

SCENE TEN

~~The Platform. As the lights come on the two actors turn violently away from each other, tearing their masks off. Nickles, with a gesture of disgust, skims his into a corner.~~

Nickles: Well, that's that!

Mr. Zuss: That's... that!

~~Silence. After a time Nickles looks cautiously around at Mr. Zuss.~~

Nickles: What's the matter with you?

Mr. Zuss: Nothing.

Nickles: You don't look pleased.

Mr. Zuss: Should I?

Nickles: Well,
You were right weren't you?

Mr. Zuss: *too loud* Of course I was right.

Nickles: *too soft*
Anyway, you were magnificent.

Mr. Zuss: Thank you.

He looks at the mask in his hands: puts it down as though it had stung him. Silence. Mr. Zuss pretends to be busy with a shoelace.

Mr. Zuss: Why did you say that?

Nickles: What did I say?

Mr. Zuss: Why did you say it like that?

Nickles: Like what?

Mr. Zuss: *imitating*
"Anyway!" ... "Anyway, you were magnificent!"

Nickles: You know. "Anyway." Regardless.

Mr. Zuss: Regardless of
What?

Nickles: Now, wait a minute! Wait a
Minute! You were magnificent. I said so.

Mr. Zuss: Go on. Finish it.

Nickles: Finish what?

Mr. Zuss: Regardless of...?

Nickles: ...being right, of course.

(more →)

(Nickles)

What's got into you, my friend? What's eating you?

Being magnificent and being right

Don't go together in this universe.

It's being wrong — a desperate stubbornness

Fighting the inextinguishable stars —

Excites imagination. You were

Right. And knew it. And were admirable.

Notwithstanding!

snickering

anyway!

a snarl

regardless!

Mr. Zuss: I knew you noticed.

Nickles: Of course I noticed.
What lover of the art could fail to!

~~Something in Mr. Zuss's expression stops him.~~

Noticed

What?

Mr. Zuss: That tone! That look he gave me!

Nickles: He misconceived the part entirely.

Mr. Zuss: Misconceived the world! Buggered it!

Nickles: Giving in like that! Whimpering!

Mr. Zuss: Giving in! You call that arrogant,
Smiling, supercilious humility
Giving in to God?

Nickles:

(you call that... arrogant)

Arrogant!

His suppurating flesh — his children —
Let's not talk about those children —
Everything he ever had!
And all he asks is answers of the universe:
All he asks is reasons why —
Why? Why? And God replies to him:
God comes whirling in the wind replying —
What? That God knows more than he does.
That God's more powerful than he! —
Throwing the whole creation at him!
Throwing the Glory and the Power!
What's the Power to a broken man
Trampled beneath it like a toad already?
What's the Glory to a skin that stinks!
And this ham actor! — what does *he* do?
How does he play Job to that?

attitude

"Thank you!" "I'm a worm!" "Take two!"

Plays the way a sheep would play it —
Pious, contemptible, goddam sheep
Without the spunk to spit on Christmas!

~~Mr. Zuss has watched Nickles' mounting rage in silence, staring at him. Nickles breaks off, shuffles, looks at Mr. Zuss, crosses to the ladder, swings a leg across the rail.~~

Well...

~~He swings the other over.~~

you said he would...

~~He starts down.~~

You're right.

~~Another rung.~~

I'm wrong.

~~Another.~~

You win.

~~Another.~~

God always wins.

(He peers down into the dark under the platform.)

Where did I put that... popcorn?

Mr. Zuss:

Wint

Planets and Pleiades and eagles —
Screaming horses — scales of light —
The wonder and the mystery of the universe —
The unimaginable might of things —
Immeasurable knowledge in the waters some-
where
Wandering their ways — the searchless power
Burning on the hearth of stars —
Beauty beyond the feel of fingers —
Marvel beyond the maze of mind —
The whole creation! And God showed him!

God stood stooping there to show him!
Last Orion! Least sea shell! ...
And what did Job do?

~~Mr. Zuss has worked himself up into a dramatic fury equaling
Nickles'.~~

Job ... just ... sat!

~~Silence.~~

Sat there!

~~Silence.~~

Dumb!

~~Silence.~~

Until it ended!
Then! ... you heard him!

~~Mr. Zuss chokes.~~

Then, he *calmed* me!
Gentled me the way a farmhand
Gentles a bulging, bugling bull!
Forgave me! ...
for the world! ...

for everything!

Nickles: *poking around in the shadow under the platform*

Nonsense! He repented, didn't he —
The perfect and the upright man!
He repented!

Mr. Zuss:

That's just it!

He repented. It was *him* —
Not the fear of God but *him*!

Nickles:

Fear? Of course he feared. Why wouldn't he?
God with all those stars and stallions!
He with little children's bones!

Mr. Zuss: *pursuing his mounting indignation*

...As though Job's suffering were justified
Not by the Will of God but Job's
Acceptance of God's Will...

Nickles:

Well,

What did you hope for? Hallelujahs?

Mr. Zuss: *not hearing*

...In spite of everything he'd suffered!
In spite of all he'd lost and loved
He understood and he forgave it!...

Nickles: *a contemptuous snort as he straightens to face Mr.*

Zuss on the platform

What other victory could God win?
The choice is swallowing this swill of world
Or vomiting in the trough. Job swallowed it,
That's your triumph! — that he swallowed it.

Mr. Zuss: ...He'd heard of God and now he saw Him!
Who's the judge in judgment there?
Who plays the hero, God or him?
Is God to be forgiven?

Nickles: Isn't he?
Job was innocent, you may remember...

~~Silence.~~

(a nasty singsong)
The perfect and the upright man!

Mr. Zuss: *deflated*
Don't start that again! I'm sick of it.

Nickles: You are!

Mr. Zuss: I am. Sick to death.
swinging his leg over the rail and starting down the ladder
I'd rather sell balloons to children...
Lights!...

~~He shouts.~~
Turn those lights on, can't you?
Want to see me break my neck?

~~The platform lights go out. Total darkness.~~

~~Louder.~~ Lights! Lights! That's not the end of it.

Nickles: *in the darkness*
Why isn't that the end? It's over. (note →)

Nickles

Job has chosen how to choose.
You've made your bow? You want another?

~~The dangling light bulbs come feebly on. By their light J.B. can still be seen kneeling on his broken table. Mr. Zuss and Nickles crawl under the platform after their traps. Their voices come from the shadow, punctuated by grunts and wheezes.~~

Mr. Zuss: You know as well as I there's more...

them

There's always one more scene no matter
Who plays Job or how he plays it...

God restores him at the end.

Nickles: a short

God restores us all. That's normal.
That's God's mercy to mankind...

We never asked Him to be born...

We never chose the lives we die of...

They beat our rumps to make us breathe...

But God, if we have suffered patiently,
Borne it in silence, stood the stench,
Rewards us...

..

gives our dirty selves back.

~~Mr. Zuss emerges in his white jacket, adjusting his cap.~~

tens

Mr. Zuss: Souls back!

Nickles: Selves back! Dirty selves
We've known too well and never wanted.

Mr. Zuss: That's not this play.

~~Nickles backs out with his jacket and cap and tray, puts them
on.~~

Nickles: Hell it isn't.

~~Mr. Zuss tightens his balloon belt.~~

Mr. Zuss: God restores him here. On earth.

Nickles: *balancing his tray*
So Job gets his in cash. That's generous.
What percentage off for cash?

Mr. Zuss: Gets all he ever had and more —
Much more.

Nickles: *cheerfully-ironic*
Sure. His wife. His children!

Mr. Zuss: *embarrassed*
He gets his wife back, and the children...
Follow in nature's course.

~~Nickles, who has stooped to pick up a bag of popcorn, straightens
slowly, stares at Mr. Zuss.~~

Nickles: ~~harshly~~

You're lying.

Mr. Zuss: I'm not lying.

Nickles:

I say you're lying.

Mr. Zuss: Why should I lie. It's in the Book.

Nickles: ~~jeering~~

Wife back! Balls! He wouldn't touch her.
He wouldn't take her with a glove!
After all that filth and blood and
Fury to begin again! ...
This fetid earth! That frightened Heaven
Terrified to trust the soul
It made with Its own hands, but testing it,
Tasting it, by trial, by torture,
Over and over till the last, least town
On all this reeling, reeking earth
Stinks with a spiritual agony
That stains the stones with excrement and
shows
In shadow on each greasy curtain!
After life like his to take
The seed up of the sad creation
Planting the hopeful world again —
He can't! ... he won't! ... he wouldn't touch
her!

Mr. Zuss: He does though.

Nickles: ~~raging~~

Live his life again? —

Not even the most ignorant, obstinate,

(none →)

Stupid or degraded man
This filthy planet ever farrowed,
Offered the opportunity to live
His bodily life twice over, would accept it —
Least of all Job, poor, trampled bastard!

~~Mr. Zuss has finished fooling with his balloons. He straightens
up and marches off without a glance at Nickles.~~

It can't be borne twice over! Can't be!

Mr. Zuss: It is though. Time and again it is —
Every blessed generation...

~~His voice drifts back as he disappears.~~

Time and again...

Time and again...

Nickles starts to follow, looks back, sees J.B. kneeling in his
rubble, hesitates, crosses, squats behind him, his vendor's cap
pushed back on his head, his tray on his knees.

Nickles: J.B.!

J.B.: Let me alone.

Nickles: It's me.

J.B. shrugs.

I'm not the Father. I'm the — Friend.

J.B.

Archibald MacLeish

(The Book of Job has lived in men's minds for thousands of years and the myth of Job for longer, perhaps, than that. It is Job who asks most poignantly for all mankind the crucial question: How can the world be justified? How, if the world is what we see, can its creator be just? How, if God is just, can God be the creator of the world? As Nickles, who plays the part of Satan in the play within MacLeish's play, puts it in his mocking jingle:

~~If God is God He is not good~~
~~If God is good He is not God;~~
Take the even, take the odd.

Our generation is one which has felt the stab of Job's question more than most, for ours is a generation in which human suffering has seemed more gross and brutal and senseless than in other times. How can our generation not despair? How can it believe in life?

It is understandable that a poet of our generation, seeking a metaphor for such a time, should have turned to the myth and Book of Job (In MacLeish's J.B. two broken-down actors, reduced to selling popcorn and balloons in a circus, venture to exercise their rusty talents and reinflate their egos by reading the parts of God

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FIRESIDE THEATRE
BOOK CLUB

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and Satan after closing time on a side-show stage where others, it appears, have played the play of Job before them. They put on the masks only to discover that they have stumbled through the play into reality: the real reality of a Voice, not theirs, that knows the lines they mean to speak; the human reality of a living, suffering Job, the J.B. of the title, banker and industrialist, a happy and wholly successful man, the husband of a lovely wife, the father of sons and daughters, the possessor of great wealth and power, confident, virtuous, admired and respected — from whom everything is taken.

The justification of the injustice of the universe is not, in this play, our blind acceptance of God's inexplicable will, nor our blinder acceptance of the existence of the world because the world exists. The justification of the injustice of the universe is our love, in spite of everything, for God: our love of life in spite of life. Man depends on God for all things: God depends on man for one. And love is a free gift or it is nothing. And love is most itself, most free, when it is freely given in spite of suffering and of injustice and of death.

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Gideon

SCENE ONE

"Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash, the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press to hide it from the Midianites."

GIDEON

THE ANGEL

The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor. (*GIDEON, who had not noticed the ANGEL till now, looks up, a little startled*) I said, the Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.

(This greeting, needless to say, disconcerts GIDEON. He darts a quick look back to the tent to see if anyone is around to take the fellow off his hands. He pounds a few more whacks, then smiles sheepishly at the stranger, raises his hand in a gesture of "Be right back," and shuffles quickly into the tent. His father is squatting unhappily on his haunches in the middle of the tent.)

GIDEON

Father, there is a very strange fellow by our terebinth tree.

JOASH

Well, give him what cakes we have on the hearth and show him the road to Schechem.

GIDEON

(Hurriedly gathering cakes)

I was beating the wheat, you see, and this fellow suddenly came up, saying . . . *(He hurries out of the tent, across to the stranger now perched on the edge of the wine press. He offers the cakes and a skin of water.)* We have only these. We are very oppressed here. But you must hurry south before the Midianites come. I will show you the road. One makes for Schechem and then into Ephraim, and then others will show you the roads to Judah. I must get to my work. I have this wheat to beat here. It is a slow business. (*GIDEON picks up his beating stick and gets back to his work. But the calm stranger unnerves him.* THE ANGEL sits perched on the edge

GIDEON

of the wine press amiably munching the flat cakes he has been given) Sir, it is hard for me to do my work if you sit there like that.

THE ANGEL

(Affably)

I am the Lord your God, Gideon, who brought you out of the iron furnace of Egypt and delivered you from bondage.
(GIDEON considers this announcement for a moment.)

GIDEON

Well, as you say, sir. Now, let me be about my work.

THE ANGEL

Keaton
I am the Lord your God, Gideon. I have heard your groans under the Midianite yoke. You have cried out to Ba-al, but it is my ears that heard. My wrath was hot against you, for you have bowed down and served the Amorite gods and the Ba-als of the Canaanites. My name is Jealous, Gideon, for I am a Jealous God; and I have delivered you into the hands of the Midianites. But I have remembered the covenant I made with Jacob and the bargain I struck with Moses, and I will redeem you from the Midianite oppression. For My Name is the Loving God, the Gracious God, the Merciful God, and I have hearkened to your groans. *(MORE →) (strong)*

(This is all a little too much for poor GIDEON. He makes a few half-hearted whacks at the wheat in the wine press, nods his head nervously a few times.)

Gideon
Excuse me, my work awaits — *Interrupt!*

GIDEON *(Muttering)* "I am the Lord

Excuse me. (He turns and shuffles back across the stage to his father's tent and goes in again) It is a very strange

your God who brought you out of the House of Egypt!"

GIDEON

~~stranger, indeed, Father. He seems a Hebrew from the cut of his beard, but I—it would be better if you came forth and dealt with him.~~

~~JOASH~~

~~(In despair)~~

~~Leave me be, Gideon.~~

(GIDEON nods nervously and takes a few tentative steps out of the tent, and would perhaps have made his way back to the wine press, but he is petrified into a halt by the sudden booming of the stranger's voice. THE ANGEL is now standing in all his black majestic height, and he roars out in volcanic tones.)

THE ANGEL

Strong → I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the house of Egypt! With signs and wonders I delivered you from bondage! Ten plagues I hurled at Pharaoh to awe you with my might. I drove back the sea with a strong east wind, and Israel walked through the waters! The horse and the rider I cast into the sea, but you walked through water! Would that not be a sign enough? Would that not be wonder enough? But you are a stubborn people! From that day to this have you rebelled against the Lord! Did I not rain bread from the heavens? Did I not strike water from the rock at Horeb? How long will you murmur against me? I shattered the walls of Jericho with trumpets. Thirty-one kings with their cities and walls did I give into your hand! But this mighty God was not enough for you! A cult of whores did you require! Mincing priests with crushed testicles! You have made cuttings in your skin and tattoos upon your brows! You have reveled before eyeless gods! You have debauched before

GIDEON

stumps of trees! You are a stiff-necked people! You have done evil in mine eyes!

(GIDEON, now thoroughly unnerved by what seems a raging lunatic, looks back to the tent to see why his father and wife haven't come running out at this outburst. But the two people in the tent do not seem to have heard.)

GIDEON

(Nervously)

Sir, I do not know why you are so enraged.

THE ANGEL

Gideon, do you not know me? It is hardly four generations since Moses. Do not the young men know my name any more? I am your Lord Yahweh, the Kinsman of Jacob, who was the father of all the houses in Israel.

GIDEON

I have heard the old men talk of My Lord Yahweh.

THE ANGEL

Well, I am he.

GIDEON

I shall not say you are not.

THE ANGEL

Shout
Build
I tell you I, even I, am he!

GIDEON

Pray, sir, do not shout.

GIDEON

THE ANGEL

What a stiff-necked fellow you are!

GIDEON

(Thoroughly distressed)

What would you have me say? I am a poor farmer, beating out wheat in his wine press. Suddenly, a black-bearded stranger appears at my elbow and shouts at me: "I am your God!" Well, I find this all an unusual business. I do not hold everyday traffic with gods. I said: "Very well." What else should I have said? And you have abused me roundly and hold me back from my pressing work.

THE ANGEL

I did not mean to discomfort you.

GIDEON

And now that I am put to it, I will tell you plainly—I do not believe in gods. I am not all as witless as my fellows sometimes think me. I have thought about these matters lately, and I do not believe in gods. You say that you are the god, Yahweh. The fact is, sir, in these parts, you are but a minor divinity. When I was a boy, you were more highly thought of, I think. But we Abiezrites are poor men, hill farmers. Our soil is hard, and we must pray for fertility, so we adopted a goddess with breasts and a womb, Ishtar—a sportive lady, I must say; her festivals are lively times. A farmer, you see, needs a romping god. And Yahweh, as I recall, was grim. Oh, sir, we have had all manner of gods here—the Bull-El, Yam, Mot, pin-breasted Ashtartes, Anu, Anath, the Mother Goddess of the wonderful womb, and now we have added the rain Ba-al of Beth-shean! And to all these gods I gave my full and primitive awe. I truly, truly served

GIDEON

them. For I am a child in many ways and truly thought the wind did love me, and that the thunder was angry at something I did, and that I sliced our poor Lord Ba-al in half as I sickled my wheat, for such is the story, you know, that Ba-al dies each year at harvest. How I wailed as I reaped! I truly, truly thought the air was cluttered with fierce powers. But lately I have come to wondering.

THE ANGEL

Gideon ...

GIDEON

(Indicating the sacrificial kid)

What god will eat this sacrifice? Only that black bird. You say god to me, but I am a farmer, sir; I know a crow for a crow. A carrion crow is not much of a god really; I can chase him away with a stick.

THE ANGEL

Dear Gideon ...

GIDEON

I have never asked of any god more than my own, that my trees bear olives, that my ewes bear lambs, the natural increase of things, no special favor. I did ask for seven sons; I have but one.

THE ANGEL

You shall have seventy sons, I promise you. And I shall redeem you from the Midianites.

GIDEON

Perhaps so. But lately, as I say, I have come to wondering.

GIDEON

THE ANGEL

Let us be friends, Gideon. For I am, in truth, the Lord your God, and I would have you believe in me. (*There is something so gentle about the black-bearded stranger that GIDEON must look at him*) The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.

(GIDEON looks quickly away, then squats on his haunches in the manner of the East.)

GIDEON

If the Lord is with us, sir, then why are we as we are? In my time, it has always been hard for a Hebrew.

(THE ANGEL now squats beside GIDEON, as two Oriental farmers might sit for a chat.)

THE ANGEL

Come, we will talk as kinsmen, for I am the first of your tribe. I like you, Gideon; you are a straightforward man.

GIDEON

Well, you are quick to temper, I see, but there is a sweetness in you.

THE ANGEL

Then, we are friends.

GIDEON

Brothers, since you say so.

THE ANGEL

My brother then, you are a farmer. You know the ways of covenants. When you sell your cow to the caravan and the

GIDEON

merchant gives you nothing in exchange, you will rise in anger, I should think.

GIDEON

Aye.

THE ANGEL

It is a breach, is it not?

GIDEON

It is a breach.

THE ANGEL

Well, so it is with me. I have made covenant with the people of Israel, and they have defaulted. I have filled my part of the contract. I promised Jacob I would make of him a great people, and indeed I did. Jacob was but a wandering Aramæan with a household of seventy people when I sent him down into Egypt. And when I led them out of the land of Egypt, the house of Jacob had become six hundred families, rich with flocks and servants. And I gathered the whole full twelve tribes of them at Mount Nebo by the Jordan River. And I put the matter to them plainly there. "Look here," spoke I, "let us renew this covenant of ours, so that things are clear between us. I shall give this land across the Jordan to you, and you shall prosper there. Your part of the bargain is simple enough. You shall not bow down to any other god. I am the Lord your God, and there is no other god. You shall not serve any other god." Could it have been more plainly stated?

GIDEON

No, it was plainly said.

GIDEON

THE ANGEL

Well, after Moses came Joshua, and after Joshua, there rose a new generation in Israel who knew not the Lord, and they played the harlot after the Amorite gods. And such gods, really! A stone lady with a bulbous belly! As you say, with more colorful rites than mine perhaps, but I really did think you Hebrews were a cleverer breed than that. Do you really think if you lay with a priestess, your seed will fecundate barley? Come, Gideon, this is merely magic and not fitting for a noble house. It is beyond my understanding—really it is!—what you see in these other gods. The men of Sumer pray to the moon, but your god made the moon and many moons like it. The Philistines bow down to a flea, and the Egyptians—oh, well, the Egyptians will pray to anything. Cats, fish, vermin, frogs, rams, bulls, asps and adders, anything really. But your god is no cat. Nor can his likeness be chipped from stone. Not by gold nor red carbuncle can your god be wrought. Your god is beyond dimension. Your god, Hebrew, is beyond all other gods. Your god is all. Your god is everything. I am what is. I am the Lord! What was it we were talking of?

2254 =
Conversational

Proclaim

GIDEON

You were saying our fathers bowed down to other gods.

THE ANGEL

Your fathers indeed! Have *you* not bowed down to Marduk? And now it is Ishtar and the rain Ba-al of Beth-shean. And so I have given you into the hands of the Midianites. (*He has risen now to his full godlike majesty. His voice booms out*) This one last time shall I redeem you! This one last time, ye Hebrews! (GIDEON looks nervously around, surprised that nobody seems to hear THE ANGEL) But if you break faith

GIDEON

with me one more time, then cursed shall you be in the city and cursed shall you be in the field! You shall serve your enemies in nakedness! I shall make brutes of you! Your women shall eat their own afterbirth! Your men shall eat their sons in hunger. Among all nations, you shall find no rest! For I am the Lord! I am the Lord! I am the Lord! (*He is abruptly affable again*) I shall raise up from among you a redeemer, and he shall deliver you from the Midianites.

GIDEON

(*Terrified now*)

How shall we know this redeemer?

THE ANGEL

I shall come to him in the guise of a stranger, and I shall say unto him: "The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor."

(*GIDEON nods his head slowly. Then he scowls as he begins to understand.*)

GIDEON

I?

THE ANGEL

You shall be the redeemer. Gideon the son of Joash, the son of Abiezer, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manassch.

GIDEON

You cannot be serious.

THE ANGEL

You shall be the redeemer.

GIDEON

GIDEON

Sir, I am Gideon, the donkey of the clan. Ask anyone in Ophrah or on the hills. They shall tell you Gideon is a good enough fellow but an ass. Will you gird a donkey and make him your general? Of course, it is a prank. I am often the butt of such pranks. It is a prank, is it not? Of course. Ho! Gideon the general! What an ideal *(He looks anxiously at THE ANGEL who seems quite serious about the whole matter)* Sir, I am not a soldier. I wouldn't know which end of the sword is haft.

THE ANGEL

You are a mighty man of valor.

GIDEON

I will not hear any more of this. Really, I . . . the very idea of it has put me at my wit's end. Who will join Gideon's army?

THE ANGEL

The spirit of the Lord shall come upon you, and all Israel shall heed your words.

GIDEON

No, no, sir, I will have no part of this.

~~*(Enter HELEK, running from stage right. He is aghast with panic and quite out of breath.)*~~ *(Angel next page)*

HELEK

~~*(Shouting)*~~

~~They come! They come! The Midianites come!~~

GIDEON

~~THE WOMEN~~

~~The Kings of Midian ford the Jordan.
The blood of Gilead drips from their swords.~~

~~THE ELDERS~~

~~O! We are oppressed!~~

~~THE WOMEN~~

~~The quiet Jordan heaves with waves.
Thousand on thousand push into the water.
They come! They come! Midian comes!~~

~~THE ELDERS~~

~~O! We are wounded and suffer!~~

~~THE ANGEL~~

(To GIDEON, who is staring with wide-eyed interest at him)
The spirit of the Lord is upon you, Gideon, and the people
shall do as you tell them.

(GIDEON turns slowly to the elders.)

GIDEON

(In a state of possession)

Rise up, ye elders!
Hear the oracle of Gideon, the son of Joash,
The oracle of the man whose eye is opened!
The Lord of Jacob will redeem you.
The God of Moses is here,
And the Midianites will flee before you seven ways!
(The elders look up from their postures of prostration.)

~~HELEK~~

~~On my head, is this Gideon who prophesies?
(He stands stately.)~~

genuine cause for alarm concerning ARTHUR LANDAU, for he has ambled down to the platform where he stands waiting for THE RABBI to finish his prayers. They watch ARTHUR warily. HARRIS suddenly decides to be communicative. He lifts his old face to ALPER and ZITORSKY.)

HARRIS. Ah, am I thirsty!

ALPER. *(Watching ARTHUR carefully.)* Good.

(THE RABBI, having finished his last prayer, now turns and starts down from the platform. ARTHUR steps forward to meet him.)

ARTHUR. Rabbi—

THE RABBI. *(Walking by him.)* I'll be with you in just a moment. *(He strides directly to his office. ALPER leaps to intercept him.)*

ALPER. Rabbi—

THE RABBI. *(Continuing into his office.)* I'll be with you in a minute, Alper. *(He goes into his office and closes the door. ALPER clasps his brow and shrugs. ZITORSKY mutters an involuntary "Oy." They both nod their heads and wait with the sufferance that is the badge of all their tribe. ARTHUR moves a few steps to the rabbi's door and also waits. In the office, THE RABBI has sat down, all business, and has dialed a number. On phone.)* I'd like to make a person-to-person call to Rabbi Harry Gersh in Wilmington, Delaware. The number in Wilmington is Kingswood 3-1973—Thank you—*(He hums a snatch of the service. ALPER opens the door and comes into the office. He stares just a little open-mouthed at the absence of THE GIRL. He tugs at his Vandyke beard in contemplation.)* Yes, Alper?

ALPER. Well, I'll tell you, Rabbi—*(He scowls, a little flustered, then turns and goes out of the office.)* Excuse me.

THE RABBI. *(On phone.)* Locust 6-0932.

ALPER. *(To ZITORSKY.)* She's not there.

ZITORSKY. She's not there?

ALPER. I'll have to go out and look for her. (*Frowning, in contemplation, ALPER puts his coat on slowly and exits from the synagogue.*)

THE RABBI. (*His attention is abruptly brought back to the phone. His voice rises into that pitch usually used for long distance calls. On phone.*) Harry, how are you, this is Bernard here, I'm sorry I wasn't in last night, my wife Sylvia said it was wonderful to hear your voice after all these years, how are you, Shirley, and the kids? Oh, that's wonderful. I'm glad to hear it. Harry, my wife tells me you have just gotten your first congregation and you wanted some advice since I have already been fired several times— Good, how much are you getting?— Well, five thousand isn't bad for a first congregation although I always thought out-of-town paid better. And what is it, a one-year contract?— Well, what kind of advice can I give you? Especially you, Harry. You are a saintly, scholarly, and truly pious man, and you have no business being a rabbi. You've got to be a go-getter, Harry, unfortunately. The synagogue I am in now is in an unbelievable state of neglect and I expect to see us in prouder premises within a year. But I've got things moving now. I've started a Youth Group, a Young Married People's Club, a Theatre Club which is putting on its first production next month, "The Man Who Came to Dinner," I'd like you to come, Harry, bring the wife, I'm sure you'll have an entertaining evening. And let me recommend that you organize a little league baseball team. It's a marvelous gimmick. I have sixteen boys in my Sunday School now— Harry, listen, what do I know about baseball?— Harry, let me interrupt you. How in heaven's name are you going to convey an awe of God to boys who will race out of your Hebrew classes to fly model rocket ships five hundred feet in the air exploding in three stages? To my boys, God is a retired mechanic— Well, I'm organizing a bazaar right now. When I hang up on you, I have to rush to the printers to get some raffles printed, and from there I go to the Town Hall for

a permit to conduct Bingo games. In fact, I was so busy this morning, I almost forgot to come to the synagogue— (*He says gently.*) Harry, with my first congregation, I also thought I was bringing the word of God. I stood up in my pulpit every Sabbath and carped at them for violating the rituals of their own religion. My congregations dwindled, and one synagogue given to my charge disappeared into a morass of mortgages. Harry, I'm afraid there are times when I don't care if they believe in God as long as they come to Temple. Of course, it's sad— Harry, it's been my pleasure. Have I depressed you?— Come and see us, Harry— Good luck— Of course. Good-bye. (*He sings up, stands, starts looking around for his briefcase, strides out into the synagogue still searching for it. He is interrupted by ARTHUR.*)

ARTHUR. Rabbi, I have to hurry off, but before I go I would like to talk to you about that girl in your office. These old men tell me she is possessed by a demon and I think they are intending to perform some kind of an exorcism. I must caution you that that girl should be treated only by competent psychiatrists and the most frightful harm might come to her if she is subjected to anything like— Look, do you know about this exorcism, because I cannot believe you would tolerate any—

THE RABBI. (*Who has been trying very hard to follow all this.*) I'm afraid you have me at a disadvantage.

ARTHUR. I'm talking about the girl in your office.

THE RABBI. I'm somewhat new here and don't know everybody yet by name. Please be patient with me. Now I take it you want to get married.

ARTHUR. (*For a moment he briefly considers the possibility he is not really awake. Pensively.*) This whole morning is beginning to seem absolutely— Rabbi, there is a girl in your office, who is insane.

THE RABBI. In my office? (*THE RABBI is suddenly distracted by ZITORSKY, who has been wandering around the synagogue, looking up and down between the rows of chairs, and is now looking into the bathroom at the*

sunken and hollow. He wears a small black skullcap from beneath which stick out grey forelocks and sidecurls—a testament to his orthodoxy. After a moment, he regains his strength and returns to his prayers. Three men hurry into the synagogue out of the oppressive cold of the street. They are THE SEXTON, SCHLISSEL and ZITORSKY. They all wear heavy overcoats and grey fedoras. SCHLISSEL and ZITORSKY are in their early seventies. THE SEXTON is a small, nervous, bespectacled man of 48. We know he is a sexton because he carries a huge ring of keys and is always doing something. They rub their hands for warmth and huff and puff and dart quick looks at THE CABALIST who is oblivious to their entrance.

SCHLISSEL. (Muttering.) Close the door. (LIGHT pours down on the synagogue as THE SEXTON raises the window curtains. THE SEXTON scurries Upstage to fuss with the heater in the rear of the synagogue. SCHLISSEL and ZITORSKY shuffle Downstage to a small naked radiator and stand silently—indeed a little wearily—for a moment, SCHLISSEL sighs.) So how goes it with a Jew today?

ZITORSKY. How should it go?

SCHLISSEL. Have a pinch of snuff.

ZITORSKY. No, thank you.

SCHLISSEL. Davis won't be here this morning. I stopped by his house. He has a cold. His daughter-in-law told me he's still in bed.

ZITORSKY. My daughter-in-law, may she grow rich and buy a hotel with a thousand rooms and be found dead in every one of them.

SCHLISSEL. My daughter-in-law, may she invest heavily in General Motors, and the whole thing should go bankrupt.

ZITORSKY. Sure, go have children.

SCHLISSEL. The devil take them all.

~~THE SEXTON. (Scurrying Downstage, to THE CABA-~~

LIST as he passes.) Hirschman, are you all right? (He flutters, a small round ball of a man, to the door of the rabbi's office, which he enters.)

SCHLISSEL. Foreman won't be here today.

ZITORSKY. What's the matter with Foreman?

SCHLISSEL. His granddaughter today. This is the morning.

ZITORSKY. Oh, that's right. Today is the morning.

SCHLISSEL. Listen, it's better for everybody.

ZITORSKY. Sure.

SCHLISSEL. I told Foreman, I said: "Foreman, it's better for everybody." The girl is becoming violent. I spoke to her father. He said to me they live in terror what she'll do to the other children. They came home one night, they found her punching one of the little children.

ZITORSKY. Well, what can you do?

SCHLISSEL. What can you do? You do what they're doing. They're putting her back in the institution.

ZITORSKY. Of course. There she will have the benefit of trained psychiatric personnel.

SCHLISSEL. The girl is incurable. She's been in and out of mental institutions since she was eleven years old. I met the psychiatrist there, you know, when I was up there to visit Foreman last week. I discussed the whole business with him. A fine young fellow. The girl is a schizophrenic with violent tendencies.

ZITORSKY. *(Considers this diagnosis for a moment, then sighs.)* Ah, may my daughter-in-law eat acorns and may branches sprout from her ears.

SCHLISSEL. May my daughter-in-law live to be a hundred and twenty, and may she have to live all her years in her daughter-in-law's house.

(A fourth-old Jew now enters from the street, a patrician little man with a Vandyke beard and a black homburg. His name is ALPEX. He bursts into shrill prayer as he enters.)

~~ALPER. (Chanting) As for me in the abundance of~~
Thy loving/kindness will I come into Thy house; I will
worship toward Thy holy temple in the fear of Thee/
How goodly are Thy tents, O Jacob/. . . ~~(As precipi-~~
~~tously as the prayer had begun, it now drops into nothing~~
~~more than a rapid movement of lips. THE SEXTON~~
~~acknowledges ALPER's arrival from the rabbi's office,~~
~~where he plunks himself behind the desk and begins~~
~~hurriedly to dial the phone. ALPER's voice zooms abruptly~~
~~up into a shrill incantation again.) . . . in the truth of~~
Thy salvation. Amen!
SCHLISSEL. Amen.
ZITORSKY. Amen.

(ALPER joins the other two OLD MEN and they stand in
silent rueful speculation.)

THE SEXTON. (On phone.) Hello, Harris? This is
Bleyer the Sexton. Come on down today, we need you.
Foreman won't be here. Davis is sick. We won't have ten
men for the morning prayers if you don't come down—
Services start in twenty minutes. Hurry up— Wear a
sweater under your coat— All right— ~~(He hangs up,~~
~~takes a large ledger from the desk and begins to nerv-~~
~~ously examine its pages.)~~

SCHLISSEL. Hirschman slept over in the synagogue
again last night. Have you ever seen such pietistic hum-
bug?

ALPER. Well, he is a very devout man. A student of the
Cabala. The Rabbi speaks of him with the greatest
reverence.

SCHLISSEL. Devout indeed. I assure you this lavish
display of orthodoxy is a very profitable business. I was
told confidentially just yesterday that his board and food
are paid for by two foolish old women who consider him
a saint.

ALPER. It can't cost them very much. He's been fasting
the last three days.

SCHLISSEL. And the reason he sleeps in the synagogue

so frequently is because his landlady does not give him heat for his own room in the mornings.

ZITORSKY. Ah, go be an old man in the winter.

ALPER. I must say, I really don't know what to do with myself on these cold days.

SCHLISSEL. I'm an atheist. If I had something better to do, would I be here?

ZITORSKY. You know what would be a nice way to kill a day? I think it would be nice to take a trip up to Mount Hope Cemetery and have a look at my burial plot. A lovely cemetery. Like a golf course, actually. By the time one gets there and comes back, the whole day has been used up. Would you like to come? I'll pay ~~your~~ your fare.

(See) ALPER. Why not? I have never been to Mount Hope. ~~I have my burial plot on Mount Zion Cemetery.~~

ZITORSKY. Oh, that's a beautiful cemetery.

ALPER. ~~Yes, it is.~~ My wife wanted to buy plots in Cedar Lawn because her whole family is buried there, but I wouldn't hear of it.

ZITORSKY. ~~Oh, Cedar Lawn.~~ I wouldn't be buried in Cedar Lawn.

ALPER. It's in such a bad state. The headstones tumble one on top of the other, and everybody walks on the graves.

(Hear) ZITORSKY. They don't take care in Cedar Lawn. My wife once said, she should rest in peace, that Cedar Lawn was the tenement of cemeteries.

ALPER. A well-turned phrase.

ZITORSKY. She had a way with words, God grant her eternal rest.

ALPER. I'd like you to come to Mount ~~Zion~~ ^{HOPE} ~~someday~~ see my plot.

ZITORSKY. Maybe we could make the trip tomorrow.

SCHLISSEL. Listen to these two idiots, discussing their graves as if they were country estates.

ZITORSKY. Where are you buried, Schlissel?

SCHLISSEL. Cedar Lawn.

*You said
like an
idiot*

ALPER. Well, listen, there are many lovely areas in Cedar Lawn. All my wife's family are buried there.

ZITORSKY. Come with ~~me~~ Schlissel, and have a look at my grave.

SCHLISSEL. Why not? What else have I got to do?

(ALPER now slowly goes about the business of donning his praying shawl and phylacteries, which he takes out of a velvet praying bag. Among Jews, prayer is a highly individual matter, and peripatetic to the bargain. The actual ritual of laying on the phylacteries is a colorful one. ALPER extracts his left arm from his jacket and rebuttons his jacket so that his shirt sleeved left arm hangs loose. Then, the shirt sleeve is rolled up almost to the shoulders, and the arm phylactery, a long thin black leather thong, is put on by wrapping it around the arm seven times and around the middle finger of the left hand three times. All this is accompanied by rapidly-recited prayers, as is the laying on of the head-phylactery. All the while ALPER walks bending and twisting at the knees, raising his voice occasionally in the truly lovely words of incantation. In a far Upstage corner, THE CABALIST huddles under his enveloping white praying shawl, his back to everyone else, deeply involved in his personal meditations. The synagogue itself is a shabby little place, the walls yellowed and cracked, and illumined by a fitful overhead bulb. There is indeed at this moment, a sense of agelessness, even of primitive barbarism. During this THE SEXTON has dialed a second number.)

THE SEXTON. Hello? Mr. Arnold Kessler, please—How do you do? This is Mr. Bleyer the Sexton at the synagogue. Perhaps you recall me—Did I wake you up? I'm terribly sorry. As long as you're up, according to my books, your father died one year ago yesterday, on the eleventh day in the month of Schvat, may his soul fly straight to the Heavenly Gates, and how about coming

Alper
prayer
bag
(next)
Rabbi
phone
conversation

(BUDDY enters and immediately goes back into bedroom closing door quietly behind him)

FATHER

(Steps in and looks at ALAN and nods disgustedly. He walks into the room. ALAN looks after him, dismayed, and seems puzzled when he doesn't see BUDDY. The FATHER examines the room. It is obvious he approves of nothing in the apartment)

ALAN

(Meeting him downstage center)

Gee, Dad . . . this is a . . . pleasant . . . surprise.

(The FATHER looks at him as if to say, "I'll bet")

How . . . how are you?

FATHER

How am I? . . . I'll tell you sometime . . . That's how I am.

(He continues his inspection)

ALAN

I've redecorated the place . . . How do you like it?

FATHER

Fancy . . . Very fancy . . . You must have some nice job.

(Sniffs highball glass)

ALAN

I just got in, Dad. I was about to call you.

FATHER

The phone company shouldn't have to depend on your business.

ALAN

I wanted to explain what happened to me. Why I wasn't in the last two days.

FATHER

There's nothing to explain.

ALAN

Yes, there is, Dad.

FATHER

Why? I understand. You work very hard two days a week and you need a five-day weekend. That's normal.

ALAN

Dad, I'm not going to lie. I was up in Vermont skiing. I intended to be back Sunday night, but I twisted my bad ankle again. I couldn't drive. I thought it was broken.

FATHER

I'll send you a get-well card.

ALAN

I'm sorry, Dad. I really am.

FATHER

You're sorry. I can't ask more than that.

ALAN

I'll be in the office first thing in the morning.

FATHER

That's good news. You know the address, don't you?

ALAN

Yes, Dad. I know the address.

FATHER

See. I always said you were smart. So I'll see you in the morning.

ALAN

Right!

(ALAN starts upstage)

FATHER

. (Stops)

Oh, by the way . . . How's the Meltzer account going?

ALAN

The Meltzer account?

(ALAN comes back)

FATHER

From Atlantic City? The one you bragged about was all wrapped up?

ALAN

Oh . . . er . . . fine.

FATHER

Fine? . . . I'm glad to hear that . . . Because he called today.

Come Blow Your Horn

ALAN

(Surprised)

Oh? . . . About an order?

FATHER

Yes. About an order.

ALAN

(A little skeptical)

. . . Did . . . did we get one?

FATHER

Yes . . . We got one.

ALAN

. . . How much?

FATHER

How much?—guess.

ALAN

Well, Dad I—

FATHER

Guess! Guess how much we got from Meltzer.

ALAN

. . . Nothing?

FATHER

Bingol Right on the button! . . . Bum!

ALAN

Dad, wait a minute . . .

FATHER

Did you have a nice weekend, bum? Do you know what it costs to go skiing for four days? Three thousand dollars a day? Bum!

ALAN

I tried to call him. I couldn't get a line through.

FATHER

On skis you tried to call him? You should be in the Olympics.

ALAN

(Crossing to phone)

I'll call him right back. I'll explain everything.

FATHER

Where you gonna call him?

ALAN

In Atlantic City.

FATHER

Who're you going to talk to? The Boardwalk? He's here!

ALAN

In New York?

FATHER

In the Hotel Croyden. For two days he's sitting waiting while you're playing in the snow.

ALAN

Dad, I promise you. I won't lose the account.

FATHER

Why? This would be the first one you ever lost? You want to see the list? You could ski (*gestures*) down your cancellations.

ALAN

I couldn't get back in time, Dad. Skiing had nothing to do with it.

FATHER

I'm sorry. I forgot. I left out golf and sailing and sleeping and drinking and women. You're terrific. If I was in the bum business I would want ten like you.

ALAN

That's not true. I put in plenty of time in the business.

FATHER

Two years. In six years you put in two years. I had my book-keeper figure it out.

ALAN

Thank you.

FATHER

My own son. I get more help from my competitors.

(*Starts to sit*)

ALAN

Well, why not? You treat me like one.

FATHER

(Jumping up)

I treat you? Do I wander in at eleven o'clock in the morning?
Do I take three hours for lunch . . . in night clubs? . . .
When are you there?

ALAN

What do you mean, when?

FATHER

When? When? You take off legal holidays, Jewish holidays,
Catholic holidays . . . Last year you took off Hallowe'en.

ALAN

I was sick.

FATHER

When you came back to work you were sick. When you were
sick you were dancing.

ALAN

In the first place, it's not true. And in the second place, what
good does it do coming in? You don't need me. You never ask
my advice about the business, do you?

FATHER

What does a skier know about wax fruit?

ALAN

You see? You see? You won't even listen.

FATHER

(He sits)

Come in early. I'll listen.

ALAN

I did. For three years. Only then I was "too young" to have
anything to say. And now that I've got my own apartment,
I'm too much of a "bum" to have anything to say. Admit it,
Dad. You don't give me the same respect you give the night
watchman.

FATHER

At least I know where he is at night.

ALAN

. . . You know where I am, too. Having fun. What's wrong
with it? I think what I do at night should be my business.

FATHER

Not when it's nighttime four days in a row. Listen, what do I care?

(He rises and crosses right)

Do whatever you want. Go ahead and live like a bum.

ALAN

Why am I a bum?

FATHER

Are you married?

ALAN

No.

FATHER

Then you're a bum!

ALAN

Give me a chance. I'll get married.

FATHER

I heard that for years. When you were twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, even twenty-nine, you were a bachelor. But now you're over thirty and you're still not married, so you're a bum and that's all there is to it.

(Turns away)

ALAN

Who made thirty the closing date? All I want to do is have a little fun out of life like any other healthy, normal American boy.

FATHER

Healthy you are, American you are, normal you're not.

ALAN

What do you mean?

FATHER

Look at your brother, that's what I mean. That's normal. He'll be something, that kid. He'll never be like you. Not in a million years.

ALAN

Really? He might surprise you.

FATHER

That I'll bet my life on. He's in the plant the first thing in

the morning, he puts in a whole day's work. No, that's one son I'll never have to worry about.

ALAN

Have you read your mail lately?

FATHER

What?

ALAN

Nothing.

FATHER

All right, I don't want to discuss anything more. I want to see you in the office tomorrow morning at eight o'clock.

ALAN

Eight o'clock? There's no one there then.

FATHER

You'll be there. And you'll be there two nights a week and Saturdays, holidays, birthdays, and vacations. I'm sick and tired of being the father. From now on I'm the boss.

ALAN

All right, Dad, but eight o'clock is silly. I have nothing to do until nine.

FATHER

(Crossing up to foyer)

You play solitaire all day anyway. You can get in three more games.

ALAN

Okay. Okay, I'll be there.

FATHER

With the Meltzer account. If you haven't got it signed and in your pocket . . . you can ski *(gesturing)* right into the unemployment office.

ALAN

I'll try, Dad. I'll really do my best.

FATHER

With your best, we're in trouble. From you I need a miracle.

(ALAN sits downstage right center chair)

Eight o'clock with the Meltzer account . . .

Yes, Dad.

ALAN

FATHER

The day your brother becomes like you, I throw myself in front of an airplane.

(And with that he exits)

(As front door slams, BUDDY comes rushing out of the bedroom door in a state of shock)

BUDDY

Did you hear that? I told you, Alan. I told you what he'd do.

ALAN

(Crosses to phone)

What hotel did he say, the Croyden?

BUDDY

Wait'll he reads that letter. He'll kill himself. He'll kill all of us. Like those stories in the Daily News. Alan, give me the phone.

(ALAN dials 411)

ALAN

Take it easy, will you. I've got to call Meltzer.

BUDDY

Meltzer? We've got to get to Mom before he gets home. She's got to tear up that letter.

ALAN

Will you relax. He's not going to kill anyone until he's had his supper . . . I'll straighten everything out.

BUDDY

How?

ALAN

All I've got to do is get Meltzer to sign.

(Into phone)

I'd like the number of the Hotel Croyden please.

BUDDY

Suppose you don't?

AL SCENES FROM REPRESENTATIVE
PLAYS FROM THE AMERICAN THEATER,
FOR MOST PART, COMEDY...

doe 1. NEIL SIMON - ONE OF MOST
POPULAR PLAYWRIGHTS IN THE
CONTEMPORARY THEATER.

COME BLOW YOUR HORN: STORY
CONCERNS A FATHER AND HIS TWO
SONS IN BUSINESS WITH HIM -
THE WAX FRUIT BUSINESS. THE
OLDER SON HAS BEEN LIVING IN HIS
OWN PAD FOR SOME TIME -

AL AND HIS YOUNGER SON, UNBEKNOWNST
TO THE FATHER HAS JUST LEFT HOME
TO JOIN HIS BROTHER IN PURSUIT OF
THE FINER THINGS OF LIFE. THE FATHER,
WHO HAS NOT YET LEARNED HIS YOUNGER
SON HAS DEFECTED, VISITS ALAN, HIS OLDER
SON, AT THE APARTMENT.

2. THE TENTH MAN IS PADDY
JAC CHAYEFSKY'S RETELLING OF
THE DYBBUK STORY. SCENE WE
SELECTED DEALS WITH BYGONE DAYS:
STRUGGLE TO PRESERVE OLD WAYS,
RITUALS, ETC. TWO OLD MEN, IN
OLD AGE LIVING WITH DAUGHTERS-
IN-LAW, GOING TO MINYAN EVERY
MORNING BECAUSE IT TAKES THEM
OUT OF THE HOUSE AND INTO WORLD
THAT IS THEIR SECURITY. THEY ARE
IN THE SYNAGOGUE.

THE SCENE IS THE INTERIOR OF
SYNAGOGUE OF CONGREGATION ATTERETH-
TIFERETH YISROEL, AN ORTHODOX
SYNAGOGUE THAT IS ACTUALLY A
CONVERTED SHOP.

AI BOTH TENTH MAN AND GIDEON
REFLECT JEWS' RELATIONSHIP TO GOD.

- - - - -

AI NEXT, FROM TENTH MAN, THE RABBI'S
TELEPHONE CONVERSATION. HERE IS
RABBI OF THE SHUL ON THE PHONE.

3. AI PADDY CHAYEFSKY - A DIFFERENT
PLACE, A DIFFERENT TIME; STILL,
HOWEVER, DEALING WITH MAN'S
RELATIONSHIP TO GOD.

THE TIME ^{JUNE} 1100 BCE. THE SCENE
IS THE HILL COUNTRY OF MENASSEH,
WEST OF THE JORDAN RIVER IN
BIBLICAL PALESTINE.

THIS IS THE BIBLICAL QUOTATION
PADDY CHAYEFSKY CHOSE AS AN
INTRODUCTION TO GIDEON: "NOW..."

(9th c. Gideon quote)

4. J.B. By ARCHIBALD MACLEISH.
(FLYLEAF)

AL OUR SCENE TAKES PLACE WHEN
THE PLAY IS OVER: A PLAY WITHIN
A PLAY. THE TWO ACTORS RESUME
THEIR IDENTITY AS CIRCUS VENDORS.