



The Heart of a Christian Playwright

THE LOVE DARE

An Original Stage play

By

Cleveland O. McLeish

THE CHARACTERS

- Hosea: Male in his 40's. He is a simple casual dresser with unkept hair and beard. He has a pleasant face and sometimes charming charisma.
- Gomer: Female in her early 30's with pretty eyes. She has been on the streets most of her life and her countenance and appearance reflect years of substance, verbal and physical abuse. She wears a shaggy wig and heavy make-up.
- Joshua: Father figure in his late 60's. He is old but still looks healthy, well groomed and a very easy going guy.
- Celeste: Young woman in her late 20's. Also been on the streets a long time. She is slender and a little loose in how she dresses and walks. She can be very loud and ghetto as well as slick and charming.
- Robert/ Eric Robert is a well built and egocentric Male in his early 40's who likes to be in control. Eric would probably pass as his twin brother.

NOTE FROM WRITER

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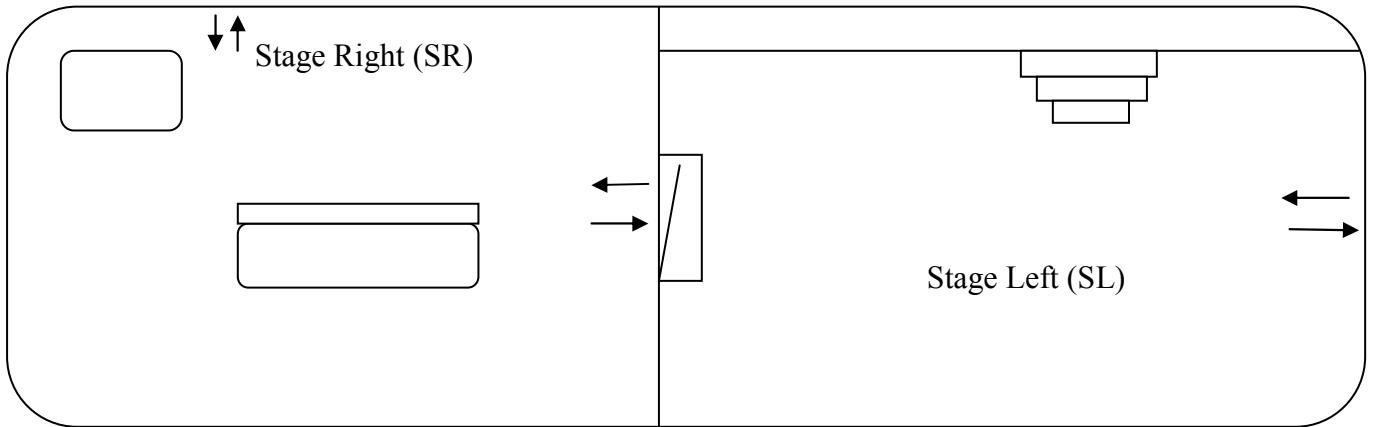
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CMcLeish

BASIC STAGE SET UP (TOP VIEW)



SCENE 1**LIGHTS UP @ SL**

Gomer and Celeste sit on the steps Up Stage (US) in front of a door leading into Sammy's Girls & Liquor.

Hosea is standing Down Stage (DS) facing the audience with Bible open in his hands.

Gomer and Celeste both have foul expressions on their faces and react to the message accordingly. Celeste has a bottle of Jack Daniels Whiskey that she drinks from momentarily.

HOSEA: *(Speaks with little emotion.)* This city is vile, corrupt and wicked. Unless you repent and turn from your nasty way of living, you are all going to hell. Fire and brimstone will be yours eternally if you remain on this road. God hates sin. He hates liars, prostitutes (*glances behind him*) thieves, fornicators, adulterous, witches and warlocks and He will have no reservation committing you all to hell. You just need to repent. I'm not going to sugar-coat this message. Some of you here will be dead tomorrow. Some of you here will be dead tonight. Now is the day of salvation. How you will die, I don't know. Hit by a motorcar or a gunshot, it doesn't matter. You will be dead and there is no repentance in the grave. Repent! I don't care who you are --- Repent! The wages of sin is death and unless you repent you will die. If you don't want to die, find God before it is too late. That's all I'm saying. It's up to you if you want to continue living a dirty, nasty life. I couldn't care less.

Hosea closes his bible and goes to the door CS leading to his living room (SR). He opens it and enters.

LIGHTS UP @ SR.

GOMER: He could not even look at us while he preaches.

CELESTE: That is because he has already passed his judgment on us. You think he believes we can be saved? Christians are all the same...as if they weren't sinners themselves.

GOMER: Some of them did worst things than me and you put together.

CELESTE: Some of them still do.

Hosea goes on his knees.

CELESTE: Let him preach. Nobody even listens to him anymore. *(They laugh)*

Gomer sips from her bottle of Jack Daniels.

CELESTE: You gotta stop drinking that stuff.

GOMER: If I do, I'm gonna have to quit this job. I'm surprised you don't drink.

CELESTE: Not after seeing what it did to my Mom.

GOMER: Let's not go there. We are having a bad enough day as it is.

LIGHTS FADE @ SL

HOSEA: Father, in Heaven ---

VOICE: Yes.

Hosea pauses. He opens one eye and looks around.

HOSEA: Who said that?

VOICE: Do you still pray and not expect an answer?

Pause.

HOSEA: Is that you God?

VOICE: My sheep they know my voice.

HOSEA: Forgive my ignorance; it's just that I have never heard you speak so clearly to me before ---

VOICE: Have you seen what Israel has become?

HOSEA: Yes Lord, I have.

VOICE: The more they prosper, is the more immoral they become. Swearing, lying, killing, stealing, adultery, drunkenness, perversion and Idolatry. When will they ever learn that there is no other way?

HOSEA: People rather to have their own way than be obedient to laws and rules.

VOICE: I love them, Hosea. Israel is my wife, but they keep whoring after other gods and it must stop.

HOSEA: I understand.

VOICE: No you don't. You preach my words but your preaching has no effect because something is missing. You have grown intolerant of their lifestyles and it suppresses the vital ingredient of change....and that is love. You do not love them.

HOSEA: What's to love? You said it yourself ---these people are all prostitutes.

VOICE: No human has the right to judge another human being. You were not so different from them once.

HOSEA: Yes, but I heard your word and I responded.

VOICE: And they can too - - - but the words of a prophet cannot be littered with ridicule and hate. I need you to understand my love for them so you can effectively share it.

HOSEA: How can I, when I am just a man.

VOICE: You have always been obedient and I expect nothing less with what I am about to ask you to do.

HOSEA: Anything Lord.

VOICE: You have been single long enough. I am giving you a wife. Her name is Gomer. Find her and take her as your wife.

HOSEA: Where do I find this Gomer?

VOICE: Just go about your daily routine. You will know her when you see her. She will be wearing a red skirt with matching stripe top.

HOSEA: Red is my favourite colour.

VOICE: I know.

HOSEA: And you said her name is Gomer?

VOICE: Yes.

HOSEA: A very unique name. She must be a very unique person. I have been looking forward to being a husband for a long time.

VOICE: You will be a father as well. Joshua has been looking forward to being a Grand-Dad.

HOSEA: Sounds good. Sounds really good. *(Pause)* Lord, if I have found favour in your eyes, can you grant me one request?

VOICE: No man can see God and live.

HOSEA: How did you - - - *(realizes)* I just want a glimpse...even for a second.

VOICE: You will see me when you die.

Silence.

HOSEA: Hello!

Silence

HOSEA: Well, it was worth a try.

Gets up off his knees.

HOSEA: Finally I get to experience marriage. I always wondered what it would be like. Gomer my beautiful wife to be. We will meet soon. *(starts to feel excited)* This is a very exciting time....I must be ready.

LIGHTS FADE @ SR

SCENE 2**LIGHTS UP @ SL**

Gomer and Celeste sit on the steps. Gomer drinks from her bottle of Jack Daniels Whiskey. She is wearing a red skirt with matching top.

CELESTE: Business is sooo slow today.

GOMER: *(wipes her mouth)* City men are the worst customers. I told you we need to relocate.

CELESTE: I am depending on the money to go shopping this weekend at Walmarts.

GOMER: Do you ever think about anything other than shopping?

CELESTE: Yes, money to go shopping.

GOMER: *(shakes her head)* Maybe the men here are tired of us. You ever think about that.

CELESTE: *(laughs)* As if that is even possible...If you ask me, I think Jack Daniels is getting to your head.

GOMER: You enjoy this lifestyle, don't you?

CELESTE: The money is good...and I know that look --- This is our life Gomer. We didn't choose it, fate just handed it to us.

GOMER: We don't belong in the streets. We are better than this.

CELESTE: If thinking like that makes you sleep at nights, be my guest.

Gomer sinks in thought for a moment.

GOMER: I keep having strange dreams.

CELESTE: About what?

GOMER: A knight in shining armour come and takes me away from here.

CELESTE: That happens everyday, just that they bring us back after an hour or so.

Gomer looks offstage left.

GOMER: Now there's a familiar face. *(Gets up off the step)* I will be right back.

Gomer strides offstage adjusting her hair and checking her makeup.

CELESTE: You got all the charm to disarm any man girl.

Hosea enters from SR with Bible clutched under his arm.

Celeste turns to see him stepping out.

CELESTE: I think my very bad day is about to get worst.

HOSEA: Young lady, I know we have had this conversation before, but do you think it's appropriate to conduct your 'business' next door to a Church.

CELESTE: There is no Church here. Just you.

HOSEA: I am the church.

CELESTE: Why are you always bothering us? We don't bother you.

HOSEA: What you women do here is just plain nasty?

CELESTE: Save your judgement for somebody who cares.

Gomer enters counting money.

GOMER: Celeste girl, that's the easiest 500 bucks I ever made --- *(Looks up to see Hosea staring at her)*. Oh great!

HOSEA: *(dejected)* Dear God of Heaven - - - You!?! You are wearing a red skirt. Oh, this is crazy.

GOMER: What you want preacher man?

Silence.

Hosea is staring dumb folded at Gomer.

CELESTE: Why do you just stand there staring at my friend? Just a moment ago your mouth was running like a pipe.

HOSEA: *(looks away)* This is not happening --- *(laughs to himself)* this can't be right. No way!

GOMER: What is your problem?

HOSEA: Do I look like I have a problem?

GOMER: Yah...you do.

Pause.

CELESTE: Looks to me like you have the Preacher man under some manners Gomer.

HOSEA: Hold on...not only are you wearing red but your name is also Gomer?

GOMER: What's it to you?

Pause.

HOSEA: No way! Noooo way!

LIGHTS UP @ SR

Hosea goes back through his door entering SR. He leans against the door.

HOSEA: Talk to me God...cause obviously you have made a very big mistake. *(Goes to sit in the couch)*

CELESTE: What was that about?

GOMER: I'm just glad we got rid of him.

They go back to sitting on the step.

Joshua enters SR and stands behind the couch watching Hosea beat his head with his palm.

JOSHUA: You ok son?

HOSEA: Nope.

JOSHUA: Wanna talk about it?

HOSEA: Nope.

Pause.

Joshua sits.

JOSHUA: You should talk about it.

HOSEA: Why?

JOSHUA: It helps. I haven't seen you beat your head in a while. What happened?

HOSEA: God wants me to get married.

JOSHUA: About time. I was starting to give up on ever being a grandfather.

HOSEA: To her! *(Points at the door – Joshua looks at the door)*

JOSHUA: I'm pretty sure that's a door son.

HOSEA: Outside the door. She is wearing a red skirt.

Joshua goes to the door. He barely cracks it open and peeps out.

A man enters and Celeste and Gomer exits with him on either side.

Joshua closes the door.

LIGHTS FADE @ SL

JOSHUA: I'm pretty sure that's a prostitute son.

HOSEA: This doesn't make any sense.

JOSHUA: And you are sure you talked to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

HOSEA: Pretty sure.

JOSHUA: How sure is sure?

HOSEA: He told me what I was thinking before I could say it. Only God could do that.

Pause.

JOSHUA: Why would God tell you to go marry a Prostitute? Hardly makes any sense. Can you imagine what people would think?

HOSEA: The question is, how do I tell God no.

JOSHUA: Come to think of it, maybe it would probably be easier if you just did what he asked you to do. Remember what happened to Jonah when He sent him to Nineveh and he decided to run?

Hosea sighs and starts beating his head again.

JOSHUA: There must be a reason for this.

HOSEA: What could possibly be the reason?

JOSHUA: Maybe you are the only one who can save this woman.

HOSEA: I know these women father, I have preached to them on numerous occasions. They don't like me. You think I can just walk over to her and take her as my wife.

JOSHUA: That's what I did with your mother.

HOSEA: Those were ancient times. Women want to be wooed, complimented and pampered...which applies to normal women ---not women who sell their bodies to the highest bidders. This one in particular is always with her friend. They are like peas in a pod. How do I compete with that?

JOSHUA: Sounds like you are considering this.

HOSEA: I'm weighing my options and trying to look at this from all angles.

JOSHUA: Prostitute being the key word here...several things come to mind when I consider that word. Nasty, disease, infections ---

HOSEA: You are not helping.

JOSHUA: Maybe God made a mistake.

HOSEA: He was very specific...He told me her name and what she would be wearing. Its real father and I don't see any other way around this. Common sense dictates that it is better to fall into the hands of men, than God.

JOSHUA: I have always supported your charismatic approach to God, maybe even admired your consistent obedience even in the face of imminent danger ---- but I'm not so sure about this one.

HOSEA: Would you do it if God asked you to?

JOSHUA: Let me think about that for a minute ---NO!

Joshua exits.

Hosea sighs. He looks around the room.

HOSEA: You there God?

He listens....nothing but silence.

HOSEA: Why am I not surprised!

LIGHTS FADE @ SR

SCENE 3

LIGHTS UP @ SR

Hosea walks out and stops to look behind him.

HOSEA: Cmon father, we don't have all day.

Joshua walks out. He is dressed out of character, shirt tucked in and wearing glasses.

JOSHUA: For the record, I'm not very comfortable right now.

HOSEA: Well, do you have a better idea.

JOSHUA: A boat and a big fish come to mind.

HOSEA: You want me to run without even giving it a try.

JOSHUA: If it would save me from being seen in this ridiculous clothes and glasses ---YES.

HOSEA: I just need a few minutes alone with her. That's all. I can't do it without you.

JOSHUA: So let me get this straight.....I am going to pretend that I am interested in acquiring the services of a prostitute, which goes against all my morals, values and beliefs, just so you can be alone with another prostitute. *(pause to think)* It sounds like a great plan, but how long do you think I can pretend to want something I don't want?

HOSEA: Improvise.

JOSHUA: Are they even out there?

Hosea goes to the door and cracks it so he can peep outside.

LIGHTS UP @ SL

Gomer sits on the steps texting on her blackberry. Celeste stands close to the edge of the Stage waiting for a customer and rigidly chewing a gum.

HOSEA: Yep.

Hosea steps away from the door.

HOSEA: You ready?

JOSHUA: No.

HOSEA: Good. Use the back entrance and try to stay in character.

JOSHUA: I can't believe I let you talk me into this.

Joshua exits.

Hosea goes back to the door and cracks it a bit to watch.

Joshua enters SL. He appears extremely nervous and sweating.

Celeste is the first to see him. She strides over and holds his arm.

CELESTE: Hey honey, you looking to have a good time.

Gomer steps up and holds his other arm.

GOMER: Tell us what we can do to make your day better hun.

JOSHUA: Uhm...well...

CELESTE: Is this your first time?

JOSHUA: Is it that obvious?

GOMER: You are not a cop, are you?

CELESTE: Please girl, he is too old to be a cop.

JOSHUA: I'm not that old.

GOMER: Well, you have no need to be nervous hun. We will lead...you just need to follow.

JOSHUA: Ok...uhm, but I just want her *(points at Celeste)*

Gomer smiles and let go of his arm.

Celeste holds him tighter.

CELESTE: Where's your car?

JOSHUA: I don't drive.

CELESTE: So how you want to do this honey?

JOSHUA: Ahm, I know a place...its a few blocks from here.

CELESTE: A few blocks? I'm going to have to charge you travelling as well.

JOSHUA: Ok...*(pushes up his glasses)*

Joshua exits with Celeste still clutching his arm.

GOMER: *(mimics Joshua)* I just want her. *(Drinks from her bottle)*

Pause.

Hosea steps out. Gomer sees him and rolls her eyes again.

LIGHTS FADE @ SR

HOSEA: Can I talk to you?

GOMER: I have nothing to say to you.

HOSEA: I know we got off on the wrong foot and ---

GOMER: What do you think you are doing?

HOSEA: I'm trying to have a conversation.

GOMER: Why? Which part of I have nothing to say to you don't you understand?

HOSEA: You think I don't know your arrogance covers up who you really are. This is not you. This is not the life you want to live.

GOMER: You don't know me.

HOSEA: I know you hate being rejected. Who rejected you as a child?

Silence.

GOMER: Do you want something from me? Cause I charge by the hour.

HOSEA: How much?

GOMER: What?

HOSEA: How much do you charge an hour?

GOMER: Two Hundred.

Hosea reaches for his wallet and pulls out a few bills. He holds it out to her.

HOSEA: This is two hundred and fifty dollars.

Gomer just looks at the money in Hosea's hand.

GOMER: You are dumber than you look. Look around you preacher man. Everybody who passes by knows who I am and knows who you are. Imagine what they are thinking seeing you handing money to me...and for what. So you can talk me to death.

HOSEA: When you truly follow Christ at some point or the other you stop caring what people think.

GOMER: Keep your money. I may not be much in your eyes, but I'm not a thief. My conversations are not for sale.

Hosea puts the money back in his wallet.

GOMER: Why are you trying so hard to get under my skin?

Hosea looks to heaven and breathes hard.

HOSEA: I want you ---- I want you ---- *(takes a very deep breathe)* I want you, to be my wife!

There are no words to describe the look of Gomer's face.

GOMER: Your wife?

HOSEA: Yes.

Gomer is looking for some evidence of insanity in Hosea's expression.

GOMER: Is this a joke.

HOSEA: Unfortunately not.

GOMER: Do I look like wife material to you?

HOSEA: No...but It's not what you look like. It's who you are or who you can be.

Gomer starts to laugh.

GOMER: I have seen and heard some weird things...but this one deserves a trophy.

Gomer is laughing really hard...Hosea maintains his composure, but realize he may need to go one step further.

HOSEA: I apologize if I didn't do it right.

Hosea gets down on one knee.

GOMER: Whatever it is you drank this morning, please don't drink anymore.

Robert enters. He goes to Gomer and kisses her on her cheeks.

GOMER: I wasn't expecting you for another hour.

ROBERT: *(Points at Hosea still on his knees)* Who's this?

GOMER: I don't know him.

Robert pulls Gomer aside.

ROBERT: I was thinking maybe we could hook up a little earlier. I'm having some company later.

GOMER: Who?

ROBERT: My wife.

Pause.

GOMER: Sorry, I already had an appointment.

Gomer goes to Hosea and takes him up off his knees and holds his arm.

GOMER: We were just about to leave.

ROBERT: I thought you said you didn't know him.

GOMER: I don't know half the men I leave here with Robert.

Robert is furious. He clenches his fist.

ROBERT: You would embarrass me like this.

GOMER: You embarrassed yourself.

ROBERT: All in good time, you hear.

Robert turns and exits.

GOMER: Jerk!

Gomer quickly lets go of Hosea's hand.

HOSEA: I can take you away from this kind of life Gomer.

GOMER: You live next door Preacher man. (Goes for her bottle) That's not far enough.

HOSEA: I can help yo ---

GOMER: Enough ok. I don't know why you are trying to be so nice to me all of a sudden, but I can find my own way.

Gomer exits.

LIGHTS FADE @ SL

SCENE 4

LIGHTS UP @ SR

Hosea sits in the couch holding his head in the palms of his hands.

Joshua enters. His shirt is half pulled out of his pants and the glasses is crooked on his face.

JOSHUA: That woman is crazy, you hear me. Never again will I make you convince me to do something like that.

Starts to tuck his shirt back in his pants.

JOSHUA: This woman took this thing to another level. Had to run like Joseph. *(Pulls out a receipt from his pocket)* She gave me a receipt. Charged me tax, travelling and overhead expenses just to talk. I hope you plan to pay me back.

HOSEA: I will pay you back. Thanks for doing this for me.

JOSHUA: So how did it go?

HOSEA: Apart from making a fool of myself and being kicked to the kerb I think it went pretty well. I am really having second thoughts about this.

JOSHUA: You are the one who said you were sure it was God talking to you.

HOSEA: I have replayed the conversation a thousand times trying to find something that would cause reasonable doubt...but it was very consistent. I am pretty sure I was talking to God.

Hosea thinks for a moment.

HOSEA: You want to hear something strange?

JOSHUA: Not really, but I'm sure your gonna tell me anyway.

HOSEA: A man came for her...a married man. Wanted to have her early than usual because his wife was coming over and she used me to get rid of him. Thing is, I saw her expression when he mentioned his wife...and I actually cared.

JOSHUA: And the moral of this story is...

HOSEA: If God can love us in our worst state as sinners, should we love any less. I mean, maybe that's what this is about. Maybe God is daring me to love the unlovable.

JOSHUA: You think this is a love dare?

HOSEA: What else could this be? This is a test. God is asking me to do something once that He practically does every day.

JOSHUA: Marry a prostitute?

HOSEA: It's not just that. His people constantly turn from Him to worship strange gods. It's the same with a harlot. Instead of giving herself to her one true love, she prostitutes herself to strange men. God loves us even though we don't love Him. That is the lesson He wants to teach me. He wants me to love Gomer as He loves Israel.

JOSHUA: That's a very good theory but is it one worth sacrificing your reputation as a man of God. People are already talking.

HOSEA: People will always find something to say about me.

JOSHUA: Yeah but you soliciting the services of a woman like that...unless you don't plan to ever preach to these people ever again.

HOSEA: Is it possible to serve God and please people?

JOSHUA: I think being a Christian is about finding a balance between the two.

HOSEA: Some of us have a higher calling.

JOSHUA: Higher would not be my choice of word in this case. Think more like preposterous, absurd, bizarre, unreasonable, nonsensical ---

HOSEA: I got it.

Hosea thinks.

HOSEA: I have to see this thing through...with or without your support.

JOSHUA: I knew you would say that.

HOSEA: Are you going to help me?

JOSHUA: No.

HOSEA: Please!

JOSHUA: How?

HOSEA: Teach me how to win the heart of a woman.

JOSHUA: It's easy with this one. You need about a thousand dollars.

HOSEA: That's if I wanted her body. I want her heart.

JOSHUA: Is there really any difference?

HOSEA: You tell me.

Joshua sighs.

JOSHUA: You are really gonna do this?

HOSEA: Yes and why are you being so cynical. You helped me not too long ago.

JOSHUA: Because I knew she would reject you. I thought that would have been enough to discourage you, not set you on fire...and I was bored.

HOSEA: I wouldn't bother you if I could do this alone.

JOSHUA: What makes you think I can help you?

HOSEA: Mom was no walk in the park. I know you had to come good to get a woman like that. What did you do?

JOSHUA: It was nothing I did. Naturally, I am a charming man.

HOSEA: So seriously, what did you do?

JOSHUA: What would you expect from a man of God? I used the Word of God.

HOSEA: There is nothing in the Bible relevant to this.

JOSHUA: Oh, you have never read Songs of Solomon.

Joshua finds a Bible and opens it.

JOSHUA: You just listen and learn Son. This will take you to first base. *(Begins to read)* How beautiful you are my darling, oh how beautiful! Your eyes are doves. How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh how beautiful! Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead. Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely. Your neck is like the tower of David ---

HOSEA: I don't think that is appropriate.

JOSHUA: If you want my advice, you have to trust me son. Now to get to second base. *(Begins to read)* How much more pleasing is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume than any spice! Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride; milk and honey are under your tongue ---

HOSEA: Whoa --- okay then.

JOSHUA: I'm just getting to the best part.

HOSEA: I'm not so sure I want to go there.

JOSHUA: You don't want to know how to get to third base.

HOSEA: What is third base?

JOSHUA: That's the best part --- you usually need a bed for that.

HOSEA: I don't think this is a conversation I should be having with my father.

JOSHUA: You don't have much of a choice. Your mother went to visit God and hasn't returned. Listen to this. *(Begins to read)* Your breast ---

HOSEA: No more. I think I got it.

JOSHUA: Powerful stuff this Songs of Solomon and it is the Word of God. This book passed the canonization and all. You want to win any woman's heart...use the Word.

HOSEA: What if that doesn't work?

JOSHUA: You have to understand women son. They respond to love. Your words must be sweet but above all, if you can prove to her that you love her more than you love yourself, you win her for life.

HOSEA: How did you prove that to Mom?

JOSHUA: I always left the last piece of chicken for her.

HOSEA: I have never seen you do that.

JOSHUA: I stopped once we got married and she couldn't leave me again.

Joshua taps his son on his shoulders.

JOSHUA: As much as I admire your unwavering obedience to God, I still think you should quit while you are ahead. I am going to get some food. You want anything?

HOSEA: I'm not hungry.

Joshua exits leaving the bible in Hosea's hand.

LIGHTS FADE @ SR

SCENE 5

LIGHTS UP @ SL

Gomer sits alone on the steps.

Hosea comes out gripping his bible.

HOSEA: Morning.

No response.

HOSEA: Where's your friend?

GOMER: She is not in office today. Called in sick.

Hosea smiles.

HOSEA: I like your sense of humour. So how is your day?

GOMER: Why the sudden interest in me huh?

HOSEA: It's complicated.

GOMER: It's uncomfortable. You are always here preaching, judging and condemning us. You could not even look us in the eye and when you do look at us, it is with so much contempt and disgust and now all of a sudden you are up in my face and even proposing marriage. Why?

HOSEA: You were waiting for me weren't you?

No response.

HOSEA: That is why your friend is not here.

GOMER: I want to understand why the sudden change.

HOSEA: It's hard to explain.

GOMER: Try.

Hosea considers deeply.

HOSEA: You have been thinking about me, haven't you?

GOMER: I don't waste time thinking about men with nothing to offer.

HOSEA: What do you have to offer Gomer?

GOMER: You already know the answer to that.

HOSEA: I know you sell your body for money. But what you give is not your body....you give a piece of your soul and eventually you will have nothing left to give.

GOMER: You think you have me all figured out, don't you?

HOSEA: I don't know you....but I know sin and I know what sin does. Sin teaches you to give and always expect something in return. I want the opportunity to give you something expecting nothing in return.

GOMER: There is no such thing as a free gift.

HOSEA: Salvation is free...so is faith, hope and love.

GOMER: Does love make your mother leave you in a bag by the side of the road to be picked up and raised by a pimp? Does love make a child grow without ever knowing who their father is? Does love make a man beat you and treat you like a common dog?

HOSEA: That's not love.

GOMER: Then what is it? Cause that's all the love I know. You are a preacher and I am a prostitute and you want to take me off these streets and call me your wife and I should believe there is nothing in this for you. What is it that you want and why do you want it from me?

HOSEA: I don't know.

GOMER: You don't know or you won't tell me.

HOSEA: I don't know what I'm doing ok.

GOMER: So why do it?

Hosea can't respond to that question.

He opens the Bible.

HOSEA: *(Begins to read)* How beautiful you are my darling, oh how beautiful! Your eyes are doves. How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh how beautiful! Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead. Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely. Your neck is like the tower of David ---

Gomer hits the bible from his hand.

GOMER: It's a simple question.

HOSEA: Am I on first base?

GOMER: What?

HOSEA: My father said that would get me to first base.

Gomer begins to laugh.

Robert enters. He walks over and grabs Gomer by her wrist squeezing hard. Hosea is not sure what to do.

GOMER: Robert, you are hurting me.

Hosea steps back seemingly a little timid.

ROBERT: I'm not playing your game missy. You have been ignoring my calls, not showing up for our dates...and who is this wimp?

HOSEA: *(extends his hand)* I am Hosea.

Robert looks at his hand, then at his face.

ROBERT: *(barks)* Don't you have somewhere to go?

HOSEA: Not really.

Robert grunts at him and he steps back.

GOMER: Why don't you go home to your wife, Robert?

Robert hits her across the face.

ROBERT: You don't talk to me like that Jezebel.

Robert begins to pull her offstage against her will.

GOMER: Let me go Robert.

ROBERT: I'm gonna have some fun with you tonight.

Hosea slowly works up enough courage.

HOSEA: You should let the lady go!

Robert stops. He turns around.

ROBERT: What did you say, wimp?

HOSEA: I said, maybe you should let the lady go...I mean, it sounds like a good idea.

Robert laughs and releases his grip on Gomer.

ROBERT: I guess this man is the reason you have been avoiding me.

GOMER: Don't...Robert. Please. (*Stands between him and Hosea*) I will go with you, anything you want..

ROBERT: Oh, so you got a soft spot for the wimp.

Robert shoves Gomer out of the way and grabs Hosea and starts to hit him.

Gomer tries to stop him and he pushes her off. She falls on her side.

He continues to hit Hosea until he stops moving.

Robert stands looking at the two lying onstage.

ROBERT: You two deserve each other.

Robert rubs his fist. He goes over to Gomer and pulls a chain from around her neck. He exits.

Gomer slowly gets to her feet and goes over to Hosea. He stirs in pain.

She lifts him to his feet and walks him to the door.

GOMER: Now that was stupid.

Gomer helps him inside.

LIGHTS UP @ SR

The Bible remains onstage SL.

Hosea sits painfully in the coach.

GOMER: Why'd you do that?

HOSEA: Seems like the gentleman thing to do at the time.

GOMER: Nobody has ever tried to defend me before...not that you were very good at it.

HOSEA: I am a preacher...not a fighter.

Gomer looks around the room.

GOMER: You live alone?

HOSEA: No, my father is probably out in the field.

GOMER: Ok. Can I get you anything?

HOSEA: Ice...in the freezer. (points DS) Through that door.

Gomer walks to the door.

HOSEA: Thanks...(Gomer stops and turn to him)...for helping me.

GOMER: I should be the one to say thanks.

HOSEA: I'm just glad you are ok.

GOMER: You will be happy to know that you just got to first base.

Hosea smiles.

Gomer exits.

LIGHTS FADE @ SR

Celeste enters at SL.

She looks around...sees the bible on the ground. She walks over and picks it up and stares at It.

She looks around again, and then exits.

LIGHTS FADE @ SL

SCENE 6 – ONE YEAR LATER

SFX: Baby crying

LIGHTS UP @ SR

Joshua sits close to a small baby crib. He rocks the crib, but the crying continues. He puts One toy after another into the crib, but the crying still continues.

He stands over the crib and shuffles his hand inside as if pulling off a diaper, what he sees is a bit disturbing.

JOSHUA: What have they been feeding you? Oh my goodness.

Hosea enters with a small bag.

HOSEA: I brought something to cook --- *(smells something disturbing)* and what is that smell?

Joshua takes the bag from Hosea and heads to the exit.

JOSHUA: I will go start dinner. I think little Jezreel needs some attention below the waste.

HOSEA: Where's Gomer?

JOSHUA: *(stops with turning around)* She left hours ago.

HOSEA: What do you mean 'she left'?

JOSHUA: I can only think of one possible meaning Son.

Joshua exits.

Hosea takes a peek into the crib. His face twist in disgust.

HOSEA: What have you been eating?

Hosea picks up the crib and exit.

A beat.

The crying stops.

Gomer enters carrying two shopping bags.

She puts them in the coach and sits going through the bags all smiling and jittery as a kid with new toys.

Hosea comes out. He sees Gomer ecstatically going through her bags.

Gomer looks behind her to see him standing.

GOMER: Come and look what I bought today dear husband.

Hosea comes around, his countenance is not a happy one.

HOSEA: You left Jezreel to go shopping?

GOMER: Today was the last day of the sale and he was in good hands. His grandfather seems to have such a special bond with him.

HOSEA: We agreed that one of us would always be here.

GOMER: It was just for a few minutes Hosea. Stop making such a big deal out of small things. Now...(takes out a dress that is similar to the one she is wearing) What do you think?

HOSEA: It looks like the one you are wearing.

GOMER: Look carefully and you will see that the shade is different.

Hosea is looking but not seeing.

Gomer brings the dress up to his nostrils.

GOMER: Smell how invigorating this new smell is...(She takes his hand and runs it over the fabric) Feel the texture. Have you ever felt anything like this?

HOSEA: All the time.

Gomer puts that dress aside and pulls out another dress equally similar.

GOMER: How about this one?

HOSEA: It looks just like the one you are wearing.

GOMER: You men have no sense of taste in fine clothing.

HOSEA: Where did you get the money for this?

GOMER: I took a few coins out of your coin box.

Hosea looks like he is having an instant headache.

HOSEA: That's the money I'm saving to buy that piece of property, so we can build a house for our family.

GOMER: I know that but where the need arises, I want to think that your wife is entitled to something.

Hosea bites his lips.

HOSEA: You take money out of our savings, leave Jezreel without the presence of a parent to go and buy two dresses that look like the two you bought last month? Am I missing anything?

Gomer pulls a pair of matching shoes and handbag from the other shopping bag.

GOMER: Maybe these.

HOSEA: What is wrong with you?

GOMER: What is wrong with me?

HOSEA: I have put up with your impulsive spending...your negligence...your indulgence in material things...your incompetence in carrying out simple task around this house but no more Gomer. You need to learn some responsibility.

GOMER: You think I am an impulsive spender?

HOSEA: I just listed about four to five things just now and that's all you heard.

GOMER: Let me get this straight...you think I am an impulsive spender.

Hosea sighs.

GOMER: You only think that because I am spending your money, but if you hadn't taken me away from my job, I would be spending my money.

HOSEA: Prostitution is not a job.

GOMER: Apparently preaching is not either, but I had my own money and nobody accused me of being an impulsive spender.

HOSEA: You are missing the point.

GOMER: I don't think so. You brought me here Hosea. You took me from everything that I knew and brought me into this house and for what. So I can clean, cook and nurse a kid.

HOSEA: Jezreel is not a goat. He is your son and motherhood comes with some level of responsibility. You don't just go as you please and do as you like.

GOMER: That is who I am and maybe you should have considered that before you took me as your wife.

Gomer exits.

HOSEA: Woman, don't you dare walk away from me when I am talking to you.

A door slams.

Joshua comes out drying his hand.

JOSHUA: I tell you son, you can take the pig out of the pen but you can't take the pen out of the pig.

HOSEA: You heard all that?

JOSHUA: I wouldn't miss it for the world.

HOSEA: I am glad one of us is enjoying this.

JOSHUA: Something I learn early in life son, you can't change a woman. You either accept her for who she is or you don't.

HOSEA: She is a little bit too care-free for my acceptance.

JOSHUA: Then you should have said I don't instead of I do. You knew who you were marrying so sup it up. It's been a whole year and you have a son. The two of you need to get it together. Listen, when you were getting married and you sent out 50 invitations and only 4 people showed up, you knew it was going to be just you and her.

HOSEA: I should have taken that as a sign.

JOSHUA: I did whisper something like that to you at the altar, but you did it anyway.

HOSEA: *(sniffs the air)* I think something is burning.

JOSHUA: Ooops.

Joshua quickly exits.

Hosea sighs deeply.

LIGHTS FADE @ SR

LIGHTS UP @ SL

Celeste enters with Robert trailing behind her.

CELESTE: I told you I don't know where she is.

ROBERT: I think you are lying.

CELESTE: Now why would I do that, when you scare the living daylights out of me?

ROBERT: You two were thick as thieves. I know you know where she is and I won't stop haunting you till you tell me.

CELESTE: Does your wife know where you are?

ROBERT: Is that a threat?

CELESTE: No. A simple question.

ROBERT: You think you are so smart, but time reveals all secrets.

Robert leaves.

Celeste watches him go...she goes to the edge of the stage staring offstage for a beat making sure he is gone.

She goes to the door and knocks once.

LIGHTS UP @ SR

Gomer comes across the stage and goes to the door and knocks twice.

Celeste looks behind her again just to be sure, and then knocks 3 times.

Gomer lets her in. They hug.

LIGHTS OUT @ SL

GOMER: Thanks for coming.

CELESTE: You are more fortunate than others. You know I don't answer strange numbers on my phone. What's up girl, you looking really nice.

GOMER: I need you to make some links for me. I need to be making my own money.

CELESTE: Ok, you know your girl have friends in high and low places. Tell me what kinda employment you need, and I will hook you up.

GOMER: I am only good at one thing Celeste.

Pause.

LIGHTS OUT @ SR

SCENE 7 – ONE YEAR LATER

SFX: Baby cooing

LIGHTS UP @ SR

Hosea sits by the baby crib.

Joshua comes out. He looks at the baby in the crib.

JOSHUA: This one is a lot quieter than the last one. Have you named her yet?

HOSEA: Loruhamah.

JOSHUA: Why do baby names have to be so complex? Do you really want your child to spend her entire life spelling her name?

HOSEA: Loruhamah means unpitied or unloved. It means she will never enjoy her true father's love.

Joshua considers.

JOSHUA: She is not yours is she?

HOSEA: Look at her and tell me what you think.

Joshua looks inside the crib.

JOSHUA: She is a little bit dark in complexion. Where is your wife?

HOSEA: I don't know.

JOSHUA: You don't know where she is half the time, and still you two manage to be making babies.

HOSEA: I don't know if I can do this Father, but despite everything...I love her. I really do love this woman and she does nothing but cause me pain.

JOSHUA: And what is a father supposed to say to that?

HOSEA: Every day I learn how a Father who would give His life for his children, for His bride Israel and how He must feel when they constantly turn their backs on His everlasting love.

JOSHUA: So you think this is about God's love for sinners?

HOSEA: I am just trying to make sense out of this. I'm just trying to understand. A love like this must hurt.

JOSHUA: Well, my advice to you is...until you know what your wife is really up to, you probably need to stay away from the baby making activities for a while.

HOSEA: We are not stupid. We both know what she is up to.

JOSHUA: I am glad you are the one to say it, but do we really assume the worse.

HOSEA: She stopped taking coins out of my coin box and her spending has doubled. New clothes, shoes, bags and jewellery. The money has to come from somewhere.

JOSHUA: If she has gone back to her old lifestyle, she is an ungrateful little...*(The door opens and Gomer steps in)*...Lambada is such a cute child.

HOSEA: It's Loruhamah.

JOSHUA: Right. Anyway, too much to do and not enough hours in the day to get it all done. Have fun!

HOSEA: Can you take the baby to her room for me please?

JOSHUA: Sure.

Joshua takes the crib and exits.

HOSEA: Where are you coming from Gomer?

No response.

HOSEA: Haven't I done enough for you? What did I do for you to treat me like this?

GOMER: Am I supposed to know what you are talking about?

HOSEA: Yes.

GOMER: Well I don't.

HOSEA: That perfume you are wearing. It's familiar.

GOMER: It's new.

HOSEA: It's a man's perfume.

GOMER: What is your problem? When I'm here it's a problem, when I'm not here it's a problem. How am I supposed to please you?

HOSEA: You can start by being honest.

GOMER: I can't live up to your expectations Hosea. I'm not good at being a maid or a cook. Evidently, I'm not good at being a mother or a wife either.

HOSEA: You have a choice here Gomer. Your future can be significantly different from your past...but if you choose to relive the past over and over again...nothing will ever change.

GOMER: Are you accusing me of something?

HOSEA: Where do you get the money you have been spending?

GOMER: Is that what this is about?

HOSEA: This is about our family; our marriage.

GOMER: This is about you wanting to control me.

HOSEA: We can't continue like this Gomer.

GOMER: I agree. This marriage was a mistake, one I should have never agreed to.

HOSEA: That's not what I meant.

GOMER: Admit it. Just be honest with yourself this once. I will never be the wife you want me to be Hosea.

HOSEA: You can try.

GOMER: I did.

Gomer heads for the door.

HOSEA: Where are you going?

GOMER: Out!

Gomer opens the door and steps out. Hosea watches her go. He rubs his head in frustration.

LIGHTS UP @ SL

Robert is standing by the door as Gomer steps out closing the door behind her. She turns into Robert.

ROBERT: This is where you have been...all this time.

Hosea gets up and begins pacing.

GOMER: What do you want?

ROBERT: You know what I want...and we got two years to make up for. *(Grabs her hand)* Don't think about screaming or calling for help. If anybody steps through that door, I will take his life.

Robert drags Gomer against her will offstage.

Hosea opens the door and steps out. He looks in both directions, and then goes back inside.

LIGHTS FADE @ SL

Joshua comes out.

JOSHUA: Where is she?

HOSEA: She's gone.

Joshua hugs his son.

JOSHUA: I'm sorry son. I wish I knew what to say and do to make the yoke a little lighter.

HOSEA: I never asked for this. I don't deserve this.

A beat.

LIGHTS FADE @ SR

SCENE 8 – SIX MONTHS LATER

LIGHTS UP @ SL

Gomer staggers onstage. Her clothes are dirty and worn, her face has running mascara and she looks a bit malnourished. She makes her way to the step and sits there, weary and half dead.

She breaks down and begins crying.

Celeste comes on and sees her. She goes to her and hugs her.

CELESTE: What happened to you? Where have you been these past 6 months?

GOMER: Do you have anything to eat?

Celeste searches her bag and finds a half eaten sandwich. She gives it to Gomer who Devours it quickly.

CELESTE: Robert did this to you?

GOMER: I did this to myself... thinking I could handle the streets. Its getting worse Celeste, the older we get is the easier it becomes for them to replace us with younger women. We are nothing but a liability to them.

CELESTE: Tell me where you have been.

GOMER: Robert is no longer with his wife. She figured out what a pervert he really was and left him, so he came looking for me. Took me to a different state, spent one night with me, and then kicked me out. Said I wasn't the same. I have been trying to make my way back here since. Celeste I have done some really terrible things.

CELESTE: We all do what we have to do to survive girl.

GOMER: I never should have left.

Gomer starts to cry.

GOMER: Hosea will never take me back.

CELESTE: You have never needed him to survive out here Gomer. We were ok knowing we had each other.

GOMER: I have always wanted more...just don't think I deserve it.

CELESTE: It's not the same for me without you Gomer. You really think I'm just going to sit here and watch you walk right back into a life you don't belong. *(Points at the door)* That will never be you....This is you. Right here with me.

GOMER: What do we do ten years from now when our skin is all wrinkled and nobody wants us anymore?

CELESTE: Ten years is a long way from now.

GOMER: You said that ten years ago.

Celeste knows the reality of what was just said.

GOMER: The thrill of sin is only for a season.

CELESTE: That prophet has poisoned your mind. There is nothing sinful about surviving and taking care of ourselves.

GOMER: Look at me Celeste. Look at me! I have been rejected, abused, ridiculed, abandoned and broken. Is that what you call survival?

CELESTE: Things happen ---

GOMER: I don't know about you, but I want to be free. I want to change. I am so tired.

The door opens and Hosea steps out. Gomer's back is turned to him.

CELESTE: Well you need to make a choice, cause I'm tired of bailing you out only to be left in the cold and alone.

GOMER: What do you mean?

CELESTE: It's either me...or him. *(Points at Hosea. Gomer turns around to see him just standing there)*

HOSEA: I --- heard your voice from inside.

Uncomfortable pause.

CELESTE: There is no future for you with this man Gomer. You must realize that by now.

HOSEA: There is no future for her on the streets. There is no future for any of you here on the streets. The path of sin always leads to death.

CELESTE: We were ok before she got involved with you.

HOSEA: Apparently the only time she is not ok is when she is not with me.

GOMER: Enough!

HOSEA: Gomer, I don't know where you have been these past few months...and I wish I could say I have gotten used to you not being around, but I haven't. I have actually been expecting you. I have missed you and have been praying for you to return to me every single day...181 days to be exact.

GOMER: You don't really mean that...I mean, look at me Hosea, I am a mess.

HOSEA: A bath and a change of clothes can fix that...maybe some shampoo and conditioner...but I am way past seeing you just on the outside. I know you are here because you want to come home. You have a husband and two children waiting for you.

Gomer is again in tears.

GOMER: How are my babies?

HOSEA: They miss their Momma.

Gomer thinks long and hard.

GOMER: I miss them too. Please take me to them.

Hosea takes her hand and begins to lead her away from Celeste.

CELESTE: Please don't do this to me again Gomer. Please!

GOMER: I am sorry my friend, but I have a family. I have to try.

CELESTE: You know it won't last.

GOMER: I have to try.

Hosea and Gomer exits through the door.

Celeste closes her eyes and sighs deeply, biting her lip.

LIGHTS FADE @ SL

SCENE 9 – ONE YEAR LATER

SFX: Baby cooing

LIGHTS UP @ SR

Joshua sits by the crib.

Hosea enters.

JOSHUA: Did you find her?

HOSEA: No.

JOSHUA: Son, you have been walking these streets now everyday for two months. She is not a lost sheep. She made her choice. She is gone...again.

Hosea sits beside his father.

JOSHUA: I guess old habits die hard. *(Takes out an empty bottle of Jack Daniels)* I found this and considering that it's empty, I would say she has been at it a while.

No response. Joshua looks at the baby in the crib.

JOSHUA: Have you named him yet?

HOSEA: Lo-ammi.

JOSHUA: I am afraid to ask what that name means.

HOSEA: It means 'No Kin of mine.'

JOSHUA: This child is not yours?

HOSEA: You would think I would have learnt my lesson by now. I gave her an ultimatum...took her back with the understanding that if she ever left again, I would let her go...and still my heart is concerned and still I love her. Am I stupid?

Joshua holds his response a moment.

JOSHUA: I am curious to know why you think this child is not yours, considering you both are still together in a manner of speaking.

HOSEA: She hasn't been home in two months and I haven't touched her in eleven months.

JOSHUA: Ouch!

HOSEA: The last time I saw her we argued.

JOSHUA: As usual...nothing new and surprising there.

HOSEA: I wanted to know who the father was and she wouldn't tell me, but I know she probably don't have a clue who it is.

JOSHUA: Gomer will never be tamed Hosea and the sooner you accept that the better for all of us. Everybody in this city knows about her affairs. You are a joke to the people in this community. You don't even preach anymore, your eyes are sinking to the back of your head because you are not eating or sleeping...Maybe its time to let her go.

Hosea struggles with the thought.

HOSEA: Give me a moment father. I need to pray.

JOSHUA: Ok.

Joshua takes the crib and exits.

Hosea rubs his eyes.

HOSEA: Am I being punished for something God?

No response.

HOSEA: If at any point in my life I found favour in your eyes, then explain this mess to me cause I don't understand it. Explain it to me God --- or take my life.

No response.

HOSEA: What did I do to deserve this?

No response.

HOSEA: Answer me!

VOICE: You speak words without knowledge but brace yourself as a man and I will also ask you a question and you will answer me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me if you understand.

No response.

VOICE: Have you ever given orders to the morning, or show the dawn its place? Who endowed the heart with wisdom or gave understanding to the mind? Surely you know this?

Hosea is filled with remorse and guilt.

HOSEA: I am unworthy --- how can I reply to you?

VOICE: I know the pain you feel in your heart...to have your wife turn her back on you time and time again to seek after other men who can't give her what you can. I know the despair that lingers inside you...wanting to be with her, wanting her to change, wanting her to want you as much as you want her. I know the love that you have for your bride Hosea, the willingness in your spirit to do whatever it takes to find her and restore her by your side. I know Hosea and now you know as well.

HOSEA: Was this a test?

VOICE: How else would you understand?

HOSEA: What am I supposed to do now?

VOICE: I think you have already answered that question.

HOSEA: I need your answer.

VOICE: Your ways are not my ways and your thoughts are not my thoughts, but your obedience to my Word has always been reasonable enough. It all comes down to this moment and the choice you will make today.

HOSEA: Choice?

VOICE: I had a choice to make. Do I purchase mankind with my own blood or leave them to be sold into slavery by the devil and eventually die...The question I had to answer was, "Is man worth saving?" Hosea...every sinner is worth saving despite the enormity of their sins. I love them, and I know you love her...but the decision has to be yours and the tide is about to change.

LIGHTS UP @ SL

Celeste enters, goes to the door and knocks.

HOSEA: What do you mean when you say the tide is about to change?

No response.

Celeste knocks with even more urgency.

Hosea goes to the door and opens it. Celeste walks in.

LIGHTS FADE @ SL

HOSEA: You are the last person I would expect to show up at my door.

CELESTE: I am only here because Gomer is in trouble.

HOSEA: You know where she is?

CELESTE: No...but I know who she is with. A slave trader named Eric. If he leaves with her on his ship, we will never see her again.

HOSEA: How did she get involved with a slave trader?

Celeste shows some reluctance in responding.

HOSEA: Tell me!

CELESTE: Her last lover abandoned her leaving her indebted to some very dangerous people. She had to sell herself to spare her own life.

Hosea struggles with the news.

HOSEA: What is your name again?

CELESTE: My name is Celeste.

HOSEA: Celeste, I gave up my reputation for Gomer. Lost whatever respect I had in this community as a Prophet and am now a father of three, two of which I'm not even sure is mine. I have shed a lifetime of tears these past three years running behind Gomer, hoping for change and dealing with her overly cynical friend (*raises a eyebrow at her*) who has miraculously showed up at my door, just to tell me I'm gonna lose my estranged wife for good. Why?

CELESTE: I came to ask for your help.

HOSEA: You don't even like me.

CELESTE: True that...but I aint no fool. No man has ever loved Gomer like you and maybe it was envy or just plain bad mind, but you're the only man who never left her and now she needs you more than ever.

HOSEA: What am I supposed to do at this stage? What can I do?

CELESTE: If there was a chance that you could save her...would you?

HOSEA: How?

CELESTE: I know men like Eric. They all about business. He will release her to you for the right price. (*Takes out some money from her bag*) Gomer is my best friend. I have always cared about her but I could never give her what you can. (*folds the money neatly*) This is all the money I have, but it's not enough.

Celeste gives the money to Hosea. She also takes out a piece of paper.

CELESTE: Eric's number is on that piece of paper. (*Hosea looks at the paper*) I may not like you very much Preacher man, but I know you will do everything you can to help her.

Celeste turns and walks to the exit.

HOSEA: Can I get you something to drink?

Celeste stops without turning around.

CELESTE: You don't even like me.

Hosea takes her by the shoulders and turns her around to face him.

HOSEA: God loves you. Should He expect any less from me?

CELESTE: *(Meets his eyes)* This is probably the first time you have looked at me without contempt in your eyes.

Joshua comes out.

JOSHUA: What's going on?

HOSEA: We have a guest father. Please give her anything she needs. *(He goes for his bag of coins)*

JOSHUA: What are you doing son? That's the money you have been saving to buy your house.

HOSEA: Is money or a house more valuable than a human life?

Joshua is not sure what he is taking about, so he withholds a response.

Hosea puts the money he got from Celeste into the bag.

HOSEA: I will be back soon.

He exits.

Celeste looks at Joshua...he seems familiar.

CELESTE: Don't I know you?

JOSHUA: *(Tries to hide his face)* Nope.

LIGHTS FADE @ SR

SCENE 10

LIGHTS UP @ SL

Eric paces back on forth with his cell phone pressed to his ear.

Hosea enters carrying a bag. Eric sees him and cuts off the call.

ERIC: Nice neighbourhood!

HOSEA: You must be Eric.

Eric looks at Hosea from head to toe.

ERIC: I must be stupid to make you convince me to come to a dump like this. Do you know how strange my limousine looks parked along the road right there? This better be worth my time.

HOSEA: You have a girl that I want.

ERIC: Nothing strange there. It's what I do.

HOSEA: Her name is Gomer.

Eric raises an eyebrow.

ERIC: What do you want with a washed up prostitute?

HOSEA: She's my wife.

Eric raises both eyebrows...then begins laughing.

ERIC: Look, I'm not even going to try and wrap my mind around this....but business is business. You want the girl, you gotta pay and you don't look like you can afford much...not that a washed up bimbo is worth anything on the market these days.

Hosea gives him the bag of money.

Eric looks inside and is wide eyed.

ERIC: You could buy yourself three decent, clean mistress with this much dough.

HOSEA: I only want her.

Eric shakes his head not quite understanding.

ERIC: Well, business is business. Wait here.

Eric exits.

A beat.

Eric brings Gomer in.

ERIC: She is all yours. Have fun!

Eric leaves.

Gomer is unable to meet Hosea's eyes. She is torn, dirty and depleted of almost all her physical strength.

Hosea walks to her and embraces her.

GOMER: I know that I am nothing to you but a constant pain, so why'd you come for me?

HOSEA: I made a vow remember. For better or worse, in sickness and in health until death do us part.

GOMER: I don't deserve this, Hosea.

HOSEA: That's it right there Gomer. Would you believe that when God came to earth to die in your place, he saw you right now and still He died anyway. He believed that you were worth saving, that all of us are worth saving.

GOMER: I have caused you so much pain.

HOSEA: You have helped me to see and understand the heart of God.

GOMER: I spend every moment with you thinking that one day I will wake up and it will all be gone. I'm not used to men staying with me longer than an hour. I expected you to leave. I lie awake at nights remembering some of the things I did, the people I hurt and the many unresolved issues in my past.

HOSEA: You have to be willing to start over...rebuild your life and learn how to live a normal life. I know you can do it.

GOMER: I don't - I don't think I can. I don't know how.

HOSEA: With God all things are possible. Let him take you out of the old life. Accept the new life He is offering you and even though you might not see it now, believe. Give Him a chance. Give us a chance.

GOMER: Why would God save me?

HOSEA: Because, that's what love does.

Gomer breaks down.

GOMER: Save me God. Change me. I don't want to be broken anymore. I need you so much more than I was willing to admit. Forgive me God.

Hosea embraces Gomer again.

HOSEA: Gomer, what will you be doing for the rest of your life?

GOMER: What do you mean?

HOSEA: I was hoping you would spend it with me.

Tears amidst smiles and hugs.

Hosea takes his wife home.

LIGHTS UP @ SR

Joshua and Celeste are on the couch.

CELESTE: I still can't believe that was you.

JOSHUA: Yeah, and I must say its nice having a conversation without you trying to take off my shirt.

Hosea and Gomer enter.

Celeste is ever so excited to see her friend. She goes to her and hugs her.

Joshua squeezes Hosea's shoulder.

JOSHUA: I guess now you are officially broke.

HOSEA: Yep.

JOSHUA: And stuck with me. No leaving and cleaving for you son. At least not for now.

HOSEA: I am thinking it might not be such a bad idea to stay here with you. I have 3 kids and probably will have more, so I don't mind the help.

Joshua shakes his head. He goes over to Gomer.

JOSHUA: My son loves you.

GOMER: I know --- and you have all reason to hate me and you should ---

JOSHUA: If my son can love you as much as he does --- should you expect any less from a father?

Gomer hugs him tightly.

GOMER: Thank you.

JOSHUA: I hope you're all hungry.

LIGHTS FADE @ SR

A beat.

Hosea comes out at SL with his Bible. He faces the audience.

HOSEA: People of God, if you will permit me...I want to share with you the unmerited Love and Favour of our God. *(Celeste comes out and stands behind Hosea)* Unmerited in that we do not deserve it, nor is there anything we could humanly do to deserve it. God loves us because He wants to. *(Joshua comes out and stands beside Celeste)* I used to think I was different from you sinners because I accepted God's love and you refuse to. Used to think you were ignorant fools to keep turning your back on God to serve other gods. I would have gladly sent you all to hell. *(Gomer comes out and stands beside her husband. She is dressed more modestly and the heavy make-up and wig is gone)* I was wrong to judge and condemn you. It don't matter who you are, whether a prostitute, a criminal, a witch or a murderer, God loves you as much as He loves me and its free of favouritisms, biases and reservations. It transcends culture and races and extends beyond our intuition and human understanding. Fact is, God, who is Supreme and Universal...loves you so much He designed a plan of salvation that included Him personally making a sacrifice to atone for all our sins. Listen to this testimony.

GOMER: I was on a road that led to death. The pleasures of sin only last for a season and eventually it destroys, but God stepped into time and gave me a choice. *(Takes the hand of her husband)* Hosea is just a man and he would have done anything to save me. I think I can understand my Creator being willing and able to do exceeding abundantly beyond that which I could think or imagine. If God could change me, He can change you.

HOSEA: We were created with the power to choose and we have always chosen death, but God has made provisions for us to choose life ---abundant eternal life. How will we respond to His everlasting and unmerited love? There is and will always be only two types of people. Those who accept God's Love, and those who reject it but the choice has to be yours!

Celeste steps forward. She takes the bible she found out of her bag and holds it out to Hosea.

CELESTE: I think this is yours.

HOSEA: *(with a smile)* Not anymore.

CELESTE: *(in tears)* I have been reading it. *(Considers for a moment)* I want what you guys have. I want to be saved. *(Breaks down)*

Gomer hugs her.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK