

Solomon

A 10-minute play
By Kym Fraher

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A flock of sheep meet to decide who they want to elect to protect and provide their care for the next few years. The usual suspect, Farmer Bill, gives a stump speech on the fly about why he is the best person for the job, confident that he is a shoe in for the job until an unexpected candidate appears for his turn at the podium. A play about who we trust to lead us and why.

CHARACTERS

RICHARD: Fancies himself as "head sheep," ambitions outmatch his skills, enjoys the idea more than the actual task

FARMER BILL: in his 20's, still getting his foothold on the job but capable and confident, aware of others' being unsure of his ability to do the job but eager to show them that he can do it

DAMIEN THE WOLF: Sly, knowledgeable about how to manipulate others to get what he wants, doesn't mind playing the long game, ultra competitor.

SHEEP 1: on the dim side but doesn't know it, uses criticisms of others to elevate her/himself, loud and obnoxious, leads by steering things the way he/she wants others to go

SHEEP 2: more of a follower, eager to appear as if he/she is helping to lead the flock, tends to echo Sheep 1, but slightly moderated

SHEEP 3: echo chamber, never 100% committed to either idea, can be persuaded but always goes where the tide is flowing

SETTING

Small meeting room, rustic, maybe in a barn, current times

A single podium sits onstage facing an audience of 4-5 chairs. Sitting in the chairs are various men and women, dressed in white, with black shoes. They are all wearing sheep fleece vests. Behind the podium sits a man in work clothes and wellies. He seems unsure of himself in this setting. Some in the audience are talking quietly amongst each other and others are sitting, waiting. A similarly-dressed man walks to the front, facing the character audience. He is wearing a top hat. He produces a pile of index cards from his vest inner pocket and proceeds to read from them.

RICHARD

Welcome all to this evening's event. Before we get started with our speakers Maribel and Janet have asked me to remind you all that they'll be presenting a talk entitled...

RICHARD looks at the index card at the top of the pile.

RICHARD

"From Hill to Ditch--the 10 Best Spots for the Tenderest Dandelions in the East Field." That'll be this Wednesday in the East Paddock at dusk. All are welcome. Unfortunately, no refreshments will be served, so make sure that you've had all you can eat in the field before you attend. Thank you Maribel and Janet for your contributions to our continuing education.

He straightens up and begins speaking with a more authoritative and invested tone. He reads his introduction from one of his index cards.

RICHARD

Now, as you all know, we've asked some special guests to come and speak with us this afternoon. I think it'll be very entertaining and informative, and I, for one, am looking forward to what our guests have to tell us. (Looks at card) First up, you know him as the guy who is in charge of our community currently. He is the official opener and closer of the gates and can often be seen around the fields in his trademark wellies. Please make some noise for Farmer Bill.

The audience claps with low enthusiasm as FARMER BILL walks to the podium. He looks confused, unclear as to why he is there.

He is dressed in a pair of worn overalls that are stained and dirty. He is wearing wellies.

FARMER BILL

Thank you...uh, Richard?...for that introduction. I'll be honest, I only got this invitation to come and speak with you fine...folks about an hour ago, but I wanted to be sure to come and make an appearance.

There are a few scoffs from the audience.

FARMER BILL

As you know, this is a family farm, as my father ran the farm before me.

SHEEP 1

(coughing)

Nepotism.

FARMER BILL

Okay, that's fair, but let me address that point. Now, you may call it nepotism, but I call it a family tradition of stewardship of the land and of all of the animals on it. (some audible offense at being called "animals") You see, I believe that farming is not just a job, but a calling. It takes years to learn best practices for crop rotation and livestock care. Now, I was lucky enough to take a couple of classes at Twin Valley Community College, and there/

SHEEP 2

(to neighbor)

/Ivory tower elite./

SHEEP 3

/He thinks he's better than us./

FARMER BILL

/I read about techniques for building barns to keep out the cold, and the heat, and pest eradication and/

SHEEP 3 raises her hand.

FARMER BILL

/uh, okay, yea, you have a question?

SHEEP 3

(quivering voice)

You bet I do. Since you brought it up, I seem to remember a significant field mouse problem last spring. Can you explain that, since you (mockingly) *learned so much* about pest eradication?

FARMER BILL

Sure, yea, of course. If you all prefer, I don't have any prepared statements because up until about 8 minutes ago, I was in the west field/

SHEEP 1

/So you keep saying/

FARMER BILL

/fixing those fence posts that came down in the storm last night, and I had to make sure the hen house was locked for the evening because of the coyote issue we've been having, but regarding the field mouse problem/

SHEEP 2

/Hey, yea--why don't you tell us what you're going to do to keep us safe from those coyotes?

Audience agreement all around.

FARMER BILL

Yes, well, I've/

SHEEP 3

/And where are my children? I haven't seen them since last spring. I've heard rumors, but I don't dare believe half of them/

FARMER BILL

Actually, I can address/

SHEEP 3

/The shearing! Every season it's shearing time, you just grab us, rough as you please, and hold us down to take our beautiful pelts, that we've all spent a lot of time and energy to grow, and you shave it right off of us. There's no asking, no consent--you don't even give us any form of compensation. It's downright barbaric!

SHEEP 1

Thievery!

FARMER BILL
(completely overwhelmed by the
complaints)

Um, this is all very useful information for me to consider. I have to say that I'd never really thought of these issues as problems, from your perspective, and I appreciate that you are all mentioning it to me here today./

SHEEP 3

/Yea, I bet you are/

FARMER BILL

I'd like to address your concerns one at a time, if I may/

RICHARD
(stepping toward the podium)

Thank you for your words, Farmer Bill, but I'm sorry, we are able to give only a limited amount of time to each candidate. Can we all give a round of applause for Farmer Bill.

FARMER BILL

Hold on, what?

Only a few in the audience clap.

RICHARD
(to Farmer Bill)

Please step back and have a seat on one of those chairs right there as we bring our second speaker out for the evening.

FARMER BILL

Second speaker? Candidate? Wait, I don't/

RICHARD takes FARMER BILL by the arm and directs him to the seat behind the podium, then turns back toward the audience, very excited. He needs to only check his notes periodically this time.

RICHARD

Now I think you all will enjoy our next speaker. He comes from a security background, which I know we can all appreciate given our recent troubles with those coyotes. He grew up in the surrounding countryside, so we know he understands quite a bit about how the predators in this area think, which I personally believe sets him at a very distinct advantage. In the interest of creating and maintaining a more equitable community for us all, I'm thrilled to introduce our 2nd speaker of the evening, Damien the Wolf.

FARMER BILL

What???

There are a few gasps in the crowd but hearty applause. Farmer Bill shuffles his chair a little further from the podium as DAMIEN saunters to the podium from off stage. He is huge, thick, and wild-looking and is wearing a sheep skin vest, just like the audience wears. His movements are appropriately lupine, graceful and enthralling. He's one smooth operator. He turns first to FARMER BILL, who recoils.

DAMIEN

Good afternoon Farmer Bill. My, those are lovely *new* boots you're wearing today. Those must've set you back quite a penny. Well, they look good on *you*.

DAMIEN turns to the audience.

I've been so looking forward to coming to speak with you beautiful creatures for quite some time--You could say that it's the pinnacle of my week! All so young and tender,

He catches himself, as FARMER BILL knits his brow, but none of the audience seems to have noticed this slip.

DAMIEN

What I mean to say is that you all look so fit, and I admire your sense of belonging. As most of you know, I've been a part of this community for years. Some of you may have seen me observing the flocks from the hillside, and it saddens me to say that my actions--yea, my very appearance--may have had the effect of alarming some of my dear, dear neighbors. But I assure you that my gaze came from a place of *concern*. (oo's and ah's from the audience) You see, I was studying the gross lapses in security around the paddocks, and frankly, I was appalled at what I saw: whole sections of fencing compromised, some of your family members allowed to wander from the safety of the flock, not to mention the artificially-imposed restrictions from portions of the meadow where the choicest grass and wildflowers grow, kept from you for no discernible reason./

SHEEP 1

/That's right!/
/Ladies and Gentlemen, I weep for shame that this once great farm has been reduced to a shell of its long-ago glory by the mismanagement it currently suffers under.

I ask myself, is the word “ineptitude” big enough to encompass everything I see wrong when I look at the mismanagement of this farm and the majestic creatures within it? Or would “corruption” fit more snugly? (sounds of agreement from the audience.) After all, prices at market are at an all-time high for your babies, who are sacrificed every spring for the good of the farm. And your beautiful coats--certainly no sane creature could suggest that the quality of your fine wool has diminished in the past years. So one has to ask, “Where *is* all that money going?”

All eyes turn to FARMER BILL and his brand new boots.

DAMIEN

But I don't mean to dominate the talking this afternoon. I'm here to listen to what is important to you. After all, whoever you pick to run the farm must understand and share the values of its citizens, yes? So let's hear what is concerning you.

Several hands raise. He picks a few in turn.

SHEEP 2

I think I speak for us all when I say that the coyotes are getting too close for comfort lately.

DAMIEN

Thank you for raising this important issue--It shows your skills at environmental awareness to even have noticed those sneaky curs. So I shall ask you this one important question: In a one-on-one contest of me versus a coyote, who do you think would win?

AUDIENCE

You/You of course/No contest.

DAMIEN

That's right, 100%. Nothing is escaping your keen intellect. Yes, I can easily take a coyote, or even 2 or 3 at once. For the sake of comparison, do you think that Farmer Bill, if caught without a weapon or tool in a far pasture were to be cornered by a coyote, not to mention several, is it as sure in your mind about who would triumph?

SHEEP 1

(scoffs as he gestures toward Farmer Bill)

Not that guy.

DAMIEN

That is not to say that he doesn't have his...advantages...afterall, he's brought in--what are they--"Great" Pyrenees dogs to watch your families. (audience groans) But at what cost?

Are we to live in a surveillance society where you can do nothing that is not known about by Farmer Bill?

SHEEP 2

I don't want that!

DAMIEN

And these dogs are not from here--they are foreigners, brought here to take the tasks that others, like myself, who know this land and are from this land, like yourselves, could easily do instead. Where are the *Pyrenees* anyway? And what makes these dogs so "great"? Just something to think about.

Nods and murmurs all around.

DAMIEN

What else is on your mind?

SHEEP 1

I think the shearing was mentioned...

DAMIEN

Of course. That's easy. You would all keep your beautiful wool. Why should Farmer Bill benefit from something that he had no hand in creating. A pyramid scheme if ever I heard one. If he is dying to shear something, he can shear that pathetic mop on his own head and those of his children.

FARMER BILL jumps to his feet.

FARMER BILL

You can't do that! They are bred for their wool. They'll become vulnerable to attack from the weight of the wool alone if they are not shorn in the spring.

Gasps from the audience.

DAMIEN

(to FARMER BILL)

Did you say that my friends here are "bred" for it? No creature on Earth should be seen as existing for another's benefit alone. I ask you sir, no I demand, that you give my compatriots the respect that they deserve, when you talk about their natural god-given resources.

FARMER BILL sits back down, stunned by the turn of events.

FARMER BILL

I can't believe this.

DAMIEN
(to FARMER BILL)

Believe it.

He turns back to the audience.

Now, I think I've taken enough of your valuable time this afternoon. I thank you humbly for the opportunity to offer a choice of leadership. You can either support the status quo-- a system marked by nepotism and unheard concerns--or you can choose something new-- a leader with years of experience running his own successful pack, someone who listens and is willing to give you a seat at the table for decisions that effect each and every one of you, someone with a broad vision to clean up the swamp of the south paddock and open access to the meadows beyond the west field. I'm not a *human* towering over you, ruling with an iron fist--I am a citizen of the animal kingdom, like you, and I know what it is to be hunted and oppressed by men. The choice could not be more clear, and I hope I can count on your vote.

DAMIEN gives a slight bow and backs away from the podium as the audience leaps to their feet in applause and cheering. DAMIEN gives the stunned and horrified FARMER BILL a smirk as he goes to stand by the back wall near him.

RICHARD

Wow. I mean, wow, right? That was...(he turns to DAMIEN)...that was really something. So I think we all have a lot to think about here.

FARMER BILL interrupts and pushes RICHARD aside at the podium. The audience gasps at his audacity.

FARMER BILL

I can't just sit here and watch my flock get/

SHEEP 1

/My flock?/

SHEEP 2

/Oh, he thinks he owns us now.

FARMER BILL

What? Of course I *own* you--you are sheep!/

SHEEP 1

/I'm not going to sit here and take this from you!/

SHEEP 1 leaves the room.

SHEEP 2

Honestly, who does he think he is?

FARMER BILL

Listen to me! This one--(he gestures toward DAMIEN)--wants to eat you. He doesn't give a hoot about your safety! Or he does, only because he wants you all for himself!

SHEEP 3

/Excuse me! What do you do with our lambs? Are they kept as pets for human children?

FARMER BILL

Uh, no/

SHEEP 2

/Are they taught skills, like jumping hurdles and racing through tunnels?

FARMER BILL

/No, of course not, they/

SHEEP 3

/OR...are they eaten?

The crowd gasps.

FARMER BILL

(has no idea what to say)

I...

SHEEP 2

Yes, it's as many of us have feared. So, what were you saying about Mr. Damien's intentions to *eat* us and how that differs from your own plans?

FARMER BILL

No, it's just that/

FARMER BILL is interrupted and drowned out by a cacophony of angry shouts from the members of the audience. DAMIEN remains standing in the back with a triumphant smirk on his face. RICHARD pushes past FARMER BILL and steps back to the podium to take control of the melee.

RICHARD

Settle down, please...order...ORDER!

The shouts die down. He regains order.

RICHARD

Farmer Bill, I'll ask you one more time to take your seat sir. Please remember that you are a guest here and with that comes certain expectations about your behavior.

He turns back toward the audience.

RICHARD

This has been quite a lot. Anyone who feels overwhelmed by the events and revelations brought forth here today is encouraged to seek out a quiet spot or a big ear to listen. I recommend the burros in the north field. I have had success with them when I sought their counsel in the past. Now, I think we are about finished for this afternoon. Please remember about Maribel and Janet's upcoming information session. May the wildflowers be plentiful and the shade abundant! Good afternoon.

The audience filters out, speaking in low tones to each other as RICHARD steps down and turns to the speakers behind him. RICHARD gives FARMER BILL a rough sweeping gesture to go off stage ahead of him and bows courteously at DAMIEN. FARMER BILL at first glances at DAMIEN first with incredulity and then with malice as they exit with RICHARD none the wiser trailing behind.

END OF PLAY