

Brothers

By R. James Scott

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SYNOPSIS

Following the end of the Civil War, Jed and Ben have arrived outside their home in northern Pennsylvania after having traveled on foot for nearly a thousand miles. They are brothers. The younger brother, Ben Thomas, espoused to the beautiful Mary Shae, refuses to go into town for fear that in his crippled state he will not make a suitable mate for the love of his life. In the end, Mary Shea and Jed succeed in persuading Ben to return home and marry his sweetheart.

Running time: About 32 min.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

JEDEDIAH GLEN THOMAS

BENJAMIN JAMES THOMAS

MARY SHAE

UNION SOLDIERS...5 to 8 (non-speaking)

SETTING

A wooded area in northern Pennsylvania. Late November, 1865.

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(AT RISE: At the fade of the house lights, and the stage warming lights, we see stars. A single spot comes on down center, and a young woman, MARY SHAE, in a blue cotton dress, stands in the light.)

MARY SHAE: On April 12, 1861 the first cannon volleys fired on Ft. Sumter. Within days the news had spread, and hundreds of thousands of men, young and old signed up to wage war upon their brothers. In whole, nearly three million went off to battle. Benjamin James Thomas, the love of my life, was among them. "Wait for me," he said, "I'm gonna marry you," he said. So I waited...and I waited. Four years later the weary men began trickling back to their homes. Still I waited. In late November, 1865, six months after the cannons were silenced, two bruised, torn, and broken brothers crested Potawatami hill and dropped down into the valley of their birth. This is the story of that day.

(As the spot fades, music fades in, and once again we are left with the stars. After a few seconds, a faint blue fades in to the cyclorama, and we begin to see the silhouettes of trees and rocks on the stage. A little more light, and we pick up more detail. It is early morning. Across the back, we see several trees, small bushes, and a few rocks. There is also a cutout silhouette of some low hills. Down left, rests a large rock, behind which sprout up some small trees, and in front, a smaller rock with some brush. SR is a clump of small trees. The stars are beginning to fade. The music continues. Through the early morning mists we see two figures emerge USL. They are moving slow. One carries a pack, the other limps along with the aid of a crutch. They turn at CS, and begin making their way towards the front. They are two Civil War Union soldiers. The lead figure (JED,) moves down right center and looks out over the audience. The other figure (BEN) stops a few steps behind him.)

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BEN: Jed...Jed, we have to stop.

JED: We're almost there, Ben.

BEN: I'm sorry, Jed, I can't go any farther. I can't.

(BEN collapses onto the ground. JED throws down the pack and goes to him.)

JED: It's OK. We're close. We're almost there.

BEN: I'm sorry, Jed, I'm sorry. I'm so tired.

JED: I know Ben, it's OK.

BEN: I can't go...any farther.

JED: It's OK. You done good, little brother. Real good.

BEN: You should go on without me.

JED: We'll rest for a bit. I told you we could make it by dawn.

BEN: Where are we?

JED: You don't recognize this place?

BEN: Should I?

JED: Potter's Glenn, don't you remember? Look around!
We're almost home!

BEN: Home? *(BEN is exhausted. He looks around in a daze as he tries to take it in.)*

JED: Yes, home! See here? *(JED moves left to the large rock. He moves some weeds and brushes off the rock. Our names scratched onto this rock.)* Jed Thomas, and Ben Thomas, July 17, 1859. Remember when we scratched that on there? We're home, Ben! We made it!

BEN: We made it.

JED: There were times I wondered if I would ever see this place again. *(JED crosses right past BEN and looks out into the darkness.)*

BEN: It's like another world.

JED: We used to play here, all the time. Remember? Seth, Isaac, Carl Bishop.

BEN: A long time ago.

JED: Not that long.

BEN: It feels like forever.

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JED: But we're home now, Ben, just like I promised.
(*Indicates off right.*) Just over that rise and down to the old town road. We can rest for a little if you want to, and then we'll walk that road right across Jensen's bridge, past the cattail ponds, and right up to our own front porch. We'll waltz in there pretty as you please, just in time for breakfast. (*Turning back.*) You hungry, Ben?

BEN: I could eat.

JED: And we'll eat plenty too. (*Crossing back to BEN.*) Eggs, flapjacks, cured side pork, milk from old Bessie, corn meal and brown sugar. My, oh my, we're gonna be in hog-heaven!

BEN: Sounds real good, Jed.

JED: You bet it does, and it's waitin' for us just over that rise. Just sittin' there waitin' pretty as you please.

BEN: We come pretty far last night, Jed. I figure I'm just about wore out.

JED: Me too, Ben, but we're almost there! (*Kneeling down next to BEN.*) Half an hour, that's all, half an hour and we'll be sittin' at that table.

BEN: I'm too tired, Jed. Why don't you just go on ahead. I know the way, I'll be along.

JED: (*Rising.*) Oh no you don't, little brother. We came all this way together, through swamps, and bogs, and hail storms, and cross rivers, and sleepin' in hog pens, eatin' moldy cheese and wormy fatback, and now we're nigh to our front porch there's no way I'm goin' on ahead. We're walkin' in and sittin' down to that kitchen table together! And we're havin' breakfast!

BEN: Sound's good. You do that, Jed. I ain't ready yet.

JED: Ain't ready? What do you mean you ain't ready? I ain't been more ready for anything in my whole damn life!

BEN: Jed, I ain't goin' into that town, not today, not tomorrow, not any day till I know.

JED: Till you know what?

BEN: You know damn well what!

JED: You still harpin' on that girl?

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