This way, the world; a play in three acts

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THIS WAY, THE WORLD
A Play in Three Acts

By

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Dean, Graduate School

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AUG 17 1965
THE CAST

JULIO CRISTUS, the God-seeker
MUFATO CRISTUS, his father
CONCETA CRISTUS, his wife
RICHARDO, the bastard son
PHILLIP SQUIRES, the self-seeker
GINNY
Man 1
Man 2
Woman
Girl
The Carnival Crowd
The Pilgrims of JULIO
The Henchmen of SQUIRES
THE SETTINGS, BY SCENE

ACT 1

Scene 1. The present, night on the edge of a desert.

Scene 2. Three weeks later, late afternoon in a forest clearing.

ACT II

Scene 1. Three weeks later, late morning on the midway of a carnival site at a large fair.

Scene 2. The same day, early evening at the same place.

Scene 3. A month later, past midnight at the same place.

ACT III

Scene 1. Two months later, dusk high on a rugged mountain plateau.

Scene 2. Later the same night on a grassy plateau half way down the mountain
ACT I
ACT I

Scene 1

THE TIME: the present, night
THE PLACE: the edge of a desert

(A wind-swept night on the edge of a desert, a hint of chill in the air. In the background loom the ghostly carcasses of a battered house trailer, an old sedan, and a long, flatbed trailer. An orange and white-striped parachute, supported by two aluminum stakes planted in the sand and attached to the trailer, obviously provide a sun-cover during daylight. As the fire in the foreground flickers higher, the result of JULIO adding some sticks and dried-out desert vegetation, one can perceive yet another structure to the left—a large, rectangular tent of lightweight material, dimly illuminated from within by two kerosene lanterns. Their light casts eerie, elongated shadows of the life-sized wooden sculpture occupying the tent.

Just in front of the tent's open door flaps are two large packing crates pushed together and draped with an ornate but not garish bedspread. On the top lies JULIO'S dying father MUFATO. Just as JULIO seems to be satisfied that the fire is well tended and begins to settle himself beside it, the wind rises, whipping the flames into a small fury and sending a shower of sparks towards his father. A few seem to land on his clothing, and JULIO hastens to smother
them with his vest, which he quickly strips from his body.)

JULIO

His old body's suffered enough pain, for the love of God. Give him a little peace

(MUFATO stirs uneasily, and as JULIO sees that the sparks are extinguished, he attempts to calm him. CONCETA appears at the door of the house trailer.)

CONCETA

What's happened now?

JULIO

(failing to hear her)

It's not right, father—when you've given your life to God so completely.

CONCETA

(approaching JULIO)

Is he worse?

JULIO

He's not any better.

CONCETA

I didn't think he could get any worse

JULIO

I'm afraid he is. Things can always get worse.

CONCETA

If he'd just allowed us to get out of this hell when there was still some hope. . .

(The old man groans, as if protesting.)
JULIO

He's dying. You give the dying their privileges.

CONCETA

How can you be so sure?

JULIO

He knows, and I--I know.

CONCETA

Oh?

JULIO

He's resigned himself to it. That's all I can say.

CONCETA

I hate this guessing game we're playing. It's been three days and nights like this. No one should be expected to put up with this--I know I can't much longer.

JULIO

I'll give him his way.

CONCETA

Yes, as you always have. One more day here and I think we'll all be dead . . .

JULIO

(scolding)

Conceta.

CONCETA

. . . or at least out of our minds.

JULIO

This time, for once, there'll be no compromise. His wishes'll be respected.
CONCETA

Then I'll leave. Richardo and I'll walk away from here if we have to.

(She turns sharply and strides towards the trailer.)

If your father's going to need something, you'd better let me know now.

JULIO

How can you be so selfish? You want to turn your back on a man who's given us a good way of life for twelve years.

CONCETA

(Pausing at the door.)

A "good way of life"? How can you tell me that when you've hated it almost as much as the rest of us?

(She exits.)

JULIO

You know that's a lie, Conceta. Conceta!

(There is no response.)

If you want to feel that way, go then. Go.

(He tries to dismiss the conflict with a sharp flick of his hand.)

If you heard any of that, Mufato, don't believe it.

(Moving to his father.)

Don't die on our account when we aren't worth the cloth you're on. If you'd only grow strong again. It'll never be the same--like battering down our foundations. We need you. . .

(JULIO stops as he sees that MUFATO is making an effort to raise himself.)

MUFATO

Julio, it came to me . . . I've heard His command again . . . are you there . . son . .?
JULIO

(Trying to resttle him.)
You've given me the message before. Save your strength.

MUFATO

(Now almost sitting up, despite JULIO'S efforts.)
He's talking to me . . . He wants it understood . . .

JULIO

I understand--fully; I understand.

MUFATO

Are you there? You must.

JULIO

I'm here. Father, what else would I do if I didn't carry on for you? Please rest.

MUFATO

He wants your promise.

JULIO

I'm giving you that. I'm giving Him that.

MUFATO

Others--they'll fight you. They'll try to drag you down. . . are you strong enough?

JULIO

I hope so, yes. Now save what little . . .

MUFATO

(Growing weary.)
Your . . . your family will be . . . no help. Alone, you must be . . . strong . . .

JULIO

For you, yes Mufato.
MUFATO

(His voice diminishing to a whisper.)
For Him, only for Him...

JULIO

Now rest.

(JULIO listens for his father's breathing, and satisfied, turns to walk back to the fire. He takes a nearby camp stool and places it before the fire, then sits on it and drops his head heavily into his hands. Moments pass. Suddenly RICHARDO, flailing a wineskin, enters to break the oppressive silence.)

RICHARDO

(Drunkenly half-singing, half-taunting.)
Is he dead and gone to hell, my jolly good fellow, is he dead and gone to hell?

(JULIO springs to his feet, then recognizing RICHARDO, tenses to control himself.)

JULIO

Quiet.

RICHARDO

I find this fire too bright for funerals. I'll drown it a little.

(He squirts wine on the fire.)

JULIO

(With less restraint.)
Will you have some respect? Get out of here, and while you're at it, take some sobering up lessons from your mother.

RICHARDO

(Stung, he stops dousing the fire.)
Step-father, you really know how to reach me, don't you?_
JULIO

Go inside.

RICHARDO

The delight you take in crucifying anyone--anyone but yourself--for a human weakness, especially my mother!

JULIO

(Moving back to check MUFATO.)

I told you to go inside.

RICHARDO

She "blessed" you with me, but because she made that mistake long before you knew her, you tolerate her sometimes, and crucify her the rest of the time.

(He suddenly attempts to rush JULIO.)

You take that back about my mother!

(JULIO sidesteps RICHARDO, gets his foot in the latter's path, and sends him sprawling.)

JULIO

Pick yourself up and get out.

RICHARDO

(Getting up, resuming the taunt.)

Is he dead yet, my jolly good fellow, is he dead and gone to hell?

JULIO

You're a sorry excuse for a man.

RICHARDO.

As my mother is for a woman because of her drinking, yes?

JULIO

No, thank God.
RICHARDO

I wanted to hear you deny it—so sincere, from that pious, hypocritical mouth.

JULIO

(His patience tried again, starting to move in on RICHARDO.)

You've said enough.

RICHARDO

(Stopping JULIO'S advance with his words.)

I heard your vow.

JULIO

What?

RICHARDO

(Motioning.)

I've been imbibing behind the tent of holies for some time, you know. When he dies—if he ever decides to let go—you're not giving it up, so I heard. I knew you'd break your promise to Conceta.

JULIO

(Seemingly exposed, losing control.)

I don't know. I won't tell you again. Get inside.

RICHARDO

I heard it. You're going to be a slave to that

(Gesturing to the tent.)

zoo of wooden saints as long as you live. But I'll wager you this: it won't make slaves of me, nor my mother any longer. We'll leave you; we'll start living where there's some life. We're tired of taking crumbs from a supper that should have been buried and forgotten two thousand years ago.
JULIO

Leave—when you're able to take care of yourself. But you're mother knows her place.

RICHARDO

Ha! Now that you've made a second vow, I'm sure she'll know her place, and it won't be with you. Your father and you drained her spiritual well long ago. Now, by God, she's earned the right to a little life.

JULIO

(Confronting RICHARDO and shoving him at the shoulders.)

I've promised her, and I can keep that promise. She knows that.

RICHARDO

(Mockingly.)

Ahhhh—no, no, no Julio. You vowed to Mufato.

(He cuts JULIO'S arms away.)

You can't go back on a promise to a saint.

JULIO

He deserves to die with things right. He's earned some peace of mind; I've got to give him that.

RICHARDO

Why, what're you saying?

(Trying to grasp what JULIO has said.)

Then...now let me get this straight...then you aren't going to hold onto this rummage? You will keep your word to Conceta? You won't keep your word to the old man?

JULIO

(Motioning RICHARDO to lower his voice, then speaking in subdued tones.)

Yes, those are my intentions.
RICHARDO

But you're not completely sure.

JULIO

I'm sure.

RICHARDO

Then you're wise enough at last to see that you couldn't ever continue as your father had, and... and we might just mean that much to you after all?

JULIO

You're the living; it's the living who need promises kept.

RICHARDO

(Near tears of elation.)

Impossible. Impossible. I've been dreaming of this, but... but I do believe you. I believe you really mean what you're saying. Who could have shown you the light? Certainly it couldn't have been--No.

(He breaks into spasms of laughter.)

Mother! Come out here, mother! Mother!

(CONCETA, somewhat frightened, appears at the trailer door.)

Wine! I have red wine to celebrate our break from the wooden shrine, the wooden Jesus, the wooden disciples--maybe even from the wooden devil himself here.

CONCETA

You're drunk again, and babbling like a drunk.

RICHARDO

And what a reason to be drunk! My saintly sometimes-father, your saintly sometimes-husband--has seen the light. He's promised a new future for us.

CONCETA

Is that what this's all about? Forget it--I've heard the same empty promise.
RICHARDO

But listen. When the old man dies—and it's now become an absolute necessity—we're giving up our pitiful ministry.

CONCETA

(To JULIO, bitterly.)

You had to get the boy's hopes up too.

(She moves to leave.)

RICHARDO

Mother, I think he finally--really understands he owes this to us. He's just given me his word, and I believe it. I feel he means it. For the first time, he means it.

CONCETA

(Stopping, a little hopeful.)

Is there any truth in this?

JULIO

If Mufato goes, yes.

CONCETA

If you're misleading us now...God be your witness.

(MUFATO suddenly writhes in great pain, and JULIO hurries to him.)

God be your witness.

JULIO

(Distractedly.)

Yes...God be...yes.

RICHARDO

(Embracing his mother.)

See we're redeemed.
RICHARDO (Continued)

(Taking a long drink of wine, trying to get his mother to.)

At last we're getting real life back into our lungs. It's overpowering.

CONCETA

(Returning the embrace.)

Oh, let's hope all will be well. It could be wonderful, wonderful. We can move to a city, a big city...maybe make some real friends...

JULIO

(After touching MUFATO's forehead.)

He's burning up. Conceta, the fever's too high. Get me something--anything cold.

(CONCETA turns from RICHARDO, hesitating as if she failed to hear JULIO.)

Something cold. Now

(CONCETA runs to and exits into the trailer.)

RICHARDO

(Stepping beside JULIO.)

Did you see the hesitation, my jolly good fellow? Hard to blame her though--a new life, perhaps for the lack of a cold towel.

JULIO

He's going. I'm afraid he's going.

RICHARDO

And with him that--creation of his.

(Moving in an erratic path towards the tent.)

That, that, that nightmare of man.
JULIO

Quiet, for God sakes!

RICHARDO

He'll be gone, and this'll be done. My kingdom come, thine will be done.

(He throws back the tent's side flap, revealing some of the carved statuary from the backside. Christ, Judas, and one or two other disciples are distinguishable.)

None of us—even you, father Julio, were ever meant for this and its "redemptive powers" ...

JULIO

(Growing frantic.)

Conceta, for the love of God, what are you doing? It's got to be now—something cold.

(Becoming vaguely aware of RICHARDO'S actions.)

Stay clear of that you drunken bast...ard...

RICHARDO

(Stunned, then using JULIO'S invective for strength.)

Bastard, father. Don't stumble on that word. Bastard. You've never managed to do that to my face before. Congratulations!

(Now poising the wineskin and turning his attention to the image of Jesus.)

But now, first—I'll anoint Thee with wine, drowning you in the wickedness of man, much of which I lay on You.

(He starts drenching the Jesus statue with wine.)

JULIO

(Now fully aware of RICHARDO'S actions, but obligated to stay with his father.)

I'll cut your throat if you don't stop that now!
RICHARDO

Stop? But certainly.

(He stops.)

I need wine too, you know.

(He drinks.)

Next, a warm embrace for the only one who knew human folly when he saw it.

(He embraces Judas' image.)

But you made all those martyrs—to suffocate our lives.

(He pushes the image aside.)

JULIO

(In final desperation.)

Conceta, now!

RICHARDO

But now all of you are leaving us to ourselves. The faith you'd say we failed to put in you we'll put in ourselves. And you,

(Turning on the image of Jesus.)

you are the first to go!

(He wrests the image from the Last Supper scene and hurls it to the ground, then grasps a nearby ax lying at the base of the tent and prepared to mutilate it when JULIO rushes him, wrestles him to the ground, and beats on him. Soon RICHARDO loses possession of the ax to JULIO, and the latter raises it, ready to bring it down on RICHARDO, when a choking, dying gasp issues from MUFATO. JULIO hurls the ax away and scrambles to his father.)

JULIO

Father, Mufato, father.

(He listens for breathing.)

Oh God.
CONCETA

(Running from the trailer.)

He's dead, isn't he? I looked everywhere, but I couldn't...

JULIO

Where was the cold you were to bring? Where?

CONCETA

There wasn't any.

(Seeing RICHARDO lying near unconsciousness, she goes to him.)

We've had nothing cold here for the last three days. Would it really've helped?

JULIO

You wanted him to die. You could've found something, but no--you wanted him to die.

CONCETA

(Wounded by the accusation, now drawing RICHARDO to the trailer.)

Yes, exactly.

(She utters a cry of anguish and exists with RICHARDO, slamming the door after her.)

JULIO

(After some pause, turning to his dead father.)

Oh, my good, great father! How faithless we've been in your eyes. How lacking.

(He draws the loose sides of the spread over the body.)

We've deserted you. In times of real need, we've deserted you--and Him. And it's true, I've never been enough of a man for your tasks.

(Crossing his father's hands, he kisses them, then steps back.)
But now I pledge a change in me, and I'll serve both you and God as that changed man until I die. My promise to you is good, as you'd have it, beloved Mufato, as you'd have it...

(He moves to the fallen Christ figure and rights it back into its place as the curtain closes slowly.)
ACT I

Scene 2

THE TIME: three weeks later, late afternoon
THE PLACE: in a forest clearing

(The tent now occupies a central position, the car and the trailer to one side, the flatbed in the background to the other side. The surroundings have changed radically, the main structures of JULIO'S camp now sitting in the midst of a forest clearing. Sturdy pines tower in clumps on all sides. A few rock formations crowned with lush vegetation are scattered here and there, and a well-worn trail winds its way through them to the left. It is late afternoon, three weeks later. The shadows are long, and tranquility seems to reign. JULIO, obviously distraught, emerges from the tent.)

JULIO

So few come, so very few. Is it that they really don't care--about the savior who still holds out His arms to them--or am I just not up to the task? I don't know; I don't seem to have the answers--just doubts that plague me. My hollow stomach tells me this is still a dream only those like my father could live for.

(He kicks the dust.)

(CONCETA emerges from the trailer. In contrast with the CONCETA of the first scene, she seems revitalized. She is dressed seductively, but subtly so, and she approaches JULIO with calm self-assurance. She takes a scarf from her neck as JULIO sees her, and uses it to wipe his forehead and neck.)
CONCETA

You've been in the tent a long time. I don't think the length of your prayers will change things.

JULIO

Probably not. Very few prayers today, however. I was doing a little repair work, as a little relief for the mind.

CONCETA

It's too late for anyone to come now. Can you forget it for awhile—at least until tomorrow?

JULIO

I don't know; I'd like to. Where's Richardo?

CONCETA

In town for something—chasing some dream. I'm sure he won't be back until dark, or later.

JULIO

Not to beg or steal more food, I hope.

CONCETA

No...

JULIO

If he'd give the Lord a chance, he'd learn that the Lord does provide. But for him, a little hunger is starvation.

CONCETA

(Slipping her arms around JULIO'S waist from behind him.)

Julio, you've been around your father's religion long enough to know that the Lord doesn't always provide. Besides Richardo is still young—and growing. Let's forget people for awhile. The people that stay away. Richardo—everyone but you and me.

JULIO

(Leaning his head back on CONCETA.)

I'd like to, believe me.
CONCETA
Try. Let there just be us for a change.

JULIO

(Turning to her.)
I haven't given you much of a place in my life for some time, have I?

CONCETA

(Without hesitation.)
No, you really haven't

JULIO

(Grasping his wife's shoulders, studying her closely.)
It's strange how less and less I've been able to look at you and really see you. Right now I can look at you and see something very good.

CONCETA
Oh Jule, I want you to notice me.

JULIO
I know--and you deserve my attention. I'm sorry I've not given it to you more often.

CONCETA
Just a little more often, a little more, and I think we'll be happy.

JULIO
I'll try. I swear to you I'll try. If things were just going better here for a change. If I could just learn how to light that spark in man's spirit. If I could just have my faith revived a little...
CONCETA

Jule, forget these problems for a time--quit this--and maybe things will happen the way you want them to. Sometimes the harder you try for something, the harder it is to reach. Let me back into your life. You need a--what can I say?--a diversion of some kind. Then maybe good things will start happening.

JULIO

(Embracing CONCETA.)

I'll make you as important as you should be to me, but never call yourself what you did. You won't be a diversion to me. And if that's the way I've made you feel, God forgive me.

CONCETA

I still love you so.

JULIO

I'll give you more reason to say that hereafter.

CONCETA

(Kissing JULIO)

Richardo is gone--we're alone. I'm sure he'll be away until late.

JULIO

Is there wine left?

CONCETA

Some.

(JULIO kisses CONCETA warmly, they pause, then turn and walk to the trailer. At the door CONCETA reaches to a bow in her hair, unpins it, and lets down her long, dark tresses. She smiles to JULIO, turns and disappears into the trailer. JULIO follows and closes the door behind him. For a few long moments all is still. But the silence is broken as an empty beer can sails across the scene and rattles to its resting place on the ground in front of the trailer.)
RICHARDO enters, carrying a wash pail full of beer cans. He positions it carefully, drops to the ground, puts his legs around the pail, and carefully probes for the next beer. Suddenly a thought strikes him and he leaps to his feet.

RICHARDO

Hey, Lord Phillip. Squires--where the hell are you?

(He pauses to hear an answer; at first there is none, but then--)

SQUIRES

(Out of breath, from beyond the scene.)

Richar... Richardo?

RICHARDO

Squires. Here--over here.

(At last there is the crackling of brush abbreviated with swearing, and soon Phillip Squires appears from the left, dusty and exhausted.)

SQUIRES

By God, I thought that climb was going to kill me. After this, the deal we're supposed to make with your old man had better materialize.

RICHARDO

It will. It's got.

SQUIRES

(Dusting himself off, noting the tent.)

I take it that's the "shrine" over there. Just as good as it was two years ago outside that revival camp?

(RICHARDO nods "yes".)

RICHARDO

The deal will go. Stop worrying. Catch your breath and have a beer.
(Now there are loud voices from within the trailer. The two revelers on the outside turn to listen and grow amused as the argument rages louder and more violent.)

SQUIRES

Sounds like marital problems.

RICHARDO

Yeah--one of those hate skirmishes.

CONCETA

(Caught between tears and rage, bursting from the trailer.)

Ricardo—Ricardo! Tell this Goddamned fool that I didn't plot to soften him up—for some secret scheme of our, by making love to him. Tell him that.

JULIO

(Appearing at the door as CONCETA runs to her son.)

Don't bother to lie, boy. I can smell your deals across counties, and

(Eyeing SQUIRES.)

I see you have the city slick right here with you. Very nice timing. Your mother was spared any extra effort.

CONCETA

Oh God!

(She runs to JULIO and starts to swing wildly at him, striking him on the face and chest. JULIO tolerates it for a moment, then swings her aside roughly.)

RICHARDO

You, for a self-appointed follower of the Prince of Peace and a forgiver of sinners, have a dirty, dirty mind. If you've got to believe my mother plotted the way you're claiming she did, you'd better pray hard for cleansing, step-daddy, because it's people like you that drive people to sin.
JULIO

I'd like to trust your word just once--and later find it's reliable, but you've made your reputation.

CONCETA

I only wanted your love. Why can't you accept that?

SQUIRES

(Confronting JULIO.)

Sir, you would like to honor your wife's word, wouldn't you?

JULIO

Get out of here, salesman. I know your smooth sell.

SQUIRES

Can't you answer my question? Does your wife deserve this or not?

JULIO

Quit trying to make this your affair.

SQUIRES

I'm sure you'd like to be assured that your wife wouldn't use you as you obviously think she has.

JULIO

Not with you in charge of the hearing.

SQUIRES

(Moving to CONCETA, gently turning her towards JULIO then addressing her.)

Now then--and answer quickly and without hesitation--did you or did you not know where Richardo was going tonight?

CONCETA

Ye-es, somewhat.
JULIO

Well then, there. That's already a confession that she lied to me. She told me next to nothing about Richardo's whereabouts.

CONCETA

I was not asked for details, so I didn't give any. Yes--I knew where he was going, and because I wanted love tonight, and understanding, and no sermons, I didn't tell you where, except to the city.

JULIO

This is getting us nowhere. Leave. I'd prefer to handle my own family differences.

SQUIRES

Just another moment.

(Taking out a leather folder from his suitcoat and withdrawing a newspaper clipping.)

Is this a replica of the newspaper ad Richardo showed you yesterday? Take a close look.

CONCETA

Yes--yes, I'm sure it is.

RICHARDO

You can be damned sure it is.

(Going to his wallet, shuffling through some cards and papers and finally producing another clipping.)

And here's my clipping, cut out of yesterday's paper.

(He confronts JULIO with it and shakes it in front of him.

JULIO

So?

(He looks at RICHARDO expectantly, and RICHARDO, not knowing the next step, looks to SQUIRES.)

Go on, go on Mr. . . . .
SQUIRES

(Extending his hand.)
Squires, Phillip Squires.

RICHARDO

(Getting an idea.)
Hey—I think we still got the paper I cut this out of. I'll show the doubter here the true, honest-to-God hole I cut it out of this morning. He's thinking we ran it off the press ourselves.

(He ducks into the trailer, then momentarily ducks back out.)
Hey salesman—do we have a case going here?

(He exits.)

JULIO

(Who has quickly dropped SQUIRES' hand after the latter's introduction.)
If you do have a case—which I doubt—it won't be an honest one. Get it over with please.

SQUIRES

I will, I will, but I do see you want me go on with it, Mr. Cristus. Whatever you say, I know you'd like this to absolve your wife; and since it is so important to you, certainly it has to be an honest case. It shall be.

JULIO

To the point.

SQUIRES

(Showing the clipping to JULIO.)
Here is the clipping—look it over.

(To CONCETA.)
Now, Mrs. Cristus, what did this clipping have to offer that interested Richardo?
A job selling. Family shelters—or fallout shelters the ad called them. Richardo thought he...

SQUIRES

And how were you and Richardo going to plot over that? Tell me.

CONCETA.

Why, we had no plot. My son thought this might be the break he'd been looking for—Julio's been harping on his worthlessness—how he's old enough to be self-sufficient.

JULIO

(Referring to the ad.)

I see your name's here, Mr. Squires. Certainly Richardo must have known you...and made some connection...

RICHARDO

(Bolting from the trailer with a newspaper page in his hand, a square but ragged hole cut in it near the center.)

I found it! The hole is here—right here where my greedy little shears went to work.

(Sticking his hand through the hole and wagging it at JULIO.)

Can you believe in this—space within a dirty rag, but still part of eternity. Of course you do. You're a believer in such things, so you think.

(He returns to his pail of beer for another can, wearing the newspaper like a banner on his chest.)

JULIO

(Shaking his head.)

You seem to be outdoing yourselves for nothing.

SQUIRES

But we've been honest with you. You've really raised no questions of any substance.
JULIO
This whole thing is a hoax. You've proven nothing.

SQUIRES
Have you?

JULIO
I don't have to

SQUIRES
So you still feel that way. I thought you were a faithful man. Doesn't the effort alone your family has expended to convince you of their innocence prove them so?

JULIO
Hardly.

SQUIRES
Let's get to the really crucial issue then.

JULIO
Yes?

SQUIRES
What does my business interest have to do with your wife and son "plotting" against you?

JULIO
Only you can answer that, and since the salesman cannot give straight answers, only time will tell.

SQUIRES
You're being unreasonable. If you'll just assume that your son was responding to the ad of a total stranger, then I can't see any potential in that ad whatsoever for victimizing you. Your wife simply let him go--that's all there was to it.

JULIO
(Pointedly):
What are you doing here?
SQUIRES

You will assume that your son never met me before?

JULIO

Why are you here? You could've either given him or not given him that job where you were in the city.

SQUIRES

I still think you are a man of sufficient trust who'll believe that he had never met me before. But now...

JULIO

I'd like an answer to my question.

SQUIRES

I'm getting to it, Mr. Cristus. Now...if you'll allow yourself to see that no prearranged plot was possible--no victimizing intended or planned for--then you can search your own heart and soul a bit further to find a little more faith--faith in your wife, above all, faith in my word, trust in my motives.

JULIO

Spit it out.

SQUIRES

(Warily at first.)

Yes...yes. While meeting with...while in the process of interviewing Richardo today I was...well, nothing short of overwhelmed to find out about your ownership of the shrine of the Lord's Last Supper.

(JULIO gropes for self-control, clutches at his temples.)

To stumble on someone directly connected with the display was, I felt, a colossal stroke of luck. You see, I'd seen it about two years ago--somewhere along the coast near a revival camp, and it had haunted me ever since. I wish to see it again...I feel it may have unlimited possibilities...I may wish to...
JULIO

(Revealing total disillusionment.)
Sure, sure; I knew it. It couldn't have been any other way.

CONCETA

(Rushing to stop JULIO who has now turned to head towards the tent.)
I didn't know any such opportunity would come knocking at our door tonight—I swear to God, Jule—but now that it is here, please, please consider whatever offer he may make.

JULIO

(Shoving her to the ground.)
Get out of my sight!

(He continues towards the tent.)

SQUIRES

(Now restraining RICHARDO who has risen and seems ready to face off with JULIO, then hurrying to block JULIO'S path to the tent.)
I asked you to find a little faith, man. We've done all we can to give you reason to have some. If you still don't have it, you don't deserve this sacred gift that's been given you. I've given you enough truth to defeat the doubts of a hundred faithless men. What more do you want?

RICHARDO
He doesn't want to believe anything decent about us.

SQUIRES
...or better, how can a man such as you're supposed to be even think of defaming your own wife as you have?

JULIO

(Sidestepping SQUIRES and continuing his way to the tent.)
Your speeches have sickened me. Leave.
RICHARDO

(Now at his mother's side.)
You had better forget about hiding with your saints and listen this time. You hear? You'd better listen.

(The special meaning in RICHARDO'S voice stops JULIO.)

SQUIRES

(Reapproaching JULIO.)
Understand I come to give this whole enterprise--this entire family--new life. And tell me, Ricardo, Mrs. Cristus, does it need this?

RICHARDO

Oh Jesus, does it.

CONCETA

Yes--yes, yes.

SQUIRES

(To JULIO, aggressively now.)
Does it sir?

JULIO

(Sensing the trap.)
It...yes, but you're not the answer.

SQUIRES

Then who or what is? Can you tell me that?

JULIO

God will give us success without you--when He wishes to.

SQUIRES

And if he never wishes to?
JULIO

That will be His will. In His eyes, we may never be worthy to succeed.

RICHARDO

(Sarcastically)

Jolly good fellow, holy man—you're talking in tongues again—tonges that mean nothing to you or us. You listen to Mr. Squires, because Mr. Squires—as far as I an my mother are concerned—is your last chance. You pass by Mr. Squires and I promise you we're leaving you—for good.

(JULIO recoils from RICHARDO'S threat and looks to CONCETA for some assurance that it is an empty one, but she looks up to stare coldly and unflinchingly at him.)

JULIO

(In sickened disbelief.)

So—you've bought them off.

SQUIRES

Can't you understand that this is no scheme and that I offer new hope?

JULIO

I only understand the choice you give me, and this is my answer: I will not give up the shrine—at any cost.

SQUIRES

Have I asked you to?

JULIO

Yes, you have.

SQUIRES

No—not at all. You see, you've misunderstood.
JULIO
I will not give it up.

SQUIRES
I repeat: I'm not asking you to. I'm only asking you
to listen to reason.

CONCETA

(Making a final appeal)
You must listen to him.

RICHARDO
Forget it, mother. He wants his shrine—nothing else
matters to him.

CONCETA

Listen to him, Julio.

(JULIO makes no move to leave. He seems to have
been forced to acquiesce to his wife's plea.)

SQUIRES
Mr. Cristus, I can now feel what I have hoped I could feel
about you. Beneath your cloak of cynicism, you are a man
of faith with a great commitment to this shrine of the
Last Supper. I'd be a monumental fool to ask such a man
to cut himself off from this task of his life by selling
out. I can clearly see that your father's display of
genius could never succeed without your devotion to it.
But too, I can also see that this grand enterprise can
never simply succeed with your devotion alone. Say what
you will, it needs my God-granted talents too.

JULIO
I'd doubt that your talents were God-granted.

SQUIRES
Well, God did a lot that may not be agreeable to the
religious such as you, but somehow all of it seems to
fulfill His Great Purpose. So who are we to say whether
or not my talents are God-granted. All I really know,
Mr. Cristus, is that you need them.
JULIO

Maybe, Mr. Squires, but the only real issue here is whether or not I'm to give in to you so I can keep my family.

SQUIRES

You're making that the issue, and it needn't be really. The issue should be whether or not you wish to take this new fork in the road so that you may see your purpose in life fulfilled—completely during your own lifetime. I'm here to give you that chance—yes, a chance, but at least a chance.

JULIO

You're deeply concerned about my "purpose in life"—naturally. Let's forget the pretending. What is your "deal"?

SQUIRES

(Now triumphant.)

We will be partners, fifty-fifty basis, I will supply the money necessary to promote the display—or shrine, and of course your hopes and dreams for us. I will establish the locale for its presentation and advertise it, but you and only you will be the bulwark of the whole thing—as Religious Supervisor—completely in charge of the display itself and the people who come to it—to find God.

JULIO

Promotion of that kind will destroy it in a week—a day.

SQUIRES

I think you're wrong. I've seen something like this revived before. This is the life it needs. To put what I'll have to put into it, I personally have to have great faith in its success—and to show that faith, I'll promise you that if you're not completely satisfied and do not see considerable success within a month—let us say two months—every little will be returned to your hands to run as you see fit. All the loss will be my money, and a little of your time. Does that seem fair?
JULIO

(Now clearly defeated by the watchful eyes of his family.)

Yes, yes—that would have to be the understanding. Under the conditions of the two months, I'd accept the arrangement.

(CONCETA and RICHARDO look at one another in seeming disbelief, then clutch each other ecstatically.)

But I'll do none of this without a lawyer, if there's an honest one to be found.

RICHARDO

(Turning the pail of beer cans upside down.)

Hallelujah, mother! Let heaven ring it out! Heeee--yah!

SQUIRES

Excellent! I can recommend any number of reputable ones, or of course, you may choose one of your own as far as I'm concerned. You give me two months and I'll give you more glory than you ever dreamt of.

(JULIO absently offers his hand. SQUIRES takes it and grasps his shoulder.)

RICHARDO

(Picking up his mother and whirling her.)

We are free! We're finally through with this wandering in the wilderness. Now we can live like human beings. It's too much--too much!

(CONCETA breaks away from RICHARDO, then runs to SQUIRES to embrace him. He accepts the gesture just for a moment, then turns her towards JULIO.)

SQUIRES

And now, my new partners, it's time I once again visited this gift of God--carved by the hands of Julio's good father--which we all now put so much new hope into.
JULIO

Hope of your kind will not last long unless it produces dollars and cents—and lots of them.

SQUIRES

(Pausing before the tent opening.)

That's part of it, but how many religious enterprises succeed today without those dollars and cents?

JULIO

They don't really "succeed"--as you would say.

RICHARDO

How true, how true, Simon Peter.

(Opening another beer.)

But at this point, who really gives a damn?

(SQUIRES exits into the tent.)

JULIO

(To CONCETA.)

I'm afraid my head is whirling. Too much has happened--too much has been lost in the last half hour.

(RICHARDO drifts towards the tent entrance.)

CONCETA

Please don't be so sad. He's given us new life, as he's said.

(She moves to JULIO and from behind, drops her arms over his shoulders.)

JULIO

(Taking her arms from his shoulders.)

New, new? What's so magical about that word--so assuring? Why are you all in love with it? It seldom means something better. In this case it means the worst.
JULIO (Continued)

(Going to the trailer.)

This is the night we lost each other, Conceta—and maybe God too.

(At the door.)

Goodnight.

(He exits.)

(CONCETA instinctively starts to move after JULIO, but a few steps and she stops, pauses, and starts to move towards the trailer again when SQUIRES suddenly exits from the tent, strangely detached. RICHARDO studies him, stands, snaps his fingers in front of SQUIRES' face, and starts to snicker uncontrollably.)

RICHARDO

Squires--buddy--messiah--come out of it.

SQUIRES

(To himself.)

Odd, but I always wondered why this thing had stuck in my mind...

RICHARDO

Because it could mean big money.

SQUIRES

...I almost think it does have power. It is an awe-inspiring thing...

RICHARDO

(Thrusting a beer at SQUIRES.)

Have a beer.

SQUIRES

(Dismissing his vision.)

A beer? Yes, a beer, by God. Conceta, a beer. We've got something to celebrate, woman.
(CONCETA hesitates, glances back at the trailer, then a remote smile creases her lips and she moves towards the other two, almost waltzing.)

CURTAIN
ACT II
ACT II

Scene 1

THE TIME: three weeks later, late morning

THE PLACE: midway of a carnival site at a large fair

(The display has now been moved to a carnival site at a large fair. It is three weeks later. The tent now sits between a gaudy, cheap-jewelry booth to the right—as well as a gaming booth—and to the left, the sleek thoroughly modern trailer of PHILLIP SQUIRES. The external appearance of the display has undergone drastic change. The tent itself has been painted an ostentatious "heavenly" blue, and a huge banner and flags blatantly proclaim: THE MOMENT OF BETRAYAL--IN LIVING, BREATH-TAKING SCULPTURE. The banner is strung imperfectly between two drooping crosses. Another sign to the right of the entrance reads: "1.00--A Contribution to the Betterment of Man." Still yet another quotes from scripture: "...Verily I say unto you, that one of Ye shall betray me..."

A three-foot high platform fronts the tent.

Now PHILLIP SQUIRES appears to supervise two workmen already onstage who have been stringing lights along the top edge of the tent and around the banner. He gives them some directions, reminding them to light both crosses, then suddenly recognizes RICHARD who has been mulling over the merchandise in the jewelry booth.)
SQUIRES

Say there--Richardo. Richardo, isn't it?

RICHARDO

(Backing off a bit worriedly.)

Yes, 'tis I; 'tis I, 'tis pity.

SQUIRES

Where the devil you been the last three days? You were supposed to be lending me a hand. You realize we open tonight.

RICHARDO

I was going to help, but you seemed to have all well in hand and well...thm sport, you did make the mistake of advancing me $200.

SQUIRES

I did slip up there. And the $200's all gone?

RICHARDO

Squires, you know how the carnival spawns some really free-wheeling broads. It also gets expensive. Hell, I not only spent the $200. I owe this simple-minded woman another $150, but she might forget it.

SQUIRES

If you've got debts, you'd better start giving me a little help here. For instance, I've got one problem that'll sink this venture flat in a couple of months if something doesn't shake up that old man of yours.

RICHARDO

You mean he won't play along with your selling gimmicks?

SQUIRES

Friend, he's been conveniently ill ever since I had that banner strung--says he won't be a party to "this defilement" until I put everything back the way it was.
RICHARDO

He should have sold out to you. His father would have made the best of this. But him...Well God, I've been telling you this: do without him. You don't need him.

SQUIRES

But I'm afraid I do, I've told you. We've got a little clause in the contract that returns full ownership and operation to him in sixty days if he isn't completely satisfied with everything we do.

RICHARDO

Hell, it probably won't be worth keeping in sixty days anyway.

SQUIRES

There I think you're wrong, Richardo. More leisure time...a more fouled-up world than ever before...threat of total destruction of man...the dire prophecies of our so-called religious leaders--these things drive people to cheap amusements, and then when they find this outpost of hope in the midst of chaos, then you've got a winner.

RICHARDO

The angle's there all right. They wouldn't buy your shelters. They could be looking for something like this. But you can't give in and return all this to its original drabness.

SQUIRES

True. It'll kill it. It's got to have the big sell. But I've been thinking. It may even need more.

RICHARDO

Sex!

SQUIRES

Possibly, but no. It really needs Julio himself.
RICHARDO

You're joking.

SQUIRES

No...no--as I pointed out rather unintentionally to the man himself the night we made the deal with him, he's got his heart and soul tied up in the life of this thing. He authentically believes that it can rejuvenate tainted souls, or at least give them one hell of a guilt complex. And he alone sees himself as a Spiritual Director of this set up with a burning conviction that the Almighty has made this his life's work.

RICHARDO

I have real doubts that he's as dedicated as all that. Who in the hell says this's got to have this salvation program anyway? What's wrong with dealing with this simply as an artistic...

SQUIRES

I do. People are hungry for this crap. They're insecure--an attack could hit any hour, any minute, any second. They're desperate for instant forgiveness, and art alone isn't going to do it. Don't you see it? They want to be reminded how far they've strayed, and then, they want Jesus. Accept it. And we've got the answer.

RICHARDO

You really believe it. You're sure it'll make us a pot of gold. Okay. Nothing to lose. Let's get him on our side so we can make this thing go. Just so I don't have to spend much time near it once it's on its way.

SQUIRES

Agreed. But to get him our side. My arts of persuasion have failed miserably. Can you do the job?

RICHARDO

(Shaking his head.)

He's never given in to me on anything important. Why not my mother?
SQUIRES

(Cautiously choosing each word.)

Your mother is...is tending to be...let's say "more detached" from Julio lately, and so she's not...really in a position to swing much weight with him...

RICHARDO

(Readily catching on.)

Hmmm...more than your selling gimmicks are putting him on the ill side.

SQUIRES

Don't start being virtuous. With you out on your sprees, and your father sulking and keeping to himself, your mother's needed a friend--some compatibility. No one deserves it more.

RICHARDO

Easy, friend. My father is far from sacred to me--nor is my mother, for that matter.

SQUIRES

Your mother is a fine woman.

RICHARDO

But not for Julio.

SQUIRES

Yes.

RICHARDO

I've always known that, and she has been starved for--compatibility. Good luck.

SQUIRES

You'll come to understand.
RICHARDO

Oh, I do now--don't fret.

SQUIRES

Well...to get back to business...

(Squires stops as he notices RICHARDO straining to see someone in the direction of the booths, then looking horror-struck and backing away in the opposite direction.)

...What's wrong?

RICHARDO

The girl from the other night--the one that loaned me the $150. I'm not in the mood to see her right now.

SQUIRES

Which one?

(RICHARDO indicates.)

No...no. Not the wide-eyed child. Is this what you've been chasing? Is this what you've been chasing?--"free-wheeling broads"?

(He breaks into laughter.)

RICHARDO

(Miffed)

She's twenty-one, and she had $150. Why be hard to please?

(Backing off towards SQUIRES' trailer.)

Humor her or something. I'm ducking into your trailer.

(He exits.)

SQUIRES

She's your problem, but go ahead.

(The girl has paused at the jewelry booth to buy RICHARDO an ID bracelet. She is of medium build characteristically feminine in her movements, and
somehow radiates a wholesomeness of manner and purpose. As SQUIRES takes a step towards her, she pays for the bracelet—after some digging in her purse—and turns away to start towards the display tent. She notices SQUIRES.)

GINNY

Sir.

SQUIRES

Yes?

GINNY

Are you connected with this, in any way?

SQUIRES

(Taking some interest in her after a good look.)

Why yes. I'm Mr. Squires. Phillip Squires. Can I...

GINNY

Oh yes, I've heard of you. I'm Ginny Ephrem.

SQUIRES

(Taking her hand.)

How do you do?

GINNY

Fine, thank you. I...I was looking for the owner, Ricardo— I don't know his last name.

SQUIRES

The owner?

(Then realizing that RICHARDO has lied to her.)

Oh yes, Mr. Ricardo. A very busy man right now. He probably told you--this show opens tonight.

GINNY

Oh, I wouldn't bother him for the world in that case. I know how much work he's put into this. I'm sure he hasn't a minute.
SQUIRES

That's possible.

GINNY

Well, I'd like him to have this

(She holds out the bracelet.)

--for good luck tonight. If he's free for just a moment anytime today, would you give him this? And tell him hello from Ginny? He was so nice to me the other night.

(She starts to withdraw.)

SQUIRES

(Taking considerable in GINNY'S manner, getting ideas at the same time.)

Of course, I'll get it to him, and I'll say hello. This'll mean a lot to him.

GINNY

Well, thank you. Goodbye.

(She continues to withdraw, but with hesitation.)

SQUIRES

(Taking a step forward.)

Could I show you anywhere? You may not know your way around here very well.

GINNY

Oh yes--I'm fine. I haven't far to go.

(Losing composure.)

Thank you anyway.

SQUIRES

(Noticing this.)

There's something else?
GINNY

(Stopping.)

No, no. That's all.

(Moving away again.)

Goodbye.

SQUIRES

(Moving quickly to her and taking her arm.)

Wait. There's something wrong.

GINNY

(Turning to face SQUIRES, not shedding a tear but close to it.)

He has taken everything but my last few collars, and I'm out of work...and I was counting on him to...but I can hold out another few days...until he gets things running. I'm all right.

SQUIRES

Wait, please. I'm starting to understand. You need that money badly.

GINNY

It's really the job I want. Richardo made it sound so interesting. I only ask enough to live on.

SQUIRES

What job?

GINNY

Why, why the job--the job he sold me for $150.

SQUIRES

He sold you a job here?
GINNY

Yes. It's unusual to buy work, I guess, but he made this sound so special, and worthwhile, and I've been out of work for over a month. I'm sorry he didn't tell you about it.

SQUIRES

Well, no—that's his own business, naturally.

(Pausing)

Tell me, did he specify what the work would be?

GINNY

He just told me about the meaning of the shrine, and what it could do for people, and he said he was sure I would fit in perfectly as someone to collect the admissions, or attract the hesitant ones.

SQUIRES

(Marveling)

He told you all this?

GINNY

Much more impressively--but that was the idea.

SQUIRES

(Inspired)

Richardo--Mr. Richardo at times shows a touch or so of genius.

GINNY

(Encouraged)

Then you like the idea. You might talk to him?

SQUIRES

Ginny...Ginny Eee--What's the last name?

GINNY

Ephrem.
SQUIRES

Ginny, Ginny Ephrem, not only am I going to assure you for Mr. Richardo that you have a job—at least for the next two months—but I'm going to return that $150 "employment fee" to you in full if you'll do one thing—if you manage to please someone in this organization that so far has not been pleased.

GINNY

Sir--Mr. Squires, that sounds wonderful. I'll be glad to try my best for you.

SQUIRES

If you're what I think you are, I'm almost sure your best will be more than good enough.

GINNY

Maybe, however, I'd better--before rushing into this--know what I have to do to please this someone.

SQUIRES

Nothing out of line, I promise you.

(Checking his pockets, coming up with a slip of paper.)

Just go gather up your things, and while you're doing that, learn this little speech. Learn it by heart, and speak it simply and sincerely in that true-to-God voice of yours—and that's all. Come back here, say by four o'clock, and I'll hear it. And as soon as I'm satisfied, we'll let the real owner, Richardo's father Julio, hear it. I think it'll be what he's been looking for; I think you're what we've all been looking for.

GINNY

Then--and that's all I have to do?

SQUIRES

All. Then we'll work you into the show, of course. You go and start packing and working on that speech now.
GINNY

(Giving SQUIRES a hug of gratitude.)

Thank you so, and I will get busy--right away.

(GINNY hurries away past the booths and exits. SQUIRES, very pleased with the turn of events, watches her departure, turns, and looks at the bracelet GINNY has given him for RICHARDO. He walks to the stairs of the trailer, then calls out effeminately.)

SQUIRES

Richardo, you damn little scamp. You can come out of hiding now. I have something for you. Richardo...

CURTAIN
ACT II

Scene 2

THE TIME: the same day, early evening
THE PLACE: same place at the carnival

(It is almost time for the display to open. JULIO emerges from the tent, looks over a few mildly curious passersby who pause and then move on, and starts pacing the raised platform added by SQUIRES which now fronts the tent. Presently CONCETA appears at the door of SQUIRES' trailer sees JULIO, and walks over to him.)

CONCETA

Julio, I've very glad you've agreed to open tonight.

(JULIO gives her a quick glance of contempt, then continues his pacing.)

I know you hate me for what you think I am, but can't you even speak to me?

(JULIO continues to ignore her.)

A little sympathy, a little understanding and trust, a little more help with Richardo--you've sold me short too. It isn't as cut-and-dried as you'd like me to think.

JULIO

I've nothing to say.

CONCETA

You'd like to believe that some terrible lack, some terrible weakness of spirit drove me from you. But I say no. It was simply you.

JULIO

What I can never accept is what you've done to us. For the sake of human decency you've had no right to do what you've done.
CONCETA
Rights? How can you talk of rights when I've never had any.

JULIO
That isn't true.

CONCETA
They were all taken away from me long ago in the name of God. But I lived with it; I put up with it for twelve years--then my chance came to win my rights back. I took it--and you'll never take my rights back again.

JULIO
Keep them--for whatever they're worth.

CONCETA
I will. Let God believe it. I will.

JULIO
And take good care of Ricardo. I'm sure that new man of yours has much more in common with him than I ever did.

CONCETA
Let God believe that too.

JULIO
I wish you'd stop talking about God.

CONCETA
I know--it offends your ears to hear such a sinner using His name.

JULIO
Yes.

CONCETA
(After a thoughtful pause, noting that the crowd of passersby has thickened and that some are wondering over the argument, she lowers her voice.)
CONCETA (Continued)

How I hope this crusade of yours folds—the sooner the better. Tonight might tell the story. I don't think I'll ever really be free until its finished.

JULIO

If it's a failure here, as I expect it only can be, it won't mean lasting defeat. Let it fold here. This is no place for it; your Mr. Squires has perverted its true meaning.

CONCETA

Which you've never understood anyway—just like the rest of us.

JULIO

Thank God he's not been allowed to touch the inside. No...let it fold, I'll find the place for it.

CONCETA

Not on this earth you won't.

(She turns to leave, takes a few steps, and again talks.)

Since you feel as you do, why are you letting it open at all? A contract shouldn't frighten the high and mighty.

JULIO

Because I'm a fool. For a fatal moment back there on the road I thought I was doing it to keep you and Ricardo.

CONCETA

I understand a "child of innocence" has made the difference with you. You've decided to stay and "play the fool" for her.

JULIO

(Exploding)

I don't know what filth Squires has spread, but the girl at least lends a breath of decency to this cheap front. And no...I'm no so "high and mighty" that I'm going to risk breaking a legal agreement.
CONCETA

But you wouldn't be opening tonight without the girl. You wouldn't be taking part.

JULIO

Well, why should you care one way or another?

CONCETA

I don't really.

JULIO

That's right, so don't worry about my motives. Just remember it all began when you and your lover—with great success—threatened me with the loss of a family that was already lost.

CONCETA

Christ, that could only exist in your own sick mind.

JULIO

If my mind's sick, it was the plotting of you and Richardo that made it that way.

CONCETA

The "plot" was your sick creation; it's no wonder your mind's ill. But go on now and look after the child. She's very helpless and innocent, I understand—the helpless usually are. She'll need you. Goodnight.

JULIO

I hope we won't have to talk again.

CONCETA

We won't.

(CONCETA exits into SQUIRES' trailer. JULIO slumps to a squatting position on the platform. SQUIRES, looking rattled, appears from the right.)
SQUIRES

My God man, why aren't the lights on? They're on everywhere else on the grounds. It's opening time...and where's Ginny? This bad start could ruin us.

JULIO

(Not changing his position.)

Aren't we ruined anyway?

SQUIRES

(Feverishly)

What are you talking about? We're losing business. I told them to have these lights on well before dusk--what the hell's wrong with them! And what about Ginny? If you don't have her here by the time I get the lights on, we're going on without her.

JULIO

(Rising)

We're not.

SQUIRES

Listen, you've agreed to go along with this. What are you trying to pull now? How long do you expect me to wait for her?

JULIO

Shortly--she'll be ready shortly.

SQUIRES

(Shouting)

Then get her out here!

JULIO

Get your lights on; she'll be here.

SQUIRES

Well, fine, fine--now you make it simple. Were the stalling tactics necessary?
SQUIRES (Continued)

(Rushing off to the right.)
I'll have these lights up within a minute or two, even if I have to break some skulls.

(He exits.)

JULIO

Ginny.

(A little louder.)

Ginny.

GINNY

(Appearing at the tent opening.)
I'm ready, Mr. Cristus. At least I hope you'll think I am.

JULIO

Step out here and let me have a look.

(GINNY enters, clothed in dark blue robes not unlike those worn by women of ancient Jerusalem. Her face is without makeup, but is radiant.)

It may be a little warm, but put the hood up.

(GINNY raises it; it gracefully encloses her face)

Beautiful--very, very beautiful. I truly believe it's you they'll look at tonight. They won't even be aware of this.

GINNY

I'll try to do my best. And oh, Mr. Cristus, the shrine is everything you said it was--and more.

JULIO

Has it given you a little more peace than you had before you looked on it?
GINNY

Oh, so much, so much more. After being with it, even for so short a time, I feel so calm, and so confident, and so sure about tonight. If I were my own self, I'd be nothing but nerves at this moment, but I'm not.

JULIO

You'll want to spend more time in the tent when you have the time. I think you are one who'll uncover new miracles there every day.

GINNY

I know I will. I feel exactly that way about it.

JULIO

(With an unanticipated, meaningful change in his voice.) The lights aren't up yet, Ginny, but I think you're ready now; will you start your appeal. Just stand right here, and talk--talk right out to the lost souls who look into your face.

(He steps down from the platform and stands before her.)

Go ahead.

(She smiles at him, then starts smoothly.)

GINNY

Lost, hollow souls of man, will you hear me? Will you still harken to a cry of hope? You're starved, yet you still have an unquenchable thirst for faith. But is there any will left? Realize there's more reason than ever before to have that will, but is it there? With all this bright, new hope for God's kingdom on earth, is it there? Or is it dead? And are your souls all dead?

(The attention of a few is drawn, and a small group starts to gather.)

It is written that Jesus said, "...but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed; good were it for that man if he had never been born."

(The lights come on; more gather.)
And if you know this word of God, you may also remember the troubled looks of the disciples, and the sudden flood of guilty feelings, until each one said, "Is it I?, "Is it I?" It was not Judas Iscariot alone who felt the guilt—all felt capable of it. Judas did betray Jesus, but now consider: could not it have been any one of the disciples; and consider further: today, could it have not been any one of us?

We are inadequate in the eyes of Jesus and God. We are his betrayers, for we are the faithless. "Good were it for that we had never been born."

(SQUIRES appears, is startled to the gathering crowd GINNY well into her speech.)

Now give yourself and God a moment of true selflessness, a moment when you can see how you have distorted God's hope for us, a moment when you can truthfully face your betrayal, a moment when you can stand near Jesus and love Him and hate what was done to Him, and what you are still doing to Him.

My ardent prayer is that you will enter here and live this moment, and be reborn.

(Bowing her head in prayer.)

This way each man, dear God. This way, the world.

(GINNY remains with head bowed.)

(JULIO moves quietly from the crowd to mount the ramp leading to the tent's entrance. He glances back for a moment, then exits within after pulling open the entrance flaps. There is an uneasiness in the now sizeable crowd punctuated with short, hushed conversation. SQUIRES moves nervously to the side of the entrance with the plate for admission money. There is a deadly lull, and just when it appears that several are going to turn away and break up the gathering—enticed by the cries from the jewelry and gaming booths—RICHARDO, not previously recognized in the crowd, leaps onto the platform from its midst, drops to his knees, and lightly kisses GINNY'S robe.)
RICHARDO

(Passionately)
She's touched me.

(Rising)
I say this lovely child of God must be His spokesman. Her words have touched me deeply--soul deep.

(GINNY survives the initial shock and drops to her knees trying to hide or pray.)
Maybe, just maybe, she has another miracle behind that canvas, I don't know. Maybe only God knows, but isn't it worth a dollar just to satisfy your curiosity? Come on!
(He leaps from the platform and starts moving among the crowd. Two yield and approach a seemingly stunned SQUIRES, then two more, and all at once there is a flood of admission-seekers. RICHARDO continues to encourage the hesitant as SQUIRES rejoices. GINNY remains on her knees--out of shame perhaps more than anything else. The tent is soon filled to capacity, and SQUIRES artfully closes the entrance; RICHARDO has vanished.)

SQUIRES

(Motioning the remaining patrons away.)
That's all we can take right now, sorry. But we'll have the next showing in twenty minutes. You'll all be welcome in just twenty minutes.

(The remaining spectators slowly drift away, many for just a short distance, however. Finally only GINNY and SQUIRES are left near the platform area. GINNY starts quietly to weep.)

SQUIRES hurrying to GINNY, DRAWING her up on her feet.

Ginny, Ginny--you did a great job--a marvelous job. There's nothing to cry over.

GINNY

There's everything to cry over.

SQUIRES

But you did it; you made it a success.
GINNY

(Close to bitterness.)

Oh yes, but would they ever have gone in without Richardo? Would they have? I don't think so, but we'll never know now. Julio told me this is no place for goodness. Trickery sells all--sacred or not.

SQUIRES

What are you saying? I don't understand.

GINNY

You understand. Richardo won over the crowd. That was your trick, so clever, and I feel so used--a feeling I guess I should be getting used to it by now.

SQUIRES

(Trying to reason)

Listen to me. Richardo was drunk--as usual. He acted on some foolhardy impulse I promise you I had nothing to do with. I did not set up anything.

GINNY

Didn't you?

SQUIRES

Ginny, I had the utmost confidence in you. I feel you would have won them anyway--without Richardo.

GINNY

How I wish I could believe that, but I think I'm getting to know you better than that.

SQUIRES

Don't ruin that beautiful spirit of yours and start seeing everything like Julio. I'm telling you the truth.

GINNY

I'll try--since I really have no place to go from here--I'll try to accept that. It may take time.
SQUIRES

Good, even if it takes some time.

GINNY

Will you make sure that Richardo never puts on his show again.

SQUIRES

I'll certainly try my best. Richardo is difficult to keep under wraps, but I think I can keep him from making another interruption.

GINNY

It's very important to me that what I say is enough to get your admissions.

SQUIRES

I understand that. And I know that what you say is enough in itself. I know--I'm sure they'll keep coming just because you're out there.

GINNY

I guess we'll soon be able to see.

SQUIRES

Yes, we will, and I, for one, have no fears.

GINNY

Please keep Richardo away, and maybe I'll lose the ones I feel now.

SQUIRES

I will.

GINNY

I want to go in now.

*(She starts towards the entrance.)*
SQUIRES

A good idea. I know it will help calm you, and Ginny.

(GINNY turns.)

GINNY

Yes?

SQUIRES

If you have the chance, reassure Julio, please. I'm sure he's condemned the whole business. Certainly he didn't miss Richard's outburst. Please win his trust again. You're the only one who can.

GINNY

I'll try. Maybe I can.

(She moves on.)

SQUIRES

You can, you can. And...

GINNY

(Stopping in front of the entrance)

Yes?

SQUIRES

...and may I tell you that I really think what just happened here, with Richardo, was not any man's stunt, but that it was God's gimmick--His way of helping all of us. That's what I really believe, and I hope that's what you'll believe--and Julio.

GINNY

Yes, I hope so too.

(She exits into the tent.)

(SQUIRES checks his watch, then heads for the trailer CONCETA meets him at the door.)
CONCETA

I got a glimpse of your crowd from the window. Quite impressive. She must have been very good.

SQUIRES

She?

(Momentarily not understanding, then grasping the significance and returning to elation and embracing CONCETA.)

Oh yes, she was good, quite good. But without his help, God knows how good she would have been.

CONCETA

(Puzzled)

His? Oh, so the hand of God did touch her.

(Sarcastically)

God was there, on her side.

SQUIRES

(Gaily)

I'd have my doubts about that, but Ricardo was there, and he was all we needed. He was all we needed.

(He raises CONCETA, lowers her, and elegantly takes her across the threshold of the trailer.)

CURTAIN
ACT II

Scene 3

THE TIME: a month later, past midnight
THE PLACE: still the carnival site

(The display as well as the entire carnival have closed down for the night. A solitary flood lamp provides the only real light, although there is a faint glow from within SQUIRES' trailer. Presently a figure moves out of the tent, turns, padlocks the entrance, and starts to move off to the right. The floodlight reveals that it is JULIO. He is just disappearing in the shadows when the door of SQUIRES' trailer is flung open and both SQUIRES and CONCETA all but fall down the stairs, both quite drunk. They join in uncontrollable laughter as they pick themselves up.)

SQUIRES

By God, that was a damn dirty trick. I'll strangle the son of a bitch who walked off with those stairs.

(There is more laughter.)

CONCETA

Julio--it had to be Julio

(JULIO, recognizing the two, has frozen. Now he whirs away in disgust and exits to the right.)

SQUIRES

Why come out here anyway--this is no place for sex.
CONCETA

Forget sex. I thought we were going to look at the saints in our zoo.

SQUIRES

Hell, what a waste of time.

CONCETA

But you just told me we had to.

SQUIRES

Did I?

CONCETA

Let's get back to the trailer.

SQUIRES

(Tugging at her.)

But did I?

CONCETA

Goddamnit yes! Something about a magazine...pictures, or something.

SQUIRES

(Clearing his mind.)

Magazine...pictures...now wha... Yeah! Yes, yes. 'Nother big outfit comin' out here tomorrow for a look.

CONCETA

So it'll wait 'til tomorrow. I want a drink.

SQUIRES

(Getting to his feet.)

Hell it will. Big four-color spread for around $7500--if they like what they see.
CONCETA

Jeeze-us. This little gold mine just doesn't quit paying off.

SQUIRES

God, we could make a killin' without our buck-a-head babies the way things are now. Just a few more weeks of keeping ol Jule happy and we'll get out of here--get much more exclusive. Hit up everybody for ten or twenty 'stead of a paltry one. Maybe build a whole religion.

CONCETA

It's chilly out here half-dressed. Make up your mind--the tent or the trailer.

SQUIRES

C'mon, to the tent. I wanta make sure our Religious Supervisor hasn't done something to mess up a $7,500 deal.

CONCETA

Godalmighty yes. Lead on, Midas Squires

SQUIRES

(Helping CONCETA up, losing his grasp a time or two.)

I like that. I like that--"Midas Squires"--like anopu--is it "opulent"--yeah, like an opulent prince of the East. That's good.

(They stumble towards the tent entrance, then stop for a kiss. SQUIRES produces a flask, offers it to CONCETA and motions towards the tent entrance with a grand flourish. She takes a long swallow, then SQUIRES does the same. They stagger right into the locked tent opening, then fall back shortling. At last discovering the padlock, SQUIRES mutters about "Always-reliable JULIO who never forgets to lock up" and goes through a drunken pantomime trying to find the right key. Finally the two gain entrance, and after more laughter, a single lamp is lit from within, revealing the shadows of both masked from the waist down by the platform fronting the tent. SQUIRES lifts the remainder of the flask to CONCETA'S lips, then tosses it aside. At this point JULIO re-enters from the right, and seeing the tent open with a light
burning inside, he rushes towards it. But as he makes out the shadows, he stops, then freezes in horrified silence as they disrobe and sink beneath the masking of the platform.

JULIO

(Spinning away as if to vomit.)

God!

(Emotions build within him, and suddenly he makes a dash for the entrance. He is just a stride from it when he stops abruptly. His body seems to slump in defeat.)

Oh Lord God!

(He draws the entrance flaps shut, turns, and walks away, again to the right.)

Let it end here; it must.

(He exits.)

(Moments pass, then SQUIRES rises and starts to dress. As he does so RICHARDO appears in front of SQUIRES' trailer. Noting that the door is open, he leaps up onto the steps and calls, 'Mother!' Finding no one, he descends and is about to exit to the left when he catches a glimpse of the light in the tent. He steps nearer and makes out SQUIRES' figure. He reaches the entrance, throws back its flaps, and suddenly charges SQUIRES.)

SQUIRES

(From within.)

Wha...Richardo...buddy. A, a nice surprise, but this isn't the time or place to walk in on me.

RICHARDO

(Also from within, seeing his mother.)

You've got my mother in here and...holy Christ, you've raped her--and in here--in here!
SQUIRES
Now fella, sober up and leave us alone.

RICHARDO
(Choking on his words.)
That's...my...problem tonight. I'm sober...for...a...change.

SQUIRES
Just don't get belligerent, and let us have our privacy.

RICHARDO
You're a real--a Goddamned opportunist!

SQUIRES
(Trying to be firm.)
Sonny, if you don't think your mother and I have...
indulged this way

RICHARDO
This way! Here?

(Losing a last grip on himself.)
You had to drown her in your booze!

(He rushes SQUIRES and hits him squarely; SQUIRES
feebly tries to counter as blow after blow rains
on him. He is beaten into the ground by RICHARDO
without mercy. RICHARDO finally restrains himself
and pauses over him, regaining his breath. He goes
to his mother, covers her, lifts her with great care,
and appears at the tent entrance with her in his
arms. His chest is heaving with grief. He moves to
the trailer, kneels for a moment before the steps,
head bowed, then rises and carries her on inside.)

CURTAIN
ACT III
ACT III

Scene 1

THE TIME: two months later, dusk

THE PLACE: high on a rugged mountain plateau

(A beautifully rugged, almost grotesque mountain plateau not far from timberline. The area is covered with much rock, tamarack, and scrub pine. Several rock ledges of varying height and size are in evidence in the background. Beneath the most imposing ledge to the left is the familiar display tent, now minus all of its carnival trimmings. Part of the flatbed trailer can be distinguished behind the tent. A carefully laid walkway in the form of a cross has been achieved by a sandstone border which encloses interlaced pine boughs; the vertical segment leads from the foreground to the tent entrance; the horizontal segment leads to a serpentine path which winds up over the imposing ledge at the left and disappears in the shadows to the left, while the other end connects to a rather straight path which exits to the right into a semi-heavily forested area. In the foreground to the right of center, some ten or twelve yards from the vertical segment of the path, is the open side of a simple lean-to made from pine timbers and boughs. It is near the latter stages of dusk. The curtain opens to reveal the bowed figures of men, women, and a few children—all just leaving the tent. Each with a lighted candle, they are humming “Holy, Holy, Holy” in muffled tones. JULIO stands at the intersection of the
cross, grasping the hands of those in the two lines which pass on either side of him and turn to go right and left. After a dozen have passed on either side of him, the lines come to an end and wind their ways offstage, their humming fading to silence. JULIO, suddenly showing great weariness, slumps to his knees as GINNY appears from within the tent. She quickly moves to his side.)

GINNY

Julio, you're out on your feet.

JULIO

(Rising with difficulty)
I...I can't stop myself any more.

GINNY

I don't know what's going to happen if you don't stop driving yourself.

JULIO

God's given me the drive I've sought all my life. Now that I have it, I can't quit.

GINNY

But you're still human.

JULIO

Better than that I'd hope now. Certainly a little above that.

GINNY

But your strength is limited.
JULIO

Yes—I suppose that's true, but how can I sit still when Mufato's gift daily works the miracles he believed it could?

GINNY

I know it's difficult, but you must find a way.

JULIO

Do you realize, Ginny?—now we can say we have a real group of believers, the hope for a new world—all because of the shrine.

GINNY

(With unexpected feeling.)

But does it have to kill you in the process?

JULIO

I see. You are convinced I'm pushing too hard. You truly care that much.

(He reaches out to her and grasps her hands.)

And you're right. I've only been thinking of the cause—and myself.

GINNY

Don't say that. You've given me everything.

JULIO

I haven't. You, and everyone, needs a little personal interest from someone else, and I haven't given it to you.

GINNY

That doesn't matter to me. Really, I understand your dedication.

JULIO

It does matter, and that's always been my greatest failing. I've always been so tied up in a crusade that...that the rest of my life...
GINNY

But that's the way it's got to be with you.

JULIO

Has it got to be? Why then, I should never get would into into the personal lives of others. It means I can only hurt--maybe destroy them. I may be doing that to my wife right now.

GINNY

That's just what Richardo wants you to think. Anyone who truly understands you can't possibly be hurt by you.

JULIO

Why haven't I always just looked after people's spirits and left the rest alone?

(Starting to move towards the lean-to.)

Ever since that night at the fair when I pulled up stakes and left them, I've felt this way.

GINNY

God is guiding you. Don't. Let Him use His will as He wishes.

JULIO

Is He? And even if He is, am I and my cause worth the sacrifice of my family?

GINNY

They haven't been sacrificed.

JULIO

No matter how God might be using me, I'll never completely rid myself of the guilt I have for them.

GINNY

Don't think that. Pray for them instead, and ask God to strengthen them.

(She moves to his side as he stands over the lean-to.)

They needn't be lost for good.
JULIO

(Pondering)
You think there still could be hope for them?

GINNY

I have faith that they just need time to see their sin and their need for you. Richardo's already searched you out twice. Maybe next time he'll stay, and then Conceta too.

JULIO

That's a very refreshing thought. Only you could have soothed me with it. I will pray for them, and you know,

(Stretching)
I am tired—dead tired. I feel it now. I really must be trying to kill myself.

GINNY

(Starting to back away to the left as JULIO starts to settle himself.)

Please rest. A good man like you with so much important work in the world needs much, so do rest...rest like a good man must. Rest...and pray for Conceta and Richardo...and remember God's beauty, and the cross he showed you in the forest...rest...

(She exits to the left.)

(JULIO is soon settled under the lean-to. He turns over as the last light of day fades to darkness. For a few fleeting moments it is so still that only the heavy, rapid breathing of JULIO can be heard, but then his breathing subsides to near-stillness. A dream sequence follows, enacted in the background on the several raised levels of
rock already described. The foreground area where JULIO has fallen asleep remains in complete darkness throughout, while the various ledges above are lighted singly and in combination as required. JULIO does not appear in the sequence. Other reactions reveal his presence to him.

The sounds of the turbulence of a storm now gradually grow out of the darkness. Flashes of lightning appear over one acting ledge area, then another. Suddenly the frightened cries of GINNY can be heard, in crescendo, crying out, "Julio, are you up here? Are you here, Julio? Please answer." As the cries continue, the intensity of the storm suddenly subsides, the lightning flickers to nothing, and as the darkness starts to lift, a remarkably bold, yet ghostly shaft of light of a faintly rosy hue plunges down to one ledge area at background center. It is recognizably shaped like a cross. GINNY'S cries for JULIO intensify more, and in another moment she appears on the ledge, breathless. At first she doesn't see the shaft of light, for she sees JULIO (imaginary to the audience) on his knees and drops to hers beside him.)

GINNY

My dear God. Are you all right, good Julio? With this lightning cracking all over, I was sure you had been... what? Are you all right? You're face is streaked with tears. What is it? Wha...(responding to some indication from JULIO and nearly swooning.) Oh, dear, dear, dear Lord. What is this? Is this real? And oh, my God, is it entering
GINNY (Continued)

your heart as it is mine now? Then...it must be. This must be the place!

(She weeps and holds out her arms to JULIO.)

(But just as GINNY'S embrace is closing around the imaginary JULIO, the area darkens, the shaft fades and as it does so the blunt laughter of SQUIRES and CONCETA rings out from an area to the left, and as the light comes up on that area, it reveals SQUIRES sprawled on the ground with CONCETA tugging at him.)

SQUIRES

Some son of a bitch stole the stairs. By God, he stole the stairs.

CONCETA

It must have been Julio, it must have been Julio, it must have been...

SQUIRES

By Jesus, he stole the stairs, he stole the stairs.

CONCETA

Julio, Julio, Julio did it...Julio...Julio...

(As CONCETA continues to repeat JULIO'S name, SQUIRES right's himself, embraces CONCETA roughly, but as he starts to take her to the ground, she frees herself for a moment and reaches out with open arms, still repeating JULIO'S name. Slowly SQUIRES pulls her over away into the shadows as the lights dim. At last CONCETA'S voice is not heard. The shaft of light flickers in the first acting area but does not gain full intensity. GINNY'S form, just as it was left, is barely outlined. The storm sounds rise again, and then RICHARDO'S voice is heard from the stage left area but rather than in the background, just above the ledge which protects the display tent. The lights come up on him as the cross continues to flicker.
RICHARDO

The tainted son is here, father. Tear yourself away from your shrine for a moment and see me. I'm sure you're there.

(Pause)

Off your knees and hear me out damnit!

(His reactions reveal that JULIO has come out and is standing in the darkness below him.)

Did you expect me to be in hell by now? Of course you did. Oh, don't waste your time with trite questions about my health; I'm thriving on lust, liquor, and lechery as usual. But hear me out. I didn't track you down for nothing. I came to tell you that my mother, who for a dozen years was presumed to be your wife, is day in, day out--drinking herself to death. And I think you'd better go to her. And it must be soon or somebody's god—I hope it won't be yours--will be taking her, so if you care at all...

(He turns away suddenly and runs into the shadows)

...if you care at all, you'd better do something.

(He disappears as the light in the area goes black.)

(The flickering cross dies, and for a few silent moments the stage is dark. JULIO can be heard turning restlessly in the lean-to. Then he settles down to a deeper sleep. The lights come up on the first acting area where GINNY had appeared. Now, instead of GINNY, the figure of a small, elderly man in overalls is revealed facing towards the spot where the cross had appeared. He seems to be talking to himself at first, then it becomes clear that he's addressing JULIO.)

MAN 1

Why should any man in his right mind ever doubt that God dropped a cross down through the trees of one of His forests? I just have never been able to see how any man could deny God and His miracles, if you want to call them that.
(Turning to reveal his face.)

So much of everything around us are miracles. And who could ever doubt your word, my beloved Julio, or the word of a pure child like Ginny?

WOMAN

(Appearing from the right.)

You needn't be at pains, to make us believers. Surely as we stand here it happened. Surely it was no freak of nature. But it was a personal experience for you and Ginny--share it only if you wish to.

MAN 1

You needed renewed strength to go on, and God gave it to you. And we believe that. And we too have those very real carved testimonies to live by. Remember that; it's all we really need.

MAN 2

(Appears from the left.)

You bet all we need. I learned that back on a logging trail after I'd lived through the fall from my truck--down the mountain beside fifteen tons of thundering logs. Came out of it without a scratch, and I'd thought about the reason I'd been able to pray then to save myself. I thought of that crazy--I called it crazy then--shrine in a tent I'd seen at the fair one night. Then I knew I'd felt the same then, exactly the same as when I was tumbling down the mountain. Don't you think something like that has brought each one of us here? Believe it.

(The others nod assent.)

MAN 1

Since I'd lost my wife, I'd taken to walking--maybe trying to find my wife again, or to find God really for the first time. And then I mended a wheel on Julio's wagon--just happened to come by that wagon--and when he couldn't offer any pay for it but invited me to look into his wagon, well--that was the beginning of my miracle, the end of an empty life.
WOMAN

I've known too many false Christians--unlike all of us--so drenched in sin that they would have smothered in another minute if they hadn't come up to God for air. And when they do, they think they have a monopoly on God. Finally, when one of these church-goers had returned from an all-expense paid missionary, he turned on me and blustered, "...and when do you think God will come to one so much in need as you?" I walked away and left the church forever. That was the beginning of my miracle, and then I heard of this, and I followed it and found in its beautiful simplicity and lack of sham what I'd been seeking all my life.

GIRL

(Appearing from the left.)

We are all in the right place now, aren't we? And we are all going to save others, shan't we?

(The others attempt to reassure her, saying "Surely," "Try never to doubt it," "This is the real starting place." But turning to the place where the imaginary JULIO stands, the girl continues to be persistent.)

GIRL

And you shall lead us, won't you?

(The others indicate reassurance as previously.)

You must lead us, at least the younger of us like myself. You see some of us--like me--don't think we have the strength in ourselves like all of you older ones. I'm afraid, you see--I'm afraid we're kind of like those misguided ones you were talking about and...

WOMAN

You can't mean that child.

GIRL

But I do. It's so hard to understand righteousness, for us.

WOMAN

Why, if you really know what you're saying, your place can't possibly be here.
GIRL

Yes, yes, I'm sure it's here, but I'm trying to say that we need others' strength and good sense to build our faith on.

WOMAN

(To the others.)

She has real weakness, I'm afraid. Is her place here? I doubt it.

GIRL

I'm afraid so many of us are just too young, or immature, or something—and I'm afraid that without the help of those like good master Julio who are in tune with God, I'm afraid that we'll just go through life reacting to our own failings, but never finding the right path.

MAN 2

(Stepping forward.)

And so you'll get that help, isn't that true, brother Julio?

WOMAN

(Shaking her head.)

I'd think twice about this child. I'd be wary of her.

GIRL

Don't be. Please. If anything is certain in my heart, I know you must reach us, we who can't have their own miracles but who know they must keep searching for them. Isn't it so?

MAN 1

Surely he agrees.

GIRL

If your tent of miracles isn't here for the lost souls, then I've misunderstood all this time.
MAN 1

I'm sure you haven't, has she good Julio. Has she?

GIRL

You've got to answer.

(In considerable anguish.)

You must let me know.

(Suddenly her face is twisted in disbelief.)

Don't...don't turn away!

WOMAN

It's only right that he shouldn't want to cope with you, or your kind.

MAN 2

I'm sure he does. He isn't himself. Are you all right?

GIRL

(Defeated, she walks away into the shadows.)

He walks away. He doesn't want anything to do with me...
He just walks away...

(The lights dim as the GIRL mumbles on, "...he walks away." GINNY appears from the right and assists the GIRL'S exit to the left; the others follow, the two men glancing back in confusion at the imaginary JULIO'S departure. As the lights fade to darkness, there is a roar of thunder, then another, and suddenly RICHARDO appears on yet another ledge area to the far right. His hands are out appealingly. The lights come up to full, then dim out quickly as he finishes.)

RICHARDO

Day in...day out, she's drinking herself to death. There's not too much of her left now, but you must claim what's left...you still might save her...you still might save her...
(RICHARDO'S area fades out, the area in which SQUIRES and CONCETA formerly were dims in to reveal CONCETA, drunkenly reeling, then banging on an imaginary door. SQUIRES appears at the door from the shadows, and she falls to her knees. He looks at her in contempt.)

SQUIRES

So you've managed to crawl to me at last. I wasn't going to hold onto anything of yours another day.

(He disappears in the shadows and, in pantomime, returns and hurls imaginary luggage, bags, etc. at her.)

Good-day, and don't come around here begging. Your son owes me so much in hospital bills it'd hardly be in place.

(She tries to enlist his assistance in getting up after gathering her things; he pushes her back roughly, and she falls hard. Showing little regret, he finally throws some money at her feet.)

Go on, that'll buy enough drink for another day or two.

(She grabs it and half-falls, half-lunges out of the scene.)

And now only Mr. Cristus himself and I have a little score to settle. The "saint" must be brought back to earth and its realities.

(The stage is blackened again, there are more thunder rolls, then something unlike thunder, but like a gaping roar continues to grow as two ledges come into view, dimly lit. JULIO'S pilgrims, all with their backs to the audience, sway to and fro rhythmically as the roar continues, then fall to their knees as its volume mounts even more. Suddenly the scene fades out, the cross is illuminated fully, and GINNY appears in her area re-enacting the cross-discovery scene, only now without dialogue. A few moments of this and both cross and scene fade, the SQUIRES-CONCETA area to the left dims in and CONCETA appears as in Act I, Scene 2).
CONCETA

I still love you so. Ricardo is gone—I'm sure he won't be back until late.

(‘She reaches for the bow in her hair, releases it, and lets down her long, dark tresses.)

(The scene dims out, the roar resumes in crescendo again, and the slim outlines of the pilgrims are again distinguishable as they sway in rhythm. This fades out, and GINNY’s area lightens.)

GINNY

Lost, hollow souls of man, will you hear me? Will you harken to a cry of hope? You're starved, yet you still have an unquenchable thirst for faith. But is there any will left...Is there any will left...Is there any will left?

(Now her voice trails off into silence as the scene fades. Now SQUIRES appears in the same spot under bright illumination.)

SQUIRES

And now only Mr. Cristus himself and I have a score to settle, right Mr. Cristus? And the law's on my side all the way. So let's settle our little score. Let's settle it now...

(He is blacked out.)

(Now GINNY can be heard calling out for JULIO from some distance as in the first dream phase, but it slowly grows more immediate. The cross flickers bravely, but continues only to flicker. Dim flashes of lightning again reveal the swaying pilgrims as the roar again becomes audible. Half-light catches SQUIRES in a flicker again, then RICHARDO appealing, then CONCETA loosening her tresses, then the GIRL as JULIO walked away from her. All at once the kaleidoscopic effect halts altogether, although GINNY’s cries for JULIO have continued throughout it and still go on, and the stage goes black. Now GINNY’s cries are very close and real. JULIO can be heard thrashing beneath his shelter, and he screams out in his sleep, waking himself. He leaps to his feet in total confusion, and is just coming to his senses when GINNY rushes in holding aloft a small lantern.)
JULIO

(At first startled, then recognizing GINNY.)

Was that you, crying out in the dark. It seemed as if you've been calling out to me all night.

GINNY

Yes, it was me.

(Bursting out in horrified tones.)

Squires and Richardo are here! Their henchmen have already run or beaten our people off the mountain and...and Richardo says he will kill you!

JULIO

So the moment's come. This is the way it'll be.

GINNY

Don't go near them--any of them.

JULIO

Time kept moving on us; now it's run out.

GINNY

(Throwing her arms around JULIO and holding on tight.)

Richardo said he'd kill you.

JULIO

(Gently breaking her hold and striking off on the path to the left.)

GINNY

Julio, Julio--it isn't worth it.

JULIO

God is with us.

GINNY

Yes, but...
JULIO

This is God's moment, Ginny. Let it happen.

(He exits to the left. GINNY soon exits after him in pursuit.)

CURTAIN
ACT III
Scene 2

THE TIME: Later the same night
THE PLACE: A grassy plateau halfway down the mountain

(A grassy plateau not far from the foot of the mountain which JULIO has made his retreat. A few scrub pine are dotted here and there. A large portion of the background area slopes up at approximately a forty degree angle. A barely discernible trail winds down from the slope to the right. SQUIRES is poised at the bottom of the trail, apparently about ready to ascend. He is accompanied by five undistinguished henchmen who seem to hover inconspicuously in the background. Two of them, however, are necessarily more prominent than the other three, for they hold a struggling RICHARDO who seems intent on breaking their hold. About half a dozen of JULIO'S pilgrims--including MAN 1 and 2 the WOMAN, and the GIRL--keep their distance far to the left. The GIRL seems to be injured and unconscious and is being administered to by the WOMAN. It is later the same night.)

SQUIRES

(Angrily to RICHARDO.)

And you'll stay here, like it or not. And when I've finished my work above, I'm going to get you as far from here as possible. I'll keep you in chains if necessary, like a mad dog.
RICHARDO

(Continuing to struggle.)
Just think of yourself as usual, Squires.

SQUIRES

I'm thinking of you, too.

RICHARDO

Yeah, for your own good. Why'd you let me come this far?

SQUIRES

I wanted a little entertainment for this—safari. And for some time there, I thought you were only joking about killing your father.

(RICHARDO struggles harder.)

MAN 2

You'd better get that drunken devil out of here right now or something's going to happen.

(He starts to move forward.)

SQUIRES

Get back!

(Threatening as his henchmen raise their clubs.)

All of you stay out of it.

MAN 1

By the holy God, we'll rush the whole filthy crew of you if he or any of you raises your hand against Brother Julio.

SQUIRES

You keep your distance too, old man. And forget about any heroic charge.
RICHARDO

(Scoffing)
"Brother" Julio.

SQUIRES
You'll just get clubbed down like the girl.

WOMAN
Come, let's at least pray for the destruction of these beasts.

RICHARDO
That's right, you holy bastards--pray as the scarecrow saint's taught you--and let the real needs of the world crumble around you. Pray, pray.

SQUIRES
(Slapping RICHARDO)
Quit trying to rile them!

RICHARDO
You're afraid of a handful? A handful of these?

SQUIRES
The ones that ran weren't fanatics.

RICHARDO
Yes, the fanatics of a fanatic who killed my mother. You expect me to just strew flowers on her grave and forget it?

SQUIRES
Use your head for a change. Where's revenge going to get you? Besides, was she really any good? And now, is she really worth all this?

RICHARDO
Shut your mouth, Squires.
SQUIRES

But it makes sense.

RICHARDO

As a son of a bitch like you used her, she wasn't worth very much, but there was a woman in her that knew you for a son of a bitch.

SQUIRES

Shutup, shutup.

RICHARDO

I'd kill you too, Squires, if I could believe she ever took you for more than what you are.

SQUIRES

I said shutup.

RICHARDO

But no...only my father's "religion" could have driven her to you—and suicide.

SQUIRES

I was very fond of your mother once.

RICHARDO

(In high mockery)

"Fond"! What kind of fondness is it that threw her in the street and trampled on her? I'd say the only "fondness" you've ever felt was for yourself.

(SQUIRES grabs a club from one of his henchmen and is about to beat RICHARDO to the ground.)

Yes, do it now, or I'll upset all your big plans for being the Lord High Priest. I'll upset everything with violence, so by all means, use violence.

(SQUIRES lowers the club.)
RICHARDO (Continued)

Make sure the saint's menagerie which is now legally yours will never be yours.

(SQUIRES backs off.)

You are in a bind, aren't you Lord Phillip?

SQUIRES

Everything up there is legally mine. He broke our agree­ment and ran away with it,

(Gaining confidence)

and,

(Confronting RICHARDO again.)

there'll be no violence—now.

WOMAN

You can't talk of legalities here, you young fool. Only God's law applies here, and God's law says that a man like you'll never belong to God's world.

MAN 2

You'll never have the shrine.

SQUIRES

Only man's law counts here, and it's on my side.

(JULIO appears from above right, high on the trail.)

JULIO

(Intruders aren't welcome here, Mr. Squires.

RICHARDO

(Looking up with the others.)

There's the greatest sinner of them all.
SQUIRES
I'm sorry about that, but I have all the right in the world to be here.

JULIO
"All the right in the world" means nothing in God's world.

SQUIRES
Let's talk in realistic terms. You know you violated our contract.

RICHARDO
I want you to come down, "brother" Julio, and welcome the return of your lost son.

JULIO
(To SQUIRES, ignoring RICHARDO.)
I can't talk in your terms.

(GINNY appears at JULIO'S side.)
I've found no justice or meaning in your terms. Here you can deal in mine.

RICHARDO
Don't you ignore me!

SQUIRES
Let's keep it simple. You took something I owned half of before you had the right to, so by our contract all of that up there is now mine.

(Holding up a piece of paper, presumably a copy of the contract.)
The small print here—which I encouraged you to read at one time--makes it very clear.

JULIO
Mufato, the father of my blood, carved it, and God of my soul entrusted it to me. Your blood and your soul can't claim it.

(SQUIRES starts on up the trail.)
RICHARDO

Don't you ignore me!

SQUIRES

I can't reason with you, I see. We're going to take it now--back to where it can do some good.

(He motions to the three of his henchmen who are lagging a bit; they move in behind him.)

If you want to stop me, you'll have to pray extra hard.

GINNY

(To JULIO.)

Let them go if they must.

RICHARDO

(Shouting hysterically.)

You killed my mother! You're ignoring me, and you killed my mother.

(JULIO'S reaction suspends the action.)

RICHARDO

Now you're the executioneer. Grand High Priest. Now, Grand High Executioneer!

JULIO

She isn't dead. You're trying to distract me from your friend.

(Brushing past SQUIRES and heading down the trail toward RICHARDO. Absently to SQUIRES--)

Don't take another step.

(To RICHARDO)
You've got no truth in you. And what a thing to tell me!

RICHARDO

On a grimy, rotting skidrow backstreet--two nights ago. A seizure. They kept her alive about five hours, then it was over. You triumphed. She paid for her trespasses. She's in hell now.

JULIO

(Almost on top of RICHARDO now.)
You're lying... your're lying...

SQUIRES

(From above)
We're going up now, Julio. Nothing but what goes with the display--nothing more.

(He pushes GINNY aside.)
Be wise and let us go about our business without interference.

(To the henchmen holding RICHARDO.)
Make sure you don't let the tiger loose.

JULIO

(Barely hearing SQUIRES)
God'll not let you do that...He forbids such...

(To RICHARDO, now grasping him and starting to shake him.)
You don't make up tales like that--she's alive.

SQUIRES

(Turning just before he disappears above.)
It's no tale. Your wife died two days ago; her burial was to have been today.

(Looking up the trail.)
Let's go get it loaded up.
JULIO

(Struck by SQUIRES' words, unhanding RICHARDO and whirling from him.)

It can't be. Tomorrow...or the next day...or...I was going to look for her. I was going to...

(Shouting)

It's a lie!

(He wanders away from RICHARDO and drops in the grass on his knees, staring ahead at nothing.)

It's a...

(There is a long lull, and then, just as GINNY and some of the other pilgrims move towards JULIO to console him, RICHARDO breaks from the restraint of SQUIRES' men.)

RICHARDO

Such good intentions.

(He plunges a knife into JULIO'S back, holds it for a moment, then withdraws it as JULIO slumps forward. The others freeze or draw back in horror. The henchmen start towards RICHARDO, then suddenly turn and scamper up the trail to exit. RICHARDO holds the knife high over the body as GINNY breaks from the others to assist JULIO. She kneels over him.)

He is dead, my jolly good fellow. He's dead and gone--gone to hell.

(As the pilgrims cautiously move in on JULIO, RICHARDO drifts to the grassy slope of the mountain, looks with sickened disbelief at the bloody knife, lets it slip from his hand, and suddenly dashes up the slope.)

GINNY

(With MAN 1 and 2 and the WOMAN beside her.)

There's still breath in him. Oh God, don't let him die!
MAN 1

Lord God, he's trying to get something out—to get his breath. Are you stopping the blood?

GINNY

(Helplessly)
The gash's so large! I can't seem to.

WOMAN

His blood's all over!

JULIO

(Stunning everyone with an effort to sit up.)

Forget the blood. My shrine's... all... all that's... left. We've got... stop them. Get me up there. Anyway... you can. Now.

GINNY

Julio, no, no.

JULIO

(Appealing to MAN 2)

You're strong. Help me... come, take me up.

MAN 2

I can't do that!

JULIO

Come... everyone. Time is short.

WOMAN

Lift him if he wants it!

JULIO

Hurry.

(MAN 2 lifts him.)

Now go. We'll stop them... somehow.
GINNY

You're killing yourself. Why? Why?

(The WOMAN now leads a handful of pilgrims who have gathered up the trail behind JULIO and MAN 2. As she does so there is a faint, distant rumble in the background.)

JULIO

(Exiting)

I can feel the end. Hurry!

GINNY

(Falling into the arms of MAN 1 who has not followed the other pilgrims.)

Can't anyone stop him?

MAN 1

No... no, no one can.

(The last pilgrim exits.)

(The distant rumble holds, then picks up steadily. MAN 1, sensing danger, starts to draw GINNY back, back behind a protective outcropping of rock behind which the GIRL is lying. Now the rumbling rises to a roar, then a great, gaping roar. The few trees bend before a great gush of air, and as the scene darkens the air is full of dust, boughs, small trees, and rocks. The stage nears darkness, but gradually the roar subsides to a rumble, and as the dust settles and the scene lightens, there is near-silence. A delayed rock slide is loosened; it slips down a portion of the grassy slope. Then there is silence. MAN 1 stands up, taking in a scene of devastation.)

MAN 1

(overawed)

The earth burst open.

(He moves, dazed, from one mangled tree to another.)

It seems just to let loose.
GINNY

(caring for the GIRL)
God wanted to end this--all of it.

MAN 1

(reaching the base of the slope)
Why, it's as if all hell broke loose. The mountain's been sliced in two.

GINNY
Then...we're all that's left.

MAN 1
And all of them up there. Not a soul could have lived

GINNY
He's spared us, for some reason.

MAN 1
It would have taken a miracle to survive...

GINNY

(to the GIRL)
Rest. It's all right now.

MAN 1
(straining his eyes upward)
They needed a miracle...but maybe this time...

(he jumps)
Wait! Am I seeing things? I think there's some...some pitiful creature up there that's gotten through.

(GINNY hesitates, then hurries to look)
Yes--there's someone or something that's made it through.
(Both start waving, they yelling to guide the survivor.
At last the release of rocks and sifting dirt from above
announce his appearance. As GINNY and MAN 1 make the
identification, they can only fall back and gawk.)

SQUIRES

(Stumbling down the slide, his clothes almost torn
off completely, not really aware of his surroundings
or the other two.)

Oh Holy, Holy God, you saw fit. You saw fit...and how your
power came! But you saw fit most precious, precious Lord
God. And that ledge of rock snapped off like a cracker
and took mine. And that mountain burst its insides and
coughed up a billion tons of rock and took his. But God,
you saw fit.

(He drops to his knees in the dirt at the end of the
slide and looks skyward.)

Oh, dear Father, now I know Your power...and You saved me--
from all of them. Can I give thanks, can I find the way?
After all Your power stripped my clothes, deafened my ears,
but left me here!

(Suddenly his eyes brighten, and he rises.)

By God, my Father

(Stretching his hands out)

that saw fit--with my own hands if necessary, I'll build
You a stupendous palace of celebration...of Your power and
glory--a shrine so little a part of this earth that humans
can just marvel at its splendor and fall on their knees.
And how they'll come, as if the world-to-be is

(motioning)
just right this way.

(dropping back to his knees, arms outstretched)

No Lord, no one will be turned away...no admission charge--
none at all. Yes, how the people will come...!
(SQUIRES remains with his arms and eyes upwards. GINNY and MAN 1 remain motionless. As the curtain slowly closes, the lights dim them out, then the surroundings until SQUIRES is lighted. He is darkened as the curtain closes.)