AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

BY ARLENE HUTTON

DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE INC.
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SPECIAL NOTE
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Originally produced in New York City
by the Journey Company and the 78th Street Theatre Lab.
Dedicated to Randy Folger
PRODUCTION NOTES

STAGING: There should be no blackouts between scenes. The movement is fluid, with first line of a new scene following the line in the previous scene with no break in rhythm. If additional time is needed, it should be filled with song. The set and staging should exemplify the simplicity of the Shakers and their dedication to work. The play can be performed with six benches, a few baskets and some laundry. Or the set can resemble a meeting house, with Shaker pegs. The women should be constantly at their tasks.

CASTING: It would be historically accurate to cast one or more of the roles using ethnic types. As to the ages, it is more important to determine the difference in the ages than the ages themselves. For instance, PEGGY could be as old as eighty but could also be played by a college student if it were made clear that she was older than FANNY, POLLY and IZZY. A director may choose to present the play with a larger cast, e.g., in the meeting house and other scenes.

MUSIC: The songs in the script are all Shaker hymns, meant to be sung a cappella. A director may want to put additional songs and dances into the play. A booklet with all the hymns in the play, plus some extra ones, has been compiled by the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill. Information about this can be obtained from:

Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, Kentucky
Attn: Music Programs Coordinator
3501 Lexington Road
Harrodsburg, KY 40330-8846
Phone: 1-800-734-5611, x 115
Email: donna@shakervillageky.org

SOURCE MATERIAL: Helpful works include *The Shaker Spiritual* by Daniel Patterson, recently reprinted by Dover, and *The Gift to Be Simple* by Edward Andrews, also by Dover. Especially helpful are Sharon Koomler’s *The Gift Drawing Collection of Hancock Shaker Village* and *Shaker Style*, as well as Deborah Burns’ *Shaker Cities of Peace, Love and Union. The Shaker
Experience in America by Stephen Stein remains one of the definitive works on the Shakers. Roger Hall has a web site on Shaker music. The Shaker Heritage Guidebook, published by Golden Hill Press, is an excellent source of information about Shaker sites, including the villages at Pleasant Hill, Hancock, South Union, Enfield, Canterbury, Sabbathday Lake, Mount Lebanon and the Shaker Museum and Library at Old Chatham.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: Randy Folger, Larrie Curry, Sharon Koomler, Jerry Grant, Donald Maass, New Dramatists, The Barrow Group, The MacDowell Colony.
A NOTE FROM THE DRAMATURG

The United Society of Believers in the Second Coming of Christ, more commonly known as the Shakers, was originally founded in Manchester, England, during the 1770s. Enduring religious persecution from the British government, the first nine Shakers set out for America. Mother Ann Lee, the charismatic and visionary leader of the early Shakers, was among those first believers who set foot on American soil in 1774. In a two-year preaching tour of New England, Ann Lee won many new converts to the faith and lay the foundations of the first Shaker communities. Mother Ann Lee died in 1783, by which time there were several established Shaker communities beginning to flourish.

The Shakers were an exemplary group of early Americans, struggling to make a new life for themselves in the rich wilderness. The new country became a vast testing ground for Utopian communities such as the Shakers. Of all the hundreds of Utopian societies founded in early America, the Shakers, who emphasized a strong integration of faith and daily life, are the most enduring. They established a cooperative life of piety, work and clean living. Personal property and individual rights were unimportant, all of which were sacrificed for the common good of the community.

The Shakers had three essential beliefs that influenced their living practices. They believed that God was dual in nature, both mother and father to their children. Jesus Christ was the first manifestation of God’s presence on earth; Mother Ann Lee was the second. The Shakers believed that they were living in the millennium leading up to the final judgment and so they were not to be focused on earthly concerns. Because of this second belief, they lived a celibate life dedicated to building the kingdom of heaven on earth. They lived separate from the outside world, “the world’s people,” in complete devotion to Mother and Father God. Throughout the nineteenth century, they continued to gain converts, building their numbers to over four thousand believers. Since they regarded themselves as the children of their holy Mother and Father, they saw one another as sisters and brothers who were to live in devo-
tion and union, practicing a virtuous life together. They divided each village into “families” of brothers and sisters who lived, worked and worshipped in a confessional community. Males and females lived in equality, and all races were welcome to join in Shaker life. The only element required to join was the signing of a covenant at the age of twenty.

As It is in Heaven is set in the Shaker village of Pleasant Hill, Kentucky — one of the most prosperous of all the Shaker communities during its time. Formally established as a village in 1814, Pleasant Hill, like its sister communities, flourished in antebellum America. Their dedication to hard work, simplicity and cleanliness became evident in the beauty of their architecture and designs.

By the 1820s the Shaker way of life was well established. Like most religious communities, internal disruptions arose and many felt that the original vision of Mother Ann had been lost. All of this changed due to an intense spiritual revival that began in 1837, a period of Shaker history known as “Mother Ann’s Work.” As It is in Heaven is set during this period of revival when believers experienced visions, trances and all phenomena of religious fervor. Intense periods of shaking and dancing, visions and the channeling of spirits disrupted the orderly flow of the Shaker service. Many received what they termed “gifts” which were divine inspirations, experiences or abilities. For example, during this revival many received gifts that manifested themselves in colorful spirit drawings. Others received visions and messages from Mother Ann. These revivalist experiences swept through all of the Shaker communities, causing many to return to their beliefs and others to doubt.
In the rush of American industrialism and modernization after the Civil War, many of the Shaker communities disbanded. Their simplistic way of life was no longer attractive in a world of emerging materialist consumerism. The Shaker's story and experience are embraced by many Americans today as a national treasure. At its heart, the Shaker experience is about religious freedom and the American puritan values of hard work and endurance, brotherhood/sisterhood and equality. Their beautiful Utopian experiment will be cherished for generations.

—Stephanie Sandberg
AS IT IS IN HEAVEN was originally produced by the Journey Company (Beth Lincks, Producing Artistic Director) and the 78th Street Theatre Lab (Eric Nightengale, Artistic Director; Mark Zeller and Dana Zeller-Alexis, Producing Directors; Ruth Nightengale, General Manager) in New York City on September 13, 2001. It was directed by Beth Lincks; the associate director was Stephanie Sandberg; the lighting design was by Tyler Micoleau; the music director was Julie Alderfer; the costume design was by Shelley Norton; and the assistant directorstage manager was Annie Levy. The cast was as follows:

PEGGY ......................................................... Julie Alderfer
PHEBE ...................................................... Margot Avery
RACHEL ....................................................... Lisa Hayes
IZZY .......................................................... Soline McLain
BETSY ....................................................... Ruth Nightengale
HANNAH ..................................................... Priscilla Shanks
POLLY ....................................................... Carla Cantrelle
FANNY ...................................................... Alexandra Geis
JANE ........................................................ Judith Hawking

The play was subsequently produced by the Journey Company and the 78th Street Theatre Lab in association with Laine Valentino and Evan Bergman at the ArcLight Theatre on January 11, 2002 with the following cast:

PEGGY ......................................................... Julie Alderfer
PHEBE ...................................................... Margot Avery
RACHEL ....................................................... Lisa Hayes
IZZY .......................................................... Soline McLain
BETSY ....................................................... Ruth Nightengale
HANNAH ..................................................... Priscilla Shanks
POLLY ....................................................... Carla Cantrelle
FANNY ...................................................... Alexandra Geis
JANE ........................................................ Judith Hawking
CHARACTERS

THE ESTABLISHMENT
PEGGY — The cook. Meek, quiet and trustful, easily hurt.
HANNAH — An eldress. Tries to be merciful and kind.
PHEBE — A deaconess. Seeks righteousness.
BETSY — A deaconess. The peacemaker, but also a gossip.
RACHEL — A longtime Shaker. Pure in heart.
IZZY — The youngest. Raised with Shakers. Persecuted for righteousness’ sake.

NEWCOMERS
POLLY — A newcomer. Poor in spirit, needy, bitter.
JANE — Mournful, sad.

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

TIME
Around 1838.
AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

ACT ONE

Scene 1

A Shaker village in Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, 1838. The stage may subtly resemble a Shaker meeting house. There are six to eight wooden benches on stage, which move around for the various scenes. There are no entrances and exits from or to offstage; when the actresses are not in a scene, they sit on the side benches and sew or knit. Their hands are always busy, even when they are out of the light.

There are no blackouts or pauses between scenes. The movement from scene to scene is fluid throughout the play; we do not wait for the set to change before the next scene starts. The actors frequently begin speaking the lines for the new scene while they are still in the previous scene. The benches are moved, or they move them, and they walk into the new scene. Sometimes a scene or song is happening in the foreground while a new scene is setting up behind the action, in full view of the audience. The downstage actors finish their scene and exit to the side benches, revealing the new scene upstage. Each scene has a task; none of the work of the Sisters should be totally mimed; there must always be a prop to represent the task.

The women all wear simple white sheer caps. The dresses are more colorful than we would expect, and each woman wears a shawl-like kerchief. Occasionally an apron is worn.
At the start of the play the benches are set in rows like pews. The Sisters enter, singing as they dance a structured march. By the end of it they have taken their places in the meeting house.

PEGGY. (Singing.)
WELCOME, WELCOME PRECIOUS GOSPEL KINDRED.
ALL. (Singing.)
WE ARE HAPPY YOU TO MEET
AND MAKE YOU FREELY WELCOME.
BY THE CORDS OF UNION PURE
OUR HEARTS ARE BOUND TOGETHER.
AND THE LOVE WE BEAR TO YOU
NO FRIENDSHIP E’ER CAN SEVER.
(The song repeats as long as needed for the Sisters to get to their places. They all sit, except for Hannah.)
HANNAH. Let all confess their sins. (Hannah sits. There is silence, and then the confessions come quickly. Each woman stands to make her confession and then sits.)
PEGGY. I slept late last Thursday.
BETSY. I was angry at the hens. They nipped Izzy when she was gathering eggs. I was angry at them.
RACHEL. I, I, I forgot to pray for some of the Sisters this week.
BETSY. Yesterday I heard two boys quarreling and I passed them by without reporting them.
JANE. I pray that I keep my mind on my tasks.
BETSY. I ate bread between meals. (A beat.)
PEGGY. I wished that Sister Jane would fall asleep and not cry in her bed. I was proudfu of my new apron.
BETSY. I wrung that rooster’s neck in anger. ’Cause he pecked Izzy.
RACHEL. I threw a stone at a stray dog. (Betsy, Jane and Izzy all stand up at the same time to confess. Betsy and Izzy sit down.)
JANE. I confess that my mind wandered while I should have been working.
IZZY. I teased the chickens. They nipped me ’cause I was teasing them. I confess that I was teasing the hens. Tryin’ to pet the chicks. (Betsy stands up, as if to respond to Izzy, but sits back down without speaking. There is a pause, and Betsy stands up again.)
BETSY. I gossiped. (A beat.)
PHEBE. I became impatient when the children ran through the garden. I scolded them too harshly for trampling the seedlings and ruining the tomato plants.
POLLY. I fed my dinner to the cats. I confess that I couldn’t eat it and I fed it to the cats.
BETSY. I didn’t thank Sister Peggy for making waffles on my birthday.
RACHEL. I cursed at some raccoons.
POLLY. I forgot to throw out the food that the cats didn’t eat. I confess that I forgot about the raccoons.
BETSY. I don’t thank Sister Peggy often enough for her hard work in the kitchen.
PHEBE. I ate extra helpings of mashed potatoes without asking.
IZZY. I put extra gravy on my mashed potatoes.
BETSY. I had three helpings of soup beans.
RACHEL. At grace I forgot to give thanks for Sister Peggy’s cooking. (A pause.)
PEGGY. I daydreamed and burned the muffins.
FANNY. May I be given strength to do my kitchen chores even better.
PHEBE. I am frequently impatient with the newcomers. With Sister Fanny and Sister Polly and Sister Jane. May I realize that they have much to learn about our ways. (Sister Jane stands, starts to say something but doesn’t. She sits.)
PEGGY. I neglected to comfort Sister Jane in her sorrow.
POLLY. I looked at Brother Abraham in the meeting. Caught his eye.
FANNY. I went past the … (She stops. Polly stares at her.) Past the meeting house without saying a prayer. Walked right on by. (Silence.)
PHEBE. May we be forgiven and deserving in your eyes. Hear our prayers.
RACHEL. May we pray for our leaders and give thanks for their guidance. We pray for our deaconesses, Sister Betsy and Sister Phebe. We give thanks for the wisdom and love of our eldress, Sister Hannah.
PHEBE. (Interrupting.) We pray — we pray for the continued
health and well-being of all the Sisters and the Brethren.
BETSY. Let us give thanks and praise. Let us work as if we were
to live forever. Let us live as if we were to die tomorrow. Grant us
grace and peace.
FANNY. Amen. (When no one else says “Amen,” Fanny realizes she
responded too quickly.)
HANNAH. May we go forth in the strength and the power of the
gospel and labor for the spirit of conviction.
ALL. Amen. (Peggy, who clearly likes to sing, begins a song.)
PEGGY. (Singing.)
COME LIFE, SHAKER LIFE
ALL. (Standing and singing.)
COME LIFE, ETERNAL
SHAKE, SHAKE OUT OF ME,
ALL THAT IS CARNAL.
(The Sisters move to their positions in the next scene, moving the
benches when necessary, singing all the while.)
I’LL TAKE NIMBLE STEPS
I’LL BE A DAVID
I’LL SHOW MICHAEL TWICE
HOW HE BEHAVED.
(Lights change. By the end of the song the stage is set for the next scene
and the actors are in place.)

Scene 2

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

BETSY. (To Polly.) What did you see?
POLLY. I don’t know.
BETSY. Must have been something powerful.
POLLY. Weren’t much o’ nothin’. Nothin’ at’ll.
JANE. We sometimes don’t know what we see.
POLLY. Didn’t see much of anything, I reckon.
BETSY. Well, then.
POLLY. You believe me?
JANE. No.
BETSY. If you say you didn’t see anything, then, yes, I believe you.
JANE. She didn’t say that. Didn’t say she didn’t see anything.
BETSY. (To Polly.) Then what did you see?
POLLY. I don’t know.
JANE. She don’t know what she saw. (To Polly.) You don’t know what you saw.
POLLY. I don’t know. It couldn’t be —
BETSY. What couldn’t it be?
POLLY. Fanny said.
JANE. We want to know what you saw.
POLLY. Fanny said it were angels. (Lights change. We hear singing from the women sitting on the benches. Peggy, Phebe, Betsy and Rachel sit and spread out a large cloth over their laps.)
ALL. (Singing.)
   I WILL BOW AND BE SIMPLE
   I WILL BOW AND BE FREE
   I WILL BOW AND BE HUMBLE
   YEA BOW LIKE THE WILLOW TREE.
(Lights change. Still singing, the women move the benches to set up for the next scene.)

Scene 3

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

PEGGY, BETSY, PHEBE, RACHEL. (Singing.)
   I WILL BOW THIS IS THE TOKEN
I WILL WEAR THE EASY YOKE
I WILL BOW AND BE BROKEN
YEA I’LL FALL UPON THE ROCK.

BETSY. Sister Peggy, you look a little peaked.
PHEBE. Indeed you do.
RACHEL. Hmm.
PHEBE. Too much close work.
PEGGY. I like it.
PHEBE. Quilting. Making labels for the jelly jars. Too much close work.
RACHEL. Hmm.
PEGGY. I’m quite well.
PHEBE. Fresh air would put color in your face.
BETSY. (To Peggy.) Would you like a respite from your quilting?
RACHEL. ’Taint the quilting that makes her look tired.
BETSY. Are you not sleeping well, Sister Peggy?
PEGGY. I’ve missed some nights.
RACHEL. Hmm.
PHEBE. You need your sleep.
RACHEL. Hmm.
BETSY. Should Sister Phebe administer herbs to you?
RACHEL. It’s Sister Jane. She’s in the room with Sister Jane.
PHEBE. That’ll keep anybody from a good night’s sleep.
BETSY. Is there a difficulty? Is there a difficulty with Sister Jane?
PEGGY. She cries all night.
PHEBE. Sister Jane can leave the community if she is not happy here.
BETSY. She signed the covenant.
PEGGY. Yes, she did.
BETSY. By her own free will.
PHEBE. Could leave if she liked.
RACHEL. I don’t think Sister Jane would be happy anywhere.
PHEBE. I don’t think Sister Jane was ever happy.
RACHEL. She’s been here nigh on a year now.
BETSY. Came with her husband.
RACHEL. That’s right.
BETSY. Brother James.
RACHEL. No.
PEGGY. It was Brother William.
BETSY. No.
PEGGY. Yes. It was Brother William.
BETSY. Of course it was.
RACHEL. Brother William.
BETSY. Brother William is good with the carpentry. Liked to raise that barn by himself.
PEGGY. He'll make deacon some day.
RACHEL. He'll make a good deacon.
PHEBE. Yes, he will.
RACHEL. Maybe make elder.
PEGGY. He looks like an elder.
RACHEL. He does look like an elder.
PEGGY. With that fine beard.
RACHEL. That is a fine beard on him. Full. Not scraggly like Brother Timothy's. Brother William keeps his beard in good trim. It's a tidy beard. You're right. He'll make a fine-lookin' elder some day.
BETSY. Always has a cheerful countenance.
PHEBE. Because he doesn't live with Sister Jane anymore. (They laugh. Hannah enters and takes her place. The women focus on their work. Rachel hands Hannah a threaded needle. All sew in silence.)
HANNAH. Several of the brothers took the wagon to Lexington this morning. Taking the seed packets to sell. Going to bring us a new pot. I requested a new soup pot and a kettle.
PEGGY. The kitchen could use some new pots. (All sew in silence.)
BETSY. My needle's gone dull.
PHEBE. Here is one. (She mimes a needle.)
BETSY. Thank you, Sister Phebe. (All sew in silence.)
HANNAH. They'll be slaughtering that hog next week.
PEGGY. Izzy will be sad.
RACHEL. Hmm.
BETSY. Izzy raised that hog from a piglet.
RACHEL. (Agreeing.) Little piglet. (They quilt in silence.)
HANNAH. The elders have a concern. (All stop sewing and look at her.) The Brethren mentioned to me that they have noticed some of the sisters gossiping.
PHEBE. Surely not.
BETSY. Must be the North Family they're talking about.
RACHEL. Hmm.
HANNAH. Surely you are right. Must be the North Family. (They begin to sew again. Jane enters and takes her place at the quilt. She just touches it.) Welcome, Sister Jane. (Jane sits at the quilt, but does not sew.)
JANE. Reminds me of a baby quilt I made once. Wonder what happened to that quilt.
BETSY. Baby quilts are nice to make. Make ’em up quick, they’re so small.
PEGGY. (Kindly.) Sister Jane, your babies are in heaven. They don’t need quilts.
JANE. Oh, I recollect now! We buried one of my little boys in that quilt. My little boy Benjamin.
HANNAH. Sister Peggy, perhaps it would be wise to prepare the kitchen for the new pots.
PEGGY. I’ll tend to that right now, Sister Hannah. (Peggy knots off her thread and stands to leave.)
HANNAH. Sister Jane, perhaps you could assist Sister Peggy.
JANE. Yes, I will do that. (Jane stands and turns to go.)
HANNAH. And Sister Jane —
JANE. Yes, Sister Hannah?
HANNAH. (As she begins folding the quilt.) It was mentioned by a cousin of yours that you make fine oatmeal sweetcakes. Perhaps you would make some for us today. The brothers will be hungry after their journey.
JANE. But Sister Peggy always does the baking. (Hannah stands, preparing to leave. The women take the quilt from her.)
HANNAH. I understand that you are a fine baker, as well. Sometimes we need to change the way we do things. We look forward to your sweetcakes. (Lights change as Peggy begins the next song. Jane and Hannah move two of the benches to the side and sit.)
Scene 4

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

PEGGY.
WHO WILL BOW AND BEND LIKE A WILLOW,
WHO WILL TURN AND TWIST AND REEL
IN THE GALE OF SIMPLE FREEDOM,
FROM THE BOWER OF UNION FLOWING.
WHO WILL DRINK THE WINE OF POWER,
DROPPING DOWN LIKE A SHOWER, PRIDE
AND BONDAGE ALL FORGETTING,
MOTHER’S WINE IS FREELY WORKING.
PEGGY, RACHEL, PHEBE, BETSY.
OH, HO! I WILL HAVE IT,
I WILL BOW AND BEND TO GET IT,
I’LL BE REELING, TURNING, TWISTING,
SHAKE OUT ALL THE STARCH AND STIFF’NING!
(By the end of the song Peggy and Izzy have taken their place on a bench and the other woman have returned to their places on the side benches.)

Scene 5

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

HANNAH. Sister Fanny —
FANNY. Yes, Sister Hannah?
HANNAH. Your cousin came to the trustee's office again.
Looking for you.
FANNY. I don't want to be no bother to anyone.
HANNAH. No bother. We sent him away.
FANNY. Thank you, Sister Hannah. (Hannah starts to leave, but
turns.)
HANNAH. You are safe here, Sister Fanny. And kindly welcome.
(Hannah and Fanny exit, revealing … Lights up on Peggy, Izzy break-
ing green beans into a pot, tossing the ends and strings into a basket.)
PEGGY. Snap 'em.
IZZY. Beggin' your pardon.
PEGGY. You snap 'em, Izzy. Snap the beans. Don't just break 'em.
Give it a little snap.
IZZY. Don't make much difference. They're going to the same pot.
PEGGY. If they don't snap they go back to the garden.
IZZY. Why don't you cut the beans? Slice 'em with a knife. Faster.
PEGGY. Cain't tell if it's a good bean, then. If the bean don't give
a nice little snap when you break it, if it's soft, the bean's not good
enough. If it don't snap ya throw it back into the compost and give
it another chance to be a better bean next time 'round.
IZZY. It'll still taste the same. Tastes the same in the pot. No
one'll know if you cut it or snap it.
PEGGY. You will know. (Izzy snaps a bean.) And God will know.
(Lights change as Polly and Fanny begin the next scene in a different
part of the stage.)

Scene 6

POLLY. (Handing a broom to Fanny and beginning to sweep.)
Where were you?
FANNY. You seen the baby lambs?
POLLY. You were gone an awful long time.
FANNY. They're precious.
POLLY. Sister Phebe asked about you.
FANNY. Sister Rachel was there. With the lambs.
POLLY. Long time to be looking at lambs. Went back the meadow didn’t you? Izzy saw you go. She was up the stairs. Saw you go. No lambs past the meadow. You meet’n a bigger beast maybe? Maybe there’s a stallion past the meadow. Big ole stallion await’n for you.
FANNY. Weren’t no stallion there.
POLLY. I know’d you went, so you best be telling me where.
FANNY. Past the meadow. Past the big willow tree. I seen things. I heerd …
POLLY. Who’d ya see? Were it Jane? Out there a cryin’? Were it Jane?
FANNY. You wouldn’t believe it.
POLLY. Who’d ya see?
FANNY. I seen angels. There’s angels out there — past the meadow.

Scene 7

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

PHEBE. What did you see?
IZZY. *(To Rachel.*) They were from heaven.
PHEBE. What were?
RACHEL. Everything comes from heaven.
IZZY. They were beautiful. They were the most beautiful —
PHEBE. *(Overlapping.*) Tell us everything you saw.
IZZY. Gold. Lots of gold. And I heard music.
PHEBE. Maybe you were dreaming.
IZZY. It seemed like a dream. So beautiful.
PHEBE. What did it look like?
PHEBE. *(To Rachel.*) She was dreaming.
IZZY. Weren’t no dream.
PHEBE. I wasn’t talking to you.
IZZY. Weren’t no dream. I thought it was. I thought it was at first. I heard sounds. Like music, but not like music. I looked up and seen a light so bright. Brighter than the sun even, but it didn’t hurt my eyes to look at it. I thought I must be dreaming, so I slapped my arm. And pinched at my hand. I pinched it hard. So hard. Look. Look at the bruise. Weren’t no dream.
RACHEL. Surely that must be heaven she seen.
PHEBE. Dreams show us heaven sometimes. You pinched yourself in your sleep.
IZZY. No! Fanny seen it, too. (Fanny stands from her side bench position and moves onstage purposefully. Izzy walks into the next scene and begins it immediately following her last line. Lights change, as Phebe and Rachel move the benches.)

Scene 8

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

IZZY. Fanny! (No answer. Izzy follows her.) Fanny! (Izzy catches up to her. Fanny walks a while, Izzy behind.)
FANNY. Don’t you have chores?
IZZY. Finished. Fed the chickens. I can come with you.
FANNY. I don’t recollect inviting you.
IZZY. I want to see … see the … (Fanny turns to face her.)
FANNY. See what? What is it you wanting to see?
IZZY. What you’ve been seeing.
FANNY. I’ve been seeing blueberries. And I aim to pick us some. Gonna spoil that nice white apron o’yours if you come pickin’ blueberries with me. (Izzy turns to go as Polly runs on.)
POLLY. (To Fanny.) Was looking for you.
FANNY. Getting to be a party now, Polly.
IZZY. (To Polly.) Fanny’s going to pick blueberries.
POLLY. Too early for blueberries.
FANNY. Found some early ones.
IZZY. Early ones'll be sour.
POLLY. She's going out past the meadow.
IZZY. (To Fanny) You said you were going berry-picking.
POLLY. Where's her pail, then?
IZZY. You don't have a pail! (A beat.)
FANNY. Just wanted to be alone. Not used to spending every waking minute someone by my side. Just like to go sit and look at the trees sometimes.
IZZY. I won't bother you. I won't even talk to you.
POLLY. You're seeing something in the trees.
FANNY. (Starting to leave.) Sure, I am. Birds. I'm seeing birds in the trees. And squirrels. (Polly is following her throughout the following.
IZZY tags along.)
IZZY. Are there baby squirrels? Funny how you never see baby squirrels. Baby birds. You see them. Once I found a baby bird fallen out of its nest. I put it back.
POLLY. It died.
IZZY. How do you know? I put it back.
POLLY. Mama bird won't touch a young'un after a person's handled it.
IZZY. Maybe it didn't die.
POLLY. Won't touch it once it's tainted with a human smell. Momma bird won't have anything t'do with it.
FANNY. You saved it, Izzy. You saved its life. (They keep walking.)
IZZY. Once I found a hummingbird caught in a spider web. I pulled that spider web oft it. Flew off, happy as could be. Aren't hummingbirds the most beautiful thing? Little spirits flying around. Little angels, almost.
POLLY. Fanny sees angels. You told me you did. Unless it was a false gift.
FANNY. Weren't false. Ain't no false gift.
POLLY. If you're seeing something, then show us. I think it's a lying gift. I don't believe in spirits and angels no how.
IZZY. Mother Ann saw spirits.
POLLY. She's making it up. She's lying. (Fanny stops and stares westward.)
IZZY. (To Fanny.) Are you making it up?
POLLY. She’s making it up. I’m going back. I’m hungry.
FANNY. There’s berries over there.
POLLY. Too early for berries. (Izzy sees the berries.)
IZZY. Those are the biggest blueberries I ever saw. Don’t see any squirrels or birds. Sure is quiet here.
POLLY. There it is! (Polly “gooses” Izzy, who squeals.)
IZZY. Where?
POLLY. Sun’s about to set. There’s nothing here.
FANNY. Over there.
POLLY. Where?
FANNY. There. (She points.)
IZZY. Where?
POLLY. An angel?
FANNY. Don’t know.
IZZY. I should be getting back.
POLLY. You scared?
FANNY. Thought you wanted to see.
IZZY. I do.
FANNY. (Suddenly stops.) Then look.
IZZY. Don’t see anything. Where am I supposed to look?
POLLY. It’s getting warmer. Should be getting cooler, but it’s getting warmer.
FANNY. Hush.
POLLY. What do you see?
FANNY. Hush.
IZZY. I’m scared.
FANNY. (Whispers.) Don’t be scared Izzy. It’s the most beautiful thing you ever did see.
IZZY. (Whispering back.) More beautiful than a hummingbird?
FANNY. Like a hundred hummingbirds all at once. (The lights shift. Fanny holds out her arms.)
IZZY. Ohhhh. (Fanny closes her eyes. Izzy and Polly look skyward.)
Ohhh, I see light.
FANNY. Hush.
POLLY. Where? (Fanny stands and faces the light as if it were sunlight streaming on her face after a long dark winter.) What do you see?
IZZY. So beautiful!
POLLY.  Don't see anything except the pink clouds!
IZZY.  The light!
POLLY.  It's the sunset, silly.
IZZY.  I hear the wings! Like a hundred hummingbirds! Oh, oh, oh ...
POLLY.  Just the breeze, Izzy. Just a warm breeze rustling though the trees. (*Polly shakes Izzy, who continues to look all around.*)
IZZY.  Gold. All gold.
POLLY.  Where?
FANNY.  What do you hear, Izzy?
POLLY.  (*Shouting.*) You're making it up! It's just a sunset.
FANNY.  Look at the clouds, Polly.
POLLY.  You're making it up!
FANNY.  Look at the clouds!
POLLY.  (*Covering her face.*) No.
FANNY.  Does that look like any sunset you've ever seen before?
POLLY.  (*In denial.*) No.
IZZY.  Like a thousand hummingbirds! (*Izzy and Fanny run off. Polly turns to go and runs into Rachel carrying a basket of laundry. Lights change.*)

Scene 9

RACHEL.  Sister Polly, where's the fire?
POLLY.  (*Out of breath.*) No, I, I, I don't know.
RACHEL.  Catch your breath. (*Betsy enters with a laundry basket, and sets the benches with Rachel, all the time continuing the scene. They begin folding laundry.*) Something startled Sister Polly.
BETSY.  (*Laughing.*) Seeing spirits, are you?
POLLY.  No!
RACHEL.  Hmm.
BETSY.  Best not be. 'Til you sign the covenant.
POLLY.  Really?
RACHEL.  She's just funnin' you.
POLLY. How did you know you were ready to sign the covenant?
RACHEL. Just seemed like the thing to do, one day.
POLLY. Did you see…? You just suddenly became a believer?
BETSY. Don't have to be a believer to sign the covenant.
RACHEL. Hmm.
BETSY. Don't have to believe. Just have to try.
POLLY. Were you always a believer?
BETSY. Sister Rachel was a minister's wife. She had to believe.
RACHEL. Joined with my late husband. And the entire congregation. Every last one of us believed.
BETSY. (Beat.) I didn't believe. When I came here. No. Didn't believe at all. Didn't have any family much, bringing me up. It's nicer here. Never had so many clothes to wear. And shoes. Shoes year-round. And if they wear out they get fixed. And if they wear out again I get a new pair. Always like having shoes. I thought I'd be here a year, two at the most … Some people here eighty year old. Where else do I see so many people eighty year old? Being taken care of. Who's going to take care of me? Longer I'm here the more I believe.
RACHEL. Hmm. Have to want to believe. It's the journey that matters.
POLLY. I don't have to always believe?
RACHEL. We'll help you.
BETSY. Have faith and belief will come. Work like you believe.
Sing like you believe.
RACHEL. You ever go to a barn dance? You twirl round and round 'til you're feeling dizzy? Same thing at the meeting house. You march round and round, you're bound to feel dizzy. You stop for just a minute to catch your breath, and the singing sweeps you up again, dancing and twirling and freeing yourself from earthly concerns.
BETSY. Listen to you, you old Methodist!
RACHEL. Don't miss being a Methodist. I like to dance.
POLLY. I'm always out of step.
RACHEL. You'll catch on to it after a while. Started forming the marches about ten years ago. Some people dancing the same dances for years. Singing the same songs. For years. You'll catch on.
POLLY. I don't like singing together all the time. Want some harmony.
RACHEL. Plain and simple.

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

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

POLLY. End up in the lap of Brother Timothy!

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

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

POLLY. Hush!

RACHEL. (Pointing.) Rosy cheeks. Thinkin' of Brother Abraham. (They giggle, as Jane enters with a basket of clothes.)

JANE. What about Brother Abraham?

POLLY. He's a looker!

JANE. (To Polly, pointedly.) You shouldn't be, neither. (Looks offstage.) That ole bull Comet will be the death of me. Snortin' and runnin' at the fence. Pastured too close to the wash-house. (To Polly.) You shouldn't be lookin' at the men.

POLLY. Weren't. We were just funnin'.

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

POLLY. Don't you miss bein' married sometimes?

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

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

POLLY. Being with a man's a natural thing.

RACHEL. For the world's people. Not for us.

JANE. Well, I don't miss it. (Looks offstage.) What am I going to do? That ole bull won't let me near the clothesline. Flies at the fence every time I try to take down a linen.
RACHEL. Comet wouldn’t hurt a no-see-um flying in his face.
POLLY. But it’s natural, wantin’ to be with a man.
RACHEL. Mother Ann Lee teaches us to keep our eyes on heaven.
Not on earthly wants.
POLLY. We eat and we sleep.
RACHEL. So we can do Mother Ann Lee’s work.
JANE. Mother Ann lost four babies. Afore she stopped lying with
her husband. Four babies.
RACHEL. (To Polly.) Fix your eyes on heaven. You won’t think
about earthly wants.
POLLY. If it’s natural, like eating and sleeping …
RACHEL. Some people find a sweetheart and get married. We
give our hearts to God. (Rachel grabs some of the laundry and exits.)
JANE. (Looking off.) That ole bull Comet sure don’t like those
linens on the line. The worst is the petticoats. He sees them a-wavin’
at him and he goes crazy. Just like a man. Goin’ crazy over the pet-
ticoats on the other side of the fence. (Izzy comes running in.)
IZZY. Mischief had kittens!
POLLY. Again? (Jane keeps working.)
IZZY. She had kittens! Three, four of ’em! In the laundry basket.
On the clean laundry! I don’t think anyone’ll mind, do you? She
just popped one out and licked it and then another came out and
another. One looks like Mischief and two look like Mr.
Chickenhouse. But the last little one, all motley colored, was just
lying there. Mischief didn’t even lick that one. Just pushed it aside.
(Izzy looks at Polly, who doesn’t speak. Izzy turns to Jane.)
JANE. Cats are smarter than people sometimes. (As she gets up to
go.) Know when to give up on a sickly child. (Jane goes back to the
side benches. Rachel, Betsy and Izzy carry off the laundry baskets as
they exit to the side benches. Lights change.)
Scene 10

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

POLLY. (Singing.)
MY CARNAL LIFE I WILL LAY DOWN
BECAUSE IT IS DEPRAVED.
I’M SURE ON ANY OTHER GROUND
I NEVER CAN BE SAVED.
(Lights change.)

Scene 11

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

BETSY. You have a beautiful script, Sister Polly. And look at that apple. That is a lovely apple. (Betsy and Peggy begin to work.)
POLLY. I like making pictures. Drawing the fruit.
PEGGY. Some Sisters couldn't tell the jelly jars apart. Before you started making pictures for them.
POLLY. Why not?
BETSY. Can't read. Some of the older Sisters are unable to read. And some of the younger ones if they're new.
PEGGY. Your fruit pictures are welcome.
POLLY. I try to make them pretty.
PEGGY. Just make them plain and simple.
BETSY. A little color is nice.
PEGGY. Just to tell what the fruit is. Don’t embellish.
BETSY. Sister Polly is an artist.
PEGGY. (To Betsy) Sister Polly is of service here. Her labels are
clear. (To Polly) We’ll have you helping Sister Betsy with the seed
packets next.
POLLY. Seed packets would be fun.
PEGGY. It’s not for fun.
POLLY. Sister Betsy’s seed packets are beautiful.
BETSY. They are useful. Sell the seeds to the world’s people.
POLLY. They are beautiful. All the colors.
BETSY. I try to keep them simple.
POLLY. They look just like the vegetables. Not like my drawings.
PEGGY. Your fruit drawings are unmistakable. Plain. Simple.
POLLY. My trees.
PEGGY. (Curious) What trees?
POLLY. Oh, if I were to draw a tree … On a seed packet.
PEGGY. (Confused) There are no seed packets for trees.
POLLY. If there were.
PEGGY. There aren’t. (They work in silence) Are you drawing
trees, Sister Polly?
BETSY. I must commence working on some herb pictures. Sister
Polly, I simply can’t seem to get the rosemary right. All those spiny
little leaves. Tricky little leaves. Would you sketch it out for me?
(Polly just stares at her.)
PEGGY. Are you drawing trees, Sister Polly?
BETSY. It’s the little details that escape me. I’m better at the vege-
tables.
PEGGY. Sister Polly?
POLLY. Yes, Sister Peggy?
BETSY. I like a good round radish. Or a tomato. Even a carrot.
Something with color. Don’t care for drawing potatoes or turnips.
And those little herbs are tricky. Trying to tell them apart. Always
have to ask Sister Phebe which is which. All those little leaves.
PEGGY. Perhaps Sister Polly can help you with the little leaves on
the herbs. For the seed packets. Perhaps Sister Polly is accustomed
to drawing leaves. Perhaps Sister Polly should direct her drawing
talent toward useful service. (Peggy exits. Betsy and Polly work in
silence for a moment. Polly stops and looks at Betsy.)
POLLY. I have a gift to draw.
BETSY. You have a talent to draw.
POLLY. I have a gift to draw.
BETSY. What’s your meaning, Sister Polly?
POLLY. I have a gift to draw. It just comes out of me. The strangest drawings. Trees and birds.
BETSY. Trees and birds aren’t strange.
POLLY. Trees and birds like I’ve never seen. I have a gift to draw trees and birds, but I only see them in my head. Well, you understand. You have a talent.
BETSY. I have a talent to draw what I see so others can recognize it. Vegetables. Fruits.
POLLY. But you see it in your head.
BETSY. No. I have to look at what I’m drawing for anybody to be able to tell what it is. Can’t just draw it without seeing it.
POLLY. But you see it in your head. Right now. You could draw a carrot. Right now if you wanted to.
BETSY. Might look like a long orange potato. No. I have to look at what I’m drawing. See it in front of me.
POLLY. Not in your head.
BETSY. On the table in front of me.
POLLY. Oh.
BETSY. Have to see it. (A pause.) Do you draw from your head, Sister Polly?
POLLY. I have a gift to draw.
BETSY. I would make certain it is not a false gift.
POLLY. I have a gift to draw. (Polly pulls something from her pocket.) This is for you, Sister Betsy. (Polly hands her a colored heart with drawing and writing on it. Betsy just looks at Polly for a moment without speaking. Lights change. Betsy and Polly move the benches as the other women enter.)
Scene 12

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

RACHEL. Here, chick, chick, chick.
Peggy. Some roosting in the trees.
Betsy. Chick, chick, chick.
RACHEL. Get the cats! The cats are chasing the chickens. Mr. Chickenhouse! Mr. Chickenhouse!
Peggy. Got a chick in his mouth. He’s under the coop. Here, kitty, kitty, kitty.
RACHEL. Mischief! Mischief!
Betsy. There she is. Yonder past the trees. (Jane enters.)
RACHEL. Chickens are gone.
Peggy. Chick, chick, chick.
RACHEL. Dogs chased the chickens into the woods.
Fanny. Chick, chick, chick.
Betsy. Mr. Chickenhouse better not come out, neither, if he knows what’s good for him.
RACHEL. Wait’ll chickens get hungry.
Izzy. We’ll get them back.
RACHEL. Catch ’em then.
Polly. Chickens are stupid. (Polly laughs.)
Peggy. So stupid you can’t catch ’em.
Polly. (Laughing, as she looks for chickens.) Chick, chick, chick.
RACHEL. Mr. Chickenhouse’s got a baby chick. Under the coop.
Polly. (Suppressing a giggle.) Chick, chick, chick.
Izzy. (Horrified.) No! (Polly giggles more.)
Betsy. You find that funny, Sister Polly?
Fanny. She has a laughing gift. (Polly can’t stop giggling.)
Polly. I have a laughing gift! (Polly and Fanny laugh uproariously. Izzy looks at them.)
Fanny. We have a laughing gift. (They are falling down with

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laughter. Polly laughs hysterically and bumps into Izzy who catches the laughing gift. Rachel begins to laugh. Peggy watches in disbelief.

RACHEL. We have a laughing gift. (At this news, Fanny, Polly and Izzy explode with laughter. Izzy falls into Jane, and she laughs. Fanny exits, looking for the chickens. Phebe enters.)

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

RACHEL. (Laughing.) Maybe it’s the devil.

PHEBE. Who was feeding the chickens?

PEGGY. I sent Sister Polly out for some eggs.

POLLY. I saw Sister Fanny walking past the henhouse.

PHEBE. I will have a word with Sister Fanny. You, too, Sister Polly. (She sees a chicken and goes after it.) Chick, chick, chick. (The women howl. Maybe Polly imitates her.) This is not funny. This is not funny. (They look at her.) What are you going to eat tomorrow? No eggs for breakfast. Or for bakin’. What are you going to feed the Brothers for breakfast tomorrow? Or the day after tomorrow? (The women are subdued. Hannah enters.)

PHEBE. The chickens got loose.

HANNAH. Talking won’t catch them. Here, chick, chick, chick. (Hannah exits. Serious now, Rachel, Peggy, Phebe chase after the chickens. Betsy starts to exit, but Izzy stops her.)

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

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

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

BETSY. No devil.

IZZY. Sister Rachel said the devil let the chickens out.

BETSY. We’re living in heaven here. Remember your lessons? You have confessed your sins, so you are without them. Everything is perfect here. (Betsy exits. Lights change.)
Scene 13

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

ALL. (Singing.)
COME THE FEAST IS READY,
WHILE THE TABLE’S LOADED,
WITH THE CHOICEST FRUITS FROM AFAR AND NEAR.
WHILE LEADERS AND PEOPLE, PARENTS AND CHILDREN,
LOVE, AND AFFECTION, ALL ARE HERE.
(Both groups kneel. Fanny enters, late, and kneels.)
HANNAH. Gracious God, we are your humble servants.
PEGGY. Mother God, Father God, we thank you for this food.
BETSY. We thank you for that which you have provided us.
RACHEL. May we serve you.
PHEBE. May we use this food in your everlasting service.
PEGGY. We eat in silence and respect. Amen.
ALL. Amen.
HANNAH, BETSY, PHEBE. Amen. (All sit. The Sisters eat in silence. Each has a small dowel as a prop. Hannah, Betsy and Phebe are eating alone together. They are freely talking, in great contrast to the quiet dinner of the rest of the women.)
BETSY. This squash could do with some seasoning.
HANNAH. Sister Peggy cooks plain and simple.
BETSY. Mighty fine bread, though.
HANNAH. Sister Phebe …
PHEBE. Yes, Sister Hannah?
HANNAH. I’m concerned.
PHEBE. About what?
HANNAH. About the girls.
PHEBE. Yes?
HANNAH. Their hearts are to God, but their hands don’t seem
to want to work.
PHEBE. I'm not catching your meaning.
HANNAH. The girls are not attentive to their work.
PHEBE. The work is getting done.
HANNAH. Sister Polly has missed her kitchen duties. Sister Fanny takes long walks alone. The girls are not doing their share, are they?
PHEBE. No, they are not.
HANNAH. Ah. (A beat.)
PHEBE. They are young. They drift off, return.
HANNAH. More than that.
PHEBE. Perhaps.
HANNAH. What do you think is happening?
PHEBE. I don't think they are lazy.
HANNAH. That is not what I am asking.
PHEBE. They are attentive at service. (Hannah turns to Betsy.)
HANNAH. Sister Betsy?
BETSY. These beans are good.
HANNAH. Sister Betsy, you are as inattentive as the girls. There is an oddness in the air, an expectancy even. Sister Polly keeps running with the younger girls.
BETSY. Sister Polly never had a childhood. Sister Polly was working on her back in a fancy house in Lexington when she was twelve.
HANNAH. I am well aware of Sister Polly's provenance. (To Phebe.) You must guide them better, Sister Phebe. You must tend to order.
PHEBE. Yes, Sister Hannah.
HANNAH. You must keep them better occupied. I see girls whispering in the corner. We have no secrets here.
BETSY. Sister Hannah — (Pulls a heart-shaped gift drawing out of her pocket.) One of the girls gave this to me.
HANNAH. They are not permitted to make such things.
BETSY. She said she was the instrument. She said it was from Mother Ann.
HANNAH. Mother Ann?
BETSY. She said that Mother Ann came to her from heaven and told her to make this for me. That this is a gift from Mother Ann to me.
HANNAH. And you believe her?
BETSY. There are strange things going on. What shall we do?
HANNAH. Sister Phebe, what do you think we should do?
PHEBE. I think we should wait.
HANNAH. That is good advice, Sister Phebe. We will wait … And we will watch.
BETSY. I wonder what we have for dessert today. (Lights change as the next scene begins immediately. One of the benches stays in place for the following scene; the rest are placed on the sides. The women sit on them.)

Scene 14

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

HANNAH. (To Peggy.) What did you see?
PEGGY. Who was there with you?
HANNAH. What did you see?
FANNY. I saw angels.
HANNAH. (To Fanny.) Who was there?
FANNY. Angels. There were angels there.
HANNAH. You must tell us who was with you.
FANNY. I saw angels.
PEGGY. (To Hannah.) Maybe she saw …
HANNAH. (Overlapping.) You must tell us what you saw.
FANNY. Angels —
HANNAH. (Overlapping.) There was another sister there?
FANNY. No.
HANNAH. Brethren? Who was there? (A pause.)
PEGGY. There are good reasons …
FANNY. I’m thinking.
PEGGY. We’ll help you think.
HANNAH. There were Brothers there?
FANNY. I don’t know their names.
HANNAH. Brothers from the North Family?
FANNY. Not Brothers.
PEGGY. Men from town?
HANNAH. Old men? Young men?
FANNY. Not men.
PEGGY. Boys?
FANNY. No.
HANNAH. Not men or boys?
FANNY. Angels! Gabriel, Michael. Peter. I don’t know all their names.
PEGGY. Oh, Lordy.
FANNY. I’m telling you. There were angels. (Lights change.)

Scene 15

Peggy begins to sing. Betsy hears her and enters.

PEGGY. (Singing.)
GLORY UNTO GOD WE’LL SING
(Betsy motions Peggy to stop. Betsy looks around to see if anyone is listening. She motions Peggy to continue. When Peggy begins to sing again, Betsy joins in.)
PÉGGY, BÉTSY.
PRÁISE TO CHRIST THE SAVIOUR
(Betsy begins to harmonize, much to Peggy’s excitement.)
WHO THE JOYFUL NEWS DID BRING
THAT WE MIGHT CONQUER EVERY SIN
AND REIGN O’ER DEATH FOREVER
(They sing full out, joyfully.)
ALL THE HEAVENS PRAISE HIS NAME ANGELS GIVE
HIM GLORY
(The become aware that they might be overheard.)
SAINTS ON EARTH COME JOIN THE STRAIN
LET YOUR CHORUS BE THE SAME
CRYING HOLY HOLY.
(As the song finishes, the women have returned to their seats. Lights change.)
Scene 16

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

POLLY. I don’t like pulling weeds.
IZZY. Nobody does.
POLLY. Sister Phebe does. She’s always in the garden.
IZZY. She has a garden talent.
POLLY. ’Taint fair. I have a kitchen talent.
IZZY. You’ll be in the kitchen next month. (A beat.) Polly, what did you see out there past the meadow —
POLLY. (Interrupting her.) Hush. (Rachel and Fanny enter, Fanny carries a basket. She puts it on the ground as Rachel exits.)
FANNY. Got sent out here to help. Finished my baskets and they sent me out here.
IZZY. You been back past the meadow?
FANNY. You want to go with me?
POLLY. Weren’t nothing there. (Phebe and Betsy cross the stage. Polly stands up.) My knees hurt. Can’t keep sitting on the ground.
BETSY. We’re having a picnic tomorrow.
IZZY. A picnic!
PHEBE. Can’t sit on the ground, can’t go to the picnic. (The Sisters exit. Fanny and Izzy keep pulling weeds. Polly sits.)
POLLY. My knees hurt.
FANNY. Poor, pitiful Polly.
IZZY. I got bit by a bug.
FANNY. Don’t got no time for complaining. (Fanny works harder.)
POLLY. I’m hungry. (Another Sister hurries past and exits.)
IZZY. Why are you working so hard? There’s always going to be
more weeds.
POLLY. Proving.
IZZY. Proving what?
FANNY. She's saying that I'm a winter Shaker.
IZZY. But it's summer. You can't be a winter Shaker in the summer, can you?
FANNY. She thinks I'm just here to get a good meal and a warm bed.
POLLY. Didn't say that.
FANNY. Didn't have to say that. I know'd what you mean.
IZZY. You work harder than anybody.
FANNY. I'm used to work. Work's not hard. When your momma's dead, your daddy's a drunkard, and his new wife don't like the nose on your face, well, then you just keep working to stay out of their way.
POLLY. My daddy was a drunk, too. Izzy don't know much 'bout her daddy.
IZZY. Do, too.
POLLY. He dropped you off here when you was three.
IZZY. 'Cause my momma died. But I've seen my poppa twice since. I've seen him twice.
POLLY. I'm hungry now.
FANNY. You're going to be fed soon. Sisters making supper right now.
POLLY. Sister Peggy?
FANNY. Making your supper. Smelled it on my way over. Smells good.
POLLY. Won't taste like much o'anything. Always tastes the same. I'm hungry for something different.
FANNY. Being real hungry is when your stomach's a'growling and there's nothing to eat. And when you know there's not gonna be anythin' much to eat for days and days.
IZZY. I'm going to always stay here. I'm going to sign the covenant. I'll be old enough in three years.
FANNY. Might as well sign the covenant.
POLLY. You don't know any different. Never know'd anything else.
FANNY. No place better than this.
IZZY. I want to be a deaconess. Or an eldress.
POLLY. Then you won't have to pull weeds. *(They continue to pull weeds in silence. Lights change, as Betsy unfurls a big cloth from the side of the stage. As she speaks, she places it on the ground to begin the picnic scene. The lights are bright and there is much movement on the stage.)*

**Scene 17**

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

BETSY. Mighty fine day.
RACHEL. We thank God for this beautiful day.
Peggy. Never a better one this year.
RACHEL. You bring the napkins?
JANE. Right here.
IZZY. What are we having?
BETSY. *(She flings out a blanket.*) It’s a surprise!
JANE. Bet it’s your favorite! *(The women lay blankets on the ground and sit, arranging their baskets, etc., during the following.)*
PHEBE. Everything is her favorite.
IZZY. Is not.
PHEBE. Name a food you don’t like.
RACHEL. She always cleans her plate.
IZZY. ’cause we’re supposed to!
POLLY. What if you didn’t?
IZZY. Didn’t what?
POLLY. What if you didn’t have to clean your plate? What would you leave on it?
BETSY. Vegetables!
IZZY. Wouldn’t!
RACHEL. Yes, you would.
JANE. Children never like vegetables. *(She hands something to Phebe.)* Here, Sister Phebe.
POLLY. What if you could eat whatever you want?
PHEBE. Thank you, Sister Jane.
IZZY. I like everything.
POLLY. If you had to choose.
IZZY. Sister Peggy’s chicken and gravy. That’s my favorite.
JANE. I’m sitting on a rock.
RACHEL. Trade with me then.
JANE. It’s not a hard rock.
RACHEL. All rocks are hard. Sit over here.
IZZY. Sit by me! Teach me Jacob’s Ladder.
JANE. Don’t need to be knowing Jacob’s Ladder.
BETSY. Every child learns that.
RACHEL. Hmm.
IZZY. Never did. Always got the string tangled.
RACHEL. Best not put you on a spinning wheel!
PEGGY. Or a loom. You’ll be snapping beans in the kitchen from now on.
IZZY. I could learn to spin!
PEGGY. You are a bean-snapper!
BETSY. Or a whippersnapper!
IZZY. *(Holding out some string to Jane.)* Teach me Jacob’s Ladder.
JANE. Got better things to do.
POLLY. I used to do Jacob’s Ladder. And Cat’s Cradle. I could do them.
IZZY. *(To Jane.)* You said you would teach me.
BETSY. We’ll have you spinning wool this winter, Sister Polly! And weaving!
JANE. I said I knew how. Didn’t say I would teach you.
RACHEL. Sister Polly, you never learned how to spin?
BETSY. Lots of things she never learned. We’re here to help Sister Polly. She never lived on a farm before. Not like the city.
IZZY. Did you have servants?
POLLY. Where’d you get such an idea?
IZZY. Sister Betsy said you came from a fancy house.
RACHEL. Hmm.
BETSY. Izzy!
PHEBE. You’re here with us now, Sister Polly.
RACHEL. (To Polly.) You have a new life now.
PEGGY. Sister Polly, would you like some cornbread?
POLLY. Had better food in Lexington! (Polly walks away.)
RACHEL. Hmm.
JANE. (Indicates Izzy should come to her.) Izzy.
IZZY. (To Jane.) Please, please teach me Jacob’s Ladder?
JANE. Why you askin’ me? Lots of other sisters could teach you. Polly could teach you.
IZZY. You take time to explain things. You’ll teach me the right way and I’ll remember it. (After a beat.)
JANE. I’ll show you one, anyway. I’ll do one quick for you to see. (Jane creates the “Jacob’s Ladder” with her string, explaining all the while.) Over two, over one, over two. Put your fingers there and … Inside out … Jacob’s Ladder. Up to heaven. (Jane holds up the string figure.)
IZZY. Oh!
JANE. (Holding up the Jacob’s Ladder.) See the strings, top and bottom of the X?
IZZY. I see them.
JANE. Grab each one of them. No. Pinch your fingers. One hand on the top and the other on the bottom. Pinch the top and bottom of the X. That’s it.
IZZY. Got it.
JANE. And pull. (Izzy does and the string unravels perfectly.)
IZZY. Oh! Now teach me. Please?
JANE. It’s not hard. Make certain the knot’s tied right so it won’t give way when you pull on it. Gotta start right if you’re going to finish right. (Jane begins to show Izzy. Fanny stands very still, looking off in the distance.)
BETSY. Storm a-brewin’?
RACHEL. No. Not a cloud in the sky.
PHEBE. Better not be a storm. (Fanny continues to stand still and stare off. Her arms begin to raise, pointing outward.)
BETSY. What do you see, Sister Fanny?
PEGGY. Something off in the woods?
JANE. You see an animal? Where? Is it big?
PHEBE. Most likely a deer.
BETSY. Sister Fanny, would you like some chicken? (Fanny just stands still. Polly watches her. Polly starts to sing. The women join in. After a moment, Fanny’s reverie is broken and she watches the women.)
POLLY.

HOP UP AND JUMP UP
AND WHIRL 'ROUND, WHIRL 'ROUND
SISTERS.

GATHER LOVE, HERE IT IS
ALL 'ROUND, ALL 'ROUND.
(Polly makes a round begin. But as soon as the Sisters realize, they stop, one by one.)

HERE IS LOVE FLOWING 'ROUND,
CATCH IT AS YOU WHIRL 'ROUND,
REACH UP AND REACH DOWN,
HERE IT IS ALL 'ROUND.

HANNAH. (Interrupting) Sister Polly, we sing in unison. It is not permitted to embellish.
POLLY. Would be more fun if we did.
RACHEL. Sister Polly! (Fanny stands up and continues to stare out.)
PHEBE. Are you ill?
HANNAH. Are you ill, Sister Fanny? (Fanny raises her arms slowly upward, as the women all watch in silence.)
RACHEL. She’s an instrument.
HANNAH. Sister Rachel, will you help Sister Peggy pack up our dinner.
PEGGY. Are we finished?
HANNAH. Yes.
IZZY. We just got here. I’ll eat the vegetables! (All the women begin to pick up the picnic items. Fanny slowly turns, arms heavenward.)
HANNAH. Sister Fanny.
IZZY. You spoiled the picnic! (We move immediately into the next scene. Lights change.)
Scene 18

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

HANNAH. Sister Fanny will be moving into the East Family Dwelling. Next week.
RACHEL. She's very new.
PHEBE. Won't be signing the covenant anytime soon.
BETSY. Shouldn't she stay in the Gathering Order?
PEGGY. With the newcomers?
HANNAH. I see the men looking at her there.
PHEBE. Brother Harris'll be looking at her over here.
RACHEL. Hmm.
PHEBE. He likes to look at the young'ns.
BETSY. Just 'cause one eye a-wanders. His eyes don't look in the same direction. Cain't tell where he's lookin'.
PHEBE. He's got a wanderin' eye, all right.
PEGGY. Just 'cause he's afflicted in his eyes.
PHEBE. You don't know 'bout men and their lookin'. You were reared here. Don't know the ways of worldly men.
BETSY. Leastways he's not cross-eyed! Like that son of Brother Ethan. I declare, I don't know how he dances the circles without falling down dizzy.
RACHEL. Maybe that's why he's cross-eyed.
PHEBE. Poor thing. How do you think he drives those pegs so straight? With those crossed eyes a' his?
BETSY. He'd be good at basket making. Keep two sides going at once.
PEGGY. Or weaving.
PHEBE. Get the warp and woof weaving at the same time.
PEGGY. Couldn't match up his plaids, I bet.
BETSY. Makes a straight chair, though. Drives those pegs in
straight. Even with crossed eyes.
PHEBE. If his eyes ever straightened out he’d be driving pegs crooked. *(They all are twittering.)*
HANNAH. Is everyone finished with their discussion of men’s eyes?
BETSY. Beg pardon, Sister Hannah.
RACHEL. Beg pardon.
HANNAH. Sister Fanny will be moving to the East Family dwelling. In the room with Sister Rachel.
PHEBE. Sister Jane’s in that room.
RACHEL. I’m with Sister Jane.
HANNAH. Sister Jane will move in with Sister Polly.
PHEBE. That’ll be a teary room. Whiny little Sister Polly with sad Sister Jane. Best be assigning them some extra hankies. Puttin’ those two together.
HANNAH. Are you suggesting that Sister Jane shares with you?
PEGGY. *(To Phebe.)* Sister Jane snores if she’s been crying.
RACHEL. Her nose fills up and she snores.
HANNAH. Sister Jane and Sister Polly will share the room. The decision has been made. *(Hannah exits with Betsy.)*
PEGGY. Sister Jane won’t be happy.
PHEBE. Sister Jane is never happy. *(Fanny, Polly, Jane enter.)* Sister Jane, would you bring the rest of the ironing off the line?
JANE. I don’t mind ironing some.
PEGGY. There are kerchiefs on the line.
FANNY. I’ll go.
PHEBE. I asked Sister Jane to go.
RACHEL. Let Sister Fanny go.
PHEBE. Sister Fanny will remain here.
RACHEL. Then let me go. I’ll get the kerchiefs.
JANE. Please don’t send me.
PEGGY. It’s a beautiful day. Be nice to be outside.
JANE. *(Tearing up.)* I don’t want to go out to the clothesline.
FANNY. *(Starting to go.)* I’ll go.
PHEBE. You will not go. You will not go outside.
FANNY. But Sister Jane is afeerd.
JANE. Don’t make me go.
RACHEL. Sister Jane, what are you afraid of?
JANE. It’s outside.
PHEBE. What is? What is outside?
JANE. By the clothesline.
RACHEL. What's by the clothesline?
JANE. I don't like it!
PHEBE. Sister Jane —
FANNY. She's afeerd of —
PHEBE. Sister Fanny, you will be quiet.
JANE. Comet!
POLLY. You're afraid of Comet?
RACHEL. That old bull?
JANE. He runs to the fence.
PEGGY. Fence'll keep him in.
JANE. I'm scared he'll jump the fence.
PHEBE. Sister Peggy will you go fetch the kerchiefs? Don't bother yourself any more, Sister Jane. Sister Peggy will fetch the kerchiefs.
PEGGY. I'll go fetch the kerchiefs. I'm not afraid. That ole bull knows not to pick a quarrel with me. (Peggy exits. Polly and Fanny begin to fold a sheet. Izzy enters, carrying a basket.)
IZZY. I saw the kerchiefs on the line. They were scaring Comet. (Polly and Fanny begin to play with their sheet.)
POLLY. Scaring Comet!
PHEBE. Sister Polly?
POLLY. I have a spinning gift. (Polly and Fanny are now spinning playfully.) I have a spinning gift!
FANNY. We have a spinning gift. (Polly and Fanny wrap the sheet around Izzy's waist and spin her.)
IZZY. I have a spinning gift. (Izzy joins hands with Jane and starts to spin.) We have a spinning gift.
JANE. We have a dizzy gift. (Izzy and Jane let go. Jane is dizzy and begins to walk crookedly. Polly and Fanny are spinning around the stage.)
POLLY. (Pointing to Jane.) You have a drunk gift! You have a drunk gift!
JANE. I have a drunk gift! (Fanny spins slowly upstage, her arms reaching upward.)
POLLY. I have a drunk gift.
FANNY. I have a spinning gift.
IZZY. I have a spinning gift!
JANE. I have a spinning gift. (They all whisper “I have a spinning gift,
I have a spinning gift,” over and over and over while twirling slowly with their arms held high. Phebe looks on in amazement. Betsy enters."

PHEBE. (To Betsy.) They have a spinning gift. (Betsy looks at the girls. Lights change. As the next song begins, the Sisters clear the stage.)

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**Scene 19**

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

PEGGY. (Singing.)
O SISTERS AIN’T YOU HAPPY
ALL.
O SISTERS AIN’T YOU HAPPY,
O SISTERS AIN’T YOU HAPPY,
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.
SING ON, DANCE ON,
FOLLOWERS OF EMMANUEL.
SING ON, DANCE ON,
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.
(After the set has changed, the women line up in a formation to finish the dance.)

BETSY.
I MEAN TO BE OBEDIENT
ALL.
I MEAN TO BE OBEDIENT,
I MEAN TO BE OBEDIENT,
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.
SING ON, DANCE ON,
FOLLOWERS OF EMMANUEL.
SING ON, DANCE ON,
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.
PHEBE.
I’LL CROSS MY UGLY NATURE
ALL.
I’LL CROSS MY UGLY NATURE,
I’LL CROSS MY UGLY NATURE,
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.
SING ON, DANCE ON,
FOLLOWERS OF EMMANUEL.
SING ON, DANCE ON,
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.
RACHEL.
I LOVE TO ATTEND TO ORDER
ALL.
I LOVE TO ATTEND TO ORDER,
I LOVE TO ATTEND TO ORDER
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.
SING ON, DANCE ON,
FOLLOWERS OF EMMANUEL.
SING ON, DANCE ON,
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.
IZZY.
I’M GLAD I AM A SHAKER
ALL.
I’M GLAD I AM A SHAKER,
I’M GLAD I AM A SHAKER,
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.
SING ON, DANCE ON,
FOLLOWERS OF EMMANUEL.
SING ON, DANCE ON,
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.
SING ON, DANCE ON,
FOLLOWERS OF EMMANUEL.
SING ON, DANCE ON,
YE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.

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

FANNY. Mother Ann is here. Mother Ann is with us. (Polly and Izzy also begin to turn, arms high.)
POLLY. Yes.
IZZY. I hear heavenly music. (Lights change. Some of the women exit to their benches at the side. We move immediately into the next scene, which begins while the benches are being set. The lines begin as the women move into place. We are in Hannah's office.)

Scene 19

PHEBE. They're not doing their chores.
RACHEL. A-screaming in the woods at midnight.
BETSY. They try to do their chores in the afternoon.
RACHEL. No. One of them always gets a gift and off they go. Whooping and hollerin'.
BETSY. They labor the entire day at their worship.
PHEBE. Well, I can't do all their chores for them.
BETSY. They have a gift to sing and dance.
RACHEL. They have a gift to sing separate from the others. If we're going to start singing in harmony, we might as well be Methodists.
BETSY. Perhaps they have a true gift to sing.
PHEBE. I don't have a gift to do their chores.
RACHEL. They're filled with the spirit.
PHEBE. I'll fill them with a spirit. Castor oil, maybe.
BETSY. You'll catch more flies with honey.
PHEBE. (To Hannah.) There is talk in town. There were world's people at the service. The Brothers are disturbed. Sister Izzy is telling them to give up meat.
BETSY. They will tire of this.
PHEBE. I'm tired of it. Sick and tired.
HANNAH. Sister Phebe.
PHEBE. Perhaps Sister Polly should leave. Sister Fanny, too.
BETSY. Sister Polly has no family but us. Sister Polly was a, a fallen woman before she came to us. We cannot desert her.
PHEBE. (Sharply to Betsy.) Something must be done.
RACHEL. Maybe it's the end of the world.
PHEBE. Maybe it is.
HANNAH. Listen to yourselves. This is not the way we talk to
each other.
RACHEL. There is poison here.
HANNAH. Ten years ago this community was failing.
RACHEL. After my husband passed.
HANNAH. Ten years ago I was sent here from Union Village with Brother Ezakiah to restore order. We are now prosperous. Are we to return to what was before? We must determine what is happening. The community is more important than one individual. We must tend to order. (The three women all start to speak.) (Stopping them.) We must send a report to Mount Lebanon. (They all look at her.) We will interrogate the girls. We will get testimonies from every woman in the village. We will send a report. (Lights change. Hannah begins to speak her lines for the next scene as the women move the benches and get into place.)

Scene 20

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

HANNAH. (To Fanny.) What did you see?
BETSY. (To Polly.) What did you see?
PHEBE. What did you see?
PEGGY. Who was there with you?
HANNAH. What did you see?
POLLY. I don't know.
BETSY. Must have been something powerful.
POLLY. Weren't much o' nothin'. Nothin' at'll.
HANNAH. What did you see?
FANNY. I saw angels.
IZZY. (To Rachel.) They were from heaven.
PHEBE. What were?
RACHEL. Everything comes from heaven.
HANNAH. (To Fanny.) Who was there?
FANNY. Angels. There were angels there.
IZZY. They were beautiful. They were the most beautiful —
PHEBE. (Overlapping.) Tell us everything you saw.
IZZY. Gold. Lots of gold. And I heard music.
JANE. We sometimes don’t know what we see.
POLLY. Didn’t see much of anything, I reckon.
BETSY. Well, then.
POLLY. You believe me?
JANE. No.
HANNAH. You must tell us who was with you.
FANNY. I tell you. I tell you again and again. I saw angels.
PEGGY. (To Hannah.) Maybe she saw …
HANNAH. (Overlapping.) You must tell us what you saw.
FANNY. Angels —
PHEBE. Maybe you were dreaming.
IZZY. It seemed like a dream. So beautiful.
PHEBE. What did it look like?
IZZY. Light. Beautiful light.
HANNAH. There was another sister there.
FANNY. No.
HANNAH. Brethren? Who was there?
BETSY. If you say you didn’t see anything, then, yes, I believe you.
JANE. She didn’t say that. Didn’t say she didn’t see anything.
PEGGY. There are good reasons …
FANNY. I’m thinking.
PHEBE. (To Rachel.) She was dreaming.
IZZY. Weren’t no dream.
PHEBE. I wasn’t talking to you.
PEGGY. We’ll help you think.
BETSY. (To Polly.) Then what did you see?
POLLY. I don’t know.
JANE. She don’t know what she saw.
HANNAH. There were Brothers there?
FANNY. I don't know their names.
HANNAH. Brothers from the North Family?
FANNY. Not Brothers.
PEGGY. Men from town?
HANNAH. Old men? Young men?
FANNY. Not men.
PEGGY. Boys?
FANNY. No.
HANNAH. Not men or boys?
FANNY. Angels! Gabriel, Michael. Peter. I don't know all their names.
PEGGY. Oh, Lordy.
JANE. (To Polly.) You don’t know what you saw.
POLLY. I don't know. It couldn't be —
BETSY. What couldn’t it be?
FANNY. I'm telling you. There were angels.
IZZY. Weren't no dream. I thought it was. I thought I must be dreaming, so I pinched my hand. I pinched it hard. Look at the bruise. Weren't no dream.
PEGGY. Oh, Lordy, Lordy.
HANNAH. (To Peggy.) Sister Peggy.
RACHEL. Surely that must be heaven she seen.
PHEBE. Dreams show us heaven sometimes. You pinched yourself in your sleep.
IZZY. No! Fanny seen it, too.
JANE. We want to know what you saw.
POLLY. Fanny said it were angels.
FANNY. There were angels.
IZZY. I saw angels!
FANNY. Angels! (Lights change. The benches are quickly cleared as we go right into the next scene. Or there could be an intermission here.)
ACT TWO

Scene 1

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

POLLY. We whooped 'em! We whooped 'em!
BETSY. Lay her down.
RACHEL. Did she fall? (To Izzy.) Did you fall?
FANNY. Who were they?
PHEBE. Look at me, Izzy.
POLLY. Boys from town.
JANE. What happened? What happened?
RACHEL. Is she bleeding?
Peggy. Lordy.
IZZY. They threw rocks at us.
POLLY. I got one of them.
IZZY. They hit me with a rock.
PHEBE. Where?
FANNY. By the tannery.
PHEBE. Where'd the rock hit you?
FANNY. Hit her in the head.
POLLY. Just got hit in the head. That's all.
PHEBE. It's not bleeding.
JANE. All righty.
PHEBE. Goose egg of a knot, though.
IZZY. (Feeling the back of her head.) I've got a goose egg!
RACHEL. (To Polly.) You get hit?
Polly. I was throwing back at ’em.
Phebe. You must not engage them.
Betsy. (To Fanny) What happened?
Fanny. Just walking along the main road. Saw these boys and they started chasin’ us and calling us names and throwing rocks.
Phebe. Did you get hit?
Izzy. They had so many rocks.
Polly. I got the tall one!
Phebe. (Grabbing Polly) I tell you, you must not antagonize them.
Polly. They started it.
Phebe. We are a peaceful community.
Polly. Can’t even defend myself.
Rachel. Mother Ann Lee will defend you.
Polly. Mother Ann wasn’t there. They could’a killed us.
Peggy. Let’s get her to her bed.
Izzy. Don’t want to go to bed.
Betsy. You’re going.
Polly. There was four of ’em.
Izzy. There’s pie for supper tonight.
Peggy. I’ll bring you some. You can eat your dinner in bed.
Polly. I got hit, too.
Phebe. Where? Where did you get hit?
Polly. On my … on my foot.
Phebe. Can you walk?
Polly. Yes.
Phebe. Good.
Phebe. (Losing her temper) We do not throw stones at our neighbors. You are never, never, never to do that again. You must go confess to Sister Hannah. You have been wicked. Wicked. Do you hear me? (She grabs Polly by the shoulders) Do you understand me? We are a peaceful community. We do not throw stones.
Polly. Yes, Sister Phebe.
Rachel. (To Phebe) She was just scared.
Polly. Weren’t scared.
Betsy. Let us go pray for our neighbors. (Phebe exits. Betsy leads off Polly in a different direction.)
JANE. (To Izzy.) Your head hurt?
IZZY. Just a little.
JANE. Were you scared?
IZZY. They called us shaking devils. Said we were going to hell.
(Jane puts her arm around Izzy and leads her off.)

Scene 2

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

RACHEL. Explain it to me again.
HANNAH. A testimony. Just write your testimony.
RACHEL. It's Fanny and the other girls should be writing testimonies.
PHEBE. We want your testimony. (A beat.)
RACHEL. My script's not what I'd like it to be. And I'm not a good speller.
PHEBE. Doesn't matter. Just write how you came here. Everything. From the beginning.
RACHEL. Not much different than anyone else's story. Came here by the grace of Mother Ann Lee. Don't know why you are asking me.
HANNAH. We're asking everyone. Everyone will have a written testimony.
RACHEL. I'll give you my testimony. I have been a good and steadfast Shaker. I have obeyed the laws. I have humbled myself in the spirit.
PHEBE. We are not accusing you, Sister Rachel.
RACHEL. Best not be. There's a devil in our midst. Either there's a devil in our midst or the end of the world is near. (Lights change.
The women exit during Peggy's song.)
Scene 3

Peggy brings on a bowl and resets the benches.

PEGGY.
OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN
HALLLOWED BE THY NAME
THY KINGDOM COME
THY WILL BE DONE
(Having set the benches one on top of another, in the "table" position, Peggy begins to stir something in her bowl, still singing.)
ON EARTH AS IT IS DONE IN HEAVEN
GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD
AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS
AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS.
(Polly enters, interrupting Peggy.)

Scene 4

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

POLLY. It's a gift.
PEGGY. You have a gift to draw.
POLLY. I'm the deliverer. I'm the instrument.
PEGGY. It's beautiful.
POLLY. (In a whisper.) It's from Mother Ann.
PEGGY. You shouldn't be making drawings.
POLLY. Mother Ann made it. I'm delivering it to you. It's from Mother Ann to you.
PEGGY. How could Mother Ann make this for me?

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

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

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

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

POLLY. Mother Ann loves you, Sister Peggy. (Polly exits. Peggy moves the benches, so they are lined up next to each other.)

PEGGY. (Singing.)

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

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

Scene 5

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

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

PHEBE. You only have to tell us why you came here.
JANE. I'm telling you. And everybody knows anyway, don't they? All my babies dead. What were we gonna do? No children to help tend the farm. Came 'cause my husband came here. Where else was I gonna go? Didn't have much choice, did I?
PHEBE. (To Peggy.) Will you read Sister Jane's testimony to her so she can sign it?
BETSY. (Reading.) “By the grace of Our Lord, I came here by my own will with my husband William. Through the bountiful goodness of Mother Ann Lee I have discovered the joy of a simple life. May I continue to strive to be a better Shaker and to be pure in heart and mind until the time has come that I go onward to greater rewards in heaven.”
PHEBE. Is that your testimony, Sister Jane?
JANE. I reckon it's close enough.
BETSY. Make your mark on this page. (Jane starts to sign as the lights change. The benches are moved as the next scene begins.)

**Scene 6**

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

HANNAH. Your father has come to fetch you.
IZZY. Won't go. Can't make me go.
HANNAH. Your father's here.
IZZY. Give me the covenant. I'll sign.
PHEBE. You're not old enough.
IZZY. I'll sign right now. Give me the covenant. I want to sign the covenant. You can't make me go.
BETSY. You can always come back.
RACHEL. (To Betsy.) He won't let her come back.
BETSY. Come back to us when you're twenty. You can come back. Sister Izzy, listen to me now. Hush. You just come back
when you're old enough. See? We want you back.
IZZY. If I'm gonna come back, why do I have to leave? (She sobs.)
HANNAH. Where's her suitcase?
RACHEL. Right here.
PHEBE. Who's carrying her cloak?
PEGGY. I'm carrying it for her.
PHEBE. Got the warm winter one?
PEGGY. Yes.
FANNY. Where's she going?
PHEBE. Her daddy's come to fetch her.
POLLY. She don't even know her daddy.
IZZY. Didn't say goodbye to the chickens! I didn't say bye to the chickens!
PEGGY. That old rooster be in a pot soon. Won't know you're gone.
IZZY. And Mischief! And Mr. Chickenhouse!
BETSY. We'll tell'm bye for you. The cats'll all be here when you get back.
IZZY. I made Mr. Chickenhouse a bonnet.
BETSY. I'll put the bonnet on him. I'll take care of him.
IZZY. (Howling.) I didn't say bye to the lambs. The little baby lambs! I didn't kiss the kittens!
HANNAH. Honey, your daddy's waiting for you in the visitor's parlor.
IZZY. I want a kitten. I want one of Mischief's kittens! Let me have a kitten.
BETSY. Those kittens too young to leave their momma. They'll be waiting for you when you get back.
IZZY. They won't be kittens any more!
JANE. There'll be more kittens. There'll always be kittens.
IZZY. I love THOSE kittens. I want a kitten to take with me!
RACHEL. Honey, a kitten'd smother in your little suitcase.
POLLY. (To Phebe.) Her daddy left her here when she was a baby. He don't know her. He can't take her away. Not right.
PHEBE. Contract says he can come get her whenever he wants. Until she's of age.
BETSY. Your daddy has a farm. There'll be kittens there. Barn always has cats.
IZZY. I only seen him twice! I don't know what he's got. I don't
want him. I want a kitten! \textit{(She sobs.)}

HANNAH. You don’t want your daddy to see you like this, do you?

BETSY. Want your daddy to be proud of you.

FANNY. Izzy, you don’t have to go.

HANNAH. She has to go.

IZZY. What?

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

POLLY. Just run away.

HANNAH. Sister Fanny, you are needed in the kitchen.

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

HANNAH. Sister Fanny.

PHEBE. Don’t make it harder on her.

HANNAH. You can always come back and visit us.

FANNY. Just run away, quick as you can.

IZZY. I don’t want to run away. I don’t want to go! \textit{(Hannah stands, helpless. Jane moves to Izzy. Phebe goes to Fanny.)}

JANE. You write to me.

IZZY. I’ll write.

JANE. And I’ll write to you.

IZZY. You can’t write.

JANE. Someone’ll write for me.

IZZY. Tell me about all the animals.

JANE. I’ll tell you about all the animals.

IZZY. I want a kitten!

JANE. I’ll write you. I’ll learn how to write. I’ll learn how to write and I’ll write you all about the kittens. Now say a proper goodbye to everyone. \textit{(Izzy turns and hugs the Sisters. Jane is last. She gives Izzy the Jacob’s Ladder string. The Sisters walk her out to the benches, where she sits or exits.)}

FANNY. \textit{(Waving.)} Bye, Izzy. \textit{(Phebe turns from the other women back into the scene.)}

PHEBE. This is a-cause a’you.

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

FANNY. Her father heard.

FANNY. Her father heerd what?

PHEBE. Her father heard you girls were dancing up the ridge. With no clothes on. Her father heard that you girls were
unclothed.
FANNY. Didn’t go unclothed.
PHEBE. Too late to say you didn’t. Strange things going on. Oughta thought about what you were doing.
FANNY. I didn’t do nothin’.
PHEBE. (Phebe starts to leave.) All cause a’you. (Phebe exits.)
FANNY. I didn’t do nothin’. I didn’t do nothin’! (Fanny begins to exit the opposite way of Phebe but is swept up with the arrival of the sisters coming to service. Lights change.)

Scene 7

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

ALL. (Singing.)
IF YE LOVE NOT EACH OTHER
IN DAILY COMMUNION,
HOW CAN YE LOVE GOD,
WHOM YE HAVE NOT SEEN?
IF YE LOVE NOT EACH OTHER
IN DAILY COMMUNION,
HOW CAN YE LOVE GOD,
WHOM YE HAVE NOT SEEN?
(By the end of the song the benches are set for the next scene. Lights change. Hannah, Jane, and Phebe are sitting on two benches put together. Betsy stands.)
Scene 8

HANNAH. (Looking at a drawing.) Where did this come from?
JANE. It was given to me.
HANNAH. By whom?
JANE. Says on the paper. Says it’s for me. There’s my name.
HANNAH. You are not permitted to have such things. (To Phebe.) We have no secrets here.
JANE. There’s other words written on the paper, but I cain’t read ’em.
BETSY. It’s very beautiful.
HANNAH. (To Jane.) Who gave you this?
JANE. It was sent to me from Mother Ann. It’s a picture of my children.
BETSY. Perhaps it’s a gift drawing.
JANE. It’s a picture of heaven. See, there are pictures of my children. There are all my children. Frederick, Susannah, Benjamin, Margaret, ’Lizbeth-Ann. It’s a gift from Mother Ann to me. My children are in heaven. With Mother Ann. Mother Ann loves me. She sent me a picture of heaven.
HANNAH. It is a sin to create a picture of heaven.
JANE. Why?
HANNAH. How can we with our imperfections create a picture of something perfect? (Phebe starts to interrupt.) This is a picture of pride. This is a picture of sin.
JANE. My babies are innocent.
HANNAH. Your children have gone to live with their heavenly father and mother. You must accept the wisdom of our heavenly parents. You will find more comfort in prayerful contemplation. (A pause.) This is not a gift. It is a work of pride from a confused, misguided young woman. We will no longer indulge these false gifts. (Hannah tears up the drawing. Jane holds out her hand for the pieces. Hannah puts them in her own pocket.)
BETSY. Come, Sister Jane. We must return to our chores. (Betsy and Jane exit to the side benches.)
PHEBE. You should apologize to her.
HANNAH. I should what?
PHEBE. You should apologize to her. That picture brought her comfort.
HANNAH. She will find more comfort in her labors. In her work.
PHEBE. She never has before.
HANNAH. Perhaps you should guide her better, Sister Phebe. Especially if you hope to become an eldress yourself some day.

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

Scene 9

The women all kneel in prayer.

PEGGY.
I NEVER DID BELIEVE
THAT I EVER COULD BE SAVED
WITHOUT GIVING UP ALL TO GOD.
HANNAH. Let all confess their sins. (No one speaks. Jane stands up and exits.) We will now confess our sins. (During the silence, Fanny rises.)
FANNY. Holy Mother Wisdom speaks to me. (Fanny begins to shake.) Holy Mother Wisdom speaks to me. Holy Mother Wisdom speaks to me. (All the women are looking at Fanny.)
HANNAH. (Abruptly ending the service.) May we go forth in the strength and the power of the gospel and labor for the spirit of conviction.
ALL. Amen. (Lights change. All sit on the side benches except for Fanny and Hannah. We go immediately into the next scene.)
Scene 10

HANNAH. I'm suggesting you leave the community.
FANNY. I'm a strong worker. You can't make me leave.
HANNAH. You haven't signed the covenant.
FANNY. When the time comes I'll be a-signin'.
HANNAH. You won't need to.
FANNY. Why wouldn't I? No place better than this. It's heaven on earth here. Learned that from you. Don't you believe that, Sister Hannah?
HANNAH. We are not here to talk about my beliefs, but yours.
FANNY. Is that what we are talking about?
HANNAH. You are insolent.
FANNY. Not meaning to be. Just tryin' to understand.
HANNAH. Then understand that it is time for you to depart.
FANNY. I want to understand the angels. I want to know what they say.
HANNAH. You are making this up.
FANNY. The others hear them. They send them songs. And pictures. I see the angels, but I mostly don't know what they're saying. I want to understand them. I want to know what they say.
HANNAH. Angels speak in heavenly tongues. (Corrects herself.) Would speak in heavenly tongues. If they were here.
FANNY. But what do they say? Please help me.
HANNAH. They are not here, I'm telling you.
FANNY. Polly hears them. Izzy hears them. (She corrects herself.) Heard them.
HANNAH. You have created this yourself.
FANNY. Why do they talk to me?
HANNAH. Indeed. Why would angels speak to you? (A pause.) You must go.
FANNY. Where do you want me to go? You can't just send me away with a little suitcase. No, you wouldn't do that. You care about people. You do, Sister Hannah. You'd be thinking about me. You'd wonder what happened to me. Did my half-wit brother tear
my clothes off me in the outhouse? Did I give birth to my father’s next child on some snowy night all alone with the wind a-howlin’ through the cracks in the winders?

HANNAH. That is enough.

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

HANNAH. You cannot talk to me this way.

FANNY. Won’t you even pray for me then? (Possibly a pause.)

HANNAH. I pray for you every day.

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

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

FANNY. No!

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

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

HANNAH. I am giving you a chance.

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

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

To me?

FANNY. Would you recognize her if you saw her?

HANNAH. You will leave tonight!

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

HANNAH. You have no choice.

FANNY. (Fanny stares at something behind Hannah.) I’ll be good. I try to do … I try … I try …
HANNAH. You will not do this.
FANNY. Don't you see them?
HANNAH. See what? What do you see?
FANNY. They are so beautiful. So beautiful.
HANNAH. (Hannah looks all around.) There is nothing there.
FANNY. You can't see them, can you? You can't see them.
(Hannah holds Fanny by the shoulders and begins to shake her.)
HANNAH. There is nothing to see.
FANNY. I hear their voices. (Hannah shakes Fanny.)
HANNAH. Tell me you see nothing. (Hannah shakes Fanny harder and harder.) Tell me you see nothing. Tell me you see nothing! (She lets go of Fanny and kneels.) Please. Please. Holy Mother Wisdom, hear my prayer.
FANNY. They speak to me.
HANNAH. Grant me the vision to see from my eyes as well as my heart.
FANNY. (To her spirits.) What are you saying? (Fanny shakes harder and harder and finally collapses on the floor, sobbing joyfully.)
HANNAH. (Looking around the room.) Holy Mother Wisdom, grant me this prayer. Let me see! Let me see! I will see. You will come to me. (Betsy, Phebe, Rachel rush in.)
BETSY. We heard shouting.
HANNAH. Sister Fanny is ill.
RACHEL. I'm scared.
HANNAH. There is nothing to be frightened of.
RACHEL. Sister Fanny's an instrument. I've seen her. I see the face of Holy Mother Wisdom. The end of the world is near.
BETSY. Calm yourself.
RACHEL. I am a hypocrite. I haven't always believed.
BETSY. Sister Rachel, you are a good Shaker.
RACHEL. The sky is darkening. I must confess my sins before it's too late.
HANNAH. Sister Rachel, you are free from sin. Have no fears. Sister Rachel, would you and Sister Phebe take Sister Fanny to her room? And pray for her salvation. Sister Fanny is ill. (Rachel and Peggy assist Fanny. Hannah and Betsy move to another part of the stage. Lights change.)
Scene 11

PHEBE. Are we being visited by angels?

HANNAH. There are no angels.
PHEBE. There are reports from …
HANNAH. I know about the reports.
BETSY. Perhaps we are not acknowledging the gifts we receive.
HANNAH. The truth of a spiritual gift is tested over time.
BETSY. Sister Rachel believes the end of the world is coming.
HANNAH. Sister Rachel is mistaken.
PHEBE. It's spread throughout the entire community —
BETSY. The elders at Mt. Lebanon are preparing a Sacred Site. (A pause.)

HANNAH. Are the elders receiving gifts? At Hancock? Mount Lebanon? Are there reports of the elders receiving gifts?
PHEBE. No. Not the elders.
BETSY. Earthly vessels are sometimes unworthy of the spirits that fill them. (A pause.)
PHEBE. We must act upon this.
HANNAH. We must all get back to work. There is much work to do.
PHEBE. Sister Hannah, we can no longer ignore …
HANNAH. Who is ignoring this? I would like to ignore it. How can you ignore giggling girls awake at all hours of the night? Spinning when the mood strikes them. Shaking and trembling and saying that spirits are interrupting their chores.
BETSY. Sister Hannah … (Hannah turns to her.) Mother Ann had a shaking gift. Mother Ann saw spirits. Mother Ann had gifts. But
she did not turn away from her gifts. Nor did she question the source. *(A long pause, as Hannah takes this in.)*

HANNAH. I will have a gift. I will have a gift that we are to have a service at our own Sacred Site. You will report to the girls. You will report that we have had a gift that we are to make ready for a service. We will unite together in worship. *(Betsy and Phebe don’t move.)* We are the leaders and we must lead. The girls are little lambs lost in the valley. They have forgotten their simplicity. It is our gift to return them to their mother. *(Betsy and Phebe stare at her.)* We must be the ones with vision. The men will prepare the Sacred Site. We will lead our lost lambs to Mount Sinai’s Holy Plain. *(Lights change. Hannah continues speaking as the scene changes.)*

**Scene 12**

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

HANNAH. I have a gift.
PHEBE. I have a gift.
BETSY. I have a gift.
PHEBE. I have a gift to go past the meadow.
HANNAH. Beloved, our fountain stone is ready. We will go together in unity and harmony. Sister Peggy will lead us in two-part singing as we march to our Sacred Site. *(They lead the girls in a march to the Sacred Site.)*

BETSY, HANNAH, PEGGY, PHEBE. *(Singing.)*

COME TO ZION, COME TO ZION
SIN SICK SOULS IN SORROW BOUND.
LAY YOUR CARES BEFORE THE ALTAR
WHERE TRUE HEALING MAY BE FOUND.
*(As a round, with all singing.)*

SHOUT HALLELUIA! HALLELUIA!
PRAISE RESOUND O’ER LAND AND SEA.
ALL WHO WILL MAY COME AND SHARE
THE GLORIES OF THIS JUBILEE.
(Lights change as they march to the Sacred Site. They march into
place, forming two columns, winding up in a horseshoe formation.)
HANNAH. Beloved children. You stand on holy ground.
(Hannah cues Phebe.)
PHEBE. Let us give thanks and say Amen.
ALL. Amen. (Hannah cues Betsy.)
BETSY. Let us pray that we may free ourselves from sin.
HANNAH. Beloved, are ye prepared to cleanse your spirit at the
fountain stone? Answer, Sisters.
ALL. Yea, God helping us.
HANNAH. We must wash with heavenly water. Let all who truly
desire to be Shakers wash themselves at the fountain stone. (This
is clearly a challenge to Fanny and to Polly. Phebe and Betsy lead the
women to the fountain stone. They splash water on themselves.) Don't
you sense the presence of Holy Mother Wisdom? I see above me
fruit and flowers from our heavenly mother. Let us reach out and
take fruit from the hands of the angels. (Hannah demonstrates. The
women are confused. There is an awkward silence.) The spirit has
sent us cups of silver. Hold out your goblets and receive holy wine.
Let ye who are worthy drink their fill. (Hannah looks pointedly at
Fanny, who then mimes drinking.)
PHEBE. Let us be lifted in mind and purpose from this world of
sorrow and sin. The angels have brought us a heavenly feast.
RACHEL. I see them. (Rachel points skyward. This is unexpected
and Hannah tries to cover. She looks at Fanny, who has covered her
eyes, trying to block out the vision.)
HANNAH. The angels dance above us, hearing our prayers.
RACHEL. I see the angels. I hear music.
HANNAH. Is there music? Has Holy Mother Wisdom sent us
heavenly music?
RACHEL. I hear singing.
JANE. (Frightened.) I hear music.
PEGGY. I hear the angels singing.
RACHEL. I hear the horn of Gabriel.
PEGGY. I see a cloud.
RACHEL. A host of angels.
PEGGY. I see a cloud of angel wings.
JANE. I see a cloud.
RACHEL. A host of angels. I hear the angel’s voices.
HANNAH. Let us not hear false voices.
PEGGY. We are in the hollow of God’s hand.
RACHEL. The angels are gathering.
PHEBE. This is Mother Ann’s work. She comes to unite us.
RACHEL. I feel rain from heaven. (All the women respond individually to the “rain.”)
FANNY. Holy Mother Wisdom speaks to me!
HANNAH. We will fight the temptation of false gifts.
FANNY. (To Hannah.) Let not any think because they can’t see into every gift that is, they will not believe it to be a gift.
HANNAH. Let us shake out our sins.
FANNY. We are without sin! God has made his second appearance on earth. Mother Ann has saved us. Let us rejoice! (The Sisters begin to murmur and confess rapidly.)
RACHEL. Forgive me my sins.
POLLY. Forgive my thoughts of lust.
PEGGY. Mother Ann, may I be meek in your eyes.
JANE. I confess that I have cursed God for taking my children.
BETSY. I confess that I have spoken when I should not have.
PHEBE. Forgive my arrogance and pride. (Fanny holds out her arms and look upwards. Some of the Sisters follow her gaze and look up.)
JANE. I see my children. I see my babies, and they have angel wings! I see my children! (Jane is overcome with joy. The murmuring builds and the women begin to shake, their arms raised to heaven. The intensity mounts.)
FANNY. (Shaking and speaking in an unknown tongue.) On-eak-la-to-menni-ska-pra-leh-sah-bah-nuj … (The women continue their movement, but the sound retreats. They are holding their arms high and shaking. Hannah looks at Fanny and looks at the women.)
HANNAH. (Looking up.) Please. Please. (Lights change. The women are shaking upstage, hiding the scene change happening as Jane and Betsy set a bench and sit.)
Scene 13

Betsy is teaching Jane to read.

JANE.  Blessed are the … poor … in spirit for the …
BETSY.  Theirs …
JANE.  … Theirs … is the … kingdom … of heaven. Blessed are the … they … that mourn … for the … they … shall be comforted. Blessed are the …
BETSY.  Meek.
JANE.  Blessed are the Meek: for they … shall … inherit … the earth. Blessed are they which do … hunger and thirst … after righteousness … for they shall be filled. (Lights change. During the transition we hear … )
ALL.
MORE LOVE, MORE LOVE,
THE HEAVENS ARE BLESSING,
THE ANGELS ARE CALLING,
O ZION, MORE LOVE.

Scene 14

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

HANNAH.  Please sit.
FANNY.  I have my bag packed.
PHEBE.  You’ll be tending the herb garden at South Union. They need a new gardener.
FANNY.  I will be happy to serve.
HANNAH. They have need of your … gifts. At South Union.
FANNY. Oh. *(Hannah puts a bright copper bowl on the floor. She has a small cloth as well.)*
BETSY. Some Brethren heading down there today. Brother James. Taking them some lambs. And some herb seeds. You'll be going with them. It's pretty down t' South Union.
FANNY. So I've been told.
PHEBE. Write to us.
FANNY. I will.
BETSY. Tell us all about South Union.
FANNY. I'll do that.
HANNAH. May I help prepare you for your journey? *(Fanny nods, unsure of what she means. Hannah kneels in front of Fanny. In silence she takes off Fanny's shoes and stockings and washes one of Fanny's feet. As she finishes the first foot, the other women come into the room. They fall silent as soon as they notice what Hannah is doing. She finishes and stands.)* You'll make deaconess someday. At South Union. *(Hannah moves the bowl away and the others descend on Fanny.)*
RACHEL. Wouldn't been right you leaving without a sendoff.
PEGGY. We brought you some sweetcakes. Sister Jane, Sister Polly and I made them for you.
FANNY. Thank you. *(She looks at the Sisters.)* What long faces! I'm just going down to South Union! I'll come back and visit.
JANE. You come visit us.
FANNY. I'll do that.
RACHEL. We'll visit!
PEGGY. We'll come visit you!
POLLY. *(Starting to cry.)* I'll miss you!
FANNY. Best be on my way. *(Ad-lib hugs and goodbyes. Fanny exits. Jane, Rachel, Betsy and Polly follow her.)*
PHEBE. They need a good gardener at South Union.
HANNAH. It has been requested that she instruct them in the new style of worship.
PHEBE. Indeed. *(Phebe looks at Hannah and exits. Betsy looks in the direction of Fanny's exit.)*
BETSY. I will miss her. *(Betsy starts to exit. Hannah sits.)*
HANNAH. Sister Betsy, did you see angels? Did you see angels at the Sacred Site?
BETSY. I saw ... I saw ... bright light. (A pause.)
HANNAH. Did you hear celestial singing?
BETSY. I heard singing like I'd never heard before.
HANNAH. Did you see angels?
BETSY. Did you?
HANNAH. When I looked at the Sisters' faces I almost thought they were angels.
BETSY. Maybe they were. (Hannah doesn't say anything. Betsy exits. Hannah is alone on stage for a minute and then picks up her bench to move it back into place as lights shift and all the Sisters enter singing.)

Scene 15

PEGGY. (First begins to sing, turning slowly as the others dance around her.)
COME DANCE AND SING AROUND THE RING
LIVE IN LOVE AND UNION ALL. (Joining in, skipping and singing.)
DANCE AND SING AROUND THE RING
LIVE IN SWEET COMMUNION
(One at a time the others join in singing and dancing in a circle.)
SING WITH LIFE, LIVE WITH LIFE
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER
SING WITH LIFE, LIVE WITH LIFE
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER
(By now all are holding hands dancing in a circle.)
COME DANCE AND SING AROUND THE RING LIVE
IN LOVE AND UNION DANCE AND SING AROUND THE RING LIVE IN SWEET COMMUNION
(Polly breaks off and begins to twirl.)
SING WITH LIFE, LIVE WITH LIFE
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER
SING WITH LIFE, LIVE WITH LIFE
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER
(They begin twirling and clapping, singing faster.)
SING WITH LIFE
LIVE WITH LIFE
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER
SING WITH LIFE
LIVE WITH LIFE
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER

(Clapping and dancing and twirling and singing faster and faster.)
SING WITH LIFE
LIVE WITH LIFE
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER
SING WITH LIFE
LIVE WITH LIFE
SING WITH LIFE AND POWER.

(They raise their arms to heaven. Blackout.)

End of Play
CURTAIN CALL

“Simple Gifts” may be sung in the curtain call.

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

Green beans, pots (PEGGY, IZZY)
Brooms (FANNY, POLLY)
Laundry basket with laundry (BETSY, JANE)
Colored paper heart (POLLY, BETSY, POLLY)
Small dowels (ALL)
Baskets (POLLY, IZZY, FANNY)
Large cloths, baskets (BETSY, RACHEL, PEGGY)
Blanket (BETSY)
String (IZZY)
Laundry (RACHEL, PHEBE, BETSY, PEGGY)
Sheet (POLLY, FANNY)
Paper (RACHEL, POLLY)
Bowl (PEGGY)
Small suitcase, cloak (PEGGY)
Copper bowl, cloth (HANNAH)
A religious community is changed when a non-believer has an ecstatic experience. The 1830’s Shaker society of Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, is set in ordered ways. Their once dramatic form of worship has by now developed into routine. The arrival of Fanny upsets the harmony; the Sisters suspect her to be a “winter Shaker,” one who suddenly converts when life gets too hard on the farm. Fanny sees angels in the meadow, and soon all the young women are receiving spiritual “gifts” of songs, drawings, ideas and giggles, completely upsetting the community. The leaders question Fanny’s intentions and honesty: Is this a resurgence of the original Shaker celebration or something manufactured by Fanny so that she can remain with the Shakers? Eldress Hannah is jealous that she, the most devout of Shakers, has not been privileged to see the visions. But only the ones who question need visual proof. Whether they were heavenly or earthly, the angels were there. “Hands to Work, Hearts to God” is their motto, and in each scene the Sisters are always at tasks. The set is as simple as the Shakers: benches, baskets and laundry. Hymns sung a cappella punctuate the scenes of the play, which ends with a joyful explosion of Shaker singing and ecstatic dance.

“A moving portrayal of upheaval caused when the utopian existence of an 1830’s Shaker community in Kentucky is threatened by the arrival of ‘newcomers’ claiming to see angels … powerful and insightful … a thought — provoking piece, the message being that often we need not look as far as heaven to see angels here on earth …”

— The Herald

“Hutton, who is best known for her charming Last Train to Nibroc, once again looks into a slice of Americana and a time when things seemingly were simpler while showing that even a ‘utopian’ existence such as the Shakers’ was not without complications … Hutton asks some universal questions about the nature of community and belief that are timeless and also prove to be good fodder for storytelling on stage … AS IT IS IN HEAVEN contains a story that deserves to be told.”

— American Theatre Web

“What Hutton does that is so fascinating is to show us people who appear to be the very picture of goodness and brings out their eccentricities and frailties. [She] is excellent at drawing comedy from the situation … to its satisfying and inspiring conclusion.”

— theatremania.com