

T W O - H E A D E D

a play of history

by

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SCENE I

L A V I N I A ' S T R E A S U R E

DATE: 1857. AGES: 10.

This scene takes place outof-doors, near a root cellar. It is evening in late summer.

LAVINIA, age 10, is climbing a tree, a branch of which hangs over the cellar.

Her friend, HETTIE, the same age, is sitting on the cellar door.

LAVINIA

If Jane was a animal, what would she be?

HETTIE

(Having played this game too many times already.) Ah...Ah...Horse.

LAVINIA

No! Guess again.

HETTIE

Ah...Sheep.

LAVINIA

Hettie, you have no imagination. Horse, sheep. Them are both awful. Ugly, huge and clumsy.

HETTIE

She reminds me of something I can't remember.

LAVINIA

What is it?

HETTIE

I don't know, do I? I can't remember, can I?

LAVINIA

I'll tell you what it is.

HETTIE

What?

LAVINIA

Mourning dove.

HETTIE

Oh.

LAVINIA

Remember that mourning dove I raised in a box?

HETTIE

Yeah.

LAVINIA

You never seen a smoother, softer thing than the neck of a baby mourning dove....

HETTIE

So when are we gonna see the two-headed calf?

LAVINIA

...That's like Jane. Very smooth and soft.
What do you think?

HETTIE

I guess.

LAVINIA

She acts like that, too. She acts smooth and
soft. Mourning dove behavior. Don't you
think?

HETTIE

I don't think I know what you're talking
about.

LAVINIA

Jane! I am speaking of Jane!

HETTIE

Oh. Well, when are we gonna see the two-headed calf?

LAVINIA

I don't want to show it to you before I show it to Jane.

HETTIE, butt in air, tries to see through the cracks in the cellar door.

LAVINIA grabs the tree branch and dangles a few feet off the ground.

When I look at Jane doing something ordinary, I think, "Oh, that ain't one bit ordinary, that is beautiful." That's how I think when I see Jane. What do you think when you see Jane?

HETTIE

Huh?

LAVINIA

What do you....Oh, never mind.

She drops from the tree branch.

HETTIE

I can't stay out here too long, you know.

LAVINIA

How come?

HETTIE

That wagon train of emigrants.

LAVINIA
What about them?

HETTIE
No one knows where they are.

*A pause as LAVINIA ponders
a decision.*

LAVINIA I
know where they are.

HETTIE
They ain't at Mountain Meadow. They was
supposed to be camped at Mountain Meadow. But
they ain't at Mountain Meadow.

LAVINIA
And...

HETTIE
And well, they could be anywheres. They could
be hiding.

LAVINIA
So....

HETTIE
Well, things could get stoled.

LAVINIA What
could get stoled?

HETTIE
Children, small animals, pret-near anything.
We could get stoled.

LAVINIA Who would
want to steal you?

*LAVINIA ducks behind the
tree.*

HETTIE
Them emigrants are from Missouri. They would
steal anything. They stoled Nolan's dog. And
they ate it. If they ate a dog, they could
eat a child.

*LAVINIA jumps out from
behind the tree.*

LAVINIA
(Softly.) Boo.

HETTIE leaps and screams.

In the afterlife, the beast will eat of the
man.

HETTIE
Meaning?

LAVINIA Two
words: Be. Ware.

HETTIE
Anyways, I ain't supposed to stay out past
dark.

LAVINIA
Well then, you'll have to wait till tomorrow
to see the two-headed calf.

HETTIE

I ain't waiting till tomorrow! I can't wait till tomorrow.

LAVINIA

Sorry. But you will have to.

HETTIE

I tell you, I am a crazy person when it comes to two-headed things. I just can't stand it till I see them.

LAVINIA

Then it's too bad you won't be able to see the two-headed calf till tomorrow.

HETTIE

So far, I have seen three two-headed things.

Course, Ezra, he's seen four. I have seen a twoheaded sheep, a two-headed pup, and a two-headed snake.

LAVINIA

But you ain't seen a two-headed calf.

HETTIE

No.

LAVINIA

There's lots of other things, too. Besides the two-headed calf.

HETTIE

What other things?

LAVINIA invents an answer.

LAVINIA

Scissors and dolls.

HETTIE

You mean, under this here cellar door, there is scissors, dolls and a two-headed calf?

LAVINIA

Pickled.

HETTIE

Pickled two-headed calf.

LAVINIA

In a vinegar jar.

HETTIE

In a vinegar jar.

LAVINIA

That's right.

HETTIE

I can't hardly imagine it. Where you think it come from?

LAVINIA

I think it could be a miracle.

HETTIE

Oh no.

LAVINIA

Miracle. Like pillar of salt.

HETTIE

Miracle. Like the Three Nephites. Like the Golden Plates. Like the seagulls eating the grasshoppers.

LAVINIA

Miracle. Like the answer to a prayer.

HETTIE

No! You prayed for a two-headed calf?

LAVINIA

God's will be done.

*LAVINIA jumps off the
cellar.*

HETTIE

I'm gonna start praying. I tell you, I just love two-headed things.

LAVINIA You think Jane will like it?

HETTIE

I don't think there's nothing that's two-headed I don't like.

LAVINIA

You think Jane will find it inter-esting?

HETTIE

Yeah. Probably.

LAVINIA

I think she will find it "irresistible".

HETTIE

If I was gonna pray for a two-headed thing, I would pray for a...a two-headed horse.

HETTIE kneels, ready to pray.

LAVINIA

Wanna hear this idea?

HETTIE

Or maybe I would pray for a two-headed bob cat.

LAVINIA

(More insistent.) Wanna hear this idea?

HETTIE

Oh no. I would pray for a two-headed Ezra.
Then me and Jane could divide him up.

LAVINIA

I said. Do you want to hear this idea?

HETTIE

I guess.

*LAVINIA stands up high on
the cellar roof,
proclaiming a great truth.*

LAVINIA

There are toads of life. And there are doves
of life.

HETTIE

Oh.

LAVINIA

You wanna know what it means?

HETTIE

I know what it means.

LAVINIA

What?

HETTIE

Everyone's a dove, if they want to be.

LAVINIA

No.

She jumps off the cellar.

Everyone's toads, the whole world is toads!
Except for Jane.

HETTIE

Oh. *(Pause.)* So how long we got to wait for
her?

LAVINIA As long as
it takes, Hettie.

HETTIE

How long is that?

LAVINIA

As long as it takes to get four cows from the
bottom of the pasture, put them in the shed,
milk them, and come back.

HETTIE

Let me just sneak one look at the two-headed
calf, and then I'll leave. You can show
everything to Jane. By yourself.

LAVINIA

No.

*LAVINIA jumps up and grabs
the tree branch. She
dangles there.*

HETTIE

Please....

LAVINIA

Hush up.

HETTIE

Oh please, Lavinia.

LAVINIA

No whining.

HETTIE

I'll just look at it. I won't even touch it.

LAVINIA

No!

HETTIE

I'll give you that clear glass marble with the hole in it.

LAVINIA

No.

HETTIE

I'll give you one of them robin eggs my sister found.

LAVINIA

No.

HETTIE

I'll give you them three rabbit ears on a string we got from the Indians.

LAVINIA

No. Change the subject.

HETTIE

I'll give you....

LAVINIA

Hettie.

HETTIE

What.

LAVINIA

CHANGE-THE-SUBJECT.

*HETTIE collapses in misery
on the cellar door.*

*LAVINIA lets herself drop
from the branch, landing in
front of HETTIE.*

I wonder what I'd be saying right now if I was
looking at Jane instead of you.

HETTIE

I don't know. What?

*LAVINIA looks at HETTIE for
a long time.*

LAVINIA

The mind belagos!

HETTIE

What's a belago?

LAVINIA

I'll explain it to you when you're older.

HETTIE

Oh.

LAVINIA

In the meantime, you've gotta study your
vocabulary words. Otherwise, life is gonna
pass you by.

*HETTIE moves her attention
to the lock on the cellar
door. She fumbles with it.*

HETTIE

What's this lock doing here?

LAVINIA

Guarding other treasures.

HETTIE

What else you got down there?

LAVINIA

Many a marvelous work and wonder.

HETTIE

Like what?

LAVINIA

Many objects of great and exceptional beauty.

HETTIE

Name one.

LAVINIA I am

sworn to secrecy.

HETTIE

I don't believe you.

LAVINIA

I have sworn a blood red oath.

HETTIE

To who?

LAVINIA

I am not allowed to speak of it to you or any human youth.

HETTIE

Just name one other thing you got down there.

LAVINIA ponders whether to tell.

LAVINIA

A locket in the shape of a heart....

HETTIE

Oh.

LAVINIA

...That you can put two pictures in. And when you close it, they kiss.

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HETTIE

(Laughing.) Oh, no. If I had that, I would put Ezra in it. Kiss. *(She laughs again.)* What else you got down there?

LAVINIA

Swear you will never tell.

HETTIE

Swear.

LAVINIA

Even unto death and after.

HETTIE Even unto death and after.

The both do a ritual gesture of promising. Long pause.

LAVINIA

Silk underwear.

HETTIE

Nooooo.

LAVINIA

Blue, pink, and salmon.

HETTIE

I don't believe you.

LAVINIA

I got one in my pocket.

HETTIE

You have not.

LAVINIA

You want to see it?

HETTIE

I don't know. You ain't supposed to look at other people's underwear.

LAVINIA

This here's fancy. It ain't like temple garments, nothing like that. Close your eyes.

She pulls a salmon-colored camisole from the crotch of the tree. She stands in front of HETTIE, hands behind her back.

Open!

She makes a rainbow arch with the garment.

You ever see anything like that?

HETTIE

No.

LAVINIA

You wanna see how it works?

LAVINIA puts the camisole over her clothes.

And in here goes the bosoms.

She pokes her hands in the garment.

It is worn by women of the night.

HETTIE

Oh no!

LAVINIA

They have love in every port.

HETTIE

HETTIE

Is that pure real silk?

LAVINIA

Yes, it is pure real silk. It costs one dollar per thread.

No.

LAVINIA

(Vamping.) Hey, lady, you want to make a beast with two backs?

HETTIE *(A small giggle.)*

What does that mean?

LAVINIA

What does it sound like it means?

HETTIE

I don't know.

LAVINIA

Well then, you'll have to think about it, won't you?

LAVINIA continues to strut around in the camisole.

HETTIE It looks like there's light inside of it.

LAVINIA

It is magic. You put this on, and you will have your greatest love come true.

HETTIE

Oh no! They wear them things when they are sexing.

LAVINIA

And they do not wear anything else.

*HETTIE laughs hysterically.
Then she stops abruptly.*

HETTIE

We're not supposed to be thinking about this.

LAVINIA

Why not?

HETTIE

It gives me the fan-toads.

LAVINIA

What gives you the fan-toads?

HETTIE

Just thinking...just thinking...about it gives me the fan-toads.

HETTIE shivers.

LAVINIA

It gives you the fan-toads when he kisses your neck? Kiss, kiss, kiss.

*LAVINIA comes after HETTIE.
HETTIE, screaming and
laughing, runs away.*

HETTIE

No. No.

LAVINIA pursues her.

LAVINIA

It gives you the fan-toads when he rubs his face on your bosoms?

HETTIE

HETTIE runs behind the tree.

HETTIE

No. Stop.

LAVINIA pursues her again.

LAVINIA

It gives you the fan-toads when he wiggles around on your stomach?

HETTIE slides to the ground in front of the cellar.

Please....Please....No.

LAVINIA jumps in front of her.

LAVINIA

It gives you the fan-toads when he lays his thing upon your leg.

HETTIE screams and beats her feet on the cellar door.

LAVINIA watches as Hettie's "fit" subsides, then stops abruptly.

You've got to work harder on your maturity, Hettie.

LAVINIA takes off the camisole.

Do you think Jane will like this?

HETTIE

Are you going to give her that?

LAVINIA

Yes I am. Because I am "devoted" to Jane.

HETTIE

You can't give her that. It's for a grown-up.

LAVINIA

Do you know the reason why I am not devoted to you? Because you are still a child.

HETTIE

I am three months and four days older than you.

LAVINIA

But...you still have the mind of a child. You are scared and jumpy. And you scream around.

HETTIE stands up to her.

HETTIE

That's not even part-way true. Who touched those snakes? Who faced down Wylie's dog?

LAVINIA

I might be able to tell you something, then. But if you cry or run, neither me or Jane will speak to you again. So long as we both shall live.

HETTIE

Tell me what?

LAVINIA

First you have to take a solemn oath.

HETTIE

*They cross their hearts,
lick their hands, and clasp
hands.*

HETTIE

Swear.

LAVINIA

If I speak.

HETTIE

If I speak.

LAVINIA

If I speak of this to anyone.

HETTIE

If I speak of this to anyone.

LAVINIA

I will sleep.

HETTIE

I will sleep.

LAVINIA

I will sleep with a snake.

HETTIE

I will sleep with a snake.

LAVINIA

And I will drink.

HETTIE

And I will drink.

LAVINIA

And I will drink raw vinegar.

HETTIE

And I will drink raw vinegar.

LAVINIA

If you ever break this oath. If you ever speak of this to a living soul, I will set your hair on fire. Do you swear?

HETTIE

Swear.

LAVINIA takes HETTIE to the cellar door, where they kneel and look out.

LAVINIA

(Quietly.) This silk underwear was once wore by a woman from Missouri.

HETTIE

A emigrant?

LAVINIA

Yes, a emigrant. It was owned by a emigrant woman from Missouri on her way to California.

HETTIE

How'd you get it?

LAVINIA

It was rendered up.

HETTIE

Rendered up?

LAVINIA

Rendered up by the sons of perdition.

HETTIE

Oh.

LAVINIA

Because the emigrants from Missouri are dead.

HETTIE

No. They're just hiding.

LAVINIA

They're dead. They all got killed.

HETTIE

Who killed them?

LAVINIA

Who do you think killed em?

HETTIE

God.

LAVINIA

No.

HETTIE

Your pop.

LAVINIA

No. (*Inventing the answer.*) Indians.

HETTIE

Indians killed em?

LAVINIA

This morning at sunrise.

HETTIE

At Mountain Meadow.

LAVINIA

Killed em all. All except for seven small children. Too young to speak the truth of what they saw.

HETTIE

I don't believe you.

LAVINIA

They all died in agony on the meadow.

HETTIE

How do you know all this?

LAVINIA

My pop is the commander.

HETTIE

So what?

LAVINIA

He is called upon to use his bravery.

HETTIE

He is crazy with a gun, that's what my pop says.

LAVINIA

He's supposed to be crazy with a gun. He's the commander. He had to bury the bodies. The dead and mangled bodies of the dead and mangled emigrants.

HETTIE

Did your pop tell you this?

LAVINIA

He had to bury them. Or else the wuffs would eat their flesh.

HETTIE

Wuffs?

HETTIE sits transfixed.

Lavinia, I think I got the fan-toads again.

LAVINIA

Jist remember one thing. They deserved to die.

HETTIE

Because they was from Missouri?

LAVINIA

The people from Missouri shot the Prophet Joseph Smith and his beloved brother Hyrum.

HETTIE

I seen that emigrant train when it come through town. Them people from Missouri, they had dogs.

LAVINIA

Yes.

HETTIE

Cuz they eat dogs.

LAVINIA

They named their oxen Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. They deserve to die.

HETTIE

They snapped the head off a chicken and called it the Mormon Church. I seen them do that with a bull whip. Snap.

LAVINIA

And they cast aspersions on the godhead.

HETTIE

Yeah, aspersions on the godhead.

LAVINIA

They deserve to die.

HETTIE

The Lord's will be done.

LAVINIA

On earth as it is in heaven.

HETTIE

(Searching for more.) And they poisoned that spring.

LAVINIA

When they were a guest in the territory, they poisoned that spring. Which killed the Indians. And so the Indians hated them.

HETTIE

Yes, the Indians hated them. And so the Indians killed them.

LAVINIA

Yes.

HETTIE

What if the Indians hated us?

LAVINIA

They do not hate us. We never poisoned a spring.

HETTIE

And the emigrant children, they never poisoned a spring. That's why they never got killed.

LAVINIA

A hundred and twenty-seven souls. They all died on the meadow this day, their blood mixed with the water of the slew.

LAVINIA pulls the camisole through her hand, like it is a magic trick.

Now then, look all over this salmon slip.

HETTIE

What for?

LAVINIA

See if you can find her blood.

HETTIE

Blood of the Missouri woman?

LAVINIA

Blood of the damned.

HETTIE

Lavinia....

LAVINIA

What.

HETTIE

I got the fan-toads again.

LAVINIA

Shhh. Examine the salmon slip.

*LAVINIA drops the camisole
on her.*

HETTIE recoils.

HETTIE

Oh!

HETTIE sits transfixed.

(Quietly.) Lavinia.

LAVINIA

What?

HETTIE

What about the two-headed calf?

LAVINIA

What about it?

HETTIE

Is there blood on the two-headed calf?

LAVINIA

Might be. Might not be. We don't know, do we?

HETTIE

Please, can I see if there's blood on the twoheaded calf?

LAVINIA

No.

HETTIE

Please, Lavinia.

LAVINIA

You cannot see the two-headed calf. But....

HETTIE

But what?

LAVINIA

But later. After I show the calf to Jane. And after I give the pink slip to Jane. After that. After all that, I might give this salmon slip to you.

HETTIE

You might give it to me?

LAVINIA

I might.

HETTIE

What for?

LAVINIA

Because I love you.

HETTIE

You do?

LAVINIA

Of course I do.

HETTIE

Are you sure it's pure real silk?

LAVINIA

It's pure real silk and there's blood on it.

LAVINIA waits for a moment for the information to sink in. HETTIE rubs the silk.

Treasure it.

HETTIE

I will. I will.

LAVINIA

And now I'm gonna leave you here.

HETTIE

No, Lavinia, don't leave me here! Don't leave me alone.

LAVINIA

I must go help Jane with the cows.

HETTIE

I can't stay here by myself. There's too much going on. There's emigrants. There's Indians. There's blood on this slip.

LAVINIA

Shhhh. I must go help Jane so she will not be killed.

HETTIE

No, Lavinia, please don't leave me.

LAVINIA

Hush up. No whining. By the time you find the blood on that slip, we will both return. Me and Jane. The "incomparable" Jane.

HETTIE

And then we'll take a look at that two-headed calf?

LAVINIA

Only if you've found the blood. Blood of the Missouri woman.

HETTIE

Blood of the emigrant.

LAVINIA

Blood of the damned.

LAVINIA rushes off.

*HETTIE is left alone and
breathless. She studies
the camisole, looks out,
and whimpers.*

*Sound of wolves bleed into
the music.*

Lights dim.

*

SCENE II I C

E M A I D E N

DATE: 1867. AGES: 20.

This scene takes place in the same back yard ten years later. It is a hot day in late summer.

LAVINIA and HETTIE, both now 20, are busy at work on a small quilt, just the size to bury with the woman whose crude casket is on the cellar door under the tree. The casket is covered with a large piece of canvas, over which is ice. Over that is another larger piece of canvas.

There are several moments of silence. Tension is thick in the air.

Sound of crows.

LAVINIA

There are crows in that box elder tree.

HETTIE

I know, I saw them.

LAVINIA

You know why, don't you?

HETTIE

Yes, Lavinia, I know why.

LAVINIA

Why?

HETTIE

(Trying to distract her.) Remember you used to call them magpies, and Jane called them redwinged black birds?

LAVINIA

I am asking you a simple question.

HETTIE

...That's because half the town says magpies. The other half says red-winged black birds.

LAVINIA

Why!

HETTIE

Why what?

LAVINIA

Why are those crows waiting in that box elder tree?

HETTIE

Let's think about the good things, the lucky things. She was...funny and she was brave. It's lucky we knew her.

LAVINIA

...Carrion. The crows smell carrion.

HETTIE

She was married before she died. That's a lucky thing.

LAVINIA

It's been three days. The crows are ready to feed.

HETTIE

We've had enough time to make her a quilt.
That's a lucky thing.

LAVINIA

The crows are patient, but they cannot wait
forever.

HETTIE

And Ezra will be back by nightfall!

Pause. Sound of crows.

LAVINIA

"That's a lucky thing." Because the crows are
eager to feast.

HETTIE

Put your mind on something else, would you?

Pause.

Think about Ezra.

LAVINIA

No.

HETTIE

My heart goes out to him.

LAVINIA

Not mine.

HETTIE

You have to feel sorry for him. All he's lost.

LAVINIA

I do not feel sorry for him.

HETTIE

You feel sorry for yourself.

LAVINIA

I feel sorry for Jane. And I feel sorry for that crow.

HETTIE looks up from her work. She's losing patience.

HETTIE

Lavinia, please....

LAVINIA It's only got one leg. Ha!

Pause of several seconds as the two return to their work.

HETTIE

What to tell Ezra, that's what worries me.

LAVINIA

Tell him the truth.

HETTIE

Obviously. But...how to put it.

LAVINIA

(With a grin.) Jane was smothered.

HETTIE

Jane was attacked and bit.

LAVINIA

By a diseased wolf.

HETTIE

It wasn't a wolf.

LAVINIA

What was it?

HETTIE

There are no wolves here. No one has seen a wolf. In five years, no one has ever seen a wolf.

LAVINIA

It was a wolf.

HETTIE

Wolves are further north. There are no wolves in the desert.

LAVINIA

Must have been a crow then.

HETTIE

What?

LAVINIA

Must have been a crow that got Jane.

HETTIE

Don't start.

LAVINIA

Was it crows dug up those bodies at Mountain Meadow?

HETTIE

Lavinia, we're not talking about that.

LAVINIA

Was it crows that dragged the limbs to the edge of town then repeatedly buried them and dug them up, buried them and dug them up?

HETTIE

You have a way of saying the awfulest things.

LAVINIA

It was crows that scattered the bones at Mountain Meadow! Yes, it was crows. And it was a crow that got Jane, a crow that will scatter her bones. You are so right, Hettie. Crows! Ha-ha.

Long pause. The women continue working.

HETTIE

Jane was not bit by a wolf.

LAVINIA

I know.

LAVINIA looks up from her work and then back down.

(With mock seriousness.) Jane was bit by a diseased rabbit.

HETTIE

This is no time for joking.

LAVINIA

A diseased squirrel, a chipmunk, a field mouse.

HETTIE

You're irreverent.

LAVINIA No,
Hettie. I'm furious!

Long, tense pause. The women continue to work.

HETTIE

More than likely it was a coyote.

LAVINIA

IT DOES NOT MATTER, HETTIE!

HETTIE

We cannot spread the word that it was a wolf. People will think we live in the wild. We do not live in the wild. We are a civilized people. This is a civilized place.

LAVINIA

Civilized.

HETTIE

Yes. All the wolves have been killed.

*LAVINIA moves to the box.
She lifts up a piece of wet*

*canvas. She rearranges
something in the box, perhaps
the woman's hair.*

LAVINIA

Jane is turning black.

HETTIE

We cannot put her in the ground before her husband comes. It would not be right. Not proper. Ezra needs to see her dead. Otherwise, he will live a haunted life.

LAVINIA

There's no more ice.

HETTIE

It takes three days from Salt Lake City. He'll be here tonight.

LAVINIA

Unless something has happened to him.

HETTIE

Lavinia. You are not to talk that way.

LAVINIA

(False sentiment.) But I worry about him. Something could happen. He could fall from his buckskin mare into Wildcat Gulch. He could break both legs, both arms, his back. He could lie in agony till nightfall when diseased wolves take after him. Bite by bite.

HETTIE

You're just upset.

LAVINIA

Up set. You have no words, Hettie. Up set?

HETTIE

It fixes nothing when you talk like that. Ezra is a fine, fine man.

LAVINIA

He should have been here.

HETTIE

He was on Church business.

LAVINIA

The goddamn Church.

HETTIE

And I don't want to hear nothing against the Church, neither.

LAVINIA

(Blankly, quietly.) Howl, Lavinia, howl.

HETTIE

And no more public spectacles like Jane's wedding day.

LAVINIA

Howl, howl.

HETTIE

Sitting in a tree pelting the wedding guests with bits of food.

LAVINIA

Howl.

HETTIE

You are not the only one affected by this. Of course, you're going to miss her, but....

LAVINIA

I don't miss her. I am with her. I only seem to be here.

HETTIE leans in toward her friend.

HETTIE

Lavinia. Look at me.

LAVINIA does.

It may be fine for you to talk like that to me. But you don't say those things to others. You understand?

LAVINIA

I understand. I understand everything. My beloved Jane is turning black.

HETTIE

Shhhh.

Tears well up in LAVINIA's eyes.

LAVINIA

She looks like a corpse. She used to look like someone sleeping. Not herself. Not Jane. But someone. Now she looks like a corpse. Dead calf in the desert. The smell, the flies.

LAVINIA replaces the canvas.

HETTIE

Shhh. She was always happy, never one to worry. Let's think about that.

LAVINIA

(Turning on a dime.) Jane would have been a great woman. What do you think?

HETTIE

Yes. She would have had a wonderful family.

LAVINIA looks at her.

LAVINIA

She would have taught school.

HETTIE

She might have taught school.

LAVINIA

We would have taught school together.

HETTIE

She wasn't as fixed on teaching school as you are.

LAVINIA

Jane wanted to teach school.

HETTIE

She wanted to marry Ezra and have a big batch of children. That's really what she wanted.

LAVINIA

We would have taught school together. We would have talked about our students.

HETTIE

Maybe so.

LAVINIA

We would have discussed great books, great ideas, the greater meanings of things.

HETTIE

I'm sure you would have.

LAVINIA

Yes. And on Sunday afternoons we would have opened the windows and read books in the quiet breeze of our house.

HETTIE

That's a lovely thought.

LAVINIA

And on winter nights we would have built a fire and cooked a soup. We would have wrapped ourselves in blankets and discussed the meaning of the universe.

HETTIE

Do you know what I thought...what I thought every time I saw Jane?

LAVINIA

What?

HETTIE

That she was like....She was like...like a singer with a song.

LAVINIA

Like a singer with a song?

HETTIE

Don't make fun.

LAVINIA

Like a singer with a song. That's beautiful, Hettie.

HETTIE grins.

The most beautiful thing you ever said. She was like a singer with a song. I love you for saying that.

HETTIE

I don't know where it came from....

LAVINIA

Shhhh. She was like a singer with a song. *(Turning on a dime.)* HOW COULD YOU DO IT, HETTIE?

HETTIE

We all agreed on it. You were there. We all agreed.

LAVINIA

I did not agree.

HETTIE

It was her wish. She begged to be shot.

LAVINIA

But you did not shoot her. You smothered her.

HETTIE

She could not be saved. And no one could shoot her.

LAVINIA

I could have shot her. Like shooting a horse with a broken leg. Like shooting a cow with Bang's Disease. Like shooting...a mourning dove.

HETTIE

Let's think about something else.

LAVINIA

I can shoot anything. I have shot many things.

HETTIE

Let's think about Ezra. Poor man will be home soon.

LAVINIA

And his wife is dead.

HETTIE

Yes.

LAVINIA

She said to me. Before she was raving. After the bite but before the raving, she said, "If I get it, if I get the hydrophobia, I want you to shoot me. I want you, Lavinia. I want you to shoot me."

HETTIE

She said nothing of the sort.

LAVINIA

I am not the one that lies!

HETTIE

She refused to speak of the possibilities of the disease. That was part of her lovely spirit in the last few days. She maintained a lovely, positive spirit.

LAVINIA

Hog swill.

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HETTIE

The Church was a comfort to her at the end.
It was a comfort to all of us at the end.

LAVINIA

Mormons can make apple sauce from horse piss.
"Go take her cows," you said. "Go take them to
the milking shed. We'll wait with her."

HETTIE

I wanted to spare you.

LAVINIA

You smothered her.

HETTIE

It was the kindest thing.

LAVINIA grabs HETTIE's face.

LAVINIA

It was the most unkindest thing.

Pause.

LAVINIA (*cont.*)

For the rest of my life, Hettie Edison, every
time I see you, every time, I will wonder what
it would be like if Jane were in your place
instead of you.

HETTIE

You're talking crazy now.

LAVINIA

It runs in my family.

HETTIE

Hush. Your family is not crazy.

HETTIE
LAVINIA

My father's as crazy as a rip saw.

Shhh. Everyone must pray for him.

LAVINIA
Pray for my mother if you want to pray for
someone.

HETTIE
You've had too much grief. And now the trial.
I am forgetting what you're going through.

LAVINIA
This trial does not concern my father.

HETTIE
If you say so.

LAVINIA
My father was not there that day.

HETTIE
No, of course not.

LAVINIA
And in all other ways my father did what he
was told to do.

HETTIE
I'm sure he did.

LAVINIA
What he was told by Brigham Young to do.

HETTIE
Brigham Young had nothing to do with that
thing.

HETTIE
LAVINIA

Massacre. The word is....

HETTIE
Shhh.

LAVINIA
Massacre.

There's no need to speak of it. I'm sure your father's suffered quite enough.

LAVINIA
Because they stripped him of his rank? That does not concern him. He wears his uniform just the same. And drills his regiment just the same.

HETTIE
He's a proud and proper man.

LAVINIA
He is a pompous ass.

HETTIE
He is your father.

LAVINIA
And a pompous ass.

HETTIE
He deserves your respect. Now he deserves your prayers.

LAVINIA
My prayers? My father threw me in a wagon. There was blood and mud in there.

HETTIE

HETTIE

Pray for him, Lavinia.

LAVINIA

It smelled like a pig slaughter. "Speak of this to no one."

HETTIE

We must pray for them all.

LAVINIA

He put something in my hand. Something metal. A necklace or a pin. Could have been a locket. Could have been a bone. "Speak of this to no one. Speak of this to no one."

Pray nothing is uncovered at the trial... nothing implicating him.

LAVINIA

He has a declaration. Signed by twenty men. He was not there that day.

HETTIE

But he must suffer at the thought that someone else is suffering.

LAVINIA

He does not suffer at the thought.

HETTIE

He is a caring man. He cares for John D. Lee.

LAVINIA

I doubt it.

HETTIE

They ran cattle together.

HETTIE
LAVINIA

So what?

HETTIE
They tell stories on one another.

LAVINIA
My father was not there. John D. Lee was there. John D. Lee must suffer for them all. Waiting for the axe to fall. Waiting for the wolves to bite. John D. Lee is being punished. And I am being punished. Jane is turning black.

LAVINIA returns to the casket. Long pause.

LAVINIA
That locket you're wearing. I want it back.

HETTIE
What?

LAVINIA

I want it...back.

HETTIE

What for?

LAVINIA

I gave it to you. Now I want it back.

HETTIE

Please, Lavinia...

LAVINIA

I gave you that locket. But before I gave it to you, I gave it to Jane. She had to give it back. Her mother said it came from the Mountain Meadow Massacre. That's when I gave it to you. But now I want it back.

HETTIE

It's got the pictures of my parents in it.

LAVINIA

Take them out.

HETTIE

Whatever you say.

Pause.

LAVINIA

NOW! I want it now.

HETTIE

I don't have it now.

LAVINIA

You wear it all the time. You're wearing it now. It's under your collar. I want it.

Pause. LAVINIA is fixed on HETTIE, and she means business.

HETTIE fumbles with her collar and takes off the locket. She hands it to LAVINIA.

LAVINIA grabs the locket and HETTIE's hand.

LAVINIA (*cont.*)

And stay away from my father.

HETTIE

What are you talking about?

LAVINIA

He's watching you.

HETTIE

He barely knows my name.

LAVINIA

I watch him watching you.

HETTIE

It is completely innocent, I assure you.

LAVINIA

You stay away from him. You resist his courtly charm.

HETTIE says nothing.

And now that silk camisole.

HETTIE

Silk camisole....

LAVINIA

The silk camisole I gave you. I want that too.

HETTIE

What on earth....

LAVINIA

I want it back.

HETTIE

We do not need to discuss this now.

LAVINIA

You never wear it. You can't wear it. You'd be afraid to wear it. I want it back.

HETTIE

I don't have it. That was ten years ago.

LAVINIA

You have it. I want it.

HETTIE

What for?

LAVINIA

I want to cut it up. All three of us had them. I had one. It was blue. Jane had one. It was pink. You had one. It was salmon. I want yours back.

HETTIE

You get worked up like this, it only makes things worse.

LAVINIA

I didn't like yours. I didn't like that color.

That's why I gave it to you. Now I want it back. I'm going to cut it up.

HETTIE

Whatever you say. You can have it back. Now could we have an end to this?

LAVINIA

Do I give you the fan-toads? I'm going to cut the bosoms out of it. I'm going to sprinkle the petals on her grave. I'm going to dance in a circle, tromping the dirt on her grave....

LAVINIA rises and twirls.

HETTIE grabs her.

HETTIE

Lavinia, I understand you. I know your intensity. But I'm warning you, right now, you are not to talk like this any more. And especially in front of Ezra. You're not to talk like this to him.

LAVINIA

And why not?

HETTIE

He's gone through too much himself. He will not understand.

LAVINIA

Under. Stand.

HETTIE

We must be mindful of his pain. We must help him to bear up beneath the strain.

LAVINIA

You think you're going to marry Ezra, don't you?

HETTIE

The man's wife just died.

LAVINIA

You're not going to marry him, Hettie. I am.

HETTIE

My god, Lavinia....

LAVINIA And do you
know why, Hettie?

HETTIE

Oh, Lavinia.

*LAVINIA laughs in
exhaustion.*

LAVINIA

Why shouldn't I marry him? Jane is turning
black.

HETTIE

Please be quiet now. We're almost finished.

*The women work. First
HETTIE finishes. Then
LAVINIA. They both sit back
and study the quilt. Tears
well up in LAVINIA's eyes.*

LAVINIA

Oh, Jane....

HETTIE embraces her.

Lights fade.

Scene III

I N S A N

E

DATE: 1877. AGES: 30.

This scene takes place in the same back lot, another ten years later. Vegetation around the cellar is less planned. Things show signs of wear and tear. It is late autumn. A chill is in the air.

LAVINIA is about 30. She's washing clothes, using a barrel, a washboard and a bar of lye soap.

LAVINIA
(Yelling back into the house.) Janie, you keep those twins away from that stove, ya hear?

Brief pause as she waits.

Then wash out the milk cans and set em out for Grandma. Janie, you hear me?

HETTIE appears from inside the house. She wears a long coat and is clearly pregnant.

HETTIE
I hear you.

LAVINIA studies her in disbelief, then throws a wet garment at the tree. She stands against the

tree, refusing to look at her. Pause.

HETTIE (cont.)

Did you get my letter?

LAVINIA

You didn't come through the house, did you?

HETTIE

The child let me in.

LAVINIA

Did you run into my mother?

HETTIE

No.

LAVINIA

That's a blessing.

HETTIE

If you say so.

LAVINIA studies her stomach.

LAVINIA

What do you want?

HETTIE

Did you get my letter?

LAVINIA

Yes, I got your letter. We do not live in the wild, you know. This is a civilized place. We are a civilized people. The post comes twice a week.

Total silence. A long one.

HETTIE

Your father sends his love.

LAVINIA

Hush. Up.

HETTIE

He's very sorry this has....

LAVINIA

I said, hush up!

HETTIE He and I both
think it's time we....

LAVINIA

I want you out of here as soon as possible.

HETTIE

Your father sent me.

LAVINIA

Of course he did. Got himself in prison or
something.

HETTIE

Asylum.

LAVINIA

Yes, asylum. For doing what exactly?

HETTIE

Well, he went there to preach the gospel to his
family.

LAVINIA

His family is here.

HETTIE

His family in Connecticut.

LAVINIA

Superlative job, too. An overwhelming success, I'd say.

HETTIE

Please, Lavinia, please don't talk to me in words.

LAVINIA throws something in the wash. A pause of several seconds.

LAVINIA

I can't do a damn thing, Hettie. He's crazy. You shouldn't have married him. My mother shouldn't have married him.

HETTIE

He thinks you can get him out.

LAVINIA

I think he belongs there.

HETTIE

You do not. He is your father.

LAVINIA And he's

crazy as lightning.

HETTIE

He believes in you. He believes you can intervene.

LAVINIA

What did he do to get himself in there?

HETTIE

He was just trying to share the blessings of the gospel....

LAVINIA

Yes but what did he do?

HETTIE

He bore his testimony as to the truthfulness of the restored gospel....

LAVINIA

Quit dancing behind your chair. What did he do?

HETTIE

Took over the pulpit at a Catholic Church.

LAVINIA

I see. And what did he tell them?

HETTIE

He testified about the institution of plural marriage.

LAVINIA

(Laughing.) He told them he was a plig?

HETTIE

He testified as to the wisdom of the divinely inspired institution of plural marriage.

LAVINIA nods knowingly.

That upset the Catholic people that were there that day. They sent up a call for the constabularies. And he was taken from the pulpit.

LAVINIA

To the prison?

HETTIE

No. To the asylum.

LAVINIA

To the asylum, right. Thank god for that.
They think he's just crazy not criminal.

HETTIE

No call to speak so harshly.

LAVINIA

And what do they call it? What's the exact
name of his "disease"?

HETTIE

Religious intolerance.

*There is a long pause.
HETTIE is uncomfortable.*

LAVINIA

You've just lied to me, haven't you?

HETTIE

What?

LAVINIA

They did not throw him in the asylum because he
talked about polygamy.

HETTIE

No. *(Carefully.)* Someone. A friend of his
sister...has family in Missouri.

LAVINIA

I see.

HETTIE

Word...got around.

LAVINIA

That he'd been up to more than multiple wives.

HETTIE

Word got around.

LAVINIA

That he's crazy but also a killer.

HETTIE

He's very frightened, Lavinia. He's afraid he'll have to spend the rest of his life in there. You can't imagine what it's like. The noises. Screaming. Banging. The smell.

LAVINIA

I can't get him out of there.

HETTIE

I don't know what to do with him.

LAVINIA

Neither do the rest of us.

HETTIE

I think he should come back here.

LAVINIA

Why? Because here everyone's as crazy as he?

HETTIE

Because here people understand his intensity.

LAVINIA Intens-
ity.

*LAVINIA throws something in
the wash.*

HETTIE

I want to come home. He wants to come home.

LAVINIA

My father cannot come back here.

HETTIE

Why not?

LAVINIA

Second trial is about to begin.

HETTIE

Mountain Meadow?

LAVINIA

Mountain Meadow.

HETTIE

John D. Lee again?

LAVINIA

John D. Lee again.

HETTIE

Oh, that poor man.

LAVINIA

One more trip to the table of justice.

HETTIE

They acquitted him before. Pray God they do it again.

LAVINIA

That was ten years ago. This time they'll convict. He was solely responsible for the massacre. That's what we're to understand, what we're to believe. Typical Mormon justice. Kill as few Mormons as you can. Kill as many others as possible.

HETTIE

I feel so sorry for his family.

LAVINIA

Suffice it to say, my father should not be around.

HETTIE

Your father had nothing to do with it.

LAVINIA

He planned it. Commander in the Mormon Militia. That was his job! He got his cut of the loot.

HETTIE

Every drop of blood shed that day was but another rung on the ladder of salvation.

LAVINIA

Now you're quoting him.

HETTIE

Shedding the blood of the enemies of Christ is no sin in the sight of the Lord.

LAVINIA

The principle of blood atonement. I will not listen to this.

HETTIE

I believe it to be the truth.

LAVINIA

A hundred and twenty-seven people, Hettie.

HETTIE

And what had they done to deserve it?

LAVINIA

Nothing! A few taunts, a few jibes.

HETTIE

They bragged about killing Joseph Smith. I heard that myself.

LAVINIA

You do not kill people for words.

HETTIE

What about their deeds in Missouri a dozen years before? Those people from Missouri killed my grandmother. Made her walk across the frozen river. Middle of winter.

LAVINIA

It wasn't those people.

HETTIE

Of course it was.

LAVINIA No,
it wasn't, Hettie.

HETTIE

What difference does it make. They all hate us!

LAVINIA

I've got to say one thing. You are dumb, Hettie Edison. Stupid as a stump. Dumber than a chicken. Slow as a sheep. And you always were! There, I've said it.

HETTIE

Are you're finished?

LAVINIA

Yes.

HETTIE

Good. (*Right back at her.*) Because some of us don't find it worth our time being smart. We

don't want to end up being tedious like you.
There. I've said it.

Deep pause.

LAVINIA

You've got to understand, Hettie, that you and my father have wreaked a bit of havoc in this family.

HETTIE

What have we done? We're not even here.

LAVINIA

(Inhaling, then controlling an explosion.)
Since my father took himself another wife, my mother has been "upset". Since my father picked you to be his second wife, I have been "upset". Since my father and second wife have taken themselves to Connect-icut, we have all been "up set".

HETTIE

That wasn't my idea. Your father wanted to see his family. He wanted me to meet his family. He wanted to preach the gospel to his family.

LAVINIA

We are his family.

HETTIE

His family back in Connecticut.

LAVINIA

And it sounds like he's been a great success with his family back in Connect-icut. They got him where?

HETTIE

State House for the Feeble Minded and the Insane.

LAVINIA

The feeble minded and the insane. You should not have married him, Hettie.

HETTIE Your father has many fine qualities.

LAVINIA

So does that dog asleep on the porch out there. You gonna marry him?

HETTIE

Your father had stature in this town. People thought highly of him.

LAVINIA

They were afraid of him.

HETTIE

They respected him. They respected me when I was with him.

LAVINIA

Whatever crumbs of respect there were should have belonged to my mother. She put up with him for twenty-four years. Exactly what had you done?

Pause.

HETTIE

(An admission.) My parents had eight daughters. Eight.

LAVINIA

You could have said no.

HETTIE

I thought I'd be well cared for.

LAVINIA

And you were right, so right. Probably living in a palace back east.

HETTIE

I thought, when I married your father, I'd finally be the equal of you.

LAVINIA

So you are. What exactly what is it you want from me?

An awkward moment.

HETTIE

(Changing the subject.) I brought Tess with me.

LAVINIA

All the way on the train? Must have cost a fortune.

HETTIE

I thought maybe she could get to know her cousins. Janie, the twins.

LAVINIA

They're not cousins. Your daughter is my sister.

HETTIE Well

yes, technically.

Pause. LAVINIA washes on a scrub board.

And how's Ezra?

LAVINIA

Had typhoid last winter, but it didn't kill him.

HETTIE

Does he still look the same?

LAVINIA

Shoulders more stooped. His knees are bad.

HETTIE

I'll bet he enjoys the children.

LAVINIA

Can't tell the twins apart.

HETTIE

Rising in the Church.

LAVINIA

Yes. Oh, yes.

HETTIE

I look forward to seeing him.

LAVINIA

I should have let you have him.

HETTIE

Lavinia, please.

LAVINIA

Well, it's the truth.

HETTIE

I'm perfectly satisfied with the lot I have.

LAVINIA

Your life's been a comfort, has it?

HETTIE

Some of it, yes. Tess has. Tess has been a comfort to both of us.

LAVINIA

Then what in hell do you want from me?

HETTIE cannot say it yet.

HETTIE

Your mother, how is...your mother?

LAVINIA tosses the garment she's been working on into the rinse tub. Then she fishes another one from the scalding wash. She rubs a bar of soap on it and scrubs it on the board.

LAVINIA

Mother looks at the sky all day. She's trying to find God. So far, he has eluded her.

HETTIE

Neither one of us understand what it's like to leave the world behind and come west.

LAVINIA No,

I'm sure we don't.

HETTIE

To sacrifice everything for the Church. Load all your belongings into a wagon.

LAVINIA

Please save us your handcart story, Hettie.

HETTIE

They walked more than a thousand miles. Your father and mother both.

LAVINIA

And ain't it a blessing that "in these, the latter days," we have the railroad.

HETTIE

Please give my good wishes to your mother.

LAVINIA

Oh, I will, I will.

HETTIE

And your father sends....

LAVINIA

Yes.

HETTIE

Your father sends his best to her. His warmest regards.

LAVINIA looks at her blankly.

LAVINIA

No more la-dee-dah, Hettie. What do you want?

HETTIE

(A difficult admission.) I have...I have no means of support.

LAVINIA

If you can work, we can feed you.

HETTIE

I need ready money.

LAVINIA

No one's got ready money.

HETTIE

They want a hundred dollars.

LAVINIA

Ah.

HETTIE

For the indigent tax. If I pay the tax and promise not to let him come back to the state of Connecticut, they'll let him out.

LAVINIA

A hundred dollars. Out of the question.

HETTIE

Can't you sell something?

LAVINIA

Why don't you sell something? Start with that coat.

HETTIE (*An admission.*) It's borrowed.

LAVINIA

And you're also pregnant again.

HETTIE

Well, yes....

LAVINIA

It's barbaric how many children we have. Even the Indians have fewer children than we do.

HETTIE

The Commander wanted more children.

LAVINIA

The Commander? The old man is running around the east calling himself the Commander.

HETTIE

I didn't feel I could deny him.

LAVINIA

Oh no, of course not.

HETTIE

The last one. After Tess. It...was not whole.

LAVINIA

Was it two headed?

HETTIE tears up.

HETTIE

Your father was...very hurt. His pride.

LAVINIA

His pride is the size of Great Salt Lake.

HETTIE

Well yes, I suppose it is. But he cares for you. He does.

LAVINIA

He is a crazy son of a bitch. And the Church did nothing but make him crazier.

HETTIE

He is haunted by Mountain Meadow. Sometimes he hears wolves. They speak to him in nightmares. They tell him to bury it deeper. But he has no shovel, no tools, just his hands.

LAVINIA

In my own nightmare, I am one that gets shot. Never one that shoots. A bearded man with kindly eyes shoots me in the neck, and I die slowly, my blood leaking drop by drop into the water of the slew.

HETTIE

The Lord has tested us. Tested us all.

LAVINIA

You say he suffers then?

HETTIE

More than you can know. His life is a torment.

LAVINIA considers this.

Nods. Then decides.

LAVINIA

It'll take me a week or more to get the money together.

*HETTIE rushes to her, but
LAVINIA turns away.*

HETTIE

Thank you! Your father thanks....

LAVINIA

In the meantime, you better stay with your mother.

HETTIE

I planned to. Please understand how grateful....

LAVINIA

And you are not to see my mother.

HETTIE

No.

LAVINIA

You should go now.

HETTIE

Yes.

*HETTIE makes a move to
leave, then stops.*

The child inside, the girl, she's yours and Ezra's.

LAVINIA

Yes. Janie. She and the twins. The sum total of what Ezra and I have in common.

HETTIE

And is she very much like our Jane?

LAVINIA

No.

HETTIE

She looks like Ezra.

LAVINIA

She's quiet like Ezra.

HETTIE

And she's six?

LAVINIA nods.

Same age as Tess. Tess reminds me of you. She has two little friends, like we were. Like you and me and Jane. She orders them around.

LAVINIA smiles then fights back tears.

LAVINIA I think you better go now.

HETTIE touches her face, comforting.

HETTIE

I know how hard it is for you.

*HETTIE moves to leave.
Then returns, having
remembered one more thing.*

Lavinia...there's something else.

LAVINIA

What?

HETTIE

That necklace.

LAVINIA

Yes.

HETTIE

Your father would like it back.

LAVINIA

This locket?

HETTIE

Yes. He wants it back.

LAVINIA

What for?

HETTIE

He says it's worth good money.

LAVINIA

Good. Money.

HETTIE

He says it's his to bestow.

LAVINIA

You see that. He has no regret for what he did.

HETTIE

He wants to give it to Tess.

LAVINIA reaches up and removes the locket. She dangles it above HETTIE's hand.

LAVINIA

Make sure she knows where it came from.

HETTIE takes the locket and leaves.

(Calling after her.) See to it Tess knows!

Exhausted, LAVINIA sits on the cellar door and stares at the ground.

Then lights fade.

SCENE IV A N I

M A L T R A P

DATE: 1887. AGES: 40.

In the darkness, we hear a loud crash. It is the sound of a large wooden chest full of hand tools falling from the second story.

The sound of barking dogs erupts in the distance. Then we hear tools being tossed and moved.

Lights up on the same scene. It is an autumn at night, ten years later. The leaves are yellow. Tools are scattered around the broken wooden chest.

LAVINIA is pawing through the rubble. She is holding an animal trap in her hand.

HETTIE (off)

Is someone hurt?

LAVINIA

Not yet.

HETTIE

Do you need some help?

I don't think so.

Pause. More pawing.

Finally HETTIE enters on the run, carrying a lantern.

HETTIE What on earth is going on over here?

LAVINIA
I pushed Ezra's tool box off the porch upstairs.

HETTIE
And set every dog in this valley to barking.

LAVINIA I was looking for something.

HETTIE
That animal trap?

LAVINIA
I think so.

HETTIE picks up some of the scattered tools and tosses them in the box.

HETTIE
I knew you were gonna be upset.

LAVINIA
I ain't upset.

HETTIE
No, of course not.

LAVINIA slams shut the lid on the chest.

LAVINIA

LAVINIA

I'm as calm as a cow.

HETTIE Calm as a volcano
between eruptions.

LAVINIA

Hettie, I want you to promise me something.

HETTIE

What's that?

LAVINIA

See to it I'm not buried next to him.

HETTIE

Where do you want to be buried?

LAVINIA

Anywhere but next to Ezra.

HETTIE

But you're still married to him. Polygamy
doesn't change that.

LAVINIA

Anywhere but next to him.

HETTIE

You can't be buried next to Jane. She buried
in Gunnison.

LAVINIA

Bury me alone then. Bury me next to the
Indian woman we found dead last winter.

HETTIE

I'll do nothing of the sort.

LAVINIA

It is my desire. No, it is my command.

HETTIE

And exactly who do you think listens to your commands?

You do.

HETTIE

Our job is to search for the blessings, that's what we need to do at a time like this.

LAVINIA

It's immoral.

HETTIE

It's a burden, I know.

LAVINIA

No, it's criminal.

HETTIE

The Church is a blessing, Lavinia. I really do believe that.

LAVINIA

And the divinely inspired institution of plural marriage?

HETTIE

Is a challenge.

Slight pause.

LAVINIA

Is an old man's nocturnal emission!

HETTIE

Lavinia, if you were a child of mine, I'd wash your mouth out with soap.

LAVINIA

*HETTIE slowly, deliberately
picks up some more of the
scattered tools.*

LAVINIA

Exactly when did he have time to carry out this little interest, this little preoccupation with the flesh of teenage children?

HETTIE

Tess never let on, never told me a thing. A couple of months ago I had an inkling of something between them. But then I figured they'd get over it.

LAVINIA

That's the nice thing about polygamy. Old men don't have to "get over it." Do you think it's a passion? The great passion of his life?

HETTIE

I don't think so.

LAVINIA

Pity! But I never promised to put up with this. And I won't. From now on, he is married to Tess, not me. Quicker than a Goshute Indian. He no longer has a place at my fire.

HETTIE

You are not taking this at all well.

*LAVINIA slams shut the lid
on the chest.*

LAVINIA

He is marrying someone three and a half months younger than his own daughter!

HETTIE

Must you tell me things I already know. At full volume?

HETTIE kicks the chest.

I dug up the garden today. Quarter of an acre.

LAVINIA

And why? Do tell us why, Hettie.

HETTIE

Tess should marry someone young.

Everyone should marry someone young.

HETTIE

I know what it's like to marry someone old.

LAVINIA

What is it like?

HETTIE

Never mind.

LAVINIA

Oh please, pretty please, do tell us, do.

HETTIE

I wouldn't touch it with a pitchfork.

LAVINIA

Everyone should marry someone young. Except for Janie. Who should marry no one at all.

She makes a big swipe with the trap in her hand.

LAVINIA

HETTIE

Oh, Lavinia, don't talk like that.

LAVINIA

Don't listen, then. Janie is going to be a school teacher. Live in a house by herself. Read books in the quiet of her house on Sunday afternoons.

HETTIE

We cannot control the arc of an arrow. And we cannot control the lives of our children. Your father used to say that. About you.

LAVINIA

She's going to find him dull.

HETTIE

I told her as much. But I think she loves him.

LAVINIA

Someone should love him before he dies.

HETTIE

He's hard-working, kind.

LAVINIA Smells
like a suckling calf.

HETTIE

What's that got to do with it?

LAVINIA

Nothing. Nothing at all.

HETTIE

He's good with children.

LAVINIA

Children make him nervous.

HETTIE

She'll be well cared for.

LAVINIA

Providing she's a hardy desert plant. Can grow without tending, thrive on neglect.

LAVINIA pries the jaws of the trap apart.

HETTIE

Lavinia, your hand is bleeding. Put that damn thing down.

LAVINIA

I'm going to trap a dog.

HETTIE

Whose dog?

LAVINIA

There was a dog in the sheep last night.

HETTIE

There was no dog.

LAVINIA

Maybe it was a coyote. Could have been a wolf.

HETTIE Put that damned thing down. Please.

LAVINIA

Thought I'd give myself the hydrophobia. Die like Jane.

HETTIE

Come help me plant that garden. It'll be good for you. For me, too. Wear us both out.

LAVINIA

Trap like this can take a dog's leg right off. Wolf's leg too. Man's foot....

HETTIE

Lavinia, listen to me. You scrape yourself together. I ain't putting up with you crazy.

LAVINIA

...That's how T-Legged Tom come to walk the way he does. Stepped in a trap set for a coyote. Snap goes the dragon.

HETTIE

Lavinia, snap out of this.

LAVINIA

Snap.

HETTIE

This ain't even about you.

LAVINIA

Oh no?

HETTIE

You never cared about Ezra, I did. And it ain't your daughter that's marrying him now, it's mine.

LAVINIA

Snap goes the dragon.

HETTIE

You can't ever do nothing small. Always got to make a specimen of yourself.

LAVINIA

Snapping turtles. Snapping dragon.

HETTIE

You and your father both. Live your lives like everything is about you. Most selfish people on the face of the earth. If either one of you ever stopped looking at yourself long enough, you'd find a whole world out there.

*LAVINIA considers what
HETTIE has said.*

LAVINIA

I am not my father.

HETTIE

I said you resemble him.

LAVINIA

I resemble him in stature. Nothing else.

HETTIE

You resemble him in temperament. Act like you're the only one in the house. Yell around in every room.

LAVINIA

My father was insane.

HETTIE

He was not insane. He was never...insane.

LAVINIA

He walked head-on into a train.

HETTIE

To make a point.

LAVINIA

That it was stronger than he?

HETTIE

He believed the railroad would corrupt us. He wanted to warn us, to protect us.

LAVINIA

Yes, to protect us. My father walked into a yard full of the children saved from the massacre. They were screaming. Scared. Hungry and hot. Their parents were dead. A toddler, filthy with gore, waddled up to him and hugged his boot. My father pushed her back and walked away. To protect the shine on his boot.

HETTIE

Who told you that?

LAVINIA

I saw it.

HETTIE

No.

LAVINIA

He was crazy at the end. That's all I know of justice and all I need to know.

She twirls the trap by its chain.

HETTIE

And what of yourself?

LAVINIA

I'm sane. Sane as the town clock.

HETTIE

What would Jane think of you now?

LAVINIA

She would laugh, stretch out her arms and twirl for the sky.

LAVINIA twirls.

She would laugh and misquote the scriptures. "Behold, these are my beloved buns. See them."

LAVINIA twirls and bends over.

She would laugh, stretch out her arms, and a mourning dove would perch on her hand.

LAVINIA reaches for an imaginary dove.

HETTIE

No mourning dove ever perched on Jane's hand.

LAVINIA
Of course it did.

HETTIE
Lavinia, it did not.

LAVINIA I
remember it clearly.

HETTIE
You made it up. There's no mourning doves
around here. No mourning doves or evening
doves or noon day doves. No doves of any sort
except you put them there.

LAVINIA
There were flocks of mourning doves back then.
They lived in this tree. Jane brought wheat
in her apron to feed them. She threw it in
the air. The mourning doves would dart from
the sky and catch it mid-air.

*The sound of a trap
snapping shut. Pause.
HETTIE freezes, afraid to
look.*

HETTIE
Lavinia, are you all right?

LAVINIA
Yes.

Pause. She is not all right.

Tell me something about Jane. Something you
remember about Jane.

HETTIE
I barely remember Jane.

LAVINIA

I don't know where my mind would go if I didn't remember Jane.

HETTIE

She had that brown skirt and a scarf.

LAVINIA

Green scarf.

HETTIE

Yes, green.

LAVINIA

What did she do in her brown skirt and scarf, green scarf?

HETTIE

I don't know. I don't remember.

LAVINIA

She gave a report on mourning doves. She sat near the alphabet letters--beneath the letter m. M for mourning doves.

HETTIE

You have a remarkable memory.

LAVINIA

I keep in my head every thing she ever said. I quiz Ezra, "Did she say, 'I'm only a child at heart' or did she say, 'I'm only a child in my heart'?" He looks at me sideways. "What difference does it make?" And I guess it doesn't make very much difference, but it seems to make all the difference. All the difference. "No difference," I say, "I'm just thinking." He's never caught on, in all these

years, he's never once said, "Why do you care so much about her?" Never said, "Are you in love with Jane?" Because I am so cunning. So intricate. No one has the slightest idea.

HETTIE

I have the slightest idea.

LAVINIA

Of course you do, Hettie. That's why I love you.

Distant thunder. It starts to rain.

HETTIE

You still miss her.

LAVINIA

Like the right side of my body.

LAVINIA raises her arms out wide. Her hand is in the teeth of the trap.

Lights out.

Scene V

T R E E H O U S E

DATE: 1897. AGES: 50

This scene takes place in the same back yard ten years later. It is early morning.

LAVINIA is sitting on the steps furiously playing solitaire. She has no right hand.

HETTIE enters from the side of the house. She watches.

HETTIE

What's got you on the trot?

LAVINIA is still playing furiously.

LAVINIA I think

I'm losing my beans.

HETTIE studies her.

HETTIE

What's your symptoms?

LAVINIA

Squares of time missing.

HETTIE watches the game.

HETTIE

Seven on the Eight.

Pause. More card playing.

LAVINIA

I found myself in that damn box elder tree.

HETTIE

In?

LAVINIA

Up in.

HETTIE

Your fat bottom in that tree. Wish I'd seen it.

She laughs. LAVINIA waits for HETTIE to stop.

LAVINIA

When I woke up--came to--it was dark. I couldn't see to get down.

HETTIE

So you had to stay up there the whole night?

LAVINIA

Just till dawn.

HETTIE laughs. LAVINIA doesn't.

LAVINIA

I was that boy at the Massacre. The one who ran into the cedars and climbed a tree to escape.

Who had to be shot from the tree like a bob cat. I was that boy. In this tree.

HETTIE

Oh god.

LAVINIA

Nothing like that ever happened to you, did it!

HETTIE crosses to her.

HETTIE

At this age, we're supposed to lose a little memory. But we gain in creativity.

LAVINIA

I'd rather have memory.

The game continues.

HETTIE

Ten on the Jack. Nine upstairs. Is that why you got that handful of bullets in your lap?

LAVINIA

If it happens again, I want you to kill me.

HETTIE

Why don't you kill yourself?

LAVINIA

Well, I'll try. But if I miss, I want you to do it.

HETTIE

Lavinia, could you one time, just one time before you die, do something plain? Something kind of regular or ordinary. You always gotta have this big tah-dah about everything.

LAVINIA

I don't want to be a crazy old woman.

HETTIE

Why not? You were a crazy young woman.

LAVINIA studies her.

LAVINIA

I swear in the next life, you are going to be so much smarter.

HETTIE sits.

HETTIE

I got news for you, dear friend, in the next life, you are going to be jolly and comforting. We'll never speak about anything. We'll just have adventures.

LAVINIA

And where will we have these adventures?

HETTIE

(Thinking, then finally inventing a place.)
Neptune. Three on the Two up above. And so you're gonna carry a rifle around for the rest of your days?

LAVINIA

If I have another lapse, I'm afraid I might be too far gone to remember where it is.

HETTIE

Four on the Five. But what if I don't want to shoot you?

LAVINIA

You're the one that's got good sense, remember. That's what my mother always said, "That Hettie, she ain't bright. But she's got good sense."

HETTIE

She didn't say that I wasn't bright. You added that. Your mother was a sweet woman, she would not have said that.

LAVINIA

No, she didn't. But she did say you had good sense and implied the rest.

HETTIE

If I didn't have good sense, you wouldn't be here today. And your father would have died in Connecticut.

LAVINIA

That's what Mother said.

The card game proceeds.

HETTIE

Jack on the Queen and move it over. Now you free your Ace.

LAVINIA

Would you like to play a hand of cards with me? Or do you just want to coach?

HETTIE

You're slipping. I have to help you.

LAVINIA

Either play a hand of your own or be still about mine.

*HETTIE watches, then picks up a card and plays it.
LAVINIA glowers at her.*

HETTIE

I did not say a word. Well, maybe I'll play just one hand.

HETTIE sits.

LAVINIA

The Lord does not approve of cards.

HETTIE

I didn't invite the Lord to play.

With effort LAVINIA gathers up the cards.

I'll shuffle.

HETTIE takes the cards from LAVINIA.

It's not against the Word of Wisdom to play with cards. It's just against the Word of Wisdom to wager with cards.

LAVINIA

It's against the Word of Wisdom to play with face cards at all.

HETTIE

That's only in the strictest interpretation of that covenant.

LAVINIA's eyes roll to the sky.

HETTIE continues to shuffle. She looks around the yard.

Well, I say, if you had to spend all night with your rear end draped over a branch, this is a lovely place to do it.

LAVINIA

Deal the cards.

HETTIE still shuffling.

HETTIE

What kind of climber is that?

LAVINIA

Clematis.

HETTIE

Beautiful.

LAVINIA

It's fertilized with bones.

HETTIE

George Q. Cannon used to say the trees would grow taller and bear more fruit if you buried a few bones at their roots.

LAVINIA Yes. But he wanted to use the thigh bones of Catholics.

HETTIE

The longer I live, the more I like flowers.

LAVINIA

All right, Hettie.

HETTIE

Every year my garden has fewer vegetables and more flowers.

LAVINIA

The cards, Hettie.

HETTIE

Just planted three bushes of peonies. They're all for your father's grave. He loved peonies.

LAVINIA Deal-the-

cards.

*They play the game of War.
It goes on for several
seconds.*

Sure you don't want to go down to the freight stop to meet Ezra?

LAVINIA

I'm sure.

HETTIE

I told Tess that would be your answer. But she insisted I invite you to go with us.

LAVINIA

That's like Tess. Very polite.

HETTIE

Yes, she's polite.

LAVINIA

The Commander raised obedient daughters.

HETTIE

The Commander did not raise Tess.

LAVINIA

He didn't raise me, either.

Pause. The game continues.

HETTIE

Don't you want to go for just a few minutes?
Do you good.

LAVINIA

I don't want anyone's pity.

HETTIE

It's not pity. It's simple human kindness.

LAVINIA

I will not be pitied!

HETTIE

You are not pitied. That's not a danger for you.

LAVINIA

You go in my place. Make a report.

HETTIE

I'm afraid he'll be embarrassed if you're not there.

LAVINIA

Embarrassed? An emotion unknown to men of the Mormon faith.

They play for several seconds.

HETTIE

The baby's going to wear that naming dress you sewed for him.

LAVINIA

In hopes that Ezra will be gratified to see the newest child he's spawned?

HETTIE

I tried to prepare Tess.

LAVINIA

At his age he has no interest in an infant.

HETTIE

Serves him right. Having to live with one now.

They both chuckle. Pause.

LAVINIA

You can't imagine how much I do not want to see that man.

HETTIE

Aren't you curious?

LAVINIA

Not in the least.

HETTIE

Oh, I am. I'm curious.

LAVINIA

I know what he looks like. Besides, you always found him more interesting than I did.

HETTIE

What was it we found so compelling about him?

LAVINIA

I never found him so compelling.

HETTIE

Oh, I did. I found him thoroughly compelling. Jane too. She found him thoroughly compelling. One year's a long time at his age. Prison is hard on the older ones.

LAVINIA

It's all Tess's problem, not mine.

HETTIE

I gave her some money in case Ezra needed a suit of clothes.

LAVINIA

I already sent him money for a suit of clothes.

HETTIE

Cecil Simpson was sent home in his stripped prison garb.

LAVINIA

That's because Cecil Simpson wasn't a good member of the Church.

HETTIE

Ezra's an old man. He deserves respect.

LAVINIA

If you go to prison for polygamy, the Church will buy you a suit of clothes when you get out. That's the deal the Church offers you in exchange for turning you in. Ain't it kindly?

HETTIE

He's got a right to his dignity.

LAVINIA

He's got a right to his dignity. And a six-month old infant. And a farm in total disrepair. And that semi-officious, all-knowing daughter of yours for a wife.

HETTIE

Tess and you are just alike. That's the reason he married her.

LAVINIA

I wrote him a letter in prison. Told him I did not want him staying here when he got out. Not in this house. I told him he could have the little house at the other end of the lot. It's solid. The rooms are small. The ceilings are low. And it needs a new stove. But it'll be fine for him. And Tess. And the children.

HETTIE

Your generosity of spirit o'erwhelms us all.

LAVINIA

There's nothing wrong with the little house.

HETTIE

It's a sentence for an unknown crime.

LAVINIA

The crime is known. Cohabitation with plural wives. A crime in the state of Utah. Punishable by up to a year in the state penitentiary.

They nudge each other and grin.

HETTIE

Polygamy is dead.

LAVINIA

For time and all eternity.

HETTIE

Your Janie won't even have to worry about it.

LAVINIA

Janie's a mid-wife. Just the profession to give her the right perspective on marriage.

HETTIE

You say the awfulest things.

LAVINIA She's happy with her life.

HETTIE

But what's she doing with it?

LAVINIA

Living it the best she can.

HETTIE

Well, yes, I suppose she is, poor thing.

LAVINIA

Good Lord, Hettie, neither one of us had the right answer.

HETTIE

I don't know about you, but I'm proud of my life.

LAVINIA

You did all right with what you were given. But god knows, you wouldn't wish it on anyone else.

HETTIE

No, I suppose not. My mother used to say her life was mirrored in the migration west. It's beautiful and green in the east when you're young. There's a large, terrible flat part in the middle. That's when the children are small. Then the hellish mountains before the children are grown. And after all of it, you end your days in the desert.

LAVINIA

Hey! Let's lock up the house and go somewhere.

HETTIE

Where shall we go?

LAVINIA

To Neptune.

LAVINIA pulls the door shut and turns the key and puts it in her pocket.

HETTIE

Let's go up in the tree.

LAVINIA

You're not going to the freight stop, then?

HETTIE

Not if you're gonna be in the tree. Besides, I'm not as interested in Ezra as I once was.

LAVINIA

To the tree!

They move to the foot of the tree.

HETTIE

There will be no food or rocks up there.

LAVINIA

None.

HETTIE

Well then, let's go.

LAVINIA starts up the tree, HETTIE following. Midway up, HETTIE stops.

Wait a minute. You could fall out of this tree, kill yourself. I want to know something before you do. What happened to that two-headed calf?

LAVINIA

I told you.

HETTIE

God did not take it back like the Golden Plates.

LAVINIA

Well, no.

HETTIE

It was not stolen by the Indians because they believed it was the head of god.

LAVINIA

No, I don't think so.

HETTIE

And it was not given to Brigham Young and his last wife for a wedding present.

LAVINIA

I didn't tell you that one. You invented it, and I agreed with you.

HETTIE

The truth this time.

LAVINIA

I made it up.

HETTIE

You invented the two-headed calf?

LAVINIA Ummm-

hummm.

HETTIE

God, you're cruel.

LAVINIA

I had no choice, I knew exactly what was in the cellar. Bed clothes, shoes, leather traces for a team. No one could know. Grubbing hoes and pitch forks. A child's coat with bloody

mittens. "Speak of this to no one." I mentioned them to no one.

HETTIE That doesn't explain the two-headed calf.

LAVINIA
Since there was not a two-headed calf in the cellar, I could speak of that.

HETTIE
Oh.

HETTIE nods. They continue up the tree and stand together on a branch.

It's right beautiful up here.

LAVINIA
That it is.

HETTIE
You're not going to shoot anyone?

LAVINIA
No.

HETTIE
And you're not going to pelt them with anything.

LAVINIA
No.

HETTIE
How long till they get here?

LAVINIA
I don't know, do I? It doesn't matter, does it?

The both sit on the branch.

HETTIE

Things look so small from up here. Look at the washtub. It looks like a cup.

LAVINIA

Shhh. The whole point of being in the tree is silence.

HETTIE

Oh. You can see all the way to Mountain Meadow.

She turns and looks at LAVINIA.

This is where you were.

LAVINIA indicates a distant point.

LAVINIA

The shooting went on for several minutes. Many people died right away. An equal number did not die--right away. Some of them had to be shot twice, even three times. They watched themselves being killed. (*Long pause.*) Jane, too. She watched herself being killed.

HETTIE Shhh.

Give me your hand.

LAVINIA's "bad" hand is closest. She offers her "good" hand. HETTIE takes the "bad" hand.

They sit there looking out at the view.

Sound of a distant train.

Lights fade slowly.

END OF PLAY

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