

A THIN PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE

by  
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**TIME**

Summer, 1990.

**PLACE**

Mainly Colonus, a suburb of Athens. Also Chicago, Vietnam.

**SET**

Exceedingly spare. Three locales—a bedroom, a work room, and the site of an archaeological dig—which need not be physically separate. (See the notes at the end of the play.)

**CHARACTERS**

CHRISTOPHER, a post-doc archaeologist. About 26, male.

PIETY, a doctoral candidate in archaeology. A healthy woman with a Texas drawl, given to work shirts, jeans, and heavy-soled hiking boots. Anywhere from 25 to 40, female.

MARGARET, a wealthy armchair archaeologist who takes over as project director after Rosen dies. Late 50s, female.

ROSEN, a ghost. Before he died, the project director of the dig. Slight middle-European accent. About 80 at his death, male.

*Played by the same actor who plays Rosen:*

OLD MAN, killed in about 1820 in the Greek war of independence. 70s to 80s, male.

ANDY, Margaret's nephew. About 23, male.

*Played by the same actor who plays Andy:*

LUKAS, a Greek soldier killed in about 1820 in the Greek war of independence. About 23 at his death, male.

Christopher's FATHER, an American soldier killed in the Vietnam war in the 1960s.

About 23 at his death, male.

Also, voices of a NEWSCASTER and a WOMAN.

**Act I**

*In darkness.*

**NEWSCASTER**

. . . winners were announced today. Among those receiving MacArthur genius grants this year was David Stuart, at eighteen, the youngest recipient ever. Stuart was cited for his work deciphering Mayan hiero—deciphering Mayan hieroglyphs. Other recipients included playwright and poet . . . *(Crossfade. Recording begins again.)* . . . among those receiving MacArthur genius grants—MacArthur genius—genius grants this year—*(Recording continues. Lights up on Christopher's room. Night. CHRISTOPHER asleep.)*—was David Stuart, at eighteen, the youngest recipient—the youngest—at eighteen—at eighteen, the youngest recipient ever. Stuart was cited . . . *(Crossfade. Recording begins again. TV comes on. Simultaneously, spot up on ROSEN, indicating he's on the TV.)* . . . among those receiving MacArthur genius grants this year was David Stuart—was David—

**ROSEN**

Christopher.

**NEWSCASTER**

—was David Stuart—

**ROSEN**

Christopher! *(CHRISTOPHER sits up, stares at TV, catatonic.)*

**NEWSCASTER**

*(Fading out.)* —David Stuart—

**ROSEN**

Can you hear me? Listen, boychik—this is important. Here. *(Points to a spot on map.)* Christopher! Pay attention! Here. The terrace. The light. Look for the light. *(CHRISTOPHER has fallen back to sleep.)* Christopher?! Christopher! . . . Oy, Gottenyu! *(TV off. Pause.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Awakens, terror stricken. Beat.)* Fuck. . . . Jesus. . . . Just a bad dream. *(Gets up, crosses to TV. Turns it on. Snow. Turns it off.)* As if he hadn't made my life miserable enough when he was alive. He has to come back and haunt— *(Abruptly; decisively.)* Time to sleep. *(Tries to sleep. Can't. Sits up.)* What light? That's what he said, wasn't it? The terrace. Look for the light. What's that mean, look for the light? . . . Ah, just a dream. *(Tries to sleep. Can't. Sits up.)* Jesus! How did I do this to myself? Damn project has turned into a bloody nightmare. David Stuart gets a MacArthur genius grant—the twit—I get the Franz Kafka Travel Grant to Hell. You wouldn't believe half of it. Nine months ago, Rosen snuffs it. Hallelujah, right? Wrong. *(Lights change. CHRISTOPHER sleeps. Knocking.)*

**PIETY**

*(Off.)* Chris? Chris, wake up.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Huh? What? What is it?

**PIETY**

Christopher? You awake?

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm awake, I'm awake. *(PIETY enters. Lights up. Pain.)* Oh, jeez.

**PIETY**

Wake up!

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm awake, I'm awake. What's the matter?

**PIETY**

Rosen. Somebody shot him. Up at the site.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What time is it?

**PIETY**

Did you hear what I said?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yeah. Uh, no. What—?

**PIETY**

*(Overlapping “What—?”.)* Somebody shot Rosen up at the site.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Shot— . . . ?

**PIETY**

Stop jawboning. He wants you. *(Tosses CHRISTOPHER his jeans.)* Where’s your shirt?  
*(Finds it. Throws it at him.)* Come on, move it! *(He doesn’t move.)* MOVE IT! *(Exits.)*

*CHRISTOPHER dresses. Lights up on ROSEN. PIETY kneels next to him.  
CHRISTOPHER crosses to him.*

**ROSEN**

Who’s that?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Me, Christo—

**ROSEN**

*(To PIETY. Overlapping “Christo—”.)* Go away.

**PIETY**

You want to bleed to death?

**ROSEN**

Go I said. Shoo!

*Sound of ambulance approaching.*

**PIETY**

*(To CHRISTOPHER.)* Here. Keep pressure on the wound. *(No response.)* Christopher! We have got a situation here! *(He responds.)* Just keep pressure on the wound. *(He takes over. She exits.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(To audience.)* So I'm kneeling over him, his blood on my hands. And he says to me,  
"Boychik—"

**ROSEN**

*(Overlapping.)* Boychik. The bones— *(Coughs.)* I know where they're buried.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(To audience.)* But he won't tell me. He won't tell me where unless I promise to keep it a secret.

**ROSEN**

Promise, boychik? Yes or—? *(Coughs.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Don't—

**ROSEN**

Don't tell me not to talk. Pisher.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Save your—

**ROSEN**

And don't tell me to save my strength. It's not a Western you're watching. I'm dying.

**CHRISTOPHER**

You're not— *(ROSEN coughs.)* I'll get somebody.

**ROSEN**

You want I should bleed to death?

**PIETY**

*(Off. Distant.)* Edo, edo. Epano.<sup>1</sup>

**CHRISTOPHER**

Piety!

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<sup>1</sup>Εδω, εδω. Επανω. This way. Up here.

**ROSEN**

Yes or no, boychik?

**CHRISTOPHER**

You need help.

**ROSEN**

Yes or—?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yes. Yes. All right. I'll keep the secret. I promise.

**ROSEN**

Here. Everything's in here. *(Hands him diary tied up with string.)* You are to keep it, you alone . . .

**CHRISTOPHER**

Don't— . . . [die] *(ROSEN dies.)* Wait! Don't— . . . *(Breaks away. Lights change. Beat.)* Jesus. *(To audience.)* Anyway. Rosen. Fucks up my life again! How could I make a promise like that? See, there's a legend. The bones of Oedipus— *(Pause.)* Yeah. Oedipus. *(A look: a challenge.)* Okay. So. There's this legend. Goes all the way back to Sophocles. The bones of Oedipus possess some sort of mystical power. And the power can be preserved only if the place where they're buried is kept secret. Kept secret. Think of it. I mean, finding the bones of Oedipus—just trust me on this, okay: it's possible—finding the bones of Oedipus would rank up there with discovering Troy, the Rosetta Stone, King Tut's tomb. It's the kind of thing that makes you a legend in your own time. Keep it a secret?

**ROSEN**

*(A replay.)* You are to keep it, you alone . . .

**CHRISTOPHER**

He was lying there dying. What was I supposed to say?

**ROSEN**

*(A replay.)* Yes or no, boychik?



**CHRISTOPHER**

So I made the bloody promise—the stupidest single fucking act of my entire fucking existence. And guess what? I still don't know where the bones are buried. (*Holds up diary.*) Note the knot. Still intact. Why? Cause I figure if I figure it out on my own, the promise is null and void and I'm off the hook. I mean, like I actually care anyway, but—Jesus! Whatever possessed me to come here in the first place? (*Lights change.*)

**MARGARET**

(*Enters.*) I went to the mat for you, Dr. Mavros. If I'd had my way, David Stuart is not the young Mayanologist they'd given the MacArthur. (*Freezes.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*To audience.*) That should have put me on guard. Like I was even nominated. Some women—some, not all, let me emphasize—some women have evolved the predatory mechanisms of the spider. First there's the silk, then come the fangs. You play the hapless butterfly—one moment carefree, the next snared, paralyzed, injected with digestive juices. Sucking me dry has been a pleasure this particular arachnid has lingered over for the past two years.

**MARGARET**

(*Extends hand.*) Margaret Durant. Thanks for coming on such short notice.

**CHRISTOPHER**

You said it was important. (*She hands him a bound manuscript.*) Oidipous epi Kolono<sup>2</sup>—Oedipus at Colonus. Jeez, this is the real thing, isn't it?

**MARGARET**

What can you tell me about it?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Manuscripts really aren't my field, Mrs. Durant. If you want—[somebody to authenticate it]

**MARGARET**

Indulge me.

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<sup>2</sup>Οιδιπους επι Κολωνω

**CHRISTOPHER**

My guess would be . . . eleventh, twelfth century . . . produced somewhere in the Near East . . . but the binding is relatively modern. Italian?

**MARGARET**

Impressive. *(Freezes.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(To audience.)* I use a method highly respected in academe for producing information when you're on the spot. DRE we call it: Direct Rectal Extraction. *(Holds out manuscript to her.)*

**MARGARET**

Keep it. Consider it a loan with an option to own.

**CHRISTOPHER**

But it must be worth—

**MARGARET**

About the equivalent of a MacArthur genius grant. Indulge me. Keep it.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What's the catch? I mean, you don't expect me to sleep with you or something, do you? Because if you do, forget it. *(Holds out manuscript again.)* I'm queer.

**MARGARET**

*(Laughs.)* Dr. Mavros, tell me about the myth of Oedipus.

*Lights up again on the actor playing Rosen, now an OLD MAN, fatally wounded. It's 1820—the Greek war of independence.*

**WOMAN'S VOICE**

*(Off. Ethereal.)* Lukas!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Oedipus? This is too weird.

**MARGARET**

Before Freud, after the unfortunate business with his mother. Indulge me.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I wish you'd stop saying that. Well, what do you want to know? (*Referring to manuscript.*) It's all right here.

**WOMAN'S VOICE**

(*Off.*) Lukas!

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Overlapping.*) Oedipus wanders around in exile for years, shunned by everybody like a truckload of toxic waste because of—

**MARGARET**

—the unfortunate business with his mother. Yes.

*LUKAS enters, running. Carries flintlock.*

**OLD MAN**

Who's there?

**LUKAS**

Me, Lukas.

**OLD MAN**

Fetch your brother.

**LUKAS**

You are wounded!

**OLD MAN**

Hurry! (*Coughs.*)

**LUKAS**

(*Starts to exit, stops.*) No.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Finally, he finds himself in Colonus, just outside Athens—

**MARGARET**

In a sacred grove.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Right.

**OLD MAN**

Fetch your brother.

**LUKAS**

No. There is no time. Choose me!

**CHRISTOPHER**

You know all this.

**MARGARET**

But do you? You know the plot, but have you listened to the story?

**LUKAS**

Tell *me* the secret!

**MARGARET**

Listen to the story.

**CHRISTOPHER**

So, Oedipus is in the sacred grove, where the gentle townsfolk stumble upon him. Everything's cool. For about thirty seconds. Then, oh, dear. Major social gaff. "Hi! I'm Oedipus. Maybe you've heard of me—killed Pa, married Ma? Meet the kids." Everybody freaks. Oedipus in the *sacred grove*! TOXIC SPILL IN THE SISTINE CHAPEL! Pandemonium! Gentle townsfolk morph into snarling mob.

**OLD MAN**

You are too young.

**LUKAS**

I have a wife, a son.

**OLD MAN**

Do not argue!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Luckily for Oedipus, Theseus comes to the rescue. And it being a one-good-turn-deserves-another kind of world, Oedipus returns the favor by bequeathing to Theseus his only possession.

**LUKAS**

I will guard the bones. I will give my life—

**OLD MAN**

*(Derisive.)* Your life! Boy! You think it is yours to give? Go!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Oedipus—through some karma I’ve never been able to grok—has become holy because of all his trials and tribulations. Alive he’s too polluted to let Theseus touch him. Dead and buried—

**OLD MAN**

*(Momentarily ROSEN.)* I’m dying, boychik.

**CHRISTOPHER**

—Love Canal turns into Lourdes.

**OLD MAN**

Hurry. *(Coughs.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

The bones work miracles. But there’s a catch. *(Consults manuscript.)*

**LUKAS**

What if you die before I return? Will you let the secret die with you? We struggle to free our city from the Turks. We will fail without the blessing of the bones.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yeah, here it is. *(Reads.)* Ego didaxo, teknon Aigeos—<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>εγω διδάξω, τεκνον Αιγεως—. I will reveal, son of Aegeus—.

**MARGARET**

Your Greek isn't bad for someone who spends all his time digging around in Mayan temples.

**CHRISTOPHER**

My Greek is flawless. "Mavros" is more than just a vestigial ethnic organ. After my father died I was shipped off to the relatives in Athens every summer.

**LUKAS**

The bones—their blessing is our deliverance, uncle. I am here. I am ready.

**MARGARET**

What made you decide to specialize in Mesoamerica?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Spending every summer in Athens.

**LUKAS**

The secret makes its bearer worthy. Tell me. (*OLD MAN coughs.*) Tell me while you are able.

**OLD MAN**

(*Relents.*) Are the women gone?

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Reads.*) "Son of Aegeus—"

**OLD MAN**

Come close.

**CHRISTOPHER**

"—what I have now to unfold to you / Is a thing that your city shall keep in its secret heart / Alive to the end of time."

**OLD MAN**

(*Fierce.*) Understand this, boy: where the bones lie— (*Coughs.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

"I shall take you to the place where I must die; / And no one must know it."

**OLD MAN**

*(Simultaneously.)* —no one must know it.

**CHRISTOPHER**

“Tell no man—.”

**OLD MAN**

No one!

**CHRISTOPHER**

“—the region where they lie concealed from sight.”

**OLD MAN**

*(Labored.)* The terrace. They lie buried there.

**CHRISTOPHER**

“There is no one else—”

**OLD MAN**

*(Rosen.)* Shmendrick.

**CHRISTOPHER**

“—to whom I can reveal it.”

**LUKAS**

Like ten thousand tigers I will guard— [the place.]

**OLD MAN**

*(Fierce.)* Boy! You have your wish. And its jaws will hold you fast. *(Weak. The ritual.)* I give this holy mystery into your keeping.

**CHRISTOPHER**

“You are to keep it for ever—”

**OLD MAN**

*(Rosen.)* You alone, boychik.

**CHRISTOPHER**

“And when your life is drawing to its end—

**OLD MAN**

“Disclose it to one alone—

**CHRISTOPHER**

“—your chosen heir—

**OLD MAN**

“And he to his, and so—

**OLD MAN and CHRISTOPHER**

—for ever and ever.”

**CHRISTOPHER**

Amen.

*OLD MAN dies.*

**MARGARET**

Up for a little adventure, Dr. Mavros?

**CHRISTOPHER**

You want to dig him up, don’t you? Oedipus. Adventure? Why not the lost ark? The holy grail? The temple of doom? The bones of Oedipus, Mrs. Durant?

*LUKAS exits. Lights out on OLD MAN.*

**MARGARET**

Don’t you have an ounce of romance in your soul?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Hey, my soul dances like Fred and Ginger.

**MARGARET**

Can’t you smell it? The mystery. The magic. The marketing potential.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Market— [—ing potential]? I’m an archaeologist—

**MARGARET**

And one with great promise by all accounts. But that’s not enough, Dr. Mavros. You want something more than a traditional career, however successful, don’t you?



**CHRISTOPHER**

Well, yeah.

**MARGARET**

I want to create a new breed. I want to midwife this generation's Schliemann and Carter. To get what we want, we've got to forge a new paradigm.

**CHRISTOPHER**

But the bones of Oedipus? It's, it's— [such a long shot]

**MARGARET**

Just a myth.

**CHRISTOPHER**

No! Everybody thought Troy was a myth until Schliemann dug it up. I worship at the altar of imagination like that—the chutzpa! But Troy was a city—a big chunk of real estate—and it still took Schliemann years to find it. We're not talking Taj Mahal here, we're talking grave. Which would be tough enough, but you pick one hidden on purpose, a cult object so sacred a single person in each generation knew the secret of its whereabouts. What're we—you going to do, bulldoze Colonus? Sift it inch by inch? And we—you're bound to find graves. How are we—you going to tell which one, if any, belongs to Oedipus? And even if we—you could— *(MARGARET grabs him, kisses him. Simultaneously, ANDY, played by the same actor who plays Lukas, enters.)*

**ANDY**

Oops.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Christ. I'm outta here. *(Starts to exit. MARGARET laughs.)*

**ANDY**

*(Sees CHRISTOPHER; smitten.)* Oh, man.

**MARGARET**

*(To CHRISTOPHER.)* You can't wait.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Untrue!

**ANDY**

Oh, man.

**MARGARET**

Go away, Andy.

**ANDY**

*(To CHRISTOPHER.)* Um. Greetings!

**MARGARET**

This is my nephew, Andy. Andy, Dr. Mavros.

**ANDY**

“Doctor”!? Oh man oh man.

**MARGARET**

Andy just flunked out of—where was it this time?

**ANDY**

Doctor.

**MARGARET**

I’ve lost count. Andy, dismissed. I believe you still have my manuscript, Dr. Mavros.

*(CHRISTOPHER holds it out.)* Open it. *(He does. She points out a passage.)* Here.

Translate.

**CHRISTOPHER**

“Koilou pelas krateros—”*(Translating.)* “Near the hollow that commemorates the pact between Theseus and Peirithous—”

**ANDY**

You can read that?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yeah.

**ANDY**

*(To MARGARET.)* He can read that!

**MARGARET**

Andy.

*He looks over CHRISTOPHER's shoulder.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

“Midway between the hollow, the rock of Thoricus, the hollow pear tree, and the marble tomb, he sat down. He—” Hmm.

**ANDY**

Who?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Landmarks.

**MARGARET**

Four of them.

**ANDY**

Who sat down?

**MARGARET**

*(Opens a map.)* Here's the site.

**CHRISTOPHER**

But, jeez, look at this. Tomb, tomb, tomb, tomb—there must be a dozen of them. Which one is *the* marble tomb? Not to mention the other landmarks. A hollow pear tree!?

**ANDY**

*(Echoing CHRISTOPHER's tone.)* Yeah!

**MARGARET**

Nobody said it would be easy, Dr. Mavros. That's what makes it an adventure.

**ANDY**

Yeah. Cool.

**CHRISTOPHER**

But if there are tombs all over, there must be ten times as many graves. You're bound to find bones. How are you going to know if you've found the bones of Oedipus?

**ANDY**

“The bones you have crushed, O Lord, rejoice.”

**MARGARET**

Child.

**ANDY**

Weird. What does that mean? I heard that somewhere. “The bones you have crushed, O Lord, rejoice.”

**MARGARET**

I think I hear your mother calling.

**ANDY**

Oh. Mom? (*Wanders off.*)

**MARGARET**

How will you know? His name is written all over them: Oedipus. *Oidei pous*.<sup>4</sup> Club foot.

**CHRISTOPHER**

A name’s a name, not a medical diagnosis. It’s all just— . . .

**MARGARET**

Legend? That’s what it all comes down to, doesn’t it? You either look at all these things, like Schliemann did, as clues and you find Troy, or you look at them as the stuff of legend and you find . . . [nothing] (*Shrugs. Slight pause.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

An awful mighty mega-fucking long shot, Mrs. Durant.

**MARGARET**

It takes chutzpa, Dr. Mavros. Do you really worship at the altar of that kind of imagination, or just pay it lip service?

**CHRISTOPHER**

So why me? My field is Mesoamerica. All right, all right, all right, I know why. Now I’m going to tell you why you’re wrong. First, the tomb I found was in a temple. That

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<sup>4</sup>Οιδει, to swell, πους, foot.

narrowed it down considerably. Second, the text I used was part of the temple murals. There were pictures, there were diagrams, there was everything but a triple-A map—all contemporaneous. Granted, it was a brilliant piece of deduction— (*MARGARET laughs.*) Well, it was. But I had a hell of a lot more to go on than a play written a thousand years after the putative fact. Third, I don't want the job. I've got a career path, I've got work to finish back in Palenque. I'm just not interested, thank you very much. (*Holds out manuscript.*) Now would you take this back so I can go?

**MARGARET**

Don't fight fate, Dr. Mavros. Remember what happened to Oedipus.

**MARGARET**

Unfortunately, try as I might, I couldn't get the investors to agree to appoint you project director.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Oh, jeez! I just don't seem to be getting through to you. Greece is a snore. Meso—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Project director?

**MARGARET**

"Brilliant" as you are, you are just a post doc. As far as I'm concerned, you're the one making the decisions—but then, I'm only organizing the funding. So, on paper the project director will be Jacob Rosen.

**CHRISTOPHER**

You're joking.

**MARGARET**

Joking?

**CHRISTOPHER**

He's been retired for years. I mean, the man is older than dirt. He was there when they were test marketing the Big Bang.

**MARGARET**

You know him, then.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Know him!? I loathe him. When I die, I want to be cremated and have my ashes scattered in his face! He came out of retirement once before for the sole and malicious purpose of flunking me! Me! The bastard actually flunked me! What desperate fantasy makes you think anything could persuade me to work with that, that—

**MARGARET**

No fantasy, Dr. Mavros, simple fact. If anyone can find the bones of Oedipus, it's you. I know these things. And *I* don't hand out genius grants to just anyone. (*Exits. Lights change.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*To audience.*) I'm such a whore for that kind of talk. So, adios, Palenque—geia sou,<sup>5</sup> Colonus. Stupidest fucking— . . . Things have gone from bad to worse. Rosen dies, Margaret somehow manages to get *herself* installed as project director. Me? I get appointed chief eunuch. (*Crosses back to bed.*) Enough whining. I gotta get some sleep. Big battle with Margaret in the morning. I gotta figure out some way to get back in control. (*Gets into bed.*)

*LUKAS enters with flintlock. Takes up his position on grave. Christopher tosses. Lights out.*

**ROSEN'S VOICE**

Christopher. Christopher! Christopher?!

*Work room, the next day. Lights up on MARGARET, PIETY, and CHRISTOPHER. Site map on table.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*To MARGARET.*) I'm *not* being argumentative, I'm just trying to point out we're not finished with this pit yet. It's not time to move here or here or anywhere else. (*Phone rings.*) The plan was and always has been—

**MARGARET**

The plan has changed. We agreed on this back in Chicago.

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<sup>5</sup>Γεια σου, hello

**CHRISTOPHER**

We didn't agree. I didn't agree. (*Phone rings.*)

**MARGARET**

The investors agreed. You made your case, I made mine. They decided my proposal made more sense.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yes, but they were wrong. They've never been here. You've been here for 24 hours. I'm the one who's been here since day one. (*Phone rings.*) I'm the one who's sifted every teaspoonful of that dirt.

**PIETY**

Telephone.

**MARGARET**

Everyone respects that. But mature judgment doesn't—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Oh, Christ! (*Phone rings.*) Gimme a break. Mature judgment!

**PIETY**

Telephone!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Whatever happened to I was going to be the one making the decisions? Whatever happened to I was the only one in the known universe who could find the bones of Oedipus? (*Phone rings.*)

**MARGARET**

You've had two years.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Two years! What did you expect?

**PIETY**

Tele— (*Picks up phone.*) Hello?

**MARGARET**

**PIETY**

Daring! Passion! Balls! Not bloodless  
academics. You don't have to dig halfway  
to China to see there's nothing there.      Tha tis po.<sup>6</sup>  
Take a risk! Break the rules! Find the  
bones!

**CHRISTOPHER**

**PIETY**

This isn't a treasure hunt!      Efharisto. Geia chara.<sup>7</sup>

**MARGARET**

No, but it's a commercial venture. Investors expect results.

**CHRISTOPHER**

It's still archaeology! It's a discipline with a methodology.

**PIETY**

Margaret, the—

**MARGARET**

An expensive one which, you seem to have forgotten, I'm helping to finance. The  
resources aren't inexhaustible, and I, for one, have no intention of footing the bill for  
your ivory-tower self-indulgence.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Self-indulgence?

**PIETY**

Marg—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Lady, if you think two years on your hands and knees, grubbing around in the dirt under  
conditions a migrant worker wouldn't put up with is self-indulgence, you should try it  
sometime.

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<sup>6</sup>Θα της πω. I'll tell her.

<sup>7</sup>Ευχαριστώ. Γεια χαρά. Thank you. Good bye.



**PIETY**

Oh, Christ!

**MARGARET**

Time's another commodity that's not in inexhaustible supply around here. Neither is my patience. You're wasting one and trying the other.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What I'm trying is to stop you from treating this project like some schoolgirl game—hopscotching around—

**MARGARET**

**PIETY**

Discussion over, Dr. Mavros. The subject     *(Warning.)* Chris.  
is closed.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(To PIETY.)* You stay out of this. *(To MARGARET.)* Not till I've had my say.

**MARGARET**

You've had it.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm not finished.

**MARGARET**

You are as far as I'm concerned.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I am not.

**MARGARET**

**PIETY**

You are, too.

Christo—

**CHRISTOPHER**

I am not.

**MARGARET**

**PIETY**

You are—

Marg—

—oh, this is ridiculous.

Knock it off, you two!

**PIETY (continued)**

I feel like the playground monitor. *(To MARGARET.)* That was Antiquities. Skalkeas will meet you there in half an hour.

**MARGARET**

Lord. *(To CHRISTOPHER.)* We're through arguing. If Skalkeas catches us bickering like this, they'll pack us off in 24 hours. Get up to the site and get to work. *(Exits, reenters.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Unaware she has returned.)* God, what an asshole.

**MARGARET**

I just wanted to remind you to be careful. Just in case whoever shot Rosen decides to come back. *(Exits. Pause.)*

**PIETY**

She ain't all that bad really.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I meant *me*. Can you believe that performance? "It is!" "It isn't!" "Are too!" "Am not!"

**PIETY**

What the hell's the matter with you, boy? You walked in snarling like a cur dog.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm sorry. I'm jet-lagged. I'm cranky. Besides, she started it.

**PIETY**

No, she didn't. You did.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I did not. She— *(Laughs.)* You're right. I *did*. Christ. Goddamn Rosen.

**PIETY**

Rosen?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Even from beyond the grave he can't resist making my life miserable. I had a dream about him last night. Couldn't get back to sleep. Hence my mood, hence my behavior.

**PIETY**

Und would you like to tell me about dis dream? Hmm?

**CHRISTOPHER**

What were they thinking when they made Margaret D.D. anyway? A Ph.D. in armchair archaeology from UCLA, which the moment she got, she dropped like a hot rock to go back to the life of a socialite in Chicago. No field experience. Never published.

**PIETY**

Doubt if she gave them much choice. Besides, admit it, she knows her stuff. And they want results.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Schmoozing at cocktail parties doesn't qualify as intellectual discourse. She's a dilettante.

**PIETY**

I've seen stuff a damn sight worse than her cocktail party chat get published.

**CHRISTOPHER**

The point is, we had a deal: I ran the show. So how come I'm suddenly sitting in the back of the bus?

**PIETY**

Last I noticed, they weren't making post-docs D.D.

**CHRISTOPHER**

No? I'd say Margaret is the oldest post-doc in the history of the cosmos.

**PIETY**

Politics are politics. No point in having a wall-eyed fit. And you know damn well she's right about focusing on one of the other pits.

**CHRISTOPHER**

She is not. I know she is!

**PIETY**

Then what in the Sam Hill you going on about, boy?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Just pisses me off. “Take a risk. Break the rules. Find the bones.” I hate that. All that . . . testosterone shit. It’s so . . . unseemly.

**PIETY**

In a woman.

**CHRISTOPHER**

No. Yes. Anytime. I just hate it.

**PIETY**

But we ain’t breaking the rules.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yet. But when push comes to shove—and you know it will—who’s going to stand up for the discipline when they want to bring in the backhoe? Margaret? Don’t hold your breath. I mean, the woman is queer for loot, plain and simple.

**PIETY**

Whereas, you on the other hand ain’t queer for nothing.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Me?! You really haven’t been paying attention, have you?

**PIETY**

Well, one of us hasn’t.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Meaning?

**PIETY**

*(Pause.)* Let’s get to work.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. You obviously think I am.

**PIETY**

What?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Queer for something. I mean, other than the obvious. (*PIETY glares.*) What?

**PIETY**

(*Starts to exit. Returns.*) Number one. I'm just gonna say two words. Klieg lights.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What—"Klieg lights"—what's that supposed to mean?

**PIETY**

You got your genius grant, didn't you?

**CHRISTOPHER**

I got the Margaret Durant Memorial Blow Job is what I got.

**PIETY**

Jesus. Ain't nobody dropping hundred-grand manuscripts in my lap.

**CHRISTOPHER**

It's not even close.

**PIETY**

Why not? The Klieg lights. The microphones shoved in your face. That's what you're queer for. Fame. Applause. The fucking envy. So don't give me this cow doo about standing up for the discipline.

**CHRISTOPHER**

That's—. Get out.

**PIETY**

Yeah?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yeah.

**PIETY**

Yeah, right. My Granddaddy used to say, "When a man gets too full of hisself, ain't no room left inside for Jesus."

**CHRISTOPHER**

You are just a foot washin' Babtist at heart, ain't you?

**PIETY**

Like shit. But you're so damn sure you're the one who's gonna lead us into the promised land, you just might want to think about that. Number two: Why is it that you go around announcing you're queer at the least provocation—I mean, somebody can remark that the weather's been a tad peculiar and you take it as a cue to announce you're queer—and yet in all the years I have known you, I ain't never once seen you near a fella. Why is that?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Where did this come from?

**PIETY**

Is there something wrong with you?

**CHRISTOPHER**

There's nothing wrong with me. I've just been—busy.

**PIETY**

Busy, shit! Boy, you been obsessed. But no matter how obsessed a body is, he still needs a good poke now and again.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What is with you?

**PIETY**

You're a good looking fella. I can't believe you ain't never had some nice boy come up to you and ask you to cuddle.

**CHRISTOPHER**

“Cuddle”?

**PIETY**

Okay, “fuck” then.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Would you shut up?

**PIETY**

Is that something to be so afraid of?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Who said I was afraid?

**PIETY**

Well, then, who or what are you waiting for?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Who said I was waiting for anyone? I just—I haven't been interested. I have as much right as anybody else to choose who I sleep with. So why does that mean I'm waiting for somebody?

**PIETY**

I hope whoever he is, he comes along soon. Might improve your disposition.

**CHRISTOPHER**

There's nothing wrong with— (*PIETY exits.*) Come back here! There's nothing—! And I AM NOT WAITING FOR ANY—! Fuck. (*Grabs bag, starts to exit. Stainless-steel Zippo lighter falls out. He picks it up. Looks at it. Flips it open. Lights it. Looks at the flame. Closes it.*) Prying cow. (*Puts it back in bag. To audience.*) So much for my efforts to get back in control. (*Takes diary out of bag.*) "Take a risk. Break the rules. Find the bones." . . . Fuck the promise. He was dying. What was I supposed to say? (*Cuts string tied around diary. Lights up on LUKAS, keeping watch at the grave. CHRISTOPHER opens diary. LUKAS is suddenly on guard. Phone rings.*) Hello?

**ROSEN'S VOICE**

(*Static.*) Christopher?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Hello? I can barely hear you.

**ROSEN'S VOICE**

The terrace.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What?

**ROSEN'S VOICE**

The terrace. Look for the light. Christopher?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Who is this?

**ROSEN'S VOICE**

What sort of a question—? It's me, Rosen. Shmendrick!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Who is this?

**ROSEN'S VOICE**

Did you hear what I said? The terrace, the terrace, the terr—

*CHRISTOPHER slams phone down, exits.*

**LUKAS**

You lie in wait in the darkness. But I do not fear you. Come.

*Lights change. Work room. Night. CHRISTOPHER alone, on phone.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Look, Ma, this is costing a fort— . . . I know you're upset. I told you not to go to the damn meeting. Those people are— . . . Well, of course that's what he's going to say. You think they're going to hold a meeting to announce the government's telling the truth? . . . Ma, it doesn't matter that he was there. (*Lights up on Christopher's FATHER—same actor who plays Lukas and Andy—a GI with an M16. Jungle foliage.*) I didn't have to be. I've heard it all before. It's the same old— . . . Ma, it's been twenty-two years. The war's over. Dad's— (*FATHER lights cigarette with Zippo lighter.*) Would you listen to me? Would you just shut up for a minute and listen to me? Dad's dead. Period. He died twenty-two years ago on this very day in some jungle on the other side of the world fighting in some stupid war everybody'd just rather forget. Bummer. But that's life. . . . It's not hope anymore, Ma. Get a grip. He's not coming back. Stop waiting for him. He's dead—understand? God, I can't talk to you when you're like this. (*Hangs up. Lights out on FATHER. Beat. To audience. Still annoyed*) So, the problem: Where are the bones buried? (*Moves his bag. Zippo lighter falls out. Beat. He picks it up.*) Stupid, really. I



don't even smoke. *(Returns lighter to bag.)* Clues: It's "near the hollow that commemorates the pact of Theseus and Peirithous"—here— *(Points it out on the map.)*—in between that, "the rock of Thoricus"—who knows?—"the marble tomb"—take your pick—and my personal favorite, the hollow pear tree. Yeah, right. Three thousand years later, forget *that*. Nonetheless, we've managed to come up with two possible locations: the mound, here— *(Points it out.)*—and the grove, here. *(Points it out. Phone rings. CHRISTOPHER picks it up.)* Yeah?

**ROSEN'S VOICE**

*(Static.)* Christopher? . . . Christopher? . . . The terrace. The light. Look for the—  
*(CHRISTOPHER slams phone down.)*

**ANDY**

*(Enters.)* Then he told me this really cool story. It was about—I thought this was so cool. It was a holyday, and all the wise men of the town had gathered together in the cave in which the bones of Rabbi . . . um, of Rabbi Somebody or other—

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Without thinking.)* Shimon bar Yohai. *(Reacts: has no idea how he knows that.)*

**ANDY**

—Yeah! Cool!—in which the bones of Rabbi Simpson bar What-you-said were buried. And a young man who was visiting joined them. It was a custom amongst them that each in turn would read a passage from the mystical book known as the Zzzzz, the Zzzzzzz—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Zohar.

**ANDY**

—zzzzzohar—yeah—the mystical book known as the Zohar, which the rabbi had written. But when the book was passed to the young man, he was ashamed, for—

**PIETY**

*(Enters.)* Well?

**ANDY**

He was ashamed, for he could not read it. *(Exits.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

What's he doing here?

**PIETY**

Who?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Andy.

**PIETY**

Andy who?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Margaret's nephew Andy.

**PIETY**

She has a nephew?

**CHRISTOPHER**

The guy who just left.

**PIETY**

When?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Just now.

**PIETY**

I didn't notice.

**CHRISTOPHER**

You didn't—?

**PIETY**

*(Waits.)* Well?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Well, what?

**PIETY**

Well, what's so important I had to come back in the middle of the night?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Hardly middle. It's only ten-thirty. More like early archaic. C'm'ere. I need your help.  
(Referring to site map.) Take a look at this. . . . C'm'ere. . . . What?

**PIETY**

Didn't we just spent the entire day looking at that site? Weren't we here in this very room—not forty-five minutes ago—for four solid hours arguing about it? And during all that time, as I recollect, you had your mouth puckered smaller than a chicken's asshole. Skalkeas thinks you're a deaf mute. And now when it's well past the time when any decent, God-fearing Christian is snug in his or her bed, you got me back over here to *talk*? I'm going, and I'm gonna be real cranky tomorrow because I ain't had my eight hours, and it's gonna be all your fault, and I hope I make you suffer.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Whose side are you on, anyway?

**PIETY**

Look, unless life as we know it somehow hangs in the balance, could we postpone this chin wag till tomorrow?

**CHRISTOPHER**

No, dammit—

**PIETY**

All right! Look, if you want to know the God's truth I don't like Margaret any better than you do. I probably wouldn't object to a minor palace coup if it meant we could get back to doing something productive. I'd rather be back home flipping burgers this summer than wasting my time on this exercise in futility—God knows, I rather be flipping burgers than listening to y'all bicker. But I got a dissertation to write. What else you gonna—?

**CHRISTOPHER**

I've got a plan. (*Pause.*) It's unethical as hell.

**PIETY**

(*Considers.*) Will it work?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Dicey. C'm'ere. (*Referring to site map.*) Two possibilities: the grove, the mound.

**PIETY**

And the terrace. There are three of them.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Forget the terrace. Now, we figure out which pit is the one where the bones are buried, then we convince Margaret they're buried at the other pit. She wants to dig a new pit, we'll give her one—and she can dig her way to Tien Ah Min Square without finding a thing. And I'll be happy to help her. (*Pause. PIETY starts to exit.*) Where are you going?

**PIETY**

You rowing with all your oars in the water, boy? You seriously think if I knew where old Oeddy Bob was buried, I wouldn't go out there in the dead of night with a book of matches and dental pick if I had to to dig him up?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Listen: If the dig doesn't turn up something this year, it's dead as a dodo—

**PIETY**

Well, that's just fine and dandy. And just what am I supposed to write about? How I spent my summer vacation?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Let me finish, would you? The dig comes to an ignominious end. Margaret goes back where she belongs—to her symphony committees and fund raisers. We, however, know where the bones are buried. It's our little secret.

**PIETY**

Oh. Well. I like that even better. I can call it "Nyeah Nyeah Nyeah Nyeah Nyeah," colon, "I Know Where the Bones Are Buried, but I'm not Telling."

**CHRISTOPHER**

Fuck your dissertation and pay attention.

**PIETY**

Fuck my disser—?!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Shut up and listen, dammit! We wait six, nine months. Then we announce that based on our reexamination of the results of the dig, we've stumbled on some significant new evidence, on the strength of which we apply for a grant. In eighteen months, we're back. A year later—tops—we've made the most significant discovery since Carter made Tut a household curse.

**PIETY**

May I point out what appears to me to be one teeny little flaw in your plan, Mr. Fuck My Dissertation? What makes you think you can figure out something all by your lonesome everybody else put together can't?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Because it's what I'm good at. I've done it before, I can do it again. And, to quote Margaret, they don't hand out genius grants to just anybody.

**PIETY**

And as I recollect, they handed it out to little Davey Stuart, not you.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Fuck you!

**PIETY**

Yeah, fuck me, fuck my dissertation, fuck everything that doesn't pave the path of your ambition. You know, boy, sometimes you get a mite too toxic for even my tough hide. Fuck my dissertation. *(Starts to exit.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm sorry. I didn't mean it that way.

**PIETY**

What way did you mean it?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Okay, I meant it that way! Look, I'm sorry. *Okay?* Jeez, now you know why I never cuddle. You think I want to inflict this on somebody I like? That came out wrong. Look, would you just come back, sit down, and hear me out?

**PIETY**

*(Doesn't come back.)* I'll hear you out.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I have Rosen's diary. *(Takes it out and holds it up. Phone rings.)*

**PIETY**

And? *(Beat. Phone rings.)* Phone. *(Beat. Phone rings.)* Telephone. *(Beat. Phone rings.)*

Oh, Christ Almighty! *(Crosses to phone.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

LEAVE IT! *(She picks it up. CHRISTOPHER immediately disconnects. Beat.)* The way you find something everybody else can't is to know something everybody else doesn't.

Right? So, how do you unearth what nobody else knows? You keep digging. Not in the ground, but in the data.

**PIETY**

Pretty elementary, boy. What's your point?

**CHRISTOPHER**

What's the one thing you know about research from the day you start?

**PIETY**

You never ever finish.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Precisely. There's always one more clue waiting to be uncovered.

**PIETY**

So, okay. And?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Rosen'd been at this since before we were born. He had the time to dig up stuff we won't get to for years.

**PIETY**

Like what?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Who knows? That's the point. (*Holds up diary.*) But I'm betting it's the key to the puzzle.

**PIETY**

You know, God's truth is you and Margaret and this whole action-adventure flick y'all fancy yourself starring in are commencing to irk me no end. I know this is hopelessly unromantic of me, but I'm pretty much of the school of "What you find is what you're looking for." G'night. (*Starts to exit.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

Bullshit. Every writer wants to be Shakespeare, every scientist wants to be Einstein. Everybody wants to be immortal. You want Oedipus as bad as I do—you wouldn't be here if you didn't.

**PIETY**

You can't sabotage the dig!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Oh, yeah? Who made you Jiminy Cricket all of a sudden? Fuck your dissertation. That's penny-ante poker.

**PIETY**

Not to me it ain't.

**CHRISTOPHER**

You need bones, we'll find bones. The site's littered with them. (*The diary.*) But somewhere in here is the key to immortality.

**PIETY**

And what if I just blow the whistle?

**CHRISTOPHER**

You blow the whistle, and you end up doing all the work and Margaret ends up getting all the glory. Fuck your dissertation. It's a done deal. I mean, you think your good ole girl act fools anybody? You're fucking awesome. You can write a dissertation with one lobe tied behind your back. But it's not going to get you any higher than the bottom rung.

Stick with Margaret, you settle for anonymous grunt. Come with me, you end up co-discoverer. That's what's at stake. So, which'll it be?

*The phone rings. Pause. Lights out abruptly. Lights up. The workroom.  
The next day. MARGARET, CHRISTOPHER, and PIETY.*

**MARGARET**

*(On phone.)* Don't have a hippo—40K. . . . You're having a hippo, Jack. I'm giving you a special deal, beloved. I asked Sam and Slater and the rest for 60. . . . Jack! A piddling forty thousand! You spend more than that on that moronic club of yours— . . . I told him that. Strike while the public is hyped about the discovery, and we'll be able to pull in enough to pay back the investors and fund research for years. And when they see what happens in the U.S., there's Japan, Canada, Europe, Australia. . . . So he wants to make sure the funding is there. Not promises, not pledges, cash in the till. . . . God, Jack, you won't even feel it— . . . Don't be abusive, and don't call me babe, buster— . . . What's that supposed to mean—? . . . Are you doubting my competence? Because if you are, I'd prefer that you just come out and say so. *(He says so.)* Good-bye, Jack. *(Slams phone down. To CHRISTOPHER.)* Pick a pit, any pit. It doesn't matter. Just start digging.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Pick a pit? Margaret, I mean, what do you think, this stuff comes to you in a dream?

**MARGARET**

The logic is simple. There are three candidates—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Two. The terrace isn't worth considering.

**MARGARET**

So much the better. Two pits. That gives us a fifty-fifty chance of getting it right on the first try. Pick a pit and start digging. We'll turn up something, and then we'll know whether we guessed right.

**CHRISTOPHER**

That's not the way things are done.



**PIETY**

He's right, Margaret.

**MARGARET**

Don't lecture me! (*Dials phone furiously. To CHRISTOPHER and PIETY.*) I'm fully conversant with accepted methodology. It's getting us nowhere. What matters are res— [results] (*Into phone.*) Now you listen to— . . . Yes, I'm aware of what time it is in Chicago. (*To CHRISTOPHER and PIETY.*) Go. Dig. (*Into phone.*) I don't care if it is after midnight. . . . No, sir. Not in this century. Forty thousand. . . . No, we can't talk about this in the morning. . . . Forty thousand. Not 25, not 35, 40. . . . Not *if*, Jack, *when*. And *when* is going to be this summer. . . . Cough it up, fatso. . . . I beg your pardon? I thought I just heard you say no. . . . I know how to spell, Jack. (*Slams phone down. To CHRISTOPHER and PIETY.*) Go. Dig.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Look, Margaret, I'm trying to be cooperative. You want to find the bones, I want to find the bones. But this just isn't the way to go about it.

**MARGARET**

Of course it isn't. That's the point. That's how you forge a new paradigm. This isn't about archaeology, it's about money. Now, get out. Go dig.

**CHRISTOPHER**

We need more research to—

**MARGARET**

More research! What is there left to research?

**PIETY**

There's always the chance we've overlooked something.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Give me a week—

**MARGARET**

We don't have a week.

**CHRISTOPHER**

All right, give me till Friday.

**MARGARET**

I'll give you one day.

**CHRISTOPHER**

One—!?

**MARGARET**

One day. (*Dials furiously. To CHRISTOPHER.*) So get out your library card and get busy. (*To PIETY.*) You, marshal the troops, get up to the site, and— (*Into phone.*) Listen—oh! (*Presses button on phone.*) Pick up the phone, Jack. I'm not talking to the bloody machine. . . . Jack, pick up that goddamn phone if you value your marriage and your life. (*To CHRISTOPHER and PIETY.*) Dig! (*They exit.*) Oh, poppycock, Jack, I just called three seconds ago. Look, if you don't want to find yourself facing the dire consequences of the prenup you signed, I suggest you just crack open that checkbook and start scribbling. . . . Oh, is that right? Well, you can just call my lawyer in the morning and tell him I want a divorce. . . . You think so? Well, you'd better think again. D-I-V-O-R-C-E, buddy, and 40 thousand is a pittance compared to what that's going to cost you. (*Slams down phone.*) God! Next time, pick something easy. (*Exits.*)

*Lights change. The workroom. That night. CHRISTOPHER, asleep on diary.  
ANDY stands over him.*

**ANDY**

But when the book was passed to the young man, he was ashamed, for he could not read it. Whereupon the others left, and the young man wept bitterly until at last he fell asleep upon the grave. And as he slept, the spirit of Rabbi Simpson—

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*In his sleep.*) Shimon.

**ANDY**

—bar Yooohoo—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yohai.

**ANDY**

—I meant—the spirit of the rabbi came to him and kissed him on the mouth. (*Beat. Exits.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Awakes with a start. Troubled. Goes back to diary. A moment.*) Charcoal. Charcoal. . . . Bingo! (*Light effect. He notices. PIETY enters.*) So, make up your mind?

**PIETY**

The difference between you and me is that you think you're on some sort of crusade that makes this the right thing to do. I know it's wrong, I just figure your totally unethical approach has a marginally better chance of succeeding than Margaret's totally irresponsible one.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I take it that's a yes.

**PIETY**

Close enough.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Welcome, Comrade Piety. The password for the day is "charcoal."

**PIETY**

Charcoal?

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Hands her diary.*) Rosen found some obscure report on core samples done at the site in the early 50s. The analysis showed—

**PIETY**

This is peculiar. Why'd he staple the last few pages shut?

**CHRISTOPHER**

He didn't. I did.

**PIETY**

What for?

**CHRISTOPHER**

You read the last chapter of a mystery first?

**PIETY**

What's that got to do with anything?

**CHRISTOPHER**

I like to figure things out for myself. The evidence—*that* I'm interested in. His conclusions I couldn't care less about.

**PIETY**

What makes you so sure that he came to any?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Because he— [told me.] . . . Come on. Give it back.

**PIETY**

And how do you know the clue you're so desperate for ain't right here? In fact, stands to reason it would be. You don't keep looking for something once you found it.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Gimme the book. *(She takes out penknife and starts to pry out staples.)* Hey, what're you doing?

**PIETY**

Matter of fact—I usually do take a peek at the last chapter.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Come on! Stop it! *(Tries to get book from her.)*

**PIETY**

Now, now. Just get these nasty staples out. Won't hurt a bit.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Stop it, damn it! *(They struggle. CHRISTOPHER gets stabbed in hand.)* Ow! Shit!

**PIETY**

God, I'm sorry.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Give me the damn book. *(She does.)*

**PIETY**

Sorry.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Shit.

**PIETY**

I think I've got a Kleenex.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Never mind. *(Sucks on wound; takes out handkerchief.)*

**PIETY**

Don't suck on it. You want to get it infected? Go wash it at least.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Tries to tie hanky around hand.)* It's okay.

**PIETY**

I didn't realize it was such a big deal.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Just pisses me off. If I wanted to staple the whole goddamn book shut, I have every right to. It's my book.

**PIETY**

I said I was sorry.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Gives up trying to tie hanky.)* Do this. Anyway, back in the 50s, when they had the soil samples analyzed, they found charcoal.

**PIETY**

You mean old Oeddy Bob and his kin were having themselves a barbecue?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Shut up. This is cool. *(Goes to map.)* Two possibilities. The grove, the mound.

**PIETY**

What about the terrace? You always— [ignore]

**CHRISTOPHER**

Dead end. Forget it. The soil samples showed evidence of a deposit of charcoal right about here. (*Points to a spot on map.*)

**PIETY**

What's this? (*Points to a different spot.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

What?

**PIETY**

This. Right here. On the terrace.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I don't see anything.

**PIETY**

You blind? Look!

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Looks.*) What!? There's nothing— [there] (*A blinding flash.*) Ow! Jeez!

**PIETY**

Don't look like nothing to me.

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Momentarily blinded.*) Damn! What was—?

**PIETY**

Looks like a blinding light to me. (*Examines map.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

What are you—? (*Pause. Eyes her.*) It's nothing.

**PIETY**

Sure looks like something.

CHRISTOPHER

It's nothing.

PIETY

*(Engrossed.)* What is that? Like a blinding—

CHRISTOPHER

Charcoal here, grove here, mound here.

PIETY

—light here.

CHRISTOPHER

WOULD YOU PAY ATTENTION? All right. So we've got the hollow, probably this spot here, which is adjacent to both grove and mound—

PIETY

And terrace. *(Consults manuscript.)*

CHRISTOPHER

The rock of Thoricus—say, here. The stone tomb—one of these. *And—*

PIETY

*(Sings.)* “A partridge in a—”. That's weird.

CHRISTOPHER

What?

PIETY

What's the Greek for pear tree?

CHRISTOPHER

*Aherthos.*<sup>8</sup>

PIETY

It doesn't say “hollow pear tree” here, it says “hollow *Acheloüs*.”

CHRISTOPHER

It does not.

---

<sup>8</sup>αχερδος

**PIETY**

Does so. Look.

**CHRISTOPHER**

It does—*(She shows it to him.)*—not. *(Perplexed: it does.)*

**PIETY**

What's Acheloüs mean anyway? *(Gets lexicon.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

It means nothing.

**PIETY**

Name of a river, I think. Yup.

**CHRISTOPHER**

It means nothing!

**PIETY**

"Any of several rivers. By extension, any river or stream."

**CHRISTOPHER**

"The hollow Acheloüs" means nothing! *(Slams manuscript shut. Shuttle radar image flutters to floor.)*

**PIETY**

*(Picks it up.)* What's this?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Radar image of the site. From the shuttle.

**PIETY**

We checked these out already.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Not these. They've been reprocessed. New enhancement algorithm somebody was testing. Something Rosen ferreted out. Same raw data, but way more info and way less noise.



**PIETY**

*(Points to something on image.)* What's this? This is the terrace here, right?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yeah.

**PIETY**

What's this squiggly line running right past it.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Consults page of text on back of image.)* A stream bed. Possibly.

**PIETY**

Below the surface?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yeah. The stream dries up, the stream bed gets buried. Happens sometimes. But it's right at the limits of the resolution. Could be just a—

**PIETY**

Hollow Acheloüs!

**CHRISTOPHER**

—squiggly line.

**PIETY**

Sweet Jesus, boy, we've been racking our brains trying to find the spot between a hollow, a rock, a tomb, and a hollow pear tree when all along we should've been trying to find a spot between a hollow, a rock, a tomb, and a dried-up stream bed. And—shazam!—ain't but one: the terrace!

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Pause.)* No.

**PIETY**

What do you mean, "No"?

**CHRISTOPHER**

It's not the terrace.

**PIETY**

*(Referring to radar image and manuscript.)* Science and art agree.

**CHRISTOPHER**

No, no, no! . . . NO! NO! NO!

**PIETY**

Yes, yes—

**CHRISTOPHER**

NO! There's not a single shred of concrete—

**PIETY**

*(Points to manuscript.)* Hollow Acheloüs. *(Points to radar image.)* Dried-up stream bed.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Hollow pear tree. Squiggly line.

**PIETY**

Read the Greek.

**CHRISTOPHER**

That's not the text.

**PIETY**

*(Radar image.)* Proof, boy!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Artifact—! *(Phone. PIETY reaches for it.)* Don't—

**PIETY**

'Lo? . . . *(To CHRISTOPHER.)* For you. *(Matter-of-factly.)* It's Rosen.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Very funny.

**PIETY**

He wants to talk to you.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Take a message.

**PIETY**

*(Into phone.)* I'll tell him. *(Hangs up. Rosen's accent.)* "The terrace. The light. Look for the light." *(Exits.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Wait! Come back— [here]! Rosen's dead! AND I WON'T BE—! Coerced. I WON'T BE COERCED, GOD DAMN IT! Reality has rules. *(Light effect. He notices.)*

**PIETY**

*(Reenters.)* The difference between you and me is that you think you're on some sort of crusade that—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Rosen is dead. Period.

**PIETY**

I'm aware of that.

**CHRISTOPHER**

It's not the terrace! And there's no bloody light! Okay?

**PIETY**

Did I ever say there was?

**CHRISTOPHER**

You— *(Points to phone.)* Yes! Don't say you—!

**PIETY**

*(Picks up radar image.)* What's this?

**CHRISTOPHER**

It's— *(Beat. Takes it from her. His mind races. Reads from manuscript.)* "Midway between the hollow, the rock of Thoricus, the hollow Acheloüs, and—"

**PIETY**

"Hollow Acheloüs"? What's a—? Let me see that.

*CHRISTOPHER closes manuscript, picks up diary and radar image, turns to go. Stops, takes handkerchief off hand, examines palm. The cut is gone. Holds it up to PIETY.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

What do you see?

**PIETY**

Your hand. A long and prosperous life. What am I supposed to see?

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Not to her.)* Fine. That's the way you want to play. *(Exits.)*

**PIETY**

Where are you—? What sort of— [bullshit]!? Damnation!

*Lights change. LUKAS at his post. Effects. Unsettling. He looks around. Nothing.*

**LUKAS**

Why will the night not end?

*Crossfade: TV on; spot on ROSEN; CHRISTOPHER in bed.*

**ROSEN**

Christopher. *(CHRISTOPHER tosses.)* Christo— . . . Oy! CHRISTOPHER! *(CHRISTOPHER sits up.)* The terrace. The light. Look for—are you listening this time, boychik?

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Lunges for TV; it and light on ROSEN go off. Dresses. Mutters.)* Fine. The terrace. The light. We'll just go to the terrace. We'll just look for that light. We'll just put an end to this bloody damn nonsense once and for all. *(Crosses to terrace. To audience.)* This is it. The terrace you've heard so much about. You see a light? You see a flame, a flicker, a romantic glow? *(Light from grave; rumbling. Pause. Effects repeat, bigger. A whine.)* Oh, man. *(Turns to go.)*

**ROSEN**

*(Enters.)* Surprise! *(Flashes flash in CHRISTOPHER's face.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Ow! Damn it.

**ROSEN**

Wasn't easy—oy, don't ask—but Rosen's back!

**CHRISTOPHER**

No. Sorry. Not happening. *(Starts toward bedroom.)*

**ROSEN**

Not so fast, boychik. You made a promise.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I did not.

**ROSEN**

No? I distinctly remember right before I died—an event in one's life one doesn't forget one, two, three—I said, "You promise?", you said, "Yes." I misunderstood maybe.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm leaving now. *(Starts to exit.)*

**ROSEN**

*(Stops him.)* Over my dead body. *(CHRISTOPHER exits.)* Oh, that's right. This is my dead body. *(Laughs.)* Being dead has its advantages, boychik. Watch this. *(Strikes pose as if he's about to fly. Nothing happens.)* So, I'll walk. *(Sits.)* I'll rest. *(After CHRISTOPHER.)* A promise is a promise. Pisher! *(To himself.)* So it wasn't exactly kosher, the promise. So I nudged a little maybe. I was dying, already! *(To heaven.)* What do you want from my life!? *(LUKAS appears, aims flintlock at ROSEN.)* Oy! Genug already! *(Flashes flash at him. LUKAS doesn't react.)* Humph. *(They freeze. Lights shift.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Begins to undress.)* Damn Rosen and his fucking promise. *(Phone rings. Rings. Rings. Rings. Silence. Gets into bed. Phone rings. Rings. Rings. Rings. Rings. Snatches up receiver. Angrily)* What? . . . Oh, hi, Ma. . . . No, I was awake. . . . No, nothing's wrong. What did you do, call me in the middle of the night from 5000 miles away to wake me up to find out if I was asleep? . . . I'm sorry. It's two in the morning, So why are you calling? . . . Oh, Christ, Ma. Don't follow this guy to Washington. . . . Because nothing important's going to happen that you can't find out watching CNN. . . . Create a presence! A bunch of hysterical women descending on some poor senator's office isn't a presence, it's a mob scene. . . . Ma, you're not giving this guy any money, are you? . . . No, not fifty dollars, not fifty cents. Stop the check. . . . Why can't I get through to you?

Just because you dreamed Dad was alive doesn't mean he's alive. He's not trying to communicate with you. . . . Ma, a dream is just a dream. They're nature's way of cleaning out the dust bunnies in your mind. . . . No, you don't know what you know, that's the problem. Dad's dead! Would you just—fuck! would you just get that through your head? *(Hangs up. To audience.)* Just don't start in with me. Rosen's dead. Period. He hasn't come back. Period. It's just— . . . You're so smart, you figure it out. *(Pulls covers up. Lights change.)*

**LUKAS**

Fyge. Tora amesos.<sup>9</sup>

**ROSEN**

So what do you make of this, boychik—this mishegoss?

**LUKAS**

You may not rest here, old man.

**ROSEN**

You don't recognize me maybe? *(Opens coat, reveals blood-stained shirt.)*

**LUKAS**

*(Terrified. Stands his ground.)* Go! The devil sends you. I will not flee.

**ROSEN**

A news flash from the Great Beyond, boychik: your time, it's up.

**LUKAS**

I have many years before I die. I have a son. When he is grown and I am old—

**ROSEN**

Boychik! Your son had a son, who had a son, who had a son, who grew old and died.

**LUKAS**

*(Suspecting the truth.)* That is not so.

**ROSEN**

And the night, it will not end. This also is not so?

---

<sup>9</sup>Φυγε. Τώρα αμεσως. Go away. Now.

**LUKAS**

*(Bravado.)* The terrors of the night do not frighten me. I will not flee. Send the fearful tiger, I will not flee. I will keep the promise I have—

**OLD MAN**

Fetch your brother. You are not worthy.

**LUKAS**

Do not, do not speak with his voice.

**OLD MAN**

Fetch your brother!

**LUKAS**

I am chosen!

**OLD MAN**

You have failed.

**LUKAS**

No!

**OLD MAN**

You are dead.

**LUKAS**

My heart beats.

**OLD MAN**

Another has come.

**LUKAS**

My heart beats! None other may hold the secret while that is so. None other. And I will stop the heart of any who dares. This you know. Demon.

**ROSEN**

This I know.

**LUKAS**

Bring him then, demon. This other. This I dare you.

**ROSEN**

Boychik—

**LUKAS**

This I dare you, if you test me with your lies. Go now. *(Raises flintlock.)*

**OLD MAN**

You have your wish, boy. And its jaws hold you fast.

**LUKAS**

Go! Go!! *(ROSEN exits.)* Let the light come.

*Lights change. The same night. Dream effects. Spot on ANDY. Lights up on CHRISTOPHER, asleep.*

**ANDY**

And as the young man slept, the spirit of Rabbi— *(CHRISTOPHER tosses. ANDY concentrates. ROSEN enters, stands next to bed.)* Rabbi Shimon . . . bar . . . Yohai came to him and kissed him on the mouth. *(ROSEN leans over CHRISTOPHER to kiss him.)* The young man awoke to— *(Phone rings.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Unh? *(Picks up phone. Doesn't notice ROSEN.)* Hello? Hello? *(Hangs up. Sits catatonic.)*

**ANDY**

The young man awoke to find that the wise men of the town had returned and were disputing amongst themselves a passage from the Zzzzzohar, which none of them could comprehend. And the young man rose up *(CHRISTOPHER slides down under covers)* and revealed to them what they could not see—for his soul had been joined with the soul of the rabbi, *(ROSEN exits)* and his eyes had been opened to its inner meaning. *(CHRISTOPHER pulls covers over head.)* And they were all amazed.

*Spot out on ANDY. Dream effects; jungle sounds. CHRISTOPHER tosses. Lights up on Christopher's FATHER.*

**FATHER**

“Tyger! Tyger! burning bright

In the forests of the night— . . .” *(Crosses to CHRISTOPHER.)*



*CHRISTOPHER becomes part of dream; he is four again. FATHER recites the poem to him as if it were a bedtime story. They act it out—it's a game they play.*

**FATHER**

“Tyger! Tyger! burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

“In what distant deeps or skies  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

“When the stars threw down their spears,  
And water'd heaven with their tears,  
Did he smile his work to see?” (*Tucks CHRISTOPHER in.*)

“Did he who made the Lamb make thee?” (*Kisses Christopher on forehead. Crosses back to his post.*)

“Tyger! Tyger! burning bright  
In the forests of the night— . . .”  
(*Takes out cigarette, lights Zippo lighter. Gunshot; he falls. CHRISTOPHER tosses.*) Tiger. .  
. . Hey, Tiger. (*Dies. Lights out on FATHER.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

Where did that come from? (*Takes out Zippo. Flips it open. Lights it. Stares at flame. Starts to cry.*) I hate this. I hate. This. (*Puts lighter away. ROSEN enters, crosses to CHRISTOPHER.*) Oh, Christ. (*Pulls covers over head. ROSEN prods him.*) Go away. (*ROSEN prods him again.*) Go away!

**ROSEN**

OOOOOoooooOOOOOoooooOOOOOoooooOOOOO! (*CHRISTOPHER sits up. Blandly.*)  
Boo.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What do you want?

**ROSEN**

What do I want, he's asking! Oy! . . . I call on the telephone, I do television broadcasts, I make special guest appearances in his dreams, I come back from the dead, and what do I want, he's asking!

**CHRISTOPHER**

What do you want?

**ROSEN**

That you should choose what's right!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Fine. I'll keep the secret. Good night. *(Attempts to sleep.)*

**ROSEN**

Forgive me if I doubt your sincerity. *(Pause. ROSEN moves. CHRISTOPHER opens his eyes, thinking he's left. ROSEN flashes flash.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Ow! Stop doing that!

**ROSEN**

It's my function.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I don't care. It hurts. *(Just as he recovers—)*

**ROSEN**

*(Flash.)* Oops.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Ow!

**ROSEN**

*(Flash.)* Sorry.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Jesus!

**ROSEN**

*(Flash.)* Thumb slipped.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Grabs flash.)* Give me that. *(Flashes it in his own face.)* Now go away. *(ROSEN sits. CHRISTOPHER attempts to sleep. ROSEN leans over to kiss him.)* Out!

**ROSEN**

No.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Get—! *(Pulls clothes on.)* Fine. You say the bones are buried at the terrace. Swell. Great! Let's just go find out.

**ROSEN**

Wait! *(CHRISTOPHER starts off toward terrace.)* Stop! Stop! Would you stop already? Oy! *(ROSEN follows. CHRISTOPHER gets prybar.)* Boychik, stop! Come away from there. Listen when I'm talk—! What is with that thing? Put it down! Down! And come away from there!

**CHRISTOPHER**

You say the bones are buried here. I'm going to find out.

**ROSEN**

Oy, Gottenyu! They're there. Listen, I'm standing here. I'm telling you.

**CHRISTOPHER**

You're dead!

**ROSEN**

Enough already! I'm dead! This is a reason not to believe a person?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Frankly, yes. *(Goes to work with prybar.)*

**ROSEN**

Remember the four sages!

**CHRISTOPHER**

The who?

**ROSEN**

The four sages! Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Ben Abuyah, and, and, and—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Rabbi Akiba.

**ROSEN**

Rabbi Ak— (*A take. CHRISTOPHER is equally mystified.*) They went to Paradise. Couldn't stay away. Wonderful idea! What could be better? Except Ben Abuyah, he lost his faith, Ben Zoma, he lost his mind, and Ben Azzai, he came back dead. Nu!

**CHRISTOPHER**

And?

**ROSEN**

Rabbi Akiba, he came back okay. But—the odds are terrible. Listen, I'm telling you. This place, boychik, is to die from. I'm dead. I should know.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'll take my chances. (*Big effort with prybar.*)

**ROSEN**

NO!

*Big, abrupt sound effect from grave: pain, protest.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

**ROSEN**

Holy shit!

Oy vey iz mir.

**ROSEN**

So now you'll listen, maybe.

*Sound effect: warning, threat. CHRISTOPHER backs away.*

**ROSEN**

Ai-ai-ai. . . . So, what do you say, amigo? Let's vamoose out of here.

**CHRISTOPHER**

No.

**ROSEN**

Oy!

*CHRISTOPHER pries. Sound effect: pain, resistance. Light from grave: slashes, stabs. CHRISTOPHER retreats, advances.*

**ROSEN**

May I make a suggestion?

**CHRISTOPHER**

No.

**ROSEN**

Nu, don't blame me when your face melts off.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Pulls. Slab moves slightly. Sound effect.)* It's coming! It's coming!

**ROSEN**

Boychik—zesser Gottenyu!—one last time I'm warning you—

*CHRISTOPHER shifts slab. Sound effect. Searing light knocks CHRISTOPHER to ground. Eerie silence. CHRISTOPHER extracts skull, kneels, elevates it.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Mine!

*Sound effect. Spot up on LUKAS, his flintlock raised.*

**LUKAS**

Vromoxene, klefti! Phyge prin sou rixo!<sup>10</sup>

*CHRISTOPHER is between ROSEN and LUKAS, with his back to LUKAS.*

---

<sup>10</sup>Βρωμοξενε, κλεφτη! Φυγε πριν σου ριξω! Foreign thief! Get away! I'll shoot!

**ROSEN**

Look out! Look out!

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Turns. Sees nothing.)* What?

**ROSEN**

There!

**CHRISTOPHER**

What?!

**ROSEN**

Get down!

**LUKAS**

Fyge prin sou rixo!<sup>11</sup>

**ROSEN**

*(Pulls CHRISTOPHER away from grave.)* Down! Down!

**CHRISTOPHER**

What?!

*LUKAS fires. CHRISTOPHER is unharmed; the bullet instead strikes ROSEN. ROSEN falls; CHRISTOPHER doesn't notice. Spot out on LUKAS. Offstage knocking.*

**PIETY**

*(Off.)* Chris? Christopher? You awake?

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Surprised by PIETY's voice.)* What the—?

**PIETY**

*(Enters.)* Somebody shot Rosen. Up at the site. *(Exits.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Notices ROSEN.)* Jesus! How could you get shot? You're already dead.

---

<sup>11</sup>Φυγε πριν σου ριζω! Get away! I'll shoot!

**ROSEN**

Only a goy would ask! I'm dying, boychik.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Hold on.

**ROSEN**

Listen to what I'm telling you. <sup>12</sup>Kol nidrei, ve-e-sarei, va-cha-ramei, v'ko-namei—  
(*Coughs.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

What? What are you saying?

**ROSEN**

—ha-ba aleinu l'to-va— (*Coughs.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

Fuck. Piety!

**ROSEN**

Ni-dra-na la nidrei—

**CHRISTOPHER**

I don't understand.

**ROSEN**

—ve-es-ar-a-na la esarei—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Piety! Fuck. Somebody!

**ROSEN**

—u'sh'vu-a-ta-na la sh'vu-ot.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What are you telling me?

**ROSEN**

Mazel tov, boychik! You're off the hook. Off the—(*Coughs.*)

---

<sup>12</sup>The *Kol Nidre*.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Don't. Fuck, don't— (*ROSEN dies.*) Somebody! (*FATHER enters.*) SOMEBODY!

**FATHER**

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright / In the . . . ruins of the night. (*Upbeat.*) Hey, Tiger.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Andy?

**FATHER**

(*Laughs.*) That game we used to play—remember?

**CHRISTOPHER**

What— . . . why are— . . . what are you— [doing here]?

**FATHER**

Sh. Listen. (*Silence.*) Your heart cries out, Tiger. For it would have you know its splendor. (*Touches CHRISTOPHER's heart.*) It burns so bright.

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Affect.*) Dad? (*FATHER starts to exit.*) Wait! Dad!?! (*But he's gone. CHRISTOPHER sobs. Recovers.*) Fuck. This is stupid. I'm just tired. Exhausted. Fuck. (*To audience.*) All that matters is I found the bones. They're mine. (*Starts to cross. Stops.*) Stupidest single fucking act of my entire fucking existence. Why did I come here in the first place?

**ROSEN**

Oy. (*Sits up.*) Boychik. To decide.

*Blackout.*



**Act II**

*Morning. Work room. Lights up on MARGARET, PIETY, and ANDY. They wait. MARGARET does a slow burn. ANDY slurps a cup of coffee. Lights up on bedroom. CHRISTOPHER and ROSEN. CHRISTOPHER dresses hurriedly, tries to ignore ROSEN.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Margaret is going to kill me.

*Searches for jeans. Finds them. Pulls them on. ANDY slurps. CHRISTOPHER looks for shirt. Can't find it. Realizes it's over the back of the chair where ROSEN sits. Dilemma. ANDY slurps. CHRISTOPHER, pointedly ignoring ROSEN, extracts shirt.*

Margaret is going to fucking kill me.

*Searches for socks, pointedly ignoring ROSEN. Finds them. ANDY slurps. Searches for shoes, pointedly ignoring ROSEN. Finds them. Shoelace breaks.*

*(Sotto voce.)* Shit!

*ANDY slurps. Ties ends of lace together, pointedly ignoring ROSEN. Grabs bag, crosses. Stops. Realizes he's forgotten his keys.*

*(Sotto voce.)* Fuck!

*Crosses back. ANDY slurps. Drops bag. Searches for keys, pointedly ignoring ROSEN. Finds keys. ANDY slurps. Crosses. Stops. Realizes he's forgotten bag.*

*(Sotto voce.)* Jesus!

*Crosses back to bedroom. Gets bag, pointedly ignoring ROSEN. Crosses. Stops. Crosses back. ANDY slurps.*

*(Confronts ROSEN.)* Decide what?

**MARGARET**

I'll rip his heart out of his chest with my bare teeth!

**ANDY**

*(Startled, spills coffee on himself.)* Yeow!

**PIETY**

*(To MARGARET.)* Get in line.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Decide what?

**ROSEN**

Oy. (*Crosses toward exit.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

Decide what?

**ROSEN**

(*Stops. Beat.*) Oy. (*Exits.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm not going to keep it a secret, if that's what you mean. (*Crosses.*)

*ANDY stands with his back to CHRISTOPHER, mopping coffee off himself.  
MARGARET expresses intense disapproval.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Oh, gimme a break, Margaret. I overslept. All right? (*ANDY turns.*) Uh . . . (*Reacts, not sure if he's Lukas, his father, or Andy, not sure if MARGARET and PIETY see him.*)

**PIETY**

(*Laughs, mistaking his confusion for sexual attraction.*) Well, there's hope yet.

**MARGARET**

This is my nephew, Andy. Say hello to Dr. Mavros, Andy.

**ANDY**

Greetings!

**CHRISTOPHER**

I think we've met.

**ANDY**

You had that, like, book.

**MARGARET**

He just graduated from the College of—where?

**ANDY**

Remember?

**MARGARET**

Whatever. Jack promised his mother that we'd find something for him to do this summer.

**ANDY**

Gotta be better than digging ditches.

**PIETY**

Don't bet on it.

**ANDY**

So here I am!

**MARGARET**

So here he is.

**ANDY**

*(To CHRISTOPHER.)* That was cool. The way you read it and everything. Remember?

**MARGARET**

Be quiet, love. *(To CHRISTOPHER.)* You sit. *(He does.)* I'll be brief. I want the diary, I want the shuttle photo, I want the manuscript. I want them now. I don't want an argument.

*CHRISTOPHER looks at PIETY accusingly.*

**ANDY**

A shuttle photo? Cool. I'd like to see that.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(To PIETY.)* I don't believe it.

**PIETY**

Sorry, buddy. I got a dissertation to write.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Rising. To MARGARET.)* I'll think about it.

**MARGARET**

Sit. (*A beat. He does.*) I want the diary, I want the shuttle photo, I want the manuscript. I want them now.

**ANDY**

Ee-yeow! I think she means it.

**MARGARET**

Shut up.

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Considers.*) Rosen gave the diary to me.

**ANDY**

(*Sotto voce to PIETY.*) Who's Rosen?

**MARGARET**

It's a project document.

**CHRISTOPHER**

No way.

**MARGARET**

It contains field notes. That makes it a project document. Read your contract.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What, if he writes a letter to his mother and speculates about where the bones are buried, that makes the letter a project document? I don't think so.

**MARGARET**

I don't want an argument. I want the diary, I want the shuttle photo, I want the manuscript.

**CHRISTOPHER**

You want the shuttle photo? Write NASA. They'll send a copy to anybody.

**ANDY**

Really? Cool.

**CHRISTOPHER**

As for the manuscript, it's mine. You gave it to me.

**MARGARET**

A manuscript worth over a hundred thousand dollars? Where did you get that idea? As I remember it, I lent it to you. So you could do research. For the project.

**CHRISTOPHER**

You said— . . . Fine. You want it back, sue me.

**MARGARET**

I don't have to sue you. It's mine. I can prove it. You took it. That's theft. I can have you arrested, Dr. Mavros.

**CHRISTOPHER**

So have me arrested. But unless you intend to tie me to this chair in the meantime, all that you're going to end up with is a pile of ashes.

**PIETY**

Don't y'all think we're getting just a soupçon melodramatic here? Margaret, you are not going to have Christopher arrested. Christopher, you are not going to burn anything. Not if I have to sit on both of you simultaneously until you come to your senses.

**ANDY**

Hey, know what?

**PIETY**

We are supposed to be a team here working toward a common goal. Has everybody forgotten that but me?

**ANDY**

Know what, Margaret?

**MARGARET**

One could cut the irony of that speech with a knife.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yeah.

**ANDY**

I have— [an idea.]

**PIETY**

Look, I've got a dissertation to write!

**ANDY**

Hey, know what?

**MARGARET**

WHAT, Andy?

**ANDY**

I have an idea. I could xerox the manuscript and the diary, then you'd both have copies. And I could write NASA and get another copy of the picture. That could be my job. Doing stuff like that.

**MARGARET**

Andy—! (*Changes her mind.*) That's a marvelous idea.

**ANDY**

Really? Cool!

**MARGARET**

What Dr. Mavros needs is an assistant, someone at his side night and day—

**MARGARET**

**CHRISTOPHER**

—someone to help him with his research, Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. I do not keep track of the details, someone to be at need— . . . I *do not need*— . . . I DO NOT his elbow no matter what he's doing. NEED—

**ANDY**

I can do that.

**CHRISTOPHER**

No you can't.

**MARGARET**

I'm sure you can. As a matter of fact, since we're so short on space, I think we'll put a cot for you in Dr. Mavros' room—

**CHRISTOPHER**

No way!

**MARGARET**

And the first thing on your to-do list is to make those copies. Because if the diary, the manuscript, and the shuttle photo aren't here on this table by this time tomorrow, I'm afraid Dr. Mavros is going to have to be terminated.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Terminated?!

**MARGARET**

It's a big responsibility. Do you think you can handle it, Andy?

**ANDY**

Yes, ma'am. The cavalry to the rescue!

**MARGARET**

Good. Get to work, soldier. *(Exits.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

She can't do that—fire me!

**PIETY**

Of course she can.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I've got a contract!

**PIETY**

Yeah? So sue her. When you going to read the handwriting on the wall, boy? *(Exits. A beat.)*

**ANDY**

Um.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What?

**ANDY**

I forgot. What are you guys digging for anyway?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Oh, jeez. (*ROSEN enters, crosses, is about to exit—*) I asked you a question!

*A beat.*

**ANDY**

(*To ROSEN.*) Hi. (*They look at him in astonishment.*) I'm Andy. (*Extends hand to ROSEN.*)

*Lights change. Afternoon. Christopher's room. MARGARET casually rifles the room.*

**MARGARET**

(*On phone; effects from grave indicating its reaction*) Sheldon, you're the dearest, sweetest man in the world, but you're not listening to what I'm saying. It's not a contribution, it's an investment. . . . Because we're going to make money on this dig, that's how. . . . I know that, angel, but one doesn't have to sell artifacts to make money. (*Grave awakens; perhaps music.*) We've got myth. Myth of operatic proportions. And we're going to tour the world with it. . . . You're absolutely right, Sheldon, Tut had gold and we don't. But you're assuming that that's what drew people. (*Sound effect.*) It wasn't. It was the face. The funeral mask. (*Grave reacts.*) The chance to look into those eyes and connect across the millennia. That's what sent the shiver up their spines. The moment of recognition. (*Grave reacts.*) That he was as we are now. We're going to have the best forensic artist in the country use the skull to reconstruct the face of Oedipus. Sheldon. Imagine the effect. (*Sound effect.*) The myth made flesh. And that's just the outer precinct. (*Sound effect.*) Inside, veiled from the casual observer, will lie the bones themselves. The mortal frame that once clothed with flesh walked this earth. As awesome— (*Grave reacts.*) —as the True Cross. We'll rake in a bundle, Sheldon. (*Grave reacts. MARGARET discovers locked drawer. Tugs it.*) How close are we? (*Looks around. Spots a dental pick. Gets it.*) We're close, Sheldon. (*Goes to work on the lock.*) Very, very close.



*Lights change. MARGARET remains. CHRISTOPHER and ANDY enter.  
Evening. (Margaret's time frame overlaps Christopher and Andy's; they  
don't see each other.)*

**ANDY**

. . . Then he told me this really cool story about—it was really cool, this story about Reb  
somebody of somewhere—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Reb Elimelech of Lizensk. I know, Andy. I was there.

**ANDY**

The rebbe was known throughout the land for his wisdom and holiness. He had so  
transcended this world that he was no longer aware that he was wise and holy. Instead he  
saw wisdom and holiness in everything around him.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Andy. I know. I heard the story. I was there.

**ANDY**

It's late. Maybe you should give me the stuff now so I can xerox it for tomorrow.  
*(MARGARET express frustration. Tosses dental pick down. Starts to exit.)* The diary and  
stuff. *(MARGARET stops. Considers. Gets dental pick. Exits.)* Do you think that really  
happens—that your soul joins with anyone you kiss?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Let's hope not. *(Beat. He looks at ANDY. ANDY looks at him. Beat.)*

**ANDY**

Maybe, um . . .

*ANDY crosses to CHRISTOPHER, who stands paralyzed. ANDY hesitates, then  
leans toward CHRISTOPHER to kiss him. At the last possible moment,  
CHRISTOPHER crosses away.*

**ANDY**

So he told me this really cool story. Reb Uh-wing-uh-wap was known throughout the  
land for his wisdom and—

**CHRISTOPHER**

I heard the story, Andy. Would you get the bloody cot so we can get to sleep? We have to be up at five.

**ANDY**

Oh. . . . Like, in the morning? (*CHRISTOPHER gives ANDY a look. ANDY exits.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Picks up book he's taken out of bag. Reads.*) Kol nidrei, ve-e-sarei, va-cha-ramei—. . . .  
“All vows, obligations, oaths . . . may they be deemed to be forgiven, absolved, annulled, or void—and made no effect. The vows shall not be considered vows, nor the obligations obligatory, nor the oaths oaths.” The *Kol Nidre*. Recited on Yom Kippur. In which pious Jews ask God to release them from any vows forced upon them. A not uncommon fate they suffered over the centuries at the hands of pious Christians. (*During following, CHRISTOPHER unlocks drawer Margaret was trying to force, takes out diary, manuscript, and shuttle photo, puts them in bag, puts bag in drawer. Locks it.*) So help me out here. First Rosen makes me promise to keep the secret, then lets me off the hook, only to rise from the dead again to tell me that I came here to decide. Decide what? Whether to keep the bones a secret? I have. Not to. Period. So how come I have this feeling there's another shoe yet to drop? . . . . Meanwhile, I *am* keeping the place where the bones are buried a secret. And as a result I'm going to be fired in the morning. (*Takes out airline ticket.*) And I'm about to do the dumbest, most self-destructive thing I've ever done in my life. (*Pause. Dials phone. ANDY enters carrying cot, some bedding. ROSEN follows.*) Oh, yeah—and I believe in ghosts. Well. This has been fun.

*During the following, ANDY sets up cot. Listens entranced.*

**ROSEN**

Reb Elimelech of Lizensk was known throughout the land for his wisdom and holiness.

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Exasperation. His irritation grows. Into phone; distracted.*) Yeah, I'd like to change—, uh, thelo na allaxo ti ptisi mou.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Θελω να αλλαξω τη πτηση μου. I'd like to change my flight plans.

**ROSEN**

He had so transcended this world that he was no longer aware that he was wise and holy.

**ANDY**

Instead he saw wisdom and holiness in everything around him.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Mavros.

**ROSEN**

And people used to run behind his carriage as it went through the streets.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Ti proti ptisi gia Sikago.<sup>14</sup>

**ROSEN**

One day the rebbe noticed and asked his coachman why. The coachman answered—

**ANDY**

“They’re following after wisdom and holiness.”

**CHRISTOPHER**

Tomorrow morn—, uh, aurio to proi.<sup>15</sup>

**ROSEN**

The rebbe was amazed at how wise the people were. And so he got out of the carriage and joined them.

**ANDY**

And the rebbe and the people all ran through the streets together after the empty carriage.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What? Yeah. Nai, efharisto.<sup>16</sup> (*Hangs up.*)

**ANDY**

So cool.

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<sup>14</sup>Τη πρώτη πτήση για Σικάγο. The first flight to Chicago.

<sup>15</sup>Αυριο το πρωί. Tomorrow morning.

<sup>16</sup>Ναι, ευχαριστώ. Yes. Thanks.

*ROSEN crosses toward exit.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(To ROSEN.)* Hey.

*CHRISTOPHER holds airline ticket, waves good-bye. ROSEN crosses back to ANDY. CHRISTOPHER begins to undress. ROSEN kisses his fingers and touches them lightly to ANDY's lips: knowledge transfer. ANDY's face lights up.*

**ANDY**

Yodea!

*ROSEN indicates CHRISTOPHER. ANDY gives ROSEN a thumbs-up sign, which ROSEN returns. CHRISTOPHER watches suspiciously. ROSEN exits. CHRISTOPHER climbs into bed.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Get the light, Andy.

**ANDY**

*(Pause, then crosses to CHRISTOPHER.)* Yodea is the angel of lost things. He has many servants, some of whom are angels, some of whom are men. His servants spend their time digging for that which has been lost, in the dark of the night, by the light of their souls.

*CHRISTOPHER reacts. ANDY returns to cot, undresses, climbs in. Crossfade. The workroom. PIETY and MARGARET examine the results of the day's dig.*

**MARGARET**

Nothing. Not a clue. *(Beat. PIETY continues to work.)* Nothing but garbage.

**PIETY**

That's what it's about sometimes, Margaret.

**MARGARET**

Well, I don't like it.

**PIETY**

Well, it ain't garbage.

**MARGARET**

But it's not what we're looking for.

**PIETY**

But it's what we found! That's what we do: we dig stuff up. Stuff that got broken or thrown away or forgotten about or lost. Coins, pots, tools, art, lives. We put the pieces back together. We listen to the story. We tell it again.

**MARGARET**

And who pays the bills?

**PIETY**

Margaret, I've heard your It's About Money speech so many times I can recite it in my sleep. It ain't about money. It's about knowledge.

**MARGARET**

It's about money! (*Beat.*) We're broke.

**PIETY**

Broke? How can—? Margaret, you gave Christopher a book worth the GNP of the entire country of Belise. How can we—?

**MARGARET**

I didn't say *I* was broke. I said *the dig* was broke. That was not the deal I made, to play the Cosmic Tit until I'm sucked dry. You have no idea how nauseating philanthropy is. Ladling gruel into the upraised bowl of the starving child, the struggling artist, the dedicated scientist. God, it makes me retch. Never again. New paradigm.

**PIETY**

Which would be what? Toss out the trowel, bring in the backhoe? (*MARGARET displays dental pick.*) What?

**MARGARET**

Can you pick a lock?

**PIETY**

Pick a—? No. I don't know. I never tried.

**MARGARET**

(*Extends pick to PIETY.*) I suggest you do. Because I can't.

**PIETY**

*(Doesn't take it.)* What lock? What for?

**MARGARET**

We need more capital, new investors. We need concrete evidence that we're headed in the right direction. So unless you have something more substantial to offer than stories about the romance of garbage— *(Opens PIETY'S hand, places pick in it.)* —I suggest you learn.

**PIETY**

What lock?

**MARGARET**

Your friend's room. The top drawer of the bureau. Bring me the diary, the photo, and the manuscript.

**PIETY**

Margaret. Shit. I mean, shit. . . . Talk to him. Explain the situation. He's not nuts. All right, he's nuts, but he's not *nuts*. *(MARGARET is unmoved.)* I already snitched on the guy! I'm not gonna break into his room and swipe his stuff! *(Tosses dental pick down.)* I'm just not gonna.

**MARGARET**

All right. In the morning, you can have everybody start clearing the site and packing up. There's no point in prolonging this agony. I've had enough for one project. I've sunk a bundle in this venture, but nothing that I couldn't afford to lose. Christopher can go back to Palenque. What you're going to do is an open question.

**PIETY**

Now let me tell you something, and I'm going to tell you straight. You can say what you want about what you're trying to teach us poor house niggers. But the fact is, this is just so much entertainment for you. What sort of gamble, pray tell, is a gamble you can afford to lose? My butt's on the line. This dig is do or die for me. If you want my cooperation, then I suggest you get your butt out of your comfy, well-feathered nest and get it right over here next to mine. If this dig needs money, do your job, woman—get it. If Christopher has what you need, do what you do best—buy it. Everybody has his price.

But let's get one thing clear between us. I ain't your nigger, I ain't his nigger, and I'm getting mighty fucking tired of y'all treating me like I am.

*PIETY exits. Lights up dim on bedroom area. Dead of night. Andy is asleep; CHRISTOPHER lies awake. Gets up, dresses. Crosses to grave site. ANDY rises, dresses, crosses to grave site, stands behind CHRISTOPHER. CHRISTOPHER gets pry bar, positions it to pry slab off.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(To audience.)* Who says you can't take it with you?

**ANDY**

Can I help?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Andy!

**ANDY**

Can I help?

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Considers.)* Sure. Grab a pry bar.

*ANDY goes to get pry bar. Sound and light effects. ANDY picks up a flintlock; becomes LUKAS. LUKAS, his back to CHRISTOPHER, is unaware of the latter's presence. He turns, catches sight of CHRISTOPHER, cries out in terror, raises his flintlock.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Andy! *(LUKAS fires wildly and misses.)* Shit. *(LUKAS fumbles with gun.)* Stop! Stop it!

**LUKAS**

Piso!<sup>17</sup>

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Grabs gun; they struggle.)* Give me that. Give it to me! I've had it with this weird shit!—Let go, Andy!—Dead people in my dreams, dead people on the phone, dead people in my face.—Let go! What the fuck has gotten into you?—Dead people getting

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<sup>17</sup>Πισω! Stay back!

shot, dying.—Give it to me, damn it!—Now you! Now this! FUCKING STOP IT, ANDY! (*Stops struggling. Intense.*) I have had it! This is scaring the shit out of me!

**LUKAS**

Vromoxene! (*Knocks CHRISTOPHER to the ground, raises the flintlock over his head.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

Andy! . . . ANDY!

*Sound effect: Army helicopter passing low overhead. Lights change. Jungle foliage. Vietnam-era music. LUKAS crosses to cot, removes shirt. Dog tags. He's Christopher's FATHER. Lounges on cot, opens a letter, takes out a snapshot. CHRISTOPHER crosses to bedroom. FATHER examines snapshot, smiles.*

**FATHER**

(*Not recognizing him.*) Got any kids?

**CHRISTOPHER**

No. I'm— . . . . No.

**FATHER**

Here's mine. (*Hands CHRISTOPHER snapshot.*) Fourth birthday party.

“Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright,

In the forests of the night . . .”

(*Helicopter passes overhead.*) In the jungles of the night. . . . Shit. (*CHRISTOPHER hands snapshot back.*) Cute, huh?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yeah.

**FATHER**

Beats the hell out of me how that happened. I mean, shit, all the acid I've dropped, all the dope I've blown, I figured if I ever had a kid, he'd have so much gene damage, he'd come out with two noses and a dorsal fin. But when I saw him for the first time at the hospital, he was so perfect, so fucking perfect—the nose, the hands, these absolutely fucking perfect little fingernails—scared the shit out of me. I mean, I'm literally sitting



there in the can, shitting my brains out, you know— (*Laughs, embarrassed.*) —you know . . . crying. And this dumb-shit poem from school kept going through my head.

“Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright,  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?”

Fearful symmetry. I mean, he was . . . perfect. And I had nothing to do with it. I—  
(*Abruptly.*) Got a light?

**CHRISTOPHER**

What?

**FATHER**

(*Takes out cigarette.*) A light?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Oh. No. . . . Uh, I mean, yeah. (*Gets lighter, hands it to FATHER, who lights cigarette.*)  
Andy?

**FATHER**

(“*Why are you calling me ‘Andy’?*”) What? (*Pockets lighter. CHRISTOPHER is about to protest. Doesn’t. Pause.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

Dad?

**FATHER**

(*Surprised. Delighted.*) Hey! Tiger!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Why are you here?

**FATHER**

(*Laughs.*) Shit, I don’t know. . . . LBJ says so. Too dumb to go college. Too scared to run away. Take your pick.

**CHRISTOPHER**

No, I meant— . . . I'm not four years old any more. Haven't you noticed? And this isn't Vietnam. What are you doing here?

**FATHER**

*(Confused for a moment; then:)* You're in the jungle for the first time. And it's night. And nothing in your life has prepared you for this. The dark. The confusion. The terror. It's like the worst trip on the worst acid you've ever done. Like you've gone crazy or you woke up in hell. And it's raining and it won't fucking stop and you can't fucking see a thing—it's so fucking black, man, it's so goddamn fucking black you keep thinking you've gone blind or you're already dead. And you know they're behind you, no matter where you turn, they're behind you. And you don't know if you're gonna piss or shit or—man, they're everywhere. And you know you're fucked. You're going home in a bag, man. In a bag. And you pray. Fuck, you pray. Fuck. You pray. But there ain't no Jesus, not tonight, the fucker. There's just the ache, man—just the ache in your heart that's been there since you left and the six feet of earth on your chest. . . . And this poem in your head, this goddamn poem that won't stop, this fucking— . . . And . . . and the game you used to play with your kid. . . . And the first time you saw him at the hospital. He was so perfect, so fucking— . . . Goddamn, it scared the shit out of me, man. And then you look up at the sky. And the rain's gone. And it's so . . . Jeez, man . . . beautiful. The stars. And the terror goes away—and the ache. And you know if you reach just high enough— . . . *(reaches as far as he can above his head and plucks something out of the air.)* And you think, I am where I am, which is everywhere. This now is eternity. I have been and will always be. And the poem fills your soul like the voice of a fucking seraph. "In what distant deeps or skies  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand, dare seize the fire?"  
The wings were mine, this was the hand. I was god once, man. I made a son. A perfect son. *(Long pause.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

You're dead, Dad. You died over twenty years ago.

**FATHER**

Dumb shit thing to do.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yeah.

**FATHER**

Getting killed.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yeah.

**FATHER**

Dunno what happened. I— . . . . Fucking stupid.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Ts'okay. I'm over it. . . . So, why now? Why here?

**FATHER**

I dunno. I guess— . . . I guess I wanted to tell you— (*Phone rings.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

What?

**FATHER**

Answer the phone.

**CHRISTOPHER**

It can wait. Tell me what? (*Phone rings.*)

**FATHER**

Better answer it. It's your mother.

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Pause.*) Hello. . . . Hi, Ma. . . . No, I wasn't going to yell at you. It's okay. I was up anyway. I was up.

**FATHER**

Time for me to go, Tiger.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(To FATHER.)* No, wait. *(Into phone.)* Hold on a second, Ma. *(To FATHER.)* What was it you wanted to tell me?

**FATHER**

Be a good boy while I'm gone, okay?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Wait, don't go. *(Into phone.)* Ma, can I call you back?

**FATHER**

Daddy's got to go, Tiger.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Into phone.)* What kind of hurry? *(To FATHER.)* Wait! *(Into phone.)* Catch a flight? Where?

**FATHER**

Daddy's got to go.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Not yet. I want to know what you want to tell me.

**FATHER**

Do what Mommy says, okay? *(Crawls into the cot and sleeps.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Wait! *(Into phone.)* Ma! *(To himself.)* Damn it! *(Into phone.)* Where? . . . That's just nuts. That's crazy. . . Ma, they won't let you go. It's like Cuba. You can't just fly off to Hanoi. And if even you could, they wouldn't let you in. You need a visa. You think they're going to give that crowd visas? . . . Ma— . . . Ma, listen to— . . . Listen to me. Are you listening? Don't go. Don't do it. It's a big mistake. Don't dig all that stuff up again, for chrissake. It— . . . it— . . . [hurts too much] *(Hangs up. A beat. Crosses to cot, kneels, takes ANDY's hand. ROSEN enters. A moment, then CHRISTOPHER notices ROSEN. Crosses away.)* Could we get this over with? Could we stop this stupid guessing game, and just tell me what it is I'm supposed to decide? *(ROSEN is silent.)* I don't know why you had to

drag my father into this, you son of a bitch. (*ROSEN is silent.*) Just tell me what it is you want from me because I am getting seriously stressed here! (*Alarm clock goes off.*)

**ROSEN**

(*Turns it off. To CHRISTOPHER.*) Time to wake up, boychik!

*ANDY rises, stretches. CHRISTOPHER watches him. Dog tags are gone.  
ANDY stumbles off. ROSEN hands Christopher's plane ticket to him.*

**ROSEN**

Hurry, or you'll miss your flight.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm not going anywhere.

**ROSEN**

That's what I said when I died. You never know, boychik.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I reject you. I reject every dream, every, every transformation, every— . . . your existence, every syllable you've spoken, every vow, emotion, every manipulation—all of it! I dismiss it. I repudiate it. I reject it.

**ROSEN**

Poof! I'm gone. . . . No . . . wait . . . yes! I'm still here! What could this mean?

*ANDY reenters, begins to dress.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm going to do what I came here to do.

**ROSEN**

Boychik— (*Alarm clock.*) Time to wake up. (*Exits. CHRISTOPHER turns off alarm clock.*)

**ANDY**

The young man awoke. The rabbi came to him and—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Gimme my lighter.

**ANDY**

Lighter? (*CHRISTOPHER searches cot. Nothing.*) The rabbi came to him and kissed him on the mouth. Then the young man awoke, for his soul had been joined with the soul of the rabbi. (*CHRISTOPHER glares.*) It's a story. (*CHRISTOPHER exits.*) Whew. Mr. Sluggo. I feel like I've been up all night. (*Crosses to workroom. PIETY is there alone.*) Say a person kisses another person. Could their souls like, you know, join? You think?

**PIETY**

No.

**ANDY**

Oh. (*Beat.*)

**PIETY**

Did you make the copies?

**ANDY**

Copies?

**PIETY**

The manuscript, the diary. The shuttle photo.

**ANDY**

Oh. No. (*PIETY expresses exasperation, annoyance.*) I remembered. Then I forgot.

**PIETY**

Yeah.

**ANDY**

Think Margaret'll be mad? (*Pause. Yawns.*)

**PIETY**

Where were you two last night?

**ANDY**

When?

**PIETY**

Late. I stopped by.

**ANDY**

We went straight back from here.

**PIETY**

No, late late.

**ANDY**

Nowhere. In bed.

**PIETY**

*(Hostile.)* I stopped by, Andy.

**ANDY**

I had the weirdest dreams.

**PIETY**

You should've been there. You should've made the copies. Shit.

**ANDY**

Everything that happens, happens to awaken us.

**PIETY**

What?

**ANDY**

*(He hasn't heard himself.)* What?

**PIETY**

What did you just say?

**ANDY**

*(Trying to remember.)* Um. Something. . . . I bet she'll be mad, huh?

*MARGARET and CHRISTOPHER enter from opposite sides. Glare.*

**ANDY**

Margaret, I, uh . . . Margaret?

**MARGARET**

Yes, Andy?

**ANDY**

I forgot to copy the stuff.

**MARGARET**

The stuff? . . . Oh. That's all right, love. I have something to tell all of you.

**PIETY**

You don't have to do it now, Margaret.

**MARGARET**

What?

**PIETY**

Close down the dig. . . . I picked the lock.

*Pause.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

What lock?

**MARGARET**

I wish you hadn't done that.

**PIETY**

You wish—! . . . Well, shit, woman, that's one hell of a different tune than you were singing last night.

**ANDY**

What lock?

**PIETY**

*(Produces the manuscript, the diary, and the shuttle photo. CHRISTOPHER reacts.)* Don't you give me that bullshit—either of you. Ever since we got here, y'all've been at each other like the proverbial scorpions in the proverbial bottle. With the result that this project is on the verge of collapse. Now that may be just dandy with y'all, but I am not interested in immolating myself on the pyre of your flaming egos. I got something to lose here that's just as important to me as your endless struggle for supreme divahood. *(To CHRISTOPHER.)* I stopped by last night to try one last time to get you to put your ego aside for twelve seconds—just twelve seconds—so you could see that you are an archeologist,



not a rock star, and if you want the world to throw itself at your feet, digging up the bones of ol' Oeddy Bob ain't quite going to do it if that's what you think.—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Shut up.

**PIETY**

—But *you* had to be gone. And *you* don't have the sense if you don't want people swiping your stuff to lock it up with a lock that a casual visitor can't pick with a paper clip in fifteen seconds.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I guess I trust my friends more than that.

**PIETY**

Somebody had to do something! Christ Almighty.

**ANDY**

I'm sorry. I forgot to copy the stuff.

**PIETY**

It's not your fault.

**ANDY**

If I'd've copied the stuff, you wouldn't've had to have stolen it.

**PIETY**

It's not your fault.

**ANDY**

You mad at me?

**PIETY**

No.

**ANDY**

Sure?

**PIETY**

Don't push it, boy.

**MARGARET**

Piety's right. This project is, to put it mildly, in deep shit. I don't like it anymore than you do, but we're going to have to learn to cooperate.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Said the spider to the fly. What does that mean?

**PIETY**

It means we might actually accomplish something.

**CHRISTOPHER**

For who?

**PIETY**

What is with you? For all of us. We're a team.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yeah, right. Fine. So, what'll it be: a round of self-flagellation or a group hug? Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa. And in the end, I still do all the work, I still figure out the riddle, I polish up the handles on the big front door, and I still end up the junior clerk, fucked over, no advancement, no recognition.

**MARGARET**

*(Overlapping "recognition.") I'm resigning. (Pause.)*

**CHRISTOPHER and PIETY**

What?

**MARGARET**

I'm resigning as project director. Here's the letter. *(Hands it to him.)* This dig needs a full-time fund-raiser, and I can't do it from here. I've appointed you acting project director and recommended that the board promote you officially.

**PIETY**

*(Snatches letter.)* You're appointing *who what?!*

**MARGARET**

*(To CHRISTOPHER.)* I've drafted another letter for your signature accepting the appointment.

**PIETY**

Would someone please just shoot me now?

**MARGARET**

I'll fax it along with my resignation. *(Puts it in front of him, hands him a pen.)*

**ROSEN**

*(Enters.)* Boychik.

**PIETY**

*(Slaps her hand across letter.)* Now let's just pause uno momento here and consider the implications of what's about to happen.

**MARGARET**

Piety.

**ROSEN**

Boychik.

**PIETY**

Christ Almighty, Margaret, this is a hell of a position you're putting me in.

**ROSEN**

So, boychik, mazel tov. Exactly what you wanted. It's happening.

**ANDY**

*(To himself.)* Oh, yeah. What was it I said? Everything that happens . . . um.

**MARGARET**

Piety.

**PIETY**

*(A challenge.)* Margaret.

**ROSEN**

*(To CHRISTOPHER.)* It's happening.

**ANDY**

Oh, yeah! Piety.

**MARGARET**

Piety.

**ANDY**

*(To PIETY.)* Everything that happens, happens to awaken us.

**PIETY**

What?

**ANDY**

What I said before. Everything that happens, happens to awaken us.

**ROSEN**

*(To CHRISTOPHER.)* Nu?

**ANDY**

What's that mean?

**MARGARET**

Piety. *(PIETY removes her hand from letter. To CHRISTOPHER.)* This is what you wanted, isn't it?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Why all of a sudden?

**PIETY**

Yeah.

**MARGARET**

Because I want the dig to succeed. It's not because I like you. I don't. It's not because I care about your future. I don't. It's because we're in deep trouble and because I think you can do the job. I'm sure that any progress you make between now and Monday will go a long way in convincing the investors that the trust I'm putting in you isn't misplaced.

**ROSEN**

It's happening, boychik. Mm, Mm, Mm. Beware. *(CHRISTOPHER puts pen to paper.)* Tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Begins to sign. Stops.)* Damn pen won't write. *(Tosses it. MARGARET takes one from PIETY's pocket.)*

**MARGARET**

Here.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Begins to sign. Stops.)* This one's no good either. *(Tosses it.)*

**ANDY**

*(Finds pencil. Hands it to CHRISTOPHER.)* Um.

*CHRISTOPHER begins to sign. Point of pencil breaks. He tosses it. Everyone searches. ROSEN hands a pen to CHRISTOPHER. A moment.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

I've got one.

**MARGARET, PIETY, ANDY**

Oh. *(Pause. He puts pen to paper.)*

**ROSEN**

Wake up, boychik. *(CHRISTOPHER signs.)*

**MARGARET**

Congratulations, Dr. Mavros. *(They shake.)*

**PIETY**

*(Extends her hand. A sense of mistrust persists between them.)* Chief. *(They shake.)*

**MARGARET**

Let's get the job done. *(Dials phone. PIETY busies herself with manuscript, diary, shuttle photo, and site map. CHRISTOPHER and ROSEN exchange a look.)*

**MARGARET**

Sarah, Margaret.  
Morning. How's the fax  
line today, up or down? . .  
. Why doesn't that  
surprise me? . . . I'm sure  
they do. But when do you  
think we can really  
expect them? . . . All  
right. Just keep me  
posted. I have some  
letters that need to go out  
today.

*(Continues.)*

**PIETY**

<sup>18</sup>One more time into the  
breach, dear friends.  
*(Unrolling site map.)* I  
suppose if my career as  
an archaeologist doesn't  
work out, I could always  
become a paper hanger. I  
seem to have this part  
down good enough.  
Slapping some paste on  
the back can't be all that

*(Continues.)*

*ROSEN (with ANDY's  
assistance) removes  
diary, manuscript, and  
shuttle photo one by one.  
PIETY notices the  
disappearance of each a  
moment too late. She  
searches for them in vain,  
growing more and more  
perplexed.*

*ROSEN crosses to exit.*

**MARGARET**

. . . That's a possibility.  
But if they don't come by  
three or four, maybe we

*(Continues.)*

**PIETY**

hard. And it's inside  
work. That'd be nice for a  
change. Who knows?

*(Continues.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

What are you doing?

*ROSEN grabs  
CHRISTOPHER, kisses him.  
CHRISTOPHER struggles.*

**MARGARET**

can impose once again on

*(Continues.)*

**PIETY**

Maybe I could meet some

*(Continues.)*

**ANDY**

Whoa!

---

<sup>18</sup>If Piety's business with Rosen and Andy is sufficiently funny, her speech may become a distraction. If so, feel free to cut it.

**MARGARET**

our friends next door.  
Would you check? . . .  
Thanks. And would you  
call Antiquities and see if  
they can squeeze me in  
for an appointment  
today?. . . Any time will  
be fine. . . . Not long.  
Twenty minutes should  
do it. Changes on our  
staff.

*(Continues.)*

**PIETY**

nice, *normal*, state-  
certified electrical  
contractor who's only  
ambition in life is to  
come home after work  
and flop down on the  
davenport and watch TV.  
Drink a couple of six-  
packs— Pearl for him,  
Bud for me. Nah, I'd get  
fat. What the hell. I am—  
[fat]

*(Continues.)*

*CHRISTOPHER finally frees  
himself. ROSEN crosses to  
the exit.*

**MARGARET**

. . . Thanks.

**PIETY**

. . . What the—!?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Rosen, what the— . . . !?

*Just as ROSEN reaches the exit, MARGARET turns.*

**MARGARET**

Where'd he go?

**ANDY**

Who?

**MARGARET**

Christopher.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Margaret.

**MARGARET**

Piety?

**PIETY**

*(Looks up.)* He was here a second ago. *(Crosses to door.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Piety.

**ANDY**

Margaret.

**MARGARET**

What?

**PIETY**

*(Calls.)* Christopher?

**ANDY**

He's right there.

**MARGARET**

Andy.

**ANDY**

He is!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Margaret.

**PIETY**

*(Calls.)* Christopher?

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm right here.

*ANDY and ROSEN exchange a look.*

**ROSEN**

**ANDY**

Oops.

Oops.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What? *(ANDY starts to laugh.)* Rosen.



**ANDY**

Wow!

**MARGARET**

What?

**PIETY**

*(Returning.)* Vanished.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Rosen.

**ANDY**

Cool!

**PIETY**

Along with the manuscript, the diary, and the shuttle photo.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What did you do?

**MARGARET**

Christ.

**PIETY**

**ANDY**

How'd he do that?

Did you see that?

**ROSEN**

I thought a little kiss—

**ANDY**

Margaret?

**ROSEN**

—like the rabbi.

**ANDY**

Did you like see that?

**MARGARET**

See what? (*ANDY gestures inarticulately. She stares at him uncomprehendingly. ANDY laughs.*)

**ROSEN**

Oops.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Margaret!

**MARGARET**

I fail to see what you find so amusing.

**ANDY**

(*Laughs.*) Yeah.

**CHRISTOPHER**

No, no. No, no, no, no, no.

**ROSEN**

Maybe . . . (*Exits.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

Wait! Rosen!

**MARGARET**

(*To PIETY.*) Well, find him!

**PIETY**

Come on, laughing boy. (*Drags ANDY to exit.*)

**MARGARET**

Andy.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Andy.

**ANDY**

(*Tries not to laugh.*) Yeah?

**MARGARET**

It's not funny.

**CHRISTOPHER**

It's not funny.

*ANDY laughs. PIETY drags him off. Beat.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Margar—

**MARGARET**

What more could possibly go wrong? (*Exits.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

I shudder to think. (*He thinks.*) Rosen!

*Exits. Lights change. Bedroom. ANDY and CHRISTOPHER.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

No!

**ANDY**

Come on. Please?

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm not going to kiss you. Stop asking.

**ANDY**

But that must be like so cool.

**CHRISTOPHER**

You think so.

**ANDY**

You could get into any movie you want. Or concert. I mean, you can do anything!

**CHRISTOPHER**

As long as I don't want anyone to notice.

**ANDY**

Yeah!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Andy— . . . ! Never mind. . . . I'm going to find him.

**ANDY**

We looked everywhere already.

**CHRISTOPHER**

We'll look again.

**ANDY**

You could call him. I don't mean like on the phone. I mean, you know— (*Calling.*) Dr. Rosen!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Andy—

**CHRISTOPHER**

**ANDY**

—would you stop it?

Oh, Dr. Rosen!

*ROSEN enters.*

**ANDY**

See?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Where have you been? You disappeared hours ago.

**ANDY**

That's the pot calling the kettle black.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Maybe you haven't noticed, but I appear to be invisible.

**ROSEN**

Oops! I thought a little kiss like the rabbi would maybe put some sense into your head. Instead—poof! Such a thing!

**ANDY**

Me next, okay?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Well, what are you going to do about it?

**ROSEN**

Do!? Boychik, when you've been dead as long as I have you learn to take life as it comes.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm invisible!

**ROSEN**

And I'm dead. Life has its little challenges.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm invisible!!

**ROSEN**

What do you want from me? If I knock a glass from the table, will your kvetching make the pieces come together again? It was an accident, for which I apologize.

**CHRISTOPHER**

KVETCHING!?!?

**ROSEN**

Yes! And you must remember this, boychik, a kiss is still a kiss, it takes two to tango, and it was you maybe who caused the accident.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What, I leapt from the curb in front of your speeding taxi?

**ROSEN**

You exaggerate.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm not a broken glass!

**ROSEN**

And I'm not a taxi cab, toot, toot.

**CHRISTOPHER**

This is absurd. I'm invisible, and I'm arguing with a dead man.

**ANDY**

What a cool summer job!

**CHRISTOPHER**

You buy into one stupid assumption like somebody's come back from the dead, all sorts of weird things start to happen, and before you know it, you think you're invisible. . . . Absurd. Brain glitch. Illusion. Period. *(To ANDY.)* Let's find Margaret.

**PIETY**

*(Enters.)* So there you are.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(To ROSEN.)* See? You can go now.

**PIETY**

Well? Where is he?

**CHRISTOPHER**

**ANDY**

Who?

Who?

**PIETY**

Elvis! Who do you think?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Damn!

**ANDY**

Um.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Damn! Damn! Damn! Damn! Damn!!

**PIETY**

You know where he is, don't you?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Damn! Damn! Damn! Damn! Damn! Damn! Damn! . . . Damn it!

**ANDY**

Yeah.

**PIETY**

Where?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Tell her.

**ANDY**

Um. He's in a mythic place.

**PIETY**

A what?

**CHRISTOPHER**

A what?

**ANDY**

A mythic place. There are like these thin places in the universe. Places where the visible and the invisible, um, meet. And those, and those we cannot see but still hold in our hearts can cross the border there and show themselves to us and dwell among us for a time. Such places are full of wonders, but so too are they fraught with peril. And so it came to pass that when the rabbi kissed the young man—

**PIETY**

When—?

**ANDY**

The rab—no, um, that's not—. When Dr. Rosen—

**PIETY**

Rosen?

**ANDY**

—yeah—kissed him, Christopher, he—yeah!—he slipped through. The subtle membrane. Christopher did. So he's like, you know—

**PIETY**

Invisible.

**ANDY**

Yeah.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I don't believe this.

**ANDY**

I'm not making this up. He's right here.

**PIETY**

Where?

**ANDY**

There! Next to— . . . Dr. Rosen.

**PIETY**

Rosen.

**ROSEN**

Hello, Miss Prescott.

**ANDY**

He says hi.

**PIETY**

Andy?

**ANDY**

Yeah?

**PIETY**

Do you know where Christopher is?

*ANDY looks at CHRISTOPHER.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Oh, for chrissake. *(Crosses to her.)* I'm right here. *(Takes her arm.)*

**PIETY**

*(Feels it as a twinge in her shoulder.)* Ow.

**ANDY**

I guess I can't tell you.

**PIETY**

Why?



**ANDY**

It's like, um . . .

**PIETY**

What?

**ANDY**

A secret. Or something.

**ROSEN**

A riddle, maybe.

**PIETY**

A riddle.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(To ROSEN.)* You stay out.

**ANDY**

You'll have to find him yourself.

**PIETY**

Like I have time for riddles. *(Turns to go.)* Oh, cute butt. *(Starts to exit. Stops.)* Did I just say "cute butt"?

**ANDY**

I think so. You think I have a cute butt?

**PIETY**

No. But he does. Christopher.

**ANDY**

*(Delighted.)* He does?

**CHRISTOPHER**

I do not.

**ANDY**

He said so?

**CHRISTOPHER**

No.

**PIETY**

But he thinks so.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I do not! How does she know?

**ANDY**

How do you know?

**PIETY**

How should I know? (*Exits.*)

**ANDY**

You like my butt?

**CHRISTOPHER**

No.

**ANDY**

You do! I can tell.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I do— [not].

**ANDY**

(*To ROSEN.*) He thinks I have a cute butt.

**ROSEN**

Well . . . mazel tov!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Do you mind? At the moment I happen to be invisible. Still.

**ANDY**

Not to me.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Swell.

**ANDY**

Listen!

**CHRISTOPHER**

What?

**ANDY**

*(Overlapping.) Sh! (Silence.)*

**ROSEN**

Your heart cries out, boychik.

**CHRISTOPHER**

My—? It does not.

**ANDY**

Piety heard it.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Piety heard my heart cry out that your butt was cute?

**ANDY**

I came to you. Remember?

**CHRISTOPHER**

When?

**ANDY**

You wanted me.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I did not.

**ANDY**

Your heart—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Does not— [cry out]

**ANDY**

*(Touches CHRISTOPHER's heart.)* It burns so bright.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Reacts. Recovers.)* It does not.

**ANDY**

You're not invisible. And *you* saw *me*. Remember?

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Lying.)* No.

**ANDY**

It didn't make sense—the story. Cause it's not about the spirit of the rabbi. That came to him. The young man. It's about—. *(Very close to CHRISTOPHER.)* Um. It's about the young man's spirit, his own spirit. Which he sought with all his might. Though he knew it not. Though he knew not where to find it nor how to seek it out. Though his heart cried out. Until in shame and sadness, he gave up hope. And wept bitterly at his own emptiness. And behold—. Um. This is like the story. And behold, the spirit of the young man came to him as he wept and kissed him on the mouth. And he awoke. Cause it was like the whole reason. *(A beat, then he leans forward to kiss CHRISTOPHER, who at the last moment pulls away.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

I didn't call you. You didn't come to me. And when my heart cries out, whatever it cries out for doesn't include you, I'm afraid. Get a grip.

**ANDY**

You don't know what it cries out for, if you ask me.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I didn't.

**ANDY**

Yeah, well . . . . Fuckhead. Like who cares if nobody can see you?

**CHRISTOPHER**

I do.

**ANDY**

God, I mean, like— . . . ! You— . . . ! Like Reb Uh-wing-uh-wap got out of the carriage and ran after emptiness!

**CHRISTOPHER**

What does that mean?

**ANDY**

It means— . . . I don't know!

**ROSEN**

Another riddle!

**ANDY**

But he did. And maybe you wouldn't be such a fuckhead!

**ROSEN**

Riddles. It's what you're good at, boychik—figuring things out.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I have a somewhat more pressing issue at the moment.

**ROSEN**

The riddle is: What brought you here, boychik?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Did we skip a reel?

**ROSEN**

Reb Elimelech's carriage. It took him where he wanted. Until he got out to follow where it was going. What brought *you* here?

**ANDY**

Yeah? (*Tick-tocks.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

I came here to decide, remember?

**ROSEN**

Hmm? (*Prods him with cane.*) Boychik? (*Prods him.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

Stop it. *(To ANDY.)* Shut up.

**ROSEN**

Boychik? *(Prods him.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Ooo. Um. A tough one. Could it be . . . I'm an archaeol—?

*ANDY buzzes (game show sound).*

**ROSEN**

Wrong answer, boychik.

**ANDY**

Ha ha.

**ROSEN**

You gave up everything. Palenque, the pyramid, the career path. Why? *(Silence. ANDY tick-tocks. ROSEN pokes him.)* Boychik?

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm not going to get sucked into this. *(Pause. ANDY continues.)* Because Margaret gave me a blow job, okay? Because I'm an asshole. Okay? *(ANDY buzzes.)*

**ROSEN**

Wrong again.

**ANDY**

Except the asshole part.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I'm warning you.

**ROSEN**

Oedipus, he solved the riddle also, boychik. It was what he also was good at. Ran the show. Big macher. And what happened to him? *(ANDY tick-tocks. Pause.)* With just a few seconds on the clock . . . *(Clock gets slower and slower.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Oh, all right! He killed his father, he married his mother, he poked out his eyes. (*ANDY dings enthusiastically.*)

**ROSEN**

And?

**CHRISTOPHER**

He came here to die. (*ANDY buzzes.*) He did. (*ANDY buzzes.*) Stop that. I'm serious.

**ROSEN**

Oy, oy, oy. Boychik! He poked out his eyes. Next day—one, two, three—he came here to die. Nu?

**CHRISTOPHER**

No. He . . . wandered! (*ANDY dings.*) So? (*ANDY buzzes.*)

**ROSEN**

He got out of the carriage, boychik. He got out and he followed wherever it took him. To wander in exile. Homeless. A beggar.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yeah? So? What's your point?

**ANDY**

Oh! (*His hand goes up.*)

**ROSEN**

Contestant number two.

**ANDY**

You're invisible! You've been like *exiled* to this other dimension. And you have no abode in that foreign place, so you're like *homeless*. And you're naked there, and have naught, no coin for bread or passage home, and so, o one of noble birth, with outstretched hand you beg. See!?

**CHRISTOPHER**

No.

**ANDY**

It's what happens! To everybody. I mean, one day, sooner or later, you and me and everybody else—we all just vanish. (*Demonstrates: "croaks."*) Life isn't ours. Nothing is ours for keeps. And we don't even like get to decide when to give it back. A kiss from the angel of death, and— (*Buzzes.*) —you're out of here! History. No point in struggling when you're locked in *that* embrace. Meanwhile, we're just the homeless guy on the street corner, living off the random stuff that gets dropped in our paper cup.

**CHRISTOPHER**

That's . . . so . . . fucking . . . Comp Lit.

**ROSEN**

If he can grasp this, why can't you?

**ANDY**

Hey!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Because he's from the planet Gork—

**ANDY**

Hey!

**CHRISTOPHER**

—and you're not even here! I'm the only one who's both fully rational—

**ANDY**

That is not nice!

**CHRISTOPHER**

—and actually present! And I don't have time for stupid riddles! (*ROSEN and ANDY buzz.*)

**ANDY**

Bud! You're invisible! Like, *there's* a puzzlement.

**ROSEN**

You're in the carriage, boychik. You give the orders where it should go. And you end up here talking to a dead man. Please explain. Why?



**ANDY**

Yeah. *(They tick-tock together.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Shut up. I'm not playing.

**ROSEN**

Then I win. *(ANDY dings.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Because life is fucked!

**ANDY**

Because your heart cries out!

**CHRISTOPHER**

I know what my heart cries out for! And it's not anonymity. It's not invisibility. My heart wants every eye to look upon me, every knee to bend. It wants lips to part and say, he is a god among us. If you want to know the truth. That's what my heart cries out for.

**ANDY**

That's not your heart. That's what you want—your, like, ego. Your heart— . . . . You won't even listen, how can you know what your heart wants?

**CHRISTOPHER**

But you can?

**ANDY**

It called to me!

**CHRISTOPHER**

The only thing that calls to you is in your pants.

**ANDY**

*(Pause.)* You are making me really mad.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Well, I'm deeply sorry.

**ANDY**

You can't talk that way about your heart.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Oh?

**ANDY**

Apologize. *(Pause.)* I said apologize.

**CHRISTOPHER**

To who?

**ANDY**

To your heart. Fuckhead.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Go away.

*ANDY pushes him. A challenge.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

You twerp.

**ANDY**

Come on. Apologize.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Andy.

*ANDY pushes him again.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

**ROSEN**

Stop it!

Boychik!

**ANDY**

I said—

**CHRISTOPHER**

No!

*ANDY tackles CHRISTOPHER. They grapple. ANDY is inept, more tenacious than effective. CHRISTOPHER is more annoyed than angry or threatened. The struggle is childish, not violent.*

ANDY	CHRISTOPHER	ROSEN
<i>(Ad lib.)</i> Fuckhead! . . .	<i>(Ad lib.)</i> Andy. . . Would	<i>(Ad lib.)</i> Oy! . . . Enough
Come on! . . . Say	you— . . . Ow! . . . Let go	already. . . Stop with the .
you're— [sorry] . . . No,	of— . . . Stop it! . . . [etc.]	. . . Boychik! Christopher!
not till— . . . You can't		. . . I'll call your mother .
talk that— . . . [etc.]		. . [etc.]

*The struggle progresses to the grave site. ANDY somehow manages to get CHRISTOPHER pinned. His hand finds a stone. He raises it over CHRISTOPHER's head.*

ANDY	CHRISTOPHER	ROSEN
Apologize!		
	Andy! ANDY!	Boychik!
	LUKAS	
Vromoxene!		

*CHRISTOPHER throws LUKAS off. LUKAS finds his flintlock.*

CHRISTOPHER
Who <i>are</i> you!?
LUKAS
Gia ela pio konda! <sup>19</sup>
ROSEN
Stay back!
LUKAS
Phyge!

---

<sup>19</sup>Για ελα πιο κοντα. Come no closer.

**CHRISTOPHER**

An illusion can't kill you.

**LUKAS**

Alt!<sup>20</sup>

**CHRISTOPHER**

Pos se lene?!<sup>21</sup>

**WOMAN'S VOICE**

*(Off. Ethereal.)* Lukas!

**CHRISTOPHER**

*("Aha!")* Lukas!

**LUKAS**

Gia ela pio konda!

**CHRISTOPHER**

I've come for the bones, Lukas.

**LUKAS**

*(Lying.)* I do not understand what you say.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I've come to take them. *(Gets a pry bar.)*

**LUKAS**

Vromoxene klefti! Fyge afti ti stigmi!<sup>22</sup>

*CHRISTOPHER gets ready to pry grave open.*

**LUKAS**

**ROSEN**

Phyge! Phyge!

Stop, boychik!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Stop me if you can.

---

<sup>20</sup>Αλτ! Halt!

<sup>21</sup>Πως σε λενε. What's your name.

<sup>22</sup>Βρωμοξενε, κλεφτη! Φυγετε αυτη τη στιγμη! Foreign thief! Get away!

**LUKAS**

*(Takes aim.)* Tha sau rixo!<sup>23</sup>

**CHRISTOPHER**

Shoot me then! Go ahead! Shoot—! *(LUKAS fires. Silence)* You see. Not a scratch.

**LUKAS**

You are he. I would not have thought it would be one such as you. A foreigner. A thief.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I am he who?

**LUKAS**

*(Hands CHRISTOPHER his gun.)* The one who is to come after. I have kept watch until you came. *(Sounds of distant gunfire.)* My hour is near. We must hurry. *(The ritual.)* What I have now to unfold to you is a thing that you shall keep in your secret heart alive until the end of time.

**CHRISTOPHER**

No. Wait. Stop. Andy—wake up.

*Wisp of Vietnam-era music.*

**FATHER**

I shall take you to the place where I must die, Tiger; and no one must know it.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(To ROSEN.)* Stop. Right now. I mean it.

**LUKAS**

Tell no man the region where it lies concealed from sight— *(Gunfire grows nearer. As FATHER.)* It's like the worst trip on the worst acid. And it's so fucking black, man, so goddamn— . . . *(Spooked: they're everywhere. Grabs gun, starts to reload.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(To ROSEN.)* No. Unh-uh.

---

<sup>23</sup>θα σου ριξω! I'll shoot!

**ROSEN**

*(Prompting.)* There is no one . . .

**LUKAS**

*(To CHRISTOPHER.)* There is no one else of all this people to whom I can reveal it. *(To ROSEN.)* I will never see my son again. He is four years old. *(As FATHER, takes snapshot from pocket, hands it to ROSEN.)* Cute, huh?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Rosen, stop him.

**ROSEN**

*(Prompting LUKAS.)* I give this holy . . .

**LUKAS**

*(To CHRISTOPHER.)* I give this holy mystery into your keeping. You are to keep it for ever—

**ROSEN**

*(To CHRISTOPHER.)* You alone, boychik.

**LUKAS**

*(Gunfire is very near.)* I must be ready. *(Struggles with flintlock.)*

**ROSEN**

*(Prompting.)* And when your life . . .

**LUKAS**

*(Distracted; concentrating on gun.)* And when your life is drawing to its end, disclose it to one alone, your chosen heir— *(Stops abruptly, looks into CHRISTOPHER's eyes. As FATHER.)* And you think, I am where I am, which is everywhere. This now is eternity. I have been and will always be. The wings were mine— *(Reaches high into air.)* —this was the hand. I made a son— *(Shots. Falls into CHRISTOPHER's arms.)* “Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright—” *(Places his hand for a moment over CHRISTOPHER's eyes. Looks at him, smiles.)* Hey, Tiger.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Dad?

**FATHER**

You came. I knew you would.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I— . . .

**FATHER**

I waited.

**CHRISTOPHER**

You said—

**FATHER**

Jeez, man. So beautiful. The stars.

**CHRISTOPHER**

You said you had something, something to tell me. Dad.

**FATHER**

*(Pause.)* You were god once, Tiger. Burning bright. *(Dies. A beat.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Sobbing.)* Fuck you, Rosen. Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you. *(Releases body.)* If you think I'm going to fall for this sentimental . . . bullshit . . . you're out of your fucking mind.

**ROSEN**

Boychik—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Save your breath. I came for the bones, I'm taking the bones. *(Gets pry bar, tries to pry open grave.)*

**ROSEN**

Boychik—

**CHRISTOPHER**

I've decided. That's what you said I came here for—to decide. I came for the bones, I'm taking them. *(ANDY mutters, tosses, curls up.)* So go away. Andy, get up. . . . Andy!

**ANDY**

Uh? (*ANDY sits up, looks around. CHRISTOPHER struggles unsuccessfully with slab.*)  
Weird.

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Starts to cry again—frustration. ROSEN exits. To ROSEN.*) Go aw—! (*Notices ROSEN is gone.*) Shit.

**ANDY**

(*Notices CHRISTOPHER's state.*) Hey, bud. (*Puts arm around CHRISTOPHER.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Shakes ANDY off.*) Get a pry bar and help me.

*MARGARET enters, deep in thought, nearly runs into ANDY before she notices him.*

**MARGARET**

Oh. (*Takes in situation.*) Well.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Margaret?

**MARGARET**

So this is where you disappeared to.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yes and no.

**ANDY**

You can see him? (*ANDY and CHRISTOPHER exchange a look. ANDY shrugs.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

You're up early.

**MARGARET**

Late.

**CHRISTOPHER**

What?



**MARGARET**

Up late.

**CHRISTOPHER**

It's almost dawn.

**MARGARET**

Yes. And you're up to . . . what, exactly?

**CHRISTOPHER**

This is it, Margaret. The grave.

**MARGARET**

I see. You vanish, we search, and where should you materialize, pry bar in hand.

**ANDY**

Some dig at night by the light of their souls.

**CHRISTOPHER**

It's a long story, Margaret. It's— . . . You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

**MARGARET**

Try me.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I had this dream about Rosen—

**MARGARET**

Rosen?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Right.

**MARGARET**

So did I. The first night.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Rosen? (*ROSEN drifts on.*)

**ANDY**

I've been having weird dreams, too. And waking up in weird places.

**ROSEN**

Margaret.

**ANDY**

Margaret?

**ROSEN**

It's hopeless.

**ANDY**

He's right behind you.

**CHRISTOPHER**

No he's not, Andy.

**ANDY**

He is!

**CHRISTOPHER**

Andy.

**ROSEN**

Margaret.

**ANDY**

*(Echoing.)* Margaret.

**ROSEN**

It isn't worth it.

**ANDY**

It isn't worth it.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(To ANDY.)* Would you stop?

**ANDY**

That's what he's saying!

**MARGARET**

Andy's right, Christopher. Whatever this battle between us is all about, it isn't worth it anymore.

**ROSEN**

It's futile.

**ANDY**

It's futile.

**MARGARET**

I gave you what you wanted. Now I find you here.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Don't listen to him.

**MARGARET**

Who?

**CHRISTOPHER**

The voice that says it isn't worth it.

**MARGARET**

What was it we wanted so badly that we couldn't have gotten by working together? It was such a splendid undertaking at the start, and we—the two of us—poisoned it.

**CHRISTOPHER**

It isn't futile! This is the grave. The bones are right here. I've seen them. I've touched them. I've held them in my hands.

**ROSEN**

Another wild goose hunt.

**ANDY**

Another wild goose hunt.

**MARGARET**

It's too late. I've run out of faith, out of hope, out of—

**CHRISTOPHER**

Margaret, trust me!

**ROSEN**

Trust you! Oy, oy, oy!

**ANDY**

Trust you! Oy—!

**MARGARET**

Trust you! Christopher! You have lied, you have connived, you have plotted. Haven't you? You've manipulated, concealed— *(Sputters.)*

**ROSEN**

Conspired—

**MARGARET**

—conspired. You've subverted, obstructed—

**ANDY**

Slumbered—

**MARGARET**

Trust you?! Trust you?!?

**ROSEN**

Oy, oy, oy!

**ANDY**

Oy, oy, oy!

**MARGARET**

How on God's earth do you expect me to trust you?

**CHRISTOPHER**

Fine. Don't trust me then. Just give me half an hour. I'll bring you the bones!

**MARGARET**

*(Considers.)* Whatever. *(Exits.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Andy, pry bar! *(They position themselves to open grave. ROSEN interposes himself.)*

**ROSEN**

This is what you want? *(CHRISTOPHER ignores him. ROSEN steps away.)* Remember, boychik.

*ROSEN exits. They start to pry open grave. Blackout. Sound effect.*

*Lights up. The same. Slab has been removed and set aside. PIETY, MARGARET, and CHRISTOPHER cluster around an almost complete skeleton. ANDY is in grave.*

**PIETY**

You're welcome to a second opinion, boy, but—well, let me show you something here. *(ANDY crosses, hands MARGARET plastic bag. PIETY picks up skull. To ANDY.)* Smile. *(He does, lips closed.)* Say cheese.

**ANDY**

Cheeeeeese.

**PIETY**

*(Holds skull next to ANDY's head.)* Look at the teeth. Almost perfect. This here fella couldn't have been any older than Andy when he died. Which rules out Oedipus. Number one. Number two, the ankle bone's connected to the foot bone, which shows no evidence of *talipes equinovarus*, commonly known as a club foot. Which rules out Oedipus. Number three, ain't no way these bones have been in the ground anywhere near 3000 years. My guess is no more than—

**MARGARET**

*(Holds up bag ANDY handed her.)* Musket.

**PIETY**

Two hundred. *(MARGARET hands bag to CHRISTOPHER.)* What you got here, Dr. Mavros, are the remains of some kid who died fighting the Turks. Not the bones of Oedipus.

**CHRISTOPHER**

That's not possible. I— . . . It's not possible.

**MARGARET**

Bones don't lie, Christopher.

**CHRISTOPHER**

They're the wrong ones, then.

**PIETY**

There ain't any others.

**CHRISTOPHER**

But I held them in my hand. There was a light.

**PIETY**

A light?

**CHRISTOPHER**

From the grave. . . . They're here. They have to be. *(They all look at him.)* They are. We have to dig deeper.

**ANDY**

It's all rock—I mean, like solid.

**CHRISTOPHER**

*(Grabs a shovel, jumps into grave.)* We have to dig deeper. *(Shovel clanks against rock.)*

**PIETY**

It's bedrock, boy. *(Shovel continues to clank against rock.)*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Get a pick. They're here. We just have to dig deeper. *(Continues to work. A beat.)* Come on. Help me. *(Another beat. Stops. Looks at them.)*

**PIETY**

Christopher, it's bedrock.

**CHRISTOPHER**

We're so close.

**PIETY**

There ain't nothing under there.

**CHRISTOPHER**

There was a light, damn it! Why aren't you listening to me?

**MARGARET**

What do you mean, a—?

**CHRISTOPHER**

A light! A light! The bones of Oedipus aren't—they aren't just bones. They're—they have—they're— . . . Jesus, this isn't rocket science! I opened the grave. A light shined out—it almost blinded me. If that isn't a sign— I mean, if it wasn't the grave of Oedipus I found, if those weren't the bones of Oedipus I held in my hand, how do you explain it then? How do you explain the light?

**MARGARET**

How do I— . . . ? You call yourself an archaeologist, a professional, you preach about discipline and methodology—and that's your evidence? A light? . . . What has possessed you? Do you have any idea how many hundreds of thousands of dollars of our investors' money you've— . . . ? Based on what? The noise in a shuttle photo? Rosen's what, senile scribblings? A light? . . . You want to know how I explain a light. I want to know how I explain your— . . . How do I explain that I championed you? How do I explain this futile—this, this— . . . Young man. How do I—dear God, how do I explain how I let this happen? Tell me. Please. Because at this moment it makes not one wit of sense to me.

**CHRISTOPHER**

I saw— . . . Margaret, I— *(Beat. Goes to work with shovel again briefly then stops, stunned.)*

**ANDY**

*(To himself.)* Oh. Ooooooh!

**MARGARET**

Let's pack it up so they can backfill.

*PIETY busies herself.*

**ANDY**

Margaret. . . Margaret.

**MARGARET**

What?

**ANDY**

Margaret, what happened—what *happens* isn't what matters. It never makes sense. Like when I kept flunking out?

**MARGARET**

Andy, I'm not in the mood—

**ANDY**

No, listen. 'Cause *whatever* happens makes sense. I mean, things aren't the way they are. They're, um . . . um . . . *different*.

**MARGARET**

Andy.

**PIETY**

*(Holding one of the ends of the sheet that the bones lie on.)* I could use some help here.

**ANDY**

It's like—remember, Piety, what I said before? Yesterday? Whatever happens makes sense, 'cause— . . . 'cause whatever happens happens to awaken us.

**PIETY**

Awaken us?

**MARGARET**

To what?

**ANDY**

Well— . . . stuff!

**MARGARET**

Stuff.



**ANDY**

Yeah. Like, Margaret— . . . our splendor! (*Beat.*)

**PIETY**

I could use some help here. (*ANDY picks up other end of sheet. They carry it to the grave. To CHRISTOPHER.*) Hey. (*CHRISTOPHER gets out of grave. PIETY and ANDY put bones there.*)

**MARGARET**

(*Starts to exit; stops. To CHRISTOPHER.*) How in God's name did I let this happen? (*Exits.*)

**PIETY**

(*Crosses to CHRISTOPHER, hands him shovel.*) Here. (*Starts to go.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*An apology.*) I— . . . I— . . .

**PIETY**

Yeah. Me, too. (*Exits.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

It wasn't just an illusion. . . . I found something. What was it? (*ANDY starts to exit.*)  
Rosen? . . . Dr. Rosen?

**ANDY**

He left.

**CHRISTOPHER**

The fuck. When I need him.

**ANDY**

Hey, shit happens, bud. Rejoice.

**CHRISTOPHER**

Yeah.

*ANDY exits. A beat. CHRISTOPHER goes to grave. Something there catches his eye. He picks up a trowel, jumps in. The sound of trowel against rock. He stands up with something in his hand. It's a steel-cased Zippo lighter. Beat. CHRISTOPHER jumps out of grave.*

**CHRISTOPHER**

Andy? . . . Andy? (*In bedroom, phone rings. CHRISTOPHER crosses to it, snatches it up.*)  
Dr. Rosen? . . . Oh, hi, Ma. . . . No, it's okay—I'm up. . . . What sort of bad news? . . .  
They identified his—oh. His remains. (*Pause.*) Yeah, I'm still here. . . . No, Ma. No . . . I  
wasn't right all along. I wasn't— (*He hangs up.*) I wasn't right about anything. I— . . . (*A  
moment. Crosses to grave. Stares into it. Beat.*)

**ANDY**

(*Enters.*) I, um . . . Oh, hey, I forgot. I have something for you. (*Crosses to  
CHRISTOPHER, and without warning, gives him a kiss. Beams.*) It was a trick.  
(*CHRISTOPHER looks at him, impassive.*) Um. (*Starts to exit, stops, returns. Touches  
CHRISTOPHER's heart.*) Take heart. For it would have you know your splendor.

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Downbeat.*) Yeah.

**ANDY**

(*Upbeat.*) Yeah. (*A moment.*) So.

*ANDY turns to exit. CHRISTOPHER takes his arm to stop him. A pause—  
perhaps a long one—then CHRISTOPHER, without touching ANDY in any  
other way, gives him a chaste but lingering kiss on the lips.*

**ANDY**

Oh man. (*Smiles. Exits.*)

**CHRISTOPHER**

(*Looks at lighter.*) Something—a heart—your heart, maybe—cries out, “You were god  
once, Tiger.” You were god once, way back when you were just— . . . nothing really. A  
kid. Burning bright. Before you got the idea in your head that genius grants and godhead  
were something to be grasped at. So, gosh. Too bad for those who win the prize and get  
the grant and hear the praise. Too bad for them, I guess. They'll never ask themselves,  
who am I that— . . . I mean, Jesus, who am I that I should be granted deliverance?

*Pause. The lights start to fade. As they do, a light begins to glow in the  
grave at CHRISTOPHER's feet. It grows and grows until it's burning bright.  
Blackout.*

*End of play.*

### Notes

The set for the production of *A Thin Place in the Universe* in The Studio at Theatre Rhinoceros (San Francisco) was exceedingly spare: nothing more than blacks and a table. The table served as the work table, Christopher's bed (with the addition of a blanket), and the grave (with the tabletop removed). A stagehand brought props on and off as needed and changed the position of the table to indicate scene changes.

The stagehand also effected all the things that appear to happen by magic. For example, in the scene where the shuttle photo flutters to the floor, the stagehand simply blew it off the table. When Andy became Lukas or Christopher's father, the stagehand handed him a flintlock or placed dogtags around his neck.

Finally, the stagehand was used to reinforce the mood of the play. For example, in the scenes in which Lukas is spooked by the darkness around him, the stagehand either knelt very close to Lukas and simply stared at him or managed to be behind Lukas no matter which way he turned.

This is a big play in many ways, but it doesn't require a big production. In fact, it's best served by a production that's elemental in its simplicity, by effects that are evocative rather than explicit, and by a set porous enough to allow the action to be as fluid as possible.