

AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

by Arlene Hutton

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## AS IT IS IN HEAVEN BY ARLENE HUTTON

## CHARACTERS

## THE ESTABLISHMENT

PEGGY — The cook. Meek, quiet and trustful, easily hurt.

HANNAH — An eldress. Tries to be merciful and kind.

PHEBE — A deaconess. Seeks righteousness.

BETSY — A deaconess. The peacemaker, but also a gossip.

RACHEL — A longtime Shaker. Pure in heart.

IZZY — The youngest. Raised with Shakers. Persecuted for righteousness' sake.

## NEWCOMERS

FANNY — A newcomer. Independent. Accused falsely.

POLLY — A newcomer. Poor in spirit, needy, bitter.

JANE — Mournful, sad.

## PLACE

A Shaker village at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. Benches on a bare stage become both indoor and outdoor locations in the village.

## TIME

Around 1838.

## ACT 1 SC 1 -- "WELCOME, WELCOME"

*(A Shaker village in Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, 1838. The stage may subtly resemble a Shaker meeting house. There are six to eight wooden benches on stage, which move around for the various scenes. There are no entrances and exits from or to offstage; when the actresses are not in a scene, they sit on the side benches and sew or knit. Their hands are always busy, even when they are out of the light. There are no blackouts or pauses between scenes. The movement from scene to scene is fluid throughout the play; we do not wait for the set to change before the next scene starts. The actors frequently begin speaking the lines for the new scene while they are still in the previous scene. The benches are moved, or they move them, and they walk into the new scene. Sometimes a scene or song is happening in the foreground while a new scene is setting up behind the action, in full view of the audience. The downstage actors finish their scene and exit to the side benches, revealing the new scene upstage. Each scene has a task; none of the work of the Sisters should be totally mimed; there must always be a prop to represent the task. The women all wear simple white sheer caps. The dresses are more colorful than we would expect, and each woman wears a shawl-like kerchief. Occasionally an apron is worn. At the start of the play the benches are set in rows like pews. The Sisters enter, singing as they dance a structured march. By the end of it they have taken their places in the meeting house.)*

PEGGY

*(Singing.)*

WELCOME, WELCOME PRECIOUS GOSPEL KINDRED.

ALL

*(Singing.)*

WE ARE HAPPY YOU TO MEET  
AND MAKE YOU FREELY WELCOME.  
BY THE CORDS OF UNION PURE  
OUR HEARTS ARE BOUND TOGETHER.  
AND THE LOVE WE BEAR TO YOU  
NO FRIENDSHIP E'ER CAN SEVER.

*(The song repeats as long as needed for the Sisters to get to their places. They all sit, except for Hannah.)*

HANNAH

Let all confess their sins.

*(Hannah sits. There is silence, and then the confessions come quickly. Each woman stands to make her confession and then sits.)*

PEGGY

I slept late last Thursday.

BETSY

I was angry at the hens. They nipped Izzy when she was gathering eggs. I was angry at them.

RACHEL

I, I, I forgot to pray for some of the Sisters this week.

BETSY

Yesterday I heard two boys quarreling and I passed them by without reporting them.

JANE

I pray that I keep my mind on my tasks.

BETSY

I ate bread between meals.

*(A beat.)*

PEGGY

I wished that Sister Jane would fall asleep and not cry in her bed. I was prideful of my new apron.

BETSY

I wrung that rooster's neck in anger. 'Cause he pecked Izzy.

RACHEL

I threw a stone at a stray dog.

*(Betsy, Jane and Izzy all stand up at the same time to confess. Betsy and Izzy sit down.)*

JANE

I confess that my mind wandered while I should have been working.

IZZY

I teased the chickens. They nipped me 'cause I was teasing them. I confess that I was teasing the hens. Tryin' to pet the chicks.

*(Betsy stands up, as if to respond to Izzy, but sits back down without speaking. There is a pause, and Betsy stands up again.)*

BETSY

I gossiped.

*(A beat.)*

PHEBE

I became impatient when the children ran through the garden. I scolded them too harshly for trampling the seedlings and ruining the tomato plants.

POLLY

I fed my dinner to the cats. I confess that I couldn't eat it and I fed it to the cats.

BETSY

I didn't thank Sister Peggy for making waffles on my birthday.

RACHEL

I cursed at some raccoons.

POLLY

I forgot to throw out the food that the cats didn't eat. I confess that I forgot about the raccoons.

BETSY

I don't thank Sister Peggy often enough for her hard work in the kitchen.

PHEBE

I ate extra helpings of mashed potatoes without asking.

IZZY

I put extra gravy on my mashed potatoes.

BETSY

I had three helpings of soup beans.

RACHEL

At grace I forgot to give thanks for Sister Peggy's cooking.

*(A pause.)*

PEGGY

I daydreamed and burned the muffins.

FANNY

May I be given strength to do my kitchen chores even better.

PHEBE

I am frequently impatient with the newcomers. With Sister Fanny and Sister Polly and Sister Jane. May I realize that they have much to learn about our ways.

*(Sister Jane stands, starts to say something but doesn't. She sits.)*

PEGGY

I neglected to comfort Sister Jane in her sorrow.

POLLY

I looked at Brother Abraham in the meeting. Caught his eye.

FANNY

I went past the ...

*(She stops. Polly stares at her.)*

Past the meeting house without saying a prayer. Walked right on by.

*(Silence.)*

PHEBE

May we be forgiven and deserving in your eyes. Hear our prayers.

RACHEL

May we pray for our leaders and give thanks for their guidance. We pray for our deaconesses, Sister Betsy and Sister Phebe. We give thanks for the wisdom and love of our eldress, Sister Hannah.

PHEBE

*(Interrupting.)* We pray — we pray for the continued health and well-being of all the Sisters and the Brethren.

BETSY

Let us give thanks and praise. Let us work as if we were to live forever. Let us live as if we were to die tomorrow. Grant us grace and peace.

FANNY

Amen.

*(When no one else says "Amen," Fanny realizes she responded too quickly.)*

HANNAH  
May we go forth in the strength and the  
power of the gospel and labor for the spirit of  
conviction.

ALL  
Amen.

*(Peggy, who clearly likes to sing, begins a song.)*

PEGGY  
*(Singing.)*  
COME LIFE, SHAKER LIFE

ALL  
*(Standing and singing.)*

COME LIFE, ETERNAL  
SHAKE, SHAKE OUT OF ME,  
ALL THAT IS CARNAL.

*(The Sisters move to their positions in the next scene, moving the benches when necessary, singing all the while.)*

I'LL TAKE NIMBLE STEPS  
I'LL BE A DAVID  
I'LL SHOW MICHAEL TWICE  
HOW HE BEHAVED.

*(Lights change. By the end of the song the stage is set for the next scene and the actors are in place.)*

## ACT 1 SC 2 -- "WHAT DID YOU SEE?" #1 (POLLY)

*In a special light we see Polly sitting on one end of a bench which is perpendicular to the stage. On either side are Betsy and Jane standing, who interrogate her.*

BETSY  
*(To Polly.)* What did you see?

POLLY  
I don't know.

BETSY  
Must have been something powerful.



POLLY  
Weren't much o' nothin'. Nothin' at'll.

JANE  
We sometimes don't know what we see.

POLLY  
Didn't see much of anything, I reckon.

BETSY  
Well, then.

POLLY  
You believe me?

JANE  
No.

BETSY  
If you say you didn't see anything, then, yes, I believe you.

JANE  
She didn't say that. Didn't say she didn't see anything.

BETSY  
(*To Polly.*) Then what did you see?

POLLY  
I don't know.

JANE  
She don't know what she saw.  
(*To Polly.*) You don't know what you saw.

POLLY  
I don't know. It couldn't be —

BETSY  
What couldn't it be?

POLLY  
Fanny said.

JANE  
We want to know what you saw.

POLLY  
Fanny said it were angels.

*(Lights change. We hear singing from the women sitting on the benches. Peggy, Phebe, Betsy and Rachel sit and spread out a large cloth over their laps.)*

ALL

*(Singing.)*

I WILL BOW AND BE SIMPLE  
I WILL BOW AND BE FREE  
I WILL BOW AND BE HUMBLE  
YEA BOW LIKE THE WILLOW TREE.

*(Lights change. Still singing, the women move the benches to set up for the next scene.)*

### ACT 1 SC 3 -- "QUILTING"

*(Peggy, Phebe, Betsy, Rachel are quilting, miming needles and thread. They hum or sing softly, obviously enjoying their work and their time together.)*

PEGGY, BETSY, PHEBE, RACHEL

*(Singing.)*

I WILL BOW THIS IS THE TOKEN  
I WILL WEAR THE EASY YOKE  
I WILL BOW AND BE BROKEN  
YEA I'LL FALL UPON THE ROCK.

BETSY

Sister Peggy, you look a little peaked.

PHEBE

Indeed you do.

RACHEL

Hmm.

PHEBE

Too much close work.

PEGGY

I like it.

PHEBE

Quilting. Making labels for the jelly jars. Too much close work.

RACHEL

Hmm.

PEGGY

I'm quite well.

PHEBE  
Fresh air would put color in your face.

BETSY  
(*To Peggy.*) Would you like a respite from your quilting?

RACHEL  
'Taint the quilting that makes her look tired.

BETSY  
Are you not sleeping well, Sister Peggy?

PEGGY  
I've missed some nights.

RACHEL  
Hmm.

PHEBE  
You need your sleep.

RACHEL  
Hmm.

BETSY  
Should Sister Phebe administer herbs to you?

RACHEL  
It's Sister Jane. She's in the room with Sister Jane.

PHEBE  
That'll keep anybody from a good night's sleep.

BETSY  
Is there a difficulty? Is there a difficulty with Sister Jane?

PEGGY  
She cries all night.

PHEBE  
Sister Jane can leave the community if she is not happy here.

BETSY  
She signed the covenant.

PEGGY  
Yes, she did.

BETSY  
By her own free will.

PHEBE  
Could leave if she liked.

RACHEL  
I don't think Sister Jane would be happy  
anywhere.

PHEBE  
I don't think Sister Jane was ever happy.

RACHEL  
She's been here nigh on a year now.

BETSY  
Came with her husband.

RACHEL  
That's right.

BETSY  
Brother James.

RACHEL  
No.

PEGGY  
It was Brother William.

BETSY  
No.

PEGGY  
Yes. It was Brother William.

BETSY  
Of course it was.

RACHEL  
Brother William.

BETSY  
Brother William is good with the carpentry.  
Liked to raise that barn by himself.

PEGGY  
He'll make deacon some day.

RACHEL  
He'll make a good deacon.

PHEBE  
Yes, he will.

RACHEL  
Maybe make elder.

PEGGY  
He looks like an elder.

RACHEL  
He does look like an elder.

PEGGY  
With that fine beard.

RACHEL  
That is a fine beard on him. Full. Not scraggly like Brother Timothy's. Brother William keeps his beard in good trim. It's a tidy beard. You're right. He'll make a fine-lookin' elder some day.

BETSY  
Always has a cheerful countenance.

PHEBE  
Because he doesn't live with Sister Jane anymore.

*(They laugh. Hannah enters and takes her place. The women focus on thier work. Rachel hands Hannah a threaded needle. All sew in silence.)*

HANNAH  
Several of the brothers took the wagon to Lexington this morning. Taking the seed packets to sell. Going to bring us a new pot. I requested a new soup pot and a kettle.

PEGGY  
The kitchen could use some new pots.

*(All sew in silence.)*

BETSY  
My needle's gone dull.

PHEBE

Here is one.

*(She mimes a needle.)*

BETSY

Thank you, Sister Phebe.

*(All sew in silence.)*

HANNAH

They'll be slaughtering that hog next week.

PEGGY

Izzy will be sad.

RACHEL

Hmm.

BETSY

Izzy raised that hog from a piglet.

RACHEL

*(Agreeing.)* Little piglet.

*(They quilt in silence.)*

HANNAH

The elders have a concern.

*(All stop sewing and look at her.)*

The Brethren mentioned to me that they have noticed some of the sisters gossiping.

PHEBE

Surely not.

BETSY

Must be the North Family they're talking about.

RACHEL

Hmm.

HANNAH

Surely you are right. Must be the North Family.

*(They begin to sew again. Jane enters and takes her place at the quilt. She just touches it.)*

Welcome, Sister Jane.

*(Jane sits at the quilt, but does not sew.)*

JANE

Reminds me of a baby quilt I made once.  
Wonder what happened to that quilt.

BETSY

Baby quilts are nice to make. Make 'em up  
quick, they're so small.

PEGGY

*(Kindly.)* Sister Jane, your babies are in heaven. They don't  
need quilts.

JANE

Oh, I recollect now! We buried one of my little  
boys in that quilt. My little boy Benjamin.

HANNAH

Sister Peggy, perhaps it would be wise to  
prepare the kitchen for the new pots.

PEGGY

I'll tend to that right now, Sister Hannah.

*(Peggy knots off her thread and stands to leave.)*

HANNAH

Sister Jane, perhaps you could assist Sister  
Peggy.

JANE

Yes, I will do that.

*(Jane stands and turns to go.)*

HANNAH

And Sister Jane —

JANE

Yes, Sister Hannah?

HANNAH

*(As she begins folding the quilt.)*

It was mentioned by a cousin of yours that  
you make fine oatmeal sweetcakes. Perhaps  
you would make some for us today. The  
brothers will be hungry after their journey.

JANE  
But Sister Peggy always does the baking.

*(Hannah stands, preparing to leave. The women take the quilt from her.)*

HANNAH  
I understand that you are a fine baker, as well.  
Sometimes we need to change the way we do  
things. We look forward to your sweetcakes.

*(Lights change as Peggy begins the next song. Jane and Hannah move two of the benches to the side and sit.)*

ACT 1 SC 4 -- "WHO WILL BOW AND BEND"

*(Peggy sings, as Rachel, Phebe and Betsy dance. Or all four could sing and dance.)*

PEGGY  
WHO WILL BOW AND BEND LIKE A WILLOW,  
WHO WILL TURN AND TWIST AND REEL  
IN THE GALE OF SIMPLE FREEDOM,  
FROM THE BOWER OF UNION FLOWING.  
WHO WILL DRINK THE WINE OF POWER,  
DROPPING DOWN LIKE A SHOWER,  
PRIDE AND BONDAGE ALL FORGETTING,  
MOTHER'S WINE IS FREELY WORKING.

PEGGY, RACHEL, PHEBE, BETSY  
OH, HO! I WILL HAVE IT,  
I WILL BOW AND BEND TO GET IT,  
I'LL BE REELING, TURNING, TWISTING,  
SHAKE OUT ALL THE STARCH AND STIFF'NING!

*(By the end of the song Peggy and Izzy have taken their place on a bench and the other woman have returned to their places on the side benches.)*

ACT 1 SC 5 -- "YOU ARE SAFE HERE"

*(Hannah and Fanny downstage. Peggy and Izzy on an upstage bench, in shadow.)*

HANNAH  
Sister Fanny —

FANNY  
Yes, Sister Hannah?

HANNAH  
Your cousin came to the trustee's office again.  
Looking for you.



FANNY  
I don't want to be no bother to anyone.

HANNAH  
No bother. We sent him away.

FANNY  
Thank you, Sister Hannah.

*(Hannah starts to leave, but turns.)*

HANNAH  
You are safe here, Sister Fanny. And kindly welcome.

*(Hannah and Fanny exit, revealing ...)*

# ACT 1 SC 5A -- "SNAP THE BEANS"

*(Lights up on Peggy, Izzy break- ing green beans into a pot, tossing the ends and strings into a basket.)*

PEGGY  
Snap 'em.

IZZY  
Beggin' your pardon.

PEGGY  
You snap 'em, Izzy. Snap the beans. Don't just break 'em. Give it a little snap.

IZZY  
Don't make much difference. They're going to the same pot.

PEGGY  
If they don't snap they go back to the garden.

IZZY  
Why don't you cut the beans? Slice 'em with a knife. Faster.

PEGGY  
Can't tell if it's a good bean, then. If the bean don't give a nice little snap when you break it, if it's soft, the bean's not good enough. If it don't snap ya throw it back into the compost and give it another chance to be a better bean next time 'round.

IZZY

It'll still taste the same. Tastes the same in the pot. No one'll know if you cut it or snap it.

PEGGY

You will know.

*(Izzy snaps a bean.)*

And God will know.

*(Lights change as Polly and Fanny begin the next scene in a different part of the stage.)*

ACT 1 SC 6 -- "PAST THE MEADOW (SWEEPING)"

POLLY

*(Handing a broom to Fanny and beginning to sweep.)*

Where were you?

FANNY

You seen the baby lambs?

POLLY

You were gone an awful long time.

FANNY

They're precious.

POLLY

Sister Phebe asked about you.

FANNY

Sister Rachel was there. With the lambs.

POLLY

Long time to be looking at lambs. Went back the meadow didn't you? Izzy saw you go. She was up the stairs. Saw you go. No lambs past the meadow. You meet'n a bigger beast maybe? Maybe there's a stallion past the meadow. Big ole stallion await'n for you.

FANNY

Weren't no stallion there.

POLLY

I know'd you went, so you best be telling me where.

FANNY  
Past the meadow. Past the big willow tree. I  
seen things. I heard ...

POLLY  
Who'd ya see? Were it Jane? Out there a cryin'? Were it  
Jane?

FANNY  
You wouldn't believe it.

POLLY  
Who'd ya see?

FANNY  
I seen angels. There's angels out there — past  
the meadow.

ACT 1 SC 7 -- "WHAT DID YOU SEE?" #2 (IZZY)

*(Lights have changed to the special interrogation lights. The set has changed during the previous scene. We find Izzy seated at one end of a bench set perpendicular to the edge of the stage, flanked by Phebe and Rachel.)*

PHEBE  
What did you see?

IZZY  
*(To Rachel.)* They were from heaven.

PHEBE  
What were?

RACHEL  
Everything comes from heaven.

IZZY  
They were beautiful. They were the most  
beautiful —

PHEBE  
*(Overlapping.)* Tell us everything you saw.

IZZY  
Gold. Lots of gold. And I heard music.

PHEBE  
Maybe you were dreaming.

IZZY

It seemed like a dream. So beautiful.

PHEBE

What did it look like?

IZZY

Light. Beautiful light. Heavenly light.

PHEBE

*(To Rachel.)* She was dreaming.

IZZY

Weren't no dream.

PHEBE

I wasn't talking to you.

IZZY

Weren't no dream. I thought it was. I thought it was at first. I heard sounds. Like music, but not like music. I looked up and seen a light so bright. Brighter than the sun even, but it didn't hurt my eyes to look at it. I thought I must be dreaming, so I slapped my arm. And pinched at my hand. I pinched it hard. So hard. Look. Look at the bruise. Weren't no dream.

RACHEL

Surely that must be heaven she seen.

PHEBE

Dreams show us heaven sometimes. You pinched yourself in your sleep.

IZZY

No! Fanny seen it, too.

*(Fanny stands from her side bench position and moves onstage purposefully. Izzy walks into the next scene and begins it immediately following her last line. Lights change, as Phebe and Rachel move the benches.)*

ACT 1 SC 8 -- "THOSE ARE THE BIGGEST BLUEBERRIES"

*(Izzy walks up to Fanny, who keeps moving around the stage.)*

IZZY

Fanny!

*(No answer. Izzy follows her.)*

Fanny!

*(Izzy catches up to her. Fanny walks a while, Izzy behind.)*

FANNY

Don't you have chores?

IZZY

Finished. Fed the chickens. I can come with you.

FANNY

I don't recollect inviting you.

IZZY

I want to see ... see the ...

*(Fanny turns to face her.)*

FANNY

See what? What is it you wanting to see?

IZZY

What you've been seeing.

FANNY

I've been seeing blueberries. And I aim to pick us some. Gonna spoil that nice white apron o'yours if you come pickin' blueberries with me.

*(Izzy turns to go as Polly runs on.)*

POLLY

*(To Fanny.)* Was looking for you.

FANNY

Getting to be a party now, Polly.

IZZY

*(To Polly.)* Fanny's going to pick blueberries.

POLLY

Too early for blueberries.

FANNY  
Found some early ones.

IZZY  
Early ones'll be sour.

POLLY  
She's going out past the meadow.

IZZY  
(*To Fanny.*) You said you were going berry-picking.

POLLY  
Where's her pail, then?

IZZY  
You don't have a pail!

(*A beat.*)

FANNY  
Just wanted to be alone. Not used to spending  
every waking minute someone by my side.  
Just like to go sit and look at the trees  
sometimes.

IZZY  
I won't bother you. I won't even talk to you.

POLLY  
You're seeing something in the trees.

FANNY  
(*Starting to leave.*)  
Sure, I am. Birds. I'm seeing birds in the trees.  
And squirrels.

(*Polly is following her throughout the following. Izzy tags along.*)

IZZY  
Are there baby squirrels? Funny how you never see baby  
squirrels. Baby birds. You see them. Once I found a baby  
bird fallen out of its nest. I put it back.

POLLY  
It died.

IZZY  
How do you know? I put it back.

POLLY

Mama bird won't touch a young'un after a person's handled it.

IZZY

Maybe it didn't die.

POLLY

Won't touch it once it's tainted with a human smell. Momma bird won't have anything t' do with it.

FANNY

You saved it, Izzy. You saved its life.

*(They keep walking.)*

IZZY

Once I found a hummingbird caught in a spider web. I pulled that spider web off it. Flew off, happy as could be. Aren't hummingbirds the most beautiful thing? Little spirits flying around. Little angels, almost.

POLLY

Fanny sees angels. You told me you did. Unless it was a false gift.

FANNY

Weren't false. Ain't no false gift.

POLLY

If you're seeing something, then show us. I think it's a lying gift. I don't believe in spirits and angels no how.

IZZY

Mother Ann saw spirits.

POLLY

She's making it up. She's lying.

*(Fanny stops and stares westward.)*

IZZY

*(To Fanny.)* Are you making it up?

POLLY

She's making it up. I'm going back. I'm hungry.

FANNY

There's berries over there.

POLLY  
Too early for berries.

*(Izzy sees the berries.)*

IZZY  
Those are the biggest blueberries I ever saw.  
Don't see any squirrels or birds. Sure is quiet  
here.

POLLY  
There it is!

*(Polly "gooses" Izzy, who squeals.)*

IZZY  
Where?

POLLY  
Sun's about to set. There's nothing here.

FANNY  
Over there.

POLLY  
Where?

FANNY  
There.

*(She points.)*

IZZY  
Where?

POLLY  
An angel?

FANNY  
Don't know.

IZZY  
I should be getting back.

POLLY  
You scared?

FANNY  
Thought you wanted to see.



IZZY

I do.

FANNY

*(Suddenly stops.)* Then look.

IZZY

Don't see anything. Where am I supposed to look?

POLLY

It's getting warmer. Should be getting cooler, but it's getting warmer.

FANNY

Hush.

POLLY

What do you see?

FANNY

Hush.

IZZY

I'm scared.

FANNY

*(Whispers.)* Don't be scared Izzy. It's the most beautiful thing you ever did see.

IZZY

*(Whispering back.)* More beautiful than a hummingbird?

FANNY

Like a hundred hummingbirds all at once.

*(The lights shift. Fanny holds out her arms.)*

IZZY

Ohhhh.

*(Fanny closes her eyes. Izzy and Polly look skyward.)*

Ohhh, I see light.

FANNY

Hush.

POLLY

Where?

*(Fanny stands and faces the light as if it were sunlight streaming on her face after a long dark winter.)*

What do you see?

IZZY

So beautiful!

POLLY

Don't see anything except the pink clouds!

IZZY

The light!

POLLY

It's the sunset, silly.

IZZY

I hear the wings! Like a hundred hummingbirds! Oh, oh, oh ...

POLLY

Just the breeze, Izzy. Just a warm breeze rustling through the trees.

*(Polly shakes Izzy, who continues to look all around.)*

IZZY

Gold. All gold.

POLLY

Where?

FANNY

What do you hear, Izzy?

IZZY

Music? Singing? Sounds like I never heard before.

POLLY

*(Shouting.)* You're making it up! It's just a sunset.

FANNY

Look at the clouds, Polly.

POLLY

You're making it up!

FANNY

Look at the clouds!

POLLY  
*(Covering her face.)* No.

FANNY  
 Does that look like any sunset you've ever  
 seen before?

POLLY  
*(In denial.)* No.

IZZY  
 Like a thousand hummingbirds!

*(Izzy and Fanny run off. Polly turns to go and runs into Rachel carrying a  
 basket of laundry. Lights change.)*

ACT 1 SC 9 -- "WHERE'S THE FIRE"

RACHEL  
 Sister Polly, where's the fire?

POLLY  
*(Out of breath.)* No, I, I, I don't know.

RACHEL  
 Catch your breath.

*(Betsy enters with a laundry basket, and sets the benches with Rachel, all the  
 time continuing the scene. They begin folding laundry.)*

RACHEL (CONT'D)  
 Something startled Sister Polly.

BETSY  
*(Laughing.)* Seeing spirits, are you?

POLLY  
 No!

RACHEL  
 Hmm.

BETSY  
 Best not be. 'Til you sign the covenant.

POLLY  
 Really?

RACHEL  
 She's just funnin' you.

POLLY

How did you know you were ready to sign the covenant?

RACHEL

Just seemed like the thing to do, one day.

POLLY

Did you see...? You just suddenly became a believer?

BETSY

Don't have to be a believer to sign the covenant.

RACHEL

Hmm.

BETSY

Don't have to believe. Just have to try.

POLLY

Were you always a believer?

BETSY

Sister Rachel was a minister's wife. She had to believe.

RACHEL

Joined with my late husband. And the entire congregation. Every last one of us believed.

*(Beat.)*

BETSY

I didn't believe. When I came here. No. Didn't believe at all. Didn't have any family much, bringing me up. It's nicer here. Never had so many clothes to wear. And shoes. Shoes year-round. And if they wear out they get fixed. And if they wear out again I get a new pair. Always like having shoes. I thought I'd be here a year, two at the most ... Some people here eighty year old. Where else do I see so many people eighty year old? Being taken care of. Who's going to take care of me? Longer I'm here the more I believe.

RACHEL

Hmm. Have to want to believe. It's the journey that matters.

POLLY

I don't have to always believe?

RACHEL

We'll help you.

BETSY

Have faith and belief will come. Work like you believe. Sing like you believe.

RACHEL

You ever go to a barn dance? You twirl round and round 'til you're feeling dizzy? Same thing at the meeting house. You march round and round, you're bound to feel dizzy. You stop for just a minute to catch your breath, and the singing sweeps you up again, dancing and twirling and freeing yourself from earthly concerns.

BETSY

Listen to you, you old Methodist!

RACHEL

Don't miss being a Methodist. I like to dance.

POLLY

I'm always out of step.

RACHEL

You'll catch on to it after a while. Started forming the marches about ten years ago. Some people dancing the same dances for years. Singing the same songs. For years. You'll catch on.

POLLY

I don't like singing together all the time. Want some harmony.

RACHEL

Plain and simple.

POLLY

(*Confessing.*) And I don't like the circles. Afraid I'll go off in the wrong direction and end up dancin' with the men.

RACHEL

That would be a dancin' gift! You a'twirlin' on the men's side. Give the old'ns palpitations.

POLLY

End up in the lap of Brother Timothy!

RACHEL

He's so blind, wouldn't know what was happening. Be thinking he'd got a gift from heaven and not be able to see what it was!

BETSY

Or end up twirlin' yourself into the arms of Brother Abraham.

POLLY

Hush!

RACHEL

*(Pointing.)* Rosy cheeks. Thinkin' of Brother Abraham.

*(They giggle, as Jane enters with a basket of clothes.)*

JANE

What about Brother Abraham?

POLLY

He's a looker!

JANE

I'm not looking. *(To Polly, pointedly.)* You shouldn't be, neither. *(She looks offstage.)*

That ole bull Comet will be the death of me. Snortin' and runnin' at the fence. Pastured too close to the washhouse. *(To Polly.)* You shouldn't be lookin' at the men.

POLLY

Weren't. We were just funnin'.

JANE

Gave all that up. Don't need any men anymore.

POLLY

Don't you miss bein' married sometimes?

JANE

Not one bit of it. Don't miss havin' a baby every year and wonderin' if they're gonna live long enough to walk. All that pain for nothin'. And if they do grow enough to walk and talk, you start lovin' on them every day and gettin' used to havin' your own family and then they get sickly and leave you quick as anything. I don't miss nursin' sick children who're gonna die anyway. So, no, missy, I don't miss being married. You young'ns think it's all pretty words and bouquets of flowers, but I'm here to tell you that it ain't.

RACHEL

Your husband's a good man. Become a good solid Shaker. Works hard.

POLLY

Being with a man's a natural thing.

RACHEL

For the world's people. Not for us.

JANE

Well, I don't miss it. (*She looks offstage.*) What am I going to do? That ole bull won't let me near the clothesline. Flies at the fence every time I try to take down a linen.

RACHEL

Comet wouldn't hurt a no-see-um flying in his face.

POLLY

But it's natural, wantin' to be with a man.

RACHEL

Mother Ann Lee teaches us to keep our eyes on heaven. Not on earthly wants.

POLLY

We eat and we sleep.

RACHEL

So we can do Mother Ann Lee's work.

JANE

Mother Ann lost four babies. Afore she stopped lying with her husband. Four babies.

RACHEL

(*To Polly.*) Fix your eyes on heaven. You won't think about earthly wants.

POLLY  
If it's natural, like eating and sleeping ...

RACHEL  
Some people find a sweetheart and get married. We give  
our hearts to God.

*(Rachel grabs some of the laundry and exits.)*

JANE  
*(Looking off.)* That ole bull Comet sure don't like those linens  
on the line. The worst is the petticoats. He sees them a-  
wavin' at him and he goes crazy. Just like a man. Goin' crazy  
over the petticoats on the other side of the fence.

*(Izzy comes running in.)*

IZZY  
Mischief had kittens!

POLLY  
Again?

*(Jane keeps working.)*

IZZY  
She had kittens! Three, four of 'em! In the laundry basket.  
On the clean laundry! I don't think anyone'll mind, do you?  
She just popped one out and licked it and then another came  
out and another. One looks like Mischief and two look like  
Mr.Chickenhouse. But the last little one, all motley colored,  
was just lying there. Mischief didn't even lick that one. Just  
pushed it aside.

*(Izzy looks at Polly, who doesn't speak. Izzy turns to Jane.)*

JANE  
Cats are smarter than people sometimes.

*(As she gets up to go.)*  
Know when to give up on a sickly child.

*(Jane goes back to the side benches. Rachel, Betsy and Izzy carry off the laundry  
baskets as they exit to the side benches. Lights change.)*

ACT 1 SC 10 -- "MY CARNAL LIFE"

*(Polly sings as she moves the benches. She stacks one on top of the other to  
make a table.)*



POLLY

*(Singing.)*

MY CARNAL LIFE I WILL LAY DOWN  
BECAUSE IT IS DEPRAVED.  
I'M SURE ON ANY OTHER GROUND  
I NEVER CAN BE SAVED.

*(Lights change.)*

ACT 1 SC 11 -- "I HAVE A GIFT TO DRAW"

*(Polly finishes her song and begins to draw, standing at the "table." Betsy enters from one side and Peggy from the other. All three women use dowels for brushes and mime drawing.)*

BETSY

You have a beautiful script, Sister Polly. And  
look at that apple. That is a lovely apple.

*(Betsy and Peggy begin to work.)*

POLLY

I like making pictures. Drawing the fruit.

PEGGY

Some Sisters couldn't tell the jelly jars apart. Before you  
started making pictures for them.

POLLY

Why not?

BETSY

Can't read. Some of the older Sisters are unable to read. And  
some of the younger ones if they're new.

PEGGY

Your fruit pictures are welcome.

POLLY

I try to make them pretty.

PEGGY

Just make them plain and simple.

BETSY

A little color is nice.

PEGGY

Just to tell what the fruit is. Don't embellish.

BETSY  
Sister Polly is an artist.

PEGGY  
(*To Betsy.*) Sister Polly is of service here. Her labels are clear.  
(*To Polly.*) We'll have you helping Sister Betsy with the seed packets next.

POLLY  
Seed packets would be fun.

PEGGY  
It's not for fun.

POLLY  
Sister Betsy's seed packets are beautiful.

BETSY  
They are useful. Sell the seeds to the world's people.

POLLY  
They are beautiful. All the colors.

BETSY  
I try to keep them simple.

POLLY  
They look just like the vegetables. Not like my drawings.

PEGGY  
Your fruit drawings are unmistakable. Plain. Simple.

POLLY  
My trees.

PEGGY  
(*Curious.*) What trees?

POLLY  
Oh, if I were to draw a tree ... On a seed packet.

PEGGY  
(*Confused.*) There are no seed packets for trees.

POLLY  
If there were.

PEGGY

There aren't.

*(They work in silence.)*

Are you drawing trees, Sister Polly?

BETSY

I must commence working on some herb pictures. Sister Polly, I simply can't seem to get the rosemary right. All those spiny little leaves. Tricky little leaves. Would you sketch it out for me?

*(Polly just stares at her.)*

PEGGY

Are you drawing trees, Sister Polly?

BETSY

It's the little details that escape me. I'm better at the vegetables.

PEGGY

Sister Polly?

POLLY

Yes, Sister Peggy?

BETSY

I like a good round radish. Or a tomato. Even a carrot. Something with color. Don't care for drawing potatoes or turnips. And those little herbs are tricky. Trying to tell them apart. Always have to ask Sister Phebe which is which. All those little leaves.

PEGGY

Perhaps Sister Polly can help you with the little leaves on the herbs. For the seed packets. Perhaps Sister Polly is accustomed to drawing leaves. Perhaps Sister Polly should direct her drawing talent toward useful service.

*(Peggy exits. Betsy and Polly work in silence for a moment. Polly stops and looks at Betsy.)*

POLLY

I have a gift to draw.

BETSY

You have a talent to draw.

POLLY

I have a gift to draw.

BETSY

What's your meaning, Sister Polly?

POLLY

I have a gift to draw. It just comes out of me. The strangest drawings. Trees and birds.

BETSY

Trees and birds aren't strange.

POLLY

Trees and birds like I've never seen. I have a gift to draw trees and birds, but I only see them in my head. Well, you understand. You have a talent.

BETSY

I have a talent to draw what I see so others can recognize it. Vegetables. Fruits.

POLLY

But you see it in your head.

BETSY

No. I have to look at what I'm drawing for anybody to be able to tell what it is. Can't just draw it without seeing it.

POLLY

But you see it in your head. Right now. You could draw a carrot. Right now if you wanted to.

BETSY

Might look like a long orange potato. No. I have to look at what I'm drawing. See it in front of me.

POLLY

Not in your head.

BETSY

On the table in front of me.

POLLY

Oh.

BETSY

Have to see it. (*A pause.*) Do you draw from your head, Sister Polly?

POLLY  
I have a gift to draw.

BETSY  
I would make certain it is not a false gift.

POLLY  
I have a gift to draw.  
*(Polly pulls something from her pocket.)*  
This is for you, Sister Betsy.

*(Polly hands her a colored heart with drawing and writing on it. Betsy just looks at Polly for a moment without speaking. Lights change. Betsy and Polly move the benches as the other women enter.)*

ACT 1 SC 12 -- "THE CHICKENS ARE GONE"

*(The lights are suddenly bright, as if the sun is shining. The Sisters are chasing chickens, ad-libbing "chick, chick, chick.")*

RACHEL  
Here, chick, chick, chick.

PEGGY  
Some roosting in the trees.

BETSY  
Chick, chick, chick.

RACHEL  
Get the cats! The cats are chasing the chickens.  
Mr. Chickenhouse! Mr. Chickenhouse!

PEGGY  
Got a chick in his mouth. He's under the coop.  
Here, kitty, kitty, kitty.

RACHEL  
Mischief! Mischief!

BETSY  
There she is. Yonder past the trees.

*(Jane enters.)*

RACHEL  
Chickens are gone.

PEGGY  
Chick, chick, chick.

RACHEL  
Dogs chased the chickens into the woods.

FANNY  
Chick, chick, chick.

BETSY  
Mr. Chickenhouse better not come out,  
neither, if he knows what's good for him.

RACHEL  
Wait'll chickens get hungry.

IZZY  
We'll get them back.

RACHEL  
Catch 'em then.

POLLY  
Chickens are stupid.

*(Polly laughs.)*

PEGGY  
So stupid you can't catch 'em.

POLLY  
*(Laughing, as she looks for chickens.)*  
Chick, chick, chick.

RACHEL  
Mr. Chickenhouse's got a baby chick. Under  
the coop.

POLLY  
*(Suppressing a giggle.)* Chick, chick, chick.

IZZY  
*(Horried.)* No!

*(Polly giggles more.)*

BETSY  
You find that funny, Sister Polly?

FANNY  
She has a laughing gift.

*(Polly can't stop giggling.)*

POLLY  
I have a laughing gift!

*(Polly and Fanny laugh uproariously. Izzy looks at them.)*

FANNY  
We have a laughing gift.

*(They are falling down with laughter. Polly laughs hysterically and bumps into Izzy who catches the laughing gift. Rachel begins to laugh. Peggy watches in disbelief.)*

RACHEL  
We have a laughing gift.

*(At this news, Fanny, Polly and Izzy explode with laughter. Izzy falls into Jane, and she laughs. Fanny exits, looking for the chickens. Phebe enters.)*

PHEBE  
Who left the gate open? Who left the gate open?  
*(No one answers.)*  
It's not funny.

RACHEL  
*(Laughing.)* Maybe it's the devil.

PHEBE  
Who was feeding the chickens?

PEGGY  
I sent Sister Polly out for some eggs.

POLLY  
I saw Sister Fanny walking past the henhouse.

PHEBE  
I will have a word with Sister Fanny. You, too, Sister Polly.  
*(She sees a chicken and goes after it.)*

Chick, chick, chick.  
*(The women howl. Maybe Polly imitates her.)*

This is not funny. This is not funny.  
*(They look at her.)*

What are you going to eat tomorrow? No eggs for breakfast. Or for bakin'. What are you going to feed the Brothers for breakfast tomorrow? Or the day after tomorrow?

*(The women are subdued. Hannah enters.)*

PHEBE  
The chickens got loose.

HANNAH  
Talking won't catch them. Here, chick, chick,  
chick.

*(Hannah exits. Serious now, Rachel, Peggy, Phebe chase after the chickens.  
Betsy starts to exit, but Izzy stops her.)*

IZZY  
Sister Betsy. It was me. Left the gate open.

BETSY  
In all my years of schooling you, I never knew  
you to tell a lie. Don't start now.

IZZY  
I was feeding the chickens. Had a gift to go  
past the meadow. Went past the meadow.  
Must've left the gate open. Sister Betsy, what's  
out there past the meadow? Is the devil out  
there?

BETSY  
No devil.

IZZY  
Sister Rachel said the devil let the chickens out.

BETSY  
We're living in heaven here. Remember your  
lessons? You have confessed your sins, so you  
are without them. Everything is perfect here.

*(Betsy exits. Lights change.)*

# ACT 1 SC 13 -- "THESE BEANS ARE GOOD"

*(Peggy, Rachel, Polly, Izzy, Jane march into dinner, moving the benches as they sing.  
Phebe, Betsy, Hannah go to their dinner on another part of the stage.)*

ALL  
*(Singing.)*  
COME THE FEAST IS READY,  
WHILE THE TABLE'S LOADED,  
WITH THE CHOICEST FRUITS FROM AFAR AND NEAR.  
WHILE LEADERS AND PEOPLE, PARENTS AND CHILDREN,  
LOVE, AND AFFECTION, ALL ARE HERE.



*(Both groups kneel. Fanny enters, late, and kneels.)*

HANNAH  
Gracious God, we are your humble servants.

PEGGY  
Mother God, Father God, we thank you for  
this food.

BETSY  
We thank you for that which you have  
provided us.

RACHEL  
May we serve you.

PHEBE  
May we use this food in your everlasting  
service.

PEGGY  
We eat in silence and respect. Amen.

ALL  
Amen.

HANNAH, BETSY, PHEBE  
Amen.

*(All sit. The Sisters eat in silence. Each has a small dowel as a prop. Hannah, Betsy and Phebe are eating alone together. They are freely talking, in great contrast to the quiet dinner of the rest of the women.)*

BETSY  
This squash could do with some seasoning.

HANNAH  
Sister Peggy cooks plain and simple.

BETSY  
Mighty fine bread, though.

HANNAH  
Sister Phebe ...

PHEBE  
Yes, Sister Hannah?

HANNAH  
I'm concerned.

PHEBE  
About what?

HANNAH  
About the girls.

PHEBE  
Yes?

HANNAH  
Their hearts are to God, but their hands don't  
seem to want to work.

PHEBE  
I'm not catching your meaning.

HANNAH  
The girls are not attentive to their work.

PHEBE  
The work is getting done.

HANNAH  
Sister Polly has missed her kitchen duties.  
Sister Fanny takes long walks alone. The girls  
are not doing their share, are they?

PHEBE  
No, they are not.

HANNAH  
Ah.

*(A beat.)*

PHEBE  
They are young. They drift off, return.

HANNAH  
More than that.

PHEBE  
Perhaps.

HANNAH  
What do you think is happening?

PHEBE  
I don't think they are lazy.

HANNAH  
That is not what I am asking.

PHEBE  
They are attentive at service.

*(Hannah turns to Betsy.)*

HANNAH  
Sister Betsy?

BETSY  
These beans are good.

HANNAH  
Sister Betsy, you are as inattentive as the girls. There is an oddness in the air, an expectancy even. Sister Polly keeps running with the younger girls.

BETSY  
Sister Polly never had a childhood. Sister Polly was working on her back in a fancy house in Lexington when she was twelve.

HANNAH  
I am well aware of Sister Polly's provenance. *(To Phebe.)* You must guide them better, Sister Phebe. You must tend to order.

PHEBE  
Yes, Sister Hannah.

HANNAH  
You must keep them better occupied. I see girls whispering in the corner. We have no secrets here.

BETSY  
Sister Hannah —  
*(Pulls a heart-shaped gift drawing out of her pocket.)*  
One of the girls gave this to me.

HANNAH  
They are not permitted to make such things.

BETSY  
She said she was the instrument. She said it was from Mother Ann.

HANNAH  
Mother Ann?

BETSY  
She said that Mother Ann came to her from heaven and told her to make this for me. That this is a gift from Mother Ann to me.

HANNAH  
And you believe her?

BETSY  
There are strange things going on. What shall we do?

HANNAH  
Sister Phebe, what do you think we should do?

PHEBE  
I think we should wait.

HANNAH  
That is good advice, Sister Phebe. We will wait ... And we will watch.

BETSY  
I wonder what we have for dessert today.

*(Lights change as the next scene begins immediately. One of the benches stays in place for the following scene; the rest are placed on the sides. The women sit on them.)*

ACT 1 SC 14 -- "WHAT DID YOU SEE?" #3 (FANNY)

*(Fanny is seated on the end of a bench, in the special interrogation light. Hannah and Peggy stand on either side of her.)*

HANNAH  
*(To Peggy.)* What did you see?

PEGGY  
Who was there with you?

HANNAH  
What did you see?

FANNY  
I saw angels.

HANNAH  
(*To Fanny.*) Who was there?

FANNY  
Angels. There were angels there.

HANNAH  
You must tell us who was with you.

FANNY  
I tell you. I tell you again and again. I saw  
angels.

PEGGY  
(*To Hannah.*) Maybe she saw ...

HANNAH  
(*Overlapping.*) You must tell us what you saw.

FANNY  
Angels —

HANNAH  
(*Overlapping.*) There was another sister there?

FANNY  
No.

HANNAH  
Brethren? Who was there?

(*A pause.*)

PEGGY  
There are good reasons ...

FANNY  
I'm thinking.

PEGGY  
We'll help you think.

HANNAH  
There were Brothers there?

FANNY  
I don't know their names.

HANNAH  
Brothers from the North Family?

FANNY  
Not Brothers.

PEGGY  
Men from town?

HANNAH  
Old men? Young men?

FANNY  
Not men.

PEGGY  
Boys?

FANNY  
No.

HANNAH  
Not men or boys?

FANNY  
Angels! Gabriel, Michael. Peter. I don't know  
all their names.

PEGGY  
Oh, Lordy.

FANNY  
I'm telling you. There were angels.

*(Lights change.)*

ACT 1 SC 15 -- "GLORY UNTO GOD WE'LL SING"

*(Peggy begins to sing. Betsy hears her and enters.)*

PEGGY  
*(Singing.)*  
GLORY UNTO GOD WE'LL SING

*(Betsy motions Peggy to stop. Betsy looks around to see if anyone is listening. She motions Peggy to continue. When Peggy begins to sing again, Betsy joins in.)*

PEGGY, BETSY  
PRAISE TO CHRIST THE SAVIOUR

*(Betsy begins to harmonize, much to Peggy's excitement.)*

WHO THE JOYFUL NEWS DID BRING  
 THAT WE MIGHT CONQUER EVERY SIN  
 AND REIGN O'ER DEATH FOREVER

*(They sing full out, joyfully.)*

ALL THE HEAVENS PRAISE HIS NAME ANGELS GIVE  
 HIM GLORY

*(The become aware that they might be overheard.)*

SAINTS ON EARTH COME JOIN THE STRAIN  
 LET YOUR CHORUS BE THE SAME  
 CRYING HOLY HOLY.

*(As the song finishes, the women have returned to their seats. Lights change.)*

ACT 1 SC 16 -- "I DON'T LIKE PULLING WEEDS"

*(During the song Polly and Izzy have entered upstage. When the lights change we see they are pulling weeds. They each have a basket beside them. Throughout the scene the women are very careful not to talk about what happened at the meadow. Various Sisters cross behind them, so that they are never alone and can't talk about the vision.)*

POLLY

I don't like pulling weeds.

IZZY

Nobody does.

POLLY

Sister Phebe does. She's always in the garden.

IZZY

She has a garden talent.

POLLY

'T aint fair. I have a kitchen talent.

IZZY

You'll be in the kitchen next month.

*(A beat.)*

Polly, what did you see out there past the  
 meadow —

POLLY

*(Interrupting her.)* Hush.

*(Rachel and Fanny enter, Fanny carries a basket. She puts it on the ground as Rachel exits.)*

FANNY  
Got sent out here to help. Finished my baskets  
and they sent me out here.

IZZY  
You been back past the meadow?

FANNY  
You want to go with me?

POLLY  
Weren't nothing there.  
*(Phebe and Betsy cross the stage. Polly stands up.)*  
My knees hurt. Can't keep sitting on the  
ground.

BETSY  
We're having a picnic tomorrow.

IZZY  
A picnic!

PHEBE  
Can't sit on the ground, can't go to the picnic.  
*(The Sisters exit. Fanny and Izzy keep pulling weeds. Polly sits.)*

POLLY  
My knees hurt.

FANNY  
Poor, pitiful Polly.

IZZY  
I got bit by a bug.

FANNY  
Don't got no time for complaining.  
*(Fanny works harder.)*

POLLY  
I'm hungry.  
*(Another Sister hurries past and exits.)*

IZZY  
Why are you working so hard? There's always  
going to be more weeds.



POLLY

Proving.

IZZY

Proving what?

FANNY

She's saying that I'm a winter Shaker.

IZZY

But it's summer. You can't be a winter Shaker in the summer, can you?

FANNY

She thinks I'm just here to get a good meal and a warm bed.

POLLY

Didn't say that.

FANNY

Didn't have to say that. I know'd what you mean.

IZZY

You work harder than anybody.

FANNY

I'm used to work. Work's not hard. When your momma's dead, your daddy's a drunkard, and his new wife don't like the nose on your face, well, then you just keep working to stay out of their way.

POLLY

My daddy was a drunk, too. Izzy don't know much 'bout her daddy.

IZZY

Do, too.

POLLY

He dropped you off here when you was three.

IZZY

'Cause my momma died. But I've seen my poppa twice since. I've seen him twice.

FANNY

Fortunate for you. Your daddy bringing you here. Learn to read. Always got shoes. Never hungry.

POLLY

I'm hungry now.

FANNY

You're going to be fed soon. Sisters making supper right now.

POLLY

Sister Peggy?

FANNY

Making your supper. Smelled it on my way over. Smells good.

POLLY

Won't taste like much o'anything. Always tastes the same. I'm hungry for something different.

FANNY

Being real hungry is when your stomach's a'growling and there's nothing to eat. And when you know there's not gonna be anythin' much to eat for days and days.

IZZY

I'm going to always stay here. I'm going to sign the covenant. I'll be old enough in three years.

FANNY

Might as well sign the covenant.

POLLY

You don't know any different. Never know'd anything else.

FANNY

No place better than this.

IZZY

I want to be a deaconess. Or an eldress.

POLLY

Then you won't have to pull weeds.

*(They continue to pull weeds in silence. Lights change, as Betsy unfurls a big cloth from the side of the stage. As she speaks, she places it on the ground to begin the picnic scene. The lights are bright and there is much movement on the stage.)*

ACT 1 SC 17 --"MIGHTY FINE DAY"

*(Betsy, Rachel, Peggy, Jane, Izzy, Phebe, Polly, Hannah, Fanny at the picnic. Betsy, Rachel, Peggy lead the way, carrying cloths and baskets. Izzy, Polly, Phebe, Jane follow. Hannah and Fanny seem to both be keeping to themselves.)*

BETSY

Mighty fine day.

RACHEL

We thank God for this beautiful day.

PEGGY

Never a better one this year.

RACHEL

You bring the napkins?

JANE

Right here.

IZZY

What are we having?

BETSY

*(She flings out a blanket.)*

It's a surprise!

JANE

Bet it's your favorite!

*(The women lay blankets on the ground and sit, arranging their baskets, etc., during the following.)*

PHEBE

Everything is her favorite.

IZZY

Is not.

PHEBE

Name a food you don't like.

RACHEL  
She always cleans her plate.

IZZY  
'cause we're supposed to!

POLLY  
What if you didn't?

IZZY  
Didn't what?

POLLY  
What if you didn't have to clean your plate?  
What would you leave on it?

BETSY  
Vegetables!

IZZY  
Wouldn't!

RACHEL  
Yes, you would.

JANE  
Children never like vegetables.  
(*She hands something to Phebe.*)  
Here, Sister Phebe.

POLLY  
What if you could eat whatever you want?

PHEBE  
Thank you, Sister Jane.

IZZY  
I like everything.

POLLY  
If you had to choose.

IZZY  
Sister Peggy's chicken and gravy. That's my  
favorite.

JANE  
I'm sitting on a rock.

RACHEL  
Trade with me then.

JANE  
It's not a hard rock.

RACHEL  
All rocks are hard. Sit over here.

IZZY  
Sit by me! Teach me Jacob's Ladder.

JANE  
Don't need to be knowing Jacob's Ladder.

BETSY  
Every child learns that.

RACHEL  
Hmm.

IZZY  
Never did. Always got the string tangled.

RACHEL  
Best not put you on a spinning wheel!

PEGGY  
Or a loom. You'll be snapping beans in the kitchen from now on.

IZZY  
I could learn to spin!

PEGGY  
You are a bean-snapper!

BETSY  
Or a whippersnapper!

IZZY  
*(Holding out some string to Jane.)*  
Teach me Jacob's Ladder.

JANE  
Got better things to do.

POLLY  
I used to do Jacob's Ladder. And Cat's Cradle.  
I could do them.

IZZY

*(To Jane.)* You said you would teach me.

BETSY

We'll have you spinning wool this winter,  
Sister Polly! And weaving!

JANE

I said I knew how. Didn't say I would teach  
you.

RACHEL

Sister Polly, you never learned how to spin?

BETSY

Lots of things she never learned. We're here to  
help Sister Polly. She never lived on a farm  
before. Not like the city.

IZZY

Did you have servants?

POLLY

Where'd you get such an idea?

IZZY

Sister Betsy said you came from a fancy house.

RACHEL

Hmm.

BETSY

Izzy!

PHEBE

You're here with us now, Sister Polly.

RACHEL

*(To Polly.)* You have a new life now.

PEGGY

Sister Polly, would you like some cornbread?

POLLY

Had better food in Lexington!

*(Polly walks away.)*

RACHEL

Hmm.

JANE  
*(Indicates Izzy should come to her.)*  
 Izzy.

IZZY  
*(To Jane.)* Please, please teach me Jacob's Ladder?

JANE  
 Why you askin' me? Lots of other sisters could teach you. Polly could teach you.

IZZY  
 You take time to explain things. You'll teach me the right way and I'll remember it.

*(After a beat.)*

JANE  
 I'll show you one, anyway. I'll do one quick for you to see.

*(Jane creates the "Jacob's Ladder" with her string, explaining all the while.)*  
 Over two, over one, over two. Put your fingers there and ... Inside out ... Jacob's Ladder. Up to heaven.

*(Jane holds up the string figure.)*

IZZY  
 Oh!

JANE  
*(Holding up the Jacob's Ladder.)*  
 See the strings, top and bottom of the X?

IZZY  
 I see them.

JANE  
 Grab each one of them. No. Pinch your fingers. One hand on the top and the other on the bottom. Pinch the top and bottom of the X. That's it.

IZZY  
 Got it.

JANE  
 And pull.

*(Izzy does and the string unravels perfectly.)*

IZZY  
Oh! Now teach me. Please?

JANE  
It's not hard. Make certain the knot's tied right so it won't  
give way when you pull on it. Gotta start right if you're  
going to  
finish right.

*(Jane begins to show Izzy. Fanny stands very still, looking off in the distance.)*

BETSY  
Storm a-brewin'?

RACHEL  
No. Not a cloud in the sky.

PHEBE  
Better not be a storm.

*(Fanny continues to stand still and stare off. Her arms begin to raise, pointing outward.)*

BETSY  
What do you see, Sister Fanny?

PEGGY  
Something off in the woods?

JANE  
You see an animal? Where? Is it big?

PHEBE  
Most likely a deer.

BETSY  
Sister Fanny, would you like some chicken?

*(Fanny just stands still. Polly watches her. Polly starts to sing. The women join in. After a moment, Fanny's reverie is broken and she watches the women.)*

POLLY  
HOP UP AND JUMP UP  
AND WHIRL 'ROUND, WHIRL 'ROUND SISTERS.  
GATHER LOVE, HERE IT IS  
ALL 'ROUND, ALL 'ROUND.

*(Polly makes a round begin. But as soon as the Sisters realize, they stop, one by one.)*  
HERE IS LOVE FLOWING 'ROUND,  
CATCH IT AS YOU WHIRL 'ROUND,



REACH UP AND REACH DOWN,  
HERE IT IS ALL 'ROUND.

HANNAH  
*(Interrupting.)* Sister Polly, we sing in unison. It is not  
permitted to embellish.

POLLY  
Would be more fun if we did.

RACHEL  
Sister Polly!

*(Fanny stands up and continues to stare out.)*

PHEBE  
Are you ill?

HANNAH  
Are you ill, Sister Fanny?

*(Fanny raises her arms slowly upward, as the women all watch in silence.)*

RACHEL  
She's an instrument.

HANNAH  
Sister Rachel, will you help Sister Peggy pack  
up our dinner.

PEGGY  
Are we finished?

HANNAH  
Yes.

IZZY  
We just got here. I'll eat the vegetables!

*(All the women begin to pick up the picnic items. Fanny slowly turns, arms  
heaven-ward.)*

HANNAH  
Sister Fanny.

IZZY  
You spoiled the picnic!

*(We move immediately into the next scene. Lights change.)*

## ACT 1 SC 18 -- "I HAVE A SPINNING GIFT"

*(The picnic clothes have turned into laundry. Rachel, Phebe, Peggy are doing laundry and ironing. Hannah and Betsy are folding the picnic blanket together.)*

HANNAH

Sister Fanny will be moving into the East Family Dwelling. Next week.

RACHEL

She's very new.

PHEBE

Won't be signing the covenant anytime soon.

BETSY

Shouldn't she stay in the Gathering Order?

PEGGY

With the newcomers?

HANNAH

I see the men looking at her there.

PHEBE

Brother Harris'll be looking at her over here.

RACHEL

Hmm.

PHEBE

He likes to look at the young'ns.

BETSY

Just 'cause one eye a-wanders. His eyes don't look in the same direction. Cain't tell where he's lookin'.

PHEBE

He's got a wanderin' eye, all right.

PEGGY

Just 'cause he's afflicted in his eyes.

PHEBE

You don't know 'bout men and their lookin'. You were reared here. Don't know the ways of worldly men.

BETSY

Leastways he's not cross-eyed! Like that son of Brother Ethan. I declare, I don't know how he dances the circles without falling down dizzy.

RACHEL

Maybe that's why he's cross-eyed.

PHEBE

Poor thing. How do you think he drives those pegs so straight? With those crossed eyes a' his?

BETSY

He'd be good at basket making. Keep two sides going at once.

PEGGY

Or weaving.

PHEBE

Get the warp and woof weaving at the same time.

PEGGY

Couldn't match up his plaids, I bet.

BETSY

Makes a straight chair, though. Drives those pegs in straight. Even with crossed eyes.

PHEBE

If his eyes ever straightened out he'd be driving pegs crooked.

*(They all are twittering.)*

HANNAH

Is everyone finished with their discussion of men's eyes?

BETSY

Beg pardon, Sister Hannah.

RACHEL

Beg pardon.

HANNAH

Sister Fanny will be moving to the East Family dwelling. In the room with Sister Rachel.

PHEBE  
Sister Jane's in that room.

RACHEL  
I'm with Sister Jane.

HANNAH  
Sister Jane will move in with Sister Polly.

PHEBE  
That'll be a teary room. Whiny little Sister  
Polly with sad Sister Jane. Best be assigning  
them some extra hankies. Puttin' those two  
together.

HANNAH  
Are you suggesting that Sister Jane shares with  
you?

PEGGY  
(*To Phebe.*) Sister Jane snores if she's been crying.

RACHEL  
Her nose fills up and she snores.

HANNAH  
Sister Jane and Sister Polly will share the room.  
The decision has been made.

(*Hannah exits with Betsy.*)

PEGGY  
Sister Jane won't be happy.

PHEBE  
Sister Jane is never happy.

(*Fanny, Polly, Jane enter.*)

PHEBE (CONT'D)  
Sister Jane, would you bring the rest of the  
ironing off the line?

JANE  
I don't mind ironing some.

PEGGY  
There are kerchiefs on the line.

FANNY

I'll go.

PHEBE

I asked Sister Jane to go.

RACHEL

Let Sister Fanny go.

PHEBE

Sister Fanny will remain here.

RACHEL

Then let me go. I'll get the kerchiefs.

JANE

Please don't send me.

PEGGY

It's a beautiful day. Be nice to be outside.

JANE

*(Tearing up.)* I don't want to go out to the clothesline.

FANNY

*(Starting to go.)*

I'll go.

PHEBE

You will not go. You will not go outside.

FANNY

But Sister Jane is afeerd.

JANE

Don't make me go.

RACHEL

Sister Jane, what are you afraid of?

JANE

It's outside.

PHEBE

What is? What is outside?

JANE

By the clothesline.

RACHEL  
What's by the clothesline?

JANE  
I don't like it!

PHEBE  
Sister Jane —

FANNY  
She's afeerd of —

PHEBE  
Sister Fanny, you will be quiet.

JANE  
Comet!

POLLY  
You're afraid of Comet?

RACHEL  
That old bull?

JANE  
He runs to the fence.

PEGGY  
Fence'll keep him in.

JANE  
I'm scared he'll jump the fence.

PHEBE  
Sister Peggy will you go fetch the kerchiefs?  
Don't bother yourself any more, Sister Jane.  
Sister Peggy will fetch the kerchiefs.

PEGGY  
I'll go fetch the kerchiefs. I'm not afraid. That  
ole bull knows not to pick a quarrel with me.

*(Peggy exits. Polly and Fanny begin to fold a sheet. Izzy enters, carrying a basket.)*

IZZY  
I saw the kerchiefs on the line. They were scaring Comet.

*(Polly and Fanny begin to play with their sheet.)*

POLLY  
Scaring Comet!

PHEBE  
Sister Polly?

POLLY  
I have a spinning gift.

*(Polly and Fanny are now spinning playfully.)*  
I have a spinning gift!

FANNY  
We have a spinning gift.

*(Polly and Fanny wrap the sheet around Izzy's waist and spin her.)*

IZZY  
I have a spinning gift.  
*(Izzy joins hands with Jane and starts to spin.)*  
We have a spinning gift.

JANE  
We have a dizzy gift.

*(Izzy and Jane let go. Jane is dizzy and begins to walk crookedly. Polly and Fanny are spinning around the stage.)*

POLLY  
*(Pointing to Jane.)*  
You have a drunk gift! You have a drunk gift!

JANE  
I have a drunk gift!

*(Fanny spins slowly upstage, her arms reaching upward.)*

POLLY  
I have a drunk gift.

FANNY  
I have a spinning gift.

IZZY  
I have a spinning gift!

JANE  
I have a spinning gift.

*(They all whisper "I have a spinning gift, I have a spinning gift," over and over and over while twirling slowly with their arms held high. Phebe looks on in amazement. Betsy enters.)*

PHEBE

*(To Betsy.)* They have a spinning gift.

*(Betsy looks at the girls. Lights change. As the next song begins, the Sisters clear the stage.)*

# ACT 1 SC 19 -- "OH, SISTERS AIN'T YOU HAPPY"

*(As the women move the benches back to the perimeter of the stage, Peggy begins singing. The others join in. We are at a Shaker worship service.)*

PEGGY

*(Singing.)*

O SISTERS AIN'T YOU HAPPY ALL.  
O SISTERS AIN'T YOU HAPPY,  
O SISTERS AIN'T YOU HAPPY,  
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.  
SING ON, DANCE ON,  
FOLLOWERS OF EMMANUEL.  
SING ON, DANCE ON, YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.

*(After the set has changed, the women line up in a formation to finish the dance.)*

BETSY

I MEAN TO BE OBEDIENT ALL.  
I MEAN TO BE OBEDIENT,  
I MEAN TO BE OBEDIENT,  
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.  
SING ON, DANCE ON,  
FOLLOWERS OF EMMANUEL.  
SING ON, DANCE ON,  
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.

PHEBE

I'LL CROSS MY UGLY NATURE ALL.  
I'LL CROSS MY UGLY NATURE,  
I'LL CROSS MY UGLY NATURE,  
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.  
SING ON, DANCE ON, FOLLOWERS OF  
EMMANUEL.  
SING ON, DANCE ON, YE FOLLOWERS OF  
THE LAMB.

RACHEL

I LOVE TO ATTEND TO ORDER ALL.  
I LOVE TO ATTEND TO ORDER,



I LOVE TO ATTEND TO ORDER  
 YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.  
 SING ON, DANCE ON,  
 FOLLOWERS OF EMMANUEL.  
 SING ON, DANCE ON,  
 YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.

IZZY  
 I'M GLAD I AM A SHAKER ALL.  
 I'M GLAD I AM A SHAKER,  
 I'M GLAD I AM A SHAKER,  
 YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.  
 SING ON, DANCE ON,  
 FOLLOWERS OF EMMANUEL.  
 SING ON, DANCE ON,  
 YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.  
 SING ON, DANCE ON,  
 FOLLOWERS OF EMMANUEL.  
 SING ON, DANCE ON,  
 YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.

*(During the last chorus, Fanny suddenly begins to turn round and round with her arms stretched upward. The dance is disrupted.)*

FANNY  
 Mother Ann is here. Mother Ann is with us.

*(Polly and Izzy also begin to turn, arms high.)*

POLLY  
 Yes.

IZZY  
 I hear heavenly music.

*(Lights change. Some of the women exit to their benches at the side. We move immediately into the next scene, which begins while the benches are being set. The lines begin as the women move into place. We are in Hannah's office.)*

ACT 1 SC 20 -- "WE WILL SEND A REPORT"

PHEBE  
 They're not doing their chores.

RACHEL  
 A-screaming in the woods at midnight.

BETSY

They try to do their chores in the afternoon.

RACHEL

No. One of them always gets a gift and off they go. Whooping and hollerin'.

BETSY

They labor the entire day at their worship.

PHEBE

Well, I can't do all their chores for them.

BETSY

They have a gift to sing and dance.

RACHEL

They have a gift to sing separate from the others. If we're going to start singing in harmony, we might as well be Methodists.

BETSY

Perhaps they have a true gift to sing.

PHEBE

I don't have a gift to do their chores.

RACHEL

They're filled with the spirit.

PHEBE

I'll fill them with a spirit. Castor oil, maybe.

BETSY

You'll catch more flies with honey.

PHEBE

(*To Hannah.*) There is talk in town. There were world's people at the service. The Brothers are disturbed. Sister Izzy is telling them to give up meat.

BETSY

They will tire of this.

PHEBE

I'm tired of it. Sick and tired.

HANNAH

Sister Phebe.

PHEBE

Perhaps Sister Polly should leave. Sister Fanny, too.

BETSY

Sister Polly has no family but us. Sister Polly was a, a fallen woman before she came to us. We cannot desert her.

PHEBE

*(Sharply, to Betsy.)* Something must be done.

RACHEL

Maybe it's the end of the world.

PHEBE

Maybe it is.

HANNAH

Listen to yourselves. This is not the way we talk to each other.

RACHEL

There is poison here.

HANNAH

Ten years ago this community was failing.

RACHEL

After my husband passed.

HANNAH

Ten years ago I was sent here from Union Village with Brother Ezakiah to restore order. We are now prosperous. Are we to return to what was before? We must determine what is happening. The community is more important than one individual. We must tend to order.

*(The three women all start to speak. She stops them.)*

We must send a report to Mount Lebanon.

*(They all look at her.)*

We will interrogate the girls. We will get testimonies from every woman in the village. We will send a report.

*(Lights change. Hannah begins to speak her lines for the next scene as the women move the benches and get into place.)*

## ACT 1 SC 20 -- "WHAT DID YOU SEE?" #4 (POL,IZ,FAN)

*(The three groups of women are onstage, three in each group, as in each of the previous interrogation scenes, except this time all together. Group One is Hannah, Peggy and Fanny. Group Two is Betsy, Jane and Polly. Group Three is Phebe, Rachel and Izzy. Fanny, Polly and Izzy sit on the ends of the benches in their groups, with the other two women on each side and slightly behind them.)*

HANNAH

*(To Fanny.)* What did you see?

BETSY

*(To Polly.)* What did you see?

PHEBE

What did you see?

PEGGY

Who was there with you?

HANNAH

What did you see?

POLLY

I don't know.

BETSY

Must have been something powerful.

POLLY

Weren't much o' nothin'. Nothin' at'll.

HANNAH

What did you see?

FANNY

I saw angels.

IZZY

*(To Rachel.)* They were from heaven.

PHEBE

What were?

RACHEL

Everything comes from heaven.

HANNAH

*(To Fanny.)* Who was there?

FANNY  
Angels. There were angels there.

IZZY  
They were beautiful. They were the most  
beautiful —

PHEBE  
(*Overlapping.*) Tell us everything you saw.

IZZY  
Gold. Lots of gold. And I heard music.

JANE  
We sometimes don't know what we see.

POLLY  
Didn't see much of anything, I reckon.

BETSY  
Well, then.

POLLY  
You believe me?

JANE  
No.

HANNAH  
You must tell us who was with you.

FANNY  
I tell you. I tell you again and again. I saw  
angels.

PEGGY  
(*To Hannah.*) Maybe she saw ...

HANNAH  
(*Overlapping.*) You must tell us what you saw.

FANNY  
Angels —

PHEBE  
Maybe you were dreaming.

IZZY  
It seemed like a dream. So beautiful.

PHEBE  
What did it look like?

IZZY  
Light. Beautiful light.

HANNAH  
There was another sister there.

FANNY  
No.

HANNAH  
Brethren? Who was there?

BETSY  
If you say you didn't see anything, then, yes, I believe you.

JANE  
She didn't say that. Didn't say she didn't see anything.

PEGGY  
There are good reasons ...

FANNY  
I'm thinking.

PHEBE  
(*To Rachel.*) She was dreaming.

IZZY  
Weren't no dream.

PHEBE  
I wasn't talking to you.

PEGGY  
We'll help you think.

BETSY  
(*To Polly.*) Then what did you see?

POLLY  
I don't know.

JANE  
She don't know what she saw.

HANNAH  
There were Brothers there?

FANNY  
I don't know their names.

HANNAH  
Brothers from the North Family?

FANNY  
Not Brothers.

PEGGY  
Men from town?

HANNAH  
Old men? Young men?

FANNY  
Not men.

PEGGY  
Boys?

FANNY  
No.

HANNAH  
Not men or boys?

FANNY  
Angels! Gabriel, Michael. Peter. I don't know  
all their names.

PEGGY  
Oh, Lordy.

JANE  
(*To Polly.*) You don't know what you saw.

POLLY  
I don't know. It couldn't be —

BETSY  
What couldn't it be?

FANNY  
I'm telling you. There were angels.

IZZY

Weren't no dream. I thought it was. I thought I must be dreaming, so I pinched my hand. I pinched it hard. Look at the bruise. Weren't no dream.

PEGGY

Oh, Lordy, Lordy.

HANNAH

*(To Peggy.)* Sister Peggy.

RACHEL

Surely that must be heaven she seen.

PHEBE

Dreams show us heaven sometimes. You pinched yourself in your sleep.

IZZY

No! Fanny seen it, too.

JANE

We want to know what you saw.

POLLY

Fanny said it were angels.

FANNY

There were angels.

IZZY

I saw angels!

FANNY

Angels!

*(Lights change. The benches are quickly cleared as we go right into the next scene. Or there could be an intermission here.)*

## ACT 2 SC 1 -- "WE DO NOT THROW STONES"

*(Izzy, Polly and Fanny run onstage as the other women move the benches from the previous scene. Izzy is not wearing her cap, but is holding her head as she runs and she collapses to her knees on the stage. Betsy, Phebe, Rachel, Peggy quickly enter. Jane stands to one side, watching.)*

POLLY

We whooped 'em! We whooped 'em!



BETSY  
Lay her down.

RACHEL  
Did she fall? (*To Izzy.*) Did you fall?

FANNY  
Who were they?

PHEBE  
Look at me, Izzy.

POLLY  
Boys from town.

JANE  
What happened? What happened?

RACHEL  
Is she bleeding?

PEGGY  
Lordy.

IZZY  
They threw rocks at us.

POLLY  
I got one of them.

IZZY  
They hit me with a rock.

PHEBE  
Where?

FANNY  
By the tannery.

PHEBE  
Where'd the rock hit you?

FANNY  
Hit her in the head.

POLLY  
Just got hit in the head. That's all.

PHEBE  
It's not bleeding.

JANE  
All righty.

PHEBE  
Goose egg of a knot, though.

IZZY  
(*Feeling the back of her head.*)  
I've got a goose egg!

RACHEL  
(*To Polly.*) You get hit?

POLLY  
I was throwing back at 'em.

PHEBE  
You must not engage them.

BETSY  
(*To Fanny.*) What happened?

FANNY  
Just walking along the main road. Saw these  
boys and they started chasin' us and calling us  
names and throwing rocks.

PHEBE  
Did you get hit?

FANNY  
Arm and leg. Just bruised.

IZZY  
They had so many rocks.

POLLY  
I got the tall one!

PHEBE  
(*Grabbing Polly.*) I tell you, you must not  
antagonize them.

POLLY  
They started it.

PHEBE  
We are a peaceful community.

POLLY  
Can't even defend myself.

RACHEL  
Mother Ann Lee will defend you.

POLLY  
Mother Ann wasn't there. They could'a killed us.

PEGGY  
Let's get her to her bed.

IZZY  
Don't want to go to bed.

BETSY  
You're going.

POLLY  
There was four of 'em.

IZZY  
There's pie for supper tonight.

PEGGY  
I'll bring you some. You can eat your dinner in bed.

POLLY  
I got hit, too.

PHEBE  
Where? Where did you get hit?

POLLY  
On my ... on my foot.

PHEBE  
Can you walk?

POLLY  
Yes.

PHEBE  
Good.

POLLY  
I got hit on the foot. A big rock. I threw it back.

PHEBE

*(Losing her temper.)* We do not throw stones at our neighbors. You are never, never, never to do that again. You must go confess to Sister Hannah. You have been wicked. Wicked. Do you hear me?*(She grabs Polly by the shoulders.)* Do you understand me? We are a peaceful community. We do not throw stones.

POLLY

Yes, Sister Phebe.

RACHEL

*(To Phebe.)* She was just scared.

POLLY

Weren't scared.

BETSY

Let us go pray for our neighbors.

*(Phebe exits. Betsy leads off Polly in a different direction.)*

JANE

*(To Izzy.)* Your head hurt?

IZZY

Just a little.

JANE

Were you scared?

IZZY

They called us shaking devils. Said we were going to hell.

*(Jane puts her arm around Izzy and leads her off.)*

## ACT 2 SC 2 -- "A TESTIMONY"

*(The lines begin as the scene is being set. Rachel, holding a dowel and paper, is sitting looking up at Hannah and Phebe, beside her.)*

RACHEL

Explain it to me again.

HANNAH

A testimony. Just write your testimony.

RACHEL  
It's Fanny and the other girls should be writing  
testimonies.

PHEBE  
We want your testimony.

*(A beat.)*

RACHEL  
My script's not what I'd like it to be. And I'm  
not a good speller.

PHEBE  
Doesn't matter. Just write how you came here.  
Everything. From the beginning.

RACHEL  
Not much different than anyone else's story.  
Came here by the grace of Mother Ann Lee.  
Don't know why you are asking me.

HANNAH  
We're asking everyone. Everyone will have a  
written testimony.

RACHEL  
I'll give you my testimony. I have been a good  
and steadfast Shaker. I have obeyed the laws. I  
have humbled myself in the spirit.

PHEBE  
We are not accusing you, Sister Rachel.

RACHEL  
Best not be. There's a devil in our midst. Either  
there's a devil in our midst or the end of the  
world is near.

*(Lights change. The women exit during Peggy's song.)*

# ACT 2 SC 3 -- "OUR FATHER" BEGINNING

*(Peggy brings on a bowl and resets the benches.)*

PEGGY  
OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN  
HALLOWED BE THY NAME  
THY KINGDOM COME  
THY WILL BE DONE

*(Having set the benches one on top of another, in the "table" position, Peggy begins to stir something in her bowl, still singing.)*

ON EARTH AS IT IS DONE IN HEAVEN  
GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD  
AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS  
AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS.

*(Polly enters, interrupting Peggy.)*

ACT 2 SC 4 -- "FROM MOTHER ANN TO YOU"

*(Peggy and Polly alone. Polly holds a piece of paper in her hand, shaped like a heart.)*

POLLY

It's a gift.

PEGGY

You have a gift to draw.

POLLY

I'm the deliverer. I'm the instrument.

PEGGY

It's beautiful.

POLLY

*(In a whisper.)* It's from Mother Ann.

PEGGY

You shouldn't be making drawings.

POLLY

Mother Ann made it. I'm delivering it to you.  
It's from Mother Ann to you.

PEGGY

How could Mother Ann make this for me?

POLLY

She came to me. Mother Ann came to me. I  
looked across the room. Mother Ann was  
standing there, pointing to the wall. And on  
the wall was a big picture, all painted with  
colors of light. I copied down what I saw on  
the wall. It's from Mother Ann. It's for you.  
Did you know Mother Ann?

PEGGY

*(Looking at the heart.)* Mother Ann sent this to me?

POLLY

It has words. I copied down the words I saw on the wall. They were shining. The words were on the wall, shining like a light.

PEGGY

*(Reading.)* "To help you through this world of strife, and cheer your path to heaven. From Mother Ann."

POLLY

Mother Ann loves you, Sister Peggy.

*(Polly exits. Peggy moves the benches, so they are lined up next to each other.)*

PEGGY

*(Singing.)*

LEAD US NOT IN TEMPTATION  
BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL  
FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM  
THE GLORY AND POWER FOREVERMORE  
AMEN.

*(Lights change as Peggy moves the benches for the next scene. Jane, Phebe and Betsy have entered during Peggy's song.)*

ACT 2 SC 5 -- "IS THAT YOUR TESTIMONY, SISTER JANE"

*(Jane is dictating to Betsy as Phebe looks on. Betsy holds a paper and a dowel.)*

JANE

Seemed like after the little twins died there weren't much use a-livin'. I birthed five children and all of 'em died afore they was six. Everything on the farm seemed to be dying, too. Cow stopped givin' milk. Seemed like the cow didn't have to give milk any more since there weren't any young 'uns around. The well went dry, too. Dried up one day, just like the cow.

PHEBE

You only have to tell us why you came here.

JANE

I'm telling you. And everybody knows anyway, don't they? All my babies dead. What were we gonna do? No children to help tend the farm. Came 'cause my husband came here. Where else was I gonna go? Didn't have much choice, did I?

PHEBE

*(To Peggy.)* Will you read Sister Jane's testimony to her so she can sign it?

BETSY

*(Reading.)* "By the grace of Our Lord, I came here by my own will with my husband William. Through the bountiful goodness of Mother Ann Lee I have discovered the joy of a simple life. May I continue to strive to be a better Shaker and to be pure in heart and mind until the time has come that I go onward to greater rewards in heaven."

PHEBE

Is that your testimony, Sister Jane?

JANE

I reckon it's close enough.

BETSY

Make your mark on this page.

*(Jane starts to sign as the lights change. The benches are moved as the next scene begins.)*

## ACT 2 SC 6 -- "GOODBYE, IZZY"

*(Lights up on Hannah and Phebe entering. They go over to Izzy who looks at them and begins to sob. The rest of the Sisters slowly drift onstage. Peggy carries a small suitcase and a cloak.)*

HANNAH

Your father has come to fetch you.

IZZY

Won't go. Can't make me go.

HANNAH

Your father's here.



IZZY

Give me the covenant. I'll sign.

PHEBE

You're not old enough.

IZZY

I'll sign right now. Give me the covenant. I want to sign the covenant. You can't make me go.

BETSY

You can always come back.

RACHEL

*(To Betsy.)* He won't let her come back.

BETSY

Come back to us when you're twenty. You can come back. Sister Izzy, listen to me now. Hush. You just come back when you're old enough. See? We want you back.

IZZY

If I'm gonna come back, why do I have to leave? *(She sobs.)*

HANNAH

Where's her suitcase?

RACHEL

Right here.

PHEBE

Who's carrying her cloak?

PEGGY

I'm carrying it for her.

PHEBE

Got the warm winter one?

PEGGY

Yes.

FANNY

Where's she going?

PHEBE

Her daddy's come to fetch her.

POLLY

She don't even know her daddy.

IZZY

Didn't say goodbye to the chickens! I didn't say bye to the chickens!

PEGGY

That old rooster be in a pot soon. Won't know you're gone.

IZZY

And Mischief! And Mr. Chickenhouse!

BETSY

We'll tell'm bye for you. The cats'll all be here when you get back.

IZZY

I made Mr. Chickenhouse a bonnet.

BETSY

I'll put the bonnet on him. I'll take care of him.

IZZY

*(Howling.)* I didn't say bye to the lambs. The little baby lambs! I didn't kiss the kittens!

HANNAH

Honey, your daddy's waiting for you in the visitor's parlor.

IZZY

I want a kitten. I want one of Mischief's kittens! Let me have a kitten.

BETSY

Those kittens too young to leave their momma. They'll be waiting for you when you get back.

IZZY

They won't be kittens any more!

JANE

There'll be more kittens. There'll always be kittens.

IZZY

I love THOSE kittens. I want a kitten to take with me!

RACHEL

Honey, a kitten'd smother in your little suitcase.

POLLY

*(To Phebe.)* Her daddy left her here when she was a baby. He don't know her. He can't take her away. Not right.

PHEBE

Contract says he can come get her whenever he wants. Until she's of age.

BETSY

Your daddy has a farm. There'll be kittens there. Barn always has cats.

IZZY

I only seen him twice! I don't know what he's got. I don't want him. I want a kitten! *(She sobs.)*

HANNAH

You don't want your daddy to see you like this, do you?

BETSY

Want your daddy to be proud of you.

FANNY

Izzy, you don't have to go.

HANNAH

She has to go.

IZZY

What?

FANNY

You don't have to go. And if they make you go, just run away, Izzy, quick as you can.

POLLY

Just run away.

HANNAH

Sister Fanny, you are needed in the kitchen.

FANNY

Izzy, if your daddy don't treat you right, you just run away.

HANNAH

Sister Fanny.

PHEBE

Don't make it harder on her.

HANNAH

You can always come back and visit us.

FANNY

Just run away, quick as you can.

IZZY

I don't want to run away. I don't want to go!

*(Hannah stands, helpless. Jane moves to Izzy. Phebe goes to Fanny.)*

JANE

You write to me.

IZZY

I'll write.

JANE

And I'll write to you.

IZZY

You can't write.

JANE

Someone'll write for me.

IZZY

Tell me about all the animals.

JANE

I'll tell you about all the animals.

IZZY

I want a kitten!

JANE  
 I'll write you. I'll learn how to write. I'll learn  
 how to write and I'll write you all about the  
 kittens. Now say a proper goodbye to  
 everyone.

*(Izzy turns and hugs the Sisters. Jane is last. She gives Izzy the Jacob's Ladder string.  
 The Sisters walk her out to the benches, where she sits or exits.)*

FANNY  
*(Waving.)* Bye, Izzy.

*(Phebe turns from the other women back into the scene.)*

PHEBE  
 This is a-cause a'you.

FANNY  
 How could this be 'cause of me? I don't know  
 her daddy.

PHEBE  
 Her father heard.

FANNY  
 Her father heerd what?

PHEBE  
 Her father heard you girls were dancing up  
 the ridge. With no clothes on. Her father heard  
 that you girls were unclothed.

FANNY  
 Didn't go unclothed.

PHEBE  
 Too late to say you didn't. Strange things  
 going on. Oughta thought about what you  
 were doing.

FANNY  
 I didn't do nothin'.

PHEBE  
*(Phebe starts to leave.)*  
 All cause a'you.

*(Phebe exits.)*

FANNY  
I didn't do nothin'. I didn't do nothin'!

*(Fanny begins to exit the opposite way of Phebe but is swept up with the arrival of the sisters coming to service. Lights change.)*

ACT 2 SC 7 -- "IF YE LOVE NOT EACH OTHER"

*(Lights up on a service. The women are marching in a proscribed circle. During the dance Polly hands a piece of paper to Jane.)*

ALL  
*(Singing.)*  
IF YE LOVE NOT EACH OTHER  
IN DAILY COMMUNION,  
HOW CAN YE LOVE GOD,  
WHOM YE HAVE NOT SEEN?  
IF YE LOVE NOT EACH OTHER  
IN DAILY COMMUNION,  
HOW CAN YE LOVE GOD,  
WHOM YE HAVE NOT SEEN?

*(By the end of the song the benches are set for the next scene. Lights change. Hannah, Jane, and Phebe are sitting on two benches put together. Betsy stands.)*

ACT 2 SC 8 -- "IT'S A PICTURE OF MY CHILDREN"

HANNAH  
*(Looking at a drawing.)* Where did this come from?

JANE  
It was given to me.

HANNAH  
By whom?

JANE  
Says on the paper. Says it's for me. There's my name.

HANNAH  
You are not permitted to have such things. *(To Phebe.)* We have no secrets here.

JANE  
There's other words written on the paper, but I cain't read 'em.

BETSY  
It's very beautiful.

HANNAH  
(*To Jane.*) Who gave you this?

JANE  
It was sent to me from Mother Ann. It's a picture of my children.

BETSY  
Perhaps it's a gift drawing.

JANE  
It's a picture of heaven. See, there are pictures of my children. There are all my children. Frederick, Susannah, Benjamin, Margaret, 'Lizbeth-Ann. It's a gift from Mother Ann to me. My children are in heaven. With Mother Ann. Mother Ann loves me. She sent me a picture of heaven.

HANNAH  
It is a sin to create a picture of heaven.

JANE  
Why?

HANNAH  
How can we with our imperfections create a picture of something perfect?  
(*Phebe starts to interrupt.*)  
This is a picture of pride. This is a picture of sin.

JANE  
My babies are innocent.

HANNAH  
Your children have gone to live with their heavenly father and mother. You must accept the wisdom of our heavenly parents. You will find more comfort in prayerful contemplation. (*A pause.*) This is a not a gift. It is a work of pride from a confused, misguided young woman. We will no longer indulge these false gifts.

(*Hannah tears up the drawing. Jane holds out her hand for the pieces. Hannah puts them in her own pocket.*)

BETSY  
Come, Sister Jane. We must return to our  
chores.

*(Betsy and Jane exit to the side benches.)*

PHEBE  
You should apologize to her.

HANNAH  
I should what?

PHEBE  
You should apologize to her. That picture  
brought her comfort.

HANNAH  
She will find more comfort in her labors. In her  
work.

PHEBE  
She never has before.

HANNAH  
Perhaps you should guide her better, Sister  
Phebe. Especially if you hope to become an  
eldress yourself some day.

*(Hannah exits. Phebe moves a bench. Lights change.)*

# ACT 2 SC 9 -- "HOLY MOTHER WISDOM SPEAKS TO ME"

*(The women all kneel in prayer.)*

PEGGY  
I NEVER DID BELIEVE  
THAT I EVER COULD BE SAVED  
WITHOUT GIVING UP ALL TO GOD.

HANNAH  
Let all confess their sins.

*(No one speaks. Jane stands up and exits.)*

We will now confess our sins.

*(During the silence, Fanny rises.)*



FANNY

Holy Mother Wisdom speaks to me. (*Fanny begins to shake.*) Holy Mother Wisdom speaks to me. Holy Mother Wisdom speaks to me. (*All the women are looking at Fanny.*)

HANNAH

(*Abruptly ending the service.*) May we go forth in the strength and the power of the gospel and labor for the spirit of conviction.

ALL

Amen.

(*Lights change. All sit on the side benches except for Fanny and Hannah. We go immediately into the next scene.*)

ACT 2 SC 10 -- "I'M SUGGESTING YOU LEAVE..."

HANNAH

I'm suggesting you leave the community.

FANNY

I'm a strong worker. You can't make me leave.

HANNAH

You haven't signed the covenant.

FANNY

When the time comes I'll be a-signin'.

HANNAH

You won't need to.

FANNY

Why wouldn't I? No place better than this. It's heaven on earth here. Learned that from you. Don't you believe that, Sister Hannah?

HANNAH

We are not here to talk about my beliefs, but yours.

FANNY

Is that what we are talking about?

HANNAH

You are insolent.

FANNY  
Not meaning to be. Just tryin' to understand.

HANNAH  
Then understand that it is time for you to  
depart.

FANNY  
I want to understand the angels. I want to  
know what they say.

HANNAH  
You are making this up.

FANNY  
The others hear them. They send them songs.  
And pictures. I see the angels, but I mostly  
don't know what they're saying. I want to  
understand them. I want to know what they  
say.

HANNAH  
Angels speak in heavenly tongues. (*Corrects  
herself.*) Would speak in heavenly tongues. If  
they were here.

FANNY  
But what do they say? Please help me.

HANNAH  
They are not here, I'm telling you.

FANNY  
Polly hears them. Izzy hears them. (*She  
corrects herself.*) Heard them.

HANNAH  
You have created this yourself.

FANNY  
Why do they talk to me?

HANNAH  
Indeed. Why would angels speak to you? (*A  
pause.*) You must go.

FANNY  
Where do you want me to go? You can't just  
send me away with a little suitcase. No, you  
wouldn't do that. You care about people.

You do, Sister Hannah. You'd be thinking about me. You'd wonder what happened to me. Did my half-wit brother tear my clothes off me in the outhouse? Did I give birth to my father's next child on some snowy night all alone with the wind a-howlin' through the cracks in the winders?

HANNAH

That is enough.

FANNY

You gonna send me out in the cold and pray that I don't end up like Polly a-layin' on my back in some fancy house in Lexington? Some travelin' men a-pawin' at me? Is that where you are sending me? You gonna pray for me there? You gonna pray me to a safe life, or pray that I go quickly up to heaven?

HANNAH

You cannot talk to me this way.

FANNY

Won't you even pray for me then? (*Possibly a pause.*)

HANNAH

I pray for you every day.

FANNY

But what do you pray? That I will disappear? Or that I'll show you where the angels are?

HANNAH

We know where you go. The men are clearing the place right now.

FANNY

No!

HANNAH

The land will be plowed and fenced. Perhaps your "angels" won't be there any more. Why don't you simply stop talking about spirits? The others will forget about it and we can all resume our lives here.

FANNY

You're tellin' me that if the angels go away I  
can stay.

HANNAH

I am giving you a chance.

FANNY

You're tellin' me that if the angels leave I don't  
have to.

HANNAH

Girl, think about what you have been doing!  
Think! Do you honestly believe that celestial  
manifestations would appear to you, an  
uneducated young woman who has not even  
signed the covenant? If Mother Ann were to  
visit us, don't you think it would be the elders  
who would see her first? You are not a stupid  
girl. Don't you think Mother Ann would have  
something to say to us? To me?

FANNY

Would you recognize her if you saw her?

HANNAH

You will leave tonight!

FANNY

*(With a sudden intake of breath, Fanny looks at something behind Hannah.)*  
You are not to send me away.

HANNAH

You have no choice.

FANNY

*(Fanny stares at something behind Hannah.)*  
I'll be good. I try to do ... I try ... I try ...

HANNAH

You will not do this.

FANNY

Don't you see them?

HANNAH

See what? What do you see?

FANNY

They are so beautiful. So beautiful.

HANNAH

*(Hannah looks all around.)*

There is nothing there.

FANNY

You can't see them, can you? You can't see them.

*(Hannah holds Fanny by the shoulders and begins to shake her.)*

HANNAH

There is nothing to see.

FANNY

I hear their voices.

*(Hannah shakes Fanny.)*

HANNAH

Tell me you see nothing.

*(Hannah shakes Fanny harder and harder.)*

Tell me you see nothing. Tell me you see nothing!

*(She lets go of Fanny and kneels.)*

Please. Please. Holy Mother Wisdom, hear my prayer.

FANNY

They speak to me.

HANNAH

Grant me the vision to see from my eyes as well as my heart.

FANNY

*(To her spirits.)* What are you saying?

*(Fanny shakes harder and harder and finally collapses on the floor, sobbing joyfully.)*

HANNAH

*(Looking around the room.)* Holy Mother Wisdom, grant me this prayer. Let me see! Let me see! I will see. I will see. You will come to me.

*(Betsy, Phebe, Rachel rush in.)*

BETSY

We heard shouting.

HANNAH  
Sister Fanny is ill.

RACHEL  
I'm scared.

HANNAH  
There is nothing to be frightened of.

RACHEL  
Sister Fanny's an instrument. I've seen her. I  
see the face of Holy Mother Wisdom. The end  
of the world is near.

BETSY  
Calm yourself.

RACHEL  
I am a hypocrite. I haven't always believed.

BETSY  
Sister Rachel, you are a good Shaker.

RACHEL  
The sky is darkening. I must confess my sins  
before it's too late.

HANNAH  
Sister Rachel, you are free from sin. Have no  
fears. Sister Rachel, would you and Sister  
Phebe take Sister Fanny to her room? And  
pray for her salvation. Sister Fanny is ill.

*(Rachel and Peggy assist Fanny. Hannah and Betsy move to another part of the stage. Lights change.)*

ACT 2 SC 11 -- "ARE WE BEING VISITED BY ANGELS?"

PHEBE  
Are we being visited by angels?

BETSY  
The other villages report visits from spirits.  
The girls are seeing angels. At the other  
villages. Mount Lebanon. Hancock. Enfield.  
Tyringham. They all report visitations from  
the spirit world. Saint Peter, Saint Michael,  
Mother Ann. *(A pause.)* Sister Hannah? *(A  
pause.)* Sister Hannah? What does this mean?  
*(A pause.)* All of the villages.

Spirit manifestations. Songs, drawings. Visions.  
Gifts. Angels. *(A pause.)*

HANNAH  
There are no angels.

PHEBE  
There are reports from ...

HANNAH  
I know about the reports.

BETSY  
Perhaps we are not acknowledging the gifts  
we receive.

HANNAH  
The truth of a spiritual gift is tested over time.

BETSY  
Sister Rachel believes the end of the world is  
coming.

HANNAH  
Sister Rachel is mistaken.

PHEBE  
It's spread throughout the entire community  
—

BETSY  
The elders at Mt. Lebanon are preparing a  
Sacred Site.

*(A pause.)*

HANNAH  
Are the elders receiving gifts? At Hancock?  
Mount Lebanon? Are there reports of the  
elders receiving gifts?

PHEBE  
No. Not the elders.

BETSY  
Earthly vessels are sometimes unworthy of the spirits that  
fill them.

*(A pause.)*

PHEBE  
We must act upon this.

HANNAH  
We must all get back to work. There is much work to do.

PHEBE  
Sister Hannah, we can no longer ignore ...

HANNAH  
Who is ignoring this? I would like to ignore it. How can you ignore giggling girls awake at all hours of the night? Spinning when the mood strikes them. Shaking and trembling and saying that spirits are interrupting their chores.

BETSY  
Sister Hannah ... *(Hannah turns to her.)* Mother Ann had a shaking gift. Mother Ann saw spirits. Mother Ann had gifts. But she did not turn away from her gifts. Nor did she question the source.

*(A long pause, as Hannah takes this in.)*

HANNAH  
I will have a gift. I will have a gift that we are to have a service at our own Sacred Site. You will report to the girls. You will report that we have had a gift that we are to make ready for a service. We will unite together in worship.

*(Betsy and Phebe don't move.)*  
We are the leaders and we must lead. The girls are little lambs lost in the valley. They have forgotten their simplicity. It is our gift to return them to their mother.

*(Betsy and Phebe stare at her.)*  
We must be the ones with vision. The men will prepare the Sacred Site. We will lead our lost lambs to Mount Sinai's Holy Plain.

*(Lights change. Hannah continues speaking as the scene changes.)*

ACT 2 SC 12 -- "COME TO ZION" / "I SEE THEM"

*(All the Sisters except for Izzy enter the scene. A bench is set on end, looking somewhat like a gravestone.)*



HANNAH

I have a gift.

PHEBE

I have a gift.

BETSY

I have a gift.

PHEBE

I have a gift to go past the meadow.

HANNAH

Beloved, our fountain stone is ready. We will go together in unity and harmony. Sister Peggy will lead us in two-part singing as we march to our Sacred Site.

*(They lead the girls in a march to the Sacred Site.)*

BETSY, HANNAH, PEGGY, PHEBE

*(Singing.)*

COME TO ZION, COME TO ZION  
SIN SICK SOULS IN SORROW BOUND.  
LAY YOUR CARES BEFORE THE ALTAR  
WHERE TRUE HEALING MAY BE FOUND.

*(As a round, with all singing.)*

SHOUT HALLELUIA! HALLELUIA!  
PRAISE RESOUND O'ER LAND AND SEA.  
ALL WHO WILL MAY COME AND SHARE  
THE GLORIES OF THIS JUBILEE.

*(Lights change as they march to the Sacred Site. They march into place, forming two columns, winding up in a horseshoe formation.)*

HANNAH

Beloved children. You stand on holy ground.

*(Hannah cues Phebe.)*

PHEBE

Let us give thanks and say Amen. ALL. Amen.

*(Hannah cues Betsy.)*

BETSY

Let us pray that we may free ourselves from sin.

HANNAH

Beloved, are ye prepared to cleanse your spirit  
at the fountain stone? Answer, Sisters.

ALL

Yea, God helping us.

HANNAH

We must wash with heavenly water. Let all  
who truly desire to be Shakers wash  
themselves at the fountain stone.

*(This is clearly a challenge to Fanny and to Polly. Phebe and Betsy lead the  
women to the fountain stone. They splash water on themselves.)*

Don't you sense the presence of Holy Mother Wisdom? I see  
above me fruit and flowers from our heavenly mother. Let  
us reach out and take fruit from the hands of the angels.

*(Hannah demonstrates. The women are confused. There is an awkward silence.)*

The spirit has sent us cups of silver. Hold out your goblets  
and receive holy wine. Let ye who are worthy drink their  
fill.

*(Hannah looks pointedly at Fanny, who then mimes drinking.)*

PHEBE

Let us be lifted in mind and purpose from this  
world of sorrow and sin. The angels have  
brought us a heavenly feast.

RACHEL

I see them.

*(Rachel points skyward. This is unexpected and Hannah tries to cover. She  
looks at Fanny, who has covered her eyes, trying to block out the vision.)*

HANNAH

The angels dance above us, hearing our  
prayers.

RACHEL

I see the angels. I hear music.

HANNAH

Is there music? Has Holy Mother Wisdom sent  
us heavenly music?

RACHEL

I hear singing.

JANE

*(Frightened.)* I hear music.

PEGGY  
I hear the angels singing.

RACHEL  
I hear the horn of Gabriel.

PEGGY  
I see a cloud.

RACHEL  
A host of angels.

PEGGY  
I see a cloud of angel wings.

JANE  
I see a cloud.

RACHEL  
A host of angels. I hear the angel's voices.

HANNAH  
Let us not hear false voices.

PEGGY  
We are in the hollow of God's hand.

RACHEL  
The angels are gathering.

PHEBE  
This is Mother Ann's work. She comes to unite  
us.

RACHEL  
I feel rain from heaven.

*(All the women respond individually to the "rain.")*

FANNY  
Holy Mother Wisdom speaks to me!

HANNAH  
We will fight the temptation of false gifts.

FANNY  
*(To Hannah.)* Let not any think because they  
can't see into every gift that is, they will not  
believe it to be a gift.

HANNAH  
Let us shake out our sins.

FANNY  
We are without sin! God has made his second  
appearance on earth. Mother Ann has saved  
us. Let us rejoice!

*(The Sisters begin to murmur and confess rapidly.)*

RACHEL  
Forgive me my sins.

POLLY  
Forgive my thoughts of lust.

PEGGY  
Mother Ann, may I be meek in your eyes.

JANE  
I confess that I have cursed God for taking my  
children.

BETSY  
I confess that I have spoken when I should not  
have.

PHEBE  
Forgive my arrogance and pride.

*(Fanny holds out her arms and look upwards. Some of the Sisters follow her  
gaze and look up.)*

JANE  
I see my children. I see my babies, and they  
have angel wings! I see my children!

*(Jane is overcome with joy. The murmuring builds and the women begin to  
shake, their arms raised to heaven. The intensity mounts.)*

FANNY  
*(Shaking and speaking in an unknown tongue.)* On-  
eak- la-to-menni-ska-pra-leh-sa-bah-nuj ...

*(The women continue their movement, but the sound retreats. They are  
holding their arms high and shaking. Hannah looks at Fanny and looks at the  
women.)*

HANNAH  
*(Looking up.)* Please. Please.

*(Lights change. The women are shaking upstage, hiding the scene change happening as Jane and Betsy set a bench and sit.)*

ACT 2 SC 13 -- "BLESSED ARE"

*(PHEBE is teaching Jane to read.)*

JANE  
Blessed are the ... poor ... in spirit for the ...

PHEBE  
Theirs ...

JANE  
... Theirs ... is the ... kingdom ... of heaven.  
Blessed are the ... they ... that mourn ... for  
the ... they ... shall be comforted. Blessed are  
the ...

PHEBE  
Meek.

JANE  
Blessed are the Meek: for they ... shall ...  
inherit ... the earth. Blessed are they which do  
... hunger and thirst ... after righteousness ...  
for they shall be filled.

*(Lights change. During the transition we hear ... )*

ALL.  
MORE LOVE, MORE LOVE,  
THE HEAVENS ARE BLESSING,  
THE ANGELS ARE CALLING,  
O ZION, MORE LOVE.

ACT 2 SC 14 -- "MAY I PREPARE YOU FOR YOUR JOURNEY?"

*(Hannah sits, waiting with Betsy and Phebe. Fanny enters. There is silence for a moment.)*

HANNAH  
Please sit.

FANNY  
I have my bag packed.

PHEBE  
You'll be tending the herb garden at South  
Union. They need a new gardener.

FANNY  
I will be happy to serve.

HANNAH  
They have need of your ... gifts. At South Union.

FANNY  
Oh.

*(Hannah puts a bright copper bowl on the floor. She has a small cloth as well.)*

BETSY  
Some Brethren heading down there today.  
Brother James. Taking them some lambs. And  
some herb seeds. You'll be going with them.  
It's pretty down t' South Union.

FANNY  
So I've been told.

PHEBE  
Write to us.

FANNY  
I will.

BETSY  
Tell us all about South Union.

FANNY  
I'll do that.

HANNAH  
May I help prepare you for your journey?  
*(Fanny nods, unsure of what she means. Hannah kneels in front of Fanny. In silence she takes off Fanny's shoes and stockings and washes one of Fanny's feet. As she finishes the first foot, the other women come into the room. They fall silent as soon as they notice what Hannah is doing. She finishes and stands.)*  
You'll make deaconess someday. At South Union.

*(Hannah moves the bowl away and the others descend on Fanny.)*

RACHEL  
Wouldn't been right you leaving without a  
sendoff.

PEGGY  
We brought you some sweetcakes. Sister Jane,  
Sister Polly and I made them for you.

FANNY

Thank you. *(She looks at the Sisters.)* What long faces! I'm just going down to South Union! I'll come back and visit.

JANE

You come visit us.

FANNY

I'll do that.

RACHEL

We'll visit!

PEGGY

We'll come visit you!

POLLY

*(Starting to cry.)* I'll miss you!

FANNY

Best be on my way.

*(Ad-lib hugs and goodbyes. Fanny exits. Jane, Rachel, Betsy and Polly follow her.)*

PHEBE

They need a good gardener at South Union.

HANNAH

It has been requested that she instruct them in the new style of worship.

PHEBE

Indeed.

*(Phebe looks at Hannah and exits. Betsy looks in the direction of Fanny's exit.)*

BETSY

I will miss her.

*(Betsy starts to exit. Hannah sits.)*

## ACT 2 SC 14A -- "DID YOU SEE ANGELS"

HANNAH

Sister Betsy, did you see angels? Did you see angels at the Sacred Site?

BETSY

I saw ... I saw ... bright light.

*(A pause.)*

HANNAH  
Did you hear celestial singing?

BETSY  
I heard singing like I'd never heard before.

HANNAH  
Did you see angels?

BETSY  
Did you?

HANNAH  
When I looked at the Sisters' faces I almost  
thought they were angels.

BETSY  
Maybe they were.

*(Hannah doesn't say anything. Betsy exits. Hannah is alone on stage for a minute and then picks up her bench to move it back into place as lights shift and all the Sisters enter singing.)*

ACT 2 SC 15 -- "COME DANCE AND SING"

PEGGY  
*(First begins to sing, turning slowly as the others dance around her.)*

COME DANCE AND SING AROUND THE RING  
LIVE IN LOVE AND UNION

ALL  
*(Joining in, skipping and singing.)*

DANCE AND SING AROUND THE RING  
LIVE IN SWEET COMMUNION

*(One at a time the others join in singing and dancing in a circle.)*

SING WITH LIFE, LIVE WITH LIFE  
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER  
SING WITH LIFE, LIVE WITH LIFE  
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER

*(By now all are holding hands dancing in a circle.)*

COME DANCE AND SING AROUND THE RING LIVE



IN LOVE AND UNION DANCE AND SING AROUND  
THE RING LIVE IN SWEET COMMUNION

*(Polly breaks off and begins to twirl.)*

SING WITH LIFE, LIVE WITH LIFE  
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER  
SING WITH LIFE, LIVE WITH LIFE  
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER

*(They begin twirling and clapping, singing faster.)*

SING WITH LIFE LIVE WITH LIFE  
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER  
SING WITH LIFE  
LIVE WITH LIFE  
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER

*(Clapping and dancing and twirling and singing faster and faster.)*

SING WITH LIFE LIVE WITH LIFE  
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER  
SING WITH LIFE  
LIVE WITH LIFE SING WITH LIFE AND POWER.

*(They raise their arms to heaven. Blackout.)*

*(End of Play)*

CURTAIN CALL -- "SIMPLE GIFTS"

*("Simple Gifts" may be sung in the curtain call.)*

ALL  
'TIS THE GIFT TO BE SIMPLE,  
'TIS THE GIFT TO BE FREE,  
'TIS THE GIFT TO COME DOWN  
WHERE WE OUGHT TO BE;  
AND WHEN WE FIND OURSELVES  
IN THE PLACE JUST RIGHT,  
'T'WILL BE IN THE VALLEY  
OF LOVE AND DELIGHT  
WHEN TRUE SIMPLICITY IS GAINED;  
TO BOW AND TO BEND  
WE SHAN'T BE ASHAM'D  
TO TURN, TURN WILL BE OUR DELIGHT  
'TIL BY TURNING, TURNING,  
WE COME ROUND RIGHT.

*(The Sisters exit, possibly singing.)*

