

## **SIDE ONE: Settlers**

**Five Characters: Director; Actor 1; Actor 3; Actor 2; Actor 2**

Director: Yes. The Mighty Men were sons of pioneers. How do you think that helped make them into the Mighty Men?

Actor 1: A pioneer ethic. Building together. Working together.

Director: Can we show that on-stage?

*On screen, a shot of a Zorra pioneer log cabin.*

Director (*calling*): Thanks Don. Congratulations. You're catching on fast to what visuals we'll need.

Actor 3: Being pioneers could have helped. Must have been hard work. We can only imagine.

Director (*to prop and costume people*): We got any pioneer props? Hats Tools?

*The prop and costume person/people produce what's needed. Perhaps prop tools—axe, saw; perhaps a few 'logs'.*

Actor 3: First thing when they got here —the trees.

Actor 2: We've shown the trees.

Actor 4: The settlers here had never seen trees before?

Actor 3: Check out Northern Scotland. Willow, birch, juniper—that's all the trees they would know. Tiny stuff compared to Zorra.

Actor 1: Heather, bracken, moss, scrubby grass, rocks. Nothing like Zorra.

Director: So they come to Zorra, and a mature sugar maple or a red oak is what, maybe 25 meters high. And a beech—even more—maybe 30.

Actor 2: And bigger around than a really fat person.

Actor 1: And they've just been a couple of months crossing the Atlantic and living on mouldy potatoes and they're all still seasick and then they walk from Montreal to Zorra. And when they get here—did they really know how to use an axe?

*Actor 3 swings an 'axe', misses the tree, chops his own foot. Screams, grasps foot in pain, hops.*

Actor 1: You don't just chop a tree any old way. You have to make sure it doesn't fall on top of you.

*On screen, felled and/or falling trees. Live, an actor looks up, runs as a tree falls toward them. Perhaps another actor with a branch acts this out.*

Director: First they had to cut enough trees to build a cabin. And figure out the way to build it tight from wood. Back home they probably had stone huts. Here they didn't have nails, bolts, anything like that.

*Actors pick up the assembled tools and logs and will act out trying to build a cabin. Perhaps some logs tumble and jumble. Appropriate keyboard music throughout, thanks to the creative musician—e.g. work-song.*

Director: Then—you need a roof. What's that made of? Not logs.

Actor 3: At first—Bark?

Director: How do you get the bark from a tree?

Actor 3: Skin it somehow.

Director: Have you ever tried to skin a tree? Must have been lots of trial and error to get that done.

Actor 2: The Indigenous people could have shown them.

Actor 4: Why should they? What did the settlers ever do for them?

Director: And then— how did they fasten the bark on the roof poles?

Actor 2: Rope maybe.

Actor 4: Rope! Finally we get a tug-of-war image!

Actor 1: Where did they get that—Rona?

Actor 3: Maybe made it from vines or something.

Director:        Maybe. And then, the hardest part—the door. You don't make a door from logs or bark. You need—

*Prop person is running around getting the things mentioned—rope, board, hinge, etc. Then actors start acting—a whole on-stage multi-tasking workshop, with busy heigh-ho working music. Everyone is busy.*

Actor 3:        Boards.

Director:        So you need a sawmill. For that you need a fast-flowing river.

Actor 4:        In Zorra?

Actor 2:        No dice. So they'd need to build a mill-dam.

Actor 2:        And they'd need, like, hinges for a door.

Actor 3:        So they need iron, and a metal-worker. And a forge. An anvil. Where do you get that?

Actor 4:        And meanwhile they don't have even a door?

Actor 1:        They'd need to make or get from somewhere all the mill equipment—wheels and grinders. Complicated machinery.

*Maybe the actors act out a sawmill and/or a mill grinding, and/or sheep and weaving etc*

Actor 4:        In the meantime they must have had something to cover the opening. What was it—a blanket? And where did they get it—WalMart?

Director:        They had to hand-weave that too.

Actor 1:        They need sheep, then wool, then a loom.

Actor 2:        And even if they did get a blanket— What would that keep out?

Actor 4:        Not a thing.

*An actor or two inside the cabin: Two actors hold up the blanket 'door'. A wild animal starts pushing its way in.*

*Actors (inside the cabin, terrified,*

*The animals enters, pioneer runs away, a bear for example pursues. Wolf-type music maybe a la Prokofiev 'Peter and the Wolf'.*

Actor 1:        They would have had to make not just the door blanket but all their clothes.

*Actors mime a spinning wheel, and working at it. Then tap-tapping as if cobblers.*

Director: What about shoes? You need leather, and a cobbler.

Actor 4: Those don't show up in the bush every day. In the meantime—what, they went barefoot?

Actor 2: Must have.

Actor 4: In winter?

Actor 2: No doubt. Or wrap their feet in homemade cloths.

Actor 1: No fleece-lined boots then.

Actor 2: No steel-toed work-boots either. No wonder they cut their feet up with axes.

Director: What about food? No Sobeys, no Foodland.

Actor 1: Whatever they could grow for themselves. Potatoes, pigs, a cow, milk.

*Actors mime hoeing, another is a mooing cow, another is milking.*

Actor 4: Wait a minute—what about cooking?

Actor 3: They had a million trees for firewood.

Actor 4: And what if the fire goes out? They didn't have matches.

*An actor blows frantically at a fire.*

Actor 2: Borrow from a neighbour. She'd give you a smouldering stick and you'd have to get home with it somehow.

*Actor struggles back home desperately trying to keep a stick sheltered, keep it from going out.*

Director: And for building a barn—that's a much bigger proposition. You need a bee.

*An actor directs a barn-building. Actors mime the actions, including one who is an ox. More work-song singing perhaps.*

Actor 3: Let's move that rock-elm trunk.

Actor 4: It's sixty feet long, three feet thick. Not even the oxen can pull that.

Actor 3: Lift one end. Push on that lever! Up! Get a wedge in there! Now—Stick that light basswood log under. Now—same at the other end. Now we can roll it. Right there! Stop! Now—Up she goes! Hold it! Now boys, push, get that log under. Can you hold it? You have to. Yes we can. Hold it, hold it—there! Break time. It's ninety degrees out here. *(The actors wheeze, gasp, fan themselves with their straw hats, wipe sweat from their faces.)* Whiskey! *(An actor brings a pail. They dip cups and swig.)* Whiskey galore!

Actor 2: Okay. We get the idea. Pioneering was hard work. None of us should ever complain of hard work again.

Actor 4: The good news was—it's easy to ferment a potato or whatever, and distill the alcohol, and you could buy it for like a quarter a gallon.



Director: And right about now, if not all long, the audience will be wondering—just what has all this got to do with the tug-of-war Mighty Men?

Actor 3: I guess Zorra people, they were used to working together, and used to doing things you wouldn't think they'd be able to do.

Actor 1: So maybe that's what ties our scenes together.

Actor 2: Could be.

Actor 4: So let's make sure the audience understands that.

Director: Thistle Theatre audiences are smart. They'll get it.

Actor 1: There's just one thing we forgot for our pioneer scene.

Director: What's that?

Actor 1: Zorra's official animal emblem.

Actor 4: Zorra doesn't have an official animal emblem.

Actor 1: Well it should.

Actor 3: What is it? The squirrel? Skunk? Raccoon?

Actor 1:       The mosquito.

## **END OF SIDE 1**

## **SIDE TWO: The Bishop**

**Three Characters: Strachan, William, Robert**

*With help from prop and wardrobe on stage, an actor has become Bishop John Strachan—puts on his elaborate a gown and mitre, say. Perhaps he holds an official-looking document that he's reading. Perhaps a quill pen. Perhaps he sits as on a sort of throne. Perhaps there is a guard by his chair. Music is some dignified hymn, e.g. 'Crown Him With Many Crowns', or something regal like 'Rule Britannia'. On-screen: The painting from the cover of Elaine Cougler's The Loyalist Legacy. Two settlers Robert and William enter to the Bishop, with a mixture of loud defiance (Robert) and trepidation (William). They are obviously Zorra rural—straw hats or whatever. They stand and wait and shuffle. Strachan raises his eyes, stares at them, makes them wait more.*

Strachan:       Well? (*Pause*) Speak. A Bishop is a busy man.

William:        We've come regarding a number of issues, sir— to do with your government. Sir.

Strachan: Issues? You bumpkins have a nerve coming in here...telling your betters how to govern.

William: We've come here all the way to Toronto from Oxford for an audience. All we want is to help this country grow and prosper.

Strachan: Your government makes that happen. That is not your concern.

Robert: Growing and prospering is exactly our concern. You and your allies in your city mansions know nothing of our needs. And you don't seem to care.

*William puts an arm on Robert to restrain and calm him.*

Strachan: Be careful what you say. We have prisons waiting for disloyal ingrates the likes of you.

William: We are not disloyal. We have always been—Loyalists. We want only to explain how life is in our new townships.

Robert (*another outburst*): Your bunch in Toronto make our lives miserable! You leave us to our sweat and toil and do nothing for us! Your clergy lands are empty lots, wild land, no settlers on them to help to make our roads! Our representatives that we elect have no say in your government! *We* have no say! Your clique do just as they please! We are Methodists and Presbyterians yet our own preachers can't get a license to marry us! We—

William: Please forgive my brother's vehemence. We want only your support to build this colony.

Strachan:       The only help you'll receive from me is—I won't have you thrown in jail this very moment. Now begone. Clear your land and plant your crops and leave government to those with some brains and breeding. Now off with you— Or jail for you both. Loyalists indeed.

*Strachan jumps up, stalks off. Robert makes to approach him again, but William takes his arm again and leads him away.*

**END OF SIDE 2**

## **SIDE THREE: The Mighty Men**

**Five Characters: Bob; Billy, Rob, Ira, Sandy, Sutherland**

Bob: Now why would our Honourable Member of Parliament be coming to talk to the likes of us?

Billy: I hope he won't be long talking. I've got over six hundred acres of farms to run.

Rob: Seeding soon.

Ira: Fields are drying up nicely.

Sandy: We've none of us got the time now for pulling games. I suppose a Member of the Parliament can take all the time he wants for whatever the Members of Parliament do with their fine spring days.

*Hon. James Sutherland enters. Tie and jacket or top-hat or something recognizably Parliamentary.*

Sutherland: Good day to you, men. *(They all greet him respectfully.)* Now I know you're all busy men with farms and you'll be all wondering why I have asked you to meet me. I thank you all for coming and I promise to be brief. You men are a renowned tug-of-war team.

Ira: Don't know about re-nowned. We've won a few pulls.

Sutherland: Renowned as far as Dereham and Nissouri.

Sandy: Beat Dereham four years in a row.

Sutherland: And now how about some sterner prey?

Billy: What are ye suggesting? Waterloo? Hamilton?

Sutherland: I'll get right to the point. Buffalo!

Ira: Buffalo?

Sutherland: New York State!

Rob: I'll walk 4-and-a-half miles of a Sunday to church, but why walk across the road, let alone the border, to meet a Yankee?

Bob: I've never ventured south of Tillsonburg.

Rob: I've never been west of Thamesford.

Sandy: I've never been east of Brantford.

Billy: I've never been north of Lucknow.

Ira: Well, I have. I was born way up in the Bruce Peninsula. But I'm fifty years old. And— Buffalo? Isn't that in the United States of America?

Sutherland: Why, Ira, I've seen you with those hundred-and-twenty-pound anvils held straight out, one in each hand, and you stroll out of McKay's blacksmith shop and heave 'em in the street like tossing litter. You could out-pull a team of those Clydesdales that you breed. Compared to that—Americans are nothing.

Ira: Yes but I do not relish Buffalo.

Sutherland: I'm talking about a tug-of-war. Ira, fifty years means nothing. I could bring you two 25-year-olds, any two young pups in Zorra, and you'd out-pull em both together. Bob—you could out-pull two Clydesdales. Billy—you deal in livestock. I've seen you lift a calf above your head.

Billy: Sure, and I can lift a heifer. But Ira's right. I needn't go to Buffalo to lift a heifer. Let the Americans come to Zorra.

Sutherland: Any one of you could out-pull any other three men together. Or any two horses. Why, you're that much better than all the rest, the way that new acetylene I manufacture is so much better than kerosene. You burn that much brighter.

Sandy: Tug-of-war is not a business or occupation. It's for play.

James Sutherland: Men this is not just play. It's close demanding teamwork and intense concentration. You harmonize your efforts and your traction. One untimely slip and you could lose. You watch the other team as a cat eyes a mouse and...the second they falter—you pounce.

Rob: When you tell it like that—it does not sound like fun. It sounds like work. And a train to Buffalo—that's not fun neither.

Sutherland: There's a team from Rochester say they can beat any team from Canada. They'll meet you at the Erie County Fairgrounds in Buffalo. Men— You'll not go to pull for Canada? An Inter-national Competition. Show the Americans what Canadian men are made of. Men, what do you say? (*They mumble and grumble and hesitate.*)

Rob: Go all that way to be some fairground exhibit? They can display a mesmerist. Or prize hens. Or a monkey on stilts.

Bob: In Buffalo they have monkeys? On stilts?

Sandy: They make those photo-graph machines in Rochester. Those Kodak things.

Bob: Will they take our photograph?

Sutherland: The whole team. If you win.

Rob : I hear they make and sell dirty pictures with those Kodaks.

Sutherland: When you win they'll print a picture of the team on Woodstock cigar boxes.

Rob: Cigars? No sir. Not my photograph. I don't smoke. I don't drink.

Sutherland: Say, you men know that I'm the Royal Chief of the Order of the Scottish Clans of North America. You'd be doing this not for me, oh no— but for the Clans.

Sandy: Wellllll...we canna go till after the second hay crop is in.

Ira: And we have no time to practise. And no-one anyway to practise against. They're all push-overs. Or pull-overs. (*He laughs at his own joke, tries to explain it by gesture. The other look at him blankly.*) You know— Push— Pull....



Sutherland: Swing a scythe, steer a plough, split cordwood—why, you men have built up the strength of ten of those Rochester boys. We'll get you rooms in the best hotel, free tickets on the train.

Billy: I'm not for riding on a train. Smoky, noisy, bumpy. *(He shakes like someone on a shaky train.)*

Sutherland; I am a member of the Parliamentary Committee on Railways. We are assured that the TH&B should be built through to Buffalo by late this summer.

Bob: TH&B?

Billy: To Hickson and Back. *(They laugh.)*

**END OF SIDE 3**