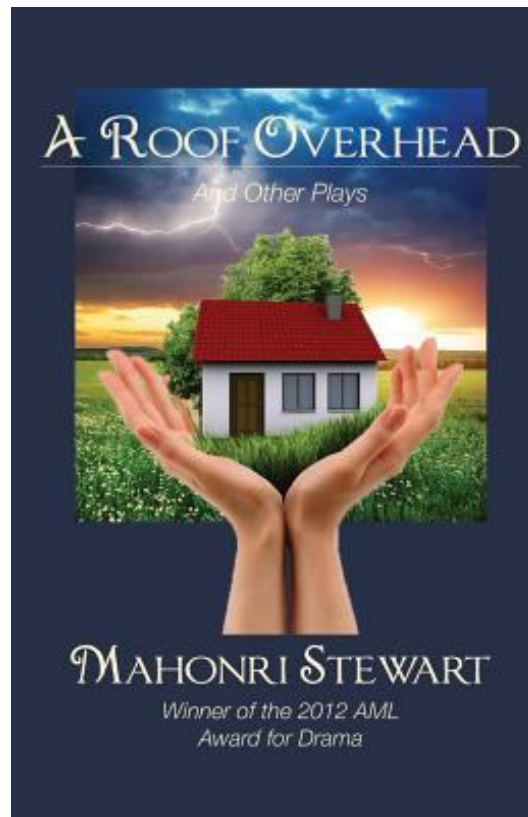


# PERUSAL SCRIPT



**A Contemporary Drama in Two Acts**  
by  
**Mahonri Stewart**



Newport, Maine

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**LBT ORDER # 2123**

*The play is dedicated to my family:  
My parents,  
My sisters,  
My brothers.  
Under their roof was genuine happiness,  
Which I now realize is a rare thing indeed.*

“Mock them, ridicule them in public, don’t fall for the convention that we’re far too polite to talk about religion. Religion is not off the table. Religion is not off limits. Religion makes specific claims about the universe, which need to be substantiated. They should be challenged and ridiculed with contempt.”

— Richard Dawkins, *The Rally for Reason*

“It’s natural to have questions—the acorn of honest inquiry has often sprouted and matured into a great oak of understanding. There are few members of the Church who, at one time or another, have not wrestled with serious or sensitive questions. One of the purposes of the Church is to nurture and cultivate the seed of faith—even in the sometimes sandy soil of doubt and uncertainty.”

— Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Come Join with Us”

“Joseph Smith was a fraud. A con artist. A brilliant story teller, but ultimately, a liar and an awful historian. His cult should not be taken seriously, should have no power over the world, and should not be knocking on my door unless they’re willing to answer the most fundamental questions about their cult without finishing with ‘Yeah, I don’t know much about this.’ The Book of Mormon though, is no more or less ridiculous or and more or less a work of fantasy, than the Bible, the Koran, the Torah and every other ‘Holy’ dogmatic fairy tale the World has had to endure, books that for centuries demanded the suspension of reason on pain of death. The Book of Mormon simply amplifies and emphasizes the stupidity and dangerous dogma of all organized religion.”

— Jamie Smith, “The Mormon Delusion”

“The Lord created us in His image and likeness, and we are the image of the Lord, and He does good and all of us have this commandment at heart: do good and do not do evil. All of us. ‘But, Father, this is not Catholic! He cannot do good.’ Yes, he can . . . “The Lord has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ: all of us, not just Catholics. Everyone! ‘Father, the atheists?’ Even the atheists. Everyone!” . . . We must meet one another doing good. ‘But I don’t believe, Father, I am an atheist!’ But do good: we will meet one another there.”

— Pope Francis, Mass in Rome, March 2013

“There is something infantile in the presumption that somebody else has a responsibility to give your life meaning and point . . . The truly adult view, by contrast, is that our life is as meaningful, as full and as wonderful as we choose to make it. And we can make it very wonderful indeed.”

— Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*

# Production History

*A Roof Overhead* premiered at the Little Brown Theatre in Springville, Utah, on April 16, 2012. It had the following cast and crew:

## CAST

*Sam Forest*: Rebecca Minson  
*Abish Fielding*: Jana Lee Stubbs  
*Daisy Fielding*: Jennifer Leigh Mustoe  
*Maxwell Fielding*: G. Randall King  
*Naomi Fielding*: Penny Pendleton  
*Joel Fielding*: Tyrone Svedin  
*Tyrell Howard*: James C. Jones  
*Ashera*: Sarah-Lucy Hill

## CREW

*Producers*: Penny Pendleton, Sara Harvey  
*Director*: G. Randall King  
*Stage Manager*: Cameron Fullmer  
*Lighting*: Brent Harvey  
*Sound*: Sawyer Hunt

Binary Theatre Company then performed a revised version of *A Roof Overhead* in Tempe, Arizona, on February 3, 2012, with the following cast and crew:

## CAST

*Sam Forest*: Noel Miller  
*Abish Fielding*: Sarah D'Agostino  
*Daisy Fielding*: Ivy Gambier  
*Maxwell Fielding*: Peyton Scott Geery  
*Naomi Fielding*: Kendra Schroeder  
*Joel Fielding*: Seth Ephraim Scott  
*Tyrell Howard*: Zachary Figures  
*Ashera*: Victoria Murray  
*Jenny Pond*: Alana Gordon

## CREW

*Director*: Mahonri Stewart  
*Assistant Director*: Bethanne Abramovich  
*Stage Manager*: Jeremy Leung  
*Scenic Designer*: Jessika Watson  
*Lighting Designer*: Hailey Featherston

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**MAXWELL FIELDING**, the father. In his late forties or early fifties, Maxwell looks sufficiently conservative in his clothing, down even to the tie he is wearing, which has boring, vertical stripes in boring colors, with a traditional two button suit coat. His appearance is clean, organized and meticulous. Yet something in his soft smile does not allow for him to come off as cold, or even imposing. He has an evident gentleness, even though he does not have an evident charisma.

**DAISY FIELDING**, his wife. Similar in age to Maxwell, she also appears the part of the Mormon housewife, but there is something slightly off about Daisy that allows her to narrowly escape the stereotype that otherwise may have been imposed upon her. She doesn't quite wear her hair the same, or dress the same as other women her age, although she would never dare do anything too outrageous or out of step . . . she is definitely not out to get attention. But she does have marks of individuality placed in a graceful and subtle self-design.

**NAOMI FIELDING**, 20s, conforms to the basic standards of Mormon modesty, but she has some evident spunk in her style and demeanor, which is warm and welcoming rather than attention starved. Apt to wear soft Spring colors, light material which can breath and subtle touches of bright color, she has the rare talent of seeming warmly appealing, without resorting to being flagrantly modern or fashionable. Even when she is in her most formal attire, she seems absolutely relaxed and easy going.

**JOEL FIELDING**, 20s, on the other hand, looks more bookish and intellectual, even down to his spectacles. He has an endearing mixture of the awkward and the sophisticated in his appearance. He's not without fashion sense, when he decides to pay attention to it, but generally doesn't care enough to go at it full force. He has touches of the traditional in his clothing, but makes sure to offset that with a colorful tie or a three-to-four-button suit . . . just enough to set him apart from the ideal Mormon image, but never enough to estrange him in any significant way from the culture that he loves.

**ABISH FIELDING**, who is 15 years old. She is slightly offset from the rest of the family in the portrait. Her style also sets her apart. They may be subtle to a more secular eye, but they are enough to show noticeable signs of rebellion in her culture. A second set of ear rings. Maybe even a small nose stud. Net gloves. Very short hair, maybe spiky. A skirt that is a little too short. A top that doesn't have quite enough sleeve. And thus, in a glance, we see a family dynamic in the portrait, one that is fairly accurate to what the family actually experiences.

**SAM FOREST** is a woman of presence. She dresses in a put together, sophisticated style. She is attractive and stylish, but also gives off an intentional air of intellectualism and worldliness. When she speaks, it's with a crisp, East coast accent.

**ASHERA GROVER**, a Wiccan, has a warm, spirited way about her. She wears clothing that suggests unfettered freedom, connectedness with nature, and a kind of wind-swept spirituality. Given the moment, she could be anything from Mother Earth to Loreena McKennit to Morgan Le Fay.

**TYRELL HOWARD**, a handsome, African-American man. He dresses sharply, and has a significant presence and bearing.

**JENNY POND**, a friend of Abish

**SET** — The play is set in a moderately sized home in an undetermined state in America, 2012. There is a set of stairs that go up into the top floor of the house, and also a door that leads to the basement. Another door leads into the kitchen. There are things which one might expect in a typical living room. The home shows a pleasant, if not somewhat predictable, scene. It is evidently a home of a religious

*family, in this case Latter-day Saints (Mormons). There are pictures of Jesus Christ, Mormon temples, perhaps even Joseph Smith and the current LDS First Presidency on the walls. There is also a prominent picture, taken recently, of the Fielding family: MAXWELL, Close to him is his wife, DAISY. Standing close together in the picture, although not close enough to be mistaken as spouses, are NAOMI and JOEL. Then ABISH.*

**A ROOF OVERHEAD** by Mahonri Stewart. RUN TIME: 1 hour and 45 minutes. CAST SIZE: 9 (6f, 3m). One Interior living room. Contemporary costumes. The Fielding family's Mormon values conflict with their tenant's Sam Forrest's atheistic beliefs. Can mutual tolerance be found, or will tragedy ruin their chances for finding common ground? This award-winning family drama explores the beliefs that divide some of us and the humanity that unites all of us as we all search for meaning, acceptance, and love in our lives. Winner of the Best Drama Award, Association for Mormon Letters. 2012 **ORDER #2123**

**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. He currently is the Director of theatre at Vanguard High School, in Utah.

## REVIEWS:

“As to be expected with a Mahonri Stewart play, the title *A Roof Overhead* is thematically telling. What happens under the roof of this home full of loving but flawed people is what draws us into their lives. Most, but not all, of the interaction between family members and friends is pleasant and happy, but even when the characters steer us into uncomfortable areas that still challenge many members of the Church today (like, for instance, Blacks and the Priesthood), we are presented with multiple sides of those issues in a fair and balanced manner. No one seeing this play would consider it unbalanced. The father Maxwell Fielding is fond of saying throughout the play, ‘It’s about being fair.’ *A Roof Overheard* is nothing if not fair.

“Stewart’s skill at dialogue and characterization, mingled with just the right amount of humor, drama, and pathos, anchors us to the play—we become more than mere observers. We become members of the diverse set of characters and we, characters and audience alike, share this roof overheard. What this play says to Mormons is, ‘We are not alone in the world. We need to learn to get along with others of different, or sometimes, no faith.’”

—Excerpt from the AML Award Citation for Drama, 2012

“Stewart’s characters are all strong, all opinionated, and all delightfully quirky in ways that help the audience suspend disbelief. An audience member could come to the play over several performances and glean new insights to his various themes of diversity, family bonds, and the dimensions of maternal influence.”

—Margaret Blair Young, *Dawning of a Brighter Day*

"I'm getting more and more impatient to see great Mormon literature before I die! Thanks to Mahonri Stewart, we're coming closer . . . I loved his *A Roof Overhead* . . . Hooray for quality! It's coming!" — Marilyn Brown, Association for Mormon Letters

# A Roof Overhead

## Act One

*SCENE 1 — Enter MAXWELL and DAISY FIELDING.*

**MAXWELL.** Half an hour late. Do you think we should be worried?

**DAISY.** We could call her—she did leave a cell number.

**MAXWELL.** I don't know. We don't want to seem overanxious, I suppose.

**DAISY.** You're nervous?

**MAXWELL.** Well, the money would help. Especially with Naomi wanting to serve a mission . . .

**DAISY.** She said she'd be willing to save up for it.

**MAXWELL.** We paid for Joel's.

**DAISY.** She knows things are tough right now.

**MAXWELL.** They're not that tough.

**DAISY.** Yes, they are. Max, I talked to Naomi last night—she said she'd be fine. She's not expecting . . .

**MAXWELL.** What we do for one child, we need to be willing to do for all the children.

**DAISY.** She knows you're willing. It's just . . .

**MAXWELL.** We've got to be fair to the kids, Daisy.

**DAISY.** Joel and Naomi aren't kids anymore . . .

**MAXWELL.** It's doable. If Daisy wants to save up money, she can put it to graduate school. That would be good. Joel is using student loans for his graduate studies, so it's even.

**DAISY.** *(With a smile)* Even.

*(Beat.)*

At your old job you could do these kind of things and we could make it work. But since the layoffs, well, you don't make the kind of salary you once did. You can't provide everything for them, Max. You don't have to prove yourself to us.

**MAXWELL.** It's not about proving anything. It's about being . . .

**DAISY.** . . . fair.

**MAXWELL.** *(Beat.)* Am I that predictable?

**DAISY.** After 23 years of marriage, I sure hope that I can predict you.

**MAXWELL.** While I can never seem to guess what you're thinking. You're stressed about this. Why?

**DAISY.** Oh, I'm fine. You know my nerves.

**MAXWELL.** What's wrong?

**DAISY.** I'm fine.

**MAXWELL.** Daisy . . .

**DAISY.** *(Imitating)* Max . . .

**MAXWELL.** Sweetheart, you know I don't let go of these things.

**DAISY.** You're going to let go of this one.

*(The doorbell rings.)*

She's here.



*(For a moment MAXWELL and DAISY hesitate. They don't know why, they don't even notice enough to understand it, but they both flinch, as if they were ready to avoid a slap. The moment is brief, almost imperceptible, and then it is gone as fast as it came.)*

**MAXWELL.** Thank goodness.

*(MAXWELL and DAISY answer the door together, and the door opens to SAM.)*

**DAISY.** Oh.

**SAM.** Mr. and Mrs. Fielding?

**MAXWELL.** Just call us Max and Daisy. We're plain people that way.

**SAM.** I'm Sam Forest. It's a pleasure to meet you.

**DAISY.** Come in, Sam. Is that short for Samantha?

**SAM.** No. It's just Sam.

**DAISY.** Well, it's lovely.

**MAXWELL.** Have a seat, Sam.

**SAM.** Thank you.

**MAXWELL.** Daisy?

**DAISY.** I'll be back in a moment.

*(DAISY exits into the kitchen.)*

**MAXWELL.** I'm guessing the East Coast?

**SAM.** The past several years, yes. Originally I'm from Georgia.

**MAXWELL.** Really?

**SAM.** I know . . .

*(Re-enter DAISY with a tray, on which are small plates with muffins and tall glasses of juice.)*

Oh, you really didn't have to . . .

**DAISY.** Please, Sam.

**SAM.** All right. *(Takes a juice and muffin. Bites into the muffin)* Oh. Yes, very, very good.

*(DAISY sits, pleased by the sincere reaction.)*

**MAXWELL.** You don't have a single trace of the accent.

**SAM.** Thank you.

**DAISY.** Which accent?

**MAXWELL.** Sam is from Georgia.

**DAISY.** Really?

**SAM.** I've been living in Boston for years until now.

**DAISY.** What brings you here?

**SAM.** Grad school.

**MAXWELL.** Oh, you're down at the University. Our son Joel is going to grad school there as well. He's going for a PhD in American History. Both he and our daughter Naomi have moved back in with us for a while to help them save money.

**DAISY.** Naomi is in a—transitional period. She's thinking about going to graduate school in anthropology.

**MAXWELL.** But she's also considering going on a mission, anyway, so grad school may be a ways off still.

**SAM.** Mission? A military thing? Or the peace corps?

**MAXWELL.** Oh, no—for our Church.

**SAM.** Of course. Sorry. So she'd be helping the poor in Zimbabwe or Brazil or something of that sort?

**MAXWELL.** Oh, they could send her anywhere. It'd most likely be a proselyting mission.

**SAM.** Oh, yes, uh, Mormons, right? Latter-day Saints? The boys with the white shirts and ties. I didn't know you let women do that, too.

**DAISY.** Yes, we "let" them . . .

**SAM.** Yes, uh, sorry. I must admit I don't know much about your Church except from things you read in the news and, well, *Angels in America*.

**DAISY.** What is that?

**SAM.** Er, a play. Well, two plays.

**DAISY.** Interesting. It involves the Church then? Do you think we'd like it?

**SAM.** Well, uhm . . .

**DAISY.** Oh, don't tell me it's like that dreadful *Big Love*?

**SAM.** Oh, I wouldn't say it's like *Big Love* at all. Well, not really . . .

**DAISY.** You know the Church doesn't practice polygamy anymore, right? Not since 1890. The things you see on TV about those people in Texas or Colorado City, that's really fringe, not a part of our Church . . .

**SAM.** Yeah, I knew that . . .

**DAISY.** We're more Mitt Romney than Warren Jeffs, if that makes sense.

**SAM.** Uhm, I'm sure if that really helps your . . .

**DAISY.** Or Harry Reid, if that's where you lean politically . . .

**SAM.** Really, I didn't mean to . . .

**DAISY.** Well, I guess this *Angels* play of yours couldn't be much worse than that *Book of Mormon* musical . . .

**MAXWELL.** Daisy. Ease off. Let the poor girl gather her wits, won't you?

**DAISY.** Oh. Yes. I'm sorry, Ms. Forest. Sometimes it's—well, when we lived in Utah, we didn't really have to worry about explaining ourselves all the time, you understand. I'm sure you understand, wanting to be understood on your own terms.

**SAM.** (*With a genuine smile.*) Certainly.

**MAXWELL.** Enough chit chat then. You're here to look at the basement apartment.

**SAM.** Yes. The apartment.

**MAXWELL.** Come on down.

*(MAXWELL, DAISY, and SAM head down the door to the basement. After they exit, JOEL enters the front door. He has grabbed the mail and, after throwing his school books, etc. onto the couch, he finds a Netflix envelope. ABISH comes down the stairs and grabs the Netflix out of his hands.)*

**ABISH.** Oh, I got it!

**JOEL.** Hey!

*(ABISH rips open the envelope, takes out the DVD.)*

**ABISH.** *Gettysburg*?

**JOEL.** Ever seen it?

**ABISH.** Another one of your history movies!

**JOEL.** Afraid so.

**ABISH.** I hate when it's your turn to pick.

**JOEL.** What would you prefer, an indy Ellen Page feature?

**ABISH.** Infinitely more!

**JOEL.** Come on, you know the Civil War's interesting . . .

**ABISH.** Okay, liked *Gone with the Wind* well enough. Just no more World War II films, please! Sure, *Schindler's List* or *The Great Escape*, I like those, but if there's one more movie about hiding Jewish refugees in the floorboards, or some opposition group trying to take down the entire Third Reich, or some swing dancers being cremated by the Hitler youth, I swear to you, I'm going to tear off my clothes and protest at the Chinese Theater!

**JOEL.** Okay, let's be a little more respectful, Abish.

**ABISH.** How could I forget? I'm talking to history's apostle . . .

*(JOEL looks at his sister with more than a slight sense of exasperation.)*

Oh, come on, Joel, don't be so serious. See that is what's wrong with you! So serious! So sober! Our little Eeyore: "Thanks for noticing me."

**JOEL.** Look, you're being offensive, you know?

**ABISH.** Yeah.

**JOEL.** And that's where you like to be, in everyone's face, demanding attention . . .

**ABISH.** Ease off, Joel! Jeez, it's like every conversation I have with you turns into this big downer!

**JOEL.** There are certain things that deserve respect. Certain events . . .

**ABISH.** Yeah, yeah, you've told me all of this before. Heil History!

**JOEL.** Our worlds seem so big to us. But we're really small. In history's scope, we're just . . .

**ABISH.** You think I'm small?

**JOEL.** We're all small, and . . .

**ABISH.** I'm not small. I'm valuable.

**JOEL.** There are whole movements, whole revolutions—and we're, yes, we're small.

**ABISH.** Well, then "small" as I am, what does it matter if I listen to the establishment's versions of history?

*(Enter DAISY from the basement door.)*

**DAISY.** Okay, what's happening up here?

**ABISH.** Oh, were we bothering you, Mom? I didn't think anyone could over hear our *little* conversation.

**DAISY.** Look, your father and I are showing somebody the basement apartment. Could we not scare her into thinking that she'd be living above a family of cage fighters?

**ABISH.** Sure, Mom, sure, you got it. I was going out anyway. I was just going to crawl into a hole somewhere and brood upon the fact that I don't matter.

**JOEL.** Abish, really, that's not all what I meant and you know it.

**ABISH.** You know, Joel, maybe you're right. Maybe these big battles and culture wars of yours are unstoppable forces that are just ready to swallow us whole. But, if that's the case, don't you think little people like us should just get out of the way and let the storms, I don't know, pass us by? Otherwise, well, man, we're going to get crushed.

*(ABISH exits out the front door.)*

**DAISY.** What was that about, Joel?

**JOEL.** I think I just alienated Abish.

**DAISY.** Again?

**JOEL.** I'm sorry, Mama. I don't know why we don't get along. We were just talking about movies.

**DAISY.** She's young . . .

**JOEL.** No, that's what I usually say, but fifteen's not really that young. Not young at all really. And she's smart for her age. Really smart.

**DAISY.** Too smart?

**JOEL.** I don't think there's such a thing as too smart. Just not smart enough. And that's about how I feel right now.

**DAISY.** You're about as clever as they come, Joel.

**JOEL.** Clever? Yes, so clever. What an inadequate word that is . . .

**DAISY.** Oh, Joel, don't be hard on yourself. You can be so . . .

**JOEL.** . . . sober? Yeah.

*(A sad, short laugh.)*

"Thanks for noticing me . . ."

**DAISY.** That's not what I was going to say. Now, Joel . . .

**JOEL.** I have to look up some things at the library for a paper . . .

**DAISY.** That can wait, can't it? Hey, let's watch a movie tonight, the whole family. And, look, our new Netflix is here! When Naomi gets home we can make some popcorn and . . .

**JOEL.** You know, I'm not sure I'm in the mood. I've seen that movie before anyway.

*(Exit JOEL. MAXWELL and SAM enter from the basement.)*

**MAXWELL.** Everything all right up here?

**DAISY.** Sorry for that, Sam. I promise, you usually can't hear a peep from down there . . .

**SAM.** You should have heard the knock-out-drag-'em-outs that my family had. And the profanity! My family knew how to look the part of good Southern Baptists, but there were times when we made the Osbourne family look like the Cleavers. But, obviously, I've left all that behind.

**DAISY.** I'm not sure if I'm supposed to know who the Osbournes are but, really, we're usually such a tight knit . . .

**SAM.** You don't have to sell me anymore, Daisy. I've decided to take your offer, if that's still all right with you two.

**MAXWELL.** Well, yes—definitely, yes!

**SAM.** Good. I've been looking at a lot of places and—well, they've been kind of scary. I don't have a lot of money—living off student loans right now, you see, so I can go to school full time—and I don't know anybody in this city who would be my roommate. I was getting kind of scared until I came here and . . .

**DAISY.** Well, the Lord led you right to us then!

**SAM.** Uh, I'm not sure if—the Lord had much to do with it, but I'm glad I found you.

**MAXWELL.** Good. Very good! You want to drop by in the morning and we'll talk more in depth about the agreement and sign all the necessary papers.

**SAM.** Great. It's so great that it has its own bathroom, kitchen, but—you said the only entrance is from up here?

**MAXWELL.** Right.

*(An uncomfortable pause.)*

**DAISY.** I suppose we'll all just have to get nice and friendly.

**SAM.** Right. Friendly.

*(It is as if SAM is about to say something more, but she bites her tongue and smiles—not so genuinely this time. For a moment, DAISY and MAXWELL sense this.)*

**DAISY.** I hope that, well, that you can maybe join us for dinner every once in a while. We don't have to be strangers.

**SAM.** *(Pause.)* Well, you know, sure, why not? It will be so nice to have a roof over my head.

*(The tension releases, and everyone becomes more comfortable.)*

**MAXWELL.** Good, good! A roof overhead, huh? Well, I think you'll find that this place means a whole lot more to us than that!

*(MAXWELL opens the door for SAM.)*

This is now your place, too, Sam.

**SAM.** *(She takes this graciously.)* Thank you, Max. Thank you, Daisy. I'll see you in the morning.

*(Exit SAM. MAXWELL and DAISY exchange happy grins.)*

**MAXWELL.** Well, sweetheart, there's our extra \$400 a month!

*(Blackout.)*

**SCENE 2** — *Enter NAOMI from the stairs, in her pajamas. She goes through the mail and sees a wedding invitation. She opens it and smiles warmly, but then becomes slightly depressed. She goes over to her purse and takes out a photo of her and her boyfriend Tyrell. She compares the pictures, trying to imagine her and Tyrell in a wedding dress and a Tux. This depresses her and she tears up and throws away the wedding invitation. She exits into the kitchen. Enter SAM, JOEL, DAISY, and ABISH from the front door, carrying moving boxes, etc.*

**SAM.** Thanks again. I couldn't have done this by myself.

**DAISY.** If Max hadn't had work, he would have loved to help, too. And, of course, Abish has school.

**JOEL.** Where's Naomi?

**DAISY.** She was out late last night. I didn't have the heart to wake her.

**JOEL.** Out late? With whom?

**DAISY.** Uh, I don't think that's my business to tell . . .

**JOEL.** Wait. Does Naomi have a boyfriend?

**DAISY.** As I said, not my business to . . .

**JOEL.** Why hasn't she told me?

**SAM.** Are you two close?

**DAISY.** Naomi and Joel have been close since they were very small. Attending each other's birthday parties, hanging out with each other's friends . . .

**SAM.** That's nice. My brothers and I were constantly at each other.

*(Enter NAOMI with a bowl of cereal.)*

**NAOMI.** Oh.

**DAISY.** Naomi, put on some clothes . . .

**NAOMI.** What?

**ABISH.** Mom, chill. She's perfectly modest.

*(NAOMI sits on a couch and digs into her cereal.)*

**DAISY.** They're her PJs, honey.

**ABISH.** Mom, if Sam is going to live here, she may see sights much more revealing than Naomi's PJs.

**SAM.** *(Unconsciously looking at JOEL).* I sure hope so.

*(Everyone pauses, slightly shocked. ABISH lets out a muffled laugh.)*

Uhm, I said that out loud, didn't I?

*(Pause.)*

I—I'm going to take this one down stairs.

*(Bright red with embarrassment, SAM ducks her head behind a box and exits downstairs.)*

**DAISY.** I think it's time for you to move out again, Joel.

**ABISH.** As long as he doesn't move downstairs . .

**DAISY.** Abish!

**JOEL.** I think I have a box to move.

**DAISY.** Not alone down there, you're not!

*(JOEL and NAOMI open the door downstairs to find that SAM has come back up. JOEL and SAM stop at each other awkwardly.)*

**SAM.** I didn't mean for what I said to come out like that.

**JOEL.** I know.

**SAM.** Not that there would be anything wrong with that! I'm sure you would look great if I caught you in a towel.

**DAISY.** Nobody will be catching anybody in towels!

**SAM.** No! Of course not. What I meant was . . . well, I'm surprised that slipped out. Usually I'm pretty guarded and—well, not that there is anything to guard! I mean I'll be living downstairs and you'll be living upstairs and we'll be so close we'll be practically family. It would be like incest!

**DAISY.** There will be no incest either!

**NAOMI.** I don't know, they might be a good couple, Mom. No offense, though, Sam, we'd have to convert your first.

**SAM.** Excuse me?

**NAOMI.** Oh, don't take me seriously, Sam. Just playing with you.

**DAISY.** But she's right. Mormons don't generally marry outside of the . . .

**NAOMI.** Mom, I said I was just playing.

**DAISY.** But it's true.

**ABISH.** Mom!

**JOEL.** I'm not marrying Sam, nor will I be prancing around downstairs in a bathrobe, so drop it. Nothing to worry about.

*(Tense pause.)*

**SAM.** Is that the last box? I'll take it down.

*(Exit SAM.)*

**ABISH.** Well, we made a great first impression.

**NAOMI.** I shouldn't have said that. That was stupid.

**DAISY.** It was true. She has to understand that although Joel and she are similar ages, there won't be any . . .

**JOEL.** Mom.

**NAOMI.** It wasn't kind.

**DAISY.** And what were all those comments about towels and incest? I told your father that bringing in a non-member wasn't a good idea . . .

**ABISH.** Mom, there's nothing wrong with her not being Mormon!

*(Pause.)*

**DAISY.** Of course there isn't. You're right.

*(Pause.)*

**JOEL.** Maybe one of us should talk to her.

**NAOMI.** I will.

**DAISY.** I think that would be best. Come on, you two, you've been a great help today. I'll treat you to some IHOP.

**JOEL.** Mom, you don't have to resort to pancakes . . .

**DAISY.** You've never said no to breakfast food in the afternoon.

**JOEL.** All right. Thanks. Some comfort food sounds great.

**DAISY.** And, Naomi . . . give Sam my apologies.

*(Exit DAISY, ABISH, and JOEL. Enter SAM.)*

**SAM.** I'm sorry, I . . . where'd your family go?

**NAOMI.** A ritualistic ceremony involving maple syrup.

**SAM.** What?

**NAOMI.** I'm Naomi. I didn't properly introduce myself.

**SAM.** Sam.

*(SAM and NAOMI shake hands. NAOMI stops short for a moment, a peculiar expression crossing her face. She looks at the handshake and then at SAM. She then drops SAM's hand, embarrassed.)*

Is everything all right?

**NAOMI.** Excuse me. Déjà vu.

**SAM.** What do you mean?

**NAOMI.** It's not important. Look, my Mom and Joel were so sorry about how that went. Me too.

Sometimes awkward things get said that nobody means and . . .

**SAM.** What was the déjà vu?

**NAOMI.** No, really, it's nothing.

**SAM.** I can tell when people are lying to me to be polite. Spit it out.

**NAOMI.** No, it's—really, never mind, it's creepy.

**SAM.** Creepy?

**NAOMI.** People think it's creepy.

**SAM.** They think what is creepy?

**NAOMI.** I—I have dreams.

**SAM.** Well, what's wrong with that? We all have dreams, don't we? Me, I'm studying journalism and communications. I want to be a social and political writer.

**NAOMI.** No. Like night time dreams. *Dreams*. They're vivid and meaningful, with this spiritual, overpowering feeling and—and sometimes I dream something and—and it comes true.

**SAM.** I—hm. Sorry, but I think I'm going back downstairs.

**NAOMI.** I told you it was creepy. I usually don't tell people . . .

**SAM.** Then why are you telling me this?

**NAOMI.** To explain that moment.

**SAM.** Well, you didn't do a very good job. I'm still confused.

**NAOMI.** I've dreamed that moment before . . .

**SAM.** Handshakes are pretty common things . . .

**NAOMI.** I dreamed about you. I'm surprised that I didn't recognize you right away. I had a dream once, a very short, but very vivid dream where I was shaking some one's hand. She looked a lot like you, I guess. I had forgotten all about it until I was—I was even wearing pajamas. I know, I know, it sounds a little mystic . . .

**SAM.** Ya think?

**NAOMI.** It got weird there, and, really, it just got weird here, too, so— so sorry for all of it.

**SAM.** Okay. Thanks.

**NAOMI.** Good. Good.

**SAM.** But, just so you know, I don't believe it. The dream thing.

**NAOMI.** I understand.

**SAM.** I mean, not at all. Not that I think you're lying. But it was just a dream and maybe I reminded you of it, but it was just a dream. Prophecy and that sort of mystic whatever . . . Well, I'm sure that's great for you, but I'm an atheist.

**NAOMI.** Totally cool. I shouldn't have told you. I stopped myself, but then you just kind of pushed me into it.

**SAM.** Okay, all right. We'll just forget it then. And, okay, how can I say this right? No offense, but, well, I'm never going to join your Church, you understand that, right?

**NAOMI.** My church? Oh, yeah, really, I was just joking about that . . .

**SAM.** But you understand that? I'm never going to join your Church. I'm never going to join any Church. I just want that out in the open so there aren't any misunderstandings or hurt feelings.

**NAOMI.** Oh, yeah, sure. Uhm . . .

**SAM.** I left my faith for a reason. I had a friend—Tyler. He was a member of the congregation I attended. I loved him dearly. He was gay. Our minister said that God could cure him, that God had never intended him to be that way, so God would open a way for him to be free.

**NAOMI.** Sam, just so you know, I really don't consider myself homo-phobic . . .

**SAM.** (*Didn't really hear NAOMI.*) Tyler tried and tried, he believed so much—so much! I've never met anyone who loved Jesus like he did. Which made his failure to live up to these impossible odds all that much more devastating for him. After they found Tyler dead—I couldn't handle it. And then my parents—they had the gall to warn me about the hell they believed Tyler was in. Not just because he was a



homosexual, but also because he had committed suicide. I couldn't forgive my parents for that. It was faith like theirs, words like theirs that killed Tyler.

**NAOMI.** Sam, I don't believe in that kind of hell your parents described—a lot of Mormons don't. God has a good place for all of his children, differing kingdoms of glory which are a more just compensation for the varying degrees of goodness in the world. Your friend Tyler, even if by chance he's not in the highest kingdom of glory, he's still qualified for . . .

**SAM.** Tyler deserved the highest. He deserved the best of heaven. That's why I decided then that if God wasn't as anxious to love Tyler as Tyler was enraptured in loving God then that must mean that God simply wasn't there, for Tyler was the most beautiful human being I ever encountered.

**NAOMI.** Okay. Understood.

**SAM.** All right. Then we're good?

**NAOMI.** Good. Perfectly good.

**SAM.** Then it's nice to meet you, Naomi.

*(They shake hands, look down at the shake, realizing the context of the conversation, and then drop their hands awkwardly.)*

**NAOMI.** You'll have to come up for dinner sometime.

**SAM.** We'll see.

*(SAM exits upstairs and NAOMI exits downstairs. Lights dim.)*

**SCENE 3** — *It's late, perhaps 3am-ish. The house is quiet. Enter ABISH and her friend JENNY. They are doing their best to be as silent as possible. Before they get to the stairs going up to her room, however, SAM enters through the downstairs door. SAM, upon seeing ABISH and JENNY, gives out a shriek. ABISH covers SAM's mouth.*

**ABISH.** Sh!

**SAM.** Abish?

**ABISH.** Don't blow my cover!

**SAM.** Coming in or going out?

**ABISH.** Are you kidding? Coming in.

**SAM.** Well, I'm going out.

**ABISH.** Really?

**SAM.** Yeah. Meeting someone.

**ABISH.** Well, yeah, we were just with a couple of guys.

**SAM.** Cute?

**JENNY.** Very. Hi, you must be Sam. I'm Jenny Pond.

**SAM.** Nice to meet you, Jenny. I hope you girls had fun with the boys. Good night.

**ABISH.** Really? So you're not going to tell my parents?

**SAM.** Of course not. I remember what it was like at your age. But I am surprised that they wouldn't wait up for you on a school night.

**ABISH.** Oh, they thought I went to bed at 10.

**SAM.** Gotcha. So . . . were you . . . ?

**ABISH.** Was I what?

**SAM.** Having sex?

**ABISH.** Me? No!

**JENNY.** (*Laughs.*) Oh, you don't know our little Abish very well, do you?

**SAM.** Oh, yeah, your family is a little puritanical that way.

**ABISH.** Well, it's not like we were just holding hands watching *Cinderella* or anything. Give me *some* credit.

**JENNY.** What? Hey, I missed that part . . .

**ABISH.** You missed a lot of things tonight, Jenny.

**JENNY.** Okay, what base?

**ABISH.** Oh, get your mind out of the gutter, Jenny. You and Gordon were having your own kind of fun, but you know that I have certain standards.

**JENNY.** Your standards, your standards, always talking about your standards . . .

**ABISH.** Not that, well, not that I wouldn't want to sometimes, you know. I . . . okay, look at me, I never get embarrassed . . .

**SAM.** Please. Look, I of all people am not going to judge you.

**ABISH.** Well, I think I need to be more careful sometimes. With how he and I are going, well, it would just take a little more, just a few more barriers jumped over and—boom, game over, man.

**SAM.** Game over? Or just the beginning?

**JENNY.** Ooo, this is going somewhere interesting. I'm liking this Sam lady. But I'd better get going, girl. Sometimes my parents have a sixth sense about this kind of thing. Take care, okay?

**ABISH.** Okay, Jenny.

**JENNY.** And I want a full report on what's happening between you and Wally, okay? Tomorrow?

**ABISH.** Tomorrow.

**JENNY.** Every detail!

**ABISH.** Whatever, Jenny.

**JENNY.** It'll be totes wicked, you'll see. Nice to meet you, Sam.

**ABISH.** Right back at you, Jenny.

**JENNY.** Every juicy detail!

*(Exit JENNY out of the front door.)*

**SAM.** So what's so wrong with having a little fun with your boyfriend?

**ABISH.** Look, I really don't expect you to understand our Church, and that's okay, but I—I don't know why I'm talking about this with you.

**SAM.** Why not? I don't know who else under this roof you would talk about it with. Have your parents even tried to have the sex talk with you?

**ABISH.** My Mom tried once. She went off about Adam and Eve and something about fruit and pollen and flowers and bouncy, little clouds.

**SAM.** You're kidding me.

**ABISH.** Then she said, "I'm glad we did this," and that was it.

**SAM.** Wow.

**ABISH.** Yeah. I learned more from watching network television than I did during our entire “sex talk.”

**SAM.** So what’s holding you back?

**ABISH.** (*A “well, duh,” tone.*) Uh, my religion.

**SAM.** Is it *your* religion?

**ABISH.** Of course it is.

**SAM.** I’m not so sure about that.

**ABISH.** Look . . .

**SAM.** Hear me out for just a second. I’ve been watching you, Abish. Sure, I’m not up here often, but it doesn’t take long to size you up.

**ABISH.** You don’t know me, Sam.

**SAM.** Sure I do. I was just like you. Black sheep of the family, but still trying to find a middle way between my independence and my parent’s religion.

**ABISH.** Look, I don’t know how it was for you, but I’m not reduced that easily.

**SAM.** Reduced? No, you’re trying to expand! You’ve got all these passionate feelings and skyrocketing thoughts and then these wellmeaning, religious nuts try to put on all these restrictions and boundaries and blinders on you, and all you’re trying to do is stretch into yourself, but you can’t even do that! And, believe me, Abish, there’s nothing wrong with finding yourself at your age. It’s what angsty teenagers are supposed to do.

**ABISH.** I’m not angsty.

*(SAM laughs good-naturedly.)*

I’m not!

**SAM.** I didn’t think I was either. But I’m glad I was, because it’s what helped me finally break away.

**ABISH.** I’m not trying to break away. I’m just trying to be myself.

**SAM.** Sorry to break it to you, hon, but if you ever want to be yourself, breaking away is exactly what you’ll have to do.

**ABISH.** And how do you know that being religious isn’t exactly who I am?

**SAM.** Your parents? Yeah, completely. Joel and Naomi? Religion fits them like a glove. You? No, not even a god could keep you bottled up, Abish. You like the wind on your face too much.

**ABISH.** That’s not how others see me.

**SAM.** What do you mean?

**ABISH.** At school. I try to fit in, not make a fuss, but they know I’m Mormon. Most people are cool about it, but there’s this one group of kids . . .

**SAM.** Are you being bullied?

**ABISH.** Not the way you’re thinking about it. At least, well, not physically. They’re actually the really smart kids. Honors and AP students, the real competitive sort, you know. The kind of kids I usually really get along with, but—well, there’s this group of them that are pretty intense about what they believe. Always picking a verbal fight with those of us who are conspicuously religious, always making fun of us. Saying we’re what’s wrong with the world, that the world would be better off with religion—without us. That sort of thing.

**SAM.** Abish, I—I see you as something so much more than any belief or creed. I see—well, if I believed in

angels, I could see you rise with your trumpet and bless the whole world. Don't let anyone, not even me, tell you what your limits are. Just fly, girl, fly.

**ABISH.** Sam, that's really nice. Thanks.

**SAM.** I mean every word.

**ABISH.** I—I'm pretty tired.

**SAM.** Sure.

*(ABISH is about to go upstairs, when she stops.)*

**ABISH.** Sam?

**SAM.** Yeah?

**ABISH.** I'm not saying you're right. I guess I really don't know whether I'm, like, religious or not, you know . . . but it's nice hearing another perspective. Refreshing, you know what I mean?

**SAM.** I'm just downstairs. Come talk anytime.

**ABISH.** Thanks.

*(ABISH exits upstairs. SAM heads to the front door; but not before JOEL enters from the kitchen, a bowl of cereal in hand.)*

**JOEL.** I'm glad that Abish has such an inspiring role model to look up to now.

**SAM.** Joel! What are you doing up?

**JOEL.** My family has the strange habit of craving cold cereal at odd times in the night. We've had many a family discussion this way, not to mention the fact that we've kept Kellogg's in business during the recession.

**SAM.** I'm just on my way out the door.

**JOEL.** Hold it. You're not getting away that easy.

**SAM.** Really, I've got someone waiting for me and I've really had a hard time making connections lately so I don't want to screw this up.

**JOEL.** Yeah, I heard that part. I heard the whole discussion, actually. I had to crunch my Corn Chex pretty softly.

**SAM.** Well, I hope you're not going to turn the poor girl in. She's a teenager, it's pretty normal.

**JOEL.** Oh, it's not her I'm thinking about turning in. It's you.

*(Pause.)*

**SAM.** I just told her how I experienced it myself.

**JOEL.** Abish isn't you. Get that through your head. Whatever choices you made, she's not just pre-destined to make the same ones, okay?

**SAM.** I think you're misunderstanding me . . .

**JOEL.** We've respected your privacy. Respect ours.

**SAM.** I'm just showing concern for Abish. That's all, Joel. She can do whatever she wants.

**JOEL.** Thanks for the concern, but you're not a part of our family.

**SAM.** You're completely misconstruing me, Joel. Really, I'm just . . .

**JOEL.** Just consider it a warning, okay? Abish—well, her and I don't always see eye to eye. But I'm her big brother. I'm going to watch out for her. And I'd try to be a little more grateful. This family is providing a roof over your head.

**SAM.** But, as you're setting out so clearly, you're not providing me a home. Your family is getting your

money from me. So leave me the hell alone.

*(Exit SAM. JOEL exits into the kitchen. **Blackout.**)*

**SCENE 4** — Enter MAX, ABISH, and DAISY, in the middle of an argument.

**MAXWELL.** I think we've been more than patient with you, Abish. You've felt the need to express yourself, to be an individual, we understand that, but this is different, this is important . . .

**ABISH.** Look, I'm going. I'll see you guys later, okay?

**DAISY.** You're not going anywhere, young lady. Sit down.

**ABISH.** I'm not sitting down.

**MAXWELL.** Then stand up. Sit down, stand up, I don't care! But, please, sweetheart, listen . . .

**ABISH.** It doesn't matter—it just doesn't matter . . .

**DAISY.** It certainly does matter! If there's anything that matters, it's the Gospel.

**ABISH.** What that man teaches isn't the Gospel!

**MAXWELL.** No, maybe not, but seminary should be an important part of your life. And Brother Jensen has to wake up just as early to teach you kids before school and he deserves a little support . . .

**ABISH.** A little support? Let me tell you what he told us last week. The lesson was on the priesthood, right? Sure, I can go with that. But, totally off topic, he goes off about the . . . the subservience of women . . .

**MAXWELL.** Subservience? I'm sure he didn't say it like that.

**ABISH.** Subservience, or whatever word he said—but he said that women still carried the curse of Eve and that's why men had the authority to rule over women! He said that women were meant to be mothers and only mothers and that we would be barefoot and pregnant for the rest of eternity, a baby intelligences machine! A spirit making robot!

**MAXWELL.** Now I'm sure he didn't say that!

**ABISH.** He might as well have.

**MAXWELL.** Daisy—what can you tell her, Daisy?

**DAISY.** Sweetheart . . . sweetheart . . . I . . .

**ABISH.** Mom, really, I don't want to go. It—it really hurts me to go. I don't feel the Spirit. I just feel dead. Worthless.

*(Pause.)*

**DAISY.** Well don't go then.

**ABISH and MAXWELL.** What?

**DAISY.** Don't go.

**MAXWELL.** Daisy, I know that neither of us condone that kind of sexist thinking—especially from someone who's teaching our kids—but she has to go to seminary.

**DAISY.** No. She doesn't. Her mother gives her permission not to.

**MAXWELL.** Daisy, I think we need to talk about this . . .

**DAISY.** I'll get up early with her and we'll study the scriptures together. What do you think, Abish? Deal?

**ABISH.** Deal!

*(ABISH nearly bowls DAISY over with a huge hug.)*

**DAISY.** But every morning. 6 am.

**ABISH.** Every morning, I promise.

**MAXWELL.** Abish, now let's . . .

**ABISH.** Thanks for your support, Dad.

*(ABISH kisses her father on the cheek and exits up the stairs.)*

**DAISY.** Now, Max . . .

**MAXWELL.** So that's it? A unilateral decision? Is that your answer to chauvinism? If the man's not the leader in the home, then it transfers automatically to the woman?

**DAISY.** I know, Max, I know . . .

**MAXWELL.** We need to support Church programs . . .

**DAISY.** Max, it's not like a seminary teacher is her Bishop or has any real priesthood authority over her . . .

**MAXWELL.** I've met my share of seminary whackos and their weird folk doctrines, but still, she'd be studying the scriptures every morning at least and . . .

**DAISY.** She will be studying the scriptures still. With me.

**MAXWELL.** We study the scriptures already as a family . . .

**DAISY.** We haven't had family scripture study since Naomi moved out the first time . . .

**MAXWELL.** Well, maybe we should start again then, but that doesn't replace seminary. Naomi and Joel loved seminary. They talked all the time about how that's where they really felt like they started independently growing a testimony . . .

**DAISY.** Abish is very different than Joel and Naomi.

**MAXWELL.** Yes, which is why she needs seminary even more!

**DAISY.** Maxwell, look, I agree with you. Kids should go to seminary. It exposes them to the scriptures. But I think it's vital that we know who is teaching our child and how. And Brother Jensen is harming Abish's already fragile testimony.

**MAXWELL.** We can—we can talk to her about that . . .

**DAISY.** Or we can take her from harm's way. Let her learn the Gospel under our own roof, in our own home, the way we want her taught. Consider it my version of religious home school.

*(Enter NAOMI from the stairs. MAXWELL and DAISY let the conversation drop. NAOMI notes the tension.)*

**NAOMI.** You're fighting, aren't you?

**DAISY.** Everything's fine, sweetheart.

**NAOMI.** It's really awkward to be around when you're fighting.

**MAXWELL.** Really, Naomi, we're done. You off?

**NAOMI.** Yeah, I have a Presidency meeting.

**MAXWELL.** Do you like your new Relief Society President?

**NAOMI.** Sure.

**DAISY.** Sure?

**NAOMI.** Yeah, sure.

**MAXWELL.** What do you think, Daisy?

**DAISY.** Not a good sign.

NAOMI. I said sure. I like her fine.  
DAISY. "Sure."  
MAXWELL. "I like her fine."  
NAOMI. Do you want me to gush?  
MAXWELL. You usually do.  
DAISY. People are kind of your thing. You like to gush about them.  
MAXWELL. Unless they're . . .  
DAISY. . . . judgmental . . .  
MAXWELL. . . . uncompassionate . . .  
DAISY. . . . or hypocritical.  
NAOMI. I've never said anything like that about anybody.  
DAISY. No, you haven't. You just don't gush.  
MAXWELL. You "like them fine."  
NAOMI. I don't like it when you guys tag team.  
MAXWELL. Why don't you like her?  
NAOMI. I like her.  
MAXWELL. Okay. Why do you "like her fine?"  
NAOMI. I think I need an apartment again.  
DAISY. I've been saying that for a while.  
MAXWELL. She needs to save her money.  
DAISY. For her mission?  
MAXWELL. For graduate school. I'm taking care of her mission.  
NAOMI. Papa, you really don't have to . . .  
MAXWELL. It's decided.  
DAISY. Is it? I still think things mean more when a person works for them.  
MAXWELL. I thought this was decided.  
DAISY. I thought we were still in negotiations.  
NAOMI. Yeah, Mom and I were talking . . .  
MAXWELL. I know. But we paid for Joel's and we'll pay for yours.  
NAOMI. It was different for Joel.  
MAXWELL. Why?  
NAOMI. Well, it's expected for guys, but . . .  
MAXWELL. You're a girl?  
NAOMI. It's a choice for me . . .  
MAXWELL. It was a choice for Joel.  
NAOMI. That's nice to say, Papa, but . . .  
MAXWELL. Do you want to go?  
NAOMI. *(Beat.)* Yes.  
                  *(Beat.)*  
Very much.  
                  *(Beat.)*

Which is why I'm willing to pay for it.

**MAXWELL.** We paid for Joel, we'll pay for you. It's only . . .

**ALL.** . . . fair.

**MAXWELL.** Look, Naomi, sweetheart, you know, well, I'm really proud of what you've done in your life.

I want to . . .

**NAOMI.** I've met someone.

**MAXWELL.** What?

**NAOMI.** A boy. Well, a guy. A man.

**MAXWELL.** Are you two serious?

**NAOMI.** Yeah. Pretty serious. I'm not sure if you'd . . .

**MAXWELL.** Yes?

**NAOMI.** . . . approve.

**DAISY.** Why not? Is he a member of the Church?

**NAOMI.** Yes. A convert.

**MAXWELL.** My mother was a convert, too.

**NAOMI.** Oh, I know. I wasn't saying that—that's not why . . .

**DAISY.** Does he treat you well?

**NAOMI.** I've never been treated better.

**MAXWELL.** I'm not seeing the problem here then.

**NAOMI.** He's African-American.

*(A long pause.)*

**MAXWELL.** And why do you think we would care about that?

**NAOMI.** I don't know. We've never talked about that sort of thing much in the family . . .

**MAXWELL.** And you think that means we might be racist?

**NAOMI.** I know a long time ago certain leaders in the Church said things about marrying other, well, other—cultures.

**MAXWELL.** Absolutely ridiculous.

**NAOMI.** Well, they said that certain cultures sometimes didn't mix well and . . .

**MAXWELL.** They definitely don't say that now. You can get that out of your head. Why, President Hinckley gave that whole talk against racism in General Conference several years ago. And, if you haven't noticed, the Church has been broadcasting a clear message in the "I'm a Mormon" commercials . . .

**NAOMI.** I heard how grandpa Frank used to talk about—well, the words he would use . . .

**MAXWELL.** My father was a product of his generation. That doesn't mean I would ever condone . . .

**NAOMI.** I'm glad to hear it.

*(A broad grin replaces her stress.)*

Really, really glad.

*(Pause. Then NAOMI gives her father an impulsive hug. MAXWELL reciprocates warmly).*

Dad, my bishop says that if I get an offer, I should marry him as soon as possible.

**MAXWELL.** Does he now?

**NAOMI.** But I—I still want to go on a mission. Maybe that's why I—I don't know, I feel kind of guilty



about all of it . . .

**MAXWELL.** Guilty?

**NAOMI.** I mean why should I take your money when I can . . .

**MAXWELL.** (*Good-humoredly*) . . . take his?

**NAOMI.** No! I mean—you know as well as I do that women are encouraged in Church to . . . to . . .

**DAISY.** (*With the slightest bit of acid in her voice*) Get married as soon as you can and have lots of babies.

**NAOMI.** Pretty much.

*(Both DAISY and NAOMI look to MAXWELL. He studies NAOMI thoughtfully.)*

**MAXWELL.** Well, obviously you'll eventually want to start a family . . .

*(Pause.)*

**NAOMI.** Eventually?

*(Pause.)*

**MAXWELL.** Your Bishop isn't encouraging about your mission?

**NAOMI.** Well, he's—he's kind of a typical Singles Ward Bishop, you know. He sees it as his life's mission to get us all married off and into the moral safety of full-fledged family wards.

**MAXWELL.** Do you love Tyrell?

**NAOMI.** I think so.

**DAISY.** You've been dating for how long?

**NAOMI.** Three months—but they've been an exceptionally good three months.

**MAXWELL.** And if you didn't go on your mission you think you might marry him?

**NAOMI.** With a little more time, I think I would.

**DAISY.** There's a lot of "I thinks" in here.

**NAOMI.** But I've always wanted to go on a mission.

**MAXWELL.** I know you have.

*(Pause. MAXWELL looks at his daughter searchingly and then closes his eyes and sighs.)*

Do you want me to tell you what you should do?

**NAOMI.** That would be nice.

**MAXWELL.** Some sound, sage, unerring advice?

**NAOMI.** Isn't that what you're for?

**MAXWELL.** Well, here it is then. First, ignore what your Bishop told you.

**DAISY.** Careful, Maxwell . . .

**NAOMI.** But I thought a Bishop had right to receive revelation for his . . .

**MAXWELL.** Yes, I believe that, in special circumstances, especially when it has to do with issues that involve your ward. But this is your personal life. The Brethren say the family trumps even the Church, and this is about your future family.

**NAOMI.** I know, but . . .

**MAXWELL.** Let me make this clear, sweetheart. Once you're out of his ward, your decisions have no consequence or bearing upon his life. You may never see him again. He does not have to live with this decision, a decision that could alter the course of the rest of your life. But you have to live with it.

**NAOMI.** So you're saying I should go on a mission?

**MAXWELL.** You want advice? Here's my advice. Don't let your Bishop, or me, or any man, or any

woman, make this decision for you. It's your personal life, so it deserves personal revelation.

**NAOMI.** I'm not sure that's what I wanted to hear.

**MAXWELL.** Don't be lazy.

**NAOMI.** Lazy?

**MAXWELL.** A "slothful servant" needs to be "commanded in all things," right? You know how big this decision is and you don't want to mess it up. So you want to shift the responsibility to someone else, anyone else.

**NAOMI.** I'm scared, Papa.

**MAXWELL.** Darling, since you were a little child, you were special. It seems like you had such a strong connection to your Heavenly Father. I've felt the Spirit many, many times, but you—you experienced it in a way I've never seen. Of all times, why would you try to trust me or your Bishop or anyone else over the Voice of the Lord that has been with you since childhood?

**NAOMI.** Thank you, Papa. Thank you, Mama.

**DAISY.** I'm not sure how much I really contributed to this conversation.

**NAOMI.** No, no, you're both amazing. But I've really got to go to that meeting.

**DAISY.** Yes, I'm sure your Relief Society President doesn't like tardiness.

**NAOMI.** She certainly doesn't.

**MAXWELL.** Ah, tell her to suck a lemon!

**DAISY.** Max!

**MAXWELL.** As far as I'm concerned, the Bishop should have made you president.

**DAISY.** Maxwell Owen Fielding!

**MAXWELL.** Am I not right?

*(NAOMI laughs and then kisses MAXWELL on the cheek.)*

**NAOMI.** You're always right, Papa. It runs in the family.

**MAXWELL.** See, she agrees with me!

**NAOMI.** But, honestly, Papa, she can have it. Relief Society President is a tough job. I'm content being a counselor. She has my full support.

**MAXWELL.** Just speak up in those meetings, all right? The Lord put you in there for a reason.

**NAOMI.** Sure thing. Bye . . .

**MAXWELL.** My children aren't wilting violets, you hear me? Make your opinion known, don't be a "yes-man"—er, a "yes-woman!"

**NAOMI.** *(With another laugh)* Bye!

*(Exit NAOMI. DAISY looks MAXWELL over with the familiar exasperation that can only be held between long time spouses.)*

**DAISY.** And we wonder why our children sometimes have big heads . . .

**MAXWELL.** I wouldn't have it any other way.

**DAISY.** Honestly, Max, what just got into you?

**MAXWELL.** What do you mean?

**DAISY.** You just told that girl not to ignore her Bishop and made fun of her Relief Society President. What happened to Mr. "Follow the Brethren" and "support Church programs"?

**MAXWELL.** I still believe that. I always will. But her Bishop and Relief Society President are hardly

prophets or apostles or . . .

**DAISY.** Just like a seminary teacher had no authority over Abish.

**MAXWELL.** True. I get your point now. And I agree with it, so why are you . . . ?

**DAISY.** Her Bishop, her Relief Society President, they are doing their best. It's a tough, thankless road they have to travel. They deserve her support. Her help.

**MAXWELL.** And, knowing Naomi, that's exactly what she'll give them.

**DAISY.** I just wish I had some consistency from you!

**MAXWELL.** Look who's talking!

*(Both their last lines come out much more aggressively than they intended. They become embarrassed and a little stunned. There is a pause.)*

I—I've always thought I was consistent. I've always tried to be consistent . . .

**DAISY.** You have—you are. I am the one who's . . .

**MAXWELL.** Who's what? You're what? Something's bothering you.

**DAISY.** I—I'm grateful that you're not like them, Maxwell. That you're compassionate and understanding and treat me like an equal . . .

**MAXWELL.** You are my equal, not *like* an equal. And, well, *sometimes* you're my superior.

**DAISY.** I guess that I just don't know what I would have done if I had married someone like Brother Jensen. Hearing what he was teaching Abish in seminary—I don't think a marriage like that would have lasted for me.

**MAXWELL.** Oh, Brother Jensen wouldn't have been good for you on so many levels. I've been to Scout Camp with that man and his personal hygiene left a lot to be desired. And he snores.

**DAISY.** So do you.

**MAXWELL.** I do not.

**DAISY.** What are you talking about? You've always snored!

**MAXWELL.** I sleep like a baby.

**DAISY.** A snoring baby.

**MAXWELL.** Woman, my manhood is cheapened by thy unruly tongue and thus I shall stop thy incessant chattering!

*(MAXWELL kisses DAISY.)*

**DAISY.** Well, I suppose your rough, manly ways aren't *always* a detraction.

*(They kiss again. Lights dim.)*

**SCENE 5** — *SAM enters from the front door, with her friend ASHERA.*

**ASHERA.** . . . and so, well, yeah, one of my friends almost became a Mormon. In the end the Pentecostals got to her instead.

**SAM.** Similar fates as far as I can tell.

**ASHERA.** Not the way she tells it. She says it's as if she had escaped the gates of hell. When one of her sisters joined the Mormons she had a fit! Strange thing is, she didn't react nearly as harshly when I

became a Wiccan. Better a pagan idol than a false Christ, I guess.

**SAM.** The Baptists weren't too fond of the Mormons either. Always calling them a cult—some of it got pretty ridiculous. I even met a preacher—a preacher!—who literally thought that the Mormons had horns on their heads. Of course, as far as I can tell, the Baptists pretty much hated everybody.

**ASHERA.** Sam!

**SAM.** Believe me, Ashera, you should have heard them rail against Mormons, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, pagans, evolutionists, oh, and when I declared that I was an atheist, my family had a fit! In their minds, we were all pretty much lumped together as heathens and heretics.

**ASHERA.** That's not fair, Sam. You're just doing the same thing, putting all Baptists together like that.

**SAM.** Look, I know what I'm talking about. I lived with them most of my life . . .

**ASHERA.** Which makes it even harder for you to see them objectively.

**SAM.** I know what I saw.

**ASHERA.** And now you're living with the Mormons. How's that going for you?

**SAM.** We've had our strained moments, but we're getting along for the most part . . . they're really nice people. But mainly we stay out of each other's way.

**ASHERA.** So what happens when you get in each other's way?

*(NAOMI enters the front door in a rush, with groceries. She accidentally runs into ASHERA and the groceries scatter.)*

**NAOMI.** Oh!

**ASHERA.** I'm so sorry, let me help you . . .

**NAOMI.** It's all right, I'm . . .

**SAM.** Sorry, Naomi, we shouldn't have been standing in the door way like that . . .

**NAOMI.** No, it's okay, it's just—are the eggs okay?

**SAM.** The eggs are fine.

**NAOMI.** Good. We're having Tyrell over again. Mom and I are making Lasagna—but we realized when we layering it that we forgot the eggs.

**SAM.** Eggs?

**NAOMI.** We use cottage cheese with eggs, instead of that weird spongy cheese people use—what's it called?

**ASHERA.** Ricotta?

**NAOMI.** That's it! Disgusting stuff.

**SAM.** Oh, I love Ricotta . . .

**NAOMI.** Then you haven't tried our lasagna yet! Do you and your friend want to have dinner with us? We're having plenty!

**SAM.** Well, no, I don't think . . .

**ASHERA.** That would be lovely.

*(SAM darts ASHERA a dark look.)*

**NAOMI.** *(Calling out to the kitchen)* Mom! Sam and Ashera are eating with us!

**DAISY.** *(Off stage, in the kitchen)* That sounds lovely!

**NAOMI.** You two can just wait up here, if you want. We just have to put it together and thrust it into the oven now. Can you answer the door, if Tyrell rings?

*(Pause. To ASHERA)*

What was your name again?

**ASHERA.** Ashera.

**NAOMI.** Cool. Like the Semitic Mother Goddess.

**ASHERA.** *(Pleased)* I'm impressed. Most people think I'm named after He-Man's twin sister.

**NAOMI.** I love reading about different religions and mythologies.

**ASHERA.** Mormons don't frown on that?

**NAOMI.** Brigham Young said that Mormons should accept all truth, no matter what source it comes from.

**ASHERA.** Well, color me surprised.

**DAISY.** *(Off stage)* Naomi? You coming?

**NAOMI.** Coming, Mama! Sorry. But I'd like to talk later.

**ASHERA.** Sure thing.

*(Exit NAOMI.)*

**SAM.** I thought we were going out for dinner?

**ASHERA.** What are you complaining about? Free food! Don't you ever eat with them?

**SAM.** What would we talk about?

**ASHERA.** Well, you could talk comparative religion with Naomi, for one thing.

**SAM.** I don't talk about religion.

**ASHERA.** What have we been doing then?

**SAM.** I don't talk about it with religious people.

**ASHERA.** I am religious.

**SAM.** You don't count. You're a . . .

**ASHERA.** A pagan? A witch? Careful, Sam . . .

**SAM.** I'm sorry. Well, it's not like Wicca is an organized religion . . .

**ASHERA.** Sure, a lot of us are. I belong to the British Tradition Wicca. A high priest and priestess are in charge of my coven . . .

**SAM.** I mean like catechisms or articles of faith . . .

**ASHERA.** "An it harm none, do what you will . . ."

**SAM.** Or a firm theology . . .

**ASHERA.** The Law of Threefold Return, the Five Elements, reincarnation, the Summerland, The Charge of the Goddess . . .

**SAM.** Look, all I'm saying is you're different and that's a good thing! You're not like them!

**ASHERA.** And what are "they" like, Sam?

*(There is a knock. ASHERA and SAM look at each other.)*

Well, she did say that we should answer it.

*(ASHERA goes to the door and answers it. In the doorway is TYRELL.)*

**TYRELL.** Oh. Uh—am I in the right place?

**ASHERA.** You're Tyrell?

**TYRELL.** Yeah.

**ASHERA.** Then you're in the right place. Come in, come in, welcome to their humble abode! Look at me, don't I play the gracious proxy hostess!

**TYRELL.** How do you know the Fieldings?

**ASHERA.** I'm friends with the monster in the basement. My name's Ashera.

**TYRELL.** Interesting. Like the consort of Yahweh.

**ASHERA.** Man, I like you people!

**TYRELL.** Naomi's introduced me to all sorts of new myths.

**ASHERA.** How do you know it's just a myth?

**TYRELL.** Oh, I think very few things are *just* myths. I'm getting a PhD in anthropology. Mythology and ritual have held a long impact on the human species. I don't dismiss it lightly.

*(Noting SAM.)*

Sam, right?

**SAM.** That's me.

**TYRELL.** Nice to meet you again. Naomi has a very high opinion of you.

**SAM.** She hardly knows me.

**TYRELL.** Then you must have left an impression.

**ASHERA.** She certainly does that. Have a seat, won't you? Can I get you something to drink? I know these Mormons don't go for hard liquor, but I'm sure I can find something tantalizing . . .

**SAM.** Ashera . . .

**ASHERA.** What about proxy hostess didn't you understand, Sam?

**TYRELL.** *(With a smile.)* I think I'm okay, thanks.

**ASHERA.** Are you sure? I'm sure I could dig out some appetizers out of the freezer.

**TYRELL.** You should own a hotel.

**ASHERA.** Oh, no, indoors usually make me feel cramped. I own a small house, but it has an even bigger yard.

**SAM.** She likes being close to the trees.

**ASHERA.** No roof for me! I try to sleep outside as often as is practical. Even sometimes during a light rain. There are lots of fun things you can do in the rain.

**SAM.** Now you're just flirting with him! She doesn't sleep in the rain.

**ASHERA.** I do so. And when Sam turns into a mermaid she sleeps underwater. That is until she is woken by passing sailors and then she drags them underwater with her melancholy melodies.

*(TYRELL laughs. He gives a shrewd look at the two women.)*

**TYRELL.** Somehow I feel that you two tend to enjoy yourselves.

**ASHERA.** Oh, I do! Sam, on the other hand, tends to brood.

**SAM.** I do not.

**ASHERA.** It's even worse when she drinks. Right now she's just giving you a bit of tame melancholy and pessimism.

**TYRELL.** So you two off set each other. Yin and Yang?

**SAM.** She's a pain up the yang is more like it.

**TYRELL.** What do you do for a living?

**ASHERA.** I'm a computer programmer.

**TYRELL.** I wouldn't have guessed that.

**ASHERA.** Most people don't. Especially when they find out that I'm a witch.

**TYRELL.** Literally?

**ASHERA.** Well, a Wiccan. Does that scare you?

**TYRELL.** Hardly. I'm a Mormon. We have to file the horns on our heads.

**ASHERA.** So, it's true!

*(ASHERA and TYRELL laugh, with SAM a little disturbed.)*

**SAM.** You're a Mormon?

**TYRELL.** Does that surprise you?

**SAM.** Well, I guess I should have known that. Naomi wouldn't date anybody but a Mormon, but . . .

**TYRELL.** *(Nonplussed)* You didn't expect a Mormon to be black.

*(NAOMI and DAISY enter.)*

**NAOMI.** I'd know that laugh anywhere!

**TYRELL.** The love of my life!

*(NAOMI and TYRELL kiss.)*

**DAISY.** *(Playfully)* Some people are self conscious to display affection in front of their parents.

**NAOMI.** Never been a problem for me. Mama, this is Tyrell.

**DAISY.** Such a pleasure, Tyrell. Naomi has positively gushed about you—well, more than usual. The lasagna's in the oven. Max, Joel and Abish should be home soon.

**NAOMI.** Oh, I just thought they were upstairs.

**DAISY.** There was a bit of a blow up between Joel and Abish. Your father took them on a drive to do some damage control. I wish you had been here, sweetheart.

**ASHERA.** Would have that helped?

**DAISY.** Oh, hi. Your name is?

**ASHERA.** Ashera.

**DAISY.** Oh, like the Jewish goddess.

**ASHERA.** Wow, you guys are three for three!

**DAISY.** Kind of a common interest in this family. Ever read any Margaret Barker? She writes some very interesting stuff about the early Hebrew worship of a female deity who was the wife of Yahweh . . .

**ASHERA.** No, I don't think I have . . .

**DAISY.** She talks about the Deuteronomists and King Josiah taking away plain and precious truths out of the Bible about our Heavenly Mother . . .

**ASHERA.** Heavenly Mother? Do Mormons believe in . . . ?

**NAOMI.** Oh, Mama, you're totally Mormonizing her.

*(To ASHERA)*

Barker's a Methodist.

**DAISY.** She might as well be a Mormon. In fact, maybe she will be. Do you know if the missionaries have ever tried . . . ?

**NAOMI.** Mother!

**ASHERA.** Yeah, well, my reading list tends towards the pagan rather than the Judeo-Christian.

**DAISY.** Oh.

*(A tense pause.)*

**TYRELL.** *(Changing the topic)* To answer your first question, Ashera, it would have helped.

**ASHERA.** What's that?

**TYRELL.** Having Naomi here would have helped with the blow up between Joel and Abish. From what she tells me, she's kind of the peacekeeper around here. I call her the bomb squad.

**DAISY.** She's always had a special relationship with her older brother since they were very little. And Abish really respects her.

**NAOMI.** Oh, they'll be fine. Joel and Abish really do love each other.

**DAISY.** Well, they have a funny way of showing it.

**NAOMI.** Love often does.

*(Enter MAXWELL, JOEL, and ABISH.)*

**MAXWELL.** Well, we all made it back alive. These two have now promised to behave themselves.

**JOEL.** Sorry it made us late, Mom.

**ABISH.** Yeah, sorry, Mom.

**DAISY.** Oh, it doesn't affect me. Dinner's still in the oven.

**MAXWELL.** And this is Tyrell. Good to meet you!

*(TYRELL and MAXWELL shake hands.)*

**TYRELL.** Thank you, sir.

**MAXWELL.** Sir, nothing! Call me Max. Tell me, Daisy, what do you think of this lad? Is he what you would call handsome?

**DAISY.** Very.

**MAXWELL.** That's what I thought. Good taste, Naomi.

*(Beat.)*

That's my indication that you can relax, Tyrell.

**TYRELL.** Oh, uh, sorry, sir, uh, Max. Of course.

**MAXWELL.** Don't stand on pretense here. This is our home. As long as you are friends with my daughter, you are a more than a welcome guest. You are a part of us.

**SAM.** Hm.

**MAXWELL.** Oh, Sam! Have you finally decided to take up our invitation?

**DAISY.** And we've invited her friend Ashera to dinner as well.

**JOEL.** Ashera? Like He-Man's sister!

*(DAISY and NAOMI roll their eyes, groan, etc.)*

What? I loved those shows as a kid.

**MAXWELL.** A pleasure to meet you, Ashera.

**ASHERA.** Likewise.

**MAXWELL.** Looks like you've met most everyone else, but this is my daughter Abish and my son Joel.

**ABISH.** Hi.

**JOEL.** Hello, Ashera.

**ASHERA.** Nice to meet all of you.

**NAOMI.** This turned into quite the party!

**DAISY.** Not too overwhelming is it, Tyrell?

**TYRELL.** Not at all. I come from a much larger family than this. I feel right at home.

**MAXWELL.** How many kids?



**TYRELL.** 11.

**ABISH.** 11! Wow, did your parents not have a television?

**NAOMI.** Abish!

**TYRELL.** (*Laughs.*) No, it's perfectly all right. My Mom, well, she read this book called *Cheaper By The Dozen* when she was a kid—not the Steve Martin film, obviously, but the original—so ever since then she wanted to have a dozen kids. Thankfully, my Dad had the kind of job where he was in a position to support that many kids and, well, here we are.

**ASHERA.** You said she wanted a dozen. She missed one.

**TYRELL.** Well, it's better to aim for the stars and miss, I guess.

**ABISH.** Wow, that's like 99 months of pregnancy! That's over 8 years!

**TYRELL.** Yep, she's a pretty impressive lady.

**SAM.** Well, don't you think . . . ?

(*Beat.*)

Sorry.

**TYRELL.** What? What were you going to say?

**SAM.** Well, I was just—well, don't you think that's a little irresponsible? We've got enough people in the world as it is.

**TYRELL.** Well, I was number 10, so I guess the then question is: was it a mistake to have me?

**SAM.** No, that's not what I'm saying at all . . .

**TYRELL.** Then what are you saying?

**ASHERA.** I think what Sam is saying that . . .

**SAM.** Look, I have my opinions, that's all. It's not personal.

**TYRELL.** No, you already crossed the personal line with that black Mormon comment.

**MAXWELL.** What?

**NAOMI.** Tyrell, let's not get . . .

**TYRELL.** Thanks for trying to defuse me, Naomi, but let me say this. Sam, right?

**SAM.** Really, I shouldn't have said anything.

**TYRELL.** But you did. You said it and now you have to own it. So tell me what is your idea of the religion a black man should have?

**ASHERA.** Sam, maybe an apology will let us all . . .

**SAM.** Like I said, it was nothing personal—but, okay, sure, it is especially surprising for me to see an African-American join a religion that is historically racist.

**TYRELL.** You're treading on thin ice . . .

**SAM.** Knowing that the Mormon Church denied their priesthood to black people until nearly 1980, well, I don't think I'm being the offensive one. I think that's just being aware of history and dismaying at the sad irony.

**JOEL.** History?

**ABISH.** Oh crap. She just let the genie out of his bottle.

**JOEL.** Let's talk about history for a second. Joseph Smith and most of the early Mormons had a very broad view of race for their time. Part of the reason the Saints were driven from Missouri was because of their abolitionist tendencies. Joseph Smith ran for president on a platform that included the eradication of

slavery. He himself ordained a black man, Elijah Abel, to the priesthood office of a Seventy, which is just below an apostle. So don't tell me that he was a racist, especially in his historical context.

**ABISH.** Really? Well, then what happened? Why did we change?

**TYRELL.** It happened under Brigham Young . . .

**SAM.** Surprise, surprise.

**MAXWELL.** I'm not comfortable with where this conversation is going. Let's not have contention . . .

**TYRELL.** Look, Sam, you don't know anything about it, all right? Don't you think I get grief all the time about this? Sure, somewhere down the line something got screwed up. The leaders of the Church have tried to change things for the better, and most members of the Church have let all that go and are kind and open minded—but you still hear some of the old justifications.

**SAM.** And you want to subject yourself to that? The “mark of Cain,” that's what they called it, right? You were supposedly descended from this mythological figure—you were cursed! Even before you were born, you were wicked, unclean! Isn't that what they used to say? See, I've done my reading, too.

**DAISY.** Sam, you're our guest, please have some . . .

**SAM.** Tyrell, the sad irony is that you've traded one curse for another. People give you grief? Well, maybe they should. For you've marked yourself, all right. You've justified all that racism and have given the Mormons a free pass.

**TYRELL.** And where do you think the Mormons got the tendency from? It wasn't until Mormons started gaining converts from the Southern Churches when these ideas started creeping into the Church. A lot of other religious people try to peg this on the Mormons, to discredit them, but the thing is that their Churches were the ones who taught the Mormons the idiotic mess! Unless you're a Quaker, if you go back far enough, every group is dirty, nobody's hands are clean.

**ASHERA.** Well, then maybe we should all become Quakers.

**NAOMI.** Ashera, I don't think that's helping.

**SAM.** I don't want anybody to become a Quaker! I don't want anyone to become a Mormon, or a Baptist, or a Muslim, or, yes, even a Wiccan, Ashera.

**ASHERA.** All right, Sam, calm down, you're not being yourself . . .

**SAM.** All these religions and creeds, what have they done, but create division and prejudice? Religion takes people like all of you—who are basically good, basically decent—but then fills your heads with all these little thoughts, these limiting attitudes, this divisive silliness! You think you're noble, you think you're being moral, but you're just hanging all your little hatreds upon the cross of Jesus Christ!

**MAXWELL.** That is enough!

*(This last statement from MAXWELL comes out ferociously. Everyone looks at him, a little shocked.)*

**SAM.** Mr. Fielding . . .

**MAXWELL.** I've tried to be patient, Sam, I've tried to be open minded, but when you blaspheme my Lord and Savior, I will have no tolerance for that!

**NAOMI.** Papa, let's—let's just let it go.

**MAXWELL.** Let it go—after what she just said about your boyfriend, and your religion, and your family?

**NAOMI.** Yes.

*(MAXWELL looks at his daughter searchingly.)*

**MAXWELL.** (*To TYRELL*) I hope you know how lucky you are, young man.

**TYRELL.** I sure do.

**SAM.** Thanks, Naomi. I—look, this went badly, we all need to cool down. Sometimes when I get worked up I say things I regret. We can make this work. I think we're really helping each other out here, you know?

**NAOMI.** Then let's just forget it all and have some dinner.

**SAM.** Well, maybe dinner's not such a good idea right now. You know, maybe we all need some space and time. Come on, Ashera, let's go.

**ASHERA.** I was invited to dinner.

**SAM.** Let's go.

**ASHERA.** If it's all right with the Fieldings, I would like to stay.

**DAISY.** If that's what you want, you're more than welcome.

**SAM.** Ashera?

**ASHERA.** The Mormons weren't the only ones you were attacking.

**SAM.** I—I got carried away.

**ASHERA.** You still haven't said you were sorry.

**SAM.** (*Beat.*) It's what I believe, Ashera. I can't help that.

**ASHERA.** I know. But I still think I'd prefer to eat with the Fieldings tonight. And I think you should, too.

**SAM.** Maybe another time. Really, although I'm not sorry for what I believe, I am sorry how it came across. Have a nice dinner.

*(Exit SAM, out the front door.)*

**ABISH.** Well, that was fun.

*(Blackout.)*

**SCENE 6** — *That same night. There are voices from the kitchen, where everyone is finishing eating. There is laughter and animated discussion. ABISH enters from the kitchen. She sits glumly. After a moment, NAOMI enters.*

**NAOMI.** Abish?

**ABISH.** Hey.

**NAOMI.** Hey.

**ABISH.** What are you doing out here? Aren't you supposed to be in there with Tyrell? That's sort of the point, isn't it?

**NAOMI.** Didn't you say you had homework to do?

**ABISH.** Well, obviously, you saw my angsty, teenaged attempt to get attention for what it was. Sorry, I actually do have homework, so I'll go upstairs . . .

**NAOMI.** What's wrong, Abish?

**ABISH.** I—well, everyone was getting along so well in there . . .

**NAOMI.** That's a bad thing?

**ABISH.** Well, everyone was getting along—except me.

**NAOMI.** Did we say something wrong?

**ABISH.** No, no, everyone's just great. I, uhm, never mind.

**NAOMI.** No, go ahead.

**ABISH.** Is this what everyone goes through at my age? This—I don't know—this oppressive loneliness?

**NAOMI.** Sorry to break it to you, sweetie, for some people, it's not just your age. For some people it doesn't ever go away.

**ABISH.** Is that how you feel?

**NAOMI.** Sometimes.

**ABISH.** Even with Tyrell?

**NAOMI.** Sometimes.

**ABISH.** How do you feel the other times?

**NAOMI.** Well, sometimes it's just, well, placid. No extreme emotion either way and then . . .

**ABISH.** Then?

**NAOMI.** Then all of that goes away when I feel God close.

**ABISH.** You talk like that a lot, but—I never know what you mean. I mean, is it like some manic phase?

**NAOMI.** Is that what you think I am? Manic-depressive? Bi-polar disorder?

**ABISH.** How am I supposed to know?

**NAOMI.** I know this sounds all mystical and whatever—and I don't really expect most people to understand it, not really—but *you've* got to understand. It's like—it's like I hear this distant voice—not with my ears, but like my spirit is hearing this distant call. I absolutely tremble sometimes. It comes upon me and I feel connected to everything, to everybody. Everything else burns away and I'm . . . happy is an inadequate word for it. I'm—it's sometimes fleeting, you understand, but for at least a moment, a brief moment, I'm—complete.

**ABISH.** I've never felt complete.

**NAOMI.** I know.

**ABISH.** (*Pause.*) Does Tyrell make you feel complete?

**NAOMI.** Tyrell is one of the best men I have ever met.

**ABISH.** But?

**NAOMI.** Abish, if you're waiting for some guy to make you complete, then it's not going to happen. That's not how it works. Love is beautiful, it's wonderful, but . . .

**ABISH.** Love?

**NAOMI.** Yeah, I love him. I've known that for a while now.

**ABISH.** Are you going to marry him?

**NAOMI.** I hope to—someday.

**ABISH.** But not now.

**NAOMI.** I hear the voice calling.

(*Enter TYRELL.*)

**TYRELL.** Everything all right?

**ABISH.** Sorry to take Naomi from you, Tyrell. I'm just going up. Thanks, sis.

**NAOMI.** Let's talk about this later, okay?

**ABISH.** Okay.

*(Exit ABISH, up the stairs.)*

**TYRELL.** I have a sister like you. She connects together all of the separate parts.

**NAOMI.** I worry about her.

**TYRELL.** It's that age.

**NAOMI.** It's more than that. Tyrell, I'm really scared sometimes. I feel like there's something big that's about to happen in my family . . .

**TYRELL.** When you say "you feel," you mean one of your . . .

**NAOMI.** Yes. I've been having all these impressions and dreams—so many of them lately—am I completely crazy?

**TYRELL.** If that's crazy, then I don't want to be sane.

**NAOMI.** But, if I'm right, it's not good. Or at least not pleasant. Whatever's on the horizon, it could give a blow to my family that we may not recover from.

**TYRELL.** But they'll have you. They have always had you to help heal the wounds.

**NAOMI.** Not this time.

**TYRELL.** What do you mean?

**NAOMI.** I'm—I'm going to be gone.

**TYRELL.** I don't understand.

**NAOMI.** Tyrell, I've decided to go on a mission.

**TYRELL.** A mission? For the Church?

**NAOMI.** Yeah.

**TYRELL.** But—but I thought things were going so well between us.

**NAOMI.** They are.

**TYRELL.** I don't get it. Naomi, not now, obviously, but if things kept on the way they were, well, I was planning on . . . on . . .

**NAOMI.** Proposing? Yeah, I know.

**TYRELL.** So is that why you're going, to get away from me?

**NAOMI.** Of course not! Tyrell, I—I love you.

**TYRELL.** You do?

**NAOMI.** Yes.

**TYRELL.** Then why would you want to leave?

**NAOMI.** Because it's not just a mission. It's *my* mission.

**TYRELL.** And then what?

**NAOMI.** Then, if you haven't fallen in love with some other smart, beautiful girl, we can think of getting back to that proposing part.

**TYRELL.** But you said that you believe your family is going to be in some sort of trouble. Why would you leave now?

**NAOMI.** I guess maybe that's the way God's planned it.

*(Pause.)*

Are you upset?

**TYRELL.** Disappointed.

**NAOMI.** I—I understand if you want to end everything now.

**TYRELL.** Naomi, you're forgetting something.

**NAOMI.** What's that?

**TYRELL.** I love you, too.

**NAOMI.** Then we're still . . . ?

*(TYRELL kisses NAOMI. Enter JOEL.)*

**JOEL.** Oh, uh, sorry. When you're ready, Dad's making some banana shakes for us . . .

**NAOMI.** Awesome. Come on, it's a bit of a tradition . . .

*(Enter ASHERA.)*

**ASHERA.** Hey, these banana shakes are looking pretty good. Get in here before I drag you in! As much as all of us would enjoy that, you know that I'd win.

**TYRELL.** Shakes sound great to me.

*(Exit TYRELL and NAOMI.)*

**ASHERA.** You too, hot stuff.

**JOEL.** You talking to me?

**ASHERA.** I don't see anyone else in here.

**JOEL.** Thanks for the charity, but no one's ever mistaken me for Hugh Jackman.

**ASHERA.** Don't get me wrong, Hugh could have fun with me anytime, but he's not my type.

**JOEL.** And who's your type?

**ASHERA.** I thought I already made that clear, hot stuff.

**JOEL.** Uh . . .

**ASHERA.** Get in here, will you?

**JOEL.** Yes, ma'am.

*(Exit JOEL and ASHERA.)*

**26 more pages in the script**