

Judas Agonistes

A Play in Two Acts

by Robert Joseph Ahola

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Synopsis

The year is 1929. Dr. Thomas Parkinson, a psychotherapist and disciple of Carl Gustav Jung has recently been commissioned to treat a single case of extraordinary psychosis in Mount St. Crispin Sanitarium, a private institution in the Eastern United States. The case: "Patient J, "a young man who entertains the iron-clad delusion that he is the reincarnation of Judas Iscariot.

Commissioned by Patient J's wealthy family, Parkinson sets about to administer a series of unconventional therapies to this seemingly hopeless case. What he finds instead in the young man, H. Jude Johnson, is someone who is charming, articulate, and chillingly accurate in all he portrays of his past life in the company of "Jesus the Christ." He is also in complete command of his remembrances, even as they haunt him.

More like a prince in exile than a desperately paranoid-schizophrenic, Jude Johnson proves, in every way, to be a match for the young psychotherapist in wit, candor, and insight. He is also uncanny in his gift of prophecy.

Able to predict future events such as the stock market crash of '29 and a global crisis that will lead to the rise of Nazi Germany, H. Jude Johnson also perfectly recalls a time and a man like no other in the history of the world.

And yet it is his personal relationship with Jesus the man, his love/hate obsessions, his political ambitions, and finally his spiritual abandonment that drive this tormented soul to the edge. Convinced that he has actually been to Hell and back, Patient J draws Thomas Parkinson along with him into both the highest aspects of human thought and the darkest places in the soul – all within a few therapy sessions.

But Parkinson is as determined in his agnosticism as H. Jude Johnson is in the faith of his own contrition. So, the question invariably arises. Whom does the therapy ultimately benefit? And what is Thomas Parkinson's tie to the historical person of Judas?

Able to work his way through the labyrinth of Patient J's consciousness, the young doctor is finally able to bring his charge the truth for which he so desperately longs. Yet he does so at the risk of his own sanity and in peril of his own redemption.

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Character Breakdown

Thomas Parkinson. A psychotherapist and disciple of Carl Gustav Jung, he is in constant contact with Dr. Jung through a series of letters he writes him. An avowed agnostic “with an open mind,” he is told that he is Patient J’s last best hope. Because of this, his determination to get to the core of Patient J’s fixations with being the betrayer of Jesus Christ becomes a fixation in itself.

Patient “J”(Jude). Self-proclaimed as the reincarnation of Judas Iscariot, he is chilling in his verbatim recounting of the life and times of Jesus. Intellectual, fatalistic, and admittedly self-absorbed, he is also obsessed with his loss of redemption and the loss of all hope.

Doctor Wright. The administrator of the Mt. St. Crispin Sanitarium, he is both fascinated with and appalled at his “star client.” He is also intensely involved in the stock market, which may prove to be his undoing.

Reverend Mother Mary Margaret. An older woman, and uncompromisingly strict, she is an old-school cleric and as such is convinced that Patient J is a minion of the Devil.

Sister Fox. [Mary Magdalene]. A quiet subdued younger woman who often attends Patient J, she is in a way his extra-dimensional tormentor. — the embodiment of “The Black Madonna,”.

Chief Warder. He appears as either as friendly orderly, “Freddie,” or a minor demon, at the appropriate moment.

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Synopsis of Scenes

Act One

Scene 1. A Writing Desk .

Scene 2. Office of Administrator .

Scene 3. Patient J's Personal Quarters.

Scene 4. Pocket set. Parkinson at his Desk.

Scene 5. Patient J's Personal Quarters

Act Two.

Scene 1. Parkinson's Office and Desk.

Scene 2. Dr. Wright's office.

Scene 3. Patient J's Personal Quarters.

Scene 4. Parkinson's Desk. The Next Day.

Scene 5. Patient J's Personal Quarters.

Scene 6. Office of the Administrator.

Scene 7. Patient J's Personal Quarters.

Scene 8. Parkinson at his Desk.

Scene 9. Patient J's Personal Quarters.

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Production Considerations

- Because of the slightly noire design of this play, dark minimalist sets would not only be acceptable but also preferable. In this dramatic vehicle, our set, design and circumstance are projected as extensions of human consciousness and the realities created out of them.

- Note: The frequent changes of scene in Act Two are flips of circumstance from the main set in Patient J's quarters to two pocket sets — Thomas Parkinson's Desk and Dr. Wright's office. These are minimalist sets and are best left in place. They would, of course, be ideally handled on a stage with appropriate fly space.

- Simplicity of setting. The play, however, would also easily rendered on a single stage with only a handful of accent pieces and appropriate lighting.

Costumes will be of the period – late 1920s. Since the majority of the players are men, these should easily be available at any costume...or with a minimum of adaptation.

Approximate running time 90 minutes.

Judas Agonistes

Act One

Scene 1. A Writing Desk. *In the soft light, a well-dressed young man Dr. Thomas Parkinson, a young psychoanalyst fresh from his studies as a disciple of Carl Gustav Jung. He gives voice to the words as he pens a letter.*

PARKINSON

Dear Doctor Jung.

"I write this letter in anticipation of a patient assigned to me here at Mt. St. Crispin Sanitarium. He has rather cryptically been code-named Patient "J." His purported psychotic delusions take him into a category of one. It seems, that Patient J is convinced that he is the disciple Judas Iscariot – the very one who betrayed his master, Jesus Christ. As you know, Dr. Jung, I declare my disbelief in all religions and their conspired mythologies. And though I, to you, must respectfully do as you once did to your mentor, Dr. Freud, and place my dissent "at the feet of his master by his loyal but disobedient servant," I truly believe that your work in the collective unconscious holds the answer to so many questions that persist in this nascent field of psychoanalysis. And though as an agnostic, I have my doubts, I remain open to all possibilities. But how do we break the code on such a mindset as the one set before me now without breaking the man himself? This is the question I ask in advance before my first encounter. My instincts tell me that this is the correct direction to take. Your advice and counsel, as always, will be held in the strictest confidence and interpreted with the utmost respect. Yours truly, Thomas Parkinson."

(He pauses to reconsider and signs.)

No, no! "Respectfully... Thomas." I've earned at least that much, I think.

He puts down the pen, stands up, dons his suit coat, and exits.

Blackout.

Scene 2. Office of the Administrator — Mount St. Crispin Sanitarium. *The administrator, Dr. Wright, sits behind a desk, apparently buying stocks over the phone. He is impeccably attired in suit and tie. There is a sense of a fashion maven about him, inconsistent with his position and job description.*

WRIGHT

Well, of course, I think Packard is a good buy at 56. It's the auto industry isn't it? Yes 1000 shares! Yes, we'll leverage 90%. That's the game these days. Besides, this is isn't risk. It's an investment in the future. It's like minting money, Ed! Minting Money!

(He sees Thomas Parkinson come into his office and rises to greet him.)

You'll have to excuse me Ed. My appointment is here. I'll have my bank wire you the money.

(He comes around his desk and extends his hand.)

Dr. Parkinson, please excuse the rudeness. I had to tend to an investment.

PARKINSON

I understand — the fever of Wall Street. A little too rich for my blood.

WRIGHT

Well, of course, it's not for everyone... Please do sit down.

(They both sit. Wright pulls out a folder.)

First I must tell you how much of an admirer I am of the work of Dr. Carl Gustav Jung. And I understand you studied with him in Austria.

PARKINSON

Yes, for three years.

WRIGHT

Amazing work! So terribly far-reaching, But not without its critics.

PARKINSON

I'm only too aware.

WRIGHT

Some of them right here, I must tell you. Although we work very hard to be progressive here at Mount St. Crispin, many are still convinced that psychoanalysis is an atheistic science. But Dr. Jung is changing that bias. To my delight, he's opened the doors of the spirit, as it were.

PARKINSON

For some of us...

WRIGHT

Well, let me assure you that you'll need all your skills with Patient "J."

PARKINSON

And I'm ready to do that.

WRIGHT

And I have to warn you; he's not your typical delusional psychotic. I believe that's the correct term.

PARKINSON

I can't make that determination yet.

WRIGHT

That's my determination, at least at this juncture. And I have to tell you. He doesn't show the typical symptoms. He's not...what is it you call it? Oh yes, paranoid. He's not paranoid in the usual sense. In fact, he's almost resigned in his assumptions of who he is – rather like a political exile. But he's treated with respect, as if everything he said has some validity.

PARKINSON

I'm sure that says a great deal about the way you operate this asylum

WRIGHT

Please, doctor. Asylum is such an antiquated term. This is a sanitarium in every modern sense of the word. We are proud of the humane treatment our patients receive.

PARKINSON

My apologies. I thought asylum originally meant "sanctuary."

WRIGHT

Not that he hasn't been without his tormentors in here. Our Mother Superior, Reverend Mother Mary Margaret, looks upon him as some sort of psychic outlaw.

PARKINSON

An interesting choice of words...

WRIGHT

My definition, not hers. No, she calls him, "That damned blasphemer!" and other descriptions less flattering. Of course The Church doesn't like psychoanalysis at all, as you know. Our mental ward here has sort of been grafted into the overall complex. So, they "tolerate" us. An uneasy alliance, at best.

PARKINSON

And could we...?

WRIGHT

Of course. I'm forgetting myself. He's just in the next wing, if you please.

(Both men get up to leave. Wright opens the door for Parkinson and follows him out. Exit upstage.)

Scene 3: Patient J's Quarters. *It is a sparse room with two chairs a table and a bed pushed against one wall. There is a partition just outside the door.*

As Dr. Wright opens the door, Reverend Mother Mary Margaret, with The Chief Warder stands with her arms crossed in triumph while Patient J (Jude) sits strapped into a straight jacket, his mouth tied shut with a leather strap. Both doctors react with predictable dismay.

WRIGHT

Good God, woman!

REVEREND MOTHER

Exactly!

WRIGHT

Please unbind this man! This is 1929, not the Middle Ages!

REVEREND MOTHER

Not until he takes back what he said about the blessed Virgin!

WRIGHT

How can he, as long as you have him trussed up like a turkey?!

REVEREND MOTHER

Called her the slickest piece of salesmanship in the history of the world!

(Parkinson snuffs a giggle. Wright remains firm.)

WRIGHT

If that were grounds for insanity, we'd have to lock up more than our friend, here. Now, let's release him.

REVEREND MOTHER

The man's demon-possessed. And only an exorcism will cure him. And he needs to clean up his language, and his revisionist sense of history.

WRIGHT

We will be the ones to determine that, Reverend Mother. Now, let him loose instantly!

(Incensed, but obedient, the old nun motions to The Chief Warder who loosens the straps and removes gag. As the bonds come off, Patient J responds with a passive, if smug approach to the incident.)

REVEREND MOTHER (to Jude)

You just think you're getting by with this...If that will be all, gentlemen!

WRIGHT

Indeed it will.

REVEREND MOTHER

Gentlemen...

(She departs. The Chief Warder follows her out. Dr. Wright turns to Patient J.

WRIGHT

My apologies.

JUDE

Not to worry. Cosmic justice will have its say. In six months, she'll be banished to a small mission in China where they'll all be bombed into mashed potatoes by a wing squadron of the Japanese Air Force in 1940.

PARKINSON

(to himself)

Ah! A psychic.

WRIGHT *(addressing Jude)*

Japan?! That nice little country of fishermen and farmers?! Oh, dear, dear. And with bombs from those clumsy little aeroplanes? What an imagination! And why would they do that?

JUDE

It's a part of their quest for world dominance...because they'll see themselves as the next Roman Empire.

DR. WRIGHT

World dominance? The next Rome?!

(He asides aloud to Parkinson)

Our friend here fancies himself quite the prophet.

JUDE

Which reminds me, doctor. What month is it?

WRIGHT

As if you didn't know. September 20th, 1929. The Autumnal Equinox.

JUDE *(thinks about it)*

September of '29... Dr. Wright, I like you. Do yourself a favor. Sell your stocks by the end of the month. Because the Market's going to crash in October and won't recover until the next Great War.

WRIGHT *(to himself but quite audible)*

Oh, my God, he really believes this!

(Recovering, he changes the subject)

Well, allow me to introduce you to Dr. Thomas Parkinson. Dr. Parkinson will be working with you on your reorientation to some new levels of thinking.

Jude squints into the light as if seeing Thomas Parkinson for the first time.

JUDE

Thomas! It's you. Thank God it's you!

(He notes Parkinson's non-reaction to him, and laughs at the irony.)

Oh no! It occurs to me. You don't know who you really are. Do you. You're the spitting image, the soul of him returned, and you're not even aware. Well, God has his little ironies!

WRIGHT

And lest we forget who we really are.

JUDE

Not again.

WRIGHT

We are Mr. H. Jude Johnson III. Age 29. Son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Johnson.

JUDE

(covers his ears as if to block the sound)

You pompous little bastard!

WRIGHT

(continues to press, repeating with emphasis)

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Johnson of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania! The third of two older brothers, Arthur and Chester, and younger sister, Kate!

JUDE

(screams and cowers in the corner)

You're really taking pleasure in this, you self-important son-of-a-bitch!!

WRIGHT

A young man of privilege who attended Dartmouth College for two years, before dropping out after a nervous breakdown, and whose family visits him every third Sunday of every month only to be sent away, rejected!

JUDE

Damn you! God damn you!

WRIGHT

Every third Sunday! Reality! Jude! We must learn to adjust to the world as it truly is.

JUDE

(crouching, covering his ears, crying, screaming)

You idiot! This world is Maya! Illusion! Illusion! Get out, you stupid ass! Get out!

PARKINSON

Dr. Wright!

(His tone interrupts the emotional exchange.)

I'll take it from here, if you don't mind.

WRIGHT

Of course... by all means.

(regards Jude, then back to Parkinson)

He's not violent, by the way.

PARKINSON

It never occurred to me that he would be. But then...

WRIGHT

Then what?

PARKINSON

Anyone can become violent if sufficiently provoked...

WRIGHT

I'll be in my office if you need me.

PARKINSON

Thank you.

Dr. Wright exits. No sooner has he gone than Jude rises to his feet in the corner and applauds.

JUDE

Well done! Well done!

PARKINSON

I'm sorry for that.

JUDE

Oh, don't worry, doctor. I put on those histrionics from time just to validate the old boy. Gives him a stronger sense of purpose.

PARKINSON

So, he really made no impact on you with all that "family" business.

JUDE

Irritating. But I laid it on a bit thickly. After all, this is a nut house.

PARKINSON

And you're in it.

JUDE

But I don't belong here, and you know it, don't you, Thomas?

PARKINSON

And I'm told I may be your last best hope, Jude. May I call you Jude? Jude Johnson — that is your surname, the name your family gave you. You do acknowledge your family.

Jude doesn't respond for a moment. Instead, he walks to a window, looks out. As he does, Parkinson writes his data.

JUDE

Recently I read about a rather brilliant young psychic named Edgar Cayce. According to Dr. Cayce, the soul dynamically seeks its own natural home and will gravitate toward the body of energy that fits it. In that moment, the soul is reborn to that energy and sticks to it like a kind of cosmic adhesive. That is what the womb of Edna Johnson created for me. And my soul flew to it. But I am he. I am the one they call Judas.

PARKINSON

I'm aware of Dr. Cayce's theories about the transmigration of souls.

JUDE

However, comma...

PARKINSON

Jude... I'm willing to explore all possibilities with you, but I need to ask one thing of you: that you be willing to explore with me, as well...

JUDE

To places you never dreamed possible!

PARKINSON

I'm sure.

JUDE

Have you ever been to Hell, doctor?

PARKINSON

There were a couple of times when I thought I'd been.

JUDE

Have you ever looked upon the face of the Christ, been held in the embrace — been burned by the fire of purification, tasted the Breath of Love?

PARKINSON

I can't say that I have.

JUDE

Oh, but you have, Thomas. You have, you know. We all have!

PARKINSON (*notes to himself*)

He loves rhetorical questions.

(*He breaks, and strolls away for moment.*)

Jude...Let's both agree upon a few things from the outset. First, I'm here to help you. Please understand that. I believe that you believe in everything you say. But help me first. Let's go through this step by step, so that I can understand.

JUDE (*making light of it*)

Ah! It's understanding that he wants.

PARKINSON

And I think we can learn to do that... together.

JUDE

Just as soon as you stop patronizing me as if I were a two-year-old.

PARKINSON

Nor do I intend to. People...on the edge of perception have their senses honed. They know the truth or lie of something even before it's spoken.

JUDE

"The edge of perception." I like that! But why beat around the bush. Why don't you just go ahead and say I'm a bloody loony?

PARKINSON

Such a harsh self-description. I'd rather say you're unique.

JUDE (*to the empty room*)

Unique! My God, he thinks I think it's unique.

PARKINSON

Does your family think it's unique? Tell me...

JUDE

Ah yes by all means! Let's go slogging around in the old family closet. Did my father abuse me? Did my mother misuse me? Did my sister amuse me? Did my brother infuse me? Isn't that what you Freudians think — that everything is sexual? Well it certainly is in a way. But not with this family of mine. No, no. They're as normal and kind as can be, and a little bit dull as well. They simply incurred the burden of birthing me.

PARKINSON

In the first place, my training is Jungian, not Freudian. In the second place, I'll only go where you want to take me.

JUDE

Good! That will save us so much time poking around in the present.

PARKINSON

I'll only poke in one more place in present tense, if you'll let me.

JUDE

When did I realize who I was? Isn't that what you want to know? When in this incarnation did my bleak epiphany take place?

PARKINSON

Of course, I forget. You're prescient, aren't you?

JUDE

In church. At mass. Good Friday seven years ago. It was during the stations of the cross. That's when the recollection guts me, the light across the window — when the Messiah falls and another picks up the burden.
(He stops himself. He's haunted by the memory but rallies.)
Anyway, that's where it happens in every lifetime I've lived. At the very same point on an afternoon, when the sun strikes the moment

PARKINSON

It takes place at the same point in every... incarnation? Every lifetime?

JUDE

Just like a bell, or a call to prayer. It wasn't so bad this time. But there were times and places when I paid the price, I can tell you.

PARKINSON

And was anyone with you?

JUDE

It's a journey one always takes alone.

PARKINSON

I ask again: Was anyone with you?

JUDE

Ah, the witness hook! The conjuration of contradiction. An animal can't lie or embrace denial. That's a trait unique to man. You expect that from me, of course! And I will deny you that pleasure!

PARKINSON

The human being is the only creature with a "choice." That is his blessing and his curse. So, wasn't it your choices that condemned you?

JUDE

"We!" Thomas. Use the first person plural. We all betrayed him you know. We all ignored the love that lived in the man.

PARKINSON

Are we being metaphorical here?

JUDE

“We” are being truthful.

PARKINSON

Can you really say that — you who claim to have betrayed the Truth? Isn't that Judas' burden — that the greatest Truth of all came to Earth, and he personally delivered it to ruin?

JUDE

You think that speaking of me in third person will soften the blow for me. Don't! I take pride in what I did. I was the agent of destiny! I had to be. And who else could have done it? Not they. Never they — they who left him for ruin! They who ran and hid. What could “they” have done, those simple mindless men?

PARKINSON

And yet it is against those mindless, simple men that you play your passions out. And...you imply that I was one of them.

JUDE

One of us, Thomas! But you were clever...you who kept your distance!

PARKINSON

And you? Even in this role you assume, can you accept yourself?

JUDE

That's all I want — to be accepted. To be...at peace.

PARKINSON

Then, why do you keep doing it?

JUDE

Doing what?

PARKINSON

I'm sorry. I push too hard, I think.

JUDE

No, no, no! Push on! I like your impatience,

PARKINSON

(reluctant)

But then again of course...

JUDE

Of course... Go on, Thomas.

PARKINSON

Of course, if you've experienced the centuries of persecution — that little turn you had in the Ninth Rung of Hell — that Dantean fabrication that has twisted our view of eternity. See that's the trouble I have with this...

JUDE (*interrupts*)

A fabrication, to be sure! But there is that place in the void — the darkest night in the aching hole of the self.

(He shudders at the thought. Parkinson waits, politely.)

I assure you, by the sheer weight of collective thought that place exists.

PARKINSON

St. John the Divine has a series of visions—probably drug induced—and suddenly he's ranked as Gospel to cap the last chapter of a myth.

JUDE

I agree.

PARKINSON

You agree? You agree that the Bible was a myth?

JUDE

"What is history but a myth agreed upon?"

PARKINSON

Napoleon Bonaparte...

JUDE

The myth persists. The truth is buried. Like the real books of the Bible, the ones they threw out — the hidden gospels. The Book of Judas.

(Jude notes Parkinson's body language, his sudden step backward, his head tilted as if to question what he's heard.)

Oh yes, dear Thomas. There was a Book of Judas! That was my chronicle of all this written during the events — not penned in the soft light of retrospect by some scribe a decade after the fact. Too accurate. Too close to the bone. So they put the torch to that one, I can assure you.

PARKINSON

So, that's what you're going to share with me now — the Secret Books of Judas? So, I'm to be the fortunate beneficiary of Judas Iscariot's Diary?

JUDE

"Fortunate" is not exactly the term I would use to describe it, Thomas. Beneficiary? Well... time is the arbiter of truth.

PARKINSON (*paces a bit more, turning back to Jude*)

Then, if it's this that we're agreed upon. I have to share this truth with you. You see, Jude, I'm an agnostic.

PARKINSON (*Continuing*)

I believe that if a Creator might possibly exist.— if he were decent and loving and kind — he would recoil at this bestial tripe of a planet that his worshipers had created. So, rather than a God so flawed, I choose no God at all. Or else one who wouldn't touch this world with a single ray of light.

JUDE

Of course, you do, Thomas. Or you wouldn't be you. You come once more as the consummate skeptic, even in your new skin. Once again you test the faithful, even in modern times.

PARKINSON

I grasped your appeal to the "Doubting Thomas" in me. I can only wonder why it's so important that I fulfill that role. What's at stake here?

JUDE

Salvation, Thomas! Nothing less than that.

PARKINSON

Whose salvation? Yours or mine? I'm letting this pass for now. After all it's our first encounter. And truth be told, I've let it go much farther than I should have.

JUDE

Funny that you feel you've let it go, when you've done all the talking. Frankly, I wasn't expecting someone quite so...

PARKINSON

(interprets)

Forthcoming?.

JUDE

Full of himself. You're a bit full of yourself, you know.

PARKINSON

I suppose I deserved that. And you're right. I have gone on a bit. I guess I was so excited to meet someone with your extraordinary...

(He fishes for the words.)

With your...

JUDAS

Complexity of delusion. Almost makes sense, doesn't it?

PARKINSON

(reaches in his vest, looks at his pocket watch)

Anyway, I only came to get acquainted. But tomorrow we start in earnest.

JUDE

Tomorrow? Oh, why not now? I have nothing but time on my hands.

PARKINSON *(continues his thought)*

...I'll also give you fair warning, "Judas." I'm something of a Biblical scholar. So I hope you're up on your facts.

JUDE

Facts? Dear God, what facts do you speak of?! They've got nothing to do with the truth. And the truth is that none of it was as it seemed. Gods rose out of tribalism. Christ came out of the miasma. This was the Light in the deepest hole that blackness had ever made.

(He notes Parkinson's reluctance to press the issue further. He seizes upon the man's discomfort and takes it as a sign.)

Surely, Thomas, you don't believe that Judea was the Holy Land. —that we were at all the chosen people. Chosen by whom, for God's sake?! Whatever Moses had led out of Egypt, whatever David had fought for, whatever Solomon had molded together, had perished generations before. This was a rabble unworthy of mention, pregnant with hypocrisy and spinning out of itself—with no more ties to the faith of their fathers than cobwebs would come out of silk. Are you a scholar as you claim to be? Or just a student of tripe?

PARKINSON

I only know what I've read.

JUDE

A man who only knows what he reads is less than an ignorant fool.

PARKINSON

I suppose that was meant to insult me.

JUDE

Not if it doesn't apply.

PARKINSON

I'm really not sure. But I know this much: I'm your last best hope. After me, there is the Void and a less than kindly fate.

(He notes Jude's sudden suspension of arrogance. Momentarily he is speechless. But as Parkinson goes to leave, Jude recovers.)

JUDE *(calls after)*

I've been to the Void. And let me assure you, once you've been to that black hole, everything else is a waltz. There is no terror outside it.

PARKINSON

None? Are you sure? Then you won't mind if I turn out the lights when I go. I can leave you here in the darkness. It's quieter that way, and easier on the eyes.

JUDE

I'd rather you didn't. That's when they come to visit.

PARKINSON

They?

JUDE

Those who would torment me. Those who would abuse and torture me. It's boring. But that's what there is. Devils and whores, whores and devils — and sometimes not even I can tell the difference.

PARKINSON

What do you mean?

JUDE

(points to the door)

I mean that! That!

(Just as Jude points toward the door, a young nun, Sister Fox has entered the room. She is pretty but nondescript. In her habit, she seems to be the essence of piety.)

That. That! That demon... temptress!! Look at her!

PARKINSON

She's merely here to tidy the room. How much a threat is that?

JUDE

No she's not! She knows what she is, who she is? Get her out of here!

(Sister Fox blanches and backs away.)

PARKINSON

I'm sorry, Sister. Will you excuse us for a moment?

(Compliantly the Young Nun bows to Parkinson. Parkinson turns back to Jude, as she scurries out of the room Parkinson turns back to Jude.)

Jude, I'd like to get one thing very clear between us. I'm willing to work with you under certain conditions. The first one is that you not be abusive to other people. The second, that you eliminate these unnecessary histrionics. Most of it's just for show, and you know it.

JUDE

And the third? There's a third, I know. Things always come in threes.

PARKINSON

The third is that you have to tell me clearly what you see, everything you see, and why. But do it confidentially, and learn to trust the process.

JUDE

Trust the process?! Trust?! Lovely irony. How in the hell do you think I got into this mess in the first place?

PARKINSON

Then, if trust got you into this, Trust must set you free. I think you know that.

JUDE

Only too well.

(Suddenly, The Chief Warder bursts into the room. The same man who entered earlier to loosen Jude's bonds.)

CHIEF WARDER

Pardon me, Doctor. Is there some trouble in here? Sister Fox tells me there's some trouble.

PARKINSON

No trouble really.

CHIEF WARDER

Oh, he's always causin' trouble, this one. You are. Aren't you Mr. Johnson? Aren't you?

JUDE

A demon with horns and a tail.

PARKINSON

I beg your pardon?

JUDE

You asked me to tell you everything I see. That's what I see. A demon with horns and a tail.

PARKINSON

I thought I said "confidentially."

JUDE

Oh, Freddie and I have no secrets. Do we Freddie?

CHIEF WARDER

Always seeing things, he is. Always. Every day. Never fails. Ain't that right, Mr. Johnson?

JUDE

Right, Freddie?

CHIEF WARDER

If you need anything, Doctor, just ring.

(The Chief Warder motions toward the bell at the door and walks out. As he does, Jude hisses at him. The Chief Warder makes a "demon face" that Jude returns in kind. Then he walks out, chuckling to himself.)

PARKINSON

Paranoid fantasies of persecution...

JUDE

(mocking him, makes a note to himself)

Utterly blind to the light that shines within...

Blackout.

Scene 4: Pocket Set. Parkinson's Desk.

Thomas Parkinson pens a letter to Carl Gustav Jung.

PARKINSON

He claims to be free of fight or flight. He claims to see things clearly. Then why does terror lurk in every corner of his thoughts? He says he's weary of his journey. And yet he steps into wastelands of his own recollection like a man in a minefield. Is remembering such a peril for him? Or is he trying to protect us? Rather than playing "The Betrayer," he behaves like a man betrayed. He's not nearly as haunted much as he is someone who likes to haunt. It's as if he knew something that the rest of us do not. Most of all, he scorns approval. I think it would crush him no end, if we were to embrace him even for a moment. Surely there is a syndrome for this. Yet I've never seen anything like it. For now, there's no place for me to go, except into his tangled world and try somehow to lead him out of the wasteland he's created.

Blackout.

(To be continued...)

If you wish to read the complete script, please contact the playwright directly:

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