

PERUSAL SCRIPT

Friends of God
A Mormon History Play in Two Acts
by Mahonri Stewart



Newport, Maine

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FRIENDS OF GOD

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LBT ORDER #2120

Production History

Friends of God first premiered at Art City Playhouse in Springville, UT on January 6, 2006. It had the following cast and crew:

CAST

Joseph Smith: Benjamin King

Emma Smith: Heather Jones

Hyrum Smith: Jordan McMillan

William Law: Adam Argyle

Jane Law: Dadre Mitchell

Eliza R. Snow: Holly Harris

John Taylor: Stephen Driggs/Mahonri Stewart¹

Willard Richards: Kenneth Brown

Actor 1: Amos Omer

Actor 2: Penny Pendleton

Actor 3: Adam Stallard

Actor 4: Jason Fullmer

Porter Rockwell: Bryce Bishop

Leonora Taylor: Sarah Harris

Governor Ford: George Anderson

Brigham Young: Rhett Dial²

Mary Ann Young: Melissa Chung

Creative casting could included the doubling of roles.

CREW

Executive Producer: Gavin Grooms/Utah Stage Artists

Director: Mahonri Stewart

Costume Designer/Construction: Amelia Schow

Lighting Design: Dadre Mitchell

Lighting Technician: Adam Harvey

Set Construction: Gavin Grooms

Set Design: Mahonri Stewart

Fight Choreography: Adam Argyle and Amos Omer

Set Painters: Heather Jones, Adam Stallard, Anne Stewart, Mahonri Stewart

Original Music: Nathaniel Drew

¹ Due to an emergency, I took over the role from Stephen Driggs for the last couple of performances.

² Brigham and Mary Ann Young were characters in the original production, but in this published revision the characters have been cut out as they did not contribute greatly to the main plot, and unnecessarily lengthened the play—as much as I liked the actors who played them.

CAST OF CHARACTERS (5f, 10m)

Joseph Smith

Emma Smith

Hyrum Smith

William Law

Jane Law

Eliza R. Snow

John Taylor

Willard Richards

Actor 1 (M) (*actor also plays Robert Foster, Reynolds Cahoon*)

Actor 2 (F) (*actor also plays Mary Fielding Smith, Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Vilate Kimball*)

Actor 3 (M) (*actor also plays Francis Higbee, Colonel Geddes, Sergeant Worrell*)

Actor 4 (M) (*actor also plays Dan Jones, Heber Kimball, Joseph Jackson, Dennison Harris*)

Porter Rockwell

Leonora Taylor

Governor Ford

Creative casting could include the doubling of some roles. There also could be additional CITIZENS, MOB, and SOLDIERS, if desired.

FRIENDS OF GOD by Mahonri Stewart. RUN TIME: 2.5 hours. CAST SIZE: 15 (5 f, 10 m, could be doubled to make a smaller cast). Joseph Smith, the founder and prophet of Mormonism, is in his last days. As rumors of Joseph's involvement in polygamy and other controversies rock the faith of even some of the most stalwart of his followers, his enemies plot his death. Yet, even in these dark, tumultuous days in 19th century Nauvoo, Illinois, the controversial Mormon leader steps forward into the conflict with his sense of mission undeterred. Who will stand loyal to him as he strives to stand loyal to his principles and his God, and who will take part in offering him up as a sacrifice to appease the fury building up against his controversial and shocking actions? GENRES: Historical Drama, Religious, Latter-day Saints/Mormon. PREMIERED at Art City Playhouse, 2016. **ORDER # 2120**

Mahonri Stewart is an award-winning writer and educator. He has written over two dozen plays, most of which have been produced throughout the U.S. and Europe, including productions in Los Angeles, Scotland, and Switzerland. In 2004, his premiere play *Farewell to Eden* won the Kennedy Center's American College Theater Festival's National Playwriting Award (Second Place) and their National Selection Team Fellowship Award. Since then he has also received numerous other awards and honors as he continues to expand his writing into various mediums, including screenplays, graphic novels, poetry, and novels. He received his MFA degree in Dramatic Writing from Arizona State University. He received his Bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts from Utah Valley University. He's a former Playwright in Residence at the Noorda Regional Theater for Children and Youth.

REVIEW:

"Good script, good story, good actors, good Lord, go see it ... This is a story about how the good Lord tries his friends."

—Harlow S. Clark, AML-List

DEDICATION:

For my mother Joanna MacKay Stewart,

Who gave me *The History of Joseph Smith* by his Mother, the first full volume of Mormon History I read;

And to Alex Parent,

*Who accelerated that interest when he gifted me *The Martyrs* by Lyman O. Littlefield, and lent me Truman G. Madsen's lectures on Joseph Smith when I was in high school.*

I have read higher heights and deeper depths in Church History since then, but it was those volumes in my early life that were the tinderbox that created this passionate fire.

“Since God had commanded it, it was necessary that I do it. Since God commanded it, even if I had a hundred fathers and mothers, even if I had been a King’s daughter, I would have gone nevertheless.”

— Jeanne d’Arc, Condemnation Trial (1431)

“For years I have been waiting for someone to do justice in recording in song and story and painting and sculpture the story of the Restoration, the reestablishment of the kingdom of God on earth, the struggles and frustrations; the apostasies and inner revolutions and counter-revolutions of those first decades; of the exodus; of the counter-reactions; of the transitions; of the persecution days; of the miracle man, Joseph Smith ...”

—Spencer W. Kimball, “The Gospel Vision of the Arts” (1978)

Friends of God

Act One

SCENE 1

ACTOR 1 walks out onto the stage and he gingerly looks out at the audience for a while, with a smiling, friendly manner.

ACTOR 1: Welcome to Missouri.

ACTOR 2 comes out as well. She is more hesitant, but initially polite.

ACTOR 2: Good to meet you, folks.

ACTOR 1: Are y'all Mormons? Or can I trust you?

ACTOR 2: Are you Missourians? Or can I trust you?

(Beat.)

The looting and capture of Far West was a terrible thing. A terrible thing.

ACTOR 1: Have you ever figured what a group can do, if they all think the same? Say they gots a leader—a “prophet”—like ol’ Joe Smith. He says he talks to God and that God tells him whats all of us is supposed to do. Say that group grows and grows like mildew and that they don’t stop growin’.

ACTOR 2: The Haun’s Mill Massacre came first. It came after the Extermination Order was signed by Governor Boggs. Perhaps you maybe think what we believe’s heretical or somethin’, but I probably think that lots of what you believe is a bunch of rubbish as well. But did that justify a state order to exterminate an entire religion, if we didn’t leave the state?

ACTOR 1: Whatcha gonna do when they start votin’ the same? Whatcha gonna do when they start comin’ from other states, from the North, East, from Canada, from all over the place and focus themselves on one spot. A hornet is easy enough to deal with, if you only have one to deal with. But what happens when they build a whole nest of hornets right above your head? Are you just gonna to turn your rights and privileges over to them? Are you gonna let them spoil the community you tried so hard to build?

ACTOR 2: The Haun’s Mill Massacre was conducted by the Missouri State Militia. Have you ever thought your own government would turn against you? They killed men, women, and children. No warning, no skirmish. They just came in and started shootin’. All with the Governor’s blessing.

ACTOR 1: They said they was some chosen people and this was their Zion. We could stay here for now, but God had really meant it for them and they were goin’ to buy it and build up their own community. They wouldn’t buy or sell with us. They warn’t friendly like. Stuck to themselves mostly, unless you was interested in their religion. A bunch of snobs, the pack of them.

ACTOR 2: I was in Far West and that was the most frightening moment in my life. People were killed, we were badgered and insulted. They sieged the city and took away the guns we had—that left them open to

loot Far West for what they wanted. Including the women. I don't like to talk about that part, but my sister she was—well, what they did—well, I don't like to talk about that part.

ACTOR 1: Then they started all of that abolitionist talk. If you want to be a part of a community, you gotta act like that community, or at least not preach all your high handed ideas. Do you reckon we were just gonna let such a group get powerful? No, not for the moon and all the stars. We had our rights, just like anyone else.

ACTOR 2: 'Mong our martyrs, we seen an apostle get killed. David W. Patten. He was a good man, among the best. A man of God. Captain Fear Not, we called him. He was known for healin' people, miraculous like. Even a blind woman. Just like in the Bible. Can you imagine killing a man like that? A man of God isn't immortal or anything. They killed the likes of Stephen or Paul or Peter. If Jews bleed, then so do Mormons.

ACTOR 1: If we could just get Smith and their other leaders, then we knew the whole blasphemous religion would stop.

ACTOR 2: I couldn't bear to think of them putting Joseph in that dank dungeon. What kind of black humor did somebody have to call that place Liberty Jail? Imagine putting a man like Brother Joseph in a place like that.

ACTOR 1: It was a real shame that ol' Joe weren't killed on the spot. You can thank the ol' traitor Doniphan for that missed opportunity.

ACTOR 2: Thank the Lord for Alexander Doniphan.

ACTOR 1: That false prophet was ready to be executed, but then Doniphan went on his self-righteous tirade. Sometimes I think some of the ridiculous laws we set up let evil thrive.

ACTOR 2: Doniphan proved that there is kindness and justice among the Gentiles yet.

ACTOR 1: That Joseph Smith, he sold his soul to the devil. That's why he could do so many miracles. I heard he was an adulterer, a liar, a conjurer, a gold digger, a counterfeiter—even a murderer. And all this time people is callin' him a prophet.

ACTOR 2: There was no man that made me feel closer to God than Joseph Smith. Joseph may have not been perfect, some may have thought him a bit rough and tumble like—but he was not a deceiver. And he was not deceived.

ACTOR 1: After we drove them out of Missouri, they went to Illinois. They started a city there. And guess who became their mayor? Joseph Smith. Guess who became the lieutenant general of their militia? Joseph Smith. Guess who then ran for the President of the United States? Joseph Smith. See a pattern?

ACTOR 2: When the government failed us, Joseph was there. He went directly to Washington to talk to the likes of Henry Clay and John Calhoun, and even President Van Buren himself. Did they ever help us? The president said to him, "Your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you. I'll lose the vote of Missouri." Is it any wonder that in Nauvoo Joseph asserted himself; sought to protect our people politically and militarily? He had seen his people persecuted so heavily— in Nauvoo he made sure that wasn't going to happen again.

ACTOR 1: If only we could have finished the job in Missouri before he did so much more damage.

Exit ACTOR 1.

ACTOR 2: In Missouri we were pressed like grapes. But we poured out like new wine, pure and unfermented, ready to be put into the new bottle of Nauvoo. In Liberty Jail, Joseph was ground to ashes. But out of those ashes he flew out a Phoenix, shiny and fiery-like, more powerful and more searching than ever. Yes, Nauvoo, there was our glory.

Exit ACTOR 2. ACTOR 3 walks out onto the stage and he gingerly looks out at the audience for a while, with a smiling, friendly manner.

ACTOR 3: Welcome to Illinois.

Blackout.

SCENE 2

WILLIAM LAW appears, addressing the audience.

WILLIAM LAW: What have the Mormons done to Illinois? This is the question which I have frequently asked of those who are busy with the tongue of slander in calumniating the Latter-day Saints. Perhaps many of them judge from rumor, not having investigated the matter for themselves. There are those who cry out, “Treason! Murder! Bigamy! Burglary! Arson!” and everything that is evil, without being able to refer to a single case that has been proved against the Mormons.

WILLIAM steps down. Enter ACTOR 1 as ROBERT FOSTER.

ROBERT FOSTER: Fine oratory there, President Law. Too bad the truth of it is more slippery than water.

WILLIAM: Robert Foster. I’m surprised you still show your face around here.

ROBERT: I won’t let men like Joseph Smith destroy my life.

WILLIAM: You destroyed your own life when you decided to involve yourself in the licentious practices of John C. Bennett. Hyrum and I found out all about the wife he abandoned, the women he seduced, the brothels he constructed in Nauvoo, the abortions he performed ...

ROBERT: Yes, quite the list.

WILLIAM: You have brought the curse of God upon you.

ROBERT: The sanctified William Law. Always spouting off such holy talk, dignified speeches. Such a polished, perfect saint and gentleman. Wash all that away and you’ll be revealed to be nothing but Joseph Smith’s dupe.

WILLIAM: You were the one duped by Bennett, sir. You believed his lies and practiced his hellish teachings. Did you really believe that the Prophet Joseph would have taught such evil doctrines?

ROBERT: Do you really think that he didn’t?

WILLIAM: Well, he's denied it, hasn't he?

ROBERT: I've been keeping my ear low to the ground lately, and I'm finding out new information all the time. Yes, President Smith has been able to avoid it in the technicalities of his talk. But he sure is hiding something. A new system of marriage.

WILLIAM: I will not believe the lies of an adulterer.

ROBERT: Whitened sepulchre. Full of dead men's bones. All manner of uncleanness.

WILLIAM: You slander me, sir.

ROBERT: Do I? Well, perhaps the stories I hear of you are wrong as well then.

WILLIAM: What libel do you refer to?

ROBERT: Are there so many that you must keep track? Let him without sin cast the first stone, William Law. An adulterer accusing me of adultery ...

WILLIAM: Pernicious lies—I am not an adulterer!

ROBERT: Perhaps not. But when Joseph Smith starts uncovering your sins, let's see how you feel then? Let's see how you feel when you are denounced in public by a man who you know has kept hidden his own dealings. But when you reach that road, remember those who understand your plight.

WILLIAM: You are a wicked man, Robert Foster.

ROBERT: Aren't we all?

Exit ROBERT, leaving WILLIAM deeply disturbed. Exit WILLIAM.

SCENE 3

The Smith home. EMMA SMITH is looking through some papers. Joseph enters and kisses her on the cheek:

JOSEPH: Good afternoon, darling. What are you reading?

EMMA: The Female Relief Society minutes. I had Eliza bring them over when she came to teach the children. Some of the women had some urgent questions about something you said to us.

JOSEPH: Oh? I'm surprised they didn't nod off.

EMMA: Believe me, you were saying some—*controversial* things. Like this: "...the Society should move according to the ancient Priesthood, hence there should be a select Society separate from all the evils of the world, choice, virtuous and holy— Said he was going to make of this Society a kingdom of priests as in Enoch's day—as in Paul's day ..."

JOSEPH: You're right. That's scandalous. I'll apologize to them tomorrow.

EMMA: Seriously, Joseph, what does this mean?

JOSEPH: What do you think it means?

EMMA: I dare not hope.

JOSEPH: If I am given time, Emma, I will reveal to you every key and principle the Lord has taught me. You will be able to pass the angels that stand as sentinels and become a lady of light beyond anything you could have expected. A priestess. A queen. A goddess.

EMMA: That is what I wanted to—wait, what do you mean, “If I am given time?” Of course you have time.

JOSEPH: Oh, Emma, listen! We must all prepare to receive those revelations, or else we can’t have them. I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them.

EMMA: Am I ready to receive them?

JOSEPH: I don’t know, are you?

(Beat.)

Where are the children?

EMMA: Working on their lessons with Eliza.

JOSEPH: I’m glad that you and Sister Snow are such good friends.

EMMA: She’s been a great comfort to me. And so intelligent! I need that kind of conversation! There is no woman who stimulates me more than she does. And she does a marvelous job teaching the children.

JOSEPH: Just because I didn’t have the opportunities of an education doesn’t mean that my children won’t. They’ll be like their mother in that regard.

EMMA: If I needed to marry an educated man, I would have.

JOSEPH: And if you had that choice to make again?

EMMA: You don’t need to ask that question, Joseph. You know my heart.

JOSEPH: Hear me out, Emma. If you had known what we have had to go through—the mobbings, the terrors, you and the children having to wander homeless in the winter storms while I lay in prison—the loss of so many of our dear, little ones. Would have you ...?

EMMA: Now stop it, Joseph. I love you. You mean the world to me.

JOSEPH: I love you, too, I always will. But ...

EMMA: Then we don’t need to have this conversation. Especially in the sunlight of our experience. After such a long journey, we are finally prospering.

JOSEPH: The Lord will require more of us. Our travails and pains are not over.

EMMA: The Lord has seen our sacrifices. He is pleased. He is satisfied.

JOSEPH: He will test us even as Abraham. He will wrench our very hearts strings.

EMMA: Joseph, stop it! The Lord tore out my heart strings when He took my children away!

(Beat.)

But I have submitted to that, I have submitted to Him every step of the way. He is satisfied. He must be.

JOSEPH: Emma, I know you, and I know your goodness, even when some others do not.

EMMA: I have never cared about the opinions of others.

JOSEPH: Another of your virtues. But, Emma, what you have had to endure in the name of the Lord—you must comfort yourself knowing that God is your friend in heaven, and that you have one true and living friend on earth, your husband.

EMMA: And I am your friend.

JOSEPH: *(Sober pause.)* Emma, you have borne every grief, every sacrifice—except one.

EMMA: No. We are through with that. You promised.

JOSEPH: Emma, the Lord's revelations cannot be so easily discarded. I wanted to please you, but more so I want to please God. You don't know the severity the angel put upon ...

EMMA: We are through with it! I will no longer listen to that principle from hell! How can you ...? After everything, how can you still ...?

JOSEPH: How can you ask me to deny an angel of the Lord?

EMMA: If you value our marriage, never mention it again.

JOSEPH: Emma, please ...

EMMA: It's not from God, Joseph. It can't be.

Enter ELIZA SNOW, initially unseen.

JOSEPH: Emma! You are forcing me into an impossible ...

EMMA: No, you are forcing me! If you continue to press this, then there is no hope for us!

ELIZA clears her throat.

EMMA: Eliza!

ELIZA SNOW: I am sorry. I didn't mean to ...

EMMA: No, it's all right, Eliza. This conversation is over. Isn't it, Joseph?

(Silent beat.)

How were the children today?

ELIZA: I've been sent by the children to deliver an urgent message to Joseph: they say that they have been kidnapped by Captain Kidd and his pirates who often sail upon the fish pond. If their father doesn't save them soon, they may have to walk the plank.

JOSEPH: Yes, urgent indeed. Captain Smith will go to the rescue.

Exit JOSEPH. Uncomfortable silence and then—

ELIZA: He's really just one of the children, isn't he?

EMMA: Yes, and sometimes children need to be disciplined.

ELIZA: Well, *your* children are very well behaved. Except perhaps that big one who just bounded out of here. He is a tough nut to crack, that is sure.

They both smile at each other.

EMMA: Joseph and I are deeply grateful for you, Eliza. Joseph is a little self-conscious about his lack of formal schooling. He doesn't want his children to suffer the same embarrassment.

ELIZA: That's only natural.

EMMA: Can you imagine a man like him doing what he's done without the aid of Heaven? He couldn't have composed a well written letter in those days, much less the Book of Mormon.

ELIZA: If the world could only see what we see. Then all the mobs would stop.

EMMA: Would they?

ELIZA: Of course.

EMMA: Perhaps it would only anger them even more. You are right about that one, the world does not know him. There are parts of him which even I don't know—they are too deep and mysterious for me.

ELIZA: Nonsense. The Lord has made you equal to your husband. There is one speech of his that I loved. I borrowed Brother Wilford's notes and committed to it memory: "The things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man, if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity—thou must commune with God."

EMMA: (*Strangely affected:*) It is ironic that such a rustic man could revolutionize so much. In the first days of the Church, the things he taught were simple and—understandable. But since we've come to Nauvoo ...

ELIZA: Hasn't he become glorious? The refiner's fire of Missouri truly made a great man out of him!

EMMA: I don't know.

(With a strained smile)

I liked it when I was smarter than him.

(Beat.)

But, as you said—now we are to be equals.

ELIZA: Perhaps there was purpose in his supposed ignorance. It leaves so much more room for the education of God when we don't cling too tightly to fallen man's ways.

EMMA: Yes.

ELIZA: Uncluttered. No worldly theories of Babylon to block the way. No customs or ...

EMMA:... traditional values ...

ELIZA.... we become so open to the revelations of God ...

EMMA.... the revelations of God. He preached recently: “what many people call sin is not sin; I do many things to break down superstition, and I will break it down.”

(Beat.)

Purposes. God has his purposes.

ELIZA: Emma?

(EMMA begins to cry. ELIZA freezes in surprise and then rushes to embrace Emma.)

You have friends, my dear. What’s wrong?

EMMA: Am I a wicked woman?

ELIZA: What? No, of course not!

EMMA: I can be so jealous hearted.

Long pause.

ELIZA: Emma, your husband is a prophet of God.

EMMA: I know that. You think I don’t know that?

ELIZA: He is a righteous man. The things he teaches are true.

EMMA: Eliza, you don’t know what you are saying. You don’t know what is—oh, I can’t even say it! Are you so sure? Are you so sure that everything he teaches is true?

ELIZA: Well, probably not everything. I’m sure that he’s not a perfect man. You of all people would know his faults. His humanity. You see that, more intimately than most do. Yet you also know his Greatness. His Calling. Don’t let your familiarity with him block you from what you know.

EMMA: Oh, and what do I know, pray tell?

ELIZA: You know that God talks to him. That he is God’s friend.

EMMA: *(Beat.)* I suppose I do know that.

ELIZA: Can I tell you about my first impressions of Joseph?

EMMA: Yes, I would like that.

EMMA nestles her head into ELIZA’s lap. ELIZA begins stroking her hair.

ELIZA: The first time I saw your husband, he’d called at my father’s with Sidney Rigdon, who had been our Campbellite pastor. Sidney was convinced that Joseph was a prophet by then and was telling everyone in his congregation. I was skeptical, to say the least. But I caught Joseph when he thought he was alone, warming himself by our fire. As I watched him from the shadows, I scrutinized his face as closely as I could without attracting his attention. He was at ease, calm—he had a peace that I have never observed in liars. I decided his was an honest face. In that firelight playing on his countenance, I could not doubt his relaxed, peaceful face.

EMMA: And doesn’t he have a wonderful face?

ELIZA smiles, but then catches herself. There is a pause before she continues—

ELIZA: It took me a long time to join this Church. I was incredulous at first. Cynical. Yet the Spirit bore witness to me of the truth. When I was—when I was taught things that were very difficult for me to understand, I could stand on that Spirit which gave me so much more faith and courage in my convictions.

EMMA: You have been a true friend to me, Eliza.

ELIZA: I—I hope we can be even more than that to each other, Emma. I consider us like sisters. When all these things are worked out, I hope we can be so much more.

SCENE 4

Lights cross fade to HYRUM SMITH and JOSEPH wrestling. HYRUM seems to have the upper hand, but then Joseph accomplishes a reversal.

HYRUM: You're not going to pin me, you're not going to pin me ...

JOSEPH pins HYRUM on his back.

JOSEPH: *(With a mischievous smile)* I pinned you.

HYRUM: Little brother, you're gettin' my goat.

JOSEPH helps HYRUM to his feet.

JOSEPH: That's not difficult with a self-serious fellow like you.

HYRUM: Someday I'll be able to best you, you know.

JOSEPH: Stick to your gentleman's games. When you get a little more muscles on those bones of yours, then maybe I can have a little bit of fun with you.

JOSEPH laughs and turns away.

HYRUM: I'll show you how a true gentleman wrestles!

HYRUM tackles JOSEPH from behind.

JOSEPH: Cheater!

The two begin to wrestle again.

HYRUM: You're not going to pin me, you're not going to pin me ...

Once again, JOSEPH pins HYRUM.

JOSEPH: I pinned you.

HYRUM: All right, my goat is got.

JOSEPH: Want to go two out of three?

HYRUM: I don't know ...

HYRUM suddenly springs on JOSEPH. Again, they wrestle. Enter WILLIAM.

WILLIAM: Excuse me, Brethren ...

JOSEPH: *(With a laugh)* Can't you see we're busy, William?

HYRUM: You're not going to pin me, you're not going to pin me ...

JOSEPH pins HYRUM.

JOSEPH: I pinned you.

HYRUM: All right, I may have pulled something ...

JOSEPH: We even had an audience to view your shame this time!

(JOSEPH helps HYRUM up.)

The Bible says that there must be two or three witnesses in all things, after all.

(Beat.)

Wanna wrestle, William?

WILLIAM: Joseph, do you really think it is best for people to see servants of God tussling around on the ground?

JOSEPH: Why not? Jacob wrestled with an angel. It is perfectly scriptural.

WILLIAM: And you, Hyrum! I know Joseph is sometimes—untraditional—but I wouldn't have expected to see you in such a state!

HYRUM: *(To Joseph)* You call *me* serious.

WILLIAM: Joseph, I really must bring all of this to your attention. Not only the wrestling and the baseball and the games with that trouble making brood ...

JOSEPH: "Suffer the little children," William.

WILLIAM:... but now you've also let Thomas Lyne infect Nauvoo with those pernicious plays.

JOSEPH: Wait, are you being serious? I wept during their production of *Pizarro* at the Masonic Hall.

HYRUM: I thought it was a lovely production, too. Did you see it, William?

WILLIAM: No, certainly not! But I heard the stories! To have an apostle like Brigham Young—an apostle!—dressed up like a pagan, Incan priest!

JOSEPH: *(With a subversive smile)* Brother Lyne told me that he should have been more careful casting Brigham as the High Priest—he may get used to it!

WILLIAM: And still you joke! We are the leaders of this people. We need to set an example. We should discountenance houses of revelry and dancing, dram shops, theaters—they lead away from virtue, from holiness—they will lead us to vice and debauchery!

HYRUM: Calm down, William. As members of the First Presidency, you and I certainly have the right to counsel Joseph, but let's not get ...

WILLIAM: We need to be cleansed, or we shall fall!

HYRUM: That is enough, William!

WILLIAM: Joseph, I want you to consider what we were talking about the other day.

JOSEPH: What *you* were talking about.

WILLIAM: You are this community's religious leader, as well as their civic leader. As mayor and prophet, so much depends on you. We ought to establish some stricter community guidelines about what is and is not allowed in Nauvoo.

HYRUM: William, really, let's talk about something more ...

WILLIAM: (*Ignoring Hyrum.*) And we should not only focus on behavior, but the root of behavior. Belief. We need a more unified belief system. I've told you again and again, let us establish some more creeds of belief. Relate it all back into one system. There are other religions where a man must believe or be kicked out of their church. This is reasonable ...

JOSEPH: I want the liberty to believe as I please, it feels so good not to be trammled. It does not prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine.

WILLIAM: Joseph, there are odd beliefs, dangerous beliefs that are circulating in Nauvoo. Ridiculously, some are even saying that some of those beliefs are originating with you.

HYRUM: I am not sure if I know what is being discussed here ...

WILLIAM: Of course we know that you are a pure man, Joseph. A prophet. Let us declare to the world pure doctrine that proves such. Let's establish what our creed truly is.

JOSEPH: (*Steely*) The Latter-day Saints have no creed. We are ready to believe all true principles that exist, as they are made manifest to us.

WILLIAM: You can't mean that. Perhaps you have been influenced ...

JOSEPH: Yes. By angels and the Holy Spirit.

WILLIAM: I have long questioned the choice of some of the people you surround yourself with. Their demeanor, their habits, the language they use ...

JOSEPH: William, I love a man better who swears a stream as long as my arm, yet deals justice to his neighbors and mercifully deals his substance to the poor. I love that man much better than the long, smooth faced hypocrite.

Tense pause.

WILLIAM: I hope you'll see reason soon.

Exit WILLIAM.

HYRUM: It wouldn't hurt to use a little tact, Joseph.

JOSEPH: And William was so subtle?

HYRUM: Joseph ...

JOSEPH: Hyrum, you have the integrity of Job. God loves the loyalty you have shown me and His Church.

HYRUM: Yes, Joseph, but ...

JOSEPH: But God will test even your integrity, Hyrum.

HYRUM: What are you talking about?

JOSEPH: What if God were to reveal to you something that would shake even your faith?

HYRUM: I am ready to follow God in any circumstance, but ...

JOSEPH: The rumors that William has heard—you have heard them as well?

HYRUM: *(Pause.)* Yes. And denounced them.

JOSEPH: Then keep denouncing them. We need to be careful with how we proceed with this.

HYRUM: Joseph, I don't understand. They aren't true. You would never do that. God would never condone that.

JOSEPH: But what if, in certain circumstances, He did? If He commanded it, even. Hyrum ...

HYRUM: I don't want to hear it. Joseph, I love you too much to indulge such fancies.

JOSEPH: Hyrum ...

HYRUM: I don't want to hear it!

Exit HYRUM.

JOSEPH: *(Calling after Hyrum)* God will try you, Hyrum! Even a man as righteous as you.

Exit JOSEPH.

SCENE 5

Lights rise on a social gathering. HYRUM, JOHN TAYLOR, LEONORA TAYLOR, ACTOR 4 as DAN JONES, WILLIAM, and JANE LAW are among the group, in addition to the other ACTORS, who are intermingling with them. ACTOR 2 is playing Hyrum's wife, MARY FIELDING SMITH.

MARY FIELDING: *(To Hyrum)* Darling, where's Joseph? Our host has abandoned the party!

HYRUM: Emma needed some help in the kitchen, Mary. He'll be out in a moment.

ACTOR 1: Help in the kitchen, did you say?

LEONORA: Brother Joseph does many such things for his wife. He proves himself a very thoughtful and

loving husband in that.

Enter JOSEPH, unseen by the others, carrying a platter of food. Sensing that the conversation is about him, he remains quiet to overhear—

ACTOR 1: Such home habits are not in accord with my idea of a great man's self respect.

MARY FIELDING: Be careful what you say, sir, for Joseph is a great man.

ACTOR 1: And that's why I bring it up. I don't mean offense, of course.

MARY FIELDING: Then what do you mean?

ACTOR 1: All I mean is, if the prophet were here, then I would give him some good natured, corrective advice.

MARY FIELDING and HYRUM notice JOSEPH. JOSEPH puts his finger to his lips. They nod and smile inconspicuously.

MARY FIELDING: So, if the Prophet were here, what would you say to him?

Enter EMMA and ELIZA, also carrying food, drinks, utensils, etc. Joseph signals them to be quiet as well.

ACTOR 1: I would remind him of every phase of his greatness and call to his mind of tasks that were performed that were too menial for such as he. To work in the kitchen is too great a humiliation!

LEONORA: *(Also catching JOSEPH's eye)* A humiliation, do you say?

ACTOR 1: Too terrible a humiliation! For he is the head, and he should not do it.

JOSEPH: *(Revealing himself, with platter in hand.)* If there be humiliation in a man's house, who else should or could bear the humiliation?

ACTOR 1: Oh, Brother Joseph!

JOSEPH: Well, my friend? Who should bear it?

ACTOR 1: Well, er, Brother Joseph, I just wanted you to see things in a clearer light. A woman is ennobled when she serves her husband dutifully, wouldn't you agree? Take my wife for example. You must admit, my wife does much more hard work than does your wife.

JOSEPH: Then I pity your wife.

ACTOR 1: Why—why, here now!

JOSEPH: Where is your wife now?

ACTOR 1: Doing as she ought to, finishing chores which she had neglected this afternoon.

JOSEPH: *(With a disapproving look)* If a man cannot learn in life to appreciate a wife and do his duty to her, he need not expect to be given one in the hereafter.

There is a tense silence.

ACTOR 1: I—I'm not really quite sure what to say to that.

JOSEPH: I would suggest that you go relieve your wife of those chores.

ACTOR 1, abashed, grabs his hat and coat and then exits. JOSEPH takes this opportunity to speak to the group, and then more particularly to EMMA.

It is the duty of a husband to love, cherish, and nourish his wife, and cleave unto her and none else; he ought to honor her as himself, and he ought to regard her feelings with tenderness, for she is his flesh, and his bones. It is not the place of the man to rule over his wife as a tyrant, neither as one who is fearful or jealous that his wife will get out of her place, and prevent him from exercising his authority.

EMMA: Amen!

DAN: Here, Sister Smith, let me help you with that.

EMMA: Thank you, Brother Jones.

JOHN: Let me give you a hand, Sister Snow.

ELIZA: I appreciate it, Elder Taylor.

JANE approaches EMMA, taking her by the arm and talking to her privately. Emma is slightly uncomfortable with the intimacy of the gesture.

JANE: You have a mighty fine husband, Emma.

EMMA: Why, uh, thank you.

JANE: Now if only William could be so thoughtful.

EMMA: William is a good man, Jane.

JANE: Oh, he's good. I see that. We have our troubles, though.

EMMA: Truly, that's none of my ...

JANE: He's a little strict at times. And it would be nice to get out once in a while, beyond Church and—well, you ought to count your lucky stars, Emma.

EMMA: Now, Jane ...

JANE: The majority of women, we receive average men. Men who generally want to be good, but who suffer a bit in the faults which men seem so eager to display. Oh, but your husband. As humble as the earth, yet as bold and as expansive as the sky!

EMMA: Is it really appropriate to ...

JANE: You have married greatness, a man whose name shall go down through the generations! I would trade places with you in an instant.

EMMA: Jane!

JANE: Have I upset you?

EMMA: "Thou shalt not covet."

JANE: Oh, don't be angry, Emma. You misunderstand me.

EMMA: I certainly hope so.

JANE: But you must admit that your husband is admirable. A true prophet.

EMMA: Your prophet. My husband.

JANE: And you are a woman who is worthy of such a man. Really, I see that I have distressed you, I am so sorry. That was not my intention. Let's upon a different subject, shall we? Let's see, well, I was just down Parley Street the other day and I found this exquisite new shop ...

JANE's voice fades off. Enter PORTER ROCKWELL, looking disheveled, disoriented, and ragged. His face is hidden amidst his coat, hat, etc.

JOHN: (*Motioning to PORTER*) Joseph ...

JOSEPH: Who is that? A drunk?

DAN: Perhaps a Missourian, Joseph. This may be dangerous.

JOSEPH: Whoever he is, escort him out, Brethren.

JOHN, DAN, WILLARD, WILLIAM, and HYRUM go to PORTER and try to grab him. A struggle ensues.

PORTER ROCKWELL: Let me go!

WILLIAM: You won't get near him, you rascal!

JOSEPH: Brethren, wait!

(JOSEPH comes up to PORTER and gets a clear view of his face.)

Port?

PORTER: Now ain't that a fine way to greet a friend?

JOSEPH: Porter Rockwell! You're out of prison!

The men let PORTER go and JOSEPH embraces him.

PORTER: Just like you prophesied I would be.

JOSEPH: I hardly recognize you!

PORTER: That was awful obvious.

JOSEPH: I swear, Port, the time will come when good men will no longer have to bend under the oppression of illegal law suits and false imprisonments. But God has delivered you!

PORTER: Yeah, a miracle, I know—but I need to talk to you alone, Joseph.

WILLIAM: Surely, Brother Rockwell, you can discuss the matter here among friends.

PORTER: (*Giving WILLIAM a withering look*) I surely can't.

JOSEPH: All right, Port, let's just step outside then.

WILLIAM: Wait a minute, Joseph.

(Taking him aside)

Are you sure it's safe?

JOSEPH: If I'm not safe with Port, then I don't know who I would be safe with. Just the sight of him scares most scoundrels away.

WILLIAM: That's not what I mean. He's just come back from the hands of your enemies, Joseph. How did he get out? Perhaps he's in league with them now. Perhaps they set him free to trap you.

JOSEPH: That man gave up his freedom to defend the Church.

WILLIAM: They say he tried to murder Governor Boggs!

JOSEPH: If so, as I said, he gave up his freedom to defend the Church. Boggs tried to kill all of us.

WILLIAM: Are you defending ...?

JOSEPH: Porter Rockwell puts God first and has always been a solid and true friend to me. I trust Porter Rockwell almost more than anyone else in the world.

WILLIAM: He's a rough man, Joseph.

JOSEPH: The Lord does not look on the outside appearance, William. He's been my friend since I was young in Palmyra. Porter has the pure heart of a child.

WILLIAM: Porter Rockwell is anything but a child! I'm not sure if I trust him anymore. I'm not sure if I ever did.

JOSEPH: I trust him even more than I trust you. Now excuse me.

(To PORTER)

Come on, Port.

Exit JOSEPH and PORTER, leaving WILLIAM exasperated. HYRUM approaches WILLIAM.

HYRUM: William?

WILLIAM: Yes?

HYRUM: What you said to me and Joseph the other day ...

WILLIAM: *(Taking HYRUM aside)* I know it upsets you, but ...

HYRUM: There seems to be truth in it. I have been hearing the same rumors from other sources now and—well, Joseph said something to me that could be interpreted ...

WILLIAM: Yes?

HYRUM: We must get to the bottom of this.

WILLIAM: I knew you would come around! William Marks and I have been talking and we feel it best to bring it before the public. Especially coming from us, that will make Joseph respond.

HYRUM: Wait—publicly?

WILLIAM: I don't see any way around it.

HYRUM: I don't want to publicly go against Joseph.

WILLIAM: Do you agree with these new teachings?

HYRUM: I—I'm not sure if I understand them, but if what I hear is true ...

WILLIAM: We must act quickly, Hyrum. This new teaching is attracting the highest men in the Church.

HYRUM: Then we may not be able to reverse it.

WILLIAM: Are we agreed?

HYRUM: I want to try to see Joseph about it first.

WILLIAM: What would that change?

HYRUM: If Joseph has a revelation on the subject—I would believe it.

WILLIAM: Hyrum, no, it can't possibly be true. A man is supposed to only have one wife.

HYRUM: But, you see, William, that is it. I have already had more than one wife.

WILLIAM: You were a widower, Hyrum. That is a completely different case.

HYRUM: I have thought a great deal about this since the conflict the other day. If I go to heaven, and if I were to be presented with that good woman over in heaven, my dear Mary, and if then I was presented with my dear Lovina, who is already there, but told that I must choose between them, am I to just abandon the one and cleave to the other?

WILLIAM: Perhaps it is as Jesus said, that we neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels.

HYRUM: No, the scripture says that in heaven they neither marry, nor are given in marriage—that doesn't mean that we are not supposed to be sealed together on earth. This is the time of our probation. Jesus said, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh."

WILLIAM: I think you are wresting the scriptures, my friend ...

HYRUM: Am I? Any more so than you are? Jesus said they are *no more twain*—one flesh!

WILLIAM: Not you, too, Hyrum. The root of this is wickedness.

HYRUM: How do you know that? Has God told you anything about it?

WILLIAM: Monogamous marriage has been the bedrock of society for ...

HYRUM: God may or may not talk to you, William. But I know he talks to Joseph.

WILLIAM: Hyrum, it can't possibly be ...

HYRUM: Don't worry, William. We shall know all about it soon.

Lights dim and blackout on the party as JOSEPH and PORTER enter alone.

JOSEPH: So what is this about, Port? Is everything all right?

PORTER: Joseph, when they captured me they tried to make me go traitor on you. They wanted me to lead you away so that they could capture you. They told me to name my price.

JOSEPH: And?

PORTER: I told them they were barking up the wrong tree. But I got a piece of disturbin' information. They got an inside source.

JOSEPH: What do you mean?

PORTER: There are traitors. I don't know who, but it sounded like some of them were high up. Perhaps some of the apostles. Or the First Presidency. People who know you—who are close to you.

JOSEPH: It's come to that again, has it?

PORTER: Joseph, there are folks in Nauvoo who want you dead.

Lights fade and PORTER exits.

SCENE 6

JOSEPH steps into a light, addressing the audience.

JOSEPH: I calculate to edify you with the simple truths of heaven.

ACTOR 2 as MARY ELIZABETH ROLLINS LIGHTNER enters another light, addressing the audience.

MARY ELIZABETH: It is true I have been in the Church from its beginning. I have been acquainted with all those who were first members of this Church, with all those who saw the plates and handled them, with even those who saw the angel Moroni who came to them.

JOSEPH: There are but very few beings in the world who understand rightly the character of God. If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend their own character—they do not understand their own relationship to God.

MARY ELIZABETH: There was a day when Joseph got up to speak to us. As he began to speak very solemnly and very earnestly, all at once his countenance changed and he stood mute. Those who looked at him that day said there was a search light within him. I could not take my eyes off him; he got so white that anyone who saw him would have thought he was transparent. I remember I thought I could almost see the cheek bones through the flesh.

JOSEPH: What kind of being is God? Ask yourselves! I again repeat the question: What kind of being is God? Does any man or woman know?

MARY ELIZABETH: He said, "Do you know who has been in your midst?" Martin Harris said, "It was our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." Joseph put his hand down on Martin and said: "God revealed that to

you. The Savior has been in your midst this night and I want you to remember it. There is a veil over your eyes for you could not endure to look upon Him. You must be fed with milk, not with strong meat.”

JOSEPH: Turn your thoughts in your hearts, and say, Have any of you seen him? Or communed with him? Here is a question that will from this time henceforth occupy your attention while you live.

MARY ELIZABETH: I never took my eye off his countenance. Then he knelt down and prayed. I have never heard anything like it before or since. The spirit rested upon us in every fiber of our bodies, and we received a sermon from the lips of the representative of God.

JOSEPH: The Apostle says that this is eternal life: to know the only wise God—if the declaration of the Apostle be true, he will realize that unless he knows God he has not eternal life for there can be eternal life on no other principle.

MARY ELIZABETH: Every principle that has been given in the Church by the prophet is true. He preached polygamy and not only did he preach it, but he practiced it. I am a living witness to it.

JOSEPH: If I can get you to know Him, I can bring you to Him. And if so, all persecution against me will cease. This will let you know that I am His servant, for I speak as one having authority and not as a scribe.

MARY ELIZABETH: It was given to him before he gave it to the Church. An angel came to him and the last time he came with a drawn sword in his hand and told Joseph if he did not go into that principle he would slay him.

JOSEPH: Open your ears and eyes all ye ends of the earth! If the veil were rent today and if you were to see God today, you would see Him in all the person, image, fashion, and very form of man, like yourselves. For Adam was a man formed in the very fashion and image of God.

MARY ELIZABETH: Emma may deny it, but she took the two Partridge sisters by the hand and gave them to Joseph. I asked him if Emma knew about me, and he said, “Emma thinks the world of you.” I was not sealed to him until I had a witness. I had been dreaming for a number of years I was his wife. I thought I was a great sinner. I prayed to God to take it from me, for I felt it was a sin; but when Joseph sent for me he told me of all these things.

JOSEPH: You have got to learn to make yourselves Gods in order to save yourselves and be kings and priests to God. I want you to know that God in the last days, while certain individuals are proclaiming His name, is not trifling with you nor me.

MARY ELIZABETH: “Well,” said I, “don’t you think it was an angel of the devil who told you these things?” “No,” said he, “it was an angel of God. God almighty showed me the difference between an angel of light and Satan’s angels. They called me a false and a fallen prophet, but I am more in favor with my God this day than I ever was in all my life before.”

JOSEPH: God is glorified in the salvation and exaltation of his creatures. This is good doctrine. It tastes good. You say honey is sweet and so do I. I can also taste the spirit and principles of eternal life, and so can you. You taste them and I know you believe them. I rejoice more and more.

MARY ELIZABETH: Well, I talked with him for a long time, and I finally told him I would never be

sealed to him until I had a witness. Said he, “You shall have a witness.” Said I, “If God told you that, why does he not tell me?” He asked me if I was going to be a traitor. “I have never told a mortal I had such a talk with a married man.” And I a married woman.

JOSEPH: I have intended my remarks to all—to all the rich and poor, bond and free, great and small. I have no enmity against any man. I love all men—I love you all, but I hate your deeds. I am their best friend, and if persons miss their mark it is their own fault. If I reprove a man, and he hate me, he is a fool; for I love all men, especially my brethren and sisters.

MARY ELIZABETH: Well, Brigham Young was with me. He said if I had a witness he wanted to know it. “Why should I tell you?” said I. “Well,” said he, “I want to know for myself. Do you know what Joseph said? Since we left the office the angel appeared to him and told him he was well pleased with him and you should have a witness.” I made it a subject of prayer and I worried about it because I did not dare to speak to a living being except Brigham Young. I knelt down and if a poor mortal ever prayed, I did.

JOSEPH: You don’t know me—you never will. You never knew my heart. No man knows my history. I cannot do it. I shall never undertake it. I don’t blame you for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I could not have believed it myself. I never did harm any man since I have been born into the world. My voice is always for peace. I never think evil, nor think anything to the harm my fellow man. When I am called at the trump and weighed in the balance, you will know me then. I add no more. God bless you. Amen.

Exit JOSEPH.

MARY ELIZABETH: A few nights after that an angel of the Lord came to me. I gazed upon the clothes and figure but the eyes were like lightning. I was frightened almost to death for a moment. The angel leaned over me and the light was very great, although it was night. When my aunt woke up she said she had seen a figure in white robes pass from our bed to my mother’s bed and pass out the window. Joseph came up the next Sabbath. He said, “Have you had a witness yet?” I told him, “No.” “Well,” said he, “the angel expressly told me you should have.” Said I, “I have not had a witness, but I have seen something I have never seen before. I saw an angel and I was frightened almost to death. I did not speak.” He studied a while and put his elbows on his knees and his face in his hands. He looked up and said, “How could have you been such a coward?” Said I, “I was weak.” “Did you think to say, ‘Father, help me?’” “No.” “Well, if you had just said that, your mouth would have been opened for that was an angel of the living God. He came to you with more knowledge, intelligence, and light than I have ever dared reveal.” I said, “If that was an angel of light, why did he not speak to me?” Then Joseph said, “You covered your face and for this reason the angel was insulted.” I went forward and was sealed to him. I know he had other wives and I have known some of them from childhood up. I knew he had three children. They told me. I think two are living today but they are not known as his children as they go by other names. These things I can testify as the living truth.

Blackout on MARY ELIZABETH:

SCENE 7

JOHN TAYLOR enters. He looks distraught. He goes over to a table and sits in it, placing his face into his hands. LEONORA calls from offstage:

LEONORA: (*Offstage*) John, is that you?

(JOHN doesn't respond.)

John?

JOHN: Yes, Leonora, it's me.

LEONORA: (*Offstage*) How was your meeting with the Prophet?

JOHN: It was—Leonora, please, come in here.

LEONORA enters, drying a tea cup.

LEONORA: Yes, John, I'm ...

JOHN looks up and LEONORA immediately recognizes that something is amiss.

What's wrong?

JOHN: Sit down, dear.

LEONORA: Did somebody die?

JOHN: Please, Leonora, sit down.

LEONORA sits across the table from JOHN.

LEONORA: Now what's the matter?

They freeze, or lights dim on them, while ACTOR 4 as HEBER KIMBALL enters on another part of the stage, in a similar distressed situation as John, albeit more disheveled. ACTOR 2 as VILATE KIMBALL enters as well—

VILATE: Come, Heber, tell me what is the matter. You have been like this for days.

HEBER: I—I can't. My heart can't stand it.

VILATE: Is it something I have done?

HEBER: No! Never think that. You are my precious, precious friend. You are the wife of my youth—the love of my heart. Vilate, I love you more than I can say.

VILATE: Then why can you not tell me how to help you? You have never kept your thoughts from me before.

HEBER: And that is why this so painful for me. It is so painful *because* I love you.

VILATE: Heber ...

HEBER: Oh, I can't! I can't!

HEBER exits. JOHN and LEONORA unfreeze/lights raise, and their scene now overlaps with VILATE and HEBER's—

LEONORA: John, that's impossible!

JOHN: It's true—it's true. How I wish it wasn't!

VILATE goes into a praying position.

VILATE: Oh, dear Lord, please, please, hear this prayer of mine. Heber and I, we may not be perfect, we may not be as refined and polished as perhaps we ought to be—but I know that thou dost love us and that thou dost hear and answer our prayers.

LEONORA: It's reprehensible!

VILATE: Dearest God in Heaven, there's something wrong with Heber ...

JOHN: I know, I know. I don't know how to handle it ...

VILATE: He's not eating. He's not sleeping. He's been going on like this for days.

LEONORA: You don't know how to handle it? You're not considering this?

JOHN: He's a Prophet, Leonora.

LEONORA: It's horrible!

(She throws the tea cup to the ground. It shatters.)

It's inconceivable!

JOHN: It's not my word—I did not make it!

LEONORA: Could it not be that Brother Joseph is wrong in this? That he is deceived? That he is deceiving?

JOHN: I will not call Joseph a fallen prophet. I will not allow that same temptation overcome me that overcame Parley in Kirtland!

LEONORA: Will you allow yourself to be made a lecherous fiend?

JOHN: Leonora, you know that I have always entertained strict ideas of virtue. This is appalling to me. The idea of going and asking a young lady to be married to me when I already have a wife? It's a thing calculated to stir up feelings from the innermost depths of the human soul!

VILATE: If you could help me understand what is troubling him. If you could open to my mind how to get around this thing which is driving a wedge into his heart—and between us ...

JOHN: I have never in my life seen a time when I have known a man deceiving a woman and not thought him to be a scoundrel. It is often done in the world, where the man is received into society and the poor woman is looked upon as a pariah and an outcast ...

VILATE: Thy will be done.

JOHN: I have always looked upon such a thing as infamous, and upon such a man as a villain.

VILATE: I wish to understand. God, I will trust you. I will be loyal. I will submit to thee.

A bright light suddenly flashes on VILATE and she puts her hands up to shade her eyes. The

lights blackout on VILATE while the scene continues with JOHN and LEONORA.

JOHN: Hence, with the feelings that I have entertained, nothing but a knowledge of God, and the revelations of God, and the truth of them, could have induced me to embrace such a principle as this. God sent me from England to Canada because I prayed for the truth. And it was there that Parley Pratt preached the Gospel to us, it was there that I saw him heal a blind woman, and it was there that the Spirit of God wrought upon me and told me this was the truth! I will not abandon God, nor His prophet. I will trust, I will be loyal, I will submit to the Lord even if it kills me!

LEONORA looks at him, stunned. Tears come suddenly to her eyes.

LEONORA: Oh, John ...

JOHN: Leonora ...

JOHN goes to LEONORA and embraces her. Blackout on JOHN and LEONORA, while lights raise again on HEBER, weeping and praying. Enter VILATE.

VILATE: Darling?

HEBER: Vilate, I'm sorry. I didn't mean for you to see me so ...

VILATE: Shh. Heber, I understand.

HEBER: No, Vilate, you don't understand. I am ...

VILATE: Heber, what you have kept from me, the Lord has shown me.

HEBER: What?

VILATE: I prayed and the Lord has shown me. He has shown me in a vision the order of Celestial Marriage. It has been made very clear to me, in its details. I also saw in my vision your—your other wife. Sarah Noon.

HEBER: Is it possible?

VILATE: I know what you have had to do, and the Lord shall transform it into something glorious. It is all right, Heber. It is all right.

HEBER: (*Crying, he embraces Vilate*) Oh, you lovely, lovely woman! God has told you! He has told you! I have been suffering as if in hell, Vilate. I didn't know—I didn't know how ...

VILATE: (*Also crying*) Now we know. We know.

HEBER: I thought I might lose you. How could have I expected you to accept this?

VILATE: I am yours. And when we are sealed, I will be yours forever. I covenant to stand by you and honor the principle. I covenant!

HEBER: I haven't lost you. I haven't lost you ...

VILATE: Shhh—oh, Heber, this is going to be hard.

Lights dim to blackout.

SCENE 8

WILLARD enters. HYRUM enters running behind him.

HYRUM: Brother Richards. Brother Richards!

WILLARD: Brother Hyrum, good afternoon.

HYRUM: I want to talk to you.

WILLARD: All right. Let's talk then.

HYRUM: I have a question to ask you ...

WILLARD: Yes?

HYRUM: I do know that you and the Twelve know something that I do not know. I know that there is something or other which I do not understand that is revealed to the Twelve. Is this so?

WILLARD: I do not know anything about what you know, but I know what I know.

HYRUM: I've mistrusted for a long time that Joseph had received a revelation that a man should have more than one wife—and he has hinted as much to me, but I would not bear it. I am convinced that there is something that has not been told me.

WILLARD: Brother Hyrum, I will tell you about this thing which you do not know if you will swear that you will never say another word against Joseph, and his doings, and the doctrines he is preaching to the people.

HYRUM: With all my heart. I want to know the truth.

Lights cross fade immediately to JOSEPH and WILLIAM entering.

WILLIAM: Please, Joseph, there must be some mistake.

JOSEPH: There is no mistake.

WILLIAM: Please ...

JOSEPH: William, there is no mistake in this. Whatever mistakes we perpetuate in its practice, the principle was taught to me from God.

WILLIAM: How can you force us to do this? Your enemies will see this as further signs of religious corruption.

JOSEPH: Have I ever exercised any compulsion over any man? Have I not given him the liberty of disbelieving any doctrine I have preached, if he saw fit? That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another. God said, 'Thou shalt not kill'; at another time He said, 'Thou shalt utterly destroy.' This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted—by

revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason of it until long after the events transpire.

WILLIAM: How can it be?

JOSEPH: The Lord's thoughts are not our thoughts, his ways are not our ways. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason until long after.

WILLIAM: This will certainly not be popular with the people. Does God want a nation of apostates?

JOSEPH: I'm not concerned about what will be popular with the people. I am concerned about the commandments of God.

WILLIAM: Joseph, have we not been faithful? Would God require such a horrible thing? Have we not done enough, sacrificed enough? Have we not become a righteous people?

JOSEPH: Men may preach and practice everything except those things which God commands us to do, and we will be damned at last. We may tithe and mint and rue, and still not obey the commandments of God. It matters not whether the principle is popular or unpopular, I will always maintain a true principle, even if I stand alone in it.

WILLIAM: How do you know?

JOSEPH: If the angel had conversed with you, William, then you might understand.

WILLIAM: If you will not do just this one thing, then this will become the greatest Christian Church.

JOSEPH: That may be true, but God has commanded me.

WILLIAM: Joseph, if you do this, you'll be damned.

JOSEPH: If I don't do this, I'll be damned.

WILLIAM: I can't follow you on this.

JOSEPH: Then you have no interest in the Kingdom of God.

JOSEPH exits, leaving WILLIAM distraught. WILLIAM exits.

SCENE 9

*The Smith household. WILLARD is at a desk writing. EMMA is upstairs in her room, reading.
Enter DAN JONES.*

WILLARD: Brother Jones?

DAN: Willard. Eliza said that I could find Joseph here.

WILLARD: He stepped out for a moment. He'll be back soon. Have a seat, Dan.

DAN: What's that you're doing, Brother Richards?

WILLARD: Work.

DAN: What kind of work?

WILLARD: Important work.

DAN: What kind of important work?

WILLARD: Work that requires focus.

DAN: You're a fountain of information.

WILLARD: You won't leave me alone until your curiosity is satisfied, will you?

DAN: Nope.

WILLARD: I am looking over Joseph's history.

DAN: (*Rummaging through the papers*) You have nice handwriting.

WILLARD: (*Grabbing the papers back*) I need to have legibility. Joseph's history is very important. He dictates, I write.

DAN: I hear that you're here quite a lot—some say you see more of Joseph than even his own family.

WILLARD: I don't know about that. What I do know is that Joseph believes writing the history of this people is pivotal.

DAN: Will you write my history someday?

WILLARD: Well, that depends if you ever do anything worth writing about, Dan.

DAN: I suppose that may not be likely, eh?

WILLARD: I'd say not very likely at all.

DAN: You're a very big man, Brother Richards.

WILLARD: Pardon me?

DAN: I like Sister Richards. You have a very pretty wife.

WILLARD: I agree with you very much.

DAN: How did such a big man get such a pretty wife?

WILLARD: I got such a pretty wife because I went on a mission. We met in England. The Lord blesses those who go on missions. Remember that.

DAN: You met in England? How did you know she was for you?

WILLARD: Well, I knew before I even met her, I suppose.

DAN: How's that?

WILLARD: Heber Kimball was on a mission with me and he was in one part of England and I was in

another at the time. Then I get this letter from him which says, “Willard, I baptized your wife today.”

DAN: Yeah, I’ve heard of Heber’s funny knack. Propheying all over the place! He’s more comfortable propheying than I am singing! So how did you dupe her into agreeing? Buy her pearls and presents, promises that you couldn’t keep—moderately sized bribes?

Enter WILLIAM and JANE, unnoticed.

WILLARD: Why did you say you needed to see Joseph?

DAN: Can’t seem to remember, I’m having too much fun with you.

WILLARD: This really is important work.

DAN: How did you ask her? To marry you, I mean.

WILLARD: Her first name is Jennetta and her last name was Richards— just like mine, you see.

DAN: Your first name is Jennetta?

WILLARD: Do you want to hear this story or not?

DAN: I’ll behave.

WILLARD: When we met, we were both mutually attracted. Soon enough I said, “Richards is a good name. I never wanted to change it. Do you, Jennetta?” “No, I do not,” she replied. And she never did.

WILLIAM: So are you still in love with Jennetta then, Willard?

WILLARD: My love for Jennetta has only increased, William.

WILLIAM: Even with ...

(Glancing at DAN)

...recent developments?

JANE: William, please.

WILLARD: Especially with recent developments. She has proved as true as gold. I admire her all the more for being able to withstand its weight.

DAN: You know, perhaps I’d better go. I’ll drop by when there is less of a crowd.

WILLARD: I’ll tell Joseph you dropped by, Dan.

DAN: Then I’ll see you folks later.

Exit DAN.

WILLIAM: Now it’s a wonder how people are still a little squeamish about the subject!

JANE: William, you promised.

WILLARD: Why are you here, William?

Enter JOSEPH.

JOSEPH: Good afternoon, William. Good afternoon, Jane.

JANE: Good afternoon, Brother Joseph.

JOSEPH: Can you leave us alone for a moment, Willard?

WILLARD: Of course. If you need anything ...

JOSEPH: I'll let you know.

Exit WILLARD.

Have a seat. What can I do for you?

WILLIAM: Well, Jane and I have been discussing a great many things ...

JANE: And we wish to be sealed together, Brother Joseph.

WILLIAM: I know we've had our differences, Joseph, but this is important to us. The chance for us to be together—always. That is the part of the doctrine I do like.

JOSEPH: (*Pause, considering*) I wish I could help you.

WILLIAM: What do you mean?

JOSEPH: I cannot seal you together.

JANE: Brother Joseph ...

WILLIAM: Why? Why can't you seal us together? Aren't I coming to you? Aren't I proving that I believe that you have the sealing power?

JOSEPH: I'm sorry. You may not believe me, but I really am sorry that it must be like this.

WILLIAM: I'm coming to you, Joseph. I want God's blessings. Give me your reasons.

JOSEPH: Perhaps it would be best if you and I discussed this alone, William.

WILLIAM: No, Jane and I will hear it together.

JOSEPH: You don't know what you're saying.

WILLIAM: We will hear it together!

JOSEPH: (*Pause.*) You are an adulterer, William.

WILLIAM appears stunned. He then collects himself and turns to leave.

WILLIAM: Truly? Is that how you want to play this?

JANE: (*Shocked*) William?

WILLIAM: Let's go, Jane.

JOSEPH: William, with time this can be worked through, and then we can ...

WILLIAM: You crafty hypocrite, I will have none of it!

JOSEPH: Be careful, William.

JANE: Is it true?

WILLIAM: Will you take this man's word over mine?

JANE: Is it true?

WILLIAM: What if it were? Would that man be able to sit in judgment?

(To Joseph)

I saw how you treated John Bennett, Robert Foster, the Higbees—you tell a man he can have another wife, but you condemn a different man for mistakes with those same human passions!

JOSEPH: I am married to my wives. I am responsible for them. I am sealed to them. I have been commanded by God.

WILLIAM: All under the guise of religion! A fallen prophet!

EMMA stands atop the stairs, unnoticed.

JOSEPH: Be careful, William!

WILLIAM: What, you don't like to be crossed? Contradicted?

JOSEPH: When you condemn me, you condemn Abraham. You condemn Jacob. You condemn Moses. You condemn the holy prophets.

WILLIAM: That was another time! Another place!

JOSEPH: It is this time! This place! The Lord has revealed it! And He has not only revealed it to me. He has revealed it to the Twelve. To their wives. To Hyrum.

WILLIAM: Is Hyrum in this now?

JOSEPH: Yes.

WILLIAM: Your corrupting influence is astonishing. Has the Lord "revealed" it to Emma too then?

JOSEPH: Emma is—coming around. She has given me wives at times, but then the fear comes back. She still struggles, but that's natural. But we must make our flesh and our limited reason bend to God. We must prove to be worthy friends to Him.

WILLIAM: Is that how you're putting it? It makes it sound so nice and pure and correct. While I am the wicked one! Me!

JOSEPH: Pray about it. The Lord will reveal it to you.

WILLIAM: Only the devil would reveal such a thing.

JOSEPH: Just pray about it. Pour out your soul. Wrestle with God until you have an answer.

JANE: William, please, let's listen to what he has to say before we make rash judgments.

WILLIAM: Don't be duped into this, Jane.

JANE: No, hear me out. You've gotten upon your high moral horse about plural marriage, and yet you've hid this from me? Who is the hypocrite here, William?

WILLIAM: Jane, you're not understanding what's happening here.

JOSEPH: We can all work this out. With a little bit of patience and forgiveness ...

WILLIAM: No, Joseph, I don't want you touching my personal affairs. You think that everyone revolves around you, that everything must go through you. Well, this is my territory now, and I don't want you trespassing on it.

JOSEPH: All right, if that's how you want it.

JANE: William ...

WILLIAM: We are leaving!

Exit WILLIAM and then, reluctantly, JANE. EMMA reveals herself.

EMMA: Must it really be this way, Joseph?

JOSEPH: You know my answer to that.

EMMA: "When God commands, do it." I know.

JOSEPH: There is purpose in this.

EMMA: What if God bends us so much that we break?

JOSEPH: You won't break.

EMMA: Won't I?

JOSEPH: Emma, you're getting there. You've met the fury of men and devils. You've proven your worth. Don't let this stop you.

EMMA: (*Beat.*) Good night, Joseph.

EMMA exits. Exit JOSEPH.

SCENE 10

Enter ACTOR 1 as ROBERT FOSTER and ACTOR 3 as FRANCIS HIGBEE.

FRANCIS: I've never been so embarrassed in my whole life! Joseph Smith is a monster to abuse us such! Bringing out all our ...our ...

ROBERT: Adulteries? Let's name them for what they are.

FRANCIS: While he sits there and pretends to all of Nauvoo that he's only bedded one woman in his life! When Bennett brought me into his circle—I thought there was Church approval!

ROBERT: From my discussions with him, John Bennett taught something different. Bennett, with the whore houses he was building on the edge of Nauvoo and the more—"free" relationships his spiritual wifery constituted, it wasn't the plural marriage that Joseph's circle has been practicing.

FRANCIS: Well, it's just lovely that you can be so philosophical about it!

ROBERT: Bennett was doing his own thing, that much is obvious. Maybe building on the rumors he was hearing as part of the First Presidency. But his version is more like the Cochranites ...

FRANCIS: Now you've completely lost me.

ROBERT: I've been comparing the two—trying to connect where one ends and the other begins—well, anyway, what does it matter now? Joseph's not going public with his version anytime soon. The Church has cut us off, "Brother" Higbee.

FRANCIS: Keep to Francis now. It's a farce. Nobody's my brother in this place, Doctor Foster.

ROBERT: Leave off the Doctor. Just Robert to you now. We have common scars.

FRANCIS: Yes, but I'm still so—agh, Joseph Smith is a monster!

ROBERT: Not a monster. An angel.

FRANCIS: An angel?

ROBERT: An angel. An angel of light. He blinds the eyes of this people with his high positions and alleged visions. He sanctifies himself, scrubs his skin until it absolutely glows and people think they see beams of light exuding from his face, his eyes, his hair, and his very toes. An angel—no, like a god he has set himself up as. But angels of light can be counterfeits, just as gods can be false.

FRANCIS: I will shoot him and all that pertains to him; and before ten suns shall go over our heads, the Temple, the Nauvoo House and the Mansion House shall all be destroyed. All I want is to see this city sunk down to the lowest hell, and I shall!

ROBERT: Do you mean that?

FRANCIS: Of course I do.

(Beat.)

Would you?

ROBERT: *(Beat.)* I'm not proud of what I've done. That young woman I got pregnant—she's ruined because of me.

FRANCIS: It's not about what *we've* done.

ROBERT: Isn't it?

FRANCIS: He's pulling the wool over everyone's eyes, Robert! Condemning men like us while he pretends that he and his inner circle are the exceptions!

ROBERT: What can we do about it?

FRANCIS: We can't give up. We fight back. He wants to expose us to the world? Well, let's see how he feels about it when it's his turn!

Enter ACTOR 4 as JOSEPH JACKSON, with PORTER following him.

PORTER: Joseph Jackson!

JACKSON: I will not submit! I will not submit to a corrupt law!

PORTER: Assault is a law that is recognized anywhere. Come with me.

JACKSON: Make me.

PORTER: (*Motioning to FRANCIS and ROBERT.*) Gentlemen, Marshal Greene has deputized me so that I can help take this man into custody. I'd appreciate your help in bringing him in.

(*FRANCIS and ROBERT don't move.*)

Ain't you goin' to help me?

ROBERT: You obviously don't know us very well, Mr. Rockwell.

PORTER: Ain't you gonna be loyal to Nauvoo's laws? To the mayor?

FRANCIS: The mayor! I would consider myself favored of God for the privilege of shooting and ridding the world of such a tyrant.

ROCKWELL. Why, you stinkin' demon from a mudpit ...

Enter JOSEPH.

FRANCIS: And here's the Emperor himself!

PORTER: Shut it, you canal rat!

ROBERT: Oh, save the indignation. You don't impress us with your talk of laws and government. You profane the words by associating them with Nauvoo and Joseph Smith.

JOSEPH: Robert, Francis, haven't I strived to settle this with both of you?

ROBERT: We won't be caught up in your web. You've got the whole law twisted up in your favor. Just look at your use of habeus corpus! They can't arrest you, they can't bring you out of this city! You just cite that blasted Nauvoo Charter and you are tried in Nauvoo. As if any court in Nauvoo would convict you!

JOSEPH: I do everything within the law, Doctor Foster. I will no longer submit myself to those whose only purpose is to destroy me.

ROBERT: What about justice?

JOSEPH: Justice? You call Missouri mobs justice? That's where they've been trying to put me on trial, you know. Or perhaps you think I would get a fair trial in Carthage or Warsaw?

FRANCIS: It's hasn't been about God or angels or golden plates—it's been about power all along.

JOSEPH: It's been about God. But, yes, it's also been about power. The power to protect my people.

FRANCIS: And your political career? Such a divine disinterestedness there as well? Not only God's mouthpiece, but God's king! A regular David incarnate! I don't buy it.

JOSEPH: Persecution has rolled upon our heads like peals of thunder; and no portion of the government as yet has stepped forward for our relief. You know that, Francis—it was your father who went with me when we petitioned Washington about the murders, and the rapes, and the theft, and the beatings our

people received in Missouri!

ROBERT: And we didn't contribute to that tenseness, Joseph? Your Danites weren't meeting insult with injury?

JOSEPH: You know nothing of what we all endured there, Robert. But, Francis, your father did. Elias Higbee was a true friend to me until the day he died. Why are you so set against me?

FRANCIS: Don't bring my father into this. Our troubles were no excuse for the wrangling of power that we have seen under your hand.

JOSEPH: I feel it my right to obtain what power and influence I can— lawfully—for the protection of injured innocence. We have not broken or fought the law, we have joined with it! We have sought its aid and protection.

ROBERT: Then the law shall be betray you.

JOSEPH: It hasn't been the only one.
(*Resigns arguing with them.*)
What is the trouble here, Port?

PORTER: Marshal Green deputized me to take in Jackson because he attacked Orson Spencer, after Orson tried to defend your reputation. These men won't assist me in his arrest.

JOSEPH: Then arrest them as well for refusing to assist you in the charge of your duty.

ROBERT: Wait, that's not fair!

PORTER: Do as he says.

JOSEPH lays his hands on JACKSON. JACKSON takes out a gun, pointing it at JOSEPH.

JACKSON: Back off, Mayor, or I'll shoot.

JOSEPH: You would not scare an old, setting hen.

JACKSON: I swear, I'll do it!

JOSEPH charges FRANCIS and wrenches the gun away from his hand and tosses it away. FRANCIS and ROBERT move to assist, but PORTER takes out his own gun and points it at the attackers, stopping them in their tracks. JOSEPH and JACKSON continue to struggle until JOSEPH is able to throw him into FRANCIS and ROBERT, where PORTER has his gun leveled at them.

PORTER: Are you all right, Joseph?

JOSEPH: I'm fine, Port. I've wrestled stronger twelve years olds.

FRANCIS: My father was a fool to follow you.

JOSEPH: You and Robert and Joseph Jackson and your brother and all the other apostates combined are not half the man your father was.

PORTER: What should we do with them, Joseph?

JOSEPH: Let them go for now.

PORTER: What? Are you sure?

ROBERT: You won't trick us with false charity.

JOSEPH: We'll let the courts settle it.

(Picking up JACKSON's gun and giving it to PORTER.)

But confiscate this. Let me walk off a ways before you let them loose.

Exit JOSEPH.

PORTER: I coulda blown your brains out for that, you disloyal mutts.

(Checking Joseph's distance.)

Y'all can go then.

(ROBERT and JACKSON exit, but FRANCIS stays.)

You waiting for a written invitation?

FRANCIS: Did you know my father, Mr. Rockwell?

PORTER: *(Putting away his gun.)* Your father was a good man. Too bad his son is such a cotton brained rascal.

FRANCIS: I didn't mean what I said about my father. I know that he was a good man.

PORTER: Are you finally making some sense?

FRANCIS: I know that I haven't always done right by people ...

PORTER: And the Prophet?

FRANCIS: *(Hardening)* I'll go to my death against him.

PORTER: But you just said ...

FRANCIS: My course may be wrong; but if I stop I shall get hell, and if I go on I shall get hell. I will do what I intend to do at the risk of my very own life, and I will destroy Joseph Smith, if possible. Am I not a brave man to tell you so?

PORTER: You're a coward.

FRANCIS lunges toward PORTER and the two grapple. PORTER knocks FRANCIS down and a piece of paper falls out of the hat in which FRANCIS had concealed it. PORTER picks it up.

FRANCIS: Give that back.

PORTER: What is it?

FRANCIS: Give it back. It is mine and you have no right to it.

PORTER: You seem to think it's mighty important. Are you ashamed of it?

FRANCIS: Give it back!

PORTER: There ain't no way in hell or high heaven that I'm givin' this back. We've known for some time

there is a conspiracy in Nauvoo against Joseph. By how you're actin', I reckon this here paper will shed some light on the subject of who may be involved in that conspiracy. Good day, Francis.

Exit PORTER.

FRANCIS: Come back here! You don't understand! Give it back!

Blackout.

SCENE 11

JOSEPH enters and sits, reading. Enter EMMA.

EMMA: Willard is here for you, Joseph. I'll be out in the garden.

JOSEPH: Do you want some help after I talk to Willard?

EMMA: Are you joking? Whenever you help me in the garden, it's not long until we have half of Nauvoo on our doorstep, all wanting time with you, tearing up my plants with their crowded, clumsy feet.

JOSEPH: Emma, I'm sorry. I ...

EMMA: It's not your fault, Joseph. I just wish that we were normal, average people for once. That we could live a peaceful life.

JOSEPH: The time will come, Emma.

EMMA: I'm not sure that I can wait for the next life.

JOSEPH: It may come sooner than that, Emma. There may come a time when you are to go on without me.

EMMA: Don't talk like that. I can't bear that kind of humor.

JOSEPH: You and our children will be in the hands of God, and God will take care of you.

(JOSEPH goes over to EMMA and kisses her. She embraces him fervently.)

You are an elect lady.

EMMA: I wish I could be a better wife to you.

JOSEPH: I never asked for a better wife. Never think that God gave me others because there was a lack in you.

EMMA: Let's not talk about that.

JOSEPH: All right. Then just know that I adore you. Oh, what a commingling of thought fills my mind when I hold you. Again you are here, even in the seventh trouble. Undaunted, firm and unwavering. Unchangeable, affectionate Emma!

EMMA: I love you.

JOSEPH: I love you, too. Now you better go and get Willard. He must think that we have forgotten him.

EMMA: (*With a laugh*) I had.

JOSEPH: Oh, what is that? Is that a laugh?

EMMA: I guess it is.

JOSEPH: I missed your laugh.

EMMA: I missed it too.

EMMA kisses JOSEPH softly.

JOSEPH: Now, if any of the apostles come by, if you can just let them right in, I would appreciate it. I'm expecting them to drop in before they leave on their missions to the East.

EMMA exits. Enter WILLARD.

WILLARD: Good morning, Joseph.

JOSEPH goes over to WILLARD, takes him by the shoulders and stares him in the eyes, searching. WILLARD is caught off guard, but locks eyes with JOSEPH and says nothing.

JOSEPH: I'm glad to see you, Willard.

WILLARD: Joseph?

JOSEPH: I'm sorry. I hardly know who are my friends and who are my enemies anymore.

WILLARD: Were you searching my soul?

JOSEPH: You could look me in the eyes, Willard.

WILLARD: I hope that I have pleased you, Joseph. That I have served you well.

JOSEPH: Willard, you are one of the best friends that I've ever had. Remember that. I have been able to keep you close to me and trust you with my history—what of it that I can give, at least.

WILLARD: I will be true to you, Joseph.

JOSEPH: (*Pausing, once again searching him.*) The day will come, Willard, when a literal hailstorm of bullets shall pass you, and you shall see friends fall on your right hand and on your left, and you shall not even receive a hole in your robe.

(Beat.)

Do you believe it?

WILLARD: Is that a prophecy?

JOSEPH: Do you believe it?

WILLARD: I'm afraid I may not.

JOSEPH: When it comes to pass, you shall believe.

Enter JOHN.

JOHN: Joseph, I've heard about the other apostles stumping for your bid to the presidency. Why haven't you called me?

WILLARD: John is an excellent orator, Joseph ...

JOSEPH: I thought about sending you off with the rest of them, John, but I need you to run the *Times and Seasons* and *The Nauvoo Neighbor*. Your service to those papers is invaluable. With all the trouble that *Warsaw Signal* is brewing up, I need you here behind that press. I would have sent Willard off as well, but he and I need to finish my history.

JOHN: Finish?

JOSEPH: Nothing gets past you, John.

JOHN: Joseph, do you feel your life is in danger?

JOSEPH: (*Picking up a pamphlet.*) John, I've had William Phelps help me with this pamphlet, but I would like your opinion on it ...

JOHN: Joseph, if you feel that your enemies ...

JOSEPH: "If I were the President of the United States, I would walk in the tracks of the illustrious patriots who carried the ark of the Government upon their shoulders with an eye single to the glory of the people..."

JOHN: Joseph, are you listening to me?

JOSEPH: John, this is important: "...when the people petition to abolish slavery in the slave states, I would use all honorable means to have their prayers granted, and give liberty to the captive by paying the Southern gentlemen a reasonable equivalent—that we may break off the shackles of the poor black man and that the whole nation might be free indeed!"

JOHN: Why are you sending out the apostles, if you need to be protected here ...

JOSEPH: "And when the people petitioned to possess the Territory of Oregon, or any other contiguous Territory, I would lend the influence of Chief Magistrate, that they might extend the mighty efforts and enterprise of a free people from the east to the west sea—and, when we have the red man's consent, we will make the wilderness blossom as a rose."

JOHN: Joseph! You won't be any good to them, if you're dead. What is going on?

JOSEPH: What is going on? This nation is in turmoil, and if they are not corrected, the time will come that war will be poured upon all nations, beginning at this place. Beginning at a rebellion in South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death of many souls.

WILLARD: Are you prophesying, Joseph?

JOHN: I don't care about any prophecy right now, except this: prophesy to us that you will live. For, if not, I suspect that you are sending as many of the Twelve away as you can—so that you can protect us.

JOSEPH: If your faith can alter the will of God, John, then pray away. But also pray for our Brethren in the Eastern States who will be stumping for my election.

JOHN: Tell me that you'll live a long life.

JOSEPH: If I live a long life, we would all see the Savior's coming together.

JOHN: That's not answering the question.

JOSEPH: Do you believe I'm a prophet of God?

JOHN: Of course I do!

JOSEPH: Then understand this: God has told me to send our Brethren to the Eastern States and to keep you and Willard with me. Will you obey this revelation? Will you stay with me, John?

JOHN: Until the very end. Unto death.

JOSEPH: I knew you would. What can man do if God is our friend? I shall not be sacrificed until my time comes; then I shall be offered freely.

WILLARD: We still need you, Joseph. Surely the Lord understands that.

JOSEPH: Something is going to happen. I don't know what it is, but the Lord has bid me and hastened me to give you and the rest of the 12 the keys and powers which rest upon me. And now you have got all the keys, and the hosts of Satan will not be able to tear down the kingdom, as fast as you will be able to build it up. On your shoulders will be the responsibility of leading this people right, for the Lord is going to let me rest a while. (*Beat.*) That's enough of such somber thoughts for one day!

WILLARD: You shall live a long life, Joseph. My faith will make it so.

JOSEPH: I cannot lie down until my work is finished. That I prophesy freely. I defy all the world, and I prophesy they will never overthrow me until I am ready. Now, Willard, get out that quill, ink and paper, and we shall proceed!

Enter ELIZA.

ELIZA: Joseph?

JOSEPH: Yes, Eliza?

ELIZA: May I talk to you?

JOSEPH: Yes, go ahead.

ELIZA: Alone?

JOSEPH: (*Nods.*) Willard, I guess we'll have to postpone it just a little bit longer. Can I call you back in a moment?

WILLARD: Of course.

Exit WILLARD and JOHN.

JOSEPH: Are the children finished with their lessons?

ELIZA: Yes.

JOSEPH: Did they behave today? If one of them needs some discipline . . .

ELIZA: There's nothing wrong with the children.

JOSEPH: What is it then?

ELIZA: It's Emma. She has been very volatile about—about the principle lately. She still struggles with it, Joseph.

JOSEPH: She talks to you about it?

ELIZA: No. But I understand the subtext. She still doesn't know that I'm your wife, correct?

JOSEPH: She will when she's ready. She had enough struggles giving me the Partridge and Lawrence sisters—and she chose them. She's gone back to her old attitude.

ELIZA: You must tell her.

JOSEPH: She won't let me. She won't hear anything about it.

ELIZA: Deceit is not the way to go about this. There have been too many lies. Too many denials.

JOSEPH: Didn't Abraham deny that Sarah was his wife? To protect them?

ELIZA: And look at the mess it got them into!

JOSEPH: Do you think I like this, that this doesn't weigh on me? I argued with that angel, I quoted scripture at him! But I was commanded to do this!

ELIZA: Yes, an angel came to you with this principle. But are you telling me he also told you to lie about it?

JOSEPH: (*Beat.*) Honestly, I think they have left me to figure a lot of it out on my own. Maybe there's some lesson in it, but you don't know what a lonely and difficult position that puts me in.

EMMA is about to enter, but hearing ELIZA's voice, stops at the door frame and remains unnoticed.

ELIZA: I believe you received this principle, Joseph. But, as you've reminded us time and time again, we can't expect perfection from you. You are only a prophet when you are prophesying. You err like other men. You've told us this ...

JOSEPH: I know I have made mistakes in this, but—but she threatened to divorce me, Eliza. The angel Moroni directed me to Emma, do you understand? He said I would need her to do the work and I—I love her. I don't want to lose her. But I can't disobey this commandment.

ELIZA: Perhaps Hyrum can convince her. He always has a powerful effect on her. His gentleness brings her to tears.

JOSEPH: Hyrum already tried. He brought her the written copy of the revelation. She tore it up.

ELIZA: I know you feel as if you have been put into an impossible situation, but there must be a way through this honestly.

JOSEPH: I wish I could see it.

ELIZA: I wrote a poem to comfort you. Can I share it?

JOSEPH: Yes, I would like that.

ELIZA: (*Taking the poem from her apron and reading it:*) “I feel thy woes—my bosom shares thy spirit’s agony:

How can I love a heart that dares suspect thy purity?

I’ll smile on all that smile on thee as angels do above,

All who in pure sincerity will love thee, I will love.

Believe me, thou hast noble friends who feel and share thy grief;

And many a fervent pray’r ascends to heav’n, for thy relief.”

EMMA: That is quite enough of that!

ELIZA: Sister Smith!

EMMA: Apparently I’m not the only Sister Smith in this place!

EMMA charges up the stairs to confront ELIZA. The lights blackout, except for lights on the ACTORS, who are gossiping with each other.

ACTOR 1: I hear that Emma attacked Eliza with a broomstick.

ACTOR 3: I heard that Emma pulled Eliza down the stairs by the hair.

ACTOR 1: No, she was pushed down the stairs.

ACTOR 2: Sister Eliza was really hurt.

ACTOR 4: No, she walked out that night—but in the rain.

ACTOR 3: Eliza was pregnant.

ACTOR 2: With Joseph’s son.

ACTOR 3: The injury inadvertently killed the unborn child.

ACTOR 4: There was no child. You’re all wrong.

ACTOR 3: And you have the truth about it?

EMMA and ELIZA enter from opposite sides, and the ACTORS become hushed. EMMA and ELIZA connect, pause, and stare intensely at each other. Blackout.

END ACT ONE

30 PAGES IN ACT TWO