

The Devil and Daniel Webster
[a.k.a. "All That Money Can Buy"]

The hill farm of Jabez Stone, in New Hampshire, some miles from the village of Cross Corners, around 1840. It is a poor farm, stony and stingy with its favors. The house is small, simple, bare.

A wide view of the JABEZ STONE FARM on a Sunday morning fades in, and it is seen squatting down under the muddy, showery skies of a cold New Hampshire spring. The grip of winter is broken -- the ground runs with water. The air is still cold but the sun is warm at noon. It's a cold spring, but liveness has begun to come back to the earth. It isn't depressing weather -- exciting rather -- for after months of snow and ice, there is going to be warmth and light, though not quite yet. But they're in the air -- on the way.

Over this scene comes the sound of distant church bells, ringing faintly from the village of Cross Corners, and Jabez Stone, a husky young farmer in his late twenties, gets a rather discouraged-looking horse hitched to a rattle-trap buggy.

JABEZ

Mary! Ma! All ready? First bell's a-ringing.

Ma Stone, a brisk old woman, Jabez's mother, bustles to the door, which stands open. She wears her best Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes and is adjusting her bonnet, tying the strings under her chin with nervous fingers.

MA STONE

Yes, we're all ready. Mary's just coming down.

She comes out on the porch. She has a tart tongue and knows how to use it, but when she talks to her son or her daughter-in-law, there is affection under the tartness.

MA STONE

(helping him into his coat)

Now, son. Cheer up. We're all healthy. We've still got meal in the barrel. And look at that sky ...

(pointing out)

... big cracks in it like it was ice on the mill pond cracking up to show it's spring a-coming. If that ain't enough for a God-fearing New Hampshire family, I want to know.

And Ma Stone climbs up to the seat of the buggy, Jabez on her side to help her.

Now Mary appears at the door, also dressed for church. She is four or five years younger than Jabez, small, appealing, with rather fine features. She looks more fragile than she is. It is obvious that she and Jabez are very much in love.

MARY

(seeing the pool of mud in

her way, stops and calls)
Jabez -- help!

JABEZ

Coming.

He rushes from the buggy to help.

The dog, Shep, a ragged shepherd, appears from below the hill, running with a stick in his mouth. He jumps up against Jabez's leg, wiping his mud-caked paws on him.

JABEZ

Down, Shep! Down!

MARY

He only wants you to throw the stick for him,
Jabez. I guess he's feeling the spring
a-coming, too.

JABEZ

All right -- only he needn't dirty my pants!

He wrests the stick away from Shep and throws it far off with a mighty swing. Shep runs after it, barking excitedly. Mary, standing on the edge of the porch, follows the soaring stick with her eyes.

MARY

(speaking with pride)
You throw mighty far, Jabez -- almost into the
pigsty.

MA STONE

(from the buggy)
Mary -- Jabez --

MARY

Coming, Ma.

JABEZ

(as he sweeps Mary up in his
arms, carrying her to the buggy)
What is that smile on your face?
(glancing down at his clothes)
Is there anything wrong with me?

MARY

Now, Jabez! I've got on my Sunday bonnet and
I'm going to church with my husband. Almost the
first time since the beginning of winter -- and
if that isn't an occasion, I don't know what is.

JABEZ

You're right, Mary.

MA STONE

I hope we won't be too late --

She shifts her position so that Mary can get in too. The barking of Shep is heard, and then suddenly the squealing of a pig.

JABEZ

Now, what the dickens --

And we see Shep on the SLOPE COMING FROM THE BARNS, barking excitedly and chasing after a small pig that his barking has scared into a panic. Thereupon, at the STONE HOUSE, Jabez stands up in the buggy.

JABEZ

(yelling)

Look at that consarn dog! Shep! Stop it! Shep!

Jabez leaps down from the buggy and heads for the bushes, chasing the pig. Shep runs after him, barking furiously, only making matters worse. And on the SLOPE CUTTING DOWN TO THE GULLY there unfolds a wild scene of Jabez trying to catch the slippery pig. Both man and pig slip through the mud and fall. Once, Jabez almost catches the pig; grabs frantically for its hind leg, but the pig manages to break away. Finally, the pig slips over some rocks in the gully and falls, hurting its leg. Jabez succeeds in cornering it, helped by Shep who rounds it up as he would a sheep, and Jabez carries the pig back toward the house, his clothes now a sight with mud and wet.

At the STONE HOUSE:

MA STONE

Well, I guess we won't be going to church today.

MARY

I guess we won't.

Jabez emerges from the gully with the pig, still squealing, in his arms. He comes up panting, the muddy dog following him, looking quite triumphant and not at all guilty. Mary is near. Jabez comes up to her and they stand for a moment looking at each other.

JABEZ

(as the pig squeals)

Quiet, Mr. Porker!

(laughing, as he struggles
to hold it)

He's worse than a greased pig at the county
fair!

They walk into the house as the rain starts.

The KITCHEN: It is the largest room in the house and very much the pleasantest. There is a big fireplace with fire in it, crane, pot-hooks, etc. All of the cooking is done here. A clock, with a tinny striking effect, hangs on the wall. Jabez and Mary enter. Ma follows.

JABEZ

(looking over the pig)

I think his leg is broken.

MARY

(taking his wet trousers, hanging them near the fire, and covering his knees with a blanket)

Oh, Jabez.

JABEZ

(shaking his head)

Yep.

He is fitting a crude splint to the pig's wounded leg, helped by Mary, who holds the splint while Jabez wraps it tightly with some rags torn from an old shirt. The pig doesn't like this a bit, and often protests loudly, in the shrill guttural of pigs.

JABEZ

I remember Dad used to say sometimes, when they were handing out hard luck, the farmers got there first.

MARY

Jabez, don't you remember your own wedding? We said it's for better or worse. We said it's for richer or poorer.

JABEZ

That's what we said.

MA STONE

(has taken the Bible and starts leading)

"There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil."

JABEZ

(as the pig heaves and almost breaks away)

Consarn the consarn --

MA STONE

Jabez! What kind of talk is that for the Sabbath? And me a-reading the holy word!

JABEZ

Sorry, Ma -- but this consar-- this little pig -- He won't let me fix him --

MARY

(smiling)

He's stubborn as a Stone.

JABEZ

Hold the splint tighter -- it's almost done.

(As Mary holds the splint tighter)

Go on reading, Ma. This man, Job, he had troubles, didn't he?

MA STONE

You know that, son.

JABEZ

(nodding)

Hard luck -- like me.

MA STONE

(severely)

Now, Jabez Stone -- as for what you're calling hard luck -- well, we made New England out of it. That and codfish.

JABEZ

That's right, Ma -- we ain't licked yet. A Stone's never licked till he's dead -- that's what Dad used to say, didn't he, Ma?

Ma Stone nods silently.

JABEZ

(finishing with the pig)

There! Guess that ought to hold good. Put him down here, by the fire, Mary.

(moving forward an empty woodbox)

But we don't want to get him too close -- we'll have roast pork for supper.

MA STONE

(with a smile)

Not on the Sabbath you won't, Jabez!

MARY

Give me the book, Ma! I'm going to read us something comforting.

Ma hands her the book, and Mary plumps it down on her knee with spirit; turns the pages; then remembers and looks up at Ma Stone.

MARY

That is -- if you don't mind changing the lesson, Ma.

MA STONE

Land sakes, I don't mind. I never did hold much with Job, even if he is Scripture. He took on too much to suit me. I don't want to malign the man, but he always sounded to me as if he came from Massachusetts. Yes, Mary, you go ahead and read.

As Mary is about to read, there is a dash of rain on the windows, and Shep is heard barking from outside. Holding the blanket around him, Jabez rises and goes to the window.

JABEZ

Well, I'll be -- there's a rig, turning in, by the gate.

MARY

(rising and going quickly
to the window)

Who is it?

JABEZ

It's Tom Sharp and two other fellers -- Oh, glory -- where's my pants?

He makes a wild scramble for them, grabbing them up from a chair near the fire. The women, in the way of all women, are rushing about, fixing up the kitchen. Shep is heard barking, outside.

Outside, a buggy has driven up in the teeming rain and two farmers, their clothes drenched, are climbing down, while a third farmer remains in the driver's seat, reining in the horse. The men run for the shelter of the porch, barked at by the dog, who has been curled up by the kitchen door. They reach the door and knock; one pats the dog and quiets him. Jabez, pulling up his braces, opens the door.

TOM SHARP

Afternoon, Mary.

MARY

Afternoon, Tom. Come in.

Tom Sharp starts to come in slowly, followed by his friends.

MA STONE

There's a mat there to wipe your feet on.

TOM SHARP

Thanks, ma'am. Howdy, Jabez.

JABEZ

Howdy, Tom.

He wipes his feet vigorously. So does his companion.

TOM SHARP

(introducing the second farmer)

This is Van Brooks -- he's Massachusetts.

Thereupon Ma Stone looks at him with redoubled suspicion. And now the third farmer, the one driving the buggy, stands at the door, stamping his wet feet.

TOM SHARP

This is Eli Higgins -- Vermont.

MA STONE

There's a mat there to wipe your feet on.

THIRD FARMER

Thanks, ma'am.

He enters.

Each farmer ducks awkwardly as introduced and mutters, "Afternoon, ma'am," to Mary and Ma Stone. They come over and hold their hands out to the blaze that Mary pokes up.

JABEZ

Come on close to the fire -- Set down.

They sit.

VAN BROOKS

(who is nearest to the wood-box)

Little pig hurt himself?

JABEZ

Yep.

The women busy themselves at the cupboard over in one corner, opposite side of the fireplace. The men make themselves comfortable by the fire, as Jabez adds a few logs of wood and again pokes up the coals, but they do not smoke. Eli Higgins gets his pipe out and is about to fill it.

MA STONE

We don't smoke on Sabbath in New Hampshire.

ELI HIGGINS

Sorry, ma'am, I forgot.

(And he puts the pipe away.)

JABEZ

(to Eli Higgins)

How's the year been in your part of the country?

ELI HIGGINS

Had a good stand of corn -- coming up right nice. Then we got a hailstorm -- in June. Hailstones so mighty chickens sat on 'em thinking they was eggs. Makes you wonder sometimes what Providence is thinking about.

VAN BROOKS

We got a snowstorm in August.

MARY

In August?

VAN BROOKS

Yes, and it was so cold -- a man got caught in it -- froze him solid, all except his heart. That was frozen already.

TOM SHARP

Loan shark -- hey?

JABEZ

Too bad it didn't happen to Miser Stevens.

TOM SHARP

Are you one of old Stevens' customers too?

JABEZ

Sure am.

TOM SHARP

Yes, it's the debt and the lien and the mortgage that eats up the farmer!

He stretches out his thin legs; uses a splinter of wood for a toothpick, pulled from a log near the fire.

ELI HIGGINS

City folks, they can go bankrupt -- a farmer, he can't crawl easy.

VAN BROOKS

Laws ought to be changed, somehow.

TOM SHARP

Yes! We farmers ought to put through some of our own laws at regular meetings -- have a sort of Grange as they call it in Vermont.

VAN BROOKS

That's why the three of us met up together, Neighbor Stone. We're American citizens -- we've got a right to get ourselves organized like city folks.

TOM SHARP

What do you say? Sound reasonable to you?

JABEZ

(pulling his chin)

Sure does. But I'll have to sleep on it a couple of nights.

TOM SHARP

That's fair enough, Jabez. Man's got a right to mull things over. We'll drive round again, week or so.

They get up.

JABEZ

I am just thinkin' -- now they mightn't like the idea down in Washington.

TOM SHARP

Why not! There's a bill up in Congress to give us a uniform law of bankruptcy. Daniel Webster is fighting for it right now--

JABEZ

Black Dan'l?

VAN BROOKS

Yep -- the biggest man in the whole U.S. --
Senator from Massachusetts -- and surely our
next president.

JABEZ

He was born and raised at Franklin -- right
across the valley -- Mary is from there, too.

MARY

(leaping in -- flushed
with excitement)

He gave my father advice, many times -- about
crops and politics -- and it was always right.

TOM SHARP

I've heard people talk a lot about his farm at
Marshfield. He's up at five there every morning.
He ain't one of our gentleman farmers. He knows
all the ways of the land.

ELI HIGGINS

They say, when he goes out to fish, the trout
jump out of the stream and right into his
pockets, because they know it's no use arguing.

JABEZ

Why, they say that when he speaks, stars and
stripes come right out in the sky....

The scene dissolves into WEBSTER'S STUDY at night. Daniel Webster is seated
at his desk writing a speech. A table lamp lights his face, leaving the rest
of the room in darkness. On the wall behind him we see the shadow of Scratch.

VOICE OF SCRATCH

Listen, Black Dan'l, You're wasting your time
writing speeches like that. Why worry about the
people and their problems? Start thinking of
your own. You want to be president of this
country, don't you -- and you ought to be --
(continues dreamily)

-- Inauguration Day parade -- bands playing --
horses prancing, the sun shining on the stars
and stripes waving in the breeze -- crowds
cheering Daniel Webster, President of the
United States of America....

(more briskly)

Don't be a fool. Stop bothering with that
speech and get busy promoting yourself instead
of the people.

Webster at this point grabs the inkwell and throws it at the shadow on the
wall. The shadow disappears, and Webster turns back looking over his speech.

Then the SPEECH IN WEBSTER'S HANDWRITING appears on the screen.

"I would say to every man who follows his own plough, and to every mechanic, artisan, and laborer in every city in the country -- I would say to every man, everywhere, who wishes by honest means to gain an honest living, 'Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing!'"

This dissolves to a series of views, montage shots, of a group in a village square: of men and women, farmer types, reading a copy of Webster's speech, headed "Webster Pleads for Farm Rights in Bankruptcy Bill."

FARMER

(reading)

"The insolvent farmers cannot even come to the seat of their Government to present their cases to Congress -- so great is their fear that some creditor will arrest them in some intervening state -- "

This dissolves to a field, revealing a farmer reading from the same speech, with his wife and son. It is day.

FARMER

(reading)

"We talk much and talk warmly of political liberty, but who can enjoy political liberty if he is deprived permanently of personal liberty? To those unfortunate individuals doomed to the everlasting bondage of debt, what is it that we have free institutions of Government?"

This dissolves to the JABEZ STONE KITCHEN in the afternoon, revealing Jabez, dressed to go to town, seated by the small table, glancing over Daniel Webster's speech copied in the "Cross Corners Gazette." The Sheriff is looking over Jabez's shoulder. On the other side of the table is Mary. On the table is the cracked teapot in which they have hoarded their small savings. Mary is counting the money.

JABEZ

(reading from the paper --
Webster's speech)

" ... and if the final vote shall leave thousands of our fellow citizens and their families in hopeless distress, can we -- members of the Government -- go to our beds with a clear conscience, can we, without self-reproach, supplicate the Almighty Mercy to forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors?"

MARY

That's wonderful language. It would move a stone.

JABEZ

If it would only move old Miser Stevens --
We've still got to pay him.

SHERIFF

Yep -- you can't get around that mortgage.
-- I'm sorry, Jabez.

JABEZ

It's all right, Sheriff.

SHERIFF

Wish I could really do something for you. But
you know Stevens. He'll throw you off your
farm tomorrow if you don't pay him tonight.

JABEZ

Let him try it.

SHERIFF

The law is the law. Good-bye, Mary.

MARY

Goodbye, Sheriff.

The Sheriff leaves.

JABEZ

Well -- what are we going to do?

MARY

We can still use my butter money.

JABEZ

Your butter money?

MARY

Do you think I'm grudging it?

JABEZ

Mary -- it's gone.

MARY

Not all of it?

JABEZ

Yes -- I had to pay the vet in full. He just
wouldn't have treated the horse this time.
After all, we can't very well do without a
horse.

MARY

It's all right, Jabez. We'll find something
to pay Stevens.

JABEZ

If the pig hadn't broke his leg, we could have
taken him.

MARY

Jabez! Couldn't you take a sack of seed instead?

JABEZ

(bitterly)

To save us work on the spring plowing?

MARY

You always said, the field uphill needs a rest, but if you think --

JABEZ

Mary, I'm a farmer -- always will be. To me seed isn't a thing to pay debts with, it's alive, more alive than anything -- but I guess you're right. We just got to do it. Oh -- how's it all going to end?

MARY

Jabez -- you ought to talk to Tom about joining the Grange.

JABEZ

I will, Mary -- always thought a man could be stronger alone -- seems I've been wrong about that.

Ma Stone calls from outside.

MA STONE'S VOICE

Jabez! You'll be late!

JABEZ

(calling)

All right, Ma--

He gathers up the worn bills and puts them in the inside pocket of his coat.

MARY

Just a minute.

She runs for the stairs that lead to the bedrooms.

The SIDE PORCH OF THE KITCHEN: The wagon stands, already hitched, by the side door. A fine, white-faced calf, at the long-legged skittery stage, is being held by Ma Stone by a piece of rope around its neck. It is extremely nervous, anticipating a drastic change, and jumps about a good deal, tugging at the rope. As Jabez comes out from the house, Ma Stone is jerking at the rope, trying to make the calf quiet down.

JABEZ

How'd you know to have the calf ready, Ma?

MA STONE

I just figgered -- knew you didn't have enough

bills.

JABEZ

Yes -- and you figgered right, consarn it!

MA STONE

(disapprovingly)

That's a word you're too free with lately,
Jabez, consarn this and consarn that ...

JABEZ

Helps sometimes to say it.

MA STONE

(with understanding)

All right, son -- if it helps.

Mary comes out of the house. She holds a scarf in her hand.

MARY

(as she sees the calf)

Jabez!

JABEZ

Seed alone won't do, Mary. We have to throw the
calf in.

MARY

(very much disappointed)

Oh Jabez! And we were counting on ...

(stopping)

It's a lovely calf.

JABEZ

(still glum)

You're right, Mary it's a fine calf. That's why
Stevens'll take it for the rest of the payment.

He sighs and starts to get the calf up on the wagon, and Mary climbs up on
the wagon to help. At this moment the horse moves, Mary loses her balance,
and falls over backward from the wagon. Jabez rushes over to her.

JABEZ

Mary -- are you hurt?

Mary is unconscious and doesn't answer.

MA STONE

She hit her head -- Carry her in the house.

He lifts her up, carrying her into the house.

The KITCHEN: Jabez puts Mary into a chair.

MA STONE

Fetch some water -- quick!

Jabez rushes out to the pump while Ma tends to Mary.

The YARD: As Jabez comes out of the house with a bucket and hurries toward the pump, Shep, the dog, is seen by the corner of the house, his muzzle raised to the sky, howling dismally and strangely.

JABEZ

Keep quiet, Shep.

He continues on the way to the well to fill the bucket, but Shep howls again.

MA STONE

(calling from the kitchen door)
What's ailing that dog?

JABEZ

(at the well)
I dunno.

MA STONE

Well ... make him keep quiet.

JABEZ

And why should I? Let him howl if it makes him feel good.

(with a sudden rush of bitterness)
Consarn it. He's better off than I am! I wish I could tell Him...

(with an angry motion up to the sky)
... up there, just what I think.

MA STONE

Hush up such talk, Jabez!

JABEZ

I can't help it. I mean it, I tell you. I've had more than my share. Nothing ever goes right for me -- nothing!

He draws up water quickly and returns to the house.

The KITCHEN: Jabez, enters with the bucket of water, and sets it down.

JABEZ

(bending over Mary, tenderly)
Mary--

MARY

(coming out of her faint)
Jabez ...

JABEZ

Mary -- how do you feel?

MA STONE

Let her be, son. She'll do all right. You better get yourself straightened out.

MARY

(weakly)

Yes, Jabez -- don't worry.

JABEZ

I'll get the doctor.

MARY

No, Jabez -- all I need is some rest -- You go
and pay our debt. Everything'll be all right
then ... everything.

Mary's eyes close and she sinks into sleep, while Jabez leaves for the barn.

The BARN: Jabez takes a sack of seed, throws it on his shoulder. At this
moment the sack opens and all the seed runs out into a dirty pool of water.

JABEZ

That's enough to make a man sell his soul to
the devil! And I would, too, for about two
cents!

He stops abruptly, realizing what he has said and appalled by it. He looks
around him, fearfully.

JABEZ

I guess nobody heard. I hope not.

Jabez jams his hands in his pockets and a horrified expression comes over his
face. He slowly takes out his right hand. In the palm are two big copper
pennies.

A VOICE

(speaking smoothly)

Good evening, Neighbor Stone.

Jabez turns around and sees a figure -- well-dressed, looking rather like a
salesman. Jabez stares at him, speechless.

THE VOICE

My name is Scratch -- I often go by that name
in New England.

JABEZ

I don't want to have any business with you.

SCRATCH

Do you deny that you called me? I've known
people in other States who went back on their
word. But I didn't expect it in New Hampshire.

JABEZ

(stung)

You can't say that to me! I'm New Hampshire.
If I say I called you, I did.

(in a lower voice)

I guess I did.

SCRATCH

You've had a lot of bad luck these days. And yet -- it's all so unnecessary. When I think of your opportunities --

JABEZ

Opportunities?

SCRATCH

Of course. Why man, you have one of the richest farms in the county.

(as Jabez laughs bitterly,
Scratch persists)

You just go about it the wrong way -- so many men do. Hard work -- well, that's all right for people who don't know how to do anything else. It's all right for people who aren't lucky -- but once you're lucky -- you don't work for other people. You make them work for you.

JABEZ

Well, now, Mister, that sounds all right. But--

SCRATCH

A clever man like yourself -- he can find money anywhere. Money to pay his bills -- money for his wife and his children -- money to be a rich man. All he needs is a friend to point it out to him.

(kicks his suspiciously sharp
toe at a loose board in the barn)

Like that!

The board, rotten, gives way. Underneath it is an iron pot, filled with money. Scratch points down to it silently; Jabez looks at it, dumbfounded.

SCRATCH

Don't be afraid of it. Pick it up. Feel it in your hands.

SHARP'S VOICE

(from outside)

Jabez Stone!

Jabez doesn't hear. He still stares at the gold.

SCRATCH

Someone's calling you, Mr. Stone.

Jabez looks up bewildered.

ANOTHER VOICE FROM OUTSIDE

Jabez Stone!

Jabez runs across the barn to the other door. Tom Sharp, Eli Higgins and Van

Brooks are approaching, and Jabez stops them in the doorway.

JABEZ

(breathless)

What do you want?

TOM SHARP

Howdy, Mr. Stone. We've come round to ask you if you made up your mind to join the Grange?

JABEZ

(in a daze)

What Grange?

TOM SHARP

That farmers' association -- we were talking about the other day.

ELI HIGGINS

That is, if you had time to mull it over, proper.

JABEZ

(interrupting)

No, no I don't want to join!

(harshly)

Go away -- leave me alone.

TOM SHARP

(retreating)

Well -- we don't mean to force you, Jabez Stone -- but -- it's only for your own good.

JABEZ

I'll look out for myself! ... Now go away -- leave me alone.

He stands for a moment looking after them as they turn and leave. Then he quickly rushes back to Scratch.

JABEZ

(looking at the gold)

Where did it come from?

SCRATCH

Oh, you know the old story -- the Hessian wagon train that was ambushed on the way to Saratoga. Some of the gold has been buried under your barn!

JABEZ

(feverishly)

Yes, why shouldn't it?

SCRATCH

Yes, of course, people forgot -- or the men who knew about it died, you know how these things

happen.

Jabez goes forward to pick up the gold. Scratch stops him.

JABEZ

It's mine?

SCRATCH

That's right, Mr. Stone -- there is --

(whipping a paper from his pocket)

-- just one little formality. I'd like your signature here -- see. And when it's done -- it's done for seven years.

(as Jabez looks up)

It's our usual form. Of course -- we may be able to take up the question of a renewal in due time.

JABEZ

(staring at the paper

Scratch holds before him)

What does it mean here -- about my soul?

SCRATCH

Well, why should that worry you. A soul -- a soul is nothing. Can you see it, smell it, touch it? -- No! -- Think of it -- this soul -- your soul -- a nothing, against seven whole years of good luck! You will have money and all that money can buy. Upon my word, Neighbor Stone, if it weren't for my firm's reputation for generous dealing--

He starts to put the paper away.

JABEZ

No, no! Give it to me!

SCRATCH

(taking a pin from his coat lapel)

A pin, Neighbor Stone! I'm afraid, you'll have to prick your finger -- but what's a little pain to a lucky man?

Jabez takes the pin, pricks his finger and draws blood.

SCRATCH

(pointing)

Sign here.

Jabez signs.

SCRATCH

Excellent. A firm, fair signature. One that will last till doomsday.

(tucking the deed away in his pocketbook, then shaking Jabez's

hand)
My dear Neighbor Stone, I congratulate you!
You're going to be the richest man in New
Hampshire!

(He starts to leave.)

JABEZ

Well, I'll be --
(He stoops to pick up some gold.)

SCRATCH

Yes, indeed. But not now. Not for seven years.
Oh, I almost forgot -- what is the date?

JABEZ

The seventh day of April --

SCRATCH

1840. Well, that'll take us to the seventh day
of April in 1847.

They start for the door together.

OUTSIDE THE BARN, the sunset fading from the sky: Jabez and Scratch stand by
a stunted tree near the door.

SCRATCH

Just to remind you -- though of course we'll be
seeing each other in the interim --

He sweeps his five, very pointed fingers across the bark of the tree and
suddenly there is a date upon it: "APRIL 7, 1847." Scratch moves toward his
black buggy and black horse. They are just shadows in the weird light.

SCRATCH

(lifting his hat)
Good evening, Neighbor Stone.
(he gets into the buggy)
A beautiful sunset, Mr. Stone.

Jabez stands with the gold in his hands as we hear the buggy wheels drive
away, but we hardly can see it disappear; it becomes part of the twilight so
quickly.

Jabez, left alone, blinks as though waking from a fantastic dream. He looks
down at the gold in his hands; and he brings a piece of it up before his eyes
and stares at it, blinking again.

JABEZ

(in a low voice)
Mary....
(the realization of his luck
coming over him in a wave)
Mary ... Mary ...Mary!

He rushes for the house. The dog, Shep, slinks out of the hall and follows
Jabez, suddenly shaking off his fears and prancing by his master's side.

The KITCHEN in Jabez Stone's House: The lamps are lit. Mary is propped up in a chair by the fire, and Ma Stone is busy with supper. Jabez rushes over to Mary, so excited he cannot sit down. He tosses the gold pieces in Mary's lap. She is fingering them, amazed -- incredulous.

JABEZ

Mary -- what would you do with a pot o' gold?

MARY

Jabez!

JABEZ

Mary -- what would you do?

MARY

Well -- I -- I don't know -- I would pay our debts and well -- maybe get a new bonnet, but -- really -- I think I would live the same.

JABEZ

Mary -- look! Hessian gold. I found it in the barn.

MA STONE

You found it in the barn, hey?

JABEZ

Yes -- I was getting the seed -- I stumbled -- I saw one of the boards warped up a bit -- and -- there it was.

MA STONE

(skeptically as she carries plates to the table)

Most outlandish thing I ever heard tell.

(as she thumps plates down on table)

Don't seem right, somehow!

JABEZ

But it's true. Take 'em up in your hands, Mary -- feel 'em -- they're real all right.

(as Mary just stares at her lap, but does not touch the money)

Aren't you glad?

MARY

I'll try hard -- I just can't take it all in.

MA STONE

(taking up one of the gold pieces)

H'm. Hessian gold. Well -- hope it'll do us more good than it did the Hessians.

She drops it.

JABEZ

We'll none of us have to worry any more, Ma.
We're rich!

He stoops down and kisses Mary.

MA STONE

(at the fire)

Well -- that's comforting!
(lifting the pot from the crane
and starting back toward the table
with it)
Supper.

JABEZ

Say, Mary, how is your shoulder?

MARY

It feels fine now, Jabez.

JABEZ

Will you come into town with me tomorrow?

MARY

I'd love to.

The scene fades out.

A ROAD fades in. It is next morning and a bright spring day and Jabez and Mary, both dressed for town, are riding in the buggy, en route to Cross Corners. As we follow them, Jabez is in high spirits, he is humming or whistling a little tune; Mary is, too, but with more reserve.

This view dissolves to CROSS CORNERS, MISER STEVENS' OFFICE, later in the day: The buggy stops in a whirl of dust, and as Jabez jumps out of the buggy, Sheriff Mays steps outside the office building.

JABEZ

Hello, Sheriff.

SHERIFF

Hello, Jabez -- I was just talking to Stevens about a little extension on your payment.

JABEZ

(laughing)

And you didn't get it, hey? Come on, we'll have another talk with him.

Jabez takes the Sheriff's arm and goes over to the office with him. As Jabez disappears through Stevens' door he turns and signals reassuringly to Mary and gives her an elaborate wink.

STEVENS' OFFICE: It is a bare, cold room with a small iron stove near the desk, a small iron safe, and a few severe chairs. A meager fire burns in the stove, no more than a few coals. Stevens is behind his desk, with various legal papers piled in front of him, and is looking craftily at the door from the street as it opens and the Sheriff enters, followed by Jabez.

JABEZ

(closing the door and stepping
forward jauntily, as he mockingly
sweeps off his hat)

Stevens!

STEVENS

(icily)

Well, Stone -- have you got the money?

JABEZ

(with mock humility)

I barely managed to scrape up a bit for you. I
thought if I made a kind of part payment --

STEVENS

(hard as granite)

No, Stone!

JABEZ

-- in gold.

STEVENS

(scornfully)

I'd like to know where you'd get it....

JABEZ

You know -- some folks are just lucky. Others
pick gold right out of the air.

(reaching up over his head, as
though picking it from the air,
and flinging a gold piece on the
desk)

Like that!

STEVENS

(grabbing for the gold piece as
it rolls on the desk and biting it)

Real! Sheriff, you are a witness that this
money is paid me voluntarily, and while it
does not satisfy the mortgage, it has become
my property.

JABEZ

Doesn't satisfy, eh? Well -- that's too
bad....

He does another sly bit of hocus-pocus and extracts another gold piece,
seemingly out of Stevens' nose, and flings that one down.

JABEZ

Rake that one in, too....

(flinging it down)

And this one -- and this one -- and that ...

He takes them out now, faster and faster flinging them down one after the

other and laughing uproariously as Stevens scrambles for them.

JABEZ

(stepping close to the desk)

Count it -- count it! The Sheriff's here to witness.

He reaches out suddenly and grabs up a deed from Steven's desk. He glances at it; makes sure it is his; and deliberately tears it into bits and flings them down on the desk.

JABEZ

That makes everything clean now. Come on, Sheriff.

He links arms with the Sheriff and goes out, leaving Stevens staring at one of the pieces of gold as he holds it on his wrinkled palm. He lets it fall to the desk, suddenly realizing he has seen that kind of gold before. With a motion of repulsion, he pushes the gold aside, moves back the top of his desk with a thrust of his trembling hand, and stares down on something that is written there.

There follows a close view (an insertion) of what Stevens sees: It is the present date: April 8, 1840, written in the same style of lettering Scratch used on the tree on Jabez's farm.

Then, the previous scene reappearing, we watch Stevens staring at it for a moment, then rising rather unsteadily and going quickly to his small iron safe. He opens it; snatches out some gold and some fat bundles of worn bills, and stuffing them into his pockets, leaves.

The scene dissolves to the EXTERIOR OF THE CHURCH AT CROSS CORNERS, a fine white New England structure opposite the village green. Stevens comes up the front steps, hurrying up, clutching his pockets, heavy with their burden of gold and currency, enters the VESTIBULE of the church, which now appears. It is a shadowy corner where there is a poor box or box for contributions to foreign missionaries. Stevens begins stuffing his money into the box. As he is thus engaged, a shadowy figure in a black frock coat appears in the doorway; starts to put his sharp-pointed foot over the threshold; then draws it back. He does not enter the church but speaks from the outside.

SCRATCH

(softly)

What are you doing, Mister Stevens?

Stevens whirls about. He stands trembling, his head thrust forward.

STEVENS

(stopping and cringing)

I wanted to give it all to the church.

SCRATCH

My money? Why, Mister Stevens? What a quaint idea. Come over to the door. I want to speak to you privately. Stop throwing away that money. We mustn't let people see any softness in you, Mister Stevens.... People take

advantage of softness, you know. Come out of there -- I'll give you an extension if you'll forget this stupid repentance idea.

STEVENS

(coming out of the church)

That isn't it. It's ... the loneliness, Mr. Scratch ... the loneliness!

SCRATCH

(stroking his pointed chin
and chuckling softly)

The loneliness? Lonely with all your gold, Mister Stevens? That hardly makes sense.

STEVENS

(under his breath)

I want someone to talk to ...

SCRATCH

You can talk to me ...

STEVENS

No, no ...

(beginning to whimper again)

I want to talk to men ... to people in Cross Corners ...to my neighbors ...

SCRATCH

Why don't you?

STEVENS

I can't be honest with them.

SCRATCH

Oh, that's what you want -- well, you can be perfectly honest with Jabez Stone -- now.

The scene dissolves to the COUNTRY STORE of Cross Corners, disclosing Jabez loading various things he has purchased on his buggy. Eddie, the store clerk, is coming out of the store with Jabez's bill in his hand.

EDDIE

That certainly was a big day for our store, Mr. Stone.

JABEZ

(paying the bill)

Here ...

(handing Eddie an
extra gold piece)

... and this one is for you.

EDDIE

Golly, Mr. Stone, I hope I stumble on a pot of Hessian gold one day, myself.

As Eddie runs back into the store, Mary comes out, accompanied by Sarah.

MARY
(indicating the bonnet)
What do you think of that, Jabez?

JABEZ
Looks right elegant, Mary.

SARAH
(fluttering around her)
Newest thing by last fall catalogue and
"Godey's Ladies' Book."

MARY
You don't think it looks too fancy?

JABEZ
Did you say too fancy?

SARAH
Lan's too gracious, child, not for you!

JABEZ
You take it -- nothing's too fancy for us ...

MARY
(to Sarah)
Well -- maybe it wouldn't hurt -- to have a
few roses.

SARAH
(smiling)
Right pretty, Mary.

MARY
(turning back to the store)
I'll pick out a little shawl for Ma -- good
and serviceable.

JABEZ
(calling after her)
Take your time, Mary. I'll be back in half an
hour.

Jabez leaves, and as Mary turns back she bumps into Eddie who is coming out of the store with a trumpet under his arm.

MARY
Where are you going with your trumpet?

EDDIE
Didn't you hear, Mrs. Stone? Daniel Webster
has promised to stop at Cross Corners today on
his way to Franklin.

MARY

Daniel Webster -- here?

EDDIE

Aren't you going to the reception?

The scene dissolves to the VILLAGE SQUARE in the late afternoon: The whole village has collected here and we see quite a gathering. The local fife-and-drum corps is prominently in evidence, including at least one Revolutionary veteran, in buff and blue, with a pigtail. The Sheriff lines up the band and the spectators; the schoolmaster takes care of the children. The Squire stands in front of the band looking up at Eddie who practices on his trumpet.

SQUIRE

Eddie -- must you do that now?

EDDIE

I want to get it right once before Mr. Webster arrives.

SHERIFF

(joining them)

What do you think, Mr. Squire, shall I find out more about Jabez and his gold?

SQUIRE

You better find out about Mr. Webster -- he is already more than an hour late -- can't understand it.

He turns to the waiting crowd which is getting restless. He is almost about to speak when Eddie blows his trumpet again, causing the Squire to look at him exasperated.

EDDIE

Don't worry, Mr. Squire, I'll get it yet.

SQUIRE

Friends, neighbors -- I beg you to have a little more patience. So let's rehearse the parade once more.

He turns to the bandleader, who gives the signal, whereupon the band starts playing.

The scene dissolves to a FIELD BEHIND THE BARN in the late afternoon, as Jabez arrives at the blacksmith's.

JABEZ

(to a boy)

Where is the blacksmith ?

BOY

He's pitching horseshoes with Daniel Webster.

JABEZ

With whom?

As Jabez turns, we see Daniel Webster and the blacksmith pitching horseshoes. Small boys stand about, watching and cheering.

SPECTATOR

(to his companion)

Crazy galoot -- thinking he can take on Dan'l Webster.

ANOTHER FARMER

Dan'l pitched shoes from his cradle, didn't you, Dan'l?

WEBSTER

Yes, with my Granny, and she wasn't bad, either -- Now, I'll really have to go. The people must be waiting over at Cross Corners.

Webster has reached his buggy and there Scratch is holding up Webster's coat.

SCRATCH

It's only a short drive, Mr. Webster.

WEBSTER

(turning)

Oh -- it's you again. What do you want?

SCRATCH

With the presidential election coming up, I thought I could be of some help, sir.

WEBSTER

I'd rather see you on the side of the opposition.

SCRATCH

I'll be there, too!

Just then Webster stops, looks back, and sees Jabez throwing a horseshoe.

WEBSTER

Say, that's pretty good, young man.

SCRATCH

Pretty good -- that's perfect!

JABEZ

Ten throws -- Mr. Webster?

WEBSTER

Ten throws it is.

The scene dissolves and reappears, indicating that some time has elapsed. A few more throws and Jabez has won the game. The farmers cheer.

WEBSTER

(Shaking Jabez's hand; very friendly)

You win. Will you ride to the village with me,

Mr. Stone?

JABEZ

Thank you, Mr. Webster.

The scene dissolves to the VILLAGE SQUARE, and as Webster drives his buggy down the slope, we suddenly see that the village square is empty -- not a soul is in sight. The people had apparently become tired of waiting for Webster and gone about their various duties. And now in WEBSTER'S BUGGY, as two buggies come down the slope, we see the amazed and then chagrined faces of the reception committee as they observe the deserted square.

WEBSTER

(smiling, his black eyes flashing
their lightning of humor to the
Squire at his side)

I don't seem to be so very popular after all --
in Cross Corners.

JABEZ

Seems like it's my fault, Mr. Webster.

WEBSTER

(slapping his knee)
Not at all, lad -- not at all.
(with tongue in cheek)
For a good game of horseshoes I would always
sacrifice fame and acclaim.

Some boys jump off the rear of the buggy and dart away, calling out as they run in their shrill, piping voices.

MARTIN

(one of the boys; running up
to the door of the inn)
Black Dan'l's here!

The INN, which now appears, is filled with farmers and town people who were seen before waiting in the Square, and heavy drinking is going on as Martin goes up to the bar.

MARTIN

Hey, Dan'l Webster's here!

In the SQUARE IN FRONT OF THE INN, the carriages now come to a stop as the tavern door opens and the host, Cy Bibber, round, red-faced, always a little mellow, rushes out with greetings and a good-sized cup of rum for the great Dan'l Webster, handed to him by Mr. Scratch. The Squire, red-faced, rushes up to the carriage.

SQUIRE

Welcome -- Mr. Webster -- welcome in Cross
Corners.

CY BIBBER

(as he hands up
the cup to Webster)

Your good health, sir.

WEBSTER

(taking it)

What about my friends -- let's all have a drink
and a bumper one for the champion -- Mister
Stone!

CY BIBBER

Right away, Mr. Webster.

He bows and scrapes and is off immediately into the tavern.

WEBSTER

(sniffing the cup)

Here's a man who knows what's good for Dan'l
Webster! Medford rum! Ah, a breath of the
Promised Land!

(he tastes it; and smacks his lips)

To the champion of the Iron Horseshoe, Jabez
Stone!

JABEZ

(who in the meantime got his drink)

Thanks, Mr. Webster!

(lifting up his cup)

To the champion of the whole United States --
Dan'l Webster!

Cheers, and they all drink. At this moment, however, young Martin, stepping
up to the buggy, begins scrutinizing Webster.

WEBSTER

What are you looking for, Colonel?

(as Martin doesn't answer)

What's your name?

MARTIN

Martin Van Buren Aldrich and my Pa's the only
Democrat in Cross Corners. He said you had
horns and a tall, Mr. Webster, but I ain't
seen 'em yet.

WEBSTER

Well, Martin, I only wear them in Washington --
that's the trouble. But if you ever come down
there, I'll show them to you.

MARTIN

(goggle-eyed)

Gee, would you, Mr. Webster? Honest?

WEBSTER

Of course. And you tell your father for me --
we may be on opposite sides of the fence, but
I'm always glad to hear of a man who holds to
his own opinions. As long as people do that --

the country's all right. Do you understand,
Martin?

MARTIN

Yes, sir -- I guess I do -- Gee --

SCRATCH

Speech, Mr. Webster -- speech --

Webster, Jabez, and the Squire, Schoolmaster and Sheriff are still drinking, and Cy Bibber is giving another cup to Webster. It is obvious that Webster, in a very pleasant way, is a little under the weather, for he slumps down in the front seat of the buggy, holding the cup a little unsteadily in his hand. Voices in the crowd begin calling:

VOICES

Speech, Black Dan'l. Speech!

SQUIRE

They're asking for a speech, Mr. Webster.

WEBSTER

Speech? -- Oh, no -- I'm a little tired,
Slossum. And, besides, it's so pleasant here --
in the sun.

(he stretches out his legs and
settles down on the small of his back)

Your sun and air are very pleasant in Cross
Corners.

He smiles and closes his eyes with a deep sigh.

SQUIRE

(sputtering)

-- but -- Mr. Webster --

He looks helplessly around at the others.

WEBSTER

(to the Squire)

You tell them --

VOICES

(from the crowd)

Speech, Dan'l Webster! Speech!

SQUIRE

(helplessly to the Committee)

What are we going to do, Gentlemen?

Suddenly, Jabez, who realizes the state Webster is in, moves away from the buggy; and jumps up on the tavern steps. He holds up his hands to the crowd. They gradually stop calling and give him their attention.

JABEZ

(beginning with a frog in his
throat, scared by his own

temerity)
Listen, folks -- Folks, I want to say -- Folks,
I -- I don't know much about speechifying --
(swallowing dryly)
-- but I feel it my duty --

There is an expectant silence, and Jabez, still scared, looks out at the crowd and gropes for further words.

At this point we get a fairly close view of Mary in the crowd. She is standing next to a tall, thin woman, Susannah Orr.

SUSANNAH
(looking off at Jabez)
What's the matter with him? Cat got his tongue?

MARY
Hush up, Susannah.

SUSANNAH
Jabez is a smart farmer. But making tall
speeches's different. Kin he do it?

MARY
Of course he can -- I mean he never has -- but
-- Oh, can't you keep quiet!

Now we get a close view of Jabez Stone, still standing on the steps of the tavern.

JABEZ
(continuing his speech)
Well, folks -- what I want to say is -- well,
when a man like Dan'l Webster visits us -- we
shouldn't ask him for a speech -- it is for us
-- to speak, to tell him that we farmers thank
our lucky stars every day in the year for what
Dan'l Webster's done for us. If anybody's got
corn in his crib and hay in his barn, it's all
due to our good neighbor, Dan'l Webster, who
stood right up in Congress to protect us from
loan sharks by a new law. And after hard work
like that, it's only natural Dan'l Webster
gets tired. He's tired of making speeches and
just wants a little rest in the sunshine --
and, folks, if he don't choose Cross Corner's
sunshine to rest in! Now that's mighty fine!
And I want to say this before I quit talking.
We're hoeing corn in Franklin County, all due,
like I says, to Dan'l Webster, and we'll keep
on hoeing it till he's in the White House in
Washington -- where he belongs.

Jabez bows and steps down from steps and is rewarded with applause and cheering. Webster has been soundly asleep but now he opens his eyes. He smiles at Jabez and stretches out his open hand. Jabez grips it, looking exalted.

WEBSTER

(still a little drowsy)
Eloquent speech, Neighbor Stone -- couldn't
have done better myself --
(with a sly smile)
-- under the circumstances.
(he squeezes his hand)
Thank you.

JABEZ

Mr. Webster -- I'd like you to meet my wife,
Mary.

WEBSTER

Well -- I'll be -- if it isn't little Mary
Sampson from Franklin.

MARY

(smiling)
It is.

WEBSTER

(putting out his hand to Mary)
You've got a smart man, Mrs. Stone. Hang onto
him.

MARY

(as they shake hands)
-- I'm going to try, Mr. Webster.

She blushes; then pauses.

WEBSTER

That's fine --
(then picking up horses' reins)
Well -- I'm getting on to Franklin before night.
Good-bye, Mary -- Good-bye, Jabez -- God bless
both of you -- Good-bye, everybody and thank
you.

He raises his hand to the crowd. They begin to cheer. The horses start
trotting off. Now, the band in a last minute rush comes and plays a farewell
tune for the departing Webster. Webster turns and waves as the crowd goes on
cheering. Jabez and Mary stand together, waving good-bye.

The STEPS IN FRONT OF THE INN: The Squire and the others are about to enter
the inn.

SQUIRE

Coming along, Jabez?

JABEZ

(to Mary)
Shall we?

MARY

We must go on home, Jabez.

JABEZ

Yes, Mary.

(with a self-satisfied
sigh and stretch)

It's been a long day.

The scene dissolves to the WASHINGTON ARMS TAVERN BARROOM, where we find the Squire, the Sheriff, the Schoolmaster, and a few other men. They have all been drinking heavily, even the host, Cy Bibber, who is not behind the bar where he should be. Instead, in his place is Scratch, smoothly and very efficiently mixing and serving the drinks.

SCRATCH

Another drink, Sheriff?

CY BIBBER

I want to make a toast --

(holding up cup that
Scratch fills again)

-- a toast to Dan'l Webster -- greatest man --
in whole United States!

Others cheer thickly and drink.

SCRATCH

Excellent, Mr. Bibber, excellent -- and I'd
like to make another one.

(raising his cup)

To Jabez Stone -- who so ably today supported
the --

(slurring it)

Great Dan'l Webster! -- Sometimes people don't
recognize great men in their own community.

CY BIBBER

(to the Squire)

Did you hear, Squire Slossum?

SQUIRE

Mr. Stone? -- a great man? -- Well, now -- I --
he seems to be a little overbearing -- driving
in Mr. Webster's carriage. No -- I am not so
sure about him.

SCRATCH

(to the Squire)

Another rum, Squire Slossum.

SQUIRE

(thickly)

-- Well -- I -- I don't know --

SCRATCH

What? You don't know? --

SQUIRE

Well, just one more -- and this is the last one.

The scene dissolves to the MAIN STREET OF CROSS CORNERS, dark and silent. The lights are out in the houses. From out of the tavern, their arms locked together, come the figures of Scratch, the Squire, Sheriff, Cy Bibber and the Schoolmaster. Scratch is in the middle.

We follow them as they weave in an unsteady line down the dark street. Softly they chant in their mellowed, dulcet tones, as the scene dissolves.

ALL OF THEM

We want Jabez Stone! -- for selectman -- Jabez Stone! Jabez Stone!

JABEZ STONE'S BEDROOM, a small room under the slope of the eaves: It is still that night. The lamp is lit. There is a big, fourposter New England bed with a canopy and patchwork quilts. Jabez and Mary are preparing for bed, Mary is finishing braiding her hair and Jabez is taking off his shoes.

JABEZ

(still in the dream)

Remember, Mary, how he said it: "Couldn't have done better myself, Jabez Stone," and it was my first speech. I don't know what came into me, Mary. I just stood up and the words came flowing like water out of my mouth.

MARY

(having said this many times since)

Oh, Jabez -- it was a wonderful day --

A pause. She finishes with her hair and begins to unbutton her dress.

MARY

But I'm glad to be home again --

JABEZ

(looking up at her)

Tired?

MARY

Worried!

JABEZ

There is nothing to worry about now.

MARY

(anxiously)

You'll never change -- will you?

JABEZ

Mary -- you just wait and see -- It's all -- just the beginning -- just the beginning -- of everything. I'll be the biggest man in New

Hampshire and you'll be the wife of the biggest man.

But now Shep is barking in the yard. Jabez turns from Mary and goes toward the window to open it, unbuttoning his shirt. We get a close view of Jabez at the window as he opens it and the curtain flutters in the breeze that smells of earth. We see the new moon from Jabez's angle, just sinking over the sharp hills.

JABEZ

Quiet, Shep --
(taking in a deep breath)
It's a new moon, Mary --

MARY'S VOICE

Yes, I know, Jabez -- a new moon. And I saw it over my right shoulder, too. That means good luck -- for both of us.

JABEZ

Yes -- we are rich --

MARY

(after a pause)
There's hope and promise in it, Jabez --
Planting and promise of good harvest to come.

JABEZ

(taking another deep breath)
Yes -- you are right, Mary. I can almost hear the little blades of grass a-starting up --
All the seeds a-stirring underneath the ground --

MARY

(after a pause, softly)
Don't take cold, Jabez.
(after another pause)
Come -- it's warm in here.

The lamp is blown out and the room becomes dark, except for the thin light of the moon. Jabez's figure is bathed in it for a moment. He turns from the window, just as the unmistakable figure of Scratch is seen, watching from the shadow of a tree, but Jabez has no eyes for him now.

In the gentle glow of moonlight, Jabez's tall figure is seen going toward the bed, while Mary is lying under the covers, her face turned to him on the pillow, waiting.

JABEZ

Mary --

MARY

Jabez --

He kisses her, then reaches out and touches the very edge of the bed as the scene fades out.

A HILLSIDE FIELD back of the Stone house fades in. It is just before noon next day, and Jabez is doing his spring plowing. The horse is old and so is the plow, but we should get some feeling of the essential strength and beauty of earth here -- and of Jabez's real kinship with it -- his stride across the furrows and the feeling of his feet honestly gripping the good earth. Then a closer view picks out Jabez plowing and now a horn is heard blowing from the house; it is a horn used to call men in from the fields. Thereupon Jabez stops and goes to the house.

The KITCHEN-SIDE of the Stone House, near the porch: As Jabez and Ma Stone come up, Mary, sleeves rolled back, is fresh from her washtub.

MARY

(seeing Jabez)

Oh, Jabez -- I hated to call you from spring plowing, but--

The Squire, his wife, Lucy, Schoolmaster Phipps and the Sheriff: The Squire, Sheriff and Schoolmaster all look suspiciously bleary and are suffering from headaches. The Squire, in particular, looks unfortunate, being so pompous anyhow.

JABEZ

(excited)

Why -- good morning, Squire.

SQUIRE

Morning, Jabez.

OTHERS

'Morning, Jabez.

JABEZ

'Morning, Mrs. Slossum.

SQUIRE

Ahem -- we want to have a little confidential talk with you, Neighbor Stone. Don't like to take a man away from his planting -- but sometimes --

JABEZ

Come right into the parlor, won't you, folks.

MA STONE

(displaying her new shawl, proudly, now that there is distinguished company. She is smoothing the part in her hair)

Well -- Lucy Slossum! Come right in with us, won't you?

LUCY

Thanks, Mrs. Stone.

They go into the house.

The STONE PARLOR: It is a frigid place, with sparse, unfriendly furniture and a horse-hair memorial to a departed Stone on the wall. The place might well be a marble vault. Jabez ushers the Squire, Sheriff and Schoolmaster into it. They sit down uncomfortably on hard chairs, shivering a bit.

JABEZ

Mighty good of you to come out, Squire --
sparing all this time to --
(looking at others suspiciously)
Sheriff, too -- and Schoolmaster -- mighty
nice.

SQUIRE

Ahem -- Neighbor Stone, we want--

His head is killing him. The Sheriff and the Schoolmaster are not happy, either.

SQUIRE

(moaning)
Oh!

JABEZ

(concerned)
Headache -- Squire?

SQUIRE

Worst I had in years -- ahem -- starting a
spring cold, I guess -- er -- don't happen to
have a bit of camomile tea in the house, do
you, Stone?

JABEZ

Camomile tea!

The STONE KITCHEN: Mary, now trimmed up a bit for company, but still flushed and steamed-looking, is sitting with Lucy Slossum and Ma Stone. Jabez enters from the parlor.

JABEZ

Mary, get three cups of camomile tea for the
Squire and the rest. They all feel colds coming
on.

MARY

I'll get it, Jabez.

JABEZ

Thanks, Mary.

He goes back to the parlor, and Mary goes to cupboard and gets down jug of cider and some cups.

LUCY

Poor Henry, he's suffering mighty sharp. Had an
important committee meeting last night, and

didn't get home till midnight. I was asleep, of course, that late, but this morning -- My! --

MA STONE

(dryly)

There's one thing good for that kind of headache. Let me show you.

The STONE PARLOR: The Squire has managed to get to his feet and is speaking formally.

SQUIRE

And so, Jabez Stone, in the name of the Whig Party of Cross Corners, we offer you the nomination of that party for Selectman.

JABEZ

(stunned)

Selectman? Selectman of the village? Me?

The Sheriff and the Schoolmaster clap their hands.

SHERIFF

Fine speech you made yesterday, Jabez. Shows you've got the stuff.

SQUIRE

New blood -- and old stock.

JABEZ

But -- I was just lucky.

SQUIRE

Well? Don't a politician have to be?

SHERIFF

It seems such an obvious candidature to us all.

JABEZ

(taking a deep breath)

Very well, folks. I accept.

SQUIRE

Good! That's the right New Hampshire stuff! Now -- ahem -- if we could make a little toast to that effect.

MARY

(entering with cups on a tray)

Here, Jabez --

JABEZ

(taking the tray)

Mary! I'm -- Selectman of Cross Corners!

MARY

(looking at him, frightened and as

though she has suddenly lost him)
Oh -- Jabez.

She turns and runs from the room. Jabez turns and looks after her. Then he shrugs, turns back to the men, and begins passing out cups to them.

 SQUIRE
 (holding up his cup)
To our new Selectman, Jabez Stone!

They drink taking it down in one thirsty gulp, and smack their lips. Suddenly, all three who drank look at each other -- strange, foiled looks coming over their faces. Their lips pucker up.

 SHERIFF
I'll be blowed -- nanny-plum laxative tea!

They all look, bewildered, at Jabez.

The KITCHEN: Ma and Mrs. Slossum are looking over a box filled with paper slips -- recipes.

 MA STONE
And if this doesn't do it, then you try this
recipe.

 MRS. SLOSSUM
Thank you -- Ma Stone.

 MARY
 (entering with the
 tray of empty cups)
Oh, Mrs. Slossum, they are all leaving -- you
better hurry up if you don't want to stay here.

Mrs. Slossum swallows her last piece of pie -- wipes her fingers and rushes out.

 MRS. SLOSSUM
Good-bye, Ma Stone. Good-bye, Mary, and thanks
for everything.

 MA STONE
 (who has looked into the
 cups Mary brought in)
They really finished it, and to the last drop
-- my, my.

She goes to the window where we see the buggy leaving with all the visitors in it.

 MARY
You know, Ma, why the Squire came to see Jabez?

 MA STONE
Yes, Mrs. Slossum told me -- Lucy can't even
keep a secret -- Selectman -- my son -- well,

who would have thought of that?

JABEZ

(who has by now entered the
room and heard Ma's speech)
You could have knocked me down with a feather
-- Selectman -- me.

MARY

(who doesn't want to talk about
it, for fear she might cry)
I'll never get my washing done.

JABEZ

That's one thing I want to talk to you about,
Mary.

MARY

(with a curtsy)
Yes, Mr. Selectman!

JABEZ

I'm serious.

MARY

It's very becoming to you, Mr. Selectman.

JABEZ

But it's not very becoming to you to have your
hands in the suds -- when the Squire and his
wife --

MARY

(bewildered)
But Jabez -- the washing has to be done --

JABEZ

Well -- that's the last time -- we'll have
servants to do it.

MARY

No, no. I don't want to be idle.

JABEZ

And I don't want to have a washwoman for a wife.

MA STONE

Well, son, I'm glad to see a Stone come up in
the world again.

JABEZ

Now look here, Ma. I'm not a boy anymore. I
want that understood. I don't aim to stay a
one-horse farmer the rest of my life. Mary's
got to be the kind of wife a -- a big man
needs --

MARY

Jabez -- once you said we'd never change --

JABEZ

I wasn't used to being big -- wasn't used to thinking in big ways. Now, I've made up my mind.

He leaves, the two women looking after him, thoroughly puzzled.

The YARD of the Stone Farm: Jabez, coming from the kitchen, sees Hank, a neighboring farmer, lingering about. (It is day.)

HANK

Howdy, Jabez.

JABEZ

Howdy, Hank.

HANK

(meekly, with a feeling of apology)
Kin you spare a moment for me Jabez?

JABEZ

(condescendingly)
Why, of course, Hank -- I've always got time for a neighbor. What's on your mind?

HANK

Well -- here's how it is ...Tom Sharp, Eli Higgins and a couple of others been talking to me about -- that new sort of organization -- grange they call it. What you think about it?

JABEZ

I don't know -- don't seem much of an idea to me.

HANK

Yes, but what does a farmer do if he don't want to get roped in some more by them loan sharks?

JABEZ

Oh -- you don't have to go to Miser Stevens while I'm around.

HANK

Don't I? ... Say, that's mighty white of you, Jabez.

JABEZ

Not at all, Hank ... not at all. Glad to help you.

HANK

Thanks, Jabez -- I really wouldn't need very much ... if you could let me have some seed to

start off with enough for spring planting ...

JABEZ

Seed? ... Easiest thing in the world. Come along, Hank, we'll pick out everything you need, right now.

They walk toward the barn.

HANK

Say ... about the interest ...

JABEZ

Now don't you worry about that. You just leave it all to me. We won't talk business now ... just bear this in mind ... I'm not the man to get rich on other people's hard luck.... No, sir... not me! ...

They enter the barn.

JABEZ

I been through the mill myself, an' I know just how you feel. Here ...

In the BARN, Jabez bends over the seed bin, Hank standing beside him.

JABEZ

Here, that's the best seed you'll find anywhere around New Hampshire.

And as the seed runs through Jabez's hand the scene dissolves to a series of views ("montage shots") of the STONE FARM by day: We see it prospering under the skies of late spring and then summer. We see all the stony fields blossoming ... the little blades of green starting from the earth; the corn growing thick and mighty high in one field ... the barley rank and heavy-headed in another. We see a fine new bull being led to the barn, and two new cows. The corn and barley stand ripe and golden in Jabez's fields.

This dissolves to the BEDROOM on a late afternoon: Mary, her eyes closed, is lying on the fourposter bed. She is fully dressed. Her bosom rises and falls in the breathing of gentle sleep. Jabez has just come in. His hair is boyishly ruffled. His face, however, seems more mature and serious with a growing self-importance.

JABEZ

(in a whisper)

Mary ...

He stops on seeing her asleep and turns away from the bed. He starts back toward door; turns to the bed again; comes back to it and pulls the patchwork quilt up over Mary, covering her. Then he tiptoes out.

In the KITCHEN Ma Stone sits by the fireplace, knitting. She readjusts her spectacles and squints a bit. Jabez enters, having come downstairs again, and

paces up and down the room.

MA STONE

It won't be the first baby ever born in this house.

(fumbling with her knitting)

There! Made me drop a stitch!

(as Jabez continues his pacing)

Sit down, you make me nervous!

(But he doesn't sit)

Lan's, that's the way a man always is. Thinks his son's the most important thing in the world.

JABEZ

My son! Do you really think, Ma....

MA STONE

(laughing)

Oh, go along with you! As if it mattered to a grandma! But p'raps you got an even chance.

There is a sudden blink of lightning at the window.

MA STONE

Looks like a storm, all of a sudden. Hope it won't wake Mary.

She lights a lamp.

JABEZ

(looking out the window)

Queer sort of weather we're having -- queer like everything else.

MA STONE

Well, thank the Lord you can always depend on New England for weather. We've got enough for the whole United States.

JABEZ

I feel -- fidgety, Ma -- not right at all.

MA STONE

Lan's, I'd think you was having the baby, to hear you.

JABEZ

(after a pause)

Me -- a son.

He pauses and glances at the window as though somebody might be there looking in at him. He sees only the dark clouds and the racked tree on which his doom is carved. He speaks out of his fears:

JABEZ

Money -- money's a funny thing, ain't it, Ma?

MA STONE

I figure that depends a mite on how you get it
and how you spend it, Son.

JABEZ

(eagerly)

Do you really think that?

MA STONE

Why, that's just sense, Son. Now a man like
Daniel Webster -- guess they pay him high for
what he does. But he's worth it -- and he helps
others. Makes all the difference.

JABEZ

I know, Ma, but -- Suppose a man got his money
in bad ways --

MA STONE

(with a snap of her jaws)

Wouldn't profit him none.

Jabez is glancing again at the darkened window when there is a flash of
lightning, as though mocking him.

MA STONE

You see, son? I'm old and I've lived. When a
man gets his money in bad ways -- when he sees
the better course and takes the worse -- then
the devil is in his heart -- and that fixes
him.

JABEZ

Ma -- and yet, a man could change that,
couldn't he?

MA STONE

A man can always change things, Son. That's
what makes him different from barnyard
critters.

Jabez, having stared out of the window at the racked tree, now heads with
determination for the door.

MA STONE

Where you going, Son?

But Jabez does not heed her and goes out silently.

OUTSIDE THE STONE FARM: Dark clouds are rolling up steadily and there are
occasional flashes of distant lightning.

We follow Jabez as he hastens along and comes up to the racked tree. He looks
about him, rather furtively, taking care not to be seen, then takes out a
large pocket knife and attempts to gouge out the date that Scratch had fixed

on the tree. But he finds that the lettering is too deep and makes no headway. And, giving up the attempt, Jabez determines on something else. He rushes to the barn.

Now Jabez enters the BARN and hunts about. He finds an ax and is about to start out to attack the tree again when the drumming of a great burst of hail is heard on the roof and sheets of it are seen falling outside the barn door. The pellets of hail are enormous. Then, as Jabez stops and whirls about, Scratch emanates from the shadows, or is suddenly revealed in a flash of lightning, standing calm, suave and smiling.

SCRATCH
Good evening, Neighbor Stone.

JABEZ
Look here now--

SCRATCH
Oh come, Neighbor Stone. I wouldn't cut that tree if I were you. It means a breach of contract.

JABEZ
I don't care.

SCRATCH
But you should, now that you are becoming a father.

JABEZ
Leave your tongue off of that!

SCRATCH
Oh, certainly. I shan't even come to the christening -- it would be tactless and in wretched bad taste.
(laughing)
But I may send a friend of mine -- just for old sake's sake. Yes, I might do that.

He strokes his chin thoughtfully.

MA STONE'S VOICE
(outside, calling)
Jabez! Jabez!

SCRATCH
Your mother! I find her a little difficult -- hardly the type for our sort of thing.
(stepping back)
Good night, Neighbor Stone.

Scratch bows and leaves, almost imperceptibly, through the rear door; one moment he is there, the next he is gone, leaving Jabez staring after him. The hail continues to fall. The cattle come out of their trance-like silence. The horse stamps. Jabez goes toward the warped board where the money is hidden

when Ma Stone enters through the front door. Over her head she holds an old coat to protect her from the hail.

MA STONE

(breathless)

Oh, here you are, Jabez. Lan's, I was worried about you... Hail in August! The crops will be ruined!

JABEZ

It don't matter!

MA STONE

What's that you say, Son?

JABEZ

I say -- it don't matter.

MA STONE

(also greatly relieved)

Now that's the way to talk, Son! I know you worked hard for that crop. But we'll make out.

JABEZ

Make out? We'll do better than that! I never thought I'd be glad for bad luck, but I am. I never thought I'd be glad of a hail storm at harvest time, but I am! Oh, bless ye the works of the Lord in the hail and the storm and the rain!

Ma Stone nods again, lips still pursed. Hail drums loudly on the roof. Twilight has dropped outside and it is dark.

The scene dissolves to JABEZ STONE'S CORNFIELD early next morning: We see not only Jabez's cornfield but the fields of neighboring farmers, farther down the slope and up the valley. In the bright light of the glistening morning, Jabez's field of corn stands straight and high, the golden banners waving in the breeze, unscathed by the devastating hail of the night before. But in tragic contrast, the neighbors' fields are laid low to the earth, pelted down into worthlessness. Jabez, Mary and Ma stand by the stone fence, near the road, staring in wonder at the miracle of their standing corn.

MARY

Ruined -- all the fields -- ruined.
(kneels down as in prayer)

JABEZ

Mary -- but look -- it didn't touch an ear of my corn -- we'll have a rich harvest.

MA STONE

For unto everyone that hath shall be given --
and he shall have abundance.

Jabez, lifting his head, looks at her with a sudden and unpredictable challenge.

JABEZ

That's right, Ma!

As he stands there, silent under the bright morning, two farmers, owners of the blasted fields beyond, pass him on the road, going down to their fields. They walk with a discouraged slump to their shoulders and lagging steps. As they come up to Jabez he greets them.

JABEZ

Helloh, Hank -- halloh Lem --

But they don't answer. They raise their eyes and look at him, and then at his prosperous field and then back at him again. Their eyes seem to bore through him with a burning accusation, and they hardly nod their heads in greeting as they trudge on. Jabez looks after them, conscience-stricken. Then he turns abruptly and starts back toward his farmhouse.

At the "WASHINGTON ARMS" TAVERN later that day. A group of farmers is congregated in corners where the bar is located. Some of the farmers we have seen before are there -- Lem, Noah, Tom Sharp, and others we have not seen, keep on drifting in. Cy Bibber, the host and bartender, is serving drinks.

LEM

(at the bar)

Charge me up for another rum, Cy. Only way I kin forget my troubles.

CY BIBBER

Sorry, Lem, but I'll have to count my pennies, too.

STEVENS

(to Bibber)

Let him have one more -- on me.

(to Lem)

You'd think Stone's standing in good with Providence, somehow.

LEM

My corn's no more use than a last year's crow's nest.

STEVENS

Maybe you'd let me help you out a bit.

SETH

Seems like someone's giving us the horse-laugh.

TOM SHARP

Guess you're ripe and ready now to join our Grange, eh, boys?

STEVENS

Now wait a moment, folks ... I can make you some better terms.

At this point Scratch, in farmer's clothes, enters and comes to the bar.

CY BIBBER

Howdy.

SCRATCH

Howdy. -- Never did see such a hail! Big as bowling balls out my way. Broke all the winders an' nearly killed the cat. I'll have cider -- hard.

(turning to the others)

Boys, I'm here with an offer from Jabez Stone.

LEM

What's that?

SCRATCH

Well -- seeing as how due to yesterday's hail, nobody's got nothing to harvest in his own fields, Jabez says maybe you could help him harvest his.

There is a pause as the farmers look at each other uncomfortably. They feel the humiliation of this, but they know they are in no position to refuse.

SETH

(bitterly)

Never worked fer anybody else in my whole life, 'ceptin' when I was a shaver, and that was for my old man.

TOM SHARP

I wouldn't do it.

LEM

Well -- dunno -- I'll think it over.

SCRATCH

(with a smile)

What's there to think about, boys? Here's a dollar in advance for every one who will work for Jabez.

He throws down money on the bar.

And now STONE'S FIELDS come to view. The farmers are cutting and shocking Jabez's bumper corn crop -- Seth, Lem, Noah, Tom Sharp, and others. Jabez rides through the fields on his sleek new horse, watching his neighbors harvest his crops. He shows a certain condescension toward them which is akin to arrogance.

Another view of Jabez's fields discloses the harvest, in great bursting wagons, rolling into the barn. The big new barn is fast approaching completion. The wagons keep on rolling into the barn, watched over by Jabez like a Lord of the Manor. Not only is Jabez harvesting corn and hay but autumn fruits, too, in abundance.

The scene then dissolves to the OUTSIDE BEDROOM in the evening while faint festive music is heard -- simple folk-music played on fiddle, fife and banjo mostly. It is coming from Jabez's new barn where the harvest festival is in full swing. Outside is the great red harvest moon, just rising. Jabez goes to the closed door and listens, putting his ear against it. He makes as though to rap on the door, but changes his mind. He walks away again, digging his hands in his pockets, and paces back and forth. Suddenly, Ma Stone opens the door.

JABEZ
(rushing to help)
Ma -- is she? --

MA STONE
(complacently)
You'll be a father any minute now.

JABEZ
(gulping)
Golly, Ma --
(as music from barn swells up)
Consarn that music! Shouldn't a-had the
harvest festival tonight.

MA STONE
Fiddlesticks! She don't hear it. Got better
music to listen to than that.
(as there is the sudden cry
of a newlyborn child)
There -- that's what I mean.

Jabez stands spellbound as the strident cry of the child drowns out the music of the dance, and Ma Stone turns back into the room. Presently, Jabez, on tiptoes, moves to the room, frightened and trembling.

The scene dissolves to the OTHER BEDROOM at night. Mary is lying in a fourposter bed. A maid, typically New England, and the doctor are there. The doctor is just placing the baby, wrapped up in blankets, beside Mary and prepares to leave. Things necessary to a birth are about the room -- kettle and basin of hot water, towels, and other articles. Mary looks down from her pillow at her baby, parting the cocoon of covers to see its tiny, wrinkled face. Jabez tiptoes up to the bed.

JABEZ
Mary --

MARY
(smiling up at him weakly)
Hello, Jabez --
(after a pause)
Here's your son.

Jabez, too emotional to speak, stares down at the baby, a suspicion of moisture in his eyes. Mary closes her eyes, weakly but happily. Ma Stone, watching Mary anxiously, speaks in whisper to the maid.

MA STONE

Fetch a bed warmer, Dorothy.

The maid nods and goes out. Jabez still stands looking down on the baby as the doctor is putting things back in his bag. Jabez takes up the baby, awkwardly, as though handling something made of glass, and steps to the window that looks out on the new barn. He raises the window and the music comes floating into the room. He leans from window, holding the baby high in his arms.

The NEW BARN at night (seen from Jabez's angle): There is a view of the front barn door, thrown open, providing a glimpse of the merry-makers inside, dancing. Groups, bathed in the light of the moon, stand near the door, talking and laughing.

JABEZ
(calling down, boyishly)
Hey! Look, everybody! Look here! It's a boy!

The group at the door stands transfixed for a moment, then they begin to cheer.

GROUP
Hurray for Jabez Stone! More good luck for
Jabez Stone! Hurray! Jabez Stone and his new
son!

The good word travels into the barn. Others crowd to the door. Musicians swing into something gay and triumphant. Cups of cider are passed about. They drink to Jabez and the new boy -- and to Mary Stone.

MA STONE
(behind Jabez)
Lan's, shut that window, Jabez! Want him to
catch his death of cold?

She takes the baby away from him.

JABEZ
(a little sheepishly)
Well -- I -- I-

MARY
Don't be cross with him, Ma. This don't happen
every day.

Ma Stone puts the baby down beside Mary again, in the curve of her arm. Mary opens her eyes; she smiles weakly and snuggles her cheek down against the baby. The baby cries and she hushes it.

MA STONE
You go down and see what's keeping Dorothy.

JABEZ
Sure, Ma.

He hurries past the doctor, still collecting his things; he pats him on the shoulder, as man to man.

JABEZ
(as he goes out)
Thanks, doctor.

The KITCHEN: In front of the fireplace, with her back turned to the door, a woman is standing. She is looking into the fire, seemingly musing over the blinking coals. Jabez comes hurriedly downstairs.

JABEZ
(bursting in)
Dorothy -- what's keeping you so long? Mary needs that --

He stops and looks intently. The woman turns slowly and looks him straight in the eye. She is a young, slender woman, with a strange, sultry prettiness; she is externally demure but underneath there is a definite feeling of seething fire like the coals in the fireplace. She is simply dressed but still better dressed than any woman we have yet seen in the picture.

JABEZ
(taken aback)
You're not -- Dorothy.

THE WOMAN
(quietly, in a low toned, musical voice -- unhurried and deliberate)
No. She's gone.

JABEZ
(looking about incredulous)
She couldn't be gone!

THE WOMAN
But she is -- I've taken her place. Don't you remember -- you wrote me a letter. Mrs. Stone was too ill.

She digs down into the bosom of her gown and produces a letter. She shows it to him. Jabez stares at it.

JABEZ
It -- it looks like my hand.

She lets the letter drop from her hand and it twirls into the fire where it flares up abruptly.

THE WOMAN
I have other recommendations, too, from a very good friend of yours.

She makes a movement as if to produce them from the same place.

JABEZ
(hoarsely)
Never mind. What's your name?

THE WOMAN

Belle.

JABEZ

Belle --

BELLE

Belle Dee. I'm from over the mountain.

JABEZ

(as if hypnotized)

From over the mountain --

Jabez continues to look at her and she holds his eye, steadily.

MA STONE'S VOICE

(calling down the stair)

Jabez! Jabez!

Belle turns to the fireplace to fill the warming pan with coal.

JABEZ

I'll take it.

BELLE

No -- that's for me to do.

She starts for the door passing on her way up Ma Stone who has gone to show the doctor out.

The BEDROOM as Belle enters the room with the pan:

MARY

(out of a dream)

Jabez -- ?

BELLE

(her voice very gentle and soothing)

I've brought you something to keep you warm,
Mrs. Stone --

Belle props up Mary's pillows, making them more comfortable, and puts the bed warmer in place. Mary simply stares at her. Instinctively her arm tightens about her little son. The music from the harvest festival is heard from outside.

BELLE

You're not resting well, are you? I know --
it's that music.

(she closes the window)

You need your sleep. Is there anything else you
want?

MARY

(very gratefully)

No, thank you -- what's your name?

BELLE

Belle --

MARY

Thank you, Belle --

She leaves as Ma Stone comes in.

MARY

(dreamily, as her eyes close)

What a nice -- and kind girl -- Who is she --?

MA STONE

The new girl -- Jabez says; she is from over
the mountain.

MARY

What mountain?

Then her voice trails off and she sinks into sleep.

The NEW BARN: The fodder bins and loft spaces are stuffed with the fruits of the harvest. It is a very large barn, representing the prosperity of Jabez Stone. Now it is brightly lit by lantern light and is decorated with sheaves of barley, tall stalks of corn, pumpkins and golden leaves from the autumn woods. The platform for the musicians is at the other end of the barn, and a refreshment table, where cider is being served, is on one side of the wall. On the opposite side are tables, groaning with food -- cakes, pies, cold meats, sausages, chickens, ducks, etc.

A square dance is just beginning, as Belle appears, moving gracefully through the gay crowd. She has found a gay shawl to drape about her shoulders -- an exotic shawl that might have come into New Hampshire from the cargo of a clipper ship, smelling of the Far East and dark ports of call. Everybody is having a good time except Miser Stevens who sits gloomily in a corner. Near the musicians' stand, where couples are gathering for the next dance, the fiddler is Mr. Scratch, and as he looks down at Belle, he tucks his fiddle under his sharp chin and begins to play, very softly. Belle stands, her hands loosely clasped on her hips. Jabez comes up behind her.

JABEZ

Let's dance together -- Belle.

BELLE

(turning slowly)

No, Jabez -- your place is with your wife --

She smiles. The fiddler plays a little louder and the other musicians pick up the tune. Belle dances forward, alone, and is leading the couples as they start to dance.

BELLE

(gaily)

Faster -- faster --

Scratch, over his fiddle, smiles down at her and nods.

BELLE
(dancing on)
Faster -- faster --

She breathes this out at Jabez as she passes him. The dancers move faster and faster. There is something utterly abandoned about it. The harvest moon gleams in at the great door. Then the scene fades out.

The BEDROOM, cold moonlight in the room: It is a winter night, and a candle burns beside Mary. Between Mary and Jabez lies the baby. The baby cries and Mary turns and tries to soothe it.

MARY
Shh -- go to sleep, little Daniel -- go to
sleep.

The baby continues to cry. Mary hums a little song to the child.

MARY
(singing)
Potato bug sits on the leaf in the sun,
Sleep, sleep, my baby --
Raccoon sits in the spruce all night,
Sleep, baby, sleep --

JABEZ
(who has not been asleep,
speaks irritably)
What in sugar hill's the matter with him?

MARY
Nothing, Jabez -- just natural for a baby to
cry, sometimes.
(as the baby still cries, she
tries to quiet him again)
Shh, little Daniel -- sleep -- sleep --

She continues her song, but it does not help.

JABEZ
(flinging back the covers angrily)
Consarn it!

He gets up.

MARY
Jabez!

Jabez is getting into his trousers.

MARY
Where are you going -- ?

Jabez opens the door, still struggling with his clothes, and goes out, shutting the door after him. Mary sits up in bed, looking bewildered at the closed door.

MARY
(calling)
Jabez! Jabez!

His footsteps dwindle down the stairs. A silence. Mary drops back on her pillow. Tears start to her eyes. She blinks them away. The baby keeps on crying.

The scene dissolves to a COUNTRY ROAD IN WINTER, the sun shining on the banks of snow. Visible now is Jabez's sleigh, the graceful, swan-like kind of 1840, and Jabez's new, sleek horse is pulling it. There are bells on the harness, gaily jingling as the sleigh goes skimming over the icy road, up hill, then onto a lake, locked in ice.

Next JABEZ'S SLEIGH appears at close range and Jabez is seen driving with Belle, in becoming winter costume, seated beside him. The keen wind blows against her cheeks, reddening them into the semblance of Christmas berries, hard and brightly scarlet. Her eyes glitter like sparklets of frost. Jabez wears a coonskin cap and a great winter coat. He is urging on the horse, faster and faster, flicking its rump with his whip.

JABEZ
(laughing)
Golly, Belle, that was a good idea -- we should
do that every morning.

BELLE
We will --

Jabez laughs. Belle laughs, too, very softly.

BELLE
Make him go faster, Jabez -- faster --
faster --

Jabez calls to the horse and flicks the whip. They skim on toward the lake.

The LAKE is seen closer: It is day, and the lake is like a jewel of crystal in a setting of black spruce trees. We see the dark figure of a man, on the ice of the lake, stooping over a hole he has cut there.

Now the sleigh appears on the edge of the lake.

JABEZ
(standing up in sleigh
and waving his whip)
Hey, you! Hey!

A close view discloses a man by the hole in the ice. Bundled up in heavy clothes, the man is fishing. He is pulling up a fish through the hole, beside him a pile of fish he has just caught. He turns as he hears Jabez's voice.

JABEZ'S VOICE
You can't fish there! Private property! I'm
Jabez Stone! I'll have the Sheriff after you!

The man, frightened, begins to run. He leaves his other fish behind him, but

holds onto his line with a fish dangling to it. He runs across the ice, slipping, falling, getting up again and running. He plunges into the spruces on the other side of the lake.

A close view of Jabez's sleigh discloses Belle laughing as she watches the man running and falling on the ice. Jabez is still standing up in the sleigh, brandishing his whip and laughing, too. He drops back in the sleigh again as the man disappears.

JABEZ

(still laughing)

It's wonderful to frighten people like that --
and watch them run.

As Jabez picks up the fish the scene dissolves to the KITCHEN, where a bright fire is burning in the fireplace. Ma Stone is standing by the doorway to the stairs, dressed in her Sunday clothes, wearing her new shawl, and putting on her bonnet. The baby is lying in its cradle by the fire.

MA STONE

(calling upstairs)

Mary! Ready? First bell's a-ringing!

MARY

(coming downstairs)

Yes, Ma -- I'm ready --

She enters the room, dressed in "Sunday-best" also. The baby whimpers and Mary starts toward the cradle, but before she gets there, Jabez and Belle enter. They are dressed as we last saw them in the sleigh, and their faces are ruddy from the wind over the snow. Belle instantly crosses to the cradle; she throws off her heavy wrap and kneels beside the baby, crooning to it, and the baby stops crying. Jabez strides to the table and throws the fish down on it.

JABEZ

(turning to Mary)

Good morning, Mary. Brought some fish for us.
Want you to cook 'em for breakfast.

Mary turns and looks at him, her soft eyes filled with pain and confusion.

MA STONE

She'll do nothing of the kind! She's going to
church with me, right away!

MARY

(voice shaking)

Jabez -- for the good of your soul ... please
come with us.

JABEZ

I want you to fix these fish!

MA STONE

And I say she won't! I'll not have the scorn
of God on this place -- with the smell of fish

in it, polluting up the Sabbath!
(turning to Belle)
And as for you -- let me tell you, young
woman...!

Church bells are heard faintly.

MARY
Come along, Ma. Second bell's a-ringing.

Mary crosses to Ma Stone and they go, closing the door behind them. We hear Mary and Ma driving away in the buggy.

JABEZ
We'll cook 'em ourselves. You'll help me, Belle.

BELLE
Of course I will.

At this moment, the front door opens and Stevens enters.

STEVENS
Mornin', Jabez ...

JABEZ
Hello, Stevens ... you're early today.

STEVENS
Yes, I wanted to get here before the others....
I want to talk to you alone.

JABEZ
Some other time, Stevens.

Jabez hurries about the room, arranging chairs and pulling out a table from the wall. He seems to know exactly what to do, from long practice. He goes to the cupboard, brings out some bottles of rum and hard cider and cups, and goes to a drawer in the table and produces a dice box and dice. There is a rap on the back door, and Belle goes gracefully to the door and opens it, making a low curtsy. Squire Slossum, Aaron Coffin, the heavy-set banker of Cross Corners, and two other silent, poker-faced men sneak in.

SQUIRE AND OTHERS
(the Squire beating his
cold hands together)
Good morning, m'am -- Good morning, Jabez.

JABEZ AND BELLE
Good morning.

BELLE
Sit down, gentlemen.

SQUIRE
(ogling her)
Thanks, m'am.

He sits, pompously, at the head of the table. The others sit about the same table. Jabez draws up a chair, too, and takes up the dice box, rattling the dice.

SQUIRE

I almost forgot --

He brings out a roll of bills and hands them reluctantly over to Jabez.

JABEZ

I hope you'll have better luck today, Squire.

Jabez counts the bills, avidly and over-carefully, holding some up to the light to see that they are not counterfeit; then pockets the bills. He begins to roll the dice as each man silently stacks up his betting money before him. The game proceeds, and Belle serves the rum and hard cider, watching the men as they play. Suddenly the baby begins to cry again. Belle goes to it instantly, and takes it up from the cradle and rocks it in her arms. She croons to it. The song she croons is a French lullaby. It has a strange, haunting melody, and the French words fall curiously in that New England kitchen.

SQUIRE

(again ogling her)

You French?

BELLE

(looking at him through
half-closed eyes)

No -- I'm not anything.

She goes on singing.

JABEZ

Your game, Squire!

There is a commanding rap on the door. The players are startled, and they pause.

BELLE

(looking out the window)

Sheriff's coming --

Belle very calmly goes to the door.

JABEZ

Come in, Sheriff.

SHERIFF

Jabez -- seems like I've been hearing talk around. Reverend Harper thinks more Cross Corners folk oughter be in church, Sabbath morning.

JABEZ

Belle, give the Sheriff a cup of rum.

THE CROSS CORNERS CHURCH, with the congregation assembled: It is the very end of the service. The severity and serenity of the Sabbath peace lies like a blessing over the bowed heads of the faithful. In the third pew we see Ma Stone and Mary, with an empty place beside them.

VOICE OF MINISTER

Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage; we humbly beseech Thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of Thy favor and glad to do Thy will. Save us from discord and confusion; from pride and arrogancy, and from every evil way ...

MARY

Save Jabez from pride and arrogancy, and from every evil way.

VOICE OF MINISTER

In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in our day of trouble, suffer not our trust in Thee to fail -- amen.

VOICE OF CONGREGATION

(in unison)

Amen.

They lift their heads. The church bell begins to peal. Another service is ended.

The KITCHEN: The bells peal through this and now faintly come to the ears of the players, among them the Sheriff. They look up. The last dice are rolled quickly. Money is gathered in; debts are paid. Silently, and in haste, the guests collect their coats and hats and mufflers. They begin to file out the door.

SQUIRE

Good-bye, Stone -- next Sunday, as usual.

He smiles unctuously at Belle and goes out. When they are all gone, Jabez closes the door. Belle is putting away the table and the cups and jugs. Jabez hides the cards. Belle returns to her care of the baby. She sits demurely down on a low stool beside the cradle and begins to rock it, humming softly to the child. The bells from Cross Corners gradually stop ringing over the snow-locked countryside. Jabez draws up a chair to the table and begins adding up his winnings in his account book and ledgers.

He hunts for the date in an old-fashioned almanac ... finds it ... puts his finger on it. We see Jabez's fingers turning the pages of the almanac -- the leaves turning swiftly, and we see the years drop away, faster and faster -- leaves of the years falling from the tree of Time.

BLUEPRINTS of a house (Jabez Stone's mansion) appear. Jabez's hand makes notes and corrections. Details of the front view of the new house appear until finally the full view of the mansion is seen over the shoulder of a man on horseback, dressed for fox hunting. Workmen are still putting the finishing touches on the new house. Furniture is carried in through the doors. The man on horseback slowly turns his head -- it is Jabez Stone. He

looks back at the old farm where he was born. Then the scene fades out.

The EXTERIOR OF THE FARMHOUSE fades in. It is morning, and Ma Stone, in her regular old working clothes, grimly sticking to them in a spirit of defiance, is tending her flower beds and "herb" garden, near the side porch, transplanting tender new slips. Her sleeves are rolled up and her arms and hands are covered with good earth. She is kneeling over a flower bed. Jabez's little son Daniel is with her.

DANIEL

Granny, when do we move to the new house?

MA STONE

Move? -- We are not going to move -- the old one is good enough for us.

DANIEL

But I like the new one better.

MA STONE

That's just too bad --

Daniel, very cautiously, takes out his beanshooter. A mother hen and her chicks come around the side of the house, pecking up bugs and worms from Ma Stone's garden. Daniel loads his mouth with dried beans and aims the beanshooter at the chickens. He makes a direct hit on the old mother hen. She squawks and flies up in the air with a great flapping of wings. The chicks cheep frantically and run about.

MA STONE

(startled out of her skin)

Lan's to goodness, what happened to that hen?
Did you use that beanshooter again?

DANIEL

(all innocence; hiding
the beanshooter)

I did not, Grandma.

MARY

(coming from kitchen
door behind them)

Yes, you did, Daniel! I saw it from the window.
And then to lie about it! Give me that
beanshooter, Daniel!

DANIEL

(jumping up and dancing away)

It's mine, Ma! Pa made it for me -- and I'm not
going to give it to anyone!

MARY

(reaching for it)

Daniel give me that beanshooter!

DANIEL

(attacking Mary)

No! No! I won't.

MARY

Daniel! ...

(catching him)

I've stood just about as much as I can bear!

Mary drags the yowling Daniel toward the woodshed that is not far from the kitchen door; a sort of lean-to on the rest of the house as was the custom then. At this moment Jabez rides up on horseback with Belle beside him.

JABEZ

What happened.... Where are you taking him?

MARY

I am going to lock him up.

JABEZ

(dismounting)

You're not supposed to punish my son, Mary.

BELLE

That's my business. -- Now, it's all right, Daniel.

(to Mary as Daniel
continues to cry)

What did he do?

MARY

He lied to me again.

DANIEL

I did not!

BELLE

(to Mary)

He never lies to me.

(to Daniel)

Don't cry, Daniel -- I believe you. You're always a very good boy and -- now come along.

She leads him into the house.

MARY

(to Jabez)

Jabez -- how can you let her talk like that when the boy is present? He won't respect me any more.

JABEZ

(coldly)

Isn't that your own fault?

MARY

My fault? ... Oh, Jabez -- all I want is to be proud of him. He can be such a fine boy, if we show him how to be.

JABEZ

He's my son and I like him the way he is. Why do you always have to pick on him? If it's not the boy it's me. You don't like the way I live -- you don't like my friends, or my new house -- or anything.

MARY

But Jabez, I never said that!

JABEZ

It shows on your face.

MARY

Well -- I am worried about the way you've changed. That was one thing you said you'd never do -- remember?

JABEZ

Oh, for heaven's sake, leave me alone!

Daniel and Belle are coming out of the house. Jabez picks him up.

JABEZ

Come on, Daniel -- we'll go fox hunting in the upper pasture.

DANIEL

Hurray!

(pulling out beanshooter from his pocket and waving it)

I'm going to shoot the old fox dead with my beanshooter.

Jabez, laughing, lifts Daniel on his horse.

DANIEL

(calling to Ma Stone)

Grandma, look at me!

MA STONE

(squinting up at him but still squatting beside the flower bed)

I see you! Riding pretty high, ain't you? Look out you don't fall off.

DANIEL

Not me!

(pretending to balance himself, using his arms)

Jabez, Daniel and Belle ride off.

MA STONE

(to Mary)

Fox hunting -- a Stone going fox hunting on a

week day -- and the earth crying out for the touch of him!

MARY

Now, Ma -- You just try to set an example for me, and keep hold of yourself.

MA STONE

(rising from flower bed)

Me? Why, look here, Mary Stone -- I'm worried about you, that's all.

MARY

Worried about me! Well, you just stop it!

MA STONE

What's that?

MARY

(something steely in her voice)

I said you should stop worrying because I've made up my mind!

She turns and goes quickly into the house. Ma Stone looks after her, concerned....

The scene dissolves to a ROAD THROUGH MARSHFIELD ON DANIEL WEBSTER'S FARM in the late afternoon: This is a fair, fertile countryside, and all about are the green fields, smiling under June skies. Mary is seen driving Jabez's old buggy up the road. A farmhand with button-like black eyes and a friendly smile is walking along the road.

MARY

(stopping the horse)

Mr. Webster's place?

FARMHAND

Yes, m'am -- musta come many a long mile, m'am. Horse looks tired -- moving like cold molasses.

MARY

Yes -- we have come a long way -- all the way from Cross Corners to see Mr. Webster. I hope he's at home.

FARMHAND

Yes, m'am -- he's here.

The FIELD OF THE WEST TWO HUNDRED, discloses Webster mowing his clover field, two farmhands, giant young men, working with him.

OLD FARMHAND'S VOICE

(calling through this)

Hey there, Dan'1! Black Dan'1!

WEBSTER

(pulling in the oxen; turning

toward road and calling lustily)
Hullooo!

OLD FARMHAND'S VOICE
Someone to see you, Dan'1!

WEBSTER
If it's the British Minister, take him around
to the pantry and give him some Madeira --

OLD FARMHAND'S VOICE
Just someone from New Hampshire!

WEBSTER
(shouting)
Why, that's different!
(to the other farmhands)
Well, boys, I guess we'll knock off. I've got
to see a friend.

He turns over the oxen to the other men and starts striding across the field.

The scene dissolves to the DINING ROOM AT MARSHFIELD that evening. It is a splendid big room of the period, full of comfortable living and good cheer. Webster is at the head of the board and Mary sits at his right. A generous meal has just been eaten. They have finished their dessert, with most of the dishes cleared away.

WEBSTER
Well Mary, it's too bad I didn't know -- I
would have given you a real dinner, but with my
wife being in Washington -- Have another piece
of pie --
(starting to cut a generous slice)

MARY
No, really, thank you. -- Is Mrs. Webster
coming back soon?

WEBSTER
Well -- she hardly ever comes here -- she's not
the type of woman who cares to live in the
country. Yes -- I'm all on my own -- sometimes
it makes you feel a little lonely --
(he pulls out a big cigar)
Do you mind if I indulge?

MARY
Of course not --

WEBSTER
No, you wouldn't -- You're not the sort of
woman that's afraid of smoke -- or fire --
But now let's talk about your affairs.

MARY
Goodness, Mr. Webster, I've done nothing but

talk about that all through dinner.

WEBSTER

Yes, you've chatted a lot, woman-like nibbling around the edge -- But, Mary, forgive an old lawyer's legal mind, I don't think you ever once came to the point. And there is a point, isn't there?

MARY

Why -- yes -- it's hard to put it into words, Mr. Webster. There's this matter of little Daniel's schooling and the new house -- and well -- there's something else that's wrong -- it gets worse, year after year -- it's like a shadow growing -- I can't really talk about it, even to Ma -- she puts it all on Jabez and I won't stand for that.

WEBSTER

I've heard some odd things about Jabez lately -- he seems to make the wrong kind of name for himself.

MARY

Mr. Webster, you mustn't believe all that people say.

WEBSTER

You don't have to defend him to me, Mary -- I've been called names myself.

MARY

You see, I don't care if we are rich or poor -- I don't care if we're big or small, all I care about is Jabez. He was the first man I loved. He never used to care about money -- we were poor as Job's turkey, but none of us minded. Now I've seen him drive the poor from the door, and we used to be poor ourselves. I've seen him get hard and mean, and he isn't hard or mean. I've heard him mock at the church bells -- the bells that rang for our wedding. That's not like him, Mr. Webster -- It must be my fault somehow -- my fault.

WEBSTER

Mary -- you've talked to me as you might have talked to your father and I believe he wants me to help you a little. You see, sometimes we think we're licked in this life -- but we weren't put here to be licked. Don't you believe it. Sometimes the shadows seem to get hold of us -- the shadows and the evil -- but it is still up to us to fight. Now I was thinking before you came, of coming over to Cross Corners end of the month, to get

acquainted with my Godson -- and other things.

MARY

(breathlessly)

Oh, could you, Mr. Webster ?

WEBSTER

And now come on, Mary. I want to show you the all-fired biggest parsnips in the whole United States, raised right here in Marshfield -- of course!

He links arms with her, in a warm, affectionate, fatherly manner and walks her toward the door.

The scene dissolves to the HALL OF JABEZ'S NEW HOUSE at night: The last finishing touches are being done by the workmen. For that part of the country, the house is ostentatious to the last degree. Perhaps it is borrowed freely from the Adams period. Jabez stands in front of a mirror, getting a fitting from the Tailor, who is just about to take off the sleeve from the evening coat Jabez is wearing. Belle is looking on.

JABEZ

Looks all right! -- Do you have to tear it all down again?

TAILOR

I'm sorry, sir -- that's part of the fitting.

JABEZ

Well, as long as you have it ready for the party --

(to Belle)

Look, Belle -- that'll give the folks something to talk about --

BELLE

(correcting him)

The people, Jabez -- the people.

JABEZ

The -- folks or people, what's the difference among friends?

The Squire comes in.

JABEZ

Howdy, Squire! Howdy! Oh -- how do you do, Squire.

SQUIRE

How do you do, Belle? How are you, Jabez?

(looks about, very much impressed)

Well -- mighty elegant house you got here.

JABEZ

You really think so?

Now two workmen come through the room, carrying a billiard table.

JABEZ

(to the workmen)

Hey, you! Watch out there -- you're scuffing my Brussels carpet -- Consarn them.

BELLE

Jabez! Careful --

JABEZ

Oh --

(confused)

Didn't mean to talk like that in front of a lady.

(to Belle)

Get some wine for the Squire, Belle.

SQUIRE

Well, Jabez -- I'm a little pressed for time. You wanted to discuss something -- some business --

JABEZ

Oh yes -- yes. Won't take a minute. Can you keep a secret?

SQUIRE

Why of course --

JABEZ

Dan'l Webster is coming to my party.

SQUIRE

Dan'l Webster?

JABEZ

Yes -- and that's the reason I wanted to talk with you. You got my invitation?

SQUIRE

Yes.

JABEZ

(taking out a paper)

Now look -- here's a list of the people I invited -- they're all the right kind of people -- or did I miss anybody?

SQUIRE

(glancing over the list)

The only one you missed -- is the President.

JABEZ

You think that's a joke? I had him on there too, but I was afraid Dan'l Webster might feel

insulted.

The Squire makes a move to return the list.

JABEZ

You keep that -- that's for you. I want you to talk up the party to make sure that the best folks really come.

SQUIRE

You want me to go around --

JABEZ

Yes siree -- that's the idea. Get them all here and then say: "Look, folks -- here's Daniel Webster, my guest of honor." Golly, I can see their eyes pop already.

SQUIRE

You mean that's all you had me come out here for?

JABEZ

Now, Squire, you're not going to let me down. We still want to do a lot of business together, don't we?

SQUIRE

Well -- yes --

JABEZ

That's fine. Now you can tell people all about the house, but don't mention Webster.

SQUIRE

You are not so sure that he'll come.

JABEZ

Oh yes -- I am -- want to bet?

SQUIRE

Why not -- ?

JABEZ

How much?

SQUIRE

5000 -- that's just what I owe you.

JABEZ

(extending his hand)

Shake!

They shake hands.

The scene dissolves into a ROAD TO CROSS CORNERS. It is day, and a carriage drawn by two magnificent horses appears, driven by Webster. The carriage is

brought to a stop as it reaches little Daniel who is reading a handbill from a circus.

WEBSTER

(calling)

Hello, Colonel! Want a lift?

DANIEL

Well, I wouldn't mind.

(as he runs up to carriage)

But my name's Daniel Stone.

WEBSTER

All right, Daniel. Jump in.

Daniel does so, and they drive along the road.

In WEBSTER'S CARRIAGE as Webster and Daniel are driving along the road toward Cross Corners.

DANIEL

Gee -- that Fair --

WEBSTER

It hasn't opened yet?

DANIEL

No -- but I can hardly wait -- Mister -- tell me, will there really be --

(spelling it out)

-- a man that eats fire?

WEBSTER

Guess there will, if it says so.

DANIEL

And two unpara-- unparalleled Cir-cass-ian beauties? What is that?

WEBSTER

Young man -- you got me there.

DANIEL

(looking at the handbill again)

'N Daniel Webster will be there.

WEBSTER

(chuckling)

A varied list of attractions. And which would you like to see first, Dan'l?

DANIEL

I think I'd like to begin with the fire-eater --

WEBSTER

And what about Daniel Webster?

DANIEL

Well, I thought he'd come in the middle.

WEBSTER

(laughing)

And serve him right!

Webster is driving faster now. He talks softly to the horses. Daniel fumbles in his coat pocket and slyly brings out his inevitable beanshooter. He puts beans in his mouth and when Webster isn't looking, blows a bean at the rear of one of the horses. The horse shies. Webster turns and catches Daniel before he can hide the beanshooter.

WEBSTER

Daniel! Don't ever let me catch you doing that again!

DANIEL

Why? It don't hurt.

WEBSTER

It does hurt! And don't you do it again.

A pause. Webster urges on the horses as he chooses not to say anything more. The horses fly along the road.

DANIEL

Make them go faster, Mr.... ?

WEBSTER

No, Daniel -- they are not race horses. They are good old friends of mine. I call 'em Constitution and Bill of Rights, the most dependable pair for long journeys. I've got one called Missouri Compromise, too, and then there's a Supreme Court -- fine, dignified horse, though you do have to push him now and then.

DANIEL

Golly -- I'd like to see all your horses!

WEBSTER

Maybe you can, sometime, Daniel. I'm a farmer, you know, and like to show my farm -- but the thing I'd like to show you most, you'll have to see for yourself.

DANIEL

What's that, sir?

WEBSTER

Well -- it's high and it's wide and it goes a long way and there is a wind blowing through it and a blue roof over it -- it's the hills up here and the rivers running south and the new States growing in the West.

DANIEL

Anybody can see that.

WEBSTER

You're wrong, Mr. Stone. There are people who live and die without e'er seeing it. They can't see the country for the money in their pockets -- And some think their state's the country, or the way they live is the country, and they're willing to split the country because of that. Well, I hope you'll meet all those, when you're grown. You'll meet the fire-eaters and the Circassian beauties -- that's part of the fair, to be sure. But if we'd had to depend on them, in a permanent way, the country would have stopped at the Allegheny mountains.

DANIEL

But it didn't stop. I know it didn't stop. Granny told me it didn't.

WEBSTER

No, siree, it didn't. And it won't -- no matter what happens -- just as long as the folks at the fair believe in freedom and Union. So --

(to the horse)

Giddyap, Constitution -- and let's keep going, Mr. Stone.

They drive ahead.

DANIEL

(shouting excitedly)

Faster -- faster --

He takes out his beanshooter and uses it again on the horses. Webster brings the buggy to a stop.

WEBSTER

(grabbing Daniel more firmly)

I think this is coming to you, young man! --

He turns him over his knee, taking the boy completely by surprise.

WEBSTER

I told you not to do that again.

He begins to spank him. Daniel yowls.

At the INN IN CROSS CORNERS, with a crowd of farmers:

THE CROWD

(calling)

Black Dan'1! Hurray for Daniel Webster! The Union and Black Dan'1! Hip, hip, hurray!

They rush forward. And now we see Webster's carriage. Webster is just finishing spanking Daniel as the rest of the crowd surround the carriage to greet him. A close view reveals the boy, Daniel, sprawled across Webster's knee. He looks up with tear-stained face as he hears the magic name of Daniel Webster! His eyes open wide. He stares. Then, in complete humiliation, he escapes through the crowd. -- Now we see Webster as the Squire approaches him.

WEBSTER

Well -- well -- what's this? I thought I'd meet you all down there at Jabez Stone's house-warming. I hope you didn't wait for me to lead the parade.

SQUIRE

Not exactly, Mr. Webster. -- We wanted to have a little chat with you before we go to the party. Do you mind having a drink with us?

WEBSTER

Do I mind having a drink with you, gentlemen? What a question to ask Daniel Webster!

Webster climbs from his carriage and goes to the inn followed by the Squire and the rest of the crowd.

The scene dissolves to the KITCHEN OF THE OLD FARMHOUSE at night: Ma Stone is sitting by the window shelling peas. She interrupts her work to peer out into the darkness. Steps are heard above and as Ma turns around Mary appears at the foot of the stairs in her party dress. There is a moment of silence.

MA STONE

So you've made up your mind to go to the party.

MARY

You aren't angry with me?

MA STONE

Ah, fiddlesticks -- you are old enough to know what you are doing.

They go to the door.

The FRONT YARD: As Mary walks away through the darkness Ma stands in the doorway looking after her.

MA STONE

(calling)

Be sure to let me know if Daniel is over there.

MARY

I won't forget.

Mary walks on as Ma looks after her. In the distance we see the flickering of the lights in the new house.

The scene dissolves to the RECEPTION ROOM OF JABEZ'S NEW MANSION, moving up

impressive front stairs and through the great door into the hall with its grand staircase, and then into a reception room. Here are found a great many of the treasures that Jabez has bragged about. Servants of every description are waiting, and a small orchestra is in one corner, tuning up. There is a decided air of pretentiousness about it all, contrasting pointedly with the dance in Jabez's barn, years before.

Mary, dressed in a simple but becoming party gown, moves quietly about, seeing that all is correct and in readiness -- a demure and charming hostess, hiding her real feelings quite successfully, for the moment. Jabez enters, just having come downstairs, dressed to "kill." He goes to a full-length mirror on the wall, tying his cravat. There is something utterly pompous about him, at the same time tragic in its implications.

JABEZ

(looking at his watch,
then turning to Mary)

Why don't they come --

MARY

(helpless)

I don't know, Jabez.

Jabez walks up and down, waiting. Suddenly he turns to the orchestra.

JABEZ

Play some music -- something gay and jolly.

The orchestra starts to play. Then Jabez, after another interval of nervous waiting, turns to Mary again.

JABEZ

Think this room is larger than anything
Webster's got at Marshfield? You've been there.
What about it, Mary?

MARY

It's -- different, Jabez -- that's all.

JABEZ

(looking again at his watch)

What's the matter with 'em? Why don't they
come?

Little Daniel comes running down the stairway, followed by Belle who is dressed elaborately for the party. Jabez doesn't take any notice of the boy, being so worried. He continues to walk up and down.

MARY

Daniel, you ought to be in bed.

DANIEL

No, no, I don't want to go to bed. I want to be
here for the party.

He runs from the room. Jabez in his walk approaches the window, where faces appear pressed against the glass.

JABEZ

(to Belle)

What are those people doing there? What do they want?

BELLE

They're just outsiders. They want to see how fine Jabez Stone lives these days. They're waiting for your guests, too --

Jabez turns away from the window and as he passes the orchestra, which has just finished a piece, he relieves his tension by shouting at them.

JABEZ

Consarn it -- I'm paying you for playing -- so keep on playing.

The musicians hurriedly start to play another selection. But, before they can begin, a bell is heard. It cracks the silence. Jabez jumps to attention and Belle moves from the window. Mary stands stiffly, as a servant, or lackey, hurries to the great front door. The orchestra strikes up, triumphantly.

A Lackey hurries to the door and opens it. A small, pinched figure in rusty black, stands on the great steps. It is Stevens. He takes off his old beaver, stove-pipe hat and cringes in, stepping with an obsequious air. The Lackey takes his hat which he hardly wants to let go. He crosses to Mary. Mary makes a curtsy and Stevens takes her hand, eager for the warmth of it.

MARY

Welcome, Mr. Stevens --

STEVENS

Good evening, Mrs. Stone.

Nervous and cringing, he crosses the threshold and enters the reception room.

The RECEPTION ROOM: Stevens crosses to Jabez.

STEVENS

Good evening -- I'm sorry, Jabez -- I'm a little late.

JABEZ

No, you're not.

STEVENS

(looking around)

Where's everybody?

JABEZ

I dunno -- I can't figure it out. I've invited them all. Why don't they come?

DANIEL

They're all at the inn. I've seen them.... Mr. Webster's there, too....

The scene dissolves to the INN IN CROSS CORNERS, where Webster is sitting with Tom Sharp, Eli Higgins, Hank and a number of other farmers around a table. Webster is looking over a number of contracts -- the same which the farmers signed with Jabez.

TOM SHARP

(to Hank)

Show Mr. Webster that foul contract you got with Jabez Stone.

Hank produces a worn bit of legal paper and hands it over to Webster. Webster compares it with the other contracts.

WEBSTER

He's certainly made himself the big frog in the little puddle around here, hasn't he?

FARMER

And it all looked so simple when it started -- like getting loans for nothing.

(to Tom Sharp)

I should have listened to you, Tom.

WEBSTER

(slowly)

Well -- he's got you, I'm afraid -- got you sewed up tight in his money pocket. Guess you've sold your souls, gentlemen!

The scene dissolves to the RECEPTION HALL IN STONE'S MANSION, where the situation hasn't changed -- no guests are there but Miser Stevens. Belle goes over to Mary who is still waiting at the foot of the stairs to play her part as the hostess.

BELLE

I see why you're here -- you knew that nobody was coming.

MARY

I didn't.

BELLE

You're lying.

MARY

Lying to you -- Why should I?

BELLE

You know that you're in my house.

MARY

I know -- and you could show me the door. You would, too, if you weren't still hoping the guests might arrive.

BELLE

You think you're so smart, Mrs. Stone. You wanted to be near Jabez. It looked like your big chance tonight, but you're wrong, you can't win him back -- not that way.

MARY

That's my problem, Belle.

And she walks away.

Stevens is sitting at the table. Jabez sits next to him, just dismissing the little boy, Daniel.

JABEZ

Now run along, Daniel.

STEVENS

(as Daniel leaves)

What a fine boy you have, Jabez. How old is he now?

JABEZ

Almost seven.

(correcting himself quickly)

No -- no, he's not seven yet I am sure --

STEVENS

Well -- it seems to me -- I remember when you paid me--

STEVENS

(interrupting quickly)

Oh, never mind -- let's have a drink.

Stevens looks strangely.

JABEZ

What's the matter with you?

STEVENS

You are afraid!

JABEZ

Afraid ... of what?

STEVENS

-- of what happens after we die!

JABEZ

Are you plumb crazy, man! What do you think happens? We're buried -- that's all.

STEVENS

But what becomes of our souls?

JABEZ

Why do you fret about something that isn't

there?

STEVENS

(with a frantic note in his voice)
Don't say that -- I know it is --

JABEZ

(swigging down another drink)
All right -- so it's buried with you!

STEVENS

What if one hasn't a soul any more? What of that?

JABEZ

(disturbed)
Huh? -- What's that?
(a pause; he gulps,
then hurries on)
Well -- what about it? Who cares, anyhow?

STEVENS

I do -- and I think you should too.

JABEZ

(suddenly, excited)
Stevens -- what's all this leading up to? You know something. Come on! Out with it -- you know something about me!

At this moment they are interrupted. Men and women with common faces, the same faces we have seen behind the windows, are pouring in. Belle leads them. The guests, who have flocked around, bow to Jabez.

JABEZ

(to Belle)
Who are these people?

BELLE

They are all friends of mine -- from over the mountain.
(to the crowd)
Welcome! Help yourselves to drinks! Glad you could come! Have a good time.

Jabez, dumbfounded, shakes hands with people he has never seen before. Stevens is shoved aside. The orchestra begins a strange dance tune, and Belle glides over gracefully to Stevens.

BELLE

Let's dance, Mr. Stevens.

STEVENS

(frightened)
No -- no -- I can't dance --

BELLE

Oh, yes -- you can dance with me. I'll guide
you --
 (taking his hand)
You see -- it is all so easy -- like that --
 (and she takes a few steps)
You see -- so easy --

They begin to dance, slowly at first, around the room. Others are dancing -- the strange, thinly-clad people in their heavy boots that clump over the fine oak floors. Mary stands in the doorway, watching miserably, seeing Jabez drinking more rum, laughing loudly -- all this to cover his growing fears, and Mary knows that.

The HALLWAY, just in front of the big outside doors: There is a rap on the door and Mary rushes to it, getting there before the lackey can. She opens the door herself and Webster comes in.

MARY
 (taking his hand)
Oh -- Mr. Webster -- I'm so glad you came!

WEBSTER
 (peering at her eager
 but distressed face)
Are you, Mary? Well, I guess I'm glad myself
-- seeing as how you feel this way.
 (he looks into reception room,
 at the whirling dancers)
Party seems to be quite a success.
 (with a wry smile)
Lots of guests, anyhow.

Mary looks at him and Webster sees that her eyes are moist and that her lips tremble. She might say something; might break the shell of her New England reserve, but before that can happen, Jabez comes strutting out. His face is flushed from rum and his eyes are unnaturally bright. He comes to Webster, his hand thrust forward.

JABEZ
Well -- Mr. Webster! This is a great day for
me. Come on in, sir. I want you to take the
seat of honor and meet all my guests!

WEBSTER
That's just fine, Neighbor Stone -- but -- I
have to be pretty careful of my seats of
honor -- where I sit, I mean. You see, the
whole country sort of has its eye on me,
Jabez -- anybody in public life has that
difficulty -- even you, Jabez. They watch us
carefully, our neighbors and our enemies, and
they see much more than we think they do -- and
understand much more. My friends all like to
think that I've got the good of mankind always
at heart, and I've got to make sure that those
I deal with have the good of mankind always at
heart, too. Do you know what I'm talking about,

Jabez?

JABEZ

What -- what's on your mind?

WEBSTER

You, Jabez Stone -- you and a lot of poor farmers, hereabouts -- good men of the earth who are in trouble because of you. Or -- am I wrong about those contracts, Mr. Stone?

JABEZ

Contracts? -- Yes, they have contracts with me -- lots of 'em -- but -- but that's all right. Without me and my money, they wouldn't have anything.

WEBSTER

They'd have a good neighbor, Jabez -- and that's worth much more than anything else -- much, much more!

Jabez laughs uproariously. Webster shakes his head with the wisdom of real sadness in his eyes.

WEBSTER

I'm sorry you can't see that, I know you could once -- you made a little speech once, that I'll always remember and I know the others do too -- They remember and they see how you have changed. That's why they didn't want to come tonight to you, Jabez -- you're as blind as a Burma bat, with your gold pot! Mind you, it's not the money, I've been talking about, it's what you make of it.

JABEZ

I -- I don't know what you're talking about! I -- I haven't time to listen to all this --

WEBSTER

(still shaking his head)

No -- you haven't time -- You haven't time for your mother, or your wife, or your child.

JABEZ

(turning on Mary)

It's your fault! You brought Daniel Webster here -- just to try to make a fool of me! You played the sneak behind my back -- made up all sorts of lies against me! You can get yourself out of my home -- go back to the other house -- that old place, where you belong -- I don't want to -- to talk to you again!

Over his shoulder, in the doorway to the reception room, the whirling dancers pass and Belle, still dancing with Stevens, is seen for a moment.

WEBSTER
(calmly, gently, to Mary)
Come along, Mary --

Mary goes to him and they move to the door. Little Daniel, frightened by the strange, motley dancers comes running out of the reception room into the hall.

MARY
Daniel -- you come with me.

Mary takes his hand. Webster, Mary and Daniel go out of the house; down the stairs and the doors close with a bang. Jabez turns and calls into the reception room where amidst the other guests, Belle dances with Stevens.

JABEZ
Belle!

She doesn't listen -- the music is playing faster and louder.

JABEZ
(to a footman)
Close the windows and make a fire.
(as the footman leaves)
Belle!! Belle!

A VOICE
What is it?

Jabez turns around and sees Scratch standing in the doorway to the reception room.

SCRATCH
Why, Mr. Stone, you look so worried. Can I be of any service?

JABEZ
(facing Scratch)
You promised me prosperity, happiness, love, money, friendship --

SCRATCH
(interrupting)
Just a minute, neighbor Stone. I promised you money and all that money can buy. I don't recall any other obligations. But let's look at the contract.

He takes out a large black pocketbook, stuffed with paper. He flicks papers over, reading the names:

SCRATCH
Sherwin, Slattery, Stevens, Stone --

But something has fluttered from his pocketbook -- a small white thing that looks like a moth -- the soul of Miser Stevens. It flutters toward Jabez.

Jabez catches it in his hand and closing his fingers, holds it tightly. A thin small voice is heard -- the soul of Miser Stevens, speaking from Jabez's hand.

SOUL OF STEVENS
Neighbor! Neighbor Stone! Help me!

JABEZ
(astounded)
That's Miser Stevens' voice! -- Miser Stevens --

SCRATCH
(smiling)
.... Miser Stevens' soul, Mr. Stone. Yes -- I am sorry for the disturbance.

JABEZ
He ain't dead -- he's dancing in there.

SCRATCH
He was --

He steps near and drapes a big bandana handkerchief over Jabez's hand and transfers the soul to the handkerchief, and starts tying the ends together. Jabez looks into the reception room. It's empty, except for the dead body of Stevens lying on the floor.

SCRATCH
In the midst of life -- one really hates to close these long standing accounts. But business is business.

Jabez's eyes fix on the bandana.

JABEZ
(hoarsely)
Are they all as -- small -- as that?

SCRATCH
Small? Oh, I see what you mean. Why, they vary.
(looking at Jabez)
Now a man like Daniel Webster, if I ever get hold of him, I'd have to build a special box for him and even at that, I imagine, the wing spread would be astonishing.
(looking again at Jabez)
In your case --

JABEZ
My time isn't up yet.

And, as he turns around, the scene changes quickly, to the STONE FARM at the blasted tree that bears the date of Jabez's doom. Jabez is hacking blindly at the tree trunk with an ax. He is making little headway. Mr. Scratch is standing beside him.

SCRATCH

Trying to break our contract again, Mr. Stone?

JABEZ

(furiously hacking away)

I'm through with you.

SCRATCH

What a headstrong fellow! Well -- I guess you're quite prepared to suffer the consequences.

JABEZ

I have still a year -- a year to make up for everything.

SCRATCH

Oh no, you violated clause five of our contract and I could collect right now, if I chose.

JABEZ

(desperately)

Not now! Not now! -- Let me make up -- let me make up.

SCRATCH

Suddenly you seem quite desperate, Mr. Stone --
(a pause)

-- You know I'm a good-natured man. I'm always open to reason. With a little security -- I might--

JABEZ

Anything -- anything. -- You can have it all back -- that money -- the new house -- my farm -- the whole caboodle!

SCRATCH

I'm afraid that's hardly the sort of security I was thinking of --

(after a pause)

You see -- there is that promising little fellow, your son ...

JABEZ

(violently)

No! No! No! Not him -- not my son -- I'd rather go with you -- right now.

SCRATCH

Come, come, Mr. Stone, you are a little upset. It's not fair to bargain with you now. -- I'll give you until midnight, Mr. Stone, but not one minute more. Ah, then you'll come with me indeed.

And Scratch disappears. Jabez turns and runs from the tree, off into the night, in the direction of the old farmhouse.

The EXTERIOR OF THE OLD FARMHOUSE: The place is dark, forlorn-looking, almost desolate in contrast to the false gaiety of the mansion. We follow Jabez as he comes running from the tree, along the path to the house. He bursts into the kitchen door.

Now we see Jabez INSIDE THE FARMHOUSE as he runs upstairs into the bedroom, calling frantically.

JABEZ
Daniel! ... Daniel! Mary!

He looks frantically about; he calls again and runs downstairs, as the scene moves with him into the kitchen. It, too, is empty and dark. He calls once more:

JABEZ
Mary! ... Daniel!

The scene moves with him as he runs outside. Jabez then comes running out, more wildly than ever; this time in the direction of the barn.

In the OLD BARN, where Jabez first met Mr. Scratch. Jabez comes running in. He pauses, panting; he looks about him, helplessly, hopelessly.

JABEZ
(desperate)
Mary ... Daniel...

No answer. Suddenly he sinks down on an old barrel and buries his head in his hands, groaning in mortal agony. Ma Stone enters from the rear door. She carries a smudged lantern.

MA STONE
My son ... what's the matter?

JABEZ
(looking up)
Ma! ...
(jumping up and going to her)
Where's Mary ... and little Dan'l?

MA STONE
Gone with Daniel Webster -- to Marshfield,
son.... You told Mary to go--

She stops, not wishing to add to his pain, but looks at his twisted face with great understanding and compassion. Jabez turns to one of the stalls and brings out a horse. Ma Stone holding up the lantern, he leaps on the horse and rides off.

Now there are views of: A STRETCH OF ROAD IN THE DIRECTION OF MARSHFIELD as Webster, with Mary and Daniel beside him on the front seat of the carriage, is driving on toward Marshfield.

ANOTHER PART OF THE ROAD, farther back, with Jabez riding on -- his horse galloping. Finally we see ANOTHER SECTION OF THE SAME ROAD as Jabez catches

up to Webster's carriage. Mary sits beside Webster, holding the boy in her lap.

JABEZ

Mr. Webster ... Wait! ...
(as Webster slows down,
and Jabez rides up)

Mary!

MARY

(turning on front seat;
with a glad cry)

Jabez!

JABEZ

Mary! Come back ...

MARY

(happily to Jabez)

Oh, Jabez! ...

(to Webster)

Did you hear, Mr. Webster? -- Now you'll help
him, won't you?

WEBSTER

I'll fight ten thousand devils to save a New
Hampshire man.

Webster turns the horses about and starts back.

The scene dissolves to the EXTERIOR AND THE INTERIOR OF JABEZ'S OLD BARN, a Short time later: Jabez and Webster, making their way through a crowd of farmers, enter the barn. Throughout the barn is thick darkness, pierced only by the uncertain light from a farm lantern. The corners, loft and stalls are pools of night.

WEBSTER

It's here you said that you closed the deal
with him?

JABEZ

Yes, Mr. Webster -- it was here where it all
began.

WEBSTER

I see. And this is where he'd like to collect,
too.

JABEZ

Yes -- at midnight.

MARY

(coming in through the front door)

Jabez ...

WEBSTER

(coming over to Mary,

stopping her at the door)
Mary -- what love and trust could do for your husband, you've done. And frankly, in a very few moments, this is going to be no place for a lady.

MARY
Mr. Webster -- you will help him?

WEBSTER
I'll do my best, Mary.

JABEZ
You must go now, Mary -- you must!

MARY
All right, Jabez ...

She turns and exits quickly.

WEBSTER
They make plucky women in New England.
(he consults his watch,
holding it near the lantern)
H'm ... how long have we to wait?

JABEZ
(trying to control himself;
looking at his watch)
Not long -- now.

WEBSTER
(going over to feed-bin where
a dusty jug reposes in the hay)
Then I'll just christen the jug, with your permission, Stone. Somehow or other, waiting's wonderfully shorter with a jug.

He takes the jug over to a plank laid between two saw-horses and pours himself a drink into one of the cups Mary brought. He tastes it.

WEBSTER
H'm -- old Medford.

He smacks his lips; sits down on a barreltop. There are a few other barrels placed about the crude table.

WEBSTER
There's nothing like it. I saw an inchworm take a drop of it once, and he stood right up on his hind legs and bit a bee. Come -- try a nip!

JABEZ
There's no joy in it for me.

WEBSTER
Oh, come, man, come. Just because you've sold

your soul to the devil that needn't make you a teetotaler.

He takes another swig of Medford. There is a knock at the rear door; a subtle kind of knock that is different from anything else of its kind.

WEBSTER

Come in.

Scratch enters. He carries his collecting-box under his arm.

SCRATCH

(suavely)

Mr. Webster, I presume?

WEBSTER

Attorney of record for Jabez Stone. Might I ask your name?

SCRATCH

Scratch will do for the evening. May I -- join you?

He slides easily onto a barrel-top by the makeshift table and pours a drink from the jug then lifts his cup and toasts Jabez and Webster silently. He drinks deeply.

WEBSTER

Why, certainly -- but be careful, Mr. Scratch -- Medford rum has an uncanny habit of kicking back, even with old-timers like yourself.
(he sips his Medford)

SCRATCH

(with a soft chuckle)

It even kicked back -- once at you, didn't it?

WEBSTER

(professing indignant surprise)

Me?

SCRATCH

Oh .. not that you ever get drunk! No, indeed! But a kind of overpowering lassitude or, more plainly, a deep and enveloping sleep.

WEBSTER

There isn't enough Medford rum in the whole of New Hampshire to make me sleepy.
(he deliberately drinks again)

SCRATCH

Talk has never proved that question, Mr. Webster!

(he drains his cup)

Cup for cup -- what do you say?

WEBSTER
(immediately)
Cup for cup!

They pour and drink and smack their lips at each other.

SCRATCH
Well now, Mr. Stone, did you make up your mind?

JABEZ
About what?

SCRATCH
Are you willing to give me your son in exchange
for an extension of our contract?

JABEZ
Never!

The STONE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN where Ma Stone is busy making a pie. Mary stands by the window. She turns from it as little Daniel comes running downstairs in his nightgown and bare feet.

DANIEL
Mama!

MARY
Daniel! ... You must go to sleep.

DANIEL
(throwing his arms around her)
I don't want to be up there all alone, Mama....
I want to be with you.

MARY
All right, darling.

Voices are heard outside, and there is a quick rap at the window.

MA STONE
(to Mary)
You see who it is. I have to get my pie in the
oven.

Mary opens the door. There are Tom Sharp and a few farmers outside.

TOM SHARP
Jabez's new house is a-burning down!

MA STONE
(calling from the stove)
Well, you just let it alone ... the consarn
thing oughter burn!

She closes the window on their astonished faces, and turns to Mary with her head tossing and her lips pursed.

The BARN, with Webster and Scratch still drinking. With a chuckle, Scratch rises, perfectly steady on his nimble legs. Webster sits at the table, a trifle slumped.

SCRATCH

Your spirited efforts on behalf of your clients do you credit, Mr. Webster -- If you have no more arguments to adduce I'll take him along now.

WEBSTER

Not so fast, Mr. Scratch. Produce your evidence -- if you have it.

SCRATCH

(taking out the pocketbook)

There, Mr. Webster.

(passing it to him)

All open and above-board and in due and legal form.

WEBSTER

(looking over the deed)

H'm. This appears -- I say appears -- to be properly drawn. But you shall not have this man! A man isn't property! Mr. Stone is an American citizen, and no American citizen may be forced into the service of a foreign prince.

SCRATCH

Foreign? And who calls me a foreigner?

WEBSTER

Well, I never heard the dev-- of your claiming American citizenship.

SCRATCH

And who with better right? When the first wrong was done to the first Indian, I was there. When the first slaver put out for the Congo, I stood on the deck. Am I not spoken of, still, in every church in New England? 'Tis true, the North claims me for a Southerner, and the South for a Northerner, but I am neither. To tell the truth, Mr. Webster, though I don't like to boast of it, my name is older in the country than yours.

WEBSTER

Then I stand on the Constitution! I demand a trial for my client.

SCRATCH

You mean -- a jury trial?

WEBSTER

I do! If I can't win this case with a jury, you

shall have me, too. If two New Hampshire men aren't a match for the devil, we'd better give this country back to the Indians.

SCRATCH

(smiling)

Very well. -- You shall have your trial, Mr. Webster. The case is hardly one for an ordinary jury --

WEBSTER

Let it be the quick or the dead -- So it is an American judge and an American jury!

SCRATCH

The quick or the dead! You have said it.
(he raises the cup again to Webster)
May -- the best man win, Mr. Webster!

WEBSTER

I'll drink to that, Mr. Scratch!

Webster raises his glass also. Both drink deeply, Scratch watching Webster closely, to see the effect. Then Scratch goes to a door in a dark corner of the floor that opens into a cellar. He throws the door back and a black hole yawns at his feet. A ruffian in pioneer dress, Captain Kidd, appears, others follow.

SCRATCH

You must pardon the leathery toughness of one or two ... Captain Kidd -- he killed a man for gold; Simon Girty -- the renegade; he burned men for gold; Governor Dale -- he broke men on the wheel; Asa, the Black Monk -- he choked them to death; Floyd Ireson and Stede Bonnet, the fiendish butchers; Walter Butler -- the King of the Massacre; Big and Little Harp -- robbers and murderers; Teach, the Cutthroat; Morton, the vicious lawyer ... and ... General Benedict Arnold -- you remember him, no doubt. Dastard, liar, traitor, knave -- Americans all ...

They now go toward the stalls that in a crude way resemble a jury box.

Now in the KITCHEN OF STONE'S OLD FARMHOUSE, Ma Stone sits by the fire, reading from the big family Bible, Mary at her side. It is still night.

MA STONE

(reading from Psalm 102)

"Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me; in the day when I call answer me speedily. For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. But thou, O Lord, shalt endure forever; and thy

remembrance unto all generations."

Then, back in the OLD BARN, we see that the jury has filled up the stalls that serve as a jury box. They sit silently in shadow, real and yet at the same time, unreal. Justice Hawthorne, a tall, lean, terrifying Puritan appears.

CLERK

(in a gabble)

Oyes, oyes, oyes! This trial tream of the Midnight Court of the State of New Hampshire in the County of Franklin, is now in session. Justice Hawthorne presiding. Oyes, oyes, oyes! The Devil versus Jabez Stone!

HAWTHORNE

Who appears for the plaintiff?

SCRATCH

I, Your Honor.

HAWTHORNE

And for the defendant?

WEBSTER

I.

HAWTHORNE

Are you content with the jury, Mr. Webster?

WEBSTER

I object to General Benedict Arnold, Your Honor, for being a flagrant traitor to the great American cause....

HAWTHORNE

(cutting it short)

Objection denied! The prosecution will proceed.

SCRATCH

(stepping out briskly)

Your Honor -- gentlemen of the jury -- this case need not detain us long. It concerns one thing alone -- the transference, barter and sale of a certain piece of property, to wit, his soul by Jabez Stone. That transference, barter or sale is attested by a deed. I offer that deed in evidence and mark it Exhibit A.

WEBSTER

I object.

HAWTHORNE

Objection denied. Mark it Exhibit A.

Scratch hands the deed to the clerk who hands it to Hawthorne.

SCRATCH

I shall now call Jabez Stone to the witness stand.

CLERK

Jabez Stone to the witness stand!

Webster gives Jabez an encouraging pat on the back, and Jabez takes his place in the witness stand, which is an empty corn-crib. He looks scared. The eyes of the jury fasten upon him.

SCRATCH

Jabez Stone -- did you or did you not sign this document?

JABEZ

(sweating)

Yes, I did -- but you tricked me into signing it! You told me my soul was nothing ... that I could forget all about a soul, in exchange for money. That was a lie, a lie, a lie.

SCRATCH

(only smiling)

That is highly irrelevant to this case, Your Honor.

HAWTHORNE

(nodding sagely)

Leave out the soul. Proceed.

SCRATCH

I would like to ask Mr. Stone whether or not I faithfully fulfilled my part of the contract? Didn't I give you seven years of good luck and prosperity? Didn't I make you the richest man in the country?

JABEZ

Yes -- yes, I am the richest man -- too rich. I can't think of anything but money. That's the trouble with me.

SCRATCH

(smiling)

But, Mr. Stone, I am hardly to blame for the pricking of your wholly unnecessary conscience.

(he holds out deed)

Is this your signature?

JABEZ

(almost shouting)

You know darn well it is.

SCRATCH

(turning to the jury)

Gentlemen, the prosecution rests.

HAWTHORNE

Does the jury wish to consider the case?

They do not speak.

HAWTHORNE

It appears they do not. Take your man, Mr. Scratch.

Scratch moves toward Jabez who shrinks back. The jury sits motionless.

WEBSTER

I protest, Your Honor! I wish to cross-examine -- to prove --

HAWTHORNE

There will be no cross-examination in this court!

SCRATCH

Your Honor, you will lose a great experience if you do not let him speak. There is only one Daniel Webster.

HAWTHORNE

(to Webster)

You may speak, if you like, but be brief.

(as Webster steps forward)

And let me warn you, Mr. Webster -- if you speak and fail to convince us, then you, too -- (pointing his finger)

-- are doomed!

There now appears a close view of Daniel Webster. His face shows his struggle to concentrate.

VOICES OF JURY

Drag him down with us -- Drag him down with us.

JABEZ'S VOICE

Save yourself, Mr. Webster -- Don't speak!

SCRATCH'S VOICE

(ironically)

"There isn't enough Medford rum in the whole of New Hampshire to make me sleepy."

VOICES OF JURY

Lost and gone -- lost and gone --

A bell stroke and music.

WEBSTER

(his voice mounting over it all)

Be still!

The timbre of his mighty voice stops the murmur, and the music and bell strokes recede. A breathless silence ensues. He is facing the jury, his eyes like anthracite, seeming to burn through the murk.

WEBSTER

Gentlemen of the jury -- It is my privilege to be addressing tonight a group of men I've long been acquainted with in song and story, but men I had never hoped to see.

He pauses. They stare back at him, eyes fixed, and Benedict Arnold starts to raise his head.

WEBSTER

My worthy opponent, Mr. Scratch, has called you Americans all, and Mr. Scratch was right -- you were Americans all! Oh, what a heritage you were born to share! Gentlemen of the jury, I envy you! For you were there at the birth of a mighty Union. It was given to you to hear those first cries of pain -- and to behold the shining babe that was born of blood and tears. Tonight, you are called upon to judge a man named Jabez Stone. What is his case? He is accused of breach of contract -- He made a deal to find a short cut in his life -- to get rich quickly.... The same deal all of you once made.

(a pause)

You, Benedict Arnold! ... I speak to you first, because you're better known than all your other colleagues here. What a different song yours could have been! A friend of Washington and LaFayette -- a soldier -- General Arnold, you fought so gallantly for the American cause, till -- What was the date? Oh, yes -- in 1779, a date burned in your heart.

Arnold bows his head again.

WEBSTER

The lure of gold made you betray that cause.

Another pause as his words sink in; then he whirls about and points at Simon Girty.

WEBSTER

You, Simon Girty, now known to all as Renegade! A loathsome word -- you also took that other way.

(steps along the jury box)

You, Walter Butler -- What would you give to have another chance to let the grasses grow in Cherry Valley without the stain of blood? -- You, Captain Kidd, and you, Governor Dale -- I could go on and name you all, but there's no

need of that. Why stir the wounds? I know they pain enough.

(his voice rises)

All of you were fooled like Jabez Stone -- fooled and trapped in your desire to rebel against your fate. Gentlemen of the jury -- it's the eternal right of man to raise his fist against his fate, but every time he does he stands at crossroads. You took the wrong turn and so did Jabez Stone. But he found out in time. He is here tonight to save his soul. Gentlemen of the jury, I ask that you give Jabez Stone another chance to walk upon the earth, among -- the trees, the growing corn, the smell of grass in spring -- What would you give for one more chance to see those things that you must all remember and often long to feel again? For you were all men once. Clean American air was in your lungs -- you breathed it deep, for it was free and blew across an earth you loved. These are common things I speak of, small things, but they are good things. Yet without your soul they are nothing. Without your soul they sicken. Mr. Scratch told you that your soul is nothing and you believed him. It has cost you your freedom. Freedom is not just a big word -- it is the bread and the morning and the risen sun. It was for freedom we came in boats and ships to these shores. It has been a long journey, a hard one, a bitter one. There is sadness in being a man, but it is a proud thing, too. Out of the suffering and the starvation, the wrong and the right, a new thing has come, a free man. When the whips of the oppressors are broken, and their names forgotten and destroyed, free men will be walking and talking under a free star. Yes, we have planted freedom here in this earth like wheat. We have said to the sky above us, "A man shall own his own soul." Now -- here is this man -- He is your brother! You are Americans all, you cannot--

(pointing at the devil)

-- take his side -- the side of the oppressor. Let Jabez Stone keep his soul -- this soul which doesn't belong to him alone, which belongs to his son -- his family -- his country. Gentlemen of the jury -- don't let this country go to the devil! Free Jabez Stone! God save the United States and the men who have made her free!

A long pause. The jury does not stir. Webster steps back, goes to the table and sits down, quietly. The pause holds for a moment longer, and then Hawthorne speaks:

HAWTHORNE

The jury will consider its verdict.

He hands the deed to the FOREMAN of the jury. They form a little circle and put their heads together. Jabez looks at them, the sweat of his agony in beads on his forehead. Scratch only smiles. Slowly the jury turns again and the foreman tears up the deed.

HAWTHORNE

The jury finds for the defendant.

A long-drawn crow of a cock is heard.

SCRATCH

(wryly to Webster)

My congratulations -- as between two gentlemen.

WEBSTER

(catching Scratch by the collar)

Why, you long-barreled, slab-sided, lantern-jawed, note-shaving crook, be off with you ...

He runs Scratch to the door and kicks him out.

The YARD OUTSIDE OF THE BARN: Morning light is shining. Scratch is tearing out of the barn. He turns and calls back:

SCRATCH

You'll never be president -- I'll see to that!

He practically thumbs his nose. But the farmers rush in and chase Scratch out through the gate. He runs wildly down the road.

IMMEDIATELY OUTSIDE THE BARN DOOR: Mary is just flinging her arms around Jabez.

MARY

Jabez -- Jabez!

JABEZ

Mary!

WEBSTER

You were worried, Jabez, weren't you?

JABEZ

Well, I --

WEBSTER

I know -- that was mighty queer Medford -- knew it the minute I tasted it. But it takes more than that to down Daniel Webster.

MARY

(turning to him and
clasping his hands)

You've done it, Mr. Webster -- God bless you!

And as they stand together, Jabez runs toward the house.

OUTSIDE THE KITCHEN, Ma Stone is busy setting the breakfast table that is under an apple tree in the yard. Jabez comes running to her gleefully, like a boy let loose from school.

JABEZ

Ma -- Ma -- it's all right, Ma!

MA STONE

(still busy with her table,
in matter-of-fact tone)

Of course it's all right, son. You had Daniel
Webster, didn't ye?

(calling out loudly)

Breakfast's ready!

(to Jabez)

I've made a special surprise for Mr. Webster.

The EXTERIOR OF JABEZ STONE'S FARM, near the old barn. Webster, with the jug of Medford rum under his arm, is surrounded by the farmers including Tom Sharp, and Eli Higgins. They are giving three cheers for Webster.

TOM SHARP

Hurrah for Black Dan'l!

WEBSTER

Don't make so much of a trifle, my friends!

JABEZ

(joining the group)

Ma says breakfast's ready, Mr. Webster!

WEBSTER

Breakfast ... Ah! ... Come along friends, Ma
Stone's a cook this side of heaven.

He hooks his arm into Jabez's and they go up toward the house. Tom Sharp walks next to Jabez.

OUTSIDE THE KITCHEN as they all sit down. Webster is at the head of the table, the jug of Medford beside his chair. Jabez sits next to Mary, and next to Mary sits little Daniel.

TOM SHARP

Jabez -- will you join our Grange now?

JABEZ

Why, thank you, Tom. I was going to ask you if
you thought I could.

TOM SHARP

We'll be mighty glad to have you with us.

WEBSTER

There is nothing like a good old country
breakfast. Where's Ma?

MARY

She'll be here in a moment. She has a special
surprise for you.

Ma Stone brings out a huge covered dish from the kitchen and sets it before Webster with pride.

WEBSTER

(sniffing it)

Peach pie!

Ma smiles, but doesn't answer. Webster lifts the cover and finds an empty dish. Everybody is dumbfounded.

MA STONE

What the D-- ?

And on CROSS ROADS we see Scratch, in his buggy, holding a big peach pie in his hands and munching it lustily as the scene fades out.