

# **Pride and Punishment**

## **The Missionary Career of Father Morice of Fort St. James**

**By Johannes Allgaier**



**College of New Caledonia**

# PRIDE AND PUNISHMENT

THE MISSIONARY CAREER OF FATHER MORICE OF  
FORT ST. JAMES

BY

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

Father Adrien-Gabriel Morice,  
Missionary at Fort St. James, 1885-1903

Father Chiappini ..... *Priests at Williams Lake*  
Father Guertin .....

Richard Loring, Indian Agent at Terrace

Chief of Fort Babine

Jacques ..... *Fort Babine Villagers*  
Patrick, his Son .....  
Patrick's Mother .....  
Two Indian Prisoners .....  
Elderly Native Man .....  
François .....  
Rachel .....  
Members of Congregation .....

Paul ..... *Natleh Villagers*  
Sebastian .....  
Peter and John, Native Watchmen .....  
Members of Congregation .....

Clerk of the Hudson's Bay Company, Fort St. James  
Traill, Chief Factor  
Peter O'Reilly, Reserve Commissioner

Joseph Prince, Indian Constable ..... *Fort St. James Villagers*  
Francis Prince, his Brother .....  
Chief Taya .....  
Two Native Watchmen .....

Bishop Dontenwill of New Westminster  
Wagner, his Assistant

..... *Hagwilgate Villagers*

Louis Dixon, Hudson's Bay Clerk, Quesnel  
Jenny Jenkins, aging Barkerville Prostitute  
Two Native Boatmen  
Messenger  
Father Conan, Morice's Successor

## SCENE I

*Williams Lake Mission, Summer 1885. A corridor running across the stage, with windows facing upstage. Fathers Chiappini and Guertin pacing left and right saying their office.*

MORICE [*off stage to the right, loudly singing and clapping*]

Sur le pont d'Avignon,  
L'on y danse, l'on y danse,  
Sur le pont d'Avignon,  
L'on y danse tout en rond.

Les beaux messieurs font comme ça,  
Et puis encor comme ça,  
Sur le pont d'Avignon,  
L'on y danse, l'on y danse,  
Sur le pont d'Avignon,  
L'on y danse tout en rond.

Les belles dames font comme ça,  
Et puis encor comme ça,  
Sur le pont d'Avignon,  
L'on y danse, l'on y danse,  
Sur le pont d'Avignon,  
L'on y danse tout en rond.

Les laveuses font comme ça,  
Et puis encor comme ça,  
Sur le pont d'Avignon,  
L'on y danse, l'on y danse,



Sur le pont d'Avignon,  
L'on y danse tout en rond.

*[repeat as needed]*

CHIAPPINI *[looks at Guertin with exasperation]*

GUERTIN *[does not respond; carries on with office]*

MORICE *[enters after singing gets closer. He pretends to be surprised by the two priests' presence and makes a superficial, insincere gesture of apology. He crosses the stage and exits on opposite side, resuming his singing off stage.]*

CHIAPPINI *[after a few moments, during which he appears to be struggling with his anger, to Guertin]* Won't you do something?

GUERTIN. I'll send him to Fort St. James, at Stuart's Lake.

CHIAPPINI. But that is what he wants. That's why he's been making himself intolerable here. Are you rewarding him? *[renewed singing and bumping, as from dancing off stage]*

GUERTIN. I want him out of here. It's either he or I. I'm not just going to run away, like Father Baudre last year.

CHIAPPINI. Then why don't you apply the Rule? Get the Bishop to send him his Second Warning. It won't take long for him to earn the Third -- and then presto on to the Tribunal, and good-bye -- adieu -- *[with malice]* stranded in British Columbia. Maybe he can get a job as cowboy or constable. Maybe he'll go native. Why let him use the Church or the Order to satisfy his pride, his caprice, his infatuation with himself?

GUERTIN. My dear Chiappini, people who don't actually have the misfortune of living under one roof with Father Morice are not likely to be as eager to get rid of him as we are. From afar he doesn't look as bad. *[renewed noises off stage]*

CHIAPPINI. Doesn't look bad! He tells people that the miners and

workmen murdered by the Chilcotin had only themselves to blame. He acts as though teaching in our school was beneath his dignity. He treats you, his superior, with contempt -- holes himself up in his room and refuses to take part in anything. Goes out on one of his bush missions whenever he feels like it, without telling anyone, let alone with permission. Declares himself incapable of getting up in time for the ten o'clock mass on Sundays. Refuses to deliver sermons -- because there was nothing new to be said to a civilization Christian for over a thousand years. My dear Father Guertin, I'm asking you --

GUERTIN. Yes, yes, I know. And he's the only one of us who taught himself the Chilcotin language, who goes out there -- where nobody else wants to go, who covers six hundred miles in six weeks living on dried fish. And he's already working on the Carrier language. --

CHIAPPINI. Self-aggrandizement -- nothing but self-aggrandizement. The self is his Lord.

GUERTIN. But in Paris at Oblate headquarters, if not in New Westminster, he looks more interesting than you and I.

CHIAPPINI. Humiliating!

MORICE *[heard approaching from left, singing and clapping. Upon entering, he feigns surprised forgetfulness and stops. Tries to tip-toe across stage.]*

GUERTIN *[as he and Chiappini pretend to resume saying their office when they see and hear Morice approaching]* A word with you, father, please.

MORICE *[pleased at effect he has produced]* Yes, of course, father.

GUERTIN. I want to talk to you about -- how you see yourself as part of an Oblate community.

MORICE. I thought I had joined a missionary order.



GUERTIN. So you did. You came in from the Chilcotin just days ago. It's precisely because we are a missionary order that we cannot be indifferent about your motives in wanting to go out there and assume the leadership of a people who'll follow you not because you're such a wonderful fellow but because you are the bearer of glad tidings and the guide to ways proved successful in the world. Before we let you loose on those natives we must know if you're seizing the opportunity to follow the Lord -- or yourself, your pride.

MORICE *[not unaffected by the poignancy of the alternatives]* Wherever I've done something well it was because I've taken pride in doing it.

CHIAPPINI. Excuse me, Father Guertin. Paul puts it quite differently. *[Turns pages of his breviary.]* Here. 'Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.'

GUERTIN. Quite so, Chiappini. Tell me, Father Morice, do you ever do something well for the love of the Lord or your fellow man?

MORICE. Come on, are you keeping me here as an irresistible object of your charity or --

GUERTIN *[angered]* I've been keeping you here because I thought you in need of spiritual resuscitation. But I no longer perceive any signs of life in you.

MORICE. So will you cast my remains out into the wilderness?

GUERTIN. Oh, do not mock me. I know you want to go to Fort St. James, on Stuart's Lake. In God's name, go there -- but don't hope to come back here, or to any other Oblate community, so long as you remain obdurate. Maybe the remoteness of the place will help you search your soul. Maybe it will help you examine whether you have a vocation at all. Maybe you'll learn to care for others if they depend on you. At least you'll



know yourself.

MORICE. You mean I'm free to go to Stuart's Lake?

GUERTIN. Yes, as soon as possible.

MORICE. But -- but --

GUERTIN. Just go -- go. *[Exit Morice, not knowing whether to trust his luck.]*

CHIAPPINI. You're rewarding him -- it's what he wants.

GUERTIN. He wants to get out. The Indians at Stuart's Lake need a missionary, and we need to get rid of him.

CHIAPPINI. But it isn't right.

GUERTIN. My dear Chiappini, it cannot have escaped you that our Holy Mother Church has usually fared best when she did what was practical rather than what was right. You see, we must strive for conditions in which the practical becomes the right.

*Curtain*

## SCENE II

*The priest's house, a small log cabin, in Fort Babine in the summer of 1889. One enters from stage left. Towards the right there is a door to the Church, marked with a cross. A primitive stool, table, bench, and between the doors, a bed with strawsack are the only furniture. Enter Chief of Fort Babine and Father Morice from left, followed by Jacques, his young son Patrick, and the boy's mother. The family seats itself on the floor to rest and chew jerky.*

CHIEF. We've kept this ready for you these last two years. *[Hits the strawsack with his hand, causing a large dustcloud to rise.]*

MORICE. I came as soon as I heard of Alexandre's illness.

CHIEF *[remains silent; smells water in a pitcher next to chipped enamelled wash basin on table, grimaces, and steps to the door to empty it.]*

MORICE. How did he die?

CHIEF. The day before he died, the old medicine man, he confessed his sins to a holy crucifix. Then he asked to be whipped, but nobody would whip him because he was old and very ill. So Alexandre he tied his own hands together -- like this. Next morning he thought he had done enough penance. So he took off the rope again. In the evening he died. Is he all right -- is he -- saved, father?

MORICE. Did you say he desired with all his heart to receive the sacraments?

CHIEF. He sure did, father.

MORICE. Since he had been baptized, he may be saved from damnation -- if he repented with a sorrowful heart his idolatry and if he firmly resolved never to invoke his demon spirits again. Still, it had pleased Almighty God to let him die before I was able to arrive.

CHIEF. Old Alexandre he did repent. He was very scared of God. When he was sick he told the people our brothers and sisters and all those children died last winter of the measles because God is very angry with us for doing our own religion. But with God angry at our poor people, and no priest coming to help us, all we had was the old religion.

MORICE. You can't stay God's just punishment with the help of your spirits, with Alexandre's Indian medicine, for God is almighty. All creatures of Heaven and earth are subject to his will.

CHIEF. That's why some of our people are glad you're with us again. Almighty God is hard to get along with. Sometimes we offend Him without knowing it. Even the white man, who knows so much, sometimes gets sick and dies.

MORICE. All people are sinners.

CHIEF. Those children last winter? Do the greatest sinners suffer more than those children? Why do those who remain faithful to the Lord fare no better, or worse, than sinners? When you are away my people ask me those questions.

MORICE. They ask those questions because they have not given up their will to the Lord. In their overweening pride, in their self-importance, they think they can argue with Him Who made them. It is like a child questioning his father. It stems from



setting one's own judgment higher than the Lord's wisdom. But the Lord will lead them like salmon into the trap. He will 'set them apart for the day of slaughter,' says the Book.

CHIEF. But when we hunt or fish or trap, or deal with the white man, or with our spirits, we need our judgment. It is very hard to give it up when we deal with the Lord. Our people don't want to give up their judgment. Our spirits never want us to give up our judgment. They only want us -- to respect their hunting ground. And to do this, we need judgment. Our people don't mind the Lord -- they just don't want to give up their judgment.

MORICE. Your spirits are demons who misled you to think that you can make them subject to your will through magic. Where were your spirits and your magic when your people died of measles last winter? 'Mine is the judgment' says the Lord, and 'Thou shalt have no other gods beside me.'

CHIEF. Yes, father, I know the white man's medicine is stronger than our own. And that is why some of my people want to make peace with the Lord. But he wants all of our pride from us, your Lord, and if He has our pride, what have we got left? -- There's only fear.

MORICE. You've got Almighty God's love and mercy. You've got love and forgiveness instead of hate and revenge. Jacques and Patrick here suffer persecution because of that boy who drowned last year. Is the death of that poor boy a good reason to hate his friend [*points at Patrick*] because he was lucky enough to make it ashore when the boys' canoe turned over?

CHIEF. Why did he not help the boy? He thought only of himself. [*Patrick moves closer to his father.*]

MORICE. He says he tried his best.

CHIEF. It wasn't good enough. What matters for us is what a man does, not what he wants to do.



MORICE. What matters for Almighty God is what a man wants to do. Wanting to commit adultery is as bad as doing it. *[Encouraged somewhat, Jacques rises and assumes a threatening position towards Chief.]*

CHIEF *[undaunted]* Is God happy with what we *want* to do? Who's to blame when we don't do what we want to do, or do what we don't want to do? We know what a man wants when he does it.

MORICE. This is your pride. You don't want to let God rule you. You want to rule yourself.

VOICE OUTSIDE. By George, I smell a white man in there. *[Knocks on door.]* Anybody home?

MORICE *[opens door; white gentleman, dressed in careful riding attire with pistol holster, appears.]* Mon dieu -- what -- who --

GENTLEMAN. Richard Loring, sir. Indian Agent for the Northern Interior.

MORICE. I'm Father Adrien Morice, Pastor at Stuart's Lake. *[They shake hands.]* What a pleasure to meet you here.

LORING. My pleasure, sir.

MORICE. And I want you to meet Chief George, of the local Babine band. Jacques and Patrick, my porters. Jacques' wife, Mary.

LORING. Oh yes -- whom I have been trying to find. *[Shakes Indians' hands with neither condescension nor feigned respect. Jacques and Mary sit down again. To Morice]* It so happens I was actually on my way to Fort St. James to seek the pleasure of your acquaintance on your home turf.

MORICE. This is my -- home turf. It's twice the size of France. -- I've heard of your appointment.

LORING. A somewhat unfrequented corner of the turf for the last two

years, I hear.

MORICE. A corner where I had reason to think the ground stoney, fit only for weeds instead of the fruits of the Gospel.

LORING. Weeds? Ah, wildflowers, making do where the softer of God's creatures can't make it on their own.

MORICE. We are all "soft" enough, Mr. Loring, to require the sustenance of Providence.

LORING. These folks here have made it on their own for some time, you know.

CHIEF. Providence has brought us together, all right. *[To Loring]* Last winter over thirty of our people, mostly children, died of the white man's sickness. Only the white man's medicine can now save us.

MORICE. You go and tell this to your people. Why are most of your men out hunting? Why do your women stay indoors when I'm here? Why do your people threaten my friends?

CHIEF. They are not yet ready to let go of their pride. But there's also the matter of the boy who drowned. By Indian custom, the family of the boy who lives *[points at Patrick]* should pay compensation to the family of the dead boy -- or there may be bloodshed.

MORICE. Then bring them here so that we may settle the matter.  
*[Patrick is afraid again.]*

CHIEF. They don't want to come.

MORICE *[looks at Loring]*

LORING *[to Chief]* Do they know that I'm here?

CHIEF. Yes, sir.

LORING. I may be of some help here. *[Rises and makes for door.]*

MORICE. I'd prefer to settle the matter without the authority of the law.

LORING. Someone's got to be in charge. I'm paid to be in charge. *[Exit, leaving door open]*

MORICE *[glances anxiously after him]*

CHIEF. Don't worry.

MORICE. I want them to come because they open their hearts to the Lord's will -- not because they're afraid of Mr. Loring.

CHIEF. It's easier to follow the white man's government. You see, my people feel their spirits belong to them -- not to me, not to the government, not even to the white man's God, but to themselves alone. Their bodies must always belong to whatever is stronger, like the government, but their spirits are free.

MORICE. Ah -- freedom is wanting the right thing.

CHIEF. Freedom is when the will roams over the land like the deer we hunt.

MORICE. According to the gospel, a man who wants the wrong thing is as guilty as one who does the wrong thing.

CHIEF. My people will do as you tell them, but they will not think as you tell them.

MORICE. Let me speak to them -- or am I to leave them again in the wilderness, facing the wrath of the Lord?

CHIEF. They'll come -- if you leave them a little of their pride.

MORICE. I've come to knock their pride out of them. *[Both look out the door at something having caught their interest. Two Indian*



*men in their best years enter, followed by Loring, pointing his revolver at them. Jacques, with Patrick somewhat behind, and the two prisoners confront each other in obvious hostility. Morice stands between them.]*

LORING. These fellows want to give the white man's way a try. They are the dead boy's maternal uncles. *[Morice motions the two prisoners to sit down on the floor. Jacques and Patrick sit down again on their bench. Loring remains standing at the door, pistol in hand. The Chief crouches somewhere between Morice and the prisoners. Morice sits down on his cot.]*

MORICE. When our Lord had been nailed to the cross, He begged forgiveness for those who were putting Him to death. *[The two prisoners stare inscrutably.]* You have threatened Patrick's family -- for no reason other than that he lives? *[Silence]*

LORING. Listen, if you cause harm to anybody, you'll be taken by the Queen's soldiers and dealt with according to the white man's law. Remember what happened with those Chilcotins at Quesnel when you were young boys? *[Silence]*

CHIEF. Winter does not follow summer in a day. There is a time after the heat of summer and before the cold of winter when the squirrel gathers its food cache, when the bear eats himself fat, when the beaver, the fox, and the marten grow their winter fur. The Indian too needs time to prepare himself -- to get used to the white man's way.

MORICE. Yes, but the white man's way is not like winter. The love and forgiveness our Lord Jesus Christ taught us by his example make me think of summer -- when your streams are teeming with salmon and the forest beckons with sweet berries. And when love and forgiveness fail there is the rule of the Queen's law, which no one must take into his own hands.

CHIEF *[impressed]* Does the white man never act the way he feels?



LORING. I'm afraid no, old boy. I thought I could find it in the bush of British Columbia. But the white man's way follows you wherever you run to.

MORICE *[to Jacques]* Have you offered them furs and tobacco, or money?

JACQUES. My son did not kill the other boy.

FIRST PRISONER *[angrily]* They hide behind the white man's way.

MORICE *[to Prisoners]* Will you leave their traps alone and treat them as your brothers in Christ if they pay you compensation?

FIRST PRISONER. Peace in the land follows peace in the soul. The white priest is like a great chief if he can make the Indian follow his own custom.

MORICE *[to Jacques]* Will you and your people pay this man's family one hundred beaver skins for the peace of his soul?

JACQUES *[father and son look at each other]* And for the peace of our land.

MORICE. As a sign of your good will, I want you to shake hands.  
*[Directs the four litigants to shake hands with one another.]*

LORING *[putting his gun back in its holster]* An interesting idea -- that peace starts in the soul.

MORICE. There's also the kind of peace that starts in fear. Those whose souls have no peace don't know the difference.

LORING. What kind is the peace of the Lord?

MORICE. There are those who fear the Lord -- and those who dare in the name of the Lord.

LORING. But how do you know you don't dare in your own name?

MORICE *[reflects]* You can tell the tree by its fruit. *[To chief]* Call those of your people who want to make peace with the Lord.

LORING. Before I let you turn to your pastoral duties, I'd like to say good-bye to you, father. I can see ahead of us much work we may do together for these people. *[Shakes hands with Morice.]*

MORICE. Very pleased to have met you, Mr. Loring. There's indeed work ahead for you and me. We may be able to share one another's burden.

LORING. Quite so, sir. *[Exit]*

MORICE *[to Chief]* Call your people. Others are eager to hear the word of God and to receive the sacraments. I can't stay here forever.

CHIEF *[stands in the door and loudly calls outside in Carrier]* Come and hear the words of the white priest. Make your peace with the Lord. Prepare yourself for the holy sacraments. Come and hear the priest before he leaves again. *[His words are answered by a deafening crescendo of dogs barking. As a few faithful or curious enter the cabin and are greeted with a silent handshake, the barking gradually dies away. They seat themselves on the floor of the cabin.]*

MORICE *[after making his way through the crouching figures to his place in front of the table]* Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ our Lord. I'm sad that only you from among your people have heeded the call of the Lord. 'Many are called but only few are chosen' says our Saviour. And so I'm also happy to see the few who've been faithful these last two years, for you are the 'salt of the earth,' as holy Scripture puts it. As so often in the long history of our holy Mother Church, the many have not reckoned the anger of the Lord God of Israel. You will recall that while the great chief Moses was in the presence of the Lord on Mt. Sinai, the people of Israel made themselves a Golden Calf and danced around it. Even so the people of the



Babines have mocked the Lord in unholy ceremonies vying to be first among sinners. But the first at the potlatch shall be the last at the heavenly feast. The people of the Babines have angered the jealous God of Israel by calling upon heathen spirits. They have broken the holy bonds of matrimony as though, like their heathen ancestors, they have never heard of the Lord's Commandments. They have raised the desire of the flesh over the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But 'I am thy Lord and God' says the Lord, and 'thou shalt have no other gods besides me.' *[A lone drum starts beating outside. The congregation shows signs of fearful glumness and distraction. One elderly man at some distance from the door gets up and tries to tiptoe his way out through the people seated on the floor.]* And to a chief of the Jewish people Jesus said 'no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born from water and spirit.'

ELDERLY MAN *[The lone drummer is being joined by others]* Water and spirit -- they don't bother me. But your God wants too much. *[The drumming is joined by chanting.]* He wants me to hate my own flesh and my own people.

MORICE. Oh, do not lend your ear to the enchantment of the Devil's clan. Don't seek the darkness like one who wants to hide his evil deeds. Outside there's only weeping and gnashing of teeth.

ELDERLY MAN *[continues towards door, his fear showing in the extra care he takes not to step on anyone. Before he opens door, he hesitates for a moment, looking back at Morice, who returns his glance but says nothing. He dashes out, leaving the door open. Drumming and chanting floats into the cabin loud and clear, to be muffled only when Morice shuts the door.]*

MORICE. But justice is as dear to the Lord as love and mercy. The Lord of Israel slaughtered the first-born sons of Egypt to change the heart of proud and stubborn Pharaoh. -- Because he is just, the Lord withheld his protection from your people these

past two years -- protection against terrible accidents and deadly sickness that took your children away like Egypt's first-born. Alexandre's medicine was helpless against God's anger, and it was not God's will that I came here to bring the sacraments before your medicine man died.

Now the holy Book tells us that God had often been angry with His people, but that he returned His love and mercy to them whenever they turned around and repented their sins with truly meek and humble hearts. He is willing even now to let His crucified Son, who died for our sins, enter again the hearts of your people if they first cast out the Devil and all his pride. *[The drumming and chanting begin to die down.]*

If you want to make your peace again with Almighty God, if you want his merciful protection against sickness and mishappenings, you must know that you are sinners helpless without God's grace and that your very flesh is corrupted by the pride of our first ancestors, who wanted to be like gods.

I've come here by the will of God to offer you His forgiveness if you'll open your hearts to Him. Today I shall hear your confessions of sin and grant you His forgiveness -- if you have been baptized. Tomorrow I shall celebrate the feast of the Holy Eucharist with you, and I invite those of you who have prepared themselves to taste the boundless love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now even as sin stems from pride and repentance from humility, I ask those among you who have sinned publicly to confess your wrongdoing before your brothers and sisters whose righteousness you have scandalized. *[Silence -- even the drumming and chanting have died down. The congregation stare ahead of themselves in embarrassment. Morice's eyes settle on François, sitting next to an attractive young native woman. François slowly gets up, tiptoes over to Morice, who slowly unfurls his stole and puts it over his shoulders and*



*kneels before Morice.]*

FRANÇOIS. Father, I have sinned.

MORICE. Do you repent?

FRANÇOIS. I do, father.

MORICE. Will you give up your sin and take back your lawful wife Marianne? *[François' girlfriend dashes towards her lover. They embrace passionately, both on their knees before Morice.]* You must think of the suffering of our Lord for our sins. He will give you His divine grace to make the right decision.

GIRLFRIEND *[desperately]* Don't let the priest make you leave me. I don't want to be alone.

MORICE *[towering over them]* Soon I will be away again. If something happens to you, as it did to Alexandre, while you are in a state of mortal sin, your soul will be banished from the heavenly feast of life. You will be cast into darkness. Is your life with this woman worth damnation?

FRANÇOIS. Oh Rachel, I am afraid of God. *[They loosen each others' embrace. François buries his face in Morice's left hand, while Morice's right hand slowly makes the sign of the cross over François' head.]*

MORICE. Deinde ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis, in Nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

RACHEL *[dashing outside, leaving door open -- loudly from the cool, clean air outside]* The feast of life is now.

MORICE. Let us not forget to include in our prayers those whose weakness has made them choose the Devil's clan over the family of God's children. *[Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary may be said here. Making the sign of the cross]* May the peace of the Lord be always with you. *[While he blesses them, they all kneel*

*and cross themselves. Morice places himself near the door and shakes everyone's hand as his congregation, except Patrick, file out. Dogs barking. Jacques parts from Patrick with a hug.] Get me some water, boy. [Patrick cowers on the floor in obvious fear.] Oh, you are frightened, are you? [Morice grabs the pitcher and gets water from outside himself while Patrick sits alone in darkening cabin lit only by a candle. Dogs barking. Morice returns and locks door.] You're safe with me and the Lord. [Hugs him reassuringly. Takes off his soutane and washes himself, wearing his trousers and an undershirt.] My towel, Pat. [Patrick takes towel from one of Morice's bags. Morice dries himself. Patrick puts one blanket on the strawsack and lays out another for a cover. Morice rolls up his soutane for a pillow and goes to bed. Patrick blows out the candle and rolls up in his blanket on the floor. A scream of a woman far away, followed by dogs barking.] What was that? [Patrick does not answer. Both lie and listen intently.]*

PATRICK'S MOTHER *[screaming nearby and knocking violently on door, accompanied by barking]* Patrick, Patrick -- I want my boy.

MORICE *[without getting up]* What's the matter?

PATRICK'S MOTHER *[hysterically]* Rachel has killed herself. Her people are out to get you. *[Knocks again. Patrick crawls under Morice's bed. Morice crosses himself but does not get up. Continued barking outside. Eventually a soft rap]*

JACQUES *[outside]* It's me, Jacques. *[Morice lets him in and locks door again.]* Rachel is all right. *[Patrick comes out from under bed. Father and son hug.]* Rachel said she was going to kill herself. They found her walking by the lake shore, saying to herself 'the feast of life is now.' *[Jacques and Morice look at each other as though they understand a little.]*

*Curtain*



### **SCENE III**

*In front of and on the steps to Natleh church, spring  
1890. Morice and a group of natives rehearsing an  
enactment of the Way of the Cross.*

MORICE. Today we want to do some work on the first station of the Way of the Cross. There are fourteen stations altogether, all dealing with the sufferings of our Saviour on His way to Golgotha. The first station shows Christ before Pontius Pilate, the great chief of the Romans, who sent our dear Lord to be crucified, but first he had Him scourged, that is, beaten bloody with a whip, and crowned with thorns that pierced His Sacred Head, and mocked by Pilate's cruel soldiers. Now our Holy Mother Church has decreed that if you go to each of those fourteen stations and think about what our Lord has suffered for our sins, you'll receive a plenary indulgence, that is, Almighty God, in His loving mercy, will forgive you all punishments for every single sin of your whole life. -- You know the story of our Lord's passion already. But there are different ways of knowing. The best way to know something is to do it. On our Way of the Cross, we'll not just think about the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall become those cruel soldiers, the great Roman chief, and our suffering Lord. That is the best way of opening our hearts to Him. -- Now let's see, our church here shall be Pilate's house. When he hears the crowd with Jesus approaching, he hurries out and seats himself in his judge's chair, flanked by two soldiers. -- Somebody go inside and get the priest's chair. -- Paul, I want you to be Pilate.

PAUL. Why me, father? Pilate was an evil man. He sent Christ to the cross. I don't want my friends and neighbours to think of Pilate when they see me.

MORICE. Somebody has to do it, Paul. We can't all be Christs. Pilate too was important for salvation. In this world there have to be soldiers and judges and governors, and they sometimes have to do things they don't like doing, like sending soldiers to war and men to be hanged. *[Two men are carrying an arm chair out of the church and placing it in front of it, at the head of the stairs.]* Now, Paul, will you take your place in God's plan?

PAUL. Those are strong words, father. The white man's words have power over Indian people. I thought the priest knew all about the Kingdom of God. But you know about the world of people too. *[Seats himself in chair.]*

MORICE. Good. Our two watchmen, Peter and John, you are Pilate's soldiers. You stand behind his chair. We'll make some Roman hats and lances for you come Holy Week. *[Peter and John take up their positions.]* Now the crowd, with Jesus their bound prisoner, is coming from the High Priest Kaiphas' house, from there. Sebastian, I want you to be Christ. *[All look at Sebastian with a mixture of envy and admiration.]* Does somebody have a piece of rope? *[Somebody produces one. Morice binds Sebastian's hands behind his back.]* Now form up over there *[stage right]* and lead Jesus before the judgment seat of Pontius Pilate. *[They do as told, with some confused shoving and pushing.]*

MORICE *[to Paul, reading from New Testament]* You ask them 'What charge do you bring against this man?'

PAUL. What charge do you bring against this man?

MORICE *[to the group]* 'If he were not a criminal we should not have brought him before you.'



ALL *[in unison]* If he were not a criminal we should not have brought him before you.

MORICE *[to Paul]* 'Are you the king of the Jews?'

PAUL. Are you the King of the Jews?

SEBASTIAN *[Much taken by the role, replies without prompting by Morice.]* My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my soldiers would be fighting to save me from the people. But my kingdom is elsewhere.

MORICE. Very good, Sebastian. I can tell that you have thought about the passage. -- *[to the group]* Have we not all dreamed of being kings? But for most of us our dreams do not come true. A great writer of the Irish people has said that we are all born kings, but that most of us die in exile.

SEBASTIAN *[as one seized by a vision]* My kingdom is the truth. I was born, I came into this world to bear witness to the truth, and all who want to know the truth must listen to my voice.

MORICE *[impulsively]* But what is Truth? *[All look at Morice in astonishment, who, after a brief hesitation, points at Paul and directs him to repeat the passage.]*

PAUL. What is truth?

MORICE. Christ says elsewhere 'I am the Truth and the Light.' When we think of truth we think of the way things really are -- like two and two is four -- not of the way we'd like them to be, or the way the medicine man tells us they are. The truth is a powerful medicine -- more powerful than Indian medicine. Too much truth can make us proud and rebellious. When we don't want to obey our parents, our priest, or our Queen, we say 'I know better -- my truth is more powerful than yours!' Too much truth is the white man's curse, for those who rebel against parents, priest, or king will never be happy -- they'll

share the despair of the rebel angels in Hell. When our Lord says 'I am the truth,' he wants Pilate to follow Him, not his own truth. But Pilate is a proud man. He chooses his own truth. And so the innocent Lamb of God must suffer the punishment of sinners and rebels. Pilate [*points at Paul*] orders his soldiers to scourge Jesus.

PAUL [*to Peter and John*] Take him and scourge him. [*They untie Sebastian, strip off his shirt, and tie him in a stooped position to the railing of the church porch. All form a semicircle around him.*]

MORICE. Has someone brought the whip? [*Someone fetches a cat-o'-nine-tails from inside the church and hands it to one of the two watchmen, who positions himself behind his victim.*] The Son of God, whose truth is more powerful than that of any man, humbles Himself before the will of man because He loves us who cannot live without pride. [*At this, the watchman with the whip deals a painful blow to Sebastian, who lets out a cry. Morice raises his hand to stay the proceeding.*] Let the story go on as it is written. [*Sebastian is untied. Someone gets a crown of thorns from the church and places it on Sebastian's head. Another gets a purple blanket and places it 'round Sebastian's shoulders. Yet another places a piece of dry wood in his hands.*]

WATCHMEN [*bend their knees before Jesus*] Hail, King of the Jews.

PAUL [*rises*] Behold the man.

ALL [*prompted by Morice*] Crucify him! Crucify him.

PAUL. Take him and crucify him yourselves. I find no case against him.

FIRST INDIAN [*reading from a piece of paper*] We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he has claimed to be the Son of God.

SECOND INDIAN *[reading]* If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar; any man who claims to be a king is defying Caesar.

PAUL *[cringes in exaggerated fear, to watchmen]* Take him away and crucify him them.

MORICE. You have learned the passion of our Lord well. -- Why do they hate him so? They hate Him because He wanted only their love, not their obedience. But they wanted a king to lead them in freeing their land from the Romans and in protecting their customs. So then sent our Lord on His Way of the Cross. -- In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

ALL *[cross themselves]* Amen. *[Watchmen fetch a large cross from the Church, place it on Sebastian's shoulders, and all move in procession off the stage.]*

*Curtain*



## SCENE IV

*The Hudson's Bay Company store in Fort St. James, summer 1892, much as it is today, but with the outside door stage right instead of facing the counter. To the left, behind the counter, a door to the office. As someone knocks urgently on the outside door, a clerk enters from office to open.*

CLERK. I'm coming. But we're closed on Sundays. *[Unlocks and opens door. Joseph Prince, in Indian constable's uniform, and Francis Prince enter.]*

FRANCIS. We don't want to buy nothing. We want to see Mr. Traill. It's kind of important.

CLERK. Does it have to be on a Sunday? I don't think -- *[looks into his office]* I think he's coming over.

TRAILL *[off stage]* What's the matter?

CLERK. Joseph and Francis Prince want to see you. *[Traill enters.]*

FRANCIS. As I left church the watchmen grabbed me. They took me to Taya. He said I should get ten -- for drinking last night.

JOSEPH. He wasn't even drunk. -- We're not Indian, anyway. Taya has no power over us. We're Métis. So I took him away and brought him here.

TRAILL. Was the priest there?

JOSEPH. He went straight to his house after church.

TRAILL. He knows about it by now. Well, I suppose he knows that no one is to be taken for a whipping from the Company's premises. And we had made it quite clear to him that your family was not to be subject to the priest's discipline.

CLERK. Morice doesn't accept this -- not Morice.

TRAILL. This is not the 1860's. This is 1892. And this is not Spain under the Inquisition. Even Morice will have to learn to live by the rule of British law. That priest down south, Father Chirouse, was given a year in jail for whipping a Lillooet woman. The Church of Rome will have to be reminded that the Spanish empire had been replaced for some time now by the British Empire. -- *[to Clerk]* Go and get Peter O'Reilly, the Reserve Commissioner. *[Clerk opens outside door, almost bumps into Reserve Commissioner, and beckons him in.]*

CLERK. Here he is.

O'REILLY. Yes, yes, I saw it all. We can't go on like this. No one can serve two masters. I've warned him. This time he's gone too far. The case against Fr. Chirouse has clearly established that the Bishop and his priests are not above the law. Even Mr. Loring will have to see --

TRAILL. Loring will never side with us if we lay charges. Such things are best dealt with behind the scene. I told him to leave the Princes alone. The Company does carry some weight in this colony -- even without its monopoly. I told him that what he does with his natives at his villages is his own business. But when it comes to the Company's employees --

CLERK. He may simply deny having anything to do with it. After all, it was Chief Taya who wanted Francis whipped.

TRAILL. I'd say Taya checked this with Morice before. And even if he



didn't, the priest would back him all the way. Morice would never admit that anyone does anything without him in any of his villages. *[The door opens without a warning and Morice enters gravely, followed by Chief Taya and his two watchmen, one armed with a rifle, the other carrying a whip of the cat-o'-nine-tails type. Francis stands his ground defiantly next to his brother Joseph. O'Reilly places himself before Traill and the Prince brothers, but Morice ignores him and confronts Traill.]*

O'REILLY *[protesting]* I'd like to point out to you, sir, that in subjecting this man to a whipping you're breaking the law. Only the government can lawfully punish a man.

MORICE *[ignoring O'Reilly, to Traill]* I thought we had an understanding that you were not to interfere with the work of the Mission and the authority of Chief Taya *[points at him]*. The Company is only cutting into its own flesh by appearing to condone drunkenness and debauchery.

TRAILL. The legality of your actions aside, you can't impose clean living with the whip, sir. Morality has to come from within, not from the threat of punishment. Give these people an idea of sound work habits and the rewards of their labour will set a shining example of the use of righteousness.

MORICE. You mean you'd like to see them become snivelling little penny pinchers on whom you can rely for a steady supply of furs -- calculating, greedy hypocrites and busybodies showing off their righteousness in the clothes they wear at Sunday church. That won't do for my Mission. *[To Taya and his watchmen]* Take him away. *[The watchmen try to seize Francis, but he and his brother Joseph repulse them angrily. Traill and O'Reilly assume a threatening pose towards Morice.]*

TRAILL. I was indeed naive enough to assume that the purpose of your Mission was to lead the natives to a civilized, clean, righteous way of life. I thought that to be the aim of all Christians, no



matter what their persuasion.

MORICE. You English with your clean, righteous way of life!

TRAILL. What is it that *you* want?

MORICE. There's more to life than making money -- much more. There's more to religion than heaping up treasure in Heaven, too. There are things your account books can't record. There's -- celebrating the feast of life. There's love and hate, joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, innocence and sin, power and impotence, pride and humility, and -- what will remain forever beyond the comprehension of shopkeepers -- you can't balance the two sides of the ledger the way you balance your credits and debts.

TRAILL. Ha, if you don't you'll go bankrupt. I smell something like spiritual bankruptcy in your refusal to balance -- in your fascination with what you call the feast of life -- in your heathen pride to let the whip take the place of the Lord's voice within.

MORICE. And at what point does the voice of the Lord turn into the voice of your pride?

O'REILLY. Come, come. I don't see the point of this discussion. I can only point out that under the rule of civilized British law -- [*He is being ignored.*]

MORICE. Thank your Maker that some of us still take time out from balancing our account books to remind ourselves -- of the shame without which we'd have no idea of the glory of being human. I'd rather have Francis drunk than puffed up with the monstrous conceit that he's under the direct guidance of the Lord -- a delusion owing more to spirits than to the Spirit. The good Lord, my dear sir, has made *me* responsible for the guidance of this man.

TRAILL. No one will be assaulted on these premises.

O'REILLY. Not while I'm here. Do you not know, man, that Fr. Chirouse, the very assistant to your bishop, has been sentenced to a year in jail for the whipping of that woman in Lillooet?

MORICE *[pulling out a piece of newspaper]* I'm glad to report that good sense has prevailed in the case. Due to public pressure, Fr. Chirouse has been pardoned. How come you don't know? *[Hands the paper to O'Reilly, who grabs and reads it eagerly.]* But there's an argument that Mr. Traill will find more convincing. If you persist, sir, in interfering with the discipline of my flock, I must draw the conclusion that you are no longer interested in the cooperation between the Mission and the Company. I will direct my parishioners to sell their furs to the free traders at Quesnel. If my men can get drunk with impunity in Fort St. James, they may as well get drunk in Quesnel. With the Fort abandoned for lack of business, I can at least make a fresh start here.

TRAILL. You're a very hard man to deal with, father. I'm a businessman. I wasn't trained in scholastic casuistry.

MORICE. But it isn't the latter that's causing you any difficulty at all. It was a matter of dollars and cents that demonstrated to you the weakness of your position. *[Francis, who had become ignored during the argument, makes a dash for the door, but is intercepted by Taya's armed watchman.]*

JOSEPH *[freeing his brother from the watchman's hold]* No one lays hands on my brother -- on orders from the priest.

TAYA. The priest? I, Taya, son of the great Kwah, have ordered your brother to be punished -- according to Indian custom.

JOSEPH. Indian custom? You are the slave of the white priest.



TAYA. The words of a half-breed slave of the Hudson's Bay Company cannot hurt Taya.

JOSEPH. Nothing can hurt Taya, because he doesn't come out into the big world. Taya hides in his little Indian world, because he can't understand the big world.

TAYA. If you think you understand the white man's world, you're a fool. The Indian was given a brain to help him go where he wants to go -- the white man's brain takes him where he doesn't want to go. That's why he needs strong drink. So long as the Indian doesn't think like a white man, he doesn't need the white man's drink.

JOSEPH. Does the priest take you -- where you want to go?

TAYA. The priest shows me how to use my brain to get there. The men of the Fort work hard to get rich, so they can fancy themselves in the Lord's grace. And if they don't get rich, they get drunk. Their priests have taken them where no man wants to go. Maybe this is why their priests don't come to Stuart's Lake.

MORICE *[somewhat uneasy]* Francis, will you submit to the penance you have incurred by having sullied your body -- which Scripture describes as the sacred temple of the Lord? *[Francis looks at Joseph, who looks at O'Reilly and Traill, whose demeanors suggest no willingness to act.]* If you do not accept the chastisement the Lord offers you because He loves you, you will not be admitted to the Blessed Sacrament, without which there can be no grace. *[to Joseph]* I want you to consider this. *[Morice puts his hand on Francis' shoulder and pushes him gently but firmly to the door. Before he moves, Francis again looks at Joseph, O'Reilly and Traill, who display embarrassed inaction.]*

FRANCIS *[mostly to himself]* Is that where I want to go? *[Exit Francis and Morice, followed by Taya and his watchmen.]*



O'REILLY. I'll report this straight to Victoria. I'll bypass Loring.

TRAILL. The Bishop's -- theology -- is not as remote from ours as the priest's. Bishop Dontenwill is as interested in the good will of the Company as we are in the good will of the Church of Rome -- whose missionary activity has been good for the fur trade, let me say. Morice's removal from the Stuart's Lake Mission becomes a business priority.

*Curtain*

## SCENE V

*Hagwilgate (Rocher Déboulé), summer 1901. The choir of a simple wooden church. Morice is setting up the altar for a service: altar cloths, flowers, candles. A large church window stage right. Centre stage, in front of the altar, a pile of Indian ritual artefacts: masks, potlatch utensils, totem animals. Loring is watching Morice from some choir chairs at left. Every time Morice crosses from one side of altar to the other he genuflects.*

LORING. You've come a long way since our first meeting in Fort Babine.

MORICE *[thoughtfully]* Yes.

LORING. Should be possible for you now to relax a little. Maybe put a little more time into your linguistic and anthropological work now. With your knowledge of the language you're in a unique position --

MORICE. We'll see.

LORING. After you left my house this morning his Excellency expressed the hope that your example will begin a tradition among the Oblates combining pastoral work with scholarship -- similar to the great Jesuit order. He has some grand notions of -- complementing Scripture with what he calls the Book of Nature.

MORICE. Hm!

LORING. Pity, isn't it, to burn all this beautiful old stuff. [*Points at artefacts*] The new anthropological museum in Berlin would love to get its hands on it. Anybody would, really.

MORICE. Yes -- I know.

LORING. Can't you sell it?

MORICE. The Bishop insists that seeing the artefacts go up in flames will prove to be a unique educational experience for the natives -- a true test of the authenticity of their conversion.

LORING. He has a point, I suppose. There's a beautiful finality to fire. In a museum things linger on -- like shadows in the ancient underworld -- they remain part of the collective memory, like hollow men in a dream kingdom.

MORICE. Trouble is the soul is fireproof.

LORING. I suppose Hell rests on this assumption.

MORICE. Look at those masks -- and totems.

LORING. Beautiful stuff.

MORICE. It's not beauty, exactly. It's something else. It's a fierce will to be what one *is*, or rather what one *believes* to be -- maybe even what one *chooses* to be. Those masks -- they tell of being as a challenge. -- But maybe that's what beauty is.

LORING. You've got it! A mask is something you put on -- you *choose* to put on. *Persona* originally meant "mask" -- of course.

MORICE. Today these people are about to burn their *personae*.

LORING. What is it that remains behind?

MORICE. Shadows.



LORING. Does civilization consist of shadows?

MORICE. This morning -- the talk around your breakfast table -- the Bishop and his fool of a factotum -- Wagner -- I thought that maybe I had left France to live in a world where -- savage will still makes some sort of sense. To put it in a way that must make a priest shudder: what drove me here to these people was what I found in those masks -- pride. Loring, it may have been my pride that made those folks give up theirs!

LORING. My dear father, I have noticed in you a predilection for self-flagellation. No one who's tasted civilization has ever wanted to give it up, you know. You're giving these people what they want.

MORICE. Does this justify it?

LORING. Oh -- ho -- to give people what they want is becoming the only justification for giving anybody anything.

MORICE. They treat me like their king.

LORING. If it worries you -- this sort of thing doesn't last nowadays.

*Enter Bishop Dontenwill and Wagner, his assistant, from the left. The Bishop wears a soutane like Morice and Wagner, but with a Bishop's sash and hat. Wagner carries a suitcase with his own and the Bishop's liturgical vestments.*

DONTENWILL *[as he enters]* Ah, nothing lasts in this world. -- 'My days are swifter than a shuttle,' moans Job.

MORICE. 'And come to an end as the thread runs out.'

DONTENWILL. A salutary text to mind in the hour of triumph. *[As they talk, Wagner slips into his own surplice and then robes the Bishop. Native parishioners enter the church from stage left. They genuflect, cross themselves, and seat themselves on the floor in a semicircle around the artefacts. When Dontenwill, Morice,*

*and Wagner are fully robed, the Bishop begins his sermon, while Morice, Wagner, and Loring sit in choir chairs.] Dearly beloved in Christ our Lord, I've come here to celebrate with you the most important event in the history of your people: you have decided as a nation to accept Christ as your Saviour. Previously each man, woman, and child has accepted Christ, but now you have done so together as a people. And most fitting it is, for we are known to God Almighty not only as persons, but also as members of a nation. We must remember that in the beginning God granted His Holy Covenant not to this or that child of Israel but to the whole nation of Israel. We think and act as members of a nation; our nation lives within our souls, and our souls within the nation. And so our baptism into holy communion with Christ is really complete only when our nation has truly become the nation of God, as Israel of old.*

This step Israel took in accepting the offer of a Covenant with Almighty God is really unique in the history of the world. It is nothing less than the beginning of civilization. It stands for mankind's growing up. It means at bottom that we give up pretending that the world is as we would like it to be in favour of the way God has really made it. It means seeing the world not as we would crave to see it but as God sees it, and trying to change it -- if indeed it pleases God -- not through blasphemous magic and idolatry but through humble work and prayer alone. The white man's medicine is more powerful than Indian medicine because it is made from the humble knowledge of what the world is really like -- and from humble prayer. Be mindful, we can't have it both ways -- we either see the world proudly through our own eyes, or we see it humbly through God's eyes. And what was therefore the first, and we must gather most important, condition God demanded of the people of Israel before He would lead them out of childish captivity in Egypt? 'I am the Lord thy God,' He says, and 'Thou shalt have no other gods besides me.' The people of Israel became the



people of the Lord when they cast out their own gods, whom they had shaped in the image of their animal nature, and accepted the God Who had revealed Himself to Moses as their sole Lord. Conversely, whenever they returned to their idols the holy prophets reminded them relentlessly that they had forsaken the Lord, who had led them out of the land of Egypt.

Why does God Almighty insist so jealously -- this is actually the word Holy Scripture uses -- that we cast out all spirits and gods before God Almighty will grant us the protection of His Holy Covenant? Because in serving our spirits and idols we are really serving ourselves. But God has created us so that we may serve Him. Remember that God cast Satan into Hell not because he stole something or lied to anybody or coveted some other angel -- he was too proud a spirit for any of this -- but because he refused to serve God. 'I will not serve,' he said to God, and these were powerful words, for one third of all the angels agreed with him.

That is why the great teacher St. Augustine believed that heathen gods were really devils, because in as much as they were representing the pride of the people who worshipped them they stood for the words 'I will not serve.' They stood for the pride of man in his own beauty, strength, wisdom, courage, and so on -- for the belief 'I am all right O God, I don't need you. You may have created me in the beginning, but now I'm on my own, thank you.' But when sorrow and suffering strike, when the frightful hour of our death approaches, then we know how much we need Him. Nor do we prevail in our human pride when we seem to rise above pain and sorrow in this life on earth, for the last outcome of pride is never-ending pain and sorrow after death, and whose pride may prevail over this?

Now when I look at what goes on at your potlatches, what I see is the display of your pride in yourselves as sinful men and women and as a nation. 'This is my place among my people -- I belong here, on the earth,' you seem to be saying, so 'let us



eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we'll die. -- I do not need to be saved from anything.' When I look at your masks and totems, I see nothing but fierce pride. I see boastful strength, false courage, smug contentment in the moment, the proud acceptance of life as a challenge -- no fear of the terrible things that may befall sinful creatures, no fear of the Lord.

In your decision to turn over a new leaf in the life of your nation your sober sense of what you are has at last overcome your pride in what you would like to be -- namely gods, a pride passed down to all the nations of the earth by our first parents, Adam and Eve. We are gathered here now in the name of the Lord to cast out that pride by renouncing the proud fallen angel and all his works. I now want you to stand and repeat after me the renewal of your baptismal vows. *[Morice moves to Dontenwill's side and assists by directing the responses of the congregation.]* Do you reject sin, so as to live in the freedom of God's children?

ALL. We do.

DONTENWILL. Do you reject the glamour of evil, and refuse to be mastered by sin?

ALL. We do.

DONTENWILL. Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness?

ALL. We do.

DONTENWILL. Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

ALL. We do.

DONTENWILL. Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand

of the Father?

ALL. We do.

DONTENWILL. Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

ALL. We do.

DONTENWILL. This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ALL. Amen.

*Dontenwill opens tabernacle and takes out monstrance with Host. Places it on altar. All kneel.*

ALL [*sing*] Tantum ergo sacramentum  
venerémur cernui  
et antiquum documéntum  
novo cedat ritui;  
praestet fides suppleméntum  
sénsuum deféctui.

Genitóri, Genitóque  
laus et jubilátio,  
salus, honor, virtus quoque,  
sit et benedictio!  
Procedénti ab utróque  
compar sit laudátio!  
Amen.

DONTENWILL [*chanting*] Panem de caelo praestitísti eis. Alleluia.

ALL [*chanting*] Omne delectaméntum in se habéntem. Alleluia.

DONTENWILL. Oremus. Deus qui nobis sub sacraménto mirábili  
passiónis tuae memóriam reliquisti: tribue, quáesumus, ita



nos córporis et sánguinis tui sacra mystéria venerári; ut  
redemptiónis tuæ fructum in nobis júgiter sentiámus. Qui  
vivis et regnas in sáecula saeculórum.

ALL *[chanting]* Amen.

*Dontenwill rises, blesses the congregation with monstrance, and  
returns it to tabernacle. Closes tabernacle. Congregation rises.*

DONTENWILL. You may now go and render unto the Lord these  
tokens *[points at artefacts]* of your pride as a burnt offering.  
*[Prays]* O Lord, receive us in the spirit of humility and with a  
contrite heart. May our sacrifice please You, Lord and God. --  
Come Sanctifier, almighty, eternal God, and bless this offering  
prepared in honour of your holy name.

*At Morice's motioning, natives with offerings of their artefacts  
pass before Dontenwill, receive his blessing, and exit stage right  
in such a way that they display their artefacts to the audience.  
Off stage, they are joined by others in a stirring rendition of the  
hymn "Immaculate Mary."*

Immaculate Mary, your praises we sing.  
You reign now in splendor with Jesus our King.  
Ave, Ave, Ave Maria! Ave, Ave Maria!

In heaven the blessed your glory proclaim,  
On earth we your children invoke your sweet name.  
Ave, Ave, Ave Maria! Ave, Ave Maria!

We pray for the Church, our true Mother on earth,  
And beg you to watch o'er the land of our birth.  
Ave, Ave, Ave Maria! Ave, Ave Maria!

*Morice, closest to the window, the Bishop immediately behind,  
Loring and Wagner watch proceedings outside through window.  
After first or second stanza of hymn one sees the flickering of a*

*large fire, through the window, ominously reflected in the onlookers' faces.*

DONTENWILL *[to Morice, who keeps watching the fire without turning to his bishop or responding in any way]* The cleansing power of the Holy Spirit -- Congratulations, father. You've had the assistance of my poor prayers all along. -- When I say this, I don't mean to be boastful -- It is God Who answers our prayers, all we can do is ask. I know how hard it is for us to know when we're pleasing our pride and when we're pleasing God. -- There is such a thing as spiritual arrogance, difficult to keep at bay at occasions such as this. -- But perhaps one may be a little proud in a humble sort of way when one knows it has pleased the Lord to make use of our lowly service to Him in causing a nation to consign its heathen pride to the flames -- a drastic, dramatic demonstration of contrite hearts in penance -- I know what troubles you, but remember that even St. Paul -- how does he put it -- 'in the fellowship of Christ Jesus I have ground for pride in the service of God.' -- You deserve some rest, father. I'm going to send you an assistant, Father Conan. -- He's very good at teaching English to the natives -- that's one thing that remains to be done -- there's one corner of their souls that's still theirs, so long as they speak their language. *[Only Loring looks at the Bishop as though he fully understands.]*

*Curtain*



## SCENE VI

*Office of the Hudson's Bay Company in Quesnel, 1903. A middle-sized room, a window on each side, a door stage right. The Clerk's desk stage left is separated from the waiting area by a banister. Benches along walls of waiting area.*

*Louis Dixon, the Clerk, gazes intently through the window stage right. Suddenly he hurries back to his desk via an opening in the banister and pretends to be concentrating on his work. Seconds later Morice walks in without knocking, followed by two natives loaded heavily with Morice's luggage. They place luggage in the middle of the waiting area and sit down tired on benches.*

DIXON *[rising]* Father Morice! How do you do, sir.

MORICE. How are you, Dixon?

DIXON. I'm fine. How's everything in Fort St. James?

MORICE. Same as usual. Nothing a firm hand can't help.

DIXON. You're on your way to Vancouver? For the winter, sir?

MORICE. Yes, should see a doctor. Have had problems with my liver -- fried potatoes three times a day isn't good for the liver. That and finishing another book.

DIXON. Another book? May I ask what it's about?

MORICE. It's called 'The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia.'

DIXON. Sounds interesting.

MORICE. I'll send you a copy. -- Is there any mail for me?

DIXON *[with inauthentic casualness]* Oh, just a little telegram here -- I think it's from the Bishop. *[Hands it to Morice]*

MORICE *[reads and appears much disturbed by its contents. Looks out the window stage right.]*

DIXON. Everything all right? *[Morice remains silent.]* Something the matter?

MORICE. Looks like I am -- to be replaced.

DIXON. What -- Father Morice -- to be replaced? -- No!

MORICE *[shows telegram to Dixon]*

DIXON *[reads]* 'Tell Indians wait for priest to go Stuart's Lake.' -- Means he's sending someone up while you're away.

MORICE. I didn't ask for anybody.

DIXON. Maybe someone else did.

MORICE. I'm not going. -- I'm going back. I'm sending the Bishop a cable. *[Exit Morice and two boatmen, leaving luggage in the office. As they leave, enter a provocatively dressed, 90's style, heavily made-up woman of about 40, drunk, carrying a valise.]*

WOMAN. Dixon darling -- hello. *[She reaches over the banister to embrace him, but he retreats to a safe distance.]*

DIXON. Jenny -- not here, please. -- Why aren't you at Barkerville, anyway?

JENNY. Aren't you glad to see me?

DIXON. Not here. Tonight --

JENNY. Tonight I'll be on my way to Vancouver. Gather ye rosebuds --

DIXON. Don't you like it in Barkerville?

JENNY. It's not mutual, lovey. Barkerville don't like me. I'm no spring chicken no more, y'see. I thought it was time for a change. O Dixie, I can use a little comfort -- why don't you comfort me?  
*[Drinks from pocket flask.]*

DIXON. For Christ's sake, not in the Company office. *[pointing to Morice's luggage]* He may be back any moment. *[Jenny looks at luggage.]* Father Morice -- from Stuart's Lake. Tough nut to crack.

JENNY. Who wants to crack him, lovey?

DIXON. Everybody -- a lot of his Indians, his bishop, the Company -- everybody. Managed to offend everybody, that one.

JENNY. But what an interesting boy, darling.

DIXON. Ugh, he's crazy. Spent too much time in the bush. Wants to go native or something -- wants to be their king or something. Refuses to teach them English. Their soul is in their language, he says. Whips them as though they were his children. -- Christ, nowadays you rule people with money, not with a whip. -- Well, we don't interfere with his business so long as he doesn't interfere with ours, but when he starts making the fellows take their furs to the independent traders, that's where it's got to stop. The Bishop was glad to let him go. -- Could be real fun if he decided to go back on his own, though. *[looking through window]* Here he is coming back. *[Enter Morice and his two boatmen.]*

DIXON *[to Jenny]* I want you to meet the Reverend Father Morice.



JENNY. Hello, daddy.

DIXON *[rolling his eyes]* Miss Jenny Jenkins.

MORICE *[not pleased at all]* Pleased to meet you. *[to Dixon]* There must have been some mistake. The right thing for me to do would be to go back where I belong. I've wired the Bishop.

DIXON. That'll straighten it out, I'm sure.

MORICE. But why is he sending someone up?

DIXON. I'm telling you -- he's sending you an assistant. You are a very busy man. You deserve it, Father.

MORICE. Anybody but Conan!

DIXON. I'm sure it won't be.

MORICE *[half to himself]* Trouble with Conan is -- he feels he's not responsible for the truth by which he lives.

DIXON. I know the problem.

MORICE. Things are not that simple. You can't just go to the Indians and tell them that everything they've done so far is wrong and everything you tell them is right. In real life things are never that simple. Without some pride in what we are doing and in what we are, we can't do much at all. Theology is one thing. But in the forests of this country you learn that life is larger than theology -- that nature rejects you as unworthy if you don't find a way of reconciling your pride with your Maker.

DIXON. I know what you mean.

MORICE. Conan wants to teach English to the natives. Not teach them to get by, as those fellows do *[points to his boatmen, who respond with broad smiles]*, but to make them think in English, to raise their children without the language of their parents. He wants them to be ashamed of what they are.

DIXON. Yea -- they should be proud for being what they are.

MORICE. People have called me the king of the North. That's rubbish. I'm their missionary. But I tell you something: I learned that when they truly did follow me, it happened because in following me they followed themselves. I learned this in those crisp cold nights up there. Conan will never learn it.

DIXON. Absolutely. You said it.

*Enter a messenger with a telegram. He hands it to Morice, who opens it anxiously and reads it without thanking the messenger.*

MORICE. My God, he does mean it. -- He doesn't want me to go back.

DIXON. Darn it!

MORICE. I could go back anyway. -- He doesn't understand the mission. He'd have to put up with it. This isn't France.

DIXON. You bet it isn't.

JENNY. If I were you, I wouldn't go back there.

DIXON. Please don't interrupt us, Jenny.

JENNY. If this baby means what he says he won't go back.

DIXON. Jenny!

JENNY. He won't run away to the bush no more. He'll talk to his own people -- by golly, they need him.

MORICE. Madam, I should think the issues involved in my predicament well beyond your comprehension.

JENNY. Oh don't give me that gobbledegook. We are fellow professionals -- we both deal with men's souls -- but you think you can bypass the body, poor baby.

MORICE *[more amused than annoyed]* Perhaps we can talk when --



JENNY. When I'm sober? No, I talk better when I'm drunk. When I'm drunk I'm inspired, hee hee!

DIXON. For the last time --

JENNY. For you it is the last time. I won't talk to you stuffed shirt ever again. -- But the reverend here, he's my baby. -- *[to Morice]* Don't hide behind that black skirt no more. Make people love ye' for yourself. I hear you made a good start with your Indians. Now come with me to the big town -- they need us there. -- You see, reverend, we've all denied our Mother Nature for too long. Mother Nature doesn't want us to run after the Law, or the Truth, or the buck -- or the Lord above, like they do in the big town. She loves to see us run after one another. And like horses, we run best with the whip. *[She pulls a whip from her valise, of a kind we have seen before. Morice can't take his eyes off it.]* -- Take it from the horse's mouth, baby reverend. In the end Mother Nature always has her way.

DIXON. I'm very sorry, father.

JENNY *[ignoring Dixon, drinking]* Those horny young gold diggers back in Barkerville bore the hell out of me. When I see this old skin of mine get wrinkly, I'm trying to figure out what it's all about. You can have your gold diggers, poor bastards. I want self-diggers, see? Them self-diggers can tell me what it's all about. There is more of them in the big cities -- more and more of them. So much Law and Truth and Money and God Almighty drives them right into my arms -- over my knees, to be exact *[displaying her whip]*: Nature wants them to go back to the human pecking order by presenting ass. See, they want the human touch. You know what happens to babies who don't get touched? -- If nobody whips my big babies, they'll pay someone to whip them. -- Just because you're over forty don't mean you can live from air -- there's Mother Nature's wisdom for you. Right, we don't live by bread alone,

but we sure as hell need bread. Here's to bread. *[Drinks and settles down, whip in hand, soon to fall asleep.]*

DIXON. Jenny, you get out of here -- or I'll have to throw you out. *[Lifts his arms towards Morice in a gesture of impotence.]*

MORICE. Leave her alone -- she doesn't bother me. *[Sits down between his two boatmen]* I must obey the Bishop. *[to boatmen]* I came to you because the Bishop sent me. Now he wants me to do something else. I don't yet know what. But I'm good with words. You used to say that I know your language better than you know it yourselves. I also know the white man's language. He needs a missionary too. Because God spoke to him first, he's become proud and arrogant. He uses God to lord it over other people and nations. But God doesn't want to be used. He wants to be loved. That's why he sent His Son to be crucified by us. -- Those who crucify the Lord -- don't use Him. It takes the right kind of pride and the right kind of humility to understand this. I now must teach my own people the right kind of pride -- and the right kind of humility. *[A multitude of dogs barking announce the arrival of the stage coach. Dixon rushes out to meet it. Morice and his boatmen watch the arrival through the window.]* -- Conan, that fool! *[Enter Dixon and Father Conan, carrying a large bag, in conversation.]*

DIXON. No, no, no, father. It's always been the policy of the Company to do everything within its power to support the work of the Mission. You can't do business with idle, improvident fornicators who see the bush as an enchanted forest rather than as a resource -- *[Conan notices Morice]*

CONAN. Father Morice -- *[Holds out his hand.]*

DIXON. I presume you gentlemen have met.

MORICE *[declining to shake Conan's hand]* Indeed! *[to boatmen]* Come on, boys. Help me one last time. I'm catching the next stage to Cache Creek. *[Exit without greeting, followed by*



*boatmen carrying his luggage.]*

DIXON. *[He and Conan looking in the direction of Morice's exit.]* Full of hot air. Thinks of himself as an anthropologist! Now he wants to anthropologize the white man. They're just waiting for him.

CONAN. If only he could let go of his pride. May God's grace be granted to him.

DIXON. May he have to work for a living.

VOICE. Father Adrien-Gabriel Morice lived yet another 34 years. Before he died in 1938, at the age of 78, he published, among other works, a *History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia*, a *Map of the Northern Interior of British Columbia*, a grammar and dictionary of *The Carrier Language*, and numerous articles on anthropology and geography. Accused of rejecting the authority of superiors, he suffered beatings, questionings of his sanity, and false imprisonment by his fellow Oblates. He insisted on maintaining membership in a Catholic political movement, Action Française, aimed at restoring monarchy to France and condemned as atheistic by the Church. Father Morice visited his former Mission at Fort St. James twice. He is said to have broken down and wept when speaking to his people for the last time ten years before he died.

*Curtain*

### **About the Author**

**Johannes Allgaier was born in Berlin, Germany, in 1935. He came to Vancouver, B.C. in 1956 and took a master's degree in English from the University of British Columbia in 1966. Mr. Allgaier has been teaching English at the College of New Caledonia in Prince George, B.C. since 1974. Previous publications include Philosopher and Barbarian, a play about the Roman statesman and philosopher Boethius. Pride and Punishment is his second play.**

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