

# THE LOVE DARE

An Original Stageplay



**Cleveland O. McLeish**

## **The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish**

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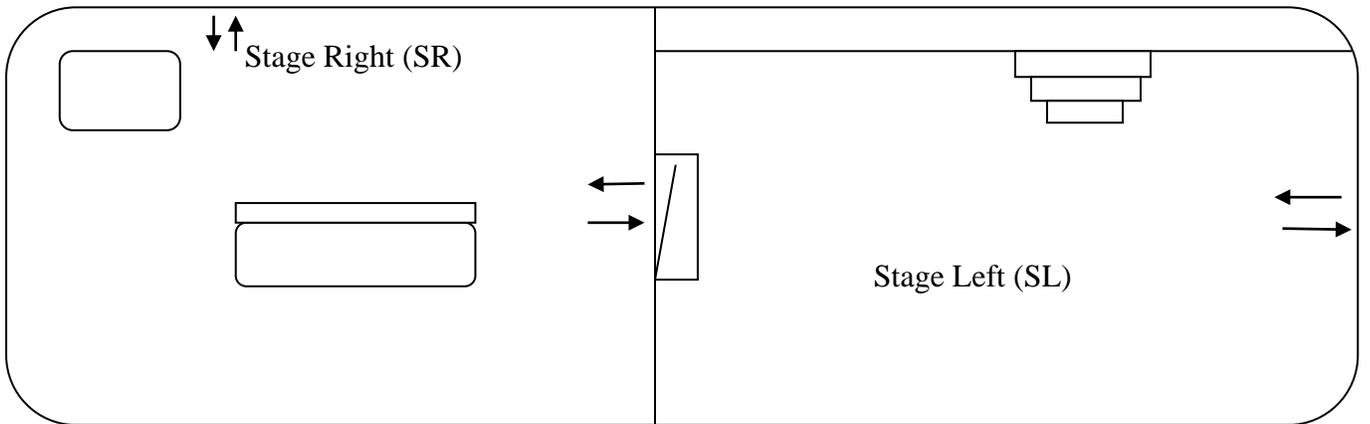
## The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

### CHARACTERS

- Hosea: Male in his 40s. 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 30s 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 60s. He is old but still looks healthy and well groomed; he is a very easygoing guy.
- Celeste: Young woman in her late 20s who has 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 40s who likes to be in control. Eric would probably pass as his twin brother.

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Settings: BASIC STAGE SET UP (Top View)



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### The Story

The play begins with God paying a personal visit to His prophet Hosea, who has begun to preach without compassion and love for sinners. It's not a very comfortable confrontation, but it ends with Hosea feeling a bit hopeful because God has decided to provide for him a wife.

Hosea's enthusiasm soon dissipates when he discovers that his wife to be is a prostitute. He is devastated and struggles with the choice to obey God. Joshua, his father, has always supported his decisions and admires his commitment to God, but is extremely skeptical of this new command.

How could God expect a Prophet to marry a prostitute? What would people think and what would be the ramification of such a union?

Out of sheer obedience, or maybe rising curiosity, Hosea chooses to follow through and the events that transpire will take all involved on a journey of self-discovery, forgiveness, and unconditional love.

The lessons to be learned are supernatural and universal as we get a glimpse and hopefully a clearer understanding of God's love for sinners.

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### Play Details

**Length:** 90 Minutes

**Cast:** 3 males, 2 females.

**Audience:** Teens & Adults

**Genre:** Contemporary Comedy Drama (A Contemporary Retelling of a Biblical Story: See the Book of Hosea)

## The Script



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### SCENE 1

#### **LIGHTS UP @ Stage Left (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 periodically.*

**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, adulterers, witches, prostitutes *(glances at the girls again)*, and warlocks. He hates prostitutes too and He will have no reservations 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, suicide, 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 at Stage Right (SR). He opens it and enters.*

#### **LIGHTS UP @ Stage Right (SR).**

**GOMER:** He is cold.

**CELESTE:** Church people are so judgmental. You think he believes we can be saved? Christians are all the same. You'd think they weren't sinners once too.

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

**CELESTE:** Some of them still do. *(They laugh)*

*Hosea is seen going on his knees.*

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

*Gomer sips from her bottle of Jack Daniels.*

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**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. Where are the men in this town?

### LIGHTS FADE @ SL

**HOSEA:** Father, in Heaven —

**VOICE:** Yes.

*Hosea pauses. He opens one eye and looks around.*

**HOSEA:** Who said that?

*Pause.*

**HOSEA:** Is that you God?

**VOICE:** My sheep 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 has become of my people?

**HOSEA:** Yes, Lord, I have.

**VOICE:** The more they prosper, the more immoral they become. Swearing, lying, killing, stealing, adultery, drunkenness, perversion, and idolatry. When will they ever learn that there is a better way to live?

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

**VOICE:** I love them, Hosea. But they keep going 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.

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**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:** I was never a prostitute. I was good all my life. I went to church, sang in the choir, paid my tithes and offering. Unlike them, 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:** (*getting excited*) 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 unique name. She must be a 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 granddad.

**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.

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**VOICE:** You will see me when you die, Hosea.

*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**

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### 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.

**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 deep in thought for a moment.*

**GOMER:** I keep having strange dreams.

**CELESTE:** About what?

**GOMER:** A knight in shining armour...he comes and takes me away from here...in a beautiful Rolls-Royce.

**CELESTE:** That happens every day, 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.

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*Gomer strides offstage, adjusting her hair and checking her makeup.*

**CELESTE:** You go girl.

*Hosea enters from SR with Bible clutched under his arm.*

*Celeste turns to see him stepping out.*

**CELESTE:** *(rolls her eyes)* 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 50 bucks I ever made—*(Looks up to see Hosea staring at her)*. Oh great!

**HOSEA:** *(dejected)* Dear God of Heaven - - - You!?! Why are you wearing a red skirt?

**GOMER:** Because I bought it.

**HOSEA:** Ah, this is crazy.

**GOMER:** What'd you want, preacher man?

*Silence.*

*Hosea is staring dumbfounded at Gomer.*

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

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

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**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 your spell, Gomer.

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

**GOMER:** What's it to you?

*Pause.*

**HOSEA:** What madness is this! (*storms off towards SR*)

### **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 on 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 carrying a bag over one shoulder and hunting rifle over the other.*

*He sees Hosea and watches Hosea beat his head with his palm. He puts down the bag, looks down the barrel of his gun, and puts it aside.*

**JOSHUA:** You alright boy?

**HOSEA:** Nope.

**JOSHUA:** You wanna talk?

**HOSEA:** Nope.

*Pause.*

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*Joshua sits.*

**JOSHUA:** You need to talk about it.

**HOSEA:** Why?

**JOSHUA:** The last time I saw you beating your head like that is, and I remember this so well by the way, you were almost stoned by the market people for calling them whitewashed sepulchres and blood suckers.

**HOSEA:** Dad, I don't really know how to say this, so I'm just going to say it. God wants me to get married.

**JOSHUA:** Do you have any idea how long I've waited to hear you say that? I was beginning to get a little bit concerned.

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

**JOSHUA:** I am pretty sure that's a door.

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

**JOSHUA:** You mean, my future daughter-in-law is standing outside that door, and you are in here beating your head?

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

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

*Joshua closes the door.*

**LIGHTS FADE @ SL**

**JOSHUA:** Son, I don't see anything out there that looks like a wife. I do see something dressed in a red skirt, but I'm not sure if it's human.

**HOSEA:** This doesn't make any sense.

**JOSHUA:** And you are sure you talk to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Peter, Paul, John?

**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.

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*Pause.*

**JOSHUA:** So, God told you to get married to a bird? You, a man of God, married to her (*points at door*). Imagine what the people of this town are going to say about that.

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

**JOSHUA:** Telling God no could be worse than getting married to her. Remember Jonah. You have found yourself in quite a predicament, my son.

*Hosea sighs and starts beating his head again.*

**JOSHUA:** I have always been sceptical about this prophetic journey you have found yourself on. A man who hears God's voice will carry a lot of responsibility. If this was God, I would think He has a reason.

**HOSEA:** What could possibly be the reason?

**JOSHUA:** Maybe to save this woman. That's what He does, right? Save people from sin.

**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:** Well, it worked for me and your mother.

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

**JOSHUA:** I guess 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 think about that word...nasty, disease, infections —

**HOSEA:** You are not helping.

**JOSHUA:** Maybe God made a mistake.

**HOSEA:** (*laughs*) That would be a first. He was very specific...He told me her name and what she would be wearing. Its real and I don't see any other way around this. It is better to fall into the hands of men than the hands of God.

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**JOSHUA:** I have always supported your charismatic approach to God; your consistent obedience, even in the face of danger, but this goes way beyond my pay grade.

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

**JOSHUA:** I would not! I would rather die first, but then that's me. I've already lived a full life and I do miss your mother.

*Joshua retrieves his bag and exits.*

*Hosea sighs. He looks around the room.*

**HOSEA:** God?

*He listens....nothing but silence. He sighs.*

**HOSEA:** Why me?

**LIGHTS FADE @ SR**

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### SCENE 3

#### LIGHTS UP @ SR

*Hosea walks out and stops to look behind him.*

**HOSEA:** C'mon, Father, we don't have all day.

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

**JOSHUA:** I am very uncomfortable with this plan of yours.

**HOSEA:** Well, do you have a better idea?

**JOSHUA:** I would say run like Jonah and hope for the best.

**HOSEA:** You would encourage me to run without at least trying?

**JOSHUA:** Considering that the "trying" is trying to get married to a prostitute, yes, Son. I would encourage you to run without trying.

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

**JOSHUA:** So, you want me to pretend that I am soliciting the services of one prostitute, so you can be alone with the other prostitute?

**HOSEA:** Yes, basically.

**JOSHUA:** This is the end of our glorious, holy reputation.

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

#### LIGHTS UP @ SL

*Gomer sits on the steps texting on her cell phone. Celeste stands close to the edge of the stage waiting for a customer and rigidly chewing gum.*

*Hosea steps away from the door.*

**HOSEA:** Are you ready?

**JOSHUA:** That must seriously be a rhetorical question.

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

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**JOSHUA:** I am really doing this! Unbelievable.

*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, are you looking to have a good time?

**JOSHUA:** *(under his breath)* Lord, have mercy.

*Gomer steps up and holds his other arm.*

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

**JOSHUA:** Uhm...well...

**CELESTE:** Is this your first time?

*Joshua nods.*

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

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

*Gomer smiles embarrassingly, lets go of his arm.*

*Celeste holds him tighter.*

**CELESTE:** Where's your car?

**JOSHUA:** I don't own a car.

**CELESTE:** So, how do you want to do this?

**JOSHUA:** Let's just take a walk.

*Joshua exits with Celeste still clutching his arm.*

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

*Pause.*

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*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?

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**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 on 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:** I'm serious.

**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 realizes 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:** Robert, darling, I wasn't expecting you for another hour.

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**ROBERT:** (*Points at Hosea still on his knees*) Who is this man kneeling down before you?

**GOMER:** I don't know him.

*Robert pulls Gomer aside.*

**ROBERT:** Babes, I came early because I'm expecting someone later.

**GOMER:** Who?

**ROBERT:** My wife.

*Pause.*

**GOMER:** Sorry you wasted your time. I already had an appointment.

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

**GOMER:** And we were just about to leave.

**ROBERT:** I thought you said you didn't know this man.

**GOMER:** I don't know 95% of the men I leave here with, Robert.

*Robert is furious. He clenches his fist.*

**ROBERT:** So, this is how it is, eh. You would embarrass me like this?

**GOMER:** You embarrassed yourself.

**ROBERT:** Alright. No sweat. It's all good!

*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—

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**GOMER:** (*angry*) Enough, okay. 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. Leave me alone.

*Gomer exits.*

**LIGHTS FADE @ SL**

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### SCENE 4

#### LIGHTS UP @ SR

*Hosea sits on 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:** Son, you need to promise me that this madness will never reoccur.

*Joshua starts to tuck his shirt back in his pants.*

**JOSHUA:** *(Pulls out a receipt from his pocket)* She gave me a receipt. She charged me tax, traveling, and overhead expenses just to talk. This is serious. You're paying me back.

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

**JOSHUA:** So...how did it go?

**HOSEA:** I made a fool of myself. Got kicked to the curb big time. I am really having second thoughts about this.

**JOSHUA:** Second thoughts? I have already passed through seventeen second thoughts. I think it's safe to say that you did not talk to God after all.

**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:** No, not really.

**HOSEA:** *(ignoring his answer)* 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 cared.

**JOSHUA:** So?

**HOSEA:** If God can love us in our worst state as sinners, should we love others 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?

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**HOSEA:** What else could this be?

**JOSHUA:** A test of your sanity. And I think you're failing really bad.

**HOSEA:** This is a test. God is asking me to do something once that He does practically every day.

**JOSHUA:** God gets married a prostitute every day?

**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 people.

**JOSHUA:** You're a man of God, Hosea, and a well-respected one too. People generally listen to you. If you do this, you're going to throw all that away...and you're going to take me with you. There is not one sane person in this world who would understand this.

**HOSEA:** Maybe this is my ultimate test of obedience. At the end of the day, you can't really please people and obey God.

**JOSHUA:** So, you're giving up your reputation as a preacher to pursue a harlot?

**HOSEA:** This is my higher calling.

**JOSHUA:** It amazes me how a higher calling seems to always take us to a lower place.

**HOSEA:** I have to see this thing through. I need your support. Are you going to help me?

**JOSHUA:** Not in this life.

**HOSEA:** Please!

**JOSHUA:** How do I help you? I am not going back out there.

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

**JOSHUA:** It is very easy with this. A thousand dollars should be enough.

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

**JOSHUA:** Her heart and body is one, my son. You get one, you automatically get the other.

**HOSEA:** How do I win her heart, Dad? I'm serious.

## The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

*Joshua sighs.*

**JOSHUA:** You are really doing this?

**HOSEA:** Yes, and stop being so cynical. You helped me not too long ago.

**JOSHUA:** I knew she would reject you, and you wouldn't listen anyway. Besides, I was kind of bored.

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

**JOSHUA:** But why do 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 all nature. Naturally, I am a charming man.

**HOSEA:** So seriously, what did you do?

**JOSHUA:** Well, the only thing I can remember using was the Word of God.

**HOSEA:** Teach me.

*Joshua finds a Bible and opens it.*

**JOSHUA:** I'm going to give you a scripture that 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:** You asked me for advice, remember. 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:** Now for the best part.

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

**JOSHUA:** You need to know how to get to third base.

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**HOSEA:** What is third base?

**JOSHUA:** Third base brought you into this world, Son. It comes after your wedding day, though. It is important that you remember that. No shacking up.

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

**JOSHUA:** You don't have a choice. Your mother is with Jesus. Now listen carefully. (*Begins to read*) Your breast —

**HOSEA:** No more. I think I got it.

**JOSHUA:** That, dear son, is the Word of the Lord. You want to win any woman's heart...use the Word.

**HOSEA:** What if it doesn't work?

**JOSHUA:** Women respond to love. If you can prove to her that you love her, you win her heart for life.

**HOSEA:** How did you prove that to Mom?

**JOSHUA:** We always ate from the same plate.

**HOSEA:** I have never seen you do that.

**JOSHUA:** I stopped after we got married, and I knew she couldn't leave me again. But, do as I say, not what I do.

*Joshua taps his son on his shoulders.*

**JOSHUA:** God is asking a hard thing, Son. You need to be sure of what you are getting yourself into.

*Joshua exits, leaving the Bible in Hosea's hand.*

**LIGHTS FADE @ SR**

## The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

### SCENE 5

#### **LIGHTS UP @ SL**

*Gomer sits alone on the steps.*

*Hosea comes out gripping his Bible.*

**HOSEA:** *(a little nervously)* Good morning.

*No response.*

**HOSEA:** *(trying to sound friendly)* Where's your friend?

**GOMER:** She is not in the office today. She called in sick.

*Hosea smiles.*

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

**GOMER:** Your questions are casual and boring, but I have a few questions for you. 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 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:** I get it. You were waiting here for me.

**GOMER:** Just answer the question.

**HOSEA:** That is why your friend is not here, isn't it?

**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?

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**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 if you keep doing that, 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. I want to give you something that will cost you nothing.

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

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

**GOMER:** Does love cause your mother to leave you in a bag by the side of the road to be picked up and raised by a pimp? Does love cause a child to grow without ever knowing who their father is? Does love cause a man to 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, okay?

**GOMER:** So why do it?

*A beat. Hosea can't respond immediately. Finally ---*

**HOSEA:** Because God told me to.

*Gomer bursts out laughing.*

**GOMER:** You are insane.

*Hosea opens the Bible.*

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**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:** Stop that.

**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 am done playing games with you, whore. You have been avoiding me all week, but no more games. *(looks at Hosea)* And who is this fool?

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

*Robert looks at Hosea's hand, then at his face.*

**ROBERT:** *(barks)* Excuse yourself, man. Don't you have somewhere to go?

**HOSEA:** No, 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:** Stop talking to me as if I'm your child.

*Robert begins to pull her offstage against her will.*

**GOMER:** *(begins to struggle)* Robert, I am done with you. I'm not going anywhere with you.

## **The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish**

**ROBERT:** I am going to teach you a lesson of submission tonight.

*Hosea slowly works up enough courage.*

**HOSEA:** You should let the lady go, sir!

*Robert stops. He turns around.*

**ROBERT:** What did you say?

**HOSEA:** I said, maybe you should let the lady go...I mean, it sounds like a good idea – and I did say sir, you know, being respectable and all.

*Robert laughs and releases his grip on Gomer.*

**ROBERT:** Ohhhh...so, this is the man you have been ignoring me for.

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

**ROBERT:** Don't hurt him? You actually care what happens to this fool?

*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 a very stupid thing to do.

*Gomer helps him inside.*

**LIGHTS UP @ SR**

*The Bible remains onstage SL.*

## The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

*Hosea sits painfully on the couch.*

**GOMER:** Why'd you do that?

**HOSEA:** Seemed like the right 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:** Do you live here alone?

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

**GOMER:** Okay. *(looks around uncomfortably)* Can I get you anything?

**HOSEA:** Ice...in the freezer. *(points Down Stage)* Through that door.

*Gomer walks to the door.*

**HOSEA:** Thank you...*(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 okay. *(flinches in pain)*

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

*Hosea smiles painfully.*

*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**

# The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

## SCENE 6

### ONE YEAR LATER

*SFX: Baby crying*

#### LIGHTS UP @ SR

*Joshua sits close to a small baby cradle. He rocks the cradle, but the crying continues. He puts one toy after another into the cradle, but the crying continues.*

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

**JOSHUA:** Oh, dear Jesus.

*He pulls out a soiled diaper.*

*Hosea enters with a small bag. Joshua quickly puts the diaper in the cradle.*

**JOSHUA:** Am I happy to see you!

**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:** Good. Let me go start dinner. You can take care of little Jezreel. He needs some attention below the waist.

**HOSEA:** Where's Gomer?

**JOSHUA:** (*stops without turning around*) You are asking me where your wife is? That's interesting. Son, she's never here.

*Joshua exits.*

*Hosea peeks into the cradle. His face twists in disgust.*

**HOSEA:** What have you been eating?

*Hosea picks up the cradle and exit.*

*A beat.*

*The crying stops.*

## The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

*Gomer enters carrying two shopping bags.*

*She puts them on the couch and sits down, going through the bags smiling and as 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 of color is different.

*Hosea is looking but not seeing.*

*Gomer brings the dress up to his nostrils.*

**GOMER:** Notice 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:** (uninterested) 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?

## The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

**GOMER:** I took some money from our savings.

*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 a little 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 out 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 tasks 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 isn't either, but I had my own money and nobody accused me of being an impulsive spender.

**HOSEA:** You are missing the point.

## The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

**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 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 hands.*

**JOSHUA:** Old people have this thing they always say – you can take a pig out of the pen, but you can't take the pen out of the pig.

**HOSEA:** You heard all that?

**JOSHUA:** Well, you guys are terrible at arguing quietly. I think the whole neighbourhood heard that, but everybody already thinks you have lost your mind to marry a street girl, so – what else is new.

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

**JOSHUA:** You thought this was going to be easy? Marrying a woman is never easy. They are the greatest mystery in creation, and there is nothing you can do to change a woman. You either accept her for who she is or you don't.

**HOSEA:** She is a little bit too carefree for my acceptance.

**JOSHUA:** Maybe you should have said "I don't" instead of "I do." Remember, on the day you stood at the altar with this girl, I whispered in your ear and asked if you were sure. You did it anyway. You bought the package, so live with it.

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

**JOSHUA:** Oh, snapchat!

*Joshua quickly exits.*

*Hosea sighs deeply.*

## The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

**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:** You're lying.

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

**ROBERT:** I know you know where she is, and I will not stop till I find her.

**CELESTE:** Does your wife know where you are, Robert?

**ROBERT:** Are you threatening me?

**CELESTE:** It's a simple question.

**ROBERT:** We'll see how long you two can play these games.

*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 are looking so nice.

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

## **The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish**

**CELESTE:** Okay, you know your girl has friends in high and low places. But are you sure? It looks like you have a good thing going on here.

**GOMER:** Not everything that glitters is gold, my friend.

**CELESTE:** Tell me what kind of employment you need, and I will hook you up.

**GOMER:** I am only good at one thing, Celeste.

*Pause.*

**LIGHTS OUT @ SR**

# The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

## SCENE 7

### ONE YEAR LATER

*SFX: Baby cooing*

#### LIGHTS UP @ SR

*Hosea sits by the baby cradle.*

*Joshua comes out. He looks at the baby in the cradle.*

**JOSHUA:** One wasn't enough, so you just had to go and have another. At least this one doesn't cry as much. What's her name again?

**HOSEA:** Loruhamah.

**JOSHUA:** Poor child. She's going to spend her whole life spelling her name for others. Whatever happened to giving babies normal names like John or James.

**HOSEA:** You named me Hosea.

**JOSHUA:** Your mother named you, and it's a good name. Easy to spell.

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

**JOSHUA:** Oh! So this is not your child?

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

*Joshua looks inside the cradle.*

**JOSHUA:** I just thought maybe we had African American somewhere in our bloodline. And sometimes babies are born black, but get a little whiter as they grow older. *(PLEASE NOTE: If the actors playing these roles are Caucasian, then this dialogue is perfect. If the actors are African American, the dialogue will need to be tweaked.)*

*Hosea shakes his head.*

**JOSHUA:** Where's your wife?

**HOSEA:** I don't know.

**JOSHUA:** As usual. She's hardly here, but still manages to produce a baby.

## The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

**HOSEA:** I don't know if I can do this dad, 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 it feels for a Father to give His life for his children, for His bride and for His people, and how He must feel when they constantly turn their backs on His everlasting love.

**JOSHUA:** You still think this is about God's love for humanity?

**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 this, until you know what your wife is up to for sure, try and 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 didn't want to be the one to say it or assume the worse, but yes, we both know.

**HOSEA:** She stopped taking money from our savings and her spending has doubled. New clothes, shoes, bags and jewelry. The money has to come from somewhere.

**JOSHUA:** Ungrateful little wren – *(The door opens and Gomer steps in. Joshua starts singing)*...Jesus loves me this I know.

*Gomer doesn't make eye contact with anyone in the room.*

**HOSEA:** Dad, can you take the baby to her room for me please?

**JOSHUA:** Yeah man.

*Joshua takes the cradle 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.

## The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

**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!

## The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

*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 bumps into Robert and is shocked into silence.*

**ROBERT:** How long did you really think you could hide from me?

**GOMER:** What do you want, Robert?

**ROBERT:** You know what I want.... *(Grabs her hand)* Don't scream. If anybody steps out that door, I will kill him.

*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:** She's gone?

**HOSEA:** Yeah.

*Joshua hugs his son.*

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

**JOSHUA:** I know, but we never get to choose our own cross, Son. We just get to carry it.

*A beat.*

### **LIGHTS FADE @ SR**

## The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

### 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 six months? I have been so worried that something bad happened to you.

**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. It's getting worse, Celeste, the older we get, 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 my family.

*Gomer starts to cry.*

**GOMER:** Hosea will never take me back. He will never forgive me, Celeste. I have made a big mess of this.

## The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

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

**GOMER:** I have always wanted more...just didn't think I deserved it. I got more, and threw it away.

**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 Gomer just said.*

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

**CELESTE:** Sin? This is not sin. This is survival. 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 of this life.

*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 being 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.

## The Love Dare by Cleveland O. McLeish

**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 okay before she got involved with you.

**HOSEA:** You are deceived. You see what you want to see. Look at Gomer. The only time she is not okay 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 exit through the door.*

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

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**LIGHTS FADE @ SL**

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**SCENE 9**

**ONE YEAR LATER**

*SFX: Baby cooing*

**LIGHTS UP @ SR**

*Joshua sits by the cradle.*

*Hosea enters. This is a very familiar scene.*

**JOSHUA:** Did you find her?

**HOSEA:** No.

**JOSHUA:** You have been walking the streets now every day for two months. She is not a lost sheep. She has made her choice. She is gone...again. Maybe you need to start thinking about letting her go.

*Hosea sits beside his father.*

**JOSHUA:** Old habits die hard. *(Takes out an empty bottle of Jack Daniels)* I found this. Empty. She is drinking again.

*No response. Joshua looks at the baby in the cradle.*

**JOSHUA:** Hosea, in the matter of little Lo-ammi here, you are not the father.

*Joshua laughs, but quickly gets serious when he notices Hosea's expression.*

**JOSHUA:** Why did you name him Lo-ammi?

**HOSEA:** It means "No kin of mine."

**JOSHUA:** I could have guessed.

**HOSEA:** You would think I'd have learned 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:** Maybe this one is yours. You two get together sometimes, right – on third base? Husband and wife stuff?

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

**JOSHUA:** Ai!

**HOSEA:** The last time I saw her, we argued.

**JOSHUA:** Nothing new 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:** You can't tame that wife of yours, Hosea. She is untameable, if there is such a word. The whole community knows. Do you realize that we are the laughing stock of this entire block? Look at you. You no longer preach. Your eyes are sinking to the back of your head from lack of sleep. And for what? You need to let this woman go.

*Hosea struggles with the thought.*

**HOSEA:** Give me a moment, Father. I need to pray.

**JOSHUA:** It was prayer that got you into this mess. You remember that.

*Joshua takes the cradle 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.

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*No response.*

**VOICE:** Have you ever given orders to the morning, or showed 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:** 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:** You know the answer to that question.

**HOSEA:** I need to hear it from you.

**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. You don't have much time. The events have already been set into motion.

**LIGHTS UP @ SL**

*Celeste enters, goes to the door and knocks.*

**HOSEA:** What do You mean when You say events have already been set into motion?

*No response.*

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*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 human trafficker named Eric. If he leaves with her on his truck, we will never see her again.

**HOSEA:** How did she get involved with a human trafficker?

*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 an 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 ...but I am no fool. No man has ever loved Gomer like you and maybe it was envy or covetousness, but you're the only man who never left her. Now she needs you more than ever.

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

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

**HOSEA:** I would give my life for her.

**CELESTE:** I know men like Eric. They are 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, Son?

**HOSEA:** We have a guest. Please give her anything she needs. I need to make a quick run to the bank.

**JOSHUA:** Hosea, are you going to use the money you have been saving for your house?

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

*Joshua is not sure what he is taking about, so he doesn't answer.*

**HOSEA:** I will be back soon.

*He exits.*

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*Celeste looks at Joshua...he seems familiar.*

**CELESTE:** Don't I know you?

**JOSHUA:** *(Tries to hide his face)* I don't think so.

**LIGHTS FADE @ SR**

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### SCENE 10

#### LIGHTS UP @ SL

*Eric paces back and 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 let you convince me to come to a dump like this. Do you know how strange my limousine looks parked there along the road? 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 that...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 whore is worth anything on the market these days.

*Hosea gives him a bag of money.*

*Eric looks inside, wide-eyed.*

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

**HOSEA:** I only want her. I only want my wife.

*Eric shakes his head, not quite understanding.*

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**ERIC:** Well, business is business. Wait here.

*Eric exits.*

*A beat.*

*Eric brings Gomer in.*

**ERIC:** She is all yours, Brother Man. 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.

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**GOMER:** Why would God save me?

**HOSEA:** Because, that's what love does. It saves, and it doesn't matter the cost.

*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 amid 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:** I was just trying to help, and it feels good to talk without you trying to take off my shirt.

**CELESTE:** It's tempting.

**JOSHUA:** You need Jesus.

*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:** So, you spend all your savings?

**HOSEA:** Yep.

**JOSHUA:** *(sighs)* So, I have to continue to put up with you two under my roof for another couple years?

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

*Joshua shakes his head. He goes over to Gomer.*

**JOSHUA:** I hope you know this man loves you more than he loves himself.

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

**JOSHUA:** I don't hate you, child. I love you with the love of my son.

*Gomer hugs him tightly.*

**GOMER:** Thank you.

**JOSHUA:** Awkward!

### 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 doesn'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 favoritism, biases, and reservations. It transcends culture and races and extends beyond our intuition and human understanding. The 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

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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)* You can keep it. I already bought a replacement.

**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**

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### From the Author's Desk

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