

PERUSAL SCRIPT

Exile

by **Matthew Ivan Bennett**

Part 2 of Episode 2 of the **RADIO HOUR** Series



Newport, Maine

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EXILE

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CHARACTERS: 5f 6m 1either

Narrator (Gender Neutral)

Jean Baptiste

Mrs. Baptiste

Mr. George Clawson

Policeman Henry Heath

Sexton Jesse C. Little

First Girl

Second Girl

Outraged Woman

Miss Penny

The Voice of Wilford Woodruff

The Voice of Brigham Young

Mob

EFFECTS (F/X)

Suggested Doubling to 2f 2m 1either

Actor 1: Narrator (Gender Neutral), possibly Voices

Actor 2: First Girl, Miss Penny, Mob (if narrator is female, Actors 1 and 2 can combine)

Actor 2: Jean Baptiste, Voice of Wilford Woodruff, Voice of Brigham Young, Mob

Actor 3: Mrs. Baptiste, Second Girl, Sexton Jesse C. Little, Outraged Woman, Mob

Actor 5: Mr. George Clawson, Policeman Henry Heath, Mob

NOTE: because of the unique way this was produced originally, with two live foley artists, it's hard to double EXILE, as the foley artists were used for some characters.

Period Costumes or contemporary clothes

Radio Station setting

Sound Effects required (can be Foley, recorded, or a mix of both. Music required.)

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EXILE by *Matthew Ivan Bennett* (?? minutes) 3f 3m 1e either can be doubled to 2f 2m. Simple costumes, setting. SFX essential. Staged Radio Drama, Radio Broadcast, Fully-Staged Production, or Virtual Theatre. *Exile* spins a chilling yarn about a real-life grave-robber at the Salt Lake City Cemetery circa 1860, whose apparition is allegedly still seen on the shores of the Great Salt Lake. Based on a ghost story from Salt Lake City. RADIO HOUR is a co-production between Salt Lake City's Plan-B Theatre Company and the University of Utah's Public Radio station KUER's Radio West. **ORDER #3236.2**

MATTHEW IVAN BENNETT is a resident of Plan-B Theatre, listed by American Theater magazine as one of 14 companies nationwide exemplifying social action and civic engagement. At Plan-B, he's premiered several stage and radio plays, including an adaptation of "*Frankenstein*" that won a Utah Broadcasters Association award and "*Eric(a)*"—which won Best Drama at the United Solo festival in New York. He received the Holland New Voices award from the Great Plains Theatre Commons, has twice been a finalist in screenwriting at Austin Film Festival, and in 2016 was an O'Neill finalist. His short plays have appeared at Chicago's Circle Theatre, Rising Sun in New York, Monkeyman in Toronto, and the Source Festival in DC. Matt is a member of the Dramatists' Guild.

EXILE

“EXILE” MUSIC UP

F/X: The B/G sound of SEAGULLS CRYING and of a FREEWAY. WATER LAPS in the F/G.

(Two young women WALK IN THE SAND.)

FIRST GIRL: *(sniffing; put out)* God, this lake stinks.

SECOND GIRL: I know. ‘S the brine shrimp.

FIRST GIRL: It’s like a sewer with sand. Who told you it was “awesome” out here?

SECOND GIRL: Sarah.

FIRST GIRL: *(sses)* Yeah, figures, Sarah can’t smell anything with her new and improved nose. You wanna go back? ‘S getting dark.

SECOND GIRL: *(stopping)* Whoa. Look at that wacko. What is he doing?

F/X: An OTHERWORLDLY BUZZ. WET FOOTSTEPS.

FIRST GIRL: Where? What are you talking about?

SECOND GIRL: That guy. Is he carrying clothes?

FIRST GIRL: What guy?

SECOND GIRL: Down the beach? Guy with big wet bundle of clothes? You don’t see him?

FIRST GIRL: Um, pretty sure I don’t see anything.

F/X: The footsteps stop. The BUZZING fades.

SECOND GIRL: He’s gone.

FIRST GIRL: Are you okay?

SECOND GIRL: He’s gone.

MUSIC UP (sharp; a guitar, a harmonica)

NARRATOR: The story of Jean Baptiste, The Exile, is bound to the shores of the Great Salt Lake. It’s said he was branded on the forehead and left on Fremont Island for his crimes. Public record says nothing of it, but the story lives: in the journal of Wilford Woodruff...

F/X: A pen SCRIBBLING.

THE VOICE OF WILFORD WOODRUFF: *(from his journal)* “Damniable, diabolical, satanical, hellish sacrileges...!”

NARRATOR: *(continuing)* ...In the testimonies of policeman and judge...

THE VOICE OF HENRY HEATH: *(as if telling a reporter years later)* “Imagine our shock and our

surprise...In my breast rankled the unconquerable determination to kill him there and then should my suspicions be confirmed...!”

NARRATOR: (*continuing*) But most importantly, perhaps, the story lives in Baptiste’s specter seen along the lake.

F/X: The BUZZING again; WATER LAPPING.

SECOND GIRL: (*as before*) “Down the beach? Guy with big wet bundle of clothes? You don’t see him?”

NARRATOR: (*continuing*) Yes, the story of Jean Baptiste—a story of depravity, of banishment and of the dead—is bound to the shores of the Great Salt Lake; it begins, however, with the slicing sound of a shovel in the winter of 1862.

*F/X: A man SHOVELING in a slow rhythm. The ground is hard. The grass WHISTLES.
(Another man RUBS his hands together.)*

NARRATOR: The sky was a gray haze, the sun invisible behind it; the wind was sharp. Mr. George Clawson compulsively smoothed his sandy-colored hair, hovering by the grave, livid and impatient, as the coffin was dug up. His yellow teeth clattered and a vein throbbled in his left temple. His breath condensed in huffs of pompous irritation.

GEORGE CLAWSON: (*educated*) Could we do this with haste, please? The cold is stabbing.

LITTLE: Sorry, Mr. Clawson. The ground’s frozen solid.

NARRATOR: Inside the coffin was Moroni Clawson, George’s brother. A week earlier he had been arrested by Orrin Porter Rockwell, and was shot by police after attempting an escape. Despite his falling in with outlaws, however, his family wanted him in the family plot—not in a pine box in Salt Lake City.

F/X: The shovel THUDS against wood.

LITTLE: Here he is, sir.

(tapping)

Almost finished.

GEORGE CLAWSON: I would like to see him, Mr. Little.

LITTLE: Oh, ya don’t wanna do that, sir. Best ta think ‘a him—

GEORGE CLAWSON: Show me.

NARRATOR: Mr. Clawson knew his brother had been wrong in joining the attack on the Territorial Governor—even if Governor Dawson was a lecher and a jackass, sent only to tax the Mormons for a war in the South, he had been wrong. But did he deserve to be shot in the street for it? Even if he ran?

F/X: Little DUSTS OFF the coffin and PRIES it open.

LITTLE: *(to Mr. Clawson)* Prepare yourself, sir.

NARRATOR: Mr. Clawson steadied himself and stepped closer, gaping down into the casket.

GEORGE CLAWSON: *(aghast)* Oh Lord.

LITTLE: *(surprised)* Oh my. This isn't—

MUSIC UP (a creeping doom)

GEORGE CLAWSON: This is how my brother is buried?

LITTLE: No, sir, he was—

GEORGE CLAWSON: Naked? Face down?

LITTLE: He was clothed, sir. Mr. Heath, the policeman, he bought 'im clothes.

GEORGE CLAWSON: Thrown in?!

LITTLE: I-I don't understand it, sir.

GEORGE CLAWSON: That's a terrible thing to do—to bury a man like that!

F/X: The BUZZ again; WATER LAPPING. Then the sound of a HORSE AND BUGGY. WINTER WINDS. A man dismounts, takes a few short steps over GRAVEL, wearing SPURS. He climbs a couple of steps and KNOCKS on a DOOR; a DOOR opening.

HEATH: Afternoon, Mr. Little.

LITTLE: Officer Heath.

HEATH: I 'spose ya know why I'm callin'.

LITTLE: 'Spose I do.

F/X: Heath enters. The DOOR CLOSES and the sound of the winter wind is dampened. A FIRE CRACKLES.

LITTLE: *(to his hired help)* 'Scuse us, Miss Penny.

MISS PENNY: I cin finish the cleanin' later, Sir.

F/X: Miss Penny LEAVES.

NARRATOR: Henry Heath, a barrel-chested man with a neat, reddish beard, surveyed Mr. Little's home. Scriptures sat open on a table by the fire; the walls were bare except for a sepia photograph of a staring, wrinkled woman; it smelled of bacon grease. Heath turned to the round, balding Mr. Little. Was this the home of a pervert and grave-robber?

HEATH: The Clawson family's mighty upset, Mr. Little.

LITTLE: Reckoned they would be.

HEATH: *(going on)* And I'm startin' an investigation on Judge Smith's permission.

LITTLE: I heard.

HEATH: Now grave robbin' is a felony, Mr. Little. And wicked in the eyes of God.

LITTLE: And I don't know a thing about it. We dressed the Clawson boy in the clothes you were kind 'nough to buy, Mr. Heath.

HEATH: (*overlapping*) Ya dunno anything?

LITTLE: And I'll swear it on the Book. I wouldn't bury a devil like that and I wouldn't disturb no grave. The job 'a sexton is a sacred responsibility and don't think I don't know it.

HEATH: Huh. Well, I'm gonna have to talk to your staff. Who ya got diggin' fer ya?

F/X: The BUZZ again; WATER LAPPING.

NARRATOR: Mr. Little gave a name...

LITTLE: (*as if in conversation with Heath*) Jean Baptiste. Lives 'bout K Street.

NARRATOR: (*continuing*) It was the only name he needed to give.

MUSIC UP (driving, dark)

F/X: HORSE and BUGGY

NARRATOR: (*continuing*) En route to the Baptiste home, Henry Heath thought of his hazel-eyed daughter. He thought of the dandelion bouquets she pushed against his sleeping nose, giggling as he woke with a start. He thought of her playing dolls by the oven because she loved the smell of warm bread. Then he thought of her like Moroni Clawson, lying in a crooked, nude heap, her bones poking through her gray flesh as maggots fed. His daughter, too, had been buried in the Salt Lake cemetery. His hands tightened against the reins.

F/X: LEATHER being GRIPPED.

HEATH: (*stopping his horse*) Whoa! Easy, girl!

NARRATOR: (*continuing*) Heath wasn't certain that Mr. Little, the sexton, was blameless; but he was certain that whoever was to blame would feel his fist.

F/X: Heath KNOCKS on the door of the Baptiste home. A dismount and LIGHT FOOTSTEPS precede its OPENING.

MRS. BAPTISTE: (*empty-headed*) Hello?

HEATH: Howdy, M'am. I'm Officer Heath, investigatin' a matter up at the city cemetery. Are you Mrs. Baptiste? Wife of Jean? [pronouncing it "John"]

MRS. BAPTISTE: I am.

HEATH: Good. Cin I come in?

MRS. BAPTISTE: What's the matter?

HEATH: It's about an investigation, M'am.

MRS. BAPTISTE: An investigation 'a what?

F/X: AN ICY GUST. Heath's horse, nearby, complains.

HEATH: M'am, it's a bitter day today. Cin I just come in?

MRS. BAPTISTE: Well, I—

(nervous)

Alright.

F/X: She lets him in. Heath STOMPS his boots. The DOOR CLOSES, but the WIND WHISTLES under the door.

NARRATOR: Henry Heath could see his exhalations inside the house. He noticed that Mrs. Baptiste's chapped, bony hands were trembling. She looked unkempt. Her hair was pulled back into a bun, but several wiry hairs had escaped and curled like dead spider legs over her forehead. Her pointed face was pasty and her eyes were sunken. Her thin lips were perfectly horizontal, not smiling or frowning, but seemed strained. She wore a tattered dress that was markedly out of style.

F/X: The BUZZ again.

HEATH: *(rubbing his knuckles)* No fire?

MRS. BAPTISTE: I'm afraid I let it die.

(a mock-girlish giggle)

HEATH: Ya run outta wood?

MRS. BAPTISTE: Um, yes. Yes.

NARRATOR: Henry looked around. There was a large pile of kindling in the corner, covered by a green wool blanket. But he said nothing. The atmosphere of their home unnerved him. It felt as if he were standing in dog's breath, and he suddenly had a headache. He was certain he could smell a bedpan from a back room.

MRS. BAPTISTE: What's the nature of the investigation, Mr....?

HEATH: Heath.

MRS. BAPTISTE: Right, Heath. What is it concerning?

NARRATOR: Henry noticed boxes, boxes along every wall, boxes stacked one on top of another, full of clothing—much of it white.

HEATH: *(the clothing)* Huh.

MRS. BAPTISTE: Mr. Heath?

NARRATOR: *(going on)* He heard a low gurgling. He couldn't tell from where.

F/X: WATER BOILING.

HEATH: *(the sounds)* What's that?

MRS. BAPTISTE: Mr. Heath? Would you please explain—?

HEATH: What's that sound?

MRS. BAPTISTE: Sound?

HEATH: And whose clothes are these?

MRS. BAPTISTE: Oh, those old things?

HEATH: Yes, who do they belong to?

F/X: Heath RUMMAGES through one of the boxes.

4 MORE PAGES TO THE END OF THE SCRIPT