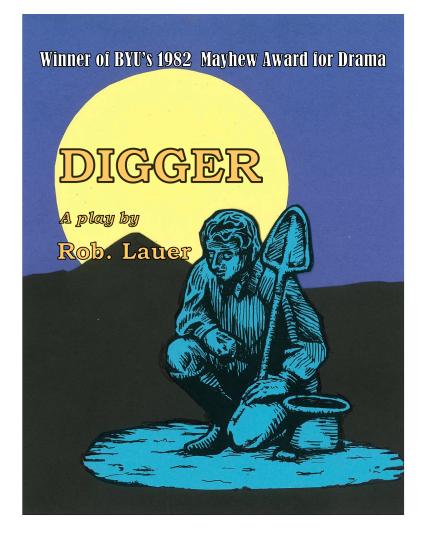
PERUSAL SCRIPT





Newport, Maine

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DIGGER

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

In order of appearance

(7 Males, 2 Females)

ISAAC HALE—A rough, burly hunter in his early to mid-60's EMMA HALE—Isaac's 21 year old daughter; tall, dark, attractive; outspoken with a dry wit ELIZABETH HALE—Isaac's devoted, self-effacing wife; in her 60's JOSIAH STOWELL—A bubbly gentleman farmer in his mid-50's ESAU—Poor, educated, superstitious, hot-headed; in his late teens to early 20's JESSE—Also poor, uneducated, etc. but more jovial; in his late teens to early 20's JOSEPH SMITH—Tall, masculine, handsome with a fair complexion; 19 years old ARAD STOWELL—Josiah's son; gentlemanly; something of a dandy; mid-20's JONATHAN THOMPSON—Josiah's foreman; in his 40's

DIGGER was first presented by the Brigham Young University Department of Theatre and Cinematic Arts at the Nelke Experimental Theatre on 2 December 1982. It was directed by John E. Clark, with sets by R. Kent Sheranian, costumes provided by the BYU costume shop, lighting by Sara V. Olds, and sound by Brent Wolfe and Somsik Nonpoe. The cast was as follows:

ISAAC HALE	J. Scott Bronson
EMMA HALE	Paula Miller Eckern
ELIZABETH HALE	
JOSIAH STOWELL	Duane D. Reneau
ESAU	Trent Bright
JESSE	Stanley J. Hainsworth
JOSEPH SMITH	Alan Ririe Stark
ARAD STOWELL	Mark R. Gollaher
JONATHN THOMPSON	Richard F. Beach
The play takes place in the kitchen of the Hale Home in Harmony, Pennsylvania, in the years 1825 and 1826.	

DIGGER by *Rob Lauer*. 6M 2F Winner of the 1982 Mayhew award for Drama, "Digger" explores the early life of Mormon founder Joseph Smith, his youthful involvement in folk-magic and his evolution into an American frontier prophet. Produced as a Graduate Production at Brigham Young University Department of Theatre in Dec 1982 to sold-out crowds, "Digger" was praised by critics as "ground breaking" in the genre of Mormon drama. The play was published by Sunstone Magazine in 1988. **ORDER #2040.**

Rob Lauer is an award-winning playwright, theatrical and television director, and the host of two TV shows in the Hampton Roads region of Virginia.

Rob's first play "Digger" won the 1982 Mayhew Award, and later critical acclaim whin it was published in 1988. In 1990 he became the first playwright to win both the Best Play of the Year Award (for his satire, "Tom and Penny's Yard Party") and the Paul T. Nolan Award (for his urban drama, "The Church Street Fantasy") at the Deep South Writers conference.

Currently Rob has been commissioned by the Mountainside Theatre and the Cherokee Historical Association (in Cherokee, North Carolina) to write a new musical, "Chief Little Will," inspired by the life of William Holland Thomas—the only white man to ever serve as chief of the Eastern Cherokees. This musical will premiere in the summer of 2014 and play every summer thereafter in rep with the acclaimed outdoor drama, "Unto These Hills."

Other recent works include the musical "My Jo" (based on the works of Louisa May Alcott), the comedy "Geeks & Gangsters" (inspired by the true story of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster—the Cleveland teenagers who, during the 1930's, created Superman) and the recently published novel, "A Southern Christmas Carol."

Rob founded and served as Artistic Director of the Olde Theatre Company in Virginia from 1986 until 1990. Rob served as Artistic Director of Sail Productions in New York City from 1996 until 1999. In 2000 and 2001, Rob served as production manager and head writer of MGA Films, Inc. in Colorado. From 2002 through 2005, he was the Artistic Director of "Swamp Gravy"—Georgia's official folk-life play, produced in Colquitt, Georgia. He wrote the critically acclaimed musical "A Southern Christmas Carol" which had its world premiere —featuring a cast of Broadway actors—in Colquitt in 2003, and has sense enjoyed multiple productions in Alabama, Arkansas and Virginia.

DIGGER

ACT I

SCENE 1

<u>SETTING</u>: The Isaac Hale Home in Harmony, Pennsylvania <u>TIME:</u> Autumn 1825

<u>SCENE</u>: The action of the play takes place inside the kitchen of the Isaac Hale home and in the yard just outside. The kitchen is indicated by a raised area upstage center. A table and chairs are in the center of the room and a large fireplace is upstage center. A door, upstage right, leads into the rest of the house while a door frame, downstage left, opens out onto the back porch. Steps at the downstage end of the porch lead into the back yard. To the right of these porch steps is an old water pump.

<u>AT RISE</u>: ISAAC HALE, a great man in his sixties, enters carrying a hunting rifle and a string of dead quail. ISAAC is broad across the shoulders and stocky of girth, with skin that is red and rough from the sun and wind. He flings the quail across the table and rests his rifle against the hearth. He starts to remove his hunting jacket but realizing this his hands are bloody from the quail, he first grabs a kitchen apron hanging on a chair, wipes the blood from his hands with it, then balls it up and tosses it onto the table. With his hands now clean of blood, ISAAC removes his hunting jacket and lays it over the back of chair. Off stage left a hound is heard barking. ISAAC crosses to a pot cooking over the fire, pulls out a bone with some meat on it with his hands, drips it across the room out onto the porch. With his bare hands, ISAAC pulls a hunk of the meat from the bone and then flings the bone off stage left to his barking dog.

ISAAC (Yelling at the dog) Now let that satisfy ya!

Isaac's daughter, EMMA HALE, has entered from right just in time to see him mess up the kitchen floor. EMMA is a tall, striking young woman of twenty-one, with a dark complexion, abundant dark hair and piercing dark eyes. Clearly perturbed that her father has dripped gravy across the floor, EMMA grabs her apron in order to clean up the mess with it. Finding the apron stained with blood, EMMA glares at ISAAC. She lays the apron down, then calmly picks up her father's hunting jacket, wipes the floor with it and then hangs it neatly back over the chair. Meanwhile out on the porch steps, ISAAC has been eating the hunk of meat. Now finished, he walks to the pump to rinse his hands. He works the pump vigorously but no water comes out. EMMA crosses out to the porch.

EMMA: You see? Mother and I both told you it's dry as a stone

ISAAC (Still working the pump) Bah! It can't be dry yet. I just dug this well thirty-five years ago.

EMMA: I've been carrying water from the river for nearly a full week now.

ISSAC: This still works. You just have to put some muscle into it.

(ISAAC demonstrates, vigorously working the pump. EMMA sighs, reclines in the doorway and watches the demonstration. Soon ISSAC'S pumping becomes slower until, exhausted, he has to

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stop.)

ISAAC: My muscles aren't what they once were.

EMMA: Neither is that well.

ISAAC (*Climbing back up the steps and crossing into kitchen, panting*) It'll be fine now that I've primed the pump. Just leave it be a while and let it—let it rest.

(He flops into a chair at the table, still trying to catch his breath.)

EMMA: Now you're as winded as I am after hauling water from the river. Once old Josiah Stowell's diggers, arrive hire them to dig a new well over by the barn.

ISAAC: They'll be busy working for Josiah.

EMMA: But once they've dug his well—

ISAAC: Josiah didn't hire them to dig him a well.

EMMA: But you can hire them to dig one for us, can't you?

ISAAC: Josiah will be keeping them too busy.

EMMA: Not every day.

ISAAC: Well...

EMMA: What type of work are they doing for him? You've been mighty closed-mouth about all this.

ISAAC: As is my right, Daughter. Need I remind you that this is my house?

ELIZABETH (from off stage) Is that your father, Emma?

EMMA: Indeed it is.

ELIZABETH: Have you given him any stew? I'm sure he's hungry.

(ELIZABETH HALE enters. She is in her sixties, descended from upright New England Puritan stock. She is an excellent housekeeper, a devout wife and mother, a good Christian and, last of all, her own person.)

ISAAC: No, she hasn't offered me a bite. When I see how your daughter has turned out, I sometimes wonder if you ever played me false.

ELIZABETH: Isaac!

ISAAC: Smile, Elizabeth. I was only jesting.

ELIZABETH: Well, I don't find such talk humorous.

(As she spoons out a bowl of stew for him)

Are those all the quail you shot?

ISAAC: I left a few on the front stoop of the Widow Harper's house.

- **EMMA:** (*Crossing to the quail, taking up a knife and cleaver to clean them*) Father, we'll need more than these few birds to feed ourselves and Josiah's men.
- **ELIZABETH**: Emma, the Widow Harper has no one to hunt for her since...(*lowering her voice*) since her husband was shot.
- **EMMA:** Why are you whispering, Mother? The Widow Harper certainly doesn't. Far from it: She sings about her husband's murder from the roof stops, to any poor soul she thinks will extend a little Christian charity her way. As a result she's better off now than she was when her husband was alive.

ELIZABETH: Where is your sense of charity, Emma?

EMMA: (*Cleaving into a quail with a loud thud*) My sense of charity ends where my common sense begins. **ISAAC** (*Chuckling at Emma's zeal*) You're quite the wildcat today.

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ELIZABETH: Emma's always like that when she has to cancel school.

EMMA: No children showed up today—again.

ISAAC: It's harvest time. You know that.

EMMA: Yes, and so their parents work their children in fields like mules. Learning to read and write is just a waste of time. Oh, I get so sick and tired of such ignorance! All I've ever known are farmers, hunters, and trappers: Wolves content to waste their lives running in packs, howling, at the moon and breeding more of their own kind. No ambition! No gentility! No refinement!

ISAAC (With a laugh) Just like Andrew Jackson.

EMMA: And now we'll have more of the same, living right here under our roof.

ISAAC: Ah, so that's what's got your dander up.

EMMA: Who are these men, Father? How long will they be lodging here? You've given Mother and I no notice, no explanation—

ISAAC: Because this is my house and no explanation is owed.

- EMMA: You simply announced to us a few days ago that you've agreed to lodge old Josiah's diggers here.
- **ISAAC:** As is my right, Daughter. Josiah said he'd pay me a right goodly amount for lodging his men, and he promised—

(He stops himself)

EMMA: He promised what?

ISAAC: We worked out an agreement.

EMMA: What kind of agreement?

ELIZABETH: Emma, that is between your father and Josiah.

ISAAC: Listen to your mother, Daughter.

EMMA: Why are you being so tight-lipped about all this, Father?

ISAAC: Because I don't owe you an explanation, Daughter.

EMMA: No, it's more than that. You're embarrassed about something.

ISAAC: I am not!

EMMA: Yes, you are. What business is Josiah up too now?

ISAAC: Josiah's business is Josiah's business. I'm lodging his diggers here and I stand to make a pretty little sum from the arrangement. That's all you need to know of the matter.

EMMA: What exactly is the arrangement?

ISAAC: That's none of your concern!

EMMA: I'm asking anyway!

ISAAC: And it's still none of your concern!

ELIZABETH: Emma, please mind your father.

(With an irritated groan, EMMA resumes cleaning the quail)

ISAAC: I'll lodge whoever I please in my house. We have plenty of room for them since all your brothers moved out...<u>because they got married</u>...and your sisters moved out...<u>because they got married</u>.

(He waits for EMMA to respond, but she says nothing; she merely hacks away at the quail. He turns to Elizabeth)

Ah: suddenly your daughter has nothing to say.

EMMA: Why waste my breath?

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ISAAC: Your sisters seem happy, don't they?

EMMA: They seem content enough, I suppose.

ISAAC: Content!? They're happy—and you could be happy, too, if you'd only force yourself.

ELIZABETH: Hasn't some young man caught your eye, Emma?

EMMA: How I hate that word: "caught"..."caught."

ISAAC: So no young man has caught you eye?

EMMA: No.

ISAAC: Maybe you need specks.

EMMA: I see quite well, Sir. To date I haven't met any man with whom I'd care to spend time or keep company.

ISAAC (*Teasing, with a laugh*) "Spend time?" "Keep company?" Is that what you think marriage is? (*EMMA's eyes flair at ISAAC'S laughter. With a loud thud, she hacks into a quail.*)

Daughter, do have some pity of on those poor quail; I've already killed them once. All this Hell in you that gets stirred up—that's what concerns me; that's what needs tending to. And you're not tending to it by hiding out here with your mother and me, or over in the school house—

EMMA: I'm not out hiding in the school house.

ISAAC: A husband and seven or eight children tend to have a settling effect on most women.

ELIZABETH: A married woman is a respectable woman. Emma.

EMMA: Aren't I respectable now, Mother?

ELIZABETH: Well, of course you are but...but...

ISAAC: All that furniture in the front side sitting room is yours when you marry. You know that don't you? **EMMA:** I know, Father.

ISAAC: There're some fine pieces in there. And both those two young milking cows in the barn—they're yours too...to take with you...as soon as you marry.

EMMA: Maybe I'll never marry.

ELIZABETH: Oh, Emma, don't say that!

EMMA: Good Heavens, Mother, why shouldn't I say it?

ISAAC: What in the world will you do once we're dead and gone?

EMMA: I don't know. Relax in the front side sitting room with my two cows, I suppose.

ISAAC: Well, I don't know how you'll survive without me.

EMMA: Father, do you think I'm completely dependent upon you?

ISAAC: So it seems.

EMMA: Really? Well then allow me to educate you, Sir. When I'm finished cleaning these birds, <u>you</u> can cook them for supper. Then we'll see who is dependent upon whom.

(EMMA returns to hacking away at the quail. ISSAC shakes his head in frustration)

ISAAC (*To Elizabeth, with a weary sigh*) The man who goes after her will have to have the Good Lord with him if he intends on holding on to her.

(JOSIAH STOWELL, a bubbling gentleman in his mid-fifties, appears on the porch and raps upon the door with his cane.)

ELIZABETH: Come in, Josiah.

JOSIAH: Thank you, Lizzy. How are we today?

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ELIZABETH: We're doing just fine.

(EMMA hacks through a bird with a loud thud and looks at ISAAC.)

EMMA: Yes, Father is preparing supper tonight. Perhaps you'd like to join us.

ISAAC: Are the lodgers here?

JOSIAH: They're waiting outside.

ISAAC: Bring them on in.

(JOSIAH goes to the porch and calls off left.)

JOSIAH: Come right in, Boys.

(ESAU and JESSE enter the kitchen, cautiously, so as not to dirty anything. They are both in their late teens/early twenties, dressed in dirty work clothes and carrying all their belongings in bundles under their arms. They are unshaven and unkempt.)

This is Esau ...

ESSAU: How'd do?

JOSIAH: And this is Jesse...

JESSE: Pleased to meet 'ya.

JOSIAH: And this is . . . (He hurries back to the door and calls outside) Joe, come on in! (JOSEPH SMITH enters from off left. He is nineteen years old, six feet tall with a beguiling smile, blonde hair, and large penetrating blue eyes that contrast dramatically with his pale skin. He stands straight and tall, moving in a princely manner despite his ragged work clothes, poor speech, and generally poor appearance. He carries a white felt top hat under his arm.)

And this is Joe Smith-

JOSEPH (Correcting him) Joseph Smith.

JOSIAH: Of course! This is <u>Joseph</u> Smith. Boys, meet the Hales. This is Isaac Hale, his wife Elizabeth, and that lady with the axe over there is their daughter, Emma. You'll be put up here with them while you're digging for me.

EMMA: Speaking of that, Mr. Stowell, we were just discussing having a new well dug over by the barn—**ELIZABETH**: Come, Emma. I'll help you with those birds while the men talk.

- EMMA: Mr. Stowell, could you spare these men a while so they can dig a well for us?
- **JOSIAH:** That's not the type of digging these boys do, Emma. You've heard of that silver bullion they say those Spaniards buried, a hundred years back, in the foothills over toward Oquago Mountain?
- EMMA: That's just a lot of rumors, Mr. Stowell.
- **JOSIAH:** Oh, but over the years those rumors have haunted me like ghosts from limbo—especially when I've needed money for land payments. Well, recently I dreams of a great golden treasure buried in the earth just waiting for the right man to bring it forth. I dreamt that dream three times—and you know what they say about dreamin' the same dream three times means.

EMMA: That you drank some bad liquor?

JOSIAH: It's a sign—an omen—that the particulars of my dream must surely come to pass! So I'm heading up a digging to uncover that silver.

EMMA: What does Mrs. Stowell have to say about this?

JOSIAH: Oh, I don't pay her much mind; but Arad and some of the children are kicking up a cloud of dust over it—afraid I'll squander away "their inheritance." Well, it's not "their inheritance" until I'm in the ground,

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and I plan on staying above ground for a good many years yet.

EMMA: But Mr. Stowell, if there really was silver over toward Oquago, how would you ever find it? Dig up the entire mountain?

JOSIAH: Of course not. That's where Joseph here comes in. A few weeks back while visiting my son Simpson up in Manchester, I mentioned my dreams. Simpson suggested that I look up a boy he heard tell of over in Palmyra, who had the power to see the invisible, interpret dreams, and find great treasures in the earth.

ESAU: Our Joe here is the boy!

JOSIAH: Of course, I don't readily believe every such tale I hear-

EMMA: Not readily...

JOSIAH: So I asked Joseph to demonstrate his powers. It was like pulling teeth, but finally he took a small brown stone, dropped it in his white hat, held it over his face so as to keep out all light, and began telling me what he saw. He said he saw my house and out houses and, sure enough, he described them all in detail! Then he described an oak, painted white around the trunk with a human hand painted over that.

ISAAC: Sounds like the tree over at the Lewis place.

JOSIAH: Exactly! But Joseph's never been there.

ISSAC (To JOSEPH) How do you explain knowing all that, Son?

JOSEPH: I just told Mr. Stowell what I'd seen.

(ARAD STOWELL appears at the door with JONATHAN THOMPSON. ARAD is a well-dressed, proper .young man in his mid-twenties. THOMPSON is a middle aged man. Both are upset.)

ARAD: Father! Are you here?

JOSIAH: No!

ARAD: Father, I've informed Jonathan of this madness!

THOMPSON: Josiah, as your foreman I think I deserve an explanation!

JOSIAH: At my age, I owe explanations to no one!

(ARAD looks JOSEPH, JESSE and ESAU over.)

ARAD: I suppose these are your "men"?

JOSIAH: That's correct, Son. This is Esau, Jesse-

ARAD: All right, which of you is the leader of this little crew?

JESSE: Who do you think you are, talkin' to us like that?

ARAD: My father is old! I refuse to let him be taken advantage of by the likes of you!

(To ESAU)

Are you in charge here?

(ESAU and JESSE look at one another and step back behind JOSEPH. ARAD approaches JOSEPH.)

Are you behind all this?

JOSEPH (Looking at his cowering companions) Looks like all this is behind me.

JOSIAH: See here, Arad! Leave these gentlemen alone!

ARAD: "Gentlemen?"

(To JOSEPH)

You're the spokesman. Explain yourself!

JOSEPH: Well...I...

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THOMPSON (*To JOSEPH*) We're worried about Josiah being taken by an opportunist. Why, with Freemasons taking over everything these days, you can't trust strangers.

JOSIAH: Fiddlesticks! An old man has a right to take a few chances. In fact I have the right to be taken for every blessed cent I have, if I so choose!

JESSE: But we're no frauds, Sir. Joe Junior can see the invisible . . .

ESAU: Aye, and things hidden from mortal eyes!

JOSIAH: He's an honest-to-God seer! I know that! Come, Joseph! Demonstrate your gift for them.

JOSEPH: Here and now?

(JOSIAH pulls JOSEPH aside.)

JOSIAH: I'm not an old fool being taken by you or anyone else, and I shan't have my children and neighbors thinking so.

JESSE: Go on! Show 'em up, Joe!

EMMA: Will he demonstrate his...art for us, Mr. Stowell?

JOSIAH: He most certainly will. Go ahead, Son. I have faith in you.

JOSEPH: Well... only if Mr. Hale doesn't mind.

ISAAC: Go ahead.

ARAD: Yes, do! I've always wanted to see how you rascals pull this sort of thing off.

ESAU: Then everybody be seated and make yer'selves comfortable.

(ESAU and JESSE usher everyone to a seat at the table. Then they push JOSEPH to the head of the table ... as if they were actors preparing to perform.)

JOSEPH: Well, I'll need my stone.

(He takes a small brown stone out of his pocket.)

ARAD (Sarcastically) So that's a real peep stone! Hold it up so we can all see it.

THOMPSON: Why do you need an old rock?

JOSEPH: To gaze into. The staring takes my focus from the physical world around me, so that the visions come more clear.

(ESAU hands JOSEPH his white felt hat. The stone is dropped in it, and JOSEPH then sticks his face inside the hat. ARAD gives an irritated chuckle.)

I'll need complete silence.

(As he continues to gaze silently into the stone, everyone unconsciously leans toward him... then they catch themselves, quickly sit up straight, embarrassed that they were showing genuine interest in the demonstration.)

Mr. Thompson, you don't believe in my powers, you're against the digging because you was cheated once and you're afear'd

ISAAC: Who hasn't been cheated?

THOMPSON: You needn't look into a rock to know something like that.

(All laugh quietly.)

JOSEPH: It was nigh unto sixteen years ago...Lots of money was involved... I see the man ...bearded, no mustache...wearing a black brimmed hat. He was a Quaker or Mennonite.

THOMPSON: Ah... he was a Mennonite.

JOSEPH (*Without looking up*) No ... a Quaker.

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THOMPSON (Caught) Yes... a Quaker.

JOSEPH: He was a'going to sell you some land.

THOMPSON: Yes, south of here by the Susquahanna.

JOSEPH: You trusted him.

THOMPSON: I had known him five years.

JOSEPH: So you paid him with the money you'd been saving...He gave you a deed.

THOMPSON: Yes! But when I went to confirm the transaction, I found out he never even owned the land. He ran off with my money.

JOSEPH: He needed to pay his creditors.

THOMPSON: A warrant for his arrest was put out, but he was never caught.

ARAD: You actually knew such a man?

JOSIAH: Of course, he did! Didn't Joseph just say so?

THOMPSON: It all happened sixteen years ago just as he said!

JOSIAH: Now do you believe?

THOMPSON: Josiah, you told him this?

JOSIAH: How could I? You never told me.

THOMPSON: I haven't, have I?

(To JOSEPH)

How did you know all of this?

JOSEPH: I only spoke what I seen.

JOSIAH: And that's how we'll find that Spanish silver. Joseph will look in his stone, tell us what he sees and we will dig accordingly.

ARAD: Father, think of the time and money you'll be wasting on this magic child's play.

EMMA: Mr. Stowell, listen to Arad. Certainly you cannot-

ISAAC: Daughter, stay out of this. It's their business.

EMMA: It's your business as well, isn't it, Father?

JOSIAH *(To EMMA)* Of course it is, Emma. Why, your father is a partner in our company. He served as the legal witness for the contract I drew up with these boys.

(Giving a now very sheepish ISAAC a warm pat on the shoulder)

And I won't forget your help in all this, Dear Friend. Whatever silver we uncover, I'll see that you get a share.

(ISAAC is keenly aware that EMMA is staring at him incredulously, but he can't bring himself to look her way. He awkwardly tries to save face.)

ISAAC: Yes...well, we'll see about all that...uh, Old Friend—but I'll still be expecting the full amount I quoted you for lodging the diggers.

JOSIAH (Beaming, cheerfully) Of course, Isaac.

ISAAC (*Trying to sound stern*) At the end of each week, Josiah.

JOSIAH (Happily) Yes, of course, Isaac.

ISAAC: Now...uh...if you'll excuse me.

(He turns to make a quick exit)

JOSIAH (Joyfully, guilelessly) We're going to be rich men, Isaac!

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ISAAC (*barking to ELIZABETH over his shoulder as he exits*) Elizabeth, show these men to their room! **ELIZABETH**: Yes, Isaac. Follow me, Boys.

(The DIGGERS gather up their belongings and follow ELIZABETH off.)

JOSIAH (to ARAD & THOMPSON) Would the two of you stop with your worries? (He leaves the house, happily whistling)

ARAD: Jonathan, are you certain that you never mentioned that incident to Father?

THOMPSON: I'm sure of it. I've always been embarrassed that I had been so gullible.

ARAD: How long have you known Father?

THOMPSON: Twelve years.

ARAD: Think for moment: how could you possibly remember everything you have or have not said to him in the course of all those years? Isn't it possible that you did mention it and he in turn mentioned it to this Smith fellow?

THOMPSON: I suppose you could be right, Arad.

ARAD: Of course, I'm right. Now go along with Father.

(THOMPSON turns to exit then stops.)

THOMPSON: But, Arad, what if I didn't mention that incident to your father? How did that boy know? **ARAD**: There's an explanation!

(THOMPSON exits)

I can see right through that Smith character!

EMMA: You're a seer also?

ARAD: You can find those fortune tellers in every tavern throughout the county.

EMMA: And you probably know, as no doubt you've been to every one of them.

ARAD: Don't be smug, Emma. This is serious. Our fathers could be robbed blind by these frauds.

EMMA: I know my father; he won't be.

(Smiling slyly)

Oh, but I am going to enjoy holding this lbit of foolishness over his head.

ARAD: Listen, Emma, I want you to watch this Smith character very carefully. Let me know what unfolds. I'm going to find out more about him and show everyone the type of fraud he really is.

EMMA: And what kind of a fraud is he, Arad?

ARAD: Just do as I asked, Emma—please!

(ARAD leaves the house. EMMA clears the table and notices that JOSEPH left his stone behind. After making sure that she is alone, she picks it up and studies it. Then she cups it in her hands, closes her eyes, and rolls back her head as if she is going into a trance. JOSEPH enters from behind her but stops short when he sees what she is doing. He almost laughs but controls himself. EMMA opens her eyes and peers down into the stone.)

JOSEPH: See anything?

(EMMA spins around in surprise.)

EMMA: Do you find it amusing, sneaking up on people unsuspected?

JOSEPH: I forgot my stone.

EMMA: And, of course, a seer can't be without his stone.

JOSEPH: Neither can the hunter's daughter, I reckon.

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(He holds out his hand. EMMA gives him the stone and he turns to exit.)

- **EMMA:** I must say you had everyone quite entranced with your little performance Joe. Where in the world did a plow boy master such theatrics? One would suppose you had been stomping about a stage all of your life instead of corn fields. Your performance almost had me convinced that you could see the invisible—almost.
- **JOSEPH**: When do you stop performing, Miss Hale? I'll admit you play a very believable shrew, but a change of character sure would be nice.
- EMMA: How dare you!

JOSEPH: I'm sorry, but I'm also given to speaking my mind. Now, if you'll excuse me, Em.

EMMA: Don't you dare address me in so familiar a fashion! To you I am Miss Hale!

JOSEPH (*Suddenly smiling warmly, sincerely*) Of course. And you can call me Joseph. If you'll excuse me, Miss Hale.

(He exits the house, leaving an astonished EMMA. She returns to preparing the quail as ISAAC enters.)

EMMA: Father, I refuse to be humiliated by that boy!

ISAAC: Humiliated by what boy?

EMMA: That Joe Smith just addressed me in a most familiar fashion!

ISAAC: How familiar?

EMMA: He called me Em!

(ISAAC laughs.)

He looked me straight in the eye and called me "Em" as if he had known me for years; as if I too was accustomed to peeping in stones and digging up people's fields.

- ISAAC (Laughing) Your name's Emma, isn't it? It seems only reasonable that he might call you "Em."
- **EMMA:** (*A with a sarcastic grin*) Father, you can stop that talk right now. If you really believe that old Josiah is actually going to find buried silver with a peep stone, then you've lost the right offer any opinion on what is reasonable and what is not.

ISAAC: I never said I believed in all this peep stone business.

EMMA: Then why are you a party to it?

ISAAC: I have nothing to lose from it. Josiah's paying me to lodge his men, and if by chance he does find silver in those hills, I'll stand to gain from it.

EMMA: If by chance he does?

ISAAC: Yes, Daughter: If by chance.

EMMA: Oh, I see. Well, I certainly feel better now, being completely dependent upon you, knowing that you leave things to <u>chance</u>. And speaking of being dependent, these quail are now cleaned and ready for you to cook.

(She flings a quail into ISAAC'S arms and starts to exit.)

Remember, Father, we're depending on you.

(She defiantly exits into the rest of the house.)

ISAAC: Daughter, you come back here!

(*He throws the bird on the table, runs outdoors to the pump to rinse off his newly bloodied hands, but no water will come out.*)

Emma Hale!

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BLACK OUT

SCENE 2

<u>SETTING</u>: Same as before, one evening several weeks later.

<u>AT RISE</u>: ISAAC sits at the table while EMMA reads a letter aloud. ARAD stands near her, listening. ELIZABETH busily cleans the kitchen while taking in every word.

EMMA: (*Reading*) "... after the treasure's been found, it is best to wait till seven nights after the new moon. On the seventh night cut seven "—I suppose the word is "branches—of hazel. Drive them into the ground in a circle around where the treasure lies. Get a sword. Steel swords is best, but brass ones is even better. Let a man walk round the circle, a-waving the sword first to the left, then to the right, saying every seventh step 'Abra... abra..."

ARAD (Looking at the letter) Ab-ra-ca-da-bra.!"

(Meanwhile outside, as EMMA reads the letter, JOSEPH hurries into the yard from the left. He looks very anxious and depressed. He is alone, but he glances over his shoulder as if to make sure he is not being followed. He trudges toward the steps of the porch, sits there and bows his head as if about to pray. He raises his head when he overhears the letter being read inside. He quickly rises and hurries to the corner of the house, secluding himself there and listening to the conversation inside.)

EMMA: "... Ab-ra-ca-da-bra.' Let no other sound be made. The faculty of Abrac is the key what will bind the Devil or any tricky spirit that guards the treasure. One man here almost dug up a chest of gold bars this way, but he was not faithful in following my instructions and he spake too soon and the tricky Indian spirit what guarded the chest caused it to sink back into the earth. I offer"—that's spelled: O-F-U-R-"—my services to you. I can show you how it is done—Yours, Joseph Smith, Junior."

ARAD *(To Isaac)* That's just one such letter Joe has written to gullible farmers around Palmyra. He's been at this game for years—ever since he was a boy. For over two weeks now he's led diggings every night, and they've found nothing. Oh, once in while a shovel will hit an old root or a rocky patch, and they'll get excited about having found the silver; but when they realize they haven't, Joe spews some nonsense about his being blinded the Devil or some evil spirit.

EMMA: Do you think he actually believes that?

ARAD: Of course not.

ELIZABETH (As she works, loudly enough to be heard) Hmmm...

ARAD: Joe is a perfect charlatan.

ELIZABETH: Hmmm...

ISAAC: Do you want to say something, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH: It's not important. It's just that earlier, I overheard Joe talking to the other two about going to the camp meetings the Methodists are holding this week.

ARAD (With a laugh) Old Joe at a camp meeting? The boy has no since of shame.

ELIZABETH (To herself, as she resumes her work) Hmmm.

ISAAC: What does your father say?

ARAD: He believes every word out of Joe's mouth. Isaac, if you were to throw these diggers out of your house

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maybe then Father would come to his senses and abandon this foolish enterprise.

ISAAC: I don't know, Arad...

- **ARAD:** Come now, Isaac. Peep stones and diving rods are one thing, but devils and guardian spirits and spells are something else altogether. Please: if you are Father's friend, speak to him.
- **ISAAC** *(Rising)* I've never been one to give another man my opinion about his business unless he asks me for it.

ARAD: Isaac, please.

ISAAC: Give me a day or two to think about it.

ARAD: Of course. Thank you, Isaac.

(ISAAC exits the room in deep thought.)

ARAD (To Emma and Elizabeth) He'll come around. He'll say something to Father, I'm sure of it.

EMMA: I don't know. Father has a mind of his own.

(Indicating the letter)

May I keep this a while longer?

ARAD: Whatever for?

EMMA: I think I might confront Joe with it myself.

ARAD: Yes. Most certainly; and let me know how it goes. I'll be interested to hear what excuses he makes for himself. I should get back home before Father become suspicious.

(Hearing this, JOSEPH quickly hides around the corner of the house. ARAD comes to the back door and looks up at the night sky.)

ARAD: A full moon: good. Maybe I won't fall and break my neck in one of the pits they've dug all over the place looking for silver.

(ARAD walks down into the yard and exits. Seeing him leave, JOSEPH slowly comes out of hiding and stays at the corner of the house, listening to the conversation inside. Inside, ELIZABETH watches as EMMA looks over the letter, then folds it, places it in her dress pocket and starts to exit the room.)

ELIZABETH: Emma, I don't think you should confront Joe with that letter.

EMMA: (Stopping, turning to her mother) Why shouldn't I, Mother? He doesn't scare me.

- **ELIZABETH** (Crossing to Emma) Nor should he. I just don't think any good will come of it. Please, leave this entire matter to your father.
- **EMMA:** These boys are here under our roof because we left this entire matter to Father. Why do you never speak your mind to him? Just moments ago you had something to say, but instead you "himmed" and "hawed" until finally he asked you to speak.

ELIZABETH: I know my place, Daughter. For your own well-being I suggest that you learn yours. (ELIZABETH and EMMA exit the kitchen. JOSEPH cautiously emerges from the corner of the house and walks out into the yard. He still looks depressed and is clearly troubled by what he has overheard. Cautiously, he looks around the yard, then toward the house, making sure that no one is around. When certain that he is completely alone, he kneels in the yard and looks up at the night sky—the full moon illuminating his pale face, reflecting in his wide eyes. He prays.)

JOSEPH: Heavenly Father-Lord, please hear me. Please, forgive me...open my eyes-

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(Suddenly off stage left JESSE and ESAU can be heard. They have been drinking.)

JESSE (Off stage) Did ya' see that old lady?

ESAU: (Offstage) "I believe! I believe!"

(JESSE and ESAU burst onto the stage, laughing. ESAU leaps onto the porch steps above) ESAU: Lookee here, boys! I'm that Methodist preacher! "I say ye must repent Turn ye, turn ye to the Lord!" JESSE (Falling on his knees) Oh, Brother, I repent! I am a sinner through and through!

ESAU: Do ya' confess?

JESSE: I confess and I believe!

(ESAU notices that JOSEPH has been trying to ignore them.)

ESAU: And you, Joe Junior, do ya' admit you're on the road to Hell, where the fire never dies-

JESSE: And where the worms eat away your flesh, and it grows back so'n they can eat it away again?

(JOSEPH turns from them.)

Hey, I think he's ignorin' us, Esau!

ESAU: Ah, Joe, don't take it so serious! Why'd you want'a go to a camp meeting anyway?

- **JESSE**: Joe, you can't believe anything those Methodist Riders preach. My grandma's a Presbyterian and she knows the Bible; and she says the Methodists ain't right about anything.
- **ESAU:** It's not that preacher what's got to him, Jesse. He's been tight as a cork in a bottle 'cause we ain't dug up that treasure yet. Well, lookee up in that sky, Joe boy, and what do you see? The moon—a full moon! And tonight that full moon's gonna scare off those spirits and just draw that there Spanish silver right out'a the ground. Now grab your shovel and let's get over to ol' Josiah's place. He's waitin' for us.

(He goes for his shovel that is propped up by the porch.)

- **JOSEPH**: Jesse, that minister picked me out the crowd—tried to make an example of me. He said I'd never be saved until first off I denounced my gifts. Now, how could I do such a thing?
- JESSE: You know his type. Our kind ain't good enough for them and their churches. We ain't Educated—we ain't well-dressed or well-mannered enough for them. Forget it all, Joe.

JOSEPH: They don't see me for who I am.

JESSE: That's right. They're blind.

JOSEPH: They're the ones who are ignorant—ignorant of things spiritual. Don't you reckon?

ESAU: You don't need 'em Joe Junior. You don't need 'em 'cause you can see. You got the gift of seeing.

JOSEPH: You really believe that, Esau?

ESAU: Sure. You're just as convincing as any of those ministers.

JOSEPH: You think we'll find that treasure tonight?

ESAU: Sure, sure. Come on. Josiah's waitin' and tomorrow we get paid.

JOSEPH: You two go on ahead. I'll join you presently.

(ESAU gives a shovel to JESSE and they start off left. ESAU takes a bottle from his back pocket and drinks from it.)

ESAU: We're gonna whup them evil spirits tonight and grab that silver!

(They are gone, leaving JOSEPH alone. He kneels on the ground again, looking up at the moon.) JOSEPH: Heavenly Father, please hear me. Open me...open me up, Lord. We ain't finding that silver. My eyes are all stopped up. I can't see in the earth....Open my eyes, Lord. Open them up and show me why I've been brought here!

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(He looks wide eyed at the moon. He stares at its light without blinking. Inside the kitchen, EMMA has entered from upstage carrying the letter. She looks through the porch door and sees JOSEPH kneeling in the moonlight. Clearing her throat, she steps on to the porch.) EMMA: Joe, I want a word with you....

(EMMA stops short when JOSEPH doesn't respond to her voice, but continues to stare upward as if listening to an unheard voice. His eyes are open, filled with wonder, as if seeing something we cannot. His face has become pale, it almost shines. A shiver runs down EMMA'S back. Slowly she backs into the shadows, placing the letter in her dress pocket. Then she hurries into the kitchen, unnerved by the experience. She takes several books from a shelf and takes them to the table. She sits, opens a book, tries to start reading, but can't. She rises and goes to the fireplace, looking into the flames. Meanwhile outside, JOSEPH nods his head as if in agreement with something that's been said.)

JOSEPH: Amen.

(He rises to his feet, feeling more at peace and confident. He enters the kitchen. When EMMA sees him enter she is startled.)

JOSEPH: Evening.

EMMA: Good evening, Joe.

JOSEPH (Seeing her books on the table) You been reading?

(He picks up the open book and examines it.)

EMMA: I was about to.

JOSEPH (Reading off title page) William Wordsworth...

EMMA: He's an excellent poet now writing in England.

JOSEPH: You know him?

EMMA: (Amazed at his ignorance) Only through his poems.

JOSEPH: My father's fond of poetry. There's one poem he taught me and the boys:

My name is Cap'n Kidd

And most wickedly I did,

The laws of God I did forbid

As I sailed, as I sailed!

EMMA: That isn't poetry.

JOSEPH: It rhymes, don't it?

EMMA: (*Correcting his grammar*) "Doesn't it." It's very bad verse—a prostitution of true poetry.

JOSEPH: I reckon my father didn't know that. He was never one to abide harlots, be they real or written. **EMMA:** Obviously you haven't read much. Now if you will excuse me—

JOSEPH: No, Ma'm, my mother makes sure that my brothers, sisters and me read near every day.

EMMA: The Bible, no doubt.

JOSEPH: I've been through it twice.

EMMA: And so has every dirt poor farmer in these parts who can read. Being able to quote scripture hasn't helped them.

(She opens a book to read. JOSEPH studies her.)

JOSEPH: I knew you was a teacher the first time I saw you.

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EMMA: (Without looking up) Did you look in your peep stone?

JOSEPH: I didn't have to. You have an intelligent way about you.

EMMA: If so, you're the first one around here to take notice.

JOSEPH: And you're not married.

EMMA: And of course, spinsterhood is a prerequisite for teaching! So I help with the children at the school house, hoping that just maybe they'll realize they don't have to settle for pushing a plow the rest of their lives! What are you dedicated to, Joe? Digging for dream mines or simply deceiving people?

JOSEPH: Neither.

EMMA: Neither? Well, you certainly have picked a fine profession.

JOSEPH: I never picked stone peeping and money digging as professions. All of this sort of happened by itself. **EMMA:** And you had no say in the matter?

JOSEPH: I suppose I did as a child. But what boy doesn't dream of such things.

EMMA: What things?

JOSEPH: Buried treasure and magic charms. Over at the school—especially among the boys—ain't you heard talk of Cap'n Kidd and burying dead cats in graveyards to cure warts?

EMMA: I <u>ain't</u>. And if I did, I'd tell them to visit the apothecary shop—not fiddle around with some lousy animal carcass.

JOSEPH: You got the right idea. But the folks I growed up around-

EMMA: (Correcting) "The folks I grew up around . . . "

EMMA: "Other boys and I..."

JOSEPH: When <u>we</u> made up stories of buried treasures and spread rumors that the old woman in the hollow was a conjurer, the grown folks encouraged us. They didn't mean no harm, they was just backwards because they never had no one like you to educate them.

EMMA: Then you admit that you're a fraud?

JOSEPH: I'm no fraud, Ma'am. I can see things-wonderful, beautiful things, and other things not so nice-right in here . . . in my mind, my <u>intellect</u>.., with my <u>spiritual eyes</u>.

EMMA: Then there is no magic?

(JOSEPH searches her face before answering.)

JOSEPH: You want to believe there is, don't you?

EMMA: (Taken aback) I'm sure it matters not to me.

JOSEPH: Miss Hale, I know there's more to this world than what meets the natural eye, and there's a power greater than man's.

EMMA: And you understand this "power"? Aren't your visions ever wrong?

JOSEPH: I make plenty of mistakes. I suppose those are just the inventions of old Joseph Smith's mind or

deceptions from the Devil. At times it's hard to tell one from the other. But the true visions come from God. **EMMA:** From God?

(She wants an explanation, but JOSEPH quickly changes the subject.)

JOSEPH: When I was a boy there was this fellow by the name of Walters—Luman Walters who showed up in Palmyra. Now, he knew how to draw a crowd! We boys would watch him wide eyed while he told people's

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fortunes and did his magic. I remember once he claimed to have found some old manuscript written in some ancient tongue only he could translate. It turned out to be an old book he bought in New York what was printed in Latin. We boys would play games, pretending to tell fortunes like he did. At first we was just guessing, but then folks began noticing that I always seemed to guess right. Soon it weren't a game no more

EMMA: "any more..."

- **JOSEPH**: . . . any more. Folks were listening to me and watching me. Some said they didn't believe a word I said, but if they didn't, then why'd they keep on listening? And I started noticing that whenever I looked at them in a certain way, they'd get real uneasy. I reckon it was then I realized I were different.
- **EMMA:** (*Correcting*) "I *was* different." Well, Joe, merely considering yourself different will not get you very far in this world. Do you ever think about the future?

JOSEPH: All the time.

EMMA: And you'll be content to spend your life digging for fool's gold?

JOSEPH: Course not. I only took this job because my family needs the money.

EMMA: You could elevate the station of both your family and yourself with an education.

JOSEPH: I went to school for a while.

EMMA: Then what are your plans when all this silver mine falderal is over?

JOSEPH: Go back to Palmyra and find work.

EMMA: Doing what? Digging?

JOSEPH: There's farm work.

EMMA: Oh yes, pushing a plow. Now that's quite an improvement over digging!

JOSEPH: I'm an able body! I got talents-

EMMA: "I have talents—"

JOSEPH: <u>I have talents</u>!

EMMA: Of course you do, Joe. And you like to use words such as "ain't"; "was" instead of "were"; "no" instead of "any"... Oh yes, you'll go far indeed!

JOSEPH: Well, if you're so blamed all-knowing, you teach me!

EMMA: Don't think for one moment that I couldn't!

JOSEPH (Suddenly cheerful) All right then! I accept your offer.

EMMA: What?

JOSEPH: You'll be my teacher!

EMMA: But I—

JOSEPH: Of course! You can teach me how to speak proper, how to read that Worth-words fellow and how to tell true poetry from prostitution!

EMMA: But when?

JOSEPH: Evenings, early mornings ... we'll find the time. (*ELIZABETH enters.*) Mrs. Hale, your daughter's offered to help me with my reading and writing!

ELIZABETH: Emma?

EMMA: Yes, I suppose I have.

JOSEPH: Mrs. Hale, your daughter is a very intelligent woman. I think we'd all be better off if we'd listen to her more. Now, if you'll excuse me, I feel like washing up.

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(*He exits upstage into the rest of the house, whistling cheerfully. ELIZABETH looks at EMMA, concerned.*)

EMMA: Is something the matter, Mother?

- ELIZABETH: You're going to teach him?
- **EMMA:** I suppose so. Why shouldn't I?
- ELIZABETH: What about that letter that Arad showed you?
- EMMA: I'll simply teach Joseph how to write better ones in the future.
- ELIZABETH: Perhaps you should discuss this with your father first.
- **EMMA:** What business is it of his?

(EMMA smiles at ELIZABETH, amused by what she sees on her mother's face.)

- Why, Mother, I do believe that you're concerned.
- ELIZABETH: Of course I am. You're my daughter.
- EMMA: You're afraid.
- ELIZABETH: What have I to be afraid of?
- **EMMA:** I don't know.
- **ELIZABETH**: Even though you are an attractive, unmarried woman and the neighbors might talk about you teaching a younger, unmarried man with his background and reputation.
- **EMMA:** To the devil with the neighbors! Who don't they talk about? You're always going on about Christian charity. Admit it, Mother: you're always at your most cheerful when some poor wretched soul comes to you begging for help. Now I shall have a chance to see what it feels like to administer relief to one in need.
- ELIZABETH: Just remember, Daughter, that he is a fraud.
- **EMMA:** Yes, Mother, but he's a genuine fraud.
 - (JOSEPH enters carrying a towel. He crosses through the kitchen whistling cheerfully, goes outside to the pump and reaches for the handle. EMMA goes to the door.)

EMMA: Joe, you'll have to go to the well behind the barn. That pump's been dry as a bone for a month.

JOSEPH: Really? I've been using it since the day I got here.

(He pumps the handle several times and suddenly water begins to pour out.)

There! You see?

(EMMA is amazed. When ELIZABETH hears the water running, she hurries to the door and is also amazed. She looks to EMMA, who returns into the kitchen speechless, gathers her books and exits left. ELIZABETH recovers and follows her. Once they have gone, JOSEPH takes off his shirt and begins to wash his face and neck. JOSIAH enters from left, carrying a bucket.)

JOSIAH: Joseph, what's taking you so long? We've been waiting for you over by the hill. And lookee here: I went over to the Brock's farm this afternoon where they were butchering sheep and got the blood of a pure white lamb. I've heard tell such blood binds the evil spirits that might be guarding the Spanish mine.

(JOSEPH looks into the bucket; then withdraws as if repelled and sticks his head under the pump, wetting his head and scrubbing his face and hair.)

- **JOSIAH**: What's wrong, Joseph? Once you told me yourself that this might work. Now come on. The moon is full and white.
- **JOSEPH**: Mr. Stowell, we don't need that blood.

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JOSIAH: But once you said-**JOSEPH**: I know, but now.... Well, I don't think it'll be near enough powerful in this case. **JOSIAH**: Why? Are these spirits too tricky? **JOSEPH**: Yes, that's it. We're dealing with very tricky spirits. **JOSIAH**: We'll just have to work harder to break them. **JOSEPH**: I don't know if we're that strong and wise. **JOSIAH**: We're certainly now, but you—you have a gift. **JOSEPH** (Under his breath to himself, exasperated) My gift... JOSIAH: Now come on. Essau and Jesse are waiting. (Suddenly JOSEPH gets an idea. Picking up his hat, he takes his stone from his back pocket, *drops it in his hat and looks into it.*) JOSEPH: Mr. Stowell, wait! **JOSIAH**: Yes? **JOSEPH:** Mr. Stowell, a vision is coming... Yes, it's coming. **JOSIAH**: What do you see? The mine? JOSEPH: No . . . **JOSIAH**: Then what? **JOSEPH**: I see a group of weary men coming home after a hard day. **JOSIAH**: Do you recognize them? **JOSEPH**: They're all so old and bent over...like they've been working very hard. Their clothes is just rags, and they have such long faces—like they had a real hard life! (*He gasps*.) **JOSIAH**: Who are they? **JOSEPH**: Could it be me and the boy? **JOSIAH**: Could it? JOSEPH: Yes, it could! It's us, Mr. Stowell! **JOSIAH**: Can you see me? What about me? **JOSEPH**: I ain't seeing you yet. Right now I see us going into a house. Why, it's your house, only it's run down and deserted. **JOSIAH:** My house? **JOSEPH**: There's no furniture! Seems you owed folks money, Mr. Stowell, and when you couldn't pay them, they came and took everything. **JOSIAH**: Why couldn't I pay them? **JOSEPH**: Because you spent all your money digging for silver. Now we're standing by your bed. Is that you a' lying in it? **JOSIAH**: You see me?

JOSEPH: You don't look like yourself. You look so weak and old, and your hair is long and white and a 'scraggly. You're weak, near death, penniless!

JOSIAH: Oh no! What's happening now?

JOSEPH: We tell you that we found no silver. You start to cry. Now, all of a sudden-Oh, no!

JOSIAH: What?

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JOSEPH: It's the spirit—that tricky spirit what guards the treasure. He's appearing over your bed. You shrink back from him. You gasp for breath. He draws near your face. You're calling to us to save you, but we can't see the Spirit! Only you can! "I've got you now, Josiah Stowell!" he's saying. "Now you're mine forever." "Who are you?" you cry. "Look at me well, Josiah!" the Spirit's saying; "For my name is Greed, Avarice!" His cold fingers are circling round your throat. Your eyes open wide. Your breath is leaving you—Oh, I can't go on!

(JOSEPH drops his hat and stone and sinks to the porch steps, shaking. JOSIAH picks up the cap and stone and hands it back to JOSEPH.)

- **JOSIAH:** Oh, Joseph! What am I to do? What?
- **JOSEPH**: If this vision is true—and you know, you yer'self just said I do have a gift—I would call off the digging at once. My mother has always been fond of the Bible verse what reads, "The love of money is the root of all evil."

JOSIAH: But I'm not greedy, am I? (Suddenly JOSEPH begins trembling.) What is it?

JOSEPH: I was just think of how your face looked when that spirit grabbed your throat. Maybe Arad and Emma Hale are right. Maybe it is hopeless—digging for this silver when spirits such as that one are guarding it.

JOSIAH: You're right, my boy. I shall call off the digging at once! Oh, Joseph how can I repay you for this? **JOSEPH**: I didn't do nothing. Really: I didn't do nothing. This is <u>your</u> decision.

JOSIAH: And you think it's a wise one?

JOSEPH: I do indeed, Sir.

JOSIAH: I do, too. But I feel I should do something in return for you warning.

JOSEPH: Well, I am out of a job now, unless you'd let me stay on at your place and help work your farm for you in exchange for my room and board. I can do regular farm work, Mr. Stowell—

JOSIAH: Not another word! Of course you can stay.

JOSEPH: Now, I don't want to interfere.

JOSIAH: I insist!

JOSEPH: Well, if you do insist; but what about Jesse and Esau?

- **JOSIAH**: They're digging for the mine right now over in my cow pasture. I'll tell them their services are no longer needed.
- **JOSEPH**: But maybe I should talk to them.

JOSIAH: No. I hired them. I should dismiss them.

JOSEPH (Embracing JOSIAH) Thank you Mr. Stowell!

JOSIAH: For what?

JOSEPH: For believing in me.

(JOSEPH pulls away and looks up at the moon.)

JOSIAH: You're welcome, Joseph.

JOSEPH: Miss Emma Hale said she'd help me with my reading and writing.

JOSIAH: Emma is a smart girl, I hear.

JOSEPH: Maybe she believes in me, too.

JOSIAH: What?

JOSEPH: Oh, nothing...nothing. (He looks off left toward the countryside) Mr. Stowell, those tricky, tricky

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spirits are flying away. You broke the spell and set us free.

JOSIAH: I did? How?

JOSEPH: By your decision just now.

JOSIAH: I did it that easily?

JOSEPH: Uh-huh. Maybe they'll leave us alone for good this time.

(He starts off left.)

JOSIAH: Are you going to say good-bye to Esau and Jesse?

JOSEPH: No. The moon is full, the sky is clear and all the stars are out. It's a night for running through open fields and dancing in the light.

JOSIAH: What?

JOSEPH: Now that those wicked spirits have fled, all the good spirits—the spirits of the righteous—are rejoicing. Don't you see them out in those fields dancing and leaping for joy?

JOSIAH: No.

JOSEPH: They're all here. Even an angel or two has joined them...dancing in the moon's light and kicking the dew off the grasses.

JOSIAH: I can't see a thing.

JOSEPH: Oh, I can. And tonight I'm going to join them.

(He hurries off left into the night.)

JOSIAH: Good night, Joseph, my boy-and thank you!

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REVIEWS:

"Digger: Art as Religious History"

By Scott Dunn

"Sunstone Review" March 1983

...Mormons have seen and heard much debate over the writing of their history. There have been border disputes over the fine line between certain religious assertions and historical observations, and "the fertile middle ground" identified by Martin Hill has suddenly become something of a battlefield, exalted by some and excoriated by others.

In the midst of this "war of words and tumult of opinions," has come a new synthesis of Mormonism's colorful history and spiritual ideals that is—surprisingly—neither history nor apology, but art. In "Digger," a new play by BYU student Robert Frederick Lauer, we have an impressive attempt to do what neither objective history nor devout apologia can—recreate experiences that are deepest in the Mormon psyche and significant to Mormon historians.

"Digger," which won second place in the drama division of the 1982 Vera Hinckley Mayhew Contest, was recently performed as a graduate production in BYU's Nelke Experimental Theatre. The play is based on early historical accounts of Mormonism, notably the 1826 Bainbridge trial, in which Joseph Smith was convicted of being a "glass-looker" and the 1832 account of the first vision.

"Digger" focuses on Joseph Smith's courtship of Emma Hale during the time he was employed as a "money digger"...

....If this doesn't sound like the kind of Joseph Smith you heard about in Sunday school, don't be too quick to judge. For while Lauer's play definitely shows the human side of Joseph Smith, it also portrays the divine: the recital by Joseph of his first vision is one of the most moving and convincing moments of the play. Lauer's ability to synthesize the prophetic and human qualities into a consistent, believable character is, for me, one of the play's greatest strengths.

Yet the real protagonist in the play is Emma, who develops from hardened skepticism to enlightened discipleship. Emma's transformation is portrayed not as mere devotion to the young prophet, but to the ideals that his view of life provides. It is through Emma that Mormons—whether converts or "lifers"—re-experience their conversions and contemplate the sacrifice it has required.

Historians may quibble over details, asserting for example, that it was probably a silver mine and not golden treasure that Josiah Stowell sought. But the references to gold in the play serve purposes more important than historical accuracy, both as a symbol of the quest for something precious and as an illusion to the yet-to-be-discovered gold plates: "God...has chosen me to do his work," Joseph tells Emma's father, Isaac, "maybe because I believed there was buried something golden, just waiting for someone to wake up and claim it."

Lauer said the play was intended to be neither pro-Mormon nor anti-Mormon. Nevertheless, for me at least, the play succeeds in conveying a deep spirituality. The dry pump bursting forth with fresh water and the seer stone effectively symbolize the divine power transmitted through Joseph Smith to refresh a parched world...

The play is a milestone in Mormon drama...Through "Digger," Lauer has given us what objective retellings and sincere apologetics never can: the re-experiencing of religion's hardest questions and life's crucial turning points. But then, that has always been what art does best.