

MATTERS of the heart,



**Paul's home from his mission.
A year early.
Now what?**

by Thom Duncan



ZION THEATRICALS

Newport, Maine

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MATTERS OF THE HEART

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MATTERS OF THE HEART

List of Characters

Robert M. Baines -- age 60, newly-appointed Stake President

Alice Baines -- age 58, his wife

Paul Baines -- age 20, their son

This play observes the Aristotelian Unities of Time, Place, and Action and should be performed without any breaks.

The scene consists of the front room, kitchen and backyard garden of the Baines family of Salt Lake City, Utah.

MATTERS OF THE HEART

by Thom Duncan.

2M 1W.

1 Interior/exterior set.

A heart-wrenching and inspired look at a Stake President's family who's youngest son returns early from a Full time LDS Mission. We come to know and love and empathize with each of the characters in the play because each of them could be someone we have known. And that is the power of this play: its believability, its ability to make each of us relate to the situation and characters and come away from a performance moved, changed, entertained and challenged. 90 mins. Order # 2017. Best Original Play Award-1985, Utah Valley Theatre Guild.

THOM DUNCAN, Having been born of goodly parents, in the town of Southgate California, he is currently employed as a Technical Writer. Thom has written many LDS-oriented plays (one of which, *Matters of the Heart*, currently anthologized in *Saints on Stage*, won an award as Best New Play of the Year in 1985), two technical books about Novell software, and several yet unproduced screenplays. All of his LDS plays are represented by Zion Theatricals. *Moroni Smith in Search of the Gold Plates* is his second published novel. He is published in every branch of the medium except screenplays. When he does that, he says that he can die happy.

MATTERS OF THE HEART
ACT ONE

(BAINES is in his garden, DSR, hacking away at the azalea bush and surrounding plants. He wears a one-piece overall, gardening gloves, and beat-up shoes. He has quite a pile of branches and dead leaves at his feet. He works feverishly, with a dedication that seems to border on obsession. So involved is he in his work that he doesn't notice the ENTRANCE of ALICE BAINES from the kitchen USL, carrying a pitcher of some fruit drink and two glasses. Her hair is cut short and neatly coiffed. She is still beautiful as long as she wears makeup. She wears a conservative house dress and a silver chain around her neck from which hangs a pair of glasses. She comes through the back door, letting it slam behind her and places the tray on the top step. Sitting, she fills both glasses, and holds one out to BAINES.)

ALICE: Strychnine. Sugarless.

(BAINES absently reaches out and takes the glass. He stops short of taking his first sip and looks at ALICE)

BAINES: What did you say?

(A pause. ALICE laughs, joined by BAINES)

Was I doing it again?

ALICE: Totally oblivious.

BAINES: I'm sorry.

ALICE: If I wanted to do away with you, I'd do it while you were working on the garden.

BAINES: What did you say? Strychnine?

ALICE: Sugarless.

BAINES: The best kind. Artificially sweetened strychnine has been proven harmful to your health. Causes cancer.

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

BAINES: I appreciate it.

(Kisses her lightly. Then holds up the glass)

Not bad.

ALICE: How's it going?

(BAINES looks up questioningly. ALICE indicates the bush)

BAINES: Bad. I've got a call into Leonard --

ALICE: Leonard?

BAINES: He owns Three Pines Nursery. If he can't tell me what's wrong, then I don't know--

ALICE: I don't understand. You're out here every day, pruning it, watering it, digging the soil around it. If the other plants had feelings, they'd probably feel neglected.

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

ALICE: Maybe you should have called Leonard earlier.

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

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ALICE: *(Slight pause)* I'm sure you know best.

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

(Points to it)

Nothing.

(He hacks away at another branch, adds it to the pile)

ALICE: *(Reaching for them)* Do you want me to get rid of these?

BAINES: No. I'll take care of them.

(Holds up empty glass)

I could use some more strychnine, though.

(She pours him some more as he empties the branches into a plastic bag)

ALICE: Well, I've got his room ready.

(BAINES stops with a handful of leaves, but only for a split second; now, as he continues to fill the bag, his movements seem to be more direct, more forceful)

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

BAINES: *(Finishing, tying the bag, his voice straining with exertion)* Did you find that one album -- his favorite?

ALICE: Prominently displayed on top of the turntable.

BAINES: *(Standing with effort)* How did you manage to get rid of all my things?

ALICE: Just don't open the hall closet without a hardhat.

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

ALICE: I don't think he would --

BAINES: Alice, he'll be going through a period of adjustment. Coming home early from a mission is traumatic enough. Everything needs to be as normal as possible.

(Looks at his watch, as he enters dining room, checking his watch with the wall clock)

Twelve-fifteen. When did he say -- ?

ALICE: *(Following him in with the tray)* I called the airport. His plane arrived on time.

BAINES: He's taking a taxi, wasn't that it?

ALICE: That's what he said. He seemed pretty rushed.

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

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

BAINES: We could have afforded to talk him for three days--

ALICE: Well, maybe he had to make a fast connection.

BAINES: Still ... he could have said more than "I'll get a cab."

(He looks at the clock again, then goes to the window, looks out)

What's it take? Maybe twenty minutes from the airport?

ALICE: I'm sure he'll be here any minute now.

BAINES: I still don't understand why he didn't want us to meet him.

(He goes to closet, fumbles through a coat pocket)

ALICE: What are you looking for?

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BAINES: That letter from President Andrews.

(Goes to bookcase, looks through a pile of letters on one of the shelves.)

ALICE: (She goes to a drawer in the hutch and removes the letter) I put it here for safe keeping.

BAINES: *(Taking it from her)* He doesn't give us a clue as to why he's sending Paul home early.

(Opens the letter)

Here's the part: " ... for reasons that Elder Baines would like to discuss with you himself."

(Slight pause)

Thank heaven he's still "Elder" Baines.

ALICE: Bob!

BAINES: Sorry --

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

BAINES: No, of course not.

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

BAINES: Yes. Yes.

ALICE: *(Slight pause)* Then why -- ?

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

ALICE: *(Just to make sure he understands how she feels, just to drive the point home)* Paul would never do anything like that.

BAINES: *(Looks at his watch again)* Probably got stuck in traffic. I heard on the news that there was an accident on the Twentieth South offramp.

ALICE: *(After a pause)* Would it make a difference?

(BAINES turns to her. Pause)

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

BAINES: *(Slight pause)* Of course.

ALICE: Because what he needs now, more than anything, is our understanding, our support -- not our condemnation.

BAINES: I know that, Alice. I -- I just wish I knew more about this whole situation.

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

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

ALICE: But he's not the worst missionary in France.

BAINES: *(Indicating the letter)* That's what President Andrews says. He calls Paul "one of the most effective missionaries in the field." He's not been ex-communicated, and he's not sluffing on the job. So I still don't understand why he's coming home.

ALICE: Just wait till he gets here, then let him tell you. What I think is more important is how do we deal with it? How are you going to deal with it?

BAINES: Me?

ALICE: Yes, you. This seems to be upsetting you an awful lot.

BAINES: It's not bothering you?

ALICE: Yes, of course it is. I've seen the sidelong glances from the other women in Relief Society; I can almost hear their thoughts: "What did her son do, that he's being sent home early? What did she do wrong? If she,

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the wife of a stake president, can't do everything right, how can I ever hope to?"

(ALICE, who had been in perfect control up to this point, suddenly turns away, reaching for a hanky. BAINES is instantly on his feet, taking her shoulders in his hands)

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

ALICE: No, not at --

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

ALICE: Bob, I'm sorry --

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

(ALICE, after a slight pause, nods)

I thought so. Why haven't you told me before? Because you wanted to be strong, didn't you? You thought showing your true feelings would appear as a sign of weakness, didn't you?

(Again, she nods)

Believe me, I know the feeling.

(He's temporarily lost in thought. Suddenly)

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

ALICE: We could take solace he's still a member. He's committed no sin great enough to take that away from him. And he's alive.

BAINES: You're right, Mother, as always.

(He kisses her, sees flowers on mantel piece)

And the flowers look great right where they are.

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

(She moves the flowers to the other side of the hearth. As she passes by him, BAINES pats her on the fanny, eliciting from her a yelp of girlish delight)

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

BAINES: No, they understand a father's anticipation toward seeing his son come home. Perhaps not my particular anticipation ...

ALICE: Oh yes, they do. You're not the man whose son hasn't lived up to the father's expectations.

BAINES: Again, you're right.

(Moving toward window)

ALICE: *(A pause. She moves to him)* Bob?

BAINES: Hmmm?

ALICE: *(Pause)* Are you going to let Paul give a homecoming talk?

BAINES: You mean in Church?

ALICE: It would be a wonderful experience for him!

BAINES: Well ... I ... don't --

ALICE: Returned missionaries speak in Church all the time.

BAINES: True, but --

ALICE: But not missionaries who are sent home early?

BAINES: No. And it's not because they're second-class citizens or something. Our youth -- and adults, for that matter, need to view the mission experience in a positive light. Granted, there are ... some ... difficult aspects to missionary life, but they find that out soon enough.

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ALICE: Are you sure there's no other reason? Are you sure it's not because you -- you don't want people to know he's come home?

BAINES: *(Takes her in his arms)* Is that it, Alli? Am I ashamed of my own son?

(A pause)

Have I ever told you that ... Paul was my favorite?

ALICE: Bob!

BAINES: Oh, I love all my sons -- you know that. But Paul was always special to me -- from the day he was born. Just like Israel and Joseph.

ALICE: Don't you ever tell any of the boys that.

BAINES: Of course, I won't.... But I remember the day you brought him home. You had him on the basinet, and he rolled over onto his stomach, lifted his head and looked around through squinty eyes. It was in that split second -- that frozen moment of time -- that I saw the entire course of Paul's life stretching out before him. I knew then that, in the face of the unknown, Paul would not shrink but would lift up his head and face life straight on -- eyes squinty, perhaps, but he would face it.

ALICE: That's beautiful.

BAINES: And he was always that way -- all through school. If a problem was too tough, he would bite his lip and tackle it until he mastered it. Do you remember how he spent days patiently trying to tie his shoe? Never seeming to get frustrated, or discouraged. None of the other boys were like that. That's what makes it so difficult to accept -- Paul's coming home. I get the feeling that he's ... running away from something. And I can't understand that.

(THE SOUND OF A CAR driving up. BAINES goes to window)

It's him! Paul's home!

ALICE: Now remember what I said, Bob. Let him tell you why he came home. Don't ask him.

BAINES: Yes. Yes.

(He seems like a little child on Christmas Eve in his anticipation. Then, ever image-conscious, he gathers himself, figuring it wouldn't be sufficiently manly to appear over-zealous, and goes and sits on the couch, picking up an Ensign and thumbing aimlessly through it. ALICE, having reacted with a wistful smile at her husband's brief genuineness, now seems somewhat disappointed when his "officialness" wins over. She, however, being by nature more emotional, is not so easily diverted and, as the front door opens and PAUL ENTERS, she rushes to him)

ALICE: Oh, Paul! I'm so glad you're back!

(PAUL has short hair, though it is styled, not cut; he carries a suitcase. His suit is slightly more fashionable than his father's. He carries a camel colored overcoat over his arm. He barely gets the suitcase to the floor when his mother rushes into his arms. Their embrace carries them clear around, both laughing. BAINES stands as PAUL ENTERS)

PAUL: Nobody can keep me away from your good old home-cooking.

ALICE: *(Stepping back, scrutinizing him)* You've gained weight ... you've lost a little hair...

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

BAINES: *(Somewhat awkwardly)* Welcome home, Son.

(There is an electric moment between the two men. ALICE senses this, steps back to silently urge them on)

PAUL: Thanks, Dad.

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(BAINES offers his hand, which PAUL shakes)

BAINES: *(Feigning a wince)* I can see you learned the missionary handshake well.

(Sincerely)

Congratulations, Son.

PAUL: For what?

BAINES: On your last baptism. President Andrews told me in his letter that your convert is now branch president.

PAUL: Thank you. Frere DuChamp was a wonderful man. I was very lucky.

BAINES: Blessed.

PAUL: *(Slight pause)* Whatever.

ALICE: What's his first name? "Frair?"

PAUL: *(Slight laugh)* That's not his first name. The word's "frère." French for "brother."

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

(And she leads him to one end of the couch)

PAUL: *(Indicating his suitcase)* But what about -- ?

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

(BAINES starts to sit in the chair, but ALICE gets there first, forcing BAINES to sit at the other end of the couch. Once he's down, she immediately stands up)

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

(As she EXITS, she gives him a look that says, "Don't you dare sit in my chair!")

PAUL: *(A slight awkward pause)* Uh -- how's the flower garden coming along?

BAINES: Funny you should ask. I was working at it just before you came in.

(PAUL looks at BAINES' coveralls. BAINES notices the look, remembers he has them on. They both laugh)

As if you didn't know. Let's go take a look.

(BAINES and PAUL go out to the garden. BAINES walks down to the azalea, while PAUL remains on the steps)

PAUL: That's new, isn't it?

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

PAUL: It seems pretty mature now.

BAINES: *(Pause)* Yes.

(Another pause. BAINES putters as PAUL looks on)

Your brothers will be here around five-thirty.

PAUL: *(Suddenly animated)* Rich, too?

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

PAUL: I can understand that. Four kids --

BAINES: Five, soon.

PAUL: *(Pleasantly surprised)* She's pregnant again?

BAINES: They called last night.

PAUL: Are they hoping for a girl this time?

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

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PAUL: *(Slight pause)* Just like you.

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

PAUL: *(Quickly)* In a letter.

BAINES: Yes, I suppose I did.

(ALICE ENTERS, carrying a pitcher and some glasses)

ALICE: Here it is! Real Hawaiian punch.

(She sets her charge on a lawn chair. Neither BAINES nor PAUL move)

Well, get over here, you two.

PAUL: Hawaiian punch? The real thing?

BAINES: *(Laughing)* No. You know we don't drink "the real thing" in our house!

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

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

ALICE: "Frogs?"

PAUL: That's what we called the French people.

BAINES: You call them "frogs?"

PAUL: Only among ourselves.

BAINES: It doesn't seem very complimentary.

PAUL: I never really thought about it.

(Takes a sip of punch)

This is great stuff!

BAINES: Thank you, Mother, it's very delicious.

ALICE: *(Taking a sip)* What are they like? The French people?

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

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

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

BAINES: Pretty rough, was it?

PAUL: *(A tense pause)* What do you mean, "rough?"

BAINES: *(Trying to cover)* It ... must have been discouraging ... That's all I meant.

PAUL: Maybe a little.

ALICE: *(Again to the rescue of a potentially explosive situation)* Did Dad tell you about Ruth?

PAUL: Yeah. Can you believe it? Another kid?

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

BAINES: I wouldn't say that.

ALICE: All right. Twenty-one then.

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

ALICE: Me? I'm a mess!

PAUL: Dad, is she fishing for a compliment?

BAINES: It's more like she's trolling, if you ask me.

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

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(All laugh)

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

PAUL: So you do canning every morning. What's the difference?

ALICE: She does that, too!

(Again, laughter all around)

Want some more punch?

(BAINES shakes his head)

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

ALICE: Oh, the reception was absolutely beautiful. And her new husband is nice, too. You knew him didn't you, Paul? I'm afraid I know only the youth that are in our ward. Isn't that horrible, for the wife of a Stake President?

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

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

PAUL: I am over it.

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

PAUL: *(Very uneasy, as if he wants to say something, but can't bring himself to do so)* Yeah. I know.
(Then with more strength of conviction)

It's all image.

BAINES: What is?

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

(There is no bitterness in this statement, but BAINES doesn't know how to take it)

BAINES: Yes ... well ... unfortunately ... appearances are everything in this telestial world we live on. In the afterlife...

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

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

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

(A pause. PAUL laughs, breaking the tension. BAINES and ALICE join in, relieved that it was all a joke. Or is it?)

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

(EXITS)

PAUL: American food! I can't believe it. Oh, I've got something for you.

(Goes back into house. Takes some gifts out of his suitcase)

These are for you guys.

(ALICE comes back in carry ing a tray of lunch meats, breads, etc.)

Hey, that isn't honest-to-gosh baloney is it?

ALICE: It certainly is.

(Indicating gift)

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What did you go and do this for?

PAUL: Just open them. While I make a sandwich.

BAINES: Thank you, Son!

(PAUL dives into the fixings, as his parents begin to unwrap their presents)

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

(ALICE has opened her present by now. It is a glass figurine of delicate artistry)

ALICE: Oh, Paul, this is so lovely!

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

BAINES: *(Hefting a book)* "The Missionary Journal of Elder Paul W. Baines." It's all typed and bound.

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

BAINES: Paul, this is wonderful! I'll treasure this always.

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

(A pause)

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

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

PAUL: He finally straightened up enough to go, huh?

BAINES: He said you inspired him to go.

PAUL: Me? Inspiring?

BAINES: You were to Brother DuChamp, obviously.

PAUL: *(Loosening his tie)* Hey, I'm going to take this off, if you don't mind.

ALICE: Have some milk.

BAINES: Tell us about Brother DuChamp.

PAUL: What's there to tell?

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

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

ALICE: Would you like another sandwich?

PAUL: Hmm? Uh ... no ...

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

PAUL: Well, I've got some other things in there. Things that were too heavy to bring in the suitcase.

BAINES: The delivery man put it in here. Mother's been using it as a knick-knack holder.

(ALICE removes the table cloth she had spread over it. PAUL scoots over a hassock and unlocks the trunk, pulling out a square rock, hefting it)

ALICE: What's that?

PAUL: It's called a "pav'e." The French use it to pave the streets. Makes skate-boarding real difficult. I don't know. Maybe I'll use it as a paperweight.

(He pulls out some books)

My French dictionary ... And this book was given to me by one of the most beautiful French women I've ever seen. Well, not woman exactly -- girl. She was only seventeen. But she had the longest honey-blond hair that hung straight down her back. And incredibly mature for her age. And very spiritual. Not the weepy-

eyed kind of spirituality that a lot of girls have at that age -- hers was real. The first time I met her was my very first day in that city -- Le Havre it was called: "The Harbor." On the northern coast of France, just across the English Channel from South Hampton. My companion picked me up at the train station and as we walked in the salle -- sorry -- as we walked into the meeting room, a bunch of members were there, polishing the floor. I was introduced around and Dominique -- that was her name -- said, "Come on, Elder Baines. Why don't you help?" She threw me a cloth and I did what everybody else was doing -- threw the rag on the floor and kind of moved it with my feet, like this. The thought went through my head: "Am I dancing with a girl? Isn't this against mission rules?" Anyway, when I left that town three months later, she was there at the train station. That's when she gave me this book on French grammar. As the train started on down the track, I looked out the window ... and she was waving at me. There were tears in her eyes. I told her in a letter that, if things didn't work out with Lisa and me, I would look her up .

(Back to reality now)

I guess I can do that now ... I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...

ALICE: She sounds like a lovely girl.

PAUL: She is. I have a picture of her in here someplace.

BAINES: You ... wrote to her?

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

BAINES: I ... see ...

PAUL: *(Pulling out a hunk of metal)* Anybody know what this is?

BAINES: Looks like a grenade.

PAUL: It is.

ALICE: Oh!

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

BAINES: You'd think they'd have combed the beaches clean by now.

PAUL: That's exactly what I said. Hey, is my bookcase still empty?

ALICE: I gave all your old science-fiction magazines to Ronnie. Isn't that what you wanted me to do?

PAUL: Yeah. I need the room for these.

(He starts pulling out copies of the Journal of Discourses)

BAINES: The Journal of Discourses? Where did you get those?

PAUL: There's a European Distribution center in Liege. I ordered them from there.

BAINES: When did you have time to read them?

PAUL: I haven't read them all yet.

BAINES: Wasn't there a prescribed reading list?

PAUL: I read all those. The Book of Mormon six times. These

(Indicating the J&D)

were in between. You know me. Always the voracious reader.

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

PAUL: Questionable? Dad, these are the Prophet's predecessors. Brigham Young. Heber C. Kimball. Orson Pratt. How can anything they say be considered questionable?

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

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

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

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

BAINES: Precisely why we shouldn't read it.

PAUL: They sell the J&D at Deseret Book.

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

(Quickly)

Not because there's false doctrine in there --

PAUL: But there is.

(Pause)

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

BAINES: That's open to interpretation.

PAUL: There are accounts in journals relating that Orson Pratt, who didn't believe the doctrine, used to have arguments with Brigham Young, who did.

BAINES: Then, if the books contain false doctrine, why did you read them?

PAUL: *(Shrugs)* They were interesting.

BAINES: I don't deny there are many great truths in the Journal of Discourses. But the modern prophets have said that belief in Adam as our God is a false belief. Why Brigham Young taught it, or if he taught it as we understand the doctrine, I don't know. Anyway, this is not the time or place to get into this kind of discussion -- if, indeed, there ever is a time or place. You're home safely and we're very glad. How was the flight over?

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

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

PAUL: Hmm -- let's see. Fried chicken?

ALICE: That's right.

PAUL: And for dessert, German chocolate cake!

ALICE: You guessed it.

PAUL: Do we have to wait for everyone to get here? Hup! Now I almost forgot. There was something else I wanted to show you in my suitcase, and, Mom, you side-tracked me. Therefore, I cannot be held responsible for any damage to your olfactory nerves!

ALICE: What -- ?

PAUL: *(From out of his suitcase, he pulls ...)* Ta-Dah! French cheese!

(In French, as he empties his suitcase)

Bonjour, Madame. Et que voulez-vous, aujourd'hui? Du fromage? Eh, bien, nous avons du camembert, et du gruyere, et un peu de babybel. You know, there are thousands of kinds of cheeses in France?

(ALICE reacts to the smell of camembert)

Now do you see why I didn't want to send these along in the trunk? That took a month and a half to get here.

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Anyway, Mom, serve these with dinner tonight.

ALICE: None of this ... is bad ... is it?

PAUL: No. It just smells that way.

ALICE: If you say so ...

(She EXITS into the kitchen with the cheese. PAUL goes back to the trunk)

PAUL: Let's see. Nothing but slides left, but we can show those after everybody gets here.

BAINES: You're looking good, Son.

PAUL: Thanks. So are you.

BAINES: I mean it. So many young men come home from their missions all fat and out of shape.

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

BAINES: Judging by your little impersonation just now, you seem to have picked up the language pretty well.

PAUL: Yeah, wouldn't that surprise Mrs. Holt? She thought I'd never learn French.

(Slight pause)

Hey, Dad. When you were on a mission, did they ever play pranks on new missionaries?

BAINES: Oh, yes, I suppose ...

PAUL: I bet they were never like the ones we pulled. I never saw this one, but it happened to my first companion when he was a greenie. His first senior companion had this whole thing pre-arranged with one of the sisters in the local branch. When the greenie arrived at the train, this sister came up, acting like she was a hooker, made a pass at the greenie, who, of course, refused. Then she made a pass at the senior comp. Well, he looks at his companion, says, "I'll meet you back at the apartment," and walks off with the girl.

(ALICE ENTERS)

ALICE: What in heaven's name are we talking about?

BAINES: Oh, just some missionary hi-jinks, Mother.

ALICE: Paul, you didn't do anything like that, did you?

PAUL: *(Arm to the square)* Not on your life.

ALICE: I certainly hope not. Those kinds of things are not becoming a missionary Is that cheese going to affect everything else in the refrigerator?

PAUL: Don't worry about it.

ALICE: If it does, I'll make you clean out the entire refrigerator all by yourself.

PAUL: As long as I can have all the leftovers.

ALICE: It's a deal.

(BAINES gestures to ALICE)

BAINES: *(ALICE suddenly remembers something and EXITS)* Mother --

PAUL: What's going on?

BAINES: You just sit still, young man.

PAUL: Hey --

BAINES: Hurry up, Mother. Paul's getting restless.

ALICE: *(Off)* Coming!

(She ENTERS with a gaily wrapped package held behind her back)

BAINES: Since we're all in the giving mood, we've got something for you .

PAUL: Me? What for?

BAINES: What for?

(Pause. Then, almost too matter-of-factly)

Because you're our son and we love you.

ALICE: Should I give a little fanfare?

PAUL: What's -- ?

BAINES: If you'd like.

ALICE: Ta-ta-ta-tah!

(She doesn't know what else gives PAUL the present)

PAUL: You guys didn't need to do this. You gave me enough. You paid for my mission --

BAINES: Open it and quit complaining.

(PAUL opens the present, lifts out a sport shirt)

PAUL: Wow! This is great!

ALICE: Your father picked it out.

BAINES: Read the card.

PAUL: "Dear Son, Welcome back to the real world!" Thanks. My first gentile shirt.

ALICE: I hope it fits. I wasn't sure if your size had changed.

PAUL: (Sees something in the pocket) What's this?

(BAINES gestures to ALICE. They both watch in silence as PAUL takes out an envelope and opens it. PAUL's expression changes to one of dismay as he reads it)

I don't understand.

BAINES: An all expense-paid scholarship to BYU! What do you think of that?

PAUL: I ... I don't know what to think. How -- ?

BAINES: I have friends on the Board of Trustees, you know.

PAUL: Thank you, but --

(BAINES look at ALICE then back at PAUL)

I'm not sure I want to go to BYU.

BAINES: *(After a pause. With considerable effort at keeping his composure)* I see.

PAUL: I ... probably should have told you when you mentioned it before.

ALICE: May we ask why, Paul?

BAINES: Brigham Young has always been our school. For three generations --

PAUL: I'm just not sure ... if that's where I want to go ...

BAINES: *(A bit tensely)* Where else is there?

PAUL: Lots of places. The U of U. There's some good schools in California --

BAINES: *(A sudden outburst)* California!

(Softer now, but with effort)

But BYU is all you ever talked about before your mission.

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

BAINES: *(Under his breath)* That's obvious.

ALICE: Father!

BAINES: *(A forced smile)* Sorry.

(Trying a new tactic)

But Paul ... uh ... now that your mission is over, you'll... you'll be wanting to get married. What better place

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to find a wife than among the choice daughters of Zion ...

(PAUL looks away)

You don't want to get married?

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

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

(Pause)

Just don't wait too long.

PAUL: Well, I don't know how long it'll take. I want to be sure.

BAINES: I mean ... there are certain ... urges in a young man ...

(ALICE moves over to the flowers in embarrassment)

... that are very powerful at your age ...

PAUL: You mean "it's better to marry than to burn"?

BAINES: Your namesake couldn't have phrased it better.

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

BAINES: I wasn't saying...

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

BAINES: And it should. Most definitely it should. I couldn't agree more. ... So BYU is out of the picture --

PAUL: Not totally --

BAINES: Do you know the kind of people they have down there in California?

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

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

PAUL: What about the "other" people?

BAINES: They're -- well, they just don't ... uh ... look at life the same way we do.

PAUL: Not many people do.

BAINES: Their standards aren't as high as ours --

PAUL: And I might be corrupted, is that what you're saying?

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

PAUL: Since when is BYU a paragon of virtue?

BAINES: Granted, BYU has problems ... like everywhere else. But they're not as widespread. It's a safer environment, that's what I'm trying to say.

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

BAINES: I wouldn't be surprised. You've always had great leadership qualities.

(As an afterthought)

But it's not wise to play with fire.

PAUL: Dad, if California is such a Babylon, then why is it one of fastest growing missions in the world?

BAINES: I just think you should reconsider BYU.

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

(Pause)

Until I do, maybe you should keep this.

(Hands BAINES the scholarship)

And thanks for the shirt. Sincerely. I really like it.

ALICE: You're welcome, Son.

(An awkward pause. PAUL stands)

PAUL: Hey, ya know, I'm kind of tired. Jet lag, I guess. I'd like to lie down for a while.

ALICE: Your room is ready. Just like it was when you left.

PAUL: The same sheets and everything?

ALICE: You know what I mean.

PAUL: *(Smiling)* Thanks. Hey, Mom, the sandwiches were great. Rat-hair baloney and all.

ALICE: Oh, Paul!

(PAUL EXITS. BAINES crosses to doorway after PAUL has gone, stands looking after him for several seconds)

BAINES: I know they're supposed to change on their missions, but ... I can't believe this. Did you notice how defensive he was?

ALICE: I wouldn't call it "defensive." "Careful" maybe.

BAINES: But what has he got to be careful -- or defensive -- about? Before he left on his mission, we could talk about anything at any time. Now I can't get a straight answer out of him.

ALICE: I think he just needs some time to unwind.

BAINES: Well, I hope that's all it is. Did you notice how he warms up to you and how he -- tenses up -- when he talks to me?

ALICE: *(Pooh-pooing the idea)* No, I didn't.

BAINES: I make him uncomfortable.

ALICE: Well, his father's never been a stake president before.

BAINES: No, it's more than that.

ALICE: He might ... be afraid to express his independence around you. ... Dear, you do give off a gruff, stern image.

BAINES: *(Genuinely surprised)* I do?

(ALICE nods)

But's that only when I'm giving an address. It's my style, I suppose. But, surely, Paul doesn't think I'm not without compassion.

ALICE: I'm sure he doesn't.

BAINES: *(Paces a bit. Then, suddenly)* Something happened to him while he was out there, Mother, to change his mind about things. A young man doesn't go on a mission with the bright hope of the Gospel in his eyes and, one year later, ask to be released -- all for no reason.

(A pause, while he searches the air for reasons)

I bet it was those Journal of Discourses. Those volumes have been the ruin of many a saint. Or maybe it's that girl -- what was her name --?

ALICE: Dominique.

BAINES: Maybe he's gone and fallen in love.

ALICE: Then why didn't he bring her home with him?

BAINES: Perhaps he will.

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

BAINES: You're right. I'm probably just grasping at straws.

(In utter frustration)

Then why doesn't he tell us, Mother?

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

BAINES: He must know how our not knowing is affecting us!

(Suddenly)

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

ALICE: Bob, you're not thinking ...

BAINES: I've seen troubled missionaries do some strange things, Alice. For obvious reasons, we don't talk about those sorts of things, but we've had problems in the Church with some missionaries. This one missionary in the East Stake --

ALICE: Bob, I don't want to --

BAINES: Don't worry. I won't tell you who it was. But some missionaries walked into class one morning and found the chalked outline of a man's body on the floor, with a knife severing the heart. The missionary who drew that is in therapy now.

ALICE: How sad.

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

(As if he has the answer)

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

ALICE: Concessions have had to be made.

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

ALICE: They stopped polygamy. Wasn't that a concession?

BAINES: That was a commandment of God on which depended the future of the Church. As Wilford Woodruff said in his revelation the Church would have been destroyed had we continued.

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

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

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

BAINES: Yes, but what caused the changes? That's the key factor. The weakness, the vanity of the people. God gives us what we ask for -- either to our exaltation or our damnation.

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

BAINES: I certainly hope so, Mother.

(ALICE goes to move the figurine)

ALICE: This is so delicate. I'm almost afraid to touch it.

(BAINES picks up the journal, thumbs through it)

Wasn't it sweet of Paul? These gifts?

BAINES: *(Absent-mindedly)* It certainly was.

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

BAINES: *(Ditto)* Yes, he has.

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

BAINES: *(Back into the conversation)* You put them in a vase and we had to look at those dreadful things all through dinner.

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

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

(Looking at the journal)

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

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

BAINES: There's a book mark on this page.

(Opens it, reads a passage. After a while, he has to put it down and move away, overcome with emotion. When ALICE moves to him to discover what's wrong, he points at the journal. She picks it up and reads)

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

(She slowly lowers the book)

BAINES: So that's it. My son thinks I forced him to go on a mission.

ALICE: Well, you have to admit. Those were strong words.

BAINES: But they were true! The Prophet said that it's every young man's duty to go on a mission. That's very explicit language. And when the Prophet speaks, the matter is at an end.

ALICE: *(Slight pause)* Still, there are ways to make that message a little more palatable.

BAINES: *(Conceding, but not too much)* Perhaps I came on a bit strong --

ALICE: Just "a bit"?

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

ALICE: So's an ice pick.

BAINES: What are you saying, Alice?

ALICE: I'm saying that ...

(Searching)

... that this Church is filled with Ten million individuals. Ten million different ways of looking at life and the Gospel. And your son is one of those individuals.

BAINES: That's the purpose of the Gospel -- to turn those ten million individuals into one heart and soul.

ALICE: Some are a little harder than others.

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

ALICE: You remember you said Paul was always your favorite?

BAINES: Yes, yes.

ALICE: Could that have been because he was so different from the others?

(BAINES looks at her, not comprehending)

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

BAINES: I ... I don't know. I don't know anything anymore. I thought I understood Paul, but I don't. Perhaps I never did. But I do know one thing: he doesn't understand me, if he thinks I coerced him to go on his mission. I encouraged him. Granted my language was a little -- very harsh -- but ... well, I haven't been a Stake President very long. I haven't learned the finesse of some of the other brethren ... Perhaps I was over-enthusiastic.

(With new fervency)

But it's only because I so want Paul to do the right thing. I so want him to be happy.

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

BAINES: When I was called to my first position of leadership -- Elder's Quorum President -- President Jameson pulled a piece of string out of his pocket and laid it on the desk top before him. "Elder Baines," he said, "I want you to push that piece of string across the desk to me, keeping it perfectly straight." I tried it and, of course, it just crumpled up under the pressure. "Now try and pull it from the front, keeping it straight." That was much easier. "As you lead the brethren in your quorum," he told me, "don't stand behind and push them. Stand in front and gently, ever so gently, pull them toward you." I've tried to do that all my life. I've never forced anyone to obey the gospel. Where does Paul get the idea that I have? Mother, I'm trying to understand him. Believe me, I'm trying .

ALICE: I know you are, dear. And, remember, the most important thing you can do is let him tell you why he came home. Let me get rid of these lunch things.

(She picks up the tray of meats and goes out. BAINES goes over to the journal and just looks at it this time, almost afraid to open it, afraid of discovering some revelation therein that he couldn't handle. Suddenly, he puts down the book, checks to make sure ALICE is still in the kitchen, and begins dialing an overseas number on the phone. As he speaks, PAUL ENTERS behind him and overhears)

BAINES: *(A pause. ALICE ENTERS, also stands listening. She doesn't see PAUL)* Hello, this is President Baines. Is President Andrews in? Well, then, could you leave him a message to call me as soon as he gets back? At home. Yes, he has the number. We're old friends. Thank you.

(He hangs up. Turning, he notices PAUL and ALICE)

PAUL: You won't even allow me the dignity of telling you myself, will you? Well, I'm going to anyway.

ALICE: Paul, you don't --

PAUL: Yes, I do, Mother! ... You wanted me to tell you about Brother DuChamp. All right, I will. But first, I need to tell you about my last companion. I was the senior companion and Elder Wainwright was my first greenie -- a farm boy from Salem, Utah. Spent his whole life on the farm. As innocent as they come. The

very first door he ever knocked on, the lady slammed it in his face. He just stood there for a moment, overcome with shock. "What's the matter?" I said. I thought maybe he had narcolepsy or something. "I can't believe it," he said. "She didn't want to hear about the Church." "So?" I said. I'd been out nine months, had a lot of doors slammed in my face. It wasn't such a shock to me by that time. "So how can anyone not want to hear about the Church?" said Elder Wainwright. It wasn't just a question he tossed out to keep the conversation going between doors. He was actually flabbergasted! "You find that surprising?" I asked. He said: "I've never known anybody who wasn't a Mormon. I don't understand how anybody can live without the Gospel." So now let me tell you about Frere DuChamp. We found Frere DuChamp a month and a half later. It was nine o'clock on a Saturday night and the rain was coming down in solid sheets, it seemed at the time. We were soaked to the skin and probably should have been home in our warm beds, but there we were, thoughts of the pioneers running through our heads, along with strains of "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Onward, ever onward, in the grand tradition of Paul of Tarsus, Ammon, Parley P. Pratt we trudged, determined to spread the Word at all costs. There was one building left in this particular complex we were tracting. As we approached, I admit to having had second thoughts, thinking that maybe, since it was so late, we should go home. But then I remembered something they'd taught us at the MTC: "When you want to go home, just knock on one last door. The golden convert you seek may be waiting. So that's what I did. I knocked on just one more door.

(A pause. This is really an emotional thing for PAUL)

This little French man answered the door. He was maybe in his thirties and his eyes seemed to brighten as he looked at us. Well, we did the usual spiel ... and that was when he broke into tears It turns out he'd been praying for God to send someone with the truth to his door. He was, indeed, the golden contact we'd been seeking. He took all the lessons and was baptized the following Saturday. After his baptism, we were at his house for a little celebration. He went to the refrigerator and brought out some kind of cola drink. As he started to open it I told him that cola had caffeine in it. He put the bottle down as if it had suddenly caught fire and looked at my companion and me with the most woeful look I've ever seen on a human face. "Is this against the Word of Wisdom?" he asked. "If it is, just tell me and I'll never drink it again. I'll do whatever you tell me." The next day, I called up President Andrews. Now you won't have to wait for his call, Dad. I'll tell you why I came home. Because of a farm boy from Utah to whom the very idea of a happy non-Mormon was incomprehensible, and because of a little Frenchman who was willing to alter his complete lifestyle merely because I said so.

(A long pause)

Like I said. It's all in the journal.

(He starts to go)

BAINES: Where are you going?

PAUL: Wherever I want to.

18 pages in the second half of the script