

3. OCTOBER 22nd 1844, MORNING.

AGAIN, A GRAPHIC OR PROP TO SHOW PAGES FALLING OFF A CALENDAR, COMING TO A STOP ON OCTOBER 22ND.

A LIGHT SLOWLY FADES UP. FRANCIS AND JANE HARRISON ENTER, CARRYING A SMALL BAG EACH. THEY LOOK HAPPY.

FRANCIS

What about here, Jane?

JANE

Yes, why not? This looks like as good a place as any!

FRANCIS

I can't think of a better place to welcome the Lord than right here. Look at that view! See how the trees frame the sun, Jane?

JANE

I do, Francis. I do. And we can see the whole village from up here.

FRANCIS

We'll be able to see them run out as the Lord returns. We'll see the whites of their eyes as they witness the truth!

JANE

And then we'll see them running up the hill towards us, praying for mercy, begging us to tell our Lord that they deserve their place amongst the blessed and the saved.

FRANCIS

And we'll say, "No".

JANE

I can barely contain myself!

FRANCIS

Well, you'll have to wait just a little longer! Say, will you help me with these blankets?

JANE

I will.

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

THEY LAY OUT BLANKETS ON THE GROUND FOR PEOPLE TO SIT ON.

JANE

Francis, how many would you say will join us?

FRANCIS

It's hard to say, Jane. The evidence is overwhelming, so in theory those who can see the truth plain and simple as it is laid out before them will join us here. The difficulty of course, is that the devil has his messengers out in force, casting doubt into the minds of good, Christian folk. So Jane, will the good be able to shut out the poisonous word of the non-believers? I fear not. I fear that many of those we have considered "friends" over the years will be left behind while we, and those select, chosen few enjoy sweet paradise with our Lord God.

JANE CONSIDERS THIS FOR A MOMENT.

JANE

Maybe about nine or ten?

FRANCIS

I'd say that's a fair estimate.

JANE CONTINUES TO LAY OUT THE BLANKETS. FRANCIS TAKES SOME STICKS OUT OF A BAG AND ARRANGES A SMALL FIRE IN THE CENTRE.

JANE

Say, Francis. You brought the loaves I baked, didn't you?

FRANCIS

I did, Jane. I brought two loaves, some cheese, and some apples and a bottle or two of water. That ought to keep us sufficiently until the coming of our Lord.

JANE GOES TO A BAG AND LOOKS THROUGH.

JANE

Did you bring a knife?

FRANCIS

A knife?

JANE

To cut the bread and cheese.

FRANCIS

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

Oh Jane, I'm sorry. I think I may have disposed of all our knives...

JANE

Don't worry, I'm sure we'll manage. Can't let a little thing like that spoil the greatest day of our lives, can we?

FRANCIS

Amen!

JANE

Amen.

FRANCIS AND JANE SIT ON THE BLANKETS AND LOOK FOR A MOMENT.

JANE

It's really happening, isn't it Francis?

FRANCIS

It is.

JANE

It's strange, you wait your whole life for something, and when the day comes you don't know how to feel about it.

FRANCIS

Jane?

JANE

I mean, on the one hand you know how excited I am about it all; the Heavens opening, the trumpets sounding, the dead rising, I will be the first to rejoice. But I'm weak, Francis. I cannot help but feel some sorrow for the end of this life. I know we will go to a better place, but there are people I like, people who I care about who I know won't make it there. I feel...I feel sorry about that.

FRANCIS

Jane, those feelings are quite natural. I understand. But you must shut them out, just as those who have chosen not to believe have shut the Lord out of their hearts. They are dead to us now, the only thing we can do is anticipate eternal paradise. Can you focus on that, Jane?

JANE

I...you're right. Of course you're right, I know that. I'm sorry...I've been weak.

FRANCIS

Remember, after today none of this will matter.

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

JANE

I know.

FRANCIS

The cares of this life will be gone forever, and we can finally live in –

THOMAS HOWE ENTERS, CARRYING A SMALL SATCHEL WITH HIM.

THOMAS

Mr Harrison? Mrs Harrison?

FRANCIS AND JANE TURN TO SEE HIM.

FRANCIS

Young Thomas Howe, how good to see you!

JANE

Welcome, Brother Thomas.

THOMAS

May I join you?

FRANCIS

Of course, sit down!

THOMAS SITS ON A BLANKET.

FRANCIS

I'm glad to see that you've joined us, young man. Where are your father and mother?

THOMAS

They won't be joining us, sir.

JANE

They won't? Oh, Thomas...

THOMAS

They believe that the good Reverend Miller is mistaken. I attempted to present to them the indisputable evidence that this is the day we've all been waiting for, but they decided to reject it. So, I'm here alone.

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

FRANCIS

Not alone, son. You've made a brave decision, and the right one.

THOMAS

I believe so, sir.

FRANCIS

Tell me, have you heard of many others that will be joining us?

THOMAS

Yes sir, I saw Mr Tyler and Mrs Tyler on their way over here. They had an older woman with them I did not recognise.

JANE

An older woman?

THOMAS

That's right, Mrs Harrison.

JANE

Bless you, Thomas. You can call me Jane.

THOMAS

That's very kind, Jane.

ROBERT TYLER ENTERS, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED BY HIS WIFE NANCY, WHO IS HELPING HER MOTHER, MARGARET CLAY.

FRANCIS

Ah, Robert! Good to see you!

FRANCIS STEPS FORWARD, OFFERING HIS HAND TO ROBERT, WHO SHAKES IT FIRMLY.

ROBERT

Francis.

JANE

Hello, brother Robert.

ROBERT

Jane.

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

JANE

And sister Nancy, welcome!

NANCY

Hello Jane.

JANE TURNS TO MARGARET AND OFFERS HER HAND.

JANE

I don't believe we have met before. My name is Jane, and bless you for coming along to be saved!

MARGARET

What is she saying?

NANCY

Mama, this is Jane. She's welcoming you here.

MARGARET LOOKS AT JANE'S HAND.

MARGARET

What does she want?

NANCY

She doesn't want anything, mama. She's offering to shake your hand.

MARGARET

If she wants something she ain't getting it.

JANE

I don't want anything...

JANE LOOKS AT NANCY FOR A NAME TO CALL HER MOTHER.

NANCY

Margaret.

JANE

Margaret. That was my mother's name.

MARGARET

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

It's Mrs Clay to you.

JANE

Oh, I'm sorry. Mrs Clay.

NANCY

Mother, be nice.

MARGARET

What?

ROBERT

Nancy...

NANCY

Be nice to people, mother.

MARGARET

I'm plenty nice, now shush.

ROBERT

Nancy, I spoke to you about her.

NANCY

I know Robert, I'm sorry.

ROBERT

Control her.

NANCY

Yes dear.

FRANCIS

Can we find you somewhere comfortable to sit, Mrs Clay?

MARGARET

Nancy, who's this one?

NANCY

This is Francis Harrison, mama. Brother Francis, this is my mother.

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

FRANCIS

Pleasure to meet you, ma'am. Is there anywhere in particular you would like to sit?

MARGARET

What's he saying?

NANCY

He wanted to know if you'd like somewhere to sit?

MARGARET

I'd like to be sat in my own damn home.

PEOPLE LOOK SURPRISED.

ROBERT

Nancy!

NANCY

Mama! Don't be talking like that.

MARGARET

I'll talk however I please. Don't see what you're all complaining about anyhow.

ROBERT

Nancy, you put a stop to that.

NANCY

I'm sorry, Robert.

JANE

Let me see, why don't you folks take a seat just here beside young Thomas?

FRANCIS

Thomas, would you be ever so good and fetch Mrs Clay an extra blanket?

THOMAS

Yes, sir.

THOMAS GOES TO THE BAG WHERE THE BLANKETS ARE KEPT.

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

FRANCIS

Say, Robert, did you hear of many more folk heading our way?

ROBERT

Not a one. But we did run into a group of folk down in the village making jokes about the Lord's return.

FRANCIS

We ran into some of them ourselves, brother Robert. You are walking on steadier ground than them. I trust you walked on by?

ROBERT

We did, although not before Nancy's mother stopped to join in their singing.

EVERYONE LOOKS AT MARGARET WHO LOOKS UP TO SEE THEM ALL STARING AT HER.

MARGARET

What?

JANE

Thomas, you got that blanket yet for Mrs Clay?

THOMAS

Yes, ma'am.

THOMAS APPROACHES MARGARET WITH THE BLANKET.

THOMAS

Here you go, ma'am.

MARGARET SNATCHES THE BLANKET.

MARGARET

Nancy, who's this skinny one?

NANCY

Mother! I'm sorry, I'm not sure we've met?

THOMAS

We have ma'am, I'm Thomas Howe. I believe you know my mother, Jane Howe?

NANCY

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

Little Thomas Howe? My goodness, you've grown! Where is your mama?

THOMAS

Ma'am, she won't be saved today. She chose to turn her back on the Lord's return, along with my father.

NANCY

I'm sorry to hear that, Thomas.

THOMAS

Don't be ma'am. Their souls have been claimed by the Devil, I won't waste any more time worrying about them.

NANCY

Oh...

SILENCE.

JANE

Well, just to let you folks know, we've got bread and cheese, apples and water should any of you feel hunger or thirst during our wait, short as it may be!

FRANCIS

I'll light a fire later on in the afternoon, to provide some heat and light.

THOMAS

That's mighty kind of you both.

FRANCIS

Bless you for saying, young Thomas. Like my good wife says, shouldn't be much of a wait. The Lord will return before the day is out, and time's isn't stopping still just yet!

NANCY

I brought along some jam and some crackers for the wait.

NANCY REACHES INTO HER BAG AND TAKES OUT SOME CRACKERS AND JAM, AND REACHES THEM OVER TO JANE.

FRANCIS

My goodness, we certainly won't starve before the Lord arrives!

MILD LAUGHTER FROM MOST AROUND THE CIRCLE, EXCEPT MARGARET AND ROBERT. BENJAMIN COTTON ENTERS, AND JANE NOTICES HIM.

JANE

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

Brother Benjamin! Welcome!

BENJAMIN

Hello Jane, Francis.

FRANCIS

Benjamin, good to see you. How are you?

BENJAMIN

My wife died.

JANE

We did hear that, brother Benjamin. We're so sorry.

NANCY

Very sorry indeed.

THOMAS

Very sorry.

BENJAMIN

No matter, I'll be reunited with her today.

FRANCIS

That you will! That is a refreshingly positive attitude, brother Benjamin and I salute you.

MARGARET

What's this?

NANCY

Nothing mother, don't worry.

JANE

Did you see many more, Benjamin? Any more in the village who have chosen to be saved?

BENJAMIN

I'm afraid not, ma'am. I have a cousin over in Rocky Ridge though, says there should be 30 or 40 gathered there.

NANCY

Gracious...

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

THOMAS

A fine crowd, indeed.

MARGARET

Who's this one? Why's he looking so miserable? Was he dragged here against his will, too?

NANCY

No, mother. Neither were you.

ROBERT

That's enough, Margaret.

MARGARET MUTTERS SOMETHING UNDER HER BREATH.

JANE

Let me see...Benjamin? Have you met Robert and Nancy?

BENJAMIN

I have.

ROBERT

Good to see you, Benjamin.

BENJAMIN

Robert.

NANCY

I was so very sorry to hear about your wife, Benjamin.

BENJAMIN

I don't know if you've heard, but she's dead now.

NANCY

That is what I was referring to, my deepest sympathies.

BENJAMIN

Thank you, Nancy.

MARGARET

Nancy?

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

NANCY

Yes, mama?

MARGARET

I've seen that one somewhere before.

NANCY

That's Benjamin Cotton, mama. I don't think you know him.

MARGARET

Where have I seen you?

BENJAMIN

I don't think we've met. You are...?

ROBERT

This is my mother-in-law, Margaret Clay.

BENJAMIN

Good to meet you, Margaret.

JANE

She prefers Mrs Clay.

MARGARET

What?

BENJAMIN

I said it's good to meet you, Mrs Clay.

MARGARET

Where have I seen you?

NANCY

You don't know him, mama. Hush now!

FRANCIS

Uh, why don't you take a seat just here, Benjamin?

BENJAMIN SITS DOWN BESIDE FRANCIS. NO ONE LOOKS ENTIRELY COMFORTABLE.

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

JANE

We shouldn't have too much longer to wait folks. Before the day is out our souls will be saved and the sanctuary will be cleansed!

FRANCIS

Amen!

THOMAS

Amen.

ROBERT

They say rain's coming.

FRANCIS

Well Robert, when those clouds part and the angels sing their sweet song a little rain won't dampen our spirits.

NANCY

I thought we would hear trumpets?

FRANCIS

Well Nancy, what I believe the good book is saying is that there will be some sort of Heavenly music. It may be the angels singing, or the angels' trumpets, either way it will be the sweetest sound of all!

MARGARET

You there!

MARGARET IS LOOKING AT THOMAS.

THOMAS

Ma'am?

MARGARET

When is this nonsense over? I want to go home.

THOMAS

Uh...ma'am, I don't believe we will be going home. Although figuratively speaking, of course, we are going home, just not to the ones on this earth.

FRANCIS

Well put, young man.

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

JANE

Amen.

MARGARET

What's he saying?

NANCY

Young Thomas is right, mother. We talked about this, remember?

MARGARET

Don't be so silly, Nancy. I want to go home.

ROBERT

That's enough, Margaret. We've told you that isn't an option.

MARGARET

What's he saying?

JANE

I believe they're trying to tell you that we won't be returning to our homes, Mrs Clay. The Son of God is returning today and the world as we know it will be over. No more possessions, no more earthly concerns, no more homes.

FRANCIS

Amen!

THOMAS

Amen.

MARGARET

Can't get a straight answer out of anybody...

ROBERT

Nancy!

NANCY

I'm sorry, Robert.

BENJAMIN

You expecting anyone else, Francis?

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

FRANCIS

Well, hopefully a couple more will join us. There's 118 living here in Little Faith, and –

BENJAMIN

117.

FRANCIS

Brother Benjamin?

BENJAMIN

There's 117 living in Little Faith. My wife died.

FRANCIS

Of course...117. My apologies. Well, with –

JANE

Although that young girl, what's her name...Grace somebody? She gave birth to twins last week, didn't she?

NANCY

She did. Lovely, just lovely.

JANE

So that would make it 120?

BENJAMIN

119. My wife's dead.

JANE

Of course...I'm sorry, brother Benjamin.

FRANCIS

Yes...well, with 119 living in Little Faith I should hope for at least a couple more to join us. It would be a shame for so many to spend eternity in a fiery pit of damnation and despair, wouldn't it?

THOMAS

It would.

JANE

Of course.

MARGARET

Extract from *The Great Disappointment* by Conor McReynolds

What?

NANCY

Never mind, mother.

MARGARET

I'm cold.

ROBERT

You've got two blankets, Margaret.

MARGARET

I'm still cold.

FRANCIS

Thomas, fetch the good lady another blanket, would you?

NANCY

That's mighty kind of you, Francis. Thank you.

THOMAS GOES FOR ANOTHER BLANKET.

ROBERT

Good view from up here, Francis.

FRANCIS

It is, isn't it? I'd say there isn't a finer place in these United States to receive the good Lord than right here!