yard from left leading JASHER. She looks as tired as TALMADGE.*)
REBA: Talmadge. . . ?
TALMADGE: Reba, is it true that Moroni didn't come home last night?
REBA: He wasn't here?
TALMADGE: No. I'm calling the police.
REBA: Wait! We need to talk.
TALMADGE: Later. When Moroni left here he was more angry than I've ever seen him.
REBA: Now! Talmadge.
TALMADGE (*taken aback*): Reba? The tone of your voice—
REBA: So what if Moroni stayed out all night? He's a grown man and this is Provo, Utah! What trouble could he possibly get into *here*, for goodness sakes?
TALMADGE: Maybe he's left Provo!
REBA: Not without taking Zanita.
TALMADGE: Maybe he has. Maybe they've run off to be married by some money-grubbing *minister!*
REBA: I doubt that. Moroni doesn't share your enthusiasm for secret weddings.
TALMADGE: So I'm still the villain, am I?
REBA: I didn't come here to talk about you, but about *me!* (*She starts to cry.*)
TALMADGE (*trying to comfort her*): Oh, look. You've gone and gotten yourself all upset and crying. Come over here and sit down.
REBA: I'd rather stand, thank you! (*to JASHER.*) Go inside and pick out some clothes for the parade.
JASHER: I've never matched my clothes before, Mama.
REBA: Then this will be your first time.
JASHER: What if they don't match?
REBA: You're a big boy now. You know your colors. I trust you.
(*JASHER goes into the house.*)
TALMADGE: You look exhausted.
REBA: I've good reason.
TALMADGE: You didn't sleep well? (*REBA laughs scornfully at the ridiculous question.*) You haven't told Evangeline or Beulah . . . anything, have you?
REBA: Not yet.
TALMADGE: Are you moving into the big house?
REBA: That depends on your reaction.
TALMADGE: To what?
REBA: My pregnancy. (*TALMADGE'S mouth drops open in stunned silence.*) Why don't you call the police about Moroni and we'll talk later.
TALMADGE (*still stunned*): Moroni can take care of himself.

REBA: Look what I've done: gone and gotten you all upset. Come sit down.
TALMADGE: You're certain?
REBA: I've been sure for three weeks now.
TALMADGE: You haven't told the others?
REBA: I wanted you to be the first to know. If Beulah suspects anything, she hasn't let on. There's no reason why she shouldn't know with the way I've been fainting and falling about recently. She must think me such a light-headed little simp!
TALMADGE: But when Jasher was born the doctor said you could never have any more children.
REBA: It seems we've been visited by a little miracle—of all times! (*Pause.*) Jasher nearly killed me. I'm afraid, Talmadge—afraid that this baby is a judgment—a punishment from God.
TALMADGE: A punishment for what?
REBA: For breaking every oath and covenant I made when we married. I have broken them all in my heart. Sometimes I simply despise Beulah and her boys, and other times Evangeline because she is so strong. Beulah and I laugh and say terrible things about her. Then the boys hear us and throw rocks at her house. That's no way for a mother to influence her child! Sometimes I wish that a disease or accident would strike this family so there'd be only you and me and Jasher. Sometimes I hate the Principle, and I . . . I hate—please don't hate *me* for this!—I hate God for commanding it—*sometimes!* I'm sorry, Talmadge. Last night I couldn't sleep because for the first time I almost hated you. I thought I'd be the last one in your life. Some of my aunts were so bitter because they couldn't be my father's first wife. I never cared about that as long as I could be the last. And I thought—I was so sure. But now I find out there's to be another and that you have never been in love with anyone. So last night I almost hated you. For a moment I wished we had never married, and I'm afraid this pregnancy is a punishment for my wickedness. (*She begins to cry. TALMADGE puts an arm around her.*)
TALMADGE: Heavenly Father wouldn't punish you in this way. Where do you women come up with such crazy notions?
REBA: But I've broken my marriage covenants—
TALMADGE: In our hearts *all* of us have. God forbid we should be struck down for it. Heavenly Father understands.
REBA: But he's a man. How could he?
TALMADGE: It's a mystery to me. Maybe that's why he's God.
REBA: Why do you have to marry someone else?
TALMADGE: It's not because *you're* deficient in any way.
REBA: But *I* must be if you need someone new.
TALMADGE: I don't know . . . maybe when you're older you'll understand . . .
REBA: Talmadge, don't do that!
TALMADGE: What?
REBA: Condescend! Whenever I press a point you treat me like a child!
TALMADGE: Forgive me, Reba. You're not a child. I know that. (*Pause.*)
REBA: You're still going to marry this lady from St. George?
TALMADGE: If it's God's Will.
REBA: Well, when God tells you what he wants you to do, come to me and I'll tell you what I'm going to do.
TALMADGE (*tenderly*): I'll tell you what you're not going to do—
REBA: I'm not a child. I won't obey you.

TALMADGE: Then can I tell you what I wish you *wouldn't* do? I wish you wouldn't move in with Evangeline.

REBA: Well, I didn't marry her. . . .

TALMADGE: I wish you would stay here.

REBA: With you?

TALMADGE: I'll be here.

REBA: For a quarter of the time if God approves of your plans.

TALMADGE: It'll be a good time, that quarter. *(Pause.)* Reba, I'll try to make it up to you. I'll be a better father to Jasher and this baby and a better husband to you.

REBA: Beulah won't like it if I stay.

TALMADGE: You just leave Beulah to me.

REBA: You're talking as if you're my father again.

TALMADGE: Old habits are hard to break.

REBA: Try your best.
(She gently kisses him. They embrace.)

TALMADGE: Now I think you'd better go inside and make sure that our little boy is wearing clothes that match.
(BEULAH and EVANGELINE appear dressed in white for the parade and carrying signs which read "Plural wives for national suffrage" and "Women of Utah—vote!" They catch REBA and TALMADGE embracing.)

EVANGELINE: Now isn't that a touching sight? I've imagined the two of you sharing a tender moment such as this many times, but never did I envision so sweet a little picture.

TALMADGE: Well, if it isn't the household brigade.

EVANGELINE: Indeed. Coming for armaments. Materials for more signs are in Beulah's kitchen.

TALMADGE: What do you hope to accomplish with this marching?

EVANGELINE: Oh? Reba's told you of our plans? How thoughtful of you, Sister.

TALMADGE: Ether and Mahonri told me, and if you walked here from Main Street carrying those signs, I'm sure every gossip in Provo knows about it by now.

EVANGELINE: Let's pray not. Without the element of surprise our appearance at the parade will prove shamefully anti-climatic.
(Heading for kitchen.) Now you two continue with whatever you were doing.

BEULAH: What were you doing, Reba?

EVANGELINE: Why, Beulah, whatever is going on here is between Talmadge and his wife.

BEULAH: Aren't I his wife?

EVANGELINE: Only when it's your turn. You see, the Principle is rather like a game of hide-and-seek. When Reba is "it," you hide and keep out of her sight. When you're "it," you cover your eyes and she hides. You can take my turn if you like. After yesterday's little revelation I won't be playing again. It seems Talmadge never thought me much good at the game to begin with.

BEULAH: If you're not playing any more, Evangeline, neither am I.

EVANGELINE: That leaves you with only two players, Talmadge: Reba and your new friend in St. George.

REBA: Would both of you stop it!

TALMADGE: Yes! I've had enough of this . . . wicked talk!

BEULAH *(to REBA)*: I thought you were finished with him!

REBA: I never said that!

EVANGELINE: That's true, Beulah. We did all the talking last night. She just sat silent, looking pitiful and lost.

REBA: That's exactly how I felt. And underneath all your high talk and manners, I think you feel the same way, Evangeline.

EVANGELINE: You've the gift of discernment, Sister, but I have my self respect.

REBA: A lot of good that alone will do you!

EVANGELINE: It's kept me company on many a night these past fourteen years. Which is more than I can say for Talmadge.

BEULAH *(To REBA)*: Why didn't you just say you were coming back to him?

REBA: And be eaten alive by the two of you?

EVANGELINE: Poor child . . .

BEULAH: Poor child, my eye! You're always trying to get him to yourself!

REBA: So are you!

BEULAH: But I've never resorted to sneaking about! You tell us that you're taking Jasher for a walk, and lo and behold, we find you here!

TALMADGE: I've had enough of this!

BEULAH: Oh, Talmadge, you know you're enjoying this!

TALMADGE: Enjoying *this*?

BEULAH: Having three women fight over you?

TALMADGE *(sarcastically)*: Of course! I'm having a splendid time! Let's forget the parade and keep at this all afternoon!

REBA *(to BEULAH)*: I brought Jasher here to change for the parade!

BEULAH: Then why aren't you dressing him?

REBA: I'm following your advice and giving him a little freedom, Sister!

BEULAH: I'm going to the bishop right now! Ether! Mahonri! A new wife indeed! I don't believe for one moment the Church approves of any of this! If the bishop will do nothing, I'll go to the stake president and on up to the prophet himself!
(Calling.) Mahonri! Ether! *(MAHONRI and ETHER appear at right.)* Come on! We're going home!

MAHONRI: Which home?

BEULAH: To Aunt Evangeline's!

ETHER: Where are you going to carry those signs?

BEULAH: In the parade today—if I live that long!

MAHONRI: We're not coming with you if you carry those stupid signs!

BEULAH: Young man, you'll do as you're told!

ETHER: Daddy, don't let her do this!

BEULAH: Your daddy has nothing to do with it! Now come along! I have to see the bishop before the parade!

MAHONRI & ETHER: No!

REBA: Boys, don't be fresh to your mother.

BEULAH: I can handle my own children, Sister! You two *move* before I pick a switch!

REBA: Oh, that's fine!

BEULAH: I'll thank you to keep out of this!

REBA: No wonder they misbehave with you always threatening to beat them!

BEULAH: They're boys! They can take it!
(JASHER appears at the kitchen door dressed in contrasting plaid knickers, shirt, tie and socks.)

JASHER: Mama? Is this all right?
(ETHER and MAHONRI start laughing at him. Even EVANGELINE stifles a laugh.)

REBA: Jasher, what have you done?

JASHER: I like checks. *(The BOYS laugh louder.)* Stop laughing at me!

MAHONRI: You can't go to the parade like that!

JASHER: I can if I want!

REBA: Come on, Jasher. Let's find something else for you to wear.
 JASHER: I didn't do all right?

(ETHER and MAHONRI laugh louder.)

REBA (glaring at them): You did just fine!

BEULAH: Boys, keep quiet or he'll start crying again!

JASHER (to BOYS, starting to cry): Stop laughing at me!

REBA: Now, Jasher, just stop that! You did just fine! If you want to wear that to the parade, you can!

JASHER: Then everyone will laugh at me!

REBA: So you'll laugh right back at them!

MAHONRI: Little Jasher's too puny to do that!

ETHER: Why does he always have to be such a cry baby?

BEULAH: Leave Little Jasher alone!

REBA (exploding): Stop calling him "little"! "Little Jasher" this! "Little Jasher" that! I'm sick of hearing it!

BEULAH: Why are you so sensitive all of a sudden? We don't mean a thing by it! He is little for thirteen.

REBA: He is not little and he's not thirteen!

BEULAH: She's out of her head! I do believe she's taken complete leave of her senses!

REBA: No, I've come to my senses!

TALMADGE (moaning): Not today, Reba! Wait until tomorrow at least!

REBA: Talmadge, I can't take living this lie another minute! (To the WIVES.) Jasher is only ten years old. He was born during my first year of marriage to Talmadge.

BEULAH: You were married in Mexico in '89, and that makes Jasher thirteen.

EVANGELINE: That's right, Reba.

REBA: No, Sisters.

BEULAH: Yes! You were married in August of '89.

REBA: How would you know, Beulah?

EVANGELINE: She would know because I sent her to Mexico as my proxy for the ceremony, to place your hand in Talmadge's.

REBA: Which she never did.

TALMADGE: Well, now you've done it Reba!

EVANGELINE (overlapping): What?

REBA: She has to find out sooner or later, Talmadge! It's all very well for you to keep it a secret when you're traipsing off to St. George all the time! But I have to live here with them!

BEULAH (to EVANGELINE): I . . . I was carrying Ether . . . I was ill! That Mexican heat was unbearable!

EVANGELINE: You've deceived me all these years?

BEULAH: You never asked me about it! You just assumed—

EVANGELINE: I assumed you were an honest woman!

BEULAH: Don't use that self-righteous tone with me! I consented to the marriage! I obeyed the commandment!

EVANGELINE: That wasn't enough!

BEULAH: That is the gospel according to you!

REBA: Don't be too angry, Evangeline. You, more than anyone, should be able to sympathize with what she was feeling.

BEULAH: Sympathize? She wanted revenge!

EVANGELINE: Call it what you like. I wanted you to feel what it was like to give your husband to another woman.

BEULAH: Up until then I never really felt like Talmadge was my husband because of you! For God's sake! I was eight months with child!

EVANGELINE: And I was six months along when I placed your hand in Talmadge's.

BEULAH: Yes, and strong as the mountains around us!

EVANGELINE: To look strong was my duty to the Church. It wasn't easy—not at all!

REBA: I'm sure it wasn't, Evangeline. But if you had seen Beulah then: avoiding everyone—even Talmadge—and when the pains began, Talmadge was worried—well, help me explain, Talmadge! You were there!

TALMADGE: I was worried about the baby, so I took her to the nearest station, ten miles away, and put her on the next train for Utah.

REBA: Before he got back, Apostle Taylor, who was running from the Feds, had to leave; but he said he'd perform the ceremony when he returned that way in a month.

TALMADGE: I returned to Utah to check on your health, Beulah, and that's when I was arrested for unlawful cohabitation.

BEULAH: Why didn't you tell me you hadn't married her?

REBA: I asked him not to. I couldn't let you think you had won that day with your sudden sick spell.

TALMADGE: We had no idea that I'd spend nearly a year in prison. When I was released one thing led to another and we didn't get around to having the ceremony until June of '92.

REBA: When Talmadge moved the entire family here five years ago, we decided to tell everyone that Jasher was older—that he was eight.

BEULAH: But why lie about that?

TALMADGE: We had to protect the Church. We couldn't let anyone know that we had been married *after* the Manifesto.

REBA: That wasn't the only reason. We wanted this family to have some peace and quiet after all those years of running and hiding.

EVANGELINE: Have you had any peace, Reba?

REBA: I've hardly slept a night through since I moved here.

(Pause.) Jasher, do you understand any of this? (JASHER nods, then pauses, then shakes his head "No.") Then listen to me. Your father and I have been very unfair to you. We meant to do what was right, but we made a mistake. We've let you think that you're thirteen, when you're not. Your father married me on June 19, 1892, in Arizona, and you were born nine months later. Your real birthday is March 22, 1893.

JASHER: So I'm only ten?

REBA: That's right.

JASHER (after a pause): Does this mean I have to be twelve all over again?

REBA: Yes.

JASHER (disappointed): I hated being twelve.

REBA: Then think of it as a present—a Pioneer Day present—from your father and me. We're giving you three more years.

JASHER (pointing at ETHER and MAHONRI): It was when I was twelve that they started calling me puny all the time.

MAHONRI: Did not!

JASHER: Did so!

REBA: Then ignore them! You're not puny. You're as big and strong as any ten-year-old boy should be.

TALMADGE: That's right, Jasher.

REBA: And think of this: other boys aren't ordained a deacon until around twelve. You were ordained when you were nine. And you didn't have to wait until you were eight to be baptized. In a way you're blessed. You're special like the Prophet Samuel or John the Baptist.

EVANGELINE: Looking at Jasher, it all seems so obvious. I should have known that it wasn't in Talmadge to father a runt.

BEULAH: This can't be!

EVANGELINE: It is, Beulah, so accept it.

BEULAH: You're not surprised?

EVANGELINE: Only by the fact that Reba could keep this secret so long. You're stronger than I imagined, Reba.

REBA: Thank you, Evangeline.

BEULAH: But the deceit that's been practiced in this family . . .

EVANGELINE (*pointedly*): By all of us, Beulah.

BEULAH: Nothing's really as it seems.

EVANGELINE: Hardly anything.

BEULAH: Who can you trust? If even the Church authorities are hiding things, who can you trust?

EVANGELINE (*looking at TALMADGE*): Trust whoever you like. Just beware.

BEULAH: Maybe the Church has some higher purpose in doing all this, some purpose we can't understand.

REBA: Maybe.

BEULAH: I'm trusting the Church authorities.

EVANGELINE: I suppose that's no better or worse than trusting anyone else.

(MORONI *appears*.)

TALMADGE: Young man, where have you been?

MORONI: I told you I was going to see the bishop.

TALMADGE: All night?

MORONI: Afterwards I wasn't sleepy, so I went for a long walk.

(JOSEPH and HELEN FLY *enter the yard behind MORONI*.)

TALMADGE (*to JOSEPH*): What do you want?

JOSEPH: It wasn't my idea to come back here.

HELEN: Bishop Kimball suggested that we come.

JOSEPH: He said we should settle our difference privately . . . though I suppose privacy in this family is nothing but a fond, fruitless fancy.

EVANGELINE: Joseph, you'd be surprised at the number of things we do privately.

MORONI: Bishop Kimball assured Brother Fly that I have no intention of ever entering the Principle. And he also assured him that you, Papa, will not try to go against the law of the Church in this matter.

TALMADGE (*scoffing*): The law of the Church!

MORONI: That's right, Papa. The bishop says that severe action will be taken against any Church member entering or advocating new plural marriages.

TALMADGE: That's the line we've been feeding the Gentiles for thirteen years.

JOSEPH: This time it's different.

TALMADGE: I'll believe that when I hear it from the prophet himself!

JOSEPH: It may come to that, Brother, unless you open your eyes and realize that this blatant flaunting of the Principle all these years after the Manifesto makes all of us in the Church look like liars and cheats. I wonder what the Gentiles next door think of this family?

TALMADGE: The Steinbergs mind their own business.

JOSEPH: But what they must think! Two women with children living alone together in this house and then you, going into the house in the evening and not coming out until morning—all right here in the open! I wonder what questions the Steinberg's relatives back East ask them. "So, do Mormon men really have harems?" And they could tell them all about it because right here, not twenty feet from their clothes lines, is a living example!

TALMADGE: Don't preach to me! All my life I've sacrificed for the Church and our people—

MORONI: This is getting us nowhere!

TALMADGE: I won't sneak around like an adulterer or a whoremonger!

MORONI: No one called you any of those things! Now, Papa, I want you to promise Brother Fly that you will never try to persuade me to enter the Principle.

TALMADGE: If you want to sell your eternal exaltation for a mess of pottage . . .

MORONI: Papa, you owe me this much!

EVANGELINE: He promises, Moroni.

MORONI: Papa?

TALMADGE: You must detest me.

MORONI (*firmly*): You know that I don't.

TALMADGE: I suppose I've failed in my duty as a father—

MORONI: Papa . . .

TALMADGE: All right! . . . I promise.

MORONI (*offering JOSEPH his hand*): Then it's settled, Brother Fly? Can I marry Zanita??

(JOSEPH *hesitates, then reluctantly shakes MORONI's hand*.)

HELEN: Now there's just one more tiny little matter . . .

JOSEPH: Oh, yes. (*To EVANGELINE*.) This concerns you, Sister Cannon . . . you and your sister wives. (*To HELEN*.) You're a woman, you explain it to them.

HELEN: The bishop asked us to ask you . . . well, he wishes that you and Sister Cannon—and you too, Sister Cannon—would reconsider marching in the parade today.

TALMADGE (*to EVANGELINE*): I knew if you marched here with those signs every gossip in Provo would know about it.

BEULAH: Maybe Moroni told the bishop.

HELEN: No, I think it was the gossips.

TALMADGE: Sister Coles, no doubt.

HELEN: No. The bishop's counselors. They feel this could hurt the Church's image.

MAHONRI: Don't let them do it, Daddy!

TALMADGE: Be quiet, Mahonri!

(*During the following conversation, ETHER and MAHONRI quietly take the wives' signs, which are now resting against the porch, into REBA's kitchen unseen*.)

HELEN: If you march and talk about women becoming more involved in politics, people may get the impression that all is not well with your home life; that maybe Brother Cannon is abusing you. Sisters, we girls know that the only women who take to the streets marching and demanding things are those who are unfulfilled in their divinely ordained domestic duties.

JOSEPH: If you march, Sister Cannon, people will get the wrong idea about the Principle: that it robs women of their freedom and happiness—

EVANGELINE: But isn't that why you're opposed to it, Joseph?

JOSEPH: I'm opposed to it because the Church has discontinued the practice, and I am obedient to the Church.

EVANGELINE: Oh, Joseph, everyone knows that you hate the Principle because of your mother's suicide.

JOSEPH: I never, ever said that! It is gossip and you are unkind to throw it at me!

TALMADGE: Just yesterday you said that the Principle ruined your mother!

JOSEPH: No! I never said those exact words!

EVANGELINE: But you are opposed to it?

JOSEPH: I'm opposed to anything that might tarnish the Church's image!

TALMADGE: When I was young, the Saints said, "To Hell with our image! We'll obey the Law of the Lord whether it offends the world or not!" The Lord has called us to be a peculiar people, and if you're afraid to be that—

EVANGELINE (*laughing bitterly*): Joseph is just as peculiar as you, Talmadge! We're all peculiar! Peculiar, illogical and not completely honest, any of us! What about the truth—how we really feel about things?

JOSEPH: The time for the truth is when we're alone among ourselves.

EVANGELINE: And at other times what are we to do? Sing "All is well! All is well!"?

JOSEPH: We cannot hang our dirty garments in public! What of the weak in the Church, whose fragile testimonies could be crushed if they thought our women were feeling abused or unhappy?

EVANGELINE: Anyone that weak has no business in the Church.

JOSEPH: Everyone has business in the Church, and it is up to us who know better to strengthen their faith?

EVANGELINE: So now you want to protect the Principle?

JOSEPH: I want to forget it! It's past! But if we are to have reminders of it—and that's just what you are—the least you can do is put up a good front.

EVANGELINE (*singing, bitterly*): "All is well! All is well!" (*To the family.*) Come on, everyone! You know this hymn! Sing! (*Singing.*)

We will make the air with music ring!
Shout praises to our God and King!
Oh, how we'll make this chorus swell!
All is well! All is well!

(*No one has joined her. She turns to JOSEPH.*) Come, Joseph. If I have to start singing this song, you have to join me.

JOSEPH: "Start singing," Sister Cannon? Why, you've been singing this song for years.

EVANGELINE: And you haven't?

JOSEPH: All right, I confess. I've kept my feelings to myself, denied them—all to keep some type of order, some steady ground to build my life on. You want honesty, Sister Cannon? Then look me in the eye and admit that you've done the very same. (*EVANGELINE, looking him in the eye, is silent.*)

HELEN: You have to admit that my husband makes good sense, Sister Cannon. I'm blessed to have such a good man to take care of me. And I know, despite everything, that Brother Cannon is also a good man. So why don't the two of you—(*To BEULAH and REBA*)—and the two of you—work out your differences right here in your own home. I don't think any of you really want to march in that parade today. Aren't you just feeling a little frustrated, a little unappreciated at home?

EVANGELINE: Don't you ever feel that way, Helen?

HELEN (*with a laugh*): Why, I just suppose I do. Joseph can tell you all about my little moods. But when those times come, I just put those unpleasant thoughts out of my mind and count my many blessings. I think of where I would be without Joseph and the children. Then I swallow my pride, close my eyes to whatever is bothering me, put my shoulder to the wheel and press on.

EVANGELINE: You can do that and sleep nights?

HELEN: Oh, I'm not saying it's easy. Joseph helps. As I said, he puts up with my moods—and I put up with his. Oh, yes! Joseph has his little moods, and I put up with them, just as Moroni will put up with Zanita's moods and she'll put up with his. That's what marriage is all about: putting up with each other's moods. (*Laughs, sighs.*) I do feel sorry for those Gentile women who are marching in the streets for their rights. I know that there are even women in the Church who feel that way. My heart just bleeds, it just breaks for them. I feel for them with every fiber of my being because I know how unhappy they are, how dissatisfied they are. But when you're tempted to despair, you just have to force yourself to be satisfied. You just have to gird up your loins and force yourself! These poor unsatisfied women remind me of the Apostle Peter before his conversion on the road to Damascus, when he was so miserable from always kicking against the pricks.

JOSEPH: That was the Apostle Paul, Helen.

HELEN (*with a laugh*): Well, you can see who the gospel scholar is in our family! These women are just like the Apostle Paul. No righteous woman could ever be happy kicking against the pricks, you know.

EVANGELINE: Maybe I'm just not all that righteous, Helen.

HELEN: Of course you are! Aren't you just feeling a little overworked because of the holiday and all?

EVANGELINE: Maybe I'd feel better if I marched in the parade. Beulah, are you coming?

BEULAH (*to HELEN*): The bishop would rather that we didn't?

HELEN: That's what he said.

BEULAH: Then I'm obeying the bishop.

EVANGELINE: I suppose I'm marching alone then . . .

TALMADGE: What's that smell?

(*Suddenly smoke pours from REBA's kitchen.*)

BEULAH: Mahonri Moriancumer Cannon, what have you done now?

REBA (*running to the door, looking inside*): My ovens on fire! Boys, get out of there!

(*MAHONRI and ETHER run out. MORONI, with a bucket from the porch, runs inside, followed by TALMADGE.*)

BEULAH: What were you doing in there?

MAHONRI: Burning those stupid signs! You can't march today! You just can't!

BEULAH: You nearly burned the house down over that?

ETHER: We're tired of people talking about us! Daddy can't control any of his wives!

BEULAH: That does it! I am really going to pick a switch now! (*MORONI and TALMADGE come out coughing and gasping.*)

MORONI: The fire's out, but Aunt Reba, your kitchen's a mess. (*REBA hurries into her kitchen.*)

TALMADGE (*to MAHONRI and ETHER, furious*): You and you! Come here! (*He advances towards them. They back away.*)

ETHER: No! Mama said she's gonna pick a switch.

TALMADGE: Oh no! I want to use my own two hands! (*He chases them around the yard, catches MAHONRI, turns him over his knee and begins spanking him. Suddenly REBA stumbles from the kitchen and faints. TALMADGE drops MAHONRI and everyone runs to her.*) Reba! Reba!

BEULAH: It's smoke inhalation! Why did she go into that smoke filled kitchen?

EVANGELINE: The foolish girl!

TALMADGE: She's not foolish! She's going to have a baby!
(*Everyone falls silent. Shock. Then . . .*)

JOSEPH: At *your* age? (*looking at TALMADGE.*)

TALMADGE: Reba . . . Reba . . .

MORONI: She almost fainted yesterday while hanging laundry.

BEULAH: Why didn't you tell me?

MORONI: She didn't want me to.

TALMADGE: She wanted me to be the first to know, and she was afraid of *your* reaction.

BEULAH: Afraid? Of me? Her own sister wife? What could I do about it? Say, "No, Reba, you don't have my permission to be pregnant?" (*Bending over Reba.*) Reba . . . Reba, it's me, Beulah . . . Reba?

REBA (*coming to*): What . . . What . . . ?

BEULAH: You're all right. Just lie still for a few minutes. Why didn't you tell me about the baby?

REBA: I'm sorry, Beulah. The doctors told me I couldn't have any more children after Jasher. I don't know how it happened.

BEULAH (*looking at TALMADGE*): Well, you didn't do it yourself. (*To REBA.*) And what are you sorry about? Bringing another life into the world?

REBA: I was afraid you'd disapprove.

BEULAH: And if I did, what could I do about it? Can you stand up now?

REBA: I think so.

EVANGELINE (*helping REBA stand*): Talmadge, you're in the way! Don't you think you've done enough?

TALMADGE: Excuse me!

BEULAH: Reba, would you like a blessing?

REBA: Why, Beulah . . . yes . . . yes, I would.

BEULAH: Then let's get you up to the bath tub. We can wash and anoint you there. (*EVANGELINE and BEULAH help REBA to the door.*) Excuse me a minute, Reba. (*She crosses down to HELEN.*) Helen, thank you for what you said earlier. You were right. Sometimes the only way you can survive it all is to close your eyes to whatever is bothering you and press on.

HELEN (*giving her a hug*): Oh, bless you, Sister.

BEULAH: Will you help us with the blessing?

HELEN: Joseph?

JOSEPH: I think we need to be leaving.

BEULAH (*to REBA as they exit into the house with EVANGELINE*): I'm sorry you were afraid to tell me. I must be an awfully wicked witch sometimes.

JOSEPH: Come along, Helen.

HELEN: We'll see you later at the parade. Moroni, will you be picnicking with us afterwards?

MORONI: Yes, Sister Fly.

HELEN: How nice! I hope that Sister Cannon—the third one, that is—Reba?—will feel up to coming out this afternoon.
(*The FLYS exit, leaving MORONI and TALMADGE alone. There is a long, awkward pause. Then . . .*)

TALMADGE: So, you got what *you* wanted.

MORONI: Did I?

TALMADGE: You're marrying Zanita.

MORONI: I suppose.

TALMADGE: You don't sound too happy about it.

MORONI: I feel like I've been married all my life: worrying about Mama and all your wives and children.

TALMADGE: There's no need for *you* to worry about them.

MORONI: Somebody has to when you're running all over creation! When did you find out about Aunt Reba?

TALMADGE: Just a while ago.

MORONI: She tried to tell you yesterday but you had other things to worry about.

TALMADGE: Well, I can't be in two places at one time!

MORONI: Then the last thing you need to do is marry someone else! Why do you need so many wives?

TALMADGE: Gentiles marry out of need. I married out of obedience to God.

MORONI: You don't love Aunt Beulah and Aunt Reba?

TALMADGE: I love everyone in my family! I've stood up for them. Gone to prison for them . . .

MORONI: But you married them out of obedience?

TALMADGE: Yes, of course.

MORONI (*after a slight pause*): With Mama . . . it was different, wasn't it? When I was very young, long before Aunt Beulah, I remember the two of you *seemed* happy. I just took it for granted that you loved each other. Did you, or were the two of you just being obedient?

TALMADGE (*after a pause*): Obedience brings happiness—

MORONI: You're talking theology again, Papa—

TALMADGE: But it's true!

MORONI: Did obedience bring you happiness?

TALMADGE: I have great joy in my family. I take pride in you and your brothers and sisters—

MORONI: If you were happy, you wouldn't want to marry this . . . woman in St. George.

TALMADGE: Her name is Jerusha!

MORONI (*silence, then awkwardly*): Is she . . . pretty?

TALMADGE: You might not notice her on the street, but she's very easy to talk to. On Sabbaths, after meetings, I often dine with her and her family. During the week if I'm finished on the farm early and it's still light, I ride over to her house. We sit on the porch, watch the sun set. It's very pleasant, very restful. Her oldest boy is your age. In fact, he was born December 3, 1879, two days before you. Isn't that a coincidence? He's unmarried also, but then he's not as nice looking as you.

MORONI: I'm not interested, Papa! I wouldn't take a million dollars for any of my brothers or sisters, but I wouldn't give you a plug nickel for another one! So just leave him out of this! I want . . . I want you to apologize to Mama.

TALMADGE: For what?

MORONI: Maybe you only married her out of obedience—I don't know, I don't want to know—but she needs you.

TALMADGE: Why, Evangeline's the most self-reliant person I've ever known!

MORONI: She wants you to love her!

TALMADGE: I've worked all my life to provide for her, never once complaining. I give her everything she's asked for—more than I've ever given the other two . . .

MORONI (*overlapping, to himself*): It can't really be this hopeless! It can't be!

TALMADGE (*overlapping*): . . . I've made no demands on her because I knew her hands were filled with you children—

MORONI: But the woman you really love is in St. George?

TALMADGE: Moroni, some day when you're older . . .

MORONI: Don't finish that sentence if you're implying that one day I'll be like you. I never want that to happen!

TALMADGE: You do despise me.

- MORONI:** I wish I did. I'd be less confused. You won't be allowed to marry this lady. The bishop said a storm's brewing in Washington over whether a Mormon can be a senator if the Church allows members to break the polygamy laws.
- TALMADGE:** The Church will never completely renounce the Principle—certainly not for political power!
- MORONI:** They already have. You will only have three wives. One of them is my mother and you owe her an apology whether you believe it or not.
- EVANGELINE** (*from inside the house*): Talmadge!
- MORONI:** Papa, *please!* The way I remember the two of you, that wasn't just my imagination, was it?
- EVANGELINE** (*from inside*): Talmadge!
- TALMADGE:** All right, Moroni.
(*MORONI starts to quickly hug TALMADGE, but when he sees EVANGELINE coming out of the house, he quickly stops himself.*)
- MORONI:** How's Aunt Reba?
- EVANGELINE:** Feeling much better. Talmadge, you're wanted on the telephone. It's the bishop.
- TALMADGE** (*hurrying into the house*): What does he want?
- EVANGELINE:** Your future father-in-law is a very discerning man. What he said about denying one's true feelings about the Principle . . . very discerning. It galls me to say that because I detest the way he talks down to Helen. Then again, she doesn't seem to mind. Maybe I'd be happier if I were as simple minded as she.
- MORONI:** I think we'd all be happier in this family if we weren't so set in our ways. I know how Papa can be, but if you'd just—I mean, if we'd just . . .
- EVANGELINE:** What? Give in a little more?
- MORONI:** Not exactly.
- EVANGELINE** (*overlapping*): Because that's all I've been doing all these years . . .
- MORONI:** I'm not criticizing, really. You've always been the strong one. When he married Aunt Beulah you didn't speak for a week—to anyone. They went off for a week and you said nothing.
- EVANGELINE:** Do you think I could have stopped him from marrying her?
- MORONI:** No, but at least he would have known it bothered you. It bothered me! When I was nine I started having this nightmare. We were all in heaven—the Celestial Kingdom—and on this throne like a God was Papa, surrounded by all these beautiful Goddess wives, but you and me and the other children were separated from him somehow. He was loving and adoring to all his Goddess wives. They were so beautiful that I hated them! And I called to you, "Mama, do something so we won't lose him! Tell him that you . . . love him!"
- EVANGELINE:** You don't think I love your Papa?
- MORONI:** I know you do!
- EVANGELINE:** It's because I loved him that I said nothing. Your Papa loves the Church first and foremost. As much as we hate to admit it, it's the truth. If I had protested or voiced my doubts, that *would* have been the end of it! My heart was full of hell when he took Beulah, but I fought to appear strong: indifferent to her and devoted to the Church.
- MORONI:** But Papa thinks you're indifferent to him! You two are separated . . . but I am both of you! I can't choose sides!
(*Pause.*) Anyway, it's over now. The bishop said plural marriage is gone, never to be brought back.
- EVANGELINE** (*stunned*): Then what was all the sacrifice for? If something so important can change, maybe none of it's true.
- MORONI:** Of course the *Church* is true.
- EVANGELINE:** Then where's my place in it? Where do I belong? Maybe on display in some Gentile museum back East: a concubine in a Mormon harem, circa 1903.
- MORONI:** I'm glad you've gotten your sense of humor back.
- EVANGELINE:** But I'm sealed into the Church. It's the only place I'll ever be understood, respected, even pitied. You and your brothers and sisters are the sealing agents; not priesthoods, oaths, or covenants. Through you I'm sealed to your Papa and through him to the Church. Maybe that was the plan all along. The prophets knew that the Principle was the only way to knot us all together so that we'd never leave the Church . . .
- MORONI** (*overlapping*): Now, Mama, stop it . . .
- EVANGELINE** (*overlapping*): How very clever they were . . . clever and cruel.
- MORONI:** Mama, you don't believe that! (*Pleading.*) Things will be different now. You'll see! I'll marry Zanita and things will get better—from now. You're just feeling overwhelmed because of the holiday—like Sister Fly said.
- EVANGELINE** (*studying MORONI's eyes*): Wise Sister Fly.
- MORONI:** You'll feel better after the parade and picnic. We all will.
(*TALMADGE comes out of the house looking perplexed.*) I'll see if I can help Aunt Beulah get the boys ready for the parade.
(*MORONI kisses EVANGELINE's forehead and looks to TALMADGE and goes into BEULAH's kitchen.*)
- EVANGELINE:** Why the fallen countenance?
- TALMADGE:** They did it. The Church sold out to the Gentiles. If I marry Jerusha, the bishop said both of us and who performs the ceremony will be excommunicated. He really said that—over the telephone. Damned contraption.
- EVANGELINE:** Ah, poor lamb. Lost your one true love, have you?
- TALMADGE:** I thought the news would make you happy.
- EVANGELINE:** You were right.
- TALMADGE:** You love to see me hurt, don't you?
- EVANGELINE** (*smiling*): After all these years together, do you honestly think I find pleasure in your pain?
- TALMADGE:** I'm hurting and you're smiling.
- EVANGELINE:** I'm hurting also and smiling. It's how I register pain.
- TALMADGE:** Why does an older woman like Jerusha threaten you?
Beulah was only twenty-two when we married. It may have bothered you—
- EVANGELINE:** More than you'll ever know.
- TALMADGE:** But you never said a word. Nor did you have that smile on your face.
- EVANGELINE:** I was younger then. I hadn't learned to radiate while dying.
- TALMADGE:** You didn't smile when I married Reba.
- EVANGELINE:** After Beulah I thought I could accept anything.
- TALMADGE:** Then why can't you accept Jerusha?
- EVANGELINE:** I was wrong.
- TALMADGE:** But Jerusha's an older woman!
- EVANGELINE:** Her age has nothing to do with it! It's what you've finally found in her. Even though the Church won't allow you to marry her, she'll continue to occupy a place in your heart . . . the place I occupied, or *thought* I occupied, until yesterday.
- TALMADGE:** About that . . . I'm sorry for what I said.
- EVANGELINE:** Did Moroni put you up to apologizing?

TALMADGE: Of course not! I'm truly sorry I said . . . all that.

EVANGELINE (*smiling*): But don't you remember? It's what you didn't say that was so wounding.

TALMADGE: Then I'm sorry for what I didn't say!

EVANGELINE: Don't apologize if you were being honest.

TALMADGE: You deserve better from me!

EVANGELINE: I deserve the truth from you. If it hurts you to speak it or me to hear it, then so be it. But after all these years, we need to know exactly where we stand in relation to one another. So, come, Talmadge! Put your shoulder to the wheel and tell me outright.

TALMADGE (*finally, at a loss for words*): Oh, Evangeline . . . Evangeline . . . I'm so tired.

EVANGELINE: That's no answer.

TALMADGE: I look back and all I see is a rush and whirl of sneaking about, hiding from the law, praying for deliverance, trying to maintain a business and households; trying to treat wives and children equally so no one gets their feelings hurt—I'm exhausted! Why did we ever start this life of ours in the first place?

EVANGELINE: I don't know why you married me. It was a commandment. If nothing else you were an obedient soul. Then, there were the cravings of the flesh—I know on my part there were. The time, the place, the ceremony—who knows why anyone does it? I thought I married you for only one reason.

TALMADGE: You loved me?

EVANGELINE (*smiling*): Ah, so you were there after all.

TALMADGE: You were so strong, overwhelming. I was drawn to you but at the same time you made me feel like a helpless puppy or a child.

(*Pause.*)

EVANGELINE: I never really had you, did I, Talmadge?

TALMADGE: We had . . . passion in the beginning.

EVANGELINE: The children and time killed that.

TALMADGE: We've had an adventurous life. Nothing dull about it. We had some happy times.

EVANGELINE: Yes, we did . . . some. But we never really had each other, did we?

TALMADGE: I suppose not.

(*Pause. Then . . .*)

EVANGELINE: Will we ever?

TALMADGE (*sadly*): I suppose not.

EVANGELINE (*smiling, softly, to herself*): Ouch.

TALMADGE: Who knows? Come the Morning of the First Resurrection, when we're both restored to our prime, I'll look at you and feel the old passion again.

EVANGELINE: Dear Heart, if that's the best we can hope for, just leave me moldering.

TALMADGE: You wanted the truth.

EVANGELINE: I want the lie. But the truth is what I deserve. All in all it's the best thing for me. Thank you for finally giving it to me.

(*EVANGELINE crosses to TALMADGE, takes his face in her hands and bends down to kiss him, but he turns his face away. She straightens up and looks down on him, as if considering this final rejection. Then she turns to leave the yard.*)

TALMADGE: Isn't there anything else I can say?

EVANGELINE: No. This isn't a theological debate. This is life as it really is. It can't be restructured or rephrased to make it less

offensive or to make it go down like mother's milk. We'll have to digest it for the meat that it is.

(*EVANGELINE slowly turns and smiles sadly at TALMADGE. Then turning away, she slowly leaves. He watches her go, sadly. She is almost out of the yard when . . .*)

TALMADGE (*softly*): Evangeline? Whatever will you do? Where will you go?

EVANGELINE (*simply*): To the house to pick up the children for the parade. (*TALMADGE is stunned.*) Where did you think I was going? (*She looks at TALMADGE, sees his amazement and laughs.*) Oh, Talmadge, you didn't think I was leaving? Just because of our problems? (*She laughs harder.*) There are more people in this family than you and I. They're the children, Reba, Beulah, this new baby—

TALMADGE: The way you looked, I thought you were going away.

EVANGELINE: No, Talmadge, you won't get rid of me that easily. We were married for time and all eternity, remember? In that ceremony I was taught that you were to be my husband and Lord. Well, draw near, dear Lord. Here's a confession for your ears only. Mark it well as I'll not repeat it again. My dear Talmadge, you're not now, nor will you ever be a God. Neither will I or anyone else on this sweet earth. We just don't have the makings for it. We have our hands full just trying to get along as human beings, and Christ knows we've made an awful mess of that.

TALMADGE: But, "As man now is, God once was. As God now is, man may become."

EVANGELINE: Oh, I know all that. I just don't believe it. Not one word. Not one jot or tittle.

TALMADGE: You don't mean that.

EVANGELINE: Oh, but I do.

TALMADGE: I don't believe you!

EVANGELINE: You have your free agency.

TALMADGE: You're trying to goad me by playing the apostate.

EVANGELINE: I've never been more sincere in my life.

TALMADGE: I *know* the Church is true!

EVANGELINE: And you go right on "knowing" that. I know otherwise.

TALMADGE: What do *you* know?

EVANGELINE: That this whole business of life is much more simple than you and the Church make it out to be. I know I have children who need me. And I need them.

TALMADGE: You brought those children into *my* family.

EVANGELINE: They're more my family than yours, and I won't allow you or the Church or my own foolhardy attempts to make your gospel work come between me and them any longer.

TALMADGE: My God! You *are* an apostate!

EVANGELINE (*proudly*): Yes, I am. Tell Moroni, the children or anyone else and I'll feign ignorance. Expose me and I'll deny it.

TALMADGE: Your words will expose you!

EVANGELINE: No, Dearest Heart. The words are only for you, this once. I'll be the most dangerous and clever of apostates. I'll never utter a testimony of anything again, but I'll be at every Church meeting, listening and just smiling. How could I do otherwise? It's all I've ever known. And I will lavish on our children and your wives and everyone else all the love and understanding that until now I reserved for you and the Church. That love will become more important to them than

all your doctrines, priesthoods, and powers because it will be free, no conditions attached! Our children will know that I love them regardless of their standing with the Church or your god. That's all I have to offer. All I've ever had. I wasn't enough for you—too easily attained, I suppose; too simple for your patriarchal taste. It will be more than enough for them. I'll win all their hearts in the end, and I'll never have to utter a word. (TALMADGE is struck dumb. BEULAH, REBA, their BOYS and MORONI come out of the house, all dressed for the parade. EVANGELINE buzzes over to them.) Well, there she is! Your color is looking good, Reba. Are you sure you're up to going out in this heat?

REBA: After that beautiful blessing you and Beulah gave me, I feel up to anything. You should have heard it, Talmadge.

EVANGELINE: Well, you certainly look fresher. Doesn't she, Beulah?

BEULAH: That's the word I'd use: fresher.

EVANGELINE: I feel refreshed myself.

BEULAH: You look it. Has something happened?

EVANGELINE: I've just seen the day for what it is, and I feel clean all over.

BEULAH (with a laugh): What?

EVANGELINE: I just feel good! This is going to be a real nice Pioneer Day! Now, we need to stop at the big house to get the other children and those picnic baskets we packed.

MAHONRI: Do we get to sleep at your house again tonight, Aunt Evangeline?

BEULAH (looking at TALMADGE): I think we'll stay here from now on.

ETHER: Aw, Mama! We like the big house!

EVANGELINE: Let them spend the night anyway, Beulah. I'll watch them, and wouldn't you like a night off? I can imagine how stuffy this little house can be on summer nights with everyone home, and with Reba's baby coming, you can't stay

squeezed in here much longer. Talmadge, when did you say you were building each of these women their own house?

REBA: Talmadge, you're really going to build me a house?

EVANGELINE: You each deserve your own place. Don't they, Moroni?

MORONI (shocked): Ma'am? . . . Ah . . . yes, ma'am! Yes, Papa, Aunt Reba and Aunt Beulah each need their own house.

EVANGELINE: Go to it, Son. He'll listen to you. And don't let him tell you he can't fit it in the budget because the farm in St. George is doing fine this year.

MORONI: Yes, Mama!

EVANGELINE: Well, shall we go? Come along, Talmadge, don't just stand there like a helpless puppy or child.

BEULAH: Come on, Talmadge. Get your banner.

MAHONRI: Can I carry it to the parade for you?

TALMADGE: I don't feel like marching today after all.

MORONI: Do you want me to carry it in the parade for you? I will if you'd like.

TALMADGE: Thanks, Son. But there's no need to bother anymore.

BEULAH: Yes, it is so hot today. (Everyone starts off for the parade.) Now that we're on better terms, maybe the Flys will join us at the picnic.

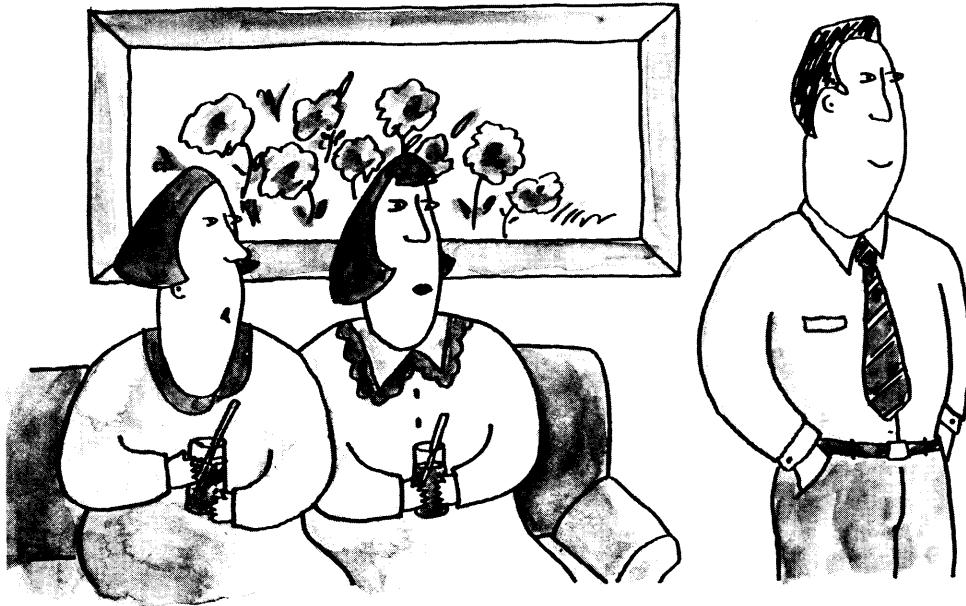
EVANGELINE (exiting): Wouldn't that be special? Both families together!

REBA (exiting): Yes! Together!

(The WIVES, chatting happily, have exited, followed by the BOYS who are playfully teasing one another. The sun is shining and in the distance on State Street the band can be heard playing.

TALMADGE is left in the yard all alone. The last measures of "In Our Lovely Deseret" can be heard as he looks at his banner, then exits. The lights over the yard begin to fade, the last ones fading on the forgotten banner: "DESERET: This is STILL the place!")

C U R T A I N



"I'll tell you what it doesn't say. It doesn't say that the men's baseball team gets new uniforms."