

"Matters of the Heart"

by

Thom Duncan

based on his
award-winning play

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MATTERS OF THE HEART / DUNCAN

FADE IN:

EXT. BAINES BACKYARD - DAY

A small, sickly azalea bush is receiving a fairly expert trimming from an UNSEEN PERSON.

BEGIN CREDITS

SERIES OF SCENES:

BRANCHES CUT - falling to the garden floor...

LEAVES REMOVED, GLOVED HANDS adding them on a nearby pile of brush...

DIRT around the base of the plant dug up with a trowel by the gloved hand...

A BAG OF FERTILIZER - moving along in a wheelbarrow, the wheelbarrow coming to a halt, the gloved hands opening the top of the bag, dumping the fertilizer...

THE FERTILIZER mixed into the ground around the plant...

MORE DEAD LEAVES removed...

WATER streaming from a spout, falling down around the plant, through the branches, onto the trunk, down and into the moist, fertilized ground.

The water keeps coming, streaming, dripping off the branches, welling up at the base of the plant, seeming to drown the plant, but still water keeps pouring down from the spout, a virtual rain storm...

END CREDITS

EXT. PARIS STREET - NIGHT (MOVING)

With rain falling in solid sheets, TWO MORMON MISSIONARIES putt-putt along a Paris street on two European motor bikes. They wear overcoats and hats, but are still soaked to the bone.

The bikes aren't as fast as cars, so the missionaries hug the right side of the road. Cars and trucks pass them.

ELDER PAUL BAINES - is the Senior Companion and so holds the first position. He looks over his shoulder to make sure his companion -

ELDER PHILIP WAINWRIGHT - is still behind him.

Wainwright putts along, spitting water from his face.

PAUL - turns back around from looking at his companion just as a PASSING CAR sends a torrent of water over him.

EXT. PARIS APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT (RAINING)

The building is long, about four stories high, and has multiple entrances, each leading to a flight of stairs which in turn lead to various apartments.

The two bikes are locked together in front of one of the entrances.

INT. PARIS APARTMENT COMPLEX / LANDING

The two Elders, now carrying backpacks, are huffing it up to the top landing, which gives way to two apartments.

Elder Wainwright, behind Elder Baines, takes a couple of leaps up the stairs and achieves the landing first, stops, looks off in frustration.

A NOTE - thumb tacked on the door tells it all. In French:

Dear Elders.
Please forgive me.
I am no longer interested in talking
with you about your church.

ELDER WAINWRIGHT - rips the note from the door and crumples it.

PAUL - now arrives at the landing, and breathing hard, is nearly knocked aside by his companion running down the stairs.

EXT. PARIS APARTMENT COMPLEX / GROUND LEVEL

Elder Wainwright stands at the bottom of the stairs leaning against a wall, looking at the rain.

Behind him, Elder Baines comes down the last flight of stairs, walks up to his companion.

ELDER WAINWRIGHT
How can anyone not want to know
about the Church?

PAUL
The way I see it Elder, we have
two choices. One, we can go home
now. It's only 9 o'clock, it'll
take us at least a half hour to
get there anyway.

Paul "poses:" lifts his head, while looking off into a bright future, his intonation a study of mock religiosity.

PAUL

Two, we can endeavor to wash our garments of the blood and sins of this generation and gird up our loins and go forth to continue to preach the Gospel, yea, unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, until the last --

Elder Wainwright can't take it anymore and bursts out laughing.

ELDER WAINWRIGHT

Was it your door or mine?

And they hurry off to the last set of stairs.

INT. AIRPLANE / CABIN - DAY

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT bends over into our line of sight and, while smiling:

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Care for anything to drink?

PAUL - looks up from a magazine.

PAUL

Sprite -- No, how about a Diet Coke?

CRASH! goes the plastic cup into the ice bucket. SNAP-FIZZLE! goes the lid of the Diet Coke. GLUG-GLUG! goes the brown liquid into the cup.

The Flight Attendant passes the cup and the can to Paul Baines...

... who we now see is all decked out in Mormon Missionary chic: Suit. Tie. Badge. Conservative haircut.

Paul holds the Diet Coke, sniffs it as if inspecting a vintage wine, wets his lips, then downs the glass.

THE SALT LAKE AIRPORT WAITING AREA - DAY

The place is a mad house already.

A MISSIONARY FAMILY: MOTHER, FATHER, BROTHERS, SISTERS, FRIENDS - all gathered in a group near the entrance to the gate.

In front of them, two children unroll a banner on butcher block paper:

WELCOME HOME, RANDY

INT. PASSENGER APPROACH RAMP

Passengers are making their way down the tunnel to the awaiting entrance. We soon pick Paul out of the crowd. He's now got a backpack over one shoulder.

An OLD WOMAN looks up at him, sees his name-badge.

OLD WOMAN

I heard that Mormons don't eat ketchup.

PAUL

No, that's the Jehovah's Witnesses.

INT. GATE ENTRANCE

A few people who had been in front of Paul come out, look around, hook up with various loved ones or walk off alone.

Paul comes out, stops, looks at -

THE WELCOME HOME SIGN - flanked by the grinning family.

Behind Paul, A SECOND RETURNING MISSIONARY APPEARS, sees the sign, smiles, goes to -

HIS WAITING FAMILY - hugging mother, father.

PAUL - looks on. Beat. He moves on, removing his missionary badge as he goes, then his tie.

INT. AIRPORT WAITING AREA

The Second Missionary has just finished hugging his younger sister, looks up, sees his GIRLFRIEND, who hugs him. Everyone is deliriously happy.

EXT./INT. AIRPORT TAXI STAND / TAXI

Paul, now carrying an additional two bags and his backpack, stands at the curb, waiting for a taxi, which is being hailed by a PORTER.

The TAXI pulls up. The TAXI DRIVER gets out, shlumps Paul's bags into his trunk. Paul drops into the back seat.

As, behind him, the Taxi Driver shuts the trunk and returns to the driver seat, Paul looks off toward the entrance to the airport at -

THE RETURNING MISSIONARY AND HIS FAMILY - crossing the street toward the parking garage, all smiles, laughing, exuding Family Values to the extreme.

PAUL - stares glumly at them as the Taxi drives off.

EXT. BAINES HOME / GARDEN - DAY

ROBERT BAINES, 60, hacks away at an azalea bush and surrounding plants. His thinning hair hangs in sweat-soaked strands across his forehead. He wears overalls, gardening gloves, beat-up shoes.

From inside the house in the background comes the SOUND of CLASSICAL MUSIC.

A pile of branches and dead leaves is growing rapidly at his feet. He works feverishly, his face is a mask of grim determination that borders on obsession.

INT. BAINES HOME/ KITCHEN

ALICE BAINES, mid-50's, stands at the counter, mixing some punch. Classical music in louder. Where appropriate, Alice uses her ladle to direct an imaginary orchestra.

Her hair is neatly coifed and she wears a conservative house dress with a silver chain around her neck from which hangs a pair of glasses.

Seen out the window in the background, her husband Robert still slaves away at the bushes.

Alice puts the glasses and the pitcher on a tray, and moves off-scene revealing -

A LETTER - on the counter, its envelope lying across it. The envelope is addressed to Robert and Alice Baines with an Orem, Utah address.

The letterhead on both:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
France-Paris Mission

EXT. PATIO / GARDEN

Alice comes out of the sliding glass window, walks down the brick path to where Baines is gardening.

She sits the tray down on the nearby patio table, pours the drink, holds out one of the glasses to Robert.

ALICE
Strychnine. Sugarless.

Robert absent-mindedly takes the glass, raises it to his lips, but stops short of taking a sip.

ROBERT
What did you say?

Beat. Alice laughs, then Robert joins her. Alice pours herself a glass.

ROBERT
Was I doing it again?

ALICE
Totally oblivious.

ROBERT
(sips)
Sorry.

ALICE
You know, if I ever wanted to do away with you, I'd do it while you were working on the garden.

ROBERT
What did you say? Strychnine?

ALICE
Sugarless.

ROBERT
The best kind. Artificially sweetened strychnine has been proven harmful to your health.

ALICE
I thought you might like a little something to drink. You've been out here all morning.

ROBERT
I appreciate it.

ALICE
(re: the azalea bush)
How's it going?

ROBERT

I've got a call into Leonard at Three Pines Nursery. If he can't tell me what's wrong...

ALICE

You're out here every day, pruning it, watering it, digging the soil around it. If the other plants had feelings, they'd feel neglected.

ROBERT

A lot has to do with the time of year you plant, the amount of water. I may be giving it too much. I don't know. Could be a lot of things.

ALICE

Maybe you should have called the nursery earlier.

ROBERT

I planted everyone of these shrubs and flowers. This is the first one to give me any trouble.

ALICE

(sips)
I'm sure you know best.

ROBERT

I put this in the ground a year ago. It should be covered with flowers by now. About three feet high.

(points)
Nothing.

Robert hacks away at another branch, adds it to the pile. Alice reaches for them.

ROBERT

No, I'll take care of them.
(holds out glass)
But I could use some more strychnine, though.

Alice pours him some as he empties the branches into nearby plastic bag.

INT. DINING ROOM / PARLOR - LATER

Alice rinses out the glasses and the pitcher.

Robert, now out of his overalls, enters from the hallway, crosses to the wall clock, compares it with his watch.

THE CLOCK - reads twelve-fifteen.

ROBERT - speaks over his shoulder to Alice.

ROBERT

When did he say -- ?

ALICE

I called the airport. His plane arrived on time.

ROBERT

He's taking a taxi, wasn't that -- ?

ALICE

He seemed pretty rushed.

Robert crosses into -

THE PARLOR

He stands in front of the curtains, pushes them aside, looks out into -

THE STREET - No taxis. The street is bare.

Behind him, in the kitchen, the SOUND of running water stops.

ROBERT

He hasn't talked to us in a year and when he calls from Kennedy airport, that's all he says? "Don't pick me up. I'll get a cab."

AT THE DINING TABLE

Alice adjusts some flowers in a low vase in the center of the table.

ALICE

It was long distance. He wanted to save us money.

IN THE PARLOR

Robert stills looks out the window.

ROBERT
We could have afforded to talk to
him for days --

ALICE (O.S.)
Well, maybe he had to make a fast
connection.

ROBERT
Still, he could have said more
than "I'll get a cab." What's it
take, forty minutes from the
airport?

ALICE (O.S.)
I'm sure he'll be here any minute
now.

Robert sits in a chair, starts rumbling though a stack of
papers and magazines on the coffee table.

ROBERT
(to himself)
I still don't understand why he
didn't want us to meet him.
Alice, have you seen that
letter -- ?

THE LETTER - is thrust into his face by Alice. It is the
letter we saw earlier on the kitchen counter.

Baines takes it while fumbling on his glasses.

ROBERT
President Andrews doesn't give us
a clue as to why he's sending
Paul home early...
(reads)
"... for reasons that Elder
Baines would like to discuss with
you himself."
(beat)
Thank Heavens he's still "Elder"
Baines --

ALICE
(cuts him off)
Bob!

ROBERT

Sorry --

ALICE

You don't think for one minute
that Paul would -- ?

Robert puts the letter in his breast pocket.

ROBERT

No, of course not --

ALICE

Whatever his problem is, it's
nothing that would endanger his
membership in the Church.

(beat

I know that.

ROBERT

Yes. Yes.

ALICE

Then... why...?

ROBERT

Alice, I don't know. I'm just
trying to figure this all out,
that's all.

Just to make sure he understands how she feels, to drive the
point home:

ALICE

Paul would never do anything like
that.

Robert looks at his watch again.

ROBERT

Probably stuck in traffic. I
heard on the news there was an
accident on the Twentieth South
off ramp.

ALICE

(cautious)
I've got his room ready.

INT. TAXI

The city speeds by as Paul looks out the window.

ROCK MUSIC blares from the taxi's radio.

TAXI DRIVER
Zat bother you?

Paul is getting down in the back seat.

PAUL
No. In fact, if you want to
crank it up...

Taxi driver cranks up the tunes.

Paul gets even more down as, accompanied by the music he takes in the sights and sounds of Gentile Land:

AMERICAN CARS - speeding past.

TALL AMERICAN BUILDINGS - hugging the sky. The massive size of the freeway.

A CAR FULL OF GIRLS - pulls up alongside. A CUTE BLONDE in the passenger side looks over, sees Paul -- she smiles, waves. Her friends join in.

Paul smiles, waves.

The car full of girls is lost behind them as the taxi speeds along.

Paul surveys his surroundings, ultimately lands on -

A PICTURE - of the taxi driver and his wife.

He reaches into his coat pocket, pulls out a wallet, opens it to -

A PICTURE OF DOMINIQUE - a beautiful French woman, about 20, with shoulder-length strawberry blonde hair. She wears a bikini and stands on the beach, looking seductively at the camera.

The picture is signed (in English), "To Paul: With Love from Dominique."

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM

Alice and Robert stand in the doorway to Paul's bedroom.

ALICE
Just the way he left it. A
little more orderly, mind you...
but everything's there: the
posters, the stereo...

ROBERT

How did you manage to get rid of
all my things?

ALICE

Just don't open the hall closet
without a hard-hat.

ROBERT

Good. Everything needs to be
exactly as he left them. It
mustn't look like we wanted him
to go so we could have his room
for my den.

ALICE

I don't think he would --

ROBERT

(overlap)

He'll be going through a period
of adjustment. Everything needs
to be as normal as possible.

EXT. FRONT PORCH

Robert bends to pick up the *Deseret Morning News*, pulls off
the rubber band while he moves to one of the porch chairs.

He sits, starts to read the paper, but not without giving
the road one more glance. Behind him, Alice comes out the
door, comes down to him, rubs his shoulders. Beat.

ALICE

Would it make a difference?

Robert looks up at her.

ALICE

Would you love him just the
same -- if he came home excom --

She can't finish the word.

Robert turns the paper to editorial section, straightens it
out.

ROBERT

Of course I would.

ALICE

Because what he needs now, more
than anything, is our
understanding, our support.

ROBERT

I know.

Alice moves around to the other porch chair, sits, but leans in to Robert.

ALICE

Does he know that? That you would love him regardless of what he does?

He doesn't answer. She pulls the paper down from his face.

ROBERT

You mean, did I tell him? Not in so many words. You don't sit your son down when he gets his call and say, "Paul, I'll love you even if you're the worst missionary in France." The Father-Son discussion prior to a son's mission is a time of encouragement.

ALICE

But he's not the worst missionary in France.

Robert drops the paper to his lap, takes the letter from his breast pocket.

ROBERT

That's what his mission president says.

(scans the letter)

"... one of the most effective missionaries in the field." He's not been excommunicated, and he's not sloughing on the job...

ALICE

Wait till he gets here, let him tell us. What's more important is, how do we deal with it... how are you going to deal with it?

ROBERT

Me?

ALICE

Yes, you. It's upsetting you an awful lot.

ROBERT
It's not bothering you?

Alice turns away, reaches for a hanky, going back into the house.

Robert watches her go but doesn't immediately follow her.

IN THE DINING ROOM

Alice sits at the dining room table, arranging some flowers.

Robert stands in the doorway, watching her. He comes in, moves a chair closer to her, takes her hands in his.

ROBERT
It's been rough for you, hasn't it?

ALICE
No, no at --

ROBERT
I don't mean just about Paul. I mean about everything. About being my wife -- the notoriety...

ALICE
Bob, I'm sor --

ROBERT
Come on, now. Admit it. It's been rough, hasn't it?

A beat. Alice nods. He takes her face in his hands.

ROBERT
Why haven't you told me before?
Because you wanted to be strong, didn't you? You thought showing your true feelings would be a sign of weakness, didn't you?
(beat)
Believe me, I know the feeling.

He stands, brings her with him, takes her into his arms.

ROBERT
I think you were right the first time. What are we going to about our son coming home early from his mission?

He kisses her. Pulling away, he looks at the dining room table.

ROBERT
And those flowers look great
right where they are.

ALICE
Then I'll move them, because you
have terrible taste.

She takes the flowers from the dining table, goes back into -
THE PARLOR

where she puts the flowers on the mantle piece. Robert
follows her, stands looking at her work.

ALICE
Did they mind terribly you're
taking the rest of the day off?

ROBERT
No, they understand a father's
anticipation toward seeing his
son come home.

As he moves toward the front window:

ROBERT
Maybe not my particular
anticipation...

Alice has had to move some pictures of her other sons and
their families from the mantle piece to make room for the
flowers. Now she picks up one, looks at -

A PHOTO - of all five of her sons.

ALICE - caresses the picture.

ALICE
Robert?

AT THE WINDOW

Robert stands, looking out between the curtain again.

ROBERT
Hmm?

AT THE MANTLE-PIECE

ALICE
Are you going to let Paul give a
homecoming talk?

BEGIN INTERCUT between Alice and Robert.

Robert seems hesitant.

Alice becomes more enthusiastic.

ALICE
It would be a wonderful
experience for him!

Robert moves away from the window.

ROBERT
Well... I... don't --

ALICE
Returned missionaries speak in
Church all the time.

ROBERT
True, but...

ALICE
But not missionaries who come
home early?

ROBERT
No. And it's not because they're
second-class citizens or anything.
The youth need to view the
mission experience in a positive
light. Granted, there are...
some... difficult aspects to
missionary life, but they find
that out soon enough.

ALICE
(firm)
Are you sure it's not because
you... don't want people to know
he's come home?

Robert slumps into a chair. Alice moves to stand next to him.

ROBERT
(beat)
Is that it, Ali? Am I ashamed of
my own son?

Robert sees her still holding the photo. He takes it from
her, looks at it. Smiles.

ROBERT

Do you remember the day we brought him home? You had him on the bassinet, and he rolled over onto his stomach, lifted his head, and looked around through those squinty eyes?

Alice laughs as Robert squints, moves his head like one of those plastic dogs in the back of some people's cars.

INT. TAXI

Paul looks out the window. The background has changed from city to residential.

ROBERT (V.O.)

It was in that split second, that frozen moment of time, that I saw the entire course of Paul's life stretching out before him.

Paul leans forward, points to a house on the right.

EXT. HOUSE A FEW DOORS FROM BAINES HOME

The taxi pulls up to the curb, stops. Taxi driver and Paul get out. Taxi driver opens trunk, puts Paul's luggage on the parkway.

On the word, "squinty" in the following dialogue, Paul squints, look down the block, his hands over his eyes.

Paul opens his wallet, gives the taxi driver a tip.

ROBERT (V.O.)

I knew then that, in the face of the unknown, Paul wouldn't shrink but would lift up his head and face life straight on -- eyes squinty, maybe, but he would face it.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET (MOVING)

Paul carries all his luggage up the street.

ROBERT (V.O.)

And he was always like that -- all through school. If a problem was too tough, he would bite his lip until he mastered it...

Paul bites his lip nervously, stops, struggles out of his burden to bend and tie his shoe.

ROBERT (V.O.)

Do you remember how he spent days
patiently trying to tie his shoe?
Never getting frustrated,
discouraged.

Paul finishes tying his shoe, stands, loads up on luggage and continues struggling down the street.

ROBERT (V.O.)

None of the other boys were like
that. That's what makes it so
difficult to accept -- this thing
about Paul coming home early from
his mission. I get the feeling
he's... running away from
something. And I can't
understand that.

Paul takes a few more steps after end of dialogue, then stops.

He's standing at the beginning of the sidewalk to his house.

EXT. BAINES HOME

Paul hesitates. He takes a deep breath, starts toward the front door.

He gets about half-way down the walk when the door bursts open and Alice comes running out, her hands over her head, tears streaming down her face.

ALICE

Paul! You're home!

She launches herself toward Paul, who just drops his luggage to take her in his arms and swing her around.

When she finally comes to a stop:

ALICE

Oh, Paul, I'm so glad you're back.

PAUL

Nobody can keep me away from your
home cooking.

He looks up, sees -

ROBERT - standing on the porch.

PAUL - smiles, raises a tentative hand.

PAUL
Hello, Dad.

Robert makes the first move: puts out his hand, which Paul takes.

ROBERT
Welcome home, Son. I can see
you've learned the Missionary
Handshake pretty well.

PAUL
Thanks, Dad. It's good to be back.

An awkward pause. Robert sees -

ALICE - struggling with the luggage. Robert moves into scene to help her.

ROBERT
Mother, let me get those.

He goes to the pile of luggage, picks them up. Paul moves to help.

ROBERT
No, you go on inside. Alice,
take him inside. He must be
starved. I'll get these.

Arm in arm, they move toward the door.

THE PORCH

Robert achieves the top step, stops on the landing to adjust one of the bags, looks up to see -

A NOSEY NEIGHBOR - looking at him. The nosey neighbor, watering plants, looks away immediately.

ROBERT - limps into the house.

INT. THE ENTRYWAY

As Robert comes in, drops the luggage at the door, and slumps on them, wiping his forehead: Alice and Paul stand just inside the threshold. Alice is giving Paul the Motherly Once Over.

ALICE
You've gained weight... you've
lost a little hair...

PAUL
Mom, I've only been gone a year.

Robert stands, shuts the front door.

ROBERT
Congratulations, Son.

PAUL
For what?

ROBERT
On your last baptism. President
Andrews said in his letter that
your convert is now branch
president.

PAUL
FrÈre DuChamp was a wonderful
man. I was very lucky.

ROBERT
Blessed.

PAUL
Whatever.

Alice sees the tension between the two men, tries to change
the subject.

She takes Paul by the arm, moves him into -

THE PARLOR

ALICE
What's his first name? "Friar?"

PAUL
The word's "frÈre." French for
"brother."

ALICE
Well, Paul. Don't be so formal.
Sit down. This is your house, too.

She leads him to one end of the couch. Paul indicates the
luggage.

PAUL
But what about -- ?

ALICE
We'll take care of that, later.
You just sit down.

Robert starts to sit in the chair, but Alice gets there first, forcing Robert to sit at the other end of the couch, closer to Paul.

Once Robert sits, Alice immediately stands up.

ALICE

Oh, I'm so flustered, I forgot!
I have some punch for us.
Father, you keep our son occupied
till I get back.

Exiting, she gives Robert a look that say, "Don't you sit in that chair!"

After a slight pause:

PAUL

Uh... how's the flower garden
coming along?

ROBERT

Funny, you should ask. I was
working at it just before you --
but you probably knew that already.

Robert stands, moves toward the dining room, where the sliding glass door will take them outside.

Paul follows.

IN THE KITCHEN

Alice mixes more drinks, sets out some brownies on a tray.
Robert and Paul pass by, on their way to the garden.

ROBERT

I'm showing Paul the garden.

ALICE

Fine, dear.

Robert and Paul go out the sliding glass door.

A faint smile passes across Alice's lips.

EXT. GARDEN

The azalea is trying very hard to look like a healthy plant.

PAUL (O.S.)

That's new, isn't it?

The two men lean against a railing looking down at the poor azalea.

ROBERT

Azalea. I planted it the day you entered the MTC. I work it nearly everyday. It was my way of reminding myself that, as it grew, you'd be growing in another kind of field.

PAUL

It seems pretty mature, now.

Robert notices that some stray branches still remain. He kneels to pick them up.

ROBERT

Your brothers will be here around five-thirty.

Paul is suddenly animated.

PAUL

Rich, too?

ROBERT

He's taking the afternoon off and flying up. He probably won't be bringing Ruth.

PAUL

I wouldn't think so. Four kids --

ROBERT

Five, soon.

PAUL

She's pregnant again?

ROBERT

They called last night.

PAUL

Are they hoping for a girl this time?

ROBERT

Well, Ruth's practically given up hope after four boys. Of course, Richard wants five sons.

PAUL

Yeah.

ROBERT
Did we tell you he's been made a
Bishop?

PAUL
(quick)
In a letter.

ROBERT
Yes, I suppose I did.

ON THE PATIO TABLE

Alice comes out the door to the house, carrying punch and
cookies to the covered patio table.

ALICE
Here it is! Real Hawaiian punch.

Neither of the men move.

ALICE
Well, get over here, you two.

Robert and Paul join her at the table.

PAUL
Hawaiian punch? The real thing?

ALICE
You're going to tell me they
don't have this in France?

PAUL
No, I'm not. Because you already
said it. But they also don't
have Jell-o, decent ice cream, or
white bread. There's a
McDonald's on the Champs-Élysées,
but in name only. Secret Sauce
or no, those Frogs can't make a
decent hamburger.

ALICE
"Frogs?"

PAUL
That's what we call the French
people.

ROBERT
You call them "frogs?"

PAUL
Only among ourselves.
(drinks punch)
This is great stuff!

ROBERT
Thank you, Mother. It's very
delicious.

ALICE
So what are the French people like?

PAUL
Just like you and me. Except
they speak a different language.

ALICE
No, what I meant was: how do they
react to the Church?

PAUL
French is a Catholic country.
The most frequent response I ever
heard at the door was, "Je suis
catholique et je reste
catholique." "I'm a Catholic and
I'll stay a Catholic."

ROBERT
Pretty rough, was it?

PAUL
What do you mean, "rough?"

ROBERT
(fishing)
It must have been discouraging.
That's all I meant.

PAUL
Maybe a little.

ALICE
Did Dad tell you about Ruth?

PAUL
Yeah. Can you believe it?
Another kid?

ALICE
I'll tell you, she's absolutely
amazing. Still looks like she's
nineteen.

ROBERT
I wouldn't say that.

ALICE
All right. Twenty-one, then.

PAUL
Well, what about you? You had
five kids. Look at you.

ALICE
Me? I'm a mess.

PAUL
Dad, is she fishing for a
compliment?

ROBERT
More like trolling, if you ask me.

PAUL
Mom, you're not a mess. You're
the best looking mother I've ever
had.

All laugh politely.

ALICE
Go on, you two. You know what I
mean. Ruth jogs every morning.

PAUL
So you do canning every morning.

ALICE
She does that, too!

Again, laughter.

ALICE
Want some more punch?

Paul holds up his glass.

Robert shakes his head.

PAUL
Speaking of good-looking twenty-
one years olds, how's Lisa?

ALICE

The reception was absolutely beautiful. And her husband is nice, too. You knew him, didn't you, Paul?

PAUL

I still can't believe he would do that to me -- come off his mission and steal my girl. Some guys have no class.

ROBERT

It's nothing. You'll get over it.

PAUL

I am over it.

ROBERT

Good. She's not worth worrying about. You're a returned missionary. An RM at BYU has nothing to worry about as far as girls are concerned.

Paul seems very uneasy at this, as if he wants to say something.

PAUL

Yeah, I know. It's all image.

ROBERT

What is?

PAUL

It's all image. Going to BYU. Just like the mission field. White shirts, short hair. It sends out a message to people: "clean and wholesome." If you're an RM, you grow a mustache. That sends out a message to the girls. Clean, wholesome, spiritual. And ready.

There is no bitterness in this statement but Baines doesn't know how to take it.

ROBERT

Yes... well... unfortunately, appearances are everything in this terrestrial world we live in. In the afterlife --

PAUL

But why do we have to play the game? If we're trying to live a Celestial law, why should we care about what the Telestial world thinks?

ROBERT

You're right. Our sights should be set higher.

PAUL

So when are you going to start wearing colored shirts to Church?

Beat. Paul laughs, breaking the tension. Robert and Alice join, relieved that it was all a joke. Or was it?

Alice stands, moves toward the house.

ALICE

Well, I'm going to make your favorite lunch, Paul.

PAUL

American food! I can't believe it.

Paul stands also, follows his mom.

INT. KITCHEN

Alice moves to the refrigerator, opens the door as Paul blurs by her.

PAUL

Oh, that reminds me, I've got something for you guys.

THE ENTRYWAY

Paul rummages through one of his suitcases.

THE KITCHEN

Robert enters. His and Alice's eyes lock. Beat.

PAUL (O.S.)

These are for you guys.

Paul comes back into the kitchen, holding two wrapped gifts, just as Alice pulls out a tray of luncheon meat and bread from the refrigerator.

Paul, with a little protest by Alice, takes the lunch tray to the counter, and gives the presents to his parents.

PAUL
This isn't honest-to-gosh
baloney, is it?

ALICE
It certainly is.
(indicates gift)
What did you go and do this for?

They are all now at the counter, standing or sitting on the stools.

PAUL
Just open them while I make a
sandwich.

ROBERT
Thank you, Son!

Paul dives into the fixings as his parents begin to unwrap the presents.

PAUL
You know, the French don't even
know what baloney is. I had to
go to the American store in Paris
whenever I was there to get this.

Alice has opened her present by now: A GLASS FIGURINE of one of the Relief Society monuments.

Alice's eyes well up in tears.

ALICE
Oh, Paul, this is so lovely!

PAUL
One of the men in my last branch
was a glass-blower by trade. I
showed him a picture of the
Relief Society's monument to
women and he copied it.

Robert has unwrapped a bound book, read the title.

ROBERT
"The Missionary Journal of Paul
W. Baines."
(thumbs through it)
It's all typed and bound.

PAUL

The glass-blower's wife was a secretary who knew English. I had her type it for me.

ROBERT

(genuinely moved)
Paul, this is wonderful! I'll treasure this always.

PAUL

You know, Mom, snails are good but they're nothing compared to a good old-fashioned baloney sandwich.

(beat)

So fill me in on the local scene. What's happened since I left?

ALICE

Let's see... Oh, Karl Thorne got his mission call to Japan.

PAUL

He finally straightened up enough to go, huh?

ROBERT

He said you inspired him to go.

PAUL

Me? Inspiring?

ROBERT

You were to Brother DuChamp.

ALICE

Paul, have some milk.

ROBERT

Tell us about Brother DuChamp.

PAUL

What's there to tell?

ROBERT

Why didn't you write to us about him? He was baptized six months ago.

PAUL

Guess I never got around to it. Anyway, it's all in the journal.

ALICE
Would you like another sandwich?

PAUL
No, thanks.

ALICE
Oh, that reminds me. Your trunk
came last week!

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM

Someone pulls THE TRUNK out of Paul's closet. It is Paul, who eagerly starts unlatching it.

Robert and Alice stand just inside the door. Robert has carried Paul's luggage from the entryway and now puts them on the floor.

PAUL
I've got some other things in
here. Things that were too heavy
to bring in the suitcase.

ROBERT
Your mother had the delivery man
put it in here.

Paul opens the trunk, then sits on the bed and rummages around inside.

ALICE
What do you think of your room?
It's just like you left it.

PAUL
Same sheets and everything?

Paul looks around quickly as he's dumping stuff from the trunk onto his bed.

PAUL
Thank you.

Alice smiles contentedly. Finally, Paul finds what he was looking for:

A SQUARE RED-STONED ROCK - which he hefts, showing it is heavy.

ALICE
What's that?

PAUL

It's called a pavø. The French use it pave their streets. Makes skate-boarding real difficult. Maybe I'll use it as a paperweight.

He pulls out some books.

PAUL

My French dictionary... and this book was given to me by one of the most beautiful French women I've ever met.

This peaks the interest of Robert and Alice. Alice sits next to Paul on the bed. Robert collapses into a desk chair.

PAUL

She was only seventeen. But she had the longest honey-blond hair that hung straight down her back. Incredibly mature for her age. And very spiritual. Not the weepy-eyed kind of spirituality a lot of girls have at her age -- hers was real. The first time I met her was my very first day in the city. Le Havre. "The Harbor." On the northern coast of France, just across the English Channel from England. My companion picked me up at the train station and as we walked in the salle -- sorry -- as we walked into the meeting room, a bunch of members were there, polishing the floor. I was introduced around and Dominique -- that was her name -- said, "Come on, Elder Baines. Why don't you help?" She threw me a cloth and I did what everybody else was doing: threw the rag on the wooden floor and kind of moved it with my feet, like this.

(does twisting motion)

The thought went through my head: "Am I dancing with a girl? Isn't this against mission rules?" Anyway, when I left that town three months later, she was there at the train station.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

That's when she gave me this book on French grammar. As the train pulled away, I looked out the window... and she was waving at me. There were tears in her eyes. I told her in a letter that, if things didn't work out with Lisa and me, I would look her up.

(back to reality)

I guess I can do that now.

Alice touches Paul's arm.

ALICE

She sounds like a lovely girl.

PAUL

She is. I have a picture of her here someplace.

ROBERT

You wrote to her?

PAUL

I know it was against mission rules. But I always got such an incredible spiritual uplift from that girl... I can't explain it.

ROBERT

I see.

Reaching back into the trunk, Paul pulls out a hunk of metal shaped like a grenade.

PAUL

Anybody know what this is?

ROBERT

Looks like a grenade.

PAUL

It is.

(tosses it to his dad;

Alice reacts)

Don't worry, Mom. It's dead. I found this on the beach at Normandy. I took it to an expert who told me it was used during World War II.

ROBERT
You'd think they'd have combed
the beaches by now.

Paul starts pulling out books from his trunk and putting them in his bookcase.

PAUL
I see my old bookcase is empty.

ALICE
I gave all your old science-fiction magazines to Ronnie. That is what you wanted me to do, isn't it?

Baines looks at the books that Paul is shoving in the bookcase.

ROBERT
The *Journal of Discourses*. Where did you get those?

PAUL
There's a European Distribution center in Liège. I ordered them.

ROBERT
When did you have time to read them?

PAUL
Haven't read them all yet.

ROBERT
Didn't you have a prescribed reading list as missionaries?

PAUL
I read all those. The *Book of Mormon* six times. These were in between. You know me. Always the voracious reader.

ROBERT
You should have stayed with the Scriptures. There's some questionable material in these volumes.

PAUL
Questionable? Brigham Young. Heber C. Kimball. Orson Pratt. How can anything they say be considered questionable?

ROBERT

I don't know. I've never read them --

PAUL

Never read them! Dad, this is history! This is the Church in its infancy.

ROBERT

I've never read them simply because there is so much that the modern Church leaders have written that just to keep track --

PAUL

There's some great stuff in here! You know, if you were to preach some of these things today, half the Church would get up and walk out.

ROBERT

Precisely why we shouldn't read them.

PAUL

They sell the J&D at Deseret Book.

Robert can't take it anymore, stands.

ROBERT

At least missionaries shouldn't read them. There's deep doctrine in there. I've heard of some missionaries who've lost their testimonies from reading the Discourses.

PAUL

Did you know that there are over twenty different times, over as many years, that Brigham Young taught the Adam-God theory?

ROBERT

That's open to interpretation.

PAUL

There are accounts in journals relating to Orson Pratt, who didn't believe the doctrine, arguing with Brigham Young, who did.

ROBERT

Then if the books contain false doctrines, why did you read them?

PAUL

(shrugs)
They were interesting.

ROBERT

I don't deny that there are many great truths in the Journal of Discourses. But the modern prophets have said that belief in Adam as our God is a false belief. Why Brigham Young taught it, or if he taught it as we understand the doctrine, I don't know.

(beat)

Anyway, this is not the time or place to get into this kind of discussion -- if, indeed, there ever is a time or place. You're home safe and we're very glad.

(beat)

How was the flight over?

PAUL

Long. The food was good, but not as good as you home cooking. By the way, Mom, what's for dinner tonight?

ALICE

You haven't changed a bit, have you? Well, why don't you try and guess. What kind of meal would I make on such a special day?

PAUL

Hmm -- let's see. Fried chicken?

ALICE

That's right.

PAUL

And for dessert, German chocolate cake!

ALICE

You guessed it.

PAUL

Do we have to wait for everyone to get here?

They all start to go to the kitchen, led by Alice. Paul remembers something.

PAUL
I almost forgot.

He starts rummaging in through one of the suitcases.

PAUL
There was something else I want to show you in my suitcase, and Mom, you side-tracked me.

He pulls out something wrapped in paper, holds it out before him as he now leads his mother and father into -

THE KITCHEN

As Paul puts the small package on the counter:

PAUL
Therefore, I cannot be held responsible for any damage to your olfactory nerves!

He unwraps:

PAUL
Ta-TAH! French cheese.

He acts the part of a French missionary.

PAUL
Bonjour, Madame. Et que voulez-vous aujourd'hui? Du fromage? Eh, bien, nous avons du camembert, et du gruyère, et un peu de babybel. Do you know there are over 350 kinds of cheeses in France? Think about that. One kind for every member of the Mo Tab.

Alice reacts to the smell of the camembert.

PAUL
Now do you see why I didn't want to send these along in the trunk? That took a month and a half to get here. Anyway, Mom, add this to the dinner menu tonight.

ALICE
I will on one condition.

INT. GROCERY STORE

Paul holds a shopping cart full of stuff while Robert fumbles through a row of boxes on a shelf.

While Robert looks for what they came for, Paul is stuffing things in the shopping cart from both sides of the aisle.

ROBERT
Arm & Hammer, was it?

PAUL
Baking soda.

ROBERT
Ah, here it is.

He looks up, sees the full cart, looks at Paul, who looks away with mock innocence.

INT. CAR TRUNK

At first, it's dark. A CLICK! sound then the trunk lid opens. Paul and Robert start filling it with bags of goodies from the shopping cart.

ROBERT
You're looking good, Son.

PAUL
Thanks. So are you.

ROBERT
No, I mean it. So many young men come home from their missions all fat and out of shape.

PAUL
Well, I exercised every day.
Didn't eat too many French pastries. Coming back a year early helped a lot, too, I guess.

Paul has put the last bag in the trunk and slams the lid.

INT. CAR

Paul drives while Robert tries very hard not to tell Paul how to drive.

ROBERT

Judging by that little impersonation you did back at the house, you seem to have picked up the lingo pretty well.

PAUL

Yeah. Wouldn't that surprise Mrs. Holt? She thought I'd never learn French.

(beat)

Dad, when you were on a mission, did they ever play pranks on new missionaries?

ROBERT

Oh, yes, I suppose --

PAUL

I bet they were never like the ones we pulled. This one happened to my first companion when he was a greenie. His first senior comp had this whole thing pre-arranged with one of the sisters in the local branch. Anyway, when the greenie arrives at the train station, this sister comes up, dressed like a hooker? Anyway, she makes a pass at the greenie, who, of course, refuses. Then she makes a pass at the senior comp. Well, he looks at the greenie, says, "I'll meet you back at the apartment," and walks off with the girl.

Robert is stunned, not finding this funny at all.

ROBERT

Uh, well... think of the stories you'll get to share with the other returned missionaries at BYU.

PAUL

(beat)

Dad, about BYU... I'm not sure I want to go there. I know I should have told you earlier --

ROBERT

Why? Brigham Young has always been our school. For three generations --

PAUL

I'm just not sure if that's where
I want to go --

ROBERT

Where else is there?

PAUL

Lots of places. The U of U.
There are some good schools in
California --

ROBERT

(blasphemy!)
California!
(in control)
But BYU is all you ever talked
about before your mission.

PAUL

A lot has happened in a year.
I've change my mind about a lot
of things.

ROBERT

Sorry.
(new tactic)
But... uh... now that your
mission is over, you'll be
wanting to get married. What
better place to find a wife than
among the choice daughters of Zion.

Paul says nothing.

ROBERT

You don't want to get married?

PAUL

Yes! But not right away. I... I
want to think about it first.

ROBERT

That's reasonable. Commendable.
Marriage is important. You
shouldn't rush into it.

(beat)

Just don't wait too long.

PAUL

I don't know how long it'll take.
I want to be sure.

ROBERT

I mean... there are certain...
urges in a young man... that are
very powerful...

PAUL

You mean, "it's better to marry
than to burn."

ROBERT

Your namesake couldn't have said
it better.

PAUL

If and when I do marry, it won't
be to legitimize my lust.

ROBERT

I wasn't saying --

PAUL

I know. I just want my brains
and my heart to play a role in
the marriage decision.

ROBERT

And it should. Most definitely
it should. I couldn't agree
more.

(beat)

So BYU is out of the picture?

PAUL

Not totally...

ROBERT

Do you know what kind of people
they have down there in California?

PAUL

I certainly do. One of my
companions was from L.A. The
most spiritual Elder I ever met --

ROBERT

I'm not talking about the
California Saints, though some of
them tend to be a bit liberal.
But the other people --

PAUL

What about the "other" people?

ROBERT

They're... we'll, they just don't... uh... look at life the same way we do.

PAUL

Not many people do.

ROBERT

Their standards aren't as high as ours --

PAUL

And I might be corrupted, is that what you're --

ROBERT

No, of course not. You're stronger than that. I know that. But Satan's influence is powerful --

PAUL

Since when is BYU a paragon of virtue?

ROBERT

Granted, BYU has problems... like everywhere else. But they're not as widespread. It's a safer environment, that's all I'm saying.

PAUL

Have you ever thought that I might be a good influence to these "corrupted" Californians?

ROBERT

I wouldn't be surprised. You've always had great leadership skills. But it's not wise to play with fire.

(beat)

I just think you should reconsider BYU.

PAUL

I will. I told you, I haven't decided for sure yet.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM

Alice is just finishing putting away all of Paul's clothes, closes the last suitcase and puts in the closet with the others.

Before leaving, she takes one more look around the room, notices some pictures on his dresser.

PICTURES OF PAUL - as a young boy, with his parents as a young boy, with his parents and brothers at his high school graduation.

She looks at the wall: banners, pictures of all the girls he's taken to proms over the years, of himself and some of his friends goofing off at the beach.

TROPHIES - from sports, his Eagle Scout.

HIS SCRIPTURES - In a zipped leather case. She hesitates, then gives in to her temptation, unzips the case, opens the Triple Combination.

She thumbs through it. Nearly every page is covered with red shading, notes written in the margin. The SOUND of the car driving up pulls her attention away. She leaves.

INT. ENTRYWAY

The door opens and Paul comes in. Alice comes in from the hall.

ALICE
How was your drive?

Paul starts down the hall.

PAUL
I'm a little tired. Jet lag, I guess. I'd like to lie down for awhile.

ALICE
Have a nice nap.

PAUL
Thanks, Mom, the sandwiches were great. Rat-hair baloney and all.

Paul kisses her on the forehead. That isn't enough for her -- she pulls him into a hug.

ALICE
I want my Paul Hug.

He hugs her, then goes to his room.

Alice watches him go, notices that Robert is not with him, goes out the front door.

INT. BAINES CAR

Baines sits in the passenger seat, punching buttons on the radio, cycling through a half dozen stations.

The driver's side door opens and Alice sits behind the wheel.

Robert tries a couple more stations, then punches the off button. He leans his head back against the head-rest, closes his eyes.

ROBERT

Something happened to him while he was out there, Mother, to change his mind about things. A young man doesn't go on a mission with the bright hope of the Gospel in his eyes and one year later ask to be released -- for no reason. Maybe it's that girl -- what was her name...?

ALICE

Dominique.

ROBERT

Maybe he's gone and fallen in love.

ALICE

Why didn't he bring her back home with him?

ROBERT

Maybe he will.

ALICE

It sounded to me like he didn't know what to do in that department.

ROBERT

You're probably right. I'm just grasping at straws. Why doesn't he tell us, Mother?

ALICE

In his own due time, I'm sure he will.

ROBERT

He must know how all this is affecting us.

(beat)

Maybe that's what he's trying to do. Some strange transference of guilt.

ALICE

Bob, you're not thinking -- ?

ROBERT

I've seen some troubled missionaries do some strand things, Alice. For obvious reasons, we don't talk about it but we've had problems with some missionaries. This one missionary in the East Stake --

ALICE

Bob, I don't want to --

ROBERT

No, no. I'm not going to tell you his name. But some missionaries walked into class one morning in the MTC and found the chalked outline of man's body on the floor, with a knife severing the heart. The missionary who drew that is in therapy now.

ALICE

How sad.

ROBERT

There's no denying that the extreme discipline of missionary work can take its toll on certain types of individuals. But Paul is not that type. He has four brothers who told him what the mission field was like. He went on that two-week mission when he was a priest. He got straight A's in Seminary. He was more prepared than any missionary I know. So why?

(beat)

It's the influence of the world, that's what it is.

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Things were so much simpler when we were younger. We were more sheltered. The ways of the world were unknown to us. Everything was laid out before you in nice, neat little packages. If you were a boy, you went on a mission. There was no deciding to do. It was expected. If you were a girl, you grew up to be a mother. It never ever occurred to young LDS women of our day to pursue a career. Everyone was in his rightful place.

ALICE

Concessions have had to be made.

ROBERT

I know. But how are we ever going to be a Zion people if we make concessions all the time?

ALICE

They stopped polygamy. Wasn't that a concession?

ROBERT

That was a commandment of God on which depended the future of the Church.

ALICE

So maybe these... modern concessions are for the same reason. After all, Bob, whether we like it or not, this is the world we're living in.

ROBERT

But we don't have to be of the world as much as we are.

ALICE

Isn't it true that many of these concessions were directed by the Prophets?

ROBERT

Yes, but what caused the changes? That's the key factor.

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

The weakness, the vanity of the people. God give us what we ask for -- either to our exaltation or our damnation.

ALICE

All I know is that if Paul is doing anything wrong -- if he's making any kind of mistake -- he'll eventually come to see that. He'll be all right.

ROBERT

I certainly hope so, Mother.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE PAUL'S ROOM

Through the opening between the door and the door jamb, Paul can be seen asleep. Alice closes the door gently, and moves back down the hall toward the living room.

INT. PARLOR

The glass figurine Paul gave Alice sits on the coffee table.

Alice reaches down, picks it up.

Robert sits in a chair, thumbing through the journal Paul gave him.

ALICE

This is so delicate. I'm almost afraid to touch it. Wasn't it sweet of Paul? These gifts?

ROBERT

(absent-minded)
It certainly was.

ALICE

He's always been very thoughtful about things like this.

ROBERT

(ditto)
Yes, he has.

ALICE

I'll never forget that time he brought home that handful of weeds and presented them to me as a bouquet of flowers.

ROBERT

You put them in a vase and we had to look at those dreadful things all through dinner.

ALICE

The other boys made fun of them and you told them to be quiet.

ROBERT

Well, he was so proud of them. As if they were the most artistically designed bouquet in the whole world. I couldn't stand to see him disappointed.

Robert looks at the journal in his hands.

ROBERT

He must have done something on his mission to be proud of if he went to all this trouble of having his journal typed up.

ALICE

I think it shows a lot of respect for you as his father. He may be too embarrassed to tell you how he feels, but he's certainly capable of showing it.

Robert hasn't been listening to these last few sentences because he's been reading in the journal. Now, he sets it aside, though open, stands up and moves away, overcome with emotion. Alice watches him go out the back door to stand on the patio.

She picks up the journal and starts to read.

PAUL (V.O.)

Got my copy of the Stake Newsletter today. Read Dad's talk. It really blew me away. He said something in there that I have a lot of difficulty believing. He was talking about young men going on missions and said, 'To any of you prospective missionaries who might be considering whether you should go on a mission or not, I address these words: "My young brethren, you have no choice. The Prophet has called you. You must go."

She lowers the book, goes out to join Robert on -

THE PATIO

Robert stands there, looking out over his back yard.

Behind him, Alice comes out the sliding glass door, embraces him from behind, her hands around his stomach.

ROBERT

My son thinks I forced him to go on a mission.

ALICE

Well, you have to admit, those were strong words.

ROBERT

But they're true. The Prophet said it's every young man's duty to go on a mission. That's pretty explicit language. When the Prophet speaks, the thinking is done.

ALICE

Still there are ways to make that message a little more palatable.

ROBERT

All right, maybe I came on a little bit strong.

ALICE

Just "a bit?"

ROBERT

All right, "a lot." But I was straight and to the point. You have to admit that. I was straight and to the point.

ALICE

So's an ice pick.

ROBERT

What are you saying?

ALICE

I'm saying that this Church is filled with millions of individuals.

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

With millions of different ways
of looking at the Gospel. And
your son is one of those
individuals.

ROBERT

But isn't the purpose of the
Gospel, to turn those individuals
into one heart and soul?

ALICE

Some are a little harder than
others.

ROBERT

Why does Paul have to be one of
them? The other boys were never
like that. And Paul never was
either. Until his mission.

ALICE

Do you remember, you told me once
that Paul was your favorite?

ROBERT

Yes, yes.

ALICE

Could that have been because he
was so different from the others?
Don't we all tend to stand behind
a file leader who's distinctive?
Look at Joseph Smith. No more
individualistic a man could be
found in his time. He couldn't
fit into a mold. Brigham Young
was another one. If that's the
reason you love Paul so much --
because he is so different, then
making him fit into a mold would
lessen your love... wouldn't it?

ROBERT

I don't know. I don't know
anything anymore. I thought I
understood Paul but I don't.
Maybe I never did. I do know one
thing: he doesn't understand me
if thinks I coerced him to go on
a mission. I encouraged him.
Maybe my language was a little --
very harsh -- but...

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I haven't been a Stake President very long. I haven't learned the finesse of some of the other brethren. Maybe I was over enthusiastic, but it's only because I so want Paul to do the right thing. I so want him to be happy.

ALICE

Even if what makes him happy differs from what you expect? Bob, all things considered, he is our son.

ROBERT

When I was called to my first position of leadership President Jameson pulled a piece of string out of his pocket and laid it on the desk between us. "Brother Baines," he said, "I want you to push that piece of string across the desk to me and keep it perfectly straight. I tried and, of course, it just crumpled up under the pressure. "Now try and pull it from the front and keep it straight." That was much easier. "As you lead the brethren in your quorum," he told me, "don't stand behind them and push. Stand in front and gently, ever so gently, pull them toward you."

(beat)

I've tried to do that all my life. I've never forced anyone to obey the gospel. Where does Paul get the idea that I have? Mother, I'm trying to understand him. Believe me, I'm trying.

ALICE

I know you are, dear. And, remember, the most important thing you can do is let Paul tell you why he came home.

(kisses him)

I need to clean up the lunch things.

Alice looks at Robert, sees something in his face, an indication that he wasn't listening to her, that he has decided what he need to do and there's nothing she can do to stop him.

But she must try. As he heads towards the house.

ALICE
Robert, don't --

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM

Paul, lying fully clothed on top of his bed, comes awake at Alice's line. He sits up, listening. He can hear voices but not what the voices are saying.

He gets up, leaves the room, into -

THE HALLWAY

The voices become more distinct.

Just before the end of the hallway, Paul hears somebody punching buttons on the kitchen phone.

He turns the corner, comes into -

THE KITCHEN

Robert has his back to Paul. Alice is looking away, her head in her hand.

ROBERT
Hello, this is President Baines.
Elder Paul Baines' father. Is
President Andrews in?
(beat)
Well, then, could you leave him a
message to call me --

Alice has now turned, sees Paul over Robert's shoulder, reacts.

Robert sees Alice's reaction, looks over his shoulder. Beat. He hangs up. Paul and his father face off. Paul moves toward the front door. Alice goes after him but stops, lets him go. Robert stands helpless, looking at his departing son.

EXT. PAUL WALKING (VARIOUS)

Paul, his hands stuffed into his pockets, head down, walks swiftly down the sidewalk, past a couple of houses.

He crosses a street, so lost in thought, he practically gets run over by a car but jumps aside at the last minute.

He's in a park, now, walking along. People walking past him. Behind him, people having picnics.

A SWING SET - where a FATHER and SON play. The father pushes the son on a swing while -

PAUL - sits on a nearby bench and watches.

EXT. BAINES HOME

Robert stands on the sidewalk, looking down the street in the direction Paul went.

He turns and walks back up the walk.

INT. PARLOR

Robert walks over to Alice, who sits, looking away. She holds a handkerchief. She's been crying.

Robert sits.

ROBERT

He's been going through a rebellious stage, that's all. He's been trained well. He'll cool off then come back and apologize. After a few days he'll probably ask to finish out his mission.

ALICE

"He's been trained well." You make him sound like a circus animal.

ROBERT

I was just paraphrasing scripture: "Train up a child in the path to follow, and he will not depart therefrom."

ALICE

Kelly Thorenson did. He had good parents.

ROBERT

That's an isolated case --

ALICE

Lehi had two sons who never came back.

ROBERT

Yes...

ALICE

Elohim had a rebellious son.

ROBERT

Alice, are you siding with him and his radical ideas?

ALICE

What's so radical about a son wanting his father to love him?

ROBERT

My love for him is not the issue here. He obviously feels he's been coerced into going on his mission.

ALICE

Hasn't he?

ROBERT

You sound as though you're condoning his actions.

ALICE

I'm not condoning anything. I just think I know how he feels.

ROBERT

What do you mean?

ALICE

Robert, it's... very difficult living in the shadow of a great man.

ROBERT

(slow, pained)
You, too?

ALICE

Don't think I don't support you --

ROBERT

I can't very well ask to be released simply because my family finds it difficult to live with me.

ALICE

And I'm not asking you to.

ROBERT

I know. I know. This thing with Paul has me so upset, I don't know what I'm saying anymore...

ALICE

We'll figure out Paul together.

ROBERT

That's really the only way, isn't it?

ALICE

You should have let Paul tell you at his convenience.

ROBERT

So you're saying I made my own son leave this house?

ALICE

Don't be so hard on yourself. I'm sure I'm part of the problem, too.

ROBERT

You -- ?

ALICE

And his brothers. We're all a family. We're all responsible to some degree for whatever's happening to Paul. He's zeroed in on you because you're the most visible.

ROBERT

Alice, I don't want to lose him. I love him.

ALICE

Then when he comes back, why don't you tell him?

ROBERT

He knows I love him.

ALICE

Does he?

ROBERT

It should be quite evident, I would think, after all these years. I've told him many times before. I've spent quality time with him. I've had personal priesthood interviews with him. We've played handball together. Exactly what I've done with all the other boys.

ALICE

But Paul isn't like the other boys. We've already established that. He needs to be treated differently. You need to let him be himself, right or wrong.

ROBERT

He's only twenty years old, and obviously is not capable of making correct choices.

ALICE

Paul isn't some hardened criminal you're letting loose on society. He's a highly intelligent, spiritual young man who's going through some real emotional problems right now.

ROBERT

Why do I feel like it's you and him versus the mean ogre of a dad?

ALICE

I'm not taking sides. I can't take sides where matters of the heart are concerned. I love you both. I want you both to be happy, but each in your own way. And you're not a mean ogre. A little stubborn around the edges, maybe...

ROBERT

(beat)

You know what I'd like, Alice? It's strange, because I haven't thought of this for many years -- at least not since my mission. I wish that... somehow...

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I could just take everything that's in my heart and soul, everything I know and feel about this glorious Church and transfer it wholesale into Paul. If he could only see the great vision of this work as I do there's be no problem, no conflict between us.

ALICE

And no growth.

ROBERT

(slight laugh)

"Oh, that I were an angel," said Alma, who later realized he had sinned in his desire.

THE GARDEN

The sickly azalea stands alone.

A HAND reaches down, caresses a leaf, then another. The hand reaches down, smoothes the dirt around the base of the plant.

INT. DINING ROOM

Robert stands looking out the plate glass window.

IN THE GARDEN

Paul kneels, looking down at the azalea bush. We hear his father behind him. Beat.

PAUL

I... I just had to walk around for a little while.

ROBERT

That's all right.

Paul stands.

PAUL

What was it you said about planting an azalea bush? "I knew that as it matured in my garden, that you would be maturing in another field."

ROBERT

Paul, you don't --

PAUL

I want to apologize to you and Mom from unloading on you. When I saw you on the telephone to President --

ROBERT

Son, I'm sorry about that. I should have waited and let you tell me.

PAUL

This whole thing -- my coming home early -- must have been a great shock to you.

Robert puts his arm around Paul as they move toward the house.

ROBERT

It did concern us somewhat.

PAUL

Dad, you always were one with the understatement when it came to expressing yourself. Admit it: my coming home early blew you away.

ROBERT

Well, I wouldn't say it in those words --

PAUL

Come on, now.

ROBERT

All right. "It blew me away."

They enter the house, specifically:

THE DINING ROOM

PAUL

Did you cry, Dad?

ROBERT

I... suppose...

PAUL

Did you?

ROBERT

I was disappointed, and... uh... yes, I did cry a bit.

Alice comes into the room, hugs Paul.

ALICE

I know I did.

ROBERT

You've lost your testimony,
haven't you?

PAUL

If I lost anything, it was the testimony of myself. When I first got out -- full of missionary zeal, determined to convert the world. I'd always been taught that the Gospel was the only true path to happiness. But the longer I was over in France, the more French people I met who were content, absolutely content in their way of life. I even taught a man once who told me that the Holy Ghost had told him his church was true.

ROBERT

There are many sincere deluded people in the world. But when presented with the truth through the Holy Ghost, they can be converted they begin to exercise their free agency, to think for themselves.

PAUL

Unless you're a young man going on a mission.

ROBERT

That's different. That's a direct call from the Prophet.

PAUL

Is it? The Prophet individually calls ever missionary?

ROBERT

I don't claim to understand how inspiration works in every situation.

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

But I've heard many young men
bare testimony that, as far their
personal growth was concerned,
their mission came at just the
right time, or they were sent to
just the right place --

PAUL

I don't doubt that. I just know
it didn't happen to me. I felt
good about my decision to come
home, that's all I can say.

ROBERT

Maybe you should have given your
mission more of a chance.

PAUL

That's your solution to
everything, isn't it? Whatever's
wrong with the world, the Gospel
can fix.

ROBERT

No one's ever claimed the Gospel
was a magic curative. People
have to use it correctly.

PAUL

And how do they do that, if not
by using their Free Agency?

ROBERT

You're right --

PAUL

So do you see the dilemma? On
the one hand, the Church tells
people to follow the Prophet: "He
will not allow you to be led
astray." On the other hand,
we're told to use our Free
Agency, to let the Spirit tell us
what to do.

ROBERT

What do you think your Free
Agency is, if not the freedom to
follow the Prophet?

PAUL

(another approach)
Dad, why was the War in Heaven fought?

ROBERT

You know the answer to that.

PAUL

It wasn't just because Lucifer wanted the glory of God, but because he wanted to FORCE PEOPLE TO BE GOOD! I think sometimes we get the impression that Lucifer's plan was to make us do horrible things against our will. But that wasn't it at all. He wanted to make us pay tithing. He wanted to make us go on missions, whether we wanted to or not!

(beat, softer)

Can't you see that, even if it's for a good reason, no man should force another?

ROBERT

Neither I, nor anyone else, forced you to go on a mission!

PAUL

There are more subtle ways, more sure ways to force people. Peer pressure: "All my friends are going on missions. I guess I should go;" intimidation: "My young brethren, you have no choice!" Dad, I'm not saying that guys shouldn't go on missions. They should. If they want to.

ROBERT

You're beginning to sound like one of those Mormon intellectuals who --

PAUL

"The glory of God is intelligence."

ROBERT

A questioning mind is a faithless mind.

PAUL

"Let us reason together." Have you heard that passage before? With what do you reason if not your mind, your intellect?

ROBERT

Your intellect tempered with the Spirit. And when your reasoning disagrees with the revealed word of God, then your reasoning is faulty.

PAUL

The what do you do if "the revealed word of God" differs with other "revealed words of God?"

ROBERT

Now you're talking nonsense.

PAUL

Am I? Brigham Young said, on many occasions, "You cannot get to the highest degree of heaven if you only have one wife." But today, if you marry another woman, you're ex'ed. Two diametrically opposed statements. Which one's right?

ROBERT

They both are.

PAUL

Now you're talking nonsense.

ROBERT

Brigham Young's statement was true for his time.

PAUL

But isn't God an unchanging god, the "same yesterday, today, or forever." Why two different doctrines a hundred years apart?

ROBERT

It's the same doctrine -- the same principal -- just the way of practicing it differs. Principals never change. Practices do.

PAUL

Maybe. But do the Saints know that? You should hear some of the incredible lengths people go to to make it look like Tithing, the Word of Wisdom, and Sunday School have always existed.

ROBERT

You can say what you like, but the Church is true and the Prophet will never lead us astray. That's all that matters to me. That's my iron rod.

PAUL

Then if the Prophet can do no wrong --

ROBERT

I didn't say that. No one is perfect. But God would not allow him to teach false doctrine.

PAUL

Then why does the Doctrine and Covenants provide for a court to try the Prophet? If he could never lead us astray, there would be no need for a court. Look at the Book of Mormon --

ROBERT

Mother, are you noticing? First he blasphemes the Prophet. Now it's the Scriptures.

PAUL

If the Book of Mormon is without flaw, if there can be no mistake in it --

ROBERT

There have been typographical --

PAUL

Then why did Joseph Smith call in the "most correct book?" Why does it say on the title page, "If there be mistakes, they are the mistakes of men." If prophets can't make mistakes, then why the disclaimer?

ROBERT

So you're saying the Prophet is just like any other men?

PAUL

No, I'm not! He's a very inspired human being, who's very opinion I highly praise. But I must reserve the right to decide for myself on his or anybody else's teaching. If I can't have that right, then Free Agency is a joke. Then the War in Heaven never happened.

(beat)

Do you think I like what's happened to me? Sure, I felt good about coming home but I didn't feel good about what it would do to you -- what you would think of me --

(Alice tries to intervene)

Mother, I know how he feels. And though I know that, in my particular case -- as far as I'm concerned -- I've done the right thing by coming home, it causes me no pleasure to know that I've been a disappointment to both of you.

ALICE

Paul --

PAUL

There's no use denying it, Mother! You know as well as I do that, in this society, a missionary who comes home early is just one step above a divorced woman in the hierarchy of "People With Whom It Is Not Wise To Associate." Do you think I look forward to that stereotype the rest of my life?

ALICE

Paul, no true Latter-day Saint would feel that way --

PAUL

I'm not condemning the Church. It's just a few individuals.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

But many of those individuals are in leadership positions and they're influencing others to the same close-minded kind of thinking.

ROBERT

All right, you've said your piece. Now let me give you my impressions of your experience. But first, I want you to know that this comes from the innermost depths of my love for you. And I hope you perceive it that way.

(beat)

You know perfectly well that there are many lying and deceiving spirits in the world today. And that, in the last days, they will deceive and lead astray even the very elect.

PAUL

Yes, but --

ROBERT

Please, Paul, let me continue. You said you felt good about your decision to come home. Isn't it just possible, isn't there just the slightest chance that what you felt was a clever imitation?

PAUL

What is this? You think I'm possessed or something?

ALICE

Dear, what are you trying to say?

ROBERT

Isn't that possible?

PAUL

No.

ROBERT

Have you ever similar "good feelings?"

PAUL

No...

ROBERT

Then you have nothing to compare this to, do you?

PAUL

Well, no...

ROBERT

Then it could have been a Satanic imitation, couldn't it have?

ALICE

(shocked)

Bob!

PAUL

I know what I felt!

ROBERT

But with nothing to compare it to, you have no way of knowing for sure that you received a manifestation from God or from some other source, do you?

PAUL

I never said it came from God in the first place. I just know that I felt good afterwards.

ROBERT

Son, the devil and his angels swing into high gear with missionaries and those in other positions of authority. They pull out all the stops and will do anything they can to discourage the servants of the Lord.

(beat)

I know.

(beat)

Because it happened to me.

This drops like a lead balloon in the room.

ROBERT

It was just after I got my call to the Stake Presidency. Do you remember the day it happened, Mother?

ALICE

I'll never forget it.

ROBERT

When we got back from the interview, we just sat around the house for the longest while, not saying anything. I suppose I must have looked miserable because your mother asked me, "Who died?" "Me," I said. "My old self has died. I'll never be the same again." Soon, thoughts started running through my head, thoughts such as: "Who do you think your are, Robert Baines? You, a Stake President? Ha!" I began to doubt, thinking of all the things I still had to do, of the change in my status in the eyes of my neighbors and friends. I, Robert M. Baines, would soon have the responsibility of speaking in the name of Jesus Christ to the entire stake, "as if from mine own mouth," the Scripture says. I felt woefully inadequate. I went so far as to actually pick up the phone to tell them I couldn't do it. But I hung up, got down on my knees --

(which he does now)

-- right there in my office, and prayed until the horrible feeling was replaced by an overwhelming feeling of peace -- true peace. Not transitory peace. Not false peace. But the kind of peace that can only come from Christ.

(looks at Paul)

Kneel with me, Paul.

(Paul stands)

Alice, kneel with me and Paul and let's pray -- let's each of us pray that the veil might be lifted from your eyes, that you might see the error of your way. Paul, kneel with me. Alice.

(Alice kneels)

Come on, Paul.

PAUL

No.

ROBERT

Then Mother and I will pray.

Robert takes Alice's hand. She looks at Paul, begging him with her eyes to join them; he doesn't. She then bows her head as Robert starts praying.

ROBERT

Our Father in Heaven, we humbly
kneel before thee at this time...

PAUL

What are you trying to do?

ROBERT

(going on)
... with a desire in our hearts
that thou shalt shed thy Spirit
upon this household -- that our
son, Paul, whom we both love more
than life itself -- may see the
error of his ways, that he may
repent of his weak faith...

PAUL

Please, stop...

ROBERT

... and recommit himself to the
high and holy calling which is
his, of proclaiming Thy word to
the inhabitants of this mortal
sphere...

PAUL

Dad, please...

ROBERT

Let him once again feel Thy love
for him, that whatever evil
influence hath overtaken him may
be purged from his soul forever.

PAUL

I know what you're trying to do!

ROBERT

That he may return to full
worthiness in thy Church and
Kingdom --

PAUL

WILL YOU SHUT UP, DAMMIT!

Silence. Alice breaks into tears, gets up and moves away.
Robert stays on his knees.

ROBERT
And forgive our son his sacrilege.
In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Robert stands, moves to his son. Beat.

ROBERT
What has made your heart so hard?

PAUL
It's not hard. How can it be...
when it's broken in two?

Paul, barely able to hold back his anger, strides across the room and out the back door.

Alice casts a killer glance at Robert, who is not looking at her. The phone rings once, twice before it is answered by Alice.

ALICE
Hello?

She holds out the phone to Robert.

ROBERT
Hello. Oh, Leonard. Thanks for
calling back.
(beat)
You think so? All right, I'll be
right down. No, no. That's all
right. I wasn't doing anything
important.

He hangs up the phone, goes to -

THE FRONT DOOR

to get his keys, turns to tell Alice where's he going,
thinks better of it, then turns to go out the front door.

He sees Paul's journal sitting on the coffee table, picks it
up, then goes out the door.

EXT. GARDEN

Paul stands at the edge of the garden, looking away. SOUND
of garage door opening and car driving away.

Alice comes up to him, then looks down, sees something on
the ground, picks it up.

ALICE
He left his trowel out here.
It'll get rusty.

PAUL
I heard him leave --

ALICE
The man at the nursery called,
they spoke for a few minutes...

Paul looks at the azalea bush.

PAUL
Maybe it needs more water.

ALICE
He waters it every day.

PAUL
Maybe it gets too much.

ALICE
Did you know there's a history
behind each of these plants.

PAUL
He likes to tell us, doesn't he?

She moves down the row. Paul follows.

ALICE
Whenever some milestone is
reached in his life, he'll plant
a shrub or a flower. This one is
when David was born. This was
when your father sold his first
insurance policy.

She stops at the azalea bush.

ALICE
And you know what this one is for.

PAUL
It's the only bush that's dying.
Isn't that interesting?

ALICE
Your father is happiest when he's
out here in the garden. He says
it gives him time to think about
things.

PAUL

I tried growing a little garden in one of the places I lived. I guess I didn't inherit his green thumb because nothing edible came up.

ALICE

I can't seem to make anything grow, either. I asked your father about that once. "Alice, it's more than just digging a hole and dropping in a seed. You've got to nurture these plants. And that means a lot of TLC." Tender Loving Care. That's the difference, I guess.

(beat)

You know your father's a frustrated gardener.

PAUL

Yeah...

ALICE

That's what he wanted to do when we first got married, did you know that? Open up his own nursery.

PAUL

Really? Then how did he ever get into insurance?

ALICE

That was because of me. I wouldn't let him become a gardener. It was our first... disagreement.

PAUL

What do you mean, you wouldn't you let him?

ALICE

Security. I wanted the steady income -- not that insurance was steadier, but it had more potential. I felt uneasy not knowing where our next meal was coming from.

(beat)

"Security." A word that's probably killed more dreams than anything else.

PAUL

How come I never knew about this?

Alice looks up, suddenly realizing what she has done.

ALICE

Oh, no...!

PAUL

Something wrong?

ALICE

I... uh... your father...

PAUL

Don't tell me, I can guess. He never wanted you to tell us.

(Alice nods)

Why is that man so afraid of anybody seeing his weaknesses?

ALICE

He believes that being an example --

PAUL

It can drive you crazy, that's what being an example can do. Never doing anything because you're afraid someone's looking over your shoulder will misconstrue your actions, and you'll be responsible for them going inactive or something.

ALICE

As he often tells me: "Avoid the appearance of evil."

PAUL

So Dad was afraid we'd figure he was weak because he gave into his wife?

ALICE

He didn't "give in." He agreed with me.

PAUL

I bet he wouldn't call it that.

ALICE

Maybe so. Your father's a complex man, Paul. It's not easy to point at any one thing and say, "This is Robert Baines."

PAUL

(beat)

So, how's it been? This "security" that Dad "agreed" to?

ALICE

As far as I'm concerned, wonderful. I've been able to feed and clothe five sons. He's given me a marvelous house. For me, it's all I asked for.

PAUL

But for him?

ALICE

For him? I don't know. Maybe he's gotten used to it.

PAUL

Maybe.

ALICE

At least I hope he has.

A beat. She cries softly. Paul takes her in his arms.

PAUL

Hey, Mom! What is it?

ALICE

Nothing.

PAUL

Teenage girls cry over nothing.

ALICE

Paul, you don't think -- ? It just suddenly occurred to me that maybe he never has gotten used to it.

PAUL

Has he ever told you that?

ALICE

No. And he never would. He'd keep it inside. He'd never let on.

PAUL

You know what I think? I think you're upset over what's happening between Dad and me.

ALICE

Should I not be? Two men whom I love both trying to force their differing philosophies on the other.

PAUL

I wasn't --

Alice sends a look to him.

PAUL

Maybe I was.

(beat)

What do you think, Mom? I know how Dad feels about my coming home early. He made that clear enough. But what do you think?

ALICE

You're my son, whatever you do.

PAUL

You're saying you love me even though I did the wrong thing?

ALICE

(beat)

Yes.

Paul moves away.

PAUL

I thought for sure you'd understand.

ALICE

I do understand. I'm not sure you do, though.

PAUL

It did get pretty heavy there for a while, didn't it?

ALICE

Paul, he was in the middle of a prayer. You shouldn't have interrupted him in the middle of a prayer.

PAUL
He wasn't praying. He was
intimidating. I won't be
intimidated any more.

ALICE
Paul, your father only --

PAUL
" -- wants what's good for me."
But why is what he thinks good
for me different that what I think?

ALICE
You interrupted me. I was going
to say that he only wants so
desperately for you to make the
right choices.

PAUL
As he sees what's right.

ALICE
Would that be so wrong? After
all, he had many years of
experience in the Church --

PAUL
Which only proves he's learned to
toe the party line.

ALICE
Is there anything wrong with that?

PAUL
Yeah. If you're doing it because
everybody else is.

ALICE
And you think that's what your
father is doing?

PAUL
I'm not going to judge him.

ALICE
All right, don't judge him. Just
tell me. Do you think your
father is "toeing the party
line," as you call it, just
because everybody else is?

PAUL

No, of course not. I have no doubt he's absolutely sincere in the way he feels.

ALICE

But "wrong," is that what you're saying?

PAUL

I'm not going to answer that. Everyone's entitled to his own opinion.

ALICE

Even if it's a wrong opinion?

PAUL

Who's wrong? Who's right? That's what our whole argument was about in the first place.

ALICE

You must have some opinion. Even the most liberal-minded Mormon must have some opinion of what's right and wrong.

PAUL

I don't want to say he's wrong... I... can't say what I really think.

ALICE

Why can't you?

PAUL

Because... because it'll sound terribly conceited.

ALICE

Maybe I won't see it that way.

PAUL

Have you heard of that passage in the New Testament: "As a child, I thought as a child. But now that I am a man -- "

ALICE

" -- I have put away childish things."

PAUL

Well, when I used to have this absolute, unwavering faith, I... I was like a child.

ALICE

But now you've matured beyond that.

PAUL

Well, not matured, really. Not progressed, either. "Changed," I guess is the only word.

ALICE

There's another scripture you're forgetting about. "Except ye be as a little child, ye can in no wise enter the kingdom of God."

PAUL

I can't go back to the way I was. I can't just forget everything I've learned. I've tried.

ALICE

Maybe you should have told that to your father. Maybe if he saw how much agony this is causing you --

PAUL

He wouldn't listen. He only gives Tender Loving Care to his plants.

ALICE

At least his plants don't turn against him.

PAUL

Is that what you think, that I'm rebelling against Dad? I guess I didn't make myself clear.

ALICE

It was hard to find clarity in all that yelling.

PAUL

I tried to do it calmly, but when he wouldn't listen, I just... lost control, I guess.

ALICE

That's a good guess.

PAUL

It was my fault, wasn't it? The shouting match.

ALICE

Does it matter who's fault it was? What matters is how it made you feel.

PAUL

Well, it didn't turn out exactly the way I wanted it to. It didn't even come close.

ALICE

How did you want it to turn out?

PAUL

I knew there'd be communication problems, but the reason I asked President Andrews not to say anything is because I wanted to confront those problems myself. I like to fight my own battles.

ALICE

And boy, can you fight.

PAUL

What I expected was: I'd come home, it'd be a little tense at first, but eventually everyone would relax a bit... and then I'd tell him.

ALICE

And he would understand, just like that?

PAUL

I guess it was kind of naive of me, wasn't it?

ALICE

You know, Dear, those people who can totally change their lives instantly are very rare.

PAUL

I know that.

ALICE

For most of us, any change at all must come over a long period. With your father, that period is longer than with almost anyone.

PAUL

But he's changed -- before? There must have been at least one time.

ALICE

There was.

Alice shivers as a sudden chill hits the air. She gestures toward the house.

A ROARING FIRE

in the fireplace in the parlor, being manned by Paul. Alice sits in her favorite chair.

ALICE

It was when I was pregnant with Andrew. Before that, whenever we went anyplace, your father would always drive the car. It was the unwritten law of the Baines household: The Man Shall Drive. I had a license but he never let me use it when he was in the car. I asked him about it one time. I can't remember his exact words, but it was something to the effect that women, not being as mechanically inclined as men, weren't as good drivers.

PAUL

That's unbelievable.

ALICE

Remember, your father was raised in Utah. Well, when it came time to deliver Andrew, your father was nowhere to be found. So I borrowed a neighbor's car and drove to the hospital myself.

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

When your father learned that not only had I delivered a healthy baby boy, but that I had driven there safely, he turned to me and said -- and these words I do remember exactly -- "I always knew you could do it." I accepted that as an apology.

PAUL

And did he let you drive after that?

ALICE

Yes, but he'd always wear his seatbelt. So, you see, if you want to change the way he thinks --

PAUL

I need to have a baby.

ALICE

You need to be patient and work at it, maybe for quite a long time.

PAUL

Mom, will he ever understand? Will it ever be -- between him and me -- like it used to be?

ALICE

No. But I think -- with work -- you'll come pretty close. I will tell you one thing, though. When your father finally comes around, don't expect him to come right out and say it. He may be straight and to the point in his preaching but he'll skirt the issue, he'll say something else. It'll be up to you to see it for what it is: an apology.

(beat)

Now it's your turn.

PAUL

What?

ALICE

We've been talking about your father and his weaknesses, as if he's the only one involved in this disagreement.

PAUL

Yeah, but at least he's gone and can't hear what we say.

ALICE

But you're the open-minded one. So let's get philosophical --

PAUL

You don't have to do that. I can take it.

ALICE

Then I'll let you have it. You, in your "open-mindedness" were as letter-of-the-law as he was. You can no more accept his way of looking at things than he can accept yours.

PAUL

I'm more honest with myself than he is.

ALICE

Are you? When you accepted your mission call, you made a commitment to serve for two years. You didn't follow through on that. Does that seem honest to you?

PAUL

I told you. I had no choice. I was ramrodded into the mission field.

ALICE

You always have a choice. You chose to give into this "intimidation" as you called it. You would have been more honest with yourself -- and us -- if you had never gone in the first place.

PAUL

I know that! But I couldn't do that -- then. I didn't know what I know now.

ALICE

You know what this whole thing sounds like to me? One gigantic case of rationalization.

PAUL

Mom -- !

ALICE

What else can I think? You go out in the mission field, excited, vowing to convert the world, and then when it gets a little tough, you tuck your tail between your legs and come home.

PAUL

Do you really believe that?

ALICE

I don't want to, but I've seen precious little else to convince me otherwise.

PAUL

I would have expected this from Dad --

ALICE

You see, you're not the only one in the Church who has your philosophy. I've known quite a few. But there's danger in your way of looking at the Gospel, just as there is in wearing blinders all the time. The danger is that, unless you try very hard, you end up questioning everything. And eventually, believing nothing. And a life without belief is a life without hope.

PAUL

Everything I told Dad --

ALICE

Everything you screamed at him.

PAUL

You don't believe any of it?

ALICE

Do you?

PAUL

Let's not get into that again. I was not being influenced by the Devil.

ALICE
How do you know that?

PAUL
I already told you how. I had
this... feeling.

ALICE
Feeling. You mean you didn't sit
down and reason out why you
shouldn't be on a mission?

PAUL
I thought about it --

ALICE
If this feeling didn't come from
Satan, or wasn't a result of your
own feelings of inadequacy, then
where did it come from?

PAUL
(reluctant)
I see what you're getting at.

ALICE
Then say it.

PAUL
God.

ALICE
And how do you know that, if not
by faith? Don't you see that,
sometimes, reasoning is not
enough, that even the most
"intellectual" Mormon needs to
take a step into the darkness
every now and then? So what am I
telling you? You've said it
yourself several times now: "No
one is either black or white."
There are elements of questioning
in all of us.

PAUL
In you?

ALICE
Yes.

Paul looks at her. She starts to speak.

PAUL

I know. Don't tell Dad.

Another beat. Alice moves toward the house.

INT. DINING ROOM

Alice enters, sits at the dining table.

Paul enters, stands behind her.

ALICE

I never thought I would tell that to anyone.

PAUL

I know what you're feeling. Kind of a strange mixture of relief and agony -- coalescing somewhere at the base of your heart. You fell like you want to burst with joy that you've finally come to terms with yourself but afraid that, if you do, nothing will come out but this oddly shaped, deformed mass that used to be called "perfect, child-like faith."

Alice looks at Paul.

Suddenly, she bursts into tears, folding into Paul's arms.

PAUL

Let it come, Mom. Let it come.

ALICE

Paul. Promise me one thing. Whatever else you tell your father when he gets home, don't --

PAUL

I won't.

ALICE

Because it would destroy him. He already thinks that you and I are teaming up against him. If he found out that I... You know what he told me once? He said the reason he married me was... was because I was perfect. That's what he said. So, you mustn't.

PAUL

Don't worry.

ALICE

He just wouldn't know how to handle it. Not yet, anyway.

PAUL

Someday you'll have to do what I did. You'll have to tell him.

ALICE

I know?

PAUL

You know what I think?

ALICE

What?

PAUL

I think that every member of the Church questions things. But most are afraid to admit is, as if by ignoring it, it'll go away. Or maybe they think that if they stand up in Testimony Meeting and say, "I know the Gospel's true, but I'm not sure about the Church," they'll somehow be judge as weak in the faith.

ALICE

They probably would.

PAUL

What... sort of things do you question?

ALICE

So it's my turn, is it? Yes, I suppose I owe you an explanation.

PAUL

You do.

ALICE

You know how we're taught that -- you won't think I'm an apostate, will you?

PAUL

Mom, you're talking to Mister Liberal-Minded.

ALICE

It's just that -- well, I told this once to your father and he said I should stop thinking about it -- that, since it wasn't essential to my salvation -- I didn't need to be concerned.

PAUL

"It's not essential to my salvation." The Great Mormon Cop-out.

ALICE

It has to do with... the Creation...

PAUL

Go on.

ALICE

Well, you know how we're taught that the world was created by Elohim, Jehovah, and Michael.

PAUL

Yes...

ALICE

Well, you see...

PAUL

Go ahead. There are no G.A.'s looking over your shoulder.

ALICE

I don't think that's all there is to it. There are -- aspects -- of the creation that carry a decidedly feminine slant. The flowers, for instance, rainbows... all the things of beauty. I'm not saying that a man couldn't have done all that... what I'm saying is... Don't you think it's possible that maybe... Heavenly Mother could have designed those things and given them to her husband to create? Is that such an heretical idea?

PAUL

(smiles)

I think it's a beautiful concept.

ALICE
Why are you smiling?

PAUL
I can't believe it. My mother,
the Mormon Feminist.

ALICE
I'm not!

PAUL
Just kidding.

ALICE
You got me off the subject which
was you.

PAUL
An old missionary trick I learned
to keep contacts from rambling.

ALICE
I wasn't rambling.

PAUL
I know, I know.

ALICE
Well, Mr. Open-Minded. Am I
right? About you and your
father, I mean?

PAUL
Well...

ALICE
Come on, now.

PAUL
Yes, you're right.

ALICE
So what we have here are two
grown men who aren't willing to
just throw doctrine to the wind
and let love tell their hearts
what to do.

PAUL
I don't know if we ever can. Our
basic philosophies seem so
diametrically opposed. He's and
Iron Rodder and I'm a Liahona.

ALICE

What does that mean?

PAUL

You remember Dad saying that the words of the Prophets were his "iron rod?" That's the one basic difference between people like him and me. Some are like in the parable of the iron rod. As long as they hold on tight, they don't have to worry about anything. They can make it through every mist in a clear, straight line to that beautiful tree. There are others of us who are better symbolized by the Liahona. We don't have the whole picture -- feel more comfortable without it, as a matter of fact. We prefer to sort of figure out where we're going one step at a time. I was an "Iron Rodder" before I went on my mission. I'm now a "Liahona." And you don't know how many sleepless nights I've spent praying that I could somehow undo what happened to me -- that, in one fell swoop, I could be returned to those days when I had a simple faith. Is it a sin, Mom, to pray for ignorance?

ALICE

That's a very fascinating idea. But there's one thing you need to remember about those two objects. They were both made by the same God. He must have done that for some reason. Could not that reason have been that he wants both types of people in the Church? For whatever reason, I don't know. But maybe... maybe the Iron Rodder is there to keep the Liahona geared toward the basics. And the Liahona is there to push, pull, and to make noise so that the Iron Rodder will occasionally look up to get the whole picture. Maybe it's God's system of checks and balances -- I don't know.

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

What I do know is that you and he will have to figure out some way to get together and resolve this. Whether you give in to him, or he does, or you reach some kind of compromise, I don't care. It's just got to happen. Or I won't make you any more baloney sandwiches.

EXT. THREE PINES NURSERY PARKING LOT

Bob sits in his car, his hands on the steering wheel, looking ahead.

Behind him, a sign proclaims his whereabouts:

THREE PINES NURSERY

INT. BAINES CAR

Bob continues looking ahead.

From his tape deck comes the words of a passage from the Book of Mormon on tape.

VOICE ON TAPE DECK

"... wherefore ye shall clear away the bad according as the good shall grow, that the root and the top may be equal in strength, until the good shall overcome the bad, and the bad shall be hewn down and cast into the fire -- "

Robert clicks the tape player off. Beat. He looks down, sees -

PAUL'S JOURNAL - sitting on the seat next to him.

ROBERT

picks up the journal, opens it, thumbs through it, finds a passage, starts reading.

PAUL (V.O.)

"Elder Wainwright was my first greenie -- a farm boy from Salem, Utah. Spent his whole life on the farm. As innocent as they come.

(MORE)

PAUL (V.O.; CONT'D)

Anyway, some one blew off a meeting he had arranged. I'd been out nine months by then -- this sort of thing was old hat to me. But it was quite the earth-shattering experience for Elder Wainwright."

EXT. PARIS APARTMENT COMPLEX / GROUND LEVEL

Elder Wainwright stands at the bottom of the stairs leaning against a wall, looking at the rain. Behind him, Elder Baines comes down the last flight of stairs, walks up to his companion.

ELDER WAINWRIGHT

How can anyone not want to know about the Church?

PAUL

The way I see it Elder, we have two choices. One, we can go home now. It's only 9 o'clock, it'll take us at least a half hour to get there anyway.

Paul "poses:" lifts his head, while looking off into a bright future, his intonation a study of mock religiosity.

PAUL

Two, we can endeavor to wash our garments of the blood and sins of this generation and gird up our loins and go forth to continue to preach the Gospel, yea, unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, until the last --

Elder Wainwright can't take it anymore and bursts out laughing.

ELDER WAINWRIGHT

Was it your door or mine?

And they hurry off to the last set of stairs.

PAUL (V.O.)

"We found FrEre DuChamp a month and a half later."

EXT. ANOTHER PARIS APARTMENT COMPLEX

Elder Baines and Elder Wainwright come out of one of the buildings, looking all sad and glum.

PAUL (V.O.)

"There was one building left in this particular complex we were tracting. It was nine-thirty at night and we'd had absolutely no response at all that day."

Urged by Paul, the two missionaries move off toward the last complex.

PAUL (V.O.)

"As we approached, I admit to having had second thoughts, thinking that maybe, since it was so late, we should go home."

They disappear inside the building.

INT. THE SAME COMPLEX (MOVING)

They slowly trudge up the stairs. Their packs seem like heavy loads, they lean tiredly on the banister as they lift one foot after the other.

PAUL (V.O.)

"But then I remembered something they'd taught us at the MTC: 'When you want to go home, just knock on one last door. The golden convert you seek may be waiting.'

They arrive at the landing. Paul knocks on a door.

PAUL (V.O.)

"So that's what I did. I knocked on just one more door."

The door opens, revealing -

FRERE DUCHAMP

standing in the doorway. As Paul speaks, the French man listens, enraptured.

PAUL (V.O.)

"This little French man answered the door. He was maybe in his thirties and his eyes seemed to brighten as he looked at us. Well, we did the usual spiel...

FrÈre DuChamp bursts into tears.

PAUL (V.O.)

"... and that was when he broke into tears... It turns out he'd been praying for God to send someone with the truth about religion to his door. He was indeed the golden contact we'd been seeking."

INT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Elder Wainwright baptizes DuChamp while Paul and another Elder look on as witnesses. Other people -- a few missionaries and some members -- also look on. DuChamp goes down under the water as:

PAUL (V.O.)

"He took all the lessons and was baptized the following Saturday."

INT. DUCHAMP'S PARIS APARTMENT - EVENING

A party is in full swing: all those from the previous scene and OTHERS we didn't see before, SISTER MISSIONARIES, members.

Everyone is happy, smiling, there's plenty of food.

Paul stands in the corner, watching this.

PAUL (V.O.)

"After his baptism, we were at his home for a little celebration."

DuChamp notices the drinks are low, goes into the kitchen. Paul follows.

INT. DUCHAMP'S PARIS APARTMENT - KITCHEN

DuChamp opens the refrigerator, pulls out a bottle of Coca Cola.

Paul speaks from the doorway to the kitchen.

PAUL

Brother DuChamp, you do realize that cola has caffeine in it?

DuChamp does the action next described.

PAUL (V.O.)

"He put the bottle down as if it had suddenly caught fire, and looked at me with the most fearful expression on his face."

FRERE DUCHAMP

Is this against the Word of
Wisdom? If it is, just tell me
and I'll never drink it again.
I'll do whatever you tell me.

EXT. STREET

Robert drives, remembering the last few words of Paul's
journal:

PAUL (V.O.)

"The next day, I called up
President Andrews. This is why I
came home. Because of a farm boy
from Idaho to whom the very idea
of happy non-Mormon was
incomprehensible, and because of
a little Frenchman who was
willing to alter his complete
lifestyle merely because I said
so."

ROBERT

Paul, don't you know how much
your mother and I cried over that?

PAUL - is suddenly seated next to Robert, only this time he
is wearing his full missionary garb, including badge, and
carrying his back pack.

PAUL

Would it surprise you to know
that I did, too? The night I
decided to go home, I just lay in
bed staring at the ceiling for
the longest time. When it
finally came to me that --
whatever else I was -- I just
wasn't cut out to be a
missionary... I cried. Because,
more than anything, I wanted to
be! I wanted to do such a good
job, to please the Lord, you and
Mom... myself.

(beat)

And after what seemed like maybe
a half hour... this absolutely
incredible feeling of peace swept
over me. It started at the exact
center of my chest and seemed to
swirl outward -- this fantastic
feeling of...

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

warmth that left my entire body tingling. And the more I thought about going home, the better it felt. When I thought that maybe I ought to reconsider, to stay, it started to fade.

(beat)

I didn't cry after that.

EXT. BAINES HOME - DRIVEWAY

The car driven by Robert pulls into the driveway and now we saw what we couldn't before: An azalea bush in the trunk with a partially closed lid, held there by twine. Robert gets out of the car, goes around back and starts unfastening the trunk lid.

EXT. BACKYARD FENCE

We see the top of the bush approaching the gate, the gate opening, and then Robert carrying the bush, struggling to get it through the gate.

Paul comes around the corner of the house to help Robert with the plant.

Alice comes into scene also, shutting the gate.

ALICE

What...? Another azalea bush.

ROBERT

A healthy one.

THE GARDEN

Robert and Paul struggle with the plant, finally letting putting it on the ground near the old one.

ROBERT

Thank you, Paul. Leonard told me what was wrong with the other plant. It was getting too much water. The azalea doesn't need a lot of water. In fact, it does better in dry ground. I knew that...

PAUL

So what's going to happen to the old one?

ROBERT

Leonard told me I should uproot it and plant this one in its place. Would you like to help me, Paul?

PAUL

Sure.

Paul grabs a nearby shovel and starts digging up the old plant.

ROBERT

Oh, wait! Keep digging Paul. There's something I've got to get in the house.

Robert leaves.

Paul and Alice look knowingly at each other.

INT. PARLOR

A Book of Mormon lies prominently displayed on the coffee table. Robert picks it up, goes back outside.

THE GARDEN

Paul has dug a fairly deep hole by now.

Robert comes up, hands the Book of Mormon to Alice, who takes it, looks surprised.

ROBERT

(to Paul)

Excellent job. Let's get this other one ready to plant.

He starts removing the cardboard pot holding the healthy bush.

ROBERT

Alice, would you read that passage I have marked?

As Robert and Paul work the bush out of its container and into the hole Paul dug:

ALICE

(reads)

"And it came to pass that the master of the vineyard went forth, and he saw that his -- "

ROBERT

"Azalea bush."

ALICE

"And he saw that his azalea bush began to decay, and he said: I will prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it, that perhaps it may shoot forth young and tender branches and it perish not. But behold, the main top thereof began to perish. The master of the vineyard said to his servant: It grieveth me that I should lose this tree."

Alice starts to choke up.

Paul and Robert finally have the bush ready to put in the hole. Robert stands, takes over the reading chores as Paul plants the bush.

ROBERT

"But what could I have done more in my vineyard? I have nourished it, and I have digged about it, and I have pruned it. Who is it that has corrupted my vineyard? And the servant told his master: Is it not the loftiness, or the pride of thy vineyard?"

Paul stops digging and listens as Robert continues reading.

Robert is starting to choke up, too, as he reads.

ROBERT

"Have not the branches thereof overcome the roots which are good, growing faster than the strength of the roots? And the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: Let us go to and new down the trees in the vineyard. What could I have done more for my vineyard?"

Paul looks at Robert, who moves closer to Alice, puts his arm around her.

ROBERT

"But behold, the servant said
unto the Lord of the vineyard:
Spare it a little longer. And
the Lord said: Yea, I will spare
it a little longer..."

Beat. Robert is really having trouble at this point, but he
plugs away to the end.

ROBERT

"... For it grieveth me that I
should lose the trees of my
vineyard."

Robert closes the book, gives it to Alice, then kneels down
with Paul.

Together the two men tamp down the soil as Alice looks on,
smiling.

FADE OUT.

THE END