

PERUSAL SCRIPT

FACING



EAST

A DRAMA

Carol Lynn Pearson



Newport, Maine

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FACING EAST

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FACING EAST, by *Carol Lynn Pearson*, received its world premiere at Plan-B Theatre Company in Salt Lake City, Utah, November of 2006. Plan-B Theatre then presented **FACING EAST** at Atlantic Stage 2 in New York for a limited off-Broadway run, May/June of 2007, with the cast and production team intact.

Designers:

Cheryl Ann Cluff, Sound;

Jerry Rapier, Costumes;

Randy Rasmussen, Set;

Cory Thorell, Lighting and Props;

Stage Managed by **Jennifer Freed**.

Directed by **Jerry Rapier**.

The cast was as follows:

ALEX, *a man in his late fifties* **Charles Lynn Frost**

RUTH, *Alex's wife about the same age* **Jayne Luke**

MARCUS, *their deceased son's gay partner* **Jay Perry**

THE TIME: today

THE PLACE: a cemetery in Salt Lake City

THE ACTS: this play is performed without an intermission

NOTE:

“Up to 30% of the completed youth suicides are committed by gay and lesbian youth.”

—U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

“Utah leads the nation in suicides of young men 15-24.”

—Deseret Morning News, April 23, 2006

Reviews and Responses

from the Utah Premiere of Facing East

REVIEWS:

“A tightly-wound domestic tragedy...freshly relevant...dares to ask important questions about faith, death and survival.” —Salt Lake Tribune

“May well be the best thing Carol Lynn Pearson has ever written...[in her] eloquent, tightly written script...there is very little finger-pointing, but plenty of fodder for healthy debate....’Best Drama and Best Actress 2006.’” —Deseret Morning News

“FACING EAST reaches into the complex psyche that is every American family. I was particularly struck by the depth of emotion and the raw honesty of Alex and Ruth, parents struggling with the harsh realities of the gay son they never fully knew. As the Executive Director of PFLAG, I draw tremendous hope and inspiration from Carol Lynn Pearson’s play, knowing that millions of people struggle with issues of faith, family and acceptance every day. FACING EAST is a compelling must see for everyone seeking to understand the challenging intersections of faith and family, and the undeniable bond that love must provide along the way.” —Jody Huckaby, Executive Director, PFLAG

RESPONSES:

“The theatre was packed with so much emotion you could cut it with a knife. Every one there, I’m sure, had a story—of pain, of betrayal, of confusion, of sacrifice and the struggle for love. They were looking to find redemption, hope, and searing honesty, no matter what the cost. Thank you for holding nothing back. You never let up, except for an occasional gift of humor so we could breath. There was a shared com- passion that held us in a place beyond words. It was an amazing experience to be part of.”

“When I told my husband we would be going to the play, he told me he wasn’t comfortable with the idea, but he came anyway. His first words as we left the theatre were, ‘It will be a very long time before we see something that powerful again.’ He compared it to Raisin in the Sun for emotional impact.”

“I attended with my mother and two sisters. The discussion in our family has not stopped since.”

“After the play, I lay awake asking myself: Have I taught doctrine that could break someone’s heart? Is it more important to me to be right than it is to cry with those in anguish?”

“Watching FACING EAST was a turning point for me. ‘God loves me and I am gay!’—those beautiful words, in some miraculous way, touched my heart, and I have come to know in recent weeks that I, too, am loved by God.”

FACING EAST a play by Carol Lynn Pearson. 2M 1W. About 75 mins. The story deals with a Mormon couple confronting the suicide of their gay son. The problems inherent in dealing with this emotional and ideological divide are universal to all humans, let alone any particular religious group. The three characters—father (Alex), mother (Ruth) and gay partner of the deceased (Marcus) – meet for the first time at Andrew’s grave following the funeral. The audience “becomes” the congregation in a new funeral the father is giving for his son, this time a funeral that speaks the truth. There are “memory moments” in which each parent relives important times in the past, during which the other parent speaks the son’s lines from the darkness. The only time we “see” the deceased son is toward the end when his partner “becomes” him in memory. These stylistic devices make us yearn to actually see and hear Andrew, but we cannot. Neither did most of us truly see or hear him when he was alive. **Order # 3154.**

CAROL LYNN PEARSON has been a professional writer, speaker and performer for many years. Her autobiography, *Goodbye, I Love You*, tells the story of her marriage to a homosexual man, their divorce, ongoing friendship, and her caring for him as he died of AIDS. This story made her a guest on such programs as “The Oprah Winfrey Show,” and “Good Morning, America.” She has been featured in “People Magazine.”

In the years since the publication of *Goodbye, I Love You*, she has become an icon to many thousands of gay people and their families for her powerful work to end the tragic collision between religion and homosexuality. Her work is based in Mormonism, but resonates into all spiritual communities. Rabbi Harold Kushner (author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*) says of her work, “Thank you, Carol Lynn Pearson, for reminding us that the task of any religion is to teach us whom we’re required to love, not whom we’re entitled to hate.”

Among her works for the stage are “Facing East,” the story of a Mormon couple dealing with the suicide of their gay son, and “Mother Wove the Morning,” a one-woman play in which she plays sixteen women throughout history in search of the female face of God, and which earned an award from “Booklist” as “one of the top 25 videos of the year.” Two of her children’s plays were commissioned by Robert Redford’s Sundance Summer Theatre.

Ms. Pearson’s many award-winning books have had a combined sale of over 800,000 and include poetry, novels, humor, Christmas stories, inspirational fables, and the recent *No More Goodbyes: Circling the Wagons around Our Gay Loved Ones*, which examines the tragic and unnecessary goodbyes we continue to say around the issue of homosexuality, and also presents many inspiring stories of families finding new and positive ways to relate to their gay children.

Many of Ms. Pearson’s poems have been widely reprinted in such places as the Ann Landers column and *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, as well as college literary textbooks. The poems appear now in a compilation, *Beginnings and Beyond*. She has written numerous educational motion pictures, including the well-known “Cipher in the Snow.”

Ms. Pearson has an M.A. in theater, is the mother of four grown children, and lives in Walnut Creek, California. Learn more about her at www.clpearson.com.

“Thank you, Carol Lynn Pearson, for reminding us that the task of any religion is to teach us whom we’re required to love, not whom we’re entitled to hate.” —**RABBI HAROLD KUSHNER, author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People***

FACING EAST

A cemetery in Salt Lake City. Downstage center is a new, unfilled grave. ALEX and RUTH, clearly dressed for a funeral, stand separate, silent. RUTH looks at her husband, looks around, then back at her husband as if waiting for him. He is in a private reverie.

RUTH. Alex?

(ALEX does not respond. There is an uncomfortable silence.)

Alex? They're waiting to fill it. Maybe you can come back. Later.

(Still no response.)

It's a nice view, I'm glad of that. East. Every grave in the cemetery faces east. For resurrection morning. Just like that. Everyone here, up they come. Facing the rising sun. And the Lord.

ALEX. And what about the poor fools that got buried facing south? What are they going to do?

RUTH. Why, just hop around a little, get situated. Shouldn't be too hard.

(Pause.)

The food will be getting cold, Alex. The sisters worked so hard.

(Another long silence.)

I asked them to make the potatoes just the way Andy liked them, with cheese mixed in with the sour cream in the potatoes as well as some cheese on top. And some onion sprinkles. He liked it that way.

(RUTH is in her own world. Alex does not respond.)

I wish that big tree wasn't in the way. Such a nice lot of light would fall right here. I don't like shadows.

(Pause.)

Mama said her Aunt Alice made her promise—that was in the days before pantyhose—that when she died Mama would make sure they did not just pull her nylons up to the knee like she'd seen done, but that they would attach them to her garter belt real secure.

ALEX *(Bewildered)* What?

RUTH. Well, she didn't want to rise up on resurrection morning and have her nylons in a little puddle at her feet.

ALEX. Oh, hell, Ruth!

RUTH. I didn't say *I* believed it. I said Aunt Alice believed it. And in her mind, how embarrassing! Everybody watching on the most important day of her eternal life and...

(Looks at her feet.)

...Oh, dear!

(There is another long pause.)

Alex. The food.

ALEX. I need to ask you. Ever since this happened, I've had the feeling—

(RUTH goes to the flower arrangement at the head of the grave and lifts out a rose. Many of the following lines are to herself in her own reverie, not conversational with ALEX.)

RUTH. I should have taken one for Aunt Edna. A red one.

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ALEX. —that you're relieved—

RUTH. They dry so nice if you hang them upside down. And spray them.

ALEX. —glad almost.

(RUTH pricks her finger on a thorn.)

RUTH. Ah! Can I have your handkerchief, Alex? Used up all my Kleenex.

(ALEX takes the white handkerchief from his suit breast pocket and hands it to her.)

Blood comes right out with cold water and bleach.

ALEX. Are you—

RUTH. *(Cutting ALEX off)* Every day of my life I will wake up wondering how I can live in a world that does not have Andrew in it.

(ALEX goes to his wife and takes her in his arms.)

ALEX. I know, love. I know.

(ALEX pulls away.)

But are you relieved?

RUTH. He's with his Heavenly Father now. Free from sin.

(ALEX moves away from his wife. RUTH looks around.)

The spirit is allowed to accompany the body until the burial takes place. Andrew is likely—right here.

ALEX. The people at the funeral were relieved.

RUTH. Maybe that tree will die or be destroyed before the resurrection. Not likely, though.

(Pause.)

It was a lovely service, Alex. The stake president's talk on Jesus atoning for the sins of the world. The recording of Andrew playing his cello.

ALEX. It was a lie! And I sat there and let it be a lie!

RUTH. So many people who loved us, loved him!

(ALEX goes to RUTH and demands that she see him, listen to him.)

ALEX. They didn't love him. No one in that chapel knew him! No one should be allowed at a funeral who does not know the person who died. I should not have been allowed at Andrew's funeral!

RUTH. Alex!

ALEX. *You* shouldn't have been allowed at Andrew's funeral.

RUTH. He was my son!

ALEX. I stared at the casket in front of me. I listened to the words, the stories. I tried to find my son in the picture on the program.

(MEMORY MOMENT: GENERAL LIGHTING DOWN, SPOTLIGHT UP on RUTH and ALEX looking straight ahead, listening. SOUND: DEEP STRAINS OF A CELLO, slowly and skillfully playing a Bach Suite. GENERAL LIGHTING UP. Agitated, ALEX goes again to the grave.)

RUTH. Alex, we have to go. They're waiting.

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ALEX. The ground has shifted. I don't know where to step. Ruth, help me.

RUTH. Satan won this round.

ALEX. Satan be damned!

RUTH. Oh, that's rich, Alex.

ALEX. I need a new funeral! A service that speaks the truth. I will not leave this spot until we have given a better funeral for our son.

(ALEX steps toward the audience.)

Brothers and sisters—

RUTH. Alex! You haven't had a good sleep in four days. You've been saying strange things.

ALEX. Brothers and sisters, we are gathered here today—

RUTH. Alex! You are not well!

ALEX. —facing east—or west—or...

RUTH. Do not swear Alex. Not today, not here!

ALEX. To grieve the loss of my son! We are gathered here where there are trees, random, struggling, maybe some imperfection—not in a cookie cutter brick chapel. Maybe a bird will bear witness, maybe a cloud will shed a few tears. Here where confused, earth-bound spirits congregate and ask each other what the hell happened.

(Pause.)

This is the grave of my son. Andrew Isaac McCormick. None of us—knew him.

(Reaches into his back pocket for a piece of paper.)

Maybe you read this. Deseret Morning News. "Andrew Isaac McCormick passed away September 19th, 2006 [change date and year as needed] at age 24 in Salt Lake City, Utah. After graduating from East High School and Julliard School of Music, Andrew served a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Minnesota and always retained a strong testimony of the restored gospel. Andrew was a gifted cellist and at the time of his passing played in the Utah Symphony. He is survived by his parents, a brother and a sister. Funeral will be...." Lies!

RUTH. Lies?

ALEX. I wrote that. With, of course, some very nervous help from Andrew's mother. But we're finished with lies. We are gathered here, brothers and sisters, to speak the truth. So let's begin with an honest obituary, the one I did not have the balls to write.

RUTH. *Alex!*

ALEX. Andrew Isaac McCormick passed away at the age of 24 from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. He was found by a gardener lying alone in a flower bed beside the Salt Lake Mormon temple. Andrew was a gifted musician and a loving, loving son, brother, uncle and friend. He was also—a homosexual man.

RUTH. That's not who he *was*, Alex. That was his *cross!*

ALEX. After years of repression and anguish and failed reparative therapy, prayer, fasting until his doctor told him to stop, Andrew entered into a relationship with a man he dearly loved, whom Andrew's family chose

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not to meet. Andrew's father would like to thank the stake president and long-time family friend for weeping as he handed to his son the letter of excommunication. Andrew is survived by his father—who failed him.

RUTH. Not failed.

ALEX. His father, the hypocrite, the very well-known radio personality “One-Minute Dad,” who taught the whole country how to spend quality time with their kids, while his youngest son ended his life alone.

(GENERAL LIGHTING goes down. MEMORY SPOTLIGHT comes up on ALEX.)

(Brightly.)

Hey, it's “One-Minute Dad” again with a sixty-second great idea for all you dads out there. You know, little love notes are not just for romance. Say your kid is having a hard time with peer pressure, thinks they have to be like everybody else. How about slipping into your son's or your daughter's lunch bag or into the pages of their school book a little card that says, “Listen, do you know how proud of you I am?—just the way you are. Never mind what everyone else says you ought to be like. Dare to be different! Look for that bright little, right little light inside. Trust that light. I love you. Dad.

(GENERAL LIGHTING comes back up.)

RUTH. Not a hypocrite, Alex. I wish I'd had a father like you. You're a wonderful father.

ALEX. Permit me, brothers and sisters, to give you a little more information to help you understand this—catastrophe.

RUTH *(Points to her watch)* Alex!

ALEX. Utah is a red state, a *flaming* red state, pardon the imagery. In the civil war that's sweeping across our nation, we hold a place of leadership. You think civil war is too strong a term? Well, take a look. Right here. A casualty. Collateral damage!

(ALEX is silent for a moment.)

RUTH *(Gently)* Darling. Let's go now.

ALEX. I—I'd like to turn the time over to Andrew's mother for a few remarks.

(RUTH stares blankly at ALEX.)

Andrew was a very special child. Oh, every child is special, you're saying. But Andrew was—unusual. I'll let his mother tell you about that.

(RUTH surveys the audience.)

RUTH. Alex. It's just—trees.

ALEX *(Firm, pleading)* Please, Ruth. They're waiting.

RUTH. And then back to the chapel. The sisters worked so hard.

ALEX. Tell them about Andrew.

(RUTH surveys the audience again. Satisfied there's nobody there, she glances at her husband, halfway enters his fantasy, puts on her good Mormon smile, and begins.)

RUTH. Well, Andrew was—nearly perfect. Andrew means “manly, valiant.” And he was, mostly. I would look at him and think, we are so blessed, so blessed. Well, all our children were wonderful, yes, his big sister

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Janet, and his brother Kenneth, both went on missions, both married in the temple. Janet lives nearby, so that's nice. Three children, born under the covenant to faithful parents married in the temple. That's important. Much more important than my Master's degree in music theory—being a mother. I wanted more—children—but Andrew was our last. Sometimes when we were alone I would say—

(Sings.)

“Last the best of all the game!”

(MEMORY SPOTLIGHT falls on RUTH and she kneels. She is weeding a flowerbed.)

Do you see her yet, Sweetie?

(Andrew's lines are spoken from the darkness by the parent who is not featured in the memory scene.)

ALEX AS ANDREW. No, Mama, her car's not back yet.

RUTH. What do you think she'll say, Andrew, when she comes back from the store and finds her flower bed so clean? No weeds, just flowers. Will she think some angels came?

ALEX AS ANDREW. I'll bet. Angels. Is this one a flower, Mama?

RUTH. That one's a weed, Sweetie. Out it goes. You get out of these flowers, Mister Weed, you are not wanted here! Which is this, Andrew, flower or weed?

ALEX AS ANDREW. It's a flower.

RUTH. And this?

ALEX AS ANDREW. A weed.

RUTH. Well, look at this, Andrew. Which is it, a flower or a weed?

ALEX AS ANDREW. That's *me*, Mama!

RUTH. Flower or weed?

ALEX AS ANDREW. I'm a *flower*, Mama!

RUTH. Of course you are! We're going to keep all the weeds away from you, aren't we Sweetheart?

(Sings.)

“I have a garden, a secret garden

Where thoughts, like flowers, grow day by day, 'Tis I must choose them

And tend and use them

And cast all wrong ones like weeds away.”

You will do that, won't you, Andrew?

ALEX AS ANDREW. 'Course, Mama.

RUTH. You'll be like this rose. And this iris. And this petunia. And this—

ALEX AS ANDREW. Mama, that's *me*!

RUTH. Oh, excuse me! My mistake!

(Tickles him. They laugh.)

(MEMORY SPOTLIGHT shifts from RUTH to ALEX.)

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ALEX (*Brightly, as "One-Minute Dad"*) And don't ever forget, Dads, that the most important work you will ever do is within the walls of your own home. Or maybe up in the Uintah Mountains, or whatever special place is yours, with your son or your daughter, just the two of you.

(*SOUND: CRICKETS, FROGS. Andrew's lines are spoken in the darkness by his mother.*)

RUTH AS ANDREW. Dad?

ALEX. Yes?

RUTH AS ANDREW. Doesn't it hurt the woman, doing what you said?

ALEX. Ah, no, Son. Well, maybe the first time, just a little, so you have to be real careful, real sweet. But no. I know the whole thing sounds—silly and, and shocking maybe— but *she* likes it too. You both do. You won't understand this for a few years, but it's like the best present God or nature gave to this world. Sort of like the best Christmas present you can imagine. And waiting for the right time, that's important, Andy. Kids want everything right now. Or like, you know how in kindergarten you dug up the little seed in the carton to see how it was doing?

RUTH AS ANDREW. I'm nine now, I wouldn't do that.

ALEX. Needed more time.

RUTH AS ANDREW. Can I ask a question now?

ALEX. Sure, Son. Ask away.

RUTH AS ANDREW. Can we catch frogs in the morning?

ALEX. You bet we can.

(*To himself, chuckling.*)

Can we catch frogs?

(*Pause.*)

Just one more thing, Andy. You awake?

RUTH AS ANDREW (*Yawns*) Yeah.

ALEX. My father told me that marriage is commitment and sex. "If you've got commitment and sex," he said, "you've got a good marriage." My father was wrong. Even better than sex is being in love. They're related, but *being in love*, that's like, like Christmas all year round. That's like—you can't stop smiling even if you tried. It's like feeling sorry for everyone in the whole world that is not you. Eventually that moves into a different kind of love. Andy, you still awake?

(*Silence.*)

Andy?

RUTH AS ANDREW. *Huh?* Yeah, I'm awake.

ALEX. Andy, listen to me. Don't ever get married until you are deeply and wholly in love. Marriage is hard. And without that, it can be—too hard.

RUTH AS ANDREW. And then we'll let them go.

ALEX. What?

RUTH AS ANDREW. The frogs. We'll let them go.

ALEX. Yeah—we'll let them go.

(MEMORY SPOTLIGHT DOWN, GENERAL LIGHTING UP.)

RUTH. They say a mother gets too close to her son, won't let him grow up right. Or maybe something happens in the womb. The mother's hormones do something to the baby's brain. That's what I read.

ALEX. No one knows, Ruth.

RUTH. Either that or I smothered him. One way or the other, it's my fault. Right back to Eve, we're the ones to blame.

ALEX. No one's blaming you, Ruth.

RUTH. Maybe it's easier to live hating myself than—

ALEX. Ruth. Ah, no. You're a good woman, a good mother.

(ALEX goes to RUTH and puts his arms around her. In a moment she withdraws.)

RUTH. Some say this—thing—is in your genes. Not our genes, no sir. Both sides were well-developed, masculine men. Leaders.

(Indicates nearby grave.)

Grandpa here. Alex's grandfather. His people go back to the pioneers. Strong fighters for the right. They never had this problem we're speaking of. And Andrew's father, my husband, a real leader. His voice is heard by two million people every day.

ALEX. A leader who has ceased to know anything! What is up, what is down, who gets to rise in the resurrection with their damn nylons around their ankles.

RUTH. You don't need to make fun of me, Alex. It hurts, we have discussed that. And don't swear. Not today.

ALEX. Damn today!

RUTH *(To audience)* That is his only fault, I would like you to know that. He swears, but usually not this much, and not the really bad words. Only hell and damn.

ALEX. And occasionally bullshit.

RUTH. And why he is making fun of me—on *this day*—I'm sure I do not know. Well, actually two faults. He swears. And—he was unfaithful to me.

ALEX *(As if he's been punched)* Ah!

RUTH. He was! You were!

ALEX. A kiss, Ruth. *One* kiss!

RUTH. Emotionally unfaithful to me.

ALEX. Oh, for crying out loud!

RUTH. The truth? Did I hear you say you wanted the truth?

ALEX. That has nothing to do with—

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RUTH. Well, just maybe it does! Maybe it was not my hormones that damaged our son. Maybe it was because his father did not love his mother—

ALEX (*Sincerely*) Ruth, I love you.

RUTH (*Near tears*) —*the way people like to be loved.*

ALEX. Please, Ruth.

RUTH. Tell them, Alex!

(*ALEX goes to one of the folding chairs and sits down, exhausted.*)

Well then. There was this college sweetheart. Her name was—

(*As if she's saying a bad word.*)

—Diane. And Alex was crazy about her and they got engaged. But she broke it off while he was away on his mission, and then she got engaged to someone else and Alex was broken hearted. And then he came home and we started dating and we fell in love. *I fell in love.*

ALEX (*Quietly*) I love you, Ruth.

RUTH. But it was on again off again and on the morning of our wedding he was outside walking in the rain trying to decide if he was going to get married, and I was in the temple and I refused to put on my wedding dress because I didn't know.... And we waited and we waited. And then—

ALEX. (*Resigned.*) I came in, Ruth.

RUTH. —**he** came in. And I put on my dress and we got married for time and for all eternity. With those mirrors on the walls reflecting us forever and ever and ever. And then, as we were leaving for our honeymoon, his mother gave him a letter—from Diane—which she had sent three weeks before but his mother had kept it so as not to upset the apple cart, and also she loved me and of course I am so glad that somebody loved me.

ALEX. I love you, Ruth.

RUTH. So who came along with us on our honeymoon, which by the way was a disaster! And finally I said, “Alex, what in the world do you go off and read all the time?” And so he told me that it was a letter from Diane and that she had called off her engagement because she realized—“I want to be with you, Alex, more than I want to wake up in the morning.” Oh, well. Too bad, Diane! Too bad, Ruth! Too bad all of us—

ALEX. Ruth, don't.

RUTH. —for time and all eternity! And then ten years later he kissed her.

ALEX. One kiss.

RUTH. At their college reunion. He came right home and told me—

ALEX. Confessed. I did not want anything—

RUTH. —about the kiss—

ALEX. —coming between us, hidden. *I was trying so hard.* You have no idea how hard I was trying.

RUTH. Well, maybe that was it. Maybe *that* was what went right into my hormones and into my milk and confused the heck out of our boy! The fact that falling in love and getting married—

ALEX. I'm so sorry, Ruth.

RUTH. —is not what it's cracked up to be.

ALEX. We've had a good marriage.

RUTH. You know the first question I am going to ask when I get over there? Why did you make that sex thing so important?

(Shouts to heaven.)

I would like some answers, because that is what destroyed my son!

ALEX *(After a few moments)* When he was dating Karen, "I tried so hard," he said.

RUTH. She was in love enough for both of them. Still is. I watched her at the funeral.

ALEX. When he told me about....

(Pause.)

I hope he was in love.

RUTH. He broke his temple covenants. That is not love.

(Pause.)

He should have married Karen. Nobody gets a perfect marriage. I sent him articles. Very good articles. They could have just made it work.

ALEX. Put your shoulder to the wheel.

RUTH. Exactly.

ALEX. Push along.

(Sings with exaggerated good cheer.)

Do your duty with a heart full of song!

RUTH. He and that man never could have made it work. Those relationships do not last.

ALEX. Everyone deserves a shot at being in love.

(Pause.)

RUTH. I hope they'll have the headstone in right away. The music notes, the dove. That was a good choice, I think. Don't you think so, Alex?

(Alex does not respond.)

His music always frightened me. Of course, I was so proud, but

(GENERAL LIGHTING DOWN as MEMORY SPOT- LIGHT COMES UP on RUTH.)

Andy. Sweetheart. I've been thinking. Maybe you shouldn't take cello anymore. I mean, everyone should learn a musical instrument and you have learned the cello so well! Dvorak, even! My! But, you spend so much time. Don't you think a twelve year-old boy needs to be outside more, you know, doing boy things, baseball, things like that? I mean, you're on your way to being a man now.

ALEX AS ANDREW. Men play the cello, Mother. I've seen them.

RUTH. Of course they do, Sweetheart. And if you really love the cello....

ALEX AS ANDREW. You know I love the cello.

RUTH. Your father should be talking to you about these things.

ALEX AS ANDREW. He does.

RUTH. Oh, good.

ALEX AS ANDREW. He told me maybe I shouldn't use words like *fabulous*. And maybe I shouldn't help you make bread.

RUTH. We just want you to grow up to be the best man you can be.

ALEX AS ANDREW. Mother?

RUTH. Yes?

ALEX AS ANDREW. Did you know that a long time ago in Hawaii they had a big problem with snakes? The whole island was overrun with them. So they brought in a lot of mongooses to get rid of the snakes. Only the mongooses killed all the birds instead.

(MEMORY SPOTLIGHT DOWN; GENERAL LIGHTING UP.)

RUTH. He was the dearest child.

(To audience.)

He truly was. He started reading the scriptures on his own—stayed up late studying the Bible, the Book of Mormon, like his life depended on it. He gave us no trouble. Sometimes we thought it strange that he was such a good boy. Well, there were a few incidents. The illegal fireworks. And the time he lied. He was fifteen.

(RUTH breaks off, unable to go on. She turns her back.)

ALEX *(To audience)* He told us he was practicing basketball.

(MEMORY SPOTLIGHT on ALEX.)

You haven't been at practice for two months, Andy. What have you been doing?

RUTH AS ANDREW. I—I have a job. Janitor work downtown. Take the bus.

ALEX. Why?

RUTH AS ANDREW. I needed money.

ALEX. Money! For what?

RUTH AS ANDREW. I can't tell you.

ALEX. Andrew. You can tell me anything! I promise you, whatever this is—whatever *it is*—*we'll* get through it together.

(MEMORY SPOTLIGHT abruptly off. The stage is dark.)

RUTH AS ANDREW. I've been seeing—a therapist, Dad. There's something *wrong* with me.

(GENERAL LIGHTING up. ALEX picks up a chair, brings it close to the audience and sits.)

ALEX. There's something else we need to acknowledge at this service. It has—affected things. I am owned lock, stock and barrel, by two organizations. The Mormon Church and Family for Tomorrow. Been bishop

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- FACING EAST by Carol Lynn Pearson

twice. Always felt the Church has something special. The prophet, the head of the Church, has an office over there on temple square. But the CEO, at my house anyway, is Ruth. She keeps me on the right track.

(RUTH reacts, chooses not to speak.)

Ever since this happened, I've had the feeling that you're relieved—glad almost.

RUTH. He's with his Heavenly Father now. Free from sin.

MARCUS. This should have never happened! No one has the right to tell another person what God thinks of him! I don't care if it's the Mormon Church or suicide bombers.

The prophet—excuse me, the *head—of* Family for Tomorrow is Jim Lawson, who hired me twenty-five years ago. He hates the New York Times, Martha Stewart, Michael Moore, illegal aliens, New Age bookstores—and homosexuals. No, he does not know about my son. The death, yes. Corporate sent a *large* floral arrangement. But he does not know that my son was—

RUTH. And he does not need to.

ALEX. The CEO—who guards time as well as eternity—is determined to protect both our mansion on high and our fine home up on the Bench.

RUTH. Tell them the good news, Alex. Tell them about the letter.

ALEX. Well. I am on the verge of—big *things*. We'll probably have to move to Washington D.C. so I can shmooze with the big-wigs. We're going from a hundred and fifty stations carrying "One-Minute Dad" and an audience of two million listeners every day, five days a week, to three hundred stations and an audience of four million listeners in over thirty countries. And a *very* nice raise!

(RUTH has drawn a letter out of her purse.)

And because Family for Tomorrow has just been purchased by Right Hand of Jesus, I will have the opportunity to denounce in the strongest possible terms that fearsome plague that is moving across the country, contrived by all those queers in San Francisco and—my son. Right Hand of Jesus is owned by Frank Canton, whose book, "The Gay Agenda: The Real Axis of Evil," can be found in your local bookstore.

(Pause.)

So you can see that, on this subject—with the Mormon Church on one side and Right Hand of Jesus on the other—which is the rock and which the hard place?

RUTH. Thirty-four countries.

ALEX. You brought that letter *today*?

RUTH. I'll want to show it to people this evening. Relatives who will be very proud of you, Alex. Not everybody receives a letter like this one.

(Reads.)

Dear Alex. It was great to finally meet you last month. Not to worry, my friend. I am sure that with your popularity, you are solid gold, and even though you're a Mormon your right hand is for Jesus. Another thing. We've got an article about you scheduled for next month in "The Searchlight." Sort of a 'Portrait of a Great Family' kind of thing. Would you please write up a page on each of your three children? Describe what they're doing, how you see their lives reflecting the strong values you've dedicated your life to. This is very important to me as we plan your future. Congratulations, Alex! May your voice become an even greater trumpet of the Lord. Frank.

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(RUTH puts the letter back in her purse.)

Isn't that something?

ALEX. You see? I am now owned by the Right Hand of Jesus.

(Pause.)

And sometimes I wish the left hand of Jesus knew what his right hand is doing.

(Pause.)

And I wish—I wish that when Frank Canton handed me a signed copy of his book, I would have had the guts to say, “Hey, that’s my *son* you’re talking about.”

(Pause.)

Maybe I will. In that article. “And my third child...

(Nearly breaking.)

...a son any father would be proud of. My gay son Andrew.” Or maybe....

(With a painful sarcasm.)

Hey, all you dads out there. I mean you with a gay kid. Speaking to you here from the graveside of *my* gay kid. How about slipping this note into that lunch bag: “Listen, do you know how proud of you I am? Just the way you are. Smart and good and *gay*. Just look for that bright little, right little....

(GENERAL LIGHTING down as MEMORY SPOTLIGHT comes up on ALEX.)

ALEX. Andy. You don't have to do the big family deer hunt next year. You don't have to prove anything. Sorry about that stupid joke.

RUTH AS ANDREW. “What’s a vegetarian?”

ALEX. Yeah.

RUTH AS ANDREW. “Vegetarian is an ancient Indian word that means, inept, clumsy hunter.”

ALEX. Stupid joke.

(Pause.)

RUTH AS ANDREW. I saw a deer this morning, Dad. A four point. All of a sudden it was there, right in front of me. Didn't move or anything, like it was frozen. We just looked at each other. So close. I aimed the rifle—

(Pause.)

—and just looked at him. He was so beautiful. I brought the gun down—and he ran into the trees.

(Pause.)

If only I'd seen him far off, like up on the hill or something. I think I could have shot him. But he was *so close...I* could see his eyes.

(Pause.)

I wanted you to be proud of me.

ALEX. I am. Don't you ever forget that.

RUTH AS ANDREW. I don't know what I'd do if I thought you weren't proud of me.

(Pause.)

I saw the bishop last Sunday. Told him to go ahead and put in the papers for my mission.

ALEX. That's great!

RUTH AS ANDREW. I think I'll be okay.

ALEX. You'll be a great missionary.

(RUTH steps out from the darkness into one of two SOFT MEMORY SPOTLIGHTS. She and ALEX are in separate spots. They look and speak forward, not acknowledging each other visually.)

RUTH. Alex? Are you awake?

ALEX. Yes.

RUTH. Are you cold?

ALEX. No. You?

RUTH. Yes.

ALEX. Come here.

RUTH. He should not have given up. He was valiant for years.

ALEX. He's still our son, Ruth.

RUTH. I thought, Andrew isn't like them. He won't—he'll never do that. He knows better.

ALEX. He was fine on his mission. That's where a lot of them get into trouble.

(Pause.)

RUTH. I was dreaming just now. Andy was a little boy, maybe five. He wanted to fly and he kept hopping and waving his arms and I laughed and told him people can't fly. But he kept trying. And then, he hopped up and he stayed up, floated around the room like a little balloon. I was amazed. He said, "Mom, you can do it too." And I hopped and stayed in the air. He took my hand and said, "Out the window now, out the window now." I said, "Oh, but what would people say?" Then he went without me and I watched him and I thought, "My son can fly!" And then I woke up, crying, remembering.

(Pause.)

I hate that man.

ALEX. His name is—

RUTH. I don't want to hear his name. Ever!

ALEX. Try to sleep, Ruth.

RUTH. He isn't even a member of the Church.

ALEX. And if he was they could get married in the temple?

RUTH. He hasn't been taught right. Andy was taught right.

(Pause.)

I can't get out of my head the pictures of—what that man is doing to my son.

ALEX. Your son is an adult, Ruth. *He* is doing—

RUTH *(Nearly hysterical)* Stop it! Stop it!

(GENERAL LIGHTING back up. RUTH is looking where the headstone will be.)

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A good choice, I think. The dove.

(ALEX is silent, staring at the grave. RUTH goes to him.)

(Gently.)

Alex. “All things work together for good to them that love God.” You can now stand witness to a sad truth. The gay lifestyle destroys people!

ALEX *(Stares at her in disbelief)* Who are you?

RUTH. Well, you are just so superior, aren't you, mister? No, people don't write articles about me, but believe you me I have a few things to say. I have been through some darkness myself, and I think you know that. And I came out the other side. He should have come out the other side!

(To audience.)

Nobody knows this. No one but immediate family. But since there's just—trees. A year ago I was on my knees— and this was just after Andrew had told us was in love with this man—and I heard a voice that said, “Ruth, do you expect your son to overcome his sin if you cannot overcome yours?” For two years after my car accident I was addicted to Percodan! Every time Alex confronted me, I lied. I couldn't get up in the morning and bear the pain—thinking about my son, my Andrew, giving up his birthright, his place in God's kingdom—to be gay—to be with that man.

And so I lied. I took the pills and I got through the day.

But after the voice in my prayer, I knew. And I knew it would be the hardest thing I would ever do, but I told my family, and I said I wanted Andrew to be the one to help me because there has to be somebody there to help you or you can't do it, and he said yes he would, and we went to our cabin up Little Cottonwood Canyon where nobody would hear me scream.

Nobody but Andrew. For four days, he was the one who cleaned up my vomit, who held me through the shaking.