

# *Nine Dramas*

*Studio Editions Drama Publications*

Copyright © 1991, 1996 by Martha Keltz



## **The Twentieth Century ~**

The Fountain

The Man in the Mirror

The Saint Leger Incident

The Phoenix

## **Historic ~**

The Appointment, Young Michael Faraday

Count Cagliostro

The White Stone

The Grotto, Francis of Assisi

The Eve of Freedom, Abraham Lincoln

The *Nine Dramas* in this collection are appropriate for young adults and students.

# The Fountain

**Characters:**

Samuel Emmenberger, a nuclear physicist

Grace, an eleven-year old girl

**Time:** 1951

**Place:** A small American college town

*The key to the character of Emmenberger is that he is not of Jewish descent and was never a victim of the Holocaust. He is in fact a former member of the Nazi Party.*

**Scene:** A park with an old concrete bench and a half-circle fountain with a lion's head. The time is 1951; the place, a small American college town.

**At Rise:** Samuel Emmenberger, a lean, white-haired man with grey suit and small, round, wire-rimmed glasses, enters. He walks slowly, immersed in thought.

EMMENBERGER

... drifting on the sea in a small boat, a small boat. Debris all around. A storm has passed. Flotsam. A ship has gone down, only pieces can be seen, pieces of wood floating on the grey surface. A storm has passed, yet hovers on the horizon, as though the wind might change. Nothing certain, nothing solid can be seen for miles. No gull, no living thing. Once he had everything, everything. Now he drifts alone in the small boat. Why did he cross the ocean? Why did he come here? He might have remained where he was, he might have been safe....

*He sits on the bench.*

The dream, the image, even the sensation, like a floating, again and again and again. Am I losing my mind? And now, now of all times, when honors and rewards are heaped upon me! The great scientist!... At dusk, the evening sun touching the glittering glasses; toasts and warm wishes; a hostess with her black gown and white pearls; telegrams at breakfast; faces turning in recognition; the podium lit; the hall filled with dark, murmuring figures, some rising above the heads, as though they were... The military green and gold; the white gloves; young men guarding the door. All in my honor...

*He rises.*

Lies!...

The boy, clinging to his boat, shivering in the dark, the boy is surrounded by deceivers... or, the deceived. The rabbis of the early years, the kindly dark eyes, gone. The generals grasp my hands. The boy would fly with the gulls; the man, he embraces the warhead!

*He paces.*

I should retire. I'm old enough now. I can dictate a letter of resignation. I have no bitterness, yet I am suffering... Samuel is resigning. The wife will weep. Does she not see a loss of prestige? She would have me to the doctor; to the yellow, sterile walls and polished corridors, to the man in white with piercing blue eyes. He would have me on pills, yellow, white, green, black, red pills. I threw them out the window and they rolled on the grass. The gulls wouldn't touch them; the earth shuddered to receive them. I wonder... the earth would reject me, spew me from my grave. Creator of bombs!... What have you done, you sorrowful boy, turning to look at the rabbis in the crowd....

*Again sitting on the bench.*

Had I not left Europe as a boy, I would have been destroyed in the Holocaust; I would not have been safe. I came to this country, was educated and helped build weapons that ended the war. After the war, more powerful weapons helped build the peace! We scientists are revered!...

*A girl, Grace, eleven years old, enters. She is carrying a basket which holds a few plants and flowers. Unnoticed, she listens for a time to Emmenberger.*

But the boy... he does not revere me. He would steer his boat to the rocky isles of the wilderness. He would pass by the storm and the great city. Below, the ship lies buried on the ocean floor, the flotsam knocks against his boat, but he passes by, he passes by....

*He notices the girl listening to him.*

The boy, you see.

GRACE

On a boat?

EMMENBERGER

Yes, well... if you'll forgive me, my child, I'm nothing but an old man in the habit of talking to myself.

GRACE

What is the boy's name?

EMMENBERGER

Sam.

GRACE

Who gave him the boat?

EMMENBERGER

He himself built the boat.

GRACE

And went all alone to an island?

EMMENBERGER

Well, he wishes he had, you see, he wishes he had gone to an island in the wilderness, Maine perhaps, instead of Ellis Island.

GRACE

Ellis Island in New York?

EMMENBERGER

Yes.

GRACE

And he saw a shipwreck?

EMMENBERGER

Many, in the war.

GRACE

Well... you must pardon me. My mother says I ask too many questions. Yet, more: Sam – that's your name, isn't it? And you're the boy?

EMMENBERGER

That is correct.

GRACE

You may go on speaking if you wish. I came to the park to collect wild flowers and plants.

EMMENBERGER

There are buttercups!....

GRACE

Oh, those are rather common around here. Besides, I have some already.

EMMENBERGER

I believe you are rather uncommon. What is your name?

GRACE

Grace.

EMMENBERGER

Not a usual name these days.

GRACE

*(Observing him quietly for a moment)* You're not well, are you?

EMMENBERGER

No, I'm not. I'm thinking of resigning. I'm a scientist.

GRACE

A scientist! So is my father. He's a botanist.

EMMENBERGER

And you collect plants for him?

GRACE

I want to be a botanist, too. But you... what is resigning?

EMMENBERGER

Retiring. Stopping my work.

GRACE

You should have a work you could never retire from! Everyone should. Look!....

*She notices some plants by the fountain.*

Here's an ivy plant I've never seen before. Do you know its scientific name?

*He rises to examine the plant.*

EMMENBERGER

No, I'm afraid I don't.

GRACE

No?... My father will know. Look how firmly it's rooted and how it climbs up the fountain.

EMMENBERGER

He will not be ungrateful if we call him "ivy vine."

GRACE

I suppose not. (*Observing him again*) I think you're a very nice man.

EMMENBERGER

I'm glad you think so.

*Grace puts part of the vine into her basket, then seems intrigued with the fountain.*

GRACE

I've never noticed this fountain before. Only a little bit of water inside. It must be broken. The lion's mouth was a spout; water poured from it into the fountain.

EMMENBERGER

It's neglected now, forgotten.

GRACE

Oh, it stirs such feelings inside of me! I don't know why. But I must remember, it's very important. It's important for you.

EMMENBERGER

For me? How could that be?

GRACE

A memory....

EMMENBERGER

Have we met before?

GRACE

I can remember a place... before I was born.

EMMENBERGER

Ah!

GRACE

Long, long ago. We did not exist, I mean, we were not here. We came down into the earth, into the water. It was the source of our life. The lion called to us. Then we lived. We fell very far. The lion, he went into our hearts; he made us strong.

EMMENBERGER

What an imagination you have.

GRACE

Oh, but it's true. You have forgotten. It is you who have forgotten and neglected the fountain; that's why you're troubled.

EMMENBERGER

Are you a wise child?

GRACE

The boy in you... he has been searching for me. Today we meet at last. Tell me about your life; tell me about what troubles you. What has caused you to forget?

EMMENBERGER

Grace, I could not dim the light of your pure heart – your pure lion's heart – with the shadows of so many sorrowful years. Nothing could dim your light. Yet I will spare you the tales of my work. I should say lies, lies!... Outwardly I have always been a success, with position, money, a good home, a wife admired for her looks, her fashionable dress. I was gifted in design; construction. As a boy I did build boats, small boats. As a man... now I... We worked in the desert, in the Southwest. Hot, dry land; sparse life. I made a hobby of catching lizards. The landscape out there... violent, shifting moods. Now tall cliffs; now sunken canyons. Some parts beautiful, some barren. No European could ever imagine the mood of that land!

... I used to tell them, my colleagues, we were all deceived and we were all deceivers. Because I knew this, I surpassed them all. And I see through the honors now. Beware the honors! Better to be despised! They want rid of me because of my behavior. Even my wife wants rid of me. Her social position is threatened. Putting me away would look better than divorce. Divorce might reflect badly on her, but there's a fascination with insanity, with the fall of a great mind.

Where we worked... a colleague dubbed the ground Laodicea. Every day he said prayers before meals, but he said he had to build Laodicea. He had to build Laodicea...

I would catch lizards, did I tell you? And one day I saw a demon, a very large demon, very intelligent, though no one thinks of demons as intelligent. But I couldn't catch it. They're fond of deserts, I think, especially deserts full of bombs... where we worked.

Perhaps my wife is right... and there may be a genuine caring in her anxious eyes. Perhaps I am losing my mind and should be put away. I wonder... did I survive the shipwreck? Or did I die beneath the tumult, floating to the surface on a memory, a memory of a youthful quest, a youthful ideal. Am I losing my mind?....

## GRACE

Lose your mind with all those bad memories; hold your heart and soul closely. Deserts are full of tiny flowers; somehow they go on living. They don't care for science, they would rather have water, and they also drink the great sun from their tiny cups. My mother taught me a poem:

Mid star-clusters of heavenly spheres,  
A drop of dew, the tear of an angel,  
Sees a flower below, on the earth.  
At dawn the dew descends  
As moisture through the air  
And touches the flower-cup.  
The morning sun shines on the dew;  
He radiates like a tiny star,  
Reflecting his heavenly home.  
Yet he had come to love the earth;  
He dissolves joyfully into the flower.  
The angel smiles.

*She begins to make a wreath with the ivy.*

Ivy vine, I'm sure he wouldn't like the desert, or too much sun. He likes lots of water, a dark, moist earth, a nearby tree or building or fountain to climb. He needs the earth, but he wants to see what's above. He's curious about what men do; that's why he's seen in cities so much. I believe, nothing becomes him so much as bricks, real bricks that men make with their hands. If

he can cling to bricks he can climb very high and peer into second-story windows. He doesn't care for men because men find him merely decorative, but he's very, very curious. He's also very, very old – ancient. How much men could learn from him if only they would open their eyes to him! Oh, ivy vine, I'm sorry you're not better understood. Oh, you and all the other living things must suffer so terribly because of men. You, and the tiny flowers in the desert, oh, no, you couldn't survive bombs, oh, no!...

EMMENBERGER

Please, don't cry!...

GRACE

*(Suddenly realizing the import of his words)* You make bombs?....

EMMENBERGER

Yes, me... and others.

GRACE

In the desert? Bombs... Atomic bombs!

EMMENBERGER

And so the war ended.

GRACE

But... I've known you! Once we were together, at the beginning. How... what road did you take? Why did you do such work?

EMMENBERGER

To end the war.

GRACE

Oh no, you've more than forgotten, more than neglected the fountain. You would destroy it! I can't bear to let the picture of your deed come into my thoughts. I would be harmed.

EMMENBERGER

You must forgive me. After all, I was doing my duty; I was doing the right thing for my country; I wanted to be a loyal citizen, I who had been an immigrant. And in Europe, my child, a race of Jews was....

Yet near retirement I weigh the worth of my work and I am filled with remorse. A ravaging disease would not be worse!

But you must forgive me, and you must keep alive and well my faith that your sweet light cannot be dimmed by my confessions. I might have spared you certain details, yet I went on talking in a

selfish way... I could not stop, I can hardly help myself. I'm not well, you understand, you said so yourself. Yet, you cannot be harmed!....

GRACE

Well... I believe I'm not the same –

EMMENBERGER

Oh, no!

GRACE

But you see, I'll be twelve soon, twelve years old. My father says I have some growing up to do. This I have done today: I have grown up a bit. It happens every time I meet you. In dreams I travel to the stars; in waking life my parents must persuade me to leave my nature-friends. Science will help, they say. Then it so happens I meet you and my feet are suddenly on the ground where they belong. Yet even when I am completely grown up, I will not forget where we came from –

EMMENBERGER

Or where we are going!

GRACE

And that the fountain will fill with water again from the brave lion's mouth as surely as the blossoms appear every spring. And you... you will build small boats again and bring them here, to the fountain.

EMMENBERGER

You always bring healing to me.

GRACE

Yes, but this time you are in deeper trouble. You should welcome your illness.

EMMENBERGER

So I shall....

GRACE

The sun is setting! I am due home. My parents will be worried. And how can I tell them?... How can I tell them I met you and everything is changed?

EMMENBERGER

Say nothing. They will see the change in you and they will understand.

GRACE

It's time to say good-bye, Sam, once again good-bye...

*She approaches him with the wreath.*

Not only I forgive you, Sam, but God forgives you...

*She places the wreath on his head.*

And ivy vine, he forgives you, too. Only, you must forgive yourself, and that will not be so easy.

*She kisses him, then runs off.*

EMMENBERGER

... my colleague, back in the desert... I always thought he knew something; more, even more than I, who was always convinced that I surpassed everyone...

Laodicea... he... had to build Laodicea...

*End of Drama*

### **Reference Note**

Regarding "Laodicea" from *Revelation*, John: "In the country near the cities of Hierapolis, Laodicea and Colossae, the surface of the Earth is like an inverted stalactite cave... In our day something of the Plutonian principle has spread over the whole of modern civilization. We have had to learn on a large scale how to work with subterranean forces such as gases, electricity, or latterly, atomic energy. A kind of glazed crust covers every landscape in which Nature has been thrust back by industry. In Laodicea, a prophetic anticipation of modern conditions may have been at work." – From *The Apocalypse of Saint John*, by Emil Bock.

## The Man in the Mirror

### *Characters:*

Bobby Joe, “bohemian” artist, Eleanor’s nephew

Sylvie, shop employee

A Grotesque Man

*Time:* A holiday, the 1950’s

*Place:* “Eleanor’s Jewelry,” a prosperous shop

*Scene:* The interior of Eleanor’s Jewelry Shop, “modernistic” in style, with potted exotic plants. At left is a glass counter, and behind this counter is a locked cabinet with glass doors. Next to the counter, on the floor, is a shopping bag with wrapped presents. At right is a low, sleek-looking couch, and to its left (right of center) is a smaller display case on top of which a large mirror with a silver-painted frame leans back slightly, standing independently, head and chest level. To the right of the couch is a chair. On the upstage walls hang various small, unique mirrors. On the shelves of the counter, etc. can be seen jewelry, watches, collector’s items, mirrors, antiques, etc. Off at left is the front door of the shop, and off at right are rooms and a back entrance to the shop.

*At Rise:* Bobby Joe enters slowly and warily from the right. He is a young man, around twenty-one years of age. He wears dark clothing – the collar and lapels of the jacket pulled up around his neck – and a beret. His hair is thick and wavy and he has a mustache. His large, dark eyes are normally melancholy, though presently they dart nervously about, reflecting both fear and anger. He quickly observes the contents of the various cabinets, then, with a slow, significant gesture, removes his beret and places it on the counter. After observing further, he removes keys from his pocket and crosses to the cabinet behind the counter, unlocking it. He touches the various items, then slowly removes a knife in a jeweled case. He gazes fondly at this, then puts it in a pocket inside his jacket. He again looks stealthily around, then crosses to examine the presents in the shopping bag. A smile flits across his face, and a sense of power overtakes him. He turns and observes himself in the large mirror, then picks up the beret and hangs it on the top right corner of the mirror. He is pleased with this gesture.

**BOBBY JOE**

Good day, my friend – good day.

(He becomes uneasy and turns away. He removes a folded cloth bag from his pocket. Suddenly there is a noise off left and he freezes. Sylvie’s voice is heard.)

SYLVIE

Oh, hi!... No, I'm not working on a holiday – just left some things here I need for Eleanor's birthday. Oh, yes, every year....

(Her voice fades out as she engages in conversation with someone outside the front door. Bobby Joe shifts from frozen terror to frantic activity. He stuffs the cloth bag back into his pocket, quickly locks the cabinet; crosses right to exit, then stops, realizing he has forgotten his beret. He turns back to the counter for it and stumbles over the shopping bag, spilling the contents.)

SYLVIE

*(Off)* Have a nice holiday! Try not to overeat.

(Bobby Joe stuffs the presents back into the bag. He then looks for the beret on the counter and is bewildered not to find it there.)

*(Closer)* I know, I know, why count calories today. See you later!....

(Desperate, Bobby Joe throws himself on the couch and pretends to be asleep. Sylvie enters. In her twenties, she is plump, with dark curly hair and rosy cheeks. She wears a coat and hat. Her glance falls on the shopping bag and she crosses to it, puzzled to see it in disarray. Then, with great shock, she notices the figure on the couch. Her hand flies to her mouth to suppress a scream. Moments pass, then she relaxes somewhat and takes a step nearer to the reclining figure, whom she recognizes.)

SYLVIE

Bobby Joe! *(She crosses to the couch)* Bobby Joe! *(Bobby Joe pretends to awaken)* What's going on? What are you doing here?

BOBBY JOE

What are *you* doing here?

SYLVIE

This is where I work! Not today – I came to get Ellie's birthday presents. Oh, lord, Bobby – does Ellie know you're here?

BOBBY

*(Sitting up)* Sure she does. She gave me the keys. Said I could come in and rest.

SYLVIE

Rest? Why do need a place to rest?

BOBBY

Because I've – been evicted from my room.

SYLVIE

Oh, no!... Well, you can't stay here!

BOBBY

If it's all right with her...

SYLVIE

How could it be? Why would she? –

BOBBY

Maybe she has a heart after all.

SYLVIE

It's not like Ellie...

BOBBY

True... Listen, Sylvie, let's keep it between us. Don't say anything to her. She made the offer, but it might be better if she didn't know. I won't touch anything.

SYLVIE

Well, you've messed up the presents.

BOBBY

I stumbled over the bag. Honest.

SYLVIE

If you're so careless – and so thoughtless about putting things back in order – you'll take liberties –

BOBBY

*(Rising from the couch with anger)* Bobby Joe just better keep his hands off the merchandise!

SYLVIE

I didn't say that.

BOBBY

You did say it – in so many words.

SYLVIE

The merchandise *is* valuable.

BOBBY

But I'm not! You know, there's a gap between me and my so-called aunt, an abyss. From the time I was a small boy she resented and rejected me; she hated the responsibility of raising her sister's kid. She hates me.

SYLVIE

She doesn't!

BOBBY

When did she ever really care about me? When there was some cost to consider.

SYLVIE

She doesn't hate you – she doesn't understand you. She doesn't understand why you want to be – what is it, a bohemian?

BOBBY

I'm an artist! A poet, and a painter.

SYLVIE

But you can't hold down a job. Look here now, you've been evicted from your room. What will you do?

BOBBY

I can take care of myself.

SYLVIE

Where are your things?

BOBBY

With a friend.

SYLVIE

At least you have a friend! Oh, how insecure you are!... Is it worth it, this artist's life?

BOBBY

What am I worth? What about my talent?

SYLVIE

I'm talented, too. I design jewelry, and I designed most of these mirrors. What you've got to realize is that talent needs some kind of support, especially in the beginning. You're not practical, that's your problem. You've got to compromise; to consider the needs of others; of society.

BOBBY

To hell with the needs of society! What has society ever done for me? I'm kicked out of home at the age of eighteen! I can't afford art school or college. As for work... should dishwashing be a rung on the ladder for artists?

SYLVIE

What about sales?

BOBBY

I wouldn't touch sales. Don't you think I've had enough with her?

SYLVIE

Oh, lord, Bobby Joe, this is strange... Why are we talking like this? Why here, why now?

BOBBY

Because my time has come.

SYLVIE

*(Uneasy)* Well, I can't talk with you any longer. There's the party –

BOBBY

What about my birthday? Why doesn't anyone ever celebrate my birthday?

SYLVIE

Now you're being childish. When have you ever given Ellie a card for Mother's Day?

BOBBY

What have I been telling you – when has she ever been a mother?

SYLVIE

Don't get angry with me. It's not my fault.

BOBBY

How can you ask me such a stupid, insensitive question?

SYLVIE

I'm sorry. She's always been very nice to me; I've never seen the side of her you're describing.

BOBBY

Oh, you've seen it all right. What does she say about me?

SYLVIE

I've really go to be going –

BOBBY

What does she say about me behind my back?

SYLVIE

She doesn't talk about you.

BOBBY

That's a lie!

SYLVIE

I wouldn't lie... She's talked about bohemians. I suppose that includes you. She thinks bohemians are lazy; they spend too much time in cafes; they drink too much wine; they believe they can be good artists without discipline and hard work; they count on inspiration and good luck. That's all she's ever said, really. She never talks about you directly, she just talks about bohemians.

BOBBY

She never talks about me directly because I don't exist for her!

SYLVIE

*(Picking up the shopping bag) I'm leaving now.*

BOBBY

I don't want her to know I was here!

SYLVIE

I won't tell her.

*She turns to exit.*

BOBBY

Wait! Don't go.

*He crosses left and blocks her exit.*

SYLVIE

Promise, I won't tell her.

BOBBY

No!...

SYLVIE

Bobby Joe, you're scaring me. This is not normal. Something's wrong. I mean, you're in turmoil...

(She sets down the bag and crosses back to center. Bobby Joe follows her.)

But why take it out on me? Look, as far as I'm concerned, nothing's happened; I didn't see you.

BOBBY

You think she didn't offer to let me stay here?

SYLVIE

Now you tell the truth... Of course she didn't.

BOBBY

So what am I doing here?

SYLVIE

How did you get the keys?

BOBBY

Easy. She's careless. But let's get back to your accusation.

SYLVIE

What accusation?

BOBBY

That I'm a common criminal; that I've come here to rob my aunt.

SYLVIE

I never said any such thing!

BOBBY

She's the one who's robbed me! Let me tell you what she's lately put up for sale: heirlooms. Heirlooms that belonged to my family – to my father – heirlooms that are rightfully mine.

SYLVIE

I didn't know.

BOBBY

(*With mounting anger*) It wasn't enough to reject me; to deprive me of guidance, of education; to force me out on the street with nothing. No, that wasn't enough. Now she's selling the last and only links I have to my parents – to my father. It's not the money – she doesn't need the money –

she only wants to hurt me. I'm furious, and my fury is spilling over – I want to harm her! I want to destroy this shop!

SYLVIE

Calm down –

BOBBY

You're stupid – there's no calm in a raging sea!

SYLVIE

Pull yourself together! If you damage her shop, that's a criminal act. You say she's pushed you low, but if you resort to criminal behavior, you're letting her push you even lower. Vandalism; then robbery; then what?... You can stop now – you haven't yet crossed your Rubicon. As far as I'm concerned, nothing's happened. Please believe me, I won't say a word. Leave with me now – I'll help you – I'll help you find a place to stay.

(After a pause, only more anger erupts from Bobby Joe.)

BOBBY

It's too late!

(He picks up the chair at right.)

SYLVIE

No!

(He aims the chair at the large mirror.)

That's my mirror, not Ellie's!

(He is about to smash the mirror, but freezes as he sees the beret hanging on it. He throws the chair down on the floor, then flings the shopping bag across the room. Sylvie starts crying.)

No, please... Oh, this is awful!

BOBBY

So I'm a criminal am I? A robber?

SYLVIE

I never said that!

BOBBY

Let me show you something – let me show you what I've taken that's mine! It belonged to my father, and now it's mine!

(He removes the knife from his pocket, pulling it from its sheath. Sylvie's hand flies to her mouth to suppress a scream. She staggers back and passes out on the couch. Bobby Joe stares at her, and at the knife, in horror. He throws the knife down and crumples to the floor, crying.)

Sylvie... What's happened to me? Have I really sunk so low? A vandal, a robber, and god knows what else. What am I? Who am I? Answer me, Sylvie! Somebody answer me!....

(The Grotesque Man enters from the right. He is bent over and walks and moves in an odd, rhythmic manner, with a peculiar limp. His body, face and hands are full of large, uneven bumps; his eyes are small and gleaming; his mouth forms a sneer. Bobby Joe stares at him with shock. With his peculiar walk, the Man circles round Bobby Joe while reciting.

GROTESQUE MAN

I'm an heirloom, Bobby Joe.  
Don't tell me you didn't know.  
I'm an heirloom, without shine,  
See my features, all are thine.

BOBBY

Who are you?....

MAN

I'm an heirloom, sorry soul,  
And your errors take a toll  
On my pretty features, see:  
I am you and you are me.

In his room he sits and broods,  
Starving his poor soul of foods.  
Nourishment? He gives me all,  
Thus his spirit can't grow tall.

BOBBY

Who are you? What is this, some kind of joke?

(The Grotesque Man looks at himself in the large mirror, then puts the beret on his head.)

MAN

Stand and gaze upon your face,  
Molded in this very place.

(Bobby Joe rises and stares at the Man and at his image in the mirror.)

Look around you and you'll see,  
All the images are me.  
Yet the Being, friend, is thine,  
We can see he doesn't shine.

Brooding first, then thievery,  
Violence and robbery.  
All the world he'll blame for this,  
While my pretty face he'll kiss.

How much further will he fall?  
At the threshold, hear a call.  
Sylvie cries in deep despair,  
For the fool she has a care.

Ellie never gives a thought  
To the victim she has wrought,  
Long ago he did the same.  
He has but himself to blame.

For your soul my pretty face  
With another would replace,  
One to smile through dark and pain –  
Ah, then would the spirit gain.

Wake up, Bobby Joe, my friend,  
And this ugliness you'll end.  
For your poet-painter can  
All the darkness truly span.

At its end the sun shall beam,  
And this shall not be a dream.

Bobby Joe and Sylvie true,  
Will my Self with light imbue.

Beautify me evermore,  
And I'll open every door.  
God without, He can be seen,  
As within your soul He'll beam.

Spirit then shall find the way;  
All shall know a better day.

(He puts the beret back on the mirror.)

Bobby Joe, I tricked you well,  
And I knew you couldn't tell,  
It was I who hid your hat  
Up above the image that  
Stopped you twice upon your track.  
No more bumps upon my back.

Now good-bye, my stupid fool,  
Insensitive – very cruel.  
Wake your love and soothe her fear,  
Then your life shall be most dear.

Good-bye! Good-bye! Good-bye-bye!....

(The Grotesque Man exits. Bobby Joe stares after him with wide eyes; then at the beret on the mirror; then at Sylvie. He rises and picks up the chair and sits down on it, shaking his head in disbelief.)

**BOBBY**

Myself... he said he was myself... an ugly, distorted man. I'm not hallucinating, no, I've never hallucinated... he was real. Not part of this world, yet real. Who was he? To what world does he belong? Why has he appeared here? Why now? Myself... an aspect of myself... come to warn me....

(He covers his face with his hands, then slowly lowers them, noticing the knife on the floor.)

I wouldn't hurt anyone! I only wanted to show her the heirloom...

I'm an heirloom, without shine,  
See my features, all are thine...

That hideous man was the purest truth I've ever seen – ever known! He radiated pure self-knowledge: imperfection. Shame burns into my heart like a flaming knife. Yet I'm awed, for I've witnessed the miraculous, and I sense hope.... He stopped me just in time, like Sylvie said, before I crossed my Rubicon. Sylvie...

*He rises from the chair and crosses to Sylvie.*

Sylvie!...

*He takes her hand, then gently pats her cheek.*

Please wake up!... Everything will be all right! Sylvie!...

*Sylvie awakens and gazes in confusion at Bobby Joe.*

Everything is all right, Sylvie. I'm calm, and I'm – sorry.

*Sylvie sits up and looks around.*

I only wanted to show you the heirloom. I would never harm you; I would never harm anyone, not even in my darkest moments, and I'm afraid you've seen that... It's not too late, Sylvie, like you said. Nothing's happened, nothing... I'm going to put everything back in order, I'm going to put everything back where it was....

*He collects the presents and puts them back into the shopping bag.*

After you passed out, I was a witness to my behavior, to my *self*. I saw myself for what I was, a fool ready to blame others for my own flaws and weaknesses.

SYLVIE

She's wronged you, your aunt; she's hurt you. I can see that now... you're like a wounded creature.

BOBBY

I brought it on myself.

SYLVIE

Oh, lord, no! How is a person to cope? Resented and rejected? She's a selfish, greedy person. I don't think I want to work for her anymore.

BOBBY

Don't say that. You've a good outlet here for your jewelry designs, and the mirrors.

(He picks up the knife and puts it back in the sheath. Sylvie rises and crosses to him; she takes the knife from him.)

SYLVIE

I'm going to buy this for you, and the other things, too, that are rightfully yours.

BOBBY

Give it some thought first.

SYLVIE

No need, I'm firmly decided. Meantime... let me have the keys.

(He gives her the keys and she crosses to the cabinet, unlocks it, places the knife carefully back on the shelf, re-locks the cabinet, and puts the keys into her coat pocket.)

Show me what else belongs to you.

BOBBY

I couldn't just now...

*He places the chair back at right.*

I've had a rough day. I'd like to get out of here.

SYLVIE

Where will you go?

BOBBY

Home... to my room, that is. Oh yes, I lied to you. When I realized you were coming into the shop, I didn't have time to get out, and I hit on the crazy idea of pretending to be asleep, then claiming I'd been evicted. I lied again when I told you I planned to take only what belonged to me... (*He shows her the cloth bag in his pocket*) this would hold a lot.

SYLVIE

I don't blame you. Still, you've done nothing – and you haven't been evicted. That means you don't have a friend after all, not one, I bet.

BOBBY

Not one, no... but whose friend am I?

SYLVIE

I'm going to help you.

BOBBY

I don't deserve any help.

SYLVIE

Oh yes, you do! I had a dream after I fainted. It was awesome... I seemed to be in a large room, full of mirrors, more than I could ever design in a lifetime. I saw your image in them, but it wasn't really you, it wasn't your real self. Then I saw what seemed to be two radiating suns, the second emerging from the first. The light was so intense, it beamed on all the mirrors, and no images could be seen. Then you appeared from the second sun, except... you were different somehow; you had a different expression – I believe because you were secure and self-confident. You were a success! Yet your success, you told me, was due to a far greater Being out of which your own light emerged. It was a wonderful dream, Bobby Joe! It was your future! Yet, I knew you would need help, so I promised to help you.

BOBBY

What did you promise?

SYLVIE

Well, I'm not sure what it was exactly.

BOBBY

That is an awesome dream... especially in view of what happened to me.

SYLVIE

What happened?

BOBBY

What I saw wasn't a dream or a vision. It had material substance; it was like flesh and bone. It wasn't pleasant, yet... it seemed to bestow a blessing on me. I'm altogether shaken!...

SYLVIE

Something extraordinary has happened to us. Let's go somewhere – where we can talk about it – let's go to one of those cafes bohemians like so much.

BOBBY

What about the party?

SYLVIE

I couldn't! I'll phone and give my regrets; I'll tell them Ellie's presents are here.

BOBBY

I feel we should talk.

SYLVIE

Let's go then. The shop... (*looking around*) No one was here.

BOBBY

(*With a deep sigh of relief*) You'll like my café. It's a special place. Order one cup of coffee, and maybe a pastry, and you can stay and read and write for hours – just like European cafes.

SYLVIE

Coffee, pastry, and a holiday meal! I have enough money –

BOBBY

I don't think so, Sylvie.

SYLVIE

You can pay me back.

BOBBY

Maybe....

SYLVIE

Don't forget your beret.

BOBBY

There could be no more telling evidence.

(He slowly removes the beret from the large mirror and puts it on, looking grimly at his image.)

He tricked me well and hid my hat,  
Up above the image that  
Stopped my twice upon my track.  
No more bumps upon my back –  
My very own back....

(He yanks the beret from his head and throws it on the floor.)

SYLVIE

No!....

(She picks up the beret and puts it on his head at a jaunty angle. Then she touches his temple, and lifts up his chin.)

Poet, painter... artist.

(Bobby Joe's posture improves and a handsome, self-confident man briefly and mysteriously emerges. This is not lost on Sylvie; she takes his arm.)

When is your birthday, by the way?

*They exit at left.*

***End of Drama***



# The Saint Leger Incident

## Characters:

Lou, a city detective

Brian Corelli, student, part-time P.I. (private investigator)

*The Detective*

**Time:** An autumn night in the 1990's

**Place:** An abandoned office in the now empty Saint Leger Building, in the decaying center of a large city

**Scene:** An abandoned office. There is a large window with shattered glass, up-left, looking out over a nearby building of gray, concrete blocks. Pieces of glass are on the floor beneath the window. At right there is an old metal two-drawer file cabinet on top of which are styrofoam cups. Brown paper bags, cups and newspapers litter the floor. There is an overturned wooden chair at left, an old office chair on casters, and an overturned wastebasket. Two large windows must be imagined to be at front, and they cast eery squares of pale light across the room.

**At Rise:** Lou enters from the right followed by Brian. They are both out of breath from climbing stairs. Lou is a dark-haired woman in her mid-thirties. She is dressed casually but is sophisticated, with jewelry, coiffured hair and make-up. She is attractive, though her features are somewhat coarse. Brian is a congenial, dark-haired young man in his twenties who speaks with a slight New Jersey accent. He wears a short jacket over a checkered shirt (there is a handkerchief in the shirt pocket); a backpack hangs from his shoulder.

LOU

Whew! Eight flights! At least I'm getting my exercise.

*They both catch their breath.*

This is your office for the night, Mr. Corelli, the luxury suite. And like I said, great view from the window. Just watch where you step.

*Lou crosses to the window and Brian follows cautiously, looking around.*

See down there?

BRIAN

Uh-huh.

LOU

The warehouse office.

BRIAN

They keep the lights on all night?

LOU

In this neighborhood, the more lights the better.

BRIAN

And they won't see me up here?

LOU

No, but don't stand in front of the window.

BRIAN

You say, the payoffs will occur sometime between twelve and three?

LOU

Tonight and tomorrow night.

BRIAN

So how long can you stay?

LOU

For a while – not long. My partner needs me; our shift starts at midnight.

BRIAN

Lou, I appreciate your coming up here with me.

LOU

A tip-off and an escort both, not bad, Corelli. But you deserve it. I mean, you've really advanced on the Benham case, finding out I was the internal affairs investigator....

BRIAN

My boss guessed as much, too. You're just not made of the same stuff as the others.

LOU

A good guess, kind of... Study the room carefully. Figure out the best spot to set up the video equipment tomorrow.

BRIAN

The case could've been yours, you know. Why a tip-off? Why me? Why us?

LOU

Because the state will respond better to an outside agency, especially a respected one. Besides, if I took the lid off the city, I'd get scorched; I could never work here again. Bad as this city is, it's still my home. Now, study the room, Brian.

*Brian looks around and notices the file cabinet.*

BRIAN

You suppose there's anything in there?

LOU

There wasn't that last time I looked, but let's check it again.

(She crosses to the file and Brian follows. Carefully she opens both drawers and closes them as Brian observes.)

Empty.

(She picks up a cup from the top of the file.)

Care for some coffee? Only about a week old. Looks like most of the cream and sugar got spilled though...

BRIAN

I'll pass; besides, I brought my own.

*He looks around the room.*

The Saint Leger Building has seen better days.

*He moves a newspaper with his foot.*

Nothing here... nothing anywhere. All the offices like this?

LOU

Yeah, the building's totally empty.

BRIAN

Ever since the bombs went off, huh? Who did that anyway?

LOU

A neighborhood gang.

BRIAN

What for?

LOU

They wanted to hone their bombing skills.

BRIAN

Terrific.

LOU

Fortunately, most of them are locked-up.

BRIAN

Not all of them? Saint Leger... the Saint Leger Building... named after a saint?

LOU

I think it's just somebody's name.

BRIAN

You don't suppose there ever was a Saint Leger?

LOU

I doubt it, who's ever heard of him?

BRIAN

I sure haven't... Well, I've seen enough. I'll set up my tripod and video right about here; it won't be hard at all... meantime, I'll settle in for tonight.

(He rolls the office chair over near the window, then removes the pack from his shoulder. Lou retrieves the wastebasket and sets it upside-down by the chair.)

LOU

Here, use this for a table.

(Brian removes a thermos, sandwich and small camera case from the pack and sets them on the wastebasket.)

Now you've got a cozy arrangement. Guess I'll be going –

BRIAN

Hey, so soon? Can't that partner of yours manage alone for an hour?

LOU

Not for an hour. I can't be that late, not tonight.

*Brian picks up the wooden chair from the floor.*

BRIAN

Here, sit down for a few minutes then.

*Lou reluctantly sits down.*

Tell me, how does a woman get into this kind of work?

LOU

*(Shrugs)* I never planned it... I just happened to have a boyfriend who was a cop. One thing led to another, and I got into decoy work. One night when I was doing my old lady routine, a mugger fell for it, I collared him and it turned out he was wanted for armed robbery. So I got a promotion – robbery detective; some narcotics... recently, internal affairs.

BRIAN

So you like detective work?

LOU

It's okay, but sometimes it's boring. I don't like the typing part, but I've got to type my reports.

BRIAN

I bet the internal affairs stuff isn't boring.

LOU

You win that bet.

BRIAN

What with all the corruption – from the mayor's office on down to the police department.

LOU

The works. Embezzlement, manipulation of votes, bribery, infidelities, disappearance of confiscated drugs and monies. It couldn't be worse, and James Benham knew everything. He wasn't all that moral though. He was caught between two factions in the beginning and saw his job going downhill, so he decided to play the honest bureaucrat and he started talking. Figured he had nothing to lose. When he turned up missing, nobody blamed his wife for consulting a private agency. By the way, where is she?

BRIAN

I can't tell you that.

LOU

You can tell me, Brian.

BRIAN

We don't know.

LOU

You don't know?

BRIAN

All we know is a certain town, general delivery. She calls us from pay phones; sends us money orders.

LOU

What town?

BRIAN

Come on, Lou, I can't talk.

LOU

You can trust me. I brought you here – it's the best tip-off you'll ever have. Day after tomorrow it'll be in your lap.

BRIAN

So, you can wait.

LOU

(Icy) Thanks.

BRIAN

Why do you need to know?

LOU

I don't need to know!... (Warming) I've told you about my brilliant career; tell me about yours. How did you get into private eye work?

BRIAN

Well, before the Benham case, it was just income, just a part-time job, mostly at night, mostly boring... divorce stuff. The rest of the time, I'm working on a degree in criminology.

LOU

Why criminology?

BRIAN

Hey, you should ask? Okay, I used to read Sherlock Holmes.

LOU

Sherlock Holmes? Okay.

BRIAN

I read every story, and the book – you know, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* – over and over. Holmes fascinated me, he just seemed so real; he still does. Could he be just a fictional guy? Ask

anybody you meet on the street – anybody at all, “Hey, give me a description of Sherlock Holmes,” and they will! Anybody – a bum, an office worker, a kid. This guy is *real*. Anyway, I decided to major in criminology. So far so good. But tell me, what does a real-life detective like yourself think about Sherlock Holmes?

LOU

Me, I don’t think about him much. All the same... Listen, Brian, you won’t believe this: the last really good chief we had – he kept a framed picture of Sherlock Holmes up on his office wall.

BRIAN

No kidding?

LOU

Not only that – you know what he believed to his dying day? He believed Sherlock Holmes was the guardian angel of the detectives. The chief of detectives believed this!

BRIAN

You’re kidding!

LOU

No, for real, real-life.

BRIAN

Fantastic! How did he die?

LOU

*(Shrugs)* Old age.

BRIAN

*(Laughs)* Maybe there was something to it then.

LOU

For him maybe. But where’s this guardian angel these days, with everything going downhill the way it is?... And look at this awful bombed-out building. Where’s Saint Leger’s angel? It’s crazy – I never heard of such a crazy thing.

BRIAN

Was this chief crazy?

LOU

No, that’s just it, he wasn’t. Like I said, he was the last good chief we had.

BRIAN

Nowadays people are beginning to believe in angels again.

LOU

‘Cause times are tough.

BRIAN

Sure, but so what? Have you seen all the books that are out?

LOU

I don’t read much.

BRIAN

Everybody’s supposed to have an angel. Even you.

LOU

Me? I don’t have an angel – I’ve only got a damned devil!

*She laughs, then glances at her watch.*

I’ve really go to be going.

BRIAN

Come on, let’s talk some more.

LOU

Sure. And I can tell my partner I’m late ‘cause we were talking about angels.

BRIAN

And the last good chief.

*Lou stands; Brian follows.*

LOU

By the way, be careful when you leave. Police keep an eye on the building.

BRIAN

By all means, beware of the police.

LOU

Good luck, and call me at home tomorrow.

BRIAN

Sure thing. Thanks again.

*Lou turns before exiting.*

LOU

Maybe you'll see your angel tonight.

(She laughs again, and the laugh echoes and fades as she descends the stairs. Brian listens uneasily, then looks around again.)

BRIAN

Terrific.

(He opens the camera case, removing the camera and a light meter. He moves the meter around the room and in front of the window. He then picks up the camera, adjusts it, and, standing at a safe angle with the lens aimed downward through the window, he focuses and takes several shots. He then takes several shots of the room. This done, he makes himself comfortable in the chair; pours coffee from the thermos; glances at his watch and out the window.)

Twenty past twelve...

*He sighs deeply.*

I'm already tired. No sleep today, not much last night.

*He closes his eyes, then opens them suddenly.*

Stay awake, stay awake; watch the window, watch the window...

(He sips coffee and stares out the window. The lights fade out. When they fade up again, Brian, sleepy, is still staring out the window. He has moved the wooden chair and his legs are resting on it. He looks at his watch.)

Ten minutes until two. Nothing....

*He unwraps the sandwich and takes a few bites; pours fresh coffee from the thermos and sips.*

So where's the action? Figure if you've got from twelve to three, it'll happen at three, right? Maybe even after three. Nobody ever does anything on time anymore.

(He yawns and stretches and stares out the window. His head nods and he wakes; his head nods again and he breathes deeply. He wakes suddenly and glances at his watch, then out the window.)

I wasn't out five minutes. Okay, nothing, nothing happened in five minutes; nothing's been touched.

*He looks uneasily around the room, then rises from the chair. He circles the room carefully.*

I've got a gut feeling something's not right... Nah, it's only around two; there's still plenty of time.

*He sits down.*

Come on, dumbos, let's get it over with – your fingers must be itching for that money. Fools....

*He nods off to sleep. A gentle, but firmly insistent voice is heard calling, off at right.*

VOICE

Brian! Brian!

*Brian wakens and, doubtful, listens.*

Brian!

BRIAN

Somebody's calling me!

*He rises from the chair and crosses to left of center.*

Who is it? Who's there?

(The Detective enters from the right. He is tall and thin and clearly agile. He has an aquiline nose and deep-set eyes, mysterious eyes difficult to see or define. He wears a deerstalker cap and a loose, full tweed coat with a matching cape.)

Who are you?

DETECTIVE

I'm a good friend of yours, and you'll require no proof of that very soon. Look about you, my good man, you see nothing amiss?

BRIAN

No.

DETECTIVE

Don't be so quick then to call the other fellow a fool. The first thing I wish to tell you is that, were you to remain here for a week with your eye upon that warehouse office, you would still see nothing.

BRIAN

What do you mean?

DETECTIVE

It's a setup.

BRIAN

A setup? Why?

DETECTIVE

We have very little time. Come here, I've something to show you.

*He crosses to the file cabinet.*

BRIAN

What's this all about?

DETECTIVE

There's no time to explain. Come here, I say.

*Brian crosses to the file.*

BRIAN

Something's wrong for sure. When I get a gut feeling...

DETECTIVE

Set the coffee cups on the floor; don't spill the contents.

BRIAN

What if I did?

DETECTIVE

Do as I say.

*Brian sets the cups on the floor.*

Give me one of those newspapers.

(Brian retrieves a newspaper and the Detective places it on top of the file. He then stoops down and gently pulls out the bottom drawer.)

Observe. Do you see anything?

BRIAN

No, nothing.

DETECTIVE

You shall have to re-assess your powers of observation, young man. This drawer is not deep, but shallow.

BRIAN

So it is...

DETECTIVE

It has a false bottom.

*Brian starts to touch the drawer.*

Stay back.

*The Detective gently removes a thin, rectangular piece of metal from the drawer.*

This metal is a poor match for the rest of the file. I suppose you didn't notice?

*He sets the metal on the floor. Brian manages to peer inside the drawer, then staggers back.*

Gawd a'mighty!

*The Detective pulls a wire.*

DETECTIVE

Ahhh!... But don't relax yet.

(He removes a crude-looking bomb from the drawer and sets it on top of the newspaper. The device has sticks of dynamite, pipes, a timer, wires, tubes, etc. tied together.)

Very similar to the bombs made by your neighborhood boys, and I wouldn't doubt one of them put it together in exchange for a light sentence. Carefully now...

*He pulls a few more wires loose, then relaxes.*

My dear fellow, you had less than a minute to live.

BRIAN

I don't believe this!

DETECTIVE

There is one real advantage with this kind of crude device. With just a touch or two here and there, it can be made to appear as though something pulled loose by itself. Hence it wouldn't explode, it would "bomb" you might say. I shall arrange it thus.

*He deftly re-arranges some wires.*

BRIAN

What about your fingerprints?

DETECTIVE

Smart thinking for a change. Nevertheless, don't worry. Now, get your pictures before I put it away.

(Brian grabs his camera and takes several shots of the bomb. He then quickly sets the camera back on the wastebasket and watches closely as the Detective puts the bomb back in the drawer, then replaces the false bottom and closes the drawer.)

Exactly as it was, save for the unforeseen mishap, of course.

*He picks up the newspaper.*

My, my, look at this. (*Reads*) "James Benham, a certified public accountant and an employee in the property tax assessment office, has been missing since June 2<sup>nd</sup>... anyone with any

information as to his whereabouts, please contact the investigative division at police headquarters.”

*He folds the newspaper carefully and sets it back on the file.*

The newspaper is sticky – cream and sugar. They’ll think you saw the article, read it, and left it here.

BRIAN

Who’ll think?

DETECTIVE

The woman you admire so, and a few others.

BRIAN

Lou?

DETECTIVE

Put the coffee cups back on the file, please.

*Brian obeys.*

By the way, the coffee is not a week old, it was fresh yesterday. They brought it with them, but at least one of them was too nervous to drink any. She even spilled it; left a mess.

BRIAN

Lou...

DETECTIVE

She was cooler tonight. She took something for her nerves.

BRIAN

But Lou works in internal affairs!

DETECTIVE

You can’t imagine the magnitude of the corruption in this city; the degree of her complicity.

BRIAN

She would do this to me?

DETECTIVE

Oh, yes, she and the others want you private detectives out of the way.

BRIAN

My boss!

DETECTIVE

Oh, he's safe for a while. You'll have time to warn him. When they realize the bomb has failed to explode, you see, they'll expect you to remain here till morning.

BRIAN

And I would.

DETECTIVE

When you leave, leave by the back stairs. Understand?

BRIAN

They're watching the front?

DETECTIVE

Yes, though not carefully at the moment. They're disgusted.

BRIAN

Disgusted? They can be disgusted! Better that than me in pieces! I have been a fool. But you still haven't told me – who are you? Where did you come from? How do you know so much?

DETECTIVE

*(After a thoughtful pause)* Lou is wrong about Benham. She said he wasn't moral. Well, he was. In fact, his situation parallels that of a man who lived back in the fifth century. The man's name was Leo Degarius, though he's better known as Saint Leger. Lou's also wrong about this building, it *was* named after Saint Leger, and it was named by Benham himself some years ago, when he had hopes for this neighborhood. Leger, you see, like Benham, was caught in a fight between two factions. He reacted by trying to expose the corruption around him and became the enemy of the notorious mayor. He, like Benham today, was tortured and killed... Leger was declared a martyr and a saint. These days, hardly anyone believes in saints and martyrs anymore. What's to be done then, for a man like Benham?

BRIAN

Please tell me who you are.

DETECTIVE

*(Smiling)* I can see you're going to win, my good man, you and that agency of yours. Very sorry, but I can't tell you who I am. However, what I can tell you is this: someday this building will be rebuilt, and trees and flowers planted all around, and it will be called the James Benham Building.

*A pause, then the Detective is again grim.*

Remember, take the back stairs, and as soon as possible.

*He turns to leave.*

BRIAN

Hey, you're not leaving, are you?

DETECTIVE

I must.

BRIAN

Look... was Lou telling the truth about that chief – the one who believed Sherlock Holmes was the guardian angel of the detectives?

DETECTIVE

Yes, she was.

BRIAN

And is it true, I mean – was he right about Sherlock Holmes?

DETECTIVE

Your persistence is admirable. The angel, rather, finds it expedient at times to look like Sherlock Holmes. It's altogether advantageous. However, he will only help those for whom deception is a means to an end, the end being the newfound truth. Each at some point must cross a threshold where all deception ceases and the truth held sacred. This is essential if the client is to be helped, and justice served.

BRIAN

I see.

DETECTIVE

Despite your blunders tonight, my young friend, you have the makings of a first-rate detective. Now I really must be going.

*He turns again to leave.*

BRIAN

Oh, wait! I want to get a picture of you. It won't take a second.

*Brian crosses to retrieve his camera, and the Detective exits.*

What will I say to my boss?

*Brian turns and holds up the camera, then lowers it slowly.*

Gone... It probably wouldn't come out anyway. I'd have a picture of an empty room... A room I'm getting out of!...

(He puts the camera and meter back into the case, and everything into the pack. He pauses, looking at the file cabinet. Then he removes the handkerchief from his shirt pocket and crosses to the file cabinet. Using the handkerchief to avoid leaving fingerprints, he opens the bottom drawer slightly and peers inside.)

Uh-huh.

VOICE

*(Off)* Brian!

(Brian shivers and closes the drawer. He stands, puts the handkerchief away and picks up his pack.)

BRIAN

The point is, I can't tell my boss. No way!... And I'll get all the credit, 'cause he'll think I found the bomb.

*A pause. He looks around the room one last time.*

We're going to win, yes... We're going to win.

*He exits right. Lights fade out.*

***End of Drama***



# The Phoenix

## A Fable

**Characters:**

Brother Dog

Sister Bird

Brother Mule

The Phoenix

**Time:** 1995

**Place:** A country field.

**At Rise:** Brother Dog and Sister Bird enter.

DOG

Here is the field where Brother Mule grazes.

BIRD

He has an easy life nowadays.

DOG

His forebears were beasts of burden, but he has never known labor. He is kept as a pet for children, who give him carrots and other treats every day.

*Brother Mule, who has heard him, enters.*

MULE

Yes, Brother Dog, mine is a life of ease, but that is about to change. I'm being sold to a tourist agency, and will have to carry Brother Man on my back through the Grand Canyon.

DOG

Mmmmm... better than a life of labor.

MULE

I suppose there will be a holiday mood about it all.

BIRD

Does your Cousin Horse fare any better?

MULE

He has become a status symbol, owned by the wealthy and bred to race. Better than a battlefield, where he was so often killed – less than sixty years ago! I expect he is considered too valuable to be worn out bearing tourists through the Grand Canyon. Not I...

BIRD

When tired, you can always sit down and refuse to go any further.

DOG

How is your life nowadays, Sister Bird?

BIRD

Simply wonderful! The populations of man are so great, most of my natural predators have disappeared. When in danger, with my wings I can easily leave the ground and soar through the air!... Trees are profuse and safe, even in the cities, and hence make ideal dwellings. City food is not of good quality, however, we must depend on what man discards, and this is not healthy: french fries, popcorn, rolls, potato chips, corn chips, cookie crumbs, and other foods which serve to make us fat and lazy – like man.

MULE

And your life, Brother Dog?

DOG

The dog's life today is a paradox, both greatly improved, and alarming. I have an easy time in the country, but city dogs do not fare so well, locked in apartments all day, and running outdoors only briefly, and then, only on small patches of grass. Cement and buildings everywhere! But far worse than the city dog's fate is the scientists's dog, who must give his life for the sake of some marginal statistical gain. Man believes that all disease and accident is purely of physical origin.

*All three shudder.*

MULE

Not only dogs are used, I understand, but pigs, rabbits, calves, cats, rodents and many other creatures.

BIRD

All for the sake of technology, an old god in new guise.

MULE

Whatever is happening to Brother Man lately? He has forgotten his cosmic origins entirely, and the origins of the plant and animal kingdoms. He has nearly abandoned nature altogether!

DOG

He builds an artificial, mechanical world, weaving more entrapping webs than Sister Spider – with none but himself the victim!

BIRD

Yet we creatures must continue to sacrifice for him.

DOG

Did not the woodpeckers recently triumph over NASA?

BIRD

Oh yes, they delayed a launch of one of those rockets. They managed to punch 130 holes in the armor of the monster. Well, the scientists used inflated owls, hoping to scare the woodpeckers away. The woodpeckers laughed themselves sick over the inflated owls and their enterprise subsequently failed.

MULE

We have to give them credit for trying.

DOG

While we're on the subject of science, a friend related to me an extraordinary adventure. Seems he became the subject of a laboratory experiment to determine why dogs bark. *Woof! Woof!* After spending hundreds of thousands of dollars, mostly on salaries, it was decided that *woof! woof!* was a sort of neutral signal, somewhere between a high-pitched soothing sound and a low growl, the latter two sounds common in most all creatures. Yet the scientists are unable to determine *why* dogs *woof! woof!* If my friend and I could speak man's language – as man longs for us to do – we would tell him that all dogs *woof! woof!* for the sake of man himself! If there was no Brother Man, then dogs wouldn't *woof! woof!*

MULE

What a sorry pass man has come to....

BIRD

And matters will probably become worse before they improve. How long will it take him to realize that he can't learn very much about the universe by traveling from planet to planet? – assuming he'll ever get beyond the moon in the first place. How long before he realizes that everything in the universe is *within him* and that he must learn to understand himself?

DOG

In view of all these follies, perhaps, after all, we animals are superior to man?

MULE

It certainly seems so, especially at the end of this inglorious century.

DOG

I suggest we devise a Declaration. This Declaration should proclaim: man is not what he once was. The human kingdom has sunken below the level of the animal kingdom. This Declaration can be circulated to all creatures on earth.

BIRD

What a wonderful idea!

MULE

With such a ring of truth!

DOG

None will disagree.

MULE

Creatures shall be raised above the human level in the eyes of God.

BIRD

Man is so stupid, it must be the Creator's intention that we should rise to superiority.

DOG

Let us prepare the Declaration then.

MULE AND BIRD

We shall! We shall!

(The Phoenix enters. He is a glorious bird with magnificent fiery red, orange and gold feathers, a large wing span, and elegant sweeping tail and noble features and posture. He circles the three, then pauses down-right.)

MULE

The Phoenix!

BIRD

Rarely seen!

DOG

Magnificent!

## BIRD

But recall what Lessing said of him: "...Unhappy Phoenix! Fate has been hard to him. He has neither mate nor friend. He will never know the pleasure of loving, or of being loved."

## PHOENIX

Gaze upon my plumage, fiery gold.  
From the dust and ashes it is told,  
I arise in all my beauteous glory.  
Could it be my form is merely story?  
Or a Being who in spirit lives  
And to every dying creature gives  
Hope of rebirth in a higher form.  
You shall know when lower life is shorn.

For all creatures on the earth I stand  
On the path to higher spirit land.  
Human beings, too, shall pass this way,  
And I promise there shall come a day  
When you'll gaze upon the higher man;  
Fathom all God's deep and wondrous plan.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! - to bow at human feet,  
For man's true Self 'tis destined you shall meet.  
He will lift you to the heights above,  
And return in fullest measure all your love.  
Then you will to his own speech aspire,  
To fulfill for him this keen desire.

*The Phoenix exits. There is a pause.*

## MULE

I suppose the children are searching for me...

## DOG

I should this moment be walking by the side of my master...

## BIRD

I must return to the city and sing in the trees for the apartment dwellers....

*All three exit.*

***End of Drama***

# **The Appointment**

## **Young Michael Faraday**

### ***Characters:***

Michael Faraday, young scientist

Benjamin Abbott, friend of Michael

Margaret, Michael's ten-year-old sister

Mrs. Margaret Faraday, Michael's mother

Sir Humphry Davy, Fellow of the Royal Society

***Time:*** December 1812 through March 1813

***Place:*** London, England: a bookbinding shop; room in the home at Weymouth Street; outdoors; anteroom of the lecture theatre of the Royal Institution; Michael's room at the Royal Institution

***Scene:*** The set should be abstracted to accommodate the scene changes, with realistic touches. A door is formed between upstage flats. The smaller flat is angled at right; the large flat spans center and left, also angling downstage somewhat. At the point where the left flat begins to angle is a tall window. (For the anteroom scene, a semicircular stained glass arch with sunrise motif is placed atop this window.) The area behind the flats is an abstracted backdrop which reflects various colors and patterns throughout the play. At the opening of the play there is a table right of center with two chairs. On the table are various bookbinding tools, and unbound books, papers, shears, boards, cloth, etc. On one of the chairs some books and a notebook are stacked. Left of the window sits a bench. Exits and entrances are also at right and left.

***At Rise:*** Michael Faraday, carrying a jar of paste and some brushes, enters from the left. He is twenty-one years old, with dark, wavy hair parted in the center, and gentle, though lively gray eyes. He wears an apron over dark vest and trousers, and a white shirt with a high collar around which a dark bow is tied. He sets the supplies on the table, then looking towards the window, he crosses to it and gazes out forlornly.

**MICHAEL**

Here am I then, likely to spend my life in the solitary occupation of bookbinding, most intimately acquainted with cloths, shears, paper, paste, brush and book; looking at times out upon the busy street, wondering how other men spend their days... They are certainly not always inside, as I; they walk freely enough about.

(He sighs deeply, returns to the table and continues his work. In the midst of his occupation, however, his mind wanders and he picks up the notebook. He reads from an attached clipping.)

“Galvinism... Mr. Davy has announced to the Royal Society a great discovery in chemistry – the fixed alkalies have been decomposed by the galvanic battery.”

*He sets the clipping aside.*

And my notebook... *(He reads)* “I have lately made a few simple galvanic experiments to illustrate to myself the first principles of the science. I obtained some nickel and malleable zinc, in the thinnest pieces possible, or in a flattened state. I used these pieces as discs, combining them with copper to make a little battery...”

*(He is lost in thought when the bell on the shop door is heard, off at up-right.)*

Mr. De le Roche back so soon?

*(He returns to his bookbinding work, and his friend, Benjamin Abbott, peers around the door frame.)*

BENJAMIN

Busy at work, I see.

MICHAEL

*(Rising to greet his friend)* Why, if it's not Sir Ben himself! What brings you here midday, sir? Pray, come in.

*(Michael bows humorously, and Benjamin enters. He is a well-dressed young man – a municipal clerk – somewhat younger than Michael. He wears a winter frock coat.)*

BEN

I was out on an errand, and saw Mr. De le Roche steadfastly headed in the opposite direction, so I came in to say hello.

MICHAEL

And a welcome visitor you are!

BEN

Our excellent correspondence has fallen into neglect.

MICHAEL

Oh, yes, now that I'm a wage earner I've far less time and liberty than before.

BEN

And you're unhappy about it, I sense, ill content to be the journeyman bookbinder.

MICHAEL

I fear I am greatly discontent. And Mr. De le Roche, being a Frenchman – all and well – is a passionate man with an unpredictable nature, a difficult man to work with, though he likes me well enough.

BEN

I've never known anyone who didn't like you. You're the most likeable fellow around.

MICHAEL

But alas! – What will happen to the spirit of me, tied to a trade I despise.

BEN

So tell me, what forays have you made into the world of “service to science?” Have you prospects?

MICHAEL

None, I must admit. You'll recall the results of my letter last spring to Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society. When I visited his house, naturally enough, “no answer” was the reply on the card left with the porter. This unpleasant experience leaves me reluctant to be so bold again.

BEN

Let me encourage you, then. I saw your friend Mr. Dance the other day. He's, after all, a Fellow of the Society, and he's suggested you write Sir Humphry Davy, sending him the excellent notes you took at his lectures.

MICHAEL

Mr. Dance was kind enough to share with me his tickets to Davy's lectures, yes.

BEN

Return his kindness by taking his advice.

MICHAEL

Should I, Ben?

BEN

Absolutely. Mr. Dance is genuinely impressed with your notes and drawings; he believes Davy could not fail to appreciate them.

MICHAEL

Perhaps... Speaking of notes, I must tell you how my experiments with the small galvanic battery are proceeding.

BEN

I'm keenly interested.

MICHAEL

These experiments you know I began last summer, and succeeded in decomposing the sulfate of magnesia, copper, lead, and... water? Well, sir, you may be correct in doubting, but I inserted the battery wires into some water and in a short time strong action commenced. (*With great enthusiasm*) A dense – I may really say dense – white cloud of matter descended from the positive wire, and bubbles rose rapidly from the negative wire, though after a time the activity slackened. Could the battery have been exhausted? I substituted a fresh portion of water for that which had been galvanized, and the action commenced again and went on as before, yet after a while ceasing.

BEN

Had the water truly decomposed?

MICHAEL

I'm not certain. Our water comes through iron pipes, and is retained in a leaden cistern. It also holds a small portion of muriatic acid, and no doubt carbonic acid. These would have effects.

BEN

Only think of the work it will take you to determine if these elements are causing the effects.

MICHAEL

And where shall I find the time for such work? – And many other investigations I believe would be important for the science of chemistry, and perhaps electricity. I noticed for instance, not long ago, that several of the metals when rubbed emit a peculiar smell, especially tin. Now, smells are supposed to be caused by particles of the body that are given off. If so, then it introduces to our notice a very volatile property of these metals. But I suspect their electric states are concerned, and then we have an operation of that fluid that has seldom been noticed, and yet requires accounting for before the science can be completed.

BEN

All these experiments, all these observations will leave you well prepared for working with Davy.

MICHAEL

Working with Davy... Dare I hope it might really happen?

BEN

It very well might, but you must write him first. You won't disappoint me, Sir Mike?

MICHAEL

Nay, Sir Ben.

BEN

Especially as I'm most interested in following your progress, too, on the effect of nitrous oxide on Cupid.

MICHAEL

And since galvanism now aids nitrous oxide, it will not be possible for the little urchin to keep his ground.

BEN

He shall be conquered by science!

*They both laugh.*

MICHAEL

But let us not laugh too much in earnest, the little god will hear us and be offended, then we shall be in serious trouble.

BEN

Yes, indeed, let us change the subject. What was the outcome of that contest you had with those gentlemen respecting perpetual motion?

MICHAEL

On this topic we're permitted to laugh as much as we please. Ah yes, I was induced to go and witness this motion. The thing was in the window of a watchmaker's shop, situated in a passage at the east side of the Royal exchange. After inquiring, I ascertained that this example of perpetual motion was called the "inclined-plate clock." However, it required winding-up every fourteen days.

BEN

You won the contest! Did they concede?

MICHAEL

They would not concede to a bookbinder.

BEN

Be of good cheer, thou future Servant of Science, and put this good cheer to work on your letter. Well, I expect I must be on my way, the magistrate himself will come looking for the errant clerk. Have a good day.

MICHAEL

I'm purely at the day's mercy.

BEN

I shall patiently await your next eloquent letter.

*Ben exits up-right; the bell is soon heard again.*

MICHAEL

"...An honest man, close buttoned to the chin,  
Broad cloth without, and a warm heart within."

*Michael diligently goes back to work, but soon lifts his head thoughtfully.*

Something else I observed... on separating the discs of the battery from each other, I found that some of the zinc discs had got a coating – superficial in some parts – of metallic copper, and that some of the copper discs had a coating of oxide of zinc....

(Lights fade out. As the lights fade up, the stage is set for the home on Weymouth Street. There is a Bible and a glowing oil lamp on the table, which is covered with a festive cloth. Wreaths in the making are also spread on the table and bench. There is an extra chair on the set. Margaret, a 10-year-old girl, enters carrying a basket of apples. She wears a plain dress and apron with pockets. She sets the basket on the table. Mrs. Margaret Faraday enters carrying a dish of sweetmeats. She is a small, gentle woman wearing a long dress, a lace cap and apron.)

MRS. FARADAY (MOTHER)

And sweetmeats to complete our Christmas eve festivity. Our meal tonight was humble, my love, because we must always remember how poor Mary and Joseph were the night before the Savior's birth. But the infant Jesus would want us to have a few sweets for dessert.

MARGARET

May I have one?

MOTHER

We must wait for Michael to come down. Now, go and complete your wreath, and we shall put it on our door.

MARGARET

Shall not one of these wreaths be ours?

MOTHER

No, Margaret, these are for the brethren of our congregation. Don't look so disappointed, your little wreath is very special.

(Margaret crosses to the bench and Mrs. Faraday sits down at the table; they proceed with their wreath-making.)

I doubt we shall have more snow tomorrow, the sky is clear. Matters could change, however, hindering our visits.

MARGARET

*(Holding up a decorative dove)* If it snows, my little dove can carry all the gifts through the air on her wings.

*Michael enters. He wears a frock coat over the basic costume of the first scene.*

MICHAEL

Something sweet, I see.

MOTHER

Help yourself then, and Margaret –

*Margaret dashes over, takes candy and an apple, and returns to the bench.*

MICHAEL

Sweet smelling, too. Not tin, no, nor any other metal, but... sugar.

*He pops a piece into his mouth, then looks about the room.*

By the way, I wonder if I left a note down here anywhere.

MOTHER

I don't believe so.

MICHAEL

Sad enough it is I should lose ideas and thoughts for want of noting them, but here I've gone and lost the note. Something to do with the question of whether chlorine has a simple or compound nature...

MOTHER

He thinks of chemistry even on Christmas eve.

MICHAEL

Oh?... *(He sits down at the table)* The holly now is of natural matter, composed of?... *(laughs)* I shall not bore you, nor spoil your enjoyment of the wreaths.

MOTHER

You do not bore us, but reveal the wonders of things. Of what is the holly made?

MICHAEL

I'm not certain precisely, but I do know of infinitely smaller and smaller particles, the seeming opposite of the infinitely greater and greater universe. Did you glimpse the stars tonight?

MOTHER

Yes, and I pray the skies will be clear tomorrow. Well I remember the many Christmas days your father and I would carry our wreaths and gifts through the deep snow. Poor dear James, gone two years now. He would be proud of your brother, who has become a blacksmith in his place. And you, Michael, how pleased he would be with your successful apprenticeship.

MICHAEL

Would he not be better pleased, Mother, were I to find a place in science?

MOTHER

Of course he would! He was aware of your earnest desire to improve yourself, noticing the many times you came home with your eyes all aglow over the books you had read.

MICHAEL

I'm certain I've read the whole of the Encyclopedia Britannica, beginning with "Electricity." Mother, you know I really must find a way out of bookbinding?

MOTHER

What suited you as a boy does not fit the man.

MICHAEL

At least I am secure, and the wages good. Science, being desirable, may not provide as well... Yet I want to take care of you.

MOTHER

I will not have you unhappy for my sake. And your brother is in full agreement. We can manage. Michael, you have abilities; you have your whole life ahead of you.

MICHAEL

I had hoped to obtain a place – an easy place, too – starting at five hundred pounds per year, but it was mechanics: drawing, mathematics, and so forth, and I have not employed my mind with these matters, but with science. Alas! Alas! But fancy my earning up to eight hundred pounds a year! You would never have to take another lodger into our home.

MOTHER

There are good reasons why you have not occupied your mind with mechanics. I believe science may be what God intends for you. Your brother and I never let a day pass without a prayer for you.

MICHAEL

And I pray for you both, that you shall not suffer for my selfishness. As for ability, I thank that Cause to whom thanks are due that I am not in general a profuse waster of those blessings which are bestowed on me as a human being.

MOTHER

May God guide your way... You have not heard from Sir Humphry Davy yet?

MICHAEL

I fear not, though he's had my – I should say, pleading letter and quarto notebook for a week now, more than enough time to look them over and reply.

MOTHER

He will reply.

MICHAEL

If only I could feel so certain. I can do little but recall my unpleasant experience with Sir Joseph Banks. At least nothing could be worse than “no answer.”

MOTHER

Be of good cheer, 'tis Christmas.

MICHAEL

Ah, good news would bring good cheer.

MOTHER

The letter will arrive any day.

MARGARET

Oh! You are looking for a letter, Michael?

MICHAEL

Yes...

MARGARET

I have it here.

MICHAEL

What? –

*Margaret stands and removes a letter from her pocket.*

MARGARET

It came today while Mummy was out gathering holly. I put it in my pocket and forgot about it.

MICHAEL

Oh, Margaret, you imp, you didn't! She's as forgetful as I!...

*He jumps up and takes the letter from Margaret.*

Sir Humphry Davy! Look Mother, H. Davy is written on the back of the envelope!

*Mrs. Faraday rises to look at the letter.*

MOTHER

It truly is from Sir Humphry! Open it, son.

*With trembling hands, Michael opens the envelope, unfolds the letter and reads.*

MICHAEL

“December 24, 1812. To Mr. Faraday: Sir, - I am far from displeased with the proof you have given me of your confidence, and which displays great zeal, power of memory, and attention. I am obliged to go out of town, and shall not be settled in town till the end of January; I will then see you at any time you wish. It would gratify me to be of service to you; I wish it may be in my power. I am, Sir, your obedient humble servant, H. Davy.”

*With so much intensity of feeling, Michael paces.*

“I am far from displeased,” he says, and this is far, far from “no answer!” It is a most polite, kind and encouraging letter. I shall have to wait a month before seeing him, but at least it will be a month full of hope. What worries me is “I wish it may be in my power,” for this suggests it may not be within his power.

MOTHER

Well, there should be some room for question. It is only his first letter; he has not met you yet. Also, there are likely others besides himself who must decide.

MICHAEL

Hmmm....

MOTHER

This is good news. Thank the Lord for it, and consider: what is the truest good news of this season? Our Savior was born.

MICHAEL

You are right, Mother. Hope for me, but of far greater importance, hope and joy for mankind. I feel exuberant! Let us celebrate!

*He takes Mrs. Faraday's hands and they dance around in a circle.*

MICHAEL

'Tis Christmas eve and all is well,  
And Michael goes a'sciencing.

MARGARET

I want to dance, too!

*Margaret joins the circle.*

MICHAEL

'Tis Christmas day and all can say  
That Michael goes a'sciencing.

MARGARET

A'sciencing, a'sciencing,  
Michael goes a'sciencing!

MICHAEL

He fills his head with chemistry,  
And it affects his memory,  
Yet everyone can clearly see  
That Michael goes a'sciencing.

MARGARET

A'sciencing, a'sciencing,  
Michael goes a'sciencing!

MICHAEL

Ha, ha, ha, hah! Ha, ha, ha, ha, hah!

MOTHER

Oh, my dears, I shall be out of breath.

*They cease dancing and Mrs. Faraday sits down at the table.*

MICHAEL

Refreshment!

*Michael and Margaret take more sweetmeats.*

MOTHER

Ah, Michael, if – I should say when you receive an appointment with Sir Humphry, I shall have reason to be even prouder of you than I am now – if that be possible. Think how pleased your friends Mr. Dance and Mr. Abbott will be to hear of your letter.

MICHAEL

I shall have to write them at once! –

MOTHER

Not just at this moment, perhaps. I had hoped you would read from the Bible for your sister and myself.

MICHAEL

Certainly.

MOTHER

Let us gather round the table then.

MARGARET

My little dove, too.

(Margaret takes her dove from the bench and places it on the table. She and Michael sit down and Mrs. Faraday opens the Bible.)

MOTHER

Why, a paper is marking this evening's passage...

MICHAEL

Oh!... That's where I put my note! Where it could not be missed on Christmas eve. How very clever.

*Mrs. Faraday gives him the note and he reads it.*

“In regard to the simple or compound nature of chlorine... perhaps it matters not whether the sodium be named *chlorate* or *chloride*. It is not so much a matter of terms as truth, the kind of truth variable through repeated experiment, irregardless of what authorities assert...” Yes, indeed.

*He puts the note into his pocket, takes the Bible from Mrs. Faraday and reads.*

“Luke 2:8: And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the lord appeared to them, and the glory of the lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them: ‘Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord...’”

*Fade out.*

(The stage is next set for the anteroom scene and the outdoor scene. Atop the window is the semicircular stained glass arch. Against the right flat is a chair and a table. The table is covered with a fringed cloth and holds a simple electrical machine and chemistry instruments. Two chairs

are at left. The bench is placed at the extreme down-right for the outdoor scene. At rise, the lights fade up on the down-right area and the rest of the stage remains in darkness. Michael and Ben enter from the right. Added to their costumes are hats and woolen scarves.)

BEN

We have some time before your interview. Let's sit down here, though it's a cold spot.

*They sit down on the bench.*

Staying calm, are you?

MICHAEL

Reasonably calm – not entirely. In truth, the cold helps.

BEN

I can only offer support right up to the door, but after that, well, a friend can only go so far. Speaking of friendship, we've taken up that topic again at the Philosophical Society, another ethical concern to complement our scientific work. Can you come this Wednesday – at Tatum's?

MICHAEL

You know very well the discussions are for members only.

BEN

Why not become a member then?

MICHAEL

Members are from the humblest ranks, but there are no tradesmen.

BEN

No one has said there couldn't be a tradesman.

MICHAEL

I say I couldn't be the only one.

BEN

You had expressed some ideas about friendship to me previously and I thought them profound. Refresh my memory and you'll at least be at the meeting in spirit. Sir Mike truly speaking!

MICHAEL

What were my thoughts on that subject?... I believe it wise to be cautious in respect of new acquaintances and in fact, this caution limits my friends to a very small number. I scrutinized you, and after putting all doubt to rest, I find myself indebted to you for many a sober turn or bend in my reason. Your education is far superior to mine.

BEN

But does my zeal match yours?

MICHAEL

Why, certainly.

BEN

I've had less to overcome than you.

MICHAEL

The course of a life is like a river, sometimes running rapidly, sometimes slowly. Now to friendship... in every action in our lives I conceive that reference should be made to a Superior Being, and in no way should we oppose or act contrary to His precepts. Bearing this in mind, I would define a true friend as one who will serve his companion next to God. Yet, consider the almost infinite strength that would be required for this, and in addition, the complete self-knowledge. I must confess, examining my own deficiencies, I could not fill the character.

BEN

You are harsh with yourself. Taking everyone's deficiencies into consideration then, you'd agree that a friend cannot be chosen from any particular rank; he could be met on the lowest path in life, while a false friend can come from a superior rank.

MICHAEL

Yes, what matters is that the character is of high morals.

BEN

A man should be constantly improving his mind.

MICHAEL

Instead of spending all of his efforts arranging the body, speech and habits into a nice form so as to appear commendable. I fancy I have said enough on this subject. What time is it?

BEN

*(Looking at his waistcoat watch)* Time you were going inside.

*Both rise from the bench.*

MICHAEL

You have my sincere thanks for your fine companionship up to the door and for relieving my worries with splendid philosophical discussion.

BEN

I shall pray all goes well; that you find a place at the Royal Institution *and* find the peace of mind and heart to join our Society.

(Ben tips his hat and exits. The lights fade up on the stage and Michael crosses to center, removing his hat and scarf. He notices the objects on the table and crosses to observe them, placing his hat and scarf on the nearby chair. In a few moments, Sir Humphry Davy enters from the left. He is a slender man with intense dark eyes and a bemused expression, the play of a smile about his lips. He is dressed in the professor's black frock coat, with waistcoat, high collar, etc. He observes Michael for a few moments before speaking.)

DAVY

Mr. Michael Faraday?

MICHAEL

(*Turning*) Yes, sir.

DAVY

I am Sir Humphry Davy, Professor of Chemistry and Director of the Laboratory. You're a very young man, I see. Your age?

MICHAEL

Twenty-one, sir.

DAVY

Observing the items on the table, were you?

MICHAEL

Oh, yes...

DAVY

What do you think of them?

MICHAEL

I've constructed similar electrical machines. One like this, with a glass phial, and also one with a real cylinder.

DAVY

So electricity interests you as much as chemistry?

MICHAEL

I've devoted most of my spare time to chemistry, but I'm fascinated with how much there is to be done with the many electrical theories. As for the instruments, I was trying to guess what they might have been used for.

DAVY

For a demonstration showing the conversion of two liquids into a solid. These items, which the speaker used yesterday evening, have not yet been put away. This is because we do not presently have a laboratory assistant. The position is vacant. Might you be interested in this position?

MICHAEL

Yes, sir!

DAVY

The responsibilities are mundane for the most part: assisting lecturers in preparation and during their lectures; cleaning and replacing instruments after use; cleaning and dusting the models in the repository and all the instruments in the glass case; keeping a record of repairs... and a few other duties I cannot recall at the moment. Let us sit down and talk further.

*They cross to the chairs and sit down.*

The most mundane chore we have is bottle washing. How would you feel about that?

MICHAEL

I believe a knowledge of chemistry is necessary for the proper cleaning of the bottles.

DAVY

This brings me to an important question. Tell me, Mr. Faraday, what is your education?

MICHAEL

I had no opportunity for formal education, sir, but became a bookbinder's apprentice at the age of fourteen. However, I've studied diligently in the areas of science and philosophy and have attended many lectures. At the home of Mr. Tatum, and your own, of course.

DAVY

As I believe I wrote you, your notes of my lectures here are most impressive, displaying great powers of memory and attention stemming from obvious zeal for the field.

MICHAEL

I have read the first published volume of your work, *Elements of Chemical Philosophy*, and have discussed at length with friends your discovery of chlorine as a simple substance rather than a compound of oxygen. Having watched your experiments at the lectures, I hope it does not seem immodest for me to say I could only agree with your conclusions.

DAVY

Which experiments in particular are you referring to?

MICHAEL

When you heated dry muriatic acid gas with the peroxide of manganese; water formed rapidly and the chlorine gas was liberated. Also, with the litmus paper, when chlorine was shown to have no effect on vegetable colors, proving it to be of a very different nature than the acids.

DAVY

Hmmmm... yes, I am proceeding further with this work; the second volume of my book shall present most convincing arguments. You sir, show a good understanding of the processes involved in chemical discoveries. I wonder if you might not be better fitted for the situation than the situation is for you?... You indicated in your letter to me your present occupation is journeyman bookbinder?

MICHAEL

Yes, sir.

DAVY

A trade which cost you many years of apprenticeship. You would not now prefer this trade over science?

MICHAEL

No, sir, I am desirous of serving science. Scientific and philosophic men have superior moral feelings and service to science makes them, I believe, amiable, liberal and wise.

*Davy smiles and rises from his chair. Michael also starts to stand.*

DAVY

No, no, sit down, please. *(He crosses thoughtfully to center)* Excuse me for smiling, young man, but I must point out to you that, far from your ideal presumption, science is a hard mistress, and from a pecuniary point of view, rewards but scantily those who devote themselves to her. Comfort and success are assured you in the trade of which you are now a master, whereas our position of laboratory assistant will pay you only 25 shillings a week. We do provide two small rooms at the top of the house... As to men of science having superior moral feelings, I must inform you that even this glorious pursuit can be carried on for ignoble ends, and by ignoble means. I would advise you therefore not to abandon the sure path of commerce for the uncertain and far from lucrative pursuit of knowledge.

*Michael rises hesitantly from the chair.*

MICHAEL

I... do not consider the remunerative rewards to be of equal value to the satisfaction of working in the field of one's choice. What the Institution has to offer is quite pleasing to me.

DAVY

I can only imagine you might have cause to regret your decision later in life. I should not like to be responsible for a step you might wish you had never taken... Think matters over very carefully. By the way, having examined your quarto notebook for its splendid binding as well as its content, I would be willing to procure for you the whole of the bookbinding work needed by the Institution, including my own books and those of any friends I can influence.

MICHAEL

That is very kind of you, Sir Humphry, and if you do not find me acceptable for service here, my master, Mr. De le Roche, will likewise be very happy with your offer.

DAVY

Does your master know you are seeking to leave?

MICHAEL

Yes, and he tries to persuade me to remain.

DAVY

So his advice to you is the same as mine. We shall see what happens... sometimes the choices are not ours to make, but are determined by circumstances beyond our control. Your situation is unusual... Now, before we close the interview, I should like to point out to you another duty of the assistant. This escaped my thoughts earlier, or perhaps I wished to be cautious. You will be required to help me with my work, and presently I am engaged in experiments with the chloride of nitrogen. Such compounds can be dangerous. We're careful and we protect ourselves with masks, but the element of danger is always there.

MICHAEL

*(Eyes alight)* Compound of nitrogen?... I have had many a mishap with my own humble experiments, including some serious cuts.

DAVY

Very well then... This brings the interview to a close. I believe I have touched upon everything. Have you any questions?

MICHAEL

None, sir. And let me say again, I would be extremely grateful and happy to find a place here.

DAVY

We shall see.

MICHAEL

Thank you, sir, good day.

*Michael starts to exit.*

DAVY

Ah, Mr. Faraday, don't forget your hat.

MICHAEL

Oh – no, sir – I mean, thank you, sir!

*Michael retrieves his hat and scarf and exits.*

DAVY

Most unusual... Amiable, liberal and wise. The superior moral feelings of scientific men...  
Hmmpf!... A few years of experience will set him right on that matter.

(He exits and the lights fade out. The lights fade up on the home at Weymouth Street, however, the setting is simpler. Mrs. Faraday is sitting in a chair, sewing. The chair is placed near the window, where she draws the last light of the day. Next to the chair is a sewing basket. Nearby is the bench, on which can be seen various pieces of fabric. She looks up and gazes out the window with a silent prayer, then looks back to her sewing work. Michael enters from the left, clearly glum. He wears a coat over a plain shirt, with no waistcoat or collar.)

MRS. FARADAY (MOTHER)

Did you find your sister, Michael?

MICHAEL

Yes, and I brought her home. Now she wants to play outside with her friend.

MOTHER

She may for awhile. The sun is still shining and the weather calm. As soon as March arrives, Margaret believes it is spring; she believes winter is gone forever. The days *are* longer... You, Michael, are still in the midst of winter, quiet and low.

MICHAEL

*(Sitting down on the bench)* If my mood affects you, I'm sorry.

MOTHER

I am buoyed by faith that your future is secure.

MICHAEL

I am not so certain... there has been no word from Davy since my brief work with him as amanuensis.

MOTHER

Amanuensis?

MICHAEL

He asked me to do his writing for him. I hadn't told you, but he was wounded in the eye from an explosion of the chloride of nitrogen.

MOTHER

Oh!...

MICHAEL

It was not very serious; he recovered. Now, I suppose, he has no further use for me.

MOTHER

I believe you are never far from his thoughts. He could not overlook someone like yourself.

MICHAEL

I also hadn't told you... he's taken on someone else as laboratory assistant, a William Payne.

MOTHER

Oh, I'm sorry to hear this, son...

MICHAEL

The fellow has the proper education.

MOTHER

Still... call it what you please – the Lord's answer to a mother's prayer perhaps – I believe you have a future at the Royal Institution.

MICHAEL

Well, now, if mothers were masters of this world!...

MOTHER

You're still preparing, aren't you?

MICHAEL

I fear I must leave philosophy and science entirely in the hands of those who are more fortunate in the possession of time and means.

*He rises from the bench.*

I believe I'll retire early this evening.

MOTHER

Again?

MICHAEL

You know, Davy believes he's done me a favor. He quite honestly believes that bookbinding can provide for me a happier life... He should know I will never remain in the paper-hanging trade, no matter what happens.

*He turns to exit.*

MOTHER

All the brethren of the congregation are praying for you.

MICHAEL

That is comforting.

(Michael exits through the door. Mrs. Faraday sighs and returns to her sewing. Presently, she hears something on the street outside the window and rises to look out. Seeing nothing, she sits back down to work.)

MOTHER

Ah, the light begins to fade. I had best call in Miss Margaret.

(She puts down her work and is about to rise when Margaret's voice is heard offstage at left.)

MARGARET

Mummy! Mummy!

*Margaret runs in holding a letter.*

Look! Look, Mummy! A letter for Michael! And it was delivered by a footman who came in a grand coach! Did you see it?

MOTHER

*(Rising)* I thought I heard something –

MARGARET

The footman said it was Sir Humphry Davy's coach! I told him I would give the letter to my brother!

MOTHER

Let me see it, love... *(taking the letter from Margaret)* Oh, dear Lord, it is a letter from Sir Humphry!

*They both cross to the left.*

Michael! Come down at once! A letter has just arrived from Sir Humphry! It was delivered by a footman in his grand coach!

MICHAEL

*(Off)* I shall be down!

MOTHER

I was only just telling him not to despair.

MARGARET

*(Hopping about)* Michael goes a'sciencing! A'sciencing, a'sciencing!....

*(Michael enters putting his coat on and balancing one boot under one arm. He sits down on the bench and puts the boot on.)*

MICHAEL

You're certain it's from Sir Humphry?

MARGARET

Didn't you see the coach?

MICHAEL

I heard it, but there are always coaches on the street.

*He rises, takes the letter from Mrs. Faraday and opens it, reading quickly.*

I would not have believed this possible a few moments ago. He refers to our former interview and inquires as to whether I'm still of the same mind. He will give me the place of assistant in the laboratory –

MOTHER

The appointment! He has given you the appointment!

MICHAEL

He ejected the former occupant – William Payne – the previous day. The salary is still to be 25 shillings a week, and the two rooms at the top of the house. If interested, I'm to call on him tomorrow morning. If interested!... Margaret, you're again the bearer of good news!

*He picks her up, twirls her around, and sets her back down on the floor.*

MARGARET

A'sciencing, a'sciencing!

MICHAEL

Ha, ha, ha, ha, hah!

MOTHER

You're moving away...

MICHAEL

Mother can use my room – not for lodgers!

MARGARET

Come and visit us in the grand coach!

MICHAEL

I don't believe the coach is part of the bargain. I'm to begin washing bottles and that sort of thing – I will do so gladly!

MOTHER

Are the rooms furnished? Perhaps not very well... I shall give you some of our furniture – and linens...

MICHAEL

Listen to her, already planning how my rooms are to be arranged and supplied. Mother, if you'll be so good as to forgive me, I must go out at once and tell Ben Abbott, and Mr. Dance and Mr. De Le Roche and – everyone!

MOTHER

Margaret, dear, fetch his hat and scarf from the peg.

*Margaret exits through the door.*

Mr. De le Roche will be extremely disappointed to lose you.

MICHAEL

I know, but he half expects it.

*Margaret returns with the hat and scarf which Michael quickly puts on.*

MICHAEL

Good-bye now... Bring out a special pie this evening, can you?

MOTHER

Certainly!... Come back soon.

*She kisses him good-bye and he exits. She sits down in the chair and begins crying.*

MARGARET

Mummy! What's wrong?

MOTHER

I was just remembering him when he was a boy. He was a thin boy, though he had rosy cheeks... and full, tousled hair. He was so happy when he acquired his first work – delivering newspapers. Then there was the joy of his apprenticeship. We had so little... he was given only one loaf of bread a week, and it had to last him. He did so much better for himself than your father and I could do for him... Now he's to be a great scientist!....

MARGARET

He'll come visit us, won't he? Even if it can't be in the coach?

MOTHER

Of course he will. Now, let us clean this room... put all the cloth away... there can be no more sewing tonight.

*Mrs. Faraday puts her sewing things in the basket and Margaret collects the fabrics from the bench.*

I wish your father was here. He would be so proud!... A Faraday has not advanced from the trades for many, many years....

(The lights fade and in the dim light Mrs. Faraday removes the chair as well as the basket, and Margaret moves the position of the bench. They exit and the lights fade out. They fade up again on the down-right area of the stage. Michael enters from the left in dim light and crosses to the down-right area, carrying a box. As he reaches the down-right area, Ben's voice is heard offstage.)

BEN

Michael!

*Ben enters from the right.*

MICHAEL

Sir Ben!

BEN

I was at Weymouth Street and was told you had begun moving into your rooms. You were either at the Institution or somewhere between Albemarle and Weymouth. So, here you are! I fancy you've emptied this box and – (*lifting the lid*) why, it's not empty! Pray, which way to Albemarle?

MICHAEL

The opposite way. My mother insists I take her good linens and I insist on returning them. She'll give me another argument, you may be sure.

BEN

Tell her to keep them till you're married – that will do the trick.

MICHAEL

I believe it will!

*They laugh.*

BEN

What she doesn't know – and no need to inform her – is that you've got Cupid in a glass bottle, owing to the nitrous oxide.

MICHAEL

No need to inform her, no.

BEN

May I help you move?

MICHAEL

I could use help, and you're very kind to offer. I cannot pay for a carriage, and a few more items need to be accounted for. You shall save me time.

BEN

I should like to see the rooms.

MICHAEL

They are small but adequate.

BEN

To Weymouth then, and the Institution.

(They exit right. The lights fade out and in a few moments fade up on the stage, which is bare except for the bench. Shortly, Michael and Ben re-enter from the right. Ben carries books, a flat wooden box and a telescope; Michael carries a chair and an oil lamp.)

BEN

Why, the rooms are quite comfortable.

*They set down the items and remove their hats.*

MICHAEL

There's a fine view of London from the window, and at night the stars can be seen clearly, as we're on the outskirts of the city.

BEN

Ah yes, your telescope will be useful up here. (*Peering through the door*) The bedroom is a fair size, and the bed... not bad.

MICHAEL

I wanted to move that table....

(He exits through the door and returns with a small table which he places left of center. He then places the chair behind it and the lamp upon it.)

BEN

Your writing materials, the telescope, a few books...

*Ben places these items on the table, then stands back and surveys the room.*

Well, a bit sparse, but it's home.

MICHAEL

Home... I cannot imagine myself happier than I am at this moment. I've everything I had ever hoped for, ever dreamed of... Here I am... at the Institution, with the laboratory but a few flights

below. I can manage my duties easily, and, most important, can become thoroughly involved with the vastly more important work of others.

BEN

You can also become a member of the Philosophical Society – now that you’ve moved into scientific circles.

MICHAEL

Yes, as soon as I’m familiar with all that Davy and the others shall require of me, I’ll be down to Tatum’s for the lectures – *and* the discussions.

BEN

As for this evening... (*He removes tickets from his pocket*) I’ve two tickets for Ranelagh’s – our usual stations under the orchestra. Too tired?

MICHAEL

Tired? I shall not get a wink of sleep this night.

BEN

Then we’ll go.

*They put on their hats.*

MICHAEL

How did you come by two tickets?

BEN

Quite simple – I bought them. I knew you wouldn’t sleep. Your eyes have been full of the stars all day; no need to take your fill tonight.

MICHAEL

You’re a true friend, and a very fine fellow, indeed! You must come to tea next Sunday....

(The two exit, right. The lights fade out and come up again. It is a week later. The setting is unchanged. Michael enters from the door carrying a stick with which he lights the lamp. He then picks up the telescope and crosses to the window, gazing out.)

MICHAEL

Venus... I find you are, among our visible planets, a – beautiful – object – certainly.

(He crosses back to the table, sitting down and opening the flat box. From the box he removes a letter, some paper and pen and ink. He both reads and muses through the letter.)

“Royal Institution, March 8, 1813. Dear Ben... It is now about nine o’clock, and the thought strikes me that the tongues are going at Tatum’s; yet I fancy myself much better employed than I should be at the lecture. Indeed, I have heard one lecture already today, and had a finger in it (I can’t say a hand, for I did very little). It was on mechanics, or rather on rotatory motion, and was a good lecture, but not very fully attended. As I know you will feel a pleasure in hearing how I’ve been occupied, I will inform you that I’ve been employed today, in part, in extracting the sugar from a portion of beetroot, and also in making a compound of sulphur and carbon – a combination which is lately of great interest to chemists. With respect to next Wednesday, I shall be occupied until late in the afternoon by Sir Humphry and must therefore decline seeing you at that time; this I am ready to do as I shall enjoy your company all the more next Sunday. You must not expect a long letter from me at this time, for I assure you my hand feels somewhat strange in the occupation, and this must plead in excuse for so uninteresting a compound....”

*He signs his name.*

M. Faraday.... The compound of sulfur and carbon?... (*Eyes alight*) I’ve some ideas I should note about this....

*He picks up a fresh piece of paper and begins writing intensely.*

*The lights fade out slowly.*

***End of Drama***



### **Reference Note**

Several biographies of Michael Faraday, as well as books of Faraday’s correspondence, were studied and translated into stage dialogue for *The Appointment*, including:

The Life and Letters of Faraday, by Henry Bence James, 1870.

Michael Faraday, Sandemanian and Scientist, by Geoffrey Cantor, 1991.

The Correspondence of Michael Faraday: 1811 – 13, Edited by Frank A.J.L. James

# Count Cagliostro

## *Characters:*

Count Cagliostro

Lorenza, his wife

Monsieur Duplessis, a good friend and pupil

Althotas, a teacher

The Count of St. Germaine, a teacher

*Time:* One year after the onset of the French Revolution

*Place:* A room in the prison of San Angelo, Rome

*Scene:* Room in the prison of San Angelo, Rome. In the room are a cot, table, lantern, and crude bench. To the right is a door with a small barred window. To the front can be imagined a high, narrow window.

*At Rise:* Cagliostro is sleeping on the cot. As though he hears a noise behind the door, he stirs and rises. He is a frail, once stout man with wavy, white hair and a white beard. His clothes are worn, his face beginning to look haggard. He walks to the door.

CAGLIOSTRO

Who is there? Answer me! I am being held here against my will! It is an injustice! I was seized and thrown into this prison, but I have committed no crime! Who is there? Answer me!....

*Silence. He peers through the window of the door and realizes there is no one on the other side.*

So, I was dreaming again. There were steps, beyond the door, in the hall. Someone had come on my behalf, I was to be released. How many times have I been caught up in that dream? And always just before I wake....

*He looks up at the window to the front.*

Well past dawn. I wonder the bells did not wake me. Such a deep sleep is unusual, though the waking... when will I learn that no one will come to release me? When first I arrived here, I counted the days; there would be compensation for each day of injustice, oh, yes!... What folly! I am forgotten. And I cannot fully persuade this ailing body that as long as I yearn for escape, I am

not free. To accept is to know freedom; to embrace rather than shun the silence is to escape; to see through the baleful garment of this room to the radiant paths awaiting beyond, that is release.

Sleep is my real enemy; through a loss of consciousness I can fall into weaknesses I would never permit. Then the body rules. To be fully awake, therein lies the true hope. Awake in thinking and when thinking wearies of these walls, awake in imagination!... Now I recall, today was to be different, special. When did I decide so?... Yesterday. It seemed an excellent idea; I thought it best to wait till morning. Could the night have robbed me of this joy, this treasure of an idea?...

Ah, yes! I am to be the magician once again, calling to life certain figures from my past – those most important to me. A bit of magic can be permitted for the now woeful adept of the Philosopher's Stone. He who stood in the opulent French court amidst the ladies in their pastel finery; he who pointed to the glittering, golden globe hanging from the ceiling and spoke of special air and light currents surrounding it; he who held in his heart the secret of the Elixir of Life, the Fountain of Youth... he who now dies aged; imprisoned – Oh, inglorious end! He is allowed once again to be a magician, but only once, and only because he, Cagliostro, is a true magician, one who has never lost Paradise, never, not even now!...

“How call to life these figures from the past?”... I can hear her childlike voice, my Lorenza... My dear child, did I not say these persons were important to me? Between us there was great sympathy, and not only sympathy, love. There is the answer to your question: I call to life these figures through the power of love!

*From the darkness, Lorenza enters. She is dressed as a nun.*

Lorenza! I hardly recognize you!

LORENZA

Did you love me for my fine clothes; for my long, dark hair?

CAGLIOSTRO

Your charms were gifts of the gods.

LORENZA

Then I am no longer in favor with the gods – they have taken all my charms away.

CAGLIOSTRO

Oh, no, your face is lovely, your eyes warm, and still quite large and curious.

LORENZA

And you! Look at you! Near the end, I believe you had become as bad as the French dandies

with their powdered wigs, perfumes and silken suits.

CAGLIOSTRO

One must conform to fashion.

LORENZA

So now you reflect the prison fashion.

CAGLIOSTRO

And you the nunnery.

LORENZA

I had to enter a nunnery to save my life, but when all this passes over, I shall escape.

CAGLIOSTRO

I fear you will never see me again, my dear.

LORENZA

I knew so!... Cagliostro... imprisoned by the Inquisition. They knew of your connection with the court; they took advantage of the revolution to seize you.

CAGLIOSTRO

It is so.

LORENZA

Why didn't you escape? Recall the night I urged you to flee!

CAGLIOSTRO

I should have listened to you.

LORENZA

If only you had not become famous!

CAGLIOSTRO

I wished to work in the world.

LORENZA

And now, a martyr's death.

CAGLIOSTRO

That is not a bad death. We must learn to accept destiny. The gods are wise.

LORENZA

How can the gods permit such horrors upon the earth?

CAGLIOSTRO

They have made men free, and it is longing for greater freedom that has brought about the revolution. The horrors... It is because men are not fully awake; the darkness has power over them.

LORENZA

But never over you, my dearest husband, my teacher. Oh, how can I live without you? I have always had need of your strength.

CAGLIOSTRO

Now you will discover your own strength.

LORENZA

You call me to say good-bye.

CAGLIOSTRO

Good-bye in life. In spirit we cannot be separated so long as you have need of my comfort. I will always be near.

LORENZA

He is so concerned for me, and look at his own suffering! You will be in my prayers; you will be lovingly in my thoughts; I will comfort you, beloved....

*They embrace.*

Good-bye!....

*She fades back into the darkness.*

CAGLIOSTRO

Lorenza... when first I met her, she was only a child. Later she became my pupil, then my wife. I believe she had no interest in my teaching apart from her love for me. Yet, was love not her way? Is Love not a teacher?... I fear she will never escape the nunnery. Where would she go? Our friends are exiled, imprisoned or dead. She is alone now; far removed from our life in Paris. I pray that through her trial she will discover strength within herself....

*He reacts to what seems a stirring outside the door.*

Is someone there?...

*He looks again through the window and again sees no one.*

Strange... there seemed a distinct sound. It is too early for my bread and water. This time I have not been sleeping. There comes upon me a sense of someone drawing near, yet no one I would call. Who might it be?... There can be no illusions of escape! False hopes stir the pain in my heart; increases the misery of my aching body....

Who next shall come to me?... Monsieur Duplessis! Bring tidings, my good friend!

*Monsieur Duplessis enters from the darkness.*

DUPLESSIS

Count Cagliostro!... Is it you?....

CAGLIOSTRO

Yes, it is I, though you've never seen me with a beard.

DUPLESSIS

No, and you are no longer fat.

CAGLIOSTRO

Well, I was not fat, though I did enjoy good food. Now, it seems, I eat less and less every day, though the food here is decent. But tell me, what events have transpired since last we met?

DUPLESSIS

Ah, my friend, you will perhaps not be surprised to learn that your name and reputation have been ruined! Someone... perhaps in the Church... has spread the lowest lies about you! It is said you are not a Count and your name is not Cagliostro; you are rather a Sicilian criminal named Joseph Balsamo –

CAGLIOSTRO

Sicilian!... Never! Not a Count? That is unimportant. Titles are forever in dispute.

DUPLESSIS

Not since the revolution. There are no titles.

CAGLIOSTRO

Duplessis, never mind the revolution, men will never give up their titles. What else is said of me?

DUPLESSIS

You are a trickster; a charlatan. Through black magic you influenced the members of the Court for your own profit –

CAGLIOSTRO

No, Duplessis, my magic is pure, healing; I am a good, a beneficent magician –

DUPLESSIS

No need to tell me that, my friend.

CAGLIOSTRO

What else?

DUPLESSIS

You were responsible, not only for the theft of the Queen's diamond necklace, but for several boxes of stolen jewels.

CAGLIOSTRO

Whoever told that lie has the jewels.

DUPLESSIS

No doubt.

CAGLIOSTRO

No more, I've heard enough. My fate is the fate of hundreds before me who sought only to do good, to bring truth and healing to a troubled world. But what has become of you since the revolution? Are you still in Paris?

DUPLESSIS

No, Paris is dangerous; hundreds are guillotined; the grand houses and art treasures are plundered. I fled to Vienna, where I have relatives.

CAGLIOSTRO

So, you are safe. And the others?

DUPLESSIS

I cannot account for some, but most have fled to England. After you were seized, there seemed little interest in the rest of us.

CAGLIOSTRO

That is good news. Tell me, where is the Count of St. Germaine?

DUPLESSIS

No one knows.

CAGLIOSTRO

I am certain he is safe. He predicted the revolution long before it happened; and he warned all of us, he even warned the Queen.

DUPLESSIS

Is there not some way I can help? Where are you? Can I help you to escape? Only tell me!...

CAGLIOSTRO

You cannot help me; don't be troubled. What have we learned about the end, about death? Shall we prove cowards when the time comes? No, we shall die with our eyes open, alert. Return to Vienna, cultivate the work as you would a garden. No matter what others say, always speak well of me, your friend.

DUPLESSIS

I will defend you against calumnies!

CAGLIOSTRO

Till we meet again, Monsieur Duplessis....

*Duplessis fades into the darkness.*

(With a sudden deep weariness, Cagliostro sits down on the bench by the table. He lays his head on the table, then slowly he raises his head, looking at the table.)

CAGLIOSTRO

I can see the priceless book! The golds, the deep blues and reds of the pictures. My hands can turn the pages again! There is a pyramid bathed in the golden light of the sun. I feel the sands of Egypt sifting through my fingers; the dry heat warms my back, even in this damp cell. Beyond, the great sphinx can be seen as though in the shadow of the pyramid... The sphinx lies majestic, a stone image from the invisible world of archetypes, a memory of the past, the warning eye gazing upon the shadows, the deceits of the present. Oh ancient Egypt, where the gods were active in the lives of men, I longed to bring your divine peace and wisdom to the present, I longed to ease the turmoil of the times!...

*Althotas appears from the darkness, a tall imposing figure in gold and carmine robes, a mitre on his head.*

Althotas! (*Rising*) I would never have called you! You, as though the image of all that is highest in me!....

ALTHOTAS

Before me, you saw my book. Recall the book that I gave you.

CAGLIOSTRO

Gone now....

ALTHOTAS

In the safe keeping of your friends. But have you truly lost the book?

CAGLIOSTRO

No, it lives in my heart.

ALTHOTAS

Cagliostro, many times I told you: the past cannot be brought into the present. I thought you understood. Why do the pyramids and sphinx lie in ruins? What the gods once poured down on man was withdrawn that he might know freedom and in freedom begin his long re-ascent to heaven. The secret of the Elixir of Life which I imparted to you was desired to prolong physical beauty. Yet the secret is always safe, for the Elixir cannot be used for selfish purposes. I say this so you may realize once again that the paradisiacal gifts cannot now be given to men and women as in the past. You forgot what I told you, and persisted. The vain blinded you. The lofty vision

of the spherical globe which reflects the starry pictures you debased by concocting a ball with tinted mirrors; hanging this from the ceilings of palaces.

CAGLIOSTRO

Your words always have the effect of wounding me. I wished only to help others, to point to deep truths using simple devices.

ALTHOTAS

I am sorry my words must be painful. You helped many, yes, but too often you gave them the daught of the past! Evening after evening you shared stories of the great pyramids of the Pharaohs, the demigods, while around you the monarchy was collapsing because men had become kings! How was it you allowed yourself to be caught and imprisoned? You were blinded. Not only did St. Germaine warn the Queen of the revolution, he warned you as well, but you forgot his warning.

CAGLIOSTRO

I do recall this warning, in sorrow now. I tended to view the possibility of revolution as a glorious event; I could not believe I would be its victim.

ALTHOTAS

Yet you yourself said many times: if men do not recognize necessary evolutionary changes there will come chaos and catastrophe into the social order, for the changes must come, whether men have prepared themselves or not. You knew that those around you were sleeping.

CAGLIOSTRO

Yes, well, my present abode provides an ideal grounding for someone who cannot bring his head from out of the clouds; would you agree, Althotas?

ALTHOTAS

Yet I am pleased with your gift for dressing the bare frames of outer life with the glistening garments of inspired imagination.

CAGLIOSTRO

However, you would check my enthusiasm for expensive Eastern imports.

ALTHOTAS

Indeed, your capacity for worldliness is useful to us, but with such propensities there is always a

very thin line between necessity and desire. Hence the secret of the Philosopher's Stone did not entirely yield itself to you.

CAGLIOSTRO

Althotas, you have the power to set in motion the transforming processes, but first you stir misdeeds to shameful self-consciousness. Your presence in my life has always brought significant change in its disturbing wake; I expect that will not be different now.

ALTHOTAS

It is decreed: your constant and strenuous efforts in self-development and your generosity and beneficence to others shall this time bring your suffering to an early conclusion. Even so, I wonder you can stand and speak to me, I marvel at your strength and courage. Your body is wracked with pain; devastated. Yet the spirit is master. You may pass through the gates, Count Cagliostro!

*Althotas fades into the darkness.*

(With great bodily weariness and pain, Cagliostro turns to the cot and lies down. There is a pause while he lies very still with his eyes closed. Then bells can be heard. He opens his eyes and rises.)

CAGLIOSTRO

The bells!... At this time of day? How could it be?

(There is a stirring behind the door; the door opens and the Count of St. Germaine enters carrying a key. In contemporary dress, he wears colors of red and white.)

St. Germaine! Here!... How?...

ST. GERMAINE

My pupil! Oh, merciful Lord, how he has changed! He looks like a wizened elder. Come to me; place your hand on my heart.

CAGLIOSTRO

Oh, no... I couldn't! –

ST. GERMAINE

You can. No open wounds here, only invisible tears.

*Cagliostro places his hand on St. Germaine's heart.*

ST. GERMAINE

Too much substance here to pass through the walls, wouldn't you say?

CAGLIOSTRO

Beloved teacher....

ST. GERMAINE

So I passed through the halls, asking the guard for the key. He stared at me as though in a trance, then he gave me the key. It was really quite easy.

CAGLIOSTRO

Can I believe my eyes?

ST. GERMAINE

Or your touch?

CAGLIOSTRO

It is you!... I am to escape?

ST. GERMAINE

Well, my friend, even if you were to escape, you have very little time left. Today is the day of your death. Did you think I had forgotten you? Oh no, I longed to come earlier, but I could not. I was alarmed you had allowed yourself to be caught: did I not teach you better? Were you disappointed in me? Day after day my loving thoughts reached you only as stirrings behind the door....

Now is the time. Do you see the light beyond the door? As, yes, beyond the baleful garment of this room the radiant paths await. Come with me then, I am to lead you across the threshold!....

*St. Germaine guides Cagliostro through the door.*

*Bells increase in volume.*

***End of Drama***

# The White Stone

**Characters:**

Kenneth, the Elder

Robert, Son of Kenneth

Kenneth, the Younger

Lady Elaine

Lady Seaforth

**Time:** Mid-Seventeenth Century

**Place:** The Highlands, Scotland. Cottage of Kenneth, the Elder, and the Brahan Castle.

**Scene:** To the left, a raised platform with benches and table, etc. This suggests the small cottage of Kenneth the Elder. To the right and center the stone walls of the Brahan Castle can be suggested, with a large entrance rounded at the top. In the background can be seen a violet, rose and pale-blue horizon.

**At Rise:** The platform is lit; the stone walls and sky dim. Kenneth the Elder and Robert enter. Kenneth is grey-haired; a robust-looking man wearing sheepskins, deerskin shoes and a tartan wrap. Robert, a 16-year-old youth, is less bucolic-looking. Robert carries firewood.

KENNETH, ELDER

Set the firewood over there in the corner, my lad. We must not be without a fire today. Our sheep and newborn lambs are warm and safe; now we deserve similar protection against the spring chill.

ROBERT

The ice has not yet thawed.

KENNETH

Oh, no, not for weeks.

*Kenneth pours tea into mugs from a kettle.*

So, the morning work is done; now we have time to talk. Sit down, Robert.

*Robert, with some timidity, sits; Kenneth places scones on the table.*

Let me see if I have the story correct so far: You were born to Lady Elaine in a house belonging to the Earl of Seaforth, her brother. When the Earl's wife, the Lady Seaforth, died, you went with Elaine back to Brahan Castle and were raised by the Earl of Seaforth, who never re-married.

ROBERT

Yes, sir, it is true.

KENNETH

I do not question the truth of your story, my lad, after all, you handed me a letter written by the Earl of Seaforth on his deathbed; I recognize his seal and signature. No, I do not doubt the truth of any of this. I am merely reviewing the facts in my mind. When one has lived in the open country so long, lived with the rising and the setting sun, with the needs of the animals and the rhythms of nature, words and facts are no so readily assimilated.

ROBERT

I hope my presence is not distressful to you.

KENNETH

Gracious, no! You're a strong, healthy lad; handsome. Why should I be displeased? However, you must sense my... shock over the fact that Elaine never told me we had a son. Can you imagine my surprise? One spring day, a strapping lad walks up to me, hands me a sealed letter and says: "I am your son! This letter will prove my identity!"

ROBERT

I might have been less direct. Of course, I know she never told you.

KENNETH

Not only have I a son, but a castle as well! I am invited to return and share the estate with Lady Elaine. You must admit, it's a good deal to come over a man on a sudden.

ROBERT

Yes, sir, I'm sorry.

KENNETH

Well, don't be sorry you were born and now sit across from me with lively eyes full of questions.

ROBERT

Please tell me the story of the white stone, as you promised. Though all the folk on our isle remember the seer and the white stone, my uncle and my mother never spoke of it; they wanted you to tell me.

KENNETH

I will tell you the story of the white stone, yes. You must try to understand that it is difficult to relive the past; a man confronts what happened, not what might have been or what he might have said or done with the advantage of a few years of maturity.

ROBERT

Yes, sir, I understand.

KENNETH

Hmmpf!... *(Rising)* Well, let us begin with the stone itself... I have it here somewhere –

ROBERT

You have the white stone? –

KENNETH

Of course. Here it is....

*Kenneth produces a small leather bag and takes the white stone from it... a thin, gleaming, semi-opaque white stone. He holds it up to the source of light and peers through it.*

Even now, the future wants to stream through in multitudes of tiny pictures, so strongly is the stone charged with the magic of belief. If the hearts of men and woman yearn to believe, then belief can become real....

When I was a young lad, not much older than yourself, I acquired this stone from an elderly man who was reputed to be a master of the mineral kingdom. He told me I had the power of second sight but that my forces were undisciplined and hence scattered. He advised me to observe this white stone for a brief time each day and it would so happen that my gifts would flow out in the proper direction. With the stone he gave words of warning: “Through this white stone, you will be led from the past into the future. Beware the future that is too easily won! Only through trials will you come to the true future”...

One afternoon I had finished my chores and was sitting outside observing the stone. I chanced to hold it up to the sky, peered through it, and there came the pictures for the first time! I saw people from my village engaged in their daily work. I saw segments of their past, and also their

futures: children, travels, even death. In no time I was sharing the pictures with everyone and when they proved accurate, people began flocking to me from everywhere. I never took the money I was offered, but I traveled and received food and lodging for my services, and there came gifts from many unknown sources. One such gift was a hat with peacock feathers which I became fond of: no doubt it came from the elder master, for looking back, it was a suitable gift for a young lad who had become something of a peacock!

Perhaps you know my fame reached the ears of Lady Seaforth of Brahan Castle and she sent for me. The Earl had been away several months. She feared something dreadful had happened to him; she was certain the white stone would provide the answer. In due time I arrived at the Castle....

*Lights dim on the cottage and come up on the Brahan Castle. Kenneth the Younger, wearing a tartan wrap and the hat with the peacock feathers, enters singing.*

KENNETH, YOUNGER

Why should I sit and sigh,  
Pulling bracken, pulling bracken.  
Why should I sit and sigh  
On the moorland dreary?...

When I see the rising plover  
And the curlew wheeling,  
Then I know my mortal lover  
Back to me is stealing,  
Back to me is stealing.... (*Poem and song from a Scottish Highlands ballad*)

*Lady Elaine enters. She is charming, with long blonde curls, and Kenneth's own age. Kenneth removes his hat.*

ELAINE

Would you be Kenneth, the seer?

KENNETH

Yes, I am. And you are the Lady Seaforth?

ELAINE

Oh, no, I am Lady Elaine; the Earl of Seaforth is my brother. Lady Seaforth asked me to greet you. You are... you will be able to inform her of the whereabouts of the Earl?

KENNETH

I believe so, yes.

ELAINE

Do you not consider it... strange she cannot locate him any other way?

KENNETH

No other way would be quite as perfect as the white stone.

ELAINE

I see. Are you not rather young for a seer? Does not age bring a necessary wisdom to such talents?

KENNETH

Destiny placed the stone in my hand at an early age.

ELAINE

You suppose that a favorable destiny?

KENNETH

My Lady, an armed guard would not challenge me more than you at the entrance to this castle.

ELAINE

You must take my challenge as a warning: be cautious in speaking to the Lady Seaforth.

KENNETH

I am confident that whatever is seen through the white stone may be revealed. I make only one exception: death. All else has proven favorable even if momentarily painful.

ELAINE

I believe you are too confident.

KENNETH

Shall I look through the stone for you, Lady Elaine?....

*He removes the stone from the leather bag, which is attached to his belt.*

ELAINE

And what will that prove?

*Kenneth holds the stone up and peers through it... He is then taken aback.*

Nothing!....

ELAINE

Nothing?... What does it mean when you see nothing? You alarm me!

KENNETH

No need to be alarmed. I'm surprised, you see, for the only time the stone yields nothing is when I... well, when I have some personal interest in the answer...

ELAINE

I don't understand you. May I see the stone, please?

KENNETH

Certainly.

*He gives her the stone and she observes it carefully.*

ELAINE

Cut and polished, I see, but otherwise just an ordinary stone – not magical at all. Everything comes from you! May I look through it?

KENNETH

I would be pleased if you would.

ELAINE

There is some special method?

*In reply, he puts his arm around her waist and takes her hand.*

KENNETH

Gaze through the whiteness to the light beyond, and tell me what you see....

*There is a pause, then Elaine steps away from Kenneth and returns the stone to him.*

ELAINE

The Lady Seaforth will receive you tomorrow. She has requested I be present, for I too am concerned about the Earl. Follow me, please. We will find my maid and she will show you to your chamber.

KENNETH

Thank you, my Lady.

*They exit. Lights dim. They come up again at Lady Seaforth's entrance. She is dark-haired with a thin, almost haggard face; elegantly dressed. She paces anxiously.*

LADY SEAFORTH

The nights... the nights are without mercy. The loneliness of my chamber, the cold, damp stones; the foul air seeping through, curling around me with a cunning. The fire hardly warms the room, it beckons the air as though it would add to my misery. If only I could sleep! Yet even the remedies fail to bring relief, respite from the images, the voices. And the Earl! Where is the Earl

through all of this? His return is delayed by months, and not a word! Damn him!... His neglect is cruel!... Or is he dead? Have I not seen, over and over, the image of his face turn into a hollow, white mask, as though drained of all substance, all life? What could it signify but death? He has left me alone in this wretched castle, on this bleak land, with these surly retainers!... Separated by sea from everything I have ever known! If he isn't dead, I shall kill him!

*She appears to be staring at something in front of her.*

You will kill him? Yes, I know you could. I could not, for I am a Lady, but you... Yes, even when the Earl is here he neglects me, it's true. He deserves death, yes. Tell me, is he dead? Why won't you answer? Answer me!... Kill him, then!

Are you friend or foe? Do you deserve my trust?....

*Lady Elaine enters.*

What do you want?

ELAINE

My Lady, the seer of the white stone awaits your summons.

LADY SEAFORTH

Who?

ELAINE

The seer who may inform you of the Earl's whereabouts.

LADY SEAFORTH

Oh, yes, of course. When did he arrive?

ELAINE

Yesterday.

LADY SEAFORTH

What is he like?

ELAINE

He is very young; he seems a lad from a good family.

LADY SEAFORTH

Are you fond of him?

ELAINE

Why, no....

LADY SEAFORTH

Well, I see that you are; you can't hide it from me.

ELAINE

You surprise me....

LADY SEAFORTH

Send him in then, but... stay. Stay as you promised you would.

ELAINE

I shall be pleased to stay, my Lady.

*Elaine exits.*

LADY SEAFORTH

Kill him before he kills me!...

*Elaine re-enters with Kenneth, who bows before Lady Seaforth.*

KENNETH

Gracious Lady, my deepest thanks to you for calling me to this beautiful land and castle. I am most grateful for your kind hospitality.

LADY SEAFORTH

Hah!... You are young. My Lady Elaine and I imagined you were an old man.

KENNETH

Accuracy of vision takes the vigor of youth.

LADY SEAFORTH

The visions are physical?

KENNETH

Pardon?

LADY SEAFORTH

If the visions require vigor, then I would think they are of the body and not of the spirit.

KENNETH

They are of the spirit.

LADY SEAFORTH

Do you know what you're doing?

KENNETH

I have never been quite so challenged anywhere as at this castle.

LADY SEAFORTH

I know a thing or two about these matters! You will find Lady Seaforth a hard school, young man, especially if you try to deceive.

ELAINE

He is sincere, my Lady.

LADY SEAFORTH

And immature. Well, let's get on with it! What can you tell me about the Earl? As you know, he's been missing for months, neglecting his duties at Brahan Castle, leaving me to do all the work.

*Kenneth removes the white stone from the leather bag.*

Don't be vague. I want details.

*Kenneth holds the stone up to the light.*

Why do you need that white stone? Just tell me!

KENNETH

I find it helpful.

LADY SEAFORTH

And I suppose you think it's a magical stone. Bah!... it's a crutch.

*Kenneth strains to concentrate, and hesitates.*

What's wrong?

KENNETH

You must have faith in the white stone.

LADY SEAFORTH

Very well, the stone has my faith, all of it!...

*Kenneth again concentrates, then begins to relax as pictures come forth through the stone.*

KENNETH

I see a room in what appears to be a grand house... The chairs are covered with blue velvet; the drapes are gold and pale blue. On the walls are paintings in golden frames... the paintings are of cherubs – cupids. This is a room in the house of... a duchess, in Paris.

LADY SEAFORTH

Paris!....

KENNETH

There is a lounge or sofa... upon it reclines the duchess. And the Earl... I see his tartan, and he has a full red beard –

LADY SEAFORTH

Yes, he does.

KENNETH

He wears a ring on the little finger of his left hand, with a sapphire.

LADY SEAFORTH

So he does. But what is he doing in Paris?

KENNETH

My Lady, he has his arms around the duchess –

ELAINE

Kenneth, no!....

LADY SEAFORTH

Liar!

KENNETH

Did I not see his beard? His ring?

ELAINE

Kenneth!

LADY SEAFORTH

You're a liar, I say! And you try to bring shame upon this castle and the good name of the Earl!

KENNETH

No, my Lady, I have only told you what the white stone reveals –

LADY SEAFORTH

Scandal! You'll spread this lie among all our servants and retainers! Think of the gossip that will spread everywhere! The Earl will be disgraced in his own castle! And what about me? I will be a laughing stock!

KENNETH

The stone –

LADY SEAFORTH

Damn the stone! – and you – I shall see that you're locked up!

ELAINE

Please let him go, Lady Seaforth! This need not go any further than you and I –

LADY SEAFORTH

What! You act as though you believe him.

ELAINE

True or not –

LADY SEAFORTH

True or not! –

ELAINE

We can let it pass, forget the entire incident –

LADY SEAFORTH

He's dangerous! Possibly a spy for another clan. He means to harm me.

ELAINE

He's not from this area.

LADY SEAFORTH

How do you know?

ELAINE

He wouldn't harm anyone.

LADY SEAFORTH

You're on his side!

ELAINE

On no, you know you can trust me, you –

LADY SEAFORTH

You're in love with him!

ELAINE

No –

LADY SEAFORTH

There can be no more confidences between us. He's to be locked up! Try and help him and you shall be locked up!

*Lady Seaforth exits.*

ELAINE

I warned you! She isn't right in her mind. Come! I must help you to escape –

KENNETH

No! You heard what she said, you cannot help me.

ELAINE

There are many in this castle who will obey me. Some will do anything she asks – even kill – but others dread her; they look to me to help them.

KENNETH

Let her imprison me for a time. I saw more through the white stone than I revealed: the Earl will return soon and put matters aright. Elaine, she has made your life miserable.

ELAINE

Never mind me!

KENNETH

I should have listened to you; you were right. I'm a fool, an arrogant fool. I deserve to be punished. Besides, I would never leave you here alone with her, no matter what I must suffer. Now let me go, it must be clear you have not helped me....

ELAINE

No!....

KENNETH

*(Taking her hand)* You have faith... have faith!....

*He exits.*

ELAINE

Kenneth... Kenneth... Oh, her mind is deranged, and yet she knows!....

*Lights dim. They come up on Kenneth, locked in a cell below the castle.*

KENNETH

Here in this dungeon, at the mercy of Lady Seaforth, long hours have I spent pondering the words of the master who gave me the stone: through the white stone, you will be led from the

past into the future. Beware the future that is too easily won! Only through trials will you come to the true future. Beware the future that is too easily won... this warning I understand because I did not heed it. Now I pay the price. How big-headed I became through my success; how lacking in judgment! What flowed through with ease and without discrimination has brought ruin. A trial, yes... But what is the true future? And how come from the past to the true future? I believe my trials must worsen in severity before I am able to understand, or... I must simply wait patiently for the wisdom of years....

*Elaine enters, abruptly.*

Lady Elaine! How did you get in here? –

ELAINE

I told you, I have followers in this castle. Listen: there is little time; we're both in great danger. I have arranged for our escape to a house owned by my brother. There, those loyal to my brother will protect us against Lady Seaforth and her murderers!

KENNETH

I saw that the Earl would return –

ELAINE

Never mind what you saw! Use your head, your reason. Open your eyes! Wake up! Do you know what she plans for you tomorrow morning? You are to be thrown in boiling tar! Yes, yes my friend, and the Earl is not yet in sight.

KENNETH

She is possessed!

ELAINE

Come with me, then! – and this....

*She yanks the leather bag from his belt and throws it across the room.*

Leave it!... Now come, quickly!....

*They start to exit, then Kenneth hesitates.*

KENNETH

Please!....

*He retrieves the little bag. They exit.*

*Lights dim on the Brahan Castle and come up on Kenneth the Elder and Robert in the cottage.*

KENNETH, ELDER

Well, we escaped to the house, the same house where you were born, lad. Within a short time we were married and there were moments of blissful happiness....

When the Earl returned, imagine his shock when he was barred entrance to his own castle. In fact, he was fortunate to escape the incident with his life. He rode out to the house; there we met him and explained the entire story. With great surprise – and no small amount of hearty laughter – he confirmed that my description of his detainment in Paris was correct down to the smallest detail. After a brief rest, your good-natured uncle then arranged to take back his castle. He gathered together all those who had helped Elaine as well as many loyal friends from outlying areas. They rode out to the castle and there was a great battle.

ROBERT

I have heard many stories of that battle.

KENNETH

Thirteen men on both sides were killed. Of course, you know Lady Seaforth was defeated. The Earl had her seized; she was imprisoned in the tower.

ROBERT

Where she remained until her death. It is said she was completely mad by the end.

KENNETH

Your uncle consulted many physicians in the hope of relieving her misery, but nothing helped.

ROBERT

And you... You left my mother, why?

KENNETH

Too much weighed upon me: had I not shown such bad judgment the Earl would have returned to his castle without incident. Eventually he would have sought remedies for his Lady. Instead, thirteen men lost their lives.

ROBERT

Yet my uncle blamed himself; many times he said he should never have left Lady Seaforth in charge of the castle.

KENNETH

Ah yes, well, what did I tell you: in reliving the past, a man confronts what happened, not what might have been if only!....

Yet, though loss of life was reason enough, it was not the only reason I left: I had resolved to give up the stone but my reputation left me no peace – there were endless requests for consultation. I needed to be alone; I needed to think through what had happened; I needed to resolve in my soul the words of the master. Elaine agreed to the separation; her love was not possessive; she loved truly....

ROBERT

And through the years – father ... have you resolved the words of the master in your soul?

KENNETH

Aye, lad.

ROBERT

Will you share this with me?

KENNETH

Listen carefully, then: many a long winter night I've spent in this cottage studying the great Revelation of the future: the Apocalypse. I began to realize that here was no trivial recording of personal fortunes, as I had occupied myself with, but a selfless recording of the future – and the past – of all humanity, from a heavenly point of view. One evening, all of a sudden it seemed, I understood: my gift of second sight came from the past, when such visions were natural to men. Today it is not so, today men must try to perceive the spirit in all things by way of their reason; their wide-awake thinking activity; they must perceive by their own strenuous efforts what once was freely given by the gods in the past. That very evening, I looked upon the stone in a new way: I saw in its pure, crystalline whiteness a lofty spirit permeating all things material, a lofty all-knowing spirit waiting as though spellbound, waiting to be re-discovered by the newly opened eyes of men!... It was as the master had said: the white stone led me from the past, through trials, to the true future!....

ROBERT

Then you may return to Brahan Castle! If our people still seek your consultation you may tell them what you have told me! My mother – Lady Elaine – she needs your help! If she has loved truly, cannot you? Won't you please return with me and help her?

KENNETH

No need to ask, my boy, no need to ask. It is settled.

ROBERT

Oh, thank you!

KENNETH

Let us go and see how the new lambs are faring, shall we? I have only to attend to the matter of my sheep, then we may depart.

*They exit.*

*Lights dim on the cottage and come up on the Castle. Kenneth the Younger, hat with peacock feathers in hand, enters and sings:*

Why should I sit and sigh,  
Pulling bracken, pulling bracken.  
Why should I sit and sigh  
On the moorland dreary?...

When I see the rising plover  
And the curlew wheeling,  
Then I know my mortal lover  
Back to me is stealing,  
Back to me is stealing....

*End of Drama*



## The Grotto

**Characters:**

Francis

A Leper

A Holy Man

**Time:** Early Thirteenth Century

**Place:** A grotto, near Assisi, Italy

**Scene:** A grotto, with rocks, roses.

**At Rise:** Francis enters.

FRANCIS

Silent now, the voice that guided me  
Back to Assisi, the place of my childhood.  
I come to this quiet grotto  
In hope that the yearning of my soul  
Might also be silenced  
Amidst nature's loving splendour . . . .

*He picks a rose.*

But I forsake my hope! . . .  
Oh, sweet being who guided me  
In soothing spirit-tone,  
Can you not fill my daily life  
As once you filled my vision  
With light of wisdom and love?  
You have left me with such longing . . . .

Before I heard the voice,  
The goal of knighthood

Surged in my very blood.  
Would I not be a warrior  
As my German forebears,  
Growing firm in battle,  
Strong in courage and honor?  
Such was the quest of my youth!  
What else could the vision  
Have signified to me?

A great palace I saw,  
Full of weapons and shields  
In glimmering gold and silver.  
A life-filled picture  
That led me to join an expedition.  
But on the way  
The voice urged my return.  
“Not in external service  
Have you to seek your knighthood.  
You are destined to transform  
The forces at your disposal  
Into powers of the soul,  
Into weapons forged for your use.  
The weapons in the palace  
Signify the spiritual weapons  
Of mercy, compassion, love . . . .”

In abandoning the years  
Of youthful aspiration,  
In turning from my past  
And taking upon myself  
The burden of poverty,  
I grew ill.  
I was alone in those days of pain,  
Sustained only by a blissful memory  
And the promise of a special mission  
To serve Him.

Strengthened now, alone,  
I still await some further sign.  
No thought compels me,

And my heart . . .  
Oh, poor soul that I am,  
I am like a lover  
Who has found his love  
Only to have lost her again.  
What can he do but bemoan the loss,  
Spending his days  
In longing and search?  
Oh, gentle being who guided me,  
Have you not heard the cry of my soul?  
Though I am unworthy  
To know once again  
The grace and bliss of your presence,  
Can you not reveal to me  
Some sign of your return,  
Of my mission?

*The leper enters.*

A leper!

*Francis draws back in repulsion.*

How did you find this grotto?  
Why are you not with the others?

LEPER

Behold me!  
I stand before you  
An outcast.  
But look!  
Behind me  
Stands all of humanity.  
Can you see?

FRANCIS

Multitudes of faces  
Pass before my inner vision.

Lips beseech me.

LEPER

Though they have cast me out,  
They cannot pass by me.

FRANCIS

White and noble hands —  
Hands laden with gems —  
They clutch at these rags.

LEPER

I block their way.

FRANCIS

They scream, but I cannot hear.

LEPER

Hear them and drown  
In the desperate storm  
Of their terror.

FRANCIS

Who are you?

LEPER

Hear me!  
They cannot pass by me! . . . .

*The Leper exits.*

FRANCIS

No radiant countenance,  
No bearer of bliss  
Comes before me,  
But a spectacle  
Of the horrors  
Of the world,  
The world I yearn  
To be transported from  
And yet must serve . . . .

Lips beseeching,  
Thoughts compelling,  
Hearts enfolding me . . .  
I feel . . . .

I am filled  
With the power  
Of the leper's words,  
Touched with a new knowledge  
Full of life, meaning.  
Here was the sign,  
Clear and warm as sunlight.  
Yet outer appearance repulsed me,  
I would have sent him away.  
Oh, why did I let him go?  
Why did I not embrace him,  
The outcast,  
As He would have embraced him?  
Why did I not act  
At once  
To ease his pain?  
I fail Him!

Leper! Come back!  
Come back! —

*He falls to his knees.*

This new power of knowledge welling  
Blends with deepest shame!  
I fail Him!

*An older Man, dressed poorly, enters. Francis rises.*

FRANCIS

You? —  
You have come back? . . . .

No . . .  
Have you seen the leper?

MAN

Yes, I have.

FRANCIS

Did you let him pass?  
Or did you try to help him?

MAN

I could not help him.

FRANCIS

Everyone replies  
In this way:  
I could not,  
I cannot.

MAN

Do you preach to me?

FRANCIS

Myself, worse:  
I would not,  
I will not.

MAN

He may return.

FRANCIS

You have eyes  
Full of understanding.  
You know this grotto?

MAN

Like myself,  
But this grotto  
Is dearer to me  
Than myself.

FRANCIS

I thought it was mine only.

MAN

Oh no, my friend.

FRANCIS

You converse with me,  
One so unworthy?

MAN

How many sacred moments pass,  
Unseen, unheard  
In a lifetime?

Even in dim reflection  
Few know  
The angel's breath,  
The angel's kiss.  
You are but a glance,  
In time,  
Beyond crucial  
Realization.

FRANCIS

Your eyes are full of love.  
This moment shall not escape me.

MAN

My son, you were born in a stable.  
Thus it was arranged  
That in the first moments of your life  
You might emulate your Saviour.  
Your mother wished to name you John —

FRANCIS

It is so! —

MAN

But your father disagreed.  
He had journeyed to France  
And you were called Francis.  
As a youth you savored  
The pleasures of life,  
Musical and poetic gifts  
Flowing from your soul,  
Inspired by chivalry  
And the quest for the grail.  
Your sweetness and generosity  
Appealed to many.  
But in maturity

The wine of the outer world,  
Devoid of spirit,  
Turned bitter.  
The glimmering palace  
As outer symbol  
Drew back its gates.  
Thus your soul turned  
To the guiding voice,  
To the balm of spirit  
And you wafted far along  
By yourself  
On the path,  
To this moment.

#### FRANCIS

Your words touch chords  
Of my inner being,  
Old emotions sound forth,  
Intonations of the past . . .  
Yet the sorrows vanish  
As quickly as they appear.  
You take them — somehow — to your heart.  
In the fire of your heart  
They melt  
And crystallize  
Into wisdom shared.  
I feel as though caught up  
In the power of this motion.  
I would flow out of myself  
Into your heart,  
Which draws me  
With light-filled magic  
And love surpassing  
In purity, sweetness and bliss  
Any I have ever known.  
Truly I am intoxicated  
As by divine power . . . .

MAN

When you took upon yourself  
The burden of poverty  
And left your home,  
Your past,  
You were regarded as strange.  
Indeed you became, my son,  
A stranger in the world.  
Few can know  
This form of loneliness.  
Yet of this suffering  
Is born,  
In blood and bliss,  
The higher self.

FRANCIS

I beg you,  
Speak to me of my mission!  
Tell me how I can serve you  
And Him!

MAN

The moment has not yet come  
To speak outwardly of your mission.  
A certain process  
Of the heart  
Is not yet completed.  
Listen:  
Meet me here again  
In seven day's  
And seven night's time.

*The Man starts to exit.*

FRANCIS

Who are you?

MAN

In vain  
Will spirits of air  
Carry my name  
To your ears,  
If in your soul  
You cannot remember me.

FRANCIS

Remember? . . . .

*The Man exits.*

*Lights fade out completely, and, after a pause, they come up fully again.*

FRANCIS

A week now has passed.  
I lived in the wood  
With gentle birds and creatures.  
Sticks were my bed,  
Leaves my pillow.  
For food  
I ate roots, berries, eggs.  
For drink,  
Water from the clear  
Mountain streams.  
My days were spent fully  
In contemplation of my nights,  
Which were full of Him  
And His messengers.  
The man who appeared to me  
In this grotto  
Appeared likewise to me  
In dreams and visions.  
He brought to me  
A most beautiful Lady

With whom I have fallen  
Deeply in love.  
Her clothes are rags,  
Her feet bare,  
Her hands and arms bruised  
From lowly work.  
Yet from her face radiates  
A light of supreme beauty  
And purity.  
Her hair like golden honey  
Flows in soft, sweet waves  
About her shoulders,  
Which are full and white  
Beneath her threadbare gown.  
She whispered her name to me:  
Lady Poverty.  
To my profoundest wonder,  
She loves me  
As much as I love her.  
Eagerly each night  
She seeks my embrace  
And I yield to her being.  
Never have I  
Been so fulfilled . . . .

*The Man enters and, unnoticed, listens to Francis.*

Yet my fulfillment  
Creates further longing.  
Did I dream, imagine,  
Experience? . . .  
She had the wings of an angel  
She wrapped these wings around me,  
So soft . . .  
I sighed against her heart . . .  
Lady Poverty,  
Can you not carry me  
From this dark earth  
To the sun-filled temple  
That is your abode?

Of what use am I here? —

MAN

I will tie you down!

FRANCIS

You!

You who brought her to me!

Oh, what I owe you!

MAN

Yet I hear you sigh,

Lovesick,

“Of what use am I here?”

When last we met,

You begged to know

Of your mission.

Because you are transported

To spiritual worlds

Can you forget those left behind

To suffer in darkness and disease?

FRANCIS

Blessed Father,

Forgive me!

I still beg to know

How I might serve Him.

Has the moment now come?

MAN

I see a completeness

About your heart.

She has filled your heart

With her sun.

Sit down.

*They sit down upon some rocks.*

In the beginning was the Word  
And the Word was with God  
And God was the Word.  
This was in the beginning with God.  
All things through him became  
And without him became  
Not one thing  
That has become.  
In him life was,  
And the life was the light of men,  
And the light in the darkness shone,  
And the darkness did not overcome it . . . .

Now I will tell you a story,  
But a story full of truth,  
One which will speak  
Powerfully to your soul.  
I must begin, not with you,  
But with all of humanity,  
Which your mission, my son,  
Must encompass.

FRANCIS

Dear Lord, let me not fail!....

MAN

Long, long ago  
After the great flood  
Which so many  
Ancient documents  
Wisely record,  
Vast bodies of people  
Migrated to Asia and Europe.  
The peoples who settled in Europe  
Were guided by mystery schools

Whose existence remained  
A carefully guarded secret.  
Slowly European souls ascended  
From the fall,  
Guided by the great princes  
Who were themselves guided  
By the mystery schools.  
As souls ascended  
So did certain peoples  
Die out . . .  
As these peoples died out  
The entire region of Europe  
Became inhabited by demons,  
The products of dissolution.  
These demons of putrefaction  
Have endured to this day.  
Terrors brought about  
By invading hordes from Asia  
Have given these demons the power  
To enter the feeling-life  
Of human beings.  
The consequence? . . .  
Leprosy.

FRANCIS

Leprosy?...  
I see the leper's face  
Before me...  
Sores and wounds vanish,  
There emerge bright eyes  
Full of grateful tears....

MAN

Now your story, my son.  
So much to learn  
In so short a time!  
Yet my speech is filled  
With the resounding ether-tone

Of the Logos,  
And the meaning of my words  
Shall awaken within you  
As living experience.  
You shall no longer be afraid  
Or hesitant.

There once existed on the shores  
Of the Black Sea,  
Between Asia and Europe,  
A certain mystery school  
Which brought together  
Spiritual streams  
Disparate upon the earth.  
Your soul knew this school  
Wherein teachings of equality  
And compassion,  
Flowing from an ascended brother,  
Combined with the Christ-impulse.  
From this experience  
Comes the source  
Of your moral power.  
Through your moral power  
Works the Christ-impulse  
On the evil substance  
Of the disease-demons  
Of leprosy.

Did you not see His body  
In the sunlight  
In the palace  
Of your vision?  
Did you not feel His touch  
Upon the inner qualities  
Of your soul?  
He is the light and the life!  
Through you alone  
Will He lay hold  
Of the disease-demons  
Of leprosy —

Through you alone  
Will leprosy  
Be swept away from Europe! . . . .

Thus have I spoken of your mission.  
So be it.

FRANCIS

Your words awaken, within me,  
An essence-force.  
Life within life,  
Image within image,  
Memory within memory.  
I am swept back  
By the sea of aeons  
To a shore half-veiled  
In violet sun.  
He writes in the sand,  
His hair falling over  
His shoulders...  
Waves of time and will,  
Form and motion,  
Play upon the shore,  
But the eternal sea  
Cannot erase  
What He has written there....

I see a man walking by the sea,  
Waves lap about his ankles.  
With what power  
Does he draw me towards him!  
If I slip into his feet  
And walk with him,  
Will I abandon my own life?  
He kneels in prayer,  
He lifts his careworn face towards the sun . . .  
Oh, all that I am! . . . .

MAN

Not I, but Christ in me.

FRANCIS

Not I, but Christ in me.

MAN

These words will save you.

*Francis begins to fall into sleep.*

FRANCIS

Will you leave me?

Somehow I cannot believe

You will always be a presence

In my life.

Am I a child

Who would slip his small hand

Into a larger one

For guidance... always?

MAN

Be here again, Francis,

In seven days

And seven nights time.

FRANCIS

Seven days... seven nights....

*He falls asleep.*

MAN

Sticks are his bed,

Leaves his pillow,

Rags his garment.

No home has he upon the earth,

And yet... sky, sea, bird, cloud,  
Meadow, flower, forest, mountain,  
All visible and invisible wonders  
Of divine creation  
Belong to him,  
And he the glory of all!

*The Man exits.*

*The lights again fade out, and the stage is completely dark. After a pause they fade back up.*

FRANCIS

This morn I woke  
As light rain fell.  
I did not wish to stir,  
So full was I  
Of holy presence,  
Enflaming my soul, my life.  
Yet the day-moment pressed  
My limbs to move  
And seek some shelter.  
I began to rise  
When, from the grey heights  
A tiny bird descended  
Alighting on my breast.  
She spread her little wings  
As wide as she could.  
They were no wider  
Than my heart,  
Yet this beating life  
She covered and protected.  
We did not stir  
Until the rain stopped  
And sun pierced the sky  
Silver and golden.  
How long? . . . I cannot say.  
Day-place, day-moment faded.  
I opened my eyes  
When, with sudden

Sound of flutter  
She ascended  
Towards a distant rainbow  
Where her tiny form  
Vanished into rose . . . .

Hours, it seems, I walked,  
My garment drying in the wind.  
I knew no chill nor hunger,  
For I was filled  
With holy love.  
At noon the sun  
Beamed on my head  
And the dancing rays, I thought,  
Turned into a dove.  
She did not remain  
Long on my head  
But descended to my heart  
And spread her wings there.  
Dark, loving eyes,  
White, fluttering life,  
She guided me  
Throughout the day  
To secret places  
Where creatures made their homes  
And nests.  
With animal cries of longing  
They greeted her,  
The wild ones,  
Licking my feet and hands  
As if to reach her  
Through me. . . .

The day grew long,  
Enchanted.  
I opened my eyes fully  
To the outer world  
And found I had wandered here  
To the grotto.

Thoughts of my teacher  
Fill my soul.  
Though he will not  
Meet me here again,  
He is living presence  
Within me,  
Closer, closer,  
Than were he standing here,  
As though his body were  
An obstruction to his purposes.  
He says  
“I am with you always,”  
And holds promise  
At some distant moment  
Of union with the One  
Who is the Fount of our strength.  
Should I err grievously,  
He would will my death  
Then let me fall . . . .

Now his words of wisdom  
Fill my soul again:

“Not in external service  
Have you to seek your knighthood.  
You are destined to transform  
The forces at your disposal  
Into powers of the soul . . .  
Spiritual weapons  
Of mercy, compassion, love . . . .”

“He is the light and the life!  
Through you alone  
Will He lay hold  
Of the disease-demons  
Of leprosy —  
Through you alone  
Will leprosy  
Be swept away from Europe!”

“My speech is filled  
With the resounding ether-tone  
Of the Logos,  
And the meaning of my words  
Shall awaken within you  
As living experience.  
You shall no longer be afraid  
Or hesitant...”

Now dusk reveals her fiery garments  
On the horizon of our earth.  
In accepting the tasks  
Of this troubled globe,  
I can emulate the serenity  
Of the setting sun,  
Strengthening through night,  
Gathering his mighty forces  
About him,  
Withdrawing to prepare  
For a new day,  
A new age.

*He draws back suddenly.*

Again before my inner vision  
Pass multitudes of faces,  
Pale and full of desperation.  
Hands clutch at me!  
“Help us! Help us!”

Oh, souls of men,  
You beseech me,  
But now I am not afraid.  
I am full of His strength.  
Come, poor souls,  
Poor children,  
Let me embrace you,  
Let me comfort you.  
Come, Lambs of God,  
I will bear your sorrows,

I will lead you  
To a valley of peace and justice,  
Serene in the rose light  
Of His loving splendour!

*The Leper returns.*

The leper! . . .  
Come, child,  
Come to my arms.  
My love will banish  
All of your wounds . . . .

*Francis embraces the Leper, then falls to his knees.*

FRANCIS

An angel!  
He is an angel of God!....

***End of Drama***

### **Reference Notes**

*The Grotto* is one of two dramas in this collection that is primarily influenced by Anthroposophy. The second drama reflecting this influence, although to a lesser extent, is *The Eve of Freedom*, which follows below.

In *The Grotto*, the spiritual teachings given to Francis by the Holy Man are drawn in large measure from *The Spiritual Foundation of Morality, Francis of Assisi and the Mission of Love, Three Lectures* by Rudolf Steiner, 1912.

# The Eve of Freedom

## **Characters:**

Abraham Lincoln

A Man in Chains

A Spiritual Teacher

An Angel

**Time:** Early March, 1862, evening

**Place:** A private room, the White House, Washington, DC

**Scene:** A private room in the White House. A table and rocking chair, a clothes rack in the back. On the table is a Bible, lamp, gold-rimmed glasses, pen and ink and bottle.

**At Rise:** Lincoln enters in coat and top hat. Slowly he gazes out, right to left, as though aware of the consciousness of each member of the audience. Slowly, he removes his hat, then puts it on the rack. He removes his coat-jacket and hangs it up. He moves wearily towards the chair, remembering and removing a note from his vest pocket. He sits down, puts on his glasses and reads the note aloud.

LINCOLN

“March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1862. Secretary Stanton: As I assured you at the first of the year, you can count on my full approval for any decision that will help clean up the War Department.”

Underline *any*.

*This he does and signs his name.*

A. Lincoln....

*Addressing the envelope.*

Secretary Edwin M. Stanton....

*He seals the envelope and places it inside the Bible, returning this, and pen and glasses, to the table.*

My thoughts stray from daily tasks.  
The evening sun, dim red,  
Shimmers on the walls,  
Yet shadows deepen in the room  
And in my wearied mind.  
In the shadows, pale objects;  
In my mind, lingering memories,  
A pale dream....

*He rises.*

I saw our son, our Willie,  
Young companion of the dead,  
Standing on the battlefield.

My eyes ached as tears flowed –  
I have tears left? –  
I called that he, a small boy,  
Might come home  
To his mother and father.  
Had he business on such deadly ground?

He only shook his head  
And gestured upwards,  
Where, in the grey smoke  
Of dwindling flame  
I saw thousands of soldiers,  
Their ranks so deep  
The furthest passed from sight  
Into the white stars.  
And I saw wounded, fretting horses  
With empty saddles.  
They were stamping on the flames  
Out of which rose the ghostly figures.  
From the dark earth below  
Sorrowful forms ascended  
Like pleading hands  
Who would carry the dead back to life.

Like my hands....

Then our boy pointed  
To where I myself was standing.  
I looked down  
And though my boots stood firm  
On a small, solid incline,  
There sank beneath me  
A huge chasm, so wide and deep,  
The bottom was pitch blackness.  
I felt myself utterly alone  
And confess I was shaken  
By a fear and despair  
That seemed to rise  
As evil mist  
From the dark breach....

In the chilling emptiness  
I longed for solace;  
I sought a friend, a companion.  
From afar I heard  
The pitiful cries of my wife,  
The mocking voices of colleagues,  
The vengeful oaths of conspirators.  
Then, a cold whisper touched my ear  
As if from every Blue and Grey,  
Every slave and master  
United in the Beyond:  
None can help now,  
All rests on you!....

How am I to bear such weight?

At once I discerned a flickering, golden light  
Surrounding the child.  
In him was clarity.  
By his light, I sensed he knew  
The Word to heal the wounds  
Of our divided nation,  
And my own wounds of grief.

Yet with this comfort came  
The first ray of dawn  
Through the window of my room.  
I began to wake.  
I urged the child reveal his Word  
For the suffering multitudes  
Who looked to me for release.  
And just as I woke  
I heard his voice ring out:  
“Oh, my father Abraham, I am the son!”....

*A pause, and he returns to the chair.*

For a time, I pondered the meaning of those words.  
But life’s demands press hard upon me,  
Abrupt intruders on my meager peace.  
A war must be waged, a race set free.  
The burdens, the costs, grow heavier day by day;  
Every hour I am besieged  
With great and small requests –  
Posts, pardons, permits, weapons, orders.  
Act now, now wait; destroy now, create...  
Still, the living Word returns  
And holds, I know,  
Some secret key, some vital breath  
Without which I cannot go on,  
I have not the power!...  
“Oh, my father Abraham, I am the son!”...

Yet I seem to have forgotten...

What caused the dream?

Ah, yes! – I visited a garrison hospital  
And met a mortally wounded soldier.  
How moving were the gentle eyes,  
The youthful, flowing hair,  
The handsome face, so paled...  
He spoke words I’ve since forgotten,  
Then quoted, very softly, Revelation 6.

*He picks up the Bible, opens to the Chapter and reads:*

“And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow....

*(He reads to -)* “...And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.”

If I could but piece together the many fragments –  
The youth, the dream, the child, the horsemen,  
The frightful events of our time.  
For this I need be more than mortal,  
For I can only stammer in the darkness  
With which He has veiled our sight!...

*(He closes his eyes, then covers them with his hands, a gesture of despair. Then he folds his hands in his lap, eyes still closed, as though in his weariness and concern he has slipped into another consciousness. A Man enters, in poor slave’s clothing and fettered in chains.)*

LINCOLN

A ghostly figure, in chains....

MAN

Brother, learn to know substance from spectre.

LINCOLN

Why do you appear like this?

MAN

So that you may see what is true, and not be deceived.

LINCOLN

Tell me who you are – what is your name?

MAN

You know me well. I am your Guardian. If your name is called, I may answer.

LINCOLN

What do you seek? What do you wish of me?

MAN

It is you who seek me. In your deep pondering, in your soul's hunger for greater understanding, you have hurled yourself into my sphere.

LINCOLN

Help me, then.

MAN

If you wish help, gaze upon me. You would free a race, but I reveal that you yourself are fettered.

LINCOLN

Oh, no!....

MAN

Do not grieve, for it cannot be otherwise. Of choice, you took up the chains, the dark garments of the time. Who can know freedom who has not himself been imprisoned?

Now continue to gaze deeply, earnestly at me,  
Touch with your soul the glimmer of my eye,  
And you may see what I can reveal  
Beyond your own personality.

Not only upon earth, but above, in the heavens,  
A mighty battle is being waged.  
For thousands of years  
Certain opposing spirits  
Have been active  
In their appointed tasks  
Of dividing humanity  
Into races and peoples,  
A division of the blood.  
If higher beings alone had ruled  
Mankind would be one species,  
As are the animals around us.  
But now the time has come  
When differences must vanish;  
The divided human race  
Must be formed again into a unity.  
Who can achieve such a deed?

In your soul I sense a powerful force,

Which only rarely finds expression  
In your consciousness.  
There is a picture  
Of the ancient Warrior, sublime,  
The one who has become  
The Spirit of the Time.  
He leads the mighty battle  
Against the retarding spirits,  
Those who in your earthly experience  
Are behind the rebellion  
Of the southern states,  
Sustaining the forces of division,  
Enlivening the old social order  
And holding a race in bondage.  
As you struggle against  
These opposing spirits,  
As you drive them  
From the field of battle,  
So you serve the ancient Warrior.  
Thus you stand with great responsibility  
In this, the fiery trial of your nation.  
But you do not stand alone.

If you, and those who follow you,  
Emerge victors in this trial,  
Our chains will be severed;  
A race will find its way to freedom;  
America will lead in opening its doors  
To members of all races, all nations.

#### LINCOLN

You, whom I greeted in fear,  
Have guided me far  
On my journey of understanding.  
As you spoke, I saw a picture  
Of the Warrior battling the dragon....

But now another picture fills my senses,  
As with sweeping urgency –  
Awesome, distant tones, trumpet tones;

Thunderous tremors;  
Dark clouds seared by blinding light;  
Cries, hoofbeats – the Four Horsemen!

MAN

Do not fear, one comes to protect you.  
He can lead you further than I.  
With him you are safe,  
Though you touch the outermost stars  
Of the cosmic abode....

*The Man in chains withdraws, and the spiritual Teacher enters. He is dressed in black, and wears boots, as the rider of the third horse.*

LINCOLN

About you, a pair of balances!... A measure of wheat for a penny, three measures of barley for a penny!....

TEACHER

Stay calm, my friend. Remember your own sober advice to many: Keep cool under all circumstances.

LINCOLN

You are familiar to me.

TEACHER

Indeed, I have often been your guide. There is a bond between us.

LINCOLN

I recognize you!... Why do you appear as the rider of the black horse?

TEACHER

Though you now suffer crisis,  
My wish is to lead you  
Far beyond the moment,  
Once more to a vision of cosmic import,  
That your spirit be refreshed,  
Your soul strengthened  
For the earthly tasks ahead.  
For I heard your cry:  
“The living Word holds a vital breath  
Without which I cannot go on,

I have not the power.”

You see in me the apocalyptic image  
Written anew in your heart  
By the dying youth.  
For you, my appearance signifies the past;  
For your opponents, the future.

Now bring to your consciousness  
Living memories sealed...  
Sealed as within your eternal Self.

LINCOLN

A vision... A vast time period, an epoch.  
Within the epoch, seven ages.  
We dwell in the fifth age of the fifth epoch.

TEACHER

The seven seals of Revelation represent the seven ages.

LINCOLN

To be unsealed in the future epoch, the sixth epoch.

TEACHER

But first, the past.  
The black horse is the sign  
Of the third age,  
Wherein you sowed seeds of experience  
That yielded the fruits of your present powers.  
You looked upwards to the stars  
And below to the forces of nature,  
Perceiving the divine will therein  
That men might know true justice  
In the laws of the State.  
Your quest brought you nearer  
To the outer world.

LINCOLN

And now I would be swallowed by darkness,  
Standing on the edge of the abyss!

TEACHER

You live at the end of the darkest time.  
But recall the words of the Guardian:  
Of choice you took up the chains.  
How can he, who has never been imprisoned,  
Know freedom?  
How can he, who has never been separated  
From God, return to Him,  
With freedom, and with love?

LINCOLN

Hoofbeats...  
The sound oppresses me.

TEACHER

The four horses call up the first four ages  
When mankind – when you – acquired intelligence for outer life.

LINCOLN

Why then should the sound be so frightful?

TEACHER

In the future epoch,  
When the first four seals are unveiled,  
There will come forth the souls  
Who wish to remain  
In the four ages of preparation,  
In which are contained  
The old forms, the separating forces  
That drive men asunder.

LINCOLN

Souls behind the dissension of the south.

TEACHER

In the past, intelligence for outer life  
Was good, essential.  
For the future, retarding forces  
Behind these faculties  
Can prevent the rise  
From the mouth of the chasm.  
Man must seek anew the spirit

Or risk falling backwards  
Into forms of the past,  
Forms of the beast from which he rose.  
Thus the horses frighten you.

Yet everywhere comes response  
To the Spirit of the Time  
In the surging towards freedom.  
In war, in revolution,  
Mankind would needs have  
A new social order  
As foundation for his re-ascent;  
A social order formed  
As out of the depths  
Of his true being,  
Which he begins to glean anew:  
Spirit, soul and body,  
Willing, feeling, thinking.

I need not tell you, my friend,  
What form of government  
May best welcome the new order.

LINCOLN

Demoncracy.  
And upon the fate of the Union  
Hangs the fate of world demoncracy.  
“Every kingdom divided against itself  
Is brought to desolation,  
And every city or house  
Divided against itself  
Shall not stand.”

TEACHER

You recognized me.  
In ages past,  
You were prepared for your mission,  
Even to the lanky form  
And great eagle’s head.  
Your mere shadow casts an image  
That attracts, in sympathy,  
The very folk spirit of America

To your cause.  
Yet in this dark season  
After the death of your son,  
In melancholic brooding,  
You hesitate.

LINCOLN

My son, yet... The child!  
The one who is surrounded  
By the golden light.  
Oh, tell me the meaning of his words:  
"Oh, my father Abraham, I am the son!"  
In vain have I sought the answer  
To lift the surrounding gloom,  
As the morning sun frees us  
From the confines of night.

TEACHER

The child would bring to light  
Lifelong struggles of your soul.  
Even as you are named Abraham,  
So you possess great powers  
For working within the world of men,  
Drawing your inspiration  
From fountains of the past,  
From the Father God,  
Whom you address so often  
With such natural ease.  
Yet, as I have shown you,  
And as you have sensed  
Beneath levels of consciousness,  
The gods of the past  
Cannot provide, as of old,  
The measure of strength  
Needed for our time.  
Hence the child tells you  
We must turn our gaze  
Towards the future, to the Son,  
To the Christ-force  
Which will work with such power  
That men will be endowed again

With godly consciousness  
In a new form.

LINCOLN

The child points to... He, Himself,  
The Christ!....

TEACHER

The vital breath without which  
You cannot go on.

*Lincoln covers his face with his hands, this time as though to stop or hide tears.*

LINCOLN

What can we feel but utmost shame,  
When, despairing in our loneliness,  
We recall the Sacrifice....

There was an evening, late, not long ago,  
When the lamps in my room were lit,  
And papers were strewn on my desk.  
I was immersed in the study  
Of a document, notably the words:  
“All men are created equal.”  
Suddenly I understood  
That the Declaration of Independence  
Sought to free mankind  
From the ties of blood,  
Linking the hearts  
Of liberty-loving men together  
On moral principle.  
Now I see, that is the way  
Of the future,  
The way of Christ.

The darkness lifts!...  
From breath-of-life to firm resolve  
For what you have called  
The earthly tasks ahead.  
There can be no further delay.  
A plan for emancipation  
Must be given to Congress at once!

TEACHER

God's will be done.

LINCOLN

My new strength I owe  
To the Guardian,  
As well as to the guidance  
Of your lofty teaching.  
Long will I reflect upon the grace  
Of these solemn moments.  
Yet, even as waves of joy and gratitude  
Soothe my soul and invigorate my will,  
The sacred picture of His Countenance  
With its deep gaze  
Of love and compassion,  
Directs my inner eye  
To the faces in the crowds,  
Those who attend my speeches,  
Or wait by the road  
For a glimpse of my carriage:  
Black men, soldiers, orphans, widows,  
Pastors, teachers, nurses  
And hundreds, hundreds more,  
Both living and dead.  
What hope have they  
Of receiving the inspired Word  
You have given me?

TEACHER

Because you ask me this,  
We may ascend higher,  
There to find the answer.  
But only a brief time remains for us.  
We must part, and you return fully to your life.  
Don't be sad, my friend,  
For we will meet again  
In a few years,  
And you may be full of hope  
For great progress... Look!

*An Angel in white enters, and through her veils and the position of her left arm, she appears to be holding a small child.*

An angel! Can you see her?  
In a loving, protective gesture  
She carries the soul of a small child  
Close to her heart.  
See how he sleeps blissfully in her arms,  
Though he lives also in earthly life,  
In a little house near a forest  
In the care of his parents.  
Within this small being she protects  
There will unfold in maturity  
Spiritual powers capable  
Of penetrating fully  
The intelligence for outer life  
Of which we have spoken,  
Illuminating the true origins  
Of this faculty, which are cosmic.  
Souls upon earth who hear the call  
And unite with this being  
Can awaken, through study,  
Forces of life within them  
Which can lead to re-ascent  
From the darkness  
For themselves and for the dead.  
Then will come the birth  
Of the higher Self,  
Who is like this sleeping child,  
And the child in your dream,  
And the Lamb of the open book;  
The higher Self Who is the Son,  
The Christ.

LINCOLN

The true last, best hope of earth.

*The Angel withdraws.*

She withdraws!....

TEACHER

And so must I.

LINCOLN

Oh, that I could go with you!....

TEACHER

Let the inner eye be closed now  
To the future path of spirit it has glimpsed.  
Return to the present; to your mission.  
Remember my promise:  
We will meet again soon!...

(The Teacher withdraws. The lights dim, and after a pause, Lincoln returns to his chair. On the table he notices the Bible. He puts on his glasses, picks up the Bible and opens it again to Revelation 6, reading.)

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

*(Closing the Bible)* I don't doubt that we shall meet again soon. *(Removing the glasses)* No, no... I don't doubt that at all!....

But there is still time, precious time!

Outside, hoot owls,  
And March wind blowing  
Through the tree branches  
And beating on the window panes.  
The voice of the dark season  
Hesitates, hollows...  
I reckon a breath of cold air  
Would do me good right now,  
I reckon it would....

*He rises, walks to the clothes rack, puts on his jacket, and takes down the top hat.*

A bit of fresh air and a short walk  
On the grounds of this auspicious white house  
Will bring the first draft of the Emancipation  
Clearly into my refreshed thoughts, I'm sure.  
By spring this draft

Will be in the hands  
Of many an important man.  
Which reminds me....

*He glances at the envelope in the Bible; goes to the table and removes it.*

I'll give this note to a courier  
To take to Stanton at once.

I don't know why  
I feel myself so alone  
With a little tyrant like Stanton  
In the War Department.  
Why, that bully called me a great ape!....

Well, it doesn't pay to hold a grudge.

*He puts the note in the hat, puts the hat on and exits. Lights dim, and after a pause they come up again and the Man in Chains enters.*

MAN

“Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray,  
That this mighty scourge of war  
May speedily pass away.  
Yet, if God wills that it continue  
Until all the wealth piled  
By the bondman's two hundred and fifty years  
Of unrequited toil shall be sunk,  
And until every drop of blood drawn with the lash  
Shall be paid by another drawn with the sword,  
As was said three thousand years ago,  
So still it must be said,  
The judgments of the Lord  
Are true and righteous altogether.”

*With a swift, almost violent movement of his arms, he breaks the chains.*

***End of Drama ~ End of Nine Dramas***

### **Reference Notes**

The Mission of the Archangel Michael, by Rudolf Steiner, published by the Anthroposophic Press, Hudson, New York

Egyptian Myths and Mysteries, by Rudolf Steiner, published by the Anthroposophic Press,  
Hudson, New York

The Apocalypse of Saint John, by Rudolf Steiner, published by the Rudolf Steiner Press,  
London, England

