

REDEMPTION

A play in four acts

by

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CHARACTERS:

Stephen: a surgeon in his thirties.

Cathy: his wife, a nurse in her thirties.

Bob: a bush pilot in his late forties.

Jim: a social anthropologist in his thirties.

PLACE:

A trapper's cabin in the Canadian Arctic.

TIME:

1983.

ACT ONE**Scene One**

Fierce winter cold. The crude cabin is basically furnished with an iron cot-bed and a box-type stove. Anxious voices are heard outside.

STEPHEN

Holy Jesus. Give me a minute will you? The damn thing is frozen stiff.
(Banging and pulling away.)
Hasn't been open for years.

JIM

Prize it open with this.
(Hands him a big axe.)

STEPHEN

Give me time.
(Hacks away.)

JIM

It won't come. Can't you see it's rusted up?

BOB

Christ's sake you fellahs. We'll freeze to death.
(Stephen starts to crash against the door.)

JIM

Don't break that door we're going to need it.

STEPHEN

It's coming. Hold it. It's giving way. One more heave.
(The door gives way. Stephen comes through followed by Jim.)
Christ are we lucky.

CATHY

(From outside.)
Give me a hand will you?

JIM

A stove. Just what we need.

STEPHEN

And we were six days huddled together in that freezing plane.

BOB

What about me?

CATHY

Will you give me a hand to get Bob in?

JIM

Okay Cathy.
(Both Steven and Jim go out to get him.)

BOB

(Screams.)
My legs.

STEPHEN

Lift him carefully.

BOB

You're hurting me.

CATHY

Okay Bob. Okay. We'll have you in.
(They carry him in.)

STEPHEN

Lift him onto the bed.

JIM

My strength's gone.

STEPHEN

Make an effort.

CATHY

Catch him under the arms.

BOB

(Screams.)

My legs. My legs. The pain.

(To Stephen.)

You butcher.

CATHY

Easy Bob. We just have you.

STEPHEN

Got him Jim?

JIM

I have him.

STEPHEN

Now. Lift him up and over onto the bed.

BOB

(As he's lowered onto the cot.)
Oh Jesus. Oh Jesus. The pain, oh the pain.
(He goes quiet.)

CATHY

Thank your blessings Bob. At least you'll not die of cold.

BOB

No. But hunger.
(After a moment.)

STEPHEN

Where's that Indian?

CATHY

With his son.

STEPHEN

He's not bringing him here.

CATHY

Who said he was?

STEPHEN

He'll stink.

JIM

Don't you understand? He's mourning him.

STEPHEN

Carrying a body all the way here.

CATHY

It's his son.

STEPHEN

It was his son.

JIM

Was or is. It is still his son until he sees him at rest.

STEPHEN

He'd better leave him outside.

CATHY

He's no intention of bringing him in.

JIM

As far as he's concerned he isn't dead.

CATHY

Bob. Are you all right?

BOB

Bit better. Any more of those pain-killers?

CATHY

You finished the last of them a couple of days ago.

BOB

What I'd give for a shot of whiskey.

STEPHEN

Let's get a fire going. Get some wood.

CATHY

Jim! He'll injure himself.

STEPHEN

(Sarcastic.)

Anthropologist.

CATHY

Why don't you? Stephen. Please.

JIM

I'll do it.

(He goes out.)

CATHY

What's happening to you?

STEPHEN

(Defensive.)

Nothing.

CATHY

Keep your voice down. Bob's dozing off.

STEPHEN

If we don't get food soon he'll doze off forever.

CATHY

What do you mean?

STEPHEN

His injuries.

CATHY

I hope that's all you mean.

STEPHEN

He'll go before us.

CATHY

Have faith. Have hope.

STEPHEN

Faith. Hope. I'm a goddamned scientist.

CATHY

This is where faith and hope will get us through.

STEPHEN

Religion.

CATHY

If it'll help me in this situation I'll be glad for it. We must get out of here Stephen. We must. If not for our sake for his.

STEPHEN

What's Bob to us?

CATHY

(She gently caresses her stomach.)
His sake. Maybe her sake.

STEPHEN

You're not?

CATHY

I'm not sure. But I'm almost.

STEPHEN

Why didn't you tell me?

CATHY

I wanted to be sure.

STEPHEN

We must get out of here.

(He looks at Bob.)

He won't survive.

CATHY

He will.

STEPHEN

This is our seventh day.

CATHY

So far it's a miracle. Somebody up there is looking after us. That plane was so cramped one of us would have given way. We would have killed each other in the end.

JIM

(Comes in with a small pile of brush-wood.)

Any matches left?

BOB

(Awoken.)

Use my petrol-lighter.

(Takes it from pocket and throws it to Jim.)

Go easy on it.

STEPHEN

You're alive.

BOB

You sorry.

CATHY

Let's get the stove going.

BOB

What I'd give for a tender-loin steak.

JIM

And french fries.

CATHY

You're making my mouth water.

(We hear the ululations of the Indian accompanied by a drum.)

STEPHEN

Christ he's not starting again is he?

JIM

It's his way of propitiating the gods.

STEPHEN

What gods?

JIM

His gods.

STEPHEN

Savage.

BOB

A real one. Even brought his drum.

CATHY

Because he felt an imminence.

STEPHEN

(The Indian's chanting continues.)

It's maddening. Those bird calls, those animal cries. I'll be forced to kill him.

(They listen.)

JIM

He's a pantheist.

CATHY

(The Indian's chanting continues.)

He wants to bury his child.

STEPHEN

I wish he would.

CATHY

Really bury him.

BOB

What I'd give for a bottle of beer.

CATHY

Are you comfortable?

BOB

I won't be if your husband gets his way.

JIM

I'll go and chop some more wood.

BOB

Take the axe with you.

JIM

I've got one.

BOB

The heavy one.

JIM

This'll do.

BOB

Take them both. I'm the pilot. As long as I'm alive I'm skipper. Take the axes. Don't let them out of your sight.

JIM

Right Bob.

(He goes out. There is silence except for the continuous monotonous dirge of the Indian.)

STEPHEN

Will he ever stop? He's driving me Christ-Jesus mad.

(The incantations stop.)

Thank god.

BOB

You should thank him you're alive.

CATHY

I go along with that.

STEPHEN

Any idea where we are?

BOB

Not in the slightest.

STEPHEN

How did you find this place?

BOB

Who knows? Luck.

STEPHEN

You told us before we left the plane that you knew of a trapper's cabin.

BOB

I know I told you. I had to. Else we would have stayed by the plane and froze to death.

CATHY

It would have been safer to have stayed by the plane.

BOB

Are you kidding? On that ice? We were on the edge of the Atlantic.

STEPHEN

Are you saying it was pure chance we found this cabin.

BOB

Pure chance.

CATHY

And if we hadn't have found it?

BOB

We would have perished. Either ways we would have perished. Two more days on that wind-swept ice. It must have been forty below.

STEPHEN

At least there was a better chance of spotting the plane.

BOB

They didn't in six days!

CATHY

We are miles off course.

STEPHEN

Whose fault is that?

BOB

Who knows?

STEPHEN

Not yours?

BOB

Not mine.

CATHY

He knows the country like the back of his hand.

BOB

Not here.

STEPHEN

You said you knew of a cabin.

BOB

There are trappers' cabins dotted all over the Labrador.

STEPHEN

Then there should be plenty of game.

BOB

Why should there be?

STEPHEN

We're on a trapping-line.

BOB

Doesn't always follow. Game comes and goes.

STEPHEN

Must be something around here.

BOB

Like what?

STEPHEN

Rabbit. Partridge.

(After a moment.)

CATHY

At least we've got wood and shelter.

BOB

Go sparingly on the wood.

STEPHEN

We must conserve our energy. Take turns in hauling wood.

CATHY

And Providence?

BOB

With a name like that he should be able to help us.

STEPHEN

The only time he opens his mouth is to howl.

CATHY

He knows what you're saying.

STEPHEN

If there's anyone here who can help us it's him. He's a trapper, a fisherman, a native Indian. One of the Dene. Why doesn't he do it?

JIM

(Coming in with more wood.)

He's got a death-wish.

CATHY

He's listening.

STEPHEN

His is not the only death-wish. There's Bob's. His won't be long away if he doesn't get some food. His legs are infected. If that infection takes hold then our friend will have somebody else to take with him. Maybe he'll outlive us and escort us all into the Happy Hunting grounds.

(The haunting monotonous rhythm of the Indian's chant is heard and clearly audible is the word ISUMA repeated over and over again.)

CATHY

He's been listening.

JIM

What's that word? He keeps repeating it. Haven't heard that before.

BOB

ISUMA

STEPHEN

ISUMA?

BOB

Yes ISUMA.

CATHY

You've gone too far.

STEPHEN

Not far enough. Maybe we're getting some kind of a rise out of him.

CATHY

He knows what we're saying.

STEPHEN

What a load of hog-wash.

JIM

If you'll allow the professor to give his opinion.

STEPHEN

Why not? It'll help pass the time.

JIM

Providence will remain the way he is until his son's soul finds its new resting place.

STEPHEN

We're starving to death.

JIM

Give him time. As soon as he's delivered his son to a new world he will return to us.

STEPHEN

Tomorrow will be our eight day without decent nourishment.

CATHY

We wouldn't if we'd respected the laws of the Labrador.

BOB

I was doing it for Providence.

STEPHEN

So was I. Some witch-doctor!

CATHY

Bob has to take some of the blame.

JIM

Why Bob?

CATHY

Bob broke his own rules not only for the Indian's child but for his own.

JIM

What do you mean?

CATHY

Bob's son is in Intensive Care.

STEPHEN

I didn't know that.

JIM

So that's why you flew out against all advice.

BOB

The Indian's son would have died if we delayed. Ask the doc.

STEPHEN

We could have kept him going on antibiotics and fluids. Now the odds have certainly turned. He's dead.

BOB

You turned them.

STEPHEN

The decision to fly was yours. I told you my decision. We could have stayed.

CATHY

The Indian's child is gone.

BOB

Is mine? Tell me is mine? What about my child? Haven't I also the right to take a risk to see my dying son. For how many years have I taken risks? Twenty years flying over this wasteland. You know what they call it? What Cartier called it when he first saw it: "The land that God gave to Cain".

(After a moment)

CATHY

(To Jim.)

Is that all the wood you got?

JIM

Sorry.

BOB

We need a fire outside to make plenty of smoke.

STEPHEN

Leave that to the Injun. He's an expert.

BOB

See to it Jim.

(Jim goes out.)

STEPHEN

Everything has failed us.

CATHY

More and more this place makes me believe in God.

BOB

Couldn't get a squeak from the radios.

CATHY

Maybe it was some kind of magnetic storm.

BOB

Everything went dead. Came from nowhere.

CATHY

A miracle we landed in one piece.

STEPHEN

Should've taken that radio with us.

BOB

Haul that piece of scrap across the ice!

STEPHEN

Could have fixed it.

BOB

I tried. We were risking our lives out there. Any minute I was expecting the ice to open up.

JIM

(Jim comes in.)

Blazes too quickly.

BOB

Put plenty of green twigs on it.

JIM

There's not enough. Must go deeper into the forest.

CATHY

Better stick to the open space.

JIM

What did the trappers do for wood?

BOB

Cut in winter. Stock-pile in summer. Take it along in coastal-boats and off-load.

JIM

Hard work.

BOB

They do it.

CATHY

They're more likely to be looking in the open space.

STEPHEN

We're in the open space.

CATHY

If we're in a cabin we're more likely to be safe though they're more likely to be looking outside.

BOB

The only thing that's stopping them is the foul weather.

(After a moment.)

STEPHEN

Do you think he's going funny?

JIM

Who?

STEPHEN

Who do you think?

BOB

Be careful with our Indian. Remember it's his land. You are the intruder. He has a communication that is better than ours. His radio hasn't failed him. At least not yet. His radio tunes into the spirit world and it goes back generations to ancient ancestors. As he thinks and broods he gets stronger.

STEPHEN

Not in body.

BOB

Look at him. He isn't the worst for wear. If any of you had have done what he has done you would have been dead by now. He can conserve his heat like an animal. He can go into a trance. He can slow his body right down. Just like one of those yogi fellahs.

JIM

Bob is saying and I'm coming to believe it. He's got special powers.

STEPHEN

What powers?

JIM

Special spiritual powers and maybe some physical.

STEPHEN

You mean he's a witch-doctor.

JIM

More precisely a Shaman.

STEPHEN

Holy Christ. What next?

JIM

Holy Christ you Stephen. Don't you believe in anything that is not tangible, quantifiable, measurable?

STEPHEN

That's all I believe in.

BOB

He's a butcher.

JIM

A material-positivist. Isn't that right Stephen? All metaphysics is hog-wash, all religion is mumbo-jumbo, the paranormal is fantasy and psychology, now this is closer to home, is only for nutters. To a surgeon all mental illness is classifiable under nuttury. But when you can apply your scientific tests then it becomes real.

STEPHEN

Yes. Yes. How else would we have gotten this far? What was religion; spiritual occurrences hundreds of years ago is now scientific phenomena. That's the way the world goes.

BOB

I don't know what this argument is about but there is one thing certain and I'm a practical man who always looks for practical solutions and sometimes but very rarely takes a risk. Our Indian friend has a knife.

STEPHEN

And I have an axe.

CATHY

Stephen!

BOB

At this moment doctor the only thing you should be allowed to have is a scalpel.

STEPHEN

I could cut your heart out with a scalpel.

BOB

I know you could. I know you would. But you won't.

CATHY

Stop it. I don't want to hear any more of this talk. You're driving each other insane.

BOB

Look after your wife doc.

STEPHEN

(Realising he's gone too far.)

Sorry everyone.

(The incantations of the Indian start up.)

Oh Christ. Oh Christ. I wish he'd shut up. Can't you see? He's heralding our death. Whatever's going on in his primitive head. He's juggling with our spirits. He's jeopardising our fate and throwing us into the laps of his gods.

(The sounds grow louder.)

JIM

Listen. Listen.

STEPHEN

We're listening. What do you think we need to listen for? It's bloody him. Unceasingly, nerve-wrackingly, chanting, heralding our death. He wants to bring us all with him. So we'll accompany the funeral of his son.

JIM

Be quiet. I hear something.

STEPHEN

It's him.

BOB

(Sits up.)

No. It's not him.

JIM

A plane.

BOB

Yes. A plane.

JIM

I hear it.

BOB

Me too.

(Stephen listens.)

JIM

It's definitely

BOB

A plane. A plane. We're going to be rescued. The fire.

JIM

(He rushes out.)

The fire. The fire.

(From outside both he and Cathy.)

The fire. The fire. The fire.

(Stephen goes out. All shouting outside.)

The fire. Get it going. Get it going.

(Bob gets off his cot and attempts to crawl to the door. Excited shouting continues.)

Put on more wood. It's coming. The plane is coming. The fire. The fire. We're going to be rescued.

(The smile of relief and delight is seen on Tom's face as the lights come down.)

ACT ONE**Scene Two**

Two days later.

JIM

There's no good telling me so Bob. It's no good. It wasn't my fault if the fire wasn't good enough. It's not my fault if it didn't generate enough smoke. How was I to know the godforsaken plane was out looking for us? That's the first one we've heard since we crashed.

BOB

And it maybe the last.

CATHY

Stop thinking like that. Stop incriminating each other. They'll come again.

STEPHEN

Two days have passed and they haven't. If wigwam would only get off his butt and make some smoke-signals. If there's anyone at fault it's him.

BOB

We must have a fire at the ready. By right we should have one going all the time.

JIM

That's impossible. We need to heat ourselves. It's no good if they find us dead from exposure.

CATHY

Frozen stiff. Like cracked eye-balls.

STEPHEN

Cracked eye-balls!

BOB

The Eye-Team...

CATHY

It was so cold that those who were wearing artificial eyes had to take them out and put them in their pockets to keep them warm.

STEPHEN

To stop them from cracking!

CATHY

Yes.

BOB

She's right. I saw them.

STEPHEN

She's exaggerating.

BOB

She's not. The glass-eyes were left in a box and they split open with the cold.

STEPHEN

In a box but not in their heads.

BOB

In their heads. There was such a difference between the temperature outside their skulls and inside their skulls.

STEPHEN

I don't believe it.

BOB

How long have you been here? A year. Two years. You're all the same. You come in. Do your tour of duty and go out. Fly by nights.

STEPHEN

What's that got to do with eye-balls.

BOB

Have you ever seen a tree split with the cold?

STEPHEN

No.

BOB

Well I have. A birch-tree. It's trunk as thick as your body split right down the middle as though you'd taken an axe to it. That's how cold it can be.

(After a moment.)

Like Tom Pardy going across the bay that terrible winter. Minus 60 it was and they stopped because his missus wanted to have a piss. She squatted down but it was so cold her damn piss froze and she couldn't get up. She called to Tom. Help. Help me. I'm stuck to the ice. He comes on over. Don't worry Martha. Don't worry. I'll soon have you free. He pulls and pulls but she doesn't budge. So he gets down on his knees. Hold on Martha. Hold on. I'll soon have you free. So he blows on her beaver and blows and blows and blows but doesn't his breath freeze and doesn't his beard freeze till both beaver and beard are frozen solid to the ice. That's how the Mounties found them, a few days later, both frozen solid and both stuck to the ice.

(After a Moment)

CATHY

One of us will have to make for the woods and haul some timber.

STEPHEN

None of us are in that kind of condition.

CATHY

Let's go. There'll be adequate shelter.

BOB

I won't make it.

CATHY

We'll all help you.

STEPHEN

We'll be lucky enough to get there ourselves.

CATHY

We're strong enough.

STEPHEN

What's keeping us alive is conserving energy. Not wasting it. We stand a better chance of surviving by just sitting here and waiting for them to find us than in going out and getting lost. So what if we get there? There'll be fire but will there be food? This is our eight day and we're becoming weaker. We could last another thirty days at the minimum. We'd be slowly starving to death but at least we'd be giving our rescuers time.

BOB

What if they call off the search?

CATHY

Would they?

BOB

Never goes more than two weeks.

CATHY

Only two weeks!

BOB

Officially that's all it is.

CATHY

But that kid in Port Hope. The search went on for ages.

BOB

The family do. I've seen them go right on into summer. But then they're just looking for the body.

CATHY

I'd rather die trying than just sitting here waiting. I'd rather the cold got me quickly than just slowly starve to death.

JIM

What do you propose doing?

CATHY

I don't know. But there must be some sort of a trail. Some means of getting from this cabin to somewhere else. It just didn't drop out of the blue.

BOB

We could be hundreds of miles from the nearest settlement.

JIM

We may be lucky and some Indians will find us.

STEPHEN

Indians! We've got one. A prize one. I haven't seen any of his spirits come to the rescue. After all his howling. If there were Indians in the bush they'd be here by now.

CATHY

I'm sure he could help us.

STEPHEN

Ask him.

CATHY

I have. He doesn't respond. There's just this wall between us. He doesn't seem to hear or see what I'm trying to say.

STEPHEN

He's in a catatonic trance. If only I'd some haloperidol.

JIM

What's that?

STEPHEN

A psycholeptic drug. One shot might snap him out of it.

BOB

Why don't you try a pair of jump-leads?

STEPHEN

If I'd a pair I'd electrocute the bastard.

CATHY

He knows what you're saying.

STEPHEN

Who cares? If you ask me he's playing a waiting game.

CATHY

Don't say anymore Stephen.

STEPHEN

Why not?

JIM

Clear the air.

STEPHEN

He's waiting for Bob to die.

CATHY

What difference will that make?

BOB

If any bastard comes near me he'll get this.

(He slips aside his jacket and shows a knife which he clutches.)

With my dying breath. I warn you. I know what you're thinking. You don't have to say it. It's in your eyes. Every goddamned one of you. One step closer and I'll drive this knife into your gut.

CATHY

Bob. You're raving.

BOB

I'm not. I'm all here. I know what you're thinking. You want to make a meal of me. Isn't that it? Well good Christ you won't. I'll poison myself before I die. Don't think of it. There'll be so much poison floating about in me you'll all die.

CATHY

Nobody wants to hurt you Bob. Nobody.

BOB

Look at your husband. Look at him. Look at his eyes. He thinks of expediency. Scientist! He'd eat his caged monkeys, his experimental rats, his own grandmother. You. He'd even eat you if there were only two of you left.

STEPHEN

What's his temperature?

BOB

Don't you mind my temperature. It's damn well normal. There's no way I'd let you take it.

CATHY

Do you think he's feverish?

BOB

Don't mind your medical talk. You pair of murderers. You're out to get me. Doctor Death.

JIM

Bob.

BOB

You keep out of this. Hyena. When they're finished chopping away at the best pieces you'll gnaw at my bones. You'll suck at my brain to get at any bits of knowledge that's left. I've seen you. I've listened to you. Quizzing every innocent fisherman and trapper. How did you come to be here? What did your father do? How many children were you? What were your total earnings for the year? How much welfare do you live on? Call yourself an anthropologist! You're a blasted government tax-inspector. Do you think all those fisherfolk don't know? Every time you come into a community they disappear into the woods. Have you noticed? Ever ask yourself the question? Where do all the folk disappear to when Jim Davison comes to town? I'll tell you where. The woods.

CATHY

That's enough Bob.

BOB

Every common-law couple unhitches. Ladies' shoes and skirts disappear. College educated! Ever ask yourself the question? Why are there so many bachelors and spinsters about?

STEPHEN

There's a lot of truth in what you say Bob.

JIM

Damned cheek.

CATHY

Something is happening. Something evil is happening. And look how distant the Indian is. Look at him out there. Just staring and staring into emptiness. He's witnessing our destruction. What is he doing to us? Is he something else? Jim. Jim. Who is he?

JIM

Yes Cathy. I already told you. Then I was guessing. Now I know. He is a Shaman. Someone with special powers. Someone capable of flying through the heavens. Someone capable of carrying wayward spirits with him.

STEPHEN

Shit.

JIM

I've read about their exploits and I've talked to older Indians and Eskimos who've witnessed them. In times of famine just by pure divination they've been known to lead their people to a place of plenty.

STEPHEN

Why doesn't he do it now?

JIM

Because you are off-centre.

STEPHEN

Off-centre! What crap!

JIM

The Shamans have great powers. They can go into a trance and levitate, rise above the earth and look searchingly all over the land.

STEPHEN

We've got the same. We call them helicopters.

CATHY

You're an arch-cynic.

BOB

Devil.

CATHY

Please don't. Don't mention that word. Don't. Not now. Not here.

BOB

The land that god gave to Cain.

CATHY

Maybe you can speak to him Jim. Of all of us I think you are most in tune.

STEPHEN

You'd better look for his auxiliary-socket. What a nut-house!

CATHY

Speak to him Jim.

STEPHEN

Hard to believe.

CATHY

Speak to him.

STEPHEN

In such a scientific age.

CATHY

Look how well he looks physically. If you can get through to him I'm sure we'll get out of here. All of us. You said so. He's a Shaman. He'll lead us back to civilisation.

JIM

We'll have to wait.

CATHY

Wait for what?

JIM

I told you. He'll come out of his trance when he's ready. At the moment he's voyaging.

CATHY

To where?

STEPHEN

What a silly bloody question.

JIM

I don't know. Into hidden worlds. Maybe it's the underworld the Greeks knew. Maybe it's into Nirvana of the Hindu gods. Who knows?

STEPHEN

Where did you study anthropology Jim? California? Anthropologists. You really are vultures. Aren't you? You go to record. Excite interest. The tourists come in and the society you have so romantically recorded dies. In recording you are feeding it its own poison. Where is the worth of your works?

JIM

I'm not listening to you.

BOB

Don't. Just watch him.

STEPHEN

(He looks out the door.)

Still in his catatonic trance. I thought savages had more mettle than that. Any psychiatrist worth his salt would tell you it's been brought on by the death of his child.

(The Indian starts to chant. We distinctly hear the word ISUMA repeated over and over within the dirge.)

What's that he keeps chanting? ISUMA ISUMA ISUMA.

JIM

Do you really want to know?

STEPHEN

I've got an enquiring mind haven't I?

JIM

It means unquiet one. Bad tempered one. One who is dangerous to the community. One who by his actions can endanger the rest.

BOB

Do you know what they do with people who are ISUMA?

STEPHEN

They kill them.

JIM

It's their form of legitimatising murder.

BOB

Rough justice. And you can see why.

CATHY

(Affectionate.)

Oh Stephen.

STEPHEN

(He looks worried but pushes her off.)

Leave me. ISUMA! Me? Endanger those here! So far my little knowledge has contributed to us being alive. Where's his? You can't feed off his. His spiritual power. Let's see him use it.

BOB

Be careful.

STEPHEN

I've got my scalpel haven't I? Or better still an axe.

(He makes an attempt to grab Jim's axe.)

BOB

Leave it.

STEPHEN

Shut up.

CATHY

Lay off the axe Stephen.

STEPHEN

It's mine.

(He has it.)

JIM

It's ours.

STEPHEN

I have it and it's mine.

JIM

It's the communities.

STEPHEN

What community?

CATHY

Ours Stephen. Ours. This is our community.

JIM

We won't survive if we don't stick together.

STEPHEN

Some sacrifices will have to be made. We need food.

BOB

Go and hunt.

STEPHEN

Shut up you cripple. You got us here in the first place. If there's anybody to be sacrificed it's you.

CATHY

(Gets in between Stephen and Bob.)

You won't lay a finger on Bob. Do you hear?

BOB

I can protect myself.

JIM

Cool it. Our tempers are frayed. If we're going to survive we're going to have to work together.

STEPHEN

Someone's going to have to take the initiative.

CATHY

Let's pray.

STEPHEN

Pray!

CATHY

Yes Stephen. Please. For me. For us. It'll calm us. Give us further strength. Weld us together in communion.

(She kneels.)

Jim. Kneel with me.

(He does. Stephen remains standing.)

BOB

I would if I could.

CATHY

Thanks Bob. You just lie there and join with us. Our Father Who art in Heaven Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins and those who transgress against us. Hail Mary Full of Grace. The Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou amongst women and Blessed is the Fruit of Thy Womb Jesus. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven and forgive those who trespass against us.

(They look at her quizzingly.)

Oh I'm so sorry. I'm mixing up all my prayers. I even brought the Virgin Mary into it and I'm a Protestant.

(They all laugh.)

I'm so confused. So mixed up. So nervous. Please boys. For me. For us. Let us not argue. I'm sure God will help us.

STEPHEN

(He looks up at the heavens.)

God.

CATHY

Your gesture is right Stephen. It's up and to him we should look in this our hour of adversity.

STEPHEN

Christ. You're going round the twist.
(He moves away and puts down axe.)

CATHY

He's helping us Stephen.

STEPHEN

Helping us!

CATHY

Yes. He's just helped us. Prayer will calm us. Give us strength.

JIM

Better than tranquillizers.

STEPHEN

Give me a tranquillizer any day.

CATHY

You see Stephen. You see? You've laughed. You see what it can do to us. Keep us at peace. Calm us down so we can plan our next step. Stop us from fighting amongst each other with hatred and revenge. Maybe this is a good moment, a good experience for us all that we will live to cherish. Oh I'm sure it is. The more I think of it the more strength I draw. This experience is going to make us stronger in body and in mind. In this wilderness we are going to learn about ourselves. Just like Christ in the desert. He went out and allowed himself to be tormented by the devil. And was he tempted! Just like we are being tempted. The devil has come amongst us in all kinds of weird ways. He has manifested himself in selfishness and anger, short-temper and wilfulness. We must watch his every move for the devil is the evil in all of us.

STEPHEN

He's outside the door listening.
(They all look to the door.)

CATHY

Oh don't be like that Stephen. Don't. Be kind and gentle. Be good to him. He has just lost his son. Talk to him. Try and talk to him. Let us all make an effort to talk to him and help him in his need. I'm sure he will then come to us and help us.

JIM

Cathy is right.

CATHY

It's easy to be right. Because God is right. I have re-found God.

STEPHEN

Why else wouldn't you? There's nobody else to turn to.

CATHY

You will see Stephen. He will enlighten us. I see it. It's like a flood of light and strength coming out of my entire past. I feel Him. God is near at hand. He is going to help us because He loves us and if He feels it is our time to be called He will call. Let him guide us. Don't be afraid. Let Him guide us to peace and eternal happiness in Heaven or allow us to remain here on earth. Let us feel for Him. Let us be guided by Him.

STEPHEN

God helps those who help themselves.

CATHY

Indeed He does. And let us all begin by helping each other.

JIM

I agree.

BOB

Me too.

STEPHEN

Amen.

STEPHEN

Godamnit. We're dying. We are all dying. We're starving to death. Can't you see? Day by day we are wasting away. And the danger for the moment is not the entire lack of food. It is complacency. It is euphoria. It is just what we have experienced. It is prayer and the belief that someone somewhere is going to come down and find us if we pray hard enough. Don't you see that's what hunger leads to. That's what fasting leads to. That is why hermits fasted so that they would have a deeper spiritual experience and they do. But they were all cute enough to do it under controlled conditions. Lent or a monastery where there was ample food to replenish their stores. We don't have a morsel of bread and as things are going we are wasting away in front of each other's eyes without noticing it! That is euphoria. The body is playing tricks on us. We are now entering into a state of ecstasy. Just like the first balloonists who didn't realise what danger they were in as they ascended into the heavens in a balloon because the lack of oxygen and the rise of carbon dioxide was inducing euphoria. And that's the direction we are heading. To heaven in a balloon because we're failing to keep our feet firmly on the ground. We need proteins. Amino acids. Essential foodstuffs. The building bricks of life.

BOB

What are you trying to say doctor?

STEPHEN

What I've just said.

BOB

Not what you've just said. I know that. I'm an aviator after all. What are you really trying to say?

STEPHEN

You don't want me to mince my words?

BOB

Please don't talk about food.

JIM

Something less appetising than mince.

CATHY

What could be less appetising?

STEPHEN

Human flesh.

JIM

They say it tastes like pig.

CATHY

It's because of its affinity to human flesh that certain religions are forbidden to eat pork.

JIM

A rather free interpretation.

BOB

What are you proposing doc?

CATHY

The unimaginable.

STEPHEN

The imaginable.

JIM

What's that?

BOB

The doc is so long winded. There's an element of hesitation. I wonder why? Maybe because you're not that far from ritual and taboo yourself. Let me be blunt. I'm a practical man and maybe because I'm close to death I can be even more so. There is ample protein out there.

JIM

Meat?

BOB

Yes. Meat. Enough to keep us going 'till rescue.

CATHY

The child's.

STEPHEN

I didn't want to say it.

CATHY

The child's body.

JIM

The Indian child's body!

CATHY

Oh God. Let us pray. Our Father Who art in Heaven....

STEPHEN

Sssh. I hear a movement.

JIM

What was it?

STEPHEN

Sssh.

BOB

I heard it.

CATHY

An aeroplane?

STEPHEN

Sssh.

(A low incantating-type sound is heard which gets deeper and deeper and grows greater and greater and louder and louder to encircle the house.)

JIM

It's the Indian. He's never been that loud before.

BOB

It's like an earthquake.

STEPHEN

The ice. Are we still on ice?

BOB

No. It's the earth.

CATHY

The heavens.

(The thunder grows around them.)

The cabin is shaking.

JIM

It'll collapse on us.

STEPHEN

Let's get out.

BOB

Stay put.

(The trembling goes on. It stops.)

CATHY

It's stopped.

STEPHEN

What was that?

JIM

The Shaman?

CATHY

Him flying!

(They look at each other as if it was possible.)

STEPHEN

Listen.

(As if awaiting another tremor.)

JIM

There is only silence.

CATHY

Silence.

BOB

It was an IVU.

STEPHEN

What's that?

BOB

It's when the sea-ice without warning suddenly breaks up and surges inland.

STEPHEN

Will it happen again?

BOB

Who knows?

JIM

Should we not move on?

BOB

This cabin's been here a long time. The chances are it's a safe place to be.

JIM

I'll look outside.

(He looks.)

There is nothing to see. Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

CATHY

It was the Shaman.

STEPHEN

It was a physical phenomenon.

CATHY

It was the Shaman.

STEPHEN

It was not the Shaman.

CATHY

If it was a physical phenomenon there would be something physical to see.

JIM

There is nothing to see.

CATHY

Then it was the Shaman.

STEPHEN

Why was it the Shaman?

CATHY

Because he heard us talking about him.

STEPHEN

He's off out on the ice.

CATHY

I know sitting in the lotus position.

STEPHEN

Smoking his peace-pipe.

CATHY

You may mock him. You may mock at the spiritual world. You may laugh. But he is as real to me as you are to me. And he caused all this. That was him. It was an extension of his powers. He made the earth to move and the ice to crack and he did so because you and yours have attempted with your profanity to destroy the life of his off-spring.

STEPHEN

His off-spring's dead.

CATHY

He is not. He is alive. Alive until he's dead. Alive until his soul, the soul of his son can be transmigrated elsewhere.

STEPHEN

To where?

CATHY

God only knows.

STEPHEN

Where?

CATHY

God only knows. It's a warning Stephen. And if you or us interfere with the Shaman or the passage of his son's soul we will all surely die. All of us. All of us will die.

STEPHEN

Jesus. She's going round the bend.

CATHY

Call him Stephen.

STEPHEN

Who?

CATHY

Jesus.

STEPHEN

Jesus!

CATHY

It'll take you and Jesus to get us out of here.

STEPHEN

Me and Jesus!

CATHY

Yes Stephen. You and Jesus. It's up to you to go to Him. To find Him. And deliver us from here.

STEPHEN

Bob. Is this what they call cabin-fever?

BOB

I can't answer that doc. I'm a practical man and all I know is that I'm dying. I'm simply dying of hunger.

STEPHEN

Do you hear that? Do you hear what he's saying? He's dying of hunger! We're dying of hunger and he'll be the first to go. Bob. You like Bob don't you? You even said you loved him. He's flown us all over the Labrador. He's risked his life countless times to save us and save others and now you'll let him die. For what! For the belief that Jesus is going to save us while out there perfectly frozen on the ice is freely available protein that that nut-case incantates and prays over. He's waiting to levitate and carry his son off into the Happy Hunting grounds of the heavenly stars amongst bears and wolves and whatever hunted animal is waiting to be feasted upon. Levitation. Levitation my ass. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. How fickle are we. The slightest stress and they move back into the sanctuary of heaven for solace and security. Redemption? Redemption is here on earth where we can do something about it.

(Lights come slowly down.)

ACT TWO**Scene One**

Two days later. Jim comes in.

CATHY

You manage to catch anything Jim?

JIM

No. I'm exhausted. Could barely drag myself back.

BOB

How far did you go?

JIM

To the tree-line. Must be three miles. Won't make it again.

CATHY

And there was nothing?

JIM

Absolutely. Not an animal's print in the snow.

BOB

Where did you lay the snares?

JIM

Where you told me to.

STEPHEN

What would you know about trapping? Spent most of your life in the air.

BOB

I was born here. Not like you outsiders.

STEPHEN

Did you ask him to go with you?

JIM

Yes.

STEPHEN

And he refused.

JIM

He's watching over his son.

STEPHEN

The savage bastard. What's he living on? Tell me. What's he living on? Do you see his condition? He's out there on the ice watching over his son. Day by day he gets stronger. He must be eating something.

CATHY

Maybe fish.

STEPHEN

Fish! There is four foot of ice between him and the fish. What does he do? Dive? Disappear through it?

CATHY

No. He looks through it with what Jim calls QUAMANQ.

STEPHEN

What's that?

JIM

A sort of Shaman light that allows him to see in the dark.

STEPHEN

Like infra-red lenses?

JIM

More like X-rays.

CATHY

With his special powers he looks right through the ice into the sea where all the fishes are swimming about.

STEPHEN

Seeing them is not eating them.

CATHY

To him it probably is. I think he can summon them to him.

STEPHEN

Like a policeman.

CATHY

No. Like a king. Like a god. I think his powers are so strong that he can command them to come to him.

STEPHEN

And fly up through the ice.

CATHY

Yes. Transmigrate up through the ice.

STEPHEN

And into his mouth?

CATHY

Yes. Into his mouth.

STEPHEN

And down into his stomach?

CATHY

Yes.

STEPHEN

I'm getting an appetite.

CATHY

And into his bowel. And all in and through his body. Into the eternal sea that lives within him.

STEPHEN

You're a trained nurse!

CATHY

I'm a holistic nurse.

STEPHEN

So this is alternative physiology.

CATHY

Call it what you will.

STEPHEN

I see. So the fishes disappear into the internal sea or mare interna that our classically educated physiologists used to call it.

CATHY

Yes.

STEPHEN

And what do they do then?

CATHY

They transfer their psychic energy into the psychic energy of the Shaman.

STEPHEN

I see. So this is a new metabolic pathway. A psycho-cycle.

CATHY

Why not? Energy is a force isn't it? We are all empty space aren't we? Isn't that what you told me? Physics says that life is made up of particles that are made up of nothing and just by their incredible speed they become measurable and discernible.

STEPHEN

Very good. I go along with all of that. So what happens to the fish when they've transferred their energy into the Shaman?

CATHY

They go back into the sea.

STEPHEN

I see. No I don't see. Oh yes. Now I see. I see them gurgling around in the Shaman's intestines like salmon in a mill-race and swiftly flying out of his ass!

BOB

You did what I told you Jim?

JIM

Go back to the mission-plane?

STEPHEN

You went all the way back to the plane!

JIM

Yes. Ripped out the wiring. As much as I could that is. And used it to make snares.

CATHY

The plane is still there? We should've stayed.

STEPHEN

You didn't tell me? Why didn't you tell me?

JIM

It was between me and Bob.

STEPHEN

So you've been plotting behind my back.

JIM

We have not been plotting behind your back.

STEPHEN

Well what's this but plotting behind my back.

JIM

Bob thought it'd be best not to tell you.

STEPHEN

Why? Why did Bob think it was best not to tell me?

JIM

Because you are too excitable.

STEPHEN

Me! Excitable!

JIM

Yes.

BOB

And far too rash.

STEPHEN

If there is anyone here who is rational enough to save all your damn lives it's me.

BOB

What have you done so far?

STEPHEN

What have I done? I've saved you from bleeding to death. I've set your fractures.

BOB

Fair enough but you are not a good leader. You are far too impulsive. Far too divisive.

STEPHEN

Impulsive! Impulsive because I've got energy. Divisive! Divisive because I'm trying to shock you out of your lethargy. Your complacency. Your prayer. All this spiritual mumbo-jumbo. I've been telling you for days. I've saved your life once and now I'm trying to save it again. I told you before. I'm telling you again. Because of your injuries you will die before us. And we will hold out. We will. And then whether you like it or not Bob we will eat you. By that time we will be so ravenous and demented that we will eat you. We will commit what the Catholic Church calls anthropophagy or in layman's terms cannibalism. Do you hear Bob? We will cannibalise you. Do you hear? And we will all be exonerated because in times of dire necessity the Church will understand and forgive us. The Church accepts that as soon as the soul departs from the body the body is remains. Take heed of the word remains. And we can eat your remains.

BOB

You're an animal.

STEPHEN

Of course I'm an animal. We are all animals. Every animal kills to eat. Everything eats everything else. This world, this beautiful world is founded on murder. Now do you know why I am so irreligious? We are all murderers. We murder to eat. We live to eat and murdering is unavoidable.

CATHY

Thou shalt not kill.

STEPHEN

Of your own kind. Human kind. But not the rest. The animal-kind. Well? What kind of a god is he? Tell me. What kind of a god is he? He has created the world. And amongst that creation is man and he has chosen to create mayhem. To slaughter. To kill. I know what he has created. Devils. A universe of devils. That's right. A universe full to the tip of the slop-bucket with devils and all of the other animals, majestic though they be, are no better.

JIM

Conserve your energy Stephen.

STEPHEN

I can't believe it. Here I am trying to save this man's life and our lives by suggesting something that is physically possible and wholly realisable.

CATHY

What?

STEPHEN

Eat the Indian's kid. Eat the little bugger. He's dead. Kill the Indian.

CATHY

He will kill you.

JIM

I second that.

STEPHEN

Then eat Bob.

BOB

I didn't ask you your opinion. Butcher. Some surgeon. Can barely keep the live alive. How many have you buried since you came to the Labrador? A good half dozen and I bet there's more to come. It's not a surgeon you should have been. You should have been a pathologist or better still a mortician.

STEPHEN

(He makes a lunge at Bob and takes his knife.)

All the more to cut you up Bob. Do you know how we go about our work?

The mortuary attendant makes the first incision. Just like our Indian's ancestors when they used to scalp white men. A nice neat incision from temporals to ear-lobes and then they peel back the scalp. Once exposed he takes a whirring-blade on a rotary-saw and cuts through the skull. Then he prizes it open and just like a lid he pulls it back. Presto brain. Bob's brain. Jim's brain. No matter. Whoever's brain. Then he takes a callipers; just like a chicken-shears for splitting breasts and with these he cuts or clips his way through the rib-cages, left and right and laterally. Then a neat incision along the costal-margin. And like the lid of a coffin flaps up the chest-wall. Presto. Heart and lungs. Now for the belly.

CATHY

Shut up Stephen. Shut up. You're making us sick.

STEPHEN

Sick! We were just coming to the juicy morsels. I'm not interested in eating brain, heart, lungs. What do you think I am? A Frenchman! At least I have some imagination when it comes to matters culinary. Now, the psoas muscle; that's what you laymen call the fillet, now the loin, that's what we call but how about something organic, liver, kidney, pancreas. Awful offal. And last but not least balls. How about Bob's fried balls.

BOB

At least I've put mine to some use.

STEPHEN

It may well have been a waste Bob. How about Bob Junior. How's he faring?

(Bob tries to lift himself from the cot to vent his anger. Tears well into his eyes.)

Why don't you ask the diviner? He who communicates with the other world. Maybe he will tell us of the spirits that are abroad in the night.

CATHY

I can't believe this. I can't believe it. Are you the man I married? Are you? You're changing. You've changed. You're monstrous. You're diabolical. Thou shalt not kill.

JIM

I will die rather than kill to live.

STEPHEN

We'll see will you be saying that in a week's time.

JIM

Thou shalt not kill.

CATHY

I too will die rather than kill.

STEPHEN

Fair enough. So you're all resolved to starve to death.

CATHY

So be it.

STEPHEN

May I make another suggestion?

JIM

Fire ahead.

STEPHEN

What if I personally sacrifice myself for you all. Will you eat me?

CATHY

(Affectionate and lovingly.)

Stephen. Oh Stephen.

(There is silence.)

STEPHEN

Well Bob? Well Jim? You're very quiet. Not like Cathy. Cathy you see is full of goodness and she would not see me lose my life. But not you two. So if there's any goodness it is in Cathy. It is in this woman. But you two. You both hesitate. And your minds tick around and you say. There's something here. There's no murder. He'll have committed suicide. Wilful suicide. And that's his sin depending on how religious you are. Or his misfortune. Now your hesitation has told me something. Not that I didn't know it before. You would be prepared to eat me for your own survival provided of course that I took my own life.

JIM

Who said we would?

STEPHEN

Not being here to witness the act I'll never know but I can surmise that you would because that moment of silence, of doubt revealed all.

BOB

I must confess I'd eat you Stephen.

STEPHEN

An honest man.

BOB

Not out of honesty Stephen out of pure necessity. The need to survive. I want to see my son. I live for him. I want him to grow up with his father around. My father died when I was ten. How I missed him. I missed him all my growing life. I don't want the same thing to happen to Bob.

STEPHEN

Would you eat human-flesh if I were to sacrifice myself?

CATHY

You won't. You've got your own child.

JIM

You told me you hadn't any children.

STEPHEN

That remains a mystery.

CATHY

It is not a mystery. It is true.

STEPHEN

We haven't proved it.

CATHY

The proof is in me. I feel it.

STEPHEN

You've missed your periods. Stress. This stress could cause that.

CATHY

I missed them by two days before we set out.

STEPHEN

The chances are you aren't.

CATHY

The chances are I am.

BOB

Stephen that was a very noble gesture.

STEPHEN

An expedient one.

CATHY

A caring one. But one you won't follow through because I would rather die and have you all eat me.

STEPHEN

Great. Anyone else.

BOB

I don't think I'll have to make that decision. You'll have me sooner than you think.

CATHY

Please Bob. Think positively. Hope. Pray.

STEPHEN

All except Jim. No, Jim wants to get out of here. Do you know where he was going when he took that plane? Do you know where he was going to? He was flying out to see his publisher. A big book on the way Jim. Yes Jim was going to become famous. Very famous. A bestseller and the chair of anthropology at Harvard!! Jim. He has everything to lose. In comparison we have only our lives and human life is in reality only worth a wank.

CATHY

Stop it.

STEPHEN

It's true. Genius has been conceived at the bottom of a dirty lane.

CATHY

The devil is back.

STEPHEN

He is. And he is the only one who is going to get us out of here. Just like the beginning of the rise of mankind. Note I say man. Not humankind. Certainly not womankind. But mankind. Like Cain and Able. Jim is going to commit murder.

BOB

Jim couldn't kill a rabbit.

STEPHEN

Well Jim? For fame. Chair of anthropology at Harvard. A world selling bestseller. Providence.

(The Indian's chant slowly starts up.)

Take the axe. The big one. He's in a trance. Go out there and murder him.

JIM

Murder!

STEPHEN

Yes. Murder most cold. Murder most bloody. Do it!

CATHY

Our Father Who art in Heaven. Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

STEPHEN

It was. Amongst the rebellious angels. And we're all down here on earth. Take the axe Jim. I'm your guardian angel.

BOB

Devil. You're really a devil. All surgeons are devils.

JIM

I'm not like that. I won't do it.

STEPHEN

No you won't. And not because of Thou shalt not kill but because you are shit-scared. Not because he's a Shaman but because he's bigger than you. More powerful than us. Stronger than us. I can't do it on my own. I'm not strong enough. We will all die because we are afraid to kill in order to live.

(The chanting of the Indian increases, drumming, nerve wrackingly away, hypnotic and maddening.)

CATHY

There he goes. Flying away. Flying out and beyond into the deepest darkness of the Universe.

STEPHEN

(He goes to the door and looks out.)
He's gone. Disappeared into a Black Hole.

CATHY

I knew it. They say it's like a chute between heaven and earth. A magical pathway. Jesus used it.

STEPHEN

And no doubt. The Virgin Mary.

CATHY

He'll be back. Wait'll you see.

STEPHEN

(There is a silence.)

He's back.

(He closes the door.)

BOB

Leave your wife alone Stephen.

JIM

There is one way of getting the Shaman to help us.

STEPHEN

He is not a shaman. He is a bloody Indian trapper who lives off hunting and fishing in the summer and welfare in the Winter He is like you and like me. He needs to eat. He has to make a living. His son was dying. He couldn't cure him. So he brought him to me. Where then were his magical powers? He failed to cure his son.

JIM

Why then has he not died of exposure? It's minus forty out there.
You and me would be dead by now.

CATHY

He's a Shaman.

STEPHEN

Oh leave it at that. Shamanism will explain everything. As will religion.

JIM

There is one way out of here.

STEPHEN

You going to kill him?

JIM

There is a much more peaceful way out of here.

CATHY

If it's peaceful I'm all for it.

JIM

The Shaman will help us as soon as his son's soul finds its new body.

STEPHEN

He's taking a bloody long time.

BOB

Like the Eskimo he's looking for some place to put his son's ATIQ.

STEPHEN

His what?

BOB

His ATIQ. A form of reincarnation. They often give a child his grandfather's ATIQ if the grandfather was sufficiently wise. In this way they pass on a body of knowledge or wisdom.

JIM

Exactly. In this case because he values his son who already has his grandfather's ATIQ and wants to pass this ATIQ onto somebody else who will then have the repository of knowledge of his grandfather.

BOB

His grandfather may have been a great Shaman. That's why the Indian is desperate to find a new living body.

CATHY

How wonderful. And so one never dies. One's soul is passed on to another being.

JIM

Yes. As soon as the soul of the departed one takes up residence in another human being then the body of the old soul can join its ancestors at rest.

STEPHEN

So why hasn't he found a new place for his son's soul. He's been chanting since we crashed.

JIM

I think it's because he's far away from his tribe and cannot find anyone amongst the women to accept the soul.

BOB

I heard this before.

STEPHEN

Surely that shouldn't be a problem for a shaman. He can fly anywhere.

CATHY

He's been everywhere.

JIM

So far he hasn't found one.

BOB

If his people were around him it'd be easier.

STEPHEN

Why?

JIM

The proximity. The kindred spirits. The collective sympathy of the tribe. They would all engage in unison in attempting to find a new body for the soul of the departed one.

BOB

There'd be some squaw ready to accept it.

STEPHEN

Squaw. This is 1980's not 1890's!

BOB

Old beliefs die hard. You said it yourself. Some revert. Others have never left them.

STEPHEN

So what you're saying is that our shaman is hunting for a squaw.

JIM

Put crudely yes. But not any squaw. The squaw has to be sympathetic and understanding and willing to accept the new soul. There must be perfect harmony between the two or there'll be mortal conflict and both souls will fight. Unhappy unions between old and new souls lead to discontented people in real life.

STEPHEN

A bad marriage will give rise to unhappy children.

JIM

The same. But they see the trouble beginning at the very moment of conception.

BOB

We're going to have to find him a squaw.

STEPHEN

This is getting crazier. Here we are on our last legs. Drinking snow-water, wasting away and the only thing you can suggest for survival is to get him a squaw. Can you find one for him? He's been in and out of Black Holes for the past few days and he hasn't found one himself. Shout Bob and a whole clutch will come running.

BOB

There's one within shouting distance.

STEPHEN

Well shout. And I hope you can shout loud enough. Because we have been and we haven't been heard.

BOB

I only need whisper.

STEPHEN

Why don't you whistle?

BOB

I only need whisper.

STEPHEN

Whistle and she'll come to me is that it?

STEPHEN

Well whisper then.

BOB

Cathy.

STEPHEN

Cathy!

CATHY

Yes.

STEPHEN

My wife!

CATHY

Yes.

STEPHEN

Are you suggesting?

CATHY

Yes.

STEPHEN

That she be?

CATHY

Yes.

STEPHEN

His squaw!!

BOB

She's the only woman.

STEPHEN

Hold on now. Are you suggesting that my wife be the receptacle of that savage's brat's soul?

BOB

Well if you put it like that no.

STEPHEN

How else am I going to put it?

JIM

More metaphysically.

STEPHEN

I am not a metaphysician. I told you. I am a physician. A surgeon. I believe in the real and in the concrete.

BOB

It'll only be a spiritual gesture.

STEPHEN

You mean him screwing my wife's a spiritual gesture!

JIM

In this case yes.

STEPHEN

Okay. Let's assume he screws my wife. What happens?

JIM

What do you mean what happens?

STEPHEN

You're hardly a bloody child. I know you've done pretty little screwing in your life so far but being a grown-up what'll happen if he screws my wife?

JIM

He'll transfer the soul of his son into that of your wife.

STEPHEN

Oh will he?

JIM

Yes. According to his religion he will.

STEPHEN

And what happens to his son's soul?

JIM

It takes up in the new body and continues its journey through life.

STEPHEN

So it stays in her body.

JIM

Yes.

STEPHEN

For as long as she lives?

JIM

No. It comes out.

STEPHEN

When?

JIM

I don't exactly know when.

STEPHEN

Well I'll tell you when. Nine months later. As an Indian. A full blooded Naskapi Indian.

JIM

Not exactly. It's more spiritual than that.

BOB

It's simply a gesture. But the Indian having imparted his seed and along with it his son's soul into your wife will put his living soul to rest.

STEPHEN

And then?

BOB

And then he'll give us permission to eat. Oh Christ the thought of it. It makes me sick. His son.

CATHY

The Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We eat of His Body. We drink of His Blood.

STEPHEN

This is prostitution. You want to prostitute my wife so the two of you can have a meal.

JIM

Not us two. All of us.

BOB

It's the only way. If we are to live.

STEPHEN

And you who said you would not break any of the Commandments.

JIM

I didn't say that.

STEPHEN

You did. You said you would not kill. You in fact said; Thou shalt not kill. You quoted the bloody bible at me.

JIM

It was only the Fifth.

STEPHEN

But not the Sixth. You go to hell for both don't you? You did when I was a kid. They are both mortal sins that merit hell and damnation. And now you are aiding and abetting my wife to commit adultery.

JIM

It's not the same. You have to respect his religion too. Look how much he's suffering. He's out there on the ice day after day mourning his son. He will eventually die himself and all of us with him if you don't at least adhere to some religious belief.

STEPHEN

So. You are willing to sacrifice your Christian beliefs for the religious beliefs of a savage.

JIM

Yes. In this case yes. Because we have the benefit of knowing both religions. We have a world view of things. He hasn't. He's totally locked within his beliefs because he knows no better. We can...

STEPHEN

Duck and dive.

JIM

Put that way.

STEPHEN

Not only are you a sinner. You're a lousy hypocrite.

JIM

You've already called me a coward.

STEPHEN

And now I'm calling you a hypocrite.

BOB

Can I have a say?

STEPHEN

Can you have a say? Can Cathy have a say?

(She is in a dream-state.)

Cathy. Cathy. Would you like to have a say in this matter? After all it's only your body and the gentlemen are discussing it.

CATHY

(She looks up at him serene and smiling.)

Yes.

STEPHEN

Would you like to have a say? Oh Jesus. She's miles away.

JIM

With the Shaman.

STEPHEN

If you open your fucking mouth again I'll drive this fist down it.

BOB

Easy Stephen. Easy.

STEPHEN

Easy! Easy! I'll make it all so bloody easy. One swipe of this axe and I'll chop his metaphysical head off his metaphysical shoulders and then we'll have enough meat for a week.

(Lights Down.)

ACT TWO**Scene Two**

Evening. Two days later. Stephen is tending Bob's wound.

CATHY

How's his leg?

STEPHEN

Festering.

CATHY

Did you get much out of it?

STEPHEN

Yes.

CATHY

He was very brave letting you drain it without anaesthetic.

STEPHEN

Just like it was before we came? The suffering. The hardship. No doctors. No hospitals. No clinics. Not even a nurse. And not so long ago. The first quarter of this century.

CATHY

You've done good work up here.

STEPHEN

I intend doing a lot more.

CATHY

How did they ever manage?

STEPHEN

They didn't. They did what the high priest out there is doing and hoped for the best.

CATHY

It is good to hope.

STEPHEN

But hopeless just to hope.

JIM

It was also risky.

STEPHEN

For who?

JIM

For those who took on the power of the tribe. It wasn't an automatic succession of line. Those who aspired to lead were responsible to the tribe for all their actions.

STEPHEN

Isn't that the way it is with us? We elect them and kick them out if they fail to do the job.

JIM

There's a big difference between resignation for mistakes made and being killed.

CATHY

They killed their chiefs if they made a mistake!

JIM

And their medicine men.

STEPHEN

Now that's interesting. So if we applied their laws to us we'd have dispatched Bob because of his navigation errors.

CATHY

It wasn't his fault.

STEPHEN

Whose fault was it then?

CATHY

It was the weather's.

STEPHEN

Then god's.

CATHY

Not god's.

STEPHEN

And our medicine-man? No question of him passing on responsibility to god. He'd definitely get the chop.

CATHY

For what?

STEPHEN

Failing to cure his own son number one and despite a good twelve days of celestial flight failing to find a residence for his son's soul. So if what Jim says is true because of his mistakes he will accordingly accept to be killed. Fantastic. You should have said this before. The ball is now in his court. God we should have these philosophical discussions more often.

CATHY

I don't want any more talk of killing. All I want to hear of is loving.

STEPHEN

That's my life-saving chore done for today. Did it smell of putrefaction? Oh for a breath of fresh air. Want to come Jim? Help me light that fire.

(After a moment.)

Please.

JIM

Sure.

(They both go out.)

BOB

(Awakens while Cathy is making him comfortable.)

Cathy.

CATHY

Yes Bob.

BOB

I'm dying.

CATHY

No you're not. You're not at all dying. Stephen did a marvellous job.

BOB

It was very painful. I must have passed out.

CATHY

It was God's way of giving you a general anaesthetic.

BOB

What did he do?

CATHY

God?

BOB

No. Stephen.

CATHY

He drained the pus from around the fracture.

BOB

(After a moment.)

Will you do me a favour Cathy?

CATHY

If I can.

BOB

If I'm to get out of here you must.

CATHY

You will. We all will. Wait'll you see. They're out searching for us. I know it.

BOB

My little boy. He's gotten over his illness.

CATHY

How do you know?

BOB

I dreamt it?

CATHY

Then it's for real.

BOB

I dreamt he was sitting up in bed playing with a teddy-bear.

CATHY

Oh Bob that's really wonderful. That's great news. I knew things were happening. My prayers are being answered.

BOB

I dreamt that I would never see him again.

CATHY

You will Bob. We'll all see him.

BOB

I dreamt that it was the last time I'd see him if something didn't happen.

CATHY

Like what?

BOB

The Shaman. He then came to me in my dream. Was he something! Like as if he had just come through the gates of heaven. And though I could recognise his face, the typical Naskapi face, he had a very powerful body with enormous wings. The wings of an angel. Not just a simple angel but that of an archangel.

CATHY

Like the Archangel Gabriel's?

BOB

Like in the prayer-books and in the stain-glass windows at church.

CATHY

Magnificent. And he'd just come from heaven!

BOB

So it seemed.

CATHY

What did he say to you?

BOB

He looked at me and smiled, a broad welcoming, serenely happy smile that made me feel so safe, so happy and so secure.

CATHY

I knew it. I too have seen this side of the Shaman. But what did he do? What did he say?

BOB

He first of all told me that he had gone on a mystical journey.

CATHY

Did he see god?

BOB

Yes.

CATHY

What did He look like?

BOB

It is forbidden to talk about the face of god.

CATHY

But he was in God's presence.

BOB

Very much so.

CATHY

Oh how wonderful. And what did God say to him?

BOB

He said that he would soon have a resting place for his son but he would have to wait.

CATHY

Why wait?

BOB

Until the soul of another little boy of the same age departed this life.

CATHY

Someone else would have to die?

BOB

Yes.

CATHY

How cruel.

BOB

Unless another little boy was born.

CATHY

But that happens all the time.

BOB

Not as haphazard as we might think. In heaven choices are made to agree with problems on earth.

CATHY

What problems on earth?

BOB

Ours.

CATHY

Ours!

BOB

He said we were in a state of limbo.

CATHY

Why?

BOB

Because of disbelief.

CATHY

Disbelief!

BOB

Yes. God was having difficulty with our rescue because there were some among us who were unbelievers.

CATHY

Among us!

BOB

Yes. And god was taking his time while waiting to see. Giving them a chance to go back to believing in him.

CATHY

But how?

BOB

This plane crash was sent to test us.

CATHY

I have refound my faith.

BOB

And so have I. But you know who hasn't.

CATHY

Stephen?

BOB

Yes. Stephen and probably Jim.

CATHY

But Jim believes in something.

BOB

I know he does. God is not too worried about Jim. Jim is nearly there. Just a little shove and he's back on the right path. But the big problem is Stephen.

CATHY

Stephen?

BOB

Yes. He is a self-confessed atheist.

CATHY

And God told all that.

BOB

Yes. Through the Shaman.

CATHY

Are you sure it was the Shaman? You said he looked like an archangel.

BOB

Yes.

CATHY

But there are only two archangels. The Archangel Michael and the Archangel Gabriel.

BOB

He had the face of the Shaman.

CATHY

They can do that can't they? Archangels can change their shapes and their forms. They can become anything.

BOB

Yes.

CATHY

So it may have been one of them. It may have been either Michael or Gabriel.

BOB

Not Michael.

CATHY

Why not Michael?

BOB

Michael deals with violence. With rebellion. At least I hope it wasn't him. If it had've been him he would have given a warning and a last warning at that. And if not heeded we would have plummeted like Lucifer into hell.

CATHY

I'm terrified.

BOB

There's no need to be. It was Gabriel. The Archangel of Love.

CATHY

How long will we have to wait?

BOB

For this annunciation?

CATHY

I'm getting very nervous. How long do you think?

BOB

Until you make up your mind.

CATHY

About what?

BOB

About love.

CATHY

Love. But I love.

BOB

I know you do. But now God wants you to make love known to us all.

CATHY

How can I do that?

BOB

God has sent us the Archangel Gabriel disguised as the Shaman.

CATHY

The Shaman is the Archangel Gabriel?

BOB

Yes.

CATHY

Oh God.

BOB

The Archangel Gabriel wants to reside within you.

CATHY

Within me!

BOB

Yes Cathy. He told me so. He wants to enter you.

CATHY

Why?

BOB

To transfer the soul of the Shaman's son into your body.

CATHY

But how will that help us?

BOB

Firstly it allows the Shaman's son's soul to find a home and to be at rest and secondly if this happens there is no need for god to take the soul of a little boy of the same age away from us on earth.

CATHY

You mean your Bob will live if I do this.

BOB

Yes.

CATHY

But you told me he was sitting up in bed playing with his teddy.

BOB

That is the picture I was given but the Archangels told me he would relapse soon if his son's soul continued to wander.

CATHY

Oh I'm so confused between Shamans and Archangels. What about my son. Our son. What am I to do? What about Stephen?

BOB

Leave Stephen to me. He is an unbeliever.

CATHY

You're not going to kill him?

BOB

No. But the Shaman will.

CATHY

Oh no. Oh no. You said the Shaman was like the Archangel Gabriel.

BOB

But he could soon change into the Archangel Michael if god so wills.

CATHY

But I love Stephen.

BOB

I know you do and god knows you do. We all do. But Stephen is going to have to soften his heart.

CATHY

Stephen's heart is soft. All his life he's been doing good works; tending the sick, caring. He's not a sentimental man. He's not one to talk about love and care. He just does it.

BOB

He's an atheist. That's the problem. However god is giving him a chance and if he agrees to the Shaman entering you then god will forgive him.

CATHY

The Shaman entering me! The Indian!

BOB

Remember he's not just the Shaman. He's also the Archangel Gabriel.

CATHY

And if he does we'll all be saved?

BOB

Yes. You. Me. Stephen. Even Jim. And of course my own son.

CATHY

I can see him. Staring at me.

BOB

It's his way of calling you.

CATHY

He's so ugly.

BOB

Appearances are deceptive.

CATHY

I would have never thought for a moment that he was the Archangel Gabriel.

BOB

He is.

STEPHEN

(He comes in followed by Jim.)

Well Bob? You must be on the mend. Flirting with my wife.

CATHY

(Jumping up and throwing herself into his arms.)

Oh Stephen. Oh Stephen.

(She cries.)

I love you. I love you.

STEPHEN

What's wrong?

CATHY

Nothing. Nothing's wrong.

STEPHEN

Why all this emotion?

CATHY

I don't know but yet I do.

STEPHEN

You're embarrassing me.

BOB

Learn to love Stephen.

STEPHEN

Go to sleep you malingerer.

(He hugs Cathy.)

CATHY

I love you Stephen. I love you.

STEPHEN

I know you do and people mightn't think it but I do too.

CATHY

Let's go outside and look at the stars. We'll be able to see right into heaven.

(They go out.)

BOB

(After a moment.)

Did you get a chance to speak to him?

JIM

(Warming himself by the stove.)

The Indian?

BOB

Yes.

JIM

I tried earlier.

BOB

What did he say?

JIM

It was difficult. His English is not too good.

BOB

He knows enough to understand.

JIM

Just.

BOB

Well? Is he going to do it?

JIM

I can't tell.

BOB

Maybe he didn't understand what you were getting at.

JIM

Must confess it was a bit embarrassing using sign-language.

BOB

But it's his religion. He must see no wrong in it.

JIM

It's not just a question of wrong.

BOB

Didn't you explain about the soul going from one body to the next?

JIM

Yes.

BOB

Did you talk to him about The Last Supper?

JIM

Whose last supper?

BOB

Ours. Whose do you think?

(After a moment.)

Are you sure he understood?

JIM

Transubstantiation? The Eucharist. I'm sure he does. He's come across Christian missionaries up here.

BOB

Are you sure he believes in it?

JIM

I don't know. He just sits there listening with that awful stare. It's uncanny. You'd swear he was on some sort of drug. The pupils; two black holes and the eyes themselves remain fixed deeply looking into you. You feel at any moment you are going to slip into a trance.

BOB

Did he say anything?

JIM

No. Just nods his head.

BOB

Is he going to do it?

JIM

I can't tell.

BOB

Is he?

JIM

I don't know.

BOB

Did he say anything?

JIM

Just nods his head.

BOB

They're not ones for talk those woodsmen.

JIM

Understandable. All that silence and loneliness. Out on their trapping-lines for months and not talking to or meeting a soul. Must have a peculiar effect on you.

BOB

Look at Cathy.

JIM

How was she?

BOB

Completely whacko.

JIM

Didn't take much.

BOB

She was always a bit weird.

JIM

Strange the doc being so level-headed could have married a ding-dong like that.

BOB

He met her up here. A peculiar place the Labrador.

JIM

It hasn't affected you.

BOB

Must remember I fly in and fly out. It's the ones who live here all the time who have the problems. Especially the outsiders.

JIM

And the Settlers.

BOB

They were born that way.

JIM

(After a moment.)
So she's flipped.

BOB

Yes.

JIM

Hard to believe she's a nurse.

BOB

Being a member of the medical profession doesn't protect you from madness or believing in the Virgin Birth or that someone somewhere once walked on water.

JIM

She'll do it?

BOB

Of course she'll do it. The only obstacle will be him.

JIM

Stephen'll stop her?

BOB

He might try. But if she decides and Providence decides then Stephen'll never face up to him.

JIM

I don't know. Stephen's spunky.

BOB

He may well be. But deep down he's rational and far from being a brute. In the end he'll see it scientifically. I doubt if he'll kill for her honour. That's far too old fashioned. Even I wouldn't kill a man if I found him in bed with my wife.

(After a moment)

Convince the Indian. Explain that she doesn't have to be one of his own tribe. Any woman will do.

(After a moment)

What did he say about my son?

JIM

He didn't say anything. He just responded...

BOB

Responded? How?

JIM

Oh Christ Bob. All these questions. I'm so tired. We're dying. We won't last a week.

BOB

That's why it's urgent. If we don't have some of that meat out there we'll be finished. One of us is going to murder the other. You don't want that do you? The doc has always been right. We should've murdered that goddamned Indian. We should've done it when we were strong. The three of us. We should've overpowered him and killed him.

JIM

Stop it Bob. Please. Stop it. Just resign yourself.

BOB

To what?

JIM

Death.

BOB

Never. I've no intention of dying. I'm going to live to see my son and that cursed Providence is going to help.

BOB

How help?

BOB

You know how he's going to help. By fucking the doc's wife.

JIM

Do you think he'll accept?

BOB

He's a superstitious bastard. Did you tell him the doc agrees?

JIM

Now hold on Bob. I didn't go that far.

BOB

You should've. That's why I sent you out there.

JIM

Bob I am not your Angel Gabriel.

BOB

You are.

(After a moment)

I'm the skipper of this ship. As long as I'm alive I give the orders around here.

(After a moment.)

Did you tell him my son was dying?

JIM

Yes.

BOB

What did he say?

JIM

He didn't say anything.

BOB

Nothing?

JIM

Nothing. Though I saw tears in his eyes.

BOB

Tears!

JIM

Yes. Tears.

BOB

Well that's at least something.

JIM

Oh I feel like crying. Will no one help us. Where is everyone? Everyone's abandoned us. We're starving to death. We're growing weaker and weaker with the hunger. Please. Please oh god. Oh god will someone come and rescue us.

BOB

They'll come. Don't worry boy. They'll come.

STEPHEN

(He comes in.)

What's all this crap about the Archangel Gabriel?

BOB

The Archangel Gabriel?

STEPHEN

Don't pretend you don't know? The Archangel Gabriel. You've been filling my wife full of shit.

BOB

No I haven't. Swear Stephen I haven't.

STEPHEN

Been taking advantage of her state of mind?

BOB

Not true Stephen. Not true.

STEPHEN

Here she is nursing you. Cleaning your stinking wound and you fill her mind full of lunacy.

BOB

We'll have to do something to get out of here.

STEPHEN

Like have that brute mount my wife?

JIM

He mightn't condescend to do it.

STEPHEN

Condescend? Oh I see. It's a matter of condescension? You mean that savage will have to lower his standards.

JIM

You're a racist.

STEPHEN

He's a superstitious, bronze-age brute and I don't like him.

JIM

Why did you come up here?

STEPHEN

For the fishing.

BOB

Stephen. Honestly. It's the only way we'll get something to eat.

STEPHEN

I'd rather starve.

BOB

If my wife were here I'd let her do it.

STEPHEN

You're a pimp.

BOB

Being a pimp will save our lives.

STEPHEN

Just how low can you get.

BOB

It's life Stephen. It's all about life. You're a man who knows all about life. Don't you? Please Stephen. Think of it scientifically.

STEPHEN

And you've been talking to her about the Holy Ghost!

BOB

The Archangel Gabriel.

STEPHEN

Both dirt birds.

JIM

That's blasphemous. You're going too far.

STEPHEN

Another pimp.

JIM

Better than being a murderer.

STEPHEN

Aiding and abetting my wife to commit adultery.

BOB

The Holy Ghost got away with it.

(After a moment)

Stephen. Jim spoke to the Indian.

STEPHEN

Another plotter.

BOB

He's not plotting. He's only doing it for our own good.

STEPHEN

Oh shut up.

BOB

Please Stephen. My leg is rotting. I've no way of fighting this.

STEPHEN

Would you like me to amputate it?

BOB

No! Keep away from me. There's no way you're getting near that leg.

STEPHEN

I'm hardly going to eat it.

BOB

I wouldn't put it past you. That's what you're waiting for. That leg will keep you going for a week.

STEPHEN

Not if we share it.

BOB

Nobody's getting it. Neither you or him or her. I'm keeping it.

STEPHEN

I hope it falls off.

BOB

You're a doctor. You can't say things like that. You'll be responsible for my death. All of our deaths. Even your own. It's your responsibility.

STEPHEN

No it's not. If it's anybody's it's his.
(He points to heaven.)

BOB

God's?

STEPHEN

Yes. For making contradictory laws.

BOB

So you believe in god?

STEPHEN

Like hell I do.

BOB

Do you believe in life then?

STEPHEN

Yes.

BOB

Well then save us. Please Stephen.
(He offers his knife to him.)
Either kill us or save us. You said you'd kill.
You said we should be prepared to kill Providence.

STEPHEN

I said we shouldn't be afraid to eat his dead child. I tried to get you to accept this as a necessary thing to do. All we had to do was convince the Indian.

BOB

But this is the only way of convincing him. Short of killing this is the only way that'll succeed. Making life is a way of preserving life. It's our only chance. Love Stephen. Love. Let them make love and love will save us all.

STEPHEN

I'll not allow it.

BOB

In that cold. He'll be in and out.

STEPHEN

I said no.

BOB

Then we'll die.

STEPHEN

Then let us die.

BOB

What about my son?

STEPHEN

What about him?

BOB

He'll be without a father. He'll be miserable.

STEPHEN

The world's miserable.

BOB

You're a hard hearted man Stephen.

JIM

What about your own son?

STEPHEN

I don't have one.

JIM

Your wife has conceived a son.

STEPHEN

Why not a daughter?

JIM

Sons come first to mind.

STEPHEN

I'm sure they do.

JIM

What about Cathy?

STEPHEN

Leave Cathy out of this.

JIM

Hasn't she got a say? Isn't it her body? Think of her Stephen. She needs a child.

STEPHEN

She does?

JIM

Yes.

STEPHEN

Will it be mine?

JIM

Of course.

STEPHEN

And not Providence's?

JIM

How could it be? You were there first.

CATHY

(She comes ecstatically in.)

Oh Stephen I have just seen all the way into heaven.

(Bob and Jim look away.)

STEPHEN

See what you've done?

BOB

She is the way she is.

STEPHEN

With a helping hand from you and from him.

JIM

I never spoke to her.

STEPHEN

But the sky-pilot did.

CATHY

I had a vision. I have seen light. Blinding light. The blinding light of God. Curtains of light are hanging from the windows of heaven.

STEPHEN

The Aurora Borealis.

BOB

It's out?

STEPHEN

All over the sky.

CATHY

I have never seen such lights like the light of to-night.

STEPHEN

Hunger gives it a sharper hallucinogenic edge.

CATHY

The fingers of God are reaching down from heaven. Long beautiful fingers. Each one a different colour and all playing on sheets of changing light.

STEPHEN

So called mystical visions that have misled the world.

CATHY

I saw the Shaman riding high on the back of a polar bear.

STEPHEN

Stark and raving.

CATHY

I want to ride with him.

BOB

Where's Providence?

JIM

Out on the ice.

(He goes and looks out.)

BOB

What's he doing?

JIM

Standing over his son's body with his arms raised.

CATHY

Like Christ on the Cross. Calling out to His Father Who Is in Heaven.

BOB

They think they're holy lights.

JIM

Signs from heaven.

CATHY

The Star of Bethlehem.

STEPHEN

If the Three Wise Men come I hope they've something more edible than incense and myrrh.

CATHY

A child is going to be born.

STEPHEN

What she say?

BOB

I didn't hear.

CATHY

I saw the Angel Gabriel. He had enormous wings. Each feather a different colour and each time he moved great winds of differing light danced across the sky.

CATHY

I saw him talking to the Shaman. And then the Shaman became him and he became the Shaman. And then a little child appeared and I saw the Archangel bending down from his great height to welcome him. And everybody was smiling. Most of all the Shaman. He was smiling as if the child was his son. But then the Archangel stopped smiling and looked across the heavens and everybody followed his gaze. Then his gaze turned towards earth and we all saw another child, this time an unhappy child. The Archangel picked up the Shaman's child and looked sternly at the Shaman and with one finger pointed back towards earth. He told him to go and then a great big banner unfurled across the heaven saying THY WILL BE DONE. It was then that the Archangel's gaze fixed on mine and I bowed in obedience and submission. He spoke quietly. Have no fear Cathy. The Shaman is waiting for you. And I replied, but he is an Indian. Have no fear. He is a messenger of the Lord. And what about my husband Stephen, I asked. Don't worry. Stephen will come to accept the way of the Lord.

CATHY

I must go. I must go to the Shaman. He's waiting to receive me.

(She goes to the door.)

STEPHEN

(He blocks her way.)

Stay where you are.

CATHY

Don't stop me. Please. The Shaman's waiting.

STEPHEN

He can wait.

CATHY

He's been sent by the Archangel Gabriel.

STEPHEN

He's an Indian.

CATHY

He's God's messenger.

STEPHEN

He's not.

CATHY

Oh Stephen let me go or you'll be killed.

STEPHEN

The only thing that'll kill me will be hunger.

CATHY

The Archangel Michael will kill you. He'll strike you down.

STEPHEN

Let him strike.

CATHY

Oh Stephen please. You're interfering with God's Will.

STEPHEN

I know I am.

CATHY

You are so proud. Lucifer went to hell because he was proud.

STEPHEN

He had too much self-respect.

CATHY

It's god's will Stephen. The Archangel Gabriel spoke to me as he spoke to Mary. Joseph didn't object.

STEPHEN

He was a carpenter.

CATHY

You're no better.

(After a moment)

Oh Stephen. Don't worry. God and the Holy Ghost will make up to you.

STEPHEN

You mean they'll make me a saint.

CATHY

Yes. Anything you want. You'll be amongst the army of the host.

STEPHEN

No.

CATHY

God forgive you Stephen.

CATHY

God has ordered me to sleep with the Shaman who is the Archangel Gabriel who is the Messenger of the Holy Ghost.

STEPHEN

You will not sleep with that stinking Indian.

CATHY

He is not a stinking Indian. Think of your religion. Of the faith of your fathers. The Virgin Mary didn't object.

STEPHEN

You're a married woman.

CATHY

Let me go. Let me go. I'll kill you. I'll kill you.

(She drums with her fists on his chest.)

I'm doing this for you. For Bob. For Jim. For the Archangel Gabriel. For God. You are disobeying God. God. Oh God come to my rescue. Destroy my husband who is disobeying your command.

(A beating of drums starts up, something similar to the earlier incantations and drumming and then there is a clear beating of wings.)

Listen. Listen. Do you hear? Do you hear? It's the Archangel Michael come to strike you down. You are disobeying the command of the Lord. Hear Him.

Hear him. Hear the beating of his wings. He has come from heaven to strike you down.

(The wing-beating increases. A light, starting faintly brightens up till both light and wing-beating is synchronous.)

Lord God Who art in Heaven. I am the hand-made of the Lord and I am prepared to do Thy Will. Thy Will be done. Thy Will be done. Thy Will be done.

(Sounds and light increase in intensity.)

STEPHEN

She's hysterical.

(He tries to restrain her. The light and sound is now directly over them and it is distinctly that of a helicopter with its blades whirling and its search-light beaming in on the cabin.)

BOB

It's a chopper.

JIM

A chopper. It's a chopper.

STEPHEN

They've seen the fire.

JIM

They have.

(He goes to the door and looks up.)

It is. It is. It's a sea-rescue chopper. They've found us. They've found us.

BOB

(He tries to get up.)

This blasted leg. It's them. It's them. They've found us. I knew they'd find us.

STEPHEN

(He tries to comfort his wife.)

Cathy. Cathy.

CATHY

The Lord. The Lord. It's Our Divine Lord come to redeem us. He has come with the Army of the Host to raise us up and bring us into heaven.

STEPHEN

(She struggles with him.)

Give me a hand. For Christ's sake.

CATHY

The Lord. The Lord. Let me go to the Lord.

(She scratches his eyes.)

STEPHEN

My eyes. My eyes.

(She runs out onto the ice.)

BOB

Cathy. Cathy. Come back. Come back.

STEPHEN

I can't see. I can't see.

JIM

She's running to the Shaman.

BOB

Stop her. Stop her. She'll get killed.

(Sound of helicopter heard coming down lower and lower.)

BOB

Stop her Jim. Stop her.

JIM

It's too late. It's too late. She's under the blades. She'll get killed. She'll get killed. Oh God. Oh God.

(Deafening sound of blades and blinding light.)

STEPHEN

(Bob crawls to the door.)

What's happening?

BOB

Oh Stephen. Oh Stephen.

STEPHEN

My eyes. My eyes. I can't see. I can't see.

BOB

Both she and the Shaman...

STEPHEN

(Shouting.)

Christ. Oh Christ. What has happened to her?

BOB

She has gone to heaven Stephen. Both she and the Shaman. Look at that light. It's a blinding light coming all the way from heaven. We're saved. They've seen us and we're saved.

(Lights Down.)

THE END