

## ACT ONE SCENE ONE

*THE PLAY IS SET IN A POST-APOCALYPTIC WORLD WHERE SOCIETY HAS ONCE MORE RETURNED TO A FEUDAL, MEDIEVAL STATE. IN THE DARKNESS WE HEAR SHOUTS, THE SOUND OF CHAOS. LIGHTS UP TO REVEAL KERNA, THE GOVERNOR OF THIS PROVINCE IN A LIVING AREA IN HIS RESIDENCE. HE OPENS A LETTER SEALED WITH WAX, READS IT BUT SHOWS LITTLE EMOTION. HE SEEMS RESIGNED TO THE LETTER'S CONTENTS. ENTER HENDEL, HIS WIFE.*

**HENDEL**

Kerna, there are militia at the gate. What's going on?

**KERNA**

I'm sorry Hendel.

*KERNA HANDS HER THE LETTER AND INDICATES FOR HER TO READ IT. SHE READS QUIETLY BUT IS CLEARLY SHOCKED AS SHE DISCOVERS THE LETTER'S CONTENTS.*

**HENDEL**

Exile? For how long? Months? Years?

**KERNA**

It's permanent.

**HENDEL**

But they can't do this.

**KERNA**

The High Council have decided; their decree is permanent exclusion.

**HENDEL**

But you're Governor of this province.

**KERNA**

It counts for nothing anymore. My title's gone. I'm to be stripped of all rank.

**HENDEL**

There must be something we can do; someone we can go to for help.

**KERNA**

There's no-one, Hendel.

**HENDEL**

Then what's to become of us?

**KERNA**

This is not about 'us', Hendel.

**HENDEL**

What are you saying?

**KERNA**

The order applies to me.

**HENDEL**

No.

*HENDEL BEGINS TO CRUMPLE WITH THE REALISATION. KERNA MOVES TO COMFORT HER BUT SHE WILL NOT HAVE IT.*

**HENDEL**

What gives them the right?

**KERNA**

They are the High Council; they do as they please.

**HENDEL**

There must be something we can do.

**KERNA**

Don't you think I've tried? There's nothing to be done. I wish there were, but there isn't. The High Council have exercised their power, and that is that.

**HENDEL**

Once you would have fought this!

**KERNA**

Once, maybe, but the world's a different place now.

**HENDEL**

You used to be so strong.

**KERNA**

I'm sorry.

**HENDEL**

Then I'll come with you.

**KERNA**

No!

**HENDEL**

Why not?

**KERNA**

Because they won't allow it; they know it's not losing all this that's my punishment, it's being separated from you and the children.

**HENDEL**

So you will endure all this...

**KERNA**

What would you have me do?

**HENDEL**

Give them up!

**KERNA**

I can't; I made a promise. I won't betray that trust!

**HENDEL**

So you would put us through all of this, and what for? A few peasants?

**KERNA**

The earthers deserve some dignity.

**HENDEL**

Are we not entitled to the same consideration?

*KERNA TURNS HIS HEAD AWAY FROM HER; HE IS CAUGHT ON THE HORNS OF THIS DILEMMA.*

**HENDEL**

All of this to uphold your principles. It has cost us everything, Kerna. Dear God, what are we going to do? What are we going to do?

**KERNA**

You must go to Dreipentz. Take the children. Explain to your parents what's happened. You must stay with them while matters are resolved here. There should be enough left after the militia have finished for you and the children to begin again.

**HENDEL**

Kerna, why can't I make you understand? I don't want any of this without you.

**KERNA**

You think I don't know that? But the High Council's decision means we have no choice.

**HENDEL**

Talk to them. Tell them you've reconsidered. Tell them...

**KERNA**

It will make no difference. Do you really think they'd believe me; turning my back on everything I've argued for these past years.

**HENDEL**

Isn't it worth trying? Aren't we worth trying for?

**KERNA**

It's too late, Hendel. The die are cast; however much you might like to turn back the clock.

**HENDEL**

But...

**KERNA**

I won't, will not, treat these people as animals, Hendel.

**HENDEL**

No.

**KERNA**

Something we once agreed on.

**HENDEL**

And still do... it's just the price is too high.

**KERNA**

It was always going to be, and if you're honest, you know that. We went into this with our eyes open, Hendel. We knew what might happen one day.

**HENDEL**

And now it has.

**KERNA**

Yes. The moment we stood out against them we became vulnerable. The law now classifies the 'earthers' as 'sub-human'; food production their sole reason for existence. All the while we met their production targets for the harvest we had a fragile security but once those quotas were missed...

**HENDEL**

We are not to blame for the low yield this year!

**KERNA**

And neither are the earthers! The seed would not germinate, but the consequence is that the terraces are bare and so too now the barns. The High Council's response? Punishment. Punish the earthers and make an example of selected families.

**HENDEL**

It's so unfair.

**KERNA**

Their view is that the state prospers when the earthers are enslaved. They see providing them with decent rations, adequate housing and proper conditions as indulgence. Their solution? The prod. Well I will not use it, nor will I allow it to be used in any land over which I have jurisdiction.

**HENDEL**

You are a good man.

**KERNA**

No. In their eyes, Hendel, I am the cause.

*SUDDENLY THERE IS A COMMOTION AND TWO CHILDREN, A BOY, BARU, AND A GIRL, PRETA, ENTER AGITATED. THEY ARE FOLLOWED BY THE MAID, DOCHA.*

**BARU**

Mother, there are militia in the house. They're in father's room!

**HENDEL**

I thought I told you to keep the children to their rooms, Docha.

**DOCHA**

I tried, madam, but there are soldiers everywhere.

**BARU**

What's happening?

**HENDEL**

Maybe you would like to explain to the children why they have to leave their home.

**PRETA**

Leaving? Why? Where are we going?