

Ruth

A Girl from New York

An Opera

in Three Acts

by William Call

© 2017 William Call

Character List

Bowen Family Members

Ruth Bowen, soprano: A widow from New York City, young (early to middle twenties)

venturesome, pretty, active, resourceful

Naomi Bowen, contralto: Ruth's mother-in-law, Benjamin's sister-in-law, stable, a widow in her late forties

Benjamin Bowen, Sr. baritone: middle forties, established family, church, and businessman; healthy, vigorous, in the prime of life

Edith Bowen soprano: Benjamin's first wife, in her early forties, healthy, active, mother of a large family and matron of the larger Bowen family

Sarah Ann Bowen, mezzo: Benjamin's second wife, sister to Adele; in her late thirties; pleasant, resourceful, a busy mother

Adelle Bowen, alto: Benjamin's third wife; sister to Sarah Ann; in her mid-thirties; busy with her growing family but still conscious of her not-yet-dissipated youth

Benjamin Bowen, Jr. tenor: Benjamin and Edith Bowen's firstborn, in his early twenties, ambitious, sees himself as his father's successor

Judith Bowen, soprano: eldest daughter of Benjamin and Sarah Ann Bowen, Ruth's confidant, mature for her age, late teens, idealistic, prospective bride and mother

Willard R. Bowen: child of Benjamin and Sarah
Ann Bowen, age six, does not sing
Jacob Bowen, baritone: Benjamin and Adelle
Bowen's firstborn, late teens
Nancy Bowen, mezzo: Jacob's younger sister
Edward (Eddie) Bowen: eight-year-old Son of
Benjamin and Edith
"Miss Young," mezzo: appears in Act 2, part 4,
a mature mother of about forty

Benjamin's Business Partner, his Competitor and Others

Benton, tenor: Benjamin Bowen's business
partner, older, jolly, egg-shaped, optimistic,
progressive
Alexander Kerns, tenor: Benjamin's gentile
competitor in his late twenties, well-dressed,
outgoing, flashy
Bodyguard (Act 1) second tenor
Messenger (Act 1) second tenor
Station Attendant (Act 1) second tenor
Worker 1, tenor (Act 2)
Worker 2, 2nd tenor (Act 2)
Worker 3, baritone (Act 2)
Worker 4, bass (Act 2)
First Banker, tenor (Act 3)
Second Banker, bass (Act 3)

Church Authorities

Prophet, bass: dignified, aged, grey-bearded,
white-headed
Counselor, baritone: "George Q.", a middle-aged
man with an authoritative presence

Federal Officials

Marshal, baritone
Deputy 1, tenor
Deputy 2, bass

Prosecutor, tenor
Judge, bass

Hotel Guests (Act 3)

Joe Simmons, second tenor
Jane Simmons, mezzo
Man 1, tenor
Man 2, bass
Man 3, baritone
Woman 1, soprano
Woman 2, contralto
George White, second tenor
Sue White, alto

Choruses

Bowen family
Bowen children (treble chorus)
Female patrons of the Bowen mercantile
Omaha restaurant patrons

Possible Role doubling

Soprano: Edith Bowen, Woman 1
Mezzo: Sarah Ann Bowen, Jane Simmons, “Miss Young”
Alto: Adelle Bowen, Sue White
Contralto: Naomi, Woman 2
Tenor: Benton, worker 1, first banker, Man 1
Second Tenor: act 1: bodyguard, messenger, station attendant;
Acts 2 & 3: Worker 2, Joe Simmons
Baritone: Worker 3, Counselor, Marshal, George White
Bass: prophet, Worker 4, second banker, Man 2

© 2017 William Call

Libretto

Act I

Scene 1-1 There is a valley

In a darkened, indefinite space, Benjamin stands with his three wives. As the band plays, the wives draw straws from Benjamin's hand. Edith, drawing the winning straw, dances with Benjamin.

Benjamin shows more straws, holding them out for the wives to draw. Suddenly Ruth appears at Benjamin's side. He takes the winning straw and hands it to her. She and Benjamin dance.

Bass:

There is a valley in my heart,
A place where you and I

Alto:

Will live and love and never part—
A place up in the sky.

Soprano/Tenor:

And there's a mountain up above,
We stand upon it high,

Chorus:

And there below our life and love—
The valley in the sky!

Act I

Scene 1-2-1 Oh what a way to spend a day

Spring of 1886 at the Union Pacific Railroad Station, the receiving platform is visible with the railroad tracts behind it. To one side is a ticket office with a doorway leading to the platform. The Bowen family and friends are gathered attired in their Sunday best, awaiting the arrival of a west-bound train.

Benton:

gesturing to Edith and Sarah Ann,
My, my, oh what a way to spend a day!
to the bodyguard who bursts through the doorway bumping into him
Good morning.

bodyguard looks through his spyglass

And what now do you see,
whoever they might be?

Bodyguard:

If they slip thru the crevices
oh, oh, oh, the consequences!

Benton:

to members of the Bowen family
Good day to you, to you too, and to you too, Top of the morning!
to Benjamin who hasn't yet appeared
It's safe to come, all clear!

Bodyguard:

No, not a thing to fear.

Benjamin Junior:

Heads up, heads up, he's here!

Chorus:

We are the Bowen family,
Paragon of loyalty
Always faithful we shall stand
Stalwarts of the promised land!
United for eternity,
Bound together by decree—
Union, love, and harmony—
We forever more will be
The Bowen family!

Act I

1-2-2. So good that we can be here together

Flanked by Benton and the Bodyguard, Benjamin ceremoniously walks onto the platform.

Benjamin:

So good that we can be here together
On this most important of days.
Approaching Edith and Sarah Ann
Most honored and proudest of fathers am I,
And look how much the children have grown!
He stoops before one of the smaller children, picking the child up and turning to his wives
And who is this, this little guy?

Sarah Ann:

stepping forward and beaming
He is, good sir, your Willard R. Bowen!

Benjamin:

feigned confidence Number thirteen, am I correct?

Sarah Ann:

pondering I think eleven, as I recollect.

Benjamin:

putting down the boy A handsome boy, indeed,

Sarah Ann:

And happy member of our creed.

Benjamin:

turning to Benton No train as yet is nigh?

Benton:

But will be by and by.

Edith:

stepping forward holding the hand of a nine-year-old boy

Your Edward Bowen wants to say hello.

Benjamin:

smiling at Edith, kneels before the boy

He's become a man since I have been away.

And do you mind your mother, son?

Child:

looking up at his mother

I think I do, don't I?

The children line up to greet their father.

Benjamin Junior:

stepping up Good morning, father.

Benjamin:

Good morning, son.

Jane:

next in line To you, good day, good sir.

Benjamin:

And same to you, my dear.

Nancy Bowen approaches. As she steps forward to greet her father a messenger enters from the ticket office and calls out.

Messenger:

Brother Benjamin Bowen!

Benjamin:

turning away from Nancy

Yes sir, right here!

What d'ya bring me, boy?

Messenger:

approaching bows

A telegram if I may

As Benjamin takes the message, Nancy bows low and greets him.

Nancy:

Good morn, most honorable father.

Benjamin:

his attention divided

Good morning, Judith Ann.

Judith/Nancy Jane:

rolling their eyes

Nancy Jane:

Nancy Jane, most honorable father!

Benjamin:

maintaining his composure Yes, yes, of course!

Nancy turns aside. A boy steps up. Benjamin, too distracted to greet him, scribbles something on a paper and gives it to the messenger.

Benjamin:

Take this, boy, and send it back. *Taking a watch from his pocket*

The train must be delayed.

I'm called away and can't be sure that I can stay.

I must attend a pressing matter.

Edith:

Oh, Benjamin, don't go.

Benton:

Now listen, everyone,

The engine's not coming yet,

No whistle or bell,

But it will be here pretty soon.

Tho it comes late we'll be

anxious to wait and see.

But where is dear Aunt Adelle?

Jacob Bowen runs to the front.

Jacob:

Here she comes, everybody!

Adelle Bowen pushes a baby carriage onto the platform as young girls gather around her screaming with excitement.

Teenage boys are laughing and scuffling as Adelle takes the baby from the carriage. As she holds it up for everyone to see there are screams and laughter.

Edith:

somewhat ostentatiously Oo a baby!

Edith/Sarah Ann:

Aah, Oo a newborn baby, aah,

a newborn baby, Aah, aah, Oo, a baby

Adelle stands directly before Benjamin, kneels, holds the baby out to him, and (her movement synchronized with the final chord of music) bows her head.

Act I

Scene 1-2-3 A handsome boy, indeed.

Benjamin:

A handsome boy, indeed.

Adelle:

submissively A girl, Mister Bowen, the
product of your seed.

Benjamin:

We'd best be on our way.
We must attend to our appointment.

Benton:

No, no, we'd better stay,
Or ours will be the disappointment.
Who knows?
They may soon serve some delicate refreshment,
*looking up as church dignitaries in suit coats and
stovepipe hats enter onto the platform*
Or maybe sacrament!

*There's a sudden hush as all move back to give the men room and then at Benjamin
Junior's cue intone a hymn:*

Chorus:

We thank thee, Lord,
for prophets true,
Who give to us the gospel new.
May we thy revelations keep
and great rewards in heaven reap!

Prophet:

greeting Benjamin warmly
Good morning, good friend, good brother.

Counselor:

extending his hand
We've come to join with you today.

Benjamin:

How kind of you to favor us.
Welcome to this our glad yet reticent reunion.

Prophet:

We have heard about your losses,

Counselor:

A brother and a nephew.

Benjamin:

Mine, yes, but greater my dear Naomi's.

Prophet:

Who went away five years ago?

Benjamin:

And now returns I fear near empty handed.

Counselor:

And yet,

Prophet:

And yet,

Counselor:

we hear,

Prophet:

we hear,

Prophet/Counselor:

not wholly so.

Benjamin:

You're privy then to the widow?

Prophet:

We are—a woman from the East,

Counselor:

A cityite they say.

Benjamin:

A stranger in our midst she'll be,

Here is true loyalty,

That she would leave her home from far

for this remotest valley.

Act I

Scene 1-2-4 Ladies and gentlemen, the train is a-coming

As the train approaches, the people gather at the edge of the platform, their faces pointing in concert toward the oncoming locomotive. Benjamin, anticipating the train's arrival, is lost in thought as he rehearses in his mind the just-finished conversation.

Station Attendant:

Ladies and gentlemen,

the train is a-coming!

Benjamin:

A stranger in our midst she'll be!

...now returns I fear empty-handed...

Yet we hear, we hear not wholly so...

...she is a woman from the East.

She is a cityite they say, they say...

A woman from the East.

A cityite they say...

A stranger in our midst she'll be, she'll be...

The train comes to a stop.

Act I

Scene 1-2-5 Oh, oh my

A passenger car stops directly in front of the platform, a moment of anticipation, then the door to the Pullman opens, and Naomi steps out.

Naomi:

Overwhelmed Oh my,

Benjamin steps forward. Naomi, smiling up at him, extends her arms, and the two embrace.

Naomi:

Oh my,

Benjamin:

Welcome to your home again;
O welcome home again, Naomi!

Benjamin/Chorus:

Welcome to your home again;
O welcome home again, Naomi!

Naomi:

with tears in her eyes

Five years and you haven't changed at all.

Benjamin:

You're kind, and look at you,
Through life's ordeal have weathered well.

Naomi:

Ascended late from hell,
Yet I hold on steadfast,

Benjamin:

And shall endure unto the very last,

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:

Once more to your true home,
To Zion you have come,
The mountaintop of Christendom.

Benjamin:

Is the Yorker near at hand,
Did she come as you had planned?

Naomi:

She did, indeed, a little shy, you understand.

All is quiet as Ruth appears framed by the doorway of the Pullman, her brightly colored attire in stunning contrast with her fair, delicate features. With a slight wave of the hand, speaks with a noticeable New York City accent.

Ruth:

My name is Ruth, hello, everybody,
I am the widow of the late Jack Bowen.

Act I

Scene 1-2-6 This is, my dear, the good Mister Bowen

Ruth smiles as she hurries down the stairway, then faces Benjamin, awaiting an introduction.

Naomi:

This is, my dear, the good Mister Bowen.

Ruth:

with feigned confidence A pleasure, sir, this morning fine.

Benjamin:

trying to make an impression The pleasure ma'am most surely mine.

Naomi:

And now, my child, Aunt Edith here.

Ruth:

to Edith How do you do?

Edith:

I'm well.

Naomi:

Aunt Sarah Ann,

Ruth:

to Sarah Ann And you?

Sarah Ann:

That too,

Naomi:

And Aunt Adelle.

Ruth:

to Adelle And you?

Adelle:

The very same, thank you.

aside to Naomi Your brother has three sisters?

Naomi:

Much more than that, dear Ruth.

Benton:

with a smile Each one's his wife!

Ruth:

to Benton, blushing Yes, yes, of course, I should have known,
then beside herself to Naomi But oh, in all my life!

The prophet and counselor step forward.

Treble Choir:

We thank thee, Lord, for prophets true,
Who give us the gospel new.
May we thy revelations keep
and great rewards in heaven reap.

Benjamin:

And this, dear Ruth, our prophet wise,
A seer, a man of knowledge and of truth.
Courageous leader of our faith.

Ruth and Naomi ceremoniously bow. All are rapt in reverent awe. The prophet extends his arms and raises the two women up.

Prophet:

Tho' to your life came tragedy,
You're here now to determine
What is in store for you to see,
And what the future's bringin'.
A blessing for you, Ruth, Naomi,
They smile on you in heaven.
Live true that you may happy be,
This is my little sermon!

Prophet / Treble choir:

Amen, amen, amen.

Act I

Scene 1-2-7 This is a private gathering

The prophet takes Ruth's and Naomi's hand warmly in his. He and his counselor shake Benjamin's hand, wave goodbye to all, and step from the platform. As they exit, a man well-dressed in suit, tie, and hat, enters. He approaches Benton and shakes his hand. The children go back to their games, as the man walks toward Ruth. Benjamin's wives and older children recognize who it is and turn away.

Benjamin:

standing in the way This is a private gathering.

Kerns:

with a broad smile Yet in a public place.

Benjamin:

What do you want here, Kerns?

Kerns:

directing himself toward Ruth No more than introduce myself:
handing her his card Alexander Kerns, mu'um
I run a large emporium,
From which you could soon net yourself a handsome sum!
Bows and turns to take his leave.

Ruth:

unsure how to respond as Kerns walks away Thank you, Sir.

The Bowen children form a line and step up one by one to introduce themselves.

Benjamin Junior:

My name is Benjamin Junior.

Judith Ann:

Judith Ann

The boy next in line holds back. The others push him into place.

Eddy Bowen:

They call me little Eddy Bowen,

Judith Ann:

And I his older sister am.

Nancy Bowen:

I'm Nancy Bowen,

Jacob Bowen:

and Jacob Bowen here.

Suddenly three men in suits step up onto the platform.

The bodyguard catches sight of them and quickly stands in front of Benjamin. The three wives and older children form a protective shield around him.

Ruth looks up in surprise and grasps Naomi's arm.

Benjamin Junior:

realizing who the men are Bowens to the ready.

Now take your place!

Stand guard, then make your case!

Marshal:

showing a paper A warrant for the arrest of Benjamin Bowen.

Benjamin Junior:

coming forward And I, good sir, am he.

Marshal:

No, no, an older man

Benton:

Stepping out and looking around him

No older man is here but me!

Marshal:

Here, Smithy, guard the way,

You, Brown, the Pullman door!

Benjamin Junior:

raising his arms as a signal Away now, give them more!

Benjamin Junior stands in the way of Smith as Jacob blocks Brown. The bodyguard moves up and bumps the Marshal who pushes him away. Benjamin slips away with Benton at his side.

Once the Bowens realize he has escaped they join together in song:

Chorus:

We are the Bowen family,

The paragon of loyalty.

Forever faithful we shall stand,

True stalwarts of the promised land!

United for eternity,

We're bound together by decree.

We valiantly the good news bring,
With fervor in our hearts we sing;
In harmony we'll always be
The Bowen family!

Act I

Scene 1-3 A wonderful place to be

On the Bowen ranch

Ruth:

A wonderful place,
a wonderful, wonderful place,
a wonderful place, a wonderful,
wonderful place to be!

Edith:

Hurry now and fetch them pails.

Benjamin:

Watch 'em boys, careful now

Ruth:

A wonderful, a wonderful place to be.

Adelle:

Bring the wood and light the fire.

Benjamin:

Stop 'em there, yah! Don't let them go!

Ruth:

A wonderful place to be.

Sarah Ann:

Ya gotta grease the pans
before ya put the dough in.

Benjamin:

Watch out, they'll git away.

Ruth:

in admiration This sun

All:

proudly this sun,

Ruth:

this sky,

All:

this sky,

Ruth:

these hills,

All:

these hills,
Ruth: these tow'ring,
All: these tow'ring,
these tow'ring mountains that go way up high!
A wonderful place, a wonderful place,
a wonderful place, a wonderful,
a wonderful place to be.

Benjamin:
'cross the streams where waters flow,
Then across the verdant hills
Where the grasses grow,
Where a thousand dainty little buttercups
Greet us in the breeze a rockin' to and fro.

All:
We salute the western sky, majestic sun, horizons high.

Ruth:
Around a campfire with others
Evening falls, the fire aglow,
First we hear a song from Mister So-and-So,
Next the plaintive music of a violin,

All: Then we make a circle singing "O. Johnny, O!"

Benjamin:
takes a memento from his pocket
In my heart I know it's true,
I can feel it thru and thru,
There's a place for me where I must be,
I'm comin' home to you.
Tho I dwell in open spaces,
Tho a stranger where I roam,
I shall see familiar faces when I come home.
In my heart I know it's true,
I can feel it thru and thru,
There's a place for me where I must be,
I'm comin' home to you.

All (Women):
The mountain tops are calling.

All (Men):
Vaporous dewdrops on them falling.

All:
To these fair hills a stranger has now come.

Ruth:

To my new home.

Act I

Scene 1-4 What's this? It is a face that's real

The stage is divided between Benjamin's office, stage right, and the merchandise display area, stage left. The office is ample but sparsely furnished. Near the center is a large desk with two straight-back chairs in front of it. To the far right is a row of cabinets against the wall.

To the left of the desk is a coat and hat rack. On the wall behind the desk are portraits of Brigham Young and Benjamin's father. To the far left is a doorway that leads to the sales area.

It is morning and the store is open for business.

On the sales floor is a dress rack where several pioneer dresses are hung. Attendants arrange display dresses on wooden frames with aprons pinned into place and bonnets held up by sticks.

Some women enter the store. One takes a dress from the rack and holds it up to her. She begins to twirl around just as Benton in the office picks up a mannequin and begins to swing it around. Benjamin enters the store. When the women see him, they look stern and sober. Benjamin nods as he passes. The woman and Benton continue twirling. Benjamin without looking back ceremoniously enters the office. Benton blushes, holding the mannequin in his arms.

Benjamin:

sits down at the desk and asks with a grin...What's this?

Benton:

*in the mode of a salesman It is a face that's real,
And if not real then better still than...*

Judith, wearing a dress similar to the one on the mannequin, enters the room and approaching her father, whispers to him. Benjamin shakes his head.

Benjamin:

pleasant but stern Not now, my dear.

Benton:

*making his point than plain old wooden frames,
Today so very out of date.
But if we would display the late...*

Judith interrupts again, approaching her father, who again shakes his head, this time more forcefully.

Benjamin:

*Raising up a little with a slight scowl
Not now, my dear, I'm busy.*

Benton:

*...est fashions. We then would learn more modern ways,
A thousand dividends this newness pays.*

Out with the old and in the new,
Judith breaks in a third time. Benjamin, holds out the palm of his hand before she has time to approach

Benton:

Rewards for us will not be...

Benjamin:

I mean to say just what I said:

stamps foot and shakes head Not Now!

Judith turns to leave as Ruth, Naomi, and Benjamin's three wives enter the sales area. The three wives follow her holding up the train, and Naomi leads the way carrying the hat.

Benton hearing the commotion steps to the office door to see what's happening. He watches in admiration as Ruth stands in front of a mirror and the three wives carefully lay the train out behind her. Naomi then as carefully places the hat on her head and fits it into place. Benton and the women stand in admiration.

Ruth walks back and forth modeling the dress.

Judith/Naomi/Benton/Wives:

ooh aah ooh, ooh aah ooh,
ooh aah ooh, ooh aah,
ooh aah, ooh aah, ooh aah,
ooh aah, ooh aah, aah!

Benjamin gets up from his desk and walks out onto the sales floor. As the women flank Ruth on either side, she turns to Benjamin, looks up, and smiles.

Judith/Naomi/Benton/Wives:

aah, ooh, aah.

Judith/Naomi:

Excuse us, sir, now if you will,
Our reticence we did resist,
This once now that it's come to pass,
There is a stranger in our midst.
To live our lives we dedicate;
In this great work we must persist
To strive, to toil, to consecrate
Our hearts and hands and not desist.

Benjamin:

taken aback Well, well,

I must confess you've caught me quite off guard.

I would know more of what this does consist,

gesturing toward Ruth and of our guest.

Now if she will assist. For this I would insist.

directing himself to Ruth Your kind indulgence, ma'a'm.

Ruth:

I am just a girl from New York,

Landed there safely by stork.

City of festive sights,
City of glowing lights,
City of magic nights,
Who? Me? I'm just a girl from New York.
I come from far, far away,
Still in my youth I did stray.
Stranger I am to you,
Stranger I'm sure it's true.
Stranger no doubt it's due
to someone who would come
so far away from home
To see what she could see,
Be what she could be,
Free what she could free.
This my ditty, straight from the city!
I'm just a girl from New York,
Clickety clack thru Grand Fork.
I never knew the way
'cross the great USA
Or what to do or say.
Who? Me?
I may have told a few, I'm now a-telling you,
I'm just a girl from New York!

Benjamin:

Well well, well well, you don't say!

Ruth:

Yes, sir, I do. That's what I say!

Benjamin:

folding his arms and turning sternly to Benton
And what would our good brethren think
If they were here today?

Judith:

We ask you, sir, that you not frown
Upon a girl in such a gown,
Who comes to us from lands afar
To lift, to raise above the bar,
She is so pretty in that dress,
As all the world must now confess.

Benton emerges from the office doorway carrying the mannequin.

Benton:

Look what I've got.

Judith/Naomi/Wives:

Look what he's brought!

Benjamin:

pointing to the pioneer dress With this alone we cast our lot.

Benton:

pointing to Ruth's dress No here's the one,
no here's the one we should have sought.

Benjamin:

standing next to the mannequin
For ever more the tried and true;
This is the one we must pursue.

Benton:

stands next to Ruth
Rewards for us will not be few,
If out the old and in the new.
I say these gowns will sell,
I say they'll sell for sure.

Judith/Naomi/Wives:

Of these, dear Ruth, we must,
Of these we must have more.

Naomi/Benton:

They will sell for sure.

Benjamin:

Will they sell for sure?

Three Wives:

Now we must have more.

Judith/Naomi/Benton:

Let our eyes on beauty feast,
The ways we praise, the fashions of the East!

Benjamin:

with others Let our eyes on beauty feast?
The ways we praise, the fashions of the East?

Three Wives:

Let our eyes on beauty feast:
The ways we praise, the fashions of the East!

Ruth:

I'm just a girl from New York.

All:

She's just a girl from New York,

Ruth:

Landed safely there by stork,

All:

Landed safely there by stork,

Ruth/All:

City of festive sights,
City of glowing lights,
City of magic nights,

Ruth:
I'm just a girl from New,
All:
She's just a girl from New,
Ruth:
I'm just a girl from New York!
Three Wives:
York.
All:
She's just a girl from New York!

Act I

Scene 1-5 Messrs. Perkins, Wright and Ray

Benjamin's desk is at far stage right facing stage left where a second, smaller desk is near the back wall facing stage front. At the right of the second desk is a small table that accommodates a typewriter, some ledger books, and papers. The door that leads into the sales area is closed. Benjamin is seated at the desk to the left. His coat and hat hang on a rack in the corner. He wears a collared shirt, tie, and vest. Ruth is seated at the smaller desk. She is dressed in fashionable eastern "workwear." Her hat and jacket hang on hooks mounted on the wall behind her. In the center of the wall are portraits of Brigham Young and Benjamin's father. To the right of Ruth's desk is a mannequin clothed in a dress similar to the one Ruth is wearing. Benjamin gets up from his chair, walks around the desk, steps to the middle of the room, and begins pacing back and forth his hands behind his back.

Benjamin:
Messieurs. Perkins, Wright, and Ray
The goods you shipped the other day
Have been received here Monday last,
But not until the deadline past.
The time committed, But this omitted,
We now enclose the payment due
That it might get to you
Without deferment, stay,
Postponement, or delay.
Yours truly...

Ruth looks up from her writing.

Ruth:
wanting to please Within the hour you'll have it, sir,
And were not for these *pointing to the stack of papers*

I'd mail-time make.

Or if you prefer

Benjamin raises his hand as if to speak, but Ruth, anticipating an objection, continues

Ruth:

I'll try to do them both

For expedition's sake.

Benjamin starts to pick up the stack of papers and then stops and smiles

Benjamin:

No, I can do them up myself,

Or better still, let's put them on that shelf!

Ruth laughing, leans forward and puts her hand on the stack to deter him

Ruth:

No, No, the task is mine,

And I will do it up in time!

Benjamin:

Well, well, alright,

Then I must go and mount that bolt of cloth

That Judith ordered in.

Ruth:

smiling confidently You'll see it's done already;

We two came in this morning early.

Benjamin:

impressed Ah so, then if it's done,

Instead, I'll dress the mannequin. *steps toward it*

Ruth:

getting up from her chair The only thing missing is the hat.

Benjamin:

And we for sure can see to that.

takes her hat from the hook

and puts it on the model

Ruth:

You think that one like this would do?

Benjamin:

I think it's good enough,

Ruth positioning the hat just right and then stepping back to take a look

Ruth:

It's good enough,

Benjamin:

and yet...

Ruth:

and yet...

Benjamin:

It looks removes the hat from the model

Ruth:

it looks

Benjamin:

much prettier

Ruth:

much prettier

Benjamin:

on

Ruth:

on

Benjamin:

you! *putting it on Ruth*

Ruth:

who?

*Suddenly the door opens and there stand the three wives,
Edith and Sarah Ann each holding the hand of a child and Adelle with babe in arms.*

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:

shocked and turning to leave Oh, we beg your pardon!

Benjamin:

quickly moving forward to stop them

No, No, we're through!

Ruth turns away in embarrassment.

Benjamin takes the hands of the children and holds the baby as he passes through the doorway.

Adelle, surveying the new arrangement of her husband's office, puts a hand to her mouth in surprise

Adelle:

stunned but going to Ruth and touching her arm

Oh, my, I didn't know,

but then I s'ppose it's just as well.

I've always said to Mister Bowen,

Because his money's flowin'

First this-a-way then that.

I mean he's gotta know where it's all at,

Or 'fore he sniffs or smells a rat,

It's gone; it's slidin' down a hole,

And who's a watchin'? not a soul!

Not he, not as he should.

A private secretary would do him good!

Sarah Ann:

stunned but going to Ruth and touching her arm

Oh, my, I didn't know,

Adelle:

Oh my,

Sarah Ann/Adelle:

but then I s'ppose it's just as well.

Sarah Ann:

I've always said to Mister Bowen,
As long as he's still owin'
A mortgage at the bank.
I mean he's gotta watch his p's and q's
'cause otherwise

Sarah Ann/Adelle:
he's gonna lose
A lot of money down a hole,

Adelle:
And who's a watchin'?

Sarah Ann:
not a soul!

Sarah Ann /Adelle:
Not he, not as he should.
A private secretary would do him good!

Edith:
stunned but going to Ruth and touching her arm.
Oh, my, I didn't know,

Sarah Ann/Adelle:
Oh my,

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:
but then I s'ppose it's just as well.

Edith:
to Ruth I've always said to Mister Bowen

Edith/Sarah Ann:
It's time to stop a throwin'

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:
His money down the drain.

Edith:
I mean it's always slippin' thru a crack

Edith/Sarah Ann:
'cause no one's here

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:
that's keepin' track.
And soon enough it's down a hole,

Sarah Ann/Adelle:
And who's a watchin'?

Edith:
Not a soul!

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:
Not he, not as he should.
A private secretary would do him good!

*Benjamin returns, the baby still in his arms and the two children at his side.
He hands the baby to Adelle and seats the two children on the desk*

Benjamin:

Alright, so now you know,
But then I s'ppose it's just as well,
to Ruth I'm always told, "Now Mister Bowen,
To keep your business goin'
And all as it should be,
There's gotta be someone who's over things,
And who sophistication brings.
Lest fortune slides down in a hole,
And who's a watchin'? not a soul!"
So let it now be undersood
A private secretary would do me good!

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:
to Benjamin Mister Bowen
now Mister Bowen,
to keep it goin' and all
as it should be
there's gotta be someone,
It's not, been as it should,
No, No! so let it be understood,
A private secretary will do you good!

Act I

Scene 1-6 My brother is a generous man

At the table in Naomi's kitchen

Naomi:
My brother is a generous man,
A godsend of good-will.
And were it not for you, dear Ruth,
Oh, what would I have done?

Ruth:
You would have got along all right
Yet, I am so glad that I could
come and ever be here at your side.

Naomi:
Just look at you, the place you've reached
So soon before the autumn frost
or when winter has set in.
Who would have dreamed that we'd
by now be fixed, so well established.

Ruth:

I hope at no one's hindrance or expense,
Naomi:
Oh no, not that,
and if it were I'd come to your defense.
Ruth:
But what about dear Edith,
Dear Sarah and dear Adelle?
Is all as well as they would make it seem?
Naomi:
They do their best to get along.
That is their greatest need,
Ruth:
Indeed.
Naomi:
And by the way a caller came today,
Ruth:
And who was that?
Naomi:
A generous man as I have said.
Ruth:
No, not Mister Bowen
Naomi:
A friendly call and nothing more,
And yet he said a thing that caught my ear,
That everything's quite possible
If we but learn to live the principle.
Ruth:
And what could he have meant by that?
Naomi:
You'll soon enough find out.
It's something we must talk about.
They rise and begin clearing the table.

Act I

Scene 1-7 Hello, they said you would be in today

Ruth is alone in Benjamin's office. The door that leads into the sales floor is open. She sits at her desk working. She looks up at the clock, then folds a letter, puts it in an envelope, and gets up from the desk. With letter in hand, she is about to exit the room when in the doorway appears Alexander Kerns immaculately dressed in suit, tie, vest, and hat in hand.

Kerns:

in the doorway

Hello, they said you would be in today.
I took a chance you would be here alone.
A moment's time, I cannot stay.

Ruth:

Oh, my! Well yes, good sir, come in.

Kerns:

entering the room and looking around

From New York City I am too.
There I was born the same as you.
At my establishment
We bring the city to the town,
The very best in eastern wear and gown.
I am here to offer you a job,
And let you know I pay the best,
Like double, triple o'er the rest.
If to a better life you're prone
Then call me on the telephone.

Kerns takes a card from his pocket, writes a number on it, hands it to Ruth, tips his hat, and takes his leave.

Then Judith walks in.

Judith:

Well, well, who was that?

Ruth:

looking at the card A Mister Kern's his name.

Judith:

Oh yes, the wealthy bachelor
Who you met at the train.

Ruth:

I didn't know he wasn't married,
But yes, the very same.
He offered me a job with higher pay.

Judith:

I'm not surprised.
That is his way
To lead you to temptation.

Ruth:

Well then away
Without consideration.
And yet I wonder if he'd do me harm.

Judith:

Deception comes with luring charm.
He is a man who leads astray

Unwary souls who fail to watch and pray!

Ruth:

Yes, yes, I know, I've heard them say,
Although there's something out there calling me:
The place where I was born,
The same, the same, the very same as he!

contemplative, in part to Judith and in part as soliloquy

Ruth:

I think you wouldn't be too quick to judge
Or be too prone to hold a grudge
'gainst those who might believe
a different way than we.
I cannot leave or break my promise.
This is the place for me,
And yet it's true that now and then
I wonder how it might have been
If I had stayed where I was born.
I am a stranger here,
At times alone, forlorn.

Homesick, feeling just a little like I'm homesick,
Sentiments as wistful as nostalgic,
Longing for the place that I call home.
I see the passersby,
I hear the peddlers cry,
People here and people there,
So many people going everywhere,
The boulevards, the avenues, the streets, the blare.
They make me Homesick,
Feeling just a little like I'm homesick,
Sentiments as wistful as nostalgic,
Longing for the place that I call home.

In Manhattan, on Broadway,
That is where I used to play.
And there I'd go a wandering,
Just here and there a sauntering.
Men a-working, danger lurking,
Cops a-coming, bandits running,
Down an alley, quick they sally,
'Stop right there!'
This was my haunt, my place, my lair!
I see the passersby,
I hear the peddlers cry,

People here and people there,
So many people going everywhere,
The boulevards, the avenues, the streets, the blare.
Feeling just a little like I'm homesick,
Sentiments as wistful as nostalgic,
Longing for the place that I call home.

Act I

Scene 1-8 Now here we are. Please gather 'round

*The three wives enter the parlor of the Benjamin and Edith Bowen home.
They stand in a row as Benjamin addresses them.*

Benjamin:

Now here we are, please gather 'round;
I have a word I would expound.
Before you now I come duty bound.

Edith:

aside A fish that's caught,
I frown and fret—
I twist and turn
inside the net
but slowly get it in my head,
'cause now I'm on
to what he said.
He'll soon be home,
But like as not he'd rather roam.
What more then can I say?
It's just the game that we polygamists play!

Benjamin:

to Sarah Ann and Adelle as Edith sings
A girl's protection must be sought,
And on nearest kinsmen falls the lot,
And so this duty mine
For all eternity and time,
And so this duty mine
I must perform it as a sign.
to Edith Please give me your attention.

Sarah Ann:

aside I'll never be the only one,
Too many peaches in the sun.
I never ever could have kept
His eyes from wand'ring tho he slept
a thousand years with me or more,

It wouldn't matter that I'm sure.
What else then can I say?
It's just the game that we polygamists play!

Benjamin:

to Edith and Adelle We understand
she's a strange in our land,
And we must heed divine command,
Lest guilt, remorse and blame
consume us all with shame.

Just one thing more and now your rapt attention:

to Edith and Sarah Ann
Our faith to try the Lord divides the pie,
That we may see eye to eye.
And so, the covenant keep
And greatest prize in heaven reap.

Adelle:

aside It fell my lot in life to be
Not number one or two but three.
What should have been a sacred crown
For me instead a hand-me-down,
that I have learned to settle for
Not love's sweet fruit but just the core.

Benjamin:

And greatest prize in heaven reap.

Adelle:

What more then can I say?
It's just the game that we polygamists play!

A cloth is removed exposing a crystal ball

Edith:

staring at the ball intently
One little lygamist, and now I see two

Sarah Ann:

staring at the ball intently
Two little lygamists, and now I see three.

Adelle:

staring at the ball intently
Three little lygamists, and now I see four

Benjamin:

Yes, my little lygamists,
we soon shall see more!

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:

No, no, not yet,

Edith:

until I get my new davenport.

Sarah Ann:

And for me a new dress to sport.

Adelle:

And now for me as you will see,
something easy a delicacy.

One for you and one for me,
And whosoever it might be!

Benjamin:

Not much to give, and I gladly shall
if I can but have just one more gal!

The wives cover Benjamin's mouth. All sing their lines together

Edith:

A fish that's caught, I frown and fret—
I twist and turn inside the net
but slowly get it in my head,

Sarah Ann:

I'll never be the only one,
Too many peaches in the sun.
I never ever could have kept

Adelle:

It fell my lot in life to be
Not number one or two but three!
What should have been a sacred crown

Benjamin:

A girl's protection must be sought;
And on nearest kinsman falls the lot,

Edith:

Cause now I'm on to what he said.
He promises he'll soon be home,
but like as not he'd rather roam

Sarah Ann:

His eyes from wand'ring tho he slept
a thousand years with me or more,
It wouldn't matter, that I'm sure.

Adelle:

For me instead a hand-me-down,
that I've learned to settle for
Not love's sweet fruit but just the core.

Benjamin:

And so this duty mine
I must perform it as a sign.

Three Wives:

What more then can we say?

Benjamin:
Now what more can we say?
Adelle:
It's just the game that we polygamists
Sarah Ann/Adelle:
It's just the game that we polygamists
Benjamin/Three Wives:
It's just the game that we polygamists play!

Act I Scene 1-9 And David took a thousand wives

Naomi and Ruth are reading together
Naomi:
reading aloud
And David took a thousand wives,
Ruth:
reading aloud
King David was the one.
Naomi:
A warring man he took a thousand lives
Ruth:
And so the battle won.
Naomi:
Then fair Bathsheba bore a son,
who soon was crowned King Solomon,
Ruth:
When David's time was done.
Naomi:
A man who wisdom did pursue,
And many thousand maidens too,
Ruth:
A thing beyond comparison.
And now the principle restored,
Naomi:
The gospel true of holy Lord.
Ruth:
May I thru righteousness become
Each takes the other's hand.
Naomi/Ruth:
A daughter pure in Zion.
Ruth:

King David!

Naomi:

King Solomon!

Naomi/Ruth:

men of great strength, courage, and wisdom.

Naomi:

And now goodnight.

Ruth:

to you as well, goodnight.

Naomi takes up her candle and exits the room.

Ruth:

How can I now impart
My love, my tender heart
To him who only wants to be
A baron lord perpetually?
No, I can only give to him
and only live with him who cares eternally.
I want a man who will impart
His love, his tender heart to me.

Act I

Scene 1-10 When she comes in

The stage is divided between the parlor of the Benjamin and Edith home, stage left, and Benjamin's study, stage right.

As the curtain opens, Benjamin enters, followed by Edith, Sarah Ann, and Adelle. Benjamin steps in front of a mirror to smooth his hair.

The wives straighten his tie, adjust his coat, refold his handkerchief, etc. Benjamin enters the study.

Adelle:

As soon as she comes in
role playing her part
I'll step with her aside.
Then I will say my part and bring her back.

Sarah Ann:

joining in
Then I will take a turn with my appointed lines,
Just as I was instructed.

Edith:

obediently And I will so the same

Without a word deducted.

Naomi enters in a hurry

Naomi:

She'll be here soon,
Oh my, I'm all a jitter.
I warn it's not a certain thing,
I know, I am the go-between!

Judith rushes in

Judith:

She's coming,
and oh, won't she be surprised!

Naomi:

A better word would be astounded.

Judith:

Astounded.

Three Wives:

Astounded! Yes, yes, on this we are agreed.

Judith/Naomi/Sarah Ann:

Yes, yes, on this we are agreed.

Three Wives/Judith/Naomi:

More than surprised
she's going to be astounded!

Benjamin inside the study

Benjamin:

Nervous? Now why would I be nervous?
It's true no bachelor am I,
Yet am her next of kin,
And surely that's a start
to win her heart and gain her favor.
I can give her everything:
A home, security, Love, dependability.
For sure, I am a little older,
But not so very much.
What's twenty some odd years or so,
when one's in love?
It's not a thing compared to stars above.
A pittance of eternity,
Where she and I will live to see
A hundred thousand million years for sure.
We'll be together there forever more.
Forever she'll be mine,
Thru all eternity and wonderous time!

takes his watch from his pocket, opens the door to the study, sees Ruth has not yet come, closes the door, and returns to his desk.

Love in my heart is burning,
The words inside my mind are turning.
First I must say why 'tis that this must be,
Before my faithful women three.
Most mem'orable occurrence,
There I on bended knee
Forthrightly then I'll state my case
in language plain and clear.
And if once said she then should shed a tear,
Then I will take it as a sign,
And tenderly take her hand in mine,
I'll give her reassurance.

straightens his coat and steps toward the study door

Suddenly he hears a loud knocking at the front door of the house.

Marshal & Deputies:

Open up in the name of the law!

knocking continues

Benjamin Junior enters in a panic

Benjamin Junior:

Father! Father! Where is father?

Benjamin:

I'm right here.

Benjamin Junior:

with great excitement Away, away!

You must now get away!

Jacob rushing in

Jacob:

They are this minute at the door
with papers to arrest you.

Benjamin:

in disbelief steps forward But first I must...

Benjamin Junior:

No, no, they'll take you in.

Benton:

You must quickly get inside,

Benton/Jacob/Benjamin Junior:

Or it will be your hide!

Marshal & Deputies:

calling out and knocking at the same time

Open up the door!

Edith starts for the door, but before she can get to it, it flies open.

The marshal and deputies enter wearing badges with papers in hand.

Marshal:

We've come for Bowen.

Deputies:

We know he's here.

Marshal:

Now where's he at?

The lawmen part in different directions to make their search.

They come in and out of the parlor.

The marshal enters the study.

The women grasp each other fearing the worst, but he emerges empty handed.

The marshal gives up but then approaches Benjamin Junior with vehemence

Marshal:

He may have 'scaped us once again,

But we will git him sure!

1st & 2nd Deputy:

As sure as sure as sure!

Marshals leave.

Benjamin Junior retrieves his father from the secret chamber.

Chorus:

We are the Bowen family,

Paragon of loyalty.

Always faithful we shall stand,

United we, a loyal band!

We seek reprieve and amnesty,

True justice comes by God's decree,

Union, love, and harmony,

We forever more will be

The Bowen family!

Act II

2-1 Not yet, but they will come

The parts of this act meld together in a continuous, unbroken series of events.

Each part takes place (usually at either stage right or left) so that the action can immediately shift from one part to the next without a break.

The time is early fall 1886. At stage right Benjamin is standing on the side of a hill...

At stage left is a dimly lit room where the Bowen family is gathered.

The family is addressed by the Prophet's counselor.

Benjamin:

Looking into the distance for a sign of his pursuers

No feds as yet, but they will come.

I'm always on the run.

Counselor:

Consoling

I've come to share the latest news.

A message arrived this morning early.

Your Benjamin we know is well

And sends his greeting.

Amiss he had to leave without forewarning,

He did it sure but to 'scape a snare,

Benjamin runs.

The marshals pursue him.

Counselor:

His whereabouts unknown now sends a prayer to you

And blessing, for sustenance and aid.

May the Father forever bless you all.

At stage left is a saloon with countertop, bar stools, and bartender.

Deputy 1:

Our job's to go a nabbin'

All them who are co-habbin';

We drain the cup then lock 'em up

And let them rot in jail.

Marshall:

How sly the ways of co-habs,

a hidin' under floor slabs.

With one drink more we slam the door

and let them rot in jail.

Deputy 2:

To him who has ten women

Ten years is what we give 'im.

From underground he'll soon be found,

And then he'll rot in jail.

Deputy 1 & 2/Marshal:

We raise the cup to drink
In praise of true monogamy,
But them who choose polygamy
We let them rot in jail!

Marshal:

Ole Jed Jensen, we found him in a haystack;

Deputy 1:

And Elder Thomas Richards a soakin' in a barrel!

Deputy 2:

Horatio P. Parker, while dressed in women's cloths,
Rose up and said, "My name is Carol!"

Deputy 1 & 2/Marshal:

Ha ha

Ha ha ha ha ha ha, ha ha ha ha,

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha !

Our job's to go a nabbin'

All them who are co-habbin';

We drain the cup then lock 'em up

And let 'em rot in jail.

We raise the cup to drink

In praise of true monogamy,

But them who choose polygamy

We let them rot in jail!

Benjamin is stowed away in an attic furnished by a chair and small table. The room is dimly lit by the light from a flickering candle.

Act II

2-3 I send this from the underground

At stage right Benjamin is seated at a table. He begins to write a letter, then gets up and shakes his fists in a display of defiance. He hesitates a moment then returns to the table.

Benjamin:

Writes hesitantly

I send this from the underground

And hope it finds you well.

In times of, sacrifice we never vacillate

But march unwavering ahead.

And now, dear Ruth, I must speak truth and candidly,

I miss you so!

Bangs fist on table then arises

I couldn't say just what it was that day

When you came in my world.
When you stepped off the train into my soul,
I really couldn't say just what it was
That held me fast and wouldn't let me go.
Could it be planet orbs or stellar spheres,
Some beauty rare that in me now appears?
Just what it was I really couldn't say;
It came with you into my heart that day.

At stage left Ruth opens an envelope, removes a letter and reads.

Ruth:

I send this from the underground
And hope it finds you well.
May we in times of sacrifice
Stand firmly in the right
And never vacillate but marching unwavering ahead.
We turn to neither right nor left
but stay the course unto the end.
And now, dear Ruth, though days are few
Since I have been away,
I must speak truth and candidly:
I miss you so and all my family.

Benjamin:

I couldn't say

Ruth:

I send this

Benjamin:

just what it was that day

Ruth:

From the underground

Benjamin:

When you came into my world.

Ruth:

and hope it finds you well.

Benjamin:

When you stepped off the train into my soul.
I really couldn't say just what it was

Ruth:

May we in times of sacrifice.

Benjamin:

That held me fast and wouldn't let me go.

Ruth:

marching unwavering ahead.

Benjamin:

Could it be planet orbs

Ruth:
 We stay steadfast,
Benjamin:
 or stellar spheres,
Ruth:
 We stay steadfast,
Benjamin:
 Some beauty rare that in me now appears?
Ruth:
 We stay steadfast, unto, unto the end.
Benjamin:
 Just what it was I really couldn't say;
Ruth:
 And now, dear Ruth, dear Ruth,
Benjamin:
 It came with you into my heart,
Ruth:
 I must speak truth!
Benjamin:
 with you
Ruth:
 I miss you so,
Benjamin:
 into my heart, with you
Ruth:
 I miss you, miss you,
 I must speak truth and candidly
Benjamin:
 Into my heart
Ruth:
 I miss you so.
Benjamin:
 that day.

Act II

2-4 And now, "Miss Young"

In a courtroom the judge is seated at the bench, and after "Miss Young" is sworn in, the prosecutor approaches the witness stand. As Miss Young takes her seat she looks over at the defendant, takes a handkerchief from her purse and dries her eyes.

Prosecutor:
 The prosecutor steps toward the witness

And now, Miss Young, please tell the court the number of your children.

Miss Young:

The count, good sir, *looks for a cue. The defendant nods.*
is nine.

Prosecutor:

Who live with you on 'leventh street?

Miss Young:

Yes, sir, they do.

Prosecutor:

And who might the father be?

Miss Young:

I really couldn't say.

Prosecutor:

And why is that?

AND WHY IS THAT?

Miss Young:

I am a maiden, still!

Prosecutor:

A maiden nine times o'er?
And please tell the court
Just whence these come
In case there might be more!

Miss Young:

From Providence, good sir.

Prosecutor:

And so you never wed;
You never saw the need
Because from heaven comes the seed.
You've sworn to tell the truth,
the truth and nothing but,
Yet if you're not a maiden still
Perhaps you are,
Yet if you're not, if not a maiden still
Perhaps, perhaps you are a slut!
The time for perjury is long
A long, long time in jail.
Now tell the truth, "Miss Young":
Pointing to the defendant
Is Brown the man you never wed,
Is he the secret angel
who shares with you your bed!

Miss Young breaks down in tears. The defendant stands before the judge.

Judge:

I fine you, Mister Brown, five hundred dollars

And sentence you to serve two years a prisoner of Utah territory,
While there to learn the truth of this most quaint advice
Before the law ignore you think about it twice!

Act II

2-5 This is the scheme they did disclose

It is nighttime, and men are working. One holds a lantern while two others pound stakes. Others spread out a canvas and tie ropes to the corners. Still others put up a cooking rack and prepare to start a fire. Benjamin stands off to the side.

Benjamin:

This is the scheme they did disclose,
And once again they now propose
To love their friends and hate their foes
And plant the seed where'er it grows,
Around and round and round it goes.

Worker 1, 2, 3 & 4:

Oppressed tormented the burden borne,
A test of courage and of scorn;
A pledge of loyalty we've sworn
In these forsaken times forlorn,
We sweat and strain, from night till morn.

Placing a lantern on the ground, Benjamin clears a place to sit down, and then taking up pencil and paper begins to write.

Benjamin:

Dear Ruth, I was so happ'ly surprised
When came to me a letter
That left your hand but days before
and made me feel much better.
You'll smile that I by rote can say
It's lines and keep it tucked away in my vest pocket.
I read it o'er and o'er again,
Whene'er I feel discouraged.
And that these days is now more often,
Yet know I'll not give up
That on that day, the promised day,
I'll come to you on bended knee
and then stand content with wives and family!

Holding a letter in her hand

Ruth:

These wistful words, so innocent,

Beneath them lies a meaning, a sentiment, a feeling!
Between them veiled a plea,
A song, a plaintive kind of wooing,
A distant prize, a hope 'gainst hope,
Chimerical vision pursuing.
Within these words a dove-like song
A lover's prayer an unpretentious cooing!

Act II

2-6 Years of drought, the fields are dry

Jacob:

Years of drought the fields are dry.
The cold will come, the snow will fly,
We'll have to sell the cattle.

Benjamin Junior:

And look like dupes, like greenhorn fools?
No, no, let's buy more feed instead
And borrow if we must.

Jacob:

We'll have to ask our father first;
We can't proceed without approval.

Benjamin Junior:

hammering Why not? We'll sell the steers next fall,
Repay and then be free and clear.

Jacob:

And which way will we turn for help
if things should go awry?

Benjamin:

To Ruth and to the mercantile

Jacob:

We'll pay it by and by?

Benjamin Junior/Jacob:

To Ruth and to the mercantile,
We'll pay it by and by!

Act II

2-7 We sing the devil's ditty

Adelle:

We sing the devil's ditty,
We sing the devil's song

From morning until evening time,
We sing it all day long.

Sarah Ann:

Tee-hee tah-hah toe-hoe tuh-hum,

Adelle:

We hear the cadence of his drum,

Edith/Sarah Ann:

Hee-hee, hah-hah, hoe-hoe, huh-hum,

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:

Then out from hell we see him come!

Sarah Ann:

The Devil sings a ditty,

The Devil sings a song;

With suffering, pain, and poverty

We sing it all day long.

Edith:

Tee-hee tah-hah toe-hoe tuh-hum,

Adelle:

Comes now the devil with his scum;

Edith/Sarah Ann:

Hee-hee hah-hah hoe-hoe huh-hum,

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:

Satanic omnipotenum!

Edith:

This is the Devil's ditty;

This is the Devil's song

A canticle the Devil sings,

We sing it all day long.

Hear our

Sarah Ann:

Hear our

Adelle:

Hear our

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:

lament,

Edith:

the Lord

Sarah Ann:

the Lord

Adelle:

the Lord

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:

has sent

A scourge to test our leather.

Edith:
 There's no
Sarah Ann:
 There's no
Adelle:
 There's no
Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:
 Denying this harsh trying,
 We gather all three together
Edith:
 Must long endure
Sarah Ann:
 Must long endure
Adelle:
 Must long endure
Edith:
 lest we incur
Sarah Ann:
 lest we incur
Adelle:
 lest we incur
Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:
 The wrath of heaven's rancor.
Edith:
 To God on high
Sarah Ann:
 To God on high
Adelle:
 To God on high
Edith:
 We raise our cry
Sarah Ann:
 We raise our cry
Adelle:
 We raise our cry
Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:
 To God on high
 We raise our cry,
 give us we pray thy succor!
 From these hard times we ask thy stay;
 We bend the knee; before thee, Lord, we pray.
Adelle:
 Again the Devil's ditty,
 Again the Devil's song,

It gurgles up from depths of Hell,
We sing it all day long.

Sarah Ann:

Tee-hee tah-hah toe-hoe tuh-hum,

Adelle:

This is the tune the devils hum.

Edith/Sarah Ann:

Hee-hee, hah-hah, hoe-hoe, huh-hum,

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:

The instrument their fingers strum.

Sarah Ann/Adelle:

The Devil sings his ditty,
The Devil sings his song;
The master of our misery,
He sings it all day long.

Edith/Sarah Ann:

Tee-hee tah-hah toe-hoe tuh-hum,

Sarah Ann/Adelle:

The Devil's curse on us has come,

Edith/Sarah Ann:

Hee-hee, hah-hah, hoe-hoe, huh-hum,

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:

A cloud descends o're Mormondom.
How witty is his ditty?
How witty is his song?
The Devil's wit of wickedness?
As witty as the day is long!
From these hard times we ask thy stay;
We bend the knee, before Thee pray.
These are the times that we must bear,
O Lord, our God, show us the way.

Edith:

Hear our

Sarah Ann:

Hear our

Adelle:

Hear our

Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:

Lament,

Edith:

The Lord

Sarah Ann:

The Lord

Adelle:

The Lord
Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:
 Has sent
 A scourge to test our leather.
Edith:
 There's no
Sarah Ann:
 There's no
Adelle:
 There's no
Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:
 Denying this harsh trying,
 We gather all three together
Edith:
 Must long endure
Sarah Ann:
 Must long endure
Adelle:
 Must long endure
Edith:
 lest we incur
Sarah Ann:
 lest we incur
Adelle:
 lest we incur
Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:
 The wrath of heaven's rancor.
Edith:
 To God on high
Sarah Ann:
 To God on high
Adelle:
 To God on high
Edith:
 We raise our cry
Sarah Ann:
 We raise our cry
Adelle:
 We raise our cry
Edith/Sarah Ann/Adelle:
 To God on high
 We raise our cry,
 Give us we pray,
 give us we pray,

give us we pray thy succor!

Act II

2-8 A message from my father...

Judith:

A message from my father...
If I would speak to you,
That at some distant place
A secret rendezvous.
Though if you venture out,
They'll stalk you like a hound,
No matter how you mask or hide
Inside the underground.
Yet, deeper, deeper still,
A plan has been devised,
Veiled, incognito you must go,
concealed, covert, disguised.

Ruth turns to leave as Judith, taking her by the arm, holds her back.

No, wait! I know this is so very sudden,
And I am so afraid of what will happen.
Oh, how I wish there were a better way.
guiding Ruth into a nook where they won't be overheard
O Ruth, O Ruth, my dearest, dearest Ruth,
I would from you the truest, truest truth.
Oh, what's it like to take, to have, to hold
A man apart, one's own, outside the fold?
I have throughout my life been taught
To seek the way that should be sought,
And be a wife with sister wives,
Entwining souls, entwining lives.
O Ruth, O Ruth, my dearest, dearest Ruth,
I would from you the truest, truest truth.
Oh, what's it like to take, to have, to hold
A man apart, one's own, outside the fold?

Act II

2-9 Twixt a rock

Marshal:

Twixt a rock

Deputy 1 & 2:

Twixt a rock

Marshal:

And a hard place,

Deputy 1 & 2:

A hard place

Marshal:

Time and a stranger called the human race

Deputy 1 & 2:

human race

Marshal:

They can rant

Deputy 1 & 2:

They can rant

Marshal:

and they can rage,

Deputy 1 & 2:

and they can rage,

Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:

But can they win against the modern age?

Somewhere in the underground the president's counselor speaks to Benjamin.

Counselor:

I've come with counsel God has given

For younger men like you,

It may be best to serve your time

Advice that's sent from heaven,

We leave it up to you alone to choose

to stay or end the fight,

To hold steadfast or let it go,

In either case uphold the right.

Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:

Twixt a rock and a hard place,

Time and a stranger called the human race.

They can rant and they can rage,

But can they win against the modern age?

At the Ranch Edith speaks to Ruth

Edith:

How good of you to come in time of need.

I will be brief and wish the news was good.

There's been some things that's bad here at the ranch.

I'll not explain except to say we've failed

To pay the mortgage.

The bank won't wait for us.

There's no place else to turn but to the store.

I hope that you can spare the funds

without some dreadful consequence.
You understand that we will pay it back,
But that can't be until next fall.
The times is hard and cash I know is dear.
How much I would that things was as they used to be
'fore Benjamin was gone,
But times is changed and worst is yet to come.

Edith/Benjamin:

We can rant and we can rage,
But can we win against the modern age?

Act II

2-10 A pleasant afternoon

It is closing time at the store. Ruth is alone on the sales floor. The room is rather bare— short on inventory. A single dress is on display.

Alexander Kerns enters without Ruth noticing him.

Kerns looks around as Ruth picks up a hammer to repair the stand that holds a mannequin. As Ruth attempts to straighten it, Kerns approaches her from behind. Ruth turns in surprise, but Kerns walks past her to the mannequin,

Kerns:

A pleasant afternoon!
I've come because I like that dress.
Although a better model would impress
me more, I think.
Is there a live one near?

Ruth:

Oh yes! Miss Judith's in the back.

Kerns:

Oh, no, the person who is standing here
Will do just fine.
My eye just might be caught.
If Missus Bowen would be kind enough,
I'd rather think I'd buy it.
On the spot!
Kerns walks about studying the dress

Ruth:

Hesitant but eager to make a sale
Well I... I s'ppose I could oblige you,
If that will do the trick.
She steps ahead and then turns back to Kerns.
Excuse me, sir, I'll be a moment;

She enters the fitting room.

I'm back in just a tick tock tick!

Kerns:

through the curtain

Have you been back to see the city?

I came from there just days ago.

Excitement stirring more than ever.

How nice it'd be if you could go.

Two days and some and you would be there.

On Broadway Street to see the show!

Ruth:

occasionally peeking through the curtains

The thought is tempting,

But I'm right busy in the store,

While Mister Bowen is away.

Kerns:

I've heard it said he's on the run

And that his bigamy's been made a crime

And that he's been away some time.

Ruth steps out into the sales room modeling the dress.

Very impressed. This dress would be stupendous.

Oh my, I wish you'd come.

Ruth:

tempted It sounds like fun, inviting,

So long since I've been home.

Kerns:

with growing enthusiasm This dress I know will sell for sure,

First one and then a dozen more.

Your purse will bulge with rolls of dough

To buy more gowns, the more to show!

Ruth:

tempted still more I'd have to think it over.

But then perhaps...

Kerns:

glowing Oh, now you're talking, ma'am.

In days that number less than ten

You'll find just where your fortune's been.

Your choice is 'tween this Mormon clan,

The breakers of the law,

Or choose instead a better plan

that's not so crude and raw.

Ruth:

Trying to catch his meaning

You mean, good sir, to say

There is a better way?

Kerns:

Oh yes, oh yes, there is indeed.
Ne'er more good times will they impede.
The legal way is much more fun;
You neither fret nor run.

Ruth:

with concern A way that's more conducive,
Altho perhaps illusive?

Kerns:

with a growing smile You catch on fast, my pretty lamb.
Some judge while others damn.
If prudishness is not your wont
Then diamonds you shall vaunt!

Ruth:

now playing along And if I can go and I can come
Before it all gets tiresome?

Kerns:

agreeing Yes, ma'am, indeed, this way's the other
With not a tie and not a tether.
As always unattached and free.
As you could ever want to be!

Ruth:

with feigned enthusiasm Oh well, well, well, if it's for sure,
How could I think to ask for more?

Kerns:

closing the sale On stack of bibles shine or rain,
I swear, I swear you'll get your gain.
Yes, yes, this is the better way.
And now, my New York sweetie, what do you say?

Ruth:

I say I'll not, I say I'll not,
I say I'll not another word!
No no, no no,
such lewd licentious talk.

Stunned, Kerns steps back as Ruth approaches him.

Get out, get out, get out I say;
Get out, get out and don't come back, 'cause
Ruth picks up an umbrella waving it in Kern's face
If you do then you'll find out
What *this* is all about!

Kerns leaves the room as Ruth chases him. As he passes the entrance, he opens the door and runs out as Ruth slams it behind him.

Act II

2-11 O hear, O hear, ye gods above

January 1888, it is nighttime. The sky is fully overcast, and it is snowing. During Benjamin's opening antiphonal the stage remains dark, then the scene little by little becomes more visible.

Benjamin:

From stage right O hear, O hear, ye gods above,
The wonders of my love!

The marshals approach from a distance at stage left then slowly move forward.

Marshal:

Now quiet, soft,

Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:

Now quiet, soft,
On to the prize,
That has so oft
Slipped through our hands.
No more, this time
Love lights the way.
No more will crime
Escape these bands.

Ruth:

At mid stage holding a lantern
O frozen night, so dark and drear,
O ghostly forms that leap like deer,
O moonless sky, with wind so chill
How hard you press against my will!
My lamp a fire makes senses play
Before the darkly lighted way.

Benjamin:

Silhouetted against the flickering light of a fire behind him
Yea, yea, no, no, in times of woe,
Some say, yea, yea; some no.
Yea, yea, no, no, comes now the foe?
Some say, yea, yea; some, no.
Yea, yea, no, no, to prison go?
Some say. Yea, yea; some, no.
Yea, yea, no, no, the final blow?
Some say yea, yea; some no.
Tho perilous the night,
Precarious my plight,
I'll not give up, I'll not give up,
I'll not give up the fight.

Ruth:

How long must bitter windstorms blow?

Benjamin:

The winds they blow,

Ruth:

How long this blinding snow,

Benjamin:

Thru blinding snow,

Ruth:

How long,

Benjamin:

How long,

Ruth:

How long,

Benjamin:

How long,

Ruth:

Before

Benjamin:

Before

Ruth/Benjamin:

the way I know?

Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:

stepping forward He runs, he hides, abides out in the rough.

So what? Don't care,

We'll get him soon enough.

Deputy 1:

Oh yeah, he's slick; oh yeah, he's sly;

Marshal:

He disappears before our eye,

Deputy 2:

But we don't care, and we don't cry;

Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:

His time is come, his time is nigh.

A love-light glides and guides o'er snowy bluff;

We'll go, we'll come, we'll get 'im soon enough!

Benjamin:

The saints in rout, hope driven out,

It seems that all is lost,

With hard times here a mournful tear
falls silent on the frost,

A blessing said we break our bread

And drink the bitter cup,

And with a prayer that God might spare,

we're loath to take it up.

I stand audacious, bold, courageous,
Daring likeness of
A flying flag, defiant stag,
That leaps in lands of love!
I'll on and on and ever on,
Forever I'll take my flight
O'er land, o'er sea, forever free,
Tho black as black the night!

Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:

He hides, abides out in the rough.
So what? We'll get 'im soon enough.
A love-light guides o'er snowy bluff;
We'll get 'im, get 'im, soon enough!

Ruth:

Is love awaiting where I'm going?
The joy of love forever flowing?
Is love awaiting where I'm going?

Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:

A love-light guides o'er snowy bluff;
We'll get 'im soon enough!

Ruth:

The joy of love forever flowing?

Benjamin:

Someday, somewhere two lovers together.
Somehow we two forever,
Someday, somewhere I'll be with you!

Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:

He hides, abides out in the rough.
So what? We'll get 'im soon enough.
A love-light guides o'er snowy bluff;
We'll get 'im, get 'im, soon enough!

Ruth:

Love awaiting where I'm going?
The joy of love forever flowing?

Benjamin:

Someday, somewhere two lovers together.
Somehow we two forever,
Someday, somewhere I'll be with you!

Ruth:

I must press on 'gainst this incessant snowing.

Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:

He hides, abides out in the rough.
So what? We'll get 'im soon enough.
A love-light guides o'er snowy bluff;

We'll get 'im, get 'im, soon enough!

Benjamin:
Ho there! what's that, a bobbing in the night?

Benjamin/Ruth:
Ho there! what's that? I think I see a light!

Ruth:
able to see Benjamin O, Benjamin, I'm coming
can't you see, oh, can't you see?

Benjamin:
Hearing Ruth's voice Ruth, O Ruth Bowen could it be?

Ruth:
approaching O Benjamin,

Benjamin:
O Ruth, O Ruth,

Ruth:
Yes, oh yes,

Benjamin:
O Ruth, O Ruth, Ruth Bowen could it be?

Ruth:
O Benjamin, it's me,
O Benjamin, oh yes, it's me!

Benjamin:
Yes, Ruth, yes, it's you.
Now thru the dark I see!

Ruth:
Thru the dark of night I've come that we might be,
that we might be forever free!

Benjamin:
Tho dark the night, my woeful plight,
We two shall be forever free!

Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:
Approaching the encampment
Ho there! what's that a shining in the night?
Sure 'nough, there 'tis the tell-tale campfire light!
Steady now, set the trap,
Stay clear, my friend, it's gonna snap!
Now softly;

Ruth:
O Benjamin,

Benjamin:
O Ruth, O Ruth

Ruth:
I'm coming, see?

Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:

Now quiet;
Benjamin:
 O Ruth, O Ruth
Ruth:
 I'm coming, see?
Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:
 Now careful;
Ruth/Benjamin:
 We two shall be,
 we two forever free!
Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:
 We set the trap and watch it snap!
Ruth:
 O Benjamin, oh yes, it's me;
Benjamin:
 Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, I see
 And we forever more are free,
 We forever, ever free!
Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:
 Encircling Benjamin from three sides
 Steady now, set the trap;
 Stand way back and watch it snap!
 Steady now, set the trap,
 Then stand way back, stand way back,
 stand way back, stand way back,
 stand way back and watch it snap!
Ruth/Benjamin:
 Someday, somewhere two lovers together,
Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:
 way back,
Ruth/Benjamin:
 Somehow we two forever.
Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:
 set the trap,
Ruth/Benjamin:
 Someday, somewhere two lovers together;
 Somehow we two forever free!
Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:
 and watch it snap!
 Steady now, set the trap
Ruth/Benjamin:
 We forever, we forever more
Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:
 stand way back, stand way back

As Ruth and Benjamin unite the marshals surround and handcuff them.

Ruth/Benjamin:

are free!

Marshal/Deputy 1 & 2:

and watch it snap!

Act III

3-1 Prelude—Going, she's going home

In February 1888 Benjamin is tried and convicted of unlawful cohabitation. Because of his arrest at a time when he was with another woman his punishment is unusually severe. He is not released from prison until the fall of 1890.

The federal government's offensive against Mormons continues unabated, Federal officials prepare to take over temples, and the U.S. Congress debates whether to disenfranchise all Mormons.

The Manifesto advising church members to "refrain from contracting marriage forbidden by laws of the land," is upheld.

In a letter to Ruth while he is still incarcerated, Benjamin makes a formal proposal of marriage. Ruth is to travel alone in disguise to where the secret ceremony will take place. but when the moment of decision comes she boards a train that will take her home to New York City. Benjamin is about to pursue her when his banker warns him of an impending financial crisis. Unless he acts immediately, he could lose everything. He takes a train to Omaha to plead with his creditors, leaving his wives to wonder when he will return and what his final destination will be.

Benjamin:

Going she's going home.

Ruth:

I'm going back home.

Wives:

Gone, he's gone again.

Ruth:

I'm going back home.

Benjamin:

She's going she's going home.

Wives:

He's gone, he's gone again.

Ruth:

Yes, I am going back home.

Wives:

Gone again, gone, he's gone again.

He is gone again.

Gone again, gone, he's gone again.

He is gone again.

Ruth:

Going back home, I'm going home,

going back home.
Going back home, I'm going home,
going back home.

Benjamin:

Going back home, she's going home,
going back home.
Going back home, she's going home,
going back home.

Sarah Ann/Adelle:

He is gone again.
Gone again, gone, he's gone again.
He's gone again.

Ruth:

I am going.
Going back home, I'm going home, going back home.

Benjamin:

She is going.
Going back home, she's going home, going back home.

Wives:

Gone again, gone, he's gone again.
He has gone again.

Ruth:

Going back home, I'm going home, going back home.

Benjamin:

Going back home, she's going home, going back home.

Wives:

He has gone again.

Benjamin:

She's a-going back home.

Ruth:

I'm a-going back home.

Benjamin:

Going back home, she's going home.

Ruth:

I'm going back home.

Wives:

Gone again, gone, he's gone again.

Ruth:

I'm going back home.

Wives:

He's gone again, he's gone again, he's gone again.

Ruth:

I'm going back, I'm going back, I'm going back home.

Benjamin:

She's going back, she's going back, she's going back home.

Act III

3-2 How good of you

Benjamin is seated at a table. As two gentlemen enter the room, he stands to greet them. Engaged in conversation they ignore him. Benjamin, embarrassed, sits back down and stands back up two or three times. The two finally acknowledge him, shake his hand, and introduce themselves.

First Banker:

How good of you that you would come so far.
The train makes this quite possible,
And yet the journey is long.
Experienced it myself.

Benjamin:

obliging The least I could have done to settle things.

Second Banker:

No better way to reach an understanding.

First Banker:

diplomatically I hope we can be frank, speak open here.

Benjamin:

forthcoming Of course, you know I've been detained some time.

First Banker:

We do—for some two years we understand.

Benjamin:

For more than thirty long, long months I have served.

Second Banker:

My, my, and taken from your 'sponsibilities.

First Banker:

It seems one's economic state depends upon the moral, at least I so opine.

Second Banker:

as reinforcement And I agree, I do concur with that.

First Banker:

But let's not into private things,
Except to ask will there be more?

Second Banker:

Infractions past and put away?

First Banker:

Confinement long its imprint firm?

Second Banker:

So one can tend,

First Banker:

Can tend more pressing matters now?

Second Banker:

more pressing matters, pressing matters now?

Benjamin:

trying to be convincing Good gentlemen, you can be sure that I

Shall live the law that law may live, may live in me!

First Banker:

Well said, good sir, your words like music sound.

Second Banker:

To worried banker's ears.

First Banker:

firmly And now let there be no mistake that in all seriousness

We must be paid or else we will foreclose if it should come to that.

But nonetheless we'll give you some reprieve.

To get affairs in order.

Second Banker:

concluding One hundred-eighty days we'll give you more

With int'rest still accruing.

First & Second Banker:

rising together And now you understand?

Benjamin:

standing Yes, yes, I do,

I understand quite indeed.

First Banker:

extending his hand And now, God speed, farewell.

Second Banker:

And now, God speed,

God speed, farewell,

First Banker:

God speed, farewell,

Benjamin:

I wish you well,

First & Second Banker:

God speed, farewell,

Benjamin:

I wish you well,

First & Second Banker:

God speed, farewell,

God speed, farewell,

Farewell.

Benjamin:

I wish you well.

Act III

3-3-1 Some things are meant to be

The table at which Benjamin is seated slowly converts from a bank boardroom to a table in a hotel restaurant.

Benjamin:

Barely visible in the darkened room
Some things are meant to be,
Some things are for eternity,
Divinity's fair hand,
Consummate contraband,
Forever!

The lights are somewhat brighter.

Benjamin arises and begins to dance alone.

Then he seems to be joined by Ruth

The two disappear as the lights dim.

Benjamin is again alone at the table. As the lights come up, a boy is seen sweeping around the table. He takes his watch from his pocket, looks at it, and then begins to work faster. More attendants enter. They arrange chairs around the tables. They bring in tablecloths, napkins, and silverware and then cups and glasses. The host turns to see if all is in order, then walks to the doors and opens them. Guests enter and soon the room is crowded with people. Strangers make themselves acquainted and take their places at the tables.

Benjamin stands to the side then makes his way across the room in search of a place where he can sit by himself. Unable to find a table that is empty, he turns to retrace his steps when a guest stands and invites him to join them. He takes his place next to Joe and his wife Jane.

Joe:

Please, won't you have a seat with us.

Benjamin:

Well, I... I thank you, sir.
So good of you.

Joe:

Joe Simmons is the name,
and Jane, the wife.

Benjamin:

And I am Benjamin,
from rocky mountains to level parts.

Joe:

Nor ere before in all my life
In Omaha, Nebraskie stayed

Jane:

In Omaha, Nebraskie stayed,

Joe:

Had not the train us bade
from state of Californie been delayed

Joe/Jane:

Been delayed.

Benjamin:

Why was that?

Joe:

We smacked a cow,
got out 'n pushed and fin'lly made it to this town.

Benjamin:

Now is that so?

Joe:

I thought for sure we'd have to walk,

Joe/Jane:

All way from 'braskie to New Yawk!

Act III

3-3-2 Oh, thank you, ma'am

Characters with singing parts in addition to Ruth, Benjamin, and the chorus comprised of women and men guests are Joe, tenor; Jane, mezzo; Man 1, tenor; Man 2, bass; Man 3, baritone; George White, second tenor; Woman 1, soprano; Woman 2, alto; Sue White, alto.

A waiter places a kettle of soup on the table in front of Jane. He brings a stack of bowls, puts it next to the kettle, and hands Jane a ladle. She begins dipping out the soup as the waiter brings a loaf of bread on a cutting board and places it next to Benjamin. As the food is being served Ruth enters the restaurant. Benjamin, preoccupied, doesn't see her come in. She hangs her coat on a chair, places her handbag next to it, and sits down. She is seated so her back is to Benjamin.

To each other as the food is passed around

M G:

Oh, thank you, ma'am.

M G/W G:

So kind of you.

W G:

This soup is good;

M G:

The bread is too.

Ruth eats not knowing that Benjamin is seated not far away.

M G/W G:

Yes please, I'll take some more of that,
Some 'licious broth and hearty fat.

W G:

Oh, thank you.

M G:

You're welcome.

During this time, Benjamin becomes increasingly aware of the young woman across the room.

Man 1:

Not bad a town to spend some time waylaid.

Woman 1:

But in some better place we might have stayed.

Woman 2:

And yet we can't complain.

Man 2:

It beats a-sleeping in that train.

George White to Ruth

George White:

We are the Whites. I am George and this is Sue.

Ruth:

Hello, my name is Ruth, how do you do?

Benjamin, unable to hear Ruth's reply, is drawn by the sound of her voice.

George White:

Ill-fated trav'ler like ourselves no doubt?

Ruth:

Appears my luck ran out.

Benjamin's attention becomes transfixed.

Chorus:

These 'braskie folk ain't sa bad;
They've took the best these flatlands had.

George White:

And we from Oregon have come.

Ruth:

And I from Utah good sir.

Man 3:

Out in Ohia the wind can chill,

Benjamin agitated, joins the conversation

Benjamin:

And blast across a Utah hill.

Man 1:

In Benjamin's ear with a grin

I hear that sumpun there can warm a man

George White:

With a smile to Ruth

I'm right surprised they'd let young ladies go.

Sue White:

with smug assurance

But here, my dear, you're safe from priest and shameless beau.

Joe:

with a snicker If not a few then sure, then sure a dozen can!

Jane:

Oh, shut up, Joe! You ought to show respect.

turning to Benjamin Some Utahans are moral amen I 'spect.

Benjamin:

With growing excitement

Oh, thank you, ma'am, I surely try to be.

"one at a time," to live quite properly.

Chorus:

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha

Ruth:

Turning so she's plainly visible to Benjamin

No, not to worry, ma'am.

I'm free to go, free to proceed.

No man, no man my way impede!

Benjamin:

Coming to a full recognition that it is Ruth

And this the rule of good Mormon life:

Each day the week devoted to one wife!

Chorus:

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha.

Ha ha ha, ha ha ha, ha ha ha ha ha ha.

Amidst the laughter Benjamin jumps to his feet.

Ha ha, ha, ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Benjamin:

Ruth, O Ruth! It's Benjamin, yes, Benjamin,

I'm Benjamin! It's me!

Chorus:

As if Benjamin's display were pure theatrics

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha,

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha,

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! ha!

Ruth rises from her chair and turns to face Benjamin.

Ruth:

Benjamin! Is it Benjamin?

Mister Bowen, sir?

In disbelief No, No! it cannot be!

I left you home;

I left you free with wives and family

I took my leave that all would be well,

Benjamin:

And I our woes to bankers tell.

Ruth:
Good judgement, sir, has willed that I should go.

Benjamin:
That I would find you here, I did not know.

M G:
Concealed delights!

W G:
Dispicable disgust!

M G:
Clandestine bliss!

W G:
No, no, just carnal lust!

Joe:
Come on, Jane, *with a grin*
It's time to go upstairs!

Jane:
But then what of this vagabond romance,
Bottlegged love, left-handed 'stravagance!
I cannot leave without a guarantee
Points to Benjamin with a finger in his face and then to Ruth
This Mormon man will let the girl go free.

Chorus Altos:
Let the girl go,

Chorus Women:
Will let the girl go, will let the girl go free.

Ruth:
Moving to the front I thank you all, my sisters sweet,
And would your counsel here entreat.
This man has served three years for me,
In foulest penitentiary.
Should I for that send him away?
He did not know, he did not know,
He did not know of my delay.
By chance this day our paths have crossed,
Should I now let this chance be lost?
He did not seek, pursue me here.
I trust in him and do not fear,
Instead respect, in truth, revere.

Sue White:
Be careful Ruth, beware the wolf;
Beware the heated, beware the heated bull!

Ruth:
Perhaps you think me but a fool,
A proselyte, a priesthood tool.

But hear me out. I'll tell my tale,
And how I came to western vale.
In New York City I was born.
Then a few years since I met a man,
From Western hills he came, he tarried,
Soon after we then were married.
He tarried, soon after we then were married,
And then a fatal accident,
He died, my life in pieces rent.
With mother new, Naomi sweet,
By train I traveled west to meet
My relatives in Salt Lake City

George White:

Challenging And then not doubt, no doubt with love and pity
They took you in, proselytized;
First they beguiled then catechized.

Ruth:

Yes that they did. I thought they would.
So I held my ground as best I could.
I went to work. I modeled dresses
And heeded not their male advances.
A single girl, I made my way,
As fed'ral marshals came to prey
On many men of that fair city.

Chorus:

As it should be.

Ruth:

Perhaps, but there was much to pity,
As men were tried and sent to prison.
To learn, 'twas said a hard-learned lesson.
And yet, hard it was for women bold,
Who took the reigns of each household.
O'er toil excessive backs were bent,
As empty days their men folk spent.

Joe:

To Benjamin You served your time for Mormondom.

Benjamin:

For honor true and Kingdom come.

Ruth:

For months before he was in hiding,
Day in, day out, incessant riding.

Chorus:

Pursued then like a fleeing fox,
A fugitive from vagrant flocks!

Ruth:

At his request I came disguised.
My coming tho was ill-advised,
For suddenly the feds were 'round us,
They cursed and then they tied and bound us.

Chorus:

So in the end the law prevailed,

Benjamin:

And all my fondest hopes were then assailed,

Ruth:

In court of law, afore convinced,
They made me testify against
Him there, a prisoner of love
In all the agony thereof!
Alas, alas, what had I done?
Alas, he could no longer run.
Then there I sat so helplessly,
In shame and tears and misery.
He was a prisoner of love,
and I in agony thereof!

Act III

3-3-3 If I a prisoner of love must be

Benjamin:

If I a prisoner of love must be,
Then that forever for eternity
The essence pure, the very core,
Of life itself for evermore,
If I a prisoner of love must be,
Then I'm a fettered man forever free!
An angel ties my hands
As sister seraphs wrap their bands
Around and round and round and round
Until I am forever bound.
If I a prisoner of love must be,
Then I'm a fettered man, forever free!

Alto/Bass:

A prisoner of love is he,
This Benjamin, a Mormon, we,
Confessing here love's charms and fashions,
Declare its glorious grace and passions!

Chorus:

This prisoner of love is free;
Convinced of that attendants we,
Acclaim his love with approbation
And praise it too with admiration.

Ruth:

Like endless mountains snows have capped,
He serves with fascination apt.
This man who 'fore the world appeared
Had to my gentle heart adhered,
Before and after time in chains,
In of love remains.

Chorus:

Confessing bold its charms and fashions
And all its glorious grace and passions!

Ruth:

He entered in captivity
By way of perceptivity.
All my love would there requite
In bonds secure with all his might.
Before and after some time in chains,
In ligatures of love remains.

Ruth/Chorus:

Confessing bold its charms and fashions
And all its glorious grace and passions!

Chorus Soprano:

We now have heard this novel truth –
A girl out west still in her youth,
Lived there a life she dreamt not of,
A life converse of secret love.
Against the ways of common lore,
Was courted by a paramour.
But then their love, from first ill-fated,
Could not by law be consummated.

Chorus Alto/Tenor/Bass:

We hear this novel truth –
A girl still in her youth,
a life she dreamt not of,
A life converse of secret love.
Against the ways of common lore,
Was courted by a paramour.
But then their love, from first ill-fated,
Could not by law be consummated.

Chorus All:

No place, no place,
no place on earth to satisfy
What would instead but mortify
All save, all save, all save
rare hearts whose love extends,
from human depths to heaven's ends.

Chorus Soprano/Alto:

What of the bows, the ceremony,

Chorus Tenor/Bass:

And of the vows, the testimony?

Chorus Soprano/Alto/Tenor/Bass:

And what for you, Good Benjamin,

And you, dear Ruth, is love's true regimen?

Benjamin:

Emboldened I am lifted up

To glorious heights above.

Erotic beams from amorous stars,

Enliven there my love.

For some they are but passing forms

Quaint beacon lights to mark the way,

but I, transfixed with rare emotion,

The gems of heaven see,

Above both isle and ocean,

Forever passing there for me.

Ruth:

A rite that's made of time must atrophy, must perish,

So I the more to compensate must care, must cherish,

Terrestrial decay I can't prevent,

And so bestow on it my heart, my sentiment.

Who'er I love, I love forever,

But temporarily I wed.

The two they say should join together

in one eternal bed.

Were life so quaint but never.

The twain must 'stead hold sway,

Whoever I wed I wed for now.

Whoever I love, who'er I love,

I love, I love forever.

Chorus Soprano/Alto/Tenor/Bass

She weds for now but loves forever.

Benjamin/Ruth:

Some things are meant to be,

Some for eternity,

And some, and some for you and me together.

Some now and some forever,
The one around the other

Chorus:

Some now and some forever,
Revolves until the two combine,

Chorus Soprano/Bass:

Step out of time

Benjamin/Ruth:

Into eternity, into eternity,

Chorus Soprano/Alto/Tenor:

Not to the blissful,

Benjamin/Ruth:

Not to the blissful, to the wistful,

Chorus All:

But to the wistful, not to the blissful,

Benjamin/Ruth:

but to the wistful.

Pursuers of fortuity

Benjamin/Ruth/Chorus:

another chance

For life, for love, significance,

Chorus:

The evening past, the time is late,
The hour has struck, bids us retire.
Though morrow will decide our fate,
This feast has filled our heart's desire.
With reticence to say farewell,
May time allay, the trouble quell;
With morn the hope of some respite,
The good ensure, no wrong or spite;
And now to wish you all the best,
Felicity and all the rest,
As some go east and some go west,
With one accord we end this fest!
Good night! We wish you well,
We wish you both goodnight.

Benjamin/Ruth:

To the guests as they are leaving
The same we wish for you,
The best of times to come,
Goodnight to ev'ry one.

Benjamin:

Looking around to make sure the guests have left.
Are we alone?

Strange circumstance!
May I, dear lady, have this dance?

They dance

Ruth:

Well, I... I s'ppose you could,
A turn or two might do us good.
This night is like a trance.

Benjamin/Ruth:

Another step by luck or chance.
This night, this night is like,
this night is like a trance,
One more step by luck or chance.

Benjamin:

If east you're gone and never back;
If west it's on a thorny track!

Ruth:

No miracle in sight,
And yet the bullet we must bite;
Must choose to come or go—
Lest win or lose we'll never know!

Benjamin:

I love you Ruth, my heart's desire,
no more to gain or to aspire.
When years have past and eyes are dim,
And when these locks are thin and gray,
Enchanted still forever more,
Resistant I'll grow old that way.

Chorus:

Attention, Ruth Bowen, now hear this:
The engine is a-puffing, all set to make its run,
It leaves for New York City,
at the rise, at the rise, at the rise of the sun!

Ruth:

Careful now, you might get more,
An awful lot more than what you bargained for!
The times are new the rules have changed,
It's never gonna be the way it was before!

Benjamin:

Right in the morning wrong afternoon,
If it's not too late for sure it's too soon!
First we can and then we can't,
As modest as extravagant!

Chorus:

Some knock at the windows,

some knock at the door,
Up on the ceiling, down on the floor;
Must hold our own as we are prone,
Cause it's never gonna be like it was before.

Ruth/Benjamin:

But what will we do, and where will we go?

Chorus:

Perhaps to Canada or Mexico

Ruth/Benjamin:

There's a pretty little valley not far away,

Ruth/Benjamin/Chorus:

That's tucked in the folds of old Wyo they say!

Chorus:

Careful now you might get more,
An awful lot more than what you bargained for.
Although we doubt, although we're sure;

Ruth:

It's never gonna be the way it was before.

Chorus:

They fill our minds with legends and lore
with fables and tales and myths and more.

Benjamin:

Don't you listen to them Ruth,

Ruth:

Don't you listen to them Ben,

Ruth/Benjamin:

They say it's gonna be,
the way it was back when.

Ruth/Benjamin/Chorus:

Careful now, you might get more,
An awful lot more than what you bargained for.
So put your head on your shoulders
And your thinker in gear,

Ruth/Benjamin:

Cause it's never

Chorus:

never,

Ruth/Benjamin:

never

Chorus:

it's never gonna be.

All:

it's never, never gonna be
the way it was,

Ruth/Benjamin:

before!

Chorus:

cause it's never, never, never
gonna be the way it was before!

The End