

Newport, Maine

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MARTYR IN WAITING

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CHARACTERS

MARILYN: Who plays ELIZABETH

PAUL: the director

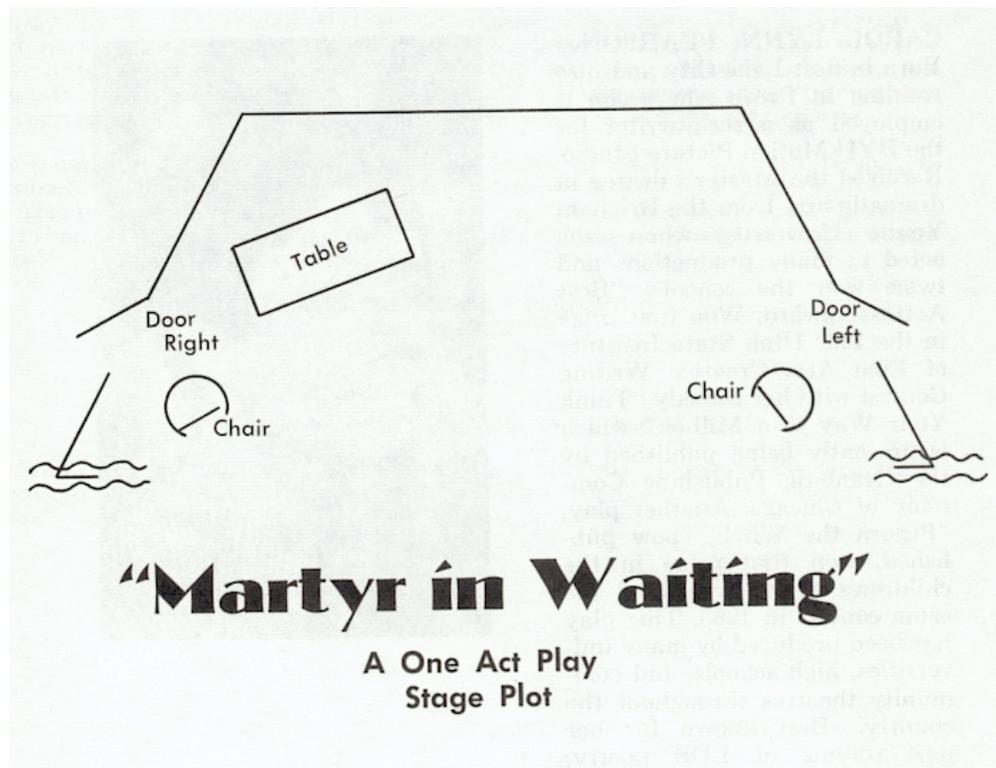
LINDA: who plays ANNA

DIANA: who plays SUSAN

CALVIN: who plays DANIEL

TIME: The time is the present.

STAGE SETTING: Four Latter-day Saint actors and their director are rehearsing a play about the Church. The stage is barren of scenery, except for a chair stage right and a chair stage left and chairs or other pieces as the director desires. Even the props mentioned are not intended to be present. It will help production if special lighting is used for the scenes of the "play within the play." During parts of these scenes, very quiet music in the background is effective. For this, Dr. Crawford Gates' album of orchestrated LDS hymns is recommended.



MARTYR IN WAITING by Carol Lynn Pearson. 2M 3W. Open Stage Setting. 20-25 minutes. A group of young LDS actors are putting on a play about the hardships of the early Saints. They are idealistically ready to follow those footsteps and are even envious of the early Saints' opportunities to sacrifice. However, when they are called upon to make real sacrifices in the modern world they find that they are not up to it. ORDER # 2038.

MARTYR IN WAITING

At rise of curtain, MARILYN, right of center, is rehearsing a scene, wearing an early pioneer dress. CALVIN, seated, down left of center, is in regular clothing. PAUL, the director, holds the script, stage right.

MARILYN (Elizabeth): Can you hear them, Susan? The soldiers are laughing in the temple.

PAUL: *(Interrupting)* Hold.

(Step toward her)

Marilyn, you didn't hear the soldiers. You'll never convince us. Now try it again.

(MARILYN takes a moment, then reacts to hearing a sound; her expression this time is more believable.)

MARILYN (Elizabeth): Can you hear them, Susan? The soldiers are laughing in the temple.

(LINDA and DIANA appear, door upper left, dressed in old pioneer costumes. DIANA's dress fits, but LINDA'S is a bit loose. As the three spot her, LINDA comes slinking in, singing, crosses down front left Of MARILYN.)

LINDA: "A pretty girl is like a melody..."

(She turns around in front of them.)

Gorgeous, huh? I feel like some thing out of Stephen King.

PAUL: Well, there's another one out there—try it on after we're finished.

DIANA: Does this one look all right, Paul?

(Whirls around down front between LINDA and MARILYN.)

PAUL: Fine. But take the lace off. We're in hard times.

DIANA: Didn't they have any lace in Nauvoo? My great grandmother brought some across the plains.

PAUL: Maybe. But if Susan has any lace now, it's tucked away in her trunk. You girls—always have to be beautiful.

DIANA: Okay, okay.

(She tucks the lace inside the neck)

But remember—in the next play, I get to be glamorous.

CALVIN: If there is a next play. So far this little theatre business hasn't been too lucrative.

MARILYN: But this play's going to make money. Good LDS play—lots of good Saints coming to see it.

LINDA: Now that's a happy attitude!

MARILYN: Oh, you know I love the play.

DIANA: But we've got to have funds if we're going to take this and the next one on tour.

LINDA: If? We've got to! My suitcase is packed.

MARILYN: I wouldn't give up that tour for anything. It'll be the most fun I've had in years. New places, new things to see and do.

CALVIN: The itinerary's all set, isn't it Paul?

(Rising, he crosses when bidden by PAUL.)

PAUL: Yes, but let's get this play finished before you're in the next one. Would you help me with this set piece Calvin? We don't need it in this scene. The Saints were in tents and wagons—anything to protect themselves from the sleet.

(Crosses to table back stage right. PAUL and CALVIN carry a table off-stage.)

LINDA: Do you have your car tonight, Marilyn?

MARILYN: No. My brother had to take it to do a work assignment at the new stake house.

(Crosses to chair left to place bonnet there.)

LINDA: Isn't that finished yet? They've be working on it for ages.

(Towards MARILYN)

MARILYN: Nope. They're still trying to get it done.

(PAUL and CALVIN come back on stage through door up right.)

PAUL: Right here, Diana. "I've heard them all night..."

(Crosses down right. CALVIN up right. PAUL sits chair right DIANA lies down on the floor stage center. LINDA Sits in chair left.)

MARILYN (Elizabeth): The soldiers are laughing in the temple.

(Puts bonnet on)

DIANA (Susan): I hear them. I've heard them all night.

MARILYN (Elizabeth): Poor Susan. Didn't you sleep?

(Crosses to above DIANA)

DIANA (Susan): The cold. I was shivering.

MARILYN (Elizabeth): Take my blanket.

(Hands her blanket in pantomime)

DIANA (Susan): It's wet.

(She starts to cry.)

Everything's wet!

MARILYN (Elizabeth): Susan—I'm sorry.

(Kneels by DIANA)

DIANA (Susan): You were always the stronger one, Elizabeth. But I can't do all this—I can't!

MARILYN (Elizabeth): Shhhh. Of course you can. Everything will be all right when we get to the west.

(Rises)

Just follow the prophet and have faith.

DIANA (Susan): *(Getting up)* Faith! Look—across the river at Nauvoo.

(Points out front)

That's what our faith got for us. Houses burned—men and young boys beaten—killed. And now those devils ripping up the temple we gave blood for.

MARILYN (Elizabeth): Don't try to understand it, Susan. We can't. We've just got to believe—behind it somewhere

(Arm around DIANA)

DIANA (Susan): I know.

(Bitterly)

There's a purpose. But what kind of God asks this much—asks everything?

(Steps away from arm)

MARILYN (Elizabeth): A wise God, Susan. He has so much in store for us—glories we can't dream of. But first we have to prove our trust in Him. Susan, no one is worthy to have something until he's willing to give it up.

DIANA (Susan): (*Turns back to MARILYN*) I can't give up everything. Do you remember how I cried in Kirtland when that mobber smashed my blue glass vase? It was the only perfect thing I'd ever owned. It's been like that ever since—one thing after another. People hating us, killing us—no food, clothes, running...

PAUL: Hold.

(*They break character and PAUL crosses to DIANA.*)

Diana, look. Have you ever been hungry—really hungry?

DIANA: No, I guess not.

PAUL: Has anyone hated you, wanted to kill you, to drive you off the face of the earth?

DIANA: (*tiny smile*) I hope not.

PAUL: Well, they have hated Susan. You've got to feel these things. Maybe you need to go without food for a couple of days.

DIANA: (*Looks down at her stomach and draws it in*) I guess I could stand a little famine.

CALVIN: (*Chuckles, crosses to chair where LINDA sits*) Couldn't we all?

DIANA: Let me go back. Okay?

PAUL: Please. Uh- "...like that ever since."

DIANA (Susan): It's been like that ever since, one thing after another. People hating us—killing us...

PAUL: (*Shouting at her*) They killed the Prophet Joseph in Carthage jail—remember? Again!

DIANA (Susan): People hating us...

(*With more passion and bitterness*)

...killing us...

PAUL: Go on.

DIANA (Susan): No food, clothes...

PAUL: All you've had for two days is a little corn meal and bacon. And it's cold—you're shivering. Again!

DIANA (Susan): (*With deeper intensity*) No food, clothes—running...

PAUL: (*Pacing*) You ran from New York to Kirtland to Nauvoo, and now over the icy river without even a dry blanket. Running—running—running! Again!

DIANA (Susan): No food, clothes—running!

(*She turns and breaks tension*)

I'm broken, Elizabeth—shattered—like blue glass on the floor.

MARILYN (Elizabeth): Susan, try a little longer.

DIANA (Susan): I'm going.

MARILYN (Elizabeth): But we're all going—together.

DIANA (Susan): Not west. I'm going home—back to New York.

(*Turns back on MARILYN again*)

MARILYN (Elizabeth): Susan!

(*She takes DIANA by the shoulders and turns her*)

The more we're willing to sacrifice, the more we prove ourselves.

DIANA (Susan): I want you to have everything of mine that's in the trunk. Give the velvet purse to Beth, and the ivory elephant to Robert—when they grow up.

(*Bitterly*)

If they grow up.

MARILYN (Elizabeth): And what shall I tell them about their aunt?

DIANA (Susan): Tell them—that their aunt loves them—and that she's gone away, because—
because she's not as strong as their mother.

(Two or three steps down right)

MARILYN (Elizabeth): *(Following her and embracing SUSAN)* Susan...

DIANA (Susan): Goodbye.

(She breaks away and leaves through door up right.)

MARILYN (Elizabeth): *(Softly)* Goodbye.

PAUL: Hold.

(He is writing something down as DIANA reenters.)

CALVIN: I wonder how many there were like that?

LINDA: Like what?

CALVIN: Like Susan, that didn't come.

LINDA: I don't know. You don't hear much about them.

DIANA: But there must have been quite a few. Not everybody's as strong as Elizabeth.

LINDA: I'm not. The first time somebody threw a rock in my window, I'd have probably sat down and bawled
and given up the whole thing.

MARILYN: Oh, you wouldn't either.

(Crosses to center)

LINDA: I might.

CALVIN: It's hard to know. We've never had to face it.

PAUL: That's the best you've done that scene. Now we're almost to production dates, and I don't want you to
make drastic changes. But if you find little things you want to start using—go ahead and try them.

LINDA: If I can just remember my lines I'll be doing well.

(Stands up)

PAUL: Be serious, Linda. I'm the director, but I can't tell you every little thing to do. If you feel like reaching
over and touching Elizabeth, go ahead and do it. It's these little things that really count. A tiny little gesture
can mean everything. All right, back in act one in Nauvoo. In the ashes.

CALVIN: *(Taking his place upstage left of center)* Ashes. Dirty scene for a religious play.

MARILYN: From where I'm alone?

PAUL: Yes, on your knees.

*(MARILYN gets to her knees down center and runs her fingers along the floor, as if through ashes. She
picks up a small object and examines it.)*

MARILYN (Elizabeth): Susan's hair brush—not a bristle left.

(CALVIN/DANIEL runs in. Hearing a noise, MARILYN/ELIZABETH turns, startled)

Who's there?

CALVIN (Daniel): Don't be frightened

(Coming downstage)

MARILYN (Elizabeth): *(Rising)* Oh, Brother Allen, I couldn't see you.

CALVIN (Daniel): You can't go wandering around out here at night.

MARILYN (Elizabeth): They wouldn't come back here. My house is in ashes. What more could

they do? You know what I was thinking as I watched the house burn? The baby was crying and Robert was pulling at my skirt. I just stood there and watched the flames. It was like losing Tom all over again. He built this house.

CALVIN (Daniel): Tom was a fine man.

MARILYN (Elizabeth): Every morning he'd get up at five and work on the house until noon—then go and help build the temple. He wanted us to have one of the finest houses in Nauvoo.

CALVIN (Daniel): It was. Tom was a good craftsman.

MARILYN (Elizabeth): *(Crosses left to beside chair)* All the hours he put on those bookshelves. All the carving. And polishing. "We'll never use all those bookshelves, Tom, not in a hundred years," I said. But he'd go right on building and carving. "Oh yes, we will," he'd say. "This is our home forever, and my children are going to own a whole library full of books—right here in our own house." He sent me our seventh book from England while he was on his mission, just before he died of the fever. They're gone now—all of them.

CALVIN (Daniel): We'd better be ...

(Crosses down to her level)

MARILYN (Elizabeth): *(Building in intensity)* I tried to run back in while it was burning, but they wouldn't let me. I wanted to get something for the children—something of their father. His letters. He wrote such beautiful letters ... so strong.

(On the verge of tears)

I wanted the children to have his words—his strength.

CALVIN (Daniel): *(Low and intense)* Blast them! Blast all of them!

MARILYN (Elizabeth): I shouldn't have gone on like that. I'm not bitter—really. The Lord is just—proving us.

(LINDA/ANNA runs into the scene from right.)

LINDA (Anna): Daniel, come quick! They're stealing the oxen!

CALVIN (Daniel): The oxen?

LINDA (Anna): And the horses! Hurry!

CALVIN (Daniel): *(Running out door upper right)* Get in the house, both of you. And lock the doors.

(He re-enters, crosses down by PAUL.)

LINDA (Anna): *(Putting her shawl around ELIZABETH)* Elizabeth, you'll catch your death of cold.

MARILYN (Elizabeth): Are the children all right?

LINDA (Anna): They're fine. If they take the animals we'll never make it west.

MARILYN (Elizabeth): We'll make it—if we have to walk.

LINDA (Anna): A messenger from President Young just came. We can't stay until spring.

MARILYN (Elizabeth): *(Whirls to face LINDA)* But they promised!

LINDA (Anna): Promises! What do promises mean to a hate-filled mob! We're going now—in the dead of winter. Hurry, Elizabeth.

(Holds out hand to MARILYN. As they start to leave. MARILYN leans down and picks up something from the ground.)

MARILYN (Elizabeth): Robert's jackknife!

LINDA (Anna): Hurry!

(They exit door left.)

PAUL: Almost. Almost.

LINDA: *(Reenters, MARILYN is with her.)* It'll help when we get all the costumes and props, don't you think?

PAUL: Don't count on it. It's what's inside of you that makes the difference, and costumes won't change that much.

DIANA: How could people do those things?

PAUL: Do what?

DIANA: Burn houses and steal oxen.

CALVIN: It's nothing new. Happens all through history.

DIANA: But there was no reason for them to hate the Saints.

CALVIN: We were different. They couldn't understand us. And it made them afraid.

DIANA: But it's scary.

CALVIN: Why? That was almost two-hundred years ago.

DIANA: But if it happened then, right here in America, why couldn't it happen again?

CALVIN: To us? No.

DIANA: Why not? It could.

LINDA: Diana, those things don't happen anymore. Saints die of old age—just like everybody else.

MARILYN: Yeah—darn it.

CALVIN: Huh?

MARILYN: Nothing. I was just thinking—nothing really exciting happens to us these days.

LINDA: Yeah. You'll probably go home tonight and find that your house isn't even burned down.

(They all laugh.)

MARILYN: Now, look. Haven't any of you wished—even once, just the teeniest, tiniest bit—that you'd lived back in the early days?

(Crosses sits in chair left)

LINDA: Are you kidding?

CALVIN: Maybe—Just in daydreams.

MARILYN: Well, I do. I'd give anything to have lived back then.

LINDA: Honey, if you'd lived back then, you'd have to give up everything.

MARILYN: Good. Fine.

LINDA: Okay. But as for me and my house—we'll watch it on television.

MARILYN: We're missing something these days. Really, we are.

PAUL: What do you mean?

MARILYN: Do you meet people like Elizabeth now? No. We don't make them like that now, we just watch them on television.

CALVIN: Oh, I don't know.

DIANA: You can't compare quite like that. If we were supposed to have those same trials, the Lord would have arranged it that way.

MARILYN: But sometimes—I want so much to rise to the heights they did. And, well—

PAUL: People have to go through the fire to really shine—is that it?

MARILYN: Yes, it is.

PAUL: And today the furnace is turned down too low?

MARILYN: *(A little confused, but sincere)* Yes.

DIANA: *(Crosses to chair upstage side)* I see what you mean, Marilyn. But if there was a purpose to all those difficulties, there must be a purpose to the peaceful times too.

MARILYN: *(Still not satisfied)* Yeah, I guess. Well, meanwhile back at the play.

PAUL: *(Crosses to center)* One other spot I wanted to go over. Winter Quarters. You've just come in from burying the baby. Up—up. Don't push this scene. Make it quiet and natural. Okay.

FOUR pages left to end