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## **Excavations** **By Eugene Stickland**

### **Overture**

*The PIANIST enters and takes his place at the keyboard. He can do this quite formally, as if we were at a recital, or very casually. As for how he may be dressed, and where his instrument is located, I defer to the director and designers. He plays an overture, something representative of the musical themes of the play. And then he finishes.*

*Blackout.*

*End of overture.*

### **Act One**

#### **Scene One: We Like to Nail Certain Truths...**

*A special reveals the Revered Clifford FUDGE standing in somewhat soiled ecclesiastical robes before some sort of pulpit downstage, in an area not really defined as any of the playing areas. He has with him a huge tumbler of red wine and a big old Bible. Despite the fact that his robes are rather dirty, and he seems awfully fond of his wine, he is quite upbeat and cheery. In his mind, it's a beautiful Sunday morning somewhere far away.*

*The PIANIST plays the last bars (perhaps for as long as thirty seconds or so) or some sort of solemn hymn, such as "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."*

*Throughout this, the beginning of the sermon, FUDGE treats the PIANIST as an elderly organ-playing woman from the community, and the audience as his congregation.*

FUDGE            Thank you, Mrs. Shanahan. That was truly beautiful. Such a gift you have, I swear I can feel the will of the Lord Jayzus just a-squirting out the ends of your fingers when you play like that. It's a beautiful world, so let us rejoice in God's love. Amen. Praise Jayzus. Praise, praise Jayzus!

*He drinks.*

A few announcements before we start. The Lady's Auxiliary has been hard at work preparing a nice tea for all of us today, so please be sure to join us in the basement after the service. Maybe Mrs. Strong will surprise

us all with her lovely Bundt cake... have to be careful how you say that one.... Well, we can only hope.

*He drinks.*

And on a more sombre note... (*He has another quick hit of wine.*) I'm afraid Ken Hucklebuck is in the hospital here in Climax once again... looks like they're going to have to take off his other leg... his remaining leg... the leg we've all been referring to as his *good* leg since he had to have his *bad* leg amputated a few months back, you all remember. I guess Jayzus must have some special need for old Ken's legs up there in heaven... I don't know.... On any account, once again, our prayers will go out to Ken and the rest of the Hucklebuck family... Enid, Buck, Varley, Lizzy, Kindersley, Travis, Vamis, Rick, whatever the little one's name is, and of course, Trina....

*At the mention of Trina's name, he twitches.*

Ahh yes. Dear sweet Trina... dear sweet, young, lithe Trina.... Who knew she was only fifteen?

*Drinks more.*

Right. Okay. Okay....

*He recovers himself a bit, enough to begin his actual sermon. As he begins, he gives the nod to Mrs. Shanahan who dutifully begins to play background music for him.*

Jayzus said: "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto a resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28....

*CHRISTINA enters, upstage from FUDGE. She stands for a moment and watches him.*

Now, it is upon this particular quotation of our Lord Jayzus, that we like to nail certain truths which function as the foundation of our prophesy – and of course, one of those things that we hold as the truth is the knowledge—

*CHRISTINA has approached FUDGE, and takes him by the arm and starts leading him towards their kitchen. The music stumbles to some kind of conclusion.*

What the hay—?

CHRISTINA It's okay....

*House lights fade entirely, as does the light FUDGE has been sermonizing in, as the lights come up on their kitchen area. She leads him to the table. The following dialogue virtually overlaps.*

CHRISTINA It's okay, Clifford....

FUDGE What are you...?

CHRISTINA It's okay....

FUDGE What are you doing?

CHRISTINA Sit down and rest a bit and everything....

FUDGE But my sermon....

CHRISTINA I know....

FUDGE I have to deliver my sermon....

CHRISTINA There's no one there....

FUDGE The congregation....

CHRISTINA There is no congregation....

FUDGE My flock....

CHRISTINA There is no flock....

FUDGE They have to hear....

CHRISTINA There's no one to hear....

FUDGE But they have to—

CHRISTINA Shhh!

FUDGE (*whispering*) They have to hear....

*She gets him sitting at his seat at the table (at least by now). She places his Bible and glass of wine on the table before him. He passes out with his face on the open Bible. The PIANIST begins accompanying her, a movement from conventional dialogue into a more poetic and perhaps even abstract duet between piano and voice.*

CHRISTINA Too bad

So sad  
So sad for me  
You see  
Stuck in this rut  
The person I'm with  
Is as crazy  
As a shit house rat  
God help me  
I've got to get out  
God help me  
I got to get unstuck....  
I got to get unstuck....

*Lights fade on the FUDGES who both remain in place in their kitchen. The PIANIST creates a bridge to next scene, as lights fade to blackout.*

### **Scene Two: A Beautiful New Beginning**

*Lights up on FINN's front porch. He is sitting with a .33 magnum rifle, complete with scope, across his legs. The PIANIST plays FINN's theme, which as I hear it is some transcription of the theme from the Sibaleus violin concerto. FINN listens to the PIANIST, almost as though he were listening to an LP on his old stereo. After a few moments, he snaps the gun shut and stands.*

FINN            You know, ever time I hear about a crowded jetliner crashing into some remote and frigid sea, I feel a real wave of joy washing over me....

*Music changes as lights fade on FINN and sneak up on the FUDGE kitchen, so the entire set is now visible in a faint light. The other characters are discernable in a tableau – FUDGE asleep on his Bible, CHRISTINA across the room from him holding an orange, FINN on his front porch holding his gun. NED enters down right. The PIANIST plays NED's theme music as NED comes to centre stage. He is carrying a suitcase and is wearing a backpack. He has a hat on his head. From their places on the stage, the others slowly turn to look at him. The PIANIST plays some kind of hopeful, optimistic theme. NED's lines are spoken in duet with the music.*

NED            Ahhhhh, yeah. Here we go. Here we go. Here we are. Here we are. The country. The country. So this is good. Sure it is. This is very good. (*He takes in a deep breath through his nostrils.*) Ooooooh. That air. And that sky. Man. That's some sky up there. Beautiful. Beautiful sky. Beautiful air. Beautiful country. Beautiful people. Beautiful simple wonderful basic gentle country people living out here in this beauty. Away from the sit and concerns of the city. Beautiful. I am among them now. I am among them now. Beautiful. I am in the country. Among the simple folk. A beautiful new beginning....

*Over the course of his last speech, NED has prepared himself to start working. Suddenly the lights shift to suggest a bright morning on the prairie. FINN is revealed on his porch with his gun, as before. NED is up centre, removing his jacket, rolling up his sleeves, getting ready to dig for the fossil. No piano at this point.*

On any account, Mr. Finn—

FINN Finn's fine.

NED Finn.

FINN That's fine.

NED Finn. Right. On any account, Finn – it's very generous of you to allow this excavation to take place on your land.

FINN Anything for science.

NED Right. You're sure you're okay with it?

FINN Oh, yeah. I'm fine, I'm fine.

NED Well, then, in the name of science, I thank you.

FINN Quite all right. Don't mention it. It's quite a boon for the town, you know.

NED Yeah. That's what they're hoping.

FINN Dig this thing up. Display it. Get those tourist dollars in our local cash registers. You could be a bit of a saviour for this community, you know.

NED Really....

FINN Yep. No pressure, but chop chop, eh? Better get to work.

NED Right.

FINN Kidding.

NED Right....

*NED prepares to start working. FINN attentively watches his every move. NED stops and gives a little wave. FINN waves back.*

FINN Actually, you know...

NED           What's that?

FINN          It may come of a bit of a surprise to you, but there are certain aspects of science that I am quite conversant with.

NED           Is that a fact?

FINN          Oh yes.

NED           That's great.

FINN          You see, I read a lot, eh?

NED           Yeah. Reading's good.

FINN          Yes. Helps pass the time. Which you need to do in a place like this. Pass the time....

NED           Yeah.

FINN          Yeah. I myself am particularly interested in the process of extinction.

NED           That's one of my favourite areas, too.

FINN          Is that a fact?

NED           Yeah.

FINN          Excellent. We're going to have some great conversations, you and I. It's true, for example, that ninety-nine per cent of all species that have ever lived are now extinct? Right? I read that.

NED           It's true. Got one of them right here.

FINN          Exactly.

NED           In fact, Finn, we lose three or four species and hour. Right now. Did you know that?

FINN          No. Three or four an hour? Serious?

NED           Yeah. That's eighty a day. Thirty thousand a year. Highest level in sixty-five million years.

FINN          That's mind boggling.

NED            Yeah, it is.

FINN            Whose fault is that?

NED            Well, ours I guess.

FINN            Mankind.

NED            Yeah.

FINN            Yeah. Mankind. A cancer on the face of the earth.

NED            It seems like it at times.

FINN            Yeah. Well. Plenty of time for us to discuss such weighty matters. You're looking forward to getting at it, I guess?

NED            Oh yeah.

FINN            You're going to be okay out here?

NED            Sure.

FINN            You're not going to miss the city too much?

NED            No. I was getting tired of the city.

FINN            Yeah. Too many people for my liking.

NED            I've been looking forward to this, actually. Change of pace. Change of scenery.

FINN            Well, change as good as a rest, they say.

NED            Right....

*NED picks up a pickaxe and finds a spot along the face of the cliff where he wants to work. As he is preparing, the PIANIST prepares to play some kind of accompaniment to his work routing. He's about to take a swing when FINN interrupts him. The PIANIST relaxes and doesn't play.*

FINN            What's that you're doing?

NED            Digging?

FINN            Right. Right. What for?

NED I have to dig down to the fossil.

FINN Right...

NED To see where it is.

FINN Of course.

NED And to see how it's laid out. It's hard to know, exactly, which way it goes back into the cliff.

FINN Is it all in one piece?

NED No. It's probably been stirred up, like an omelette. And that's a big omelette.

FINN How big?

NED We think about forty feet or so, head to tail.

FINN (*whistles*) That is a big one....

NED Yeah. And it's one of only thirteen in the entire world, Finn. Tyrannosaurus Rex. And it's right here on your land.

FINN Unbelievable.

NED So I have to dig and poke around here and try to figure out the best way to proceed.

FINN I see. Hard work?

NED Oh yeah.

FINN Good. I like hard work.

NED Is that right?

FINN Oh yeah. I could sit and watch it all day. In fact I do. I don't even bother working on my land anymore. Rent it out, watch some poor bastard bust his nuts day after day. Yep. I could sit and watch someone else work alllll the live long day.

*NED prepares to start again. The PIANIST gets ready to play. NED stops, and looks at FINN, who of course is looking down at him.*



It wasn't actually me that located this thing in the first place.

NED No?

FINN No. I wouldn't have known what it was.

NED Right.

FINN Looks like a hunk of rock to me. And the funny thing is, I must have walked past it a million times. And yet I missed it. I never saw it. Funny, eh?

NED Well, it may not have been actually sticking out for all that long. Maybe only since the spring run off.

FINN Really?

NED For sure. Every year, something gets exposed that you couldn't see the year before. It's hard to say.

FINN Well, that makes me feel a bit better. You'd hate to think you could miss it, eh? A big old bone like that. How old did you say it was again...?

NED About seventy million years. Give or take a few weeks.

FINN Unbelievable.

NED Yeah.

FINN Unbelievable! That's unbelievable to me.

NED So who actually found it, then?

FINN The neighbour girl, the next farm over. Christina Fudge. One of the Fudge kids.

NED Fudge?

FINN That's their last name. Fudge.

NED I see.

FINN She's a bit of a character around these parts. The whole family is a little eccentric, I guess you might say.

NED Oh yeah?

FINN A few bubbles off the plumb line.

NED Right.

FINN Their old man was a mean prick, fire and brimstone and all that, cheap and miserly. Trying to farm land that was only good for grazing. Stretching his pennies into copper wire. He and I never really got along. Putting it mildly. The mother, on the other hand, when she was younger, was a bright, beautiful, amazing woman. Grace, her name was. Her preserves were famous all over the southern part of the province, she even won ribbons for them at Buffalo Days, year after year. A cultured handsome woman, but he just drove her into the ground and crushed her spirit with his backward old country ways. She ended up wandering around the fields out here in a long, white gown – no shit – in a long, white gown like some kind of ghost, used to see her at night sometimes.... But she's been gone quite some time now. They're both gone now. And all that's left are those two orphaned kids over there....

*Lights cross fade down on NED and FINN, who settle in their places, and up on the FUDGE kitchen.*

*End of scene. Continuous action to next scene.*

### **Scene Three: Burnt Offerings**

*Lights fully up on the kitchen. CHRISTINA is moving around preparing a breakfast while FUDGE sits at the table reading his Bible, sipping at a cup of coffee with some revulsion. He is bravely waiting for his sister to leave for the day so he can start drinking his wine and, by extension, writing his sermon. She is anxious to leave, as she has seen a truck pass by on the road and knows the man from the museum has returned to FINN's place to begin excavating the dinosaur she has discovered. CHRISTINA begins to peel an orange. The PIANIST, who has given up on the idea that NED is going to do anything, shifts his focus to the kitchen and begins to play something domestic and homespun and cheerful enough, say along the lines of Stephen Foster, although this may soon devolve into something that is not quite right.*

CHRISTINA Slice a toast?

FUDGE No thank you....

*She takes a slice of bread from the bag, places it in the toaster.*

CHRISTINA Sure about that?

FUDGE No thanks....

CHRISTINA Suit yourself then....

*She pushes the handle down. Slight pause.*

You know, it wouldn't hurt you to eat a bit form time to time. Like actual solid food. Something 'sides wine. Something that might actually make its way into your large intestine. Be good for your bowels.

FUDGE My bowels are fine.

CHRISTINA A piece of toast might be just the thing for your bowels.

FUDGE Let's not make my bowels the subject of discussion at the table.

CHRISTINA It's just that I can hear you moanin' and groanin' in there every morning.

FUDGE I don't want to discuss it.

CHRISTINA And the smell you leave behind you! It can't be healthy....

FUDGE That's enough!!

CHRISTINA Okay.

*Slight pause.*

FUDGE *(reading)* It must be ready now....

CHRISTINA What?

FUDGE Your toast.

CHRISTINA Not yet.

FUDGE *(reading)* I can smell it.

CHRISTINA I can't.

FUDGE *(reading)* When you can smell it, it's ready.

CHRISTINA I like my toast dark.

FUDGE *(reading)* You're going to burn it.

CHRISTINA I know this toaster. I'm not going to burn it. Christ on a bicycle, you think I don't know this toaster?

FUDGE *(slamming his book down)* Language!

CHRISTINA Deal with it....

*The toast begins to burn in the toaster.*

FUDGE Look! It's burning!

*He goes to pop it up but she grabs his hand.*

CHRISTINA Leave it!

FUDGE It's burning!

CHRISTINA I said leave it!

*He leaves it. She pops the toast up. It is black.*

FUDGE There. Are you happy now?

CHRISTINA Well. Maybe it is a little burnt.

FUDGE You never listen to me.

CHRISTINA I can fix it.

*She takes out a knife and starts scraping the toast. It begins as a duet of sorts, between the toast scraping and the piano, but then the other actors on stage take it on as well. FINN creaking in his rocking chair, NED sharpening a shovel with a rasp – all designed to drive FUDGE out of his skull. FUDGE tries to go back to his reading but is too distracted and bothered by the scraping of the toast and the wasps inside his skull.*

FUDGE Now what are you doing?

CHRISTINA Scraping my toast.

FUDGE Why?

CHRISTINA It's burnt.

FUDGE I know it's burnt.

CHRISTINA So what's your point?

FUDGE        Make a new slice.

CHRISTINA No need for that. I'll have this one. After I've scraped it.

*She scrapes. They all scrape. FUDGE tries to read, finally gives up.*

FUDGE        I find that scraping of your toast to be a little hard on my nerves.

CHRISTINA Sorry. (*She scrapes softer.*) How's that?

FUDGE        It's quite possibly the most annoying sound on the face of the earth.

CHRISTINA I find it kind of... homey....

*Pause. More scraping.*

FUDGE        Don't you have anything to do today?

CHRISTINA Oh yeah.

FUDGE        You do?

CHRISTINA Oh yeah.

FUDGE        What?

CHRISTINA None of your beeswax.

FUDGE        You see, I need to get my sermon written....

CHRISTINA Yes?

FUDGE        And you're a little distracting.

CHRISTINA Sorry.

FUDGE        And what would happen? If I didn't get my sermon written?

CHRISTINA The same thing that will happen if you do get it written: nothing.

FUDGE        Because you have no faith... spending your days out searching the fields for your pagan artefacts. Even those forbidden fields upon which Daddy forbade us ever to tread. You're an embarrassment to the family.

CHRISTINA I'm an embarrassment to the family.

FUDGE That's right.

CHRISTINA What are you talking about?

FUDGE You know what I'm talking about. Your sordid little episode with the man from the museum.

CHRISTINA Aw, for God's sake, not that again.

FUDGE Language.

CHRISTINA Anyway, Marty will be back any day now, and then you'll see it wasn't just a sordid little episode.

FUDGE Dream on, sister.

CHRISTINA As for the rest of it, you weren't embarrassed the day I found the meteorite, were you?

FUDGE Oh, brother not this again....

CHRISTINA And the photographer came out from *The Courier*? And my picture was on the front page. The front page!

FUDGE That was twenty years go for crying out loud—

CHRISTINA Yeah well, you weren't embarrassed then, were you?

FUDGE For heaven's sake—

CHRISTINA You said it was Momma's soul—

FUDGE I know what I said—

CHRISTINA And *The Courier* said it was the most important scientific discovery of this region—

FUDGE Do you have to go on about your fifteen minutes of fame yet again?

CHRISTINA Well, you're the one going on about Marty. You're just jealous.

FUDGE Don't be ridiculous.

CHRISTINA I'm not being anything—

FUDGE        The point remains, sister, I have a very select parish in which to deliver my sermon. And a very select congregation to whom it shall be delivered.

CHRISTINA   Okay. Okay. What parish?

FUDGE        None of your business.

CHRISTINA   I can't imagine anyone wants to listen to you after your sordid little episode with Tina Hucklebuck. And poor old Ken lying in the hospital having his legs sawed off all the while.

FUDGE        How was I supposed to know she was only fifteen?

CHRISTINA   So where?

FUDGE        It hasn't been revealed.

CHRISTINA   Oh brother...

FUDGE        But when it is, Christina, I shall be prepared.

CHRISTINA   I'm sure you shall.

FUDGE        But how can I get my sermon written, with you peeling oranges and scraping your toast? How?

CHRISTINA   Fine. You go ahead and write your sermon. I'm going out.

FUDGE        Thank God.

CHRISTINA   Just – just try to hold off on the wine a little bit today, will you? Just a bit, 'til the sun's over the yardarm.

FUDGE        No problem.

CHRISTINA   Promise?

FUDGE        Oh, yes. Absolutely.

CHRISTINA   Great. See you later.

*She leaves.*

FUDGE        Hold off on my wine. As if. I can't hold off my wine. I can't write without my wine. No way. That would be next to impossible, trying to write

without my wine. What does she know about the writing process anyway...?

*Fade on FUDGE as he pours himself a glass of wine. The PIANIST stops playing. After the glass is full, FUDGE keeps on pouring the wine, until it spills over the tabletop and begins to drip down onto the floor. This sound seems to continue for a very long time.*

*End of scene.*

#### **Scene Four: Love, or Something Like It...**

*Lights up on NED and FINN, as before.*

FINN           ... Yeah.... Just those two orphaned kids over there slowly driving each other mental...

NED            Right. Well. Back at it, I guess.

FINN           Oh. Don't let me stop you.

NED            I won't.

FINN           Yeah, like I say, I do like hard work. I could sit and watch it all day. Well, maybe I'll mosey on in and rustle us up some lemonade.... It's going to be a hot day. Yep. A hot, hot day...

*FINN leaves, going into his shack. NED takes up his pickaxe. The PIANIST thinks finally. He and NED may even nod at each other before they begin, as at the start of a duet. NED takes a few cuts at the face of the cliff. The piano starts, perhaps with some sort of paleo-artifact theme. They play in this manner for a few moments before NED stops to take a drink from his canteen. (It may be that after a rather soft winter, NED is not in the best of shape...) CHRISTINA enters and watches him for a moment. When she appears, the PIANIST conjures up some kind of theme of high romance. Finally, NED stops and turns to her. During their scene together, we may see FINN's face in his dirty window, watching. And see FUDGE take a few steps out of his kitchen, watching them.*

CHRISTINA   Hi.

NED            Hi.

CHRISTINA   Hi. Sorry if I startled you.

NED            That's okay.

CHRISTINA   Who are you?



NED My name's Ned. Ned Fletcher.

CHRISTINA Hi. I'm Christina.

NED Christina Fudge?

CHRISTINA Yeah.

NED The one who actually found this?

CHRISTINA Yeah.

NED Cool.

CHRISTINA Yeah, so what happened to Marty?

NED Marty?

CHRISTINA Right. Marty. What happened to him?

NED Nothing happened to him.

CHRISTINA He said maybe he was going to come back for a visit but something must of happened, he never made it.

NED I don't know.

CHRISTINA Is he still married?

NED As far as I know. I don't really know him all that well.

CHRISTINA So, did he actually decide there was something here? Something worth pursuing?

NED Well, the fossil, I guess. Beyond that, it doesn't look like it.

CHRISTINA No it sure doesn't...

NED Nope...

CHRISTINA So they sent you instead of Marty...

NED Yeah.

CHRISTINA I don't understand why they didn't send Marty?

NED Oh. Well, he has a life, I guess. He couldn't just pick up and live out here for the summer. So they sent me.

CHRISTINA So you don't have a life?

NED Something like that.

CHRISTINA Well, you'll fit right in, here.

NED Great...

CHRISTINA So, are you going to be doing this all by yourself?

NED Yeah, for now. It'd be nice to have a crew but that's probably not going to happen, at least not yet. Budget cuts at the museum, you know how it is. So, I'll hack away for the summer. I'm just picking away, trying to figure out the best way to get at it.

CHRISTINA It seems like a big job.

NED Yeah. Yeah it is. It's huge.

*Slight pause.*

CHRISTINA So...

NED Yeah...

CHRISTINA Where are you staying?

NED Here.

CHRISTINA Out here?

NED Yeah. Got my tent. Got my camp stove. Got my excellent battery-operated Coleman reading light. And my Big Sky Bistro coffee press. By MEC.

CHRISTINA So, you're by yourself then...

NED Oh yeah.

CHRISTINA Didn't bring your family out...

NED I don't have one.

CHRISTINA Your wife?

NED No. I don't have one of those either. No wife. No family. No life. Other than this hill for the rest of the summer.

CHRISTINA Hmm... Not even a girlfriend?

NED Just me.

CHRISTINA I see. Interesting. Hey. Can I ask you something?

NED I think so.

CHRISTINA Do you think Marty's a very trustworthy person?

NED I really have no idea.

CHRISTINA Me neither. Bastard... Can I ask you something else?

NED Why not?

CHRISTINA Like, you're a scientist, right? A palaeontologist, right?

NED Right.

CHRISTINA How old do *you* think the world is?

NED How old do I think the world is?

CHRISTINA Yeah.

NED That's what you want to ask me? How old do I think the world is?

CHRISTINA Yeah.

NED Serious.

CHRISTINA Yeah.

NED Well, it's hard to say exactly. Of course it is. But the commonly held theory is that it's about four billion years old, or so. Between four and five.

CHRISTINA Really?

NED Yeah.

CHRISTINA And you believe that?

NED Absolutely.

CHRISTINA That fossil?

NED Yeah?

CHRISTINA How old?

NED Seventy million years or so? Sixty-five to seventy million...

CHRISTINA Amazing!

NED Somewhere in that neighbourhood.

CHRISTINA Interesting. So. If someone were to say to you the world is six thousand years old...

NED Yeah?

CHRISTINA What would you think?

NED I'd think I was talking to a begat counter.

CHRISTINA What's that?

NED Like in the Bible?

CHRISTINA Yeah?

NED They count all the "begats" from Adam on down and calculate how old the world is from that.

CHRISTINA Right. Gotcha. I know all about it. So what do you think of that?

NED Not much. Why?

CHRISTINA Just curious. Most people around here actually believe it's true.

NED Amazing.

CHRISTINA Yeah.

NED So, you find other things out here, I guess?

CHRISTINA Oh yeah.

NED Like what?

CHRISTINA Well, I found a meteorite, just across the way.

NED Really?

CHRISTINA Oh yeah. We saw it flash across the sky one night. And I found it a while later. A few days.

NED Cool.

CHRISTINA Had it displayed, eh? A guy in town, Sandy, he's good at such things, though not to be trusted. Beware of people with red hair. They tend to be bad news.

NED Right.

CHRISTINA Yeah, it looks really sharp. They came out and did an article for the paper on me. Took my picture. I was a celebrity around here for a little while. I find arrowheads and axes and whatnot. There's lots to be found out here. But I totally like the meteorite the best.

NED And you found this, too. That's amazing.

CHRISTINA Yeah. And here you are.

NED Yep. Here I am.

*FINN comes out of his place. He is carrying a little serving tray with two glasses of pink lemonade.*

FINN Hello!

NED Hey, Finn.

FINN This is a surprise. Hi, Christina.

CHRISTINA Hi, Finn.

FINN How are you?

CHRISTINA Good. I actually just dropped by to see how things are going out here. I should probably be getting back.

FINN Stay for a lemonade. I've got plenty.

CHRISTINA No, thanks. I should probably be getting back.

FINN How's that brother of yours doing?

CHRISTINA He's doing really well, thanks, Finn. Really well. Stronger every day. Thanks for asking.

FINN That's good to hear. Is he going to be able to work again soon?

CHRISTINA Any day now. Any day. He's looking for something now. Checks the paper out every day.

FINN That's great.

CHRISTINA Yeah.

FINN I'm glad to hear that. And how are you?

CHRISTINA Good.

FINN Yeah?

CHRISTINA Yeah.

FINN That's good.

CHRISTINA Yeah.

FINN Anything you need?

CHRISTINA No. Not really. I'm okay.

FINN Good.

CHRISTINA Yeah.

FINN Sure you won't stay?

CHRISTINA No, thank you. I have some things to do. *(to NED)* It was nice meeting you.

NED Yeah. You too. Drop by anytime. Next time I'll put you to work.

CHRISTINA Okay. I will drop by. Thanks. Bye, Finn...

FINN           Take care...

*She leaves. They watch her go. FINN crosses over to NED, and gives him a glass of lemonade. They drink, still watching her go.*

                  What'd you think?

NED            About what?

FINN           What do you think about her?

NED            She's not bad.

FINN           Nope. In fact, she could be quite a looker if only she's take care of herself a bit better. You know? They've got some awfully nice things over at Sears that she could look quite smart in. Maybe a nice sundress, something a bit more feminine...

NED            Are there any others around here? Any other women?

FINN           No really?

NED            Serious?

FINN           No, and that's the tragedy of it, eh? To find another woman even approaching her quality, you'd have to travel all the way to Sifton.

NED            How far away is that?

FINN           Forty-three klicks.

NED            Great...

FINN           And even in a major centre like Sifton, it's pretty thin pickings. All the kids from around here move away. And all the good looking women. They're the first to go. And I don't blame them. There's nothing for them here...

NED            I suppose not...

FINN           Next year country, eh? That's what they call it. Next year country... always waiting to see what next year will bring. And usually, all it brings is just more of the same... more and more of the same old thing...

*They finish their lemonades. FINN takes the glasses and goes back inside the house. NED picks up his pickaxe and takes a couple of whacks at the ground as the lights fade. PIANIST joins in with him, playing a transition from this scene to the next. Blackout.*

*End of scene.*

### **Scene Five: Travels with Fudge**

*The FUDGE kitchen. During the last scene, FUDGE has been drinking, writing in his notebook, pacing, glancing over at the scene between CHRISTINA and NED. He finds a coat – something from a tractor company, or an old Saskatchewan Roughriders windbreaker. He puts on a hat of similar origin, and a pair of sunglasses. He takes out an aerosol breath freshener and has about ten squirts. He leaves the kitchen and hops on his bicycle, a vintage gearless thing from the '50s. As he rides his bicycle, he does all kinds of dips and turns and near crashes into the ditch. The PIANIST accompanies him throughout this scene with some kind of travel music; initially perhaps as he prepares to leave, something reminiscent of the “Mission: Impossible” theme. A film of prairie back roads may be projected in behind him to give a sense of his journey from his own house, over to FINN’s land and the excavation site. Of course, as he rides, he speaks. In the first part of the scene, as he is getting ready for the journey, he mutters “fingers and legs” over and over again in some kind of duet with the PIANIST.*

FUDGE           *(as he’s getting ready)* Fingers and legs... fingers and legs... fingers and legs... fingers and legs... *(Etc., ad lib with PIANIST. As he mounts his bicycle, just before takeoff, he has the following revelation.)* There must be a special room in heaven, or a field or something, full of the fingers and legs we lose along the way... *(And so the journey begins, FUDGE bobbing and weaving on the bike 'til he arrives at the site.)*

Fingers and legs, fingers and legs  
Fudge land, Fudge land  
Fingers and legs, fingers and legs  
Fudge land, Fudge land

Still all Fudge land, Daddy!  
Praise the Lord.  
Rest in peace.  
I sincerely mean that,  
Rest in Peace.  
Still all Fudge land...

Daddy and those cut off fingers of his  
In the Kingdom of Heaven  
The fourth and fifth fingers of the left hand  
Because the twine was wrapped around the axel  
And the tractor slipped into gear



And Daddy's fingers were sliced clean through.

*He holds up his hand and collapses his fourth and fifth fingers. Then he peddles on, managing to have a drink of wine from one of two or three bottles he has with him in an old fashioned bicycle basket. The hit of wine is followed by much spraying of the aerosol breath freshener.*

This field is  
The field where  
Daddy lost his wedding band the night he lost his fingers  
And maybe Jayzus had a special need of his fingers  
Maybe we'll never know  
Maybe Jayzus needed old Ken's legs  
Maybe we'll never know.  
Maybe there's a special room in heaven  
Full of the fingers and legs we lose along the way.  
Maybe we'll never know.

Because the twine was wrapped around the axel  
And the tractor slipped into gear  
And Daddy's fingers were sliced clean through.

It was speculated and postulated that  
Daddy's wedding band  
Had flown from the finger at the moment of slicing  
And still it lay still under the tractor  
In the hay field.

*He stops the bicycle and dismounts. The film freezes into a still of a hay field. He drinks from his wine and then squirts with the breath freshener.*

The field in this hay land that dries too slow for cereal.  
The very field the tractor was left that night the fingers were lost.  
This field, right here.

All he had left of her was that ring  
And he would have it, nothing else would do. So  
We walked out here  
Looking for Daddy's ring  
Moon out  
Silhouette of tractor  
Sound of footsteps  
Smell of rum  
Trouble of breathing  
Nothing said.

He bade me kneel  
Beneath the tractor  
I shone the beam.  
Tufts of grass  
All shadow changing with the angle of the light

And there it—  
My God.  
There is was.  
A little ring of gold  
There on the soil.  
And I knew there was a God.  
Tiny golden ring  
Middle of five thousand acres of land.

Yes, there is a God.

I handed the ring to Daddy  
Whose fingers art in heaven.

Fingers and legs  
Fingers and legs...

Permission to enter Finn-land, Daddy!  
Here I go!  
Finn Land!

*FUDGE spits and pedals on, nearly falling, righting himself again. He arrives, and as he does, the background film fades and the lights come up on NED who is digging with his back to FUDGE, who gets off his bike, walks around a bit and has a few more hits of breath freshener. Sensing that someone is there, NED looks down.*

NED            Hey!

FUDGE        Hello, friend.

NED            Hi.

FUDGE        How goes it?

NED            Good, thanks.

FUDGE        That's good. Where's Marty?

NED            He's not here.

FUDGE Then there is a God!

NED What's that?

FUDGE Have you seen my dog?

NED Hang on a sec. I'll come down.

FUDGE Don't let me disturb you!

NED No, no. Hang on. I'm coming down.

*NED comes down as FUDGE furiously freshens his breath.*

Hey.

FUDGE Hey. So how's she goin' up there?

NED Slow but steady, I guess.

FUDGE Oh yeah.

NED Yeah.

FUDGE Found somethin', did ya?

NED Yeah.

FUDGE What is it?

NED T-Rex.

FUDGE Ooooooh. Just like in that movie!

NED Yeah.

FUDGE Wow.

NED Yeah. It's a big one.

FUDGE So how's she comin'?

NED Well, it's big, it's just me out here, no crew, so it's going to be a while.

FUDGE Yep. Gosh sakes. Big old dinosaur, eh?

NED That's right.

FUDGE Who'd a thought? Right here. You know? Right here. Lived here all my life and never knew what was in the ground beneath my feet. Big old dinosaur. Who'd a thought? Fingers and legs, fingers and legs...

NED What's that?

FUDGE I'm amazed, I'm amazed.

NED Right...

FUDGE Who'd a thought? Big old dinosaur right here...

NED We tend to find earlier fossils around here.

FUDGE Is that a fact?

NED Yeah. Sea creatures, mostly. Plesiosaurs, what not.

FUDGE Sea creatures?

NED From the time of the inland sea.

FUDGE What inland sea?

NED The sea that covered the prairies.

FUDGE Here?

NED Yeah.

FUDGE Here where we stand?

NED Yeah.

FUDGE And inland sea?

NED Yeah.

FUDGE When?

NED About eighty million years ago.

FUDGE Are you pulling my leg?

NED No.

FUDGE You have a very vivid imagination.

NED It's science.

FUDGE The devil you say...

NED Right.

FUDGE Science.

NED Yes. Anyway.... My name's Ned. I'm with the museum. Sorry I'm not Marty, but I'm not.

FUDGE Well, a scientist is a scientist is a scientist. Cliff.

NED Hi, Cliff.

FUDGE Hi, Ned.

*They shake hands. Slight pause.*

I tell you something, Ned.

NED What's that, Cliff?

FUDGE It's going to be a long, hot summer.

NED Is it?

FUDGE Oh yeah. We fear the drought in these parts. I myself have seen these very fields on fire.

NED Really?

FUDGE Really. You can predict such things from the activity of the hoppers.

NED Can you really?

FUDGE Oh yea. I tell you something else, Ned.

NED What's that?

FUDGE Hoppers' goin' a be bad, this summer, you can feel it. Hoppers' goin' a be bad.

NED Is that right?

FUDGE Oh yeah. Real bad this year, I'd say. You can feel it, eh? I myself have seen years so bad the hoppers ate the green paint from the shingles.

NED Really?

FUDGE Oh yeah. And I feel it now. I feel a devastation is at hand. Impending and relentless.

NED Jesus...

FUDGE Language.

NED Sorry.

*Slight pause.*

So, did you want to come up and look at the work I'm doing? I'm getting some of it exposed up there, the legs, one of the claws...

FUDGE Oh! Well, that's mighty kind but I don't want to hold you up.

NED You sure?

FUDGE That's a pretty big climb for someone with an artificial leg like I got, yep, that's a big climb for me.

NED Okay. Suit yourself.

FUDGE No. I just wanted to drop by and say welcome to the neighbourhood. You may find that some people keep a bit of an eye on you but it's a small town and small towns is like that.

NED Right. Thanks.

FUDGE I won't hold you up anymore. From the important work you're doing.

NED Right.

FUDGE Science.

NED Right.

FUDGE *You* are a man of science.

NED Right.

FUDGE Right. You take good care of yourself out here, man of science. Ned.

NED Thanks, Cliff.

FUDGE You make sure.

NED I will. You take care, too.

FUDGE Oh, I will. Yep. I sure will. *Adios, amigo.*

NED Yeah. See ya...

*NED walks back up the cliff. FUDGE goes back to his bicycle, muttering "fingers and legs" under his breath. He turns the bicycle around, starts riding home again and the background film rolls. When he is sure he's out of NED's sight, he takes a bottle of wine from the basket and has a huge drink and calms himself from the ordeal of his undercover investigation. After a moment, he stops peddling and stares out across a field.*

FUDGE And then there's this field.

This one here.

This field

In which my mother

Took her own life.

Another sin

To add to the rich heap

Of Momma's sins.

Known as Momma's field.

The field into which she bled.

Alone and cold

After Daddy found out about

Her dalliance with the un-nameable neighbour.

To whom of whom we must not speak.

Upon whose land we must not set our feet

Of all our fields gives me the creeps...

Of all our fields gives me the creeps...

*FUDGE arrives back at his house. He goes to pour himself a glass of wine but the bottle is empty. All the bottles are empty. He makes his way over to the cupboard, opens it, only to discover that the cupboard is bare. The PIANIST follows his journey as he starts to tear apart the cupboards, breaking plates and cups and spilling boxes of cereal and*

*whatnot. There is not a bottle to be found. Finally, somewhere in the back of his brain he remembers a bottle he has hidden for just such an emergency. He climbs up onto the counter and reaches into some unlikely place and triumphantly produces a bottle of red. He slinks down to the floor, cradling the bottle in his arms. Slow fade on FUDGE. End of scene.*

### **Scene Six: The Flu, The Common Flu**

*The site. NED digging and hacking away at the earth with his pickaxe. (Perhaps in the name of variety we could expect something from the PIANIST at this point along the lines of "Chain Gang," or perhaps some Negro work song.)*

FINN            So what do you think really happened?

NED            What's that?

FINN            The dinosaurs. What do you think really happened to them?

NED            Well, there's lots of theories.

FINN            But what do you think?

NED            I favour the asteroid theory myself.

FINN            Ah yes. A heavenly visitation. Havoc on earth. The endless winter and the blotting out of the sun.

NED            You know about it?

FINN            Oh yeah. I study such things. Even comment on them from time to time. In print. There's not much of a dialogue to be had out here. Well, until you showed up. Let me ask you this.

NED            Yes?

FINN            Do you think that there's any possibility it was viral?

NED            Viral?

FINN            Yeah.

NED            Well, most of the species that were alive went extinct at roughly the same time. So that would have had to have been one hell of a virus.

FINN            Well, viruses are pretty amazing creatures, wouldn't you say?



NED I guess...

FINN I have a lot of hope for them.

NED Hope?

FINN Yeah.

NED What are you talking about, hope?

FINN Well, I subscribe to some theories that some find to be a tad contentious.

NED Oh yeah?

FINN Yep.

NED Are you going to share them?

FINN Yeah, I guess, if you think you're up to it.

NED I think I may be.

FINN Okay. And just so you know who you're talking to, I'll have you know I've actually managed to publish a few papers expounding on my meditations.

*He pulls a bunch of ancient, worn out folded pieces of paper from his pocket.*

NED Really?

FINN Oh yeah. Lot's of clippings. Quite an eclectic array of thoughts and publishers. Publish or perish, they say.

NED Tell me about it...

FINN What?

NED Same in my field. Trouble is, there's nothing particularly noteworthy about this excavation. I don't see any opportunity to further my career out here. I only see an opportunity to break my back—

FINN Ned?

NED Yeah, Finn?

FINN This isn't about *you* right now.

NED Sorry.

FINN I was telling you about *my* publications.

NED Right.

FINN And I'm only showing you these, not to brag, but so you don't think I'm some kind of rube with no credentials.

NED I see. Okay... (*He checks over the papers FINN has given him.*) Wow. *Globe and Mail.*

FINN I rest my case.

NED Very impressive.

FINN Thank you.

NED So what are these theories of yours?

FINN Well, basically, and I shouldn't have to tell you this, given your occupation, but I believe that the world can't possibly hope to sustain its current human population. And if you look at the projections, they're absolutely terrifying. You said yourself, mankind is a cancer on the face of the planet.

NED I didn't say that.

FINN Sure you did.

NED No I didn't. You did.

FINN Yeah, well, whatever. Clearly something has to be done. I believe that action has to be taken.

NED What for?

FINN To reduce the world's population.

NED What kind of action?

FINN Something. Anything.

NED Like what?

FINN           Some agent of change.

NED            What kind of change?

FINN            Death, I suppose.

NED            You're talking about reducing the world's population?

FINN            That's right.

NED            By how much?

FINN            Twenty-five percent. For starters.

NED            Over a billion people.

FINN            For starters.

NED            So how do you see this happening?

FINN            Well, there's lots of scenarios that cross through my mind when I'm sitting out here thinking. But obviously, one of the most efficient is the viruses. That's why I hold them in such high regard. Oh yeah. The haemorrhagic fevers: Erlichia, Marburg, Ebola, Junin, Machupo—

NED            What do you know about the Ebola virus?

FINN            I know that it's fast, and efficient.

NED            That's your word for it? Efficient?

FINN            Yeah...

NED            Your internal organs liquefying, bleeding through every orifice in your body, including your eyes... tears of blood, Finn... tears of blood...

FINN            The ultimate killing machine.

NED            You think so, do you?

FINN            I know so. I've done the research.

NED            It's deeply flawed.

FINN            What are you talking about?

NED           It's not an efficient virus.

FINN          Sure it is.

NED          No it's not.

FINN          Why do you say that?

NED          It kills its host too quickly.

FINN          That makes it inefficient?

NED          Yes.

FINN          I don't see how.

NED          I thought you were a published expert on this.

FINN          I didn't say I was an expert. I just said I published a few of my thoughts and feelings on a very serious subject...

NED          Well, that would imply that you're some kind of expert.

FINN          Whatever...

*At this point, something distracts FINN's attention. He picks up his rifle and looks through the scope, starts tracking something as NED continues to speak.*

NED           The problem is, Finn, you don't even know your basic biology. I don't know if you've ever heard of Stephen Jay Gould, but I've got some of his stuff with me and I think you might find it worth your while to read some of it. You see, Finn, the goal of a virus, as with any organism, is to procreate and ensure the survival of its species—

*FINN fires the gun. A huge explosion, scaring NED half to death.*

NED           Jeezus!

FINN          Damn things.

NED          What?!

FINN          Damned mangy things.

NED          What?!?!

FINN Coyotes.

NED Christ!

FINN Skulking around. Can't stand 'em.

NED You have to shoot them?

FINN That's what you do with them, Ned. You shoot them. What did you think?

NED Well, uh, I don't—

FINN Anyway, you were saying...

NED I was?

FINN About the inefficiency of the Ebola virus...

NED Oh yeah. Right. Jeezus – you done? Anything else you wanted to shoot?

FINN No. Go ahead.

NED Okay. I was talking about the goal of organisms. In this case, viruses.

FINN Right. Go on...

NED Well, you see, that they happen to kill their host organism is incidental. And in the case of the Ebola virus, unfortunate. Because once the host is dead, the virus is toast.

FINN Fascinating...

NED Something that works slower is more efficient, ultimately. Something that insidiously attaches itself to a host, without giving itself away too soon, so the virus is passed on. If that's what you really want. If you really want the viruses to win out, at the expense of mankind – in fact, forget the Ebola virus. The deadliest virus in recorded history – you know what it is?

FINN The plague?

NED Influenza. The common flu.

FINN Really...

NED Oh yeah. You want something that's good at killing people, that's it. The flu. You don't need designer viruses for what you're talking about. The flu does the job just fine.

FINN I hadn't thought of that.

NED You don't think much of life, do you?

FINN That's not true. I think about it entirely too much. And that's why I've come to the conclusion that I've come to.

NED Well, if the Ebola virus ever mutates, and becomes airborne, then that'll probably happen. In a matter of weeks. Or if there's ever a return of the Spanish flu. Or if this West Nile takes off the way everyone thinks it's going to...

FINN Halleluiah...

NED I think you're seriously misguided. I can't believe you've managed to publish.

FINN Yeah? Well as long as you're standing on my land day in, day out, all I ask is that you at least consider my opinion, even if you don't embrace it wholeheartedly.

NED Fine!

FINN Fine.

*They stare at each other a moment. FINN walks off. After a moment, NED has a drink from his canteen, sits on the cliff and lights a cigar. Slow fade.*

*End of scene.*

### **Scene Seven: Tractor Factor**

*CHRISTINA returns to the FUDGE residence. FUDGE is sitting in a straight-backed chair at the table. The big Bible lies open. He is voraciously drinking his last bottle of wine, while making random notes in his notebook. The PIANIST plays some drunken, wobbly piece – for some reason “Onward Christian Soldiers” comes to mind. FUDGE has had a few more drinks.*

FUDGE Where have you been?

CHRISTINA Out.

FUDGE       Where out?

CHRISTINA   Out out.

FUDGE       Where?

CHRISTINA   Just out.

FUDGE       I don't like it when you're out scavenging around. You know how the neighbours talk. I'm serious about this. I have some very disturbing news.

CHRISTINA   Oh?

FUDGE       Once again, there is a heathen, come into our midst.

CHRISTINA   Really?

FUDGE       A blasphemer. In the name of science: another one. After your sordid episode with the last one, *Marty*, you are to stay away from this one, you hear me?

CHRISTINA   You must be talking about Ned.

FUDGE       How do you know his name?

CHRISTINA   He told me.

FUDGE       You've actually met him?

CHRISTINA   Yes.

FUDGE       How?

CHRISTINA   I went over...

FUDGE       And?

CHRISTINA   He's cute.

FUDGE       Cute?!

CHRISTINA   Yes. He's cute. Well, at least he's someone new to look at around here.

FUDGE       Who the hell cares what he looks like?!

CHRISTINA   More to the point. He's smart.

FUDGE Smart?! Ha! Smoke and mirrors, that's all scientists deal in. And you're gullible enough to be taken in by it all.

CHRISTINA He seems to think that your quaint little idea that the world is six thousand years old is bullshit. Just like Marty thought.

FUDGE Lies. And watch your language.

CHRISTINA He seems to think that this dinosaur he's digging up is seventy million years old.

FUDGE Impossible.

CHRISTINA Seventy million years.

FUDGE No way.

CHRISTINA And the world is four billion years old!

FUDGE Fantasy.

CHRISTINA It's science, Clifford.

FUDGE Well, it's wrong.

CHRISTINA What makes you think that you're right? What makes you think you could possibly be right?

FUDGE The Bible tells me so!!!

CHRISTINA Right. Of course. And everything in the Bible is true.

FUDGE God's word, sister. The word of God. It's bad enough that you don't believe in it, but now you've been out consorting with an agent of the devil. Again.

CHRISTINA Yeah, yeah. Whatever...

FUDGE Digging through the earth for his old bones like a lice-ridden, mangy mongrel hell hound...

CHRISTINA He's a nice guy!

FUDGE He's evil. His work is blasphemy. You're not to see him again, you understand?



CHRISTINA I'll see him if I bloody well want to see him.

FUDGE And he's not to be referred to in this house from this moment hence.

CHRISTINA You brought him up.

FUDGE Well, now I'm un-bringing him up.

CHRISTINA Right. Okay. Great. Was there anything else you wanted to share?

FUDGE No. Yes.

CHRISTINA Well?

FUDGE (*smiling a sickly smile*) How have you been, dear?

CHRISTINA Why?

FUDGE Just curious. And mindful of your well-being. You're a very special person, you know. In my eyes. In God's eyes, even.

CHRISTINA What is it, Clifford?

FUDGE What is what?

CHRISTINA What's on your mind? Why are you talking to me like this?

FUDGE I'm your brother.

CHRISTINA Talk to me then.

FUDGE Okay. Well, you see, Chris. There is a bit of a problem in this house.

CHRISTINA What now?

FUDGE It's the wine.

CHRISTINA The wine?

FUDGE Indeed.

CHRISTINA What about the wine?

FUDGE We have a wine problem.

CHRISTINA We do, do we?

FUDGE Yes, we do. In fact, it's beyond being a problem, even. It's become a situation, one might say. Full-blown and grave.

CHRISTINA What is the situation?

FUDGE We're down to our last bottle.

CHRISTINA *We're* down?

FUDGE To our last bottle. You hear me?! Our last bottle!!

CHRISTINA Good.

FUDGE What will we do?

CHRISTINA Stop drinking.

FUDGE Oh.

CHRISTINA Simple enough.

FUDGE I don't think I can do that.

CHRISTINA Sure you can.

FUDGE No. I can't do that. I can't stop drinking my wine. No. I can't do that. I wouldn't be able to find the way to get my work done without my wine.

CHRISTINA Well, I'm not giving you any more money.

FUDGE Why not?

CHRISTINA Not for wine.

FUDGE But I need my wine.

CHRISTINA Things are tight enough as it is. We have no cash flow. We have no crops. No cattle. No food in the fridge. No water in the well—

FUDGE You make it all sound so grim—

CHRISTINA All we have is the revenue from the oil companies and we're not spending any more of that on wine.

FUDGE I was worried you might say that. But I've had a thought that might mitigate against your unreasonableness...

CHRISTINA What's your thought?

FUDGE Well... because we don't in fact use it anymore—

CHRISTINA What?

FUDGE Well, I was wondering if it wouldn't perhaps be prudent to unburden ourselves of the tractor, and in doing so, increase our cash flow in a very significant manner.

CHRISTINA Sell the tractor?

FUDGE Yes.

CHRISTINA Sell the tractor?!

FUDGE That old John Deere. Yes.

CHRISTINA That'd be a good trick.

FUDGE Why do you say that?

CHRISTINA You don't know?

FUDGE Know what?

CHRISTINA I say that would be a good trick, to sell the tractor, and you don't know why?

FUDGE No. Enlighten me.

CHRISTINA I say it would be a good trick, because you already sold it.

FUDGE Nonsense.

CHRISTINA No. It's not nonsense. You sold it.

FUDGE No I didn't.

CHRISTINA Yes, you did. You sold it to that lowlife Sandy. For a case of wine and a cooked ham. Sandy's still bragging about it—

FUDGE Do you honestly think that I could have undertaken such a complex negotiation as selling our tractor and have no memory of it?

CHRISTINA I would have hoped that wouldn't have been possible. But it seems that it is.

FUDGE But I saw the tractor only the other day.

CHRISTINA Where?

FUDGE In the Quonset.

CHRISTINA I don't think so.

FUDGE I did! I saw it with my own two eyes.

CHRISTINA Maybe it didn't like Sandy and came home to you. Like Lassie.

FUDGE If you'll excuse me for a moment.

CHRISTINA Where are you going?

FUDGE I'll be right back.

CHRISTINA *(blocking his way)* You're not going to check?!

FUDGE *(moving her out of his way)* Let me go!

*He leaves for the Quonset.*

CHRISTINA *(calling after him)* You're going to check, aren't you?!

*CHRISTINA goes to the table and sits in the straight-backed chair.*

How can you not remember selling a tractor? Christ's sake...

*The PIANIST and CHRISTINA reprise their beautiful aria from the beginning of the play, which thanks to the beauty of 'cut' and 'paste,' the author reprints here and now...*

Too bad  
So sad  
So sad for me  
You see  
Stuck in this rut  
The person I'm with  
Is as crazy

As a shit house rat  
God help me  
I've got to get out  
God help me  
I got to get unstuck...  
I got to get unstuck...

*FUDGE trudges into the kitchen. It is obvious he has discovered he no longer owns a tractor. He sits, and drops his head to the table. She makes no movement to help him. He peeks up at her.*

FUDGE        This is a desperate time, sister. I could use some succour.

*She puts her hand on his neck and starts to stroke him. She is extremely seductive in this scene. The PIANIST plays something along the lines of "New York, New York."*

CHRISTINA    Well, you know, darling brother, there is a way.

FUDGE        Oh?

CHRISTINA    Could be a way.

FUDGE        Oh?

CHRISTINA    Pretty simple solution to your problem, actually.

FUDGE        What is it?

CHRISTINA    Sell the farm.

FUDGE        No! —

CHRISTINA    *(placing a finger to his lips)* Shhh. Listen to me for a sec, will you? Listen to me for a sec. Okay? *(whispering into his ear seductively)* We sell the farm. You know what it's worth. We sell the farm and we take the money. All that money. We just walk away from it and we take the money. We set you up in a sharp little apartment over in Sifton. One with cable TV. Maybe some kind of sectional couch, you know? A book case, for your book. A working toilet. Think of that! We could get you an account over at the liquor store, that one that you like so much. When you're in town like that, you can even get them to deliver. Right to your door. Plus: they take away the empties for you. Think about it, Clifford. Wouldn't that be nice? Wouldn't that be better than living like this?

*He looks up at her. She believes for a heartbeat that maybe he's actually heard her. The PIANIST comes up under this story of Daddy's death with something suitably gothic.*

FUDGE        When Daddy died, and you weren't there but I was, and let me tell you it was – well, words can't account.... The room was dark and so close, the walls closing in like the room was reduced to a closet and it smelled so intense like him, only more even like him than he smelled himself. All I could do was wait for his last breath. I sat there for hours and hours through the night and then suddenly he reached up his claw hand, and grabbed onto my arm with the remaining fingers and thumb like hot wires grabbing onto me, and he drew me into him, my face on his chest and his voice hot and dry in my ear, and he said, "This is Fudge land, son, and a fuck of a lot of it, seven sections of it, and don't fuck with that, or I'll come back and fuck with you, from the other side, I'll haunt you 'til your final breath, you little fuck, you sell one square foot." And died. Still holding onto me with that claw. My ear pressed up against his dead mouth. So what am I going to do? What am I supposed to do? Am I supposed to fuck with my father? Do you want me to fuck with the dying of my father? Our father. Our Father. Fuck. Fuck! I don't know. I don't know. Sifton sounds pretty damned good to me too, sister, but what am I supposed to do?

*She moves away from him. Then she moves back to him. She hugs him. Then she hits him.*

CHRISTINA    I don't know, Clifford. But we've got to start doing something other than this. I'm not going to do this anymore.

FUDGE        I don't know...

CHRISTINA    Something has to change. I'm sorry, but I've had enough. I've got to get the fuck outta here...

*She leaves. The PIANIST plays something reminiscent of the search for the hidden bottle. FUDGE looks up from the tear-stained Bible. He tries to pour another glass of wine, but the bottle is empty. His gaze falls on the meteorite in its case. He rises and puts on a large black overcoat. He grabs the meteorite.*

FUDGE        Mamma!

*He hides the meteorite under his coat and leaves, as the PIANIST plays an end o' act flourish.*

*End of scene.*

*End of Act One.*

## Act Two

### Scene Eight: Confounded by Certain Truths

*The PIANIST plays some variation of NED's tune. We are seeing NED at work for a few moments, happily working away at the preliminary phase of his excavation, i.e. determining exactly where he needs to dig. He is on top of the cliff with a shovel. He takes out a few shovelfuls of dirt from the ground, and then gets down on his hands and knees, sifting through it. Every once in a while, something captures his attention. A small fragment of a bone, perhaps. He studies it, touches it to his tongue, either discards it or puts it into a Ziploc bag. After a few moments, FINN steps out on his porch with two glasses of pink lemonade. He looks around for NED, but can't see him as he is kneeling down. Finally NED peeks over the top and sees FINN.*

FINN            Brought you a drink. Little peace offering...

NED            Great. Thanks.

*NED comes down (whatever his route might be) and FINN gives him his lemonade and returns to his special chair.*

FINN            Don't mention it. It's a hot day.

NED            Yeah, it sure is.

FINN            You need to replenish your liquids, otherwise you'll dry up out here.

NED            Right.

FINN            Yep...

NED            So what have you been doing this morning?

FINN            Oh, you know. Making lemonade. Listening to the news.

NED            The news, eh? I've kinda forgotten about the news. The rest of the world seems so far away or something.

FINN            Tell me about it.

NED            Anything exciting happening out there?

FINN            Well, same old, same old. They're still killing each other in the Middle East. But that probably goes without saying.

NED            No doubt.

FINN            Beyond that, well... North Korea seems to be heating up again.

NED            Oh yeah...

FINN            The U.S.-Iraq thing is looking good. You gotta like that.

NED            I don't, actually.

FINN            Well, I find it pretty exciting.

NED            Well, I don't.

FINN            Well I do.

NED            Well I don't.

FINN            Well I do.

NED            Oh, brother. I don't know. I don't know. What do I know anyway? I stand all day on the side of a hill, digging and poking. Wondering if I'm ever going to get laid again. Ever. No money. No fame. No love. No support. Just your voice, endlessly droning on and on about wiping half the population off the face of the earth. Funny the things your life throws at you.

FINN            Who pooped in your porridge. Sorry if I upset you. We don't have to talk about it, if it makes you uncomfortable. We can talk about something else.

NED            Yeah?

FINN            Oh yeah.

NED            Suits me.

FINN            Sure. We can find lots of different things to talk about...

NED            Great.

FINN            How's your lemonade?

NED            It's fine.

FINN            That's good. Man needs a cool drink on a hot day. Yep. That's for sure. Sit down. Take a load off.



*Pause. They think for a few moments of something else to talk about.*

You mind me asking you something?

NED Now what?

FINN This is something kind of personal. Nothing to do with my work.

NED Oh. Okay. Go ahead.

FINN Well, it's just to do with the paucity of attractive women out here...

NED Right...

FINN I was kinda wondering if you, uh... if you get much into the masturbation thing.

*Pause.*

NED I can't believe you're asking me this.

FINN If it's too touchy for you, I'll back off.

NED No...

FINN Well then?

NED Well, I mean from time to time, it comes up. As it were. You know. And I can see that the nights get long and there's no one around. So out here, I have to say, sure, I do.

*Slight pause.*

Do you?

FINN Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I quite like it.

NED What's not to like?

FINN Exactly. Tell me...

NED Yes?

FINN Do you, uh... do you tend to conjure up a mental image, or do you prefer to have something in front of you? A magazine, say.

NED            Either way.... I guess I like the pictures.

FINN           Me too... depictions of lingerie, *girdles*, that kind of thing...

NED            Yeah...

*Long pause.*

FINN           You didn't happen to bring anything with you, did you? Any magazines, that kind of thing?

NED            Sorry.

FINN           Right. Well. That's unfortunate. You see, it's such a small town. Only the one store, eh? I don't dare buy a magazine. Everyone knows your business around here, eh?

NED            Right. Well, that's no biggie. Next time I go to the store, I'll pick something up for you...

FINN            Yeah?

NED            Sure, why not?

FINN            They keep them behind the counter. In a special rack. You have to ask specifically for them. The ones wrapped in plastic cost more, but they're worth every penny.

NED            Okay.

FINN            You'd be comfortable doing that? Even the plastic ones?

NED            I think I can handle it.

FINN            Well, that would be much appreciated. I mean, it doesn't have to be anything kinky, if you know what I mean. Hell, even a new Sears catalogue would be nice.

NED            I'll see what I can do.

*Pause.*

FINN            I used to have room in my head for... I don't know. Bigger things. Better things. Like love, maybe. Something lofty like that. Some state of grace that was worth aspiring to, striving towards. I don't know. Maybe somehow I just missed it. Because I can honestly say I don't care

anymore... Just the physical sensation, that small bit of personal pleasure. That's all that matters. As for the rest of it, I really don't know if I give a shit.

NED I don't know if I'm there yet, Finn. But I'm starting to think that I might be on my way.

FINN You had someone, eh?

NED Yeah.

FINN Recent?

NED How do you know?

FINN Just guessing. There's a trace of a ring on your finger there, couldn't help but notice.

NED Oh yeah...

FINN Pretty much gone now, though, eh? A little hard work with your hands, a few days in the sun...

NED I guess.

FINN Thing you have to remember is, you're always better off not being in a relationship. People in relationships lie awake at night dreaming up ways to get out of them. And whether she toasted you or you kissed her off, you have to admit, at some point you were secretly thrilled to find yourself alone again, eh? Free again.

NED Maybe...

FINN Eh?!

NED Yeah... probably.

FINN And so you come out here, thinking it might be a good place to start over...

NED Something like that.

FINN Yeah, well. Good luck on that one.... At least maybe you won't make the same mistake I did.

NED What's that?

FINN Kids.

NED God. Don't tell me you have kids.

FINN Something wrong with that?

NED I wouldn't have thought you'd be comfortable increasing the world population.

FINN Yeah, well in this case it was personal. I had two of 'em. Two of 'em I talk about, anyway. But they left. A long time ago.

*FINN takes a small, wrinkled photograph from his wallet. The PIANIST conjures up some kind of wistful melody, time gone by.*

That's Kirsten. And that's Michael.

NED Who's that?

FINN That was me.

NED What happened?

FINN Well, that's the problem with being a writer. When you're confounded by certain truths you feel a compulsion to share. Their mother didn't understand some of the things I was writing about. The courts felt the same way. So she packed up the kids and hauled her ass out of here.

NED I'm sorry...

FINN Yeah. I let it shut me up for a long time. But no more. I won't be silenced anymore. Your coming out here has rekindled my desire to share my thoughts again.

NED Oh yeah...

FINN Yeah. I have to thank you for that, Ned.

NED Great!

*FINN puts the photo back in his wallet.*

Well... back at it, I guess.

FINN Don't let me hold you up.

*NED gets up, takes up the pickaxe and starts working again, and the PIANIST joins him.*

Oh.

NED           *(stopping)* Yeah?

FINN           If you want anything... if you want to pop in for some more lemonade... or a nice cup of tea... or to have a shower or anything, whatever... that'd be okay.

NED           Thanks.

*FINN leaves. NED watches him go for a minute, then resumes work. The PIANIST joins in with him and then plays a transition into the next scene. Slow fade.*

*End of scene.*

### **Scene Nine: Lunch is Served**

*NED on top of the cliff. As the piano plays, he works away with his pickaxe, digging down towards the fossil from up above. It is hard work on a hot day. CHRISTINA appears upstage. She is carrying a white plastic bag. The PIANIST plays her theme. She looks beautiful in the prairie breeze. She approaches NED.*

CHRISTINA Hi!

NED           Hey. How's it going?

CHRISTINA Good, thanks. How are you making out?

NED           Slow but steady, I guess.

CHRISTINA You've got a lot of digging to do.

NED           Yeah. I realize that...

CHRISTINA I brought you some lunch.

NED           Really? That's great. Thank you.

CHRISTINA *(handing him the bag)* It's not much, but I thought it might hit the spot.

NED           *(opening the bag)* Thanks...

*He opens the lunch bag. It contains two slices of Wonderbread, an orange and two of those puffy, chocolate-coated marshmallow cookies, also known as Dream Puffs. The PIANIST plays throughout the eating of this stuff, something reminiscent of a Parisian café.*

Great...

CHRISTINA That's an orange. They're very nice. And I took the liberty of buttering your bread, I hope that's okay.

NED It's fine.

CHRISTINA And the Dream Puffs. A little sugar for energy.

NED Right...

CHRISTINA Is it okay?

NED Oh yeah. It's fine.

*NED begins to eat his slices of bread as she describes the famous Esso chef's salad.*

CHRISTINA I haven't actually got any groceries for a while. I don't know how to cook, and my brother hasn't eaten any solid food in years so it's not much fun. I get hungry enough, I go out to the Esso on the highway. I like it out there, full of people on their way somewhere, somewhere else. They have a nice chef's salad there. You should see it. They've got the nice bed of lettuce underneath everything. A nice, crisp iceberg lettuce. And the nice thick slices of roast beef. And the boiled egg. And some strips of ham. And some nice cheddar cheese. And the ranch dressing. Oh yeah. That's a nice salad, all right. All for \$5.95 and that includes your coffee. We could go there sometime, if you wanted. If you were hungry. I could show you.

NED That'd be great.

CHRISTINA Yeah. It's just a small town, it's not what you're used to, but people tend to congregate there to a certain extent. The food is reliable and it's always open...

NED What else do people around here do for excitement?

CHRISTINA Well, there's drinking...

NED That's good.

CHRISTINA And then there's more drinking.

NED Okay...

CHRISTINA Then there's drinking and driving around and getting into fights and on a really special night there could be a few cows tipped.

NED Fascinating.

CHRISTINA Oh yeah. Lives lived...

NED Yeah...

*Slight pause.*

CHRISTINA Am I keeping you from your work?

NED No. Not really.

CHRISTINA I should probably get going pretty soon anyway.

NED Why?

CHRISTINA My brother.

NED What about him?

CHRISTINA He had a bit of a, you know. One of those things. An incident. I don't like to leave him on his own for too long...

NED Another few minutes won't make any difference.

CHRISTINA I guess...

NED It's just that I feel a connection. With you. Not through the bone, because you found it and here I am. But you know...

CHRISTINA What?

NED Other stuff?

CHRISTINA Like what?

NED I don't know. We both like to play in the dirt.

CHRISTINA Yeah.

NED I've always thought that's a pretty cool thing about what I do. I get paid to play in the dirt.

CHRISTINA I'd like to, someday. Get paid for this. You should see. I have a whole suitcase full of stuff. Marty suggested we take them to Vegas some weekend and maybe try to sell them. But of course that never happened.

NED Probably for the best.

CHRISTINA Yeah. And then. There's my meteorite, which I really want to show you sometime.

NED Yeah, I'd like to see it.

CHRISTINA I'll bring it out with me next time. I guess it's special because we saw it flash across the sky just after my mom died.... My brother thought maybe it was her soul, maybe, maybe it was, but if it was her soul, all that's left of it now is that rock. I paid a little money and got it displayed properly. And the paper came out and took my picture, put it on the front page. I may have mentioned that already...

*She takes out a crumpled page from a newspaper and shows it to him. FINN comes out of his place with the tray and two glasses of pink lemonade and a small plate of the same cookies that CHRISTINA has packed in the lunch. As he approaches, and NED is watching him, CHRISTINA silently disappears. FINN crosses over and sets down the lemonade and cookies.*

FINN Chow time!

NED Hey, Finn. *(to CHRISTINA who is not there)* Do you want a glass— Oh.

FINN What?

NED She came back for a visit, but she disappeared.

*FINN tracks her with his scope.*

FINN There she goes... man, she moves fast. *(giving NED the gun)* See.... She's just coming out of that coulee.

NED Oh yeah.

FINN You see, she's growing up to be *just* like her mother, out prowling around the fields night and day. Won't be long 'til she starts skulking around the fields in some kind of diaphanous white nightgown. And it's too bad, because in her case there's something there, something special. And,



really, you know, she could be quite a handsome young woman if she'd just do some of the womanly things on herself. Like wearing some makeup or something. Some rouge or something. A little blue eye shadow. All men respond to a little blue eye shadow, don't you think?

NED            You like the blue eye shadow, do you?

FINN           Well, yeah, you?

NED            It's okay. Do you know why you like it?

FINN           I don't know – I just know I like it.

NED            But there's a reason you like it.

FINN           There is?

NED            Yeah.

FINN           What?

NED            Well, they say that when a woman has an orgasm, her eyelids kind of flush, and turn a very delicate shade of blue. Kind of a periwinkle. And blue eye shadow – they say – brings this to mind in the eye of the male beholder. Making the wearer of the eye shadow extremely attractive and even beguiling.

FINN           Serious.

NED            Yeah.

FINN           You're not having me off here?

NED            It's not an exact science. But that's what they say. I read it somewhere...

FINN           Hmmmm... I'm going to have to think about that one for a bit.

*FINN wanders back to his porch, sits and rocks and thinks about women's makeup, while NED takes up his pickaxe and gets back to work. The PIANIST resumes the work theme. Lights fade on the work area as a small light comes up on FUDGE at his table.*

*End of scene.*

## Scene Ten: And Lot Came Out of Zoar

*The PIANIST plays a happy, domestic piece as we discover FUDGE entering with a case of wine. He dances with it. Hides a bottle in his special hiding place. He sets it down, sits down himself with a fresh bottle, and looks over at the case with love and admiration. He reads the Bible, deeply. CHRISTINA enters.*

CHRISTINA Hello.

FUDGE Hello.

CHRISTINA How was your day?

FUDGE Grrreat! How was yours?

CHRISTINA It was fine. Just fine.

FUDGE You've been out fornicating with that digger of bones?

CHRISTINA Oh, boy, would you look at that?

FUDGE What?

CHRISTINA You've managed to get yourself another case of wine.

FUDGE Yeah...

CHRISTINA How did you manage that?

FUDGE I prayed. The miracle came. That's how it works. It's called faith.

CHRISTINA That's great. Just great. Well, I see you won't be needing anything from me, so I guess I'll turn in. Good night, Clifford.

FUDGE Good night.

*She leaves for her room, which would seem to be on the other side of the kitchen wall (far left wall). FUDGE takes a great gulp of wine and picks up his Bible, moves down to the spot where we first saw him, with his special (maybe even the pulpit, to begin with). The PIANIST plays some appropriate Old Testament music in behind his reading.*

“And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father *is* old, and *there is* not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth:

Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the seed of our father.  
And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father...”

*FUDGE stops. Music stops. Then they resume again.*

“And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father...”

*They stop again. The PIANIST resumes as FUDGE mouths these same words. A light bulb turns on over his head. He walks over to the wall and pounds on it.*

CHRISTINA *(off)* What?

FUDGE I've just had a thought.

CHRISTINA *(off)* What?!

FUDGE I've just had a thought!

CHRISTINA *(off)* What thought?

FUDGE A thought about the future of this family!

CHRISTINA *(off)* Go to bed.

FUDGE No! I've had a deep thought. Maybe even a revelation! Come out, little rabbit. Come out of your hole! I have something to share with you!

*CHRISTINA enters, wearing a diaphanous white nightgown.*

CHRISTINA This had better be good.

FUDGE Oh it's good, it's good, it's good all right. Comes from my reading of Genesis.

CHRISTINA Great...

FUDGE Ohhh... where was I? Oh, right. Yeah. Listen to this...

CHRISTINA I'm listening.

FUDGE “And they made their father drink wine that night.” And the firstborn went in. You see?

CHRISTINA No, I don't see.

FUDGE They made their father drink wine that night. Father in this case meaning the patriarch. Like, the guy who was around. The only guy. The guy with the seed. Get it? The seed? In this case, Lot. They wanted him to drink wine, so that he might relax, and they in turn might lay with him, that his seed might come unto them. Get it?

CHRISTINA Go to bed.

FUDGE Don't you see?

CHRISTINA Get some sleep.

FUDGE "...and the firstborn went in." You see?

CHRISTINA No.

FUDGE They were coming to the end of their race. They had to do something to keep the race alive. Or face extinction.

*She comes further into the room, in a rather threatening manner. FUDGE returns to the table and drinks some more wine.*

CHRISTINA So what's your point?

FUDGE Well... it makes the point that given the right set of circumstances... sometimes it's justified...

CHRISTINA *It?*

FUDGE Yeah.

CHRISTINA This is severely sick and twisted even for you, Clifford.

FUDGE It's the word of God.

CHRISTINA It's twisted. You've twisted it.

FUDGE It's in the Bible.

CHRISTINA Everything's in the Bible.

FUDGE They were coming to the end of their race – don't you see? So in some cases it's justified— (*He stands and grabs her by the shoulders.*) It's justified, if you're at the end of your race.

CHRISTINA Let go of me.

FUDGE I have a bold new plan for us, sister.

CHRISTINA Clifford. I'm warning you now: let go of me.

FUDGE Because we're at the end of our race, you see. We're at the end of the Fudge race—

*She knees him in the groin. He goes down, whimpering on the floor.*

CHRISTINA Don't you ever – ever – touch me again. You hear me? Ever!

*No response.*

I'm going out. I won't be back tonight. For God's sake, get some sleep.

*She looks around the room for her meteorite, but of course she doesn't find it.*

Where's my meteorite? Clifford? Huh? Where is it? What have you done— Oh my God. Oh my God. You took it, didn't you? You took my meteorite. I get it. You took it over to Sandy and sold it, didn't you. That weasel, he's wanted it ever since I found it, so you took my meteorite and pawned it for a case of wine, didn't you? Didn't you? The most important scientific discovery of this region and you sold it? Even worse, you saw Momma in it, Clifford. You said so. You said it contained her soul. And yet you turned around and sold it? And for what? For wine? For wine? You bastard. You lousy, drunken, pathetic bastard, you stole my meteorite. I hate you. I hate you. I wish you were dead I wish you'd just die why don't you just die why don't you do the world a favour and die?! You stupid fucking bastard!!! FUCK!!!!

*She takes a bottle of wine and pours it over him. She leaves. The PIANIST plays the theme we associate with FUDGE and his madness. After a moment, FUDGE reaches up and grabs his bottle of wine. He drinks as the lights fade.*

*End of scene.*

### **Scene Eleven: Consummation**

*The site. NED is sitting, reading by the light of a Coleman lantern. The cry of a coyote can be heard very close to him. A series of other coyote calls echo away and fade. The coyote sound is made by FUDGE who is lying with his bottle on his kitchen floor. NED hears it as coyotes. The PIANIST plays some lovely nacht musik.*

NED Jesus...

*He goes back to reading. CHRISTINA looms up in the light, still in her nightgown, so the audience, and FINN, of course, can see her, but NED cannot. The coyote again.*

Man.... This is getting to be like some kind of bad Disney movie...

*CHRISTINA moves forward. NED sees her and screams.*

CHRISTINA Hi!

NED Aigh!!

CHRISTINA Oh. Did I startle you?

NED My God. Don't ever do that to a person. I could have had a heart attack!

CHRISTINA Sorry.

NED What the hell are you doing out here?

CHRISTINA Well, I was just passing by and it seemed kind of strange not to say hi.

NED Passing by? Out here? Like that?

CHRISTINA Yeah. Kinda.

NED Right.... Right.

CHRISTINA Sorry. I can just go if you want me to.

NED No, no. It's okay. I'm sorry. You just scared the shit out of me. You know? I was already freaked out by the coyotes. And then you showed up. So you scared me. But it's okay. It's nice to see you. I'm glad you're here. It's all good. Really.

CHRISTINA You sure?

NED Absolutely. Here.

*He pulls out a camp stool for her.*

Here. Sit. Make yourself at home.

CHRISTINA Thanks.

NED            Want a drink of something?

CHRISTINA    Sure. What do you have?

NED            Rum. And rum.

CHRISTINA    Okay.

NED            Cool. (*rummaging through his stuff*) Find you something that's not too grossly contaminated here... (*He pulls out a tin cup.*) Voila.

*He pours some rum into the cups, hands her one.*

                  Cheers.

CHRISTINA    Cheers.

*They drink. Coyotes again.*

                  (*to herself*) Stupid bastard...

NED            You okay?

CHRISTINA    Yeah.

NED            Yeah?

CHRISTINA    Yeah. Are you?

NED            Yeah. I'm better now. It's nice to have company.

*Slight pause.*

CHRISTINA    So how are you making out up here?

NED            Good.

CHRISTINA    Yeah?

NED            Yeah.

CHRISTINA    Amazing view.

NED            Yeah. You can start feeling pretty insignificant out here...

CHRISTINA    We are insignificant, Ned.

NED            Maybe we are.

CHRISTINA No one's going to come looking for our bones in a million years.

NED            No. Probably not.

*FUDGE/coyote is heard.*

CHRISTINA Coyotes...

NED            Yeah. They're not so bad. A bit noisy, but they tend to keep to themselves. Finn shoots them, did you know that?

CHRISTINA So?

NED            Seems like a shame.

CHRISTINA Everybody shoots coyotes, Ned.

NED            Why?

CHRISTINA Why? Why, they're nothing but mangy, rabid, chicken-stealin' scavengers, that's why. You shoot them. That's what you do with them.

NED            Really?

CHRISTINA Well, yeah.

NED            Right.

*Slight pause. NED stifles a yawn.*

CHRISTINA Am I keeping you awake?

NED            Sorry. It's all this fresh air or something. That and digging out here all day, you know. I've got to tell you, I'm not in the best of shape.

CHRISTINA Right...

NED            I was actually thinking of turning in, just before you showed up.

CHRISTINA Yeah...

NED            Hitting the old hay. I've been pretty much getting up when the sun comes up which isn't that long from now.



CHRISTINA You're a smooth-talkin' devil, you know that?

NED I am?

CHRISTINA Where do you sleep?

NED In the tent.

CHRISTINA I like tents.

NED Oh yeah?

CHRISTINA I like sleeping in tents.

NED Is that right?

CHRISTINA Totally.

NED The problem is, though... I only have the one sleeping bag, eh?

CHRISTINA Works for me.

NED Works for you?

CHRISTINA Yeah.

NED Right. Okay. Well then. Do you want to stay the night, is that what I'm hearing?

CHRISTINA Yes, please.

NED Well then. Okay...

CHRISTINA Yeah.

*She crawls into the tent. NED has another quick hit of rum. He extinguishes the Coleman lamp and crawls in behind her. A flashlight comes on inside the tent and we are treated to a silhouette show of passion and adventure, the likes of which are seldom seen on the prairie west, while the PIANIST plays a theme celebrating the grandeur of love and romance. At the same time, FINN and FUDGE watch the play of light and shadow on the tent. Suddenly the light switches off.*

*Blackout.*

*End of scene.*

## Scene Twelve: The Death of Fudge

*FINN on the porch looking at things through the scope of his gun. NED standing on top of the cliff with a cup of coffee. FUDGE approaches the base of the cliff. He is wearing a long black coat, and has a bottle of wine in one of the pockets. He has now, over the course of the last few days, consumed several bottles of wine without really eating or sleeping, and yet it's possible he has drunk and fretted himself into a state resembling lucidity. The PIANIST plays something that perhaps puts us in mind of Sergio Leone, complete with the rattlesnake sound effect.*

FUDGE           “Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Saskatchewan!”

*He looks around him and spits.*

Finn-land.

FINN           Well well well. The Revered Fudge. What brings you here?

FUDGE         I cannot speak to you.

FINN           No. And you shouldn't be on my land, either. According to your daddy. But he's dead. And you're here. So talk to me. What brings you out here?

FUDGE         The prophets.

FINN           No shit.

FUDGE         I talk to them. They talk to me. We talk.

FINN           Is that a fact?

FUDGE         Absolutely.

FINN           Just don't touch anything.

FUDGE         Okay.

FINN           We got *science* going on here.

FUDGE         Okay. I won't touch nothing.

FINN           See that you don't.

FUDGE         Okay. I won't. For I, too, am a man of science...

*He wanders over to the base of the cliff and shouts up at NED.*

For I, too, am a man of science!

NED           What's that?

FUDGE        I saw, For I, too, am a man of science.

NED           Right. How you doing, Cliff?

FUDGE        Good thanks, Ned. Good good good.

FINN          You two know each other?

NED           Yeah.

FINN          How?

NED           Cliff came out and visited me. Why?

FINN          *(whispering to NED, so that FUDGE doesn't hear, if that's possible)*  
That's Clifford Fudge, Christina's brother. *(makes the sign of his index finger twirling around his temple)*

NED           Right...

FUDGE        You know, Ned, I, too, am a man of science, given to sober introspection, and circumspection, and and and and and mindful contemplation of the mystery of creation. Yes indeed. A man of science... like yourself.

NED           Right...

FUDGE        For what is science? But a name given to our consuming and passionate desire to achieve a quantitative cognition of our circumambient universe...

NED           Good point.

FUDGE        Thank you. Tell me something, Ned...

NED           What's that?

FUDGE        Where is my sister?

NED           Your sister. Well, uh, gee, Cliff...

FUDGE        I fear she has cleaved to you.

NED Cleaved?

FINN Cleaved?

FUDGE And you have cleaved to her. What have you done with her?

*CHRISTINA pokes her head out of NED's tent.*

CHRISTINA Clifford!

FUDGE Ahhh, there you are, my blood and my bones. There you are.

CHRISTINA What are you doing here?

FUDGE An inspection, sister. Nothing for you to worry your little head about.

CHRISTINA Give me a sec and I'll take you back home, okay?

FUDGE But I'm not finished my little exploration here.

*CHRISTINA disappears back inside the tent, and comes right back out wearing one of NED's shirts over the famous and even hereditary diaphanous white nightgown.*

FUDGE *(to NED)* We men of science. Isn't that right?

NED What's that?

FUDGE We men of science! Sniffing around the edges of our incomprehensive misunderstandings and shnivings and quivings and etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc....

*He appears to be stuck on 'etc.,' which he pronounces as "eckt." CHRISTINA crosses over to him.*

CHRISTINA Okay. Time to go home, Cliffy, okay?

FUDGE *(pushing her away)* No. I'm not done here. Damned though I may be to even stand here. I am not done.

*She walks over and sits on the porch steps by FINN, who is standing on the porch, holding his rifle, suddenly in an extremely protective manner.*

*(to NED)* You know what you are?

NED No.

FUDGE You know what you are?

NED No.

FUDGE You are a fossil cowboy! Shooting the lights out of our misguided comprehension. Six guns blazing for the truth. Ride on. Right on!

CHRISTINA Clifford, let's just go home.

FUDGE *(to CHRISTINA)* Hang on, hang on. *(to NED)* I need to ask you something.

NED Yes?

FUDGE I wanna ask you something.

NED Yes?

FUDGE Hang on. I'm coming up.

*Like some kind of bat he starts to crawl up the side of the cliff. He gets about halfway up and stops and has a huge belt of wine.*

Do you believe in God, cowboy?

NED Are you asking me that?

FUDGE Yes.

NED I don't know.

FUDGE You don't know?

NED I don't know if I believe or not. You asked. I'm telling you.

FUDGE You're wrong, you know.

NED About what?

FUDGE Evolution.

NED I don't think I am.

FUDGE All the fossil record proves, again and again, is that a turtle is still a turtle, a snake is still a snake, and the hoofed animals of the field are still the hoofed animals of the field. And a man is still a man. As time goes by,

there is no progression from one species to another. The conclusion is clear: no amount of accidental genetic modification can cause one kind of life to turn into another. These bones you dig up prove that, again and again. There is no missing link. Every particle of life complete, inviolate, in and of itself, lovingly crafted by a compassionate and omnipotent God. What you're doing proves it.

NED           That's your opinion.

FUDGE        Someday, it will be made known to you. Someday, you'll be made to know how terribly wrong you have been. Someday, you will be turned away, even as you have been turned away. Access denied, cowboy.

*He comes the rest of the way up the cliff.*

NED           Listen, Cliff. I think the tour's over for today. Okay?

FUDGE        It need not be too late, friend.

NED           What are you talking about—?

FUDGE        On your knees, sinner!

NED           Up yours!

*FUDGE grabs NED by the shoulders, trying to force him down.*

FUDGE        Fall on your knees and open up your heart to Jayzus! That ye may be saved. Repent, man of science.

NED           No!

FUDGE        I say repent!

NED           No! Leave me alone!!!!

*He pushes FUDGE away. FUDGE falls. NED turns to say something to FINN and CHRISTINA. With surprising quickness, FUDGE picks up the pickaxe and follows him. He's about to nail him from behind. FINN jumps up and shoots right at the two of them. FUDGE falls.*

FUDGE        Motherfucker!

*His soul, pure and white, can be seen shooting up to heaven, even as he drops to the ground. Quick blackout. Continuous action to the next scene.*

### **Scene Thirteen: And the Rocks Were Rent**

*As the gun shot reverberates, the lights change, going into some kind of strobe effect. Somehow, perhaps through the use of film, the rocks on the cliff face begin to bleed. A wind effect, sweeping everything from the stage, threatens to blow the actors off their feet. Thunder and lightning. The PIANIST plays something suitably surreal and even abstract throughout this scene, windblown though he may be. There may also be the opportunity here for recorded music as well. We hear also the sound of a shovel in gravel. The sound of empty bottles rattling against each other. The sound of breathing throughout. In the semi darkness, we wish to create some kind of exotic movement/voice/sound piece depicting the death of FUDGE.*

*CHRISTINA kneels, holding the dying FUDGE, who quotes from Matthew 24/33-35...*

FUDGE        *(His voice, at least, on tape, looping, so these words can repeat, they can be manipulated to slow down and speed up again, depending on the eight million other things going on. If there were a significant budget attached to this moment, there may be a mighty chorus to back him at this moment, seventy-five Trina look-alikes, but maybe our PIANIST can, as they say, fake it...) (Are there still tapes?!)* Wherefore, ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets/Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers./Ye serpents. Ye generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell? How can you escape the damnation of hell? How can you escape the damnation of hell? How can you escape the damnation of hell... *(Etc...)*

*Light on FINN standing by his cabin.*

FINN            I can't believe I took him down like that, first shot.

*Lights down on FINN and up on NED who is struggling with his tent.*

NED            That is not what I mean by a summer in the country!

*Eventually, the storm passes and order is restored to the world. The voices and other sound effects, like of the storm, fade. The lights start to come back up, on the characters, with the exception of FUDGE, standing around the makeshift grave. The music distils into something simple and melodic, either of his own composition or from the repertoire, e.g. the Chopin prelude (in, I believe, C minor).*

*Continuous action to next scene.*

### **Scene Fourteen: The Earthly Paradise**

*Lights continue to come up to full value, as the PIANIST continues the funeral song, revealing FINN, NED and CHRISTINA at the base of the cliff. Stocking out of the*

*ground, one of FUDGE's feet, showing the ankle, sock and shoe. They look at the foot and look at one another.*

FINN *(more to himself than anyone else)* Oh boy oh boy. Boy oh boy oh boy. I can't believe I took him down like that, first shot.

*Silence.*

Because it was in my mind to just scare him or whatever, but there's something I guess, some force at work when your finger's on the trigger, that says go for it, go for the kill. What could I do? What could I do but shoot? Oh boy. I don't know...

*Silence. We may hear the prairie wind if there are sound effects, or the piano may recreate them somehow.*

CHRISTINA *(to NED)* So, that's the best you could do?

NED What?

CHRISTINA That's the best you could do, burying him?

NED Yeah...

CHRISTINA Couldn't fit all of him in the hole?

NED I tried.

CHRISTINA Couldn't dig a bigger hole?

NED I panicked.

CHRISTINA I thought you were like a professional.

NED What are you talking about?

CHRISTINA Digging. That's what you do.

NED I'm a palaeontologist. Not a gravedigger.

CHRISTINA Same skills.

NED Yeah, well usually I'm digging things out of the ground, not trying to put them back in.

*Slight pause.*



FINN I can't believe I got him like that. That he just went down like that. That it all just finishes like that, completes itself.... And what's left but a shoe we scuffled across the dirt?

*Slight pause.*

CHRISTINA Coyote's likely to come and chew on his ankle we just leave him like this.

NED Yeah, okay. I'll pile some dirt on him later, okay?

CHRISTINA Okay.

NED Give me a break. I should never have gotten involved in the first place.

CHRISTINA Yeah, well you're involved now. Don't think you're not. You're involved as much as me and Finn are. Isn't that right, Finn?

FINN *(not hearing her)* And to make such a clean, precise shot like that, it's really unbelievable...

CHRISTINA Tell him he's involved, Finn. Tell him he's as much involved in this as we are.

FINN Oh, he's involved, all right.

CHRISTINA Tell 'im.

FINN You're involved all right, Ned. Oh yes you are. We're all in this together.

NED Okay...

CHRISTINA What could we do anyways?

FINN Nothing.

CHRISTINA What could have made it any different than it was?

FINN Nothing.

CHRISTINA It was only a matter of time...

FINN Yep...

CHRISTINA Only a matter of time...

FINN            Yep.

*The three drift away. FINN to his place, NED and CHRISTINA over to the FUDGE home. The PIANIST begins playing “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” or “Onward Christian Soldiers” or some other piece that we identify with FUDGE. The special comes up and FUDGE appears, only now his robe is clean and his hair is combed and his face is as fresh as a cherub’s. He looks at the three “mourners” and shakes his head.*

FUDGE            Sad, really. Can’t even muster up a decent prayer to help speed a man to the Sweet Hereafter. Sad. This is what happens, when you have no faith. When you can’t believe in anything other than the empirical, and can’t see what’s beyond the tip of your nose... sad...

For I have seen the heavenly paradise and I have been invited in, all for the simple reason that I invited Jayzus into my heart.

As I recall, it went something like this. I felt the fiery pain as the bullet from Finn’s gun singed by flesh. I felt my vigour draining from my body. I felt my heart begin to cool, and my light to fade, like I was lost in the depths of some vast ocean. But then I did open my eyes and saw a great and mighty orb. And it did surge with heat and light and it was beautiful, beyond words or even understanding. And I could hear the singing of a celestial chorus of souls like myself, who had gathered to welcome me to paradise.

Paradise, where I was greeted by the family members made whole again, fingers and legs attached and functioning again. All were there to greet me. And I was made to sip lemonade and eat of Nanaimo bars, and I definitely caught a glimpse of God on His throne, and I am here to tell you that no matter what it might seem at times, all is well with the universe.

Now, before I head on back, in case you haven’t figured it out yet, let me put it in as simple terms as I know how, because for some of you here, I’ve gotta believe there’s still hope. It goes like this:

**Those of us who have chosen the Lord Jayzus as our personal Saviour will enjoy eternal life in paradise. And the rest of you can go to hell.**

*FUDGE holds up his hands the way the Pope holds up his hands, bestowing a blessing on the audience. The music swells, echoing the heavenly chorus. FUDGE disappears in such a way that he seems to transform into a ghost.*

*Fade to blackout on entire set.*

*End of scene.*

## Scene Fifteen: One Too Many

*Lights upon the FUDGE kitchen. NED is now sitting in FUDGE's chair, reading, drinking a cup of coffee. CHRISTINA sits at another chair, transfixed. The PIANIST may wish to create some sort of surreal version of what we heard in the Burnt Offerings Scene – hominess gone seriously awry (if it wasn't before).*

CHRISTINA Whatcha reading there, honey?

NED *The Bible.*

CHRISTINA What?!

NED Well, that's what I call it. It's called *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory*. By Stephen Jay Gould.

CHRISTINA Who's that?

NED You've never heard of Stephen Jay Gould?

CHRISTINA No.

NED He was the most influential scientific mind in history. Well, after Darwin. My hero. I can't believe you've never heard of him.

CHRISTINA Well, now I have...

NED Yep. Now you have...

*Pause. The PIANIST begins making a tick-tock sound that gradually gets slower and slower.*

CHRISTINA Shouldn't you be out there?

NED Where?

CHRISTINA Out at Finn's. At your excavation?

NED I don't know. Looks like it might rain.

CHRISTINA What are you talking about? It doesn't rain here.

NED Well, it looks like it to me.

CHRISTINA It's just that, the sooner you get done your digging, the sooner we can get out of here and start seeing the world...

NED It's a long process.

CHRISTINA What do you mean?

NED That excavation?

CHRISTINA Yes?

NED It's a long process.

CHRISTINA How long?

NED It'll take years.

CHRISTINA Years?

NED Years and years.

CHRISTINA I thought you'd be done this summer.

NED Oh no. I'm going to be here a good long time. Yep. A good... long... time.

CHRISTINA Years...

NED Yep...

CHRISTINA Years...

NED Years and years...

*She swoons and falls from her chair. NED doesn't notice. The tick-tock stops and the PIANIST plays some music that helps her get up from the floor and finally take some action. She leaves. He reads. After a moment, CHRISTINA returns with an old suitcase. She throws it on the table and opens it. Inside, hundreds of archaeological artefacts she has collected over the years. She is now wearing a nice sun dress, the kind FINN dreams about. She puts on a hat, a coat and a pair of sunglasses. She takes a few papers from one of the drawers and puts them in her bag.*

What are you doing?

CHRISTINA I'm leaving.

NED Where are you going?

CHRISTINA I don't know.

NED But...

CHRISTINA What?

NED You can't leave.

CHRISTINA Yes I can, actually.

NED But you live here.

CHRISTINA Not really.

NED You belong here.

CHRISTINA No, I don't.

NED It's your house. Your stuff.

CHRISTINA So?

NED You can't just walk away.

CHRISTINA Yes I can. Yes I can.

NED No you can't.

CHRISTINA Just you watch me. I've had enough. I'm going to sell this Fudge land, and I'm going to spend the rest of my life acting like I was never here, never once.

NED But what about your brother?

CHRISTINA What about him?

NED People will ask about him.

CHRISTINA No one cares.

NED Okay. About him.

CHRISTINA Yeah.

NED But what about... you know?

CHRISTINA What?

NED            You and me?

CHRISTINA    I'm sorry, honey. There's just too much sadness...

NED            But we can change that. We can move on.

CHRISTINA    No.

NED            Why not?

CHRISTINA    It's too late. And it's sad, really. I know I'll never meet another man like you, as fine as you. But I can't stay here. There's too much sadness on this land...

*She kisses him and leaves, passing by FINN's place.*

*He crosses the set to FINN's place.*

*End of scene. Continuous action to next scene.*

### **Scene Sixteen: The Mission**

*NED crosses the stage, over to FINN's house. FUDGE's foot still protrudes from the earth, near the actual excavation site, but everything else, his tent, shovels, etc., is now gone. The PIANIST plays a forlorn version of whatever his theme has been throughout the play.*

*Lights alter, in the area of FINN's cabin. A bit of smoke, making everything seem unreal. FINN appears up behind his porch. He is wearing a long coat and a hat and is carrying an old suitcase. NED sees him and takes no notice, at first, that there is something unusual about him.*

NED            Hey, Finn.

FINN           So, she left?

NED            Yeah.

FINN           You let her get away.

NED            Yeah...

FINN           Too bad.

NED            What's up with you?

FINN I'm leaving.

NED What do you mean, you're leaving?

FINN What I said, I'm leaving.

NED But you can't.

FINN Why not?

NED This is your place.

FINN My work here is done. Time to move on.

NED Where are you going to go?

FINN Where I'm needed.

NED Needed? For what?

FINN For my work.

NED Your work?

FINN My life's work.

NED What are you talking about?

FINN You know damn well what I'm talking about.

NED What? That? No. No way. You can't be serious.

FINN I'm very serious, Ned.

NED Yeah, but that's not work, it's just an opinion.

FINN Listen to me.

NED Yeah, I have been—

FINN I believe in what I've been saying all these years. With my heart and my soul. But naturally, I've never thought of doing anything about it before. Oh, sure, I published a few articles. Spoke to an extension class over at the community college a couple of times. But I never really thought of putting my words into action. But I have to tell you, potting old Fudge there

seemed to open the gates or something. Seemed to bring me closer to my destiny.

NED            So what are you going to do?

FINN           What am I going to do? I'm going to kill people, that's what I'm going to do. This is what I was meant to do. It's time for me to fulfill my destiny. I am an agent of change.

NED            That's crazy.

FINN           Uh huh.

NED            You can't just—

FINN           What?

NED            There's no way.

FINN           There's lots of ways. Lots and lots of ways.

NED            But you can't go out and start killing people.

FINN           Why can't I?

NED            The law, for one thing.

FINN           Pfft! The law! It don't matter.... I'll be around in the dark. I'll be everywhere – wherever you look. Wherever there's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there, cheering for a drought. Oh yeah. I'll be there all right. I've wasted enough time out here. I've got work to do. Keep your eye on the news. I've got a feeling they'll be covering my career. Pay special attention to the medical reports. That unexpected outbreak of Ebola along some forgotten river bank. Far away from here. Or a contaminated water supply, somewhere, somewhere closer to home. An unexpected case of Creutzfeldt-Jakob. Whatever. Remember, I like to work with microbes. I have a lot of faith in 'em. Take care of yourself, son. Good luck with your excavation.

*FINN leaves in a little more smoke. Fade on NED.*

*End of scene.*



## Scene Seventeen: The End

*The stage appears exactly as it did at the beginning of the play. Characters in their same positions. The only difference, FUDGE is wearing a silk Armani suit, a 44" tall. (Don't worry; the author will graciously buy it at the end of the production.) NED enters exactly as he did at the beginning, with the same bags and equipment. This scene is of course the same as NED's first appearance, which is reflected not only in the blocking but also in what the PIANIST does here. The implication is that he is now just arriving, and that what we just saw was a bit of a dream NED had/has on first arriving, as he imagined what it might be like out here.*

NED            Ahhhhh, yeah. Here we go. Here we go. Here we are. Here we are. The country. The country.... Beautiful country.... Beautiful people. Beautiful simple wonderful basic country people living out here in this beauty.... I am among them now.... I am in the country.... Among the simple folk. A beautiful new beginning...

*Lights fade to blackout over entire set, except for the PIANIST who plays some kind of finale. When he has finished, his light fades to blackout.*

*End of play.*

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