

Characters

- Winnie (F)** - A sweet but naive eighteen-year-old
- Idarose (F)** - Seventeen years old, engaged to Seb
- Julia (F)** - A conflicted seventeen year old
- Bertha (F)** - Seb's mother, sceptical of Idarose
- Seb (M)** - A slight pushover, he is Bertha's son and fiancé to Idarose
- Jack (M)** - A local worker who becomes involved with Winnie

Set in: Utah, 1893.

Act 1

Scene 1 - Church

(Curtain rises. A blank stage, except for a young woman, Winnie, kneeling in the middle. She is crying. There is a spotlight on Winnie as well as two other empty spotlights, which Julia and Ida will fill.)

Winnie: Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...

(She continues to pray as Ida walks onstage and kneels down.)

Ida: Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...

(They both continue to pray in a round as Julia walks onstage and kneels.)

Julia: Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name...

(They continue praying in a round. The stage is dark except for three spotlights on them. Eventually, Julia stops praying but stays kneeling. A few seconds later, Ida does the same. Winnie is left praying, her voice shaking.)

Winnie: Father who art in –

(Winnie falls to the floor. Blackout. Tabs close.)

Scene 2 - Saloon

(Tabs open. A bar is upstage right and there is a door centre stage far right, presumably leading to the back of the store. Lights up on Ida, leaning on the bar.)

Bertha: (offstage) Idarose!

Ida: Yes?

Bertha: Stop leaning. Make yourself useful. Clean.

(Ida takes out a rag and wipes down the counter.)

Bertha: Well, come on now, Ida dear, I know you can work harder than that!

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(Ida rolls her eyes. pause)

Bertha: You know, I've heard you talking to Seb. You're trying to convince him to let you help run the store! You're smarter than you look, girl, but you don't fool me. If you want any chance a running this damn place, you better watch where you're wipin'.

(Ida looks down, but it is too late. She has knocked a glass off the bar. It crashes and breaks. Bertha runs onstage, through the SR door.)

Bertha: What'd I tell you?

(Ida says nothing. She looks away.)

Bertha: And right before our big crowd, too. That'll cost you, dear. You're lucky I pay you.

(Bertha gets a broom and starts sweeping. After a moment, she stops and holds the broom out for Ida, who quickly takes it and starts sweeping. Pause.)

Ida: Why do all the men come here after church?

Bertha: (surprised) What d'ya mean?

Ida: You always say it. The "after church crowd". Why do they come here?

Bertha: They come here to drink, why else? And you best like it, too. Maybe they get a little handsy, but they pay enough to keep this damn store open.

Ida: I know, I know. It just doesn't... they spend the mornings worshipping God, then the minute church is out they run over here to drink? It seems ... unholy.

Bertha: Now, don't you be questioning them. Jesus turned water into wine, remember?
(Pause. Bertha crosses to Ida) See here. These men love our Father Almighty. They do. But every other day they work, and you can't expect a man to be holy every day. God just don't make 'em like that! Even He knows that we need a day off sometimes.

Ida: When do I get my day off, then?

Bertha: **(scoffs)** Now, that ain't funny. We took you in, girl. You wandered in here from God-knows-where, no parents, no nothing. A common whore, it looked like you were gonna be.

(Ida looks incredulous)

Bertha: That's what they all said, Ida, girl. But I? I said no. *I* took you in as one of my own, *I* set you aside for my Seb. Idarose, you told me your name was. I wouldn't let a little rose be deflowered.

(Ida is shocked; She has never heard this before.)

Bertha: Now, go along, child. Today's gonna be busy. I can feel it.

(Ida stands there for a moment. She does not know what to do. Bertha gives her an exasperated look and exits through the SR door. After a moment, Ida resumes sweeping. Winnie enters DR.)

Winnie: Ida, Ida!

Ida: **(with a smirk)** Yes, Winnie?

Winnie: Oh, shoot, you're working... are you coming to the town bonfire tonight?

Ida: No, I'm afraid I can't make it.

Winnie: Really? You missed the last one too, Ida! The town will start to talk. You know how they hate it when people stop showing up.

Ida: I know, I know. I want to go, but Bertha wants me here. I need to clean. It was the same last week. The store is always so messy after the church crowd gets to it.

Winnie: You should talk to her. Or maybe you could get Seb to?

Ida: It isn't that important.

Winnie: You used to love the fires! You looked forward to them every week.

Ida: Times change. I'm older now, and I have to watch the store.

Winnie: I wish you would come. I don't even remember the last time I got to talk to you and Julia together.

Ida: I know. I miss the days when we would run around town from sunrise to sunset. But I have responsibilities now. I can't let Bertha down. You aren't the only one in this town, you know. **(pause)** But the store isn't too busy. So you can tell me everything you need to right now. How about you do that?

Winnie: Fine. I suppose. **(her mood changes and she pauses for suspense)** I talked to him.

Ida: **(sarcastically)** Oh, lord!

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Winnie: Come on, I did! In church. I sat the pew behind him, and whispered in his ear when we had to kneel. And after we got communion and were waiting for everyone else to go, you know, when you're supposed to be prayin', we talked again! And get this, he actually turned around and talked to me! I thought... I thought Father William was gonna crucify him right then and there for talking during prayer!

Ida: Now, don't say that...

Winnie: This is it, Ida! Don't you see? I am eighteen years old - I am a woman! **(as if it is the most impressive news in the world)** I'm gonna be married.

Ida: **(with a look of pity)** I am happy for you, Winnie. **(it's hard for her to say)** But this town is dying. I've heard Seb talk of it. He doesn't think that I know, but I do. The mines are failing. There is barely anything left for the workers anymore. Men are leaving, and families will follow. It's only a matter of time before Jack leaves, too.

Winnie: I am not scared of leaving. I will go with Jack if I must.

Ida: And leave me? And Julia?

Winnie: You all will leave too!

Ida: I wish it were that easy.

Winnie: Don't say that. You'll be married in no time.

Ida: I'm in no rush.

Winnie: You aren't?

Ida: Why must I rush?

Winnie: Well, don't you want children? Don't you want... **(she looks around and lowers her voice)** Other things?

Ida: Winnie, that's crude.

Winnie: Well, don't you?

Ida: **(quietly)** If you must know, I have had... other things.

Winnie: **(flabbergasted)** And why am I hearing of this just now? Why haven't you told me everything?

Ida: Because it's none of your concern! Besides, women aren't supposed to discuss such matters. It would be unholy of me to run and tell you all the details.

Winnie: You are a rascal! You preach God, and yet you-

Ida: Oh, what does it matter? I am to spend my life with Seb. Everybody knows it.

Winnie: I'm just a bit jealous, that's all.

Ida: Don't be rash, Winnie. Wait for your husband.

Winnie: But you-

Ida: I know. And I don't regret it. But... but I am in a different situation than you.

Winnie: But -

Ida: And do not dare speak a word of this. To anyone.

Winnie: **(half-joking)** You're an abomination, you know that?

Ida: You're one to talk.

(Lights down on the saloon, Ida, and Winnie stage right. Tabs close.)

Scene 3 - Julia's Room

(Lights up downstage left. Tabs closed, front of tabs. Bed, desk, and chair are brought onstage. Julia is sitting on her bed. Seb is sitting at a desk, writing a letter that Julia is speaking.)

Julia: “Dear Mr. Hudson”. No. “Dearest Mr. Hudson. Wait. “My dear” no, “My dearest Mr. Hudson”. Did you get that?

Seb: My dearest Mr. Hudson?

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Julia: Yes. Okay, continuing- “I am writing you this letter to convey my deepest gratitude towards your courtship. I surely look forward to meeting you. I believe we are well suited for each other, and I would be more than happy to spend my life with you in New York. My father has made arrangements for my dowry. Please write back to let me know when I am to come on a train to the city.” **(pause. Julia slumps on her bed.)** How was that?

Seb: It was...

Julia: Terrible? Please tell me terrible.

Seb: I don't want you to go. **(pause)** Do you?

Julia: I did. I do? I... **(She looks at Seb)** My father needs the money. My family needs the money. And the city can't be too bad. I have always wanted to see what it would be like. All the sounds and lights and loud noises everywhere you go? It's nothing like it is here. I would like to see it.

(Seb crosses to sit on the bed.)

Seb: I can take you there, Julia.

Julia: How? With what money? **(pause)** Besides, you have Ida. You must take care of her. I want you to take care of her.

Seb: Idarose is none of your concern. Please, Julia.

(Seb kisses Julia. Julia pulls away.)

Julia: This is my chance, Seb. My chance for a new life. Far away from a dying town. In a city at its birth! I want to go, Seb. I do. Don't mistake this little tryst as a chance for a

life, Seb. You have a life. A life full of the store and of Ida. I am not a part of it, and I never will be. What we have... it isn't anything.

Seb: You want me to send this letter.

Julia: I... I do.

(They kiss one more time. Julia pulls away and leans her head on Seb's shoulder. He rocks her gently. Lights down on downstage left as the bed, desk, and chair are brought off. Tabs remain closed.)

Scene 4 - Outside of the Mines

(Lights up downstage right. Tabs closed, front of tabs. Winnie is waiting outside the mining building, anxious. Julia is also there. There is an awkward silence.)

Winnie: **(Trying to make conversation)** I was talking to Ida earlier. She isn't going to be at the bonfire.

Julia: I'm not surprised.

Winnie: The three of us haven't talked in a while. I mean, all of us together, like the old days. **(pause)** Is everything going well for you? **(pause. Still trying)** I have some exciting news. Truly. I've barely been able to keep it in, but I wanted to wait to tell you and Ida. I wish... we always fantasised about our future husbands. And now it's finally happening - for all of us! Didn't I hear that you've found a suitor?

Julia: One could say that.

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Winnie: What's his name?

Julia: **(almost robotic)** Mister Edward Hudson.

Winnie: **(concerned)** Is there something wrong with him? Will he not... will he not make a good husband? **(no answer)** Do you want me to steal his letters before your father sees them and rip them up. **(no answer)** I'll do it, you know. That way, you won't have to go. **(Julia gives a small smile. pause)** How'd you find him, anyways? He's from New York, is he not?

Julia: He's a friend of my grandfather's.

Winnie: Is he... really old?

Julia: Winnie!

Winnie: What? I'm sure you've thought about it.

Julia: So, tell me about your suitor. Is it really true that it's Jack Giles?

Winnie: You're a fickle one. I see what you are trying to do. I will tell you about Jack once you tell me about this Edward fellow.

Julia: Fine. I don't know his age. From what I've gathered, he seems as if he were peers with my father, though, in grade school. He works for my grandfather now, but I do believe that was how they met. He wants a wife, and my grandfather suggested me. I've never even met my grandfather, but, I suppose that's no matter. Mr. Hudson seems nice enough. Julia Hudson sounds nice enough.

Winnie: Aren't you excited? Who knows? Maybe in one year, you'll be a mother!

Julia: Oh, don't say that. I don't know. I've never met someone of the male sex who has been of much interest to me.

Winnie: How do you mean?

Julia: I don't know. I just don't have a Jack like you do. A man who makes my heart flutter. **(pause - a desperate attempt to change the subject)** So, tell me about him. I want to hear everything.

Winnie: I don't think there's much to say. He works in the mine, and lives just down the road from me. It's a wonder I didn't meet him sooner.

Julia: And how old is he?

Winnie: **(teasing)** You are a vain, hypocritical girl, Julia. You know you mustn't ask that! **(pause)** He's twenty four.

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Julia: Well, that isn't too bad, now is it? Mister Hudson seems to be in his forties.

Winnie: That just means he will be more dignified, Julia. That isn't so bad.

Julia: Take my place then, if you wish.

Winnie: Surely you don't mean that. **(pause)** Do you want to hear about what happened in church today? With Jack?

(Julia gives her a crazy look)

Winnie: Oh, nothing like that! We just talked, is all. I mean, that's why I'm here. To show him I'll care for him. He must want to get married soon, and I don't know of any other girl he is courting.

Julia: Well, is he courting you?

Winnie: I'm not sure.

(Jack enters DR.)

Winnie: Oh, look, the workday is finally over - well, for the men, at least. I'll introduce you at the bonfire, okay? Sometimes he's not in the best mood after these long work days. I wouldn't want to bother him more. Will you be okay getting home?

Julia: My father should be out in any minute. I always come here so I can walk home with him. So, yes, I'll be fine. Thank you.

Winnie: Of course. I'll see you later, alright?

(Julia smiles and takes a step backwards, standing awkwardly.)

Winnie: Jack!

Jack: **(indifferent)** Hello.

Winnie: How was work?

Jack: Fine. **(pause)** What do you want me to say? It's the same every day. Except now we're working ten times harder for the same shit. You should come home. With me.

Winnie: Oh. Well, I... I don't think I can.

(Jack leans in)

Jack: Come on.

(He grabs her hand)

Winnie: Jack...

(Jack does not stop)

Winnie: Jack!

Jack: **(sighs)** Don't act like this. You know, I won't want to marry you if you keep this up.

Winnie: Keep what up? And, and marry?

Jack: I know that's why you're talking to me. Winnie, come on. Come over.

Winnie: Jack, I... **(pause)** Are you being serious, you want to get married?

Jack: I'll talk to your father later. Come on, Winnie.

(He starts to take her offstage. Julia has been watching and steps forward.)

Julia: Hey-

(Jack turns to her. She falters)

Julia: Winnie, are you alright?

Jack: Let her be.

Winnie: I'm fine. Thank you, Julia. I'll see you tomorrow.

(Jack and Winnie exit DL. Lights down on Julia looking after them. Tabs open.)

Scene 5 - Saloon

(Lights up onstage right on the saloon. Tabs open. Ida is sitting in the store. As lights come up on stage left, Seb walks in SL. They acknowledge each other, but do not say anything for a long time.)

Ida: Where did you go?

Seb: Julia came by yesterday and asked me to help her write a letter.

Ida: I thought she could write. She always bragged about it - when we were younger, I mean. She said she was the best.

Seb: You're confused. You're probably thinking of someone else, someone from your old town. Julia doesn't write.

Ida: No, I know it was her. It was the first thing she said to me, almost. We were standing out on the main street, she was talking to Winnie about it and I was standing there, all out of place.

Seb: I doubt that was her. But even if it was, she must not have written much after that. She asked for my help.

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Ida: How did it go?

Seb: It was fine.

Ida: Were you alone?

Seb: If you must know, no we were not. Her mother was there. She wanted to hear what Julia was writing.

Ida: Are you being honest, Seb?

Seb: Why must you question everything I tell you?

Ida: I just... I need to know. We are supposed to be married, soon, and take over the store from your mother-

Seb: We will not be taking over the store. I will. And if you're lucky, you can help. **(pause)**. And honestly, Idarose, I want you to help. You will be good. I want to marry

you. **(pause)** But I will be in charge of the store. Idarose, you have to trust me. **(He touches her face)** Ida. Please.

Ida: I do. I'm sorry.

Bertha: **(offstage)** Sebastian, are you home yet?

Seb: Yes.

Bertha: Come back here. I need to talk to you.

Seb: **(to Ida)** Watch the front, will you? Call me if you need anything. **(He wraps his hands around her waist)** Just like it will be in a few short years. Us. Together. Us, and the store, and a family.

(He kisses her, then smiles at her and walks upstairs. The scene shifts to Bertha and Seb talking "in the back", downstage, on the other side of the SR door as the lights come up.)

Bertha: I think you should leave.

Seb: I can't leave Ida.

Bertha: Then take her, for all I care. This town is dying, Seb. The store won't stay open. In a few years there won't be anything left. Your life would be over, Seb. You could move on to another town, but what if there isn't a job for you? They need miners, not shopkeepers. Leave while you can. Unless... do you want to be a miner?

Seb: Ma, how could you ask... No. Of course I don't.

Bertha: It isn't the life you were meant to have, Seb. Mining... it's terrible.

Seb: I know.

Bertha: You were young, Seb. Young.

Seb: I know.

Bertha: I can't lose someone else.

Seb: That won't happen.

Bertha: It will, if you don't leave, Seb.

Seb: Ma, if I leave, what will you do?

Bertha: I don't know. But the town is dying. I was here at its birth, so I should be here for its demise.

Seb: (to himself) I can't tell Ida.

Bertha: She's lived through it before.

Seb: Exactly. What if she leaves? Leaves *me*?

Bertha: Then you leave too. Without her. And you move on. I'm sure you will be able to find another woman to be your wife. Sometimes I fear you already have.

Seb: I don't want to leave her. I don't want to leave Idarose.

Bertha: You may be able to fool her, but I know why you are visiting with Julia. It certainly isn't writing letters.

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Seb: It is. That's all we do. I've never...

Bertha: Don't play dumb with me. Your father isn't around to put you in your place, but I can do that just as well. Stop fooling around with Julia.

Seb: I don't know what you think is happening. I'm promised to Ida. I have been, for years, you know that. You arranged it!

Bertha: An adolescent promise is for fools. I know what you think of Julia. She's tempting, I'll give you that. But the talks of love and family we had when you were young will not hold up against your desire. The arrangement I made was in a vain hope you would not stray. But you have.

Seb: Ida has no other man. No other family. I am not a monster, I would never think of leaving her with no one!

Bertha: And yet, you still worry she will leave you. **(pause)** Save up money, Sebastian. And leave.

(Lights down SR. Tabs stay open.)

Scene 6 - Church

(Lights up on SL, tabs open. There are three pews lined up SL and a door, the entrance to the church, upstage centre. It is three weeks later, in church. Jack, Winnie, and Julia are kneeling in the first pew, centre SL. They are praying, as are the actors offstage.)

All: Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven...

(Jack and Winnie break into conversation. Offstage voices and Julia continue praying, although Julia listens in on their conversation.)

Jack: I think we should be married.

Winnie: Now?

Jack: **(incredulous)** No, not now. But we should.

Winnie: What made you think of this? Now? **(sarcastic)** Quite a romantic proposal, if I do say so myself.

Jack: Hey. You're lucky I'm proposing at all. A good wife doesn't complain, or show less-than-content sentiment.

Julia: Jack, do you plan to move?

Jack: Did you expect me to stay with my mother and father my whole life?

Winnie: I think she meant out of this tow-

Julia: You seemed awfully keen to go back home after work with Winnie a few weeks ago.

Winnie: Julia!

Jack: I am trying to build a home, and a life, for Winnie and me. But I don't see why that is any of your concern. Keep sticking your nose in places it doesn't belong, and you surely won't get to move to the city with whoever your suitor is.

Julia: How do you know about that?

Jack: Do you think people do not talk down in the mines? That we don't talk about pretty girls, pretty girls like you? I've heard all about your suitor, Julia. I've heard all about you.

Julia: **(damage control)** I think it's best we be quiet during prayer.

(Ida enters through the door upstage centre.)

Winnie: It's more than halfway through mass! Where have you been?

Ida: Bertha wouldn't let me leave.

Jack: You'd best start calling her 'mother'.

Ida: **(sourly)** Hello, Jack.

Julia: **(to Jack)** You're one to talk about not sticking your nose in places it doesn't belong!

Winnie: She does think that 'Bertha' is disrespectful.

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Ida: She isn't my mother.

Jack: She might as well be. Your real mother is dead.

(Ida is taken aback.)

Jack: We've talked about you down in the mines, too.

Winnie: Ida, please, come sit. Come pray.

Ida: Winnie, can I talk to you? Outside?

Winnie: We can't just leave in the middle of mass, Ida. You know that. Can we talk after?

Jack: Afterwards you're coming with me. We've got to get home.

Julia: Home? Alone? Everyone else will be at the store.

Ida: We can talk then. All three of us, together. I know how much you want that, Winnie.

Winnie: **(ignoring her, glancing at Jack)** I guess we can talk now. Come on. Let's be quiet.

(Jack and Julia start to protest, but Ida and Winnie glare at them. Not wanting to make a scene, they both begin to pray again as Ida leads Winnie through the church door and slightly downstage. Spotlight on them. SFX. Throughout the scene, hymn music/prayer can be heard faintly.)

Winnie: We really shouldn't be doing this, Ida. **(pause)** Ida? Ida, are you okay? **(pause)** If it's about what Jack said in the chapel, please don't listen to him. He can be a bit brash.

Ida: It's not that.

Winnie: Then what is it?

Ida: **(pause)** Do you want to marry Jack?

Winnie: Yes. Yes, of course. Why would you ask?

Ida: Why have you been going over to his house? Alone?

Winnie: You know not to ask such immature questions.

Ida: So that's what's happening. **(pause)** I'm worried about you, Winnie. I thought I told you to wait.

Winnie: And why should I listen to you? What authority do you have to tell me what I can and cannot do? I'm older than you, for God's sake!

Ida: Don't say the Lord's name in vain! We are *in church*.

Winnie: **(scornful)** Then please remind me, Idarose, which one of us showed up over half an hour late? **(pause)** You think you are such a good Mormon girl. You think you follow all the rules, that you are the epitome of humans made in God's image. You act so high and mighty, Ida, but you are no better than the rest of us. In fact, you are worse. I will not judge you, Ida. But God will. You act as if you have never come late to church, or never been with Seb. I know that's a lie. What do you think Bertha would do if she found out, Ida? **(pause)** You know what she would do. She would throw you out, she would tell everyone what you really are.

Ida: What are you insinuating, Winnie? That I'm a whore? *I'm* the whore? Do you hear yourself? At least Seb and I have been planning on getting married for years. You and Jack met a few days ago! **(pause)** I don't mean to be harsh. I just... you know to wait. I thought you agreed. You are smart. You know being pregnant and unmarried is damnation in this town. I just feel as if... something else is going on.

Winnie: **(playing dumb)** What do you mean?

Ida: How does Jack treat you?

Winnie: He treats me well.

Ida: And you wanted to, you wanted to have relations with him? **(pause)** Winnie. I will not judge you. **(long pause)**

Winnie: I didn't have a choice.

(Long pause.)

Ida: Are you okay?

Winnie: What an inane question. **(pause)** I didn't mean that. **(pause)** Just - what does it matter? If I'm "okay" or not.

Ida: What else is wrong, Winnie? **(a long pause)**

Winnie: I haven't gotten it. It's late.

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Ida: What? What is?

(Winnie looks at her and slowly brings her hand to her stomach. Ida understands.)

Ida: Oh. I see. How late?

Winnie: Two weeks.

Ida: What are you to do?

Winnie: Get married. What other choices do I have?

(Ida does not have an answer)

Ida: Does he know?

Winnie: No. I mean, I don't know for certain. I don't want to scare him. It could all just be a coincidence.

Ida: You know it isn't. **(pause)** Sorry.

Winnie: I'll tell him. When, when I know. For certain.

Ida: You best get married soon, then. Before you start showing. If you get married soon enough, there won't be any talk of... unsavoury behaviours.

Winnie: I know. **(pause)** I don't want this child, Ida.

Ida: I know.

(Lights down on the entire stage. Tabs close.)

Scene 7 - Julia's Room

(Tabs are closed and Julia's desk, chair, and bed are brought on. Lights rise DL on Julia, who is holding two letters, and Seb. Both are sitting on Julia's bed. The atmosphere has changed. They still want to be together, but there seems to be some distance between them.)

Julia: I got a response.

Seb: Oh?

Julia: It's official.

(She hands him one of the letters and continues to hold the other one. Seb skims the letter.)

Seb: How long?

Julia: I leave in three months. We get married the day we arrive.

Seb: Well, that's longer than we thought we would have.

Julia: We don't have any time, Seb.

Seb: We have until the day you leave. (He hands the letter back and notices the second one.) What's that? Another letter from Mr. Hudson?

(Julia looks at the second letter, lost in her own world.)

Julia: No.

Seb: I didn't know you were keeping correspondence with anyone else! Do you have a secret love waiting for you in New York?

Julia: (blushing) No, of course not.

Seb: Then may I see?

Julia: I'd really rather not -

(Before she can stop him, Seb grabs the letter and starts to read it out loud.)

Seb: "My dearest Julia -"... (pause) Dearest. Wow. (He looks at the bottom of the paper.) It's from someone named... Tabitha. Who...

(Before he can read any more, Julia snatches the letter back.)

Seb: Who's Tabitha?

Julia: An old friend.

Seb: You write to her?

Julia: I...

(Seb moves in, closing the distance between him and Julia. He puts his arm around her waist.)

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Seb: I think I get it. Tabitha is a code name for a man. A handsome, young man who you cannot wait to meet in New York. Are you making a cuckold of me?

Julia: That would be impossible, since we aren't married.

Seb: **(flirty)** I can't believe you've already found another young man to pass the time with in New York. And here I was, thinking I was special.

(Julia puts her arm around his neck.)

Julia: You *are* special.

Seb: Really? Prove it.

(Julia giggles and Seb kisses her. She kisses him back, then pulls away. pause.)

Julia: No. I can't... **(pause)** I am going to be a wife now. It's official. Before it didn't mean anything; it was a strange man across the country asking for my hand. All hypothetical, all unrealistic. But, now... deals have been made. I can't be unfaithful. I won't be having any affairs. Not here, and not in New York.

Seb: You've never met the man. I'm sure he is not leading a solitary life before you arrive. What does it matter?

Julia: I think the dust from the mines is getting to you. You cannot see what is two feet in front of you, Seb.

Seb: And what is that?

Julia: You are to marry Ida! I cannot keep doing this, not in good conscience. Ida is a good woman. She does not deserve your unfaithfulness, my betrayal. Be honourable with her. **(pause)** This, us, we started our affair when we still had childish hope that Ida

would fall for another man and we could be together. But Ida has not found anyone. Ida loves you. Our immature dreams are being replaced with marriage and children before our eyes. And I cannot, in good conscience, continue with you.

Seb: I love you, Julia.

Julia: I know. And I love you, too. I'm sorry. **(pause)** Ida will treat you well. And you will do the same for her. You two will be content.

Seb: I hope.

Julia: When's the wedding?

Seb: A few months. Around the time you leave. We have a meeting with Priest William to discuss our wedding tomorrow.

Julia: **(ashamed)** Then what are you still doing here? Go home. Help with the store, be with your soon-to-be wife. **(pause)** Pray for forgiveness.

Seb: I do not regret what we have done.

Julia: I know. But I do. And I worry that I will not be a good wife because of it. **(pause)** I do not mean to be inconsiderate. I wish we could be together, I do. But that is not what God has intended. We must accept that. I'll see you around, okay? I'll come into the shop. But I don't think it's a good idea for us to be alone together anymore.

Seb: **(giving up)** Goodbye, Julia.

Julia: Goodbye, Seb.

(As Seb stands to exit SL, lights dim. Julia's desk, chair, and bed are brought offstage as tabs open.)

Scene 7 - Saloon

(Tabs open and lights up on upstage right at the saloon. The next day. Seb is cleaning the bar. It is late at night. SFX. Voices of miners offstage, presumably sitting down at tables, can be heard. No one is sitting at the bar. Bertha and Seb are behind the bar, talking quietly.)

Bertha: Has Ida been faithful?

Seb: Of course, ma, of course. Why are you so worried? Ida is always faithful.

Bertha: I do not trust her.

Seb: Ma, are you okay?

Bertha: Yes, of course, I'm fine, I'm fine.

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Seb: I've had enough of these conversations. Idarose has proved herself time and time again. What's gotten into you?

Bertha: Keep an eye on Ida.

Seb: Ma- (pause) This isn't like you.

(Bertha stares into the distance.)

Seb: You took her in, remember?

(Bertha does not respond. Seb speaks gently.)

Seb: Let me tell you all about it. It was four years ago. The store wasn't doing so great, and you were worried we were going to go under. You were so worried. Then you found this girl, all alone on the street. She asked if you needed help, and just like that, you took her in. You introduced us, and it was love at first sight. I never believed in that until I saw her. And I remember this one night, this one night when I knew that you loved her, too, as if she was one of the family. You told me that she reminded you of father. Just because of how good her heart was, how kind and earnest she was. Ida hasn't changed, Ma. She is still that wonderful girl.

Bertha: No. No, she is not. I should not have compared her to your father. She does not deserve the dirt on his grave.

Seb: Ida loves me, and she would have loved father. I'm he would love her, too. He would want me to be happy, Ma. I am happy with Ida.

Bertha: **(Not quite listening)** She does not deserve the dirt. I don't trust her, I don't...

(Jack enters as if coming to the bar from sitting at a table offstage, SL. He is slightly drunk.)

Jack: **(holding up his glass)** Can I get another?

Seb: I have to go, Ma. How about you start cleaning up for the night?

(Bertha nods and starts to leave SR.)

Seb: We're going to talk later, okay? Look at me. Hey.

(She turns back and looks at him.)

Seb: You have nothing to worry about. You can trust Ida. You are safe. I am safe. Okay?

(Bertha nods and exits SR. Seb turns to Jack, who is leaning on the counter. Seb takes a moment to breathe and adjust himself.)

Seb: Evening. Another round?

Jack: If you don't mind.

(Jack sighs and slumps on a barstool.)

Seb: Tough day?

Jack: You're lucky you don't have a shit job, boy. Not saying you've got it easy, but, well, you do. What I'd give...

Seb: It hasn't been getting better?

(Ida enters through the SR door and watches the following exchange.)

Jack: How would it get better?

Seb: I've been hearing... the mines are drying out. I don't know. I don't know much about mining, but I was hoping they'd pick up again. You'd find a new spot. **(Trying to save face)** Or something.

Jack: **(good heartedly)** You ever talked to a miner?

Seb: **(with a smile)** Not as much as I'd care to admit.

Jack: (nods) How come you ain't one yourself?

Seb: My dad was a miner. He died, a while ago. He had been saving money to open a store. When he died, my mom took up a collection and used that, plus our savings, to finally open one. She had been sceptical before he died, but once he was gone, she wasn't taking any chances. She didn't want anything to happen to me. She wanted me to have a good life.

Jack: (sincerely) That's noble of her.

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Seb: It is.

Jack: Well, I'm glad you have this store. It's a hell of a lot better than what I've got. (pause) I'm Jack, by the way. I've seen you around, but I don't believe we've properly met. I never really got out into town much before. I mined and I went home. That was all. But I met this girl, and she wants me to socialize.

Seb: Well, it's nice to meet you. I'm Seb. Who's the girl?

Jack: Winnie, er, Collins.

Seb: Ah. It serious?

Jack: If I have any say in it, yes.

Seb: Good for you.

Jack: How about you?

Seb: I'm not married, but I got someone. Ida. Maybe you know her.

Jack: I don't think I do.

Seb: We're getting married soon.

Jack: Congratulations.

Seb: Thank you. You know, Winnie and Ida are friends. I'm sure I'll be seeing more of you in the future.

(They shake hands)

Seb: Here are the beers for your table. And here's an extra. On the house.

Jack: Thank you.

(Jack exits SL with the beers as Ida walks on. She had been watching the later part of the exchange, and seemed to be waiting for Jack to leave. Now that he is gone, she stands next to Seb. They do not speak, but Seb puts his arm over her shoulder and pulls her in. She leans against him, and they stay there for a moment, gazing out into the store. Lights out on Ida and Seb. Tabs stay open.)

Scene 8 - Church

(Tabs open. Lights up on upstage centre. That night. Winnie is standing upstage centre, outside of the church door, trying to gain the courage to go in. We can see the inside of the church; it is dark and no one is inside. Finally, with one last look over her shoulder, Winnie walks through the door. Lights dim on the other side of the door and lights rise on the inside of the church. Winnie walks slowly, gazing around her, apprehensive. Finally, she stops in a pew and kneels.)

Winnie: **(eyes closed)** Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name... **(opens her eyes)** I'm... I'm sorry, God. I need help. Please. I know life is sacred, but God... **(closes her eyes)** Thy kingdom come, thy will be done... **(opens her eyes)** I'm sorry if I haven't prayed as much as I should. Maybe this is my punishment. If it is, God, I'm sorry. I've learned my lesson, I will be more devoted. **(closes her eyes)** On Earth as it is in Heaven... **(opens her eyes)** I'm sorry. I know I'm supposed to finish "The Lord's Prayer" before I say my own prayer... at least, I think... **(closes her eyes)** And give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses... **(opens her eyes)** That's it, God, please forgive me. I will come to church more. I will be a good disciple. I will wait until marriage... **(closes her eyes)** As we forgive those who trespass against us... **(opens her eyes)** I can do that, God, I can! Please give me a second chance. Please let me start over. I will forgive Jack, I will, but please... don't make me have his child. **(closes her eyes)** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. **(opens her eyes)** Please. God. Please. I... I can't. God, I haven't been good. But I will, I will change. **(closes her eyes)** For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen. **(opens her eyes)** See, God? I finished it. I finished the prayer. I... I'll do it again. I'll do it as many times as I need. **(closes her eyes)** Our father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name... **(tears up)** Our father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name... **(begins to cry)** Our father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name... **(sobbing)** Our father... our father- **(collapses)**

(Blackout. Tabs close.)

END OF ACT 1

Act 2

Scene 1 - Julia's Room

(Tabs stay closed. Lights up on Julia's room with her usual furniture. Three months later. She is sitting on her bed, reading a letter.)

Julia: “My dearest Julia,” **(pause)** “Foremost, I would like to express my deepest regret for not writing sooner. I believed I would never see you again, Julia, and my heart could not bear the pain of that thought. I tried to put you out of my mind, but it was all in vain. I have missed you every day since I left. New York is loud and bright and full of everything wonderful, except it cannot be perfect, as you are not here. I do not miss Utah, but I think of our tender moments together and I miss *you*. I think of us as mere children, on the verge of adulthood, and wish more than anything that I could see you again. I am sorry I took so long to write. I am a coward. The thought of your correspondence, but not you, was too much to bear. I have not yet married. I do not yearn to. I know we could never marry, but for some reason I still wish for you. I heard you are moving here soon. To be married to Mr. Edward Hudson. He is a nice man. When I first heard it, I did not believe it could be you. The chances! But it is. It is you. Mr. Hudson will treat you well. I cannot bear the thought of you being Mrs. Hudson, but seeing you, even if you are married to someone else, is better than never seeing you again. I cannot wait for you to move here, Julia. Please write when you have arrived. We must meet again. I have been waiting to see you for years. Lastly, my dear Julia, do not be scared. You will love it here. And if Mr. Hudson is anything but nice to you, he will have me to answer to. You know I can be intimidating. **(Julia smiles and laughs softly)** I will see you soon, my love. I cannot wait. Until that day, **(pause, then, a whisper)** Tabitha.

(Julia sighs, then carefully folds the letter and places it on the inside of her dress. Lights out DL, tabs stay closed.)

Act 2

Scene 2 - Outside the Saloon

(Tabs closed. Lights up DR. Winnie is sitting on a curb outside, knees to her stomach. She is slowly rocking back and forth. Ida walks onstage slowly from SR, looking around her to make sure no one is watching, before sitting next to Winnie.)

Ida: How are you?

(Winnie is fighting tears. Ida puts her arm around her)

Winnie: I am sick every morning. I am starting to show. I have to walk around, every day, covering up my stomach in shame. People are starting to talk. And Jack and I still aren't married. I, I don't want to marry him, but I... I have to.

Ida: He is surely planning on marrying you, is he not?

Winnie: I think.

Ida: He knows, right? About the child?

Winnie: I had to tell him. He was bound to find out.

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Ida: How did he take it?

Winnie: How you would expect. (pause) I'm... I'm sorry I've been distant, but I don't want to be seen out much. He doesn't want me out much, either. We don't want people talking.

Ida: You can always see me. I'll always talk. Even if you want me to come over so you don't have to leave your home, I will.

Winnie: Thank you.

Ida: I have some choice words I would like to say to Jack.

(Bertha enters SR and starts walking across the back of the stage, but stops to eavesdrop on Ida and Winnie.)

Winnie: Ida, don't start.

Ida: No, Winnie, I have to! He should not be able to do what he's done. I wish you could leave him, I wish you weren't practically imprisoned by him!

Winnie: You are being dramatic.

Ida: Are you happy?

Winnie: (pause) No.

Ida: I want you to be happy. And if Jack is why you are not happy, I want him gone.

Winnie: Happiness. What is happiness, Ida? You live in this idealistic world of true love and dreams and fairy tales. Everyone regards you as the smarter of the two of us. And you are. You are down to Earth, and insightful, but... why do you think I deserve, or you deserve, or *anyone* deserves the perfect life?

Ida: I'm not saying life is a fairy tale, but I don't want you to be miserable.

Winnie: I've accepted this. This is my reality, Ida. It is not good. But it's mine. (pause) I suggest you realize the same. I mean, you have it better than me! You have Seb, a man who loves you and cares for you. (pause) I've grown up, Ida. Will you?

Ida: (taken aback) Need I remind you of... of everything? I have taken care of you, guided you, watched you. I may be a year younger, but I was practically your mother. Even now, I am comforting you. How dare you tell me to grow up? The nerve!

(No one speaks for a long time.)

Winnie: Why do you still care for me. Why do you still love me. I am nothing but rude to you. Ida, I-

Ida: Don't speak of it. You're forgiven.

(Winnie leans her head on Ida's shoulder. Ida sighs and holds her, comforting her. Bertha watches for a moment more, then quietly exits SR. Lights down on Winnie and Ida as tabs close.)

Act 2

Scene 3 - Julia's Room

(Tabs closed. Julia's room, usual furniture, plus a suitcase on the floor, downstage of the bed. Julia is packing to leave for New York. SFX. Knock on door.)

Julia: Come in.

(Seb enters SL. Ida stands in the doorway, awkwardly, mostly hidden.)

Julia: Seb! (Julia rushes to Seb and gives him a long hug; with a smile) It has been quite a while. (She notices Ida. A bit awkward/embarrassed, but still cordial) Oh. Er, hello, Ida. (She pulls away from Seb and walks over to Ida to give her a hug.) Always a pleasure to see you.

Ida: And you as well. It has been a while.

(Ida and Julia hug.)

Julia: How was the wedding? How are the newlyweds feeling?

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Ida: (smiling at Seb) It was wonderful, thank you. I'm sorry you couldn't have been there. Bertha wanted it to be strictly family only; you know how she can be. Winnie nearly threw a fit when I told her she wasn't invited.

(They laugh)

Julia: Well, I'm glad you two are content.

Ida: Thank you. And how about you? When do you leave?

Julia: Two days. There is a train a little ways away, running through at seven o'clock that night. I step on, and the next time I leave it I will be in New York.

Seb: Are you ready?

Julia: I think so. A bit scared, yes, and- (She looks around her room.) And a bit, um, frantic... I've barely left the house, between packing and tidying up so my father won't have to- (pause. She breathes.) But I am ready. I'll miss you. (quickly) You both.

(Ida gives her an awkward smile and Julia tries to recover.)

Julia: And how is the store? Doing well, I hope. I don't want to worry for you when I am across the country.

Seb: **(with a smile)** The store is doing just fine.

Julia: I'm glad. **(pause)** I hope it is not unseemly to ask, but have you two considered moving?

Ida: What do you mean?

Julia: I have heard there has been some trouble with the mines. Even some of the miners are starting to leave. I don't know, perhaps it isn't my place, I was just wondering if you think you will leave as well.

(Ida looks at Seb, concerned.)

Seb: We will have to discuss it.

Julia: Oh, please, forgive me, I didn't mean to... I was just going to say, if you do move, please write to me with your new address, so we don't lose touch. That's all. I'm sorry.

Ida: You have done nothing wrong, Julia. If it comes time that we must move, though I surely hope not, we will write to you. You are one of my good friends, and one of Seb's as well. We surely will want to continue correspondence with you.

Julia: Wonderful. I will miss you both. **(She gives them each a hug and looks meaningfully at them, fighting tears.)** I hope I will see you again.

Ida: You surely will. How about this: we will meet you at the train. We will be there with you for your last moments here. And we will smile and wave goodbye and walk back to our home afterwards and reminisce on how you took me under your wing when I was nothing but a young, orphaned girl, and speak of all the other good times we had with you. There were many.

Julia: Thank you.

Seb: This is not goodbye, Julia. We will see you in two days.

Julia: **(Together)** Until then.

Ida: **(Together)** Until then.

Seb: **(Together)** Until then.

(Lights down on Julia's room as tabs open.)

Scene 4 - Saloon

(Tabs open. Lights up on upstage left. The next evening, in the saloon. Seb is wiping down the bar. Julia enters from SL, looks around, and upon seeing Seb, runs directly to him.)

Julia: Seb!

(**Ida enters through the SR door, unseen by both Seb and Julia. She listens intently.**)

Seb: Julia? What are you doing here? I thought you were getting ready to leave. Is everything alright?

Julia: (**Breathing heavily**) I just... I had to see you -

Seb: Well, I'll see you tomorrow, with Ida.

Julia: - alone.

Seb: (**flustered**) Well, I-I'm working, I... you said we shouldn't be alone.

Julia: I know, but-

Seb: No, Julia, you can't keep doing this. You can't keep pretending that you... (**He stops himself**) And then you get a letter and change your mind! You know how I feel, Julia. You told me, when I saw you right after your betrothal was official, you told me that this was over.

Julia: I don't want anything like *that*, I just... I'm panicking. I thought that maybe you could help me.

Seb: I think your mystery man in New York will do a better job of that than I will.

Julia: I told you, there is no "mystery man", it was a letter from a friend -

(**Ida walks to the bar. Her deliberate footsteps in the empty room catch Seb and Julia's attention.**)

Ida: (**icy**) Hello, Julia.

Julia: (**caught in the act, nods**) Ida.

Ida: I think you should leave.

Julia: But I... will I still see you tomorrow?

Ida: I think you should leave.

(Julia looks at Seb for support, but he is looking down at the floor, offering none. Julia takes one last look at Ida, whose steely demeanour is unwavering.)

Julia: I'll see you.

Ida: Goodbye, Julia.

(Julia exits SL. Ida turns to Seb, still quiet and cold.)

Ida: You said you weren't alone with her. That you were helping her write. So, why were you with her right after she received her final letter from Mr. Hudson? **(pause)** I thought so.

(Bertha enters through SR door, quietly sweeping. She is eavesdropping, though neither Seb nor Ida notice.)

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Seb: Idarose, I -

Ida: Save it.

(She exits SL, purposefully hitting her shoulder against his as Bertha watches. Seb stands at the bar, alone and stunned. Lights down on upstage right as the tabs close.)

Scene 5 - Outside of the Mines

(Tabs closed. Lights up on DR. The next morning. Winnie is walking with Jack to the mines.)

Jack: Stay inside, okay?

Winnie: I cannot stay inside forever. People are already talking, Jack. They are suspicious.

Jack: Just wait until we get married. Then they will have nothing to talk about.

Winnie: You keep postponing the wedding, Jack! They will do the math. They already know that something isn't quite right.

Jack: Look, we can talk about this tonight. **(pause)** It must be difficult being stuck in the house all day. I'm sorry we aren't married yet. I want to marry you, Winnie. **(pause)** I love you. **(pause)** Please promise me you will stay in the house.

Winnie: I will. **(pause)** I love you, too. Have a good day.

(Jack smiles at her and exits SR. Lights down on DR as Winnie looks after Jack. Tabs open.)

Scene 6 - Saloon

(Tabs open. Lights up on upstage right. It's the same day, around 3 PM. SFX. As the lights rise, a faint boom! can be heard in the distance. No one seems to notice. Winnie is sitting at the bar, talking with Ida as Ida cleans the bar.)

Winnie: Where's Seb?

Ida: He ran off a while ago.

(Winnie gives her a suggestive look)

Ida: Did you know?

Winnie: **(genuine)** Know what?

Ida: Oh. **(pause)** Never mind. **(pause)** He just... ran out. Said I was in charge of the store for a little. It's not like many people come this time of day, anyways. I don't know. Something seemed off.

Winnie: I'm sure it's nothing. You always worry.

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Ida: I didn't say I was worried. But, hey, sometimes I worry for good reason. I was right to be worried about you and that man you are with.

Winnie: Oh, Ida, you should not say such things. He and I are to be married. Besides, he is friends with Seb. I'm sure Seb would not be too happy with you if he heard how you talked about Jack.

Ida: Maybe so. But Seb knows it is useless to try to control the words I say. I will say what I want.

Winnie: That is a bad decision, Ida. You must watch yourself.

(Seb runs in SL. He is covered in dust and breathing hard. He looks around wildly, then runs to Ida and grabs her arms.)

Seb: Idarose, my Idarose, we must leave.

Ida: What? Leave?

(Seb cannot seem to say. Winnie stares at him, then slowly connects the dots.)

Winnie: (softly) The mines.

(Seb looks in her direction, but does not seem to see her. All he can do is nod.)

Winnie: Oh, God, the mines! What's wrong, Seb? What happened?

(Seb cannot speak)

Winnie: Seb? (pause) Seb?

(Seb collapses onto Ida, who cries out. Lights dim on the saloon. Winnie runs just out of the store, ending centre stage. Spotlight on her, looking around. She sees smoke.)

Winnie: There's smoke. Oh, God... (Winnie stares at the smoke, mouth agape.) Smoke.

(Lights shift back to Ida and Seb inside the store. Ida has sat Seb down. He is sobbing. Ida is in shock. Winnie is still frozen outside.)

Ida: That was why you ran off, wasn't it? I... I didn't even hear anything.

Seb: (it is hard for him to speak) There were multiple. Explosions. I ran off after the first one. I wasn't sure what it was. I didn't want to worry you. I... didn't want to worry you. (pause) The other two came a bit later. They were smaller, fainter. (He looks at her) They're all gone.

Ida: A...All?

Seb: I think. It's hard to tell. But I think everyone was down there. And I don't think anyone made it out. I didn't see anyone, at least.

Ida: So... so Jack. And Julia's father, Winnie's father... (pause) Winnie is all alone.

Seb: Not just her, Idarose. All of us left... nearly every woman has lost someone. Sons, husbands, fathers.

(Ida cannot speak for a long time. She slowly rocks Seb back and forth. Finally)

Ida: You're still here.

Seb: I'm still here.

(Lights fall on Ida and Seb and rise on Winnie. She has not moved, and is still staring at the mines in the distance.)

Winnie: Smoke.

(Lights down on Winnie. Tabs stay open.)

Scene 7 - Church

(Lights up SL in the church. Tabs open. That same day, that same time. Julia is in the chapel, kneeling and praying before she leaves. She does not know about the explosion or her father's death.)

Julia: “Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. And gives us this day our daily bread, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever.”
(pause) Amen. **(pause)** I leave today, God. I’m leaving. I go right from here to the train. I’ve already said my goodbyes. I said goodbye to my family this morning, I said goodbye to Winnie and Jack last night. I said goodbye to Ida and Seb, too, but they promised to wait with me for my train to come in a few hours. **(pause)** I hope they keep their promise. **(pause)** I guess this isn’t a goodbye to you, I mean, I’m still Mormon, I’ll still pray and go to church in New York, I’m sure, but I guess I wanted to say a kind of goodbye in this chapel. I mean, I’ve grown up here. And I’m nervous to move. I don’t even know if Mr. Hudson is religious. **(pause)** But, um, I had another reason to pray. **(She takes the letter from Tabitha out of her dress.)** I got this letter. From Tabitha. Um, you know her. She used to live here, remember? Well, she lives in New York now. Maybe she still speaks to you. Maybe she doesn’t. I’m not sure. **(pause)** God, please have mercy on her. And on me. On us. She’s a wonderful person, and... and I don’t want to be unfaithful to Mr. Hudson, or anything, I mean, I *want* to be a good wife, but... **(pause)** I don’t know. I love you, God, I do. And I believe you love me, too, even if people say that you don’t love people like me. I believe you do. I mean, you made us in Your image, did you not? You made me this way. **(She puts Tabitha’s letter back in her dress.)** I’m not ashamed. I’m more ashamed of my tryst with Seb, and I pray for forgiveness for that. I love him, I truly do, but I should not have been with him while he was with Ida. **(pause, a lame attempt at humour)** Why can I never be with the people I love?
(pause) Sorry, God. I don’t mean to be rude. I trust you, and your plan, I really do. And I’m scared to move, but I know that you’ll be there for me, even across the country. **(pause)** So, um, God... I pray for my family back here. May they continue in good health and prosperity. And the same for Winnie and Jack, and for Ida and Seb. Have mercy on us for our sins, God, and guide us through our lives. I may not be able to watch them anymore, but I trust you to. **(pause)** And Tabitha. Please let us reunite, God. You gave us the power to love for a reason. I have wished to see her again for years. **(pause)** Amen. **(pause)** “Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...”

(Lights dim on Julia in the church. The tabs close.)

Scene 8 - Train Station

(Tabs are still closed. Lights rise on Julia once she takes her place DL. A few hours later. Julia is standing alone, at a train station, waiting for her train. It is noisy and as the lights rise she thinks she hears Ida calling her name and turns around. SFX. train sounds, chatter.)

Julia: Ida! **(pause)** Ida? **(pause)** Seb? **(pause)** Oh. I thought I heard someone calling me. **(quietly)** I guess not. **(pause. She reaches into her dress and pulls Tabitha's letter out. She clutches it in her hand. After a moment, the sound of a train approaching can be heard.)** Here it is. **(She looks around her one last time. To no one:)** Well, goodbye, I guess.

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(There is a sound of a train coming to a screeching halt. Lights dim and Julia steps forward as SFX. train doors closing and a train starting to move. Blackout as the tabs open.)

Scene 9 - Saloon

(Tabs open. Lights up upstage left. That night, back in the store. Seb and Ida are sitting together at the bar, leaning on each other. Winnie is still close to them, by herself, staring off into the distance, slowly rocking. Her hands are wrapped around her stomach. Bertha is standing in the doorway to the back of the store, holding a broom and watching Ida and Seb.)

Ida: (quietly, to herself) What am I going to do... what am I going to do... what am I going to do...

(Ida notices her and carefully extracts herself from Seb. She walks over to Winnie and sits next to her.)

Winnie: (Finally looking up and meeting Ida's eyes) What am I going to do?

Ida: You'll be alright.

Winnie: Don't say that. You don't know if that's true.

Ida: You are a strong girl. You can recover, you can be happy again, you can make a life for yourself.

Winnie: Oh, I'm... that's not my concern.

Ida: Then what is?

(Winnie looks at her stomach)

Ida: Oh.

Winnie: I'm not married. I'll... I'll never be married. No one will want me now, and I have no money, I mean, I mean my father is dead, this child's father is dead, and who will want me once everyone knows what I've done?

Ida: Don't say that.

Winnie: Why not? (pause) What am I going to do? (pause) There is nothing for me here.

Ida: There isn't anything here for any of us.

Winnie: The town is dead.

Ida: It was already dying.

Winnie: I never... I never truly believed that. I don't know, I... always thought they would find another place to mine, that the town would pick up again, or something. Deep

down, I always imagined raising this child here. And now I won't. **(pause)** What should I do? Please, Ida, you always have the answer.

Ida: **(at a loss for words)** I don't... Look. I'm not going to say that Jack was an angel. I will not even say that I believe you would have been happy. There is... there is a silver lining in this accident, Winnie. You aren't bound to him anymore. **(pause)** But I understand what you are saying. And I am sorry you are feeling this pain. **(pause)** You could always leave. Like I did. Go to another town.

Winnie: How? You were young, you were without child. I would be no use to anyone in another town. And I could not travel with an infant. **(pause, then turning angry)** And how dare you, how dare you say that there is a silver lining? Your husband is still here. Seb is still alive, uninjured and alive.

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Ida: I have witnessed death, Winnie, at much younger than you are now. Make no mistake, I have witnessed its destruction first hand.

Winnie: You say you watched your parents die before you wandered here - have you no sympathy for my loss? My father is dead, Ida, do you not remember that pain? I am not saying that my life was perfect, nor luxurious, but... but I had one. **(pause)** You never liked Jack.

Ida: And I had good reason not to! Need I remind you of what he did? The reason you are with child in the first place?

(Winnie looks as if she is about to slap Ida, but Bertha intervenes.)

Bertha: Ida, may I speak to you? Now.

Ida: I'll be back soon, okay? I - I'm sorry.

(Winnie turns away from her.)

Ida: Winnie?

Bertha: Ida. Now.

(Ida gives Winnie one last look before she stands up and sheepishly walks over to Bertha, who leads her into the back room.)

Bertha: Where was the canary?

Ida: What?

Bertha: The canary. It wasn't there today.

Ida: I don't know what you're talking about, Ma.

Bertha: Do not call me that. The canary. Why wasn't it there?

Ida: Truly, I... I don't...

Bertha: Don't play dumb with me. I watch the miners off every morning. They always bring a canary with them, down into the mines. Today it wasn't there.

Ida: What has that got to do with me?

Bertha: What did you do to the canary?

Ida: I've done nothing with... with a *canary*, Bertha. Why would I -

Bertha: You wanted them to die.

Ida: Who? The miners? I never-

Bertha: I've heard you. You have always hated Jack. You wanted him gone.

Ida: I'll admit that I did not like him, but that does not warrant his murder! Even if not for him, I would not want Winnie to get hurt.

Bertha: You did not live here when my husband died. I was destroyed. I promised that I would not let any others die down in the dusty Earth. I watched them every day, and every day I said a prayer. This morning when I prayed, there was no canary. I didn't think much of it. But... but there is always a canary.

Ida: I am sorry that this happened, Bertha. And I am sorry that your husband died. I truly am. But it is preposterous to think that had any part in this accident.

Bertha: So you won't admit anything. So be it. I will be going to the sheriff's tomorrow.

Ida: **(incredulous)** On what authority?

Bertha: My husband and I built this town. I will not witness the death of it at your hands. The sheriff will listen to me. My authority is good enough.

Ida: I am married to your son, I am your daughter now! You will regret this. Please, I have done nothing.

Bertha: I took you in. I cared for you. I have always worried that it was a mistake; now I have my answer.

Ida: Bertha, please -

Bertha: (steely) Enjoy tonight, Ida. And expect the sheriff tomorrow.

(Bertha storms offstage right. Ida starts to follow her, but decides against it. Instead, she turns and watches Seb and Winnie in the front of the store. They are both in agony. Seb crosses to Winnie..)

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Seb: Jack was a good man. I remember the first night he and I talked. *Actually* talked. It was right at the bar. Those miners were usually so gruff with me, but he... he was kind. I'm sorry, Winnie.

(Winnie cries into Seb's shoulder as Ida watches. Blackout, tabs remain open.)

Scene 10 - Outside and Inside of the Church

(The next morning. Ida and Seb are outside the church, centre stage. Ida is holding Seb's hand.)

Ida: We can go in when you're ready.

Seb: I don't know if I will be.

Ida: That's okay, too. It doesn't have to be today, or tomorrow, or the next. Grief takes time.

Seb: Do you want to go in?

Ida: Maybe. It's, it's so quiet outside. I feel like it shouldn't be.

Seb: It will be quiet inside the church.

Ida: I know. But, but it's supposed to be. Church is always quiet. Maybe it'll feel normal.

Seb: You can go.

Ida: I don't want to go without you.

Seb: **(gently)** Go in.

(Ida nods and walks through the chapel door. Lights fade on Seb, who is still waiting outside, as lights rise inside of the church. Ida kneels and begins to pray.)

Ida: "Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. And give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen."**(pause)**That one was for Jack. **(pause)** I'll say another. I'll say more, however many more I need to. I'll say one for Winnie's father, too, and Julia's, and for every other person that died down there yesterday. **(pause)** Bertha thinks I did it. Or that I at least played a part. I know that you know I played no part in the accident, but perhaps you could help Bertha see the truth? I didn't do it. I didn't do anything. I did not want Jack to die. Um, I... I'll say it again. "Our father, who art in heaven..."

(Ida continues praying as lights dim on her and come up on Seb, still outside the chapel. Bertha enters SR, walking to Seb.)

Bertha: Where is Ida?

Seb: Um, inside. Praying.

Bertha: As she should.

Seb: How do you mean?

(Bertha does not answer)

Seb: Where have you been, Ma? Did you get any sleep? Are you, are you doing okay?

Bertha: I just came from the Sheriff's.

Seb: Why?

Bertha: I just wanted to talk to him. About it.

Seb: I'm sure he doesn't know much more than any of the rest of us. It was just an explosion, he shouldn't be too involved. Unless I'm wrong... did he have much to say?

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Bertha: No. I had some thoughts about the explosion, I wanted to run them by him.

Seb: I'm sure he did not appreciate that.

Bertha: He did not. He did not listen. No one in this town appreciates me, Seb, *no one* listens. I told him of the real dangers in this town, and he simply brushed me off. I have to do something.

Seb: You don't need to do anything, Ma. Just go home and rest. **(pause)** I'm sorry about the sheriff. I'm sure he has a lot on his mind.

Bertha: Like I don't? **(pause)** I think I'm going to go inside. Pray.

Seb: You should wait until Ida comes out. I'm sure she would prefer to be alone.

Bertha: If only everyone who's left in the town could get a moment alone in the church with God. She should learn that she will not always get things her way.

Seb: She isn't asking you not to enter, Ma, I am.

Bertha: Have you prayed yet?

Seb: I prayed yesterday when I heard the news. And last night. And this morning. But no, I haven't gone in the church yet.

Bertha: She didn't invite you in with her? She's your wife, for God's sake!

Seb: She did invite me in. She wanted me to join her. I just... couldn't.

Bertha: I'll give her a moment. Then I will join her.

(Lights dim on Bertha and Seb and raise on Ida, still kneeling.)

Ida: I want to see my parents again, God. I miss them. I wish I could have grown up with them, I wish I never had to leave. If I hadn't come here, Seb could be with Julia. He would be happier, he would be with the woman he truly loves. **(pause)** But that is in the past. There is no use dwelling on it. **(pause)** Please help Winnie. She said that I always have the answers, yet I made everything worse. Please let her forgive me. Julia is gone, and Seb is not truly mine. I don't have anyone else. I need Winnie, and... and she needs me. **(pause)** I want to be with Seb, God. That is all I have ever wanted. A home, a family, a community. Forgive me, God, if I have done something wrong. I never intended to.

(pause. As she begins the prayer again, Bertha slowly walks into the chapel, coming up behind Ida, who does not notice her. Bertha pulls a pistol out of her pocket.)

Ida: "Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. And give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against--"

(Bertha raises the gun to the back of Ida's head. SFX. gun being cocked. Ida registers the noise. But before Ida can do anything, SFX. Bang. As there is a simultaneous blackout. Tabs close.)

Scene 12 - Outside

(Tabs closed. Lights up downstage. Two months later in a desolate landscape. Winnie is wandering across the stage. Her mental state is somewhat questionable; throughout the scene, we hear her talking to her baby in her womb.)

Winnie: I'll find somewhere for us. **(pause)** I'm sorry we had to leave. **(pause)** Everyone else was leaving. Once Seb and Bertha left, no one had any hopes of staying. Bertha is what held the town together. She had been there from the beginning. And then, one day, she and Seb were gone. **(pause)** It's alright, though. I have you. **(pause)** I'll find us somewhere. Just like how Ida found me. I know there are towns by us. It seems like they pop up every single day. Wherever they can mine. **(pause)** There's got to be one close. There has to be. I'll find us a place, baby, before you're born. I've still got a few months. I've made it this long, haven't I? **(pause)** I'm sorry, baby. I'm sorry. **(pause; she looks up at the sky)** I wish you could see the stars, baby. They're all around us. They light up the sky. **(pause)** Mama always told me to "follow the North Star" when I was younger, in case I ever got lost. The funny thing is, I never knew which star was the North Star. But I was too scared to tell my mama that. **(pause)** I don't want you to be scared of me. **(Winnie does not speak for a moment. She has sat down and is looking all around her, soaking it in. After a while, she stands.)** We'll keep going, baby. We will keep walking. **(She starts to walk, but stops suddenly, a look of awe commandeering her face.)** Could it be...? **(pause)** Baby, I think it is. It's burning, it's... **(pause)** This means that there is a town! There is a town, baby, there is a town nearby! **(pause)** Oh, baby, we're saved. I see it, it's so close, oh, I can smell it now. **(She reaches out and slowly walks forward.)** Smoke.

(Blackout. Curtain. The End.)