Scene 1

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

JOE: What is a man who has eaten his fill?
A man who is finished, done for it, nil.
What hope can he wield?
It’s all delivered, signed, sealed.
He sprawls inert, barely taking in air.
Life lies like a rock on his heart.
Can I describe such despair?
Darkness like that can’t be found anywhere.
But two hours later?
Two hours later, despair despairs.
Though less clear-cut, the horizon grows brighter.
The man doesn’t budge, his belly still presses,
But his breath is lighter.

And four hours later?
Four hours later, hope begins to creep
Into his belly. Not a peep
Of appetite but some idea steals in,
And the man who lay on his back an hour before like a turtle,
With no feeling,
Aiming belches of sorrow up at the ceiling.
Wakes up a bit, turns over on his belly
Like a block
And shifts the job of honking from front to backside.
Whoever said that life is a rock?
And six hours later?
Six hours later the rock turns into a bird;
For life is light, colorful, spreads its wings,
Little chirps in the belly and the man once more springs,
Soars, fresh and wide awake, salivating, to the table.

A new man is born every six hours.

**FEMALE GUEST:** For me it works out very nice:
Every six hours, I'm born twice.

**Scene 2**

**SERVANT:** My lord, the beggars beg leave to come to the table.

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

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

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

But we are not like you; we suck and suck.
We go to it with devotion, diligently, deliberately,
Almost tearfully. You'd be amazed—
You who gorge yourself on meat
And leave the bone with a lick so hasty—
How fat and juicy it still is, how tasty.

Part of the juice, of course,
Comes from your spit.

But that's just it—
To suck a bit of bone
That was once in the mouth of a contented swell—
That's not just a bone, it's a pedigree as well.

*(They finish and exit.)*

**Scene 3**

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

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

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

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

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

We gorge ourselves on warm bone gruel.
For the rest, we let the stomach rule.

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

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

**Scene 4**

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

**JOB:** What will he eat, the table?!
Blessed art Thou Oh Lord Our God Who feedeth all His creatures.
Let him in.

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

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

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

Scene 5

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

CHAPTER TWO
MESSAGERS OF POVERTY

Scene 1

Job and the Guests drowse off. Enter Messenger of Poverty 1.

Messenger of Poverty 1: Bad news, my lord.
(Pause)
My lord, bad news.

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

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

Messenger of Poverty 1: And if I do—
Will the stones in your mine jump back up
And stand on top of one another once again?
Job: My little iron mine!
My little iron mine in Lebanon!
This is how a man feels when they rip off
His hand and foot. The iron mine was half my wealth.
(He stands up.)

Messenger of Poverty 1: Where are you going, my lord?
Whatever has to be done—was done.
The police are investigating. My lord’s accountants
Are balancing the books. My lord’s lawyers
Are drawing up claims for the imperial treasury in Rome.
The emperor himself guaranteed investments in imperial development.
(He exits.)
JOB: Now it's happened to me, what always
Happens to somebody else.
The most awful thing of all has happened to me.
Nothing could be worse.
And if we were called on to bestow
Our share of suffering and sorrow—
I've just given mine, be it nice or mean.
Thank God—now I'm clean.

Scene 2

Enter Messenger of Poverty 2.

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 2: Bad news, my lord.
JOB: They already told me.
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 2: Who? I was sure I was the first—
JOB: They were already here.
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 2: Well, when more information comes in
From Alexandria, they'll tell you right away.
JOB: Alexandria?
JOB: What happened in Alexandria?
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 2: You said they told you—
JOB: What happened in Alexandria?! What happened in Alexandria?!
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 2: A dreadful storm. The port was flooded.
Your dock sank, your ships
Shattered on the rocks.
JOB: What am I? A player in a farce?
This is my life! My life!
Those docks and ships you destroyed with your breath
Were the other half of my fortune! Now I have nothing!
(Pause)
Everything?! Nothing’s left?! You’re sure?!
(Pause)
Two fruits of my life, two beloved children
I bore and tended and raised up.
What do I say, children?!
It's me, my own flesh and bones,
My arms and legs, my sweat and blood!
D'nt I give myself there,

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

MESSENGER OF POVERTY 2: Where are you going, my lord?
Whatever has to be done—was done.
The police are investigating. My lord’s accountants
Are balancing the books. My lord’s lawyers
Are drawing up claims for the imperial treasury in Rome.
The emperor himself guaranteed investments in imperial development.
(He exits.)

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

Scene 3

JOB: Perhaps you have some bad news for me?
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: Yes.
JOB (Frightened): Forgive me. I'm just joking.
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: I'm not.
JOB: Lebanon?
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: No, my lord.
JOB: Alexandria, then?
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: No, my lord.
JOB: Something else?
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: Yes, my lord.
JOB (Laughing): I don't have anything else, I don't
Have any more businesses. Go
Tell your news to somebody else.
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: No. You.
JOB: Somebody else.
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: Only you.
JOB: I don't have anything. The two messengers before you
Already wiped out everything.
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: My lord, listen—
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: You don’t have any accountants or any clerks.
JOB: I’m going to my office to clarify things for myself.
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: You don’t have an office either, my lord.
JOB: It’s my office! There’s my chair,
My beloved desk,
All my little toys—
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: It’s not yours anymore.
JOB: To hell with you! Don’t tell me “It’s not yours!”
Who are you?! Who are you and what are you—
“This is yours, this isn’t yours”—to hell with you!
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: My lord is not in a position to talk to me like that.
JOB: What?!
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3: Lower your voice.
JOB (Raising his hand to him): Varlet! Dog!
MESSENGER OF POVERTY 3 (Pushing him): Dog yourself. From dog you came.
Dog is your father. Bitch is your mother.
Son of a dog. Phooey!
(He spits in his face, exits.)

Scene 4

The Guests withdraw slowly and exit.

JOB: You’re going? Well, it’s late; good night to you all.
Too bad it suddenly grew late.
We could sit some more and leisurely reminisce:
Remember how once, five minutes ago,
I was a rich man?
Not so long ago, five minutes. Remember?
Like a lord I strode the earth. And once,
Five minutes ago, in this place,
Who would have dreamed of calling me dog
Or spitting in my face?!
(He bursts into bitter sobs, then stops.)
Suddenly it grew so late—Oh, just a phrase.
Remember? Five minutes ago. Those were the days.
(The last of the Guests avoid him and exit. He remains alone.)
CHAPTER THREE
THE BAILIFFS

Scene 1

LEADER OF THE BAILIFFS: We're the Bailiffs, come to carry out
the decree.
You're bankrupt.
We've come to confiscate all you own,
Except for you yourself—skin, bones, hair,
Body, soul, and underwear.
(To the other Bailiffs) Take the tables, take the benches, take
the chairs,
Take the plates, take the cups, take the forks,
Take the knives, take the spoons, take the jars,
Take the pans, take the bottles, take the corks,
Take the corkscrews, take, take, take, take, take the cases
Of the corkscrews, take the candelsticks, take the jugs
Take the tablecloths, take the napkins, take the vases,
Take the sofas, take the carpets, take the rugs,
Take the bows, take the plants, take the frills,
Take the screens, take the curtains, take the clocks,
Take the shutters, take the glass, take the sills,
Take the bolts, take the keys, take the locks,
Take the doors, take the floors, take the ceiling, take the walls,
And if I forgot something—without violating any rights—take
that, too.
Take.
(The Bailiffs empty the hall and strip Job down to his underwear.)

JOB: You forgot my gold teeth.
I've got some gold teeth in my mouth.
(He opens his mouth.)

LEADER OF THE BAILIFFS: Don't be ridiculous.
Don't try to make us into monsters.
We're all just human, part of the group,
We all go home to our wives at night,
To our slippers and a hot bowl of soup.
(The Bailiffs exit.)

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

From her mother, too.
Shuddering, we emerge, one from another,
A long line, naked and new.
"What shall I wear?" asked my mother in the morning,
But when the day was done,
Naked was she borne to the grave.
Now, too stand naked, her son.
(Leader of the Bailiffs sneaks in, approaches Job, grabs him by the
throat and takes out a pair of pliers.)

LEADER OF THE BAILIFFS: Open your mouth and don't say a word
Or—you die!
(Job opens his mouth wide. The Leader of the Bailiffs pulls out his
gold teeth. Job is about to shout in pain.)
Here's a tooth—one!
Another tooth—two! Three!
Not a sound! Swallow your shout!
It hurts? Your mouth is bleeding?
Bite your lip! Swallow your shout!
Help me get through this job and get out.
(He exits. Job shouts mutely.)

Scene 2

JOB: My sons and daughters, fruit of my loins,
Look at this hand—with this hand
Your father fed you,
Like magic, infinite plenty he drew—
Bread and honey and butter, flowers and clover,
The charms we thought would never end. Now it's over.
The magic is gone. The hand is empty.
Now it's stretched out to you.
Congratulations, my children!
Unto you a new father is born!
Look at him. How sweet. Just like a babe,
Naked, weeping, and weeping. Skin smooth as silk.
Helpless, toothless. Take him in your arms,
Rock him, feed him on porridge and milk,
Put him to sleep with lullabies, keep him warm.
He needs your love.
Oh, my children, the hand is empty,
The father who gave is no more.
A new father is born unto you—a father who takes.
Congratulations!

CHAPTER FOUR
MESSengers OF DEATH

Scene 1

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

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

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

(He approaches Messenger of Death 1.)
I'd like it better if you looked at me coldly;
Those eyes, full of pity,
Can mean only one thing—

(Suddenly he groans.)

Which one?!

MESsenger OF DEATH 1: The firstborn. At his own banquet. At noon.
Suddenly a mighty wind struck the house.
Fire quickly spread to all corners, mounted the stairs.
Shrieks of fear and pain were heard.
When the fire died, so did the shrieks.

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

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

He knew I'd come and put him on my lap.
When he ran around the room
Shrieking, shrouded in smoke,
When all the years suddenly fell away
Like a shell. When he became once more a frightened child.
"Papa!" he called to me. "Papa, Papa!"
He screamed and couldn't understand
How the flesh so dear to his papa was burning up:
"Where is Papa?" he called to me. "Papa! Papa!"

Here is my firstborn son. His face turned to me
But his eyes were already fixed
On something beyond me.
Disappointed, perhaps, he turned away from me,
Walked off, left me alone
With the burden of my guilt.

Scene 2

Enter Messenger of Death 2.

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

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

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

JOB: My daughters, my little girls,
I'm just beginning to grieve
For your older brother.
Now you come, too, two dead girls,
Mute, obstinate, demand
Your share of grief. As once,
When you jumped up to hug me when I came home,
Rejoicing, shouting, prattling away, kissing my
Cheeks with warm lips. Your breath was so fresh
Rolled down to the path beneath,
And crushed the passersby, your son included.
(Enter two stretcher-bearers with a body covered with a blanket.
They put it on the ground and exit.)
It may comfort you to know that death was instantaneous—
No suffering, no agony.
(Pause)
It may comfort you to know that the calamity isn’t yours alone.
Other people were killed—a bride and groom, children.
(Pause)
I have no other comfort for you.
(Exit Messenger of Death 3.)

JOB: My youngest son, my favorite child.  
Grief for any one of them  
Would have drowned me like a flood.  
Grief for all four of them—  
I don’t have the strength to bear it.  
And so, my youngest son, I defer the tidings of your death  
For another time. May I live to see the day  
When I have strength for the hard labor  
Of grieving for you.
Now I’ll say only this: Welcome back.  
They all came back. All my children are here.  
My little boys, my little girls, you came home.  
And the house is filled once again. Welcome back.

Scene 4

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

THE TORMENTS OF JOB
CHAPTER FIVE

THE FRIENDS

Scene 1

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

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

Job's best friends. We heard
That calamity befell him.
We have come to give him comfort.
(Job doesn't respond.)

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

We're his best friends—

ZOPHAR: Friends, here's our companion Job.

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

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

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

I could be a happy man if not—
For this itching, just this itching.

I'll tell you, gentlemen, you itching beasts,
Without this itching—the world would not be the same.
Why complain? Everything's fine, splendid, a game,
So well-balanced, life, death—the world goes on, it seems.
But this itching ruins our happiness, spoils our dreams.
You know what brought down the great Emperor
Of Rome? Itching. The Emperor of Rome raised his hand
To scratch his nose and lost his neck.
Listen to the words of an experienced man, my boy;
It is only itching that separates man from his joy.
(The three Friends weep silently.)

Scene 2

JOB: Why do you weep? You itch too?

ELIPHAZ: Our good friend, Job, do not condemn us
For not being stricken with your plague.
We too are at the mercy of God's wrath

Or His grace.
And if God should turn His face
From me, too,
I would be itching and naked over there, instead of you
And you would be standing here, blessed,
Giving me pity—and dressed.
God chose you to suffer
And us—to bring you consolation.
My friends, let us now rend our garments,
Cover our heads with ashes,
And pray humbly to God.
(The three Friends sit facing Job.)

JOB: What are you talking about—"God"?
What does God have to do with this,
The wreck of my life?
If that's God's doing,
What's His game? What are the rules of His play?
Why does He return my sons as carcasses all in one day,
Why does He crush my mines in Lebanon,
Sink my ships in Alexandria, and bring down the Emperor of Rome?
Maybe you'll tell me why, for dessert, a sweet,
He gives me this itch for a treat?
Why is He punishing me, this God?
That's a reward? Divine Justice? An even rod?
No, my dear friends.
The world of Job
Does not include God.

ELIPHAZ: Dear friend, Job, we do not intend to prate
Morality to you in your present state.
We always keep in mind that things are good for us now, it's true—
Though who knows for how long—and bad for you.
Nor do we want to hint
That God is punishing you for your sins.
The whole world knows
That Job is a righteous man. And yet.
There is a "yet."
Scratch around inside yourself a bit.
Maybe you once committed a crime? No?
Try to recall, now's the time. No?
Maybe many years ago?
Never. Well, let's say.
Maybe you were once on the verge of sin? No? No way?
Not even that? Well, let's say,
But maybe you sinned only in thought?
Not even there? Let's say,
There's a lot of "let's say" here.
That really ought to make you a righteous man, so
Maybe God is simply testing you, like long ago
Abraham, another righteous man (so much greater)—
And like him, He will reward you richly (generations later)?
Who can know the mind of God?
We are only small details
But only God can see it whole.
Man makes small accounts, one and one, plume and broom,
And the Lord above sits and summons up all the brooms,
All the plumes, the heaven and the earth.
Look at the world. Don't rip pieces—
Look at all of it. See how correct it is, how right.
Embracing everything, in beauty and in might.
Into this world, our lives are poured
Like water from a dark pitcher
Suddenly bursting out onto the open field.
Here is the ground, here the sky.
Here are trees and fruit and birds that fly,
A world splendid, colorful, a world filled with sores
But also with solace and healing.
A world familiar as our home
But also filled with mystery and concealing.
A world where darkness is encircled by a great ring of light.
Job, it takes greatness of soul to ponder
The whole world. If you have the magnanimity now to wonder—
This is the time. Lift your eyes up.
Leave off your sufferings, accept God! Rise up!

**Job:** My good friend, you're tormenting me!
You talk to me about justifying God;
First prove you can justify man.
Don't torment me. Let me scratch in peace.
I don't know the grace of creation. I don't know God.

**Bildad:** You knew Him when things were good.
**Job:** When things were good—things were good. Now
Things are bad. I don't know God.

**Eliphaz:** Does God exist when we're content
And disappear when happiness is spent?
Is God a bubble of soap
That we blow with a puff of air,
And then burst with a little poke?
People in torment like you and even worse
Call to Him in their distress.
They see no conflict
Between belief in God and their affliction.
For who are you with all your pain?
A hundred yards away
No one hears your scream or plea.
A thousand yards from here, you look like a flea.
What do you think you look like from the stars?!

**Job:** Let the stars accept the existence of God! Let he
Whose notions of right and wrong haven't gone awry,
He who believes the arms of God embrace him—
Let him embrace God!
I am small and blind and groping like a mole
In a dark burrow. In darkness I live,
Total darkness, a hole.
And I hear of light only in tales!

**Eliphaz:** The blind man doesn't know the sun
But he does know it exists.
You're steeped in your itching but you know
Under your skin that God exists.

**Job:** No! I exist! You exist!
The gap between us exists! God does not exist!
The itch on my skin exists!
The death of my sons exists!
The loss of all my wealth exists!
All I do not have—
That's what exists!

**Bildad:** You're quite arrogant, you know? A little humility.
Just because you're suffering
And we show complete understanding of your plight
Does not mean that you are right.
There's the demagoguery of the contented man;
But there's also the demagoguery that suffering and torment bring.
You're not allowed to do everything, not yet everything.
You think if you yell "my itching exists!" day and night,
That wipes out God. Your world today is itching—right.
God is long-suffering and generous. He's not mean,
You're not the first itcher He's ever seen.
But I'm not generous like God.
I'm just an impatient man; I mind—
I won't let you spit on all that is holy, divine.

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

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

**Scene 3**

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

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

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

**BILDAD:** You don't exist! You don't exist!
Not one member of our society
Would emit such dirty garbage! Not for a moment!
Not if he is a member of our society!

**JOB:** "Our society"? What society is "our society"?
(Point to the bodies.)
Here is my society. With them I live
And socialize. For them and for me—
For our society—there's no room for God!

**BILDAD:** Huddle together and you'll find room! Four corpses
And a poor wretch smitten with boils won't crown
And won't drown our God!
It's easy for you. You talk like a man who has
Nothing to lose.
I have. I'm not stricken like you.
I have to choose
Life. And it's not easy to keep
Holding to the fragile pole.
Of life. I’m tired, too; I want to drop the role,
Lie on the ground, beat my breast. But I refrain.
I won’t let you sit and shout there is no God!
I won’t let you. You’re insane!

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

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

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

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

Scene 4

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

(He approaches Job.)

In this world we’re all simply
Frightened orphans seeking our father.
Did we forget the father’s mercy for his sons?
And you who lie at our feet,
On your heap of corpses, itching,
How did we forget your father’s mercy for you?

(He kneels next to Job.)

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

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

JOB: Papa! I called out—Papa!

ZOPHAR: And he was always there; he came to you and leaned
over you,
Picked you up in his arms,
Held you in his embrace,
And you felt his warm breath on your face.

JOB: (Tears beginning to flow from his eyes); Papa—

ZOPHAR: You buried your frightened face in his neck,
A smile of relief hovered over your lips,
Your breath calmed down and you fell asleep.

JOB: (Sobbing): Papa—Papa—Where is he, my father?

ZOPHAR: (Hugging Job); There, up above.

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

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

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

ZOPHAR: Hold out your hands to him.

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

ZOPHAR: He’s holding out his hands to you. Don’t you see?

JOB: My eyes are dimmed by tears—

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

JOB: Yes, I think I do. He’s answering me.

Now I see clearly
His hands reaching out to me.

ZOPHAR: He’ll never desert you.
He’s hugging you—

JOB: He’s hugging me—I feel—
He’s hugging me now—

(Suddenly he bursts into bitter wailing.)

Papa, look what happened to me, Papa!
Look what happened to me in this world
You brought me into with joy!
Look what happened to your boy!
Look what happened to the joy!

ZOPHAR: You were dreaming, I told you;
The world is a bubble of a dream.
JOB (Gradually calming down): Ye, a dream. I was only dreaming.
ZOPHAR: Now you wake up in the arms of your father
And he rocks you slowly,
Up, far above the world,
Stars here, the moon there,
Softly and gently and your eyes are shut tight
And you open them ever again to see light—
JOB (With his eyes shut): And I open them ever again to see light—

(A silent joy begins to fill him.)
Papa’s alive, Papa’s not dead,
From the cradle of his death, my Papa arises,
My sons and daughters will do the same.
For the world’s just a dream, a bubble of a dream,
And death, like the snow, washed away in the stream.
Farewell suffering, farewell sorrow,
Goodbye to my dead daughters and sons;
I’m a baby again, warm in Papa’s lap;
Above the world, he carried me far away,
Softly and gently and my eyes are shut tight
And I won’t open them ever again to see light—
(Zophar rocks him in his lap.)

Rock me, Papa, rock me, like that—
ZOPHAR: Call him, talk to him: Our father who art in heaven—
JOB: Our father who art in heaven—
ZOPHAR: Who sits in the highest—
JOB: Who sits in the highest—
ZOPHAR: Into your hands I entrust my spirit—
JOB: Into your hands I entrust my spirit—
ZOPHAR: And in the shadow of your wings will I take refuge—
JOB: And in the shadow of your wings will I take refuge—
ZOPHAR: Hear my voice—
JOB: Hear my voice—
ZOPHAR: May your ears heed the sound of my supplications—
JOB: May your ears heed the sound of my supplications—
ZOPHAR: For you are good and forgiving and merciful—
JOB: For you are good and forgiving and merciful—
ZOPHAR: God of all the world.
JOB: God of all the world.

(Pause)

CHAPTER SIX
THE SOLDIERS

Scene 1

Enter Five Soldiers, led by an Officer.

OFFICER: In the name of the new Emperor,
Emperor of Great Rome and her colonies,
These are the words of the Emperor:
I am God, that is he, the Emperor.
You shall have no other gods
Except me, the Emperor.
All prayers and sacrifice to other gods—
Are forbidden. Religious rituals in the temple—are forbidden.
The idol of the new god
Will replace all other idols.
No temple priests, no attendants,
No rabbis, no cantors, no sextons. The new god
Will send his own sextons.
For these are the words of the Emperor;
The god of the Jews is null and void, wiped out.
All who believe in him are heretics and rebels.
To reinforce the new belief and make it crystal clear:
All those who believe in the god of the Jews will have
A spit stuck up their rear.

Scene 2

OFFICER (To Eliphaz): You, c’mere.
(Eliphaz comes to him.)
Does the Jewish god exist or not?
(Pause)
(To the Soldiers) This man is a rebel. Put him on the spit.

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

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

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

(Pause)

Esteemed soldiers, all of us here will confirm That he said to us: "There is no God."

OFFICER: We want to hear it from him.

BILDAD (Quietly, to the Officer): Let's go off to the side. He'll say what you want But not in front of everybody.

OFFICER: The confession is in public. That's the Emperor's decree.

BILDAD: Eliphaz, my friend, the esteemed soldiers want You to repeat what you said before.

(Pause. He embraces Eliphaz.)

Eliphaz, my friend, when you consider the subject deeply now, Think not about Job's dead children; think about Your own children: they're alive. Think about your fields under the plow. They produced a splendid crop this year, right? Think of your house, of dinner. That wonderful dinner after a day of toil; Of slippers, a glass of wine, a chat with friends around the table at night. The lovely routine of our lives, the seasons, the days, The holidays. Did you swim in the sea this year? Warmed your bones on the soft sand, in the sun's rays? Eliphaz, my friend, my comrade true,
I have always insisted and I continue to insist on the importance of social law and order.
No doubt, the innocent attempt to engage The base of social order
With a god in heaven was necessary at some past stage Of human development. God was a rung,
A means to rise to the highest step,
Where the Emperor is hung.
In the middle, wretched people stuck.
Happy are they at the top, where I now stand.
Peeping at the hem of the Emperor’s frock
And calling out in gratitude: There is no god!

Scene 4

OFFICER (To Zophar): You.

ZOPHAR (Approaching him): There is a god—

OFFICER: Put him—

ZOPHAR:—in my ass.

OFFICER: Who?

ZOPHAR: God.

(Pause)

OFFICER: You make things a bit complicated for me.

That is, you don’t deny his existence.

On the other hand, I’m not such an idiot to think you really believe in him

OFFICER: You show him up your ass.

On the third hand, if god

OFFICER: You still believe in him.

On the fourth hand, if you do believe in him,

OFFICER: Can’t you find a better place for him

ZOPHAR: Than your filthy ass?

OFFICER: In short, either you’re poking

ZOPHAR: Fun at me, or you’re joking

OFFICER: To curry favor with the brass.

But I have precise instructions and I need

OFFICER: A simple answer to a simple question:

ZOPHAR: Does god exist or not?

Scene 5

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

JOB: My dear fool, don’t you see him

STRETCHING OUT HIS ARMS TO HUG ME.

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

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

OFFICER: On this human pile of weeds.

ZOPHAR: The man went mad because of a calamity—

OFFICER: He’s not responsible for his words or deeds.

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

OFFICER: Anyway, when is madness an excuse? That nut

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

Already has twelve disciples. So? Are they

NUTS TOO? SHOULD THE IMPERIAL ARMY SIT ON ITS ASS

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

I’ll be honest with you: my men

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

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

DIFFERENCE IN ASSES IS PRETTY HAZY.

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

JOE: But my loyal friend Zophar, why are you  
So upset? What is it?  
Did someone lose his four children and is he weeping?  
You know, from up there, from the bosom of the Lord,  
A weeping man looks like he's sneezing.  
The shrouds—  
Like handkerchiefs. Grief, joy—all movement  
Is the same and quite absurd. From up there, my friend.  
It's all so amusing.  
Who separated me from my father?  
Who brought me down  
From the bosom of the Lord?  

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

Scene 6

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

ZOPHAR: Take fifty dinars and let him go.  

OFFICER: You're trying to buy the army—so cheap?  

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

OFFICER: Make it double. Maybe that'll work.  

(Zophar looks at Eliphaz and Bildad. They don't respond.)  

ZOPHAR: No, it's not worth more than fifty  
To me. I did what a man  
Must. My conscience is at peace.  

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

Scene 7

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

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

WILL FIND THE ENTRANCE TO THE ASS.

SOLDIER: You can't mistake the smell.  

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

JOB: Oh! My arse! My arse! Oh god!  
My arse, my arse! Oh god, my arse!  

OFFICER: That man's whole being  
Is now concentrated in his ass.  
All family ties, instincts,  
Feelings, loyalties, and opinions  
Are all mixed up in a shapeless mass—  
A heavy fog, and the awful pain in his ass  
Flickers like the beam from a lighthouse.  
As the spit ascends to his belly  
The pain in his ass will dissolve in the fog.  
Give way to a new focus of being.  

JOB: Oh! My guts! My guts! Oh god!  
My guts, my guts! Oh god, my guts!  

OFFICER: Now he makes his god pass  
To his guts from his ass.  

ZOPHAR (Shouting): Deny god, Job!  
Say there is no god!  
Deny god!  

(The Soldiers raise the spit Job is impaled on, putting the end on the ground.)  

JOB: Papa, they raise me up to you on an iron pole.  
On poles and crosses and spears and pyres they raise us,  
Our arms stretched out to our fathers.  
I'm riding up to my Papa, on a knife.  
How dreadful is the trip, but how great the grace,  
How sweet the repose at the end of the journey—  
To look my Papa in the face.  
(He falls silent.)

Scene 8

The three Friends stand looking at Job on the spit.  

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

Job: Don’t leave me alone with god!
   My friends, don’t leave me
   Alone with god!

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE ENTERTAINERS

Scene I

Enter the Ringmaster.

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

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

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

Ringmaster: What? You’re joking. We missed the part
   Where you shoved in the spit
   And pulled down his pants;
   The shrieks of fear, all
   The humiliation and scorn—
   The juiciest part.
   The pole’s deep in his belly,
   He hardly has another hour
   Of silent agony.
   How many tickets do you think you’ll sell for an hour
   Of inner agony? Who’s interested these days
   In a man suffering in silence?
   The audience, you know, pays
   To hear a little singing, something gay.

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

Ringmaster: Really? And can somebody guarantee
   That a hemorrhage or a fit
   Won’t carry him off any minute?

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

Ringmaster: I don’t know much about anatomy.

Officer: Thirty percent to the circus, 30 to the Emperor.

Ringmaster: And the other 40?

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

(They shake hands.)

RINGMASTER (Addressing the audience): Ladies and gentlemen, 
the sun now is setting, another 
Weary day of buying and selling 
Comes to an end. 
Now as you wend your way home 
To potatoes and soup in a bowl, 
Be sure to throw a little crust to the soul. 
Have you closed the shutters? Dimmed the light? 
Did you lock the store up tight? 
Ladies and gentlemen, five minutes for art. All right?

Scene 2

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

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

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

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

DWARF: Judge us not by African pricks. 
We live in Asia. Judge us by Asian dicks. 
(The Stripper dances and strips in front of the Dwarf. When she is naked, she examines his erect penis.)

STRIPPER: Well, even on that wretched scale, 
You don't fit the accepted tale 
That nature made you topsy-turvy— 
A short body with a long prick. 
No, nature fucked you, barrel, stock, and lock: 
Short body, short life, and short cock. 
You have something long? 
Suffering, we may regard. 
Your suffering is long, long and hard. 
(She looks at Job, then at the spit.)

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

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

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

Scene 3

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

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

Scene 4

Two Clowns climb ladders on either side of Job, paint him like a clown.

SOLEMN CLOWN: “That’s final,” he says, and who will remind him  
Of all the final things he pronounced in his life?  
For what is man? Here’s a man for you:  
Now he cries “My Son, My Son,” now he shouts “My Ass.”

Job gargles his death rattle.

RINGMASTER (To Job): You won’t leave me right in the middle,  
will you?  
You look like a reasonable man, you’re bread for my children tomorrow.  
Listen how they cry out to me: Papa—Papa—in sorrow.  
You wouldn’t take bread out of the mouth of babes, would you?
OFFICER: Too late. This is death.
RINGMASTER: He could easily have gone on for another hour.
OFFICER: I don’t tell you how to train elephants,
   Don’t tell me how to smell death.
   For ten years I’ve lived with death, like a little monkey
   Sitting on my shoulder, playing with my ear.
Gentlemen, this is death.
   *(He holds out his hand for the money. The Ringmaster gives him his share.)*
JOB: Death? Death itself? This is the famous moment
   I’ve heard so much about? It’s here?
   *(The Officer and Soldiers exit. The Ringmaster tries to divert Job
   and keep him from dying.)*
RINGMASTER: Hey, man! What are you thinking about now?
   Is there a god? You see something there? Huh?
   Or is it just
   A black hole, about the size of Africa?
   Huh? Hey, man, tell us! Tell us! Tell us!
   *(He hits him desperately.)*
SOLEMN CLOWN: This man is now far above us.
   He knows something we do not.
   But he will not say a thing. He is now
   in those dizzy heights where a person recognizes no one. All
   the plains
   And hills are behind him, the story of his life and deeds, the
   people and tools
   That bound him to the world—all severed from him.
   At long last, he has slipped out of his father’s tight clasp, left it
   Far behind and now he is all alone. Alone. Enveloped like a
   high priest
   In the simple shirt of the mystery of his death.
   Which each of us will have his turn
   To don.
   Someday.
JOB: *(Whispering with the last of his strength)*: What is a man on a spit?
   A man who is finished, done for it.
   Can I describe such despair?
   Darkness like that can’t be found anywhere.
   *(He retches, vomit and blood and dies.)*
RINGMASTER *(Angry)*: “Anywhere!” You couldn’t have waited
   another hour?!
   “Anywhere!” Phooey!
   *(He spits on Job’s corpse and exits. The Circus and the audience
   disperse and exit.)*

CHAPTER EIGHT
THE DEAD

Scene 1

Enter the Most Beggarly Beggar of All the Beggars. He licks Job’s vomit.

BEGGAR: Just like I said; a little patience
   And somebody finally pukes. Yes,
   Somehow we manage to live.
   There’s a god in the sky,
   Tra-la-la, tra-la-lie.
   *(He exits.)*

Scene 2

The Dead sing.

THE DEAD: But there is mercy in the world
   And we are laid to rest.
   Thus the dead lie patiently,
   With silence are we blessed.
   Grass grows on our flesh.
   The scream dies in our breast;
   But there is mercy in the world
   And we are laid to rest.