

SELECTED PLAYS

CHAPTER ONE  
THE BEGGARS

Scene 1

*A banquet in Job's house. The revels have ended and the guests are gluttoned, exhausted. Leftovers are strewn on the tables.*

JOB: What is a man who has eaten his fill?

A man who is finished, done for it, nil.

What hope can he wield?

It's all delivered, signed, sealed.

He sprawls inert, barely taking in air.

Life lies like a rock on his heart.

Can I describe such despair?

Darkness like that can't be found anywhere.

But two hours later?

Two hours later, despair despairs.

Though less clear-cut, the horizon grows brighter.

The man doesn't budge, his belly still presses,

But his breath is lighter.

And four hours later?

Four hours later, hope begins to creep

Into his belly. Not a peep

Of appetite but some idea steals in,

And the man who lay on his back an hour before like a turtle,  
With no feeling,

Aiming belches of sorrow up at the ceiling,

Wakes up a bit, turns over on his belly

Like a block

And shifts the job of honking from front to backside.

Whoever said that life is a rock?

*Hanoch Levin*

*Translated from the Hebrew by Barbara Harshav*

*With an Introduction by Freddie Rokem*

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And six hours later?

Six hours later the rock turns into a bird;  
For life is light, colorful, spreads its wings,  
Little chirps in the belly and the man once more springs,  
Soars, fresh and wide awake, salivating, to the table.  
A new man is born every six hours.

FEMALE GUEST: For me it works out very nice:

Every six hours, I'm born twice.

### Scene 2

SERVANT: My lord, the beggars beg leave to come to the table.  
JOB: Blessed art Thou Oh Lord Our God Who feedeth all His creatures.  
Let them in.

(Enter the Beggars. They swarm over the table, gnawing on the bones.)

BEGGAR: Bones. Nothing but gnawed bones.  
Think that's the end of the meal? Wrong!  
They open a bone and suck it.  
Chew on it a bit and chuck it.

But we are not like you; we suck and suck.  
We go to it with devotion, diligently, deliberately,  
Almost tearfully. You'd be amazed—  
You who gorge yourself on meat  
And leave the bone with a lick so hasty—  
How fat and juicy it still is, how tasty.  
Part of the juice, of course,  
Comes from your spit.  
But that's just it—  
To suck a bit of bone  
That was once in the mouth of a contented swell—  
That's not just a bone, it's a pedigree as well.  
(They finish and exit.)

### Scene 3

SERVANT: My lord, the Beggars of the Beggars beg leave to come to the table.

JOB: What! Another round on that heap of bones?

Blessed art Thou Oh Lord Our God Who feedeth all His creatures.  
Let them in.

(Weak and disfigured Beggars enter and attack the table.)

BEGGAR A: Second-tooth bones. The left behind  
Of leftovers. Never mind;  
What was sucked once and satisfied twice  
Won't disappoint when served up thrice.  
Of course there's no marrow, no juice.  
But the bone, on the other hand, is already ground.  
It's soft, falls apart, just like porridge  
And is ready to eat, easily downed.  
We gorge ourselves on warm bone gruel.  
For the rest, we let the stomach rule.

BEGGAR B: Sometimes they forget a bone  
With a little marrow and fat,  
For in time some high-class beggars  
Assume the habits of genuine lords, put on airs,  
Sucking sloppily here, skipping something there—  
Then we come—

(They suddenly bring out a neglected bone and fight over it. One of them wins and chews it while the others watch him. They finish and exit.)

### Scene 4

SERVANT: My lord, the Most Beggary Beggar of Beggars of all the Beggars begs leave to come to the table.

JOB: What will he eat, the table?!

Blessed art Thou Oh Lord Our God Who feedeth all His creatures.  
Let him in.

(Enter the Most Beggary Beggar, a frail old man; he totters and lands on the table.)

BEGGARLY BEGGAR: Empty. Not even a bone. And if there was,  
How would I chew? I've got no teeth.

The only time I get food is when  
One of the middling beggars gulps down  
The bones too fast, his throat rebukes,  
A bone sticks in his gorge and he pukes.

I can swallow what he pukes without having to chew  
And easily digest the thrown-up stew  
Which is already half-digested.  
And if I'm in luck, I find in the mess  
A piece of what was once potatoes, beets, or cress.  
Of course, that doesn't happen every day,  
So I'm always weak, almost fade away.  
Yet, never mind—you get used to it.  
Be patient, my friend,  
And somebody will surely puke in your hand.  
Well, somehow we manage to live.  
There's a God in the sky,  
Tra-la-la, tra-la-lie.  
Maybe they'll throw up for me on the way,  
Tra-la-la, tra-la-lay.  
(*He exits.*)

#### Scene 5

JOB: What did we see here? Miracle? The ways of nature?  
One chicken bone fed a whole gang  
And the last one of them even sang.  
Two things we've seen, it's clear.  
First, there's a God!  
GUESTS: Blessed be He and blessed once again!  
JOB: Second, God gives!  
GUESTS: Amen! And amen!

## CHAPTER TWO

### MESSENGERS OF POVERTY

#### Scene 1

*Job and the Guests drowse off. Enter Messenger of Poverty 1.*  
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 1: Bad news, my lord.  
(*Pause*)  
My lord, bad news.

(*Job is dozing. The Messenger raises his voice.*)

My lord, very bad news.  
Very, very, very bad news.  
(*He shakes Job.*)  
Forgive me, my lord, for persisting, but that's how it is  
With bad news—I didn't invent this—  
You're usually sleeping when it comes,  
It's always at night,  
They wake you up so you won't lose,  
God forbid, a minute of life  
Without knowing the bad news.  
(*He shakes Job harder.*)  
My lord, I have very bad news.  
It's for your ears, it's yours,  
I have to give it to you, nothing will help.  
JOB: I'm digesting. Don't yelp!

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 1: Try digesting, my lord, what I have to tell.  
An earthquake struck Lebanon,  
Your iron mine caved in.  
A hundred and eighty slaves buried alive.  
JOB (*Sitting straight up, stunned*): Deny it! If you have a shred of  
humanity—deny it!

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 1: And if I do—

Will the stones in your mine jump back up  
And stand on top of one another once again?  
JOB: My little iron mine!

My little iron mine in Lebanon!

This is how a man feels when they rip off

His hand and foot. The iron mine was half my wealth.  
(*He stands up.*)

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 1: Where are you going, my lord?

Whatever has to be done—was done.

The police are investigating. My lord's accountants

Are balancing the books. My lord's lawyers

Are drawing up claims for the imperial treasury in Rome.  
The emperor himself guaranteed investments in imperial  
development.

(*He exits.*)

JOB: Now it's happened to me, what always happens to somebody else.  
The most awful thing of all has happened to me. Nothing could be worse.  
And if we were called on to bestow  
Our share of suffering and sorrow—  
I've just given mine, be it nice or mean.  
Thank God—now I'm clean.

### Scene 2

*Enter Messenger of Poverty 2.*

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 2: Bad news, my lord.  
JOB: They already told me.

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 2: Who? I was sure I was the first—  
JOB: They were already here.

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 2: Well, when more information comes in  
From Alexandria, they'll tell you right away.  
JOB: Alexandria?

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 2: Alexandria. Of course, Alexandria.  
JOB: What happened in Alexandria?

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 2: You said they told you—

JOB: What happened in Alexandria?! What happened in Alexandria?!  
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 2: A dreadful storm. The port was flooded.  
Your dock sank, your ships  
Shattered on the rocks.

JOB: What am I? A player in a farce?  
This is my life! My life!  
Those docks and ships you destroyed with your breath  
Were the other half of my fortune! Now I have nothing!

*(Pause)*

Everything?! Nothing's left?! You're sure?!  
*(Pause)*

Two fruits of my life, two beloved children  
I bore and tended and raised up.  
What do I say, children?!  
It's me, my own flesh and bones,  
My arms and legs, my sweat and blood!  
Didn't I give myself there,

My youth, the best years of my life?!  
They killed me! Slaughtered me!  
Sliced my carcass in two! I'm buried,  
Half of me in Lebanon, crushed in the ground,  
Half in the port of Alexandria, drowned!  
*(He turns to leave.)*

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 2: Where are you going, my lord?  
Whatever has to be done—was done.

The police are investigating. My lord's accountants  
Are balancing the books. My lord's lawyers  
Are drawing up claims for the imperial treasury in Rome.  
The emperor himself guaranteed investments in imperial development.  
*(He exits.)*

JOB: I thought the most awful thing happened to me before.  
I was wrong—it happened now.  
*(To the Guests)* Forgive me, everything is falling apart.  
I have to go to my office.  
*(He turns to leave.)*

### Scene 3

JOB: Perhaps you have some bad news for me?  
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: Yes.

JOB *(Frightened)*: Forgive me, I'm just joking.  
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: I'm not.  
JOB: Lebanon?

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: No, my lord.  
JOB: Alexandria, then?

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: No, my lord.  
JOB: Something else?

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: Yes, my lord.  
JOB *(Laughing)*: I don't have anything else, I don't  
Have any more businesses. Go

Tell your news to somebody else.

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: No. You.  
JOB: Somebody else.

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: Only you.

JOB: I don't have anything. The two messengers before you  
Already wiped out everything.

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: My lord, listen—

JOB: Don't keep me. I have to get to the lawyers

To collect the guarantees from the Emperor of Rome.

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: That's just what my news is about.

JOB: Something happened to the lawyers?

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: The lawyers are fine.

JOB: Then what?

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: Rome. A military coup.

JOB: Hey, man! What are you talking about?

Military coup?! The Emperor won't let it happen.

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: He already did.

JOB: Not as long as he's alive!

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: That's right. That's why he's dead.

JOB: Dead or alive—he won't let it happen!

*(Pause)*

Dead?! The Emperor of Rome?! There's no Emperor?!  
The most immortal man in the world, two-thirds

Of the trade in iron and lead, eight-tenths  
Of the production of iron and lead, the steel safe

Of the Empire, the great, infinite trust

And we mortals are just its compound interest—

He's dead?!

If he's dead—who's alive?! Who's alive?!  
*(Pause)*

I still have one lot left that I bought once

In Jaffa, not far from the port—

That's all I have left—

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: The new Emperor also decreed—

JOB:—I can build a shop on it—

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3:—with regard to all lands in strategic  
places—

JOB:—not a big shop—a little hole in the wall—

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3:—absolute confiscation—

JOB:—just a stand—

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3:—with no financial compensation.

JOB: Not even a stand.

*(Pause)*

What do my lawyers have to say?

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: You don't have any lawyers, my lord.

JOB: What do my accountants and clerks say?

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: You don't have any accountants or  
any clerks.

JOB: I'm going to my office to clarify things for myself.

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: You don't have an office either, my lord.

JOB: It's my office! There's my chair,  
My beloved desk,

All my little toys—

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: It's not yours anymore.

JOB: To hell with you! Don't tell me "It's not yours!"

Who are you?! Who are you and what are you—

"This is yours, this isn't yours"—to hell with you!

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: My lord is not in a position to talk to

me like that.

JOB: What?!

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: Lower your voice.

JOB *(Raising his hand to him)*: Varlet! Dog!

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3 *(Pushing him)*: Dog yourself. From dog

you came.

Dog is your father. Bitch is your mother.

Son of a dog. Phooey!

*(He spits in his face, exits.)*

#### Scene 4

*The Guests withdraw slowly and exit.*

JOB: You're going? Well, it's late; good night to you all.

Too bad it suddenly grew late.

We could sit some more and leisurely reminisce:

Remember how once, five minutes ago,

I was a rich man?

Not so long ago, five minutes. Remember?

Like a lord I strode the earth. And once,

Five minutes ago, in this place,

Who would have dreamed of calling me dog

Or spitting in my face?!

*(He bursts into bitter sobs, then stops.)*

Suddenly it grew so late—Oh, just a phrase.

Remember? Five minutes ago. Those were the days.

*(The last of the Guests avoid him and exit. He remains alone.)*

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE BAILIFFS

#### Scene 1

LEADER OF THE BAILIFFS: We're the Bailiffs, come to carry out the decree.

You're bankrupt.

We've come to confiscate all you own,

Except for you yourself—skin, bones, hair,  
Body, soul, and underwear.

(*To the other Bailiffs*) Take the tables, take the benches, take the chairs,

Take the plates, take the cups, take the forks,  
Take the knives, take the spoons, take the jars,

Take the pans, take the bottles, take the corks,

Take the corkscrews, take, take, take, take the cases

Of the corkscrews, take the candlesticks, take the jugs

Take the tablecloths, take the napkins, take the vases,

Take the sofas, take the carpets, take the rugs,

Take the bows, take the plants, take the frills,

Take the screens, take the curtains, take the clocks,

Take the shutters, take the glass, take the sills,

Take the bolts, take the keys, take the locks,

Take the doors, take the floors, take the ceiling, take the walls,  
And if I forgot something—without violating any rights—take that, too.

Take.

(*The Bailiffs empty the hall and strip Job down to his underwear.*)

JOB: You forgot my gold teeth.

I've got some gold teeth in my mouth.

(*He opens his mouth.*)

LEADER OF THE BAILIFFS: Don't be ridiculous.  
Don't try to make us into monsters.

We're all just human, part of the group,

We all go home to our wives at night,

To our slippers and a hot bowl of soup.

(*The Bailiffs exit.*)

JOB: Naked came I from my mother's womb and naked came my mother

THE TORMENTS OF JOB

From her mother, too.

Shuddering, we emerge, one from another,

A long line, naked and new.

"What shall I wear?" asked my mother in the morning,  
But when the day was done,

Naked was she borne to the grave.

Now, too stand naked, her son.

(*Leader of the Bailiffs sneaks in, approaches Job, grabs him by the throat and takes out a pair of pliers.*)

LEADER OF THE BAILIFFS: Open your mouth and don't say a word  
Or—you die!

(*Job opens his mouth wide. The Leader of the Bailiffs pulls out his gold teeth. Job is about to shout in pain.*)

Here's a tooth—one!

Another tooth—two! Three!

Not a sound! Swallow your shout!

It hurts? Your mouth is bleeding?

Bite your lip! Swallow your shout!

Help me get through this job and get out.

(*He exits. Job shouts mutely.*)

#### Scene 2

JOB: My sons and daughters, fruit of my loins,  
Look at this hand—with this hand

Your father fed you.

Like magic, infinite plenty he drew—

Bread and honey and butter, flowers and clover,

The charms we thought would never end. Now it's over.

The magic is gone. The hand is empty.

Now it's stretched out to you.

Congratulations, my children!

Unto you a new father is born!

Look at him. How sweet. Just like a babe,

Naked, weeping, and wetting. Skin smooth as silk.

Helpless, toothless. Take him in your arms,

Rock him, feed him on porridge and milk,

Put him to sleep with lullabies, keep him warm.

He needs your love.

Oh, my children, the hand is empty,

The father who gave is no more.  
A new father is born unto you—a father who takes.  
Congratulations!

#### CHAPTER FOUR MESSENGERS OF DEATH

##### Scene 1

*Enter Messenger of Death 1. He stands silently, facing Job.*

**JOB:** The house is empty, and you don't burst in  
As if you came to take something.  
You reach out your hand, hesitant.  
You want to tell me something.

*(Pause)*

If you had bad news to tell me,  
You would look me squarely in the eye.  
But you're trying hard to be human,  
So I see it's not bad news you bring,  
It's dreadful tidings.

*(He approaches Messenger of Death 1.)*

I'd like it better if you looked at me coldly;  
Those eyes, full of pity,  
Can mean only one thing—  
*(Suddenly he groans.)*

Which one?!

**MESSENGER OF DEATH 1:** The firstborn. At his own banquet. At noon.  
Suddenly a mighty wind struck the house.

Fire quickly spread to all corners, mounted the stairs.  
Shrieks of fear and pain were heard.  
When the fire died, so did the shrieks.

*(Two stretcher-bearers enter carrying a body covered with a blanket. They put it on the ground and exit with Messenger of Death 1.)*

**JOB:** This is my firstborn,  
The baby who would fall asleep in my arms,  
Calm and trusting. The baby who called me at night, "Papa!"

He knew I'd come and put him on my lap.  
When he ran around the room  
Shrieking, shrouded in smoke,  
When all the years suddenly fell away  
Like a shell. When he became once more a frightened child.  
"Papa!" he called to me. "Papa, Papa!"  
He screamed and couldn't understand  
How the flesh so dear to his papa was burning up:  
"Where is Papa?" he called to me. "Papa! Papa!"  
Here is my firstborn son. His face turned to me  
But his eyes were already fixed  
On something beyond me.  
Disappointed, perhaps, he turned away from me,  
Walked off, left me alone  
With the burden of my guilt.

##### Scene 2

*Enter Messenger of Death 2.*

**JOB:** I cannot bear any more tidings.  
Two daughters and a son are left.  
Take pity on me.

**MESSENGER OF DEATH 2:** God will take pity on you  
Who took your two daughters from you.  
Your firstborn invited  
To that feast, it seems,  
All his brothers and sister.

*(Enter four stretcher-bearers carrying two bodies covered with blankets. They put them on the ground and exit with Messenger of Death 2.)*

**JOB:** My daughters, my little girls,  
I'm just beginning to grieve  
For your older brother.  
Now you come, too, two dead girls,  
Mute, obstinate, demand  
Your share of grief. As once,  
When you jumped up to hug me when I came home,  
Rejoicing, shouting, prattling away, kissing my  
Cheeks with warm lips. Your breath was so fresh

And you called out, "Papa, see our new dresses!"  
"Papa!" you call to me now, "see how we lie here,  
Still. See how we have no breath!  
Papa, you think this will pass  
Like the measles and mumps of our childhood?  
When, Papa? When will we get up? When will we go out  
To the garden? When will the doctor  
Let us see the sun again? And if we don't get up, Papa,  
Weep for our lives! Weep for the golden days of our childhood,  
A foretaste of the great joy to come. Where, Papa,  
Where is that great joy?"  
Just a minute, my daughters, wait.  
I haven't yet finished with your older brother.  
How will I have enough grief for all of you?  
Even if I turned into  
A torch of grief and wrath, how long can I burn?  
How long can I shout, "I have lost my firstborn son and my two  
daughters,  
I have lost my firstborn son and my two daughters!"  
The land is so big  
And heaven so far away  
And I have only one throat to shout—one throat!  
And I haven't yet forgotten my grief for my lost riches,  
I loved my wealth, too.  
Oh, my wealth and my money; oh, my children, my children;  
Oh, how much labor of grieving I must do.  
(Pause)  
(Suddenly) He invited all his brothers and sisters to the banquet?  
My youngest son, was he there, too, at that table?

### Scene 3

*Enter Messenger of Death 3.*

MESSENGER OF DEATH 3: No. Your youngest son wasn't there.  
He was late.

JOB: I still have a son!!

MESSENGER OF DEATH 3: And death was waiting for him on the way.  
In an earthquake,  
A rock came loose from a mountaintop,

Rolled down to the path beneath,  
And crushed the passersby, your son included.

(*Enter two stretcher-bearers with a body covered with a blanket.  
They put it on the ground and exit.*)

It may comfort you to know that death was instantaneous—  
No suffering, no agony.

(Pause)

It may comfort you to know that the calamity isn't yours alone.  
Other people were killed—a bride and groom, children.

(Pause)

I have no other comfort for you.

(*Exit Messenger of Death 3.*)

JOB: My youngest son, my favorite child.  
Grief for any one of them

Would have drowned me like a flood.  
Grief for all four of them—

I don't have the strength to bear it.

And so, my youngest son, I defer the tidings of your death  
For another time. May I live to see the day  
When I have strength for the hard labor  
Of grieving for you.

Now I'll say only this: Welcome back.  
They all came back. All my children are here.

My little boys, my little girls, you came home,  
And the house is filled once again. Welcome back.

### Scene 4

*Job sits stunned, facing the bodies. Almost insensibly, he begins to feel an  
itching, first in one place, then another. He scratches absentmindedly. The  
itching is relentless. He scratches some more. He begins to feel itching in  
various parts of his body and it grows worse. He scratches frantically. He  
tears off his underwear so he can scratch more easily. He rolls around on  
the ground, naked, and thrashing around. Suddenly, horrible bestial  
screams come from him. He rolls around and screams until he is ex-  
hausted. He remains on all fours, barely whining and then falls on the  
ground, rolls up in a fetal position and lies still. Every now and then his  
body is convulsed by a spasm.*



## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE FRIENDS

#### Scene 1

*Enter Job's friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar; they see him from afar.*

ELIPHAZ: We're looking for a man by the name of Job.

We're his best friends. We heard

That calamity befell him.

We have come to give him comfort.

*(Job doesn't respond.)*

BILDAD: We're looking for a man by the name of Job.

We're his best friends—

ZOPHAR: Friends, here's our companion Job.

*(The three of them stand still, shocked, for a moment. They approach him slowly.)*

ELIPHAZ: Job, here are your friends—Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar.

JOB *(Groaning from the itching)*: This itching! Itching! My skin is burning all over!

I could be a happy man if not—

For this itching. Just this itching.

I'll tell you, gentlemen, you itching beasts,

Without this itching—the world would not be the same.

Why complain? Everything's fine, splendid, a game,

So well-balanced, life, death—the world goes on, it seems.

But this itching ruins our happiness, spoils our dreams.

You know what brought down the great Emperor

Of Rome? Itching. The Emperor of Rome raised his hand

To scratch his nose and lost his neck.

Listen to the words of an experienced man, my boy;

It is only itching that separates man from his joy.

*(The three Friends weep silently.)*

#### Scene 2

JOB: Why do you weep? You itch too?

ELIPHAZ: Our good friend, Job, do not condemn us

For not being stricken with your plague.

We too are at the mercy of God's wrath

Or His grace.

And if God should turn His face

From me, too,

I would be itching and naked over there, instead of you

And you would be standing here, blessed,

Giving me pity—and dressed.

God chose you to suffer

And us—to bring you consolation.

My friends, let us now rend our garments,

Cover our heads with ashes,

And pray humbly to God.

*(The three Friends sit facing Job.)*

JOB: What are you talking about—"God"?

What does God have to do with this,

The wreck of my life?

If that's God's doing,

What's His game? What are the rules of His play?

Why does He return my sons as carcasses all in one day,

Why does He crush my mines in Lebanon,

Sink my ships in Alexandria, and bring down the Emperor of Rome?

Maybe you'll tell me why, for dessert, a sweet,

He gives me this itch for a treat?

Why is He punishing me, this God?

That's a reward? Divine Justice? An even rod?

No, my dear friends.

The world of Job

Does not include God.

ELIPHAZ: Dear friend, Job, we do not intend to prate

Morality to you in your present state.

We always keep in mind that things are good for us now, it's true—

Though who knows for how long—and bad for you.

Nor do we want to hint

That God is punishing you for your sins.

The whole world knows

That Job is a righteous man. And yet.

There is a "yet."

Scratch around inside yourself a bit.

Maybe you once committed a crime? No?

Try to recall, now's the time. No?

Maybe many years ago?  
 Never. Well, let's say,  
 Maybe you were once on the verge of sin? No? No way?  
 Not even that? Well, let's say,  
 But maybe you sinned only in thought?  
 Not even there? Let's say,  
 There's a lot of "let's say" here.  
 That really ought to make you a righteous man, so  
 Maybe God is simply testing you, like long ago  
 Abraham, another righteous man (so much greater)—  
 And like him, He will reward you richly (generations later)?  
 Who can know the mind of God?  
 We are only small details  
 But only God can see it whole.  
 Man makes small accounts, one and one, plume and broom,  
 And the Lord above sits and sums up all the brooms,  
 All the plumes, the heaven and the earth.  
 Look at the world. Don't rip pieces—  
 Look at all of it. See how correct it is, how right.  
 Embracing everything, in beauty and in might.  
 Into this world, our lives are poured  
 Like water from a dark pitcher  
 Suddenly bursting out onto the open field.  
 Here is the ground, here the sky,  
 Here are trees and fruit and birds that fly,  
 A world splendid, colorful, a world filled with sores  
 But also with solace and healing,  
 A world familiar as our home  
 But also filled with mystery and concealing,  
 A world where darkness is encircled by a great ring of light.  
 Job, it takes greatness of soul to ponder  
 The whole world. If you have the magnanimity now to wonder—  
 This is the time. Lift your eyes up.  
 Leave off your sufferings, accept God! Rise up!  
 JOB: My good friend, you're tormenting me!  
 You talk to me about justifying God;  
 First prove you can justify man.  
 Don't torment me. Let me scratch in peace.  
 I don't know the grace of creation. I don't know  
 God.

BILDAD: You knew Him when things were good.  
 JOB: When things were good—things were good. Now  
 Things are bad. I don't know God.  
 ELIPHAZ: Does God exist when we're content  
 And disappear when happiness is spent?  
 Is God a bubble of soap  
 That we blow with a puff of air,  
 And then burst with a little poke?  
 People in torment like you and even worse  
 Call to Him in their distress.  
 They see no confliction  
 Between belief in God and their affliction.  
 For who are you with all your pain?  
 A hundred yards away  
 No one hears your scream or plea.  
 A thousand yards from here, you look like a flea.  
 What do you think you look like from the stars?!  
 JOB: Let the stars accept the existence of God! Let he  
 Whose notions of right and wrong haven't gone awry,  
 He who believes the arms of God embrace him—  
 Let him embrace God!  
 I am small and blind and groping like a mole  
 In a dark burrow. In darkness I live,  
 Total darkness, a hole.  
 And I hear of light only in tales!  
 ELIPHAZ: The blind man doesn't know the sun  
 But he does know it exists.  
 You're steeped in your itching but you know  
 Under your skin that God exists.  
 JOB: No! I exist! You exist!  
 The gap between us exists! God does not exist!  
 The itch on my skin exists!  
 The death of my sons exists!  
 The loss of all my wealth exists!  
 All I do not have—  
 That's what exists!  
 BILDAD: You're quite arrogant, you know? A little humility.  
 Just because you're suffering  
 And we show complete understanding of your plight  
 Does not mean that you are right.

There's the demagoguery of the contented man;  
But there's also the demagoguery that suffering and torment bring.  
You're not allowed to do everything, not yet everything.  
You think if you yell "my itching exists!" day and night,  
That wipes out God. Your world today is itching—right.  
God is long-suffering and generous, He's not mean,  
You're not the first itcher He's ever seen.  
But I'm not generous like God.  
I'm just an impatient man; I mind—  
I won't let you spit on all that is holy, divine.

JOB: I see the world through itching—  
How do you see it?  
Through your belly? Comfort? Fat? You stand  
On the firm base of your lives,  
Feel the ground solid beneath your feet.  
How will you see the fact that it's all fluid, built on water?  
You need someone to guard your safe  
And you hired God to do the job;  
I don't have a safe anymore—  
I fired God from my world.

ZOPHAR: Friends, from the guts of our dear Job  
Comes an awful shout. The eyes of our dear Job  
Are dimmed with blood and tears.  
How can he see God? Give him a day or two,  
I'm sure it will all become clear.  
For in a man's soul, as in a pond, anger and woe sink  
And the limpid water once again reflects the image of God.  
Let us go now. Let us leave him alone with his sorrow.  
We shall return again on the morrow.

### Scene 3

BILDAD: I'm not sure I'll come back. Let's be frank:  
Philosophizing about God didn't start today.  
The pros and cons are known. But I'm not  
Talking now about philosophy, just life.  
The everyday life  
We mortals—with a safe or without a safe—lead  
In a society which upholds law and order.  
Yes, law and order.

Who gives our laws meaning?  
Who endows our life with sense?  
In our society—God is the significance.  
If God does not exist, it will follow—  
Life has no meaning, law is just hollow,  
Empty, with no rhyme or reason.  
If God doesn't exist, life's just a game—  
To steal or not to steal—it's all the same.

JOB: You're scared of thieves. So you  
Burden my suffering with meaning.  
But what is meaning except suffering?  
I itch and itch,  
Try to dig into suffering, find meaning in it.  
And I tell you: There is nothing  
In the depths of suffering—only suffering!  
I see only suffering filling the world!  
Every block of suffering composed of a thousand slivers  
Of suffering and every sliver of suffering is built  
Of millions of atoms of suffering!  
Suffering exists! I exist! You exist!  
The gap between us exists! God does not exist!

BILDAD: You don't exist! You don't exist!  
Not one member of our society  
Would emit such dirty garbage! Not for a moment!  
Not if he is a member of our society!  
JOB: "Our society"?! What society is "our society"?  
(*Points to the bodies.*)

Here is my society. With them I live  
And socialize. For them and for me—  
For our society—there's no room for God!  
BILDAD: Huddle together and you'll find room! Four corpses  
And a poor wretch smitten with boils won't crown  
And won't drown our God!  
It's easy for you. You talk like a man who has  
Nothing to lose.  
I have. I'm not stricken like you.  
I have to choose  
Life. And it's not easy to keep  
Holding to the fragile pole

Of life. I'm tired, too; I want to drop the role,  
Lie on the ground, beat my breast. But I refrain.  
I won't let you sit and shout there is no God!  
I won't let you. You're insane!

JOB: You won't let me? What will you do? Pull out  
My tongue? Kill me! Please! Be my guest:  
There is no God! No God! No God! No God!

(*His shouts sound like barking, especially since he is on all fours.*)

BILDAD: Look at this dog of God, on all fours, lying  
At the feet of God, barking, "No God!"  
God swings His foot, kicks the dog in the snout,  
But the dog sees only the boot  
And whines, "No God!"

JOB: It suits you, standing there with the boot  
Ready to kick my face. You're at your best.  
You never looked so perfect, so slick.  
All your words were just a preface to the boot.  
You were born to kick—so go on, kick!

#### Scene 4

ZOPHAR: But, my friends, what of pity?  
Not only is justice holy and divine,  
So is pity. Did you forget? Let me remind.  
It is not for us to be more harsh than God.  
The man is drowning and we're standing on the shore.  
Not holding out a rod?

(*He approaches Job.*)

In this world we're all simply  
Frightened orphans seeking our father.  
Did we forget the father's mercy for his sons?  
And you who lie at our feet,  
On your heap of corpses, itching,  
How did we forget your father's mercy for you?  
(*He kneels next to Job.*)

JOB: My father? Yes, I once had a father.

ZOPHAR: And you called out to him at night when you had a bad dream.  
You woke up scared, drenched with sweat and you called out:  
Papa!

JOB: Papa! I called out—Papa!  
ZOPHAR: And he was always there; he came to you and leaned  
over you,

Picked you up in his arms,  
Held you in his embrace,  
And you felt his warm breath on your face.

JOB (*Tears beginning to flow from his eyes*): Papa—  
ZOPHAR: You buried your frightened face in his neck,  
A smile of relief hovered over your lips,  
Your breath calmed down and you fell asleep.

JOB (*Sobbing*): Papa—Papa—Where is he, my father?  
ZOPHAR (*Hugging Job*): There, up above.

JOB: I'm his little boy and it's so bad,  
I had a bad dream in my bed—

ZOPHAR: He hears you. You had a  
Bad dream. Call to him.

JOB: I had a bad dream, Papa,  
And I'm scared and soaked with sweat—

ZOPHAR: Hold out your hands to him.

JOB (*Lifting his hands*): Take me in your arms and bury me in  
your neck—

ZOPHAR: He's holding out his hands to you. Don't you see?  
JOB: My eyes are dimmed by tears—

ZOPHAR: He's answering you. Don't you hear?

JOB: Yes, I think I do. He's answering me.  
Now I see clearly

His hands reaching out to me.

ZOPHAR: He'll never desert you.

He's hugging you—

JOB: He's hugging me—I feel—

He's hugging me now—

(*Suddenly, he bursts into bitter weeping.*)

Papa, look what happened to me, Papa!

Look what happened to me in this world

You brought me into with joy!

Look what happened to your boy!

Look what happened to the joy!

ZOPHAR: You were dreaming, I told you;  
The world is a bubble of a dream.

JOB (*Gradually calming down*): Yes, a dream. I was only dreaming.

ZOPHAR: Now you wake up in the arms of your father  
And he rocks you slowly,

Up, far above the world,

Stars here, the moon there,

Softly and gently and your eyes are shut tight

And you open them ever again to see light—

JOB (*With his eyes shut*): And I open them ever again to see light—

(*A silent joy begins to fill him.*)

Papa's alive, Papa's not dead,

From the cradle of his death, my Papa arises,

My sons and daughters will do the same.

For the world's just a dream, a bubble of a dream,

And death, like the snow, washed away in the stream.

Farewell suffering, farewell sorrow,

Goodbye to my dead daughters and sons;

I'm a baby again, warm in Papa's lap;

Above the world, he carried me far away,

Softly and gently and my eyes are shut tight

And I won't open them ever again to see light—

(*Zophar rocks him in his lap.*)

Rock me, Papa, rock me, like that—

ZOPHAR: Call him, talk to him: Our father who art in heaven—

JOB: Our father who art in heaven—

ZOPHAR: Who sits in the highest—

JOB: Who sits in the highest—

ZOPHAR: Into your hands I entrust my spirit—

JOB: Into your hands I entrust my spirit—

ZOPHAR: And in the shadow of your wings will I take refuge—

JOB: And in the shadow of your wings will I take refuge—

ZOPHAR: Hear my voice—

JOB: Hear my voice—

ZOPHAR: May your ears heed the sound of my supplications—

JOB: May your ears heed the sound of my supplications—

ZOPHAR: For you are good and forgiving and merciful—

JOB: For you are good and forgiving and merciful—

ZOPHAR: God of all the world.

JOB: God of all the world.

(*Pause*)

ELIPHAZ: Behold my friends, the heavens are opening.

See how great is His love for us,

For He called us the sons of God.

My loved ones, are we not the sons of God?

And the heavens are opening.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE SOLDIERS

#### Scene 1

*Enter Five Soldiers, led by an Officer.*

OFFICER: In the name of the new Emperor,

Emperor of Great Rome and her colonies,

These are the words of the Emperor:

I am God, that is he, the Emperor.

You shall have no other gods

Except me, the Emperor.

All prayers and sacrifice to other gods—

Are forbidden. Religious rituals in the temple—are forbidden.

The idol of the new god

Will replace all other idols.

No temple priests, no attendants,

No rabbis, no cantors, no sextons. The new god

Will send his own sextons.

For these are the words of the Emperor;

The god of the Jews is null and void, wiped out.

All who believe in him are heretics and rebels.

To reinforce the new belief and make it crystal clear:

All those who believe in the god of the Jews will have

A spit stuck up their rear.

#### Scene 2

OFFICER (*To Eliphaz*): You, c'mere.

(*Eliphaz comes to him.*)

Does the Jewish god exist or not?

(*Pause*)

*(To the Soldiers)* This man is a rebel.  
Put him on the spit.

BILDAD: Esteemed soldiers, why do you draw  
Such hasty conclusions from his silence,  
Which emanates from his great excitement  
At the rise of our new Emperor,  
Whose most devoted servants we all are?

OFFICER *(Pointing to Eliphaz)*: Has his excitement passed? We're  
waiting for an answer.

BILDAD: Eliphaz, my friend, surely you recall how,  
When we came here an hour ago now  
And saw the calamity that befell  
Our dear Job, itching in his hell,  
How you said to me: A world so full of such suffering  
Is empty of God.  
*(Pause)*

Esteemed soldiers, all of us here will confirm  
That he said to us: "There is no God."  
OFFICER: We want to hear it from him.

BILDAD *(Quietly, to the Officer)*: Let's go off to the side. He'll say what  
you want

But not in front of everybody.  
OFFICER: The confession is in public. That's the Emperor's decree.

BILDAD: Eliphaz, my friend, the esteemed soldiers want  
You to repeat what you said before.  
*(Pause. He embraces Eliphaz.)*

Eliphaz, my friend, when you consider the subject deeply now,  
Think not about Job's dead children; think about  
Your own children: they're alive.  
Think about your fields under the plow.

They produced a splendid crop this year, right?  
Think of your house, of dinner,  
That wonderful dinner after a day of toil;  
Of slippers, a glass of wine, a chat with friends around the table at  
night.

The lovely routine of our lives, the seasons, the days,  
The holidays. Did you swim in the sea this year?  
Warmed your bones on the soft sand, in the sun's rays?  
Eliphaz, my friend, my comrade true,

Will you eat the rich, wonderful dinner tonight?  
Or will everyone sit at the table—but you?

ELIPHAZ *(Weeping with him)*: Tell me some more. About the children,  
tell me.

BILDAD: Like fruit on a tree. You're the sturdy trunk  
Where the red hearts of your children hang.  
The coarse spit that slices your flesh also pierces their soft skin.  
They wait for you, Eliphaz, I am become the mouth of your children,  
The small sweet mouth gaping at the horror of the world,  
With so much trust.

Hear how it screams, this mouth:  
Will you let the spit be thrust?

ELIPHAZ: Oh, my children, sweet little mouths!  
BILDAD: Oh, Papa, hear the sobs that burst

From our sweet little mouths. Not like Job's

Children frozen for eternity, our bodies are warm, it's not yet too late,

The last irremediable step has not yet been taken.  
Don't abandon us Papa; redeem our fate!

To die for your god, Papa, is a great sacrifice:

Now we call on you to make an even greater one: strive,

Sacrifice for your children—stay alive!

ELIPHAZ *(Still weeping a bit, wiping his tears)*: Among the things you  
said, Bildad, my friend,

So vivid, so concrete,

My heart was touched by the appeal to sacrifice.  
Not the sun or the crops or the dinner—

Which indeed is fast approaching—

As I sense by my appetite's encroaching—

But the plea of my dear ones.

On that I could not turn my back,

That alone led me, after serious thought,

To take the inevitable tack:

*(To the Officer)* There is no god.

### Scene 3

OFFICER *(To Bildad)*: You, c'mere.  
*(Bildad comes to him.)*

Does your god exist or not?  
BILDAD: I have never made a secret of my opinions.

I have always insisted and I continue to insist on the importance  
Of social law and order.  
No doubt, the innocent attempt to engage  
The base of social order  
With a god in heaven was necessary at some past stage  
Of human development. God was a rung,  
A means to rise to the highest step,  
Where the Emperor is hung.  
In the middle, wretched people stuck.  
Happy are they at the top, where I now stand.  
Peeping at the hem of the Emperor's frock  
And calling out in gratitude: There is no god!

#### Scene 4

OFFICER (*To Zophar*): You.

ZOPHAR (*Approaching him*): There is a god—

OFFICER: Put him—

ZOPHAR:—in my ass.

OFFICER: Who?

ZOPHAR: God.

(*Pause*)

OFFICER: You make things a bit complicated for me.  
On the one hand, you claim there is a god.  
That is, you don't deny his existence.  
On the other hand,  
I'm not such an idiot to think you really believe in him  
If you shove him up your ass.  
On the third hand, if god  
Exists everywhere, he also exists in your ass, that is,  
You still believe in him.  
On the fourth hand, if you do believe in him,  
Can't you find a better place for him  
Than your filthy ass?  
In short, either you're poking  
Fun at me, or you're joking  
To curry favor with the brass.  
But I have precise instructions and I need  
A simple answer to a simple question:  
Does god exist or not?

ZOPHAR: "A simple answer to a simple question." Ah,  
What a triumphant military sense of humor—

(*He gives the Officer a friendly pat on the shoulder. The Officer hits him  
in the face. Zophar falls down, his nose bleeding. He gets up, still trying  
to joke to save his honor, wags his finger humorously at the Officer.*)

Naughty, naughty—

(*He tries again to pat the Officer on the shoulder; the latter again hits  
him in the face. Zophar falls down, gets up, comes to the Officer, has  
trouble standing, wags his finger clowingly again.*)

Listen, people are liable to think  
We're quarreling—

(*The Officer hits him a third time, knocks him to the floor.*)

My, my, aren't we perky today—

(*The Officer scolds him for continuing and hits him. Zophar cannot go  
on anymore, bursts into bitter weeping, and shouts.*)

There is no god! There is no god!

We all see there's no god, don't we?

#### Scene 5

OFFICER: You. Get up. Does your god exist or not?

JOB: My dear fool, don't you see him

Stretching out his arms to hug me?

OFFICER (*To the Soldiers*): Put him on the spit.

ZOPHAR (*To the Officer*): Don't waste your precious time

On this human pile of weeds.

The man went mad because of a calamity—

He's not responsible for his words or deeds.

OFFICER: Clown, you talk more than you have to.

Anyway, when is madness an excuse? That nut

In the next village who claims to be the son of god

Already has twelve disciples. So? Are they

Nuts too? Should the imperial army sit on its ass

And leave the world alone because it's a nuthouse?

I'll be honest with you: my men

Are hungry for fun; they haven't seen blood on the spit yet today.

And looking at it from the spit, sane or crazy,

The difference in asses is pretty hazy.

ZOPHAR: Job, my friend, it's time to open your eyes.

We dreamed a little that there is a god.  
Now wake up, get up to your suffering, to yesterday's suffering.  
Bark, bark at the empty skies,  
Bark as before "There is no god!" For nothing has changed.  
Remember death, recall your poverty,  
Remember your itch, rolling on the ground, all of it.  
And most of all—remember the spit!

**JOB:** But my loyal friend Zophar, why are you  
So upset? What is it?

Did someone lose his four children and is he weeping?  
You know, from up there, from the bosom of the Lord,  
A weeping man looks like he's sneezing.  
The shrouds—

Like handkerchiefs. Grief, joy—all movement  
Is the same and quite absurd. From up there, my friend,  
It's all so amusing.

Who separated me from my father?  
Who brought me down  
From the bosom of the Lord?

**OFFICER:** He's right. Help him get back up  
To the bosom of the lord on the spit.

#### Scene 6

*Zophar takes some money out of his pocket and slips it to the Officer.*

**ZOPHAR:** Take fifty dinars and let him go.  
**OFFICER:** You're trying to buy the army—so cheap?

**ZOPHAR** (*Putting the money back in his pocket*): Well, I tried.

**OFFICER:** Make it double. Maybe that'll work.  
(*Zophar looks at Eliphaz and Bildad. They don't respond.*)

**ZOPHAR:** No, it's not worth more than fifty

To me. I did what a man

Must. My conscience is at peace.

**OFFICER** (*Angrily pointing at Job*): Come on, put him on the spit!

#### Scene 7

*The Soldiers spread Job's legs and bring the spit.*

**SERGEANT:** You found the ring? Yes, in the center. Good.  
Even a blind man on a dark night, they say,

Will find the entrance to the ass.

**SOLDIER:** You can't mistake the smell.

**SERGEANT:** Now shove it in, yeah, like that.

**JOB:** Oh! My arse! My arse! Oh god!

My arse, my arse! Oh god, my arse!

**OFFICER:** That man's whole being

Is now concentrated in his ass.

All family ties, instincts,

Feelings, loyalties, and opinions

Are all mixed up in a shapeless mass—

A heavy fog, and the awful pain in his ass

Flickers like the beam from a lighthouse.

As the spit ascends to his belly

The pain in his ass will dissolve in the fog,  
Give way to a new focus of being.

**JOB:** Oh! My guts! My guts! Oh god!

My guts, my guts! Oh god, my guts!

**OFFICER:** Now he makes his god pass

To his guts from his ass.

**ZOPHAR** (*Shouting*): Deny god, Job!

Say there is no god!

Deny god!

(*The Soldiers raise the spit Job is impaled on, putting the end on*

*the ground.*)

**JOB:** Papa, they raise me up to you on an iron pole.

On poles and crosses and spears and pyres they raise us,  
Our arms stretched out to our fathers.

I'm riding up to my Papa, on a knife.

How dreadful is the trip, but how great the grace,

How sweet the repose at the end of the journey—

To look my Papa in the face.

(*He falls silent.*)

#### Scene 8

*The three Friends stand looking at Job on the spit.*

**BILDAD:** See how he's looking at me. His tormented eyes  
Stare at me with the boldness of someone you owe something to.

What's wrong? What did I do and what do I owe him?

Does a spit in your belly make you a saint?



And why do you look down on me, from the heights of the spit,  
With such pride? The god you believe in  
Doesn't love arrogance. The god you believe in  
Loves me, the humble, the fearful, lower than a weed, the mud.  
Here I stand, the soft human mud to mold into great faith.  
And if I were in your place  
On the spit, staring at me—what then?  
Would you come sit in my place?  
So, what's the difference?  
What's the point? What would change? And why  
Do I even stand here defending myself?  
Does somebody owe you something?  
So take those pleas out of your eye!  
I told you: You are you and I am—I!  
You hear? You are you and I am—I!  
You are you and I am—I!  
Shut your eyes! Or lift them to the sky,  
Villain! Look for your Papa in the sky,  
Shout to the sky and cry to the sky,  
Go weep in the bosom of your god that, here on earth—  
Oh horrors—you lost your drawers!  
(*The three Friends exit. Job calls to them.*)  
**Job:** Don't leave me alone with god!  
My friends, don't leave me  
Alone with god!

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE ENTERTAINERS

#### Scene 1

*Enter the Ringmaster.*

**RINGMASTER:** Too bad about this one, isn't it? Bad taste  
For such a performance as this to go to waste.  
All those potential tickets mutely crying out  
Like the souls of unborn children dying out.  
Not to mention the educational worth

For those who still think god exists on earth.  
I've run musical circuses in all the most  
Important capitals of Europe.  
I can even say that I've run Europe.  
I've got a stripper and I've got dwarfs,  
I've got French cooking,  
And drinks and dance music to go with it.  
What I don't have is just that—  
Ass flambé on a spit.  
Five hundred Dinars to the royal treasury  
For the right to put this man  
In my circus.

**OFFICER:** If the Emperor sold tickets himself,  
He could make at least five thousand.

**RINGMASTER:** What? You're joking. We missed the part  
Where you shoved in the spit  
And pulled down his pants;  
The shrieks of fear, all  
The humiliation and scorn—  
The juiciest part.

The pole's deep in his belly,  
He hardly has another hour  
Of silent agony.

How many tickets do you think you'll sell for an hour  
Of inner agony? Who's interested these days  
In a man suffering in silence?

The audience, you know, pays  
To hear a little singing, something gay.

**OFFICER:** This man will live for another six or seven hours  
And, with a musical comedy, maybe even till morning.

**RINGMASTER:** Really? And can somebody guarantee  
That a hemorrhage or a fit

Won't carry him off any minute?

**OFFICER:** A hemorrhage in the belly—yes;  
But until the pole pierces his diaphragm,  
If it does, toward the heart—

**RINGMASTER:** I don't know much about anatomy.

**OFFICER:** Thirty percent to the circus, 30 to the Emperor.

**RINGMASTER:** And the other 40?

**OFFICER:** I'm a human being, too.

RINGMASTER: So, 40 to the circus, 40 to the Emperor,  
And 20 to the human being.  
OFFICER: No less than 40 percent to the human being.  
RINGMASTER: Listen, we're all human beings.  
OFFICER: I don't know much about philosophy.  
RINGMASTER: Enough. Fifty percent to the circus,  
Fifty to the human being.  
OFFICER: And the Emperor?  
RINGMASTER: The Emperor doesn't speculate in asses.  
OFFICER: You're right.

*(They shake hands.)*

RINGMASTER *(Addressing the audience)*: Ladies and gentlemen,  
the sun now is setting, another  
Weary day of buying and selling  
Comes to an end.

Now as you wend your way home  
To potatoes and soup in a bowl,  
Be sure to throw a little crust to the soul.  
Have you closed the shutters? Dimmed the light?  
Did you lock the store up tight?  
Ladies and gentlemen, five minutes for art. All right?

### Scene 2

*The Circus Performers enter and surround Job. These include a Dwarf who chases the Stripper and sings.*

DWARF: Once when I was the age of three,  
What a wonderful time,  
No one thought that I was wee  
And nobody called me dwarf.  
The future belonged to you and me,  
When we saw eye to eye;  
Happiness waited for you so free  
And happiness, too—for me.  
But you grew up and left me far, far behind in the notch,  
And now your face comes up to the sky and mine comes up to  
your crotch.  
Don't call me dwarf,  
Call me eternal child,

For with warmth is my heart all aflood,  
And I still have such passionate blood  
And so much feeling, so much warmth in stock,  
And perhaps it may please you to know  
That I have a very long cock.

STRIPPER: In Africa, I spent some years  
And I know what long is. And I also know, it appears,  
What hard is. If I say so myself, my cunt  
Is fit for African dimensions, not some runt.  
And I don't want to stuff it with noodles.  
This is what comes  
Of living in Africa.

DWARF: Judge us not by African pricks.  
We live in Asia. Judge us by Asian dicks.

*(The Stripper dances and strips in front of the Dwarf. When she is naked, she examines his erect penis.)*

STRIPPER: Well, even on that wretched scale,  
You don't fit the accepted tale

That nature made you topsy-turvy—  
A short body with a long prick.

No, nature fucked you, barrel, stock, and lock:  
Short body, short life, and short cock.

You have something long?  
Suffering, we may regard.

Your suffering is long, long and hard.  
*(She looks at Job, then at the spit.)*

Here is something fit for my tail,  
Even on an African scale.

*(The Stripper spreads her legs, puts her crotch to the spit, rubs against it and moans with pleasure as if in response to Job's groans of suffering, as he is stuck on top with his legs spread wide to the sides. Their spasms and groans ostensibly resemble a fornication in which the spit serves as a penis.)*

JOB *(In agony)*: Papa—Papa—

STRIPPER *(In ecstasy)*: Mama—mama—  
*(She sings as she rubs against the pole.)*

Between my legs there's a hole that is black,  
Between my legs there's a hole that is black;

Who will fill it up tonight there,  
Who will bring a little light there,  
Who will go in from the front  
And come out through the back?  
Between my legs there's a hole that is black—  
DWARF (*Masturbating and singing*): Don't call me dwarf—  
(*Both songs blend into one another with a loud shout and an emphatic motion.*)

### Scene 3

*The spit slices into Job's lungs and it becomes hard for him to breathe.*  
JOB: Oh! Air! Oh, god!  
Air! Air!

RINGMASTER: Why are you standing around like jerks?  
Where's your sense of humanity?  
Give him some water. We have to stretch out  
His death throes a bit!  
There's still a lot of people waiting in the door.  
OFFICER: Too late. The spit pierced the diaphragm  
And penetrated the lungs.

JOB: There is no god—  
Take me down from the spit! There is no god!  
OFFICER: Too late, pal. Death  
Has struck root in you. Go  
With death!  
JOB: Air—There is no god—  
I swear to you there is no god!!!  
OFFICER: Too bad. For the same price, you could have died  
As a man of principle.  
JOB: Take me down from the spit!  
There is no god—and that's final!

### Scene 4

*Two Clowns climb ladders on either side of Job, paint him like a clown.*  
SOLEMN CLOWN: "That's final," he says, and who will remind him  
Of all the final things he pronounced in his life?  
For what is man? Here's a man for you:  
Now he cries "My Son, My Son," now he shouts "My Ass."

At night roasted doves in his mouth, at dawn a poker up his toot.  
Then he sang, now he weeps, soon he will be mute.  
What is man? What he said yesterday?  
What he cries now? His silence soon?  
Is he his memories? His hopes?  
What he does or what is done to him?  
His last scream on his deathbed?  
Or his first scream between his mother's legs?  
Or is he that awful, ridiculous muddle  
Between one scream and the other?  
Where is the thread that binds it all?  
Where is the thread and what is meaning?  
What is man? And what is life?  
And the thread, gentlemen, tell me, where is the thread?

CYNICAL CLOWN: "What is man? What is life?"  
What is hemorrhoids? What is a fly?  
Who cares where the thread may lie?  
Who cares what is a man?  
What is the world? Who gives a damn?  
Ladies and gentlemen, you see  
A man fall off a high roof, you stare—  
His arms waving, spinning in the air,  
His shattered scream reverberates in space.  
You step back a bit so the blood won't spatter your clothes and face.  
Hypnotized by his fall like lead,  
Your expressions a blend of yearning and dread  
For the final, unrepeatable moment when his body hits the ground.  
Don't search for meaning.  
Don't ask for a moral. Why try?  
Just watch: a man falls, soon he'll die.

### Scene 5

*Job gargles his death rattle.*

RINGMASTER (*To Job*): You won't leave me right in the middle,  
will you?  
You look like a reasonable man, you're bread for my children  
tomorrow.  
Listen how they cry out to me: Papa—Papa—in sorrow.  
You wouldn't take bread out of the mouth of babes, would you?

OFFICER: Too late. This is death.

RINGMASTER: He could easily have gone on for another hour.

OFFICER: I don't tell you how to train elephants,  
Don't tell me how to smell death.

For ten years I've lived with death, like a little monkey  
Sitting on my shoulder, playing with my ear.  
Gentlemen, this is death.

*(He holds out his hand for the money. The Ringmaster gives him his share.)*

JOB: Death? Death itself? This is the famous moment  
I've heard so much about? It's here?

*(The Officer and Soldiers exit. The Ringmaster tries to divert Job and keep him from dying.)*

RINGMASTER: Hey, man! What are you thinking about now?  
Is there a god? You see something there? Huh?  
Or is it just

A black hole, about the size of Africa?  
Huh? Hey, man, tell us! Tell us! Tell us!  
*(He hits him desperately.)*

SOLEMN CLOWN: This man is now far above us.  
He knows something we do not.  
But he will not say a thing. He is now

In those dizzy heights where a person recognizes no one. All  
the plains

And hills are behind him, the story of his life and deeds, the  
people and tools

That bound him to the world—all severed from him.  
At long last, he has slipped out of his father's tight clasp, left it

Far behind and now he is all alone. Alone. Enveloped like a  
high priest

In the simple shirt of the mystery of his death.  
Which each of us will have his turn

To don

Someday.

JOB *(Whispering with the last of his strength)*: What is a man on a spit?  
A man who is finished, done for it.  
Can I describe such despair?

Darkness like that can't be found anywhere.

*(He retches vomit and blood and dies.)*

RINGMASTER *(Angry)*: "Anywhere!" You couldn't have waited  
another hour!

"Anywhere!" Phooey!

*(He spits on Job's corpse and exits. The Circus and the audience  
disperse and exit.)*

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE DEAD

#### Scene 1

*Enter the Most Beggarily Beggar of All the Beggars. He licks Job's vomit.*

BEGGAR: Just like I said: a little patience  
And somebody finally pukes. Yes,

Somehow we manage to live.  
There's a god in the sky,  
Tra-la-la, tra-la-lie.

*(He exits.)*

#### Scene 2

*The Dead sing.*

THE DEAD: But there is mercy in the world  
And we are laid to rest.

Thus the dead lie patiently,  
With silence are we blessed.

Grass grows on our flesh,  
The scream dies in our breast;

But there is mercy in the world  
And we are laid to rest.