

Cain

a short play
by: Gabe McFadden

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Cast

EZRA: Older male. Father Figure. A good man.

ANNA: A young woman. Strong because she has to be.

HENRY: An attractive young man. Quiet. Guarded.

CAIN: Nomadic, earthy, lonely. Timeless. Strangely alluring.

Setting

1847, a wagon train of Mormon Pioneers somewhere between Nauvoo, IL and Salt Lake City, UT.

PROLOGUE

BLACKOUT

*We hear the Voice of God recite Genesis
4:10-12*

VOICE OF GOD

Genesis 4:10-12

10 What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

11 And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

*Projected and read aloud, we hear and see the
following Quote:*

DAVID W. PATTEN

As I was riding along the road on my mule I suddenly noticed a very strange personage walking beside me. ... His head was about even with my shoulders as I sat in my saddle. He wore no clothing, but was covered with hair...I asked him where he dwelt and he replied that he had no home, that he was a wanderer in the earth and traveled to and fro.

He said he was a very miserable creature, that he had earnestly sought death during his sojourn upon the earth, but that he could not die, and his mission was to destroy the souls of men. About the time he expressed himself thus, I rebuked him in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by virtue of the Holy Priesthood, and commanded him to go hence, and he immediately departed out of my sight

-David W. Patten

ACT 1: THE FIRE

We hear crickets and cicadas chirping. Slowly, the lights fade on to reveal a two Mormon Pioneers sitting around a crackling fire. We get the impression that there are other little fires and camps like this scattered around.

They sit in companionable silence for a moment, poking at the fire, looking at the stars, when suddenly there's the sound of something rustling in nature behind them. They both startle and look around, then for EZRA lets out a soft laugh.

EZRA

You'd think we'd be used to this by now. Two months of nothing but plains, trees, and the majesty of God's Great Earth.

Enter ANNA. She's holding three mugs. She passes one to HENRY and EZRA and takes a seat next to them.

ANNA

God's Great Earth goes to bed with the sun. We're stuck now with anything left behind.

HENRY

Or anything that stayed behind.

EZRA

Our wagon has space if you'd like to kip there. Mary is sleeping under the stars tonight.

ANNA

Somehow, even the dirt on the ground is softer than these wagons. Plus, I'd like to enjoy the weather while we can. I'm scared of what winter will bring.

EZRA

We'll make it to the Salt Lake Valley long before winter sets in.

HENRY

That's what the Donner family said.

ANNA

Oh hush. That's just a legend.

HENRY

It can't be! My cousin told me all about it in a letter.

EZRA

We've a long way to go before we have to resort to anything like that. Plus, it's the old ones like me that have to be worried. We're the first to go when things get rough.

He realizes his mistake almost as soon as the words leave his mouth. He looks at ANNA guiltily. Her face is set with a grim determination.

ANNA

It's fine... No, really. Everything that happens is a part of His plan. I'll see him again someday. The Lord giveth nothing we cannot overcome.

EZRA

The pendulum swings both ways. You'll be counting your blessings soon enough. A new world awaits.

ANNA

A new world can't come soon enough. What will you do once we arrive in the Promised Land?

EZRA

Ah, this game again. Well, build a home with a large porch and a matching set of rocking chairs for me and Mary.

ANNA

Your answer never changes. Ever unwavering, our Ezra.

EZRA

I'm blessed to have found my happiness. Henry? What will you make of yourself?

HENRY

Oh you know, find a girl, build us a home to fill with children.

ANNA

I never pegged you for a boring man, Henry. Come on, what's really going on in that head of yours?

HENRY

I'm just trying to take it one day at a time. I figure if I keep one foot in front of the other, I'll eventually end up somewhere I'm meant to be.

EZRA

And there's an optimist in there after all.

ANNA

You don't have to make up your mind now. Heaven only knows we'll have lots of time to think about it.

*There is more silence as they enjoy the night
and the fire.*

ANNA

Did you guys see the moose earlier? It was huge! Samuel tried to pet it but it ran off.

EZRA

He's lucky it didn't charge. We have to remember, we're just passing through. This is their home and we're intruding.

HENRY

You almost sound scared.

EZRA

The West is a wild place. Vastly untamed and untouched by human hands.

ANNA

Tell the story about your uncle again.

HENRY

Your Uncle?

EZRA

David Patten. My mother's brother. Legend tells of a creature cursed to walk the forests of the Earth for eternity. Even the Natives whisper about his footprints in the mud.

HENRY

And your Uncle saw him?

EZRA

He did. But he's not a monster. He's a man. Robbed of the dignity of death when he took his brother's life. Cain was cursed by God to wander the earth alone for all eternity.

HENRY

I know the story. And your Uncle met him?

EZRA

He did. He rebuked him in the name of our Lord by the power of the Priesthood and he never saw him again.

HENRY

It seems a bit extreme as a punishment.

EZRA

He committed a previously unknown crime. Murder. Perhaps the second sin.

ANNA

Do you truly believe your Uncle's account?

EZRA

He had no reason to lie.

HENRY

But do you?

EZRA

Maybe I do. Maybe I'm an old man spinning tales and telling stories to keep the next generation entertained.

ANNA

Sometimes it's more fun to believe.

HENRY

Because that's what this is all about, *fun*.

ANNA

While we know few have had it as rough as you,

(she pauses for a pointed beat)

but maybe just this once you can let yourself be spooked by a silly story around a campfire.

HENRY

Only it's not a silly story, right?

ANNA

Maybe "silly" is the wrong word. I mean you no offense, Ezra. It's just we're headed across the country to find freedom. We left our homes, jobs, security--all because we know what we are building is true. The Promised Land is waiting for us.

(beat)

As jaded as you pretend to be, you're still here on this journey like the rest of us. You wouldn't have come if you didn't believe.

EZRA

Amen. Brigham Young is waiting for us.

They sit as the cicadas, crickets, and frogs fill the silence.

EZRA

I think it's time for me to retire for the night. I'll get a spot more of this, then turn in. Sleep well you two.

Exit EZRA.

ANNA and HENRY sit in silence.

HENRY

So, how are you really?

ANNA

Tired. But tired enough to not have the energy to dwell on anything else.

HENRY

That seems to be the best we can hope for right now.

ANNA

Always a ray of sunshine, our Henry

HENRY

(he finally smiles and bumps her shoulder gently).

I aim to please.

ANNA

I think I'll head to bed now as well. Sleep well, Henry.

Exit ANNA.

The lights dim slowly as HENRY finishes his drink alone by the fire.

ACT II: THE FIRST DREAM

The Wagons are gone but we are still outside. A man (CAIN) is crouching down studying the ground with his back to the audience.

Enter EZRA

EZRA

Who are you?

CAIN

(still crouched down, studying the ground).

Does it matter?

EZRA

Maybe not, but I'd still like to know. We're here together after all.

CAIN

And where exactly is here?

He stands and reveals that though he is a man, he is not like EZRA at all. He is tall, wild, and almost feral in appearance. But he also has the countenance of a man bearing a heavy load. Though he looks intense, he has not forgotten that underneath it all, he's still human.

EZRA takes a step back.

EZRA

Well speak of the devil. We were just talking about you.

CAIN

You wound me, I'm not the devil. Just his incarnate, apparently.

EZRA

What do you want with me? I won't pretend that I have any power here, but the Lord is on my side. By the power of the holy priesthood, I rebuke you in the name of God!

(There's a beat of silence as nothing happens)

CAIN

Are you done? I'm flattered by the display but it takes more than words to turn me away. It takes *intent*. Plus, you're the one who summoned me. You're curious, aren't you?

He stalks closer to EZRA. EZRA holds his ground.

CAIN

You obviously know who I am, but I, in this, and this moment only, am at a disadvantage here. With whom am I spending this lovely afternoon with?

He holds out his hand which EZRA ignores.

EZRA

Ezra Patten

CAIN

Charmed, I'm sure. Now, are you going to help me? Or not?

EZRA follows him to where he was crouching down. CAIN pulls a seed out of his pocket, plants it, and waits. Nothing happens.

CAIN

Nothing. Again. It's endlessly frustrating. Now, you try.

After taking the offered seed from CAIN, EZRA crouches down and plants it. After a moment (through the magic of theatre) a little green sprout pops out of the ground.

CAIN

(He sighs overdramatically then laughs)

So I guess the problem is me. As usual.

EZRA

Why am I here?

CAIN

Why is anyone here? To be born, die, then ascend back to heaven. You of all people should know this.

EZRA

Am I dead?

CAIN

Yes!

(beat)

No, I'm just kidding. You're just dreaming.

EZRA

And are you... you know...

CAIN

I'm real, yes. I go by many names. After thousands of years you begin to stop caring what people call you. The tribes out West call me Sasquatch. Some call me Bigfoot. Your lot is one of the last that remember who I began as.

EZRA

So you are him.

CAIN

That, you'll never know. Unless we meet again? Perhaps we'll bump into each other on our travels.

EZRA

Then we won't be seeing each other again.

CAIN

Why not? Too old to see the world? You've still got a couple of years left in those legs.

EZRA

I have a life now. I...I chose a different path.

(beat)

I'm very happy though.

CAIN

A man who wants to see the world but feels he missed his chance. How cliché. Why do you think you're special enough to go on an adventure? You realize that most people just bumble along through their lives, going through the motions.

EZRA

Is that how you fill your days?

CAIN

I fill my days doing whatever I please. The only luxury I'm still afforded is the luxury of time. But we always seem to get tired of the things we have an excess of.

EZRA

So you've seen the world?

CAIN

I've seen worlds you can't even imagine.

EZRA

I almost envy you.

CAIN

I wouldn't wish this fate on anyone. Do you know how long it takes you guys to accomplish anything?

EZRA

You speak as though you're not one of us.

CAIN

Well am I?

EZRA

Are you not a man? You seem to be cut from the same cloth as me, and we were made in God's own image.

CAIN

Stop, you'll make me blush.

EZRA

It wasn't a compliment, just an observation.

CAIN

I envy you, you know.

EZRA

At least you're here. The alternative is worse.

CAIN

I would welcome death with open arms at this point. Invite him in for dinner. Anything to move the process along.

EZRA

I didn't mean death. Hell.

CAIN

Hell is a mindset. Hell is damnation is it not? Am I not damned to a life, unfulfilled, stuck here? Trust me, I know hell.

EZRA

Then tell me about it.

He sits and motions for CAIN to do the same.

CAIN

At the end of the earth there's a place so cold, it's entirely white.

EZRA

I know what snow is.

CAIN

Not like this. The only living things for miles are the creatures deep beneath the sea. All sharp teeth and disfigured bodies.

EZRA

(sarcastically)

I can only imagine.

CAIN

Do not forget that I'm capable of murder.

EZRA

It is maybe the only thing outside of your story I can focus on. Have you seen the promised land?

CAIN

From a distance. You'll be happy there.

EZRA

You think I'm simple.

CAIN

Fine, you'll be content there.

EZRA

Do you think it's over for me?

CAIN

If you can survive the walk across the country, I'm sure you can muster up the strength to go out and explore a bit. I warn you, it all looks like this. You'll have to cross the Earth to see something truly new.

EZRA

And my family?

CAIN

Wait for them to die. That's what I did.

EZRA

I chose my path. There's no use in looking back.

CAIN

Did you actually choose your path or are you following the path laid out *for* you? You're literally following a path created by others to live a life that mirrors the lives of the people who walked this trail before you. You married the right girl and now you're raising your children in the "light of Christ" as you like to call it.

EZRA

What do I have to gain by dwelling on what-ifs? I'm happy. Maybe everyone is on to something. Maybe us Latter Day Saints have it all figured out.

CAIN

But that doesn't stop you from doing it. You're still here, with me. Dwelling.

EZRA

So are you.

CAIN

But I'm just a piece of your dream.

EZRA

Are you?

CAIN

You're going to wake up tired tomorrow.

EZRA

I wake up tired every morning.

CAIN

A few thousand years and you'll get used to the whole walking thing.

EZRA yawns and lays down. He begins to drift off into sleep.

EZRA

Why *are* you still here? You've seen thousands of men just like me.

CAIN

You have no regrets.

EZRA

You and I have very different things to dwell on.

CAIN

I know. My story is much more interesting.

EZRA

Yet you're here visiting me in mine.

CAIN

It helps me remember how good I have it. All the happiest men beg for death.

EZRA

(Drifting off to sleep)

I'll put in a good word for you when I make it to heaven. You *are* sorry, right?

*The lights slowly dim as EZRA falls asleep,
CAIN sadly watches him.*

ACT III: THE SECOND DREAM

The lights come up as ANNA jolts awake. She takes a moment to steady herself then gets up from where she was laying down. She wraps the blanket around herself and begins to walk. CAIN approaches from behind her.

CAIN

You know a girl like you shouldn't be walking around---

He's cut off by ANNA's scream. She tries to run away but falls to the ground instead.

ANNA

Get away! Stay away from me!

CAIN

Woah, woah. Calm down. I'm not going to hurt you.

He takes a tentative step towards her. She recoils.

ANNA

Help! Somebody!

She tries to scramble away but gets caught in her blanket.

CAIN

I'm serious. The one murder was enough. Obviously I don't want to tempt fate, well God, again. Up, up!

He helps her up. She snatches her hand away and retreats to a safe distance.

ANNA

What are you doing here? Where is everyone?

CAIN

This is your dream. Make them appear!

ANNA

I'm dreaming? I'm dreaming, okay.

CAIN

And I am truly the man of your dreams. Well in your dreams I guess.

ANNA

I know what you are.

CAIN

Ask and ye shall receive, I guess.

ANNA

I didn't ask.

CAIN

Like I said, it's your dream. I'm merely passing through.

ANNA

(She looks around)

Wait, I've been here before...

CAIN

Strangely enough, I haven't.

ANNA

It's the glen behind my house. Well, our old house... This is where...where John....

Her hand absently rubs her ring finger then settles on her stomach. Then, she snaps out of her daze, suddenly remembering who she is with.

ANNA

Why are you here?

CAIN

I'm an immortal being cursed to walk the Earth for eternity. I'm basically everywhere.

ANNA

Are you going to kill me?

CAIN

Didn't we go over this? Have I done anything to make you think I mean you harm?

ANNA

You killed your brother.

CAIN

Anything that you've seen then? Don't you believe people can change?

ANNA

Yes. People can change. But you're...

CAIN

I'm an extreme case, yes. But that doesn't mean I'm incapable of change. Does it?

ANNA

I don't know.

CAIN

That's the smartest thing you've said all night.

They stand awkwardly together for a moment.

CAIN

So you're pregnant.

ANNA

What? How? How do you know that?

CAIN

Either I know everything because I'm, well, me and I've infiltrated your dreams. Or I'm simply a figment of your imagination, so by that logic I know everything you do. Take your pick.

ANNA

But I'm not sure...

CAIN

But aren't you? So, who's the father?

ANNA

How could you even ask that? Don't you know?

CAIN

Maybe, but it's fun to ask. I'm a "bad guy," remember? It's my job to make you remember the bad things. Like your dead husband. Did he know?

ANNA is shocked at his bluntness.

ANNA

I didn't know until after.

CAIN

After?

She's angry now.

ANNA

(She's angry now)

Until after the accident you ass.

CAIN

Tut, tut Anna. Language.

ANNA

I don't have to deal with this. This is my dream. I'm leaving.

She turns to leave. She walks off stage then back onto the stage. She doesn't realize that she has been turned around. She looks surprised to see CAIN again. With a huff, she exits to the other side only to have the same thing happen again.

She lets out a frustrated yell and sits on the ground.

ANNA

Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!

CAIN comes up behind her.

CAIN

Is it working? Look! Don't walk away from me!

ANNA

(Pacing, walking away from CAIN)

Let me wake up!

CAIN

You think I want to be here with you right now? Gosh. So touchy. You really should calm down. It's not good for the baby.

ANNA

Why don't you leave then? I obviously can't but you can.

CAIN

And miss all the fun?

ANNA

What about my life right now seems fun? What about this *situation* seems fun? I'm carrying the child of my dead husband while I *walk* across the country to a new life I have to build *alone*.

CAIN

Oh? Is that some wavering faith I hear?

ANNA

Shut up! This is my dream! I'm in control! Be nice to me! Brain! Make this *thing* nicer.

CAIN gives a little wiggle as if overcome by something.

CAIN
(sarcastically)

You look lovely today.

ANNA

I am in hell.

CAIN

No, but you are gaining weight while walking across the country which is tough to do. Nice jugs though.

ANNA

Jugs? There are no jugs here. What's happening?

CAIN

You'll understand when you're older.

They stand in silence.

ANNA

So now what?

CAIN

I don't know. "You're in control," remember?

ANNA

I want to wake up.

CAIN

Then do it.

ANNA

I can't!

CAIN

Take control!

ANNA

I'm trying!

CAIN

Are you? Because it sounds a lot like you're whining about your *baby* and your *fresh start*. Some of us would kill for a companion and a do-over you know. Well, not literally.

ANNA

Why are you here?

CAIN

This isn't about me.

CAIN slowly walks closer to her. She tenses, but doesn't recoil. He puts a hand on her shoulder.

CAIN

Look, I'll level with you here. I'm alone. I've been completely alone for almost as long as this world has existed. You're never going to be alone. You have a living memory of your husband inside you that will soon be here to help.

ANNA

Oh.. I... Than--

CAIN

Unless you lose the baby while walking across the country.

*ANNA shoves him away and slaps him in the face. As soon as her hand makes contact:
BLACKOUT.*

ACT IV: THE THIRD DREAM

The lights gently fade in. CAIN and HENRY are sitting next to each other. Shoulder to shoulder. HENRY is in a bit of a daze and doesn't notice CAIN sitting next to him.

CAIN

Well this is intimate.

HENRY startles and jumps to his feet, stumbling. He tenses when he fully takes in CAIN. They stare at each other in silence for a moment.

CAIN

Hello, Henry.

HENRY

You're... You're him, aren't you?

CAIN

The Alpha and Omega? The Only Begotten? No, sweet child. I am not God, nor is son, Jesus Christ.

HENRY doesn't relax.

CAIN

Loosen up. Why does everyone always think I'm out to kill?

HENRY

(Forgetting himself)

Your track record maybe?

CAIN

Annnnd there he is. The sharp-tongued, tortured soul we've all come to know and love. How's it hangin,' Henry?

HENRY

Why are you here? Why am I here?

CAIN

(exasperated)

Oh your God, you people. You're in a dream, I'm here because I'm either immortal and omnipotent or you've manifested me out of your subconscious. Caught up? What should we talk about?

HENRY still hasn't moved, despite CAIN motioning him to come join him.

CAIN

Fine stay over there.

He sits while HENRY stands. HENRY starts to relax a bit.

HENRY

So this is all a dream?

CAIN

When you've lived as long as I have the line between dreams and reality becomes blurred. Maybe it is, maybe it isn't.

HENRY

You're not very helpful.

CAIN

God didn't keep me around to be helpful.

HENRY

Does this mean I'm being punished too?

CAIN

Oh Henry, don't be mean. I would hope my presence isn't just a punishment.

HENRY

I still don't know why you're here.

CAIN

Unfortunately, I do know why I'm still here. Funny how "forgive and forget" can be so one sided.

HENRY

So you really are him?

CAIN

Yes dummy. I'm the mighty Cain. Slayer of Abel, father of Enoch, etcetera, etcetera. At your service.

HENRY

But you're... What is happening to me right now? I've got to get out of here.

CAIN

Pause on you for a moment. What were you about to say about me? I'm devilishly handsome?

HENRY

Devilish is an understatement.

CAIN

That may be true, but everyone loves a rebel. Don't we, Henry.

HENRY is uncomfortable.

HENRY

I'm not a rebel.

CAIN

Oh?

HENRY

I'm here, aren't I? Well there. Wherever the wagons are. I committed to this trip.

CAIN

Is going through the motions enough?

HENRY can't answer.

CAIN

I guess you'd better hope it is.

(beat)

Why are you so unhappy?

HENRY

I'm not unhappy. I'm just...I'm sick of running.

CAIN

From who? Whom, sorry.

HENRY

(He makes a sigh/noise of disgust)

I'm not going to be "that guy." The sad rebel who is all alone. I'm fine. I'm happy. I'm going to the Promised Land!

CAIN

Why?

HENRY

Brigham Young told us to!

CAIN steps closer.

CAIN

You and I both know that's a stupid reason to walk across an entire country.

HENRY

We were chased out of Nauvoo. We had to leave.

CAIN is close to HENRY

CAIN

You didn't have to. *You* could have gone anywhere. New York. England, even.

HENRY

This is where I'm supposed to go. Okay?

CAIN

You're avoiding the question. Why aren't you married yet? There's plenty of options. Even more now that the trail has taken some of you.

HENRY

That's a terrible thing to say.

CAIN

It's your duty Henry. You must provide. Protect...Procreate.

HENRY

This isn't a very romantic environment.

CAIN

Oh, so you want *romance*?

HENRY

You're making fun of me.

CAIN

Not at all. I think it's nice to dream. Do you think that's all you'll ever have? A dream?

HENRY

I can't focus on the future. There's too much happening now.

CAIN

Even I can still feel love.

HENRY

I doubt that.

CAIN

I'm still a man just like you.

HENRY

There's a difference between love and lust.

CAIN

Are you telling me? Or yourself?

HENRY deflates. He sits down.

HENRY

It's just never felt quite right. I don't know why it just hasn't clicked yet.

CAIN

Maybe you need to broaden your horizons.

HENRY

I'm walking across the world, aren't I?

CAIN

Is that what you're trying to find in your so-called "Promised Land?"

HENRY

Motion is progress.

CAIN

Treading water is motion but you don't go anywhere.

HENRY

I can't swim.

CAIN

Well, then being in love is like drowning.

HENRY

Terrifying?

CAIN

No, all consuming.

HENRY

I don't understand. But I also don't know if I want to.

CAIN

You really aren't a rebel, are you?

HENRY

I don't think so. A black sheep maybe. I just want what they have.

CAIN

Who is "they"?

HENRY

Everyone else! Everyone that's happy...Everyone that found someone.

CAIN

Maybe you should stop trying so hard.

HENRY

And what? Give up? Camp out on the side of the trail until I wither away?

CAIN

Leave! Strike out on your own.

HENRY

That sounds lonely too.

CAIN

It is.

HENRY

I kind of like it here.

CAIN

These plains?

HENRY

No, the dream. I don't have to worry about it here.

CAIN

And you're not alone.

CAIN sits next to HENRY.

HENRY

Is this a sunrise? Or sunset?

CAIN

Take your pick.

*They share a moment of silence together.
Shoulders touching. HENRY looks cautiously at
CAIN. CAIN glances over. There's a charged
moment. HENRY leans in for a kiss.*

BLACKOUT

ACT V: EPILOGUE

It's morning. HENRY and ANNA are sitting sleepily next to each other. EZRA enters holding mugs for all three of them.

EZRA

You two look like you've been to Hell and back.

ANNA

Speak for yourself.

EZRA

I had the strangest dream last night.

HENRY glances up then looks away, ashamed. Almost subconsciously ANNA's hand finds her stomach. EZRA sighs and looks out, surveying the world. We hear a shout.

MAN'S VOICE

Westward Ho!

We hear the sounds of the wagons pulling out. EZRA and ANNA quickly finish their drinks and stand to leave. HENRY is spacing out. ANNA gives him a gentle nudge and motions for him to leave. Distracted, he stands, leaving his unfinished cup behind.

EZRA, ANNA, HENRY Exit.

CAIN walks onstage. He picks up HENRY's discarded cup and takes a drink with a private smile.

As the lights fade, we hear/see Genesis 4:13-14 in the VOICE OF GOD and CAIN's voice.

Genesis 4:13-14

13 And CAIN said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth;

BLACKOUT.