

PROLOGUE

(IN THEIR DARKENED ROOM THE VOICES OF JOSIE AND REX ARE HEARD AS THEY MAKE LOVE)

JOSIE

Oh, baby...baby...precious baby...Oh!

REX

Mm! Mamma...mamma...it's...so...good...so good

JOSIE

You make it good...baby...you make it...righteous

REX

Righteous, mamma?

JOSIE

Oh, yes...baby...RIGHTEOUS!

(IN THE DARK THEY GASP AND SHOUT THROUGH COINCIDING CLIMAXES AND THEN MOAN HAPPILY INTO AN AFTERMATH OF SATISFIED SIGHS AND CHUCKLES INTERRUPTED BY THE SOUND OF HURRIED FEET MOUNTING HALF A DOZEN STEPS TO CROSS THEIR FRONT PORCH. THERE IS FRANTIC POUNDING AT THE DOOR OFFSTAGE...)

REX

My God!

JOSIE

Who in the world...?

REX

(CALLING) Who's that? Who's there? (HE HAS RISEN FROM THE BED, TURNED UP A LAMP AND DONNED HIS BATHROBE IN A SERIES OF SWIFT MOVES)

ELSIE

(CALLING FROM OFFSTAGE)

It's Elsie, Rever'n Rex, it's Elsie Sampson!
I'm sorry to disturb you, but I mus'!

REX

(CALLING) The door's unlocked, Elsie, come in, come in!
HE TURNS UP A SECOND LAMP REVEALING A LARGE DOUBLE BED WITH AN
ORNATE WOODEN HEADBOARD AND MATCHING NIGHT STANDS ON EITHER SIDE.
A DRESSER, CHEST OF DRAWERS, LOVE SEAT, SMALL TABLE, A PAIR OF
STRAIGHT BACK CHAIRS AND A ROCKER ARE POSITIONED CONVENIENTLY
AROUND A SPACIOUS BED CHAMBER. ON THE TABLE AND BUREAUS ARE A
PITCHER, A BOWL, A CHAMBER POT, LAMPS AND OTHER FURNISHINGS AND
BRIC A BRAC OF THE CIVIL WAR ERA. A CROSS IS PROMINENT ON THE WALL
ABOVE THE BED BESIDE A PAINTING OF JESUS)

JOSIE

(RISING FROM THE BED TO DON HER HOUSECOAT)
Elsie? At this time of night?

REX

(CALLING) We're in here!

ELSIE

(APPEARS AT BEDROOM DOOR, AND SHUTS THE LIGHT)
I'm sorry breakin' in on y'all this late

REX

What is it, Elsie?

ELSIE

It's my husband, Clyde!

REX

What's wrong with Clyde?

ELSIE

They's nigh beat him to death

REX

Beat? Clyde? Who did?

ELSIE

Them night riders. The Klan

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REX

The Ku Klux Klan again

ELSIE

The Ku Klux Klan

(BLACKOUT)

ACT ONE

(THE CHAPEL OF OLD CADMUS CHURCH IN A SMALL SOUTHERN TOWN IN 1869. THE STAGE IS OCCUPIED BY A PULPIT ON A RAISED PLATFORM BETWEEN ROWS OF CHOIR STALLS FACING EACH OTHER ON EITHER SIDE. DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE PULPIT ARE TWO STRAIGHT BACK ARM CHAIRS SIDE BY SIDE, AND ON THE WALL ABOVE AND BEHIND THE PULPIT, THE NAME OF THE CHURCH AND THE LEGEND, "YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH AND THE TRUTH WILL MAKE YOU FREE". BEHIND EACH CHOIR STALL IS A SINGLE DOOR, ONE LEADING TO THE PASTOR'S STUDY, AND THE OTHER TO THE KITCHEN. AS LIGHTS COME UP, REX EMERGES FROM HIS STUDY CARRYING A LARGE BIBLE. THE CHOIR ENTERS FROM THE REAR OF THE AUDIENCE SINGING IN PROCESSION UNTIL THEY ARE IN PLACE IN THE STALLS. LIKE THE CHURCH, THEIR ROBES ARE NOT SHABBY, BUT ARE BY NO MEANS ORNATE)

SONG: "LISTEN TO THE LAMBS"

Sung by CHOIR

Listen to the lambs, all a'cryin'
Listen to the lambs, all a'cryin'
Listen to the lambs, all a'cryin'
All a'cryin', all a'cryin' all a'cryin'

He shall tend is flock like a shepherd
And gather the young lambs to his bosom

(THE SONG IS REPEATED UNTIL THE CHOIR MEMBERS REACH THE STALLS AND ON SIGNAL FROM ELDER BATTLE TAKE THEIR SEATS. THERE IS NERVOUS COUGHING AS THEY SETTLE DOWN, WITH ALL EYES ON THE PASTOR. ELDER BATTLE SITS BEFORE THE PULPIT)

REX

My brothers; sisters, friends and members of
Old Cadmus: This morning we will depart
From our regular order of worship
So that we may devote our most serious
Attention to matters of grave concern.
You all know what is going on....

CHOIR

Oh, Yes
That's right. Sho nuff. Uh-huh. We knows. Mmmmm-mmm!

REX

So I don't have to tell you we are in
A desperately dangerous situation.

CHOIR

Oh yes. We knows. Sho dangerous, alright.

REX

Last night brother Clyde Sampson, a hard working
Law abiding, well respected member
Of this congregation was attacked
And badly beaten by the Ku Klux Klan:
Flogged unmercifully by a band
Of armed men all dressed up in robes and hoods
To make us think that they're some sort of ghosts:
Whipped in front of his wife, and small children

CHOIR

Good God! Dear Lord. Shame. Shame. Poor soul Have mercy

REX

And why? Because he is a leader of
Our efforts to get all our folks to vote.

CHOIR

That's why they done it. Ku Klux Klan. Lord! Lord!

REX

I tried to wire the Governor for help
But all the telegraph lines have been cut
In several places, no doubt by the Klan
So we are here virtually under siege.

CHOIR

Can't even send no telegram for help.
White peoples. Lawd, Lawd, Lawd. What they won't do

REX

Now I want to say this at the outset
There are a number of right minded whites
Who do want to see peace and understanding
Develop between our two races here.

CHOIR-PRO

Some does. A few. There is some. Not too many.

CHOIR-CON

They all hates niggers. Can't trus' 'em. Uh-uh!

REX

With their cooperation and support
We're working to secure a brighter future
For all our children, black and white alike
As equal United States citizens.

CHOIR

Amen. Bless God. Amen. Praise God. Yes Lord.

REX

But all our hopes are being threatened now
By the rampages of an organized
Ferocious few bent on wrenching from us
By violent means, all the progress we've made
During the Reconstruction since the War
And since the Fourteenth Amendment was passed
Which guarantees Negroes full citizenship.

CHOIR

Don't let 'em do it. No, Lord. Jesus, please!

REX

Both as your Pastor here at Old Cadmus,
And as your Representative in the
State Legislature, I feel a great burden
Of responsibility falls on me.
A heavy load...

CHOIR

Oh yes, a heavy load

REX

A burden borne, not only for my family
For my wife Josie, and our sons and daughters,
But more for each and every one of you,
For all your families; our whole church, and yes
For our entire community, as well.

I need continued help of God Almighty

CHOIR

Great God!

REX

In order that I be as equal
To perils of the present, as I was
To problems of the past that I helped solve.
I don't have to remind you of the plight
In which I found you when I first arrived here
Five years ago to take over this pulpit.

CHOIR

No, we remember. How could we forget?
You got us organized. Give leadership.
Our congregation's doubled count o' you
And you speaks for us in the Capitol.
We all remembers how mixed up we was
'Til you come 'long an' helped to set us straight.

REX

We've progressed well together since that time,
And we intend to keep on keepin' on

CHOIR

Oh yes, we're gonna keep on keepin' on

REX

This morning we'll be seeking after ways
In which to deal with violent attacks
By these hooded, cross burning night marauders
Who's only aim in life is to spread terror
And turn us all from freedmen back to slaves.
We're going to search for means and methods to
Stop all of the outrages of the Klan,
Remembering though, as in the past, we must
Be spiritually righteous...

CHOIR

Righteous, yes....

REX

As we engage in worldly politics

In order not to forget it's the Lord
And His Heavenly Kingdom we seek first
Now I don't want the Lord or you to think
That I think I'm the only one here who
Is capable of rattling the keys
To His Kingdom

CHOIR

You rattles 'em Rev'rn

REX

And therefore I've asked our good Elder Battle
To come offer this morning's opening prayer.
So Elder Henry Battle, if you will
(SIGNALS CHOIR TO RISE AND BOW IN PRAYER)

BATTLE

Dear God, on whose great mercy we depend
We come to you in deep trouble today

CHOIR

Deep trouble, Lord. Oh, yes

BATTLE

Because a plague:
A plague that calls itself the Ku Klux Klan;
Night riders who comes trampling 'cross our fields
Is 'flictin' pain and death amongst us, Lord.

CHOIR

Yes Lord!

BATTLE

Their horses thunderin' down our roads:
Their ghost robes puttin' fear in peoples hearts
With torches, guns an' whips, night after night
They's cuttin' wires to an' from the world
We needs a way to put a stop to 'em
And so we's prayin' to You Lord for help

CHOIR

Lord help us!

BATTLE

Drive away the wickedness
Of these Ku Kluxes comin' to our doors

CHOIR

My Lord!

BATTLE

Please show our leader, Rev'n Rex
Some way out of this bad p'dicament:
That's caused by these attacks we done come under.
That mought destroy us iffen they goes on

CHOIR

Grant it, Lord

BATTLE

Give him his stronges' voice
When he talks to the 'ficcials of the State;
Stronger than ever before.

CHOIR

Talk with him

BATTLE

Show him an' us the proper steps to take,

CHOIR

Walk with him:

BATTLE

And grant him the wisdom, Lord
The proper words to say to the white folks
Help him so that through our pullin' together
Behind his leadership we'll all receive
Your righteous mercy.

CHOIR

Mercy. Mercy. Mercy.

BATTLE

All this we humbly ask for in the name
Of your son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, Amen.

CHOIR

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen

REX

Amen. And thank you, Elder Battle. Thank you
We all at Old Cdmus know Henry Battle
We know him as a man who's strong in faith
Especially in times of trial and trouble

CHOIR

He's strong in faith. Oh, yes. Sho nuff he is .

REX

However, it has been my observation
That there are many who declare that they
Are faithful, but [REDACTED]
Oh, they believe hard during easy times,
But then their faith turns soft when times get hard