

## SETTING

THE EDDY HOMESTEAD  
CHITTENDEN, VERMONT  
AUTUMN, 1874

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

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*“VOICES” AND “ANSON LADD” CAN BE CAST  
AMONG EXISTING PLAYERS. EXTRA PLAYERS MAY BE  
NECESSARY FOR THE DARK CIRCLE SEANCES. SPECIAL  
USHERS (WITH EXPERIENCE IN SLEIGHT OF HAND) WILL  
BE NEEDED FOR PRE SHOW AND CAN BE USED FOR SPECIAL  
EFFECTS OPERATION.*



## SECOND SIGHT ;

OR,

THE WAY OF HOLINESS

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## PRELUDE

**Pre-show:** The audience writes down personal information on a “prayer card” (see Appendix): a spiritual question, the name of a passed loved-one, etc. The card is shredded by ushers and the pieces are collected in a bucket that is in clear view of the audience.

*The circle- room. A dark, upstairs room illuminated by a kerosene lamp and candles. An old wooden floor is neatly swept underneath two rows of filled benches and two windows on either side of the room. Upstage wall bears a wooden cross. Stage Left is a closet (or “spirit cabinet”). MARY, a dignified sister of farmers in plain attire, sings a hymn for the sitters: “Out of the depths I cry to thee (Aus tiefer Not)”. She sings as much or as little is necessary.*

MARY

*Out of the depths I cry to thee;  
Lord, hear me, I implore thee.  
Bend down thy gracious ear to me;  
My pray’r let come before thee.  
If thou rememberest ev’ry sin,  
If nought but just reward we win,  
Could we abide thy presence?*

*Thy love and grace alone avail  
To blot out my transgression;  
The best and holiest deeds must fail  
To break sin’s dread oppression.  
Before thee none can boasting stand,  
But all must fear thy strict demand  
And live alone by mercy.*

*Therefore my hope is in the Lord  
And not in mine own merit;  
It rests upon his faithful word  
To them of contrite spirit  
That He is merciful and just;  
This is my comfort and my trust.  
His help I wait with patience.*

*And though it tarry til the night  
And till the morning waken,  
My heart shall never doubt His might  
Nor count itself forsaken.*

*Do thus, O ye of Adam's seed,  
Ye of the Spirit born indeed;  
Wait for your God's appearing.*

*Though great our time and sore our woes,  
His grace much more aboundeth;  
His helping love no limit knows,  
Or utmost need it soundeth.  
Our Shepherd good and true is He,  
Who will at last His people free  
From all their sin and sorrow.*

*HORATIO, a scrawny but intimidating farmer prays before the cross. WILLIAM, his brother, enters without urgency. He is a bulky, rugged farmer who looks like his aching body might fall to pieces in front of us, but he doesn't seem to mind. He slowly puts out each candle and lamp, making the room darker and darker.*

#### WILLIAM

Evenin'. All of you come t'night to get the answer to one question. These souls passed on to spirit life... might them come back to us? The shadows in the firelight don't go out with the flame. No. They linger. They dance; callin' to us in song, by touch; under thick black. A touch in the dark will fill the blood with a black terror you might liken to a stroke of hell. Now mark this – no sense not bein' plain about it – we'll be doing a true seance here t'night and you can't move from your seat until the light's back. I know some of ya don't much like the dark, and you won't like what you hear, won't like what you feel. But won't no harm coming to yous, honest. If you fright easy, you ought to leave now. Don't got the grit to face what scares you, then hang up your fiddle and fly the coop. Not one? Close your eyes if you're gone all-skeery and wish 'em gone. They don't hang round long.

*WILLIAM sits in an old farmhouse chair. He is then bound up tightly to the chair so as not to move and cause a stir in the dark – or perhaps not to harm himself or others.*

#### HORATIO

I seen Death crawl through the limbs of my brothers and sisters. The stink of it — all filth, sick, and black. I suspicion you seen it too. That be why you's here – if only they knowed how much you loved 'em. And you're thinkin' they ain't nowheres else now 'cept your thoughts, but they's here, folks. They can point the path out right for us. So they ask you not to shed tear, but to lift 'em upward with prayer.

*HORATIO strikes a match and ignites all prayer cards in the bucket like some strange ritual.*

The Holy Book tells us that the people which sat in darkness, saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. You'll talk to em tonight in this Dark Circle, and they might speak to you, but they need darkness to be seen.

*HORATIO rings a bell to call the spirits. WILLIAM is by now limp in a trance. HORATIO drips hot wax on his brother's skin to test the depth of his trance.*

Put out the light and bring up the dark.

*Darkness. WILLIAM inhales audibly and breathes. His breaths are joined by many breathing. This grows in intensity and then fades. Silence until the bell rings on its own. A low voice drones: "Memento mori", "Audi alternum partem", "Est modus in rebus". We hear distant vocalise fragments of archaic folk music. Distant moan: "ich schwebe". Whispers from the dark of the audience "prayers" (i.e. audience members' first names, etc) and "my daughter" "my son" "please don't cry for me" "(ex.) I remember the flower garden". Intensifying. Grinding and someone walking about. Silence. Indian drum pulses for some time. Other instruments sound. Audience begins to feel light feather touches against hair or shoulders. Kisses from the dark. Etc. Intensity heightens. Breathing remains. WILLIAM ruggedly vocalizes in a way that builds in intensity. A scream slices through the dark.*

ANSON

I think that be enough!

HORATIO

*(hushed)* Quiet out there!!

ANSON

You hear me? Ain't hard telling this be left-handed trouble.

HORATIO

Shut it, Mister!

ANSON

*(Menacingly)* You hear me boys?

*A match illuminates the darkness. MARY lights a candle. ANSON has left his seat.*

HORATIO

Sit you down, Mister!

ANSON

I lived in these hills all my born days hearin' banshee-like hollerin' all coming from this house. I know the stories – and I'll be sworn saying there ain't no shred of goodness in it. Smell that, can't you folks? Not just the stink of a rotten crop but of all-fired, unnatural wickedness. And our hill-towns be no place for sin and black magic.

*ANSON hurls a punch into WILLIAM's gut. HORATIO immediately reacts by pinning the man against the wall and punching him.*

HORATIO

Weren't too wise, you coming here. Mark this: The Eddy brothers seen things that would rob you of sleep for a lifetime.

ANSON

I know ruffians in these hills – all tuckered out with you Eddy Brothers and your jo-fired dealings with the Devil.

HORATIO

You keep off this land.

ANSON

*(Spits the blood in HORATIO's face)* Keep this up and we gonna run you Eddy Brothers all-bowlegged.

HORATIO

If your face be seen near but a step from the sugarbush, it'll be hellfire for you. You understand don't you?

ANSON

It don't be hellfire waiting for me and my family.

HORATIO

*(Choking him)* Don't you?

ANSON

Yes!!

*HORATIO lets him loose. A beat.*

I is a man of my word, Horatio. And a coward in this life for it. But there be others to pile on the agony and have you ripped inside and out.

*ANSON exits*

HORATIO

Shame death don't kill a man.

*WILLIAM is still groaning*

Shut it! Ladies and gentleman, a hand for them who be coming through tonight.

*Applause.*

Peace now. Peace. They's quiet yet.

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