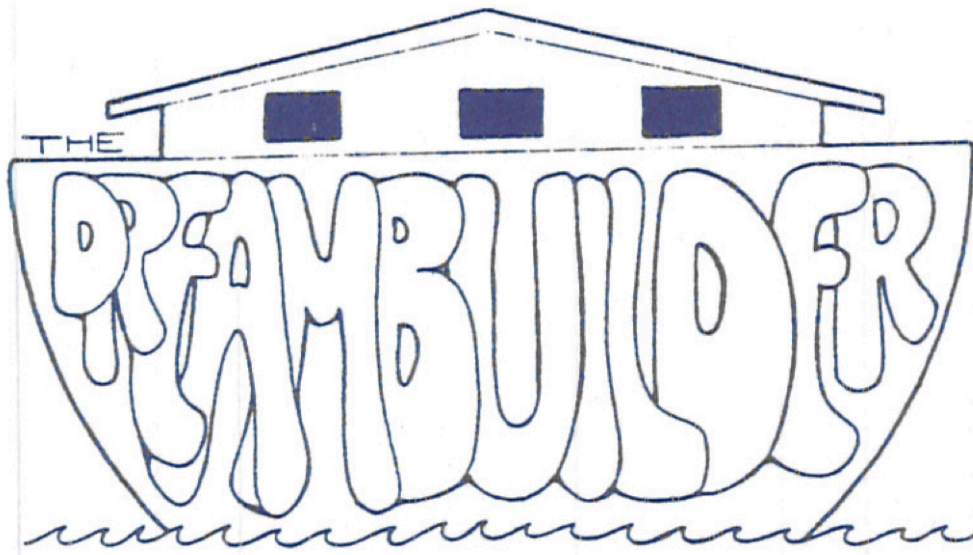


# PERUSAL SCRIPT



by  
Tim Slover



Leicester Bay  
THEATRICALS

Newport, Maine

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## Characters

(in order of appearance)

5MIW 6either

Six Chanters	also play the District Council, workers, animals, and other parts
Noah	a builder
Shem	his middle son
Ham	his youngest son
Ruby	his wife
Messenger	his celestial contact
Japheth	his oldest son

Setting: Noah's front yard

**Tim Slover** is a playwright, screenwriter, and educator. His plays have been performed off-Broadway, throughout the United States and in Canada. His writing has earned him a Writer's Digest Grand Prize, a Hopwood Award, an American Screenwriters Association Award, a George Washington Honor medal, an Emmy nomination, and two Association for Mormon Letters playwriting awards.

**THE DREAM BUILDER** A Comedy by *Tim Slover*. 5M 1W 6either. Single multi-location setting. In an eclectic mix of the ancient and the contemporary, *Dream Builder* retells the story of Noah and the ark. For 600 years, opposed by an unfriendly district council, the decidedly unhandy Noah has tried and failed to make his building projects match his dreams. But God's call changes everything. In an eclectic mix of the ancient and the contemporary, *Dream Builder* retells the story of Noah and the ark. For 600 years, opposed by an unfriendly district council, the decidedly unhandy Noah has tried and failed to make his building projects match his dreams. But God's call changes everything. The Lord expects Noah to build an ark. But he has problems. He's all thumbs. His wife hates animals. One of his sons is working for the other side. And it hasn't rained for over 150 years or so. About 90 minutes. **Order # 2032.**

# Dream Builder

## ACT ONE

**Scene 1** -- *The playing space is dark. A single voice is heard, singing out the traditional Muslim call to prayer.*

**ONE:** Allah!

*Now the voice begins to chant a section of the Koran.*

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all Being,

The All-merciful, the All-compassionate,

The Master of the Day of Doom.

*Lights slowly up, revealing six Chanters. For the moment they are neutral, simply six people reciting.*

*Later, they will take on various characterizations.*

*Chanter One holds a copy of the Koran, from which he has been reading. It should be clearly recognizable.*

*Chanter Four holds a copy of the Torah (perhaps a scroll), from which he or she will read. It should be clearly recognizable.*

*Dominating the playing space are one to three large piles of building materials covered with a huge drop cloth.*

**ONE, TWO, THREE:** Thee only we serve; to Thee alone we pray for succor.

Guide us in the straight path,

And do not let us go astray.

*Now the Chanters begin a rhythmic activity to indicate that this is a joyful, ritual recounting in an oral tradition. This could be as simple as clapping or stick tapping or as complex as dancing and mime.*

**ALL:** Praise belongs to God

Who created the heavens and the earth

And appointed the shadows and light.

It is He who created you of clay, then determined a term

And a term is stated with him.

*As the recitation from the Koran concludes, there is a pause in the rhythmic activity; then a single voice calls out the traditional Hebrew declaration, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord":*

**FOUR:** Baruch haba b'Shem Adonai!

*Now the voice begins to chant a section of the Old Testament.*

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.

And the earth was without form, and void;

And darkness was upon the face of the deep.

**FOUR, FIVE, SIX:** And God said, Let there be light.

And there was light!

*The rhythmic activity continues.*

**ALL:** And God saw the light, that it was good.

And God made the firmament.

And God called the firmament Heaven.

**FOUR:** And God created whales

And every living creature that moveth,

And every winged fowl after its kind.

**FOUR, FIVE, SIX:** And God saw that it was good.

*Now Chanter Six, overcome by how good God's creation is, goes off on a tangent, wreaking havoc on the rhythm the group has created.*

**SIX:** No, I mean really good. He made tree shrews and elephants and lightning bugs and polar bears and orangutans—have you seen orangutans? You know, *pongo pygmaeus*? They have these incredible long arms adapted to swinging through jungle trees, and they use them on the forest floor to fist-walk, like this. (*Demonstrates.*) See? That's what differentiates them from gorillas and chimpanzees, which, you know, knuckle-walk. (*Demonstrates.*) And male orangutans have this amazing air sack in their throats which they can inflate to make this fantastic roar—the “long call”—and it can be heard a mile away, at least. Do you want to hear it?

*(He takes in a deep breath to make the “long call,” but suddenly sees that everyone is staring at him and realizes he has digressed inappropriately. He lets out his breath, gets back to the script.)*

And God saw that it was good.

*The Chanters resume their rhythm.*

**ONE:** And on the sixth day the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground.

**ONE, TWO, THREE:** And breathed into their nostrils the breath of life.

**FOUR, FIVE, SIX:** And God called their name Adam and Eve.

**ONE:** Allah!

**FOUR:** Baruch haba b'Shem Adonai!

**TWO:** And now these are the generations of children which came forth from Eve to dwell upon the earth which God made in wisdom and love.

*The generations are recited in a round: Chanters One, Two, and Three beginning; Four, Five, and Six following.*

**ONE, TWO, THREE:** Adam and Eve begat Cain and his brother, Abel. And Cain slew Abel.

<b>ONE, TWO, THREE:</b>	<b>FOUR, FIVE, SIX:</b>
And again Eve conceived and brought forth Seth.	Adam and Eve begat Cain and his brother, Abel. And Cain slew Abel.

And Seth begat Enos.	And again Eve conceived and brought forth Seth.
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And Enos begat Cainan	And Seth begat Enos.
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And Cainan begat Mahalaleel.	And Enos begat Cainan.
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And Mahalaleel begat Jared.      And Cainan begat Mahalaleel.

And Jared begat Enoch, who      And Mahalaleel begat Jared.  
with his city was taken up  
and was seen no more by men  
upon the earth.

And Enoch begat Methusaleh,      And Jared begat Enoch, who  
who lived to be the oldest      with his city was taken up  
of the sons of Adam.      and was seen no more by men  
upon the earth.

And Methusaleh begat Lamech.      And Enoch begat Methusaleh,  
who lived to be the oldest  
of the sons of Adam. And

Methusaleh begat Lamech

*One and Six hold high their Koran and Torah. The books are passed from Chanter to Chanter in opposite directions until, at the edges of the playing space, they are placed offstage. Meanwhile:*

**ONE:** And it was now many hundreds of years—

**TWO:** —since God had given man—

**THREE:** —Adam and Eve—

**FOUR:** —their bodies of clay.

**FIVE:** And Lamech knew his wife and she brought forth a son, beloved of both Peoples of the Book.

**SIX:** And they called his name—

**ALL:** —Noah!

*The Chanters remove the drop cloth, revealing large piles of junk—scrap lumber, rusted metal, nails, tires, pipes, paper, used caulking guns, etc. Noah has also been beneath the cloth and now appears. He is past middle age, gentle, a little unsure of himself, a dreamer. The Chanters now transform into the District Council. The mood change between their friendly storytelling and their menacing daffiness as the District Council should be distinct. They are all carrying census forms now.*

**ONE:** Noah, we are from the District Council, the highest governing body in the District.

**TWO:** Indeed, the only governing body in the District.

**NOAH:** I know that. I read the papers.

**THREE:** We have come to make some inquiries about you.

**FOUR:** For the census.

**SIX:** Purely routine.

**FIVE:** We expect your complete cooperation.

**NOAH:** Of course. Why wouldn't I—

**ONE:** Good. Splendid. Capital. Now then...

*(gets ready to fill in his census form)*

Name?

**NOAH:** You said my name.

**FIVE:** I thought you were going to cooperate.

**NOAH:** Sorry.

**ONE:** Shall I ask the question again?

**NOAH:** No. I'm Noah, son of Lamech.

**TWO:** Liar!

**FOUR:** *(consulting directory)* No, that appears to be true.

**TWO:** Oh. Lucky for you. Age?

**NOAH:** Five hundred and ninety-four.

**THREE:** Fine. Who and how many share this domicile with you?

**RUBY:** *(off stage)* NOAH!

**NOAH:** Well, um, there's my wife—as you can hear.

**FIVE:** Name?

**NOAH:** Noah, son of—

**FIVE:** No. Her name.

*He prepares to put it on the census form.*

**NOAH:** Ruby.

**FIVE:** What?

**NOAH:** My wife's name is Ruby.

**FIVE:** Are you sure?

**NOAH:** Yes.

**FIVE:** Well I suppose there's nothing we can do about that now. Age?

**NOAH:** No idea.

**ONE:** Look, we have a box, see? *(shows him on the form)* for everyone's age. You're not suggesting we leave a box blank, are you?

**NOAH:** She's just a little sensitive about her age, you know how some--

**RUBY:** *(off stage)* NOAH!

**NOAH:** --people are.

*(calling off)*

In a minute, dear!

*(to the Council)*

I can call her out, if you want. You can ask her yourself.

*Three, Six, and Four are alarmed at the offer.*

**FOUR:** *(hastily)* No!

**THREE:** No need!

**FOUR:** *(confidentially, to One)* Haven't you heard about her?

**ONE:** *(overhears)* No. What's the problem?

**FOUR:** *(confidentially, to both)* Apparently, she's a real—

**FIVE:** *(remembering)* Ah, yes. No, no need to bother your good wife. We'll just put down “of legal age.”

**NOAH:** I think that's a good idea.

**SIX:** Now. Who else is domiciled here?

**NOAH:** Our boys. Well, two of them, anyway. Shem—

**THREE:** Age?

**NOAH:** A hundred and eighty.

**FOUR:** Activities beneficial to the District?

**NOAH:** Shem's studying law. Here at home.

**TWO:** (sarcastically) That should work out well. Who else?

**NOAH:** Ham, just turned a hundred.

**ONE:** Spouses?

**NOAH:** Spouses? Shem just came of age! And Ham's still a baby!

**TWO:** Fine. No spouses.

**NOAH:** Land sakes, the way people jump the gun nowadays.

**SIX:** Anyone else?

**NOAH:** Our firstborn, Japheth. But he doesn't live here. Yes, he has a spouse. Leah.

**FIVE:** Japheth we know.

**NOAH:** That's right. Of course you do. He's on the Council.

**ONE:** And he's just been put in charge of water control.

**NOAH:** Really? Well. I'm not surprised. He's a bright boy. Hope he doesn't raise the rates.

*(He finds this funny. He's the only one who does.)*

**SIX:** So that makes?

**NOAH:** Four here on the farm. Ruby and me and the two boys.

*They all mark this on their census forms. Suddenly there is a huge offstage vocalization from many kinds of animals.*

**NOAH:** Oh, and some animals.

**TWO:** Pets? Now that's definitely not allowed.

**NOAH:** No, they're not pets. *(chuckles)* Believe me, you can't make komodo dragons pets. Or bobcats. Now, lemurs, on the other hand—

**TWO:** *(suspicious, poised to write)* Where are you buying these creatures?

**NOAH:** Oh, I don't buy them. I don't actually think you can—

**TWO:** Where do they come from?

**NOAH:** *(vaguely)* Oh, they just wander in, you know. Sick or hurt, most of them.

**ONE:** Colleagues? May we stick to the point—which is PEOPLE!?

**TWO:** *(under his breath)* Well, I'm going to write down "pets."

**THREE:** *(under his breath)* I don't see a place for that.

**TWO:** *(under his breath)* There. Under "Not Allowed."

**ONE:** All right, Noah, now just one more question. Your occupation?

**NOAH:** Farmer. Just like everyone else.

**FOUR:** Ah, here we come to it.

**FIVE:** Did you know that your quotas are down?

**SIX:** Way down.



**FOUR:** Which means that you must be wasting time on some other activity.

**NOAH:** I don't know. I mean I'm not sure—

**FOUR:** (*reading impatiently from the form*) “Other than farming, what are you doing with your life and property to justify the Council's continued support?”

**NOAH:** What support?

**FIVE:** We let you do it, don't we?

**NOAH:** Well, I—

**FIVE:** Well, there you are.

**ONE:** Answer the question, please. Failure to do so will result in immediate rescinding of your water rights.

**NOAH:** Oh.

**TWO:** So will an inadequate answer.

**NOAH:** I see. Well, when I'm not farming—which I spend almost all my time doing, of course—

**TWO:** You'd better.

**NOAH:** I'm a general contractor.

**FOUR:** (*searching his form*) We have no record of you're ever having been in the military.

**ONE:** No, a general contractor.

**FOUR:** What rank is that?

**ONE:** It means he builds things.

**FOUR:** Oh.

**ONE:** (*under his breath*) Nitwit.

(*to Noah*)

Well?

**NOAH:** Hmm?

**ONE:** What have you built?

**NOAH:** Well, I've built, by the grace of God—

**FIVE:** What's that?

**NOAH:** I mean by the grace of the District Idols.

**FIVE:** That's better.

**NOAH:** I've built...ah...well, let me show your honors something.

(*He runs behind a pile, returns with an enormous set of blueprints, which he unfolds and solicits the Council to hold.*)

If your honor could hold this corner. And if your other honor could just...

**THREE:** Yes, yes, alright.

**TWO:** Get on with it.

**NOAH:** I've been working on this project for years. I want you to take a look at it because I think you'll really like this idea. (*He keeps unfolding the blueprint, until everyone is holding some corner or edge.*) Thank you.

This is my most ambitious project yet. Well, what do you think?

*They all peer at it, baffled.*

**SIX:** What is it?

**NOAH:** It's a temple. A temple to the Most High—I mean, the District Idols. A place of worship where the community can come together to offer up their devotions. And, you know, have coffee evenings.

**ONE:** We have a temple.

**NOAH:** But not like this one. An inner courtyard filled with trees and birds connects to an outer courtyard by steps of sandalwood and marble. The stream runs through here, see? And the dome! Look at this dome: eighty cubits across at the base, supported by 160 marble columns, each inlaid with precious stones and worked with beaten gold. Think of the youth retreats and bingo games you could have in here!

**FIVE:** He's right. We don't have a temple like this one.

**NOAH:** And this is only the beginning. All I've ever really wanted to do—since I was a boy of seventy or so—is build. Single family dwellings with sun decks and spacious yards for lawn darts.

*(getting carried away in his vision)*

Retail pod malls with pet shops.

**TWO:** What? Pet shops?

**NOAH:** And palaces and patios and community art centers. And people will walk by all the things I've built, and they'll say, "I like that. That's Noah's work, isn't it? Yes, Noah built that."

**FOUR:** And meanwhile?

**NOAH:** Meanwhile?

**TWO:** What have you built lately?

**THREE:** What have you built at all?

**FOUR:** Nothing. Everybody knows that. You've never built anything, have you? Not in five hundred years. Not even a breadboard.

**NOAH:** That's not the point. I will build. Some day you'll all see this temple built.

**FOUR:** All he ever does is doodle *(indicating plans)* and collect junk.

*Four prods a pile of junk.*

**NOAH:** Here, leave that alone. Don't be touching things. Everything here is very important.

**ONE:** How dare you speak to a member of the District Council in that peremptory manner!

**NOAH:** I'm sorry, forgive me, your honor. It's just that the order here mustn't be disturbed.

**SIX:** What order? These are just piles of junk.

**NOAH:** No, no—these are my inventories.

**FIVE:** This junk?

**NOAH:** It's not junk! These are my building materials. I know every item here. Every board, every pipe, every nail, bracket, and caulking gun. Everything. It's all written down. So please don't touch anything.

*The Council members look at each other for a moment, then, as if on cue, toss down their census forms and enthusiastically begin poking and prodding the piles.*

**NOAH:** Hey stop that! I mean stop that, please! *(He rushes from one to another, trying to stop them.)* Don't touch that! Now, I've answered your questions—Hey!—for your census and—

**THREE:** Noah, our files indicate that you are not a builder.

**TWO:** And our files are never wrong.

**THREE:** You're registered as a farmer—

**NOAH:** That's what I said—

**THREE:** —but only marginally productive—

**TWO:** —which is to say, not nearly productive enough—

**THREE:** —and as a public nuisance. All of this junk is unsanitary and unsafe.

**TWO:** There have been complaints. Serious complaint.

**FOUR:** The Council has authorized us to order you to dispose of it. All of it.

**FIVE:** Immediately.

**NOAH:** But it's all very valuable. It all has a purpose. I've spent my whole life collecting these materials.

**ONE:** Tough beans.

**NOAH:** I thought this was a census.

**FOUR:** It's just become a disciplinary action.

**ONE:** If this farm isn't more productive, and pronto, the Council will rescind your water rights.

**NOAH:** But you said my son is in charge of water now.

**FIVE:** Who do you think lodged the complaint?

**SIX:** Who do you think told us about you?

**NOAH:** Japheth?

**TWO:** That's why they gave him the water job. Kind of an exchange.

**FOUR:** Smart man. Doesn't seem to run in your family.

**ONE:** Colleagues, let's give our unproductive citizen a hand, shall we?

*Now the Council attacks the piles, removing pieces quickly. In the chaos:*

**TWO:** Thinks he can build a temple. Honestly. About as likely as a flood in a desert.

**THREE:** You're a fool, Noah.

**FOUR:** Worse than a fool. Unproductive.

**FIVE:** Worse than that. He doesn't know how to stick to the facts. No wonder your son's ashamed of you.

*(He grabs the plans.)*

I'll take these. Maybe now you'll keep your mind on your farm.

**NOAH:** No!

*He lunges for the plans, misses. The Council starts to go, taking pieces of Noah's piles with them.*

*Shem and Ham enter. Shem is intellectual, gentle, a mirror of his father; Ham is a very big, strong guy, also very low-key and terse. When he speaks, it is almost in a monotone. They have just come in from a farm chore. Ham is carrying a lot of tools, Shem hauling a bale of hay.*

**HAM:** Hey, what's goin' on?

**SHEM:** Father?

**ONE:** Ah, these must be the two sons. Good morning.

*(starts out again, the others following.)*

**SHEM:** Where are you going with our father's—

**TWO:** Junk? Just making a start. We expect you to clear away the rest.

**THREE:** We'll give you, oh, an hour. How does that sound?

**HAM:** Sounds bad.

*(calls off)*

Mom!

**SHEM:** You have no right to do this. These building materials belong to our father.

**HAM:** *(calls off)* Mom!

**SHEM:** And under District Statute 17a—

**FOUR:** Save it, law boy. That statute's been changed.

**SHEM:** That's preposterous.

**HAM:** *(calls off)* Mom!

**SHEM:** When was it altered?

**FIVE:** Just now.

**SIX:** Now get this place cleaned up.

*Again they start to leave, carrying their spoils. Ruby enters. She is a hard-bitten western woman in an apron, carrying a broom.*

**RUBY:** WAIT A MINUTE!

*The Council members stop in their tracks.*

**NOAH:** Ruby!

*Three hasn't turned around to look at Ruby. To Four:*

**THREE:** Please don't let it be her. Is it her?

*Four nods.*

**FOUR:** Uh huh.

**RUBY:** All right now, gawl-darnit, drop them things!

**FIVE:** Now, Madam—

**RUBY:** I ain't no madam. I'm more the irate land-owner type. Now, I don't reckon none 'a you boys want me to get riled up, do ya?

**FOUR:** *(to One)* Careful, chief. She's got that broom we've heard about.

**RUBY:** Well?

*(brandishing her broom)*

Do ya?

*(No reply.)*

Then get the holy horse hockey off our spread!

**ONE:** Colleagues, it would be beneath our dignity to subject ourselves further to this abuse. I suggest--

**RUBY:** GET OUT!

*The Council exits in some haste, dropping whatever they were holding.*

**RUBY:** *(under her breath)* Bureaucratic riffraff.

*(She helps Noah up.)*

Here now, let's get you picked up and brushed off, darlin'. What was that all about, anyway?

*(Noah is silent.)*

Aww now, I know how you hate it when I summon up cursin' language, but by God's green horned toads, that load a' cow snot had it comin'! Why—

**NOAH:** It's not that.

**RUBY:** It ain't? Well, what is it then, darlin'? And why didn'tcha come in when I called? I had my hands full with the wash, and I was tryin' to make sense of your last entries in the accounts—which I've asked ya a million times to let me handle—

**SHEM:** They said all Father's building materials have to go.

**RUBY:** Pig wash!

**SHEM:** They don't have jurisdiction. We're zoned for this activity.

**NOAH:** They said he's ashamed of me.

**RUBY:** Who's that, darlin'?

**NOAH:** Japheth.

**RUBY:** The family puff-adder?

*Ham snorts.*

**HAM:** Good one, Mom.

**RUBY:** Listen, you boy's wanna give your Pa'n me a minute here?

**NOAH:** No, I'm going up to the animals.

*(indicating the hay bale)*

Is that for the ibex?

**SHEM:** I thought we'd try her on it.

**NOAH:** Good.

*(He picks up the bale, starts to go, turns back.)*

Well, one thing the Council's right about. After five hundred years, I've never really built a thing.

*(kicks the blueprints)*

And after five hundred years, I've never been able to get my heart into crop farming.

*He exits.*

**RUBY:** *(calling after him)* Noah!

*(But he won't come back.)*

Ah, camel spit!

*(She eyes her boys.)*

You boys wanna help me clean up?

**HAM:** Sure, Mom.

**SHEM:** Right.

*They pick up the debris and put it back onto the piles while they talk. It's not important that everything gets picked up.*

**RUBY:** That low-down, no-account, Mr. High-'n'-Mighty brother 'a yours. He oughta get horsewhipped for hurtin' your Pa like that. An' you did not hear me say that so don't go tellin' him.

**HAM:** No ma'am.

**SHEM:** *(more or less simultaneously)* We won't.

**RUBY:** It's fine with me if he don't wanna associate with his own flesh 'n' blood no more—

**SHEM:** Well, we are sort of a political liability for him.

**HAM:** Oh, yeah. Big time.

**RUBY:** Fine! If he'd rather cozy up to that wolf pack Distric' Council, fine! But hurtin' your Pa. I oughta put the broom to him!

*They pick up for a moment. Ruby simmers down. She sighs.*

At least your Pa's with his animals. That'll cheer him up if anything can.

**HAM:** Yeah. Big time. The man loves his animals.

**SHEM:** He certainly does.

*They pick up for a moment.*

**HAM:** I don't.

**SHEM:** Ham!

**HAM:** Not the orangutan anyway. Pain in the butt. I'd like to throw somethin' back at him.

**SHEM:** How we treat animals is an indication of who we really are. Father says.

**HAM:** Well, who I really am around the orangutan is pissed off.

**SHEM:** Here we go.

**HAM:** Plus I'm sick a' the ostrich steppin' on my feet and the musk ox makin' bad smells on purpose. And I'm sick 'a always havin' to look for the chameleons. But mostly I'm way sick a' the orangutan.

**SHEM:** Finished?

**HAM:** *(thinks a moment)* Yeah, that's about it. Wait. I'm also kinda sick 'a buildin' all a' Dad's cages 'n' pens 'n' crap.

**RUBY:** Hey! Don't you blame yer Pa fer that! It ain't his fault he can't hammer!

*Her vehemence makes Ham want to laugh, but he manages to suppress it.*

**HAM:** Or saw.

*Shem, too, suppresses his laughter. Sort of.*

**SHEM:** Or measure.

*The dam bursts. Under the laughter:*

**HAM:** Or drill a hole.

*Ruby joins in the merriment.*

**RUBY:** Or glue, or work a plane, or draw a straight line, for gosh sakes. Oh lordy, yer father really is a mess, ain't he?

*(instantly sober)*

But I love 'im so shut yer traps!

*The boys are as instantly cowed.*

**HAM:** Yes, ma'am

**SHEM:** No problem.

**NOAH:** *(Off)* Ruby!

**RUBY:** *(shouting off)* What!

*Noah rushes in, rubber gloves on his hands.*

**NOAH:** Don't come in for a minute, anybody!

**RUBY:** Why?

**NOAH:** Now, promise you won't get mad.

**RUBY:** What about?

**NOAH:** I was working on the spider cage—

**RUBY:** They got loose again didn't they? Of all the dag-blasted, gawl-darned—

*Blackout cuts her off.*

**Scene 2** -- *Ruby and the boys are gone, and Noah enters quickly with some boards, a tool box, and some rolled-up plans. He is determined to build a spider cage.*

**NOAH:** Ruby says she won't feel safe in the house until I make a better cage for the spiders.

*(affectionately)*

That woman has such a delicate nature.

*(back to business)*

And I can't spend all day doing it because if I don't get something planted this season in the bottom two acres, they'll cut off the water. Japheth will cut off our water... So. I've got to get this built. It shouldn't be too difficult—just some small boards and screening and a little sliding door. It's all in these plans I've made.

*(He unrolls the building plan. It is enormous and elaborate. He takes a deep breath, shakes himself all over, does deep knee bends, all in preparation for carpentry.)*

Alright. Here we go.

*(He tries to nail two boards together. The nail bends. He bends another. He decides to try two nails at once.)*

Maybe if I try two at once—

*(It doesn't work. He peers at the nails.)*

These nails seem to be defective in some way.

*(He ponders for a moment. The solution occurs to him.)*

Got it!

*(He wedges the hammer between his feet.)*

Don't know why I never thought of this before.

*(He carefully holds a nail to the board, tries to pound the board and nail onto the hammer, in reverse of the normal occupation. It's creative, but a failure. Angry and frustrated, he throws the whole thing down.)*

I'll never get this! Never, never!

*(He kicks something and hurts his foot.)*

Oooohhhwwwwww—!

**RUBY:** *(off stage)* Don't swear, gawl darn it!

**NOAH:** *(mumbling)* She should talk.

*The Messenger appears, seemingly from nowhere. He is extremely natty, and everything he wears or holds, including the expensive camera hanging around his neck at the moment, is always white. He speaks in a cultured, upper-class English accent and is unfailingly affable and pleasant, unless irritated.*

**MESSENGER:** Your wife is quite correct, you know. It is extremely bad form to use strong language in the presence of a Messenger from God.

*(Noah simply stares, awestruck.)*

You know: bad form. Not on. Now then, you are Noah, are you not?

*(Still speechless, Noah nods.)*

And you were expecting me, were you not?

*(Noah shakes his head.)*

Really? Good Lord.

*(A rumble of thunder is heard, which always accompanies the Messenger's mild oaths. He glances heavenward.)*

Sorry.

*(back to Noah)*

But I was told you were expecting me. Oh, this is really quite exasperating. Ah well, it's what I deserve, I suppose, for taking the word of a cherub. They're so unreliable, always flitting about, always giggling. Noah?

*(He passes his hand in front of Noah's face, but no response. Then he snaps his fingers, remembering)*

Oh, that's right, I forgot. We're always supposed to start with this bit: "Noah. Fear not."

*(As though coming out of a trance, Noah instantly relaxes somewhat.)*

That's better. Now, to the business at hand, what?

**NOAH:** What—what are you?

**MESSENGER:** My good man, I'm not a what; I'm a who. Look, you've got to relax. I've told you: fear not.

**NOAH:** Who are you, then?

**MESSENGER:** Who I am, old sock, is an august ambassador from the radiant realm, a heavenly harbinger, a celestial seraph, a reporter from the ranks of the rolls called up yonder—

**NOAH:** You mean you're an— You're saying you're an...an...

**MESSENGER:** Angel? Somewhat unsophisticated term, if you ask me. Conjures up all that excessive Italian art, doesn't it? Personally, I like to think of what I do as networking.

**NOAH:** *(a new word)* Net Working.

**MESSENGER:** Good Lord, Noah.

*(rumble)*

Sorry. You're a bit slow on the uptake, this morning. Must I spell it out for you?

*(charading as he says it:)*

I am a Messenger from God. I have a message for you. Grasped it?

**NOAH:** *(gets it, he thinks)* Ohh.

*(laughs)*

This is some kind of joke.

*(calls off)*

Shem! Ham! Very funny!

**MESSENGER:** *(sighs)* All right. If you choose to be stubbornly skeptical, I am authorized to perform one miracle to verify my authenticity. But frankly, old bean, I'd rather not. I'm on a terribly tight schedule, I want to get a snap or two of the pyramids this afternoon if I can.

**NOAH:** The what?

**MESSENGER:** So I don't suppose you could just take me on faith, could you? That chap, Enoch, did.

**NOAH:** You've talked to Great-grandfather Enoch?!

**MESSENGER:** Just left his city. Nice place. Though, mind you, rents are sky-high now. Ha ha.

*(No response from Noah.)*

I say the rents are sky-high. It's a witticism, you see.

*(points heavenward)*

Because his city is... Look, don't you read the Bible?

**NOAH:** The what?

**MESSENGER:** No, I suppose not. Alright, a miracle. Good. Here we go.

*(sets off the flash on his camera)*

*How about that?*

*(Noah just blinks.)*

What? Not satisfied? Dear, or dear. These *are* skeptical times. I know. Give me a long-division problem. I'll do it in my head.

*(Noah is now utterly confused. The Messenger takes a deep breath.)*



You know, we've got off to a rather bad start, haven't we? Sorry. My fault. Shouldn't have rushed. Let's begin again, shall we?

*(He decides to be chummy, puts an arm around Noah's shoulder, walks him around a bit, talks soothingly to him.)*

Noah, God sent me to you with a message. If you find that hard to believe, my brief allows me to bend the laws of time and/or space a bit so that you might. Get it?

**NOAH:** I think so.

**MESSENGER:** What's it to be then?

**NOAH:** Well, if you're really who you say you are—

**MESSENGER:** Oh, I am.

**NOAH:** Then this should be no problem.

**MESSENGER:** *(indulgently)* Go on.

**NOAH:** Look, could you make a spider cage for me? Ruby would be so much more at ease, and I just can't seem to—

**MESSENGER:** *(He is instantly offended.)* My good man, I am not a blue-collar laborer. You seem to think I'm some sort of Trade Unionist! Some sort of Bolshevik!

**NOAH:** Some sort of what?

**MESSENGER:** Let me tell you, I've a good mind to take my message elsewhere—comrade!

**NOAH:** Sorry. I just thought—

**MESSENGER:** *(instantly affable again)* Apology accepted, old sock. Look, the pyramids await, so I'm just going to take your belief as read and get on with it, shall I? Good.

*(takes an envelope from an inner-coat pocket)*

Now then. Noah, son of Lamech, grandson of Methusaleh, great-grandson of Enoch—are you paying attention?

**NOAH:** Of course I'm paying attention.

**MESSENGER:** Well, do try to look it a bit more, hmm? I'm only going to say this once.

*(catching up)*

grandson of...great-grandson of... right. The Lord is very pleased with your righteousness and humility before him. He has watched over you throughout your life, guided you in ways indiscernible to you, smiled upon your kindly actions, and chastened you when you were in need of chastisement. He has chosen you for a great work in which you are to be an instrument in his holy hands. He has sent me, a Messenger from his celestial realm, to deliver this to you.

*(hands Noah the envelope. Noah manages to open it, but is too nervous to read the paper inside.)*

**NOAH:** I'm a little nervous. I wonder, could you...?

**MESSENGER:** *(takes paper)* Of course. Happens all the time.

**NOAH:** Thank you.

**MESSENGER:** The Lord says—You don't mind if I don't do the Voice? Good.

*(reads)*

“Noah, my son, you must build an ark, a great vessel; for a flood will come upon all the earth to cleanse it of its wickedness. You must warn the people and prophesy of this deluge, which will surely come upon all who will not repent. Noah, I have chosen you. You will be my builder.”

*(He hands the Noah the message, takes out a contract and a pen.)*

And so, by the authority vested in me by the Celestial Architecture Commission, I hereby appoint you general contractor for any and all arks the Lord may require. Sign here, here, back here, also here, and initial each page.

*(produces a set of architectural plans)*

Oh, yes, here are the plans.

*(Noah takes them, begins to examine them. Meanwhile:)*

Well, done, Noah. Congratulations. From what I hear, this ark could well be the construction project of the millennium. I'm sure I shall want to snap it when it's up and running.

**NOAH:** *(poring over the plans)* This is terrible, just terrible.

**MESSENGER:** Nonsense. These plans have gone through committee. And been cleared by the Navy Board  
*(produces an admiral's hat and puts it on)*  
of which I am a member.

**NOAH:** No. Not the plans.

**MESSENGER:** What then?

**NOAH:** This whole thing. This whole message. There must be some mistake.

**MESSENGER:** That's rather presumptuous, isn't it, considering from whom the message came?

**NOAH:** No. I mean—I'm the mistake. I'm the wrong man for this job.

**MESSENGER:** What's the name on that envelope?

**NOAH:** Noah.

**MESSENGER:** Well then, there you are.

**NOAH:** But I can't do this. I can't go out and warn people. I hate public speaking. And how am I going to get anyone to believe there's going to be a flood? This is a desert. We get less than an inch of rain a century. We ration water like it was gold. Nobody is going to believe I can produce what the District Priesthood hasn't been able to conjure up praying to its idols all season!

**MESSENGER:** You're not going to produce the rain, Noah. That's going to be handled from upstairs. You simply have to produce the ark.

**NOAH:** That's the biggest laugh of all. Me, produce the construction project of the millennium. I can't even make a bread board. See these piles of junk? They represent five hundred years of what I call building materials but what everybody else knows are just—just broken down dreams.

**MESSENGER:** That sounds like the District Council talking, not you.

**NOAH:** Well, maybe the District Council is right. I'm a farmer—and not a very good one, at that. I'm a husband whose wife has to manage his life for him. I'm a father whose oldest son is ashamed to own him. I'm not a builder. I've got to stick to the facts.

**MESSENGER:** *(eyeing the piles of junk)* Well, the facts certainly indicate that in the past, your efforts have not, shall we say, borne the rich fruit for which we could have hoped. However, circumstances are now altered, are they not? You are no longer, as it were, self-employed. You have been put on the divine payroll, and I can assure you that your employer will render you the necessary assistance to complete the task to which he has appointed you.

**NOAH:** Are you saying that the Lord is going to help me build this ark?

**MESSENGER:** Absolutely, old sock. I assumed that was understood.

**NOAH:** No offense, but don't you think I've prayed for help before? Every day I get down on my knees and beg God to let me build just one thing that will stay together long enough for someone to use it.

**MESSENGER:** Perhaps it hasn't been the right time for you to build.

**NOAH:** Oh, and it is now?

**MESSENGER:** Now you're chosen.

**NOAH:** I'll show you how much it means to be chosen.

*He picks up the boards he has been unsuccessfully trying to hammer together.*

This is supposed to be a spider cage. Some builder. Some things never change. Please tell the Lord I'm sorry. There isn't much he can do with someone like me.

**MESSENGER:** Tell me, old bean. During the last, oh, half-millennium or so, what's been your motivation for building? Eh? What's put the fire in the old tum?

**NOAH:** Well, I guess, to make my mark in the world.

**MESSENGER:** Oh.

**NOAH:** There's nothing wrong with that, is there?

**MESSENGER:** No. Not at all. Of course, there's nothing all that right about it either. Let's call it neutral. But now, you'll be making Somebody else's mark, you see. So, have a bit of faith, Noah—if not in yourself, at least in He who stretched out the heavens and caused the earth to teem with life. If he wishes to create a little rain in a desert, rest assured he has worked out the procedural details. And if he wishes to perform the greater miracle of turning you into a passable carpenter, well, he'll manage that, as well.

*(proffers the contract and pen again)*

So, do you accept?

**NOAH:** Do I have a choice?

**MESSENGER:** Oh yes, there's always a choice.

**NOAH:** *(taking the contract and pen)* Well...

**MESSENGER:** Capital!

*(looks at his watch)*

Good Lord, I'm late for the pyramids.

*(rumble)*

Sorry.

*(leaving, taking off admiral's hat)*

Goodbye, builder.

**NOAH:** Wait! I haven't made—

**MESSENGER:** *(putting on tourist hat)* I hope these tour people take VISA.

*He exits.*

**NOAH:** —up my mind yet.

*(gazes after the Messenger)*

Well, that was unusual.

*(He looks at the contract, pen, and plans in his hands, shrugs, puts them down. He's going to resume his task.)*

Now. Where's my hammer?

*He pats his pockets, as if he might find it there. Instead he discovers the heavenly message. He takes it out, reads it, wads it up and tosses it away. The Messenger suddenly appears on the other side of the playing space, unseen by Noah. He is carrying a deluxe spider cage. To the audience:*

**MESSENGER:** *(whispering)* Shh. I wasn't here.

*(He puts down the cage, imitates Ruby's voice calling:)*

Noah!

*(He exits quickly.)*

**NOAH:** *(calling)* I'm working on it, dear!

*(He notices the cage.)*

It's a miracle. Then, it's all true.

*He kneels quickly.*

Lord. I—

*(thinks of something)*

Oh. Wait!

*(He gets up, finds the wadded up message and smoothes it out, kneels again.)*

Sorry. I'm new at this. Now, Lord—

*(thinks of something else)*

Hold on!

*(He gets up, finds the contract and the pen.)*

What did he say to do?

*(He looks at the pen uncertainly, makes a mark with it on the contract, discovers that it works.)*

Oh.

*(He leafs through the contract.)*

I was supposed to put my name on this somewhere, I think.

*(remembers that he's mid-prayer)*

Sorry. Just give me a second, Lord. I don't know where I'm supposed to... Oh well.

*(He signs his name in large letters across the front of the contract. Then he gathers it, the message, and the plans into his arms and, kneeling, continues his prayer.)*

Lord, forgive me for doubting you. I won't do it again. Well, I've got to go get started.

*(He gets up.)*

I will build your ark. Somehow. Amen.

*He starts to exit. The Messenger enters from the other side of the playing space, adroitly snags the contract as he passes Noah—*

**MESSENGER:** Thank you.

*—and exits on the other side without slackening his stride. Noah, startled, looks after him, and then exits. Meanwhile, the Chanters have entered variously, and take up positions by the piles of junk. Now, while they speak, they will begin to build the ark. It is essential that the ark be built from the piles of junk on the stage and that when it is completed, later, all the parts are used.*

**ALL:** They say,

**ONE:** “Why does he not bring us a sign from the Lord?”

**TWO:** Has there not come to them the clear sign of what was in the former scrolls?

**ALL:** They say,

**THREE:** “Our Lord, why didst thou not send us a Messenger so that we might have followed thy signs?”

**ALL:** Say:

**FOUR:** Everyone is waiting.

**FIVE:** So, wait.

**SIX:** And assuredly you shall know who are the travelers on the even path and who is guided.

*Now the Chanters put on hardhats, and keep building the ark, leaving some finishing touches for later.  
While the other four keep building silently, One talks to Six.*

**ONE:** *(playing an older man)* Craziest thing I ever worked on.

**SIX:** *(playing a younger man)* What?

**ONE:** I said, craziest thing I ever worked on. Here, have some.

*(pulls out a bottle and a couple of empty convenience store cups)*

This’ll make you think you’re right back in the Garden.

*He gives Six a cup.*

**SIX:** *(sniffs his drink)* Hey, what is this stuff?

**ONE:** My boy, this is the genuine article: first class home-made date palm liquor. Made it myself. A sip of this and you’ll forget you sins so you can start ‘em all over again.

**SIX:** *(quickly setting cup down)* Curse your throat! You want to get me fired from my first job in ten months? You know there’s no drinking allowed. The boss wants it done right—and that means no foul-ups from drunken old sand grubs like you.

**ONE:** Well, if that’s how you feel, kid, I’ll keep it all for myself.

*He grabs Six’s cup.*

**SIX:** Good! Just keep it away from me!

*(He gets up to go. One starts laughing.)*

What’s so funny?

**ONE:** Uh, let me think. Oh yeah. *You!* So concerned. So worried. “Oh, no! Maybe the boat won’t get built right!” As if it’s ever going to do anything but sit here and warp in the sun.

**SIX:** I know that! Don’t you think I know that, you old camel turd? But I also know we’re getting the highest wages in half a century. The boss sold everything he had for this thing, and I’ll be damned if I let you blow me out of my share before he goes broke. So stow the rot gut!

*(One takes a slow, luxurious drink, which infuriates Six.)*

I said get rid of it!

*He knocks the cup out of One’s hand. One responds by soaking Six with the bottle.*

**ONE:** Have a drink, you little sandal licker!

*Six grabs One. They fight, yelling invectives at each other.*

**SIX:** Camel turd!

**ONE:** Sandal licker!

*The other Workers drop their tools and yell encouragement.*

**FOUR:** Fight! Fight!

**THREE:** Nothing like a family fight.

**TWO:** They’re family?

**THREE:** Yeah, father and son. Bite him, Dad!

**FIVE:** Gouge his eyes out, kid!

*Noah and Ruby enter. Noah is absorbed in his voluminous plans, showing them to Ruby.*

**NOAH:** I'm thinking of adding a shuffleboard deck.

*(sees the fight)*

Here now! What's going on here? Fighting? At two silver pieces a day?

*(Everyone ignores him.)*

Now, stop this. Come on, stop it.

*(No effect.)*

**RUBY:** *(Whistles shrilly.)* I believe my husband asked you gentlemen to STOP!

*(Everyone stops in their tracks.)*

Now, then. Which one of you cactus-for-brains started this here tussle?

**ONE/SIX:** He did, sir.

**RUBY:** Is this what you boys're gettin' paid for?

*(She sniffs the air.)*

Wait just a gawl-darned minute here.

*(sniffs One and Six)*

Gimme that bottle.

*(She takes it from One.)*

Date palm liquor.

*(sniffs again, grimaces)*

*Home-brewed date palm liquor.*

**NOAH:** I must say, I'm very disappointed in you men. I don't know what to say.

**RUBY:** Well I sure as camel snot do! It's bad enough I have to lose my home and everything in it to pay for this gawl-darned, dag-blasted, crack-brained project. I don't have to throw my money away on a couple of liquored-up party boys. You two knew the rules when you signed on to this here gold-plated disaster. No drinkin' on the job.

**ONE:** But Mrs. Noah, everybody drinks on the job nowadays.

**RUBY:** Not on this job. My husband may've been drunk when he decided to start this thing, but that don't mean you get to be drunk while you're workin' on it. You're both fired. I'd say come up to the house for your wages, but we ain't got a house no more. So come on up to where the animal is at. That's my pay office now.

*Six falls to his knees in front of Noah, pulling One down with him.*

**SIX:** Look, boss, don't sack us. This is my own dear father, sir. We're a father and son team. And we need this job or we'll starve and have to sell the younger children into slavery.

**ONE:** Again!

**SIX:** Yeah, again! You don't want that on your conscience, do you, sir?

**NOAH:** Well...

**SIX:** We were just taking a little break, sir, from the back-breaking work—

**RUBY:** Oh, brother.

**SIX:** But now we'll get right back on the job, sir. And we swear we'll never touch a drop again. Don't we, Dad?

**ONE:** Yeah. You bet. We swear, boss. On the grave of Abel.

**NOAH:** Well...

**SIX:** Thank you, sir. Thank you.

*(rising and pulling One to his feet.)*

And thank you, Mrs. sir.

*(He kisses Ruby's hand. She recoils in disgust.)*

You won't regret this. Come on, Dad, let's get back to the back-breaking work.

*(They retreat and start working.)*

**NOAH:** *(They are gone.)* Well, I guess so.

*Work continues silently under the following exchange.*

**RUBY:** You're hopeless! You're a gawl-darned, soft-brained, pushover, you know that?

**NOAH:** Now, Ruby. God won't let us fail. I've explained that.

**RUBY:** You ain't explained nothin'! You gimme some kinda campfire story about seein' angels and talkin' to the Big Cowboy in the Sky—

**NOAH:** Not talking to, receiving messages from.

**RUBY:** Then you up and sell our house to pay shiftless no-account boat-builders. And *then* you sell everything else to buy up all the grub you can lay your hands on! What for, is what I wanna know.

**NOAH:** I've explained all this. The food and water are for the passengers who are going to board the ark. We may be in there for some time and we don't want to run short of rations, do we? Where are we going to get supplies once we're in the ark?

**RUBY:** Gee, I don't know. Maybe after awhile if we get real desperate one 'a us can hop on out and borrow from the neighbors.

*(Noah's hurt look softens Ruby a little.)*

Look, Noah, darlin', honey, what is goin' on? I don't understand none of this. All I asked ya to do was build a spider cage, and now I got me a luxury liner in my front yard. I gone along with you on this tall tale for a coupla weeks now 'cause you been so gawl-darned excited about it, but let's us call it quits now, ok? I reckon we can still get the mortgage back on our spread. I'll tell the Council it was—I dunno—a farmin' experiment or somethin'. Whaddya say, sugar lamb?

**NOAH:** No!

*(Ruby turns away in disgust.)*

You must be very tired of me, Ruby. And my projects. Year after year I take the little money we make and spend it on silly, self-indulgent schemes. Now even the farm's gone. And you put up with all my animals.

*(He sighs.)*

Look, Ruby, I want to say—I'm sorry about the last 523 years.

**RUBY:** *(relenting)* Well...

**NOAH:** But this project is different! Look at this ship. Have you ever seen anything like it?

**RUBY:** Well, heck, Noah, you could say that about all your projects.

**NOAH:** Ruby, watch this.

*He pulls a hammer out of his tool belt.*

**RUBY:** What?

**NOAH:** Just watch.

*(to a Worker)*

Three-sixteen grade one-and-a-quarter-inch fourteen-gauge checkered flat-head nail please.

**TWO:** Sure.

*He rummages around in his tool belt, gets a nail, gives it to Noah. Noah glances at it.*

**NOAH:** No, I need a seven-thirty-seconds head.

**TWO:** Oh, sorry boss. Here.

*Noah expertly sets a nail just where it's needed, hammers it in with a couple of easy blows.*

**NOAH:** There. Have you ever seen me do that before?

**RUBY:** Well, no.

**NOAH:** Want to see me do it blindfolded?

**RUBY:** No, I do not.

**NOAH:** Look at this section of the hull. And this bracing over here. I built them. I built them with my own hands. Sure I subcontract the basic work—I'm pushing six centuries, I can't do everything myself. But Ruby, can't you see? For the first time in my whole life, I'm *building*! Want to see me use a router? I'm really good with a router.

**RUBY:** No.

**NOAH:** What more proof do you need that this project is different?

**RUBY:** (*eyeing the ark*) And the thing's stayin' together so far. I gotta admit, that's a mite unusual for one a' your projects.

**NOAH:** It's not mine. It's God's. That's the point.

**RUBY:** But, Noah, darlin'—

**NOAH:** This isn't just some cabin cruiser. This ark is going to save people!

*(He looks up at it.)*

A lot of people, I hope. Although I have to admit, that's been worrying me. How many people can this thing hold? A thousand? God hasn't left much room.

**RUBY:** (*not believing any of this*) We talkin' about good people? I reckon he's left plenty.

**NOAH:** We've got to get the word out. We've got to tell people. I've sent Shem and Ham to speak to the District Council. My theory is that God wants this to be a prototype for lots of other arks.

**RUBY:** What're you talkin' about? *Where'd* you send my boys?

**NOAH:** To the District Council. To urge them to hold a general assembly. They've got to hear God's plan. I would've gone myself, but you know what they think of me.

**RUBY:** You sent my boys to the Council? Was this another little thing God told you to do? The Council's downwind 'a every vicious crime in the District. And you sent my boys to give 'em some kinda morality lecture?

**NOAH:** The Council can't be that bad, can it? Besides, Japheth would never—

**RUBY:** Japheth! You old fool!

*She turns to go.*

**NOAH:** Ruby, where are you going?

**RUBY:** To get my boys.

*She leaves. Suddenly a piece of something from the ark is thrown by One at Noah. It barely misses him.*

**ONE:** Sorry, sir. I wasn't aiming at you, sir. I was aiming at this desert snake here. He stole my pitch bucket.

**THREE:** Liar! Watch this one, sir. He's a bad one. A spy from the Council. Get rid of him.



**ONE:** Who's a spy from the Council, you stinking snitch?

*One jumps Three, and they start to fight.*

**TWO:** Hey, my tools are gone! Who stole 'em?

**FOUR:** (*mocking*) Ah, I just took 'em so you wouldn't hurt yourself.

**TWO:** Turd!

*Two jumps Four.*

**FIVE:** Hey, leave him alone!

**SIX:** (*throws his tool down gleefully*) All right! Fight! Fight!

*He jumps Five, who has jumped Two. General fighting. Noah tries to stop it.*

**NOAH:** Not again! Stop it! Stop this at once!

**FIVE:** Stay out of this, old fool!

**TWO:** Yeah, this is a union dispute.

**THREE:** And you're not in the union.

*The fighting intensifies. Japheth enters. He is serious, arrogant, a hard man.*

**JAPHETH:** Alright, that's enough.

**NOAH:** Japheth!

**JAPHETH:** (*ignoring his father*) I said, that's enough.

*(pause in the fight as Japheth speaks quietly.)*

Or do you all want a date with the Council's flogging posts?

*(All drop or lower weapons, stop fighting.)*

That's better. Now clear out. You're all through with this job. Go home and don't come back.

**ONE:** We've got money coming to us, your honor.

**JAPHETH:** Nobody gets paid for this job. You all should know better than to work for an anarchist.

**NOAH:** Anarchist!

**JAPHETH:** The Council is extremely disappointed in you men. However, if you leave now, it may decide to overlook your treasonous activities. Do I make myself clear?

*All Workers exit quickly except One.*

**ONE:** Councilman, I—

**JAPHETH:** Yes, please do tell me your complaints. Let me make a note of them. And your name. And the names of everyone in your family. So I can bring them before the Council. Well?

**ONE:** I have no complaints, your honor.

**JAPHETH:** Good.

*(Japheth shakes his hand and slips him a bag of gold.)*

Goodbye, Worker. Have a safe trip home.

**ONE:** I will. Thank you. Thank you, your honor.

*He leaves quickly.*

**NOAH:** I should have paid those men, Japheth.

**JAPHETH:** I just did. How could you have sent Shem and Ham to the Council Chambers?

**NOAH:** Are they all right?

**JAPHETH:** They come in, raving about a flood and God’s warnings—idiotic notions they obviously got from you. I could hear the Council lick its collective chops before they even mentioned the “imminent destruction of the District”—which I understand you’re predicting.

**NOAH:** Not just this district, I’m afraid.

**JAPHETH:** In effect, they said the government is going to be overthrown by a rain shower.

**NOAH:** It is.

**JAPHETH:** Are you crazy? Have you finally cracked?

**NOAH:** What happened to the boys?

**JAPHETH:** They were flogged, of course.

**NOAH:** What?

**JAPHETH:** Just be happy they weren’t executed. (He looks around him.) Yet.

**NOAH:** You’re on the Council. Why didn’t you stop them?

**JAPHETH:** I... Listen, you’ve got to give up all this lunacy about floods and God.

**NOAH:** It’s the truth.

**JAPHETH:** It’s sedition. Can’t you understand? You’re threatening the government!

**NOAH:** It will happen. Why didn’t you stop them?

**JAPHETH:** Shut up and listen to me! The Council is on its way here, right now. It’ll be a race to see if Shem and Ham or they get here first.

**NOAH:** Why should they come here?

**JAPHETH:** I wish I could say it was just for sport—to see if you’re finally succumbing to senility.

**NOAH:** Is that what you think?

**JAPHETH:** They’re coming for you. Look at this place. You’re in violation. All this junk was supposed to be gone. Your sons have threatened the Council with extinction. And it doesn’t levy fines anymore. It kills people.

**NOAH:** Then why are you on the Council?

**JAPHETH:** It wasn’t always this way.

**NOAH:** It was always close enough to this way. You just didn’t want to see it.

**JAPHETH:** You believe what you want.

**NOAH:** And why are you telling me these things now? Didn’t you lodge a complaint against me?

**JAPHETH:** I was trying to warn you! To wake you up! But you can’t be waked up! You’ll be a dreamer all your life.

**NOAH:** Well. I’m awake enough to know you exchanged information about me for a promotion. Didn’t you?

**JAPHETH:** Look, they’re coming now to arrest you. Probably to execute you on the spot as a security threat.

**NOAH:** Didn’t you, son?

**JAPHETH:** With a crowd of your good neighbors on their heels to watch the show. As soon as Shem and Ham get here we’ve got to go!

**NOAH:** And then you stood by and watched your own brothers get cut up by a whip. What kind of person does that?

**JAPHETH:** (*quietly*) A scared person.

*Shem and Ham enter, supported by Ruby.*

**NOAH:** Shem! Ham!

*He rushes over to help. Shem and Ham collapse, almost unconscious.*

**RUBY:** There's a real nasty lookin' mob about a whisker behind us. *(to Japheth)* What're you doin' here?

**JAPHETH:** We've all got to leave. I know a house we can stay the night in. Then—

**RUBY:** These boys ain't up to no hike. And I sure as spit ain't goin' nowheres with him. I'd sooner trust a scorpion.

**JAPHETH:** There isn't time for this!

**NOAH:** He's right. I want all of you to go with him.

**JAPHETH:** Come on. This way.

*He starts out.*

**RUBY:** I said, I'm stayin' here.

**NOAH:** Woman, I am the patriarch of this family. Will you do as I tell you?

**RUBY:** No.

*(to Japheth)*

So git, if yer gittin'.

*(Japheth, at a loss, stares at her. Mob sound.)*

Go on.

**JAPHETH:** Before this day is out, you will be dead. All of you.

*(He starts to go, turns back with a grim smile.)*

That is, unless your God saves you.

*He leaves.*

**NOAH:** *(calling after him)* Son! Be back in fourteen days. The ark will be ready to sail.

**RUBY:** Well, my patriarch, in about a minute the biggest, most stirred up hornet's nest I ever saw is gonna be at what used to be our front door. Any ideas about what we oughta do?

**NOAH:** I must exhort them to repent and join us on the ark.

**RUBY:** Good plan. Well, lets get these boys moved somewheres less conspicuous. You lug the big one.

*(They half drag, half help them to the ark.)*

Come on, Shem. Just a little farther.

**NOAH:** Here we go, Ham.

*Shem and Ham come to.*

**SHEM:** Where's Japheth?

**RUBY:** Don't you worry. We sent that blagslaggin' viper packin'.

**SHEM:** No, you don't understand. Japheth saved our lives.

**HAM:** Oh yeah, they woulda killed us, no question. If he hadn't stepped in. What I reckon is, God was with him.

**RUBY:** With Japheth?

**SHEM:** Yes!

**HAM:** In spades.

**SHEM:** He told them if they killed us, he'd expose their crimes to the people.

**HAM:** Shook 'em up bad. 'Course by now they prob'ly figured out they gotta off him, but he was good, I gotta say. He's a hero in my book.

**SHEM:** Mine, too.

*Without ceremony, Noah prays.*

**NOAH:** Your call, O Lord, it is a hard thing. Hard and keen as a desert wind that strips the trees and dries the watered places. But I have heard the call, and I will not turn away. And in the midst of tribulation there is joy, for my strength is in my sons.

*(to Shem and Ham)*

Boys, I'm sorry I sent you to do a thing I was afraid to do myself. I should have spoken to the Council, not you.

**SHEM:** We were proud to be there.

**HAM:** Besides, you they *woulda* killed.

*Noise of the approaching mob, offstage.*

**NOAH:** Let's try to get a little higher. I will address the people from the ark.

**HAM:** Dad. Is this a good idea?

**NOAH:** *(considering)* No. Probably not.

**HAM:** Right. Let's go.

*The four get on top of the ark. The Council enters from all sides. They should look as menacing as possible. Two and Four are holding Japheth.*

**THREE:** Ah, here they are. This should be fun.

*Blackout.*

### ***INTERMISSION***

**19 MORE PAGES CAN BE FOUND IN ACT 2**