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And The Stones Will Cry Out
By David M. Graham

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Cast of Characters

Dr. Johann Adam
Bartholomeus Beringer
(Male - 40's to 60's -
with flexibility)

Dean of the Medical School at
Würzburg, and personal physician
to the Prince-Bishop. A somewhat
arrogant, self-righteous man,
who was nevertheless
accomplished and intelligent,
with a passionate interest in
fossils.

Johann Georg Von Eckhart
(Male - 40's to 60's -
with flexibility)

Head Librarian for the Medical
School. A personal friend of
Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz
(he delivered Leibniz's eulogy
at the funeral), he is a meek,
amiable man who is much abused.
He is writing a historiography
on the Prince-Bishop's family.

J. Ignatius Roderick
(Male - 40's to 60's -
with flexibility)

Professor of Algebra and
Geography at the Medical School.
An ex-Jesuit priest, he is
fiercely intelligent, and has
begun to have serious doubts
concerning his faith. He is the
principal instigator of the hoax
that is the crux of the play.

(CONTINUED)

ACT I

SCENE 1

A spotlight comes up on Georg Von Eckhart, head librarian of the Wurzburg School of Medicine. He is dressed rather formally. He paces a moment or two, and then speaks.

ECKHART

I am awaiting the verdict. The Prince-Bishop has been most upset by recent events -- understandably so -- so there is no way to tell what his decision will be. Even though I have spent many years researching and writing a historiography of his family, the man himself is -- *(He makes a motion that signifies that he cannot describe him.)* I suppose some of that comes from the weight of responsibility. Oh, Gottfried! If only you had been here! If anyone could have prevented this chaos, it would have been you, I'm sure! You would have known how to deal with Dr. Beringer --

Another spotlight immediately comes up on JOHANN BARTHOLOMAUS ADAM BERINGER. He carries a large book in his hand, and a magnifying glass. He beams with a smile of pride.

BERINGER

I am convinced that God has something special planned for me.

The spot goes out just as quickly.

ECKHART

-- and you could have convinced Ignatius that it was all going too far --

Another spotlight immediately comes up on J. IGNATIUS RODERICK. He faces the audience with a touch of belligerence.

(CONTINUED)

RODERICK

The fact that Beringer is my superior proves that God is not in complete control.

His spotlight goes out immediately as well.

ECKHART

(places his head in his hands)
-- and then none of this would have happened. But you weren't here, were you? It was just me. And I didn't manage it well, I'm afraid. Even though I am somewhat of an expert at examining the past, when I look back, I am still mystified by how it all unraveled so quickly...

The spotlight on ECKHART fades as he walks out of it. The lights come up on the study of JOHANN BARTHOLOMAUS ADAM BERINGER. He is seated at the desk, poring over a huge tome with the magnifying glass. He is delighted with something that he reads and makes a note of it. There is a knock at the door. He continues writing without looking up.

Go away. I'm busy.

The door opens to reveal J. IGNATIUS RODERICK, Algebra teacher and former priest. He steps into the room.

RODERICK

As am I, Dr. Beringer, but you did send for me.

BERINGER

Yes! Come in, come in, Professor Roderick!

He straightens his desk and wipes his hands.

As I am sure you are aware, His Excellency will be performing his annual review of the University tomorrow?

RODERICK

Yes, Dr. Beringer. You have spoken of little else during the recent weeks.

BERINGER

(ignoring that)
No doubt you are also aware that
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER (cont'd)
University policy requires that students make up all work and exams within three calendar days of any absence?

It is obvious that RODERICK knows exactly where this is headed. His mouth hardens and his posture becomes defensive.

RODERICK
Yes, Dean, I am aware of the policy.

BERINGER
And yet the recording secretary informs me that you have yet to report an exam grade for young Erlanger?

RODERICK
Yes, Dr. Beringer, that is correct. I have not yet scored Erlanger's exam.

BERINGER
So the lack of a grade is to be attributed to your tardiness. Erlanger has indeed taken the exam?

RODERICK
Yes, Dean.

BERINGER
Then bring it to me, now, and I will correct it myself.

This produces the exact reaction that BERINGER hopes for. RODERICK deflates a bit.

RODERICK
Erlanger has not taken the exam.

BERINGER
Ah. I suspected not. Professor Roderick, this cannot continue. You are supposed to be a teacher to these boys, not their father. You cannot shield them from their responsibilities. This is the third time --

RODERICK

The second. And Erlanger is a full year younger than his --

BERINGER

The third! In the matter of that Schoenborn fellow --

RODERICK

That was two years ago!

BERINGER

(exploding)

HOLD YOUR TONGUE! In the matter of that Schoenborn fellow, I LIED to His Excellency to keep him from becoming involved! I! His personal physician and Dean of this University! To protect an ALGEBRA TEACHER! I must say that for a Jesuit --

RODERICK

Former Jesuit.

BERINGER

STOP INTERRUPTING ME! -- a man of supposedly Christian character, a man dedicated to the truth, it strikes me as being completely out of character that you use deceit as a way of trying to protect these boys! Surely they themselves would be ashamed of your actions?

RODERICK

But Johann --

BERINGER

No buts, Ignatius. Mend your ways. This is your final warning. Is that clear?

RODERICK starts to protest, but a look from BERINGER silences him. BERINGER returns to his book. RODERICK boils a moment more, then starts to exit.

BERINGER

And please make sure that in future, you attend class in full robes, Ignatius. There have been reports of laxness. I have better things to do than to enforce a dress code among the professors.

RODERICK
(the slightest hesitation, but
he cannot hold it)
Flattering His Excellency is a full
time profession, I'm sure.

BERINGER
(completely done)
Go and report the grade, Professor
Roderick.

RODERICK exits, full of unspoken retorts. BERINGER breathes
a deep, cleansing sigh and returns to his book.

Not even a second passes before there is another knock at
the door. BERINGER again does not look up.

Go away, I'm busy.

The door cracks open to reveal GEORG VON ECKHART, who is
dressed in his university robes. It is with some effort
that the older man squeezes his way into the study and sits
in a chair with a thump.

ECKHART
(out of breath)
Hello, Dr. Beringer.

BERINGER
(looking up)
What is it? Georg, I'm very busy
trying to prepare for His
Excellency's annual inspection!

ECKHART
Yes, Dr. Beringer, but I have
located --

BERINGER
(interrupting him)
Were the new tapestries installed
in the library?

ECKHART
Oh, yes! My most sincere thanks!
The one of St. Thomas Aquinas is
especially --

BERINGER
(completely dismissive)
Yes, yes, and the new books arrived
on time?

ECKHART

Oh, yes! I meant to tell you that
--

BERINGER

Did you see Professor Roderick in
the hallway just now? Was he going
to the recording secretary's
office?

ECKHART

Yes, I think so. I have --

BERINGER

And what do you make of our
Professor of Algebra?

EKCHART

Make?

BERINGER

(frustrated)

Yes, Eckhart, what is your opinion
of him?

ECKHART

Well, the students seem to feel --

BERINGER

If I valued the students' opinions,
Georg, classes wouldn't start until
after lunch and would only occur
every other week, if then. What do
YOU think of him?

ECKHART

Well...he's very -- passionate. And
he cares a great deal for the
students.

BERINGER

(still not the answer he's
looking for)

Yes. (a beat) A former Jesuit.
You're more well acquainted with
him than I. Do you know the history
of that?

ECKHART

He has never mentioned it to me,
I'm afraid.

BERINGER

(dismissing that and him)
Ah. Well, so nice chatting with
you, but there is much to do before
tomorrow! So if you'll excuse me --

ECKHART

But I found that passage that you
requested. Don't you wish to see
it?

BERINGER

(seeing the paper)
Oh! Well, this is unexpected!

He holds out his hand for the paper, but ECKHART instead
begins to read it.

ECKHART

"...and these mysteries of nature,
such as magnetism, attraction and
repulsion, the ebb and flow of the
sea, the cross-currents of
alternating winds from the various
parts of the world, as well as
numerous other phenomena, including
the formations are plainly the
result of occult forces."

Such an unusual passage!

BERINGER

(snatching the paper)
Thank you, Georg. That will do.

ECKHART

Is this connected with one of
those...what do you call them?

BERINGER

Fossils! How many times must I tell
you?

ECKHART

Oh, yes.

He picks up a rock from BERINGER's desk.

Is this it?

BERINGER

Yes. It came from Nicholas Heinmann
--

(CONTINUED)

ECKHART

The butcher?

BERINGER

No, not our Nicholas Heinmann. I received this from Nicholas Heinmann of Hochberg. He is the curator of the museum there.

ECKHART

Related?

BERINGER

(irritably)

What difference could it make? Here.

He hands the magnifying glass to ECKHART, who examines the rock for a moment before facing BERINGER again.

ECKHART

It looks like a rock.

BERINGER

It IS a rock, Georg! But it is what's IN the rock that matters! Now look again!

ECKHART reexamines the stone, making "MMMM" and "AHHHH"ing noises.

ECKHART

Oh I see! You mean the crab?

BERINGER

NO!

BERINGER snatches the stone and magnifying glass. ECKHART is slightly bamfoozled.

ECKHART

So...you are trying to come up with an explanation for the...the --

BERINGER

Yes. (reading the paper) What poppycock. "Occult forces." Some French philosopher, no doubt.

ECKHART

Many of our own countrymen hold a similar view, I'm told.

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER

Well, many of our countrymen are imbeciles, then. Or in the Devil's service. I'm not sure which is worse -- that Germany is a land of idiots, or that it is in the clutches of the Devil.

ECKHART

(giggling a little)
How could you tell the difference?

BERINGER

This is no laughing matter, Georg.

ECKHART

No, of course not. But as my good friend Gottfried Leibniz always used to say, "Laugh, and the world laughs with you. Cry, and you cry alone." (Examining the stone again.) But what sort of animal IS this?

BERINGER

It's not an animal, Georg! It's --

He is interrupted by a knocking on the door.

(calling out)

Go away, I'm busy!

A much more subdued RODERICK enters. His face is inscrutable, but he gives every outward appearance of being repentant without actually being so.

RODERICK

I'm sorry, Dr. Beringer, but may I come in?

BERINGER

Oh, I suppose, Ignatius. What is it now?

RODERICK

It occurred to me that I was possibly disrespectful earlier. My apologies. Erlanger has been reported as failing the exam, and consequently will probably not be allowed to continue next semester.

BERINGER

Well, it is a misfortune, of course, but all in service to the truth.

He dismisses the matter with a wave of his hand, returning to the stone. RODERICK is stunned by the flippancy.

RODERICK

The truth? Well, on behalf of all the students and myself, I would like to thank you for your unwavering commitment to integrity, regardless of the personal sacrifice. *(a beat, then with what is either unbelievable sincerity or bright sarcasm)* Thank you.

BERINGER

(with slight uneasiness)

Quite all right. Think nothing of it.

RODERICK

I will make every attempt. *(To ECKHART)* My apologies, Georg, for disturbing you. How is the historiography of the Prince-Bishop coming?

ECKHART

Extremely well, I must say. The first draft should be finished in seven -- no more than eight -- years. Then, the real work begins. But as my good friend Gottfried Leibniz always used to say, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life."

RODERICK

Well, I hope I didn't interrupt anything important.

ECKHART

Not at all! Take a look at this!

He starts to hand the stone and magnifying glass to RODERICK, but BERINGER snatches them away.

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER

Georg, I am sure that Professor Roderick is far too busy with his theorems and quadrangles and such to be interested in these philosophical quandaries!

RODERICK

(sensing that BERINGER is hiding something)

On the contrary, Dr. Beringer, I do involve myself in life on occasion. May I?

He extends his hand for the stone. Grudgingly, BERINGER gives it to him. RODERICK peers at it through the lens.

Hmmmm.

ECKHART

(knowingly)

He got it from Nicolas Heinmann! It's a flossil!

BERINGER

(eyes rolling)

Fossil!

RODERICK

You got this from a butcher?

ECKHART

That's what I thought. But apparently, there's ANOTHER Nicolas Heinmann --

BERINGER

For the love of God, Georg! (To RODERICK) As you can see, it is quite unusual.

RODERICK

(examining it)

Yes. (a beat) It's a cancer pagurus, isn't it?

BERINGER/ECKHART

No./Yes.

BERINGER gives ECKHART a look usually reserved for unruly five-year-olds. ECKHART shrugs apologetically.

(CONTINUED)

RODERICK

Oh, perhaps I got the name wrong. Science always was my least favorite subject.

ECKHART

Mine, too!

BERINGER

Yes, thank you, Eckhart. What Georg is trying to say, after his inept fashion, is that it LOOKS like a crab, despite the fact that it is NOT one.

RODERICK

(a beat)

I don't understand.

BERINGER

(trying to sweep RODERICK out)

You see? I told you that you wouldn't find these pursuits of any interest.

RODERICK

I didn't say I wasn't interested. I just said I didn't understand.

BERINGER

(a little exasperated)

If you remember from your Biology classes at University, any animal bearing the name of crab -- or any of its relatives -- has two eyes on stalks, two claws, six legs, yes?

RODERICK

I suppose.

BERINGER

Oh, no supposing about it. It's a natural fact. Science was my favorite subject. But the creature you see represented there -- if it is a creature -- has at least eight legs, possibly ten. The outline is far too indistinct to enumerate them. Its eyes, if it has any, are on the top of its shell. Thus, it is not a crab.

(CONTINUED)

RODERICK

Very well. Then how do you account for it?

BERINGER

Ah! The crux of our dilemma! Since the Great Flood has been eliminated, we look to other possibilities. Perhaps the Almighty has merely done a little artwork to display His power and majesty? Or is Herr Heinmann merely trying to test us with a nebulous rock formation? Just the little conundrum that Eckhart and I were about to tackle when you entered.

ECKHART

Actually, I was merely stopping by to give Johann another book --

BERINGER

Which has been of very little help, as you see, but I certainly appreciate Georg's efforts on our behalf, misguided as they are!

BERINGER turns a beaming smile on ECKHART. He is by turns pleased and vexed at this "compliment."

RODERICK

(examining the stone again)
I suppose it could be a remnant of the Great Flood. I hadn't thought of that.

BERINGER

Impossible.

RODERICK

And why not?

BERINGER

(completely off-hand)
No mention of such a thing in Genesis. Or anywhere in scripture, come to that.

RODERICK

(after a small blank pause)
What?

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER

It's not mentioned in the Word of God, Ignatius. Surely as a Jesuit -- your pardon, former Jesuit -- your ignorance of scripture cannot be as great as your ignorance of biology.

RODERICK

(still slightly flabbergasted)
So you don't think that it's an actual creature, because Moses didn't record it by name.

BERINGER

Precisely. And Moses didn't write the book of Genesis, Ignatius -- don't pretend that you aren't aware of that!

ECKHART

Moses was not the author of Genesis? Then I have been much deceived. Who was?

BERINGER

(turning to him)
God, of course! Moses was merely the human hand He used to put it down, Georg! I am sorry to hear that your spiritual training has been so lacking! Remind me to give you a refresher course.

ECKHART

Well, naturally, I was referring to --

BERINGER

(back to RODERICK)
In any case, I will tell Herr Heinmann that this is NOT a fossil. The indistinct outline -- the poor quality of the image -- all point to it being a mere mineral shadow in the rock. Nothing more to consider, really.

RODERICK

(not ready to give it up)
But if it had clearly been a fossil, what then?

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER

Another explanation would be called for. One in keeping with Biblical principles but of sound scientific basis.

RODERICK

Such as?

BERINGER

Well -- *if* it had been a real sea creature -- its fertilized eggs might have at some time been evaporated into the clouds, rained down on the Earth, and grown to full maturity in the ground.

ECKHART

Fascinating!

RODERICK looks at ECKHART in amazement.

BERINGER

Possibly the salts of the Earth, with their plastic power, might have formed the shape. Or perhaps the sun, shining on an animal, captured its shape, and then projected that shape onto the rock many miles away.

ECKHART

Difficult theories to refute, all.

RODERICK

For so many different reasons.

BERINGER

But the theory that has the most credence, in my opinion, is that God places these fossils in the Earth to show His mighty handiwork, and to test our faith!

RODERICK bursts out laughing. Miffed, BERINGER turns on RODERICK.

BERINGER (cont'd)

You have a better explanation?

RODERICK

Well, I'm sure that you would find my opinions backward and uninteresting.

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER

(luring RODERICK in so he can
crush him)

Not at all, Ignatius! They couldn't
be any more far-fetched than
Georg's here. Of course I would be
interested!

RODERICK

Well, perhaps it is merely an
aberration of nature.

BERINGER

A what?

RODERICK

An aberration of nature. A mistake.

BERINGER

(falsely puzzled)

I'm afraid I don't understand.

RODERICK

You see? I said you wouldn't be
interested.

BERINGER

I didn't say I wasn't
interested. I said I didn't
understand. Do you maintain that
"nature" -- by which I suppose you
to mean the bounty of God's
creation -- is responsible for
creation itself?

RODERICK

Yes, but --

BERINGER

And that not only is "nature"
capable of usurping God's power,
but that it can also make a mistake
in its creation?

RODERICK

I never said that nature usurped --

BERINGER

Well, Ignatius, it seems that I owe
you an apology after all. It is
possible for your opinions to be of
less value than Georg's. To hear
such pagan beliefs from a

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER (cont'd)
 supposedly Christian educator! I
 hope you have not been corrupting
 your students with this profane
 sacrilege!

RODERICK
 (already beginning to seethe)
 Have no cause for fear, Dean. Too
 busy with worthless theorems and
 quadrangles and such. I'm saving
 profane sacrilege for second
 semester.

BERINGER
 (completely missing the
 sarcasm)
 Well, thank Heaven for that!

ECKHART
 (sensing an opportunity for
 escape)
 Well, Dr. Beringer, as I have been
 of very little aid, I will retire
 to the library once again --

BERINGER
 (waving him away)
 By all means, Georg. Always
 appreciated!

ECKHART hastily assembles himself and pauses near RODERICK
 at the door.

ECKHART
 (shrugging)
 Well, as my good friend Gottfried
 Leibniz always used to say, "When
 you have eliminated the impossible,
 whatever remains, however
 improbable, must be the truth."

RODERICK has been staring intently at BERINGER, obviously
 weighing what he will say next. ECKHART's casual submission
 to BERINGER seems to decide him. RODERICK lifts a finger,
 indicating ECKHART should wait.

RODERICK
 So, Dr. Beringer -- to be clear --
 is it your assertion that God and
 God alone is responsible for all of
 creation?

BERINGER has already become absorbed in one of his books.

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER

What?

RODERICK

Do you claim that every single tiny event on this planet is under the personal regulation of God Himself?

BERINGER

(completely flabbergasted)
Claim? Claim?! Ignatius, are you testing me? The Holy Bible does not "claim" that God created the Heavens and the Earth! It is a statement of fact! Surely you do not contest that?! If so, you tread dangerously close to heresy!

RODERICK

No, I have no problem with the Genesis account of creation.

BERINGER

"Have no problem!" Ignatius, how oddly you reply!

ECKHART

Perhaps what Professor Roderick is trying to say --

RODERICK

Thank you, Georg. I am fully capable of expressing myself.

BERINGER

Well, the terms in which you express yourself are distressing in the extreme!

RODERICK

Be that as it may, my question stands: is God directly responsible for every event of every moment on this planet?

BERINGER

You're serious? (*beat*) Very well. I suppose I do not have to quote chapter and verse to you? You have some familiarity with Scripture? I am sorry to ask, but until today I had made that assumption, perhaps erroneously.

(CONTINUED)

RODERICK

I have some familiarity with Scripture.

BERINGER

Well then -- a few basic precepts, concerning the nature of God. Do you believe in the omnipresence of God? His omnipotence? His omniscience?

RODERICK

I do.

BERINGER

Then our debate is likely to be terribly short. Does not Christ himself -- you do believe in the Holy Trinity, do you not? Christ was God incarnate, human yet divine?

RODERICK

I am not sure that we share the same definition, but for the purposes of this discussion, I think we are in agreement.

BERINGER

(slightly suspicious)

Very well -- did not Christ himself tell his disciples that God was aware of the falling sparrow?

RODERICK

Matthew Chapter 10, Verse 29.

ECKHART

Impressive!

BERINGER

Thank you, Georg. And what do you take that verse to mean?

RODERICK

It refers to the omniscience of God. That nothing happens without God's knowledge.

BERINGER

Good. And God's omniscience even extends to future events, yes? God has foreknowledge? He knows that

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER (cont'd)
the sparrow will fall even before
the sparrow does?

RODERICK
Yes, I think so.

BERINGER
Well! There you are! You yourself
have answered your own question!

ECKHART
(caught up in the moment)
Actually, he hasn't. The knowledge
of an event -- even the
foreknowledge of it -- does not
determine responsibility for that
event.

RODERICK
(honestly)
Thank you, Georg.

BERINGER
But God is omnipotent! You said so
yourself!

RODERICK
I did, and still do. But just
because God has every power, it
does not follow that He must
exercise every power. He knew the
sparrow would fall. The Bible says
so. It does not, however, say he
caused the sparrow to fall, though
He had the power to do it.

BERINGER
But He had the power to prevent it,
yes?

RODERICK
Of course.

BERINGER
There! You see? Foreknowledge of an
event, coupled with the
indisputable ability to prevent
that event, is the same as being
responsible for it.

RODERICK

No.

BERINGER

And why not?

RODERICK

Because of free will, which presumably God extends to Himself as he does to us, being lesser creatures than Himself. Surely we are not superior to God in any way?

BERINGER

(completely horrified)

Do you realize what you're saying? What it implies?

ECKHART

(with dawning realization)

That God....CAN control...but sometimes...DOES NOT.

RODERICK

Precisely.

BERINGER

No! I reject this! For God not to be in control would not be in keeping with His character! He loves us!

RODERICK

So scripture tells us. But it is difficult to tell sometimes, isn't it? By Earthly circumstances?

BERINGER

But it's monstrous! Why would God allow things to happen beyond His control?

This question throws RODERICK for a moment and his answer is both immediate and true -- and shows a man not at all sure of his arguments.

RODERICK

I have no idea. (He quickly recovers.) But who are we to know the mind of God, yes? I know that you are occasionally privy, but the rest of us suffer in darkness!

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER

What you're talking about is that philosophy of Satan that's sweeping Europe! You're talking about Deism!

RODERICK

Am I? I didn't know it had a name.

ECKHART

Oh, yes! Newton, that English thief! Copied the entire notion of the calculus from my dear friend Leibniz! Of course he's a Deist!

RODERICK

Never heard of him.

ECKHART

Understandable. In a hundred years, no one will even remember who he was.

There is a moment while BERINGER struggles with himself, unable to form a reply to the arguments. Then, a sudden light turns on.

BERINGER

No. NO! You have left out one critical fact!

RODERICK

And that is?

BERINGER

God's INFALLIBILITY! He cannot make a mistake! You see? To allow something to happen outside of His will would mean an error on His part! Which is impossible!

RODERICK

No, not an error. Just a lack of will.

BERINGER

A lack of will? Are you honestly imputing a lack of will to the Eternal Creator?

RODERICK

Not will power, Dr. Beringer. Just...will, itself. Or concern, if you

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RODERICK (cont'd)
 prefer. It's the only explanation
 for... (*he is momentarily lost in
 thought, but is strangely hardened,
 then*) ... it's the only possible
 justification for some of the
 atrocities perpetrated on this
 planet.

BERINGER
 (sees his way clear, now)
 Like The Great Flood, for
 instance? Or the Plague? Things
 like that?

RODERICK
 (still lost in his own
 thoughts)
 No. (*then, after a beat*)
 Yes. Things like that.

There is a moment of silence, after which BERINGER begins to
 chuckle. His chuckling finally breaks out into full-fledged
 laughter. He chokes a little.

BERINGER
 (back in command)
 My dear Ignatius! Your argument
 might as well be that of a child!
 "Oh, God is so unfair! Why do such
 terrible things happen to innocent
 people?" (*He laughs again,
 heartily.*) Do forgive me, Ignatius,
 but I took you for better!
 Oh, your verbal tricks were
 very clever, but they are so
 circular! Everything leads back to
 poor Man at the center of
 things! But he's not! God is at the
 center! He always has been! (*He
 shakes his head.*) "Poor me, poor
 me!" says man -- as though he has
 not deserved every terrible plight
 that befalls him! Or as though
 Earthly events were not the result
 of cause and effect! I assure you,
 Ignatius, God is not dead, nor doth
 He sleep! And every single thing
 that happens on this insignificant
 Earth -- good or ill -- happens
 because a just God wills it! And
 insignificant Man dare not question
 this celestial order, but rather

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER (cont'd)
should bend his knee to the
Almighty and praise Him for it!

Triumphant, he points a finger in the air, smiling. RODERICK merely stares at him for a moment, as something goes on behind his face that is quite inscrutable. The only thing that may be safely said is that huge forces are at work behind that expression, even though he gives no vent to them. Then, suddenly, he puts his head in his hand, as though exhausted by the experience. His voice shows no trace of acrimony or irritation, only tiredness.

RODERICK
I dare say you're right, Dr. Beringer. I'm sorry to have taken up so much of your valuable time. I merely came to say thank you, and I hope I have conveyed my gratitude well enough.

BERINGER
Naturally! Think nothing of it! (*He gets up begins to shepherd RODERICK toward the door.*) And I must say that I have enjoyed our little discussion just now! If I was harsh with you earlier, it was merely out of surprise at your somewhat... unconventional thinking, shall we say? But I do hope you have seen the error of your ways? (*Snaps his fingers and shakes one at RODERICK.*) Or were you just playing the Devil's advocate with me? Oh, Professor Roderick, I do know how you enjoy these little games! (*He chuckles again.*)

RODERICK
(smiles enigmatically)
You know me too well, Dr. Beringer. But just so there is no confusion -- every future event is seen clearly by God?

BERINGER
Oh, yes, clearly. His eye is on the sparrow, remember.

RODERICK
Of course. And His foreknowledge means that all events are predestined and part of His will?

BERINGER

Absolutely!

RODERICK

And even things which seem wrong to us are merely part of His inscrutable and perfect plan? No room for mistakes?

BERINGER

None whatsoever.

RODERICK

Well, thank you again, Dr. Beringer. I feel much better now.

BERINGER

(with mock modesty)

Please! Please! A man can only take so much gratitude during the course of one evening! Now, if you'll excuse me, I told His Excellency I would look in on him before bed. He's suffering a slight head cold. Most likely imaginary. Like his head. *(He chuckles at his joke and then glances around him.)* My, what a mess you've managed to make in here, Eckhart! Please see that it's made more presentable before I return!

ECKHART

I? But all these books are YOUR --

RODERICK

I'll assist Georg, Dr. Beringer. There were a few books in the library I wanted to question him about anyway. The best of luck in your search for the stone's explanation.

BERINGER

Ignatius and your expressions! You know very well that chance has no place in the celestial order!

RODERICK

Naturally. It was just a figure of speech.

BERINGER

Of course. Well, your vist has been most welcome -- though I do wish you'd do it before supper! (*He waves an admonishing finger.*) Drop by tomorrow -- after my morning walk!

He exits. RODERICK looks after him for a moment, and then begins to straighten the room, picking up the mess that BERINGER has left behind. After a short pause, a slightly incensed ECKHART follows suit. There are a few quiet minutes, while neither says anything.

ECKHART

So what were the books that you --

RODERICK interrupts him by suddenly screaming and leaping up with one of the large books clutched tightly in both hands. There is murder in his eyes.

RODERICK

(through furious tears)
No mistakes? Everything is the will of God?

ECKHART

Ignatius? Ignatius, what's the matter?

RODERICK

I tell you, Georg, God may be incapable of making a mistake, but Beringer is not!

He takes the stone and sweeps from the room. ECKHART, who doesn't know quite what to make of this, continues to clean, puzzled, as the lights fade to a spot on him.

ECKHART

Could I have stopped it here? I don't think so. At this point, there was nothing to stop. Yet. At least, not that I was aware of.

The lights change to come up on:

SCENE 2

BERINGER's study. He is absorbed in viewing another stone with absolute rapture. He puts the stone down on his desk, dances about a bit, singing to himself, and --though he tries to resist -- he picks up the stone again, and peers at it through the magnifying glass. A small peep of excitement escapes him and he dances again. As he does so, ECKHART squeezes in through the door, having obtained more large books. He pauses just inside the door at the sight of the Dean dancing. He sits quietly in the chair by the door just to see how long it will go on. When it seems it will have no end, he speaks.

ECKHART

Your partner would be missing a few toes by now.

BERINGER stops, startled, but quickly strides to the librarian, sweeps his books onto the floor, and pulls him up by the collar, dragging the smaller man into the room.

BERINGER

Eckhart, you have to see this!

ECKHART

(as he's pulled along)
There's no telling what damage you may have done! Those books are unbelievably rare!

BERINGER

Not as rare as what I have to show you! Take a look at this!

He thrusts the stone and the magnifying glass into ECKHART's hands.

Well? What do you think?

ECKHART

It's a rock.

BERINGER

I know it's rock, you...bookworm!
But LOOK at it!

ECKHART lifts the magnifying glass resignedly to his eye and examines the stone. What he sees there first puzzles and then slightly excites him.

ECKHART

What is that?

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER

(with pure delight)

I have no idea! Isn't it wonderful?

ECKHART

I'm afraid I don't understand. If we don't know what it is, why is it wonderful?

BERINGER

(places his head in his hands)

I despair of making myself intelligible to idiots! Georg, think! Have you ever seen, ever heard, ever...smelled a creature remotely like the one depicted on that stone?

ECKHART

No.

BERINGER

(overwhelmed again with delight)

I know! Isn't that wonderful?

ECKHART

(completely confused)

Well...perhaps --

BERINGER

(his joy replaced by irritation)

Oh, just sit down in that chair, and I will explain! I have to share my joy with SOMEONE, it might as well be you! Now, are you listening? Giving me your full attention? Using all of the brains that God gave you?

ECKHART

(sitting)

Yes, I believe so.

BERINGER

Well, as you know, I often walk up and down the trails of Herbipoli early in the day, as a means of exercise and stimulation. Well, that's where I was this morning. As I was on my descent, I was turned from the usual path by a slide of

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER (cont'd)
rocks which blocked my way.
Everything clear so far?

ECKHART
I am managing to keep up.

BERINGER
Good. Well, as I picked my way
around the fall of rocks, one among
the debris caught my eye. I bent to
pick it up, and as I held it in my
hand, I noticed that it was of a
softer constitution than those
around it, and also that it was of
a lighter color. When I turned it
over, I was amazed to find a
depiction of that creature which
you have now observed yourself! I
could hardly believe my eyes! I
rushed back here, falling once and
nearly dislocating my knee in my
haste. That was nearly two hours
ago, and I have been examining from
every angle, searching for
explanation in every reference and
finding no account for it
whatsoever! (*Waits for response
from ECKHART, which is not
forthcoming.*) Isn't that amazing?

ECKHART
Amazing.

BERINGER
You have no idea what I'm talking
about, do you? Think, Eckhart!
THINK! Don't you realize what this
means?

ECKHART struggles to come up with an appropriate answer,
gets excited, discards the idea, gets excited again, again
deflates and finally gives up.

ECKHART
I have no clue.

BERINGER
(Enumerating on his fingers)
A rock of a different material and
consistency is found in a remote
area where it has no business. On
that rock is the carved depiction
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER (cont'd)
of a creature that has never
existed, does not now exist, nor
could ever exist in the future.
This rock is only exposed because
of a natural erosion of the soil
and the movement of the Earth,
which discovers where it has been
buried for hundreds, perhaps even
thousands of years. And lastly, it
is placed directly in the path of
quite the possibly the only man in
Germany who might put it into its
proper perspective. What do you
say to that?

ECKHART
(after a slight pause)
Good show?

BERINGER
My God, Georg, I knew you thick,
but are you telling me that you
can't see the only possible logical
explanation?

RODERICK
Explanation for what?

They both turn to see RODERICK standing at the threshold. He
points behind him.

You did say to drop by.

BERINGER
(going to him)
Thank God, Ignatius! Do come in!
I'm having a Devil of a time --
you'll pardon the expression --
trying to get Georg to see the
light!

RODERICK
And what light is that?

BERINGER
Here!

He hands him the stone and the magnifying glass.

Well?

RODERICK
It's a rock.

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER
(defeated)
Oh, Ignatius, not you,
too! Examine it, please!

RODERICK looks at the stone. He, too, is impressed by what he sees. After what is an almost unbearable wait, looks at BERINGER.

RODERICK
I'm afraid I have no explanation
for you.

BERINGER
(looking up)
Father, save me from the
machinations of fools!

RODERICK
Unless....unless... (*gets a knowing
smile on his face and turns to
ECKHART*) Eckhart, I believe you and
I are the victims of a prank! The
good doctor here is quite obviously
an expert stonemason!

BERINGER
Prank! Ignatius, I found this stone
on the upper part of Mount
Herbipoli not two hours ago! I
swear to you by all that is Holy --

RODERICK
Now, now, Dr. Beringer, there is no
need for any blasphemy. Your word
is sufficient. But, if you found
this as you say you did --

BERINGER
I did, I did!

RODERICK
-- then I cannot provide a
satisfactory explanation.
(*Examines the stone again.*) What
did you say the name of this
creature was?

ECKHART
He didn't.

BERINGER
That impossible creature doesn't
have a name, because it never
existed.

(CONTINUED)

RODERICK

Ah. Well. That adds a new wrinkle,
doesn't it? (*He rubs the stone.*)
Sandstone is not usually found near
Herbipoli, is it?

BERINGER turns with great satisfaction on ECKHART.

BERINGER

You see, Georg? It's not so
difficult! (*back to*
RODERICK) Well, Ignatius? Are you
thinking what I'm thinking?

RODERICK

I don't know. Perhaps it was
placed there --

BERINGER

It was only uncovered by a small
rock slide on the upper western
side of the mountain. I found it
among the rubble of the recently
fallen stones!

RODERICK

Are you sure that this isn't just a
-- what did you call it -- a
mineral shadow?

BERINGER

Look at the perfectly raised
outline! The smooth and
well-defined shape! This is no
mineral shadow!

RODERICK

Still --

BERINGER

I knew this would be where you
would have a problem, Ignatius!
Georg here is limited by his
mental perception, but it is your
spiritual perception that is
clouded. Clouded by skepticism!
Georg sees the facts and has no
idea what they mean. You know what
they mean, but are unwilling to
admit it!

(CONTINUED)

RODERICK

What? Dr. Beringer, I do not wish to have another religious scuffle with you, but these are modern times! What you are suggesting is from an era gone by --

BERINGER

I knew it, I knew it! You know, don't you, Roderick? You know perfectly well what this means!

RODERICK

Johann, I refuse to acknowledge --

BERINGER

(begins to dance again)

Oh, Ignatius, I can see it in your eyes! Don't try to deny it! I was right! I was right!

ECKHART

Right about what?

BERINGER

(spinning to face him)

THAT IT'S A MIRACLE! Don't you see it, Georg? GOD placed that stone there! For ME! For me to find and rightly interpret! That's why it's so far from where it should be, that's why it's an animal of fiction, and that's why it was buried all those years! It was waiting -- HE was waiting -- for ME! He called to me, like Moses, and there, on the mountaintop --

ECKHART

You were on the mountaintop?

BERINGER

(a little angry at the semantics)

He called to me like Moses, and there, near the mountaintop, I received the message of God! Written in stone, no less! You understand, don't you, Ignatius?

RODERICK

Now Dr. Beringer, I never said --

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER

Yes, I know, I know, you never agreed to anything. You never do! But your unwillingness to speak in this instance only adds to my surety! Oh, if you had any real objection, I'd be trapped here until midnight, buried under a mound of your wickedly scrambled logic! *(to himself)* So, what to do now? What follows? *(Crosses his arms and taps a finger on his lips.)* Yes, yes, that must be the next step.

RODERICK

(a warning)

You're not thinking of telling His Excellency, I trust, Johann?

BERINGER

Well, I was wavering between two courses of action, but as you advise against it, that makes my decision easier. Thank you, Ignatius.

ECKHART

A wise choice, Dr. Beringer. Wait until you're in a calmer state.

BERINGER

Don't be foolish, Georg. I'm off to tell him at once!

He puts on his coat, straightens his dress, fluffs his hair, picks up the stone and sweeps out the door. The two stare dumbfounded. After a quick moment, he enters again, grabs the magnifying glass and makes another regal exit.

ECKHART

Well.

RODERICK

Well, indeed.

ECKHART

(after a short pause)

You don't really believe that, do you? That it's a...miracle?

RODERICK

(after pondering)

Yes, I think it may be a miracle,
in its own small way.

ECKHART

Really! Well. *(He slowly begins to gather the books that BERINGER scattered at his entrance. There is a small uncertain pause.)* As you said before, it seems a little -- well, late -- in the flow of time for miracles, doesn't it?

RODERICK

(helping him)

Oh, Georg! Let us hope that there's always time for miracles, yes?

He stacks the books in ECKHART's arms.

ECKHART

Well, I can honestly say that I never thought I'd live to see one.

RODERICK

See one! Georg, you're about to be involved in one!

ECKHART

Me? Oh, I don't think so. Dr. Beringer is the one who found the stone. I'm just the one who was too stupid to understand what it meant.

RODERICK

You give yourself too little credit, Eckhart! This miracle will not happen without you!

ECKHART

Come, come, Igna -- what do you mean, "will not happen"? Hasn't it already happened?

RODERICK

(pats him on the back)

Oh, this miracle, like your historiography, is still an embryo, Georg!

(CONTINUED)

ECKHART

(shakes his head)

You see? I am stupid. I have no idea what you mean.

RODERICK

Fear not. Like pieces of a puzzle, this miracle will fall into place. And, like a puzzle, sometimes the pieces don't seem to fit. Or seem irrelevant. Like the fact that I am an expert stonemason.

ECKHART

(pleasantly surprised)

Are you? I didn't know --

He suddenly drops the books with a loud crash.

Oh my God, Ignatius, what have you done?

RODERICK

Only what I was meant to do, Georg. Only what I was meant to do. What God had seen that I would do -- and though He had the power to stop me, He did not.

He smiles gently at ECKHART, and begins to pick up the books again.

ECKHART

But he's gone to tell the Prince-Bishop!

RODERICK

(sadly)

Yes, I know. Pity, isn't it, that he wouldn't listen to the wise counsel of his friends?

They restack the books in ECKHART's arms. He places an arm around ECKHART's shoulder.

Come on. Let's get these back to the library.

The two of them look at each other for a moment and then RODERICK makes his way out the door as the lights fade. Again, ECKHART ends up in the spot.

(CONTINUED)

ECKHART

Here, Gottfried? Was this the place? Genealogy is actually the practice of looking backwards - so as a science it does not really prepare one for anticipating the future very much. The past and the present are certainly enough to contend with! It all seemed so relatively harmless, you see? Since I thought there was no real cause for alarm, I waited...

Again the spot fades as he walks out of it. The lights come up on:

SCENE 3

Again, in BERINGER's study. There are stones everywhere. Dozens would be the accepted minimum, but hundreds would be more realistic to history.

BERINGER is absent for the moment. After a brief moment, there is a soft knocking. When there is no answer, the door cracks open, revealing RODERICK.

RODERICK

Dr. Beringer? May I come in?

He pokes his head in and looks around. When it is obvious that the coast is clear, he steps in, looks around the room with satisfaction and chuckles. Then, from beneath the folds of his robes, he produces at least a dozen more stones and begins to distribute them about the room, gaging the relative surprise factor of BERINGER when he finds them. He eyes critically, changes his mind, is struck by inspiration, and flits about the room happily. He even places one in a pair of BERINGER's shoes. Unseen, ECKHART almost knocks, pushes the door open quietly and is aghast at what he sees RODERICK doing.

ECKHART

Ignatius! I am aghast! What do you think you're doing?

RODERICK whirls around, sees ECKHART and relaxes.

RODERICK

Oh, it's you, Eckhart. I'm just distributing the miracle. Want to help me? I don't have time to chat. There's another batch waiting in the workshop.

(CONTINUED)

ECKHART
(a little alarmed)
You have a workshop?

RODERICK
Of course. There wasn't room in my
chambers for all this!

ECKHART
How many stones have you...

RODERICK
Well, I haven't been keeping an
exact count. Somewhere around two
thousand, I'd say.

ECKHART
Two thousand!? But that's
impossible!

RODERICK
Well, God and Roderick work in
mysterious ways. It wouldn't be
called a miracle if it seemed at
all possible, now would it? Come
on, before Beringer gets back.

ECKHART
Where is he?

RODERICK
With His Excellency. And some other
high potentate, I'm told. Just one
or two?

He offers some stones to ECKHART. ECKHART takes them and
peers at them. He looks up at RODERICK in alarm.

ECKHART
But this one has a spider web on
it! And this one is a carving of
the sun and the stars!

RODERICK
And?

ECKHART
And he'll know immediately that
these couldn't have been created in
the ground!

RODERICK
Your idea of a miracle is rather
feeble, isn't it?

ECKHART
(realizing)
Oh, I see what you mean. He'll
think --

The two of them gesture with their fingers to show that they are in agreement, murmuring "yes, yes, yes," or words to that effect, and smile.

But I don't think I have your
creative flair, Ignatius. You do
it.

He hands the stones back to RODERICK.

RODERICK
(taking them with mock
exasperation)
Coward.

He looks about for another intriguing spot, but the sounds of someone coming down the hall become clear -- and the someone seems to be singing. RODERICK hides the stones under his robes, realizes that he doesn't have to do that, puts them both down on BERINGER's desk. He and ECKHART assume casual poses as BERINGER breezes in the open door, beaming.

BERINGER
Gentlemen, gentlemen! How good to
see you! Admiring the collection, I
see?

RODERICK
Oh yes. There is much to admire.

BERINGER
Isn't there? God in His bounty
continues to shower His blessings
upon me.

ECKHART
(slightly disturbed at this
allusion)
Yes -- Dr. Beringer, I was hoping
to speak to you on the subject of
these...blessings --

BERINGER
As I was hoping to speak to you,
too, Eckhart! What sort of binding
do you recommend?

(CONTINUED)

ECKHART
(thrown by this change of
topic)
Binding?

BERINGER
Yes, binding! Book binding! You're
supposed to be the book expert here
-- I'm asking your supposedly
expert opinion. If you were going
to write a book, what sort of
binding would you use?

ECKHART
I am writing a book, Dr. Beringer.

BERINGER
(waving that away)
Yes, yes, of course, but don't
change the subject, Georg -- we
weren't talking about you, we were
talking about me! I'm speaking of a
book that will actually be
published! Now what sort of binding
should I use for this book?

ECKHART
Well, as my good friend Gottfried
Leibniz always used to say --

BERINGER
Eckhart, were there any subjects
upon which your good friend
Gottfried Leibniz was ever silent?

ECKHART
Well -- yes -- I, I suppose so --

BERINGER
Then could we have one of those
quotes for a change?

ECKHART
Well, I'll have to think --
(realizing what has just been said
to him) -- well!

RODERICK
So, Dr. Beringer. You're writing a
book?

BERINGER

Yes, of course!

RODERICK

A book...about the miracle?

BERINGER

Naturally! At the urging of His Excellency!

ECKHART

Oh my God.

BERINGER

Well? What do you think? Aren't you going to congratulate me?

RODERICK

Congratulations. I can't think of anyone more deserving.

BERINGER

For once, Ignatius, we can finally agree on something!

He busies himself at his desk, gathering a few choice stones and some papers. He finds one that he has never seen before, is rapturous and then suddenly confused. ECKHART and RODERICK, apprehensive, give each other a look. BERINGER finally shrugs and continues.

Well, Georg, when you have finally made up that tiny mind of yours about the binding, you will let me know, won't you? I have to run now -- His Excellency awaits! (Pause for dramatic effect.) With the King of Austria!

He almost breezes out, catches himself at the door, returns for the magnifying glass, gives them a knowing wave of the finger, and then breezes out.

ECKHART

(slightly panicky) Ignatius! Did you hear that? He's writing a book!

RODERICK

(smiling a little)
Yes.

ECKHART

Well, what do you think?

RODERICK

I think it's perfect.

ECKHART

No! Ignatius! You're taking this too far!

RODERICK

(walking to the door)

I am not taking it anywhere, Georg. He is. As long as he is willing to accept this lunacy as a miracle, I am content to provide it.

ECKHART

But he's going to publish all of this!

RODERICK

In some three-page pamphlet that will never see the light of day outside the shelves of your library! No one but Beringer could possibly take this seriously!

ECKHART

What about the King of Austria? And the Prince-Bishop?

RODERICK

You mean he of the imaginary head?

ECKHART

Ignatius, I'm serious! Where does it all end? Suppose he never stops believing it?

RODERICK

Don't worry. If he does not discover it himself, I will find the appropriate place and time to reveal it.

ECKHART

And he will be humiliated?

RODERICK

Yes. He will be humiliated.

(CONTINUED)

ECKHART

(after a short pause) May
I -- will you tell me why?

RODERICK

He craves attention, Georg, and he should have it! Besides, he is the most arrogant, insufferable... idiot...that I have ever known.

ECKHART

But surely it is more than that. I am also an idiot, according to Dr. Beringer. Are you planning something for me as well?

RODERICK

No, Georg! Only Beringer thinks that! I would never do anything to harm you! In fact, you're probably the only real friend I have here.

ECKHART

Then, for my sake, will you at least have a little pity on him? He has a long way to fall.

RODERICK

Oh, Georg, this is one of the reasons I like you. Here you are defending him, and he treats you abominably!

ECKHART

Yes, sometimes. But he can be good. You yourself came here the other day to thank him for his kindness.

RODERICK

Well, that's not exactly true. But I'm not even sure if his kindnesses are for us, or for him. So he can be proud of being kind. *(He removes the other stones from his robes and begins to cast about for hiding places.)* Never fear, Georg. I have the business well in hand. After all, God still hasn't stopped me yet, has He? So we must be treading the good path, yes?

ECKHART watches as RODERICK cheerfully places a few more stones. He makes his way to the door and then turns, full of doubt.

(CONTINUED)

ECKHART

But what will happen to him now?

RODERICK

(shrugging)

I have no idea. But whatever happens, won't it be of great comfort to Dr. Beringer to know that it will be God's will?

RODERICK smiles benignly at him, and then begins to hum as he places another stone. ECKHART, troubled, turns and faces the audience as the lights fade to a spot on him.

ECKHART

It was here that I decided that Roderick's trick had gone too far, and that I would put a stop to it. But I quickly found out that things were already well beyond my control.

He walks sadly out of the spot, which fades to:

BLACKOUT

ACT 2

SCENE 1

As the lights come up, ECKHART is dragging RODERICK in the door of BERINGER's study.

ECKHART

(wildly)

Come on!

RODERICK

I still don't know what we're doing here.

ECKHART

I told you! Looking for the manuscript!

RODERICK

Why? Are we out of toilet paper?

ECKHART

Oh, Ignatius, why won't you listen! I've been helping him proofread it! I've delayed as much as I can, but he's going to start sending it to

(CONTINUED)

ECKHART (cont'd)
the publishers soon! All two
hundred and seventy-two pages of
it!

RODERICK
So? Who's going to read -- Georg,
there must be some mistake. It
sounded as if you said seventy-two
pages. He can't have written
seventy-two pages in just nine
days!

ECKHART
No, you -- mathematician, not
seventy-two! Two HUNDRED and
seventy-two!

RODERICK
But that's not possible!

ECKHART
Well God and Beringer work in
mysterious ways! Even with me
dragging my feet, we'll be through
with the proofreading on Thursday,
and the illustrations are supposed
to be completed no later than the
beginning of next week!

RODERICK
Illustrations?

ECKHART
Sixteen full pages -- done by eight
different artists! In COLOR!

RODERICK
(indignant)
That industrious jackass!

ECKHART
So now will you help me look?

RODERICK
You take the shelves, I'll take the
desk. (*Under his breath as they
look:*) Two hundred and seventy-two
pages! What is there to fill two
hundred and seventy-two pages WITH?

At that moment, they hear BERINGER coming down the hall, whistling merrily. They find the traditional places to hide, i.e., the curtains, behind a door, etc., just in time. BERINGER sweeps in, carrying what is obviously the manuscript. He places it lovingly on desk, and strokes it.

BERINGER

(to an imaginary entity, with mock surprise)

Who, me, Your Majesty? *(He bows, grovelingly.)* Oh, surely not, Your Majesty! There must be someone who deserves the honor more than I! *(Pauses for royal protestation.)* Very well, Your Majesty -- but only if you insist!

He giggles giddily, and sits down to pore over the manuscript, magnifying glass in hand. RODERICK and ECKHART motion to one another from their hiding places. Each urges the other to sneak out. Neither wants to go. They visually agree to go on "three." Finally, they both begin to tiptoe toward the door. After they make several accidental loud noises, which have no effect on BERINGER at all, they drop all pretense. ECKHART moves quickly to the door. RODERICK decides to speak, over frantic silent protestations by ECKHART.

RODERICK

Dr. Beringer?

BERINGER

(not looking up)

Go away. I'm busy.

ECKHART takes his advice, and gets out the door. He beckons RODERICK, who refuses. ECKHART turns sadly and exits.

RODERICK

I'm sorry to interrupt, Dr. Beringer, but I'm afraid I must speak with you.

BERINGER

What? Oh, Ignatius, I didn't see you there. I really am quite occupied at the moment, so unless it's something pressing...

RODERICK

It is. I have to speak with you about your book.

BERINGER

(beaming)

Well, I suppose I do have a few minutes!

RODERICK

You can't publish it.

BERINGER

What do you mean, can't?

RODERICK

Mustn't, then.

BERINGER

(the joke is wearing off quickly)

Ignatius, I really have a great deal to do, and these efforts to distract me, while I am sure they are meant to amuse, come at a most inopportune time. Now, if you'll excuse me!

He bends back to manuscript, dismissing RODERICK, who gathers his courage and speaks again.

RODERICK

You can't publish it because it will make a fool of you.

BERINGER

(heaving a sigh of acquiescence)

Very well, if we must continue this charade. How, pray tell me?

RODERICK

These stones...they're not...God didn't...

BERINGER

Ignatius --

RODERICK

The stones are frauds!

BERINGER looks at RODERICK with consternation.

It's true. I'm very sorry.

BERINGER's consternation very slowly dissolves into a smile, which eventually becomes laughter.

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER

Oh, Ignatius, how you do love to provoke me! If I were a lesser man, I'm not sure that we wouldn't be enemies! Now, you've had your fun --

RODERICK

THIS IS NOT A JOKE, YOU GREAT BOOB! I'm trying to keep you from embarrassing yourself on a cosmic scale! I tell you, these stones are not what you think!

BERINGER

What I think, Professor Roderick, is that it's time you return to your university duties, and stop hindering God's work!

RODERICK

God's work?! You really think that God has set all this up just for YOU? When there are so many more on this planet worthy of His consideration?

BERINGER

(for the first time, a flash of monumental holy ego)
That is the beauty of God's power, Professor Roderick. He doesn't have to choose between men -- but He does anyway, His name be praised! I'm sorry that you have no firsthand knowledge of this. For those of us who've experienced it, however, there is no greater honor on earth! And I will not let you, nor the Prince-Bishop, nor any other man -- nay, not even a king! -- stand in the way of God's glory! So if you'll excuse me, now, I must return to His assignment! Good day, Professor Roderick.

BERINGER who has stood up during this exchange, smiles a very hard smile, and sits again, completely dismissing RODERICK as he returns to the manuscript. RODERICK looks a moment, stunned, and searches for something to say. Before he can, BERINGER, without looking up, speaks again.

I said, good day, Professor Roderick.

(CONTINUED)

This decides RODERICK. He goes angrily to the door.

RODERICK

(not turning around)

One day, I will look back on this,
and laugh.

BERINGER

(not looking up)

I have no doubt. What else could a
failure do?

RODERICK stiffens, and then goes out the door. BERINGER continues working on the manuscript, quite pleased with himself. The lights fade to black as a spot comes up on stage to reveal ECKHART. He looks terribly unhappy.

ECKHART

I wish that I were a true scholar,
like you, Gottfried. You could
unravel the knottiest problem with
no effort at all, make me wonder
how I did not see the answer for
myself! But you never made me feel
inferior or laughed at me - you
were so kind. You probably would
have solved it quite easily, even
at this point, but for the life of
me, I could not. From a distance,
right and wrong are so clear! It's
only when one gets close enough to
touch that they get fuzzy. Oh,
Leibniz! Why didn't you give me a
sign! What would you have had me
do?

As he nears the end of this lament, the lights come up to reveal:

SCENE 2

BERINGER's study, with several crates about the room. One of them is open, revealing many shiny new copies of BERINGER's book. It is beautiful, impressive, and obviously expensive. ECKHART moves to sit and begins numbering the copies, checking them off on a list. As he does so, he is moaning, as if in pain. He opens a book, moans, makes a weary gesture, makes a notation on his list, and repeats. After about four rounds of this, RODERICK pokes his head in the door.

(CONTINUED)

RODERICK
(whispering)
Eckhart!

ECKHART records another copy, moaning. RODERICK whispers more loudly.

Eckhart!

ECKHART records another copy and moans. RODERICK looks about, doesn't see BERINGER and comes into the room. In a normal voice:

Georg, you must stop this at once.

ECKHART looks up toward the heavens from his notations in uncertain rapture, as if his prayer had been answered.

ECKHART
Gottfried?

RODERICK
(snapping his fingers in
ECKHART's face)
Georg, are you all right? This is
the wrong time to be losing your
mind. How many copies are there
here?

ECKHART
(recovers himself and looks at
the list)
Four hundred and forty. But this
is the second printing. Three
hundred have already been sold.

RODERICK moans, just as ECKHART did, and places his head in his hands.

That's what I said.

RODERICK
Oh God, Georg, what are we going to
do?

ECKHART
We? I took no part in this charade!
This was all your idea!

RODERICK
(head still in his hands, the
same tone)
Oh God, Georg, what am I going to
do?

(CONTINUED)

ECKHART

I don't know. After your display at Baron Von Hof's party last weekend, I truly thought he would have to be convinced.

RODERICK

One would think so! After all, I carved one of the stones in front of his face! How could anyone be so unreasonable?

ECKHART

Well, he did make a good point: you have seen so many of the stones by now that it would be easy for you to imitate one.

RODERICK

Of course it would be easy for me to imitate one! They're my creation, for God's sake!

ECKHART

Yes, *I* know that, Ignatius, but *he* doesn't.

RODERICK

Yes, Georg, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to shout.

A beat.

I'm at my wits' end! Maybe there's something in it we can contradict, some error that would force him to delay distribution?

ECKHART

I doubt it. It is thoroughly researched and cogently argued. The logic is circular in places, but that makes it all the more difficult to pierce, of course. (*He puts down the book.*) But now that we have arrived at this ridiculous pass, will you finally tell me why?

RODERICK

Why what?

ECKHART

Why it was so important to humiliate Dr. Beringer? What could

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ECKHART (cont'd)
possibly have been the cause for
all of this chaos?

RODERICK rises, almost gives a flippant retort, but then
thinks better of it. He removes a stone from his robes and
hands it to ECKHART.

ECKHART
(reading the stone)
Karl and Elke. Who are they?

RODERICK
If not for them, you would never
have known me, Georg. (ECKHART's
quizzical look almost makes him
laugh.) I would have been a
sailor. But because of Karl and
Elke, I am here.

ECKHART
Ignatius, I -- I don't --

RODERICK
(seemingly a change of
subject)
I never wanted to be a priest! He
made me swear! On his death-bed --
of course! -- to take the vows! My
father! If my sister Elke had only
been on my side, I could have
withstood his urging, and done what
I wanted -- to sail the sea! But
Elke was the other half of me -- we
were twins -- and she made me keep
that promise. What could I do?
Elke and God on one side and me on
the other. I said yes.

She had married a sailor. He drank.
I think -- I know -- he sometimes
beat her. They had a child --
little Karl -- named after my
father -- but he was hideous to
see, Georg. One of his arms had
never developed, it was like the
fin of a dolphin flopping against
his body. His legs were thin and
spindly. His eyes were (his voice
breaking) too far apart. I thought
my first official act as priest
would be to bury them both. And
when they did not die, I became

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RODERICK (cont'd)
convinced that God had given Karl
to my sister for a purpose.

ECKHART
And do you no longer think so?

RODERICK
I am not sure, anymore. When my
brother-in-law returned from the
sea, he took one look at Karl,
declared that my sister had been
unfaithful to him during his
absence, that he could never have
fathered such creature and stormed
out. It's just as well, I suppose.
I think I would have killed him,
had he stayed.

But Georg, if anyone could bolster
a man's faith in God, it would have
to have been little Karl! Despite
his condition, he laughed more than
any child I have ever known. He was
happy! I moved in with them, and he
became a son to me, and I a father
to him.

When he was six, we were out on his
grandfather's boat, Elke and Karl
and I, when we were overtaken by a
storm. In the thrashing waves, Karl
was thrown overboard. My sister
screamed and leaped in after him. I
leaped in as well, but it was too
late. They had both disappeared. I
called until I had no voice, and
dived and dived, but they were
gone. So you see, Georg? I didn't
get to bury them after all. There
was a service, though. And next to
the markers of their graves, I left
my Holy Cross and sash.

ECKHART
(after a pause)
You think that God was responsible?

RODERICK
Like Beringer, I used to think so.
But if He was, why? Why would He
give us little Karl, a gift of joy
to me and Elke, make me love him,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RODERICK (cont'd)
and then take him from me? I had been a good priest, done my duty, praised Him, given Him my life and service! For what? So He could take it all away? No! The God I believed in couldn't have purposed such a thing. No one could have looked on little Karl and not loved him! And so, if God was not responsible, then He didn't control everything -- and if He didn't control everything, I could no longer serve Him as His priest. So -- since I will never set foot on a boat again -- I am an algebra teacher. Because of Karl and Elke.

ECKHART rises and crosses to RODERICK, placing a hand on his shoulder. There is a moment.

ECKHART
(finally seeing it all)
Ignatius, I am so sorry.

RODERICK
My thoughts keep going in circles. I sat in the workshop all morning, trying to come up with some way for it all to end. When I looked down at my hands, I had carved that -- I did it without even thinking. It must be the first sign of insanity.

ECKHART
(looking at it)
No, not at all. In fact, I am sure this was just a way of settling your mind. But Dr. Beringer had nothing to with your tragedy, Ignatius. Surely now you see that punishing him will serve no purpose?

RODERICK
He speaks of his faith and God's glory, but it's Beringer's glory he's worried about! Well, I want him finally to be humbled enough to see that he is not an addition to the Holy Trinity!

ECKHART

(handing him a copy of the book)

It is we who are about to be humbled, I think. Dr. Beringer references us in the book. Chapter 12, page 94.

RODERICK

Georg! Why didn't you tell me?

He turns to the page that ECKHART indicates.

ECKHART

Well, he doesn't mention us by name. But the whole chapter is a defense of the stones' authenticity, you see. Basically, he can admit no chance of fraud, for if it proves to be a hoax, everyone will think he was part of it.

RODERICK

Oh my God.

ECKHART

Well, won't they?

RODERICK

(completely deflated)

Yes, of course. But that thought had never occurred to me. I just thought that he would be exposed for the pompous ass that he is, and that would be the end of it.

ECKHART

(after a quiet beat)

You haven't come to the part about us, yet.

RODERICK

(opens the book wearily and reads)

He calls us "antagonists" and says that we are responsible for spreading the lie that the stones are counterfeit.

BERINGER

I am honored that such celebrated skeptics choose to read my work. High praise indeed.

(CONTINUED)

Unnoticed by the other two, BERINGER has stolen in, and stands at the door, quietly furious.

ECKHART

Johann --

BERINGER

(striding into the room)

Get out.

RODERICK

But Johann --

BERINGER

(whirling on him)

DR. BERINGER IS MY NAME! Now get out!

RODERICK struggles with himself a moment and then starts to go. He pauses at the door.

RODERICK

Dr. Beringer?

BERINGER

Yes, Professor Roderick?

RODERICK

I know you will find this difficult to believe --

BERINGER

As you are the one speaking, I find it impossible to believe. Whatever it is.

RODERICK

I -- this is all -- you cannot distribute any more copies of this book. I implore you. For your own sake.

BERINGER stares at him for a moment, and then, shaking his head:

BERINGER

Jealousy is such an ugly emotion, Ignatius.

RODERICK

(taken completely off-guard)

What?

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER

It's sad, really. A man of your intellect and ability. But you couldn't be satisfied with your allotment in life, could you? As long as someone else had just a little more, someone else was just a little above you --

RODERICK

(total disbelief)

You -- you think I'm trying to stop this because I'm jealous? You self-centered, egotistical baboon! If it weren't for your unquenchable lust for fame, none of this would have happened!

RODERICK launches himself at BERINGER. The two do not exactly fight, but it is a strange wrestling match of sorts in which they circle each other. All the while, BERINGER continues to make his point.

BERINGER

It has always grated on you, hasn't it, Ignatius? That I have been a favorite and confidant of His Excellency? That I was chosen? That it was never you? You, with your lightning tongue and heady logic, you with your acerbic wit and your nonchalant manner?

RODERICK

Johann, you must listen!

BERINGER

No peers, of course! But no colleagues, either. No cohorts. No....friends. No one ever chose you, did they? And now, it's happening again, isn't it? I'm being chosen once more! This time by God Himself! You have been turned aside, put in your rightful place, and you are so devoured with -- your envy would drain the ocean dry and not be slaked! Well, get thee behind me, Satan! There is nothing you could offer me -- not the world entire -- that would persuade me to bend to the likes of you!

(CONTINUED)

RODERICK

If you would be silent for just one moment --

BERINGER

When the Pharisees tried to silence the disciples, Christ himself said, "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out!" Well, I'll not hold my peace! These stones will cry out!

Whether through superior strength or weight, BERINGER has finally gotten the upper hand, and in one tremendous pull, he tears RODERICK's robes from him. The two stare fiercely at each other, breathing heavily.

RODERICK

It's not the book of Luke, Dr. Beringer, but the book of Proverbs that applies here -- Chapter 16, Verse 18!

BERINGER

Don't quote scripture to me, Pharisee! Just get out!

He turns, dismissing RODERICK. Disheveled, RODERICK reassembles himself and pauses next to ECKHART.

RODERICK

You witnessed it, Georg. I did try.

RODERICK exits.

BERINGER

And, you, Georg! I thought we had agreed that you would no longer conspire with Beelzebub! Despite the fact that you are not a great thinker --

ECKHART

I agreed to nothing, Dr. Beringer. And Professor Roderick is not the Devil, any more than you are Moses.

BERINGER

(completely taken aback)
Georg! Are you deserting me too--?

ECKHART

(whirling on him)

Deserting you?! For years, I have looked up to you, admired you, respected you! I've helped you in every endeavor, defended you, given you the benefit of every possible doubt! Don't you dare accuse me of infidelity now!

BERINGER

But Georg --

ECKHART

You are supposed to be a great man of science! A seeker of the truth! "All in service to the truth!" And now, in the face of all logic, you continue to insist that these stones are genuine!

BERINGER

Yes!

ECKHART

Despite all the evidence to the contrary!

BERINGER

Yes!

ECKHART

When you know in your heart they must be forgeries!

BERINGER

YES!

It is the final straw. ECKHART looks at him with a mixture of terror and betrayal.

ECKHART

You know?

BERINGER

(in a low voice)

Yes.

ECKHART

And you still plan to distribute these books, knowing that the stones were carved by the hand of man?

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER

Yes.

ECKHART

But, for God's sake, Johann -- why?

BERINGER

(with almost maniacal fervor)
Because it IS for God's sake,
Georg! Don't you see? These
stones still represent the truth!
They still show God's majesty in
His creation! In the end, they will
praise God just as much as if they
were fashioned by the Almighty
Himself! In a way, they were! God
USED Ignatius to carve them, just
as He used Moses to write the book
of Genesis! Don't you see? He is
still responsible and in complete
control!

ECKHART

(still having trouble
assimilating it)
But the truth --

BERINGER

The truth is that God has given me
this task, to further His glory!
And I will NOT falter in it! THAT
is the only truth that concerns me!

ECKHART stares a moment, and then, making up his mind,
crosses to the desk and hands BERINGER the list from the
crate, along with the Karl/Elke stone.

ECKHART

Then I have a question for you,
Johann. When the stones are
discovered to be counterfeit -- and
we both know they will be -- whose
honor will be in the greater peril:
God's? Or yours? If you'll excuse
me, I have some pressing business
just now.

BERINGER examines the stone as ECKHART starts to exit.

BERINGER

(truly bewildered, like a
child)
Georg, where are you going? Karl
and Elke? What does this mean?

(CONTINUED)

ECKHART

(pausing at the door)

Perhaps a burning bush will appear
to guide you, Dr. Beringer.
Careful not to get singed. Good
night.

ECKHART exits. BERINGER runs to the door.

BERINGER

But Georg, wait! You can't tell
anyone! Georg! (*Hardening*) I will
have no other choice than to bring
charges against you! GEORG!

There is no reply. BERINGER, defeated, crosses to the crate and sits, the list in one hand and the stone in the other. He wrestles with a difficult decision. After a moment, he then deliberately destroys the inventory list and begins to pack the copies back into the crate as the lights go out.

SCENE 3

A spotlight rises on ECKHART, who is dressed again as he was at the beginning of the play.

ECKHART

And so, the remaining copies of The
Wurzburg Lithogrpahy were
destroyed. Dr. Beringer put out a
call for all the books that had
been sold earlier, and bought back
as many of them as he could. They,
too, were destroyed. I finally
understood Ignatius in a way that I
had not before, but by that time,
it was too late. The following
week, Dr. Beringer brought a suit
of fraud against Professor Roderick
and myself, which has just now
concluded. Oh, Gottfried! I've made
a mess of it all, haven't I? What
should I have done that I did not?
Was there something I did do that I
shouldn't have? (*He sighs, sadly.*)
Well, all I can do now is wait.
And hope.

The lights come up on BERINGER's study again, and there are no more crates. There are no more stones. The room looks as it did at the opening of the play. The door opens, and ECKHART beckons RODERICK into the room. RODERICK, too, is dressed more formally.

(CONTINUED)

RODERICK

Georg, confronting him in this way
is not a good idea.

ECKHART

I think we've established that you
are not the best judge of what is
or what is not a good idea.

RODERICK

But, Georg --

ECKHART

No! No buts! I have spent the last
two days in court, hearing my name
sounded out like a common criminal!
I have had to stifle every impulse
to stand up and shout that the
whole thing was your doing! So for
this moment, I will be in charge of
the ideas!

RODERICK

(meekly, after a moment)

May I sit down?

ECKHART

Yes. But not there.

He catches RODERICK just before he sits at BERINGER's
desk. RODERICK straightens back up and makes his way to the
chair by the door. He indicates the spot questioningly, and
ECKHART nods. RODERICK sits. They are silent.

After a few moments, BERINGER comes in, without seeing
RODERICK. He crosses to ECKHART solemnly.

BERINGER

Hello, Professor Von Eckhart.

ECKHART

Hello, Dr. Beringer. Is the
verdict in?

BERINGER

It is. (*He pauses.*) You are not
going to like it, I'm afraid.

ECKHART

I have not liked being part of a
trial, but what I want is obviously
not part of these proceedings. What
is the verdict?

(CONTINUED)

BERINGER takes a piece of paper from his pocket. Before he unfolds it, he speaks.

BERINGER

First of all, I want you to know, Georg, that I only brought that suit to save my good name --

ECKHART

(holding up his hands)
Please, Dr. Beringer! You do not have to justify your actions to me. I am well aware of what motivates you. "Well done is better than well said."

BERINGER

(wearily)
Leibniz?

ECKHART

No. Eckhart.

BERINGER

Georg, I only want to explain --

ECKHART

Yes, well, I think explanations are in order all round, don't you? If I am to listen to yours, shouldn't you hear Professor Roderick's?

BERINGER

Roderick! That scoundrel! That plague-ridden rat --

RODERICK

The plague-ridden rat is right behind you.

BERINGER freezes for a moment and then turns around. As he does so, RODERICK rises from his chair, stiffly. There is a tense awkward silence.

ECKHART

Well, Ignatius? Don't you have something to say?

RODERICK

Dr. Beringer --

BERINGER
Save your breath, you --

RODERICK
-- I only came here today to --

BERINGER
-- you wicked, demonic --

RODERICK
-- to ask if you could --

BERINGER
-- filthy mongrel --

ECKHART
(roaring)
NO! I WILL HAVE NO MORE OF THIS!

His outburst immediately stuns the two into silence.

YOU! (*pointing at RODERICK*) Sit
down! And YOU! (*to BERINGER*) Sit
over there!

He indicates the desk. Both men are so overwhelmed that they do his bidding without hesitation. ECKHART snatches the verdict from BERINGER's hand as he passes.

Now I have withstood your childish
bickering as long as I intend
to! Both of you will sit here
quietly while I read this
verdict! And God help you if you
interrupt me!

He glares at them and they are cowed. He opens the paper and begins to read.

"By the order of the Most Reverend
and Most High Prince and Lord of
the Holy Roman Empire Chrisopher
Franz, Bishop of Wurzburg and Duke
of Fanconia, hear these decrees:
In the matter of the suit brought
by Johann Bartholomew Adam
Beringer, Doctor of Philosophy and
Medicine, Senior Professor and
Dean of the Faculty of Medicine
against the person of Jacob
Ignatius Roderick, Professor of
Geography, Algebra and Analysis,
and also against the person of
Johann Georg von Eckhart,

(CONTINUED)

Principal Librarian of the University and Histiographer, the court finds thusly:

That Dr. Beringer in no way was responsible for the perpetration of or the conspiracy to perpetrate a fraud of any kind concerning the publishing of his book *The Wurzburg Lithography*; the rather that he was the victim of such a conspiracy -- to wit, that numerous and sundry stones were fashioned by the said Professor Roderick and given over to Dr. Beringer through divers methods by both Professor Roderick and Professor Eckhart under the pretense of being genuine. Thus deceived, Dr. Beringer published his book in good faith, though the book itself was full of error.

In consequence, Dr. Beringer is in no way to be held responsible or accountable for this fraud. His name is clear of the law, though possibly not clear in the opinion of the public.

As the court finds Professor Roderick the chief perpetrator of this wrong-doing, he is thus commanded: he will quit his position as professor of the University immediately; further, he will quit the township of Wurzburg within one month's time, never to return, upon pain of law. His name shall be stricken from the records of the University, and no person here shall give him aid or succor.

To a lesser degree, the court finds Professor Eckhart somewhat responsible, as he helped Professor Roderick to this ill. In consequence, he is commanded thus: to quit his position of Head Librarian of the University, and to have no more traffic or access thereto (*his voice begins to break a little*) for as long as he shall live. Thus commands His Excellency, the Most Reverend ...

He begins to cry. RODERICK stands up and starts to go to him, but ECKHART quickly makes a motion for him to stay where he is.

(CONTINUED)

ECKHART (cont'd)
 (struggling to control
 himself)

As my good friend Gottfried Leibniz
 always used to say, "Never ruin an
 apology with an excuse." Now, YOU
 (*pointing at RODERICK*) apologize to
 him (*indicating BERINGER*)! And YOU
 (*indicating BERINGER*) listen!

RODERICK steps forward just a bit and composes himself.
 Then, he kneels.

RODERICK

Dr. Beringer -- Johann (*BERINGER
 looks up, but a threatening glance
 from ECKHART stalls him*) -- I am
 most humbly and abjectly sorry for
 my actions. There can be no
 justification or excuse for what I
 have done to you. As I will never
 see you again, I wish you to know
 that for the rest of my life, I
 will regret not only the folly that
 took hold of me in this, but also a
 day will not go by that I will not
 think of the harm I have done you,
 and be sorry for it anew. Though
 you may think of me as your enemy,
 and as such it will not hurt me, I
 can only assure you that you are
 wrong about that. I hope you can
 accept this as being both honest
 and true. God knows it is the
 truth of my heart.

There is a pause. ECKHART looks over at BERINGER, who has
 been a little touched in spite of himself. Still, a small
 bit of his arrogance shines through.

ECKHART

Well?

BERINGER

(after a slight pause,
 grudgingly)
 Very well, Ignatius, I accept your
 apology.

RODERICK

Thank you, Johann.

He gets up off his knees and turns to go. With a word,
 ECKHART stops him.

(CONTINUED)

ECKHART

No! (*turning to BERINGER*) Your turn.

BERINGER

(in total disbelief)
My turn! What have I to apologize for?

RODERICK

It really isn't necessary, Georg --

ECKHART

Yes, Ignatius, it IS necessary! (*turns to BERINGER*) I want you to apologize to ME! And I don't want your fatuous platitudes! I want it to be the truth of your heart! I want you to say that you are sorry that you treated me like a servant! I want you to say you're sorry for belittling me! I want you to say you're sorry for thinking that under no circumstances could I have been your equal! I want you to say you're sorry for not treating me like I was your friend! Like I was a man! Like I was even human! NOW...SAY...YOU'RE...SORRY!

BERINGER

(completely overwhelmed)
Georg. I'm....I'm very sorry.

ECKHART

Thank you, Johann. And incidentally, you DO owe Ignatius an apology. For Karl and Elke. Now apologize.

BERINGER

(almost automatically)
I'm sorry, Ignatius.

RODERICK

(with a questioning look at ECKHART)
Thank you, Johann. May God bless you.

ECKHART stands all-powerful for a moment, and then collapses internally. Both men start to go to him, but he points a warning finger. When he speaks, it is the sorrow of the whole world.

ECKHART

I...was writing a book.

His look fixes them both equally with the blame, and he exits. RODERICK and BERINGER stand for a moment with nothing to say. Finally, RODERICK speaks.

RODERICK

So he told you about Karl and Elke?

BERINGER

No. He just gave me this.

He retrieves the stone from the desk and shows it to RODERICK.

He never explained. Do you know what it means?

RODERICK

(regarding the stone)

Yes. But it's my stone to carry, Johann. Not yours. (*There is a beat.*) Well, I must go and pack.

He starts to exit, but is stopped by BERINGER's words.

BERINGER

You did try to tell me, didn't you? (Roderick gives him a questioning look.) "Pride goeth before destruction --

ROCKERICK

-- and an haughty spirit before a fall."

BERINGER

Proverbs, Chapter 16, verse 18.

A feeble attempt at a joke:

Or was that Eckhart's good friend Gottfried Leibniz?

They almost smile.

What will you do? Where will you go?

RODERICK

I don't know. I have distant
cousins on the coast, near
Weimar. Maybe they have need of an
Algebra teacher there. (*He looks at
the stone.*) Or who knows?
Perhaps I'll try my hand as a
fisherman. It's been a long time
since I was on a boat.

He starts to exit.

BERINGER

Ignatius?

RODERICK

Yes?

BERINGER

(*It is hard for him to say*)
Best of luck.

RODERICK

Go with God.

The two look at each other for another moment, and then
RODERICK exits. BERINGER looks after him, and the lights
fade just as:

CODA

A single spot comes up on ECKHART.

And so, Gottfried, I have often
scoured my own past for an
explanation as to what happened --
some defect in my lineage, perhaps.
At times, I have even wanted to
blame you. But the simple truth is
- I was the root. The branch came
from me, not any great-great-
great-great ancestor. The past is
dead, however. It has no value on
its own - any more than a dead
tree has value - until it finds
some use. Either as the planks of
a house, the cradle that holds a
child, the churn that helps
produce the butter. The dead tree
even has use when it decays. And
so that is all I can hope for - to
find some use.

(CONTINUED)

The spot on him dims and the lights shift to show that seven years have passed. BERINGER moves to his desk. He is older, wearier. He sits and begins to pore over another book. He resorts more than ever to his magnifying glass, which does not seem strong enough anymore. He discards it and picks up a much larger one and looks back at the book with greater satisfaction. There is a soft knocking at the door.

BERINGER

Yes?

The door opens to reveal an older RODERICK. The years have softened him, but not in a physical way. He is more open, and his face is warm.

RODERICK

Dr. Beringer? May I come in?

BERINGER

(squinting as he looks up)
Yes? Who is it?

RODERICK

It is I. Ignatius. Ignatius Roderick.

BERINGER

(surprised and pleased)
Roderick? Ignatius! Come in, come in!

RODERICK enters the room and crosses to the desk. BERINGER stands and they shake hands warmly.

RODERICK

Thank you, Dr. Beringer. It's good to see you.

BERINGER

Please, Ignatius, it's Johann. You haven't forgotten, have you? It's only been six -- no, seven -- years, yes?

RODERICK

Almost eight. And I do remember.

BERINGER

Almost eight! How is it you are back in Wurzburg?

RODERICK

I've returned with His Excellency's most generous indulgence, because of Georg.

BERINGER

Georg! Ignatius, I am sorry to have to tell you this, but Georg has died. He passed away a little over a month ago.

RODERICK

Yes, I know. We corresponded a few times, during my exile. He spoke of Wurzburg and the University and the changes here, but for the most part, his letters were about his book.

BERINGER

Yes, the historiography. I'm afraid he never finished it, poor man. It was the abiding desire of his life.

RODERICK

And that's why I've returned. The Prince-Bishop has graciously allowed me to attempt its completion.

BERINGER

Really! What a wonderful idea, Ignatius.

RODERICK

Well, I feel it might help repay him a little, for his kindness and friendship to me. He tried to prevent me from playing that horrible trick on you, but I refused to listen! So, in a way, this is my penance.

BERINGER

(chuckling)

Well, I was deaf to his warnings too. And I had a penance, as well. Do you know that I spent almost three years trudging about Europe, buying back most of the copies that had been sold?

(CONTINUED)

RODERICK

Oh, Johann, that must have been humiliating for you. Not to mention expensive.

BERINGER

Expensive, yes. But not humiliating! Oh, it was in the beginning, I suppose, but each time I did it, it shaved just a little bit of my ego, until there was no ego left. And I realized how heavy that ego had been, and how light my heart felt when I got rid of it! When I look at it now, I could finally see what you meant.

RODERICK

What I meant?

BERINGER

Yes, about God not managing every little event, but letting us blunder around, getting into our own messes and finding out that we're not as smart as we think we are!

RODERICK

(musing)

And do you know -- the main reason I came here today was to tell you that you were right. God DOES do what He does for a reason, and He is in control of everything -- even if we can't recognize it at the time. Strange how our vision changes, isn't it?

BERINGER

Yes -- although my vision has changed mostly because I am old.

They laugh.

So you have all of Georg's notes and research?

RODERICK

Yes -- almost forty volumes of it. Funny. His estimate was right on the mark. (*BERINGER gives him a questioning look.*) He thought the first draft would be finished about

(CONTINUED)

RODERICK (cont'd)
now, and then the real work would begin. I think it may keep me busy until the end of my life, too. Oh, well. "Choose a job you love --"

BERINGER
Exactly! Oh! And speaking of Georg and that time, I have something for you!

RODERICK
For me?

BERINGER
Yes. That stone you carved!

He begins to rummage through the desk.

RODERICK
Oh, you mean the one with your name on it?

BERINGER
My name?

RODERICK
Yes. Did you find it the next morning? I assumed you must have. That was the same week you brought the suit.

BERINGER
You carved my name on a stone?

RODERICK
Of course! And I placed it in the exact spot where you found the original. It was the only way I could think of to prove to you that the whole thing was a fraud. But I won't accept it unless you let me give you something in return. Will you dine with me tonight? At my expense?

BERINGER
Yes, Ignatius, I will, and gladly. Because we have much to discuss. I never found any stone with my name on it. I was referring to this.

He finally retrieves the rock paperweight and hands it silently to RODERICK. RODERICK smiles as he accepts it, but when he examines it, he falters a bit.

Do you remember?

RODERICK nods.

Then I want the whole story over dinner. At your expense.

BERINGER gets up and gathers his things, straightens the desk and puts on his coat. RODERICK, meanwhile, stands lost in thought. BERINGER finishes and goes to the door.

Ignatius?

RODERICK

Oh, yes, Johann. I was.... remembering. (*He laughs.*) Why did Georg give it to you?

BERINGER

I have no idea. Perhaps to show me that the stones could have been a joke for children. That it wasn't a message from God at all.

RODERICK

I'm not so sure about that.

BERINGER

(examining the stone)
So who are Karl and Elke, anyway? A pair of star-crossed lovers? Like Romeo and Juliet?

RODERICK

Not quite. Come along -- you will get the whole story over dinner -- as promised.

As they exit...

So you never found the stone with your name on it? (*BERINGER shakes his head.*) It must still be up there! I wonder what the discoverer will make of it?

BERINGER

Just as long as it's not another miracle.

They chuckle companionably as they go out the door, just as the lights

BLACKOUT

SET/TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

The play has a single set - Dr. Beringer's office in the Medical School.

It is possible for the set to be very simple. The play could easily be done in the round, with no walls onstage. The set could also be as elaborate as a budget would allow. So the play is very flexible in this way.

Lighting also could be used to great effect at the director's discretion, but all that is absolutely necessary is that the stage can be seen from the audience.

A desk and two chairs are the only requirements as far as furniture, but, again the furniture could be as elaborate as the production budget will allow.

There need to be as many stones as the budget and space will allow, appearing and disappearing in the scene changes. According to history there were about 2500 of them during the course of the action, so the more the better. I would suggest at least several bags, boxes or fake piles to suggest the number of stones if at all possible.

A crate containing copies of Beringer's books is on stage (and off) during the scene change. At least 10-12 identical books (with the suggestion of more). They should be as expensive and rich-looking as the budget will allow.

Performance rights must be secured before production. For contact information, please see [the And The Stones Will Cry Out information page.](#)