

# **THE INTERVIEW**

A ONE ACT PLAY

- by -

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**CHARACTERS:**

PETER:           A middle-aged man with a jovial face  
                  and a zany sense of humor

JOSH:            A young man in his late twenties. He  
                  projects a kind of pent-up inner  
                  tension.

MICHAEL:            A middle-aged man with a severe  
                  manner, and an aura  
                  of pompous authority

## QUOTATIONS :

1. "At that time the great angel Michael, who guards your people, will appear. Then there will be a time of troubles, the worst since nations first came into existence. When that time comes, all the people of your nation whose names are written in God's book will be saved."

(Daniel, 12.1)

2. "My life has been useless, but in it I have seen everything. A good man may die while another man lives on, even though he is evil. So don't be too good or too wise - why kill yourself?"

(Ecclesiastes,  
7-15)

3. "And so I tell you Peter - you are a rock, and on this rock foundation I will build my church, and not even death will ever be able to overcome it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; what you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and what you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven."

(Matthew,

17.18-19

*House lights dim. The song sitting 'Here in Limbo' is played over the PA. As the song finishes, or is faded out, house lights off and stage lights up. PETER is lying flat on his back on the closed half of the well-top. He is trying to catch olives in his mouth. From OFF stage LEFT is heard the hum of an elevator, then its doors opening. JOSH enters LEFT. PETER is startled by his silent appearance*

PETER: Well bless my soul, what have we here? (He peers at the maple-leaf on JOSH's ski-hat) Another Canuck, eh? (JOSH's attention is diverted by sounds of wailing coming up from the well) Bit warmer here, eh? But not so warm as down there, huh? (He points down the well) What's that doing open anyway? A man can't think straight with that huh-bub going on. Here, give me a hand will you? (They close the open half of the well-top)

JOSH: Where am I? Who are you?

PETER: Why of course, of course. Forgive me. I tend to forget just how disorientating that trip is. Welcome to Purgatory. Benvenuto a Purgatoire, (laughs) Yes, and I'm Peter ... but you can call me Simon, or Simon-Peter, or Cephas, or Petros or ... well, whatever. Yes, yes Peter ... that's me. Hmm ... try this one. Peter purged a peck of pickled pepper ... (faster) Peter perked a pick of peckled ... ah well never mind! Yes, yes, this is a regular old laundrette of the spirit we have here. (sighs) Once, I was a fisher of souls, now I just clean 'em and weigh 'em ... know what I mean?

JOSH:                               This is ridiculous. I don't believe in heaven or hell or ...

PETER:                              Oh you don't eh? Well ... *(He shrugs, points to a large pair of keys dangling from his belt, and then lifts the lid of the well-top a few inches so that a few groans are heard)* What can I say? It **is** a live performance, so to speak ... or let's just say it's not pre-recorded. Do you remember what happened ... I mean, when you ...

JOSH:                               Yes, yes I *(looking upset)* ... I remember what happened.

PETER:                              Well let's not go into that now. Have a seat while I check to see what you've been up to. *(He moves over to the lectern)* What's your name again?

JOSH:                               Josh.

PETER:                              Really? Josh, eh? Hmm ... reminds me of a song I know. Oh yes, *(clapping)*

                                      Joshua fit the battle of Jericho  
                                      Jericho, Jericho  
                                      Joshua fit the battle of Jericho  
                                      And the walls came tumblin' down.

Yes, good song that. Not going to be fighting any battles up here I hope, Joshua? *(He arrives at the lectern. Curses! He's taken The Book again)*

JOSH:                               What?

PETER:                              Michael, Michael! He's walked off with The Book again. *(Muttering to himself)* How in sugar does he expect me to do my job? But then again he needs it more than I do. Always everything by The Book ... stickler for the rules that guy. *(turning, to Josh)* Hmm ... well in that case, I'll have to ask you a few questions.



JOSH: Listen, this whole thing is ridiculous.  
I have nothing to say.

PETER.- Bit of a skeptic aren't you?

JOSH: It's just that I never believed in ... *(He gestures around him)* ... maybe re-incarnation.

PETER: Re-incarnation! *(laughs)* Oh yes, we got quite a few coming here convinced that they're going to return as snakes or cats, or else Hollywood actors. You even get the oddballs who think they're going back as the Pope or the President.  
*(PETER mimicking Sylvester the Cat)* Sufferin succotash, but I was such a **good** puddycat.  
*(PETER thinks this is a huge joke and breaks up laughing. Then he sobers up)* Look, don't worry ... in this place you have a fair chance. As far as I'm concerned, 'innocent until proven guilty'. And even then, you can still repent.

JOSH.- Repent! What for? I don't have anything to confess. I haven't done anything wrong. And anyway, who's to say what's wrong and what's right?

PETER: *(Becoming Yiddish)* Ah ... who's not to say what's wrong and right.

JOSH: Well that's the point, isn't it?

PETER: Well anyway, you're here aren't you? Olive?

JOSH *(Exasperated)* Oh what's the use?

PETER.- O.K I'll tell you what. We'll just have a nice little chat and leave the er ... evaluating to Michael. He should be back anytime now.  
*(PETER glances around nervously and whispers)* Oh, and by the way, Michael's not as easy going as me, know what I mean? *(clears throat)* yes, well anyway, like I said before,

in my book you're innocent until proven guilty

*(PETER, who has been eating all this time, takes a bite of bread.) Yuck .. stale!  
(He opens one side of the well-top and throws the crust in. Groans are heard. He drops the lid and the groans cease)*

All right, so much for that. Now, let's get down to business. Give me a hand with that there tablet will you?

*(JOSH looks sullen, resigned, but he moves to help. PETER takes a last olive and then licks his fingers with relish)*

Mm-mmmm *(optional Italian accent)* do I love them olives! All of them. The black ones, the green ones, the yellow ones, the stuffed ones, Queen olives, King olives, olives with garlic, olives with salami, olives with olives. Yes, yes *(PETER starts singing 'green and black together' to the tune of 'we shall overcome')* Oh I'm getting silly again. Anyway, what I say is ... life without de olives no good. But life with de olives ah mama mia ...

*(PETER makes a Mediterranean kiss of appreciation)*

*(By this time, table and chairs are on the well-top and PETER and JOSH are in the process of sitting down. PETER reaches into a drawer of the table and brings out a bunch of papers, a pen, and a desk-bell.*

*Immediately after closing the drawer and placing these things on the table, he bangs the bell. The moment this happens, PETER changes role. He tries, without much success to be the bureaucrat)*

PETER: *(He clears his throat, puts on a pair of spectacles and surveys a form he has in front of him) Now then Mr. ... er, what is your family name?*

JOSH: *(sarcastic) You don't know? I thought you knew everything up here.*



PETEIR: Nov that's up there. In the ... how can I say, Head office. This is only Purgatory. You know, half-way house. It's true, we **do** have your record down here, in The Book.

JOSH: Well it's Jobson ... Josh Jobson, at least ...

PETER: (*writing*) Josh Jobson ...

JOSH: Just a moment. Like I was trying to tell you, if you want to get your records straight, you'd better add something to that. That record book you were talking about for instance, you may have a different name down for me in that.

PETER: How do you mean?

JOSH: I changed my name.

PETER: You changed your name? Why was that?

JOSH: I just wanted to change it, O.K.?

PETER: Did you really? So what is your name now?

JOSH: Jobson, but it used to be MacMillan. Some people call me Josh MacMillan.

PETER: Well, I'll just put you down here as Josh MacJobson, I mean Josh Jobson. Hmm, what's next? (*He looks at the form*) Ah 'SEX'. No problems there, I presume? Ha ha,

JOSE: What do you mean?

PETER: Well heavens! You are 'male', I assume?

JOSH: Well I am now ...

PETER: (*muddled*) I see ... but now you do have er ... male (*He points to JOSH's crotch*) ... ?

JOSH: Yes.

PETER: Well then, I think I'll just put I mean  
it's only a form isn't it? Hmm ... now  
'NATIONALITY'?

JOSH. I'm afraid I can't answer that.

PETER: Oh really Mr. Jobson, let's keep things  
simple shall we? I've got a job to do here.  
You must have had a nationality.

JOSH: Why? What if I was a Palestinian?

PETER: Are you a Palestinian?

JOSH: No.

PETER:. I thought you were a Canadian? *(He points to  
the ski-hat)*

JOSH:-- My mother was English and my father was  
Scottish. I never knew whether I was English  
or Scottish, or 'British'. Then I emigrated  
to Canada and ...

PETER: Fine. So you are Canadian?

JOSH. On paper yes ... but not in my heart. But then  
I'm not British there either.

PETER: Well my goodness! You are a strange  
bird, aren't you?

JOSH: *(sarcastic)* Yes I am, aren't I? I should have  
known you wouldn't understand. Anyways ... do  
you have your information now? Do we have to  
go on with this?

PETER: Er no. *(PETER bangs the bell, takes off his  
spectacles and slumps out of role)* Hang on a  
second, will you? I er ... I just have to  
make a quick call.  
*(PETER crosses to stage RIGHT. Beside the  
gatehouse, there is a telephone. He picks up  
the receiver)*



PETER: Oh come on ... you'll enjoy it ... help us all relax a bit. We can play until Michael gets back.

*(They start playing. Comments such as 'good shot', 'not bad eh?' 'darn it', etc. can be improvised into the dialogue when appropriate, but from PETER only. Also possible humming and whistling from PETER)*

I was interested in some of the things you were saying before. You know, about changing your name and your country and so on. Seems like you were trying to escape something.

JOSH: I was.

PETER: Mind if I ask what?

JOSH: Isn't it obvious? I wanted to escape my background, what I'd been brought up as.

PETER: So what did you do? For instance, what was your line of work?

JOSH: What do you mean?

PETER: Well, what was your trade, your profession? Me, for example, I was a fisherman.

JO SH You were also a preacher, a healer, an apostle, an administrator, and

a martyr ... were you not? And now you're a saint. *(JOSH puts the quoit above his head like a halo)*

PETER: Well yes, that's true but ...

JOSH: So you had more than one line, eh? Like fishermen don't put all their bait on one book, huh?

PETER: I don't quite see what you're getting at.

JOSH: What I'm getting at is that I didn't want to get stuck in one type of work so I did all kinds of jobs. I was curious ... what's wrong with wanting to see a lot of life?

PETER: *(Taken aback)* Nothing, nothing. I'll be frank with you Josh. The reason I'm asking is because we have a kind of points system here ...

JOSH: Ha! Just as I thought. I bet you've got a whole class system going here. Just like down there. Don't tell me now ... doctors and lawyers get ten, salesmen get five, and floorcleaners get one.

PETER: No, no, no. Salesmen get ten and floorcleaners get five. Doctors and lawyers make it right through, no questions asked. *(laughs)* No, just kidding.

JOSH: Are you?

PETER: Yes of course. In fact our points system is worked out on what you did in your job and of course in your life generally. So anyway ... as I said, I'm interested. Give me an idea of some of the jobs you had.

JOSH: *(still suspicious)* I know what this is all leading up to. You want to know where I've 'sinned' ... what I've done 'wrong', or at least what is wrong by your criteria.

PETER: *(Reflecting)* Now what's that song. Ah yes ... *(He starts 'Hey sinner man, where you gonna run to?' but then breaks off abruptly)* Yes well, very bad taste ... no reflection on **you**. *(laughs)* I'm sorry! You see, if I hear the line of a song or else a word that reminds me of a song, I have to sing it. I can't help it. I must have music in me veins. I certainly got plenty of soul *(more laughter)* No, but getting back to what you were saying ... you see Josh, the information about your er

.. sins, that's all in The Book. The interview stage is just intended to put a human face on things and fill in the gaps ...

JOSH: *(JOSH stares at PETER for a moment, trying to read him. He appears lost in thought)*  
I ... I don't know where to start. I've done a lot of different jobs. I've been a clerk, a repairman, a proof-reader, a warehouseman, a researcher, a dishwasher, a muralist, a factory worker, a floor-cleaner, a musician ... oh, I don't know. I've done all kinds of work. Backbreaking work, mind-destroying work, filthy stinking rotten work that no-one else wanted to do.

PETER: Hmm ... very interesting, Anything else?

JOSH: Oh yes. Community work, organizing, teaching - they were the main things. But that was when I believed something could be done. Before I saw that people didn't care, before I ... *(he trails off)*

PETER: What were you going to say?

JOSH: No. Forget it. I've said too much already.

PETER: What's wrong Josh? What's happening. Tell me more about those jobs. It sounds like you lost faith. Tell me what things were like down there - in Britain, in Canada.

JOSH: Just leave me alone. I don't want to talk anymore.

PETER: What's the matter?

JOSH: You really want to know? *(Fiercely)* I don't trust you!

*(PETER appears absolutely flabbergasted. He turns away from JOSH hand clamped to forehead. Suddenly, without any warning, he*

*falls backwards straight as a ramrod towards JOSH. At the last moment, JOSH catches him. JOSH then lets go of PETER, a shocked look on his face)*

What, what are you doing?! Are you crazy?

PETER: *(Very nonchalant, dusting himself off)* I just decided to play another game with you. I was getting tired of quoits. Now it's your turn.

JOSH: What?

PETER: Just do what I did. It's simple. Fall backwards and I'll catch you.

JOSH: This is stupid! What's the point?

PETER: *(Emphatically)* The point is trust. I trusted you. You said you didn't trust me. I want you to trust me - that's very important to me. Now come on, just fall back and I'll catch you.

JOSH: No, no I can't.

PETER: What's the matter? Are you afraid?

JOSH: No

PETER: So?

JOSH: Look, I used to trust people. Then I got let dona badly *(turning perverse again)* Come to think of it, there's quite a famous instance of your letting someone done, isn't there?

PETER: *(Angry)* Now look here ... I may not know much, and I've made mistakes, but don't question my trust or my faith. Don't you or anyone else mess with that!

JOSH: *(Disturbed)* O.K. ... I'm sorry. I just don't know what's going on, that's all. O.K. I'll do it.

*(JOSH falls backwards but bends his body at the waist. PETER breaks his fall)*

PETER: *(Sternly)* Come on. That's no good. Do it again.

JOSH: *(Like a frightened child)* Don't let me down.

PETER: *(Gently)* Come on.

*(JOSH falls again, this time with his body straight. PETER catches him, and then helps him up off the floor. As they rise to their feet, PETER puts his arms around JOSH and embraces him)*

Here, I think we could both use a drink.  
*(PETER gestures towards the table and the bottle of wine. They stop tip onto the well-top and sit down at the table, on either side of it, PETER pours out two drinks)* You ... you said that teaching and community work used to be important to you. Please tell me about it.

JOSH: *(JOSH seems to relax as he considers the question)* There's not much to say really. Community work was difficult - people are so, so suspicious. But teaching, I loved teaching. I always loved to see things grow, people grow.

PETER: Me too, me too *(he sighs)* ah, but how easy it is to think negatively, wouldn't you say?

JOSH: *(tightening up)* What do you mean?

PETER: Well I mean, here you are in Purgatory and er ... you have a choice. You can either believe that things will work out, or you can be cynical and fear the worst.

JOSH: *(hardening)* Oh I see ... very subtle. Well maybe there's a reason for my cynicism.



PETER: Yes, yes ... that's true, maybe there is, and maybe that's what we should get to now. I have an idea. Wait a moment.

*(PETER reaches under the table and pulls out a screen which he attaches in the center of the table so that it 'screens' JOSH's view of him, and vice-versa)*

JOSH: What ... what are you doing?

PETER: Oh. just an idea I had. Here, have an olive while you're waiting.

JOSH: You ... you're weird.

PETER: Right! There we are. All ready. *(bangs the bell)* Josh, I er ... I have something to confess to you.  
*(He leans his head forward close to the screen but does not look JOSH in the eye. He speaks in a soft and humble voice, with an Irish brogue if possible)*  
I am but a poor fisherman, simple in my ways, but with a good heart.

JOSH: Are you crazy?

PETER: I am, I surely am. But in my own small way I'm doing my best to understand a fine gentleman like yourself and with the Good Lord's help, I may still succeed.

JOSH: *(disarmed)* Oh come on, stop fooling around.

PETER: *(continuing with the Irish brogue)* Oh, but there's nothing like a bit of fooling around. Listen, you're an intelligent fellow ... I've noticed that ... almost an intellectual you might say. So here's a little teaser for you. Are you ready for it? O.K. here we go. How do you recognize an Irish intellectual?

JOSH: What? I don't know.

PETER:                    (*Deadpan*) He doesn't move his lips when he reads. (*JOSH gives a little smile*) Here's another one. How do you tell the age of an Irishman?

JOSH:                    I don't know, measure the percentage of alcohol in his blood?

PETER:                    Oh very good, very good ... but that's not the right answer. No, all you have to do is cut off his head and count the rings. (*JOSH smiles*) One last one. Why do so many Irishmen have scratched faces?

JOSH:                    (*Thinks for a second, smiling*) I give up.

PETER:                    From trying to eat with forks. (*JOSH has to laugh*) Is that a touch of the chuckles I hear from the other side? Aarr, by Saint Paddy, that's awful good to hear. Music to the ears, so it is. Now listen here, me fine young lad. We've talked a fair bit, and got to know each other a little. But I've been doing most of the talking, although it's hard for me to stop, d'ye know what I mean? Anyway, now I'd just like to take this opportunity to sit back and listen to you. You can tell me in your own words about why you changed your name and your country, and why you got disillusioned with things, and what you were trying to escape, and so on.

JOSH:                    There's no way I can get into all of that with you acting the fool like that. Can you be serious ... for a while?

PETER:                    (*Still with an Irish accent*) Sure I can. (*He smiles and drops out of role*) Yeah, O.K. (*He bangs the bell*) Right! There we are. Cephas The Rock at your service, dull old bugger that he is.

JOSH:                    So you want a confession, is that it?

PETER: A confession? Oh no, not exactly. I just want you to tell me a bit about yourself.

JOSH: But as you said earlier, I wouldn't be here unless I'd done something wrong ... 'innocent until proven guilty'.

PETER: Well ...

JOSH: Well jeez, it looks like a confession, wouldn't you say?  
*(he points to the screen)*

PETER: Oh that was just so that you wouldn't have to look at my face. You know ... the scratch marks.

JOSH: *(smiles)* O.K. O.K. ... a confession it is.  
*(There is a long as JOSH struggles to begin)*  
I don't know where to start.

PETER: Start anywhere. Feel free.

JOSH: All right ... I ... *(he says the following words slowly and with difficulty)* I confess that I am guilty of betrayal.

PETER: Guilty of betrayal? Well that's not something you hear every day. What, who did you betray?

JOSH: *(nervous laugh)* Oh forget it. I was just kidding. I don't even know why I said it. 'Betrayal' makes it sound as if I'm a traitor or something.

PETER: You're not?

JOSH: Well, what I mean is, I betrayed my heritage. I was brought up by the ... how shall I put it, the ruling class *(sarcastically)* the great British colonial ruling class. Tell me, how is it one should be in a confession? Humble? Is that right?

PETER: Well ...

JOSH: You see, it's hard for me to be humble. I was brought up to be proud of who and what I was. I was brought up to believe that the British had a mission. You know, to educate the backward, to develop the undeveloped, to enlighten the ignorant masses to the superior system and culture and character of the British (*JOSH breaks off suddenly*) Do you really want me to talk about my life?

PETER: Yes, yes. That's what I said. That's what I'm here for. You were talking about what you were brought up to believe ... that the British had a mission ...

JOSH: Yes. It was like a ... a holy -task, to spread the word. The generals and the preachers and the administrators had been sent forth as apostles of the Word - the Word according to Victoria. And the funny thing is that I was proud to have had such a heritage, or so I thought. My father wanted me to go into the army and I had no reason at first to doubt his endless talk about what a noble thing it was to serve one's Queen and country. I went to an English boarding school and learned that this was the stepping-stone to entering the ranks of the ruling class. I even did well there. I did what I was told, and I was good at what I did. I had friends ... in fact I was pretty happy there. (*JOSH seems almost suprised to hear himself saying this*) But at the same time, there were other things that made me start to question, that seemed hard to accept.

PETER: Please, go on. What kind of 'things' are you talking about?

JOSH: Oh, different things. Like I couldn't get used to ... I couldn't accept the superior attitude towards the scivs.

PETER: The 'scivs'?

JOSH: Yes, that was the name for the maids ... working class girls who were responsible for cleaning the house and serving the meals. They were treated as if they were stupid, dirty, untouchable.  
*JOSH breaks off as he hears the phone ring. PETER gets up and starts walking over to it)*

PETER: Ah, interruptions, interruptions. Why is it that confessions always get interrupted? O.K. O.K. hold your horses. *(he picks up the phone)*

*Hello, Purgatorio Pizzeria here ... oh, sorry! yes, yes ... oh he is ...right ... O.K. ... thank-you ... 'bye. (He puts down the receiver and turns to JOSH. He looks serious and starts speaking more quickly)*  
O.K. ... now listen, Michael will be here very shortly. He's on his way. We've got to speed things up. There are certain things I want to ask you before he gets here. I want you to tell me as quickly as possible what happened in your life after you left this school.

JOSH: This Michael ... it sounds as if you're scared of him, or something. What's he like? What's he going to do?

PETER: *(agitated)* We don't have time to go into that now. Don't worry, just trust me. Just think of him as the council for the prosecution. Let's get rid of this thing. *(he takes off the confession screen)* Ridiculous idea anyway ... never works.  
*(PETER sits down, takes some papers out off the drawer, shuffles them into order and bangs the bell)*  
O.K. let's go. First of all, tell me what happened after you left school.

JOSH: I went to Canada.

PETER: Why? Why did you leave?

JOSH: Well, I won a scholarship to go to University there.

PETER: And you stayed there? In Canada? That's when you emigrated?

JOSH: No. I went back to England after I finished College.

PETER: Oh I see, I see. So tell me about your time in Canada, when you were at College.

JOSH: What do you want to know? Look, I feel under pressure - you're rushing me.

PETER: Come on now. You can handle it. Just tell me some of the things that happened, what you did, what you liked, what you didn't like ... you know. Come on Josh, there's something else I want to get to before he gets back.

JOSH: *(He thinks for a few moments.)* Well for a start, I went there like I owned the place. I was off to the colonies for a while. You see, I may have started questioning but I was still very much in the mould of the young English gentleman. Anyway, I spent three years in a place called Kingston, Ontario. What a stiffling hole that was! It was also the heartland of the Empire Loyalists. *(He laughs bitterly)* What better place for the beginnings of a betrayal?

PETER: What do you mean? What happened while you were there?

JOSH: Well I took a degree, and I read a lot. But that's not the important thing. What's important is that I began to see things differently. I started feeling guilty.

PETER: I don't understand.

JOSH: Guilt, guilty. I felt guilty for what I was, what I stood for. *(becoming animated)* Listen, you want to hear about guilt? Well, you got the right man. Guilt's meant to come from sin, right? Well it must be original sin then. I mean I was born white, I was born a man, I was born middle-class and I was nurtured on good old British bigotry.

PETER: I don't see what you're getting at.

JOSH: All right. For instance, I'd always felt lucky in a way to be white. I mean my father was an ex-Army officer, and he would refer to black Africans as trousered apes. He said they were dirty, stupid, inferior to us. I didn't know. And then I started reading about what the whites had done in their colonies - to the natives that is, whether they were black, brown, yellow or red.

PETER: Yes, but you weren't involved in that. You're not responsible for the sins of your ancestors.

JOSH: Maybe not. But that didn't stop me from feeling guilty. I mean there you are, The Great White Liberal - 'cos that's what I became at College in Canada, and you The Great White Liberal are positively aching to find a black man to tell him that you are different. You are The Great White Liberal **not** The Great White Oppressor like your father. And then you meet a black man, and before you can get a word in edgeways he says something like 'hey man ... you white ... you don't understand nothing'.

PETER: But you could have explained ...

JOSH: No, no ... the more you try to explain, the more anger you set off. Same thing with women, same thing there.

PETER: Ah, I know what you mean. After I became a disciple, things weren't easy at home, no sir. My wife used to give me hell for never being at home.

JOSH: Yes, but at least she knew you. I mean I would meet women who didn't even know me, and they would say things like 'you're a man, you wouldn't understand', and 'you're only, after my body'. And a lot of it was totally unfair. I wasn't doing anything wrong. But then I remembered the way my father had been to my mother, and I felt guilty.

PETER: So what did you do about all this guilt and everything

JOSH: I wanted to become different, be seen as different. You see, that's where the betrayal comes in, or at least the rejection. I could no longer believe in the holy mission of the British ruling class. By going to Canada I'd had the chance to get away from my roots and to see things differently. I began to feel ashamed. I felt I'd been tricked ... you know, that I'd just been fed a bunch of lies. Like I remembered our attitude towards the scivs ... the condescending attitude ... you know, we had our place and they had theirs (*JOSH gestures higher and lower with his hands*), and I began to understand the whole class system, to see how rotten it was. (*JOSH senses that PETER is not really with him.*) So anyway, what I'm saying, I guess, (*he sighs*) is that I began to have my own holy mission, and that was to become the opposite of what I had formerly been.

PETER: Boy you're quite a talker once you got going! But er, Josh, a word of advice ... some people don't like to be preached to - Michael for instance. Just cool it with him. Let him ask the questions. All you have to do is give him simple answers, O.K.?

JOSH: (*angry*) What do you mean, preaching? I'm not preaching. I'm telling you the way it is.



PETER: You're giving me some of your opinions.

JOSH: No! They're not opinions. Listen, that's why I had to go back to Britain. I had to find things out for sure from experience not just from reading. I had to see the other side of life.

PETER: *(trying to laugh at JOSH's intensity)* Well I see we've opened a whole can of worms here. Here, have an olive. No? Some wine then? A ... what do you call them down there? ... a valium, perhaps? But seriously Josh, you're an interesting case

JOSH: *(sarcastically)* An interesting 'case'!

PETER: Oh come on now, you know what I mean. Don't pick at my words. Anyway, you **are** interesting and I think I'm beginning to ... how is it you say, ah yes, I think I'm beginning to see where you're coming from. But you see, the problem is there isn't time for the whole story of your life What we have to do is find a way of condensing things. You see, I want to get to your feelings.

JOSH: You have been getting my feelings.

PETER: No, I don't think so. I got a lot of defensiveness and then a bit of anger. Now I think there's a lot more in there *(he pokes JOSH's stomach)* than that. I want to help you open up a bit. You know ... loosen up. *(PETER strikes a pose)* 'And I will give unto thee the keys *(he gestures to the keys hanging from his belt)* of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Get it, get it? Loose, loosen?

JOSH: You think I'm constipated?

PETER: Well, now that you put it that way, yes. Emotionally speaking, yes.

JOSH & PETER: Well maybe I have reason to be. (*PETER is mimicking JOSH*)  
(in unison)

PETER: O.K. O.K. ... listen, what I'm saying is I want to help you get out.

JOSH: Out where?

PETER: Out of yourself.

JOSH: What about getting out of here?  
Purgatory?

PETER: It's all the same, wouldn't you say? Anyway, we don't have much time. Quickly now, tell me about the last five or so years of your life.

JOSH: Quickly?

PETER: Just the essentials, the main events.

JOSH: Well, like I told you, I went back to Britain after I finished College. I had to go back.

PETER: And? What happened?

JOSH: (*becoming disturbed as he thinks about it*) It was terrible. I ... I tried to er ... I tried to destroy my roots. I can't talk about it.

PETER: How do you mean you tried to destroy your roots?

JOSH: (*struggling*) I couldn't accept anything, but I still wanted ... I still needed to be accepted, if you know what I mean.

PETER: (*confused, trying to understand*) Accept who? Destroy who?

JOSH: My family, my friends. You see ... I'd changed. I couldn't accept them anymore. I couldn't accept what they stood for. And they ...

PETER                    Yes.

JOSH:                    They couldn't understand me.

PETER:                    So you wanted to destroy them? Your links with them?

JOSH:                    Yes, yes ... at least, I didn't want to. I had to. I mean, I **did** want to in my head, but not ... not in my heart. I don't know if you're following me. It's a bit confusing.

PETER:                    Go on.

JOSH:                    *(Becoming encouraged by PETER's interest)*  
Well, they were symbols of oppression. They were the ruling class. I'd changed. I didn't want to be like them. I mean, the world is changing so fast ... the time is coming. You know, it's like a friend of mine used to say, I know which side of the barricades I'll be on when the Fascists come marching down the street. Well, I wanted to know that too. And I came to the conclusion that I no longer wanted to be behind their barricade, or on the side of The Great White Oppressor. I wanted to go further than questioning or feeling guilty like I had in Canada. I wanted to actually destroy that identity, crush it, rip it out of me. I wanted to strip myself of all privileges. I wanted to see things from the other side. I didn't want to be guilty any more. I wanted to be a liberator, not an oppressor.

PETER:                    Hmm ...

JOSH:                    That's why I started doing all those shit jobs - to get away, to break away. *(JOSH suddenly stops, deflated)* But it didn't work ... I didn't fit ... no-one ...

PETER:                    Come on Josh!

JOSH:                    *(becoming desperate)* No-one know who or what I was. I wasn't a

Cockney, I wasn't from the working-class. I got to the point where I didn't know who I was. I had destroyed my past. I didn't fit in anywhere. I wasn't British. I wasn't Canadian. I wasn't middle-class. I wasn't working-class. I suddenly felt completely alone, adrift. (*JOSH pauses for a moment, a vacant look on his face.*) And then I ... I guess I had a kind of breakdown.

PETER: (*Taking control*) O.K. Josh, you know what we're going to do. We're going to handle this thing in a different way. Now I want you to do what I tell you. But you have to trust me, O.K.?

JOSH: I don't want to bring it back. I don't want to talk about that time.

PETER: Ah, but you must ... you must. Look, what I want you to do is this. I want you to pick one of your friends, or a member of your family, and talk to them. Ask them why they couldn't understand you. Tell them how it feels not to be understood. Tell them why you couldn't accept them. All you have to do is imagine the person sitting opposite you. Oh, I have an idea. Maybe Lucy will be willing to help us out. (*PETER starts off towards the gatehouse*) Didn't I tell you about Lucy? (*with a lecherous tone of voice*) Yes, I sleep with her every night. (*He produces a big teddy bear from within the gatehouse*) Lucy, you wouldn't mind being talked to, would you? What's that you say? You fancy him ... well! you old trollop you! (*PETER smiles at JOSH*) She doesn't mind. (*he plonks Lucy in the chair opposite JOSH*) O.K. so you get the idea? Imagine Lucy is ... whoever, no - why not start with your father? Yes, that's a good idea.

JOSH: (*frowning, still upset*) My father ... my father was

PETER: No, talk to him. There he is, (*points to Lucy*) that's your father.

JOSH: No, no ... I can't do that.

PETER: Come on now. All you have to do is use your imagination, and then get in touch with your feelings.

JOSH: No, really, I ... I can't

PETER: (*angry*) You can but you won't. You won't because you are too proud.

JOSH: Proud?!

PETER: Yes. Proud of your self-pity. You won't give yourself up. You're not letting yourself flow. I'm beginning to think that you don't want to help yourself or be helped.

JOSH: (*also angry*) Maybe I can't afford to give myself up. Maybe I need to keep control.

PETER: (*backs off, sighs*) Oh Josh, let's stop this bickering. I'm sorry, I was a little harsh there. I get frustrated because I want to help you, and you ... you're stubborn, don't you see? There's nothing to lose. Look, your father ... what about your father? I know you didn't like him. He treated your mother badly. He was, as you put it, a symbol of oppression. You defied him by not going into the army.

JOSH: (*sits bolt upright*) How did you know that? I never told you that.

PETER: Yes you did.

JOSH: I never told you about not going into the army.

PETER: Yes, yes. Earlier on, you told me that. Believe me, please.  
Josh, would you er ... would you describe your father as a cruel man?

JOSH: Yes, he was mean to my mother.

PETER: All right. I want you to tell him that. But first let's set things up. Here, give me a hand with this table. Let's move it down onto the ground ... give you more room  
*(PETER and JOSH move the table off the well-top onto the ground, stage LEFT. They leave behind the two chairs)*  
Fine. Now sit down. Good. *(pointing at Lucy)*

O.K. There he is.  
Go on. It's just you and him now *(PETER bangs the bell)* O.K. off you go.

JOSH: You want me to do all these weird things. I don't know. I don't know where it's all leading.

PETER: Just do it.

JOSH: *(JOSH sighs, shakes his head)* O.K. *(he gazes at Lucy for a long time, trying to visualize his father. Eventually, in a barely audible voice he starts talking)*  
You always wanted so much. You were never satisfied. You were proud of me only as long as I did what **you** wanted. But when I tried to go my own way, you couldn't accept it. I was 'the prodigal son' wasn't I? You once said that. But you weren't like his father. You didn't accept me no matter what I did. You didn't trust me to make good. Trust ... that's it. All I wanted was for you to trust me. But you couldn't forgive me for going against your ideas. That was 'insubordination'. I had to be kept in line, just like one of your 'men' or one of your black servants. And you know what? I was becoming like you. I was a real chip off the old block. That's why I had to challenge you. I didn't want to be like you. But you helped push me away. You beat my respect and loyalty into the ground.  
*(From OFF stage LEFT is heard the sound of the elevator doors opening. JOSH and PETER, however, are unaware of the sound. MICHAEL enters stage LEFT, unseen by the other two.*

*He stands in a dimly lit corner of the stage and observes from this point on. He is holding a large book)*

And you did the same thing with mum. Except that with her, despite all you threw at her, she stayed with you. She did everything she could to make you happy, but it was never good enough, was it? She brought us up. She cared for us. She centered her whole life round you. And you were so cruel to her. I had to get away to Canada to see just how cruel you were. *(JOSH is now really worked up)* She didn't know how to challenge you. She was defenseless. She was an open, caring, vulnerable person. She was too good for you. You ruined her life. *(JOSH pauses in his rage)* You bastard! You goddamned bastard! For that I can never forgive you. *(The more he recollects this, the more disturbed he becomes. He appears in a state between rage and tears)* No, I can never forgive you for that. *(JOSH turns to PETER after a moment.)* I'm sorry, I ... I can't go on with this.

PETER:                   What do you feel like doing to him?

JOSH:                    I just feel anger ... cold anger.

PETER:                   **Cold** anger!?

JOSH:                   Well ...

PETER:                   You look like you could kill him.

JOSH:                   I did ... I wanted to kill him.

PETER:                   But now, what about now? *(PETER removes one of the quoits sticks from its base and holds it out to JOSH)* Do you feel like beating him?

JOSH:                   *(shocked)* You want me to beat him?

PETER:                   What do **you** want? Go with your feelings. Don't be afraid of them.

JOSH:                   No ... I can't.

PETER:                               Come on man ... let's go ... loosen up  
... get rid of your feelings.

JOSH:                               *(Takes stick)* Well I ... *(he begins beating the stick against his leg, working himself up)* You did so much damage, didn't you? Yes, you! *(he pokes Lucy)* Listen to me, you fucker! You never listened, did you? *(JOSH starts laughing)* That's funny ... you can't answer back now, can you? That's nice. That's really nice. You see I'm not afraid of you any more *(JOSH starts hitting the bear)* I'm not afraid of you. I'm not afraid of you, you bastard ... you bastard ... I'm - not - a - fraid - of - you. *(between each word he gives a whack. He gives one final whack, and drops the stick exhausted)* Yes, you did so much damage. Your world was crumbling away. The sun had just about set on your Empire ... and you were so bitter. Your bitterness was a poison that filled every nook and cranny of that house. I had a simple choice. *(JOSH collects himself and becomes detached and rational)* Either I had to go on kissing your arse, or I had to get rid of you ... and your world. *(there is a long pause in which JOSH seems to go through another change of mood. His face softens and suddenly there is a look of terrible sadness in his expression)* And you see Dad, that's what did it. I couldn't go on and on trying to please you. I mean, all I wanted was your trust, your acceptance, your love. But you wouldn't give it. And you know why? Because you had become so bitter and twisted that you couldn't give anything anymore. Deep inside, you hated yourself for the way you were. Deep inside, underneath all the justifications of your life, you knew you'd lived out a lie. You knew you'd oppressed other people - innocent people who hadn't welcomed you or your ways. You didn't believe in who you were or what you'd done. And that was like a rat gnawing away in your belly. Gnawing away the goodness and the sweetness in your heart, leaving only hardness, and coldness and bitterness. *(JOSE is now calm, his voice soft)* I didn't want



that to happen to me. I didn't want to be like you. I wanted to purge myself of your influence, exorcise you and everything you stood for. (*JOSH places the stick on the chair beside Lucy and turns to PETER*) And so the whole thing started - a trickle that in no time burst into a flood. I just wanted to destroy. Destroy him (*he gestures to the chair*) ... destroy the bloody class structure ... destroy the holier- than-thou British attitudes. I wanted to be part of a glorious British revolution that would bury the past, once and for all. One huge explosion that would bury Buckingham Palace and the House of Lords ... and all the American tourists. Bury them all. (*JOSH sighs and looks at PETER with an utterly fatigued expression*) So maybe you understand now. That's why I changed so radically. That's why I took my College diploma and wiped my arse with it, and went to work in factories and warehouses. That's why I lived down and out. That's why I renounced my class. I didn't want the burden of guilt. (*he turns back to face Lucy*) The guilt of your sins and the sins of your class. (*there is another pause, and a troubled look comes over his face*) But ... as you know, it didn't work out. I didn't fit in. I had killed off my old identity and I couldn't find a new one - not in England anyway. And so I had to renounce my country too. (*JOSH hangs his head. He looks pathetic. His voice conveys pain.*) The problem was that as much as I had changed, I couldn't root out my feelings. In my heart I was still loyal to my old friends. But my head wouldn't allow me to see them. In my head I had rejected them. I felt I was being torn apart. I didn't know how to deal with it. It ... it was indescribable ...

MICHAEL: Wasn't it just! An indescribable hell, you might say. And you fell apart, didn't you? (*MICHAEL moves into CENTER stage.*)

PETER: Michael! You're back. How long have you been here?

MICHAEL: Long enough, believe me! *(he turns towards JOSH)* Your name's Jobson, isn't it? *(JOSH nods)* Yes, they told me about you on the phone. Are you in the habit of making scenes like that, or *(he looks at PETER)* was this one of your new, 'humanistic', new age ideas?

PETER: Well I ...

MICHAEL: Never mind, never mind. What's done is done. I just hope I never have to witness anything like that again. All right Jobson, we'll deal with you in a second. I want a few words with my colleague here. You can take that ridiculous object *(he points at Lucy the bear)* and put it away over there *(he points in the direction of the gatehouse)* But first, bring that chair over here for me. *(JOSH, stunned, does as he's told)* I'm exhausted *(JOSH arrives with the chair)* Yes, put it down there. *(MICHAEL sits down)*

PETER: Did you have a nice trip?

MICHAEL: Well, it was nice to get away from losers like that. *(He gestures in the direction of JOSH)* Listen, there are more important things to talk about than dealing with this joker.

PETER: Michael, I ...

MICHAEL: Will you just let me talk for a second? You have no idea what it's like down there. I think the time has come, I really do. It's complete bedlam down there. *(He sees JOSE returning from putting Lucy away. To PETER)* I hope you accomplished something while I was away. *(JOSH stands in front of the table. MICHAEL speaks with a weary tone of voice)* All right, let's get this thing over with. *(He thumbs through the large book)* What was your name again? Jobson wasn't it? And your first name?

JOSH: Josh.

MICHAEL: Jobson ... Joel, John, Jonathon, Joyce, hmm,  
no Josh here.

JOSH: I changed my name.

MICHAEL: Oh you did, did you? What's your father's  
name?

JOSH: Macmillan.

MICHAEL: All names in The Book are indexed under  
father's name. MacMillan eh? *he thumbs  
through The Book again*) McInnis. McLellan,  
McLeod, McLintock, ah yes, McMillan. It is M  
- C, is it not?

JOSH: No, M - A - C

MICHAEL: M - A - C (*frustrated*) Oh for goodness sake!  
*(he flips back several pages)* Mac ... Mac ...  
Mac, ah, here we are. MacMillan, Josh ...  
born Dirleton, Scotland. (*to PETER*) Is this  
the one?

PETER: (*Glancing over at The Book*) Er ... yes,  
that's him.

MICHAEL: All right. (*To JOSH*) You'd better sit in that  
chair up there. *(he points to the remaining  
chair on the well-top. JOSH goes over and  
sits down)* Has Cephas explained our system to  
you?

JOSH: I don't know. I don't think so. We ...

MICHAEL.- (*To PETER*) What **have** you been doing all this  
time? (*To JOSH*) In The Book, we have complete  
information on you and your life. There are  
three sections to The Book. One is marked by  
the letter D. That is for those who are  
damned. The second is marked by the letter S.  
That is for those who are saved. The third is  
marked by the letter P. This letter stands  
for pending ...

PETER: Or Purgatory, if you prefer. *(PETER laughs uncertainly)*

MICHAEL *(Glaring at PETER and then looking back at JOSH)* You, needless to say, are in the P section.

PETER: *(Still trying to lighten the atmosphere)* Hey Michael, I've got a good one for you. Try this. *(very quickly)* pending penitents placed in Purgatory Peter purges pure.

*PETERE laughs again. JOSH sits expressionless. MICHAEL glares at PETER with looks that could kill, and holds his stare for a while)*

MICHAEL: I think, Cephas, we had better proceed without any more disruptions, wouldn't you agree? *(There is silence and MICHAEL starts reading in the book)* Well, well ... you've had rather a disruptive life haven't you? *(mumbling to himself)* College in Canada ... returned to Britain ... and then, and then the 'indescribable hell' of your, how shall I put it, your 'identity crisis' ... hmm ... quite the case.

JOSH: *(coming to life)* I am not a goddammed 'case'!

MICHAEL: *(MICHAEL bursts out of his chair and onto the well-top. JOSH stands in shock. MICHAEL brings his face within an inch or two of JOSH)* Do you know who we are. boy? Have you no shame? You do NOT ... you WILL NOT utter words like that here. Do you hear me? You will NOT blaspheme in my presence.

PETER: Er ... Michael, perhaps I could tell you what happened between Josh and I before you came back.

MICHAEL: Later, later! Let's stick to the format. *(He turns threateningly to JOSH.)* You had best behave yourself, my friend. *(he settles himself back in his chair behind the table, facing JOSH)* So where was I? Ah yes, your

descent into the underworld. Yes, it's all written in here. Perhaps you will permit me to divulge the contents of the latter days of your life. (*MICHAEL looks at the book and starts scanning through the account of JOSH's life*)

At the age of 21, you renounced your father and changed your name. You apparently never spoke to him again. Following this monstrous act, your life seems to have gone from bad to worse. You renounced your friends and avoided any contact with them. You squandered the money that your parents had set aside for when you got married. In fact, you did not get married. Indeed, according to our account, you did not believe in marriage or the (*squinting at the page*) 'nuclear family'.

JOSH:                               Neither would you if you'd seen our family.

MICHAEL:                           Now understand this, MacMillan

JOSH:                               Jobson ... Jobson is my name. I don't like being called MacMillan.

MICHAEL:                           (*To PETER*) Aw, did you hear that? He doesn't like being called MacMillan. (*Turning back to JOSH*) Do you really think I give a rat's arse what you think! Now please, no more interruptions. You have already had quite a considerable opportunity to er ... (*he looks at PETER*) unload your 'feelings' and you will have another chance to speak later ... when I tell you.

PETER:                              His father was in fact very cruel to his mother and put impossible demands on the boy.

MICHAEL:                           There is no evidence of that here. In any case we will hear your observations later. Let us continue. You squandered the money I was talking about before on, amongst other things, travel. For instance, you went to Spain, Morocco, etc. etc. for no other apparent reason than to enjoy yourself.

JOSH:                                 No, that's not ...

MICHAEL:                            Quiet! Whereas before your, er ... breakdown, one of your virtues was perseverance in your endeavors, in the years following it, you seemed unable to hold down a job, or a relationship. You even changed your residence many times. You wrote a lot ... but never tried to get anything published. After three years of this kind of ... drifting around, you emigrated to Canada. There, in Toronto, it appears that you tried in some small way to put some order back into your life. You *(he scans quickly)* did various teaching jobs, and engaged in ... I suppose you would call it, community work. Nothing of much consequence.

JOSH:                                 Wait a minute ...

PETER:                                Josh, Josh ... I think you had better let him finish

MICHAEL:                            *(continuing)* That you were adept at making enemies is abundantly clear, due presumably to your angry disposition, and general intolerance. *(MICHAEL pauses and looks up at JOSH)* And then ... and then it appears you just ... pouf! *(he shrugs)* gave up hope, gave up the struggle. You stopped working and relied on government benefits to support yourself. During this time, you formulated various subversive activities, although er ... I'm glad to see nothing came of them, And now for the climax of this miserable story. The cherry on the pie, shall we say? All this time, you had one woman who cared for you. This, by the looks of things *(he checks The Book)* was the one person in the world who cared for you, and who ... I'm sure, could put up with you. And yet ... and yet, what did you do? *(MICHAEL is enjoying playing out the suspense)* How did you repay her loyalty? It appears Mr. MacMillan *(gesturing to the book)* that you betrayed her.

*(At this, PETER looks horrified. He glances at glances at MICHAEL then at JOSH and then leans over and scrutinizes The Book)*

JOSH: *(Outraged)* That's not true. This is all oversimplification. That's not what happened.

MICHAEL: *(spitting the words out)* Did you, or did you not have a relationship with her best friend?

JOSH: Well, yes, a sort of' ...

MICHAEL: Ah, so you did! Well, she obviously thought it was betrayal judging by her reaction. And that, my friend, is why you are sitting here now. We take disloyalty and betrayal pretty seriously up here. Well! *(MICHAEL slams the book with a flourish)* So much for that! *(He yawns and rubs his eyes)* What interests me is how you got included in the P's. Rather fortunate I would say.

JOSH: Peter, you don't believe all that, do you?

PETER: Is it true?

JOSH: No ... well I mean the facts maybe, but not the interpretation. No, not even the facts. There's so much he hasn't taken into account.

PETER: *(looking troubled)* My son, I ... I believe **in** you but ...

MICHAEL: Ah, that's our Cephas. That's the trouble with you old chap, you're too kind, too easy going, too gullible. You believe in everyone. Even someone who has committed the grave sin of betrayal. Not once, mind you ... not twice, but three times! You, you of all people Peter, should know how grave a sin that is. Ah. *(MICHAEL shakes his head, smiles, and puts his arm around PETER)* c'mon Peter, this fellow has already taken up too much of our allotted time. We're going to be swamped here in the near future, mark my words. We can't mess around. We're going to have to stick to a more objective approach.

They make it, or they don't. And we know our criteria. It's not as if we don't know that. So anyway, having got that out of my system, we will now proceed to the accusations.

JOSH: *(almost pleading)* Peter, why are you letting this guy go on like this? You kept saying I could trust you.

PETER: And so you can. But Joshua, you must understand, there is a format. You will get your chance to speak, and I will give evidence from our meetings earlier on.

MICHAEL: Well, Mr. Joshua MacMillan. After several perusals of your record, the thing that strikes me is the way in which, so quickly, you allowed yourself to be led astray. One moment there you were, a promising young man making his way to ... what is it they used to call Canada? Ah yes, the land of opportunity. And then, the next moment, you became the rebel, the rake. Your story reminds me somewhat of the parable of the prodigal son, except for one key difference, he repented, you didn't.

JOSH: *(JOSH is more composed now, almost as if he is readying himself to do battle. He speaks slowly but forcibly)* In that story, his father accepted him back. My father only accepted me as long as I did what he wanted.

MICHAEL: Ah, you have the arrogance of the devil. Which reminds me. *(he turns to PETER)* I had an interesting dream the other night. I dreamed that war broke out in heaven. What happened was this. Satan came here, to Purgatory, disguised of course. Somehow, probably thanks to your wishy-washy humanistic methods of interviewing, he got past us and into heaven. Once there, he turned himself into a dragon and along with some of his followers, he began capturing souls. Anyway, fortunately someone called me here before it was too late. I rushed up, and along with Gabriel and the others we gave 'em what for. Then we tied them



up, dragged them down here and sent them back the fast way. *(he points to the well)* Interesting though, wouldn't you say? I suppose the moral is we can't be too careful, especially given that these may be the last days. Yes, we must be vigilante! Instead of loosening our methods *(he looks at PETER)* we need to tighten up our criteria. Instead of trying to be flexible, we need to adhere firmly to The Law *(MICHAEL looks pointedly at JOSH)* We don't want Satan to slip by us now, do we? And now ... the accusations. Oh Cephas, I'll have a glass of your excellent wine, if you don't mind.

*(PETER moves away from the table to fetch the wine)*

Joshua MacMillan, you are accused of renouncing and betraying your Father's will through wanton overestimation of yourself, and the powers of human nature. In the words of our *(looks at PETER)* friend Paul: 'for what our human nature wants is opposed to what the spirit wants, and what the Spirit wants is opposed to what our human nature wants. These two are enemies, and this means that you cannot do what you **want** to do.' Through your insubordinate pride, you were led into other sins. Lust ... for knowledge, as well as the obvious. Greed ... for unlimited experience. Anger ... at the social positions of others. Judgement of the actions of others. And I could go on, but this should be sufficient. Going by our points system, we finish up in your case, with a negative imbalance. *(turning to PETER)* Perhaps Cephas, you could explain to him - what this means.

PE'TER:                   No, I ... I would rather you did.

MICHAEL:                Fine, fine. A negative imbalance signifies that the points subtracted for your sins outweigh the points granted for virtuous actions. Consequently, I must emphasize to you that your only hope is confession

followed by a severe purgation. But first, do you have anything to say on your own behalf?

JOSH:           *(JOSH replies assertively, and without hesitation)* Yes. I've already paid my dues.

MICHAEL:       *(Cuttingly)* You've paid your dues. I see. Is that all you have to say?

JOSH:           I don't feel guilty anymore. You're not going to make me feel guilty.

MICHAEL:       Do you acknowledge your sins?

JOSH:           What right do you have to judge my sins? I don't acknowledge your book. It doesn't work anymore. We need a new book, a new points system.

MICHAEL:       What right do you have to question God's will?

JOSH:           Is it God's will? I don't know who God is, but I do know what I've seen, and I do know that a lot of what I've seen is wrong. I have the right to express myself, to speak on my own behalf as you put it. And I have the might to question. And as regards what you said about the spirit being separate from human nature ... I don't believe that.

MICHAEL:       *(to PETER, sarcastically)* Well, so far, it appears that we are going to have to write a new Book, and Paul will have to write another letter to the Galatians. *(turning to JOSH)* And what, pray, do you consider wrong?

JOSH:           I have tried to tell Peter some of the things that I thought were wrong.

MICHAEL:       Well please, try me ... be my guest. Only do try to be a little less emotional than you were when I first arrived.

JOSH:           *(JOSH appears to be thinking furiously)* You want to know what I think is wrong. All right. let me think. You told us a little story ... from your dream, well perhaps I have a story for you.  
*(JOSH speaks slowly and unevenly as he thinks out what lie wants to say)* Yes, I think I have a story for you. It has even got a title. It's called 'The Parable of the Pornographic Movie'. So here go ...

MICHAEL:       Wait a minute, wait a minute. I don't think we need any stories! I asked you a simple question. Just give me a simple answer.

PETER:           Oh come on Michael, I'm sure one story isn't going to take up too much of our time. Besides, I love stories.

MICHAEL:       All right, all right ... get on with it!

JOSH:           *(JOSH waits for a moment, and then begins)*  
Once upon a time, there lived a little man in a gray coat. His home was a two-room bachelor apartment in the center of Toronto. One day, he was looking through the newspaper, when all of a sudden he saw an advertisement for a hardcore porno movie. He had never seen such a movie before, and as he had nothing in particular to do that night he decided to go. So what happens to our intrepid hero? Well let's take a look.

*(JOSH mimes a movie screen. If JOSH has been sitting prior to this, he should now be standing. For the rest of his story he uses the welltop as a stage as he graphically illustrates the story through gestures and/or mime)*

Well, we see him bopping down Yonge street and disappearing down some steps into a movie theatre. He's excited, let's face it. The ad. said that it was a hot and heavy movie. So he pays his money and settles down for some stimulation. No doubt about it, our little man in the gray coat is looking for some

action. He's waiting to see lots of humping and bumping and stroking and sucking. After all, isn't that what a hard-core porno movie is supposed to be?

MICHAEL: *(unable to contain himself any longer)* You pervert! You sinner! How dare you bring your sordid little stories up here!

PETER: But Michael, you said he had the right to speak.

MICHAEL: *(he snorts, but acknowledges this fact)* How much longer do we have to endure this?

JOSH: Oh, I'm getting there? I'm getting there. So anyway, the long-awaited movie starts and, sure enough, right away there they are stripping off their clothes. But what happens? Just as they're about to get into it, the scene sort of cuts jumpily and we see our lusty couple not humping and bumping and stroking and sucking but lying in bed smoking a cigarette, a look of blissful exhaustion on their faces. Then the whole thing starts up again. Off with the clothes, into the bed and ... cut ... there they are again, wiping the sweat off each other's brows and sharing yet another cigarette. This goes on for the whole movie. Meanwhile, the little man in the gray coat has finished his popcorn and is positively squirming in frustration. Eventually he leaves, feeling very dissatisfied and somehow unclean. Back in his bachelor apartment he regrets wasting \$10, but figures he must have just got a bad movie and vows to return before long.

MICHAEL: *(Sarcastically)* Ah, how illuminating!

JOSH: I haven't finished. That's only half the story. Because you see meanwhile, a few blocks away, a big man in a natty pin-stripe suit sits in a ritzy hotel room. And guess what he's doing. He's watching **really** hot stuff on closed circuit television. Lots of

humping and bumping. Oodles of it! Yes, he's having a great time. You see, he's got a whole routine worked out - 'phones his wife from the office, tells her he's got a late appointment, bops down to the massage parlor, takes out one of the pretty girls to dinner, and to round out the evening nicely, he takes her back to this expensive hotel room to watch this great movie. (*JOSH pauses and looks at MICHAEL*) And you know the funny thing about the big man in the pin-strip suit? He was a Judge, just like you.

MICHAEL:           (*to PETER*) This fellow would talk all night if we let him. Is there a point to this, or have you just wasted more of our time?

JOSH:               The point? Ah yes, the point? Well, there are lots of them, wouldn't you say? Lots of points. For a start, the men who make the laws ... the men who decide what's good for us and what's bad for us - they don't want all the little gray men seeing all that hot stuff. After all, it would give the impression that we were living in a decadent society, wouldn't you say? But they don't mind the big pin-stripe suited men seeing it. Why? Well, maybe because the big men have money and can afford to be discreet and pay the price of being exclusive. Besides, they can understand the 'needs' of the big men because they're big men too. Well, that's one point. (*JOSH thinks for a second*) Deliberately false and yet legal advertising, that's another. The profits being raked in by the movie-house owners and the movie-makers on a rip-off product. I guess you could say that's another point. But do you know the real point? I haven't even got to it yet. The real point, is that there's a third person in this story who I haven't even mentioned and that's a curious, angry-looking man who doesn't have a pin-stripe suit or a gray coat. And he certainly doesn't have the \$10 for the Yonge street movie or the \$60 for the hotel room. He's not even interested in porno movies.

Why? Well, because he's thinking about how to fill his belly, and how to obtain drugs for his sick baby, and how to find a job, and how to keep his sanity. But that's another story ... (*JOSH looks fiercely at MICHAEL*) and you know who told it? Yes, that's right, you creep! Your friend Jesus told it. What was it called again? Oh yes, 'The Parable of The Last Judgement'. And in that story, if I'm not mistaken, he says that the condemned are accused not of evil acts, but of failing to give help to the needy.

PETER:           (*Nervously interceding*) I don't think Michael would disagree with the importance of charity.

JOSH:           NO! I don't mean charity! That doesn't go far enough. That third person doesn't need sympathy or to feel that he owes anyone anything. He doesn't need the crumbs from the big man's table. No, the big men should be forced to share their wealth. That's the only way. You can't ask them, or tell them that they should. That hasn't worked. Look around at the bedlam down there and you'll see that hasn't worked.

MICHAEL:       (*To PETER*) You see how clever he is. He shifts the focus away from himself. You must have had a terrible time with him. (*turning back to JOSH in confrontation*) You tell your stories, you blame others, but what of yourself?! Even now you display your arrogance. Your lack of faith, your betrayal of others has left a hole inside you, and vainly you try to fill this hole with your puny knowledge, and your pathetic preaching.

JOSH:           Yes knowledge seems a better bet than faith - that's why I wanted it. I knew at least where it would lead me. I wanted to help change things. I learned that you can never change anything from a position of weakness. You must be strong. You must have power. Power is at the bottom of everything. Some people find power in money, others find it in guns, and

yet others see power in the strength of numbers. I didn't have any of that, not after I cut myself off from my past. So I settled on knowledge. You see (*JOSH opoints to The Book*) I didn't have 'The Book'. I didn't know the facts at first. I didn't know who was right, and who was wrong. I had to learn. I was determined to learn. After all, you can't do anything unless you ... how would you put it, know thy enemy.

MICHAEL:           (*with a sneer*) Hmm ... and betray thy friend?

JOSH:               Yes maybe that was wrong, but I had to. They were part of the problem, not the solution.

PETER:             (*concerned*) and what of love, the power of love?

JOSH:               I'll tell you what I think love is. I think love is caring about something, or someone, or some people ... caring about them **enough** that you will fight for them, be prepared to die for them, if you have to. Things are so rotten down there that people have turned away from the truth. They've become cowardly in their guilt, unable to love.

PETER:             And yet you told me that you loved teaching, that you loved the children.

JOSH:               I did. I was able to give them something. I was able to show my caring. They were innocent. I had no cause to accuse them. But it was like fighting a losing battle. They were soaking in the values of that society. It was all around them: the *competition*, the greed, the mindless consumption, the **waste**. Everything gets wasted. (*musings*) what a great word ... 'wasted'. Even **you** finish up getting wasted, because as much as you love teaching, you see them being swallowed up by the irresistible influence of the surrounding culture. Your love and caring doesn't budge the power structure one inch.

MICHAEL:            *(to PETER)* See what I mean about my dream?  
Just like Lucifer all over again. Power,  
power, power.

JOSH:                *(raising his voice)* Oh that's great, coming  
from you! Do you deny that power is at the  
bottom of everything?

MICHAEL:            *(silky/steely)* Of course not. But we have it,  
you fool. You don't! You **have to** accept a  
greater Power than yourself. *(pretends to  
sing)* 'you gotta serve somebody' ... because you  
didn't or wouldn't recognize or accept that,  
and because you tried to usurp power for  
yourself, you will be punished.

PETER:              *(Disturbed)* What is being said here? This is  
all too intellectual. Power this, power that,  
yak yak yak. All these words! Is this what  
we're here for? To have an intellectual  
debate? Love! Love is what matters. I'm  
interested in the power of love not the love  
of power.

MICHAEL:            *(Soothing)* That's right Peter. You're quite  
right. You are a gentle and loving person,  
and you are beloved for it. You stay that way  
... you just stay that way.

JOSH:                But that's it! Don't you see Peter?  
*(pointing to MICHAEL)* He's the one with the  
power. He reeks of it. He's rotten with it.  
You may try to love him but he calls the  
shots.

PETER:              No, no that's ... that's going too far. I  
like Michael. I have faith in him.

JOSH:                But what about me? You had faith in me, but  
he's about to condemn me.

MICHAEL:            I think we've had enough of this. Peter, you  
heard the accusations.

PETER:              Yes, but ...

MICHAEL:                            Do you support them?



PETER: I think he speaks words of truth.

MICHAEL: Peter, do you deny **the** word?

JOSH: *(despairingly, to himself)* Oh my God!

MICHAEL: Do you deny that he betrayed his father? **Both** fathers? That he admitted as much?

PETER: No, I cannot deny.

MICHAEL: Do you suggest that this ... this person is free from sin? Pure?

PETER: No, but ...

MICHAEL: Well, let us delay no more. We have a job to do. *(he turns to JOSH)* Do you confess to your sins?

JOSH: *(stunned by PETER'S weakness)* I'm not guilty. I've done my penance. I've paid my dues.

MICHAEL: You may think so, you may think so. Well *(rising from his chair)* if you won't confess to your particular sins, how about a General Confession. The Anglican one should suit you. *(MICHAEL goes over to the lectern.)* Repeat after me: 'Allmighty and most merciful Father. We have erred and strayed like lost sheep. We ...' *(he realizes that JOSH is going to remain silent)* ... so you will not confess? *(JOSH shakes his head)*

PETER: Michael, our job is to help ... to understand ... to

MICHEL: Our job is to evaluate! Our job is to have standards of right and wrong. Quality control, you might say. Our job is not to help. We are not 'do-gooders'. He could have helped himself down there. And he could have helped himself now by confessing. He has chosen not to.

PETER: *(overwhelmed by MICHAEL'S authority and ability to make his case)*  
I don't know. I ... I suppose you're right.  
*(There are several moments of silence. JOSH looks fixedly at PETER. JOSH's expression and posture suggest that he is shattered)*

JOSH: *(To PETER)* For a moment, I trusted you. I thought you might understand. But it's not your fault.

PETER: *(gathering poise)* I'm sorry Josh ... I tried. But he's right! We have a job to do.

JOSH: *(smiling, musing to himself)* it was all a game, wasn't it? Just a game.

*(for a second, PETER looks anguished. He rises to go over to JOSH but sits down again when MICHAEL restrains him. Suddenly the 'phone rings, and MICHAEL goes over to answer it)*

PETER: Josh ... Josh, how do you feel?

*(JOSH appears not to hear this, steps off the well-top, and sits down, cross-legged on the ground, his back against the well wall. His expression is blank. He stares vacantly)*

M ICHAEL: *(Coming back towards PETER, looking sprightly)* come on, we have to go. They just phoned to remind us about the banquet tonight. Don't you remember? It is in honor of Leonardo ... it is his six hundredth birthday.

PETER: But ... what about him? *(He points to JOSH)*

MICHAEL: Oh, he seems happy enough. We can deal with him later. *(picks up the jar of olives.)* Feel like an hors d'oeuvres? *(offers the jar to PETER who declines)*

*(MICHAEL takes an olive out, pops it in his mouth, and then opening one half of the well-top, spits the pip into the well. He turns back to*

*PETER, forgetting to close the well-top.  
Wailing sounds are, once again, heard)*

By the way, is it you or us that has the meeting tonight?

PETER: I don't know. When the Saints met last ...

MICHAEL: *(MICHAEL starts clicking his fingers, moving his body in a rather uncoordinated fashion, and singing) 'Oh when the Saints, oh when the Saints, oh when the Saints go marching in, oh Lord I want to be in that number, when the Saints go marching in. Ha ha (positively jovial now) ... come on Peter, what's the matter with you? (he beckons PETER to join in the singing but PETER declines, his mood troubled) I'm taking a page from your book, eh? Now don't tell me you're upset by this whole thing. The trouble is that you take things to heart. Anyway, it's all over now. He won't cause any more trouble up here. Boy, we're going to have to toughen you up, I can see that ... in preparation for the days ahead. (he looks over at JOSH) At least he agreed with me that it's bedlam down there. Yes, we're going to have to streamline our interviewing methods. You know, do ten at a time or something like that. Anyway, I'm tired and hungry. You must be too. Come on, let's go. (he starts singing again) 'Oh when the earth has turned to fire, oh when the earth has turned to fire, oh Lord I want to be in that number, oh when the earth has turned to fire'.  
(PETER does not sing but follows MICHAEL. They exit stage RIGHT. A few seconds later, PETER returns, picks up Lucy the teddy bear, and kneels down beside JOSH)*

PETER: Now you just stay there. Here, if you're hungry, you just feel free to help yourself to some olives. There's no arguing with Michael. He's impossible really. Anyway ... I just want you to know that I'll be back a bit late ... just in case you were wondering ... and er ... Josh,

I brought you Lucy to keep you company.  
*(offers bear to JOSH; no response so he puts it beside JOSH with back to wall)* Josh, will you not speak to me?

*(PETER waits for a few moments. JOSH does not respond in any way. PETER rises, hesitates, and then exits stage RIGHT. For a few moments there is silence. JOSH is motionless and expressionless. Then suddenly his face contorts and he gives an awful cry)*

JOSH:  
MY FATHER!

I want to see my Father! I WANT TO SEE

*(STAGE LIGHTS ABRUPTLY OUTT, WAILING SOUNDS OFF. Darkness for 10 seconds. House lights up, and a recorded dixieland version of 'When The Saints Go Marching In' starts loudly on the PA)*