

“A Trial of Love”
Written by: Dorsey Clark
Music by: Deborah Capece

Cast:

Homeless Group

Michael Brainard - husband
MaryBeth Brainard - wife
Cayce - woman
Butch - woman’s friend
Mickey Jr. - lost Son

Society Group

Jeffrey Duncan III - husband
Jennifer Duncan - wife
Priscilla Duncan - daughter, oldest child
Jeffrey Thomas IV (J.T.) oldest son
Cohn Joseph Duncan - younger son
Agnes - Housekeeper
Mrs. Nelson - Social Worker

Scene 1

Michael and MaryBeth, in shabby clothing are walking along, trying to find shelter. MaryBeth is near the time for delivering her child.

Michael: (holding onto his wife) “Be careful now. This is a nasty piece of ice. I don’t want you or our baby hurt.

MaryBeth: (listlessly) “No, I don’t want to hurt THE baby. I wish you’d stop saying ‘our baby’. You know as well as I that we are going to lose this one the same as we lost Mickey Jr.

Michael: (firmly) “MaryBeth, we don’t know for sure that will happen, but if it does---- well, God gave us our baby to love for nine months and that is better than nothing. The one thing we have been able to count on since we came to know Jesus in a personal way, is that whatever He chooses for us WILL be what is best. He certainly has been meeting our needs so far, hasn’t he?”

MaryBeth: “I know, I know. I just want so badly for this baby to know its real Mommy and Daddy, but you’re right, I know God sees the big picture for our lives. We only see the present. It’s a good thing our Heavenly Father is so patient. (sighs) I sure do have a problem getting the hang of that ‘P’ word.”

Michael: (smiling) “Yes, patience is a tough one all right. We just have to keep asking Him for His help and His strength. He won’t say no to that request.” (MB nods her agreement)

(Mich. notices another homeless woman standing by a fire in a barrel. Behind her stands two large boxes. One appears to be unoccupied. Excitedly, he draws her attention to the spot)

“Look MaryBeth, I think we’ve just found a place to stay.” (Pulling at her arm) “Come on, let’s go talk to her.”

MaryBeth: (holding back) “I don’t know Michael. She looks kind of rough. Maybe we should just go on a bit further.”

Michael: (sadly) “I know it’s not much Hon, but I think it’s the best offer we’ll be getting for a while.”

MaryBeth: (contrite) “I’m sorry.” (determined)” You’re absolutely right. Let’s go to talk to her. At least we can warm up at her fire for a bit.”

Michael leads MaryBeth toward the woman by the fire. She in turn is eyeing them very suspiciously and warily.

Cayce: (cantankerously) “What do you want?”

Michael: (pleasantly) “I noticed there was an empty box next to yours. I was wondering if it belongs to anyone?”

Cayce: (curtly) “That was Charley’s. They just took him away this morning. Why are you so interested in it?”

Michael: (coaxingly) “My wife and I need a place to stay. She’s really tired,(putting an arm around he and drawing her closer) an--an--(blurts out) and you take very good care of your property so I knew you would make a good neighbor.

Cayce: (preens a little bit and then looks hard at Michael to see if he was really serious. After satisfying herself that he seemed to be, she began studying the wife. {still suspicious} “Who are you? How’d you end up here?”

Michael: My name is Michael Brainard and this is my wife, MaryBeth. And you are?”

Cayce: “I’m Cayce. What’s it to you.”

Michael: Well Cayce, we hit on hard times a while back and have been at several different places. We stay until the cops catch on and ask us to leave.”

Cayce: (chuckling) “That’s a polite way of putting it. Those buggers can be a royal pain sometimes, but they have saved my hide once or twice too.”

Michael: (quietly) They have their jobs to do and orders to follow. I can’t argue with that.”

MaryBeth: (swaying slightly) “Michael, I really need to sit down. I just can’t stand a minute more.”

Michael: (grabbing MB and looking imploringly at Cayce) “Please, can we use the extra box? My wife is due to have our baby soon and she really needs to rest.”

Cayce: (grudgingly) “I suppose you want to share the fire too? You’re going to have to help find the paper & wood you know!”

Michael: (excited & exuberant) “You mean it’s all right for us to stay?” (looking at MB) “See Hon, I knew God would supply. He is faithful. Look, you sit on this rock while I set things up.” (looking at Cayce) “Thanks Cayce. I really mean that.”

Michael starts to pick up their meager belongings when Cayce speaks again.

Cayce: (trying to look stern to cover a small smile) “Just you remember, there’s to be no loud radio or blaring T.V. After all, this is a quiet neighborhood, you know.” (M & MB stare with open mouths as Cayce cackles at her own joke) “What’s the matter, can’t you two take a joke?”

M & MB give a small laugh. Cayce seems to have dismissed them as she stares into the fire. M picks up the belongings and heads to the box. After he leaves, Cayce slyly studies MB. MB catches her look and sends a small smile.

Cayce: (annoyed at being caught once again hides behind her dour mood. “So you’re having a kid.”

MaryBeth: “Yes, very soon now. Maybe even by Christmas.”

Cayce: “Great! There goes my peace and quiet. A squalling kid on its way. This is just great!”

Cayce abruptly turns and heads toward her box, muttering all the way.

MaryBeth arises from her seat and goes closer to the fire. While warming her hands, she looks up to the heavens, deep in thought.

SONG: “Not My Will”

Michael: (walking over to MB. Putting his arm around her waist and taking her hand)”Come on, MaryBeth, I have everything ready. Let’s go in and rest for awhile.” They go and sit on the blanket. Michael wraps the other one around her shoulders. After she is settled he reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out a small Bible.

Michael: (opening the book) “Let’s see what God wants to tell us tonight.” (He begins reading -II Samuel 7: 8-bA)

MaryBeth: "I'm sorry. I'm MaryBeth Brainard and this is my husband, Michael."
(gesturing to Cayce) "And this is our FRIEND, Cayce."

(shaking hands accompanies the introductions)

Jeffrey: "Well, I am Jeffrey and this is my wife, Jennifer." (shows his discomfort) "If you wouldn't mind giving us some directions, we will be on our way. We still have much to do."

Michael: "Where did you want to go?"

Jeffrey: "Thirteenth and Market."

Michael: (pointing) "Just go back up this street for one block. Take a left on Elm. Turn right on Thirteenth and two blocks down is Market."

Jeffrey: (anxious to leave) "Thank you. Come along Jennifer, we really must hurry along." (takes her arm and tries to lead her off)

Jennifer: (holding back & looks imploringly at husband) "But Jeffrey, we can't leave these people like this."

Jeffrey: (frustrated and embarrassed as he pulls out wallet, pulls off 3 bills and hands to Michael) "Here is \$50. At least you can get some warm food. (Replaces wallet & takes wife's arm) "Now, do let's go."

(They walk on --Jennifer glances sadly over her shoulder)

Michael: (calling after them) "Thank you so very much. The Lord bless you." (looks at wife and Cayce) "Now Cayce, would you keep an eye on MaryBeth while I go get us some food and hot drink?"

Cayce: (scornfully) "Me babysit, while you go get you and your wife food?"

Michael: "Cayce, we're here together. You share your fire with us and let us use the box. Why wouldn't we share what we have with you?"

Cayce: "(sullenly) "Well nobody ever did before so why should I think you all would be different?"

MaryBeth: "We're different Cayce. God loves us and we love Him. He put us here with you, so when He gives us something, He expects us to share it. "(Cayce looks suspicious) "Don't give me that look Cayce. Michael and I care, whether you believe it or not. What ever we have --- you'll always share it with us."

Lights go down as Michael goes off.

Michael: (to kids) "It's nice to meet you all."

J.T.: (handing a bag to Michael) "These are for you, Sir. They were my Dads but he doesn't need them."

Michael: (puffing out a sweater) "Are you sure your Dad won't be needing these? They look almost new."

JT.: "Oh no. He has plenty."

Michael: "Well, thank you very much. Butch and I can sure use them."

Butch: (looking at Michael, surprised at his generosity, stammers) "Me?" (Michael nods yes) (takes sweater from Michael) "Thank you and," (turns toward J.T.) please thank your Dad too."

Colin: (setting a bag down near Marybeth) "These are some of my Mom's things," (looking at her carefully) "but I don't think they will fit you."

Jennifer: (shocked) "Cohn!"

Marybeth: (laughing) "No, I think you're quite right, but my friend Cayce will certainly enjoy them and I will save some of them for after the baby comes."

Cohn: "You're going to get a baby?"

JT.: (superior) "Colin, Mother told you that before we left. Don't be such a stooge."

Cohn: (emphatically) "I'm not a stooge. I just forgot."

Butch:(putting an arm around Cohn's shoulder) "Why don't we go over nearer the fire and warm up." (looks at IT.) " You can come too, if you would like."

Jennifer: (to Cayce) "Here is a chicken casserole. It's still warm. Perhaps you would like to set it near the fire."

Butch: "Umrmmm, that sure smells like a slice of heaven."

Cayce: "What would you know about heaven?"

The four head over to the fire.

Marybeth: (to Jennifer) "This is most kind of you, and of your children. We can't thank you enough."

Michael: "You've gone to a great deal of trouble for us. Thank you."

Jennifer: "I am so glad that we took the wrong turn yesterday. I just had no idea

Jeffrey: “Enough! Your Mother and I will discuss this in private. You will just have to trust us. Now why don’t you go on up to your rooms. It is getting late.”
All three children get up, kiss their parents, say their good nights and exit.

Jeffrey: “Jennifer, I can’t believe you took the children down to that place. It is an unsavory section and you should not have exposed the children to that.”

Jennifer: “It’s called life, Jeffrey. I was oblivious to it myself before yesterday. It is important that the children learn there are people far less privileged than they, and they should be using what they have to help others.”

Jeffrey: (defensively) “But you don’t know these people. Why, anything could have happened to you and the children in that area.”

Jennifer: (soothingly) “Dear, you have always complemented me on being such a good judge of character. Can’t you trust me on that this time? I just couldn’t get them out of my mind. I had to go back. The children saw me gathering things together, to take with me and they asked to come as well. I thought it would be good for them.”

Jeffrey: “I’m just afraid you are letting your soft heart rule the situation.”

Jennifer: “Maybe at first, you were right, but while I was there, I got a good look at something in myself that I was not very proud of. You and I claim a personal relationship with Jesus. Speaking for myself I have to confess that I have been remiss in remembering that. I have been so complacent in my comforts that I forgot there was a whole other world out there. I am ashamed of myself for that and I mean to change it.”

Jeffrey: “But what makes you think that this is the situation you should be involved in? Have you asked yourself why the man isn’t working? Surely there is some kind of job he could be doing?”

Jennifer: “People won’t hire him because he has been in prison.”

Jeffrey: “WHAT!!! He is an ex-con?”

Jennifer: “Jeffrey, don’t be a snob. People make mistakes. He made poor choices. That doesn’t mean that he can’t change. He has come to know the Lord. He has repented of those sins and God has forgiven him it is not for us to judge. Jeffrey, dearest, I know you and you are a fair and generous person. Please, just go down there yourself. Talk to Michael. I know you will think differently after you have. Please, go talk to him?”

Jeffrey: (grudgingly) “All right, I’ll go talk to him. You do what you feel you must, but I’m making no promises, understood?”

Jennifer: “Yes dear, I understand, but while you talk to him, see what kind of work he can do. With all your contacts, surely you can help him find work.”

Jeffrey: “Oh, yes, speaking of surprises. Jennifer and I have made arrangements for you at Community General Hospital. This baby will have all the best medical staff to take care of it.”

MaryBeth: (clutching herself and groaning): “I DON’T THINK SO!!!!”

Everyone: “WHAT!!!”

MaryBeth: (gritting her teeth) “This baby’s been trying to come for sometime but I just ignored it. Ooooh, I can’t ignore it anymore.”

J.T. re-enters.

Jennifer: “Jeffrey, order the car. I’ll call the hospital.”

J.T.: “I just heard on the radio that all roads have been declared impassable. No one is allowed on them. If there is an emergency, we are to call 911 and they will come as soon as possible.”

Jeffrey: “Oh, no! What are we going to do?”

Cayce: (sounding like a drill sergeant) “Jeffrey, go get the staff to boil water. LOTS of water. You boys take Mickey upstairs and find something for him to play with. Jennifer, you and Priscilla find a bunch of clean sheets and lots of clean towels. Michael, you and Butch help MaryBeth upstairs.”

Jennifer: (tentatively) “I know you want to help, Cayce, but what do you know about delivering babies?”

Butch: “Like I said before, Cayce was in the Army. She was a triage nurse. You know, like the ones on that program, “Mash”. Yep, Cayce has pretty much seen it all and done it all.”

Jennifer: (looking at Cayce, confused) “I don’t understand, Cayce. If you are a nurse, why....”

Cayce: “It’s a long story. For now, let’s just say that patients are not always the number one priority of many hospitals.”

MaryBeth groans.

Cayce: “We’ll talk about this another time.” (looking around at the group) “Okay, let’s snap to it. We got us another Christmas present to deliver.”

Everyone jumps to their assignments.

The End.