

## **CHARACTERS**

(in order of appearance)

Newsies #1, #2, #3 - older children or young teens who "sell" the news  
Reverend Fletcher - refined, distinguished pastor  
Milton Spurlin - humble middle aged factory worker  
Florene Spurlin- his middle aged, somewhat "proud" wife  
Estelle Jacobs - Florene's fiesty mother  
Bradley Spurlin - young adult or older teen (solo)  
Hattie Davenport - wealthy, arrogant wife of mill owner- middle aged  
Randolph Davenport - arrogant mill owner- middle aged  
Bonnie Davenport -young adult or older teen- daughter of Hattie and  
Randolph(solo)  
Jay - young adult or older teen, Bradley's friend (solo)  
Quinton- young adult or older teen, Bradley's friend (solo)  
Shark McShane - young to median adult - gangster-type (solo)  
Sister Prudence Jordan - young to median adult - self righteous (solo)  
Policeman- watchful, overbearing  
Jenny - young adult or older teen- snooty, spoiled - Bonnie's friend  
Amanda- young adult or older teen- snooty, spoiled - Bonnie's friend  
J.D - the town's kindly barber  
Mabel - sweet shop owner  
Photographer - seems to be everywhere at just the right time

## **PROPS**

Newspapers  
Hymnals, Bibles, etc.  
Flyers, Sister Jordan/Shark  
Rock  
Policeman whistle  
Paper money  
Vintage shopping basket  
Picnic baskets  
Brown paper sack with liquor bottle  
Vintage camera

## SCENE I

Sunday, October 27, 1929.

*(Music begins)*

*(lights up on newsboys at down stage center)*

Newsboy #1: Extra! Extra! Read all about it. Thomas Edison honored at the White House on 50th anniversary of the light bulb.

Newsboy #2: Extra! Extra! Read all about it. Philadelphia Athletics win the 1929 World Series.

Newsboy #3: Extra! Extra! Read all about it. Wall Street shaky after Black Thursday. But President Hoover says, "Not to worry."

### SONG: High Cotton-Chorus

*(Scene opens as congregation is sitting in pews at upstage center; Reverend Fletcher stands in the pulpit) . (Congregation is singing last lines of "There Is A Fountain")*

CONGREGATION: *(singing)* And sinners plunged beneath that flood/Lose all their guilty stains/Lose all their guilty stains/lose all their guilty stains/And sinners plunged beneath that flood/Lose all their guilty stains/Amen

REVEREND: And now finally beloved... turn in the back of your hymnals to responsive reading number 84. I, of course, will read the light print and you will read the bold print. Responsive reading number 84. *(reading)* "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

CONGREGATION: *(reading)* Be not wise in your own conceits, but to every man that is among you, think not of himself more highly than he ought to think...

REVEREND: For there is no respect of person with God.

CONGREGATION: For every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord. (For) pride goeth before the fall."

REVEREND: Amen...and amen. May God richly bless the reading of His word. Let us stand and join in singing "Bless Be the Tie That Binds."

*(Congregation stands and sings "Blest Be the Tie")*

CONGREGATION: *(singing)* Blest be the tie that binds/Our hearts in Christian love/The fellowship of kindred minds/Is like to that above/Amen.

*(organ postlude)*

*(Congregation begins to leave; a few linger to speak with the pastor...Milton, Florene, Estelle, Mr. and Mrs. Davenport are among them. At stage right a few "young" people have gathered. Among them are Bradley, Jay, Quinton, and Bonnie Davenport.) (organ postlude)*

MILTON: *(shaking hands with Reverend)* Good service, Preacher.

REVEREND: Thank you, Milton. Hello Mrs. Spurlin...Mrs. Jacobs.

FLORENE: Reverend.

ESTELLE: Yessiree, that was a good service, Preacher. Hope all the sinners were listening.

REVEREND: Pardon me?

ESTELLE: Yeah, I don't think you can preach enough to prideful sinners.

FLORENE: Mama! Those sinners might hear you...

REVEREND: Now, Mrs. Jacobs. My text from the Gospel of Matthew says, "Where your treasure is...there will your heart be also". It means...

ESTELLE: I know, Preacher. You told 'em them rich folks.

REVEREND: But ma'am, remember the responsive reading. It had the warning from Proverbs: "Pride goeth before the fall".

ESTELLE: Yeah, that's one of my favorites. Hope them sinners were listening!!  
*(exits left)*

REVEREND: But...

MILTON: Maybe you oughta preach that one again next Sunday, Preacher.  
Some people in this town need to hear that as often as they can. *(to Bradley)* Hey, Bradley. You coming?

BRADLEY: I'll be home after 'while, Daddy.

FLORENE: *(to Bradley)* Dinner'll be ready soon. Don't be late.

BRADLEY: I won't Mama.

*(exit Florene, Milton left)*

*(The Davenports approach the Reverend)*

MRS. DAVENPORT: Lovely service, Reverend.

REVEREND: Delighted you enjoyed it, Mrs. Davenport.

MR. DAVENPORT: Yes, the sermon was very well delivered and...somewhat pertinent.

REVEREND: Thank you, Mr. Davenport...I think.

MR. DAVENPORT: Just hope the message didn't get lost in your eloquence.

REVEREND: Excuse me?

MRS. DAVENPORT: Randolph is paying you a compliment, Reverend.

REVEREND: Oh....

MRS. DAVENPORT: Yes, your topic was of uproots pertinence to this community. But we fear that some in this congregation might not be able to digest such a subject. They simply do not realize that they should heed the warning about pride.

REVEREND: Oh? Some of the congregation? And who might that be?

MRS. DAVENPORT: Oh, you know the kind. Those common laborers who seem to glory in their lowly state in life.

REVEREND: I see.

MRS. DAVENPORT: Oh, I suppose those people are to be pitied. Such behavior is bred, you see.

MR. DAVENPORT: Now Hattie, that Doctor Sigmond Freud says that it's environment.

MRS. DAVENPORT: No matter. The disadvantaged don't seem to notice their...disadvantage....and they even seem to revel in their low lifestyle. I hope they were listening to your sermon and to the scriptures about pride, Reverend.

REVEREND: *(sighs)* Oh, I hope so, too.

MRS. DAVENPORT: Come along, Bonnie dear, before your taffeta wilts in this heat.

BONNIE: Okay, Mother. *(looking back at Bradley)* Bye, Bradley.

BRADLEY: Miss Bonnie...

*(exit Mr. and Mrs. Davenport and Bonnie left)*

JAY: *(mockingly)* Bye, Bradley. Miss Bonnie...*(laughing hysterically)* Don't tell me you're sweet on the millowners daughter.

*(Reverend silently greets a few more parishioners, then exits up stage left)*

BRADLEY: Okay, then I won't tell ya.

JAY: Pal, did it ever occur to you that your daddy's a lint head at the cotton mill...the cotton mill her daddy owns?

BRADLEY: So?

QUINTON: What are you gonna do with a little rich girl? Dazzle 'er with rubies and diamonds from your private collection? Or will you buy some from your good friend, Mr. Rockefeller?

BRADLEY: Bonnie's not like that. She doesn't care about material things.

JAY: Oh no. I'm sure she'll be just as happy to marry a lint head and live in an ol' shack on the east side. Looooove is all she needs to make her li'l ol' life happy.

BRADLEY: Bonnie's a sweet, simple girl. She doesn't even like being the daughter of the richest man in the county. In fact, having lots of money makes her...miserable, she says.

*(music begins)*

JAY: Oh sure it does...

QUINTON: Uh huh....

**SONG: High Life Blues (Jay and Quinton)**

*(enter Bonnie from left)*

BRADLEY: Bonnie. Uh....hi. What are you doing back here?

*(exit Jay and Quinton right)*

BONNIE: I left my bag. That's what I told Daddy.

BRADLEY: Did you? Leave your bag, I mean?

BONNIE: Uh huh. See? *(holding up purse)*

BRADLEY: Is that the only reason you came back?

BONNIE: Well, actually I thought you might still be here.

BRADLEY: Uh...I am. But I was just about to leave. Mama said I needed to come home for Sunday dinner pretty soon.

BONNIE: Oh, well, if you need to go.

BRADLEY: Yeah. Guess I'd better. *(starts to exit right, then turns)* Uh. Miss Bonnie.

BONNIE: Yes?

BRADLEY: You know the big oak tree down by the pond?

BONNIE: I think so.

BRADLEY: Well, I, uh... like to go there sometimes. It's nice...this time of year.

BONNIE: I'll bet it is.

BRADLEY: Yes...it is. Well...guess I'll be...*(backing out to exit, then stops)*

BONNIE: Yes?

BRADLEY: Well....Bonnie...you know the oak tree?

BONNIE: Uh huh!

BRADLEY: Well, I might go there...this afternoon. Bye! *(exits right abruptly)*

BONNIE: Oh....my goodness.....this is...swell! *(exits left abruptly)*

LIGHTS DOWN  
SEGUE

**SCENE II**

An hour later.

*(THE SPURLINS'; Scene opens with Spurlins and Estelle sitting at the kitchen table at down stage far right)*

MILTON: Yes sir. The preacher was right on today. Some people store up treasures in things of this world. It's a sin. And they oughta repent. Hand me the butter.

ESTELLE: Amen to that! Pass the corn.

FLORENE: Yeah, it's more than a sin the way some folks put on airs. It's a crime. More chicken, Milton?

MILTON: Thanks, hon. Yeah, I'm just glad we're hard-workin', God-fearin' people and don't have to worry 'bout pride. Have some butter, Mama Estelle.

BRADLEY: Do you hear yourselves talking?

FLORENE: What, Bradley? Milton, is the tea sweet enough?

MILTON: It's good. Just right. The scriptures say, "You can't serve God and mammon." That means those that serve the almighty dollar can't serve the almighty God. No, money brings pride and pride is a sin.

BRADLEY: You're talking like only rich people have pride.

MILTON: Beans could use a little more salt, Florene.

FLORENE: Sorry, hon. Here's the salt shaker.

BRADLEY: Anybody can store up earthly treasures. Even poor, working folks like us. We can be so full of ourselves we don't see our own faults...just everybody else's.

MILTON: You know, Bradley. You might have something there.

BRADLEY: Really? You mean...?

MILTON: Yeah. We oughta ask Brother Fletcher to pay a visit to ol' man Davenport. Talk some repentance into him. That man's so full of greed and the love of money that he can't see it's folks like me down at the mill that's made him so rich.

ESTELLE: I wouldn't have his money on a silver platter. You know his money's really bootleg money!

MILTON: No!

ESTELLE: Oh yeah, Mabel down at the mercantile says that her people, Mrs. Davenport's people, made a killing in rum running soon as prohibition passed. Bought it in the islands, they say, and brought it right in here.

FLORENE: So, it really is filthy money.

ESTELLE: Yeah. I wouldn't have it on a silver platter.

MILTON: It's a sorry man who uses his wife's people's money anyhow. A man oughta provide for his family with a hard day's work. Now, that's the difference between our kind and theirs.

BRADLEY: Our kind. But...we're all the same.

FLORENE: What?

BRADLEY: We're all the same...same dreams....same pride...same faults.....same everything.

MILTON: Don't say that! We're not the same. There's the honest, hard-workin' folks like us. And then there's the money-grabbin', under-handed folks like them.

BRADLEY: *(rising from the table)* I'm going for a walk.

FLORENE: You didn't finish your dinner, Bradley.

BRADLEY: I'm not hungry anymore.

*(Bradley exits abruptly right)*

ESTELLE: Well...forevermore! Youngun's these days. I'd never let one of my youngun's talk to me that-a way. No sir.

FLORENE: Mama, Bradley's just goin' through a phase. All children go through phases.

ESTELLE: Phase. Huh! That's why this country's going to you-know-where in a hand basket.

MILTON: Mama Estelle, things have changed since you were a girl. Kids talk plain to their folks now.

FLORENE: Lots of other things are changing, Mama. A man can fly a airplane 'cross the ocean and it's even legal for a woman to vote.

ESTELLE: Just 'cause it's legal don't make it right.

*(lights down at far right)*

*(lights up at far left where Mr. and Mrs. Davenport are sitting in their parlor drinking coffee) (enter Bonnie from left)*

BONNIE: Mother.

MRS. DAVENPORT: Yes, dear.

BONNIE: Mother, what would you say if I said I wanted to bob my hair?

MRS. DAVENPORT: I'd say "absolutely not".

BONNIE: Why not?

MRS. DAVENPORT: That's what common people do, Bonnie.

MR. DAVENPORT: I suppose the next thing you'd want to do is get a job.

BONNIE: What would be so wrong with that?

MRS. DAVENPORT: Nothing...if you're low-life.

MR. DAVENPORT: No daughter of mine is going to work. That's final. *(rising to exit)* Now, are there anymore questions I should address before I adjourn to the veranda for my Sunday afternoon nap?

BONNIE: No....

*((Mr. Davenport rises to exit))*

BONNIE: I mean, yes! Why are you so narrow-minded?

MRS. DAVENPORT: Why, Bonnie! What a thing to say! You sound as insolent as one of those lint heads at the mill.

BONNIE: Mother! Those "lint heads", as you call them, are the reason we have a big fancy house, rich food on the table...and handmade taffetas to wear to church every Sunday.

MR. DAVENPORT: That's where you're wrong, Bonnie. We have these things because of a shrewd head for business and hard-nosed management.

MRS. DAVENPORT: And, of course, providence plays an important part.

BONNIE: What?

MRS. DAVENPORT: Providence, dear. We have what we have because of who we are. We're Davenports.

BONNIE: Pride goeth before the fall.

MR. DAVENPORT: Pardon me?

MRS. DAVENPORT: Now where did I hear that just recently?

BONNIE: Don't you see? It's so easy to see what's wrong with others and not see our own pride. Mother, we're no different from anybody else in the world.

MRS. DAVENPORT: Bonnie, you're talking out of your head. Perhaps you should lie down for your nap. I'll have Inez fluff your pillows for you.

BONNIE: I don't want a nap. I don't want my pillows fluffed. I want to be listened to.

MR. DAVENPORT: We're listening, Bonnie. But so far you haven't said anything that makes sense.

BONNIE: Daddy, let me ask you something. If we lost all our money, who would we be?

MR. DAVENPORT: You're right, Hattie. She's talking out of her head.

BONNIE: No Daddy. You say we're different because we're Davenports. But what if the money was gone? Would we still be...different?

MRS. DAVENPORT: Always a Davenport, dear. Some things never change.

BONNIE: *(rising to exit)* I'm going out.

MR. DAVENPORT: Out? Where?

BONNIE: For a walk!

MRS. DAVENPORT: Take your parasol, dear. You don't want to freckle in the sun.

BONNIE: Oh.....*(takes a parasol, exits left)*

MR. DAVENPORT: She's a plain-spoken woman. She gets that from your side of the family, Hattie.

*(Mrs. Davenport gives him a "look")*

**SONG: Just Like Me (chorus)**

*LIGHTS DOWN*

**SCENE III**

That afternoon.

Down stage center: At the Big Oak Tree

*(Scene opens with a few picnickers crossing) (enter Sister Jordan from left carrying a homemade sign that reads, "What's the World Coming To?") (She is passing out "flyers" as people cross.) (Shark is crossing from right, passing out advertisements)*

SHARK: That's right, folks. Only a buck cover charge. Only a buck. Tell 'em Shark McShane sent ya.

SISTER JORDAN: *(to the people as they pass)* Stamp out the speakeasies. Don't let alcoholic beverages corrupt your body.

SHARK: Tonight folks...only a buck

SISTER JORDAN: Be informed of the evils of alcohol...

*(Sister Jordan and Shark finally bump into each other)*

SHARK: You!

SISTER JORDAN: You!!

SHARK: What are you doing here?

SISTER JORDAN: Trying to bring this town to its knees. What are you doing here?

SHARK: A little advertising on the streets. It's perfectly legal.

SISTER JORDAN: Legal? Don't you remember the 18th amendment? Alcohol is not legal.

SHARK: The 18th Amendment doesn't say anything about advertising...or about living it up a little!

SISTER JORDAN: If you don't obey the laws of man, you could at least acknowledge the orders of the Almighty.

SHARK: The Almighty! He a friend of yours or just an acquaintance?

SISTER JORDAN: You're trash!

SHARK: Don't knock it 'til you've tried it, Sister.

SISTER JORDAN: That's Sister Jordan to you.

SHARK: All right, Sister Jordan. Don't knock it 'til you've tried it. *(beat)*  
*(showing her an advertisement)* Hey, Tuesday nights is Ladies' Night.

SISTER JORDAN: I never!

SHARK: Maybe you should.

SISTER JORDAN: Sinner!

SHARK: Wind bag!

SISTER JORDAN: Blasphemer!

SHARK: Self-righteous...

*(an argument erupts)*

*(enter policeman from left)*

POLICEMAN: What's the problem here?

SHARK: This woman is calling me names.

POLICEMAN: Oh?

SISTER JORDAN: He's advertising a den of iniquity!!

POLICEMAN: Oh!

SHARK: Officer, I was not. Hey, officer. Tonight we're having the policeman's special...

POLICEMAN: Oh....

SISTER JORDAN: Officer, arrest this man. He's a doer of evil!

POLICEMAN: Oh....

SHARK: Well?

POLICEMAN: Well, what?

SISTER JORDAN: What are you going to do about it?

POLICEMAN: About what? Nobody's breaking the law...at least, not yet. So, I don't know what the problem is.

SHARK: It's that Pharisee...

SISTER JORDAN: It's that sinner.

POLICEMAN: Wait a minute!! Can't you people just live and let live?

SISTER JORDAN: Not if there's one heathen out there destroying the moral fiber of this community.

SHARK: Heathen? I come from a good family.

SISTER JORDAN: Bet they're real proud of you now. You hoodlum!

SHARK: Well, let she who is without sin cast the first stone!!

*(takes a rock out of her pocket)*

SISTER JORDAN: All right! Have it your way.

SHARK: Assault! Assault!!

POLICEMAN: *(blowing his whistle)* Hey! Hey!! You two. Let me determine what is unlawful behavior. And right now you're both on the edge of unlawfulness.

SISTER JORDAN: But...

POLICEMAN: Separate corners. *(Shark and Sister Jordan hesitate)* Go on. You over there...and you over there. *(Shark and Sister Jordan cross each to benches at down stage left and right)* Now sit there and act like good boys and girls...and don't come out until you can act nice! *(turns to exit, they rise)* Sit!!

**SONG: "What's the World Coming To?" (Sister Jordan, Shark, the Chorus)**

*(enter Bonnie from left) (enter Bradley from right) (They cross to center) (Shark and Sister Jordan remain down stage left and right....listening to the following encounter)*

BONNIE: Hi, Bradley.

BRADLEY: Bonnie. Fancy seeing you here.

BONNIE: I went for a walk after lunch....and...somehow.... just ended up at this spot.

BRADLEY: Oh. I'm glad. There's usually not this many people here. In fact, it's usually just me and the big, ol' oak tree most days.

BONNIE: Well, I've never been here. So I wouldn't know.

BRADLEY: You've never been here? Oh, it's a swell place. The pond, when the wind is still, sometimes looks like glass. There's ducks and turtles, too. And there's a nest of robins up in that tree. See?

*(Bonnie moves closer to have a look)*

BONNIE: Where?

BRADLEY: *(realizing she's close)* Oh...guess they're gone now. Robins grow up fast and leave the nest.

BONNIE: Hmm. They're lucky.

BRADLEY: Yeah.

*(beat)*

BONNIE: *(speaking at the same time as Bradley)* Bradley...

BRADLEY: *(speaking at the same time as Bonnie)* Bonnie.

*(they laugh)*

BRADLEY: Go ahead.

BONNIE: No you...

BRADLEY: It's okay. I wasn't gonna say anything really...important.

BONNIE: Everything you say is important to me.

BRADLEY: Really?

BONNIE: Yeah.

BRADLEY: Swell!

BONNIE: *(speaking at the same time as Bradley)* Bradley...

BRADLEY: *(speaking at the same time as Bonnie)* Bonnie.

*(both laugh again)*

BONNIE: I'll go.

BRADLEY: Okay.

BONNIE: *(beat)* Bradley...do you think I'm...different.

BRADLEY: Gee whiz, Bonnie. 'Course I do. You're different from every girl in this town. Prettier...and nicer.

BONNIE: That's not what I mean. I mean, do you think that we... you and me...are different?

BRADLEY: You mean 'cause my daddy's a lint head...

BONNIE: I don't like that name.

BRADLEY: Okay. You mean 'cause my daddy's a mill worker...and your daddy owns the mill?

BONNIE: Well, do you think we're different?

BRADLEY: I don't know. I just wish everybody thought we were the same then we wouldn't have to wonder about it.

BONNIE: Me too. I wish everybody could look past the kind of house you live in or the kind of job you have...and just not be so...so...

BRADLEY: Prideful.

BONNIE: Yeah. That's it. *(beat)* Your family doesn't know about us, do they?

BRADLEY: Not yet. Yours?

BONNIE: No.

BRADLEY: What are we gonna do?

BONNIE: Oh, Bradley...

*(enter Jenny and Amanda from left)*

JENNY: Why, Bonnie Davenport! There you are!

AMANDA: Your mama said you'd gone for a walk. We looked for you all over the estate grounds, but you weren't there.

JENNY: We looked for you at the gazebo in the park, but you weren't there.

AMANDA: And just on a whim we came here...and here you are!

BONNIE: Jenny and Amanda, this is Bradley Spurlin. You know Bradley from church?

JENNY: Oh yes. Seems like I've seen you before.

AMANDA: Yes. You sit near the back, don't you?

BRADLEY: Usually.

JENNY: It's hard to see who's behind us...unless you do the rudest thing and turn around and stare.

*(noticing Sister Jordan and Shark staring at them)*

AMANDA: It's rude to stare!

BONNIE: Yes. Why were you looking for me?

JENNY: Oh! Jake Hightower got a brand new car...a red roadster...and he wants to take us girls for a ride.

AMANDA: Mean ol' Jenny here called dibs on the front seat...but you and I can sit in the rumble seat.

JENNY: Won't that be fun?

BONNIE: Well...

*(enter Jay and Quinton from right)*

JAY: Hey Brad, ol' pal.

QUINTON: What's shakin'?

BRADLEY: Hey, you guys. *(to the girls)* Ladies, these are my friends Jay and Quinton. *(to the boys)* You know Bonnie...and these are her friends Jenny and Amanda.

JAY: *(mock chivalry)* How do you do, fair ladies?

QUINTON: Howdy, girls. Hey, just hung a new rope swing from a big limb over the creek. Need some folks to try 'er out. Ya'll wanna come?

JENNY: No...thank you.

AMANDA: We have plans. Come on, Bonnie.

JAY: Come on, Bradley ol' pal.

BONNIE: Well....

BRADLEY: Well....I guess I'll see you soon, Miss Bonnie.

BONNIE: Yes...soon.

*(Bonnie exits left with Jenny and Amanda)*

*(Bradley lingers for a beat, then exits right with Jay and Quinton)*

**SONG: "What's the World Coming To (reprise)(Chorus, Sister Jordan and Shark)**

SEGUE

**SCENE IV**

Monday morning.

*(underscoring)*

*(lights up on newsboys at down stage center)*

Newsboy #1: Extra! Extra! Read all about! One millionth Model "A" Ford sold in Detroit.

Newsboy #2: Extra! Extra! Read all about! First flights from New York to L.A. now taking only 36 hours.

Newsboy #3: Extra! Extra! Read all about it! A wave of selling engulfs Wall Street. Stock market predicted to crash again!

*(music fades)*

*(BARBER SHOP :Lights up at far left where Mr. Davenport is in the chair while J.D. is cutting his hair)*

*(enter Shark from left)*

SHARK: Good morning, Gentlemen.

MR. DAVENPORT: Morning.

SHARK: Could I interest you gentlemen in a new establishment opening just around the corner?

J.D.: What kind of establishment?

SHARK: A club...of sorts...*(teasing)* where one might wet one's whistle.

MR. DAVENPORT: A speakeasy, you mean.

SHARK: We prefer to call it a club.

MR. DAVENPORT: No matter what you call it. Liquor's illegal.

SHARK: Well, I won't tell if you won't. Here's a little advertisement. Tells you all about it.

J.D.: *(reading the flyer)* "Be not drunk with wine. Stamp out speakeasies, bootlegging, and liquor of all kinds."

SHARK: What? Give me that. *(looking at flyer)* Why, that...woman. Oughta be a law against interfering with private enterprise. *(exits, angrily)*

MR. DAVENPORT: Some people are so condescending to others!

J.D.: Yeah. *(continues cutting Mr. Davenport's hair)* Say, Mr. Davenport. Did you see what happened in the stock market last week?

MR. DAVENPORT: Yes.

J.D.: Did you see the journal this morning? Everything's falling apart up there on Wall Street.

MR. DAVENPORT: I read the journal, but I'm not alarmed.

J.D.: You're not? Why, some investors and stock brokers jumped out of the windows of skyscrapers up there in New York City when they heard the news!

MR. DAVENPORT: They're fools. No, J.D., I don't play the market myself. Too risky. I have my money tucked safely away in the bank across the street.

J.D.: But what if, with the market crashing ... there's a panic...then a run at the bank...and the banks have to close?

MR. DAVENPORT: It'll never happen, J.D. Never in a million years. And besides I can run a cash business if I need to. No problem.

J.D.: You sure are cool-headed about these things, Mr. Davenport.

MR. DAVENPORT: Comes with experience...and intelligence. I have confidence in my own judgment. *(rising from the chair)* What do I owe you, J.D.?

J.D.: Two bits, Mr. Davenport.

MR. DAVENPORT: *(hands J.D. a dollar)* Keep the change.

J.D.: Gee, thanks, sir, but you sure you don't wanna keep it yourself what with everything that might happen?

MR. DAVENPORT: J.D., don't worry.

J.D.: I'll try, Mr. Davenport. I'll try.

*(Lights down at far left,)*

*(GENERAL STORE; lights up at far right where Florene is standing in front of the counter. Mabel is standing behind the counter.)*

*(enter Sister Jordan)*

SISTER JORDAN: Good day, ladies.

FLORENE: Sister Jordan. How's the battle for holiness going?

SISTER JORDAN: Oh, just wonderful. Here's my new advertisement.

MABEL: "Come one, come all. Shark's Club 2119 West Union St. One dollar cover charge."

SISTER JORDAN: (*grabbing the flyer*) Oh, that man!

FLORENE: Is that a speakeasy opening up?

SISTER JORDAN: Disgusting! (*dropping the flyer*) Now I feel dirty all over.

MABEL: Sister Jordan, seems like you're losing the war for doing right.

SISTER JORDAN: Oh, how humiliating! (*exits right, in a huff*)

MABEL: Some people!

FLORENE: Some people are so quick to judge.

MABEL: Well, Florene what can I get for you today?.

FLORENE: I need some flour...a bottle of sweet milk...and a pound of butter.

MABEL: Coming right up! (*turns to fill the order*)

FLORENE: And just put that on our account.

MABEL: Uh...Florene. I need you to pay cash today.

FLORENE: What? Cash? Since when?

MABEL: Didn't you read the papers this morning? The stock market's going wild again. Some folks are predicting another crash! This one'll be a doozy.

FLORENE: So what if it does? It'd serve those rich people right.

MABEL: But if there's a crash...then the banks might close. That's what they're saying.

FLORENE: Mabel, you listen to those melodramas on the radio too much.

MABEL: You think so?

FLORENE: Mabel, hard-working folks don't need to worry about what's happening up there in New York City. The stock market can't touch the honest laboring man and woman. As long as we got strong backs, we got everything we need.

MABEL: (*worried*) Oh, I hope you're right, Florene. I just hope you're right

(*lights down at far right*)

**SONG: HIDEAWAY (The Chorus)**

**SCENE V**

Later that morning.

*(Mr. Davenport is standing at the corner, down stage center reading the paper)  
(Enter Florene from right carrying her basket from general store. She sees Mr. Davenport, sighs, then "parades" proudly on by )*

MR. DAVENPORT: *(talking to himself as he reads)* Those fools!

*(Florene stops; curious.)*

MR. DAVENPORT: Those simple-minded fools!

*(Florene is more curious. Crossing to center and begins looking over Mr. Davenport's shoulder)*

MR. DAVENPORT: *(noticing Florene)* May I help you?

FLORENE: No! I mean...I was just wondering what you were reading?

MR. DAVENPORT: A newspaper. My newspaper!

FLORENE: Yeah. I see that. Just wondering what part of the newspaper?

MR. DAVENPORT: Stock market reports, if you must know.

FLORENE: I was just hearing about that over at the General Store. Mabel was saying...

MR. DAVENPORT: Mabel?

FLORENE: *(defensively)* Hey, Mabel's pretty smart. She's got a high school diploma.

MR. DAVENPORT: Then she could be a stock broker. They all have the brains of an eel.

FLORENE: Mr. Davenport! How dare you talk about Mabel like that!

MR. DAVENPORT: Do you know me?

FLORENE: My husband works down at your mill. He's a foreman.

MR. DAVENPORT: Oh?

FLORENE: His name is Milton...Milton Spurlin. He's worked for you for twenty years.

MR. DAVENPORT: Sorry. Can't place him.

FLORENE: It figures. He's the hardest working employee you've got and you don't even know him.

MR. DAVENPORT: I have many hard-working employees.

FLORENE: None like my Milton.

MR. DAVENPORT: Of course. If you'll excuse me....*(starts to exit left)*

FLORENE: Pride goeth before the fall.

MR. DAVENPORT: I beg your pardon.

FLORENE: That's what the Good Book says.

MR. DAVENPORT: I recognize the reference...but what does that have to do with me?

FLORENE: I've seen you come into church...filling up the front pew with your over-priced suit and your over-dressed wife...flaunting your money in front of hard-working people like us.

MR. DAVENPORT: I've never seen you at my church.

FLORENE: I'm not surprised. You don't bother to look behind you where your loyal employees sit Sunday after Sunday. Loyalty and hard work! That's what you'd see if you bothered to look behind you!

MR. DAVENPORT: Look, Mrs.....uh....

FLORENE: Spurlin. Florene Spurlin.

MR. DAVENPORT: Mrs. Spurlin, do I not pay your husband fairly?

FLORENE: He gets paid...enough.

MR. DAVENPORT: Somewhat above what other employers pay their employees?

FLORENE: I guess so.

MR. DAVENPORT: And do I not pay overtime and other compensation as well?

FLORENE: Yeah, but....

MR. DAVENPORT: And are not the working conditions better than in most mills?

FLORENE: He says they're okay.

MR. DAVENPORT: Then why do you accost me on the street about such a thing?

FLORENE: Well....'cause we work hard for what we have. And you...you....just sit back, do nothing...and get richer and richer. That's why!!

MR. DAVENPORT: Pride goeth before the fall, Mrs. Spurlin.

FLORENE: What are you talking about?

MR. DAVENPORT: Same thing you are.

FLORENE: Oh, you're so prideful you can't even think straight.

MR. DAVENPORT: I'm thinking I should end this conversation.

FLORENE: Oh no you don't! You aren't gonna snub me again!

MR. DAVENPORT: I'll snub anyone I like!

FLORENE: Oh yeah?

*(enter Bonnie and Bradley from right, holding hands)*

MR. DAVENPORT: *(seeing Bonnie)* Bonnie Davenport!

BONNIE: Daddy...

FLORENE: *(turns and sees Bradley)* Bradley!

BRADLEY: Hello, Mama. *(after an uncomfortable silence)* This is Bonnie.

FLORENE: I know who she is.

BONNIE: Daddy, this is Bradley...Bradley Spurlin.

MR. DAVENPORT: What are you doing, young lady?

BONNIE: Bradley's walking me home from school.

MR. DAVENPORT: Walking?

BONNIE: Yes, I told our driver not to pick me up today. I told him I would walk.

MR. DAVENPORT: Bonnie, get home this instant...alone! Your mother could have another one of her spells over this!

BONNIE: I'm sorry, Daddy. But I asked Bradley to walk me home...and that's what I want him to do.

FLORENE: What will people say, Bradley?

BRADLEY: They'll say, "What is that low-life lint head doing walking with that high-life mill owner's daughter?"

FLORENE: Exactly! Do you want that to happen?

BRADLEY: I don't care what they say. Bonnie and me are no different from the other. We're both human beings. Same as you two. And speaking of you two. What are you doing out here on a public street...talking to each other...where everybody can see?

MR. DAVENPORT: I was just reading my newspaper...and this woman....

FLORENE: (*outraged*) This woman? I have a name, you know.

MR. DAVENPORT: I'm sure, but I was just minding my own business when...

(*enter Mrs. Davenport from left*)

MRS. DAVENPORT: Randolph....Bonnie! What is going on?

(*enter Milton and Estelle from right*)

MILTON: Florene? I was wondering where you were. Bradley, what's happening here?

ESTELLE: You get home, this minute...Florene.

FLORENE: Mama, stay out of this!

ESTELLE: Well, forevermore! Time was when folks honored their mamas.

BRADLEY: Grandma, this is really none of your business.

MRS. DAVENPORT: Who are all you people? Bonnie, what's the meaning of this...this...display!

(*enter Shark from right*)

SHARK: Well, well. The plot thickens.

(*enter Sister Jordan from left*)

SISTER JORDAN: This would have never happened if sin had not been allowed to run rampant in this town!

MR. DAVENPORT: *(to Sister Jordan)* What are you talking about?

FLORENE: You know what she's talking about.

MRS. DAVENPORT: Randolph?

BONNIE: Mother!

MILTON: Florene, what did he say to you?

BRADLEY: Daddy. Would you listen!

SISTER JORDAN: Oh, you brood of vipers!

MRS. DAVENPORT: *(to Sister Jordan)* What are you talking about?

SHARK: I'll show you a viper, Sister.

FLORENE: *(to Shark)* Who are you?

*(a free-for-all argument begins)*

*(enter Quinton from right)*

QUINTON: Hey, Mr. Davenport.....everybody! Come quick! It's the mill!

MR. DAVENPORT: What? What about the mill?

QUINTON: It's...on fire!!!

LIGHTS DOWN!!

**\*\*INTERMISSION\*\***

**ACT II**

**SCENE I**

That same evening.

**What's the World Coming To? Reprise instrumental**

*(lights up at down center where newsboys are standing)  
(underscoring)*

Newsboy #1: Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Stocks crash in massive liquidations

Newsboy #2: Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Bank closings leave depositors in a lurch.

Newsboy #3: Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Davenport Cotton Mills burned to the ground!

*(as music fades)*

*(THE SPURLINS'; Lights up at right. Milton, dirty and disheveled, sits at kitchen table. Florene stands nearby.)*

FLORENE: What do you think caused the fire, Milton?

MILTON: Who knows, Florene? Could have been a boiler or a weaver overheating. Could have been anything. If Old Man Davenport didn't push everybody so hard, it wouldn't have happened.

*(enter Bradley from right)*

BRADLEY: Mama, Grandma says she won't be down for supper.

FLORENE: Why? She sick?

BRADLEY: No ma'am. Just tired, I guess.

MILTON: We're all tired. Too tired to think.

BRADLEY: Daddy, what's gonna happen now?

MILTON: I don't know. Without the mill, this town is sunk.

BRADLEY: Can't they re-build the mill? I mean, if we all worked together....

MILTON: Bradley, what are we gonna use for money? People are startin' to panic... pulling their money out. Our bank closed today.

FLORENE: Son, things look really bad right now for all of us. Everything that matters is all but gone.

MILTON: Everything we've worked for...everything we've believed in....is all gone.

BRADLEY: All gone? Then...we're all the same?

MILTON: What are you talking about?

BRADLEY: Without the money, the job...can't take pride in anything.

FLORENE: Oh, this is about that poor little rich girl, isn't it?

MILTON: Don't we have enough troubles without you courtin' that Davenport girl?

BRADLEY: What's wrong with it?

FLORENE: How many times do we have to tell you? They're not our kind, Bradley! They're not our kind!!

*(lights down at far right, lights up at far left; THE DAVENPORTS'; Bonnie sits in a chair) (enter Mrs. Davenport from left carrying a smudged pinafore)*

MRS. DAVENPORT: Well, that's that! Your pinafore is ruined! Inez says that no amount of scrubbing will get out the dirt and ash. If you'd stayed away from the mill....and let the men handle the fire...

BONNIE: It's just a dress, Mother.

MRS. DAVENPORT: Well, so it is. I hate to have to tell you this, Bonnie, but we may have to...be careful with our things. Until your father can figure out a way to get the mill back on its feet.....

*(enter Mr. Davenport, dirty and disheveled from left)*

BONNIE: Daddy?

MRS. DAVENPORT: Randolph!

MR. DAVENPORT: The mill doesn't even have feet to get back on.

MRS. DAVENPORT: You mean...?

MR. DAVENPORT: It's a total loss, Hattie. Not enough equipment left to process a handful of cotton much less do a full run. I'll wire my customers tomorrow.

MRS. DAVENPORT: What about the insurance? You did have insurance?

MR. DAVENPORT: Oh yes. But with the banks closing right and left...the insurance companies can't pay the claims...at least not right now.

BONNIE: Did our bank close?

MR. DAVENPORT: It had to. All of that fluctuating on Wall Street made people crazy.

BONNIE: What are you going to do?

MR. DAVENPORT: I don't know, Bonnie. I don't know.

*(beat)*

BONNIE: What about your employees? What will happen to them?

MR. DAVENPORT: They'll have to fend for themselves. It serves them right!  
This is their fault!!

MRS. DAVENPORT: What are you saying, Randolph?

MR. DAVENPORT: Mills don't just burn down, Hattie. I had a bunch of careless buffoons working for me!

BONNIE: Not all of them are that way, Daddy!

MR. DAVENPORT: Oh...and I suppose you know one who isn't. Some hard-working, well-meaning lint head who happens to have a son you're sweet on?

MRS. DAVENPORT: Oh, my. Where are my smelling salts?

BONNIE: Oh, not to worry, Mama. We're still Davenports, remember? Even through the ashes...we're still Davenports.

MR. DAVENPORT: We will survive this...because of who we are. I just need to think, that's all.

BONNIE: I need to think, too. *(rises to exit)*

MRS. DAVENPORT: Bonnie, where are you going? You're not going to meet that boy!

BONNIE: Mother, I'm sorry about the dress. I don't mind wearing it like it is.

MR. DAVENPORT: Bonnie, I forbid you to leave this house!

BONNIE: I won't embarrass you, Daddy. I promise. Mother, please tell Inez not to set a place for me at dinner.

*(lights down at far left)*

*(lights up at down stage center, where Bradley is sitting at right) (Bonnie enters after Bradley has sung first verse and chorus)*

**SONG: SUCH A PLACE AS THIS (Bradley and Bonnie)**

BRADLEY: Well...looks like we got what we wanted.

BONNIE: What's that?

BRADLEY: Everybody's the same now. Everybody's on equal ground.

BONNIE: Not at my house. We're still Davenports, you know.

BRADLEY: Yeah. I know. And you're not our kind.

BONNIE: Maybe they're right, Bradley. Maybe we all have our place and we should just stay there.

BRADLEY: Maybe so. *(pause)* Does your father know what he's gonna do now?

BONNIE: No.

BRADLEY: Until he decides what to do, my daddy can't do anything.

BONNIE: *(slightly annoyed)* That's the way it is, Bradley. I'm sorry. My father's devastated.

BRADLEY: *(sarcastically)* Too bad.

BONNIE: *(incensed)* Yes, it is too bad. *(beat)* I need to go.

BRADLEY: So do I.

BONNIE: Good night, Bradley

BRADLEY: Good bye, Bonnie.

*(exit Bradley right ; exit Bonnie right)*

*(enter Sister Jordan, crossing right to left, looking around suspiciously)*  
*(enter Kid from left carrying a brown paper sack )*

SISTER JORDAN: Hello, young man.

KID: Howdy, ma'am.

SISTER JORDAN: Nice evening

KID: Yes ma'am, it is.

SISTER JORDAN: So? Did you bring it?

KID: Yes ma'am. Just like you said.

SISTER JORDAN: Well, let me have it.

KID: *(shaking his head)* Uh uh! Two dollars!!

SISTER JORDAN: Two? You said one.

KID: Delivery fee!

SISTER JORDAN: Oh, all right.

*(Sister Jordan hands Kid money; Kid hands sack to Sister Jordan)*

KID: Thank ya, ma'am. Nice doing business with ya. *(exits quickly left)*

SISTER JORDAN: *(opening the sack, pulls out a bottle of liquor)* Wait a minute. Young man, this isn't what I ordered. This is hard liquor. I asked for peach brandy...you know, for my lumbago. Young man! *(realizes the kid is gone)* *(to herself)* Well...the longer I stay out in the night air the stiffer I get. *(looking at the bottle, reading the label)* Eighty proof. Well, just a swallow maybe....because of the night air. *(takes a swallow from the bottle)* *(takes another swallow from the bottle...then one or two more)*

*(enter Policeman with Shark)*

SHARK: But officer. What did I do?

*(Sister Jordan doesn't notice Policeman and Shark, continues to drink from the bottle)*

POLICEMAN: In this country, they might put you in jail for selling liquor. And on my beat I put you under the jail for selling it to a minor.

*(Sister Jordan begins to stagger left)*

SHARK: A minor? I didn't know, officer. The guy said he was twenty one.

*(Policeman runs into Sister Jordan)*

POLICEMAN: Pardon me, ma'am. I didn't see you...*(sniffing)* Sister Jordan, what's that smell?

SISTER JORDAN: *(trying to hide the bottle)* What smell?

POLICEMAN: Smells like....liquor!

SISTER JORDAN: Really? *(slurred speech)* That's odd. I don't smell a thing.

SHARK: *(looking behind her)* Maybe if you took that bottle out from behind your back, you could smell it better.

POLICEMAN: Hey, let me see that.

SISTER JORDAN: What? How'd that get there?

POLICEMAN: All right, Sister Jordan. Let's go.

SISTER JORDAN: *(with slurred speech)* But...occifer...may I freak spankly? I mean...speak frankly! *(giggles)*

POLICEMAN: I think you just did, Sister. *(as he hauls them away)* Oh, this is great stuff. Imagine that...you two sharing the same patty wagon. Should be an interesting ride.

**SONG: High Cotton (reprise) (Chorus)**

## SCENE II

The next morning.

*(scene opens with newsstand at down left; newsboy with bundled papers stands at down left)*

NEWSBOY: Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Bread lines could open soon in some cities. Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

*(enter, Milton from right; picks up newspaper and starts reading it)*

NEWSBOY: Hey, Mister. This ain't no public li-bery. You wanna read the news, it'll cost you a nickel.

MILTON: Uh...I don't seem to have any change on me.

NEWSBOY: I'm all broke up 'bout that. *(grabs newspaper)*

*(Milton begins to look at other magazines and newspapers on newsstand)*

*(enter Mr. Davenport from right; picks up newspaper and starts reading)*

NEWSBOY: Hey, what is this? *(taking the paper away)* Everybody wants a free ride.

MR. DAVENPORT: I'm sorry, young man. I left my change purse in my other vest.

NEWSBOY: My heart bleeds, Mister. *(picks up papers and starts to exit)* Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Bread lines may be opening soon.

*(As newsboy exits, he drops a roll of dollar bills) (At the same time, Milton and Mr. Davenport cross to pick it up)*

MILTON: Hey, I saw it first.

MR. DAVENPORT: I beg your pardon!

MILTON: You!

MR. DAVENPORT: You! *(uncomfortably)* I uh...was going to give this money back to that nice young man.

MILTON: Yeah, sure you were. And I'm Albert Einstein.

MR. DAVENPORT: Well, I was. *(not convincing himself)* I was....

MILTON: Let's face it. We were both gonna pocket the money.

MR. DAVENPORT: I wasn't thinking. I've got a lot on my mind.

MILTON: Bet you have!

MR. DAVENPORT: I'll think of something. I'm a Davenport. I just need time.

MILTON: Time? Time is all we've got, Mr. Davenport. We've got nothing but time. You and me! Everything we've worked for, it's all gone.

*(beat)*

MR. DAVENPORT: So....what do we do now?

MILTON: We? You're asking me what we'll do now?

MR. DAVENPORT: Yes sir, I am.

MILTON: Well, you could go to your wife's people and ask for more money.

MR. DAVENPORT: What? Hattie's family? Hattie's parents were poor dirt farmers. As were mine. In fact, they all died penniless. Where did you get the idea Hattie's family had money?

MILTON: I just heard.

MR. DAVENPORT: Well, you heard wrong, sir.

*(Mr. Davenport begins to exit, pushes the money into Milton's pocket, then exits left abruptly )*

*(lights down on newsstand at left)*

*(lights up at down right)*

*(enter Sister Jordan from right with an icepack on her head, obviously with a hangover; crosses to bench at down right) (Shark follows close behind)*

SHARK: Hey, Sister that was some pretty fancy talking I did last night, huh? Getting that policeman to let you go without booking you.

SISTER JORDAN: Do you mind not screaming. There's a herd of buffalo running through my head.

SHARK: Sorry. *(beat)* Say...uh, thanks, Sister, for posting my bail like that.

SISTER JORDAN: Just a loan...with interest!

SHARK: Whatever you say.

SHARK: You know, Sister. You'd get more converts to your cause...if you'd lighten up a little.

SISTER JORDAN: Oh? And how would you know that?

SHARK: Learned it on the streets. A real con never hits his mark over the head.

SISTER JORDAN: But I'm not trying to con anybody, Mr. McShane. I'm just telling the truth...the gospel truth.

SHARK: Yeah? Same principle. Just don't hit your mark over the head.

SISTER JORDAN: Thanks for the advice. What other bits of wisdom have you learned on the streets?

SHARK: Oh, I learned to look out for number one. Do whatever it takes to survive!

SISTER JORDAN: Did you learn anything about doing the right thing?

SHARK: Sure. I do what's right...what's right for The Shark.

SISTER JORDAN: I guess people like you have no conscience.

SHARK: Don't need one as long as there's people like you to be my conscience for me.

SISTER JORDAN: Mr. McShane, don't be insolent with me. And don't forget who bailed you out of jail last night

SHARK: Yeah? Well, don't forget who did some smooth talking to the police and protected your reputation.

SISTER JORDAN: I didn't need you to do that!

SHARK: Oh yeah? What happens when this community hears that the righteous Sister Jordan had the blind staggers last night?

SISTER JORDAN: And what'll you do if the word gets out that Sister Jordan got you to repent?

SHARK: Hey! That gets out and I'm ruined!

SISTER JORDAN: So, I've got my reputation to protect and so do you.

SHARK: All right. All right. I won't tell if you won't.

SISTER JORDAN: Deal! *(moaning in pain)* Oh, my head...

SHARK: Sister, I've got a great remedy for a hangover. Three raw eggs...a bottle of Tabasco sauce...with a buttermilk chaser.

SISTER JORDAN: Oh please...

*(Shark puts his arm around Sister Jordan)*

*(enter Photographer from right)*

PHOTOGRAPHER: Hey Sister Jordan...Mr. McShane.

SISTER JORDAN: What?

SHARK: Yeah?

PHOTOGRAPHER: Smile. *(takes picture)* Congratulations. You just made the front page of the Journal!!

*(lights down)*

SEGUE "Leaning On the Everlasting Arms"

### SCENE III

Wednesday night prayer meeting.

*(Church, upstage center)*

*(Scene opens with hymn, Leaning on the Everlasting Arms) (congregation sits in pews and the Reverend stands in the pulpit)*

CONGREGATION: *(singing)* Leaning/Leaning/Safe and secure from all alarms/Leaning/Leaning/Leaning on the everlasting arms.

REVEREND: Now, brethren...if you'll turn in your hymnals to responsive reading number 80. Responsive reading number 80 *(reading)* "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another;

CONGREGATION: Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

*(enter Sister Jordan from upstage right, crossing to front pew) (congregation begins to murmur and stare)*

REVEREND: Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

CONGREGATION: Be of the same mind one toward another.

REVEREND: Judge not, that ye be not judged.

CONGREGATION: Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."

REVEREND: May God add his blessings to the reading of His word. Let's all join in singing...Amazing Grace/How sweet the sound/That saved a wretch like me.

*(organ begins intro...)*

SISTER JORDAN: *(standing)* All right! You don't have to shout it! I know you saw this morning's paper! I am a wretch! I admit it.

REVEREND: Sister Jordan, we were about to sing a hymn.

SISTER JORDAN: Oh...but not just any hymn. The hymn about me...a wretch!

REVEREND: Sister Jordan, we sing this hymn often. No one has ever taken the words so seriously before.

BONNIE: *(standing)* Excuse me...Reverend, Sister Jordan....maybe we should always take the words seriously.

MRS. DAVENPORT: Bonnie!

BRADLEY: *(standing)* Bonnie's right, Reverend. We're all the same to God. We've all received a lot of grace...so Sister Jordan, you're no more a wretch than the rest of us.

MILTON: Bradley!

SISTER JORDAN: *(sobbing)* Now even the children are pointing the finger of judgment at me!

REVEREND: My dear congregation, we've all suffered greatly in the past few days. Perhaps we should just continue in our prayer service.

MR. DAVENPORT: Reverend, may I interject?

REVEREND: Mr. Davenport?

MR. DAVENPORT: *(standing)* May I say that uh...uh...the children are correct.

MRS. DAVENPORT: Randolph, what are you doing?

MR. DAVENPORT: I'm not sure, Hattie. Speaking the truth, I think.

MRS. DAVENPORT: But....

MR. DAVENPORT: *(to the congregation)* Recent events in our community...only some of them beyond our control took our jobs...our money...even our reputations....the things we cherished most. What are we now without our...treasures?

FLORENE: *(standing)* Looks like we're all the same, Mr. Davenport. Nobody better. Nobody worse.

ESTELLE: Florene!

FLORENE: Mama! It's true.

MILTON: *(standing)* Seems like the scriptures warned us about this...and then some pretty smart kids tried to remind us of it.

MR. DAVENPORT: Yes, they did. I'm afraid I didn't listen so well then. With the fire and the banks closing...well, it took that to make me actually listen to that message.

BONNIE: Daddy! *(crosses to hug Mr. Davenport)*

*(Bradley shakes his father's hand) (Affection starts to break out in the congregation)*

REVEREND: Brothers and sisters, remember this is a prayer meeting.

FLORENE: We know, Preacher. Guess we've been so almighty ourselves...we haven't been talking to the Almighty much.

MR. DAVENPORT: I suppose we're all a little out of practice.

SISTER JORDAN: *(standing)* Oh, I am so relieved!

REVEREND: What's that, Sister Jordan?

SISTER JORDAN: I'm relieved to find that if we are all the same before God...then you're all as worthless as me.

REVEREND: Let us all...worthless.... souls stand and pray to Him who made us...

*(Congregation bows heads while choir sings....)*

***ALMIGHTY FATHER, HEAR OUR PRAYER***

*Almighty Father/Hear our prayer/  
And bless all souls that wait before Thee.  
Amen.*

*segue to*

**SONG: The Prayer**

REVEREND: And now may the peace of God go with you throughout this week and forever. Amen.

*(Congregation begins to rise and greet each other. Bradley and Mr. Davenport cross to center.) (organ postlude)*

BRADLEY: Mr. Davenport, can I ask you something?

MR. DAVENPORT: Yes.

BRADLEY: Daddy told once me about some old equipment you used to use at the mill, before you got the new machinery.

MR. DAVENPORT: Yes?.

*(enter Shark from upstage right, stands at back of the church, listening)*

BRADLEY: Well, do you still have some of that old equipment somewhere?

MR. DAVENPORT: Why yes, I couldn't find a buyer for it when we switched over to the new machinery. It's still stored in a warehouse out near the highway.

*(Milton crosses to center, overhearing the conversation)*

BRADLEY: Well, what if we got the old equipment out and used it?

MILTON: I still remember how. And we could finish the last few orders and then be ready for more.

MR. DAVENPORT: Ah, that old equipment would be like using crude hand tools...especially when compared to the new equipment now. Too slow.

*(Florene, Estelle, Mrs. Davenport and Sister Jordan cross to center, overhearing the conversation)*

MILTON: Every hand in town could pitch in. Most folks are either out of work or scared their businesses will have to close. They'd work for free, I'm pretty sure, just to save the community.

*(Shark crosses within earshot of conversation)*

BRADLEY: I'd work. I know lots of guys who would, too.

FLORENE: We'd all be glad to do something to help.

ESTELLE: Yeah, me and Florene would get all the women in town to pitch in.

MRS. DAVENPORT: I suppose I could solicit help from the ladies in my bridge club.

SHARK: I'll provide refreshments.

*(everyone looks at Shark in disbelief)*

SISTER JORDAN: Mr. McShane!

SHARK: Just lemonade and sandwiches. Hey, don't think it's gonna hurt my reputation none, do ya?

*(laughter)*

**SONG: High Cotton (reprise)**