

UNCLE ALBERT'S PROBLEM

A FULL LENGTH PLAY

BY

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CAST:

ALBERT TRIMBLE
COUSIN CLARA
JORDAN
DR. HUXLEY
NURSE PHARR
REVEREND THATCHER
WINFRED
FOUR LADIES
THREE DEACONS

SUMMARY:

Uncle Albert has a problem. Cousin Clara has decided to take matters into her own hands when Uncle Albert introduces the ladies to his friend, Jesus. What ensues is a frantic, harried tale of how Jesus gets lost in the everyday bustle of living as Clara gets committed to a psychiatric hospital by accident and the famed theologian, Dr. Thatcher tries to convince Albert once and for all that he is not seeing Jesus.

CHARACTER SKETCHES

UNCLE ALBERT -- A gentle man with a peaceful, unhurried demeanor. He appears to be crazy on the surface but underneath is far more complex. The audience must decide if he really sees Jesus or not.

CLARA --
to normal but also wants to believe her uncle is not crazy. She is good hearted and easily panicked.

JORDAN --
claims and he is in favor of humoring the man rather than institutionalizing him. Jordan, of all the characters, sees more of Albert's good qualities and the truth behind his eccentric ways.

HUXLEY --
across as rather hard nosed and businesslike. She softens as she becomes closer to Albert.

THATCHER --
with Jesus. He realizes he has lost that kind of relationship.

THE DEACONS --

THE LADIES --
personality.

WINFRED --
ends up liking her.

ACT ONE

(Several women are present in a living room setting with a picture of Jesus hanging in the background. They are the leadership committee of the Women's Christian Society.)

STERN: Well, ladies, as soon as Clara gets here we will start our meeting.

PINCHER: The sooner the better. I hope she has some decent snacks! If I have to eat one more of her dry tea cakes, I'm going to die hacking!

PRUDEHUM: Oh, Beula, don't complain. Clara does her best considering that strange Uncle Albert living here. I hear he is very eccentric.

LAFERVOR: I hear he is merely intense. You know, very focused.

PINCHER: He's also filthy rich. I hear his mother left him a fortune. And, he paid off Clara's mortgage on this old drafty house so she wouldn't get kicked out on the street. With that kind of money, I could live with King Kong!

STERN: Her son Jordan has moved back in while he goes to law school so we needn't worry about Clara's welfare.

PINCHER: She's late for her own meeting. In her own house. Probably making more of those dreadful tea cakes!

(Albert enters room and appears to be talking to someone walking beside him. He stops speaking as he notices the ladies.)

ALBERT: So, if Peter had just kept his eyes on you, then . . . Oh, hello ladies. I'm Uncle Albert.

STERN: Mr. Albert Trimble, right? Your Cousin Clara has told us all about you.

ALBERT: She has? How nice. Uh, here's my card. You can call me at this number but don't call that number. It's been disconnected. And now, I would like for you to meet a friend of mine . . .

STERN: Mr. Trimble, I hate to interrupt you but we have very important business to do.

PINCHER: Very important and I've got to get back to the house. My husband, Fred is probably glued to the television watching my soap opera and eating all of my Double Stuff Oreos.

LAFERVOR: Ladies, we shouldn't be so rude to Mr. Trimble.

ALBERT: Albert. You can call me just plain Albert. Now, I would like . . .

PRUDEHUM: I like plain things. Keep it simple.

STERN: Forgive us for being so short. I am Mable Stern. This is Beula Pincher, Gloria LaFervor, and Penelope Prudhum. I am the chairman of the Women's Christian Society from the church.

ALBERT: The Women's Christian Society? I see. Uh, just what do you do?

- STERN:** What do we do? Why we are an organization that helps women who are Christian, uh . . .
- LAFERVOR:** Improve the spiritual quality of our dreary lives with abundant joy and clean living.
- PINCHER:** And lot's of snacks.
- PRUDEHUM:** Actually, Clara has been appointed to the leadership committee and we are here to plan our activities for the next year.
- PINCHER:** Where's Clara? That woman would be late for her own funeral.
- ALBERT:** Don't be so harsh on her. She's just a bit high strung. I'm sure she's busy in the kitchen. Now about your group . . .
- STERN:** Well, we can't wait for her any longer. Ladies let's get on with our plans.
- PRUDEHUM:** Yes, we must make sure there are plenty of activities planned for our ladies at the church. You know what the Bible says: "Idle minds are the Devil's playground."
- ALBERT:** *(Sitting and pulling up a chair for his friend.)*
Do you mind if we listen in?
- STERN:** Albert, you may stay. Perhaps you can give us some ideas.
- ALBERT:** Ideas. I have a wonderful idea. Do you need a speaker for one of your functions?
- LAFERVOR:** Yes! Last year, we had Dr. Thatcher speak at our annual banquet and it was so wonderful. Such eloquent tones, such a

rich voice, such a wonderful hairdo! He is such a great man of God.

ALBERT: *(Glances at the empty chair.)* He **used** to be? What happened?

PRUDEHUM: Used to be? My dear Albert, please don't talk that way about our pastor.

ALBERT: I didn't say that. He . . . *(Pointing to empty seat, but women don't notice.)*

LAFERVOR: Who did you have in mind for our annual banquet this year, Albert?

PINCHER: Wait a minute! I thought we were going to have my nephew, Sidney. *(Turns to Albert.)* Sidney is a dermatologist. He takes care of pimples and warts.

STERN: Beula, we don't want to hear about pimples and warts.

LAFERVOR: Wait! That's brilliant, Beula. He could talk about how God loves us in spite of our pimples and warts.

PRUDEHUM: How absurd.

ALBERT: Eh, what's that? *(He looks at chair.)* We like the idea. You know God does love us in spite of our shortcomings. Isn't that right? *(He looks to empty chair?)*

STERN: Albert, please stay out of this. Beula, we have had three of your nephews speak out of the last five banquets. Surely you haven't forgotten about that banquet where your nephew the chiropractor spoke.

- PINCHER:** I liked his point about life being like one big pain in the neck.
- LAFERVOR:** He had such wonderful suggestions for adjusting to life.
- PRUDEHUM:** Please! No more medical specialists! I am tired of comparing my spiritual life to body malfunctions. Now, Albert, you had a suggestion?
- ALBERT:** Yes, I have a friend who would love to speak.
- STERN:** A friend? Is he a physician?
- ALBERT:** Sort of. But, he doesn't have a degree.
- PINCHER:** Bet he's not as good as my nephew.
- ALBERT:** He has healed a lot of people. But, that's not what he would talk about. He's very versatile. Well versed in all walks of life.
- LAFERVOR:** Is he a Christian?
- ALBERT:** The best.
- PRUDEHUM:** Where did he get his religious training?
- ALBERT:** Uh . . . (*Glances at the empty chair.*) In the temple. He has studied the Scriptures since age twelve.
- PINCHER:** Temple? Is he a Baptist?
- ALBERT:** No.
- STERN:** No! Well, I don't know if it would be appropriate for him to speak if he's not the same religion.

ALBERT: Actually, he never had many good things to say for organized religion.

PRUDEHUM: Oh, dear, a renegade! A rebel! We simply can't have someone that controversial!

LAFERVOR: We were interested in someone with a sense of humor.

PRUDEHUM: We were?

ALBERT: He has an excellent sense of humor. Have you seen my picture? *(He points to a portrait of Jesus hanging over the couch showing Jesus laughing.)*

PRUDEHUM: Oh, my! Where did you get that abomination?

ALBERT: Abomination?

PINCHER: Jesus never laughed, deary. Would you if you spent everyday with a bunch of smelly fishermen? Fred stinks to high heaven when he comes in from the lake. I make him hose off in the garage.

STERN: Albert, where did you get that picture?

ALBERT: I painted it.

LAFERVOR: I think it's very nice. But, I don't recall the Bible mentioning Jesus laughing.

ALBERT: That's funny, he has a wonderful sense of humor. *(Stops as if listening to the chair beside him.)* That's right. Remember when he said a rich man had as much chance of getting into heaven as a camel would to get through the eye of a needle. Now that's a sharp sense of humor.

PRUDEHUM: Well, I never! The very idea of our Lord and Savior laughing! Albert, you have lost your mind. I suggest you make an appointment with our pastor Dr. Thatcher for counseling immediately. You simply must get yourself right with God. You need to develop a very personal, day to day relationship with Jesus. Then, you would realize that this picture is absurd!

ALBERT: But, I do have a daily relationship with Jesus. He's right . . .

(Clara hurries into the room with a tray of tea cakes.)

CLARA: Forgive me ladies for being a tad late. I had to get these tea cakes out of the oven . . .

PINCHER: I knew it!

CLARA: And . . . *(She stops as she notices Albert sitting in the chair.)* Uh, Albert, what are you doing here?

ALBERT: They invited me to sit in for their meeting, Clara.

CLARA: Sit in? On our meeting? *(She looks around at the ladies hesitantly and then glances at the empty chair beside Albert.)* Have you introduced . . . anyone?

ALBERT: Well, to be honest, I haven't been able to get a word in edgewise. I . . .

CLARA: Good! I mean, too bad. Ladies, why don't we got out to the rose garden.

STERN: Albert was referring to a speaker for our banquet, Clara.

PRUDEHUM: Yes. A reprobate, I might add!

PINCHER: There's still my nephew.

CLARA: A speaker? Which speaker?

ALBERT: *(Standing and motioning to the empty chair.)*
Why, my friend, of course.

(The ladies stare at the empty chair and then at each other.)

STERN: Your friend?

ALBERT: Yes. Let me introduce you to my best friend.
(He motions to chair.) Jesus.

PRUDEHUM: Did you say Jesus?

CLARA: He said Jesus.

(Jordan comes into room.)

JORDAN: Good morning, Mother. What's for
breakfast? More tea cakes?

CLARA: Jordan, Uncle Albert has introduced the
Women's Christian Society Committee to
his friend.

JORDAN: Cool! They probably haven't seen Him in a
long time. What do you think of him?

PINCHER: Think of who? That chair has as much
empty air as your Uncle's head.

PRUDEHUM: Mable, it is time for us to go. I can't take
any more of this madness.

PINCHER: So, I guess it's my nephew, then.

LA FERVOR: Albert, dear, I don't see anyone in the chair.

*(Prudhum ushers all the women, except for Stern out of room..
Stern pauses at door and returns on her
line below.)*

CLARA: Oh, Albert, how could you ruin my meeting like this? I have worked for months to get these ladies to accept me in the leadership committee. And now, it's all gone.

JORDAN: Oh, mother, relax. Those old stuffed skirts needed to have the air let out of them.

ALBERT: I don't understand why you're so upset, Clara. They didn't like him anyway.

CLARA: That's it! Jordan, take Albert to the kitchen for some coffee.

JORDAN: Mother, relax. *(To Stern.)* He's not crazy, you know. I think he knows more about reality than any of us. Come on, Uncle Albert. I'll buy you some coffee.

ALBERT: *(Motions to his friend.)* He'll just have water. *(They exit.)*

CLARA: Oh, Mable, what am I going to do? Albert has gone off the deep end.

STERN: There's only one solution, Clara. Take him up to the Blue Forest Rest Home. Dr. Benley will see to it he gets the best help available.

CLARA: Rest home? You mean the Asylum? Oh my, Mable. I don't think I could stand the idea of Albert in one of those places.

STERN: It's not like what you think, Clara. You can visit him every day. And, who knows,

you might be put in charge of his finances.

CLARA: Oh, Mable, how could you suggest I would ever be interested in Albert's money?

STERN: You could fund a lot of Society functions with that money. Look, for your own peace of mind, take Albert down and have him evaluated.

CLARA: Jordan would object, you know. He doesn't take Albert's problem seriously. He just says Albert is eccentric.

STERN: Do it yourself, then. Look, I'm a personal friend of Dr. Benley and I'll call him right after I leave. Run by the Home sometime this morning and let them talk to Albert.

CLARA: I don't know, Mable.

STERN: Would it make you happier if our pastor, Dr. Thatcher came by and talked to Albert?

CLARA: That would be a good idea. Maybe Dr. Thatcher could talk some sense into him.

STERN: Then it's decided. Take Albert by Dr. Benley's this morning and I'll have Dr. Thatcher run by this afternoon.

CLARA: OK.

STERN: And, Clara, lose the tea cakes.
(She exits.)

ACT TWO

(Act two takes place in an office setting in a psychiatric hospital. Cousin Clara, a middle age, frumpish woman looking very harried and hysterical, her hair awry, her hat crushed hurries into the office from stage left. Nurse Pharr is leaning over Dr. Huxley's desk, placing some manila folders in order.)

PHARR: May I help you?

CLARA: Oh, yes. I certainly hope you can. You see, I'm here about my uncle. He's just moved into our house a few months back after paying off my mortgage, you know. And, well, he was so young when I was born and when his mother died he asked if he could come and live with me and my son, Jordan. And, since my husband, Arthur, God rest his soul, died in that train wreck, we've had such a hard time making ends meet. And, so he paid off the note and he moved in with us. And, it wasn't so bad until three months ago, or was it four?

PHARR: Ma'am, perhaps you should wait and tell all this to Dr. Huxley.

CLARA: Dr. Huxley? Where is Dr. Benley? Isn't he the head of this sanitarium?

PHARR: This is a psychiatric unit, not a sanitarium. Anyway, Dr. Benley is a very busy man. He has so many administrative duties. Dr. Huxley is our new staff addition and I can assure you one of the best psychiatrists in the business.

CLARA: Well, I suppose that'll have to do.

PHARR: Where is your uncle, now?

CLARA: He's out there talking to those fellows
working in the flower beds. He's quite
harmless, you know.

PHARR: Well, why don't you have a seat and I'll send
in Dr. Huxley. I'll have an orderly bring
your uncle in.

*(Clara sits in a chair next to the desk and takes out a lacy
handkerchief to dab at her face. Dr.
Huxley enters the office.)*

HUXLEY: Good afternoon, Mrs. Gooble. I'm Dr.
Huxley.

CLARA: Hello, Doctor. Uh, oh my. You're a woman.

HUXLEY: Yes, Ma'am. I've been a woman all my life.

CLARA: But, Dr. Benley is a man.

HUXLEY: Well, we've established you have good
powers of observation. So what can I do
for you?

CLARA: Oh, forgive me. I'm from the old school. You
know, back when only men were doctors.
I don't mean any harm by my
statements. I'm sure you're just fine.

HUXLEY: Can we get on with it, please?

CLARA: Yes. It's just that I'm so tired, you know.
We had a Women's Christian Society
meeting today at my house and just as I
thought, Albert was waiting when I was
late and before you knew it everything
was ruined. You know, he started to

introduce his friend and everyone got so agitated. . .

HUXLEY: Please, try to calm down Mrs. Gooble. Let's start at the beginning.

CLARA: Oh, my. The beginning? Well, my mother was sixteen when she met my father. He was in the oil business, you know...

HUXLEY: Not that far back, Mrs. Gooble. When did you first start having problems with your uncle?

CLARA: Well, he moved in six months ago. No, it was seven. Jordan had just turned twenty one. Legal, you know. He's going to law school next year. I'm so proud of him. He did want to be a preacher like Dr. Thatcher, you know the famous evangelist.

HUXLEY: You were telling me about your uncle?

CLARA: Oh, yes. Albert has always been such a sweet person. His mother died and left him a fortune, you know. She was such a tough woman. A bit peculiar at times. She liked to drive race cars. Albert always frowned on that. He gets motion sickness, don't you know. And anyway, one day Albert was sitting in the parlor and Oh, my, it's so upsetting. *(She begins to dab at her face and tries to keep from crying.)*

HUXLEY: Please try to calm down, Mrs. Gooble.

CLARA: Oh, but you just don't know what it's like in that crazy house. I'm so tired of it all. *(She leans over the doctor's desk and*

whispers.) And there are times I see Him, too. Please don't tell anyone I said that.

HUXLEY: See who? Your uncle?

CLARA: No. Him.

HUXLEY: Him?

CLARA: Yes, you know. Him.

HUXLEY: Who is him.

CLARA: Jesus.

HUXLEY: Jesus?

CLARA: Yes. He walks around the house and between Him and Albert, why I'm almost out of my mind.

HUXLEY: I see. *(She gets a knowing look on his face, drawing the conclusion that Cousin Clara is crazy.)* Mrs. Gooble, you just sit right here and try to relax. I'll take care of this. *(She presses a switch on her intercom and Nurse Pharr comes into the room.)* Nurse Pharr, do you know where Mrs. Gooble's uncle is?

PHARR: *(She comes into office.)* Yes. I sent him up to a room. Winfred, the orderly took him up....

HUXLEY: What? *(She stands up and walks Nurse Pharr over to the door. She glances over his shoulder to make sure Clara isn't listening.)* Do you realize what you've done? He's not the patient. Mrs. Gooble is. Get them back down here at once.

(Reacts with surprise and hurries out. Dr. Huxley returns to her desk .)

HUXLEY: Well, uh, Mrs. Gooble I think that I will be able to help you out.

CLARA: I certainly hope so. You know Albert has this picture of Jesus and the eyes just seem to follow me everywhere. I'm so jittery and jumpy and I can't face the Women's Christian Society ladies again until something is done about this problem.

HUXLEY: Ah, here is your uncle. *(Winfred enters the room his hand clasped tightly on Uncle Albert's arm.)*

HUXLEY: Winfred, why don't you show Mrs. Gooble to our . . . hospitality suite.

WINFRED: Where? *(Has a very rough and scratchy voice.)* Oh! The hospitality suite. Sure thing, boss. Madam, if you would accompany me.

CLARA: On, Albert, I do hope you understand.

ALBERT: Understand what, Clara?

CLARA: See, he has no idea. *(She begins to cry as Winfred leads her out of the room.)*

HUXLEY: *(Motions to her desk.)* I'm Doctor Huxley, Mr. ..

ALBERT: Albert Trimble is the name. Pleased to meet you. *(Reaches into his suit coat and takes out a business card.)* Here's my card. If you want to call me, use this number. *(He points to the card.)* The other is the old number....

- HUXLEY:** Yes, sir. Won't you please sit down?
- ALBERT:** Of course. Nice office. *(Pulls up two chairs and waits for someone to sit beside him.)*
Now, I would like for you to meet... *(He motions to the air beside him but is interrupted by Dr. Huxley.)*
- HUXLEY:** Mr. Trimble, I want to apologize for the mistake. I hope Winfred wasn't too rough with you.
- ALBERT:** Oh, no. *(He sits and motions to the chair and watches his friend sit down.)* He's a very nice young man. I invited him over to the house tomorrow night for supper. Say, you and Susan, here, could come...
- HUXLEY:** Susan?
- PHARR:** That's me, Dr. Huxley.
- HUXLEY:** Of course. Uh, Mr. Trimble, I have some very disturbing news about your niece.
- ALBERT:** That would be Clara. She's a bit high strung. *(Nudges the seat next to him and smiles.)*
- HUXLEY:** I would like to put her in isolation for a few days. Just as a precaution. She'll get plenty of rest and all you have to do is sign the papers.
- ALBERT:** Papers? Well, I don't know about the papers. Clara and Jordan always handle those things. I'll take them home with me and get Jordan to take a look. Now, allow me to introduce.... *(He turns to the empty chair and the doctor interrupts him.)*

- HUXLEY:** Jordan? Of course, her son should be notified. Perhaps he could run by later today.
- ALBERT:** He's a very nice grand nephew. He'll be going to law school. You see, he wanted to go into the ministry, but that's not what God had planned for him. Right? *(He glances at the empty chair.)* Tell me, Dr. Huxley, do you believe in God?
- HUXLEY:** God? Yes, Mr. Trimble. Although, it has been a long time since I was in Sunday School. Why do you ask?
- ALBERT:** I'm just concerned with spiritual matters.
- HUXLEY:** I think I understand. We try to respect all religious beliefs, Mr. Trimble. Your Cousin Clara will not be offended.
- ALBERT:** I was more concerned about your spiritual matters, Dr. Huxley. You're a very nice person. And, pretty, too.
- HUXLEY:** Thank you. I appreciate your concern, but my relationship with God is my business. *(She stands and comes around to shake Albert's hand. She directs him to the door.)* If you need anything just call.
- ALBERT:** Uh, yes. Of course. *(He exits and comes back out stage right. A gardener comes in from outside.)*
- Well, how do you do? I'm Albert Trimble. *(They shake hands and the gardener looks at him suspiciously.)* Nice roses you've got there. *(Reaches into his suit and takes out a card.)* Here, have one of my cards. You can reach me at this number. Don't call the other. It doesn't work anymore. *(He motions to the*

air next to him.) Oh, I'd like you to meet Jesus...

GARDENER:

Jesus? Don't give me any of that. I go to church. I don't need to be preached to. Excuse me. *(He exits stage, glancing at Albert suspiciously. He drops the roses on a nearby table and Albert picks them up. He will take them with him into last scene.)*

ALBERT:

(Looks at the air next to him.) He's not telling the truth? What? You never knew him? Well, he'll be sorry about that. *(He exits.)*

ACT 3

(The doorbell rings and Jordan answers the door. Dr. Thatcher and three men enter.)

JORDAN: May I help you?

THATCHER: Why, yes young man. I am Dr. Thatcher from the church. These are three of my deacons. Mr. Wrickle, Mr. Furd, and Mr. Bowsnap. We are here at the request of Ms. Clara Gooble.

WRICKLE: To talk some sense into Albert Trimble.

JORDAN: I'm not sure that will be all that easy. But, I'll enjoy watching you try. Please have a seat and I'll go get him.

THATCHER: Gentlemen, please, remember that we are fellow Christians. And, we will conduct ourselves according to the correct Biblical principles. Ah, here's our man now.

(Albert enters the room. He is carrying the roses and places them in a vase.)

ALBERT: Hi, gentlemen. Albert Trimble's the name. Here's one of my cards. You can reach me at this number. The other's no good.

THATCHER: Mr. Trimble, I'm Dr. Thatcher.

ALBERT: Do you work at the hospital with Doctor Huxley? Nice lady and pretty, too.

WRICKLE: I can't believe you've never heard of Dr. Thatcher. He is the most famous theologian in the Southern Baptist Convention.

BOWSNAP: He has been president three times in a row.

FURD: Can preach without stopping for a breath for two and a half hours.

ALBERT: I remember you. Clara brought me to your church one time. Sorry. I slept through the last two hours of your sermon. My friend and I have been visiting a small church out in the countryside. Why don't we sit down?

THATCHER: Mr. Trimble...

ALBERT: Albert. Just call me Albert.

THATCHER: Albert, Miss Clara asked us to come and talk to you about Jesus.

JORDAN: Uh, Dr. Thatcher, I'm not sure we need. . .

ALBERT: Wait, Jordan. I'd be glad to talk about Jesus with these men.

JORDAN: *(Looks around the room.)* I can't wait to hear this.

ALBERT: *(Leans over toward Jordan.)* He's not here, right now. Went out for a walk.

JORDAN: Alright, Uncle Albert. I just don't want you to get hurt.

ALBERT: Don't be silly. I'm not going to get hurt. Why would talking about Jesus get anyone hurt?

THATCHER: Then you're willing to discuss your problem?

ALBERT: Problem?

WRICKLE: Yes, your problem. This supposed friend of yours.

BOWSNAP: The one that follows you everywhere.

FURD: The one you have introduced to half the population of this city.

ALBERT: Don't flatter me, sir. Uh, what was your name?

FURD: Furd. Billy Furd.

ALBERT: Ah, yes, Billy. Would you like to stay and have supper with us, tonight? In fact, all of you...

THATCHER: Please don't change the subject Albert.

ALBERT: I'm not. What Mr. Furd here reminded me of was how nice and kind people can be. You see, that's what my friend and I do. We go out into the city and try to be nice to people. We go to someplace where people are gathered and we go in and sit down and talk. And soon, the people look over at me and I smile at them. And you know what? They smile back. It's a wonderful feeling to know you've brought a little bit of happiness to someone and my friend and I warm ourselves in the glow of those moments. Pretty soon, someone will come over and sit with me. And they talk about the big, terrible things they've done. And, the big, wonderful things they're going to do. They talk about their regrets and their hopes. Their hates and their loves. And all of their problems seem so big because no one has ever bothered to listen to them. You see, my friend and I came in as strangers but we'll leave as friends. Because that's when I introduce them to Jesus. And they discover that

He's bigger and grander than any of their problems. And when they leave that place, they leave changed for the better. Now, Mr. Furd here says I've introduced half the city to Jesus. Wish I could say I've reached over half the city, but truth is, I haven't met near that many people. Yet. But, I try to introduce every person I meet to Jesus. You do that, don't you Dr. Thatcher?

- THATCHER:** Well, I, uh . . .
- WRICKLE:** Best evangelist this side of Graham.
- BOWSNAP:** Our church considered a petition to get old Billy to have Dr. Thatcher replace him when he retired.
- FURD:** Church wouldn't do it! No, sir. Don't want to lose him! He is too good. Can bring them down the aisle in droves.
- THATCHER:** Please, gentlemen, we're getting off the subject. Albert, you don't understand what I'm saying. Clara says you wander around until you find a place where you and this friend of yours can talk -- a park bench, two empty seats in the movie theater, . . .
- ALBERT:** Well, now, I like to talk to Jesus every chance I get. Don't you?
- THATCHER:** Well, uh, . . .
- WRICKLE:** Talks to him everyday, don't you Preacher?
- BOWSNAP:** Can pray like the best of them. Why his prayers lift the roof right off the church sometimes.
- FURD:** Not a prayer gets prayed by old Thatch here what couldn't pass for a sermon!

THATCHER: I think I've had all the help I need.

WRICKLE: But, Dr. Thatcher, if anyone could sit around and command an audience with Jesus, you're the man!

BOWSNAP: Greatest man of God this side of Noah.

FURD: Yep, can pray moss right off a log.

THATCHER: Albert, let me get to the point. I'd like to talk about the last time you saw Jesus.

ALBERT: Sure. The last time was just like the first time. You remember the first time you met Jesus, don't you? Exciting wasn't it? Remember how your heart was filled with joy, excitement, happiness? Remember how it seemed nothing in this world could ever separate you from the love of God? I remember the first time like it was yesterday. Do you?

THATCHER: Well, uh, . . .

WRICKLE: Dr. Thatcher has shared his testimony with half the city.

BOWSNAP: Yep, best conversion story this side of Paul.

FURD: Could shame the hair right off of a peach.

THATCHER: Jordan, could you please take my friends to your kitchen for some coffee.

WRICKLE: Coffee?

BOWSNAP: We don't want any coffee.

FURD: Shame the hair right off a peach.

THATCHER: I need to talk to Albert alone, gentlemen.

JORDAN: Right. Why don't you come with me.

(Men follow Jordan reluctantly from the room.)

THATCHER: This conversation is not going like I wanted it to, Albert. Let's get something straight. I'm the normal person here.

ALBERT: I never said you weren't. But, as a pastor and evangelist, I would think you would have a better relationship with Jesus. Sounds to me like you two need to get reacquainted.

THATCHER: *(Sighs.)* Maybe you're right. I haven't thought about the day I first met Jesus in years.

ALBERT: Well, you can talk to Him any time you want.

THATCHER: That's what Clara tells me. You speak to Him all the time.

ALBERT: A man can't live a life as a Christian without staying in touch with the Master. What would you tell Him if He were sitting right here beside you? That's the question you need to ask yourself. If you don't know what you would say; if you would feel uncomfortable; if you had so many sins to confess you wouldn't have time; well, then, it's been too long since you spoke to Him. Tell you what, I've got a surprise for you. Just give me a couple of minutes. *(Albert arises and leaves the room, appearing to look for someone.)*

THATCHER: *(Thatcher stands up and studies the picture of Jesus smiling above the sofa. He glances at the couch and sits down. He reaches out and hesitantly touches the air next to him as if he is going to find someone there.)* Hello? Are you there, Jesus? *(He pauses and shakes his head.)* This is crazy. You're not here. *(He glances at the sofa next to him.)* What am I saying? You're always here,

aren't you? "I will be with you always, even unto the ends of the earth." That's what you said. Maybe Albert's not so crazy after all. *(Thatcher begins to talk to an imaginary person next to him.)*

Well, Lord, what should I say to you? This ordinary man, Albert seems to have developed a very special relationship to you. A relationship that everyone desires. Trouble is, I don't know if the average man could withstand that much scrutiny from His Savior. I know that I wouldn't like the idea of You watching over my shoulder and seeing everything I do, hear everything I say.

I guess I'm really jealous of Albert. I mean, here is a man without any seminary training who has never graced a pulpit in his life and he talks with you every day!

What must that be like? To be able to talk to you every day? To tell you all of my problems, all of my thoughts, all of my doubts, my fears? What am I saying? You know all of this already, don't you? So it's not the knowledge that is important. It's the talking. That's it. The talking. Here I have delivered the word of God from the pulpit for twenty five years and yet I can't even talk to my own Lord and Savior anymore.

Oh, Lord, forgive me for forgetting our simple beginnings. Forgive me for letting the world and power and position come between us. Forgive me for not talking to you as a friend, as my Lord, as my Savior. That day you came into my heart was the happiest day of my life. I want everyday to be like that from now on. I want you to walk with me and talk with me every day. Thank, you, Lord.

(Wrickle, Bowsnap, and Furd have re-entered the room out of sight of Thatcher along with Jordan. They look at each other with a puzzled expression.)

WRICKLE: Who you talking to, Dr. Thatcher?

BOWSNAP: There's no one here.

FURD: No one at all.

THATCHER: Jesus. I've been talking to Jesus, gentlemen.
(Thatcher proclaims triumphantly pointing to the sofa.) And I have been renewed! Praise God, I have spoken with my Lord and Savior today. Have you?

WRICKLE: He's gone off the deep end.

BOWSNAP: You're losing it, Thatch.

FURD: Crazy as a bessey bug, I tell you.

(They are interrupted by Clara rushing into the room, her clothes awry, her hair a mess.)

CLARA: Jordan! Jordan! Help me!

JORDAN: *(Hurries into room.)* Mother! What happened to you?

CLARA: *(Collapses onto couch.)* Oh, that abominable man! He wanted me to put on this jacket with buckles and straps and they let Albert go at the asylum instead of keeping him.

JORDAN: Asylum? What are you talking about, Mother?

CLARA: I went to the sanitarium this morning to get some help for Albert and this horrid man threw me over his shoulder and took me up the stairs to this room . . .

(Winfred comes in from stage right.)

WINFRED: Mrs. Gooble, there you are.

CLARA: Jordan, it's him! Don't let him touch me!

JORDAN: Excuse me, but just who are you?

WINFRED: Listen, buster, I've got a job to do. And if you'll get out of my way, I'll have this little lady tucked away in no time.

CLARA: You will not tuck me away, you cretin!

(Dr. Huxley and Nurse Pharr enter.)

HUXLEY: Winfred, stop! There's been a horrible mistake.

WINFRED: What? Oh, hi Doc. Sorry I let her slip away. But don't worry, I'll get her trussed up for you in no time.

HUXLEY: Winfred, there's been a mistake. The patient was supposed to have been Mr. Trimble, not Mrs. Gooble.

WINFRED: Trimble? Which one of these cats is he?

JORDAN: Just a minute. This is all very confusing.

HUXLEY: I am Doctor Brenda Huxley, staff psychiatrist at the Blue Forest Rest Center. Mrs. Gooble came down to have us evaluate Mr. Trimble and she was mistakenly taken to a room. Mrs. Gooble will you forgive us?

CLARA: Not only will I forgive you, but I will ask you leave. Now! This is far too much confusion for me. First, Albert offends the Women's Christian Society and then I almost end up in that long armed suit and Albert's been talking to him all day . . .

WRICKLE: Him?

FURD: You mean your son?

BOWSNAP: I see nothing wrong with that.

CLARA: Not Jordan. You know. Him.

WRICKLE: Who him?

FURD: Which him?

BOWSNAP: That him? *(He points up to picture.)*

CLARA: Yes. Dreadful isn't it.

WRICKLE: Demon possession, I would guess.

BOWSNAP: Nothing so elaborate. Just overly active imagination.

FURD: Sounds to me like he's crazy!

CLARA: That's what I've been trying to tell everyone.
Poor Albert needs help. And so do I.

BOWSNAP: We've got to help him get himself straightened out.

FURD: Yep, exorcise that demon from him.

CLARA: A demon? Oh, it's worse than I thought. You mean this man that's been walking around the house is a demon? Oh, what am I going to do?

THATCHER: Clara, there is no demon in this house. Where the Savior resides, Satan cannot abide. You should consider yourself blessed by Albert. A very special man.

CLARA: Then, this man I think I saw . . . You know walking and talking with Albert, isn't a demon? You mean Albert is not crazy?

- HUXLEY:** I think that's for me to decide. If your uncle has delusions and hallucinations he could be dangerous.
- JORDAN:** My uncle wouldn't harm a hair on anyone's head, Dr. Huxley.
- PHARR:** Dr. Huxley is one of the best psychiatrists in the state, Mr. Gooble. She knows what she is talking about.
- JORDAN:** That may be so, but I won't allow him to be hurt in any way. Mother, you should have talked to me about this before you went to the Rest Center.
- CLARA:** Oh, Jordan, you're just too high strung. You would have stopped me.
- WINFRED:** Listen ladies and germs, if we could get on with this vaudeville act and let me wrap up the patient, we can get back to the hospital. I've got bedpan rounds at three.
- THATCHER:** *(Pauses and glances back at the sofa.)* Dr. Huxley, you may be an expert on the human psyche, but I know a gentle and wise man when I meet him. Albert's relationship with Jesus is a bit, unusual, but I assure you he is not insane. How can introducing someone to Jesus be considered harmful? Albert doesn't need your help. He has very high connections, gentlemen. As Furd here would say, "If it ain't broke don't fix it."
- (They all exit. Albert enters room, puzzled look on his face.)*
- ALBERT:** Uh, Jordan, have you seen . . . Where did Dr. Thatcher go?
- JORDAN:** He left. Seems he had a conversation with Jesus while you were gone.

- ALBERT:** Oh, that's where He was. No wonder I couldn't find Him.
- CLARA:** Albert, darling, forgive me for doubting you. Isn't it wonderful what happened to Dr. Thatcher and right here in our house?
- ALBERT:** But, I've got to find Him. I know He's here somewhere.
- JORDAN:** Albert, Jesus is always here. He is always with us.
- ALBERT:** (*Looks at Jordan and then at Clara.*) Well, it's about time you realized it. He's always right here with us. Ready to listen. And we have to be ready to talk. Sometimes this old world gets so confusing, we forget to stop and listen to our Master. Because most of the time, He whispers. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm going for a walk and a talk with an old friend. Clara, darling, don't forget we have all those dinner guests for supper.
- CLARA:** Guests?
- ALBERT:** I invited all these people for supper tonight. I told them you would cook chicken and dumplings.
- JORDAN:** (*Goes to Nurse Pharr and extends an arm.*) Let me escort you to the table.
- WINFRED:** Uh, Mrs. Clara, would you forgive me for being so rough earlier. You know, for a woman your age you got a lot of spunk.
- CLARA:** My age?
- WINFRED:** I mean . . . Uh, here are some flowers. (*Reaches over and pulls the roses out of a flower arrangement.*) Can we start all over.

- CLARA:** Roses? How nice. Why, Winfred I didn't know you had it in you. And all of you are here to eat. Oh, my, I had better get busy. *(She starts to leave room and pauses looking at Albert.)*
- HUXLEY:** Let me go with you on this walk, Albert. Maybe I misjudged you, too. Perhaps my preoccupation with problems of the mind have blinded me to the problems of my heart. I need to reacquaint myself with an old friend.
- CLARA:** Will, He be here for supper?
- ALBERT:** If you want Him to be here he will. *(He turns to audience and winks as they leave.)* All you gotta do is invite Him in.