

The Venture of 1620

Audition Scenes

Audition Scene 1

Characters – 6

1 Female – Mrs. Greenwood

5 Male – Greenwood, Barrow, Jailor, John Smyth, Soldier 1

MRS. GREENWOOD: *(listening for the Jailor,)* Hasten, hasten, John. It is time for the jailor's coming.

GREENWOOD: Patience, wife. The copy of Brother Barrow's book *(indicating the other man)* must be so clear that no matter what befall us, our friends in Holland may easily print it.

MRS. GREENWOOD: Am I to give this to...

BOTH MEN: *(quickly)* Hush!

GREENWOOD: Even the walls of this prison have ears. Yes, he whom you know will cross with this to Leyden in Holland. When he brings you the proof, fetch it hither secretly as you have done for the other books we've written.

BARROW: Good, my friends! Your correction of the facts in this my petition to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth. *(They sit as Barrow begins to read what they have been working on.)* 'More than eighty Separatists have been committed to prison, some of whom because of cruel tortures denied their faith and so were released. Many of those in prison have been starved to the point of death even though they had obtained bail for their release. Others of our number have died in prison of cold famine, nakedness and cruel beatings, the rest are in extreme misery, want, and poverty. In Newgate prison, a boy of fifteen hath been kept in irons a full year. In the clink and the gatehouse can be found six poor men whom the bishop of London hath held in for three whole years without trial or examination. If law be looked upon, these cases are foul.

MRS. GREENWOOD: Say you nothing of what hath been done to John, and you, Henry Barrow? My husband was but reading the Scriptures in a friend's house to those of our congregation, and for this must he be kept here for the greater part of six years?

GREENWOOD: And Henry was seized when he came to comfort me in prison.

BARROW: Nay, they would have had me sooner or later. They knew of our meetings, our belief in the Word of God, and our separation from the church of England.

GREENWOOD: To be received of the Lord, we must come out from among them and be separate as St. Paul admonishes.

BARROW: Let me close 'ere the jailor come. The cause why the Bishop of London hath committed them to prison was for hearing a piece of the new testament read. He hath destined my brother John Greenwood and me to

the death. We see no remedy but to commit our cause and our lives to your majesty asking that the Lord incline His heart towards us in pity and justice. The Lord voyage safe that we be not condemned unheard.

MRS GREENWOOD: Hush—someone comes.

JAILOR: (*indicating Barrow and Greenwood*) These be the two prisoners, Barrow and Greenwood...and Greenwood's wife. (*to her*) Be ready to leave when I come back from my round. (*he exits*)

BARROW: (*to the young man*) And who may you be?

JOHN SMYTH: John Smyth of Cambridge University. I come from Francis Johnson, once my tutor at Cambridge. I visited him in prison today, and he begged me to see you instantly and tell you...

GREENWOOD: Special dangers threaten him?

JOHN SMYTH: Nay, for you he fears. Today Parliament passed a bill making it punishable by death to hold views like yours.

BARROW: The Pilgrim's hope of a Biblical Christianity grows weaker each day. Tighter and tighter our enemies draw their nets. No Separatist shall escape.

GREENWOOD: There is no way left but to add our unworthy names to the list of martyrs who have died for truth.

BARROW: (*quickly handing his petition to Smyth*) This to Francis Johnson. He will know to whom to send it.

(*As the lights approach, Smyth conceals it in his hat. Enter the jailor and an officer*)

SOLDIER I: Henry Barrow and John Greenwood, stand forth. (*they obey, he reads the order*) For crimes against the State and State Church you, are to be executed tomorrow morning at dawn on the 6th day of April this year of our Lord, 1593.

GREENWOOD: Where?

SOLDIER I: Tyburn.

MRS. GREENWOOD: (*catching her breath*) How?

SOLDIER I: (*with a leer and a gesture*) To hang from the neck until dead.

BARROW: Like common felons.

SOLDIER I: (*sneering*) As felons, yes. (*the Officer with an unheard word to the jailor exit.*)

JAILOR: All right, my lady, it's time to go, and you, too, my fine fellow.

MRS. GREENWOOD: No, I can't leave. You must let me stay.

GREENWOOD: *(taking off his ring quickly)* My ring, good jailor. *(Holds it out as the jailor considers it)* 'Tis worth much.

(Jailor lets Mrs. Greenwood go and moves over to take the ring.)

JAILOR: I should not be bribed by a felon, but... you will have no need for it tomorrow. *(takes the ring and looks at Smyth)* But you will have to go.

JOHN SMYTH: Of course.

(Jailor moves to the door and Smyth clasps in turn the fettered hands of the two men.)

JOHN SMYTH: I go to warn the congregation. I shall be at the gate before dawn to give you the love of your friends in the church, who will be praying for you. *(Deeply moved, he goes quickly. There is an instant of silence after the door closes.)*

GREENWOOD: *(gently to his wife who is sobbing in his arm:)* Remember wife, the words of our friend, John Penry, who is like us in prison. His life threatened for his beliefs. "If my blood were an ocean sea, and every drop thereof were a life to me. I would give them all with the help of the Lord and maintain my confession."

MRS. GREENWOOD: Yes, I would give my life, but not yours, John! Not yours! *(sadly, and with dim hope)* Perchance there may be another respite.

BARROW: *(who has been walking up and down)* Nay, no more respites. Last month they had struck off our chains and stood ready to bind us to the cart to take us to our deaths. A reprieve. Another day, they took us to the place of execution and tied the nooses around our necks to the gallows. Again, a reprieve. Enough of reprieves! What our words, what our lives could not do, our deaths will. Men pass; ideas abide.

MRS. GREENWOOD: John, Henry, pray! I cannot. Pray that God give me strength. *(her husband comforts her as Barrow begins to pray)*

BARROW: Dear God, we have sought to glorify thee in life, and now we are called upon to glorify Thee in death. *(Clock strikes ten, Barrow continues praying somewhat more softly.)*

MRS. GREENWOOD: Only seven hours to daybreak! Only seven. *(She clings to Greenwood, sobbing hysterically. Barrow continues praying as the music enters and the lights fade on the scene.)*

Audition Scene 2

Characters – 3

2 Female – Johanne, Young Alice

1 Male – Young William

JOHANNE: Alice! What's taken ye so long lass? I've got to have water if I'm to get your supper on now don't I?

YOUNG ALICE: Here it is Madam Johanne. I came as quickly as I could.

YOUNG WILLIAM: Here Alice - let me help you.

YOUNG ALICE: No, brother. You don't need to be lifting things just yet.

JOHANNE: Listen to ya sista' lad. We want you's with us a bit longer we do – so rest.

YOUNG WILLIAM: I am getting stronger you know. Why just the other day I . . . I took a walk.

(The house maid looks at Alice)

JOHANNE: Did ya now? Well, the fresh air has done ya some good I think. Where did ya go?

YOUNG WILLIAM: Babworth.

(The house maid drops the pan and Alice, who was taking a drink, spits it out a bit and they both look at the young man in shock)

JOHANNE: BABWORTH?!

YOUNG ALICE: William, that's a 6 hour walk! What would possess you to do such a thing?

YOUNG WILLIAM: I went to hear the scriptures taught by a Master Clifton.

JOHANNE: Well, I hope he was prepared to preach your funeral as well.... Walking 6 hours there and backin your condition ... that ain't Christian, William!

YOUNG WILLIAM: *(reiterating)* I have been feeling stronger.

JOHANNE: Well, I suppose you have –

YOUNG ALICE: William, what if you had gotten sick along the way? What then?

YOUNG WILLIAM: I was not alone. I met someone along my way.

JOHANNE: You met a lass? OH! Your Uncles will be pleased!

YOUNG WILLIAM: Nay, Johanne I met a kind, God-fearing man upon my way and we talked without ceasing of the things of God. Master Brewster has traveled all over the world and he too shares a desire for religious freedom.

JOHANNE: Oh, these people who talk of choosing their own churchwhat is next, choosing our own king?

YOUNG ALICE: Brewster? You met William Brewster – the postmaster of Scrooby Manor?

YOUNG WILLIAM: Yes. Do you know him?

YOUNG ALICE: I know of him. In fact, I thought I heard singing coming from his Manor just today while in the fields.

YOUNG WILLIAM: Singing?

YOUNG ALICE: William, you know what our Uncles would say if they knew you were spending time with . . .such men. Clifton and Brewster are . . .

YOUNG WILLIAM: What?

YOUNG ALICE: Zealots, William - men of extreme beliefs that defy the crown.

(William turns away)

YOUNG ALICE: I only urge you to be careful. Our parents wished for you to grow and enter good society when you came of age. That will not be possible with friends such as William Brewster. *(they both sit in silence for a while.)* Oh, I fear for you brother.

YOUNG WILLIAM: Well, do not. The congregation no longer meets in Babworth so it is unlikely I will ever worship with them again.

YOUNG ALICE: Perhaps it is for the best. Religion is a good and needful thing, William but it is best kept for holy days. But if you do see them again and follow such beliefs, just know that soon you will have to make a choice – to follow their path, or become a man, enter the world and put away childish ideals.

Audition Scene 3

Characters – 2

2 Male – Young William, Elder Brewster

ELDER BREWSTER: Foxe's - Book of Martyrs.

YOUNG WILLIAM: My Great Uncle Thomas gave it to me. He says I have been given a strong mind- and must be challenged if I am to excel.

ELDER BREWSTER: And have you been "challenged" by it?

YOUNG WILLIAM: I have but not in the way my Uncle's would have desired I fear.

ELDER BREWSTER: I see. *(opening the book to show Young William)* Did you know that there is a man in this book who bore your very own surname of Bradford? Yes, here it is. He loved God with all his heart, William.

YOUNG WILLIAM: And what was his fate?

ELDER BREWSTER: He perished at the stake for his beliefs but his death inspired many.

YOUNG WILLIAM: I have been inspired by the life of John Penry.

ELDER BREWSTER: Yes, I knew John well.

YOUNG WILLIAM: I have not been able to get his final words out of my mind, "If my blood were an ocean sea, and every drop thereof were a life unto me, I would give them all, with the help of the Lord, and maintain my confession."

ELDER BREWSTR: John Penry was only given 30 years upon this earth, but his words will be remembered for generations to come.

YOUNG WILLIAM: I desire to have such faith – faith so strong that I would die for what I believe.

Audition Scene 4

Characters – 4

1 Female – Lady 1

3 Male – James, Secretary, Bishop

JAMES: You should have been there, my dears...St. James Palace fairly shook with frolic and wine flowed like water.

SECRETARY: *(Who followed them in impatiently)* Your majesty...

LADY 1: And you the center of all those ladies.

JAMES: I know not...the way London's gallants dress so fantastical, it is difficult to tell them from women.
(They laugh raucously)

SECRETARY: Your Lordship...

JAMES: Patience, my good man. I must tell my story. I watched from the balcony and the dance turned into pushing and shoving so that they upset the table *(laughter)* and the crash of glass platters reminded me precisely of a severe hailstorm at midsummer smashing the window glass *(laughter)*.

SECRETARY: If your Majesty will allow me to speak...

JAMES: Yes, my faithful secretary—speak.

SECRETARY: In private, your Grace.

JAMES: Excuse me, my dainties. *(moves DSR with secretary as ladies move USL and converse quietly)* And now, what is so pressing?

BISHOP: Money and religion, your Grace.

JAMES: Both of which I favor, but what about them?

SECRETARY: The funds allotted by Parliament for the maintenance of the Crown are greatly diminished, largely by your Majesty's gifts to court favorites!

JAMES: Generosity is not an undesirable trait for Kings.

BISHOP: True, my Lord. But this year alone your Lordship has paid out more than five thousand pounds in benevolences.

JAMES: Then let Parliament vote more funds.

SECRETARY: That grows more difficult too, your Grace. Unemployment is widespread throughout the realm. The number of the poor do daily increase. Many parishes turn forth the poor who will not work - and then they beg, filch and steal for their maintenance.

JAMES: Arrest them--make the laws more harsh.

SECRETARY: They are harsh now, your Grace. Men and women are regularly hanged for stealing as little as a loaf of bread.

JAMES: Then it is not a matter of unemployment, but it is a lack of religion - for no true Christian subject would want to steal - or be hanged.

BISHOP: Exactly--and England's financial decline follows a decline in religion. Attendance is waning in the State Churches.

JAMES: And no wonder from Scotland and Holland books and tracts pour into my realm urging church reform, church reform. But as long as I am King, there will be no reformation in England - only confirmation.

SECRETARY: An even more dangerous doctrine is that of the Separatists who urge men to separate from your church and attend independent churches.

JAMES: On them my royal fury shall be unchecked. Order all informers, sheriffs, constables, and bailiffs to harry them out of the land.

Audition Scene 5

Characters – 8

7 Female – Warden, Samantha, Dorothy, Mrs. Clifton, Patience, Mrs. Brewster, Mrs. Carver

1 Male – Soldier II

WARDEN: Come along, me ladies. Keep moving, now. We don't have all day, ya know!

SOLDIER II: Ah, here we be. A nice cell for nice ladies.

(The Pilgrim women, prodded by the soldiers, make their way into the jail.)

WARDEN: Ladies or no, they still be lawbreakers. *(pushing them along)* In ye go, me pretties!

(A soldier has led the way, and as they enter the jail, he pushes or throws them to various parts of the jail. Some stumble and fall onto the floor; others sit on benches, and others kneel in prayer.)

WARDEN: *(entering the jail)* Ye'll be safe enough here, 'til the judge choose to see ye!

(She and the soldier laugh and exit the jail. They make their way back toward the crowd SC. The warden has a knapsack around her neck and from it she takes several items of value –two or three bags of money, a watch, a necklace, etc. The soldier also shows off things he has stolen from the Pilgrim women. The crowd makes over these things, as they all filter off stage and the lights fade SC and come up slightly on the jail.)

SAMANTHA: Mrs. Clifton, what is to become of us?

DOROTHY *(MAIDSERVANT TO THE CARVERS):* Yes, and what has become of our dear husbands and fathers?

MRS. CLIFTON: God will take care of all of us!

DOROTHY *(MAIDSERVANT TO THE CARVERS):* I don't mean to exhibit faithlessness, but for the last three days the worst storm in my memory has ravaged our coast.

PATIENCE: Aye! Surely the Dutch ship sailed into the worst of it.

ALL WOMEN: Aye! Surely! They could not have missed it!

MRS. BREWSTER: Dear Sisters, listen to me. *(they fall silent)* If we have lost our husbands and fathers, and if they be dead at the bottom of the channel... do we then do them honor by this terrible lamentation, when they all perished for what they believed? *(there is silence)* We were all to join, in Amsterdam, the Church of the Martyrs. If they are perished, then they have joined the martyrs for whom the church was named!

ALL WOMEN: Aye! Yea, tis true. Amen! God knows best.

MRS. CARVER: And we still have in our possession the Book of God that gave them courage in the midst of persecution.

DOROTHY *(MAIDSERVANT TO THE CARVERS):* Yes, our Bibles are the only things the soldiers did not want.

MRS. CLIFTON: Come, let us be as Abraham's wife Sarah, and let us not be afraid with any amazement.

MRS. CARVER: Let us turn our hearts to His Word and see what comfort He affords us in the midst of our calamities. Mrs. Brewster, would you pray for God's leading, and then we would ask Mrs. Clifton, wife of one of our pastors, to read to us what God would have us hear. *(music enters)*

MRS. BREWSTER: Great Father, Master of sea and sky, grant that by thy mercy we may again embrace our dear ones and give us faith to trust thee in this hour of uncertainty. In the name of thy Holy Child, Jesus. Amen!

ALL WOMEN: Amen!

MRS. BREWSTER: Mrs. Clifton.

(Mrs. Clifton slowly opens the Bible, stands, and begins to read in a clear, firm voice.)

MRS. CLIFTON: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

Audition Scene 6

Characters – 8

4 Female – Dorothy, Sarah, Faith, Mrs. Brewster

4 Male – John Smyth, William, Phillip, Jonathan

JOHN SMYTH: When will you be leaving for Leyden, William?

WILLIAM: We plan to leave within a fortnight.

PHILIP: Well, that does not leave much time then.

WILLIAM: Time? For what?

PHILIP: Marriage, of course.

JONATHAN: Especially since he has yet to speak to her.

WILLIAM: To whom?

JOHN SMYTH: Come now, William - it hath been noticed by several of your friends on more than one occasion, that your affections lie with a certain young lady among our congregation.

WILLIAM: Do they now? And who may that be?

JONATHAN: Come, William - we all know it is...

(Lights switch to the girls' side.)

SARAH: Dorothy May - are those tears in your eyes?

DOROTHY: I fear I have worked too long at my sewing. My eyes are weary tonight.

SARAH: Here, I can finish it for you - uhh, you have one of the finest stitches I've ever seen. I've even heard Master Bradford say so, many a time.

FAITH: And if William Bradford hath said it - then that is indeed an honor - for he is one of the finest weavers in Leyden.

(Dorothy begins to cry a little more.)

FAITH: Was it something I said?

MRS. BREWSTER: No, my dear ... I fear it may be more than just the sewing that fills Dorothy's eyes with tears. *(she moves closer to Dorothy)* Art thou saddened that many will soon be leaving Amsterdam for Leyden?

DOROTHY: Yes - of course - I am deeply saddened. To lose such guidance - and friendship - is a great loss indeed.

MRS. BREWSTER: My dear - William is like a son to me - and I know he is a fine young man who loves God above all else. It is understandable that your heart is drawn to his.

(Lights switch to the men.)

WILLIAM: I have never said that my heart was drawn to hers.

JONATHAN: You did not have to, my brother! *(laughing)* And I believe it is time that you spoke to her. A fortnight is not very long for her to decide if she shall say yes - or no. *(all the men laugh)*

WILLIAM: *(looking carefully over at Dorothy who is still talking to Mrs. Brewster)* And if she says no - I may lose a friend.

PHILIP: But if she says yes—you have gained one for the rest of your days!

(All the men slowly get up and begin to leave. Dorothy has joined the group of ladies again and is busy sewing. William walks over to the group of ladies, but they have not noticed him yet. They are all still busy sewing.)

FAITH: And so I said to her that those who wish to ...

WILLIAM: Forgive the interruption, ladies, but I would like a word with Miss May - if I could.

(All the ladies stop sewing and sit in quiet shock as Dorothy looks to Mrs. Brewster and receives a nod of approval. She then sets her sewing down and stands up and the two begin to walk over to the other side of the room. They sit and William begins to speak.)

WILLIAM: I requested a word with thee to tell thee that I - well, that for a long time I have... Well, you see Miss May -

DOROTHY: Please, you may call me Dorothy.

WILLIAM: Very well - Dorothy...

Audition Scene 7

Characters – 3

1 Female – Dorothy

2 Male – William, John

WILLIAM: Dorothy. (*door closes*) What's the matter, my dear?

DOROTHY: (*crying*) Oh William, I do not know.

WILLIAM: Did you receive another letter from Amsterdam?

DOROTHY: Yes, and Mother and Father miss me so.

WILLIAM: And all your friends miss you, too?

DOROTHY: Yes. Oh William, I know we have been through this before. It's just that they are concerned about us and little John.

WILLIAM: And they fear that our plans to cross the ocean are doomed to fail?

DOROTHY: Well, aren't they?

WILLIAM: No, they are not—not if God is in our plans!

DOROTHY: But how do we know if God be in our plans or no? I love Pastor Robinson and I have grown to love Elder Brewster and the rest, but I am not certain I am ready to trust my life to them or the life of our son.

WILLIAM: Dorothy, my sweet, we are not trusting our lives to men. We are trusting them to God. But even if we were, I could think of no men I trust more than the leadership of the church. Elder Brewster has been a father, teacher, and pastor to me ever since I was in my early teens.

DOROTHY: William, you do not have to tell me more to help me gain confidence in Elder Brewster.

WILLIAM: But Dorothy...

DOROTHY: Please, William, I will go to America. I love you too much not to go. But little John... I love him too, and I fear for his life.

WILLIAM: But God will take care of him.

DOROTHY: God has given us the care of him, and I want you to promise we can leave him in Holland.

WILLIAM: Leave him? What are you saying?

DOROTHY: Just for a while, until we have crossed safely and are well-established—then we can send for him.

WILLIAM: But...

DOROTHY: Father and Mother say we should leave him with Pastor Robinson until we can send for him. They would see that he has everything he needs --a home, food, education.

WILLIAM: Everything but a father and mother.

DOROTHY: But we can send for him soon. You yourself have talked of sacrifices we must make, and I would rather make the sacrifice of not seeing him for a while, than sacrificing him to the ocean or to fever. Please, William ... *(starts to cry)*

JOHN: *(offstage)* Father, why is mother still crying?

WILLIAM: Come here, John. *(pause)* Mother is crying because she loves you very much and wants no harm to come to you.

JOHN: And do you love me, too?

WILLIAM: Yes, John, very, very much.
(Music enters and lights fade on the scene.)