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THE ARCHANGEL

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THE ARCHANGEL

Written by
Mark Anthony DiBello

THE ARCHANGEL - INTRODUCTION

Life: The meaning of life for Long Island, millionaire wanna-be Michael Angelo Roman is money. Until, in a divine dream, the archangel commands that his namesake *actually* save a life—Michael's only hope for saving his own.

I am Mark Anthony DiBello, the writer of *The Archangel*. This is how the book: *The Archangel* came into existence. It is based on three true stories...not one, not two, but three true stories.

One day, in the 1970s, God spoke to me. It was through His archangel Michael that the Creator of the Universe said: "You are to write an action-adventure version of the Bible..."

The Archangel is inspired from the true story of the Bible. Michael is God's messenger; and life's savior has been *The Archangel*.

Hebrews 12:7 "You have made him a little lower than the angels. You have crowned him with glory and honor, and have set him over the works of Your hands."

"...Him?" Life has a higher Savior: God Himself. *The Archangel* is the story of the Bible; but *The Archangel* is also the true story of Jesus Christ. John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the *life*."

The millennium is here and the work of *The Archangel* is complete. In prayer...I recalled that very first time God spoke to me: "You are to write an action-adventure version of the Bible...that will be the meaning of *your* life."

And this is how the third and final true story begins...

THE ARCHANGEL - CHAPTER OUTLINE

DAY ONE IN THE BEGINNING...

In the beginning...a lifeless, foot-long, rainbow trout lies prone on a sandy-brown, kitchen cutting-board and countertop. Encamped around it are a woven, wooden basket of apples and uncut bread loaves, and a glass chalice of water and one of wine. A singular, vase-less flower symbolically completes the setting.

MICHAEL

THURSDAY, EVENING - APRIL 13, 2000

The Archangel's main divisions (chapters) are eleven days in the life of Michael Roman. *MICHAEL* is the initial subdivision. By listing the day, date, and relative time, the book reads like a journal; and the incidences in Roman's life serve as a "blueprint for life."

Michael Angelo Roman is the main character. We learn of his inborn, sinful nature in a flashback to his christening. In

this portion of the book, we also meet his sexy wife Magdalene. Her background is also divulged in a flashback. The backgrounds of the supporting characters in *The Archangel* are also revealed using this technique.

DAY TWO

1ST DREAMS & VISIONS

FRIDAY, 3:00 A.M. - APRIL 14, 2000

In the bedroom, the air is serene and peaceful. Roman and Maggie are each sleeping. They lay face down—dead to the world. Roman rolls over. In moonlight, his countenance basks in an inexplicable prolonged stillness. In his sleep, he hears his own voice in his head: "I am Michael."

Michael receives his initial calling from his namesake angel.

More meaningful, to the true-life nature of the book, is this scene:

At 3:00 A.M., in a different bedroom, a man's silhouetted, moonlit image appears to be Michael Roman. However, this man is lying alone. The bedroom furnishings are decidedly different: less costly, more pious and homey. A portrait of Jesus

Christ guards over the headboard. A palm plant grows housed on a windowsill. A simple wooden chair rests bedside; a pen and a tablet of paper are positioned there. Awakened abruptly, the man leans over and lights the candle. He scribbles a few sentences on the paper.

DISCIPLES & BETRAYERS

In this subdivision, we're introduced to the supporting characters; two of whom serve to help Michael. The others plan their diabolical schemes to betray him.

DAY THREE

2ND DREAMS & VISIONS

SATURDAY, 3:00 A.M. - APRIL 15, 2000

Michael encounters the angel a second time. The angel's identity becomes clearer.

THE ARK

In this subdivision, we meet Noah Muhammad. He is the third supporting disciple or "good guy" character. Noah introduces the reader to the biblical figure on

whom he is based. Noah (Islamic) also represents one of the thirteen major religions described in the book. For each religion: the doctrines, prophets, relationships to angels, and moral codes on human life are outlined.

In the latter stages of this division, a scene where Roman's racehorse is injured reflects the betrayers, if you will, handling of the three major subplots in the story. Here is an excerpt:

Judy interjects, "It's a sin and a crime to have to kill'em-but let him put him to sleep."

Maggie implants upon him, "He can't race and can't reproduce-it's a sin to lose that money."

Lincoln takes his shot. "It's a crime-but the horse is worth more dead than you are alive."

Roman ordains, "Everybody listen! It's my decision, my choice, my verdict...let's see if first he can be saved."

DAY FOUR

3RD DREAMS & VISIONS

SUNDAY, 3:00 A.M. - APRIL 16, 2000

In Roman's bedroom, again there is an eerie stillness.

Roman and Maggie are asleep. An omnipresent light is again present.

On his stomach, Roman rolls over. His eyes are closed shut.

"I am Michael...The Archangel, Michael...save a life..."

THE SPIRIT

Michael (the character) exhibits his mortal disdain for life. His hatred reaches its pinnacle when he gratifyingly kills his horse. He is termed, "...an addictive killer with a fix."

Later in this subdivision, Roman interacts with Noah and is given detailed information on the realities of Noah's homelessness. Having been homeless myself, this is a very insightful portion of the book.

At this juncture in the book, Michael Roman consults with the Reverend Mark Anthony character. Their stories start to intertwine. In the classic literary format, the Reverend is the mentor and comedic trickster for the hero Michael Angelo.

The final two stanzas of *THE SPIRIT* subdivision, lead to the first "plot point" (again, in keeping with classical storytelling).

The dramatic conflicts involving Maggie's unwanted pregnancy choice and Judy's influence on Aunt Mary's assisted-suicide decision; unfold here. Also, the discovery of supporting character Lesliannas Von Adolf's death penalty ordeal is detailed.

At this point, the subplots and the sinfulness of Roman reach a breaking point. A visit by the Holy Spirit miraculously changes Michael's life forever. He is determined to "save a life." Michael calls on God in an originally written prayer. The book contains many original and biblical prayers; not to mention original poetry, song verses, catch phrases, and a plethora of Bible quotes and notations.

DAY FIVE
LIFE

MONDAY, SUNRISE - APRIL 17, 2000

Roman's lifeless hand buoys in the shimmering water. The

bandage has disappeared and the burn has healed. He lies faceup in the rowboat. His eyes are sealed shut. Bearded, his long hair drapes him. A black Bible rests in the opposite hand of his dangling arm. His eyes burst open—they are full of life!

The book now takes on its episodic format covering the subplots. Michael informs Judy and Lincoln of his godly plans. He also attempts to rescue Maggie from an abortion clinic. Included, is the Reverend and Ernie Goldstein's goal to form a Christian church.

DAY SIX
WORKS

TUESDAY, DAWN - APRIL 18, 2000

The day begins at the backyard pond. This is a passage between Michael and Maggie:

Michael remarks, "This is a great book." He mandates, "You should read this second Gospel... this story is definitely too good, not to be true."

"When Hell freezes over. For Christ sake, what's up with you Michael Angelo?"

BORN AGAIN

Throughout the book, the BORN AGAIN subdivision involves Maggie's abortion choice and the contrasting arguments she and Michael make. Maggie demands their house. Michael submits on the grounds Maggie does not abort the child and "saves this one life."

TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS

Lincoln's first interview with the accused Von Adolf is covered. Her story is a complex cross between the murder of a fellow inmate's unborn child and the link to the death penalty. This "story within a story" resembles an infamous 1960s court trial, and prophetically, a highly controversial 1998 Texas capital punishment case as well.

THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The use of Roman's donation to construct the Universal Church of Angel's, Life, and God is chronicled. The writing incorporates Mark Anthony's goal to unite Judaism, Catholicism, and all of Christianity with a universe of angel believers.

SOS - SUICIDE OR SELF-DESTRUCTION

The Aunt Mary Frances and Judy "fictitious" characters are in Mary's religious art shop. The characters are based on persons of the Bible; Judy is the blatant portrayal of Christ's disciple Judas, and Aunt Mary represents both Christ's mother and the biblical man Job. This euthanasia story line is patterned after the Book of Job.

SERVICE PART I *"Entertain"*

The Reverend's church is a storied reality. The liner notes from the theme song are intermingled with the highlights of the church's opening.

WORKS II

DAY SEVEN *WORKS II*

WEDNESDAY, MORNING - APRIL 19,
2000

Wednesday is divided into two sections. The initial section covers the day's events before noon and the latter after 12:00 p.m.

BORN AGAIN 1

At an abortion rally, prominent speakers address biblical and humanitarian concerns over the abortion debate. Maggie has chosen to abort, despite the "deal" with her husband.

TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS 1

At California Superior Court, Lincoln has gone on the defense. His strategy is to prove, by a systematic comparison of conflicting statements, that his client is indeed innocent. There are three distinct inconsistencies that determine whether Von Adolf or her foe is telling the truth. All the while, Lincoln undermines his efforts because of his personal beliefs on the constitutional justice of capital punishment. This segment reads like a detective novel.

SOS - SUICIDE OR SELF-DESTRUCTION

1

Aunt Mary Frances and Judy discuss Mary's terminal illness issues with Mary's overly critical friends. Life affirming, Christian ethic is derived directly from the Book of Job.

BORN AGAIN 2

Maggie confronts Michael after being denied access to the clinic.

Throughout *The Archangel*, recurring themes present themselves in a multitude of subliminal, background, and symbolic situations and stories. The theory: "What comes around goes around" is literally consistent. The book, like life itself, is cyclical in nature.

SERVICE PART II

Drama, action, mystery and comedy...yes, comedy; *The Archangel* possesses clever dialogue, situational comedic "funny stories," and a written comedy monologue that appears at the fictional halfway point.

Within the context of the story, this comedic routine is the second phase of the Reverend's church service. The Reverend sees humor in the hypocrisy of some human beings with regards to a death sentence:

"Then from death row, you take that last walk. I love the way they always put you in a ton

of shackles and handcuffs—that's in case you try to escape back into regular prison."

THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN CHURCH 2

Reverend Mark, Ernie, and Michael Roman philosophically discuss war, death, and Christ. Mark gives a biblical interpretation.

TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS 2

Lincoln, enticed by further financial gain, intensifies his defense of Lesliannas. His written case studies, anecdotes, and data are outlined in orderly fashion.

SOS - SUICIDE OR SELF-DESTRUCTION 2

The Archangel: Saint Michael is the leader of God's angels. To better understand the nature of angels, one must have experiences with these spiritual beings. Through the written words of Aunt Mary, the vast manifestations of angels are documented; this is an excerpt:

Judy asks, "Enlighten me? Why on Earth, for God's sakes, do angels appear so only you can see

them? Why is it, when people have an angel sighting, no one else is ever around to see it?"

"Because Judy...the angel Raphael once landed on my head, healed and enlightened me with the answer. The incredible reason why angels appear alone is not because I, myself, wouldn't believe it; but because human hearts and minds are weak and angels are aware that the viewer of the angel might end up believing you, the non-believer. God's angels know some people believe other people, instead of believing angels—that's why."

Judy says cynically, "Amazing."

Later in this subdivision, the dialogue revolves around Mary's idol: Elvis Presley. Judy's arguments surrounding "The King's" death finally persuade Aunt Mary Frances to seriously consider suicide.

Elvis, Abraham Lincoln, Michelangelo, da Vinci, King David—these are just some of the references made to God's great human beings.

APOCRYPHA

The writings and prophecies of Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Moses are as appropriate for today's thoughts on life as the teachings centuries ago. When applied to Maggie's decision, the consequences of her abortion choice can be horrific.

DAY EIGHT
JUDGMENT

THURSDAY, DAWN - APRIL 20, 2000

God gives us all free will. In each of the subplots: Maggie, a modern-day woman; Mary, a contemporary Christian; and Lesliannas, a repentant sinner; willfully participate in the fate of their lives.

SERVICE PART III
"Enlighten"

The Reverend Mark Anthony closes the church service by preaching a summation; biblical, revolutionary, and revealing truth and conviction merge with Christianity and literary fiction.

CHURCHES: CHAPTERS 1-14

In the final part of the church program, thirteen church members share their biographies, a Bible passage, a personal problem, and the dogma of a baker's dozen of worldwide religions (from Buddhism to Hinduism, and Protestantism to Zoroastrianism). These testimonies each follow the Apostle Paul's New Testament letters.

TESTAMENT

The Reverend's concluding speech inspires Michael to present himself as a born-again believer. "The service has ended, go in peace."

DAY NINE
SALVATION

GOOD FRIDAY, 8:01 A.M. - APRIL 21,
2000

At Denver International Airport,
peace gives way to an earthquake.

Michael must physically save a
life. A countdown of possible
passenger rescues begins...20...
10...5...Michael endeavors through
fourteen stages to the point where
he and one man remain.

DAY TEN
DEATH

HOLY SATURDAY - APRIL 22, 2000

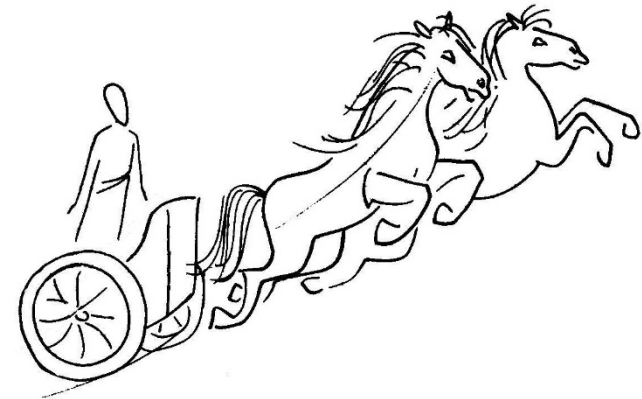
One man has survived. The other
man has died.

DAY ELEVEN
IN THE END...

EASTER SUNDAY, SUNRISE - APRIL 23,
2000

The dead man reappears...or does
He?

MANKIND NEEDS A SAVIOR..



THE ARCHANGEL

Mark Anthony DiBello

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D A Y O N E

IN THE BEGINNING...

In the beginning...a lifeless, foot-long, rainbow trout lies prone on a sandy-brown, kitchen cutting-board and countertop. Encamped around it are a woven, wooden basket of apples and uncut bread loaves, and a glass chalice of water and one of wine. A singular, vase-less flower symbolically completes the setting.

In a man's hand; an expensive, primeval, kitchen cleaver rotates like a propeller. The shining, silver blade ceases spinning. A guillotine, the razor-sharp implement slashes down beheading God's first creature.

MICHAEL

THURSDAY - APRIL 13, 2000

EVENING

In the Bethpage, Long Island, New York house of Michael Angelo Roman, in the dining room, by a vigil of candlelight, the dining table bears the footprints of the man and woman's celebration feast. There are two untouched glasses of water, two empty chalices of wine, a remaining loaf of bread and the bony skeleton of the fish.

Native New Yorker, Michael Angelo Roman has just returned home from work. He's handsome, with chiseled facial features and a ponytail of long black, lightly graying hair. He appears much younger than a man who is celebrating his fiftieth birthday dinner.

His wife, Magdalene "Maggie" Hagar Roman, is exotically beautiful. She's nineteen-years-old, a fair-skinned Greek and Egyptian girl. She was created sexy. Skinned in a three-quarter-length mink coat, she slithers on the tabletop to her man. Like a ship cutting glacial ice, she melts her way with the flicker of a small heart-shaped candle she

guides. The inscription reads: "I love you."

Her long fingers uncoil. She plucks a juicy, red apple from the basket. Her luscious lips and pearl-white teeth prepare to chomp on the fruitful delight. In the blink of an eye, a simple housefly is unearthed. Magdalene spots the teeny, winged creature and commands—"Jesus Christ, Michael. Kill him!"

Instinctively, Roman lunges for the fly swatter close-by. As if in slow-motion, Roman beats the bejesus out of the fly. Roman subconsciously flashes back to a morning in 1950....

Inside a cathedral in New York City, New York; an exquisite, floor to ceiling, stained-glass window streaks the proceedings with a prism of color. It's a work of art, with seven vertical panes of angels, centered by a sword-carrying Michael. A larger pane of Christ and the disciples rises above it.

The baby, Michael Angelo Romano, is being christened. Present at the altar is Michael's father, Giuseppe Romano, and Giuseppe's brother Vincenzo, who serves as the infant's Godfather. Giuseppe's wife Maria is flanked by her two sisters: eighteen-year-old, Mary Frances, and twelve-

year-old Clare. Mary Frances is fairer in complexion, less Italian in appearance. The men, an associate, and their accompanying four bodyguards, are all classic Mafiosi.

Father Giovanni Baptisté delicately holds the whimpering baby over the baptismal pool. Only the infant is aware of the enlightening angelic presence illuminating him. It emanates from a pristine statue of a cherub (baby angel).

Father Baptisté blesses the child in the melodic Latin hymn—*"In Nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti."*

In his broken English, Giuseppe whispers to his associate. *"Mio padre difamiglia Romano, he'a loved his life...he spent it dying. He'a died poor. Id'a rather live rich."*

The church window becomes darkened, the way a passing cloud might cause. Smash! Shatter! A team of seven, black-hooded, assassins breaks through. They barrage the altar with gunfire. The bodyguards, the associate, then Vincenzo Romano are shot dead. The sword-wielding leader, flailing his weapon, slices Mary Frances' forearm. She dips it in the bath. Giuseppe is slain by the sword through his heart. The

wailing baby is dropped into the sacred water. He is immersed in the blood red sea.

Maria Romano bellows, "Clare!" The women cling together and are spared. They shriek in tragic despair. Instinctively, they worry for the lives of the priest and the child. Mrs. Romano cries out, "Father Giovanni!"

An assassin's pistol is placed point-blank at Father Giovanni. The assassin, from behind the hooded veil, commissions, "No man lives." The trigger is pulled, as if in slow-motion.

The baby, for the first time, has stopped crying. He's held like a bloody newborn from the womb.

This evening, back in the dining room, the birthday candle brightens Roman's face. Magdalene kneels on the table. She is both alluring and playful. She presents the first portion of her gift to him in an originally composed song. While perhaps not the most gifted songstress, she is a sensual siren. She slips him the candle's directions. Uneducated herself, she sings fluently but struggles reading. "These are *'The Directions.'*" She sings:

*"1. should keep this
candle close-by,
like love, handle with
care all of the time.
2. get the candle to
light, find the
perfect match.
3. ways this candle
ignites...
A. person with the fire
inside, should not
B. afraid of love's
unknown.
When you cannot...
C. with your eyes,
hold the candle in the
dark.
4. you will never be
lost, if you look
for your love with the
feelings in your heart."*

Magdalene subconsciously
flashes back to a night in
1980....

Backstage, at an indoor
concert in San Francisco,
California, sixteen-year-old Jezza
Hagar (soon-to-be, Magdalene's
mother) is nineteen weeks pregnant
and looks beyond her years. She
is, more or less, a notch below a
prostitute and a notch above a
groupie. Jezza, a bit high on
grass, is euphoric to be here.
However, a serious issue still
plagues her.

A black-leathered, hard rock
band is wrapping an encore. The
music is loud and cutting. The
stage steams like a dark cloud
from a sewer grate—lights in a
firestorm hue of red and flaming
oranges. An announcer is heard on
stage, "That was Harlot, ladies
and gentleman! Give it up
California for Harlot!"

The audience, in ovation,
screams out, "We want the Harlot!
We want the Harlot!"

As the song whines down,
lead-singer Hadley Harlot makes
his way offstage. He immediately
swills whiskey, pops some
prescription pills, and takes a
hit from a joint. He looks
devoutly demonic, and yet
desperately destroyed. His
manager confronts him. "Hey man,
if you're trying to kill yourself—
it won't be long now."

Jezza says, "Hey Hadley that
was supernatural man."

Hadley intonates, "Hey,
what's up? Where you been baby?"
He asks a fellow band member about
Jezza, "Hey, remember this
number?"

"Yeah, ain't that the bitch
you pumped the life outta' once?"

Jezza is angry, anguished,
and ambitious. She tells the band
member, "It's Jezza Hagar to you
asshole.... Yeah Hadley, I'm

pregnant. First time I fucked up and forgot that goddamned pill. So let's do it...Vegas tonight... you and me. You owe me that much."

The audience continues to chant. The band is going back on. The audience erupts.

Jezza screams, "Do it now...or you'll pay when it's born!"

Hadley licks a bandanna through his mouth. "LSD man...long live a life of sin and death." He disappears into a black cloud of smoke—an eternal darkness. The audience cries out a devilish crescendo of death.

This evening, back in the dining room, Magdalene stands before Roman. She slowly unravels her coat. Her inviting lips ask, "So, what did you dream for on your fiftieth birthday?"

"To be a millionaire by the time I'm fifty.... And to have a sweet, young wife take off the \$5,000 mink coat I just bought for her and reveal to me her priceless body."

"Then your dream has come true. Feast your eyes on this Michael Angelo Roman. I'm your work of art...your masterpiece."

Maggie has a model's body. She wears trendy, new lingerie with the price tag still purposely

affixed. It's purple and scarlet, silk and lace. She appears resplendent in bracelets, a diamond horse-head necklace, and a strand of pearls. Maggie offers, "Why don't you make l-o-v-e, love, to me you animal?" Roman pulls her close by the dangling price tag. By design, it strips the garment away.

LATE EVENING

In Roman's bedroom, together in bed, by the glowing candlelight, wafting incense smoke, and billowing silk sheets, the couple appears like a Greek god and goddess. Roman's body is also in incredible condition. Their muscles ripple; the sinew shines with the glint of oil. Roman's skin is a golden pseudo-tan; Maggie's gleaming porcelain white. The couple makes intense, passionate, animalistic love. There is a forceful diversity in their carnal delights. Each demands, on occasion, a particular pleasure position. They communicate by touch, sense, and experience. Maggie moans, "Fuck me you stallion. Don't forget to use protection...the last thing I need on Earth is a fuckin' b-a-b-y, baby."

D A Y T W O

1ST DREAMS & VISIONS

FRIDAY - APRIL 14, 2000

3:00 A.M.

In the bedroom, the air is serene and peaceful—a dramatically different scenario. Roman and Maggie are each sleeping. They lay face down, dead to the world. Roman rolls over. In moonlight, his countenance basks in an inexplicable, prolonged stillness. In his sleep, he hears his own voice in his head:

"I am Michael."

His eyes open.

At 3:00 A.M., in a different bedroom, a man, in his vision, sees a cookie jar. The man's silhouetted moonlit image appears to be Michael Roman. However, this man is lying alone. The

bedroom furnishings are decidedly different, less costly, more pious, and homey. A portrait of the Lord guards over the headboard. A palm plant grows housed on a windowsill. A simple, wooden chair rests bedside. On it: a pen, a tablet of paper, a candle, and stick matches are all positioned there. Awakened abruptly, the man leans over and lights the candle. He scribbles a few sentences on the paper.

DISCIPLES & BETRAYERS

In Roman's bedroom, Roman arouses Maggie from her sleep. "Magdalene...Maggie...wake up. Did you see or hear something?"

"No."

"Did you feel something?"

"No, Michael...you must be dreaming. Go back to bed."

Unable to resume sleeping, a nude Roman smokes a cigarette and stares out the window. From Roman's vantage point, overlooking the acre, or two, of stately backyard property, the refracted moonlight spotlights an empty rowboat, floating unattended for years, on the small pond. The glow seems to give the small

wooden vessel a life of its own.
Dawn awakens.

DAYBREAK

Michael Angelo Roman begins every day with a ritualistic, morning routine. An avid antique weapons collector, he will put one primordial weapon to the test. Today, he selects his favorite: a slingshot.

He walks to the rear of the mini-estate. The enclosed wooded area might be picturesque were it not devoid of other vegetation. The meticulously kept grounds present a steely, rather than scenic, landscape. The grounds appear like a corporate picnic area or smoking lounge. The sole life may come from the single stable at the rear of the acreage. *Beersheba*, a thoroughbred racehorse, an exquisite equine specimen to some, is nothing more than a serious investment for Roman.

Roman doffs his Stars and Stripes, 1972 Olympic jacket. He stretches his taught, and vascular, back and arms. He straps a heavy weight to his waist. With the help of wrist straps, he does back pull-ups and chin-ups from a wooden crossbeam. Powerful and strong, this regiment

he's kept devoted to since his days as a silver medalist in archery at the Munich games.

A series of dead or dying trees, with brightly displayed targets nailed into the trunks, are his prize. Using the slingshot, he strikes them with increasing proficiency. Hungry for a kill, he sets his keen eye on his premiere pet project. He pulls a stone, from a pile in an unused birdbath, and places it in the stick and pouch. In one shot, the sacrificial squirrel he spotted takes its final breath.

Returning to his abode, he notices a pigeon has marked its territory on the pane of a cathedral style, smoked glass window outside the house. Obsessively disturbed, he wipes the droppings from the side of his wooden castle and off the cement walkway. "Pigeons—I'll kill'em if I ever get my hands on 'em!" Roman doesn't notice the nest of colored eggs tucked neatly there.

MORNING

In the Roman house, in an area next to the kitchen, the sun beams a smile on Elizabeth, the noticeably pregnant Hispanic cook, and maid. She clutches the gigantic crucifix hanging from her

neck, a gesture to thank her Maker for the day. She's vacuuming, performing her weekly task of cleaning the Roman's house. Maggie, in a revealing maid-type outfit of her own, is up uncommonly early.

Elizabeth greets her, "*?Cómo está usted.* Good morning, Señora Roman. Juan and I say *óla.*"

Maggie says halfheartedly, "Good morning, Estrellita."

"It's Elizabeth."

"I know."

In the kitchen, the vixen, with the dexterity of a magician, lights a cigarette. The flame seems to torch her face. This task she's rehearsed numerous times, but the breakfast she attempts to prepare for her husband, she has not. The egg she's holding drops and breaks. "Christ Almighty." Her anger, hopelessness, and frustration manifest themselves when she spots a common housefly innocently traveling between an unbroken egg and a jar of honey. "Fuckin' horse." She reaches into a cabinet and grabs a hand-held vacuum fly remover. As if in slow-motion, the housefly is vacuumed up the clear tube leading to the handled portion of the deadly device.

Roman, having changed, enters the kitchen wearing a dapper suit and jewelry. Maggie, almost remorseful, remarks, "I can't c-o-k in the kitchen, but that doesn't mean I wasn't cooking last night."

"Why do you think I hired you and married a cook? Shit...you know what I mean. That's why I hired a cook." Always a physical man of touch, he pinches her dragon-tattooed backside before embracing her.

"Michael, I hate to ask, but can I have a little allowance?"

"Sure, but what do I get in return?"

"Me and my l-o-v-e."

"I love you."

"I love you, too."

LATE MORNING

In the cul-de-sac, outside the Roman residence, although it's an unseasonably warm day, the tar dumped from a pavement company truck steams on the front yard. Roman is having a good portion of nature's green carpet paved into a mini-parking lot. The handful of minority workers labors away.

Roman's sharp 1999 red JAGUAR XK8 convertible is parked on a patch of healthy grass. His wife Maggie's red Land Rover Discovery SE7 (license plate: ROMANS)

remains in the garage. Roman enters his auto and lowers the top.

Immanuel, the Hispanic head laborer, approaches from near his truck. The truck's tank reads: MANNY'S—"LIFE IS A FREEWAY—IF YOU DON'T FOLLOW THE ROAD GOD MADE FOR YOU—IT'S YOUR OWN ASPHALT."

"Hello, Señor Romano. I'm Immanuel, the boss. Did you want us to take out that tree—that tombstone of Adam and Eve...and do over there too?" Their attention is directed at the wooden monument of nature.

Roman responds, "Get rid of it."

"Then we got to fix the cost a bit...okay?"

"Listen, 'Immanuel Labor'... I've already given you bums enough dinero...you're not sucking any more money outta' me." Roman springs out of his "Jag," rips off his jacket, and proceeds to the garage. Immanuel walks with him.

"Señor, Mister...you know the ground is soft in some spots—maybe we wait? Besides, you do a lot of paving, no good when it rain."

Roman, using an old ax, chops down the tree. "Who's paying who? I want this done before summer gets here and stuff starts growing...showers and flowers and

all that crap." He tramples the last flower on the property. He sinks back down in his car seat. In a rush, his car torches the grass beneath its tires as he speeds off. (His auto tag reads: EMPIRE.)

MIDDAY

Inside the Manhattan, New York City, high-rise office of Michael Roman, the techno-posh office looks more like a *Sharper Image* catalog showroom than a workplace. Just as in his house, the only plant life is a macabre abundance of Venus flytrap plants. The only clue as to how he makes his living—may be the inconspicuously seen, but large, complicated sketch of a six-pointed star, within two circles, framed on his wall.

His best friend's arrival is announced, on the desk intercom, by Lucy his secretary. "Abraham Lincoln Peters to see you sir."

Lincoln Peters is thirty-nine years of age. He is a hardened New Yorker with dark features and a medium build. He enters the office. He totes his trademark blood-red umbrella. He smokes cigarettes like a fiend. Lincoln greets Roman, "Welcome back."

"Lincoln...got the umbrella huh?"

Lincoln jabs the air, and pokes the floor, with a playful prod and a voracious violence, explaining, "Muggers and bums." He opens up a daily tabloid and proudly displays an inside page for Roman.

Roman reads it aloud, "'THE PERSECUTOR' SCORES ONE FOR CAPITAL PUNISHMENT." Roman condones. He and Lincoln exchange a high five. "All right! So how is New York City's number one prosecuting attorney?"

"The Constitution is God. I'd like to fry that asshole marching out front for crapping on my right to bear arms amendment—nail'em up on a stake—serv'em up like a kabob...you know...shit on a stick." Lincoln sits. Lincoln subconsciously flashes back to a summer evening in 1976....

On the patio, in the upper-class neighborhood, young, fifteen-year-old Lincoln is seated on the synthetic green outdoor carpet. It's difficult to distinguish if he is wearing a religious or military school uniform. He sits, alone, in a trance.

Only adults are present at the catered, political fundraiser. Senator Peters, slightly

intoxicated, is speaking. An inebriated Mrs. Peters smokes profusely. She pays little attention to her husband or to her son.

A female cocktail guest initiates the conversation. "Senator...tell us about education?"

The senator states seriously, "Teachers are just as important as parents...parents can only do so much."

A male guest asks, "Senator Peters, tell us about the party?"

The senator quips, "Party? Yeah, I enjoy a good party. Hey, this is 1976 and still there are only two things that will never end in this life—death and taxes.... So whoever it was that said: 'Give to Caesar that which is Caesar's,' didn't know how to spell IRS for Christ's sake."

Lincoln is mesmerized by the amount of flies, resting in pieces, beneath the bug zapper. As if in slow-motion, a stricken housefly flickers and fries on the grated cage. It makes an unmistakably morose sound.

The senator rambles, "I am a public servant. I care for the lives of my people. I love this country. So when my public speaks to me on the issues...goddamn it, I listen; whether it be taxes and

education, or capital punishment and abortion; for I am a man of the people, a leader. For in the end...a leader is a follower who knows where he is going. And you can quote me on that!"

The heat lightning from the sky creates an amazing effect as the bolts momentarily appear in the form of an angel. The surge of electricity strikes the zapper knocking Lincoln back.

Today, back in the office, Roman rises from his chair. Lincoln and he make their way to the door. Lincoln recalls loudly, "For Christ's sake—goddamn it!"

Roman rebukes him, "I thought you didn't believe in God?"

"I don't. It just makes for good swearin'—the name really gets the point across.... I almost forgot...here, I got you a present." From his jacket pocket, he hands Roman an automobile bumper sticker.

Roman reads it aloud, "IF YOU CAN READ THIS..."

Lincoln hands him a second bumper sticker.

Roman reads it aloud, "...YOU DIE!" He says, "I'll put it on Maggie's car.... How 'bout meeting tomorrow at Aqueduct? My horse is racing."

"Is the Pope Catholic? Does a bear shit in the woods? Come on—

I'll let you buy me lunch and a lap dance for your birthday."

APPROXIMATELY 4:45 P.M.

In his office, Roman is seated at his desk wrapping the weeks work. He waits for a monetary addictive fix. Roman beckons into the intercom, "Lucy...tell Ernie Goldstein to get in here with my weekly report."

Goldstein has been waiting outside. He's a forty-one-year-old, rotund, Jewish fellow with dark brown hair. Goldstein is loving and meek, very religious. He is humorous by nature, a bit of a goof. "Welcome back. Ernest Sy Goldstein at your service." Ernie subconsciously flashes back to a late evening in 1968....

In an old fashioned bedroom, in a middle-class home, ten-year-old Ernest Goldstein is seated bedside in the godly and trinket-filled room. His very elderly and wise grandfather Abel Goldstein, Bible in hand, speaks his peace. "I want to read you something. This is Isaiah, chapter 40, verse 3: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked

places shall be made straight And
the rough places smooth; The glory
of the LORD shall be revealed, And
flesh shall see it together; For
the mouth of the LORD has
spoken.'"

Ernie asks, "What does it
mean Grandpa?"

"You will understand when you
are old like your Grandpa Abel."
Abel presents him with a cherished
heirloom, an antique model train
caboose. "You are to build a set
from the last to the first, from
the old to the new...7:14
'Therefore the Lord Himself will
give you a sign: Behold, the
virgin shall conceive and bear a
Son, and shall call His name
Immanuel, God-with-us.'"

Grandpa Abel takes his last
spoonful of oatmeal. He refers
back to the Bible: "It has been
written... 'Death and life are in
the power of the tongue, And those
who love it will eat its fruit.'
Proverbs 18:21. In the course of
your life Ernest, when you speak
in terms of life and death, I want
you to add another train car...it
will give you wisdom." The sheer
white curtains blow lightly from
the sliver opening of the window.
"The wind reminds Grandpa he must
sleep now son. Before you go to
bed, I want you to read Exodus
20:13 for Granpa.... Yahweh loves

you...okay? Don't forget your
choo-choo."

The boy nods his head
agreeably. He takes the treasured
gift.

"I will read you this last
one from the Old Testament. This
is from the Book of Daniel...
chapter 12: 'At that time Michael
shall stand up, The great prince
who stands watch over the sons of
your people; And there shall be a
time of trouble, Such as never was
since there was a nation, Even to
that time. And at that time your
people shall be delivered, Every
one who is found written in the
book. And many of those who sleep
in the dust of the earth shall
awake, some to everlasting life,
some to shame and everlasting
contempt...'" The curtains gust
an incredible wind. They billow
and wave like angels' wings.

Back in the office, Goldstein
continues: "'...Those who are wise
shall shine like the brightness of
the firmament, And those who turn
many to righteousness, Like the
stars forever and ever.'
...Thankfully, he was blessed to
pass away in his sleep—the great
way to die—when most die because
of life.... It was his time, God
needed him."

"Goldstein...you're
daydreaming—the report."

Goldstein hands Roman an easy-to-read copy. Goldstein gets a paper cut and a smear of blood on the page. Goldstein reads, "The total personal assets of Michael Angelo Roman—Friday, April 14, 2000...

"From top to bottom—Empire, the business: \$333,000. Home and property on Bethpage, Long Island: \$250,000. Thoroughbred racehorse: \$200,000 even, [NOTE: Value of insurance not applicable]. Automobiles—1999 Jaguar XK8 convertible: \$74,128. Two year lease on Land Rover Discovery SE7, [minus final payment sent today], net price: \$37,040, ownership papers pending. Total of both autos: \$111,168. Continuing—weapons collection, including 1972 Munich Olympics silver medal in archery: \$65,6-6-6. Shall I go on?"

Roman insists, "As always."

Goldstein submits, "Clothing and jewelry belonging to Mrs. Magdalene Hagar Roman including new fur coat and \$350 sales tax: \$25,350."

"Any cents?"

"Exactly!...Savings and checking, Chase Manhattan Bank: \$13,650,00. Lucy reports petty cash of: \$41.75...and lastly..."

Roman counts the cash in his trousers pocket. "Five hundred

dollars...and...here Goldstein..." Roman tosses him a quarter. "In case of emergency."

"...And zero debits."

"And I don't owe anybody anything. What's the goal of life if you don't own anything in the end...huh? What's the grand total?"

"\$999,376.00 exactly.... Chances are sir, by this time Monday—you'll be a millionaire."

"I was aiming for my birthday yesterday...but tomorrow will do just as well."

Goldstein, not remembering Roman's day, "That's right. Mozltov! Happy Birthday."

"See Goldstein—dreams can come true. I guarantee I'll be a billionaire by the very day I'm a hundred."

"When a person's earthly dreams cross with God's heavenly will—then Earth and Heaven, Creator and creation—shall be as one.' ...My minister at church said that."

"What's a Jew like you doing in church? Isn't church against your religion?" Roman rises and gathers his belongings, including a metallic briefcase. He and Goldstein prepare to depart.

Goldstein imparts, "I'm always learning—I love Jews and I love Christians—the common

denominator is love, not religion.... Mr. Roman, would you like to be my guest at church tomorrow?"

Roman nods negatively. "Thanks, I'll be at 'The Big A,' Aqueduct.... You like horses, Goldstein?"

"I think they're one of the Lord's most beautiful creations. I always wanted a pony when I was a kid..."

"It's 'cause you got a big caboose." Roman pats him on the hind-end.

As they reach the door, Lucy the secretary enters. "Mr. Roman, your wife called. She wanted to remind you to be home early; your cousin will be here this evening.... And this registered letter arrived late for you."

"Give it to Goldstein." Roman quickly exits.

Goldstein opens the letter and reveals the contents to Lucy. "Unbelievable. There's what I call a perfect coincidence... Romans 6:23 'The wages of sin is death.' His final check from that course he'd been teaching-\$623."

Lucy shakes her head in disbelief. She returns to her work.

Alone, Goldstein is astonished by the numerology. He matches the letter with Roman's

ledger sheet. The total is: \$999,999. He assuages, "Poor guy. Who would believe it? Now that's what I call, *a day late and a dollar short.*"

LATE AFTERNOON

In a health club, a small video crew is adjusting the lighting around a treadmill machine. The privately owned gym is run by Jordan. He is in his early thirties. He's dark-skinned, short and stocky, with a crew cut.

Roman inquires at the front desk. "What's this?"

"I don't know—some Christian guy is shooting a workout video."

Reverend Mark Anthony is thirty-nine years of age. He is tall and muscularly lean, in many ways, an incarnation of Michael Roman. In his New York accent, he flies by, commenting to Roman, "I love that about people...they tell you they don't know and then they give you an answer.... Hey Jordan, tell that guy not to stand next to me; I don't like to be the second best-looking guy in the joint." Mark asks Roman, "What's up, 'Brother?'" Mark Anthony races to the treadmill. He speaks in the direction of the video camera lens. "GOD'S GIFT—THE

CHRISTIAN WAY TO A HEALTHY AND HOLY BODY, MIND AND SOUL. I'm Reverend Mark Anthony..."

Mark Anthony kneels and prays on the treadmill. He sees the video lights. He subconsciously flashes back to 9:14 P.M., December 18, 1960....

In an operating room in Glens Falls, New York; Monica is the pretty, twenty-four-year-old, fair-skinned brunette in labor. Six large lights focus down. She's in danger and excruciating pain. Monica cries, "Oh God! Why me dear God?! God, why me?!"

Doctors, nurses, an anesthetist, and a priest are present. The doctor tells her, "Try to relax Monica." He tells the anesthetist, "Get ready the anesthesia."

The priest prays: "'A man of God came to me, and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He was from, and He did not tell me His name.'"

Monica begs, "Oh my poor baby! Let me die! I will not betray my baby's life—you do all that you can to keep this child alive! How can I live with myself if I let you take my baby from me?!"

The doctor says, "We're going to save you both."

The anesthetist says, "Monica, the pain will end—start counting backwards."

Monica cries out, "My God!"

The anesthetist says, "Count Monica—count the lights."

Monica counts out, "7... 6...5...4...My God... 3...2...1."

She draws the line on the EKG machine. A white sheet is drawn over her head.

Back in the gym, envisioning his mother's angelic face, Mark is on the run. He's spirited by some *Aerosmith* music.

Roman, wondering, asks, "What's he doing?"

Jordan ponders, answering, "I don't know—he's into spirits and angels or some nonsense—who knows with him?"

Mark is in maximum overdrive; his arms wave and motion upward. Roman exits.

EARLY EVENING

On the neighborhood street outside Roman's house, Roman is returning from the gym. Three children: Jessica, age-ten; Britni, age-seven; and David, age-five; each with fair-complexions, attend to a wounded-legged kitten.

Britni begs, "Mister, help—it got runned over."

Roman asks, "Where's its mother?"

Britni and Jessica answer, "We don't know."

"Well, give it to me—I'll take it to a vet and have him put to sleep."

Jessica tells him, "But it's not sleepy—it's hurt."

Roman responds, "Go ask your parents—it's humane."

Britni asks, "Jessie, what's humane?"

Roman interjects, "It's what a human does. It's just an animal kids—it doesn't have a brain."

Jessica spouts out, "But it's got a heart."

Britni scolds Roman. "If your mom saw you with a broke't leg—you wouldn't want to go to sleep."

EVENING

In the living room of Roman's house, Maggie proudly shows the backyard view to Roman's cousin Judy Christabella. Judy is forty-one-years-old. She has dark hair with spider web gray strands. She's plump, well endowed, and boisterous. She eats, she drinks, she smokes and she gambles—that's Judy. She has a beer bottle in

hand. "Nice spread Maggie. I'll bet you a million bucks you never get Michael in that lake. Our aunt says he won't even walk by a pool."

"Or have about as much a chance of him shedding a tear."

Judy asks, "Not much of a crier, huh?"

Roman walks in the door.

"Michael," says Maggie.

"Hi, Honey." Roman sees his cousin. "Judy Christabella..."

"Hi, Michael...What's it been, a G-D eternity? What, since we were puppies? You look beat for God sakes. You kids up late on the hobbyhorse, huh?"

Roman explains, "I couldn't get to sleep last night...How'd you get...Why are you here?"

"I was telling your little missus—I had to take the train down from Albany. My friggin' car's in the shop and I'm short on coin." She tells them, "After this weekend, I'll hit A-C for a day—shoot some craps, you know roll them bones, baby needs a new pair'a shoes..." She zones back in. "But anyways, I wanted to tell you firsthand, in case she didn't reach you herself, it's Aunt Mary Frances..."

Maggie thinks, Michael has never mentioned her. Judy reads it like a poker face. She says,

"Me and her is his only livin' relatives." She goes on to explain, "Well anyways—we were on the porch at my place last night, but I knew I was leavin', so I went to check on her this morning at the store—you know she sleeps in that god-awful place?" Judy subconsciously flashes back to 8:45 A.M. this morning....

The quaint religious art shop, in Albany, New York, is replete with gifts and icons of the Lord, angels, and even a few of Elvis. Mary Frances Killion-Wilder is a sixty-nine-year-old poetry buff. She has light-colored hair and a soft, angelic face. She is meticulously dressed in *K-Mart* fashions. She kneels behind the counter; her joyful countenance refracted in the glass case of angel figurines, her back to the open and empty cash register. "'One day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, Satan also came among them.'" She clutches her chest in pain, but habitually conceals it.

Judy enters from the curtain divider in the rear. "S.O.B's—broke in again right? Just the kitty?"

"Oh! You almost frightened me half to death child." Aunt Mary Frances swishes away a winged

intruder. "Shoo fly." She instructs Judy, "It's just money—perhaps they needed it more than me?"

An ill-tempered Judy notices the smashed door window. Judy asks, "When are you going to bar the windows?"

Aunt Mary Frances replies, "Bars keep people away. All are welcome here."

"How the hell are you ever gonna get ahead in this life? It's too damn short to waste it all away in here."

"Judy love, I'm needed here. I just haven't had the time."

"Forty years you've been here. Forty...Forty years and you don't take even a Sunday off. Nowhere—no Vegas—no nothin'. All your life you've preached about wanting to see 'The King'—King—this, King—that; if it wasn't Christ the King—it was that dead-as-stone Elvis. Stop with the God, stop with the angels—it's time to get a life and start living!"

Aunt Mary Frances continues tidying up. She toys with a favorite Elvis. Judy hurls it out the broken window. "There! Now Elvis has left the building! And I don't care if God punishes me for being angry!"

Aunt Mary Frances clutches her chest, but is no longer adept at concealing it. Judy asks, "It's your chest again isn't it? That's the third time this week. I'm taking you to a doctor if it's the last thing I do."

Aunt Mary Frances says, "If God wants me—I'm His."

"Don't hand me that, what comes around goes around, give'n take Scripture."

Aunt Mary Frances brushes the housefly away. She quotes:

"'Naked I came forth from my mother's womb, and naked shall I go back again. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD!'"

Judy lunges, behind the counter, at the fly. "To Hell with the fly!" Judy, as if in slow-motion, uses a forty-year-old canister of bug spray and poisons the housefly to death.

Back in the living room, Judy says, "That's when she said if the pain of this life got to be too much—she knew she could trust in Michael to save her. Those were her exact words."

Maggie says, "And?"

Judy answers, "I virtually had to beg her to get to a hospital. I know for fact she's never seen a doctor—thinks she can pray everything away." Judy gets

emotional. "It's breast cancer...spread everywhere. Doctor said, she's terminally ill, said, it's a miracle she's stayed alive this long...could be a day...a week...Lord only knows."

Maggie asks, "Is there any chance for recovery?"

"Odds are about one in a million—but I doubt it. But, with all her spiritual stuff...doctor said, it's been known to happen."

"So what do you want Michael to do?"

"I don't know?" Asking, "Michael, you tell me?"

Roman says cold-heartedly, "I'm tempted to say, there's nothing anyone can do—let her die in peace as they say."

D A Y T H R E E

2ND DREAMS & VISIONS

SATURDAY - APRIL 15, 2000

3:00 A.M.

In Roman's bedroom, Roman and Maggie are asleep. There is a supernatural aura in the room. A spot of moonlight, coming from behind a cloud, peering through the window, seems to cause Roman to roll over and lie face up. In his sleep, he speaks:

"I am Michael: The Archangel."

Roman's eyes dart open immediately. He rolls over to see if his wife perhaps touched him. She is sound asleep.

Unable to again fall back to sleep, he walks, towel around his waist, to the window overlooking

the yard. From his vantage point, he stares aimlessly at the rowboat. Dawn arrives.

THE ARK

DAYBREAK

In the backyard, Roman appears more weary than usual. He's neglected shaving this morning. He carries with him, his choice weapon for the day: boomerangs. He stretches for a brief moment. He attaches the weight, but forgets the wrist straps. He does his chin-ups, but weak, does only a few. He tosses the boomerangs at the tree targets and a couple of archery targets as well. He still strikes the bull's-eye with regularity.

The horse van carting *Beersheba* to Aqueduct backs into the stable. The van's logo reads: ANGÉL'S AIR N' GROUND EQUINE LIMOUSINE SYSTEM—"IF YOU SEE A HORSE FLY—IT MUST BE ANGEL'S."

Angél is in his late twenties. He is the well-bred, Hispanic, driver and groom. He works to load the 3-year-old colt. He hollers, "*Buenos Días Mr. Roman, it's Angél.*" The Man gave

us a great sunrise this morning didn't He?"

Roman only waves. Closer to the wood line, Roman misses a foolhardy attempt at a rabbit.

Angél apprises Roman about *Beersheba*. "He's shown promise in the morning works. He'll be coming from the clouds at the finish. Hopefully, God-willing, you'll have a winner on your hands."

Roman hardly acknowledges. He heads back to the house. He notices the pigeon droppings on the walk (not the wall) beneath the window. He empties the rocks from the birdbath and positions the bath to catch the bird's remains. He grows angrier.

Angél hops in the truck. He shouts to Roman, "Good luck—God bless!"

MORNING

In front of the house, the new driveway is yet unusable. In his car, Roman, rushing, exits perilously close to the sidewalk. The three neighborhood children are playing a safe distance away. Roman, however, does not see the good-sized, blonde, retriever he accidentally hits. That terrible sounding thump is followed by the awful shrill of the wounded dog's

cry. Roman is anxious. He gets out. The dog starts limping away. The children come rushing over. Roman fights to find compassion, for an instant, he holds the hound like a baby. But like a frustrated parent, he cannot cope with the helpless wailing. "He's hurt pretty bad kids—I don't think he's gonna make it. Go see whose dog it was and tell'em I took'em to the vet and I'll take care of it...Okay? Go."

Jessica says, "Brit—go tell your mom that the mean guy hit Joshua with his car by mistake."

Roman's unaware of the adolescent's appraisal of his character.

LATER THAT MORNING

In the health club, Roman is diligently working out on equipment adjacent to a leg machine Mark Anthony's on.

A pretty girl struts by. She says to Mark, "Hi, how are you?"

"Terrible, how are you?"

Mark answers satirically.

She smiles.

Olympic athlete, Daniel "Zoro" Mazda, inquires congenially of Mark, "I've been watching you—you're pretty confident of yourself aren't you?"

"I'll tell'ya—my ego needs a spotter. I'm confident 'cause I got it—but humble 'cause I know where it came from."

Roman asks Mark, "You're in your own little world aren't you?"

"What's up handsome? Yeah, but that's good—I can always find a parking space."

Roman asks, "What are you on?"

"Life, God man—He's the best."

"God?"

"Yeah, God's cool."

Mark makes his way to the front desk. He asks about Roman, "Hey Jordan, where do I know that guy from?"

Jordan answers, "You saw him in here yesterday—he works out here."

"No, I know...before that?"

Jordan shrugs, saying, "He thinks you're out there though."

"He's a good judge of people." Mark says, "That's gonna kill me—that'll keep me up all night, wondering where I know that guy from." Mark leaves the facility.

Jordan says, "See'ya Mark..."

"Thanks for the warning," Mark jokes.

11:30 A.M.

At the Roman house, in the doorway, Roman and Maggie are waiting on Judy to go to the track. A timid, light brown-haired, slender, sixteen-year-old named Dawna Calendar is at the door. "Happy Saturday. My name is Dawna Calendar. Do you know the lifesaving power of Jehovah?"

Maggie's retort seems to overpower the girl. "What are you selling?"

Dawna answers, "Magazine subscriptions."

Maggie snarls, "This may be painstaking for you, but I already have a life—I ain't bein' rude, but we're leaving." The girl hands Maggie a magazine and abruptly leaves. Like a delivery boy, Maggie tosses it into the fireplace.

Judy is ready. Roman says, "It's about time. Let's go ladies," rushing them, "Judy, you follow us in Mrs. Roman's Range Rover; Lincoln's gonna meet us there."

At the railroad crossing, on the way to Aqueduct, a freight train is approaching in the far off distance. The caravan of cars rushes to cross. The people, especially Roman and his wife,

hardly notice an indignant man since they are so prevalent.

Noah Muhammad capably readies his paraphernalia. When the cars stop, he'll go to work. The most obvious characteristic of the forty-five-year-old, African-American, Muslim man is he has but one leg. By the way, on hand made crutches, he sings and dances a bit.

Roman and Maggie are inside the Jaguar, just past the tracks. Having made the crossing, Maggie is outwardly relieved they did not happen upon Noah. "Thank G-o-d, God."

"He doesn't need God—he needs to get a life."

"Loser—money's what he needs."

APPX: 12:15 P.M.

At Aqueduct Racetrack, in Jamaica, New York; Roman and the women are seating themselves at a dining table in the upstairs clubhouse. Roman says, "The trainer says I should get four or five-to-one on my horse. This could work out perfect—I wanna hit for better than six hundred."

Judy says to him, "A buck and a half on his snout will get you six bills...nine-to-two pays eleven...that's \$675."

Maggie, glancing the program, asks, "Oh is he in this race right now? Maids horses who've never run a race."

Judy points out to her snootily, "Never won a race. And it's maidens: babies, virgins—as in what every real man wants—virgin: bless-ed, pure, untouched, saintly."

The trumpet sounds its traditional race track reveille. The announcer pronounces over the loudspeaker, "The horses are on the track for the first race."

At an adjacent table are Swami Oscar Mahabharata, Gabe St. Patrick, and Kara Kesh. The Swami is fifty-years of age or so; he is rotund, with a dark ruddy face and a turban on his head. A Hindu, he speaks with an Indian accent to Roman. "I apologize; I don't wish to intrude..."

Lincoln arrives. He says to Roman, "You look like shit, who and what's keeping you up at night?" He sees The Swami and snides, "Now, that's a hell of a rug." For the on-the-score Lincoln, there is a strong, sexual attraction between he and Maggie. "Mag-pie.'" Lincoln overtly fixates upon Judy's chest. "And you must be Judy-Mary, Mother of God—your kids won't die of thirst." A waiter takes the

order. Lincoln requests, "Jack straight-up, 'Hoss.'" "

Gabe says nicely to Judy, "In God's eyes, in a true man's eyes, the beauty of a woman is found from within—in her heart and soul."

The Swami continues to Roman, "I wish to introduce myself—I am Swami Oscar Mahabharata. Our horses are coupled together...I apologize...we, own the #1 horse: the Avatar colt. Please call me 'O.M.', all my friends do."

Roman informs him, "But we're not friends."

"Then let us be...we are all as one—so to speak. 'As was in the beginning—so too, in the end—The Alpha and the Omega.'" He sees in Maggie, "You are Greek are you not? And I believe I see some Egyptian perhaps..."

Maggie claims, "...half and half."

"I have a friend, Helen Theotokos; she too is uniquely both Greek Orthodox and Egyptian—perhaps you met in a past life."

"I don't think so—this life ends with me."

"Well then, how does your God manifest Himself to you? How does He reveal Himself?"

"I'm not religious."

"Many religions...One God.... And your husband?"

"You'd have to ask him."

The Swami asks, "Mr. Roman, what is your life about?" Roman is speechless. "Everybody has a story." The Swami pauses for a response. "The race is over at the finish line—perhaps you are only at the starting gate."

The announcer says over the speaker, "The horses have reached the starting gate—they're at the post."

Roman says to Swami, "I don't mean to be rude, but the race is about to go off. You don't bet?"

"No, I...we, race for sport. Our horse runs for charity." Swami Mahabharata politely departs. "Perhaps we will be gathered together again? Good day, Mr. Roman."

Judy says, "I'm gonna bet. Who wants what?"

Maggie says, "Here, give me Twenty to win."

Roman says, "Get me One Fifty."

Lincoln says, "Five Hundred—and if he doesn't win I'm gonna personally hang'em by the neck."

Nick Zito arrives with two men. He's just come from the paddock. Zito is the horse's trainer. "Michael, I want you to meet two of my owners...Bill Condron and Joe Cornachia. They stood by me even after I became a

Christian." He addresses Roman's table, "Hi everyone, I'm Nick Zito, *Beersheba's* trainer...I wish you all the best." He speaks collectively to Roman and The Swami, "Michael, we got you Pat Day. Mr. Mahabharata, Mikey Smith went to *Lots of Promise*. He tells Roman, "They're two of the best."

The announcer speaks. "It is now post-time!"

The action behind the starting gate is hectic. The #1 horse is loaded in. Roman's horse, #1A, is unruly. He unseats the jockey.

The announcer is heard over the air, "Number 1A, *Beersheba*, has unseated the rider..."

Spooked, the horse rears up on his hind legs. When he comes thundering down, he injures his front cannon bone. He falls to his knees. He hobbles up, but cannot. The emergency personnel and van rush to the tragic scene. The other horses are loaded in the gate.

"Ladies and Gentleman, may I have your attention please.... In this race, on the advice of the track veterinarian...#1A, *Beersheba*...has been scratched. Scratch, #1A, *Beersheba*...."

Roman's table collectively bangs their fists. Each person

seated blurts out characteristic euphemisms.

The announcer continues, "All wagers on the Number's 1 and 1A will be refunded. The #1 will run for purse money only.... Ladies and Gentlemen, may I have your attention—will trainer Nick Zito please report to the Steward's office. The flag is up...they're off!"

Zito is distraught. "It looks bad. He might have to be put down."

Roman explodes. He uses Zito's tie for a noose. "Go to Hell! Over my dead body!"

"If you've got a better answer—you let me know. Right now, I've got to care for that suffering animal. Now, I'll see if he can be saved. Believe me, I pray to God he can."

Judy tells Roman, "That's a hard pill to swallow Michael."

Maggie tells him, "Son-of-a-bitch Michael—our whole investment."

Lincoln declares, "200K—that's a real death sentence."

"Shut up!" says Roman. He tells Judy, "You're not the one holding the needle." To Maggie, he says, "You're not the one who labored." And to Lincoln, he says, "And you weren't there when the gavel struck down." He tells

himself, loudly, "It's all up to me."

There is silence while Roman deliberates. Judy gambles in speaking aloud, "Dare I?" She tells the table, "A friend of mine once said: Life is like a *Racing Form*—if you read into the past, you could handicap the future...so let me chart this out." She's looking at the racing paper. "You bought him for \$200,000 as a 2-year-old.... His sire is Derby winner: *Alysheba*, his grandpa: *Alydar*—the best. He runs one race at three—dead last. So then you..."

Maggie imposes, "...try and breed it—but the mangy carcass piece of horseshit can't have b-a-b-y's."

"...So you bring it back to race it—dead last again. So you..."

Lincoln inseminates, "...have it gelded."

"...so he'll stop chasing fillies and get down to business making money—so to insure your investment, you..."

Roman discloses, "...take out a million dollar policy."

"...But it's only good for a non-racing accident. Now, today..."

Roman decrees, "...Not yesterday, not tomorrow—today, what do I do?"

Judy interjects, "It's a sin and a crime to have to kill'em—but let him put him to sleep."

Maggie implants upon him, "He can't race and can't reproduce.... It's a sin to lose that money."

Lincoln takes his shot. "It's a crime—but the horse is worth more dead than you are alive."

Roman ordains, "Everybody listen! It's my decision, my choice, my verdict...let's see if first he can be saved."

A child named Sammy Goode passes by. He speaks, out of sight of the others. "You could just let it live."

AFTERNOON

On the return trip, Roman and Maggie are parked at the crossing. The locomotive lumbers by. On this side of the tracks is a well-kept, rinky-dink, hobo shack. Two large hand written signs proclaim:

+ GOD BLESS
+ CHRIST WAS HOMELESS

Noah, a Vietnam veteran, is more down-on-his-luck than homeless. He wears his green army

jacket, its patch reads: James-Muhammad 4234567. He puts a buck in his pocket. Without a doubt, Noah is the happiest man on the planet.

Noah's got many plastic grocery bags with him. Toting a bag full of trash, he walks for the car at the gate. The blonde, male, teenage driver and three females recognize Noah. They back their car up, closing the gap purposely left by Roman. The maneuver makes the handicapped man's walk easier. Noah says, "Scott, Jackie, Janeen, and don't tell me...no, no, no...please don't tell me-Ginger, yeah!"

Scott gives Noah a handful of change. He says, "Give me just one today please, Noah."

Noah says in return, "For here or to go?"

Scott answers, "...to go."

"One for the road-you got it." Noah gives him a bag. "And here's one for the ladies." He rhymes this jingle: "*Roses are red and violets are blue-I'm an entertaining stranger, 'cause I might be an angel-Hebrews 13:2. Gotta' bolt...Alláh loves you.*"

Noah pogos his way to Roman's car. Roman is indifferent. Although the top is down-Maggie rolls up the window. She reaches for the glove box.

Noah rhymes, "*Shahadah, Salah, Zakah, Siyam and Hajj-give me your litter, I'll give you directions, readin' Scripture is my job-but I don't do windshields.*"

Maggie cracks a beautiful smile. She identifies with the music. Noah flashes his tooth-filled grin. He subconsciously flashes back to a day in 1972....

In the Vietnam jungle, a baby-faced, eighteen-year-old Noah is seemingly sweating blood and bullets. He proceeds cautiously and timidly. He's a virgin at the trigger. He leads a few paces ahead of a gung-ho, black, Sergeant Kazef, and a six-man platoon. Sergeant Kazef orders, "Hey Mo-sori, St. Louis! The government says kill, so you kill, none of this chicken shit. Kill or be killed-eye fo'n eye-you got it black brother?"

The men behind investigate a pile of dead soldiers from both sides. A soldier calls out, "Sergeant Kazef, it's us and them."

Noah drifts off the lead a bit. Suddenly, an equally inexperienced Vietnamese soldier jumps from a tree. He knifes Noah's arm. Each man draws his weapons. They stand alone, eye-to-eye. The enemy soldier,

without provocation, looks a few yards above his own head. Noah looks there too. What seems to be the blazing white *Concorde* passenger plane blurs by. The enemy soldier looks with shock back at Noah. Noah too, is amazed.

From Noah's vantage point, the black *Stealth* bomber is above the platoon. The platoon yells out, "Kill!" The seven-man firing squad blasts the Vietnamese man's body apart. The ricochet of friendly fire accidentally shoots Noah in the leg.

Noah, already in tears, clings to his Islamic medallion, cross, and dog tags. "Forgive them Allâh—I'm sorry Father."

Today, back at the railroad crossing, Roman says to Noah, "I'm sorry man, I'd like to help, but do you know what it means if I give you a dollar?"

Noah answers, "*Khudo min shan'khâtri*. You love me."

"It means, I'll have a dollar less—and that one-dollar I give to you will forever be one dollar. But, I can take that dollar and turn a profit of ten. You'll only drink it away."

"Don't drink, but I see what you mean. It's like Christ said: 'Whoever has will get more and whoever doesn't what he's got will

be taken away.' Same principle, only with blessings and the Word. Yeah, give God anything—and He'll give you everything."

The crossing gate is lifting. Noah hops out of the way. "Be good, 'Brother Man'—you too, Ma'am." He says to himself, "*Mahab'bi`umr*—bless'em, there but for the grace of God go I." He sings loudly, "*Whoa mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord...*"

D A Y F O U R

3RD DREAMS & VISIONS

SUNDAY - APRIL 16, 2000

3:00 A.M.

In Roman's bedroom, again there is an eerie stillness. Roman and Maggie are sound asleep. An omnipresent light is again present. On his stomach, Roman rolls over. His eyes are closed shut.

"I am Michael...The Archangel Michael...save a life."

THE SPIRIT

Roman's eyes burst open. He's shaken, dazed—he has actually seen something in his sleep.

Roman tosses on a long, flowing, bathrobe. His face is

withdrawn and unshaven. He stares out the bedroom window. Rain is falling. The stable is empty. The moonlight seems to outline a path from his window to the rowboat. The pond twinkles with raindrops.

DAYBREAK

In the backyard, the rain has ceased. Roman carries a medieval bow and quiver. Exasperated, he does but one chin-up. Roman also has a slingshot tucked in his pocket; he grabs a rock, from the pile on the ground, and loads. His first shot misses an archery target—his second, a tree. He spots a squirrel. The shot he fires in anger ricochets and nearly misses his own eye. The stone raps against the window of the house. Roman painstakingly checks to see if the glass is broken. He locates the bird's nest and removes it. He is equally careful not to drop the egg-filled basket. Unexpectedly, a garden snake crawls up his foot. Startled, he juggles the nest. A single egg splashes down safely in the birdbath. He proceeds to put the rest of the eggs in the nearby barbecue pit. As if in slow-motion, he douses the nest with gas from a small lawnmower can.

He ignites it. "'Mother Nature.'" A bee stings Roman. He scalds his shooting hand on the flaming nest. He screams, "Agh! Zagzagel! Agh!" Roman enters into the kitchen.

Maggie, awakened by the yelling, is confused and clueless on how to aid to her husband. "Where the fuck is Elizabeth? I can't function without my coffee...Ohh! I don't know...here put it under the water. Michael, you've got to get some sleep before you kill yourself." Roman's anger mounts.

In the backyard, with his shooting hand bandaged, Roman attempts to fire an arrow at a target. The evil determination that possesses him is frightening. The arrow falls short, landing feebly on the ground. A second, aimed at a tree, sails high into the sky.

To Roman's surprise, Angél unloads a heavily cast *Beersheba*. Angél lavishes the animal with affection. "Glorious day, Mr. Roman—look who's home! He'll never race, but what a blessing—he's alive!"

Roman loads the bow. He targets the horse. Roman's evil eye is glued to the horse's sympathetic eye. "One for the

money...two for the show...three to get ready...four to let go."

As if in slow-motion, the arrow flies. Angél has his back turned. The arrow misses him by a foot. It strikes the colt in the neck, killing him. Angél signs himself in prayer. "*En el nombre del padre, y del Hijo, y del Espiríritu Santo.*"

At the railroad crossing, Angél's horse van speeds to make the crossing as the gates come down. Roman, lagging behind, remains. He is more upbeat; an addictive killer with a fix. Noah approaches, rhyming, "*Shahadah, Salah, Zakah, Siyam and Hajj...and they ain't Islamic lawyers...*" He directly asks Roman, "It's your world ain't it man?"

"And you're lucky to be in it."

"Don't I know it—don't I know it." Noah spots Roman's revolver in the glove box. "This is the Northeast, not the Middle East." Noah continues on to say, "God Himself, told me in prayer; from after the sin of death, to death's brother murder; from after the dawn of a new day, to God's Commandments; and from man's birth, to the prophets; mankind, with time, in his created oneness with God and the angels, has used man's own kinship with evil to

murder and to kill; were it for God, life would be eternal. In the name of Earth, religion, and life—man has used his own beliefs to create holy wars. God has created life in His name—man has taken that life in *his* own. I will pray for peace on the weapons of war." Noah asks, "Where do you work?"

"In the city."

"New York City—I don't get it—13 million *other* people and everyone talks to themselves."

Roman asks Noah, "How come you're so high all the time?"

"Listen up, 'Brother'; this life's too precious and short. Ain't nothin' perfect in this world—only His.... You're rich, you're poor, you live and you die—God gives us free will man; love and worship Him and be happy through it all. This life means everything—then again, it means nothing."

"What about your..."

"Handicap? Okay to say it, it's not a swear word—one less leg to worry 'bout—wish I had it, but I don't...be okay, so long as I don't put my foot in my mouth." He enacts the idiom. "Kaboom! See, we're all handicapped—some you see—some you don't. I talk about it, see'in I believe in the battle people fight to speak out

and help others who share handicaps. That's God's best principle: loving others. See, in turn, He graces me with my shortcomings... 'sides, I don't have to be afraid and pray I don't become paralyzed or 'capped like 'lotta folks do." He notices the horse owner's emblem on Roman's windshield. "It's like with the horse races...they'll give the one that's stronger more weight to carry—a handicap. Only means I got an advantage over folks who ain't as close to God as I need to be."

Roman shoots a look with respect to Noah's housing situation. Noah accommodates him. "Homeless...another bad word? The best place to be on Earth is happy inside.... 'The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake...'"

Noah loves to quote Scripture. "Psalm 23—that's my favorite; Reverend Mark says everybody should have a favorite Scripture—'words to live by.' That's a psalm of David; you remind me a lot of him. Even King David was homeless for a stretch;

Adam, Moses, Saiyidna'îsa, many prophets—all homeless. Takes more courage and strength to be homeless than it does to have a place...I could live in your house, no problem—but could you live in mine?"

He also loves to quote Scripture—he himself has spoken; "Besides...my roof is Allâh's Heaven, the moon my lantern. His stars are my lights, His sun my fireplace, His crippled trees my chair, the lush grass my carpeted floor, His river my basin, my bed is as big and round as the earth, my bird cage is as full and large as the sky." Noah is flying now. "God! I love the world!" He is brought back down to Earth. "But, if you must know, if there is one thing that bothers me...it's stealing. Bad enough in your world you can't leave or forget something without someone taking it...in mine, we got to keep our stuff all over the place. If you find something and it ain't yours—don't take it—good chance it's someone's like mine.... Well, that don't matter, I'm not gonna be 'round this place much longer."

Roman gestures as if he is slitting his throat.

Noah lambastes him. "Hell no, suicide's a sin. I'm going to California to start over. My pot

of gold's out there. Lily, pretty Caucasian girl was gonna be my wife. We were on our way to Vegas when I got drafted. Maybe she's even got the bird I gave her 'fore I left.... Don't forget, as long as you're alive, ain't never too late to start over." Noah reaches for something. "Boy, I almost forgot...something I want you to have, in case I don't see you again. I've been getting a feeling past three days—I think it's my angel Gabriel—so to my angel be true." Noah gives him a coin. "Alla yib`at`lak! I love you, 'Brother Man.'"

Roman looks at the man's missing leg and wonders... "Your lucky silver dollar?"

Noah tells him, "Ain't no such thing as luck—blessed. I had it on me in 'Nam when I got my leg shot off—I'm blessed just to be alive!"

"I don't understand. Why do you say you love me—you didn't get anything from me?"

"Love's not about gettin'—it's about giving. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Understand? It all comes back to 'ya in the end. Besides, that's the angel voice in my head...Acts 12:9 'So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real,

but thought he was seeing a vision.'" "

Roman tells *him*, "I'm not religious."

"Angels aren't about religion. They're the sons of God, created by God to do His will—just like you and me.... Ut oh, the gates are rising...got that deep down feelin' it's gonna rain—The Almighty One is crying for a soul today." The cloudless sky refutes Noah's prediction. He hobbles away hurriedly, singing, "Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!... Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!... Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!...His truth is marching on."

AFTERNOON

At Aqueduct Racetrack, outside the veterinarian's office, Roman gets into his car.irate, he grabs his car phone and calls Goldstein. "Goldstein, it was an accident—I haven't been sleeping and my hand is hurt...forty days for the claim? Why in the hell should I have to go forty days without it? Get on it first thing Monday...One Hundred and Fifty dollars for a death certificate for an animal—it's jackasses like that, that give animals dying a bad name." He slams the phone against the

dashboard. He inadvertently breaks the convertible top switch.

On the return trip, Roman approaches the railroad crossing. As Noah predicted, the skies have opened, and rain starts to sprinkle then steadily pour. Noah's shack is nonexistent. Noah waits, with his life's belongings, for the train to slow. Noah says matter-of-factly, "Hey 'Brother,' never thought I'd see you again. Remember, how we were talkin' about being homeless? Even though the Lord says: 'So I say to you, ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you.' ...Once in awhile, it'd be nice if people would just offer to help—no man likes to be a beggar. But most of all—more than any other..."

"What?"

"It'd be nice to have a friend; someone to talk to. Homeless people make people, who aren't any different inside, afraid. Just like them, we get lonely. It's a great big world out there, and nobody likes being alone—everyone needs a friend."

Roman asks, "How'd you know it was gonna rain?"

Noah answers, "It's raining, and I said it—that's all you need to know."

He tells Roman, "I want to leave you with a story. Now, remember this: Three men were standing alone, at a bus stop, in the middle of nowhere, nothin' there but the sign. It began to rain like there was no tomorrow. The first man put all his trust in the things of this world. He put on a jacket and an umbrella he bought—and he was dry.... The second man put all his hope in himself. Using his own strengths, he thought to bend the sign over his head—now he too was dry.... The third and final man, he put all his faith in God, he prayed, and the rain stopped—then all were dry." Noah looks. "Ut oh! I see the caboose coming." The rain is a deluge. "I love the rain; it brings life to all the plants and animals in the far reaches of the kingdom.... Remember, the angel is God's messenger of mercy, resurrection, and promise—promise like the rainbow. *Alla ybarik fîk. God bless.*" A small army mattress strapped to his back, Noah hobbles away singing, "*America! America! God shed His grace on thee, and crown thy good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea.*"

The gates are raised and Roman drives forward. From Roman's angle across the tracks,

the train passes in the background. Noah is gone. The sign:

† CHRIST WAS HOMELESS...also reads: NOAH WAS ALSO HERE

With the rain pouring and Roman drenched, Roman seeks refuge under a carport. An early model, white, Ford Mustang convertible is parked outside the seemingly abandoned factory. A small sign hangs above the door:

U.C.A. LIFE + GOD - MANKIND
WELCOME

Roman peeks through a window. He cautiously enters. Roman is mad. "Of all the luck."

Inside the Universal Church of Angels, Life and God front office, hard rocking music plays. Reverend Mark Anthony is seated behind a desk. He's writing. His attention is drawn to a field mouse nearing the caged *Havaheart* mousetrap he's set up. He places broken, shredded wheat cereal in a pile outside the cage. Roman observes the strange behavior. Mark speaks to the rodent. "Hello little buddy." Roman knocks loudly on the door. Mark shouts, "Agh! You scared the hell outta' me. Ough!" Mark accidentally

jabs his right wrist with the pencil. He removes the protrusion.

Roman asks, "What are you doing?"

Mark says, "Feeding my little friend. It's great. He eats just what I eat. Feed'em then free'em—sounds good to me."

"It's just a dumb animal."

"Not to other animals."

"But it won't know if you kill it."

"I'll know." Mark suggests, "Watch one of those animal shows on TV sometime. I love those things. They teach you a lot about people. Listen—if everybody keeps killing animals, that show will be all we got left. Let me tell you a cool thing I once heard this Jack Hanna guy say; he said, animals were good for kids as pets, because they expose the kid to the death of a loved one at an early age, so the kid can better handle people passing away.

"Now that's good, huh? But let me tell'ya one better—we also need to start practicing on animals the 'going to the ends of the earth' to keep them alive way of thinking; instead of the 'putting them out of their misery' mentality. That'll teach us something about life. Do you know 99 out of 100 killers kill animals

before they kill people? Life is life, and killing is killing."

Mark is wound now. "I'm sorry. I just go nuts when I think of people killing animals. There's something in the Bible on animals." Mark taps a Bible on his desk. "Exodus 20:13. I am telling you, check it out." Mark says obligingly, "What can I do for you?"

Roman asks, "How did Noah know it was going to rain?"

"Noah, from the Bible, Noah—or Muslim Noah, from the railroad crossing, Noah?"

Roman gestures outside.

Mark jokes, "He's got ESPN."

"That's really funny—you mean E.S.P.?"

"No, ESPN—he checks the weather report to see who he should pick; either he picks the over in the Jets game, or the underdog in the Giants game. We play for fun. They're our warriors."

Roman counters, "It's not football season. Tell me the truth?"

Mark tackles his question. "Truth be told—sometimes he prays, sometimes he listens—I believe he was probably listening."

"God?"

"God or one of His angels."

Roman is bewildered. He checks the surroundings. There are few furnishings. "I don't even know why I'm here."

"You're here to get out of the rain—though I suspect putting your top up might be a solution." Mark explains, "It's okay, I'm picking on you.... The Lord works in mysterious ways. Don't think you're here by accident—it's what I call 'perfect coincidence', 'ya know, divine intervention—destiny. There's a reason you're here. In the long run, I imagine it's the reason we're all here...to find an answer to the eternal question—the question we all want to know.... What is the meaning of life?..."

Roman reveals, "I've been having a dream. My voice wakes me in my sleep, I hear myself say... I'm Michael—the Archangel—save a life."

"Wow! You had a vision—that's the archangel Michael. He's God's personal messenger—that's God talking to you. His archangel speaks to you in a voice you can understand—your own. Wow! Good for you! Wow!" Mark, in oneness, reveals, "I dream like crazy every night—it's one of the best parts of my life. Dreams, that's what life is made of."

Roman wonders, "Will it ever end?"

"Not if you don't save a life it won't. You'll never be able to sleep, let alone rest in peace—if you don't listen to that angel. I don't know what you've done in your life, what sins you've committed...but we're all sinners—none of us is perfect—only God. Michael is calling on you for salvation, for repentance...he wants you to save a life."

"Why should I believe you?"

"Because I talk and listen to God, but like Michael, I'm just an instrument, just like this pen I write with is an instrument. The archangel Michael is just the messenger of God. You truly need to go to God—He's your Creator."

"Where do I begin?"

"First of all, you have the greatest power known to man—the greatest: you can get down on your knees in prayer, make the Sign of the Cross, and talk one-on-one with the Almighty God: The Creator of the Universe...all of this, and all of us—you and Him alone. Wow! Oh, wow!" Second: worship Him—ask Him for forgiveness—then sacrifice to change your life from evil to good. And finally: listen to His Commandments, love mankind, and save a life—do so, or you're as good as dead."

"But what can I do?"

"Think of the God-given gifts and abilities God has blessed you with? Surely with one of these, think of the lives you can save?...Everyone alive has a gift to give mankind—their time, their love, their self.... How 'bout your dreams?...You've heard of 'following your dreams'?...Think of something you've always dreamt about that you've never done? Something, that if you knew you were going to die tomorrow—you'd do it today."

Roman remarks, "I'd write something."

"Then do it. If that's your gift to mankind, so be it. But listen, when the desire of your dreams crosses with God's will, then the divinity of God's plan, your destiny, will be made known to you, and your dream *will* come true."

Roman questions, "Why's it take so long, or why do some men never reach their destiny?"

Mark confesses, "Well, for me, half the time's spent doing God's will, and the other, the devils will: moral versus immoral, Heaven against Earth, good versus evil.... The nearer you are to God—the closer you are to reaching your destiny: because God created it."

Roman, in confidence, asks, "Can writing a book really save a life?"

"God's honest truth, yes. Look at the Bible, it's the Book of Life, and its words have saved many a soul. I honestly believe the stroke of a pen, and the word alone, can save any person from any death. And I honestly believe, by the angelic spirit you speak of, that your book too, can mean life to one and all."

"But how?"

"The archangel knows—I don't know—I don't have to know—I don't want to know—all I need to know—is God knows."

Roman says disbelievingly, "I don't buy it—I've got to go."

"Now, that's the evil in you speaking—the man. The archangel Michael, in four words, defeated all the dark angels of sin. If in his words, God has chosen you—you better listen, or I'm telling you—you're as good as dead." Mark kindly says, "Look it, for you, like many, seeing is believing. The archangel Michael and his creator God are seen with faith. But what your soul cannot feel—I'm certain, God willing—your eyes will one day see."

"I just don't know."

"Listen, I'm like you, I'm weak. My favorite Bible quote is

Paul to the Corinthians: 'In weakness, God's power reaches perfection.... When I am weak, I am strong.'" Mark encourages him. "Remember, the strength of a thousand men and of a hundred horses have not one-tenth the power of the flicker of just one angel's wing." He says, "I will pray the Lord's light shines on you today. The archangel Michael is with you.... Now go, save lives, as you believe you know how. I promise your life will change forever when you become one with God.... Oh, I almost forgot, before you leave, I want to give you this...it was given to me by one of the first three disciples of this church, my friend, Ernie Goldstein."

Roman is shocked that this is the church Ernie spoke about.

Mark has no idea they're acquainted. He presents Roman with a simple, design-bordered, shoe-sized, wooden box. Mark avows, "We had a promise—a brother of ours, in his travels, would come upon a stranger—and if the Spirit so moved me, as it does with you, I was to present it to him...together, God only knows, it may save the world. When the angel of the Lord is upon you—you will know when to open it."

The pastor hands Roman a small, design-bordered rug. It is noticeably worn in one spot. Mark, entrusting, says, "I also want you to take this rug—it was given to me by Noah. He too, told me of a stranger: someone who I felt I knew—as I do you. Like he, you may use this rug to kneel on and pray. It'll also protect you from the rain."

The pastor removes a piece of paper he's hidden. He hands it to Roman. Mark instructs, "Last, I want you to put this piece of paper in your briefcase. It was sent to me in the home of my first disciple: a sacred aunt of mine. I believe your archangel would want you to have it.... It will give you a beginning—and document this promise between you and I.... God bless you on your search for the truth—I know your time is at hand."

Roman opens his briefcase. "Last question: in the end, how will I know the dream was the archangel?"

Mark confides, "Listen closely—and with faith—believe what I am about to say to you..." Mark enlightens him. "If the dream comes true...it was the archangel." Mark closes his eyes. His vision fades to black.

On the road to his house,
Roman, top broken on his car,
drives in the pouring rain. He
holds the rug atop his head to
keep him dry.

AFTERNOON

Rain pelts the house. In
Roman's den, small game heads line
the walls. Roman is admiring his
prized weapons collection. He
grabs an old-fashioned, musket-
type shotgun. The huge, Sunday,
paper rests on the couch. The
headline reads—"BLOOD"

CHRISTOPHER: FREED. Roman uses a
page to clean the weapon. He
sits, on the sofa, in front of the
TV. Periodically, he'll look up
and take notice.

On the TV, a male
sportscaster is speaking. "Now,
let's take a look at today's,
half-time, player profile
flashback."

On the taped video segment, a
black, female sportscaster
reports—"The projects: the heart
and soul of the inner-city. These
basketball courts are a battle and
breeding ground for violence—gang
violence: murder, killing, and
death. However, in the early
70's, this playground must of
appeared an oasis of hope in a
desert of despair. 'Crip' they

called him: it was short for
'Cripple.' For nine months, in
this star player's God-gifted
life, he limped along. A stray
bullet from a gang shoot-out, that
accidentally killed his best
friend, only wounded his leg when
he jumped clear. Lucky? Lucky to
be alive. He called it; 'his
million-to-one shot that day: the
greatest shot of his career he
never took.' Today, a million-to-
one shot to make it anywhere, in
any life, in any career—he's made
it to the NBA. Tomorrow, he wants
for us all to pray for an end to
gang violence—to all violence....
That player is none other than—"
The TV screen displays the SPECIAL
BULLETIN tag.

Roman stops cleaning, and
loads his gun. He hears the rain
stop and listens to the TV
announcer. "We interrupt your
regularly scheduled program to
bring you this special report. We
take you live to Frontera,
California."

Roman motions as if he is
shooting the television. He is an
emotionally ticking time bomb.

The video plays on the TV.
The Oriental reporter is on the
scene. "This is Jen Yinyangchi
reporting live from the California
Institute for Women at Frontera.
Where, at this moment—famed,

former 'Son of Charles' disciple, Lesliannas Von Adolf, stands allegedly accused of the brutal murder of a fellow inmate's unborn child. As if by some sort of pre-destined fate, Von Adolf, by all accounts a perfectly model and rehabilitated prisoner—was sentenced to die in 1971—a time when, capital punishment was the peoples will. However, in 1972, only a short while after her imprisonment, the state overturned that ruling and Von Adolf escaped death. Today, after some thirty long years in prison—she remains alive. But, public opinion has swayed once again. The government will not rest until they also see Lesliannas Von Adolf dead. The people will be asking for the death penalty...the eternal life sentence. Reporting live—we return you to your regularly scheduled program."

The pre-empted, public service announcement plays on the TV. "The number one drug on Earth: alcohol—more than cocaine, heroin, and marijuana—combined. The number one addictive drug: cigarette tobacco. Now, a new drug possesses the planet—its origin—reproduction."

After a frustrated moment, Roman hits the mute button.

Judy passes the doorway. She begins to question her cousin. "Michael...Aunt Mary Frances?" Judy clumsily drops the cordless phone. It breaks a small glass elephant.

Maggie, uncontrollably furious; storms the room. She throws a home pregnancy kit at a glass armoire—shattering her reflection. She screams, "Holy Shit! Son of a fuckin' bitch... I'm pregnant!"

Roman tosses his \$350 wad of cash at his wife. He screams, "That's it! That's all I got!" Figuratively, he screams, "I'm gonna kill myself!" He sees the pigeon's shadow in the window. He screams, "Die!" He jerks the trigger. As if in slow-motion, the gunshot blasts the window—rays of light, blood, and water streak through. There is a moment of utter stillness and dead silence.

In the backyard, Roman is standing outside of the window framework. He is in a deep, spiritual trance. A rainbow strokes the sky. The birdbath bowl is a red sea, delicate white feathers lay about. Maggie and Judy stand at the windowsill inside the hollowed house. Maggie lapses into a moment of compassion. "It's a dove."

Judy also, is momentarily compassionate. "Was a dove."

Roman dips his hands in the bowl to see if it's alive. His face is transfigured. A trickling tear escapes.

Judy says to him, "You're a real doubting Thomas."

Michael, dove in his bandaged hand, tips the birdbath. The red water drains toward a squirrel burrow. Dazed, he says, "I'll walk with him to the water." Hardly able to walk and speak. He falls to his knees. He makes the Sign of the Cross and prays, "God, Oh Heavenly Father, I am sorry for the life I have taken, forgive me. I ask that the Holy Spirit and your archangel please bring me to salvation and guide my way. You are my Father—and I am your son—I only wish for you to be pleased with me. My life is yours dear God. Take me as I am..." He looks up. "Father, with the archangel, deliver me from temptation and from sin. Help me to forever change my evil ways and to sacrifice my life for you Father, so that I may be one with you God. Amen."

EVENING

Michael walks, in the moonlit path, to the wood line by the lake. He carries with him the box given to him by the pastor. In a new, white handkerchief he gently wraps the dove. He places it in the box. He digs with his bandaged and still-bloodied hands. He buries the box, under soil and rocks, beneath a tree. He prays, "God. It is with faith, love, and belief, in you as—The One and Almighty God; Creator of the Universe; Lord of Lords; God... that I ask.... If it be your heavenly will, please bring this dove back to life? May your gift of life—the life I have sinfully taken—be the life that your grace and promise restore.... And I pray dear God that I may save but one life. Amen."

With two twigs and a rusted nail, he uses the unseen object contained in the box to construct a cross. When he strikes the nail, he is overcome. Consumed by the weight of his grief, he walks laboriously into the lake. From the distance, he appears to be walking on the water toward the rowboat.

D A Y F I V E

LIFE

MONDAY - APRIL 17, 2000

SUNRISE

Michael's lifeless hand buoys in the shimmering water. The bandage has disappeared and the burn has healed. He lies face up in the rowboat. His eyes are sealed shut. Bearded, his long hair drapes him. A black Bible rests in the opposite hand of his dangling arm. His eyes burst open—they are full of life!

In the guest bedroom, Michael barges in looking for Judy. He checks the bathroom. Inconspicuously, a box of tampons is all that remains. He looks to the Heavens a moment; then runs out of the room.

In a taxicab, Miguel, a stoic, gruff-looking, Spanish cabby has his car plastered with

garish, religious goodies. Judy sees her reflection, in the partially open divider, against an angel figurine. "Damn it. Mother of all—I forgot my tampons, how far to the bus station? Miguel, is it?"

Miguel replies, "Not far. You know that's a beautiful time of the month for a woman. The ground is made fertile for the seed of all life."

Judy thinks, shoot, this a remarkable comment from the looks of Miguel. Judy demands "Go back Pedro." He turns the taxi around. The door on the cab reads: MIGUEL'S TAXI—"GOD IS LIKE A TAXI DRIVER—WITH BOTH YOU BETTER PRAY FOR YOUR LIFE."

Miguel tells her, "Story time.... The other day God arrives at the airport and He hails my cab. He told me He was going to the United Nations to speak about putting an end to death. As I drove, traffic was bad. So God switches places with me—He said His angels would get us there in time. So, we're speeding down the highway and the police stop us. The officer sees it's God at the wheel—so he reports to his police chief, 'This man's big, I think we better let him go.' Police chief asks, 'How big? Is it the Governor?' 'Bigger' says

the cop. Police chief asks, 'Is it the President?' 'Bigger!' says the cop. Police chief says, 'Bigger than the President—is it the Pope?' 'Bigger!!' says the cop. 'How could he be bigger than the Pope?' asks the police chief. Cop says, 'I don't know, but he must be *real* big—God's driving him around.'"

In Roman's driveway, an Asian child has joined the three neighborhood children. They wait with their two mothers for the school bus. Michael runs to them from his car. He takes a knee and hugs them all. "Children, I'm sorry."

He jumps in his "Jag" and tears away before screeching to a halt. From behind the parting school bus, the cab sneaks in. Michael meets Judy. Palms clenched, he prays for the cab to wait. Michael tells her, "Judy, I'm sorry."

Judy says, "For what?"

"Everything. I want you to take my car back with you Upstate. Now!"

"Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! Why? What about my trip?"

"Forget it. Your gambling's an addiction you'll have to do without. I want you to sell it and give the money to Aunt Mary

Frances. Get her the care she needs to stay alive."

"That's all well and good Michael, but I think she'd be the first to tell you—when you die and God comes, all the money in the world won't mean a thing. She's dying. She says, money can't buy you life—only afford you death."

Michael reveals, "I've been having visions, a revelation I guess."

Judy says, "Don't tell me you saw a ghost?"

"Not a ghost—an angel."

"Jeez, Mary and Joseph, you sound like her now. No wonder she said she had faith in you Michael. Are you positive you want to do this?"

"It's my money."

"I remember she used to make me read the Bible, it's all in Matthew: 'Man cannot live by bread alone, but every word from the mouth of God.' I guess it's true."

"It's the archangel—I've got no choice. Judy, you above all should know, Matthew: 'Turn away from your sins, because the Kingdom of heaven is near!'"

"Personally, Michael, I think it's hopeless...but if it's mercy you want—it's mercy you'll get."

Michael says to her, "I've got to do what I've got to do."

From here on out—I'm acting as if, no matter what I've done in my life—my eternal future, the choice between Heaven and Hell, depends on exactly what I'm doing the very second the angels come for me. And I want to make sure I'm doing something right, not something wrong."

Judy says to him, "Well that's what it says: 'You never know the day or the hour when God comes—not the Son, the angels, no one.' Aunt Mary always says, 'From the instant we're born—we're only a day closer to dying.'"

"Judy, if I don't listen to that angel and somehow save a life—either with this hand that gives, or this one that writes—I am dead."

"Hey Michael, if it helps: A little known actor I know told me a story about a big movie he and two other guys all wanted to be in. The producer told'em they all had ability, so he sent'em all to acting class. So the first guy, who had a lot of talent, he went and got better. The second guy, who had some talent, he went and learned more. My guy, who only had a little talent, he's afraid to go 'cause he knew the producer could get anybody—so he didn't do anything. Comes time to do the movie—no matter who, producer

gives parts to everyone who was in the class. Movie's a big hit; first guy ends up getting best actor—second guy, best supporting actor—my guy's not even an extra."

"Judy, by the time I'm finished—I'll have given it all away. There'll be no money left."

Judy kisses his cheek. It dawns on her; he's giving all his money away.

Michael dashes for the cab.

MORNING

In Goldstein's office; Goldstein, in a camel hair coat, sits at his desk. The office looks like that of a train enthusiast. A replica of his engine-less, model train sits nearby. Papers are strewn all over. As he cleans the debris, Goldstein attempts gobbling down a bagel with honey, a salad, and a pear.

In the reception area, Michael storms through.

In Goldstein's office, Michael's jaunt is accompanied by a huge wind that swirls from the window barely ajar. Goldstein accidentally has a paperweight of a bumblebee on the intercom button—so he hears Michael say over the speaker—"Lucy, I'm sorry. Is Goldstein here yet?"

Lucy answers, "He's been here since yesterday—his day of rest."

Goldstein tells her, over the intercom, "That's Saturday Lucy, it's okay, the Gospel says: 'the Sabbath was made for man—not man for the Sabbath.'"

The wind picks up again. Michael enters Goldstein's office in a frenzy. Goldstein, bagel in his mouth, is ducked under the desk gathering paperwork. Michael does not see him. "Goldstein?!"

From Goldstein's point-of-view, under the desk, he sees Michael's shoes. However, Goldstein can't speak. He bangs his head.

Michael starts to exit.

Goldstein rises.

"Goldstein...Is this the day to do good, not evil? To save a life, not kill?"

"Every day, Mr. Roman, every day.... I've been waiting for you." Goldstein clumsily spills his salad oil on Michael's shoes. Michael rubs a drop from his own forehead. The wind blows again. Michael shuts the window. He does not notice the pigeon nest or raindrop trickle. Goldstein says to him, "I came in to do the insurance claim—when I remembered I forgot to close the window."

"Goldstein...Ernest...May I call you Ernie? I want you to

sell everything I own. Let's save some lives."

Ernie lunges to hug him. In doing so, he momentarily knocks himself to his knees. Ernie says to Michael: "'The labor of the righteous leads to life, the wages of the wicked to sin.' You've seen the life."

"A proverb?"

"Proverbs boss, nothing but proverbs. Where do you want to start?"

"I've been hard, I'm sorry."

"It's okay."

"The business—put the word out. But hold on—I only know what I know, and I'm too ashamed to beg. Then, look for a buyer for my home. I just need a place to write."

"The horse claim?"

"Cancel it. I lied. Forgive me..."

"Forgive and forget. But just as easily, you need to ask your Maker about the life you stole and repent."

"I did, and I am."

"Now, your automobiles?"

"One down...stop payment on the other."

"Your weapons?"

"I don't know..."

"Neither do I right now, but God Himself once told me in prayer: ever since the genesis of

creation—man's knowledge made him one with evil and the original sin of death. Were it for God, His creation would have eternal life. Man's own sin, was death's brother murder. And even so, God would have it that no other man on Earth take the life of another—lest there be the first holy war. In the name of creation, not religion, God made man in this life and the life in this man. I will pray for peace on the weapons of war." Ernie asks, "Shall I go on?"

Michael insists, "As always."

"Mrs. Roman's jewelry?"

"She can live without it."

"How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.' ...Your savings account?"

"It's yours. Give it all to your church. I'm not sure how, but maybe the archangel Michael can save a spiritual life."

"If I may say sir, money is the root of all evil—charity is the tree of life. God bless you...Is that it?"

Michael unfurls his empty pockets like rabbit ears.

Ernie expounds, "King Solomon said it: 'The ransom of man's life is his riches, but the poor man does not hear rebuke.' Rejoice

you're free! See, the more you have—the more you want—you never have enough. When the end of life comes—you don't want to go and leave what you have behind. It's better to give, and of yourself, and have friends—they'll be the only thing you have on the other side. For tonight and eternity: 'When you lie down, you will not be afraid; Yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet.'"

"Thank you, Ernie. I can't do the angel's work and concentrate on enriching my lifestyle—can I trust you to steward over this?"

"You're a shrewd man Mr. Roman. If I may say—you've always known me to be honest, even with the small details—so too, will I be with the large. Have faith, now that you've inherited true wealth—I won't let you down—you have my word." Ernie implores, "Don't let God down. *Shalóm*."

Michael, departing, says, "*Shalóm* and so long."

At the Midtown District Attorney's office, in the reception area, a bedraggled Michael rushes in. Lincoln's umbrella is hanging there. The impersonal receptionist is on the phone. "District Attorney's office—can you please hold?"

"Excuse me, is Abraham Lincoln Peters in?"

The receptionist answers, "Mr. Peters has a corporal case on the docket...that's at the main courthouse...next block over. The court's far behind administering justice today—they won't let you in the building—you'll have to blaze a trail if you want to catch him!"

"Thank you."

Under harshly ominous skies, just outside the DA's office, the Midtown city street is crowded. Michael, running, quickly gains speed. He sees Lincoln. Michael slows, relieved; he gently tugs his arm. "Lincoln..." The wrong man. The fearful stranger yanks back his arm. Michael says, "Sorry." The stranger returns to talking to himself.

Outside the main courthouse entrance; Lincoln, with two briefcases in hand, waits impatiently in line. In front of him, Dr. Parkinson and Mrs. Parkinson speak with their Christian attorney. Mrs. Parkinson, a middle-aged Jewish woman, is gaudily jeweled. She is boisterous and crying. "How can I live? Have peace of mind? How can my soul sleep at night knowing that monster is alive? Hatred, a

hate crime is what it is. He deserves to die!"

A loud clap of thunder times with Michael's trek.

The attorney speaks. "No, Mrs. Parkinson."

Mrs. Parkinson laments, "My son's death is senseless."

The attorney pleads, "A victim's death is never senseless if they know God and love life. You're not the only ones who've ever lost an innocent son. Mrs. Parkinson, I know how you are both feeling. Believe in me, have faith and trust me, when I tell you—there are so many unanswered questions regarding the death penalty: religion, fairness, deterrence, innocence. Supreme power comes from oneness and truth. Imagine if you were the only person to know the absolute truth about UFO's. If they did not exist, you couldn't be lied to. And if they did exist, and visited the planet to destroy it—you would know how to be prepared. And if they came in peace, you would be their guide. On any subject, there are many questions, possibilities, and lies, for all who do not know—but only one answer, possibility, and truth, for those who do. Without the death penalty as law, you know the one powerful truth—you'll never be

lied to on if it works. But with the death penalty as law, how many lies can be told?" He concludes: 'For if a law had been given that could bring life, then righteousness would in reality come from the law.' We'll go for 25-to-life, or life without parole as a plea. The truth is, he lives, but he's a killer. You live and you are not—then we can all go on with our life."

Lincoln asserts, "That's horseshit asshole." A bolt of lightning and immediate clap of thunder set off Lincoln's internal alarm. "My umbrella!"

The rain begins. Michael has reached the base of the steps. Lincoln calls out, "Michael!"

Michael and he meet halfway up the steps. They huddle beneath a vendor-cart umbrella. "Lincoln, I'm sorry. You've heard about Lesliannas Von Adolf?"

"Who can forget?" He tells the vendor, "Gimme'a fried egg muffin."

Michael appeals, "I want you to defend her." Lincoln thinks, Yeah right. Michael briskly takes hold of him. Michael demands, "I want you to give her, her life back."

"For God's sake Michael, she should be executed. She's the one

who makes people today fear for their lives."

Michael says, "All fear leads to anger, anger to hatred, hatred to murder. We're afraid of each other because we keep killing each other." He decrees, "Now, why don't you be the first to put an end to it?"

"Forget now, I remember what she did before. Who can forgive her for that?"

"I can, for one."

"And who might you be?"

"Somebody, who if he's wronged, would like to be forgiven rather than lose my life out of fear, hatred, and revenge."

"Who died and made you boss?"

Michael professes, "I did."

Lincoln asks, "Why her? Why this?"

Michael admits, "I saw her parole hearing on TV once and never have I seen a human being more deserving of freedom than her. She'd make a better neighbor than 99 percent of us—not to mention safer—I know she's against the death penalty. How can I trust the killers out there who have no problem putting a person to death? If ever there was a case of someone being rehabilitated—it's her."

Lincoln states, "We don't rehabilitate, stupid—maybe one in

a million—we punish. I'll grant you, our justice system is what needs rehabilitating—and it's only getting worse and worse, and we're executing people, more and more, younger and younger, for less and less severe crimes—but it's the best and only system we got. What body of government do you know is any better, 'Mr. Authority?'"

Michael responds, "When your car breaks down, who better to bring it to: the people who own the repair shop, or the man who built it?"

Lincoln snipes, "You're outta' your freakin' mind. You're willing to go to the ends of the earth on this—aren't you?"

"I've sold everything I own."

"Say what?"

"I want to write a story about what's happening to me. I hope it may even save Von Adolf."

"Now, I know you're outta' your skull. And you think this can make a difference?"

"Words have freed and saved people before. The time is now. 'If you're not for me, you're against me.'"

Lincoln gets that cash register look. The vendor hands Lincoln his food. The faulty ketchup top squirts Michael's heart. "Sorry." says Lincoln. He

says, "Michael, you're my best friend; like a brother almost... there's not another lawyer in the country who'd give you the time of day on this, or go to battle for you on it. But, being time is money and your time is now; and since you seem to have so much of the almighty dollar to spend—I'll do it...the whole shooting match: lock, stock and barrel—for the standard legal fee, a third...a third of a million dollars: \$333,000."

"It's done." They shake on it.

Lincoln asks, "Michael, escape from you dream world and tell me—do you really think somebody like her, a person, can change their life for the better like that?"

Michael answers, "In your wildest dreams—did you ever think you would see me as I am? She's been there thirty years—I've been here less than three minutes—so believe it. I'm pleading with you Lincoln, no matter how they do it out there: gas, injection, electric chair—please save this one life."

"A new Michael Angelo—this has divorce written all over it. How's 'Magpie' swallowing the news?"

"Oh my God!"

In the abortion clinic procedure room, Maggie is harnessed in the apparatus. Dr. Bob "Bubba" Beals is in his early thirties; he has brown hair and appears the all-American father- wholesome as white bread. He counsels Maggie in preparation. Maggie bemoans, "Shit. I forgot my music tape in the car."

Jairus, a nurse, passes by. Dr. Bob asks, "Jairus, would you grab the lady's music cassette from her car?"

Maggie tells her, "The red Rover." Maggie asks him, "Dr. Beals, how far along am I?"

He says personably, "Bob, 'Bubba' to some." He says to her, "You wouldn't know it to look at you, but seven to eight weeks."

She asks, "That's the cutoff point isn't it?"

Dr. Bob answers, "We could've used the FDA approved Methotrexate, similar to RU 486, in conjunction with Cyotec or Misopostal to induce a miscarriage..."

Maggie says, "RU 486, that's...that abortion pill would've done the trick after my birth control misfire." She asks him, "They're like the same, right?"

Dr. Bob answers her, "It would make life easier." He tells

her, "Notwithstanding, and more importantly, you the patient must've agreed to undergo a surgical abortion if that treatment was medically incomplete." He asks, "Why?"

She tells him, "This early, I've heard that it's alive and kicking, and that it has all its once-in-a-lifetime characteristics." In seeking confirmation, she asks inquisitively, "And, is it true that the brainwaves have begun? And, if it were to exist, when those brainwaves stop, it will never exist again and is considered dead?"

Inside a taxicab, Michael is frantic.

Back at the procedure room, Dr. Beals replies to Maggie's inquisition. "The cessation of brainwaves would signify the death in a life-form, yes."

Personally concerned about the terms of the abortive procedure, she asks, "Could that be a problem?"

Dr. Beals replies, "No, piece of cake. You've got another thirty-two or thirty-three weeks. The law is progressing right to the point of birth. The normal pregnancy lasts forty weeks; ironically, numbers-wise, the same forty days it rained on Noah; the

same forty years Moses wandered the desert; and the same forty days, 'you know who,' was tempted.... I wonder if God planned it that way?"

Jairus returns. She reports, "Dr. Bubba, it's stormin' like there's no tomorrow out there."

However, she's returned too late with the cassette tape. The doctor inserts his own angelic sounding tape into the stereo. The green indicator light looms boldly.

Maggie asks Dr. Beals, "You're not into G-o-d are you?"

Dr. Beals replies, "God? I go to a service, but my religion teaches things like medically-assisted suicides, and mercy killing, and the death penalty, are all okay—so this shouldn't be too sinful. Beside, I only believe what I agree with. And who else is going to pay my family's bills?"

Maggie wonders, "Doctor, is it gonna be painful?"

"No. It should be dead in a couple of minutes." Like vultures, he and an assistant circle around her.

With Michael riding inside, the yellow cab flies through a yellow traffic light.

The assistant says comfortingly, "It's okay, you're

not alone, statistically roughly one in every three and a quarter babies gets aborted."

The doctor informs her, "I'll be performing the most common procedure—the suction curettage method." He and the assistant ready their masks. The latex gloves make a suction sound as their applied.

Maggie says, "I've heard that's where you insert a sword-type-of, sharp-edged plastic tube and cut the thing to pieces?"

The doctor responds, "To put it quite simply—the contents of the uterus are removed by suction, by a machine that operates under the same principle as a vacuum cleaner." On the machine, the red power light glares.

Maggie asks, "Does that get it all?"

He retorts, "It is particularly common that you'll need a repeat D and C to remove some placental fragments. Then, for up to a couple of weeks, spotting and cramping may occur when tissue is being expelled." He utters, "I sense this may be a difficult experience for you. Our intent is to provide the service as efficiently and economically as possible. *All in all, the procedure has been medically proven extremely*

safe...many, many times safer than childbirth." Lightning strikes with a thunderous boom! White smoke billows out from the ventilator delaying his preparation. "Nurse, the transformer's out again. Get maintenance to check it will you?" He informs Maggie, "They'll use the emergency pro-generator.... What did I say, pro-progenitor... propane generator, while the transformer is being fixed. The emergency power should kick-in any minute."

A wet hand flings open the clinic's front door. Raincoat sopping wet, a *Right to Life* pamphlet distributor attempts to drop off a stack. The "*Right to Lifer*" propagates, "Life, life-life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

He is actually kicked in the butt by a young, all-American-looking nurse. "Get your freedom of speech ass outta' here 'Jefferson.'"

In the doctor's office, Bubba Beals proclaims, "Power's up and..."

Michael, soaked, rushes past the entanglement at the clinic front door. He swiftly gains entrance to his wife. At the procedure room door, amid the regenerated white lamps and smoke,

Michael emerges with Maggie. She is dumbfounded. She carps, "For Christ's sakes, what in the hell are you doing?"

"I'm sorry Maggie, but this just may be the death of me."

At the reception area, in the front of clinic, Maggie readies herself for the storm outside. Jairus Martin-King, the nurse, is a fifty or sixty-year-old black woman with gray hair. She is at the reception desk with the all-American-looking nurse. Michael and Maggie only catch a glimpse of a fishbowl positioned on a mirrored stand; it and an aquarium against the wall, are each full of jelly beans.

Maggie asks, "What's up with all the jelly beans anyway?"

Jairus responds, "Been here as long as me, 1973."

Her clinic cohort says, perplexingly, to all of them, "They keep trying to get fish, but they keep dying; must be something in the water."

Jairus whispers to the Roman's, "Keep a secret? Bosses think it's a major Easter thing with the jelly bean factory cross the sound." Jairus shares with them her version of show and tell. She cups in her dark palm, a single red bean; "But you see this jelly bean...figure this is one

youngin' who's life ended in a clinic just like this."

She points to the fishbowl full of red and blue beans, perhaps 170 in total. She contemplates retrospectively, "And in that year [1973] when Roe versus Wade made this all legal-like, in the time it takes to watch a picture show, *that* many child'n never once let out a peep or even got to cry."

She motions to the reds and blues in the aquarium tank, perhaps 4,000-4,400. "Today, on the twenty-seventh birth... anniversary, you might say-by the end of the day, one day-*that* many will be gone forever...more than double that ever-increasing, sky-high rate."

She points to the back wall of black bean-filled tanks. They are stacked like staircases of offertory candles, forty in all. "But oh dear child, by the time we all have our next birthday, and we all turn one year older, it's sad to think, but *that* many babies won't ever make it out of their mama's alive...times 10!...40 million babies!..." Nearby, a woman's family is playing. From a table of toys, Jairus picks off a puzzle of the United States. "In the U.S. alone!" The puzzle pieces collapse. "In the world,

it's over 200 million lives this year; the number of people in the whole country."

In her hand, she reveals one white, baby blue, and pink bean. "And *this...this* is the number now saved each time that transformer give out."

A robust doctor plucks the beans from the palm of her hand. "Don't mind if I do."

Maggie asks Jairus, "Then lady, why do you w-o-r-k, work here?"

Jairus replies, "Better legal-like, than done at home-safe than sorry." A woman is leaving. Jairus says to her, "Good bye, Miss Norma." Miss Norma departs alone, like a wounded pup she is disconsolate, her face bears her shame.

Michael tells Jairus, "You could not do it at all."

Jairus becomes abruptly angry. "You got to go. Go, go, go-get on 'outta here."

Michael walks Maggie out like a child into the rain; the coat held shielding her face like a captured criminal.

Maggie says to Michael, "I thought you were pro-choice?"

"I am."

D A Y S I X

WORKS

TUESDAY - APRIL 18, 2000

DAWN

BORN AGAIN

At the backyard pond, Michael floats in the rowboat a few yards from shore. His briefcase is in his lap, Bible by his side. He writes in a loose-leaf binder, sketching an unseen figure along with the book text.

Maggie, half-asleep; approaches in a black robe and pink, white, and baby blue undergarment. The pond repulses her. She demands of him, "Talk to me. After that scene yesterday, you've got a lot of explaining to do."

Michael remarks, "This is a great book." He mandates, "You should read this second Gospel... *this story is definitely too good not to be true.*"

"When Hell freezes over. For Christ sake, what's up with you Michael Angelo?"

He informs her, "So far I've been in contact with Lincoln, Goldstein, and Judy is helping to save Aunt Mary. Part of the plan is for you to become a parent and keep this baby alive."

"Are you nuts? You know I'm pro-choice."

Michael insinuates, "Pro-choice, or do you mean pro-death?" He observes, "That doctor was evil. By the power of the archangel Michael, I've been chosen to save a life. If you were against death, you would be for life. My father once wrote, 'once a team fights among themselves, they're bound to lose!'"

He states, "If your goal is to make your own choice—no matter what the law—then make it. No one will convict you for doing the right and loving thing, and giving a child life. Even the archangel believes you should be truly pro-choice...God's given us all free will; the will to choose for ourselves, but you need to make

the right choice, His choice, and choose life."

"Is this what those others told you? None of them are your wife."

He replies, "If I had a brother, my mother, my wife—" He says, "Whoever does the will of the archangel—that's who I'm beholden to."

"I can't believe what I'm hearing."

He speaks to her parabolically, "Maggie, a human life is like a flower. Can a flower grow from anything but a seed? If we destroy all the seeds, then there will be no flowers—all the flowers left standing will soon perish—then there will be none, period. If we so easily destroy a seed, how much easier to destroy a flower that is withering away, or one that is fully grown?" ...He adds, "With a ray of light, a seed grows. And just as the tears from above fall on the many weeds in the garden—isn't the lone flower the chosen one?" ...He answers himself saying, "Can we even imagine how to instruct both the flowers and the weeds to multiply? How do they know?" ...He says, "I ask you, who are we to cut any life short?"

"I just don't understand. I just don't understand you at all."

He says, "Since it's our nature that each and everyone of us believes in something—who are we not to believe there must be a Creator? What life would exist if there wasn't one?" He tells her, "There are only two ways of being: man-made or Creator-made. Can we, let's say, grow or create a human from the ground up? Where? We know the where. We know this earth was made for man.... The when? When from the dawn of creation, until the end of time—all has begun and ended with life...therefore, only life may be the reason why. Life is the reason why we were created—and only God knows how."

"Is my baby supposed to be some shining example of the powers that be—and not the fact that you and I did the dirty deed?"

He says, "You've heard the expression, 'the older the wiser'? Is there any older than the Creator? Can a son ever be older than the father? Can a newborn ever tell the mother how to give birth; or a dead man ever tell a living one about life? How then, can we tell our Creator when we should live or die?"

Maggie, while growing incensed, is brought to a profound silence.

He muses, "Think hard—in all our intelligence, can a man create a bird or tree, a flower or a seed? No. And no man could've created me."

"Professor Michael now is it?"

He says, "Maggie, be calm, don't be afraid. God's archangel knows what to do."

"I'm the woman. You're the man. Now it's up to me to get me out of this. Who do you think you are telling me I don't really have the power to make my own choice?"

He tells her, "You're not alone. The archangel has given me no choice with my life either.... A 'Son of Charles' disciple whose name I'd only heard once before is costing me a fortune to show her mercy. Is that unborn baby she's accused of killing any less meaningful than the child you carry?"

"She's gonna fry. Why bother?"

Prophetically, he says, "Nobody believes in what I'm doing, but that's okay, I don't expect anyone to have as much faith in me as I have in myself..."

Maggie gives hard thought to the power and profundity of the phrase.

He says, "That's why I've sent Ernie Goldstein out to spend it on anyone who'll listen."

"What! The money! Not the money! How can you do this to me—I loved you.... Was it; was it Lincoln that bastard? Did he trick that thief Goldstein into doing this? 'Cause if he did.... Was it Goldstein? Did he brainwash you? 'Cause if he did, I'll kill that fat Jew.... I put on my strip show for your birthday. Then you think I'm gonna let you fuck me over? Well let me tell you, you foolish freak—even in a settlement a girl gets half. You tell your Goldstein you have a choice...if he doesn't cut me a check and give me a piece—I'll serve this baby up on a dish."

Michael shouts, "God no! You'll make this house a tomb." He assents, "Take it—the house is yours...just keep that child alive. I just need to be alone to do my writing. All my money may only save three lives, but more than one million readers could read this." He asks her, "What time is it? I've been here since three."

Maggie answers, "Almost seven." She says condescendingly, "Don't drown in your righteousness."

"It's the only way to go."

TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS

ALMOST 9:00 A.M. PACIFIC STANDARD TIME

At the California Institute for Women at Frontera, Lesliannas Von Adolf is alone in her cell. Von Adolf is fifty-years of age. She has a fair complexion. She is attractive with a natural grace. Her bleak dungeon of a home is full of her life's belongings. The only colorful object is a scenic, grade school, shoe box, display project of a nature setting. It is home for an absent fly. She slowly peels the foil lid off a tiny, condiment-sized *Smucker's* apple jam and sets it in the box. Lesliannas mutters, "Here's an apple Raphie, once a year during Holy Week...please be with me."

The cell door clangs open. The correction officer beckons, "Release 619-low."

Lesliannas moves gingerly. She is injured. In the prison

attorney/client meeting room, a posted guard watches the door. Lesliannas shuffles in fully shackled. "Mr. Peters, I'm Lesliannas Von Adolf. How do you do? I was hoping your file would be able to cut through the bars."

Lincoln sits, smugly smoking a cigarette. He has a newspaper, thin paper file, and a yellow legal pad. "Let's rock 'n' roll 'Lester.' I've got some serious dough-re-me wait'n for me when your shit hits the pan."

"I beg your pardon; may I ask you, would you be so kind as to extinguish your cigarette Mr. Peters? I would greatly appreciate it."

"Every con I know smokes more chimneys than 'Santee Claus.'"

"Not I, Mr. Peters; I am blessed to be alive. I would like to keep it that way—thank you."

"It's evident to me 'Sis,' that the reason you've agreed to let me represent you is because of the publicity I bring to this case." He whips out the tabloid paper and proudly shows her the front page's bold headline: PERSECUTOR PULLS SWITCH—DEFENDS DISCIPLE VON ADOLF.

Lesliannas expresses to him, "No disrespect, Mr. Peters, but I am not the one who sent for you, nor am I cognizant of who did. I

have yet to discern if you are; the devil, or a blessing in disguise."

Lincoln tells her, "You'd have a snowball's chance in Hell without my help."

Lesliannas acknowledges, "While I am not helpless Mr. Peters, I cannot tell a lie, your stature in society I hope will benefit my mission."

"Okay, 'bird lady,' if it's not your acquittal or your flight to freedom someday on parole—then what say you, pray tell?"

Lesliannas replies, "I must admit, while I am innocent and would welcome the truth to come to light—my eventual freedom on parole may be eternally hopeless. There is not much more I can do this side of Heaven to improve my chances of that happening. Praise the Lord, the truths' in my heart—have already set me free." She invokes, "Infinitely more important, I pray my purpose and redemption may, by the grace of God, bring me closer to Him as I hopelessly face the remainder of my life in prison. And that my imprisonment, may be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make good from evil."

Lesliannas declares, "Mr. Peters, my sole objective is to be a true-life testament, and show by

example, that a repentant, rehabilitated, resurrected ward of the state—a person—may by their actions, and not words, prove that punishment may be levied and sins forgiven. And in the end, justice can be served and lives not yet lost may be saved." She petitions, "To that end, I pray daily we as a people abolish one of the most supreme human injustices of all-time: punishment by death—the death penalty."

"Them's powerful words. My client strongly suggested I witness your next parole hearing on the tube—that is, if you get one."

"God willing," hopes Lesliannas.

Lincoln glances over a flimsy, single sheet of paper. He says, "This goddamn, virtually spotless, incarceration report of your imprisonment doesn't tell me shit." He looks over a slightly thicker stapled packet. He reads aloud, "Prison job—you're a pencil pusher."

Lesliannas says concurringly, "I'm a secretary."

He continues, "Hatched in California in 1949—artistic, creative..."

"I was blessed."

He peruses the report, saying, "This is all bullshit."

He comments, "Parents divorced..."

"My dad left." She recalls to herself, "I was seeking someone to love."

He notes, "And you wanted to be a..."

"School teacher."

He says indifferently, "Fascinating. It says you wanted to quote, unquote, 'help the world.' ...For cry'n out loud..."

"I did..." She pauses to rethink. "I do."

Lincoln hits it. "Bull's-eye. This is the background bad boy I was looking for. Flashback, to the hippie sixties: while the normal parents of today were free lovin', partying, and rock'n and rollin'-your teenage self is sexually boffin' your brains out, blowin' your mind on hundreds of acid trips, and fillin' your head with devil music played over and over again. It's during this one-year exodus when you chose to take up and disciple with that madman cult leader, the demon of my generation, that homicidal maniac: 'The Son of Charles.'"

Lesliannas responds, "I must confess, I was taken in: the brainwashing, all that talk about 'oneness and power of love...' He is the devil incarnate; the symbolic, demon-possessed, dark, fallen angel; the creator of sin

and lies. All the fake crucifixions, 'I would die for you, would you die for me?'" She quotes: "John 8:44 'You are of your father the devil. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in truth, because there is no truth in him. For he is a liar and the father of it'" Lesliannas says disgracefully, of her own self-examination, "God was I deceived."

Lincoln says condescendingly, "And with all your intelligence, you thought that murderous maniac was some sort of Messiah?"

She admonishes, "He was as John warned in his first epistle: 'Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.'" She counsels, "Do you know Mr. Peters, how many untold ways the devil can deceive and tempt you? Three times he tempted the Lord with everything—all He had to do was go against The Father; hunger for the truth and I will feed you; fall, and the angels will lift you; follow me, I will give you the world. He could trick you so many ways. He and the Lord could appear virtually identical, even resemble one another and you wouldn't know it.

The only difference—the only way to ever tell them apart...the original sin was death; worship the devil, and you kill; worship God, and you save lives."

"And so it was, in the summer of '69, under the maniac's satanic spell—that you did just that, you went out and murdered. And now you would have us believe you have rightfully paid your debt to society? Cut me some slack from the noose around my neck 'Lester.'"

She says remorsefully, "I take responsibility for what I did. The older I get the harder it is...I took away all that life..." Lesliannas concedes, "I was nineteen years growing Mr. Peters, twenty when I committed my crime and my god-awful sin. I've spent near to the last thirty growing up. I don't look forward to spending the next forty, in here, growing old."

"Not unless you can free the world from the death penalty?"

"I believe in God."

In the report of her history, Lincoln unearths a flagrant coincidence Lesliannas has frustratingly lived with for thirty years. "You were busted in '69?"

"Correct."

Lincoln intervenes, "Hold the phone—the Governor's on the line." He recounts, "This is truly amazing. The record states, the people sentenced you to death—that's on March 29, 1971. While you're on death row awaiting execution—you stated, and I quote, 'I was more than willing to go the gas chamber. I didn't fear it. The death penalty at the time justified my not dealing with what I had done. It was the *eye for an eye*, they're gonna kill me, I don't have to deal with it,' end of quote. So you're facing death in the eye.... But the next year, 1972, California overturns the death penalty—so you get to live.... But the ironic part is—if the death penalty was illegal just the one year earlier, when you were convicted—you would've gotten the mandatory life sentence..."

In a state of shock, he rolls his last cigarette onto the table. Lesliannas knows....

"Amazing grace, Mr. Peters. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me."

Lincoln concludes, "...you would have gotten the mandatory 25-to-life. In 1994, you would've been automatically released."

"I once was lost, but now am found—was blind, but now I see."

Abraham Lincoln Peters
ignites the flame on *his* last
cigarette.

THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN BOOK

ALMOST NOON - EASTERN STANDARD
TIME

Outside of the U.C.A. Life +
God Church, Reverend Mark Anthony
pulls up in his Mustang
convertible. He vaults out over
the passenger door. A female,
volunteer gardener is but one
amongst a handful of the
volunteers landscaping the lush
garden growing around Reverend
Mark Anthony's mission. She is
about to snip a flower. Reverend
Mark hollers out, "No don't!
Don't kill them!"

"Sorry," she says
unwittingly.

"It's okay." He says,
"Here," handing her a pot. "Put
the roots and dirt in some pots
and we'll bring them in later.
They're alive with spirit. St.
Augustine, another bad boy who
went to God to get good, once
said, 'Every visible thing in this
world is under the charge of an
angel.' Now I'm no Einstein, but
those flowers don't look invisible

to me. You know, even Einstein
said, 'Either you believe
everything is a miracle or nothing
is.' Imagine the work God must've
put into making these. Who could
make anything on Earth more
beautiful?" He becomes markedly
less serious. "Listen, keep your
eyes open, a girl I once knew told
me they buried valuable coins in a
coffee can around here. So, the
next day, she told me she found
her little brother digging in the
ground—I'm so dumb, I said,
'What's your brother—a dinosaur?'"

Outside of the church
doorway, Reverend Mark bumps into
a healthy, white bearded, hip,
forty-two-year-old helper with a
bandana on his head. The helper
says, "Hey Mark. Long time no
see. Do you still think your time
has passed? Will your dreams ever
catch up to time?"

"Have faith my man. Listen,
they said this project would never
get off the ground, but your
dreams are numbered by the things
you've done. Remember, the magic
word is *ask*—that's what my father
would say." Reverend Mark places
the helper's hand against the
structure. "Touch it. This
building is no *Fig Newton* of your
imagination. If God can bless
you—He can bless me."

A cynical construction worker exits. He asks Mark, "What makes you think God's the boss?"

Reverend Mark says, "Look up." He raises the question, "Do you see the man upstairs?"

The bewildered worker asks ethereally, "God? No...Why?" In an earthly sense he asks, "Is there someone in the window?"

Reverend Mark is thinking, You see—God *is* who He *is*.

Inside the church, the wooden skeleton of an elaborate stage, sparse decorations, and furnishings, a large number of chairs, benches, and bleachers start to bring the former warehouse's main floor to life. A uniformed team of construction workers labors diligently. On stage, Reverend Mark is on his knees doing carpentry. Goldstein assists by handing him nails.

A worker tells Reverend Mark, "It's 12:00, we're gonna break."

Reverend Mark says, "Okay. Great work, thanks." He tells Ernie, "Let me have a nail please, Mr. Goldstein?"

Ernie inquires of Reverend Mark, "How many people do you think will show up for the first official service tonight?" Ernie hands him the nail.

"Thanks." Reverend Mark answers, "Hopefully at least

twenty-six, if all goes according to plan and you and each of the first twelve disciples brings just one person. Remember, Mr. Goldstein, if every person who believed in God would bring just one other person to church—then everyone would come to know God and the whole world would be saved."

Ernie reminds his friend, Reverend Mark, "Did you remember to invite the Bishop?"

Reverend Mark answers, "Yeah. I told him an angel of God told me one of the goals of this church should be to unite Christians and Catholics. The fundamental Christian biblical teachings, and their personal relationships with the Lord, teamed with the established, organized, mass-appeal of that first church built on the rock: One body, one blood, together in Christ—a match made in Heaven."

Ernie asks his friend, "Will there be any other Jewish folks there?"

He answers, "I hope so."

A spiritually unacquainted construction worker offers a comment. "I thought Jews and Christians hated each other?"

Reverend Mark relays to him, "No—Christ hates no one."

Ernie tells the worker, "Do you know what the word Christ means?"

Reverend Mark enlists Helen Theotokos, a twenty-one-year-old, Greek woman with an olive complexion into the discussion. An original disciple, she helps decorate. The threesome directs their verbiage at the worker. Reverend Mark says, "Helen, Christ in Greek is what?"

She answers, "Messiah."

Reverend Mark tells the worker, "Right. Christ is the Messiah. The Lord came when He did to bring the Jewish and Christian people, all the people, together. There was a reason God did what He did; a reason why Christ, His Christian Son was sacrificed."

Ernie reproves, "And Jewish Son...Jewish first."

Reverend Mark says to Ernie, "Sorry, you're right, forgive me. There's a reason why Christ, His Judeo-Christian Son died for us...hate is not it...Helen?"

Helen remarks, "Jewish and Christian hatred—no way. In the Bible, Luke writing for Christ explains: 'Judge not and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven.'"

"Right," says the Reverend. He sets up Ernie, saying, "Back in Mark's Gospel, Isaiah said..."

Ernie follows through, saying: "'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.'"

"Right," says the Reverend again.

Helen, again, remarks, "And in those Greek Scriptures, Luke went on to record for Christ: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'"

Reverend Mark, with a sincere warmth, plainly demonstrates for the worker the message of love he conveys. He sets up Ernie, again, by saying, "I love the Lord and the Lord was Jewish. So, I love Mr. Goldstein."

Ernie follows through again, by saying, "And I love you too."

"Quick! Why?"

"Because you love me."

Reverend Mark tells the worker, "See. Mr. Goldstein, by loving him, is bound to love me; and I'm bound to love him."

Helen asks her friend, "Reverend Mark, there'll be other religions there too, won't there?"

He answers, "I hope so, Miss Helen. Life knows no religion."

The worker has seemingly lost interest. He departs. Helen too departs, returning to work. She mutters to herself this Orthodox mantra, "Christ is risen. Truly He is risen."

The pastor and Ernie are mildly disgruntled that the worker has walked off. Ernie entertains second thoughts about the probable attendance. "I hope so too," he says despairingly.

Reverend Mark says encouragingly, "Every synagogue, every temple, every church started with one brick, one board, one stone. Mr. Goldstein: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.'"

Reverend Mark nails the final nail in the gargantuan cross set upon the stage. Ernie has a troubled look. Reverend Mark holds out his empty hands for a magic trick. He sets up Ernie, a third and final time, saying, "Mr. Goldstein, what do you see?"

Ernie follows through a third and final time, saying, "Nothing."

"And that is how many disciples we stated with; therefore, we have nothing to lose." Reverend Mark, sensing an underlying concern, magically pulls a penny from Ernie's ear. "Now, a penny for your thoughts?"

"Mark Anthony I trust you, but in my opinion I question if putting the \$13,650 into first building a church is the right thing to do? Perhaps it might be better served elsewhere?"

"Mr. Goldstein, God has been known to fortunately bless His followers, I'm confident He, the archangel, and all the angels are with us." Reverend Mark encases the coin in a ceremonial container. "This is the first cent of that \$13,650 donation." He buries it, in the ground beneath the stage, like an ice fisherman. "You can't take it with you."

Ernie asks, "Reverend Mark Anthony, what is the first preaching going to be on?"

"Life! I'm thinking of this poem I'm working on. Reverend Mark extricates, from his back pocket, a poem he's scribbled:

"Eternal
life isn't
just about
your soul—it's
about your
state of mind.
Without belief
in God the
Father, and
God the Son—
man fears

death. He wishes life in the material world would never end. God forbid, if he were terminally-ill and could know and see the end in sight. To try and understand the meaning of life, when life is all he knows—the finality to see life end.

Eternal life is as much for the living as for the dead; Earth and Heaven in an infinite straight line, when the human mind cannot differ between where one begins and the other one ends.

How can a man possibly

know if and when he is dead? Eternal life begins as soon as the living believe there is a God in a place called Heaven—not when he *thinks* he's dead and transforms into a soul, in this life, he cannot see. Eternal life is never knowing when and if you die—it's not only about your soul—it's about your state of mind."

Ernie comments, "That's great," he asks, "But Reverend Mark, have you also considered what to say to the people, who in their mind, their religion won't allow them to join together to accept God's universal plan or accept your Christ as a real person?"

Reverend Mark replies, "I thought about that." He concedes, "For those who can't accept Christ as a real man—I'll tell them to think of Him as God appearing in the body of a human, like a Spirit. Like, He came in the disguise of a human being. Then, if they don't believe in Christ, just believe in His teaching. He only taught two things you know.... One: love God. And two: love thy neighbor. If you love someone, you forgive them. To love is to forgive.... And since every human being on the planet is alive—then love life. If you love them, let them live. That's it: love and life."

"Anyone could say that—I could've told you that."

"I know. God is not far from us—He is in each and every heart. That's why God also, was able to have His Son appear in the body of a man."

"I pray all this works."

"Mr. Goldstein, who was history's greatest underdog?"

"David."

"The greatest knowledge a man can have is to know God and know himself. Well, I know I am a lot like David—so if David can do it, with the power of God—I can do it."

"I hope so."

The spiritually unfamiliar construction worker, whom the trio engaged, returns with a newfound compassion for the church's program. He attempts a respectful gesture of generosity; he offers the pastor two dollars. "This must've fell out of your pocket."

Reverend Mark's onto him. "God bless you, but that's okay. The next time you pass a homeless person give it to them and know God has truly blessed you. I'll never forget this."

Ernie submits, "That reminds me, what do we do about further offerings?"

Reverend Mark discloses, "Thank God, an angel brought me this idea since I hate money and it only manages to bring out the evil in me; not to mention, I've got to feel guilty about spending it." He reasons, "Since the Bible says it's cool to donate ten percent of what you make to the church, and now we're a church. We'll keep ten percent for personal overhead and put the rest back into the congregation—and to helping the most important people in this or any other church..."

Ernie resolves, "The ones who aren't here."

"Exactly." Reverend Mark concludes, "Remember, all the money in the world never leaves

the world—it only changes hands for awhile. So it seems stupid to live or die over it. We'll do the best we can until we're dead. The less we keep, the less we'll be tempted. The more we get, the more we can give away."

SOS - SUICIDE OR SELF-DESTRUCTION

6:00 P.M.

Inside the religious art shop, a few shoppers straggle about. Mary Frances is behind the register reading the Bible. She closes the book and finishes from memory: "'This will prove that you are the sons of your heavenly Father, for His Son rises on the bad and on the good, He rains on the just and the unjust.'" She reads a wall plaque; "IT TAKES BOTH THE SUN AND THE RAIN TO MAKE A RAINBOW."

The doors' angel, wind, chimes signal the entrance of the concerned procession of her three best friends. Sister Zoe Namath is thirty-one years of age. She is a petite and very pretty French woman. She is the good daughter Mary Frances never had. Zoe is carrying a foil-covered dinner plate. Reverend Billy Shoe is

forty-five or fifty-years-old. He is a southern Pentecostal preacher. Rabbi Eli is in his mid-sixties. He brings up the rear. He tells her, "Mary Frances we heard. Sister Zoe brought you supper."

Mary Frances gasps, "Oh! You scared the life out of me! For the love of God! Sister, thank you for dinner. Bless you, one and all."

Reverend Billy Shoe asks, "Mary Frances, do the doctors know why?"

Mary Frances replies, "Why what? All I can do now is determine *who* I am. No one knows where, when, or how we will die—and only God knows why."

Sister Zoe Namath says to her, "Mary Frances, we heard it was cancer of the breast. I know abortion leads to breast cancer, but what grave sin did you commit?"

Mary Frances replies, "Sister Zoe, you know no man, including Adam, has been free from sin.... I admit, I feel like a dog who gets punished days after the owner discovers they've done a no-no in the house; the doggie doesn't remember what he or she did—they just remember being punished. After all, we're only human—and I

understand—being human is punishment enough.”

Rabbi Eli says to her disparagingly, “Cancer is God’s disease, God’s plague—He’s punishing you. Pray and ask for forgiveness Mary Frances, have faith. There’s a lesson to be learned here.”

Mary Frances says to him, “Rabbi Eli, my childhood friend—you know, the lesson to be learned here is: Be it illness descended from God or the devil, and if from God, to punish the guilty or draw the innocent nearer to thee—why is not the question.” She instructs him, “Understand not the wisdom of which and why God does what He does, the answer is: how to live with it; to live with the undying faith that the Lord is our Savior. The answer is not to curse God or reason that God has wronged me—to not lose hope as people do—to not abandon God. Man cannot escape from his Creator, as Adam learned after the original sin. Godless, I am on my own—and man on his own, is a defenseless animal in Satan’s snare. Man cries out in pain for the trapper to free him from the trap—but Satan captured you for a reason—so Satan releases you to slaughter, suicide, and death. In painful times like these, the Lord and the angels offer the earthly

and eternal freedom of salvation.” Mary Frances flinches. Her chest in pain, she no longer conceals the anguish.

The door chimes are ringing. She sees a priest enter. He is fifty-five-years-old, balding, with rectangular rimmed glasses. He never looks directly at anyone. He is unbelievably intense and focused—in a world all his own.

Reverend Billy Shoe says to Mary Frances, “I declare, you must be in bad pain?”

Mary Frances says to him arbitrarily, “Am I in *bad* pain, or *great* pain?” She tells him, “What is so bad about pain? You know; if a person’s introduction to angels is when an angel ministers to us in times of spiritual, mental, or physical pain—then pain is a great way to welcome angels into your life.”

Sister Zoe Namath tells her, “I’m sorry you’re in such pain.”

Mary Frances says to her, “Sister Namath, don’t be. Pain, like the angels, guides me to God. Ask yourself—why is it that once a person has a bad, let’s say, life-threatening experience, they often become good? Or, for some, born again? Stop and think about it.... If your Creator knows you better than you know yourself, and He does: every hair on your head.

And God knows that you are being bad and heading down a deadly, self-destructive path—why not stop you with a life-changing pain or problem that will re-direct you on a path to Him? God does this not for His sake, but for your own good.”

Rabbi Eli says patronizingly, “Pain, punishment, penance—are you at peace, Mary Frances?”

Mary Frances says to him, “Only the dying will tell you in their final breath, but believe it or not—a person is most at peace in their life when they are near death.” She clarifies, “The pain in a person’s life may be God’s way of preparing them for Heaven. Since there is only perfection in Heaven, sacrificing with the pain and suffering on Earth may give a person a better understanding of what Heaven is. Imagine...being that close to Heaven may change your life forever. It’s like this: man is an animal. As man, the animal, we are not intelligent or enlightened enough to understand God. God teaches man, the animal, like man teaches an animal. If you let an animal be punished when it goes near the fireplace, it learns the pain of being in the living room. But outside the house, it comes to know the peace of being in the

garden.... Remember, God never gives you more than you can endure. The peaceful and divinely angelic release from the pain of this life will allow you to die with dignity. It will be a tribute to your faith, trust, and belief in God and His perfect home: Heaven. What a glorious way to die.... The one who has greater reward: is not the rich man who inherits a million dollars—but the poor man who lives through the pain of poverty.”

Reverend Billy Shoe tells her, “That is rich.” He asks, “But aren’t you the least bit afraid of dying Mary Frances?”

She relays to him, “Every time you leave—you go. Reverend, Hell I’m afraid of—not Heaven.” She elaborates, “If this earth was all that there was, put it this way... all I know about this earth: is that it began when I was born and will end when I die. All I don’t know about this earth: is that there was a history before my birth and there will be a future after my death...I’m not leaving the earth, God willing, I’m going to Heaven.” She explains, “As I am still alive, dying has enlightened me. Knowing what I know, I’d welcome death the next minute—or go years looking forward

to the minute I do die." Aunt Mary flinches in pain again.

Sister Zoe Namath is heartbroken to see her plight. "Oh, Mary Frances, I love your poetic nature; but Mary Frances, I don't understand *why* God allows such pain and suffering?"

Mary Frances consoles her, "Sister Zoe..."

Rabbi Eli tells Sister Namath, "How would you make heads from tails? How would you know reward without punishment? How would you tell the good without the bad?"

The Sister needs comforting. Mary Frances obliges. "Zoe..."

Reverend Billy Shoe contemplates. He says to the Sister, "'Lordy,' 'Lordy' that is life's great mystery." Mary Frances says to her, "Zoe, I love a good mystery in my life—I look forward to when I'm dead and buried and the secret mysteries of this life are revealed to me. Child trust me; God is God; and God only knows..." She tells them, "Pain and suffering are facts of life. The truth is; God does not reveal all the facts to man for a reason. Facts you would not believe or comprehend if you saw them with your own eyes..." Mary arranges five angel statues. She says to the triumvirate, "Lookie

here...there are five angel statues: One, two, three, four, five angel statues. That is a fact. A fact you believe because you know the truth for yourself—you see for yourself."

She hides two of the angels beneath the counter. She demonstrates: "Now, the fact remains, there are still five angel statues—but now you see only three. The truth has not changed—only now, because I have not revealed all the angels to you, you're left to trust me—you need to take my word for it. *That is why God does not reveal all the mysteries of life—God teaches you to trust in Him—and you need to take His Word for it.*"

The three remaining statues, on the counter, are of the "see, speak, and hear no evil" design.

Sister Zoe Namath says to her supplicatingly, "You trust the Father that much?"

"I trust Him with my life."

There is silence as the group contemplates the wisdom. Mary Frances turns to place a figurine on the top shelf. She is drawn to view the priest. He is intently staring to the rear of the store. He mesmerizes Mary.

Judy enters from the side door in the rear. A statue falls from the shelf. It nearly hits

Mary Frances in the head. It shatters at her feet. Judy yells at her, "For God's sake!" Mary Frances is altogether unfazed. She grits her teeth and flinches in pain.

Rabbi Eli tells her, "Mary Frances, you're lucky you didn't get struck or knocked out."

Judy tells the friends, "She's been having accidents like there's no tomorrow."

Mary Frances informs them, "Rabbi, you should know there is no such thing as luck. That was an angel, or my guardian angel, protecting me. The advantage to being terminally-ill is that you are freed to better see God at work. Daily, I'm entertained, educated, and enlightened by angels—visible and invisible. The louder death knocks—the greater total of God's angels at the door."

Judy, in playful respectfulness, greets the threesome, "What's up, 'Muscatels?'"

"Howdy, Judy," says Reverend Billy Shoe.

"Hi, Judy," says Sister Namath warmly.

Eli nods a sneering, but sincere hello.

Judy says to the friends, "She been telling you that the

angels are keeping her alive, protecting her from death." She says condescendingly, "Right, Aunt Mary? The angels are in charge, so you don't even bunk your toe against a rock."

Aunt Mary Frances says, "I've been right so far. I've been alive sixty-nine years; and in one second, I'll be dead. If angels keep me alive that time on Earth—How blessed will I be when it's time for Heaven? And if I'm wrong, I'll never know it until my guardian angel tells me in Heaven—and I can live with that."

Judy says, "Yeah. And then she won't have to hear me say, I told you so." The trio and Aunt Mary Frances are amused by Judy. Judy is entertained at herself.

Aunt Mary Frances asks, "Judy, my love, how was your trip?"

Judy answers, "I'm a \$600 part owner of the casino, but I'll win and get even at church." Aunt Mary Frances and friends look inquisitively. Has Judy repented? They're fond of Judy, but know better. "Bingo," Judy explains.

Aunt Mary Frances is disappointed. She scolds her niece. "Oh Judy, for the love of God."

Judy says, "I know, I-21, B-12, Bingo! Matt: chap. 21, V-12:

"He overturned the tables of the money changers...my house shall be called a house of prayer.'" She blurts out, "By the way—I saw Michael."

Aunt Mary Frances calls out, "Dear God! Michael? The Michael? You saw..."

Judy interjects, "Ah see, you're losin' it. 'Michael, Long Island, cold as iced tea Michael.' Michael Roman, your long lost black sheep nephew. He gives us both his love." She mumbles, "I'm driving it."

"What?" asks Aunt Mary Frances.

Judy replies, "Nothing. I think he's seen the light: angels, God, the works..." Aunt Mary Frances, in joyous praise, waves her angelic antennae arms in the air! Judy says, "I know, I know: 'angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.'"

Rabbi Eli mutually responds, "*Shvakh Got.*"

Reverend Billy Shoe also responds, "No one looks for light in the day—in darkness is when we search for the light."

Sister Zoe Namath, as well, responds, "What is a miracle to man..." She and Aunt Mary Frances joyfully complete the response, "...is a habit for God."

Mary Frances continues to say, "God lives...for even in darkness we cast a shadow." She says, "Judy love, it's that famous Matthew parable I hoped you'd one day yourself learn."

Judy says, "I know, my lucky number: 11-18."

Aunt Mary Frances cites, "18-11."

Judy quotes: "'For the Son of Man has come to save what was lost.'" She says, "My dad used to tell me a version." She recites, "In the back of dark theater, two women are watching a movie and one of them drops her box of candy—but she goes up near the screen to find it. When she gets back to her seat, the friend says, 'Why did you look for it up front, you lost it back here?' And the woman says, 'I know, but that's where the light is.'"

The trio laughs, especially Aunt Mary Frances, who's never heard that story/joke before. She looks to see if the priest could hear, but he's fixated staring at the wall. She says laughingly, "Oh Judy, you kill me." Her inadvertent language halts the laughter.

Judy goes 180 degrees, asking, "To know we're gonna die—do we wish we'd never been born at

all, or would we be better off dead?"

Rabbi Eli replies, "My eye shall never see the day I am better off dead. On that heavenly day, my soul is all that shall see."

Reverend Billy Shoe also replies, "Ya'll know you have to die, to have had a life."

Sister Zoe Namath, as well, replies, "It's better to have lived and lost, than never to have lived at all."

Aunt Mary Frances illustrates, "Judy...life is a Christmas gift from God and your birth certificate is the receipt. If you can hand God the receipt, only then can you return the gift." She says pragmatically, "And if you can ask that question—I am alive with life, and there is no reason on Earth to answer it."

Judy is perplexed at her aunt's statement. Judy is frustrated that Aunt Mary Frances is not getting a subliminal hint. Playing Aunt Mary's subconscious, Judy diverts Mary Frances' attention to a plaque on the wall. Judy reads it aloud, attempting some reverse psychology on her aunt. "LIFE IS AS LONG AS TODAY—SO MAKE THE MOST OUT OF IT—LIVE YOUR LIFE LIKE THERE IS NO TOMORROW." She implants this

warning, "Whatever you do Aunt Mary Frances, over Hell or high water, don't think about doctor-assisted suicide."

Aunt Mary Frances is appalled. "Suicide? Physician-assisted suicide?" She says rationally, "We're all terminally-ill. You could die in a day, a week, or sixty-nine years.... Some people don't *start* living until they *start* dying." She catechizes, "Suicide is a sin," saying wisely, "And we are all *terminally-ill*."

SERVICE - PART I
"Entertain"

EVENING

Inside the U.C.A. Life + God Church, the stage is black but for a couple of pilot lights.

Reverend Mark's voice is heard from out of the shadows. "Life. Of all the creations in this existence, of all the blades of grass, or all the stars that shine—none outnumbers the grains of sand, from with God's breath, He made His greatest gift—the life of just one man."

A single spotlight beams on Reverend Mark standing center

stage. His voice echoes as he speaks. "Mankind welcome...to the Universal Church of Angels, Life and God."

Like the melodramatic production number at the start of a basketball game—the musical crescendo begins. The lights go dim. Around the auditorium, angel-shaped lights fly; dry ice clouds the stage. From offstage, at a new position at the rear, Mark Anthony intros the originally written theme song. "I am the Reverend Mark Anthony...and I ask you all a question..." The accompanying band and small chorus join in. The rappin' rock and roll song is off! Reverend Mark sings out:

*"[REFRAIN] Do you...
Agh!
See...Agh!
Life...Agh! In God?"*

The atmosphere is powerfully energetic. The dozen original disciples, and dozen guests, stout-heartedly sing in response:

*"I do!"
[END OF REFRAIN]*

Reverend Mark sings the countdown:

"1...2...3...4...5...6..."

An elevated platform explodes with dry ice and sparks. Reverend Mark vaults down onto the main stage. The neon sign ignites:

U.C.A. LIFE + GOD

Reverend Mark sings:

*"God made all of
creation from the earth
to the Heavens, on the
seventh day He rested,
do you think He was
pleased with it?"*

And the people sang:

"I do!"

*"Then I ask you all a
question...
[REFRAIN AND REPEAT]
Take a breath..."*

Six female dancers choreograph their ballet movements with a hard-rocking Reverend Mark:

*"God made a man named
Adam but he was lone-ly,
with a rib He created
woman, do you think He
was pleased with Eve?..."*

[REFRAIN AND REPEAT]
And a one, and a two,
and a one-two..."

A rainbow of laser lights colors the stage. Glitter streams from Reverend Mark's hand. Birds, in the colors of the rainbow, are released. They fly out the overhead windows.

"God told a man named Noah the earth would be a sea, with a rainbow He made a promise, do you think He was pleased to keep?
[REFRAIN AND REPEAT]
10,9,8...7,6,5...4,3,2,1 ..."

With the microphone as his staff, an electric lift raises a portion of the stage. A large fan gusts wind. Reverend Mark's elaborate wardrobe billows as he strips down to another layer.

"God sent a holy Moses to the top of the mountain, He delivered 10 Commandments, do you think He was pleased with them?
[REFRAIN AND REPEAT]
One..."

The large cross is lowered from the ceiling to its permanent resting-place. It will forever remain a fixture of this church.

"God gave His only Son; His name was Jes-us, He died for all of our sins, do you think God was pleased with Him?..."

"We do!"

Reverend Mark shouts—"Then I welcome you...to the U.C.A. Life n' God!" And they all sang:

"Amen!"

Reverend Mark Anthony stands; stretched out, in a crucified pose before the mammoth cross; a glowing tribute to his idol: The Christ.

D A Y S E V E N

WORKS II

BORN AGAIN 1

WEDNESDAY - APRIL 19, 2000

MORNING

A park adjoins an unidentified building; trees and flowers are abound. The manicured dirt walkways are aligned with cot-sized benches; some are experimentally solar panel equipped, others have retractable blankets. A huge sandbox, cleverly concealed pooper-scoopers, underground receptacles and natural tabernacles; await the two hundred people and their accompanying pets. The homeless in the crowd blend in naturally. The puritan-looking, partisan rally looks to the podium for: Chief "Spirit of Life."

The ruggedly handsome, middle-aged, Native American Chief wears a combination of his ancestors clothing and a business suit. "I am Chief Spirit of Life, a Native American. As tribal leader of my nation and CEO of the casino; it is with honor, love and reverence we institute this program to restore the traditions and ancestry of our forefathers, and the divine plan of the Father of Creation, by maintaining the sacred values of both life and Grandmother Earth. Welcome, to the groundbreaking of the first: ADOPTION REGENERATION CENTER OF THE EARTH AND ADAM & EVE CHILD LIFE PRESERVE...the 'ARC in the Park.'"

The people applaud and chant, "Long live life...long live life...long live life..." At the podium, J. Bartholomew Gautama IV, a forty-five-year-old, pale-skinned, brown-haired, classy and powerful, Buddhist businessman claps and chants along.

The Chief counsels, "The parents plan for the neighborhood is that we don't fall prey to the sinful scavenger Satan who roams Mother Earth feeding on souls. I quote from Moses' fifth book: 'I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death,

blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live...'"

The people clamor, "Pro-choose life...pro-choose life...pro-choose life..."

The Chief entreats, "Those who neglect to consider the adoption option, especially the one percent yearly who think their unwanted pregnancies due to rape, incest, or birth defects are necessary—I speak to you this infinite wisdom." He charges, "Truth, no lie, the only two factors which influence the physical, mental and moral growth of a child—are genes and environment. Genes and parental environment are the determining factors in the evolution of all children. And no matter which one is unhealthy or unproductive—God, God the Great and Holy Mystery, can remedy them both. Truth, no lie, there is never, never a reason on Mother Earth to have an abortion. Heed the lesson in nature: the mother, she is constantly in danger. To destroy newborn life is unnatural. Look at the sage, or the fish; the aged die, so the young may live. That is the nature of life." He explains, "It is my inherent understanding that the person who will not, so much as, step on an

ant—will kill anything. But, the man or woman who can kill even the egg of another—can kill anything. After all, there is nothing, no nothing, more meaningful than a life." He concludes, "And after we kill each other, there will be nothing left for us to kill.... I cry, long live..."

In the Roman's bedroom; Maggie is alone in the black, satin-sheeted bed wearing a black, silk negligee. She rises.

At the rally; Cally Pope is the almost twenty-year-old, perfectly pretty, blonde Californian speaking at the dais. "...mother and housewife, bringing up a little boy and girl, and a pet dog. I wonder how, when the time comes to teach them about the birds and the bees; I'll explain the fact of life that not even the animals kill their own unborn. Gifted as man is to be the most intelligent of all creatures, we are also the stupidest. We kill not only our four-legged friends, but we kill each other—how foolish to the survival of our own species. Man, in breaking the laws of nature, is the only animal that kills out of hatred—not like the wildlife who do so for natural survival. In my home, man and beast are as one, and the spirit of death has no resting-place..."

The rainbow-clothed people applaud whenever possible. Now is possible.

Pope says, "When you discuss your parenthood choice with the man you've offered up your body to God with—if you hear him say, 'Have the baby'; he is held close to God. If he says, 'Abort, don't have the baby'; then he is evil. He dances with the devil—that's that. And if your man abandons you—God, your first Father—is there to stand by you. This is why women are the only persons who can have a baby—with God being the only true Father—you are never alone. God is not a woman, but He is in her. He expects you to give..."

In the bedroom, Maggie dresses in a hip, entirely black outfit including mink coat. She slips on her gloves, boots, and black shades.

At the rally, Cally is saying, "...a fact of faith, adoption is like an Easter egg hunt. If everyone who had an Easter egg would let it hatch—then everyone on the hunt would have a little chick. The Easter bunny has a way of naturally balancing these things out. I have compassion for people who cannot have children, but don't let science be your guide—let your

guardian angel be. What is not meant to be—so be it, God needs people who will adopt. It gives the abortion-minded an easier adoption option." She illustrates, "Put it this way: some baskets have no Easter eggs, while other baskets are filled with fake straw; artificial baskets get filled with plastic eggs. Trust me, *there are enough* unwanted, natural, Easter eggs being hatched. If the Easter bunny wanted to leave an Easter egg in everybody's basket—he would. He's the Easter bunny..."

An Islamic, African-American man, in his thirties, named Mlaykiki Hâyat-Alláh yells out, "What about race?"

She cracks, "How much livelier the Easter parade, when the white and colored eggs are mixed together."

The people love this analogy. They cheer and throw flowers at the podium.

Cally tells them, "'Show me a miracle, then I'll believe.' How many times have I heard this? There is no greater miracle than the miracle of birth or life: not Old Testament, not New—whether of this earth or not of this earth.... Generations have gone lifetimes looking to see a miracle—when always just a

heartbeat away, right before our very eyes, the miracle of birth happens every day!"

The crowd cries, "Ask me, says the baby! Ask me, says the baby!"

"Long before the Lord and all the disciples and prophets—there was the beginning. And in God's perfect creation, He made Adam, the one man, alone. And His Adam longed only for what he had not. So God, in all His glory, made woman; not as He made man, to not only be man's wife; it was in the body and soul of woman, that God made Eve—with the power and choice to create another life..."

The people's applause grows...

"...God gave the world to Adam—but He gave mankind to Eve!"

...the applause crescendos.

"Can't you see a woman with child is the most blessed of God's creations—within her: the Son of Man. I tell you openly, selfishness is a sin to sacrifice. It is selfish not to opt for adoption. In the end, selfishness is the lone reason a woman has an abortion; her life is more meaningful than the next life. To sacrifice lives to abortion is a sin. To God, the redeemer of sin, the living sacrifice is..."

The people chorus, "Life!" It's as if the sound waves resonate to Michael's hearing. At the backyard lake, Michael is in the rowboat. Briefcase on his lap, he writes diligently in a charcoal black, loose-leaf binder.

At the front of the property, Maggie boards her truck in the driveway. She checks her watch. It's as if a voice from the rally carries to Maggie's brain. "...as we know it, would cease to exist if a woman sold her soul."

At the rally, the voice originates from a working class mom. The woman is in her early forties. She is pretty, with a dignified elegance and warm-faced motherly appeal. She is in an impassioned debate with a counterpart. The shameful woman she speaks with is unkempt and overweight in her tight slacks. She's a TV talk show-type. She's saying, "Hell, I would never in a million years give a live human being away. I'd be too ashamed. People, what would they think? I'd rather just keep killing the eggs."

The working class mom replies, "People? Who are you kidding? Who cares what society thinks? Let God, not your conscience, be your guide. He'll forgive you for past abortions,

but if you walk away from here today believing like you do—Heaven help you.”

Maggie is driving the Rover. Her profile, in the auto window, appears behind the reflections of the roadside buildings she passes: a hospital, a church, *Toys R' Us*, a school and playground, a *Chuck E' Cheeses* restaurant, and a cemetery.

Michael is at the lake. The sunlight breaks on him. He speaks in prayer, “God, knowing you as I do. I can't picture what dying is even like—*everyone else dies*. With you, I've been there and back. I can't imagine what life would be like without you.” From afar, he seems to vanish as he lies back in the boat.

At the rally, Mlaykiki is having a tenuous discussion. “...friends Izzy, Zeke and I, were just speaking about the prophetic books of the Bible and now this.” He discerns, “When the things I see and hear in prayer come true—then I read them in the Bible—how can I not believe in God?” He explains, “Every story told in the Bible is an example or prediction of stories today—people don't know that, only everything is multiplied—most of all: death, murder and killing...suicide, the

death penalty, and now abortion—just like Izzy and Zeke said.... You should see these two: Izzy's skinny-as-a-rail, and Zeke's big as a mountain.”

The man, with whom Mlaykiki speaks, is best described as a beefy jerk in his late twenties. He has a comedic mind of his own. The beefy jerk declaims, “Sounds like cartoons, but don't be dumb you idiot—abortion ain't killing. Nobody punishes you when you do it, so it's okay.” He claims, “Ain't nothin' that ain't here ever more important than me or anybody else who is.” He depicts, “Abortion's only like returning a Christmas present you don't want.”

Mlaykiki argues, “When aborting the life, do the mother and father think so little of themselves to not believe their child might be the next genius, world leader or star? Regardless of your religious beliefs—how do you think God may be sending the next prophet: The Brahman, the Buddha, Confucius, Moses, my Muhammad, me or you? *Where would the world be if when God sent a prophet or savior, we had it aborted?*”

The beefy jerk exclaims, “Hey 'Bub,' I got my rights, I'm a voter, I'm protesting, so keep your opinions to yourself and mind

your own beeswax!" He shoves Mlaykiki and Mlaykiki shoves him back. They get into a heated match.

On the road by the railroad, a snail is racing on a railroad rail. The wind blows his shell to safety. Maggie barrels through the red crossing signal—narrowly missing the engine car. The snail moves on.

At the rally, a thirty-nine-year-old man, with tightly cropped hair and standing shorter than average in height, speaks with a distinctive voice.

"...Assemblyman Cain Pettograsso. That dispute over protest was just as I have with my political colleagues daily. Who is right? Who is wrong? Who is weak? Who is strong? I am a Christian, and to be the best of all, I must be servant to all."

The people cheer. Cain's baby is hoisted onto the lectern. His wife, and his five, ten, and fifteen-year-old kids look on. "Children, let the Commandments be your Constitution: God first, family second, country third."

The people wave their banners. The signs read:

•PEOPLE WHO PREACH ABORTION SHOULD BE THANKFUL THEY HAD PARENTS WHO DIDN'T

•YOUR CHOICE...WILL BE YOUR CHILDS LAST
•YOU SAY—"ABORTION," YOUR UNBORN CHILD SAYS—"MOM"

"Religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition: the first Amendment of the Bill of Rights; the Constitution of the United States of America, guarantees the freedom of worship and religious practice...the right to speak without prior restraint and the right to publish and disseminate information..."

Local Christian church members distribute flyers with a poetic verse written on them.

The assemblyman continues, "The right of the people to congregate for discussion of public questions...and a request to a public official that seeks to correct a wrong or to influence public policy." The assemblyman accordingly asks, "Question: Adoption or abortion?"

The people carol, "Opt for adoption!" They chant, "Opt for adoption! Opt for adoption..."

The assemblyman attests, "If you protest against the abortion-minded and the government in the ways of the past—you will be defeated, put out. Their hatred and anger are like fuel for a torch and fire. The two will burn

and fight each other to death." He says, "If you wish to freely protest—do so. Here's how the Lord works, in *not-so mysterious ways*, and it calls for the one person: each and every one of you." He endorses, "In absolute silence, sit in or outside a clinic. Cross yourself: in the name of The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost...and pray. Pray. Pray for the archangel St. Michael so that the mother is not possessed by the spirit that is death but guided by the Spirit that is life. The devil fears God. With a peaceful, personal prayer of protest—the heavenly hosts and Holy Spirit attack with the good guilt of godliness from within and the evil spirits retreat." He forewarns, "But beware and be strong, on the other hand, Satan works his magic and his evil anger is exorcised out—and he won't soon disappear—for the abortion-minded too, fear God." He contends, "If the evil one wins the battle, pray for St. Michael in the war for the soul of the child—that it be laid to rest in the hand of God."

The first half of the people clamor, "If abortion is right?..." The second half of the people cry out, "...Who's left?"

Cain refers to the Declaration of Independence to illustrate his next point. "Declare your independence this day from death, and declare your dependency on life. For in the declaration of our forefathers, men of religious righteousness: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and the greatest of the great, Abraham Lincoln—all swore to these words and phrases, each before the word government appears a single solitary time." He reads, "And I quote, 'When in the course of human events...people among the powers of the earth...to which the laws of nature and of God entitle...mankind declare truths that are created by their Creator...with rights that are life...'"

The people applaud.

"Next sentence, 'that to secure these rights...whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it...'"

The people retain their applause.

"You've heard of—'winning the battle and losing the war'; battle the government against the war on abortion. But more significantly, wage war on the killing spirit within each and every one of you.

The government may do what they do, but no one can preside over the God-given right of free will that rule and govern over you..."

The people applause reaches its crowning point.

"God loves the sinner—He hates the sin. God loves democracy—He hates the death."

Inside the Rover, Maggie's hand steers the wheel. Her foot rams the pedal. Her eyes blaze with intensity.

The assemblyman visualizes, by saying, "At times, it's like viewing a monster movie. The government is the monster's body. It is supported by the peoples two legs, but once the head gets cutoff—the separate body takes on a life if its own. Each leg needs to stand for what is right, rather than stamp out all that we have left. The severed head voices, but the body has a mind of its own."

He vies, "Roe versus Wade; adoption versus abortion; the Commandments versus the Constitution; God versus government; life versus death; do not fight fire with fire. Fire does not extinguish a flame—water does. Fight fire with water; water stops the fire from burning."

The people applaud.

The Chief whispers to Cain, "It's seven before nine, better move it, they are rapidly approaching."

The assemblyman provokingly punctuates by saying, "In closing, I ask the people recite the great Commandments in, and of, our protest poem, *The Adoption Equation*."

The people chorus, "One, love thy God—Two, love thy neighbor—Half mom, half dad—Three, makes a baby."

They rhyme the carol:

*"One, love thy God—Two,
love thy neighbor—
Half mom, half dad—
Three, makes a baby...
One, love thy God—Two,
love thy neighbor—
Half mom, half dad—
Three, makes a baby."*

With everyone at the podium singing along, Maggie zooms up in her truck. She marches, behind the handful of white-clad abortion clinic employees, onto the rally scene.

Assemblyman Cain Pettograsso sanctions, "Thank you Michael Angelo Roman for your \$50,000-plus contribution—praise you—wherever you are."

The Chief whoops, "Sorry. We're closed!"

Maggie is infuriated. The people celebrate. The dignitaries cut the red ribbon with a tomahawk. Neon green confetti is tossed. A monumental amount of pink, baby blue and white balloons are released.

TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS 1

MORNING - P.S.T.

That morning, at California Superior Court, the courtroom is packed with an array of religious leaders; included are a Mother Theresa-looking nun, a Muslim leader, and a Catholic Cardinal. Also in attendance are some bikers, and Mr. and Mrs. Parkinson and their attorney. Present as well are the Weissman's; who are three generations of Hasidic Hebrew lawyers each wearing a yellow necktie; and a general cross-section of society. Seated prominently behind the prosecution is the victim: Hillary Paul. She possesses red-streaked, black hair; and tattoos. She is alluring in a demonic way. She's short, and wears a denim biker skirt to match. A large section

of perimeter seating is reserved for press coverage, but no TV.

The judge enters. The bailiff announces, "All rise. The Superior Court of the State of California is now in session. The honorable Pietro Caesaro DePilato presiding."

On the bench is Pietro Caesaro DePilato. The Italian, sixty-year-old, has solid gray hair with prominent black eyebrows. He is distinguished in appearance. He speaks with an Italian accent. Judge DePilato tells those in the courtroom, "You may be seated." He tells the opposing attorneys, "In the case of the people and Ms. Hillary Paul versus the defendant, Lesliannas Von Adolf—the prosecution may open."

The prosecution is headed by Thurgood Stone, a cocky, light-complexioned, black attorney in his early thirties. "Thurgood U. Stone for the people Your Honor, with Urim Af-Thummim, co-counsel." His co-counsel is an Egyptian man in his late twenties.

Stone states, "The people will subsist, depend, on the cold hard facts. We need call one, and only one, witness." He explains, "The surviving victim's corroboration, or agreement, with the five pieces of evidence,

should speak for itself." He says, "In the death of the deceased, dead, victim—the unborn child, who cries from the grave—the people will be seeking the retaliatory, just, execution-style, penalty of death."

The judge asks, "Does the defense wish to make a statement?"

"Your Honor, Abraham Lincoln Peters for the defense. I'm joined by my able-bodied assistant, Ms. Harriet S. Camael." Camael is the tight-haired, workman-like, female seated adjacent to him. Lincoln tells judge and jury, "If it pleases the court—the defense will systematically compare, numerically, the sworn affidavits of my client with that of Hillary Paul's sworn deposition: A checks and balances process to determine who is bearing false witness against whom. It is our contention; the murder against the unborn must have been self-inflicted."

Hillary Paul takes the stand. Lincoln eyes her wantonly. Seated at the defense table; Lesliannas Von Adolf, in a pale yellow prison dress, pays little attention. She begins pencil sketching on a yellow, legal pad. The back of her right hand flows smoothly. She is still partially shackled.

Two, posted, prison guards hover by her.

The bailiff, Bible in hand, asks Hillary Paul, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?"

She replies, "Yeah, I do."

The bailiff says to her, "State your complete name and date of birth for the record."

She replies, "Hillary Marta Paul, February 29, 1972."

Stone throws his first question at her, "Miss Paul, would you perpetrate, commit, this crime against another inmate: an abortion?"

She replies, "No. In prison, an abortion like this is a crime; out there in the real world is where it's legal."

Stone gathers the first item off the evidence table. "I present evidentiary exhibit A: Miss Paul's bloodied, standard-issue prison uniform. It is tattooed with the scars of life, and finger printed with that of the deadly—the accused." He displays the second item: "Exhibit B..."

The spectators cannot see the weapon, only the witness, and the jury. Stone asks her, "Miss Paul, is this the murder weapon?"

Hillary answers, "Yeah. That's what she almost killed me with—shoved it right up me."

Stone shows the witness—"Exhibit C..." He asks her, "Can you identify this?"

Paul answers, "Yeah, that's the empty container of jam she smeared on my cell wall. There's the red apple on it." On the shiny silver seal, a red apple indicates the flavor.

Stone presents—"The final two items...the bloody writing implement, pencil, with the prints of both women—it belongs to the defendant—and, her personal Bible." He asks, "Miss Paul, do you recognize these items marked D and E?"

Hillary replies, "That's the pencil her and me fought with... and that Bible she always writes in...*Miss Born Again*, I wouldn't touch that." At the defense table, Lesliannas' hand sketches her drawing on the legal pad.

Stone tells the court, "I relinquish, give over, the questions to co-counsel." Stone relinquishes the questioning to his partner.

Counselor Af-Thummim formally introduces himself to the witness. He cants, "I, as an expert on human nature, ask you Miss Paul—I know women don't like to talk

about it, it's difficult I understand, but to gain sympathy for your eventual freedom—would you do this to yourself?"

She replies, "Not for my freedom or like my life was more important if that's what you people think. For now this killin' got me out, but I got to live with it. What if it starts hauntin' me later like a ghost? Will I ever be free? Sometimes livin' with guilt is worse than dying without it."

He says, "Last question: What was our final belief on what might happen, if you, a victim, did not actively pursue the death penalty—and the accused was found guilty and years later released on parole?"

She answers, "I think they'd probably be happier if you didn't try for the death penalty to kill them back. I mean, I would, I'd probably buy you a drink. But, I can't take that chance; it's best if I, we, just kill her now."

Af-Thummim tells the court, "That is all." He tells Lincoln, "Your witness..."

Lincoln nonchalantly approaches with Hillary Paul's statement in hand. He digs her and is almost playful. "Hello, Hillary. I'm going to make this short and sweet like you. I'll

read my client's version of the events, that we've numbered, and you recount yours. We'll do a little paint-by-numbers to see if we can get a better picture." He gives the judge a copy. "Your Honor, I enter in Exhibit F: the famed fondue fork..." The courtroom mutters in astonishment. A couple of people giggle. Lincoln is amused with himself. "Inside joke." He straightens up. "I'll begin."

He reads, "Miss Von Adolf claims, Number One: 'I walked by her [Paul's] cell to wish her best on her parole hearing Monday morning.' Number Two: 'I also said a prayer because she [Paul] was blessed with child.' ...And you said?"

Hillary Paul, reading over her statement, responds, "One: 'She come by my cell, I suspect to say good luck the next day.' Two: '...and 'cause I think she was jealous she had no rug rats.'"

Lincoln tells her, "Good. Okay, okay..." Lincoln takes the metal hanger, from the enclosed plastic, and begins to stow it in his coat.

He reads, "Three: 'concealed beneath her [Von Adolf's] bed she removed a hanger'" He uses the hanger for a prop joke. "My spare

set of car keys—I've been looking all over for these."

This time more laugh, a few are outwardly shocked. Thurgood Stone leaps, yelling, "I obje—" Urim yanks him in. Stone, having been assessed of his rival's maneuver, says, "—retract, withdraw, never mind."

Lincoln says to her, "Your Number Three..."

Hillary Paul reads, "Three: 'From under her [Von Adolf's] dress she whips out a hanger.'"

Lincoln now uses the hanger as an antenna that rotates above his head. He jests, "Go ahead, Number Four and Number Five—but watch, I'm picking up a signal, I'm getting some interference, there's a discrepancy here."

Hillary Paul reads, "Four: 'She [Von Adolf] jams it up me, trying to kill me and it...' Five: '...and I miscarried my insides.'"

Lincoln reads from the text, "Four: '...and sadly destroys her [Paul's] own body and that unborn new life...I feel sorry,' Five: 'I feel sorry, and I know God will forgive anyone who ever did something like that.'"

Hillary has momentarily lost place in her statement. She is not unsettled; but she stutters, "Six...six, six: 'but that's the

way women her [Von Adolf's] age used to do it."

Lincoln reads Von Adolf's Number Six—"I hope that's not what women choose to do legally in the world today.' Seventh..."

Among the courtroom observers, a nun crosses herself and says, "Heavens forbid, God I hope not."

Lincoln continues with Von Adolf's Seventh: "There was blood all downside her [Paul's] dress.'" Lincoln unfurls, from the bag, the dress in question. The bloodstain almost resembles a fetus.

Hillary Paul reads, "My Number Seven: 'there was blood gushin' out like a fountain.'" "

Among the spectators, a woman weeps, "God, I can't watch."

A Muslim leader tells her, "The truth hurts, but the truth—"

A Catholic Cardinal tells them, "He died for us."

Lincoln reads, "Eight: 'I reached out to physically and spiritually take hold of her [Paul], saying, please believe in the Gospel.'" "

Hillary Paul screams, "Don't believe that!" She reads, "Number Eight is: 'We fought with the pencil, and I jabbed her [Von Adolf's] side.'" "

Lincoln reads, "'The Holy Spirit overcame me—with my pencil, I noted a Scripture left for the disciples according to John...'" Lincoln opens the pencil and uses the eraser to thumb the Bible. He tucks the pencil in his ear. He continues reading: "'If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained....' Duly noted here..."

He asks Hillary, "The infamous Number Nine: Miss Paul?"

Paul reads, "'I gave her [Von Adolf] the red jam she forgot at dinner and she [Von Adolf] wrote some satanic cult thing on the wall. At the time I couldn't remember it, but it got smeared. That's how we'd know it was her [Von Adolf], in case she [Von Adolf] lied.'" "

Lincoln tells Hillary, "She swears you must've wrote on the wall."

Paul tells Lincoln, "Then see, we were right, she lied."

Lincoln reads, "Her Number Ten was: 'I told her [Paul] it was Palm Sunday; I would pray to Christ on the cross for forgiveness and repentance, and to Raphael for healing.' Eleven: 'I went crying to my friend the guard.' Twelve: 'Then I took my pencil, and Bible, and went to

pray in my little sanctuary.'
Finish yours, Miss Paul..."

Hillary Paul reads, "'Then I screamed to the 'C.O.'; and Twelve: 'the rest is history.'"

Lincoln says, "That concludes the statements." He asks the witness, "Last question: Hillary, why do you think Lesliannas Von Adolf did this after all this time?"

Hillary Paul responds, "Killers kill. People who don't-don't. There's only two kinds of people: those who've already killed and those who haven't yet."

Lincoln presents her the hanger and a leer. "Here, hang around after." He tells the judge, "Your Honor, go ahead and reserve the right to recall." He mumbles, "I just like looking at her."

Judge DePilate says, "Very well. We'll reconvene this afternoon with closing arguments. Court adjourned."

Appearing suddenly, at the defense table, is an elderly, very elderly janitor. He's equipped with flaming orange hair and a spotless white outfit. He totes a three-foot long, bright orange flashlight and a mini-oxygen tank. The janitor tells Lincoln, "Goin' home, just remembered found this here when I came on this morning."

He gives Lincoln a large, white envelope.

Lincoln takes no notice of the envelope and gives it to Ms. Camael. She reads the cover to herself. Lincoln sarcastically says to him, "Hey, 'Old Man.' How's business at the morgue?" Lincoln asks Camael, "Who's it from?"

Camael answers, "Just says: FOR DEFENSE-IN CASE OF LIFE OR DEATH."

Lincoln asks her, "Postmarked?"

She says, "Sabbathiel, Somewhere..."

Lincoln tells her, "I ain't tryin' to win-let it fly."

SOS - SUICIDE OR SELF-DESTRUCTION

1

APPX: 10:45 - E.S.T.

In the religious art shop, music plays from a portable radio, shaped like a ladybug, next to the cash register. A genuine ladybug creeps along the open page of David's Psalm 23. Mary Frances readies to dine on her lunch; canned salmon, a small jar of applesauce, pita bread, and water sustain her. She is seated at the

register reciting grace aloud.
"In the name of The Father, The
Son and The Holy Ghost.... Psalm
23: 'You spread the table before
me in the sight of my foes; You
anoint my head with oil; my cup
overflows. Only goodness and
kindness follow me all the days of
my life; And I shall dwell in the
house of the LORD for years to
come.'"

A Caucasian, poor woman in
her early forties approaches with
a bag of merchandise. Mary
Frances inserts a picture Bible in
the bag. She quickly hits the
'no-sale' button. The register
drawer slings open and shut. The
poor woman relays her gratitude
for the charity. Mary Frances is
understanding and compassionate.

Judy enters from the back
room toting a fast food lunch.
Mary Frances partakes in a forkful
of fish. The poor woman leaves.
Judy yells, "Mary Frances!" Aunt
Mary Frances jumps. She chokes on
the fish. She battles the twinge
of pain in her chest. Judy is
semi-frozen in her own tracks.
She yells out, to her aunt, "The
water!"

Aunt Mary Frances is
unflappable. Instinctively, she
splashes her fingers in the glass,
crosses her forehead, and mightily
expels a gulp of air. A dime

dislodges from her throat. It
rings the fish can. Judy nears.
A thankful Aunt Mary Frances
crosses herself again. She says
to Judy, "Oh, you scared me to
death!"

Judy tells her, "That's what
you get for eating fish." She
demeaningly says, "For Christ's
sake, what's the matter with you?
How's that woman going to learn a
lesson on the value of money?"

"That woman is my best, most
loyal customer. She comes here;
well, religiously, every
Wednesday. She's afraid to go to
mass, so this is her church.
She's illiterate, can't read or
write—all she wants on Earth is to
understand the Word of God." Aunt
Mary Frances advises her niece,
"If there is a lesson to be
learned—it's that church is free.
If you're *forced* to pay—stay away.
I tell her, as a Roman Catholic—
I've yet to see someone evicted
from church for not feeding the
basket." She explains, "God does
not want your money. He wants
your sacrifice, your time, your
life. If you spend your time
making money—then sacrifice *it*.
If not, then give your time and
your life—because God's sacrifice
gives you the time of your life.
God bless you, Judy, if you ever
cast that humble child away."

Judy is somewhat remorseful. Aunt Mary Frances flips a bookmark from the Bible. She hands the Bible to Judy. Aunt Mary Frances asks her, "Judy, please read this Scripture aloud—"

Judy reads: "'When the Son of Man comes in His glory, escorted by all the angels of heaven, He will sit upon His royal throne...'" The door chimes ring; Sister Zoe, Reverend Billy, and Rabbi Eli orderly parade in. A gust of wind captures the closing door, and the priest blows in. A yellow pad in his hand, intently, he positions himself staring out the window. Judy loses her spot in the text. She again reads: "'...The King will say to those on His right: 'Come. You have my Father's blessing! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the Creation of the world: For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed Me. I was ill and you comforted Me, in prison and you came to visit Me.'" Then the just will ask Him: "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we welcome You away from home or clothe You in your nakedness? When did we visit You when You were ill or in

prison?'" Judy looks at Aunt Mary Frances and finishes from memory—"In whatever you do to the least of my children—that you do unto me."

Rabbi Eli tells Aunt Mary Frances, "We came to take you to lunch."

Reverend Billy says, "Let's all break some bread."

Sister Zoe says, "Come on Judy, you too."

Judy responds by holding up her bag and burger. She jokingly taunts the trio by taking a monstrous bite out of a bacon double cheeseburger.

Aunt Mary Frances scolds, "Judy!" She says to her friends, "Bless your hearts, thank you, but I've work to do."

Judy, with a polite mouthful, says, "Um! Meat."

Rabbi Eli tells her, "Meat to you—life to some."

Judy asks, "Vegetarians?"

Reverend Billy answers, "One and all. We don't need it to survive, and we won't die if we don't eat it."

Judy asks, "Sister Zoe?"

Sister Zoe sheepishly says, "I'd rather pet a squirrel than eat a cow—just as I'd rather have a pig for a pet than I would for dinner." Aunt Mary Frances and friends applaud the

characteristically meek and soft-spoken Sister Zoe.

Judy returns to her meal.

The others open up a spiritual and intellectual discussion. Rabbi Eli has honed himself on the Holy Book—high and mighty, he quotes: “‘Now a word was secretly brought to me, and my ear received a whisper of it. In disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men.’ 4:12.” He haughtily says, “Mary Frances, like a dream, a vision, a life that flashes before your eyes, you watch, but devoid of wisdom you do not see. This image shines not from you, but at you. The spirit is in the story; Scripture stories once seen and told—when written last a lifetime, and a lifetime of generations. See for yourself, not the vision, but the proverbial *writing on the wall*. Read for yourself the meaning, which is written in the Book—the Book of Life. ‘Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace; Thereby good will come to you. Receive, please, instruction from His mouth, and lay up His words in your heart.’ 22:21.” He asks her, “Have you looked to the Hebrew Book? To the historic, poetic, literary masterpiece—the Old Testament Book of Job?”

Mary Frances confirms for the scholar she has studied Sacred Scripture; submissive, she quotes: “‘What strength that I have that I should endure, and what is my limit that I should be patient?’ Eli, Job is my biblical mentor.” She subscribes, “For Job had no story on which to draw faith and human experience. His life was truly between God his Creator and himself: One-on-one, God one with mankind and God one with man. The Lord Himself spoke to Job. My story is a ladybug on the back of a hippopotamus in contrast to Job’s. I pray I could be that holy, that faithful, to be personally spoken to by God. Then, above all, be made to make such a miraculous recovery.” She informs them: “‘Why are not times set by the Almighty, and why do His friends not see His days?’ Friends, Job is my soul inspiration.”

Reverend Billy works with the Word, well-versed, he quotes: “Job 8: ‘Look for a moment at ancient wisdom; consider the truths our fathers learned. Our life is short, we know nothing at all; we pass like shadows across the earth.’” He wryly says, “Mary Frances, Job was right with goodness and faith; but he questioned God to learn and

understand why bad things happen to good people. If Job were wrong, he would have gained no such knowledge when bad fell on him. He wouldn't have known the difference. The wrong people think they've got life's right answers, wrong for them seems right. Job 25: 'Can anyone be righteous or pure in God's sight?' Job was right to ask—a man among men. He was never in *denial* over the condition he was in."

Mary Frances quotes: "Job: 'I know well that it is so; but how can a man be justified before God? Should one wish to contend with Him, he could not answer Him once in a thousand times.'" She willfully says, "Billy, I will not deny it—once is enough. God bless Job. Job's actions got him a personal lesson from God that saved Job's life—and enlightened all of mankind." She instructs them in the ways of the Word: "Job: 'I will teach you the manner of God's doings and the way of the Almighty I will not conceal.' Friends, now, 'The King of Kings,' Christ on the cross, in His sacrificial pain and suffering, personally took my life with Him. So now, I don't have to save my own. God's love for us; that is what saved Job."

Sister Zoe turgidly says, "Mary Frances, if our lives are healed mercifully by divine intervention, by our love, through prayer, or our labor for the Lord, then it is God who saves us; but if we are freed from our misery by any other method known to man, then it is from the devil." She too, has been taught the Book. She tutorially quotes: "Job, chapter 20, verses 4 and 5: 'Do you not know this from olden time, since man was placed upon the earth, that the triumph of the wicked is short, and the joy of the impious for a moment.' I believe that is the spirit of Job." Even Sister Zoe's confidence has her lecturing Mary Frances.

Mary Frances' steadfastness and intellect are superior. Mary Frances says, "I, I believe, with power of prayer to guide me—the timeless story of Job may not lie in what is written about sacrificial pain. Conspicuous to me in its absence—is what is not mentioned one solitary time in the Book of Job: suicide." She unalterably says, "Pain is a fact of life—suicide is the end of life. Parents tell their children, 'the facts of life.' The fact of life is—since a mother-less Adam originally

sinned, pain is present before the human existence of every life begins. The word is—labor; a mother in labor, doing God's work giving birth—a sacrificial pain, a labor of love. A mother cries out in pain before every male or female child cries for the first time. Even after conception, a mother's pain relays to the unborn child the fact." In subservience, she says, "Hail, Mother Mary who bore the pain of birth for God's only Son. Christ, as the Son of Man, labored His life with the sacrificial pain of all mankind, with His never-ending love, only to die and rise, free and forgive; every man, woman, and child on Earth for the original sin that leads all our lives to death." She concludes, "The act of belief, faith, and love by Job—never to have attempted suicide—is the gift of Job's life. Death is the devil's answer to the question of why there is pain and suffering. Furthermore, suicide is the worship of that evil answer...God made life to last—that is why He created it in the first place." She incontrovertibly says, "True story...Job lived because he did not commit suicide."

Judy is done eating. She is frustrated at her aunt's piety. She fires a barbed question at

her. "Aunt Mary Frances—why is it of all the religious, biblical, holy people you speak of: Adam; Noah; Abraham; Moses; Job; Mary and Joseph; Matthew; 'The King of King's,' God the Father and God the Son—why is it so life-threatening that you believe, and I know you believe, don't lie, that an angel chose you now to be the saintly spokesperson on the sin of suicide—say it, 'Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with Thee'?"

Rabbi Eli asks, "Yes? What miraculous act that will change the course of human history?"

Reverend Billy also asks, "Yeah? What could God have in store for you? The fact is you are dying as we speak."

Sister Zoe as well, asks, "Oúi? What dream come true?"

Mary Frances answers them, "I do not know. But I know He knows! The fact is: I'm alive, so God wants me alive." She purports, "Maybe by the fact, my personal relationship with His Son will be enough in His eyes. Maybe by the fact, I'm allowed to just die in my sleep, wake up in Heaven, and my life was my dream. Maybe by the fact, all I ever do on Earth is say to Him, 'Thank you God, we're even...this life will never end in suicide.'"

Judy finalizes the discussion with her aunt on her own terms. Judy says, "So sacrificial pain gives glory to God and gains oneness with Him?"

Aunt Mary Frances coins, "If you win the jackpot—do you beg for food? But, if you're dying of hunger—don't you search high and low for the breadwinner?"

Judy derives, "You gain from the pain."

Aunt Mary Frances says to her, "That's a winner."

The priest—staring out the window—seems to vanish from Aunt Mary's Frances' sight. Her pain beckons. Unnoticeable to all but Mary Frances, she dismisses the oddity. The tension and strife have taken their toll: Mary Frances, especially, who weakest, has been strongest. A twinge of pain attacks her.

The friends march for the exit. Rabbi Eli says, "We had better go to lunch."

Reverend Billy tells her, "Mary Fran, you keep the faith now 'ya hear?"

Sister Zoe says to her, "We'll see you this evening."

Judy says to them, "Later.... Hey you guys—get a *Job*." Everyone's laughter subsides. A Muslim man and a Buddhist man are the only

customers remaining in the store. In pain, Mary Frances goes back to work. Judy confronts her. She asks, "What on Earth are you doing?"

Aunt Mary Frances says, "God's given me work to do."

"You're dying. If you're gonna keep working—you might as well end it now. It'll all work out in the end—right?!"

"Judy love, do you believe in God as the Creator?"

"Naturally."

"Then you must know this rule of nature: If you quit on anything today—you'll quit on life in the end...I did not come forty years to quit now. If I am to die, time needs to take its natural course. Who knows what or who God has in store for me? I have a lot of unfinished business. This is the holiest week of the year. Last Sunday was Palm Sunday, tomorrow's Pesach and Holy Thursday, then Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday, coming up is *I'da el Adha* for the Muslim faithful; God bless, they love Gabriel angels."

Judy says, "We're Catholic. Who cares about those other religions?"

"Christ does for one. Secondly, I do. There are many religions Judy, but only one true God." Aunt Mary Frances speaks

about the customers; "For that Buddhist man celebrating Wesak—the first noble truth in his belief is that—suffering is universal. What denomination is pain? What religion is suffering? For that Muslim man, angels saved Isaac's life. What religion is the angel Gabriel? It's my job and I'll be damned, if I don't show that man a symbolic angel that may deliver to the Islamic people God's message to stop terrorist killing." She says to Judy, "If by fate, I may see everyone I know these final days—any murderous end to my natural existence will rob me of these upcoming valuable moments in my life; the final words, the apologies, the 'I love you's'—it would truly be for me, a fate worse than death. Let it go. God knows what He's doing."

"You let it go! I'm afraid you don't know what you're doing—that maybe you got *old-timers* or the cancer has spread to your head."

"Maybe. But Judy, cancer can never spread to my soul or kill my will."

Judy unveils a plain, white business envelope. "In this envelope is a very large check. I think your nephew's taken the Bible stuff literally: 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what

you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven...'"

Aunt Mary Frances says, "But it's not about the money and what it can do—it's the love. I love Michael."

"I told him that. I think he thinks the Bible's a how-to book, like a history lesson where he can guarantee his future if he studies the past."

"He's right in a way. God bless him. Here's a saying I heard: *The historical truth of the Bible is the Word we discover while scientists shovel.*" She says, "The history lesson is: Footprints never last very long, but Christ walked the earth. That is the everlasting truth."

Judy tells her, "The bottom line is: Michael insists you get the money—he put me in charge and made me swear to use my judgment—it's my call."

Aunt Mary Frances says to her, "You and he can trust me. I'll give it to charity."

"No! He wants you to use it to personally save a life."

"God bless him. Then I'll give ten percent to church and keep the rest to improve the store and help spread the Word."

"What are they: your bookie? Over Hell or high water am I gonna

let you do that. Bottom line is, I see four options: One—you can continue this hold out for a miracle, but you're bluffing yourself. Two—you can try to sell the store and take the money and pay for surgery and chemotherapy, or get some hospice care—but I know you won't do that. Three—we can take the money and you can live it up, before you die, in 'Sin City,' that one, big day. You can lug out some of the Elvi', and we'll go see Elvis—one of him is probably performing at a dozen Vegas hotels tonight.... Fourthly—once we're there, you can go out in style, you can be one of the pioneers for doctor-assisted suicide—before it has the chance to become really popular. You can be the first on the block."

Aunt Mary Frances, almost succumbing to the notion, sadly says, "You mean last."

Judy tells her, "You better hurry. Society, the government, insurance companies, doctors, families—it's bound to become a way of life."

"It sounds like the way of death." Aunt Mary Frances says, "You make me feel like there is a price on my life. REWARD-WANTED DEAD NOT ALIVE. Life is priceless. The economic welfare of a person's family is of

absolute zero consequence to God. God provides. Their spiritual understanding of the God of Love and the knowledge of right and wrong are what counts." She adds, "And even if I become what society thinks is unproductive, some economic burden or loss, some financial write-off for the government or medical profession—a God-given life cannot be bought without selling its soul.... Money, it's all about money." She reminds her niece, "Matthew, Judy..." She shows Judy the Good Book, but Judy knows the point.

Judy says, "I know: 'No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other or be devoted to one and despise the other...' You cannot serve God and money."

"Money, money, money—if you want to leave something behind—live your life to God's end, then those whom you love with time left on Earth, don't have to wait so long to see you again."

Judy deduces, "What? The older you live to be—the older I am—then there's less time until I die and see you in Heaven..."

"Exactly right."

"If that's true, a person could just kill themselves and see a loved one in Heaven the next day."

"Not in Heaven they won't."
Aunt Mary Frances says to her,
"Listen, did you hear yourself?
That's how a demonic angel starts
to work playing tricks on you. If
you are for suicide—there is an
amount of evil that leads to that.
They say, 'be careful what you ask
for—you just may get it yourself
one day.'"

"[You mean...] You asked for
it."

"You said it."

Judy says, "I'm no jump off a
bridge Judy. Trust me; I'm not
the type to put myself on ice."
She tells her aunt, "Bottom line,
I swear, I don't care about the
money. For some on Earth, it
makes the world go round—I just
want you to know about the right
to die." She changes pace,
jokingly saying; "Even though
suicide may technically be a
crime—how do police think they can
come between you and something
like that? What are they gonna
do, put your coffin in a jail cell
then throw the book at you?
'We'll give you the death penalty
next time you try to kill
yourself.'"

Aunt Mary Frances, in
concordance, says, "God and
government are not a match made in
Heaven. God loves you. Suicide
is a crime against God.... But,

there is hope if this physician-
assisted suicide does not spread
legally. No one body is perfect—
not mine or theirs. But as the
Gospel says: 'Seek first His
kinship over you, the way of
holiness, and all these things
will be given you besides, Enough
then of worrying about tomorrow.
Let tomorrow take care of itself.
Today has troubles enough of its
own.'" She amends, "The law and
politics by vote, I feel I cannot
change; so I don't vote. But the
ruler that governs my body—hears
my prayer—His vote is the one that
counts. 'Ask, and you will
receive. Seek, and you will find.
Knock and it will be opened to
you.' Too many of us try to live
by our rules—democratic as they
may be—but it's God's rules that
truly set us free. Love God
first. Love each other second.
Matthew 7:12 'Treat others the way
you would have them treat you;
This sums up the law and the
prophets.'"

Judy deciphers, "The golden
rule. That's great. But keep in
mind what happens as you lose your
mind—and you can't make a
competent judgment—and I become
your guardian. I'll have to do
what I think."

Aunt Mary Frances informs
her, "That's why it's crucial

euthanasia is illegal. If the government encourages me to kill myself, or let a sinful physician murder me—then it automatically affords someone acting as a surrogate the legal opportunity to murder an ill victim, one who society believes can't think for himself. That will offer the government, the people, and the so-called guardian, a reason to kill a human being." She emphatically says, "Man sinfully thinking he can play God—the devil will love that!"

Judy tells her, "For Christ's sake, you're lucky to have family like me that would inflict God's mercy on you. That's why it's called mercy-killing you know."

"Judy: 'Blest are they who show mercy...' The Beatitudes? Mercy is mercy. Killing is killing. I hope and pray Judy, whom I love and forgive; that the angels, like Gabriel, show you only God is truly merciful. You'd be defying God's supreme will and doing the angel of death a service, no matter how you select to humanely justify it, and no matter how the devil tricks you into believing killing spares someone's life. It's like the deer hunters who proudly hang dead deer in the trees in your neighborhood, and then try and

sell you on the notion that they must hunt and kill the deer for the deer to survive. They're lying to themselves. A deer, instead of *perhaps* dying of hunger, has a better chance of living if a hunter kills it. God bless them."

"We'll see when your life's a nightmare—a living Hell."

"Judy, realistically, even if you don't believe in a life after death—people who take their own life when their life is a 'living Hell'—why should they think anything will be different?" She says conversely, "Just as we whose life is 'Heaven on Earth'—if we persevere through the trials of life—why then would our eternal life be anything but heavenly?"

Judy is confounded. "How in Hell do I know?"

Aunt Mary Frances says to her: "Judy, what's the Gospel say? 'That is how it will be at the end of the world.'"

Judy finishes the verse: "'...The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous.'"

Aunt Mary Frances says to her, "Judy, for the life of me, why tell people to commit suicide? We could all die tomorrow in an accident or disaster. Don't take the power God's given you from His

hands. If the day after you wanted to kill yourself—you were struck by lightning—you would go right to Heaven. But by one day, one fateful day—killing yourself, you go straight to Hell." She insightfully says, "If you want to learn about life—live it. Don't wait for the movie—read the Book."

She hands Judy a Bible. Aunt Mary Frances points to a verse that Judy recites: "'Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life, and those who find it are few.'" She sarcastically says to her aunt, "I think I got it." But she doesn't really.

Aunt Mary Frances speaks to her a parable. "Eternity in Heaven is like a party. If a person wants to be the life of the party—then go when you have received an invitation. Don't arrive uninvited at the front gate and risk being trumpeted out by the host and told to leave, never to return. Everyone, of every religious faith, will have an invitation Heaven-sent; and the party never ends!"

Judy says, "But suicide invites you to be a party to

murder—and that promises to be a hell of a party?"

Aunt Mary Frances poetically says, "It is to walk this earth in the way of the Lord that unlocks this life's key to happiness unending; it is to thank God Almighty upon getting there, for the key, that opens for eternity the gates of Heaven."

BORN AGAIN 2

NEARING 11:00 A.M.

Inside Roman's den, the weapons have all vanished. Michael's Olympic medal is also gone. The trophy animal heads are all shrouded. At the base of the cardboard-filled broken window; Michael, Bible in hand, is deep in prayer on Noah's rug. Maggie returns from the abortion rally. She is livid. She *Frisbee's* a plate, narrowly missing Michael's head. It knocks out the revamped window. She stalks after her husband. "You son of a fuckin' bitch! Talk about grounds for divorce."

Michael shouts, "Holy cow!" He says, "Come and talk to me."

Maggie tells him, "Security, sex, solitude—these are the

reasons woman and man should m-a-r-y. Don't you know being married's like having a j-o-b, job? You get safe and easy sex, and no one has to be afraid of being alone. I didn't leave California so you could knock me up then fall in l-o-v-e, love, with angels and G-o, God. No wonder half of all couples get divorced."

Michael uses his hands to convey to her a concept. "Maggie, marriage is like a triangle, life like a pyramid—like a Christmas tree with an angel on top. The closer we get to God—the closer we get to each other." He counsels her, "People should marry because they want to have a child and not be as foolish as parents who have a child to save a marriage. Children will learn love more from the way the parents treat each other—than they do from the way the parents treat the child." He contends, "Divorce me—but in the eyes of the archangel, you will never be separated from the life inside of you."

"Too bad—because this baby's as dead as dirt." She tells him, "You'll need more than just you to stop this abortion. These clinics are like drive thru's—you think you see a church on every corner—look close. There'll be more

suicide houses than fire hydrants—more clinics than churches. I need this abortion. Half the women I know have already had at least one, so it's really a method of birth control. And just because most feel guilty after because it was a mistake, doesn't mean I won't try to have k-i-d's in the future, but for now I can't handle the responsibility. What if I wanted to go to school or get a j-o-b, job? Besides, I can't afford it if my husband gives all his G-o-d, goddamned money away. Fuck, I don't know if I even have a husband. How'm I supposed to bring up a k-i-d alone? I got no time. What guy will want me? My body, Christ, what about my body? Why bring a child into this shitty world? I can think of a million reasons why I should have an abortion. Give me one good reason why I shouldn't?"

Michael counters,
"God...love...life...m—"

"I got news for you—money makes the world go round and you can put a price on l-i-f. You giving all your money away—is that what you call love? You left me no choice."

Michael Angelo Roman reads his first Scripture passage: "'You need only one thing. Go, sell all you have, and give the money to

the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come, follow me.' Mark, chapter 10, verse 21."

Maggie is teeming with sarcasm. "Right."

Michael tells her, "You'll not only sell out your own child's life, but you wouldn't give me the coat off your back if I begged you." Michael picks up the coat she's draped over the furnishing.

Maggie snaps, "What? How dare you? I'll kill you!"

He tells her, "I'm returning the coat. It's a sin that I paid to have that animal slaughtered. How many hungry mouths could I feed? How many innocent animals needed to die? It's a mortal sin to kill any living creature—food, clothing, or otherwise. There is life in the eyes of every animal; and where there is life—there is God.... To kill a life is to kill God."

Maggie throws a tantrum. "I want it back! I want it! I want it! I want it! Give it to me! I'd rather see it turn to shreds than belong to someone else! Give it to me! You think you can save your own ass?"

"Man cannot save himself—only God's angels can."

"You're telling me sacrificing your money, your

house, and your wife is worth it in the end?"

"What comes around goes around."

They exit down the hallway. Maggie follows Michael in fear. Michael cradles the fur. Maggie points out the Bible Michael left on the furniture. "That book is costing you your life."

Michael profoundly remarks, "In the game of life, it's when a player sacrifices himself for the good of the team—that the team wins the game."

Maggie is enraged.

"Michael!" She slaps him. He merely turns his cheek. She slaps him twice more. In her own inimitable (lack of) style—she spits in his face. Michael trudges to the backyard. From within the home, Maggie throws the prayer rug out the window. The rug lands directly beneath the outside pane. She yells, "Do what I tell you."

"What more do you want from me?"

"Get your holier than thou self out of here. There's no room for you here. Get out!"

Michael lays the coat in the barbecue pit over the nest's charred remains. He says to himself, "David, Mark, Paul..."

sacrifice what you own in the Old—
sacrifice who you are in the New.”
He douses the coat with lighter
fluid.

Maggie stomps out the door.
She chucks handfuls of dirt at
Michael. Short on ammo, she
flings her cigarette at him; it
missiles by, landing in the pit.
“I hope you burn!” She unleashes
a stone, striking him. The coat
ignites. The explosion
temporarily blinds Michael. He
clutches his face. Maggie runs
inside. Michael remains calm.
Sparks shoot toward the basement
window. From inside the doorway,
Maggie heaves his Bible into the
mire at his feet. “Pray some more
see what you get!” She slams the
door shut.

Michael crumbles to his
knees. He patiently unfurls his
hands. He gropes for and picks up
the Bible. He outstretches his
arms. He tests his restored
eyesight by reading his
wristwatch. “Faith...10:52.” He
throws his watch into the woods.
“Archangel, help them to see the
life.” Demoralized, he shrinks
far off past the driveway and down
the road.

SERVICE - PART II
“Educate”

APPX: 7:00 P.M.

Inside the U.C.A. Life + God,
without missing a beat, Reverend
Mark Anthony approaches the
microphone like a comedian opening
a monologue; the now forty-eight
strong, including a Catholic
Bishop, applaud. Reverend Mark
Anthony is intent and energetic.
“Thank you.... How’s everybody
doin’? Agh, never mind, I don’t
care. I love when people do that,
‘Hi, how are you?’ “Nothing.
What’s new with you?” ‘I’m good.’
Nobody listens, nobody cares....”

He remarks, “I see in the
news we’re sending another person
to death. Death row, this is a
joke right? This is where they
take you from the regular part of
prison and put you in a special
row of cells—to remind you you’re
going to be killed—yeah, this is
something I’m likely to forget.
I’ve got so much on my mind I can
barely remember today is Tuesday.”

A heckler howls out, “It’s
Wednesday.”

“See what I mean?”

...Reverend Mark Anthony
comedically proceeds, “When you’re
about to die, you’d think they’d

give you a break. Instead, they punish you more; this is like torture, you could be on death row for years. But it's okay when they give you the 'good news, bad news.'

'Alright, so it's worse than where you've been; but it's not as bad as where you're going.' It's like taking a cow from the farm to the slaughterhouse and stopping by *McDonalds* for a hamburger on the way....

"There's one I don't get—the last meal. They give you the best plate of food you've had in years—then they kill you." He thinks, Where's the logic? "I guess if they're willing to waste you—wasting food is no big deal. Nice, they'll save their best food for you, but they won't save you.... It's true; they feed you crappy food for a year, then tell you if you want to eat better you need to die. 'Shoot for the death penalty, it's your only guarantee of getting at least one good meal.'....

"You know, they give you that great last meal, again, just to torture you. It's to remind you to be thankful that years of prison food hasn't killed you.... Still, I don't get it. If they want you to kill you so bad, why do they even bother

feeding you? What are you, a cow?...

"Then, they get you all cleaned and dressed up. You get your once a week, whether you need it or not, shower; then a shave, and a brand new prison uniform—only one without a number. I guess it's tough figuring you into the prison count after your number's finally come up....

"And then they give you that God-forsaken, butcher-job haircut that looks like a lawnmower, without one of the blades working, went over your head. Me, I'd die right there. 'Convict dies in chair! Yeah, because of embarrassment. Claims would rather die than live with haircut like that!'

"That night, they post a suicide watch over you—because of the haircut. No! Because they don't want you to kill yourself before they can. I can hear the warden now; 'Die on your own—over your dead body! We're killing you whether you like it or not!'

"At dawn, they come to wake you and take you away. Me, I'd do like when I was kid—I'd fake like I was sleeping. You just have to concentrate on keeping your eyes closed and not blinking. Just be real careful when you do that little peek to see if they're

gone. That'ta kill 'ya if you get caught....

"Then from death row, you take that last walk. I love the way they always put you in a ton of shackles and handcuffs—that's in case you try to escape back into regular prison....

"Finally, and I mean finally, they lock you in that room they're gonna murder you in; where they invite people to sit on the other side of a glass wall and witness. I wonder, are the witnesses there to make sure you die—or to witness that they're trying to kill you? I guess it must be the second—I mean, I think you'd know if you were dead.

"They invite your family. This has gotta' be a tough ticket to sell. Do you think they'd be disappointed if this wasn't a sellout? Families go generations just dying to see a loved one executed don't they?...You know there's also a reporter from the paper there. But oddly enough, it's never the person who does the obituaries....

"Finally, you get your last words—like they're gonna give you a second chance. If it were me, mine would be, 'No fair! Do over!' It worked when we were kids....

"Then the priest gives you the last rights." He grabs a band player. "I'd say, 'Get over here! You're coming with me! I'm not goin' alone!' No. Truthfully I'd say, 'Father pray for me. God, please take my soul, and if it be your will, let me live...because, I wouldn't want to be caught dead in that haircut!'"...

Reverend Mark Anthony opens up a newspaper's obituary section and reads verbatim.

"Here's my obituary: Mr. Me and You, of the world, died suddenly, instead of 25-to-life; although, he probably would've gotten cancer anyway from all the cigarette smoke where he lived in prison. Born, though he may have been born again at a moment's notice—he only

got to die
once.... He
worked in the
laundry and
made license
plates, for
a dollar a
day, which
ironically,
went to paying
for other
prisoner's
cigarettes,
which again,
would probably
have killed
him anyway....
He was a
member of the
sick ward-
because of the
cigarette
smoke-solitary
confinement,
and the chain
gang.... His
interests
included:
reading the
one magazine
over and over,
and watching
the TV show.
Not to
mention,
reading the
Bible every

day. He also
enjoyed
lifting the
weight of the
world off his
shoulders
during his one
hour of
recreation
every
month....
Survivors
include: John
the Baptist-Oh
no, he also
got the death
penalty in
prison. He's
survived by
everybody who
loved him and
everybody else
who hated him
enough to
convict him to
death....
Relatives and
friends were
invited to
witness the
execution.
'We're killing
your loved
one-and we
think it'd
mean a lot to
him if you

were there.'
Thanks state,
good timing,
it's never too
late to show
you care....
Calling hours
are between
when and when-
but don't
expect an open
casket—because
of a bad
haircut.
Funeral
services will
be brief.
Hurry up and
bury me—to
think I'd have
to go through
life with that
lawnmower
cut....
Contributions
in my memory
may be made to
the prison
barbershop for
that butcher
job do. Sure
it'll cost you
your life, but
look at the
good news—you
get a free
haircut."

Outside of the U.C.A. Life +
God, an unidentified person is
approaching the building.

Inside the church, Reverend
Mark Anthony remarks, "How they
kill you is also a joke. In the
Bible days, they would first put
people to death by stoning them.
When I was a kid in the 70's, we
used to play by throwing rocks at
each other; so I guess killing's
not much fun anymore if you can't
tell it's punishment.... Then
came crucifixion; but after the
Lord was crucified, there was a
letdown. I guess you find a way
to kill God—you've sort of
mastered the death penalty....

"Centuries later came the
'Old West,' although, the way they
were always hanging people—nobody
ever got very old.... At first
they had trouble, well, 'getting
the hang of it.' They'd tie the
rope around they guy's neck, but
he'd hang onto it, like the rope
in gym class. After they caught
on, they'd tie your hands behind
your back—but then guys would use
their feet to straddle the
platform. But the people doing
the killing were dumb back then,
instead of just making a bigger
space to fall through, they'd tie
your feet. Once they figured the
key was to tie the neck—and the

feet—some dumb guy suggested, 'Why not just hang'em by the feet?' But eventually they got tired of watching some guy hanging upside-down for hours."...

The heckler hollers, "So then what'd they do?"

"They shot him," jokes Reverend Mark Anthony....

He marches on..."Now that's when they came up with the idea for the firing squad. Here's what I don't get; they want to shoot you to death, but they stand like a half-mile away. How in the hell can they see you from way back there? The object is to hit the guy, right? If they miss your heart, that's gotta' hurt like Hell. On top of that, they put you in dreary gray prison clothes and stand you in front of a big, gray, cement wall where you blend right in. Why don't they just paint a big, red, bull's-eye on your chest? Then it would really be like target practice. Seems stupid to me, but better yet, if they're trying to hit the guy—why don't they just get real close and put the gun right in your chest? ...Then again, these are the same people who give you that last cigarette, even if you don't smoke—I'm tellin'ya, that'd kill me right there.... The reason they do that though is to tell

when you're dead. Blood's hard to see from far away—but that smoke blows right out the holes....

"Eventually, that's how they came up with the electric chair. Did you know it was a dentist who invented the electric chair? I guess he got tired of hearing people complain about toothaches. At first, it was sure-fire—your toothache always went away.... But then, the chair used to backfire and smoke and flames would come out of the guy. See, this wasn't any good because they didn't want you to be in pain—they just wanted to kill you. Then, to add insult to injury, they'd do an autopsy on the guy—funny, but I got a good feeling he's dead. And, I gotta' stinkin' suspicion of why he died.... But, the funny thing was, they found out the prisoners weren't dying of electrocution at all—they were dying of smoke inhalation—so that was no good.... If you're gonna spend a couple of million to electrocute someone—you better make sure they're blue in face with lightning in their veins. Breathing in smoke, how much evil excitement can that bring? To stop breathing's too natural a cause of death....

"But that's when they got the idea for the gas chamber.

'Hey, if breathing could actually kill you!' I guess they'd never lived in LA.... See, they figured you could only hold your breath for so long. They hoped sooner or later you'd yell something stupid, like 'help' or 'save me,' and they'd get you. Even though one guy took like eighteen minutes to die once. 'He's gotta' lot of nerve trying to live by not breathing. What's he think he is--some kind'a fish?'...

"This was all getting pretty ugly to look at, so they came up with the idea to use a mask. See, I like when they put the mask on the person who's pulling the switch or dropping the pill. I always thought this was so the people who voted to have a person killed wouldn't see who lived next to them or wouldn't know who to blame when something went wrong; that or the executioner is too afraid to be seen, *not* brave enough not to kill, just too afraid to be seen. But really, it's so the prisoner won't know who did it. See why this doesn't make sense? The state did. They said, 'This is dumb. Why don't we just put the mask on the guy who's dying? See? Then we can kill two birds with one stone. See, then he can't see us and he can't see what we're doing to him.' Yeah,

put a mask on him; you can run, but you can't hide....

"Now the death penalty is so popular, no one has to hide. Even the people who are supposed to save us are getting into the act; they need to get doctors to give those lethal injections that kill. If I'm lying strapped there, seems a little late at that point to call a doctor.... I like that little traffic light, on this and the injection machine that lets you know when you're going; green, yellow, red--that'd drive me crazy. Don't they know it goes against all teaching? In driver-ed you're taught *not* to hit the gas when you see the yellow light.... See, I guess that shot in the arm is supposed to slowly send that poison right to your heart. Again, I don't understand why they don't just stick the needle into your heart? Oh yeah, because that'll hurt too much.... I'd like to see someone roll over and let'em stick them in their ass--assassinate--so they'd really know how you felt.... It seems to me, they're trying to make dying as painless and fun as possible. Oh yeah, dying's a lot of fun--that's why nobody ever comes back to do it again. Funny, maybe it's just me, I've never died, but I get a funny feeling that at some point--

being killed has gotta' hurt. Let me ask somebody that's been sentenced to death before..." He cups his ear to the sky; "'Yeah, it hurts—it's a pain in the ass.'..."

"Do you know now doctors are giving these death penalty injections during house calls? Yeah, there's a special name for it...Oh yeah, it's called, *assisted-suicide*. It's like the guy in the woods who gets bit in the butt by a poisonous snake; so he sends his friend to the doctor, and the doctor says, 'the only way to save him, is to suck out the poison.' So the friend runs back and the guy says, 'What'd the doctor say?' And the friend says, 'You're gonna die!'"...

"Do you know it's illegal to attempt suicide, but it's legal if you go through with it? That's like jumping off the Empire State Building and the cop says, 'You better hope you die on the way down, 'cause if you fall too fast—I'll give you a ticket for speeding.... Listen up! If you're alive when you land—we're giving you a ticket for attempting suicide, but if you're lucky enough to die—we'll only give you one for trespassing.' ...I've been suicidal for years, that's why I get a kick out of the other poor

souls who try killing themselves like fifty times. Me, I'd probably try to kill myself all over again if I was that unsuccessful at something. Seems to me, if you're so unsuccessful at trying to die—you'd be a lot more successful if you just tried to live....

"Oh, by the way, with regards to the death penalty—if you're asking yourself, 'Who are they?' The 'they' I keep talking about. 'They this' and 'they that'.... If I am you, and you are they—they is we and we are they....

"I truly pray to God, we get rid of the death penalty; I truly do. Because that bad hair day will kill'ya every time!"

The congregation appreciates Reverend Mark Anthony's relentless humor. Goldstein, standing by, retreats to a private area.

Outside of the U.C.A. Life + God, an unidentified silhouette eavesdrops with his or her ear to the building.

Inside the church, Reverend Mark Anthony remarks, "You know, all the world is made up of only three different lives: baby, me, and we. There are no exceptions; this is our existence. Everyone was once a baby. I will always be me. And I will always be a part of we. These three, we all have

in common. And there are only three ways to end those lives: abortion murders the next generation; suicide murders me; and the death penalty murders my fellow man. And of the three, the one we have in common—is murder. Outside of nature, this is the only way to end life: abortion, suicide, the death penalty—murder.... Now, that's when life ends. But when does life begin? Let's perform an abortion and see. Mr. Goldstein, if you please..." The church is in obvious shock at the proposal. But shock gives way to hilarity, when Ernie escorts in a chicken on a leash—with the chicken leading! Reverend Mark Anthony jokes, "Who's leading who? Looks like the chicken's walking Ernie. Mr. Goldstein, I see you got your chicken to go."...

Ernie says, "Now you know why the chicken crossed the road."

Reverend Mark Anthony answers, "Yeah, 'cause Ernie Goldstein had it on a leash." ...Ernie walks the chicken to Reverend Mark Anthony's feet.

The Reverend says, "I'm afraid to hold it. I don't want to hurt it." He picks it up. "How do you tell a chicken you're chicken? It'll think I'm crazy." He tells the cackling creature, "I won't hurt you."

He addresses the audience again. "Now look at me! How am I doin'? I'm trying to lead people to God and I'm asking chickens how do I tell them I'm chicken without them thinking I'm crazy.... Now it's wondering, 'What chickens? Do you see chickens? I'm one chicken.'" He says to himself, "I need my head examined. Oh great, now I'm talking to myself."...

The nature of his speech changes. "The question is: Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" He displays an egg. "Is it possible the chicken? Is it possible the egg? I'd say the chicken, but isn't the truth: we really don't know? Then let's stick with the truth and something we do know..."

Reverend Mark Anthony steps down to confront a family of four in the front row. He demonstrates: "This is a man; he has life. This is a woman; she has life. If I kill either one—I kill a life..." Reverend Mark Anthony holds their baby. "This is a baby boy, I think, yeah blue; he has life. This is a baby girl; she has life. If I kill either one—I kill a life."

He discontinues with the family foursome and steps back up on stage. "This is a chicken; it comes from an egg. This is an

egg; it comes from a chicken. There is life in this chicken; it comes from the egg. The life *is* in the egg; the egg *is* life. If, *at anytime*, you kill the egg—you kill the life..." He purposely breaks the egg in hand. "There is your answer on abortion." He towels his hand dry and lets the message sink in.

Ernie is surprised to see his disheveled boss, Michael, enter. Michael heads directly to the office. It's his first time at a church service since his horrific baptism a half-century ago. Reverend Mark Anthony watches very closely. He prompts Ernie to follow Michael.

Reverend Mark Anthony continues speaking. "The death penalty, suicide, abortion, the one thing they have in common is—murder; which leads to the fourth and foremost reason we murder. The only reason on Earth anybody murders, for anything, or anyone in any way, at any time—the only reason we murder—is hate. We kill, because we want to kill. The good news is: at least we can't murder anybody who's already died...thank God!"

THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN BOOK 2

In the pastor's office, Ernie is shaking Michael's hand in a warm embrace. Reverend Mark Anthony enters his office. They all sit. Reverend Mark Anthony says, "Mr. Goldstein, mark this day when you and twelve, when we started with thirteen—" The Reverend asks, "You two know each other?"

Ernie answers, "You might say that."

Michael says to Reverend Mark Anthony, "I'm sorry about the way I acted before."

"Forget it; all's forgiven."

Ernie asks Michael, "Don't you like what has been done here?"

Michael answers, "I do."

Reverend Mark Anthony tells him, "We have Mr. Ernie Goldstein to thank in part."

Michael says, "He's served to make my life meaningful." Ernie wishes to express it was Michael's financial contribution, but Michael shakes his head at Ernie hoping to maintain his anonymity.

Ernie inquires, "Reverend Mark Anthony, churches and synagogues were destroyed in biblical times as they are today, you don't think this church will be burned or some war in the

streets will threaten to destroy it do you?"

Reverend Mark Anthony tells him, "I hope not. There is only one God, and as long as the Son of God remains at the center of this church—not even the evil hand of man shall bring the walls of this house down. Do you know, for the thirty-three years the Lord walked the earth, there was no war on Earth? What two things does that tell you?"

Michael pauses in reply to the rhetorical question; "War is hell." Ernie gives a perplexed look and a shoulder shrug. He cannot discern the second appropriate answer.

Reverend Mark Anthony says to them, "When Christ came, all that had ever happened—will be all that ever happens; wars, disasters, disease, starvation—these may never change—but we must be changed when the Lord comes again at our death to take us all one by one." From his desk, Mark holds a rock and a disarmed warhead in his hands to demonstrate his point. He focuses his speech on Michael, not knowing of Roman's former passion for weaponry. He holds out, for Michael, the rock. "See this? In war, the cavemen used rocks then spears. In medieval times, we used spears then

hatchets. The Indians used tomahawks and arrows; and the cowboys used guns and rifles; in the revolution, rifles and cannons; in the world wars, cannons and bombs; in the millennium, nuclear bombs and chemical warfare." Demonstrating for Michael, he holds out the warhead. "A human hand used a rock to kill the first man. This contaminated warhead in human hands can kill millions—then the last man. The weapons change..." He empties his hands. "But the human hand remains the same."

Michael inferably counters, "So guns don't kill, people kill?"

Ernie fused the two. Having read into it, he says, "Both guns and people kill."

Reverend Mark Anthony lays Ernie out, saying, "Ernie's right. I've yet to see somebody shoot a person to death by *throwing* a bullet at them."

Ernie is besieged with the answer to the question posed earlier. "I know it! There are wars, and there are holy wars, but without God present in our lives there will be no peace on Earth."

Reverend Mark Anthony tells him, "That's it. God's honest truth, with God in our lives there is no hatred." He radically tells them, "Listen, God asks that we no

longer war in His holy name. There is no right in killing one another. We are all one—the family of God. One life lost is one life too many. To war in the name of your religious beliefs is to kill. God does not want you to take or lose a life, like the earth, a life He worked so hard to create. God did not create religion—He created man. Man and Earth are His greatest creations. He created them both to last an eternity.” He advises, “If you holy war because you hate life—you honor the devil’s name.... If you believe in a religious holy war to make greater your domain or your descendents, or to enforce your doctrines—that is unspeakable to God. This earth and we His people—are God’s domain.” He unceasingly bombards them with rhetoric. “When has getting yourself killed ever made your earthly life longer? Isn’t there enough death in nature alone? Death comes to us all soon enough.” He warrants, “On this planet, the killing of each other and of ourselves in the name of war, the war of human weaknesses and the holy wars of religions—must end.” He fundamentally concludes, “And if, ‘fighting for a life’ means to kill one another—evil is winning the war on life.

To ‘fight for a life’ means to save a life. *There are no holy wars.*”

Ernie implores, “May we pray on the weapons of war?”

The men bow their heads as Reverend Mark Anthony recites the prayer he’s written. “God Himself told me in prayer:

“From after
the genesis of
creation, from
man’s original
sin of death,
to death’s
brother
murder, from
the
Commandments
to the
prophets; man
has been both
one with good
and evil. For
it is God’s
doing, that
the sons of
light and life
wage war on
the sons of
darkness and
death. And
that God, the
sole Creator of
Life, and He
alone, be it in

the Man or the Spirit, is the one and only God and all life belongs to Him. Only the Son of Man, in worship to the Father and love for one another, has been victorious in the war between life and death on Earth, and has God would have it, with the angels in eternity. In the name of God, not man, not Earth, not religion; the Lord would have it that no man take the life of another. In the name of the God of Life—I will pray for peace on the weapons of war."

The triumvirate bows their heads in the blessing for world peace. Reverend Mark Anthony informally asks Michael, "So how's life?"

Michael tells him, "I'm dying to save the life of a woman facing the death penalty in California. I know she must know God, but I pray the people don't kill her."

Reverend Mark Anthony encourages him, "Pray. God hears your prayer and God's will be done." He instructs, "Christ too, once faced the death penalty simply because the people thought they knew God better than God knew Himself. The people didn't believe God, the maker of Adam, the maker of man, could appear to be a man Himself."

Ernie ingrains, "I believe God is in the soul—the soul is in the man."

Reverend Mark Anthony says consentingly, "True, so I tell people: what did the Lord do that proved He wasn't God? Nothing. He was perfect. All He did was miracles and rise from the dead. He never made a mistake, never once committed a single sin. If He weren't the Son of God, would the truth in His Word have spread to 2 billion people 2,000 years later? No one before Him was truthful enough to live up to proclaim he was the Son of God, and everyone after that has lied to himself and died a failure."

Ernie subscribes, "The questions I asked myself were

these: *Why* would He say He was the Son of God if He were not? Did He ever once not give all power and glory to God? Did He ever once sin against those who believed in Him? All He did was tell the truth and people didn't believe Him. Think, *Why* else would He say He was God's Son—to get Himself killed?"

Reverend Mark Anthony acknowledges, "God loves you Ernie. You should be a Rabbi." He queries Michael, "How's the writing going?"

Michael replies, "I've got writers block. I don't know how the story ends."

Reverend Mark empathetically says, "God knows, I've played on that block before." He relays, "Just keep following the Word of God. *He* knows the story. Keep your spirit up—the archangel will show you the ending." The Reverend stops in his tracks. "Oh my God! Wow! This is so strange. Mr. Goldstein, show him that thing Noah showed me. Watch..."

Ernie uses his hands for the childlike demonstration. He intertwines his fingers and fists together at the knuckles. He says, "Think of the block like a building, a building on the way to an entire *city of angels...*

*Here's the earth—
there's a tower—
open the doors—
then save the people."*

Michael says, "I don't think I get it."

Reverend Mark Anthony says, "I know. Neither do we; it's unexplainable. That's why it's so strange. It's just something I remembered..."

Michael shares with Reverend Mark Anthony, "I'm also afraid my aunt may soon be leaving this life. I may never see her again. I know she knows God, but..."

The Reverend shares with him, "Then hang on. Believe in the God who sent His Son to die for your aunt—your aunt does." He tells him, "Christ came and personally told us the truth about the meaning of life; and how to never die, but live and live again. He showed us in a way we could actually see and hear—like that of a human being. Your aunt knows that."

Ernie upholds, "Mr. Roman, the Reverend will tell you how, when he comes to my synagogue to visit, there are those of my friends who hate me because I'm learning about Christianity." He resolves, "Which to me, is only believing that the same God my

Hebrew brothers and sisters believe in came to Earth as a man teaching love. And to prove that by dying, going to Heaven, and returning again, that indeed there is a Heaven. And the lesson for any man—is by believing in that self-same God of Love—we may see Him, and all who believe in His love, when our days on this earth end. So hold on.”

Reverend Mark Anthony proffers, “What I like to remind the people is that love is the oxygen Earth needs to survive. I think people believe there will be some catastrophic ending—when the planet and life as we know it ceases to exist. What they don’t realize; is that God won’t be the one doing it. If anyone destroys this world God created—it will be man. God has done enough creating to last a lifetime.” He says circumspectively, “The end will be just as the beginning: the devil and the evil who kill, against God and the good who live. And the one man who remains at the end—will also die.” Prophetically, he tells them, “Mr. Roman, Mr. Goldstein, *mark my words*—Earth and man’s eternal existence depends on only two things: love and hate. *If you love life enough to save it—the world will survive. If you*

hate life enough to kill it—the earth will die.”

Ernie says to Michael, “But like anything: no one ever made a million dollars without making a dollar first. No one ever climbed a mountain without taking the first step. A billion people aren’t born until one is born first. The life we must first save is our own.”

Michael tells him, “I’m trying to save a life, but now even my wife wants an abortion.”

Ernie is mortified. “Dear God! There’s a million ways to kill and die at the end of life, but now she’s unearthed the one way to kill life at the start!”

Reverend Mark Anthony says to Michael, “See, Mr. Roman, your wife is lying to herself. The truth is, any woman who thinks of taking her child’s life—”

Ernie intercedes, “—or man—even though it’s really the woman’s choice...”

Reverend Mark Anthony acknowledges, “Right...but any woman who thinks of taking her child’s life—ultimately does so to save her own...whatever she says, she does so to save her own life.” The Reverend explains to Michael, “See, at the beginning of life is God the Father and Creator. He created life and is The Truth.

And everything that is not God is not true and is a lie. And the devil is the father of lies. The devil is the dark angel; the pride of humanity that has people believing they know life and truth, but the people are lying to themselves. Since man always dies in the end—the devil lied.” His reasoning precedes his revelation. “If women brought no more babies into the world, the entire planet would be empty in a hundred years. The world was made for people.” He tells him, “The killing of Christ was the only way to forever save a life.” He concludes, “*Women die and women give birth—that’s how people remain on Earth.*”

Ernie expounds, “People think dying is the end. When in reality, it’s just the beginning of a new life. Death gives meaning to life.”

Reverend Mark Anthony philosophizes, “People will never start living until they overcome the fear of dying. People fear what they don’t know—and death is the great unknown. All we truly know is that everyone else dies. It is unthinkable, impossible, unimaginable for the living to know what being dead for eternity truly is. Death cannot be understood in this life, only the

next. Have you ever seen a one-sided coin? Can a person stand on the sun and the moon at the same time? No. No one knows for certain what Heaven is. I like to say, Heaven is only what this life is not.” The Reverend encourages, “And there is nothing to fear knowing Christ will one day come to lead us all one by one.” He confides, “Now twice I’ve had angels lead me close—and being near-death is the greatest experience in life. Because let me tell’ya—where we are going, God is there.”

Ernie says to them, “The lesson in life for me—is not only when the end is near, but how it will happen. I hope I die the second greatest way; that is, to die performing the blessed gift each of us is born with: like the scribe when they’re writing or the Reverend when he’s preaching.”

“Like the athlete when they’re playing, or the rabbi when he’s teaching,” harmonizes Reverend Mark Anthony.

“Amen,” says Ernie.

Reverend Mark Anthony hypothesizes, “The Lord is alive every minute of the day—because people pass away every second.”

Michael says, “The Lord is alive every minute—because people pass away every second.... That’s

along the lines of my, 'the world ends when we die theory,' so I need to act like God every single day." He speculates, "To me, that's why the Bible teaches the end is near. It's only the day we die away. From my view, we all have one day to change our world from evil to good. Am I right? What worker, whose day ends at five, lets their work remain undone until after that hour? Or what person, who goes to bed at midnight, starts getting ready for sleep at noon? The time is now."

Ernie retrieves the Torah and a Bible from the pastor's collection of the holy books of the world's religions. With the Torah in hand, he agreeably says to Michael, "Those are words to live by." Similarly, he says, "If our life were a Broadway play, our time on Earth is the intermission." With the Bible in hand, he equates, "In the Book of Life, the words never die. Because, once the message gets to you—it becomes a part of your life forever taken with you—and thus, the words have come alive."

Michael says, "So Earth is a proving ground with life or death consequences?"

Reverend Mark Anthony instructs, "Yes, it's like a field. Life is a countdown:

10...9...8...7...6...and in the end, there are only two plays that determine if you are a winner, or a loser: In the one second you have left on Earth, God will call on you—and you get one, and only one, play. And the one play you make—is it: winner or loser." He contends, "To win in the final second: In your mind, your words and actions are good. In your body, you are working or playing with your God-given strengths. And your soul, your soul is full of your blessing. These will mark a victory for life." He contends, "To lose in the final second: Your words and actions are bad. You are working or playing with your weaknesses, and your soul is full of your curse. These will mark a defeat in death. God calls with one second to go. In the last split second, you'll be gone from the field of Earth forever. The game of life ends—when the clock expires: 5...4...3...2...1."

Michael has exited in a determined flurry. A coach's pre-game speech for the record books has lit his fire. Reverend Mark Anthony, watching very closely, gives a distinct look for Ernie to follow Michael.

TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS 2

LATE AFTERNOON - P.S.T.

In California Superior Court, the courtroom remains full of spectators. Judge DePilate goes over his notes. Ms. Camael confers with the Weissman's before approaching the defense table. A man with a rainbow Afro displays a JOHN 3:16 sign. He is rudely ushered out. Lesliannas watches closely, quoting to herself: "'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.'"

Lincoln says, astonishingly to his client, "Damn, the word got out on this one." He comments, "For Heaven's sake, don't these sick people have anything better to do with their lives than watch other people die? I wonder what the people who see and hear the news think? What do parents tell their kids?" He asks, "Camael, what's the status of Roman's money? Did you call that chick fillet secretary of his, or that round mound of bread he calls an accountant?"

Ms. Camael answers, "They're working on it, as soon as there's

a verdict." She points out the Weissman's to Lincoln, and asks, "See the three, yellow ties?"

Lincoln says blatantly, "Yeah: 'Re,' 'Peat,' and 'Offender.'"

Ms. Camael says, "Laugh now Abraham, they're the real deal Lincoln." She informs him, "Weissman, Weissman and son. The top law firm in the west. They're prepared to offer you \$500,000 a year, up front, for your services--if you can win her an acquittal."

Lincoln dishearteningly says, "Fuckin' A. For God's sakes, how in creation am I gonna do that? I can't reintroduce the evidence; besides, I've already iced that."

Ms. Camael banefully says, "Yeah, for 'Eve of Destruction' over there." She's clearly referring to Hillary; who she jealously, longingly leers at.

Lincoln, less baneful, says, "Cool it. If everybody were like you Harriet, there'd be no more people. Shouldn't you be off having kids somewhere?"

Ms. Camael proposes, "Motion for the mistrial."

Lincoln bursts out, "No! That'll be the death of me." He is the epitome of pridefulness. "No, I'll look like a jackass. I've got my reputation to think about. The 'Wiseguys' over there

will think I couldn't try a field goal. Plus, who knows where 'Joe Born Again's' mind is at?" With regards to Hillary, he concedes, "I'll have to recall her; maybe she'll bury herself alive. After all this, I don't think I can tell fact from fiction, truth from lie." Under his breath, he says of his defendant Lesliannas Von Adolf, "Little do you know the heavy price that's been paid for your life." He loudly tells her, with dismay, "Sister, you're off the meat hook." From the defense table, he recalls Hillary Paul. Lesliannas positions her left hand and draws.

Judge DePilate tells Paul, "Please be advised, you are still under oath."

Lincoln's frustrated at playing defense. His stance weakens. He says to her, "To the best of your recollection, would you repeat the testimony you gave earlier today; from the point Number 8: where Miss Von Adolf talks about the pencil, the jam, it being Palm Sunday, and her praying to Christ on the cross."

His tone sets Paul back on her heels. Paul testifies, "She said it was Sunday. We got in the fight. And I jabbed a cross on her palm, and her side, so we knew it was her. That's when she wrote

down the same thing, I've seen in her Bible a hundred times, on the wall with the red jam. Then I screamed to the 'C.O.' And that's all she wrote."

Lincoln asks, "But you couldn't recall what that was?"

Paul says, "Yeah, I do...I remember..." She gestures with her finger, hand, and wrist; "It was X, like in times, two thousand thirteen."

"Does that mean anything to you?"

"Knowin' her, I figure it probably means times she's thought about doin' this."

"Hopeless." Lincoln says to himself. He belligerently asks, "Miss Paul, you're not too thrilled with my client are you?"

Paul says venomously, "'Miss Goodie Two Shoes?' Who's she kid'n? 'Miss Little Angel,' all white'n all. 'Miss Teacher' wants to save the world or somethin', drawing with some special angel pencil. She's a liar and a chicken shit. A *Barbie Doll* tells more truth than her. I'd slap her silly if I could. Show us that white pad of paper she's been drawin' on—I'd love to see that. Let's all see how she can save her life now."

Lincoln mercifully completes his recall of Paul. "No more questions."

Hillary Paul steps down. Lincoln returns to the defense table. He asks Camael about the mindset of the jury. "What are we looking at with them?"

Ms. Camael says, "Evidence?"

Lincoln presumes, "No chance in Hell." He asks, "Conscience?"

Ms. Camael replies, "Maybe?"

Lincoln implies, "So it's up in the air."

Ms. Camael asks, "Spirit?"

Lincoln responds, "Heaven only knows." He says, "We'll have to win it off the close, on a wing and a prayer..." He is in disbelief over his word usage. "Oh God, listen to me. God, ugh, what's come over me?"

Judge DePilate asks the prosecution for their closing argument. Thurgood Stone states, "The people have seen the truth. Seeing is believing. The prosecution rests Your Honor."

The judge, in turn, asks the defense for their closing argument.

There is a sense of anticipation—a wave of silence. The electricity in the air becomes grounded. The defense is prepared. The lights in the courtroom go dim. Lincoln

melodramatically speaks toward the witness chair. "The envelope please.... People...witness...for the defense—I hearken to the stand: The Defender of Life...The Prince of Israel—" A hand presents him with the aforementioned white envelope. At the witness box, Ms. Camael holds a full-length white cloth that conceals the stand. Lincoln resounds, "—The Viceroy of Heaven...Michael! Michael: who fought with Satan over the body of Moses. Michael: the guardian angel of Jacob, son of Isaac, who, an only son, was at the point of dying in sacrifice by the will of his own father—when it was Michael who stayed the hand of Abraham! To the rescue...the one and only...Archangel!"

As the linen drops, the word ARCHANGEL is boldly projected onto the screen. The courtroom lights brighten again. Lesliannas beams a smile. Some of the religious faithful applaud. The opposition laments. The projected image of the word is replaced by a canvas. It serves to bring the written word to life. There, on the witness box, the word A-R-C-H-A-N-G-E-L rests like a painting on an easel. Lincoln will refer to it systematically during his presentation. Lincoln reads from

a dictionary to open his discourse.

He says, "Let me spell it out for you...A: A-stands for acquittal. In Webster's Dictionary: not guilty."

Lincoln stands center stage. The courtroom is his theater. "Once upon a time, there was a log cabin lawyer who read his own way to being the greatest president in the history of the free world. Maybe by the fact I stand here at this very moment having been named after him, is some sort of divine pre-destiny. But when Abraham Lincoln autographed this document—" He holds a copy of the Constitution. "There must have been some force of nature that makes it this day, [19 April, 2000], easier to A: acquit—find not guilty—if the prosecution and the government elect for a life sentence instead of corporal or bodily punishment. Because of the phrase, 'innocent until proven guilty,' and the two words: reasonable doubt, the prosecution will have a more difficult time getting a conviction if they try to put a defendant to death. I'm giving you a handicap—it's to the people's advantage to go for life. Perhaps that fateful July 4, 1776, the force of nature Abraham Lincoln encountered was one of

what he called, 'the better angels of our nature.'"

Lincoln chooses the second letter of the word. "R: R stands for rehabilitation—rehabilitation versus punishment.

"The penal system doesn't work because at its core it only punishes—it rarely rehabilitates. If execution is a punishment—how is that rehabilitation? And if the highest penalty doesn't work, how can the least? If the core of an apple is rotten, then the entire apple is bad. *You can't rehabilitate the dead....*

"Point two: No one who commits a crime thinks about the punishment—if they were more worried about getting caught then doing it—they wouldn't do it. To stop crime you need to re-create what once was a criminal mind....

"Point three: Here's a lesson in rehabilitation we can all learn from Lesliannas Von Adolf, the teacher. Today didn't just happen overnight; every overnight has had a lifetime of days before it. It's taken Lesliannas Von Adolf fifty years to reach this minute. Her first twenty years were spent learning how to be bad; her last thirty, learning how to be good. The lesson to be learned: if she were released tomorrow, there is less of a chance of this ex-

convict killing again—then your
twenty or thirty-year-old neighbor
killing for a first time—
especially if *that* neighbor
believes in the death penalty....

"Point four: Give a person
something to live for. A life
sentence breathes hope and
expectation. Rehabilitation *can*
work for a criminal and society
alike. But the death sentence
breeds despair and desperation;
the person has nothing to live
for....

"Point five: A convict writer
sent me this poem, it reads:

*If you want to
see a criminal
disciplined
for the rest
of their life—
know every
man, no matter
how tough on
the outside,
who lives in
prison with no
hope of
escaping
alive—always
cries at least
once on the
inside.
Capital
punishment is
a law of anger*

*and hatred—to
be just and
fair, you need
to see a man
rehabilitated.
You people who
think prison
is easy, I
swear to you
have never
been. I
invite you to
jail for just
one day, and
see if you
don't cry,
'I'd rather be
dead.'"*

Lincoln chooses the third
letter of the word. "C: C stands
for crime—crime and violence."

He refers to a statistical
sheet. "Statistics show these
states lead the execution hit
parade: Louisiana, Missouri,
Florida, Virginia, and the big
daddy of them all, Texas. Texas
leads the league in executions.
Yet, since Texas re-instituted the
death penalty in the bicentennial
year, 1976; their violent crime
rate has risen over fifty percent.
Violence breeds violence. So if
you're ever driving on I85 or 10,
and you forget to pay a toll,
don't run out of gas or let your

car battery go dead—someone you know may not make it home alive....

"Violence breeds violence. Perfect example: In the course of world history, at public executions; nine out of ten times violence breaks out. And when we televise an execution in the near future, it will become evident—violence breeds violence."

Lincoln opens a black case and places select items in the hands of those at the defense table. In Lesliannas' right hand, she holds a rock and a spike, in her left, a rope. Ms. Camael holds a gun in her right palm, and a leather mask tied with an electrical outlet and cord in her left. Lincoln holds a syringe in his right hand, and a gas pellet in his left. "Look in our hands, see how the death penalty alone has given birth to newborn ways to kill ourselves. I ask you, what do these weapons of death have in common? The answer: the killing hand that lies beneath them....

Violence breeds violence.
The more violent we become—the more violent we become."

Lincoln chooses the following letter of the word. "H: H stands for hypocritical. By definition: pretending to be what one is not.

"Who respects a hypocrite? The government of the people is trying to be just. Criminals who kill are unjust. If you kill a killer, you're trying to beat a criminal at their own game—they're criminals—murder is their number one weapon. If killing becomes the government's number one weapon in the war on crime—then we don't even need a government—we'll all just be murderers. This is what weakens the power and strength of the government." To demonstrate, he separates his crossed arms and positions them parallel to each other like a referee signifying a touchdown. "If all the wooden beams in a house point in the same direction, the house falls.

"If the law says killing is wrong, aren't we wrong when we kill? Actions speak louder than words. When you sentence a person to die, believe it or not, you tell the criminal mind it's okay to murder. You lose any right to seek true justice, because now you are no better. A criminal kills a person; we the people say it's wrong, so like hypocrites we decide to kill the criminal.... Parents please don't set a bad example or try this at home: A kid steals a candy bar—so to punish the kid—do you steal something of his? A kid shoots an elephant.

In teaching the kid it's not right to kill elephants—you don't go out and shoot one yourself. 'Hey Johnny, here's what that killing you did looks like, don't do it'; boom! Then you shoot Johnny.... People...the government, we the people, me, you—if you're for the death penalty—you're a hypocrite." He reads from the dictionary. "In the dictionary: hypocrite—not truthful, not to be trusted—a liar. *But I suspect if you're a killer—lying's not such a crime.*"

Lincoln chooses the succeeding letter of the word.

"A: Accused innocence.

"In this century alone, fifty people on death row have been able to prove their innocence. Twenty-three people, who have been executed, have either been later proven innocent—or from the great beyond, a shadow of a reasonable doubt has been cast. How would you like to be one of the twenty-three?

"If you execute the wrong person, that means the real killer is still out there. And the one person, who'd like most to see him captured, is dead. Everybody rests easier, and the real killer becomes more murderous because he knows he got away with one.

"You need only make one—one mistake—condemn just one innocent

human being to death, kill one innocent person and capital punishment is wrong. The greatest injustice known to man is the death of an innocent person. And isn't that the reason you want a death penalty to begin with—to fight injustice? If you don't kill, you'll never kill an innocent person. How many times do you need to die to know you never come back from the dead? 'Sorry—we the people killed your mother or father, sister or brother, but they didn't do it. Oops! Here's a few bucks—have a nice life!'"

The courtroom bristles with reactions. Thurgood Stone indicts, "I object to the use of humor to make us laugh."

The judge declares, "Overruled."

Lincoln chooses the following letter of the word. "N: N stands for non-deterrent. By definition: does not stop or prevent.

"Even the pro-death penalty people agree corporal punishment is not a deterrent. Think about it, people who kill give no value for human life—their own or anybody else's—if they did, they wouldn't kill in the first place. How do they know they won't be killed in self-defense or by the cops? What do they care if

society threatens to kill them? I know for fact, no one I've ever tried for murder stopped to think about the death penalty before terminating someone. No one who commits a crime hopes to get caught. Everyone tries to get away with it. If you're more worried about getting caught—then doing it—you don't do it. Point is—*no punishment deters a murderer because the criminal mind doesn't think a crime is a crime until you get caught.* The District of Columbia has no death penalty—you don't see anybody moving to Washington, DC, just to murder and get away with it. In a sentence: *if you don't care about life—you don't care about life."*

Lincoln chooses the succeeding letter of the word. "G: is government....

"The government proposes capital punishment because politically; you, the voter, believes this means they are tough on crime. We're all against crime! The death penalty is the government's way of making the taxpayer feel safer. With fees and appeals, did you know it costs more to administer the death penalty than it does to give a person life? There are more than 3,500 people on death row; if they were to all die tomorrow—would you

feel any safer today? Would we become a less violent person or society because of it? Would the government make your life any more peaceful?

"It is always evil that kills. If you are for the death penalty you want to kill, if you are not: you don't. Justice my ass; justice is just an evil excuse. Just as if you condemn a killer to die, evil lives on—the evil lives on in you. If the government says, 'don't kill' and then they kill—who's going to convict them? I'd like to see another attorney file murder charges against the state the next time the state puts someone to death. I'd like to see the judge and jury brought up on charges of conspiracy. If no one is above the law, and all men are created equal, and the government is just a body of men—then when they murder—aren't they breaking the law they've sworn to uphold? And when they find themselves guilty; I'd say, 'You're forgiven—just abolish the death penalty.'

"This is why it should be *entirely unlawful* to kill anybody. The government now has supreme authority and power over the life and death of all humans: 1776-2000, 224 years this has been 'the system,' and for 224 consecutive

years, there have been ten times ten has many murders, killings and deaths." He tears the Constitution. "I'm fed up with people who say, 'until someone finds a better system, it's the only system we've got.' Isn't it time we gave someone else, gave ourselves a chance?"

He appeals to the jury. "There is not one among us who should be asked to, or is qualified to, declare who should live and die." He addresses the media people. "Perhaps you sir, you created Heaven and Earth?" He asks a woman member of the press corps, "Or you, you made Adam and Eve?" He continues, "The government is not perfect, nor are we. The majority of people; are at times: good, and at times: evil." He points a finger upward. "But I must admit; only one is perfect and mistake-free. So when the government and the people learn how not to copy, but create, an egg or a seed—then talk to me."

Lincoln chooses the following letter of the word. "E: E equals equal-equal justice."

He refers to a 'stat' sheet. "On death row, over one half the prisoners are minorities. And while only thirteen percent of the American population is black—close to fifty percent of death row is

African-American. The fact is: every statistic points out the death penalty does not work. Bryan Stevenson, a fellow attorney, believes the death penalty has a subconscious attraction to the middle class, and I quote, 'By symbolically communicating to poor people and minorities, "We will not let you terrify us, we will strike back at you."' If the death penalty were administered fairly, it would lose this symbolic value and be abolished.' He says, 'I don't believe society is capable of making the judgment that the life of any person, even a guilty person, no longer has purpose or value.' I agree.

"If you are a proponent of the death penalty, there are so many questions as to its fairness: rich versus poor, black versus white, guilty versus innocent. Rather than go on forever debating how to murder fairly, why don't we just outlaw it once and for all and get on with our lives? Let the guilty rot in prison and be done with it."

Lincoln chooses the last letter of the word. "L: Long live life. L, L is life. As was in the beginning, let it be in the end.

"I hearken the defender of life: Saint Michael, the deliverer of immortality, who shall lead the souls of the faithful into the eternal light and truth. Saint Michael: the benevolent, charitable, angel over death; the chief of the order of morals and virtues; the Prince of the presence; the angel of repentance, righteousness, mercy and holiness. Saint Michael: the angel of the final judgment and reckoning, the weigher of souls, who holds in his hand the scale of justice! The greatest of all angels: God's number one! Who, at the end of the age, will lead the angels of light into war against the angels of darkness! God versus the devil, good versus evil, life over death; in the end—the archangel!"

The faithful love it! The accusers are shocked to see Lincoln's apparent transformation. The cheering supporters fill the aisle. Lincoln returns to the defense table. Lesliannas Von Adolf says to Lincoln, "John 5:24, The Lord said: 'Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.'"

Camael leaves the Weissman's with a contract in her hand. She

says to Lincoln, "The Weissman's agreement—sign on the dotted line..." Lincoln holds the pen and begins to sign. She says to him, "I almost forgot, Goldstein said your friend Roman got a producer—someone from his church. His script's value is a million-plus."

Lincoln says to her, "Hold your horses. That's a lot'a Lincoln's." He tells her, "I got an idea. If she's found guilty, I can keep Roman paying to pursue the appeal. I know Roman; he'll see this through to the ends of the earth.... That's the ticket: a million dollars-plus. Harriet, my genius is worth the price of admission."

Camael says, "But at what cost—her life?"

Lincoln replies, "That's a small price to pay." He tells her, "Don't play devil's advocate with me. Whose side are you on? Whoever it was that said, a servant cannot serve two masters knew what they were talking about." He tells the judge, "If it pleases the court, the defense has one bit of business it needs to conclude—a shred of evidence we've been banking on, so to speak."

The judge pronounces, "We stand adjourned until tomorrow, Holy Thursday."

Camael asks Lincoln, "What if it backfires and some supernatural spirit moves them—and guilty or not—their morals refuse to put her to death?"

Lincoln grants, "Then we would've lost one. Okay, one person whose life was spared—there's enough evil out there—there'll be someone to kill again."

SOS - SUICIDE OR SELF-DESTRUCTION

2

ALMOST 9:00 P.M. E.S.T.

Elvis Presley music plays in the religious art shop. A testy, middle-class woman, and her thirteen-year-old, bratty son are browsing. Judy tallies the cash register receipts. Eli, Billy, and Zoe huddle at one end of the counter. At the counter's opposite end; a thirteen-year-old, cute, black, deaf girl is enchanted with a ladybug residing on the open Bible page: Matthew, chapter 18. She is ready to finger-flick it off the page. Aunt Mary unwittingly speaks loudly to her. "Chapter 18: The Greatest in the Kingdom—excellent choice. Wait! da Vinci couldn't

paint the back of that ladybug." She signs, "I think it's an angel. It's been here since I found out I was sick: five days. It must be an angel." Aunt Mary's sign language is graceful and choreographed. Noticeably evident is the pronounced scar, on her forearm, from the knifing she took at Michael's baptism.

The deaf girl cannot understand 'angel.' She signs back, "What is angel?"

Aunt Mary signs and says, "Angels love you through God. They are God's helpers. Angels serve and they watch over you. They tell you things from God. An angel can be in nature; a star, the wind, a bright light.... Animals, angels can take the shape of any animal.... People, angels can look like people.... Ladybugs, angels appear as ladybugs."

The ladybug has flown off. The deaf girl looks warmly to Aunt Mary. In a muzzled, non-distinct tone; she vocalizes loudly, "Angel...Angel." Aunt Mary doesn't understand; the girl points directly at her and signs, "Angel."

Aunt Mary nears tears. She signs in reply, "I love you." She kisses the youngster's forehead. Instinctively a giver, Aunt Mary

yanks out the plug and presents the child with the portable, ladybug radio.

The girl signs, "I love you." Running out, she joyously waves good-bye.

Aunt Mary, Bible in hand, walks to her entourage. Her emotional balloon pops when Judy needles her as she passes, saying incredulously, "Stars?"

Aunt Mary informs her, "God enlightened me with the knowledge that intense, bright, points of light seen on Earth may be angels." She poses, "When you hit your head and you 'see stars,' how do you know those aren't angels sent to protect you when you're hurt? You don't."

Judy says relatively, "You don't know what you don't know."

Aunt Mary theorizes, "If your mind can admit it's possible—then you have the insight to actually see various angels." She maintains, "Scientists say 'stars'—the spirited say 'angels.' Prove to me, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that stars in the sky are celestial bodies visible as points of light. Think, the possibility exists these stars may be angels. "Luke too, saw angels. Matthew too, 'inquiring, "where is the newborn King of the Jews? We

observed His star at its rising and have come to pay Him homage...

After their audience with the king they set out. The star which they had observed at its rising went ahead of them, until it came to a standstill over the place where the child was." " She wonders, "How good do you think you'd feel in Heaven when God says you're right? How bad would you feel if God says: See what you were missing?"

Judy asks, "Enlighten me? Why on Earth, for God's sakes, do angels appear so only you can see them? Why is it, when people have an angel sighting, no one else is ever around to see it?"

"Because Judy...the angel Raphael once landed on my head, healed and enlightened me with the answer. The incredible reason why angels appear alone is—not because I, myself, wouldn't believe it, but because human hearts and minds are weak and angels are aware that the viewer of the angel might end up believing you, the non-believer. God's angels know some people believe other people, instead of believing angels—that's why."

Judy says cynically, "Amazing."

"That's the truth. God never lies. He would not send them to

us to believe in, if they were not for real."

Aunt Mary reads from the Bible as she approaches her friends. "'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in their midst.'" The group holds hands in a preparation for prayer.

The middle-class woman, her son in tow, storms over with a possessed look in her eyes. He's reviewing his expensive sports trading cards, as she yells, "Stop that in public! There ought'a be a law. What right do you have to influence my child's life like that?! He doesn't know better at his age!" She almost yanks her son's arm out of the socket in leaving. He nearly falls from his \$150, untied sneakers.

Initially stunned, the group prays in silence.

Aunt Mary cringes in pain. She prays aloud, "God: I know I am created body, mind, and soul—physical, mental, and spiritual. The body is earth. The mind is sky. The soul is Heaven. I live in physical pain, mental pain, and spiritual pain. God: my body is dead, my mind is dying, my soul is alive. I pray my mind heal my body. I pray my soul heal my mind. Good God: You created life, the evil devil suicide. Suicide

kills my body and mind—save my soul from death. The question is not: Why? Is the answer, suicide?"

Rabbi Eli prays aloud, "Yahweh, God: We know the soul is first. Spiritually, if we are not healthy, we will die. Doctors agree terminal illness leading to depression is normal. It is the depression, not the disease that leads to suicide. Yahweh, God: We know depression is clinically treatable. Hopelessness is the number one cause of suicide. We pray the hopeless get the care they need, and for angels to lead the way—now this is the life."

Reverend Billy prays aloud, "'Brother Lord': We know the mind is second. Mentally, our behavior triggers us to decide. When we are in pain, none of us thinks straight. It's psychological problems, followed by hopelessness, that lead to suicide. 'Brother Lord': We know mental illness is curable. Our mental health is suicide cause number two. We pray the Bible is the cure we've detected—while the psychologist looks for clues."

Sister Zoe prays aloud, "Father: We know the body matters least. Physically, it's the defected and disabled part of our life. For the handicapped, it's

not the pain that hurts but the lack of respect. We have no right to destroy the disabled by assisting in suicide. Father: We know disabilities are not the end of life. Without the spiritual, and mental, there would be no body. We pray love begins to heal. Suicide always terminates a miraculous recovery."

Aunt Mary petitions, "Christ: We know suicide is a cry for help. Body, mind, or soul; who cares if we live or die? You do Lord—our pain You bore on the cross. We're challenged to hear the call not to help in committing suicide. Christ: We know the attempts vanish after they're first prevented. We pray, after counseling, we seek your divine intervention. We have seen science search for the answers—but, we have never seen an angel ask a question."

Judy says loudly, "Closing up! Another day, another \$66."

Aunt Mary asks, "Intercessory prayers? Special personal intentions anyone?"

Rabbi Eli says, "I pray for the upcoming remembrance of Yom Hashoah and the murder of 6 million Jews and 5 million Gentiles."

Aunt Mary intercedes, "For Holocaust Memorial Day—we pray."

Reverend Billy offers, "I pray for the people of Europe and the trip my church is taking to The Netherlands; a country where euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, mercy-killing, doctor-assisted suicide, whatever you call it—it's death by any other name—there it's legal. I pray we in the United States learn from a country where this evil spreads like a wildfire. Don't they know how Satan operates?" He explains, "At first, they all but legalized the murder of the terminally-ill; then the killing of those with incurable disabilities, like multiple sclerosis; then the death of the healthy, but depressed, by their own request; then infants born, not only abortions, but children born with disabling diseases, like Down Syndrome and Spina Bifida; then people in comas—without any consent. God save the world!"

"Amen," says Aunt Mary.

Judy says sympathetically, "Spina Bifida? I've got a relative with S.B.... G-D, I can't imagine her not being alive and kicking. Where's this, the *Neverlands*?"

Sister Zoe says rhetorically, "This is the same country where doctors risked their lives defending people against Hitler

when he ordered these types of defenseless people killed?"

Aunt Mary instructs them, "It's the parable of the unforgiving servant." She pleads, "God: We know you hate suicide: self-inflicted or physician assisted. God: There is only one truth: life. But there are many evil ways to treat a lie: the terminally ill, incurable diseases, competent or guardians and surrogates for the incompetent, physical pain or psychological pain, voluntary or involuntary, disabilities or non-disabled, to save money or to make money. God: The devil knows suicide will spread like a disease, like a wildfire, like a cancer—God we pray..."

On that note, the threesome exits in orderly fashion. The conversation continues...Rabbi Eli says to Reverend Billy, "All that murder. All God's chosen people. New suicide houses will be a Second Coming. It reminds me of that demon-possessed Hitler trying to create a master race."

Reverend Billy tells him, "Thank God, defeating death, Christ exists so that antichrist Hitler didn't one day destroy life as we know it."

Sister Zoe asks, "Brother Eli what's wrong with adopting Christ

as the Messiah? If God was to send another, wouldn't He have come when Hitler was alive? Who of perfection could follow the Son that would make this existence any better?"

Aunt Mary tells them, "Children don't fight. God is God, and this is life." From Aunt Mary's vantage point, down the sidewalk they go. She pokes her head back in the door. She locks it behind them and displays the "CLOSED" sign. Walking toward Judy, Aunt Mary cringes in pain. She almost falls. As the pain increases, she contemplates the use of drugs and suicide. Aunt Mary begs, "God, in Matthew you said: 'Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive.' I pray I make it to Easter."

Judy reminds her, "God never says, 'No,' right? Either, 'Not now,' or 'I have something better for you.'" From her handbag, Judy unscrews an airline bottle of booze. She offers it to Aunt Mary. "Here. I'm taking you to the doctor."

Aunt Mary pours the liquid spirit to the floor. "No. My time is here. Please, water...my body is in trouble, because my mind is troubled. Man on Earth caused much disease, so man tries

to remedy it. But before man and disease, was God."

Judy hands her a glass of water and offers some prescription pills. "At least take something for the pain."

"No, it's useless. I believe pain and suffering are spiritual—and not of the reality of this earth. On Earth, science saves you. If you live in the Spirit, the Spirit saves you. The Spirit on Earth prepares me for the Spirit World—nothing else on Earth can claim to do that. You may depend on man's earthly remedies, but I will only be healed by my spirituality." Aunt Mary returns the cup. She points out a plaque on the wall; "THE EAGLE WHO SOARS ABOVE THE CLOUDS—IS NOT CONCERNED WITH THE RAGING RIVER BELOW."

Judy tells her, "For Christ's sake, stop quoting me bullshit clichés on plaques. What's it say if the eagle is a dumb old hen and is too busy squawking half the time to get help for herself? We're talking about medical science, not some shot in the dark."

Aunt Mary says to her, "My only shot is to pray for the pain to pass. Medical science is human work—and human nature needs to see and have an explanation—but people and doctors can't explain

everything. In the Spirit World, faith is the science of God—and God can explain everything—so God's work is greater. Miracles are how He explains it." She cries out: "But oh: 'the spirit is willing, but the flesh weak.' God will it, please let me sleep in peace tonight. Please do not betray me in my hour of need."

Judy embraces a weakened and pleading Aunt Mary, and kisses her cheek. Poignantly, Aunt Mary knowingly turns her other cheek. Judy balks. Temporarily merciful, Judy whispers, "I love you, Aunt Mary Frances, but forget miracle, forget angels. Think 'Princess Fatima.' Think Elvis. We'll play games... 'Lost Wages' is calling... I swear, I'm doing this for you—not me."

Aunt Mary is injected with a dose of doubt and despair. She breaks the bond. "Judy, I love you, but your words cut me like a sword. You know what it says at the end of Matthew: 'Put back your sword where it belongs. Those who use the sword are sooner or later destroyed by it.' Like a drug addict, who lives by the needle will die by the needle—that is God's prediction, not permission."

Judy tells her, "Don't you want to have some power over your

life? Don't you want to have a say in the way you die? This way, you can write a final stanza in your own poetic life story."

"But Judy, I've always known God is in control. He's always healed my mortal body. I just look in His direction, and all that I don't see between He and I has saved me." She relates, "If the stars were healing angels and God were the moon—whether you see the moon as full or partially lit—the stars still watch over you." She says, steadfastly, "This is the only time I will die."

Judy is rank. "For Christ's sake, Aunt Mary, what the hell, you only die once. Holy shit, I can't believe we're even in the same family. I swear if it were me, I'd die with some pride." Judy gets teary-eyed at her own lashing out.

Aunt Mary too, is emotionally hurt. She seeks comfort from an Elvis doll she picks up. "Sing to me, 'King.'"

Judy closes the register. "You're killing me Mary Frances. Here, here's your \$66. I'm sorry, you're sick. I'm sorry, your life is ending. I'm sorry, but if you need to be put out of your misery—good luck trying to find someone else who'll help you kill yourself." Judy says to her, "You

always told me the meaning of life—is death. And the meaning of one's life was the meaning of one's death. In a sentence—yours is pain." She extorts, "Maybe, I'll go to Vegas without you."

"If you say so."

Judy says, "Before I go—I know you think drugs are drugs. But there's two sides to every coin, and two sides to every human being. I know you believe when you're good and God-like, angels protect and enlighten you. And when you're evil and human, that angel the devil makes you sinful and suicidal; and don't give me that B-S about suicide being the number one cause of death if you factor in: emotions, evil, risks, and health." She tells her, "The bottom line is, what you fail to remember is: that while drugs are drugs—drugs are also medicine—every Pope, person, and president, even a living Elvis Presley used medicine.... Thank you, thank you very much."

Aunt Mary, in her struggle to survive, looks to Judy with false hope.

Judy, faking departure, mocks like a screaming fan. "Elvis...Oh, Elvis! Here, 'King'! Ask yourself, what would the 'King of Rock 'n' Roll' do?"

"I'm not great like 'E.' I'm me. And what makes me the best me, is God. God makes me. And I believe the best act I can perform is to not kill myself. I don't want to meet God with my final act clouded in a haze of drugs. Assisted-suicide is a double-dose of the devil. It's a suicidal drug overdose."

Judy tells her, "I'm giving you a last chance—they even gave Christ drugged wine for His pain on His way to be crucified."

"Right; and God would not take it."

Judy tries tricking Aunt Mary into identifying with Elvis' death. "But Elvis 'The King' did—and wasn't Elvis the voice of God? When Elvis sang gospel, wasn't that how God would sound? And isn't Elvis the greatest gospel singer that will ever live?" She tells her, "You know God doesn't bless a voice like Elvis' and then keep it from being heard by mankind. Elvis' body and mind went bad, but not his voice, his soul, not the soul in the gospel he sang. The evil angels attacked Elvis, but they could never get to his voice—that's where God lived. Like Christ, he did all he could to change the world—and the voice he used is immortal."

The ploy weakens Aunt Mary. She says, "And like Christ's words, the voice will never die but truly live forever..." Her praise, solo, without the choir, like the sun on a holy sea, is sinking; "*Eli, Eli, my God...maybe your right.*"

Aunt Mary cringes with the most pain yet. She almost falls. But, be it her will, she might, she would, worship her idol. "Elvis too was a sacrifice, a lesson for us all on the imperfection of life and the challenge to remain alive. Elvis was the perfect example of the greatness of God and the evil of the devil. For all the good in Elvis, the devil had a way to attack." She expresses and communicates, "The greater the gifts God gives you—the greater the devil tries to destroy you. The devil attacked Elvis with his strongest weapon in the war on life: self-destruction, suicide. And the devil's favorite instrument is drugs." She begins to see, saying forthrightly, "'E' did not die from drugs. Elvis died from self-destruction. Elvis Aron Presley committed suicide—slow suicide." She reconciles, "There never has, nor will there ever be, a greater sacrificial example of drug-use

and self-destruction than 'The King.'" Walking on, just as if she could fly, she says, "Oh, what I wouldn't do to dance with 'The King.'"

Judy injects her with discord and disharmony. "And Elvis is more revered today than when he was alive. Christ, Pope John Paul II, Elvis, maybe even Billy Graham...these are the most recognizable people dead or alive. Remember, Elvis is also at peace more so than ever before in his life; the angels of Elvis, shining like a sequined, white jumpsuit, keep his memory alive, so we may remember the gift of his song, his life, his death." Judy, helping Aunt Mary rise, triumphantly says, "Let the games begin! Ladies and gentlemen...Las Vegas is proud to present: Aunt Mary Frances and 'The King,' appearing together on stage in fabulous Las Vegas for one night only—with an encore in Heaven.... Imagine."

Aunt Mary abhors her own mortal weakness. Self-pity and shame become her creed. She says ambivalently, "Imagine...imagine the power and will of God in those disciples who never self-destruct— or those who never quit. If you quit, you'll never have a chance to win the game of life. To win the game of life: is to not kill—

kill an unborn child, kill each other, or kill yourself. Abortion, the death penalty, suicide—to win the game of life is to not have killed, or kill yourself, when God calls your name. To save lives, and to be alive at the end of the game—that is winning the game of life..." Aunt Mary is defeated. Duped, she finds solace in Judy's apparent victory. Aunt Mary turns to place an Elvis statue on the top shelf. Weak and shaky, she knocks one off. It strikes her near the eye. Her eye swells up immediately.

Judy yells, "Mary Frances!" A disciple, who's won in her own way, she utters, "See what happened?!"

Aunt Mary dismisses it. "I see...you don't have to hit me over the head."

APOCRYPHA

LATE NIGHT

In the Roman's living room, a psychic's infomercial plays on TV. Maggie is passed out on the sofa. The coffee table is aligned with fruity candy, empty beer cans, cigarettes and prescription pills. A nightmare startles her awake.

The TV goes dead. She instinctively lights a smoke stick. Morning sickness rushes her into the darkened hallway. She tries flicking on a light. "Where is the light down here?"

She runs into the dark bathroom. She flips the light switch—no light. Her cigarette billows smoke. "Great... where's the power?"

In a dark bathroom, Maggie is knelt praying to the porcelain god. "Why me? Why did you give me this life?" She vomits the candy and looks upward. "Eat me, God!"

BOOM! A hellish explosion breathes fire from the mouth of the toilet bowl. The exploding cellar furnace ravages the floor below. Fire is everywhere.

In that darkened upstairs half-bath, the moonbeam from the skylight catches Maggie's terrified look. She shrieks, "Help! Michael!" A precautionary, panicking Maggie feels the door for heat. "H-o-t." She's trapped.

She's guided by the moonlight—her only escape. She climbs on the toilet. With her fist, she cannot smash the skylight glass. She removes the heavy toilet lid, but musters only a futile heave. She opens the

bathroom cabinet. The drawer holds *Band-Aids* and an aerosol can. She throws the can in vain at the skylight. "Michael!"

With a sudden blast of intellect, a composed Maggie calculates her escape. From the drawer, she wraps adhesive *Band-Aids* around her fingertips. She unlatches the loose U-shaped toilet seat with a pair of tweezers. Standing on the bowl, she affixes the large toilet plunger to the tile wall. Like a horseshoe ringer, she preps to catapult the toilet seat at the skylight. "Come on!"

She launches the seat. Ringer! It loops around the skylight latch. Maggie hops on the bowl. She braces her foot on the plunger and like *Batman* or *Spiderman*, clasps onto the U-shaped seat, and in a cantilever maneuver crawls out.

The vixen, in red underwear and a flimsy red gown, prances across the rooftop of the flaming structure. She leaps from the roof. Like a cat that's stuck or a bird perched in a nest, Maggie clings to the treetop.

D A Y E I G H T

JUDGMENT

THURSDAY - APRIL 20, 2000

DAWN

In the backyard, the sun rises over the woods. The lake glistens. One sees the stable, the dove gravesite, and the barbecue pit. Maggie's gown hangs from the tree. The charred, but intact, cathedral window and the fireplace stand like tombstones on the ashy skeleton of the gutted house.

In the front yard, a fire engine rests, precariously, in the collapsed sinkhole. Maggie, wearily defeated, is huddled alone against the large, rubber tire of the truck. She is wrapped in a blanket hooded over her head. She clutches her stomach. Maggie, now

sporting a nose ring, is spent. She fears having to move from her resting-place.

A colorful array of approaching sirens highlights her, 'too little, too late,' expression. To her surprise, it's a customized, monstrous, bronze and orange tow truck; its sirens like that of a rainbow. Its horn trumpets a melodic blast. The door panel reads: IZZY and ZEKE'S GOOD WILL AUTO SALVAGE AND DELIVERY—"IF YOU CRASH...WE PROPHET."

Inside the tow truck, Zeke, the driver, wears a 'Mr. T' supply of bronze religious jewelry—noticeably the Star of David. He is a gigantic, deep-voiced, black man. "Thank God, the Virgin Mary never had an abortion."

He is teamed with his gun-in-the-rear window, skinny-as-a-rail, long-bearded, hillbilly partner Izzy; who says, "There she is."

Zeke prophesies to Izzy:

"I saw a windstorm, lightning flashing. I saw what looked like four living creatures in the human form. Two wings of each creature were raised so they touched the tips of the wings of the creatures next to it. As I was looking, I saw four wheels touching the ground. If the creatures rose up from the earth,

so did the wheels. Above was a figure that looked like a man. It shone all over with a bright light that had the colors of the rainbow.... This was the dazzling light which shows the presence of the LORD.... When I saw this, I fell face down on the ground. Then God's spirit lifted me up. I heard the voice that said, "Praise the glory of the LORD in Heaven above!" I heard the wings of the creatures beating together in the air, and the noise of the wheels as loud as an earthquake. The LORD spoke to me. "I am making you a watchman for the nation..."

Izzy tells Zeke a prophecy:

"I saw the LORD on His high throne. Seraphim were stationed above. "Holy, Holy, Holy!" they cried. "All the earth is filled with His glory!" At the sound of that cry, the frame of the door shook and the house filled with smoke. Then one of the seraphim flew to me. I heard the LORD saying, "Whom shall I send?" "Here I am," I said; "send me!" And He replied: "Go and say to this people..."

The wrecker pulls up to the crippled fire engine. The men exit the rig. Maggie growls, "Un-fuckin-believable."

Izzy warns:

"A day is coming when the LORD will take away from the women everything they are so proud of—the ornaments they wear on their ankles, necks, and wrists...the rings on their fingers and in their noses; all their fine robes, gowns, and revealing garments. Instead of fine clothes, they will be dressed in rags; their beauty turned to shame!"

Izzy and Zeke dispense warm milk and an extra blanket to Maggie.

Zeke's message is:

"The LORD said, "Now, look at the women among your people. You want to possess the power of life and death and use it for your own benefit. You kill people who don't deserve to die." The LORD says: "I hate your attempt to control life and death. By your lies you discourage good people. You prevent evil people from giving up evil and saving their lives. I am rescuing my people from your power, so you will know I am the LORD..."

Izzy further warns and promises:

"They say, "God's judgment is like a fire that burns forever. Can any of us survive a fire like that?" You can survive if you say and do what is right. Don't use your power to cheat the poor and

don't accept bribes. Don't join with those who plan to commit murder...'"

The woman asks, "All this because I want an abortion?"

Izzy's message, on the LORD of Creation, is:

"Does a clay pot dare argue with its maker? Does the clay ask the potter what he is doing? Does anyone dare say to his parents, 'Why did you make me like this?' The LORD says, 'You have no right to question me about my children or to tell me what I ought to do! I am the one who made the earth and created mankind to live there. By my power I stretched out the heavens; I control the sun, the moon and the stars.'"

Zeke, speaking for the LORD, promises:

"...The life of every person belongs to me, the life of the parent as well as that of the child. The person who sins is the one who will die."

Izzy condemns the woman:

"It is your sins that separate you from God. You are guilty of lying, violence, and murder. The evil plots you make are as deadly as the eggs of a poisonous snake. Crush an egg, out comes a snake! You are always planning something evil and you can hardly wait to do it. You

never hesitate to murder innocent people. You leave ruin and destruction wherever you go. Everything you do is unjust. You follow a crooked path, and no one who walks that path will ever be safe.'"

The woman tells him, "But the law says it's okay."

Zeke tells her:

"The LORD spoke to me again. 'The government officials are like wolves tearing apart the animals they have killed. They commit murder in order to get rich. I looked for someone who could defend the land, but I could find no one. So I will turn my anger loose on them, and like a fire I will destroy them.' The LORD has spoken.'"

Izzy tells her:

"The LORD says, 'The people do as they please. It's all the same to them whether they sacrifice a human being, a lamb, or break a dog's neck. So I will bring disaster upon them because no one answered when I called or listened when I spoke. Do not think I will bring my people to the point of birth and not let them be born.'"

She asks, "Hasn't G-o-d punished us enough?"

Izzy's judgment is:

"The people have defiled the earth by breaking God's laws, by violating the covenant He made to last forever. So God pronounced a curse on the earth. Its people are paying for what they have done. Fewer and fewer remain alive."

The woman asks, "What if we said we're s-o-r-y?"

Zeke speaks on individual responsibility:

"Tell them I, the LORD, the living God, do not enjoy seeing a sinner die. I would rather see him stop sinning and live. I may warn an evil man he is going to die, but if he stops sinning and follows the laws that give life, he will not die, but live. I will forgive the sins he has committed, and he will live because he has done what is right and good."

Izzy is in a trance. He's sensing some thoughts:

"But this is what the holy God says: "You ignore what I tell you and rely on violence and deceit. You are guilty. You are like a high wall with a crack running down it; suddenly you will collapse. You will be shattered like a clay pot." The Sovereign LORD says, "Come back and trust in me. Then you will be strong and secure." Instead, you plan to escape by riding fast horses."

Zeke tunes in.

Maggie comes clean, telling them, "I'm going to California. California, here I come."

Izzy warns and promises:

"O God, their land is full of silver and gold, horses and chariots, idols and objects made with their own hands. Everyone will be disgraced. They will hide in the rocky hills or holes in the ground to escape from the LORD'S power and glory! On that day, the LORD Almighty will humble everyone who is powerful, proud and conceited. He will level the high mountains and every high tower. He will sink the largest and most beautiful ships. Idols will disappear and the LORD alone will be exalted that day."

Maggie rises, to allow for the fire engine's extrication. Her emotional roller-coaster begins to stoop to her old self.

Zeke consoles Izzy as they retreat to their truck. The results of the message are:

"People crowd in to hear what you have to say, but they don't do what you tell them to do. Loving words are on their lips, but they continue their greedy ways. To them you are nothing more than an entertainer. But when all your words come true—and they will come

true—then they will know that a prophet has been among them.'”

To Maggie, over the tow truck's intercom system; comes the announcement...Izzy says, "I'm sorry; your three-day grace period has expired..."

Zeke says, "You're being repossessed."

The tow truck backs up (the driveway) to hitch the red Rover. Maggie goes ballistic. "I'll kill you!"

Jeremiel Apocrypha, a fireman, vaults down from the engine—frightening Maggie. An Israeli bodybuilder, he is tan and extremely handsome. His shoulder-length, white locks tumble from beneath his helmet. His striking eyes and magnetic presence soothe Maggie. She feels he is breathtaking—a vision. "Fear," he says. She's a bit fearful. He knows her thoughts, before she knows her own. He thinks—Magdalene angel, question: Fear the God of Love? He says, "Answer: no, never."

Maggie thinks—question—explain?

He says, "Answer: A child who breaks a lamp is afraid when the father comes home. If it was an accident—accidents happen—the father understands. But if the child beats his little brother

over the head—then they will be disciplined, disciplined for their own good—then forgiven. Life goes on."

Jeremiel is reading Maggie's mind. She asks herself, What did you say?

He says, "Fear God? Never! Fear the devil forever.... *Out with the Old, in with the New—don't fear God, God's not afraid of you...*"

Magdalene thinks, It would have been better if we had never been born then to live in a world of sin and suffering without understanding why things happen as they do.

Having read her thoughts—he waves his arms like antennae: one hand up, the other open. Jeremiel says, "...the people of this world can understand only what goes on in this world, and only heavenly beings can understand what goes on in heaven." He thinks—Magdalene angel, question:

She thinks, What is Heaven?

He says, "Answer: Only what this life is not."

Magdalene thinks—question—why do we die as quickly as insects? Why doesn't God do something to help? Maggie wonders, Who are you again and why am I asking you this?

He says, "Answer: I'm Jeremiel Apocrypha." Jeremiel says, "It will happen as soon as the complete number of those who have suffered as you are here. For God has weighed this age, measured the years, and numbered the days."

He thinks-question...

Magdalene asks, "Can a pregnant woman keep her child from being born?"

Jeremiel says, "Answer: No, she cannot.... In the world of the dead, the place where God has stored the souls is like a womb. It is as eager to return the souls entrusted to it, as a woman is to end her labor pains."

He thinks, Magdalene angel: In birth, God gives, gives a woman, the greatest pain she will ever endure short of her death, and rewards her with the greatest miracle and blessing—the gift of life. This is how God treats everyone with pain. How could you tell what sweet tasted like if you did not know bitter also? The pain and suffering on this earth, the Lord allows the devil to inflict—is the bitter. Life in Heaven is the sweet. Have you not heard: life is bittersweet?

She nods a sympathetic, yes. She asks a question, she believes he will not be able to answer.

Magdalene thinks-question—why was I born? Why didn't I die?

Wisely, Jeremiel says, "I will answer you if you can do the following things: Tell me how many people are yet to be born; make dead flowers bloom again; open the rooms where the winds are locked up and make them blow; show me the picture of a sound."

She is obviously confounded.

Jeremiel says, "How can you expect to understand God's judgments or why God has promised His love to his people?" He thinks—Magdalene angel: Every mother who gives birth—gives birth to the will of God....

She thinks-question—if I abort now and have a child later; will the quality be less? Are all eggs not the same? Is your first attempt the best?

Jeremiel says, "Answer: You can learn from any woman who has given birth to several children. She will tell you that those born while she was young and healthy are stronger than those born when she was getting old and becoming weak.... You will notice creation is already getting old and losing the strength of her youth."

Maggie is inwardly upset. She doesn't get the answers she wants.

Jeremiel says, "Why are you upset by the thought that you are mortal and must die? Why don't you think about the age to come? The present age is not the end of everything. Even in this age, the glorious presence of God is not always seen." He thinks-question-what good is it for any of us to have life in the present age, when all we can look forward to after death is punishment?...

Maggie asks, "...What g-o-d is the hope of eternity, when we find ourselves in such a completely hopeless situation?"

Jeremiel says, "Answer: Here is the meaning of the conflict that every person on earth must endure: If he is defeated, he must suffer the things you have just told me about, but if he is victorious, he will receive the rewards I have just mentioned. That is why Moses urged the people to choose life so that they might live. But they did not believe him or the prophets who came after him, and did not believe me when I spoke." He asks, "Magdalene angel, question?"

Maggie asks, "For a woman thinking about having an abortion-technically, when does life begin?"

He says, "Magdalene angel, answer: Life begins at the

creation-from the beginning of time-man thinks, breathes, and believes. This is why we are alive-to sacrifice our lives for God and man-each in our own way. You live, you love, you die-end of story-ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

Like a husband, Jeremiel carries Maggie to the threshold of the burned-out home. Jeremiel whispers in her ear. She repeats after him...Maggie says, "I must search for wisdom and try to understand. I was brought into this world without my consent, and I will leave it against my will..." He sets her down. She is tranquil again. They speak in unison, "Why? We're only human." She begins her trek over the ashes.

Jeremiel departs. Arms high, he prays for Maggie:

"O Lord above,
permit me,
your humble
servant, to
offer this
prayer: Plant
a seed within
us, and let it
grow until it
produces new
hearts and
minds, so that

sinful
humanity may
have life.
For you alone
are God, and
you created
all of us, as
the scripture
says. You
give life and
provide arms
and legs to
the body
formed in the
womb, where it
is kept safe
in the
elements of
fire and
water. The
body which you
form is
carried in the
womb for nine
months, and
you alone
provide safety
for the
protecting
womb and the
protected
body. Then
when the womb
delivers what
was created in
it, your
command

produces milk
from the
breasts of the
human body.
The infant you
created is fed
in this way
for a while,
and then you
continue to
provide your
mercy. You
raise the
person on your
righteousness,
teach him your
law, and
discipline him
with your
wisdom. You
are his
Creator and,
as you wish,
you can take
away his life
or allow him
to live."

Maggie strolls the hollow
home. In what was the living
room, she uses a poker to unearth
the fireplace remains. The
magazine she tossed there days
ago—and Michael's birthday bumper
stickers—together read: LIFE/READ
THIS/YOU DIE.

Like Moses with a staff, she moves to the burned-out rear window. She clears away the singed rug. "What do I do? What do I do?"

On the blackened earthen floor, like a neon sign against a pitch-black night, she spots the colorful dove egg that secretly rolled there days earlier. She cups it in her palm. Incubated by the rug and fire, the shell cracks open. The vulnerable, newborn dove sees the light for the first time. Maggie, herself, looks up to Heaven for the first time.

The spirit of the baby bird appears to descend on an angel statuette, as the religious art shop opens this Holy Thursday, about 9:00 A.M. Eastern Standard Time.

The angels are aligned leading from the curtain that separates Aunt Mary's back room living quarters. Aunt Mary has her second wind. She swings open the curtain. Black eye and all, she performs her best, karate kick, Elvis impersonation. An intense cringe of pain briefly thwarts her. Drug free, she recoups. She uses an Elvis doll for a microphone and sings a contrasting Presley gospel verse. She struts to the register in song:

*"I awakened this morning,
I was filled with despair.
All my dreams turned to ashes
and gall. Whoa, yeah. As I
looked at my life, it was
barren and bare. Without
love, I had nothing at all."*

With an oversized, single, key on a ring in hand; she walks to the front of the store. She flips the sign to "OPEN," and unlocks the door. Outside, cars commute to work, but not a soul walks the sidewalk. Mary opens the door a bit, forgetting to remove the key. As the door closes automatically, she starts the walk back. A gust of wind lodges a gift-wrapped box at the door's base. The wind and chimes alert Mary. Intrigued, she picks up the box. It's sized like a bottle of liquor, but shaped like a cross. With no one in sight, and a blank card attached, she wonders about her life. She reasons: this must be angelic.

Poetically inspired, she meanders to the register. She recites to herself, "Life is like a Christmas present: The box is the body. The bow is the mind. Writing on the card is what you think. But more than the thought that counts, is the gift of your

soul inside; in return, the soul is the gift you give—flesh and bone in wrapping paper. Discarding the box and the bow is suicide. Don't throw it away, now or in the end. When God opens the box, all that remains—is the present that brings His Christmas to life."

Behind the register, the same spot she's stood forty years, she cringes in intense pain. She drops the box behind the counter, then struggles to write a poetic suicide note.

*God why me?
Why is there pain and
suffering?
Why is there life?
Why do I think of pain
and suffering,
when I think of life?
Why is there pain and
suffering?
Why is there death?
Why do I speak of pain
and suffering, when I
speak of death?...*

In an odd sight—Mary sees the priest, Bible crooked in his arm, purposefully pacing by outside the store. A rush of inner tranquility overwhelms her. She's guided, almost possessed, to encounter him. Striding quickly,

she opens the door. She searches intently, combing the sidewalk, but he is gone—nowhere to be found. She doubts her own sanity. Was it a ghost? An angelic seizure overwhelms her. Her right hand and left leg mysteriously cripple. Her body withers like a flag in the wind. She cries. Her lips quiver, she's unable to speak. She hobbles back inside the store. She turns the sign to "CLOSED," and locks the door, purposely leaving the keys behind. Trying to grasp reality, and her sense of touch, she lays her left hand on a Bible. On her knees, she crawls to the register and reads, in a magnanimous and hallowed voice that consumes her, a verse from the Book of Job: "'Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its size; do you know? Who stretched out the measuring line for it? Into what were its pedestals sunk, and who laid the cornerstone, while the morning stars sang in chorus and all the sons of God shouted for joy?'"

Pain free, in the presence of an angel of God; Mary humbly succumbs to the Inner Light and peace that exudes from within her. Standing, she completes penning her note in a joy all her own.

Why?...
Why is there a God?
Why is there a Son?
Why angels?
Why a Heaven?
Why is there a
light of day?
Why is there a dark
of night?
Why an Earth?
Why a sky?
Why is there love?
Why is there
laughter?
Why a before?
Why an after?
Why are there plants?
Why are there creatures?
Why nature?
Why people?
Why are there
words? Why is
there song?
Why belief?
Why thought?
Why must I go on?

Like a lightning bolt, Mary is struck with the most intense cringe of pain she's ever known. She's rocked back against the shelf. Angels and Elvis' avalanche her. She covers her head. With the angels around her, from her knees, arms stretched wide, at the top of her lungs, she

screams, "Oh God!" She silently mouths to God above: "I love you. I'd die for you!" Tears stream from her eyes.

The salt water, dissolving over the light inside the courtroom, on this pacific morning, appears to create an arc: The A-R-C-H-A-N-G-E-L sign.

At the defense table, Lesliannas prays to herself: "12:24 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.'"

Lincoln confers with Camael about the jury. "What are we looking at now?"

Camael says, "Right now: fifty-fifty. Those filled with fear and hatred, who need to get even—the lost sheep who follow the herd and the government's law—they'll vote to kill her." She advocates, "On the other side, those who are fearless, loving, and forgiving—they'll be leaders and intelligent enough to understand how to make the world a better place."

Judge DePilate instructs Counselor Peters to proceed.

Lincoln ratifies, "Your Honor, members of the jury, those in attendance...I present...no...I call to the stand Lesliannas Von Adolf." The courtroom is stunned. Lesliannas had no idea she'd be called to testify. The guard unchains her. She sets aside her drawing.

Camael tells Lincoln, "It'll be suicide for her up there. She'll have to fight for her life with nothing but the soul behind the words she speaks."

Lincoln hammers out his injunction. "It'll be the nail in the coffin that's driftin' up the river."

Lesliannas tells the guard, "Our Lord said: 'You could have no power at all against me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered me to you has the greater sin.' John 19:11. I say, 'What can man do to me that He and I together can't handle?'"

Lincoln, ever the emancipator, proclaims to his confederate, Camael, "It's their decision now. It all begins and ends with whose life is more important—their own or somebody else's. If they forgive—she lives. If it's revenge—she's dead.... If she dies, they can

live with that the rest of their lives."

Lesliannas walks freely for the first time in many years—perhaps, into a deathtrap. She makes the Sign of the Cross and prays to herself: "'For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. Whoever believes in Him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.'"

The bailiff asks her, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

With the back of Lesliannas' left hand on the Bible, she raises her unscathed, right palm, saying, "I will not swear."

The judge advises, "The Constitution declares you may practice religion freely."

Lesliannas collates, "God declares you may form governments freely."

The judge asks, "Do you affirm to tell the truth?"

Lesliannas takes a firm grasp of the Bible, the bailiff holds, saying, "I always do." She amends, "As a re-christened, true believer of God, I too, shall call

on the archangel and the Word of the Gospel according to John.

'If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free'; chapter 8, verses 31 and 32."

The bailiff tells her, "State your complete name and date of birth for the record."

"Lesliannas Suriel," saying apologetically, "it's a family name, Von Adolf. August 23, 1949."

The judge tells her, "Be seated."

Lincoln Peters, ever the conjuror, standing before his witness, tells the judge, "I have one question, then I will let my client speak solely for herself.... Did you kill this child, or attempt to kill the plaintiff Hillary Paul?"

Lesliannas, billing herself as a defendant united against injustice, states, "If you accuse me of the human rights violation against only one of those human beings—then the people might as well have killed that baby yourselves—they are one in the same. No, I did not." She constitutes, "*Capital punishment is the death penalty for those who have been born—abortion is the*

death penalty for those who have not."

Lincoln, wedded with Lesliannas' testimony, proposes to her, "Speak now or forever hold your peace."

Lesliannas is thinking.... She patterns her self-defense, after Lincoln's, by spelling out: "A-R-C-H-A-N-G-E-L, archangel."

She avows, "A: is accused—meaning damnable.

"In this case, the innocent, aborted child has gone to Heaven. I cannot speak for all victims in a homicide as to where they may eternally go; but if you kill, pray for Christ's forgiveness, because you are damned to Hell. If you ever hope to see a slain loved one in eternity—do not murder in the name of justice. Murder in the highest degree is murder committed in your heart. First John 3:20 'For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.' I for one, in the end, hope like Hell, I go to Heaven."

Lincoln asks her, "What does the R mean?"

Lesliannas responds, "Revenge or forgiveness: these are the only two choices in the death penalty debate.

"In a death penalty murder, revenge is just another bullet in

the devil's gun. Forgive and let live. Be glorified in God's eyes. He will justly, justly I swear to you, give you peace of mind. Tell the killer you are not as they are; you are for eternity infinitely greater. In killing—you battle, but lose a war. I swear to you, if you forgive and show mercy—you and your guardian angel win the war on peace—have faith. Without forgiveness for one another, without a willingness to allow a chance at repentance, the hopelessness of unresolve will ultimately prevail. Unforgiving leads to revenge and retaliation, and each of those knows no limit, but always come to a timeless end. *Revenge: is a weed from a seed of hatred—forgiveness: a leaf from the tree of life.*"

Lincoln asks, "Miss Von Adolf, what if you are judged guilty by this jury and condemned to die?"

Lesliannas replies, "So be it. The dark angels controlled the minds."

He asks, "Won't you seek revenge?"

She retaliates: "'Vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord.'" She rejoins, "No. I will forgive them. Who will forgive me, if I don't forgive? Between God and I, if He can forgive me—then I can

forgive myself. And if I can forgive myself—who am I not to forgive everyone else?"

Lincoln asks, "C?"

Lesliannas chides, "Children of Christ. We murder the children of Christ.

"Abortion kills life at the beginning. The death penalty kills life in the middle. Euthanasia kills life at its end...start to finish. If the wheels of justice, on the cycle of violence, keep going around—we will one day put to death a ten-year-old bred from the violent society we've grown to become."

She confirms, "Long, long, ago in the old days, the lawmakers used to kill for no less than twenty-five crimes.... Number Five: committing sins. Four: contempt of court. Three: cursing your parents. Two: consulting a psychic. And Number One: holy cow is right—having a cow that kills! If we can give the death penalty to a perfectly innocent teacher for teaching—the only person dead and alive who can free us from the death penalty—who, what, where, when, and why, will we kill come the next generation, the millennium, come tomorrow?"

Lincoln is befuddled that his client is presenting her argument so well, before he can ask—

Lesliannas hails, "H: is hypocritical. Defined as: that which makes no intelligent sense."

She hallows, "This existence is based on certain principles and laws of nature. Never quitting is one of these. Think about it: no one ever achieves a thing if they quit—it's physically impossible. Hypocrisy is another principle. You cannot kill a killer and expect it to work—it's like lying to a liar: you don't know who to believe. Ever since God forgave the third human being, Cain, for killing the fourth human being, his brother Abel—mankind has punished death with death. And ever since then—civilization has become worse and worse. Let's try a final principle—if it is not working—fix it. Two wrongs don't make a right. *Creation is a long time to go without a change for the better.*"

Lesliannas orates another angle in her interpretation of Lincoln's archangelic, orthographical discourse. "A: is apply-apply to oneself.

"'I loved my brother or sister until they were wrongfully murdered—so to express my love—I'd love to see the guilty dead.'" She argues, "What if a family member, friend, or someone you know is the person facing the

death penalty? How then would execution appeal to you?" She ascribes, "In that case: 'Do unto others?'" She asks, "Honestly, tell the truth—if you criminally killed someone, would you think it just and fair if their loved ones wanted to execute you? Would you, you yourself, scream for revenge or beg for forgiveness? Would you, you yourself, you want to be sentenced to die?" She pauses to allow for their self-examination. She adjures, "Don't say you wouldn't try to kill someone... you're trying to kill someone right now."

Courtroom objectors lash out. A male objector hollers, "You're anti-death penalty to save your own skin! Even if it doesn't deter crime—fact is, it'll stop—"

A female objector hollers, "Yeah. It'll sure as Hell stop you from killing!"

The judge hollers, "Order in the court!"

Lesliannas attests, "Yes. But it won't stop you."

Lincoln says to her, "Miss Von Adolf, we know experts agree the death penalty will only exterminate you—but your condemners will still be running around loose—so is your N: non-deterrent?" Lesliannas contemplates.

Urim Af-Thummim grows enraged. He tells prosecutor Stone, "Object; he's leading the witness."

Stone's beliefs sway. He says quietly to his partner, "No. No. She's right. It doesn't deter-stop. It doesn't. It propagates, gives birth to, a new killer."

Lesliannas notes, "N: is nature-laws of nature...."

"The first and foremost law of nature: every life created one day dies. I do not need to be God-like to understand this. What I don't understand, is why we people believe we are superior to nature. Can anyone present stop an earthquake or the rainfall? When people dominate nature—we kill it: the plants, the animals, people. We are all going to die by the hand of nature—let 'Mother Nature' take her course."

She says necessitously, "To kill an animal is to give it the death penalty—continue to kill and the animal becomes extinct, no longer existent. Mankind is no different. Don't expect God to make another man after we've killed ourselves off. The laws of nature do not exclude the animal man from extinction."

She says notably, "If revenge and hatred are bullets in the

devil's gun—then self-destruction points the gun at our own head. Suicide, abortion, the death penalty; one way or another, self-destruction will forever be the number one cause of death."

Lincoln says to her, "Question, would you consider suicide if you were sentenced to death?"

Lesliannas says to him, "God no. You see: ever since Eve partook of the apple—we were all sentenced to death—and just as life is life, death is death. Whether by your hand or my own, it is by the devil we shall die and by God we shall live." She tells him, "Besides, why would I kill myself before the people can? It's like the old movies we see where the supposed good-guys go to the ends of the earth to keep the bad guy alive, just so they can stand him before the firing squad. Do they seem like the type of films I'd like to see?"

Lincoln checks his watch, the second-hand stops. Strange. It's 8:22. Lincoln grows angry, asking, "Is G: government?"

Lesliannas, ever the good-natured judge of people, says, "Infinitely more meaningful—G: is God," saying greatheartedly, "Forgiveness or revenge, love or hate, good or evil, God or the

devil, life or death—the choices are only two. If you are for one—you are against the other.”

Lesliannas Von Adolf lets her gnostic side speak. “The Bible: In the beginning God made creation; He made Adam, a man in God’s own image. In creation’s first natural birth, Adam had a son: Cain. In inheriting the earth’s evil, Cain committed the first murder—he killed his own brother Abel. Cain himself became fearful for his life among the people. But, God forgave Cain. He wanted Cain to remain alive, not die. God told mankind: Let Cain live, no death penalty. However, God needed to act on the murder so that the murderer would understand he did wrong. So, God disciplined Cain by taking from him the freedom of Paradise, just as if he were sending him to a prison.”

Von Adolf germanely says, “Remember: ‘In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.’ Next chapter: before the devil’s murderous evil would self-destroy the man of the world and man become extinct—God sent an angel and saved a holy man named Noah from man’s downfall and disaster. God forgave man. God gave man another chance. God, with Noah, saved us from

ourselves. Were it not for God, man would self-destruct and die. The moral of the story: The death penalty does not forgive and never gives a second chance, and were it not for God—no one would be alive today.”

Lesliannas galvanizes: “Genesis 9:6 ‘Whoever sheds mans blood, by man his blood shall be shed. For in the image of God He made man.’ Next sentence, 9:7: ‘And as for you, be fruitful and multiply.’ God knowing man murders—*does not give man permission to murder in 9:6*—the perfect God knows killing is evil and leads to extinction. With man made as if he were God, God commanding man to kill—would be like God commanding man to kill God. It would be God committing suicide!”

She gleans, “God promises to man and the animals, I will not destroy you. But the dark fallen angel, that prideful spirit in man—that man himself believes is right—it sentences man to die on this earth. The perfect God knows this devilish spirit possesses man to be self-destructive. Why else would God create life on Earth, if Earth were not to have life on it?” gainsaying, “The moral of the story in Genesis 9:6 ‘kill a man, and by man you shall die,’ is: *God*

does not give permission, God makes a prediction! Kill and you will be killed! And an all-powerful, all-knowing God is right and true because that is just what we do."

She genteelly says, "I once had a dream..."

Urim calls out, "Object; not relevant."

The judge declares, "Overruled."

Lesliannas tells the court, "...in it I had an adopted, not aborted, brother Mo. I loved him as if he were my God. Once, my brother murdered a man. God bless, he escaped the death penalty having never been brought to trial. One day, my brother, thankful for his life, found God. God, like an angel, found my brother. My brother then became the leader of his neighborhood. But, he lived in a violent society where gang wars and murder were commonplace. People were fearful. Through prayer, my brother knew God was the God of love and was against killing, yet my brother was for the death penalty; life then death, fear of dying, kill or be killed, death begets death, these were all the people knew. In my dream, my brother Mo always wanted a baby brother; only, he had to die to ever see Him. In

Heaven, where they join together, Mo's brother taught him how in death, they, we, shall all live again and how God alone knows the truest meaning of life."

Urim yells out, "I object! Mo is Moses isn't it?! And you want us to believe the evil spirit that just once possessed Moses, the deliverer of those faithful, is the same evil spirit that once possessed you?! And if God can love and forgive someone who worships Him like Moses, and then give Moses the law—why can't the people, and the same law, forgive you and grant you parole?"

Lesliannas tells him, "I love Moses. I'm just thankful Moses didn't get the death penalty."

Urim, searing, exclaims, "I hope you burn like a desert bush struck by lightning!"

The judge denounces, "Counselor, you're out of order! Objection overruled. One more outburst and I will find you in contempt of court." He tells Lesliannas, "Go on."

Lesliannas quotes: "7:19 'Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill me?'"

Lincoln, resuming, asks, "Miss Von Adolf, is your E: equal justice?"

Lesliannas exonerates,
"Fairness is: I came into this
world against my will and I will
leave against my will. God gives
life and God takes life away—
that's what is fair," exhuming,
"E: is eye for an eye."

She explicates, "In the
second of the first, five Books of
the Holy Bible, Moses, the man,
receives the Ten Commandments of
God. In the third Book,
specifically chapter 18, he writes
Commandments against certain sins.
In 19, Moses writes: 'worship no
other Gods and love thy neighbor
as yourself.' Later in 19, he
also reports: 'nor shall you take
a stand against the life of your
neighbor.' He writes on: 'you
shall not bear hatred for your
brother in your heart,' and:
'though you may reprove your
fellow man, do not incur sin
because of him,' there is more:
'do not take revenge on anyone or
continue to hate him, but love
your neighbor as you love
yourself—I am the LORD.' However,
in the following chapter 20, these
divine Commandments when written
by mortal man as law, laws if
broken, now include the phrase:
'shall surely be put to death.'"

Lesliannas expurgates, "If
God were to speak of death—He
speaks from Heaven on eternal

death. When man thinks of death,
he thinks of an earthly death."

She says exemplarily, "When
God appears on Earth in the body
of Christ that Moses so often
noted when he wrote about 'man
formed in God's own image.'
Christ Himself spoke these words:
'If I have told you earthly things
and you do not believe, how will
you believe if I tell you heavenly
things? No one has ascended to
heaven but He who came down from
heaven, that is, the Son of Man
who is in heaven.' And: 'Do not
think I shall accuse you to the
Father; there is one who accuses
you—Moses, in whom you trust. For
if you believed Moses, you would
believe Me; for he wrote about Me.
But if you do not believe his
writings, how will you believe My
words?'" She exalts, "The moral
of the story: Adam and Eve; Cain
and Abel; Noah and the ark;
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Moses
and the Commandments—not BC,
before Christ; or AD, after His
death; *has 'eye for an eye' ever
been one of the Ten Commandments!*"

Lincoln says, "Last but not
least. L is law."

Lesliannas lobbies, "Law?
The very rule we live by is
life...life, love, and life."

She lectures, "If you grew up
on a farm, and you wanted to teach

all the animals to love life—it would take time for that love to grow. When the cows give birth to the calves, the sheep to the lambs, and the horses to the foals—they too, would learn to love life. But, if you the farmer were to kill just one of the animals—all the animals would know fear and hate. You would want to kill them, and they would want to kill you. Until the one day, when the farmer, alone in the barn, discovers: the farmer wasn't killing off the animals—he was killing off the farm."

The death penalty advocate's cheer rises slowly. A pro to con transformation has begun.

Lesliannas lauds, "With God as my witness, may the archangel and all the angels show you the one person, dead and alive, who frees man from the death penalty. May the hand of God give you..." She holds her right palm up in prayer. "...*vie, vida, vita, Leben, liv, zycie, zivot, zhisn, zo-í, haya, chayim, inochi, sheng...life!*"

The crowd is uproarious. Those speaking French, Spanish, German, Russian and English harmonically chant "life" in their native tongue.

The judge beats his gavel. "Order! Order in the court!"

Judge DePilate asks the defense if they have concluded.

Lincoln says loathingly, "The defense rests."

The judge asks the prosecution for their rebuttal.

Thurgood Stone responds, "No questions." He says to the judge, "The government and the people request to see the drawing."

The judge says to Lesliannas Von Adolf, "You may relinquish the chair. You are still under your oath to God."

Lesliannas advances to retrieve the drawing. She speaks to herself: "John: 'Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her. Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you. Go, from now on do not sin.'"

Everyone is in anticipation: the nun, the weeping woman, the Muslim leader, the Cardinal, the bailiff and judge, Urim and Stone, the Weissman's, Hillary Paul, Camael and Lincoln. In the center of court, Lesliannas holds the drawing high above her head in her right hand. It is a sketch of Christ crucified on the cross. Below it reads: EX. 20:13.

The jury cannot see, but upon close inspection, her telltale,

left palm reveals no cuts or markings.

She mutters, "Exodus, chapter 20, verse 13...read it in the Bible."

Urim Af-Thummim says cantankerously, "Let the court note we are dealing with a hostile witness!"

Thurgood U. Stone states, "The prosecution rests."

The stirring discourse and personable nature of the accused has visibly altered the mindset of many who have witnessed the trial.

The judge instructs the jury. "Members of the jury, the fate of the accused rests solely in your hands. It is my duty, as justice, to instruct you to survey the facts and evidence you have seen presented in these proceedings and to render, upon your deliberation, a verdict of guilty or accept the defense's plea of innocence. The prosecution's case for the government is representative of our society and the rules of law that you, the people, have dictated to govern over your lives. This government was given birth to by the people of this nation. She was born of your very own values and ideas. And since the separation of church and state, in the 200-plus years since her inception, she has grown to

rule as the daughter of our nation. This government, of the people, for the people, and by the people—is the embodiment of the laws you believe in and have declared independently for yourselves. These rules outlaw murder and killing, unless authorized by the state. Whether it be: the senior citizen, the adult, the youth, or in this case the unborn fetus; each of us, and our crimes, is protected and punished by yourself, the society of people greater than oneself, and by the politicians whom you've elected, as well as by the President who presides over our entire body which is the government. In the name of justice, it is the duty of this court to persecute and prosecute one of us for the betterment of all of us.... For we pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands....

"On the other hand...

"We are one nation under God. We are indivisible; for united we stand, and just as Christ said: 'A kingdom divided against itself will fall.' So, may we look upon ourselves as He—with love and justice for all. I ask you now, to welcome your instincts and the

natural presence to receive guidance by your conscience or created Spirit. Justice is seeking the truth, and in truth you will find righteousness. Reflective of the defendant's plea, is the belief that the truth will set us free. Therefore, let the testimony you've witnessed in this trial be a tribute to your choice for the righteous. Conceived in His own image, created as one, in all our beliefs and dreams, for nearly 2,000 years, God has shown like the sun—He is Father of our nation. The law Moses passed down, and the Commandments that govern us, were, from our birth, implanted in our life as a part of our nature to perpetuate our existence. Therefore, it is in God we trust and in His Spirit within us that we demand of ourselves not to murder, kill, or put to death, be it: the elderly, the man or woman, the child; or in this moment, the unborn baby. Each of our sins are not to go undisciplined, nor are they to be mercilessly unforgiven; for each of us needs to plead to our God before we must answer to ourselves; only then, may we appear before our neighbor; for in eternity, will we finally be judged. In the name of God the Father and of the One persecuted

in our defense, I pray...God bless America, land that I love, stand beside her and guide her with the light that shines from above." ...His Honor slams the gavel. He rises to exit.

The bailiff announces, "All rise." The religious faithful choose to kneel instead. "By decree of the court, the jurors are free, for three days, to return to their lives and loved ones to worship and celebrate the feasts of Passover, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. The defendant, Lesliannas Von Adolf, will be remanded to custody and remain imprisoned until the jury of the people passes judgment and reaches a verdict on her living or dying. Court is adjourned."

The letters, and the word, in the A-R-C-H-A-N-G-E-L sign—would cross the land to the U.C.A. Life + God, and the presence of Mark Anthony, if he had *his* way. (He's always looking for one.)

SERVICE - PART III
"Enlighten"

APPX: 7:00 P.M.

Inside the Universal Church
of Angels, Life and God this

Thursday evening; truly looking like a preacher for the first time, the Reverend Mark Anthony stands at the lectern. Now, ninety-six people of varied races and religions are seated. They're arranged in a dozen respective groups of fours and/or eight's. From the vantage point of the single listener in the last row, Reverend Mark Anthony opens the Bible. "This is the prophet Isaiah—around 700 years before Christ...."

To the pacing and tone of "The Night Before Christmas," he rhythmically reads, verbatim, a series of verses:

*"Here is my
servant whom I uphold,
my chosen one with whom
I am pleased, upon whom
I have put my spirit.
Until He establishes
justice on the earth,
the coastlands will wait
for His teaching.*

*Hear me, O
coastlands, listen O
distant peoples. The
LORD called me from
birth, from my mother's
womb He gave me my name.
He made of me a sharp-
edged sword and*

*concealed me in the
shadow of His arm. You
are my servant, He said
to me, through whom I
show my glory.*

*And I am made
glorious in the sight of
the LORD, and my God is
now my strength! It is
too little, He says, for
you to be my servant; I
will make you a light to
the nations, that my
salvation may reach to
the ends of the earth.*

*The LORD God has
given me a well-trained
tongue, that I might
know how to speak to the
weary a word that will
rouse them. Morning
after morning He opens
my ear that I may hear,
and I have not rebelled.*

*I gave my back to
those who beat me, my
cheeks to those who
plucked my beard; my
face I did not shield
from buffets and
spitting.*

*The LORD God is my
help, therefore I am not
disgraced; I have set my
face like flint, knowing
that I shall not be put
to shame.*

See, my servant shall prosper, He shall be raised high and greatly exalted. Even as many were amazed at Him—so marred was His look beyond that of man, and His appearance beyond that of mortals.

Because of Him kings shall stand speechless; for those who have not been told shall see. Who would believe what we have heard? To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity; one of those from whom men hide their faces, spurned, and we held Him in no esteem.

Yet it was our infirmities that He bore, our sufferings that he endured, while we thought of Him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted. We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; but the LORD laid upon Him the guilt of us all.

Though He was harshly treated, He submitted and opened not His mouth, like a lamb led to the slaughter.

Oppressed and condemned, He was taken away, and who would have thought any more of His destiny? When He was cut off from the land of the living, and smitten for the sin of His people, a grave was assigned him among the wicked.

If He gives his life as an offering for sin, He shall see His descendants in a long life, and the will of the LORD shall be accomplished through Him.

Because of his affliction He shall see the light in fullness of days; through His suffering, my servant shall justify many. Therefore I will give Him His portion among the great, and He shall divide the spoils with the mighty.

Because He surrendered Himself to

death and was counted among the wicked, He shall take away the sins of many, and win pardon for their offenses.'"

The Reverend Mark Anthony closes the Bible. The congregation claps with approval. The Reverend Mark Anthony remarks, "God bless the Book of the Prophet Isaiah."

Reverend Mark Anthony proffers, "I'm often asked: 'What, or who is God?' And I preach: God, *God is believing in love*. He philosophizes, "Every human being, every soul on Earth, no exceptions, needs to believe and needs to love. And the unknown, invisible, whatever it is, thing, to believe and to love—that is God. God is the invisible combination of believing and loving."

The Reverend Mark Anthony queries, "What does God look like? What do believing and loving look like? Man cannot even imagine how any of these things appear. God gave us belief so we could *believe in love*." Reverend Mark Anthony reasons, "If every human being needs love—and God is love—then everyone needs God." He concludes, "Listen, every human

knows love and every human believes in something. God gave us belief; then He gave us love. As creatures, not spirits, we believe in that which we see. Faith is believing in that which we do not. Because of a universal lack of faith, God sent His Son so we could *believe in love* without faith. So, as a human, we could see what love in a human being looked like. Through Christ, we now can continue *believing in love*. But we need faith again, because, He, Christ, is here in Spirit. Faith, so we may better *believe in love*."

The Reverend Mark Anthony's powerfully poignant philosophy is plastered on the faces of the faithful. The vantage point from the last row listener reveals their attentiveness.

The Reverend Mark Anthony unceasingly bombards them with rhetoric. "All of humanity shares four things. From the four directions of the wind, to the Four Corners of the Earth, the only four things mankind shares are: God, beliefs, love and life."

Reverend Mark Anthony explains, "God: There is only one God. Belief: We all believe in something, as I said. Even atheists tragically *believe* there isn't a God. Love: We all need to

love and to be loved. And last but not least, is life. Life: We are all alive." He radically tells them, "And there are only two, two kinds of people in this world: those who believe in God and those who don't. If you believe in love and life, you believe in God. If you don't—then you don't. And those who believe in God, in love and life, because they believe in God—never lose for doing so. They know a life with God is perfect and the rest of life is imperfect. And to those who believe—never let anyone who doesn't put you down or change you. The born again especially, have seen both sides of life. You have experienced the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, what works and what doesn't. The people who don't know God—how can they understand or comment on something they know nothing about? Remember, those who believe in love and life—believe in God. Those who don't believe in love and life, those who believe in hate and death—don't believe in God."

The Reverend Mark Anthony, commenting, says, "I believe one of the greatest, if not the greatest, philosophers of all time, was Confucius. I truly

believe God too, thought the same. Confucius once said, 'No doubt there are those who find it possible to act without first understanding the situation, but I am not one of them. To hear much, select what is good and follow it; to see much and take careful note of it; these are the steps by which one ascends to understanding.'" Reverend Mark Anthony fundamentally concludes, "Now Confucianism is not a religion, but Confucius knew and understood beyond all else: there is truth in life...."

The Reverend Mark Anthony instructs, "The gift of life is not just your physical life. The gift you can give to people is to give of the life within you, to give of yourself, not material gifts, but priceless gifts, gifts of actions and words; a good deed for the day, a kind word, gifts of meaning and thought. The greatest of these gifts is love. Give each other love; love, laughter, hope, I can name a million of them. Whether you know it or not, we each have at least one; the one gift given to us by God that we can give to each other. Give the true gift that keeps on giving—give each other the gift of your love and the gift of your *life!*" Again, there is rousing applause.

He hypothesizes, "With that in mind...there are four things we share, there are two kinds of people, and there is one religion. *The only religion—is the one you believe in.*"

Reverend Mark Anthony raises the question, "God did not create religion when He created man. God loves man and man's?"

The church voices, "Life!"

He harmonizes, "Remember: this church, this ministry, is not about religion, but God's words on the meaning of?"

The church voices out, "Life!"

The Reverend Mark Anthony raises his Bible. "I hold in my hands the Book of?"

The church raises their voices. "Life!"

Reverend Mark Anthony encourages, "I ask that the original disciples in the audience please stand now and introduce themselves, and share with us your religious background, and a spiritual or biblical message or passage: your, 'words to live by.' Remember: *the greatest knowledge a person can have is to know God and know thyself.* He hollers out, "This is the Universal Church of Angels, Life and God—you are all welcome here!"

Six members are on each side of the center aisle. They are seated alternately between the first and second row. Similar in religious and ethnic background guests are seated with them. Reverend Mark Anthony acknowledges, "Helen, the last shall be first."

CHURCHES: CHAPTER 1

Helen Theotokos stands. She is the antithesis of Maggie.

"My name is Helen Theotokos, even though the people at work call me 'Helen from Troy.' I am an aids and drug counselor. I'm a single mother and this is my daughter." She cradles the baby.

"I have a favorite passage I'd like to share from Sacred Greek Scripture. This passage was written, after the disciple Paul was called to be an apostle and set apart for the Gospel of God, which He promised previously through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures." She recites the first line of Scripture: "This is the Letter of Paul to the Romans: chapter 1, verse 27. It reads: '...and the males likewise gave up natural relations with females and

burned with lust for one another.'"

Before reading the remainder, she points out the proof of the passage to the male AIDS patient seated beside her. She reads: "'Males did shameful things with males and thus received in their own persons the due penalty for their perversity. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God handed them over to their discerning mind to do what was improper.'"

Helen says obdurately, "That was recorded nearly 3,500 years ago. From leprosy and the earliest of time, to AIDS and beyond—there have been plagues, diseases, and epidemics that have wiped out entire populations. Make record, there comes a day when AIDS will destroy hundreds of millions in a short span of time—then maybe we'll regret all the killing we're doing, especially abortion. Without this flock of newborns, who'll repopulate our species? May the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Ghost be with us all."

Mark Anthony says obligingly, "Bless you, Helen. Bless you for all the work you've done—for accepting me, and the angelic guidance that has been with you from the start." Applause

follows. Mark is almost in tears himself.

CHURCHES: CHAPTER 2

Dan Mazda stands. An admiring young lady is seated beside him. He speaks confidently. "My name is Dan 'Zoro' Mazda. My friends call me 'Zoro' because I'm swift and because of my religion. I practice Zoroastrianism."

He tells Reverend Mark Anthony, "Right now, I'm training for the Olympic decathlon."

He tells the church, "What I like best about my religion is that it began in an age of idol worship and polytheism—that's the belief in more than one god. But my religion preached the first monotheistic religion of the one supreme God. What I also like is that the loftiest ideal for man is to be like God. With the cultivation of the good mind, and by following the path of righteousness and with devotion, man can eradicate all evil and can hope to attain the twin rewards of perfection and immortality, thereby attaining ultimate communion with God."

He tells them, "See, Reverend Mark Anthony reminded me that he once heard, the body is just something that carries the brain around; and to be a world-class athlete, I need a sound mind; and to be a world-class person, a good soul. He told me I need to practice my religion with the same dedication I have to sport. It'll keep me free from sin."

Self-revealing, he tells Reverend Mark Anthony, "My problem is: I'm physically strong, but sexually weak. I raped a couple of girls when I was younger—so I really need God in my life to remind me of good thoughts, words, and deeds. I'm really against abortion too, because I may have tempted one of the two girls to fight evil with evil."

The Reverend Mark Anthony relays, "Dan, my brother, read your 'words to live by.'"

Dan tells Reverend Mark Anthony, "Life is not a race to the start, but a race to the finish."

He tells the church, "In the Bible though, the words are from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, check this out." He reads: "'Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every

athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.'...That's golden huh?" He tells them, "Then I like to read one of these books that helps translate, because sometimes I have a hard time understanding the Bible. One said, 'the rules of the Christian "game" are strict and call for consistent self-discipline. We cannot lose our salvation. But we can lose the prizes our dedication to the Lord might otherwise win.'"

Reverend Mark Anthony concedes, "Thanks Dan. Godspeed as they say." As with every testimony, the congregation applauds. Dan sits.

CHURCHES: CHAPTER 3

Dr. Parkinson rises. "Hello. My name is Dr. Solomon Parkinson. I am honored to be here, and to speak. As a psychologist, it's a rare opportunity for me to be counseled. But that is what I

find most rewarding about the power of God. It's a motivational tool for me involving the power of positive thinking. In my work and in my studies, I've never encountered Freudian doctrine, or contemporary concept, that has succeeded with the perfectibility of the power of God. I'm not a religious man, quite the contrary. But in my case, the redemptive power of God is infallible. Strictly speaking as a psychologist, the power of the mind is immeasurable, and yet, the power of the Spirit immeasurably outweighs the powers of the mind. Frankly it behooves me; how even a non-religious human being would not endeavor to use such a powerful force to radically improve the condition of their life. I don't think of it as religion, I think of it as a personal program or plan for positive thinking. If it succeeds in serving its purpose, which it does; to improve or save your life, why not use it? Why not give it a try? Absolutely, what has one got to lose?"

The Reverend Mark Anthony replies, "Doctor Parkinson, I concur." He suggests, "But, I know a greater dilemma weighs on your mind. Go ahead and share your testimony with us."

Dr. Parkinson tells Reverend Mark Anthony, "If I may, I'd like to first read some of the literature that has positively influenced me." Reading his Bible, he tells the church, "This is an excerpt from the Letter to the Galatians: 'For you heard of my former way of life in Judaism.' This is Paul speaking: '...how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it, and progressed in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my race, since I was even more a zealot for my ancestral traditions. But when God, who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me, so that I might proclaim him to the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult flesh and blood...' and it continues on in that vein."

He tells them, "As of present, I am experiencing conflicting thoughts. My wife and I, being the most recent victims of violent crime, immediately responded by lashing out; by temporarily seeking relief in the retributive justice of corporal punishment. But, I've succumbed to what I believe is the longer lasting positive reinforcement of this chapter, here is a segment:

'For through the law I died to the law, that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.' It continues, next chapter: 'Why, then the law? It was added for transgressions, until the descendent came to whom the promise had been made; it was promulgated by angels at the hand of a mediator. Now there is no mediator when only one party is involved, and God is one. Is the law then opposed to the promises of God? Of course not! For if a law had been given that could bring life, then righteousness would in reality come from the law.'"

He tells the people, "The result for me has been twofold: whereby, I was perplexed, I am at peace; where I was left powerless, I remain positive. I am now positively convinced—in what I've termed, 'the self-contained trinity of synopses'—the death penalty solves nothing." The congregation approves.

Dr. Parkinson is overcome by their receptiveness. Oddly, he gets carried away. He tells Reverend Mark Anthony, "Again, if I may, in the next chapter: 'Tell me, you who want to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the freeborn woman. The son of the slave woman was born naturally, the son of the freeborn through a promise.'

He tells the church, "Of the multi-faceted meaning to this—for me, the semantics are the coalescence of the covenants of life. What was the loss of one son has changed our outlook and led to the adoption of another son. I'm pleased to announce, June 9th, my wife and I are expecting the adoption of a newborn son." He tells them, "God has forgiven us for the transgressions of our youth, for the other son or daughter we never had." The congregation cheers.

The doctor holds hands with his wife. He tells the people, "Finally, I'd like to close this dissertation by imploring my colleagues in the medical community: I am a physician of the mind, I cannot condone my fellow physicians assisting in suicide. My behavioral patterns these last

days had led me to suicidal tendencies. I thank God for renewing a positive outlook on life. The glass is full. We all have something to live for!" He tattles, "I apologize, but my wife never lets me speak." He breaks down. He gives Mrs. Parkinson a huge hug. She now-will take some convincing.

CHURCHES: CHAPTER 4

Kara Kesh stands. Kara is between twenty-five and thirty-five-years-old. She has sandy, long, sun-streaked hair. She wears a large steel bracelet and a matching emergency medical bracelet. She is big-boned, similar to Judy in appearance, only younger, and delightfully more colorful.

Hi, I'm Kara Kesh. I feel bad. I don't have any problems. What I do have is a lot of terrific friends here in this ministry and at work. I'm a lifeguard and an instructor on the island. Maybe that's why my friends call me 'Guru.' I also have a lot of terrific friends where I study the religion of my birth, Sikhism. Sikh's have this real cool mantra, it goes: 'One

Supreme Being; Truth Eternal is the Name; Creator of All; Fearless; Without Rancour; Timeless Form; Beyond Incarnation...' sorry teacher, 'Self-Existent'...sorry Swami; 'Revealed through Divine Grace.' Isn't that terrific?! But what really floats my boat, is this message in the Bible; this is Ephesians 4:11—"

She reads: "'And He gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ, so that we may no longer be infants, tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery, from their cunning in the interests of deceitful scheming. Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into Him who is the head, Christ.' Isn't that terrific? I know it's been a real saving grace for a lot of my friends. I know by reading that, Christ doesn't want anybody believing in cults and killing themselves. It's one thing to be

bad yourself, but it's a real sin to drag other people down with you." She felicitates, "That's it. I hope everybody watches to see *Lots of Promise* after he wins the Kentucky Derby."

The Reverend Mark Anthony, smiling, says kindly, "Thanks Guru. You're a real lifesaver."

CHURCHES: CHAPTER 5

The Reverend Mark Anthony nods, and cradles his hands, inviting Jairus to speak.

Jairus, in fellowship, says, "I love God. I'm a widow. My Gerard would be here with me, but he's passed on. He was Methodist, a constant source of leadership and support in the fight for equal rights in his church; a true slave of the Lord for the Protestant peoples, if there ever was one—shame, shame, shame," saying formidably, "The Good Book was central to the formation of his faith and life. Lordy, Lordy, Lordy..."

She reads faithfully: "'My eager expectation and hope is that I shall not be put to shame in any way, but that with all boldness, now as always, Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by

life or by death. For to me life is Christ, and death is gain. If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I shall choose. I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ, for that is far better. Yet that I remain in the flesh is more necessary for your benefit.'"

Jairus says fruitlessly, "People ought practice what they preach," following, "I'spect I always felt the same way 'bout the Good Book, seeing I was raised Catholic an'all." She says forthrightly, "My daddy was a proud and lovin' man. His religious roots ran deep. He didn't deny the ultimate authority of the Catholic Church, but that didn't mean he wouldn't pull out the switch none, and spank my bottom 'lest I deserved it. I best remember the time we went'a fishin' by the railroad, and I dropped the fish on d'ground—shame, shame, shame," floundering, "Daddy too, done died on me at a young age."

Jairus says fortifyingly, "That's what I like 'bout church goin' with these here folks—all the stories of what God has done. The doctor's story, or when Mr. Goldstein, like my

husband, sees The God of Scripture as One who delivered oppressed people—freedom, freedom, freedom. Catholic to me as always meant universal or worldwide. That's what I like very best 'bout this here Church of Life—the freedom of all the races, religions, colors and creeds to be one with the life of Christ. Lordy, Lordy, Lordy," saying freely, "I remember my daddy tellin' me when I was knee high to a stork, that my grand-daddy was an abolitionist and the Lord was the only man that could free the enslaved. With Him, we would never be abandoned. Daddy would say, the heart of the religion for Catholic Christians is, 'it's not only possible to know God's will, but to know God personally. The followers of Christ the Man, feast on this grace in the good works she or he performs,'" ferreting out, "Freedom, freedom, freedom, but still I feel like a slave—shame, shame, shame." Jairus, foreordained, says, "My deceased Gerard, 'fore he passed, told me I could always read the Good Book by myself—Lordy, Lordy, Lordy."

She says fearfully: "'So then my beloved, obedient as you have always been, not only when I am present but all the more now when I am absent, work out your

salvation with fear and trembling. For God is the one who, for His good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work. Do everything without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world, as you hold on to the word of life, so that my boast for the day of Christ may be that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.'" "

She says futilely, "Shame, shame, shame! I remember my daddy telling me, when they wasn't workin', how the Good Book helped to free the slaves. And my husband used to tell me when I read 'bout slavery in the Good Book, I might relate it to bein' an employee, that the lessons that freed the slaves might free me. Lordy, Lordy, Lordy, I done feel like a slave. I keep readin', but I can barely read past the end of this part—" She opens the Bible: "'Join with others in being imitators of me, brothers, and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us. For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross

of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their "shame." Their minds are occupied with earthly things.'"

Jairus says faintheartedly, "Shame, shame, shame! 'Cause now even the doctors is gone. I can't do any nursin'. I got no people. I got no patients left. All's I wanted to do was be a real-life nurse. To belong to..." The congregation collectively sighs at Jairus' apparent misfortune. She exorcises her deep-seated grief. Her guest, Miss Norma, puts her hand on the distraught woman's thigh. Jairus says foresakingly, "No, no, no! Shame, shame, shame! I wasn't that kind'a nurse. No, no, no! I'm down right shamed to call myself a nurse. Shame, shame, shame! God make me whole again. No, No! I'm not a nurse. I'm retiring for shame, shame!" Miss Norma seeks to console Jairus, but Jairus is bitterly angry and sobbing uncontrollably. Face-to-face, she says, "No! Don't talk to me. I'm so shamed. Shame. Don't touch me. Leave me be."

The Reverend Mark Anthony, entrusting Miss Norma, says, "It's okay. Let her alone. She's not alone. Let her let it out. It'll be okay." Reverend Mark Anthony

empathetically asks, "Go ahead Cally." He avows, "God loves you Jairus."

CHURCHES: CHAPTER 6

Cally too, is weak in the knees. She rises however, brokenhearted in camaraderie, saying, "God forgives you Mrs. Martin-King. We all love you. I'm Protestant myself, and I carry with you the cross you must bear. But your husband and father, alive in the spirit, will tell you: of the many crosses Protestant Christians bear, the crucified Christ represents suffering and death, but the empty, 'risen,' cross symbolizes the resurrection of Christ and the promise of salvation and eternal life. Our Christian family's prayers are with you."

Cally says self-assuredly, "I empathize with you Jairus. My husband also is Catholic. For me, my life, my world, revolves around he and my family. That's why I'm privileged to read all of you this paragraph: "'Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them. Children, obey your

parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they may not become discouraged.'"

She says, "With me today is my husband, P.J. Pope Jr. I am Mrs. Cally Pope, and these are our children." P.J. Pope Jr. is a perfect match for his wife. They look like twins. He possesses a dominant presence. Their adorable daughter is Ann; their son, P.J.

Cally sermonizes, "As a female, I'm not ashamed to say, my place is in the home. But this is how I hope I've ministered to you today. In my church, I disagree with the role women play in the ministry. In my husband's Catholic church, they too, much to my disagreement, are becoming politically 'de-gendered' and biblically incorrect. I follow my husband's and God's teachings, beliefs, and will. My husband even jokes to me, 'When he came into the world, he himself was no more than a child; it was his father who taught him how to be. And it's my job to raise him too, when he comes off acting like a child, because he himself said, "If it wasn't for his mother—where would he be?"'" Cally goes to comfort Jairus. She places her hands on Jairus' shoulders.

Jairus, relieved, opens up. "I didn't feel like a minority, weak or powerless. Often times it's the woman that must serve to help carry the man, while the man carries the cross."

Cally, addressing the church, says, soft-heartedly, "If I may..." she says to Jairus, "Mrs. Martin-King, the children don't have a grandmother, we'd like to adopt you to be Ann and little P.J.'s grandma." She says to her husband, "P.J.?"

P.J. Jr. says to his wife, "By all means, Honey." He asks, "Jairus?"

Jairus says fosteringly, "Bless your heart, Son."

Mark Anthony weeps, as are many at the sight of the union. He becomes markedly less serious, "Before I lose it again. Chief..."

CHURCHES: CHAPTER 7

Chief Spirit of Life rises from his seat near the aisle. "'For the Lord Himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first...4:16.'"

He says soberly, "My name is Spirit of Life. I am an alcoholic," sincerely saying, "Truth, no lie; I believe I was as good as dead. The sacred Spirit of Christianity saved my life. When I drank, I smoked. I was addicted not only to strong spirits, but tobacco nicotine. The drinking and smoking only tempted me with greater evil. Truth, no lie, I stepped into a dozen programs, but Christianity freed me from the dark side. Believing all things are interconnected, descended from the Great and Holy Mystery—I find it no accident, I was sworn my post as Tribal Leader, and casino Executive Officer, the very day I stopped. I've been 'off the wagon,' as people say, since."

Applause interrupts the speech. The Reverend Mark Anthony intervenes. He confides, "God bless you, Chief. I don't want to say I was an alcoholic too—but I haven't had a drink in nine years, one month and seven days," jokes Pastor Mark. He marches on. "The Chief doesn't have two minutes to rub together, but he is also the head volunteer at the 'ARC in the Park.' I'm sorry, go ahead Chief..."

The Chief says sagaciously, "I take stand against all

murderous loss of life, from the youngest life to the eldest life. Look at the plant family, a tree; sever the root, and the oldest living branch will soon be dismembered. In the nation, we disregard the elderly. But in the Native American nation, the elders of my people are most sacred. By their nature, they are nearer to the heavenly sky world. That is why men of medicine are to heal—not release to death. That is a hypocritical oath."

The Chief's elderly, decrepit, alcoholic, Native American father: 'Prism of Promise in the Sky,' whispers to him. The Chief signifies, "Thank you, Father"; saying, "My father, Prism of Promise in the Sky, and I welcome you to ceremony; to give testimony and sing traditional songs as a sacrament for healing and spiritual well-being. Come, I have acreage I call Handsome Lake. Come and celebrate your individual freedom as Jairus did in her trance. Come and I will show you how to love and worship Grandmother Earth; how to preserve her and her wildlife for her own survival."

The Chief says soulfully, "We also have a religion which was given to our ancestors and has been handed down to us their

children. We worship in that way. It teaches us to be thankful for all the favors we receive, to love each other and to be united. For my people, God the Great and Holy Mystery, religious traditions, and ceremonies like these, we call: The Sacred Life-Ways. These ways of living maintain a balance with the spiritual world and all of creation. Our Sacred Life-Ways are great religious ceremonies. We pray as a means of direct communication with God the Great and Holy Mystery. We fast, dance, chant and tell stories to restore harmony and balance into the lives of the people. At the core of Grandmother Earth, and the heart of the Sacred Life-Ways, are both the words: sacred, life. That is truth, no lie. Come. Come all. Come Sunday, the casino is closed."

Reading the Bible, he says: "'For all of you are children of the light and children of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay alert and sober. Those who sleep go to sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night.'" He takes his seat.

The Reverend Mark Anthony says consentingly, "Thank you Chief for the invite. We accept.

And thank you for bringing your father, who I understand hiked half the country from Sangre DeCristo just to be with us." The crowd applauds the Herculean effort.

CHURCHES: CHAPTER 8

Gabe rises. He is a thirty or thirty-five-year-old Irishman with reddish-brown hair. He looks just as he did at Aqueduct: a pleasing in appearance, warm-faced, sturdy guy. His male guest is a hard-core, gum-chewing, Nazi-like cop.

"How are you today? I'm Officer, no; I'm, um, Gabe St. Patrick. I'm Episcopalian. Ah, the, um, the Episcopal Church is a self-governing church of the Anglican Communion. Our Church upholds the laws of the Catholic and Apostolic faith, based on the creeds and Scriptures, interpreted in the light of Christian tradition, scholarship, and reason." He enlists, "By baptism, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a person is made one with Christ, and received into the Church. In the celebration of Holy Communion, in this offering of prayer and praise, are recalled

the life, death and Resurrection of Christ, through the proclamation of the Word and celebration of the Sacrament."

Gabe enjoins, "I'm of the opinion there is no longer reason to carry out other death penalties. I'm an officer of the law, a cop. But because of my beliefs, as a person first, cop second, my hands are gladly tied. I must oppose capital punishment."

He enforces, "Ah, the, um, the biblical creed I follow, is from the Second Letter, last chapter, to the Thessalonians. It talks about the conduct of disorderly people, not the indigent per se, but those who are more or less freeloaders because the devil keeps them from being productive during their self-destruction. It, ah, it, um, talks about how even though churches have the right to remain fed by the fruits of their labors, ministries work better when they work out of love, and love for those outside the ministry, like the homeless."

Gabe elicits, "At the station I work out of, I have a sign posted on my locker I wish the other cops would read and respect, then adhere to, it goes:

'Give the homeless work, there is no vagrancy. Give the homeless money, there is no debtor's prison. Give the homeless clothing, there is no indecent exposure. Give the homeless shelter, there is no trespassing. Give the homeless food, there is no shoplifting. But always give a godly word, if you want'a book'em—throw the Good Book at em'."

He evokes, "Also, I have the right to remain silent, but the words I live by are a sort of policeman's guiding oath. A reformed cop at St. Matthew's heard this. Legend has it; it was

inspired by St. Michael, the patron saint of policeman. To the best of my knowledge, there are only two kinds of cops: the so-called good cops and the bad cops—as personified by the way we treat or mistreat the homeless. So here it goes:

'The good cops—are those who possess strength of character and enforce a moral code of ethics whereby human rights rule; and the belief in the power of the One God, means protecting and serving like the Son of God might if He were a peace officer. The bad cops—who use their job and limited authority to cover their weaknesses in character; corrupt themselves by

enforcing a code of ethics whereby constitutional civil rights are primary to human rights, and misuse human power protecting and serving their own self-interests: to think and act as if we were some kind of a god, when all we are is an officer of the law.'"

Gabe echoes, "I, Officer St. Patrick, when I go home tonight, must look in the mirror and ask myself, 'What kind of cop am I?' That's it. Have a nice day."

The Reverend Mark Anthony warrants, "Thank you, Officer St. Patrick."

CHURCHES: CHAPTER 9

Before Gabe can be seated, J. Bartholomew Gautama IV is up and prepared to speak. He is pale-

skinned, with brown hair. He is outfitted like a highly sponsored pro golfer; casually elegant. He is his usual classy and powerful self.

The natty one says, "Good evening. May I present myself? I am J. Bartholomew Gautama IV, Chairman of the Board of this areas nuclear power plant."

The nonviolent one says, "By the conclusion of the week, I will be forty-five years of age. By the close of business Thursday, I will resign my position at the plant, and retire. I will begin two new ventures. The first, mind you, will be the continued research and development of my calling on Earth: harnessing the use of solar energy. At least with solar power, when the lights go out—half the planet won't be left in the dark—hopefully we'll all be in Heaven, praise the Son of God.

"My second, mind you, will be my calling in Heaven: my work as a philanthropist traveling the country in my only luxury, my vintage Lotus. Mind you, the rich man who lives modestly will never be poor. I will be distributing the one hundred million dollars worth of trust funds from my foundation."

The nomadic one says, "I tell you this, not to enhance my own status, but to pay homage to the man the Holy One enlightened as the world's, the world mind you, the world's first billionaire: John David Rockefeller. John D. Rockefeller, whose work in the energy field as founder of Standard Oil, netted him worth in excess of one billion dollars; who once remarked, in indebtedness to his Lord, 'God gave me my money.' A man, who felt every rock and flower, and plant, was a manifestation of the divine; mind you, every rock and flower. Who, alone, asleep on his death bed, at a tender age of just over fifty, death bed mind you, hated by man, suffering from physical disease and mental breakdown was visited by an angel of God."

The noteworthy one says, "Keeping in mind suffering is universal, caused by ignorance; and ignorance can be overcome by the right ways. Mr. Rockefeller was told by the Divine, to give to the poor and learn how to live. Mind you, the fortune in life is not money: it's to be alive. J.D. Rockefeller, an Awakened One, awoke the next day to spend more than forty-five years doing just that; living to give to the poor. So too, mind you, did his only

son, J.D. Rockefeller II; a man born with it in his blood, mind you, to give to the poor. It has been said, the only difference between the rich and the poor—is the rich find out first—money can't buy you love. That leads me, not by coincidence, to the divine words in the First Letter to Timothy, chapter six. Mind you, when I first ventured to open the Bible, this is the page I randomly opened."

The newborn one reads: "'Tell the rich in the present age not to be proud and not to rely on so uncertain a thing as wealth but rather on God, who richly provides us with all things for our enjoyment. Tell them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, ready to share, thus accumulating as treasure a good foundation for the future, so as to win the life that is true life.'"

The Nepalese one says, "I too, am in agreement. My religious teaching, Buddhism, believes in the dignity and worth of each living being, in respect and compassion for all life and in the need for each person to find their own path to enlightenment and to an understanding of the nature of life. Keep in mind, the right ways of Buddhism's Noble

Eightfold Path: Right Understanding. Right Thought. Speech. Conduct. Livelihood. Effort. Right Mindfulness. Right Concentration."

The noble one says, "Keep in mind, I find it no less than divine, that the circumstances of Rockefeller's life, my life, and that of Buddha, are so strikingly similar—as if they were predestined. The wheel of truth, like life, is always in motion. As I travel, I will look for and keep you in mind. Mind you, life is not about one of many religions—life is one way to live. I must go. Good evening." The nabob taps the leg of the twenty-nine-year-old, male, junior executive that was his guest. As he promptly exits for the rear, he places his hand on the shoulder of the unseen listener in the last row; the listener's head bowed in prayerful concealment.

The Reverend Mark Anthony advises, "Remember, J. Bartholomew, anyone along your path who tells you your life's a journey not a destination—is lost. They don't know where in Hell they're going. God bless you.... Swami Mahabharata..."

CHURCHES: CHAPTER 10

The Swami is as personable as he was at the racetrack. He tells Reverend Mark Anthony, "I wish to introduce myself." He tells the church, "I am Swami Oscar Mahabharata. Please call me O.M., all my friends do." He tells them, "I, I'm sorry, we are movie producers. This is my friend Yogi." He tags, "Yogi..."

Yogi is a tiny man with a squeaky voice. He speaks the only words in English he knows. He tells the members, "Yogi says, make it happen."

The Reverend Mark Anthony informally asks, "Mr. Mahabharata, O.M., I've always been interested in things like reincarnation and déjà vu. I didn't know, but I just saw on a calendar, that's a Hindu thing isn't it?"

He tells Reverend Mark Anthony, "You are correct. In Hinduism, we believe through reincarnation or repeated births, the soul tries to realize its oneness with God.

He tells the church, "We believe in the Hindu teaching, there is one ultimate reality behind the universe, which is called Brahman, God. We believe this reality is manifested in

different symbols and levels of God in the universe, on Earth, and the inner soul of man. The symbolic worship should not replace God, but again, as with other religions, is merely human thought that man utilizes to rationalize, imagine, and envision a belief and a faith in the One God that is incomprehensible to the human mind. This should be wholly acceptable since the spirit and soul are attainable through the reincarnate beliefs that we are the creation of Almighty God, and created in His own image—a devoutly Old Testament belief. That is why, I, we two, as my dear friend Helen Theotokos, do not believe in abortion. The common bond is; our God is a God of life.

"Before the teacher asks—" He tells them, "Our problem, no, my difficulty, when I came here, is: I must not think of myself as an icon. I must tell myself; the stories we select to produce are divine. I need to remember: Heaven-sent. I, we, are not to be idolized. Everybody has a story; and a great, incarnate story of life will never die. God, He is the most creative mind in Hollywood." He tells the members, "I remind myself; to live by the Hindu belief that man attains peace who lives devoid of longing,

freed from all desires and without the feeling of 'I' and 'mine.'

"Before the teacher must ask again—" He tacks on, "Here is a favorite Book passage. This is Paul's Second Letter to Timothy: 'All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work.' That is all. Good day." Swami O.M. sits after exchanging a complex handshake with Mlaykiki Hâyat-Alláh.

CHURCHES: CHAPTER 11

"I'm Mlaykiki Hâyat-Alláh. I grew up in a town outside of Orlando, Florida," expressing, "I recall as a child, being fascinated by the technological space exploration work being done at NASA." He explains, "That's when I knew I wanted to work with computers. Now I'm currently employed as video game computer programmer and operator. My company makes combat and violence-oriented games and software."

He entertains a thought. "I'm no genius, but let me download some logic on you, on the

greatness and meaning of life, technically speaking."

He educates on the thought. "Now, think of the inventive miracle of the computer. The computer is man-made. God, in His infinite wisdom, could not invent a computer. Now think, in the less than fifty years, how the computer has grown from the development of its invention. Still, a computer cannot believe, love, or have life. Answer me, which is greater—the computer or the man who invented it?

"Now, think of the creative miracle of a lake. A lake can be man-made, if man digs the cup that is the earth. But a God-made lake was created with fish. Can man create a fish? Can man create water? Or soil? Artificial dirt, someday maybe. But how does man create water? Now, lakes and oceans, and bodies of water—how have they changed in millions of years? Still, a lake cannot believe or love. Answer me, which is greater—a man-made lake or a God-made lake?

"Now, think of the creative, inventive, miracle of man. God made man from the soil of the earth. In His infinite wisdom, God even made man alike. We call them twins. Can man make man from the ground up? Now, in those

thousands of years, man has not changed. He has a mind, a heart, and a soul. He thinks, breathes, and believes. Still, to this day, only man can believe, and love, and have life. Answer me, which is greater: the man or the God who made him?"

He enlightens them on the thought. "Man made the computer. Man even made a lake. And man will try to make a man. But only God—first created, invented, and made the man. You don't need to be a genius to know man is made of life. The point is: *life* makes the *life* in the man, greater than the man himself—and God the greatest."

Mlaykiki says esoterically, "Personally speaking, my love of the Word of the Lord began at work one day, when a co-worker called me a 'Cretan.' I never knew this expression was in the Bible. I know it doesn't really constitute much today, people are people wherever they're from and evil is everywhere," explaining, "but, I was surprised to learn how many commonplace names, terms, phrases and words are derived from the Bible. Technologically oriented, it was the first bit of literature I'd browsed through, whereby, I was held captive by the subtext, and spiritual true meaning of

randomly selected phraseologies. From that point, I've slaved to read the Bible daily. It's better than a morning cup of coffee. I focus on the points in one of Paul's letters in particular." He expresses, "I've been so desensitized by the violence in my work and personal life. Even my hobby of communicating on the Internet was becoming an overindulged, violent, sexual obsession. The New Testament, for me, has served to delete my violent nature." Mlaykiki Hâyat-Allâh clears his throat. "'For the grace of God has appeared, saving all and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age.'"

Mlaykiki says ecclesiastically, "I don't wish to renounce my Islamic upbringing. I just deplore all forms of violence and disrespect for life," expressing, "As a Muslim, and now a Christian, I've worshiped the identical One God, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. And I believe in the covenant with the children of Adam, that throughout history, prophets have been sent to every country to guide humanity. I have respect for the Islamic duty to build a just

social order and the invitation for all humanity to submit to one Lord and become one family." He explains, "But my violent nature, respect for life, and the level of forgiveness and mercy I need to achieve for a personal peace—I've located by adapting to Christianity. I like to focus on the good in people of all faiths rather than be zealous as some Christians might be. I love my brothers and sisters of Islam. Christ was sent here to bring us closer to God so the human heart and mind could realize what was beyond people's faith and belief at the time. I'm certain Christ would love Muhammad for wanting to bring mankind to the Father. I'm hopeful Muhammad would've felt the same about Christ."

He says entertainingly, "Personally speaking, I love believing in a Son of God." He says educationally, "Problematically, the question for any or all religious peoples is: Are you willing to lie down and die—or must you fight back, even if it means taking a life?" He says enlighteningly, "Life's solution for me: is to die—never having taken a life." He sits. His female, analyst, guest is wearing sunglasses and her hair in

a bun. She is uptight and fearful. She analyzes his words.

CHURCHES: CHAPTER 12

Baháulláh "Blood" Christopher the eighteen-year-old, bald, black, gang leader—rises. Onesimus, his guest, is fifteen-years-old and is also black. Onesimus is under house arrest. He has a tracking device mounted to his ankle. Blood tells Reverend Mark Anthony, "'Yo, what's up? You said the goal of this church was for everyone to bring just one brother or sister and the world would be saved. You know?"

He tells the church, "This is my main man Onesimus, he's out on behalf of all my blood brothers, all the bloods kickin' it in the gangs. You know what I'm sayin'?" He tells them, "Not all the brothers can shoot the rock. For those that don't play B-ball, we need outreach programs and ministries like these. You know?"

He says, tipping off, "So what's up? I'm the Baháulláh "Blood" Christopher you been readin' 'bout in the papers. I'm against the death penalty for obvious reasons, 'cause even those

with a bad rap get busted. You know what I'm sayin'?"

He tells the congregation, "'Yo, if the government, politicians, cops and voters start cappin' or smokin', shootin' people up—the 'bloods' on the street gonna win that war baby. Cappin' 'bloods' out there for the gang bangers ain't no big thing. But livin' that life in the joint to you an old man, that's gotta' sting baby. You make that prison on the inside, like the prison on the outside world, on the streets—criminals won't know the crime when they're doin' the time. You know what I'm saying? We gots to have peace in the world. You know?"

He tells Reverend Mark Anthony, "When I was in the joint, one of the 'bloods' dropped this Bahá'í faith on me. He said, 'The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens.' You know what I'm sayin'?"

He tells the church, "This Bahá'í faith is a world religion whose purpose is the unity of mankind and world peace. You know? The brothers were usin' it on the inside to maintain unity and peace. You know what I'm sayin'? The principles were the same: equality of the brothers and sisters, education, harmony

between science and religion, the elimination of all prejudice...You know?...the recognition of the divine origin and the unity of all the major religions of the world and the recognition of each person's right to independent investigation of truth. You know what I'm sayin'?"

He tells them, "Listen up, the brother dropped this word; 'This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Let him that seeketh, attain it.' You know this faith is talkin' 'bout spiritual solutions to economic problems with elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty. This was a brother who was stripped of his wealth, tortured, beaten and imprisoned, poisoned three times for setting forth a plan to establish a new world civilization based on peace and justice. You know what I'm sayin'?"

He tells the congregation, "Word up, I urge you on behalf of my child Onesimus whose father I have become in my imprisonment," talking it up, he reads the Bible, addressing the words in regard to Onesimus: "Verse 11, of Paul's letter of Philemon: '...who was once useless to you but is now useful to both you and me. I am

sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. I should have liked to retain him for myself, so that he might serve me on your behalf in my imprisonment for the gospel, but I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that the good you do might not be forced but voluntary. Perhaps this is why he was away from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a brother, beloved especially to me, but even more so to you, as a man and in the Lord. So if you regard me as a partner, welcome him as you would me. And if he has done you any injustice or owes you anything, charge it to me. I, Paul, write this in my own hand: I will pay. May I not tell you that you owe me your very self. Yes, brother, may I profit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.' Amen. You know what I'm sayin'?!" Enthusiastically trolling, "Amen, Amen, brothers and sisters!! God is cool. You know?! Amen. Amen. Amen!!" He continues to speak with unabashed enthusiasm over the energetically contagious, uproarious crowd.

The Reverend Mark Anthony stops in his tracks. "You know what your problem is Baháulláh?" Mark answers himself satirically;

"You need to cheer up." He comedically proceeds. "God bless you, 'Brother.'"

CHURCHES: CHAPTER 13

Reverend Mark was prepared introduce...however, a hand is raised. "Yes, Sir. What can we; I, do for you?"

The man stands. "How do you do?" The man, in a variety of both suburban and urban greetings and gestures, greets and handshakes many seated near him.

The man is a successful-looking, handsome, athletic, 54-year-old with salt and pepper short hair. He wears a black and white suit and a rainbow tie. His four-person entourage or family of guests wears identically colored-schemed uniformed clothing. One person is African; the second is Asian; the third is Indian and the fourth is Latin.

Reverend Mark replies, "I'm; we're blessed." Mark and the man appear to have a personal relationship.

"Deal; we are in agreement. I know I am not one of the original twelve disciples; but the Bible records, after the suicidal death of Judas; that another

disciple, from a choice of two, was added to the original dozen; making it basically, thirteen, a baker's dozen."

Reverend Mark: "True."

"Deal; we agree. Reverend, ladies and gentleman; I am just visiting; in fact, I was on a recruiting trip of my own. It was 14-years ago I went on my mission. Now, 14-years later, I find myself adding this story to my story."

Reverend Mark: "Maybe you unknowingly or unwittingly, or even satanically, forgot or failed to add something."

"Deal; agree. May I introduce myself; I am Coach Smith, Bill Smith. My staff calls me 'Sandy' or 'Smitty'; I am originally from Sandy, Utah. My players and team call me, 'Sir' or 'Coach.' I live in Salt Lake City and just completed recruiting trips to LA 'The City of Angels'; the OC; NYC the 'New Babylon'; Las Vegas 'Sin City,' the 'New Sodom and Gomorrah'; and now the Island; all in this 'New Unholy Roman Empire.'"

Reverend Mark: "Coach..."

"I am the AD, head ball coach, and manager at MSI: Mormon State Institute."

"Yes, Sir..."

"We, Mormons, are a religious and cultural group related to

Mormonism, the principal branch of the Latter Day Saints, or LDS, which began with Joseph Smith in upstate, New York.

"We, Mormons, self-identify as Christian though some of our beliefs differ from mainstream Christianity. We, Mormons, believe in the Bible, as well as the *Book of Mormon*. We believe that all people are spirit-children of God. We, Mormons, believe that returning to God requires following the example of Christ and accepting his atonement through ordinances such as baptism. We believe that Christ's church was restored through Joseph Smith and is guided by living prophets and apostles. Central to Mormon faith is the belief that God speaks to his children and answers their prayers."

Reverend Mark theorizes, "Coach Smith, to me, personally, Mormonism is like the new Judaism; only they believe in the Christ. It's almost like this new 'Prosperity Gospel'; where everything is prosperous, productive and positive. In my enlightenment, education and life experience Mormons can be too materialistic and wealthy; while Christ was homeless and penniless; but Adam, Abraham, Job, David, Solomon, even John, Peter, and

maybe even Paul had made for a wealthy club; so one never knows."

"We are in agreement. It's up to Heavenly Father. In my career or business; sports and entertainment are synonymous. My players or I can earn letters; and oddly, I can even be prophetic and predictive; and I can work or deal with acronyms like ESP, NFL and PSI. Do you know that math is a language of God's?" It's been said, 'numbers never lie.'" But spiritually and strategically, there's only a ten-percent chance I will be a success because the networking in both businesses is fraternally Jewish, or even minority and female biased; and the Mormon in me has a better chance to succeed because of my business background than does the Christian in me who spends most of his time, energy and talents talking to God and preaching football or sports."

Reverend Mark reports, "I love sports. To me, it's a game of math and men. And as noted, math is God's language."

"We agree. In Jewish culture the number seven is blessed, or as Americans would say, 'Lucky.'"

"Don't believe in 'luck.'"

"Agree."

"Don't even believe in 'good luck.'"

"Deal; we are in agreement."

"Would rather say, 'God Bless.'"

"Deal; we agree."

"We all know '10': 'The Ten Commandments.' Forty: Noah and it rained for 40-days and nights. Moses 40-years in the desert; Christ, 40-days and nights He was tempted by the devil; and women, a woman's gestation period is 40-weeks or 9-months. Turn nine upside down and we all know, 'the Devil's number' of 6-6-6."

"Deal; agree."

"Coach Smith, I imagine you have a Bible and the *Book of Mormon*; with all due respect, would you please read?"

"We..." Smith refers to the four in his entourage or family with him, "We agree to share four verses all from First Timothy, chapter 6, NIV."

He reads, "Verses 1+2: 'All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. Those who have believing masters should not show them disrespect just because they are fellow believers. Instead, they should serve them even better because their masters are dear to them as fellow believers and are

devoted to the welfare of their slaves.'"

The four in his entourage nod in agreement.

He reads, "The chapter: False Teachers and the Love of Money, verses 6-10: 'But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.'"

The four in his entourage nod in agreement.

He reads, "Verses 11+12: 'But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.'"

The four in his entourage nod in agreement.

He reads, "Verses 20+21: 'Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith. Grace be with you all.'"

The four in his entourage nod in agreement.

Reverend Mark offers, "Coach, billions watch sports and show business; and billions and billionaires are invested in sports; that just about covers the world?"

"We are in agreement."

"That's why you're the best."

"I am at MSI now, but one day, I hope and pray; I am an owner, co-owner, Managing General Partner, coach, or even strategist or analyst for a team in LA, 'The City of Angels.' They could be called 'The Archangels'; because of all the sports or animal team nicknames; that is the most powerful of all the sports; more powerful than the California Angels or the Jersey Devils. One could even have prophetically predicted after God sent a hurricane; the Saints would win the Super Bowl and one day, LA; 'The Big One.'"

"Coach Smith, do Mormons believe in angels?"

"The Angel Moroni is, in Mormonism, an angel that visited Joseph Smith. The angel was the guardian of the golden plates, which Latter Day Saints believe were the source material for the *Book of Mormon*."

"I could make a joke, here, saying Angel Moroni is the Italian baker who cooked-up something; but I know religion is no joke. The Lord God didn't make jokes in the Bible..."

"We agree."

"...Salvation is serious business."

"Agree."

"Coach, final words..."

"The team that wins is the team that wants to win."

"Thanks, Coach."

"Ps. No game means more than 'the game of life.' Go Archangels!"

Reverend Mark: "Peace and God bless you."

CHURCHES: CHAPTER 14

A vacant chair is on The Reverend Mark Anthony's left. Designed symbolically, in a triangle, Ernie is seated acutely

to Reverend Mark Anthony's right. The Reverend Mark Anthony lays Ernie out, saying, "If Christ is seated at the right hand of The Father—then Mr. Ernie Goldstein is our right-hand man."

Ernie takes a microphone and addresses the masses. He tells Reverend Mark Anthony, "What can I say? I study the Torah, Scripture, and the Talmud. But unlike the tradition, wisdom, and law, I read the New Testament!... I just love the Universal Church!..."

"This is the letter to the Hebrews." The Talmudist reads: "'In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, He spoke to us through a Son, whom He made heir of all things and through whom He created the universe...'" The audience applauds.

He tells the church: "'...Who is the refulgence of His glory, the very imprint of His being, and who sustains all things by His mighty Word. When He had accomplished purification from sins, He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, as far superior to the angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.'"

He tells them, "What can I say? I presently practice my first love, Judaism, as I said. Although, I often quip with the Pastor, I'm still a practicing Jew, because I'm hoping to get it perfect.... What else? I just love angels! 'For to which of the angels did God ever say: "You are my Son; this day I have begotten You?" And again, when He leads the first born into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Of the angels, He says: "He makes His angels winds and His ministers a fiery flame." But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent to serve, for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?'"

The transfuser reads:
"Therefore, we must attend all the more to what we have so that we may not be carried away. For if the word announced through angels proved firm, and every transgression and disobedience received its just recompense, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? Announced originally through the Lord, it was confirmed for us by those who had heard. God added His testimony by signs, wonders,

various acts of power, and distribution of the gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His will. For it was not to angels that He subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. Instead, someone has testified somewhere: "What is man that you are mindful of Him, or the Son of Man that you care for Him? You made Him for a little while lower than the angels; You crowned Him with glory and honor, subjecting all things under His feet." In "subjecting" all things, He left nothing not "subject to Him." Yet at present we do not see "all things subject to Him..."

He tells the group, "What can I say? I once told a teacher in temple, 'I love the Son of God.' And he said words I'll never forget, 'Without a Jew like me, there would be no Christianity.' I just love angels! I love life!..." "According to the law almost everything is purified by blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Therefore, it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified by these rites, but the heavenly things themselves by better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands, a copy of the true one, but heaven itself,

that He might now appear before God on our behalf. Not that He might offer Himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters each year into the sanctuary with blood that is not his own; if that were so, He would have had to suffer repeatedly from the foundation of the world. But now once for all He has appeared at the end of the ages to take away sin by His sacrifice. Just as it is appointed that human beings die once, and after this judgment, so also Christ, offered once to take away the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to take away sin but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await Him.'"

He tells Reverend Mark Anthony, "What can I say? Judaism is a civilization emphasizing the peoplehood of all its adherents, based on the belief in one God, coveted with the land of Israel promised by God from the time of the patriarchs.... What else? I just love life! I love God!

"`Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of them, it can never make perfect those who come to worship by the same sacrifices that have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, once cleansed, would no longer have had any consciousness of

sins? But in those sacrifices there is only a yearly remembrance of sins, for it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats take away sins. For this reason, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You prepared for Me; holocausts and sin offerings You took no delight in." Then I said, "As is written of Me in the scroll, behold, I come to do Your will, O God." ...Every priest stands daily at his ministry, offering frequently those same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But this One offered one sacrifice for sins, and took His seat forever at the right hand of God; now He waits until His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying: "This is the covenant I will establish with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them upon their minds," He also says: "Their sins and their evil doing I will remember no more." Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer offering for sin.'"

He tells the church, "What can I say? My obligation to God is carried out through the observance of *mitzvoth*, the Commandments or Divine expectations that are both of a ritual nature, and an ethical nature.... I just love God! 'Consider how He endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary or lose heart. In your struggle against sin you have not resisted to the point of shedding blood. You have also forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as sons: "My son, do not disdain the discipline of the LORD or lose heart when reproved by Him; for whom the LORD loves, He disciplines; He scourges every son He acknowledges." Endure your trials as "discipline"; God treats you as sons. For what "son" is there whom his father does not discipline?'"

He tells them, "What can I say? God does not work the way we work. Human nature and mortal weakness control our being. To disciple ourselves with God, we need to trust in the way He disciplines us for our own well being, even in ways most of us fail to understand. Like the father who removes his child's hand from a flaming oven without

explaining before doing so, if the father reasoned then reacted, the child would burn. React first, then let the child listen as the father explains why it was done for the child's own good.... What else? I just love angels! I love life! I love God!

"'Besides this, we have had our earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not submit all the more to the Father of spirits and live? They disciplined us for a short time as seemed right to them, but He does so for our benefit, in order that we may share His holiness. At the time, all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain, yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it.'"

The listener at the utmost rear of the congregation shows their attentiveness.

The trainman continues from memory: "'So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees. Make straight paths for your feet, that what is lame may not be dislocated but healed.'"

The Reverend Mark Anthony, the empty chair, Ernie, the original members and the audience all vicariously unite.

Ernie tells the group, "What can I say? I'm not certain that

I'm a Messianic Jew; I just love the Universal Church of Angels, Life and God!"

The theologian reads: "'Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels. Be mindful of prisoners as if sharing their imprisonment, and of the ill-treated as of yourselves, for you also are in the body. Let marriage be honored among all and the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge the immoral and adulterers. Let your life be free from love of money but be content with what you have, for He has said, "I will never forsake you or abandon you." Thus we may say with confidence: "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith...Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever!"

"My people, God love them; have waited thousands of years for the Messiah. I'm ready to celebrate right now! Why wait any longer? I read the New Testament and God's Chosen One has arrived!...*How many times do people wait for the train only to*

miss it? It's not that it hasn't come yet—it's that we didn't know it when it passed by!"

Ernie receives his warranted applause.

TESTAMENT

The Reverend Mark Anthony acknowledges Ernie before taking over the lectern. The Reverend Mark Anthony enlightens them. "I love sports, so sport inspires me. I love movies, so a movie inspires me. I am a person, so you people inspire me!"

Mark Anthony, in oneness, reveals, "My words to live by are from the disciple Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians: 'I must boast; not that it is profitable, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know someone in Christ who, fourteen years ago [whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows], was caught up to the third heaven. And I know that this person [whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows] was caught up into Paradise and heard ineffable things, which no one may utter. About this person I will boast, but about myself I will not

boast, except about my weaknesses. Although if I should wish to boast, I would not be foolish, for I would be telling the truth. But I refrain, so that no one may think more of me than what he sees in me or hears from me because of the abundance of the revelations. Therefore, that I might not become too elated, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan, to beat me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.'" He confesses, "*I am a Roman Catholic Christian and addiction is against my religion!*" He discloses, "My body is full of life! My mind is free to dream, free to dream of life—that's what dreams are made of! My soul is alive! My Lord and my mother loved me to death—I am alive with life!"

The Reverend Mark Anthony contests, "Because of life,

I am against abortion, suicide and the death penalty. Do you know: There are as many movie theaters that you do see, as there are abortion clinics that you don't see? Think about that every time you go to see a movie.... Do you know: My life is like a roller coaster? The highest I go, is the lowest I go—up and down, high and low. And once my life has reached its peak—then I will die. But I will not commit suicide. I'm telling you God's honest truth—if you're escorted by God's angels, then it's not a suicide.... Do you know: It's worse in God's eyes when you say, 'He killed first, so it's okay for me to kill.' He's an evil criminal; you're supposed to be good and just. It's like the two players who get into a fight during a football game. God, the referee, always sees the second guy who retaliates, and he's the one who gets the penalty." He tackles the point. "Don't trade evil for evil—trade evil for good."

Mark Anthony contends, "Remember, this church has one divine plan: follow the religion you were born into believing, and follow Christ. Share your religion with Christianity. You don't need to give up your religion to believe in Christ. If

you believe in both your religion and Christ—Christ believes in your religion and you. Every religion on Earth was created by a person—and Christ loves all people. If you believe in Christ—Christ believes in you,” saying circumspectively, “As I said earlier, the only religion—is the one you believe in. But that doesn’t mean I can’t ask you to adopt another religion.”

He shares with them, “Imagine a father and his family; he has one child of his own, and he later adopts a son. Both children will not be the same. They may have been born with different inherent beliefs. But as they grow, the two learn to understand one another’s teachings and beliefs. But all the while, what holds the family together—is the love the father feels for the both of them.”

The Reverend Mark Anthony prophetically tells them, “I’ll play my part, but this ministry is like a great movie—it depends on good word of mouth...so spread the Word.... No one else is, but try to act like Christ. It’s time for, as Christ said; action to speak louder than words—I have spoken enough.... For when I speak, and I sense greatness in something I’ve said—I sense the

Word of God. For I don’t believe, I can even imagine saying such a thing. I don’t believe I have it in me. At best, I can only lay claim to having been there—when God revealed his greatness to me!”

The seated congregation cheers, waiting to explode. From the vantage point of the last row listener, mud-stained Bible in his hands, the Reverend Mark Anthony concludes. “God bless you! Give yourselves a hand!”

The last row listener stands, giving himself a rousing standing ovation. The loud and long clapping actually makes a scene. The congregation grows silent. It’s Michael, standing alone. “I’m sorry people. I love you.”

The Reverend Mark Anthony, himself, wonders about Michael’s eccentric behavior. “Mr. Roman?”

Michael steps into the aisle, his briefcase in his seat. “I’m giving myself a standing ovation...” He praises, “God loves me! My name is Michael—and I love God!!” He proceeds forward, cradling his briefcase. His appearance epitomizes that of an itinerant homeless person.

The entire congregation explodes in ovation—never knowing it was Michael who financed the church revival—they’re just joyful he’s found God. The band plays

the theme music. The service has ended.

The Reverend Mark Anthony sings out, "I love you!! God bless you!!!"

Michael is hoisted through the swarming crowd. The Reverend Mark Anthony jumps down from the stage and greets him in a huge hug. Like a Super Bowl celebration, the duo is mobbed. The silver briefcase is hoisted like a trophy. The men appear spiritually and visually as one.

D A Y N I N E

SALVATION

GOOD FRIDAY - APRIL 21, 2000

8:01 A.M. E.S.T.

Spinning and spinning unceasingly, silver bladed propellers shine like the silver briefcase Michael holds close to his heart. He enters the security checkpoint inside John F. Kennedy Memorial Airport, New York.

A tall, male, Centurion Company security guard checks baggage onto the x-ray conveyer belt. The other security checkers cruelly leer at an indigent Michael. Michael protectively sets the case on the belt. He proceeds to set off the alarm walking beneath the metal detector. A disrespectful, mean guard commands Michael, "Empty your pockets." Michael pulls out the lone item in his pockets. His

hand releases the metal object. It clangs into the tray. Michael holds open his empty hands; his pants pocket lining pulled out like rabbit ears. The guard asks, "That's it?" He is shocked to see this is all Michael owns. He tells Michael, "Pass through again." Michael sets off the alarm again. The guard prods and fleeces Michael with the detector wand. The device sounds when waved over Michael's chest. "Your shirt..."

Michael undoes a middle shirt button. He's sporting his silver medal. He speaks meekly. "That's the last time I fired a weapon at something I wasn't trying to kill."

"Move out."

Michael picks up the object he dropped in the tray. He turns to the conveyer belt. The tall Centurion security guard is concerned over the contents of the briefcase. Upon a quick inspection, that guard's demeanor changes from caution to comfort and confidence. "Wow! You must be a true believer?"

"I am."

The Centurion guard considerately asks, "Will you please say a prayer and help my brother be healed?"

Michael nods yes, saying, "A person is never so touched, as when they're asked to pray for someone. Keep the faith. Peace." With the words, not even a touch, the guard is contented.

Michael walks away under the watchful eye of someone.

From God's Heaven, high in the sky, in the midst of the lining of shapeless, scattered clouds; the silver briefcase is in flight. From the cloud formation, the case crosses back to Earth descending from cloudland back to an airport.

Inside the airport, at concourse Gate-A, it is almost 10:07 A.M. Mountain Standard Time. Michael, once again, holds the briefcase tightly. He emerges from the A-Gate jet-bridge into the redesigned, uniquely 12-sided concourse. He is bewildered and introspective, puzzled at the archangelic meaning of his presence here. Even the city he's in remains a mystery for him. Michael's appearance earns him either dirty or indifferent looks from the 550 travelers congregated here.

Rhoda, a comely, redheaded, airport hostess converses with a black, cynical, airplane mechanic. Rhoda reminds him, "The airport

chapel is having Good Friday Stations of the Cross at noon."

The mechanic says to her, "Rhoda, let me aks you, I thought you was a born again? Ain't Stations a Catholic thing?"

Rhoda replies, "It's a God thing."

Michael presents her his ticket. The mechanic gives Michael a mortified look. She reads the ticket. "Ah, the city of...Los Angeles, LAX. Your flight departs at 12:07 from right here at Gate-A, so you've got just about a two-hour layover.... God bless, enjoy your flight."

"God bless you." Michael leaves for the bay of seats in the A-Gate area.

Rhoda remarks, "Poor guy."

Michael sits in a secluded seat. He places his briefcase in an adjacent seat. Palms joined, he prayerfully wonders what the conclusion of his story may be. A thought quickly comes to his mind. He places the case on his lap, using it as a desktop. He pops its locks open. He removes and snaps open the rings of a thin, tattered, black binder. He withdraws a blank piece of loose-leaf paper. Forgetful, he neglects to snap together the rings as he folds the binder closed. He removes his Bible.

Reflective, he surveys what he can see of the dozen-gated concourse. In clear view, he visually identifies the activities at each of the six Gates: F through A. As well as: 275 of the travelers situated across the way at Gates K and L.

Oddly, he focuses in on the procession of a family of septuplets traveling from Gate-B to Gate-K. They pass by a radio station's promotional Volkswagen van, near Gate-K. Michael notices the last child carrying a toy trumpet. Michael's look of amazement is brought on by the voice he mysteriously hears in his head. The sound emanates from his soul-it's his own:

"At the time when you hear the seventh angel blow his trumpet, the mysterious plan of God shall be fulfilled, as He promised to His servants the prophets.'"

Questioning if he heard something, Michael looks to the television speaker and to the large digital clock above it which reads-10:07. Below the speaker, is the flight information television. He glimpses the screen. His flight from New York is listed first. He watches as it's deleted from the screen. Included among the color-coded

listings are Flight #2321, an arrival diverted from Chicago; and arrival Flights #1915 and #2722. As Michael quickly glances at the screen, the A-Gate agent announces over the intercom—"Revelation Air would like to remind its Flight 1513 passengers from New York of the Mountain Standard time zone change to 10:07 A.M. Thank you."

The long gaze of someone's watchful eye checks out Michael.

Michael writes, in black marking pen, a page entry in manuscript format: Denver International Airport...Friday... 11:07 A.M.... His writing times perfectly with the voice of the airport public address announcer—"Denver International Airport apologizes for any remodeling inconveniences. Today is Friday, April 21, 2000. Local time: 11:07 A.M. Denver temperature: 33 degrees. Thank you, and welcome to Colorado—'*Nil Sine Numine.*'"

Michael withdraws into a trance. Backtracking, he says to himself, "On the way to a *city of angels...*" Unlike someone who may twiddle their thumbs when they're bored, Michael concentrates deeply. He clasps his hands together in a prayerful pose. He then folds them together. Now, he clenches his fingers and knuckles together. Coming to his mind, as

he initiates the motions, are the modified words to that childlike three-part hand rhyme. The view of the mountains; the air-traffic control tower; the gates and doors within Michael's vantage point, and the overflow of the 160 travelers from B-Gate, parallel with the rhyme. "*Here's the earth—there's a tower—open the doors then save the people.*"

Out of Michael's view, at H-Gate, preparations are made for an arrival. The methodic, female, H-Gate attendant is positioned at the stand at the intersection of the jet-bridge. She utilizes the hand-held microphone, saying, "Denver International Airport welcomes the unscheduled arrival of Flight 2321 from Chicago, Midway."

Maggie, in a snippety mood, steps into the concourse. She comments to the attendant, "'Windy City'?! Blow it out your ass. I'm not good with geology, but Denver better be on the way to San Francisco."

Back at A-Gate, Michael visually searches the K-Gate area for the trumpet player. The family is gone. He focuses in on the windshield of the van. In large blue numerals, he sees the time—11:15. The classical disc jockey's voice can be heard from

the multiple sets of speakers perched atop the VW van. The DJ distinctively says, "...Mile High Radio. It's 11:15."

Michael's prompted to open his Bible. Randomly, he's selected a verse from Revelation 11:15. Michael reads: "Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet. There were loud voices in heaven, saying... 'The kingdom of the world now belongs to our Lord and to His Anointed, and He will reign forever and ever.'" Michael truly believes the archangel has revealed the finale to him. His time is at hand. Michael grips his knuckles together in the first position of the hand rhyme.

From Michael's vantage point of Gate-C, where the church is located—the quaint triangular steeple juts out of the facade. It gives the chapel a doll house quality. It's distinctively-shaped, triangularly-inverted door also lends itself to the look of a contemporary synagogue. The sign above the door reads:

COLORADO—NIL SINE NUMINE—NOTHING
WITHOUT THE DEITY

There are 80 people gathered here.

Out of Michael's view, at L-Gate; Lincoln, in a huff, is first

off his plane to enter the concourse. An L-Gate agent addresses the microphone. He says, "Will the passengers arriving on outbound Flight #2321 to JFK, New York—please temporarily remain at Gate-L for further instructions. Thank you."

At the boarding counter, Lincoln approaches a pious, no-nonsense, beautiful, light-skinned, African, L-Gate agent. Her uniform is decorated with religious buttons. She readies for this flight's re-routing. Lincoln says to her, "Lightning?! Ben Franklin's spinning in his grave. You didn't hear his mother tell him to stop flying his kite and come inside 'cause of some thunder." He tells her, "A little electricity never killed anyone. I'm willing to risk it."

She leniently says to him, "We need to consider the welfare of all the passengers, not just yourself sir."

A flustered Lincoln reaches for his cigarettes. Bud Beetré, an unkempt, 'red neck,' autograph seeker pats Lincoln on the back. Bud wears a T-shirt that reads: KILL VON ADOLF DEAD, as well as a worn out Joe Camel cap. "Mr. Peters, sign my shirt...To Bud..."

Lincoln obliges while he fumbles for his lighter. He

inquires of Bud, "You got a light?"

The lovely, L-Gate agent legislatively says, "This is a public place sir. There is no smoking."

Lincoln lashes out, "Zip it lady! I'll sue your ass off!"

She lashes back, saying, "Pardon me, 'Mr. I'm so self-centered I could care a less about the rights of the innocent people my second-hand smoke kills'... How'd you like to fly out of here by the seat of your pants?!"

Lincoln is set back. Detained, he checks his watch. He asks Bud, "You got the right time?"

Bud answers, "It's a minute after 11:15."

Back at A-Gate, Michael reads the following Bible verse: "The twenty-four elders who sat on their thrones before God prostrated themselves and worshipped God and said..."

From Michael's angle, at C-Gate, a group of 24 senior citizens recite a prayer outside the closed door of the chapel, sovereignly praying: "'We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who are and who were. For you have assumed your great power and have established your reign...'"

Michael's fingers are fixed in the second position of the hand rhyme. His pointing fingers make a triangular, star-shape.

Outside the window, Michael sees the gray tarmac and its painted white semi-circle. And again, he sees the air-traffic control tower; the outer wall and its inverted triangle doors to the adjacent B-Gate; and lastly, the 20 riders in the AGABUS people mover, which hovers by like a spider zipping over a web. Again, Michael recites the increasingly memorable words, "Here's the earth--there's a tower--open the doors--then save the people."

Out of Michael's view, at E-Gate, a plane is docked at the bowels of the jet-bridge. A friendly, young, black skycap waits. The airplane door opens. From the initial first class seat, Judy signals to the skycap to roll a parked wheelchair to Aunt Mary Frances. With her Bible in hand, a weakened Aunt Mary crawls into the chair. The skycap rolls her off the plane. Judy is drunk, impatient, and appalled. She hollers into the cockpit, "Hail?! Hail Caesars! I've seen less ice in my drink!"

The girls lead 10 passengers off the aircraft. The skycap wheels Aunt Mary. They trek the

jet-bridge leading to the concourse gate. Judy is buzzing with anticipation. Aunt Mary is shameful and despondent. She reads her Bible aloud to herself, remorsefully questioning her own actions: "'I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be hindered. I have dealt with great things that I do not understand; things too wonderful for me, which I cannot know.'"

Judy pays little attention to Aunt Mary. She speaks over her, questioning the skycap, "'Night cap,' she wants to know if this place has a chapel close-by?"

The skycap satisfyingly answers, "Yes, we do, a non-denominational: Gate-C. It's to our right as we enter the concourse. I'll be baptized a Christian there tomorrow myself."

Judy doesn't care. "Come on Aunt Mary Frances; let's get you a shot of fresh air."

The skycap follows Judy's lead. Aunt Mary continues to read aloud: "'I had heard of You by word of mouth, but now my eye has seen You. Therefore I disown what I have said and repent in dust and ashes.'"

The trek is over; the end of the gangplank. They've reached the concourse. The E-Gate agent

speaks over the microphone, "We will momentarily be boarding passengers for the 11:18 departure at Gate-E...Flight 2722, the continuation of non-stop service to Las Vegas."

Each of the ladies is dressed in their best Las Vegas fashions. Mary wears a lovely, feminine, Elvis jumpsuit ensemble. She says to Judy, "It's my bowels." The skycap rolls Aunt Mary through the additional ten travelers waiting to board. Judy sees the ladies room symbol located in the center of the concourse. Aunt Mary sees the chapel as the seniors continue their vigil.

The seniors group spiritedly prays: "'...The nations raged, but your wrath has come, and the time for the dead to be judged, and to recompense your servants, the prophets, and the holy ones and those who fear your name, the small and the great alike, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.'"

Back at A-Gate, Michael, with his fingers fixed in the hand rhyme's second position, further solves the intricate puzzle. He wiggles each of his four digits individually. The triangular, star-shape of his hand approximates the concourse's configuration. His wiggling

fingers correlate with the gate letters. "A...H...L...E."

Michael begins a simplistic drawing. The figures he sketches are descriptive with his dialogue. He starts with a professionally drawn, well-rounded circle—"Here's the earth..." Within the circle, he outlines a triangle—"There's a tower..." He overlaps it with an inverted triangle—"Open the doors...then save the people."

His completed drawing is the Star of David enclosed within a circle. The 6-point star is the exact design of the airport. Each side matches a gate letter.

Michael shines with enlightenment as he applies letters, names, and initials to the angelic puzzle. "A-angel, Angelo...H-Hagar...L-Lincoln... E?...E?...E—"

He's looking to the E-Gate. He sees and hears an airport oddity, a barking dog. Suddenly, he catches a quick glimpse of Aunt Mary and Judy. Instantly, he loses sight of them. They duck into the bathroom. The skycap waits outside the door.

In a blaze of revelation, Michael unravels the mystery of the divine drawing. "L-A-H-E...L-A: Los Angeles." Michael checks the flight information TV. The screen has malfunctioned. All the

listed cities read: LOS ANGELES. "Los Angeles: 'The City of Angels!'"

Looking at the drawing, he says, "H-E...He, He..." Affirming his own calling, he says, "God."

Michael looks back to the clock above the TV. It reads—11:19. He hurriedly double-checks that next verse from the Book of Revelation. He drops the briefcase at his feet. He falls to his knees in reverence. "11:19... 'Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of the covenant could be seen in the temple..." Michael is in the midst of a heightened, supernatural experience. He is at the feet of God. He lays his right hand on the glimmering briefcase; his left hand on the floor.

Outside the window, he sees the fluke weather conditions. There is lightning, thunder, and the onset of hail. He reads: "'...There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a violent hailstorm.'" He shouts, "An earthquake!"

Michael, like an Indian on the plain or a Muslim bowed in prayer position, throws his hands and head to the floor. He's trying to feel a tremor. "My God!

There's gonna be an earthquake!
Everybody out! Save your lives!"
Michael hastily tosses the paper,
notebook and Bible into the
briefcase. He lifts himself up.
He clings to the case. He's off!

Michael bolts into the aisle.
He is determined to fulfill God's
prophecy. His mission is to
physically rescue a life from this
apocalyptic vision, at the very
least save one single soul.
Standing in the traffic lane, he
holds his arms high to the sky and
shouts out, "The archangel showed
me! Earthquake! Please everybody
out before the building falls!
Your lives are in grave danger!"

Of all the travelers, only
twelve heed Michael's call; the
majority mocks him. They push and
shove him, remaining indifferent
to his claim. The earth has made
no such abrupt move, neither have
the people. The mockers scoff at
him. One mocker howls, "Drop
dead."

Michael acclaims, "God help
you! Earthquake! Evacuate the
building! I'm here to save you!"

Another mocker howls out,
"I'll save myself if you don't
mind."

Michael hedges in the
direction he presumably saw Aunt
Mary Frances. Before he can even
trot, he's halted. A pair of

tough, unarmed, D.I.A. guards with
the Centurion Company of Denver
International Airport forcibly
detains him. The guards manhandle
Michael. Like sharks and their
feeders drawn to a bloody fish, a
small mob of onlookers gathers to
encourage the security force. The
commotion soon draws a small,
armed corps of Centurions. The
guards have locked onto Michael's
long, purple overcoat at the
elbows. One of the guards
interrogates, "Hold on. Where do
you think you're going?"

He answers, "To save the
people."

The guards shove Michael
against the wall, knocking the
briefcase from his hands.

A well-respected and
decorated pilot, rubbing dry his
hands, emerges from the men's
room. He confronts the situation.
To Michael's defense, he asks of
the guards, "What has he done?"

The first guard answers,
"We're thinking of having him
arrested for inciting a riot."

An onlooker protests, "He's a
barbarian, take him away!"

The pilot looks around at the
jeering travelers circled like
headhunters. He succumbs to the
peer pressure and readily gives up
his defense. He gives an
affirmative nod of the head. The

second guard signifies Michael's briefcase. "Pick it up!" Michael clings to the case. He can hardly bear to be without it.

The first guard viciously asks him, "Who do you think you are anyway?"

The second guard says, "Yeah, who does he think he is some kind of lifesaver?"

Michael, giving in with reluctant meekness, answers, "As you say."

The first guard says to him, "Huh? Is that who you think you are? Answer me?!"

Michael says absolutely nothing. The second, demeaning guard smacks him on the forehead.

Lincoln has made his way to the forefront of the crowd. Bud tags along. Lincoln is ashamed to acknowledge his friend. He remains cowardly silent.

The corps of armed guards helps to barricade the onlookers. As Michael is prodded forward, the second guard purposely trips him. The crowd laughs. Michael, holding onto his briefcase for dear life, knocks his head on it when he falls. His lifeblood drips from his forehead. Michael is on his knees. Lincoln remains idle. Veronica, a beautiful college student, lunges forward to intervene. Her gutless boyfriend

and his spineless father reel her back in. The boyfriend tells her, "Don't get involved."

Aunt Mary and Judy exit the lady's room. Judy sees the commotion and rolls Aunt Mary into the eye of the hurricane. The skycap remains close to them. Judy exclaims, "A fight!" Breaking her way through, Judy sees it is Michael. She is unwilling to proceed further. She too, is afraid to encounter him. Uninterested nonetheless, Aunt Mary's view is blocked. Judy tells her, "It's nothing."

Aunt Mary's line of vision opens. She's aghast at the sight. "What in God's name?! Michael!"

Judy pulls an about face, acting as if she's happy to see Michael. They pull forward to meet him. Judy utters to him, "Professor!" She kisses his cheek and addresses the guards, telling them, "This is his aunt. They haven't seen each other in years."

The guards acquiesce. Michael kneels at Aunt Mary's feet in the chair. Unabashedly, Aunt Mary Frances acknowledges, "Michael..."

He begs her forgiveness. "I am sorry. God loves you."

Aunt Mary gracefully alights, "I know." She mumblingly says, "Michael, things happen for a

reason: a divine pre-destiny. The money has not cured or healed the pain, but archangelic intervention has led you to decide to do what you did. The blessing for me is to see you here; God working in you, working in me. The archangel that guides you guided me." She feels: I know Michael sees God; and if Michael sees me, then God Himself is within my reach. An angelic keepsake, she tells him, "Michael, this is the moment in my life that I've lived for—and the reason I am alive today is so I may say to you..." She wails, "Son, I love you."

"Mother, and I you." Michael sets aside the briefcase. Their hands cross and clutch together; at that moment, the chapel facade cracks and splinters giving way to the earth's tremor.

Mary prayerfully reassures Michael: "'Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and the clans of the earth will strike their breasts as they see 'the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven' with power and great glory.'"

Some of the people gathered are frozen in their tracks.

The first guard yells out, "What was that?!"

The second guard tells him, "It must be a bomb. Earlier, I

heard him yell he'll destroy the place."

Judy blurts out, "It's no bomb. It's the rumble of the jets."

The skycap says, "But all the flights have been grounded."

The bond strengthens between Michael and Mary. She holds his bloody forehead. The shaking chapel indicates the increased measure of a second tremor. Mary mourns: "'He will dispatch His angels with a mighty trumpet blast, and they will assemble His chosen from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.'"

The floor of the concourse, in the area around the men's room, shakes. Typically, in the face of danger, the spiritually faithful become brave, the unfaithful, cowardly; the believer's believe, and the non-believers become doubtful.

Veronica's boyfriend yells, "It's impossible! Go to Hell; an earthquake in the heart of the country?"

Rhoda reverberates, "He's telling the truth! Three times I heard him predict it!"

The skycap shouts, "It's true! God! It must be from here to California!"

Michael rests his head on Mary's lap. Mary fatefully says, "Son...now, I can die in peace."

The earth moves! The chapel quakes! From the steeple, cracks in the shapes of angels map the two-tone black and white ceiling.

The second guard screams, "Run for your lives! The ceiling is going to collapse!"

The first guard screams out, "Earthquake!"

The guards flee. The hundreds of people react like bees in a swarm. Like bulls stampeding in a ring, they run in a circular pattern. A few are completely frozen in their footsteps. Nonetheless, all the travelers are completely unaware of the escape routes. Lincoln makes his way from the back of the pack, bursting out, "Michael!"

Michael raises his head from Mary's bloodstained lap. His arms stretched, a light shining from the Heavens empowers him. From his knees, he reaches for the briefcase. He bellows out, "Follow me!"

Veronica's boyfriend asks, "Why should we follow him?"

A hand lifts the briefcase. Michael rises. He takes the handle like a runner's baton in a relay race. The man handing off answers the boyfriend for all to

hear. It's none other than Ernest Sy Goldstein, who edifies, shouting gloriously, "He's the architect who built this place!"

Michael blasts, "Follow what I say!"

Michael's command directs the action. The believers become followers: there's Mary; the skycap; Veronica; as well as Rhoda the gate agent, who has been following the pack. Also putting their faith in Michael are a cowardly Judy and Lincoln.

The airport is cavernous. It's not the minimal falling debris that threatens the people; it's the collapse of the structurally weak ceiling that endangers the travelers. Michael knows the layout of the concourse well enough to know the emergency evacuation exit capabilities of Gate-B.

In the Gate-B area, 160 people need to be saved. An emergency exit gate, with an opening door, houses an inflatable slide ramp. To activate the system, a certain lever must be pulled. The L-Gate agent has been following the events from afar. In close proximity to the lever panel, she puts her faith in Michael's guidance. She yells to him, "I believe in you! Save us!"

Michael, pointing to the lever, shouts to her, "Over there! The inflatable slide ramp! Pull down on the middle lever!"

The agent yanks the lever, but the red activation siren light doesn't switch on. She hollers, "It's broke! This airport isn't geared for an earthquake!"

Michael shouts, "There needs to be a trip in the wire—a break in the secondary power line."

Judy foolishly screams, "Pull the plug!"

Like a long fuse from a stick of dynamite—Michael visually traces the power wire snaking over the doorframe; but, how to sever the wire? He spots a cleaver, spear-heading a fish, on a sushi food cart. He lunges a couple of quick steps. With dripping blood impairing his vision, he focuses in on the wire. Instinctively, as if he were beheading a snake, he hurls the cleaver. It severs the wire perfectly. Sparks fly and sirens spin. The system is activated.

The ground tremors.

The door hatch automatically opens. The slide ramp inflates extending out to the tarmac; the first of the stranded bounce and slide away. Michael is unable to tell if they reach safety. Like popcorn kernels down a funnel, it

will take moments for the congested travelers to filter out. The agent, arms spread wide, corrals the trapped out of the hatch.

Veronica has broken free from her boyfriend. She rushes to Michael's aide. She flings off her purple scarf and wraps it over his bloody forehead wound. She valiantly says, "Professor! It's Veronica. I was in your design class. I've always believed in you!"

"Bless you, Veronica."

The frightened boyfriend and his father tug Veronica away against her will. They all run to escape.

The remaining faithful rally around one another. They stay in a close-knit unit next to Michael. He directs his attention on the next gate area, shouting, "Follow me!"

In the Gate-C area, 80 people need saving. The crumbling facade of the church does all but barricade the opened doorway. There is not a fiery destruction, but a Samson and the collapsing temple type of devastation. Rhoda runs to assist the effort at the chapel. She hollers to Michael, "What can I do?"

He tells her, "God bless you. Please get those people into the

chapel!" He shouts to them, "Follow what I say! The chapel will save you! The crossbeams give it support! It will not collapse!"

Rhoda does her best to corral those congregated. The mortified mechanic runs from her side and borrows his frightened way through the masses—so much for "Women and children first"! However, there is a logjam again. The chapel capacity is eighty at best. Rhoda lays her hands on many shoulders as she guides people through the door, ringing out, "Follow what he says! Into the church, all of you!"

The tremor increases.

In the center of the concourse, a storage closet is situated between the bathrooms. Michael, with a firm hold of the briefcase, uses it to batter down the door.

Ernie effusively asks, "Michael, why the storage closet?"

Michael answers, "...in case."

Inside the closet, a standing artificial plant has fallen, Michael's momentum causes him to trip over it; janitorial supplies, tools, and general items are strewn about. Michael grabs the first few items he may find useful: a short piece of rope; two

strands of bungee cord with hooks at each end; a carpet remnant, the size of a large doormat; a long piece of yellow rope; and lastly, an oversized screwdriver. With the bungee cord, he harnesses the remnant on his back. He wraps the small rope around his wrist and lassos the long rope over his shoulders. He sets off like a mountain hiker. The briefcase never leaves his hand, but it causes him to fumble the screwdriver. The screwdriver falls behind to the ground.

Inside the concourse, Ernie says to Lincoln, "Are you okay?"

Lincoln is shocked into silence. He rattles more than the quake. Bud has idolized him to this point. Bud tells Ernie, "Ha! He's scared shit-less."

Judy says to Aunt Mary, "If we get separated, I'll meet you at the hotel."

Mary, holding hands with the skycap in kinship, prays, "Glory be..."

The skycap solemnly says, "...to the Father..."

Michael hollers, "Follow me!" Michael directs the group to move toward the next possible exit. They inch in his direction. He shouts, "Gate-D! The AGABUS!"

Ernie, concerned, guidingly says to Bud, "Please, go follow him buddy!"

Bud makes a face, thinking: How did he know my name? He acts like he's won something.

In the concourse Gate-D area, 40 people need saving; particularly, the 40 female members of: Mothers Against Drunk Driving-MADD. The women wear an array of rainbow-colored, MADD shirts. The group is aboard the people transporter. The official markings on the transport vehicle read: AIR-GROUND ARRIVAL BUS-AGABUS. The vehicle is docked at the gate.

A stubborn, overly professional, male AGABUS driver sits in the cab. The women are in distress, trapped on a bumpy ride going nowhere. The driver prepares to open the door. A MADD woman cries out, "Good God!"

Michael has made his way to the docking door. A panting Bud closes from behind. Michael hollers, "Follow what I say! Away! Away from the dock!" Michael reaches into the AGABUS cab's open, cockpit window. He cannot reach a large switch.

The seat-belted driver won't budge. The driver yells, "No. Don't touch that! That's the automatic uncoupling switch! I'm

unloading. I've got to go by the book"; exclaiming, "It's my job!"

Another MADD member screams into the cab at the driver, "Don't listen to him! Let us out! Look at him! He looks drunker than a skunk!"

Michael shouts to the driver, "Your job or your life? I'll save you, but you have to work with me!"

A mediating MADD member, weeping to the driver; cries out, "Oh my Lord! Please believe him. He's trying to save people!"

The driver tells Michael, "But my boss will fire me from my job!"

Michael shouts to the driver, "If you don't save these people-God will fire you from life!"

Bud points out, to Michael, a ring-like mechanism on the wall panel. He exclaims, "Man, there's the emergency disengagement ring!"

Michael lunges for it. Bud hops aboard the AGABUS to save his own skin. The doors close. The AGABUS pulls away. It beeps and sirens as it reverses itself from the gate. Michael pulls the ring. The people are rescued without him. The ring drops at his feet. Bud waves a sucker's kiss back to Michael. The docking area overhang collapses.

In the concourse, Lincoln; not smart enough to head off in his own direction, is still a lost sheep. Ernie helps tend to him. The skycap tries to keep a close grip on Mary's chair. They both loyally adhere to Michael's plan. Ernie exhorts, "I asked him to help keep an eye on Michael—not sell him out!"

Judy, still tipsy, stays within reach of the rest of the pack. She says defiantly, as if Bud was within his rights, "He can save himself!"

The skycap straightforwardly says, "If he's not willing to save others..."

Mary rolls free from the skycap. In the chair, she confronts and counsels Judy. Mary watchfully says, "Judy," she tells her, speaking as an example, "Look at Michael... Remember, Matthew: 'For man it is impossible... But?...'"

Judy says: "'But for God all things are possible.'"

A motherly Mary calls out, "Bingo!"

Michael returns right on time. "Follow me."

In the Gate-G area, 20 people need to be saved. With nowhere to run for escape, the travelers are huddled around the narrowly opened, debris-riddled, jet-bridge

entrance. Michael instructs them, "People! Please get back on the plane! Tell the attendants to get everybody back on this flight. Tell the pilot to bring up the power and take off for the clouds. You'll be safe off the ground. Please follow what I say! Listen to me! I'm telling you the truth!"

As the twenty people line-up to board the plane; Mary wheels herself closer to the open shaft. The skycap helps escort an afraid-to-fly Judy, as well as the other stranded passengers.

A tall, bearded, creepy, hardened gambler dressed in a black and red trench coat, and sunglasses; streaks from the jet-bridge like a bat from a cave. Earth shaking, broken gas pipes spew fire from the wall heralding his arrival. Drenched in blood, he goes right to Judy and embraces her. From the two, locked, black briefcases in his hands: black, clay, gambling chips with no logo spill from his pockets like coins from a slot machine. The gambler says to Judy, "He's lying. Whatever you do lady, over Hell or high water, don't think about getting on that craft. I've been hot! I gotta' hunch! I'll bet you \$66, at eleven-to-one odds,

there will be a fiery explosion—
you'll be reduced to ashes!"

Meantime, Michael lunges to
push Mary's wheelchair. His hands
fall just shy of the handles. The
skycap takes the reins. Mary
turns and blesses Michael. In
faith, she says, "Hold on, Son."

He says, "Bless you, Mother."

The high-pitched cry of a
feminine voice is faintly heard.
It mixes with loud caterwauling.
Maggie shrieks, "Somebody!"

Michael says to the skycap,
about Mary, "Go with her."

Maggie shrieks again,
"Somebody!"

Mary, knowing Michael must
save others, encourages him as he
starts away. To his kingship, she
shouts, "Run like the wind
Michael!" Mary makes the Sign of
the Cross and gasps to him as he
flees, worshipingly praying, "May
the souls of all the faithful
departed, through the mercy of
God, rest in peace. Amen."

The skycap, arms spread wide,
funnels Mary and a scared-to-death
Judy into the jet-bridge.

Judy sees Michael moving, the
gambler shadowing him from behind.
The earth moves. Judy yells,
"Fire?! Over Hell or high water!"
Without so much as a look to Aunt
Mary, Judy takes off in the

direction of Michael and the
gambler.

In the Gate-F area, 9
international tourists and a
uniformed, Asian, male baggage
handler need saving. At the end
of a scattered line of people, the
Seeing Eye dog barks. His
attention is on a white baggage
cage. The dog belongs to Bart
Thomasson. Bart is angry and
bitter, full of self-pity, a
fiercely independent, blind man.
He wears an eye patch beneath dark
glasses.

Michael jaunts in the
direction of the voice. He trips
over the unseen, unattended cage.
The cat screeches. The dog barks,
as does Bart. "Watch it!"

"Sorry."

Michael, on his knees, hears
the crying originating from the H-
Gate area. Looking...he sees
Maggie crying and whimpering like
a lost little girl. "Magdalene!"

She spins like a toy
ballerina running low on power.
"Michael!"

Ernie Goldstein sees he is
nearer to her than Michael. He
lumbers after her, shouting, "I'll
get her Michael!"

Michael, never relinquishing
hold of the case, scrambles on his
knees to see if the cat is okay.
"Sorry, Girl."

The cat owner rushes to her lost cat's cry. Michael reaches for the cage, but the relieved owner snares it away, saying to Michael, "Oh! Bless your heart," and to the cat, "Jag, you're alive!" She champions, "Oh my, I couldn't sacrifice leaving without her. I couldn't live with myself if I wasn't willing to try...I'd have two chances—slim and none—you know what I mean?"

Michael answers, "I do." He instructs, "That's why God won't let anything bad happen to you... all you have to do—is be willing to."

Michael rises to his feet. He hollers, "People! Follow me! What's more valuable, your possessions or your life?"

The people do little to heed his call. They are fighting to identify and claim their belongings. Most cannot even lift or tug their bags from amongst the tossed and discarded others.

Michael rushes to the auxiliary baggage conveyer belt. About thirty feet long, it remains operable amidst the rubble of an alternate, check-in counter. The system is used mainly for passengers who neglect to check-in oversized, oddly-shaped bags and packages. Michael hollers to them, "People! Follow what I have

to say! This is your only way out!"

Michael grasps a suitcase handle; like an ancient Olympian, he hammer throws it just short of the belt. The baggage handler places it on the belt. Suitcases, already on the belt, emerge periodically from a chute shielded by plastic strips. The strips, like those in a car wash, cover the exit port as well. The travelers opt for Michael's plan. He hollers again, "Here! Here, one at a time! This conveyer belt unloads into a carrier truck outside of the airport. Get on a case, it will cushion the landing. Leave your baggage behind and trust in me. This will lead you to safety!" He says to the handler, "Please help these people." Pointing to Bart and the animals, Michael says, "Make sure he gets out okay, and please save those animals!"

The handler tells Michael, "Way to go 'Bro!'" The handler takes hold of a male tourist's arm, telling him, "I'll lend you a hand 'Brudder.'" He helps to seat the man on a case.

Michael has yet to physically touch another person. He says, "Don't overload it. One at a time!"

Before the next female tourist can hop on, the handler butts in line saving his own ass. He's pulled out of sight into the conveyor's corridor.

The quake again increases in strength.

In the concourse Gate-G area, Ernie has retrieved Maggie. He rounds up Lincoln and Judy. Maggie screams, "We're all going to Hell!"

Judy tells her, "What do you mean going? This is Hell!"

Ernie groans, "Hell. I'll tell you all what Hell is: Hell is the choice you made not to follow God and die in a way that pleases Him. Hell is that death you can't yet imagine, the dying that makes you wish you died in a different way: a peaceful or glorious way. Hell is that place where you look back on your death and say, 'I wish I had it to do over.' God gave me the chance to do something special with my life, the chance to die in the greatest of the ways: because of something holy and good I did. 'Now look at me, now I have to die in some common way, I wish I had it to do over... I wish I'd known during my life that I had the chance to make a choice about the way I was going to die and not end up dying like this.' The second thought; the

'do over'; the regret you can't have until you've gone to the other place and wish you could return from the dead to do it over again—that's Hell!... Let's go!"

Ernie sees a broken sign, above GATE-G, that reads:

TRAIN___ ENGINE

He enigmatically says, "Gate-G, train...A-Abel to G-Goldstein: first to last, last to first." He gallantly hollers out, "The train! This way!" Ernie rallies the three captives. They pat him on the back, thankful he may be right. But Ernie too, is running on increasing fear.

At Gate-G, the gate hatch looks like a gigantic bank vault. A large, spoked wheel, like a valve, opens the hatch. There are hazardous material markings and warning symbols plastered on the door. Signs read:

⊗ DANGER: A.N.G.E.L.

⊗ EXPERIMENTAL FLIGHT TRAIN___/DO NOT ENTER

Michael has painfully made his way here. Judy offers him a shot of booze from an airline bottle she's stolen. Michael

swipes his hand over his mouth, denying the gesture.

Ernie counts with his fingers, equating, "A, B, C, D, E, F, G...seven...Gate-G, the seventh sign." He says, directly to Michael, "Your flight leaves at 12:07.... The seven trumpets..." He grievously asks, "This is it, isn't it?"

They all look on. Michael nods his head, positively, in sorrowful grief. Life's journey has reached its crossroads. Michael asks, "Maggie? Judy? Lincoln?"

Maggie nods her head affirmatively.

Judy tells him, "You can count on me."

Michael asks, "Lincoln?"

Lincoln tells him, "I'm not leaving [you] if my life depended on it."

Michael gives a look of trust to Ernie. Ernie gives him one back, eulogizing: "'You relied on the LORD—let him deliver you, if He loves you, let Him rescue you.'" He says to Michael, "You helped to save the others—it's time to save yourself." Michael and Ernie forge on. They attempt to turn the valve.

Judy is already looking for another way out.

Maggie inspires mock heroism from an idle Lincoln. She says, "Lincoln, give him a hand."

Lincoln says, "It's jammed."

Ernie says, "We need some kind of fluid to jar it loose."

Judy points out a fire extinguisher, in a glass encasement, on the wall of the upper level. Along with an ax, they've come loose and rest up against the glass case. The short stretch of second floor walkway has collapsed. It leaves the apparatus virtually impossible to reach. Judy screams, "Michael, the extinguisher!"

Michael positions; verbally commands, and inspires himself, "Think..."

He spots the large, display gate letter F; a banded package beside it. The items are near Bart, who's standing behind the cat owner. They're waiting to board the baggage belt. Michael approaches Bart suddenly. Bart lashes Michael with his walking stick. Michael winces, and asks, "What's your name?"

"Bart Thomasson. What's it to 'ya?! Huh?! You ever been hysterically blind? Do you know what it's like to not see because your mind makes you blind?"

"Bart, I need your eye...your patch, to save others."

"You need!"

"Bart, you see yourself in what you look to do for others."

Like he's being mugged, the disgruntled Bart whips off the patch beneath his sunglasses.

"Here, take it."

"Bless you. Say a prayer..."
Michael handcrafts a slingshot. He connects the package's rubber band between the letter F's horizontal lines. He uses the protective eye patch for the pouch. He looks to the floor for a projectile. He tows in a toy *Matchbox* car. He braces his left arm against the letter's frame. He puts the car in the pouch. He focuses in...asking, "God?..." He pulls back the band and lets the car fly. The toy shatters the glass.

Bart hears it smash. He barks out, "Bull's-eye!"

The ax falls to the rubble. The extinguisher-can drops and rolls on the long planks of debris. The can stops at the feet of Judy. She hands it to Ernie, telling him, "Hurry, I'm dying over here!" He gamely hollers, "Stand back!" Ernie sprays the valve that unlocks the volatile vault. He and Lincoln try opening the door. It won't budge an inch. The men shout out to Michael. An

excitable Ernie tells him, "It won't move!"

Lincoln corroboratively tells Michael, "A strong bar or lever will do it!"

Michael shouts out, "The ax!" Looking at the obedient dog, he asks, "Bart, do you think your dog saw where it went?"

Bart touts, "He sees like a hawk." He takes a knee and tells his Shepherd, "You're my best friend, Boy," shouting out, "Rover, fetch!"

Rover is off! Like a Saint Bernard in the Swiss Alps, the gallant dog climbs and scales the debris. He's able to grip the ax handle in his jowls. He carries back the big stick.

Michael yells to his group, "Call him!"

Ernie shouts out, "Here, Boy!"

The cat owner says to Bart, "That took courage."

Bart boasts, "He's the best."

She says, "I meant you."

Michael asks, "Bart, what do you want me to do for you?"

Bart tenders, "Mister, I want to see who you are."

"My name is..."

To identify Michael, the blind man touches Michael's face. He feels a blood drop, trickling down Michael's head. He feels his

long hair and beard. Overwhelmed, Bart starts to sob.

Michael says to him, "Go... your faith in me saved these people...seeing is believing, but bless you: you believed..." Michael starts off.

Bart removes his glasses and rubs a tear from his eye. Chivalrously, he grabs the handle of the woman's cat cage. Thankful and blind no more, he javelin throws his aluminum walking cane. Michael plucks the walking cane from the air.

Rover delivers the ax to Ernie, who in turn, hands it to Lincoln. Ernie sends Rover away with a kiss. Lincoln wedges the ax handle into the valve spokes. With the girls' help, they spin the knob. Michael returns. Michael uses the ax, like a crowbar, in the handle. The ax cleaver shears off, almost slicing his foot. Finally, the door is swung open. However, a sliding door now blocks the path. It has a different variety of precautionary markings. These include:

⊗ DANGER: A.N.G.E.L.

⊗ TRACKS TO TERMINAL - HANGAR - EMERGENCY ABORT

⊗ AIR N' GROUND ELEVATION LINK - A.N.G.E.L. SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS EXPERIMENTAL FLIGHT TRAINING ENGINE - DO NOT ENTER:

Judy yells to Ernie, "You bumbling...it doesn't say train-it says: training! It says: Air N' Ground, A-N-G-E-L, Angel, you idiot."

Maggie asks, "What's it spell?"

Judy tells her, "It spells Hell! If what's behind there blows up--this place'll go up like a moztov cocktail." From Judy's vantage point of Gate-K, the radio station's promotional van rotates on a display spindle. Only Judy can see the gambler inside the van's open panel door. On his knees, he waves her in.

Ernie holds the ax handle like a staff. He is fearful and tense with regards to the sealed, uncharted door. Ernie garrisons them, "All aboard that's going aboard."

Judy, forewarning Maggie and Lincoln, screams, "No way in Hell! That'll be suicide. I'll be damned!" She sees the black van's open panel door. ~~The gambler is no longer there.~~ She screams, "Run for cover! Charge!" Judy runs for the van. The earth

tremors. Shards of ceiling fall in her wake but do not strike her.

Michael hollers, "Judy!"

As if she is in slow-motion, Judy shuts the van door. She seals it closed and locks the handle. The door pulls back to reveal three sets of radio station call letters painted on the side panel. She hears the station identification. It bellows from the sets of large speakers. "KIAN, KEVO, KCAJ, Mile High Radio..."

Judy puts her hands to her ears as if she's "hearing no evil." There is no underlying circumlocution, as Judy, as if she is in slow-motion again, clearly mouths these three words—"God, why me?"

From Michael's vantage point, the van stares him head on. Its glowing headlights light his way. The van seems to have a face of its own. He hears the disc jockey's voice. "...This is: *Saint Michael the Archangel...*" The music begins. The aforementioned masterpiece by Ottorino Respighi blares its trumpeted tones.

Michael says to himself, "But when the seventh...angel...blows his trumpet..."

This is no undermining coincidence. At Gate-G, Michael

gets hold of the door handle. He musters all his strength and slides open the door. Miraculously, they board. He screens his eyes from the black, the trumpeting music continuing to play in his head.

Fading in slowly...is the underground rail beneath the terminal. It is shrouded in darkness. Slowly, he begins to see the rolling motion of the wheels. Ernie was right. It is a locomotive engine—a shiny, silver one. The experimental turbine-electric car, similar to a theme park monorail, plows its way through the building wreckage.

Inside, the high-tech train is extraordinary in design. Ernie mans the control panel. He switches and clicks brightly lit, large, easy-to-read gauges. He accelerates clear. Lincoln and Maggie are clenched against the wall, scared stiff. There are fuel tanks and complex equipment on board. The back of the train is opened like a tractor-trailer.

Michael moves up a central hatchway to a second level. He stands inside the A.N.G.E.L: an experimental, prototype aircraft that rides atop the train. Its set-up resembles the space shuttle on its ground transporter. A.N.G.E.L. is on display as a

futuristic mode of travel. Two triangular wings join at the center point, as does a third triangular passenger area and a circular cockpit. From above, the convertible craft looks like an angel. The train, beneath, lumbers through the terminal. The effect seems to have the A.N.G.E.L. hovering through the rubble.

Stranded on an overhead trestle, partitioned by Plexiglas, are NBA player Michael Jordan and his two children.

Michael Angelo hallos: "Don't be afraid! From now on you will be catching men."

Jordan holds his kids. Before Michael can assist, they jump into the cockpit from the glass. The train passes beneath another overhead area in the abandoned, decimated terminal.

Underground, the train crashes through debris. It slithers like a snake in a rock pile.

Inside the train, Jordan and kids, then Michael, emerge from the hatch. Everyone is safe.

Lincoln ballyhoos, "Michael Jordan!"

Jordan bawls, "God man, this is a nightmare!"

Ernie throttles the train. Jordan remains brave. Lincoln

feigns courage to impress Jordan. Maggie is frightened.

Michael positions himself over Ernie's shoulder. In darkness, the terminal exit nears. Michael guides Ernie; "The hangar, up ahead, might be closed. When we leave this terminal, hit the brakes." In the light, between terminal and hangar—the train exits. Michael shouts out, "Now!"

Ernie pulls the brake handle. Warning lights flash and sound. A fuse sings. Everybody stands still. The train has not stopped. Ernie cries out, "Hold on! The fuse blew. The brakes are...!"

Out of the hangar exit, on the railway tracking atop the mountain, the train/plane combination crashes through the huge hangar door. The world better sees the white A.N.G.E.L.—it's an aeronautical marvel. Its transport train rumbles through building and earthen debris.

Inside the train, Maggie and the children scream. Jordan consoles them. Lincoln is frozen. Ernie works on the tough-to-reach fuse box. Michael oversees. Ernie informs him, "I need to bypass the power connection... a paperclip...metal—"

Michael holds his hands to his chest in meditation...

It takes Spirit to think: The silver medal around your neck! Before Michael's into his prayer mode, he gropes the trinket. He hands it to Ernie. It fits the fuse perfectly. Michael asks, "How's are speed?"

Ernie says optimistically, "Sixty-six and rising."

Jordan shoots off; "We clear?"

Michael conducts to Ernie, "Bring it down slowly."

On the mountaintop tracks, the train/plane looks like a nymph as it rolls through beautifully destructive, earthen landscape.

Inside, Ernie pulls the brake switch. Warning lights flash. Ernie is panic stricken. "Hold on! It didn't work. It's out of control!"

Panic spreads like a disease. Jordan, a believer for the most part, takes his family's matters into his own hands. He hauls them up the hatchway.

Maggie and Lincoln cling together.

Ernie fidgets with the controls.

Michael goes after Jordan. The rumbling train stupendously infuses their actions.

Above, in the A.N.G.E.L. open-air cockpit, Jordan and his children emerge, the tree line

blowing by them. Ahead of the vehicle, the broken earth has tilted the monstrous arm of a construction crane. A cargo net dangles a couple of feet above the plane level. In Jordan's eyes, his children are his lone responsibility—not the others. He swoops them up. Like a suicide jumper, he stands at the edge. Michael exits the hatch. Jordan yells out to him, "Man, if I was you—I'd start heading for the exits!"

Michael hallos: "'Will a person gain anything if he wins the whole world but is himself lost or defeated? Of course not! There is nothing he can give to regain his life!'"

Jordan screams, "Hold on kids!" He cries out, "God, you blessed me." He leaps high into the cargo net. Michael lunges but can offer no physical assistance.

From Lincoln's vantage point, out the back of the train, he sees the Jordan's bouncing in the net like a circus act after a high dive. They're entangled in it, like flies in a web. It loops like a jump rope.

Lincoln notices a ski lift. It runs parallel above the railway. The chairs that might normally be on the inverted, T-shaped, guide-way are gone.

Lincoln's got an idea. Fear and survival motivate him. As he searches for a piece of equipment—to help save himself—Michael returns and realizes his old friend is deserting him. Lincoln takes from Michael the long, yellow rope. Lincoln crouches and starts tying a lasso. He thinks—then mugs Michael for the briefcase. Lincoln pops its latches. He's shocked to discover the treasure he's found, remarking, "Oh my God."

Michael kneels down.

Lincoln removes the large, iron altar cross. He slams shut the case's lid. He starts to tie the rope to the cross.

Michael has a better idea. He removes the red-white-and-blue ribbon from around his neck. He hands it to Lincoln, halloing: "'If I were to honor myself, that honor would be worth nothing. The one who honors me is my Father—the very one you say is your God.'"

Lincoln's dumbfounded. He holds the ribbon and the roped cross.

Michael intervenes and ties the ribbon to the crux of the cross, governing, "Here...with the cross as support—you'll see how the ribbon works."

Lincoln stands and prepares to escape.

Maggie hoots, "Lincoln!" She hollers, "Your coat, take it off!"

Lincoln does. He removes his billfold from the pocket, and a pistol from the shoulder holster he's sporting.

Michael sees it and comments; "...The religious right?"

Lincoln responds, "Hell no! Death threats! I can't get her killed soon enough."

Michael reminds him, "Your belt..."

Lincoln fumbles to undo his belt. He drops the gun and the wad of hundreds he tries to stuff into his pockets. The money blows out the back of the train. He chases it to the ledge. He's almost suicidal about leaping after it.

Michael questions him resoundingly, "Your money or your life?!"

Ernie, seeing Lincoln in the mirror, advises him resoundingly, "Lincoln, you can't take it with you! Anyone who loses their life over money is never around to spend it!"

Above, in the A.N.G.E.L. cockpit, Michael follows Lincoln out of the hatch. They move to the edge of the craft to see the chairlift. Lincoln screams, "For Pete's sake, it just crossed my mind—if that chairlift power is

on—I'll be electrocuted!" He yells at Michael, "Some friend you are—I'd kill for my friends!"

The train horn blows.

Throwing caution to the wind, Michael boomerangs the cross.

"*I'd die for mine!*"

It's a strike! The cross wraps around the track. A fisherman with a monster catch, the rope pulls taut.

Lincoln remembers his belt.

Michael ties the rope to the craft.

Lincoln loops the belt over the rope.

Michael anchors the rope.

Lincoln slings his arm under the holster. To brace his chest, he harnesses the belt to the rope and holster. He then buckles it.

Ahead, the tree line is closing in. Michael extends his hand to bid farewell, but Lincoln grabs the belt instead. Lincoln is upside-down. Michael just misses contact with him.

Lincoln slides safely to the guide-way. Sparks fly when the cross rides the metallic rail. The friction burns the rope. Lincoln must grab the ribbon or fall. His hands grasp the ribbon as the cross sparks. Lincoln, looking up, sees how right Michael was.

From Michael's vantage point, Lincoln takes the ride of his life. Michael, wind gusting, bravely challenges himself, saying omnisciently: "'Now *my* heart is troubled—and what shall I say? Shall I say, 'Father, do not let this hour come upon me?' But that is why I came—so that I might go through this hour of suffering.'" "

Inside the train, Michael comes down the hatch. He calls out inspirationally: "'If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget himself, carry his cross, and follow me!'" "

Ernie cries, "The emergency abort tunnel's up ahead!"

Maggie, fear also her motivation, makes a quick exodus. She heads for the red, flashing sign that reads:

EMERGENCY ABORT TUNNEL—MANUAL
EXPULSION

She hits the red button that automatically slides open the tubular door. A cylinder automatically juts out of the train like a turbine on a jet. It may be equipped for the fuel tanks, or the pilot, one can't tell.

Michael shouts out, "You may be the last people I know on Earth!"

Maggie, neglecting his plea, screeches, "I'm sorry, Michael!"

Michael unfurls the carpet remnant he's been toting. He pokes the bungee cord hooks into it. He's created her a toboggan for the slide. He hands her the rug. Maggie tosses it into the cylinder and adjusts herself on it. The yellow light flashes—
VACUUM ON.

Ernie sounds out, "The vacuum tube's ready! Are you?"

Michael presses the yellow button. The clear plastic door seals the compartment. Maggie is hunched like a fetus in a tubular womb. Like a virgin parachutist, she's terrified. Audibly, it's difficult for her and Michael to hear one another. Maggie, panting like she's in labor, cries out loudly, "I'm chicken shit!"

Michael hollers loudly, "Don't touch the button inside!"

"What?!"

"When you see the green light—hold on!"

"For Christ's sake, what do I do?!"

Michael waits for the green—GO—light to flash. He answers loudly, "Don't abort! Don't—"

Maggie mouths the word—"Go!" before Michael can. She prematurely smacks the green button inside.

Michael cries loudly, "No!"

Maggie screams like she's giving birth. She spits out of the tube like a deposit into the bank drive-thru.

Michael looks with concern, but has the utmost faith in his prayer: "'Let the children come to me and do not stop them, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'"

Outside of the train, exiting from the chamber, Maggie pours out of the spout. Like an amusement park ride, she glides on the carpet in the chute. Like an East Coast, ski slope's alpine slide in spring; the umbilical cord of a chute winds into the station box. The E.A.T.M.E. station box looks like a technically built outhouse or portable john. With the train in the background, Maggie's magical carpet ride ends inside the box. The trap door falls like a guillotine. The evacuation cylinder is sheared off of the train. The train belches a roar passing the back end of the box.

Inside the train, at the control panel, Michael, in perhaps the gravest look of despair ever to overcome a mortal being, walks up slowly behind a seated Ernie Goldstein. He places his hands gently on the shoulders of a hopeless brother, saying: "'For

whoever wants to save his own life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.'"

A large, horizontal traffic light flashes its red-STOP-sign. Warning sounds alert Ernie. Ernie shouts, "The automatic track switcher won't shut off! If we don't stay on the straight track, we're doomed! Our only hope is the manual one!"

"Where is it?"

"Out there! Up ahead! The Sagittarius Signal Station!"

The Sagittarius Station is a platform booth next to the track. Michael sets aside the briefcase. Searching...he grabs the ax handle Ernie boarded with. He stamps one end against a sharp corner on the floor. He connects the bungee cord's hooks to the opposite ends of the handle. He's fashioned himself a sturdy bow. The Sagittarius Station gets closer.

Michael shouts out, "I don't see it!"

He looks around the walls and the train compartment for some sort of arrow.... He sees something. In the swift motion of a gymnast on a pommel horse, he mounts a fuel tank. Like a centaur from Greek mythology, he leans forward out of the window.

Michael is poised. He reaches behind his shoulder. He draws the blind man's aluminum cane. Like an arrow from a quiver, he positions it. The red, signal button is the size of an apple. Michael shouts, "I see it!" He recoils the arrow, but his face is haunted by the recollection of killing his horse. Ready...aim...he's stoned...he focuses...he's forgiven...fire! Bull's-eye again!

Ernie watches the control panel signals, hollering, "They're off!"

Out on the rail tracks, the train speeds past the railway fork.

At the control panel, the yellow light flashes, warning sounds are heard. Michael again looks over the action. "What is it?"

Ernie says, "I don't know, but I'm losing control again!"

"Think; is there any other way to stop the train?"

"Ohhh!...there is one. Most trains have a danger aspect signal. If a train reaches too fast a speed, it sends a signal and the power shuts down."

"Can you make it go faster?"

"Ohhh, if I know the right switches! I've only worked on model trains! I've only been on a

train once in my life, when my grandfather died!"

Michael instructs him, "I have faith in you."

Head on, Ernie, shifting the controls, almost says it all—"I think I can, I think I can, I think I can."

If this were lightning—and surprise thunder—this is the moment before the thunder sounds.... Splat! A huge gob of mud pastes the windshield.

Inside the train, the splattered windshield blackens the area. Ernie, flicking the wiper switch, hollers, "It's broke...I can't see!" He sees Lincoln's gun on the floor of the train. He yells to Michael, "The gun!... Shoot out the window!"

Michael reaches for it—but he cannot stand to touch it. He takes a knee, propping himself up with the briefcase. Figuratively, he is sweating blood and bullets. In prayer, he cannot lift a finger to the trigger. He looks at the muddied window, thinking, what if there's something outside of it?

Outside the train, the magnificent panorama of the revamped countryside shows "Father Nature" at His finest.

Inside, at the control panel, the green light flashes, warning sounds alarm. Ernie's face

illuminates in green terror. "Oh! My! God!" He turns to the rear and sees Michael's arms spread wide. With the briefcase in hand, and the earth again beginning to quake, a magnificent backlight gives power to Michael's prayerful pose. Michael is *actually* sweating blood. Ernie has his back to the windshield. As if Michael willed it, an olive branch shatters the glass wide open.

At the gorge, they see the awesome span in the earth. The train trestle is severed in half. The bridge is out! The river runs wide. The train barrels for the ravine like an Evil Kneivel rocket car.

Michael, beckoning Ernie, trumpets, "The A.N.G.E.L release!" At the control panel, the A.N.G.E.L. release-mechanism is a green and white, angel-shaped—ON—signal light and a large, concave screw/knob. The red and silver signal—OFF—light is lit. It's protected by another concave screw that locks down the clear, bulletproof container. Michael holds his hands over the box—hoping against hope, God will open it for him. He gives a knock on it.

Ernie thinks, is he in trouble or does he have an idea? Ernie takes a moment...to look

away from the screw...to the shining-ON-light. The large, steel release-mechanism screws-uncouple the aircraft from the train.

Ernie prays in a sacred pose. Shaking his head "no," he calls out for divine guidance. "Michael?!"

Michael uses the small rope to strap himself to the landing gear. He extends his briefcase hand to Ernie, responding loudly: "I am, and you will all see the Son of Man seated at the right side of the Almighty and coming with the clouds of heaven!" Michael is, at this moment, communicating to God. He spreads his untied arm wide. He closes his eyes and lifts his head upward. The wind gusts through him.

Boom! Lightning strikes!

A gigantic oak tree lands across the track. It's braced by two standing others. The train rams the fallen oak. Ernie is ejected out of the window.

On the control panel, there is a shiny silver dollar next to the A.N.G.E.L. release-container.

Ernie Goldstein is thrown toward the last tree at the gorge's edge.

Michael pleads: "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do."

Ernie crashes, back first, onto a sturdy branch.

With one arm, Michael holds to the plane. The craft catapults him from the train. As he's ejected, the train's roofing rips the white shirt off his body. The metal leaves bloody tire tracks on his back. In pain, Michael utters not a sound.

The plane flies clear of the crashing, jackknifed train. Fire and black smoke rise as Michael descends. From high overhead and far below, Michael looks like he's riding on angel wings. The plane glides over the gorge.

From the structural wreckage of the bridge, in the center of the geological gap, a large, wooden cross protrudes. With double crossbeams, it resembles a telephone pole. Michael releases the rope. It falls, like a snake, into the train wreckage. He lets go of the case. It drops onto the bridge below. He reaches out for the crossbeam. Like a trapeze artist, he swings onto it. The crashing plane severs the one crossbeam. A crucifix is formed. A weathered, wooden plaque reads:

FOUNTAIN RIVER

The A.N.G.E.L. continues out of sight into the waters below. Blurring by, like a magician's handkerchief over a top hat, is the name of the plane: SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS.

A voice screams...

"Ijjul'jula!"

It's Noah. Miraculously, he'd been walking the bridge.

Noah, from his foot to his hands, clings to Michael's feet. He sheds Michael's shoes and pants trying to scale up him. The pants blow onto the scaffolding. Michael's left only in his briefs with Noah holding his feet. Slowly looking up Michael, Noah sees blood dripping down Michael's chest, arms, and face. Michael is in great pain.

The sign above his head is more easily read:

FOUNTA **INRI** VER

Noah, fearing his own death is imminent, screams out, "Save me a place!"

The cross slowly tilts over—like a clock's arm from noon to three.

Michael sees a vision in his head. He looks up to the ecliptic sun in a darkened, gray sky; the rays of light shine down on him.

A powerful backlight reflects the light back skyward. A direct line between Michael and Heaven is opened.

**"I, have sent My
angel to testify
to you these things
in the churches.
I am the Root and
the Offspring of
David, the Bright
and Morning Star.'"**

Michael moves his torso like a pendulum. He's trying to swing Noah safely onto the scaffolding. It's apparent the only way Michael can—is by himself letting go. He mouths to himself..."Sac-rifice."

**"Surely I am
coming
quickly.'"**

Michael is in his greatest agony. His last breath, his final act, is to..."Save a life." He thinks, Will it take his own life from him?...

...No angel is *that* omnipotent.

On the bridge, Noah is hunched looking down. He's saved! He's alive!

Michael breathes: "It is finished."

He bows his head.

His hands release from the cross; long, wooden splinters have pierced his palms.

The one man falls, as if in slow-motion. Like a dove to guide him, his bloodstained Bible flutters down after him. Its thin pages rustle free from the binding.

An earthquake rattles the bridge and rocks the ground.

As if in normal speed; he lands, flat on his back, on a concrete slab at the foundation of the bridge. An exposed, iron spike violently spears his abdomen.

The river's splashing water mixes with the gushing blood. His lungs have collapsed. Blood spews from his mouth. The Bible too, lands on its spine on the muddy sandbar.

On the bridge scaffolding; Noah, from his leg to his torso, is pinned beneath the criss-cross of a steel girder—his wrists slashed by two spikes. He is dead. Over Noah's head, the wind frees the written pages from the binder containing Michael's manuscript.

In the tree branch, at the edge of the cliff; Ernie

Goldstein's body is nested there; compound fractures of both legs have mixed the gushing blood with the mire. His eyes closed forever, he falls dead from the tree.

Back at the slab, the anchored body flops about. His shirt is shrouded over him.

D A Y T E N

DEATH

HOLY SATURDAY - APRIL 22, 2000

D A Y E L E V E N

IN THE END...

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 2000

SUNRISE

On the airport land, the white concrete edifice is no more than a junk pile. A bronze sign has fallen. It reads:

ROMAN EMPIRE BUILDERS MCMXCIX

From out of the concrete carnage, a tow truck tows the completely flattened scrap of four-wheeled steel that was the radio promo van. Aunt Mary escorts it like a casket.

At the airport terminal, on the ground transportation level, Joe Arimathea, a respected journalist, reports live from the scene. "It's Easter Sunday. This is Joe Arimathea reporting.... Three days have passed—"

Before he can complete his statement, Mary speaks into the microphone. She's in disbelief. "'Suddenly, there was a mighty earthquake...'"

At the wall of the gorge, in the grated end of the E.A.T.M.E. tunnel, overlooking the site of Michael's death place, Maggie is hunched in the pipe.

Mary continues on, saying: "'...as an angel of the Lord descended from heaven. He came to the stone, rolled it back, and sat on it.'"

In the wall of the gorge, Maggie's covered in sewage and waste, a spot of residue on her forehead. She's in tears. She masks her nose and mouth with her hands. She appears as if she's "speaking no evil."

In a large, rusted out, stilted gas tank on the mountaintop, sawdust fills the emptied, hollowed-out tank; adjectives describing the way Lincoln feels. Hiding his eyes, he's huddled, weeping bitterly. He "sees no evil."

In the identical, pious, bedroom from the beginning of the story; from the TV, Joe Arimathea's voice is heard. "There are three people reported dead and one man known missing."

The TV light creates the silhouette of a man's torso similar in proportion to Michael's. Lying in bed, he reaches to the chair at the bedside. The TV light seems to make a housefly on the chair glow. The fly rests on the identical piece of paper Mark Anthony presented to Roman when Michael endeavored upon writing his story. The hand reaches over and covers the housefly beneath a glass. Mark Anthony, obediently, says to himself: "'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.'"

A one-time paved road leads from the terminal. On the dirt pathway—with the sun rising—the silhouetted image of a man appears. His back turned, He exhorts a word to a gentleman walking side by side with Jordan. The Jordan children lag behind. The men don't recognize the man; therefore, they listen only casually to Him. As the man's image walks on, the gentleman repeats the message for edification to Jordan. "When you cross the supernatural with God..."

In the bedroom, Mark Anthony's hands remove the glass-encased fly by holding the paper beneath it. The maneuver reveals

a shiny, black folder much like a Bible cover. The gold embossed title coincides with the gentleman's words. The gentleman continues on saying, "...the unexplainable becomes *The Archangel*." Mark Anthony pulls back the paper a little further and sees the briefcase under the folder.

At sunset, outside of the terminal, Joe Arimathea is standing alone. He reports: "...but these are written that you may believe..."

At the Fountain River Gorge, a hand-written manuscript page is cascading down the river.

Arimathea continues on to say: "...Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that through this belief you may have life in His name.'"

In the Fountain River, the chapter heading is barely distinguishable: MICHAEL. More easily seen, is the simplistic, two-lined, drawing of a fish. The drawing floats by the cement slab. The man's semi-folded shirt rests where his head no longer does. The man is gone. He has disappeared from the face of the earth.

At the woods, on the other side of the gorge, the rudimentary drawing of a squirrel lays on the

snowy ground. In the vicinity, an albino squirrel stands on its haunches. The squirrel then dashes for the woods.

The drawing of a cat blows in the wind. It's swiped and pawed at by a white, mountain lion that roars silently. It too, heads out of sight back into the woods.

The drawing of a dog lay beside the white wolf. The wolf howls, but cannot be heard. It also turns and runs into the woods.

The childlike drawing of a horse gallops in the gust. A magnificent, wild, white horse rises to its hind legs. The horse whinnies in silence.

At the peak of the clouded mountaintop there is snowcapped, white grass; a white flower; the trunk, branch, and leaves of a white tree; there is the face of the moon; the sky; and the prevailing wind, which blows the first line of wispy, angel-shaped clouds away.

And war
broke out
in
heaven:
Michael
and his
angels
fought
with the
dragon;
and the
dragon
and his
angels
fought,
but they
did not
prevail,
nor was a
place
found for
them in
heaven
any
longer.

Rising
in
the
Heavens
is
Jesus
Christ—
The Image of Mankind.
There is a circular rainbow around the
sun...
The
promise
of
the
Son
of
God
to
come.



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