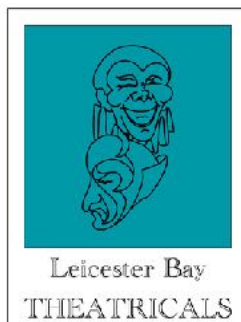


PERUSAL SCRIPT

Swallow the Sun

The Early Life of C.S. Lewis

A PLAY BY
MAHONRI STEWART



Newport, Maine

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This play is for my father George Stewart, who made it possible through his patronage;

for Hyrum Irving Stewart, to whom I am a father;

and for my spiritual father, whose nail-pierced hands are stretched out still.



“I am a wolf that follows the sun
And I will catch him ere day be done.”

—C.S. Lewis, *“Spirits in Bondage”*

“When the time comes to you at which you will be forced at last to utter the speech which has lain at the center of your soul for years, which you have, all that time, idiot-like, been saying over and over, you’ll not talk about joy of words. I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?”

—C.S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*

“I became aware that I was holding something at bay, or shutting something out. Or, if you like, that I was wearing some stiff clothing, like corsets, or even a suit of armor, as if I were a lobster. I felt myself being there and then, given a free choice. I could open the door or keep it shut; I could unbuckle the armor or keep it on. Neither choice was presented as a duty; no threat or promise was attached to either, though I knew that to open the door or to take off the corslet meant the incalculable.”

—C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*

PREFACE

“History Always Changes”

History always changes; or, at least, our understanding of it does. My relationship with C.S. Lewis started in childhood with the Narnia books; the Bill Melendez animated version of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*; as well as the BBC miniseries versions of those stories that would air on PBS. As delightful as they were to my young imagination, the connection would have probably ended there, if I hadn't stumbled on a book of Lewis's poems at the library (I was going through a particularly vivid poetry phase in late middle school/early high school). Recognizing the name as the creator of my beloved Narnia, I picked up the volume and was subsequently enraptured by the poems. Most don't know that C.S. Lewis started out his literary career as a poet, that was his original ambition. Fortunately for us, just as he spiritually evolved from an entrenched skeptic and atheist to an imaginative Christian, his evolution as a writer brought him from a brooding poet to an unlikely writer of children's stories. These poems made a deep impact on me, changing the focus of my own writing towards the spiritual.

I sought out more of Lewis's work. I started with the more well-known *Screwtape Letters* and *Mere Christianity*, but then moved on to some of his more obscure, yet superior work, like *The Great Divorce*, the Space Trilogy, and his masterpiece *Till We Have Faces*. Even now, I push forward in my quest to reach the borders of all his work, ranging from his academic work on medieval literature to his ideas on education.

Yet, as important and life-changing as his literary work has been in my life, the contours of his biography, and those of his fellow Inklings, have made just as profound of an impact. I read biography after biography, commentary after commentary, to better understand this fascinating man and those that surrounded him. *Swallow the Sun* was eventually produced as the first fruits of my obsession with Lewis's personal history. Yet, as I researched a musical I'm writing about Lewis's later life, I found that my original bio-play, though still strong and accurate, was not where I wanted it to be in light of this onslaught of new information. My understanding and interpretation of Lewis's life was shifting and changing, and I knew that I needed to update the play to reflect that. Thus, this new edition. Some of the changes have been relatively minor, while others have been significant enough to warrant major shifts in the text, its style, and approach. I believe the result is a superior play to the original: historically, emotionally, spiritually, and artistically.

—Mahonri Stewart, July 2018

SWALLOW THE SUN

The original version* of the script was performed in Provo, UT, at the Provo Theatre Company, on May 16, 2008, by New Play Project. In order of their appearance, the cast and crew were as follows:

C.S. “Jack” Lewis — C. Adam Stallard
Edward “Paddy” Moore — Jeff Bond
Janie Moore — Tatum Haugen
Maureen Moore — Rachael Stewart
John “Doc” Askins — Eric “C” Heaps
Owen Barfield — Will McCallister
Warren “Warnie” Lewis — Amos Omer
Albert Lewis — James Goldberg
Arthur Greeves — Cole Hooley
Mary “Smudge” Wibelin — Jana Lee Stubbs
Hugo Dyson — Matthew Price Davis
J.R.R. Tolkien — David Dixon

Director — Mahonri Stewart
Stage Manager — Tiffany A. Shaw
Assistant Stage Manager — Candace Crown
Dramaturg/Lighting Designer — Melissa Leilani Larson
Costume Designer — Anne Ogden Stewart
House Manager — Christina Phillips
Fight Choreographer — Amos Omer
Violinist — Brian Randall
Deck Crew — Loriann Caldwell and Michelle Corinne Perry
Artistic Director — James Goldberg
Managing Director — C. Adam Stallard
Lead Dramaturg — Bianca Dillard
Prod. Stage Manager — Melissa Leilani Larson
Technical Director — David Tertipes
Season Manager — Arisael Rivera
Advertising — Lindy Hatch

*Many significant changes have been made since the original edition, including additional characters, a different appearance order, new scenes and dialogue, as well as other revisions, deletions, flights of whimsy, etc.

A revival of the original script was performed in Provo, UT, at the Castle Amphitheater, on August 24, 2012, by Zion Theatre Company. In order of appearance, the cast and crew were as follows:

C.S. “Jack” Lewis — Ken Foody
Edward “Paddy” Moore — John Schroepfel
Janie Moore — Susan Phelan
Maureen Moore — Erika Coleman
John “Doc” Askins — Lawrence McLay
Owen Barfield — Bryce Bishop
Warren “Warnie” Lewis — Sam Schofield
Albert Lewis — G. Randall King
Arthur Greeves — Alan Stout
Mary “Smudge” Wibelin — Jana Lee Stubbs
Hugo Dyson — Matthew Price Davis
J.R.R. Tolkien — Chris Bentley

Director — G. Randall King
Stage Manager — Melissa Alex Howarth
Costume Designer — Allen Stout
Lighting Designer — Matthew P. Davis
Producers — Mahonri Stewart, Ken Foody, Nathaniel Drew
Props Master — Michael John Larson
Head Dresser/Costume Assistant — Carolyn Urban

REVIEW EXTRACTS:

“STEWART IS A MASTER WRITER of rich dialogue, clever and scintillating in the style of Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw. This is a very good play, befitting a fascinating, worthy protagonist in the historical C.S. Lewis.” - **Nan McCulloch**, *Irreantum Magazine*

“THIS IS A PLAY BUILT ON THE TENSION BETWEEN SPIRITUAL AND SECULAR APPROACHES TO LIFE. And the playwright pulls no punches ... Stewart doesn’t gloss over such things but allows them to find their own level. He lets the audience decide what to think ... I liked even more the notion that writers and playwrights are no longer giving us ‘dual versions’ of religious souls — one version where the subject can do no wrong and a ‘revisionist’ version where he or she sins at every turn. Artists have finally begun to offer us fully fleshed out, rounded portraits of spiritual souls.” - **Jerry Earl Johnston**, *Deseret News*

“STEWART ALSO HAS A DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF THE WRITINGS AND BIOGRAPHY OF C.S. LEWIS ... This accuracy is an authorial choice that respects the people and that ultimately adds to the believable and unique characterization and setting of the plays.” - **David Allred**, *AML Reviews*

“WELL-WRITTEN, FUNNY, AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING ... *Swallow the Sun* is a captivating journey from doubt to belief.” - **Scott Hales**, *The Low-Tech World*

“POWERFUL IMPACT ... Despite being a conversion story, it tends towards the intersection of the intellect and the spirit rather than a repetition of the conventional narrative of personal conversion through warm feelings about historical propositions ... [This play] spoke deeply to me ... [as someone who] views my own faith through the lens of the perpetual tensions this exacerbates: tensions between secular and sacred, insider and exile, spiritual and intellectual, narrative and history. I think that I am far from alone in that category, however, and that there will be many more people for whom [this play] will resonate deeply.” - **Nathaniel Givens**, *Times and Seasons*

“YOU WILL LAUGH, YOU WILL THINK, AND YOU WILL ENJOY IT ... this play will stay with me for a long time.” - **Jennifer Mustoe**, *Front Row Reviewers*

“INTRIGUING AND COMPELLING ... The play has a fascination about it that holds the audience’s attention ...the storyline is wonderful. *Swallow the Sun* is a play well worth seeing.” - **Rodger Hardy**, *Deseret News*

CAST OF CHARACTERS — 12 (3 f, 9 m +Fantasy/Memory characters)

C.S. “Jack” Lewis

Edward “Paddy” Moore

Janie Moore

Maureen Moore

John “Doc” Askins

Owen Barfield

Warren “Warnie” Lewis

Albert Lewis

Arthur Greeves

Mary “Smudge” Wibelin

Hugo Dyson

J.R.R. Tolkien

Fantasy/Memory Characters: Most are non-speaking shadows. They could most likely be portrayed by 2-4 performers.

A Fawn

Young Warnie — boy, speaking

Young Jack — boy, speaking

WWI Soldier

Schoolmaster

A White Stag

A Halfling

Puck

2 Shadow Figures

Flora — speaking

Nurse

A Figure

Bus Driver — speaking

A Presence — speaking

A Lion

SWALLOW THE SUN by Mahonri Stewart 12 (3 f, 9 m) Run Time: 2 hours. C.S. "Jack" Lewis became an internationally renowned author, famed creator of Narnia, and the 20th Century's most eloquent defender of Christianity. Little do most people know that he was once an entrenched atheist. This play by Kennedy Center award-winning playwright Mahonri Stewart recounts the powerful spiritual journey of the "most reluctant convert in all of England," as he grapples with bold figures of faith like J.R.R. Tolkien, as well as a persistent god who hunts his soul relentlessly. Yet the worth of that soul is manifest in a struggle that will create a legendary legacy. Premiered at the New Play Project in Provo, Utah, 2008. **ORDER #3311.**

Mahonri Stewart is an award winning writer and educator. He has written over two dozen plays, most of which have been produced throughout the U.S. and Europe, including productions in Los Angeles, Scotland, and Switzerland. In 2004, his premiere play *Farewell to Eden* won the Kennedy Center's American College Theater Festival's National Playwriting Award (Second Place) and their National Selection Team Fellowship Award. Since then he has also received numerous other awards and honors for his plays, and continues to expand his writing into various mediums. He received his Master of Fine Arts degree in Theatre: Dramatic Writing from Arizona State University and his Bachelor of Science Degree in Theatre Arts from Utah Valley University.

Swallow the Sun

The Early Life of C.S. Lewis

Act One

SCENE ONE

Forest trees frame the stage, even when various set pieces, furniture, etc. are brought on and off to indicate indoor rooms, etc. Currently, we just see the forest path, while a lamp post shines. C.S. “JACK” Lewis enters, dressed in a long coat and scarf, carrying packages. He is tall, a little ruddy, and nearly twenty years old. The packages obscure his vision. If possible, there is snow falling and the noticeable silence that accompanies such a major snow fall. A FAWN enters, dressed in a bright red scarf, also carrying piled packages obscuring his vision, plus an umbrella. They crash into each other. JACK’s packages fall to the ground, mingling with the stranger’s packages. JACK speaks with a polished British accent.

JACK: Pardon me! I really should not pack them so high and all.

(Both JACK and the FAWN kneel down to pick up the packages.)

Here, let me help you.

(For the first time JACK looks up to see the mythological satyr. JACK gapes a bit. The FAWN smiles slyly.)

FAWN: Are you listening, Jack?

JACK: What did you say?

(The FAWN disappears and the scene changes, revealing a room with two cots at Keeble College, Oxford, where the R.O.T.C. [Royal Officer Training Corps] are housed.)

PADDY: *(Off-stage)* Have you been paying attention at all?

(JACK abruptly looks up at his roommate PADDY Moore, realizing that he had been daydreaming. JACK takes off his coat and scarf to reveal that they both are wearing World War I R.O.T.C. uniforms, winding down before bedtime. PADDY is looking over a copy of a book of Alfred Lord Tennyson’s poetry which he has been reading. PADDY speaks with an Irish accent.)

JACK: Hm? What is that?

PADDY: Never mind. I can see when I’m being ignored. What has you so distracted?

JACK: You would think I’m a nutter.

PADDY: Perhaps. Perhaps not.

JACK: Ever since I was sixteen years old, I’ve had this image of a fawn with an umbrella, carrying packages in the snow. And then there’s this lamp post in the background—

PADDY: A lamp post?

JACK: Daft, I know.

PADDY: No. Not at all. Interesting image.

(JACK sits to write in a notebook. PADDY rummages through his things and pulls out a book, flops on his bed, and begins reading. JACK looks up, surprised.)

JACK: What is that you're doing?

PADDY: It's called reading, Jack. A curious habit I picked up when I was younger.

JACK: Well, obviously you're reading. What I meant—

PADDY: I've been trying to kick the habit for years now, but then I go through these terrible withdrawals. Headaches, longings, nervous twitching—

(JACK goes over to PADDY and swipes the book out of his hand.)

JACK: Egad, I was right! Tennyson, no less!

PADDY: Here now, what's the fuss!

JACK: I must apologize, Paddy—I hadn't figured that you were the type. You usually can tell just by their daily habits and what not.

PADDY: Give it back.

JACK: You're a bookish fellow, aren't you, Paddy? You're an intellectual!

PADDY: Please, Jack, I don't want to hear any sniggering from you about it.

JACK: Sniggering? Oh no, surely not! Here.

(JACK gives PADDY his book back and then goes to his own things and picks out a book of his own, from which he starts reading.)

“I yearn'd for warmth and colour which I found In Lancelot—now I see what thou art, Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?”

PADDY: *Idylls of the King!*

JACK: What? You too? Wonderful! Here I thought you some childish boy, not fit for decent, sophisticated company. But here, among soldiers who drop their h's and spit on the floor, here I find an intellectual for a roommate! A reader of poetry, no less. Grand!

PADDY: I've suddenly become interesting, have I? Really, Jack—

JACK: Then there are the “cads and fools.” Vicious lot, really. Can't get their minds to anything higher than women, alcohol, and dirty jokes. Don't get me started on the “bloods”—they use their birth and privilege to bully the rest of us.

PADDY: Then what are we?

JACK: “The public school and varsity men.” The educated, the readers, the intellectuals.

PADDY: Well, at least you haven't any pretensions about your pretensions.

JACK: You may hide behind the bashful humility, but you know I'm right. You're one of my type of men. May I make a suggestion, however?

PADDY: If it is as entertaining as the rest of your talk.

JACK: Try and lose the accent.

PADDY: Pardon me?

JACK: Oh, there's no shame in being Irish. I was born in Belfast, myself. My father still has the accent rather bad, however. But my brother and I knocked it out of ourselves in school. Didn't want people to think of us as common potato farmers.

PADDY: I'll pretend you don't know how offensive you're being.

JACK: People began to take me more seriously when I really learned how to talk. It's one of the most evident signs of cultivation. It may sound snobbish, but there it is. The reality of the world around us.

PADDY: The world around us.

JACK: All this time and I didn't even guess it! Tennyson— ha!

PADDY: Well, now we can start discussing things we both actually enjoy now instead of that wretched small talk.

JACK: You do realize this makes us friends now, don't you?

PADDY: In an instant, over Tennyson?

JACK: Over Tennyson!

PADDY: All right. Friends. Jack, my mother has taken some rooms just a few blocks away...

JACK: She likes to be in close proximity, eh?

PADDY: At least she smothers with kindness.

JACK: I'm not going to give you any grief about it, if that's what you're asking.

PADDY: No, no, that's not what I mean. She, well, she likes to throw parties, get-togethers, and the like. When we're on leave from training, would you like to come over? Interested?

JACK: Certainly. Anything to get away from this place.

(Awkward pause.)

Perhaps then we should get to bed.

(PADDY puts away his book, they snuff the light and the two of them sit quietly in the dark for a moment.)

PADDY: You're not the praying sort, are you?

JACK: Certainly not.

PADDY: Brilliant. Neither am I. Didn't want to endure that ritual every night.

JACK: It's a nice idea, that. God, I mean. Don't have much against the idea of him. I'm a lover of myths—Greek, Egyptian, especially old Norse—but I'll be damned if I ever defend them as true stories.

(Blackout.)

SCENE TWO

Enter JANIE Moore to retrieve a tray of appetizers. She sets them down for a moment and sits. JANIE is a woman hitting the latter part of her middle age. She still has a certain attractiveness and grace, but currently a tiredness overcomes her, tinged by a lifetime of grief. She places her hands upon her temples and closes her eyes. Enter PADDY. He gazes at his mother, sensing her stress.

PADDY: Let me take care of the formalities for a while. Enjoy yourself.

JANIE: The party is for you, Paddy. They're your friends.

PADDY: My friends are your friends.

JANIE: Ach, and I am sure that they just revel in the company of their mate's middle aged mother's social prowess and witty charm.

PADDY: That is most certainly the case. Why, Jack, well, he seemed absolutely bored with everyone but you.

(Enter JACK, bursting in with MAUREEN Moore¹ in his arms. MAUREEN is giggling loudly. JACK is bent over like a hunchback, à la Quasimodo.

JACK: Sanctuary! Sanctuary!

PADDY: What in—

MAUREEN: Save me, Paddy! Save me!

JACK: Sanctuary! Sanctuary!

JANIE: Well, save her then.

PADDY: What? Have we suddenly become ten years old?

JANIE: Well, if you won't save my fair daughter, I will.

JACK: Sanctu—

JANIE: Stop, fiend!

JACK: I am no fiend! I am a misunderstood monster!

MAUREEN: Yes, Mother, he's tragically misunderstood. Tragically. But save me anyway!

PADDY: He's as mad as bedlam!

MAUREEN: Precisely! It's wonderful fun!

(JACK climbs up on the couch, MAUREEN still in his arms.)

PADDY: Ach, not the couch!

MAUREEN: To Dickens with the couch!

¹ Historically, Maureen at this point was around 12-years-old, but she becomes older as the play progresses. In casting her, a teenaged actress that can play both youth and maturity may be desirable.

JANIE: Aye! To Dickens with the couch!

(JACK places MAUREEN down on the couch beside him and pantomimes ringing bells.)

JACK: The bells! The bells!

JANIE: Oh, woe is me, the tragically misunderstood creature has climbed up the bell tower. If only some heroically gestured soldier could shoot down the beast and save my poor daughter!

(They ALL look to PADDY.)

PADDY: You're all being rather immature.

MAUREEN: Paddy, don't be a wet blanket.

PADDY: I am not going to shoot down a classic literary character!

JANIE: Paddy, as your mother, I order you to shoot the tragically misunderstood creature!

PADDY: Oh, all right.

(Without enthusiasm)

Bang.

JACK: *(Melodramatically:)* Agh! Woe is me! The world has misunderstood me—all because of a hump on my back! And now I am dead!

(JACK falls to the floor, feigning death. MAUREEN jumps to his side.)

MAUREEN: Oh! Oh, no! My tragically misunderstood creature is dead! Not even my tears will ever heal him! I die of a broken heart!

(MAUREEN slumps over JACK.)

JANIE: Oh! My daughter and the tragically misunderstood creature are dead! I mysteriously die as well!

(JANIE slumps over MAUREEN and JACK.)

PADDY: Well, that solves a good deal of my problems.

(MAUREEN jumps up.)

MAUREEN: That was fun, Jack!

PADDY: Here, Maureen, help me clean up in the kitchen. Let's give Mum a rest—and Jack looks rather tuckered out himself. Climbing Notre Dame and all that.

MAUREEN: That was fun, Jack.

(Exit PADDY and MAUREEN.)

JANIE: You certainly liven up the place.

JACK: Most people consider me stuffy.

JANIE: It seems to me that you've still retained the child in you.

JACK: Funny, that. As a child I always wanted to be a grown up.

JANIE: Little do children know the troubles that grown ups have to face.

JACK: Yes.

(Pained pause.)

JANIE: So did you get your wish? Did you grow up fast?

JACK: My wish. If I had a wish back then, it would have been to ask God to spare my mother.

JANIE: Oh, Jack, I'm sorry.

JACK: I prayed. I prayed she wouldn't die. And then when she did die, I prayed that God would bring her back to life. If I could just say it right, like solving some math sum. The mathematics of prayer. The problem is, I'm terrible at math. Oxford almost didn't let me in on account of it. I guess I failed at prayer just as badly as I failed my math exams.

JANIE: My prayers dried up long ago.

(Pause.)

But I live for moments like tonight. After such a rough road, to have laughter and whimsy and—

JACK: Joy.

(An aching, longing music plays.)

JANIE: Is that something you feel often? Joy?

JACK: No, not often. I must confess, when I use the word, it has a unique meaning to me. Less euphoric than you one might assume. There is a—there is an aching involved, a longing.

JANIE: A longing for what?

JACK: For something more. And it is as if this world can't truly hold it for more than a moment. The first time I felt it, I—

JANIE: I'm listening.

JACK: My older brother Warnie and I spent a good deal of time together as children. We were each other's accomplices in this world.

(JACK is startled by a brief memory visually played before him as childhood versions of YOUNG JACK and YOUNG WARNIE enter. YOUNG JACK is drawing. YOUNG WARNIE carries a closed biscuit [cookie] tin.)

YOUNG WARNIE: What are you drawing?

YOUNG JACK: Boxen.

JANIE: Boxen?

JACK: Warnie made up stories about India, I had Animal Land. Anthropomorphic Animals and whatnot. We fused them to create Boxen.

JANIE: Children are very good at creating worlds. You must have had a wonderful imagination.

JACK: I loved the Beatrix Potter books—thus, the talking animals. They were rather plain, rational beings, I'm afraid. More likely to go on diplomatic missions than ride magic carpets. Yet, that day Warnie infused our world with that extra something that was missing from our stories.

YOUNG JACK: What is that?

(YOUNG WARNIE opens the biscuit tin to reveal a miniature garden. Light shines on their faces from the tin.)

YOUNG WARNIE: Magic.

JACK: Well, it was a kind of miniature garden he made in a biscuit tin—dirt and leaves and pieces of plants and flowers and little pebbles. I'm sure my sharpened, cynical mind wouldn't think much of it now, but to my child's mind it was as if he had taken Sherwood forest and, with a bit of sorcery, shrunk it down and brought it with all of its magic and wonder to my room. I felt something that has been very hard to shake off over the years. It was a mixture of awe and longing and pangs of wind and light reaching into my sinews. It made me feel as if I were a stranger in this world, and I had suddenly caught hold of a glimpse of something else.

JANIE: Your own little piece of heaven?

JACK: That might do, if the idea weren't so attached to that pesky God person.

(The music stops suddenly. Exit YOUNG JACK and YOUNG WARNIE.)

JANIE: Like religion, your kind of joy doesn't go far in making us satisfied with what we have here, does it?

JACK: And I think that's the point. A way to defer the desire to fight for something satisfactory here.

JANIE: Your... joy. I don't think I've ever felt anything quite like that.

JACK: You have many more years left ahead of you.

JANIE: And is that a good or bad thing?

JACK: Well, Mrs. Moore, whatever I can do to lighten your burdens, I am at your disposal. Consider me, well—

JANIE: A second son.

(The lights dim and JANIE and JACK exit.)

SCENE THREE

PADDY enters and looks around the home alone, turning off the lamps, etc. before going off to bed. A sudden soberness comes upon him. He walks about the room, touching things, looking at them as if it was his last chance to. At last he stand by the fireplace, its hypnotic shadows and flame causing PADDY to close his eyes.

The sounds of war suddenly occur. A faceless WWI SOLDIER, in dirtied uniform and with his gun in hand, rises from above the trenches. He charges forward, but doesn't get far before he gets hit by a bullet. PADDY opens his eyes, the prophetic gun fire echoing in his ears. PADDY then stands over the imaginary body. JACK enters the room.

JACK: Remind me to thank your mother for letting me stay the night.

(the SOLDIER stands, stares at PADDY ominously, and then exits.)

PADDY: *(Trying to shake off his premonition)* Things got late.

JACK: You have quite the agreeable family!

PADDY: Despite their accents?

JACK: Now, Paddy, I think you have misunderstood me. The English may have learned how to talk, but they have this invincible flippancy that I find highly irritating. When it comes down to it, the Irish are the only people, wouldn't you agree?

PADDY: Most heartily so!

JACK: Your mother seems to be quite the gem.

PADDY: What is your mum like?

JACK: I lost her when I was eight.

PADDY: Oh, Jack, that's a tragedy.

JACK: Yes, it was. Certainly. Cancer and all that.

(Changing the subject)

What about you? Did you lose your father?

PADDY: No, the man's heart is still beating, unfortunately.

JACK: Yes, I was getting the sense of something like that from her. Are your parents divorced?

PADDY: The ogre won't give Mother a divorce. Has to give her less money that way, ironically.

(Changing the subject)

Your father, he's a good fellow?

JACK: I like to think I take after my mother. She came from a cooler race. But he certainly wouldn't have treated my mother like your father does your mother.

PADDY: Well, how about this, Jack? You can borrow my mother. Sort of adopt her as your own.

JACK: My, our intimacy has increased dramatically!

PADDY: You'll find that I size people up quickly, Jack. Let's seal our friendship now.

JACK: All right, Paddy, it's sealed.

(PADDY grabs a book from a shelf. He has JACK kneel and does a "knighting" ceremony with his book.)

PADDY: My sister will be your sister, and my mother your mother. And thus you are adopted within my family. You can borrow them at any time.

JACK: All right. And you can borrow my father, if he ever comes into town, that is.

PADDY: Splendid. And we'll make a promise. A pact. A most solemn vow.

JACK: All right. Between friends. What is it?

PADDY: Now we both know the death count out there in the war. They're not trenches out there, they're graves. All of our talk of poetry and mythology and high philosophy, it doesn't matter a pence out there. But if one of us makes it, and the other, well, if the other dies, we'll promise here and now that whoever makes it out alive will take care of the other's family. That our parents won't be left without a son to replace the one they've lost. What do you say, Jack?

JACK: *(With a hesitant pause; but then decisively)* Paddy, I promise to do that with all my heart. A most solemn vow.

(THEY shake hands.)

PADDY: Good. That means we're brothers now.

JACK: Brothers.

PADDY: Good.

JACK: Good.

(Awkward pause.)

It's late. We need to be back to the O.T.C. early in the morning.

PADDY: Yes, off to bed.

*(PADDY and JACK put out the fire. JACK exits. PADDY is about to exit as well, but then looks back one final time, as if he is desperate to cling to all the familiar comforts. Exit PADDY, leaving the room dark and empty. **Blackout.**)*

SCENE FOUR

ALBERT Lewis's home. Warren "WARNIE" Lewis, Jack's brother, is reading a book. He reaches for a flask in his pocket and takes a long draw from it. ALBERT Lewis, Jack's father, enters. WARNIE scrambles to hide the flask, without success. ALBERT eyes him severely. WARNIE speaks with a definite British accent, while ALBERT still has a strong Irish accent.

WARNIE: You're home early. You're never home early.

ALBERT: I set aside this day when I thought Jack was going to visit us for his month's leave. I forgot until I got there. I was going to take both of you to the zoo.

WARNIE: You seem rather sour for a man who has the day off.

ALBERT: That drink is going to kill you someday.

WARNIE: Since when were you a teetotaler?

ALBERT: You're becoming a drunk, Warnie. Don't think that I haven't noticed.

WARNIE: I am no such thing. I am currently very sober, reading on the French 17th century.

ALBERT: While taking a very long draw of hard alcohol.

WARNIE: Just something to enliven my senses. A mere swallow. I would like to write a book someday on

the French 17th century. Fascinating period.

ALBERT: I'll take away your flask. I'll burn you dry.

WARNIE: I'm an adult, Father. I haven't lived at home since you sent me away to school after Mother's— well, you haven't had control over my life for a very long time.

ALBERT: Perhaps that was my mistake then.

WARNIE: Perhaps, but what's really bothering you, Father? All agitated because Jack isn't here?

ALBERT: Jack has nothing to do with this conversation—

WARNIE: Jack has a month of leave before he is shipped off, and half of it is already over. He's decided the Moores are more interesting than we are and has opted to stay with them instead of us, and you resent that fact.

ALBERT: Warnie, please—

WARNIE: And instead of trying to build a relationship with your other son, you've brooded over that fact the whole time that I've been here, trying to pretend you're not brooding, which makes you even duller company.

ALBERT: A rather complicated way of changing the subject.

WARNIE: And on this day which you had planned a great deal in advance, hoping to finally create an idyllic, family setting, why, it has fallen flat on its face! So don't lash out at me on the pretense that I'll become an alcoholic!

ALBERT: I didn't lash out at you.

WARNIE: You're right. I'm the one who just lashed out at you. But still don't think that I think you give a damn about me falling into the drink.

ALBERT: I—Warnie, even if he doesn't want to be here, does he think that I don't want to see him? He's going off to war! I've supported him in his schooling, I've given him a financial crutch—and this is how he repays me?

ALBERT: Does he write to you about this woman?

WARNIE: Who? Mrs. Moore?

ALBERT: Do you know what their relationship is?

WARNIE: I see you're entertaining the same freakish fancies I am. But you don't think it's likely, do you? She's nearly twice his age. Do you know whether she's an intellectual or not? I really can't see Jack fancying anyone but an intellectual.

ALBERT: Jack's been a good boy that way, hasn't he?

WARNIE: Well, I'm not precisely old fashioned myself, Father.

(Awkward pause.)

If she was loose by nature, then I don't think there would be a thing to it. But if she's overly sentimental or some rot like that—well—

ALBERT: It frightens me.

(A door is heard opening in another part of the house.)

JACK: *(Off-stage:)* Hello? Is anyone here?

ALBERT: Jack?

WARNIE: Why, the devil did come! Jack, Jack, back here!

(Enter JACK with his traveling bags. WARNIE goes and embraces him, while ALBERT hangs back a bit.)

Why didn't you wire that you were coming?

JACK: I wanted to surprise you.

WARNIE: Color me surprised.

JACK: What? You didn't think that I would go off without the opportunity of seeing both of you?

ALBERT: The thought had crossed our minds.

JACK: Sir.

ALBERT: Able to tear yourself away from your precious Moores long enough for a quick cheerio, is that it?

WARNIE: Father, let's not—

JACK: Aren't you glad to see me?

ALBERT: I would have been glad to see you, if I had known that I was a priority to you, instead of you going about gallivanting with a woman twice your age.

JACK: Pardon me?

ALBERT: Well, is that what you were doing, gallivanting?

JACK: I don't think you quite understand. I've written to you about Paddy.

ALBERT: Yes, as you've written to me about Mrs. Moore.

JACK: Why, I was invited. You couldn't have expected me to refuse an...

ALBERT: You certainly could have refused it!

JACK: You and your blasted Irish temper! Well, I don't know why I even came now.

(During the argument, there is a knock at the door which goes unheard.)

ALBERT: You already want to run back to that woman?

WARNIE: Stop it, both of you!

(Another knock. This time it is heard. They all pause for a moment. Enter ARTHUR Greeves, a fragile looking young man about Jack's age.)

ARTHUR: Hello? I knocked, but I don't think anyone heard me.

JACK: Arthur!

(JACK happily shakes ARTHUR's hand.)

ARTHUR: I thought I saw a phantom when I first looked out my window. As soon as I saw you go in, I ran over here. Well, I would have run, if not for, you know, my condition. But I walked briskly!

ALBERT: It's good to see you, Arthur. I'll leave you boys to catch up.

WARNIE: Father, wait. What about the zoo? Perhaps we still could...

ALBERT: We're not going to the zoo today!

JACK: And you wonder why I was reticent to leave the Moores!

WARNIE: Jack, you're not helping.

JACK: Helping what? There's no helping this, not while that man carries on like a savage...

ALBERT: Savage? I am a respected solicitor, I have paid for your tutoring and your schooling, I have taken care of your every need! What more do you want from me?

JACK: Our schooling? When mother died, yes, you sent us away to school. To one of the most horrible institutions in England! It would have made the Brontës shudder!

ALBERT: How could have I known that—

JACK: That the headmaster was a madman?

ARTHUR: It did look rather bad, Mr. Lewis, especially after the nutter was institutionalized.

(As he speaks, JACK hears the sound of a whizzing, and then a smack; whizzing and then a smack. JACK turns and YOUNG JACK appears, being caned by the SCHOOLMASTER.)

JACK: You never investigated it, never saw the perverse happenings, never saw the cruelty inflicted on us—

(JACK turns his back on the image. YOUNG JACK and the SCHOOLMASTER disappear.)
You didn't care who you sent us to. You didn't care.

ALBERT: I-I was grieving...

JACK: And we weren't? Two little boys who had just lost their mother, you think we weren't grieving? When we needed you most, you shut us out.

ALBERT: And this thing with the Moores? This is your way of punishing me for that?

JACK: The Moores have been my family!

WARNIE: You have a family, Jack.

JACK: This? This is family? I love you, Warnie, but the ol' Padada—he broke our family! So don't either of you blame me for wanting to fill a hole that was made by others!

(JACK is about to stalk out when WARNIE prevents him.)

WARNIE: Jack—Jack!

ALBERT: I haven't been a perfect father, but this is just blasted stubbornness! What would your mother say if she saw you...

JACK: No. I will not allow you to hide your failings behind her memory! You've done that enough already.

ALBERT: And what are you doing then, son? Your mother, bless her soul, is dead. What do you want me to do about it? It wasn't my fault! I didn't put the cancer in her! The dear Lord only knows—

JACK: No! Don't mention him either.

(JACK exits.)

ARTHUR: I'll talk to him, sir. Maybe I can calm him down.

(ARTHUR exits.)

ALBERT: Can you believe that kind of willful, petulant—?

WARNIE: He's only said what has been boiling in both of our hearts for years, father.

(WARNIE exits. ALBERT looks to God, desolate, then exits.)

SCENE FIVE

Outside, near the Lewis home. Enter JACK and ARTHUR.

JACK: Arthur, has my father been asking you things? Anything unusual, I mean?

ARTHUR: Well, you know your father—

JACK: Yes, that's why I ask.

ARTHUR: *(Pause.)* He asked me to hand over your letters.

JACK: What?

ARTHUR: He said since you wouldn't tell him about the details of your life, he would find other means. He said that he'd go to any lengths to protect his son.

JACK: And did you give him the letters?

ARTHUR: Of course not.

JACK: Thank you. I want you to burn any correspondence that we've written the last several months, especially anything that has to do with the Moores. I'll do the same with my end.

ARTHUR: Down the road, you'd regret it.

JACK: Really, Arthur, it's not like anyone's going to be scouring through our papers in a hundred years, wanting to know the intimate details of our lives.

ARTHUR: Well, what if you became a famous poet or writer as you've dreamed of being?

JACK: I detest those who try to interpret an author's works through personal history. A text should be seen in its own context, not through journals and letters, reading autobiography on every page.

ARTHUR: Oh, you haven't searched out the lives of your favorite authors? Not the least bit curious?

JACK: Just burn the letters.

ARTHUR: All right.

(Pause.)

So what you did write about Mrs. Moore then—Has anything —?

JACK: It was not at all the right thing for me to tell you as much as I did.

ARTHUR: That doesn't answer the question. Now you know that I am not one to judge. Not with my—
other condition.

JACK: Yes, that. I am delighted that you have had the moral courage to form your own opinions independently, old man, in defiance of the old taboos.

ARTHUR: I appreciate that, Jack.

JACK: Now, I am not sure that I agree with you: but this penchant is a sort of mystery only to be fully understood by those who are made that way—and my views on it can be at best but emotion.

ARTHUR: So—are there other taboos that *you* have decided to abandon then?

JACK: The subject itself must be a taboo. No more talk of Mrs. Moore.

ARTHUR: I see. All right.

JACK: The ol' Padada hasn't asked about my religious habits, has he?

ARTHUR: Oh, don't tell me he doesn't know about *that*!

JACK: It's none of his business.

ARTHUR: He's your father!

JACK: I've felt more of a family with the Moores than I ever have with my own.

ARTHUR: You need to learn to forgive him, Jack.

JACK: Oh, yes, Father Greeves! What, has this become a confessional, a sermon?

ARTHUR: Don't lash out at me, Jack. I'm your friend.

JACK: You think you can heal a man's troubles with a few pretty maxims? Forgiveness is a nice Christian principle, but I'm not a Christian.

ARTHUR: And why not?

JACK: Don't go down that path with me again, Arthur. I know you love your pretty little beliefs, and I don't want to be the one who crushes them for you.

ARTHUR: You can't break them, Jack.

JACK: Truly? If you want me to try, just say the word.

(ARTHUR looks at Jack tensely, deciding...)

ARTHUR: I don't want to hear my beliefs blasphemed, thank you very much.

JACK: I see you over there in your parent's house, like an imaginary invalid...

ARTHUR: My sickness is very real.

JACK: Your real ailment exists not in your body, but in your mind. Your beliefs are as secure, but as fragile as an egg.

ARTHUR: I have nothing to prove to you, Jack.

JACK: You know, what you Christians really need is an advocate. Somebody who can stand up to bullies like me.

ARTHUR: You think we're all simple. We're not all simple.

JACK: I have yet to meet the man who proves that point, Arthur.

ARTHUR: But that doesn't mean that you won't.

JACK: I'll take up that challenge.

(JACK dramatically addresses the sky with a mocking attitude)

God, if you're there, send me somebody other than pampered lightweights to try their hand at me!

(There is a moment when it seems like the sky seems to answer back, a wind that whispers.

Unnerved a bit, JACK tries to regain his footing and goes back to the smallness of Arthur.)

Do you want to try and be that man, Arthur?

ARTHUR: I—I don't want to strain our friendship.

JACK: And thus another heathen goes unconvinced.

(ARTHUR exits, disturbed. JACK pauses alone for a moment. JACK looks back up at the immense sky, made small against it. His expression firms up defiantly and he exits.)

SCENE SIX

An army hospital in Étaples, France. MAUREEN stands alone, playing the violin. Enter WARNIE, out of breath. WARNIE stops in surprise at MAUREEN. MAUREEN finally notices WARNIE and stops playing.

MAUREEN: Hello.

WARNIE: I was told that this was Clive Lewis's room. He's my brother.

MAUREEN: Clive? No, I don't think so. I don't know any Clive.

(MAUREEN begins the violin again.)

WARNIE: No, they most certainly told me that this was his room.

(MAUREEN stops again, annoyed.)

MAUREEN: And I'm telling you most emphatically this room does not belong to any Clive. Emphatically is a good word, is it not? Jacks says it denotes seriousness and, well, emphasis.

WARNIE: Jack? Where is he?

MAUREEN: Where is who?

WARNIE: My brother.

MAUREEN: I told you, your brother isn't here.

WARNIE: Yes, he is.

MAUREEN: You're a stubborn one, you are.

WARNIE: I'm looking for Jack.

MAUREEN: You said you were looking for Clive.

WARNIE: That's Jack's name—Clive.

MAUREEN: No, Jack's name is Jack.

WARNIE: Jack is his nickname.

MAUREEN: But Jack isn't a nickname for Clive.

WARNIE: It's his nickname.

MAUREEN: But Jack's a nick name for John.

WARNIE: Well, in this case it is a nick name for Clive.

MAUREEN: Are you funny in the head?

WARNIE: Who did you say you were, young lady?

MAUREEN: My name's Maureen.

WARNIE: Maureen? Maureen Moore? Jack has mentioned you in his letters.

MAUREEN: But you don't know Jack.

WARNIE: I do know Jack!

MAUREEN: Is Jack's middle name Clive then?

WARNIE: No, it's Staples.

MAUREEN: Staples? Well, that's not a very good name either!

WARNIE: That's why he goes by Jack! Look, when he was a little boy, he hated the name Clive and he hated the name Staples, so one day he announced that he was going to be called Jacksie. So we've called him Jack ever since. There's no rhyme or reason to it, that's just what he wants to be called.

MAUREEN: *(Pause)* All right.

(MAUREEN goes back to playing the violin.)

WARNIE: Er, pardon me again—

(MAUREEN stops again, doubly annoyed.)

MAUREEN: What is it now?

WARNIE: Where is he?

MAUREEN: To whom are you referring?

WARNIE: Jack, of course.

MAUREEN: Gone.

WARNIE: Gone? Gone where?

MAUREEN: Just gone.

WARNIE: You don't mean that he's . . . ?

MAUREEN: What? I don't mean that he's what?

WARNIE: Dead?

MAUREEN: Dead?

WARNIE: Yes, dead!

MAUREEN: Are you saying that Jack's dead!

WARNIE: That's what I'm asking you!

MAUREEN: Blessings, no! You had me frightened for a moment. You could scare a girl out of her wits.
Jack's like a brother to me.

WARNIE: Now, young lady, *I* am Jack's brother, and I need to know where Jack is.

MAUREEN: My mother took him out in the wheelchair, to get him some fresh air.

WARNIE: Wheelchair!

(Enter JANIE and JACK, JACK being pushed in a wheelchair.)

JACK: Warnie, what a surprise!

WARNIE: Jack, you haven't lost the use of your legs, have you?

JACK: Oh no, nothing so dramatic. The doctors just want me to take it easy.

MAUREEN: Your real name isn't really Clive, is it, Jack?

JACK: Not if I have anything to do with it.

WARNIE: Blast it all, Jack, when I got the news, I thought you were here dying!

JACK: Well, as you can see, I'm quite alive. How did you get here, Warnie?

WARNIE: I rode fifty miles today, Jack! Fifty miles!

JACK: Fifty miles? For what?

WARNIE: For you! Because I thought you lay in agony here dying! In agony dying!

JACK: Well, you needn't have done that, Warnie. I actually feel jolly good, besides a good deal of pain in my wrist.

WARNIE: Oh, good glory, Jack, I don't feel jolly good!

JACK: If it helps any, I really am quite touched that you did that for me.

WARNIE: Well, at least you're out of the war for a bit.

JACK: Yes. Warnie, I've had a good number of friends die out there. It's been, well, yes, it's been frightful.

JANIE: Of the boys who used to come visit Maureen and I in Oxford—not many are left.

JACK: Oh, Janie, I've been rude. Warnie, this is my—good friend Janie Moore.

WARNIE: Er, Mrs. Moore. It's, well—

JANIE: I see that you've met my daughter.

WARNIE: Yes, we've—met. A cracking start.

JACK: Here, Warnie, Janie, will you help me up into my bed?

JANIE: Of course.

WARNIE: Careful now.

(WARNIE and JANIE both assist JACK into his hospital bed.)

JACK: Many thanks.

JANIE: Maureen, perhaps it's best that we give Jack some time with his brother.

MAUREEN: Oh, but I've hardly had a moment with Jack. You've hoarded him to yourself.

JANIE: We needed to talk and now they need to talk.

MAUREEN: Only if I can give him a kiss on the cheek.

JACK: I'd receive the lion's share from that trade. It's a deal.

(MAUREEN kisses JACK on the cheek.)

MAUREEN: I hope you get better soon, Jack.

(Exit JANIE and MAUREEN.)

WARNIE: Well, I see that you still spend a good deal of time with the Moores.

JACK: They're like family.

WARNIE: You have a family.

JACK: Yes, I have you.

WARNIE: You also have a father. Does he know about your injury?

JACK: Yes, he knows! Now get off my case about it.

WARNIE: This estrangement that we've both had with him—it gnaws on my conscience sometimes.

JACK: You think I have no feelings towards him at all? I've written him a good deal this past while. I mustered all the lyrical emotion I could. I've written some darn fine, affectionate letters to the ol' Padada.

WARNIE: He hasn't told you that he'll come?

JACK: He's not coming. So don't lecture me about the duties of sons, until he learns the duties of fathers.

WARNIE: That is quite the blow.

JACK: Yes. Quite. You know, Warnie, I've been selfish. I've had these wonderful times with the Moores and, well, you could share them with me.

WARNIE: No. Certainly not.

JACK: I know you feel some bad blood with them, but you're my brother and that will never change—

WARNIE: Jack she is not your mother. She is not my mother. We had a mother. Don't you dare try and replace her!

(There is a tense pause between them.)

JACK: I've been so depressed. I have these terrible nightmares.

WARNIE: You have them too, eh?

JACK: Well, one nightmare, really. Over and over again. I'd prefer not to say it aloud, lest I jinx it and it haunts me again.

WARNIE: I understand. When I have nightmares I find a good dose of whiskey quiets them soon enough.

JACK: You're not in the bottle again, are you, Warnie?

WARNIE: If I'm not to lecture you on parental relationships, then you are not to lecture me on drinking habits. Agreed?

JACK: Agreed.

(JACK looks out of a flap in the hospital tent and once again sees the expansive sky. It bothers him.)

They say that you find God in the trenches. All I found was death and blood and senselessness.

WARNIE: Come now, Jack, if you keep broadcasting your atheism, people will lose confidence in you. God is like any other institution of King or Army or public schools—they're part of a healthy life.

JACK: Whether they be true or not? Is that what religion is to you, Warnie, a mere social institution? God bless king and country and all that rot?

WARNIE: It's just dealing with the outside world. I go along and keep my private thoughts of God, or the lack thereof, to myself.

JACK: Spirit and matter battling. There we are on the battlefield, spirits dodging and diving against material bombs and bullets and airplanes, imprisoned in this veil of flesh.

WARNIE: Now you talk of spirits? You sound more like a gnostic now than an agnostic.

JACK: There's a spark in us, Warnie. Perhaps, like Wordsworth thought, it has always existed. But if the spirit is truly there, as I feel it is, it is battling against a cruel universe, it is battling a losing war. If I found anyone there on that cratered moon of death and war, it wasn't God, it was the devil. Like Fenris the Wolf trying to swallow the light of the sun.

(Fade to Blackout.)

SCENE SEVEN

JACK walks amidst a surreal environment, afraid and uncertain. He comes to the ledge of a cliff. He stands by it, looking down into the threatening abyss. A shadowed presence approaches him from behind and whispers into his ear:

PRESENCE. Jump.

(JACK turns, frightened, trips into a bed and then wakes up in terror from the dream. The presence is gone and he is back in the military hospital in Étapes. Trying to calm himself, JACK rises, puts on a robe, and walks outside. Leaning against a lamppost, JACK looks up at the moon.)

JACK: If you were real, why save a heretic like me and not your own followers? Why should we worship a God who saves strangers and foreigners, but doesn't even protect his own children? What kind of father is that?

(The moon does not answer, but suddenly a great WHITE STAG walks into the clearing. JACK is surprised as he and the STAG regard each other. It's as if an undercurrent of energy exists between them. The moment is solemn, almost sacred.)

If there were a god, I think he'd be like you. Like an animal—like the great Pan. The god of Nature. He certainly wouldn't be human.

(JANIE enters in the background.)

JANIE: Jack!

(The STAG runs off. JANIE approaches JACK, traumatized.)

JACK: Janie, what are you doing here? The sun isn't even up yet.

JANIE: Jack—

JACK: Janie, what's wrong?

JANIE: We received—a phone call, we received a phone call. Oh, Jack—

JACK: Oh—no, it's—no—he's not—?

JANIE: The telegram went to my husband first—the beast hadn't told us, hadn't sent to us—Paddy. Oh, my dear, dear Paddy...

*(JANIE goes to JACK and embraces him, weeping terribly. JACK winces slightly from his wounds but makes no audible sign, just stares with utter desolation. **Blackout.**)*

SCENE EIGHT

ALBERT sits at his study, with WARNIE reading nearby. There is a knock at the front door.

WARNIE: One guess as to who it is.

ALBERT: *(Smiles)* Arthur.

(The front door creaks open.)

ARTHUR: *(Offstage)* Mr. Lewis?

WARNIE: You're a prophet.

ARTHUR: *(Offstage)* Mr. Lew-is?!

(Enter ARTHUR, carrying a book. He appears upset.)

ALBERT: I see you let yourself in, Arthur.

(ARTHUR smacks the book on Albert's desk. The book is revealed to be Spirits in Bondage by Clive Hamilton, Jack's short-lived pseudonym. ALBERT looks up annoyed.)

ARTHUR: It's heresy!

(WARNIE enters the room, investigating the ruckus.)

ALBERT: I'm working, Arthur.

ARTHUR: It's heresy, written on nearly every page.

ALBERT: It was like pulling teeth to get information about Jack from you before, and now...?.

ARTHUR: He's my friend, and I've been worried about his salvation.

ALBERT: I'm ecstatic about Jack being published. It's a wonderful success. I won't diminish this great victory in his life.

ARTHUR: Even if it costs him his soul?

WARNIE: Arthur, just let it alone.

ARTHUR: Do you need a sampling? "... believe in no God, but I do believe that I have in me a spirit, a chip, shall we say, of universal spirit..."

WARNIE: Actually, that may be the most spiritual thing he's ever written.

ARTHUR: And what exactly is your religious worldview these days, Warnie?

WARNIE: All right, I'll shut it.

(ALBERT looks up at ARTHUR with a discerning, almost penetrating look. He then rummages through his desk pulling out a couple of newspaper clippings.)

ALBERT: Have you seen the reviews yet, Arthur? Some of them are quite complimentary. I've made clippings from *The London Times* and *The Scotsman*, if you want to read them. They've got good eyes, they know that *Spirits in Bondage* is a fine book of poetry.

ARTHUR: All of this academia, this bookishness—it's dangerous for him.

WARNIE: Don't be so dramatic, Arthur—

ARTHUR: There is nothing more perilous to faith than intellectualism! We're losing him, Mr. Lewis.

ALBERT: Like Jack, you're young, Arthur. You'll both soon realize that all of the unfathomable mysteries of the Universe can't be solved at the age of twenty.

ARTHUR: He needs our help, sir. He needs our prayers.

ALBERT: I've prayed for him every day since he was born.

(WARNIE looks at ALBERT, caught off guard. ALBERT matches the gaze with WARNIE.)

I've prayed for both of my sons.

ARTHUR: He needs our intervention!

(ALBERT sighs, breaking off his moment with WARNIE, glances up at ARTHUR, and puts the clippings back.)

ALBERT: Arthur, at some point when you're young or when you're old, you can no longer pretend that the complex ideas of men aren't there. You've got to turn on them, to grapple them and see if you can't get the upper hand.

ARTHUR: But what if a man loses that fight?

ALBERT: God has been with Jack since the beginning. I don't think his experiences haven't been without some tutorial benefit.

ARTHUR: It can't be God's will for a man to lose his faith!

(ALBERT looks up at ARTHUR and WARNIE with a sad, experienced, almost vacant expression.)

Mr. Lewis?

ALBERT: When my wife was dying, Arthur, it was quite the trouble for me. Where was God's reason in that?

ARTHUR: We need to battle against this tide of atheism before it swallows everyone we love.

ALBERT: *(To WARNIE, almost ignoring ARTHUR)* Flora's death was my crucible. I struggled and I struggled mightily. I have never quite got over it.

WARNIE: Father?

ALBERT: I came out the better man for it. Faith, when it is pampered, is a weakling, an invalid. But when faith is born of fire and blood and heat and pressure and even doubt. That is when faith is reborn as a more vigorous being, undaunted against the challenges of a rough existence.

ARTHUR: But Jack's poetry—doesn't it frighten you that he won't come out of that crucible at all?

ALBERT: *(Still to WARNIE)* Honestly, there have been times when I feel that all of this education that I have been dearly paying for has done more harm than good for my boys. But if Oxford doesn't spoil Jack, he may write something that men would not willingly let die.

WARNIE: Fame? Is that what you're hoping for him?

ALBERT: Not fame, Warnie. I want him to be born into Glory.

ARTHUR: I don't understand, sir.

ALBERT: (*Finally back to ARTHUR*) As I said, my boy, you're still young.

ARTHUR: I still say we should all increase our efforts! We must save him! We love him, don't we?

ALBERT: Love is not bending someone to our will or belief. It often requires us to let them find their own beliefs. Their own will.

ARTHUR: Did not Christ say, "Thy will be done?"

ALBERT: And yet that sacrifice was all the more poignant because he gave it freely.

ARTHUR: Well, I won't give up without a struggle.

ALBERT: When we struggle so ardently against others adopting a belief, sometimes it reflects our own struggle with it.

ARTHUR: I—I must be off.

ALBERT: Your parents don't like you to strain yourself, do they?

ARTHUR: Well, yes—you know, my condition.

ALBERT: Yes, your condition. You know, Arthur, I have never seen any real evidence of this "condition" of yours.

ARTHUR: I must be careful, or—

ALBERT: I've been careful for most of my life. I'm not sure if it has done me any good. Perhaps if you got out a little more—

ARTHUR: I mustn't put myself in jeopardy, Mr. Lewis!

ALBERT: Then I will add you to my prayers that you'll grow strong. I hope someday that you'll be blessed with Jack's strong heart, Arthur.

ARTHUR: I must make do with the one God gave me. Goodbye, sir.

(ARTHUR exits.)

WARNIE: Why don't you tell Jack any of that, Father?

ALBERT: Every time I open my mouth to that boy, I just seem to drive him further away. I just wish I knew how to get to him.

(A MYSTERIOUS WOMAN stands behind them in the shadows. Is it the spirit of Flora?)

I—oh—

WARNIE: What is it, father?

ALBERT: I just thought—never mind.

(Fade to black.)

SCENE NINE

The home of JACK and the Moores. It's midday and a light rain is heard outside. MAUREEN is playing the violin, observed by her teacher Mary "SMUDGE" Wiblin, a woman of about Jack's age. JACK is aside, reading, while SMUDGE periodically looks over to him with an infatuated look on her face.

MAUREEN: Is that what you mean, Mary?

SMUDGE: Er, what was that?

MAUREEN: Is it better? Is that the smoother sound you wanted?

SMUDGE: Yes, perfect. You're getting very good, Maureen.

(MAUREEN glances at SMUDGE, who's still looking at JACK.)

MAUREEN: Perhaps we should end our lesson early today. You seem a little—distracted.

SMUDGE: Pardon, what was that again?

MAUREEN: Thank you for the lovely lesson.

SMUDGE: Oh, is the time up?

MAUREEN: Perhaps in the future we should make sure there are fewer—diversions. Next time can you read elsewhere, Jack?

JACK: *(Looking up from his book)* Hm? What was that?

MAUREEN: How is it that I can never command anyone else's attention? Whether poetry or men, something else always seems infinitely more interesting.

SMUDGE: What is that you're reading?

JACK: Yeats.

SMUDGE: Do you like his poetry or closet dramas better?

JACK: Why, Miss Wiblin, do you read Yeats?

SMUDGE: Oh, yes, definitely. Have memorized whole passages! But, please, do call me Smudge.

JACK: Oh, you like our little nickname we christened you with?

SMUDGE: Yes, I like your pet names.

JACK: Smudge it is then.

SMUDGE: Well, in the end, you can call me whatever you darn well please.

JACK: Er—hm—yes.

SMUDGE: *(Nervous)* I'm embarrassing you. I don't mean to embarrass you ... back to Yeats.

“Come, faeries, take me out of this dull house!

Let me have all the freedom I have lost;

Work when I will and idle when I will!

Faeries, come take me out of this dull world,

For I would ride with you upon the wind,
Run on the top of the disheveled tide,
And dance upon the mountains like a flame.”
Yeats’ touch of the supernatural—it is lovely, isn’t it?

JACK: It stirs something inside of one, yes. Yet that’s part of the danger as well.

SMUDGE: Danger?

JACK: It’s my great fear, being taken in. I have such—such yearning sometimes.

SMUDGE: Yes. Yearning.

JACK: But fairy dust can blind the eyes of reason.

SMUDGE: No, no, it is what gives us desire. Like Oberon guiding the eyes of the lovers.

JACK: Lovers?

SMUDGE: Yes, yes, Yeats is the perfect theme:

“O, you are the great door-post of this house,
And I the branch of blessed quicken wood,
And if I could I’d hang upon the post,
Till I had brought good luck into the house.”

JACK: Er, yes—

(Kindly, trying to ease her nerves)

I knew you were a talented musician, but I didn’t know you had a literary turn to you, Smudge.

SMUDGE: Well, yes. I think there is quite a bit you don’t know about me, Jack.

JACK: I’m sure that’s the case. Perhaps we can—

SMUDGE: Yes!

JACK: Uh, “yes,” to what?

SMUDGE: To, er, anything you were about to say. Ha-ha.

JACK: Ha-ha.

SMUDGE: Jack—I don’t know why—sometimes when I’m talking to you, I get—

JACK: It’s all right, Smudge. You and I have had great conversations. No need to—

SMUDGE: *(Blurting it out)* I think you’re one of the finest, most fascinating men I have ever met, Jack!

MAUREEN: Er, Mary, I was thinking about what you said about the Dvořák piece—

SMUDGE: I adore you, Jack!

MAUREEN: Mary. . .

SMUDGE: How do you feel about me?

MAUREEN: Mary!

JACK: Smudge, really—what I mean to say is that I’ve enjoyed our friendship, really, but perhaps this is a

little too—

SMUDGE: Oh, I'm so sorry, all of that just sort of came out. You know that I am—you know that I'm not—

(There is a knock.)

JACK: I will get that!

(JACK eagerly answers the door. In the doorway is a young man Jack's age, OWEN Barfield.)
Barfield, you are a godsend!

OWEN: Then our "Great War" must be having an impact on you.

JACK: Oh, well, no. You know what I mean—the way that God person of yours sneaks into even our common phrasing—it's absolutely indecent.

OWEN: You are not quite ready for the walking tour, it seems.

JACK: Oh, I apologize, I completely forgot!

OWEN: Then hurry, get into something more comfortable, and put your pack together. Cecil will be waiting for us.

JACK: I'll be right back!

(Exit JACK. Enter JANIE and John "DOC" Askins, her brother.)

JANIE: Truly, John, to think that a grown, educated man like yourself could truly believe in such bunk.

DOC: Our skeptical atheist! There's the ol' rationalist talking.

JANIE: I don't pretend to such high titles as rationalist. Common sense is common for a reason, because it grows out of the obvious. And I think the sort of gibberish you spout off at times utterly betrays your normally stable nature.

SMUDGE: I do not believe we have met.

OWEN: Oh, I am a friend of Jack's from Oxford. Owen Barfield, it's a pleasure.

SMUDGE: Smudge—er, I mean Mary Wibelin.

DOC: Janie, not everything that is true or real can be measured by a ruler or scooted under a microscope. There are other ways of understanding things; there are other senses that can be drawn upon.

JANIE: And there are also delusions, fanciful bogies!

MAUREEN: What's the fuss, Uncle John?

DOC: I made the simple suggestion that yoga might help my dear sister's infamous nerves, and then she flies off the handle, listing off my supposed superstitions.

JANIE: Superstitions is putting it mildly. You are absolutely gullible! Thrown about by every fad and supernatural theory! Theosophy. Spiritualism. Psychoanalysis.

DOC: Psychoanalysis is a legitimate science!

JANIE: I'm surprised that you haven't invited me to a séance, John.

DOC: I would have, if I didn't already know that I would get a tongue lashing for it.

JANIE: You're impossible!

SMUDGE: So you're going on a—walking tour?

OWEN: Yes, we walk for miles and miles, village to village, finding places to stay along the way.

DOC: Well, your narrow-mindedness astounds me, Janie.

SMUDGE: That sounds very pleasant.

JANIE: I would prefer to be considered narrow-minded than to be taken in by the wings of fancy.

OWEN: We generally argue the whole time, which to us, yes, is pleasant.

DOC: You talk so flippantly about things you have never looked into, never studied, never considered.

SMUDGE: So you argue like these two?

JANIE: There are certain things, John, that should never be looked into because they are ridiculous from the outset.

OWEN: Ours are not quite so—personal.

DOC: And thus, Janie, you expose your prejudice.

OWEN: Are you a reader?

JANIE: Or you expose your lunacy!

SMUDGE: Oh, yes. In fact, Jack and I were just discussing—

(Enter JACK, ready for the walking tour.)

JACK and SMUDGE: Yeats.

DOC: *(Breaking from his argument with JANIE)* Yeats? You're reading Yeats?

OWEN: Brilliant, Jack, you broke them from their spell. Now perhaps we all can discuss something more civil. Not that I wasn't enjoying the fireworks.

DOC: Not to disappoint you, my boy, but Yeats ties directly into my argument.

JACK: He certainly does.

JANIE: Oh, don't tell me that you're being taken in by all of this mumbo jumbo, too.

JACK: I'm not being taken in by anything. But Yeats is a kind of believer in another world, of beings around us, like but unlike us; spirits, fairies, demons, whatever they were, his "ever-living ones" aren't a mere fantasy to him. And there are others—Arthur Conan Doyle, Maeterlinck, probably Shakespeare.

JANIE: And this is coming from you, Jack? My Master of reason and logic?

JACK: I didn't say that I gave much credence to it. Not anymore, at least.

OWEN: Well, I do.

DOC: Ah! I knew that Owen would come to my aid! My fellow Anthroposophist!

SMUDGE: *(To MAUREEN)* He's a what?

MAUREEN: I haven't the foggiest.

OWEN: It's something that I've devoted a good deal of thought to.

JANIE: The whole world is losing its senses.

OWEN: Now, I'm not talking some sort of magic or dark arts—Madame Bavarsky says that those lead to the kind of supernatural we certainly don't want. Doc's sort of spiritualism may skate a little too close to that sort of thing for my own comfort. As much as we may agree on certain things, I certainly can't concede to more of those darker ideas and practices...

DOC: That's why the world is blighted with ignorance, lad! Always afraid to find truth in the shadows! Spiritualism as a movement is represented in people's minds as séances, Ouija boards, and divination—but it delves so much deeper than anyone possibly—

SMUDGE: *(To MAUREEN)* Who's Madame Bavarsky?

MAUREEN: Not a clue.

OWEN: There is something unseen, something spiritual— it's really Rudolph Steiner that caught my attention.

JACK: Madame Bavarsky! Rudolph Steiner! Doesn't it become embarrassing after a while, Owen? You're a student of Oxford!

OWEN: I believe what I believe. Steiner and his sort make sense to me.

SMUDGE: *(To MAUREEN)* Who's Rudolph Steiner?

MAUREEN: Really, Mary, how do you expect me to know these things any better than you do?

SMUDGE: Well, you live with them, don't you?

MAUREEN: Well, that's why I took up the violin—I can drown them out.

(Exit MAUREEN. Soon her violin is heard faintly from another room.)

DOC: Well, I personally think that our young Owen here is on the right track—but I may take you aside later and tell you about some of my experiences and see if I can't make you see the sense of Spiritualism.

JACK. But Steiner, Barfield? I mean, he wants to keep the fairy tales of Christianity, while holding on to reincarnation and karma, seasoning it all with his other blasted ideas of the occult and public education—it's a complete menagerie of religions and ideas!

OWEN: It's just like you, Lewis, to see with a modern eye, while simply shaking off the ancients.

JACK: It's positively medieval.

OWEN: And what is wrong, even if it were medieval?

JACK: There is a reason why it is called the "dark ages."

OWEN: You assume just because something is not popular or intellectually in fashion that it is not true?

JACK: Well, you know, Barfield, that I am no scientist ...

OWEN: Yet you take their word since you see them as the most recent authorities. Well, Ptolemy was the authority of his day, and you saw how he played out!

JACK: Another example of a man blighted by the darkness of an unenlightened period—

OWEN: Yes, turn your scrutinizing eye on all other past periods—be the skeptic, be the critic of the mysteries of the past, of the religions of the ancients, of the unseen traditions of great cultures—oh, but by no means turn such an eye on your own era, or your own intellectual fads, or your own flawed ideas. That’s a dangerous road, Lewis, for you may find that you are just as “unenlightened” as the so-called Dark Ages of man.

JACK: I think I’m done.

OWEN: You don’t like to be challenged, Jack?

JACK: What?

OWEN: You finally meet someone who can stand up to your intellectual bullying, and you just back down?

JACK: I’m not backing down!

JANIE: All right, boys, this may be getting a little heated.

DOC: Why stop them, Janie? After all, you started the fire

JANIE: And now I’m dousing it. Let me walk you home, John. Come now, Mary, and I’ll walk you, too. We’ll talk of more pleasant things.

SMUDGE: Oh, but I was hoping that Jack could walk me home.

JACK: Me? Er, hmm, that’s sounds nice, but—well.

SMUDGE: We’ve always had such nice talks, Jack.

JANIE: Jack has his walking tour with Owen, dear.

SMUDGE: Oh, but—

JANIE: Let the boys have their fun, Mary. You must never interfere with a boy’s fun. Coming, John?

DOC: I’ll be right behind you, Janie.

JANIE: All right, but remember you’re not as young as you used to be. Wait too long and you’ll never catch up with two vibrant young girls like Smudge and me.

SMUDGE: Oh, but if only Jack could—

JANIE: Right. We’re off.

(Exit JANIE and SMUDGE.)

DOC: Jack. Owen. Well, I just wanted to say one last thing to you both.

OWEN: Perhaps Mrs. Moore is right, Doc. I’m not sure if we should prolong the conflict.

DOC: No, no, just listen for a moment. Listen to a man who has been through more life experience than the both of you put together.

JACK: All right.

DOC: Now, I know you both are smart boys, educated boys, but beyond what you learn at school, beyond even what you learned from the wretched experience the war was, there are unseen worlds.

JACK: And the fact that they are unseen doesn't that cast the slightest bit of doubt upon them?

DOC: Let me correct myself: they are unseen by those who do not know where to look—by the uninitiated.

JACK: Oh, and you are initiated?

DOC: Yes. I do not talk from book knowledge, or fairy tales, or theories, or mythologies; I talk from rock-hard realities. I talk from personal experience. There is an astral plane upon which we can travel, Jack. There are supernatural beings we can converse with; there are experiences which can tap into the most secret mysteries of the universe.

JACK: You—you say that you have experienced this?

DOC: “We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.” You can be part of that brotherhood, Jack.

OWEN: Really, Doc, let's not get him into that sort of—

DOC: That's all I wanted to say. Just think about it. There are ways that you can be initiated into such revelries. There are people who can teach you these things.

JACK: I . . . I'll think about it, Doc.

DOC: Good. Well, I'd better be off if I'm going to catch the ladies. Goodbye, lads.

OWEN: Goodbye, Dr. Askins.

JACK: Goodbye, Doc.

(Exit DOC.)

OWEN: Now, Lewis, you must understand that there is a stark difference between what I advocate and his—

JACK: Is there, Barfield? They sound rather similar to me.

OWEN: There is a darkness around that man, Jack.

JACK: Doc? He's a teddy bear.

OWEN: And that's the paradox. Darkness can live in the kindest of men.

JACK: I didn't learn anything new today, Barfield. I had a matron at school who was into all of the supernatural theories that both you and Dr. Askins spout off. As a teenager it had great allure to me. I was in legitimate danger of becoming some sort of black wizard. Ironically, the more I studied into the occult, the more I also studied materialism. On one hand, the promise of a spiritual world, and the other, the belief that the physical world was all that there is.

OWEN: Must've had quite the arguments with yourself.

JACK: I swung like a pendulum.

OWEN: And a belief in God?

JACK: God, especially the Christian God, was out of the question.

OWEN: But there is so much in the spiritual history of the world to understand, whether it be through Christianity, Hinduism, Kabbala—

JACK: I won't be taken in again! I've seen through all of it!

OWEN: Calm down, Lewis, I'm your friend. We've always been able to have a friendly debate.

JACK: Sorry, Barfield. You know, if Dr. Askins had made me that offer when I was at the height of my interest in the occult—well, I'm through with all of that.

OWEN: I sense a hesitancy in your voice.

JACK: I admit—the lure is still there. It sits in me like a dark lust, a vivid interest.

OWEN: Be careful who you take as your guides.

JACK: You stood up to me, Owen.

OWEN: Of course I did. Not going to let you win the argument when we know that I'm the better debater.

JACK: (*Laughs*) Hogwash. But sometimes—sometimes I think of my experience with Joy. Those times when I have felt that fleeting, but encompassing desire for—for what? Could this be it? Another world which I am just not seeing?

OWEN: Why, Jack, are you doubting yourself? Now that is a miracle.

JACK: Doubting myself has always been an issue. It's just that I doubt other people even more. If only more people of your bent had that kind of nerve, I might actually develop more respect for religion in general.

OWEN: Perhaps you shouldn't worry so much about how mere humans argue, and instead take the argument to the Great Man Himself.

JACK: I might, if I ever expected a reply.

OWEN: Would you? Talk to Him. If God came down right behind you tonight and whispered into your ear, what would you say back?

JACK: Don't be so—

OWEN: I'm serious.

JACK: (*Pause.*) I'd ask what he did to my Mother.

OWEN: And what answer would satisfy you?

JACK: No answer, because he doesn't answer, because he doesn't exist.

OWEN: But what if He did?

JACK: Then he's a Coward. Taking mothers from little boys, giving Mrs. Moore a lousy husband, letting Paddy get killed in the war, making His servants into such weaklings, and making my father cold and unfeeling, and never giving any answers—He's a coward, Owen.

OWEN: What answer would satisfy you, Jack?

JACK: Let's start the tour. We're losing daylight and you said Harwood was waiting.

OWEN: What answer would satisfy you?

JACK: Look, we can argue on the way.

OWEN: All right. Let's go. Anyway, Cecil's an Anthroposophist, too. You will have to take both of us on.

JACK: Honestly, I do not know what I see in any of you.

(Exit JACK and OWEN.)

SCENE TEN

Oxford campus. Sounds of the outdoors are heard. Henry "HUGO" Dyson is reading in a lounge-like position, spread out, relaxed, and a little comical. JACK enters, stops, gives HUGO an odd look, and then is about to proceed when HUGO speaks, still not looking up from his book.

HUGO: Wipe that look off your face.

JACK: Pardon me?

HUGO: That look, it's insulting. Wipe it off.

JACK: What, do you have eyes on the back of your head?

HUGO: Yes, and the top of my head, and the back of my neck, and on my shoulders, thumbs, and big toes.
The big toes have the hardest time of it.

JACK: Nothing gets past you, I'm sure.

HUGO: In that you're correct. Nothing gets pass me.

JACK: Except me. Good day to you, sir.

HUGO: *(Finally looking up)* Oh no, you don't!

JACK: Truly, I have to go to class.

HUGO: *(Stands.)* There are many things you "have to" do in this world, and class is not one of them.

JACK: I do, actually. I'm a fellow and tutor here. I am the teacher.

HUGO: Even less important then! I should know, I am a lecturer myself.

JACK: Here? At Oxford?

HUGO: No, at Reading. I specialize in Shakespeare. I'm meeting a friend here.

JACK: Well, jolly good for you, but I need to go to class.

HUGO: And yet you haven't wiped that look off your face.

JACK: And what look is that?

HUGO: Well, it's rather like this.

(HUGO imitates "the look.")

JACK: Oh, why am I still here?

HUGO: Because nothing gets past me.

JACK: What was your name?

HUGO: If I were to reveal to you my real identity, you wouldn't believe me, but mortals call me Hugo Dyson. Pleased to make your acquaintance.

JACK: My name is Jack Lewis.

HUGO: Jack. You don't look like a Jack.

JACK: Oh? And what do I look like?

HUGO: Something more in keeping with the look on your face. Should I call you Chester?

JACK: Ugh, no.

HUGO: Well, Jack is rather disappointing, but Jack it is then.

(Enter J.R.R. "Ronald" TOLKIEN.)

Ah, here's the friend I was waiting for!

TOLKIEN: Hugo!

HUGO: Ronald! This is Jack Lewis. I wanted to call him Chester, but he would have none of it. Jack, this is the magniloquent John Ronald Reul Tolkien.

TOLKIEN: Oh, we know each other already.

HUGO: You do?

JACK: Certainly.

HUGO: That formal, is it?

JACK: Oh, Tolkien is a smooth, pale, fluent little chap. He only needs a smack or two.

TOLKIEN: You see, Hugo, there's a bit of rivalry between our two sides of the English faculty. My side, language and classical philology—Anglo-Saxon, Middle English, the art and history of the language! It's a true academic pursuit. While this new trend of studying English literature that you and Lewis engage in—well, that's a different thing entirely, isn't it? All of that is written merely to amuse ourselves—not far removed from going to the picture shows! Popular culture! If you were honest with yourselves, it would be best to simply vote yourselves out of existence.

JACK: This is why I was told to never trust a philologist.

HUGO: Oh, don't let him fool you, Jack! When we were both students here, I saw him read from a cycle of elf stories called the "Fall of Gondolin." Some of the students tried to research where Gondolin was before they realized he made the whole thing up! Who amuses whom?

TOLKIEN: Point taken. Do you write, Lewis?

JACK: Well, yes. I had one of my poetry books published by Heineman.

TOLKIEN: That's quite the accomplishment.

JACK: It didn't sell well. I've ambitions as a poet, but how many people really make their name as a writer?

HUGO: Well, you wouldn't want to see the sort of things that Ronald comes up with. He showed me pieces of this awful thing—*The Silmarillion*, was it? Frightful bore, certainly not publishable. Its mythology is so thick, it's like reading the Bible.

TOLKIEN: That's why I don't let you read my work anymore, Hugo.

HUGO: And that's the kindest gesture of friendship that you've ever extended to me.

TOLKIEN: Anyway, what I write is much less literature and more—mythology. I am trying to create a mythology for England, to replace the one that was wiped out by our conquerors. Granted, whether it's any good—

JACK: Mythology?

TOLKIEN: Well, yes, but it leans more into the Norse and *Beowulf* than the Greek—

JACK: How splendid! May I read it?

TOLKIEN: Would you be interested?

JACK: Oh, yes, that is exactly my sort of thing. I mean—it was, but—

TOLKIEN: But what?

JACK: You see, Honor Mods was a breeze. I read all the classic Greek and Latin texts with my old tutor Kirkpatrick when I was young—I worshipped Homer. But my first actual degree, I received it in philosophy. I thought it was more—academic, as you said. And easy, I already knew it thoroughly. I appreciate the great philosophers, Kirkpatrick drilled the Socratic Method into me—

HUGO: But to Socrates Philosophy was the Way. It was his heart's desire. What is your way, your desire?

JACK: It is English—which is why I received my second degree in it. But—I've had to protect myself!

HUGO: Why are you working so hard to make yourself miserable, if it's what you truly love?

JACK: The very blasted things that I love—mythology, the Faërie, adventure stories—are the enchantments I must avoid at all costs. The heated imagination, that intense desire they create—they can destroy everything!

TOLKIEN: Then what have you constructed in its place?

JACK: A tower.

TOLKIEN: And from that tower you can see everything, can you? You are the great eye.

JACK: Yes! No illusions, no slight-of-hand, all the facts finally made plain before me, stripped naked to their essentials. Nothing will escape my sight at that point.

TOLKIEN: And this thought gives you joy?

JACK: No. Anything but. Yet it gives me clarity.

HUGO: But is clarity even truth? Truth, to me, is not always plain. It can be as elusive as a stag in a wood...

(The WHITE STAG enters, darting in and out of shadows.)

...we only get glimpses of it. Our minds are too small to get a proper hold on it. But when those flashes come, it's like...

TOLKIEN: ...wind in your breath...

HUGO: ...rain in your mind...

JACK: ...fire in your heart.

TOLKIEN: You understand only too well. You just don't like that you understand.

JACK: I—I am going to be late—

TOLKIEN: I tell my children stories, like my mother would tell me. Sometimes I feel that flight of the Faërie when I compose those.

JACK: There is something in a children's story, isn't there? Like the tales of George MacDonald, or William Morris, but you probably don't know them—

TOLKIEN: On the contrary, I certainly do!

JACK: "It murmured over and over again: 'I may love him...'"

TOLKIEN: "...but I am only a beech tree."

HUGO: Ronald *would* fall in love with a tree.

JACK: You too? MacDonald baptized my imagination!

TOLKIEN: But since have you let your imagination die?

(Exit the WHITE STAG.)

HUGO: Well, Tollers, perhaps we've found a soul-friend. But be careful, Jack, he might just start spouting off about little men with furry feet.

JACK: About what?

TOLKIEN: Recently, I was correcting a student's paper, and I absently wrote the phrase, "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit."

(A HALFLING enters.)

JACK: What is that?

TOLKIEN: That is what I have been trying to figure out.

JACK: I have had similar experiences. Why, I've had this image in my head since I was sixteen of a faun, with an umbrella and parcels in his hands, standing by a lamp post in the snow. But I don't know what to do with it.

(The FAWN enters. The FAWN and the HALFLING circle each other curiously.)

TOLKIEN: Interesting—but too derivative of the Greek?

JACK: As a child I used to write these stories about talking animals...

TOLKIEN: Anything but talking animals! Too garish. Like that horrid new mouse creature at the cinema...

HUGO: Don't get Ronald talking about talking mice.

TOLKIEN: Perhaps you should move onto something else. People might make fun of you if you keep down that line of thought.

HUGO: Especially people like me.

TOLKIEN: Yes, he's more mischievous than his wretched Puck.

HUGO: Ach, my true identity has come out! Robin Goodfellow, at your service.

(PUCK enters, playing pipes. The FAWN, the HALFLING, and PUCK circle into a dance.)

JACK: Oh, I must get on! My lecture!

HUGO: Up for a lecture, Tollers?

TOLKIEN: Certainly. And we know a great pub we can go to afterwards: The Eagle and the Child!

HUGO: Or, as we like to call it: The Bird and the Baby.

JACK: That's a new pub for me.

HUGO: Oh, you'll discover whole new worlds with us, Jack.

TOLKIEN: *(Pulling out sweets from a handkerchief)* Do you want some Turkish Delight?

JACK: Oh, you'll do.

*(JACK happily takes the Turkish Delight, eats. Exit HUGO, TOLKIEN, and JACK. the lights fade as the FAWN, the HALFLING, and PUCK continue to dance. **Blackout.**)*

END ACT ONE

30 pages in Act Two

Plus 8 pages of commentary