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TESTAMENT
By
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(Darkness. A void. Musically wind over water. Musically and visually, a burst of gas and fire. From a fire billows a dawn. Music from a lute or a recorder. A weaver is seen. The dancer takes a long scarf the color of the sun from the weaver.)

Voice Overlay

Heaven, beyond the moon and sun, from earth to Saturn and beyond, brings us back to Eden.

(A human cry. A man and woman appear.)

From shore to mountaintop, all that they can see belongs to them. All is fair in Eden.

(Musically, lute or recorder: the beginning of a day, as the sun cuts through mist. City sounds. What a warm time they are having there. Sunday morning and, ah, life is beautiful for they have the whole world to see. (On a screen a montage of scenes from around the world.) There is a world of course to explore. There is a shower, with thunder, lightning, and wind. More city sounds. They sing along with a lute, and kiss. With kisses. Kiss Miguel. Kiss Miquel. Kiss him back Maria.)

They are living in God's midst and realize God's glory.

(Musically, joyful crying, joyful laughter. Human cry.)

MAN

(Moves from the woman to the projection of a domestic cat.)

Come my, pretty pretty cat.

(The cry of an eagle. Musically, "God of the Sparrow, God of the Whale." Hymn song softly under dialogue.)

An Eagle!

(Cicadas screech away. An occasional bird starts a loud cry.)

WOMAN

Hippopotame! Hippopotame!

MAN

Yes'm, a rabbit.

WOMAN

That's a rat, Miquel, not a rabbit.

(Musically, mysterious, creepy, and completely wondrous. The air is still quivering with echoes of whistling, hooting, rattling, chirruping, and croaking.)

A civet.

MAN

A *juju*!

WOMAN

A *juju* for us, and *juju* for you.

MAN

Porcupines, ouch!

WOMAN

I crawled back and showed my teeth, and sure enough, there was a porcupine, standing half turned to me, his spines bristling, and his curious tail twitching like mad.

MAN

Those are mice. Those are grasshoppers. Those are snakes, and those are lizards—in fact, everything, but the kinds of animals you would want.

WOMAN

What more could you want? A toad.

MAN

Two of them. Three, four....

WOMAN

Crocodile!

MAN

Wowwow! A giant water shrew. It's ours, all ours. We get to name it.

WOMAN

Man
Claim it. We can build it. We can create it.

(The CHOIR starts singing “We Got The Whole World In Our Hands.”)

Nobody loves me but you.

WOMAN

MAN

That's not true.

WOMAN

Irreverence.

(The sounding of a shofar. The dancer smears the faces of the man and the woman with rouge. Then music associated with temptation and the fall.)

VOICE OVERLAY

“From every stormy wind that blows...”

(Musically, arrogant, sassy strutting. Complexion of blushing.)

Goody girl offers her man a smile. I've got you babe.

(Blushing, the man responds with his best ploy. She is just as funny as he is serious. She offers him a trinket for his affection.)

From goodness to sinful at age 21.

WOMAN

My name is Betty. Betty but call me Marilyn. Here man!

Man

(Affectionately.)

I rose up one morning and saw temptation.

WOMAN

Smell the perfume of my love. Bacon and eggs and jam on burnt toast.

CHOIR

(All sing.)

“From every stormy wind that blows, From every swelling tide of woes, There is a calm, a sure retreat; 'Tis found beneath the mercy seat.” “When the storms of life are raging (Stand by Me)...”

MAN

Her reverence.

(They giggle.)

MAN

(Loving interaction.)

Betty, you're my darling.

(Musically, coming and going, now a rumba, laughter, a pleasant pattern. While the dancer takes from the weaver a pink scarf, the man and woman sing of their love.)

Come indoors.

(Projections of advertisements out of *Vogue* magazine. A picture of the most beautiful woman in the world. Someone to ogle over.)

VOICE OVERLAY

What name of you who stares?

(Betty paints her lips red and dons a fake red wig.)

MAN

Gawley-gee!

VOICE OVERLAY

She has suddenly become a cheap girl baby.

(Musically and through dance: bawdy and brash. My good grief! She is, she is stripping. Home sweetness. Happiness in abeyance. He saw she was stripping. Shame! Since human life has taken such a turn, we are seeking sanctuary swiftly.)

Good people can attract exceedingly bad times.

WOMAN

(Seductively.)

Chocolate cake?

MAN

No, something tart, like lemon pie.

WOMAN

A la perigourdine?

MAN

Truffles?

WOMAN

Si! Strawberries with whip cream?

MAN

(In ecstasy.)

Cookie dough! A tollhouse cookie.

WOMAN

Money!

MAN

(Rubbing his fingers together.)

Money, money, money, money, money, money.

WOMAN

Sex and money.

MAN

I have it all! Come in doors! Now!

(She cowers.)

Heel!

(Musically, the stomping of marching feet down a cobbled street. So we hear the hoots of men who disrespect women. We all like naked Lulu. Break another wineglass and fling it as far as you can.)

WOMAN

(Desperately.)

Ja! Ja! Ja! Bolje rob nego grob! Better a slave than a grave. Here or there, it's all the same.

MAN

Get the dogs! *Khoyzek gemacht!* Mocked and kicked!

WOMAN

Shpil! A game!

(They play hot potato with an apple until the man decides to take a bite out of it. So sing them a sequence symbolizing the assent of humankind.)

VOICE OVERLAY

Crown the pretenders. Curses make a family. Till they go round if they go round again before they break apart and all's dismissed

CHOIR

(Singing. The players are suspended.)

"It is the blood-bought mercy seat. Around one common mercy seat. And glory crowns the mercy seat."

(The CHOIR starts singing a medley of favorite hymns. They start with only the tunes, learning the words as they go. And they love what they are singing and sway and sing from the heart.)

VOICE OVERLAY

Shame! Pain! Paradise after sin. How she knots in her pain. The worst isn't over. He is guessing at hers for her the worst isn't over. They've eaten the fruit. Paradise lost. But you mustn't miss it.

MAN AND WOMAN

Oh, great mess! What have we done?

(Musically, drawn from fools, a very dandy, dainty melody depicting agony.)

Why do we go on wringing our hands? Why do we fret so much?

(Singing.)

“Lift up your hearts...”

(Pleading.)

“Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice.

VOICE OVERLAY

The thing is they must be put straight on the spot. What can they gain from a self-made world?

(Musically: changing patterns as two youths play and move from street to street. City sounds. A great deal of merriment, hoots, screams, drunken abandonment. In contrast, the god of all machinery is angry. Enter the boys.)

WOMAN

Evidently, my man has failed.

(Musically: ejaculation of venom.)

MAN

She is not wearing the ribbons.

(The dancer takes a dark red scarf from the weaver. All of sudden, there is a friendly tug of war between the boys, as the choir sings “God Send Us Men.)

VOICE OVERLAY

In the process of time...and before the day is out, he'll stab him with a Bowie knife. Miquel is sitting on all the free benches avidously reading about it.

WOMAN

I have gotten a man from the Lord.

MAN

The word is my wife is pregnant again.

VOICE OVERLAY

Two boys, one a keeper of sheep, the other a tiller of the ground, and one was accepted and other one wasn't...

WOMAN

Grey hairs turned white!

CAIN (or is it Abel?)

You should be arrested for taking all of the fat.

Abel (or is Cain?)

Enough!

(Musically: a stabbing with a butcher knife. Mortar, doom, gun shots, terrors, war! The unmentionable has been reduced to a sound bite.)

CHOIR

(Singing.)

“Onward Christian soldiers! Marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus Going on before.”

MAN

Call it murder. Call it something else. Call it what you like, but it’s still horrible.

CAIN

Banished!

MAN

Knock knock.

WOMAN

War’s where?

MAN

Knock knock.

WOMAN

Which war?

MAN

The latest one! Knock knock.

WOMAN

Who’s without?

MAN

Without what?

WOMAN

Without God.

MAN

Knock knock.

CHOIR

(Singing)

“Out of the depths I cry to thee; Lord hear me I implore thee!”

MAN AND WOMAN

Let us continue!

MAN

This wonderful world’s full of killing people kneeling before our God. Ne’er forget God’s daily care.

WOMAN

I beg you pardon. Having lost a son, I want to hang onto my grandkids.

MAN

And one of these fine days, we’ll have more children. The boy she now adores.

CHOIR

(Singing)

“I know not what the future hath. Of marvel or surprise. Assured alone the life and death God’s mercy underlies.”

(Musically: Off we go again. New life is born in every bud. His bests. And her bests. Hatch children well and multiply. Behold God’s glory. Here we stand. Don’t forget. For the joy of the dew on the flowers and the mist on fields has just come to crown a new day. Life is beautiful. Lightning, lovemaking, tender till there is stable weather.)

MAN

Hatch yourself well.

WOMAN

Are you enjoying yourself yet?

MAN

And she has plenty umph in her yet?

VOICE OVERLAY

And she beget more sons and, of course, daughters.

MAN

Embrace her bashfully with all your strength and tell her how much you love her.

VOICE OVERLAY

And she beget yet another one.

MAN

Give her a medal before we call it a day. Give her all she wants.

(The weaver gives the dancer a number of streamers bright in color.)

A hundred more, and thousands. God knows better than me how to work such a miracle.

(Musically: the earth's atrot! The sun is warm. The air is pure. The water is great. Running water. The sounds of an airplane and a train.)

WOMAN

We're all going. We know we are. On the spur of the moment, we are. We'll travel the whole world over. Here goes! We're going to have a great time. Buckle up. Flaps down. We're off. And along the way, we've learned, we've learned, we're learning.

Man

We're looking for an oasis.

WOMAN

Found one in God.

MAN

Bad luck from all the flooding.

MAN AND WOMAN

Let us continue!

WOMAN

God saw us through that too.

VOICE OVERLAY

“And the Lord said unto her, two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.”

(The choir sings a verse of “There is a voice in the wilderness crying....”)

MAN

Twins!

(Musically: the birth of nations.)

THE CHOIR

Give him a cigar! A pat on the back! A cigar!

WOMAN

Sure! Doesn't he deserve it? You said that it was highly unlikely and I shall hope to hear that you will not be wrong again.

MAN

With God's help!

WOMAN

Do, sweet, give credit where credit is due.

MAN

Every honest to goodness man knows in the back of his head that nothing is possible without God's help.

WOMAN

Esau came out all red and hairy as Jacob grabbed his brother's heel.

(Musically: offering a bittersweet prize, a little present. Talk about lowness. Any dog's quantity of it oozes out thickly.)

(The dancer sobs to herself.)

MAN

The lowness of him was beneath all up to that sunk to. For a little bread and a pot of lentils.

FIRST SON

I despise my birthright.

SECOND SON

(Laughing.)

No likebelike his birthright or first-born last place or because he didn't stick with venison or wild buckwheat honey either.

MAN

It's the snot's own fault.

VOICE OVERLAY

Unconsciously explaining our history. History of Isaac among the Philistines. History of Jacob gaining Isaac's blessing by deceit.

CHOIR

(Singing.)

"We are climbing Jacob's ladder. We are climbing Jacob's ladder. We are climbing Jacob's ladder, Soldiers of the cross. Every round goes higher, higher. Every round goes higher, etc..."

VOICE OVERLAY

History of Jacob marrying Labia's daughters. History of Jacob's sons and his increasing wealth. Etc., etc., etc., until Jacob and Esau reconciled and Rachel dies.

(Musically: a dirge. The caissons go rolling on. A hidden source of calm repose. A slow rendition of "Taps." The beginning and end of a "Twelve Gun Salute," while the dancer covered with ashes and wearing a shroud takes a long black scarf from the weaver.)

MAN

Jacob is in misery and sets a pillar upon Rachel's grave. There is not so much life left in his eyes.

WOMAN

Touch him.

MAN

It touched us all.

WOMAN

We also have to bury our father.

VOICE OVERLAY

And Issac gave up the ghost, and his sons buried him.

MAN

Touched us all. He was a very old man, stuck on his family.

WOMAN

In other words, a family man.

MAN

With milk and crackers as a favorite treat, he would be finished with his tea by now. Well, he was full of life, you bet, whatever you might have thought of him, so full of fun and vigor, give him his due, for I am sorry to have to tell you, he died last night.

CHIOR

(Singing)

"Thou hidden source of calm repose, Thou all sufficient love divine, My help and refuge from my foes, Secure I am if thou art mine; And lo! From sin and grief and shame..."

MAN

Signifying nothing.

WOMAN

No, no, no....

MAN

Faith, then.

WOMAN

Yes, faith.

MAN AND WOMAN

Let us continue!

MAN

I never thought that. It is great to think about something I never thought about before. Something inspired. Something that makes sense. The whole of the sum. He was a good man, says she, taken in his prime, says he, in his sleep, says she. Hopefully, he's in a good place.

WOMAN

Surely, he is. We know he's in a good place. So sorry you lost him.

MAN

Things are not as they were. May he rest in peace. When we all get to heaven.
(The CHOIR sings the first verse of "When we all get to heaven,"
We don't have to be brave.

WOMAN

Nor do I.

MAN

Feeling jitters?

WOMAN

No.

(Musically: Over this lost moment of mourning, a blessing in disguise. We're tempted to become passionate. Look here, the world is full of people.)

(Then the CHOIR starts singing, "When the roll is called up yonder...")

MAN

We! Yes, all of us.

WOMAN

Including Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau.

MAN

Timna, Eliphaz's concubine, did that, I confess! But you'll love Aholibamah, the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon for her short skirts and sickly black stockings. And Jesus, and Jam, and Koran were dukes, real dukes, salvaged from the Good Book.

WOMAN

Don't you understand? They're terribly nice really.

MAN

Of course, dear professor, I understand.

VOICE OVERLAY

And Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave.

(The CHOIR start singing "He's got the whole world in his hands...."which leads into "We shall overcome...".)

MAN

To be sure they did.

WOMAN

The love of a father for his son. He and his many-colored coat.

MAN

And a river of love burst out like following the races with joy. And I placed all my hopes and dreams in the boy. And his brother's answered. And now its time for us to pay tribute to our own mortality.

WOMAN

That' aboy Joseph.

MAN AND WOMAN

Let us continue! Mistakes, the backslapping, gladhandling.

(The Weaver provides the dancer with a chain and a rope.)

VOICE OVERLAY

And they stripped Joseph out of his coat, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. And for twenty pieces of silver, they sold their brother into slavery.

(Musically: the world's woe is each other's weariness. At sea, the sting of the whip. They feel sore like any person whipped. Thirty-two lashes, and the captain yells, la hoy! His sea arm stretches from one continent to the next. A New World Symphony. Bull dogs yap. There is shouting and shooting. Madder yet.)

(And the CHOIR sings “Beulah Land,” while the dancer places Joe in chains and leads him off by his nose.)

WOMAN

Ataboy, Joe! Keep your head up! Never lose heart! Don’t hate us for this. Snatched by his hair and led by his nose. Now he’ll have to live among the Egyptians, and how they will loathe him.

MAN

His brothers found the hurtled stones, and threw them again.

WOMAN

And they fell ill with a roast in the oven. Now!

MAN

No!

WOMAN

Sublime was the justice. Joe, in fact, would later rescue them.

MAN

Don’t get ahead of the story.

(Musically: through Hell with God in the lead. Bright sun without any shade. Swear aloud as the sand heats up. Glory be!)

WOMAN

And it came to pass in time...

MAN

I wish.

WOMAN

Let us continue!

MAN

No, not yet! For Judah has a household of troubles. And those who were wicked in the sight of the Lord, the Lord slew.

WOMAN

And he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.

MAN

Woe is us! Woe is each other’s weariness! Oh the mistakes, back stabbing, and gladhandling.

(The CHIOR begins singing “My Burdens Rolled Away. And the weaver provides the dancer with the rope for a lynching. Mississippi Burning.)

WOMAN

Come, clean my slate, and dry my tears. With all the thrills and ills of so many years and for so many of those years to remain a widow in my father’s house that I was thinking so much of the time of putting an end to myself. My moods, when I remembered how the Lord slew both of my husbands. You shouldn’t weep you can’t if you want to live. Shake the dust off yourself and dream. Look to the Lord for guidance. That’s the proper way to get through it. If it chews you up, swallow it. Pray and move on! Ha! And in the process of time, as sure as there is a God, tomorrow will well be thine. Quick Judah needs comforting. He just lost his wife. And when I took my widow’s garment off, and covered myself with a veil, and sat in an open place, Judah thought I was a harlot, because I had covered my face. With love yes love I have made myself look attractive. You’re my man? Then come. My intended, who won’t runaway as I step out of my petticoat. Here he hesitates, my hero and my father-in-law. What am I worth? I get my pledge of a goat from his flock, and he gives me his signet, and his bracelets, and his staff, as I flaunt my stuff. Wait ‘til spring has sprung to see if I’ve conceived. Nature will tell everybody about what we have done. A most adventurous woman am I and well rewarded, as you see. And how I would have twins. Pharez came first; and afterward came his brother. See how quickly I forgot the boys’ father. Gone are the tears. So sing loud sweet chariot, like an angel in heaven.

(Musically: celestial music. Voices of angles, Gregorian in nature.)

And the good father in his vestment and with twinkling in his eye will always have a spare Valentine in his pocket to betroth us with.

(The CHOIR starts singing “There is a balm in Gilead.”)

MAN

And for those who choose to break the law, there’s prison. Prison. We’ve discussed these things in the past, fact and fiction, crime without shame, at home and for profit. And what will my tomorrow bring? Tell me—tell me, can you interpret dreams?

WOMAN

Dreams?

MAN

The world’s woe is everybody’s problem.

WOMAN

What did you say about dreams?

MAN

We dream our dreams, while we sit in prison. And Joe interprets them. We will not say it shall not be, this passing of order and order’s coming, but in prison and the land around

the River Nile as in that country of Pharaohs we look for a way out of our dilemma.
Thada boy, Joe.

(An excerpt of Dr. Martin Luther King, JR's "I have a dream" speech. After four or five sentences, the man speaks over Dr. King.)

What was that? Behold, a vine was before me: and in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: and Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's hand, and I give the cup into Pharaoh's hand. What's the meaning of that? Swallow hard before you answer.

VOICE OVERLAY

Israel shall grow, shall flourish. And there will be seven years of famine throughout the land.

MAN

Well, so be it.

WOMAN

Joe is a mere gatekeeper of the peace, a poor lost waste-hater of the first degree. He is now an ever-devoted friend of the Pharaoh. I take my hat off to him.

(Musically: A song of busyness and preparation. A mocked gurgle, a swig of something cool. Leaving an oasis, music that gives the impression of a long journey across a desert. A song of perspiration and depressing heat. Dizziness and desperation join with the whirl of a dust devil to give the impression of impending doom.)

MAN

Hurry up! No more jogging along as if in a dream. There isn't time. I'm tired of having to nudge you along.

WOMAN

You're right. As long as Joe continues to shape his changeable timetable, there's no time to rest.

(During this section, the weaver helps Joe coordinate a massive effort to store sacks of corn or wheat for a predicted disaster. Arrayed in vestures of fine linen, Joe now wears flashy rings and a gold chain about his neck.)

MAN

Table napkins?

WOMAN

Why not! Look at the stuff!

VOICE OVERLAY

And this farmer pledged a hundred and sixty rods and cones of this and that. So did that farmer and....

(During the following speeches, a newsreel of starving children from around the world is projected on a screen.)

MAN

I want steak. Porterhouse, if you want to know.

WOMAN

You fool! Breakfast comes first.

MAN

Spadefulls of mounded food, fill those sacks!

WOMAN

Bacon, gobs of grease.

MAN

A cold forsaken steak re-cooked in onions. With Chutney, mmm, oh, so good.

WOMAN

Pig!

MAN

Pig? Get her! She called me a pig!

WOMAN

Without prejudice, I prefer round steak, very rare, with rice and peas on the side.

MAN

What about a saddlebag steak, with gravy and pumpernickel to whoop it up and as well with a second course?

WOMAN

You'll whoop it up when the world is full of starving people?

MAN

Baked beans and a big steak, no gristle, not a paddy, maybe a T-bone, with lots of pepper following a cold loin of veal and more cabbage. Strawberry jam, all free of charge.

WOMAN

Gracious me.

MAN

And the best wine ever! Jugs of wine. Cheers to us. And more and more.

WOMAN

(Laughing.)

Indigestion city!

MAN

Some ham, peas, and mash potatoes. I don't mean to make a spectacle of myself as I dig into mounds of mash potatoes, as I grow fatter and fatter. Now I am fatter, as I eat more.

WOMAN

Think of all of the starving people, as you dig into those meatballs.

MAN

While we have the bread, let's eat it!

WOMAN

He was filled with gluttony, as he chewed his meatballs.

MAN

No time for sleeping or my what a stomachache!

WOMAN

Let us continue.

MAN

God willing.

WOMAN

Play all day games of violence for fun.

(On the screen, a short video of street violence and its aftermath. Musically: wild and violent rhythms: the BLOODS verses the CRIPS. High Noon on a street corner. On the stage, kids have been playing games all day, those deadly games for fun with Roger and Bailey "kicking someone's ass" and Mary and Jane doing the same.)

THE VOICE OVERLAY

And Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy corn.

(Out of horrible necessity, the DANCER helps lead Joe's brothers into Egypt. It is looking pretty black for all of them. It is astonishingly painful for them to leave their land behind and trudge along across the barren sand. The weaver stokes the furnace by manipulating a huge bellows.)

MAN

They went without knowing that the governor over the land had every reason to dislike everything in anyway associated with them. He knew them, as he had often remembered how they had hated and envied and conspired to slay him. The accomplished governor naturally used to think of revenge, and now they bowed down before him with their faces in the dirt. They are hungry and will agree to anything as soon as it's half uttered, so command them!

WOMAN

Why do you weep?

MAN

I fear God, if the truth were known. Quite true, that they're very guilty. Also they remember, for sure they do. For not acknowledging the anguish of my soul. As guilty as they are, could anyone blame me? Wouldn't I be justified?

VOICE OVERLAY

No other situation has yet taken so much from him as seeing his brothers. By no means will he take the blood that is required. Not yet has he forced them to bring to him their youngest brother. Not yet has he filled their sacks with corn and given them their money back. Not yet has he forgiven them.

WOMAN

And there was a hope that he would get to see his father again, after first filling their sacks with corn, and that he might pity and forgive them.

MAN

He had eaten all of my steak, swallowed even the gristle, devoured a whole side of beef, chewed up all the bagels and bacon, approached a record, made mush out of my quiche and ate it all most glutinously, and I'm suppose to forgive him.

WOMAN

Here's something more serious. I'm hungry, and no one gives me anything to eat. Swallow that!

MAN

Forgive someone who's stabbed you in the back.

WOMAN

A friend, a true-blue friend.

MAN

So be it!

(The CHOIR starts singing “Be not dismayed: God Will Take Care of You.”)

MAN (continued)

We all requested his mercy, much as we hated to ask for it, but since we came forward with money have we not, without suggesting it for an instant, a right to a little respect. Excuse me. The iniquity that ought to have been ours, the sackcloth we ought to have been wearing, he had no room for that. ‘Till he forgot to act like he should. Wrongly bound. Loved not. Sinned. Shipped off. To Egypt. Taken for dead. Now into his hands. And he fell upon us and wept. Kissed us. Destined more tears. To be cleansed. Sent for our father and promised us the fat of the land.

WOMAN

Tommy, as I was shortly before that made aware of, next stopped to fetch a breath, the first steps he took in my direction (let God’s son now be looking down on me). Both of his callused hand that were plainly made a good deal more rough by the work he did, as he got close to me (as large as he was, I never had a chance). Was he noted for his inhumane treatment of women, a matter maybe you should put to a half a dozen of us? He was there, and you could plainly see what he intended. Perspiring. All feeling left me, when he said, “this ain’t going to hurt you much.” And he said he thought the world of my life and me, as his sweetheart could be just swell. Poor, poor Tommy. Now that he’s doing time I’m saying to myself maybe I can forgive him.

MAN

Take back those stolen kiss, recover all you’ve lost.

(Music depicting hell in a tunnel, touching on purgation and indulgence. Then triumph. Followed by distress in the slammer.)

WOMAN

Fall down on your knees pray how wrong he was when he committed those acts of indecency. Temptation Tommy. Not love through force. Why did he do this to me? Am I still supposed to forgive him?

MAN

Let us continue.

(The CHOIR sing of labor, devotion, and courage as they present a medley of black spirituals. They sing these old plantation songs as they were originally sung. Let manner and matter of that singing signify the strength of a race. Each singer sings in spite of the risk.)

VOICE OVERLAY

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, “gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days.”

JACOB

Reuben, my first born, adding to the malice of your transgression, yes, hoping you’ll change your nature and altering the wrong, the defiling of my bed and my couch, still you’ll be as unstable as water and will not excel.

WOMAN

‘Tis a pity! He had so much potential. If only he had not taken shares in the bride.

JACOB

Simeon and Levi are brothers.

MAN

Just a little Judas tonic.

WOMAN

Stay out of this!

JACOB

Instruments of torture fill their homes. They grew up within my sight, under my roof, in a land of milk and honey.

WOMAN

Bring their scooters along, and they were all real brothers in just right home of Jacob.

JACOB

In their anger they killed a man. Curse is their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel.

MAN

That describes them.

JACOB

Where did I go wrong?

(The man laughs.)

And because of their transgressions, they’ll be scattered throughout Israel.

WOMAN

And Judah?

MAN

You let me tell you. From now until such and such a date, in other words forever, Judah shall be praised.

(Laughing.)

Wonder if you were as popular? A young lion, he shall always rule. Imagine washing your clothes in wine and brushing your teeth with milk?

WOMAN

Zebulun!

JACOB

A safe harbor.

WOMAN

Issachar!

JACOB

He is a strong ass couching down between two burdens.

WOMAN

A slave!

MAN

I refuse to believe it.

WOMAN

And the good brother....

JACOB

....shall bow his shoulder to bear.

MAN

All that has to be done has yet to be done and done again, when days are long and hard.

WOMAN

And Dan shall judge his people.

MAN

The snake!

JACOB

Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he'll finally win.

WOMAN

And Asher?

MAN

(Laughing.)

A royal pastry does marvels for your soul.

JACOB

Naphtali is a deer let loose, while Joseph is a fruitful bough.

WOMAN

And Benjamin?

JACOB

My baby. Do you hear, Benjamin is my baby. And on all fours like a wolf he will devour his prey, and at night he will divide the spoil.

MAN

That's all twelve.

VOICE OVERLAY

And that was it that their father spoke, and he blessed them.

(Musically: as the spirituals continue to be sung, the plaintive strains of a funeral mass are also heard, as the Dancer leads a possession to a burying place.)

In the same place, they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, and Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.

MAN

When he found himself at pointblank range looking down the barrel of a revolver, his whole life flashed before him. More than a billion bites of data. Gosh, what with all his troubles, the murky business, the blotched opportunities, the tattered relationships, the inconsistencies, the fox-trotting to keep a head of the pack, the lice, the scum he knew, the tears, the drinking, my what a cross to bear.

VOICE OVERLAY

And Jacob made Joe promise to bury him in the land of Canaan with Abraham and Issac.

WOMAN

Let us continue.

MAN

And eventually Joe died.

WOMAN

Took stock and died. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

VOICE OVERLAY

Now these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt; every man and his house came with Jacob. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan, and Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already.

(As the spirituals continue to be sung, musically: the sounds of hopscotch and tag beat through the trees while the top branches wave in contrapuntal rhythms.)

MAN

Burdens, because there was a new king, from dawn to dusk, who made their lives bitter with hard bondage. And they built for Pharoah the treasured cities of Pithom and Raamses.

(To an African drumbeat, "savages" wildly dance. They prance and twist, strut, leap and pirouette. Else there is danger. Their antics and attitudes, prancing and posturing are a direct imitation of game.)

During many odd years these people of hod, cement, and edifices piled stone upon stone building a great city, building it on the banks of Nile. And still they multiplied.

(Noisy monkeys and a menagerie of sound. Moon light campfire burning. The air explodes with the screech of a trapped cat. Slave-makers relentlessly pursue those who run through the bush. Run, else you're caught!)

One yesterday he collapsed under the weight of a heavy stone. His fate dictated nothing else from him. And men like to ants bore more, and with sore backs working stacks of bricks; and their taskmasters afflicted them with all manner of service in the field. Where else in this world would we see such a thing?

(Now bigger than life, enhanced by a projection on the screen, the weaver supplies the dancer with a whip. The whip in hand, the dancer cracks it smartly about)

WOMAN

And the king was an ugly person. Throughout the land he set in motion a plan of death. Let the midwives carryout his dirty work. By order of the king, all Hebrew boys were to be killed. And so? Used the midwives? No, they didn't allow themselves to be used.

(As the "Death's Gwineter Lay His Cold Icy Hands on Me" is being sung, musically: a jackass-bark has set sail across the sea with a human cargo. There is a strong gale testing the rigging. There is flapping and creaks and groans of the rigging. In the belly of a bark the cry of many peoples. The songs of childbirth. The songs of dying. A cotton-picking song sung by those who labor with a short-handled hoe.)

VOICE OVERLAY

The jurors are out; and here are the witnesses. The gravest embezzlement is the theft of human beings. Playing down how much slavery hurts. If he pulls you over, say you're free.

SLAVE

(As Caliban, the savage and deformed slave of
Shakespeare's "The Tempest.")

No more dams I'll make for fish, nor fetch in firing at requiring; nor scrape onions, nor wash dish: 'Ban,' Ban, Cacaliban has a new master; get a new man. Freedom, hey-day! Hey-day, freedom! Freedom, hey-day, freedom!

WOMAN

(Also from Shakespeare.)

O brave monster! Lead the way.

VOICE OVERLAY

Run for your life! Run!

WOMAN

I want Bud!

PLANTATION OWNER

We want Bud's brother! You can have Bud's sister.

SLAVE TRADER

There he is a perfect specimen. The best of the lot. There he is THE MAN, stronger than an ox. Fifty dollars, a hundred, two hundred, three hundred! And tough! Four hundred, five hundred, six! Master, master, stay in your chair! He's worth a thousand times more than that.

SLAVE

What about Bud's boy?

VOICE OVERLAY

Tearing, ruptured, outrage, humiliated, humbled, and whipped! First he's stripped! Then he's examined! Look! Check his teeth!

PLANTATION OWNER

How much for the big, black buck? A half-pricer is his wife!

MAN

Their kids are an investment.

(Pharaoh exhibits his might. For now, he has dominion over everyone. As the dancer wheels a huge mirror in to serve the king's vanity, his public gushes with admiration. Tell me, tell me, and tell me, who's the fairest of them all? The weaver provides the royal purple for the king's robes. The CHOIR starts singing, "God's A-Gwineter Trouble de Water.")

VOICE OVERLAY

And Pharaoh charged all his people saying, "every son that is born cast into the river, and every daughter you should save."

(An Elvis impersonator sings, "Hush Little Baby, Don't You Cry.")

MAN

And since we are talking aimlessly about death and dying, who would deny me this opportunity to share a tear or two? Jenny. Holy God, may she rest in peace. Oh, how I weep! Of what age are we talking about? She was to reach her maturity soon after she was born. To be around a few months and then being gone like some old person, the Lord don't ever give an explanation we can easily accept. I think I'm doing pretty well, don't you think? I do! Four-year-old baby Johnson was run over by a car. I didn't see her. Do not you waken her! She is happily to be with the Lord, like the blessed angels looking over us...like the angel she looked so like...

(More of "Hush Little Baby...")

WOMAN

I heard her voice somewhere else.

VOICE OVERLAY

And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took a wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bore a son.

WOMAN

Slap, slap, his bonny bottom pap papa.

VOICE OVERLAY

And when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him for three months.

MAN

Adieu, sweet adieu.

WOMAN

Still there's tomorrow. Follow tomorrow down the lucky road.

MAN

And the world is divided unequally between Masters and Slaves.

SLAVES

(Toiling and reciting with bent backs and heavy labor.)

“I am thinking today of that beautiful land I shall reach when the sun goeth down; When thro’ wonderful grave by my Savior I stand, will there be any stars in my crown? Will there be any stars, any stars in my crown when at ev’ning the sun goeth down?...goeth down? When I wake with the blest in the mansions of rest, will there be any stars in my crown?...any stars in my crown?”

(Then the MASTERS sing, “Wonderful Story of love.”)

MAN

On the backs of men and women, we’ll build our empire.

(Musically: the rush of industry. The hum of a well-oiled machine)

VOICE OVERLAY

And they hated them, and could not speak peaceably unto them.

(Musically: a tune of flutes, which keeps stroke to the oars of a barge. Amorous music fit for a queen. A golden sound, fancy and regal in its nature. Meanwhile, the weaver has physically set the stage with purple sails for the queen and that perfume that hits the adjacent bank. The dancer tends the queen with a divers-colored fan.)

MALE SLAVE

Rare Egyptian!

FEMALE SLAVE

Royal wench!

MALE SLAVE

Sing sweet harp. The queen bids them to tend to her.

WOMAN

On each side of her walked pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids, with divers-colored fans, whose wind did seem to glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool.

VOICE OVERLAY

When his mother could no longer hide him, she constructed for him an ark of bulrushes, and placed the child inside, and laid it in the flags by the riverbank.

MAN

And it wasn't a long time before the queen came along. And in that way, he was saved.

VOICE OVERLAY

And it was so.

MAN

The many wiles of Moses.

(Musically: going fishing. He too had a great day. Caught a whopper. Look at the little general. Free to be a child. The CHIOR sings "God Will Take Care Of You.")

PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER

Moses, as we remember, was a good boy to begin with, who romping and jumping had run of the palace. In this cold old world, he had it made.

MAN

What's overdressed?

(The CHOIR starts singing "Like a Motherless Child.")

MOSES' MOTHER

And around the courtyard he ran he ran and this was when I could only watch him run. He had chewing gum, the mumps, and odd sort of things that other kids didn't. A pony, a sword, grand aspirations, and a voice to match. Flew his wild geese and soldiered a bit. And I'm not supposed to have a canary? Sports is a common thing. Shine. Hear him, and I'm proud of him. But I'm not his sole admirer. Our beneficiaries are in a different league, as he plays in their house as if he were a king. Here was when I was supposed to leave. And they expected me to quietly pass away.

MAN

Someone to saddle up to, but I also think he mustn't forget his own story. He had had a humbler beginning.

WOMAN

His feet are those of a huge man.

MAN

Hastily into his shoes, he had to flee.

WOMAN

Hold on now

(Musically, as a backdrop to a Newsreel or a montage of the civil strife in the southern United States during the sixties: rituals of blood. The Choir sings "O God, our help in ages past....")

MAN

Take your gauze off and see!

WOMAN

No, it doesn't concern us.

MAN

(While the dancer is being lynched by a silent mob)
And there they were too. It was dark. As most of the town slept, the clan met, filled with nameless rage. By courtesy of an informer, listening in, as hard as we could, in a southern town, white avengers and their troubled follows, all twenty-five of them, all talking and angry and plotting.

(More of "Hush Little Baby. More spirituals.)

TOWN PERSON

Never thought something like that could happen around here.

TWO CHILDREN

(Playing hopscotch.)

Einy, meiny, miney, mo, catch a nigger by his toes; if he hollers make him pay, fifty dollars every day.

TOWN PERSON

Lord have mercy! Mercy me!

MAN

And their roasted bodies were chained to the back of an automobile and dragged through the streets, and the celebrants shouted jubilantly as they drove through our neighborhood.

TOWN PERSON

Yet another black man hanging on a tree. One more woman raped. A black boy whipped and maimed.

MAN AND WOMAN

(Shout!)

Wake the immortal strain!

(The CHOIR STARTS SINGING "My Lord Says He's Gwineter
Rain Down Fire.")

VOICE OVERLAY

And Moses saw an Egyptian hitting a Hebrew, one of his brethren. And Moses looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he murdered the Egyptian, and hid the body in the sand.

MAN

To the honorable memory of disgrace.

WOMAN

There's never been a Moses without a flaw. It's the pith of the matter.

VOICE OVERLAY

And Moses ran and became a stranger in a strange land.

(Musically: groaning. O, weep; throw in a darker tune of sorrows. Spasms of pain and agony. But they are not alone. Somebody perhaps has a hint that God is nearby. God hears. At last, through the gloom, there is a ray. Then reckless dancing of all sorts. *Anno Domini nostri sancti Jesu Christi*. It's the road to freedom. How melodious are the bells and the song of songbirds! More spirituals. In Egypt, the dancer has become a cruel taskmaster; the people of the children of Israel are "afflicted" by him. The weaver has provided the props.)

WOMAN

Let us continue.

MAN

Well, how is Mr. Fry?

WOMAN

Do you want to know everything, or just the highlights?

MAN

All of it!

WOMAN

That would take too long.

MAN

I apologize for bringing it up.

(The CHOIR sings "The God of Abraham Praise.")

WOMAN

No, no. Mr. Fry, permit me to tell you, felt perfectly satisfied with himself. With pay and perks, and a new bride, who bore him a son, he couldn't have been happier. But there was no Sabbath for nomads, and he was mostly able to walk to the top of mountain. It is hopeless of course to explain how a bush burned of fire without being consumed. From then on, Mr. Fry would say he had seen and spoken to God and received holy orders. But he wasn't due a vacation yet! On the backside of the desert. And I truthfully declare that he didn't want to hear what the Lord wanted out of him. He was now becoming fed up over the prospect of becoming someone he wasn't, for after all he liked who he was. Couldn't he give a tithe of sheep instead? But when they ask him what is his name, what shall he tell them?

MAN

Say something elliptical.

WOMAN

I'm through!

MAN

No, you're not! Do you not must want to go somewhere in the present? Yes, it's too bad! God says, at the earliest moment. Never mind the prickly heat. It doesn't matter that it is a long walk. "I want you to go" is all that's said. Yes, indeed, you have a wife and two fine sons you made between you and a superfine home. You can pretend you didn't hear. You do not have to hear. You can join Jonah in the whale. I know you would rather go to anywhere but Nineveh.

(The weaver hands the dancer a staff, who in turns hands it to Moses.)

VOICE OVERLAY

And the Lord said unto him, "What is that in your hand?"

MOSES

A staff.

VOICE OVERLAY

Throw it down.

(Moses casts the staff down, and the dancer assumes the role of the snake.)

WOMAN

Wait!

MAN

What!

(Moses catches the snake by it's tail, and it becomes a staff
in his hand.)

The door!

WOMAN

Open.

MAN

See!

WOMAN

What?

MAN

Careful.

WOMAN

Who?

MAN

Put you hand into your bosom.

VOICE OVERLAY

Wait! I have leprosy. Oh, my, no, it's leprosy.

MOSES

Let me see.

WOMAN

Have no fear. Put your hand into your bosom again. See you're cured.

VOICE OVERLAY

Now I have to go. But who's at the door?

MAN

No one yet. But let us consider all possibilities.

WOMAN

What possibility?

MAN

WOMAN

Listen to Michah. Chapter five. Let me see. Verse two: “*yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.”

VOICE OVERLAY

And he shall be like a young lion among the beast of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of the sheep. Your hand shall be lifted up upon your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off. And the Lord will help by cutting off their horses and destroying their chariots.

(Musically: thunder and the rallying of the troops. Lightening and the thundering hoofs of horses. Hold that picket. We all live the part we dread. Stop that war. Wait a minute. It's only the wind on the road outside.)

WOMAN

Hot and cold, what are we to do?

MAN

Share the wealth and spoils.

WOMAN

Commit no fouls.

MAN

Respect the uniform.

WOMAN

Read your Bible.

(The CHOIR starts singing “A mighty fortress is our God...”)

Then lash me to my husband's star! But who says I have to lick it and like it? To barter or be a partner? Him my first love, me his first pal, but for him God comes first. Take thee your man and for this reason you leave your mother and father, and the two of you become like glue. He says we have to go. Go? To throw sheets to the wind or tie our trunks onto the roof of the car. At no time did I agree to be dragged across the country. Bound to, I don't know where. By whose orders? Who's in charge? And besides proof plenty, over proof. Foul! And for God, I lose my family, my friends, and everything I once knew! Here I am back on my haunches ready to strike, but I don't have the courage. Then what's in it for me? Maybe someday I'll get straight. But this could turn out to be an awfully long story.

VOICE OVERLAY

Moses took his orders directly from Yahweh, who was quite clear about what He expected from His Chosen People.

(Musically: one has thoughts of another desert journey. Very glad you're going to Egypt. Your donkey is sure footed. A bold stroke for someone like you. Singing glory as long as we keep going. Something as grand as a pyramid on a sightseeing trip down the Nile.)

MAN

I had no choice but to fall in with the plan, as God's people should and as God's people must. And don't try to hide. You can't. Or give an excuse. You say your car won't make it. How do you know? Be that as it may, but let us now, weather, health, danger, restrictions and other circumstances permitting, if perfectly convenient, drive toward your destination. Talk straight turkey to me mate. What happens when we run out of water and gas, and it's a hundred and ten in the shade? I am an honest man, a shepherd, anxious to please everybody and really glad that Christmas comes but once a year. You say you can not say yes to "please," and I ask, "why not?" Don't you understand that we're out of water and gas, and it's a hundred and ten in the shade?

WOMAN

I forgot my bathing suit.

MAN

Tiny tot thought she saw a pool of water in the distance, which turned out to be a mirage.

WOMAN

I'd give anything for a hamburger right now. A hamburger with fries.

MAN

Sleep, that's the best way to pass the time.

WOMAN

'Tis as human a story as has ever been told: a loaded car, out of gas...

MAN

Water and gas...

WOMAN

Water and gas...

MAN

And we'll be till we wear out and cry and age. Thief is the night, steal we a little more time. Nothing to do but pray.

WOMAN

Let us continue.

(The CHOIR starts singing, "O For a Faith that Will Not Shrink.")

MOSES

Should I dare open my mouth? Perhaps I'll stutter. I'll mangle my words. Perhaps I'll say something dumb, or my words won't match my thoughts. Take my worth from it. Lord, I can't. Now there's my brother. Look at him. With Your help, he'll speak for us both.

(And the CHOIR sings, "Thanks to God whose Word was spoken.")

VOICE OVERLAY

And he dazzled them with the signs he did.

(The weaver assumes the role of a magician. Musically: abracadabra. Smoke and mirrors. He or she concocts a bag full of tricks and turns a prince into a frog. Puff goes the dragon. Then with sobs for his job, with tears for effort, with horror over not being able to change anything significantly, he or she returns to his or her dais.)

And the people believed and bowed their heads and worshipped. When all fails, worship.

MAN

Did you see that?

(The dancer is still the taskmaster. He or she gets and gives orders. More affliction. The CHOIR starts singing "Oppressed So Hard They Could Not Stand." They can't see for the sand.)

WOMAN

O what a lovely free speech it 'twas. He found the right words.

MAN

So wrapped up in our worries and woes and tired of all the shuffling. For there is now hope for the downtrodden.

WOMAN

He's such a wonderful preacher.

MAN

We'll never give up.

WOMAN

Well, we're all well today, but what will tomorrow bring?

MAN

The world's woe is collectively all of our misery.

WOMAN

We will not say it shall not be, this passing of order and order's coming.

VOICE OVERLAY

And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, thus said the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

WOMAN

Who *is* this Lord God?

MAN

Peace to those who follow his law.

WOMAN

A Sunday king.

VOICE OVERLAY

And Pharaoh said I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.

MOSES

'tis a pity.

(Musically: Building a great city had people heavily burdened
toil in the summer heat. On the backs of workers let rise
the great pyramids. Yes, before all this has time to end this
golden age will be wracked with a vengeance. Pharaoh
will become dirigible. Israel will be rejuvenated. But for
now, each man and woman carries the weight of the world
on his or her shoulder. For now, though they stumble, they
have to work even harder. The CHOIR starts singing "We
Raise de Wheat, Dey Gib Us de Corn" in the tempo of a
dirge.)

WOMAN

This is as human a story as can be carried in any newspaper.

MAN

Not on the front page.

WOMAN

You're right. It wouldn't make headlines, unless it turned into something very tragic.
We also know from what we have perused from the pages of Newsweek.

MAN

Esra, the cat, overheard the foremen get the order from management that the workers from now on wouldn't be given straw to make brick, as before, but will have to go and gather straw for themselves.

WOMAN

We're being accused of being idle.

MAN

And scattered from here to Eternity. We've fought for this country. Now this!

WOMAN

We can not smile, because there is no more straw. Yet they say production has to continue at the same pace. The same as before, without let up. More bricks, more bricks, no breaks!

SLAVE

I am a worker, a mason, and anxious to please. I have to please, or else they'd give me the boot. You can bet on it. So I eat sand, but who am I to complain? Can't afford to complain 'cause I've got a living to make. I am also an immigrant, to some, an alien, who ran, walked, stumbled, scratched to get where I am. I brought my wife with two children a boy a girl and me. But it's gotten so that I can't breathe without the foreman writing me up. There is getting to be too many leaks in the thatch. And it need not be lost sight of that we have certain God-given rights, concerning life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. While the bosses pick their teeth, we're pushed to work even harder. Why, o why, o why, have they cut off the straw? If we weren't already bowed and solid and letdown and over-loaded with work, I'd say hang the king

MOSES

Dear Lord, do you expect us to simply say, "so be it?" O the petty rogue! We have mouths to feed. Don't give us a fork to eat gravy. Give us the tools to be productive.

(Musically: God takes charge. A voice from the mountain top billows. And it isn't just the thunder and lightning. And the weather is that mean too. There's no place to hide, so drop in your tracks. Hold him here, and may God strengthen you! And the CHIOR begins singing "A mighty fortress is our God...")

MAN

For he heard the All Mighty speak about what He would do and how the king with a strong hand would let them go, and with strong hand drive them out of his land, and everyone of us fell back, as the Lord spoke, says He! My name is JEHOVAH was I not known to....

WOMAN

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob....

MAN

And He established His covenant, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.

JEW

To some hasty-waste *komandos* from Police Regiment 11, operating under the aegis of the *HSSPF* Russia-South, part of the regiment that marched through Belorussia with great destructiveness, the rude words "*Ju-da verr-rrecke! Juda verr-rrecke*" seemed very funny.

MOSES

I've heard the gnashing of teeth. I've seen the millstones they have around their necks. So what are we going to do about it Lord? So you say you're going to redeem them with an outstretched hand!

WOMAN

He's not circumcised, no he ain't! Or should I say "thank God for that!"

MAN

And, you, take that back to where you got it, and go away. We're in the temple. Temple people don't talk that way or even think it.

WOMAN

Oh, please!

MAN

You're something.

WOMAN

Why don't you get off your high horse, and stop acting like God. We're all coming out of bondage, so what's big deal!

(The weaver hands the dancer Moses' staff. Musically: it's magic time again. Bells go off signifying another winner. Suddenly, there is a big change in the air. And the aching is over. We shall never forget. Great things were expected. It's like the time the Pope came to town. And after that so glad we all came. Take a breath! Aaah! Throughout the plagues, the slaves continue their burdensome work.)

VOICE OVERLAY

Moses *was* fourscore years old and Aaron fourscore-and three years old.

WOMAN

Pharaoh his magicians, what will they do?

MAN

Moses and Aaron, or the Lord?

(Moses throws his staff down. The dancer becomes the snake.)

WOMAN

The old snake trick. I never expected him to repeat himself.

MAN

Wait! You only have to wait to see him multiply his signs.

WOMAN

With all of the science of today, you'd expect him to come up with something better.

MAN

Like hot and cold water and electricity.

WOMAN

And a bolt in a grinder.

MAN

Like a two headed ax.

WOMAN

With bottled drinking water, we expected something grander.

MAN

Well, he's rounding up his family.

WOMAN

Credit progress.

MAN

Credit tomorrow.

WOMAN

Are you still expecting a miracle?

MAN

No, something lean for lunch.

VOICE OVERLAY

And all of the fish that was in the river died; and the water stank; and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

MAN AND WOMAN

Boring!

THE CHOIR AND MOSES

Let my people go!

MAN AND WOMAN

Nope!

(Half the CHOIR starts singing “Mine Eyes have seen the Glory of the coming of the Lord,” while the other half lead the SLAVES in “We Shall Over Come.” The two sides vocally battle for the spotlight. During the following sequences, the weaver assumes again the role of the magician, but all he or she can conjure up are modern day plagues, which are projected onto a screen.)

WOMAN

What happens to the frogs may happen to humans next year, be it catastrophic, be it hatch, be it death. For our scientific sense should tell use something, when frog multiply and come into our houses, and into our bedrooms, and in our beds, and the houses of our servants and our relatives, and into our ovens, and pollute the food we eat. What do you think?

MAN

Frogs?

WOMAN

Frogs. And what would you think if all those frogs died?

MAN

That wouldn't bode well.

WOMAN

No it wouldn't. For one thing, it would stink.

MAN

Party time.

WOMAN

Add lice.

MAN

Enough!

WOMAN

It should have been.

(Musically: You must shout out! Hope soon he'll hear us. That's where the frogs come in. Millions of frogs. Hope, letdown, and the strain of uncertainty. Who in his or her heart doubts the power of God?)

THE CHOIR AND MOSES

(Singing.)

Let my people go!

VOICE OVERLAY

No.

MAN AND WOMAN

Tip! Draw nearer to God, since if you don't it seems like you'll meet with misfortune.

(The dancer tries to contemplate what God will do next. The dancer likes to think he or she is in charge, until lightning strikes him or her. The weaver produces a huge cloth grab bag. More "Mine Eyes have seen the Glory of the coming of the Lord and "We Shall Over Come."
Musically: transition from frogs to lice to swarms of flies.)

MAN

(Scratching his head.)

A good plan given these circumstances is patience.

WOMAN

Patience is strictly necessary, but a trifle irritating.

MAN

We couldn't eat for the flies.

WOMAN

It was an abomination.

MAN

We can recall how we toured the coast to the sound of wild music. We had the top down and were driving about hoping to steal a little fresh air. A perfect day, but, on the face of it, we shouldn't have expected so much. The perfect spot. We pulled over. Anyhow, somehow and somewhere, we found the perfect spot for a picnic. Me and my girl. And

let us bring out the fresh bread and a hunk of cheese and eventually start thinking that life couldn't be better when out of nowhere came a grievous swarm of flies.

(The weaver gives the dancer the grab bag, from which the dancer takes black confetti, which he then proceeds to toss into the air.)

WOMAN

Yes, yes, more!

MAN

Dirty flies turned a perfect day black.

WOMAN

So what were you going to do about it?

(More "We Shall Over Come.")

MOSES

Let my people go!

MAN AND WOMAN

No!

(The CHOIR starts to sing "Nobody Knows de Trouble I See." Musically: as hapless as people can be. Duly fatigued, they weep laughing, they smile hating, they wait impatiently. I bet they used their best cosmetics off their vanity table, but can't cover it up. What's that! A zit! No, no, it's a boil. That's what? Boils! Smiling hating, crying laughing. May you never see me in this condition. I don't care what others think. To adore oneself in the mirror and find one's face covered with boils. Draw the shades and weep.)

(The weaver stokes a huge furnace; and from the furnace, the dancer takes handfuls of ashes and throws it in the air.)

VOICE OVERLAY

And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall become a boil breaking forth *with* swelling upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.

WOMAN

Draw the shades!

MAN

What's the matter?

WOMAN

I hold the secret from the world. Oh, vanity, vanity, what can I do?

MAN

I swear to you that I'll keep your secret.

WOMAN

No, you won't.

MOSES

Let my people go!

(The CHOIR begins singing, "Go Home to My Lord and Be Free."
Musically: more pestilence. God smites them and cuts them off
from the earth. A display of God's power, lightening, thunder, rain
and very grievous hail. The underpinning of civilization is shaken
and threatened.)

WOMAN

Ever so sorry. We really are.

(Musically: Chimed N-B-C. 1960. The theme songs for the "Bugs
Bunny Show/Bugs Bunny," "Road Runner Hour," "Bugs Bunny
and Tweety Show," "Search for Tomorrow," and "Scooby-Doo.")

MAN

How awful! Such misfortune. Hoof and mouth disease. All the horses and asses and camels and oxen and sheep. Recoil. Television brought it home. Our eyes demanded that we pay attention. And carcass bonfires blazed everywhere. When they set fire then so many hopes gone. Gone. All gone. Disaster was a common thing. Then it was the Lord's own day for hail, such as has not been seen before, and the request for a full explanation was put forth. A time to weep because hail struck everything throughout the land and destroyed everything. It looked like a battlefield. Only in Goshen was there no hail. Intreat the Lord, for hadn't people suffered enough? Pity the cattle. Would you care to know the cost of the loss of barley, rye, and wheat? The scenes, replayed over and over on television, was never to be forgotten, the carcasses and the destruction everywhere. And the grasshoppers. How much more? Like a great mower, they devoured and devoured, stealing our living. And they covered the earth, and you couldn't see anything. Nothing. Nothing escaped with one still sadder circumstance. Suddenly we didn't have any electricity and we were caught in the dark. Tap, tap!
Pardonne!

THE CHOIR AND MOSES

(Singing.)

Let my people go.

VOICE OVERLAY

But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart!

(Musically: caught in the crossfire! This time, it was the firstborn. Around the midnight, post haste. No time to waste.

The Choir begins humming "Captain of Israel's Host.")

WOMAN

And how are you?

MAN

Look at all the flinching.

WOMAN

Dig deep or forget it!

(Musically: Up the ante. A very different approach. For very different results. www.bb.com Let the dance begin.)

WOMAN

Hold on tight.

(The CHOIR begins singing again "There is a balm in Gilead.")

And since we are talking aimlessly about death and dying, who would deny me this opportunity to share a tear or two? Jenny. Holy God, may she rest in peace.

(Musically: Outcasts in Egypt. Suddenly, big shots.)

SLAVE

Delays are dangerous. Borrow money from your neighbor. None of that paper stuff. Ask for jewels, silver, and gold.

(The Weaver's preparation quickens. The CHOIR again hums part of "Captain of Israel's Host.")

VOICE OVERLAY

Big shots!

WOMAN

In control!

MAN

Control freak.

VOICE OVERLAY

Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sights of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people. And they began to salute him.

(Musically: bustling excitement, great commotion, and hullabaloo. A big to-do. THE MAN OF THE YEAR. The man, in white shirt, perfect tie, is how he is. Give him an inch and he'll take it all. Retrace his rise back to when he first came to town. This is perfect. There's faux-this and faux that.)

WOMAN

Suggested routes to success. What to wear. How to beat the heat. He drives a Jeep—that is, unless he's driving his McLaren, Acura NSX or Bentley turbo convertible. Silicon Heaven!

MAN

His public thinks they know him. The amusing part is that that couldn't be further from the truth. Those who have the best knowledge of what is happening are also those who are furthest away. He has been working his magic. We are all awed.

MOSES

Thus said the Lord, about midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt.

(The CHIOR begins singing "Where They Need No Sun.")

WOMAN

O, dear me! O, dear me now! Jenny. Holy God, may she rest in peace.

MAN

Now, then, take this in! Allow me to guide you. It wasn't as if they weren't warned.

MOSES

And all the firstborn shall die, from the first born of the king that sits upon his throne, even the first born of the servant that grinds the grain; and all the first born of their animals. And there will be a great cry throughout the land, such as has not been heard before, nor will ever be heard again.

(Excitement among the captive grows. The weaver produces a huge paintbrush and a gallon of red paint. The dancer takes the huge paintbrush and the gallon of red paint and begins to fill a huge backdrop with religious graffiti. Musically: anticipation. Carry awe. But for the majority, foreboding. The manifestation of fear.)

CAPTIVES

Quick! Quicker!

MAN

Watch! Poor soul. The death he has to live through mirrors the life he lived.

WOMAN

Oh, my. I need a hug. Stale words won't do any good.

(Musically: they are exalted and depressed, assembled and separated. The word travels fast. Puzzling, startling, shocking. It can't happen. No. Chin up! Hunker down! The well informed will take this seriously.)

MAN

11:15 p.m. The beginning of months, the first month of the year for us, the tenth of this month....

WOMAN

I wonder if we'll be able to find the right lamb. It has to be male and no older than a year.

MAN

Without blemish. It wouldn't occur to me to be so particular.

MOSES

Kill it in the evening.

MAN

As I was saying, you must carefully collect the blood of the lamb and paint it around your door. Do that and your family will be spared.

(The Choir starts singing a Jewish tune related to the Passover.)

WOMAN

As often as you come, you're welcome at our table. Come, have dinner with us. Let's eat.

MAN

This lamb is tender, roasted perfectly over a fire.

WOMAN

Pass the bread.

MAN

Flat and unleavened, like a tortilla.

WOMAN

Not exactly.

MAN

And chase it down with water and bitter herbs.

MOSES

Eat it all!

MAN

Yes, sir.

MOSES

And if you can't eat it all, burn what is left over. And make sure you're dressed, with your shoes on and your staff in your hand. Eat! Hurry!

(Musically: A little before this everything was going on the same. But the drinking and the eating are not now. The celebration of Passover has been replaced by a slow eerie death march. The shadow of death passing over the city.)

MAN

12:00 a.m.

WOMAN

Cry not yet.

(The CHOIR begin to sing again "Hush little baby." The dancer takes a dozen black roses from the weaver, which will be given to members of the audience. Musically: chanting, drumming, prayer, and ceremony meditation, while the specter of death passes over the land.)

MAN

At the beginning of October, in the year of the incarnation of the Son of God 1347, twelve Genoese galleys were fleeing from the vengeance which our Lord was taking on account of their nefarious deeds and entered the harbour of Messina. In their bones they bore so virulent a disease that anyone who only spoke to them was seized by a mortal illness

WOMAN

Well, after we got the bad news, my son was terribly frightened of being alone, of death and that he was going to be put in a black box forever. "O leave me my faculties for a while," he cried.

MAN

The infection spread to everyone who had intercourse with the diseased. Those infected felt themselves penetrated by a pain throughout their whole bodies and, so to say, undermined

WOMAN

Fear paralyzed him, but more than fear he was wracked with tremendous pain. Morphine didn't help.

MAN

Then there developed in their thighs or on their upper arms a boil. This infected the whole body and penetrated it so far that the patient violently vomited blood. This vomiting of blood continued without intermission for three days, there being no means of healing it, and then the patient expired.

WOMAN

Where were his friends? And he'd alienated the medical staff, but underneath he was a wonderfully sensitive person with deep integrity, a person who wanted to find inner peace.

MAN

Soon men hated each other so much that, if the disease attacked a son, his father would not tend him.

WOMAN

All he wanted was to be able to die with dignity and without fear. I couldn't tell him how. O but you must, you must really!

MOSES

The clock was striking midnight. Hustle along, we don't have much time.

(Musically: "death song," a song that wanted to be sung. Just sing, just share the song. Sing it to him with love and let go. Then softly begin to hum. Slowly hum, shifting into singing, softly at first, then louder. And again louder.)

MAN

Many desired to confess their sins to the priests and to draw up their last will and testament.

WOMAN

At that moment, what could I say to my first born son? It was too late. But not for a prayer. Here, give me your hand. While silently holding his hand and sending him love, I prayed. Save us Lord! The dearest little baby ever you saw, between then and now, not enough time. I worried about how he would receive my prayer. Just pray, just share the prayer, without any pressure or attachment. Jessie, be good. I'm sorry. I miss him.

(Musically: a earth-shattering cry. Great wailing, for there was not a house where there was not one dead.)

VOICE OVERLAY

Get up Moses! Up Aaron!

MAN

Who would ever imagine that they could sleep?

(Musically: the quick tempo associated with "The Keystone Cops" and old-time movies.)

VOICE OVERLAY

Hurry! You can't keep a king waiting. Hurry up!

PHARAOH

Be gone! Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, be gone; and bless me also.

A LOUD CRY

HURRY! Before we're all dead men!

(Musically: foretelling a massive migration. Refugees on the move.)

FORMER SLAVES

Freedom, hey-day! Hey-day, freedom! Freedom, hey-day, freedom!

MOSES

God be thanked!

FORMER SLAVES

We're free! We're free! We're free, at last!

VOICE OVERLAY

Of their chains, they broke. They fled. They broke away.

MOSES

Go! Let us extol the Lord with our praises!

(Musically: Lift up your voices, and sing praises unto the Lord. And they sang, "Joy, joy, joy, down in my heart..." Till they exhaust themselves. Say amen! No way did they think that this would ever happen. Free at last!)

EVERYONE

Freedom, hey-day! Hey-day, freedom! Freedom, hey-day, freedom!

WOMAN

That all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious states "are, and henceforward shall be free."

MAN

No, no, you have to secure your own liberty.

WOMAN

Dear Mr. President. It is my Desire to be free and to go to see my people. My mistress won't let me. Please let me know if we are free and what I can do.

(The CHOIR starts singing "Follow the Drinkin' Gourd.")

MAN

I had a little truble in giting away, But as the lord led the Children of Isrel to the land of Canon, so he led me to a land whare freedom will rain in spite of earth and hell. I am free from the slaver's lash. Your affectionate husband. Kiss Daniel for me.

WOMAN

Yes, we're free.

MAN

Sir: I got your letter and was glad to find you had not forgotten me, and that you wanted me to come back and live with you again, promising to do better for me than anybody else can. I have often felt uneasy about you. I thought the Yankees would have hung you long before this for harboring Rebs. Glad you are still living.

WOMAN

Give my love to Miss Mary and Miss Martha and Allen, Esther, Green, and Lee. Tell them I hope we will meet in the better world, if not in this. We are kindly treated, but sometimes we overhear others saying, "The colored people were slaves" down in Tennessee. The children feel hurt when they hear such remarks, but I tell them it was no disgrace in Tennessee to belong to Col. Anderson. Many darkies would have been proud, as I used to was, to call you master.

MAN

Here I draw my wages every Saturday night, but in Tennessee there was never any pay day for the Negroes any more than for the horses and cows.

WOMAN

I would rather stay here and starve and die if it comes to that than have my girls brought to shame by the violence and wickedness of their young masters.

(The CHOIR starts to sing, "The Walls Came Tumblin' Down.")

FORMER SLAVES

Freedom, hey-day! Hey-day, freedom! Freedom, hey-day, freedom!

(Musically: auld lang syne. Playing down their slavery past. With all the celebration, a little wistfulness. Imagine a mass exodus. All to which not a complaint. But their fate, what will it be? Traveling day and night, well tired, very stiff. Lucky! No, not just lucky, but God's Chosen Ones.)

VOICE OVERLAY

With a strong hand, the Lord brought them out of the land of Egypt. And they were smiling ever.

MAN

And where in thunder did they go?

WOMAN

You'll have to draw me a map. My sense of direction isn't very good.

(As the Chosen Ones begin their long journey, the Weaver and the dancer make preparations for a great celebration. Musically: a band is playing a lively march, and a parade is in progress. One politician looking for votes courts the crowd. An orator sees him and yells, "Good for you, Mr. Nixon!" As the acting area empties in one direction with the sojourners, people dressed in their very best enter from the other direction. First one or two, then all of the company enters with great interest and enthusiasm, all of them heading for "Bean Dinner" Park. And it's going be all of us old timers against the youngster facing off at the plate. Sack racing, as advertise. Hog calling, for something different and a greased pole for those who dare. Baseball, sack racing, hog calling and greasy pole climbing, imagine all of these fun activities conducted in a religious atmosphere. Be moving along. So much to do. Can't wait for the beauty contest.)

MAN

Marx once said, “no one in Germany is politically emancipated. We ourselves are not free. How are we to free you? You Jews are egoists if you demand a special emancipation for yourselves as Jews.”

WOMAN

Isn't it great! We're having such a wonderful time.

MAN

Fly your balloons.

WOMAN

Where is the cotton candy?

MAN

All we wants is freedom as a possession.

WOMAN

Third strike, and she's out!

MAN

Sure we haven't got much.

WOMAN

And sure anything we have is beside the point.

MAN

But O, the All Mighty wouldn't um be upset to see such heathenism?

WOMAN

To see the old buzzard whooping it up along side his old lady.

MAN

You're the prettiest woman I ever did see.

WOMAN

And that's how that man is going to make his mark. He'll go far with his compliments.

(And the celebration goes into the night. We shout and cheer, for some of us are impressed by the feats of others. Musically: thundering hooves.)

VOICE OVERLAY

Then the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army. And when Pharaoh came near, Moses stretched out her hand over the sea, and you know what happened. Then there was the drowning of Pharaoh and all of his army and they were completely drowned in the sea, the Red Sea, and we were free.

(Musically: that song sang of freedom by a single voice.
And there they were too, when it was dark. Now all they
have now is a pillow of fire to give them light.)

CURTAIN