

PERUSAL SCRIPT

LETTER FROM A PROPHET

A play in three acts by
Eric Samuelsen and Charles Metten



Newport, Maine

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LETTER FROM A PROPHET

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Cast of Characters -- 12 Men, 4 Women, 1 Girl, 1 Boy, Extras

Carrie Jane O'Riley Bowan Butler — 42, Carrie is a short, thin, red-haired woman, 39 years old. She has fantastic energy, but the weight of her energy and her life have worn her down. She is from English-Irish lower-class stock, and resents it, and shows that resentment by refusing to quit fighting, however hopelessly, for a future greatness, if not for her, then for her 2 children. She's a formidable, untrained, self-taught intellectual, and is therefore not liked by other women, who consider her to be "putting on airs." As a housewife, she's good. Her pride forces her to attack housework (which she despises) with an almost comical ferocity.

William Butler — 38, her husband and keeper of the jail at Liberty, Missouri. William Butler is a big, powerful, earthy man. He's exceptionally hard working, and profoundly unambitioned. He's a farmer in addition to Jailor, loves both jobs, and cannot understand how anyone wouldn't, especially a woman to whom he has given all the luxuries that he can, comprehend.

John Ira Bowan — 17, Carrie's son by a previous marriage. He's a wiry, nimble lad, outspoken, often obnoxious, sometimes charming and sometimes spoiled. Carrie dotes on him, and would deny doting on him if accused of it.

Mary Butler — 8, the only child of Carrie and William. Mary is an utter tomboy, who has had occasional flashes of femininity forced on her by her mother.

Colonel Franklin W. Davis — 58, an officer of the U.S. Army. Davis is fifty. He's small, thin, sickly, and ramrod straight. An ascetic, brilliant, articulate man. He has an ulcerated stomach, a lisp, and a smallpox-marred face. A first-rate intellectual, and a religious fanatic. He's also very courtly and refined.

Sheriff Bertram Hadley — 36, Clay County, Missouri Sheriff, a red-faced, stupid, honest, good 'ol boy

Slim — A guard, in his 20's

Harvey — A guard, in his 30's

Joseph Smith, Jr. — The Mormon Prophet

Hyrum Smith — his brother, non-speaking

Emma Smith — his wife

Joseph Smith III — a boy, age 6

Alexander McRae — a prisoner in the jail

Amelia McRae — his wife

Sidney Rigdon — a prisoner, old and sick, non-speaking

Caleb Baldwin — a prisoner, non-speaking

Lyman Wight — a prisoner

Rebecca Wells — John Bowan's girlfriend, 16 years old

Dr. Horner — in his 60's, non-speaking

Several extra guards

TIME: November 1838.

PLACE: Liberty, Missouri.

SETTING: The county jail, in Clay County. Stage Right is the jail. Stage Left is the home of William and Carrie Jane Bowan Butler, the jailor's family.

NOTE: This play is a dramatization of what could have happened to one family in Liberty, Clay County, Missouri, in 1838-1839. Except for the six men in the Liberty Jail and Emma Smith and her son, all other characters are fictionalized.

LETTER FROM A PROPHET a play in three acts by Eric Samuelsen and Charles Metten 12 Men, 4 Women, 1 Girl, 1 Boy, Extras. Period Setting of 2 Exteriors. 1830s Costumes. These are not the letters that Joseph wrote to Emma, or the Twelve, or to officials in order to re-dress his wrongs. This letter, from a Prophet of God (Joseph Smith), written during his incarceration in Liberty Jail, shortly after the revelation that became Section 121, 122, & 123 of the Doctrine and Covenants, focuses on the family of the Jailor and their involvement with those that were wrongly incarcerated. Carrie Jane Bowen Butler, and her son, John Ira, fled the early Church because of the death of the husband/father, Ira Bowen. They felt it was Joseph's fault. Carrie comes to find out that Joseph tried to save Ira, not stand by idly while he died. This makes little difference to Carrie. She has lived too long with the bitter pill. She has married William Butler. They have a child Mary Butler. Now, Joseph comes to her husband's jail with five other Mormon men. This is her story, and the story of her son, John, as they re-connect with their faith, until tragedy happens again. **ORDER #2098**

Eric Samuelsen taught at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio before joining the faculty at Brigham Young University in 1992. He became head of the Playwriting program at BYU in 1999. He has also taught as an adjunct faculty member in the Religion department. He retired from BYU in 2012.

As a playwright, Samuelsen has had twenty-seven plays professionally produced in Utah, Indiana, Louisiana, New York, and California. Some of his plays include *Gadianton*, which has seen three professional productions across the country, *A Love Affair with Electrons*, *Family*, *The Plan*, and *The Way We're Wired*. He is resident playwright at Plan-B Theatre Company in Salt Lake City, who designated their 2013-14 season a 'Season of Eric', including productions of six of his plays.

He is a member of the Playwrights' Circle, and the Dramatists Guild. He is three-time winner of the Annual Award in Playwriting offered by the Association for Mormon Letters (AML) and he became president of AML in 2007. In 2013 the organization awarded him the Smith Pettit Award for his lifetime work as a playwright.

He has been a staff writer for the on-line satirical magazine *The Sugarbeet*. He was also featured in the book *Conversations with Mormon Authors*, edited by Chris Bigelow. He is a noted Ibsen translator, and has also published scholarly articles on 19th and 20th century Scandinavian Theatre, and more recently, on LDS drama and film. He blogged at *Mormoniconoclast.com*. Eric died in September of 2019 after a long battle with polymyositis. This has left a huge hole in the Theatre Community within, and outside of, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Charles Metten was born in Fort Bragg, California, on September 7, 1927. He earned both a bachelor's and master's degree in Theater Arts from UCLA and went on to earn doctorate in Speech and Dramatic Arts at the University of Iowa. During his 35 years as a BYU faculty member, Metten served the university in many capacities. He became the associate director of the Honors Program in 1970 and later served as the TMA department chair for five years, beginning in 1974. Metten is also known for developing some of the first film courses at the university with the strong support of Dallin H. Oaks, who was the president of BYU at the time. Two years after retiring from BYU in 1996, Metten became the founding dean of Southern Utah University's College of Performing and Visual Arts in Cedar City. Metten was also heavily involved in the Tony Award-winning Utah Shakespeare Festival as a director, actor and administrator. Metten began his involvement with the Festival in 1966 when he directed *Julius Caesar*. He has since appeared as an actor at the Festival numerous times. In 2005, he began work at the Festival as the director of the Plays-in-Progress Program, nurturing new playwrights and their work through a program that has since evolved into what is now known as Words Cubed. He retired from SUU in 2004, but continued his work with the Festival. Metten retired from the Festival in 2017. He passed away on September 27 at the age of 91.

Act One

SCENE: *It's early evening. Inside her home, CARRIE is busy cooking supper. Enter MARY.*

MARY: *(carrying a bouquet of rather wilted looking Indian Corn)* Ma, do we have....

CARRIE: There you are, young lady. I thought I'd have to set the table without you.

MARY: Look!

CARRIE: How nice! You've brought in flowers. Johnny will appreciate them, I'm sure. Now dear, quickly, set the table.

MARY: It's not flowers, Ma, it's corn. Do we have a vase?

CARRIE: *(impatiently)* We haven't dear, sorry. Get the plates, won't you, there on the sideboard.

MARY: A glass, then? I want to put 'em right in front of Johnnie's plate.

CARRIE: Set the table first, dear, and we'll see if there's room.

MARY: The corn'll die if we don't put it in water.

CARRIE: It's dead already, you're plucking it, killed it.

MARY: Momma!

CARRIE: *(hands her a glass)* All right then, put them in this. And then, be quick about setting that table, supper's nearly ready.

(Crosses to door)

William! John Ira! Wash up, supper's ready!

(To Mary)

No, no! The good silverware, it's Johnnie's birthday.

MARY: What are we having?

CARRIE: A chicken, if I haven't burnt it. Don't forget the cups.

MARY: *(sly)* That's sure a nice carving knife Pa got for Johnnie.

CARRIE: It's expensive enough, at any rate.

MARY: I guess with the new one, Johnny won't be needing his old knife any....

CARRIE: Hush, dear, he's coming!

(Enter JOHN.)

Happy birthday, dear.

JOHN: Thanks.

CARRIE: Where's William?

JOHN: He said held be a little late.

CARRIE: Supper will be ruined! You look tired, dear.

JOHN: Didn't think we'd ever get that stable cleaned."

CARRIE: The stable? Let me see Your hands! You call these clean?

JOHN: Was the best I could do, in cold well water, Ma!

CARRIE: Well, wash up in the basin.

(To door)

William, come this instant, or you'll do without!

MARY: Look what I gotcha, Johnny.

JOHN: *(looking at the corn)* What? Oh, Indian Corn. Yeah, they're nice.

MARY: I picked 'em for you.

JOHN: In November? Where'd you find them?

MARY: I picked 'em for you. We'll put them in water, save 'em.

JOHN: Well, I like 'em, Mary.

(Enter BUTLER)

CARRIE: There you are, William. If supper is spoiled, it's your fault.

BUTLER: I'm sorry, Carrie Jane, but it don't look like I'm gonna get to eat.

CARRIE: William, it's John's birthday.

BUTLER: I know that, Carrie. Just got some visitors, that's all. Happy Birthday, John.

(Starts to leave to meet DAVIS outside)

CARRIE: Where are you going?

BUTLER: Out to the jail.

CARRIE: Now?

DAVIS: *(from outside)* Perhaps I could try to explain.

BUTLER: Shoot, You're sure welcome to try, Colonel. Come on in.

DAVIS: *(enters.)* Thank you.

CARRIE: Well, who are you?

DAVIS: Madame, my apologies. I'm Colonel Franklin W. Davis, United States Army.

CARRIE: *(charmed)* Well. This is a private family gathering. Are you certain that this business can't wait.

DAVIS: I'm afraid not. We're expecting a large contingent of prisoners momentarily, and your husband informs me that he knows nothing about it.

BUTLER: It won't take ten minutes, Carrie, but the jail just ain't ready.

JOHN: Do you want some help?

BUTLER: No, no John, course not. It's your birthday. You just stay put.

CARRIE: Well, we'll have to start supper without you, then. Mary, could you get the biscuits?

MARY: Yes, mamma.

BUTLER: (*awkward*) Be right back.

(*He exits with DAVIS*)

CARRIE: That jailhouse again! I've told him a thousand times to get rid of it, but he never listens.

JOHN: It's not that much trouble.

CARRIE: He could turn it into a smokehouse, and let this town build itself a decent jailhouse. Well, we won't discuss it now. John Ira, would you say grace, please?

JOHN: Dear God. We come before you now, thankful for everything we have. Especially the food, that we always have enough to eat, and also for our house. We're thankful for the weather, it bein' so mild this late in the season, and we pray that the winter won't be too severe. Especially with our friends, the Wells', having to travel so far. Be with all those who hunger. Be with our new prisoners. Let them repent and lead better lives. Otherwise let them forgive their oppressors, Father, and trust in your judgement. Thank you God. Amen.

CARRIE: (*short pause*) Amen. Mary, take some vegetables.

MARY: Yes'm.

CARRIE: John, would you carve the chicken?

MARY: I want the leg!

JOHN: And I get the other one.

CARRIE: Be sure and save some for William.

JOHN: We will.

(*They eat for a moment*)

CARRIE: John. That was a peculiar grace.

JOHN: How so, Mama?

CARRIE: Nothing. It just struck me as odd. That's all.

JOHN: Ain't it up to the courts to decide if prisoners are guilty or not?

CARRIE: It sounded almost as though you had some ideas who these new prisoners might be.

JOHN: How would I find out a thing like that?

CARRIE: Well. We'll know soon enough.

JOHN: Yes'm.

CARRIE: You were, of course, quite right to pray for the Wells family. A Christian has charity even for his enemies.

JOHN: (*pause*) Are you startin' on that again, Mama?

CARRIE: I'm not starting in on anything, John. Eat your vegetables.

JOHN: (*angrily*) You always told me: "John, I want you to cultivate your own friends, your own opinions, I want you to be independent. Your father raised you to be someone, someone important, to think for yourself," and that was how you were raising me.

CARRIE: (*quietly*) Yes, I've always done that, John. I've always respected your privacy.

JOHN: Sam and Becky Wells are my friends. They're still my friends, even with all the troubles.

CARRIE: I think they're mighty dangerous friends to have in the state of Missouri.

JOHN: I never asked you to like 'em, Mama. I don't need you to pick my friends for me.

CARRIE: All that I'm saying is you must be careful if you're going to be someone in this world. I don't want you making the same mistake your father did. He'd be alive today, an important, influential man, if he hadn't decided that loyalty to certain false friends was more important than his own career.

JOHN: What's wrong with loyalty?

CARRIE: Nothing, unless it's misplaced. It's when that loyalty is not received that you should be careful.

JOHN: Ma, the Wells' aren't like that, Look, every night, Sam Wells taught me how to carve. Everything I know is thanks to Sam. If anything, I'm using his.

CARRIE: I wasn't talking about Sam. You weren't sneaking off after chores every night to visit Sam.

JOHN: How do you know? Sam's as much my friend as Becky is.

CARRIE: There weren't many nights I saw you carrying home carving.

JOHN: All right. I like Becky. Still do, a lot. What's wrong with that?

CARRIE: It's obvious, isn't it?

JOHN: (*excited*) We never did nothin' wrong, Mama! All we'd do is just sit and talk, that's all.

CARRIE: Anything. I believe you, John.

MARY: Can I have a biscuit?

JOHN: Here. There's no point talking about it, anymore. The Wells' are gone.

CARRIE: And good riddance, too!

JOHN: Ma, you don't know nothin' about it. You let Amanda Gilson talk you into thinking the Mormons are all just Danites and murderers. You didn't know the Wells' like I did.

CARRIE: John, I didn't need Amanda Gilson to tell me that Becky Wells didn't care one whit for you. Mormon girls are taught from childhood to do one thing, to use their female ways to get converts for that church of theirs.

JOHN: That's not true.

CARRIE: I've seen it happen.

JOHN: Not with Becky. Maybe other Mormon girls, but not her.

CARRIE: I'm not stupid, John.

JOHN: You don't know her!

CARRIE: I know her type.

JOHN: Her type! I haven't yet met a Mormon that fits Your type.

CARRIE: (*quietly*) John. You've been talking to their missionaries, haven't you?

JOHN: I've done some thinkin' of my own.

CARRIE: And what does that mean?

JOHN: It means I've met some of their people, and I've liked the ones I've met.

CARRIE: (*probing*) John, how much do you know of what the Mormons teach?

JOHN: Some.

CARRIE: Have you read their Bible?

JOHN: The Book of Mormon ain't a Bible, Ma, it's....

CARRIE: So, you've read it, then?

JOHN: Parts of it. Becky showed me....

CARRIE: (*firmly*) John. Whatever Mormon literature you have, destroy it! No, now don't interrupt. Hear me out! You're not going to write Becky Wells, or any other Mormon. Tomorrow morning, you go over to Reverend Gilson's, and listen carefully as he explains to you the errors of their prophet, Joe Smith. Is that understood?

JOHN: (*glaring at her*) Yes, ma'am. It's understood.

CARRIE: Good.

JOHN: I understand what you're saying. I just won't do it. Any of it.

CARRIE: You're defying me?

JOHN: That's how I was raised. That's how you taught me, Mama.

CARRIE: (*hurt and holding back tears*) Well it's your birthday, son, and to quarrel....

JOHN: I'm sorry, Ma.

CARRIE: Eat your vegetables.

JOHN: (*after a long silence*) I just gotta explain, that's all. My Papa....

CARRIE: Must we talk about it now?

JOHN: Ma, listen to me. All my life, I've heard about Ira Bowan. My Pa. How he was such a prominent man, a lawyer, headin' into politics before he met old Joe Smith. How he testified in court for Smith, and was arrested for perjury, and died in jail of the consumption, without Smith so much as lifting a finger to help him. Then the Wells move in, and I meet them, and they're Mormons. They're regular folks, just like us. You tell me now that they're the same kind of people that killed my Pa. I can't seem to make any sense out of it.

CARRIE: Good people can be fooled, John.

JOHN: I'm just not so sure, Mama.

CARRIE: Alright, John, if you insist then, fetch me the Bible. Mary, you haven't touched your beans!

MARY: I been watching you two.

CARRIE: Shame on you. Bat your beans.

JOHN: *(with Bible)* Here it is.

CARRIE: *(looking in the Bible)* I'm no scholar, but I do know a few verses. It's in Revelations, I think.

Amanda Gilson showed me the other day. It destroys the entire Mormon view.

(Hands Bible to John)

JOHN: *(reading to himself then aloud)* "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plague ..." I think I see what you mean, Mama.

CARRIE: If you won't talk to Rev. Gilson, you can at least talk to me. Fair?

JOHN: I'll talk to you, Ma. But only if we can disagree, like on everything else.

CARRIE: Done.

(She smiles)

John Ira, you remind me more of your father every day.

JOHN: I'm not sure if that's good or not.

CARRIE: It's good, John. It couldn't be better.

MARY: What about me? Am I like my Pa?

CARRIE: Well, dear, your father wants a bit more pushing than Ira did. Of course, if I could ever get him away from this farm, and jailhouse, I could probably make something of him, as well. But Ira! Ira pushed me. My father would have loved him.

JOHN: Really?

CARRIE: I'm sure of it. Your grandfather always wanted to be more than a shopkeeper. That's why÷ he came to America in the first place, so he or his children could be someone. And Ira, he was well on the way. He had a real gift for politics, speaking, that sort of thing. Everyone liked him.

(Notices MARY)

Not that your father isn't a fine man as well, Mary. He's a respected man, in his own way. Politics isn't everything. Gracious, John, you haven't touched your supper.

JOHN: Ma, you do understand....

(pause)

CARRIE: What, John?

JOHN: You do understand that I'm going to write Becky Wells.

CARRIE: As you pointed out, John.... I've raised you to do whatever you think is right.

BUTLER: *(enters)* Carrie....

CARRIE: Sit down, William, your supper's cold.

BUTLER: Listen, Carrie, Colonel Davis says he ain't had no food all day.

CARRIE: William, it's John's birthday.

BUTLER: Looks to me like we got plenty to eat here.

CARRIE: Well, invite him in then.

BUTLER: He'll be a few minutes yet.

(To Mary)

How's my little punkin face?

MARY: Pa, guess what happened in school today?

CARRIE: What's he doing?

BUTLER: He's lookin' for a place to put the guards.

CARRIE: Guards?

MARY: Pa?

BUTLER: We'll have to put 'em in the barn.

MARY: Poppa!

BUTLER: Tell me what happened in school today, punkin'.

MARY: I whipped Josh Gilson at mumblety-peg.

BUTLER: Good for you, sweetheart!

CARRIE: What's mumblety-peg?

MARY: Oh ... just a game.

BUTLER: Used to play it myself.

CARRIE: Not that horrible game where you throw knives around?

BUTLER: With those old Barlow knives, it ain't a bit dangerous.

CARRIE: Where did you get a knife, young lady?

MARY: Won it.

CARRIE: Let me see.

BUTLER: Carrie, there ain't no....

CARRIE: Let me see the knife.

MARY: *(handing it over)* Here it is.

JOHN: Hey, that's no Barlow knife! That's my good carving knife!

MARY: Well, you didn't need it.

JOHN: Didn't need it! That's a good carving knife! I've been looking all over for it!

MARY: You didn't need it!

JOHN: Give it here!

(Tries to wrestle it away)

BUTLER: *(steps in)* Now stop! Right now!

(They subside)

A knife is no toy.

JOHN: But she stole it!

MARY: I only took it because you're getting a new one for your birthday and Poppa said I could have that one! Uh-oh!

JOHN: What?

BUTLER: Uh, I guess this is as good a time as any.

(Reaching in pocket for the new knife, and handing it to JOHN)

Happy Birthday.

JOHN: *(stunned and moved by his step-father's gift)* William, I ... where did you get it?

(Holding a beautiful knife)

BUTLER: Ordered it. Come all the way from Boston.

JOHN: Ten-inch blade.

BUTLER: Best steel they make, too. Really hold an edge. I reckon I don't have to tell you how careful you gotta be.

JOHN: It's beautiful, William! Thank you.

CARRIE: I saw it in a catalogue and showed it to William. I'm glad you like it, son. Meanwhile, young lady, I've been needing a good sewing knife.

(Taking knife from Mary)

MARY: Ma!

BUTLER: Let her have it, Carrie Jane.

CARRIE: It's dangerous.

BUTLER: Not if you use it proper. I'll learn her.

CARRIE: You'll teach her.

BUTLER: Teach her. Come on, Carrie Jane.

CARRIE: *(gives knife to Mary)* I'll get you your supper.

BUTLER: Tell me about the mumblety-peg, Mary.

MARY: I beat him four straight, Pa. I got him on elbows. Then on hips. Then on elbows again. And the last time, knees.

BUTLER: You ever try noses?

MARY: You mean, flipping it off your nose?

BUTLER: Sure.

MARY: Let me try.

(Balances knife on nose)

BUTLER: Careful.

(CARRIE, busy at the stove, sees it and screams. MARY, startled, drops the knife. Suddenly grabs at face)

MARY: Oh it hurts, it hurts!

(CARRIE rushes up to her, as does BUTLER)

CARRIE: It's her eye!

BUTLER: *(holding her, calming her)* Just calm down honey. Calm down, that's it.

CARRIE: How could you be so careless.

BUTLER: She'd have been all right, if you hadn't scared her. Honey just calm down.

(Gradually the child calms)

Just pull your hand away, that's a good girl.

(Pause)

It ain't her eye.

CARRIE: It's not?

BUTLER: She got a little cut up here. She'll be all right. Mostly just scared.

CARRIE: Oh thank heaven for that!

(Knock on the door)

Get that, John.

(He does)

JOHN: Colonel Davis. Excuse us, we just had a little accident.

DAVIS: *(starts to go)* I can see that I'm intruding.

BUTLER: Come on in, Colonel. It's nothing.

CARRIE: William was teaching her some knife trick, and she cut herself.

BUTLER: She was fine till you startled her.

DAVIS: I'll wait outside.

BUTLER: Colonel, sit down and eat. Carrie Jane, serve the Colonel some chicken.

(Carries MARY off into the other room.)

CARRIE: *(short pause)* Please Colonel. Do sit down.

DAVIS: I don't mean to intrude.

CARRIE: It's no intrusion. I should be the one apologizing.

DAVIS: In any case, I can't stay long. The prisoners should be arriving shortly.

JOHN: How many prisoners are you expecting?

DAVIS: Six.

JOHN: Six! Excuse me Colonel, but have you seen the jailhouse?

DAVIS: I've just come from; there.

CARRIE: And you expect to fit six grown men inside that tiny cellar?

DAVIS: That is the intention.

CARRIE: Colonel Davis!!!

DAVIS: Ma'am?

CARRIE: That sort of overcrowding is bound to increase the prisoners I chances of escaping, is it not?

DAVIS: Now so?

CARRIE: Well, you'll have to put three upstairs and three down in the cellar. It will be practically impossible to feed them all.

DAVIS: That will be no problem. We're putting all of them in the cellar.

JOHN: When you were inspecting just now, maybe you couldn't see so good. There isn't room for six people. We only built the thing for....

BUTLER: *(he enters)* We've already worked it out, John.

CARRIE: How's Mary, William?

BUTLER: She'll be fine. She's lying down.

CARRIE: I'll fetch her some water.

JOHN: There's no way you can work that out, William. There isn't room for six men down there.

BUTLER: Colonel, you told 'em; yet who the prisoners are?

DAVIS: Go ahead.

BUTLER: It's Joe Smith, his brother, and four of them Mormon leaders, from Richmond.

(CARRIE, on her way out, stops. Pause)

DAVIS: So you see, it really doesn't matter if they fit comfortably or not.

JOHN: I thought the trial was in Richmond.

DAVIS: The hearing, yes. He was remanded here to stand trial.

CARRIE: *(frozen)* How long will he be here?

DAVIS: It may be quite some....

CARRIE: How long?

DAVIS: My instructions read, "Until such a time that a fair and impartial jury can be convened."

BUTLER: In this county, stirred up as it is, that'll be awhile.

CARRIE: Approximately, then, how long?

DAVIS: I don't mean to be rude, but why do you need to know? Their care will be of no concern to you. My men will feed the prisoners.

CARRIE: Colonel Davis, I ... we moved to Missouri nine years ago, largely because we wanted to be as far away from the Mormons as possible. When they themselves moved their church to this state, I wanted to leave again, but

(Glancing at BUTLER)

my husband's business made that impossible. That being the case, I've done my best to avoid them while out here. Now they've gone, and praise God for that. Praise God, too, that Smith is finally going to trial for his crimes. But I'm sure you can't blame me for wishing it could be somewhere else.

DAVIS: I think I understand, Ma'am. My sympathies.

CARRIE: Even from a jail cell, Joseph Smith is capable of much damage. So, I ask again. How long?

DAVIS: Spring. If not later.

JOHN: Colonel, do you expect to keep them in that basement until spring?

DAVIS: Yes.

JOHN: They'll never survive to stand trial. There's no air, no light, no toilet.

DAVIS: There's light enough. Air enough.

BUTLER: John, we decided.

JOHN: To keep them in that hole till spring? They'll never make it!

DAVIS: We're aware of that possibility. It's not a matter of great concern to us.

MARY: *(offstage)* Mamma!

CARRIE: Be there in a second, honey.

JOHN: You're just going to let them ... die?

DAVIS: Those are my instructions, yes!

JOHN: It's not You just can't do that.

DAVIS: Let me explain, if I can.

JOHN: There's nothin' to explain. You're goin' to kill off those prisoners!

DAVIS: *(trying to be courteous)* No, not like that. Please listen.

JOHN: What?

DAVIS: I don't like it any better than you do, young man. At first, I was going to refuse, to tell someone, to stop it. I kept thinking of "Love thy enemies." And I prayed for guidance.

JOHN: Were your prayers answered?

DAVIS: I've been a good soldier all my life. Never once have I disobeyed an order, not once, but believe me, I would have disobeyed this one. God's law is higher than man's. So I was praying, and a voice told me to open my Bible. And I did ... Joshua, 7th chapter. Do you know it?

JOHN: No sir.

DAVIS: It's where the children of Israel destroy the city of Jericho. Their orders are to destroy everything in the city, and they do it. All except for a man named Achan. Achan saw all the gold and silver of Jericho and decided to go into business on his own. Joshua catches him at it, and do you know what Joshua tells the people to do?

JOHN: No, what?

DAVIS: They took Achan, and his wife and his family, and everything he owned, and they stoned him to death, and burned the remains and all the treasure. That's what they were told to do. And I thought to myself, I can be a little less ruthless than God requires, like Achan was. And I'll likely get the same reward. Or I can be like Joshua. I can obey orders.

MARY: Mamma!

CARRIE: Coming.

(She exits)

JOHN: But, with this Achan fellow, they caught him at it, right? There was no doubt?

DAVIS: Yes.

JOHN: But how do you know that Smith is guilty? He's awaiting trial, isn't he?

BUTLER: Or, if you gotta kill 'em, why not just string 'em up the nearest tree? I don't much hold with this plan of yours, either.

DAVIS: Yes, we could wait until the trial and execute them legally. We could have a lynching mob.

(Enter CARRIE with MARY)

But the point is not to kill "old Joe Smith." It's this whole Mormon sect. Joe Smith is not the only leader they have, and if we made him a martyr, the other leaders, who aren't stupid, would be able to use his death as an excuse to excite the movement until it's out of control. Besides that, there are a lot of decent, respectable Mormon people that are ... wavering in their belief. A martyrdom is all the excuse they need to get stubborn. This way, they still are capable of being saved. They'll simply drift away, like John Whitmer did.

BUTLER: Like ol' Ike Wells.

DAVIS: Exactly. People like that need to be kept excited, stirred up, so they don't have time to think the doctrines over carefully. If Joe Smith dies very quietly, over a long period of time, the whole movement will simply wither away.

JOHN: Are they really that bad?

DAVIS: I'm afraid so. The doctrines they preach publicly are bad enough. Their secret, private teachings are even worse.

CARRIE: How' do you know?

DAVIS: Our sources are impeccable, disaffected Mormons, including two of the witnesses to their "Golden Bible." They preach that a man can have more than one wife, like the Mohammedans. They believe that they'll become Gods when they die, while the rest of us will have to be content with being "just angels." But their dangerous teachings are their political views. They believe in, as they put it, "spilling the blood

of apostates.” Worse than that, they believe in taking over, by force if necessary, the government of the United States.

CARRIE: That’s absurd.

DAVIS: No, quite true. They even have a replacement government set up. They call it the council of fifty. It will rule until Jesus returns.

JOHN: I never heard anything like that from ... Mormons I know....

DAVIS: Ask Smith himself. He’ll be here shortly.

JOHN: But Becky...

(Stops in confusion)

DAVIS: A Mormon girlfriend of yours, perhaps? Pray for her, young man.

CARRIE: Do you have evidence for all this?

DAVIS: Oh yes, naturally. The Richmond trial was very interesting. Judge King, at one point asked Smith directly about his political ambitions.

BUTLER: Like what?

DAVIS: Do you know the prophecy in Daniel, about the stone that will fill the whole earth? Well, Smith said right out that it applied to the Mormons and to no one else.

BUTLER: Well ... mebbe so, but I allus figured that weren’t enough to go to jail. Figured you had to do something, and be caught at it.

DAVIS: We have evidence enough.

BUTLER: Like what?

DAVIS: *(uneasily)* Oh, several ex-Mormons will testify that Smith directed several murders by the Danites. Don’t worry. If this case came to trial, we’d win it. But the publicity...

BUTLER: No, we don’t want that. Now, here’s how I see it. I’ve been a jailor for a long time, and I’ve always treated my prisoners decent. Even the horse thieves and murderers. This whole business don’t sit right in my craw. What I wanna know flat out is, how bad you plannin’ to treat ‘em.

DAVIS: *(pause and then deliberately)* They will not survive the winter.

BUTLER: *(long pause, looking at Davis)* I see.

DAVIS: Orders!

BUTLER: I’ll bet that them orders give you enough room that if they do survive the winter you won’t face no court-martial.

DAVIS: That’s true enough. What do you suggest?

JOHN: Give ‘em decent treat....

BUTLER: Keep out of this, John. I say, keep ‘em here till the uproar’s died down a bit, then give ‘em a fair trial.

DAVIS: No.

BUTLER: Why not?

DAVIS: Personally, as I explained before, I consider this a religious duty, also.

BUTLER: Well ... I don't like it.

DAVIS: Mr. Butler, those prisoners are no longer any concern of yours.

BUTLER: Really?

DAVIS: My orders explicitly state that the militia under my command have sole....

BUTLER: (*exploding*) That's my jailhouse, I built it, nobody's takin' it from me, and I don't care what your Orders say! It's mine!

DAVIS: Forgive me. Mr. Butler, I sometimes forget my manners.

BUTLER: (*slightly mollified*) 'Nuff said, then. They'll get proper food, and we'll rig up some kind of sanitation. That's all we can do, anyhow.

DAVIS: We'll take charge of the feeding. With your approval, of course.

BUTLER: It's all right with me. Long's you remember whose jail that is.

CARRIE: Well, for me, I think all of your arrangements are ample, Col. Davis. And I wouldn't waste my cooking on them, anyway.

BUTLER: Now, you understand that I'll be inspectin' the food you serve 'em, Davis. And it better meet my standards.

DAVIS: That's understood, Butler.

BUTLER: All right, then. Been a jailor for five years and my Pa before that. Ain't no army colonel gonna take it away from me. John, I reckon you'll have to give up the slop bucket detail. John?

JOHN: What?

BUTLER: I said I reckon them soldiers'll be taking over your job with the slop bucket.

DAVIS: Yes, Good. These state militia aren't regular army. If we have some singularly unpleasant duty to use as a punishment, it should do wonders for discipline.

JOHN: (*suddenly breaking out of his shell*) William, aren't we going to have anything to do there at the jail?

BUTLER: Well, I'll be in charge, like I said. But the work'll be done by the soldiers mostly. I'll just be checkin' on 'em.

CARRIE: I for one, am glad of it. That's no respectable job for a young man. Maybe now you can pay some attention to your studies.

JOHN: You've never complained before.

CARRIE: You'll stay away from the jail, son.

JOHN: (*with a brief look at Carrie*) But William? It's my job.

BUTLER: I plumb forgot.

DAVIS: What's this?

BUTLER: Oh, I've been hiring the boy as assistant Jailkeeper. Pay him fifty cents a week to help me

around the jail. Figure it's good for a boy to earn a little spendin' money after chores.

CARRIE: I never approved of that job. There are plenty of other things he can do for money, if he must have work.

JOHN: That's chores. I don't expect to be paid for doin' my chores.

BUTLER: It's good for the boy to be earnin' a little money, Carrie Jane.

CARRIE: (*not giving up*) Well, if he's planning to go to the university, he'll be well advised to spend his time studying this winter. His marks....

BUTLER: His marks are good enough.

DAVIS: Perhaps I could help.

BUTLER: How?

DAVIS: Well, make him a part time enlistee, for example.

CARRIE: (*very firm*) No. He's too young to serve in the militia.

BUTLER: Carrie Jane, the boy's seventeen. I bet the Colonel was fighting for his country at seventeen.

DAVIS: (*bleakly*) Yes. At his age IÂ ran away from home to enlist.

(*pause*)

The boy can be a trusty. Shine shoes, chop wood, that sort of thing.

BUTLER: Boy?

JOHN: Yes, I'd like that. Thank you, Colonel.

CARRIE: John!

BUTLER: It's all right, Carrie Jane.

(*Knock on the door*)

DAVIS: That'll be Hadley.

(*BUTLER goes to door, enter HADLEY.*)

HADLEY: Hidey, there, Will. You got some time ta take a look at my ol' windmill?

BUTLER: When you gonna pay me for that sow?

HADLEY: Shoot. She had her one litter, and her innards fell out all over the barnyard. Had to chop her up and smoke her.

BUTLER: Reckon I'll come by sometime and help myself to a side o' bacon.

DAVIS: Are the prisoners here, Sheriff Hadley?

HADLEY: Got 'em outside, Colonel.

(*Crosses to table*)

Mind if'n I have me a wing, Miz Butler?

(*Helps himself*)

CARRIE: Yes I mind!

DAVIS: *(out door)* Coming, Butler?

CARRIE: How's the cut, sweetheart?

(To MARY, as BUTLER and HADLEY leave)

MARY: Fine. Mamma, can we go outside and see 'em?

CARRIE: No! We're going to have nothing to do with them, and I intend to start now.

(JOHN, giving her a long look, heads out the door)

John!

MARY: How come John gets to and I don't?

CARRIE: John Ira,....

JOHN: They're here!

MARY: Please, Mamma?

CARRIE: *(seething)* No! John, I'm warning you....

JOHN: *(at doorway)* Why?

CARRIE: It's dangerous.

MARY: Momma, it isn't either.

CARRIE: Believe me, it is.

JOHN: Come on, Mary, Ma's being an old spoilsport.

(Grabs MARY, they exit)

CARRIE: John! John!

(Exits after them. Meanwhile in the courtyard, the prisoners are surrounded by guards. The prisoners are chained and dirty looking. BUTLER and HADLEY are inspecting the chains.)

BUTLER: Looks good to me.

HADLEY: Yep.

GUARD: *(tauntingly)* Ole Joe, how about givin' us a revelation?

(Guards laugh)

DAVIS: Sheriff, perhaps some introductions would be in order.

HADLEY: Well...yeah, I reckon.

(Looks uncertainly around)

Listen up. Everybody, listen up now. This here is Liberty, Clay County, Missouri, Jailhouse. This big feller here is William Butler, he's the jailor. This one, that's Col. Franklin Davis, he'll be the feller you'll see mostly.

CARRIE: *(under her breath)* John, I want you in the house.

JOHN: *(cooly)* No.

HADLEY: Now, this here's Caleb Baldwin. Caleb's a veteran, ain't you, Caleb.

(BALDWIN does not answer)

This Big feller's Alexander McCrae. Next to him we got us ... uh ... Lyman Wight. What's he doin' with a black eye, Slim?

SLIM: Tried to escape when we chained him.

HADLEY: Well, he's been a feisty one the whole trip. Now the sick one's Sidney Rigdon. Leastways, he claims to be sick. And the Smith brothers. That's Hyrum on the right and the "Prophet" Joe Smith on the other side.

A GUARD: Let's see that gold Bible of yours, ole Joe!

DAVIS: That's all! Thank you, Sheriff.

WIGHT: Just a second.

DAVIS: Yes, Mr. Wight?

WIGHT: Why the fancy introduction? I thought we were just going to be here a few days, awaiting trial.

DAVIS: There may be some delay.

WIGHT: Why?

DAVIS: There may be some problems in convening a jury.

WIGHT: So we may be here awhile.

DAVIS: Yes. Our apologies. I'll be in charge here, however long it may be.

WIGHT: Until we receive a fair and impartial conviction.

JOSEPH: That's enough, Lyman.

GUARDS: *(laughing)* Let's see ya perform a miracle now, Joe!

BUTLER: Follow me.

(Leads them towards the jail)

DAVIS: *(to the GUARDS)* You'll be quartered in the barn to the south.

SLIM: In the barn?

HARVEY: Like runaway slaves!

DAVIS: If you prefer, there's room in the jail. The upper chamber is somewhat nicer than the cellar.

HARVEY: I reckon the barn's all right. Long's we get paid.

(JOSEPH is entering the jail. At the foot of the stairs, he stops, looks regally around, and then speaks)

Good day, gentlemen.

(Nods to Carrie)

Sister Bowan.

(Enters the jail)

SLIM: Sister Bowan? Hear that, Harvey?

HARVEY: Looks like we landed us in a place full of Jack Mormons.

SLIM: Have to keep the old squirrel rifle loaded.

(DAVIS stares at CARRIE a long moment, then turns to the GUARDS)

DAVIS: This youngster is John Butler. He'll be your trusty.

JOHN: John Bowan.

DAVIS: What?

JOHN: I go by Bowan.

DAVIS: Oh? I didn't know.

JOHN: The barn's a mite drafty, but there's room for a fire. I'll keep you in firewood, and run any errands you want. I'll be in school until 2:00 every day, so save up your errands till after six. That way I'll have time to do my chores around here.

HARVEY: Me'n Slim won't be needin' no luxury.

JOHN: Still, I'll keep you in firewood.

SLIM: Better'n what the prisoners'll get.

HARVEY: Boy? You play seven card stud.

JOHN: *(smiles)* And I never bet on an inside straight.

HARVEY: We'll get along fine.

DAVIS: We'll talk wages tomorrow.

(To GUARDS)

The barn's this way, if you'll follow me.

HADLEY: Colonel, we'll see ya tomorrow. William, come out and look at that windmill, will ya?

BUTLER: Will do.

(DAVIS, the GUARDS, and HADLEY exit)

CARRIE: *(upset, she comes up to JOHN)* John Ira, why?

JOHN: Mary wanted to see the prisoners, and I needed to talk to Davis about the job.

CARRIE: Well, neither you nor your sister will ever see those prisoners again.

JOHN: Don't worry, you've already fixed that.

BUTLER: What's the matter now, Carrie?

CARRIE: Nothing really, William.

BUTLER: In other words, there was something. What?

CARRIE: Nothing of any importance.

JOHN: She told me to stay inside when the prisoners arrived. I disobeyed her, and took Mary with me.

(Looks at them defiantly.)

BUTLER: Is that how it happened?

CARRIE: Yes. I told you it didn't matter.

BUTLER: *(smiles)* Two years ago, the boy sassed me, remember? And you said "to do nothin'. He warn't my son, and I warn't gonna have no say in raisin' him." If he ain't got no manners now, t'ain't my affair.

CARRIE: No.

BUTLER: *(winking at JOHN)* But if I ever treated my Momma like that, it was straight to the woodshed.

CARRIE: No.

BUTLER: *(hiding his hurt under lazy bravado)* Well, anytime You want my help, you just ask polite...

(goes in the house)

... and I'll think about it.

(He smiles)

JOHN: And no little talks about Mormons, either.

CARRIE: You're still my son, and this is still my house, John.

JOHN: If you say so, Mama.

(Exits. CARRIE is alone. She looks toward the jail as the lights fade.)

End Act One

Act Two

*(Two months later. January 1839. Late afternoon. Same as before. CARRIE is sweeping the floor.
Enter MARY with basket.)*

CARRIE: Hello, dear.

MARY: H'lo, Mamma.

CARRIE: Did you finish the chores?

MARY: Yes'm.

(Hands her the basket)

The hens aren't laying.

CARRIE: It's those guards. Coming, going, noisy and drinking.

MARY: Yes'm. Can I go out and play?

CARRIE: No, you may not. You know you have Your figuring to do.

MARY: But I don't like figuring.

CARRIE: Stoke up the fire, young lady, fiand get to work.

(Notices the wood box is empty)

You'll have to go out to the woodshed first, though.

MARY: Can't.

CARRIE: What do you mean?

MARY: There isn't any chopped to size. I checked.

CARRIE: Any buffalo chips?

MARY: Nope. All out.

CARRIE: Where's your brother?

MARY: I don't know.

CARRIE: I don't mind him earning money, but not if he's going to neglect his chores at home.

MARY: I'm not cold.

CARRIE: It's chilly out, and it's going to get worse tonight. Wasn't he out at the barn?

MARY: Nope!

CARRIE: You don't have any idea where he is, Mary?

MARY: Prolly where he usually...

(Stops. Pause)

CARRIE: Well?

MARY: I promised I wouldn't tell.

CARRIE: Tell what?

MARY: He said held carve me a whistle if I wouldn't tell.

CARRIE: Mary, what's going on?

MARY: Well, I caught him there once, and he said held carve me a whistle if I wouldn't tell you.

CARRIE: Well, you won't get his whistle anyway, so you might as well tell.

MARY: Ma!

CARRIE: He carved you one once, and it nearly drove me to distraction.

MARY: Pa didn't mind....

CARRIE: Your father has nothing to do with this. Now, where's Johnny?

MARY: I promised him I wouldn't!

CARRIE: Well, I suppose you do have an obligation to him. All right.

MARY: If I tell, can I have his old knife?

CARRIE: No! Don't you remember the last time you played with a knife? You've still got the scar on your face.

MARY: But if I promise to be careful?

CARRIE: Absolutely not. It's neither lady-like nor proper, and it's dangerous.

MARY: It's not worth it either way.

CARRIE: Not if you're only interested in personal profit.

MARY: Can't I go out and play?

CARRIE: No. Do your arithmetic.

MARY: I'm cold.

CARRIE: Then find your brother and get him to chop us some firewood.

MARY: I can't. The guards won't let me...

(Stops)

CARRIE: The guards? The jail?

MARY: I shouldn't have told, should I?

CARRIE: How does he get in?

MARY: I don't know. The guards just let him.

CARRIE: He's their trusty.

MARY: Mamma, do I have to do lessons? It's getting cold in here.

CARRIE: No, dear. Run off and play. Don't go too far, tho.

MARY: I won't.

(Exits)

CARRIE: What can I do?

(MARY enters)

MARY: Mamma! Poppa's back!

CARRIE: Thank you dear.

(To herself)

He'll want some food.

(Enter BUTLER, HADLEY and DAVIS)

BUTLER: Carrie Jane! You got anything cooked?

CARRIE: Cold Shepherd's pie sad milk. Would you gentlemen care to join us?

HADLEY: Shore!

CARRIE: Col. Davis?

DAVIS: Thank you, no.

HADLEY: You don't know what you're missin', Davis.

DAVIS: Yes, I'm sure it's delicious'. Thank you for the offer, ma'am, but I'd best be off.

HADLEY: Ah siddown, Davis. You been runnin' around all afternoon.

CARRIE: Please, Col. Davis. You do look tired.

DAVIS: Just for a moment, then.

(Sits gratefully)

BUTLER: What's the matter with that fire, Carrie?

CARRIE: John forgot to fill the firebox this morning.

BUTLER: Been doin' too much choppin' for the guards.

DAVIS: Yes, we've plenty of firewood. I'll send some men down with enough till the morning.

HADLEY: Butler, where'd you find a wife that can cook like this?

BUTLER: That's what comes from runnin' a jail.

HADLEY: *(laughing)* What'd you do, pick up the leavin's of some jailbird?

(Uncomfortable silence)

BUTLER: *(angry, but hiding it)* You know better than that, Bert.

HADLEY: *(aware of silence, feebly joking)* Well, if that's how it goes, I get first dibs on Rigdon's lady.

(A look from BUTLER silences him.)

DAVIS: Rigdon's not dead, yet.

HADLEY: No, I reckon nflot.

CARRIE: Here, would you like some milk, Sheriff?

HADLEY: Mighty obliged.

BUTLER: You'd be proud of us today, Carrie. We done us a mighty fine piece of work. Right, Davis?

DAVIS: You already know my opinion. It's quite an unnecessary precaution.

BUTLER: Well, hang it all, I just don't like the idea of lettin' the man die.

DAVIS: I don't believe for a moment that Rigdon's really sick.

HADLEY: If he ain't sick, then he's one fine play-actor.

BUTLER: Sheriff, that ain't the point. You don't know any more than I do. This way we get us a sawbones to tell us.

DAVIS: He's already had a medical examination, by the army doctor in Richmond. He's shamming. Rigdon is as well as you or me.

HADLEY: Maybe he was, then.

BUTLER: Like I said, none of that matters. If he ain't sick, he stays in there. If he is sick, it's the middle of the winter, and cold, too.

CARRIE: What are you talking about?

HADLEY: We just bin inta town, a'talkin' with ol' Judge Turnham, 'bout one of the prisoners.

BUTLER: It's that Rigdon. The older one. We're gonna have a doctor look at him.

HADLEY: IfIn the doe says he's sick, like he claims, we'll git us a habey's corpses as a hoomanitarian gesture, put ol' Sidney on the back o' a horse, 'n tell him to skedaddle.

DAVIS: It's the precedent that bothers me. If Rigdon can be released on a writ of habeas corpus, what legal grounds do we have to hold the others?

HADLEY: That don't matter none, Davis. Nobody in Missouri cares a hill ol beans for them.

BUTLER: This way, Rigdon'll be just as dead as if he died in our jail, but we won't be responsible. Now, we all know that there ain't no way he'll survive a ride on horseback all the way to Illinois. But we'll be able to say that we give him a fightin' chance.

CARRIE: Yes, you're quite the humanitarians, aren't you?

BUTLER: Well, there ain't no....

CARRIE: No don't apologize. Your plan is perfect. Pontius Pilate would love it.

BUTLER: What kind of objections you got?

CARRIE: Nothing. You must salve your consciences, I suppose.

BUTLER: You got a better plan, Carrie Jane?

CARRIE: Let them go, or try them quickly. Just get them out of here.

BUTLER: I got no control over that.

CARRIE: You have control enough to release Rigdon.

BUTLER: One sick man. There's a big diff....

CARRIE: I wonder. I wonder if, eight years ago a similar suggestion to a judge in Pennsylvania....

BUTLER: No!

(Pause)

I didn't do that.

CARRIE: I'm sorry.

BUTLER: We talked about this before. It's settled.

CARRIE: Yes. Settled.

BUTLER: *(notices the other men busily trying to look away. Embarrassed)* Come on, Hadley. We...better clean them horses.

HADLEY: Yep. You give that chestnut quite a run. Some horse, too. You be thinkin' 'bout that offer...

(BUTLER and HADLEY are gone.)

DAVIS: *(remaining behind)* Once again, Mrs. Butler, my apologies. It seems I do nothing but intrude upon your family. Forgive me.

CARRIE: Well, this has been a very difficult time for us all. Your patience and courtesy have made it seem easier.

DAVIS: Well, I had best be off.

CARRIE: Not yet, Colonel. Please stay. I've had too much of all this....

DAVIS: Well ... I must admit, a change from the barn, and the eternal poker match of Slim and Harvey would be refreshing.

CARRIE: Did you read the poem I gave you?

DAVIS: As a matter of fact, I did. I made comments on the manuscript.

(He gets the poem from his coat and reads it aloud.)

I dream'd one day of a place secure
A glade, a copse, where thought ran pure
like a little girl runs through tall green grass
Unbound, and in her freedom, safe.
But grass is dry now, and never green
Running through't makes her frock unclean
And so my little running lass
Be bound. There is nought to do but chafe.

CARRIE: Thank you. I appreciate your help. And thank you so much for the volume of Shelley. He's my favorite. I've taught myself, and I'm in need of some expert advice.

DAVIS: Well, I hardly qualify there. I dabble, that's all.

CARRIE: Perhaps one day, we'll both have time to do more with our poetry.

DAVIS: I hope so. I retire soon; perhaps then.

CARRIE: Yes.

(Pause)

Col. Davis, tell me the truth. Is Rigdon really ill?

DAVIS: Yes.

CARRIE: I hope you'll pardon me for this, but I cannot see how an officer such as yourself can allow an old, sick man to ride on horseback in the middle of winter until he dies of exposure.

DAVIS: I hope you believe me when I say that it's not my choice.

CARRIE: You have more intelligence than the entire legal profession of Missouri.

DAVIS: *(smiles, pleased)* But not the authority.

CARRIE: Perhaps not, and yet....

DAVIS: I doubt that Rigdon will die of exposure, in any case. I'll wager there's a lynch mob at every crossroads, waiting for him.

CARRIE: *(shudders)* Well, it's quicker that way, I suppose.

DAVIS: Mrs. Butler, this situation is ... a difficult one. I deplore the necessity for these harsh measures as much as you do.

CARRIE: It's January, Colonel Davis. It's been two months since the Mormons left. Surely the tumult has died down enough to permit a trial.

DAVIS: My orders won't allow it.

CARRIE: Those men may not survive the winter! Granted, there are good reasons for the ending of their religion, but these measures! How can you approve such things? Legally, ethically, morally, how can you go along with it?

DAVIS: *(pause)* They're a threat to everything I hold dear.

CARRIE: So take them to trial!

DAVIS: I can't.

CARRIE: thy not?

DAVIS: It can't be risked!

CARRIE: What?

DAVIS: There is too great a possibility of his release.

CARRIE: So you're willing to starve them to death?

DAVIS: *(long pause)* No. I am not.

CARRIE: *(almost whispered)* Franklin?

DAVIS: *(troubled)* For the first time in my career, I find myself unable to carry out an order.

CARRIE: Why?

DAVIS: My orders here are explicit, right, and correct. Mormonism is a menace that must be stopped. The means proposed will stop it. I find myself without ... the backbone to find those means-anything but excessive.

CARRIE: But conditions in the jail....

DAVIS: Are as intolerable as my orders require. I have taken steps to see that proper food and bedding reaches them through other channels.

CARRIE: I see. Then you do know of my son's visits to the jail?

DAVIS: Not officially.

CARRIE: I understand. Will you put an end to them?

DAVIS: No.

CARRIE: Why not?

DAVIS: Because every day, my duties require that I visit the prisoners. And I can't ... I won't continue to watch them starve to death. I can't. Your son is keeping them alive.

CARRIE: Colonel Davis, my son is visiting the prophet every day!

DAVIS: The prophet?

CARRIE: I'm sorry, when I knew him before, My former husband and I were in the habit of calling him "the prophet." Col. Davis, Smith has an incredible power over people. I can't have John seeing him, like this.

DAVIS: Then you'll have to stop him. I won't.

CARRIE: Why?

DAVIS: I'm afraid, because I'm also rather a Pontius Pilate. Like your husband.

CARRIE: And there's no disuading you?

DAVIS: No!

CARRIE: Can I ?

DAVIS: I doubt it.

(Formally)

Good day to you, Mrs. Butler.

CARRIE: Goodbye.

(As DAVIS exits, JOHN comes in)

JOHN: *(looking at CARRIE for a long moment)* Brought you some firewood.

CARRIE: *(still silent, looking after DAVIS)* Put it in the firebox.

(JOHN does so, starts to go.)

Where are you off to?

JOHN: Help William with the horses.

CARRIE: Sit down, please.

JOHN: Why, Mamma?

CARRIE: Sit down, please son!

JOHN: Ma, are you all right?

CARRIE: Yes, I'm fine.

JOHN: Are you sure? I saw Davis leave. What did he want?

CARRIE: I know, John.

JOHN: What?

CARRIE: I know about your visits to the jail.

JOHN: *(silence, then)* Davis told you?

CARRIE: No. I knew from before.

JOHN: Who told you?

CARRIE: It's not important.

JOHN: I'm going to murder that Mary!

CARRIE: No, don't blame her. I tricked it out of her.

JOHN: So what are you going to do?

CARRIE: Well.... We've discussed this before. You are forbidden to go back there.

JOHN: *(pause)* How are you going to stop me?

CARRIE: I wouldn't think any more would be necessary!

JOHN: I'm going to do what I think is right.

CARRIE: Then I'll tell your father and....

JOHN: Like you keep reminding me, momma, my father is dead! William Butler is not my father, much as he would like to be. That means there are only two people who can stop me: Col. Davis and The Prophet Joseph, and they won't, either of them. You don't forbid me anything!

(CARRIE looks at him a long moment, then slaps him in the face. JOHN looks back at her and starts to slap her back.)

CARRIE: Go ahead! If I'm not your mother, then go ahead, because I'm standing in your way!

(JOHN slowly backs down.)

All right then. We can talk. Where did you get the food?

JOHN: I bought most of it.

CARRIE: With what?

JOHN: Money I earned from the soldiers.

CARRIE: All of it?

JOHN: I also stole some.

(CARRIE looks at him.)

They were starving!

CARRIE: How did you get it to them?

JOHN: Two of the guards. Slim and Harvey. They'd let me in, for usually 15-20 minutes at a time, only.

Today was longer. Some important

CARRIE: I'm not interested.

JOHN: Anyway, I can get in any time I want, now.

CARRIE: Anytime? How?

JOHN: They owe me.

CARRIE: Money? How?

JOHN: I've been carving for them. Whittling. And -they owe me poker winnings.

CARRIE: John?

JOHN: It's William. He taught me how to play poker.

CARRIE: You mean, you cheated.

JOHN: It was for a good cause.

CARRIE: And all so you could hear your precious Mormon prophet. John, you're going to end up like your father.

JOHN: Isn't that what you wanted?

CARRIE: Ambitious, energetic, yes. Free-thinking, yes. But I didn't raise you to become... to become one of them, and die for it like he did!

JOHN: That isn't why he died.

CARRIE: Don't you tell me why he died: of consumption, in prison, and your prophet doing nothing to save him! And now you're cheating, stealing and lying to help the man who wouldn't help your father! Smith got the best lawyer possible! Your father got nothing! Smith had visitors daily! Your father had me. In a way, I'm glad Smith is in our prison. Glad! I can sit here and do for him what he did for Ira Bowan! Nothing! And if I have to tie you to that chair, you'll not lift a finger!

JOHN: *(quietly)* That isn't how it was.

CARRIE: That's right, defend him. You were eight years old, what could you know?

JOHN: I know. That isn't the way it was.

CARRIE: Joe Smith told you differently, I suppose, between feedings.

JOHN: Yes, he told me his side. I'll tell you, if you'll listen.

CARRIE: It doesn't matter now.

JOHN: Why not?

CARRIE: I've heard his lies before.

JOHN: Why is it that you only want me to speak my mind, when it suits you, Mama?

CARRIE: *(pause)* I can't imagine anything hefl could say being persuasive.

JOHN: Can I say it anyway?

CARRIE: If you must!

JOHN: Joseph and I had a long talk today, about you and my father. I've always been confused, ever since I began visiting the prisoners. On the one hand, I never had any reason to think you weren't right. On the other hand, I saw the conditions in there. You know something, horrible as it is in there, I get the feelin' Joseph cares more about us and our family than he does about escaping. It didn't make sense, none of it, that he could do what you say he did. So, today, I asked him. And he told me. Mostly, things you never talked about. Not different. Just more. You see, Mama?

CARRIE: He claimed complete innocence, I suppose.

JOHN: No. He said that my Pa, Ira Bowan, had been arrested for perjury like all the others that testified for him. Then the lawyers went to work, and got 'em released, all of them. He said he'd talked to the jailor personally about Pa, and was told he was gonna be let loose that afternoon. The jailor told him that Pa was sick, and was planning to go south for a while. Decided the warm air'd be good for him.

CARRIE: *(struck and breathless)* Those were our plans, yes.

JOHN: Joseph said that when Pa never showed up, he figured he'd gone south. He didn't find out Pa was dead 'till a year later.

(Long pause)

CARRIE: The other prisoners were released, all but Ira.

JOHN: What we're doing to Joseph is worse than what Pa went through, much worse, Mama.

CARRIE: You don't have any idea....

JOHN: I was there, too, Ma! Maybe I was only eight, but I remember the jail Pa was in. It was clean, and not dirty and stinking and crowded!

CARRIE: You can't blame Col. Davis. He's only following orders.

JOHN: Do you know what that means, Momma!? His orders? Ma, they got one bucket to make duty in, and another to lower food in. Only the rope ain't so good and sometimes the honey bucket spills. And sometimes it never gets taken up and it overflows. And twice they thought it would be a good joke to put the food in the wrong bucket. And the food they get ain't fit for hogs. There's no air, just two tiny windows. There's no light. Once in a long time one of 'em gets to go upstairs where there's light. It stinks down there. It's damp. It ain't tall enough for them to stand up straight, nor big enough to stretch. Orders! Let me tell you about them orders of Col. Davis. One time last week they got meat from the guards. Fresh meat, they thought! So they started to eat it, and it slipped out of their hands. So they tried again, and the same thing happened. Then Joseph tells 'em, don't eat it. It's poisoned!

(Long pause)

That's your Col. Davis for you.

CARRIE: I doubt very much....

JOHN: (*excited, self-important*) Do you know what's keeping them alive? Me! The food I bring in. And you want them to go through all that sufferin' because of Pa's dying which they didn't have nothin' to do with?

CARRIE: Joseph neglected....

JOHN: No! Joseph didn't! That's what I've been tellin' you. It was the jailor!

CARRIE: What are you talking about?

JOHN: You know who kept Pa in jail longer than he was 'sposed to? The jailor! Jeremy Butler! William's Pa and Mary's Grandpa.

CARRIE: (*she is utterly stunned by this*) They said it was a technicality. The writ wasn't properly witnessed, or something.

JOHN: What writ?

CARRIE: Someone hadn't filed the right papers or something. That was why they held Ira.

JOHN: Joseph knew nothing about it.

CARRIE: I just can't see why. Grandpa Jeremy wouldn't have any reason to do that.

JOHN: Maybe he knew his son was after you, wanted ... wanted...

CARRIE: (*shocked*) No, no, that's....

JOHN: You see, Mama, Joseph had nothing to do with it.

CARRIE: (*to herself*) We did marry fast and then moved fast, all on William's

(*Looking at John*)

Nonsense, there's no proof for any of this.

JOHN: You never had any proof, either. And you're doing the same thing with Rigdon!

CARRIE: (*pause, agitated*) John, how is Rigdon?

JOHN: What?

CARRIE: How is he?

JOHN: Sick. I don't know how sick. He's out of his mind most of the time. Shaking and cold, even though Joseph goes without a blanket so Sidney can have his.

CARRIE: William, and Sheriff Hadley, they're arranging to have him released.

JOHN: Really!

CARRIE: They say they want to give him ... a fighting chance. But they say he's not likely to survive the ride.

JOHN: Oh, he'll make it.

CARRIE: What makes you so sure?

JOHN: Joseph says so.

CARRIE: You believe in him that much?

JOHN: If Joseph says he'll make it, he will.

CARRIE: How much has he told you?

JOHN: I don't know. Mamma, it's not like that. He doesn't really talk about religion. No, he does, but it's not like preaching, not really. It's more like it's part of him, and just sorta comes up naturally all the time when we're talking about other things. It's not just Joseph, either; they're all like that.

CARRIE: Do you ... believe?

JOHN: It makes sense to me, Ma, it really does.

CARRIE: *(to herself)* Just like Ira.

(Calming herself.)

So, what do we do now?

JOHN: What do you mean?

CARRIE: Do you become a Mormon, or what?

JOHN: I don't know. Why?

CARRIE: I've got some money, John, saved up. There's some for the university, and to give a start to your career, if you want. There's enough for politics, if you decide to go that direction.

(Coldly)

But, if you decide that the Mormons are what you want to do,

(Takes a deep breath.)

then I guess I'd better hang on to it. Maybe save it for Mary's husband, whoever he may be.

JOHN: You're kicking me out.

CARRIE: No. Not exactly. That money's from My father. He set it aside in hopes that some day, someone in his family would rise. Reach a position he'd only looked at from the outside. I've set some aside, too, and added to it. It would be wasted an a Mormon. Mormons have no future.

JOHN: If I'm a Mormon, I'll rise without your help!

CARRIE: You'll have to.

JOHN: *(bleakly)* Well, I wasn't planning on the university, anyway. I never did care for book-learning.

CARRIE: I've always intended the money for you, John. Everything I ever did was to encourage you!

JOHN: You're wrong, you know. You've always been wrong.

CARRIE: *(desperate)* The money is yours, John, if you change your mind.

21 more pages to *The End*