Only There Were Two: An Original Play in Three Acts

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ONLY THERE WERE TWO
AN ORIGINAL PLAY IN THREE ACTS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Dramatic Arts
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Ronald A. Dalley
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9/25/65
Date

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PREFACE

The term drama means many different things to many different people. Aristotle states that drama is an "imitation of an action." But what Aristotle means by "imitation" leaves much to be considered; consequently, his definition is not entirely clear. Brecht believes that drama is a special interpretation of life, an interpretation whose sole purpose should be to appeal to one's intellectual understanding. This differs from Aristotle's concept that drama should excite pity and fear. Marion Gallaway maintains that drama is a work of art which expresses the artist's "experience of a stimulus" to a single recipient or to a mass audience. Invariably each innovation as to what drama is has its followers and admirers. Certainly history bears this out, but dramatic elements have been emphasized and combined so differently as to make theoretical definition most difficult.

Because it is puzzling to say what drama is, it might be approached from the opposite side and say what it is not. First, it is not a simple narrative, an account of a hunting

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trip, for instance. Such an account will generally lack comp-
plication and suspense and end up only as a series of chronolo-
gical events. It is not a mere sketch. A sketch is seldom more than a picture. Drama must have action, action with some type of progressive development. This does not mean to imply that all action be necessarily external, either. The internal or mental struggles of a Hamlet or a Macbeth illu-
strate that action of this nature can be more fascinating than mere physical action. Drama is not just mere entertainment. By entertainment it is meant something that holds someone's attention agreeably and or amuses them. Nor can it be said with George Jean Nathan that drama is "anything that interests an intelligently emotional group of persons assembled together in an illuminated hall."4

Therefore I must conclude that drama is so fluid in its nature that when a person tries to draw a rigid definition someone comes along and reveals examples that provide excep-
tion. However, a person must work from some kind of definition in order to aid in the processes of writing. Characteristi-
cally, then, I would say that drama is both the selection and arrangement of incidents and materials from life drawn in an imaginative sense to create upon the audience a certain response or effect. Further, I would say that the material is so arranged as to develop action, complication, suspense, and climax.

This brings up another aspect of drama which a writer should consider, and that is its purpose. Once again it becomes difficult to pin point a definition which states in the final analysis this is what drama does. But because definitions are a means to build foundations, it is imperative that I deal with them. So, putting it as simply as I can, it is my judgment that drama is an expression of life by someone who has a point of view, and its purpose is to share that point of view.

Would it not be fair, then, to say that drama should do more than merely photograph life or just entertain. In Hamlet's advice to the players, he states:

The purpose of playing, whose end, both at first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of time his form and pressure.

Shakespeare alludes to the ideas that drama mirrors the culture of its time, that we depend upon the dramatist to discover, or to experiment, to expose the many human variables that exist in the real world. In other words, the artist tries to communicate his experiences to others.5

Thus drama "with all its vitality," with its ability to reach deep into the world cf human existence, must ultimately deal with the essentials of life.6 Anita Block points out an interesting parallel. In Ibsen's A Doll's House he depicts

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Nora as a person who finally is made to function as a human being rather than a doll. She is able to assert herself as an individual. This may not mean very much to us today, but at the time of the popularity of the play, what was the plight of woman's individuality? Could she vote? Was it a disgrace to hold a job outside the home? Ibsen's play draws from an aspect of life that is essential in his time. Though all good plays may not have this type of parallel structure, certainly some type of identification will be inherent.

As members of the human family, we are actors more than half of the time. We imitate others; we act our way through a labyrinth of personal relationships; "we judge people by our own direct sense of their motivations, while discounting the rationalizations they offer." Children "play-like," politicians pretend, and parents relive their lives in the lives of their children. In the same sense the stage becomes a moment we stop pretending and evaluate the content a play has to offer. If we share the author's point of view, we should perhaps observe a meaningful experience and be able to relate it to our own lives. It is this reason we become critical; it is then we see the purpose for attending the theatre.

From this premise, I approached the writing of my play Only There Were Two. I have been acutely aware for some time that there are vast untapped areas in the struggles of our pioneer heritage that lend themselves to great moments of drama.

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7Ibid., pp. 7-8.
8Fergusson, op. cit., p. 11.
We need to search these areas to capture the spirit of the struggle and present it in a dramatic form suitable for the stage so people may feel and appreciate the richness of what they gave. As Mormons, we are constantly emphasizing the religious aspects of our pioneer heritage, sometimes forgetting and even sometimes deliberately pushing into the background the fascinating human side of it all. Subject matter of this nature would, I believe, help to illuminate understanding, and appreciation of the very human, intensively dramatic, and often tragic lives of these people. Indeed, it could make us reach for a spiritual understanding that would light and nurture the darkest corners of our souls. I think William Faulkner states what I mean when he said:

...the young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself. ... It is his (the writer's) privilege to help man endure by lighting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of the past. The poet's voice need not be merely the record of men, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.9

If this be true, then it should become of interest to us all; and where is a better place to stimulate that interest than on the stage.

In 1865 Brigham Young called a small group of people to settle a desolate, arid region in Southern Nevada called the Muddy Valley. He wanted them to grow cotton to be processed in a cotton gin that was to be constructed in St. George, Utah.

It was all part of Brigham Young's plans for the Saints to be self-sustaining. This handful of people abandoned half-built homes, young orchards and growing crops, sold property or gave it away, and bartered with whatever means they could for ploughs, flour, ammunition, wheat seed, cotton seed and wagons to venture forth in a calling that might well take their lives. The journey to the Muddy River would be long, hot, desolate, and treacherous. When they would get there, they would be greeted by swamps. What wasn't swampy would generally be alkaline. If they were fortunate, there would be a few meadows of rich fertile soil.

The swamps would be infested with thousands of mosquitoes, many which carried the dreaded disease malaria. In the summertime, it would be so hot that at night many of the Saints would wrap themselves in wet sheets or blankets in order to sleep. The hot wind coming off the dry mesas would be a relentless curse, filling miles of irrigation canals with blow-sand; the water tasted like a straight dose of Epsom salts and caused the same reaction until a person could get used to it.


12Mary V. Lytle, Overton, Nevada, Interview, June 30, 1964.

In the end they would be forced to abandon the settlement and once again start a long hazardous wagon journey. Bitterly ironical, it would not be the hardships and struggle caused by the elements that would force them to leave. It would be the nagging persecution brought about by unscrupulous men, a tax war, and a boundary survey. But before they would leave, they would more than accomplish their mission. They would grow cotton, 20,000 pounds of it; they would grow wheat and alfalfa, as well as plant many orchards. They would clear and drain acres of swampland, and they would endure hordes of grasshoppers, drouths, and flash floods. All this would they conquer only to be forced to leave because of the prejudices of man.14

All would abandon the "Cotton Mission" except one man, his wife, and family. It is this man and his family that become the focal point for the play Only There Were Two. It must be remembered, though, that the play itself is fiction and only the year, the boundary survey, the tax rates, the message from Brigham Young, and the mass exodus from the valley are historically accurate. However, I must say in all fairness that the idea for the plot of the play springs from a man by the name of Daniel Bonneli and his family who did not elect to leave with the Saints in 1871. Rather than starting all over again, he and his wife voted to remain, even though it meant almost complete isolation.

14Ashbough, op. cit., p. 67.
From such courage and will power the theme of a play began to germinate. It was further given impetus by a desire to dramatize the political, social, and moral conflicts that such a group of people might encounter. Mix these things with the struggles of the "human heart" and inevitably one comes up with material suitable for drama.

But there were also other reasons. I have always held in awe the fact that this obscure little group of people called to the "Cotton Mission" illustrated such a remarkable faith, a faith that is so badly needed by the obscure little groups of the world today. Perhaps a play written about these people could help engender a same kind of faith today. Here lies a reason for the play's universality. In addition to this, the subject is an area close to my own heart, my own experience, because it is my home. The year 1965 is also the centennial year since the first Mormon settlers came to rest on the banks of the Muddy River. A way to help honor that anniversary would be to dramatize it. Last of all, the material is there with which to make a good play.

Certainly in the writing of any play, it takes much preparation from the standpoint of both subject material and technical understanding; and both must be synthesized properly if the play is to be valid. In order to give me a clearer understanding of the mechanics involved in playwriting, I had to do several things. First I took a course in playwriting, which, under the instruction of Dr. Charles Metten, gave me the first impression that perhaps I should like to write a
play for my thesis. While I was enrolled in this course, I wrote a one act play and later produced and directed it as a program for the Overton Ward. Because of the play's success and impact, it was requested by the Moapa Stake Presidency that I present the play for the Stake leaders.

The thrill of seeing one's own work produced and accepted by an audience made me realize even more that I wanted to try my hand at playwriting once again, only this time a longer and more difficult work. Only There Were Two is the outgrowth of that desire.

While delving into the technical theories involved in constructing a play, I found that all the authors of the books which I had read dealing with this subject agree at least to one thing, "The dramatist is born, not made." Kenneth Macgowan puts it this way:

Scores of books and hundreds of articles now attest to the desire of some writers to teach and other writers to learn, an art that cannot in the broadest sense be taught or learned unless the student has a certain natural gift. However, authors are quick to answer that there are certain ingredients in relation to the "art of structure" that can be developed within an aspiring playwright. Macgowan lists these ingredients as exposition, preparation, complication, suspense, conflict, crisis, and climax; and for the most part

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they should appear in that order in the course of the play so that the plot structure will have a cohesive unity.\textsuperscript{17}

The development of character is enhanced as a result of a skillful interplay and outgrowth of these structural techniques, though there is more involved in the development of character, e.g., believability, personality, and reaction so that characters will inevitably conflict or clash.\textsuperscript{18}

It is to the reference of this kind of framework that I have organized my play but always keeping in mind the words of Brunetiere:

\begin{quote}
...there are no rules...there never will be. There are only conventions, which are necessarily variable, since their only object is to fulfill the essential aim of the dramatic work, and the means of accomplishing this vary with the piece, the time, and the man.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

In the final analysis the experiences I have encountered during the composition of this play have been rewarding, sometimes discouraging, and often times spiritually uplifting. The research, the preparation, and the actual writing certainly have been a rare educational opportunity, an opportunity that could be granted no other way.

Before I was able to put down a word of dialogue, I had to write two complete scenarios for each act. The first scenario lacked dramatic fire and suspense. The character, Daniel Stark, was not interesting enough to hold an audience's

\textsuperscript{17}Macgowan, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 32-49.

\textsuperscript{18}Macgowan, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 61-62.

attention; however, in the second scenario the play acquired
an interesting tone and the essence of a good conflict was
there. This in turn created suspense so that the audience
would worry and care about the central characters. The second
scenario received approval, and I was able to begin writing
the dialogue. The first draft with dialogue had some thrilling
moments, but there were still head spots and a few incon-
sistencies in exposition. I reworked these. I also reworked
much of the dialogue of Daniel Stark to give his character a
greater inner struggle but at the same time a stronger
sensitivity.

After I had completed the second draft, I tested the
play structure with Samuel Selden's "Iron Check List" of
structure, i.e.,

- preparation (which is largely exposition),
- attack (the precipitation of conflict...),
- struggle (the "guts" of the play, the conflict),
- turn (name for turning point, major crisis, or climax), and
- outcome ('the ending...how it all works out...usually
  very brief...to satisfy the audience that conflict is
  really won or lost').

For the most part my play stands up under this "check
list." But there is one more test it must meet, and that is
called the "Golden Check List." It involves three items:

- theme (which must be unified, acceptable to the audience,
  and, if conventional, supported by dialogue and action
  founded on common premises),
- issue (which must be clear, important, interesting),
- drive (which is based on the leading character's having a
desire that is clear and strong, and that will win

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sympathy, hold attention, 'serve as a worthy resistance to other's desires,' and generate dramatic heat). 21

That I can truly tell whether or not my play completely meets these requirements, remains to be seen. I can partially evaluate and say, "Yes, I think it will," but the validity of that statement can only be measured after the play has been tested before a live audience with live actors.

\[21\text{Op. cit., p. 154.}\]
ONLY THERE WERE TWO

by

Ronald Dalley
CAST OF CHARACTERS

Daniel Stark
Esther Stark
Anabelle Stark
John Stark
Vincent Miles
Israel Holt
Sarah Holt
Jake Gibson
Orson Thomas
Mort Chamberlain
Newton Hall
Alma Bennett
Isaac James
Captain Monroe
Men and Women
SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

SETTING: St. Joe, a small Mormon settlement in the Muddy Valley in Southern Nevada

ACT ONE

Late February, 1871, early evening

ACT TWO

Scene I. One day later, afternoon
Scene 2. One week later, evening

ACT THREE

One week later, late afternoon
Description of Setting

Daniel Stark's home is crude—adobe walls, with hewn cottonwood poles supporting the roof, and windows and doors made from whip-sawed timbers brought from Sheep Mountain seventy miles away. The roof is slanted and thatched with tules from the swamps. For all the room's crude appearances, it has a homey, gentle atmosphere, a feeling that seems to contrast with its cramped awkward look. Everything is clean and arranged neatly.

On one side of the room is the entrance doorway, and on the opposite side is a doorway to the bedrooms. At the back wall is a fireplace with a fire gently flickering to help give a feeling of warmth and coziness. On the fireplace mantel rests a violin. Its glossy brownness and delicate curves seem out of place in an atmosphere of mud walls, like a sapphire on an old man's gnarled finger. A cot lies near the entrance and somewhere near the cot is a bookshelf containing the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Plato, and various other literary and philosophical writers as well as the scriptures. Also at the back is a window covered with a gray, oily cloth or canvas. A large cupboard full of tins with one or two dishes occupies a place somewhere between the fireplace and the large window. A table, quite long, sits in the middle of the room surrounded by crude chairs. A large rocking chair comfortably lingers against the wall by the bedroom entrance.
A basket of clothes to be mended sits by the rocker. Above the rocker stands a rather tall rough box with a tin wash basin sitting on it. Washclothes and towels hang on pegs by the basin. Two buckets sit by a woodbox in a corner of the room. Pots and pans of various shapes and sizes hang on the walls. A dishpan full of water is at one end of the table. The effect sought is one of struggle and hardship. The curtain rises to reveal Anabelle Stark putting a few things away. She is eighteen, slim, pretty and mature for her age. Esther Stark enters from the bedroom. She is middle aged, fadingly pretty, but her appearance somewhat drawn. The rough life of the desert has had its effect. Several candles and a kerosene lamp light the room. Periodically gusts of wind can be heard outside in a lonesome whining sound. It gives one the feeling of isolation and perhaps desperation. Huge shadows are cast on the walls by the flickering light from the candles and oil lamps to enhance the feeling of loneliness. Esther moves with a slow and tired step. The day has been hard for her. She slowly arranges one or two chairs in preparation for visitors. Anabelle moves to the table with a dishcloth and begins to wipe. A gust of wind is heard. It builds and then fades.
ACT ONE

Anabelle

Oh, I wish that wind would stop. All it ever does lately is blow, blow, blow! A person can get so sick of wind. We just make a little progress when along comes the wind and undoes everything.

She finishes wiping the table and turns to her mother.

Look at the grit and sand on that dishcloth. One of these days we're going to wake up and find ourselves covered over by one big sand dune.

She goes to her dishpan at the end of the table. Esther finishes adjusting chairs and moves to the bookshelf.

I heard John the other day saying a little verse.
"The wind like fury here doth blow,
That when we do plant or sow, Sir,
We place one foot upon the seed
And hold it till it grow, Sir.
I don't know where he got it, but it names this place.

Esther

(sighing)
You complain too much; it isn't good for a girl your age to do so. You should be thankful.

She moves wearily to the bookshelf, takes the Bible, goes to the rocker and sits as though she has waited all day for this moment. She lets out a sigh almost of despair.

Anabelle

Thankful for what? Thankful that I am among the choice few who were called to come here.

Esther

Oh, I'm too weary to preach to you now. You know what I mean.

Anabelle

Oh, mother, I'm thankful for the church and all. You know that. It's just all this. It seems so hopeless.
You're just tired like I am. Besides don't let your father catch you talking this way.

Esther opens the Bible and begins to read silently. She rocks gently back and forth. The wind swells again. Tinkling noises can be heard coming from Anabelle's direction. Suddenly she stops and listens to the wind. Her back to her mother.

(almost melancholy)
You know—when the wind blows like this and makes that lonesome sound, I feel—so far, far away from everything. Like I was all alone on a

huge flat mesa, standing at the edge looking into nothing but a dark sea of emptiness and somewhere out there I look for hope but always I see nothing but darkness.

The wind swells. The sound of blow-sand can be heard whipping against the mud walls. Then the wind dies into a low whine. The lonesome sound has captivated Esther now. She has stopped rocking. She stares out over the audience.

Strange. I feel that way sometimes. I suppose we all get that lonely feeling once in a while. It's like everything were slipping from around you, that nothing is real—only some kind of dream. I feel so heavy—I can't move my arms or legs. Something I dread pulls at me from all directions—some fear, some dread happening.

Her eyes stare vacantly in front of her. Anabelle slowly turns her head and looks at her mother almost in a disbelief. She stares a moment then catches herself.

Mother, what are you reading?
Esther

"Job."

Anna hangs a dischloth on a peg protruding from the wall. Esther begins to rock again.

(pensively)
I don't know why. When I need strength and reassurance, I take the Bible or Book of Mormon or one of the other works and just open it and begin to read. I guess I trust inspiration to guide me to open to that place I need most. It always seems to work. When you mentioned about the wind just now, it brought to mind this feeling I've had lately.

Anabelle

Maybe the Muddy Valley is getting to you, Mother. I've just seen a side of you I've never quite known before.

Esther

(pretending it isn't there)
Nonsense! Everyone has the right to be depressed a little once in a while.

Trying to change the subject from herself.

You asked which section of the Bible I'm reading from? Well - it's the "Book of Job."

Anabelle

Yes - you told me.

Anabelle goes to the clothes basket by the rocker, picks it up, and crosses to the table. She sits and begins to mend.

Esther

I did? Oh. Yes - I did.

Anabelle

Read out loud, Mother; maybe I can gather some strength, too.

Esther

(slowly and deliberately)
"Then should I yet have comfort; yea, I would harden myself in sorrow: let him not spare; for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One."
What is my strength, that I should hope? And what is mine end, that I should prolong my life?

Is my strength the strength of stones? Or is my flesh of brass? Is not my help in me? And is wisdom driven quite from me?

To him that is afflicted pity should—

She is interrupted by what sounds to be hoof beats outside. She and Anna both listen.

Sounds like someone's coming—Anabelle go out and see. Maybe it's Levi.

Anabelle rises and moves to the outside door. Esther looks after her. She steps out the door, looks a moment, and then returns to her sewing.

Anabelle

We must be hearing things, or else it's the wind. I didn't see anyone.

Esther

Levi should be in from St. George any time. I'll certainly be relieved when he gets here. I worry about taking that long trip. It wouldn't be so bad if the trail weren't so treacherous.

Anabelle

Mother, it's not like he were alone. Besides someone needed to help get the supplies.

Esther

Oh, supplies - I wonder if John brought home those few things I asked him to get at the co-op.

She rises and crosses to the cupboard. Looks for a moment.

Did you see him bring anything with him when he came in this evening.

Anabelle

No, but then he's always bringing or taking something so I really can't say.
I hope he hasn't mislaid them.

Esther

She moves back to the rocker.

We're out of supplies, clothing, tools. The whole valley's out of everything.

(somewhat frustrated sounding)
No "bishop's chips" to get supplies, no supplies at the co-op, and a son who can't bring something home when I ask him. I needed some flour. Levi better get here soon or we'll be eating hay with the animals.

She resumes her seat in the rocker. There is a short silence. Esther begins to rock again.

Anabelle

Is there going to be a meeting here this evening?

(vaguely)

Esther

Yes.

Anabelle

What's it going to be about?

Esther

(not paying too much attention)
Something about a boundary survey being taken. It's mainly grownups talk and doesn't concern you.

Anabelle

I don't know why. I'm eighteen. That's grown-up, isn't it?

(pause)

You ought to tell me more things than you do. It won't be too long before I'll have to be making decisions on my own. I should have some experience, shouldn't I? I think you should trust me more.

Esther appears not to be listening. Rather lost in her own thoughts.

Mother--

She looks at her mother.

You're not even listening to me!
Esther

(coming out of it)
Oh - for goodness sake, Anabelle - of course I'm listening to you. What are you trying to say?

Anabelle

I want to know why you won't trust me more with - well - with (shrugs shoulders)
with things.

Looking sideways at her mother trying to be somewhat casual.

Vincent came to see me again yesterday, and he said that there was some talk of folks wanting to leave because of hardships and Indians. Is that what the meeting's for?

Esther

(changing subject)
I suppose so. Vincent has spent quite a bit of his time over here talking to you, hasn't he? Do you like him?

Anabelle

Mother - what a question to ask, of course, I like him.

How much?

Esther

Anabelle

How am I supposed to answer that?

Esther

(chuckles)
I was just wondering.

A man's voice is heard outside. It almost shouts. John are you bringing an armload of wood from the woodpile? Daniel Stark enters from the outside. He takes off his coat and hangs it on a peg near the doorway entrance. He is a tall, lean looking man. He has iron gray hair and sharp penetrating steel-blue eyes that give him a distinguished yet delicate and refined look. His manner is calm and commanding. He loves to play classical music on his violin, and he enjoys studying the good literature of the world. Like the violin
on the fireplace mantel, he seems out of place. He is first counselor in the Bishopric and County Commissioner of the Rio-Virgin County, which is supposedly in Utah. He is one of the strong leaders among the people.

Is the stock and everything all right?

Daniel

Yes, so far, but the night isn't over yet.

What do you mean?

Daniel

He moves to the fireplace and stands with his back toward it. He puts his hands behind him to warm them.

Israel Holt had one of his cows stolen today. That makes three or four this past week.

Esther

Isn't there something we can do?

John enters with a huge armload of wood. He partially stumbles and half runs to the wood box and throws it down with a resounding crash. John is thirteen or fourteen, obedient but has his attention easily diverted. Sometimes he has a hard time responding to his duties. He stands by the wood box puffing and gasping for breath.

Anabelle

You didn't have to bring the whole woodpile, John.

John

(gasping)

Yeh - well maybe not - but you don't have to go out in that cold wind to get wood.
He moves to the fireplace beside his father.

You get your chores finished?

Yes, sir.

Then continuing as before the interruption.

I don't know if there is anything we can do. I suppose just learn to live with it. The Indians believe it's rental payments for their land. That's a point, isn't it? But things have been so hard on the settlements lately - not knowing whether we are in Utah or Nevada or Arizona. Supplies and equipment running low - people are on edge - hungry mostly, and when people are hungry, they're touchy. Can't blame the Indians. They get hungry just like anyone else.

He turns his back. Esther rises.

John, did you get the flour and things from the co-op like I asked you?

A startled look comes over his face, and then he casts his eyes to the floor.

(apologetically)

Gosh, - Mom, I - I forgot.

Crossing to him.

Oh, John, can't you just be responsible---

Turning around

It wouldn't have done any good. The co-op's out of supplies until the group gets back from St. George. I talked with the Bishop about it.
Esther
I worry about Levi being out there in that desert.

Daniel
They should be here this evening unless something holds them up. Let's hope that doesn't happen. We've got to start working and draining some new ground sometime this week if we expect to get a few more acres of cotton planted this spring.

Esther

Daniel,
(hesitantly)
I've heard talk about some of the people want to leave the settlement. Sarah Holt told me she and her husband might go back to Utah.

Daniel moves to the wash basin.
Pours some water from the bucket and begins to wash his hands.

Is it true?

Daniel
What? About the talk? Yes, there has been some talk. I don't know how much, though. If I were to listen to what Sarah told me, I should think everyone is leaving tomorrow.

He dips water in his hands and vigorously washes his face.

(dreamily)
John
I wonder what it would be like to live in a place where it's cool in the summers and it rains once in awhile? Where the water tastes like water?

Daniel
Groping for a towel.

You know how some people are—they're not happy unless they're brimming over in misery. We'll find out tonight at the meeting how some of the people feel. As for Sister Holt, I wouldn't be too concerned with what she says.

Daniel wipes his face and hands.

John
I heard Jake Gibson say something about "givin' it up." I didn't hear much—"just givin' it up." That's all.
Anabelle

With that kind of information you could spread the best rumors in the valley.

Daniel

Since the settlement began there has always been one or two families moving in or out, but I didn't come here to put in seven years of the hardest days of my life just to pack up and leave because things started getting tough. We were called here for a purpose. Some of the Saints are quick to forget that.

Esther

She goes to the clothes basket where Anabelle is and starts to sort some clothes.

Well, these last few months have been hard. If it's not the heat, it's the wind; and if it's not the wind, it's the floods; and if it's not that, it's the Indians. Seems to be more sickness lately. People half starved and malnourished — no wonder. I'm not so sure I blame people for wanting to leave. Maybe they have the right idea—maybe it wasn't meant to be settled.

John moves to the cot and sits. Daniel takes a dipper and prepares to get a drink out of a bucket sitting on the floor.

Daniel

President Young wouldn't have called us to come down here if he thought it couldn't be done.

Esther does not reply. Daniel dips the water.

John

Will we ever be called back? I think someone else ought to have the blessing of living in the swamps.

Anabelle takes a book from the shelf and moves to left end of the table, opens it and reads silently, looking periodically to listen.

Daniel

I was talking to Brother Gibson about this problem. I told him I thought the valley has prospects of development — we've come a long way since the first time we rolled a wagon off the mesa into the valley. He was ready to admit that, but he
wasn't so sure he wanted to be the one to help it along. That's the way with people. They're willing to cash in on someone else's struggles. Who are we doing this for? Just ourselves? It seems to me the gospel enters in here somewhere. I told Jake he wanted to think long and hard before he decides to pull up and leave. Now, before I get wound up further, I've got to get ready for the meeting.

He goes into the bedroom, John rises from the cot and crosses to his mother.

Can I have something to eat before I go to bed?

There isn't much of anything left to eat. I have a crust of bread. Will that do?

She goes to the cupboard and gets out a crust of bread.

Anything, Mom. I'm just hungry.

Do you want any, Anabelle?

No, thanks.

You think maybe we'll get down to cooking lizards and frying grasshoppers?

He begins eating.

(wincing)
Oh! Don't even mention it! I hope your bread tastes good.

Why did we come here, Mom?

You know why, John.

Did we have to come? Did anyone have to?

No, no one had to.
John
If so many don't like it, why did they come?

Esther
Who said they didn't like it? I just said these last few months have been hard on the settlers. Besides, John, life (stoically) is very often doing things we don't like to do.

Anabelle
Does it have to be? It appears to me to be going a bit worse than what we don't like by living here.

Esther
You're not making sense, Anabelle. Anyway, if you discover some place where it isn't, let me know and I'll join you.

John
(munching)
I reckon you'd be dead if you found it, wouldn't you?

Esther has moved to the rocker once again. She has taken some socks with her and begins to darn.

Anabelle
Do you do everything the Church asks?

Esther
We try to. We've managed quite well so far.

John
I wonder what it would be like to be normal?

Anabelle
(laughing)
That's a good question coming from you?

Don't you think you're normal?

Esther
I didn't mean it that way. I mean living where other people live in the cities. Having a house instead of a mud hut - and living with people, lots of people (as an afterthought) who aren't Mormons.

John
We tried living with normal people - as you like to call it. I suppose, indirectly, that's why we're here.

Esther
(she indicates the room)
John, when you get old enough to be on your own, you can go and live with the gentiles; but I'm not so sure that they will let you live with them.

Why?

Because you are a Mormon.

Does that make a difference?

It shouldn't but it does. Need I remind you of the persecutions we have endured because of our beliefs.

But that was a long time ago, wasn't it?

Not that long. Strange how easy it is to forget though.

You sound as if that's bad.

A little good and bad I reckon. A lot of terrible memories — but something means more when you have to suffer for it.

That sounds like Father now.

Esther looks at Anabelle for a moment. Anabelle glances away.

There is a limit to what a person can take.

Will they ever bother us out here?

(almost bitter)

I shouldn't think they would. If they do we'll have no place to go because I'll tell you for one thing this is the end of the ear—
glances to see if Anabelle is listening. She is.

(a little flustered)
John, you ask too many questions!

Anabelle

(indicating book)
This book states that life is based on strength. The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must. Are we weak?

Entering in time to hear what Anabelle has said.

Daniel

That depends upon your definition of strong or weak. Perhaps what you mean is, is it better to be good or to be strong? Is it better to be righteous or have power and revenge over your enemies? It really doesn't matter, does it? Because of the way men act, they suffer either way you look at it.

He is holding a dark coat. He also has on a vest and tie of the times.

Is my tie straight?

Esther rises, crosses to him, and adjusts the tie.

Anabelle

Can't a person be both, good and strong?

Daniel

Yes, and when they are there is peace but when they aren't, which is most often the case, there's misery and suffering.

John

Just finishing his bread.

I wonder if people will ever learn to live together?

Daniel

Putting on his coat.

Not unless they learn to heed the teachings of Christ. You see, men are basically discontented with what they have. A man tires of what he has and pines for what he hasn't. He ridicules what he doesn't understand, and he persecutes those who may believe differently. History is a living testimony to that.
Daniel goes to his bookshelf and searches for some papers. He finds them, brings them to the table, sits, and begins to slowly leaf through them.

John

Chin in both hands.

You know, I really don't mind livin' here so much. I don't like the heat an' the wind, but there are times in the evening when the air smells of damp willows and tamarisks from the river bank.

He breathes in as if he can smell it.

Esther

Picking up the clothes and socks and placing them in the basket.

That makes you feel all good inside, doesn't it?

John

(dreamily)

Yes. I like to sleep outside, too. You can smell the dampness of the river and every so often a kind of warm breeze ripples the cottonwood leaves. It makes a slow chattering sound that lulls me to sleep like soft rain on a rooftop. I'll bet the stars at night twinkle brighter here in the spring than any place on earth.

Esther

At the end of John's speech Esther moves to the bedroom door with the basket of clothes.

Clear the table off, John, and get ready for bed. You too Anabelle. People might start coming any minute for the meeting.

She exits. John takes a cloth and wipes the table. Anabelle sits looking off in the distance. John follows after his mother. Daniel continues to look through his papers.
Father, why does the Lord cause suffering?

Daniel

Daniel looks up somewhat bewildered by his daughter's question.

Well - I - uh - I'm not so sure that the Lord causes it. It comes back to the same thing we've been discussing. It is because of the selfishness and transgressions of men.

Anabelle

To me - it just doesn't seem fair somehow.

What isn't fair?

Daniel

To suffer - In this place.

Anabelle

You are playing a game called trying to crowd God into a corner with the word justice, Anabelle.

Daniel

Maybe I am. But all I want to know is why we have to be the ones who are called to--

Anabelle

I'm sure the Lord has his reasons. I believe the word is faith, isn't it?

Anabelle

She lowers her head, not very satisfied with the answer.

Yes - that's always the word to use whenever you don't understand.

Daniel

(he looks at her a moment)

Anabelle - I really wish you would try to see more than just misery here. I notice lately you're always looking for the bad in everything. One of these days you'll look back on all this and say to yourself, "It was hard, but I'm glad I was a part of it." You'll be proud because you helped lay the foundation. You were part of the spirit and movement that history will be talking about for a long time.
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(he looks into her eyes for a moment)
Daniel gently takes her by the hand and places the other hand on her shoulder and looks deep into her eyes. There is a slight pause. Then he speaks:

Daniel

Where could I go to find someone more wonderful than you, Esther?

(smiling)

Esther

I hope you don't try.

Daniel

I know I don't tell you often enough, but you'll never know how I appreciate your sacrifices for me, the family, the church.

(gazing over her head)

It's hard, Esther. There's times when I get terribly discouraged, especially when I see my own flesh and blood having to go through so much; but we just can't quit.

(talking as if he needs reassurance.)

She breaks away. Daniel remains center. The day has been extremely hard. She brushes at her hair and then pats it with her hand.

Esther

I guess one might say that living is sacrifice, though I'm not so sure you get used to it. It's only the ones who get used to it that survive. Maybe Anabelle was partly right when she mentioned that life is for the strong. There is no room for anyone weak here.

Daniel

He crosses down behind her and places hands on her shoulders.

I'm afraid this day has been a hard one for you, Esther. You look tired. It's true things have worked hardships, but we'll make it.

(determined)

We've got to!

(pause)

He breaks from her.

I said earlier that I had a talk with Jake Gibson. Things don't look good for the settlement. There are too many who
are restless about the survey being taken. The Gibsons, the Holts, the Halls, all have stated that if the Muddy Valley is found to be in Lincoln County, Nevada, instead of Utah, they'll pull out. I think I might have convinced Jake. He stated he was as unhappy as any other member of the community, but if the others decide to leave, he would have to leave with them. I told him not to make any quick decisions until after the meeting with the county leaders tonight. I can't understand it. A man just doesn't walk off and leave seven years of hard toil without considering all aspects.

Esther
Don't you think they've been considering it day in and day out every minute of the time they've lived here?

Daniel
But what about the future? We're always too eager to forget about that. Everyone wants to live for the present. The people who do that are the ones who, when they get older, sit back and say, "If only I had realized! If only I had done this!" It's too easy to measure out our lives in "if" clauses. We have a Prophet of God. In Heaven's name let's abide by his word.

He pulls himself to his full height, sucks in his breath and looks out over the audience.

(desperate confidence)
Besides, this valley has potential - I feel it - I know it!

He points.

Out there is rich spongy earth begging to be plowed and worked. When a man sees the first small shoots of grain breaking the brown crust, it gives him a feeling - a pride because he creates and nourishes something along. It's almost as if you become a God - to see dry barren land change to fertile soil, to see swamps drained of its filth and stench and become rich loam, to see alkaline ground changed to produce vegetables and alfalfa. To have your sons at your side bending their backs in the hot sun, working with you and feeling it - to pit your wits and stamina against the forces of nature.

He turns to his wife slowly.

It's like what the gospel does to people - when they're worked and treated properly; it changes them. Something becomes useful and beneficial.

(losing himself)
It yields satisfaction - artistic satisfaction. Yes - a creator - that's how it makes you feel - like a God.

He turns away.

Esther who has intently watched Daniel reveal his feelings about the settlement suddenly seems to let down a barrier. She reveals something which she evidently has been harboring inside of her for some time. She goes to the fireplace and picks up the violin. Rushing to her husband, she thrusts the instrument into his hands and asks in a hurt passionate way.

Esther

And this, what are you going to do about this? Something which has been more than half your life. Are you throwing it away? It's an art, too. It needs a creator.

Daniel very slowly reaches for the violin. Extending a delicate hand, he gently takes it into his arms and presses it to his breast. He doesn't say a word.

Oh - Daniel - this is where you belong - not out here in a wilderness that means nothing. There are people who are meant for this sort of thing - but not you. You're an artist - a musician who could have the world at his feet. (forelorn)

Sometimes I hear a cry beckoning for you to return to your art. I dream at night that I hear comforting music coming from somewhere. Then suddenly I know it's from your violin calling you, and I rush about crying "Yes! Yes! He'll answer it - he'll come." I look for you, Daniel, and you're not there. I feel alone. Suddenly the music turns to a long wailing sob - it pleads and pleads in my ears all the time getting louder. I panic. I frantically rush everywhere trying to find you. Then I see you standing away off in the distance - you're fighting someone or something. The wailing groans of the music turn to loud crashes beating in my ears. Crying, stumbling, I frantically try to reach you to help you - I fall trying to run in the sharp rocks, and each time I fall the rocks laugh at me.

She is very tense. Then after a pause
(quietly)
It's like chasing a rainbow. I never get any closer. You're a mirage.
(pause)
(slowly)
Daniel, I see a man working furiously to evaluate himself in an environment that is treating him unjustly. For a man to struggle against that which he doesn't fit is - well - it just can't be done. You will lose, Daniel, and you will drag us down with you. Let's go back and do what you are destined to do. Disaster lies at the feet of a man who tears himself away from his chosen work and forgets who and what he is.

Daniel
(vaguely, not knowing what to say)
Who am I?

He turns his back.

Esther
You're an artist! A musician!

Daniel
Am I a husband? A father? Am I a priesthood holder? A member of the Church? All right, suppose I were to return to my music,

(coming out of it)
where would I begin?

Esther
Where you left off! - Anywhere but here.

Daniel
And what about the Church? Is that what the Lord needs now, violin players?

Esther
The Church needs everyone, all types of professions and skills.

Daniel
In the future, yes, but now, it needs a chance to stabilize, to root. We've been pushed and shoved until it's a wonder it even exists. We're struggling to settle these areas for that purpose. For that reason we were called by President Brigham Young to come here, and it is here where we can do the most good. As far as my destiny is concerned, I'm fulfilling that now. Time will testify whether we succeed or fail.

He crosses to Esther.

There's a small piece of ground that Levi and I have especially worked, with the intent of letting him have it in a short while as his to start his own farm when he gets ready to settle down.
You should see how he works extra hard on that ground. He gets
a glint in his eye and I can see him swell up inside. He tells
me his plans, the things he intends to do. And then John's
coming along and Anabelle — would their life be any better
following us around while we moved from one place to the next?
I never realized that you felt this way. Has it been that
hard, Esther? You've never acted this way before.

Esther

She reaches out, takes the
violin from her husband, and
places it back on the mantel.
Then she turns. Daniel watches
her.

(hesitantly, not too convincing)
(putting hands to face)
I'm sorry, Daniel. Yes, I'm tired. It's just that I thought
you desired to continue your music but were afraid to make it
known. Perhaps, too, I was thinking, maybe hoping, because of
the uncertainty that exists in the minds of the others that
it might be well to consider your music if we left.
(pause)

Daniel

We both know why we joined the Church. We can testify of its
truthfulness. I don't know why, I suppose the situation never
came that it needed telling, but before I became converted, I
was searching for something meaningful in the world. I
thought that music, literature, the arts would give me fulfill-
ment. I received satisfaction but always something was lack-
ing. I studied hard and the more I studied the more I felt a
sense of drowning because I could not know that which I felt
I should know. That is the aim of philosophy, isn't it? To
know?

Esther

I'm not sure I know what you mean.

Daniel

You mentioned a few minutes ago that I was compelling myself to
an evaluation in surroundings in which I did not fit. I
evaluated all right, but it was before any of this. I was
driven with an intense desire to wholly realize. One might
call it the mystery of life — though that's an oversimplifica-
tion of what I'm trying to say. I felt that somewhere there
was a reality — an intangible reality, a spiritual reality
that should become the dominant part of my existence. I was
in the process of giving up hope when I stumbled across two men
(pause)

and then you — now I have achieved that substance. It seemed
like a large tree shading a huge rock from which gushed a
spring of water, I could rest myself from the oppressive heat of a blazing sun and quench my constant thirst from the clear waters of the cool spring. I wrote a kind of poem. I never revealed it to anyone, but I've always kept it as a private dream. Anyway, it might help explain——

A knock is heard at the door. The mood suddenly shifts. Esther breaks in.

Esther

That must be the Brethren arriving.

Daniel arranges a few chairs and one or two boxes to make it convenient for the meeting. Esther goes to the door.

Come in. Hello, Sister Holt, we weren't expecting to see you — Brother Holt.

They shake hands and cross to Daniel who by now is near his wife.

Bishop, it's so nice to see you.

Sarah

(to Esther)

I thought I would come an' visit with ya while the meetin' was on.

Daniel

How are you Sister Holt? — Israel? Good to see you. Bishop — come in — have a seat.

After a hand shaking and general greetings, they begin looking for seats. Esther takes their wraps and Daniel helps them get a seat.

Esther

I'll take your wraps. That cold wind certainly does blow right through a person, doesn't it?

Sarah

Oh, and how it does. Seems colder here this year than other winters. It's dry cold, too. Ever notice how they dry cold just chills ya' to the bones?
Bishop, come sit over here.

Indicates chair at table.

Thanks, Brother Stark.

Daniel

(Indicates chair)

Brother Holt--

Israel

Let me stand by the fire for a moment and warm up a bit.

Esther takes wraps to the bedroom.

How's your lower piece coming, Brother Stark.

Daniel

Moving right.

Looks better every time I see it. Going to give that piece of ground to Levi. He's worked harder than I have on it. He's certainly proud of it.

Esther enters once more.

Sarah is seated at the end of this table. Bishop Thomas sits right of table, and Israel stands with his back to the fireplace. Daniel stands right and Esther moves to his left.

He can hardly wait to start clearing and draining more ground. He's eager to start on his own.

Bishop

He's a great worker, that boy; I don't suppose a man could ask for a better son. The Lord blessed you when he sent you that lad.

Esther

We think so.

Orson Thomas is an elderly man but he moves with strength and dignity. Israel Holt is a small man whose movement are quick and abrupt. His manner
is nervous and fidgety. He is outspoken, and perhaps dogmatic in his views. He is edgy about the prospects of the coming meeting. His wife, Sarah, is a serious and devoted wife. She's extremely tired of the struggles caused by the settlement. She's prone to exaggerate the tribulations they've had. All the men have beards except Daniel.

How's your youngest boy feeling after he had that terrible fever, Sarah?

Sarah
He's a lot better, but I'm tellin' ya it burned somethin' out of 'im. All he does is to set and stare mostly. He never plays much with the other children - just sets and stares.

Israel
We're mighty fortunate to have that boy with us, I'll tell you. It was the administering to him that saved him.

Sarah
And I'm not so certain he should 'a been saved if it is gone and drained all the energy out of 'im.

Bishop
I'm sure he'll be good as new for long. Give him a chance to get his strength back and he'll be a scrapping with the rest of them.

Sarah
I just hope you're right, Bishop; I just hope you're right.

Israel moves to a box seated by his wife and sits. She takes out some hand sewing.

But a body can't have chills and fever, for as long as he did and survive. Course I got faith in the Lord. I'm not a sayin' I don't, but when I see that child a layin' there burnin', I curse the day I ever set foot inside this valley. What with the swamps and mosquitoes infestin' everything around. I don't mind sayin' it either.

Daniel

Getting nervous at Sarah's talk breaks in.
I wonder what's keeping the others.

Pause

Israel
I think I've about finished clearing and working that three acres on the north side.
(bitter)
Now all I have to do is clear the sand out of my irrigation ditches again and maybe — I say maybe — I can get some water to it.

Sarah
(knitting)
If water gets to that piece of ground while you and me is still alive, it'll have to be 'cause of some power other than ours. Heaven knows, we been 'a tryin' for close to two years. A body just can't fight the elements in this here valley.

Israel
(to Esther)
I guess you know that Indians stole another one of my cows.

Esther
Yes, Daniel told me. We surely wish there was something we could do.

Sarah
There ain't one thing that can be done. Those Indians think they have a right to it, so they just come and take it. If a body says or does anything they threaten to go on the warpath. What's a body goin' a do?

Daniel
(nervous)
I probably can get started planting a few more acres as soon as Levi gets back. One field is in the boot stage now.

Sarah
If I were you, I wouldn't start plantin' nothin'. My guess is we'll be out of here 'fore the end 'a March.

Daniel
(irritated)
You're not me, Sarah!

He gets a quick glance from Esther. He quickly moves to put a log on the fireplace.

Israel
You're sure bent on settling this place, aren't you Daniel?
(still irritated)
Aren't you?

Daniel

Well - uh - I'm not so cer-

(curtly)
You should be. That's what we were sent here for, isn't it?

Daniel

Israel

Esther

Trying to change the subject.

What are you making, Sarah?

Sarah

I'm trying to piece a few patches together to see if I can get a quilt a goin'.

A knock is heard at the door.
Daniel moves to answer it.

Four people enter. Alma Bennett, Mort Chamberlain, Newton Hall, and Jake Gibson.

After the usual greetings and hand shaking, they take seats around or near the table.
Daniel stands at the right end of the table and commences to take charge of the meeting.
Sarah rises and moves to beside Esther who is sitting in the rocking chair. Israel helps move her chair for her.

Daniel

Now that all of the county officials are here, we can begin. Needless to say, there's been a lot of talk about abandonment of the settlement. Rumors have been flying since the latest flood washed out West Point. Brother Chamberlain, tell us your feelings, and as near as you can the feelings from that community.

Mort

(slowly and deliberately)
Well, put' near all of the West Point settlers has moved to the lower valley. Most all of their belongin's and tools has been washed away. Quite a bit o' sickness among 'em. No casualties, however. I'd say the morale was pretty low. As far as abandonment,

(scratches head)
not too many said much. But they're a grumblin' kind 'a under
neath. You can feel it. They're bein' cared for by the
"Brethren" of St. Joseph and St. Thomas. Most of 'em is gonna
have to start over an' I ain't so sure they want to start over
here. But—

(pause)
I think with a little time an' things goin' right they'll dig
in a-fresh.

(shakes head)
Can't hardly blame 'em though. Been washed out at least
three times in the last six or seven months.

Bishop Thomas
As soon as the supply train gets here from St. George, most
of them will be able to replace their damaged tools and goods.

Israel
That's if we're able to get the things from St. George.

Bishop Thomas
(ignoring Israel)
It'll be up to us to pitch in an help them get located again.
We'll have to send a couple of wagons back up to Sheep
Mountain to cut some timber and whip-saw it to get them
started building another house. That'll take three or four
weeks — we'll take turns housing them so it won't be too much
of a burden on any one family.

Sarah
They're welcome enough to stay at our place, but heaven knows
what they'll be 'a livin' on. Can't hardly feed my own—

Her voice trails off as she
turns to Esther and talks.
Esther listens politely.

Daniel
(cutting in)
I agree with you, Bishop. It will take a concentrated effort
on everyone's part, but we've done it in the past and we can
do it again. Brother Hall, what do you have to say before
the group.

Newton
Things are running quite smooth in St. Thomas. Still having
trouble keeping our ditches cleared of sand, but that ain't a
special problem. We've been doing that ever since the first
ditch was dug. Things wouldn't be normal without a little
blow sand to shovel. Flood didn't bother us much. Oh —
washed a little here and there. Supplies are running low —
ammunition - flour - whatnot. If the 'hoppers will leave our crops alone in the spring, we might make it through in fair to middlin' shape.

Israel
What about a place to convert our produce in'ta cash. Right now we have no place to market anything. We've gotta have some money sometime.

Alma
This is a point that's been bothering a lot of the Brethren.

Daniel
I should think that would be one of the least of our worries. We've managed so far doing just what we've done. I was looking over the records before the meeting—

He picks up some sheets of paper and holds them out.

In the last two years we have managed to produce 20,000 pounds of cotton lint and 10,000 pounds of grain. I would say that's a remarkable achievement considering the hardships. And to me it's only a sign of the beginning. We have some young orchards growing grain planted. A cotton gin is being constructed in St. George. We've shipped some cotton down the Colorado in exchange for goods. It seems the possibilities there are excellent.

Bishop Thomas
I have to agree with Brother Stark. It would be pure foolishness to give up now.

Alma
There's one thing we're all overlooking, though, and that's the boundary line. We don't know which state we belong to. If they find us to be in Nevada, we'll find ourselves just as bad off as if we were back in Jackson County. Those Lincoln County officials would like nothing better than to come down here and soak the "damn Mormons." They've already said they'll require coin. The only coin I can scrape up is these little pieces of worthless lead chips. Unless we could market our product for a fair price we're sunk.

He flips coin on the table.

Daniel
You sound as though we're already in Lincoln County.
Alma
Just between you and me, I think we are. And I think we're kidding ourselves to think otherwise.

Daniel
Are you insinuating we leave if the settlement is in Lincoln County?

Alma
I'm not saying that. I'm trying to look at it realistically.

Daniel
I'm not about to give up that quick. Brigham Young called us here.

(fiery)
I have abandoned half-built homes, growing crops, sold my property, given up what little I had too many times to come down and be bluffed into moving because we don't happen to belong to Utah. I know we don't have much here, but at least it's a start. So what if things have been a little tough - they will probably get tougher. We've got to expect that.

Israel
I'd say things was a might worse than "a little tough."

(almost sarcastic)
Besides, when President Young was here himself, he expressed doubts about the future of the settlement. Let's face it.

(angry)
We're caught in the middle of a three-way political tug-a-war and the ones what's goin' a come out on the short end is you and me and--

He points and gestures.

all of us in the valley.

Bishop Thomas
Brethren, I see no need to get angry. We'll get nowhere quarreling.

Israel
(still heated)
Daniel's so all-fired to stay, he won't face reality. It's them people out there gettin' sickness from the stinkin' swamp an' floods. Wearin' themselves out 'afore their time. Tryin' to endure a hell-fire inferno that yields nothin' but miseries and heartache. You been mighty lucky, Daniel. None a' your family have been sick or had the pack of troubles the rest of us had.
There's an electric silence. All eyes focus on Daniel. Daniel stands rigid for a moment and then slowly exhales.

Daniel
(calming himself)
Any man looks for meaning and order no matter where he is. We claim to be members of the Church of Jesus Christ. We claim access to the one and true spiritual reality — something that is intensified by our thoughts and actions — that is vitalized by our kind of existence. All temporal and worldly things must subordinate to this idea. If we cannot do this, then we cannot claim to have that spiritual knowledge and guidance to help us. Without it we are as any other person seeking and suffering. We become buffeted by the crowd and only occasionally catch glimpses. If I give up, then I will have failed the efforts of all the Saints who suffered the long journey to bring to all of us what we know to be true. I shudder to think what the future would be. The Lord is aware of my suffering and yours. I came here because it was a calling. Maybe now it has come to mean much more. I don't know, but I pray to God that I might endure.

He stands looking at the papers in his hand. Everyone is silent for a moment. Then Bishop Thomas clears his throat and speaks.

Bishop Thomas
Ah-hem. Well — let's proceed. I think that we shouldn't worry too much yet about Lincoln County. We're part of the Rio-Virgin County. Until we know for sure, we shall continue as such.

Mort
That still leaves the problem of selling our goods.

Daniel
I've been wondering what the possibilities would be to sell our wheat and grain to the mines in Lincoln County. If this were possible, it would bring more than enough income for our needs.

Alma
(rubbing beard)
It's a long rugged haul up there.
(conceding)
Might be done, though.
The way I look at it, it wouldn't be so bad livin' in Nevada if we could sell to 'em up there. If we can hold out until the cotton is harvested, we can market it for twenty-five cents a pound. This 'd give us enough to restock and resupply for another year's harvest.

Daniel

Besides, the Church needs the cotton.

Israel

(still pessimistic)

I'm gettin' mighty slim on clothing and boots. My hand tools are practically wore out—

(hesitant)

but - I guess I can hold out if the rest can.

(hates to concede)

Bishop Thomas

Good. Brother Gibson, you haven't said too much. What do you think?

Jake

I'm for doing what the rest does. I ain't as worse off as some and some is better off then me. I'm like Daniel. I'd hate to have to pull up now unless I absolutely had to.

Daniel

Everyone's agreed that we'll keep trying as long as we can.

There are yes's and nod's of the heads from the group.

Well, that about concludes the meeting. I wish we had some kind of refreshment to offer you.

(trying to be jovial)

I just received word things aren't too plentiful right now.

(they laugh)

Jake

(laughing)

You c'n always ask the Bishop for a handout, with all the tithin' he's received lately.

Mort

Scratching his head.

(chuckling)

Yes, sir, all I have to say is we're thirty miles to water, a hundred miles to wood, and six inches to hell. I can't say as I'm lookin' forward to the summer with much "enthusiasm."
A knock is heard. Israel Holt is standing next to the door. He opens it and Vincent Miles bursts into the room.

Daniel

Vincent, what're you doing here?

It can be seen that Vincent is on the point of bursting into tears. Esther senses something is wrong; his face is grief stricken. She rises and rushes to him. She and Daniel arrive at his side at the same time.

Bishop

What is it, boy? Speak up.

Esther

(almost hysterical)

Vincent - what's happened.

Vincent

His face twists. He sobs.

(bursting)

Oh! Sister Stark! Levi's dead! A wagon overturned - and he was crushed!

He turns his face away from them. He puts one hand up to his face and stands rigid. His shoulders heave with sobs. Esther stares in shock. The group stands bewildered, unable to move. Daniel turns slowly to face audience stunned. He moves like something wooden.

Bishop

He moves to Vincent.

Are they bringing him, boy?

Vincent affirms by nodding his head. The Bishop; Newton, Mort, and Alma all rush out to see if they can assist.
Sarah

Standing by now.

Oh, No! Haven't we had enough?

Daniel

My - son? Dead?
(whispering)
Levi - dead!

He is standing just in front of the fireplace. He turns his back quickly on the audience, rests his arms on the mantel of the fireplace and then puts his head down. Esther just stares shocked and bewildered. Everything is silent except for a gust of wind. Then, a loud twang from one of the violin strings is heard. The door opens and some men slowly carry Levi's body in on an improvised stretcher. They rest it on the table. As the lights begin to fade, Mrs. Stark sinks to a chair and suddenly sobs out.

Esther

Oh, God!

She throws her hands to her face, bends her body over to her knees, and cries out loud. The lights fade and the curtain falls on the end of Act One.
ACT II

SCENE I

The curtain opens to reveal an empty stage. It is very quiet except for the periodic gusts of wind that still persist. It's afternoon; however, the stage is still somewhat dim because the sunlight is partially shut out by the canvas cloth covering the window. The rocking chair is near the table and a mound of wax that had once been a candle rests on the table. A gust of wind rises and blow-sand whips against the adobe. Anabelle and Vincent enter from the outside. Vincent is twenty, the same age as Levi. His complexion is weather-beaten, dry, and his lips are chappy. His limbs are lithe and strong looking. Anabelle, taking off a bonnet and shawl, crosses near the bedroom entrance. Vincent just stands near the outside entrance. Every so often he quietly slaps his hat against his thigh. It is seen that Anabelle has been crying. The feeling is one of muffled grief.

(softly)
Excuse me while I put these wraps away.

Sure - go right ahead.

She exits to bedroom. Vincent shuffles his feet slightly and moves a little farther into the room. A slight pause and then Anabelle re-enters.
Anabelle

(groping for something to say)
I appreciate you walking me home like this. I couldn't stay out there another minute.

She turns her head away from him and bites her lip.

Vincent

(awkwardly)
That's all right - I - uh - kinda wanted to get away myself.

He looks at her for a moment.

Uh - you all right, Anabelle?

She nods her head. Face still turned away from him.

(groping for something to say)
Well - I guess I better go now. Your folks'll be coming along and--

He turns as if to go.

Anabelle

(quickly)
Oh, don't go--

She moves toward him a few steps.

not yet. I couldn't stand to be in here alone - not now--

(almost in tears)
not with that lonesome sounding wind.

Vincent

(turning back)
(tenderly)
Sure, anything you want, Anabelle. 'Cept I don't know - just what to say. I feel so--

Anabelle

You don't have to say anything. Just being here is enough.

Long pause - Vincent crosses to a chair and sits holding his hat in his hands between his knees.

Vincent

(sympathizing but not wanting to say anything that would make her cry)
I think I know what you mean 'bout bein' left alone. Kinda funny, sometimes a person likes to be alone - don't want nobody disturbin' his thinkin', and then other times he can't stand to be without somebody near - maybe it's 'cause he can't stand himself or he needs comfort - I don't know.

Shakes head slightly and stares in front of him.

God didn't intend man to be left alone, that's for sure.

Anabelle

A person could be surrounded by hundreds of people out here and still feel alone.

(she shudders)

She walks to the table and picks up the mound of candle wax; holding it in her hands, she runs her fingers over its tough texture.

It all seems like this burned out candle. It burns and burns until finally it's burned out and what's left is a piece of shapeless wax, unrecognizable and no longer useful.

(with a bitter smile)

Hump! And this candle flickered its last hours while Levi lay on that table cold and dead. Strange - he was like Father - he liked it here.

Pause - Vincent doesn't know what to say. Anabelle continues.

When I was a little girl, I remember I used to take a candle and let the hot wax drip on my hands until my fingers stuck together. The little drops would look like blisters on the skin. I was fascinated that such a bright light could come from a little tiny flame, and I would wonder what it would be like to be a candle and glow for everybody. Father would study and read at night; he would use a candle. I used to climb upon his lap and say, "If I were a candle, I would light up the whole room for you." He would look at me and say, "You are my little candle." That would make me the happiest girl in the world. I was Daddy's candle!

(bitterly)

Now we're all turned into candles, but not very bright ones. If we're not snuffed out like Levi, then we'll end up like this worthless chunk of wax!

She flings the wax on the table. It bounces and falls to the floor. Vincent rises and moves to her.
Vincent
(trying to console)
You're just tired. Worn out from the funeral and all. Best thing for you to do is try to rest and forget. A person can't give up. Somebody has to be our kind of candle.

Anabelle
(shaking head and slowly saying)
It hasn't a chance. I don't think it ever started and what's more I don't want it to. Not here - ever!

Vincent
You'll feel better about it in a few days. My father always used to say that Time is the undergrowth of bad memories.

Anabelle
(pensively)
Yes - that's what I want to do, forget. Vincent, are folks talking much about leaving? Have you heard anything?

Vincent
Well, the boundary survey's been completed. Lorenzo Cutler just rode in with the news this morning.
(despairingly)
We're thirty miles inside Nevada. Word has been sent to Lincoln County. Officials ought to arrive here within a week to talk about taxes. I know one or two families are going back to St. George. Can't say what the whole settlement feels - always talk here and there. Even my folks have talked some about going. I understand the Nevada Legislature requires all tax business to be in coin. If that's the case,
(shakes head)
we might as well-

Anabelle
(fearful)
Will you be leaving with them if they decide to go?

Vincent
Well - yeh. I suppose so. I hadn't thought too much about it. No decision's been made one way or other. I thought Ma wants to go pretty bad, but Pa hasn't said too much. With the Lincoln County officials comin' here in a few days, I reckon he wants to wait until after that 'fore he makes up his mind. I think most of the people are waitin' after that meetin' and then decide.

Anabelle
(bitterly)
Father is so hard and stubborn - he'll probably never leave.
Vincent

Don't say that, Anabelle. Your father's a mighty fine man. In some ways, he's been the backbone of this settlement.

Anabelle

(raising her voice)

It's true, isn't it? He's not the same anymore — he's changed. All he ever talks about is the future and — and calling and what Brigham Young wants.

Vincent

(defending)

What's wrong about that. You're being unfair. He's a spiritual man devoted to his calling in the Church! And if you had been kicked like a dog every place you'd tried to make a home, you'd talk about the future — a lot about the future — and a home.

Anabelle

(almost hateful)

I always thought it took people to make a home not burned-out things. There's more to consider than just the future. There's people, human beings, that have feelings — that need more than a — a — crust of bread — a piece of jerky — and a — slap in the face from the wind and sand and the swamps.

This isn't like you, Anabelle.

Anabelle

Look at Mother — she's worked and slaved — for what? This?

She indicates the house.

All the reward she'll get is an early grave like Levi.

She breaks down and begins to cry. Vincent crosses to her, starts to lay a hand on her shoulder, but then changes his mind.

Vincent

(a little angry)

You shouldn't place all the blame on your father, Anabelle. I've never known anyone quite like him — educated — plays the fiddle, reads all them books. To me he's a great man, and I want you to know I admire and respect him an awful lot. I think you're wrong, Anabelle.

Pause. Anabelle has quit crying. He starts to turn.
Well - I think I best—

She senses he's about to leave so she turns quickly, grabs his arm, and says in a desperate tone.

Anabelle

Vincent! - if you leave the valley, will you take me with you?

(taken back)

Vincent

What?

Anabelle

Will you take me with you?

Vincent

(pleading)

Anabelle

Please - Oh, you've got to. If I have to stay here another summer - oh - please, Vince?

She tugs at his arm. The sounds of horses and a wagon coming can be heard.

Vincent

But your family and—

He looks into her tear-filled eyes. Suddenly overcome with the compassion and love he encircles her in his arms and presses her to him. She lays her head on his chest.

Oh - Anna - yes - yes. I will take you with me. We'll go away - if there's any way possible we'll go as far from here as we can.

There's a pause and then the sound of someone coming can be heard. They spring apart. Anabelle attempts to dry her eyes and smooth her hair. Esther enters. She is hollow looking. Her cheeks are sunk and her eyes are red and swollen from crying. She moves
like a mechanical thing. There are brief lines across her forehead. She slowly starts to remove her wraps.

Vincent

(rather awkwardly shuffling his feet)
Well - I guess I'd better go now.

He turns to leave. He feels he must say something to Esther.

Sister Stark - does Brother Stark need any help putting the horses away?

Esther

(trance-like)
No, I don't think so.

Vincent

I'll go out and see just the same.

He moves to the doorway. Esther's voice stops him.

Esther

Vince!

He stops and turns.

Vincent

Yes, Mam?

Esther

Thank you for bringing Anabelle home. We appreciate it.

Vincent

(bowing his head)
Yes, Mam.

He goes out.

Esther

Anabelle, would you put these things away please.

Anabelle silently moves to take the things. As she goes to the bedroom, Esther passes to behind the rocker and stares down at the table where Levi had lain the night before.
She picks up the rocker and moves it to its original position. Then she sits.
Anabelle returns. She goes to the table. There is a pause - the wind whines and then silence.

Anabelle
Would you like me to fetch the Bible for you?

Esther
No - I'd just like to sit here. Hard to get used to - a short time ago someone's with you - and then suddenly he's lying out there among the rocks and sand. All the while the wind mocks you and the rocks laugh at you.

Anabelle
Mother, - please - it's all over now. It won't...

Esther
(a cold smile)
Is it? Is it all over? I wonder how many
She begins to rock slowly.
more times.

Anabelle
Mother - it's not good to talk so - it'll only get you feeling it all over again.

Esther
Feeling it all over! It's like something is twisting in my throat now. I feel if I only could scream, it would go away. I've got to talk now. Sometimes talking is the best way to get it out of your system.

Anabelle
But it's like a funeral, Mother. You just get over the grief and along comes the funeral and starts it up again.
(beginning to break)
It's barbaric!

Esther
That's what a funeral does mainly. It talks it out of you. It cleanses you. In the long run, it's the best.

Not for me it isn't.

Anabelle
Esther
Every person's different.
Turning to the door.

I keep half expecting to see Levi come through that doorway. It's always about this time that he would come in.

At this instant Daniel's form appears in the door. Esther starts at the sight of him. He is dressed the same as at the end of Act One. He hangs his hat, moves to the fireplace, and stands with his back to it. His grief is deep and solemn. The wind rises.

Daniel

Hasn't John come in yet?

Anabelle

No.

Esther

The wind - always the wind - and my boy buried on that sandy desolate hill.

Daniel

It's all over now. Does it matter?

Esther

(coldly)

No - it doesn't, does it? Nothing matters. Nothing matters except the wind and the sun, scorching and blowing - killing and dying - so all that's left is decay and death! Yes - always death!

(shuddering)

What a dark, sick sounding word.

Daniel

(putting it as tenderly as he can)

You're sounding melodramatic, Esther. Death is only a veil.

Esther

(bitter)

Yes - a black veil!

Daniel

This kind of conversation doesn't become you at all!

Esther

(resentfully)

At a time like this I am not worried whether I am as becoming as I should be.
(sarcastic)
Is that what's important now?

Daniel is visibly hurt by her embittered attitude. He turns away and moves toward cot. Esther puts a hand to her face.

(almost in tears)
I'm sorry—Daniel. I shouldn't talk this way. Please forgive me.

Daniel

(thoughtfully)
I know how you feel—how all of us feel. A death in most families brings them closer together. We seem to be trying to punish ourselves—or each other—

Anabelle

(bursting. Can't restrain any longer)
The one who should be punished is God and Brigham Young!

Daniel turns astonished and looks at Anabelle. His mouth quivers. He just stands looking at her, a deep hurt look on his face. Anabelle looks back for a moment. Then she looks at her mother who, staring straight ahead, is quietly crying. With a sudden realization of what she has said, she turns on her heel and runs from the room sobbing. Daniel turns back slowly. Nothing is said for a short time. It is seen that Daniel is wrestling with his thoughts.

Daniel

I know what it is you are thinking. Why is it everyone is convinced that each time it gets difficult all he has to do is leave, move away from it—ignore it?

Esther

There are times when there is nothing else that can be done.

Daniel

But what makes you think it will be any better somewhere else? We must continue to do what needs to be done here. Death is a shock, yes, it rips at your insides and when that's over, something else comes along and starts it again. You get
sick of it. You would like to vomit the whole mess out of you for good. No matter where you are, something will be tearing at your insides.

Esther
At least if we're away from here the spaces between the tearing will be farther apart! Enough to gain strength and try it again.

Daniel
It doesn't work that way, Esther. It just gets easier to run. The first thing you know, you spend half of your time trying to run away from the truth. The hardest part is behind us.

Esther
You can't believe that! I'm trying to tell you I don't think I can take any more! It - this place - just doesn't matter.

Daniel
Esther, what are you saying! We're all in this together and for the sake of Levi and you and the family - all of us - let's hope we finish together because if we don't then all this starving and struggling and existing will have been like spilling the last cup of water that we worked so hard to get just before the well went dry.

Esther
But don't you see? We will be sure to spill everything, if we remain here - if we leave we still have a chance.

Daniel
(bewildered at her using his own argument against him)
What do you mean?

Esther
You talk about finishing together! Look at Anabelle! At what she just said! She wasn't cursing God, Daniel - it was you she meant. It was aimed to hurt you. She's filling up with bitterness and hate. I'm afraid of what she'll do if we don't do something to help her now. She's young and - oh, can't you see - we're smothering the fire before it gets a chance.

Daniel
(gently)
I feel that - everything is - slipping - like a nightmare during high fever. A huge - unidentifiable thing is there ready to encompass you. You want to fight it - you want to get away from it. But you can't do either.

There is a pause.
(softly)
But you can get away from it.

Daniel
(stunned. Like everything is a long way off.)
(turning)
Can you? Yes - yes, I suppose you can. Maybe you're right. Esther, maybe we should get away from it - before it's too late to put back the pieces, before the fire goes out.

He stands disheartened and weary. Esther's reaction is immediate at Daniel's words. Her face flushes with a little color. She turns and looks at him with hope in her eyes. John enters the room.

(hesitantly)
I - I - thought maybe we would need some more fire wood.

Esther
(renewed strength in her voice)
That's very thoughtful of you, John. We always need more wood to keep the fire going, don't we, Daniel?

He looks at his wife and catches the significance of her words.

Daniel

Yes - I guess we do.

Esther
(trying to be cheerful)
John, bring me the Bible please.

He takes the book from the shelf and gives it to his mother. Anabelle re-appears.

Shall I try my method again?

(quietly)
Yes, please do.

Esther and Daniel turn and look at her.
Feeling better?

Much, thank you.

Let's try the New Testament this time.

(eager to know)

What part this time, Mother.

Would you read it - out loud?

I'll let your father read it.

Esther

Anabelle

Esther closes her eyes and says.

Esther

She opens to the Book of John.

Anabelle

What part this time, Mother.

John

Would you read it - out loud?

Esther

She hands the Bible to him. He takes it in his hands and looks at it.

Daniel

(still somewhat stunned)

It's the 14th Chapter of the Book of John just before the Savior is to be betrayed and crucified. He says to His apostles, (1) "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." (2) "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you---

(repeats slowly)

"Let not your hearts be troubled - I go to prepare a place for you."

He stops reading and looks up. Then almost in agony and in a prayer-like manner, yet in forceful tones he says:

Daniel

Oh, God! Must I give up now!

He sinks into a chair. All the family look at him as the lights fade to end Act II

Scene 1.
ACT II

Scene 2

As the curtain opens on Scene 2, we see a meeting of all the leaders of the various communities. The same ones as before in the first meeting along with others. Benches have been brought in from the outside to accommodate the people. Occupying positions where they can easily be seen by the audience are the people who gathered in the first meeting. At the front of the group sits Daniel and two other men. One of the men, Isaac James, looks like the prosperous merchant type—middle-aged, well dressed, and stalky in build. His manner is one of being rather impressed at his own importance, especially among the ragged and tattered dress of the settlers. The other man is Captain Monroe of the United States Cavalry. He's gray around the temples, a ruddy complexion and rather distinguished looking. There is a hubbub of noise and talking. Daniel rises and quiets them.

Daniel
If I may have your attention please, we'll begin the meeting. I'm sure all of you know why we're here. There has been a misunderstanding as to which state we belong to. The government made a survey, and its findings put us in the State of Nevada. This automatically dissolves the Rio-Virgin County of Utah. This makes it mandatory for us to have to abide by the Nevada laws. Because we are not aware of the tax-rate or schedule in Nevada, we have with us the chairman of the board of county officials of Lincoln County, Mr. Isaac James. He will explain the statutory procedures for us in the Muddy settlements. I now turn the meeting over to Mr. James.

James rises, takes a few papers out of the inside pocket of his coat along with a pair of glasses.
Isaac

(like a politician)
Before we get to business at hand, let me introduce my fellow traveler, Captain Monroe.

Monroe partially gets up and gives a nod to the group.

He's accompanied me to make certain that things are carried out according to the law.

(sarcastic)
I notice that you have a very articulate leader of your Rio-Virgin County in Mr. Stark here.

He nods to Daniel.

Next let me - a - compliment you on the accomplishments that you have made in this little valley. I traveled through here some time ago, and I thought then that it was a land only fit for lizards and mosquitoes, but I find that Mormons are able to survive here too.

He chuckles at his joke, but no one else makes a sound. The feeling is tense.

Well - ha - ha - let's get down to business.

He adjusts his glasses and looks at the papers.

Now - let me see. Oh, yes, here we are.

(reading)
It is hereby stated that the said tax rate of Lincoln County, Nevada, shall be—

Daniel

Mr. James, I really think it won't be necessary for you to read the legal language of the statute. Most of these people probably would understand better if you would just tell them in ordinary terms what is expected of them.

James looks out over the group by peering over his glasses. He acts like he's having fun.

Isaac

Yes, I'm sure they would, wouldn't they?

He sets the papers down on the table.
Well - Gentlemen, the law boils down to exactly this. The tax rate is levied at 2.58½ mills, plus a stamp and license tax, and a four dollar poll tax. This tax is to be retroactive from 1866. All tax transactions must be on a coin basis. Goods will not be acceptable. Those failing to comply to these laws will have their property confiscated.

There is a discontinued buzz from the group.

(smuggly)
That's it, gentlemen, any questions. Oh - one more thing - I will assess the value of your property while I'm here and tax notices will be posted in various areas to remind you of your duty.

(as an afterthought)
After all - taxes are the price we must pay to have reasonable and sound local government.

Israel Holt rises.

Israel
Mister, you've just given me the excuse I needed to pick up and pull out.

Isaac
(smacking his lips)
That's too bad, sir. Seems a shame to just leave all this work - but that's your right.

Bishop Orson Thomas rises. It can be seen that he is trying to control his anger.

Bishop Thomas
Mr. James, do you officials realize at that tax rate some of us will be paying taxes higher than the land's actually worth?

Isaac
That may very well be true, but you can't expect any tax privileges over the rest of the people living in the county. After all - that wouldn't be just, now would it?

Bishop Thomas
But why won't you accept goods as payment? All these people have for coin is worthless pieces of octagonal shaped lead that we use for bartering and trading purposes among ourselves.
Isaac

(sarcastic)
How interesting - octagonal pieces of lead. No, that wouldn't do you much good. Uh - we did consider your idea of trading goods, but we thought that by the time the goods that would be of any benefit to us arrived they probably would not be in any shape to use - so - you see - that idea was ruled out.

Mort

(rising)
(angrily)
This is nothin' but a plot - a conspiracy to drive us out of here.

Isaac

I'm sorry you feel that way about it, my good man. But I assure you it is not a plot. It's the law.

Bishop Thomas

Do you realize that you will drive honest, hard working people out of their homes.

James

(unconcerned)
Hard working - that may be so - but as far as honest and decent - that remains to be seen - if you pay your taxes. Actually, if you people have any feeling for your efforts and your homes at all, you'll find some way to pay. You always do.

Daniel, who by now has partially gotten over the shock of what the tax notice means, jumps to his feet.

Daniel

(angrily)
You don't seem to get the point, Mr. James. They can't pay!

Isaac

Can't! Mr. Stark! Can't means I won't, doesn't it?

Daniel is angry now. His eyes flame with righteous indignation. He's angry at James' arrogance more than anything.

Daniel

Do you psuedo-County politicians have any brains, or are they all bigoted-egotistical asses like yourself?
Isaac

(attitude becoming less calm now)
I will not stay here and be insulted, Mr. Stark.

He moves to pick up his papers from the table. Daniel reaches over, grabs him, and whirls him around.

Daniel

Oh - yes you will! You're not going anywhere until you hear me out!

Captain Monroe rises now and takes a step to Daniel.

Captain Monroe

I'm afraid I'll have to adjourn the meeting. I'll not stand for any fracas or fuss.

Daniel

(commanding)
You keep out of this, Captain! Nobody's going to start anything, but I've got a thing or two to say to this man, and I'm going to say it!

Monroe is taken back by Daniel's commanding authority. He doesn't move any further. The people in the meeting rise and stand looking on, bewildered by Daniel's indignation.

Isaac

(angry)
It seems to me I should have something to say—

Daniel

You've already had your say - it's my turn now, and you're going to listen.

Isaac

All right, Mr. Stark, have your little say if it will make you feel better.

Daniel

It may not make me feel any better, but it'll singe the hell and arrogance in your conscience!

1st Voice

A voice from the group.
What conscience!

Daniel - you'll not help any by getting upset - at James.

He takes hold of Daniel's elbow, but Daniel immediately jerks it away.

Daniel

I'll certainly not make things any worse - will I.

Let 'm speak, Bishop!

2nd Voice

Yeh! We'd like to hear 'm.

Several of the group now speak out asking to hear what he has to say.

3rd Voice

(arrogance returning)

Yes - let him speak. I would very much like to know what this Mormon sod-buster has to say.

Daniel's eyes are cold and hard as he fixes his eyes on James. James tries to return the look but is unable to do so. He looks away. As Daniel speaks he doesn't shout but there is force and dignity in his voice.

Daniel

You said that you knew what the valley was like before we came here. Well, I think you don't remember too well, so let me refresh your memory. When we arrived here in 1865 destitute and half starved, all that greeted us were mosquito infested swamps, alkaline ground destitute of timber or grass, stifling unbearable heat, and hot winds coming off the mesas. That doesn't sound too bad, does it, Mr. James?

He moves closer.

Except some of us have been leaving everything behind, moving our families, shoved and pushed by people like you for more than thirty years, and I for one am sick - I said sick - Mr. James, of doing it. Seven long years of a literal hell, struggling to exist so we could eke out a living and worship as we believed. Sickness and heat exhaustion and tragedies -
loved ones dead and buried in sandy graves. We've expended the equivalent of one hundred thousand dollars in labor in construction of dams and irrigation canals. We have been compelled to feed an Indian population out numbering our own. We've cleared and planted more than seven hundred acres, of which two hundred acres are planted in grain right now. We have dug more than twenty miles of irrigation canals and when the wind filled them with sand, we dug them again. We've planted orchards and vineyards, hauled timbers from Sheep Mountain - over seventy miles of the roughest country you ever saw - to build decent homes. All we want is peace and the opportunity to do our responsibility to our families and church. Not one single penny's worth of help came from any government - local, federal or whatever - and you have the unmitigated gall to face this group of honest, God-fearing men and say we must pay taxes to support good local government! The world is full of parasites, Mr. James, but you and your kind are the worst! You know why? - because your kind is the leach! You suck the vitality out of everything! But you don't care. As soon as you dry up one place, you'll turn and stick to another. We can endure all the misery that the elements can give us, Mr. James, but your kind of misery is rotten to the core! Your kind is insidious and vicious. You corrupt anything decent!

(viciously)
You are the swamp! and the akalie! and the wasteland of this world, Mister James!

Isaac during this speech has been flushing with anger. As Daniel says Mr. James, Isaac reaches over and slaps him full across the face. Daniel makes a sudden move toward him, but some men restrain him.

Captain Monroe

This has gone far enough!

He reaches to take Isaac, but Isaac stands with a sneer on his face not moving an inch.

Isaac

(between his teeth)
You Mormon! - You don't stand there and insult me! You and your cotton and your Brigham Young and your cause, I won't stand for it!

(with a gesture)
You're all a pack of gullible fools! Do you think you can get special privileges! We tried to tell you which state you were in, but you wouldn't listen!
(sneering)
No - you had to go and form your Rio-Virgin County! You're right, Mr. Stark. I don't care what happens to you. Go on back to Utah or rot for all I care! It might make this place fit for some real settlers.

He starts to leave. Daniel, during this speech, has regained his composure. He looks strong and confident. His manner is cool and dignified.

Daniel
Just one more thing, Mr. James. I want you to know that the likes of you will not bluff me out of here. I will never leave now. I'll fight you and your kind, Mr. James, even if I go down. As long as I have got one ounce of life in me, I'll fight! I want you to take one good look at this place because

He indicates the house.

this - is my home!

Isaac
Isaac moves toward the outside entrance.

I'm glad to hear you say that, Mr. Stark. Judging from what I see around me-

He looks at the house, and then with a cold sneer he looks at the other members of the group.

you'll lose!

He and the Captain leave. Daniel and the group stare after them for a moment. Then Israel Holt steps forward.

Israel
Well, Brethren, I don't see any choice but to pull up an' leave. Do you?

Daniel
What! You mean you want to go now after what he said - what he represents.

Jake
We're fightin' a losin' battle, Brother Stark.
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Daniel
A losing battle? We've just started. We can't leave now!

Israel
Daniel, we're sick of this whole mess. There's nothin' we can do.

Daniel
But that's what men like Isaac James want you to think.

Mort
What do we care what he thinks. We can't meet their demands; we can't deal with them; we're bound by their laws.

Daniel
We can write letters of petition to the State and Federal Government explaining our position and protesting the unfair restrictions placed upon us.

Israel
Yeh! We'll git help from the government like we got back in Jackson County and Hauns Mill! That's how we'll git help.

We've got to try!

Alma
Brigham Young is in St. George. Let's send a message explaining our situation and ask him what he feels would be best.

Daniel
This is not President Young's problem - it's ours.

He sent us down here.

Israel

Daniel
It was the Lord's will!

Bishop Thomas, who has been standing off a bit and listening to the group, comes forward.

Bishop Thomas
Yes, the Lord's will - I think it would be wise to ask President Young, Daniel.

Daniel
But--

There are cries of approval from the group.
Do you people realize what you're doing. You will be leaving seven years of blood and sweat and toil. All for nothing—

Alma
We've done it before. We c'n do it again.

Daniel
There is going to come a time when you won't have a Utah to run to. We have felt the brunt of mobs and men like Mr. James too often. We have now settled a land nobody wants and still they pursue us. They will always pursue us. There will always be the Isaac Jameses. It's within the nature of men. We cannot flee each time it confronts us, nor can we turn to the Brigham Youngs to bail us out. We must face it ourselves.

(to the group)
I think Brother Stark has adequately expressed the truth.

There are murmurs from the general group.

Israel
He may be right, but we still have to think of our families. I suggest we bring it to a vote. Those who want to stay move to where Brother Stark is, and those who wish to leave move over here to this side.

He moves to the side of the room. There is a pause.

Bishop Thomas
Is that agreeable to everyone. Daniel?

Daniel
(not caring, really)
Yes, that's good.

Israel
All right, all those that want to leave—

There is a moment's pause then slowly one by one the group sifts over to where Israel is until Daniel is on one side of the room and Bishop Thomas is in the middle. Bishop Thomas hesitates for a moment and then slowly moves to the group that wants to go. Daniel, looking at them, shakes his head in disbelief as the lights fade on the end of Act II.
ACT III

Early in the afternoon.
It is a week or so since the meeting with Isaac James and Captain Monroe. We see Anabelle lingering near the window. She appears listless and restless. Every so often she peers out the window. Esther is busying herself at the table. We see her mood is once again despondent. The wind has stopped.

Anabelle, you've been watching out that window for the past twenty or thirty minutes. Are you expecting someone?

(moving away)

No - I - was just - everyone is leaving today, aren't they? Everyone but us!

Yes.

When? Do you know?

As soon as they can get the wagon group together. It may be this afternoon or early in the morning.

There is a pause. Anabelle once again looks out the windows. Esther watches her out of the corner of her eye.

Why can't we go with the rest of them?

Ask your father that question. When is he coming over?

(innocently)


That's who you're looking for, isn't it?
(innocently)  
Mother, please, I--

Anabelle

Well, isn't it?

Esther

Anabelle turns away.

(nervously)  
I - I - suppose so.

Anabelle

I thought so. You wouldn't peer out that window every two minutes just to view the mesas.

Esther

John enters from the outside. He is feeling despondent, too. He crosses to the cot and sits.

All my friends will be leaving 'afore long. Who'll there be left to have fun with?

John

Anabelle

(eagerly)  
Did you see Vincent anywhere?

Esther

John

He was helpin' to load some wagons last I saw. Golly, no one to ride horses with or hike up to the caves with.

(trying to hold up)

With Levi gone, you'll be kept plenty busy helping your Father.

Esther

John

(almost sulkily)

It's still goin' a be awful lonesome. Gosh, I wish we were goin' with 'em.

(he gets a bucket and goes out)

Anabelle

Oh, Mother, why won't Father understand. What's got into him. It seemed he had made up his mind to leave once.

Esther

(a coldness, almost bitterness, in her tone)

That meeting--

She stares coldly in front of her.
All because of that meeting. 

Anabelle
You can't live here alone -- You'll die -- all of you!

Esther turns and looks at Anabelle.

Esther
You? What do you mean, you? You're part of it, too, aren't you?

Anabelle turns away.

Anabelle
(quickly)
Yes -- of course -- I didn't mean it the way it sounded.

Esther
You wouldn't lie to me would you? You might as well tell me, Anabelle.

Anabelle
(trying not to understand)
Tell you what?

Esther
What you and Vincent have planned.

(stoically)
Are you going to run away with him? You wouldn't survive in the desert, you know.

Anabelle
(giving in)
Not run away, Mother.

(quietly)
He -- he -- was going to come over and ask you and Father if he could take me with him.

Esther
I see. You mean you will go with the others.

Anabelle
Yes. We want to get married in St. George.

Esther
What do you suppose your father will say?

Anabelle
(determinedly)
It doesn't really matter to me. I was scared at first, but now I don't care because nobody is going to stop me.
Esther
No, nobody will stop you. I feel a little hurt that you didn't come to me sooner, though.

Anabelle
I'm sorry, Mother. Maybe it's because of everything that's been going on. I didn't want to add any more.

Esther
You would have to add it some time.

Anabelle
I couldn't stay here another summer. I couldn't survive, Mother - I just couldn't. I feel bad about leaving you. It wouldn't have to be this way if Father would only---

Esther
Yes, I know.

She turns and looks at Anabelle.

It's going to be even more lonesome around here without you.

Anabelle runs to her mother and puts her arms around her. By the time she reaches her, she is crying.

Anabelle
Oh, I love you, Mother, and I'll miss you, too. Your talks - your patience - your love.

Esther
She pats Anabelle tenderly on the back. Slowly breaking away and dabbing at the tears now and then.

Strange - I lose two of my children all within a period of two weeks. A family is the most precious of all things to you. You coddle and care for your children with all the passion and love that's in your heart, and yet you know that someday they will grow up and leave you. It seems sort of cruel in a way.

Anabelle
I'll never leave you, Mother - not really.

Esther
I know - sometimes I think you have more faith than I have, Anabelle, even if you think God should be punished.
Anabelle

I didn't mean that - you know I didn't.

Esther

Yes. Well, let me help you pack a few things.

She starts to go to the bedroom. A knock is heard at the door. Anabelle moves to answer it.

Anabelle

I'll get it.

Bishop Orson Thomas enters. He appears somewhat excited.

Come in, Bishop.

Bishop Thomas

I have something that I think will be good news to you and Brother Stark.

What is it?

Esther

Bishop Thomas

We've received word from Brigham Young! He's granted us permission to leave! Before, I wasn't so sure it was right to leave, but with situations as they are now and President Young's permission, I think it's one only sensible thing we can do.

Oh! How wonderful!

Esther

Bishop Thomas

He said because of high tax rates, isolation from market, and the desolate country - it all combines to render any further continuance of the Muddy Mission impractical.

Esther

(trying to restrain her exuberance)

Oh, I'm sure that it will make a difference with Daniel. Thank you so much, Bishop.

Bishop Thomas

Well, I must be going. I've got a lot of packing to do. Goodbye.

He goes out.
Esther

She puts a hand to her heart.

It's as if a huge weight were lifted from here.

Anabelle

(excitedly)
Oh, yes! Do you think it will make a difference with father?

Esther

Yes, I'm sure it will. This news erases all obligation to the Saints of the Muddy Mission. Go tell John to find his father and have him come to the house.

(excited)
Oh, this is the best news I could have received. It's an answer to my prayers.

Anabelle goes out. Esther immediately begins preparations for packing. She pulls a large trunk from underneath the cot. She goes to the bedroom and comes out with a small chest and puts it on the table. She begins to take things out of the cupboard when Daniel enters from the outside.

Daniel

Hanging up his hat.

What are you doing, Esther? What is this chest for?

Esther

(with a happy smile on her face)
Daniel, Bishop Thomas just brought news that came from Brigham Young. He said because of high tax rates, isolation from market, and the desolate country - we may abandon the settlement - leave. We no longer have to feel obligated. Isn't it wonderful! It means we can leave now with the rest of the Saints.

She goes to the door and calls for John. She crosses back to the cupboard and takes a few more things down. Anabelle enters.
I just talked to Vince and he said he would come back in a few minutes and help us load up.

Good. Anabelle, get our clothes and put them in the trunk, will you.

Anabelle moves for the bedroom door. Daniel during all this activity has stood in stunned silence.

He makes a move toward her.

Daniel, can you lift that trunk up on the table for me, please.

Esther busily taking things down.

Esther - I--

Daniel, can you lift that trunk up on the table for me, please.

Esther, will you stop a minute and listen to me.

(laughing)
We've got a lot of packing to do. The others had such a head start on us. We'll have to move if we are ready in time to leave with them.

Esther looks up in stunned silence.

We're not going!

We're not going?

That's what I said. We're not going.

But what about Brigham Young's permission, Daniel. He says it's all right. We don't have to stay anymore if we don't want to.
Daniel
That has nothing to do with it.

Esther
(upset)
It has everything to do with it. Daniel, I have been willing to go along with you, but this. I just can't. You're not making sense at all.

Daniel
I knew what President Young's answer would be before they sent it.

Esther
Why didn't you tell me or talk it over with me. After all, I'm your wife.

Daniel
It wouldn't have made any difference.

Esther
It does to me.

Daniel
Brigham Young wouldn't say we must remain here.

Esther
That's right! He realizes we have fulfilled our obligation, our mission, and now it's time to go home.

Anabelle enters carrying an armload of clothes.

Daniel
This is our home. Why can't people understand that.

What's the matter, Mother?

Anabelle

Esther
(angrily)
Your father tells me we're not going.

Anabelle
We're not - wha--
(exclaiming)
Oh, no! Father, you can't mean that. Do you realize what you're doing?

Daniel
(getting angry)
Why is it everyone questions or doubts me? Why can't you feel
as I feel it? Why can't you see the whole of it? It's not just now. It's the spectrum of the whole thing.

Esther
You're not making sense. Right now I'm concerned with my family and their feelings. A family that's suffered for seven long years in this land. A land whose soul is sick - so sick that it infects those who try to change it.

Daniel
(hurt)
Are you implying that I'm sick?

Esther
Going to him, trying to reason now.

No, of course not; but you wonder why we can't feel what you feel. You forget, we have feelings, too, Daniel. Why can't you understand that.

Daniel
Don't you think I do? Haven't I suffered every moment you have? Haven't I felt the same grief over the loss of our son? Haven't I struggled against the same things you have?

Esther
I thought you did. I - I'm not so sure now.

You're not so sure!

Daniel
Esther
You've become so obsessed with this - this idea - as if you had no feeling for us - your family.

(pleading)
Daniel, for the love of Heaven, give it up. Let it go. Can't you see we've suffered enough already.

Anabelle
Father, be reasonable - listen to her!

Daniel
(losing patience)
Suffer - suffer. You're getting to sound like Israel Holt. You're as much possessed with what we have had to endure as I am supposedly obsessed with the idea of staying.

Esther
(angrily)
How can you say that!
Pain and suffering and death are terrible things. I don't deny that. But that's why we're here, isn't it?

"God, whose law it is that he who learns must suffer. And even in our sleep pain that cannot forget, falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our own despite, against our will comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of God." And that, ironically, was written by a pagan.

I have no tolerance for your intellectualism now. This isn't a plaything. This is real. It's human lives and feelings you're toying with. It's no time for philosophizing or moralizing or whatever—

Isn't it? Think what you're doing!

I have — I'm so tired. I want to be with my friends, where it's cool, where a person can survive—

What about me? Would you rather be there than with me?

Oh, Daniel — don't say that — don't make me choose. Let's go with the rest, please, please.

Daniel moves away. We can see there is a struggle going on inside him. Pause.

(almost forlorn — calming himself)
How long, Esther, how long will it continue? Moving and settling — moving and settling. Being pushed and harrassed by men like Isaac James. We've started over so many times. What do we have to show for it?

We have the church. Isn't that what is important?

We won't have it if we continue to let ourselves be pushed like this. The line has to be drawn somewhere.

Going now will not make that much difference.
Daniel

Truth is like a rope with many strands or threads, Esther. Somewhere along the threads a man finds a particular one that belongs to him. It's given to him to keep, to trust, to guide him, and every man is assigned the responsibility of finding his strand. And then when you put all the little strands together, you have the rope.

Esther

Are you certain that our strand is not binding us - holding us back?

Daniel

(not heeding remarks)

We found the rope - you and I - I felt we had found our thread, too, but now you're asking me to sever it - to weaken the rope.

Esther

What do you mean? President Young has given his permission to leave. We're not breaking anything!

Daniel

What else could he say? Do we have to be commanded in all things by someone presiding over us? If we do, that doesn't speak very highly of our own right to guidance by the Spirit. I'm trying to tell you that I feel that the best interest for us and the church is to stay here. We're staying—

(emphatic)

regardless of what the others do - we're staying.

There is a knock at the door. John answers it. Vincent enters.

Vincent

We've about finished packing over our way, so I thought I would come over and give you a hand, Brother Stark.

He immediately senses something is wrong.

Daniel

I appreciate it, Vince, but we won't be going.

Vince

(surprised)

You won't be going? But the letter from President - I thought that—

Daniel

Would make a difference? No, Vincent, to me everything is the same as when Isaac James stepped out of this house.
Vincent
I don't mean to sound disrespectful, Brother Stark, but what about your family? Aren't you asking for more trouble by staying here alone?

Daniel
Not any more than you people will be getting into on your way back to St. George. That journey is trouble, too.

Anabelle
But at least we'll be together!

Daniel
(flaring)
Anabelle, I have had just about all I can take of your caustic little tongue!

Anabelle
(bristling right back)
That's good, Father! You won't have to listen to me any more!

Anabelle
That's good, Father! You won't have to listen to me any more!

Daniel
What do you mean?

Anabelle
Since Vincent's entrance
Esther has not moved. She just
stares in front of her.

Esther
(quietly)
She's going with the group - with Vincent.

Daniel
What! What are you talking about?

Esther
(still calm)
She and Vincent want to get married in St. George.

Daniel
Married? What is this? Why haven't I been told about this before?

Esther
I just learned about it myself a few minutes before you came in.

Daniel
But—
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Esther

(turning on him)
We're lucky they didn't run off. At least she told us. And you're not doing anything to stop them. Let's not ruin her life.

Vincent

I'm sorry, Brother Stark; I'm sorry it has to turn out this way.

Anabelle

Vince, my things are packed in a trunk in the bedroom. Would you get them. John, could you help us?

They go out.

Esther

It's your pride, Daniel -- your stubborn pride. It's breaking us--wearing us down. Those two will need help to get started--

Daniel

(turning)
They could stay here with us.

Esther

You can't be serious! I didn't realize how far this thing has obsessed you.

Daniel

You haven't tried! All of you go around thinking I'm some kind of a monster because of what I feel -- what I know to be right. No, it has to be pride or selfishness! Esther, what kind of man do you think I am?

Esther

(confused)
I used to know you, Daniel. Now it's as if you're a stranger. Somewhere a gap has opened up between us, and I'm scared neither of us will be able to close it. Oh! Let's leave before it's too late.

Daniel moves to Esther

Daniel

What do you mean? You frighten me with that kind of talk!

Esther

I'm trying to say I'm not big enough to stay here. I can't take it anymore!

(getting hysterical)
The thoughts of facing all this alone -- and now without Anabelle -- it's so lonely. -- the wind. I can't stand it,
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Daniel. It's my nightmare! I'm falling. Oh, God, help me!
The rocks are so sharp!

Daniel takes her by the shoulders and begins to shake her.

Let me go! Let me go! I can't – Levi! Levi!

Daniel
He slaps her.

Esther! – Esther! Get hold of yourself – stop it!

She sinks into a chair, sobbing quietly to herself. Daniel is kneeling at her side. Anabelle enters followed by Vincent and John carrying a box or trunk.

Anabelle

Mother! What's the matter?

Daniel
Trying to be calm.

(hesitates)
She's upset – over your leaving – and our staying.

He rises and moves away. Vincent and John set the trunk down.

John

(moving to his mother)
Mother? – are you all right?

Esther
(regaining her composure)
Yes – I'm all right. Thank you.

She tries to force a smile as she pats John on the arm.

Anabelle
(to Daniel)
What does it take to get through to you?

Daniel
Why? Why? Why does it have to be like this?
Anabelle

(angered)
Because you are too blind to see — you act as if our lives
were something to experiment with — or some kind of sport!

Daniel

Sport! — O God — no more. Please! It's like a thousand
needles pricking
(raising his hands to the side of his face)
at my brain!

Vincent

(trying to avoid a scene)
Anna, we'd best take this on out. Can you help me, John?

They take the trunk and move
toward the door.

Esther

(calmingly)
When you've finished there come back and you can carry mine,
will you, Vincent?

Vincent

(surprise)
Are you going——

Daniel

(shocked)
What? Carry yours?

Anabelle

(going to her)
Oh, Mother — yes, yes. You must get away from here.

Esther

You go with Vincent and then come back. I'll be ready for you.

Anabelle gives a quick glance
at her father who has turned
away bewildered. She then
moves to Vincent and John.
They exit. Esther rises,
goes to the trunk John pulled
from under the cot and takes
a small chest-type box out of
it.

Are you going to help me?

Daniel

(turning)
You've made up your mind, then, to leave — with the others.
Esther
(coldly)
Yes, I'm going - with or without you, Daniel. My mind's made up.

Holding box in her arms.

Daniel
We're always struggling for what we can't have, aren't we? Why does it look better somewhere else. Always choices to make.

Choices?

She sets chest down.

Daniel
Yes. We want happiness, or satisfaction or something. Looking - always looking. Now you want to leave with or without me. I want you - need you, and yet I want to stay - must stay. It all seems so vicious somehow.

Esther
I - don't want to talk any more about it. I never win when we talk. Just tell me if you're coming with me.

As simple as that?

Daniel

Esther
Yes - as simple as that.

She picks up chest once again and starts for the bedroom.

I'll start with some things in the bedroom.

Daniel intercepts her near the fireplace.

Daniel
Esther, put that box down and listen to me.

He tries to take the chest from her but she resists.

Esther
I've listened enough!

He continues to try to take the box. She hangs on tightly.
Daniel

Will you put this down for a minute?

Esther

No! Let go of it!

She gives an emphatic jerk and at the same time Daniel relaxes his grip. The box flies from Esther's hands and smashes against the violin above the fireplace. It falls to the floor, along with the box, with a resounding crash. Both momentarily stare at what has happened. Then Daniel reaches down and gingerly scoops it up. He fondles it for a moment. Esther turns, tears filling her eyes.

Daniel

(slowly)
The destruction's almost complete, isn't it? My son — dead — a daughter that despises me — your leaving — and now, even my violin. About all I have left are my books.

(building)
I'm digging a hole on a sandy slope. The faster I dig, the faster the sand pours down from the top to fill it up. A hole — a hole in a sand dune.

He turns to Esther.

(he shouts as if he is talking to some invisible thing in the room)
And what's more, we're all — all digging on sandy slopes! You know what it's all about — this life we live? Esther?

Esther

(almost shouting)
No more, Daniel — Oh God in Heaven, please no more. I'll go mad!

(hysterically pleading)
Why does everything have to be so difficult?

Daniel ignores her.

Daniel

Yes! Now I know!

He flings the broken violin to the floor.
I know what it is! It's an endurance test, Esther! That's what it is! The one who endures, he comes out on top.
Remember Job?

Esther
(not quite knowing what she is saying)
Oh — yes — yes — that's what it is!

Daniel
(shouting to that invisible thing again)
Why don't you take my books, too! They're all I have left! I don't care because I know.

He goes to his bookshelf and sharts pawing and throwing his books until they all lie around his feet in a heap. All the while he shouts.

What is it now! You can't fool me any longer! I remember Job — and Christ — and Peter. There's the Prophet Joseph, too, and all those saints who suffered to come across — who died — they endured! They stood and took it.

Esther
(coming to her senses)
She rushes to Daniel's side.

Daniel — Daniel — stop it! You must stop it, now!

Daniel steps out from among the heap of books. He ignores Esther's pleas.

Daniel
(shouts defiantly)
And I'll endure! I'll last! I'll take it! I swear before men and angels that it shall not cut me down! I will to have the courage to face my kind of world.

She goes to him and, falling on her knees, tugs at his arm.

Esther
(a forlorn kind of pleading)
Please — please — oh, how many times must I say that word. Everything chimes in my ears like sound struck from some brazen pot that goes ringing on and on and on. Stop it for me, Daniel! Place a hand on it!
Daniel
(staring in front of him)
Place a hand on it? You can't! No one can. No one!

(mournfully)
Why must we continue to — flail and kick and fight it? I'm leaving, Daniel — you can't stop me.

Daniel moves away from Esther now who is still on her knees. He has a calmness, a tranquility about him that is electrifying. His face almost seems to glow.

You endure, Esther — that's the key! You only fight it when that's what it takes to endure.

(helplessly)
I can't—

Daniel
You have to — we must endure together. The sacrifice is too great if we don't.

Esther
I don't understand. I never seem to understand.

Daniel
(pause thoughtful)
Remember when I mentioned to you about a kind of poem I wrote that in some measure expressed my feelings. I now feel even more the significance of what it means.

Esther
(tired sounding but with an eager tone in her voice)
Oh, yes, tell me — I need something.

Daniel
I never understood why I used the images I did. Now it all is so obvious — so simple — so clear.

He begins to recite, quietly but with deep emotion.

The lambent rays streaked above the
Brown and rust-stained mesa.
Pigments of red glowed and hung everywhere.
   I thought I could see myself—
Suddenly all slipped into darkness and silence;
Night things chirped around me and
From somewhere came the babbling
of dead leaves.
    I wondered where I was—

The learned man's voice drummed on about
Huge galaxies and numberless stars and billions
of years;
I gazed at the streaming heavens slowly
Spinning through eternity.
    I looked to see if I were there—
Muffled voices hissed and murmured—
Someone's feet shuffled.
"And man created God in his own image," they said.
Some words checkerred across my mind—
"I am Alpha and Omega."
    I tried to see what it was—

Then two came and talked with me—
I beheld a vineyard and leaves of gold and a tree of life.
They counseled me—they said things—
I saw another angel and blood and He is risen;
    I thought I could see something—
It seemed white, all white—
Its spired shafts pierced the morning skies;
The voice of rushing waters echoed the words,
"This is life eternal that they might know—"
Hands descended upon my head
A tiny spark kindled at the pit of my bosom.

Daniel builds with an exultant
power here.

    I could see it now,
Only there were two—
Two that were one—

A voice whispered, "God created the heavens and the earth
But you belong to each other forever and ever."

    I could see now—
I understood—

Esther's face is radiant at
the end of Daniel's poem.
Tears of joy stream down her
face. He turns and looks into
her eyes and very softly and
tenderly says

Daniel

Do you see why it has to be both of us - together?
She moves into his arms.

**Esther**

Oh, yes, yes, I do. How beautiful it all is! It doesn’t matter, does it? All this is nothing.

**Daniel**

We live life as if it were nothing — and look upon it as if it were everything. That way we endure.

**Esther**

Why couldn’t I see or understand?

**Daniel**

Line upon line, precept upon precept — didn’t the Lord tell the Prophet Joseph, "I'll test you in a crucible of fire"?

**Esther**

I can’t express the joy that has filled my heart!

In the background is heard playing softly the "Pioneer Song."

**Daniel**

He looks down at Esther.

*Welcome home, my dear. Welcome home.*

After a moment he raises his head and looks off into the distance. The music swells slightly and a chorus begins to sing the words to the "Pioneer Song."

I see before me a beautiful valley nestled among the quiet mesas of the desert sun — fertile ground worked and tilled by an industrious people — lush green fields — the humid odor of alfalfa — spears of grain nodding their heads in the warm spring evenings. I see beautiful chapels and schools. I see peace and love. But most of all I see a people who are proud of a heritage that belongs to us! Their challenge will be different from ours, but it will be just as dusty, just as troublesome, and just as lonesome. They will also have to learn to endure.

The lights have dimmed out except the spot on Daniel and Esther center stage. They both stand in each other's arms now. The
The audience can distinguish easily the words of the "Pioneer Song." This scene is held for a minute or so and then the spot fades slowly. The music is still heard even though it's black on stage. The music fades and the curtain closes.
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ONLY THERE WERE TWO
AN ORIGINAL PLAY IN THREE ACTS

An Abstract
of a Thesis Submitted to the
Department of Dramatic Arts
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Ronald A. Dalley
August 1965
ABSTRACT

Only There Were Two, a full-length three-act play, is written as a reminder to us all of the faith and endurance of a handful of Mormon settlers. I have endeavored to capture the dramatic spirit of a man who would not let bigotry and prejudice run him from his home.

The setting of the play is a small Mormon settlement in the Muddy Valley in Southern Nevada. The time is late February, 1871. Act one is early evening; act two scene one is one day later, afternoon; act two scene two is one week later, evening; and act three is a week later, late afternoon.

The first part of the thesis is concerned with the theory of drama, the purpose of drama, the subject area of the play itself, a few insights in relation to structural theory, and my general efforts as a writer.

In the first act the audience learns of some of the trials and conflicts which nature has imposed upon the settlers. The beginnings of a conflict start to materialize between Daniel Stark and his wife, Esther. We learn that Anabelle, Daniel's daughter, is beginning to acquire an embittered attitude toward the settlement. This is also a source of conflict. As the act develops, Daniel's strong faith in the settlement becomes apparent while other members think the hardships are more than they can endure; consequently, the others feel they should leave. Another conflict arises here. At the end of the act, Daniel's son, Levi, is
killed in a wagon accident. The curtain closes leaving the audience worried about the effect this will have upon Daniel and his wife and the conflict that has already risen between them.

Act two scene one introduces Vincent Miles, Anabelle's boyfriend. Anabelle further reveals a bitter attitude toward her father. She asks Vincent to take her away from the valley if he leaves. Vincent agrees. The conflict between Esther and Daniel is heightened. Daniel is confronted with an inner struggle. His daughter dislikes him; his wife blames it on the hard life of the settlement and wants to leave. Finally after struggling with the idea of leaving, Daniel reluctantly consents.

Act two scene two shows a meeting with a Lincoln County official who has come to talk about taxes. The character of the official is revealed to be unscrupulous and bigoted. He seems to be deliberately forcing the settlers to leave. This causes Daniel to change his mind about leaving. He vows never to leave. The other Saints who expressed doubt about leaving before take a vote. Everyone decides to leave except Daniel. The act ends leaving this crisis in the minds of the audience.

Act three reveals that Anabelle is going away with Vincent. Brigham Young sends a message stating that the Saints in the Muddy settlement may leave. When Esther hears this, she is overjoyed. She tells Daniel. He still refuses to leave. The conflict begins to reach its climax. Esther
says she will leave Daniel. Daniel first tries to reason with her, and then he pleads with her. She won't listen. He reveals to her a poem he had written years ago. The poem illustrates all that hangs on their marriage, what life means for them in the eternities to come, why it is important they should remain together. The spirit of what Daniel is fighting for, the real significance of things is communicated to Esther. She then knows she has to stay with her husband no matter what the consequences. Daniel prophecies of the future of the settlement and the play ends on a note of affirmation.

Approved

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