

175

A PRODUCTION STUDY OF ARCHIBALD MACLEISH'S

J.B.

by

CHARLES KEITH EVANS

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EXPLANATION OF PLATE I

Nickles and Mr. Zuss holding
Satarnask and Godmask.

PLATE I

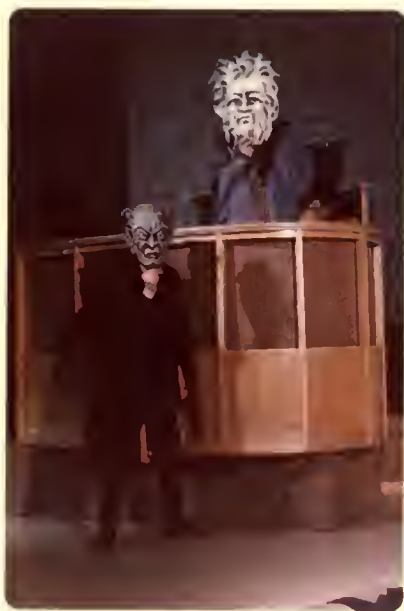


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INTRODUCTION

Reasons for the Study

In the summer of 1959 this writer became interested in the play J.B. by Archibald MacLeish. It was apparent to him that this was an important play from several view points and it loomed as a challenge to him as a director. He saw it as a vehicle through which study and experiment of directing techniques and skills could be effected if produced as part of his Master of Arts program.

The writer wondered what had made it important (critics had praised it highly) and whether there might be a relationship between its success and the style in which it was written. Of additional interest was whether a modern verse play might be presented successfully on the campus of Kansas State University before an audience of students and Manhattan, Kansas residents. Finally, he hoped that the results of his study might be of benefit to others--students, actors and directors--through the record of his findings.

In order to ascertain whether this study might be a duplicate of a previous one the writer checked Speech Monographs and the Educational Theatre Journal from 1956 through 1961 for listings, but no similar study had been recorded.

In the fall of 1961, upon approval of the Graduate School and the Department of Speech of Kansas State University, this writer began "A Production Study of Archibald MacLeish's J.B."

The Poet as Playwright

J.B. was by no means the first successful poetic drama in the English speaking world. The Elizabethan writers, notably Jonson, Marlowe and Shakespeare, were both prolific and successful. But their plays dealt mostly with historical events and characters for which the unnatural, easily recognizable blank verse was deemed appropriate.

Early American writers, too, wrote plays in verse. The first play written by an American to be performed in America by a professional company, The Prince of Parthia, was written in 1767 in blank verse, and showed the influence of Shakespeare and Beaumont.¹ Other early successful and important plays in verse include Tortosa the Usurer (1839) and Francesca da Rimini (1855).

By the early 1900's realism was the standard style of drama and unimaginative conventions abounded, but poets such as Maxwell Anderson and American born T. S. Eliot were leading the revolt for a freer form of expression.² In 1935 Anderson's Winterset successfully defied the popular convention that verse drama should be limited to historical themes. Other successful verse plays by Anderson included Mary of Scotland, Elizabeth the Queen, High Tor, Key Largo and Anne of a Thousand Days.

Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral (1935) was his first real success in the combination of theme, plot and style with which he was working. The Cocktail Party (1949) showed further development of verse drama with modern themes and characters.

¹Arthur Hobson Quinn, Representative American Plays, p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 1105.

The style of these two poet-playwrights has not been constant for their plays include lines of from two to six beats, and generally they have avoided any strict cadence, allowing the line to flow freely. Even prose speeches appear in their essentially poetic plays.

Archibald MacLeish, too, had experimented with verse plays before J.E., notably Panic and The Fall of the City, both radio dramas. His poetry also had ranged from two to six beats and only in J.E. did he maintain a basic four-beat pattern with only occasional lines of two and three beats.

In 1958, when J.E. was produced on Broadway, Archibald MacLeish was serving as Harvard's Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory. He had already earned two Pulitzer Prizes; he had served as Librarian of Congress and Assistant Secretary of State; in addition he was the first American member of UNESCO.¹

Why a man of such distinction, over sixty years of age, should choose to risk his reputation by a venture into the world of theatre may have been a question of concern to some of his friends and colleagues. Apparently he had little to gain if the play succeeded, and much to lose if it failed.

In an interview with poet, Donald Hall, Mr. MacLeish was asked why a modern poet with a major reputation should want to write for the stage. His reply was,

I can't answer for anyone else. For myself it's a question of the hero. The hero of the lyric is Me, and Me seems to get smaller and more self conscious and more strident as the world gets fuller and fuller of people and things and gas fumes and

¹Rollens Waterman, Saturday Review, March 8, 1958, 41:12.

advertisements--all the noise and nonsense. Whereas the hero of a play--a play in poetry at least--is him. And him is more interesting--less preoccupied with himself anyway.¹

Later in the same interview MacLeish continued,

One of the problems for anybody writing poetry at this time is to find a means that will let you say your hayload of saying--that will enable you to get on paper what you want to get on paper, to get into words what you want to get into words. A play will let you do that, or should if you have any kind of control of the medium. Drama is a means of enabling you to say your say to that imaginary audience which isn't yourself but which is somebody who has your questions and wants the answers.²

Why he chose the Book of Job as his source was explained by MacLeish in the foreword to the published acting edition of the play.

A man may be forgiven for dramatizing an incident from the bible and even for modernizing it in the process. But what I have done is not so easy to excuse. I have constructed a modern play inside the ancient majesty of the Book of Job much as the Bedouins, thirty years ago, used to build within the towering ruins of Palmyra their shacks of gasoline tins roofed with fallen stones. The Bedouins had the justification of necessity and I can think of nothing better for myself. When you are dealing with questions too large for you which, nevertheless, will not leave you alone, you are obliged to house them somewhere--and an old wall helps.

.....
But justification is still necessary and necessity is still the only justification I can plead. I badly needed an ancient structure in which to build the contemporary play which has haunted me for five years past and the structure of the poem of Job is the only one I know into which our modern history will fit.³

MacLeish is a poet who concluded that the experience he wanted to convey could be expressed on the acting stage more satisfactorily than on the printed page. From the outset he was not a man dramatizing a poem he had written; he was a playwright manipulating characters

¹Donald Hall, "Archibald MacLeish: On Being a Poet in the Theater," Horizon, January 1960, 2:49.

²Loc. cit.

³Archibald MacLeish, J.B., New York: Samuel French, 1958, p.6.

who could and would speak the words he created for them.¹

MacLeish's style of writing was of the utmost importance to the play. His unique structure of line and the inherent cadence were deemed so vital to the understanding of the play that Elia Kazan, who directed it on Broadway, asked the author to come to the first rehearsal and read the play aloud to the cast. In preparing them for this session Kazan explained why he had invited the author.

The fact is that I've asked him to speak to you, indirectly, by reading you his verse. I want you to feel, and I believe you will feel, as you listen to him, that this verse, this line of his is not a problem and is not a burden. It is an asset. Not only will the audience enjoy the language but you actors will find it good to work with, a help and a support. That's how I felt when he read the play to me.²

John Dolman, Jr., in The Art of Acting voiced a similar opinion when he stated that not only are lines in verse easier to learn than lines in prose, but also they are easier to recall after an interval. He reported, too, that in verse the picking up of cues was easier.³

But there is more to the value of poetry on the stage than its convenience to the actors. At times it is the only way that the author is able to express clearly and directly what he wants to say. When that happens verse becomes a necessity.⁴ In this same vein T. S. Eliot stated that no play for which prose is dramatically adequate should be written in verse.⁵

Perhaps it was a similar understanding of the value of poetic

¹Hall, op. cit., p. 50.

²Archibald MacLeish and Elia Kazan, "The Staging of a Play," Esquire, May 1959, 51:152.

³John Dolman, Jr., The Art of Acting, p. 77.

⁴MacLeish and Kazan, loc. cit.

⁵T. S. Eliot, On Poetry and Poets, p. 72.

drama that prompted John Gassner to write,

. . .there may well be a future for poetic drama, if it serves to illuminate modern life rather than to obscure it with windy exclamations or obscurantist metaphysics. But the poet needs a stern discipline for the modern theatre. He should not rely on traditional blank verse, for example, but on an idiom and meter attuned to contemporary speech.¹

This is exactly what MacLeish was trying to do. He was attempting to "illuminate modern life;" and in J.B. he had developed "an idiom and meter attuned to contemporary speech."

You really should think about it in terms of the line. In J.B. I did begin thinking about it in terms of the line and came to the conclusion, which I guess everybody else has come to, that the five-beat line just isn't in our American speech. It's not part of our language. We don't talk that way. We do however talk--our talk can be crystallized, can be shaped--in a four-beat line.

.
I'm trying to find a pattern which can be heard movingly at a moment of stress, but which won't obtrude to destroy the more colloquial speech. I want a line which, having been once established, will be capable of putting itself, if you want it to do so, into hard lyric lines, or into softer lyric lines which nevertheless depend heavily upon the pattern of the line. That the lines should be heard as lines is what I've been trying to get at in J.B. And I do think that the line in J.B., most of the time, does what I want it to do.²

There is a further asset to writing drama in verse rather than in prose. It is a richer means by which a man can relate his emotional experience to his audience which helps them, too, to experience it vicariously. Charlotte Lee, in Oral Interpretation, explained the emotional aspect of poetry.

Poetry is probably most often inspired by an emotional urge on the part of the writer. A man's emotions are closely tied up with and often dictated by his philosophy of life, his set of values about himself and about the people with whom he associates

¹John Gassner, Theatre at the Crossroads, p. 20.

²Wall, op. cit., p. 55.

and the things with which he is surrounded.¹

MacLeish was emotionally involved. He was obsessed by the thoughts of "extraordinary disasters that had befallen mankind in the ten of fifteen years just past."² He was concerned that thousands of innocent people had been maimed or destroyed. He thought of Berlin, London, and Hiroshima. He wondered why their people had been made to suffer. And he thought of Job. This was the experience he wanted to share, and prose just was not forceful or versatile enough. So his play was written in verse.

The difference between the power of prose and poetry is one only of degree. Poetry is the most condensed and concentrated form of literature, saying most in the fewest number of words. It is a language whose individual lines, either because of their own brilliance or because they focus so powerfully what has gone before, have a higher voltage than most language has.³

But not only is poetry more powerful because of concentration, it is the language of experience, which is what MacLeish needed. In an article in the Saturday Review he wrote,

The knowledge embodied in and conveyed by science is knowledge about experience. The knowledge expressed in poetry is knowledge of experience.

.....
Poetry presents the instance. Poetry gains knowledge of the chaos and confusion of the world by imposing an order upon it which leaves it still the chaos and the confusion which it really is. . . In poetry--in the greatest poetry--experience as it is may be possessed.⁴

In this manner the poet is actually communicating more directly than in prose for in poetry he is not talking about something, he is presenting

¹Charlotte Lee, Oral Interpretation, p. 394.
²Hall, op. cit. p. 50.
³Laurens Perrine, Sound and Sense, p. 10.
⁴Archibald MacLeish, "The Proper Pose of Poetry," Saturday Review, March 5, 1955, 38:49.

the very essence of that something.

In addition to studying poetry in drama and its advantages to an author, this writer also investigated to find whether the book of Job had been used as a basis for any plays other than MacLeish's J.B.

Plays Based on the Story of Job

To the knowledge of the writer four plays on the Job situation have been published; all were written in some form of verse. Thornton Wilder's Hast Thou Considered My Servant Job? is quite short--only three small pages--and surprisingly has nothing whatever to do with Job. Instead the author has borrowed the question from chapter 2, verse three of the Book of Job and adapted it to a new situation. In his play "on the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Satan. . . Christ also came among them" and

Satan (said unto Christ) Whence comest Thou?

Christ (answered Satan and said) From going/ to and fro in the earth, and from walking up/ and down in it.

(And) Satan (Said unto Christ) Hast Thou/ considered my servant Judas? . . .

This leads into a discussion of Christ's mission on earth wherein Satan ridicules Christ's defeat and death. Then Judas enters and is praised by Satan, but he casts away the silver, rejects Satan, and mounts with Christ "to their due place and Satan remains to this day, uncomprehending, upon the pavement of Hell."¹

In Robert Frost's slyly humorous play, A Masque of Reason, Man

¹Ralph E. Hone, The Voice Out of the Whirlwind: The Book of Job, pp. 256-258.

and Wife are discussing a tree which is burning nearby when they notice someone caught in the branches. Wife says, "It's God. I'd know Him by Blake's picture anywhere." Then Frost has Him pitch up a pre-fab throne (which later collapses under Him). Thus, reigning over this "fair oasis" He is approached by Man (Job) and is asked why all that suffering had to be and why he had been chosen. God answers, "I was just showing off to the Devil, Job, . . . Do you mind?" The repartee continues for a while, Satan shows up, and he is teased by God as being ". . . unhappy. Church neglect/ and figurative use have pretty well/ Reduced him to a shadow of himself." Job, too, ridicules him as "easy to see through." Wife gets her Kodak, arranges then, and in the conclusion says, "Now if you three have settled anything/ You'd as well smile as frown on the occasion." Frost concluded by indicating that he had just written another chapter to the ancient story by his parenthetical expression, "Here endeth chapter forty-three of Job."

The question posed in this play was the same as in J.B.--why good men must be made to suffer--but it was stated more humorously. This modern poem preceded MacLeish's by a decade.¹

The Tragedy of Job, adapted from the Hebrew by Dr. H. M. Kallen, is in the form of a Greek tragedy.² It is a very authentic dramatization of the Book of Job (American Revised Version) in that it faithfully retells the Bible plot with a minimum of originality on the part of the adapter.

The characters from the Bible are Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar,

¹Ibid., pp. 260-274.

²Philo M. Buck, A Treasury of the Theatre, pp. 1471-1471.

and Elihu. Others include a chorus of priests, two characters who narrate the prose of the prologue and epilogue, and The Voice out of the Whirlwind.

Part of the text was created by the dramatist and certain scenic devices such as a lightning storm and colored altar smoke were introduced, but generally the text is straight from the Bible.

Although Dr. Kallen termed this play a tragedy it is not an ideal tragedy by Aristotle's standards for it ends happily for Job and his friends. But it remains an interesting work in its form and scenic directions as well as its faithfulness to original story line.

J.B., by Archibald MacLeish, is a modern reconstruction of the story of Job. But rather than introducing a character to narrate the background of the story, he created two characters--Zuss and Nickles, broken-down actors peddling popcorn and balloons in the circus--who project one part of the story thread by taking on the identities of God and Satan and who subsequently direct the catastrophes as they occur. The drama becomes a play within a play when J.B. (Job) and his family enter the scene and sit down to a Thanksgiving feast.

Soon the conflicts gain momentum as Good vs. Evil battle verbally for control of the man, and as J.B. struggles with Fate. In swift succession the calamities are reported. Two children die in an auto accident; a son dies in a war; a daughter is raped and murdered; and the final act of violence occurs when an explosion rips the city, destroys J.B.'s wealth and home, and kills his last child. Suffering intense pain from burns resulting from the blast, J.B. still answers, "Blessed be the name of the Lord," when his wife Sarah pleads that he "Curse God and die." In desperation and bitterness Sarah leaves and

J.B. is left terribly alone. Soon three cleverly conceived Comforters appear--a Marxist, a psychiatrist, and an orthodox preacher--each professing his own modern brand of salvation. But J.B. will have none of these. He rejects their "comfort" but he cries to God for an answer. And the answer comes, but it is not what he expected. "WHERE WAST THOU/ WHEN I LAID THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE EARTH? . . ." Then the voice commands him to "DECK THYSELF NOW WITH MAJESTY AND/ EXCELLENCY/ AND ARRAY THYSELF WITH GLORY AND/ BEAUTY. . . /THEN WILL I ALSO CONFESS UNTO THEE/ THAT THINE OWN RIGHT HAND CAN SAVE/ THEE."

J.B., cowering under this Mighty Voice, replies "I KNOW THAT THOU CANST DO EVERY/THING. . . AND THAT NO THOUGHT CAN BE WITH/ HOLDEN FROM THEE/ WHEREFORE/ I ABHOR MYSELF AND REPENT." Then come Nickles' angry reaction, "pious, contemptible, goddam sheep!" and Zuss' joyous retort, ". . . The wonder and the mystery of the universe,/ Beauty beyond the feel of fingers. . . ." While Zuss and Nickles quarrel about the justice of the outcome, J.B. begins to regret his submission but remembers the words "THINE OWN RIGHT HAND CAN SAVE THEE," and by a supreme effort rises, is healed, and rejects both Zuss and Nickles. Sarah returns and they set about to begin again, because

We are and that is all our answer./ We are and what we are can suffer./ But. . . what suffers loves./ And love/ Will live its suffering again,/ . . . and still live. . . still love.¹

¹The above quotations are from the Samuel French acting edition of J.B.

Theme of J.B.

The play's theme is Human Suffering and how one group of people dealt with it. Understanding this theme was basic to understanding the play's mood and the various conflicts involved. There are three basic conflicts possible in every play; J.B. involved all three: Man's relationship to man; man's relationship to self; and the most basic one in this play, man's relationship to God or Fate.

J.B. is an experience play, not a thesis play. MacLeish insisted that he had not set out to prove anything but rather to share his questions and feelings about man and about God. The play does not prove a point about either one. But it does illuminate an experience--an inner experience of living today.

Selected History and Representative Criticism of Productions of J.B.

The writer felt that a certain understanding of the background of the play was necessary to his preparation as its director. He therefore studied as many critical comments on the play as he was able to locate. He learned that MacLeish had originally conceived J.B. as a one-act radio play to be performed on BBC which had earlier produced his Fall of a City. But as the play developed it grew into a full-length two-act play with a prologue. By the time he was satisfied enough with the play to release it for publication in the fall of 1956, MacLeish had rewritten it three times.¹

¹Saturday Review, September 1, 1956, 39:7.

The play's first acted performance was at the Yale University Theatre in New Haven, Connecticut, April 22, 1958, with Yale's drama head F. Curtis Canfield as its director.

Representative of the positive response this production stimulated are these selected comments by reviewer Charles A. Fenton.

By superb craftsmanship MacLeish maintains the intricacies of his situation--a play within a play--on three levels of meaning, the theatrical, the actual and the real.

.....
It's a tonic too, it seems to me, to witness in MacLeish's continued and meaningful productivity a denial of the historical and critical dogma about the premature collapse of literary talent, that is said to occur within all American literary generations.¹

Commenting upon audience reaction to the play Fenton reported that some in the audience objected to having their emotions manipulated so expertly, but that this reaction indicated MacLeish's theatrical success. He concluded that J.B. was good theatre and that MacLeish had displayed genuine intellectual substance.²

Saturday Review's commentator, in regard to the production, added,

Yale's scene-design instructor, Donald Oenslager, has created a translucent blue tent which requires only a change of lighting to transform itself from the empty circus to the star-filled universe. Under Dean Curtis Canfield's direction, the young actors perform with intelligence, honesty, and skill.³

But in his enthusiasm for the production he was objective enough to observe that the play's construction, not its performance, that had the most room for improvement.⁴

Tom Driver, reviewer for the Christian Century was not as eager

¹Charles A. Fenton, Nation, May 10, 1958, 186:425.

²Loc. cit.

³Henry Hewes, "Yes is for a Very Rich Man," Saturday Review, May 10, 1958, 41:22.

⁴Loc. cit.

to heap praise on the play and its performance as Mr. Hewes had been. He criticized it as being too humanistic and that MacLeish's change from a religious plane to a humanistic plane during the play was a serious dramatic flaw. He observed that MacLeish had probably found himself too deep in religious implications and had needed to revise his resolution. Mr. Driver concurred however with Hewes in his distinct approval of Donald Oenslager's set.¹

Five months after its opening at Yale, the same group acted J.B. in the American Theatre at the Brussels Universal and International Exposition. No reports of those performances were located by this writer.

Producer Alfred de Liagre, Jr. had viewed the Yale production and had promptly approached MacLeish for commercial production rights, with the result that on December 11, 1958, the play opened at Broadway's ANTA Theatre.

Not all reaction to the play was favorable, but those reviewers who voiced negative opinions were in the small minority. And, it is interesting to note that this group was not represented on any one of New York's leading daily newspapers. Also of interest is the fact that these reviews were written from three to five weeks after the play's opening performance. Of the negative views represented here Harold Clurman of the Nation magazine was perhaps the most extreme.

What is wrong with the play is that it contains no people, no true situations and ultimately no poetry. It is an abstraction of drama, as the characters are abstractions of people.

¹Tom Driver, "Clean Miss," Christian Century, June 11, 1958, 75:693.

...the play is a glittering generality; it offers little but a show of profundity.¹

Henry Hewes, writing for the Saturday Review, voiced an apparent reversal of position from his earlier Yale review when he reported that

As a member of the minority, I can only say that J.B. is an admirably big attempt to understand modern man's relation to God, but one which adds precious little to what has already been said more beautifully in the Bible or more provocatively by other modern thinkers on the subject.²

He justified his change of mind by condemning the revised version for inferring that God's answers to Job were unsatisfactory and that we answer ourselves by our willingness to accept no answer.

Theophilus Lewis, writing for the Catholic magazine, America, also reported that J.B. was inferior to the biblical story. He called the play a "dolorous tale of suffering" and remarked that it was considerably reduced in stature and spirit from the biblical tale. The lack of religious mood he blamed partly on Elia Kazan's direction.³

Representative of the other-minded reviewers was this reaction.

In verse that is both savagely rugged and soaringly lyrical, MacLeish brings Job to the realization that God's ways are not to be justified by man, but that in man himself--with his unconquerable will to go on loving and living--God is made manifest.

As news about J.B., even without newspapers, spread through New York, the theater box office was besieged and a great play was on its way to being a great hit--proof that the public appreciates exceptional merit.⁴

¹Harold Clurman, Nation, January 3, 1959, 188:19.

²Henry Hewes, "A Minority Report on 'J.B.'," Saturday Review, January 3, 1959, 42:23.

³Theophilus Lewis, America, January 24, 1959, 188:19.

⁴"Job's Ordeal in Great Play," Life, December 22, 1958, 45: 171.

John Gassner, a Harvard dramatist, whose name has long been associated with the theatre, reported, ". . .the presentation of 'J.B.' has been a salutary act which adds much dignity, even a little luster, to the Broadway stage. . . ."¹

The dean of the New York drama critics added his reaction.

. . .Mr. MacLeish has written a fresh and exalting morality that has great stature. In an inspired performance yesterday evening, it seemed to be one of the memorable works of the century as verse, as drama and as spiritual inquiry.

 In every respect, J.B. is theatre on its highest level.²

John McClain of the Journal American, reporting on the overall effect of the production and the acting of the three principal roles, called J.B. the best play of the season to date. He praised its poetic power and the three male leads as very outstanding theatre.³

John Chapman, Daily News; Richard Watts, Jr., Post; Walter Kerr, Herald Tribune; and Robert Coleman of the Daily Mirror reported very favorable reactions to the play, but to quote them all would prove too repetitious. However, the review by John Chapman is included, in part, because it represents the positive extreme of the reaction to the play on the part of the theatre critics.

I remember a line from Archibald MacLeish's play, J.B., which Alfred de Ligny, Jr. presented last evening at the ANTA Theatre. I can't remember who spoke it on the stage or what connection it had with the events of the moment. But the line was, "Beauty beyond the feel of fingers." This is a description

¹John Gassner, "Broadway in Review," Educational Theatre Journal, March, 1959, 11:31.

²Brooks Atkinson, "Theatre: MacLeish's 'J.B.'," New York Times, December 12, 1958, reprinted in New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1958, 19:170.

³John McClain, Journal American, December 29, 1958, reprinted in New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1958, 19:169.

of the play itself.

.....
 It is a lovely work which sings of the unconquerable nobility of man's spirit.

.....
 The canvas goes up and the actors fall into place--but soon the actors stop acting and become so real they make you want to cry.

The setting by Boris Aronson goes beyond reality, which it should do in the ideal theatre. It is simple enough, as it stretches the canvas of its circus tent, but it seems to contain within it the whole and inspiring world of man.¹

Robert Coleman reported a very favorable reaction, but of particular interest to this writer was his final statement as he viewed the play's future in terms of its New York audience. "We suspect that MacLeish's philosophical theatre piece will have a limited appeal."²

Mr. Coleman's prophetic statement proved to be inaccurate, for the play enjoyed a ten month run on Broadway before going on an extended tour of the United States. Coleman's assumption however was probably based on his own experience in observing the type of fare the theatre audience generally preferred.

MacLeish had previously analyzed this audience and had recorded his impressions in the foreword to an earlier publication, The Gradle Will Rock. He also suggested what needed to be accomplished by an artist before his work could be fully appreciated. Apparently his analysis was correct and his remedy successful, for J.B. enjoyed a successful run of ten months before it went on the road. A portion of that foreword is recorded here to indicate his analysis of the

¹John Chapman, "'J.B.' Inspiring Poetic Drama," Daily News, December 30, 1958, reprinted in New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1958, 19:68.

²Robert Coleman, "MacLeish's 'J.B.' at ANTA Theatre," Daily Mirror, December 30, 1958, reprinted in New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1958, 19:169.

worldly audience and his suggested remedy. It also exemplifies his writing in a non-dramatic medium.

The worldly audience is not human. It is not a collection of men and women sitting in their seats. It is a creature in its own dimensions. It answers to the definition of the Tory who said, "Your people, Sir, your people is a great beast." Your audience is a great beast. It is a beast sensual, cruel, and alert. It is a beast that waits in darkness as the spider waits, watching the stir within a little shaft of light. It is a beast that hungers secretly as the panther hungers, stirring softly in the narrow room of its impatience. It is a beast that clamors greedily as monkeys clamor, barking voraciously from safety in the trees. It is a beast of one desire and that desire is to *feel*.

If you are courageous and sleep well you may turn softly when the lights are down in any Broadway theatre and see this monster. It is a monster of many faces which are all one face; of many bodies which are all one body. It is a monster with the faces of aging women, their collapsed breasts sighing "Make me feel." It is a monster with the bodies of tired men, their shoulders back against the pliant plush, their knees thrust forward for the thoughts to touch them. It is a monster with the eyes of the defeated young; the young girls cheated of the moment when the world should have been real; the young men cheated of themselves and impotent in everything but malice.

It is this monster, this audience both greedy and inert, both impotent and sensual, that must be killed. It must be killed because so long as it lives in the dark silence of its seats nothing true or noble can be shown upon the stage. It must be killed because it is greedy only for its own gratification and because, being greedy, it hates and will destroy what cannot be devoured. Most of all it hates and will destroy a work of art. For a work of art is not a prey it can devour. A work of art is not a morsel of indulgence to be sucked between the teeth. A work of art is a hard and tooth-breaking fact, by no nerves or blood-vessels to be metabolized into gratification and satiety. A work of art is a finality as actual as a man; more actual than most. A work of art is a finality with which a man can only make his peace; with which a man alone and never an audience can find a peace to make.

What is necessary therefore for the playwright who wishes to write truly and honestly and in form of art is to destroy his audience. Which means to destroy its quality of audience and change it back to men and women who will think and judge. What is necessary is to change the audience to men and women and compel these men and women to make terms with what they see.¹

¹Archibald MacLeish, Foreword to "The Cradle Will Rock," reprinted in New Theatres for Old, pp. 456-457.

This philosophy applied directly to J.B. MacLeish wanted an audience who would "think and judge." This meant that as a successful playwright he must appeal to the individual in the audience, not the audience as a mass, a collective "beast." He must have concurred with the noted British philosopher, Bertrand Russell, who said, "To believe that there can be good or evil in a collection of human beings over and above the good or evil in the various individuals, is an error."¹ To change his audience from a beast to men and women who would think and judge it was necessary to present an intellectual, not just emotional, theme. The viewer had to be made to identify with the hero of his story, and that hero had to think. The viewer had to conclude, either consciously or subconsciously, "I am like J.B." To achieve this he chose an historical event which he believed paralysed our society and our time. For the male viewer he presented "a perfect and an upright man" as model--a man with a lovely wife, fine handsome children, position, wealth, and spiritual security. Who of us would not be like him? For the female viewer he presented a pretty woman, Sarah, loved by her husband and her family, and rich in the material things that are designed to make women happy.

The disasters which befell these characters are disasters with which the modern play viewer is well acquainted. The questions Job asked are questions asked today, the answers are the same, and the comfort we receive is no greater than Job's.

J.B. is a thinking man's play; the play's characters are made to

¹Franklyn S. Raiman, Group Leadership and Democratic Action, p. 79.

think about important things. Through skillful manipulation of identification processes the audience, too, is caused to think. This, the writer feels, is one of the most basic reasons for the play's appeal to audiences all over the world. Here was a playwright who, like a good speaker, analyzed his audience, discovered the best approach to that audience, presented his material well, and succeeded both as a poet and a playwright. He succeeded even though New York's leading newspapers were closed by a strike, and the play was denied this important medium of communication until December 29 when they resumed publication.

MacLeish's reaction to the strike and to another form of communication which came to his aid were recorded by Donald Hall.

I had been asked three or four weeks before to go on Dave Garroway's television show the next morning, and I'd accepted, under the urgings of our pressman, without stopping to think what I'd say if the play were a flop. You're on Dave Garroway's show and he says to you, "Well, I see nobody liked your play." What do you say? I got up the next morning early to go on over. I hadn't quite taken in the night before what the various critics had said. I knew that Atkinson was favorable but not what he had said. Well, they put me in front of the lights and they started by reading the Atkinson review. There were, oh, twelve seconds when I thought I was about to weep from coast to coast.¹

The following May Mr. MacLeish was awarded his third Pulitzer Prize, this time for drama, but he was still not completely satisfied with his play. In June of 1959, after six months of evaluation and writing, another revised script was submitted by MacLeish. That version was played throughout its Broadway run, on its tour of the United States, and was the version used as the basis for the K-State

¹Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

production.

With this understanding of some of the history of the play, the writer was ready to begin another phase of preparation for his own production.

PREPARING FOR PRODUCTION

Designing the Production

The Setting. In preparing for the production the director realized that he would need to plan his setting before the play could actually be put into rehearsals so that the cast could learn general blocking along with lines and interpretation. He therefore set out to prepare himself for his duty as scene designer. In Scenery Design for the Amateur Stage, Frederick and Fraser direct that "in approaching his job, the designer must begin where the director, the cast, and the technical departments all begin: the script of the play to be performed,"¹ and as this writer studied the script he observed that the circus setting for this play was necessary to both the plot development and the characterization since there were numerous allusions to the circus surroundings. Finally he reasoned that there were two alternatives from which to choose: he must either design a set which was an illusion of a circus tent (as the previous designers had done) or he could create a non-illusory setting which, nevertheless, could effectively enhance the production.

Mordecai Gorelik defined the illusory setting as

one which attempts, fundamentally, to deceive the senses of the audience. It tries to convince the spectator that the stage events which he is witnessing are not really events on the stage having a sequence planned by stage workers, but they are rather a series of natural or phenomenal events unrelated to the stage and viewed by spectators in the theatre as if by accident.²

3. ¹Frederick and Fraser, Scenery Design for the Amateur Stage, p.

²Mordecai Gorelik, New Theatres for Old, p. 27.

The decision on design was affected by numerous elements among which were place of production, cost of materials, and practicability.

It was determined that All Faiths' Memorial Chapel was to be the place for presentation and this determination prompted the other decisions. The Chapel is a simply but beautifully designed chamber and it seemed improper to "clutter" it with canvas and ropes which would have been necessary in an illusory set. Therefore in planning the scenery, it was the director's wish to create a setting which would not be detrimental to the simple beauty of the structure but which would be a playable one with at least three acting areas and a number of acting levels. There was no "magic" number of levels absolutely necessary to the production, but the director, in the course of his planning, recognized that a variety of levels would give his actors much greater freedom of action and maneuverability which would enhance the performance and ultimately aid in its reception by an audience.

Concerning the importance of levels this writer learned that

often a director would give his good right arm for a level, if only eight inches high, on which to place his chief character in his scene of climax. The more characters in the cast and the bigger the scenes, the more important are levels to variety in composition, for there are more people to spread around the stage in pleasing pictures. Especially does this occur in almost any of the nonrealistic dramas, but even in the realistic plays it is surprising how often the clever designer will find excuses for giving the director different levels. And the satisfaction of it is that the reward is not all for the director, because the designer invariably finds that his set also is much better in composition for the use of different heights.¹

And so a simple but functional set with a variety of playing areas and levels was the object for this production.

¹Frederich and Fraser, op. cit., p. 38.

Of course the basic mood of the play had long been of consideration. Throughout most of the play the prevailing mood is one of tragedy. There are a few light scenes--the first part of the prologue, and most of the Thanksgiving dinner scene--but the basic mood is tragic. Therefore the director needed to create a set proper to that mood. Turning once again to Scenery Design he learned that "vertical lines are used in exalted tragedy such as King Lear, but heavy horizontal lines for hopeless tragedy as Lower Depths."¹ Since throughout most of the play J.B.'s situation appears hopeless, a predominance of heavy horizontal lines were incorporated into the design. However, at the end the mood changes to exaltation, and since "the perch" was a desired area to include for blocking purposes, the vertical lines were also incorporated through the use of the pulpit which was part of the equipment of the Chapel stage. The decision to change the perch to a pulpit was supported by this statement from Scenery Design.

Oftentimes the designer is not content with reducing the forms of realism to their essence, but decides deliberately to change the realistic forms to nonrealistic ones which will interpret the play in a more individualistic style. His motivation for the change must, of course, spring from the script.²

Another reason for changing the perch to a pulpit was simply that it made good sense. The pulpit remained recognizable as such and it was in keeping with the Chapel atmosphere. Further, it was occupied throughout much of the play by Zuss, the character portraying God, and thus added emphasis to both his character and his lines. The pulpit was turned about with the lecturn facing upstage and the long,

¹Ibid., p. 38.

²Ibid., p. 14.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE II

Fig. 1 Usual arrangement of Chapel stage

Fig. 2 Stage arrangement for dung heap scene

PLATE II



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

curved, open railing facing downstage. This railing was backed with heavy pasteboard to mask the pulpit landing where the two masks and costumes were kept. This masking also aided in maintaining the upward sweep of the vertical line and added mass to the structure.

Three levels already existed in the stage itself--the carpeted area in front of the stage, the stage proper, and the altar level--each with a seven inch rise. To this stage was added a platform twelve feet long, three feet wide, and eighteen inches high, which extended diagonally from up left to down left. A two-step unit ran the length of this level and the combined units served as Nickles' primary acting area.

Zuss' area consisted of the large pulpit mounted up right center on an eighteen inch high level which ran to up right stage then angled to the Chapel well at down right stage. To this level was added a two-step unit which made it easily accessible by Zuss and afforded him a variety of sub levels on which to work. Both of these platforms were masked on the visible sides with heavy pasteboard and the entire unit was painted reddish brown. This helped to establish the heavy horizontal lines which were necessary to the mood of the play.

These two major areas were restricted mainly to Zuss and Nickles and occupied left stage, right stage and upstage generally. There remained a large center stage, the third basic area, and it was reserved primarily for scenes involving J.B. In arriving at this arrangement the director consulted a number of sources to determine the relative strength of each acting area. Frederick and Fraser

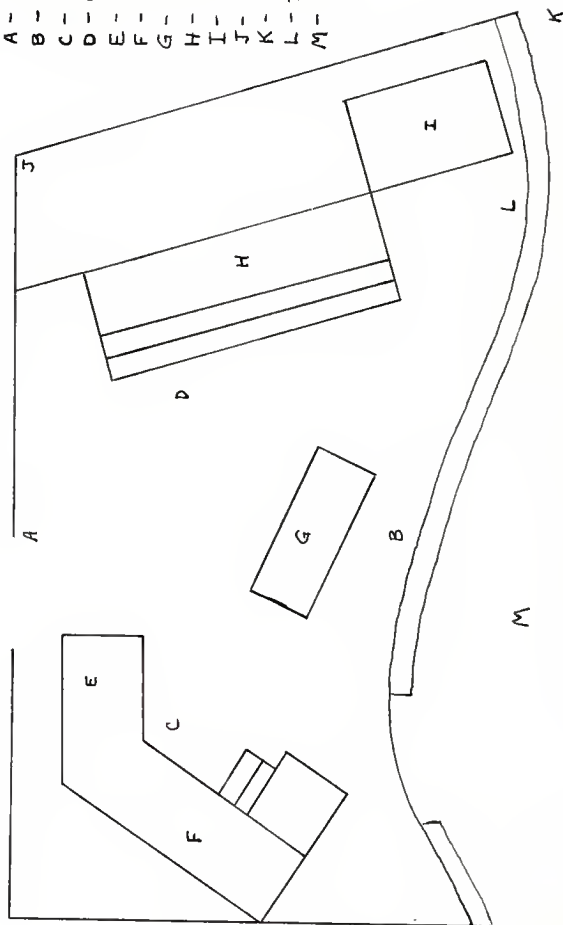
EXPLANATION OF PLATE III

Floor plan of Chapel stage in first scenes.

PLATE III

Scale 1 mm. = 2'

- A - Upstage
 B - Down stage
 C - Right stage
 D - Left stage
 E - Pulpit
 F - R. level
 G - Table
 H - L. level
 I - Organ
 J - U.L. entrance
 K - D.L. entrance
 L - J.B.'s front door
 M - Street



reserved certain areas for specific types of scenes,¹ whereas John Gassner called this practice "nonsense."² The authors of Modern Theatre Practice compromised the issue by indicating that some areas were weaker than others but that these weaknesses could be overcome by the use of levels, for example.³ They all agreed that down center was the harshest and strongest area, usually reserved for scenes of intense conflict and climax. Most of the scenes of conflict involving J.B. were so located: the scene where the police officers bring word of his daughter's death; the soldiers reporting his son's death; and his "dung heap" scenes were all staged there. Almost all the remainder of J.B.'s personal, inward conflict scenes were blocked in center stage. This made it necessary that the entire center area be left free from any permanent set pieces. Thus the levels were necessarily placed in the left, right, and up stage areas. The pulpit was placed up right center to help balance the mass on left stage composed of the organ and organ pipes which could not be properly masked. Consideration of these necessities resulted in the final stage arrangement.

With the setting groundwork planned, the specific blocking fell into place quite naturally. Zuss, from the pulpit up right center, directed the disasters as they befell J.B., down center below. Down left was used for the plot to get a picture of the family's horror upon learning of the death of two children. Staged on the steps to J.B.'s imaginary front door, it was also handy to the down left exit

¹IMd., p. 36.

²John Gassner, Producing the Play, p. 290.

³Heffner, Selden and Sellman, Modern Theatre Practice, p. 100.

where the reporters had to beat a hasty retreat. Down right was fairly neutral ground used by Zuss primarily, but also by the Women, Nickles, and J.B. This arrangement provided a set that was very easy to work with, and enhanced fluidity of movement, good balance, and fine picture composition which were rather easily maintained.

J.B. is certainly not a realistic play in the usual sense of the word. Its events and situations are nothing short of phenomenal; therefore a realistic style of design would have been out of place. The K-State production fell somewhere in the non-illueory area of design but to be more specific than to say this is difficult. In designing his set, the director had realized that "a good designer rarely sets himself down deliberately to design a play in one style or another; rather he designs the setting as he feels it should be done for the best interpretation of the play."¹ He therefore chose to follow a freer approach to the problem of design. He felt that it would represent a challenge to create a set which was functional and believable but which was not merely a reproduction of the setting used on the Yale and Broadway stages.

One of the final elements to be considered under design was the arrangement of general properties. Seven stools and a table were necessary to the Thanksgiving dinner scene. These items had to be mobile enough to be moved about the stage for various scenes. The stools were no problem since they were naturally light in weight but the table had to be large enough to accommodate seven persons and a full eet of service, yet light enough to be moved by the two

¹Frederich and Fraser, op. cit., p. 23.

maids who acted as prop girls. This problem was solved by using a six inch platform three feet wide and five feet long as the table top which was mounted on top of two light-weight, narrow, pasteboard boxes reinforced with light wood. This arrangement afforded adequate support and yet it was easily and quickly disassembled.

The table top served a dual function. In planning his action the director blocked J.B.'s dung heap scenes down center where they naturally played best, but in this position, and on his knees, J.B. was hidden from part of the audience. To overcome this problem, and to help to represent his isolation from the rest of the world, the director used the table top for J.B.'s "dung heap." This scene immediately followed the last scene in which the table was used and so the small platform was functional for both purposes.

Color. The problem of color in the design was a minor one. The upstage area is finished in natural stone and the sides of the auditorium and the stage woodwork, including the pulpit, are finished in a light tone which match it. The beams, extending from the floor up the walls and across the top to support the roof, are finished in a reddish brown tone which is complementary to the natural stone finish. In order to create a finished set which complemented this basic scheme, the designer had only to paint his levels and the masking material to match the reddish brown beams. Burnt Sienna pigment was used for this purpose. The stools and the table-dung heap were painted the same color. For variety of colors, a white table cloth was used on the table and a wide variety of colors in costumes and personal properties was utilized.

Lighting. Lighting for this play was one of its most interesting aspects in the technical area. There were no stage lighting instruments in the Chapel and it was therefore necessary to import them from the University Auditorium. Thirty-foot pipe standards were erected vertically in front of the two building beams immediately down stage of the acting area. The beams served to help mask the instruments from audience view. Since the portable dimming device available was limited in capacity, it was necessary to minimize the number of spots used. Three 750 watt ellipsoidal type spots and a 500 watt Fresnel spot were mounted on each of the standards to furnish the general lighting. They also served as specific light sources and could be controlled in pairs focused on specific areas. After some experimenting it was determined that the right stage instruments should be equipped with medium blue gelatins and the left stage instruments with straw gelatins. This provided an adequate base lighting for all the on-stage scenes. A red spot was focused on the area in front of down center stage where the Girl played most of her scene with Nickles and the Reporters. A blue spot was used on the front door area where some evening scenes were played.

In addition to the general lighting, two "specials" were used: one, a red spot which hit J.B. suddenly in the dung heap scene then gradually faded out as the second, a blue spot, faded in. These special spotlights were mounted high in the beams above the down center area. Control for all lighting was handled from the off left wing and a great versatility was achieved with each set of lights individually controlled.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE IV

Pipe standard with three 750 watt
spots and one 500 watt spot.

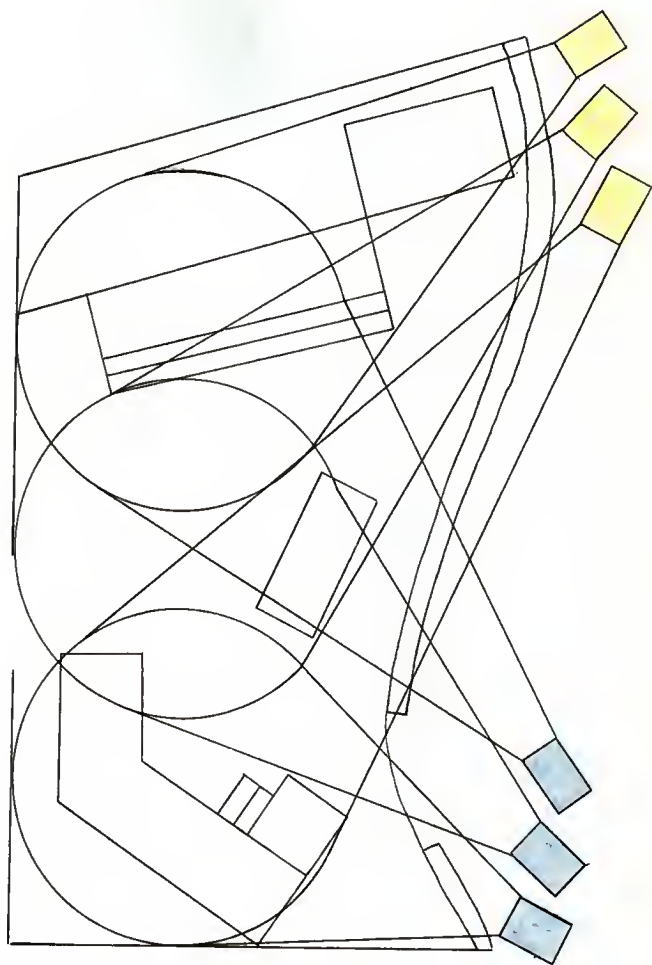
PLATE IV



EXPLANATION OF PLATE V

Lighting plot for Chapel stage.

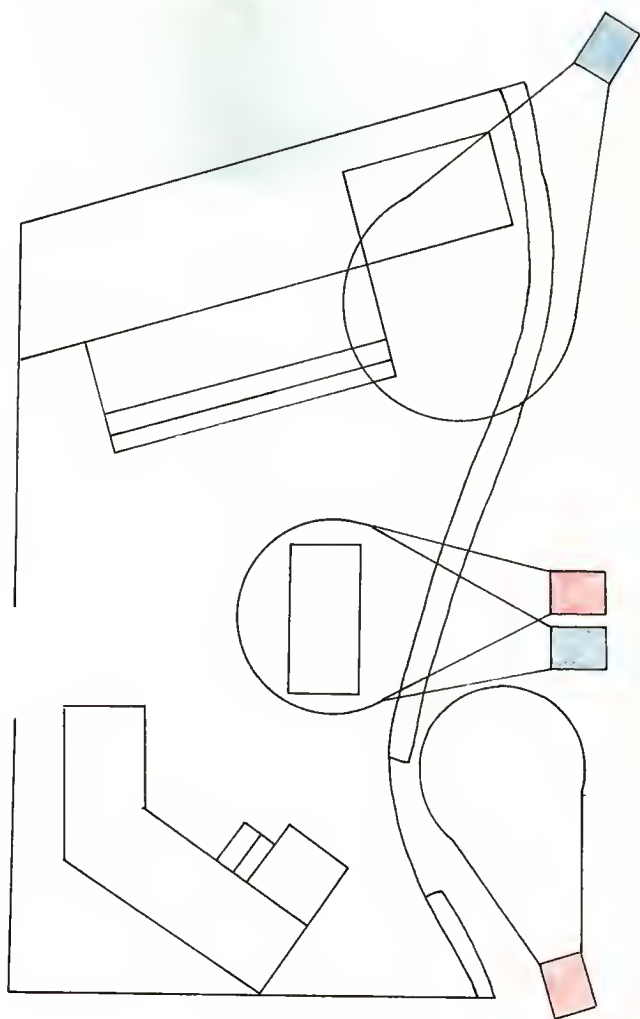
PLATE V



EXPLANATION OF PLATE VI

Lighting plot for dung heap scenes.
street scene and front doorstep.

PLATE XVI



Music and sound effects. Incidental music and sound effects played a very important role in establishing the proper mood for several scenes. A special tape recording of the music used in the Broadway production was rented for this purpose. Two twelve-inch speakers were mounted high in the beams of the auditorium one on either side of the playing area; a stereo player furnished the power and control. Two crew members were assigned to this operation for the entire performance. In addition to the music on tape the director utilized a recording of airplanes dropping bombs to more clearly explain the cause of the explosion which ruined the city. The script had never made clear what the cause had been and as a result some of the earlier productions had explained it as an earthquake. A bombing seemed both more dramatic and more appropriate in this modern tragedy.

Costumes. In selecting the costumes for this play the director examined the Broadway production for ideas since the script was very vague, describing only generally what the costumes were like. He did feel that costumes should be both representative of the character and mood, as well as appropriate to the demands of the script. The director was pleased to find that his idea coincided with that of Elia Kazan who stated that he wanted his costumes to be a "mask" for the character, and explained this mask as

an exaggeration of the most characteristic aspect of a character . . . , an exaggeration which eliminates all nontypical aspects. It is a matter of a narrow selection except that because it is narrow it goes deep. It is a probing and finally a selection for each character of his most typical characteristic, and rendering that and only that into clothes. It is a costume which provokes from an audience a smile of recognition, the recognition that something is being revealed as fundamental. . . , as though the costume is so well chosen and so thoroughly unified that it

cuts to the essence of a character and leaves everything else out.¹ This was a difficult goal for an amateur director to achieve since his choice of costumes must, because of a small budget, be limited to personal clothing of his actors, a small costume wardrobe and friends from whom costumes might be borrowed. But, having set his goal, the director began by analyzing two of the principal roles--Mr. Zuss and Nickles.

In the first scene Zuss and Nickles appear as circus vendors. The most typical costume appeared to be white vending jackets which were borrowed from the K-State Union. Zuss, the more dignified of the two, wore dark trousers and a white dress shirt and tie under his jacket. Nickles, who later portrays the Devil, was dressed in black which has traditionally been "the symbol of gloom, death, . . .mystery and evil."² His costume consisted of slacks, turtleneck sweater and sneakers. In later scenes he donned a black velvet cape lined with red satin, another traditional "Devil" costume.

Designing Zuss' robe was at first a problem. White seemed most saintly, yet inappropriate to this particular character. Finally a purple robe trimmed in black and gold, all regal colors, was designed. Not only was it appropriate but it also added a needed variety to the range of colors.

The director desired to have J.B. and his family to look like a family so a color scheme was planned for them. However, having them dressed in the same color seemed too extreme. He therefore dressed

¹Elia Kazan, Equine, p. 151.

²Heffner, Selden and Sellman, Modern Theatre Practice, p. 325.

the boys and J.B. in charcoal brown suits, which all the actors owned, and dark ties; the girls and Sarah wore blue dresses with blue bows in their hair.

In a subsequent scene, J.B., relaxing in his luxurious home, wore a plaid smoking jacket while Sarah was dressed in a neutral negligee. Returning from the theatre J.B. was dressed in a suit and top coat while Sarah wore a long white evening dress with heels, gloves and a fur stole. In the final scenes, both were dressed in soiled whites, white to symbolize their virtue, and soiled because of the demands of the script.

The Messengers appeared in various guises: first as soldiers in uniforms borrowed from the K-State Military Science Department; then as police officers in uniforms borrowed from the Manhattan Police Department. They next appeared in the traditional dress of reporters--cocked hats, sloppy jackets, press cards and camera. For variety one wore a blue jacket and the other a brown one. Throughout the play they wore army trousers. In their final scene they appeared as Civil Defense workers, and were dressed in black slickers borrowed from the Fire Department and white helmets bearing the Civil Defense emblem.

The Maids wore black uniforms and white accessories. The Girl wore red shoes, a flaming red dress and a diamond bracelet, all symbols commonly associated with such a character.

The Comforters, too, were dressed to represent their professions. Bildad wore work clothes and a leather jacket. Eliphaz wore a dark business suit and a top coat thrown over his shoulders. Zophar was dressed in a faded priest's frock without a collar.

The Women wore a variety of dark colored costumes selected because

of their raggedness and general lack of "quality." Two of them were headgear--Botticelli wore a scarf in the Italian fashion, and Murphy, the Irish woman, wore a battered hat which looked as though it might have come straight from Eliza Dolittle's wardrobe.

All the costumes were correct and attractive, and the director was pleased that so little expense had been necessary to obtain them.

Cutting and editing. In the course of his production preparation and studying the script, the director had concluded that the acting version with which he was working could not be followed faithfully in the new physical situation in which the play would be placed. He therefore sought authority for his decisions to cut, edit, and reblock which he felt would be necessary. From the book, Scenery Design for the Amateur Stage, he took the suggestion, "A designer may ignore the author or, when necessity demands, even cut or rewrite some of the script."¹ The writer was further encouraged by the invitation from Dolman to the director to adapt a script.

Only a very egotistical author regards his text as final and inviolable, or supposes himself infallible in the matter of foresight.

.....
It may well be that the greatest service the director can render the author is to adapt the text to the new situation in such a way that the message of the play may not be lost.²

With these professional opinions to support him, and a necessity to do so, the director felt justified in doing some selective altering of the published script for a better adaptation in its new situation.

Several elements contributed to a decision to make the changes

¹Frederich and Fraser, op. cit., p. 49.

²John Dolman, Jr., The Art of Play Production, p. 102.

in the script. The play was designed to open with two roustabouts preparing the circus atmosphere by raising the canvas of the tent, securing various ropes and talking about their jobs. It also included a prop woman and girl who brought on the table and stools and who "dressed the stage." The new set made the roustabouts unnecessary and since they and the prop girls were merely theatrical innovations of Kazan, unnecessary to the plot, the director omitted them from the play. The stage was prepared before the audience arrived and the play began with the entrance of Nickles and Zuss, thus saving about eleven minutes of playing time and presenting what the director felt was a stronger opening.

The second major script change was at the end of act one. The play had been designed to break at the end of the scene in which the explosion occurred. At that time J.B. was on his knees crying to God to show him his guilt. It was a very strong emotional scene and made a good place for a break, if one were necessary. Kazan had realized the value of carrying over the act and had tried it for a few nights on its Broadway run, but found that the audience, accustomed to an act break, became restless, so he and MacLeish decided to break the action. This writer agreed with Strindberg, quoted by Gorelik in New Theatres for Old, when he wrote,

"I have come to fear that our decreasing capacity for illusion might be unfavorably affected by intermissions during which the spectator would have time to reflect and get away from the suggestive influence of the author-hypnotist."¹

The writer feared that a break would be detrimental to the effect

¹Mordecai Gorelik, New Theatres for Old, p. 148.

which had just been established, and that height of emotion would be difficult to achieve again quickly. He therefore omitted the act break and carried the action over into the next scene. The overall playing time was thereby cut to one hour and forty minutes, only slightly longer than the average length motion picture. The actors were pleased with this decision and since no adverse reaction was expressed by the viewers, it appears that the shortened playing time was a determining factor in the production's success.

The third major change concerned the curtain call rather than the actual script. The acting version included a suggested order and blocking of the characters for the curtain call. The director, however, felt that the established mood should be maintained for a while following the performance. But to continue the tradition of a curtain call and to create an interesting effect he blocked the action of Zuss and Nicklee late in the final scene so that their masks could be displayed atop the pulpit. They were rather inconspicuous there until a spotlight came up on them after the final scene. This effect prompted many favorable comments from both the cast and the audience.

One final alteration should be explained. In the cast lists of previous productions located by the writer, there were four women and one girl in the group of women who entered after the explosion. However, in the script itself there were two additional characters--Miss Mabel and a small boy. The director deleted the part of the boy and gave his essential lines to Jolly, but retained Miss Mabel and placed her name in the cast list. Evidently in his rewriting of the play MacLeish had forgotten to change the names in the cast list.

The only other editing of the script involved deleting and altering

certain profanity where it appeared unnecessary or distasteful. Much of the profanity was, however, retained since it was a vital part of the poetic line and could not adequately be substituted. All the aforementioned revisions are submitted in the promptbook which is located later in this thesis.

The Masks. The Godmask and the Satanmask were of great importance to the production, so when Clyde Watson, an artist friend of the writer, asked to design them, the writer was very agreeable. Together they determined what characteristics the masks required. The Godmask was described in the script as huge, white and expressionless, with blinded eyes. The Satanmask required eyes that stare, wrinkled with bitter laughter, and a mouth drawn down in agonized disgust. When completed the Godmask was two feet high and about eighteen inches wide. The Satanmask was eighteen inches high and about a foot wide. Under stage lights they were a very impressive sight and contributed greatly to the characters of Zuss and Nickles. They were made of fiberglass and so were light enough to be carried around, yet durable enough to be dropped without damage.

Makeup. Because of the lack of stage lighting only a minimum of makeup was used; darkened brows and lashes and a few age lines with highlights added constituted makeup. The Women were aged; Bildad was given a ruddy skin tone; Zophar's eyes and cheeks were sunken while Eliphaz's eyes were accentuated. J.B., Sarah, and the Women were given smudge marks, but J.B.'s skin was not made up as burned for he had to be "transformed" before the audience's eyes. The writer felt that tattered clothing and smudges would sufficiently create the illusion

of burns. The girl was "made up" with an excess of cosmetics for character definition. Special care was exercised to apply light makeup to the "straight" characters. Zuas was given gray hair and a two-inch gray beard, while Nickles was left with pale skin.

Publicity

A well planned and executed advance publicity campaign has played a very important part in the success of many commercial as well as amateur productions. This writer, realizing that his production would be competing with other activities on the campus and in the city of Manhattan, started several weeks before production date organizing his publicity campaign.

There are several publicity media available in Manhattan and the writer hoped to engage as many as would be practicable. With the aid of Dennis Denning of the Department of Speech he became acquainted with procedures to follow in regard to dispersing information through those media. The campaign decided upon included news stories and pictures, posters, radio announcements, and letters to organizations in the city and on the campus. It was felt that through these selected media news about the production would reach the majority of Manhattan residents and K-State students, who constitute our potential audience.

The Kansas State News Bureau was of great assistance. Through them a liaison was established with the Manhattan Mercury which agreed to print a story each week for five weeks, a full page of pictures with explanatory cut lines in the Sunday edition preceding the production, another story on the day of the opening, and a few notices when needed. A similar procedure was followed in the Collegian, which printed a

number of pictures and stories throughout the six week period preceding production.

Fifty attractive posters were designed and printed, and helpful K-State students distributed some of them to Manhattan business areas where cooperative store managers displayed them in their store windows. A number of the posters were taken to organized houses and displayed on bulletin boards about the campus.

The local radio stations--KMAN, a commercial station; KSAC, the University station; and KSDE-FM, the Department of Speech student training station--received essentially the same information that was sent to the News Bureau and they made announcements concerning the play on special programs about K-State activities.

A form letter was sent to all the organized houses on the campus reminding them of the performances, and another was sent to the clergy of Manhattan inviting them to attend the production as guests. Many of the ministers announced the play to their congregations and several clergymen attended the production.

One final medium of communication played a very important part in the play's success. A very enthusiastic cast urged friends to attend and aided in the advance sale of tickets. As rehearsals progressed enthusiasm spread. The first night audience probably did much to prompt others to attend. Over 1500 persons attended the three performances of J.E., and the writer felt that much of this response could be attributed to a well organized publicity campaign.

Production Financing

A business arrangement between the writer and the Kansas State Players was made to the mutual satisfaction of both. Since production costs were expected to be high, the Players agreed to sponsor the project by selling tickets to the performances. The admission price was set at \$1.00 for adults, 50¢ for high school and grade school students, and free admission to University students with activity cards. A total of \$437.50 was received from ticket sales.

Royalty for three performances was \$100.00; rental and royalty for music and sound effects was \$41.51; scripts cost \$34.00; and miscellaneous expenses for properties, scenery, advertising and programs accumulated to a total of \$210.00. This left a net balance of \$227.50 for the K-State Players treasury. Had the expenses totaled more than the receipts, the difference would have been paid by the writer. Such an arrangement worked to the advantage of both parties, minimizing the writer's expense and actually making money for the sponsoring organization.

Casting and Character Analysis

Approaching the problem of casting the play, the director remembered Mr. Dolman's statement about the value of a thorough knowledge of the play and its characters. He realized that as the play developed he would continue to learn new things about its characters but he had to start with some basic understanding of them. He turned to The Art of Acting for aid and located this passage which he felt would apply to any accurate analysis of a role.

Using the lines, therefore, merely as an introduction to the character, the actor should study, not just what the character says, but what he is; what he is doing and thinking all the time he is on the stage--and, for that matter, off the stage; what his past history and environment have been, and how they have affected his attitude and state of mind.¹

With this advice as a guide he approached the analysis of the characters in J.B. The process involved a number of steps, first of which was an examination of the script to reveal the author's description of the characters, and the characters' impressions of themselves and their fellows. The next step involved other interpretations of the characters recorded by MacLeish and Kazan in their correspondences before the New York opening. The final step was an assimilation of all these findings combined with the director's own impressions. That final evaluation is presented by the writer in this thesis.

Nickles. He is tall, slender, lithe, vital, and energetic. He is sardonic and bitter, the angry young man. "I've licked the stick that beat my brains out./ Stock that broke my father's bones." At perhaps twenty-five he is resentful of this world which made him what he is. To him society is an enemy. He is an intellectual. "If God is God He is not good./ If God is good He is not God." As a representative of the Devil he must suggest evil without being evil. He must appear capable of evil.

Zuss. As Nickles represents the "angry young man," Zuss is the "father image." He is tall, stately, of massive stature, with gray hair and two-inch beard. He is middle-aged, benign, a man of great dignity. Little children would love him. His is the optimistic,

¹John Dolman, Jr., The Art of Acting, p. 80.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VII

Mr. Zuss and Nickles as God and Satan.

PLATE VII



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

kindly, old-fashioned religion which denies man's need or even right to question God. "We have no peace but in obedience./ Our peace is acquiescence in the will of God." While Nickles wants to play the play to show how it should be played, Zuss' desire is to "reaffirm a sense of order in a collapsing moral order."¹ And whereas Evil is the key word for Nickles, for Zuss the word is Good.

J.B. He is a big man in his middle thirties, not heavy set but tall, with an air of prosperity. Dignity, self-assurance, righteousness, and pride characterize him. He is handsome, vigorous and he believes that he is wise. Actually most of his words early in the play spring from not much deep thought. He questions not his prosperity. He senses that there is a direct correlation between wealth and virtue although he denies Sarah's suggestion of it. He is not boastful but he is proud--proud of his position, his piety and his family. This is the J.B. at the beginning of the play. By the end of the action he has become a thinking man.

Sarah. The character of J.B.'s wife was not as well developed as the three leading male roles. In fact the only direct description of her is by MacLeish in Theatre Arts. He described her as "a fine woman with a laughing pretty face and a full firm mouth--all New England in her look and carriage."² Her actions and words described her a little better. She is sensitive, loving, also proud, but without the physical and spiritual strength of her husband. She believes that their prosperity is due to J.B.'s virtue. Her faith is strong

¹MacLeish and Kazan, "The Staging of a Play," Esquire, May 1959, 51:149.

²Archibald MacLeish, "J.B.," Theatre Arts, February 1960, p. 40.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VIII

Fig. 1 J.B., Sarah, David, Mary, and Maids.

Fig. 2 J.B. and Sarah.

PLATE VIII



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

as long as God is "good" to them. Alone she is nothing. J.E. and his goodness are her strength.

Children. Their children were described as all blonde and all beautiful ranging in age from thirteen to six years. They are happy and healthy--the perfect offspring of a happy home-- all possessing wholesome innocence.

Maids. The maids can be almost anything as long as they portray prim, dignified efficiency. For the sake of variety and a more pleasing stage picture, they should ideally have dark hair.

Messengers. They appear as soldiers, police officers, reporters and civil defense officers, and are opposites in nature. The first is more brutally frank, blunt, rather more insensitive to suffering than the other. Throughout the play, in their various roles, they reflect the necessary element of contrast and remain faithful to their basic characteristics.

The Girl. She is pretty and sensitive, but looks to be what she is--a streetwalker. She is young and rather inexperienced, but she must portray "the type."

The Comforters. They too are types. Eliphaz, the psychiatrist, is suave, cynical, and believes in nothing but the mind and man's control of it. He could have a German accent.

Bilbad is a radical, perhaps a communist. He must represent anti-God through his brutal, sneering rejection of everything "religious." But he, too, is religious. He is dedicated to the "cause" as no other character in the play is dedicated to his own belief. He is big and tough, the common laborer. His features, his actions, his voice should be coarse. He, too, is evil because he has no love.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE IX

Fig. 1 Reporters, Nickles and The Girl.

Fig. 2 J.B. and Comforters, with Nickles
and Zuss looking on.

PLATE IX



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Zophar can be stout--Norman Vincent Peale. He is an ultra-conservative to the extent that Bildad is an extreme leftist. The director saw him as a man well trained in the school of "Good Is Rewarded; Evil Is Punished," but not a true believer; rather a man who has preached it so many times that it doesn't even matter whether he believes it any more. His is a religion of recitation by rote.

The Women. The four women are middle-aged or more, and once again represent types. They all are common--the salt of the earth--who have fallen on bad times. They are women of the street but they are sympathetic and kind hearted. Mrs. Botticelli is probably Italian; at least she married an Italian. She has the characteristics of the stereotyped Italian woman--quick and frequent gestures, coarse features and an accent. She should have a rather stout build. Mrs. Murphy is much the same except that she is the "Irish washervoman" type. Mrs. Lesure and Mrs. Adams can be cast as needed for variety and interest.

Miss Mabel is a younger version of these women, maybe in her early thirties. What she has in common with the others is probably just bad luck. She is sensitive, possibly pretty, but she will be another Mrs. Adams or Mrs. Lesure in a few years. Jolly is the young daughter of Mrs. Adams but already wisened about the world. She could be fifteen or less.

The Distant Voice. This is perhaps the most difficult role to cast for its appropriateness relies on one sense alone. This director gave him a deep, dignified vocal quality, slightly British, one which commands respect or awe. He represents God speaking to J.B. and should be tape recorded for perfection of execution and control. It is very important to the effect in several scenes and must be "just right."

EXPLANATION OF PLATE X

Fig. 1 Two CDO's, Sarah, Women,
Zuss and Nickles.

Fig. 2 J.B. and Women.

PLATE X



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

With a basic understanding of the characters in the play the director was able to cast it well and to enter the area of rehearsals.

Rehearsing the Play

The art of the theatre is not an individual art; it is essentially a group art, in which the author, the director, the scenic artist, the actors, the musicians, the stage crew, and even the audience all contribute to a common creative effort. It is the director, therefore, rather than the author, who is responsible for the finished product. . . . In this sense, then, the director is as much a creative artist as the author himself, and must share the author's creative attitude.¹

Realizing his responsibility as well as the great challenge ahead, the director prepared for his first rehearsal. His previous experience in directing had led him to agree with John Dolman, Jr., who wrote,

In addition to his study of the play as a whole, the actor has, of course, to consider the mastery of his own part. Here again there is a difference of opinion as to the best procedure. Shall he first memorize the lines and then rehearse for action and meaning? Or shall he postpone memorization until the details of stage movement, business, and interpretation have been worked out? There are clearly certain advantages and disadvantages in each method.²

Mr. Dolman explained that early memorization saves time at rehearsals and frees the actor from his book, but that a mechanical reading or hasty misinterpretation might result. Memorizing late gives him a chance to coordinate lines and business, thereby improving his chances for a rich, convincing performance, but it cramps the work of other actors and delays the final timing and polishing of the performances.

Mr. Dolman concluded that neither method is entirely satisfactory nor suited to all conditions, and that circumstances and the director's preference should therefore determine the method to be used.³

¹Dolman, The Art of Play Production, p. 2

²Dolman, The Art of Acting, p. 73.

³Loc. cit.

The director's preference in this case was one week of reading and discussion rehearsals so that he and the cast could come to understand each other as persons as well as artists, and to better understand the play and its requirements. The cast was instructed to study the script for an overall impression in addition to individual character studies. At the first meeting the director discussed the theme of the play, its mood, and what he knew of its meaning. His impressions of the various characters were expressed and discussed with the actors who had done some analyzing of their own.

At these first rehearsals he set up a fixed rehearsal schedule determined by the mutual convenience of the cast and director. He also sketched the set arrangement on a blackboard and often asked the actors to "walk through" the tentative blocking which he had already worked out with a model of the set. As was suggested by Dolman, they were instructed to take notes with pencil freely so that the blocking would remain constant until the director saw fit to change it.

After the first week, rehearsals were held in the scene shop where the set had been erected, complete with levels and available properties. As a result, with almost effortless ease, the cast adjusted to the Chapel setting for the final three rehearsals.

John Gassner had written, "The actor, to appear alive and real, must really think on the stage."¹ It was to keep the characters "alive and real" that the director often stopped the action and quizzed them concerning a particular interpretation of a line or a gesture or movement which didn't appear logical. To keep them thinking was his concern

¹Gassner, Producing the Play, p. 142.

throughout rehearsals as well as performances. This was especially necessary in several of the very intense, emotional scenes in which an actor could easily become too much involved in his role, with the result of a loss of artistry and destruction of its carefully prepared effects. In the words of Constantin Stanislavsky,

. . . a character in a play especially when on the stage, is an integral part of the total effect. If he is not well played at any particular moment he is badly played. If he is not contributing to the integrity of the performance he is detracting from it; there is no neutral ground.¹

The actors were carefully instructed in the method of "living the part," but were also taught the equally important art of maintaining the "dual attitude." The dual attitude involves the actor as two persons--one reciting the lines, living the role, and the other standing at a distance critically observing and thinking. In short it involves both subjectivity and objectivity, that which Stanislavsky insisted upon from his actors.

The final three rehearsals were set aside for dress rehearsals. In the first all properties, costumes, make up, and special effects were utilized. The second rehearsal included all except make up, and the final rehearsal was run as a performance with an invited audience of students, faculty and Manhattan residents. The cast and director felt that they were ready for the first performance.

¹Dolman, op. cit., p. 81.

PERFORMANCES

Two performances were scheduled in the Chapel for eight o'clock April 4 and 5. By 7:45 p.m. on April 4, it became apparent that the cast would play to a full house of about 500 persons. The seats were all sold and about 15 patrons were allowed to stand at the back of the auditorium. The cast and director were quite elated with this response. The same adjustments were necessary the second night when several people had to be turned away at the door. Special arrangements were made for a third performance and again the seats were filled with a limited number of people permitted to stand at the rear of the house. In all, over 1500 people attended the three performances of J.B.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

In final evaluation the production was reported to be highly successful. Reviews praising the performance were submitted to the Manhattan Mercury, the local daily newspaper, by a Kansas State University Journalism professor, and to the Collegian, the daily University paper, by a staff reporter. The audiences were very enthusiastic in their vocal response and several congratulatory letters were received in the office of the Department of Speech.

The only adverse criticism reported by viewers concerned the play's philosophical conclusions, and a few remarks about individual performances.

The positive aspects included remarks about the "polish" of the performance, the appropriateness of the set, casting, costuming and the establishing and maintaining of the proper mood, free from

theatricalism. Several couples who had seen the play in New York remarked how much more they favored this production. Its simplicity of design and execution was the most obvious reason they could offer.

Three successful performances of a modern verse drama in a chapel are by no means adequate proof that this style of theatre is coming into its own, but it certainly indicated that modern verse drama has a place in the Kansas State University drama program and in the fare of the American theatre goer.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The Prompt Script

The prompt script for this production was revised from the acting version of J.B. with the written consent of the publishers, Samuel French, Inc. The majority of the changes were explained earlier in the thesis and were made only when thought necessary by the director.

Almost all the directions are those established by the director and were necessary to the revised setting. The notes on interpretation are partly those of the director and part of the acting version. All are entered in capital letters and parentheses along with the speeches. The floor plan is a key to the stage directions used by the director in this production. Also included in the script are the lighting plan, the property plot, the cast and crew list, and the program note.

At the end of the rehearsal period, the prompt script was turned over to the director for a prompter was not necessary during the performance.

The Cast

Nickles	Sidney Cherpital
Mr. Zuss	Charley Peak
Distant Voice	John B. Stearns
J.B.	Don McGehe
Sarah	Janet Coleman
David	Paul Johnson
Mary	Jeanne Tranter
Jonathan	Andy Fisher
Ruth	Carol Fisher
Rebecca	Dorothy Fisher
First Maid	Marty Connet
Second Maid	Phyllis Rion
First Messenger	Richard Hill
Second Messenger	Duane Dally
The Girl	Jean Irish
Mrs. Botticelli	Laurel Johnson
Mrs. Lesure	Marion Keegan
Mrs. Adams	Judy Redinger
Jolly Adams	Mary Jean Fleek
Miss Mabel	Pat Slusser
Bildad	Lee Fleidger
Zophar	Gene Mockabee
Eliphaz	Ron Hood
Two Soldiers	Eric Sandell, Bill Benedict
Two Girls	Judy Taylor, Karen Carey

The Crew

Director's Assistant	Pat Slusser
Costumes	Betty Cleary
Sound	Judy Poteet, Ashley Luke
Lights	Al Bailey
Properties	Jean Irish, Phyllis Rion
Make up	Pat Slusser, Laurel Johnson
House Manager	Barbara Ogler

J.E.

(THE STAGE LIGHTS COME UP AND THE HOUSE DIMS ON THE SOUND CUE OF THE TRUMPET. AS CALLIOPE MUSIC BEGINS NICKLES ENTERS EAGERLY FROM THE BACK OF THE AUDITORIUM WITH ZUSS FOLLOWING, LESS EAGER. BOTH MEN WEAR VENDORS' WHITE JACKETS. NICKLES CARRIES A TRAY OF POPCORN BOXES AND ZUSS CARRIES A BUNCH OF COLORED BALLOONS ON A STICK. AS NICKLES REACHES THE FOOT OF THE AISLE HE SPEAKS.)

NICKLES. (REGARDS STAGE, TURNS TO ZUSS.)

This is it.

ZUSS. (FIFTEEN PACES BEHIND.)

This is what?

NICKLES. (FOOT ON EDGE OF STAGE.)

Where they play the play.

ZUSS. (LOOKS AT NICKLES THEN FACES U.S.)

Bare stage?

NICKLES. (CROSSING TO UPON L. LEVEL.)

Heaven and earth! (POINTS TO PULPIT.)
That platform's Heaven.

ZUSS. (CROSSES U.S., LOOKS AT IT.)

Looks like Heaven.

NICKLES. (SARCASTICALLY.)

As you remember it?

ZUSS. (EQUALLY SARCASTIC.)

Somebody's got to. You weren't there.
Popcorn never sold in Heaven--
Not in my time.

Where's the earth?

NICKLES. (JUMPING DOWN AND CROSSING TO ABOVE THE TABLE.)

Earth is where that table is.
Here's where Job sits. At the table.
(INDICATES PULPIT.)
Ocd and Satan lean above.

ZUSS. (PEERING ABOVE, UNEASILY AS MUSIC FADES.)

I wonder if we'd better, Nickles.

NICKLES.

Better what?

ZUSS.

Better play it.

NICKLES.

Why not? Who cares? We could show them!
The two best actors in America.

ZUSS.

The two best actors?

NICKLES. (IGNORING THE DIG AND RETURNING ONE.)

And now look at us! (LOOKS AT BALLOONS.)
Selling breath in bags!

ZUSS. (INDICATING THE POPCORN.)

And bags
To butter breath with!

NICKLES. (STUNG.)

When they sell. (UNHOOKS TRAY.)

ZUSS. (SETTING BALLOONS BEHIND PULPIT.)

Merchandise not moving, Nickles?

NICKLES.

Moves wherever I do . . . (SETS TRAY BEHIND L. LEVEL.)
all of it.

ZUSS. (CROSSING D.R.)

I wonder . . .

NICKLES. (CROSSING BELOW PULPIT.)

Why not? Who cares? They don't. (POINTS TO TABLE.)

ZUSS. (HURT.)

What's the matter with it?

NICKLES. (CROSSING R. OF ZUSS.)

God the Creator of the Universe?
God who hung the world in time?
You wouldn't hang the world in time
With two-inch cat hair on your outlets!

(MR. ZUSS RISES, FOLDS PACKET OVER R. ARM, LOOKS OUT FRONT, SPEAKS
WITH A MAJESTIC SWEEP OF HIS ARM.)

ZUSS.

WHATSOEVER IS UNDER THE WHOLE
HEAVEN IS MINE!

NICKLES. (DRYLY.)

That's what I mean:
You need a mask.

ZUSS. (STUNG.)

Perhaps a more
Accomplished actor . . .

NICKLES. (TURNS TO ZUSS.)

Kiss your accomplishments!
Nobody doubts your accomplishments--nobody.
(MOVES D.S. AND ADDRESSES AUDIENCE.)
We remember Mr. Zuss:
The one man for God in the theatre!

ZUSS.

You make me humble.

NICKLES.

No. I'm serious.
The part was written for you.

ZUSS. (WITH A SELF-DEPRECATING GESTURE.)

Oh.

NICKLES. (EARNESTLY.)

But this is God in JOB you're playing.
 God the Creator of the Universe--
 Job's . . . and ours! Leviathan . . . Uranium . . .
 You can't play Him without a mask.
 Human faces hide too much--too little.

ZUSS. (STANDING.)

What kind of mask?

NICKLES. (MOVING U.L. OF PULPIT.)

You'll find it somewhere.
 Heaven's the great lost-and-found. Try Heaven!

(ZUSS STARTS UP STEPS TO PLATFORM. NICKLES MOVES D.L., FACES AUDIENCE.)

If God should laugh
 The mare would calf
 The cow would foal . . .
 Diddle my soul.

ZUSS. (ON PULPIT STEPS, HAND ON RAIL.)

God never laughs! In the whole Bible!

NICKLES. (REGARDING THE WHOLE STAGE.)

How could he laugh? He made it-- the toy
 Top--the world--the dirty whirler!

ZUSS.

What's so wrong with the world?

NICKLES.

Wrong with it!

Try to spin one on a dung-heap.
 (TO THE SKY STAGE LEFT.)
 I heard upon his dry dung-heap
 That man cry out who cannot sleep:
 "If God is God He is not good,
 If God is good He is not God;
 Take the even, take the odd,
 I would not sleep here if I could
 Except for the little green leaves in the wood
 And the wind on the water."

ZUSS.

You are a bitter boy.

NICKLES.

I taste of the world.

I've licked the stick that beat my brains out--
Stock that broke my father's bones.

ZUSS.

I know. You've been around, you children!
Our modern hero! Our Odysseus
Sailing sidewalks toward the tird of
Truth and touching it at last . . . in triumph!
You sicken me!
(PLACES JACKET ON CHAIR BEHIND PULPIT RAIL.)

NICKLES. (HURT.)

All right. I sicken you.
No need to be offensive, is there?
If you would rather someone else . . .

ZUSS.

Did what?

NICKLES.

Played Job.

ZUSS.

Played Job?

NICKLES.

Naturally!

(CROSSES EARNESTLY TO L. OF PULPIT.)
Who else could play the part like me?
God has killed his sons . . . his daughters . . .
Taken his camels, oxen, sheep,
Everything he has . . . and left him
Sick and stricken on a dung-heap--
Not even the consciousness of crime to comfort him.

ZUSS.

Not Job. Not you. I wouldn't think of it.

NICKLES.

You wouldn't think of me for Job?
What would you think of?

ZUSS.

Oh, there's always
Someone playing Job.

NICKLES.

There must be
Thousands! What's that got to do with it?
(CROSSES CENTER.)
Millions and millions of mankind
Burned, crushed, broken, mutilated,
Slaughtered, and for what? For thinking!
For walking round the world in the wrong
Skin, the wrong-shaped noses, eyelids:
Living at the wrong address--
(MOVING D.R.)
London, Berlin, Hiroshima--
Wrong night--wrong city.
There never could have been so many
Suffered more for less. (PAUSE.) But where do
I come in? . . . Play the dung-heap? (GLANCES U.L. AT ZUSS.)

ZUSS.

All we have to do is start.
Job will join us. Job will be there.

NICKLES. (MOVING TO U.L. OF TABLE.)

I know. I know. I've seen him.
Job is everywhere we go,
His children dead, his work for nothing, (SITS C. STOOL ABOVE TABLE.)
Counting his losses, scraping his boils,
Discussing himself with his friends and physicians,
Questioning everything--the times, the stars.
His own soul. God's providence. (RISES, FACES ZUSS.)
What do I play?

ZUSS.

What do you play?

NICKLES. (MOVING LEFT OF TABLE.)

What do I play? You play God.

You play God and I play . . .
Ah!

ZUSS.

I had assumed you knew.
(TOSSES SATAN COSTUME D.L. IN VIEW OF AUDIENCE.)
I didn't mean to be nasty.

(NICKLES NUDGES THE CAPE WITH HIS TOE.)

You see,
I think of you and me as . . .opposites.

NICKLES.

Nice of you. (THOUGHTFULLY.)
Your opposite! A demanding role!

ZUSS.

I know.

NICKLES.

But worthy of me. Worthy of me! (KNEELS AND EXAMINES CAPE.)

ZUSS.

I have offended you. I didn't mean to.

NICKLES.

Did I say I was offended? (HE IS THOUGHTFUL.)

(MR. ZUSS TURNS TO THE LECTURN AND EXAMINES OTHER COSTUMES. HIS NEXT SPEECH AND NICKLES' SPEECH OVERLAP.)

ZUSS. (MUMBLING TO HIMSELF.)

Mask, he said. No mask . . .Costumes . . .
Vestures . . .centuries of vestures . . .
Prophets' mantles . . .High priests ephods . . .
Capes . . .and surplices . . .and stoles . . .
(PICKS UP GODMASK AND SATANMASK, BACK TO AUDIENCE.)

NICKLES. (PICKS UP THE CAPE, UNFOLDS IT SHOWING ITS RED LINING.)

So I play opposite to God!

I heard upon his dry dung-heap
That man cry out who cannot sleep:
(ADDRESSING JOB'S STOOL AT HEAD OF THE TABLE.)

"If God is God He is not good,
 If God is good He is not God;
 Take the even, take the odd,
 I would not sleep here if I could. . . ."
 (PUTS ON THE CAPE WITH A FLOURISH.)
 "I would not sleep here if I could
 Except for the little green leaves in the wood
 And the wind on the water."
 (TURNS SUDDENLY TO MR. ZUSS.)
 Show me the mask. (CROSSES TO PULPIT.)

Zuss. (TURNING, MASKS CONCEALED.)

What mask?

NICKLES.

My mask!
 You'll find it where the Godmask is--in
 Heaven!
 (TO AUDIENCE.) Father of lies they call me.
 Who knows enough to know they're lies?

(ZUSS LIFTS THE GODMASK HIGH IN HIS RIGHT HAND.)

ZUSS.

. . . Justice has a face like this!

NICKLES.

Like blinded eyes.

ZUSS.

Like skies.

NICKLES. (SPITTING IT OUT.)

Of stone!
 Being magnificent and being right
 Don't go together in this universe. (MOVES L.)
 It's being wrong--a desperate stubbornness
 Fighting the inextinguishable stars--
 Excites imagination. (FACES ZUSS.)
 Show me the
 Other! Show me!

ZUSS. (HOLDING SATANMASK BEHIND THE RAILING.)

You won't find it
 Beautiful, you understand.

NICKLES.

I know that:
Beauty's the Creator's bait!

ZUSS. (HOLDING MASK IN HIS LEFT HAND, ARMS DIAGONAL TO HIS BODY.)

Well, that's it. You don't care for it?
It's not precisely the expression
Anyone would choose: I know that.
Evil is never very pretty--
Spitefulness either. (NICKLES BEGINS TO REACH FOR IT.)
Nevertheless it's
His: you'll grant that.
(NICKLES TAKES THE MASK.)

NICKLES. (HOLDING THE MASK TO HIS RIGHT FOR ALL TO SEE.)

Evil you call it!
Look at those lips. They've tasted something
Bitter as a broth of blood
And spat the sup out. Was that evil?
Was it? (CROSSES L. A FEW PACES.) Spitefulness you say--
You call that grin of anguish spite?
Eyes that suffer: lips that spit--
I'd rather wear this ache of loathing
Night after night than wear that other
(ZUSS IS STILL HOLDING UP HIS MASK.)
Once--that . . . white indifference! Horrible!
Horrible as a star above
A burning, murdered, broken city! (PAUSE. WHIRLS TO ZUSS.)
I'll play the part.

ZUSS. (FACING D.L.)

Put your mask on.

NICKLES. (CROSSES TO UPON L. LEVEL.)

Give me the lines.

(THEY PUT THE MASKS UP TO THEIR FACES.)

DISTANT VOICE. (THE SOUND SEEMS TO ENGULF THE HOUSE.)

WHENCE COMEST THOU?

(NICKLES AND ZUSS QUICKLY LOWER THE MASKS.)

NICKLES.

Who said that? (ZUSS JUST LOOKS AT HIM, PUZZLED.)

DISTANT VOICE.

WHENCE COMEST THOU? (NICKLES IS SCARED.)

ZUSS.

That was my line.

NICKLES.

Yes . . . Who said it?

ZUSS.

He wants us to go on.

NICKLES.

Who does?

ZUSS.

Prompter probably. Prompter somewhere.

NICKLES. (SHOUTING OUT FRONT.)

Any . . . body . . . there? . . . (A LONG PAUSE.)

ZUSS.

Go on!

(THEY RAISE THEIR MASKS.)

WHENCE COMEST THOU?

(SILENCE. MASKS DOWN.)

Go on!

NICKLES.

What do I

Say?

ZUSS.

It's in the Bible, isn't it?

NICKLES.

I'm supposed to speak the Bible?

ZUSS.

Maybe that Mask of yours can speak it.
Ought to know the lines by now.

(MASKS UP.)

WHENCE COMEST THOU?

SATANMASK VOICE. (FROM LOUDSPEAKERS.)

FROM GOING TO AND FRO IN THE EARTH . . .
AND FROM WALKING UP AND DOWN IN IT . . .
(SATAN VOICE BEGINS TO LAUGH. NICKLES CASTS HIS MASK TO THE FLOOR;
IT CONTINUES TO LAUGH.)

ZUSS. (LOWERING HIS MASK, IN RIGHTEOUS ANGER.)

What's so funny? It's irreverent. It's blasphemous.
After all, you are talking to God. (LAUGH FADES OUT.)

NICKLES. (IN AWE.)

Do I look as though I'd laughed?
If you had seen what I have seen
You'd never laugh again . . . weep either.
Those eyes see. They see!
(HE GINGERLY PICKS UP THE MASK.)

ZUSS.

Now
Listen! This is a simple scene.
I play God. You play Satan.
God is asking where you've been.
All you have to do is tell him.
Simple as that. "In the earth," you answer.

NICKLES. (QUICKLY.)

Satan answers.

ZUSS.

All right--Satan!
Let's get on. Let's play the play.

NICKLES.

You really think we're . . . playing?

ZUSS.

Aren't we?

Somebody is. Satan maybe.
Maybe Satan's playing you.
Let's begin from the beginning.

(NICKLES RETURNS TO HIS LEVEL.)

Ready? . . . Masks! (MASKS UP.)
WHENCE COMEST THOU?

NICKLES.

FROM GOING TO AND FRO IN THE EARTH . . .
AND FROM WALKING UP AND DOWN IN IT.

(J.B. ENTERS FROM U.L. WITH HIS FAMILY, LAUGHING AS THEY COME. THEY AT NO TIME TAKE ANY NOTICE OF THE TWO ACTORS. THEY ENTER IN PAIRS, J.B. AND REBECCA LEADING, SARAH BRINGING UP THE REAR. J.B. STANDS AT THE HEAD, NEAREST THE PULPIT. TO HIS LEFT STAND RUTH AND JONATHAN; SARAH IS AT THE FOOT; REBECCA AND MARY STAND BEHIND THE STOOLS ON THE D.S. SIDE WITH REBECCA NEAR SARAH. THEY ARE HAPPY AND EAGER. ZUSS SPEAKS AS THEY MOVE TO THEIR PLACES.)

ZUSS.

HAST THOU CONSIDERED MY SERVANT JOB . . .
THAT THERE IS NONE LIKE HIM ON THE EARTH.
A PERFECT AND AN UPRIGHT MAN . . . ONE
THAT FEARETH GOD AND ESCHEWETH EVIL.

SARAH.

J.B. . . .

J.B. (WAITS UNTIL ALL HEADS ARE DOWN THEN BOWS.)

Our Father which art in Heaven,
Give us this day our daily bread. Amen!

CHILDREN. (EAGERLY.)

Amen! (SIT.)

SARAH. (LESS QUICKLY.)

Amen!

MAIDS. (THEY SPEAK, THEN WHEEL AND GO OUT.)

Amen!

(J.B. AND SARAH SIT.)

SARAH.

That was short and sweet, my darling.

J.B.

What was?

SARAH.

Grace was.

J.B.

All the essentials.

SARAH.

Give? Eat?

J.B.

Besides, they're hungry.

(WE-SURE-ARE'S FROM THE CHILDREN.)

SARAH.

That's what grace is for--the hunger.
Mouth and meat by grace amazed
God upon my lips is praised.

(FIRST MAID ENTERS WITH A TURKEY ON A PLATTER. SHE PLACES IT BEFORE J.B. AND EXITS. SECOND MAID FOLLOWS WITH KNIFE AND CARVING FORK, WHICH SHE GIVES TO J.B. THEN EXITS.)

MARY. (AS THE FIRST MAID APPROACHES THE TABLE.)

Papa! Papa! He heard! He heard!

DAVID.

Who did?

RUTH.

Our father which art in heaven.

J.B. (LAUGHING.)

He did indeed. What a bird He sent us!
Cooked to a turn.

RUTH.

He heard! He heard!

JONATHAN. (JUMPING UP AND FLAPPING HIS ARMS.)

He heard! He heard! He sent a bird!
(ALL CHILDREN BURST INTO LAUGHTER. J.B. AND SARAH MUST SMILE.)

SARAH.

That's enough now, children. Quiet!
Your father's counting.

J.B.

Not today.
Not this gobbler. Feed a regiment.
Nothing wrong with the food. Or the fixin's
The day either--what's wrong with the day?
Tell me what day it is. (RISES AND BEGINS TO CARVE.)

JONATHAN.

Turkey Day.

MARY.

Cranberry Day.

RUTH.

Succotash Day.

DAVID.

When we all can have white.

JONATHAN.

And giblets to bite.

RUTH.

And two kinds of pie.

JONATHAN.

And squash in your eye.

MARY.

And mashed potatoes with puddles of butter.

JONATHAN.

And gravy and such.

REBECCA. (JUMPING UP AND DOWN AT HER PLACE.)

. . .and . . .and . . .

SARAH. (THE CHILDREN ARE SCREAMING WITH LAUGHTER.)

Children!

JONATHAN.

And all eat too much.

SARAH.

Children!

Quiet! Quiet every one of you! (THE ACTION SUBSIDES.)

Answer your father's question, Jonathan.

Tell him what day it is.

(NICKLES PLACES MASK ON L. LEVEL AND CROUCHES THERE WATCHING. ZUSS IS STILL HOLDING HIS MASK.)

JONATHAN.

Thanksgiving.

SARAH.

What day is that?

JONATHAN.

Thanksgiving Day.

DAVID.

The Day we give thanks to God.

MARY.

For His goodness.

SARAH.

And did you, David? Did you, Mary?

Has any one of you thanked God?

Really thanked Him? Thanked Him for everything?

(RISES, CROSSES TO BEHIND DAVID.)

God doesn't give all this for nothing:

A good home, good food,

Father, mother, brothers, sisters.

(STROKES RUTH'S LONG HAIR.)

We too have our parts to play.

If we do our part He does His:

(BACK AT HER PLACE.)

He always has. If we forget Him
He will forget. Forever. In everything.
David! Did you think of God?
Did you think when you woke in your beds this
morning
Any one of you, of Him?

J.B.

Of course he did. He couldn't have helped it.

(SARAH SITS, DRAWS REBECCA TO HER AND TIES ON HER BIB.)

Sweet Sal! Sweet Sal!
Children know the grace of God
Better than most of us. They see the world
The way the morning brings it back to them,
New and born and fresh and wonderful. . . .

SARAH.

Please, Job! I want the children
Somehow to understand this day, this
Feast. . . .

J.B.

Forgive me, Sal. I'm sorry. But they
Do. They understand. A little.
Look at me, all of you. Ruth, you answer.
Why do we eat all this--these dishes:
All this food? You say, Rebecca:
You're the littlest of us all.
Why?

REBECCA. (QUICKLY.)

Because it's good! (ALL LAUGH.)

SARAH. (TAKING HER HAND.)

Ah, my poor baby! Baby!

J.B.

Why your poor baby?
She's right, isn't she? It is. It's good.

SARAH.

Good--and God has sent it to us.

J.B.

She knows that.

SARAH.

Does she? Job, do you? (NICKLES LOOKS AT ZUSS.)

Oh, I think you do . . . only . . .
Times like this, when we're together . . .
I get frightened, Job. . . . We have so
Much.

J.B.

You ought to think I know.
Even if no one else should, you should.
Never since I learned to tell
My shadow from my shirt, not once,
Not for a watch-tick, have I doubted
God was on my side--was helping me.

NICKLES. (TO AUDIENCE, SMUGLY.)

That's our pigeon!

J.B.

I've always known.
Even young and poor I knew it.
People called it luck? it wasn't.
I never thought so from the first
Fine silver dollar to the last
Controlling interest in some company
I couldn't get--and got.
(ALL LAUGH.) It isn't
Luck. (SITS.)

MARY.

That's in the story.

JONATHAN.

Tell the

Story.

RUTH.

Tell the lucky story!

REEBECCA. (EAGERLY.)

Lucky, lucky, tell the lucky!

J.B. (RISING. THIS IS A FAVORITE GAME.)

Tell the lucky? Tell the lucky. (CHUCKLING AS HE MOVES U.R.)

Fellow came up to me once in a restaurant:

"J.B.," he says--I knew him . . .

"Why do you get the best of the rest of us?"

Fellow named Foley, I think, or Sullivan:

New-come man he was in town.

MARY.

Your turn, Mother.

SARAH.

Patrick Sullivan.

J.B. AND THE CHILDREN. (THEY LOVE THIS STORY.)

Patrick Sullivan, that's the man!

J.B.

"Why do you get the best of the rest of us?

I've got as many brains as you.

I work as hard. I keep the lamp lit.

J.B. AND CHILDREN.

Luck! That's what it is," says Sullivan!

(NICKLES MOVES A FEW PAGES R. WATCHING INTENTLY.)

J.B.

"Look," I said, "Look out the window!

What do you see?" "The street," he tells me.

J.B. AND THE CHILDREN.

"The street?" says I. "The street," says he.

J.B.

"What do you want me to call it?" he asks me.

"What do I want you to call it?" says I.

"A road," says I. "It's going somewhere."

"Where?" he says. "You say," I said to him.

J.B. AND THE CHILDREN.

"God knows!" says Mr. Sullivan!

J.B.

"He does," says I. "That's where it's going.
That's where I go, too. That's why."
"Why what?" says he. "I get the best of you.
It's God's country, Mr. Sullivan."

J.B. AND CHILDREN. (LAUGHING.)

"God forbid!" says Mr. Sullivan!

J.B.

I laughed till I choked. He only looked at me.
"Lucky so-and-so," he yells.

J.B. AND CHILDREN. (STILL AMUSED.)

Poor Mr. Sullivan.

SARAH.

Poor Mr. Sullivan.

J.B. (STILL IN HAPPY MOOD.)

It isn't luck when God is good to you:
It's something more. It's like those dizzy
Daft old lads who douse for water.
They feel the alder twig twist down
And know they've got it and they have:
They've got it. Elast the ledge and water
Gushes at you. And they knew. (POURING TWO GLASSES OF WINE.)
It wasn't luck. They knew. They felt the
Gush go shuddering through their shoulders, huge
As some mysterious certainty of opulence.
They couldn't hold it. I can't hold it.
(HE CROSSES PAST SARAH, PAUSING TO HAND HER A GLASS.)
I've always known that God was with me. (TURNS TO HER.)
I've tried to show I knew it--not
Only in words.

SARAH.

Oh, you have,

(ZUSS AND NICKLES LEAN IN.)

I know you have. And it's ridiculous,
Childish, and I shouldn't be afraid. . . .
Not even now when suddenly everything
Fills to overflowing in me.
Brimming the fulness till I feel
My happiness impending . . . like a danger.
If ever anyone deserved it, you do.

J.B.

That's not true. I don't deserve it. (PASSES IT OFF.)
It's not a question of deserving.

SARAH. (WORRIED, SERIOUS.)

Oh, it is. That's all the question.
However could we sleep at night . . .

J.B. (STILL NOT TOO SERIOUS.)

Nobody deserves it, Sarah!--
Not the world that God has given us.
(CROSSES TO HER AND PLACES HIS UP STAGE HAND ON HER SHOULDER.)
But I believe in it, Sal. I trust in it.
I trust my luck--my life--our life-- (LOOKS AT CHILDREN.)
God's goodness to me.

(NICKLES LOOKS AT MR. ZUSS AND SMIRKS.)

SARAH.

Oh, I know.
I know you trust it. That's what frightens me.
It's not so simple as all that. It's not.
They mustn't think it is. God punishes.
God rewards and God can punish.
Us He has rewarded. Wonderfully.
Kept us from harm, each one--each one.
(PLACES A HAND ON HANDS OF RUTH AND REBECCA ON "EACH ONE.")
And why? Because of you--your faithfulness.

J.B. (CROSSING TO HEAD OF TABLE.)

No. Because He's just. (PAUSE.) She's right.
(HAND ON DAVID'S SHOULDER AS HE PASSES.)
She's right, David. A man can count on Him.
Look at the world, the order of it,
The certainty of day's return. . . . (LIFTING GLASS.)
To be . . . become . . . and end--are beautiful.
Trust our luck, my Sal! Trust in it!

(THEY DRINK, HE SITS. THE FAMILY RETURNS TO EATING AND PASSING FOOD,
BUT IT MUST BE DONE SILENTLY AND UNOBTUSIVELY.)

NICKLES. (DISGUSTEELY.)

Trust in our luck! Our life! Trust in it!

ZUSS. (STANDING ERECTLY.)

You don't like him.

NICKLES.

I don't have to.
 You're the one that has to like him. . . .
 (CROSSING TO ABOVE TABLE.)
 Poisoning their little minds
 With love of life! At that age!

ZUSS.

No,
 I thought he made that small familiar
 Feast a true Thanksgiving. Only . . .

NICKLES. (CROSSING TO J.B.)

Thanksgiving for what? For whom? For when?
 (HISsing TO J.B. WHO IS UNAWARE OF HIS PRESENCE.)
 The best thing you can teach your children
 Next to never drawing breath
 Is choking on it!
 (TO ZUSS.)

Only what?

ZUSS.

Only . . . I wonder if he knows.

NICKLES.

Knows what?

ZUSS.

Knows he's . . . in it.

NICKLES.

In it?

ZUSS.

He has the wealth, the wife, the children . . .
 Position in the world.

NICKLES. (MOVING TO ABOVE TABLE, WHISPERING AT J.B.)

The piety?

ZUSS.

He loves God, if that's what you're saying.

NICKLES.

Piety's hard enough to take
Among the poor who have to practice it.

ZUSS.

This man has his--and he's grateful.

NICKLES.

Bought and paid for like a waiter's smirk.
(TURNS TO THE TABLE.)
You know what talks when that man's talking?
All that gravy on his plate--
His cash--his pretty wife--his children.
Wait till you lift the lot--he'll sing
Another canticle--to different music.

(NICKLES CROSSES TO U.L. LEVEL. FAMILY COMMENCES SINGING THE "FAMILY SONG." J.B. CROSSES TO REBECCA WHO RISES. HE SITS ON HER STOOL AND SLAPS HIS KNEE. SHE SITS UP ON HIS LAP. AS THE SONG STARTS THE MAIDS BEGIN TO REMOVE THE FOOD BUT ARE OUT WHEN J.B. AND THE GIRLS SING THE SECOND VERSE. SARAH SUPERVISES THE STACKING OF THE PLATES, SILVER, ETC. AT HER PLACE. BY THE END OF THE SONG THE TABLE SHOULD BE CLEARED.)

J.B. AND FAMILY. (SINGING.)

I love Monday . . . Tuesday . . . Wednesday . . .
Where have Monday, Tuesday gone?
Under the grass tree,
Under the green tree,
One by one.

(THEY REPEAT THE VERSE, THEN RUTH RISES BEHIND J.B. AND REBECCA AND THE THREE OF THEM SING THE SECOND VERSE.)

J.B. AND THE TWO GIRLS.

Caught as we are in Heaven's quandary
Is it we or they are gone
Under the grass tree,
Under the green tree,
One by one?

(THE ENTIRE FAMILY REPEATS THE VERSE AS THEY EXIT. J.B. AND SARAH REMAIN BEHIND, SHOOING THE REST ON OUT. THE SONG FADES OUT OFF STAGE.)

J.B. (AT U.C. TURNS TO SARAH WHO HAS STAYED BY THE TABLE.)

I love Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday . . .

(NICKLES AND ZUSS CONTINUE THE SCENE AS J.B. CROSSES TO SARAH. SHE SHIVERS, HE PUTS HIS JACKET OVER HER SHOULDERS, EMBRACES HER. SHE SMILES UP AT HIM, AND THEY GO SLOWLY OFF U.L.)

NICKLES.

God will teach him better, won't He?
 God will show him what the world is--
 What a man is! The ignoble creature--
 Victim of the spinning joke!

ZUSS.

Teach him better than he knows!--
 God will show him God--what God is:
 Enormous pattern of the steep of stars, (REVERENTLY.)
 Minute perfection of the frozen crystal,
 Inimitable architecture of the slow,
 Cold, silent; ignorant sea-snail:
 The unimaginable will of stone:
 Infinite mind in midge of matter!

NICKLES.

Infinite mush! Wait till your pigeon
 Pecks at the world the way the rest do--
 Eager beak to naked bum!

ZUSS. (OUTRAGED.)

You ought to have your tongue torn out!

NICKLES.

All man should: to suffer silently.

ZUSS.

Nothing this good man might suffer,
 Nothing at all would make him yelp
 As you do. He'd praise God no matter.

NICKLES.

Why must he suffer then?

ZUSS.

To praise!

NICKLES. (CROSSING D.L.)

He praises now. Like a canary.
 Shall I tell you why?

To learn! (OUT FRONT.)

Every human creature born
 Is born into the bright delusion

Beauty and loving-kindness care for him.
 Suffering teaches! Suffering's good for us.
 Imagine men and women dying
 Still believing that the cuddling arms
 Enclosed them! (MOVING WITH NERVOUS ENERGY L.S.)

They would find the worms
 Peculiar nurses, wouldn't they? Wouldn't they?
 (SINGS "DEVIL THEM.")

What once was cuddled must learn to kiss
 The cold worm's mouth: that's all the mystery.
 That's the whole muddle.

(SPEAKS THE REST.)

Well, we learn it.

God is merciful and we learn it. (BITTERLY.)

We learn to wish we'd never lived.

(AS ZUSS SPEAKS NICKLES SETS THE STAGE FOR THE NEXT SCENE. ONE STOOL STAYS AT HEAD OF TABLE. TWO GO DOWN STAGE OF THE PULPIT FOR THE SOLDIERS. TWO GO OUT OF SIGHT BEHIND THE PULPIT. TWO GO LEFT STAGE BY THE ORGAN. NICKLES DOES THIS EAGERLY AS HE AND ZUSS CONVERSE.)

ZUSS.

He'll never learn that lesson. Never.

NICKLES.

Won't he? When the anguish starts?

(SITS AT HEAD OF TABLE.)

Shall I tell you how it ends?

Shall I prophesy? I see our

Smug world-master on his dung-heap.

Naked, miserable, and alone,

Pissing the stars. Ridiculous gesture!--

Nevertheless a gesture--meaning

All there is on earth to mean!

Man's last word . . .and worthy of him!

ZUSS.

He'll trust the will of God no matter.

NICKLES.

Why try the trust then?

ZUSS.

Why? To see!

NICKLES.

See . . . what?

ZUSS.

See . . . God!

NICKLES. (RISES AND MOVES LEFT.)

A fine sight from an ash heap, certainly.

ZUSS.

It's from the ash heap God is seen
Always! Always from the ashes.
Every saint and martyr knew that.

DISTANT VOICE. (PROMPTING.)

HAST THOU CONSIDERED MY SERVANT, JOB . . .

(NICKLES GETS MASK AND MOUNTS L. LEVEL. ZUSS AND HE RAISE MASKS TO THEIR FACES.)

ZUSS.

HAST THOU CONSIDERED MY SERVANT JOB
THAT THERE IS NONE LIKE HIM ON THE EARTH,
A PERFECT AND AN UPRIGHT MAN, ONE
THAT FEARETH GOD AND ESCHETH
EVIL?

NICKLES.

DOTH JOB FEAR GOD FOR NAUGHT?
HAST THOU NOT MADE AN HEDGE ABOUT
HIM
AND ABOUT HIS HOUSE
AND ABOUT ALL THAT HE HATH ON EVERY
SIDE?
THOU HAST BLESSED THE WORK OF HIS
HANDS
AND HIS SUBSTANCE IS INCREASED.
BUT PUT FORTH THINE HAND NOW AND
TOUCH
ALL THAT HE HATH . . . AND HE WILL
CURSE THEE TO THY FACE!

ZUSS.

BEHOLD!
ALL THAT HE HATH IS IN THY POWER

DISTANT VOICE.

ONLY . . .UPON HIMSELF . . . PUT NOT
FORTH THY HAND!

ZUSS.

ONLY . . .UPON HIMSELF . . .PUT NOT
FORTH THY HAND! (THEY REMOVE THE MASKS.)

(THERE IS A BURST OF BAND MUSIC. TWO GIRLS ENTER FROM D.L. AND STROLL RIGHT, IN FRONT OF STAGE. ONE HOLDS NEWSPAPER ON WHICH CAN BE SEEN IN VERY BOLD LETTERS, "WAR ENDS." TWO SOLDIERS ENTER U.L., CROSS DOWN BEHIND THE ORGAN, CALL TO THE GIRLS WHO WAIT CENTER FOR THEM. THEY CONVERSE EXCITEDLY IN PANTOMIME THEN GO OFF LEFT ARM IN ARM. J.B. AND SARAH ENTER FROM U.L., SARAH WITH SEWING. SHE PAUSES ABOVE TABLE. J.B. CARRIES TWO GLASSES AND A DECANTER WHICH HE SETS ON DOWN END OF L. LEVEL. HE POURS THE DRINKS. MUSIC FADES. TWO SOLDIERS ENTER D.L. THE SECOND SOLDIER WEAVES, DRUNKENLY. THEY PAUSE AND SURVEY THE "HOUSE." FIRST SOLDIER ADJUSTS BOTH THEIR TIES. SARAH SEES THEM THROUGH AN IMAGINARY WINDOW BESIDE IMAGINARY D.L. DOOR.)

SARAH.

Look, Job! Look! Across the street.
Two soldiers.

J.B. (POURING DRINKS.)

What about them?

SARAH.

Only they

Stare so.

J.B.

Stare at what?

SARAH.

The house.

I think they're drunk . . .A little.

(ZUSS CROSSES DOWN TO LEVEL, HAND ON RAILING.)

J.B. (AFFAELY.)

Plastered.

SARAH.

One of them anyway. (CROSSES LEFT.)
He wobbles.

J.B. (CHUCKLING.)

That's no wobble. That's a waltz step.
(THE FIRST SOLDIER RINGS THE IMAGINARY DOOR BELL.)

SARAH. (EXCITED.)

They're at the door. (PLACES SEWING ON TABLE.)

J.B. (CROSSING TO HER WITH DRINKS.)

They sure are.

SARAH.

What do you think they . . .

J.B. (HANDING HER A DRINK.)

I don't know.

SARAH.

What do you think they want, two soldiers?

J.B.

No idea. Johnson will tend to them.

(NICKLES LOOKS OFF LEFT FOR "JOHNSON.")

SARAH. (LOOKING AT THE SOLDIERS.)

I've never seen such staring eyes.

J.B. (HUMOROUSLY, UNCONCERNED.)

Glazed. Just glazed.

SARAH. (EXCITED WITH NEW IDEA.)

I know, Job. (CROSSING TO HIM.)
They have some kind of message for us.
David has sent them with a message---
Something about his regiment. They're coming
Every day now, ship by ship.
I hear them in the harbor coming.
He couldn't write and so he sent them.

(THE FIRST SOLDIER GESTURES TO SECOND SOLDIER TO ROLL DOWN HIS SLEEVES AND BUTTON THEM. HE DOES SO.)

J.B.

Pretty drunk for messengers, those soldiers. (SIPS HIS DRINK.)

SARAH.

What does it matter?

(FIRST SOLDIER RINGS BELL AGAIN. SARAH SETS DOWN HER GLASS.)

They're just boys.

They've just got home. It doesn't matter.

J.B.

Johnson's a judge of drunks. He'll handle them.

(NICKLES MOVES TO THE UP END OF THE L. LEVEL AND ADJUSTS HIS CAPE.)

SARAH. (CROSSING TO J.Y. EARNESTLY.)

He mustn't send them off. Don't let him!

NICKLES. (AFFECTING "JOHNSON'S VOICE.")

Two young . . . gentlemen to see you.
Friends, they say, of Mr. David.

SARAH. (CROSSING U.C. EXCITEDLY.)

Oh, I knew! I knew! I knew!

(J.B. RISES, PUTS GLASS ON TABLE, CROSSES D.L. TO DOOR AS THE SOLDIERS ENTER, PRESUMABLY ADMITTED BY "JOHNSON.")

J.B. (SHAKING HANDS WITH THEM.)

Come in, gentlemen. Come in. Come in.
David's friends are always welcome.
This is David's mother.

(FIRST SOLDIER GOES DIRECTLY TO SARAH, WHO HAS MOVED TO JUST ABOVE THE HEAD OF THE TABLE, AND SHAKES HER HAND. SHE USHERS HIM ON OVER TO THE TWO STOOLS WHERE HE SITS. THE SECOND SOLDIER WEAVES IN A FEW PAGES BEHIND, PAST SARAH, AND STOPS RIGHT OF FIRST SOLDIER WHO HAS REMOVED HIS OWN CAP.)

SARAH. (GESTURING TO THE STOOLS.)

Won't you sit

Down?

FIRST SOLDIER. (CROSSES U.R., SITS L. STOOL.)

What did I tell you, Punk!
Any friends of David's.

(J.B. GETS A STOOL FROM L. AND PLACES IT FOR SARAH U.C. AS SARAH
MOVES STOOL FROM HEAD OF TABLE U.R. FOR FOOTSTOOL.)

SARAH. (MOTHERLY.)

There.

Sit down.

FIRST SOLDIER.

It's just, we saw the number.

SARAH. (MOVING TO HER STOOL U.C. WHERE SHE SITS.)

And David asked you to drop in.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Any friend of his, he told us.
Any time.

SECOND SOLDIER. (MUMBLING.)

And we were cold:
A cold, hard march. . . .

(FIRST SOLDIER PULLS SECOND SOLDIER DOWN TO R. STOOL, SNATCHES OFF
THE OTHER'S CAP AND SLAPS IT IN HIS HANDS.)

FIRST SOLDIER. (CURTLY.)

What the
Hell's the matter with you! You drunk?

SARAH.

Sit by the fire, both of you. Where was he?

(SOLDIERS HUNCH FORWARD A BIT, AS IF DRAWING NEARER TO A FIREPLACE.)

FIRST SOLDIER.

Where was who?

SARAH.

David.

FIRST SOLDIER.

When?

J.B. (CROSSING TO SARAH.)

When he told you. (HE WHISPERS IN SARAH'S EAR.)

SECOND SOLDIER. (NUMELY.)

In the mess.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Any friends of his, he told us.

Any time at all . . . Why?

(J.B. IS CROSSING TO U.L. EXIT.)

You think we're lying to you?

J.B. (TURNING BACK, THEN THE LINE, THEN HE EXITS.)

Certainly

Not.

FIRST SOLDIER. (TO SARAH.)

You think we never knew him?

SARAH.

Of course you did. (THEN QUICKLY.) You do!

FIRST SOLDIER.

We knew him.

SECOND SOLDIER.

Fumbling among the faces . . .

FIRST SOLDIER.

Will you shut

Up, or will I clout you, Big Mouth? (THEN TO SARAH.)

That's why we come; because we knew him.

SECOND SOLDIER.

To tell you how we knew him.

SARAH.

Thank you.

SECOND SOLDIER.

How it was with him. . . .

FIRST SOLDIER. (MENACINGLY.)

Listen, Punk!

SECOND SOLDIER. (MUMBLING ON AS MUCH TO HIMSELF AS ANYONE.)

How, by night, by chance, darkling . . .
By the dark of chance . . .

FIRST SOLDIER. (TO SARAH, TRYING TO EXPLAIN THIS TALK.)

He's drunk.

SECOND SOLDIER.

The war done . . . the guns silent . . .
No one knows who gave the order.

FIRST SOLDIER. (UNEASY, RISES.)

Like I say, because he said to.
Any friend of his he said to.
Just to tell you we knew David.

(J.B. ENTERS WITH TWO MORE GLASSES, ONE BOURBON, ONE SCOTCH.)

SECOND SOLDIER. (SEEING J.B.)

Maybe drink to David maybe . . .

SARAH. (RISES.)

Yes! Oh, yes! Let's drink to David.
(SHE CROSSES D.R. AND GESTURES TO THE SOLDIERS.)
J.B.!

J.B. (CROSSING TO THEM INDICATES WHICH IS WHICH.)

Bourbon! Scotch!

(FIRST SOLDIER ACCEPTS SCOTCH AND HANDS BOURBON TO SECOND. HE SITS.)

FIRST SOLDIER.

Now you're

Cooking!

(FIRST SOLDIER STARTS TO PUT HIS FEET UP ON THE STOOL.)

SARAH. (EAGER TO PLEASE.)

That's right. Put your feet up. (SOLDIER HESITATES.)
Oh, they're not too dirty. David's are
Dirtier. I'm sure of that. (CROSSES TO J.B. THEY SMILE.)

SECOND SOLDIER. (SUDDENLY STARTLED OUT OF HIS STUPOR.)

David's feet!

FIRST SOLDIER. (UNAWARE OF IMPLICATION OF WHAT HE IS TO SAY.)

I'll say they are.
(AN AWKWARD PAUSE AS HE CATCHES HIMSELF, LOOKS AT J.B. AND SARAH,
WHO ARE UNAWARE OF HIS WORDS' SIGNIFICANCE.)
Look! What's going on here: David's
Feet! (LOWERS HIS FEET TO FLOOR.)

SARAH. (SHE IS PUZZLED.)

I meant—with all that marching.
(SHE LOOKS AT J.B. QUESTIONINGLY. HE IS THINKING, WORRIED.)

FIRST SOLDIER. (PLACING DRINK ON STOOL IN FRONT OF HIM.)

I don't get it. Look, it's true—
We didn't have the right length lumber;
We did the best we could. . . .

(ZUSS STARTS UP TO THE PULPIT, PICKS UP MASK AND DRUMSTICK.)

J.B. (PUTS GLASS ON TABLE. HE UNDERSTANDS BUT MUST ASK.)

What in
God's name are you saying, Soldier?

SARAH. (STILL PUZZLED.)

What does he mean, the lumber?

(NICKLES STANDS, WATCHES MORE INTENTLY.)

FIRST SOLDIER.

You don't
Know?
(TO SECOND SOLDIER.)

Ain't that the army for you!
They don't know. They never told them.

SARAH. (CROSSES TOWARD THEM, NOW WORRIED, NOT KNOWING WHY.)

Told us what?

FIRST SOLDIER. (RISES SUDDENLY.)

We better go.

(SECOND SOLDIER PUTS GLASS ON STOOL BESIDE FIRST SOLDIER'S GLASS.)

SARAH. (REALLY WORRIED. PUTS HAND ON HIS ARM, PLEADING.)

No! Please! Please! No!

FIRST SOLDIER. (MOVING PAST SARAH, HEAD DOWN.)

Come on, we're getting out, you lunkhead.

J.B. (STOPPING HIM.)

Not until you've told me. Sarah!
Perhaps you'd better, Sarah. . . .

SARAH. (DESPERATE.)

Please,

I want to hear it.

FIRST SOLDIER. (SPEAKS, THEN EXITS D.D., NOT LOOKING BACK.)

Jesus! . . . Jesus! . . .

SARAH. (NOW KNOWING, BUT ASKING.)

What is it we were never told? (TURNS TO SECOND SOLDIER.)

ZUSS. (LEANING OVER THE RAILING, QUIETLY SPEAKING.)

Ready?

NICKLES. (QUICKLY. BITTERLY.)

Got to be, don't they? Got no
Choice. Disasters . . . agonies . . .

ZUSS. (POINTEDLY.)

I meant

You!

SARAH. (OVERLAPPING THE PRECEDING SPEECHES. SHE SPEAKS AS THOUGH TO DENY THE FACT, EMPHASIZING "OUR" SON THE SECOND TIME.)

David is our son . . . our son . . .

(MR. ZUSS LIFTS THE MASK TO HIS FACE, RAISES AND SLOWLY BRINGS DOWN THE DRUMSTICK. A DRUMBEAT IS AUDIBLE, NOT LOUD. MUSIC BEGINS LOW, PLAYS TO END OF TUNE. ZUSS LOWERS MASK.)

J.B. (TRYING TO DENY THE POSSIBILITY. CROSSES R. OF SOLDIER.)

It isn't true. . . It isn't possible . . .
We had a letter from him. . . After the
End of it. . . We had a letter . . .

SECOND SOLDIER.

What shall I tell you? What I saw?
What I believe I saw? Or what
I must have seen . . . and have forgotten.

NICKLES. (FIRING HIS LINES IN QUICKLY BETWEEN J.B.'S, PROMPTING.)

Can't be happening to us. It can't be.

J.B. (TO HIMSELF BUT AUDIBLE.)

David's all right. He is. He has to be.

NICKLES. (SARCASTICALLY, TO J.B.)

God won't let it happen. Not to
Job, the perfect and the upright man.

J.B. (PERSUADING HIMSELF.)

I know he is. The war is over.

NICKLES. (RUBBING IT IN, TO SARAH.)

Job deserves his luck. He's earned it.

J.B. (MOVING L., BEMILDERED.)

It never could have happened. Never.
Never in this world.

NICKLES.

This world! This world!
Suppose it did though--suppose it did!
What would this world be made of then?

(SARAH CROSSES TO SOLDIER, TOUCHES HIS FACE AS THOUGH DAVID'S.)

SARAH. (SEARCHINGLY.)

David's all right. I know he is.

SECOND SOLDIER. (FACING AUDIENCE.)

I ONLY AM ESCAPED ALONE TO TELL THEE.

(SOLDIER WEAVES SLOWLY D.S. AND ACROSS TO D.L.S. HE TURNS BACK TO SPEAK, CAN'T, EXITS SLOWLY.)

SARAH. (BREAKING.)

Job! He's dead! God has taken him!
(SHE RUNS OFF U.L. SOBING.)

J.B. (STILL BEWILDERED BY HIS KNOWLEDGE.)

We had a letter. After the end of it. . . .

(J.B. STUMBLES OUT U.L. MAIDS ENTER, STRIKE THE GLASSES, SEWING, TWO STOOLS, LEAVING THE "FOOTSTOOL" AT THE HEAD OF THE TABLE.)

NICKLES. (A FEW STEPS TOWARD ZUSS.)

Even a perfect and an upright man,
Teach him long enough, might learn! (MOVES U.L.)

ZUSS.

Learn . . . what?

(NICKLES GETS FLASH CAMERA FROM ABOVE L. LEVEL, TOSSES IT TO FIRST REPORTER D.L.)

NICKLES.

Your providence!

ZUSS.

Keep your

Tongue in your teeth!

(A BURST OF JAZZ MUSIC. THE GIRL CROSSES TO C. BELOW STAGE, CHEWING GUM AND SWINGING HER HIPS. NICKLES DANCES WITH HER, STOPS, WHISPERS TO HER. SHE PUSHES HIM AWAY.)

GIRL.

I don't like it.

(NICKLES PUTS HIS HAND ON GIRL'S ARM ASSURINGLY. SPEAKS HIS LINE, THEN CROSSES TO BELOW PULPIT.)

NICKLES.

You'll do fine.

GIRL.

I don't like it!

FIRST REPORTER. (CROSSING R. BELOW STAGE.)

You'll do fine.

GIRL. (CROSSES TO HIM.)

I won't do fine:

I'm frightened.

FIRST REPORTER. (EXPLAINING IT.)

All you do, you go up to them,

Get them talking, keep them looking . . .

GIRL. (SMARTLY)

Go up to them yourselves, why don't you?

FIRST REPORTER.

Sure, and get the brush off. (MOVING R.)

Girl like

You can keep them talking: keep them

Looking, that is. (LOOKING HER OVER.)

Pretty girl!

GIRL. (SINCERELY HORRIFIED.)

All I know is I don't like it.

Keep them talking till a flash bulb

Smacks them naked in the face--

It's horrible!

FIRST REPORTER. (PRESSING.)

It's genius! Listen, lady!

How do I get the photograph without?

Answer me that. How do I get the

Look a mother's face has maybe

Once in a lifetime: just before

Her mouth knows, when her eyes are knowing?

GIRL.

I can't do it.

FIRST REPORTER. (SNEERING.)

She can't do it.

All you got to do is walk.

Wiggle your can. Keep them looking.

Then he tells them. Then I take them.

Then you beat it. Then that's that--

Except the drink we're going to buy you

Payday evening if you're good--(THEN SUGGESTIVELY.)

And if you're not there's lots of liars.

SECOND REPORTER. (STEPPING IN.)

You don't have to tell them: I do.

GIRL. (TURNING TO HIM.)

Why do you?

SECOND REPORTER. (HATING IT.)

Because I have to.

There's always someone has to--someone

Chosen by the chance of seeing, (REMEMBERING IT.)

By the accident of sight--

Having witnessed, having seen . . .

He only . . .

FIRST REPORTER. (AS THOUGH BY ROTE, RAPIDLY.)

He was there. He has to.

Route Two. Under the viaduct.

Traveling seventy--seventy-five.

Kid was driving them was drunk.

Had to be drunk. Just drove into it. (INDICATES SECOND REPORTER.)

He was walking home. He saw it.

Saw it start to. Saw it had to.

Saw it happen. J.B.'s son.

J.B.'s daughter. Four in all,

All the four of them just kids,

Screaming when they hit the wall.

(CROSSES UP STEPS TO FRONT OF STAGE.)

SECOND REPORTER.

Then silent . . .

Blond in all that blood . . .

(CAR SOUND OFF LEFT. ZUSS RAISES MASK AND DRUMSTICK.)

GIRL. (HORRIFIED.)

He can't tell them that!

FIRST REPORTER. (MATTER OF FACTLY.)

He has to.

Someone has to.

(CLICK OF CAR DOOR OFF LEFT. FIRST REPORTER CROSSES L. AND LOOKS OFF LEFT.)

They don't know.

They've been out all evening somewhere. (TAKES OUT CIGARETTE.)
That's them. They're coming. Quiet!

GIRL. (SCARED AND SENSITIVE.)

I can't do it!

(FIRST REPORTER CROSSES TO HER AND SAVAGELY THRUSTS THE CIGARETTE INTO HER MOUTH.)

FIRST REPORTER.

You can do it! (HE CROSSES LEFT, TAKES A POSITION WITH HIS BACK TO THE L. ENTRANCE, WAITING.)

SECOND REPORTER. (ON STAGE STEPS D.L.)

I who have understood nothing . . . have known
Nothing . . . have been answered nothing . . .
I ONLY AM ESCAPED ALONE. . . .

(J.B. AND SARAH ENTER LAUGHING AS HE RELATES A STORY. GIRL GOES L. TO MEET THEM.)

GIRL. (UNEASY.)

Good

Evening. What a pleasant evening.
Back from the theatre so soon?
We're neighbors, don't you know? You've met my
Miffkin walking me each morning. . . .
You know Muff, my purple poodle. . . .
Isn't it a pleasant evening?

SECOND REPORTER.

I'm from the press. There's been an accident . . .

(MR. ZUSS RAISES AND LOWERS THE DRUMSTICK. DRUMBEAT IS HEARD.)

FIRST REPORTER. (CUTTING IN BETWEEN SARAH AND SECOND REPORTER.)

Four kids in a car. They're dead.
Two were yours. Your son. Your daughter.
Cops have got them in a cab.
Any minute now they'll be here!

(HE RAISES HIS CAMERA. QUICK, JANGLED MUSIC, LOUD.)

GIRL. (WITH A CRY.)

Don't look! Cover your face! (A FLASH OF LIGHT.)

(THE REPORTERS RUN OFF L., THE FIRST REPORTER DRAGGING THE GIRL AFTER HIM.)

SARAH. (WEAKLY.)

Mary! Jonathan!

J.B.

You bastards!
(HE GROPPES HIS WAY TO L. EXIT, BLINDED BY THE FLASH.)
I'll beat your goddam brains out. . . .Where have you
Gone? . . .Answer me. . . .(SCREAMING IT.)
Answer me. . . .Answer me.

(NICKLES, WHO HAS WATCHED THE SCENE INTENTLY FROM BELOW THE PULPIT
CROSSES TO HIS LEVEL AND LOOKS AT THE MASK HE HAS PLACED THERE.
ZUSS SETS DOWN HIS MASK AND STICK.)

SARAH. (HURT AND BITTER IN HER GRIEF.)

Why did you follow them? It wasn't
They that did it. . . .It wasn't they.
What had they done to Him. . . .those children . . .

(MR. ZUSS CROSSES DOWN TO HIS LEVEL.)

J.B. (TURNING BACK, HIS VOICE BREAKING.)

Don't Sarah. Don't. It doesn't
Help to think that.

SARAH. (WEAKLY.)

Doesn't . . .help. . . ?
What can help them--now?

J.B. (NUMB WITH GRIEF.)

It . . .happened . . .

SARAH. (SHARPLY.)

Yes! And who let it happen?

ZUSS. (PROMPTING)

SHALL WE
TAKE THE GOOD AND NOT THE EVIL?

J.B. (IN DESPERATION.)

SHALL WE TAKE THE GOOD AND NOT THE
EVIL? We have to take the evil--
Evil with good.
(CROSSES TO SARAH WHO EXITS L. CRYING.)
It doesn't mean there
Is no good.

ZUSS. (KINDLY.)

You know that. Don't you!

J.B. (MORE DESPERATELY.)

Sticks and stones and steel are chances.
There's no will in stone and steel. . . .
It happens to us. . . .(EXITS AFTER SARAH.)

SARAH. (OFF L.)

No! Don't touch me!

NICKLES.

Starting, isn't it?

(THE REPORTERS ENTER D.L. NICKLES GETS POLICE RAINCOATS AND CAPS
FROM ABOVE L. LEVEL, TOSSES THEM TO THE REPORTERS. THEY GO.)

ZUSS. (ASKING.)

Wait a minute.

NICKLES.

Worried?

ZUSS.

No! Where are you going?

(NICKLES HURRIES ABOUT, MAKING SURE THE STAGE IS SET.)

NICKLES. (COCKY.)

Just a walk in the earth for my health--or
Somebody's.

ZUSS. (SINCERE.)

Leave him alone a minute.

NICKLES. (AT HIS LEFT.)

Who? Me? Am I . . . God? (GESTURES TOWARD THE PULPIT.)
Why should we leave him alone? He's suffering.
It's an old role . . . played like a mouth organ.
Any fool on earth can learn. . . . (ANGRY YOUNG MAN.)
Despair in six, short, easy lessons!
Give him another little, needling
Nudge between the withers and the works:
He'll learn. . . . He's desperate now. . . . You'll
teach him.

(CAR DOOR SLAMS OFF L. MUSIC COMES IN UNDER DIALOGUE. J.B. ENTERS U.L., GOES TO LET THE OFFICERS IN. HE IS DRESSED IN SHIRT SLEEVES. FIRST OFFICER MOVES TO HEAD OF TABLE AS HE SPEAKS. SECOND OFFICER CROSSES U.C. AND FACES UP. HE HAS A PARASOL WRAPPED IN PAPER HIDDEN UNDER HIS COAT.)

FIRST OFFICER. (AS HE ENTERS.)

Sorry to question you like this. We got to
Get the story.

J.B. (CROSSING U.L., CALLING OFF.)

Sarah! Sarah!

(SARAH ENTERS, DRESSED IN NEGLECT. SHE SITS ON L. STOOL. FIRST OFFICER SITS AT HEAD OF TABLE, REMOVES CAP, GETS OUT PENCIL AND NOTEBOOK. SECOND OFFICER REMOVES CAP. NICKLES CROUCHES L. ZUSS STANDS ON R. LEVEL.)

FIRST OFFICER.

Turning your house into a . . .

J.B. (TIRED.)

Matter.

It doesn't

SARAH. (ALMOST DEFEATED.)

Nothing matters but to
Know.

FIRST OFFICER.

How many children?

J.B.

Two.

FIRST OFFICER. (WRITING.)

Girls?

SARAH. (NUMBLY.)

Our boys are . . . dead.

FIRST OFFICER.

Girls.

Names?

J.B.

Ruth, Rebecca.

SARAH.

Ruth is the

Oldest.

FIRST OFFICER.

And you saw her last?

J.B.

Ruth?

SARAH. (SNAPPING IT.)

It's Rebecca is missing!

J.B. (PUTTING HAND ON HER SHOULDER.)

He

Knows.

SARAH. (SAVAGELY.)

No! It's God that knows! . . .

(J.B. REMOVES HIS HAND. THERE IS AN AWKWARD PAUSE.)

She's the littlest one. She's gone.

FIRST OFFICER.

How long ago?

SARAH.

Oh . . .hours.

FIRST OFFICER.

It's three in the morning now.

J.B.

Since seven.

FIRST OFFICER.

And you reported it . . .?

J.B.

Yes.

FIRST OFFICER.

When?

J.B.

One o'clock. A quarter after.
We looked for her everywhere, of course.
Then we thought--I thought--if somebody . . .
Maybe the telephone would ring.

FIRST OFFICER. (RUBBING IT IN.)

And you'd do better on your own!

J.B.

Yes.

SARAH. (STRONGLY, BITTERLY.)

Yes! Yes! Yes!
We believe in our luck in this house!
We've earned the right to! We believe in it . . .
(BITTERLY AT J.B. SHE BLAMES HIM FOR ALL THIS.)
All but the bad!

NICKLES. (LEANING IN.)

That's telling him!
That's telling him!
If God is Will
And Will is well
Then what is ill?
God still?
(FRONT SARCASTICALLY.)
Dew tell!

FIRST OFFICER.

And nobody telephoned?

J.B.

Nobody telephoned.

FIRST OFFICER.

Dressed? How was she

Dressed?

J.B. (NOT SURE.)

White?

SARAH. (OF COURSE.)

White! You saw her--
Glimmering in the twilight.

FIRST OFFICER. (WRITING.)

White.

SARAH.

All but her shoes.

FIRST OFFICER.

Her shoes were what?

SARAH.

Red.

(THERE IS A PAUSE. THE OFFICER LOOKS AT HER INTENTLY.)

FIRST OFFICER. (AWKWARD.)

Rebecca have a red umbrella?

(ZUSS CROSSES TO PERCH, PICKS UP THE MASK AND STICK. NICKLES MOVES IN A FEW PAGES.)

SARAH.

Parasol.

FIRST OFFICER.

Little toy umbrella.

SARAH.

Parasol. Yes, she might have had one.

FIRST OFFICER.

You mean she owned one?

SARAH.

Yes. It belonged to a

Big doll we bought her once.

Scarlet silk. It opens and closes.

She kept it when the doll gave out.

She used to take it to bed with her even--

Open and close it.

J.B. (ACROSS THE TABLE CORNER.)

You've found the parasol.

(MR. ZUSS RAISES MASK AND STICK. LOWERS STICK. DRUMBEAT. MUSIC. SECOND OFFICER TURNS FRONT, THE WRAPPED PARASOL IN HIS HANDS, HOLDING IT AS THOUGH A SACRIFICE. FIRST OFFICER RISES AND MOVES RIGHT. SECOND OFFICER STEPS IN THREE PAGES. HE IS AT THE APEX OF TRIANGLE WITH J.B. AND SARAH.)

SECOND OFFICER. (STRAIGHT OUT.)

What will it tell you? Will it tell you why?
Out in the desert in the tombs
Are potter's figures:

Two of warriors,
Two of worthies, two of monsters. (CROSSES TO TABLE.)
Ask them why. They will not answer you. . . .
Can the tooth among the stones make answer? . . .
Can the seven bones reply? . . .
Death is a bone that stammers . . . a tooth
Among the flints that has forgotten.

(HE UNROLLS THE PARASOL ONTO THE TABLE WITH ONE MOVEMENT, TURNS BACK UPSTAGE, THROWS PAPER OFF BEHIND PULPIT, FACES UP. J.B. SLOWLY PICKS UP THE PARASOL, HOLDS IT CLOSE TO HIS CHEST. FIRST OFFICER IS AT HIS RIGHT. SARAH, FACE IN HANDS.)

FIRST OFFICER. (TO J.B.)

Just past midnight--quarter past--
Pounding his beat by the back of the lumberyard
Somebody runs and he yells and they stumble--
Big kid--nineteen maybe--
Hopped to the eyes and scared--scared
Bloodless he could barely breathe.
Constable yanks him up by the britches.
(MOVES TO STOOL.)
"All right! Take me to it!"
Just a shot in the dark, he was so
Cockeyed scared there had to be something. . . .
Well . . . he took him to it. . . . Back of the
Lumbertrucks beside the track,
It was tight in her fist when he found her--still.
(CROSSES UP BESIDE SECOND OFFICER.)

NICKLES. (HURRYING TO J.B.)

Now's the time to say it, Mister.

ZUSS. (AGREEING.)

Now is the time. . . . Now is the time. . . .

J.B. (VOICE BREAKING.)

THE LORD GIVETH. . . . THE LORD TAKETH
AWAY. . . . (SOBS.)

(SARAH EXITS U.L. SOBBLING HYSTERICALLY.)

ZUSS. (PROMPTING.)

Finish it! BLESSED BE THE . . .

(J.B. STARTS U.L.)

NICKLES.

What should he

Finish when he's said it all?

ZUSS (TO J.B. AS HE PASSES HIM.)

Go on!

NICKLES.

To what? To where? He's got there, hasn't he?

Now he's said it, now he knows.

He knows Who gives. He knows Who takes. . . .

ZUSS.

Knows and accepts it all. All of it.

NICKLES. (CROSSING D.L., SAVAGELY AS HE CONTINUES.)

Accepts it all! Accepts! A son

Destroyed by some fool officer's stupidity!

Two children smeared across a road

At midnight by a drunken child!

A daughter raped and murdered by an idiot!

(TURNS TO ZUSS.)

And all with God's consent! Foreknowledge!

He accepts it!

ZUSS.

He accepts it

All. And more! He blesses God!

NICKLES. (WHIRLING U.S. TO ZUSS.)

You wait! He'll curse God to his face!

(WEIRD MUSIC COMES IN LOUD. LIGHTS CUT. MAIDS ENTER, REMOVE TABLE-CLOTH, LIFT TABLE TOP, NICKLES REMOVES THE LEGS AND TOSSES THEM BEHIND THE PULPIT. MAIDS SET THE TABLE D.C. AT EDGE OF STAGE. NICKLES MOVES STOOLS TO BEHIND PULPIT. MEANWHILE THE SOUND OF PLANES AND BOMBING SWELLS UP. AS THIS FADES, MUSIC FADES UNDER VOICES. OLD WOMEN ENTER IN THE DARK. LIGHTS COME UP TO DIM. THEY COUGH, AS THEY SHUFFLE IN THE DARK, FOLLOWING MRS. BOTTICELLI. SHE FEELS HER

WAY AROUND THE D.S. SIDE OF DUNG HEAP, PAUSES U.L. OF IT. MISS MABEL BUMPS INTO HER. AS ADAMS AND MURPHY ROUND THE D.R. CORNER OF THE DUNG HEAP, THEY FEEL THEIR WAY OVER TO THE STEPS OF R. LEVEL. LESURE SHUFFLES U.C., FINDS NO SHELTER, CROSSES D.L. AND CURLS UP IN THE "L" BETWEEN ORGAN AND LEVEL. JOLLY FOLLOWS LESURE, LIES ON LEVEL D.L. THIS OCCURS DURING FOLLOWING SPEECHES.)

BOTTICELLI. (TO MABEL.)

Gripes! Look out with your feet, can't you?

MABEL.

How can a lady look out with her feet?
It's hard enough with your eyes in this smother.

MURPHY. (STARTING UP STEPS R.)

Somebody give me a finger to follow:
There isn't a walk or a wall.

BOTTICELLI. (SEEING HER.)

You'll fall.

(MABEL HELPS MURPHY DOWN.)

ADAMS. (SITTING ON R. LEVEL.)

Even the Liggetts is gone.
(THEN TO MABEL WHO IS MOVING D.R.)
Where are you headed?

MABEL.

Wherever I'm going.

LESURE.

Where has she ever, but to bed?

(ADAMS CRAWLS DOWN TO THE "L" OF R. LEVEL.)

BOTTICELLI. (EXAMINING THE DUNG HEAP.)

There isn't a bed in the town: they've foundered.

MABEL.

You ought to know. You've been into enough of them.

MURPHY. (SITTING ON R. LEVEL.)

And that's the truth if the kettle does say it!

BOTTICELLI. (CROSSING MENACINGLY TO MURPHY.)

Call me a pot, I'll tear your hair!

(MURPHY SPREADS "THE NEWS" OVER HERSELF AND ADAMS, THEN SNUGGLES DOWN IN THE "L".)

MURPHY.

Here's the papers.

All we've got's the NEWS. It's small.

MABEL. (LYING ON STAGE STEPS BELOW R. LEVEL.)

The TIMES goes all over you.

(MR. ZUSS AND NICKLES EXCHANGE A LOOK.)

LESURE.

Don't they, though.

ADAMS.

Don't what?

MURPHY.

The times. They go over you.

BOTTICELLI. (SITTING ON R. STOOL.)

Ahhhh!

(A DROWSY SILENCE.)

MURPHY.

I fell asleep in the hall like I told you--
Woke in the alley.

BOTTICELLI. (HALF ASLEEP.)

Yeah . . .you told.

LESURE.

We slept in the parlor and woke on the roof.

JOLLY.

Only there wasn't one.

BOTTICELLI. (YAWNING.)

Yeah . . . we know. . . .

MABEL.

Know what there was in the crib of the ark
When the world went down? . . . Four old women.

LESURE.

What's the good of four old women?

ADAMS.

Go on sailing in the dark.

J.B. (OFF U.L., HIS VOICE HUSKY AND WORRIED.)

Sarah! . . .

Sarah! . . . Sarah! . . . Ruth! . . . Sarah! . . .

(ALL ON STAGE LOOK U.L.)

MURPHY. (CONCERNED.)

Somebody calling his girl in the middle of
That!

BOTTICELLI. (RUBBING HER LEGS.)

The blessing of blood's coming back in me.
I'm warm to the knees.

(SECOND CIVIL DEFENSE OFFICER ENTERS D.L. AND GOES C. CARRYING SARAH.
FIRST OFFICER FOLLOWS, CARRYING LIGHTED FLASHLIGHT, WHICH HE SHINES
AROUND.)

MURPHY.

Squeeze in.

ADAMS.

I'm squeezing.

MABEL. (SINGING TO HERSELF.)

. . .who when we court and kiss
She cries: O Sir, let go!
But when we come where comfort is
She never will say no.

(SECOND OFFICER CARRIES HER U.C. LOOKING AROUND THE ROOM. J.B., WITH A FINAL "SARAH!" ENTERS FROM U.L., GOES TO THEM. FIRST OFFICER TURNS OFF LIGHT AS BLUE SPOT FADES IN. JOLLY, ON KNEES ON L. LEVEL, DRAWS HER TATTERED SWEATER AROUND HER SHOULDERS.)

FIRST CDO.

She said she lived around here somewhere.
This is all there is.

J.B. (HIS CLOTHES TORN, DUST AND SMUDGES.)

Sarah! (TOUCHES HER FACE.)

FIRST CDO.

Where do you want her? On the floor?
You're lucky, boy. You've got a floor.

(SECOND CDO CARRIES SARAH, TATTERED AND DUSTY TO THE DUNG HEAP WHERE HE STRETCHES HER OUT ON HER SIDE, HEAD R. J.B. KNEELS ABOVE HER HEAD. FIRST CDO MOVES TO D.R. OF THEM. WOMEN WATCH, CONCERNED.)

J.B.

Where was she?

(NICKLES MOVES ABOVE RAILING U.S.)

FIRST CDO.

Underneath a wall. (INDICATES OTHER OFFICER.)
He heard her underneath a wall.
Tell him what you heard her . . .

SECOND CDO.

I heard
Two words. I don't know what they mean.
(IMITATING A VOICE CALLING.)
Ruth! . . .Ruth! . . .

(HE RISES, CROSSES TO JOLLY, GIVES HER A SIP OF WATER FROM HIS CANTEEN.)

FIRST CDO. (TO THE WOMEN AT R.)

Nobody answered.
 Nobody could have. You been down there?
 Whole block's gone. Bank block. All of it.
 J.B.'s bank, you know. Just gone.
 Nothing left to show it ever . . .
 Just the hole. (CROSSES D.R.)

J.B.'s millions!
 That's a laugh now--J.B.'s millions!
 All he's got is just the hole.
 Plant went, too--all of it--everything.
 (INDICATES SECOND CDO.)
 Ask him! Just the hole. He'll tell you.

SARAH. (STIRRING.)

Ruth! . . . Ruth! . . .

FIRST CDO.

He can tell you.
 He can tell you what he saw.

(SECOND CDO RISES AND CROSSES TO U.L. OF J.B.)

SARAH. (WEAKLY.)

David . . . Jonathan . . . Mary . . . Ruth . . .
 I cannot say the last.

J.B. (TAKING HER HAND.)

Rebecca.

SARAH. (MUMBLING.)

David . . . Jonathan . . . Mary . . . Ruth . . .

J.B. (TO SECOND OFFICER.)

You didn't find . . . ? There wasn't . . . ?

SECOND CDO. (STRAIGHT OUT FRONT.)

I heard
 Two words. I don't know what they mean.
 I have brought them to you like a pair of pebbles.
 Picked up in a path or a pair of
 Beads that might belong to somebody.

J.B. (ALMOST PLEADING.)

There wasn't . . . anyone besides . . . ?

(A DISTANT, WAILING SIREN.)

SECOND CDO.

I ONLY AM ESCAPED ALONE TO TELL THEE. (BOTH CDO'S EXIT D.L.)

(SAD MUSIC. WOMEN FALL ASLEEP.)

SARAH. (CRIES OUT.)

David . . . Jonathan . . . (SHE SOBS, EXHAUSTED.)

NICKLES. (TO AUDIENCE.)

It isn't decent!
It isn't moral even. It's disgusting!
(CROSSING TO U.L. OF J.B.)
His weeping wife in her despair,
And he beside her on his trembling han bones
Taking it! Eating it! It isn't decent!

ZUSS.

You don't lose gracefully, do you?

NICKLES. (SPITTING IT OUT.)

I don't

Lose.

ZUSS.

You have.

(MUSIC STOPS.)

DISTANT VOICE.

HAST THOU CONSIDERED MY SERVANT JOB?

ZUSS.

Put on your mask. (RAISES HIS OWN TO HIS FACE.)
HAST THOU CONSIDERED MY SERVANT JOB?

DISTANT VOICE.

THAT THERE IS NONE LIKE HIM ON THE EARTH.

ZUSS.

THAT THERE IS NONE LIKE HIM ON THE EARTH.

DISTANT VOICE.

AND STILL HE HOLDETH FAST HIS INTEGRITY.

ZUSS.

AND STILL HE HOLDETH FAST HIS INTEGRITY.

(NICKLES GETS HIS MASK FROM U.L. LEVEL AND CROSSES D.L.)

DISTANT VOICE.

ALTHOUGH THOU MOVEDST ME AGAINST HIM.

ZUSS.

ALTHOUGH THOU MOVEDST ME AGAINST HIM.

DISTANT VOICE.

TO DESTROY HIM . . .

ZUSS.

TO DESTROY HIM. . .

DISTANT VOICE.

WITHOUT CAUSE.

ZUSS. (HIS LINE OVERLAPPING THAT OF THE VOICE.)

WITHOUT CAUSE.

(SARAH RISES, CROSSES ABOVE DUNG HEAP, LEAVING J.B. THERE ON HIS KNEES. SHE WATCHES HIM AS HE KNEELS THERE SOBERING.)

NICKLES. (RAISING MASK TO HIS FACE.)

SKIN FOR SKIN, YEA, ALL THAT A MAN
HATH WILL HE GIVE FOR HIS LIFE.

BUT PUT FORTH THINE HAND NOW . . .

AND TOUCH HIS BONE AND HIS FLESH, AND HE WILL
CURSE THEE TO THY FACE!

ZUSS.

BEHOLD

HE IS IN THINE HAND BUT SAVE HIS LIFE.

(ZUSS BRINGS DOWN THE DRUMSTICK. AS THE BEAT SOUNDS, THE RED SPOT IS THROWN ON J.B. AND THE BLUE IS CUT. HE JERKS ERECT ON HIS KNEES AND GASPS IN PAIN. SARAH CRIES OUT IN SHOCK. MISS MABEL SITS UP. JOLLY RISES TO KNEES, WATCHING. WOMEN WATCH, HORRIFIED.)

J.B. (CRYING OUT.)

God, let me die! Let me die!

(SARAH TOUCHES HIS BACK. HE WINCES IN PAIN. ZUSS, TOO, IS PAINED BY IT.)

NICKLES. (SAVAGELY.)

I don't lose. (SETS MASK DOWN.)

ZUSS. (STARTING DOWN.)

You have.

NICKLES. (CROSSES TO U.L. OF J.B.)

There's still the
Pain. God asks the proof of pain,
Of physical agony, the last, the worst,
The furthest suffering the nerves can bear.
He needs the proof of pain from each of us:
Hunts us through our branching veins
With agony . . . until we . . . give it!

ZUSS. (U.R. OF J.B.)

Job will support the proof of pain.

NICKLES. (POINTING TO J.B.)

Not even Job. Not now. Not after
That! Look at him! Look at him!

ZUSS.

Even if

God must seal him in his sack of skin
And scald his skin to crust to squeeze
The answer out, he'll answer.

NICKLES. (OFFERING SUICIDE TO J.B.)

No!

Job will make his own cold peace.
A man can always cease. It's something--
A judgement anyway--reject
The whole creation with a stale pink pill.

ADAMS.

Poor soul!

BOTTICELLI.

Look at them burns! Look at them burns!

MABEL.

His skin looks like . . .

BOTTICELLI. (AS MABEL SPEAKS.)

Don't!

MABEL.

. . . They'd flayed it!
Tatters of torn shirt . . . it looks like.

LESURE.

Poor soul! Poor soul!

BOTTICELLI.

That's his wife.

MABEL.

Whose wife? Whose?

MURPHY.

You know. You've seen her picture.

J.B. (IN MORTAL AGONY.)

God, let me

Die!

SARAH. (TO HIS LEFT, ON HER KNEES.)

You think He'd let you? God is our enemy.

J.B.

Don't say that, Sarah. God
Has something hidden from our hearts to show.

MABEL.

She knows. She's looking at it.

J.B.

Try to

Sleep.

(SARAH LIES L. OF J.B., HER UPPER BODY ON THE DUNG HEAP.)

MABEL.

He should have kept it hidden.

J.B.

Once I knew a charm for sleep:
Not as forgetfulness but gift,
Not as sleep but second sight,
Come and from my eyelids lift
The dead of night.

SARAH. (NUMBLY.)

The dead of night.
Come and from my eyelids lift
The dead . . . of night. . . .

J.B.

Out of sleep
Something of our own comes back to us . . .
A drowned man's garment from the sea.

ADAMS. (SYMPATHETICALLY.)

All that's left him now is her.

LESURE.

Still that's something--a good woman.

MURPHY.

What good's a woman to him with that hide on him?
Or he to her--if you think of it?

LESURE.

Don't then.

MABEL. (RISES AND SITS ON D. EDGE OF LEVEL.)

Can you blame her?

MURPHY.

I don't blame her.

All I say is, she's no comfort.
She won't cuddle.

LESURE. (TO MURPHY.)

What's got into you?

MABEL.

Nothing recently, I'll hazard.

LESURE.

None of that! We have a child here. . . .

MURPHY. (TO ADAMS.)

Roll a little nearer, dearie,
Me backside's froze. . . .
You smell of roses.

ADAMS. (SARCASTICALLY.)

Neither do you, but you're warm.

BOTTICELLI.

Well--

Good-night, ladies.

(SHE STARTS THE SONG. OTHERS JOIN IN.)

Good-night, ladies . . .
Good-night, ladies, good-night, ladies . . .

(SARAH SCREAMS, JERKING HERSELF UP ON HER FEET, FACING U.S.)

SARAH.

Oh, my babies! My poor babies!

J.B. (GENTLY.)

Go back to sleep.

SARAH. (U.L. OF J.B.)

Go! Go where? (IN ANGUISH.)

If there were darkness I'd go there.
If there were night I'd lay me down in it.
God has shut the night against me.
God has set the dark alight
With horror blazing blind as day
When I go toward it . . . close my eyes.

J.B.

I know . . . I know those waking eyes.
(HE IS SILENT A MOMENT.)
His will is everywhere against me.
Even in my sleep . . . my dreams.
(PAUSE.)
If I knew! If I knew why!
What I can't bear is the . . . blindness . . .
Meaninglessness . . . the numb blow
Fallen in the stumbling night.

SARAH.

Even this--has it no meaning?

J.B.

God will not punish without cause.
God is God or we are nothing--
Mayflies that leave their husks behind--
Our tiny lives ridiculous--a suffering
Not even sad that Someone Somewhere
Laughs at, as we laugh at apes.
God is unthinkable if we are innocent.

SARAH. (PLEADING WITH HIM TO UNDERSTAND.)

Oh, my dear, my dear, my dear,
Does God demand deception of us--
Purchase His innocence with ours?
Must we be guilty for Him?--bear
The burden of the world's malevolence
For Him who made the world?

J.B.

Just!

God is

SARAH. (BITTERLY CRYING IT OUT.)

God is just! (CROSSING LEFT OF J.B.)

If God is

Just, our slaughtered, broken children
Stank with sin . . . were rotten with it!

J.B. (TAKING HER HAND.)

Even desperate we can't despair. . . .

Sarah!

(SHE TRIES TO WITHDRAW HER HAND FROM HIS.)

No! Don't let my hand go, Sarah.
Say it after me: THE LORD
GIVETH . . .

SARAH.

No!

J.B.

Say it!

SARAH.

THE LORD GIVETH . . .

J.B.

THE LORD TAKETH AWAY. . . .

SARAH. (CROSSING L.S., SHOUTING IT.)

Takes!

Kills! Kills! Kills! Kills!

J.B. (NUMBLY.)

BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD.

SARAH. (OVERLAPPING HIS LINE.)

They are

Dead! And they were innocent!
(TURNS TOWARD HIM, BITTERLY.)

I will not

Let you sacrifice their deaths
To make injustice justice and God good!
(A STEP TOWARD HIM.)

Must we buy quiet with their innocence--
Theirs and yours? (CROSSES D.L. TWO PAGES.)

I cannot stay here--

I cannot stay here if you cringe,
Connive in death's injustice, kneel to it--
Not if you betray my children.

J.B.

I have no choice but to be guilty.

SARAH. (CROSSING RAPIDLY TO HIM.)

We have the choice to live or die
All of us.
(SCREAMING.)

Curse God and die!

(SHE KNEELS BESIDE J.B. WHO LOOKS AT HER, THEN AWAY. SHE REPEATS
THE WORDS MORE GENTLY.)

Curse God . . . and die! (HAND OUT TO HIM, PLEADING.)

J.B. (HE LOOKS AT HER, THEN AWAY.)

BLESSED

BE THE NAME OF THE LORD. (HE LOOKS DOWN, SOBBING.)

(MUSIC AND WIND. SARAH RISES, MOVES OUT D.L.)

MURPHY.

What did I

Say? Eh? His hide was too much for her.

BOTTICELLI. (WISELY.)

His hide or his heart.

MURPHY.

The hide comes between.

LESURE.

The heart is the stranger.

BOTTICELLI.

Oh! Strange!
It's always strange the heart is.

MABEL.

Only
It's the skin we ever know.

J.B. (REACHING OUT FOR SARAH.)

Sarah . . . Sarah . . . Why do you not speak to me?
Sarah! (CRYING IT OUT.)

(A LONG PAUSE. J.B. SINKS DOWN SOBBING.)

MABEL.

Now he knows.

MURPHY.

And he's alone now.

BOTTICELLI. (MOVING TO HIS LEFT. GESTURES TO WOMEN TO COME.)

You're cold. Cold. Come down with the rest of us.
Come down with the rest. We'll keep you warm.
There's four or five of us out of the wind there
Keeping each other warm. Come down.

J.B.

SHOW ME MY GUILT, O GOD!

(THE WOMEN GROUP AROUND HIM TO HELP HIM DOWN. BOTTICELLI PLACES HER
TATTERED SHAWL OVER HIS SHOULDERS.)

NICKLES.

Well? You going to show him?

ZUSS.

Wait!
Wait!

J.B. (RISES TO KNEES, ARMS OUT AND UP, CRYING OUT IN DESPERATION.)

SHOW ME MY GUILT, O GOD!

(THE WOMEN REACH UP TO HIM. LIGHTS FADE OUT. TRUMPET. THE MUSIC PLAYS THROUGH IN THE DARKNESS. J.B. DROPS TO THE DUNG HEAP, HEAD DOWN. THE WOMEN MOVE IN THE DARKNESS TO NEW POSITIONS. MABEL IS DRAPED UP STEPS OF STAGE D.R. JOLLY IS SITTING ON D.R. END OF R. LEVEL. LESURE PROPPED AGAINST D.R. STEP. BOTTICELLI LEANING AGAINST ORGAN D.L. MURPHY AGAINST PULPIT, ADAMS' HEAD ON HER LAP. ALL EXCEPT JOLLY ARE ASLEEP. J.B. HAS HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS. LIGHTS RISE TO DIM. J.B. STRUGGLES SLIGHTLY, MOANING.)

JOLLY. (NOTICING J.B.)

Mother! (TOUCHES ADAMS ON SHOULDER.)

(THE WOMEN AWAKEN.)

LESURE.

Scrabbling up with that crust on him!

MURPHY.

How can he struggle in that . . . crust of pain?

MABEL.

He has to struggle. He can't just lie there.
He's a human being, isn't he?

BOTTICELLI.

Know what humanity is? A potato!
Trap it deep enough . . . grows.

MABEL.

Even old and dry, it flourishes.

MURPHY. (REGRETFULLY.)

Don't I know! Don't I know!

J.B. (HAS RISEN TO KNEES, LOOKS UP, PLEADING.)

SHOW ME MY GUILT, O GOD!

ZUSS. (ON PULPIT.)

Nickles. The time has come, Nickles--
Remember those proud prophecies of yours?
Take everything he had and he'd curse God?
Well, have you heard him cursing God?

(WOMEN DOZE.)

God has done everything you asked for:
God has destroyed him without cause. . . .

NICKLES. (CROSSING TO ABOVE J.B.)

God has destroyed his wealth, his children,
Stripped raw tatters from his skin,
Touched his flesh, but him himself
God has not touched. Teach his soul!
(CROSSES D.L., TURNS.)
Show him that there are no reasons!
Show him neither God nor man
Has reasons adequate to his catastrophes!
Do you think he'll call God then?
Not in that voice, anyway!

ZUSS.

Touch him where you please. You've lost him.

J.B.

SHOW ME MY GUILT, O GOD!

NICKLES. (AT L.C.)

Silence!
The still silence of the stars!
(LOOKS AT J.B.)

J.B. (SUPPORTED ON THREE POINTS, HAND OUT TO AUDIENCE.)

Is there not anyone to answer me?
Where is the wisdom of this world
That once knew answers where there were no answers?
Where are the answerers to answer it?

NICKLES. (HANDS UP, LISTENING. DROPS THEM, SNEERING, U.C.)

Silence!
The slow silence of the soul!

J.B. (CRAWLING FORWARD A BIT, TO AUDIENCE, AN AUDIBLE WHISPER.)

The hand of God has touched me. Look at me!
Every hope I ever had,
Every task I put my will to,
Every work I've ever done,
Annulled as though I had not done it.
My trace extinguished in the land.

(NICKLES CROSSES TO PULPIT, FACING ZUSS, HAND ON RAILING.)

My children dead. My father's name
Obliterated in the sunlight. . . .Answer me!
(HIS CRIES GROW TO A SCREAM.)
Answer me! Answer me! Answer me! Answer me!

(J.B. COVERS HIS HEAD WITH HIS HANDS. SOUND OF DRUMBEATS. BILDAD ENTERS FROM AUDIENCE, D.R. ELIPHAZ ENTERS D.L. ZOPHAR ENTERS U.L., STOPS AT U.C. THEY FORM A LARGE TRIANGLE.)

NICKLES.

Mr. Zuss! Who are they?

ZUSS. (MATTER-OF-FACTLY.)

Comforters.

NICKLES.

What comforters?

ZUSS.

Job's comforters.
Everytime they play this play
Job's Comforters must come . . .to comfort him.

NICKLES. (CROSSING D.S.)

You mean to justify the ways of God to
God by making Job responsible.
Making him . . .worthy of his . . .wretchedness.
(INDICATES J.B. WITH A GESTURE.)
Giving him that dear gift of guilt, (R. OF J.B.)
That putrid poultice of the soul that sucks
The poison in not out! That dirty
Thumb our generation relishes.

ZUSS.

What are you afraid of, Nickles?
Afraid he'll find the fault his own--
His folly--and be comforted?

(THE COMFORTERS, PEERING AT J.B., SMILE KNOWINGLY. ON ZUSS' WORD "FOLLY" IN THE ABOVE SPEECH, EACH LIGHTS A MATCH AND APPLIES IT TO HIS SMOKE. JOLLY IS STARTLED BY THE MATCH FLAME.)

JOLLY. (SHAKING ADAMS' SHOULDER.)

Look! Look! Look! Look!
Mother! Mother!

(ALL THE WOMEN NOTICE THE COMFORTERS.)

MURPHY.

Christ! Those eyes!

MABEL.

Look at them! They hate each other!
Each one knows the truth . . . alone.

(THEY MOVE TO L. LEVEL. BILDAD SITS ON RAIL U. ZOPHAR SITS
CROSS-LEGGED ON TOP OF LEVEL C. ELIPHAZ SITS ON SECOND STEP
D.L.)

LESURE. (AS THEY MOVE.)

That doctor one! He makes me creep.

ADAMS.

Creep! What brings him here, I wonder?

MABEL. (EASING UP BY MURPHY.)

The human smell of heart-sick misery.

LESURE. (POINTS TO ZOPHAR.)

Who's the collar?

MURPHY.

Some great preacher.

BOTTICELLI. (WATCHING BILDAD.)

See that leather-backed old bucket?
Call you Comrade in the park--
Blow your brains out in the cellar.

MURPHY. (INDICATING ZOPHAR.)

Same with him. He'll damn your soul to
Hell for saying prayers he don't say.

J.B. (LOOKING AROUND AT THEM.)

Thank God! You have come! You have come!

(SILENCE.)

I know how ludicrous I must look,
Covered with rage, my skin pustulent . . .

(SILENCE.)

I know . . . I know how others see me.

(SILENCE.)

Come in! Come in! I have no chairs now. . . .

(COMFORTERS SIT HERE.)

Speak to me! Speak to me! I sit here

Such as you see me. In my soul

I suffer what you guess I suffer.

Tell me the wickedness that justifies it.

What have I done? What . . . have . . . I . . . done?

(NICKLES CROSSES U.C. BEHIND RAIL.)

BILDAD.

Fair question, Big Boy.

ZOPHAR. (KNOCKING OUT HIS PIPE.)

Nonsense!

That was answered long ago--

Long ago.

ELIPHAZ.

In dreams are answers.

How do your dreams go, J.B.? Tell!

J.B. (BEMILDERED.)

I called into the night for answers.

BILDAD. (SO WHAT?)

And we heard you.

ZOPHAR.

And we came.

J.B. (QUESTIONING WHY.)

I called God.

BILDAD.

And God was silent.

ZOPHAR.

God will not Himself reply
From the blue depths of His Eternity.

ELIPHAZ.

Blind depths of His Unconsciousness.

BILDAD.

Blank depths of His Necessity.

ZOPHAR.

God is far above in Mystery.

ELIPHAZ.

God is far within in Mindlessness.

BILDAD.

God is far beyond in History.
How can God have time for you?

J.B. (SADLY.)

I have no children any more. . . .
Love too has left me.

BILDAD.

Love!
What's love to Him? One man's misery!

J.B.

If I am innocent?

BILDAD. (SCOFFING.)

Innocent? Innocent?
Nations have perished in their innocence.
Classes have perished in their innocence.
Young men in slaughtered cities
Offering their silly throats
Against the tanks in innocence have perished.

What's your innocence to theirs?
 God is History. If you offend Him
 Will not History dispense with you?
 History has no time for innocence.

J.B. (ARGUING.)

God is just. We are not squeezed
 Naked through a ridiculous orifice
 Like bulls into a blazing ring
 To blunder here by blindfold laws
 We never learn or can, deceived by
 Stratagems and fooled by feints,
 For sport, for nothing, till we fall
 We're pricked so badly. God is just.
 God is just!

BILDAD. (VIOLENTLY.)

Screw your justice!
 History is justice!--time
 Inexorably turned to truth!--
 Not for one man. For humanity. (RISES, CROSSES ABOVE J.B.)
 One man's life won't measure on it.
 One man's suffering won't count, no matter.
 What his suffering. But All will.
 (MOVING D.R.S.)
 At the end there will be justice!--
 Justice for All! Justice for everyone!
 On the way . . . (TURNING FRONT, ARMS FOLDED.)
 It doesn't matter.

ZUSS. (TO NICKLES.)

He calls that comfort?

NICKLES.

Millions do.

J.B. (CRAWLS R., LOOKS AT BILDAD.)

Guilt matters. Guilt must always matter.
 Unless guilt matters the whole world is
 Meaningless. God too is nothing.

BILDAD. (A STEP TOWARD J.B.)

Guilt is a sociological accident.
 Wrong class: wrong century.
 You pay for your luck with your lies, that's all.
 (CROSSES R. AND PUTS FOOT ON R. STAIRS.)

ELIPHAZ.

Come! Come! Come! Guilt is a
Psychophenomenal situation--
An illusion, a disease, a sickness!

(J.B. TURNS TO HIM ON KNEES AND HANDS.)

That filthy feeling at the fingers,
Sent of dung beneath the nails. . . .

ZOPHAR.

Guilt is illusion? Guilt is reality!
The one reality there is!
All mankind are guilty always!

BILDAD. (SARCASTICALLY.)

The Fall of Man! It felled us all!

ZUSS. (TO NICKLES.)

They don't sound much like Comforters to me.

NICKLES.

Every generation has its own.

J.B. (TO ELIPHAZ.)

Guilt matters. Guilt must always matter.

ELIPHAZ.

No. We have surmounted guilt. It's quite
Quite different, isn't it? You see the difference.
Science knows now that the sentient spirit
Floats like the chambered nautilus on a sea
That drifts it under skies that drive:
Beneath, the sea of the subconscious;
Above, the winds that wind the world.
Caught between that sky, that sea,
Self has no will, cannot be guilty.
The sea drifts. The sky drives.
The tiny, shining bladder of the soul
Washes with wind and wave, or shudders,
Shattered between them.

ZOPHAR. (OUTRAGED.)

Blasphemy!

BILDAD. (DISGUSTED.)

Bullshit!

(NICKLES SMILES KNOWINGLY AT ZUSS.)

ELIPHAZ.

There is no guilt, my friend. We all are
Victims of our guilt--not guilty.
Our will is underneath the sybil's
Stone--not known.

J.B. (PAUSE, THEN DETERMINED.)

I'd rather suffer
Every unspeakable suffering God sends
Knowing it was I that suffered,
I that earned the need to suffer,
I that acted, I that chose,
Than wash my hands with yours in that
Defiling innocence. Can we be men
And make an irresponsible ignorance
Responsible for everything?
I will not listen to you!
(DUCKS HEAD, PULLS RAGS OVER IT.)

ELIPHAZ. (RISES, CROSSES U.C.S.)

But you will. . . .

ZUSS. (SAILY.)

There was a time when men found pity
Finding each other in the night;
Misery to walk with misery;
Brother in whose brother guilt
Guilt could be conceived and recognized.
(INDICATING COMFORTERS.)
Now comfort has forgotten pity.

ZOPHAR. (CROSSING ON ZUSS' LINE TO L. OF J.B.)

Ah, my son, how well you said that!
How well you said it! Without guilt
What is a man? An animal, isn't he?
A wolf forgiven at his meat,

(J.B. LOOKS AT HIM.)

A beetle innocent in his copulation.

What divides us from the universe
 Of blood and seed, conceives the soul in us,
 Brings us to God, but guilt? The lion
 Dies of death: we die of suffering.
 The lion vanishes: our souls accept
 Eternities of reparation.
 But for our guilt we too would vanish,
 Bundles of corrupting bones
 Bagged in a hairless hide and rotting. (FOOT ON DUNG HEAP.)
 Happy the man whom God correcteth!
 He tastes his guilt. His hope begins.
 He is in league with the stones in certainty.

J.B. (CRAWLS TO ZOPHAR.)

Teach me and I will hold my tongue.
 Show me my transgression.

ZOPHAR. (KNEELING AT LEFT OF J.B.)

No,
 No, my son. You show me.
 Search your inmost heart! Question it!
 Guilt is a deceptive secret.
 The labor often of years, a work
 Conceived in infancy, brought to birth
 In unpredictable forms years after:
 At twelve the palpable elder brother;
 At seventeen, perhaps, the servant
 Seen by the lamp by accident. . . .

J.B. (GRASPING HIS FROCK, VIOLENTLY.)

My
 Sin! Teach me my sin! My wickedness!
 Surely iniquity that suffers
 Judgment like mine cannot be secret.
 Mine is no childish fault, no nastiness
 Concealed behind a bathroom door,
 No sin a prurient virtue practices
 Licking the silence from its lips
 Like sugar afterwards. Mine is flagrant,
 Worthy of death, of many deaths,
 Of shame, loss, hurt--indignities
 Such as these! Such as these!
 Speak of the sin I must have sinned
 To suffer what you see me suffer.

ZOPHAR.

Do we need to name our sins
To know the need to be forgiven?
Repent, my son! Repent!

J.B.

Shall I
Repent of sins I have not sinned
To understand it? Till I die
I will not violate my integrity.

(COMFORTERS SHOUT WITH LAUGHTER. BILDAD MOVES TO U.R. OF J.B.)

ZOPHAR. (STANDING.)

Your integrity! Your integrity!
What integrity have you?
A man, a miserable, mortal, sinful
Veneal man like any other!

BILDAD.

A statistic! Like another!

ELIPHAZ.

A case-history!

ZOPHAR. (CROSSING L.)

Your integrity!
You squat there challenging the universe
To tell you what your sin is called,
Thinking, because your life is virtuous
It can't be called. It can! (WHIRLING BACK.)
Your sin is
Simple! You were born a man!

BILDAD. (CROSSES TO R. OF J.B., ONE FOOT UP ON LEVEL.)

Your sin is
Simple. You were born One Man.

ELIPHAZ.

Your sin is simple: you have none.
You are a leaf the wind blows through.
Flutter!--it's the wind, not you.

J.B. (PULLS ZOPHAR AROUND TO HIM, CLUTCHING AT HIS TROUSER-LEG.)

What is my fault? What have I done?

ZOPHAR.

What is your fault? Man's heart is evil!
What have you done? Man's will is evil!
Your fault, your sin, are heart and will:
The worm at heart, the wilful will
Corrupted with its foul imagining. (CROSSES D.L.)

J.B. (BITTERLY.)

Yours is the cruelest comfort of them all,
Making the Creator of the Universe
The miscreator of mankind--
A party to the crimes He punishes . . .
Making my sin a horror . . . a deformity!

ZOPHAR.

If it were otherwise, we could not bear it.

J.B.

I can bear anything a man can bear
If I can be one--if my life
Somehow can justify my living--
If my own self can answer. You
Refuse me even that. You tell me (TO BILDAD.)
One man's guilt is meaningless--
History has no time for guilt-- (THEN TO ELIPHAZ.)
Science has no sign for guilt-- (THEN TO ZOPHAR.)
God created all men guilty.
Comforters you call yourselves!
I tell you those old women by the wall
Who sleep there shivering have given comfort
Greater than all of yours together!
They gave their misery to keep me warm.

(DRUM BEGINS. ALL WOMEN RISE AND SHUFFLE OUT U.L. COMFORTERS CROSS TO DUNG HEAP; ZOPHAR D.L., BILDAD ABOVE, ELIPHAZ D.R.)

ZOPHAR. (CHANTING.)

Without the fault of Adam's Fall
We're mad men . . . all of us are mad men.
We watch the stars
That creep and crawl
Like dying flies
Across the wall
Of night's sunrise. . . .

BILDAD.

And call . . .and call . . .

ZOPHAR.

. . .and night replies
And that is all.

ELIPHAZ.

The dream replies
And that is all.

BILDAD.

The shot replies
And that is all.

(THEY CROSS TO L. LEVEL. BILDAD AT UPPER END OF LEVEL, ELIPHAZ CENTER ON SECOND STEP, ZOPHAR ON STAGE AT NEAR END.)

ZOPHAR.

Without the Fall
We're mad men all.

ELIPHAZ.

We watch the stars
That creep and crawl

BILDAD.

Like dying flies
Across the wall . . .

COMFORTERS. (TOGETHER.)

Of night! . . .(JUMP TO STAGE FLOOR.)
And shriek! . . .and that is all.

(THEY RUN OFF D.L. LAUGHING AT J.B.)

NICKLES. (CROSSING ABOVE J.B., IN BITTER TRIUMPH.)

You think he'll squat there in his anguish now
Begging the universe to love him?
He knows now that no reasoning on earth
Can justify the suffering he suffers.
He knows that good is not rewarded.
He knows that evil is not punished.

He knows his life is meaningless. It's over.
 It's done with. Over. He'll curse God!
 (CROSSING U.L.)
 He'll never lift his voice again
 To that deaf, unintelligible Heaven!

J.B. (STRONGLY, DESPERATELY.)

GOD . . . (INTO THE RAGS.)
 MY GOD! (HEAD UP.)
 MY GOD, ANSWER ME! (ON KNEES, CHALLENGING.)

(THERE IS A LONG SILENCE.)

I CRY OUT OF WRONG, BUT I AM NOT HEARD!
 I CRY ALOUD, BUT THERE IS NO JUDGMENT!
 THOUGH HE SLAY ME, YET WILL I TRUST IN HIM--
 BUT I WILL MAINTAIN MY OWN WAYS BEFORE HIM!

O, THAT I KNEW WHERE I MIGHT FIND HIM!
 THAT I MIGHT COME EVEN TO HIS SEAT!
 I WOULD ORDER MY CAUSE BEFORE HIM
 AND FILL MY MOUTH WITH ARGUMENTS.

(NICKLES CROSSES TO R. LEVEL STEPS. ZUSS STEPS DOWN TO LEVEL.)

BEHOLD,
 I GO FORWARD BUT HE IS NOT THERE,
 BACKWARD, BUT I CANNOT PERCEIVE HIM. . . .

DISTANT VOICE. (MIGHTY WITH WRATH.)

WHO IS THIS THAT DARKENETH COUNSEL
 BY WORDS WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE? . . .
 WHERE WAST THOU
 WHEN I LAID THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE
 EARTH? . . .
 WHEN THE MORNING STARS SANG TOGETHER
 AND ALL THE SONS OF GOD SHOUTED FOR JOY?

HAST THOU COMMANDED THE MORNING?
 HAVE THE GATES OF DEATH BEEN OPENED UNTO THEE?

(NICKLES CROSSES UP TO ZUSS. BOTH THEY AND J.B. ARE IN AWE.)

WHERE IS THE WAY WHERE THE LIGHT DWELLETH?
 AND AS FOR THE DARKNESS, WHERE IS THE PLACE THEREOF?

HAST THOU ENTERED INTO THE TREASURES OF THE SNOW?

BY WHAT WAY IS THE LIGHT PARTED
 WHICH SCATTERETH THE EAST WIND UPON THE EARTH?

CAN'ST THOU BIND THE SWEET INFLUENCES OF THE PLEIADES?

HAST THOU GIVEN THE HORSE STRENGTH?
HAST THOU CLOTHED HIS NECK WITH THUNDER?
HE SAITH AMONG THE TRUMPETS, HA, HA;
HE SMELLETH THE BATTLE AFAR OFF,
THE THUNDER OF THE CAPTAINS AND THE SHOUTING.

DOTH THE EAGLE MOUNT UP AT THY COMMAND?
HER EYES BEHOLD AFAR OFF.
HER YOUNG ONES ALSO SUCK UP BLOOD;
AND WHERE THE SLAIN ARE, THERE IS SHE.

(A PAUSE WHILE J.B. COWERS IN HIS RAGS.)

HE THAT REPROVETH GOD, LET HIM ANSWER IT!

(ANOTHER PAUSE AS J.B. SEARCHES FOR WORDS.)

J.B.

BEHOLD, I AM VILE: WHAT SHALL I ANSWER THEE?
I WILL LAY MINE HAND UPON MY MOUTH.

DISTANT VOICE. (THESE WORDS DRIVE J.B. DOWN AGAIN.)

GIRD UP THY LOINS LIKE A MAN
I WILL DEMAND OF THEE, AND DECLARE
THOU UNTO ME.

WILT THOU DISANNUL MY JUDGMENT?

WILT THOU CONDEMN
ME THAT THOU MAYST BE RIGHTEOUS?

HAST THOU AN ARM LIKE GOD? OR CANST THOU
THUNDER WITH A VOICE LIKE HIM?

DECK THYSELF NOW WITH MAJESTY AND EXCELLENCY
AND ARRAY THY SELF WITH GLORY AND BEAUTY . . .
THEN WILL I ALSO CONFESS UNTO THEE
THAT THINE OWN RIGHT HAND CAN SAVE THEE.

(ZUSS CROSSES REVERENTLY TO ABOVE J.B. J.B. SLOWLY LIFTS HIS HEAD,
LOOKS AT HIS HAND.)

J.B. (FEELING THE WEIGHT OF THE VOICE'S WORDS.)

I KNOW THAT THOU CANST DO EVERYTHING . . .
AND THAT NO THOUGHT CAN BE WITHHOLDEN FROM THEE.
WHEREFORE HAVE I UTTERED THAT I UNDERSTAND NOT,
THINGS TOO WONDERFUL FOR ME . . .

WHICH I UNDERSTOOD NOT.
 HEAR, I BESECH THEE, AND I WILL SPEAK.
 I HAVE HEARD OF THEE BY THE HEARING OF THE EAR

(HIS HANDS ARE UP IN PRAYER-LIKE ATTITUDE. ZUSS DUPLICATES THIS ATTITUDE BEHIND HIM.)

BUT NOW MINE EYE SEETH THEE,
 WHEREFORE
 I ABHOR MYSELF AND REPENT.

(J.B. DROPS HIS ARMS SLOWLY AND BOWS HIS HEAD. ZUSS DROPS HIS HANDS BUT REMAINS LOOKING UP. THERE IS A LONG SILENCE.)

NICKLES. (DISGUSTED, CONTEMPT IN HIS VOICE, CROSSING D.R.)

Well, that's that!

ZUSS. (BEAMING WITH PRIDE THAT HE HAS WON THE WAGER.)

That's that.

NICKLES.

You win.

ZUSS. (CROSSING UP TO PULPIT.)

Of course I win. I told you.

NICKLES. (REMOVING HIS CAPE IN ANGER.)

Pious, contemptible, goddam sheep!
 (SMASHES IT TO THE FLOOR.)
 Repenting! And for what? For asking
 Reasons of the universe! For asking why!

ZUSS. (EXALTED.)

He had heard of God, and now he saw him. (HAND ON RAILING.)
 Planets and Pleiades and eagles,
 Screaming horses, scales of light,
 Last Orion, least sea shell,
 The wonder and the mystery of the universe,
 Beauty beyond the feel of fingers,
 Marvel beyond the maze of mind,
 The whole creation: Searchless power
 Burning on the hearth of stars. . . .

NICKLES. (LOOKING ABOUT THE STAGE.)

Where did I put that popcorn . . . ?

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XI

J.B. and Mr. Zuss.

PLATE XI



(NICKLES GETS THE TRAY FROM U.L. AND STRAPS IT ON, ADJUSTING THE STRAPS. HE'S ANGRY. MR. ZUSS STANDS ABOVE, LOST IN THE ECSTASY OF HIS TRIUMPH. UNSEEN BY EITHER, J.B. LIFTS HIS FACE FROM THE RAGS, HIS EYES ON THE AUDIENCE. HIS VOICE IS A WHISPER IN WHICH THE GREAT WORDS HE HAS HEARD RETURN TO HIS MOUTH WITH THE SOUR MORTALITY ON THEM. ZUSS' LINES OVERTLAP THOSE OF J.B. BOTH ARE AUDIBLE TO THE AUDIENCE.)

J.B. (LOOKING AT HIS HANDS.)

Hast thou an arm . . . ?
like God . . . ?
and can'st thou . . . ?

ZUSS.

His was the true repentance, wasn't it?

J.B. (ON HIS KNEES.)

Deck thyself now . . .
with Majesty . . .
and Excellency . . .

ZUSS.

True surrender! To the fear of God!
Not to the love! the fear!

J.B.

Deck thyself!
Then will I also confess unto thee
That thine own . . . right . . . hand . . .
(LIFTS HIS RIGHT HAND TO HIS EYES, TREMBLING.)
can save thee!

ZUSS.

Comfort, you see, is not a changing fashion.
Comfort is one and always the same
For every human heart. We have no
Comfort but the fear of God.

NICKLES.

He feared, my friend. Why not? Why wouldn't he? . . .

J.B.

Wherefore . . .

Wherefore . . .

I abhor myself . . .

and repent!

NICKLES.

God with all those stars and stallions:
Throwing the whole creation at him!
Job with little children's bones . . .
Let's not talk about those children!

ZUSS. (TRIUMPHANTLY.)

He feared God and he repented!

NICKLES.

The choice is swallowing this swill of world
Or vomiting in the trough. Job swallowed it. (TURN TO ZUSS.)
That's God's triumph--that he swallowed it.

ZUSS. (SHOCKED.)

Is God to be forgiven?

NICKLES. (A LONG, INSOLENT LOOK.)

Isn't He?

(NICKLES HANDS HIS MASK TO ZUSS, TURNS HIS BACK AND CROSSES TO THE AISLE BY WHICH HE ENTERED.)

ZUSS. (CHOKING WITH ANGER.)

That's not the end.

NICKLES. (CONTINUING UP THE AISLE.)

Why not? You win.

You've made your bow. You want another?

ZUSS. (SHOUTING ANGRILY AFTER HIM.)

You know as well as I there's more.
There's always one more scene no matter
Who plays Job or when.

You're running
Out! You haven't got the guts

To play your part through.

You're no actor!
You're a popcorn peddler to the heart!

NICKLES. (STUNG, STOPS, STARTS BACK.)

What other scene?

ZUSS.

The scene that ends it.

God restores him at the end.

NICKLES. (GOING UP TO ZUSS' LEFT.)

God restores us all. That's normal. (THEN SARCASTICALLY.)
That's God's mercy to mankind.
We never asked Him to be born.
We never chose the lives we die of.
They beat our rumps to make us breathe. (FACING ZUSS.)
But God, if we have suffered patiently,
Borne it in silence, stood the stench, (SLAPS THE RAILING.)
Rewards us. Gives our dirty souls back.

ZUSS.

God restores him here. On earth.
Gives him all he ever had and
More.

NICKLES. (STARTING OFF AGAIN.)

Sure! His wife! His children!

ZUSS.

He gets his wife back and the children . . .
Follow in nature's course.

NICKLES. (STOPS SHORT, TURNS.)

You're lying.

ZUSS.

I'm not lying.

NICKLES. (VAULTS TO BELOW PULPIT.)

I say you're lying.

ZUSS. (MOUNTING MASKS ON LECTURN.)

Why should I lie? It's in the Book.

NICKLES.

Wife back! Wife! He wouldn't touch her.
 He wouldn't take her with a glove. (CROSS U.C.)
 After all that filth and blood and
 Fury to begin again!
 After life like his to take (GESTURE TO J.B. ON "HIS")
 The seed up of the sad creation
 Planting the hopeful world again. . . .
 He can't.
 He won't.

He wouldn't touch her.

ZUSS. (LEAVING TOWARD NICKLES.)

He does though.

NICKLES.

Live his life again?
 Not even the most ignorant, obstinate,
 Stupid or degraded man
 This filthy planet ever farrowed,
 Offered the opportunity to live
 His bodily life twice over, would accept it--
 Least of all Job, poor trampled bastard!
 It can't be borne twice over!
 Can't be! (CROSSES D.L.)

ZUSS.

It is though. Time and again it is.
 Every blessed generation.
 Time and again!
 Time and again!

(J.B. STRUGGLES TO HIS KNEES, GASPING IN PAIN, THEN TO HIS FEET.
 NICKLES CROSSES A STEP TO HIM.)

J.B.

Repent? For crying out? For suffering?

ZUSS. (IN WONDER.)

Did you hear that?

NICKLES. (CROSSING UP TO L.C. HOPEFULLY.)

I did.

J.B.

Must I be

Dumb because my mouth is mortal?--
Blind because my eyes will one day
Close forever? Is that my wickedness--
That I am weak.
(HE GASPS IN PAIN AS HE SHIFTS WEIGHT.)

NICKLES. (ROCKING ZUSS.)

Time and again, eh?

J.B.

Must my breath, my breathing, be forgiven me?

NICKLES. (SETS POPCORN TRAY ON L. LEVEL.)

Time and again, eh? (CROSSES TO J.B.)
J.B.!

J.B.!

(J.B. TAKES SOME OF HIS RAGS, CROSSES TO L.S. AND TOSSES THEM OVER THE EDGE, WINCING IN PAIN AS HE MOVES.)

J.B.

Let me alone.

NICKLES. (FOLLOWING HIM.)

It's me.
I'm not the Father. I'm the . . . Friend.

J.B. (CROSSING BACK TO DUNG HEAP.)

I have no friend.

NICKLES. (FOLLOWING.)

Oh, come off it.
You don't have to act with me.

(J.B. IS SILENT.)

All I wanted was to help.
Professional counsel you might call it.

Of course you know how all this ends?

(J.B. PICKS UP MORE RAGS.)

I wondered how you'd play the end.

J.B.

What end is there?

NICKLES. (TAKING RAGS AND THROWING THEM AWAY.)

You don't know?

Why should I tell you when you know?

What is the worst thing you can think of?

J.B. (TO NICKLES.)

I have asked for death. Begged for it. Prayed for it.

NICKLES. (SOFTLY, POINTEDLY.)

Then the worst thing can't be death.

(J.B. STARES AT HIM, UNCOMPREHENDING.)

He gives it back to you.

J.B.

What back?

NICKLES.

Everything.

Everything He ever took--

Wife, health, children . . . everything.

J.B. (TURNS AWAY.)

I have no wife.

NICKLES.

He gives her back to you.

J.B. (MOVING D.R.)

I have no children.

NICKLES. (FOLLOWING HIM TO FAR D.R.)

You'll have better ones.

J.B.

My skin is . . .

NICKLES. (CUTTING HIM OFF.)

Oh, come on. I know the
Look of greasepaint!

J.B. (PULLING UP HIS TATTERED SLEEVES.)

. . . whole! It's healed!
(HE REPEATS THE WORDS, MORE AND MORE EXCITED AS NICKLES TALKS.)

NICKLES. (GRABBING J.B.'S SHOULDERS.)

You see! You see what I mean? What he plans for you?

(SARAH APPEARS D.L. MOVING TOWARD CENTER. SHE HAS A GREEN BRANCH
IN HER HAND. NICKLES SEES HER AND GROWS FRANTIC.)

Tell me how you'll play the end--
Any man was screwed as Job was. . . .
(WHIRLS J.B. AROUND SO HE CAN'T SEE SARAH.)
I'll tell you how to play it! Listen!
Think of all the mucked up millions
Since this buggered world began
Said No! said Thank you! took a rope's end.
Took a window for a door,
Swallowed something, gagged on something. . . .

(J.B. LIFTS HIS HEAD, LISTENING, BUT NOT TO NICKLES.)

Not one of them had known what you know.
Not one had learned Job's truth.

J.B. (REMOVES NICKLES' HANDS.)

There's someone . . .

NICKLES. (TO ZUSS.)

Job won't take it! Job won't touch it!

J.B. (TURNING.)

There's someone standing at the door.

NICKLES. (FRANTIC.)

Job won't take it! Job won't touch it!
Job will . . .

(HE RIPS OFF HIS JACKET AND FLINGS IT TOWARD THE PULPIT.)

. . .fling it in God's face
With half his guts to make it spatter.
He'd rather suffocate in dung,
Drown in ordure . . .

(HE SCRAMBLES TOWARD THE PULPIT TO GET HIS HANDS ON ZUSS. HE SLIPS AND FALLS AT THE FOOT OF THE STAIRS AND REMAINS THERE SOBBING.)

Suffocate in dung,
Drown in ordure. . . .

(ZUSS, IN TRIUMPH, FLINGS OFF HIS ROBE AND STRIDES DOWN THE STAIR, HIS FACE SHINING. HE STRIDES TO C. J.B. IS D.R. AND SARAH IS D.L. OF HIM. SARAH IS LOOKING AT J.B. HALF TENDER, HALF AFRAID; HE IS GRIM FACED.)

ZUSS.

Job! You've answered him!

J.B. (TURNS AWAY.)

Let me alone. I am alone.
I'll sweat it out alone.

ZUSS.

You've found
The answer at the end! You've answered him!
We take what God has sent--the Godsend. (GESTURES TO SARAH.)
There is no resolution of the mystery
Of unintelligible suffering but the dumb
Bowed head that makes injustice just
By yielding to the Will that willed
A world where there can be injustice. (A STEP U.R.)
You've learned that now. You've bowed your head.

(SARAH TAKES A STEP TOWARD J.B.)

The end is the acceptance of the end.
We take what God has willed.

J.B. (CROSSING SAVAGELY TO ZUSS.)

I will not
Duck my head again to thunder!
That bullwhip crackling at my ears!--although
He kill me with it. I must know.

(NICKLES HAS RISEN AND IS MAKING HIS WAY SLOWLY DOWN THE LEVEL.)

ZUSS. (ASTONISHED AT WHAT HE HAS HEARD.)

We have no peace but in obedience.
Our peace is acquiescence in the Will of God.

J.B. (TURNS TO NICKLES WHO IS D.R.)

I'll find a foothold somewhere knowing.
Life is a filthy farce, you say,
And nothing but a bloody stage
Can bring the curtain down and men
Must have ironic hearts and perish
Laughing. . . .

Well, I will not laugh!

(HE SWINGS BACK TO ZUSS.)

And neither will I weep among
The obedient who lie down to die
In meek relinquishment protesting
Nothing, questioning nothing, asking
Nothing but to rise again and bow!
Neither the bowing nor the blood
Will make an end for me now!

Neither the

Yes in ignorance . . .

the No in spite. . . .

Neither of them (TO NICKLES.)

Neither of them! (TO ZUSS.)

(ZUSS AND NICKLES, BOTH UTTERLY DEFEATED, STAND FOR A MOMENT THEN SLOWLY EXIT, ZUSS D.L. AND NICKLES U.L. J.B. TURNS TO SARAH.)

Sarah!

Why have you come back again?

SARAH. (CONFUSED, HOLDING THE BRANCH TO HIM.)

Look, Job.

The first few leaves . . .

Not leaves though--

Petals. I found it in the ashes growing
Green as though it did not know . . .
All that's left there now is ashes. . . .
Mountains of ashes, shattered glass,
Glittering cliffs of glass all shattered
Steeper than a cat could climb
If there were cats still. . . .

J.B.

Why?

SARAH.

I broke the
Branch to strip the leaves off.
Petals
Again!
But they so clung to it!

J.B.

Curse
God and die! You said that to me.

SARAH. (A FEW STEPS TOWARD HIM.)

Yes. You wanted justice, didn't you?

J.B. (CROSS D.R. THREE STEPS.)

Cry for justice and the stars
Will stare until your eyes sting! Weep.
Enormous winds will thrash the water!

SARAH.

Cry in sleep for your lost children.
Snow will fall . . .
snow will fall.

J.B. (TURNING TO HER.)

You left me, Sarah.

SARAH.

Yes, I left you.
I thought there was a way away.
Out of the world. Out of the world.
Water under bridges opens
Closing and the companion stars
Still float there afterwards. I thought the door
Opened into closing water.

J.B. (SHOCKED AT HER THOUGHT OF SUICIDE.)

Sarah!

SARAH. (QUICKLY.)

Oh, I never could.
I never could. Even this--(KNEELS ON DUNG HEAP.)
Even the green leaf on the branch--could stop me.

J.B.

Why have you come back again?

SARAH. (TAKING A STUB OF CANDLE FROM HER POCKET.)

Because I love you.

J.B.

Because you love me!
The one thing certain in this hurtful world
Is love's inevitable heartbreak.
What's the future but the past to come
Over and over, love and loss.
What's loved most, lost most.

SARAH.

I knew that, Job.

J.B. (CROSSING TO HER.)

Nothing is certain but the loss of love.
And yet . . .you say you love me!

SARAH.

Yes.

J.B.

The stones in those dead streets would crack
With terrible indecent laughter
Hearing you and me say love.

SARAH. (SIMPLY, LOOKING UP AT HIM.)

I have no light to light the candle.

J.B. (HIS HAND ON HER HAIR.)

You have our love to light it with.
Blow on the coal of the heart, poor Sarah.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XII

J.B. and Sarah.

PLATE XIII



SARAH.

Blow on the coal of the heart . . . ?

J.B.

The candles in churches are out.
The lights have gone out in the sky!

SARAH.

The candles in churches are out.
The lights have gone out in the sky.
Blow on the coal of the heart
And we'll see by and by. . . .

we'll see where we are.

We'll know. We'll know. (LOOKING UP AT HIM.)

J.B. (SLOWLY, WITH DIFFICULTY, THE HARD WORDS SAID AT LAST.)

We can never know.
He answered me like the stillness of a star
That silences us asking.

No, Sarah, no!
(PULLING HER UP TO FACE HIM.)

We are and that is all our answer.
We are and what we are can suffer.
But . . .

what suffers loves.

And love
Will live its suffering again,
Risk its own defeat again,
Endure the loss of everything again
And yet again, and yet again,
In doubt, in dread, in ignorance, unanswered,
Over and over, with the dark before,
The dark behind it . . . and still live . . . still love.

(THE TRUMPET THAT BEGAN THE PLAY IS HEARD AS J.B. STRIKES A MATCH TO THE CANDLE AND TOUCHES SARAH'S CHEEK WITH HIS HAND. THEY STAND FACE TO FACE FOR A MOMENT, THEN SLOWLY TURN AND EXIT U.L. THE TRUMPET FADES OUT WITH THE LIGHTS. THERE IS DARK FOR A MOMENT, THEN A SPOT LIGHT PICKS UP THE TWO MASKS ON THE LECTURN, HOLDS FOR ABOUT TEN SECONDS, THEN SLOWLY FADES. THE HOUSE LIGHTS FADE UP SLOWLY. THERE IS NO CURTAIN CALL.)

APPENDIX B

Property List

On Stage:

On pulpit platform: a chair.
 On lecturn: a rack for mounting the masks.
 a large drumstick.
 Under lecturn: Zuss' purple robe and Nickles' black cape.
 masks.
 miscellaneous robes and stoles.
 On floor behind pulpit: two black slickers.
 two police caps.
 Behind L. level: a camera.
 On dinner table: service for seven.
 Around dinner table: one stool at head, one at foot, three
 upstage, two downstage.

Off U.L.:

On small table: two serving trays,
 turkey on a serving platter.
 carving set.

Off left:

On props. table: decanter and four glasses.
 bib for Rebecca.
 Sarah's sewing.
 cigar and matches for J.B.
 bundles of rags for Women.
 canteen for Second CDO.
 "Daily News" for Murphy.
 balloons on a stick for Zuss.
 popcorn tray for Nickles.
 parasol in brown paper for Second Officer.
 notebook and pencil for First Officer.
 pipe and tobacco for Zophar.
 cigarette and holder for Eliphaz.
 newspaper with headline, "War Ends."
 flashlight for First CDO.
 cigarettes for Nickles.
 drum and stick for sound crew.

APPENDIX C

Costume Plot

Nickles: White vendor jacket, black sneakers and socks, black turtle-neck sweater, black trousers.
Black cape lined with red.

Zuss: White vendor jacket, dark shoes and socks, white shirt, dark tie, dark trousers.
Purple robe.

J.B.: Dark business suit, dark shoes and socks, dark tie, white dress shirt.
Plaid smoking jacket.
Tux trousers, topcoat, white scarf.
Tattered and soiled white trousers and shirt, old shoes.

Sarah: Blue dinner dress, blue bow and shoes, pearls.
White evening dress, fur piece, white heels, necklace.
Negligee, slippers.
Faded blue skirt, white blouse, dark flats.

David and Jonathan: Dark suits, white shirts, dark ties, dark shoes and socks.

Mary, Ruth, and Rebecca: Blue dresses, blue bows, dark shoes.

The Girl: Rich, red dress (low cut and tight fitting); red heels; small shiny purse.

Mrs. Botticelli: Dark, worn dress; ecarf; old shoes; dark shawl.

Mrs. Lesure: Dark, worn dress; long, dark coat; old shoes.

Mrs. Adams: Print dress, faded red coat, old shoes.

Mrs. Murphy: Faded polka dot dress, old oxford shoes, old blue hat.

Jolly: Short, dark dress; flats; dark red coat.

First Messenger: Army uniform, dark shoes and socks.
Felt hat, press card, brown sport jacket.
Black slicker, police cap.
White CDO helmet.

Second Messenger: Army uniform, dark shoes and socks.
Blue sport jacket.
Black slicker, police cap.
White CDO helmet.

Maids: Black, long-sleeved dresses; white aprons and caps;
black flats.

Bildad: Work clothes, leather jacket, work shoes.

Zophar: Black shoes and socks; faded, dark priest's frock.

Eliphaz: Dark business suit, black shoes and socks, dark topcoat.

Two Airmen: Enlisted men's uniforms.

Two Girls: Shirts and sweaters, flats.

APPENDIX D

Program Note

Archibald MacLeish, three-time winner of the coveted Pulitzer-Prize, has had a distinguished record as a public servant and journalist. Although he had previously published two radio verse dramas, J.B. was his first endeavor at verse on the stage, and with it he has won world-wide acclaim.

As it was produced commercially in New York, the setting represented a portion of a circus tent. There was a circus-ring, a high tight wire perch, and other usual features appropriate to that setting. These facts explain the frequent allusions to the "circus" as they occur in the script. Our staging of J.B. is considerably simplified from the former concept. The simplification has been made for two reasons: (1) our staging shifts audience attention more completely to the text, and (2) such simplicity is more appropriate to the Chapel atmosphere.

Our purpose in producing J.B. is not to present a particular philosophy or to promote any dogma or denomination, but rather to submit one man's interpretation of Man's relationship to God.

A PRODUCTION STUDY OF ARCHIBALD MACLEISH'S

J.R.

by

CHARLES KEITH EVANS

B.A., Fort Hays Kansas State College, 1957

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

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This thesis records the procedure followed in the preparation and presentation of a contemporary verse drama on the campus of Kansas State University. The writer desired to learn what factors had contributed to the success of verse drama in a period when verse does not appear as the popular style used when writing plays. He chose J.B. by Archibald MacLeish because it was the most recently successful play of this type in America. In addition the writer chose J.B. because it would present a new and challenging experience to him as a director and to the students in the cast. He also desired to know whether a successful verse play such as J.B. would be as well received on the campus of Kansas State University by an audience of students and Manhattan, Kansas residents as it had been received by New York audiences in 1958 and 1959.

In the process of his preparation for the production the writer studied the background of the author, Archibald MacLeish, so that he might better understand his play. He learned that MacLeish had chosen the Book of Job as his model because of its parallel to modern times and that poetry was chosen because no other form of expression was powerful enough to express what the author had to say. The basic four-beat line was used because it most nearly represented modern American speech.

The writer studied other plays based on the Job theme and compared them to J.B. He read every critical review of previous productions of J.B. that he could locate, noting both favorable and unfavorable reactions, so that his production might profit from the application of techniques which had succeeded and so that he might

improve on techniques which had not succeeded.

The play was produced on the "open stage" of the All Faiths' Memorial Chapel in an attempt to create a more intimate atmosphere for the audience and actors. This technique, along with the non-illusory setting designed by the writer, proved to be popular with the audience and the performers. Several innovations in staging, design, and script revisions were likewise approved.

The writer learned that a contemporary verse drama can be successful on the campus of Kansas State University as well as on the Broadway stage, and that factors contributing to that success included MacLeish's four-beat line, the universal theme of the play and the fact that modern audiences can identify closely with the characters in J.E. In addition the writer, performers and the audience gained a worthwhile experience as the result of this study and production.