

(GLORY TRAIN TO HEAVEN)

(Original Stageplay)

by

(Cleveland O. McLeish)

CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Preacher		45	Male
Sharon		42	Female
Gwen		35	Female
Martin		54	Male
Sheryl		32	Female
Male Voice			
Female Voice			
Extras			

PREACHER (OFF)

Some of you know, today marks a very important and memorable day for me and the rest of this church. It marks the anniversary of when I first started our now very successful program for feeding the hungry. It was not always successful. It was just a mustard seed of an idea.

(Crowd cheers)

PREACHER (OFF)

When the idea first came to me, I was not sure how I would make that idea a reality. We had extremely limited resources and there was no program like what I had in mind. But I did have plenty of faith that I could carry out this plan and see it through to the end.

(audience applause)

PREACHER (OFF)

Once that idea was planted, and nourished, and watered, then it grew into a seedling. That seedling became a tree that grew taller and stronger over the years. And with the help of the rest of the church, I was able to do what initially seemed like the impossible. So if you are stuck feeling like you cannot achieve your dreams, I am here to tell you that it is possible. First you need to plant that seed. You need to have faith that perseveres, faith that does not go away at the first sign that things aren't exactly going your way. You must have patience, and then your seed will grow.

(crowd applause)

MAN (OFF)

Very inspiring sermon, sir.

PREACHER (OFF)

Why, thank you.

WOMAN (OFF)

You never cease to amaze me. If only there were more people in the world like you, then the world would be a much better place for all of us.

PREACHER (OFF)

(laughs)

I know, and I am happy you see how important of a man I am to society. Now if you'all don't mind, I have an award ceremony to get to. Come wife.

WIFE (OFF)

I need to go to the ladies room. Make myself more presentable.

PREACHER (OFF)

Hurry up. You know the function can't start until we get there.

Pause.

PRESENTER (OFF)

Thank you all for joining us today to celebrate the leaders of our community. We have a very special guest here tonight, who has aided the community in so many ways. He single handedly raised the funds to launch our food for the hungry program. In the course of a year, this man has raised tens of thousands of dollars for the church and the community. He is like a father figure and an older brother to so many of us here, and we are so very blessed to have him in our lives and here with us tonight. Please give a big hand to our preacher.

(crowd applause)

PREACHER (OFF)

Thank you all very much. This project has been a long and arduous labor of love. There are times I thought I would not make it. Times I thought about giving up. Times I could not see my way through. Times I felt hopeless. Times I was so weak, I just could not go on. But I did it. Tomorrow is my birthday, and I could not ask for a better birthday with this award.

(crowd applause)

MAN (OFF)

I am a big fan of yours.

PREACHER (OFF)

What a nice thing to say.

WOMAN (OFF)

My son wants to be just like you when he grows up.

PREACHER (OFF)

Your son is very ambitious.

MAN (OFF)

You are a celebrity. Everyone knows you.

PREACHER (OFF)

What can I say. I surprise myself sometimes.

(SFX: Car crashes)

LIGHTS UP ON:

TRAIN STATION

It seems to be an ordinary train station..

Everyone carries a small suitcase, and seem to be waiting for a train.

Preacher and his Wife, Sharon, enters. They are walk around, looking confused.

PREACHER

Where are we?

SHARON

I think this is a train station.

PREACHER

Yes, but what are we doing at a train station.

SHARON

I don't know.

PREACHER

The last thing I remember was driving home from the awards ceremony ---

Pause.

SHARON

I think we were in an accident.

PREACHER

Well, if something is wrong with the car it would make sense we are here.

SHARON

I think we are dead.

PREACHER

Don't be silly woman.

SHARON

(points at SHERYL)

I know her.

Preacher looks at Sharon, his eyes narrow.

PREACHER

I know her too. The Prostitute who was always standing at the corner near the church.

(looks at the others)

I know everybody here.

(points)

He is a drunk.

(points)

That thief who kept robbing the church.

SHARON

You refused to do their funerals, remember. They are all dead.

PREACHER

This is not making sense. Why are we here with them?

SON (OFF)

Thank you all for coming here to celebrate the life of my parents.

PREACHER

Is that our son?

SHARON

Yes, it is.

SON (OFF)

The accident was a shock to all of us, but I am happy that my parents are in a better place now.

PREACHER

I am at a train station with sinners. This is not quite what I had in mind.

SON (OFF)

My father was a pillar of this community and did everything he could to make this world a better place. He taught me a lot about doing good for others and I hope to measure up to his accomplishments one day. And my mother, well I know my mother was always very proud of me. She was always bragging about me to others about what a good job she did of raising me. But she did raise me well and for that I am thankful.

PREACHER

(calls offstage)

Son, I am here. Do what Jesus did, and just raise me from the dead already.

SON (OFF)

I will miss my parents terribly, but it gives me great comfort to think that they are up in heaven looking down on me right now, protecting me and guarding me from harm and the evils of this world.

PREACHER

I don't think this is heaven.

SHARON

I don't think he can hear you.

SON (OFF)

I only hope that I can be as good of a person as they both were. That I can contribute to the community and lead our parish as much as they did when they were here on earth.

A woman with a clipboard walks up to them. Her name is GWEN.

GWEN

I am Gwen. Hi. You must be the Preacher and his wife, Sharon.

PREACHER

Everyone here knows who we are. Mind telling us why we are here with these reprobates?

GWEN

Right, yes, well welcome. The train will be here shortly to take you beyond. I need you to get registered. Follow me.

Preacher and Sharon follows Gwen to a small desk with two large books. Gwen sits behind the desk.

PREACHER

Is this the way to heaven?

GWEN

It sure is. There is a train that arrives here every single day. That train does take passengers directly to Heaven. If you're lucky, you'll both be on the list.

Preacher starts laughing.

PREACHER

What do you mean, if we are lucky. I thought you knew who we are.

GWEN

As I was saying, very few people are invited to board the train to Heaven. They must all follow a very specific set of criteria in order to make it past the gates. Many people think they will make it to heaven, but few are actually chosen.

PREACHER

You are preaching to the choir lady. Look around you. I am the only one qualified here to go to heaven.

Sharon nudges him.

PREACHER

Well, the both of us that is.

GWEN

Hell, on the other hand. Nobody ever wants to go to Hell. It's a terribly sad and miserable place where the people are always in pain and suffering.

A lot of wailing goes on down there. And it's excruciatingly hot. Burning hot, even. But unfortunately lots of people end up there anyway. I hear that it's actually starting to get overpopulated.

SHARON

That place sounds awful.

GWEN

Oh, it most certainly is. Hopefully you two don't end up down there! You both seem like nice enough looking people.

SHARON

Oh I'm sure we won't. My husband is a preacher you see. He has been for quite some time now. He's devoted most of his life to God. You should have heard the sermons he would give every Sunday. He would get so much applause. One time he even got a standing ovation from the congregation. They all just adore him so much. So I know we're going to heaven today. I'm just absolutely sure of it.

PREACHER

I even helped run some charities and started a few programs to help the needy. I actually got an award for that right before we came here. So in that sense, I am confident that we both have what it takes to get into heaven.

GWEN

You sure use a lot of 'I's when you are talking. Anyway, good for you! That sounds absolutely lovely. Let's get you registered then.

(opens the first book)

Your names should be written in this book, to board the next train to heaven. So let us see.

Gwen takes her time going through all the pages of the book.

Preacher and Sharon gets impatient with every passing minute.

SHARON

What is taking so long? It feels like we've been here forever. I have never had much patience for these things.

Preacher checks the time on his watch.

A train whistle sounds. The train is approaching.

SHARON

I can't believe we are going to Heaven! I did not think that I would see this day so soon!

GWEN

I am so sorry, but I am not seeing your name in this book.

Pause.

PREACHER

Excuse you.

GWEN

Your name is not in the book, sir. Please step aside.

PREACHER

Step aside? Do you know who I am? For years I have preached in His name. I have cast out demons, and have worked miracles.

GWEN

But, your name is not in the book.

Preacher searches his jacket pockets, and finds a pen. He extends it to Gwen.

PREACHER

Fine, write it in.

GWEN

That is not how this works, sir. Please step aside or you will be forced to.

Preacher and his Sharon reluctantly step to one side.

MARTIN walks up to the desk.

GWEN

Good day sir.

MARTIN

Hi, I am here to board the train to heaven.

GWEN

I know, I know. Let me just check to see if your---

(searches quickly)

Yes, there it is in black, white and gold. The train will be here any second.

PREACHER

Wait a minute, I know you. You used to be a robber. You stole from me. You stole from every one in the community.

MARTIN

(hangs his head in shame)

Yes, I used to be that man.

Preacher turns to Gwen.

PREACHER

See, you are looking in the wrong book. A sinners name would never be recorded in that book.

GWEN

(examines the book)

Ah, yes sir, this is the right book. Says here that all this man's sins were forgiven.

PREACHER

Impossible! How?

MARTIN

I came to your office one day for help, remember?

PREACHER

You were there to see what you could steal.

MARTIN

I was there for help. You turned me out. Threatened to call the police.

PREACHER

You are a thief.

MARTIN

I left your office, but stopped at the altar. I did not find Jesus in your office, but I met Him at your altar. He forgave me, changed me just in time. He gave me exactly what I needed. I have never met anyone who did not judge me for the wrongs I did, who saw me for the man I could be.

Gwen pops a gum in her mouth and starts to hum.
Preacher looks confused.

PREACHER

I don't get what you are saying to me.

MARTIN

Everybody thought I was hopeless, except Jesus.

PREACHER

You stole from people to buy drugs.

MARTIN

I wanted food. Not drugs. I was hungry, and you never fed me once. I begged you to have mercy. You never did. I stole from a place of need.

Martin goes to sit.

Preacher struggles to process what he has just heard.

GWEN

Next in line.

SHERYL walks up to the table.

SHERYL

Hi, uhm, I am not so sure what I am supposed to do at this point.

GWEN

It is such a simple process my dear, I will look in this book for your name. If it is there, you go on over there and just wait for the train, which should be rolling in any minute now.

SHERYL

Oh, okay.

Gwen searches through the books. Her finger stop moving and she smiles.

GWEN

Whoop, there it is. You are good to go, my dear.

SHARON

Isn't she the prostitute who is always standing in that corner near to where our church was located.

PREACHER

Yes, this is crazy. I think this crazy woman is looking in the wrong book. There is no way a prostitutes name would be there, and our name omitted.

SHERYL

I needed shelter. Do you remember that?

PREACHER

There is no way we would have given shelter to a stranger.

SHERYL

If you, representing Christ, refused to....what hope would we have on earth?

GWEN

Be careful how you entertain strangers...

PREACHER

Nobody is talking to you.

SHERYL

I was so disappointed with church. I had no interest at all, until a street preacher found me. Gave me shelter, food and a job. My life turned around, and I gave my heart to the same Jesus you denied me.

PREACHER

You, a Prostitute, getting saved? That is not possible.

SHERYL

Jesus died for sinners, didn't He? It was not the righteous that He gave His life. It was for people like me. I have heard you preach this message.

GWEN

(singing)

He didn't believe it.

PREACHER

Shut up!

Sheryl takes her seat.

GWEN

And you wonder why your name is not in the book. Next in line please.

MARK walks up to the desk.

MARK

Oh, hi, aww...I am here for the train.

GWEN

Yes, you are...

(searches)

And there's your name. Go right on ahead. The train will be here momentarily.

PREACHER

(shocked)

Don't you know who this man is?

GWEN

My duty is to check and see if the names are in this book. His name is there. Yours is not. Take up your case with the Father.

PREACHER

This man is a drunkard. I know all these people who are here. I know them all. Is this a bad dream? Is this someone's sick idea of a joke? Since when do drunkards go to heaven?

SAM

I was a drunkard sir.

PREACHER

What do you mean, was? You died driving drunk.

SAM

I lived long enough to repent.

PREACHER

You think repenting at the last possible minute is going to get you into heaven?

GWEN

Is name is in the book.

PREACHER

Somebody should fire you. I bet you have no idea what you are doing.

SAM

Sir, you say you are a man of God, but you judge so harshly. You never demonstrated to us a God of love.

SHERYL

He was too busy judging us.

GWEN

Judge not, lest you be judged.

MARTIN

You were not born a preacher. You were a sinner once...like all of us.

PREACHER

I never robbed anyone. I never sold my body for money. I stayed away from alcohol.

SHERYL

So, you think somehow by your decent behavior, God loved you more than he loved us.

PREACHER

Obviously.

GWEN

Obviously not.

PREACHER

I served Him all my life.

MARTIN

Then how is our names in the book, and yours isn't?

Pause.

SHARON

There must be some sort of error. My husband is a preacher, maam. He certainly should be going to heaven. And I am his wife. We both have a long list of good deeds that we have done during our time on earth. Surely there has been some sort of mistake.

PREACHER

My wife is telling the truth. I have been preaching for over 20 years, you see. And my congregation, if you saw my congregation you would understand why I should be on that list. When I came to my church there were only 8 parishioners. Now there are nearly 200! Why, I practically slaved day and night to make the church the huge success it is today.

GWEN

That is nice.

PREACHER

Nobody else could have accomplished such a feat but me. I tell you, if I don't deserve to go into heaven, then who on earth does? Surely not these degenerates.

GWEN

I have heard of you and your many accomplishments during your life. But the fact remains that you and your wife's names are not here on the approved list of people who can be admitted into heaven.

PREACHER

What about all the good I have done?

GWEN

Good acts alone cannot get you into heaven.

SHARON (OFF)

How was your night?

Preacher looks at his wife.

PREACHER

What?

SHARON

I didn't say anything.

GWEN

Shh! Just listen.

PREACHER (OFF)

They are all gamblers. Especially Bill. Money slips through his hands like water. You know me, I haven't played cards in many, many years. It's a sinful hobby, that gambling of his. What I absolutely cannot stand, is Bill does not even have the money to gamble. He says he's late on his rent again, second time this year. And he can barely put food on the table. And with a wife and 3 children. Spent all of his children's college funds at the casino last summer. My brother is always borrowing money from this person or that person. Always maxing out his credit cards and getting calls from collection agencies. For as long as I can remember my brother has always had that terrible vice and he's going to have to answer for that one day.

SHARON (OFF)

Oh dear.

PREACHER (OFF)

He actually wants a loan. A loan!

SHARON (OFF)

What did you tell him?

PREACHER (OFF)

I said "Bill, now's not a good time." I doubt he believed it of course. But tell me, just because I've had a successful year, does that mean I've got to give him a handout? What has he ever done with his life to deserve one?

GWEN

Who was Bill to you?

PREACHER

My brother. But I worked for everything I had. Everything I had, I got on my own. Nobody helped me, not my mother, certainly not my father. It was all handed to Bill. And what does he do? Gamble it all away.

GWEN

So you would try to convince this great cloud of witness that you loved God, but not your brother?

PREACHER

Nothing ever got handed to me. I had to work my way through college, meanwhile my brother has hardly ever had to work to earn so much as a dime. What little he has had was gotten through luck. He sure did not earn anything by his own means. What good I did or have was gained by my own hard work, determination, and perseverance.

GWEN

You spoke of what you accomplished by yourself, giving none of the credit to God. "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" First Corinthians 4:7. Listen to this one --- by far my favourite.

PREACHER (OFF)

Thank you all very much. This project has been a long and arduous labor of love. There are times I thought I would not make it. Times I thought about giving up. Times I could not see my way through. Times I felt hopeless. Times I was so weak, I just could not go on. But I did it. Tomorrow is my birthday, and I could not ask for a better birthday with this award.

GWEN

Ten times you referred to yourself. How many references to God -- uhm, a grand total of zero.

PREACHER

I know for a fact that this woman over here is a prostitute. She fell off the righteous path a long time ago. She even made the news several times for getting arrested and put into jail.

GWEN

Her name is Sheryl Graham. You never once asked her name. Her name is written in the book.

PREACHER

Well how is that possible? She's never been an upstanding member of the community. Her whole entire life has been full of so much depravity and sin. It must be a mistake that she can be on this train.

GWEN

Miss Graham has repented. Yes, she did used to sell herself for quite a while and she was deeply entrenched in a life of sin, but after some time she slowly came to see the error of her ways. After realizing this, she completely turned her life around. She may not be well known in the community, but she recently got a job as a waitress at a café. She was sharing her lunches with the homeless man who sits outside the café.

(points at Martin)

Preacher looks at Martin.

PREACHER

The thief?

GWEN

Every morning she would buy a cup of coffee for him with her own money. And at the end of the day she would give him some of the money she earned from her tips so he could go buy dinner. She talked about these good deeds to no one, but they did not go unnoticed by God. This woman has never been boastful or attention-seeking about her good deeds. Ever since reforming, she has been a good model for humility and modesty. But you, you do not seem to be very modest to people at all. You are always seeking to be praised, appreciated, and adored for your good deeds. And you think yourselves superior to many because of the good that you do accomplish.

PREACHER

But I have been helping to feed the hungry for years! I must have helped give thousands of meals to the needy in my lifetime!

GWEN

You know it was all for your personal gain, the accolades, the fame...you spent half the grants you received on your own lifestyle. Remember the time you were on a plane boasting to the passenger next to you. You told this person that if it were not for you, your church would have been closed down. That none of your churches current success would have been possible if you hadn't worked so hard for it. But you forgot to give the glory to God.

PREACHER

I prayed three times a day.

GWEN

So do the members of every other religion. You were so very boastful about yourself. Telling this stranger how many see you as a mentor, a leader, how those in the community always come to you for advice because you are so wise. You talked to this stranger on the plane about how you were on your way to a destitute village and were coming to their rescue. You spoke of how these people had nothing, few clothes and food, and how they were lacking in homes to cover their heads. You said that you were going to provide these people with new homes and that these people are always so grateful for the help you give them.

PREACHER

I wanted that stranger to know what it could be like to lead a fulfilling life, I wanted to inspire him to be a better person. So that he could live a better life than the one he was already leading.

GWEN

You think that these people see you as a god. Or at least you think they should admire you and worship you and kiss your feet. You think that they owe their lives to you and you think yourself worthy of these peoples' devotion. Your heart is transparent. And it also lacks compassion.

PREACHER

How could I possibly lack compassion? I headed many charitable programs. And I always donated to the needy when I could.

SHARON

My husband is a very important man, you know, and he is well respected in the community. You don't know who he is. My husband is a preacher, and a very celebrated and admired one at that.

GWEN

The only thing you are accomplishing with your haughty words is proving my point.

Pause.

PREACHER

Is there anything I can do now? There must be something. A last test, a chance for redemption. Can I speak to your superior? An angel maybe?

GWEN

I am an angel. I have been an angel for hundreds of years now and I take my job and what I do very seriously. Do you think you are the first preacher like this that I have met? The first preacher that was not given admission into heaven? The first charitable person or the only one who has done many kind acts but still did not get approved for heaven? There is a reason for this. You are too prideful and pride does not get someone into heaven.

SHARON

Oh dear.

GWEN

You seem to think that you know better than God.

PREACHER

But wait a minute, what about that man over there! I remember him. He is a known alcoholic and was a scourge and absolute burden to the community.

GWEN

You mean Mr. Smith. Yes it is true that Mr. Smith was an alcoholic for much of his life. He began drinking when he was in college. His alcoholism followed him long after he graduated and he could never hold a job down for long. He was fired regularly because of his drinking. He kept having to start his life over again. He got married and had children, but lost his family due to his alcoholism as well. But he came to see the error of his ways. Better late than never. And he begged for forgiveness and he received forgiveness in spades. He has long been absolved of his sins and has worked so hard to be a good person. You may not know much about his good deeds because he lived a quiet life when he began to live as a sober man. Not only that, he truly devoted his life to God, and not for attention or appreciation from others.

PREACHER

I cannot believe what I am hearing. I cannot believe any of this. My whole world has turned upside down. I was so sure, so sure that I would get into heaven.

GWEN

It never occurred to you that you could have done better, but now I am afraid it is too late. This train is only for people going to heaven. Ah ah, the train is here

(gets up)

All those who have been registered, please follow me.

Everyone follows Gwen offstage, leaving Preacher and his Sharon.

A man dressed in full black enters. He looks around with a snarl on his face. His name is DAMION.

DAMION

Only two?

(snickers)

Come with me.

PREACHER

To where?

DAMION

To where you belong. In my domain, your name don't have to be written in a book. Entrance is absolutely free. Wait a minute, I know you, Preacher Man. You preached some good sermons in your day huh.

PREACHER

We are not going anywhere with you.

(Sharon clings to his arms)

DAMION

In some ways, you might find that your destination is full of people like you. Boastful. Proud. Self-serving. Arrogant and lacking in compassion and understanding. You might find that you have more in common with those people than you do with the passengers who are on their way to Heaven.

PREACHER

All of the hard work I have done all my life, everything I tried to do right. What have I done? Only to get into hell! I wish I could do it all over again!

SHARON

There must be something you can do to save us. Think of something! Save us! You must know about something that can be done!

PREACHER

I don't know what to do!

(Sharon starts to sob)

DAMION

Let this be a lesson to all of you that good deeds alone will not get you into heaven. If you are proud, then there is only one place you will be going. That is with me.

LIGHTS FADE.

VOICE

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

FADE TO BLACK.