AN ANALYSIS AND STAGING OF BURNT OFFERING,
AN ORIGINAL PLAY BY BEVERLY MCINTOSH

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The problem with which this study is concerned is that of directing and producing an original play. The study attempts to take an original script which contains very little indication of setting, description of character, or stage direction, and establish workable patterns of interpretation and action, all of which are consistent and compatible with the central theme and idea of the script. The task generates a particular responsibility and challenge in that the experiment is happening for the first time.

The thesis is primarily divided into three basic parts: analysis, production, and evaluation. Chapters I and II report the analysis stage and were done before the production was presented. Chapters III and IV are a report of the production phase of the thesis. Chapter V is evaluative in nature and was formulated after the production was staged.

The thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapter is introductory in nature; it presents a statement of the purpose, statement of the problem, and the basic considerations prior to the study. The second chapter contains an analysis of the play. It presents the approach to
analysis utilized by the director, a synopsis of the play, and an analysis of environmental facts, dramatic action, and character. From this analysis a general concept of production in reference to the style of presentation was established. The third chapter includes a detailed investigation of the production problems, including stage direction and setting, content and structure of the script, characterizations, and staging. The fourth chapter contains the script and the production notes and shows how the play developed. Chapter V relates the results of the production at North Texas State University. Critical observations in the form of audience response questionnaires are incorporated. In addition, there is an evaluation of the production by the director. It examines the final results of the production in relation to the problem areas cited in Chapter III.

The study culminated in a two-night performance of Burnt Offering on July 29 and 30, 1971. The approach to setting, characterization, and staging seemed to be well accepted and fulfilled the requirements which the script demanded. The staging of Burnt Offering included the utilization of a revolving stage. It proved to be a practical and efficient technical innovation, and especially important in adapting the play to production in a studio theatre.
The benefits which accrue from the presentation of an original script cannot and should not be minimized. The emergence of innumerable creative possibilities, and the encouragement of young playwrights to write for the educational stage are most apparent.

The study concludes that the production of *Burnt Offering* allowed the director to exhibit his talent and competence, as well as his ability at artistic compromise in a joint effort toward excellence with the playwright.
AN ANALYSIS AND STAGING OF BURNT OFFERING,
AN ORIGINAL PLAY BY BEVERLY MCINTOSH

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
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Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

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CHAPTER I

DIRECTING AND PRODUCING THE ORIGINAL PLAY

Purpose of the Study

A primary goal of graduate educational theatre in American colleges and universities is to train and discipline students in dramatic art. In addition, it seeks to provide a cultural environment in which everyone involved can seize the opportunity to think imaginatively and develop creative abilities to the utmost.¹

An important vehicle for attaining the aforesaid goal has been to involve graduate students of drama in the study and production of representative classic, modern, and contemporary plays by reputable authors. However, many new and original² scripts are utilized as the bases of graduate production theses, and serve as integral parts of the graduate educational theatre program at such major institutions as Yale, Harvard, The University of Washington, The University of Iowa, and The University of North Carolina.

The benefits which accrue from the presentation of an original script cannot and should not be minimized. The


²By "original" the director means: A new play; one that has not been produced, written by one author, and subject to copyright.
emergence of innumerable creative possibilities, the encouragement of young playwrights to write for the educational stage, and an added freshness and vitality the theatre receives are most apparent. More particularly, the creative process inherent in the directing and producing of an original script affords the creative artist the ability to take repeated advantage of the experience as it develops; to use each completed step as a fresh vantage point from which to plan the next move.  

Statement of the Problem

The problem in presenting an original script as a stage production lies in the establishing of workable patterns of interpretation and actions, all of which are consistent and compatible with the central theme and idea of the script. This task generates a particular responsibility and challenge in that the experiment is happening for the first time.

The script of *Burnt Offering* creates special problems in that it contains very little indication of setting, description of character, or stage direction. The playwright has purposely left these details to the imagination and creative ability of a director.

It will, therefore, become the task of the director in the premier production to exhibit his training, knowledge,

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creativity, and, it is hoped, his ability at artist compromise, in a joint effort toward excellence with the playwright.

Basic Considerations

The final decision to direct and produce an original play is based on a number of very important and necessary considerations. Because of the extensive demand for creativity and ingenuity when dealing with an original play, the director must realize the limits of his abilities and the extent of his background and experience in the theatre. It would be absurd for a director to accept the responsibility of directing an original play if he lacked the self-confidence, training, and artistic discipline required for a successful production.

Assuming that the director has an adequate amount of self-confidence acquired from directing a number of other plays, let us discuss the need for background and discipline.

Whereas a play that has been produced many times possesses established guidelines for the interpretation and execution of the author's style and intent, as well as setting and character, this original play has few guidelines. It is up to the director to determine and create them. In order to fulfill this obligation, he must have a storehouse to draw from. He must be familiar with various styles of playwrighting in order to determine the particular style inherent in the script with which he is dealing. If the play
is "regional drama," it is valuable to have a knowledge of other regional dramas and the typical or unique characters they present. In the case of interpreting *Burnt Offering* as "regional drama," the director drew on his experience with the dramas of such regional playwrights as Paul Green and Ramsey Yelvington. Particular plays by these authors are similar to *Burnt Offering* in dialogue, setting, and character.

The knowledge of a wide range of scenic styles is also necessary to the director of an original play. It is especially gratifying to the director if he can design a setting that is as original as the script. This usually requires a degree of eclecticism that can only be fostered by adequate training in set design and stage lighting. It is important to note, however, that no matter how inventive the director aspires to be, he must remember that his primary responsibility is to say in the production what the playwright has said in the script, and for this reason he must choose a style of presentation that will reflect and be compatible with the style inherent in the dialogue.

Artistic discipline, a coveted quality among "play doctors," is especially important to the director of the original play. The establishing of workable patterns of action require a substantial amount of experimentation. Many avenues of the original script will require exploration
in order to arrive at the desired interpretations. Without patience, organization, and discipline, the director can become weary and stifle the enthusiastic attitudes of actors who are anxious but sometime skeptical about the worth and creditability of their endeavor. Discipline also manifests its worth in efforts at artistic compromise between director and playwright. If the playwright is available for confrontation, during the rehearsal sequence, he may question a particular interpretation or action which in turn will have to be settled through artistic compromise. Artistic compromise is derived from a mutual respect the director has for the playwright. This respect should be established early and must be one of the basic considerations before deciding to direct an original play.

No matter how qualified a director may be, his talents will be wasted if he chooses to direct a worthless script. With all due respect to young, untried playwrights, one must admit that some of them simply do not possess the ability or technique to write for the stage. Therefore, in an effort to provide a profitable experience for the director, actors, and the audience, a careful examination of the original script is in order. In other words, the directing of a particular original script must be worth the doing.

The criteria for judging an original script is inherent in two major questions: What is the playwright trying to do,
and how well has he accomplished it? The first question is answered in terms of substance and form, the second in technique. In evaluating substance, form, and technique, more questions must follow. Does the play have a dominate theme? What is the playwright trying to make the audience feel or understand? Does the play have an aesthetic style in its attempt to suggest, imitate, or represent life? Is the development of plot logical in its sequence? Are the characters sufficiently developed, and finally, how well does the playwright blend the theme of the play with the sequence of events? These questions must be answered positively, prior to rendering the original script worthy of stage production.

In spite of a competent director and a worthwhile script, the production of an original play might still be a gamble. There is no guarantee that an audience will accept it. However, if the director has been diligent and honest in the consideration of his own worth and that of the script, he can at least feel confident that the odds for having a successful production are in his favor.

The decision to direct and produce Burnt Offering, an original play by Beverly McIntosh, was made only after the director had carefully considered the prerequisites discussed in the previous paragraphs.


5Ibid., p. 30.
CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS FOR PRODUCTION

Analysis, as it is used here, simply means finding out what the play is all about. Play analysis is absolutely necessary for understanding the author's intent, as well as supplying a springboard for the establishment of workable patterns of action in the production. However, a word of explanation should be offered at this point. In an effort to analyze Burnt Offering, it was not the director's intention to "pick" the play to pieces and chance creating values that were not in the play to begin with. On the contrary, the director analyzed the play only to an extent which would enable him to have a sound notion of the playwright's motives. Rather than going into rehearsal with resolved ideas about the play and its characters, the director chose to allow the script to develop its emphasis and dramatic effectiveness through the experimentation and progression of rehearsals.

The analysis offered in this chapter then, is a representation of the technique and approach as described above. It includes a synopsis of the play, and a discussion of environmental facts, dramatic action, and character.
Synopsis of the Play

Old Mrs. Kavinsky has a creek on her land that is the envy of every farmer in the community, especially in light of an existing drought. As a means of obtaining her land and the creek, Jim Pruitt sets fire to his own farm in a plan to blame it on Mrs. Kavinsky and thus receive her land by just compensation. When young Joe Kasper admits to causing the fire accidentally, Jim's plan suddenly changes. Joe's father, A. D., accepting the responsibility for his son's deed, agrees to pay back everything that Jim lost. However, this is not enough to satisfy Jim's greed. His unscrupulous behavior will stop at nothing. With the help of Judge Waters, Jim initiates a plot that will get A. D.'s land too. The plot is based on the assumption that Mrs. Kavinsky's land, according to an old land charter, really belongs to Pruitt through his wife, Helen, and, that in an attempt to save her land and rid herself of Pruitt, Mrs. Kavinsky paid the Kaspers to let Joe set the Pruitt's fire. To support the plot, Pruitt and Waters need to produce evidence that the Kaspers and Mrs. Kavinsky are in "cahoots." Ellen Kasper's frequent visits to Mrs. Kavinsky, out of pity for her situation (she is widowed) serve as the basis for Pruitt's accusations. Joe finds out about the plot and in a desperate attempt, which ends in failure, tries to persuade his mother to break off the relationship. Not knowing where to turn for help, Joe confides in Helen Pruitt. Twisted by internal desires to
please Jim, her pa (now dead, though she has never allowed herself to admit that he is dead), and herself, Helen persuades Joe to set fire to the Kavinsky place in order to disprove the liaison between his folks and Mrs. Kavinsky. Joe agrees and the result ends in disaster and irony. Joe is punished for his deed by being sent to a reformatory. It is Joe Kasper who must suffer and make atonement for a deed that was born and nurtured in the actions of his elders.

Environmental Facts

All plays establish a particular time and locale for the action to take place, as well as an economic, political, social, and religious environment. These elements are called the facts of the play because whether the playwright has been historically accurate or not, they remain fixed throughout the play.¹

**Burnt Offering** is set in a small rural community in North Texas. The time is late July in the summer of 1960. The population consists of approximately 400 people, almost all of whom make their living by farming and raising a few cows. Except for a handful of young married couples who lack initiative, or who like the close company of their parents, the populace is composed of the older, established people, and the children. Some reside in the community because they never had enough money or education to move, while others

live there because they possess a strong loyalty to the land and believe in setting down roots. In either case they are there, they know about each other; and it is out of their beliefs, desires, and attitudes that the dramatic action of the play evolves.

The community's political, economic, social, and religious environment can be summarized in one word, conservative. They are tight with their money, believe in the guaranteed constitutional rights for all white protestants, and possess a strong sense of justice. Most of the people interpret the Bible literally (an eye for an eye), and the moral training that has grown out of its teaching is especially evident in the young.

The climate plays a vital role in the lives of the people, since most of them engage in working land. However, the influence of the weather conditions in Burnt Offering go far beyond the drying up of ponds and parching the soil; the heat creates a persistent lowering mood that affects the people's logic and thinking. It acts as a flint which ignites emotion, passion, and injustice.

Dramatic Action

In order to get at the basic forces at work in Burnt Offering, the seven scenes, which constitute the total action, were divided into smaller segments of action called units. The word unit is Stanislavsky's word for a division in
dramatic action. Although the larger units (scenes) are more easily perceived, the consideration of the smaller units (conflict or accord between characters) is necessary. This consideration is based on the premise that all action is reciprocal and that it is the function of the director to see that appropriate reciprocation takes place with the actors. The analysis then, attempts to search out the units of conflict within each scene and provide a basis for the motivating force.

Scene 1

Scene 1 opens with action between A. D. and Ellen Kasper. The dialogue establishes the seriousness of the drought, but more importantly it establishes the rapport between A. D. and Ellen as husband and wife. There is a great bond of admiration and devotion between them, but it is not evidenced verbally. It is felt, but not spoken. This absence of visible affection in their relationship is consistent throughout the play.

The entrance of Joe Kasper brings with it a major conflict that repeats itself in subsequent scenes. It is a conflict between Joe and his father. An important factor to note in the relationship is the degree of liberty that Joe

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3 Francis Hodge, Play Directing, Analysis Communication and Style, p. 36.
takes with A. D. It appears that Joe deliberately attempts to antagonize his father. A. D. in turn responds, but in a manner that suggests an obstacle in the way of more positive reprimand. In order to understand this conflict, it is important to know that Joe is not A. D.'s real son, but his adopted son. This fact, however, is not made known until Scene 3. Unable to possess the admiration a real son has for his real father, and knowing that A. D. will never totally accept him, Joe finds it easier to admire other men of the community, Jim Pruitt for instance. Ironically it is Jim Pruitt, not A. D. who indirectly causes Joe's misfortune.

**Scene 2**

Scene 2 introduces all but one of the play's characters. Jim Pruitt's house and barn have caught fire and burned. Jim and Helen, having no place to stay, retreat to the Kaspers' along with the others who were helping to put out the fire. Helen Pruitt enters with Lou Ann Tate and Ethel Waters. Helen speaks. What she says establishes two important conflicts which develop later in the play: the conflict between Helen and Jim, prompted by the memory of Helen's pa (now dead), and the conflict between Mrs. Kavinsky and the rest of the community. As a recluse, Mrs. Kavinsky is vulnerable to gossip and is consequently blamed for the misfortune in the community. Appropriately enough, Mrs. Kavinsky never appears
in the play, but her relationship with Ellen Kasper instigates the shattering climax.

When the men enter, Jim Pruitt is observed for the first time. His posture, facial expression, and general physical appearance generates a driving force that is echoed throughout the entire play. The spite Jim has for Mrs. Kavinsky is clearly evidenced, and motivates his conflict with Joe, A. D., and Jud. At the roots of the conflicts lie the supposition and conjecture of Jim Pruitt. In order to understand the basis of the conflicts, observe the following excerpts from Jim's lines.4

Joe: "What's justice got to do with your fire? It was an accident."

Jim: "Who says it was an accident? Maybe I say it was intentional."

A. D.: "Now wait a minute, Jim, you're talking about arson."

Jim: "I don't care what you call it, I say someone started that fire and someone's gonna pay."

Jud: "That's strong talk when ya don't know how it started."

Jim: "It's that damn woman. She's got me. My barn, my house. She'll get the land now."

Joe: "Mrs. Kavinsky?"

Jim: "Say, you're getting smart. There's got to

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4 Beverly McIntosh, Burnt Offering, unpublished drama, Department of Speech and Drama, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas, 1970, pp.66-68. Exists only in manuscript. Reprinted in this thesis, Chapter IV. Page references are to this printing.
be a reason for my barn burning and she's the only one who stood to profit by it."

The conflict between Jim Pruitt and his neighbors comes to a head later in the scene but not for the same reason as described previously. The conflict in this unit is sparked by the mention of Helen's pa. It is introduced by Lou Ann, and arbitrarily involves Jud who comes to Lou Ann's defense. Further conflict over Helen's pa ensues between Helen and Jim, but does not climax until Scene 4.

The next unit of action considered in Scene 2 is between A. D. and Joe. The conflict is motivated by Joe's confession that he might accidentally have caused Pruitt's fire, but graduates to one based on Joe's being A. D.'s adopted son and A. D.'s inability to accept what Joe has done because of it. The height of their confrontation is displayed in the following lines.5

A. D.: "I didn't say that. You made a mistake and you'll own up to it. Just don't expect to get away without paying."

Joe: "But you just said you'd have to pay."

A. D.: "You, me, what's the difference? The day I took you into this house I made myself responsible for you. How was I to know something like this would happen."

Joe: "I guess if you'd known you wouldn't took me in."

A. D.: "I'd a took you if you had purple skin. It's not taking you I regret. It's seeing you raised a fool that hurts."

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5 Beverly McIntosh, *Burnt Offering*, pp. 104-106.
Joe: "I never asked you to take me. You can give me back anytime you want. I'll move in with Jud tonight."

The final major conflict in Scene 2 occurs when Jim discovers that it was Joe who caused his fire. The basis of the conflict, however, is not Jim's anger in regard to his loss, but the fact that he will have to change his plan for getting Kavinsky's land.

**Scene 3**

Scene 3 contains two major units of action. The first centers around what the people of the community are saying about Joe, and how A. D. and Ellen react to it. The action is significant because it presents A. D. and Ellen in conflict. Contrary to her passive and conciliatory attitude in Scene 1 and 2, Ellen becomes defensive and lashes out at A. D. for his lack of support. She does this primarily out of parental instinct. However, one cannot discount the effects of recent events, nor can one overlook the effect of the heat. Ellen illustrates its effect when she says, "A. D. I'm sorry. I don't know what's got into me. I guess it's this crazy heat. I'm saying stuff I never said before. Stuff I don't mean. I just don't know what to make of it."\(^6\)

The second unit of action in Scene 3 is between Joe and Helen. Helen has come to apologize to Joe for the way Jim's been treating him. What transpires during their brief

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 132.
conversation, the looks, the pauses, and the physical attitudes, are extremely indicative of why Helen is able to persuade Joe to set the Kavinsky fire in Scene 6. Joe confides in Helen and expresses a great admiration for her when he says to Ellen, "You know, I feel sorry for her, but I like her too. I can talk to her. She listens good and talks good too. She's different from everybody else. It's like she cares." 7

Scene 4

Scene 4 presents three units of action. The first unit displays a conflict between Tatum and Judge Waters, the second is between Jud Tate and Joe, and the third, which is perhaps the largest display of verbal conflict and reciprocal action in the entire play, is between Jim and Helen.

The conflict between Tatum and Waters is precipitated primarily by a difference in idea and attitude the two men hold in regard to A. D. While Tatum admires A. D. for his intelligence and concern for the community, Waters despises him for it. Waters, however, is motivated both externally and internally: externally because A. D. is held in higher esteem by the community, and internally because of his mutual desire with Jim Pruitt to attain Kasper's land.

The minor conflict between Jud and Joe is basically motivated by Jud's feeling of superiority over Joe. Jud can

7Ibid., p. 146.
"talk smart" because he is not in Joe's shoes. Jud, who is "raking Joe over the coals" for getting involved with old lady Kavinsky, rarely gets a chance to exercise any authority and takes advantage of this particular situation. Although the conflict is very brief, it is very important because Joe interprets Jud's attitude toward him as being representative of the attitude shared by the other citizens.

The third unit of action in Scene 4 is the most dramatic and involves Jim and Helen. The conflict lays bare the unscrupulous behavior of Jim Pruitt and the disgust Helen feels for him as a man. In order to appreciate the extent of their emotion, Helen's motive must be realized as well as Jim's constant awareness of it. The basis of the conflict is brought to light in the final speech of the following dialogue.  

Helen: "I'm not going to let this happen."
Jim: "You can't stop it."
Helen: "I can and I will. My folks been decent as long as I can remember. We weren't perfect but we weren't blood suckers. Why'd my pa ever let me marry you?"
Jim: "Cause your family was old and stale and needed some new blood. He knew I was a man of opportunity."
Helen: "He didn't know nothing. He got bad blood and I'm getting rid of it. You aren't gonna do this to those people. They're my friends and I'm gonna stop you."
Jim: "How?"
Helen: "I got family. They'll help. My family's been respected in these parts..."

8Ibid., pp. 186-188.
Jim: "Hell the only family you got above ground is that lazy brother of yours and he wouldn't do nothing for you. You tell anything and you lose all you got. You lose that reputation you dreamed up, that house that's gonna be rebuilt and you get stuck with nothing but me."

Helen: "My pa's alive and you know it."

Jim: "Yeah, I know it. His ghost comes around once a day saying, 'look what ya haven't done. Look at the money you haven't made.' You keep saying the same thing, that I'm not the man your pa was."

Scene 5

Scene 5 epitomizes the height to which the conflict has risen in the Kasper household. It has even manifested itself in the relationship between Joe and Ellen. Motivated by a genuine concern for his parents' livelihood, Joe pleads with his mother to terminate her visits with Mrs. Kavinsky. Ellen will not hear of it. Although she is aware of the plot to get their land, she will not compromise what she considers a moral obligation to a person less fortunate than she. The conflict which is motivated by Ellen's attitude is demonstrated in the following dialogue.9

A. D.: "... Joe's right, we can't give 'em grounds for acting. We gotta sit tight and wait for the rain."

Ellen: "The rain! You think the rain'll heal everything. Well, it won't. My pansy plot is gone, dead gone because of a silly piano. No rain's gonna bring that or Pruitt's barn or anything back. You're a fool for harping on that rain. It'll never come."

A. D.: "You're a bigger fool if you think we can sit at ease till it comes."

Ellen: "All I'm saying is that I'm gonna keep on living my life as best as I can, rain or no rain, Pruitt or no Pruitt. I haven't got much left but I do have my faith, and it tells me that to hurt that old woman now'd be a sin. I don't know. Sometimes I think I see myself in her. Old, alone, listening to that phone ring, knowing it's never for you. That'll be me someday and I'd need someone, something to keep me going. It's not right leaving her up there alone."

Joe: "But pa's right. If you go visiting her, you'll ruin it all and they'll take all we got."

Ellen: "I haven't got anything left for 'em to take."

Joe: "Ma, listen to reason."

Ellen: "Reason! You're taking your pa's side and sounding just like him. Reason and rain are long gone. You just leave me alone, both of you. I'll use my own reason. I'm not gonna let that little lady down. I'll go see her everyday if I take the notion."

Scene 6

The units of action in Scene 6 revolve around Joe and Helen. Unable to arouse his parents to take definite action, and feeling an immense sense of guilt for his family's predicament, Joe confides in Helen for consolation and advice. Helen, who has reached the height of her anxiety over the dire realization of Jim's greed and worthlessness, urges Joe to set fire to Kavinsky's house as a means of reconciliation. However, Helen's motivation is more complex than it appears. It is true that Helen's concern for the Kaspers' livelihood prompts her to incite Joe to setting the fire in
order to alleviate the suspicion of a relationship between Mrs. Kavinsky and the Kaspers. This is the external motive. The internal motive is prompted by Helen's memory of her father. She envisions Joe as an instrument that can stop Jim. Victory over her husband is more important to Helen than saving the Kaspers. It is the latter motive that actually drives Helen to persuade Joe to set Kavinsky's fire.

The conflict Joe encounters in Scene 6 is a conflict within himself. He must decide what is more important, living up to his moral training—他知道 what Helen is suggesting is wrong—or saving his parents from ruin. Although the decision is made quickly, a visible effect of the two forces at work in Joe is apparent throughout the entire scene.

**Scene 7**

The concluding action in Scene 7 is of course the revelation of all that has transpired. In a desperate attempt to save Joe, Helen relates the shocking truths about Jim's plot, and her effort to reconcile it. Unfortunately for Joe, this does not change matters. Joe set the Kavinsky fire and Joe must be punished. In spite of the lies and deceit of his elders, Joe Kasper becomes a scapegoat, a sacrificial atonement for a community in their effort to deal with a hard drought.
Character

It is obvious that many character traits and qualities are divulged through the analysis of dramatic action. This is as it should be. However, in an effort to unify the traits for each of the principal characters, a listing of statements and attitudes which describe the desire, will, moral stance, and decorum of each will now be recorded.

Desire (what the character wants most)\textsuperscript{11}

A. D. Kasper.--Desires to solve the problems of the community.

Ellen Kasper.--Desires for A. D. and Joe to get along. Also desires to exercise her moral obligations.

Joe Kasper.--Desires to be accepted by his father.

Helen Pruitt.--Desires approval for her marriage to Jim.

Jim Pruitt.--Desires power and material possessions.

Will (strength for obtaining desires)\textsuperscript{12}

A. D. Kasper.--Resolute, cautious, realistic, frank, intelligent.

\textsuperscript{10}Francis Hodge, *Play Directing, Analysis Communication and Style*, p. 44.

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
Ellen Kasper.--uncompromising, trusting, temperate, patient.

Joe Kasper.--candid, argumentative, insolent.

Helen Pruitt.--desperate, proud, impulsive.

Jim Pruitt.--boorish, spitful, contemptuous, greedy, irate.

Moral Stance (values)\textsuperscript{13}

A. D. Kasper.--honest, truthful.

Ellen Kasper.--honest, truthful, kind, gentle, reverent.

Joe Kasper.--honest, truthful.

Helen Pruitt.--Christian, but impaired by passion and hysteria.

Jim Pruitt.--unscrupulous, dishonest, revengeful.

Decorum (outward physical appearance)\textsuperscript{14}

A. D. Kasper.--A. D. is about 45-50 years old. He is a big man but not fat. He stands erect and speaks with authority. Although he has a rustic look, he is always clean shaven. He wears blue jeans, a plaid shirt, and a cap. He

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.
takes large and heavy steps when he walks. He is almost self-conscious of his size.

Ellen Kasper.--Ellen is about 35, and medium size. She has a look of weariness and exhaustion. Her facial expressions display seriousness and deep concern. She has auburn hair which is pulled back in a bun. She wears a simple house dress and white sandals.

Joe Kasper.--Joe is 15 years old. He is skinny and has long hair that keeps getting in his face. He wears a T-shirt, blue jeans with holes in the knees, and tan desert boots. He is cute but mischievous. His movement is brisk and usually eager.

Helen Pruitt.--Helen is a small woman with a wild and frantic look about her. She is usually very nervous and tense. This is demonstrated by her chronic pulling at the handkerchief she carries. She has short hair and wears a dress that always looks a little too dressy for the occasion.

Jim Pruitt.--Jim looks like a weasel--small, thin and dirty. He has black, curly hair and smokes a lot. He wears construction boots, khaki pants and shirt with the sleeves rolled up to the elbow. He is very dark and slumps over when he walks.
CHAPTER III
PRODUCTION PROBLEMS

As previously stated in Chapter I, the absence of established patterns of interpretation and action constitute a major task for the director of an original play. The specific problems encountered by the director of *Burnt Offering* are discussed in this chapter of the thesis, and appear under four major headings: stage direction and setting, structure and content of the script, characterizations, and staging.

Stage Direction and Setting
The script for *Burnt Offering* provided the director with a minimum amount of stage direction, and indication of setting. These omissions would seem to indicate an inadequacy on the part of the playwright. However, this is not the case. While many playwrights include very explicit stage directions and description of setting in their scripts, there are those who, because of a limited knowledge of technical theatre, concentrate solely on the dialogue. These playwrights are content to entrust the technical aspects of the script to the imagination and creative ability of a director. Such was the case with *Burnt Offering*. Nevertheless,
the absence of stage direction and setting constituted a problem, and was dealt with accordingly.

As a means of giving movement and life to the existing dialogue, the director found it necessary to determine the physical appearance and arrangement of the setting. This was done on the premise that the physical environment shapes the actions of the characters, and must therefore be created first. The idea is based on a concept advocated by Andre Antoine, first significant French director and founder of the renowned Theatre Libre.\(^1\) In describing his directorial procedures, Antoine explained:

First of all, I found it useful, in fact, indispensable, carefully to create the setting and the environment, without worrying at all about the events that were to occur on the stage. For it is the environment that determines the movements of the characters, not the movement of the characters that determines the environment.\(^2\)

Analyzing the dialogue was the initial step in determining physical environment since all playwrights either consciously or subconsciously write their settings into the play's dialogue. The major difficulty in this instance was not a matter of determining locale, but rather a matter of determining the appearance of the locale, and choosing a particular scenic style to represent it. After careful

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examination, it was decided that a "simplified realistic" setting would be the most practical for the particular theatre to be used, and at the same time best serve to reflect the dialogue and project the mood and spirit of the play. The concept of "simplified realism" as a scenic style is presented in the following quotation, and describes accurately the setting which was created for *Burnt Offering*.

Simplified realism is an effort to use the advantages of realism, but to simplify them so that the setting meets more accepted aesthetic standards. In the simplified setting no effort is made to fool the audience. If some detail is unconvincing, it is eliminated rather than to continue to search for a more convincing substitute. Some evidence of unreality may appear which is not a distraction, but an admission that the setting is only an illusion of reality. The goal of the artist is a suggestion of the exact locale rather than representation.³

In the manner described, the set was designed and built. The set designs, and the arrangement of the stage properties, are chronicled in the appendix portion of the thesis. It is important to note that the director insisted on having a fully constructed set with exact stage properties prior to the blocking of movement and action. With a completed set, the characters could begin to move in their new environment. The charting of the movement could then be accomplished, thus producing a complete script with stage direction and setting.

The blocking of movement proved to be a long and arduous process. Many hours of experimentation transpired before the exact movements were acquired. Upon the insistence of the director, each movement must re-create and sustain the "stage pictures" which are so vital to the visual aesthetics of the play. The movement must also enhance the dialogue and, therefore, be extensive but varied. The problem was augmented by the fact that the action was staged in three-quarter round. This necessitated the director's viewing each movement from three sides before it could be finalized. When at last the most effective movement was initiated and the desired stage picture accomplished, the action was chronicled in the script. The results of this endeavor are included opposite the script in Chapter IV.

Structure and Content of the Script

The problems in the structure and content of the script did not appear until late in the rehearsals. However, as the play began to develop continuity, careful observation pointed to certain parts of the plot that were illogical in their development.

The first error in structure is evidenced in the relationship between Mrs. Kavinsky and the Kaspers. It is implied that the Kaspers are in "cahoots" with Mrs. Kavinsky and that this relationship is the entire basis for Jim Pruitt getting the Kaspers' land. Yet in the script, there is in-
A second instance of illogical plot development is the ease with which Joe Kasper is persuaded to set the second fire. Joe is motivated by the fact that his parents' land will be taken, but this alone does not seem sufficient. It also seems unlikely that a boy could so easily reject the strong moral training which led him to confess the first burning.

Another fault in the script appears in the dramatic action between Helen and Jim Pruitt. The problem here is that their conflict goes unresolved. After Jim leaves and says he is through with Helen, what happens to her? Where does she go? What does she do? It seems very unlikely that she would stay in the town or even the county, and yet this is what the script suggests.

What appears to be a final error in the script is the lack of emotional climax in the final scene. The scene builds to the point where everyone knows that it was not Joe who set the first fire and that it was Helen's persuasiveness that caused him to set the second fire. Joe must nonetheless be punished and shoulder all the blame. He is torn from his mother's arms and carted off to a reform school. In order for this scene to have the impact it must have, the dialogue should be such so as to provoke high and intense emotion. In its original state, the script simply did not generate the necessary dialogue and consequently the play had a weak ending.
The inadequacies mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs were corrected to a great extent by the playwright. The dialogue in each case was rewritten and appears in Chapter IV on the pages opposite the original dialogue.

Characterization

Deciding what the characters in *Burnt Offering* should look and act like presented a substantial problem. It is reasonably safe to assume that this is true because physical and behavioral qualities become very important in portraying the "folk" of a particular region or community.

The determining of physical and behavioral traits in the characters required many readings of the script and intense study of the dialogue. After repeated readings of the script, a vision of each character was acquired. During the auditions, an effort was made to search out in the readers the desired and envisioned characteristics.

It is obvious that the search for exact physical and emotional characteristics for each role cannot always be employed with perfect results. Having to audition a large number of people and using more than the usual amount of time for casting are among its greatest disadvantages. However, this approach to casting was utilized in *Burnt Offering* and served as an invaluable technique for solving the problem of displaying accurate physical representations in all of the characters.
As rehearsals progressed, another very annoying problem became apparent. It occurred first in the character of Jim Pruitt and then spread to the characters of Ethel and Lou Ann. The problem was to avoid portraying caricatures. Difficulties began when the actors dwelled on a particular character trait and overemphasized or exaggerated that quality. Its effect was totally disastrous. The characters whose actions and dialogue were to be interpreted as serious became comical and lost their impact. A constant effort was made to create an awareness of the problem and work toward its elimination. This was accomplished by repeated discussions and analysis of character, supplemented by constant reminders to actors not to "force" their characters. In addition, the actors were encouraged to portray the characters honestly and to think of them not as types, but as real people whose traits and qualities were natural and common.

Staging

_Burnt Offering_ is set in two different locales, requiring two completely different settings. The following is a scene synopsis which demonstrates the sequence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene 1</th>
<th>Scene 2</th>
<th>Scene 3</th>
<th>Scene 4</th>
<th>Scene 5</th>
<th>Scene 6</th>
<th>Scene 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Kasper Farm</td>
<td>The Kasper Farm</td>
<td>The Kasper Farm</td>
<td>Tatum's Store</td>
<td>The Kasper Farm</td>
<td>Tatum's Store</td>
<td>The Kasper Farm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As one can readily see beginning with Scene 3, the set changes four times. Under ordinary circumstances this would not present a problem. However, Burnt Offering was produced in a studio theatre in the absence of an act curtain, fly system, and adequate wing space; three factors conducive to conventional scene change. Thus, it became necessary to design a method of scene change that would be efficient in time, space, and manpower. Also, it must be done in view of the audience, and must not break the continuity between scenes.

To facilitate a scene change such as the one described above, a revolving stage which would house two complete but different sets, and revolve manually, was designed and built. The sets would be arranged back to back and could be changed by a half revolution of the stage.

The revolving stage was actually two separate stages that were joined together. One stage, which was elevated approximately two feet, served as the front porch of the Kasper home, while the other stage, elevated only six inches, represented Tatum's store. The porch area consisted of two units forming a stage twelve feet across and six feet in depth. The floor space in front and on each side of the porch represented the Kaspers' front yard. The store area consisted of three units forming a stage fourteen feet across and eight feet in depth. Casters were attached at calculated
positions underneath the various units. When the porch and store stages were joined to form one independent unit, the center of the unit was determined and a pivot mechanism installed to insure accurate revolution. Detailed drawings of the revolving stage and pivot mechanism are included in the appendix of the thesis. A dividing wall, which included a double-faced door was constructed between the two stages, and served as an entrance and background for both sets. Its construction is also included in the appendix.

The construction and operation of the revolving stage produced two major problems. First, because the stage was comprised of smaller "stock" units, strength and stability were necessary factors. Also, since the dividing wall was erected perpendicularly to the stage, it too, created a problem of stability, especially when the stage revolved. Secondly, the revolving stage created a noise factor. This was primarily due to the large number of casters used, and the concrete floor of the studio theatre. In dealing with the stability problem, all possible construction was carried out using carriage bolts and lock washers instead of nails to insure maximum strength. Special attention was given to the elimination of space in all joints, so as to decrease play and leeway. With a strong and stable stage, the noise was the only remaining problem. It was solved by laying a huge section of indoor-outdoor carpet for the stage to revolve on. With the problems of staging solved, the
director graduated to the task of building the sets within the limits of the newly constructed stages.
CHAPTER IV

THE SCRIPT AND PRODUCTION NOTES

Every play is born in action; and when it is produced on stage, an accurate account of the play's mechanics should be recorded. In this segment of the thesis, such an account is chronicled.

Included in this chapter are the script,¹ and the production notes as originated by the director. The script appears on the right side of the book, being entered as it was originally written. This allows the reader to observe the work as it existed prior to the alterations in stage directions and dialogue. The rationale for these alterations is discussed in a previous chapter. On the pages directly opposite the script are the production notes. These notations are numbered and correspond to the numbers which appear in the script. The notations deal primarily with blocking cues, additions and modifications in stage directions, and alterations in dialogue.

In addition, the production notes include diagrams which illustrate the movement of the actors. It should be noted that the X's which appear in the diagrams indicate

¹The script of Burnt Offering, which appears in Chapter IV, is reprinted from the original manuscript and, therefore, contains minor errors in spelling and punctuation.
termination of an actor's movement, and display the stage pictures that were created.
Blocking Key

Production Cues

Blocking Cues and Alterations in Stage Direction
Alterations in Dialogue

Stage Directions

X--cross, crosses, crossing C--center
U--upstage L--stageleft
D--downstage R--stageright

Diagram Blocking Symbols

↑--direction of movement
JT--Jud Tate
AD--A. D. Kasper
LA--Lou Ann Tate
EK--Ellen Kasper
W--Judge Waters
JK--Joe Kasper
EW--Ethel Waters
JP--Jim Pruitt
T--Jim Tatum
HP--Helen Pruitt

Stage Diagrams

The front porch and yard of the Kasper home. Scenes: I, II, III, V, VII. Tatum's Store
Scenes: IV, VI.
1A. Alteration in stage direction:
His wife is seated on the porch DR, with a bowl of snap beans when the phone rings.

1B. A.D. enter DR of yard, X to porch and sitting on steps.

2. A.D. wiping neck & setting his cap down on steps.

3. A.D. putting his cap back on.
The scene is the Kasper farm. A. D. Kasper has just returned from the country store. He has learned that several of his friends face ruin. He views himself as the community peacemaker and has retreated to his farm to work things out. He and his wife Ellen are sitting on the porch sipping lemonade when the phone rings.

1A

A.D.

1B

Is that going to be for us?

Ellen

No, two longs and one short--that should be Lou Ann Tate calling Ethel Waters.

A.D.

2

What tells you that?

Ellen

Well, that's Ethel's ring. If you and Jud left Tatum's at the same time, why, he's had time to get home, give Lou Ann the bad news, and she's bound to be itching to tell it.

A.D.

I guess you've got some way of knowing that it's bad news she's telling.

Ellen

Well, good news would 'ave held another thirty minutes. Besides, when you come home and all's in place, you hang your hat inside. Now days like today, you put your hat on the floor where you're sitting and that means bad news. Between your hat and the ringing of that phone, I always know when somethin's in the wind.

A.D.

3

I'll have to remember that next time and surprise ya.
Ellen

You may surprise me but the phone'll remain true. It tells me everything except the facts.

A.D.

I suppose that's what's called a hint, but it's wasted. I'm out of facts today too.

Ellen

I didn't really want cut and dried facts, I just want some honest details. I know what everyone's saying, but you're about the only one who really knows what's happening. Please tell me.

A.D.

(Getting aggravated) What do you want to know? That the banks put off Pruitt's note a third time? Jud says the Barkers can't get what they paid for their beef, and they're losing $900. People down at the Methodist church planning on firing the minister, seems like he ain't prayed hard enough about this drought. There's more--a whole string of bad news.

Ellen

(Defensive) Well, why'd you make me ask about it? Why didn't you just tell me?

A.D.

I didn't think you'd want 'a hear those kind of details. I thought you'd at least leave this place untouched by all this trouble.

Ellen

A.D., it's not like I brought all those troubles in and perched 'em on the furniture. I just wanted to know if all those rumors were true. I just wanted to know if my neighbors were gonna make it.
4  Ellen X from DR chair on porch to DL bench in yard.

5A  Eileen X to L of A.D.
A.D.

I'm sorry Ellen. I'm just so tired of trying to find the answers for everybody's trouble. The only answer is rain, but it dudn't look like that answer'll be given. That means I've got to find an answer that'll do.

(Phone rings three shorts and one long.)

Ellen

Now Lou Ann's calling Helen.

A.D.

Don't you feel kind of left out?

Ellen

No, the girls know I depend on you for my information. I mean, what's the use of calling me. I know more'n they do. Besides, I haven't got time to listen to rumors.

A.D.

You mean you don't listen ever?

Ellen

(Hedging) Well, I do have one question. Is it as bad as Lou Ann claims?

A.D.

That depends on what Lou Ann claims. She's been known to confuse the facts sometimes. I wouldn't want to call it lying--just confusion.

Ellen

She says Jim and Helen Pruitt's pond's going dry.
5B Omit

6 Joe X up steps & putting fishing pole in corner UR, then X to DR of porch.

7 A.D. turning back to Joe

8 Ellen X to bench and sitting.

9 Joe at DR of porch.

10 Joe X to DL of porch.

11 Joe hanging on porch column DL
(Joe enters from stageright. He has fishing gear and a string of fish. He sprawls out on the swing to rest and hear the news.)

Joe

6 Pruitt's pond gone dry?

A.D.

7 No! Your mother was just saying that Lou Ann was doing a little exaggerating.

Ellen

8 A.D., I just asked if it was true.

Joe

9 When'd their pond go dry?

A.D.

Look boy, no one's pond has gone dry. We were just talking about some gossip.

Joe

10 Ma, when did Lou Ann say that Pruitts' pond went dry?

A.D.

It's not dry, it's just low. Lou Ann's just doing a little belly-aching. She hopes their pond didn't go dry first. She'll be madder'n hell if anyone else's goes dry afore hers.

Joe

11 You don't like her much do ya?
12. Joe X to DR of porch sitting in chair.

13. Ellen X to UR of porch, picking up fish bucket. Joe rises, puts his foot on chair DR of porch.

14. A.D. rises and X to Joe at DR of porch.
A.D.

I didn't say I didn't like her. I just know her. You can know a person and still like 'em.

Joe

Well, I know her and I don't like her. Do you like old lady Kavinsky?

A.D.

Now what kind of fool question is that? You know we don't even know her.

Joe

Jim Pruitt says you like her. He says he bets you could be a nigger lover since you like Catholics.

Ellen

Joe! You didn't need to repeat that.

Joe

It's true. He said it today.

Ellen

(Trying to help Joe before his father gets angry) Here, let me take those fish. I can clean 'em and fin 'em for supper. (She exits to house.)

A.D.

Jim Pruitt may've said it, but I'm no nigger lover and no Catholic lover. All I did was tell Jim Pruitt that he was a fool for blaming all his troubles on some old lady.

Joe

Jim says the bank's gonna foreclose on her.
15 A.D. X to DL of yard.

16 Joe X to DL of porch.

17 A.D. X to Joe at DL of porch.
Change Lost Creek to Willow Creek.
A.D.

And I suppose you believe him?

Joe

Ah, I don't know. It'd be good to get rid of her. We'd get to use that creek.

A.D.

Just think about what you're saying. She's the only person in town except us that's got money. She didn't even owe the bank anything, how are they going to Foreclose?

Joe

Well, she's gotta owe somebody somethin'.

A.D.

Good luck findin' em.

Joe

I still say it'd be good to get rid of her.

A.D.

You'll say anything someone else has said first. Why you listen to that Jim Pruitt I'll never know.

Joe

He's not the only one that said it. Old Judge Waters wants that creek too. He's up at Collin County check-ing records about it.

A.D.

Now just what are those two addlebrains gonna do with Lost Creek?
18 A.D. X to DL bench in yard & straddle bench.

19 Joe X to chair DR of porch and sit.
Joe

Well, they're gonna do something. I heard Jim say he was gonna water his herd there once we got rid of her.

A.D.

That is the first time I ever heard two cows called a herd.

Joe

Maybe he's planning on getting more.

A.D.

Listen, boy, Jim Pruitt can belly-ache all he wants about Kavinsky, but it ain't gonna get him out of the trouble he's in! He's just not cut out to be a farmer and no creek'd help.

Joe

You just don't like him.

A.D.

And you do?

Joe

Why not like him? He's never done nothing to me. He's always been nice to me, takes me hunting.

A.D.

You're his friend right now because your name's not Kavinsky. But wait till next week--if he takes the notion he'll start telling how the Kaspers are hogging the water and won't let him use their ponds.
20 Joe standing at DR of porch.

21 Joe X to C of porch.

22 Ellen enter from UC of porch & X to stool UL of porch.

23 Ellen X to UC of porch.
Joe
That's not true.

A.D.
You'll see. Like Jim Pruitt long enough and you'll learn to hate him.

Joe
[20] You just think you're better'n he is.

A.D.
That's a harsh thing to say boy.

Joe
[21] But ya do. You think you're better'n everybody. (Exit into house)

(Ellen is bringing lemonade to the porch.)

A.D.
Damn that boy.

Ellen
[22] A.D., what's wrong with Joe? (Pours A.D. a glass)

A.D.
What's always wrong with that son of yours. He listens to those gossiping fools and believes every word they say. You'd think that after a while he'd learn. I mean how can he live here with us and not see how stupid they are?

Ellen
[23] They're good people, A.D.
Ellen comes down steps to yard & X DL to A.D. at bench: gives him glass of lemonade.

25 Ellen X to DC of yard.
A.D.

Jim Pruitt?

Ellen

Well, most of them try. They try hard. You just expect too much of country folk.

A.D.

Ellen, all I expect of any person is a little common sense. I learned a long time ago to expect no more'n that.

Ellen

That's what I mean. You act like having nothing but common sense is being sold short. Lots of folks are lucky to have that. They're not as smart as you but they don't need to be. (Trying to joke) I mean, after all, they've got you to solve their problems.

A.D.

If they had more sense they wouldn't have problems to solve. I wouldn't have any problems.

Ellen

That's not true. (Ellen is trying to lift the gloom.) Why you're the kind of man that looks for problems. You wouldn't know what to do if you weren't poking and fixing up. Think how dull it'd be if all ya had was your own problems. Putting up with me and Joe would drive you crazy.

A.D.

You may be right. I know Joe would.
26 Ellen X to A.D.

27 A.D. rises and X to C of yard in front of steps.

28 Jud enter DL of yard and X to UL of yard.

29 A.D. X to Jud UL.

30 Ellen enter UC of porch.

31 Jud X to DL of yard.
Ellen

A.D., don't be so hard on the boy. He's got so much growing up to do.

(The phone has begun to ring: one long, one short.)

Ellen

(Surprise) That's for us. I wonder who... (Exit into house)

A.D.

Ellen, get another glass. Jud's coming.

(Car door slams and Jud comes running onto stage)

Jud

Damn it A.D., come on. You're wasting time.

A.D.

Hold on Jud, what's the hurry?

Jud

Pruitt's place 'safire.

(Ellen enters.)

Ellen

That was Lou Ann. Pruitt's place... Jud, what happened?

Jud

I don't know. I hadn't been there yet. Get the boy, A.D. We've got to get there and see if we can help.
32 Joe enters UC of porch.

33 A.D., Jud, and Joe exit DL of yard.
Ellen

Joe, come quick.

A.D.

Is it the barn or the house?

Jud

I just don't know. It could be both. The wind's up.

32 (Joe enters.)

Joe

What's wrong?

A.D.

33 Don't stand around asking foolish questions. Come on. Pruitt's place is on fire. (They exit.)

Ellen

(Calling to them) If it's the house bring them back with you. They can stay with us.
Add: Ellen has entered UC of porch and X to DC of porch.

Helen X to near DC of yard.

Ellen coming down steps and X DC to Helen, leading her up steps into house, stops at C of porch.
Scene II

It is later in the evening the same day. A.D., Jud, Joe and the Pruitts are returning from the fire accompanied by Lou Ann Tate and Ethel Waters. The women enter first, pausing on the steps of the porch before entering the house.

Helen

I knew this would happen. If not the drought, fire, or that woman. God why me? That was my home. What right has anyone to take it? It was Jim's fault. He just couldn't make it work. It must have been an accident. But no one was there but Jim and Joe. He couldn't 'a been that foolish could he? Why are men so stupid? Lord have mercy. Why did this have to happen? I haven't done anything to cause it, have I? What did I do? If only my pa was here. Tell Jim to get my pa.

Ellen

It wasn't your fault Helen, you couldn't help it. Now come on inside, you need to rest.

Lou Ann

God yes, get the woman inside. Anyone's been thru what she's seen tonight ought to have a nervous breakdown.

Ellen

Lou Ann, please.

Lou Ann

I'm just saying that it's understandable how she'd need a rest. Lord if it was me I'd have to be packed off to county 'sylum. I've got such awful nerves. Ethel knows. She's seen my nerves when they was sticking out so far ya could tie 'em.
Helen X to DR of porch addressing Lou Ann who is at UR of yard.
Ethel

Just ask me. I know all about Lou Ann's nerves. Why I've nursed her thru five spells.

Ellen

If you don't mind, I think I'll get Helen thru this spell by myself.

Lou Ann

No reason to be touchy Ellen.

Helen

Lou Ann, did you hear Jim? He said that Kavinsky woman. Is it true?

Lou Ann

Lord knows anything could be true when Catholics is concerned.

Helen

But why should she burn my home?

Ethel

Catholics don't have to have reasons. I just can't BELIEVE the Lord'd forgive some of the things they do--confession or no confession.

Ellen

I think you need to go in and rest Helen. Come with me. Could you girls fix some coffee for the men? Everything's in the kitchen.

Lou Ann

You go right on in. We'll fix the coffee in a minute. Ethel'll be staying to help, the Judge is over Collin County way.
38  Add: Ethel X to UR of yard beside Lou Ann. Men enter DL of yard.

39  Jim X to bench DL of yard and sit.

40  Jud X to CL of porch, leaning on outside of banister.

41  Ellen calling from inside house.

42  A.D. at CR of yard.
(Ellen leads Helen into the house. The men come on stage. They sit on the porch weary.)

Jim

I just don't understand how it happened.

Lou Ann

Well, Helen was saying something about that Mrs. Kavinsky.

Jud

Lou Ann, we don't know nothing about that woman.

Lou Ann

I'm not making any judgments, just repeating what I heard.

Ellen

Lou Ann, are you going to help me with that coffee?

Lou Ann

Of course, dear. Excuse us.

(The women exit into the house.)

Jim

I was sitting in the kitchen about to say grace and Helen seen the smoke. I didn't believe her. She's so damned easy to upset. Always seeing things. I thought ... God, I thought--

A.D.

There's plenty of time to think about it. We'll find out what happened and somehow, we'll help you rebuild.
43. Joe sitting at L of steps.

44. Jim X to Joe at L of steps.
Jim

But my bank note. I just got it extended today. I used the house to get that money. I can't rebuild. I can't even meet the note.

A.D.

We'll arrange something. I'm sure something can be worked out.

Jim

Sure, you'll probably talk to 'em. God, I don't know why they don't listen to anyone but you. I don't want you begging money for me.

Jud

Just wait till tomorrow, Jim. We'll go talk to 'em. Maybe they'll listen to both of us. A.D. doesn't need to go unless you want him to.

Jim

Well, I don't want it. I don't want charity, I just want justice.

Joe

What's justice got to do with your fire? It was an accident.

Jim

Who said it was an accident? Maybe I say it was intentional.

A.D.

Now wait a minute Jim, you're talking about arson.
Jim X to DR of yard.

Jim X to Joe, then to bench DL of yard.

Jud X to DR of porch and sit in chair.
Jim

I don't care what you call it, I say someone started that fire and someone's gonna pay.

Jud

That's strong talk, when ya don't even know how it started.

Jim

It's that damn woman. She's got me. My barn, my house. She'll get the land now.

Joe

Mrs. Kavinsky?

Jim

Say, you're getting smart. There's got to be a reason for my barn burning and she's the only one that stood to profit from it.

A.D.

Now we didn't say there wasn't a reason for it, but not some old widow. What would she want with your land? Use some common sense.

Jim

Don't you hold up your smartness to me.

Jud

A.D. didn't mean it that way. Calm down. You got enough problems without making enemies of the few friends you got.
48 Ethel enter UC of porch, Joe gets up to open door for Ethel.

49 Ethel hands Joe tray of coffee and exits UC of porch.
A.D.

Who said she wanted your land?

Jim

It don't matter. I just heard it. She wanted my land and now she can get it. She's either mighty lucky or mighty smart.

Joe

What's she gonna do with your land?

Jim

Make money off of it like she does everything else.

Joe

But she keeps all her land in the soil bank. You don't make much money there.

Jim

I wouldn't know, I wuz never rich enough to find out. I always had to farm my land.

Ethel

(Bringing in coffee) Here it is, we'll have sandwiches ready in a minute. Now don't let it go to waste. Drink it while it's hot. How does everyone want their's fixed?

A.D.

You can go on back in Ethel, Joe'll fix it for us.

Ethel

Well, I was just trying to be helpful. (Exit)
Joe X to stool UL of porch and setting tray on stool.

Joe at stool UL fixing coffee.

Taking coffee to Jud, A.D. and Jim, then X to UL of porch and sits on banister.
And nosey. Fix it up, Joe.

Joe

How do y'all want it?

Jim

Black.

Jud

I'll take mine with a little sugar.

A.D.

Black, Joe.

Joe

You know that traveling preacher up at Smith? Well I heard him tell one Sunday that you could tell about a man's religion by the way he took his coffee.

Jud

That sounds silly.

Joe

No, really. He said the stronger a man took his coffee, the stronger his faith was. That a man who watered down his coffee usually watered down his faith with false doctrine.

Jud

Still sounds silly.
53. Jim X to C of yard, then to DR of yard.

54. Joe sitting on banister UL of porch.

55. Jim X to DL of yard.

56. Jim X UL to Joe, then DL to bench.
Jim

Putting coffee and religion in the same cup makes pretty good sense to me. Both are a waste of time.

A.D.

No one makes a person take either one, it's always by choice.

Jim

Yeah, I guess it's always the worthless stuff ya have a choice about. But big choices, like where ya live and what ya do. Those ya get born into. Ya get born in a place and ya die in a place and there's never any choice in it. Just luck. Course some people have good luck. They get a good farm, money, no need for them to have a choice. But folks like me and Helen. We get stuck with a lousy patch of land and then get burned out. Now there's no choice, no luck, no justice in that. Is there boy?

Joe

(Troubled) I never thought about it like that. I don't know.

Jim

Well, think about it. Use some of that common sense your pa's always parading around.

Joe

(Getting defensive) I still think it was an accident.

Jim

Shit boy. Accidents don't ruin a man. I got nothing left. And it's all that Kavinsky woman's fault. She's gonna pay. Don't think she won't. All the Catholic saints in heaven aren't going to help her now. I got justice on my side. I don't know why hers didn't burn. She's the one that deserved the fire.
57 A.D. X to steps and sits.

58 Jim X to A.D.

59 Jim X to DR of yard.
A.D.

No one deserved a fire. Not you, Kavinsky, or anyone. Now just get that straight.

Jim

Well, if she didn't deserve it, let's just say the folks would'a been happier about it if she got it. Right Jud?

Jud

There's no doubt folks don't like her. I don't know though. Don't know if they'd wish a fire on her--it isn't that hot yet.

A.D.

And it's not gonna get that hot as long as I got a say in this community. We got enough to do to survive this drought without stirring up hate.

Jim

Damnit, you don't seem to care that I lost five cows today.

A.D.

Why you've never had more'n two in your life.

Jim

I said five. How would you know what poor folks got?

A.D.

Can't you lose everything without lying about it?
60 Jim X to A.D.

61 Joe getting up from banister.

62 Jim X to bench DL of yard.

63 A.D. at C of yard.
Jim

I had five cows and they burned in that barn. I guess I ought to know what I got. I'm glad they burned though. That's five cows more she won't get.

A.D.

I'm telling you for the last time.

Joe

Maybe he's right pa. There's got to be a reason for the place burning. (Weakly) It might 'a been Mrs. Kavinsky. I mean it's gotta be somebody, why not her?

A.D.

Because you don't go around accusing innocent old ladies of arson no matter how much ya hate 'em. God I thought you had some senses boy.

Jim

See boy, he can't go five minutes without parading that common sense. What is it he calls it? The common denominator?

A.D.

That's enough out of you-- (Starting for Jim)

Jud

Hold it A.D. You said yourself we can't go stirring up things.

A.D.

But there's a limit to what a man can take. I've just about reached my limit with you Jim Pruitt.

(The women have heard the storm brewing and have come to the door with the exception of Helen.)
 Ellen at C of porch, a little to the L of door, A.D. retreats to CR of yard.

Lou Ann X to Jud at DR of porch.

Ethel in doorway UC of porch.

Lou Ann at DR of porch, then X to C of porch.

Jim rises from bench DL of yard and X to C of yard.
Ellen

A.D., we've got guests. Remember that.

Lou Ann

Jud, what's going on here? What did that A.D. say to him?

Jud

A.D. didn't start nothing.

Ethel

It seems like you men could have some respect for poor Helen's nerves. She needs peace and quiet and you men are hollering like the Fourth of July.

Lou Ann

She's been calling for her pa. He's been dead ten years. Had the biggest funeral in Collin County history. Imagine her wanting to see him. Why she must be plumb out of her mind with grief.

Jim

Shut-up Lou Ann.

Lou Ann

(Indignant) I just thought that there would be some who was concerned about another's feelings. I never thought her own husband--

Jim

The last thing I wanna hear about is my wife's railings. Now shut-up.
69. Jud stands up, steps down from porch to R of steps.

70. Ellen X to DC of porch.

71. Jim X back to bench at DL of yard.

72. Ellen X L to Joe who is at CL of porch.
I know you're tired Jim and you've got cause to be upset, but that kind of talk to women's not called for.

Ellen

Lou Ann, please go get the sandwiches we made. Ethel, why don't you help her.

Lou Ann

(They exit into house.) I never thought I'd see the day when a poor woman...

Ellen

Jim, your wife needs rest and it seems the least you could do is to keep your voice down. You can talk about that fire all night if you want. But don't disturb her.

Joe

Ma, is she really sick?

Jim

She's never been well a day in her life.

Ellen

She'll be all right Joe. She's been through a lot tonight. But don't you worry. She comes of good stock and she'll make it fine.

Joe

You know, I heard her talk about her pa before, but she never said that he was dead.
Ethel at DC of porch.
Ellen

Well, maybe to her way of thinking he isn't.

Jim

If it isn't smart talk, it's spiritual talk. Maybe he's not dead, just waiting in heaven. (Mimicing Helen)

Joe

But she knows he's dead doesn't she?

(Ethel comes out with a tray of sandwiches.)

Ellen

(Evasive) I don't know Joe. I don't remember when he died.

Ethel

I do. It was the biggest funeral in Collin-

A.D.

We've heard that before, Ethel.

Ethel

But did you hear she didn't go? She didn't believe it. He died fore he forgave her and she just plumb didn't go. Said it was all a lie, that he'd live longer'n any of 'em.

Ellen

(Weary) Ethel, I don't think we want to hear those details.
Joe, who has been sitting on banister at CL of porch, stands up.

Ethel handing tray of sandwiches to Ellen.

Ethel coming down steps and X to A.D. who is at CR of yard, then to Jud at UR of yard.
Jim

Why not, the whole county knows 'em. My wife's crazy, stark crazy.

Joe

(Confused but a little indignant) She's not either. I don't know about this stuff, but I know Mrs. Pruitt and she's not crazy. She talks about stuff that crazy folk wouldn't know about. And she's got sense, crazy folk don't have sense.

Jim

Boy, you're sounding just like your pa.

Ellen

I think this long day is just about over. Ethel, I imagine the judge is wondering where you and his supper are.

Ethel

Lord, that's right. He went over to Collin County today to look over some land records. He'll be home by now and won't know any of what's happened. I've got to get home. I'll bring some food by tomorrow to help with the burden. I know how hard it is to put up folks unexpected.

Ellen

Have a good drive home.

Ethel

Oh dear. Someone's gonna have to take me. I rode over with Lou Ann. I didn't bring my truck.

Ellen

Jud, do you think you and Lou Ann-
77 Ethel X to C of yard leaning toward Jim who is at BL of yard.

78 Lou Ann coming out of house UC of porch.

79 Lou Ann X to DC of porch.
Sure, we'd be glad to.

Oh, Lou Ann's still in the kitchen. She said she wasn't coming out till she had an apology.

Lou Ann, come on. We have to take Ethel home.

Already?

I'm sorry the visit is cut short, but this has been a long evening and we're tired.

Well, we'll be back tomorrow. We want to be of help in any way we can.

I'm sure you do.

(They are starting to exit.)

Now you just call me if you need a thing.

I will.
Jud, Lou Ann, and Ethel exit at DL of yard.

A.D. and Jim take sandwiches from Ellen.

A.D. pacing back and forth from L to R of yard.

Jim seated on bench DL of yard.

A.D. X DL of Jim, then to CL of porch leaning on outside of banister.
Ethel
Call me too. I want to help.

Ellen

Goodbye.

Lou Ann

Don't worry. I'll call you if she forgets.

Ellen

(Relief) Now, who'd like some sandwiches? That's a silly question. I know you all must be starved. Joe, go get Helen and see if she'd like to eat a bite.

(Joe exits into house.)

A.D.

You know, I keep telling myself that rain would stop all of the panic. If we just had rain, the Barkers could wait to sell, the bank wouldn't be worried about overdue loans. Everything'd settle down if we just knew the crops 'd come.

Jim

I suppose rain'd rebuild my house.

A.D.

No. But think how much easier it'd be to rebuild if you knew there'd be money this fall and next spring. I don't know. Maybe if this heat'd just let up. (Laughs quietly) Jud says it scrambles folks' brains.

(Helen and Joe enter.)
85 Helen at C of porch.

86A Joe at L of door, Ellen L of Joe.

86B Joe exits around R of porch. Ellen X C to Helen.

87 Helen X to DR of porch and sits in chair.

88 Jim rises, X to UL of yard.
Helen

Thank you, boy. You've got a fine son, Ellen. I think he really cares about people.

(Joe is flattered and almost wants to prove the truth of these words.)

Joe

Would you like a sandwich ma'am? Ma's made some coffee, too.

Ellen

I'll take care of her, Joe. Why don't you go out and pen the cows. They've been left out all day.

Joe

Sure. (He exits.)

Helen

He obeys real good doesn't he? My brothers always obeyed good. My pa said there weren't two boys in the country who showed more respect for their pa. I always thought if we had a boy he'd be just like my brothers. Course we never had no children. I never thought of it as a blessing till today. God, what'd we do with children and no home.

Jim

You just sit quiet. We'll have a home afore the week's out.

Helen

How are we gonna build a house in one week?
89 A.D. leaning over banister at LC of porch.

90 A.D. X to LC of yard.

91 Jim X to RC of yard.

92 A.D. X to UL of yard, sits on porch.

93 Ellen X to UL of porch, gets tray of sandwiches, then X DR to Helen.
Jim

I didn't say we'd build. A.D., I want your help tomorrow, and I don't mean asking for charity at no bank.

A.D.

(Trying to remain calm) Jim, I'll do anything I can to help you and Helen rebuild. I guarantee we'll get you through this drought, but I'm not going head hunting after some old widow.

Jim

I'm not asking you to. I'm saying that if I wuz to get proof, I'd want you to help me get justice. I'm talking about proof. Would you help me then?

A.D.

I don't know. You'd have to convince me. First of all I don't believe in arson. Second, if it was arson it'll take a lot to make me believe old Mrs. Kavinsky been touched by this heat.

Jim

Oh, I don't think she's been touched by the heat.

A.D.

Let it keep. We'll talk about it tomorrow.

Helen

You're lucky Ellen. You've got a fine family.

Ellen

Well, I'm partial to my own. I've never regretted getting A.D. or Joe. You knew Joe was by choice didn't you?
94 Helen takes sandwich, Ellen goes back to LC of porch.

95 Jim X UR to Helen.

96 Jim exits around R side of porch.
I heard he was adopted.

Well, I didn't really want him at first. We'd lost our boy, and I didn't want another. But A.D. insisted.

I'm sure he's a blessing to ya.

Oh, he's trouble too. He and A.D. just don't see eye to eye often. But he's a good boy. I know he'll grow up someday and A.D. 'll be proud of him.

I wish we had a boy. I know he'd be like my pa.

While ago you said he'd be like your brothers.

Did I? Well, my brothers were just like my pa.

And all were perfect, right?

They were good decent folks and they had respect for themselves and others.

Hadn't today been bad enough without you talking about your pa? I'm going for a walk. I've had enough of this chit-chat. (Exit)
97 Joe enters around R of porch.

98 A.D. sitting on edge of porch at L of steps.

99 Joe X to R corner of steps.

100 Joe X to DR of yard.
Helen

I don't know why he treats me like that. It's not like it was my fault.

A.D.

He'll be better tomorrow, Helen. A lot's happened today. I guess too much for one man.

Ellen

Why don't we go in? You need to rest. Jim'll come home calmer. You'll see.

Helen

I just don't know why he gets so mad when I talk about my pa. (Ellen helps her in. A.D. lights his pipe and settles back to enjoy the solitude.)

Joe (enters, sees his father and hesitates, then goes over to him.)

Joe

Pa, could I talk to ya a minute?

A.D.

Can't it wait Joe?

Joe

Not really. I wanted to talk to you about Pruitts.

A.D.

Joe, enough's been said on that subject for one day.

Joe

Pa, do you really believe it was an accident?
101. Joe X back to R corner of steps.

102. Joe X to LC of yard.

103. Joe X to bench DL of yard.
A.D.

What else could it be? Jim's just mad and ready to blame anyone. He'll go search the place tomorrow and find some reason for blaming Mrs. Kavinsky. No one'll believe it but him, but he'll go to his grave swearing she ruined him. His whole life'll be spent blaming some poor old helpless widow.

Joe

But what if someone else started the fire. Not on purpose but by accident.

A.D.

Then we better pray that Jim never knows it.

Joe

I don't know. I can't believe he'd go crazy mad if he knew it was an accident. I know him pa. I been hunting with him.

A.D.

It takes more than hunting to get to know a man. You're young and foolish; you don't know people yet. Don't ever expect folks like Jim Pruitt to act normal, especially when they think they been wronged.

Joe

Pa, you know I was at Pruitts' right before it happened.

A.D.

So?

Joe

Well, I been trying to think how it could'a happened. I mean I been going over and over in my head how we met in the field, went to the barn, and then the house. I keep coming up with the same answer. There's no way that fire could'a started unless it was my fault.
104. Joe X to DR of yard.

105. A.D. rises, takes 2 steps forward.

106. Joe faces A.D.

107. Joe X up steps to C of porch.

108. A.D. X to bench DL of yard.

A.D.

What?

Joe

I said I think it was my fault. I've gone over and over it and it keeps coming out the same. Jim went in the house and I went back to the barn to light the lantern. I couldn't a been that stupid but I must 'a been. I lit the lantern with a match, see I still got them. I don't remember, but I must 'a thrown the match on the floor.

A.D.

No Joe, you couldn't. You must 'a made a mistake. You know better'n to throw a match on a barn floor.

Joe

I know, that's what I keep saying. But it had to be someone's fault. It couldn't a been anyone else except me. Anyway, I can't let him go blaming Mrs. Kavinsky if it was my fault.

A.D.

Are you crazy, boy?

Joe

I'm not crazy. I just made a mistake. I'm not asking you to help me out of it.

A.D.

Well, don't ask, cause I can't. No one can help you out if what you say is true.

Joe

I figure he'll to to the barn tomorrow and remember how I was last there. He's bound to know even if I don't tell him.
110 A.D. turning to Joe.

111 A.D. sitting on bench at DL of yard.

112 A.D. rises, X to C of porch.
A.D.

I was so ready to do him the big favor, to get his loan extended. Now it'll be me that's sweating the money.

Joe

What'a ya mean?

A.D.

We'll have to rebuild him, boy. You aren't just setting your conscience at ease, you're emptying your pa's pocketbook. He'll drain us dry.

Joe

You're just saying that. It's not true. I know him, he'll be mad but he'll know it was an accident. He's my friend.

A.D.

Jim Pruitt is a parasite through and through. If I didn't know that, I'd be a bigger fool than anyone else in the county.

Joe

You don't want me to tell 'em.

A.D.

(Angry) I didn't say that. You made a mistake and you'll own up to it. Just don't expect to get away without paying.

Joe

But you just said that you'd have to pay.
A.D. X to chair at DR of porch and sits.

Joe at porch column DL.

Joe X to C of porch.

Joe X to UC of porch.

Jim enters around R of porch.

Jim X to bench DL of yard.
A.D.

[113] You, me, what's the difference? The day I took you into this house I made myself responsible for you. How was I to know something like this would come up?

Joe

[114] I guess if you'd known you wouldn't a took me in.

A.D.

I'd a took you if you had purple skin. It's not taking you I regret. It's seeing you raised a fool that hurts.

Joe

[115] I never asked you to take me. You can give me back any time you want. I'll move in with Jud tonight.

A.D.

Shut-up. You're only 15. You may grow up yet. Anyway, you're my boy now, even if you weren't then. I'll stand by you.

Joe

[116] Pa, I'm not asking you to pay for my mistakes. I'll do the paying myself. I'll pay back everything it costs you.

A.D.

It doesn't matter. You better tell Jim before I change my mind.

[117] (Jim comes around the side of the house.)

Jim

[118] What are you planning on telling me? Your boy suddenly remember my seven cows?
119. Joe at DC of porch.

120. Jim sits on bench DL of yard.

121. Joe coming down steps.

122. Joe X to RC of yard.
Joe

119 No, I wanta talk to you about the fire.

Jim

120 Well, your pa's already said to keep it till morning. He don't feel up to discussing arson.

A.D.

Let the boy speak. He's got something to say.

Joe

121 You know I was at your house today before the fire broke out.

Jim

Yeah. Yeah, I know. I sent you out to the barn to fix the lantern before you left.

Joe

Well, I lit the lantern and left.

Jim

Look boy--I know the facts of what happened while you was there. All I'm interested in is what happened when you left.

Joe

122 I been doing some thinking and it must a been me. I mean, there wasn't anyone else near the barn.

Jim

What do ya mean, nobody? I know who was there and I know Mrs. Kavinsky started that fire. You trying to say she didn't?
123  Joe X to C of yard.

124  Jim X to Joe at C of yard.

125  Jim X Joe to RC of yard, then turning to him.

126  Joe X to bench DL of yard.
A.D.

Listen to the boy, Jim.

Joe

I'm just saying I don't want her blamed for something I done. I know it's stupid, but I must've thrown the match on the ground. I guess the hay caught fire.

Jim

Shit boy, you don't know what you're talking about.

A.D.

Leave it be boy. He won't even hear what you're saying.

Joe

But, I'm the only one who could've done it. I just don't want someone blamed for my stupid mistake.

Jim

You really saying that you set that fire?

Joe

No, I mean yes. It was an accident. It was my fault, but I didn't set it.

Jim

Wait a minute, if you burned my house that means you got to pay for it.

Joe

I intend to. I told pa, I'd pay him back whatever it cost.
127 A.D. rises and X to LC of porch.

128 Jim X to C of yard, then X DL to Joe.

129 A.D. at DL of porch.

130 Jim X to UL of yard toward A.D. but not blocking him.

131 Joe jumping up from bench DL of yard.

132 Jim X to RC of yard.

133 Jim pointing finger at A.D. on "I hope..."
A.D.

And while ago you were so ready to set the blame on Kavinsky.

Jim

Who says Kavinsky didn't burn it? How much did she pay you boy?

A.D.

Why you bastard.

Jim

Don't you bastard me. Your boy's the only bastard in the county. Why you're the fake father of what they call a pyromaniac. How does it feel?

Joe

I'm not a pyromaniac--

Jim

Just say firebug, it's easier to spit out.

Joe

I'm not, it was an accident. I was just trying to stop you from blaming innocent people. I didn't have to tell it.

Jim

But you did, and don't you try to deny it now. You're gonna pay. I hope you have to sell every cow to pay for this.

A.D.

I think you'd better get out. Your welcome's worn out.
134 Jim X to UR of yard.

135 Joe X to L corner of steps.

136 Helen at DC of porch, Ellen to her L and 2 steps back.
Jim

Well aren't you the gracious host. I reckon my wife and me won't be staying in the house of folks who burned us out. I reckon we got enough sense to get out afore something worse happens. Helen, Helen, get out here. We're going to Judge and Ethel Water's place.

Joe

You don't have to leave. I want to help. I want to make it up to you. I told pa that you'd understand.

Jim

Boy, I understand one thing: you said you burned us out. You owe us and folks that owe never meet on friendly terms. Besides I want this known tonight. Our house and barn burned and you said it was an accident. Your pa's been taking up for that old widow. Mighty strange only two people in the county could profit from this and one's owning up. Folks are gonna wonder how much of an accident this was. And you know what I think, I think it was none at all.

Ellen and Helen onto porch

Helen

Jim, don't yell at the boy, what's wrong?

Jim

Wrong? Why he just went and let it slip that he burned us out.

Ellen

No!

Joe

I didn't let nothing slip. I tried to tell ya what I thought happened. I owned up to a mistake.
After line, Jim pulls Helen down steps and herds her off DL of yard.

Joe cross to DR of yard.
Jim

Too late boy, you've done let the cat out of the bag. I'm leaving 'fore you do more. Come on Helen, we got a story to tell.

Helen

No, I don't wanta go. These are my friends. You don't know what you're saying.

Jim

Don't you talk back to me!

Ellen

Helen, you can stay, but this man is leaving.

Jim

Why you're beginning to sound like my wife's folks. No, my little lady goes where I go and tonight we're leaving this place. (Exit)

Joe

But they don't have a car.

A.D.

Leave 'em be. They can walk. Joe, do you really think you set that fire?

Joe

Oh, I don't know. Yes, it had to be me. Don't you see, I was the last one in the barn. It had to be me. I wish I wuz dead.
After entire line, A.D. exits into house, Ellen X to C of porch and looks pityingly at Joe.
Ellen

He didn't burn that house, you know that don't you?
He couldn't.

A.D.

I just know he gave Jim Pruitt a free pass to ruin us.
God, how could he be that stupid. Stupid to start it,
stupid to tell. He doesn't know what he did. Half of
what he said'll be county news by morning. The other
half'll be just like Pruitt's seven cows--pure imagination.
140. Alteration in stage direction: 
A.D. is seated on steps.

141. Ellen enter UC of porch and X to DR of porch.

142. A.D. sitting on steps.

143. Ellen sits in chair at DR of porch.
Scene III

Scene: Kasper farm two days later. A.D. is seated on the porch and Ellen joins him. (She has been in the house.) They both seem extremely weary and hot.

Ellen

I could swear someone's worked on that phone. It's ringing louder 'n it's ever rung before.

A.D.

And more often. Who's that? (The phone has begun to ring again.)

Ellen

I don't know, maybe Ethel calling Lou Ann. I just couldn't stay in the kitchen with all that noise. They must say ten words, hang up, and call back.

A.D.

Where's Joe?

Ellen

I don't know. Maybe the kitchen or the barn. (The phone begins to ring again.) Someday I'm gonna go in there, listen to what they say, and then tell 'em what I think. They'll have to quit calling cause I'll bust in every time. I won't let 'em talk about my boy.

A.D.

How do you know it's Joe they're talking about?

Ellen

Because I know them. I've a good mind to go in there now and stop 'em.
Ellen rises, X to LC of porch.

Ellen X to RC of porch.
A.D.

Ellen, you can't stop gossip. You just put it off till another time or another place. Make peace with yourself, let them say what they have to say. If the rain'll just come, it'll all be over.

Ellen

Lou Ann called this morning.

A.D.

Oh?

Ellen

She thinks Joe oughta be put away somewhere?

A.D.

Where?

Ellen

In a home or something. I... I told her I thought she was crazy. I don't know what got into me. I used to be able to take anything she said--anything. Today... today I just couldn't take her foolish prattle.

A.D.

Well, you're gonna have to learn to take it. These folk's 'll want more'n money out of this fore it's over. If this heat don't let up and rain don't come, I don't know what'll happen to us.

Ellen

But to put Joe away, they gotta be crazy. She acted like we'd got some bad merchandise. Don't like it, just send it back to the general store.
146 Ellen at RC talking down to A.D. who is seated on steps.

147 Ellen X to LC of porch.
A.D.

Maybe with the first rain things'll simmer down. I keep telling myself if we're patient long enough the rain'll come and then everyone'll cool off.

Ellen

But what's gonna become of our boy till then? I'm telling you A.D., you can sit around listening and paying, but I'm not gonna let them hurt my boy. I'm gonna fight back. I'm not gonna let them ruin Joe's life. They're talking about our boy--d'udn't that do something to you?

A.D.

It used to but not now. I've gotten used to his faults and what they say don't matter. What did something to me was having to face what he was. That was something I had to do long before Pruitt's fire.

Ellen

That's as crazy as Lou Ann. You got some wild idea of what your son should be and you can't see what a good boy he is. You're just as bad as those women on that line.

A.D.

It's just realistic Ellen.

Ellen

No you're not. You expect miracles from a fifteen-year-old boy. You expect him to be some sort of tower of wisdom and not a kid. He's a boy, a good fifteen-year-old boy. You're making yourself and him miserable by trying to make him something else.
148 A.D. rises, X to RC of yard.

149 Ellen X to DC of porch.

148-154

150 Joe enters around L of porch.

151 Joe hands Ellen the egg bucket, then sits on L edge of steps.

152 Ellen X to UL of porch, sets egg bucket down on stool.

153 A.D. X to bench DL of yard.

154 Ellen X to chair at DR of porch.
A.D.

I just know I wouldn't 'ave had to make these excuses for Billy.

Ellen

Billy's dead. He's been gone for fifteen years. Can't you forget him and let Joe live? Joe's our boy now.

A.D.

My boy drowned when he was two. I thought I could make Joe into what I knew Billy could be. But it hadn't worked. Joe's just not my boy.

Ellen

Well, he's my boy and I'm gonna protect him.

(Joe comes around the corner with a bucket of eggs.)

Joe

I got two dozen today. The browns started to lay again.

Ellen

Good, maybe we can sell a few dozen now and then.

A.D.

We'll have to sell more'n a few dozen if what I hear is true.

Ellen

Oh?
A.D. sitting down on bench.

Joe standing up at L corner of steps.
A.D.

Jim is planning on our rebuilding him in some sort of grand style. His place wasn't worth more'n $8,000. The way he's talking we'll be spending twice that.

Joe

He can't do that. I mean we can rebuild what he had and no more. No one'd expect us to build more. Would they?

A.D.

You try 'n tell that to Pruitt and Waters.

Joe

What's Waters got to do with it?

A.D.

He's backing everything Pruitt says.

Ellen

But is the man lying?

A.D.

Of course he's lying. That's his specialty--lying to bleed someone dry is something he does with skill.

Joe

You're gonna have to pay for stuff he never had, stuff I never burned?

A.D.

I don't believe you burned any of it. You let your damn imagination run away and now I'm paying for a daydream.
157 Ellen coming down steps to Joe, puts hands on his shoulders.

158 Joe X to RC of yard.

159 Joe X to C of yard, then exits into house UC of porch.

160 Ellen X down to A.D. who is seated on bench DL of yard.
Ellen

[157] A.D., the boy thought he made a mistake and he tried to do right by owning up to it.

Joe

[158] I already told him that. He won't listen whether it's you or me talking. He's just thinking about all the money he lost and how I'm not worth it.

Ellen

Joe, you're acting just as bad as your pa.

Joe

I thought you'd be proud of me for trying to do right. I never thought this 'd happen.

A.D.

That's your problem boy, you didn't think. You got to temper whatever honesty I gave you with common sense.

Joe

[159] I give up. You love common sense more'n you love me. (Exits into house)

A.D.

Now he's mad. Mad cause I'm complaining that he's breaking us. It doesn't make sense.

Ellen

[160] Yes, it does. You've pushed that boy about as far as he can go. Common sense! What that boy needs is some love and support. But he can't expect it from you. All you can give is lectures that make him feel bad. I just don't understand you A.D.
161 Ellen X to DC of yard, then back to A.D., then up steps to DC of porch.

162 A.D. rises, X up to steps.

163 Ellen at door.

164 Helen X to UL of yard.
A.D.

Damn it leave me alone. I'm not one of the neighbors you gotta protect me against.

Ellen

A.D., I'm sorry. I don't know what's got into me. I guess it's this crazy heat. I'm saying stuff I never said before. Stuff I don't mean. I just don't know what to make of it. I promise I'll try harder to control my tongue. But A.D., please make me a promise. Promise you'll try harder to help Joe. Promise?

A.D.

I'm no good at promising, but I'll do something.

Ellen

If you'd just talk to the boy decent. Like you talk to me.

A.D.

(Defensive) There's nothing wrong with the way I talk to Joe.

Ellen

All right. All right. Just talk to him.

(Helen Pruitt has come onstage and meekly tries to make her presence known.)

Helen

Good morning. I... I was at Lou Ann's and I've been hearing all the talk and I just wanted to come over and talk to you. Especially the boy, is the boy home?
165 Ellen at UL of porch.

166 Ellen X to DC of porch.
A.D.
I'll get him. (Exits into the house)

Helen
Thank you, I'd appreciate it. (Attempting to cope with the silence) I, I come to apologize to Joe.

Ellen
You haven't hurt Joe.

Helen
But Jim has. I'm sorry for all the trouble he's causing. I'd climb walls to stop him, but he just won't listen. Maybe this heat is driving him crazy.

Ellen
The heat's affecting everyone. I want you to know that we don't hold it against you, Helen. We don't mind paying for your barn and house. We should--it was our boy's mistake. All I ask is that you don't make A.D. and Joe both pay. That's not fair. Now you can do that. You can't stop Jim from getting ten cows and a tractor he never had, but you can stop him from making my boy pay for something he never done.

Helen
But I thought Joe said--

Ellen
What Joe said doesn't count. He didn't set that fire 'a purpose and I don't want people treating him like a firebug.
167 Helen sits on edge of porch DL.

168 Joe coming down steps, A.D. is at L of door, Ellen to A.D.'s R.

169 Helen rises.

170 Helen X toward bench DL of yard, Joe sits on L corner of bottom step.
Helen

I never meant to do that. I like your boy--like he was my own. I know he never meant no harm to me. That's why I come to talk. I don't want the boy thinking this is any of my doings.

Ellen

What he thinks is important to you isn't it?

Helen

I like the boy. That's what I been trying to say.

Ellen

You'd be surprised how good it is to hear that. You can talk to Joe--you'll probably be good for him.

(Joe and A.D. enter--they've been in the house.)

Joe

Good morning Miz Pruitt. Did you want to see me?

Helen

Well, I was just on the way to Tatum's and thought I'd stop by. I hadn't had a chance to see you and your family, and I, well, I just wanted to talk.

A.D.

I'll be going to Tatum's in a minute--would you like to ride with me?

Helen

Oh no. I couldn't do that. Jim wouldn't like it. It just wouldn't be good. Do you understand what I'm trying to say?
171 Helen X to CR of yard.

172 A.D. exits DR of yard.
A.D.

I think I do. Jim wouldn't want you letting any secrets out--like what new thing he's lost now.

Helen

Oh no. It's nothing like that. It's just the things Jim's saying. He'd say I wasn't supporting him if I rode around the countryside with you. I'd like to. I'd be most proud to ride to Tatum's with you, but it's just Jim. Oh, I never could explain myself very good. Pa was the only one that ever knew what I was saying.

Ellen

I think we understand.

A.D.

I'm sorry for being so harsh with you. You and your husband are two different folks. I shouldn't 'a* forgot.

Helen

I'd be glad to tell you what he's planning if I knew. I was telling Ellen, I don't like what he's doing. He's remembering things I've never seen. That's like stealing. I know my pa wouldn't like that.

A.D.

There's no need for you to worry over it. I'll be going on down to Tatum's. He'll have more'n enough news for me. Ellen, is there anything you need?

Ellen

No, you go on.

(A.D. Exits.)
173 Helen goes up steps to porch R of Ellen, then x to chair DR of porch and sits.

174 Ellen at C of porch.

175 Joe jumps up and runs up on porch.

176 After Ellen's exit, Joe x to DC of porch by porch column.

177 Joe x to C of porch.
Helen

Such a considerate man. You don't know how lucky you are, Ellen Kasper. And such a fine boy, you've got a fine family.

Ellen

You'll never know how good it is to hear that right now. That phone's been buzzing off the wall with gossip. It's nice to hear a good word spoke. In fact, I think it's earned you some ice cream. Joe, would you like some?

Joe

(Subtle reluctance to be left alone with Helen) Sure, but let me help you.

Ellen

No, you stay with Helen. I think she has some things to say to you. (Exits into house)

Helen

I was telling your ma how I wanted to... well, apologize.

Joe

Are you making fun of me?

Helen

No, Joe. I mean it. I know whatever happened wasn't your fault. It had to be an accident. I'm just sorry for the way Jim's treating you. It's not fair. I hear what he's saying, and I know it isn't true.

Joe

You mean it?
178 Joe comes down steps and sits on L corner of bottom step.

179 Helen rises, X to DC of porch and sits on top step.
Helen

Honest I do.

Joe

And you're not mad at me for burning ya out?

Helen

You didn't burn me out. I don't know what happened but I just know you didn't burn me out. I feel it.

Joe

I sure wish you'd talk to everyone else. They're all saying that I'm crazy--some kind of firebug. Ma doesn't know it, but I heard her telling how Lou Ann wants me put in some kind of home. I couldn't stand that.

Helen

Don't worry boy, that won't happen. Your pa and ma would never let it happen.

Joe

Oh, I know ma wouldn't. But I think pa's about ready to put me away right now. You don't know how mad he is. He won't hardly talk to me.

Helen

Just be patient, he'll get over it. My pa got mad at me once. I went and spoiled it by running off, but you don't do that. You stand up to your pa and show him you're a man. He'll respect you, you'll see.

Joe

But everything I've done, I've done because I thought he'd have it that way. Everything I do ends up like Pruitt's barn, and pa just gets madder. Everybody gets
Ellen X to UL of porch and sets ice cream down on stool.
madder. They keep saying crazy stuff like I should a burned Mrs. Kavinsky out. I think I could 'a burned her out 'a purpose and no one would 'a cried. But an accident.

Helen

People'll forget Joe. You won't have to carry that shame with you all your life. They'll forget. And besides, I won't let Jim punish you for an accident. You stand up to 'em and I'll help you. We can show 'em that you're a man to be proud of.

Joe

Sure I guess so. You know, I almost wish I had burned that old lady out. Things 'd be different then.

Helen

But you can't change what's been done. Her place'll never go. The county's stuck with her no matter what. They'd love the man who could get rid of her, but he doesn't live. I don't understand it though. It doesn't seem right to wish that on folks, even Catholics, but they do. Things would have been different.

(Ellen enters with two bowls of ice cream.)

Ellen

This is for the peace conference. You just don't know how good this makes me feel Helen. Almost like things are gonna be all right.

Helen

(Distressed) You knew I never meant no harm. I wish things were all right, but I can't go making promises about Jim.
181 After "but I gotta go . . . ," Helen jumps up and X to CR of yard.

182 Helen exits DR of yard.

183 Ellen at C of porch.

184 Joe goes up steps to DR of porch and peers in the direction of Helen's exit.

185 Joe sits in chair at DR of porch.
Ellen

Oh I know, I know. It just makes me feel good to see you here again and no hard feelings.

Helen

It makes me feel good too. But I gotta go. I've stayed too long. Jim thinks I'm down at Tatum's for nails. He wouldn't like it if he knew I was here. You won't say anything to anyone will you? He'd get so mad.

Joe

We'll be quiet.

Helen

Good, it'd make it easier for me. Well, goodbye. I'll come back again. Maybe tomorrow. (Exits)

Ellen

She's a good woman. I'll never know what made her marry Jim Pruitt.

Joe

She keeps talking about her pa--like he wasn't dead. He is dead isn't he?

Ellen

That all depends Joe. For her, I imagine he is very much alive.

Joe

You know, I feel sorry for her, but I really like her too. I can talk to her. She listens good and talks good too. She's different from everybody else. It's like she cares--kinda like you.
186 Ellen X to Joe.
Ellen

What do you mean?

Joe

Well like Mrs. Kavinsky. She understands how everyone hates her but you can tell it makes her sad. It's like Mrs. Kavinsky counts--like it'd of made a difference if I had burned Kavinsky out. She'd probably be the only one to miss her.

Ellen

There'd be more. Folks have to have someone to blame their troubles on and Mrs. Kavinsky will always be around.

Joe

Kind of like me, huh?

Ellen

Oh no, Joe. Things 'll pass. I can feel it. Helen coming here is just the beginning. You wait and see. Before long folks 'll tire of Pruitt and they'll forget.

Joe

But what about pa? I don't think he's ever gonna forget.

Ellen

Your pa's just like any other man. He's got notions of what you should be. He just gets upset when you don't come up to what he wants.

Joe

Some notions. Read the city editorial page. Know what's going on in the country. Find out what city folks got to say about farming. Don't just work the land and stay off the city.
Ellen hands Joe a dish of ice cream and exits into the house.
Ellen

He never called you a sissy.

Joe

But he thought it and he looked it. I know what he's thinking when he looks at me--he didn't have to say it. I know he thinks I'm stupid.

Ellen

Joe, your father's just a hard man to live with. It's not just you he looks at like that. Sometimes he gives me looks that send cold shots through me. But he doesn't mean it. He's different. He's smarter than most folks. (Attempt at humor) I guess it's hard living with a bunch of dummies like us.

Joe

But I'm not a dummy.

Ellen

I know that. Your father knows it too. He just gets impatient. He's counting on you growing up for him. He needs a son he can depend on and confide in. You'll see.

Joe

I wish that was true.

Ellen

It is. You'll see. Come on, eat the ice cream. It's practically all melted.
188 Alteration in stage direction:
Tatum is sitting in rocking chair RC.

189 Waters sitting in UL chair,
rises on line.

190 Waters X CR to Tatum.
Scene IV: Tatum's store two days later.

Tatum's store is an old-fashioned country store with a complete stock. Tatum is not the county sage delivering pearls of wisdom, but he is a reliable man with both feet planted firmly on the ground. Jud and Waters have just finished a game of dominoes. Waters has won and is ready to gloat over the victory. Jud is still examining the board to see where he went wrong. Tatum is behind the counter working stock.

Waters

I swear I wish someone more challenging would show up. Not that you're no good Jud. I just need a fresh challenge.

Tatum

Have you tried work lately?

Waters

What do you mean? I was up at Collin County just this week--had some land records to check.

Tatum

One day's work. I tell you, the folks in this county aren't getting their money's worth.

Waters

I resent that statement. First I don't get paid that much and second I'm working on something right now.

Tatum

Where?

Waters

In my head. I'm trying to figure out what we're gonna do with the Kasper boy.
191 Jud sitting in DL chair.

192 Waters X DL to Jud.

193 Waters X CR to Tatum.
Kasper boy! He has a name--Joe. When did he become the Kasper boy?

The day he burned Pruitt's barn. As a man of the law I got to drop identities and be objective about these things. We got a firebug on our hands, and you got to be objective about that.

(Finally forsaking the domino board) I don't rightly know that we can call him a firebug. If A.D. says the boy's telling the truth, I believe it. I'm not going against A.D.

Well, maybe he isn't a firebug in the technical sense but that's just because we haven't got new evidence. If Pruitt comes up with fresh evidence, then we got a real live case on our hands.

Now what would you do with a real live case? You haven't been in a court in ten years.

That's just because we got effective law control in this county. But that's not important. The point is that fresh evidence is in the offing. Let me be the first to predict that you boys will be hearing new developments shortly.

I don't like it. I think Pruitt's out to hang A.D.
194 Waters X DL to Jud.

195 Waters X RC to Tatum.
Waters

You boys seem to be forgetting that his house and barn burned. There's got to be justice for that.

Jud

Don't seem like justice'd give ten cows for two.

Waters

Justice gives whatever the people tell it to give. Justice is no fancy lady; it's a farmer that got burned out and has a right to build back.

Tatum

I liked it better when it was a woman.

Waters

It doesn't matter. It says Jim Pruitt's got a right to rebuild.

Jud

I just don't like what it's doing to A.D.

Waters

A.D. brought it on himself.

Tatum

Like hell he did. He raised a kid that wasn't his and he gets ruined for it.

Waters

An eye for an eye--that's the oldest law on the books.
Waters X to shelves UL.
Tatum

Old laws are for old men.

Waters

It'd be just like you to want new ones—the old isn't good enough for you. Why you and A.D. belong in the same boat.

Tatum

I consider that a compliment.

Jud

An eye for an eye—I could take that. Pruitt ought to get what he lost. But ten cows? No, it's just a crying shame that that boy isn't the one to pay. I don't know why A.D. has to pay for that boy's blunderings.

Waters

Oh, the boy'll pay. Be patient. You'll see that boy pay as dear as his pa.

Tatum

I suppose you got another old law that'll tell us how that works.

Waters

Fresh evidence. I told you boys and you can wait and see. Fresh evidence is coming and it'll assure us that the boy pays.

Jud

You been talking about this evidence and I want to know what you mean. What else can Jim Pruitt expect to find? The boy would never of owned up to it if it was 'a purpose. Sounds to me like you and Pruitt are making some fresh evidence.
Waters X RC to Tatum.

Joe enters store through door UC.

Joe X to C of store.

Joe exits DR of store.
Tatum

The man's got a point judge. Just hearing you talk, it don't sound like you're too objective. I'd say you're just hankering to see new evidence.

Waters

I'm hankering for justice and that's all. You stop the accusations or I'll... I'll...

Tatum

Hold me in contempt of store? I'm not too scared.

Jud

Fresh evidence. I don't know. I'd have to see it to believe it.

Tatum

Well here's a sight we didn't expect to see. Good morning, Joe.

(Joe has entered and is very self-conscious. He is attempting to make the best of a bad situation.)

Joe

I wuz going fishing and remembered I needed some new line. I lost my old string. Have you got some good line?

Tatum

Sure boy, over next to the piece goods.

Joe

I'll get what I need.
200. Waters at UL of store.

201. Jud X to candy cabinet UR.
Waters

Yeah, all me and Pruitt's hankering for is justice. You hear anybody say anything to the contrary and you just send 'em to me. I can explain the facts of the matter.

Jud

I just can't understand why Kavinsky couldn't 'a got it. I mean, we'd been rid of her and A.D.'d be fine. If it was an accident, it sure as hell was the wrong one.

Waters

Well, Kavinsky may get it yet.

Tatum

(Suspicious) What do you mean?

Waters

It's like I been saying, fresh evidence. I'm working on two angles in this situation. (Very confidential so that Joe won't hear) Now when I wuz checking those land records, I got to suspectin' that the land that old woman is sitting on may belong to Pruitt through his wife. You see there's an old land charter belonged to her family. But that's beside the point. There's more important matter. Kavinsky may be paying along with the boy. Who knows but what fresh evidence would show that she paid to have that fire set.

Tatum

Bull-crap. Now I know you're making "evidence."

Jud

It dudn't sound fair to me. It sounds like Pruitt is after A.D. and I can't buy that.
Joe returns to front of store with fishing line. He holds DR of stage.

Waters X to DL of store.

Waters X to Tatum at CR, holds at C of store.

Tatum rising.
(Joe is returning to the counter with the line.)

Waters

(Forgetting for the moment that Joe is present.)
Well, I want to know what's wrong with getting A.D. and getting him good. He's never shown nothing but contempt for this county and the folks in it. I got no use for folks like him.

Joe

You're talking about my pa.

Waters

(Shook) I suppose I am. If you don't like it, you can leave.

Tatum

Now wait a minute. This is my store and if anyone is to leave I'll do the telling. Frankly I don't care for your kind of talk. This boy's pa may see through you and everyone else in this county, but that don't mean we're gonna let you and Pruitt hang 'em. Now I suggest that you leave and tell that to Pruitt.

Waters

I didn't know my welcome was so thin. I'll go and I'll deliver your message. But let me warn you. You're what's wrong with this county and this country. I'm the representative of law in this place and you got no respect for that. Let me warn you, no respect for law and justice can get you into a lot of trouble. You better not side against me.

Tatum

I'm not siding against you, I'm telling you to get out. Go peddle your tales elsewhere.
206 Jud at candy cabinet UL.

207 Joe X to UL of store.

208 Tatum sits back down in chair at RC.
Waters
You talk like this to me in court and you'll get thrown in jail.

Tatum
I don't think we'll ever meet in court so I won't worry about that. Go on, get out.

(Waters exits.)

Jud
You got kind of hard on the man didn't you?

Joe
Thanks, I should of said some of that myself.

Tatum
I'm not fighting your battles for you Joe. That was my battle too.

Joe
What was he saying?

Tatum
Nothing important. Nothing you'd want to hear.

Joe
Just don't let him go after pa. None of what I done is pa's fault.

Jud
Boy, it don't matter how much folks is down on your pa for him being so smart. I don't think folks'll let trash like Pruitt go too far. He's already overstepped his limit with me. Ten cows for two. That's just not justice.
209 Joe X to DL chair and sit.

210 Jud X to C, directing his speech at Joe.
None of this is justice. He's getting stuff he never had, and my pa's having to pay for it. If I just had to pay, but it's ma and pa and that's not fair.

You should of thought of this fore you went and got so friendly with Pruitt. You put yourself in this place. I mean whether you set the fire, 'a purpose or accident, you put yourself in a spot where Pruitt could use you. Now that's just as stupid as setting the fire.

I only went fishing and hunting with him. Pa never goes, you know that. He was just someone to go with.

But you got too close boy. You got too close and now your pa's gonna pay. If it'd just been Kavinsky.

What difference would that make? A fire's a fire. Pa'd just have to rebuild her.

No, this community 'd be grateful for the man 'd get rid of her, 'a purpose or not. You just picked the wrong person to get close to.

Quit talking like that. The boy's right. A fire's a fire. We don't want no one else burned out so you just quit making those noises.

You're getting as uppity as A.D.
Joe rises, X to UR.
I'm sorry. It's just hot. If this weather don't let up we're gonna have more trouble.

Pa says it's the heat that's making folks talk so. He says if we'd have rain everything 'd settle down.

Well he's right. Too many crops are failing for a fire to happen.

I wish I wuz dead.

That's no way to talk. What good would being dead do? Just hurt your ma and pa more. Don't go talking like that.

I don't know. I wish they'd never got me, or something 'd happened to me afore that dumb fire. You know what I mean.

Sure. Everybody feels like that sometime.

This is crazy talk. I'm going home. I'll see you tomorrow. (Exit)

He's mad at me, isn't he?
I think they're after your pa's land. The way Waters is talking, I think maybe Pruitt is going to say you, your pa, and Mrs. Kavinsky been in cohoots.
Tatum

Well, there aren't too many people in the county that aren't.

Joe

You too?

Tatum

I don't know. I really haven't figured out how I feel yet. I just know I'm not going to let Waters and Pruitt ruin your pa for fun and profit.

Joe

He's really doing it isn't he? I mean I never really thought he would, well, be dishonest. I just believed he'd listen to me and everything'd be all right. Pa said it'd be like this but I didn't believe him. I just thought he didn't like Pruitt.

Tatum

Joe, I gotta ask you something. Did you have anything to do with Mrs. Kavinsky? Have you ever helped her out, done anything for her?

Joe

Why 're you asking?

Tatum

The way Waters is talking, I think maybe Pruitt is going to say you, your pa and Mrs. Pruitt's been in cahoots.

Joe

That's not true. That fire was an accident. He can't say I set it a purpose or that she gave me money to do it, that's not true.
I haven't but ma has. She says she feels sorry for anyone who's lost their husband. Ma goes to see her every Saturday. They're making a quilt or something.

Tatum rises.

Jim's already howling about her helping with Kavinsky's shopping. Her picking up things for Miz Kavinsky didn't look good Joe. Pruitt just makes it look worse. He claims your ma's not doing the buying; says Miz Kavinsky does all the paying for her stuff and yours. No, your ma's got to stop all this running around for her. It gives folks reason to listen to Pruitt and doubt. You tell your ma not to do anything for awhile, not till all this dies down. Y'all can't have nothing to do with her. You stay clear of her; tell your ma that too.

Sure, but what if Pruitt finds out about Saturdays.

I don't know Joe, I don't know. No telling what he'd make of that. Just wait and see what happens.

Jim enters and X to C. Ellen enter and sit in chair UL. Joe moves to DL, Tatum to DR.
Tatum

Joe, he'll say and do what he wants. I just want to warn you what I think he's up to. Did you ever have anything to do with Mrs. Kavinsky? That's important. Cause he'd use it.

Joe

2) I haven't but ma has. Every once in a while she takes her a covered dish. Says she feels for anyone who's lonely and lost her husband.

(Jim and Helen Pruitt are approaching the store.)

Tatum

3) You tell your ma not to take anything for awhile, not till all this dies down. Y'all can't have nothing to do with her.

Joe

4) Sure, but what if Pruitt find out that we been there before?

Tatum

5) I don't know Joe, I don't know. Just wait and see what happens.

Jim

214 You folks talking about me?

Tatum

What makes you think that?
Jim X to Tatum at DR.

Jim X to UR, then DL to Joe on "You remember. . . ."

Alteration in stage direction:
Tatum indicating catalogues on top of candy cabinet. Jim X to UR.

Joe X to door UC.

Jim at UR in front of cabinet.

Joe in doorway.
Jim

Well, I'm just what most folks is talking about nowadays. Some say good, some say bad. I hear you aren't too happy with me.

Tatum

What do you want?

Jim

Oh I haven't come to visit. My wife and I come to order some things we lost. You know in that fire we had. You remember hearing about that fire, boy?

Joe

Sure.

Jim

Well, we wuz burned out by some crazy firebug and we're rebuilding. Now Jim, you better get your catalogues out cause we got a lot of ordering to do.

Tatum

(Tossing them on the counter) Help yourself.

Joe

I better go.

Jim

(Thumbing through a catalogue) Where you headed, Mrs. Kavinsky's? She finished paying you off yet?

Joe

If she paid me to set your fire, my pa wouldn't have to pay to rebuild you.
Jim X to door UC, then back to Tatum DR.

Figure out what you want and make a list. I've got a tractor out back that needs fixing. If you don't mind I'll lock up the merchandise and do my chores. You can call me when you settle on what ya need.
Jim

She didn't pay you enough, um? Too bad. Maybe you ought to take her to court. I'm sure Judge Waters could fix you up.

Tatum

I think you better go Joe.

Jim

What's the matter Tatum? You afraid the kid'll say something incriminating?

Joe

I'm not gonna get mad at you and I'm not gonna say nothing. I gotta go home and help my pa. I haven't got time to talk to you. (Exits)

Jim

Why that little bastard. He's still got some spunk left. Aw, to hell with him. Let's get down to business. We got some ordering to do. My little woman says we lost an antique piano in our fire. Now we want a real good one to replace it.

Helen

I just asked if it could be fixed. I don't want a new one. (To Tatum) It was just an old piano my ma gave me.

Jim

Ya see, a family heirloom.

Tatum

Figure out what you want and leave a list. I got no time or taste to bother with the likes of you. Excuse me, ma'am. (Exits into the living quarters of the store)
223 Jim is at UR in front of cabinet.

224 Jim X to UC.

225 Jim X UL to Helen.
(Jim picks up the catalogue and begins to thumb through. Helen is nervous.)

Helen

Look Jim, I just want my old piano fixed. You don't really want a new one, do you?

Jim

That's a hell of a question to ask. Why bother with the old one? We'll get a new one out of A.D.—newer and better 'n the old one ever was.

Helen

I just kind of wish I could have the old one. It... I played it when I was little. I wouldn't know what to do with one of those new fancy ones.

Jim

Well, you better learn, cause you're gonna have one. I said I'd break A.D. if I could and I can't break him if you go around wanting old stuff.

Helen

Jim, I know it's the boy's fault, but I don't like the way you're draining A.D. dry. It's not right.

Pruitt

Look who's getting shy about sticking. You're getting stuff you always wanted.

Helen

But not this way. They're paying for stuff we never had. It's not Christian.
Jim X to DR.

Helen rises and X to C.

Jim sits in rocking chair CR.

Helen X CR to Jim, then DL.
Pruitt

226 I never claimed to be.

Helen

227 Well, I do, and I can't do it. I can't take advantage of that boy's mistake. You're a liar and you're stealing A.D. blind. The whole county knows it and they hate you almost as much as they hate that boy.

Pruitt

I'm not running no popularity contest.

Helen

Well, don't you care what I think of you?

Jim

228 No, never did. You're my wife and you'll do a wife's duty. You'll stand by me thru this and when it's over, you'll thank me.

Helen

I don't see how.

Jim

Thank me cause I had the guts to get us a decent living. Cause I quit letting things happen to me and started making things happen for us. The day'll come when you won't care what the county says. You'll sit in that damn living room and play that piano, and you'll thank the Lord you got a cheat like me for a husband.

Helen

229 (Slightly amazed and surprised) Why, I think you're proud of it. You think you're a man for taking advantage of a kid's mistake. You're just a blood sucker and you think it makes you a man.
230 Jim rises, X to UR.

231 Helen X UR to Jim.

232 Jim X DL.

233 Helen X to C.

234 Jim at DL.

235 Helen X to rocking chair CR and sits.

236 Jim X to UR.
Jim

(Indignant) A bloodsucker! I told you I stopped things from happening to me and made 'em start happening for us. Now that's not bloodsucking. That's thinking.

Helen

That's a lie and you're believing it. You never did nothing 'cept see a good opportunity for sucking.

Jim

I didn't huh? What if I was to tell you I set that fire?

Helen

I'd say you was a fool sides being a liar.

Jim

Well, you just listen to this. Your fool of a husband set that fire and he planned for all this to happen.

Helen

You couldn't have. That boy did it.

Jim

That boy's stupid. He's got nothing except a lousy imagination. I set that fire with the gasoline I kept in the barn.

Helen

Then that boy's pa is paying for... for nothing.

Jim

Nothing but being rich. It's time he came down a notch or two.
185

237 Jim X to CL.

238 Helen rises.

239 Helen X to Jim at CL, then DR.

240 Jim X to Helen DR, then X to DL.

241 Helen X to C.
Helen

He's just got more'n us. That's not rich. Coming down a notch puts him as low as we ever been.

Jim

Now say I'm a fool. I'll admit, I didn't count on this good luck. I planned on getting the Kavinsky place, but it'll save till later. A.D.'ll do fine.

Helen

I'm not gonna let this happen.

Jim

You can't stop it.

Helen

I can and I will. My folks been decent as long as I can remember. We weren't perfect but we weren't bloodsuckers. Why'd my pa ever let me marry you?

Jim

Cause your family was old and stale and needed some new blood. He knew I was a man of opportunity.

Helen

He didn't know nothing. He got bad blood and I'm getting rid of it. You aren't gonna do this to those people. They're my friends and I'm gonna stop you.

Jim

How?

Helen

I got family. They'll help. My family's been respected in these parts--
242 Jim X DR, then X behind Helen at C to L of Helen.
242-243

243 Jim X DL, then back to C.

244 Helen X DR, then back to C.
244-246

245 Helen X DL.
Jim

242 Hell, the only family you got above ground is your lousy brother and he wouldn't do nothing for you. You tell anything and you lose all you got. You lose that reputation you dreamed up, that house that's gonna be rebuilt, and you get stuck with nothing but me.

Helen

My pa's alive and you know it.

Jim

243 Yeah, I know it. His ghost comes around once a day saying, "Look at what ya haven't done. Look at the money ya haven't made." And you're part of that ghost. You keep saying the same thing, that I'm not the man your pa was.

Helen

My pa would never hurt innocent folks. He had money but it was honest money--not blood money.

Jim

I haven't killed anyone.

Helen

244 But they're dying. You're draining 'em dry. That isn't enough, you gotta help bleed 'em to death.

Jim

They can afford to bleed a little. You and I, we couldn't.

Helen

245 I'm not gonna let you do it. I'll leave you.
246  Jim X to UR.

247  Jim X to DR.

248  Helen sits in chair UI.
Jim

Where ya gonna go? Naw, you can't leave and don't you forget it. Now get back to that counter and start making that list of what's been lost.

Helen

But my family--

Jim

Woman, I'm the only family you got so don't cross me. You cross me and you got nothing.

Helen

I got the Lord.

Jim

Your Lord ain't nothing but a sunday school teacher. He didn't do nothing except write stories for kids. Shut-up and get to work. I can't do all this figuring by myself.

Helen

(Beatenn) I said I won't let you do it. I'm strong. I can stand up to you.

Jim

Shut-up, I'm tired of listening to ya.

(Helen starts to leave.)

Helen, get back in here. Don't forget who you are and where you are. One mistake and you lose everything.

(She stops.)

That's better. Now go get Tatum. I'm ready to order that piano.

(She obeys.)
Alteration in stage direction:
Ellen is at CL of porch, A.D.
is sitting on steps.

Ellen X to CR of porch.
Scene V: The Kasper farm the same day.

Ellen and A.D. are seated on the porch.

Ellen

Who was on the phone while ago?

A.D.

Just Tatum. Pruitt had been in.

Ellen

Oh. I need some money for seed. It's time for me to order my pansies.

A.D.

I don't think we can do it this year, Ellen.

Ellen

But I've always had my seed. I always order at this time of the year. You know that.

A.D.

It doesn't change the fact that there's no money this year. Tatum says Pruitt's ordering some fancy new piano. Says Helen lost a family heirloom in the fire.

Ellen

Family heirloom? Why it was just an old out of tune piano like everyone else has. She used to laugh at how shabby it was. For that, that fire our boy set, she gets a new piano and I can't even have my pansies. I'm not gonna take it A.D.
251 Ellen X to steps and sits next to A.D.

252 A.D. rises and X to DL of yard.

253 Ellen rising from steps, standing on porch DC.
A.D.

What else can we do except wait for rain?

Ellen

I'll call around. I'll get proof that they lost nothing but an old piano. I thought Helen was gonna try to help. I felt so good about things. It's not fair me to give up all I got, even my pansies. Why did Joe ever get us into this?

A.D.

Because he's stupid.

Ellen

251 That's not right. I didn't mean what I said. He's our boy and we got to take up for him. Enough folks are tearing him down. We got to try and understand him better. Help him through this. We knew when we took him it wouldn't always be easy. We got to try to understand him better.

A.D.

252 You act like there's something special to be understood. Some sort of mysterious personality under those rumpled brains. You gotta learn, there's nothing there. He's not just an ordinary kid, he's stupid. Sometimes I think Lou Ann was right. He oughta be committed.

Ellen

253 My boy's no different than any one else's. His only problem is that he's got a pa who expects him to be some kind of superman. His pa's the one who ought to be committed.

(Joe approaches and the argument falters. A.D. and Ellen try to act as though nothing has happened.)
254 Joe at DR of yard.

255 Joe X to R of bottom step and sits.

256 A.D. X from DL of yard to DR of yard.

257 A.D. X back to DL of yard and sits on bench.

258 Joe rising from steps.
Joe

Hey, not you two. Everybody else is fighting, not you.

A.D.

Mind your own business boy. What we say is private and not to be heard by you.

Joe

Oh, I'm sorry, I'll ask your permission to hear next time.

Ellen

We were talking about Pruitts'. You'll never guess what Jim claims now. Says Helen lost some kind of priceless piano in the fire. Of course it's nonsense. We'll get it all straightened out.

Joe

I was there when they came in. Jim said something about Mrs. Kavinsky paying us to set the fire.

A.D.

He started saying that the first day. I'm going out--maybe Tatum's.

Joe

When I left he was still there.

A.D.

I guess it can wait.

Joe

Tatum told me something. Something he thought you ought to know. He was asking about us and Kavinsky.
259 Ellen X to CL of porch, facing out L.

260 Ellen turning.

261 A.D. rising from bench DL.
Ellen

Please Joe, I'm tired. I'm not up to hearing any gossip--fresh or stale.

Joe

But this is important. He said Pruitt and Waters was planning something.

A.D.

Oh?

Ellen

I'm sure it's nothing newer than money.

Joe

No, it's land. They plan on taking our land.

Ellen

No!

A.D.

I should'a known it. I should'a expected it. What grounds? What's their reason for claiming it?

Joe

That's just it. They haven't got the reason yet. They're looking for it. They want Kavinsky's land too. They're saying something about us plotting with old Miz Kavinsky. You know, to burn Pruitt out.

Ellen

But that's not true. There's been nothing but kindness between us.
262 Ellen X to RC of porch, then turning back to A.D. on "No rain. . . ."

262-263

263 Ellen X to DC of porch.
Joe

Tatum says the kindness has got to stop. He says we can't have nothing to do with Miz Kavinsky. They'd grab it and use it as evidence.

Ellen

But no one 'd believe it.

A.D.

Any jury Waters gets up 'll believe what he tells 'em to. Joe's right, we can't give 'em grounds for acting. We gotta sit tight and wait for the rain.

Ellen

The rain! You think the rain'll heal everything. Well, it won't. My pansy plot is gone, dead gone because of a silly piano. No rain's gonna bring that or Pruitt's barn or anything back. You're a fool for harping on that rain. It'll never come.

A.D.

You're a bigger fool if you think we can sit at ease till it comes.

Ellen

All I'm saying is that I'm gonna keep on living my life as best as I can, rain or no rain, Pruitt or no Pruitt. I haven't got much left but I do have my faith, and it tells me that to hurt that old woman now'd be a sin. I don't know. Sometimes I think I see myself in her. Old, alone, listening to that phone ring, knowing it's never for you. That'll be me someday and I'd need someone, something to keep me going. It's not right leaving her up there alone.
Reason! You're taking your pa's side and sounding just like him. Reason and rain are long gone. You just leave me alone, both of you. I'll use my own reason. I'm not gonna let that little lady down. I'll go see every day if I take the notion.

Joe X DL toward A.D.

Joe X up steps toward door UC.

Joe from steps.
Joe

But pa's right. If you go visiting her, you'll ruin it all and they'll take all we got.

Ellen

I haven't got anything left for 'em to take.

Joe

Ma, listen to reason.

Ellen

Reason! You're taking your pa's side and sounding like him. Reason and rain are long gone. You just leave me alone, both of you. I'll use my own reason. I'm not gonna let that little lady down. (Exits into house)

Joe

Pa, you gotta stop her. Make her listen. She always listens to you.

A.D.

Fool kid, you shouldn't a took my side. She won't listen to me now. We'll just have to wait for her to calm down.

Joe

Well, I'll talk to her, if you won't.

A.D.

She's not gonna listen to you boy. Don't you know it, don't you see it? You've cost her everything she's got. You better back off.

Joe

But she's my ma.
Joe coming down steps, and starts to exit around R side of porch.
A.D.

That doesn't mean she can't get fed up with you.

Joe

I'm leaving.

A.D.

And where do you have to go?

Joe

I don't know, but I'll find a place. I can see you don't want me. (Exits)

A.D.

Fool kid.
Alteration in stage direction:
Ethel, Lou Ann, and Helen are in Tatum's store looking through the catalogue. Joe enters through front door UC, and speaks from the door.

Alteration in stage direction:
Women exit through UC door. Joe steps down into store to let women pass. He makes sure they are out of ear shot, then X to UL.

Helen at R of chair DR.
Scene VI: In front of Tatum's store same day

Helen Pruitt is standing in front of Tatum's store and Joe runs up. Helen is talking to Lou Ann and Ethel.

Joe

Miz Pruitt, I'm sorry to interrupt but I gotta talk to you.

Lou Ann

Well, I never. You've certainly got a lot of nerve young man, confronting those you've ruined.

Joe

I gotta talk to you.

Ethel

My husband ought to pass a law against people like you.

Helen

Joe, I'm busy.

Joe

But it's important.

(To the women) Excuse me. I won't be long.

(The women go into the store.)

Helen

What's so important that you're risking getting me in trouble with Jim. If he saw or heard--
271 Joe at UL.

272 Helen X UL to Joe, puts her hands on Joe's shoulders.

273 Joe X DR.

274 Omit stage direction.
I'm sorry, but it's ma. She's gonna do something that'll ruin us.

She's not mad at you is she boy?

It seems like nothing I do makes 'em happy.

Surely she isn't mad. She's always stood up for you, even to your pa.

Not now. She said I was siding with pa and she got awful mad. Said we were taking all she had. I don't know. I was just trying to tell her what Tatum said about Jim and Waters—to warn her.

(Drawing Joe off to the side of the store so they can talk more confidential) What's Jim doing?

Something about him and Waters getting our land and Miz Kavinsky's too. He's saying that we wuz all in on it together. He said we plotted to burn him out and he should have our land.

You can't let him do it Joe.
275 Helen sitting in chair UL.
Joe

That's what I told ma but she won't listen. She says she's gonna keep on living her life like before. That they aren't gonna boss her. I tried to tell her she couldn't act too friendly with Mrs. Kavinsky and she blew up. She started talking about having her faith left and ignoring Miz Kavinsky being a sin. I mean, can you see Miz Kavinsky being a religion? It's crazy. She's gonna make a bigger mess than I did, and then it'll all be my fault.

Helen

275 Oh Joe, what are we gonna do?

Joe

I should'a burned Kavinsky out to begin with. Sometimes I feel like burning the whole county out.

Helen

That 'd only get you in deeper. Don't talk like that, it isn't respectful.

Joe

But everyone's saying I should a burned her out. There wouldn't be all this trouble if I had. Folks 'd think I was a hero.

Helen

It doesn't make sense but it would make 'em happy.

Joe

I see the way they look at me. They act like they're afraid I'll get their place next. I'm not like that.
276 Helen rises, X to Joe DR.

277 Joe X to DL.

278 Joe sits on edge of stage DL.
Helen

No, you're a good boy. I wish you were my boy. You're so much like my pa. You're smart and you listen to me. You don't know how much it means to listen good. Jim says I rattle for hours, but pa he always listened. Never a harsh word, not even when I hurt him.

Joe

What would your pa think of all this?

Helen

Jim?

Joe

No, the fire and what we ought to do.

Helen

I don't know boy. I suppose in a way it'd make him proud to see Jim beat. He hates Jim. It'd do him good to see Jim go down for good. But he wouldn't like seeing you and your folks hurt by Jim. He'd say we had to stop it. It's almost like he and Jim wuz having a battle—even tho they never see each other.

Joe

I know what'cha mean. Sometimes I feel like I'm having a battle—only it's always inside me. It's deep inside. Part of me gets so mad it wants to kill the other part for being stupid. The other part—I don't know, it just keeps on being stupid.

Helen

But your ma, what's your ma gonna do?
279 Helen X to table CL.

280 Joe rises, X to DR.

281 Helen at CL, turn to Joe.

282 Joe at DR, turn to Helen.
Joe

She says she's gonna keep on visiting her. Tatum says Jim'd use it for evidence that he and Waters 'd try to take our land. Mrs. Pruitt, I don't know what to do. I got ma and pa into this and it's getting worse. I don't know how to stop it. Every time I hear something, the fire gets bigger, more money gets lost. It's not fair. Even if it was your house, it's not fair.

Helen

I know boy, I know. There are things I could tell you, but I won't. It wouldn't do any good. But I can tell you this. We gotta stop Jim Pruitt. I don't want your pa's money or your ma's good. We gotta stop Jim before he takes it all.

Joe

But ma won't listen. She's gonna ruin it all. She won't even talk to me.

Helen

Remember what you've been saying about Mrs. Kavinsky? How everyone wants her burned out. Maybe that's the answer. I know it isn't right or respectful, but maybe a new fire'd stop what the old one started.

Joe

(Incredulous) You mean burn Mrs. Kavinsky out?

Helen

I mean saving your ma and pa, and saving me. Mrs. Kavinsky's gonna go one way or the other and we gotta stop Jim. If you burn her out, the county'll know you weren't in cohoots. They couldn't ruin your pa.
283 Joe turning away from Helen.

284 Helen X to Joe DR, her hands on his shoulders, turning him around.

285 Joe, uncomfortable, X DL, turned away from Helen.

286 Joe, turning to Helen.
Joe

But I wuz just talking. I couldn't really set a fire 'a purpose. I just couldn't.

Helen

But you've gotta save your ma and pa. Please Joe, don't let Jim ruin 'em. They're good people. We gotta do something. Help me stop him.

Joe

I don't know. It sounds right, but I know it's wrong. I know inside it's wrong.

Helen

You can't think about right or wrong, Jim's not. You have to think about saving your folks and stopping my Jim. He's no good. If Tatum said he wuz planning that, he's probably planning worse.

Joe

He just didn't seem this bad. He used to be a little mean when we'd go hunting, but never like this. Why is he doing it?

Helen

It's not you Joe. It's that farm and your pa's money. You don't count. Jim has to show my pa what a man he is. I know what he's doing. He thinks all this land and money'll impress my pa.

Joe

But your pa's dead.
287 Helen X toward Joe.

288 Joe turning away from Helen.

289 Joe X to UR.

290 Joe X to C.
Helen

Don't say that. You don't know—you never seen him. For some folks he may be dead, but for Jim and me, he's just as alive as you. You gotta stop Jim. He can't beat my pa and hurt your folks. Please Joe, help me.

Joe

Please don't make me. I'd do anything to help ma and you, but not burning someone out.

Helen

If you don't, everything gets lost and it's your fault. That house'll burn just like mine did and it won't matter which one was accident and which was purpose. You burned to ruin your pa. Why not burn to save him? Everyone says it's what you should of done.

Joe

But I don't hate her. I don't know her.

Helen

She's gonna lose her land either way, why can't you use her to save your pa?

Joe

I'd have to think about it.

Helen

Your ma may be visiting her now.

Joe

All right I'll do it. But promise you won't tell. I don't want ma and pa to know.
Helen X to C.
Helen

Don't worry boy I won't tell. It'll work out. Somehow it'll work out.
292 A.D. enters DR of yard and X to R of steps.

293 Ellen at UC of porch.

294 Ellen X DR of porch to A.D.

295 A.D. X to CL of yard, then to DL of yard.

296 Ellen X to DC of porch.

297 A.D. X to DR of yard.
Scene VII: The Kasper farm the same day. Remnants of red are seen in the background as Kavinsky's place burns out. A.D. has just returned from the fire.

A.D.

Where's Joe?

Ellen

He's not here, hasn't been since it started. Didn't he even show at Kavinsky's?

A.D.

No, he never came, not even near the end. They're coming though. The whole county'll be here.

Ellen

Maybe he didn't do it. Maybe this was just some freak of nature, the heat, it being so dry.

A.D.

I don't know. Could be. Could be the other fire was a mistake. Could be he burned 'em both out. God I wish I knew. If I only knew. He is my boy. He is my boy. I never really knew it before. I was mad, mad about a dumb mistake, maybe a half-lie. But now, I don't know. Ellen, my boy just couldn't burn people out like this. He's made mistakes, stupid mistakes, but not this. Please God not this.

Ellen

Where's Mrs. Kavinsky?

A.D.

I don't know. I didn't ask. When I saw Joe wasn't here, I just wanted to run, to get as far away as I could.
298 Ellen X to door UC, then to CL of porch.

299 A.D. X to R corner of steps.
That fire kept blazing and pointing its fingers. I wanted so bad to see that boy there—to know he didn't do it. Just to know.

Ellen

Did they say why they're coming?

A.D.

No need, we all thought the same thing.

Ellen

I suppose it'd be foolish to fix any coffee or coke or (Crying) A.D., my boy didn't do this. No matter how bad it looks, he couldn't a done it. We raised him better.

A.D.

I know, Ellen, I know. We did raise him. Even he wasn't ours we raised him and he... he wouldn't do this, not 'a purpose.

Ellen

It's my fault. I should of listened to him. He wanted so bad for me to listen. He went off mad at me--me. I never meant to hurt him.

A.D.

I know. You better dry your face, we've got folks coming and you gotta face 'em.

Ellen

Who's coming?

A.D.

I don't know--Jud, Tatum, Waters, Pruitt
300 Ellen X to DC of porch.

301 A.D. X to DC. At the end of line, A.D. X to CL of yard.
Ellen

Are Lou Ann and Ethel coming?

A.D.

What does it matter?

Ellen

It'd just be easier if they weren't here. I don't want to see them just now. (Trying to collect herself)
Do you want something to eat, before they get here?

A.D.

No, just something wet. It's been so hot all day.

Ellen

I'll get it. (Exits into house)

A.D.

Joe, I wish you were here, for the first time I can remember, I wish you were here.

(A crowd of about fifteen approaches. Lou Ann, Ethel, Jud, the Judge, Tatum, and the Pruitts are seen. Pruitt and Waters lag behind the crowd talking.)

Lou Ann

Well, that's one less worry the county's got.

Ethel

I didn't think the man lived who could get rid of her.
The crowd position themselves in the following order:

Jud - R corner of steps.
Lou Ann - R of Jud.
Tatum - Behind Jud and Lou Ann.
Helen - Behind Jim.
Waters - L corner of steps.
Ethel - L of Waters.
A.D. - DL of Waters.
Lou Ann

Whoever did, if it was Joe, was an instrument of God. Everyone knows Catholics are just modern day pagans.

Jud

Shut-up Lou Ann. We don't want a Bible lesson now.

Lou Ann

I'm not talking Bible, just common knowledge.

Jud

A.D., we'd like to see Joe.

A.D.

I'd be proud for you to see my boy, but he isn't here. (Ellen has heard the voices and come to the porch door.) I don't know where he could be, except maybe fishing and he fell asleep.

Waters

That's a lousy excuse. Surely, with all your knowledge you can do better than that.

A.D.

Joe'll explain good enough for himself when he gets here.

Jim

If he shows, I, personally think he's run away. He knows what he's done is wrong.

A.D.

You don't even know if it was arson yet.
Jim X to C of yard.
Tatum

I hate to say it A.D., but it was. (Showing gas can)
We found this near the barn. Still had a little in it.

A.D.

Well, it didn't have to be Joe. It could of been someone else. Plenty of folks had reason to want her gone. Joe didn't even know her.

Jim

Firebugs aren't particular where they light.

Tatum

A.D.'s right. We're doing the boy an injustice by assuming he's guilty. Jim, where were you when the fire started?

Jim

I was at Judge Waters and he can prove it.

Ethel

They were both at the house. Don't you go accusing hard-working family men. This is some kind of kid trick.

Tatum

I thought you were ready to declare it an act of God.

Ethel

That was Lou Ann. I got my doubts.

Jim

You better have 'em. Let me tell you from experience, it's no fun being burned out. If we don't stop it now, there's no telling who'll be next. You want to be burned out, Ethel?
Jim X DL, behind bench.

Waters

No proofs been given, but I don't think anyone here has doubts about what's happened. I say we get justice tonight. This county's got to be rid of that boy and now. We can take him to Collin County and I'll sign the papers to commit him. We can't chance another night. Who knows who'll be next.
Ethel

Why no, I--

Jim

You Lou Ann, you ready for God to strike your house?

Lou Ann

The Lord preserves his own. Me and mine are safe.

Jim

I'll bet Miz Kavinsky said those very same words before. Lot a good her God did her.

Lou Ann

But she's different.

Jim

No God's gonna stop this boy. This is the work of the devil.

Tatum

Quit stirring the folks up, Jim. Nothing's been proved.

Waters

No proofs been given, but I don't think anyone here has doubts about what's happened. I say we get justice here and now.

(The mood of the crowd is sort of a sedated hysteria--ready for something to happen.)

A.D.

No, if my boy's guilty. He gets a fair trial and he gets it in court. No ignorant county judge is going to determine his life.
305 Ellen at DC of porch.

306 Helen X to UC of yard about 2 or 3 steps.
Waters

This ignorant judge is gonna put him away whether you like it or not. I'm the law in this county and when the law gets broken, I mend it my own way. And there's nothing you can do about it.

Ellen

(Nearly desperate) If you really want to know who set that fire, you need to look at yourselves. You started it with your talk against that poor woman.

Jim

Still speaking kindly of her.

Ellen

Whoever did it, did it because that's all anyone in this place talks about. It's not Christian what you've done to her, what you let Jim Pruitt do to us.

Waters

We're not talking about being Christian, we're talking about doing justice.

Helen

I don't understand. I thought everyone'd be happy to see this. She's right--that's all you talked about.

Jim

Shut-up.

Tatum

They're right. Folks are gonna have to share the blame for this.
Helen X to C of yard.
Jim
Like hell we do. I been burned out, burned out by a kid who likes to set fires. I know what I'm talking about. There's no sharing of the blame. One person poured that gas and one person set the fire. He's gonna be punished if I have to tear this county up to find him.

Lou Ann
What's gonna become of the Kavinsky place?

Waters
We been thinking about that. She'll be gone now. It seems like this community owes Jim Pruitt something for what he's been through. It's only fitting he got the place. There's still the barn and the land is good. We could all use that creek.

Helen
No, I'm not gonna let you.

Jim
Keep quiet.

Helen
Listen to me, Joe set that fire--

Ellen
NO. . .

Helen
I told him to. I didn't want Jim getting all their money and that land too.
Joe enter around L of porch, then X C to Helen.

Joe turning to A.D.

Joe

They were gonna take your place away. They were saying that you and Miz Kavinsky were planning it all. I couldn't let 'em do it. Ma wouldn't listen to me. I had to prove we didn't have anything to do with her.

Joe turning to Jim.
Joe

(Coming forward from around the side of the house)
Mrs. Pruitt, don't say that. It wasn't your fault. I did what I had to do. Don't listen to her. She's not to blame.

A.D.

Why, boy, why?

Joe

They were gonna take your place away. They were saying that you and Miz Kavinsky were planning it all. I couldn't let 'em do it. I had to prove we didn't have anything to do with her.

Ellen

Joe, you shouldn't 'a, You shouldn't 'a. . .

Jim

It's time the burning stopped and we got some justice. That boy's a maniac. Now who says we get rid of him now?

(All except Tatum, Kaspers and Helen readily agree.)

Jim

We can settle the Kavinsky place later, but we gotta get rid of this boy tonight before he burns someone else out.

Joe

I only did it because of you. You were gonna hurt them--I couldn't let you.
Jim

Me--hurt your folks? Boy, you and your people ruined me, and before that they kept me down. Now I'm gonna get what's mine and more.

Helen

I'll tell, Jim Pruitt. You let that boy alone or I'll tell.

A.D.

Tell what?

Jim

Nothing, she's just ranting.

A.D.

What's to be told, Helen?

Helen

(Crying) He set our fire--he did it 'a purpose. He said he was gonna blame it on Kavinsky and get her place.

Jim

Are you gonna listen to an hysterical woman?

Waters

Let's take care of this boy.

Helen

You did it. You said in Tatum's store you set it. He ... I couldn't let him get your place and her's too. I couldn't let him beat my pa.
311 Ellen X from DC of porch to bottom step.

312 Helen turning to Ellen.

313 A.D. X C to Joe.

314 Jim begins to exit DL of yard.
Ellen

You mean you led my boy to do this... this awful thing for the memory of a dead man?

Helen

No, it was you too. I couldn't let him hurt you too. Especially not the boy. The boy's always been good to me. I just couldn't stop him by myself. The boy had to help me.

Joe

(Unbelieving) I never set the first fire. All that's happened, all that I took because he lied? I burned that old lady out for nothing. Why didn't you tell me? (Screaming at her) Why didn't you tell me? You owed it to me.

A.D.

Calm down, Joe. It'll be all right.

Joe

All right, I just burned Kavinsky's place for nothing, for nothing.

A.D.

You thought you was doing it for us and maybe you were.

Joe

But it was for a lie.

Jim

I'm getting out of here. I'm not believing that folks are listening to a crazy woman and a firebug kid. You're taking an honest man's word too light.
315  A.D. turning toward Jim.

316  Jim exits DL of yard.

Helen

What am I gonna do? I just tried to stop him. I thought Joe'd make folks proud. Why aren't you proud? We stopped him don't you see. But he's gone. What am I gonna do. Where am I supposed to go?

Waters

Get her out of the county.

Helen

Out of the county... I... I'll go to my brother. Somebody please take me to my brother. He'll get my pa and I'll be all right. Please somebody take me to my brother. Lou Ann... Jud?

Jud

Sure. Sure, you be quiet now. We'll take you. You can't stay here now.

Ethel

Good riddance it'll be. Set their own fire!

317  Alteration in stage direction:
Lou Ann moves up and takes Helen to RC of yard.
A.D.

You son-of-a-bitch. You get out and don't you ever come back.

Helen

What about me? What am I gonna do?

Jim

Find someone else to cuddle you, I'm through.

Helen

What am I gonna do? I just tried to stop him. I thought Joe'd make folks proud. Why aren't you proud?

Waters

This doesn't change things none. Joe's still gonna have to pay for what he done.

Ellen

But you heard them say--

Waters

The fact remains he burned Kavinsky's place. There's got to be justice for that.

A.D.

Justice hadn't been anywhere near this place in months. Putting Joe away isn't justice. You're all gone crazy--crazy with the heat and drought. This couldn't happen in normal times.
Waters

12 This doesn't change things none. Joe's still gonna have to pay for what he done. He set a fire and arson's against the law.

Waters

13 The fact remains he burned Kavinsky's place. One fire's as bad as two. There's got to be justice.

Jud

14 But the boy's gotta pay, A.D. We gotta be right. I don't want him to have to go, but it's only fair he should go. Pruitt's gone. He'll pay plenty for his fire. It's not Christian for the boy not to have to pay.

Jud

15 It don't matter, we got to start somewhere. This burning got to stop. It's got to have a decent end.

Waters

16 I say we take the boy tonight. No telling where he'll be by morning if we don't.

Jud

17 I say he goes.

Ethel

Sounds fair to me.

Lou Ann

The wicked have got to be punished.

Waters

Tatum?
Jud

14 But the boy's gotta pay, A.D. We gotta be right. I don't want him to have to go, but it's only fair he should go. It's not Christian not to have to pay.

A.D.
Nothing that's happened has been Christian.

Jud

15 It don't matter, we got to start somewhere.

Waters

16 All those in favor of taking the boy tonight.

(All raise hands--Tatum reluctantly)

17

A.D.

318 No, Tatum, you're the only one that ever made sense. Don't you see this isn't right?

Tatum

18 Jud's right. We gotta start somewhere.

Waters

You ready to go boy?

Ellen

319 Not now, not tonight.
A.D. X R to Tatum.

Omit this line.

Ellen X to Joe puts her arms around him, A.D. behind Ellen.

Waters X to C of yard.

I... I'm sorry. I don't know where things went wrong. I... I... Don't make me go. Let me stay pa, please, let me stay.

But that's so far off. What'll he do till then. What'll we do without our boy.

He'll pay for this fire. Folks'll forget. Soon all they'll remember is Pruitt and Kavinsky are gone. Joe'll be back--they'll make him pay first, but he'll be back. Once he's paid, they'll forget.
Waters

320 You better come as you are. You'll be getting new things.

Joe

19 (To parents) I... I'm sorry. I don't know where things went wrong.

A.D.

Boy, we'll get you out of this. I swear to God, if there's a way, we'll get you home.

(Waters takes him away and the crowd dissipates, leaving only the Kaspers and Tatum.)

Ellen

Can't we stop 'em?

A.D.

I don't know. We'll drive to Collin County tomorrow. They've got a lawyer. We'll get Joe back.

Tatum

Maybe next spring. Maybe by then things'll cool down and folks'll let him back.

Ellen

20 But that's so far off. What'll he do till then?

Tatum

21 He'll just have to pay for his mistakes.
CHAPTER V

PRODUCTION RESULTS

The absolute merits of evaluation and criticism, where a dramatic production is concerned, are questionable. In the case of the director's evaluation of his work, it is a matter of whether or not he can penetrate the shield of his own egotism. If he cannot, the evaluation in terms of improvement is meaningless. In the case of criticism by observers, it is important to consider the source. Even though a source may be competent, it may be unreliable in terms of a particular situation. Background, taste, exposure, and bias are all factors to be taken into consideration. What then is the point? Is the search for a totally objective person whose evaluation will be accepted a fruitless endeavor? Not at all. The point is simply this: a director should be cautious in equating the success or failure of his production with favorable or unfavorable evaluation and criticism.

The director's evaluation and the audience responses presented in this chapter do not seek to establish the success, or the failure of Burnt Offering. They are presented to illustrate the possible strengths and weaknesses of the
production. The ultimate conclusion is that the production of *Burnt Offering* was a worthwhile experience in spite of its glorious success or dismal failure.

**Audience Response Questionnaire**

The audience response questionnaire, which appears in the appendix of the thesis, was distributed to a select number in the audience after each of the two performances. Upon return to the director, the responses were read and arbitrarily put into categories. The responses of four observers are reprinted here and were chosen as being representative of the average response.

**Question No. 1:** What is your immediate general reaction to this play.

**Response No. 1:** I like it. I like the setting and the story, except for Scenes 6 and 7. It moves well and the audience is easily involved. Joe has our sympathy from the very beginning. The play certainly has possibilities, but I do not feel they were met in this particular production.

**Response No. 2:** I enjoyed the play, particularly the scenes featuring Jim and Helen Pruitt. I felt that occasionally good lines tended to be overworked, to lose their impact rather than to be reinforced by repetition.

**Response No. 3:** Although some dialogue and one or two of the characters seemed weak, I was thoroughly involved in the production. I wanted to jump to the boy's defense at the end and to intercede at other times.

**Response No. 4:** The play was good entertainment. In general it was very well done. I did feel that the playwright relied too much on cliches about rural folk to get the point across. This fault seemed to be mitigated somewhat by the staging.
Question No. 2: What is your evaluation of the characters? Did they seem real and believable? Was there adequate contrast between them, and was their relationship to each other well defined?

Response No. 1: The Kaspers were all very good and well developed. Mr. Pruitt was also very good. Mrs. Pruitt was terribly overacted. There are all sorts of ways to convey "craziness" without that outward show of insanity that is so disturbing to the audience. The other two female characters were very poorly displayed on stage. They did not establish or sustain their character. Joe was fantastic! The contrast between Joe and Jim, and Joe and his father was very good.

Response No. 2: I responded strongly to the characterization of Jim and Helen. I felt that the success in portraying their complex emotional development was the strongest element in the play. The other characters were believable and well contrasted, although I might question the use of two such extreme character types as Ethel and Lou Ann, whom I assume were to be representative of the women in the community. It didn't seem possible that they could all be so hysterical.

Response No. 3: All the characters seemed well developed with the exception of the county judge. However, the confusion may be a fault of the dialogue rather than characterization. The character of A. D. Kasper seemed too repetitious in dialogue and movement.

Response No. 4: The part of A. D. Kasper was the most believable. The actor was well cast in the part and played it well. Judge Waters was the least believable. The part was weak to begin with and the actor did not compensate for the weakness. Helen Pruitt was a central character and as such was a difficult part to portray. The actor apparently realized this and tended to overplay. I think she overdid it with the handkerchief. The actor in the role of Joe Kasper was excellent. Although characterization was carried off very well in general, in some cases the place of the character was ill defined. The Judge, again, is the worst offender here.

Question No. 3: Were the events leading up to the climax adequately developed and logical in their sequence?

Response No. 1: I personally did not like Scene 6 where Mrs. Pruitt talks Joe into burning the second barn. This did not seem to be an organic climax and it made for a very disappointing ending. No one wanted or thought the boy should be taken
away. Is there no justice? The ending is too harsh on
the innocent and not harsh enough on the guilty. The
author's point is not clear.

Response No. 2: I was disturbed by the ease with which Joe
was persuaded to burn the farm. It did not seem logical that
a fifteen-year-old boy would not realize that people would
take the second fire as proof positive that his actions were
abnormal and be determined to protect themselves from a pos-
sible third catastrophe. It also seemed unlikely that a boy
could so easily reject the strong moral training which led
him to confess the first burning, although I realize that the
reaction of his father and the townspeople was discouraging.
I thought, later, that perhaps the father's statements about
the boy's low mentality were meant to be taken seriously, but
the father's prejudices on this issue were so firmly estab-
lished that I discounted his remarks at the time.

Response No. 3: Yes. The conclusion however was unjust. I
couldn't resolve the fact that the people allowed the boy to
be taken away after they knew the truth. Perhaps this is a
moral judgment.

Response No. 4: Motivation for Joe's setting the fire was
not well developed. Several gaps in logic exist here. The
same criticism applies to Helen Pruitt in her motive for in-
citing Joe.

Question No. 4: What is your reaction to the setting and the
manner in which it was presented?

Response No. 1: The sets seem to be well constructed and very
effective in their purpose. However, between Scenes 3 and 4,
I did not understand why the stage had not been revolved and
ready for action. Nor did I think the pause and lights were
necessary for the passage of two days. It was stated in the
program; isn't that all that's necessary?

Response No. 2: I thought that the setting was well done.
It gave sufficient indication of time and place without dis-
tracting attention from the play itself.

Response No. 3: The necessity for mobilization justified any
small inadequacy the setting might have had.

Response No. 4: The set was well constructed and used very
effectively. It appeared to have been well thought out.
Audience involvement in the play was aided by the setting.
Director's Evaluation

In evaluating the results achieved by the production of *Burnt Offering*, it will be necessary to use as criteria the stated problem areas which appear in Chapter III.

Although the script for *Burnt Offering* was generally well written and consistent in style, mood, and idea, it possessed certain structural problems that were readily detected in the performance by the audience. It is obvious now that the attempt to correct the problems, prior to the opening production, by simply rewriting to add a few bits of dialogue was not sufficient. It seems apparent that if the play is presented at some future date, Scenes 6 and 7 should be completely reworked so as to produce more logically what Scenes 2 through 5 have developed.

Because of the nature of the script, a story involving the "rural folk" of a particular region, it is liable to appear "corny" and distasteful to many audiences. An enormous amount of time and effort was spent to prevent such a reaction. Creating an awareness of this disastrous possibility in the actors was one of the primary precautions. Placing emphasis on idea and situation rather than characterization was another preventive measure. This does not mean, however, that definite characterizations were not developed. It simply means that the actors did not force or overemphasize certain character traits. The maturity of the actors was also instrumental in accomplishing the desired audience
response, for it enabled them to grasp a better understanding of the play's characters. In any event, the play did not appear in production as it may have appeared on paper, and as regional drama it was highly praised and accepted.

The amount of discretion exercised by the playwright in regard to including dialect is to be highly commended. While the dialect gave the dialogue just the right amount of seasoning, it also supplied the director with valuable hints for determining character and setting.

The setting that was created for Burnt Offering was a strong element in the production and derived its strength from the perfect balance it achieved. It did not overpower the action, nor was it inadequate for creating sufficient physical environment. The color, mood, and atmosphere it projected enhanced the dramatic action considerably, and won the undisputed praise of all who experienced it.

In an effort to create sufficient movement for actors, and thereby reinforce dialogue, the director may have created an excessive amount of movement for the size of the playing areas. Although the movement was varied, it appeared to be repetitious because of the small stage. In future productions, some of the movement, especially in scenes between two characters, should be eliminated.

The staging of Burnt Offering, which included the utilization of a revolving stage, was another strong element in
the production. Although the revolving stage did not actually contribute to the theme or idea of the play, it proved to be a practical and effective technical innovation, and especially important in adapting the play to production in the studio theatre. The structural and mechanical perfection of the revolving stage inspired confidence in the actors and insured complete reliability during production.

The characterizations developed by the actors were, in general, pleasing to the director and the audience. However, a weak characterization was most apparent in the character of Judge Waters. This could be due to one or both of the following factors. In an attempt to find an actor with the desired physical appearance, the role of the judge was cast very late in the rehearsal sequence, four or five days before the show opened. Naturally the characterization did not have time to develop adequately. Coupled with the inexperience of the actor, the characterization of Judge Waters left much to be desired.

In addition, the characterizations of Lou Ann Tate and Ethel Waters received some criticism on the basis that they seemed too "hysterical" as representing the women of the community. The director disagrees entirely. The experience with and exposure to the rural folk of a particular region will soon evidence that these types of people do in fact exist. Granted, it is hard to believe, but one cannot really know unless he has been there. It must also be remembered
that Ethel and Lou Ann are devices for comic relief, and as such are subject to unusual behavior. The director is of the opinion that if some members of the audience found Ethel and Lou Ann unbelievable, their reaction is caused simply by a lack of exposure to such types of people.

On the other hand, the characterizations rendered by such actors as Clay Newton, Gena Turner, David Boyd, Kenneth Cook, Sylvan Salem, and Susie Heimer will long be remembered. The amount of time and degree of excellence these people gave to the theatre are considerable and deserve enormous praise.

The evaluation of actors raises an interesting question. Aside from their performance, what did the actors contribute to the analysis and interpretation of *Burnt Offering* as an original drama? The major contributions of the actors were the inquires they made concerning their characterizations. It is important to note that an actor is somewhat apprehensive when he consents to work in an original play. Unlike his feelings when preparing a play that has been produced several times and whose characters are readily accepted as being real and believable, the actor's initial concern in an original play is whether or not the characterization he is supposed to portray actually exists. The actors in *Burnt Offering* were usually very skeptical about their characterizations; however, their
skepticism was a vital contribution in that it provoked a detailed analysis and justification for each role.

Looking back on the experience of directing and producing *Burnt Offering*, the director cannot help feeling a great amount of pride in the accomplishment. Being very serious about dramatic art and realizing the discipline and perfection it demands, the director found it pleasing to work with a playwright and cast who shared his sentiments. In the final analysis, the production of *Burnt Offering* allowed the director to exhibit his talent and competence, as well as his ability at artistic compromise in a joint effort toward excellence with the playwright.
APPENDIX

Included in this section of the thesis are copies of the program, the publicity releases, the set designs, working drawings of the revolving stage and pivot mechanism, the light plot, instrument schedule, and cue sheets, costume plates of all the characters, the budget, and an audience response questionnaire. Also included is a biographical sketch of the author of Burnt Offering.
NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of
SPEECH & DRAMA
Present
A Master's Thesis Production

BURNT OFFERING
by
Beverly McIntosh
designed | directed by Carl Jakes

JULY 29, 80, 3 P.M.
North Texas State University
Studio Theatre
THE CASE

A.D. KASPER.......................... (as Glazebrook)
ELLEN KASPER.......................... (as Gena Turner)
JOE KASPER............................ (as David Boyd)
JIM PRUITT............................. (as Sylvan Salem)
HOBIE FRIEHT.......................... (as Susie Heimer)
JUD TATE............................... (as Kenneth Cook)
LUCY ANN TATE........................ (as Ronnie Boyd)
JUDGE WATERS........................ (as Garry Scott)
ETHEL WATERS........................ (as Linda Wells)
JIM TATUM............................. (as George Robinson)

Synopsis of Scenes

SCENE I.................. The Kasper Farm
SCENE II.................. Later the same day
SCENE III.................. Two days later

INTERMISSION

SCENE IV.................. Tatum's Store, two days later
SCENE V.................. The Kasper Farm, the same day
SCENE VI.................. Tatum's Store, the same day
SCENE VII.................. The Kasper Farm, the same day

CREWS

LIGHTS............. Mike O'Quinn, Betty Cannon
PROPERTIES........... Gena Turner, Ronnie Boyd,
                     Linda Walls
STAGE CREW......... Tom Kitzmiller, Jeff Rench,
                     David Boyd
PUBLICITY........... Bill Conway, Susie Heimer,
                     Kenneth Cook
PROGRAM DESIGN........... Paul Tankersley

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. and Mrs. Dickson Boyd

Bill Conway

K N T L

K D N T
"Burnt Offering" Dated
For NTSU Presentation

Special to Times Herald

DENTON—"Burnt Offering," an original play by North Texas State University graduate student Mrs. Beverly McIntosh of Denton will be presented July 29-30 in the NTSU Studio Theater.

Admission is free to the 8:15 p.m. performances.

CARL JAKS, graduate student from Shiner, is directing the play as a graduate production thesis. Jaks is presently teaching drama at Texas Lutheran College in Seguin.

The play, written in the fall of 1970 for a special studies in drama course at NTSU, centers upon the A. D. Kasper family and its attempt to deal with a hard drought.

KASPER, as the leader of a small rural community, is attempting to save his neighbors from financial ruin, crop failures and dry ponds. Barn burnings add to natural tensions to produce an atmosphere of intolerance. With an unconscious thrust, the drought-plagued community seeks a scapegoat in young Joe Kasper who is accused of burning a barn.

Appearing in the play are Gene Turner, Dallas freshman; Kenneth Cook, Haskell senior; George Robinson, Celina senior; Linda Walls, Sinton senior; freshman Bonnie Boyd, graduate student Susie Heimer, and senior Clay Newcom, all of Denton; David Boyd, son of Dr. and Mrs. Dickson K. Boyd of Denton and Sylvan Salem, also of Denton.
Sizzling Drama

Members of the cast of "Burnt Offering" rehearse a scene for tonight's performance at 8:15 in the University Theater. Among the drama's characters are, from left, Gena Turner, Sylvan Salem, David Boyd and Clay Newton. The play, written by Mrs. Beverly Macintosh, Denton graduate student, depicts an event which takes place in a small town. The play will run through Friday, and admission is free. —Photo by Don Roberson
BURNT OFFERING

Floor Plan & Dimensions

Scale: 3/8" = 1' 0"
BURNT OFFERING

Floor Plan & Stage Properties

Scale: $3/8" = 1' 0"$
BURNT OFFERING

Figure 1: Platform arrangement, caster position, & direction of revolving stage.

Figure 2: 2" caster mounted on 2 x 4 stock; bolted in corners of porch stage platforms.

Figure 3: 4" caster mounted on 3/4" plywood corner block; nailed to bottom of store stage platform.

Figure 4: Pivot mechanism for revolving stage. (See detail in Figure 5.)
Stage Platform

wood screw
1-1/2" flange

1-1/2" galvanized pipe

2" galvanized pipe

2" flange

lag screw
expandable lead anchor

Concrete Floor

Figure 5

BURNT OFFERING

Pivot Mechanism for Revolving Stage
Figure 6: Side view construction of revolving stage.

Figure 7: Front view construction of dividing wall between the two stages of the revolving stage.

BURNT OFFERING
BURNT OFFERING

Layout of Lighting Instruments & Areas
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**BURNT OFFERING**

Instrument Schedule

*Ward Leonard Dimmer System.

**Ariel Davis Dimmer System.
## BURNT OFFERING

**Light Cue Sheet**

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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) WL Dimmer 3, 4, up full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;They can stay with us.&quot; Blackout (10 Count)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>End of Count</td>
<td>(a) AD Dimmer 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, up full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) WL Dimmer 3, 4, up full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>&quot;Pure Imagination&quot;</td>
<td>(a) Blackout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) WL 3, 4, up 1/4 (costume change) (20 Count)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>End of Count</td>
<td>(a) Blackout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) AD 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, up full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) WL 3, 4, up full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>&quot;It's practically all melted&quot;</td>
<td>(a) Blackout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) WL 1, 2, up 3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(10 Minute Intermission)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>End of 10 Minutes</td>
<td>(a) Blackout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) WL 3, 4, up 1/4 (set change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>End of Count</td>
<td>(a) Blackout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) AD 3, 4, 5, up full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) WL 3, 4, up full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10</td>
<td>&quot;order that piano&quot;</td>
<td>(a) Blackout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) WL 3, 4, up 1/4 (set change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cue No.</td>
<td>Cue</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#11</td>
<td>End of Count</td>
<td>(10 Count)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Blackout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) AD 1, 2, 5, 4, 5, up full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) WL 3, 4, up full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#12</td>
<td>&quot;... fool kid.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Blackout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) WL 3, 4, up 1/4 (set change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#13</td>
<td>End of Count</td>
<td>(10 Count)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Blackout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) AD 3, 4, 5, up full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) WL 3, 4, up full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#14</td>
<td>&quot;Some how it'll work out&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Blackout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) WL 3, 4, up 1/4 (set change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#15</td>
<td>End of Count</td>
<td>(10 Count)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Blackout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) AD 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, up full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) WL 3, 4, up full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#16</td>
<td>&quot;Once he's paid, they'll forget&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Blackout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) WL 1, 2, up 2/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BURNT OFFERING

Costume Plate No. 1: A. D. Kasper
BURNT OFFERING

Costume Plate No. 2: Ellen Kasper
BURNT OFFERING

Costume Plate No. 3: Joe Kasper
BURNT OFFERING

Costume Plate No. 4: Jim Pruitt
BURNT OFFERING

Costume Plate No. 5: Helen Pruitt
BURNT OFFERING

Costume Plate No. 6:  Jud Tate
BURNT OFFERING

Costume Plate No. 7: Lou Ann Tate
BURNT OFFERING

Costume Plate No. 8: Judge Waters
BURNT OFFERING

Costume Plate No. 9: Ethel Waters
BURNT OFFERING

Costume Plate No. 10: Jim Tatum
### Lumber

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>212 ft. 2 x 4, @ .22 per lin. ft.</td>
<td>$46.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 ft. 1 x 4, @ .065 per lin. ft.</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78 ft. 1 x 6, @ .075 per lin. ft.</td>
<td>5.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 3/4&quot; x 4' x 8' plywood, AD @ 10.88</td>
<td>65.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 screen door, @ 18.00</td>
<td>18.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 porch columns, @ 11.65</td>
<td>23.50</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Hardware

#### Carriage Bolts (with nuts)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>5/16&quot; x 2&quot;, @ .045</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>5/16&quot; x 3&quot;, @ .06</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>3/8&quot; x 2&quot;, @ .06</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>3/8&quot; x 3&quot;, @ .0825</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>3/8&quot; x 4&quot;, @ .105</td>
<td>4.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>3/8&quot; x 5&quot;, @ .125</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3/8&quot; x 6&quot;, @ .145</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Nails

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1#</td>
<td>16 penny common, @ .20</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1#</td>
<td>8 penny duplex, @ .20</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1#</td>
<td>6 penny duplex, @ .18</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1#</td>
<td>6 penny common, @ .18</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1#</td>
<td>4 penny common, @ .12</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Misc. Hardware

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 pair</td>
<td>loose-pin hinges, @ 1.65</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>door catch, @ .59</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>door spring, @ .49</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pair</td>
<td>angle iron braces, @ .65</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 box</td>
<td>#8 3/4&quot; flat head wood screws, @ .95</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4&quot; casters, @ 4.50</td>
<td>45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2&quot; casters, @ 1.50</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 box</td>
<td>3/8&quot; lock washers, @ .95</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1/4&quot; x 2&quot; lag screws, @ .04</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1/2&quot; x 2&quot; lead anchors, @ .20</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2&quot; flange, @ 2.10</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1-1/2” flange</td>
<td>@ 1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2&quot; x 6&quot; pipe</td>
<td>@ 1.20 per ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1-1/2&quot; x 6&quot; pipe</td>
<td>@ 1.10 per ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>5/16&quot; washers</td>
<td>@ .015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>3/8&quot; washers</td>
<td>@ .02</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Lighting Equipment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Price Per Quantity</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>roscolene gel #804</td>
<td>@ 1.80</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>roscolene gel #826</td>
<td>@ 1.80</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>roscolene gel #842</td>
<td>@ 1.80</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>roscolene gel #809</td>
<td>@ 1.80</td>
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<td>3.60</td>
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**Make-up (Stein's)**

**Greasepaint (soft in tube)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Price Per Quantity</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>#2 pink-natural</td>
<td>@ 1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>#6 tan</td>
<td>@ 1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>#7 olive</td>
<td>@ 1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>#10 hindu brown</td>
<td>@ 1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
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**Face Powder**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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<th>Price Per Quantity</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>#2 med. pink</td>
<td>@ 1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>#8 tan</td>
<td>@ 1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>#8-1/2 juvenile</td>
<td>@ 1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>#12 olive</td>
<td>@ 1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lining Colors (soft)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Price Per Quantity</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>#4 med. grey</td>
<td>@ .65</td>
<td></td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>#6 light brown</td>
<td>@ .65</td>
<td></td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>#22 red brown</td>
<td>@ .65</td>
<td></td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Clown white</td>
<td>@ .85</td>
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<td>.85</td>
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</table>

**Cold Cream & Kleenex**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>16 oz. jars</td>
<td>@ 1.75</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>boxes kleenex</td>
<td>@ .24</td>
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<td>1.44</td>
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**Eyebrow Pencils**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<th>Quantity</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>black</td>
<td>@ 1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>med. brown</td>
<td>@ 1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Unit Price</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brushes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 face powder brushes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>@ 2.00</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hair Spray &amp; Hair Color</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 cans Lanolin Plus</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>@ .77</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 cans Streak'n Tips</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>@ .79</td>
<td>1.58</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Publicity</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 Burnt Offering Programs</td>
<td>300</td>
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<td>28.04</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Total $325.21</strong></td>
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</table>
1. What is your immediate general reaction to this play?

2. What is your evaluation of the characters? Did they seem real and believable? Was there adequate contrast between them, and was their relationship to each other well defined?

3. Were the events leading up to the climax adequately developed and logical in their sequence?

4. What is your reaction to the setting and the manner in which it was presented?
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ms. McIntosh was born in Jefferson County, Texas in 1946. Active in forensics and drama from junior to senior high school, she had her first play produced at Trinity University in 1965 while a senior in high school. Upon graduation from Port Neches-Groves High School in 1965, she attended Trinity University in San Antonio, majoring in drama. Ms. McIntosh subsequently attended Lamar Tech, University of Houston, and was graduated from North Texas State University in 1970 with a Bachelor of Arts in English.

*Burnt Offering* was a senior project in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the B. A.

Ms. McIntosh is currently pursuing graduate studies at North Texas State University. . .
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Articles


Unpublished Materials
