

Set

Apart

Adapted to the stage by
Thomas F. Rogers
from the novel by
Benson Parkinson



Sale Lake City

Novel © 1995 by Benson Parkinson (Aspen Books)

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SET APART

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SET APART

*Adapted for the stage by Thomas F. Rogers
from the novel "THE MTC: SET APART"
by Benson Parkinson)*

Cast of Characters:

ELDERS:

Harvey WILBERG -- a good natured bumbler from Iowa

Malan RIGNELL -- a New Mexico rancher's son

Cordell "Corry" ANTHON -- the modern day Corianton, from Salt Lake City

Andrew FERGASON -- from Arnold, Idaho

Phil JEPPSEN — an Australian convert

INSTRUCTORS:

Frere JAMES

Frere MUELLER

SISTERS:

Sister CLAWSON -- a sister missionary at the MTC

Sister WEICE -- a sister missionary at the MTC

LLOYD, Elder Wilberg's employer

LaDAWN, Elder Jeppsen's girlfriend

STEVE, a student at BYU

Mr. JEPPSEN -- Phil's father

Mrs. JEPPSEN -- Phil's mother

Brother RIGNELL -- Malan's father

Sister RIGNELL -- Malan's mother

This play lends itself to fluid staging in, say, an arena or theater-in-the-round. The two principal playing areas are an MTC classroom and the Elders' dorm room. The play's several flashbacks might well occur stage center, with lights dimmed elsewhere and all actors still on stage. Three additional scenes, which occur in the present--Preparation Day at the Cougareat, Elder Anthon's visit to LaDawn at Brother Paskins' s home in Provo, and the Elders' Fourth of July excursion to the grounds of the Provo Temple--might be presented on levels or in locations elsewhere on stage, again with lights dimmed elsewhere.

SET APART adapted by Thomas F. Rogers from the novel *THE MTC: SET APART* by Benson Parkinson. 2 Interiors + 3 smaller locations. 11M 5W (doubling possible) (*For production by LDS Church, Community, and College/University groups*). Corry Anthon, athletic and playful, has come on a mission with just enough of a testimony to make him ill at ease. Phil Jeppsen, an Australian convert and former vagabond, welcomes the MTC's discipline—it's his companions he has problems with. Good-natured, bumbling Harvey Wilberg, who has put off a mission, torments the others with his childish jokes but also has a childlike heart. Malan Rignell, a rancher's son, is quietly witty and clumsy in others' company, but no one guesses his strong self-doubt or his talent as a peacemaker. Adapted from a groundbreaking novel—thoughtful, realistic, spiritual—like the novel, this play showcases the experiences shared, but rarely documented, by tens of thousands of LDS youth. Rogers captures Parkinson's vision of life in the MTC, a place "set apart" from the world, by exploring the backgrounds and conversions of characters who are all the more compelling for being human, which is to say less than perfect, more like the rest of us. The play is intelligent, rich, true and broad-ranging in its depiction of the

spiritual struggle of missionary-aged young people. **ORDER #2057**

Thomas F. Rogers -- A former director of the BYU Honors Program, Thomas F. Rogers is professor emeritus of Russian language and literature at Brigham Young University and the author of more than a score of plays, many on Mormon subjects. Four of these have been published in *God's Fools* (Signature Books, 1983), which also received the Association of Mormon Letters Drama Prize that same year: **HUEBENER** (the first literary treatment of its subject), **FIRE IN THE BONES** (again, the first literary treatment of its subject, the 1857 Mountain Meadows Massacre), **GOD'S FOOLS** (or **JOURNEY TO GOLGOTHA**) and **REUNION**. Other titles include: **The SECOND PRIEST**, **The ANOINTED** (an Old Testament narrative with music by C. Michael Perry) and **The SEAGULL** (translated and adapted from the Chekov play). In 1992, **GENTLE BARBARIAN**, **FRERE LAWRENCE** and **CHARADES** were published in a second anthology entitled *'Huebener' and Other Plays by Thomas F. Rogers*. Rogers has also penned stage adaptations of Dostoevsky's novels **CRIME AND PUNISHMENT** and **THE IDIOT**, an opera libretto based on Hawthorne's **THE SCARLET LETTER**, a translation of Georg Buechner's **WOYCZEK** (produced at BYU), and scripts based on novels by local authors, Phillip Flammer and Ben Parkinson. The first of these received a BYU production, directed by Tad Danielewski, in which Rogers played the role of Marmeladov.

In 1995–1996 **GOD'S FOOLS** was produced (in translation) by a professional repertory theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia, where Rogers was then serving as an LDS mission president. He also played the role of the American double spy Cooper in that production. During that mission he directed LDS Church members in a stage adaptation of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and a Russian language version of **HUEBENER**. The play has also since been produced in Donetsk, Ukraine (also in Russian), in Finland in the Finnish language, while a German translation still awaits forthcoming performances in that language.

At BYU and in Provo, Utah, Rogers directed the premiere productions of Robert Vincek's *For the Lions to Win*, Thom Duncan's *Matters of the Heart* and Eric Samuselsen's *Accommodations* and in Bountiful, Utah, a production of **HUEBENER**. Besides numerous productions in both Russian and German for the BYU Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages, he has directed Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* (in German) for Deutsches Teater Salt Lake City, where he also performed as an actor, and Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*, Pirandello's *It Is So If You Think So* and Pinter's *The Caretaker* for the BYU Department of Theatre.

Cited by Eugene England as "undoubtedly the father of modern Mormon drama," Rogers received the Mormon Arts Festival's Distinguished Achievement Award in 1998 and in 2002 a Lifetime Service Award from the Association of Mormon Letters. His published stories have appeared in volume 2, no. 2 of *Sunstone*, the Summer 1991 and Winter 2001 issues of *Dialogue* (receiving an annual *Dialogue* fiction award) and in the collections *Christmas for the World* (SLC: Aspen Books, 1991) and *The Gifts of Christmas* (SLC: Deseret Book Co., 1999). Rogers has served as editor of *Encyclia*, journal of the Utah Academy, and authored two critical monographs: *'Superfluous Men' and the Post-Stalin'thaw'* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972) and *Myth and Symbol in Soviet Fiction* (San Francisco & New York: The Edwin Mellen Research University Press, 1992).

Rogers studied at the Yale School of Drama and holds degrees from the University of Utah, Yale, and Georgetown. He has also studied theater in Poland and Russian at Moscow State University and taught at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and the University of Utah. He has intensively studied some ten languages and had extensive residences in Russia, Eastern Europe, Germany, Austria, India, China and the Middle East. He and his wife Merriam are the parents of seven children, thirty-eight grandchildren and, so far, three great grandchildren. They reside in Bountiful, Utah.

ACT I

An MTC classroom. The companionships in the Limoges District--Elders WILBERG and RIGNELL; a threesome with Elders FERGASON, ANTHON and JEPPSEN; and Sisters CLAWSON and WEICE--are seated together. Elder JAMES stands between them and a chalk board.

JAMES: Class, when I say '*comment dit-on,*' that means, 'How do you say.' *Frere Jeppsen! En français,* in French, *comment dit-on chapel?*

JEPPSEN: *En français on dit 'chapelle.'*

JAMES: *Tres bien. Frere, uh, Rignell, comment dit-on professor?*

RIGNELL: Uh, uh, *pro-- pro--?*

JAMES: Enthusiasm, class! *'faut un peu d'enthousiasme, hein!*

JEPPSEN: *(with an Australian accent)* Ah, Elder James? What if we already know French?

JAMES: That's right, you studied it at a university.

(Slapping his forehead with his chalk hand.)

Que je suis bite!

JEPPSEN: Yes, and I spent several months traveling in France.

JAMES: I wonder why they didn't put you with ... Hold on just an instant! While Elder Jeppsen and I step out, the rest of you work on today's new vocabulary, OK?

WILBERG: Oh-oh. You're in trouble now!

FERGASON: Nice knowing ya, Elder.

ANTHON: Yeah, good luck.

JAMES: First, here's something for you all to consider.

(He puts the finishing touches on his blackboard drawing of a great clock with missionaries on the rim waking, brushing their teeth, exercising, and studying.)

WILBERG: Oh, oh. More drills.

JAMES: *Classe! Ensemble! Ils viennent de se lever!*

MISSIONARIES: *(in chorus) Ils viennent de se lever!*

JAMES: *Tres bien!* The simplest way to express something that has occurred in the past is to put its infinitive behind '*venir*', 'to come'. The elders come from waking up. The sisters come from eating lunch. The three students come from jumping up and down in the street. The missionaries come from learning *passé proche*.

WILBERG: Whu-ut?

JAMES: It's 'near past' in English. You use it for things that just happened. All you have to do is stick the infinitive onto '*venir*'.

WILBERG: What's a 'infinitive'?

(The whole class moans.)

JAMES: Sister Clawson, please use the verb '*lire*' in a sentence.

CLAWSON: *Je viens de lire le journal.*

JAMES: Excellent!

WILBERG: Shouldn't it be, 'I come to read the paper,' not 'I come from reading the paper?'

JAMES: *Frere,* trust me on this one.

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WILBERG: Well, what's that supposed to mean, 'I come from reading the paper.' It doesn't make any sense!

JAMES: Just ... trust me Now, you try one. How about the verb 'marcher', beginning with the pronoun 'tu'?

WILBERG: *Tu viens de ... Il-elle-on vient de marcher.*

JAMES: *That's it!*

WILBERG: *Nous vient de ... nous vient, no, nous venez ... aaaagh.*

JAMES: Good try. Now, while I step out for a minute, master that vocabulary. I know eight weeks seems like a long time, but it will be gone before you know it. And we'll make it go fast for you. I'll be quizzing you when I return. Come on, Elder Jeppsen.

(JAMES and JEPPSEN exit.)

WEICE: Elder Jeppsen's already been to France? Some people have all the luck.

WILBERG: Yeah, there ain't no justice! He also told me that before his mission ... his hair ... was real long.

FERGASON: *C'est un hippie!*

WILBERG: He's been all over the world, man! The guy's a little genius. He knows three different languages.

ANTHON: That's because he's from Australia. I was readin' how of all the big countries, you know, like the real modern ones, how our schools are supposed to be like last.

WILBERG: Frere Rignell, *comment dit-on...ça?*

RIGNELL: How do you say what?

WILBERG: *Ça! Le RAIN.* I mean the 'l'eau'! How do you say much water?

RIGNELL: Much water? Many waters? I think the word is 'Irreantum'.

WILBERG: Huh ... *Comment?* ... Aaaagh. I'm trying to speak French, not reformed Egyptian, smart aleck!

RIGNELL: It is said, *'Il pleut Il pleut trop* darn much.'

WILBERG: I ... uh, uh, thinking that...it is ... uh, um, uh, it's s'posed to be hot in Provo in summer, *n'est-ce pas?*

RIGNELL: *Je ne le crois pas.*

WILBERG: Dang blasted rain. We ain't seen the sun since we got to the MTC. Frank Harwood was here in June and July, and he claimed it never rained once. Brown, burnt up country, and you can't see anything for the mountains, that's how Frank described it--but we can't even see the mountains. I'm sick of rain, especially this cold rain. And it's already mid-May. You're from New Mexico, *n'est-ce pas?*

RIGNELL: *Oui.*

WILBERG: Is it ... uh, good there?

RIGNELL: *Oui.*

WILBERG: Uh, I come from Iowa. I think I told you that already ...

(RIGNELL nods.)

(then WILBERG to himself)

To heck with you, buddy Hey, Elder, what's six feet high and ...

(RIGNELL sighs.)

(WILBERG turning away and addresses an imaginary figure at his side)

Elder Brown! You like jokes, don't ya? Well, what's six feet high and green and walks through walls?

(RIGNELL snickers silently without looking up from his grammar book.)

Casper the Friendly Cucumber!

FERGASON: *(passing out letters, to WILBERG and RIGNELL)* Sorry you two had ... no luck today.

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(The lights dim on the classroom. JAMES and JEPPSEN enter an interview room and sit, a small table between them. Like their son, they speak with Australian accents.)

JAMES: Where were you then--in France, I mean?

JEPPSEN: *Dijon, St. Etienne, Valence ...*

JAMES: Oh, yeah? I've been there too. Your French isn't half bad. There's no reason you couldn't start right in. You've got your discussion book, I see. We'll put you in this room for now while the others are doing grammar.

JEPPSEN: One question. Do I really need to learn this word-for-word?

JAMES: Absolutely.

(They stand. JAMES leaves the room. An additional spot illumines an adjacent area of the stage, where Jeppsen's parents sit in elegant overstuffed chairs, facing him.)

MRS. JEPPSEN: It's nice to have you back from your travels, Phil, after more than a year away. But you've returned to us, a Mormon. And now you're going right off again, you say, to convert still more?

JEPPSEN: *(seating himself again at the table in the MTC, but still facing his parents)* That's right.

MR. JEPPSEN: The Latter-day Saints! One of the modern world's few revealed religions.

MRS. JEPPSEN: You must tell us all about it.

JEPPSEN: I seem to recall an American colleague of yours presenting you with a Book of Mormon once.

MR. JEPPSEN: Yes. Isn't it awfully dry?

JEPPSEN: Dry? I find it anything but dry. You ought to give it another try.

MR. JEPPSEN: *(raising a goblet of wine)* You mistake my meaning. I support you. I do.

MRS. JEPPSEN: *(walking toward JEPPSEN and serving him a dish of cake from a silver tray)* France! I so loved the countryside when we were there. Will you be living singly or in groups?

(She returns to her chair.)

JEPPSEN: We're sent out two-by-two, like the Apostles. We provide our own clothing, rent, and living expenses, but we stay in apartments maintained by the mission.

MR. JEPPSEN: *(to MRS. JEPPSEN)* Don't forget your acupuncture appointment, luv. It's today, isn't it?

MRS. JEPPSEN: Yes, but we've still got time for a good visit.

(to JEPPSEN)

You pro'bly think I'm superstitious, Phil, but I'd swear it's helping. I'm down to a pack a day.

JEPPSEN: That's good to hear.

MRS. JEPPSEN: By the way, there's a check for you on the breakfront. Your father and I have talked it over, and we want to help.

JEPPSEN: That's not necessary.

MRS. JEPPSEN: We think what you're doing is important and we want to be a part of it.

MR. JEPPSEN: Old Phil. We called you that when you were little. I've never seen a child play with such determination. You're a thinker. Looking in all the gaps.

(to himself)

God is in the gaps. Meanwhile, you've looked into quite a few--already done quite a few things, I mean. Haven't you?

JEPPSEN: I suppose.

MRS. JEPPSEN: Let's see if we can recount them all. Dishwasher, grocery packer and shelf stocker, janitor,

candy seller at a movie theater

MR. JEPPSEN: Hod carrier, wool packer, summons server, inventory clerk.

JEPPSEN: I've rarely kept a job for any length of time though. I'd often work just long enough for gas money, then move on. If you want the complete list, I've also picked up trash in parks with a stick, sold meat pies at soccer matches, laid sprinkler pipe, hauled stones, bagged onions, chopped cane, shoveled gravel, dug post holes and cleaned stalls. And for a time I was an orderly in a rest home, changing diapers on retarded adults. In my university days I bred hornworms as a lab assistant, delivered audio-visual equipment and films, and tutored French and German.

MR. JEPPSEN: You also walked away from a study abroad program in Paris to live in hostels and go to museums and ride trains.

JEPPSEN: I sometimes slept in parks and traveled with greasy-haired, stubble-faced men who begged and ate from garbage cans. I'd planned to return home when my visa expired, but it was autumn, and transients and students from all over seemed to be homing in on the wine country around Bordeaux, so I stayed on for the *vendanges*. In those days I had no desire to eat and might walk five miles without noticing the passage of time. That didn't keep me from feeling cold or wet or bored or depressed or groggy much of the time. I drank too much and then hated myself after. Whiskey went down like molten nails, then pounded like a hammer in your head. Next morning you thought of nothing but a headache, and if you kept it up, mornings and evenings sloshed over their brims and into each other. I remember one morning straining at myself in the mirror, bloated, rumpled, venous, puffy-eyed, hair uncombed and clothes unchanged in half a week, maybe a week, I'm not sure. I was sad enough to saturate my pillow, sad enough to fill seas, while the barkeep floating in my vision kept saying, "That's all right." Fortunately, I'd just met the elders--missionaries like I'm going to be--and they taught me to pray ... I mean really pray. The words I prayed one particular morning after I'd already hit bottom were somehow given me. They became the summation of a new fullness in my soul, even as I knelt there. There was no premeditation. I had no idea I'd be saying them, or that they and those marvelous uplifting feelings would come to me. The words left my lips as effortlessly as a month later those of the baptismal prayer left that elder's. Warmth and a rich, pure joy flowed in and around me the moment I left off praying. I thought of Alma--he's one of the characters in that boring scripture, Dad--who spoke in a single breath of the exquisiteness of both his joy and his pain.

MR. JEPPSEN: I see.

MRS. JEPPSEN: Phil, luv, we're happy for you.

(The lights dim on the JEPPSENS and rise again on the classroom.)

WILBERG: Another thirty words. Tomorrow that'll be sixty, then ninety, a hundred and twenty. I'll never catch up.

(to RIGNELL)

Hey, Elder, what's six feet high, green, and walks through walls?

FERGASON: Oh, no-oooo! The Mad Joker strikes again.

WILBERG: Casper the Friendly Cucumber!

(All snicker.)

ANTHON: I've got one

WEICE: Well?

ANTHON: Naaaa, you wouldn't wanna hear it.

WILBERG: Come on, don't be chicken. You already got our attention.

ANTHON: All right. If you don't like it, it's your fault--here goes. What do you call Relief Society Homemaking Nights in BYU marrieds' wards ... ?

FERGASON: We give up. What *do* you call Relief Society Homemaking Nights in BYU marrieds' wards??

ANTHON: Daddy Diaper Dates.

(an embarrassed pause)

ANTHON: I said I had a joke. I didn't pretend it was funny.

WILBERG: I got one. What's the name of Nephi's horse?

WEICE: Well, go on. Tell us!

WILBERG: Beuntoyou Whoa, Beuntoyou!

(Another collective moan.)

WILBERG: What's seven feet high, green, and sits in a corner?

CLAWSON: *(eyeing WILBERG, with a smirk)* Casper the Friendly Dunce?

WILBERG: No, the Incredible Sulk! What goes ABCDEF

(Frere JAMES returns.)

.... JKLMNO

JAMES: *Frere.*

WILBERG: UVWXYZ slurp?

JAMES: *Frere, frere, rappelez-vous!*

WILBERG: *Rappelez-vous* what!

JAMES: *Il faut parler français.* You know the rules--no English.

WILBERG: *(mumbling)* The rules, the rules.

JAMES: By the way, Elder Anthon, did you really use the Lord's name in gym today?

ANTHON: Yeah. I didn't mean to though.

FERGASON: He was bench pressing. Trying for over one-fifty. The trainer said it was too much, but Elder Anthon said, "Nah, I want it all." He's awesome. It was a real strain, so when they didn't move--

WILBERG: Everyone in the weight room was real quiet, seeing if he could do it. But when he let out that word, you should've seen them scatter.

JAMES: I can imagine.

ANTHON: I'm sorry. It was real embarrassing. Right here at the MTC. Sheesh!

WILBERG: *Hey, frere.* I been thinking that the system here isn't taking into account our individual strengths and weaknesses.

JAMES: Oh?

WILBERG: Yeah. They're driving us into the ground, man. No wonder Anthon blew up in gym! It's even startin' to get to me.

(to RIGNELL)

How about you, silent partner? What's your opinion? Can't you ever say anything?

(RIGNELL smiles bashfully and hunches his shoulders.)

JAMES: Elder Wilberg, didn't you know before you came here it would be hard--some days very hard?

WILBERG: I didn't think about that part.

JAMES: But you were anxious to come here, weren't you?

WILBERG: Boy, was I ever ... !

(The lights dim on the classroom. WILBERG moves away from the others and beneath a spot. He wields a soldering iron and is joined by an older man, his employer, Lloyd. WILBERG.)
(to himself)

It's gotta come soon, it's gotta come. Nineteen days. NINETEEN DAYS and they said it'd be two weeks. Gotta be lost in the mail. Postman musta dropped it in the mud. Prob'ly send me to Portland. I haven't even got a umbrella. No, they prob'ly turned me down. "Elder Harvey Wilberg, you are hereby called to stay home and not go on a mission. We're sorry, but we just don't have a spot for you right now. Don't call us. We'll call you." Teach the gospel, huh? I haven't even got the guts to teach a bunch of fourteen-year-old kids. Turned the bishop down on that one.

LLOYD: Harvey, can't you solder one flimsy little wire?

WILBERG: I'm sorry, Lloyd. I just been kinda nervous lately.

(to himself)

Prob'ly send me to North Dakota. Have to go tracting on snowshoes. Ah, what's so great about goin on a mission? I'm too old. Already twenty-two. Half the missionaries shouldn't be out there anyway. Or they'll send me to Georgia. Won't understand a thing, I know it. Least it won't be cold.

LLOYD: I'm not paying you to daydream.

WILBERG: Just about got'er.

(singing to himself)

"We'll gather the wheat from the midst of the tares. We'll sneak up on Satan and kick him downstairs." No, they'll prob'ly send me to Salt Lake, so they can keep an eye on me.

LLOYD: Pull your pants up, Harv. That job didn't give you any trouble yesterday?

WILBERG: Nope. Fixed just fine. Hey, Boss, I got a joke for you. What's the difference between a foolish Dutchman and an empty tube ...? One's a silly Hollander and the other's a hollow cylinder!

LLOYD: Harvey, when are you going to settle down and do some work?

WILBERG: Now that's not fair, Lloyd. I've been working good for you. Just 'cause I mess up a few times.

LLOYD: A few times? You're costing me more than you're worth.

WILBERG: I got a lot on my mind. This is a special time in my life.

LLOYD: Why on earth does the world need with more Mormons? Don't you people make enough little ones already? Yeah, I know. You're practicing up for when you get to heaven Jack Henderson brought in that Motorola over there. It'll probably need a new picture tube. Why don't you go to work on it.

WILBERG: *(lifting large TV set)* It's not like you said.

LLOYD: Watch that, Harv. Don't be dropping the Motorola.

WILBERG: You never heard me criticizing your beliefs. But don't misunderstand me, I'm not angry.

LLOYD: Harvey! Hear that hiss? You just tapped the picture tube with your screw driver.

WILBERG: Cause the most important thing in the world I could tell you right now is that I got a testimony, which I just can't deny.

LLOYD: Harvey, put that television down. Can't you hear that hiss?

WILBERG: Well, you said it needed a new tube.

LLOYD: You break everything you touch. Why don't you just go on home? You're no good to me like this. And take tomorrow off! Take next week--take the whole month off!

WILBERG: Boss, you can't do that.

LLOYD: I'll give you the hours! Just leave ... ! By the way, this came for you this morning.

WILBERG: What?

LLOYD: From your Church.

WILBERG: My call? I got my call! I got my call!

LLOYD: Well, where to?

WILBERG: Just a minute. I can't get it open ...

LLOYD: Not even an envelope!

WILBERG: I'm going ... to France!

LLOYD: You ... going to France??

WILBERG: I gotta leave here in four weeks! The France Toulouse Mission Oh-oh.

LLOYD: Well, what now?

WILBERG: They don't speak English there, do they ... ?

JAMES'S VOICE: *(from the classroom)* That reality hit you, did it?

WILBERG: *(facing the classroom)* Yeah, man. That first day here was something else!

(Lights now rise on ANTHON and FERGASON, who are in the elders' dorm room, unpacking suitcases.)

FERGASON: So, where you from, Elder?

ANTHON: Salt Lake. 'City of the Saints'. Also put in a year at the U of U.

FERGASON: I'm from Arnold. It's up by Boise.

ANTHON: Arnold. He's the pig in Green Acres, right ...? Hey, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to knock the place you grew up at or nothin'. Besides, since you're our DL, I gotta be extra nice to you. But don't forget, I'm senior--at least for the first four weeks.

FERGASON: That's all right, Elder. I roll with the punches.

ANTHON: What did you do in Arnold--before you came here?

FERGASON: Worked for Arnold Hardware.

ANTHON: Arnold Hardware. Yeah, that follows ... Man, do we have to live in this hole?

FERGASON: Looks fine to me.

(giving ANTHON a wink)

But I wouldn't know since I was born in a barn.

ANTHON: OK, touché. Tell me about your family.

FERGASON: *(taking pictures from his wallet)* Well, here they all are.

ANTHON: Say, that's some clan. All corn fed too, I'll bet. Just kidding.

(showing a picture from his wallet)

Whadda yuh think of this babe?

FERGASON: Wow, what's her name?

ANTHON: LaDawn. She's the reason I'm here. And, boy, did I get a sendoff after that--from the family, I mean. A big surprise celebration. They even had red, white and blue bunting at the head banquet table--French colors, you know.

FERGASON: Banquet table?

ANTHON: Yeah. There was sparkling grape juice in wine goblets and even little trays of escargot with garlic

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sauce. The whole ward was there. Even some city fathers--my dad's big shot friends. They even got a band together and a male quartet that sang "*Parlez-Vous Français*" and "Over There."

FERGASON: Wow!

ANTHON: Everyone was poking bills at me--and I mean big ones. Fifties at least.

FERGASON: No kidding!

ANTHON: Yeah, and I knew it would be like that--first a fit of enthusiasm pushing you to make commitments you didn't want to make and then dying down, leavin' you stuck with them. And it was all LaDawn's doing. The culmination of a hundred hot nights, sweating and panting across the Book of Mormon she'd place on the couch between us. And then, wouldn't you know, she didn't even show up at my party.

FERGASON: Maybe she wasn't invited.

ANTHON: There's no question she knew. My mom would have made certain of that. ... I've got great folks. Just like you do--judging by those pictures. Dad bought my brother Sammy an oversized Yamaha dirt bike when he made Eagle Scout at age fourteen. I never got past Star, but I pestered Dad and complained and moped until he bought me one too. Then I knew I owed him some. He'd stated in family night that nothing would mean more to him than that his boys not drink or smoke and that they stay clean, and that if they did, he would buy each one the car of his choice at age eighteen. Me--I sluffed seminary and spent sacrament meetings in the foyer and sometimes drank beer at parties. Barely a year after Dad's challenge, on the morning of my sixteenth birthday, I found the keys to the Rolls-Royce-hooded Volkswagen I'd drooled over hanging from the nozzle of his hot lather machine. I should have felt kinda guilty.

FERGASON: What did you do in high school, extracurricular, I mean?

ANTHON: Took debate and placed at the regional level in extemporaneous speaking. I like extemp a lot--where you have to pull something off after going in unprepared. I lettered in basketball and baseball my sophomore year and was second-string quarterback when Marty Fackrell tore a ligament in his shoulder. Scored twice on quarterback options. That kind of turned LaDawn's head, I think. She's a cream puff, a donut with an inch of glazing.

FERGASON: A Sunbeam teacher who always winks at you and calls you her special friend, you mean.

ANTHON: Exactly. My friends warned me LaDawn was a walking appointment book and that her mother had to wait in line to see her. And sometimes she'd preach at me and go on about how Zion's youth need to keep themselves unspotted from the world. But when she'd shake her hair and kick real high and sweep out swaths with her pom-poms, she'd sway whole games. When they cast her as Annie Oakley, I tried out for Frank Butler, so, when the posters came out, there she was in my arms, the two of us lost in each other's gaze. And, looking up at ourselves, in those posters, we believed. Then we were elected royalty at the Senior Prom.

FERGASON: Naturally. A charmed life.

ANTHON: *(moving away from FERGASON to an adjacent area of the stage, where LaDawn appears and embraces him)* And that's when she put the bite on me to go on a mission.

LADAWN: Corry, you big baby, it's not like that. It's just that the prophet says every young man should go on a mission.

ANTHON: So I'm a disappointment to the prophet, too. What's it to ya?

LADAWN: I care about you, Corry. Don't I have a right to care about you?

ANTHON: Don't bother.

LADAWN: You don't understand. These are special times. It's like Brother Paskins used to say. If you compare the history of the world to a race, the Lord saves his best and swiftest and strongest runners for last. This is such a tumultuous, wonderful time, and the Lord has given you so much and expects so much in return. You just can't let him down, Corry.

ANTHON: Doesn't it say somewhere that the Millennium won't come until the gospel's been preached to every nation, tongue, and kindred, or something like that?

LADAWN: Yes. See?

ANTHON: So what's the big rush. I can wait.

(moving away)

I'm going to shoot Klingons at the arcade.

LADAWN: Look at it like this then. You're already so outstanding--as an athlete. I just know you will excel and become a great leader on your mission too. I have a number of dreams and goals for my own life, Corry, and the most important will be to support my husband in his priesthood and raise children worthy to meet the Savior, but we'll both have to think along those same lines. He'll need to be righteous like my father. I have such a deep testimony, Corry. I feel it so strongly. I know you must too.

ANTHON: Testimony?

LADAWN: If you know it in your heart, you won't be happy unless you go on a mission. And I know you know it.

ANTHON: Testimony! What do I want with a testimony? What's that got to do with anything?

LADAWN: I wouldn't have a man without one

(She turns and leaves.)

ANTHON: *(calling after her)* Why don't cha try Gary Hutchins! How 'bout Harman Wright! He's probably got one! You 're really some practiced bait, you know that?

(to himself, in tears)

That's what's wrong with this entire system. For as long as I can remember, somebody's wanted me to stop running around in the foyer, stop playing basketball during roadshow practice, stop leaning back in my chair, stop wanting whatever it is I happen to want. Yeah, I know, I know--all those rules are supposed to have blessings attached. Like you, LaDawn, luring me toward righteousness. I suppose it's righteousness. You resist me in the very act of leading me on. Is that what God intended? Naw, this is crazy! God wouldn't be so uncool. If he didn't want people monkeying around, he wouldn'ta made it so .. irresistible. Where d'you come off talking about testimony? Testimonies are hereditary, aren't they? Like baldness, except that they show up in women, not men. Jill Williams bore her testimony from the time she was in sixth grade, and she got pregnant at seventeen. Boys with testimonies are as soggy and limp as your father, LaDawn The whole thing wouldn't be so bad if it didn't come with a price tag. What would I want with a testimony, LaDawn? Then I'd just have to obey it.

(He moves to another part of the stage, picking up a bat and taking the stance of a hitter. He swings hard, as if at a pitch.)

VOICE: Strike!

(ANTHON raises the bat and swings again.)

VOICE: Strike!

(ANTHON tries again, this time unhurriedly, with great assurance. As he swings, the sound of a

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wooden crack, then muffled cheering.)

ANTHON: Wow, it's going way over the fence.

ANTHON'S VOICE: *(PRE-RECORDED)* This is the right path, Corry. Get on it.

(ANTHON falls to his knees in great wonder, then slowly stands and rejoins FERGASON.)

FERGASON: *(diving onto a lower bunk)* So, here we are at last. I mean, we've been like waitin' for this our whole lives, and then all of a sudden it happens.

ANTHON: Uh, I kinda wanted the bottom.

FERGASON: *(vacating the bunk)* Sure, Elder. I don't mind. All I've got to worry about is getting a testimony.

ANTHON: Hey, you've got one, man. You probably just don't know it yet. It's there though. It'll come.

FERGASON: This MTC is like a little mission, don't you think? With all the things that happen to you in the field happening here?

ANTHON: *(sitting on the same lower bunk)* How's that?

FERGASON: Well, just like after we get to France and our one-year anniversary, there will be a Hump Day. Here it'll be our fourth week, with Bump Day after the second, Slump Day the sixth, and Jump Day the last day out.

ANTHON: *(amused)* Jump Day, huh? By the way, while you're still standing, would you mind getting me a glass of water?

FERGASON: *Uh, bien sur.*

(He takes a glass to a nearby sink, fills it, and brings it to ANTHON, who drinks in a series of long swallows, then hands the glass back to FERGASON)

Here.

FERGASON: Did you see that guy in the hall just now with the hair down to his collar?

ANTHON: No, I don't remember.

FERGASON: Got special permission. Poor guy doesn't have any ears

ANTHON: *(with a snort, realizing he's been taken in)* That's the spirit! This is some district, ain't it?

Whaddayu think of that Rignell? Never says a thing. And the way he hold his breath when he's trying to blurt out answers. The big boob.

FERGASON: Just real sensitive, I guess.

ANTHON: And that nerd mouth companion of his.

FERGASON: Wilberg?

ANTHON: What a contrast. All those dumb jokes. What a pain.

FERGASON: Yeah, they're pretty bad.

ANTHON: And those sisters. I like to stare down that Clawson. Gets real nervous, don't she? She could have been a fox in high school, except for all those freckles and that bulb on the end of her nose ...

(The lights dim, then rise on WILBERG and RIGNELL, now alone in the classroom. WILBERG is laboriously copying down JAMES's notes from the chalk board.)

WILBERG: I'm sorry for what I said today.

RIGNELL: What was that?

WILBERG: About you never speaking.

RIGNELL: Well, it's true What did you do before you came here?

WILBERG: In Omaha? I repaired TV's.

RIGNELL: Does it pay good?

WILBERG: (*holding out his fist and wagging his extended thumb and pinkie*) *Comme ci, comme ça.* I was there on my own. My Mom lives in Iowa. It took me a year and a half to save for my mission.

RIGNELL: Will you repair TV's some more when you get back home?

WILBERG: I've been thinking of coming to BYU. Don't know what I'll study. Maybe find a wife there.

RIGNELL: (*chuckling*) B-Y-Woo.

(*Both laugh.*)

WILBERG: *Quel est votre ... ah, your travail?*

RIGNELL: *Je suis berger.*

WILBERG: *Berger? Oh, un SHEPHERD!* That's why you're so ...

(*searching in his pocket dictionary*)

so tranquil.

RIGNELL: (*shrugging*) *Je n'sais pas ...* I've always worked for my father. In the summers I'd often spend two weeks or more without seeing a soul. But I know plenty of sheepmen who could talk your hind leg off. I'm like my father, I guess. Speaks once in a blue moon. I read the Book of Mormon through in three days when I was fourteen, then read it through again five times before that summer was out. I have a great love for the book. My father, who isn't completely active, offered to support me on this mission, but he's afraid I won't come back to the ranch and didn't really want me to go.

(*RIGNELL moves to an adjacent area of the stage, where his parents are seated at a kitchen table.*)

BROTHER RIGNELL: So you already put your papers in. Three weeks back?

(*RIGNELL nods.*)

That's fine, son, a fine thing to do You're sure that's what you want?

(*RIGNELL nods again.*)

You think you might stay 'til shearing?

RIGNELL: Sure, Dad.

BROTHER RIGNELL: I guess I just planned on you bein' here, that's all. Lotta work this year. Hadn't counted on you ever leaving the place.

SISTER RIGNELL: Now, Harlan, they don't come with any guarantee they'll follow in your path. I'll grant you that his older brother never were worth two cents around here.

(*BROTHER RIGNELL leaves.*)

(*smiling*)

If he wasn't cutting classes or picking on kids your size, he'd be skipping out on chores or teasing animals or smoking behind the barn.

RIGNELL: What makes him think I won't come back, Ma?

SISTER RIGNELL: Well, Jim Lambson went off to the "Y" after his mission, and he never came back. Rory Ackers came off his mission early and drifted away.

RIGNELL: Dad's doing better about Church, don't you think?

SISTER RIGNELL: Oh, he humors me from time to time.

RIGNELL: You think he'll ever be active? He keeps getting closer, doesn't he? Maybe he'll start coming again.

SISTER RIGNELL: Maybe. That don't mean he'll believe it. He believes in what's his.

BROTHER RIGNELL: *(returning and handing an envelope to RIGNELL)* This was in the mailbox. Your letter from the Church

RIGNELL: *(after nervously opening the letter)* “Dear Elder Rignell: You are hereby called to serve as a missionary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to labor in the France Toulouse Mission ... “
Toulouse, France....

(He suddenly whoops.)

"You should report to the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, on May 12 The Lord will reward the goodness of your life ...” I gotta walk. I gotta think about this.

SISTER RIGNELL: Better eat.

RIGNELL: Don't know if I can.

BROTHER RIGNELL: Go on, get outta here! I was wrong to want to stand in your way.

RIGNELL: Maybe it's not a good time. I should've waited to send off the papers.

BROTHER RIGNELL: No, you go Will you be comin' back to the ranch?

RIGNELL: Sho-ore I'm comin' back.

BROTHER RIGNELL: To stay ... ? Waymon's gone. Arden's gone.

RIGNELL: I can't decide that now. That's not why I'm goin'.

BROTHER RIGNELL: You're sure?

(RIGNELL nods.)

Just so you're sure.

RIGNELL: I've always wanted to go on a mission. I'll do my duty by you. I just want to go

(The lights come down and then up on the classroom. Another day. All are present at their usual seats, except JEPPSEN. CLAWSON's waist-length hair has meanwhile been severely cut. Her eyes are ever-so-faintly red-rimmed.)

WILBERG: *(to CLAWSON)* What made you do it?

CLAWSON: I was counseled to have it done. They thought it would be too great a distraction in the field.

(FERGASON holds up a fist for solidarity.)

ANTHON: They didn't have any right.

WILBERG: I agree. They're always on our backs. *Toujours, toujours sur nos dos.*

WEICE: Well, one must be obedient.

FERGASON: **And** I think it looks just greater, Sister Clawson. *Tres élégant. Tres élégant.*

ANTHON: No, man, *c'est un* bummer!

WEICE: Fray-ers! Such Franglais!

(Another instructor, Frere MUELLER, enters the classroom. He speaks with a French accent.)

MUELLER: Elders and Sisters, you're about to begin memorizing your missionary discussions. Elder James and I have therefore agreed that I should give you a little pep talk. I want you to know that I know these discussions teach the gospel effectively. I know it because I have been there. I also know the Spirit will bear testimony through you as you uses them, and, what's more, that they're going to do more than anything else to fill your heads with correct French. The same would be true if you were learning Japanese or, let's say, Maori.

WILBERG: Give me the Maori!

MUELLER: It's been statistically proven that your average missionary forgets seventy-five percent of what he

learns overnight. But, by strategically reviewing, we add reinforcement at key moments along the learning curve. Suddenly you get ninety, close to a hundred percent.

(laughing)

Wish I could get that kind of return on my investments ... I'd say most of you will reach the point where you can memorize thirty lines an hour. Now, you won't need to start out that fast, but you will need to start out sometime. And, Elders and Sisters ...

(removing a watch from his vest pocket, smiling brightly)

that time is now. Your assignment is to learn the first paragraph of the G discussion as before, but this time in French. I'll give you ten minutes. Ready. Get set. Go!

(The MISSIONARIES immerse themselves in the assigned discussion, periodically looking up from their materials and either staring into space, mouthing a line or two, or vocally recalling what they have just been reading. WILBERG's voice rises above the others'. FERGASON, discussion in hand, alternately paces or faces a blank wall. Fidgeting, ANTHON drums on his books, clicking the lead out on his mechanical pencil and shaking his face, then randomly flips through his discussions while rocking in his seat. CLAWSON recites in a sing-song voice. RIGNELL furls his brow in frustration. WILBERG appears pleased with his progress. He giggles and, catching RIGNELL's eye, clasps his hands together in encouragement. The lights dim, then rise again, indicating the passage of time.)

ANTHON: *(to himself)* *Cet-te bénédiction ...*

(to the same tune)

De la résurrection ... A tous les hommes ... to all the men, right? Wait a minute. Everybody gets resurrected? Do we believe that?

MUELLER: All right, Elders and Sisters. It's revision time. Let's see what you've accomplished. Elder Wilberg, would you start us out, please?

WILBERG: Sure.

(He opens his mouth, but nothing comes out.)

I... I... It's vanished. I don't remember a single line. What's going on? What's wrong?

MUELLER: All right. Let's take a little break. We'll resume in five minutes.

(He leaves.)

ANTHON: *(to WILBERG)* You fell asleep, *cher frere*.

RIGNELL: *(to WILBERG)* I just broke a shoelace. Maybe we should run to the bookstore.

ANTHON: Stop by the cafeteria and get us some sugar, will you? I'm having a low blood sugar attack.

(He cocks his head and smiles a drooly smile.)

WILBERG: *(to RIGNELL)* No! The work comes first, you mealy-eyed ferret! Here my head's been splitting in two all morning, but did I even think of suggesting we waste five minutes to buy an aspirin when there's work to do? And you want to waste time for something as stupid as a shoelace! Ha! This place is gonna kill me! And you! What kind of a companion are you? I don't know what business you think you've got being on a mission. I Oh, please. I'm sorry. I did it again. I abused my companion.

(FERGASON passes everyone licorice and M & M's.)

ANTHON: How about 'winner takes all,' huh?

WILBERG: ...I gotta unwind, man. Tomorrow's Preparation Day, ain't it?

(RIGNELL nods.)

Let's go to Salt Lake. Anthon's always talking about going to Salt Lake. He even said he was gonna take Ferguson out on his boat.

RIGNELL: *Frere!* You know we can't do that. *Les regles--je ne peux pas ...*

(with a wink, then holding up his language manual--upside-down--and pretending to be absorbed)

No, we'd better spend the afternoon reading edifying books.

WILBERG: You do and I'll clobber you with Elder James' big dictionary! I mean it, man. I gotta do something. I mean it. I'm going crazy in here. My head's ringing like a banged gong. Let's at least take in a movie, man. I'm gonna snap if I don't get out of here. A guy in the cafeteria told me it only costs a dollar at the "Y."

RIGNELL: *Frere!*

(MUELLER returns.)

MUELLER: Let's take a little different tack at this point. Elder Anthon, you strike me as especially eager and confident. Would you please tell the rest of us, by way of testimony, why you feel that memorizing these discussions is so important? Help encourage your district.

ANTHON: Hey, that's a charm

(He stands, while MUELLER sits in his place.)

Make yourself at ease, Elders and Sisters.

(He pulls off his jacket. 'The other elders titter and rush to follow his lead.)

What I'm gonna talk about is drive. Initiative. Get-up-and-go. No way we can win without it, Elders and Sisters. That's what my coach used to say. I wanna tell you about this guy. I used to play JV baseball at the 'U,' see, and we had this coach like you wouldn't believe. I mean he wore these clothes out of an old movie, and he talked about like this, and he was about two hundred pounds overweight, and I swear he used enough grease in his hair to cause a oil crisis. I mean like this guy was moldy.

(He laughs breezily.)

But I gotta tell ya, he was a winner ... You don't think drive's important? Just take Joseph Smith for example. I mean, like I can't imagine anybody having more drive than he did, the way he's gettin' persecuted an' everything and yet he still had the gumption to study those scriptures and go to all those churches and the courage to go into those woods and everything and pray. I mean, if he'd been timid and shy and a big sissy about the whole thing, frankly, I don't know whether we'd be here in this fine building today. It's like when I was playin' baseball. We had this after-game celebration after our first win. We'd already been stuffing ourselves with pizza when Jerome Cohn arrived with eight sixpacks of liquid refreshment--I won't say what kind--which we naturally felt obliged to get to the bottom of out of deference to Jerome. Without anyone quite noticing, our party merged with another in the same dorm, after which me and Jerome drove to another party at Darrin Theiler's fraternity house. I wanna tell ya, by the time we got suited up for the next day's game, I just wanted to lie down right there on second base. I mean, I might as well have brought suntan lotion and a towel. But Coach gave us this pep talk right before the game, and he talks like nothing's wrong at all--he doesn't shout or nothing--and he says we're capable of raising above our own stupidity and pulling this one out if we just want it bad enough. He also says if we ever do it again he'll kick our--

(grunts)

--from here to China, but that's beside the point. We made a wealth of errors, including a double and two

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sacrifices on my part. A gigantic paper banner came loose and tumbled into the bleachers. There was a scuffle between the first-base coach and an umpire--not a very placid game, but the main thing is, we had a dramatic, come-from-behind win. That taught me a lesson, 'cause, you know, we had to give it everything we had, and then some. And I sometimes think it was the Lord that kept us from winning by more, 'cause I know very well we'd have probably gone out that night and done the same thing again ...

MUELLER: Yes, well Let me warn you, Elders and Sisters, you only have another month to go. And in three more weeks I'll personally give you a test on these discussions. And it's possible, I testify, to have learned them all by then. If you're really dedicated and, of course, with the Lord's help.

WILBERG: Yeah, the Lord's help. Give me some of that ... !

(The lights fade, then slowly rise on the elders' dorm room. Early morning. All are awake and dressed except ANTHON, who still lies on his bunk in his pajamas, presumably still asleep.)

FERGASON: *(leaning over ANTHON's bunk and sloshing a container of water)* Water alarm in two minutes, old friend.

WILBERG: I dunno. That's pretty low.

FERGASON: Ya gotta do whatcha gotta do.

(ANTHON lifts his head and turns to see RIGNELL and JEPPSEN nearing his bed with metal wastepaper baskets.)

ANTHON: *(jumping to his feet)* Whatchu think you're frickin' doin'?

(He cocks a fist. The others back off.)

FERGASON: It's our P-Day. We've got to make the most of it.

ANTHON: Lemme take a quick shower.

(He leaves the room, taking with him a shirt and suit on a hangar. The lights slowly dim, then rise on FERGASON and ANTHON in the BYU Cougar eat.)

ANTHON: Ol' Gary Hutchins, he's all excited. Hutchins is the fullback, and he's also my best friend, and he's been tasting blood the whole game. See, the linebackers were blitzing, so I told him to make like he's gonna block and then just kind of slip around 'em. Suddenly it was like he'd just learned to float, with his feet ticking off the seconds as he flipped slowly clockwise. When he finally hit the ground, more outside the end zone than in it, his leg broke.

(laughing)

Musta been in shock. When I got to him he was squigglin' around on the ground doing this shootin' pistol act.

FERGASON: Coach musta ate you for breakfast.

ANTHON: How could he? I won the game.

FERGASON: So you gonna go back and play college ball?

ANTHON: *(catching something with his eye)* Whasat ... ? I mean no. I mean I'm not sure. I mean like, some guys need that, to feed their egos, but I been really considering and I ...

(He sees LADAWN in a booth with a male student.)

LADAWN: *(laughing, to the student)* And you've never been on the campus tour? Well, why don't you come along? You know, you have the cutest dimples. No, really, I love dimples. My little brother has dimples.

(She lays a finger on the student's chin.)

ANTHON: LaDa-awn!

LADAWN: (*noticing him*) Corry! Cordell! What are you doing here? I mean of course! The MTC! I thought you'd be in France by now!

ANTHON: Four weeks more, honey. Who's your friend?

LADAWN: This is Steve. And this is Cordell--er, Elder Anthon now.

(The men shake hands.

(to Steve)

Say, listen. Can you excuse me? You see, Cordell is one of my dear friends that I haven't seen in months and ...

STEVE: Certainly....

(He withdraws.)

LADAWN: And who's this?

ANTHON: Uh ... this is Frere Fergason. He's from Idaho.

LADAWN: Hi You're looking so good, Corry! I think this is really doing something for you.

ANTHON: Yeah, right.

LADAWN: I'll bet you're studying hard and learning your discussions and that you're the new MTC push-up champion.

ANTHON: Yeah, I'm doin' all right. How 'bout you? Taking care of yourself?

LADAWN: I've never been better! Never been busier.

ANTHON: It's been awhile since I heard from you.

LADAWN: Oh, I know, I've been just aw-ful. They've kept me so busy. I promise I'll make it up to you.

ANTHON: What you been doing?

LADAWN: Oh, you know me. Can't keep still. I've been working and finishing up my classes early and singing up at Primary Children's--oh, I just love those kids--and I made a commercial and a bunch of us went water-skiing and last week the pageant sent me to some appearances in Las Vegas.

ANTHON: Yeah, yeah, I get the picture.

LADAWN: And today I'm registering here at the 'Y' and taking the tour. Oh, Corry, it's so perfect. I've already got a job lined up helping with a workshop this summer for teenage girls. It's all about self-confidence and makeup and inner beauty and poise and being a daughter of God, and there's a fashion show we get the girls involved with ... By the way, I'm staying at the home of Brother Paskins here in Provo, house tending. He gave up trying to support his family as a seminary teacher. He's a financial analyst here in Provo. They're on vacation right now though. At Disneyland. You all should come and visit me.

(ANTHON looks at FERGASON, who wags his finger and mouths a large, fish-like 'no'.)

Moving here is perfect. I'll be able to compete in three more pageants before the Miss Utah.

ANTHON: I don't see the point. You already qualified.

LADAWN: The experience can only help me be more prepared.

(ANTHON laughs. LADAWN pokes his chest)

Don't make fun of me!

(He grabs her fingers. They slip through his fists. She reaches for his wrists, stroking them.)

Corry. Just how is it at the MTC?

ANTHON: Hey, I never worked so hard in my life. We get up at 6:00, we go to breakfast, then we have to go through the *grammaire*, then we do lines, then we finally get to go to ... to ...

LADAWN: Gra-mair, huh?

ANTHON: L-1-lmgm, I can't say it! *Dejeuner!*

FERGASON: *(laughing, bailing him out)* Lunch!
(LADAWN giggles.)

We're not supposed to speak English.

ANTHON: *(with pride)* Man, I hate it when that happens.

LADAWN: I've really got to hand it to you elders. I'd never make it. Not in a million years. That is just really commendable.

ANTHON: *(teasing)* Commendable, huh?

LADAWN: That's not nice.

ANTHON: So who's this Steve?

LADAWN: Just some guy.

ANTHON: Just some guy?

LADAWN: I just met him.

ANTHON: One more for your collection?

LADAWN: I meet people all the time. What's wrong with meeting people? Am I not supposed to talk to people? Is that it now? I suppose I'm not supposed to so much as speak to anyone else while you're away.

ANTHON: I didn't say that.

LADAWN: I suppose you'd like me to resign.

ANTHON: Come on, LaDawn. You know I didn't meant it that way.

LADAWN: What I mean to say is that I have obligations to the pageant committee, and I just feel that I'm at a point in my life where developing relationships is very important to my personal growth, and that I'd be missing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity if I let it slip away ...

(She touches his cheek.)

You know you'll always be special to me ... Oh, my, it's getting late.

(Smoothing her hair, then puffing it up with her fingers)

I've got to go. Oh, Corry, I'm so tired. They've been keeping me going so long I ... I wish I could just stop having to worry about what I say and how I look every minute of the day and not have everybody in the world telling me how fat I am.

ANTHON: It's a real struggle here.

LADAWN: You can do it. I know you can.

ANTHON: I feel like I'm faking it. Like I don't belong here.

LADAWN: You go in there and show them what you're worth, Cordell Anthon. I know you've got it in you.

You go in there and do what your Heavenly Father wants you to.

ANTHON: Write me.

LADAWN: I promise. Well ... you know how I am about letters, but ... I will. I'll do it.

ANTHON: Every week.

LADAWN: I can't promise that, and I don't want to make a promise I can't...

ANTHON: Every week.

LADAWN: I can't promise that.

ANTHON: Come to the airport when we fly.

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LADAWN: I have to be in Phoenix. I would if I could, you know that. I'd give anything to be there

ANTHON: (to *FERGASON*) We better take off.

FERGASON: Yeah, we better get going.

LADAWN: (checking her watch) Oh, my, I'll miss my tour.

(She hesitates, then squeezes ANTHON around the waist, plants a moist peck on his cheek and is gone. The lights dim, then, suggesting nighttime, rise on ANTHON, alone, walking stealthily toward another area of the stage. A spot reveals LaDawn in the Paskins' living room. She wears a chignon and sings into an imaginary microphone.)

ANTHON: (muttering to himself) What am I doing here? What am I doing here? What am I doing here? Lotta people count'n on you, Cordell. This is gett'n outa hand.

(He places himself in the light of the Paskins' doorway. LADAWN looks up, then suddenly shrieks.)

ANTHON: It's me. Corry.

(LADAWN holds a hand to her breast.)

Lemme in. It's raining out here.

(She goes to the doorway and admits him.)

LADAWN: It's you! Come in, for heaven's sake!

(ANTHON squeezes inside, grips his arms and dances a little with the cold.)

ANTHON: Hey, babe. I thought I'd never find ya. Shoulda seen your face!

LADAWN: Oh, for heaven's sake. Don't move while I get you a towel.

(She disappears, then returns, giggling, with a pile of towels.)

Now stand on these. You're just ruining this carpet Corry! What are you doing here?

ANTHON: Just giving you a hard time, Dough Head.

(throwing her a wet towel)

Here, catch!

LADAWN: (laughing, dodging) You monster Corry, what on earth did you come here for?

ANTHON: You invited me!

LADAWN: I??

ANTHON: You-uu!

LADAWN: I didn't mean ... I ...

(drawing near)

Something's wrong, isn't it?

ANTHON: Everything's wrong. This whole place is wrong.

LADAWN: (taking his head in her arms) My poor baby.

ANTHON: I don't know how I lasted this long. Man, I'm gett'n so strung out I think my head's gonna blow off.

LADAWN: Tell me about it!

(He leans against her. She strokes his shoulders.)

You're strong. I can feel you're strong.

ANTHON: I can't stand it any longer. I swear you can't go to the bathroom in that place without somebody holding your hand. And the food, man. I don't know how they come off expecting us to eat that stuff. S'like school lunch, three times a day.

LADAWN: Why didn't you tell me? I could have sent you something.

(Fondling his biceps and the lines of his belly and chest)

My baby needs to buck up, fight, get some spirit. Remember that victory over Murray High, when we trailed by twenty-four points at the half?

ANTHON: What I remember most is when you lost your balance on top of that human pyramid. You shoulda seen your face. I laughed so hard I forgot the count and had to call time out.

LADAWN: Remember the time you routed Bountiful in spite of those four fumbles? The team made you wear that Easter bonnet and an egg basket and told you not to drop any.

ANTHON: Yeah, I wore that bonnet the whole evening.

LADAWN: You danced with every girl and boy in the room. You lunged and punched the air like the game was still on

(They lose control, laughing.)

ANTHON: *(relaxed now)* Ohhhh.

(scowling)

I also remember that drive toward Wendover after I was named athlete of the year, that walk on the pure salt desert, that kiss and promise, with all the stars falling down on us.

(LADAWN runs her fingers through his wet hair. He grabs her arms. She pushes with her wrists against his chest.)

LADAWN: Corry, we can't do this!

ANTHON: I love you. Let me hold you.

LADAWN: I can't. You've been set apart. You're a missionary now.

ANTHON: That's what I'm trying to tell you. I don't feel like a missionary. I need you.

LADAWN: *(shaking her head, flustered)* Corry, let me go. Don't touch me.

(She breaks free and retreats.)

I didn't meant it that way, I meant ... I mean, there'll be time for that. Now is the time in your life when you have to put these things aside. I know it seems like a long time, but when it's over I just bet you you're going to wonder where it all went. Waiting will only make it that much sweeter. And I'll be here for you, Corry.

(He steps tentatively off the towels and advances, taking her circumspectly about the waist. She buries her head in his shoulder.)

ANTHON: My Barbie doll.

LADAWN: My superfriend.

ANTHON: My Charlie's Angel

LADAWN: My Incredible Hunk.

(He grabs her waist and tickles her, while she squeals and tries to twist away)

Stop it!

(Giggling, she pries with both hands at one of his thumbs.)

ANTHON: Ow!

(She slips out of his grasp and slowly backs away.)

LADAWN: I'll scream

(He pounces and twists, falling with her onto the couch. She is now limp on his lap)

You monster! It's not safe around you.

ANTHON: You're always putt'n me off.

LADAWN: Corry, I don't think you should be here.

ANTHON: I go where I please.

LADAWN: But this is Brother Paskin's house. You shouldn't be here. What are you doing here?

ANTHON: *(jumping to his feet)* I said you invited me! See! See! That's exactly what I mean. You ask me to come, you invite me in, then you want to know what I'm doing here.

LADAWN: You're taking me wrong again. I ...

ANTHON: You drive me crazy. Half of you is always saying come closer, and the other half is always saying back off. I don't know how I've stood you all these years. You're so two-faced you need a folding mirror to put on your makeup.

LADAWN: If you'd get down off your high horse for once you'd see you don't own me.

ANTHON: Yeah, well, if I owned you I'd just sell tickets, the way you get 'em gawking after ya. I'd retire in a month.

LADAWN: Just what gives you the ... I don't know how you think you can ...

ANTHON: I'm going.

LADAWN: Listen. This is a hard time for both of us, and when people are under pressure, sometimes they say things they haven't really thought all the way through. But I think it's all the more important during those times for people to trust each other. I told you today I don't plan to stop developing relationships while you're gone. These are growing experiences. But you must believe you're special to me, even when I don't act that way. You're more than special. You're the one. I've never loved anyone but you. I never will.

(ANTHON stares at her, then laughs, shutting his eyes and holding up his hands. She leans toward him longingly. He stands with his back to her and hangs his head, gritting his teeth.)

What's wrong?

ANTHON: I ... don't know ... I ...

(His watch alarm starts beeping.)

Time to get up and study.

LADAWN: So early?

ANTHON: A pact. We had a pact. We was gonna get up and learn three weeks' worth of discussions b'fore breakfast.

(laughing)

At this moment Elder Harvey Corn-Pone Wilberg is snorting and rolling over in his sleep. Andrew Ferguson won't so much as stir ... I want to see you again.

LADAWN: I told you I couldn't. You don't understand. You just don't understand. Do you know how much this means to me?

ANTHON: This is crazy....

(He kisses her and holds her tight.)

I'll marry you ... I'll marry you.

LADAWN: Yes ... yes ... no, no, no.

(drawing herself away involuntarily)

My career ... there are commitments ... There's so much I want ...

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(She reaches for Anthon's neck and kisses him hard, then pushes him away.)

No ... no ... we can't do this. Just ... wait here.

(She stumbles out of the room, then returns, a white-covered triple combination in her hands.)

We need to talk this out, but calmly. I so want you to finish your mission and do the right thing.

ANTHON: I can't go on.

LADAWN: I know you can do it. I'll be praying for you.

ANTHON: I won't go back.

LADAWN: I'm sure you've had some spiritual experience you can draw on for strength.

ANTHON: Well, there was that time I said that prayer in the vacant lot, kneeling in the weeds, and the game the next day, when I hit that home run at that moment and felt something pure and strong and eternal. That's something I can't deny and never will, you needn't worry about that. But as for a mission, I simply no longer see the connection.

(He grips her hard, not noticing.)

It's not for me. I can't do it. I don't need it.

LADAWN: Corry, you're hurting me

(He starts to shake her, then rushes to the door. She follows, whimpering.)

What do you thing you're doing? Get out of here! No. Come back, please!

ANTHON: Make up your mind. I can't wait. I got things to do. I'm a missionary now, remember?

LADAWN: I need you. I'm c-c-cold. Come b-b-back.

ANTHON: Gotta avoid the appearance of evil.

LADAWN: Don't leave me like this. You love me. You said you love me.

ANTHON: Yeah, well, I guess I'm tired a gett'n used....

(He walks away from her, deliberately, slowly. The lights dim on LADAWN and rise on FERGASON, who waits for ANTHON in a corridor of the elders' dormitory.)

FERGASON: Anthon, where you been, man? It's 5:00 a.m. I swear I been all over this town lookin' for you!
Where the ... heck you been?

ANTHON: Takin' care of a little business. I ... I think I'm going to throw up.

FERGASON: Do you need a blessing?

ANTHON: *(teasing)* Not from you. You ain't even got a testimony.

FERGASON: *(seating ANTHON and placing his hands on his head)* I got the priesthood, don't I?

(ANTHON takes FERGASON's hands off his head. FERGASON places them on again firmly. ANTHON squirms, then resigns himself.)

ANTHON: OK.

FERGASON: I bless you with health to ... to do your work and that ... and that this spirit will leave you and you'll ... be able to sleep and ... that the power of the priesthood will protect you ... while you

(FERGASON opens his eyes and stands away.)

ANTHON: What is it?

FERGASON: It's amazing. I've never felt anything like it.

ANTHON: You should be on TV.

(He slaps FERGASON's cheeks with his fingers, then darts for their room. Suddenly stopping, he looks back with a mixture of panic and perversity.)

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Do it again.

(He grabs his head as though to protect himself from diving nighthawks.)

FERGASON: *(putting his arm around ANTHON and leading him back to the donn roo.)* You're goin' back to bed

INTERMISSION

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