

CHURCH BASEMENT LADIES - 10TH ANNIVERSARY SCRIPT
NEW SCRIPT July 3, 2016

ACT 1

ACT I / SCENE 1...THE LUTEFISK DINNER

As the lights come up we find ourselves in the church basement kitchen of East Cornucopia Lutheran Church of the Prairie, a small rural church in the small town of Cornucopia in Northern Minnesota. The kitchen is outfitted with a refrigerator, a large industrial size stove and sink, cupboards filled with an assortment of pots and pans, and a large chest freezer. The kitchen "bible", a cookbook entitled "The Joy of Butter", sits in a place of prominence. A serving window opens onto the fellowship hall. It is closed. There is a door marked "furnace." It is also closed.

Several pots of Lutefisk are boiling on the stove. Mavis is peeling potatoes, making the Watkins nectar, and stirring the rømmegrøt. Karin is busy working on the meatballs, the cookies, the lefse, the krumkake, the dinner rolls and making coffee. Signe, home from college, is putting out the pickles and the Jello, and maybe cuts a pan of bars or two. Vivian, clearly the matriarch of the kitchen, oversees it all. She has a list, which she checks frequently. The Pastor, who finds great comfort in the bustle of this kitchen, has stopped by for yet another cup of coffee. A heavy snow is falling.

The year is 1964 and the ladies are preparing for the annual Holiday Lutefisk Dinner. They continue with their activities throughout the opening number.

Closer To Heaven (In the Church Basement)

(P: Pastor Gunderson; V: Vivian; K: Karin; M: Mavis; S: Signe; A: All)

P:

Below the sanctuary, there's a highly hallowed hall;
 Where faithful, aproned women heed a stern and solemn call.
 You'll hear them humming hymns while pots and pans are washed and dried;
 The buttered buns are blessed,
 The kitchen sink is sanctified.

A shelter from the storm...
 When rumbling rolls of thunder sound...
 It's just a little holier,

V: *(spoken)* Cookie, Pastor?

P: *(spoken)* Thank you, Mrs. Snustad.

(he sings)...just ten feet underground.

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A:

Because you're...
Closer to heaven in the church basement,

V/K/M:

Where we do the good Lord's work.

P/S:

Lift your spirits high as the stars are,

V/K/M:

Down here where the coffee and bars are.

A:

Everything happens in the church basement;

V/K/M:

Hear those percolators perk!

V:

Everywhere you look, you see spectacular sights:

P/S:

Forty kinds of food to feed some fierce appetites,

K/M:

Nearly-new linoleum and fluorescent lights...

A:

Managed by a stalwart squad, here below the house of God!
You're closer to heaven in the church basement; joyfully, we welcome you!

P:

Meet our missionaries to Burma,

V/K/M:

Greet the fold 'neath old terra firma.

S:

Everyone's busy in the church basement; such an energetic crew!

M:

Luncheons and receptions faze us not in the least;

K:

Seems there's always someone newly wed or deceased;

V:

First week of December, there's a lutefisk feast.

V/K/M:

Boiling vats of lye-soaked cod,

A:

Here below the house of God!

Musical break: During the break the activity of the kitchen takes on a percussive quality, creating a cacophony of sound that embodies the spirit of the kitchen.

V/K/M:

We hate to crow, but to tell you the truth,
We're proud to be Lutheran lasses.
We cook and sew and we sweep and we dust,

M:

So cheerfully busting our...

P/V/K/S:

As we mentioned

A:

Earlier, you're...
Closer to heaven in the church basement, shielded by the sacred soil.
It's a treat to beat back the devil, on this subterranean level.

V:

When I'm infirm and need a replacement, weary after years of toil,
Then the Lord shall come to lead me homeward again,
Peacefully, I'll pray and say my final "amen;"
Sing

A:

"How Great Thou Art" around my casket, and then...
Bury me beneath the sod, here below the house of God!

S:

So, here's to the ladies who fix the lunch,

M:

Mix the punch...

K:

Scrub the walls,

V:

Mop the halls...

P:

All the while, with a smile...

A:

They're the gals we now applaud, here below the house of God!

SONG ENDS

As the Pastor speaks, the ladies continue working and Vivian continues to "supervise".

P: Signe, I haven't had a chance to tell you how nice it is to see you home again.

S: It's great to be home, Pastor. Mom, Mrs. Gilmerson, and Mrs. Snustad already have me back to work on the Lutefisk Supper.

P: Well, these three ladies might not admit it, but they have missed you since you left us this fall for the cities with, I must say, a very impressive scholarship for the University of Minnesota.

S: Thank you, Pastor. I wouldn't miss this for the world. And you know who else is down there? Harry Hauge! He's in a couple of my classes. The U. is so big, it's really nice to see a familiar face around.

K: Harry's a nice young man.

V: A real credit to this church.

M: *[Teasing.]* And very handsome too.

S: Oh, stop it. I don't think of Harry like that.

M: So, how's it looking out there then?

P: *[Standing at the window looking at the snowfall.]* The snow is really coming down.

M: Is it deep yet?

P: Ja! Up to your hubcaps!

M: Uffda!

K: Ja, the radio is calling this THE blizzard of 1964.

P: But the snows not stopping them. **In fact,** the reason I came down was to let you know we've sold another 19 tickets! That makes 175! *[The Pastor knocks on, and then opens, the furnace room door. He has to give it a little extra push as it tends to stick.]* Hey Willie! You in there? *[We hear pipes banging in response.]* Ja! I said 175! That's a record **for the lutefisk supper...!!** *[More pipe banging.]* Well, if anyone can keep that old furnace going, it's you, Willie. *[Drill noise. The Pastor laughs in response]* You can say that again! *(He repeats the last drill noise).*

V: 175 people! Time to double check the food. **We'll start with the fish.**

K: You call and we will answer!

V: *[Rapid fire counting off.]* Lutefisk?

M: Ja. 50 pounds.

V: Lefse?

K: Ja. 500 pieces.

V: Potatoes?

M: Ja. 50 pounds.

V: Pickles?

S: Ja. 20 quarts dill and 30 quarts beet.

V: Meatballs?

M: Ja, 50 pounds!

V: Cookies?

K: *[holding up a plate of krumkake]* Ja, cookies and krumkake, about 400.

V: Butter?

S-M: Ja! 50 pounds.

V: Is that all?

S: We have more in the back of our pick-up...

K-M: ...The Minnesota refrigerator!

V: Watkins Nectar and coffee?

K: Ja. We have plenty of Nectar for the kids [*indicating the Watkins crock*] and enough for about 1,000 cups of coffee...Because every good Lutheran...

M: ...is still looking for the word coffee in the Bible!...And we're making your favorite Christmas pudding, Pastor! [*Mavis indicates the pan of rømmegrøt.*]

P: Look at that! Real Norwegian rømmegrøt. It smells like heaven!

M: You know the secret to a good rømmegrøt. don't you? You just keep stirring 'til it sets up fat and jiggly...and that's why we call 'em...

All: [*They all raise their arms and wiggle their flabby underarm skin.*] Rømmegrøt arms!

K: Pastor, you can't go wrong with butter, sugar, flour and cream.

V: The 4 pillars of Norwegian cooking.

P: And you ladies are like the four pillars of this church...like the four gospels! Matthew, Mark, Luke and John!

S: John, Paul, George and Ringo.

V: Oh that long hair!

S: Jesus had long hair!

P: The times they are a changin'. [*He smiles at his remark and exits chuckling.*]

V: I know it's not good for a church to have a widower for a minister, but Pastor seems different now that he has that new wife. From "the cities!" She's half his age!

M: No wonder he's walking around with such a big smile!

V: It's not...Pastorly!

K: [*Changing the subject.*] We need to get back to work. 175 people!

S: Mrs. Snustad, it's probably hard for her, too. With everyone watching her.

V: Young lady, if you can't take the heat get out of the kitchen.

M: **You know**, she's one of those Andersen's from Hamburger Junction.

S: Is that "o, n" or "e, n"?

All: "E, n". (*They are not too fond of the Swedes*)

M: Ja, the Pastor's new wife is the daughter of Martin and Betty Anderson, who used to live just half a mile from Willie and Zelda Bjornson back when they were still farming. *[yelling into the furnace room]* Isn't that right, Willie? *[bang bang]*

S: How long has Willie been the Janitor here at church?

K: For as long as I can remember.

V: Me too.

K: ...and how he loves to ring that bell on Sunday mornings.

M: You know the cows love it too....keeps 'em regular.

V: *[Breathes in as she stirs the pot.]* Aaahhh! Now that lutefisk smells right.

S: Ripe you mean.

V: It's delicious. *[dreamily]* Dried codfish soaked in lye 'til it bloats into a puffy jelly; **rinsed to extract the poison**; boiled on the stove **to release the aroma**; then slid onto a plate and covered in melted butter. MMM!

K: It can be traced back to the Vikings, you know.

S: *(as she lifts the lid)* Whew! So that's why it smells like this?

M: It was part of their plan to...

M/K: ... conquer the world!

M: *(to Signe)* **Just be thankful that, as a Lutheran, you're only** morally obligated to eat **it** once a year.

V: **Unlike** the fish every Friday crew!

M: **In fact, the feast of Lutefisk and Lefse is one of the unofficial feast days of the Scandinavian** church calendar. Just look it up!

K: That's right! We can look it up in our kitchen bible!

V: The Joy of Butter! *[She opens the book and reads from it as they all gather around.]*
Lutefisk and lefse...

S: *[interrupting her]* Did the Vikings have anything to do with lefse? Because I love lefse.

V: Norwegian potato flatbread.

K: ...with butter and sugar

S: ... or cinnamon...or jam.

M: The pigs like it plain...

V: *(reading)* Lutefisk and lefse are directly descended from the two fishes and five loaves at the Sea of Galilee!

S: Somewhere along the way those fishes and loaves lost their color.

M: Oh, Signe. As we all memorized from Luther's small catechism...

All: This is most certainly true!

The Pale Food Polka

As they sing the ladies share some of their favorite recipes with Signe.

V: Vivian/M: Mavis/K: Karin/A: All

K:

The multicolored rainbow, which decorates the sky,
Reminds us of God's pledge to keep His people fairly dry.

V:

A basketful of Easter eggs, a string of Christmas lights,
They re-appear each year to cheer our holidays and nights.

M:

How vibrant are these symbols of love and faith and hope;
Their tones and tints give us a glimpse through God's kaleidoscope.

K:

Our Father's great Crayola box is strictly His domain...

V:

As humble, modest Lutherans,

M:

We keep things nice and plain.

A:

Our duty to avoid more-vivid hues
Is reflected in the recipes we use.

K: To increase the appeal when you're mixing up a meal,

A:

Dance along to the Pale Food Polka.

V:

People might take offense if the table's too intense;

A:

Can't go wrong with the Pale Food Polka.

M:

Too many shades pervading your Jello...
That's a little too melodramatic.

K/V:

Dishes you serve deserve a "hosanna"
When your menu is monochromatic!

M:

Keep it light,

V:

Keep it gray,

K:

Keep paprika far away, as you casu'llly sashay across the floor—

A:

You too can do the Pale Food Polka, the dance that we adore!

(During musical break Signe tries to dance with Vivian.)

V: Lutherans don't dance, dear!

M: *(Karin and Vivian hold up an apron as Mavis gets Signe's attention.)* Signe, this is a little more our speed.

(Mavis stabs 2 rolls with kitchen forks and presents the “dancing buns”.)

They sing.

V:

Give your peas a pasty gloss...ladle on the butter sauce!

M:

Simplify your color scheme, with a pint of sour cream!

K:

Cabbage has a gaudy glow; boil it ‘til it’s white as snow!

V:

Chocolate frosting fails the test...

M/K:

People like vanilla best!

A:

Keep a load of lard close at hand...Hey, ladies, strike up the bland...and...

M:

On a festive “occazhe,” stick to ecru, tan and beige;

A:

Move your tail to the Pale Food Polka!

V: Don’t be brash, don’t be bold, when you’re nourishing the fold,

A:

And soon they’ll do the Pale Food Polka!

K:

Purple and red are dreadfully giddy
And result in a hideous salad.

V/M:

Picture the grins your kin’ll be wearing when the plates you’re preparing are pallid.

K:

Make it meek,

V:

Make it mild,

M:

Make it weak and never wild; ev'ry mother, dad and child will beg for more...

A:

You too can do the Pale Food Polka, the dance that we adore!

M:

Not too much flavor!

A:

Do the dance that we adore!

S:

To curry favor...

A:

Do the dance that we adore!

K/M/V:

Curry?!?!?!?

SONG ENDS

Pastor: *[Enters very upbeat!]* Ladies! We just sold another 12 tickets! Two station wagons from Grace Methodist Church just up the road! Mel, the snowplow operator called and said, "Pastor Gunderson, if Karin is cooking, I am getting out the plow and leading those wagons to the Promised Land."

M: Like lambs to lutefisk.

P: That's a lot at the last minute, but I am confident you ladies can handle it. *[Together he and Signe roll the Watkins nectar out of the kitchen.]*

V: Total tickets now, 187! 50 at a shift, that's three and a half shifts.

M: That's a record! Remember when we all fit around one table?

K: *[Calling out to Signe who re-enters]* Signe, time to restock. Lets start with some more butter. *[Signe starts to put on her coat and scarf.]*

V: We'll need another five pounds of fish.

M: Round three of potatoes. *[She dumps some in the sink.]*

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V: Can you believe some of those city people use instant potatoes in their lefse?

S: But, ja, Mrs. Snustad, I have had it and I can't tell the difference. *(Everyone reacts.)*

V: Well, I can tell the difference.

S: So is all change bad, Mrs. Snustad?

V: Young lady, the whole point of tradition is that you don't willy-nilly change things about. Case in point...changing our black hymnals to RED!

M: Communists!

S: *[Acting innocent.]* Oh, so all change is bad.

K: Signe, we need more butter. Could you run out to the pick-up and bring back another 40 pounds? *[Signe stares at her mother for a couple of seconds, then wheels and leaves.]*

M: *(as Signe exits.)*...about half pound per person.

(There is clearly tension in the room. Mavis casually goes back to work while Karin and Vivian begin a seemingly innocent and friendly exchange.)

V: The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

K: You think?

V: Yes, I do. Someone was just like that at her age.

K: And look how I turned out. With the exception of you I am as traditional as anyone in this church.

V: I wouldn't go that far. I won't put up with that sassy attitude in my kitchen!

K: Well, it's not entirely yours, Mrs. Snustad. It is a little bit "ours."

V: See what I mean?! Always talking back.

K: Sometimes I wasn't talking back I was speaking up.

V: Don't think I don't know what is going on. You are a gifted cook, and one day you will run this kitchen. But until that day comes, I wash and you dry!

S: *[Signe enters carrying 40 pounds of butter. She is covered in snow.]* It's still coming down. But the cars are backed up down the road. **We just sold another 13 tickets.**

V: 13 tickets! That makes two hundred people.

K: 200 people?! We've got to get to work!

M: This is not just a record, it's a historic turnout!

All: This is most certainly true!

Get Down To Business!

Karin:

Butter the lefse, butter the corn;
 'Stead of just putterin', better be butterin' just as sure as you were born.
 Peel a potato, chop up a chive;
 Glasses are glimmerin', sauces are simmerin', jumpin' and jammin' to the jive.
 We gotta...
 Get down, get down to business.
 Sister, you know that it's true;
 Church Basement Ladies got an awful lotta cookin' to do!

All:

Grease up the griddle, slice up the beets;
 Shell up a mess o' peas, follow the recipes for extraordinary eats.
 Rattle the roaster, bang on the bowls;
 Tap on the Tupperware, set up a supper where we can redeem some hungry souls.
 We gotta...
 Get down, get down to business.
 Sister, there's no time to spare;
 Church Basement Ladies got an awful lotta food to prepare!
 They'll be cheering, and how... We'll be taking a bow...
 When they check out the chow that we're pitchin'.
 So get up on your feet...Keepin' time to the beat;

Karin:

If you can't take the heat,

All:

Get outta the kitchen!
 Hundreds of women, hundreds of men,
 Soon'll be eyein' the cake 'n' the pie 'n' they'll each consume enough for ten!
 We need to hustle; we know that we're
 Needin' a miracle, for we can hear a colossal commotion drawing near.
 We gotta...
 Get down, get down to business.
 Sister, we never say "no."
 Church Basement Ladies got their aprons on; they're ready to go.

So on with the show...

Church Basement Ladies got their aprons on; they're ready to go!

The ladies have removed their work aprons and put on fancy serving aprons. As they throw open the serving window we hear Willie ringing the church bell in the distance.

Yeah!

END OF SCENE

ACT I / SCENE 2...THE FUNERAL

THE FOLLOWING FEBUARY, 1965

Lights up on the Pastor sitting alone in the kitchen. He is drinking a cup of coffee and finishing his funeral sermon. It is February. Subzero temperature but not much snow.

Song For Willie

Pastor:

(Haltingly, searching for the words...)

Willie was a good man...Willie was a kind man...Conscientious, and neighborly too.

Willie leaves a widow...Willie loved his Zelda...All of this is most certainly true.

But these words don't convey what I'm trying to say,

Why we'll mourn him and miss him so much.

How to honor the worth of his time here on earth, and the lives he'll continue to touch?

Half-past eight each Sunday morning, just like clockwork,

And whenever else we'd really need him here,

In the summer's heat or deepest snows of winter

We could always count on Willie to appear.

And he'd scale the wooden steps up to the belfry,

Softly humming something sacred as he'd climb.

He'd extend his calloused hands in adoration,

Grab the knotted rope and make that church bell chime!

And the bell would ring, ring...calling all to come and worship.

Ring, ring...for a new day had begun.

And old Willie'd swing, swing...to the joyous clang and clamor.

A kid at Christmas never had such fun! God bless you, Willie, for a job well done.

The women appear in choir robes and sing with the Pastor.

Let the bell now ring, ring...for our brother, Willie Bjornson.

Ring, ring...for the battle has been won.

Hear the angels sing, sing...as they welcome him to heaven.

His spirit shining brighter than the sun. God bless you, Willie, for a job well done.

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Thou good and faithful servant, job well done.

SONG ENDS

[The kitchen intercom phone rings.]

P: Kitchen. Oh yes, dear, I was just finishing Willie's eulogy. I'll be right up. *[He exits.]*

(Karin and Signe enter wearing hats and boots and carrying a variety of hotdishes wrapped in dishtowels. They hang up their coats, put on aprons, and busy themselves with the coffee, the Watkins nectar, and other meal preparations.)

S: *[Exasperated.]* Mother!

K: Pat Kilkenny is a good boy, but he is a Catholic. It seems reasonable for your mother to ask if you are getting serious about him. *(Signe gives another exasperated sigh)* What about Harry Hauge?

S: What about him?

K: Do you still see him around campus?

S: He's in a couple of my classes...

K: Now he is a nice Lutheran boy. Handsome too.

S: Oh, Mom, I've told you before, I don't think of Harry that way. *(altho she is starting to)* Don't worry, nothing and no one is going to stop me from earning my degree.

P: *(Enters with a pan of Lasagna covered in foil and a very heavy cake)* More food!

K: Pastor Gunderson. Let me help you.

P: Careful! This cake is from Barbara Helgeson.

K: *[Karin lifts the cake and almost drops it.]* How much does this weigh?
(Karin wrestles it to the island and drops it so it spins. All wait and watch it spin until it's done).

K/S: 50 pounds!

P: And my wife made her special Eytalian lasagna!

K: Lasagna?

P: Yes! It's that new thing they call, "vegetarian!" Meaning no meat and all vegetables! It's all the rage in the cities.

K: Well, that's ...nice. How are you this cold morning? I know we are a little early, but we wanted to have plenty of time to warm things up.

P: Believe me I could use some company just now. Signe. Thank you so much for braving the cold and **coming** home for the funeral. Willie always thought you were something special.

S: I really cared for Willie.

P: Indeed, we'll all miss ol' Willie.

K: This is a rough one, isn't it Pastor? We all were so fond of Willie, **and I know you** depended on him so much around here.

P: For the first time in my life I am not sure I will be able to make it through the funeral.

K: Of course you will, Pastor. When you speak of Willie's acts of service you will find your place to guide and be strong for others.

P: You know, Karin, sometimes I feel more at home...closer to grace...when I am in this kitchen than I do when I am in the sanctuary. I guess, in many ways, this kitchen is my personal sanctuary. Now that Willie's gone, don't be surprised at seeing me down here **more often**, asking you for your help!

M: *[Enters in coat, scarf, men's overshoes and carrying three pans of bars covered in foil. Signe rushes to help her.]* Morning all! I brought bars.

P: My wife made lasagna!

M: What?!

K: It's "vegetarian."

M: Veger what?!

S: It's all the rage in the cities.

M: What! Oh. Well, that's...nice. My it is terrible cold. This is tough one isn't it Pastor? It's downright nippy. I heard 20 below.

K: Nippy, ja. I heard 22 below.

P: Ja, nippy. I heard only 17 below.

(Mavis grabs a knife and starts cutting bars. Signe gets her an apron.)

M: I would have been here earlier but I had to stop and help the Widow Snustad get her car started. She wouldn't ride in mine. Said it smelled barn. Doesn't. Mostly smells dogs and grandkids. I got her car going for her.

P: Mavis, you are truly a great mechanic.

M: Thank you, Pastor. *(As she talks she gestures with the knife in the Pastor's direction. He manages to avoid it. Barely.)* When Gilmer got his left hand cut off a couple of years ago I had to learn to fix a whole new bunch of stuff. Farmer's wives, you know. We have to know how to fix plumbing, machines, people, animals, and, of course, the books.

P: Mavis, when Gilmer lost his hand, was that the time when the combine backed over him or the time when the tractor flipped over and landed on top of him?

M: Neither. The combine crushed his spleen and the tractor broke his legs... both of them... in two places... each. *(As she speaks she continues to gesture with the knife.)* This was the time the manure spreader caught the sleeve of his coat and pulled his hand into the gears.

S: And Mrs. Snustad said it was because he was working on Sunday.

K: Does it seem cold in here to you?

S: It always seems cold in here to me. *(Signe puts her coat back on.)*

P: It does seem a bit chilly.

M: Not to me. I'm having an episode. *(Mavis opens the door of the refrigerator and stands there for a moment in an attempt to cool off.)*

V: *[Vivian enters in hat and coat with Wonder Bread bags on her feet. She is carrying another hotdish. Signe helps her with her coat, hat and hotdish. Vivian crosses the stage walking in her breadbags to sit at the island. She raises her feet and Signe runs to her to take them off. Signe crosses to the floor boot rug with the bags and on the way she shakes them to get the excess water off].* Signe! Careful, that's a new pair. *(To Pastor)* Such a shock, Pastor. How's Willie's Mrs.? Had he been feeling poorly? He probably never said a word to anyone about how he was really feeling. Really nippy. I heard 21 below.

K: Ja, nippy. I heard 22 below.

M: Nippy, ja. I heard only 20 below.

P: 17.

M: 20.

V: *(She notices the lasagna)* Luh-zag-na?! *(mispronouncing It making it sound like it's the most horrible food imaginable)* For a funeral? Who made that?!

K: The Pastor's wife. *(Vivian's face falls.)*

M: It's "vegertarian." *[mispronouncing it]*

V: Yummmmmm... Well, that's... nice.

P: Thank you, ladies. I will tell my wife how much you all appreciate her lasagna. But **now** I must return to the real world. The families will be gathering soon. *[Exits. The ladies watch him go.]*

V: *(saying it correctly this time)* Lasagna.

M: It's "vegertarian."

S: It's all the rage in The Cities!

V: The Cities!

M: Right now I couldn't care less what Pastor's wife made. It is "freeze your spit in mid air" cold outside, and I'm so hot I can hardly stand it! Do you ladies know what I am talking about?

V: I remember those days.

M: And this girdle! Uffda!! With the way I am sweating it'll be welded to my body by the time I get home... But there is an upside!

(During the song Mavis tries to cool off, eventually ending up in the freezer.)

My Own Personal Island

Mavis:

Autumn leaves in such a hurry, chased away by Winter's fury;

Curtain up on Jack Frost's one-man show.

Icy winds bring on the shivers, frozen lakes and frozen rivers.

Barren trees stand silver in the snow.

We women of a certain age don't mind a bit when blizzards rage.

No, we don't let December's threat concern us, for we possess our own internal furnace!

Each hormonal fluctuation means a balmy, brief vacation

Even when it's twenty-two below.
Just a "zing" and a "Hey!" Soon I swing and I sway as I'm winging my way to...

My own personal island.
I have a ticket for one to a place where the sun never sets.
A younger gal might have pursued a cheap flight overnight to Bermuda,
Or maybe a sweet Tahitian retreat. But who needs Tahiti? I make my own heat on my
Own personal island.
Oh, how the thought of it thrills as I'm chasing the chills with the sweats.
Just a flash and I'm there; I would swear I'm in the Bahamas...
Too hot for pajamas, on my personal, tropical isle!

Vivian/Karin:

She's on her own personal island. (**Mavis:** Isn't it fun? Here comes the sun!)
She gets a radiant blush, and the sleet and the slush disappear.

Mavis:

In no time at all I can take a quick cruise to my private Jamaica.
So bring on the storm; though flakes swirl and swarm,
I'm ruddy and rosy and cozy and warm on my own personal island
I feel my temperature rise and the grayest of skies start to clear.
First my ears start to ring, and then *ping!*
I'm sailing the high tide...I'm mangoed and Mai Tai'd on my personal, tropical isle!

Vivian/Karin:

Now she's sipping iced tea by the sea in pre-Castro Cuba,

Mavis:

Or maybe Aruba, on my personal, tropical isle.

Vivian/Karin:

She's beginning to glow and although she's closer to Fargo,

Mavis:

It feels like Key Largo

All:

On my/her personal, tropical

Mavis:

I need a popsicle!

All:

Personal, tropical isle...tropical isle...tropical isle!

SONG ENDS

NEW SCRIPT – July 3, 2016

M: *[As K are helps her out of the freezer]* Maybe we should back ‘er out like a John Deere. *[After she is out]* Well, Willie woulda sure got a kick out of that!

V: *(preparing to exit)* Karin, if you have things under control down here, I’ll go sit with the family for bit.

K: I think the Pastor’s wife is with them.

V: Really?

K: I can tell she is good with people.

V: That’s...nice.

[The other three ladies roll their eyes.]

S: Wasn’t Willie related to Pastor Gunderson?

M: Ja. Distant cousins through marriage on his late wife’s side. *(Mavis goes back to cutting bars. Karin fills salt and pepper shakers. Vivian puts hotdishes in the oven to warm up.)* Willie Bjornson was the oldest son of Ragnar and Tillie Bjornson. They farmed 160 acres over by Arthur and Eleanor Hauge, who’s oldest boy, Harry, or should I say “Handsome Harry”, is also down at the U of M. *(To Signe)* You still see him around campus?

S: Sometimes...

M: Anyway, the Pastor’s new wife is the granddaughter of Ingmar and Helga Bjornson, who must be in their nineties and still live over by Merv and Opal Olson.

K: I thought Merv and Opal were Munsons and lived by Karl and Karlin Carlson!

M: No you’re thinking of Merv and Margret Mendelsson. Way in the back? *(She gestures with the knife.)* Christmas and Easter?

K: Oh, Ja!

M: Now, *that* Merv is the half brother of your late husband, Lars, Mrs Snustad. How long has it been since he passed?

V: Twenty-five years last Christmas. I miss him every single day! Lars and I were eating Christmas dinner when he looked at me, smiled, took a bite and just keeled over and died... It had nothing to do with my cooking at all!! You can image how relieved I was!!.. Well, let’s get out the funeral food.

(She starts to take funeral meat, butter, bread and other sandwich fixings from the fridge. The other women also get back to work).

M: *[To Signe.]* So, young lady, Miss Big Shot University Student...*[As the Pastor]* Let's see what you remember about funeral food. I am going to ask you one of those multiple choice questions just like down at the Big Shot University. Is the correct term, A) covered dish, B) casserole or C) hotdish?

S: Anyone raised in Minnesota knows that the answer is, C) hotdish.

M: And are hotdishes a part of a funeral lunch? *[Signe looks at Mavis as if she's crazy]*

S: Oh, my, yes. Hotdishes are the bread and butter of the Lutheran Funeral Spread.

M: Pickles?

S: Yes. The Seven Sacred Pickles.

M: Name them.

S: Dill, sweet, chunky, bread and butter, beet, watermelon and herring.

M: Pretty good. The funeral meat?

S: Minced ham on white bread.

M: Cheese?

S: Cheese Whiz with olives on rye bread. And egg salad on wheat.

M: Cut or uncut?

S: Cut. *(Throughout the "quiz" Karin has been mouthing the answers and Signe looks to her for help on this one. Mavis catches her.)* Diagonally.

M: And?

S: Buttered!

M: And Willie always laughed when we called this food the what?

S: The "Dead Spread."

M: And for your final bonus question: What does the "Dead Spread" never include?

All: *[Stage whisper]* Lasagna! This is most certainly true.

P: *(Enters, looking a bit worried.)* You know, it seems really cold in the building. I tried turning up the thermostat, but nothing happened. The congregation is putting their coats back on and the Hyicksons seem to be getting upset.

V: Why Willie ever married a Hyickson, I'll never know.

P: Ah, Mrs. Snustad, as I have recently re-discovered, love is a mysterious mystery. *(Vivian just stares at him).* You know, I feel like there is something about the furnace I am supposed to be remembering at this moment.

P: You know, I feel like there is something about the furnace I **should** be remembering.

K: Pastor, there is nothing to worry about. Willie always takes care of...

All: That's it!

S: Willie always took care of the furnace.

M: I'll check the furnace. *[She exits toward the furnace room but the door sticks. She gives it a big push.]* Oh, this door. *(It opens)* Got it.

S: **Now that Willie's gone,** don't you think **it** might be a good time to finally... *(Loud banging from furnace room.)* ...finally... *(more banging.)* ...finally buy a new furnace?

V: Let's not get ahead of ourselves. Just because we're having a little problem doesn't mean we have to buy a whole new furnace.

M: *[We hear loud banging from the furnace room.]* Ouch! I'm alright! Well, I've got good news and bad news. *[All groan]* The good news is I found the problem. *(All sigh of relief. As Mavis enters her dress is hiked up and a few buttons are undone.)* The bad news is I can't fix it. The furnace needs a new whatchmacallit. *(She presents the part in question.)* I could put the part in now if we had one, but we don't. We'll have to order it. That'll probably take a few weeks. *(Mavis opens the refrigerator to cool off a little.)*

P: Weeks!?!?

K: Looks like we'll have to cancel the funeral.

V: And we can just "winter Willie over"...Bury him in the spring.

P: You may be right.

M: **Whoa there, Nelly. Not so fast.** Pastor, I will figure out some way to get heat for this church! *(Mavis grabs a match and exits to the furnace room.)*

P: Mavis, the fate of this funeral is completely in your hands. Not that I want to put any pressure on her.

M: *(Off)* Well I've got good news and bad news. The bad news is that there is no way on earth that this old oil furnace will ever work again. *[All groan as Mavis re-enters. She has taken the top part of her dress down revealing her slip. The Pastor is embarrassed and turns away.]* But the good news is that there is an old wood-burning stove in there. Now, it hasn't been used in a long time but it still works.

K: Mavis, how do you know that?

M: Because I started a fire in it. *[Mavis exits.]*

P: You started a fire in that old thing? You could burn down the church!

S: Where did you find the wood?

M: *[Off]* Scrap lumber! *[Returns]* I saw this pile way off in the back corner under an old tarp. Just like Gilmer's. I knew it had to be scrap lumber.

P: The pile in the corner?

M: Ja, Pastor. I used your pile.

P: That wasn't my lumber in the corner. That was Willie's! He always said to me, "You never know when it might come in handy."

V: Willie's scrap lumber is heating this building...

K: ... and saving his own funeral.

S: It's like sending a Viking king out on his own burning ship.

P: *[Laughs]* Ja. You are right. I had better get back upstairs and get the service started before anything else happens. *[Exits]*

S: Look! The butter is spreadable again!

V: Ja! it is warming up in here.

The ladies begin taking off their coats.

M: You're telling me.

K: Well, ladies I think Willie would say, "Yob vell done!"

Closer To Heaven (reprise)

A:
May God bless you, our dear Willie, goodbye...
We pray as your Viking ship sails off.
But we have duties we never would shirk,

M:
So here we are, working our a...

All except M:
Take a look around;

A:
You'll see you're...
Closer to heaven in the church basement,
Where you'll find us standing guard.
Healthy women, fit as a fiddle;

M:
I'll just crack the window a little!

A:
We love to be here in the church basement,
Even though the work is hard.
We are staunch defenders of the church basement code,
Thankful for the blessings which the Lord has bestowed;
Grateful to be walking down the very same road...
Those who went before us trod,
Here below the house of...

(They all spring to action as church bells are heard in the distance.)

...God!

INTERMISSION

ACT 2

**ACT II / SCENE 1... THE HAWAIIAN EASTER HOLIDAY GETAWAY
FURNACE FUNDRAISER!
EASTER OF THE SAME YEAR.**

Lights up on Karin, Mavis, and Vivian wearing overcoats. During the course of the song they will remove these coats to reveal their Hawaiian Easter Get-ups.

**The Hawaiian Easter Holiday Getaway Furnace Fundraiser Song:
(Get Down To Business! reprise)**

M:

Winter was wicked;
We didn't mind.
Though it was chilly, we owe it to Willie for leavin' lots of wood behind

K:

But now we're down to
Nothin' but sticks.
Certainly Mavis was able to save us, but that was a temporary fix.

A:

We gotta get down, get down to business.
Sisters, let put on our leis...
Church Basement Ladies got an awful lotta money to raise!

We've concocted a scheme with a whimsical theme.
And we're hopin' our dream can come true now.
Since our furnace is old, and it can't fight the cold,

K:

We've decided to hold... *[They remove their coats.]*

A:

A Lutheran luau!

Oh, what a way to
Generate cash.
Makin' some moolah by doin' the hula at our Hawaiian Easter bash.
It can be rainy
This time of year;
So if it's showery, wear somethin' flowery...we can bring Honolulu here!

We gotta get down, get down to business.
Sisters, we're short on our dough

Church Basement Ladies got their muumuus
They're ready to go.

V: (Spoken)
I feel like Don Ho!

A:
Church Basement Ladies got their muumuus on,
They're ready to go! Yeah!!!

SONG ENDS

Pastor enters. The ladies hang up their coats and put on aprons. They cut bars, make coffee and Watkins, and generally busy themselves with meal preparations.

V: *[To Pastor who looks on, smiling.]* I advised against it!

P: Now, now, Mrs. Snustad, you look charming no matter what you wear. And the entire congregation did vote their enthusiastic support for having a Furnace Fundraiser. *[Turning to Mavis.]* On behalf of the entire church, Mavis, I want to thank you.

M: Thank you, Pastor. That means a lot.

P: Mavis, the marvelous mechanic! You kept the furnace going all winter long. Meanwhile, the scrap lumber piles of all the men in this church started mysteriously disappearing, only to show up on our doorstep like abandoned orphans.-What could we do but use the wood to heat the church?! No surprise those very same men voted with great enthusiasm for this Hawaiian Holiday themed Furnace Fundraiser. And they bought every ticket! I have never seen the men in this congregation give so much money so fast!

V: I advised against it.

P: And we all respect you for that, Mrs. Snustad.

S: *[Enters in a rush.]* Sorry I'm late.

K: Hi, honey!

S: Pat's truck got stuck in the mud on County Road 13.

M: Ah, spring. The season of love...and mud!

V: Pat?

K: Pat Kilkenny.

V: *(disapproving)* Patrick Sean Kilkenny? The Catholic boy....?!

P: Well, our student of higher learning returns. Welcome home, Signe.

S: Thank you, Pastor.

P: Home is the hunter, home from the hill *[He smiles at the quote...the ladies stare at him.]* and home is the student with a load of laundry for her mother. Aren't you supposed to be having fun down in the cities right now?

V: The Cities!

S: It's Easter vacation.

M: Say, how's that Handsome Harry? Did he come home for Easter, too?

S: I think so.

V: Now, he's a nice Lutheran boy... Why didn't you get a ride home with him?

S: He's... I...we...I... *(the ladies watch as she fumbles...)*

P: Well, ladies, I think I should get upstairs to find Axel Oleson. He's volunteered to play the Hawaiian Easter Bunny and I expected him here by now. *[to Snustad]* I'm sure glad I don't have to wear that get-up. *[She stares at him, he retreats]* Good to see you home, Signe. We miss your smile around here. *[Exits.]*

S: Thank you, Pastor.

V: The Pastor looks tired. That new wife of his is wearing him out.

M: Tired but happy.

K: *(to Signe)* The Pastor's wife came up with the idea of using a Hawaiian theme for the furnace fundraiser. She even made a cute Easter Bunny costume!

V: Nothing says Easter like a High-why-an Bunny! The Pastor's new wife is a classic example of what happens to a young lady when she moves to the Cities! I warned you when you went there, Karin. And I strongly advised against Signe leaving us to go there too.

S: Have you ever been to the Cities Mrs. Snustad?

V: Why would I ever want to go to a place like that?!

The Cities**Vivian:**

The depths of Hades have released a horrible two-headed beast;
 At night, you'll hear it beckon from a distance.
 It lures you with its siren song and even if your faith is strong,
 It tears down and it wears down your resistance.
 The ruin of the wretched and the hapless,
 What men have named "St. Paul and Minneap'lis!"

There's shame and degradation, and secular temptation in The Cities.
 If Satan has designed it, the odds are good you'll find it in The Cities.
 A smorgasbord of smut that serves a million kinds of sinning,
 Enough to set the needle on your moral compass spinning.
 Your standards start decaying whenever you are paying a call
 On The Cities—Minneapolis and Saint Paul!

You parents should beware of this dark and dreadful pair of
 Unholy twins so sinister, it's scary.
 They're gaudy and they're gruesome, a terrifying twosome;
 The Sodom and Gomorrah of the prairie!

Your daughter should be cautious; the air could make her nauseous in The Cities.
 (**Mavis/Karin:** *Slick and sleazy; the air could make her queasy!*)
 You shouldn't send your son there; demonic deeds are done there in The Cities.
 (**Mavis/Karin:** *He'll revel with the devil!*)
 They'll socialize with city kids at Bible Camp this summer,
 And come home using city words like "discotheque" and "bummer;"
 Then just when they're improving, they'll tell you that they're moving this fall...
 To The Cities—Minneapolis and Saint Paul!
 Provocative and pretentious, lascivious and licentious,

A pitiful pit where cockroaches crawl.
 That's The Cities...Minneapolis and Saint Paul!

SONG ENDS

K: Let's get these salads ready to serve.

M: [*Opening the refrigerator.*] Look at our celebration of salads! Potato Salad! Lime Jello Salad! And this Spam and Macaroni Salad.

V: Spam and Macaroni? Arlene Jepperson. Remember the time when we found the big hairball?

M: Which time?

K: Creations of the heart made for the stomach. *[The ladies begin to set out the food.]*

P: *[Enter.]* Ladies, has Axel been around here? I can't seem to find him anywhere.

S: He's probably stuck in the mud, Pastor.

K: Ja, his driveway is a mile of mud.

V: City people have no idea.

M: The last person in the world who would get stuck in the mud is Axel Oleson. He has four John Deere's, each bigger than the other.

P: I'm sure he'll show up. I tell you, everyone is so excited about this. You should see all the Hawaiian Easter outfits! Even Inez.

K: You mean Inez Thorvig is wearing a color other than black or gray?

P: Actually she has on a nice red dress.

[As he exits K,S,& M rush to the door to take a peek at Inez. V does not approve and stays seated. They reel back into the kitchen trying to, unsuccessfully, hold back their laughter. This ends in a group sigh.]

M: Well, that's nice.

V: Oh really? So, Signe, about that Pat Kilkenny,. Do you remember when Inez's boy married a Catholic and "turned?" Remember what it did to the two families?

M: *[Nods in agreement]* I do! I do! I do! I do!

V: *[Cutting her off before she has the chance to get going]* ...Inez, the poor thing, she came to me with tears in her eyes....

K / S: What?

K: Inez Thorvig cried?!

V: Almost! Her son "turning" broke her heart! All I said to her was that any couple who would sign over their kids to the Pope, get married in the morning, and agree to a wild dance at the VFW Hall have certainly given up their inheritance in the kingdom!

S: Mrs. Snustad, Catholics are allowed to dance.

V: We can't risk getting that close.

K: Vivian, if you think about it, we Lutherans have some peculiarities of our own...

S: This is most certainly true.

This Is Most Certainly True

[During the song the ladies form a “kitchen band”, using various items in the kitchen as instruments.]

Karin: They glorify Mary,

Signe: We glorify rice.

K: They have seven sacraments;

S: We think two will suffice.

K: St. Christopher guides them down the highway when they’re traveling to St. Paul.

S: We easily navigate the highway with our old dashboard compass ball!

K: They love to yell “Bingo!”

S: Like we hadn’t heard...

K: And their “friar” is a man,

S: While our “fryer’s” a bird.

K: They have Holy Days of Obligation;

S: We have chores to do.

B: This is most certainly true!

K/S/M: No two ways about it, there ain’t no cause to doubt it;

B: Martin stirred up quite a hullabaloo.

S: Luther’s activism resulted in a schism;

B: This is most certainly true!

S: They kneel when they’re praying;

K: We pray on our feet.

S: They eat fish to sacrifice;

K: Lutefisk is a treat!

S: When Catholics lose a thing of value, good St. Anthony's unsurpassed.

K: When Lutherans lose a thing of value, we say "Where did I have it last?"

S: They have purgatory;

K: We'd rather not wait.

S: Fragrant incense fills their air...

K: We think AirWick is great!

S: They have children by the dozen,

K: We have relatively few.

B: This is most certainly true!

K/M/S: Don't try to dispute it, 'cause only fools refute it.

B: Might as well maintain the sky isn't blue.

K: Five and ninety theses have splintered up our species;

B: This is most certainly true!

S: They go to confession;

K: We try not to slip.

S: They have miracles galore;

K: We have Miracle Whip!

S: When Catholic people say the Lord's Prayer, they're so reverent and devout;

K: When Lutheran people say the Lord's Prayer, we remember what they left out!

S: But maybe tomorrow, we'll see with new eyes.

We'll awaken on that day and we'll all realize

Every woman is our sister; every man's our brother, too...

B: This is most certainly true!

K/M/S: Words as yet unspoken shall fix what had been broken;

B: Have some faith that God will always come through!

S: We're His holy people,

K: Regardless of the steeple.

B: This is most certainly true...

All: This is most certainly true.

SONG ENDS

V: So, Signe, **does that mean** you **are** willing to sign over your children to the Pope?!

S: They don't actually have you sign a piece of paper, They tattoo it on your head.

K: Signe....

V: What!!

S: That's right. After you are married to a Catholic, a group of secret priests take you to a secret location where they shave your head in a very super secret ceremony. Then this ultra secret tattooing priest tattoos on your head: "All your children's souls must go directly to the Pope." And that is why a Catholic woman has to wear a kerchief over her head to church.

V: *[Flabbergasted. Looks at Signe and then turns slowly to Karin.]* I blame you. She is too big for her britches and she gets this from you-

K: Mrs. Snustad, let's-

V: *[To Signe.]* I have had just about enough of this disrespect in my kitchen! *[Looks at Karin.]* Karin, perhaps you could find something helpful for your daughter to do...elsewhere.

S: *[Surprised.]* You can't throw me out of this kitchen!

K: *[In a gentle voice.]* Signe.

S: *[Looking at her mother.]* Mother, she can't just order me out.

K: Of course, she can't. Now, why don't you take these bars over to the serving window and then help Mavis push the Watkins Nectar out into the fellowship hall?

S: Mother, I have my rights!

K: Signe, would you be the wonderful person we both know you are and help Mavis?

Signe glares at her mother then, full of youthful outrage, helps Mavis. They exit.

V: Well?

K: Well?

V: She lacks discipline!

K: She's 19 and you are...old enough to know better. What is really bothering you?
...Vivian... what is it?

V: Karin...the church is changing too much...and too fast. Churches aren't supposed to change. I don't want my church to change. It's just, too, much! First the hymnals went from black to red. And if that weren't enough, my one and only true church splits into all these synods: ALC, ELC, the LFC, the UELC, LCMS, TALC the LCA, the AFLC and, and, and, UCLA! It all makes my head spin!... and the guitars... in the sanctuary! And the next thing I know I'm in a muumuu at an Easter Egg Roll! I just feel awful! Maybe I'm just too old, Karin... The thing that makes me feel this way is...that... everyone likes all this... but me. I feel lost.

K: I've got it! I know what we need to do. We need to unite all the synods of the church and form the AFL-CIO!

V: What...

K: Ja! The AFL-CIO. The American Federation of Lutherans !...Coerced Into One!!!!

V: *[They laugh together until Vivian comes to a realization]* You know what...I think it is time for a change in the kitchen: a changing of the guard around here. From now on...you wash...I'll dry.

[Signe and Mavis enter.]

S: Mrs. Snustad, I am so sorry.

V: It's alright, Signe. Your mother and I had a good talk.

M: As Pastor says, "the time's they are a changin'"

V: Uff da.

Sing A New Song

K / M / V:

How I love those hymns of old;
Precious prayers, as pure as gold.
Great songs of praise from bygone days.

Hallelujah, hallelujah

Signe:

Now, every generation has music of its own;
Kids today would never play great-grandma's gramophone.
Yes, time keeps moving forward, the earth keeps spinning 'round.
Make the choice to raise your voice and make a joyful sound!

Sing a new song, sing a new song.
Sing a fresh and free kind of melody,
And soon, ev'ryone'll sing along!
Whether sixteenth, eighth or quarter,
It's the same old notes in a different order.
Sing a new song, hallelujah!

The Pastor has entered carrying a cardboard box. Music continues under the dialogue.

P: You won't believe this. Axel Oleson is stuck. Every one of his tractors is stuck in the mud! Who will we get to play the Hawaiian Easter Bunny on such short notice?

[The ladies look at him and smile.]

P: Oh no...I can't do that...it's...it's ... unpastorly!

K: What would Willie do?

P: Bring me the bunny suit!

V:

Just don't forget to honor the music of the past;
Tunes you hear from yesteryear were surely built to last.
We learn where we are going by knowing where we've been.
Harmony shall always be, so let your song begin!

[Mavis and Karin help the Pastor dress in the homemade Bunny Suit as Signe tries to get Vivian to clap on the 2 and the 4, to no avail.]

Vivian/Karin/Mavis (under)

How I love these hymns of old;
 Precious prayers, as pure as gold.
 Great songs of praise from bygone days.
 Hallelujah, hallelujah

Signe/Pastor:

Sing a new song, sing a new song.
 Sing a novel score never heard before,
 And don't worry if it's right or wrong. If you want to feel the spirit,
 Shout it loud and proud so the crowd can hear it!
 Sing a new song, hallelujah!

The Pastor is revealed in his Easter Bunny get-up.

All:

Sing a new song, come on and sing a new song.
 Now you know your part; open up your heart
 And start cantillating clear and strong!
 Like the ancient psalms implore us,
 We can turn the world into one big chorus.
 Sing a new song, hallelujah.
 Sing a new song, hallelu...

P: I can add this to the long list of things that seminary does not prepare you for! Show Business! (*Ala Jimmy Durante*) Ah Cha Cha Cha Chaaaa!

All: Hallelujah! [*The Pastor hops out the door.*]

END OF SCENE**ACT II / Scene 2... THE WEDDING**

THREE YEARS LATER, 1968

It is a steamy hot July day. As the lights come up, we see the Pastor sitting alone drinking a cup of coffee. He is working on the Sunday announcements.

P: [*To himself as he finishes writing*] Alright, let's see how this sounds. ~~Will~~ everyone please be seated for the morning announcements. We welcome our guests to East Cornucopia Lutheran Church Of The Prairie this morning. Please sign the register in the Narthex on your way out. OK here goes. Let this heat wave remind us that summer camp will be starting next week and yes there will be mosquitoes at camp! But, parents, don't worry! The day the kids arrive at camp we spray not only the entire grounds but also every single child with DDT! That sure takes care of those pesky bugs. What next...oh yes. [*Back to official voice*] There will be a short cemetery committee meeting

next Tuesday evening at 8:00 p.m. to discuss the gopher situation. That's pretty much self-explanatory.

For Family Night next week Roger Svingen, home on a six month furlough, will be here to show a filmstrip about the mission work he is doing in North Borneo. Of course, Lord, you and I know some people will complain about having to see the topless native women, whom the complainers always call, "the bare-naked heathens!" And, of course, when I say "some people" I mean the same people who always complain. Mrs Thorvig, Mrs Bjornson and Mrs Snustad. They blush when they look at National Geographic!

Since it is just you and me, Lord, I will confess to you that I enjoy seeing those three ladies squirm at having to watch those "naked natives!" One of life's small and completely guilty pleasures. Besides, we both know the only reason they get nervous watching those filmstrips is because they might see some of the clothing they donated to the church clothing drive.

[Vivian enters. She is dressed for the wedding. She puts on her apron and begins making coffee.]

P: Mrs. Snustad, good morning.

V: Good morning, Pastor. Getting ready for the big wedding?

P: Yes I am. I am a very lucky man, Mrs. Snustad. I remember when Karin and Elroy first brought Signe in here as a sweet little baby in her baptism dress. **I watched her grow up, and go off to the University, and now....**

V: ...**she** is marrying that handsome Harry! I will confess Pastor, I was **a little** nervous when Signe was dating that Catholic boy. But I never said a word.

P: Indeed, Mrs. Snustad, you suffered in silence.

V: Even a fish wouldn't get caught if it kept its mouth shut!

[Mavis and Karin enter dressed for the wedding.]

V: Are you ready for the big wedding, Karin?

K: I sure hope so. I think so. I will be so relieved when this is over. It seems like we have been planning this forever.

M: Eighteen months. Uffda, it's hot in here. The church will be over a hundred degrees by wedding time. *[Mavis slams open the furnace door to retrieve a piece of scrap lumber, leaving the door open as she heads to the window.]* One of the few surviving pieces of scrap lumber from the famous Scrap Lumber Scourge of 1965! *[The Pastor smiles. Mavis uses the wood to prop the window open.]*

P: Well, I see the mother of the bride but I don't see the bride. Don't tell me you drove off and forgot her. *[He chuckles at his joke.]*

K: No, Pastor Gunderson. She was so cute. *[She unwraps the bride and groom cake topper.]* She said she wanted to stay behind for just a few minutes...to sit...by herself...in the house where she grew up. She said...she wanted to feel like a little girl just one more time before she got married and had to become an adult for the rest of her life.

M: *[Holding up the cake topper.]* Do you know how **my** Gilmer proposed to me? He called me up on the party line and said, "Hey, how'd you like to be buried in the family plot then?" I said, "I suppose."

P: How is Gilmer?

M: Great. The bailer is broke, but Gilmer should be out of traction next week. The doctors say he should be able to walk in time for the county fair.

V: That is good news, Mavis. Uffda, it's hot. Hopefully the cake will hold together. Those pure butter layers get pretty heavy.

[They "Ooohh" and "Aaahh" as they take the cake out of the refrigerator.]

K: Today I feel like a big lump of butter - constantly on the edge of melting and feeling incredibly rich at the same time.

M: We should stitch that on a dishtowel.

[Mavis goes to get nuts out of the cupboard as the kitchen phone rings. Vivian answers.]

V: Kitchen. Oh. Hi. Yes, he's here. OK. *[To the Pastor.]* Pastor, its your new wife. She wants you to come up and meet with the soloist.

P: Excuse me ladies. *[Exits humming.]*

K: The soloist.

V/M: Beverly Barsness!

K: My Elroy said you could drive a combine through her vibrato! But she loves Signe, and Signe loves her and it's not my wedding.

V: But Karin, she was the soloist at your wedding.

M: ...and now can you believe it? You're the mother of the bride!! Speaking of the bride, any idea where she might be?

V: This is not going to be a repeat of the Ernest Larson wedding day, is it Karin?

K: Of course not. But, just in case... Mavis, could you...

M: ...Go phone, ja. Maybe she's having trouble with the dress or something in this heat. *(She exits)*

V: Karin, has Signe run away, back to someone in the cities?

K: No! Just because I did something like that doesn't mean that she will. Signe is a lot smarter than I was at her age.

V: Oh, you're not so dumb! You ended up marrying Elroy Engleson, one of the kindest, most thoughtful men I know.

M: *[entering]* Hey girls, Inez wants to talk to one of you about the flowers.

V: (to Karin) I'll go. You stay here and pull yourself together. *[exits.]*

M: Lilies are always so nice at a wedding. *(exits)*

K: I said no lilies!! Elroy's allergic!! *(exits)*

Signe comes stumbling into the kitchen from outside. She is in her wedding dress but she is a mess and she is crying. She looks around wildly and sees the cake,

P: *(off)* Karin, any sign of Signe? It's getting rather late. The church is filling up with friends and family excited to see our young bride.

[Signe reels around in panic...she sees the open furnace door and runs through it just as Karin, Vivian and the Pastor enter. She slams the door shut behind her.]

K: Don't worry, Pastor. She'll be here. You know how stable Signe is.

P: I would have said the same thing about you at her age, but the day you were supposed to marry Earnest Larson you went running down the aisle and out the front door of the church.

K: *[As she talks Karin starts madly spooning nuts into nut cups]* Pastor Gunderson, this is nothing like that! I just left Signe at the house a few minutes ago. She was wearing her wedding dress. She told me she just wanted a few minutes by herself in the house where she grew up before she had to become an adult for the rest of her life!

V: *{looking at the mess 'o nuts}* That's nuts. Pastor Gunderson, you'll see the bride when the time is right and not one minute before.

P: I'm going to try and phone her! *[Exits.]*

K: She said she just wanted a few minutes alone in her childhood home...before she had to become an adult for the rest of her life.

M: *[Entering.]* There was a busy signal at your house. I don't know if it was Signe trying to call here or just that party line again.

K: *[She is starting to panic!]* I can't stand this. I am going back to the house!

M: Then I'm driving. Your driving is terrible at best. And right now you're such a wreck you have no business behind the wheel! *[Karin and Mavis grab their purses and run to the door. Mavis blocks Karin's exit and races out in front of her. They madly exit]*

V: *[Pause...calling after them]* Don't worry about a thing. I'll hold down the fort.

S: Mrs. Snustad!

V: *(Vivian jumps like she's heard a ghost)* Signe?

S: Mrs Snustad!

V: Where are you?

S: I'm stuck. I'm in the furnace room.

V: Stand back. *(Vivian slams open the furnace door and Signe enters the kitchen, closing the furnace door firmly behind her.)* Oh, Signe!! Look at you. You look awful.

S: I feel awful. *[She starts crying again.]*

V: Come on now we'll straighten you up. You'll be beautiful in no time.

S: *[Sobbing.]* I feel awful. I look awful! Life is awful! I thought I'd feel wonderful. But I feel awful.

V: Of course **you do**, you're getting married! *(Signe sobs)* People love **weddings** ~~to~~-but it's no fun for the bride and groom. Do you feel confused?

S: Yes!

V: Do you feel frightened and overwhelmed by it all?

S: Yes!

V: Do you feel so happy that it scares you?

S: Yes! Yes! I do!

V: Perfect! On my wedding day I was confused and frightened and deliriously happy all at the same time! And then the honeymoon.

S: Where did you go?

V: *(Director reserves the right to change this reference – “Mt Rushmore”?)* The Corn Palace. *[She looks at Signe and smiles.]* Because a Lutheran would rather honeymoon in South Dakota...

S / V: ...than Niagara Falls! *[They laugh together.]*

V: Signe, be thankful for everything you are feeling. Don't squander a bit of it. Lars and I...our time together was very short. And, when he died... I looked at all the moments I'd missed... the opportunities I wasted. All the things I had saved to be used for "good". Before I knew it... it was too late. My first piece of advice to you as a married woman, remember every day, every moment, is "for good."

For Good

V:

In a burgundy box,
In our living room closet,
There's a silverplate service for ten.
Such a beautiful pattern-
Oneida Alberta-
I don't know when I'll use it again.

It's a family heirloom,
Passed down through the daughters;
But in our house, it's well understood
That for everyday dinners, I set out the stainless,
I'm saving the silver for good.

S:

See now, I've often wondered
What kind of occasion
Would my mom feel is special enough
That we'd pack up the flatware
And melamine dishes
And bring out the fancier stuff.

How the silver would gleam
 In the glow of the candles!
 I can dream but in all likelihood.
 It's a dream that must wait for some far-off tomorrow;
 We're saving the silver for good.

V:
 So it sits on the shelf, in the dark by itself, in a veil of perpetual night.
 Tell me, where is the pleasure in possessing a treasure if that treasure is kept out of sight?

S:
 It's so funny to think
 I'm a lot like that silver;
 All my life I've been hidden away,
 Sitting silently, waiting for one perfect moment;
 Now I'm certain today is that day.

Now I've never been one
 For predicting the future,
 And I'm not sure that I ever could.
 But I can't help but trust in my heart when it tells me
 That we'll be together for good.

V&S:
 For better, for worse,
 For richer, for poorer,
 Forever, for always, for good.

SONG ENDS

[We hear Karin and Mavis outside. They enter and are relieved to find Signe there.]

K: Signe. Oh, thank goodness. I was worried sick. Are you alright?

S: I'm fine, now, mom.

M: *(Taking a look at Signe.)* Well, we need to get you fixed up fast.

P: *[From offstage.]* Yoo hoo, ladies, I've come to fetch the bride.

S: Pastors' coming!

V: We can't let Pastor see her like this. It would be a disgrace!!!! Quick we have to hide her.

(They all spring into action. Signe runs to the furnace door but it is stuck. Karin and Vivian indicate she should get into the freezer. Meanwhile Mavis rushes to block the door in order to keep the Pastor from entering.)

M: Boy-oh-boy is it hot in here. We need some air...

(Signe climbs into the freezer while Vivian tries to hide her veil. As the Pastor enters Karin notices Signe's train hanging out of the freezer and quickly wraps it around her waist as an apron.)

M: *(Casually)* Pastor. Oh, hi.

P: *[Sees the ladies standing suspiciously calm.]* What are you ladies **up to?**

K: **We're just** talking.

P: Talking? About Signe?

M: No. About women's stuff.

P: What!

M: Women's stuff...women's stuff...women's stuff...

P: Oh that. I see. That's beyond my realm of knowledge. *[He backs out of the room very embarrassed. The ladies breath a sign of relief and Karin opens the freezer. Signe pops up for a moment. Vivian throws the veil to Mavis. The Pastor pops back in.]* Karin,.. *(Karin slams the freezer shut again.)* Poor Harry's a nervous wreck, and I'm starting to **feel a little uneasy** myself... Where is Signe?

K: She's just running late in the heat. You know, that dress is so hot.

P: So you have spoken with her? *(The Pastor begins to pour himself a cup of coffee but Vivian grabs the pot and puts it in the fridge.)*

K: Well, uh...yes... she's on her way...she had to make a quick stop.

P: *(The Pastor looks around at the ladies and sits.)* Ladies, is there something you would like to tell me? *(He looks to Karin and Mavis who each shake their head "no." The Pastor looks to Vivian.)*

V: *[She struggles with this.]* Yes, Pastor, there is. *[Everyone looks at her. Pause.]*

P: Well?

V: Well...here's the thing...Karin and I...we'rre...working on the lefse! And we need your expert opinion. Now one of us made the lefse with instant potatoes and one with real potatoes. I can't tell the difference. I was wondering if you could help us out.

P: Lefse at a wedding?

V: It's all the rage in The Cities!!

P: I could never choose between you and Karin...

V: I know you don't want to make us feel bad...to feel like you are playing favorites...but we can fix that.

K: Sure we can. How?

V: By doing the ultimate... kitchen...tasting.... test.

K: Oh ja. That one. Remind me again how it works?

V: It's a blindfold test!

P-K-M: Blindfold!

V: Jaaa! *[Mavis pops the Pastors glasses off. The Pastor looks confused. Vivian ties her apron around his eye and begins to turn him in circles. Karin opens the freezer and Signe crawls out. She is gasping for air.]*

P: Wait a minute ladies...

V: Remember you always say we have to "embrace change!" I took that advice to heart.

P: I said that?

V: Spin, spin, spin...just one more minute...

[As Vivian spins the Pastor, Mavis runs to help open the furnace room door so Signe can hide in there. Karin slams the freezer door shut just as the Pastor has had enough.]

P: Just stop it! *[He stops and pulls down the apron so it looks like a lacy bib. He is very upset. He reaches out and M gives him his glasses. He puts them on.]* I am going to go out there now and rescue my wife from the Hauges. *(As he speaks he casually makes his way toward the freezer.)* And then I am going to reassure and put at ease a very nervous groom and then...*[he opens the freezer door very fast and looks inside with a double take. No Signe. He slams it shut!]*...I am going to come back in here.

While I am out there I will be remembering three years ago when the furnace failed during Willie's funeral. And you ladies stepped in and saved the day. I will be remembering that, out there. But, when I come back in here...I will see, Signe. And she will be ready to get married! *[He exits. There is a pause as the ladies recover. The Pastor leaps back into the room, startling the ladies. He looks around and tosses the apron to Mavis.]* I shall return! *[Exits.]*

M: Uffda Feeda Weeda!

K: *(Indicating the furnace.)* Mavis. *(Mavis bangs open the door.)*

S: Wow! *[Coming out of the furnace room.]* If the Pastor delivered his sermons more like that, I might have paid closer attention!

K: We need to hurry and get you fixed up! Alright, welcome to the church basement beauty salon.

M: The Cook and Curl!... Crisco! *(As each item appears they use it to freshen up Signe.)*

S: Crisco?!

M: Works great. Moisturizes at the same time. Don't worry. I've been using it since I was 15 years old.

K: Beet juice. For lipstick and rouge...to highlight those lovely cheekbones.

M: Works great. I've been using it since I was 15 years old.

K: ...and flour!

S: Flour?!

M: Works great. I've been using it since I was...

All: ... 15 years old.

M: You have had quite a day today, haven't you young lady?

K: I think you were just suffering from a cold case of wedding panic! You know, the same thing happened to me.

M: I'll say! Ernest Larson!! But we don't have time for that story right now. We have to get this girlie ready for her groom. Stand up, let's fluff that dress...*[As Signe stands Mavis gets on her knees to fluff the dress and, in the process, manages to fall flat on her face. She gets up and acts like nothing happened.]* I'm alright.

S: Mrs. Snustad, do I look alright?

V: You look beautiful. *[They hug.]*

K: Mrs. Snustad! Hugging in public! The next thing you know, you'll be playing guitar in Sunday School! *[Snustad gives her look.]*

S: Mom, are you ever going to tell me what happened with Ernest Larson?

K: I'll make you a deal...when you are standing here getting ready for your daughter's wedding, I'll tell you the whole story.

M: Don't worry, when you get back from your honeymoon I'll tell you all about it! By the way, where are you going?

S: South Dakota.

P: *[Enters in a hurry dressed in his wedding vestments. He is relieved when he sees Signe.]* Signe! Thank heavens! You have one very nervous groom up there. Well, whatdaya say? Lets rock!...*[They all stop and stare at him]* I heard that from the boys in Sunday School. Look at you. You're all nervous and flushed. Why, you're red as a beet. *(The ladies all react.)* Are you ready?

S: Yes, Pastor Gunderson, I'm ready! *[They arrange her dress and veil as the Pastor takes her arm. When they reach the door the Pastor waits for the others to exit, looks up to God and whispers "Thank you". He exits.]*

V-K-M: *[From off stage]* This is most certainly true!

[Blackout...lights up...bows)

Sing A New Song (reprise)

Sing a new song
Come on and sing a new song
As we praise the lord
You complete the chord
So don't ever doubt that you belong

Raise the volume ever higher
You can help us form one enormous choir
Sing a new song, Hallelujah
Sing a new song, Hallelujah
Sing a new song...

[Signe tosses the bouquet and Vivian catches it!]

V: Lets rock!

Hallelu...Hallelujah!!!

END OF SHOW