

PIONEER DAY

By Samuel Holladay

OVER MAIN TITLES - The bellowing sound of an ONCOMING TRAIN, it's horn growing louder and louder.

FADE IN:

EXT. NEPHI, UTAH - TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

The UNION PACIFIC TRAIN whooshes by. It takes longer than one might expect- thirty or so train cars whip past. But then...

Stillness. Where the train was, we now see into the quiet streets of NEPHI, UTAH, including its lone traffic light.

EXT. NEPHI, UTAH - MAIN STREET - DAY

A "WELCOME TO NEPHI" sign. A "HOME OF THE JUAB WASPS" sign. A burger joint prominently advertising "CLOSED ON SUNDAYS".

A banner stretching across Main Street: "PIONEER DAY 2016".

Nephi looks like a relic of days gone by. Faded brick buildings house mom and pop businesses fighting for relevance- a boutique here, an electronics store there. In the windows, chalk paint advertises Pioneer Day sales and rodeo discounts.

Not a soul is out on Main Street today. The traffic light goes unneeded. The town seems to be deserted. But then we see a church- the parking lot is full.

In big letters on the side of the church: "THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS". A Mormon church.

RAY (O.S.)

I think he did a good job. Could've been a lot worse, ya know?

A faded, rumbling sedan from the 90s- the kind of car only a high schooler would drive- pulls out of the lot.

I/E. AMMON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

AMMON

It was a little apologetic, was it not?

AMMON LARSEN (18) drives, wearing a colored shirt and tie.
RAY BARNES (18) rides shotgun in a polo shirt.

RAY

Well, what, do you want him to ignore every problem with the Church or at least try to address them?

AMMON

If he owned up to the problems- if anyone did- that would be best.

RAY

Luckily, I'm not a member, but... you don't have to be to know that'll never happen. Right? I mean, what do you think, Mira?

MIRA GONZALEZ (18) sits in the backseat, wearing a nice dress, staring out the window. She clutches a small purse.

MIRA

Huh? I don't know.

RAY

(beat)

What are you doing back there by yourself anyway?

Ray unbuckles his seatbelt and climbs over the center console and into the backseat. He pulls Mira close for a kiss.

AMMON

Jesus, Liam's house is not that far from here. Calm down.

EXT. MORRIS HOME - DAY

The sedan pulls up to a middle-class brick house. A fine piece of 90s architecture. A sign in the window reads, "ELDER LIAM MORRIS - NEVADA RENO MISSION - 2016-2018". Cars fill the driveway and line the street.

AMMON

Go ahead, I'll find parking.

Ray and Mira get out of the car and head toward the house.

INT. MORRIS HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Close on LIAM MORRIS's (18) smiling face. His dark suit and well-trimmed hair make him look like a young businessman, but instead of a business card or Salesman of the Year trophy, Liam holds a navy blue BOOK OF MORMON.

Pull out to reveal it's merely a photo of Liam, attached to a custom-made placard that reads "MISSIONARY (noun): Someone who leaves their families for a SHORT TIME so that others may be with theirs for ETERNITY."

Next to the placard is a miniature NEVADA state flag. On the other side is a sign-up sheet: "Sign up for Elder Morris's Mission Emails!" A hand grabs a pen and quickly writes down their email address.

The house is filled with guests. The kitchen counter is covered with food, and people serve themselves buffet-style. The line stretches out the front door, and the door to the backyard is also open for overflow seating.

Most of the guests wear formal clothing- dresses, white shirts, ties. JENNIFER MORRIS (45) wears an apron over her best Sunday dress and lugs a heavy crockpot to the counter.

JENNIFER

Steve, I need a space!

STEVE MORRIS (47) sets a bag of ice on the floor. He stands out in a casual button-down and no tie. With his sleeves rolled up, a tattoo can be seen on his left arm. He quickly arranges dishes to make room for the crock pot. Jennifer sets it down with a heavy thud.

STEVE

Eat up, everyone, there is plenty!

LIVING ROOM

We drift into the living room and find a young man in a suit hugging an older COUPLE.

LIAM

Thank you so much for coming! I know it's a long drive from Bountiful.

The young man pulls back- it's LIAM in the flesh.

AUNT BETTY

Oh, it was worth it! We are so proud of you.

UNCLE DAVE

That was the best farewell talk I've ever heard. You bring that same spirit in your lessons, and you will have a successful mission.

LIAM

Thank you, Uncle Dave, Aunt Betty.
It's great to see you guys. I gotta
say hi to more people.

Liam walks down the line, quickly greeting more guests. He passes his long-haired, casually dressed brother, ZACH (22), playing video games in the den.

LIAM (CONT'D)

We have guests, Zach.

ZACH

(eyes fixed on video game)
Ain't no guests of mine.

EXT. MORRIS HOME - CONTINUOUS

Liam steps out the front door and finds Ray and Mira near the back of the line. He gives them hugs.

RAY

I'm sorry I fell asleep during your
talk, Liam. I dreamed it was good.

LIAM

I would've fallen asleep too, man.

Ammon steps up and joins the line. Liam hugs him too.

LIAM (CONT'D)

There he is. What do you think,
Ammon? Was my talk okay?

AMMON

(lying)
It was really good.

LIAM

I tried to be more sensitive than
other talks, you know? But not shy
away from the hard stuff.

AMMON

Totally.

Ray holds back laughter at Ammon's bullshitting.

LIAM

Are Fetu and Danielle here yet?

CUT TO:

I/E. FETU'S TRUCK - DOWN THE STREET - DAY

A boy and girl are kissing inside a truck. It's relatively chaste at first but becomes more and more passionate...

...until the girl, DANIELLE EVANS (18), pulls back.

DANIELLE
C'mon, let's go in.

FETU MAMEA (19) sighs.

FETU
We used to make out for hours.

DANIELLE
And here you are without a mission call. How do you figure that?

CUT TO:

EXT. MORRIS HOME - FRONT - DAY

Fetu adjusts his tie and Danielle fixes her hair. As they approach Liam's houses, an ELDERLY COUPLE exit the party. The husband wears a bolo tie and cowboy boots with his suit.

FETU
(calling out)
Is that the Powells?

BROTHER POWELL
Fetu! Good to see ya! Shouldn't be long until your farewell, right?

FETU
I have an interview with Bishop Brown tonight.

SISTER POWELL
It goes by fast. Graduation, missions, next thing you know you're going ring shopping!

FETU
Sister Powell!

Danielle laughs as Fetu blushes.

DANIELLE
We'll see you both at the pageant tomorrow, right?

BROTHER POWELL
Wouldn't miss it.

SISTER POWELL
We'll be cheering for you,
Danielle.

EXT. MORRIS HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

The backyard is full of eclectic knick knacks. Lawn ornaments and other decor collected over the years.

Playing host, Liam bounces from table to table, trying to give time to all of the guests. In quick cuts:

TABLE ONE

LIAM
Yeah, it's a huge mission. It's almost all of Nevada and even a bit of California.

GUEST #1
It's got a chunk of Utah too, right?

LIAM
(hiding disappointment)
Yeah. A small one.

TABLE TWO

GUEST #2
You are carrying on a Morris tradition. Your great grandfather served in France, your grandfather was in Brazil, I went to New Zealand, of course. And your dad, you wouldn't know it now, but of course he went to Thailand.

Liam politely nods then glances at his father replacing a large water cooler on a table. Steve smiles at Liam.

TABLE THREE

GUEST #3
Trust me, serving in the states is highly underrated. I loved it.

LIAM
Oh, where did you serve?

GUEST #3

Hawaii.

FRIENDS' TABLE

Liam sits and lets out a heavy exhale. Ammon is texting someone, but he puts his phone down.

RAY

Not gonna lie, I'd convert and go on a mission just to get a nice party like this.

MIRA

You can just have a party, Ray.

RAY

It wouldn't be the same.

AMMON

Look who made it!

Fetu and Danielle sit down with plates of food.

AMMON (CONT'D)

Fetu, you got lipstick on your collar.

FETU

(looking at shirt)

Huh?

DANIELLE

He's lying.

The group laughs. Ammon's phone BUZZES. He picks it up.

LIAM

Oooh, I know that smile.

DANIELLE

Ammon's in love!

Ammon can't remove his grin even as he shakes his head.

AMMON

The fun will be coming to an end in a couple weeks when I move to St. George.

RAY

Not gonna try the long distance thing, huh? We're at least gonna give it a shot.

Ray puts his hand on Mira. Her other hand holds a glass of punch, which she is downing fast.

FETU

So what's gonna be harder, Liam?
Giving up movies or music for two
years?

LIAM

Hm... movies. Definitely movies.
I'm missing three *Star Wars* movies.
Can you believe that?

RAY

Damn. I take it back, I'd never go
on a mission.

MIRA

Oh, please.
(to Liam)
At least you get to draw, right?

LIAM

Yeah, I think so. And there will
always be movies. You only get one
mission. Fetu, any news on yours?

FETU

If all goes well, I'm finally
submitting my papers tonight.

RAY

Third time's the charm.

Mira and Danielle both glare at Ray.

AMMON

Where do you want to go?

FETU

Somewhere awesome, like out of the
country. Uh, no offense, Liam.

Liam shrugs. Across the yard, he notices someone. A pretty
girl in a floral dress admiring a set of lawn gnomes.

LIAM

Hey, I got more people to greet.
Stick around though.

RAY

Sure thing, Elder Morris.

Ray salutes Liam then sees Mira taking more gulps of punch.

RAY (CONT'D)
You love that punch, huh?

Mira shrugs and keeps chugging.

Meanwhile, Liam crosses the yard toward the pretty girl, muttering an opening line. But about halfway there—

KENZEIGH LIAM

Hi, Liam!!! Great talk!! Whoa!

Liam is stopped dead in his tracks by KENZEIGH LUDLOW (16). He clutches his heart from the surprise.

LIAM (CONT'D)
Kenzeigh. I didn't see you there.

KENZEIGH
Your talk was amazing, Liam.

LIAM
Thank you, Kenzeigh.

Liam tries to step around her, but Kenzeigh blocks his path. The pretty girl turns around and makes eye contact with Liam. She sees him with Kenzeigh and starts walking away.

KENZEIGH
I signed up for your emails, but I want you to have my home address so we can write real letters. Promise to write me?

LIAM
Yeah, of course. Excuse me.

Kenzeigh hands Liam a slip of paper and, with her big doe eyes, watches him put it in his pocket and walk away toward the other girl.

LIAM (CONT'D)
Olivia!

The pretty girl turns around. OLIVIA HARPER (17). She wraps her arms around Liam.

OLIVIA
Liam, your talk was so good!

LIAM
Thanks for coming.

OLIVIA
I wouldn't miss it! You looked so
grown up, up there in your suit.

Olivia straightens Liam's tie for him. Out of the corner of his eye, Liam catches Kenzeigh still staring.

LIAM
You wanna go inside?

INT. MORRIS HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Bright red punch pours out of the spout of a large cooler and into a red solo cup. Ray brings the cup to his lips.

RAY
Mmmm... fabulous punch Mrs. Morris!
(beat)
Sister Morris?

JENNIFER
Jennifer is fine, Ray.

RAY
Ah.

Ray takes another sip. Jennifer stirs a pot while Steve takes out a full bag of garbage. Steve pushes his way past Ray.

STEVE
Excuse me, Brother Barnes.

Ray raises his cup and winks at Steve.

INT. MORRIS HOME - BACK HALLWAY - DAY

Steve walks past Ammon with the bag of trash.

STEVE
Behind ya, Ammon.

Ammon fixates on a document hung on the wall. In big letters at the top, "THE FAMILY: A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD."

The document outlines the LDS Church's beliefs concerning families. Ammon keys in on one line in particular: "God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife."

Steve reenters without the trash bag. He takes note of what Ammon is staring at.

STEVE (CONT'D)
(hushed)
That's Jennifer's.

AMMON STEVE (CONT'D)
Oh, I wasn't-- I don't really--

AMMON (CONT'D)
I know.

STEVE
You doing okay?

AMMON
Yeah, I'm good.

STEVE
Good. Glad you came. It means a lot
to Liam.

Steve walks away. Ammon sighs.

INT. MORRIS HOME - BATHROOM - DAY

Mira locks the door behind her and sets her purse on the counter. She frantically rummages through it and pulls out a small box, which she rips open.

She sits down on the toilet and breathes a sigh of relief as she pees. After a moment, she removes a pregnancy test from between her legs. She takes a deep breath and waits.

INT. MORRIS HOME - LIAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Close on Liam's bedroom door covered in artwork.

OLIVIA (O.S.)
Ooh, I finally get to see your
room?

The door opens and Liam shows Olivia inside.

LIAM
Well, it's finally clean for once.
Except the luggage, don't mind
that.

The room is like a museum exhibit on Liam's life- shelves filled with childhood toys alongside more "grown up" collectible figurines, souvenirs from vacations, and movie posters. Olivia stops at a display of polaroids, photo booth strips, and other photos of Liam and his friends.

OLIVIA
There I am. Homecoming 2015.

She points to a photo of her and Liam dressed up for a dance.

LIAM
That was so fun. Your hair looked
so pretty. I mean, it still does, I-

OLIVIA
Is this Kenzeigh?

LIAM
(panicked)
What?

Another photo from a dance: Liam and Kenzeigh dressed in
their best 80s outfits. Liam tries to play it cool.

LIAM (CONT'D)
Girl's choice. It was so lame.

Olivia notices a drawing table in the corner surrounded by
some of Liam's artwork.

OLIVIA
Hey, is that where you do your
cartoons for the paper?

LIAM
Yeah, all of my art stuff.

Olivia sits down in Liam's drawing chair. She notices
caricatures of Steve, Jennifer, and Zach.

OLIVIA
These are good.

LIAM
Do you want one?

OLIVIA
Of me?

LIAM
Yeah, stay right there.

Liam grabs a sheet of paper and pulls up a banana chair.

EXT. MORRIS HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

THUD. A horseshoe hits the ground inches away from the rod.

DANIELLE
Aw, so close!

FETU
Here, let me show you how it's
done.

With great flair, Fetu tosses his horseshoe. It lands several feet away from the rod.

DANIELLE
How it's done, huh?

FETU
Yeah, how it's done if you suck.

Ray and Mira are seated at a table with a pensive Ammon. Ray pokes around at his plate of "funeral potatoes"—shredded potatoes topped with cheese and corn flakes.

MIRA
(shaking her head)
White people food.

RAY
Don't pin this on my people. This
here's Mormon food.
(to Ammon)
How you holding up, dude?

AMMON
All this shit, man. Did you know
today is eight months since...

RAY
Oh. No, I didn't.

MIRA
I'm sorry, Ammon.

AMMON
It's fine. Ray talked me out of it.
Here I am. But here's my other best
friend leaving to teach the fine
people of Nevada that "same sex
attraction" is such a serious sin
that "same-sex married" couples
cannot enter the Celestial Kingdom.
Nor can their children.

RAY
Don't you think they'll change that
policy someday?
(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)
I mean, they gave black people the
priesthood eventually.

FETU (O.S.)
Whatcha guys talkin' about?

Fetu grabs a cup of punch from the table and takes a gulp.

AMMON
Nothing.

RAY
Gay and black people.

FETU
Ah. Well, as a straight Samoan, I
second what Liam said today. I know
the Book of Mormon is true and
Joseph Smith was a true prophet.
Everything else is trivial.

MIRA
(under her breath)
Tell that to a gay, black guy.

INT. MORRIS HOME - LIAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Olivia turns her head, breaking her pose.

LIAM
Not much longer, I promise.

OLIVIA
Sorry.

She returns her head to its correct position and watches Liam
concentrate. His tongue sticks out a bit as he draws.

LIAM
There. Done.

Liam picks up the drawing but hesitates to give it to Olivia.

LIAM
It's a caricature, okay? It's not
meant to be, you know...

OLIVIA
I'm sure I'll like it. Let me see
it!

Liam hands it over.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Oh my gosh!

LIAM
Let me just have it back--

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
I didn't realize my teeth
were that big. Or my ears.

LIAM (CONT'D)
It's, you know, an exaggeration
of... It's not good, I can do
another--

OLIVIA
No, I like it, really. I'm going to
hang it on my wall. Something to
remember you by while you're gone.

Liam and Olivia laugh then look at each other.

JENNIFER (O.S.)
Liam? Has anyone seen Liam?

INT. MORRIS HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jennifer beckons Liam's friends inside. Kenzeigh is already
in the living room looking at childhood photos of Liam. She
turns around to see Liam walking Olivia downstairs.

As Liam's friends come inside, Kenzeigh leaves.

Jennifer guides everyone to the living room. Aunt Betty and
Uncle Dave are already on one of the couches.

LIAM
Yes, Mom?

JENNIFER
Liam, you and Ammon should do
"Agony" one more time!

Liam exchanges looks with Ammon.

LIAM
I don't know, we haven't
talked about it.

AMMON
We haven't practiced since
State.

JENNIFER
Your aunt and uncle didn't get to
see it. Everyone would love it.

Guests around the house voice their agreement.

OLIVIA
You guys totally should.

Liam and Ammon look to Ray. Ray cracks his knuckles.

CUT TO:

INT. MORRIS HOME - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ray sits at the Morrisises' spinet piano, gorgeously playing
Sondheim without any sheet music. Liam and Ammon ham it up as
Rapunzel and Cinderella's princes, respectively.

LIAM

*Agony! Far more painful than yours!
When you know she would go with you
if there only were doors.*

LIAM AND AMMON

Agony! Oh, the torture they teach!

AMMON

What's as intriguing-

LIAM

Or half so fatiguing-

LIAM AND AMMON

As what's out of reach?

Liam and Ammon are perfectly in sync and having an absolute
blast. This is why they're friends.

Meanwhile, Olivia smiles and laughs, watching from the front
row. Liam plays almost directly to her.

CUT TO:

Everyone applauds and tells Liam and Ammon how good they did.
Liam hugs Ammon. Ammon holds the hug until Liam pats his
back. Liam turns around to find Olivia.

OLIVIA

Great show.

They almost hug, but Liam is pulled back by Uncle Dave.

UNCLE DAVE

You two ever consider putting on an
act?

LIAM

Ammon's going to study theater at
Dixie, right?

Liam looks back at Ammon. Ammon smiles and nods yes.

AUNT BETTY

Good!

LIAM

But me, I'm doing animation at the U when I get back. They let me defer my scholarship for two years.

AUNT BETTY

And the rest of you?

Betty looks at Fetu.

FETU

Mission, then school.
(looks to Danielle)
Right?

DANIELLE

Yep. Get married and buy a house here in Nephi, hopefully.

Danielle looks at Ray and Mira. Ray nods at Mira.

MIRA

(hesitantly)
I'm going to study to be an immigration lawyer.

RAY

I, uhh, I don't know what I'm doing.

LIAM

You're so good at music though.

RAY

Guess if I had spent as much time on my grades as my music.
(beat)
There's always the Jones Rubber Plant.

Mira looks at Ray with disappointment. Betty turns to Olivia.

OLIVIA

Oh, me? Um, I've got another year of high school and then... well, I'm going to a journalism conference at George Mason in Virginia in a couple weeks, so maybe there if I like it.

LIAM

I didn't know you got in to the conference. With the scholarship and everything?

OLIVIA

Mm hm.

It sinks in for Liam. Olivia's making it out. Not just from Nephi, but Utah.

JENNIFER

(cutting in)

Who wants dessert?

INT. MORRIS HOME - DINING ROOM - LATER

The friends sit around the table holding plastic cups of punch. Ray raises his cup.

RAY

To the Zika outbreak!

ALL

(laughing)

Cheers, cheers!

AMMON

To the Flint water crisis!

ALL

Cheers!

Olivia watches, humored but shocked.

OLIVIA

You guys are terrible!

LIAM

To the RNC choosing Trump!

ALL

Here, here!

INT. MORRIS HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Fetu and Danielle are cuddled up on a couch. Ray and Mira comb through a bookshelf of board games.

MIRA

How 'bout Ticket to Ride? Everyone likes Ticket to Ride.

RAY
Ticket to Ride, everyone?

OLIVIA
I've gotta get going actually. It
was nice seeing you all.

Olivia stands. Fetu and Danielle gesture to Liam to join her.

LIAM
Let me walk you out!

EXT. MORRIS HOME - FRONT - EVENING

Liam walks Olivia to her cherry red sedan. BEEP BEEP. It
unlocks. They stand by the car for a moment.

LIAM
Well... enjoy your drawing.

OLIVIA
Oh! I almost forgot!

Olivia opens her car and reaches in. She pulls out a black
camera bag and hands it to Liam.

LIAM
No way.

OLIVIA
My mom just got me a new one for my
birthday, so...

LIAM
Olivia, I can't-

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
It's old. I promise it's not
too fancy.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
I want you to have it, and I want
you to send me pictures every week.

LIAM
Wow. Alright. Thank you so much.

Olivia sweeps Liam up in a tight hug. He wraps his arms
around her too.

INT. MORRIS HOME - FRONT - SAME

The gang watches from the front window.

FETU
Come on, come on, do it, man.

RAY
(chanting)
Kiss her, kiss her, kiss her.

EXT. MORRIS HOME

OLIVIA
I'm going to miss you, Liam.

LIAM
I'll miss you too, Olivia.

Behind Olivia, Liam can see his friends gathered in the front window watching. He gives them a "Get out!" face.

They slowly break the hug and look at each other.

LIAM (CONT'D)
(beat)
You know, I've technically still got one more day. Do you have Pioneer Day plans, or will I see you at Danielle's pageant?

OLIVIA
Yes! I'll be interviewing the winners, and then I'll be taking photos at the bi-stake church dance thing tomorrow... but why don't I teach you how to use that camera at the carnival?

LIAM
Really?

OLIVIA
Of course, it will be fun!

Olivia gets in her car.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Spoiler alert, you just point it and press the big button!

Liam laughs, perhaps a bit too hard at the joke. The car door shuts and Olivia drives off.