

The field of Cultural Studies calls attention to how people experience the world, how their identities are shaped, and how they use language and tools of representation to order and make sense of their lives. So, culturally, what does it mean to be Mormon?

TOWARD A NEW MORMON CULTURAL STUDIES: OR TEN BOOKS I WISH SOMEONE (ELSE) WOULD WRITE

By Stacy Burton

LAST SUMMER, I SPENT SEVERAL DAYS IN PARIS. For some strange reason, as I was walking along, savoring the city, and enjoying being far from home and work, the following question crossed my mind: Why would someone French choose to be Mormon? This random thought led to others, and eventually to this paper, for no scholarship in Mormon studies yet exists to answer that kind of question fully. After much research on the historical particulars—on the factual details of specific events and the evolution of specific doctrines and rituals—what comes next? Whither Mormon studies? After forty years of attention to histories and doctrines, surely, and crucially, it is time for scholarly critical analysis to turn its gaze on Mormon cultures.

Theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether has argued that the vitality of religious traditions lies not in their histories or doctrines but in the lived experiences of their adherents. What a religion means comes down to how it acquires, possesses, and maintains meaning for individual people, how it shapes and gives voice to their experiences and thinking:

Historical institutions create the occasion for the experience of the Spirit. But they cannot cause the presence of the Spirit, which always breaks in from a direct encounter of living persons and the divine. Historic institutions also transmit a culture of interpretation around such spiritual encounters, but this culture of interpretation cannot be closed and finalized. It is, at best, an open system of symbolism that gives guidelines to interpret

the experience and translate it into daily life. But the living encounter with the Spirit is also an occasion for new appropriation of meaning by which the given culture of interpretation is itself renewed and reshaped. Tradition, to remain alive, must be open to this continual reshaping of interpretive culture by new spiritual experience.¹

The big “culture question,” then, is this: What does it mean to be Mormon? Obviously, the answer will be different things to different people, despite official pronouncements that suggest otherwise. The wide variation in popular and critical responses to recent representations of Mormon experience such as the film *God’s Army* and the anthology *Leaving the Fold*² makes this much very clear. “Cultural studies” calls attention to interpretive cultures—to how people experience the world, how their identities are shaped, and how they use language and tools of representation to order and make sense of their lives.

I suspect that, in some ways, we have a clearer conception of what it meant to be Mormon in the nineteenth century than in the century just past. As scholars—notably historian Thomas G. Alexander and sociologist Armand L. Mauss—have observed, nineteenth-century Mormonism was marked by its separatist tendencies and its millennial ambitions, while its twentieth-century descendant reinvented itself as quintessentially American and middle-class (with the requisite upper-middle-class dreams).³ While that difference was not absolute, of course, it did make the distinction between being Mormon and being American hazier than it once may have been. What about the twenty-first century? The future will see a much wider disparity among life experiences called “Mormon,” with a growing percentage of Church adherents who live their en-



STACY BURTON is associate professor of English at the University of Nevada, Reno. A version of this article was presented at the 2000 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium (Tape #SL00-275).

tire lives—and families who live multiple generations—far from what scholars have called the Mormon culture region.⁴ They will do so in postmodern societies in which people are generally wary of authority, hierarchical organizations, and absolute truth claims. All this suggests that what it means to *be* Mormon will be an increasingly complicated question in the century to come.

WITH A NOD to the work of Ruether and that of historian Colleen McDannell, whose groundbreaking *Material Christianity*⁵ examines the role of material objects in contemporary American religion, here are four key questions for future projects in Mormon cultural studies:

1. *What do Mormon religious rituals mean to their participants? Why do they mean what they mean, and how do those meanings effect changes in their lives? Do the intended meanings of these rituals differ from the experienced meanings? If so, how and why? Some rituals are performed daily. For example, how does attention to what one eats or drinks affect one's sense of personal religiosity or group identity? Other rituals are once-in-a-lifetime events. What does the ritual of baptism mean to an eight-year-old child? What does it mean to an adult looking back on it thirty years later? How do such meanings change over time?*

2. *How do Mormon adherents construct different, subjective versions of the faith in which all profess to believe? On ideological grounds, many Mormons understandably reject the notion that religion is like a cafeteria, where one may choose certain items and not others. Practically speaking, however, this simply is how religion works: some aspects of a religion appeal to, touch, and offer meaning to a person at a particular time in his/her life, and others do not—perhaps not then, perhaps not ever. Some love genealogy, some love Scouting, and some love Jesus.*

3. *How do different versions of Mormonism co-exist in families, congregations, and the Church as a whole? Mormons often dismiss interpretations of their religious culture that they do not share, saying, "Well, that's not the gospel," yet the very view they dismiss may be the heart of the gospel for others. As historian D. Michael Quinn has detailed at length, such questions about what is or ought to be central to Mormonism have at times been the source of great conflict among members of the Church hierarchy.⁶ Writer Terry Tempest Williams uses just this kind of contradiction to frame her recent work, *Leap*, which is an extended meditation on faith, artistic creativity, identities, and institutions. She recounts how a great-uncle asked two ten-year-old girls, Terry and her cousin, each to*

name the gospel principle she finds most meaningful. The cousin responds, "obedience." Terry responds, "free agency."⁷

4. *How does Mormonism as a religious culture evolve in varied and new contexts? For instance, how does the late twentieth-century official construction of the middle-class (American) family as a religious "unit" play out in people's lives across the globe? Does it function in the same way in Chile as it does in Scotland, in the Ivory Coast as it does in China? And how does Mormon culture adapt as the tradition reaches a stage in which it has second-, third-, and fourth-generation members who are neither American nor middle-class?*

KEEPING THESE QUESTIONS in mind, here are ten books I hope someone else will write. I'd love to read them. They are listed, à la Letterman, in reverse order.

10. *Hoop Dreams: Basketball, Square Dance, and American*

Mormonism. The church that historian Claudia Lauper Bushman describes in her essay about growing up Mormon in San Francisco in the 1940s and 1950s was filled with organized social activities for adolescents and young adults: drama and dance performances, elocution contests, and sports competitions.⁸ Church affiliation from this period into the 1970s involved the Gold and Green Ball, well-organized basketball leagues, annual roadshows, and frequent Saturday night dances. This church and many such activities have largely disappeared, but vestiges remain, such as the basketball courts attached to nearly all Mormon chapels. The larger questions here

deal with socialization and sport in religious practice.

9. *I'm OK, You're Not: Mormon Xenophobia.* At seventeen, I went to Europe with a choir of high-school students, about a quarter of whom were Mormon. Our travels began in Rome, where one of the first sites we visited was St. Peter's. A friend and I walked through the Baroque basilica in reverential awe. Soon we heard a strange, unsettling sound: another choir member was humming the Mormon hymn "Come, Come Ye Saints." We asked him what possible reason he had for doing that. His response? Being in the heart of Roman Catholicism unnerved him. The larger questions here deal with the widespread Mormon discomfort with anyone or anything not of the faith, manifest, for instance, in the automatic practice of categorizing everyone as either "member" or "nonmember."⁹

8. *Girl Groups and Boys Clubs.* A massive divide along gender lines marks contemporary Mormon culture, official and unofficial: from age twelve until death, girls and boys, women and men, receive their chief religious education in segregated classes. From Mormon history, the nineteenth-century origins of this bifurcation are clear, yet even cursory reflection

" . . . INSTITUTIONS CREATE THE OCCASION FOR THE EXPERIENCE OF THE SPIRIT. BUT THEY CANNOT CAUSE THE PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH ALWAYS BREAKS IN FROM A DIRECT ENCOUNTER OF LIVING PERSONS AND THE DIVINE."

—ROSEMARY RADFORD RUETHER

MORMON CULTURAL STUDIES

suggests that there is something rather odd in its persistence in a contemporary society in which most professions, schools, workplaces, and social organizations are no longer limited to only one sex. While casual conversations among Church members about shortening the three-hour meeting block usually focus on eliminating Sunday School, few Mormons under sixty seem truly fond of Relief Society and quorum meetings. Yet this homosocial divide persists. Why has it lasted so long in Mormonism, and what are its effects?

7. *Pioneer Envy: Or, the Cult of the Pioneers*. Mormons have long revered early adherents to the faith, particularly the pioneers who crossed the plains to Utah. But what began as reverence gradually became mythologizing and then sacralizing. While I respect my own pioneer ancestors as much as does the next sixth-generation descendant, I'm concerned that we have so mythologized the past that the earliest Mormons often bear only slight resemblance to human beings. It is time to ask why and in what ways Church members have come to worship the pioneers, and how long this will continue. To what ends—some of them exclusionary—are these powerful pioneer narratives used? What do the myths we tell about ourselves reveal about Mormon culture?

6. *Contemplating Our (Modestly Covered and Definitely Unpierced) Navels*. Mormons are often surprisingly self-absorbed; as a culture, Mormons may be more preoccupied with others' perceptions of them than any other group of people I know. Websites are now devoted to such topics as media coverage of the Church, biographies of well-known adherents to the faith, and rumors about celebrities who might be converts. One must ask why Mormons, in the manner of the neurotic or at least deeply insecure, care so much about their public image. This weakness of the culture and sign of its immaturity may too easily extend to Mormon critical thinking.

(The five books above I would thoroughly enjoy. Now, in a slightly more serious vein, the following are five that truly must be written.)

5. *Mormon Material Culture: My Life, My Kitsch*. How do Mormons use material objects—including jewelry and clothing—to complement their spiritual practices? What kinds of religious meaning do Church members attribute to material objects, and why? McDannell and Jana Riess—in her recent essay dealing with kitsch from CTR rings to masculinity-themed T-shirts to inspirational posters—have taken the crucial first steps here, but certainly much remains to be done.¹⁰ From the 1940s until about 1970, for instance, Mormon boys and girls participating in the Primary program had bandalos (similar in concept to Scouting merit badge sashes). These were adorned with plastic medallions and rhinestones signifying the completion of religious

tasks (such as rote recitation of Bible verses), mastery of domestic skills (including crochet), and regular attendance at Primary. (I recall wanting every last rhinestone so badly that I insisted upon attending Primary during our first trip to Manhattan. I also recall my sister's dismay when her class learned they would be part of the new Merrie Miss program, leaving their just-started bandalos forever incomplete.) How does material culture—and, in this instance, its deliberate linking of spirituality and domesticity—serve to shape the religious identities of girls on the brink of adolescence?

4. *Gendering Mormons: Replaying the 1950s, Replaying the 1930s, Replaying the Nineteenth Century*. Imagine, as a *Dialogue* satire did in 1981, a Mormon congregation in which all duties were assigned on the basis of sex and all gendered references were reversed.¹¹ Women would conduct Sunday services and occupy the major administrative roles in the congregation (with men overseeing the men's auxiliary and the children's program). Men would be invited to give sermons on family topics, women on theology; adolescent girls would serve the sacrament to the congregation after praying to God the Mother, and so forth. Even a cursory re-imagining along these lines points out how thoroughly Mormonism relies upon and emphasizes differentiation on the basis of sex and gender. Recent history, moreover, suggests that this divide is growing rather than narrowing. As women's voices have achieved parity—or at least much greater value—in workplaces, communities, and families, the narrow lines that circumscribe them in Church culture are cast in increasingly sharp relief. How, one must ask, do contemporary girls negotiate



PAT BAGLEY

Mormonism? How do official constructions of masculinity—including but not limited to endorsement of conventional gender roles—affect contemporary Mormon boys?¹² What kinds of adults, and adult Mormons, do they become?

3. *Identity and Mormon Culture*. It is perhaps inevitable that a church led primarily by middle- or upper-middle-class men from the western United States would suffer myopia regarding the depth of ethnic and national identities and allegiances. Numerous examples could suffice to illustrate here. As Mauss, Jan Shipps, and others have shown, in many ways, twentieth-century Mormonism conceived of itself as, and actually became, quintessentially suburban and American. How has this self-fashioning defined individual and collective Mormon identities, both in the United States and around the world? How do Mormons in Australia, Russia, or Brazil work out a sense of identity that embraces both their religious tradition and their ethnic and national traditions? Very little has been written on these topics: mission histories and occasional articles, but not much else.¹³ Much work in cultural studies must be done here. While half the current Church membership resides outside North America, almost nothing scholarly has yet been written about Mormon culture in countries other than the United States.

2. *Mormons and the Conservative Turn in American Culture*. When I was a child in Oregon, the church geographically closest to the Mormon Church was the St. Peter's Episcopal Church across the street. It is fascinating and not a little strange to know that in my lifetime, Mormons have moved philosophically closer not to Episcopalians, but to Christian fundamentalists. As Mauss demonstrates in *The Angel and the Beehive*, this ground shift has been substantial and has affected Mormonism in every way—socially, theologically, institutionally. Citing recent studies, he points out that by the 1990s, “in almost all indicators of fundamentalism the Mormons were consistently closer to the Southern Baptists than to any other denomination.”¹⁴ (The Church now shares with the Southern Baptists, for example, the dubious distinction of placing great official emphasis on anachronistic views on women and the ministry.) How did this ground shift occur, and how have individual Mormons participated in and been affected by it? How is the Church changing as many new converts come from increasingly conservative backgrounds, including fundamentalist churches and right-wing political groups? Will Mormonism's recent conservative turn last, or will the historical pendulum swing to the left? As a friend once asked, “Will the Church ever get over the 1960s?”

1. *The New Mormon Autobiography*. Although there is not yet

quite enough material for this book, there soon will be. The 1990s saw a boom in autobiographical writing in the United States and other parts of the world, with hints of its beginning in Mormon culture as well. What I'm calling the “new Mormon autobiography” is not the dutiful life story familiar from Church lessons and family histories. It is a new species: the frank, fresh memoir in which the writer considers the ways Mormon culture is one of many threads shaping modern Mormon lives, not their defining or sole framework. Such memoirs recount in honest, immediate detail the experience of being Mormon in specific times and places.¹⁵ Notable examples include Phyllis Barber's *How I Got Cultured*, a Nevada coming-of-age memoir; Terry Tempest Williams' much-discussed *Refuge* and recent *Leap*; and Mikal Gilmore's haunting *Shot in the Heart*.¹⁶ These texts are powerful because they tell stories of individual lives and their varied intersections with Mormonism, which enter in through family, faith, folklore, prohibitions, answers, and questions. The stories are narrated reflectively and critically: they take neither the subject's Mormonism nor the religion's self-fashioning as an unquestioned given. Individual readers may not recognize religious strains that appear in other Mormons' autobiographical writing. I know I often do not (the rural religious folklore of Gilmore's mother, for instance, is familiar only through literature). But this gap, this difference, makes these narratives all the more powerful. These reflections

demonstrate the always-already-present diversity of ways in which Mormons live and experience their religious tradition.

THESE ARE THE questions I anticipate will be foremost in Mormon cultural studies in the coming decade and the books I very much hope to see as a result. Perhaps, then, someday, a reflective memoir by a writer both French and Mormon—say one in which Annie Ernaux meets Terry Tempest Williams—will answer the question with which I began: why would someone French choose to be Mormon?



To comment on this article, or to read comments by others, visit our website: <www.Sunstoneonline.com>.

NOTES

1. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women-Church: Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 35.

2. James W. Ure, *Leaving the Fold* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999).

3. See Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), and Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana:

ONE MUST ASK WHY MORMONS, IN THE MANNER OF THE NEUROTIC OR AT LEAST DEEPLY INSECURE, CARE SO MUCH ABOUT THEIR PUBLIC IMAGE. THIS WEAKNESS OF THE CULTURE AND SIGN OF ITS IMMaturity MAY TOO EASILY EXTEND TO MORMON CRITICAL THINKING.

MORMON CULTURAL STUDIES

University of Illinois Press, 1994).

4. On the effects of this postwar movement on Mormon identity, see Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), particularly the essay "The Scattering of the Gathering and the Gathering of the Scattered: The Mid-Twentieth-Century Mormon Diaspora."

5. Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

6. See particularly *Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books/Smith Research Associates, 1997).

7. Terry Tempest Williams, *Leap* (New York: Pantheon, 2000), p. 8; cf. 242–243.

8. "Growing Up Mormon in the Outland," presented at the Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, 4 August 2000, (tape #SL291).

9. On the evolution of this practice, see Shipps, "From Gentile to Non-Mormon: Mormon Perceptions of the Other," in *Sojourner in the Promised Land*.

10. Jana Riess, "Stripling Warriors: The Cultural Engagements of Contemporary Mormon Kitsch," *SUNSTONE* 22:2 (June 1999): 36–47.

11. Anonymous, "The Meeting," *Dialogue* 14:4 (winter 1981), 178–182.


Elouise Bell was the author, and it can now also be found in her, *Only When I Laugh*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 11.

12. Riess' analysis rightly emphasizes the ways in which Church-produced and commercial Mormon kitsch further "the inculcation of gender values." Riess, 39.

13. The chief exception here, although now quite dated, is *Mormonism: A Faith for All Cultures*, ed. F. LaMond Tullis (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978).

14. Mauss, 180.

15. A significant literary predecessor of this kind of memoir is the Mormon personal essay, a genre actively fostered by *Dialogue*, *Exponent II*, and *SUNSTONE* since their inception in the 1960s and 1970s.

16. Phyllis Barber, *How I Got Cultured: A Nevada Memoir* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), which won the Associated Writing Programs Award for Creative Nonfiction; Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (New York: Pantheon, 1991), frequently read in literature and women's studies courses at American universities; and Mikal Gilmore, *Shot in the Heart* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), which won the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. 



AT THE MAGDALENA MISSION

Father Kino's bones
are splayed, full skeleton,
in a windowed mausoleum.
Excavated centuries
after he died, small body
compacted by travel,
he lies atop the ground,
sanctuary all around him.

Some say he was buried
with his horse.

When we are ready to leave,
a small boy asks,
in Spanish, piece of soiled
rag in hand, if he
can wash our car.
David says, No, gracias.
But señor, I have nothing to eat.
I'm sorry, David tells him.

Nothing, he says,
as we get in and close
the doors.

—STAR COULBROOKE

What makes our acts moral? Is any practice “just business”? Can Book of Mormon lessons speak to us in our high-tech world? In contexts as diverse as nuclear testing, corporate mergers, and Mormon family life, Gadianton powerfully reminds us that every decision is personal.

GADIANTON

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

By Eric Samuelsen

PROGRAM NOTES

CHARACTERS

THIS PLAY REQUIRES SEVEN MALE AND FOUR female actors. Each actor plays one major character and various minor characters. All the major characters except CYNTHIA are Mormons.

Major Characters

MCKAY TODD—An LDS bishop, early forties.
 KAREN TODD—His wife.
 FRED WHITMORE—An exec. with ONTI, late thirties.
 CYNTHIA WHITMORE—His wife.
 MAHONRI WARD—Owner and CEO of ONTI, late fifties.
 BRENDA BURDETT—McKay Todd's assistant, late twenties.
 HELEN BRYSON—ONTI's head of public relations, early thirties.
 SAM SUMPTER—Bryson's assistant, early thirties.
 CHAD FIRMAGE—Fred Whitmore's administrative assistant, early twenties.
 JOHN W. COGBURN—Former partner of Harry June, late forties.
 CON BRYSON—Helen's husband. Employed at Empasse.

Minor Characters

HARRY JUNE—Owner of Empasse, ONTI's main competitor.
 WILSON HACKETT—Southern Utah sheep farmer, ca. 1948.



ERIC SAMUELSEN is associate professor of theater and film at Brigham Young University. His plays have been performed in New York, Indiana, Idaho, California, and BYU. His play *Accommodations* was published in the June 1994 issue of *SUNSTONE*. This play was his sixth BYU mainstage production.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER—St. George housewife, ca. 1953.

GADIANTON, KISHKUMEN, SEEZORAM, SEANTUM, and

BETHESDA—Book of Mormon characters.

COOPER and SCOTT—Two executives, silent partners of Mahonri Ward.

THE STAKE PRESIDENT—President of Fred Whitmore's stake.

BIBI HALSTRUP—Karen Todd's sworn enemy.

Various other ONTI employees, security guards, and reporters

CAST

GADIANTON was first presented by the Brigham Young University Department of Theatre and Film at the Margetts Theatre, 29 January through 8 February 1997. It was directed by Bob Nelson. The original cast was:

MCKAY	.....	Jason Tatom
KAREN	.....	Katie Holsinger
FRED	.....	Ben Hoppe
CYNTHIA	.....	Megan Sanborn
MAHONRI	.....	Tim Slover
BRENDA	.....	Colleen Baum
SAM	.....	Josh Brady
HELEN	.....	Amy Barrus
CHAD	.....	Ryan Rauzon
JOHN	.....	Danny Stiles
CON	.....	Jeremy Hoop
WILSON	.....	Rob Gardner
ERMA	.....	Rachel Davenport

NOTE ON SCRIPT

In the text below, an ellipsis (. . .) represents a pause in speech or a collecting of thoughts, and a dash (—) indicates an interrupted line. For example, a dash in the middle of a character's line indicates that the next speaking character begins speaking at that point, the two characters speaking simultaneously.

ACT ONE



WILSON HACKETT: . . . so like I said, I seen it maybe closer than most folks. That was our winter pasture anyhow, Frenchman Flats. Me, my daddy and my brothers would drive our sheep out from Cedar. Prettiest piece a land God ever created, and 'bout the hardest to make a living off of. Daddy useta say, "Only thing—it's good for is pretty."

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: And there she was, right in front of me. Susan Hayward. All that red hair. Got her autograph that very minute. "My friend Erma. . . ." Well, Erma Mackelpranger, actually, that's me, but she didn't rightly catch the last name, just kinda scribbled it off. My friend Erma Mcklprfflsk it says but that's okay. You can read her name real good. Right here—on this napkin.

WILSON HACKETT: Just filled the sky. And then, a few weeks later, in come the movie people.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: We was pretty used to 'em.

WILSON HACKETT: Shop owners in town would jack up their prices ever time the movie crews come, but I couldn't get too excited. Livin' off the land, you don't develop much of a taste for movie-goin'. Except for the Duke, of course. Saw—ever one of *his*.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: Said she was in town to make a movie—with John Wayne.

WILSON HACKETT: I wondered why they was filmin' so soon after the shot, all the dust just—startin' to settle.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: Movie called *The Conqueror*, about Genghis Kahn.

WILSON HACKETT: Saw the Duke once at Walgreen's, had this funny looking moustache all the way down his chin, a Fu Manchu kinda thing. John Wayne in a Chinese moustache? He just—plain looked ridiculous.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: You'd see movie folk everywhere, the drug-store, the soda fountain. You'd hear 'em griping, onnaccounta liquor bein' hard to come by. But they found it somewheres,—and you'd see 'em drinking.

WILSON HACKETT: I gotta say, they worked hard. You'd see 'em

every day, all covered with dust. Start every morning at five—and knock off at nine, ten, eleven.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: I saw Susan Hayward three times that summer. She rented a house in town, hired a babysitter for her two little ones. Just as—down to earth as anything.

WILSON HACKETT: All day riding horseback, stirring up that dust, rolling around in it. Right over by where they set it off—. I did wonder.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: Then a few years later, Susan Hayward died. Brain cancer. Kinda funny how it turned out, since so many here in town was going the same way. People talked about it, the St. George curse hittin' her too—after she stayed here.

WILSON HACKETT: Saw the movie as soon as it come to town.

Them writers in Hollywood shoulda been more careful what—kinda stuff they wrote for the Duke.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: John Wayne, Susan Hayward, the director, most of the crew. They all got St. George disease.

WOMAN (*As she and BISHOP MCKAY TODD enter*): Bishop?

WILSON HACKETT: Not a good enough movie to die for, that's for damn sure.

WOMAN: Bishop? Are you all right?

(*WILSON and ERMA exit.*)

BISHOP TODD: I'm fine. I'm sorry, I have a spinal—condition, sometimes it gets . . .

WOMAN: Look, I can come back. This is just routine, temple recommend renewal.

BISHOP TODD: No, that's all right. Let me just stand, walk around. This won't take—but a minute.

WOMAN: It wouldn't be a problem for me to—

BISHOP TODD: I'm fine.

(*Cross fade to FRED WHITMORE.*)

FRED: I earned a B.S. in business from U.C. Santa Barbara—.

WOMAN: Honest? In all my dealings? (*With a chuckle.*) That's always a hard one for me.

FRED: Then my MBA in finance from Ohio State.

WOMAN: You know how it gets. April fifteenth rolls around—

FRED: I was hired by Proctor and Gamble right out of graduate school and assigned to their corporate headquarters in Cincinnati.

WOMAN (*outraged*): Denied! I've had a temple recommend for twenty-five years now, no one has ever denied—

FRED: Since then, I've been with twelve different companies in the last eighteen years: Microsoft. Then, Citicorp in Omaha, the Dallas office of HP, TNR Enterprises in San Diego—

WOMAN: Isn't that just how it goes? They make some nobody bishop—

FRED: Now, ONTI. ONTI Enterprises.

WOMAN: . . . starts throwing his weight around. You listen to me, McKay Todd, if you think you're getting away with this, then you—

FRED: I'm usually indispensable within a month, leave when the job starts to get too routine. Ride off into the sunset, leave the settlers to raise their crops alone.

BISHOP TODD: Next.

(*A MAN enters, as the WOMAN exits.*)

MAN: Bishop, what's all this about? They said you wanted to see me.

FRED: I've been called a hitman, a gunslinger, a hired hatchet. That's unfair.

BISHOP TODD: Is there anything in your relationship with your family that you need to tell me about?

FRED: If my recommendations occasionally include layoffs, that's hardly my fault. Every company has fat to trim.

BISHOP TODD: Well, for starters, your wife had a black eye in church a couple of weeks ago. Is there anything I should know about it?

FRED: But I'm also not a consultant.

MAN: The lying bitch. . . . What did she tell you?

BISHOP TODD: Nothing. She said she slipped in the shower. . . .

MAN: Then that's exactly what happened.

FRED: Consultants consult. I work for the company, implement change from the inside. I take good companies . . . maybe a bit . . . screwed up. . . . *(He falters momentarily.)* I establish systems, procedures, policies. . . . *(A pause. He falters, looks briefly disoriented. GADIANTON, a man wearing biblical robes, enters, looks quizzically at FRED.)* Sometimes . . . sometimes I sort of . . . don't know what . . . pain right between my ears. *(The man in the biblical robes exits. FRED shakes it off, back to business.)* Anyway, that's it. I see what others can't, cut where they'd rather not. And then I get restless.

(As BISHOP TODD hustles across the stage, he is met by HELEN BRYSON, an attractive young woman in her early thirties, wearing a business suit. Flashback.)

HELEN: Hi, you must be Mr. Todd.

BISHOP TODD: McKay Todd, that's right.

HELEN: Helen Bryson, nice to meet you. I see you worked for the postal service?

BISHOP TODD: I used to. I had to—retire because of . . .

HELEN: Great, sounds perfect. Everyone in the company's been stuffing envelopes and licking stamps for weeks now.

BISHOP TODD: Everyone?

HELEN: Everyone from programmers to custodial staff. Well, theoretically. Mostly it's a job people have been trying to duck. Drives me nuts.

BISHOP TODD: So I'll report to you?

HELEN: Heavens no. I'm head of media relations. Well, I guess I am. Mr. Ward just decided he needed a PR person one day, hired me. But I've done a little of everything; we're kinda improvising. We were handling a volume of two hundred units a week, we come out with OfficeMate 3.0, Dataworld gives it a four-star review, and suddenly our sales are through the roof.

BISHOP TODD: Wow.

HELEN: You said it. Now we get to process all those orders.

**“Susan Hayward died. Brain cancer. . . .
People talked about it, the St. George
curse hittin’ her too. . . .”**

MAN: *(Livid.)* A court! I just came here. . . . *(Sputtering.)* You can't just . . . just take some suspicion—!

(MAHONRI WARD enters, holding a memo.)

WARD: *(Reading.)* “To Mahonri Ward, CEO ONTI.”

FRED: My latest project. ONTI. ONTI Officemate, one of the great DOS spreadsheets. Ten years ago, just another start-up, today, a market share in the high teens. Part of that mid-eighties software boom. Rank amateurs, of course, as business people.

WARD: *(Reading.)* “I began with what I perceived—to be . . .

FRED: . . . to be the company's—.

WARD: . . . basic operating policies—.

FRED: . . . and procedures, both written and unwritten.

(BISHOP TODD quickly takes off his suit coat and replaces it with an ink-stained smock.)

FRED: The company's unofficial management motto seems to be—.

WARD: Teach them correct principles, and let them govern themselves.

FRED: I've heard that phrase from at least four people in supervisory roles. While the phrase itself is new to me, it does have a nice Tom Peters ring to it. But this motto implies a strong commitment to training and education. I have seen little evidence of such a commitment.

BISHOP TODD: So I report to—.

HELEN: I have no idea. If you have a problem, ask Mr. Ward, Mahonri Ward, he's the main boss, his office is upstairs.

BISHOP TODD: What kind of volume are you expecting?

HELEN: Who knows? We did twenty-five hundred last week, and it's going to go way higher.

BISHOP TODD: Twenty-five . . . I'll need some help.

HELEN: Hire anyone you want, pay 'em whatever you think. Three-and-a-halves are over there, five-and-a-quarters over there, manuals, I'm not sure, there's a box somewhere.

BISHOP TODD: Three-and-a-halves—?

HELEN: Good luck. And listen, you get the mail going smoothly around here, and you'll be a hero.

(BISHOP TODD takes off his smock, puts on his suit jacket. A WOMAN enters his office.)

FRED *(as WARD resumes reading.)*: “While I certainly applaud the relaxed, informal corporate culture you've created—.

WARD: . . . that very informality can, at times, get in the way of productivity.”

FRED: I have a few suggestions.

(We see in spots a series of businesspeople, all young, dressed with a kind of affluent informality.)

FIRST WOMAN: No more baby showers?

MAN: Birthday parties?

ANOTHER WOMAN: Monday night picnics?

MAN: We're not sponsoring a little league team any more?

FIRST WOMAN: Or Girl Scouts?

WARD: Oh sure we will. In the evenings, weekends. Just not on company time.

MAN: Give up rotisserie baseball?

FRED: Unless it has a direct bearing—.

WARD: . . . on the creation, manufacturing, and sale of computer software, we must ask you to save it for your after-work hours.

FIRST WOMAN: After-work minutes, you mean.

(*They all laugh. Enter CHAD FIRMAGE, a young man in his twenties.*)

CHAD: Mr. Whitmore?

FRED: You must be my new assistant.

CHAD: Yes sir. Chad Firmage.

FRED: Chad, my pleasure.

BISHOP TODD: (*Enter an older woman, SISTER GUINNESS.*) Sister Guinness.

FRED: (*They shake hands.*) Sit down; take it easy. Call me Fred. Drink?

CHAD: I'm not—.

FRED: Coke, Sprite?

CHAD: Uh, a Sprite'd be—.

FRED: Bill Gates always keeps a fridge full of cold Diet Coke, I figure'd I'd follow suit. Ice?

BISHOP TODD: Sister Guinness. As you may have guessed, we have a calling in mind for you.

SISTER GUINNESS: (*Chuckling.*) I've never turned down a calling in my life; I don't expect to start now.

FRED: So you've been married what? Three months?

CHAD: Just three months ago yesterday.

SISTER GUINNESS: The nursery?

FRED: Been a good three months?

CHAD: Yes sir.

FRED: Good. Because three months from now, you'll barely remember her name.

SISTER GUINNESS: Bishop Todd, I'm sixty-one years old!

FRED: If I were to say to you that this job requires an eighty-hour work week, what would you say?

SISTER GUINNESS: My childrearing days are over!

(*She exits in a huff. The BISHOP sighs, follows.*)

FRED: Basically, we're talking fourteen-hour days, six days a week. Say seven A.M. to nine P.M.

CHAD: It sounds—like a pretty heavy . . .

FRED: Well, what I think, eighty hours, that's for wimps. Eighty hours strikes me as a minimum commitment.

CHAD: Minimum commitment—.

FRED: Six months with me, Chad, and you'll wish you never heard the name Fred Whitmore. You'll want to quit ten times a day. You'll fantasize killing me.

CHAD: I really don't think—.

FRED: I'll give you fifty jobs at once, and expect them all yesterday. Anything you do that's just slightly not the way I want it, and you'll wish you were never born. I'll expect you to sweat blood,

I'll steal every idea you think of, and I never, ever say thanks. You still with me?

CHAD: Yes sir.

FRED: Don't call me sir. You want out?

CHAD: No, si . . . No—.

FRED: Only fair to warn you, that three of my last four assistants had nervous breakdowns. One's still in the hospital. Took sleeping pills, some kinda brain damage.

CHAD: I was raised on a ranch. I've never been afraid of hard work.

FRED: Good. Because the other two recovered, and both made their first million before their thirtieth birthdays.

CHAD: You've got your man!

FRED: Good. Finish your Coke. (*CHAD hurriedly swallows it. The Man in biblical robes reenters, smiling enigmatically.*) So, cowboy, whaddya say? Let's head 'em up and move 'em out!

CHAD: Yes—.

FRED: I said, let's head 'em up and move 'em out!

CHAD: Okay.

FRED: I thought you were a cowboy! Head 'em up and moooooove em out!

CHAD: (*Without much enthusiasm.*) Eeehah!

FRED: HEAD 'EM UP AND MOOOOOOOVE 'EM OUT!

CHAD: EEEEEHAH!

FRED: That just got you a raise.

(*The man with biblical robes exits. Lights up on WARD.*)

WARD: Look, we've had a lot of fun, and we've had a lot of success. But we can't treat this like a hobby any more. We're in the big leagues now.

(*BISHOP TODD takes off his suit coat, puts on the smock.*)

FRED: Having made these few broader suggestions, I will proceed with a more in-depth examination of specific operations. (*He crosses to BISHOP TODD, with CHAD.*) Hi. Fred Whitmore.

BISHOP TODD: McKay Todd.

FRED: My assistant, Chad Firmage. So, you're head of the mailroom room operation?

BISHOP TODD: That's right.

FRED: Been here two years?

BISHOP TODD: Two years, eight—months . . .

FRED: Helen Bryson says you're a miracle worker.

BISHOP TODD: That's nice of her. (*Twists his back and winces.*)

ED: Are you okay?

BISHOP TODD: I just have an intermittent spinal—problem. . . .

FRED: Gosh, that's a shame. I've had some back problems myself, know what you're going through. Okay, here's what I don't get.

You have how many employees in this area? Sixty-five, seventy?

BISHOP TODD: Good heavens no. I supervise six workers.

FRED: Chad?

CHAD: (*Shuffling through records.*) Uh . . . company records say you've hired a total of . . . sixty-seven employees.

BISHOP TODD: But I don't supervise them.

FRED: Explain that to me.

BISHOP TODD: When I was hired, my job was to fill customers' orders, not just supervise the mail operation. I hired people to package, to copy data onto disks, to stuff envelopes; most of them were moved to manufacturing. And, I hired in other areas of the company; customer support—.

FRED: (*Impatiently.*) Uh-huh. And now you're down to six?

BISHOP TODD: Just the mailroom, here.

FRED: Chad?

CHAD: These sixty-seven people. How did you go about hiring them?

BISHOP TODD: Well, I just—.

CHAD: Our records show no evidence of compliance with Equal Opportunity guidelines, no apps on file—.

BISHOP TODD: I wasn't told I had to. I just—.

FRED: Uh-huh?

BISHOP TODD: . . . looked for people who needed work. I'm a bishop, I see a lot of people who really need a break.

FRED: Chad, a bishop. That's a church thing?

CHAD: Head of a local congregation. Bishop, you hired your ward

FRED: If you had to, you could work all that out, couldn't you?

BISHOP TODD: Well, I—.

FRED: For an extra five grand a year?

BISHOP TODD: Five grand?

FRED: We'd still come out ahead. You ever finish an entire morning's rush before the incoming?

BISHOP TODD: Generally we. . . . Is this an order?

FRED: What?

BISHOP TODD: Are you telling me I'm supposed to come in earlier? From now on? As my boss?

FRED: No, I don't do that. This is all just hypothetical.

BISHOP TODD: I see.

FRED: But you could, right? I can put that on my report?

BISHOP TODD: (*Pause.*) I suppose. If I had to.

“ . . . It's Mormon country, so I took the lessons and took the bath. I figure, to get along, go along.”

members?

BISHOP TODD: Am I in some kind of trouble?

FRED: Don't sweat it. We're just trying to get our act together upstairs.

BISHOP TODD: So I don't . . . report to you?

FRED: You don't know who you report to?

BISHOP TODD: So far, it hasn't really mattered.

FRED: For now, go ahead and report to me. Or to Chad. Now, let me see if I've got this straight. The mail goes out when?

BISHOP TODD: The truck's usually here between two and two-thirty.

FRED: So your big rush is in the mornings. And you sort and deliver incoming in the afternoons?

BISHOP TODD: Yes.

FRED: Chad?

CHAD: One possibility might be to stagger hours to use your employees more efficiently?

FRED: I am a great believer in delegation.

CHAD: Say if four of them came in at, six or seven, worked until two or three, the other two could work nine to five and handle the incoming in the afternoon?

BISHOP TODD: I suppose—.

CHAD: And you're salaried, right? Not hourly? So you could supervise the morning rush, stay 'til five, and it wouldn't cost the company any more money.

FRED: Just hypothetically.

BISHOP TODD: But I can't.

FRED: Oh?

BISHOP TODD: My wife has to go to work early to be home when the kids come home at three. So I have to get them off to school. I can't get here—.

FRED: Good.

CHAD: Good.

FRED: Good to talk to you, McKay is it? Or do I call you Bishop?

BISHOP TODD: McKay is fine.

FRED: You'll have to forgive me. I'm a new convert, still a little shaky on Mormon protocol. (*To the audience.*) In south Philly, all those Italians, I went to mass every Sunday. In San Diego, I took up golf. Here, it's Mormon country, so I took the lessons and took the bath. I figure, to get along, go along. (*To TODD.*) Nice operation you have here.

BISHOP TODD: Thanks. (*Wearily peels off smock, puts on suit jacket.*)

FRED: Chad? You got all that?

CHAD: Comes in earlier, reports to you, raise. Got it.

FRED: Okay, next we look at programming.

(*Enter BRENDA BURDETT to BISHOP TODD's office.*)

BRENDA: Bishop Todd.

BISHOP TODD: Sister Burdett. Please sit down.

BRENDA: Bishop, it's. . . . (*She breaks down briefly.*) I'm sorry. I didn't think I was going to do that.

BISHOP TODD: Is it Brian?

BRENDA: It's over, Bishop. It's all over.

FRED: (*To CHAD.*) Then user support afterwards. (*To audience.*)

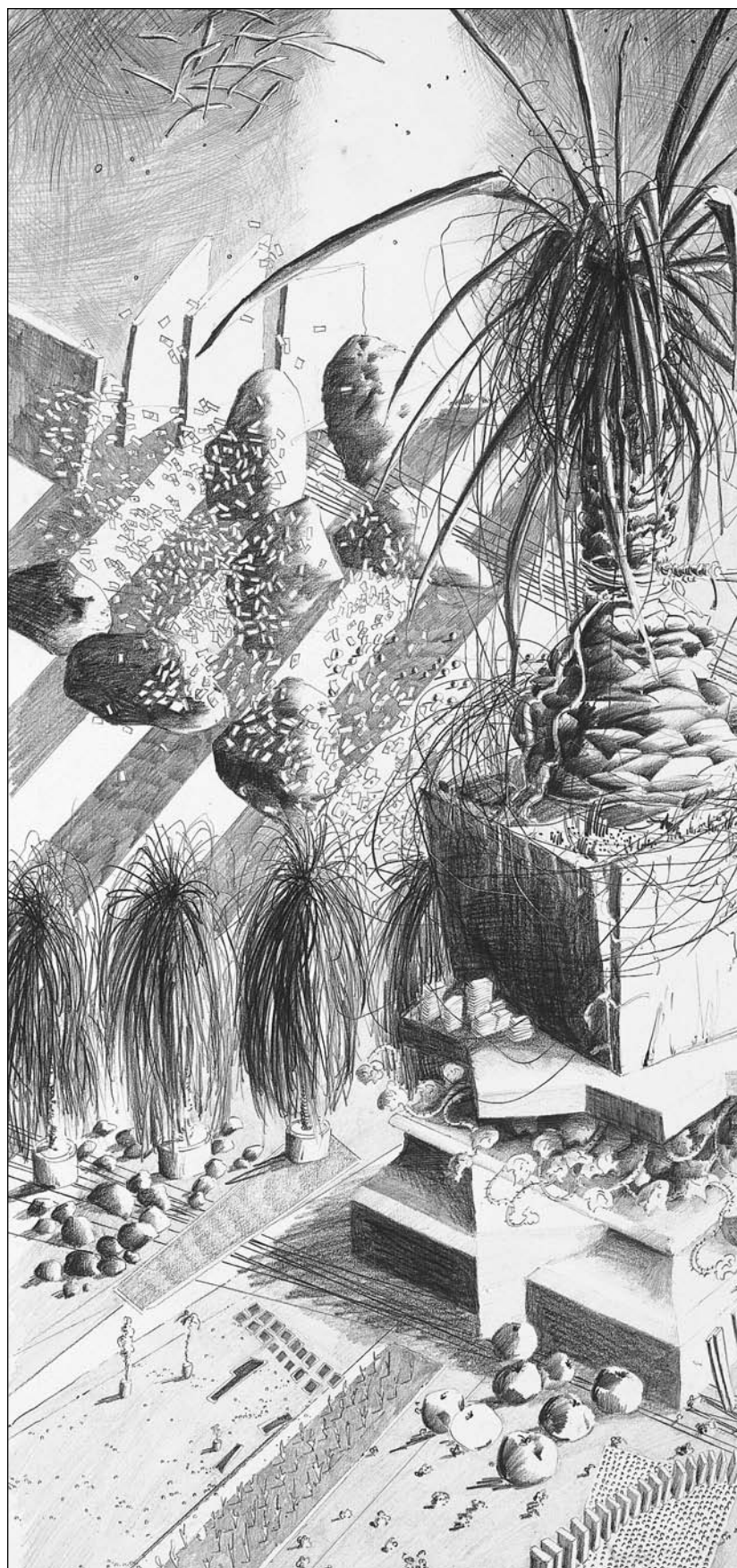
Something else, too, a project of my own. The very fact I'm here says something. Big secrecy, mysterious holes in Mr. Ward's schedule. Big secrets equal big money. And since I am here, maybe some of it can trickle down my way. . . . (*He shrugs, exits.*)

BRENDA: All that time, he lost all that weight, started working out, grew that little moustache, I thought it was for me. You know? Talking about spending more time with the kids, maybe quit smoking. I thought it was for me, for the family. All the time, it

ARTIST'S NOTE

N EITHER this image nor the cover nor the small pieces throughout the play are meant to illustrate Gadianton. Illustrations very often tend to be static and fail to invite further interaction. I wanted to create images that could stand independent of the play and convey some of my feelings about it through metaphor and symbol, while relating them to major themes running through much of my work. All of my work, in some way or another, is about landscape: how we see ourselves through it and impose our values on it. The themes of the Book of Mormon repeat themselves in many of my drawings, especially the notion of a promised land inhabited by chosen peoples who either prosper or suffer because of their activities on the land. I am especially intrigued by connections between seemingly unrelated people and events that manifest themselves in broad cycles: ancient sea voyages, pyramid temples, a civilization struggling with changing political and economic values, revelations, a hill in New York, a people searching for refuge in the desert. As Eric's play suggests, many of these events parallel in a very direct way our own history and struggles.

—MARK ENGLAND





MARK ENGLAND

was someone else. Someone named M. M. McGinn. I lost my man to an initial.

BISHOP TODD: M.?

BRENDA: That's the name on the mailbox. Outside the mobile home where I caught him. M. Mary Jane? Margaret? Martha? Megan?

BISHOP TODD: Brenda, an initial doesn't seem that . . . conclusive to me.

BRENDA: Oh, it's plenty conclusive. Looked right in the window, caught 'em in the act. I could see part of her face, even. Black hair. Except he was still wearing his cowboy boots, you know? Humpin' a guy with cowboy boots, is that supposed to be some kind of turn-on?

BISHOP TODD: When was this?

BRENDA: Last night.

BISHOP TODD: Oh, my.

BRENDA: Yeah, it was a great night, all right.

BISHOP TODD: You say you looked in. Did you talk to him? Is everything—?

BRENDA: I didn't exactly talk to him.

BISHOP TODD: I think you should, don't you?

BRENDA: It's not necessary, Bishop. He knows that I know, and he knows that it's over. Next time we talk, it'll be in court.

BISHOP TODD: How do you—?

BRENDA: Went back to the house and got all his stuff. His clothes, his shoes, his guns, that two-point trophy buck he was so proud of, everything. Took two trips, but I loaded it all in the bed of his pickup, there in her driveway. Then . . . well, Bishop, I have a little confession to make.

BISHOP TODD: A confession?

BRENDA: I was about to leave, then I saw the hose goin' out from the trailer. She has this little pathetic patch of lawn out in front she was watering. So she was used to the sound of water runnin'. So I just stuck that hose in the back of the truck with all his things. Oh, he knows all right.

BISHOP TODD: Oh, my.

BRENDA: Bishop, I know I'm supposed to forgive him. I know I'm supposed to ask Heavenly Father for forgiveness for ruining all his stuff and all. And I will. When I'm good and ready.

BISHOP TODD: I understand. In the meantime—

BRENDA: Bishop, you know me. I'm not a whiner, and I'm not a taker. But I got three kids, a brand-new mortgage, and I just lost 80 percent of my family income.

BISHOP TODD: The Church will help.

(FRED and CHAD enter, with MAHONRI WARD.)

FRED: So that's my report, Mr. Ward.

BISHOP TODD: We'll help with the mortgage, if you need us to. I'll call Sister Marchant to assess your food needs.

BRENDA: I'm gonna get a better job; that'll help.

BISHOP TODD: We have an opening in my department at ONTI, actually.

FRED: I tried to fudge together an organizational flow chart—.

BRENDA: Well, that would be great. ONTI, they pay good. And I'll be able to get child support when the divorce comes through, not that I figure to collect it real often.

BISHOP TODD: Good. I know how traumatic this must be for you—

BRENDA: No, Bishop. I'm okay. (*Sudden emotion.*) I would like to

claw the bastard's eyeballs out. (*Takes a deep breath.*) But I'm gonna be okay.

WARD: A flow chart?

FRED: Who reports to who.

BISHOP TODD: And I promise, the Church will take action on this, too.

BRENDA: Well, that's up to you. Won't mean much to Brian either way. But there is one more thing.

BISHOP TODD: Yes?

BRENDA: Well, I mean, you had all those talks with us, and he wasn't working nights as much, and I started thinking things were getting better. I had some hope, you know, and it's dangerous, hope is.

BISHOP TODD: So?

BRENDA: Well, on top of everything . . . I think I'm pregnant.

(*Pause.*)

FRED: You can see the result, just a total mess.

BISHOP TODD: We'll see if we can help there, too.

(*He and BRENDA exit.*)

WARD: We've never needed anything like a flow chart before.

CHAD: We've basically identified a three-tiered structure.

WARD: Look, I don't want to lose our flexibility, make things so rigid good ideas don't get listened to. That's the problem with these top-down structures.

FRED: I understand.

WARD: Our approach, if we have a problem, we send out for lunch and sit around a table 'til we've worked things out.

FRED: That kind of chaos can yield creative dividends.

WARD: That's what we've found.

FRED: Right, back when you had thirty-five employees. Right now you have over six thousand.

WARD: Well, okay. That's what you're supposed to do for us, help us get better organized.

FRED: Chad?

CHAD: We've roughed out a little tighter organization.

WARD: (*Looking at a chart.*) Very impressive.

FRED: We could implement the whole thing in a matter of months.

WARD: You said something about layoffs—.

FRED: Mr. Ward, layoffs is not a word we use. That's for outsiders, people who don't know a business cycle from a Schwinn. Rightsizing, that's the term for it.

WARD: Rightsizing.

FRED: And that's not a recommendation I'm necessarily making. I don't know your plans: expansion, acquisition, a merger. With your liquidity—.

WARD: I understand.

FRED: . . . your market share . . . you're an attractive target. Lean and mean, right? That's how you survive.

WARD: Yes.

FRED: All I'm saying, if rightsizing turns out to be necessary—.

WARD: I'm not going to lay anyone off.

FRED: I understand that.

WARD: I don't believe in it.

FRED: It can often lead to feelings of hostility and bitterness, absolutely.

WARD: We're not that desperate, not yet, not by a long shot.

FRED: Then I'll just file this part of my report?

WARD: Pitch it, delete the program. We're not laying people off, and that's final.

CHAD: So our restructuring proposal—?

WARD: I agree we need a tighter organization. Minus layoffs.

FRED: You're the boss. *(A buzzing sound.)* My phone.

CHAD: *(Takes cellular phone from pocket.)* I got it. Fred Whitmore's office.

WARD: Go ahead and take it.

CHAD: Yeah, he's here. Fred, I think it's your stake president.

FRED: *(Taking phone.)* My what? Fred Whitmore. Uh-huh. Yeah. Yeah?

WARD: Problems?

FRED: *(Shakes his head.)* Okay, I guess. Say about seven? Yeah.

(Hangs up.) Weird.

WARD: Anything important?

FRED: I don't know. Chad?

CHAD: Yes?

FRED: What's a stake president?

(He, CHAD and WARD exit. SAM SUMPTER, unkempt, with his head on his desk. Enter HELEN.)

SUMPTER: Hello, Helen.

HELEN: Oh, Sam. *(She sighs, and sits next to him.)* What is it this time? Let's see. Trilateral Commission? Area 51? The Kennedy assassin—.

SUMPTER: I can't do it. Can't can't can't can't, not any longer.

HELEN: Okay, it's work related. What can't you do?

SUMPTER: The job, this place, this job—.

HELEN: Specifically, Sam.

SUMPTER: Specifically? *(Nods.)* All right. All right, all right, you asked for it. We work at a computer company, we make computer software, our product is used in offices across the country.

HELEN: So far I'm with you.

SUMPTER: Mostly women, right? Mostly secretaries, women, single parents, blue-collar wives. Typing at a PC. For hours. Every day. The same repeated movements, the same muscles worked, hour after hour. You see them, don't you? You see them? Elastic bandages on their wrists.

HELEN: Sam—.

SUMPTER: Carpal tunnel. Carpal tunnel syndrome, bandages on their wrists. Any office in the. . . And they keep working, ruining their hands and their arms and and and their health and and and—.

HELEN: Sam, this is Helen.

SUMPTER: And I'm party to it. Me. To an an an increase in the sum total of human misery. I'm party to it.

HELEN: Sam, you've got to stay away from those web sites—.

SUMPTER: Carpal tunnel and and and and ozone depletion, sometimes I feel like

I'm the only one—

HELEN: Frankly, Sam—.

SUMPTER: . . . who bothers to look, who bothers to read and think, and instead of just just just nailing my ninety-five theses to the door—.

HELEN: *(Wearily.)* You nail anything to our door and I'll have you arrested.

SUMPTER: I chicken out. Bwaack bwaack bwaack. I chicken. Right? Bwaack bwaaaaack. Every time. For a paycheck. A lousy few hundred shekels a week.

HELEN: Sam, the point is, if you want to continue getting that paycheck . . . you with me?

SUMPTER: I know I know I let you down I know—.

HELEN: Look, I won't fire you, Sam.

SUMPTER: You should.

HELEN: Probably I should. But I won't. Okay?

SUMPTER: Okay.

HELEN: Just . . . it's not enough to just . . . just overcome your moral scruples enough to walk in the door. You know?

SUMPTER: I know.

HELEN: There's a little matter of a press release I needed yesterday.

SUMPTER: Yes . . . yes, I'll get right . . . right on it.

HELEN: All right. *(Starts to go, then turns back.)* We have this conversation nearly every week, you know.

SUMPTER: I know. I'm sorry, it's just that—.

HELEN: Sam, why not give it up? I mean, it's not like we make . . . missiles, or cigarettes or, I don't know, crack cocaine. . . . Are we really so awful?

SUMPTER: "All is well in Zion, yea—Zion prospereth."

HELEN: Give me a—.

SUMPTER: "ALL IS WELL—.

HELEN: I need that press release by this afternoon.

(BISHOP TODD, wearing his work jacket.

Enter BRENDA.)

BRENDA: Bishop? I got it!

BISHOP TODD: Brenda. I'm so delighted.

BRENDA: Bishop, I can't thank you enough for this.

BISHOP TODD: Did you ask about the insurance?

BRENDA: They say I'm covered. Twelve-hundred-dollar deductible, and I'll get that from Brian, the judge said.

BISHOP TODD: This is great news.

BRENDA: So, what do I do?

(Enter HARRY JUNE, affable, friendly, ruthless, owner of Empasse.)

BISHOP TODD: Excuse me. *(Crosses to him.)* Can I help you?

JUNE: Actually, I'm waiting for someone. *(They shake hands.)* Harry June. Pleasure to meet you.

BISHOP TODD: *(A bit in awe.)* Mr. June. I mean, Brother . . . President . . . uh, McKay Todd. It's my pleasure.

JUNE: McKay Todd. Do I know you from some-



where?

BISHOP TODD: I don't . . . think—.

JUNE: You gave a talk at regional conference, didn't you? Last summer?

BISHOP TODD: (*Beaming.*) As a matter of fact . . . you remember my—.

JUNE: I always remember a good talk. Let's see, you talked about . . .

BISHOP TODD: Hope.

JUNE: Hope, right. Well, it's good to see you again.

BISHOP TODD: Likewise.

JUNE: (*Enter WARD.*) Nice operation you have down here.

BISHOP TODD: Thanks.

WARD: Harry.

BISHOP TODD: Mr. Ward.

WARD: The elevator's down the hall. (*He and JUNE start to exit together. He turns back to BISHOP TODD.*) Your name is Todd, isn't it?

BISHOP TODD: McKay Todd, yessir.

WARD: Well, just go on . . . with what you were doing.

BISHOP TODD: Yes sir.

(*They exit.*)

BRENDA: Wow. *The Mahonri Ward?*

BISHOP TODD: And *the Harry June.* Both of them.

BRENDA: Two of the richest guys in the Church.

BISHOP TODD: Probably a billion dollars, right here in our mailroom.

BRENDA: Be great, wouldn't it?

BISHOP TODD: Yep.

BRENDA: How often do they come down here?

BISHOP TODD: Never. This is a first.

BRENDA: I'm impressed. My first day, too.

BISHOP TODD: Amazing.

BRENDA: So why are those two guys sneakin' around our mailroom?

BISHOP TODD: I have no idea.

(*Pause.*)

BRENDA: Well. None of my business. What do I do?

BISHOP TODD: You start working. Address labels are there, work orders over there.

BRENDA: Great. And Bishop?

BISHOP TODD: Yes, Sister Burdett.

BRENDA: Thanks.

(*Lights down. Up on JUNE and WARD in WARD's office. Two other execs, SCOTT and COOPER, are with them.*)

JUNE: Seventeen a share.

SCOTT: (*Depressed.*) Seventeen.

JUNE: Right now, that's it. Fair market value.

WARD: (*Pause.*) Look Harry, we'll have to think about it.

JUNE: You do that. (*Checks his watch.*) Meantime, I have stake meetings. (*With genuine affection.*) It's great to see you again, Mahonri. You're a good man.

WARD: So are you.

JUNE: Mr. Scott, Mr. Cooper. (*Nods affably, exits. A longish pause.*)

SCOTT: Seventeen.

COOPER: It's not like it's news to us.

SCOTT: It's what we warned you, Mahonri.

WARD: I know, Randy. (*Pacing.*) We're still profitable; that doesn't matter. We have no debt at all, doesn't matter. Market share, ir-

relevant.

COOPER: Wall Street doesn't like us.

SCOTT: That's what it comes down to.

WARD: Remember when we were at thirty?

COOPER: Not that long ago, either.

WARD: Okay, at seventeen, where does that leave us?

SCOTT: One-and-three quarters for you, close to three divided between Coop and me.

WARD: Not so bad, when you think of where we started.

COOPER: It's not enough.

WARD: Coop, Randy. I want out. I can't put it any simpler than that.

COOPER: It's what we've been talking about.

WARD: I'm not cut out for this. I've been doing some soul searching, wondering how suddenly, I came to run this . . . monster of a company. That was never my dream.

SCOTT: I know. We've talked—.

WARD: I'm a guy with an itch for making things simpler. That's all. I liked playing with software, I came up with a new application, then when we needed financing, I took us public. One thing led to another, and—.

SCOTT: And here we are.

WARD: Here we are.

COOPER: The fact is, Mahonri, I want this merger as badly as you do.

SCOTT: Both of us do.

WARD: I know.

COOPER: For you, this was a dream, a crusade even. For me, it was an investment.

SCOTT: Me too. And it's time to cash in.

COOPER: But not at seventeen dollars a share. Not for stock I bought at fifteen-and-a-quarter, some of it.

SCOTT: That one block, I bought at sixteen.

COOPER: That's ridiculous.

WARD: It's still a great deal of money.

COOPER: If it's worth nineteen, I want nineteen. If it's worth twenty-five, I want twenty-five.

SCOTT: It's been as high as thirty. Wish I'd sold then.

COOPER: Me too. Figured I'd keep riding it up.

WARD: Realistically—.

COOPER: Realistically, there's no reason we can't get twenty-five.

SCOTT: We want what's ours.

COOPER: That's just how business works.

WARD: I know you've been talking to Con Bryson—.

SCOTT: The logistics are in place.

COOPER: We'll stock split two for one. . . .

SCOTT: . . . trade shares to make up the balance.

COOPER: We have a three-week window, and we pick the day, based on NASDAQ closing price.

SCOTT: Harry doesn't set the price. The market will.

WARD: But that puts the price out of our hands, doesn't it?

SCOTT: Mahonri, weren't you listening? Harry couldn't have made it clearer.

JUNE: (*Reappears in light.*) Windows hurt you.

WARD: We're recovering from Windows. Look at our books.

JUNE: Your stock's down to seventeen. (*A pause. Then, baiting the hook.*) Of course, if you could reduce costs substantially over the

next few weeks—.

WARD: No.

JUNE: You're fat in engineering. And customer support, well—

WARD: User support is our trademark.

JUNE: Not cost-effective.

WARD: Harry, people are afraid of computers. They like having a helpline—.

JUNE: Officemate wholesales at forty dollars per unit. Each customer

WARD: I founded this company; I run this company!

COOPER: That's right. You do. And you're the biggest shareholder.

With thirty-eight percent of the stock. Mahonri, you're outvoted.

(Lights down as they exit. Lights come up on CHAD and FRED.)

FRED: Well, seven o'clock. I've got an appointment.

CHAD: *(He starts to pick up.)* Right.

FRED: You going somewhere?

CHAD: *(A pause. Sits.)* No.

**“It's not like we make . . .
missiles, or cigarettes, or crack cocaine. . . .
Are we really so awful?”**

call costs you twelve—.

WARD: It's why we have customer loyalty—.

JUNE: I'm telling you what Wall Street's telling you. Unless you can reduce costs substantially over the next four months, the selling price is seventeen dollars a share. *(Lights out on him.)*

WARD: Windows wasn't our fault.

SCOTT: It's Bill Gates, Mahonri.

WARD: When you have to buy the operating system from Microsoft and they're your main competitor—.

COOPER: The Justice Department—.

SCOTT: They did investigate—.

WARD: But how they . . . I mean, no major . . . come on—.

SCOTT: No major violations of antitrust. It's Bill Gates. They'll never catch him.

COOPER: It's also irrelevant. We've all read Fred's memo on layoffs.

WARD: How did you get hold of that?

COOPER: Mahonri—.

WARD: I told him to throw that report away!

COOPER: Calm down.

SCOTT: It was my idea to hire him. Remember?

WARD: An efficiency consultant, you said.

COOPER: That's right. Reporting to the four of us, as majority stockholders.

WARD: Reporting to me, as CEO!

SCOTT: What, you think we're not going to check with him?

COOPER: You think we're not going to ask for his recommendations?

SCOTT: It's all laid out for us.

COOPER: Wall Street will fall right back in love.

WARD: Absolutely not.

COOPER: We can get twenty-five, minimum.

WARD: Or we can sell now at seventeen. And that's good enough for me. *(Pause.)*

SCOTT: Not me.

COOPER: No way.

WARD: I am CEO of this company, gentlemen.

COOPER: Yes—.

FRED: There's a programming report and Windows update. I'll need those first thing tomorrow.

CHAD: Okay.

FRED: Seven o'clock, Chad, is when I go home.

CHAD: Right. *(FRED exits. CHAD picks up phone with a sigh.)* Honey?

Yeah. Gee, that sounds great. No. No, I'm still going to be another couple of hours. I dunno, maybe midnight. I know. I know. I know. *(Pause.)* Because I have to.

(Lights up on CYNTHIA WHITMORE. She is talking over a tape recorder, looking over some photographs.)

CYNTHIA: Search for America, chapter seven. Continuing. Grocery shopping. *(With breathless enthusiasm.)* A supermarket! Such a carefully constructed maze, herding us all, like mice, towards our water bottles and seed trays. Today, a bonus; older women smiling at you, handing out free samples of foods on special. Insert Photo Seven. *(Turns over a photograph.)*

We're all collectors of persons, searchers for faces and hands and impressions. This is St. George, Utah, white America, variations are subtler, but patience, patience, more refined pleasures are often their own reward. Insert Photo Eight. A tattooed man, wearing a Harley Davidson jacket and a stained T-shirt glowered, daring us all to comment, as he laid just five things on the conveyor: cigarettes, chewing tobacco, beef jerky, beer, and a box of Lucky Charms. Insert Photo Nine. Two of the checkout ladies had banded wrists: carpal tunnel, they said. Photo Ten. And there was an Indian woman, tall and fat and proud, and when she would approach, everyone would make such an exaggerated show of nonchalance, checking their wristwatches. Insert Photos Eleven through Thirteen, sequence. The contempt on a checker's face as a man paid with food stamps. Photo Fourteen. And I saw one very young-looking woman, with unwashed hair shining in the fluorescence. Photo Fifteen. She had two small children with her. Photo Sixteen, closeup. One of them was crying, and you could see the streaks the tears made in the brown and gray of her cheeks. *(Enter FRED. She gestures for him to sit. He does, smiling.)* And each of the free sample stations was like a point of the True

Cross, and the mother was feeding them cookies and punch and smoked sausage, the Body and Blood of Christ. Then she left, her children fed, without making a single purchase, and the baggers smiled at her kindly as she went out the door. Photo Seventeen, actually make that before that last sentence, then Eighteen now. And in the parking lot, a dispute over a parking space very nearly led to a fistfight! Nineteen and Twenty. Shouting, threats, obscenities. . . . *(Turns off the tape recorder.)* Oh, it was marvelous, glorious! I'm going back again tomorrow. Hello, darling.

FRED: *(Kisses her absently.)* Hi, Cinny. Nice stuff. Kiss?

CYNTHIA: I thought we'd do Chinese tonight. Take-out? *(We see WARD enter; ring a doorbell.)*

FRED: Fine.

(JOHN WAYNE COGBURN answers his door. Alcoholic, nasty.)

COGBURN: Yeah?

WARD: Brother Cogburn. My name is Mahonri Ward, and—

COGBURN: Get lost. *(Slams the door closed. WARD stares at it a moment, exits.)*

CYNTHIA: Did you give Mahonri your report?

FRED: Wouldn't take it. Had to slip it through the back door to Coop. He'll know what to do with it. Something else, too.

CYNTHIA: Oh?

FRED: I had a meeting with a stake president.

(The STAKE PRESIDENT enters. FRED turns, acts out the scene while CYNTHIA watches.)

STAKE PRESIDENT: Brother Whitmore? You're probably wondering why I called you in this evening.

FRED: As a matter of fact—

STAKE PRESIDENT: I'm here to extend you a calling.

FRED: *(Turns to CYNTHIA.)* You remember anything about callings?

CYNTHIA: They told us about it. It's a lay ministry, so everyone has a job to do, but it's like, hierarchical; they call you, you don't get to choose.

FRED: You remember all that stuff better than me.

STAKE PRESIDENT: You are an elder; isn't that correct?

FRED: I honestly . . . I don't rememb—

CYNTHIA: You are.

FRED: I thought I was a priest.

CYNTHIA: That was at first. Remember? It goes deacon, priest, elder, bishop, something like that?

FRED: I'm second to the top?

CYNTHIA: I think. The guys in the circle, hands on your head?

FRED: Oh, yeah.

STAKE PRESIDENT: You come very highly recommended for this present calling, and I'm very happy to extend it to you

FRED: *(Raising his hand, like a kid in school.)* Uh, President?

STAKE PRESIDENT: Yes, Brother Whitmore?

FRED: Who are you? And what's a calling?

CYNTHIA: You didn't.

FRED: Well, I didn't know.

CYNTHIA: You said, who are you? He's the stake president. That's like the head of a diocese, like a bishop in most churches.

FRED: I found that out.

STAKE PRESIDENT: Look, maybe we should take this a little more slowly.

CYNTHIA: Thank heavens.

STAKE PRESIDENT: A calling is . . . an opportunity. An opportunity for service.

FRED: *(Nodding.)* Gotcha.

STAKE PRESIDENT: Yes. An opportunity to serve your fellow man, while also serving the Lord.

FRED: Uh-huh.

STAKE PRESIDENT: Precisely. As, for example, I'm doing.

FRED: So you want me to take over your job?

STAKE PRESIDENT: I beg pardon?

FRED: This president stuff. You want me to take it on?

CYNTHIA: Fred!

STAKE PRESIDENT: No, no, I don't have the authority—

FRED: Hey, organizational I can handle. That's what I do at work, supervise over six thousand people. Get people working together, that's my kinda gig. *(Stands to shake his hand.)* You got your man.

CYNTHIA: Oh, Fred. Don't you remember anything they told you?

FRED: Not much, frankly.

STAKE PRESIDENT: Brother Whitmore, you don't understand.

Believe me, I would love to have you take over my job. But that's not. . . . I have a different calling in mind.

FRED: I don't know. I mean, I'm like everyone. Good at some things. Not good at others.

STAKE PRESIDENT: Certainly.

FRED: What if you give me something I'm no good at? *(Turns to CYNTHIA.)* And so, of course, that's exactly what he did.

STAKE PRESIDENT: We want you to be stake drama specialist.

CYNTHIA: Drama? Did he say drama?

STAKE PRESIDENT: Specifically, we want you to direct the stake play. *(The STAKE PRESIDENT exits.)*

CYNTHIA: You're kidding.

FRED: Wish I was. A play. Like that thing we saw that one time with all the cats?

CYNTHIA: I know what a play is, Fred. They have a theater?

FRED: In the stake building, he said. Anyway, every other year or so they do a dramatic thing, and this year, I'm in charge.

CYNTHIA: That's just insane.

FRED: Tell me about it.

CYNTHIA: You're a businessman; you don't know anything about drama.

FRED: Actually, I think it'll be okay. It's more organizational than anything. Every ward has a drama person called, and they get the people to be in it, I just have to coordinate it all.

CYNTHIA: Well, you can do that, I guess.

FRED: That's what I figured.

CYNTHIA: So what play are you doing? Do you get to choose?

FRED: Kinda. They gave me three scripts, I'm supposed to read them, let them know. They're all real Mormon.

CYNTHIA: Figures. *(Looking them over.)* *Man of Thunder: The Orrin Porter Rockwell Story.* Who's he?

FRED: Mountain man, pioneer guy. It's a musical. Whaddya think?

CYNTHIA: I can see it now. All these guys in furs leaping around singing. Next. *No Greater Crown.* That's got to be some Eastery . . . *(Opens script.)* Nope. Joseph Smith. Check this one off.

FRED: Why?

CYNTHIA: Cast of characters. Forty-one men, three women. That leaves one.

FRED: *Gadianton!* With an exclamation point, no less.

CYNTHIA: I remember him. He was a bad guy in that book they had us read. (*A cassette tape falls out of the script.*) Looks like it's a musical too.

FRED: "An ancient American musical." What do you think?

CYNTHIA: Nice mix of men's and women's roles.

FRED: (*Clowning.*) We may have a winner—.

CYNTHIA: Sounds dorky.

FRED: Who cares? They all sound dorky. You know, Cinny, this could be fun.

CYNTHIA: If you think so.

FRED: Hey, I've run everything else in my life. Why not a stake musical? (*Opens the script. Lights down. Enter WARD. He knocks again on COGBURN's door.*)

HELEN: Oh, Sam's always got an ax to grind. You know, some people play solitaire, surf the net. Sam complains about the world.

CON: Why don't you just can him?

HELEN: Well, when he wants to be, he's very very good.

CON: Oh, listen, listen, this is my favorite part.

BISHOP TODD: What're you watching?

KAREN: They're making like jewelry cases out of wallpaper and these little boxes.

BISHOP TODD: For homemaking?

KAREN: It's something Bibi Halstrup doesn't know how to do. Maybe.

BISHOP TODD: This is about Sister Halstrup? Again?

KAREN: Just once, I want my ideas to be as good as her ideas.

BISHOP TODD: You don't have to compete with Bibi Halstrup.

**"You know she irons her sheets? . . .
She's the kind of person who never
makes Jell-O with ice cubes."**

COGBURN: (*Drunk.*) Uh-huh.

FRED: All right, act one, scene one. The prophet Nephi surveys his people—.

WARD: Brother Cogburn. My name is Mahonri Ward. I've been assigned as your home teacher.

COGBURN: Tomorrow.

WARD: Very well. I think I can clear some time in the evening. Would seven be convenient?

COGBURN: Tomorrow.

WARD: Very well. I'll see you at seven.

COGBURN: Tomorrow. (*He shuts the door. Exit WARD. Enter HELEN and CON BRYSON. He is listening to music.*)

HELEN: Hi, honey.

CON: Shhh.

(*Enter BISHOP TODD and his wife KAREN, other side of the stage.*)

BISHOP TODD: Hey.

KAREN: Shhh, I'm watching this.

HELEN: What is it?

CON: Vaughan Williams. Fantasia on a theme by Thomas Tallis. Shh. (*They listen together.*)

BISHOP TODD: Any messages?

KAREN: Your brother called.

BISHOP TODD: Dave?

KAREN: He said call him back. Now quiet.

(*BISHOP TODD crosses to the kitchen, pours himself a glass of milk, goes back to the sofa, sits with KAREN.*)

CON: Exquisite. I love those soaring violins.

HELEN: It's beautiful.

CON: So how was life in the salt mines?

HELEN: Not bad. Same old same old.

CON: More problems with your pet lunatic?

KAREN: Shut up, I do too. All right, you go under the lid, and glue it . . . there. This whole darn thing's gonna end up stuck to my fingers, I just know it.

HELEN: You know anything about . . . well, what's going on?

CON: Where?

HELEN: Harry June dropped by Mahonri's office today. Cooper and Scott were seen in the building, first time in eight months.

CON: No kidding.

HELEN: You know anything about any of this? (*CON makes a gesture "my lips are sealed."*) I figured you would. You can't tell me anything?

CON: I can't even tell you that I can't tell you. Please don't ask about this.

HELEN: The SEC does not have a bug in our living room.

CON: Did I say anything about the SEC?

HELEN: We're married, Con. We can't even exchange a little pillow talk?

CON: About our jobs? No.

HELEN: (*Defeated.*) All right.

CON: Listen to this. The pianissimo just crystal clear.

BISHOP TODD: It looks good.

KAREN: You're just saying that. She drives me crazy, McKay. Makes me feel like such a slug.

BISHOP TODD: Why?

KAREN: Hush. Okay, make a seam with the wallpaper, glue around the edges . . . got it.

HELEN: Rumor is that we've got a big layoff coming.

CON: No kidding?

HELEN: Cut it out, all right? I know you can't say anything.

CON: Given what's happened to your stock, is it such a big surprise? That's why Mahonri hired Fred Whitmore.

HELEN: I figured. He's working that assistant of his to death.
 CON: That's one of his trademarks. He's the best, a real assassin.
 HELEN: Mahonri says he's just a consultant. You know him?
 CON: I know of him. We nearly hired him two years ago.
 HELEN: So the rumors are true.
 CON: What's to worry? You're head of your department. You're no target for the likes of him.
 HELEN: Cold comfort, if friends are getting it right and left.
 CON: Downsizing, riffing—.
 HELEN: I heard another one today. Involuntary reduction of payroll.
 CON: Yeah, whatever. It's normal business practice.
 HELEN: I know, I know.
 CON: People who don't know anything about market economics get all hot under the collar every time a company lays people off. Ignore them. It's just part of staying competitive. Just one more necessary evil—.
 HELEN: Like lawyers—.
 CON: Right. Or accountants—.
 HELEN: OSHA.
 CON: The SEC.
 HELEN: The EEOC.
 CON: The NLRB.
 HELEN: The EPA.
 CON: Ralph Nader.
 HELEN: Sam Sumpter. *(They share a laugh.)*
 CON: Listen to this, will you? Exquisite.
 KAREN: All right, I think I've got it now.
 BISHOP TODD: Any mail?
 KAREN: On the piano.
 BISHOP TODD: Anything from the twins?
 KAREN: Kimball wrote. Says the Swiss winters are getting to him, needs a new overcoat.
 BISHOP TODD: What about Spence?
 KAREN: You know the Guatemalan mail. Nothing for three weeks and then four all at once. *(Finishes the lid.)* Ta DA!
 BISHOP TODD: It looks good. Better than anything Bibi Halstrup could ever dream of making.
 KAREN: McKay, you're not taking this seriously.
 BISHOP TODD: No, I guess I'm not.
 KAREN: You don't have any idea what a woman like that does to your psyche. You know she irons her sheets?
 BISHOP TODD: Karen, she's just another sister in the ward. I don't see anything special about her.
 KAREN: PLUS she volunteers at the hospital, PLUS she takes night classes, PLUS she cans, not to mention genealogy, emergency preparedness, makes her own clothes—.
 BISHOP TODD: You make your own clothes.
 KAREN: You don't have a clue, do you? You know what she is? She's the kind of person who never makes Jell-O with ice cubes.
 BISHOP TODD: What?
 KAREN: You know. There's a fast way and a slow way to make Jell-O. You don't use ice cubes the slow way, and it tastes better but it takes like two days. Well, how'm I supposed to know I'm gonna wanna eat something two days from now that Jell-O would be good with? So I always make it at the last second, and that takes ice cubes and ends up watery. Well, not her. She's got her menus

and her shopping lined up three weeks in advance. Knows exactly when she's gonna want Jell-O, gets little shredded carrots in there, pineapple, marshmallows, I'm serving up this soupy glop and hoping the kids won't notice. Hush, I'm trying to get this all down.

BISHOP TODD: I'll call Dave.
 KAREN: Quietly. *(Muttering.)* Okay, let the glue dry and . . . the flap comes up. They said thirty seconds, I held it at least forty-five, and the flap still—.
 BISHOP TODD: Hi, Sally, it's McKay. Is Dave. . . . Sally? Are you all right?
 KAREN: . . . I don't believe it. Look at that, flapping like some kind of bird.
 BISHOP TODD: Sally . . . please, can you. . . . I know, I know, but I can't understand—.
 KAREN: Maybe if I use a little more glue. . . .
 BISHOP TODD: Sally . . . please. I don't know anything. . . . That's why I called.
 KAREN: Something wrong?
 BISHOP TODD: I don't know, Sally seems pretty. . . . Hi, Dave, what



in the world is. . . . No, she didn't. . . . *(long pause.)* Oh no.
 KAREN: What is it?
 BISHOP TODD: Dave, I don't know. . . . I see. The biopsy's when?
 KAREN: Dave?
 BISHOP TODD: *(Nodding.)* The point is, you don't know that. The doctors don't even. . . . That's what they said, huh? Well, what about the blood tests. . . . Oh. Uh-huh. Look, maybe Karen and I ought to . . . yeah, maybe next weekend. Meanwhile, keep your spirits up, okay? It may not be. . . . I know . . . I know, but still. Okay? It may not be as bad. . . . I know. I love you too. Give Sally a hug. Yeah, what a mess. *(Hangs up.)*
 KAREN: So what's going on?
 BISHOP TODD: They found a lump on his testicle. They're having a biopsy tomorrow.
 KAREN: Oh no. How's Sally doing? Maybe I should call her?
 BISHOP TODD: She's got company, friends from the ward. I think we should drive up there next weekend.
 KAREN: Of course.
 BISHOP TODD: That makes six.
 KAREN: McKay—.
 BISHOP TODD: Six in our family, if Dave goes too. Six.
 KAREN: McKay Todd, I'm not going to listen to this.
 BISHOP TODD: You think it's coincidence, Karen?
 KAREN: Coincidence, accident—bad luck.
 BISHOP TODD: *(Overlapping.)* It's this town, it's St. George, we were all living here when it happened, and now—.
 KAREN: *(Furious.)* Now you just shut your mouth! *(He looks at her,*

startled.) You shut up and listen to me! Your family has had some bad luck, some real health problems, and that's too bad, and I'm sorry. But that's all it is! Bad luck! You're paranoid about this, you overreact, that's why you got fired at the post office, and I won't have it happen again!

BISHOP TODD: The Postal Service—.

KAREN: Shut up! It is not going to happen to you, it is not going to affect you, I will not listen to any more about it. (*Gently.*) I love you, McKay. I can't live without you. (*Frightened again.*) And all this, it's just a lot of nonsense, and I'm tired of it, tired of it! Do you hear me!

BISHOP TODD: I'm sorry.

KAREN: (*Pause.*) Next weekend is not good. We'll drive up to Boise in a couple of weeks.

BISHOP TODD: All right.

(*Slow blackout on them. Lights up on MAHONRI WARD, visiting COGBURN.*)

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: My sister Edna was picking peas when it happened. Was seventeen year old. Met Wayne Garrett couple years later; got married spring of '55. She got pregnant right away, but the baby never did develop, just formed a mass like a buncha grapes inside her.

WILSON HACKETT: Since it hit, what with everthing that happened . . . never could hold down a job. I do handyman work here and there, mend a fence or paint a stable. No family left anymore, so just try—to get by, day to day.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: She died three years later of—cervical cancer.

WILSON HACKETT: Dirty Harry, they called it.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: Biggest shot they ever tried.

WILSON HACKETT: Took the heart right out of me and mine, sure enough.

"Gadianton!
With an exclamation point, no less. . . .
Looks like it's a musical too."

WARD: Brother Cogburn. I've been assigned as your home teacher.

COGBURN: Uh-huh.

WARD: My name is Mahonri Ward.

COGBURN: No kidding.

WARD: I thought perhaps for my first visit today, we could just get acquainted. Get to know each other a little.

COGBURN: Oh, I think that's a very good idea. Get acquainted.

WARD: Yes. Good.

COGBURN: Three hundred. At twenty-five a share. More like one seventy-five at seventeen, but you'll get twenty-five, have no fear.

WARD: Excuse me?

COGBURN: Stock split, trade, merger, your take in the neighborhood of three. Right?

WARD: (*A long pause, utterly shocked.*) How did you know that?

COGBURN: I know a lot of things, Mahonri Ward. I think our visits are going to be very interesting.

(*Blackout. Lights up on BRENDA, holding herself, her hand bloody.*)

BRENDA: Oh great. This is just great.

(*Enter WILSON HACKETT and ERMA MACKELPRANGER.*)

WILSON HACKETT: It was the shot they called Dirty Harry.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: The biggest of the bunch, they said.

WILSON HACKETT: You could just see the size of it. Lit up the sky—.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: Gray ash everywhere.

WILSON HACKETT: Army personnel come up to our camp. They had masks on their faces, gloves on their hands, and they told us, you boys better high-tail it outta here—. This here's a hot spot.

BLACKOUT

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

(*As lights come up, we see WILSON HACKETT and ERMA MACKELPRANGER.*)

WILSON HACKETT: We come from the winter range out by Frenchman Flat, me, my brother and my dad, when we seen it, the whole sky lit up and then the mushroom cloud, and—the gray haze up the valley.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: We tried to be careful, wash off our vegetables before we'd eat 'em. But the cow ate the grass, and we drank the milk from the cow—.

No way to avoid it.

WILSON HACKETT: The ewes was miscarryin'. And the yearlin's started to die. And the wool, like you could practically pull it off with your hands.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: My husband's brother bought him a geeger counter. He sat it down here on our flagstones, and it was really jumpin'.

WILSON HACKETT: And then the lambs was bein' born with two heads, some with their hearts outside of their bodies, skin like parchment so you could see right inside to their organs, and

sometimes just a big bloody mess of legs and feet and heads and wool.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: It ain't just cancer, you know. Degen'rative spinal problems.

WILSON HACKETT: Depression and craziness. Hyperthyroids.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: Mental retarded: in our ward we went from zero to seven Down's syndromes in one Primary class. They all sat together in the front row; folks called 'em God's row of angels.

WILSON HACKETT: And some folks just plain felt like hell their whole entire lives.

BISHOP TODD: (*At work, in the smock, with BRENDA, who is seven months pregnant.*) So that's the situation.

WILSON HACKETT: Nothin' in particular. Just plain felt like hell.

BISHOP TODD: I come in at seven, work 'til three. Then you come in at nine, work 'til five.

(*WILSON and ERMA exit.*)

BRENDA: And I'm in charge?

BISHOP TODD: They're naming you assistant supervisor, and you'll be in charge from three 'til five.

BRENDA: The rest of the time, I'm like second in charge?

BISHOP TODD: That's right. (*BRENDA has no reaction.*) They're talking an extra two hundred a month for you.

BRENDA: That'd come in handy. (*She winces in pain.*)

BISHOP TODD: Are you all right?

BRENDA: Just a little spotting, some cramps.

BISHOP TODD: Contractions?

BRENDA: It's still two months early.

BISHOP TODD: You need to see a doctor.

BRENDA: After work today.

BISHOP TODD: Okay. (*He looks at her searchingly.*)

BRENDA: The baby's moving, everything's fine.

BISHOP TODD: Okay. Anyway, I told 'em you were the only person for the job.

BRENDA: 'Preciate it. I could sure use the money. Brian's already told me, the judge can take his truck away before he pays that deductible. After I soaked his stuff.

BISHOP TODD: I'm sorry, Brenda.

BRENDA: I'm better off out of it.

BISHOP TODD: The ward—.

BRENDA: If I need it, I'll ask. So, you come in at seven. What did your wife think?

(*Enter KAREN.*)

KAREN: So great. Suddenly it's my job to get the kids up and dressed and to school every morning.

BISHOP TODD: I told them it would be awkward.

KAREN: I have to be to work by seven-thirty myself.

BISHOP TODD: I know.

KAREN: The bus doesn't come 'til eight-forty- . . . three or whatever.

BISHOP TODD: I know.

KAREN: What if the kids miss it? Who drives home?

BISHOP TODD: Karen, I wasn't given any choice on this.

KAREN: And I just have to deal with it, is that it? Just "Sorry, I have to be to work by seven from now on. I know it screws up your life, but that's the way it goes."

BISHOP TODD: That's not fair.

KAREN: Neither is this.

BISHOP TODD: Look, the money's better—.

KAREN: Not much better, not like they promised you. How hard did you fight 'em on that?

BISHOP TODD: (*Pause.*) Not very.

KAREN: Just tail between your legs, whatever you say boss.

BISHOP TODD: I suppose.

KAREN: And now this. And it's always me that makes the adjustments. This is not fair. (*She exits.*)

BISHOP TODD: She took it pretty well.

BRENDA: (*Reading between the lines.*) Uh-huh. (*She starts to get to work.*) In the meantime, they do pay us pretty good.

BISHOP TODD: They sure do.

BRENDA: Long as it lasts.

(*As they exit, enter HELEN, WARD, FRED, CHAD.*)

HELEN: Nice girls don't get angry. I believe in it, being nice. It gets you out of things, and it gets you through things, and it also makes for pretty strong armor. . . . When I was nine, my father inherited his father's carpet outlet, which declined rapidly under his management, ending eventually in bankruptcy. He turned to drink, and finally left the Church. His rages, his furious, impotent rages. I learned I could always deflect them with a smile, and a giggle, and so that became my role. Niceness works. I don't think it's such a bad way to be, the peacemaker. (*She crosses to where WARD, FRED and CHAD are seated.*)

WARD: Helen.

HELEN: (*Wondering.*) Mahonri. (*Sitting.*) What's up?

WARD: You know Fred Whitmore, of course. And his assistant, Chad—.

CHAD: Chad Firmage.

HELEN: (*Still cordial.*) We've met.

WARD: Helen. Helen, when you build a company from scratch, when you begin with an idea, and pursue it, and obtain financing, and begin hiring others who share your vision . . . when you build a company, you don't always anticipate . . . you don't. . .

FRED: There are going to be some changes.

HELEN: (*Shocked, staring at WARD.*) Yes?

FRED: Major changes.

HELEN: Mahonri?

WARD: I'm sorry Helen. I'm just very very sorry this had to happen.

HELEN: Look, what is this? What's going on?

FRED: Chad?

CHAD: Over the past year, Fred and I have formed an in-house task force reporting directly to Mahonri, designed to look at ways to improve our cash position and profitability. After carefully evaluating every department in the company, we believe that we have a recommendation to make that will greatly enhance our company's position in this very competitive market.

HELEN: You're talking about layoffs.

FRED: (*A brief pause.*) That's right.

HELEN: How big?

CHAD: This will be quite a substantial rightsizing of the company.

HELEN: How many?

FRED: Chad?

CHAD: We're initially targeting approximately twelve hundred posi-

tions.

HELEN: Twelve hundred?

CHAD: In the initial restructuring. An additional eight hundred will go in the second wave, six months from now.

HELEN: Two thousand total. A third of the company.

FRED: That's right.

HELEN: That's . . . huge. (*Fighting for control. To FRED.*) And so you've told me about this . . . you've warned me of this, so I can begin preparing.

FRED: That's right.

HELEN: When?

FRED: Soon. And we make our preparations quietly. The timing's really crucial here.

HELEN: Press release, press conference? Both?

FRED: Looks like you're on top of things.

HELEN: Putting a happy gloss on unhappy news. My forte. (*Longish*

FRED: Any more questions?

HELEN: We're still profitable, though. Right? We're in the world's most rapidly expanding market. . . . (*Pleading.*) I still don't understand. Why is it necessary to fire two thousand people?

FRED: Not firing, Helen. Not canning. Rightsizing. Reshaping, for the future.

HELEN: I understand the distinction.

FRED: You don't seem all that supportive of this.

HELEN: I'm sorry. I'm . . . supportive.

FRED: We need team players on this.

HELEN: I understand.

FRED: Your job is safe.

HELEN: I appreciate that.

FRED: Don't fight it.

HELEN: No, I'm not. I'm not . . . but I do need to understand it. If I'm going to defend it. Publicly.

"I got eighty million dollars, then spent two million on the house, ten million on the divorce, and a bunch on broads and whiskey. The rest I wasted. Know what I'm worth today? Eighty-four million.."

pause.) Mahonri?

FRED: Yes?

HELEN: Can I ask a few questions?

FRED: Shoot.

HELEN: Mahonri. We're friends aren't we? I've been here from the very beginning. Why are we doing this?

FRED: You see our stock price lately?

WARD: That's enough, Fred.

HELEN: So that's it. It's about the price of our stock?

WARD: That's right.

HELEN: Mahonri, we paid cash for these buildings. Every expansion came out of profits. Last year was the worst year of our last five, but we still had total profits—.

FRED: Chad?

CHAD: A figure down sixty-four percent from fiscal nineteen—.

HELEN: (*For the first time, a bit of an edge to her voice.*) This is a profitable company with no debt . . .

WARD: Because I took us public. We've been selling stock to keep us afloat. The Windows fiasco. . . . This is necessary, Helen. If I want out, it's necessary. And I want out.

HELEN: I see.

FRED: See, Chad, that's the sign of someone who is very very good at her job. You see that?

CHAD: I do.

FRED: Immediate thought: how can I defend this, put my own feelings aside. Terrific.

(*Enter GADIANTON and KISHKUMEN, two characters in biblical robes.*)

CHAD: So. Shall I? (*A pause as FRED stares at them.*) Clarify the situation for her?

GADIANTON: So if we can gross 226 per unit at 100,000 per lot, we're looking at what, fourteen percent above overhead?

CHAD: Fred?

KISHKUMEN: The boys at M & A think it's a real plum. Think they can finance it at eight, sell off those two divisions—.

GADIANTON: Okay, let's go for it. Fax these figures to Zeezrom at legal.

KISHKUMEN: All right. And I think that we should—.

FRED: Get out of here! Go!

(*GADIANTON and KISHKUMEN exit. The others stare at him.*)

WARD: Fred, are you all right?

FRED: Sorry. I'm sorry. (*Recovering.*) Tourette's. Sorry. I usually con-

trol it with medication. Got in a hurry this morning.

HELEN: Maybe we should—.

FRED: Nah, I'm fine; just ignore me if I start cussin'. Right Chad?

CHAD: (*Uncertainly.*) Right.

FRED: Helen, it's like this. Your entrepreneurs, your Bill Hewletts and Stephen Jobs and Mahonri Wards, guys like that're kinda like your gunslingers in the Old West. Guy rides in on his trusty palomino, forty-five in hand, and tames some desolate corner of the wilderness. Kills off the rattlesnakes, tears out the sagebrush, scares off the riffraff. Then in come the townspeople, and they set up a bank and a church and a blacksmith's shop and a general store, and they build homes. Comes a time the old gunslinger just doesn't fit in anymore. Then it's time to move on.

HELEN: So you already have a buyer, an offer on the table.

WARD: (*After a moment.*) Yes.

FRED: Again, not for public consumption, right? We can't tie the lay-offs to the sale.

HELEN: I'm familiar with the relevant SEC regulations.

FRED: Exactly. See, fact is, being a gunslinger doesn't mean you necessarily can function great as mayor. You look at a town that's had a gunslinger in charge of it, and the first thing you see is four blacksmiths, and three general stores, and five feedlots, and six churches, and you don't really need more'n one of any of 'em. That's why we call it rightsizing. Cutting down to just one of whatever it is you just can't live without.

HELEN: But those *extras*. They're not surplus. They're people. With mortgages and families and ties to the community.

FRED: Exactly, they're comfortable. Lost the fire in the belly. Lean and mean, Helen. That's how you survive.

HELEN: Of course. Lean and mean, of course.

FRED: Anything else?

HELEN: Let me just. . . . If enough is coming in—.

FRED: Helen, that's irrelevant. We still have too many blacksmiths. Every horse in town's been shoed.

HELEN: Empasse is the buyer?

FRED: Can't tell you.

HELEN: Yes, in other words. After the layoffs?

FRED: After. You got a brand-new boss, don't want him to be the bad guy.

HELEN: Plus the purchase price is tied to price per share, and Wall Street will love a 30 percent layoff.

FRED: None of which you've heard from me.

HELEN: And how much are you getting, Mahonri?

MAHONRI: (*Clears his throat.*) It's substantial.

HELEN: How much?

FRED: Helen, Mahonri stands to retire with a total package in excess of three hundred million dollars.

HELEN: (*After a long pause.*) Not a bad golden parachute. Wow.

FRED: So how do we handle the PR problem?

HELEN: We leak it, say, two weeks beforehand. Make it a rumor. Not that they don't already have an idea.

FRED: Excellent.

HELEN: Do what we can to soften the blow. Give them good references, maybe set up a job-placement office in-house, give them a place they can see what's out there, serve them some cider and donuts—.

FRED: This is all terrific; Chad, you getting all this?

HELEN: Make the severance as generous as we possibly can.

WARD: Top priority. Fred, we're clear on that? I want the people we lay off to be treated with decency and generosity—.

FRED: Good severance is a must. And Chad, we instruct the guards to be extra cordial.

(*Pause.*)

HELEN: Guards?

CHAD: Well, we're firing a lot of programmers, Ms. Bryson. People who know how to use computers.

HELEN: Yes?

CHAD: Given much notice at all, they could do all sorts of damage.

A virus, steal software, format hard drives. It's quite a risk.

HELEN: So you're escorting them out?

FRED: Armed guards. Plus a supervisor.

CHAD: It really is necessary.

HELEN: (*Pause.*) And I get to put a positive spin on that, too.

FRED: Sensational. You really are good at this, Helen.

HELEN: (*Empty.*) Thanks.

WARD: One more thing. (*They all look at him, surprised.*)

HELEN: Yes, Mahonri?

WARD: Do this right, and you could be looking at a vice-presidency.

FRED: (*Not thrilled, but hiding it, enthusiastic.*) Now there's an idea.

HELEN: Marketing VP.

WARD: I know you've had your eye on it.

FRED: We'd have to clear it with Harry June, of course.

WARD: I'll talk to Harry personally.

HELEN: I'd get to do the trade shows.

FRED: I'm sure you'd be terrific.

WARD: I know you would.

FRED: Well, I think that's all for now. We should meet pretty much daily on this, Helen.

HELEN: Give me two days to clear off my desk.

FRED: Friday, then.

HELEN: And I left. Thinking: "You handled that okay." Niceness again to the rescue.

(*As she, CHAD, and FRED leave, WARD crosses to COGBURN.*)

COGBURN: Three hundred million.

WARD: Brother Cogburn—.

COGBURN: Cut the crap, Mahonri. I know who you are, and you know who I am. What do you want?

WARD: Brother Cogburn, I'm—.

COGBURN: I'm no brother of yours. Harry and John, all those years.

WARD: I'm not here to talk business.

COGBURN: Oh, I know. You got yourself assigned as my home teacher.

WARD: I was assigned—.

COGBURN: By the bishop? By chance, maybe? Drew my name out of a hat? Liar—.

WARD: You've refused home teachers in the past. It was thought that an old friend—.

COGBURN: I let you in.

WARD: A good start.

COGBURN: First of all. We were never friends. Business rivals, Empasse vs. ONTI. Then Harry June cut me loose, and I became, what? Someone to feel sorry for?

WARD: I've never thought of you as a figure of pity.
 COGBURN: No. I'm too damned rich. Come on. Why are you here?
 WARD: Just your home teacher. That's all.
 COGBURN: Afraid I'm going to hell.
 WARD: I think you're living in hell, John. *(Pause.)* Look, can I speak candidly?
 COGBURN: That'd be a change.
 WARD: John, I want to be your friend, in the Church or out. And I look around and I see, well, a lot of mess. Whiskey bottles in the front lawn, unmowed—.
 COGBURN: *(Mocking.)* Word of Wisdom problems.
 WARD: Weeds in the garden, paint peeling. This was a very expensive home.

WARD: Excuse me?
 COGBURN: I'm teachin' you how to be rich. Elbows back. Throw your chest out, your belly in. Mostly they want what's in your wallet, but pride, you have to try. Belly in. Big ring on the finger, ruby or emerald. Then flash the wallet in the bar, and the next thing you know, she's going down on you in the men's room.
 WARD: John, what I'm saying is, I'd like to help you get your life back in order. *(COGBURN snorts with laughter.)* You're still a young man, talented, with a lifetime of service ahead of you. *(COGBURN snorts again.)* Let me help you.
 COGBURN: *Squeeze* that camel through that eyehole.
 WARD: John, let me just—.
 COGBURN: *Squeeze* it through there.

“As it scrolls across the computer screen, lies appear and disappear, and soon the truth itself is lost in worries about phrasing, pace, flow.”

COGBURN: Two million dollars.
 WARD: Really?
 COGBURN: Bought it for two million dollars. Big-screen TV that slides up into the ceiling. Jacuzzi. I love that tub. I've had lots of girls in that tub, Mahonri.
 WARD: *(With distaste.)* I don't doubt it.
 COGBURN: Ever since Catherine left me. I got eighty million dollars for my share of Empasse. Then I spent two million on the house, and two million on all the cars, and ten million on the divorce, and then I spent a bunch of it on broads and whiskey, and the rest I wasted, and know what I'm worth today?
 WARD: I don't have any idea.
 COGBURN: Eighty-four million. I spent and spent and spent and spent and it was still making more all the time. Like gerbils. Or guppies. Gerbils and guppies.
 WARD: What about your children?
 COGBURN: Gerbils and guppies!
 WARD: John—.
 COGBURN: Catherine stole 'em from me.
 WARD: If the money makes you unhappy, why not give it up?
 COGBURN: I could. You know. Heart or cancer or lungs or Jerry's kids or . . . culture stuff. Foundation for the Arts.
 WARD: So why don't you?
 COGBURN: Because you can't. You'll learn. You wouldn't have got it if you didn't want it. And then it's yours. And then it's you.
 WARD: That doesn't happen with everyone.
 COGBURN: Hah! Elbows back.

WARD:—just clean the place up a little. You'd feel a lot better about yourself.
 COGBURN: *Squeeze* that camel through.
 WARD: John, let me help you. Please. *(He begins to clean things up.)*
 COGBURN: You pick up after me?
 WARD: I don't mind.
(Lights down on them. Enter HELEN.)
 HELEN: Everyone I see, I wonder. Him? Her? *(Enter SUMPTER.)* Him? *(He groans.)* Okay, Sam. What is it this time?
 SUMPTER: I really can't anymore. I've hit the wall. I'm finished here.
 HELEN: Sam, this is not a good day—.
 SUMPTER: I know, I know, I'm sorry, I know—.
 HELEN: Okay, thirty seconds, Sam.
 SUMPTER: One word, then, Helen. One word. Cancer.
 HELEN: You're saying our software causes cancer.
 SUMPTER: Hear me out, hear me out, picture it, cubicles and offices, hundreds, thousands of workers, women mostly, staring into the screens of their PCs. Computer screens emit electrical radiation, which has been proved, *proved, proved* Helen, to increase the incidence of breast cancer, bone cancer, lymphatic carcinoma, and . . . leukemia . . . and . . .
 HELEN: Sam—.
 SUMPTER: And blastoma, and—.
 HELEN: Sam, no.
 SUMPTER: Breast cancer. When was the last time you had your breasts examined? I'm asking as a friend.
 HELEN: Sam, when was the last time you had your head examined?

SUMPTER: That's that's that's not—funny.

HELEN: Listen to yourself, Sam. You want to get rid of electricity?

SUMPTER: We're party to it, Helen! Breast cancer, malignant melanoma, our job is to . . . to to cover it up, put the best possible face on it, to to to . . . nothing's really wrong, people! Everything's fine! All is well in Zion, yea, Zion prospereth. And and and I can't, I just can't—.

HELEN: Aren't you overstating—.

SUMPTER: We are complicit, Helen! We are complicit.

HELEN: (*Troubled.*) You think so?

SUMPTER: Helen?

HELEN: We are, aren't we? Complicit.

SUMPTER: Glory be. I've finally gotten through to you, haven't I?

HELEN: No.

SUMPTER: I have. I can see it.

HELEN: Sam, tell me about your family.

SUMPTER: My family?

HELEN: That's right. Your wife's name is . . . Sharleen?

SUMPTER: Maureen.

HELEN: That's right. Maureen. Two kids?

SUMPTER: You've seen the picture, three kids, Helen, right here on the desk.

HELEN: Your oldest is a boy and then the two girls?

SUMPTER: Kyle just turned eleven.

HELEN: What would you do, Sam, if you didn't have this job?

SUMPTER: (*Suddenly frightened.*) What do you mean? What have you heard?

HELEN: Nothing. It's just that you've had these . . . scruples as long as I've known you. What would you do if you just couldn't take it, working here anymore?

SUMPTER: I'll never bother you with this nonsense again.

HELEN: Sam, that's not what I—.

SUMPTER: I know I'm a pain in the neck, but I do good work for you, you can't deny that. I don't spread dissension, you're the only one I complain to, but never again. Never again.

HELEN: Sam—.

SUMPTER: Never again.

HELEN: I didn't mean to—.

SUMPTER: Never again. What do you have for me?

HELEN: (*Sighs.*) I'm just trying to—.

SUMPTER: What do you have?

HELEN: (*After a pause.*) I've just been given a big project, something I've got to work on by myself. It means I've got to clear my desk for the next couple of weeks.

SUMPTER: Big changes?

HELEN: Yes, Sam.

SUMPTER: Bad changes?

HELEN: (*A long pause.*) I can't tell you any more.

SUMPTER: I've never complained to anyone but you.

HELEN: I know, Sam.

SUMPTER: I work hard, and I do good work. Good work, Helen.

HELEN: I know.

SUMPTER: Good work.

HELEN: I know.

(*They exit. Lights up on BISHOP TODD as he talks with KAREN, as they sit at the kitchen table.*)

KAREN: And another three-eighteen for the car payment, seven hundred to the missionary fund, twelve-seventy for the house . . .

BISHOP TODD: And we're short again.

KAREN: Even with your raise.

BISHOP TODD: Having the furnace go, that didn't help.

KAREN: Overcoat for Kimball, shoes for Joey and Lizzie—.

BISHOP TODD: Where can we cut back?

KAREN: Get the twins back from their missions.

BISHOP TODD: Eight more months. Meantime . . .

KAREN: Meantime, we got this.

BISHOP TODD: Another VISA?

KAREN: They're at five-point-nine. Discover's over fifteen percent.

We could transfer the balance over and cut our interest in half.

BISHOP TODD: We already have VISA.

KAREN: We have two VISAs. All under nine-point-nine except the Discover.

BISHOP TODD: We'd better do that, then.

KAREN: I'll fill it out. I'll need your signature in a sec. (*Working on the form.*)

BISHOP TODD: Bibi Halstrup came by tonight.

KAREN: I'm not surprised.

BISHOP TODD: Complaining about Brenda Burdett.

KAREN: Uh-huh.

BISHOP TODD: Who, as it happens, was my very next appointment.

(*Enter BIBI HALSTRUP, who is exactly as advertised.*)

BIBI: Bishop Todd, really, I wouldn't be here if it weren't serious. As it was, I could barely fit it in between my aerobics class and my work at the genealogical library.

BREND A: Bishop, I have to see you about something.

BISHOP TODD: (*To both.*) Go on.

BIBI: Bishop, I've always supported my Church leadership, even when I've been sure they've made a mistake, and then it's usually turned out to be me, wrong as usual . . . (*little laugh*) silly me.

BISHOP TODD: You think I'm wrong about something, Sister Halstrup?

BIBI: Well, it's that Sister Burdett. The new Young Women's president?

BREND A: Bishop, I went to the doctor. And they took that test, that amniocentesis. It's not good, Bishop, it's not good at all.

BIBI: I know she's been through a lot recently. What with the divorce and all, not her fault, I'm sure, I would never cast stones. Some of us have an easier time keeping our husbands satisfied than others of us, and no one's to blame. But really, Bishop—.

BREND A: Bishop, the baby's not right. She's just not right. And I've got to know the Church's position on something because I've got a decision to make and I just don't know—

BIBI: Last week, she gave the Standards Night talk for the young women.

BISHOP TODD: I know. I was there, of course.

BIBI: And you approved of it?!?!?

BISHOP TODD: There were times when it—.

BREND A: All right, girls. Listen up. Time to talk about sex.

BIBI: Bishop, I have to say, I'm seriously considering withdrawing my daughters from the program.

BISHOP TODD: Standards Night is pretty much about the law of chastity. Isn't it?

BIBI: It is about the standards of the Church in regard to serious moral transgression!

BRENDA: Girls, you know the kind of guy I'm talking about. Gets that ol' tongue working when he kisses, keeps grabbin' at your tits. Real boobonic plague, you know what I'm sayin'? Well, you got two choices, girls, that moment in your life. One, you can go along with him. You know, it does feel good. Feels real good, get a guy rubbin' on your titties like that. But see, the thing is, then he's in control. *He's* getting what *he* wants. And if *he's* in control, *you're* not. And the next thing you know, you're in the back seat of the car, feelin' all warm and soft. I ain't gonna kid you, girls, sex can feel just terrific.

KAREN: She gave this talk for *Standards Night*? In the chapel?

BISHOP TODD: Yeah, but you shoulda heard the rest of it.

BRENDA: . . . point is, after he's gone, you get to live with all the

BISHOP TODD: I've heard of it. A birth defect.

BRENDA: That's right. The baby's spinal cord is just like open, like there's no bone around it. There's a little sack at the base of the neck, they said, and it's full of spinal fluid, they said, and it could have part of the spinal cord. The baby might be paralyzed. It might be severely retarded. There's just no telling—. (*She breaks down.*)

BISHOP TODD: It's all right, Brenda. It's all right.

BRENDA: I'm sorry.

BISHOP TODD: It's okay.

BRENDA: It's just . . . the thought of it. All exposed up the back like that.

BISHOP TODD: Did the doctor—?

BRENDA: He said that some children have immediate surgery, and are fine, but that's not the usual thing.

“Every good deed, every charity you give to, you’ll hear the whispers. ‘What are his motives?’ Mistrust and suspicion. That’s you. You’re not a home teacher, you’re not yourself anymore. You’re three hundred million dollars for the rest of your life.”

consequences, all by yourself. Consequences, that's just not a word in his vocabulary. And those consequences, they can get a little rough. Workin' all day at some no-account job, worried sick about your kids alone with who knows what kinda child-care, comin' home and cleanin' the house by yourself. I been there. I am there. Hell of a lot of work for a little warmth in the belly. Second choice? You stay in control. And you say to him, “Buster, keep your hands to yourself.” And you say it every time he tries. Now I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, “If I say that, I'll lose him. I gotta let him feel me up, or I'll lose him for sure.” Well, girls, if he cares for you even one little bit, you won't lose him. And if he don't, let me tell you something, and I want to hear you repeat it after me. HE. AIN'T. WORTH IT!

BISHOP TODD: (*To BIBI. Sighs.*) I'll have a talk with her.

BIBI: Well, I hope you do, because I do *not* allow that kind of smutty talk in my home, and I do *not* appreciate—.

BISHOP TODD: (*As he speaks, she cuts off.*) It's all right, Brenda. Just tell me the problem.

BRENDA: It's something called spina bifida.

BISHOP TODD: What can the Church do to help?

BRENDA: Well, in a case like this, where there's not much chance of a normal baby anyway, and then her problems could be severe ones.

(*Pause.*)

BISHOP TODD: Yes?

BRENDA: What's the Church's stand on abortion?

BISHOP TODD: (*Pause.*) That's not an option.

BRENDA: It is an option, even this late, the doctor said—.

BISHOP TODD: No.

BRENDA: What if I was to go ahead with it?

BISHOP TODD: It would be a terrible mistake.

BRENDA: What would you do?

BISHOP TODD: Just off the cuff . . . I would have to hold a court, and it's possible—.

BRENDA: Excommunication?

BISHOP TODD: We would take all extenuating circumstances—.

BRENDA: But it's possible.

BISHOP TODD: Yes. Abortion is actionable.

BRENDA: (*Pause.*) That bad, huh?
 BISHOP TODD: That bad.
 BRENDA: They're talking about layoffs at work, Bishop.
 BISHOP TODD: I know.
 BRENDA: I got least seniority in the mailroom.
 BISHOP TODD: I know that, too.
 BRENDA: I want this baby, Bishop. I can feel her inside me. She can't kick, but she . . . moves. I wanna hold her. In my arms.
 BISHOP TODD: You will.
 BRENDA: If I have to get another job, lose my benefits, this becomes a preexisting condition!
 BISHOP TODD: I see.
 BRENDA: We're talking reconstructive surgery, years of therapy. Not covered, if I lose my job.
 BISHOP TODD: I don't know what to say.
 BRENDA: So. You're my bishop, and you're my boss. You tell me what I should do.
 BISHOP TODD: Wait.
 BRENDA: For the axe to fall?
 (*Pause.*)
 BISHOP TODD: Let's pray it doesn't.
 (*BRENDA exits.*)
 KAREN: And you never did talk to her about Standards Night.
 BISHOP TODD: No.
 KAREN: You're gonna have to, you know.
 BISHOP TODD: I know.
 KAREN: Lizzie thought it was a great talk. But Bibi's probably right. You can't say 'tits' in the chapel.
 BISHOP TODD: I also know some of the girls in Young Women's. Bibi Halstrup's daughters included. Maybe some plain talk will make a difference.
 KAREN: (*Crossing to him with the credit application.*) Maybe if you took the bus a couple times a week. Twenty bucks a week for gas doesn't help.
 BISHOP TODD: Sure.
 KAREN: And Boise will have to wait.
 BISHOP TODD: Karen—.
 KAREN: (*Sharply.*) I'm sorry, we can't afford it this month.
 BISHOP TODD: He had the surgery last Friday. Double orchidectomy.
 KAREN: So what are we supposed to do? Take out a second mortgage so you can go hold your brother's hand?
 BISHOP TODD: Spend some time with him. Help out Sally.
 KAREN: Not this month.
 BISHOP TODD: Karen—.
 KAREN: We can't afford it.
 (*She exits. With a sigh he follows. Enter HELEN.*)
 HELEN: Con?
 CON: (*Sitting, listening to music, Samuel Barber's Adagio for Strings.*) Shh. Listen.
 HELEN: It's beautiful. Barber?
 CON: Samuel Barber's Adagio for Strings. I love this part, unison violins. . . .
 HELEN: It really is beautiful.
 CON: Lovely. Transporting.
 HELEN: (*Persisting.*) Con?
 CON: (*Sighs.*) Back to mundane reality. So. That press release, is that

it?
 HELEN: You don't have to feign interest, you know.
 CON: My interest is quite genuine.
 HELEN: But aesthetic pleasures first. Right?
 CON: Always.
 HELEN: Fine.
 CON: My, my. Aren't we being snippish?
 HELEN: (*After a moment.*) I'm sorry. Bad day, all right?
 CON: Foot massage?
 HELEN: That would be nice.
 (*She takes off her shoes, he begins massaging her feet.*)
 CON: So tell me all about it. I take it you haven't finished the press release?
 HELEN: (*Aside, to the audience.*) Actually, the press releases were relatively easy. As it scrolls across the computer screen, you feel almost disembodied. Mouse, shade, copy, mouse, shade, delete. Lies appear and disappear, and soon the truth itself is lost in worries about phrasing, pace, flow. (*To CON.*) I've finished it, yes.
 CON: So what's the problem?
 HELEN: Con, do you ever get tired of all this?
 CON: Of all what?
 HELEN: This. Our jobs, our lives.
 CON: The ONTI, Empasse tensions? Those will soon be solved.
 HELEN: No, I know that. It's not the current emergency. It's just . . . everything.
 CON: Can you specify?
 HELEN: (*To audience.*) Grammar, spell-check, syntax: the computer functions become more crucial than the objective realities the text is intended to obscure. (*To CON.*) I'm beginning to hate my job.
 CON: Too bad. I happen to love mine.
 HELEN: I know you do.
 CON: I love my work. I love the money. I love our home. I wish we weren't in St. George.
 HELEN: (*To audience.*) And then you fax it, and that too seems unreal, a machine pulling paper through itself, and you think: that can't possibly be going anywhere.
 CON: . . . two weeks in London every spring, two weeks in Paris every fall. New York and San Francisco for weekend jaunts. We get by.
 HELEN: You don't wish that . . .
 (*Pause.*)
 CON: What?
 HELEN: You don't regret that we didn't have children?
 CON: I haven't closed the door on that. When we're a little more settled—.
 HELEN: I'm thirty-two years old.
 CON: So maybe, within the next two or three years. . . . In the meantime, let's enjoy what we have together.
 HELEN: I'm going to have to lie, Con. I'm going to have to stand there in front of all those reporters, and lie.
 CON: Helen, you're head of public relations. It's your job to lie.
 HELEN: I know.
 CON: It's not like you're fooling anyone. Everyone's in on it.
 HELEN: I know that too.
 CON: The reporters most of all. It's their job to be lied to.

HELEN: I know.

CON: It could even be illegal for you to tell the truth. As far as the SEC is concerned.

HELEN: Maybe so.

CON: So what's the big problem?

HELEN: I don't like it.

CON: (*Condescendingly.*) Innocent child.

HELEN: (*To the audience.*) And I stared at him for a moment. And the

FRED: Well, it's happening.

CYNTHIA: Marvelous. He went for the whole two thousand?

FRED: He had no choice. Twelve hundred at first, and then another eight. Look, I hope you don't mind. . . .

CYNTHIA: What?

FRED: The stock's at seventeen. I emptied out our savings, see if I can figure out a way to buy a few thousand shares.

CYNTHIA: You handle the money, Fred. You think it's going up, fine.

**“They’ve got me all wrong.
I’m misunderstood. I was a busi-
nessman. They called me a robber be-
cause the market was so tight.”**

thought flickered through my head: Who are you? Who is it I married? (*Pause.*) Who am I?

CON: Come on. Let's go to bed.

HELEN: And we made love that night. To Barber's *Adagio for Strings*. (*They exit. Enter CYNTHIA, who watches them with great interest.*)

CYNTHIA: Something happened at the supermarket today, and it's got me a little worried. In front of me in line was a young man, he just had a few items, yet he waited behind a woman with a full cart, despite the fact that the next aisle was free. He got to her register, and the cashier looked up, and just stiffened, rang up his purchase without even looking at him. And he paid her, and then he leaned over, and whispered something to her, then picked up his purchase and left. Another of the cashiers saw him leave, and went up to her—"Ginger," her name-tag said—and she said, "Ginger? Are you all right?" And Ginger said, "He just told me he wants a divorce."

I was entranced. The audacity! To go up to her while she was working and inform her of their upcoming divorce. Marvelous! She didn't cry. She told her friend she wanted to finish her shift; made a little joke about needing the money. And then she rang up my purchase, very controlled, just hanging on. And I wondered. The shock of it, the blow so soon. What would it take to break her down? Sympathy, I thought. A little female sympathy, and she'll lose it. And so, I stepped into the situation. As she was counting out my change, I leaned over, just as he had done, and I said, "I happened to overhear your situation. I just want you to know, I'm very sorry." And it worked! She burst into tears—I just barely got the shot—and raced out of the store, and another clerk had to finish the transaction! Should I have done that, I wonder? (*Enter FRED.*) I mean, am I invalidating the work by stepping into it?

FRED: Honey.

(*They kiss.*)

CYNTHIA: How was work?

FRED: There's gotta be a buy-out pending. See if I can launder it through Tony; I bet it doubles. Listen, I'm just going to grab a bite. Off to rehearsal.

CYNTHIA: Ah, yes, it's Thursday. Stake drama person.

FRED: You wanna come watch?

CYNTHIA: Do you mind?

FRED: You're more into that culture kinda stuff than me.

CYNTHIA: I will then. Just let me get my shoes. (*As he heads off.*) Fred?

FRED: Uh-huh?

CYNTHIA: When's it gonna happen?

FRED: What? The layoffs? Couple of weeks.

CYNTHIA: When it does . . . can I come to work with you?

FRED: Sure. Photo essay?

CYNTHIA: I think maybe so.

(*She exits. As she does, he sits, and enter SEANTUM, SEEZORAM, and BETHESDA, three actors in badly fitting biblical robes. SEANTUM and SEEZORAM are wearing ridiculous-looking fake beards, BETHESDA is a woman.*)

SEANTUM: So, Seezoram, my brother! I have found you alone, tonight, by the judgment seat of our people!

SEEZORAM: Guards! Guards!

SEANTUM: Call not for the guards, my brother! They are drunken with wine, prepared especially in its strength. I say unto you, tonight you shall die!

BETHESDA: Seantum, no!

SEANTUM: Bethesda! My wife!

BETHESDA: My husband, Seantum! Do not this wicked deed! Heed the words of the prophet Nephi, and forsake the evil counsel of Gadianton!

SEEZORAM: Listen to her, my brother!

SEANTUM AND BETHESDA: Shut up, Seezoram—.

BETHESDA: (*Sotto voce.*) Sorry, that's yours—.

SEANTUM: . . . you devil. Gadianton has told me of your nefarious

plot! I know that you plotted to steal my precious birthright, and for that crime, you must die like the villain you are!

BETHESDA: It is not true, Seantum! Gadianton has deceived you!

SEEZORAM: Please, my brother, please!

SEANTUM: False judge! Take that!

(Stabs him. SEEZORAM falls.)

SEEZORAM: I am wounded! Behold, I die! My lifeblood seeps out like spring rain through billowy clouds! But I testify, with my last

CYNTHIA: Fred, about the music?

FRED: Chad, don't take off yet.

CHAD: All right.

CYNTHIA: I wonder if the pianist can pick up the pace a little.

Kishkumen's solo number? It's too slow.

CHAD: It's supposed to be kinda introspective.

FRED: Well, Kish can introspect a little faster.

CYNTHIA: I'm worried about her voice. Isn't Kishkumen a man?

“ . . . A little advice. When you take over the company. That's your new Kishkumen. Your right hand man.”

breath, that I am a righteous judge! The prophet Nephi will sustain me! And I call on you, my brother Seantum, to repent this horrid deed!

SEANTUM: What have I done!

SEEZORAM: Repent!

BETHESDA: Seantum!

SEEZORAM: Repent! *(He falls, dies horribly. Tableau.)*

FRED: Gadianton? Where's Gadianton?

BETHESDA: *(Under her breath.)* Whose line is it?

SEANTUM: I don't remember.

FRED: Gadianton!

(Enter CHAD, half in and half out of costume.)

CHAD: Sorry.

FRED: Keep on your toes, people. Chad, your evil laugh?

BETHESDA: *(Relieved.)* The evil laugh.

(The other actors relax.)

FRED: Let's do it. Seezoram?

SEEZORAM: Repent!

(He dies horribly. Tableau. Enter CHAD, as GADANTON. He looks over the tableau, then laughs in a bloodcurdling fashion.)

FRED: And blackout. Good work people; it's really coming along. That's it for tonight. Hang up your costumes on the rack over there. We're back Saturday morning, eight o'clock. Lines were good tonight.

(They all hang costumes on a costume rack, exit.)

SEEZORAM: Fred, how was my death scene?

FRED: Good, fine. Listen, I was thinking, maybe we could get like fake blood stuff, put it in some kinda pouch in your mouth; you could bite down on it, bleed out the mouth for your death scene.

SEEZORAM: Cool!

FRED: What can I say? I'm a directing genius.

SEEZORAM: No doubt!

FRED: Could also be louder, Max.

SEEZORAM: I'll work on it. *(He exits.)*

FRED: With the beard, no one'll notice. Anything else?

CYNTHIA: That comic number, the wicked Nephtie rag?

CHAD: That's a fun song.

CYNTHIA: But it's a rag. Like ragtime? Scott Joplin?

FRED: It's gotta go faster too.

CHAD: Look, she's just outside. You wanna talk to her?

CYNTHIA: That's a good idea.

CHAD: I'll go with you.

FRED: And don't miss your entrance next time.

CHAD: I'm sorry, Fred. I've been a little short of sleep.

FRED: Couple weeks, it'll all be over.

CHAD: Is that all for tonight?

FRED: Yeah, go home. Wake up your wife; maybe she'll let you boink her.

CHAD: *(Somberly, but hiding it.)* Yeah, maybe. See you tomorrow Fred.

(He exits with CYNTHIA. FRED looks at his script, shouts to CHAD.)

FRED: And pick up the pace on that scene with Nephi! *(Grumbling to himself.)* Damn thing lasts forever . . .

(As he works, one of the costumes on the rack comes to life. It's GADANTON from the earlier scenes.)

GADANTON: Hello, Fred.

FRED: *(Not looking up.)* We're done tonight; go home.

GADANTON: Fred.

FRED: Look, I'm kinda busy. . . . *(Looks up.)* Wait a . . . I've seen you before.

GADANTON: Yes, you have seen me.

FRED: *(Shaking his head to clear it.)* Who are you?

GADANTON: I'm Gadianton.

FRED: I'm leaving. *(He heads for the door. As he does, GADANTON flies into the air, over his head, blocks his way.)* Look, I am not going nuts; that is not an option. I don't go nuts. That's not the kinda thing I do.

GADANTON: You're not going nuts, Fred.

FRED: Then leave me alone.

GADIANTON: You're a Mormon now, Fred. You're required to accept certain myths as objective realities.

FRED: What are you doing here?

GADIANTON: Setting the record straight.

FRED: What record?

GADIANTON: The book, the play. They've got me all wrong. I'm misunderstood, just as you are.

FRED: I'm no Gadianton robber.

FRED: *(Laughs with her.)* Right. *(Suddenly overcome with pain.)*

CYNTHIA: Fred? Are you all right?

FRED: Killer headache.

CYNTHIA: Fred, I think I'd better drive. Can you wait here?

FRED: I think so.

CYNTHIA: Let me get the car.

FRED: You go do that.

(He sits. She exits.)

GADIANTON: Fred—

**“Thus they did have free intercourse
one with another, to buy and to sell,
and to get gain.”**

GADIANTON: Neither was I. I was a businessman. They called me a robber because the market was so tight.

FRED: A businessman.

GADIANTON: Buying low and selling high, marketing, finance.

FRED: What do you want?

GADIANTON: To be your friend. *(As CYNTHIA returns.)* Shhhhh—.

CYNTHIA: Fred, your pianist is not being terribly coop. . . . Are you all right?

FRED: *(Recovering.)* I don't know.

CYNTHIA: You look awful.

FRED: It's nothing.

CYNTHIA: Headache? *(He nods.)* It's probably just this play. Give anyone a headache.

FRED: You don't like the play?

CYNTHIA: Well, it is pretty awful. I mean, that book's supposed to be scripture, and they turn it into this cheesy melodrama.

Gadianton, robber and fiend. *(Mimes twitching a villainous moustache and gives her own blood-curdling laugh.)*

GADIANTON: Listen to her, Fred. A businessman. “Thus they did have free intercourse one with another, to buy and to sell, and to get gain—.”

FRED: *(Interrupting him.)* To get gain.

CYNTHIA: What?

FRED: Laissez faire economics. Zero-sum-game kinda market.

CYNTHIA: Fred, why don't you lie down or something?

FRED: Zero sum game. Pot's too small; for me to gain, you have to lose; for me to lose. . . . Lean and mean.

CYNTHIA: Fred? Cut it out, okay?

FRED: *(Shakes his head, comes to.)* Sorry, Cinny. Sorry.

CYNTHIA: I'm worried about you.

FRED: Just woolgathering, thinking about the play. So you don't think I should do it?

CYNTHIA: Oh, no, do the play. It's just silly fun; who cares? I mean, it's not like the real Gadianton's going to come back and sue you for defamation of character, right?

FRED: Leave me alone!

GADIANTON: But, Fred. I'm your greatest admirer.

FRED: What do you want from me?

GADIANTON: Watch.

(Lights up on HELEN, standing in the middle of a press conference, surrounded by reporters.)

REPORTER TWO: Helen, is there any truth to the rumor that these layoffs are related to or part of plans to sell the company, possibly to Empasse or some other major software supplier?

HELEN: *(Lying smoothly.)* I am aware of no plans to sell ONTI.

REPORTER THREE: So you deny that Mahonri Ward is trying to sell the company?

HELEN: As far as I know, Mahonri Ward will still be running things twenty years from now.

REPORTER ONE: Do you know of any further layoffs after these twelve hundred?

HELEN: I have heard rumors of a so-called “second wave.” As far as I know, there is no truth to them whatsoever.

REPORTER TWO: Ms. Bryson. ONTI is a profitable company, in a rapidly expanding market. Why this massive layoff?

HELEN: Mr. Jones, for a town to function properly, it needs certain craftsmen; say, a blacksmith, and a tailor, and a butcher, and a baker. But let's suppose . . .

GADIANTON: Beautiful.

HELEN: *(Finishing.)* . . . that's why we don't really call it “a layoff.” We prefer the term—

HELEN AND FRED: *(Simultaneously.)* “rightsizing.”

GADIANTON: Rightsizing. Lovely word.

HELEN: *(She stares at FRED. In a whisper.)* Rightsizing . . . Rightsizing . . .

(Pause.)

FRED: *(Simultaneously. Quietly.)* Good girl.

GADIANTON: Fred. . . When you take over the company. That's your new Kishkumen. Your right-hand man. *(He flies out.)* I'm very proud of you.

(FRED *stares after him. Enter ERMA MACKELPRANGER and WILSON HACKETT.*)

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: So finally some newspaper folks come snoopin', and they wrote up our problems, the AEC got scared and had hearings—up to Salt Lake.

WILSON HACKETT: Army said that sometimes they'd cancel tests 'cause the wind was blowing "the wrong direction." 'Nother

CON: My. We're certainly dawdling this morning.

(*Music swells. The Dies Irae from Mozart's Requiem.*)

BISHOP TODD AND HELEN: (*simultaneously.*) I know. I'm sorry.

KAREN: You're supposed to be at work!

BISHOP TODD: It's today, Karen.

KAREN: The layoffs?

(*He nods.*)

"How many software engineers does it take to change a light bulb? Two fewer than it took last week!"

words, west, towards L. A. or Vegas. What I wanna know is, if the tests wasn't dangerous, how could there be a "right" or "wrong" direction—for the wind?

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: Poisoned the air we breathed, the grass our children played on, the milk we drank, the water we washed up in—.

WILSON HACKETT: I went to them hearings for one day. All these men in suits, talkin' so reasonable.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: I just wanted to stand up and scream "shut up! Shut up you dumb people! Don't you know they're killing us!" But I didn't.

WILSON HACKETT: The fact is, we was patriotic people! God fearing, flag salutin', army volunteerin' people. And they treat us like—makes me sick!

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: (*A warning.*) Wilson. . .

WILSON HACKETT: (*Conspiratorial.*) Eisenhower knew. We all voted for him, and he knew the whole time.

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: He never—.

WILSON HACKETT: He said: "We can afford to sacrifice a few thousand people out there in the—interest of national security."

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: Don't talk dirty about the president—. Them's just rumors.

WILSON HACKETT: He was a damned politician!

ERMA MACKELPRANGER: He was a Republican!

(*Enter BISHOP TODD.*)

BISHOP TODD: We call ourselves downwinders; the word's a badge of honor. But it's just stories people tell. My father, my mother, my brothers Wilford and Lorenzo. . . . Could just be bad luck. It's just that . . . when you grow up with mushroom clouds and red sunsets routine facts of life, and you see your entire family, one by one. . . . Then, for the rest of your life, every headache, every stubbed toe, every twinge in the back, every bruise . . .

(*Enter KAREN. Lights up on HELEN and CON on other half of the stage.*)

KAREN: McKay! It's seven-fifteen!

BISHOP TODD: And you wonder if that's the first sign. Of what's going to kill you.

HELEN: Just couldn't face it.

CON: (*Incredulously.*) Couldn't face it?

KAREN: Now you listen to me, McKay. We need that job. You know what our finances are like.

BISHOP TODD: Karen, I'm not in—any danger.

HELEN: I think I'm—safe enough.

KAREN: You will be if you—don't get in.

CON: I'm not sure anyone's—completely safe.

BISHOP TODD: It's Brenda I'm worried about. And some of the others. Sister Maxie, Brother Hales, Sister Frederickson—.

HELEN: I'm mostly worried about Sam.

KAREN: So what?

CON: Sam's a joke!

BISHOP TODD: I'm their supervisor, Karen. It'll be my job to escort them off—the premises.

HELEN: Me, and two armed guards.

CON: Helen, you know why that's necessary.

KAREN: Then get in and do it.

BISHOP TODD: Karen—.

HELEN: Con, will you please turn off that music—.

KAREN: We need the money, McKay. This is no time for scruples.

CON: Sorry. I thought you might appreciate—

HELEN: This morning, it's more than I can handle.

CON: I thought the *Dies Irae* might be appropriate—.

HELEN: Well, it's not.

CON: You're in business, Helen. Lean and mean.

HELEN: I know.

(*Reluctantly, she and BISHOP TODD pull themselves up, exit. Lights up on FRED and CHAD, sitting.*)

FRED: . . . optimist sees the glass and says, "It's half full." Pessimist says, "It's half empty." Corporate exec says, "You know, you've really got more water in that glass than you need."

(*He and CHAD laugh.*)

CHAD: Okay okay, I've got one. How many software engineers does it take to change a light bulb?

FRED: I know this one.

TOGETHER: Two fewer than it took last week!

FRED: Knock knock.

CHAD: Who's there?

FRED: Not you anymore. *(He laughs.)*

CHAD: Hey, no fair, you stole that one from an old Dilbert.

FRED: Yeah? I wondered where I'd heard it.

CHAD: *(After a pause.)* Seems kinda strange, doesn't it?

FRED: What?

CHAD: Rush rush rush the last few weeks. Then today, the biggest day in the history of the company, and we don't really have much.

FRED: I was just thinking about the good old days.

CHAD: Oh, yeah?

loaf.

CHAD: Fred . . . ?

FRED: Yeah?

CHAD: Could I . . . you know . . . hack it?

FRED: You?

CHAD: He likes young guys. I'm a hard worker; I've shown you that.

FRED: So?

CHAD: Well, when I finish here. Couple years down the road, maybe. Could I work for Microsoft?

FRED: Why is a manhole cover round?

CHAD: What?

FRED: Why is a manhole cover round? Answer me.

**“And the stockholders did flourish,
and their flourishing came at the cost
of their brothers and sisters!”**

FRED: Watching you. Late nights, early mornings. Takes me back.

CHAD: Where did you get your start? If you don't mind my asking.

FRED: Not at all. P & G.

CHAD: Proctor and Gamble, huh? In the Midwest?

FRED: Yeah. Spent three years in Cincinnati, at corporate, rooting for the Reds and Bengals. The devil's company.

CHAD: What?

FRED: The trademark?

CHAD: Trademark? Oh, you mean that genie thing?

FRED: That's right. Fundamentalist wackos decided that the P & G trademark, the genie guy with the lantern, was a sign of devil worship. It even made Donahue. We all thought it was pretty funny, the devil's company, like the boss was Satan's CEO? Very inside joke, you understand. If anyone found out, every bible-thumping housewife in America woulda turned in her Tide.

CHAD: So, you were there three years? Where'd you go then?

FRED: Redmond.

CHAD: Microsoft! No kidding!

FRED: Yeah, that was me. Twenty-seven years old and rubbing shoulders with Bill Gates. Best two years of my life.

CHAD: Bill Gates? You met him? You worked with him?

FRED: I worked with him every day. Personally.

CHAD: What's he like? I mean really?

FRED: *(Admiringly.)* Smarter, tougher, meaner, quicker. You practically lived in your suit, and he got there earlier and left later than everyone. The best of the best of the best.

CHAD: Why'd you leave?

FRED: I was stupid. See, I wasn't technical, wasn't one of Bill's Smart Guys. He likes engineers, I was a beancounter. I got another offer and like a dummy, took it.

CHAD: You've done well for yourself.

FRED: When you've had filet mignon, it's hard to get used to meat-

CHAD: Well . . . I don't really know. They just started doing it that way, I guess, and—.

FRED: I just invented a terrific new hot dog. Project how many can I expect to sell at baseball games next season, major and minor league.

CHAD: Hot dogs? I'm not sure. I mean, some people don't even like—.

FRED: Invent a new currency. If most purchases are under a hundred, what are your four lowest bill denominations?

CHAD: Bill denominations? What are you—.

FRED: *(Starts to leave.)* I'll need that marketing report on my desk by five o'clock tonight.

CHAD: Wait. Just a second. You didn't even answer—my question.

FRED: Answer is no. You couldn't work for Microsoft.

CHAD: Why?

FRED: Because you're not smart enough.

(He exits. CHAD stares after him, dumbfounded. Lights down, enter BISHOP TODD, BRENDA.)

BRENDA: *(Tense.)* It's started.

BISHOP TODD: What's happening?

BRENDA: Saw a woman out in the parking lot. Crying so hard she couldn't get her key in the lock of her car; guard had to help her.

BISHOP TODD: Did you recognize her?

BRENDA: Real short dark-haired lady, worked in Payroll?

BISHOP TODD: I know who you mean. Can't place a name.

BRENDA: Me, neither. So what do we do?

BISHOP TODD: Treat it like a normal workday.

BRENDA: Yeah, that's real likely. You sleep a wink last night?

BISHOP TODD: Mail still needs to go out.

BRENDA: I know. But normal, it ain't. Let's get going, people.

(Lights down on them. HELEN with SAM.)

HELEN: Come on, Sam, my press conference is in twenty minutes.

SAM: Just waiting for it to print.
HELEN: You sent the fax Friday. They all coming?
SAM: The *Spectrum*, the *Sun*, Las Vegas *Review*, even the *L. A. Times*. Two live remotes, but I couldn't see which stations.

HELEN: I look okay?
SAM: You look super. Helen—?

HELEN: What?
SAM: You heard anything—?
HELEN: No, Sam, I haven't. Not one way or another. *(She exits.)*

BRENDA: *(Looking through papers.)* They say mostly supervisors, or assistant supervisors.

BISHOP TODD: Who said that?

BRENDA: Guy I met in the lunchroom. Said mostly assistants.

BISHOP TODD: You or me, in other words.

BRENDA: That's what he said.

BISHOP TODD: We're pretty understaffed down here. I was even about to request another afternoon person. Maybe we'll be okay.

BRENDA: Maybe.
(Enter HELEN, press conference.)

HELEN: That's right, a supervisor and two security guards.

BISHOP TODD: How's the baby?

BRENDA: Six more weeks. Had another ultrasound. She hardly moves at all, but the picture. . . . It helps to see her.

BISHOP TODD: Have you . . . made any decision?

BRENDA: Let's just survive today, okay, Bishop?

HELEN: I know this seems harsh, but the fact is, it is necessary.

BISHOP TODD: All right.

HELEN: They'll have the opportunity tomorrow or Friday to pick up personal belongings.
(Enter CYNTHIA.)

CYNTHIA: Fred told me they would start at nine, but I was disappointed, I must say, because when I pulled into the parking lot, I was almost hit by a car pulling out, the driver crying . . . And I still had my lens cap on! When something is to start at nine, then that's when it should start.

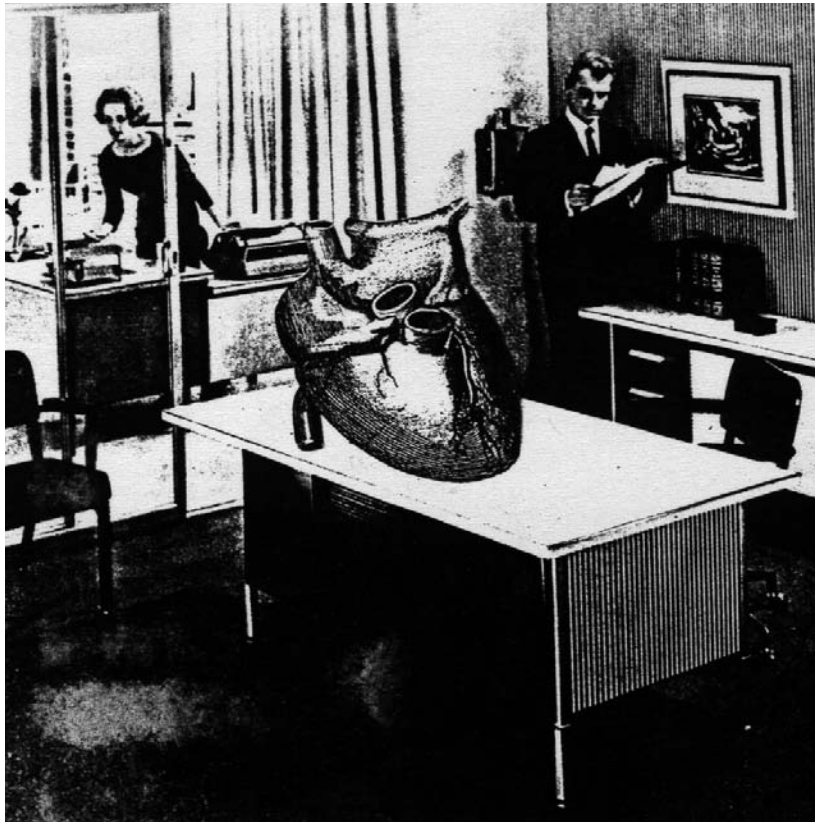
BRENDA: Brother Warner was the first to go.

CYNTHIA: *(CYNTHIA, BRENDA, and HELEN overlap these quick speeches. CYNTHIA snapping.)* Man leaving . . . half walking, half running, body so rigid he—nearly tripped down the step.

BRENDA: Sister Lakey—.

HELEN: All computer access codes—.

BRENDA: Brother Rockwood—. Brother Smith.



HELEN: . . . will be changed.

BRENDA: Brother Parmley—.

CYNTHIA: A cubicle in Personnel, empty. On the desk, a five-by-seven family photograph. A man,—a woman, chubby little kids.

BRENDA: Mr. Daletski, the HR guy who helped me with insurance stuff. Mrs. Ramirez, who—always had flowers on her desk.

HELEN: Yes, we do have concerns about sabotage.

BRENDA: Brother Bentley. Sister Enos—. Brother Rahm.

CYNTHIA: And a man typing blindly, staring straight ahead. Empty

cubicles—to either side.

BRENDA: Brother Walters—just married a few months.

HELEN: Yes, plus a supervisor—if possible.

BRENDA: Sister Breinholt. Brother Chandler—. Sister Ludlow.

HELEN: Seniority is a factor—absolutely.

CYNTHIA: Two men embracing, tall blonde, little oriental.

BISHOP TODD: And I found myself thinking about Mahonri Ward. Wondering if I could talk to him.

WARD: Hello, Fred.

(Enter FRED. GADIANTON, enters, watches.)

FRED: Mahonri. Big day, huh?

WARD: At least it'll soon be over.

FRED: Yep.

WARD: Just a few more hours.

(Pause.)

FRED: I think it was a good idea for you to come in today. I know you didn't want to—.

WARD: No.

FRED: But I like the message it sends.

WARD: Yes.

(Pause.)

FRED: You coming in.

WARD: Yes.

(Pause.)

FRED: Well, I'll keep on top of things.

WARD: This is just useless.

FRED: Excuse me?

WARD: I don't run this company anymore. Why did I even bother?

FRED: Support, solidarity.

WARD: People I started with, people I hired. Coming in and begging. Begging for this assistant or that secretary. That's what today's going to be.

FRED: I'll keep 'em out, Mahonri, they can come to me.

WARD: I don't think so. I've always had an open door. I'm not changing that today. If it makes them feel better to have someone to yell at, I'm here.

FRED: Whatever you want.

(Pause.)

WARD: Get out.

aster happening, and I was told I reported directly to him.

GADIANTON: What kind of disaster?

BISHOP TODD: I'm supposed to tell Mr. Ward directly.

GADIANTON: Well, tell it to Mr. Whitmore.

BISHOP TODD: My job is to tell Mr. Ward.

GADIANTON: Well, my job is to screen Mr. Ward's appointments.

And today he just can't fit you in.

BISHOP TODD: Five minutes, that's all, I'll take five minutes and—.

GADIANTON: *(Simultaneously.)* I've told you, he's not seeing anyone, you might as well—.

"A human mistake, that's what you're saying we made? Like we shouldn't lay her off, like we should lay you off instead?"

FRED: Right. *(He exits.)* Man.

GADIANTON: Don't worry, Fred.

FRED: What's with him?

GADIANTON: It's nothing. If anyone gets in to see him, he'll just undercut you. I'll take charge here.

FRED: Thanks.

(He exits. Lights back up on HELEN and CYNTHIA.)

BRENDA: Look, maybe this isn't the time, but . . .

BISHOP TODD: What is it?

BRENDA: See, Alice wants off at three-thirty to be with her kindergarten, wants to switch to mornings. Now Brett thinks that. . . . Bishop, are you listening?

BISHOP TODD: I'm sorry. It's about Alice, whatever you suggest. I'm sure it'll be fine.

BRENDA: It's not that easy, Bishop.

BISHOP TODD: Brenda. I'm sorry. Keep on top of things here for a sec. I have to go talk to someone.

BRENDA: Whatever you say.

(Lights down. BISHOP TODD exits.)

HELEN: Every effort will be made to treat people with respect and courtesy.

CYNTHIA: Programming. Two young men in their early twenties watch, as an older man's escorted out. His hair slicked—back, shoes polished.

BRENDA: Sister Hansen. Sister Yamaguchi—. Brother Mendez.

CYNTHIA: On every wall, posters: motivational sayings, "Proper planning prevents poor performance," the p's—all highlighted.

HELEN: Yes, we recognize it is a volatile—situation.

CYNTHIA: The boss leaves. The door shuts; young guys give each other high fives.

GADIANTON: I'm sorry, but Mr. Ward isn't seeing anyone today.

BISHOP TODD: Is he in?

GADIANTON: I can't answer that. He's not seeing anyone—.

BISHOP TODD: Look, I'm from the mailroom. We have a major disaster

(WARD, up by the door.)

WARD: It's okay. Send him in.

HELEN: Usually, we subcontract our security through—Diamond Security.

BRENDA: Mr. Kovaks. Mr. Greenfield. Dorothy and Carrie Ann—from the cafeteria.

CYNTHIA: Customer Support. Chair after empty chair, phone lights flashing.

BRENDA: Mr. Bjarnson—. Sister Bridges.

CYNTHIA: And over it all, the voices. Courteous—. Tense. Frightened. Helpful.

BRENDA: Brother Marchant—. Brother Guinness.

HELEN: Today, we thought it might be better not to use people the employees already know.

BISHOP TODD: And so I told him the entire story, the ruined clothes in the bed of the truck, the Standards Night talk, spina bifida. And he sat there, his face in shadow. And whenever I paused, he'd just say quietly:

WARD: Go on.

BISHOP TODD: Mr. Ward, we're short-handed down there anyway. If you lay anyone off, we're just not going to be able to get the mail out on time, not the way we have been. Anyway, I know she's an assistant supervisor, and I know they're the people you're targeting. But I'm begging you. Don't . . . *(Pause.)*

WARD: *(After a long pause.)* Bishop Todd. What a remarkable story. You care about your . . . you care, and that's good. I just have this feeling that all across the company today, that kind of pain. . . . *(Long pause.)* I hate this.

BISHOP TODD: You can't stop it?

WARD: I even voted against it. . . . There's a limit to what a CEO can do, especially. . . . Well, I can do some things still. *(Writing at his desk.)* Take this note to Fred Whitmore. One less layoff in the mail room. . . . I'll try to call him as well. *(Finishes the note.)* I can't do this for everyone. But this strikes me as an exceptional

case.

BISHOP TODD: Thank you, Mr. Ward. *(He starts to exit.)* I take this to Mr. Whitmore?

WARD: He's running the layoff.

BISHOP TODD: I thought this was your company.

WARD: Not any longer.

(As BISHOP TODD leaves.)

HELEN: The guards have been instructed to act only if necessary to prevent bodily injury or the—destruction of company property.

CYNTHIA: And then someone tried to take my camera away from me.

BRENDA: Sister Douglas. Brother Alvarez—. Brother Taylor.

CYNTHIA: Tried to take it out of my hands and smash it against a wall.

HELEN: Any further questions?

CYNTHIA: A guard stopped him, the flash went off, and I think, accidentally, he may have gotten a shot of his own face in closeup. I hope so. I've never seen such rage.

CHAD: I'm sorry, Mr. Whitmore isn't in right now.

BISHOP TODD: When do you expect him?

CHAD: I'm never sure. He's usually in and out.

BISHOP TODD: It's rather important.

CHAD: You're welcome to wait. I'd call him, but he didn't even take his phone.

BISHOP TODD: I'll wait.

(Phone rings.)

CHAD *(on the phone.):* Excuse me. Honey, this is not a good. . . . We've talked about this. . . . Honey, there's absolutely nothing I can. . . . We've had this conversation before.

HELEN: Any questions? *(Spotlight on her, alone and vulnerable.)*

CYNTHIA: I'm not sure I've ever done better work. The looks, their faces.

HELEN: 'Cause if you don't have any, I sure do. *(She crosses back to SAM.)*

SAM: How did it go?

HELEN: Pretty awful.

(The Dies Irae starts again.)

SAM: Good.

HELEN: Good?

SAM: It should be awful. You should feel awful. I do. We're doing an awful thing. And we're defending it. We should feel bad.

HELEN: Well, I do.

SAM: Good.

(A pause.)

HELEN: Sam. . . .

SAM: *(Warily.)* Yes?

HELEN: Sam, look. I don't know how to say this—.

SAM: Helen?

HELEN: I want you to know that this is no reflection on your work. You can expect, and you deserve, an outstanding letter of recommendation.

SAM: You knew all day, didn't you—?

HELEN: Sam, I'm terribly terribly—.

SAM: Shut up.

HELEN: I'm afraid, I'm going to have to . . . *(Nearly loses control.)* . . . to ask you to remove your hands from your computer now.

SAM: *(Hands up.)* Fine.

HELEN: Thank you—. Now, I'm going to have to ask you to accompany me. . . .

SAM: *(Speaking simultaneously.)* You are doing something despicable. I hope you know that—.

HELEN: *(Stops him.)* Sam.

SAM: Go on.

HELEN: Accompany me out of the building to your car.

SAM: Let's go.

HELEN: Sam . . . look, you're supposed to come back tomorrow for personal effects, but if you want to . . . I don't know. The picture of your family—.

SAM: Keep it. *(Hands it to her.)* Put it on your desk. *(He exits.)*

HELEN: So, Ms. Vice-President.

BRENDA: Brother Flandro. Brother Houghton. Sister Pomeroy.

HELEN: What do you do now?

BRENDA: Fred Whitmore better watch out. I know where he parks.

(Lights down on her. WARD suddenly gets up. He crosses to COGBURN, but WARD's no longer depressed; quite energized, in fact.)

WARD: Well, John, all finished. The yard is trimmed, the clippings are gone, garden's weeded. Come out and see.

COGBURN: *(Still a bit stunned, amazed.)* I saw.

WARD: But you haven't seen the paint job. Come on out.

COGBURN: In a second.

WARD: Whatever you say. The point is, John, we're getting you cleaned up. Okay?

COGBURN: For all the good it's gonna do.

WARD: I don't expect it to solve all your problems. I'm just trying to encourage you to—.

COGBURN: To what?

WARD: To make a start, John. To get your life back in order.

COGBURN: Why?

WARD: I told you, John. I've been assigned as your home teacher.

And I care about you. *(COGBURN stares at him in amazement. He looks as though he may cry. Suddenly, as he stares at WARD, he begins to chuckle. The chuckle expands into a laugh, a braying, harsh, ugly, laugh.)* John, what's the matter? *(The laugh turns into a coughing fit. COGBURN doubles over, but still laughing predominates.)* Can I help you? *(He reaches over to pat COGBURN on the back.)* John?

COGBURN: Don't touch me.

WARD: *(Friendly but puzzled.)* Do you mind sharing the joke?

COGBURN: The joke? The joke is you!

WARD: I don't understand—.

COGBURN: I figured it out. I did! The yard and the paint job, it's all outside the house, isn't it?

WARD: I told you, I'm trying to—.

COGBURN: This isn't about home teaching! Not about me! It's about the house!

WARD: It's about you.

COGBURN: It's about property values!

WARD: *(Pause.)* You can't really believe—.

COGBURN: This house is the disgrace of the neighborhood, and you don't want it to drag down property values. *(Laughing again.)*

WARD: John, that's ridiculous.

COGBURN: I don't believe you—.

WARD: I'm your—home teacher.

COGBURN: How does it feel?

WARD: What?

COGBURN: Every good deed, every charity you give to . . . you'll hear the whispers. "What are his motives?" Mistrust and suspicion. That's you.

WARD: I don't believe that.

COGBURN: Every friend you make, you'll wonder, could just be about the money. Every conversation, that's underneath. "Maybe he'll give me money." You're not a home teacher. You're not even Mahonri Ward anymore. You're three hundred million dollars, and that's all you are for the rest of your life.

WARD: What are you doing? Why are you saying this?

COGBURN: I'm teaching you how to be rich.

(WARD, stunned, backs away from COGBURN, sits across from where BISHOP TODD sits, sleeping in his chair.)

BISHOP TODD: *(Light shift indicates a dream sequence. The Dies Irae begins.)* Mahonri Ward. Welcome. I'm your bishop. And this disciplinary council is now in session.

WARD: But I haven't done anything to warrant a court. *(As he lists his good deeds, BISHOP TODD begins the charge against him. They speak simultaneously.)* I pay my tithing, and I attend my meetings regularly, and I abstain from tobacco, alcohol, coffee, tea, white sugar and soups hotter than my body temperature, and I obey the law of chastity and am honest in my dealings with my fellow man including all traffic ordinances, and serve faithfully in my calling as home teacher as my brother John Cogburn will surely attest.

BISHOP TODD: *(Simultaneously.)* You willfully and with full knowledge and intent did commit an act of economic violence against your brothers and sisters in the gospel, depriving them of their ability to earn an honest livelihood by the sweat of their brow and thus trampling on the poor but honest at heart in order that the stockholders of this company might get gain. *(Continuing after WARD finishes.)* And the stockholders did flourish, and their flourishing came at the cost of their brothers and sisters!

(Shadowy figures in the background begin to appear.)

HARRY JUNE: Stock's rising. It's up twelve dollars a share.

BISHOP TODD: Members of the court, how find you? *(As they speak, his head droops.)*

GADIANTON: Not guilty.

HELEN: It's normal business practice. Not guilty.

CYNTHIA: Not guilty.

FRED: Not guilty.

COOPER AND SCOTT: Not guilty.

(The entire company begins echoing, whispering "Not guilty." The bishop slowly retreats to his chair, head on his desk.)

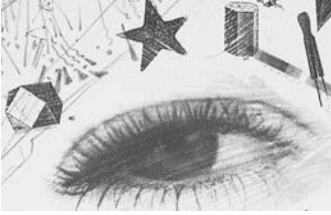
WARD: *(As the whispering fades.)* I'm not guilty. I'm not. I'm not.

COGBURN: *(Simultaneously.)* No one will ever believe in your innocence. Not for the rest of your life.

(He and WARD exit. Lights to normal. BISHOP TODD is asleep.)

CHAD: *(On the phone.)* . . . Whatever you think you have to do.

FRED: *(Enters, sees the BISHOP sleeping.)* Chad, what's going on? Who



THE NATURAL ARCHES (NEAR MOAB, UTAH)

There is beauty enough here
in the rough hewn stone
to forgive the human presence
and nature's cataclysmic cycles.
In a few thousand years
the delicate structures may well
be gone, taken to dust by the same
strong-fingered god who
so methodically worked the water
and sandstone on this salt plain.

The balance broken, what shall rise
up from the earth's mottled
flesh? Perhaps fire in the mouth
of Pavlof*, gray ash draped over
the white and blood-specked tundra.

Maybe the wild Pacific under
its massive weight will leap up
and swallow California,
as the seas once carved spires
and the haunches through
to the hollows of this tan stone.

Or might it be man which ascends,
having built so highly upon him-
self, up towards the heavens,
to witness the parade of planets
and the cascading stars falling away
from his dark and damning center.

—ROBERT J. HOLT

Whenever one talks about a conflict between an individual and an institution, there exists an unavoidable temptation to structure the story in melodramatic terms, pitting the courageous artist against the unfeeling censors within the corporate monolith. Ironically, that's also the story told in the play itself.

ME, GADIANTON, AND BYU

By Eric Samuelson

I BEGAN WRITING *GADIANTON* IN THE SUMMER OF 1994. At the time, I was living in a small, struggling, largely blue-collar ward in west Provo and was assigned to hometeach a family whose father was employed by a computer software company. When he was laid off, the family was devastated economically. That layoff angered me, as it seemed, from my judgmental outsider's perspective, utterly unwarranted. And so I began writing *Gadianton*.

About that same time, my brother Rob was employed by NCR at its corporate headquarters in Dayton, Ohio, and NCR had been purchased by A T & T, in what analysts now call one of the most foolish and destructive of all those mid-nineties mega-mergers. Rob and I talked on the phone a lot, and he told me about the atmosphere of paranoia and mistrust that now characterized his working environment. I'm not a businessman, and so, as part of my research for the play, I began reading business books, many of which deal with the software industry and with layoffs generally. Also, locally, the papers were full of stories about the WordPerfect purchase by Novell and the subsequent layoffs at WordPerfect. I found these stories particularly interesting because one of the most helpful books I'd read had been Pete Peterson's *Almost Perfect: How a Bunch of Regular Guys Built WordPerfect Corporation*. And, of course, since I was writing a play about layoffs in the computer industry, the WordPerfect story was particularly relevant to me. I knew a few people who had been laid off by WordPerfect, but the layoff that had prompted my interest, the layoff of the man I was hometeaching, had been from a different company. And my sense of the visceral, emotional aspect of layoffs, the grinding panic and fear and anger and mistrust, I was getting entirely from my brother.

Eventually, I finished the play. I showed it to a few close friends, Tim Slover in particular, who liked it and offered helpful suggestions. I then submitted it to the New Playwrights series sponsored by the Utah Shakespearean Festival. My good friend Jerry Crawford championed it, and I

was fortunate enough to be assigned George Judy as a director. George's feedback was extraordinary, and at his suggestion, I reshaped the play entirely, changing it from a rather cumbersome three-act structure to a far more compact two acts. We had a staged reading of the play at the USF in Cedar City, and the response was encouragingly positive, particularly from non-Mormons. The play was subsequently workshopped and read at the Tuacahn Mormon Arts Festival, where Doug Stewart and Robert Paxton were similarly helpful and supportive.

The BYU Theatre and Media Arts department, where I teach, decided to produce the play, and my colleague Bob Nelson was assigned to direct it. It was to open in February 1997.

During Fall term in 1996, while the play was in initial rehearsals, Bob and I heard from our dean, Bruce Christensen, that the BYU administration had some concerns about the production. This led to a series of meetings between Bruce Christensen; Bob Nelson; Eric Fielding, our Department Chair; and Jim Gordon, who was then an Associate Academic Vice-President; and me. As a result of those meetings, I rewrote the play, which was subsequently produced in 1997 to positive reviews.

THE FACT THAT those meetings took place has led to a number of rumors about the play and its production. In certain circles, it's now become rather famous, I believe. Let me take the opportunity of this play's publication in *SUNSTONE* to lay those rumors to rest. I promise you, the facts are very boring.

Rumor One: *The play is about the WordPerfect layoffs*. Not really. The play is about layoffs generally. The impetus for the play was a layoff at a different company, and the most valuable part of my research largely came from conversations with my brother about his situation at NCR. I was interested in specific connections between layoffs and Mormonism, and particularly the Book of Mormon account of the Gadianton robbers. And

I do believe layoffs are, in most cases, morally suspect. That's why I wrote the play—to make that case. But I did not and do not want to attack anyone personally.

so I set the play in a predominantly LDS community. But I made every effort to distance the specifics of the play from those of the WordPerfect sale and layoffs. Fred Whitmore, the play's demonic protagonist, had no WordPerfect parallel, for example, though there were a couple of guys like him at NCR.

As it turned out, I didn't do a very good job. I didn't know much about WordPerfect and didn't know, for example, that one of the WordPerfect chief executives was well-known for playing tennis. I'd written a tennis-playing executive into the world of my fictional company, and that parallel, understandably, bothered people who knew the real man.

I reiterate: I did not want to write a play attacking specific individuals in Utah Valley. I wanted to write a play about layoffs generally. If audiences spent all their time looking for specific parallels to specific contemporary events and individuals, the impact of the play would be, I thought, lessened.

Rumor Two: *I was threatened with loss of my employment if I didn't re-write the play.* I was never threatened by anyone. The atmosphere in all meetings with members of the administration was sometimes tense, but also cordial, respectful, and forthright. The administration was understandably concerned that the play would be seen as a direct personal attack on specific, well-known members of the community. I shared those concerns, although I also wanted to defend my play. Jim Gordon did inform me, however, that if the play weren't re-written, it could not be produced at BYU. In retrospect, I believe that this was a reasonable position for the university to take.

I don't pretend these meetings were easy for me or for anyone else in the room. On the contrary, I was angry, hurt, offended. Strong opinions were strongly, if respectfully, expressed, by me and by others. At the time of these meetings, I had not yet been granted tenure at BYU, and I was genuinely afraid the *Gadianton* controversy would complicate my tenure process.

But all of us, Jim Gordon and Bruce Christensen and Eric Fielding and I, worked through it. We found common ground. I do not today feel any animosity towards anyone involved in the process. Since the 1997 production of *Gadianton*, I have had the opportunity to work closely with some of the very people my play was supposed to be attacking. There are former top executives of WordPerfect whom I regard as close personal friends. Jim Gordon is a friend of mine. So is Eric Fielding, and so is Bruce Christensen (both of whom fought like tigers for the play). I do believe layoffs are, in most cases, morally suspect. That's why I wrote the play—to make that case. But I did not and do not want to attack anyone personally.

Rumor Three: *The re-writes I was forced to make weakened the*

play substantially, and somewhere a much stronger version exists—perhaps even stronger than the one we're reading now in SUNSTONE. The decision to re-write the play was mine. The specific changes I made were made to distance the play from real-life situations and individuals. And those changes, in my opinion, have strengthened the play substantially.

For example, originally, the play was set in an unspecified city with a sizeable LDS population. I changed it to St. George, which improved the play tremendously. Since much of the play deals with issues relating to nuclear testing, it makes sense thematically to locate it in southern Utah. Originally, the company's name was Datafine. I now think that that's a dumb name for a company and that ONTI is much better. And so on. One review of the play suggested the changes I was "forced" to make weakened the play significantly. With the benefit of several years' hindsight, I respectfully disagree.

What you are reading in SUNSTONE is *Gadianton*, in more-or-less the version produced at BYU, and the one I would love to see produced again. This is the play I'm sending to producers and agents. If another, better version of it exists anywhere, I'd have sent that to SUNSTONE instead of this.

ONE FINAL COMMENT. I am a playwright, and I am also a teacher of writing at BYU. I am a professor, drawing a salary paid in part from Church tithing funds, but I am also an artist. Whenever one talks about a conflict between an individual and an institution, there exists an unavoidable temptation to structure the story in melodramatic terms, pitting the courageous artist against the unfeeling censors within the corporate monolith. Ironically, that's also the story told in the play itself, with Bishop Todd alone against the *Gadianton*-ized world of ONTI.

But the story of *Gadianton* at BYU, the play and the production, is, I think, more complex. I have come to see it, at any rate, in more nuanced terms. My play talks about layoffs in an LDS context and, for the most part, non-Mormons have liked it better than Mormons have. I was asked to make changes that I initially resisted, and the play improved as a result. And the story of our meetings in November and December of 1996 ultimately became, not a story about bureaucrats imposing their will on an artist, but a story of reasonable people of good will who disagreed strongly about an important issue, but who struggled to find a solution all could live with. And the play was re-written, and the production took place, and I am presumptuous enough to think that some good, or perhaps even a great deal of good, came of it. ☺



To comment on *Gadianton* or this essay, or to read comments by others, please visit our website: <www.Sunstoneonline.com>.