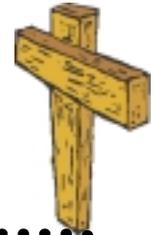


Part One -- Manuscript

“Easter Means More Than **BUNNY RABBITS**”



Act One At the Cemetery

Stage directions: The play opens with Fred Johnson, Jimmy, and Hannah bundled up in heavy winter clothes, standing silently over a gravestone. Mr. Johnson, lost in thought, is holding a red rose. Hannah is noticeably shivering.

- Narrator** The Easter musical entitled *Easter Means More Than Bunny Rabbits*, adapted from a true-life story, begins in a cemetery in the dead of winter. Fred Johnson, a widower, is visiting the gravesite of his dearly beloved wife Rose, who died of cancer two years earlier. With Mr. Johnson are his two children, Jimmy and Hannah.
- The young girl Hannah nearly died in a tragic automobile accident just a few weeks before on Christmas Eve. On this cold, bitter winter morning, Mr. Johnson is very grateful that his little girl Hannah is not lying in a grave, but he is still overcome with grief over the loss of his wife Rose two years before.
- Hannah** Boy, Jimmy, it's really cold out here in the graveyard!
Jimmy Ahh, it's not cold, Hannah!
Hannah Not cold!?! Are you crazy, Jimmy? It must be 20 degrees below zero!
Jimmy Ahh, just tighten your muffler, sissy. (Turning toward his father, Jimmy starts to ask a question) Dad?
Hannah (Tugging on Jimmy's coat, she pleads) Jimmy, please don't ask Dad any questions! Let's go back to the car!
Jimmy (Shrugging off Hannah's hand) Cool it, Hannah. (Turning back toward his father, Jimmy asks again) Dad? Dad?
Mr. J (Breaking out of his reverie, but keeping his eyes focused on the gravestone) What's on your mind, Jimmy?

Jimmy Dad, will we, . . . , will we ever see Momma again?
Mr. J (He pauses, raises his eyes heavenward, then finally gazes at Jimmy.) Yes, son, one day, . . . , each one of us will join your mother, . . . , up there, . . . , in Heaven.

Jimmy Dad, I'm so glad that I trusted in Jesus as my Savior on Christmas Eve.
Mr. J (Tousling his son's hair.) Me, too, son. Me, too!

Hannah (She moves forward and tugs on her father's arm.) Dad, can I ask you a question?
Mr. J (Smiling at his daughter.) Sure, Hannah.
Hannah Daddy, can we hurry back to the car? I'm freezing!
Jimmy Ahh, Hannah! Be tough! Be a man!
Hannah Buzz off, Jimmy! I am not a man. I'm a frozen little girl who will be joining Momma soon in the grave if we don't get back to the car right now.

Mr. J (Laughing) Hold your horses, Hannah! Let me just lay this rose on your mother's grave. (Mr. Johnson leans over and places the flower at the gravestone. He gazes at the rose and gravestone respectfully for a moment.)

Hannah (Impatiently tugging at her father's coat) Daddy, it's really cold, and I'm really freezing! I wish it were . . . springtime.
Jimmy (Laughs) Hey, Dad, I just had a thought!
Hannah (She rolls her eyes in consternation.)
Jimmy Springtime is just like the resurrection — dead things are brought back to life.
Mr. J That's a good thought, Jimmy. I used to think the same way. But your mother's death helped me to see that the resurrection is more than springtime.

Jimmy More than springtime? What do you mean, Dad?
Hannah (She continues to shiver, rolling her eyes, looking longingly toward the car.)
Mr. J Jimmy, the trees and bushes and grass don't really die in the wintertime. They just go into a dormant, resting stage, something like a bear hibernating in a cave, still alive, waiting for warm weather.

Hannah (She perks up.) Waiting for warm weather? That sounds like me!
Mr. J (Turning toward Hannah) Right, Hannah! But remember that verse that we learned last Easter about the resurrection?

Hannah (Still shivering) Which one, Daddy?
Mr. J Jesus said in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Jimmy What does that mean, Dad?
Hannah (Turning toward Jimmy) It means that I believe I am going to freeze to death if we stand out here in the freezing cold much longer.

Mr. J (Laughs, then gets serious) Jimmy, let me explain it this way. When your mother died two years ago, we laid her body in this grave. But your mother Rose is more alive today than ever before. When she left the chains of Earth, her soul and spirit were transported by angels to live in Heaven . . . forever . . . with Jesus.

Jimmy Isn't that what Easter is all about, Dad? Celebrating the resurrection of Jesus from the grave?
Mr. J That's right, Jimmy! Jesus was the Rose of Sharon. His enemies thought that they had crushed and killed Him on a cross at Calvary; but after three days, the Rose of Sharon rose from the grave. Remember that line in Aunt Matilda's new Easter song: "A Rose once dead springs forth anew"? That line reminds me so much of your mother: A Rose once dead springs forth anew.

Jimmy Have we heard that song before, Dad?
Hannah (Shrieking) Jimmy, don't ask Daddy about one of Aunt Matilda's songs!

Mr. J (Ignoring Hannah's plea) Jimmy, you haven't heard *More Than Springtime* before? I can't think of a better time or place to sing this song than right now at your mother Rose's gravesite.

Hannah (Horror stricken) Daddy!!

Mr. J (Smiling) Hannah, this song should really warm your heart!

Stage directions: Mr. Johnson sings *More Than Springtime* solo. Jimmy and Hannah stand off to the side a little bit away from him, alternating their gaze from Mr. Johnson to the gravestone to Heaven . . . to the car.

More Than Springtime

Mr. J More than springtime is the resurrection,
More than a new direction, much more than these.
More than springtime. A Rose once dead springs forth anew,
A Rose that never fades in beauty,
That never fades in fragrance,
A Rose that will never die again!

The Rose of Sharon was in a garden.
Its beauty was marred by tears of grief (and betrayal).
Then the soldiers came and took that Rose away
And nailed It to a cross at Calvary.

The Rose of Sharon was bruised and broken,
Its fragrance spilled out for all mankind (and buried).
But on the third day, that Rose rose from the grave,
Escaping corruption for all time.

More than springtime is the resurrection,
More than a new direction, much more than these.
More than springtime. A Rose once dead springs forth anew,
A Rose that never fades in beauty,
That never fades in fragrance,
A Rose that will never die again!
More than springtime.

End of Act One -- Stage directions: At the conclusion of the song, Mr. Johnson, Jimmy, and Hannah freeze. The lights go out. Mr. Johnson, Jimmy, and Hannah clear off of the stage for a minute while the stage hands clear the stage of the cemetery props. They then set up Aunt Matilda's bedroom. Aunt Matilda climbs in bed, propping herself up against the headboard, covering herself with a sheet and blanket.