

### Scene 3

*THE PROSPECTOR's* campsite is dark, save some barely-breathing embers in the fire and the occasional flash of lightning. It's quiet, besides the cracks of thunder.

*THE PROSPECTOR* exits his shanty. He has a blanket draped over his head, continuing around his shoulders and down to his knees. He sits at the campsite. A moment passes. He gets up and walks a few feet. He picks a stick up off the ground. He walks to the campfire and pushes some embers around. He sits on the ground and pokes the embers around some more as they continue to die.

*THE PROSPECTOR* lays down on the ground and stares up at the sky.

THE PROSPECTOR

It came so to pass that on the third day in the morning, that there was thunder and lightning and a thick cloud up on the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud so that all the people that were in the camp trembled. Haha! What a mighty trembling that must have been. It is a sound that is heard by sinners and saints alike. Well I know that believers shand't fear the thunder. For they have resolution and protection in the Lord, and in his child and in his holy spirit. I am not a preacher Elliott. You know that. (He laughs) I wasn't never much good at proselytizin' nor for judgin'. Of nobody, of nobody's, uh, flaws nor faults. Only the Lord shall judge. And he judges fairly against all and he forgives. Remember that always. He judges fairly and he forgives. Always, fairly.

*Lightning strikes in the distance.*

*A beat.*

*Thunder claps.*

I wouldn't certainly not say I always do those things perfectly, mind you. I have my nasty thoughts, and my biases I suppose. But Christ has saved me. And I shall have him on my side. And we have already won, Elliott. We have already won. We have won in this

life and in the next one.

*A beat.*

I don't have to tell you that.

*A beat.*

It's comin' Elliott. Maybe not tomorrow or the day after or the day after that. And maybe it could be that it happens. I think there might be that we're gettin' close to a . . . somethin' there. There just might could be somethin' here. There may just be a vein over . . . yonder.

*THE PROSPECTOR motions towards a spot.*

*Lightning strikes.*

I can feel the thing.

*Thunder claps. THE PROSPECTOR sits up.*

(Shouting) I say I can feel it Elliott. I can feel it. (Back to a usual tone of voice) God bless it.

*A moment passes.*

Remember the summers, more especially the first few summers after Pop died when we'd run around in the chicken pen, chasing the chickens, and we'd get our clothes all muddy and Mama would send Sarah out to wrangle the three of us? And Sarah would pull us into the kitchen, when she could catch us, or sometimes it was just me, or you, or Thomas she'd catch. She'd always have a switch on hand.

*A beat.*

I think she'd must have gone out at night when we was sleepin' goin' to collect the most sturdy 'n most

painful sticks she could find. Or maybe Mama did it. But I doubt it. Either way I don't remember Mama ever goin' out in the woods lookin for no switch. Nor Sarah neither.

*A beat.*

It did took all eight of those women to raise us three boys. I don't know why Mama put Sarah in charge of disciplinin', but I figure it coulda been worse.

*A beat.*

It also most certainly coulda been better. Sarah wasn't quite as intimidating as Pop was at disciplinin' us. It wasn't that she wasn't tough. She'd been as tough as Mama was, maybe more so. But I'm not sure any of us took her with as much . . . seriousness as we did Pop. Not that I didn't have the welts and bruises from her to prove what she'd had done. I think Thomas always got it worst. Maybe it's cause we had each other. I don't know. Not that we weren't all in it in the thing together, but I think it was harder on him. He was young when Pop left and I'm not sure if he had any real memory of him. In some ways that's easier. But in some ways I imagine it's much tougher. That's my thought anyway.

*A beat.*

*THE PROSPECTOR looks out at the water.*

*Lightning illuminates a starry sky.*

*A beat.*

*Thunder claps, reverberating over the lake.*

THE PROSPECTOR

Where there weren't a man around, Mama did pretty good. There wasn't no backslidin' allowed. It's a funny thing to think about. Where three boys could have come out of it all in a feminine culture. I think we come out as real men though. Me, you, and Thomas. What comes out of a house like that is determinative. But Mama didn't raise no girls. She sure didn't. Even with the girls she didn't.

Everybody worked like a man does. It was more than when Pop was having around for too. Mama didn't have no sweet spot for the girls like Pop did.

*A beat.*

I don't know. I ain't never thought about it that much before as far as I can remember, nor have any recollection of.

*Lightning cracks.*

*Thunder roars.*

*THE PROSPECTOR sits for a moment.*

THE PROSPECTOR

This lightnin'! There is a might in this lightnin', isn't there? There is a mightiness of God speaking something unto us! And Elliott, I have had a fearsome dream. As a child. A horrible, terrible, distressed-filled dream. But it was . . . jubilant. Oh so very jubilant and joyful and . . . excitin' as well too. And and and . . . mighty. I laid in my bed. I was next to you and Thomas. I trembled and yet . . . I wasn't shaken. And I wasn't alone. There is was movement in the wonder of God's . . . ful . . . in God's tribute, in God's wonderment of the . . . world. And in his warmness. I would lay there, in the tempest storm, feeling . . . there was a time that I dreamed it. I dreamed that I could touch lightnin' and I did.

*A beat.*

I was sleepin' and then I awakened out there outside the house. I walked out into the field. I would walk past the cows and the sheep in Mister Lawrence's pasture. I remember, I remember not being encumbered by. . . there was no fence at all there. I walked straight into the field and out, towards the woods. There was no fence, or it was . . . not there no more. I felt I had to go quickly, and I ran. I ran. I was out of breath. And I kept running. And it was a dream but I can tell you my chest hurt then, it was burning. The air were, was sticky. And I ran towards the woods, straight ahead of me. The woods that we

played in one hundred times. Or one thousand times. And there was some sort of coverin' there, maybe. In the pasture between, in the spot between the cows and the sheep and the woods though I would stop. I did stop. That's where it happened. A mighty bolt of lightnin' in front of me. A burst of light that blinded me, even in my sleep I could see it behind my eyes' lids. I felt a flash of heat too. And I reached out with my hand. And I would feel an . . . there would be a . . . there was burning and . . . and I burst into fiery flame. And my body was set on fire. And I screamed. And I was warm, and then it was too hot. And I screamed. I screamed so loud. I could hear it, outside my body. My ears were set to burstin'. And I was frightened. And then I would wake up. And no one was there. Except you and Thomas sleepin', and the noise of thunder and the sound of lightnin' was all around us. I saw the light of the lightnin'. And God was all around me. And I went back to sleep.

*A beat.*

Elliott, I'm appreciative that I had you around. You don't know. Or maybe you do. Hell, maybe you felt the same way. Or heck, maybe you still do.

*A beat.*

Elliott. I think maybe sometimes a man just don't get it 'til he gets it.

*There is a lull about the area.*

*A beat.*

*Another beat.*

I don't see no lightning nowhere anymore.

*THE PROSPECTOR wraps his blanket tightly around himself. He sits for a minute. He lays down for a minute.*

*Lightning.*

*A beat.*

*Thunder.*

*A beat.*

*He sits back up. Another minute passes. He raises himself up and walks to the camp fire. He stares for a half-minute. He walks a few feet, finding the stick he used before. He walks to the camp fire and pokes the embers for just a moment. He walks back to the shanty. He turns his head back and looks at the sky.*

*He shouts, gently.*

*Goodnight Elliott.*

*He enters into his shanty.*

*Lights fade to black. The final embers burn out and die.*