

## **A Heart to Forgive**

**(by the way, Rev. Mooring is a very liberal, unsaved preacher.**

**There are parts for 9 males and 5 females plus extras.**

**Some doubling is possible.)**

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### **Act I/Scene 1**

*Setting: A Wealthy Church in Philadelphia*

*(The church auditorium is the scene, with the audience becoming a part of the action. Rev. Mooring is preaching. Mrs. Mooring and Peter are seated in the front.)*

**Rev. Mooring:** *(in deep sonorous tones)* The topic I have chosen for today is well fitting for our fair city of Philadelphia; it is "Brotherly Love."

**Peter:** *(jumping up spontaneously from his seat and shouting)* Hypocrite!  
*(Rev. Mooring's expression should turn to one of livid anger. Mrs. Mooring should react with surprise and fear. Peter glances about nervously, then back to his step-father. Realizing what he has done, he quickly runs down the center aisle and out the back of the auditorium.)*

*(Lights Down)*

**End Scene**

## Act I/Scene 2

*Setting: Home of the Moorings - Parlor and Upstairs Bedroom*  
*(Nana is sitting in the parlor in a rocking chair reading her Bible. Peter comes bursting into the house. He should act breathless, as if he has been running for some distance. He puts his hand on the table to steady himself.)*

**Nana:** Peter, whatever is wrong with you? You're as white as a ghost!

**Peter:** I did it, Nana! I really did it!

**Nana:** Did what?

**Peter:** I didn't mean to do it. I was thinking it and then...

**Nana:** It's all right, Peter. Whatever it is I forgive you.

**Peter:** ( *pacing, as if thinking what to do next*) No! No! You don't understand!

**Nana:** Peter, have you gone crazy?

**Peter:** No. Yes! No! Oh, I don't know. Maybe I have.

**Nana:** ( *getting up and gently leading him to the rocking chair*) Here, you just sit right down here on this chair and calm yourself. Now, you tell your old Nana all about it.

**Peter:** ( *jumping up*) I can't. I have to leave!

**Nana:** Leave? Where are you going?

**Peter:** I don't know. Anywhere but here. I have to go before he gets back!  
*(heading quickly for the stairs)*

**Nana:** He?! Who's he? Peter, you're not making any sense! (*mumbles to herself as Peter starts up the stairs for the bedroom*) What is the matter with that boy? You'd think he'd seen the devil himself.

(*to Peter*) Peter, I'm getting too old for these games.

(*Peter is getting clothes from a drawer and piling them on the chair in the bedroom.*) What are you doing?

**Peter:** (*bundling the clothes together, pauses at the top of the stairs.*) Tell Mother I love her and I'll let her know where I am later. (*begins down the stairs as Rev. Mooring comes in the door to the Parlor. Peter's mother is close behind her husband. Peter freezes half-way down the stairs.*)

**Rev. Mooring:** (*glancing at Peter's bundle of clothes. He should be extremely angry.*) And just where do you think you're going!

**Nancy Mooring:** (*grabbing her husband's arm, pleading*) Please, Thomas, don't hurt him! He didn't mean to do it!

**Nana:** What's going on here? (*Nana positions herself in front of the stairs as Peter nervously backs up into the bedroom.*) What are you going to do?

**Rev. Mooring:** Out of the way, Aunt Kathryn!

**Nana:** (*spoken as half question, half statement*) Thomas, you're not going to hurt him...

**Rev. Mooring:** Out!

**Nana:** Thomas, please!

**Rev. Mooring:** (*livid with anger, pushing her away*) Get out! I'll not tell you again! (*goes up the stairs to the bedroom*)

(*Nana and Nancy go into the parlor. Nancy sits down on the love seat and begins to cry softly. Nana tries to comfort her. Lights down on the Parlor*)

**Rev. Mooring:** Thought you'd get away before I came home, did you, boy!

Well, you're not going to get off that easy. Did you hear me! You're going to pay for what you did! (*gives Peter a backhanded slap*)

**Peter:** (*pleading*) Please, sir, let me explain...

**Rev. Mooring:** No, you let me explain, boy! You've ruined me! Ruined me! (*grabs Peter by the collar and throws him on the chair*) Do you have any idea who was in that service, boy? (*pauses, Peter says nothing.*) Do you?

**Peter:** (*fearfully*) No, sir.

**Rev. Mooring:** (*in a sarcastic voice*) Well, let me tell you. There were administrators there. Administrators from Harvard! Harvard University! And do you know why they were there? (*At this time the men from Harvard should arrive at the entry. The Maid should enter from the study to answer the door. The men should pantomime giving their request to see Rev. Mooring.*)

**Peter:** No, sir.

**Rev. Mooring:** They came to listen to my preaching. (*grabs Peter by the collar and lifts him off the chair*) They were considering me for a teaching position at Harvard! (*tightening his grip on Peter's shirt*) Harvard, boy!

**Peter:** (*trying to pull Rev. Mooring's hands from his throat*) Please, sir, you're choking me.

**Rev. Mooring:** They'll be here any minute to interview me, boy! What are they going to say? (*sarcastic voice*) "Oh, that was your step-son who called you a hypocrite?" Hypocrite! That's what you called me, right in front of the whole church! (*slaps Peter again; Peter falls to the floor*) You've ruined me! (*grabs Peter by the arm and jerks him to his feet*) Get up!

**Peter:** (*pleadingly*) Please...

*(Rev. Mooring gets ready to hit Peter again but is interrupted by the Maid who is half-way up the stairs.)*

**Rev. Mooring:** *(upset by the interruption)* What do you want?

**Maid:** *(glancing nervously to Peter then back to Rev. Mooring)* There are some men here to see you, sir. They said they were from Harvard University, and that you were expecting them.

**Rev. Mooring:** *(looking disdainfully at Peter)* Tell them I will be with them momentarily.

**Maid:** *(The Maid curtseys while nervously glancing at Peter again, then hurries down the stairs to the entryway. She should pantomime delivering the message.)*

**Rev. Mooring:** *(pulling Peter close to him by the collar, speaks threateningly)* You had better pray I'm given that position, boy. *(roughly pushes Peter away from him, goes quickly down the stairs, straightening his tie and smoothing his jacket. He changes his expression from anger to pleasantness, and ignores both his wife and Nana, as he crosses to the entryway.)*

*(to the men from Harvard, in a cheerful greeting)* Gentlemen! Welcome! Please, won't you step in here to my study? *(He gestures towards the study door, then follows them in.)*

*(Nancy gets up from the love seat as Peter comes down the stairs with his bundle of clothes.)*

**Nancy Mooring:** Peter! Oh, Son, I'm so sorry! Nana, tell Mary to chip off some ice from the ice box.

**Peter:** There's no time for that, Mother. I need to leave now while I have the chance.

**Nancy:** Where will you go?

**Peter:** I've been thinking about that. I've decided to go to the Carlsons at the mission.

**Nancy:** Yes, yes, the Carlsons will be take you in. They'll be good to you. Oh, Peter, if only your father were still alive.

If only I hadn't....how could I have seen anything in...

**Peter:** Mother, please don't blame yourself.

**Nana:** *(consolingly to Nancy)* Now, now, dear. You were fooled by him, Nancy; it's as simple as that.

**Peter:** I'd better hurry, Mother. *(gives them both a hug goodbye)*

**Nancy:** *(following him to the door)* I'll get messages to you through Nana or Mary. Your step-father will be watching me closely so I dare not leave the house for a while.

*(Peter leaves, takes a few steps, then runs back and gives his mother one last hug before leaving)*

**Nancy:** *(emotionally)* I'll come see you as soon as I can, Son. *(Nancy and Nana exit.)*

*(Lights Down. The scene changes to the mission /exhibition set)*

**End Scene**

### Act 1/Scene 3

*Setting: The Rescue Mission - a week later*

*(Peter paces some, glances out the window; he is obviously agitated. Rev. Carlson is seated in an arm chair reading his Bible.)*

**Rev. Carlson:** Still no word from your mother?

**Peter:** No, sir, nothing.

**Rev. Carlson:** Don't despair, son. Remember Romans 8:28? "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

**Peter:** *(turning away from him, an edge of anger and unbelief in his voice)* I guess so.

**Rev. Carlson:** No you don't, or you wouldn't still be moping about after a whole week has gone by.

**Peter:** *(turning towards him, angrily)* What do you know about it? What do you know about having a stepfather who hates you and maybe never seeing your mother again?

**Rev. Carlson:** *(softly)* I know a little something about it, Peter. You see, I grew up in an orphanage.

**Peter:** *(convicted)* I...I'm sorry, sir.

**Rev. Carlson:** *(getting up, crosses to Peter and puts his hand on Peter's shoulder)* It's all right, son. I've been praying for you; I'll continue to pray. God has not forsaken you, though it may seem like that to you now.

We'll discuss this further about supper tonight, all right? *(Peter nods in agreement. Rev. Carlson exits, stage right. Nana comes to the door, knocks. Peter opens it.)*

**Peter:** *(giving her a hug)* Nana! I was beginning to think I'd never see you or Mother again. How is she?

**Nana:** She's just fine, dear.

**Peter:** And *(pauses, finding it hard to mention his stepfather)* Rev. Mooring? How did he react when he discovered I was gone?

**Nana:** Oh, he threw a regular fit, just like usual. Swore terribly and stomped around like a little child having a temper tantrum.

**Peter:** He didn't...he didn't hit her, did he?

**Nana:** *(turning away slightly)* No, dear, he didn't hit *her*.

**Peter:** *(slowly realizing what she was inferring)* And...you? *(Nana says nothing, trying to hide her hurt)*

**Peter:** *(angrily)* He didn't!

**Nana:** I never thought I'd see the day when he'd strike me.

**Peter:** It's all my fault! I should have stayed and taken what was coming to me!

**Nana:** No, Peter. I think he would have come close to killing you. I fear for him; his temper will be his downfall, just you wait and see.

Now, don't you worry about us, dear. Remember, "All things work together for good..."

**Peter:** *(almost sarcastically)* So I've been told. *(Pauses)*  
Did he...did he get the position at Harvard?

**Nana:** No, dear, he didn't.

**Peter:** Was it because of me?



**Nana:** Well, that's what he led us to believe. But I know better; I saw the letter myself. (*grins sheepishly*)

**Peter:** (*after a long, difficult pause*) I guess that means I won't be coming home, doesn't it?

**Nana:** I'm afraid so, dear. Your mother worries about you.

**Peter:** (*forcing a smile*) Tell her I'm fine. The Carlsons have been very good to me.

**Nana:** (*finding it hard to hold back the tears*) I'd better go now. He might get suspicious if I'm gone for too long.

**Peter:** I don't suppose Mother will be coming any time soon?

**Nana:** No, dear. He's forbidden her to leave the house. (*They hug goodbye.*)

**Peter:** (*as Nana is leaving; trying to control his emotions*) Tell her...tell her I love her and...I'm sorry.

(*Lights Down*)

**End Scene**

## Act 1/Scene 4

*Setting: The Mission - later that evening*

*(Peter and Mr. Carlson are seated at the table. Mrs. Carlson is clearing the dishes. Peter and Rev. Carlson keep their coffee cups and sip on them occasionally as they talk.)*

**Rev. Carlson:** *(with concern)* Well, Peter, shall we have our talk?

**Peter:** *(embarrassed by his previous behavior)* Yes sir. About this afternoon, sir...

**Rev. Carlson:** No apology is necessary, son. I know exactly how you felt. I've been there. Self-pity; it's a tool of the devil and he knows how to use it well.

I happened to be looking out the window when I saw someone leaving this afternoon. I guessed it was someone to see you.

**Peter:** Yes, sir. She's my great-aunt. Actually she's my step-father's aunt. But she's more like a grandmother to me. I call her Nana.

**Mrs. Carlson:** She must be a very special person.

**Peter:** Yes, ma'am, she is. She's not at all like...like him.

**Rev. Carlson:** Your step father? *(Peter nods in agreement.)*

**Mrs. Carlson:** *(hesitantly)* How is your mother, Peter?

**Peter:** *(trying to convince himself)* She's fine, ma'am.

**Mrs. Carlson:** I miss her. We had such sweet times of fellowship.

**Peter:** She misses you, too, Mrs. Carlson. There's been many a time she's wanted to come see you, but *(pauses)* he wouldn't let her. *(with bitterness in his voice)* It would be beneath his dignity for his wife to be seen in this part of town.

**Rev. Carlson:** Did your step-father receive the position at Harvard?

**Peter:** *(hanging his head)* No, sir.

I guess that means you'll have to put up with me for a while longer. That is, if you don't mind.

**Mrs. Carlson:** Mind? Oh, Peter. You don't know what a joy it is to have you here! It brings back so many memories. Of course, you were just a little thing when your parents worked here with us.

*(pauses momentarily, spoken with lots of feeling)* We were never able to have children of our own, so it's nice to have someone around who's almost like a son, *(laughs)* even if he is all grown up!

**Rev. Carlson:** *(teasing him, slaps him on the back)* Besides, there's lots of work to be done around here. I could use a helping hand.

**Peter:** I'd be glad to do anything, sir. I could chop wood for you, help serve meals to people who come by, sweep floors. .. *(takes a sip of his coffee)*

**Rev. Carlson:** How about preach?

**Peter:** *(almost choking on his coffee)* Preach?

**Rev. Carlson:** Yes, it's Monday. You have almost an entire week to prepare.

**Peter:** *(in disbelief and fear)* Preach this Sunday?

**Rev. Carlson:** Why not?

**Peter:** *(nervously)* Well I...I've never preached before.

**Mrs. Carlson:** *(fondly thinking back)* Oh, If you're anything like your father, you'll be wonderful!

**Peter:** *(coming up with excuses)* But, I...I've never been to college!

**Rev. Carlson:** Your father didn't go to college, either.

**Peter:** But, he had a gift for preaching.

**Rev. Carlson:** Chances are you will, too. *(with finality in his voice as he gets up from his seat)* But you'll never know until you try. Will you?

**Peter:** *(pauses, struggling with the idea, looks directly at Rev. Carlson)* No, sir.

*(Lights down - Rev. and Mrs. Carlson exit. When the lights come up Peter is pacing back and forth muttering to himself)*

**Peter:** Preach. He wants me to preach this Sunday. I don't even know where to start. *(sits down on the rocker and looks at his Bible )* Maybe I'll just open my Bible up and see where... *(opens his Bible randomly to the New Testament near Matthew, then stares at it for a few moments, pauses, looks up, as if talking to the Lord)* Lord, please don't ask me to preach on that. I can't!. *(looks at the Bible again, reads aloud)* "Then came Peter to him and said, Lord how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee until seven time but until seventy times seven." *(runs his fingers nervously back through his hair)*

Oh, Lord, I can't! *(looks up again, speaks with emotion)* I can't forgive him!

*(Lights Down)*

**End Scene**

## Act I/Scene 8

*Setting: The Mission - several months later*

*(There are a few poorly dressed people sitting on the benches listening while Amy sings the last verse of "Amazing Grace." Mrs. Carlson is accompanying her at the piano. Rev. Carlson is sitting to one side of the podium watching the expression on Peter's face as he watches Amy. After she finishes singing, Rev. Carlson gets up and crosses to the podium.)*

**Rev. Carlson:** Thank you all for coming. There will be soup and a sermon tomorrow again as usual. If someone would like to ask the Lord into their heart, please stay a while longer. We would love nothing better than to share God's plan of salvation with you.

*(People shuffle out. Mrs. Carlson talks briefly with some of the ladies.)*

**Amy:** *(after all the visitors have gone)* Mama Carlson, would you like me to take some soup to the widow Jones?

**Mrs. Carlson:** Oh, Amy, that would be wonderful. I'm certain she would enjoy it, as well as a visit from you.

**Rev. Carlson:** Ah, Peter, perhaps it would be best if you went with her. It might not be safe for Amy to travel that far in the buggy alone. Besides, I'm sure she'd be glad to have your company.

**Peter:** *(hesitatingly, embarrassed)* Yes, sir. Would you mind, Amy?

**Amy:** *(also embarrassed, puts on her cape, does not look at either one of them)* That would be fine, Peter. Thank you. *(Peter puts on his coat while Amy picks up a covered bowl from the table, and the two leave. Rev. Carlson looks after them, a twinkle in his eyes)*

**Mrs. Carlson:** *(after Amy and Peter have exited offstage)* John! You really ought to leave those two alone! *(starts to straighten up the room)*

**Rev. Carlson:** Why? It's fun! Besides, maybe they'll talk to each other for a change. After all, how are they ever going to get married if they don't even talk to each other?

**Mrs. Carlson:** Married! Who says they want to get married?

**Rev. Carlson:** I do; I can tell.

**Mrs. Carlson:** How?

**Rev. Carlson:** I just can.

**Mrs. Carlson:** John Carlson, you're impossible!

**Rev. Carlson:** *(turning away from the door; begins to help in the cleanup)* Now just think, Martha. Wouldn't it be just like the Lord to bring them both to our place, at the same time, mind you, so they could meet each other and get married?

**Mrs. Carlson:** Meet each other, yes. Get married...why John, they've only known each other for a few months.

**Rev. Carlson:** And how long did we know each other before we knew we were meant to be husband and wife?

**Mrs. Carlson:** Well...

**Rev. Carlson:** Ah, you see? *(sits down, picks up the newspaper, and starts to read silently to himself)*

**Mrs. Carlson:** But John, it doesn't work that way for everyone.

**Rev. Carlson:** *(from behind the newspaper)* I know. I know. But somehow I think it will in this case, that is, if they ever start talking to each other.

**Mrs. Carlson:** Well, all I know is, if the Lord intends for them to marry, it will happen with or without your help.

**Rev. Carlson:** *(puts the paper on his lap, throws his hands up in surrender)*  
All right. All right, Mrs. Carlson. I give up. No more matchmaking.

**Mrs. Carlson:** *(sighs)* That's better.

**Rev. Carlson:** Maybe I'll just have a talk with that boy on the art of conversation. *(hides quickly behind his newspaper as Mrs. Carlson playfully throws a dish towel at him.)*

**Mrs. Carlson:** John!

**Rev. Carlson:** *(from behind the paper)* Just seeing if you were still listening, dear.

*(Lights Down)*

**End Scene**

## Act I/Scene 9

*Setting: The Mission - that night*

*(The scene should be fairly dark except for a small dim spot. Joe knocks on the door. Peter enters from the back room carrying a candle. The lights come up brighter as he enters the stage, as if the candle is illuminating the room.)*

**Peter:** *(mumbling to himself)* Who could that be at this hour of the night?  
*(Joe continues knocking, a little louder. Peter glances up the stairs, then mumblesto himself again)* Whoever it is, they're going to wake everyone up.  
*(opens the door a crack)*  
Yes? Who is it?

**Joe:** Does a Miss Richardson live here?

**Peter:** *(cautiously)* Why do you want to know?

**Joe:** A boat from Africa came to port today sir. There was a package on board for her.

**Peter:** Do you have the package with you now?

**Joe:** Yes sir.

**Peter:** Just leave it on the step. I'll take it for her, thank you.

**Joe:** *(holding out his hand through the small opening in the door)* That will be one dollar, sir.

**Peter:** A dollar! Isn't that a little high?

**Joe:** No sir. Not if you want the package.

**Peter:** Just a minute. I thought the port usually sent a notice by mail to come and pick up packages? Besides, this is a little late to be delivering packages, isn't it?



**Joe:** Well, ah...

**Peter:** *(opening the door)* You stole that package didn't you?

**Joe:** Look, I don't want no trouble. You just give me a dollar and I'll be on my way.

**Peter:** Well, I don't have a dollar, but if you'll come in for a few minutes maybe we can make a deal.

**Joe:** *(nervously)* I don't know about that.

**Peter:** Don't worry. I don't plan on turning you over to the police.

**Joe:** *(enters slowly)* All right, what's the deal?

**Peter:** Well, before I start making deals, I like to know who I'm dealing with. I'm Peter and you're?

**Joe:** Joe.

**Peter:** Joe. Nice to meet you. *(Peter extends his hand. Joe looks at the floor, ignoring Peter.)* Now, I'll tell you what the deal is. I don't have a dollar to spare; money is scarce around here. But I have a hunch you could use a good meal. Am I right?

**Joe:** *(pauses, then looks up at Peter)* Yeah, you're right. I ain't had nothin' much to eat for two days.

**Peter:** *(motioning for Joe to sit at the table)* There's some stew left from supper. *(Peter exits to the kitchen and returns with the stew.)* Good thing we ate real late tonight; it's still warm. You're welcome to it. *(puts a plate in front of Joe who begins to eat vigorously.)* After you're finished, Joe, we'll talk about this package. *(Joe hesitates a moment and looks at Peter, they freeze - lights down quickly. There is a long pause. Joe should place his napkin over the bowl before lights come up. Joe gets up to leave.)*

**Joe:** Thanks. That was good. *(starts to leave)*

**Peter:** *(reaching out and grasping Joe's arm)* Joe, wait. The package...

**Joe:** *(grins sheepishly, pulls out a rectangular shaped package wrapped in brown paper from under his jacket, and hands it to Peter, then starts to leave again.)*

**Peter:** Joe, wait... There's something else I'd like to give you.

**Joe:** *(skeptical)* Thought you said you didn't have no money.

**Peter:** I don't. *(pauses)* But I've got something I'd like to share with you that...well, it could change everything around for you, Joe.

**Joe:** What are you gettin' at?

**Peter:** Joe, have you ever read the Bible?

**Joe:** *(looks down embarrassed)* Never learned to read.

**Peter:** Do you know anything about what the Bible says about Heaven and Hell.

**Joe:** *(uninterested)* A little.

**Peter:** Well, the Bible says stealing is wrong.

**Joe:** *(holds up his hand to stop Peter)* I don't need no sermon, preacher. I'll be seein' you.

**Peter:** Joe, please...just sit down and let me tell you what the Bible says about God's love for you and how you can know you're going to heaven.

**Joe:** *(laughs)* Why should you care if I go to Heaven? You don't know me. You don't know the things I've done outside of stealin' and lyin'. Besides, people like you don't usually associate with sinners like me.

**Peter:** We're no different, Joe. We're both sinners deserving of hell. We're both sinners that God loves so much He sent His own Son to die for our sins. Not just mine, Joe, but yours, too.

**Joe:** You're a sinner?

**Peter:** Yes. We all are, Joe. We're born in sin. The Bible says in the book of Romans that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." But, it goes on to say that "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." You see, Joe, God "is not willing that any should perish." He doesn't want people to spend forever and ever in Hell. He wants them, *(slight pause)* He wants you, to live in Heaven with Him someday.

**Joe:** I'd like that, but I could never be good enough to get to heaven.

**Peter:** None of us can, Joe. That's why God made a way, the only way, to get there...through His Son, Jesus Christ. When Christ died on that cross, He took our punishment, yours and mine, Joe, so that if we ask Him to forgive us for our sins, save our soul, and make us His child, He will. It's a free gift.

**Joe:** Ain't nothin' free, preacher.

**Peter:** It's free to you and me, Joe, but it cost Christ everything

**Joe:** *(pauses a moment, thinking)* You sure He'll do that...for me?

**Peter:** If you ask Him.

**Joe:** I...I'd like to, but I don't know how.

**Peter:** Just pray. Talk to God just like you're talking to me right now. Tell Him you know you're a sinner and that you want Him to come into your heart .

**Joe:** I guess I can do that. (*Peter bows his head. Joe watches him, then bows his own head, and prays timidly.*) Lord, you know I'm a sinner of the worst sort. I ain't done nothin' but bad for as long as I can remember. Peter here says you can forgive me and take me to heaven someday. (*emotionally*) Please...please Lord, come into my heart and make me clean.

*(Lights Down)* **End Scene**

## Act I/Scene 12

*Setting: Rev. Mooring's home*

*(Peter cautiously approaches the front door, walks in, crosses through the parlor to the library – behind the partition)*

**Peter:** Mama...(sobs) Oh, Mama! If only you could talk to me! I don't understand. I don't understand why all this had to happen. *(There is a long pause. Unknown to Peter, Rev. Mooring enters the Parlor from his study, book in hand. He stands, silently listening, reacting to what Peter says)*

But someday we'll both understand, won't we, Mother? Someday we'll all be together again, you and me, and Papa. And no one will be able to take that from us. There will be no heartaches, no tears...no, death.

*(pause)* I love you, Mama. *(enters from the Library door into the Parlor, brushing away tears)*

**Rev. Mooring:** *(sarcastically)* Well now, wasn't that touching.

I thought you'd come, boy, but I expected to see you at the funeral like a respectable person, not sneaking around my house like a thief!

**Peter:** I didn't exactly want to be arrested in front of all those people, sir.

**Rev. Mooring:** So you do remember my promise, do you?

**Peter:** Yes, sir, I remember. But I didn't think you'd be so heartless as to deny me a few minutes alone with her.

**Rev. Mooring:** Humph! You *are* sentimental.

**Peter:** She was my mother!

**Rev. Mooring:** And she was my wife! And I loved her!

**Peter:** *(shaking his head)* No, you did not. Not when you took away the dearest thing in life that she had.

**Rev. Mooring:** *(moving closer to Peter as he talks)* I was the dearest thing

she had, boy, not you! I gave her everything a woman could want: clothes, servants, money. She loved me, not you!

**Peter:** *(softly)* I feel sorry for you, sir.

**Rev. Mooring:** *(slapping him across the face)* Get out of my house!

**Peter:** *(walks to the door, turns and looks at his step-father before leaving, speaks with sincerity)* I love you, sir, and I'll pray for you.

**Rev. Mooring:** *(livid with anger, throws the book at Peter as he speaks)* Save your prayers for yourself! *(Peter dodges the book and exits).*

*(Lights Down - scene changes to mission with upstairs bedroom/Joe's house)*

**End Scene**

**Intermission**

## Act II, Scene 2

*Setting: The Mission*

*(Amy and Nana are seated on chairs at the table. Jonathan is peaking under the storeroom door.)*

**Nana:** *(to Amy)* Didn't I say you and Peter would have the most beautiful baby in the world? To think that he's four already. *(noticing Jonathan peaking under the storage room door)*

Get away from that door, young man.

**Jonathan:** Aw, Nana, can't I have just a little peak?

**Nana:** Now why in the world would you want to do that? You'll spoil all the fun!

**Jonathan:** No I won't, Nana. Honest!

**Amy:** *(patting the chair beside her)* Come sit down, Jonathan. Papa will be out with your present in a minute. Besides, it's almost time for your birthday cake.

**Jonathan:** *(eagerly, coming to the table)* It is! Oh boy!

*(Peter enters from the storage room with a package wrapped in brown paper. He sets it on the table.)*

**Jonathan:** Can I open it now?

**Papa:** All right, son. I guess you've waited long enough.

**Jonathan:** *(ripping it open)* A Bible! Papa...a real Bible! For me?

**Peter:** *(teasingly)* Well, it's not my birthday. *(to Amy)* Is it yours, honey?

**Amy:** No, it's not my birthday. Nana?

**Nana:** I haven't had a birthday in years, and I certainly don't intend to start now!

**Jonathan:** A whole Bible of my own. Just like Papa. *(holds it up for his mother to see)* Look, Mama, just like Papas.

**Peter:** Soon you'll learn to read, Son. Then you must spend some time every day reading from God's Word.

**Jonathan:** I will, Papa. I'll start tonight! *(Peter and Amy exchange smiles at his cuteness. Lights down while Amy and Nana exit.. Peter sits on the rocker with Jonathan on his lap. The lights come up dimly, as if it were night. Peter is looking through Jonathan's new Bible.)*

**Jonathan:** Papa...

**Peter:** Yes, Jonathan.

**Jonathan:** I have my own Bible now, right?

**Peter:** That's right, son.

**Jonathan:** That means I'm a big boy now, doesn't it?

**Peter:** Yes, Son. It surely does.

**Jonathan:** Well, if I'm big enough to have a Bible, don't you think I'm big enough to get saved?

**Peter:** *(pauses momentarily, in awe of the moment)* You are if you understand what it means to be saved.

**Jonathan:** Oh, yes, Papa. You say it every Sunday. I do bad things. Jesus died for me. He wants me to ask Him into my heart and wash away my sin.

**Peter:** That's exactly right, son. Would you like to do that now?



**Jonathan:** Oh, yes, Papa. *(Jonathan slides off his daddy's lap and kneels by the rocker. He reaches up and takes Peter's hand, then begins to pray.)*

Dear Jesus, I'm a bad boy, but I don't want to be. Please come into my heart and clean it out and make me good. Amen. And thank you that this is my birthday. Amen.

**Peter:** *(with feeling)* You know, Jonathan, today you can celebrate two birthdays.

**Jonathan:** *(with amazement and excitement)* I can?

**Peter:** Yes, your birthday into our family, and your birthday into God's family.

**Jonathan:** Do I get another present?

**Peter:** *(chuckling)* You've already gotten your present. He's in your heart, and He'll never leave you.

*(Lights Down)*

**End Scene**

## Act II/Scene 7

*Setting: The Mission - late at night, several months later  
(There is a knock on the door. The stage lighting should brighten some as Peter comes sleepily down the stairs, candle in hand, and answers it. The man standing before him is graying, bent over, and walks with a cane. He is obviously drunk. Unknown to Peter, it is his step-father. His appearance must be very different than the beginning of the play so the audience will not recognize him as well. His voice should sound older, broken. He should have a straggly beard and a general unkept appearance. He is in bad health, as well, and should cough from time to time.)*

**Peter:** *(cautiously)* Who is it?

**Rev. Mooring:** Lemme in.

**Peter:** What do you want?

**Rev. Mooring:** I need a place to stay for the night.

**Peter:** *(methodically reiterates the speech he has given many times before)* You realize if I let you stay here you will have to allow me to counsel with you in the morning.

**Rev. Mooring:** Yeh.

**Peter:** And you won't be able to touch a drop of liquor the whole time you're here.

**Rev. Mooring:** Wha do ya think I come for? Ta dry out, thas why! *(Peter lets him in and helps him up the stairs to a cot, which has been added to the upstairs set during intermission. Lights come down for a few minutes, then up again. Peter enters from the kitchen with a cup of coffee and takes it up to the stranger.)*

**Peter:** *(helping to lift the man to a sitting position)* Here, sir, drink this. It will be good for you to sober up a bit.

**Rev. Mooring:** (*angrily*) I don' wanna be sobered up!

**Peter:** That's not what you said last night.

**Rev. Mooring:** Humph! Who knows what I said last night. I didn't come here ta get sober.

**Peter:** Then...why did you come?

**Rev. Mooring:** I came here ta die, that's what!

**Peter:** To die?

**Rev. Mooring:** You heard me! Figured I ought ta have a nice bed to lie on when I die.

**Peter:** (*concerned*) And who says you're going to die?

**Rev. Mooring:** I know it's comin'. It's the liquor, and...

**Peter:** And what, sir?

**Rev. Mooring:** Get out!

**Peter:** What?

**Rev. Mooring:** You heard me! Get out! I don't wanna see you!

**Peter:** (*quietly, getting up from the chair*) All right. I'll leave you alone. But I'll be back later. I'm here to help you, sir. I can only do that if you tell me what's troubling you.

**Rev. Mooring:** (*gruffly*) You'll find out soon enough. (*Lights come down, then, after a slight pause, lights come up on Peter and Amy at the table. They are sipping on coffee. It is late at night.*)

**Peter:** He's a strange one, all right. I don't trust him, even though he's been here almost a week and he's hardly moved from that bed.

**Amy:** Peter, he's just a lonely old man.

**Peter:** That may be, but I still want you and Jonathan to stay away from him. We'll keep locking our door at night.

**Amy:** At least you've been able to give him the gospel.

**Peter:** I know. But if he doesn't open up to me soon, I'll have no choice but to turn him over to the authorities. *(Lights down. There is a pause while Peter goes up the stairs and sits in a chair by the man's side. Lights up.)*

**Peter:** Look, you've got to let me send for a doctor.

**Rev. Mooring:** No! *(starts to cough. Peter gives him some water)* There's nothing a doctor could do for me now, anyway.

**Peter:** Then what about the Lord? Won't you give Him a chance? You know you're on your way to Hell. Why don't you repent before it's too late?

**Rev. Mooring:** I can't.

**Peter:** *(getting up, paces some as he speaks, then stops at the foot of the cot)* But why? What could be holding you back from accepting Him? You're about to die! You may not have another day!

**Rev. Mooring:** Doesn't matter. No one cares what happens to me now...not even me.

**Peter:** *(sincerely)* I care.

**Rev. Mooring:** *(trying to sit up, coughs from time to time.)* Would you care if you knew I'd killed someone?

**Peter:** Yes.

**Rev. Mooring:** Can God forgive a murderer?

**Peter:** Of course, He can, if the murderer is truly repentant.

**Rev. Mooring:** Could you forgive a murderer.

**Peter:** *(pauses for a moment before answering)* Yes.

**Rev. Mooring:** *(looking straight at Peter)* Even if he killed your mother?

**Peter:** *(pauses, looks at the man again as if finally recognizing him, turns away - three quarters towards the audience, speaks in stage whisper)* What did you say?

**Rev. Mooring:** You didn't recognize me, did you boy?

**Peter:** I...I...no, sir, I didn't.

**Rev. Mooring:** Sin's taken it's toll on me, boy. I'd like to ask God's forgiveness, but I can't...not until I have yours.

**Peter:** *(looking straight ahead of him, away from Rev. Mooring)* I don't understand, sir. I thought mother's...

**Rev. Mooring:** *(cutting him off)* ...death was an accident?

**Peter:** *(softly, as if finding it hard to speak)* Yes, sir.

**Rev. Mooring:** That's what I wanted everyone to think. That's what I wanted to think. *(He begins coughing again. Peter goes to his side and gives him water. Rev. Mooring looks directly at Peter, then lays back down on the pillow. Peter turns away again, as if finding it hard to look at him.)*

**Peter:** Go on, sir.

**Rev. Mooring:** *(lays on his side, facing the audience, to talk with Peter)* It was my temper, boy. I hated you... hated you because you were everything I

wasn't, because you reminded your mother of your father. He was a good man, and I was exactly what you said I was, boy...a hypocrite! (*Peter should react appropriately to everything Rev. Mooring says.*)

Your mother was a good woman, boy. Best there ever was. She didn't hide your wedding from me. She showed me the letter and meekly asked my permission to go. (*acts as if he's in pain, then continues*)

I was angry...angry that you would have the audacity to go against my authority, angry because no matter how much I tried to push you out of my life, you kept returning, reminding me of the shell of a man I was.

**Peter:** I...

**Rev. Mooring:** (*cutting him off*) No, boy, let me finish. I...I struck her. It was the first time I had ever hit her. I didn't realize she was so close to the stairs. She...she fell. (*he begins to sob; Peter struggles not to cry*)

I guess you heard that I resigned the church not long afterward.

**Peter:** Yes, sir.

**Rev. Mooring:** It was because of guilt. I'd started drinking. I couldn't bear myself. I knew that soon I would be discovered unless I left. (*props himself up slightly on one arm*) I had to be able to leave with my dignity. You can understand that, can't you boy?

**Peter:** (*still turned away from him*) Yes, sir.

**Rev. Mooring:** Since then I've lived in the gutter. I've tried to drown my sin, but it continues to haunt me. I can't expect your forgiveness, but I can at least ask for it.

**Peter:** (*turns towards his step-father. Both of their faces should be in view of the audience. Peter should be near tears.*) There was a time, sir, when I could not have forgiven you. I guess my pride was crushed. It wasn't until I saw you that last time in the parlor that I realized I needed to forgive you, to love you, to pray for your salvation. There's not a day that's gone by since then that I haven't prayed for you, sir. Will you accept that for forgiveness?

(*kneels beside him*) You see, sir, I really forgave you back then,

though I never realized... *(begins to cry)*

**Rev. Mooring:** *(grasping Peter's hand in his)* And now I can have that peace, too. You have forgiven me. God will also forgive me. I am ready to accept that forgiveness. *(Peter looks up at him)* Will pray with me...Son?

*(Lights Down)*

**End Scene**

**The End**