

A Time to Heal

By Burton Bumgarner

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DEDICATION

To my parents, who finally got around to telling me the original story after forty years.

SYNOPSIS

Jim and Lillian Fowler are having a dinner party to welcome their daughter home from college and meet her fiancé. Lillian's brother, Walt, a physician, is also there, even though he and Jim get under each other's skins, especially when Walt needles Jim about losing a recent election to become prosecutor because of his conservative racial views. When Janice and her fiancé David arrive, the strain increases as the idealistic young law student from "up North" treats the Wycrofts, the family who works for the Fowlers, as equals. The Wycrofts are already uneasy, fearing for the safety of their daughter Chloe, a civil-rights activist. Tension explodes when Walt, who had left to treat an emergency, calls the house. He's been arrested after having moved an injured African-American child to a whites-only hospital to better treat him.

Set in 1960 during the North Carolina sit-ins, and based on an actual event, the play combines the story of the segregated hospital with the words and experiences of the civil rights demonstrators. Appropriate for all audiences, "A Time to Heal" is laced with gentle humor and features powerful roles for a multi-racial cast. It shows the struggles that went through the hearts and minds of many people of the time.

*For everything there is a season
And a time for every matter under heaven;
A time to be born and a time to die;
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1-3

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CAST

7 m, 7 w, 6 flexible

*The cast, including the Demonstrators,
should be multi-racial.*

Jim Fowler: An attorney.

Lillian Fowler: Jim's wife.

Walter Jeffers: A surgeon, Lillian's brother.

Janice Fowler: Daughter of Lillian and Jim, a college student.

David Hennessy: Janice's fiancé, a law student.

Sally Wycroft: Works as the Fowlers' maid.

Ben Wycroft: Sally's husband, works as the Fowlers' gardener.

Chloe Wycroft: Sally and Ben's daughter, a college student.

Barbara: Chloe's friend, and a demonstrator.

William: A friend of Barbara and Chloe.

Denise: College friend and demonstrator.

John: College friend and demonstrator.

Scott Bodie: The local chief of police.

A Nurse

6 Demonstrators (More may be added if desired.)

SETTING

"A Time to Heal" is set in the city of Forsythe, North Carolina, on a hot evening in August of 1960, and during the Greensboro sit-ins earlier in the year. Most of the action takes place in the Fowler home. The parlor has a sofa, end tables, lamps, coffee table, wing chairs, bookshelves, draped windows, etc. A telephone is on an end table DSR. A small kitchen table and four chairs are DSL. This will be both the kitchen of the Fowler home and the lunch counter for the demonstrators.

ACT I

Prologue

(AT RISE: Low lights up on DSL and DSR. DEMONSTRATOR 1 ENTERS right and speaks. DEMONSTRATOR 2 ENTERS and stands beside the table. He pulls out a chair, but doesn't sit.)

DEMONSTRATOR 1: January, 1960. A college student named Ezell Blair Jr. enters the Union Bus Terminal in Greensboro, North Carolina. He is refused service at the restaurant.

(DEMONSTRATORS 1 and 2 EXIT. Blackout.)

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: The Fowler home. Lights up center. JIM is seated in a wing chair trying to read the newspaper. He sighs, groans, rolls his eyes, and finally throws the paper down on the coffee table in disgust. He picks it up again, trying a different section. He groans loudly, and tosses the paper on the floor.)

JIM: Lillian! Lillian! *(HE starts to pick up the paper again, then kicks it.)* Where is that woman? *(HE waits, scowls, folds his arms, pouts, stands, crosses to the doorway and shouts.)* LILLIAN? *(Nothing happens. HE crosses back to his chair, kicking at the newspaper.)* LILLIAN! WHERE ARE YOU? *(LILLIAN ENTERS, adjusting an earring.)*

LILLIAN: I'm right here. Where did you think I was, dear?

JIM: I called and you didn't hear me.

LILLIAN: I heard you.

JIM: Why didn't you answer?

LILLIAN: Because I was upstairs and I can't yell as loudly as you can. Besides, I'm trying to dress. *(SHE sits on the sofa.)* Well?

JIM: Well what?

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LILLIAN: What did you want?

JIM: I... I... uh... I don't remember. (*SHE stands.*) Don't go!

LILLIAN: I need to check on the dinner.

JIM: Well, I need you here.

LILLIAN: Why?

JIM: I ... I don't have anything to do.

LILLIAN: Read the evening paper. (*SHE gathers up the newspaper and hands it to JIM.*)

JIM: That shallow, pretentious rag! (*HE tosses it on the coffee table.*)

LILLIAN: That shallow, pretentious rag was one of your supporters in the election.

JIM: And it didn't do a whole lot of good, did it?

LILLIAN: Okay. What's wrong with the *Evening Sun* this time?

JIM: It's full of that ... (*With disgust.*) that senator from Massachusetts.

LILLIAN: That would be Senator John Kennedy.

JIM: Does that fellow really think his country will elect him president?

LILLIAN: Why wouldn't they? He's catching up in the polls.

JIM: He won't win. He's from New England.

LILLIAN: So were John Adams and Calvin Coolidge.

JIM: He's too young.

LILLIAN: He's older than you were the first time you ran for office.

JIM: But I wasn't running for President of the United States.

LILLIAN: Anything else, dear?

JIM: All this sit-in business started last winter in Greensboro and Charlotte, and now it's spreading all over the country.

I just hope it doesn't happen here. Of course, if it does it won't be my problem. I'm not the prosecutor anymore.

(*SALLY ENTERS with a glass on a coaster, and a tray of hors d'oeuvres. She hands the glass to JIM and places the coaster and tray on the end table.*) What's this?

SALLY: Your iced coffee, Mr. Fowler. And some hors d'oeuvres for your guests.

LILLIAN: Sally, how is the dinner progressing?

SALLY: It's cooking, Mrs. Fowler.

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LILLIAN: How is Chloe? Is she learning her way around the kitchen?

SALLY: She's fine. *(SALLY EXITS.)*

LILLIAN: I'd better check on dinner. You will be on your good behavior this evening, won't you, dear?

JIM: Why should I be?

LILLIAN: Because Janice is bringing her fiancé home for the first time and she doesn't want you to do anything to embarrass her. And neither do I.

JIM: *(Scoffs.)* Ha. Some fiancé.

LILLIAN: You haven't even met him and you've already decided you don't like him! Janice says he's anxious to meet you.

JIM: Why? Hasn't he ever met a man who lost an election before?

LILLIAN: He's just finished law school, and he wants to meet a real Southern lawyer.

JIM: But he's not a Southerner. What confounded state is he from?

LILLIAN: He's from New Jersey, dear. But he plans on taking the North Carolina bar and practicing here.

JIM: Can't blame him for that.

LILLIAN: Try to behave. *(Tries to EXIT, but JIM stops HER.)*

JIM: And you had to go and invite your brother!

LILLIAN: Yes, dear. My brother is part of the family.

JIM: Your brother is strange.

LILLIAN: He's brilliant. That entitles him to be strange.

JIM: He's an arrogant know-it-all. I don't like him.

LILLIAN: Then you both have something in common. You're an arrogant know-it-all and he doesn't like you. Besides, he's on call. He'll probably end up at the hospital halfway through dinner.

JIM: Well, let's pray that he does.

(LIGHTS crossfade to kitchen. CHLOE and BARBARA have ENTERED and sit at the table. Chloe begins chopping carrots for a salad. Barbara is drinking a glass of tea.)

End of Freeview

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