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As Angels Do in Heaven: A Play in Five Acts, Written by David J. Marcou.

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For my son, Matthew A. Marcou, my parents (David A. and Rose Marcou), our family, and our friends – and most especially among the latter, the O’Caseys, Bells, Kiedrowskis, Whales, Freibergs, Johnses, Yis, Pierces, Sims, Butsons, and all the archivists, publishers, religious, teachers, students, troopers, menders, and producers of the world.

“For when God has all that He should have of thy heart, ...the common business of thy life is a conforming to God’s will on earth as angels do in heaven.” – William Law (1686-1761).

Cast of Characters: The main characters in this play are Bert Harter, a famous British photojournalist; his wife, Sheila; David Lamont, a young writer-photographer and friend of the Harters; plus many fictional and non-fictional figures, including Sean O’Casey, W.B. Yeats, G.B. Shaw, God, and the Devil.

Overview: *As Angels Do in Heaven* is meant to be a five-act production, with Acts I, II, and III done more or less naturalistically, and Acts IV and V done more expressionistically. A few figures from history, as well as several semi-fictional characters are dealt with here, and stylistic considerations are essential to their proper rendering. Also, the Narrator’s part should be performed as a fictional role that fits effectively into all sections of the play. As for the play segment within *Angels*, David Lamont is having difficulty with the climax of *The Red Tassel*, so his director has the cast rehearse two key scenes (one seen “rehearsed,” the other seen on film, ‘in performance’) for David’s sake. Both scenes should somehow echo O’Casey’s *Silver Tassie*. But *Angels* and *The Red Tassel* must be more heroic than anti-heroic.

As Angels Do in Heaven -- Act I: An Author’s Hope-DJM

Action: The Narrator emerges, Stage Left. He is dressed in a navy blue cardigan sweater and medium gray slacks, with a white shirt, burgundy tie, and black loafers on. Also, he carries a book and a pipe, the latter of which he puffs on from time to time. His accent is Midwestern American, and his look is that of a common-sense professor of history from a good Midwestern University. He begins to speak...

NARRATOR: “Sunday, December 24, 1999. I just finished reading over my current project, my play, *The Red Tassel*. I also just finished a phone call from my agent, Glen Dunbar. After getting nowhere for four years with my manuscript-history of *Picture Pages* Magazine, it finally appears that we’re making progress with a publisher on that project. It seems St. Martin’s Press is interested in signing me to a contract for *When the Stars Pulled Faces at the Moon*, partly because Stefan Szakall, the founder of that magazine, critiqued it in 1995. Needless to say, I’m very happy to hear all of this at last. Glen is a first-rate agent, and I know he can bring this off. But I must admit, I didn’t know if I was good enough to stay the course. Maybe now I will be able to.” (The Narrator puffs on his pipe three or four times, then says...) I’ve just been reading through someone’s diary. Now, that isn’t always the best thing to do while its author is still alive, but I’ve been granted access to this diary by the powers that be (pointing upwards and then to the just-lit apartment of David Lamont, Stage Right). Maybe, though, we should listen in to what David Lamont and his agent actually have said to each other about this.

(David Lamont, a pleasant-looking man of about 50 years, has been reading, when his phone rings. Lights come up, Stage Left, and we see Glen Dunbar in his New York office, a not wholly refurbished place, but one that does the job, nevertheless. Glen is about 45, and worldly. David is in his seasonally decorated apartment in Wisconsin.)

DAVID: Hello, this is the David Lamont residence.

GLEN: Hello, David? This is Glen. Merry Christmas!

DAVID: Merry Christmas to you, Glen! How are you?

GLEN: Well, I think we're close to a deal with St. Martin's.

DAVID: So, you think they'll offer us the moon for it?

GLEN: Well, I wouldn't say the moon, but close enough, David. I think we can count on them for a \$30,000 advance. You see, there's a great deal of interest these days in British subjects, and you hit on a theme many people still can identify with – photographs that tell Britain's story in the middle of the 20th century. Besides that, they like Stefan Szakall because he did a book on the presidents for them. They seem to think his critique of your manuscript will help them with the editing.

DAVID: Thirty thousand, eh? Geez, that sounds sweet. It would make all our effort worthwhile. What's the deal amount to?

GLEN: Well, you'll get \$30,000 up front, with a 10% commission after that, on gross sales. I get \$10,000. You will receive 25 personal copies of the book; and I am still negotiating for movie rights. It looks like we may be able to get Marc Weisman to play Stefan Szakall, Deke Andrews to play Tom Hopkins, and George Newton to play Bert Harter; we should be set for a while, if that's true.

DAVID: Sounds too good to be true. Anything else I should know about?

GLEN: Well, only that we still need to negotiate a deal with Holton Images for the book and movie rights to their photographs. That shouldn't be a problem, given your previous contacts with them.

DAVID: Let's hope not. Do you want me to phone Mr. Hawkins, their executive director?

GLEN: I don't think that will be necessary, David. Someone from St. Martin's will take care of it.

DAVID: Okay, Glen. Thanks for everything. I hope this all works out, in the end.

GLEN: I think it will, David. I think it will. Now, how is your play coming?

DAVID: *The Red Tassel* is getting there; but the climax is proving difficult. It's two scenes of naturalistic style in a mixed style play, and I haven't been able to justify them properly to myself yet. Hopefully, I'll be able to...

(Lights fade. The Narrator puffs on his pipe and says...)

NARRATOR: Yes, yes, Mr. Lamont is working on a play. And it's not a bad play either; but it does need some work yet. He has too much talk in it and not enough action, which is typical of plays these days. But I needn't tell you that! Maybe we should have a little more action ourselves now, and stop my talking for now. Lights! Camera! Action!

(The stage lights are extinguished as the audience sees a short, "archaic" film, of the interior of a working-class bedroom in the Priory Buildings, in London's Elephant and Castle district, in late 1916. Three-year-old Bert Harter is in bed while his parents are out. A sitter is downstairs with Bert's infant sister, Alice. At first, we see young Bert looking into a mirror placed at an angle in the corner in such a way that the moon's light can be seen clearly in it. Bert's face is curious and delighted at once – the perfect child's face, it would seem. After giggling and aahing at the moon's "visage" for a time, little Bert begins making faces at the moon's reflection. All goes well until a thin cloud intervenes and the moon reemerges, "making a face" back at Bert. The stunned child begins to cry loudly. In a moment, the child's sitter comes through the door. She is a pretty, lower-class girl, with the ability to calm crying children instinctively. There is a rocker in the far corner of the room, which she puts to good use. Picking up Bert, and cuddling him gingerly, she sings, "Hush, Little Baby," and Bert grows still. He looks up into the girl's face now, recovering that trusting sense of love and hope that youngsters know most often with regard to their mother. Marge is the girl's name. She tells Bert a little story next. It's a delicious tale – of courageous men and women, who fight a great battle against the forces of evil and overcome them. It is akin to the Arthurian Cycle, but derives from even older legends, and it involves the death of a dragon. Young Bert listens closely to all Marge tells him. Then, once the dragon has been dispatched, Bert claps energetically, and shrieks, "Good 'un, Marge, good 'un! More! More!" Marge then begins a fairy tale for the boy. It is the story of Hansel and Gretel. Marge does the voice of the wicked old woman splendidly, and before the young protagonists are rescued, Bert falls asleep. Just as Marge puts him back in bed, Bert's parents call up, "Marge, are you up there?" The girl goes to the door and speaks softly to the Harters as they ascend the stairs, "Yes, I'm 'ere. I just got Bert to sleep. 'e must've been frightened by something. I sang to 'im and told 'im some stories. 'e's

fine now.” “Good,” says Mrs. Harter. “And I see Alice is sleeping like a doll downstairs. Albert will settle up with you, then. We weren’t at ‘is mum’s as long as we thought we’d be. Still, it was a lively evening. Wouldn’t you say, Luv?” Albert enters the room and intones, “Twas, my dear. Twas.” The three of them descend the stairs, and soon Marge is gone. Downstairs lights go out first. Then Mrs. Harter is upstairs checking in on Bert, once she’s put the baby, Alice, in her cradle next to Bert’s bed. At last, the adults are in their own bedroom next door, undressing. Mrs. Harter is pregnant. The couple talks, while in bed. Then, they kiss and turn over. Mrs. Harter reaches up to turn off the table lamp. There is a noise, and Albert says, “I feel lovely tonight, Dear. Let’s do something about it!” They do so, as the moon shines brightly into their room. Then the film fades. Lights come up on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: That’s better. I like 1916 London, despite the war on the Continent, especially when London’s seen from the perspective of ordinary Cockney folks like the Harters. (He picks up another book and puffs on his pipe again.) But we must move on now to another part of our story. It’s the late 1920’s and the noted Irish playwright, Sean O’Casey, has just sent an early draft of his drama *The Silver Tassie* to William Butler Yeats -- the great Irish poet, playwright, and theatrical impresario -- prior to a potential production of it by the Abbey Theatre of Dublin. Yeats is dictating a letter to his wife, to be sent to O’Casey.

YEATS: Take this down, Darling. “Dear Sean: Your play was sent to me at Rapallo by some mistake of the Theatre. It arrived just after I had left and was returned from there to Dublin. I had looked forward with great hope and excitement to reading your play, and not merely because of my admiration for your work, for I bore in mind that the Abbey owed its recent prosperity to you. If you had not brought us your plays just at that moment, I doubt if it would now exist.” That’s a good beginning, I think, Sweetheart. What do you think I should say next?

MRS. YEATS: I believe you should get to the play now, Dear.

YEATS: Yes, you’re right, my Sure-Sighted Beauty. Next then: “I read the first act with admiration; I thought it was the best first act you had written, and told a friend that you had surpassed yourself. The next night I read the second and third acts, and tonight I have read the fourth.” How do I say what comes next, I wonder.

MRS. YEATS: Be direct, Dear. He will take it better, in the long run, if you are direct.

YEATS: Yes, I suppose you’re right. Then this: “I am sad and discouraged; you have no subject. You were interested in the Irish Civil War, and at every moment of those plays wrote out of your own amusement with life or your sense of its tragedy; you were excited, and we all caught your excitement; you were exasperated almost beyond endurance by what you had seen or heard as a man is by what happens under his window, and you moved us as Swift moved his contemporaries.” (Yeats looks directly into his wife’s eyes, and she returns his look.) “But you are not interested in the Great War; you never stood on its battle fields or walked in its hospitals, and so write out of your opinions. You illustrate those opinions by a series of almost unrelated scenes, as you might in a leading article; there is no dominating character, no dominating action, neither psychological unity nor unity of action; and your great power of the past has been the creation of some unique character who dominated all about him and was himself a main impulse in some action that filled the play from beginning to end.” What do you think, Dear? Am I warming to my subject, or heating it up too much?

MRS. YEATS: I believe you are doing well by your true feelings. And your thoughts are doing well along with them.

YEATS: Good, then take this down next: “The mere greatness of the world war has thwarted you; it has refused to become mere background, and obtrudes itself upon the stage as so much dead wood that will not burn up everything but itself; there should be no room in a play for anything that does not belong to it; the whole history of the world must be reduced to wallpaper in front of which the characters must pose and speak. Among the things that dramatic action must burn up are the author’s opinions; while he is writing he has no business to know anything that is not a portion of that action. Do you suppose for one moment that Shakespeare educated Hamlet and King Lear, by telling them what he thought and believed? As I see it, Hamlet and Lear educated Shakespeare, and I have no doubt that in the process of that education he found out that he was an altogether different man to what he thought himself, and had altogether different beliefs. A dramatist can help his characters to educate him by thinking and studying everything that gives them the language they are groping for through his hands and eyes, but the control must be theirs, and that is why the ancient philosophers thought a poet or a dramatist Daimon-possessed.” (Yeats touches his wife’s hand.) I am nearing the end, my Dear.

MRS. YEATS: My hand is still good, William. Carry on.

YEATS: Finally, you can write this: ‘This is a hateful letter to write, or rather to dictate – I am dictating to my wife – and all the more so, because I can not advise you to amend the play. It is all too abstract, after the first act; the second act is an interesting technical experiment, but it is too long for the material; and after that there is nothing. I can

imagine how you toiled over this play. A good scenario writes itself, it puts words into the mouths of all the characters while we sleep; but a bad scenario exacts the most miserable toil. I see nothing for it but a new theme, something you have found, and no newspaper writer has ever found. What business have we with anything but the unique? Put the dogmatism of this letter down to splenetic age, and forgive it. As ever, W.B. Yeats." What do you think, Mrs. Yeats? Will it revitalize Mr. O'Casey eventually, or will it thoroughly deflate him forever?

MRS. YEATS: Hopefully, it will revitalize him, after it's deflated him. It's a good letter, and he should appreciate it, once he's properly considered it.

(She rises and kisses Yeats; then they move to separate corners of their room as the lights fade. When the lights come up again, the Narrator speaks...)

NARRATOR: Now we must move forward in time to 1982 and the Lenoir Nursing Home in Columbia, Missouri. David Lamont is a 31-year-old student in the Missouri School of Journalism, and he's interviewing Mary Paxton Keeley for a story on that pioneering woman, who is now 94 years old. (She is sitting in a rocking chair, with a blanket on her lap. A picture of Harry, Bess, and Margaret Truman sits on a nearby table.) It is a nice day to talk, and David is about to hit upon a subject he will long be interested in.

DAVID: It's good to know you and the Trumans were friends long before Harry became president, and that you're Margaret's godmother. I'll bet Bess got some of her gumption from you.

MARY: No, Bess had gumption before Hector was a pup -- long before that, in fact.

DAVID: Speaking of old times, could you tell me the story of the red tassel?

MARY: Oh yeah, that's somewhere in the cobwebs of my brain. Dean Walter Williams called me into his office one day and said, "You're the only woman in the first graduating class, therefore you can choose the color of the tassel." So I said, like Mark Twain, "Any old color will do, just as long as it's red." So that's the way journalism graduates got red tassels. And my students, when they graduated from Christian College, which today is called Columbia College, I would let them all put the red tassel on their caps.

DAVID: That's an appealing image and story -- very nice. I also heard you've a good story about your courage, which was not unlike that of your friends, the Trumans -- a story about flying in an army balloon.

MARY: Not an army balloon -- no. It was just a man that had these balloons and he was trying to see if they'd do to be army balloons. That's a long-winded story, which I hate to tell you,

DAVID: Tell it to me anyway.

MARY: Okay. I had a hard time going 'cause A.B. MacDonald, of the *Kansas City Star*, was city editor and he said, "No, I'm not going to let you go." The boys had gone up in the morning and I wanted to, too. They came back at lunch-time to write their stories and I said, "I'm going up in that balloon. I'm gonna ask MacDonald." And they said, "MacDonald won't let you." And MacDonald said, "You're not going up in that balloon. I told your father I'd take care of you." Well, I didn't want to be taken care of. And so, the managing editor, who had come over from the Denver Post -- he gave me my job to begin with -- so I went in to him and said, "I want to go up in a balloon." And he said, "That'll be a real nice story..." After lunch, the boys took me out in a car and I borrowed a stocking cap to keep my hair outa my eyes. And I tied a piece of elastic to my dress around my ankles, to keep it from blowing up over my head. It was a kinda dangerous thing to do, but you had to do it, being a woman -- first one in it -- you had to do these things, to show 'em you could do 'em.

DAVID: Do you have any idea how high you got up?

MARY: Well, I've been trying to figure since. I never had sense enough to ask anybody how high I went. But we went out once to fly a balloon from here, and this fellow that was flying it, took it up to 200 feet -- I think it was more than that. Aye, 200 feet high. The people -- they looked like ants. And then I got sick 'cause I couldn't see the people. It was like a swing tied under an old apple tree and all that was between you and eternity was your holdin' those hands onto that rope.

DAVID: Who talked the balloon owner into letting you go up?

MARY: Well, this man came out and I said -- after lunch, the boys took me out -- I said, "I'm going up in that balloon." He said, "You are not goin' up in that balloon. I'm not takin' a woman up in the balloon." And the boys said to him,

“Well, you won’t get any advertisin’ if you don’t.” He wanted the advertisin’ – and one of the boys on the paper, the one I borrowed the stocking cap from, was a photographer. And all those years afterward I found someone that knew that he was workin’ still. Ralph Baird was his name. That was the first time I ever saw him.

DAVID: Did he get a good picture of you that day?

MARY: It was from under the balloon – just like you’d get of me in the plane sittin’ up in that swing. It was enough to horrify my father.

DAVID: That sounds like a wonderful experience.

MARY: That’s the most exciting thing I ever did. The wind first blew the little clouds through. Then it blew more clouds. One time I thought it was going to blow me over, but I stuck....

DAVID: That took a lot of courage, Ms. Keeley. I once knew a photojournalist who did something courageous, but when I first heard his story, I didn’t truly appreciate it.

MARY: And who was this photojournalist?

DAVID: His name is Bert Harter. He’s an English photojournalist, and I met him last year.

MARY: And why was he courageous?

DAVID: Well, besides being a war correspondent in eight or nine wars, he also put down his camera once to save several human lives. You see, he was driving through a town in Germany called Osnabruck, I believe, near the end of World War II, and he came upon a smoky scene, which turned out to be a basement fire that had trapped several recently liberated Russian slaves as they foraged for blankets and clothing.

MARY: And what did he do?

DAVID: He first sent his driver back for more help. Then he went downstairs to bring up as many women as he could. By the time the driver came back with more help, Sgt. Harter had saved many women’s lives. He then took pictures of the aftermath.

MARY: That does sound courageous. Was he given any sort of recognition for his heroism?

DAVID: I think he received a military commendation; but there were so many heroes in that war, he didn’t think he’d done anything special. Today, though, I can see how great a man he is. I respect him a great deal, just as I respect you. Everything moves so quickly in life, I just wish I could thank people better when they first do things for me. Sometimes I feel like I’m part of some Thornton Wilder play, with life slipping through my fingers at 100 times the speed I can catch it. Do you know what I mean?

MARY: I kinda think I do. Maybe you still can – catch it, I mean.

DAVID: I’ll try, Ms. Keeley. Now, can I take your picture?

MARY: That’ll be fine with me. Just make sure you show my left profile in them. That’s my good side, you know.

DAVID: Of course, your left profile is okay with me.

(David begins taking her picture. Then, he asks if he can move her wheelchair toward the window. She nods “Yes,” and the final view of her is smiling up at David’s camera from just in front of her window – a window with pictures of ducks on it -- and the table with the Trumans’ picture nearby. Lights out on them; lights up on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: Next you see the study of a man after my own heart – the study of Prof. David Krause, drama critic and scholar. It is December 1957, and the good professor is working on an essay that has been getting away from him up until now. But tonight, he is on the money as never before.

(Prof. Krause picks up what he’s written last and begins to read it aloud...)

PROF. KRAUSE: Now, this should be better: “Among the important discoveries O’Casey made in his new experiment, he found that it was not only possible but necessary to combine realistic and non-realistic techniques, as he had already

combined comic and tragic material in his previous work. He found that he could set a larger theme in a framework of reality and at the same time develop it allegorically through the methods of Expressionism. He found that he could bring a sharper tone of moral passion to his theme by projecting it through the symbolic second act, as well as through Harry Heegan in the other three acts, thus making his play an ethical as well as an emotional spectacle, giving it moral as well as imaginative power. As a result, *The Silver Tassie* is one of the most original and powerful anti-war plays ever written – a passionate morality play for modern man.” (Moving back to his desk, the professor reads as he writes...) “In *Juno and the Paycock* the character defines the theme; in *The Silver Tassie* the theme defines the character. The methods and forms are different, and the result is that in one play he created a noble woman, in the other a noble theme.” (He continues to himself and the audience, as he gets up from his desk...) I suppose no playwright will ever craft the quintessential story of Irish nobility and tragedy in one piece as well as O’Casey did with *Juno*; and yet *The Silver Tassie* literally jumps off the page with its humanity – in opposition to a horrible, unnecessary world war. The First World War was as unnecessary in its implications as the Second World War was vital to the best interests of humankind. (He himself lights a pipe and puffs on it.) If I can do nothing else with this essay, perhaps even with my life, than to clear up this nonsense, at least theoretically, between W.B. Yeats, arguably the greatest poet of the 20th century, and Sean O’Casey, one of the greatest playwrights ever, then my career will have served a useful purpose. O’Casey was like an angel come to Yeats, and Yeats rebuffed him by saying he didn’t know what he was doing with the *Tassie*. I doubt any two human beings could have seen the thing as differently as W.B. Yeats and I do; but perhaps O’Casey balanced things best by seeing his play through to production in 1929. The rest belongs to history.

(Lights go down, except for a spotlight on the Narrator. He has yet another book in his hand now. And he speaks between glances at it and his own thoughts. The next action occurs on film...)

NARRATOR: It’s now the night of January 11, 1941, during the Nazi blitz over London. Bert Harter, soon-to-be-legendary British photojournalist, is spending his nights with a fire-fighting unit in the capital. He is on the last night of an otherwise dreary, nonessential coverage, when the call comes out that the Nazis have hit a nearby part of the city. Bert is at his mother’s house on Lancaster Street, from where a driver takes him immediately out to the fire, and he goes to work there.

BERT (to his driver): There’s the ware’ouses that were reported burning. Let’s stop ‘ere and scramble round a while.

DRIVER: Yessir.

(They disembark and head for the warehouses. Bert joins up with a fireman, and they head down into the cellar while the driver waits. Bert begins taking pictures downstairs. Before long, though, the ceiling above them collapses, and Bert and his partner are trapped.)

BERT (looking for an exit): We’ve got to find a way outa ‘ere. Dammit, we’re too young to die.

FIREMAN (looking, too): Yessir, we certainly are.

(They dig through the rubble lying all around them. After a minute or two, with the fire getting closer and closer, Bert finds a hole.)

BERT (motioning in his direction): ‘ere we are, Mate. You go first.

FIREMAN (moving toward the hole): No sir, you go first. I’ll be right behind you.

BERT: Okay, if you insist.

(Bert scrambles up through the hole and into a dark tunnel running along beneath the warehouse. A few warehouses along, the pair emerge, near fire-fighters who have been digging for them.)

BERT (coming up behind the diggers with a big grin on his face): Lucky us; you can stop digging. (The diggers are happy to see the two men.) We’ve only got a few holes burnt in our clothes. Thank God we didn’t get stuck in there.

(The film fades out as they talk. Then, the Narrator speaks...)

NARRATOR: Our scene shifts to an area north of the River Thames in the City of London, later that night.

(As the film restarts, Bert is photographing on the ground, but he motions to a fire-fighter, signaling that he will go atop one of the buildings. The fire-fighter signals okay, and Bert begins climbing a fire-escape. As he goes higher, he swears to himself, then shouts down to the same fire-fighter, “Jeez, this is off the ground a bit.” Soon, he is on top of the

building, when a strange scene comes into his viewfinder. It appears a fire-fighter has become stuck up there, and he is not moving. Bert takes a picture; then, before he can move in to see what the man's real condition is, two fire-rescuers grab the immobile man and head downstairs with him. One of the rescuers shouts at Bert.)

FIRE-RESCUER #1: Get off the building, Sir! It's about ready to go down!

BERT (shouting back): If you say so! I'm on my way down, then!

(As Bert's foot hits the pavement, the building begins to collapse and the film fades out. The Narrator speaks again.)

NARRATOR: Mr. Harter is now near his mother's house on Lancaster Street, on the same night, but he doesn't realize where he is right away.

(As the motion picture restarts, Bert is flipping through his film cases to see if he has any more to use. He finds none. However, he suddenly realizes he is just around the corner from his mother's house, so he heads there. Once at that site, he finds his sister Lily running about frantically, trying to put out incendiary-bomb fires. He decides to help her.)

BERT: Lily, you can use some 'elp, it looks like.

LILY: Bert, it's good you're back. The damn Gerrys 'ave been bombing us bad 'ere. Grab a bucket, then!

BERT (getting busy): Be careful, Sis. It's going to be a long war, and I want to make sure we both make it through till the end.

LILY (pouring water all around): You and me both! Let's beat the Gerrys 'ere first. Then we can beat 'em on their home turf.

BERT (pouring water himself): That's the spirit, Sis. Let's do our business, then!

(The film fades. Then, lights up on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: Mr. Harter's heroics pay off. We next see him in the offices of *Picture Pages Magazine*, in Shoe Lane, just off Fleet Street, in London. It's February 1, 1941, and Bert Harter is enjoying the acclaim of Editor Tom Hopkins and others on the staff. (This action occurs live on stage.)

TOM: Way to go, Bert (shaking his hand). First photographer credit in our paper's history. Sterling work, to be sure.

REPORTER #1 (holding up the most famous two-page spread in the magazine's history): Yes, let's read these captions: "The Height of the Blaze: Eighty Feet up in the Air a Fireman Strikes at the Heart of the Fire. Stark and grim is the climax of the fire fight. Blazing walls are crumbling. The fire is bursting through. Overhead, guided by the flames, the German bombers are circling. One after another they release their load of death. Unmoved, unflinching, the firemen run out their ladder. One man mounts, higher and higher, till he is alone above the flames. There, eighty feet up, he strikes at the very source of the fire." Then this (pointing), "The Man on the Ladder: In Clouds of Smoke and Steam He Faces the Fire Alone. All night long they have fought the fire. They have fought it in the streets streaming with water. They have fought it within buildings blazing like a furnace. On to the flames they have poured a hundred thousand gallons of water, concentrated at colossal pressure. And still the fight goes on. From our rule of anonymity we except these pictures. They were taken by A. (he adds, "for Albert") Harter, one of our own cameramen." Let's hear it for Bert Harter! Hip-Hip-Hooray!

(Shouts of "Hip-Hip-Hooray!" break out throughout the news room. Bert's face turns red as one of the women staffers plants a kiss on his lips. Then he has something to say himself.)

BERT (genuinely moved): I don't deserve any special recognition. Just doing my job out there. And I was lucky: the Good Lord or someone seems to want me to finish out this war. In any case, thanks go to all of you. I hope I can continue to earn your respect.

TOM: Well-said, Bert (shaking his hand again, and this time speaking only to Bert) – there may be a promotion in all of this for you, but we'll talk about that later.

BERT: Thank you, Tom. I'll do my best work for you.

TOM: Yes, Bert, I expect you will.

(Lights are dimmed at *Picture Pages*, and come up again on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: Things are definitely looking up for Mr. Harter. He opens his mail on March 3 at his mother's house.

(As Bert opens his mail, his sister Lily is again with him. Located squarely at Center Stage, he does a jump and a kick as he reads a letter from Tom Hopkins.)

BERT: Lily, I've been promoted! -- to a staff position with the *Post*, with eight pounds a week guaranteed, and the chance to make a lot more if I've extra pictures in the paper! Mum, Dad, and Dora will be pleased. Maybe Dora will even quit nagging me about the picture business now that I've struck it rich.

LILY: I don't know about that, Bert. But I knew you 'ad it in you. Let's celebrate with a brew between us. (Opening a bottle and pouring.)

BERT: Sounds good to me, Sis. (Clinking glasses and drinking.)

LILY: Now, we've to let Mum, Dad, and Dora know. Let's get on the phone, then, to Dora, Mister. No time to spare. We'll tell Mum and Dad when they come back from shopping.

BERT: Yep, Sis. No time to spare. No time to spare. (Hesitating.) Gosh, I wonder what Dora will think....

(Lights out. End of Act I.)

Act II: Where Hell Leaves Off, History Begins.

Action: The Narrator emerges, Stage Right. He is carrying a photo album. He pages through it briefly, then speaks. The action in the next two scenes takes place on film, except for the Narrator's part.

NARRATOR: It is early April, 1945. Sgt. Harter is in Osnabruck, Germany, by a bombed-out department store. German police -- who have been allowed to continue in that capacity by Allied authorities, after the area was taken over by our troops -- have thrown strips of burning paper into a basement, where some liberated Russian slaves have been foraging for blankets and clothing. The strips of paper start a fire, and Sgt. Harter and his jeep driver, Private Harry Flowers, have just discovered it. No one else has been checking to see if anyone is trapped in that basement, so when the two Brits arrive, Sgt. Harter goes into the basement. He is about to discover what is happening to the unfortunates below, as he follows their cries for help.

SGT. HARTER (grasping at walls in the smoke): Whoa! (Bumping into a screaming woman.) Ma'am, I'm here to help you out.

NARRATOR: He grabs her, thank God.

SGT. HARTER: Let's get you out of this hellhole, okay?

NARRATOR: Coughing on the smoke, he carries the woman up a metal ladder and throws her onto the pavement above.

SGT. HARTER: Private! Get this lady breathing decently; then go for more help. There are a lot of people trapped down there.

PVT. FLOWERS: Okay, Sergeant. Anything you say.

NARRATOR: Pvt. Flowers begins to breathe into the woman's mouth, trying to restore her. Sgt. Harter goes back down the ladder..

SGT. HARTER: I'm here. Where are you?

SECOND WOMAN: Here, we are here!

SGT. HARTER: Where?

NARRATOR: Feeling his way along the walls, he eventually finds the room where she is and grabs her, carrying her now back along that smoky hallway.

SGT. HARTER: Good (as he reaches the ladder). I'm getting you out of here, Ma'am. Private, are you still up there?!

PVT. FLOWERS: Yes, Sergeant, but I'd better head back for more help if there are many more of them.

NARRATOR: Sgt. Harter looks at the condition of both women, who are breathing okay.

SGT. HARTER: All right, Private, head out. But get back here in a hurry!

PVT. FLOWERS: Will do, Sir. (He jumps in the jeep and is gone.)

SGT. HARTER (going back down the ladder): Who else is down here?

NARRATOR: The flames and smoke are intensifying, but he hears another voice, this one not so close.

SGT. HARTER: Where are you, Ma'am?

NARRATOR: This lady doesn't speak English, so the Brit has to follow the trail of her whimpers.

SGT. HARTER: I'll get you out, Ma'am.

(Sgt. Harter follows the wall along, without being able to see one foot in front of him. The woman is still whimpering. He stumbles, gets up, feels the wall again, hears the whimpering once more, looks in one room, then finds her in the next, and picks her tiny body up gently.)

SGT. HARTER: There, there, now, Lady. We're getting out of here alive, you and me, and maybe some of these other people, too.

(He struggles along the smoky wall, almost stumbles, coughs twice, then bumps into the ladder again. Just soon enough, he is up the ladder with the woman, and they both gasp for air. Private Flowers is just getting back now with some Pioneer Corps troops they had seen a few minutes before they came upon the fire.)

HARRY: Sgt. Harter, I'm back, and I've brought some more help.

SGT. HARTER: And not a moment too soon, Private Flowers. Thank God for small favors. There are more of 'em downstairs, and the smoke is terrible. (The fresh troops move in.) Now, if nobody else minds awfully much, I think I'll take a few pictures.

(The Sergeant gets his camera out of the jeep, and shoots a picture of a beret-topped Pioneer trooper carrying a rescued woman out of harm's way. And he keeps snapping pictures, almost feverishly at first, free at last to do the work he is paid for. This film segment ends happily, unlike the next.... Stage lights out, then up again.)

NARRATOR (on the other side of the stage): Our film footage begins again in a slightly different time and place. I say "slightly" to be kind. It is a thoroughly terrifying time and place. It is April 19, 1945 – the day after Allied forces liberate Bergen-Belsen concentration camp – the same camp where little Anne Frank met her death. Bert Harter has been allowed in to photograph the ghastly sights that await him. He enters the gate in a jeep that seems as marvelously timeless as Bergen-Belsen is heaped in horrible history. At the gate, his driver is instructed where to park, and then Sgt. Harter disembarks, to document the thousands of murders that have taken place there over the past few years. The British Lieutenant who shows him around, has arrived the day before and is an expert regarding the cruelty of war, as a result – he knows all about genocide, too much about genocide, in fact. They go immediately to an exposed area, where hundreds of bodies are stretched out, one by one, on their backs mainly – remnants of what used to be decent men, women, and children. Sgt. Harter is sickened, but he does not vomit. Instead, he solemnly asks if he can begin shooting. I'll be quiet a while. This story is really in the pictures and their taking.

SGT. HARTER (sadly pointing): Lieutenant, is it okay if I begin 'ere?

THE LIEUTENANT: I can't think of a better place, Sergeant.

SGT. HARTER: All right, then, 'ere it goes – for the 'istorians and the Allied war tribunals.

(Sgt. Harter takes individual pictures of three nude corpses; then he begins composing stills that show the depths of the misery. An entire field of corpses, followed by a huge ditch, filled with decaying bodies, then along a ridge at the top of the ditch – still more corpses. Mainly they are naked, and only a handful is “dignified” by their tattered clothing. Sgt. Harter continues taking pictures, although it gets harder and harder to “compose” scenes, when so much reaches beyond the tragic. He pauses occasionally and mutters to himself. Finally, he speaks to The Lieutenant.)

SGT. HARTER: Are there any survivors?

THE LIEUTENANT: Yes, they’re over here.

(Responding to The Lieutenant’s pointing, Sgt. Harter moves along another ridge, by the camp’s buildings. There he sees the raggedly dressed survivors, infested with vermin, and begging for food and drink. Sgt. Harter speaks...)

SGT. HARTER: By God, this is terrible! I thought Osnabruck was bad, where I found people burning up in a basement. Who could’ve done *this* sort of thing?

THE LIEUTENANT: God only knows. Go ahead, then, Sergeant, take a few shots here, too.

(Sgt. Harter resumes photographing. He has some chocolates in his pocket, so he gives some to a child and the woman who is looking after him. He learns the boy’s parents were both killed here. Sgt. Harter is too upset to photograph the child in his need, but when one man reaches up toward the photographer at one point, Sgt. Hardy takes his picture. The former prisoner is surprised, but thankful, too, because the photographer gives him some chocolate.)

SGT. HARTER (to The Lieutenant): I can’t do this anymore – at least not out ‘ere – it’s too awful! Is there anything else I can photograph?

THE LIEUTENANT: I know what you mean. Let’s go inside, by the bloody Gerrys!

(They move across another field, then into a wooden hut. The Lieutenant points the way and speaks...)

THE LIEUTENANT: They’re in there... fire away!

SGT. HARTER: Thanks, Lieutenant, I will.

(The action imitates the description given by the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: Sgt. Harter moves into the room the German prisoners are in. Orderlies are just bringing food to them, and the British photographer can’t stomach this. He takes a plate of food and throws it into one of the German guard-prisoners’ faces. Nobody notices, apparently, except the frightened German, hit by the sudden attack. There is strong light coming in through the window here, but because the Germans know better, they stand with their backs to the light, and Sgt. Harter can only show partial profiles and silhouettes. Before long, he’s had enough of this, so he moves back outside, where The Lieutenant is waiting for him.

THE LIEUTENANT: Seen enough, Sergeant?

SGT. HARTER: Yessir -- seen plenty of enough!

THE LIEUTENANT: Good, then we’ll get you a meal and you can be off.

SGT. HARTER: No thanks, Sir. I couldn’t eat now. I’ll wait till I get back to my unit, if that’s okay.

THE LIEUTENANT: That will be fine, Sergeant. I hope you have some good pictures. People a hundred years from now probably won’t believe this happened, if you and others like you don’t document what went on here.

SGT. HARTER: I understand, Sir. I did my best, but it’s too much death and dying ‘ere. I wonder if anyone can do it justice but God.

THE LIEUTENANT: I agree, Sgt. Harter. God will be the only one to do this justice.

SGT. HARTER: God ... and, maybe, a good war crimes trial!

THE LIEUTENANT: Yes, the Gerrys don't have a lot to look forward to, related to this place. I pity the poor bastards who lived a short automobile's ride from places like this and didn't know what was going on in them.

SGT. HARTER: I know what you mean, Sir. Everyday Germans didn't do this; it was a damned dictator and his 'enchmen.

THE LIEUTENANT: That's true, Sergeant, that's very true. Now, are you ready to push off?

SGT. HARTER: Yessir, I am.

THE LIEUTENANT (pointing): Then, there's your driver. If you have any follow-up questions, just phone me and I'll be glad to help out.

SGT. HARTER: Thanks, Sir. You've been a great 'elp already today.

THE LIEUTENANT: Then you're off, Sergeant. Have a good day. And send us some prints. We need documents, too, you know.

SGT. HARTER: Yessir, I'll send you plenty.

THE LIEUTENANT: Good day, then, Sergeant, as far as that goes.

SGT. HARTER: Yessir, good day!

(They salute each other, and Sgt. Harter rejoins his driver. As the pair get into their jeep, the Sergeant looks back for one last time and speaks to no one in particular, except perhaps to God...)

SGT. HARTER: What a bloody awful war this has been... what a bloody awful war....

(He sits down, salutes to what's left of the survivors, and turns around as his jeep creeps off into the distance. The lighting is resplendent crimson now, as the sun gently touches the horizon. The jeep moves more deliberately off now, as the film fades. The Narrator speaks next, and new action occurs on stage...)

NARRATOR: The next setting is the office of St. Martin's Press in mid-February 2000. The president of that publishing house, Patrick Murphy, is speaking with one of his attorneys.

(There is a knock at the door; then, a receptionist enters.)

RECEPTIONIST: Mr. Murphy – Mr. Dunbar and Mr. Lamont are here to see you.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Rose. Please show them in.

(Rose goes out and returns with the agent and his client. Glen Dunbar moves toward Mr. Murphy's desk.)

MR. MURPHY: Hello, Glen. How are you? Gosh it's been a long time. The last time you were here was when Norman Mahler was hot about World War II. Thankfully, there's still interest in that subject. And this must be Mr. Lamont. How are you?

DAVID: Fine, Sir. It's good to meet you at last.

MR. MURPHY: And we're glad you stuck around long enough to negotiate this deal. We'll be happy to include your *Picture Pages* book and *The Red Tassel*, too, in our collection of trade hardbacks.

DAVID: Good. And are those our contracts, Mr. Murphy? (Pointing at documents on Mr. Murphy's desk.)

MR. MURPHY: Exactly, David. Here, you and Glen can have one more look at them – before you put your John Hancocks on them, that is.

GLEN: Let's hope all the details are as we agreed.

MR. MURPHY: I'm sure you'll find everything in order. We don't botch the details once we get a good author and agent this far.

(David and Glen take a close look at the contracts. They discuss one or two points quietly; then they agree that everything looks in order.)

GLEN: David and I have looked these over and they do look good. We are especially happy that you have agreed to a \$20,000 advance on *The Red Tassel*, because you are including it in your *First Plays of the New Millennium Series*, along with the \$30,000 advance for the *Picture Pages* book. The rest of the details look equally good.

MR. MURPHY: Then you can sign here – David first, then you, Glen.

(The pair happily sign. They shake each other's hands next; and then they shake Mr. Murphy's and his lawyer's hands. The lawyer, Jack Pleasance, speaks at last...)

JACK: If I may be so bold, I think everyone here has made a good deal out of the two manuscripts offered. You, Mr. Lamont, have a good financial and artistic arrangement with both publications, as do you, Mr. Dunbar. And Mr. Murphy has the writer and agent he needs to put across these two projects to the public. It's a good deal all the way around.

MR. MURPHY: I agree, Jack. Now, would everyone like a drink? I've got some very good Brandy in my personal bar. I've heard Wisconsin loves Brandy. Is that true, David, or have I been misinformed?

DAVID: That's true for Wisconsin and for me, Mr. Murphy. I'll be happy to have one. And I know Glen loves it, too. (Glen nods.)

MR. MURPHY: Good. (He phones his receptionist for the liquid refreshments.) Now, if it's okay with you, I'll have two of our editors speak with you about the initial handling of your manuscripts. Just some preliminary stuff...nothing difficult.

DAVID: That's fine with me.

(The receptionist enters and begins offering glasses to the four men. Mr. Murphy offers a toast – “To the best interests of this excellent publications team!” – and as the editors enter, the lights dim. The Narrator speaks again...)

NARRATOR: We now enter the office of the *Irish Statesman* Newspaper, in the Dublin, Ireland of 1928. The staff is gathering round to determine what will run in the next issue of the paper. Foremost on everyone's mind is what Sean O'Casey has written by way of response to W.B. Yeats's negative letter to him about *The Silver Tassie*. One of the reporters, given to dramatics himself, has gotten a copy of it and is beginning to read from it.

REPORTER #1: Oi'm jest r-r-reading the bist par-r-rts of this, me boodies, an' (shifting accents) I'm reading it in plain English, because *The Silver Tassie* will probably be produced not at the Abbey Theatre, but rather in an English theatre – far from our homeland (one or two boos now), thanks to W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory. Mr. O'Casey writes, for one thing, to Mr. Yeats: “You say – and this is the motif throughout the intonation of your whole song – that ‘I am not interested in the Great War.’ Now, how do you know that I am not interested in the Great War? Perhaps because I never mentioned it to you. Your statement is to me an impudently ignorant one to make, for it happens that I was and am passionately interested in the Great War....”

“You say ‘You never stood on its battle-fields.’ Do you really mean that no one should or could write about or speak about a war because one has not stood on the battle-fields? Were you serious when you dictated that – really serious now? Was Shakespeare at Actium or Phillipi; was G.B. Shaw in the boats with the French, or in the forts with the British when St. Joan and Dunois made the attack that relieved Orleans?....”

“But I have walked some of the hospital wards. I have talked and walked and smoked and sung with the blue-suited wounded men fresh from the front. I've been with the armless, the legless, the blind, the gassed, and the shell-shocked; with one with a head bored by shrapnel who had to tack east and tack west before he could reach the point he wished to get to.... Did you know ‘Pantosser’ or did you ever speak to him? Or watch his funny, terrible antics, or listen to the gurgle of his foolish thoughts?....”

“You say: ‘You illustrate these opinions by a series of almost unrelated scenes as you might in a leading article.’ I don't know very much about leading articles, though I may have possibly read them when I had the mind of a kid.... [D]o you know what you are thinking about when you talk of leading articles? Surely to God, Mr. Yeats, you don't read leading articles!

“I have pondered in my heart your expression that ‘the history of the world must be reduced to wall-paper,’ and I can find in it only the pretentious bigness of a pretentious phrase....”

“[And] I'm afraid I can't make my mind mix with the sense of importance you give to a ‘dominating character.’ God forgive me, but it does sound as if you peeked and pined for a hero in the play. Now is a dominating character more

important than a play, or a play more important than a dominating character? In *The Silver Tassie* you have a unique work that dominates all the characters in the play....

"It is all very well and very easy to say that 'dramatic action must burn up the author's opinions.'... [Now] was there ever a play, worthy of the name of play, that did not contain one or two or three opinions of the author that wrote it? And the Abbey Theatre had produced plays that were packed skin-tight with the author's opinions – the plays of Shaw, for instance.

"Whether Hamlet or Lear educated Shakespeare, or Shakespeare educated Hamlet and Lear, I don't know the hell, and I don't think you know either." (Cheers from the staff at last, who have been listening intently.)

"Your statements about 'psychological unity and unity of action... Dramatic action is fire that must burn up everything but itself ... the history of the world must be reduced to wallpaper in front of which the characters must pose and speak... while an author is writing he has no business to know anything that isn't a part of the action...' are to me, glib, glib, glib ghosts. It seems to me they have been made, and will continue to be spoken forever and ever by professors in schools for the culture and propagation of the drama. I was nearly saying the Gospel....

"You say that after the first and second acts of *The Silver Tassie* there is... nothing. Really nothing? Nothing, nothing at all? Well, where there is nothing, where there is nothing – there is God...

"I shall be glad for the return of the script... and a formal note of its rejection. Best personal wishes. Sean O'Casey."

REPORTER #2: Pr-r-retty potint stoof, I propose.

EDITOR #1: Very potent stuff is right! Let's hear it for Mr. O'Casey. Hip-Hip-Hooray! (Everyone joins in.) Hip-Hip-Hooray! Hip-Hip-Hooray!

CHIEF EDITOR: Do we have a good letter for today's edition, then, Me Boys?

EVERYONE: Yes we do, Sir!

CHIEF EDITOR: Then, let's get this paper out. Everybody to their places. (They all move back to work.) Now let's get cr-r-rackin'.

(The place is suddenly alive with work, as the hum of the printing presses begins to be heard in the background. The lights die down gradually in their area and come up again on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: We're next in the New York apartment of Glen Dunbar, a while after the publication of *The Red Tassel*. It's the fall of 2003 and David Lamont and Glen are reading through the script, readying it for a leading Broadway producer. David, in particular, is suffering from creative anguish. Glen is trying to calm him.

GLEN: I doubt it's that important who gets shot in the section leading up to the hero's climactic action.

DAVID: But it is important. I doubt that anything could be any more important than this section of the play. It's critical to the audience's understanding of the importance of a military reporter, who earned his red tassel at Mizzou, also winning the Congressional Medal of Honor for drawing fire away from his comrades and taking out a machine-gun nest and six Gerrys. He does what he does because his best friend, who is also from Mizzou, has been shot and may be near death as a result of that machine-gun nest. My God, it's the best piece of writing I've done so far. Why can't you see that?

GLEN (being combative just for the sake of argument): Okay, it's good, I'll give you that. But why isn't it just as good to have them take out Pfc. Oliver, or another reporter for that matter, even if he isn't from Mizzou? Your early expressionistic parts make that relevant here.

DAVID: I know his best pal is not a reporter, but realistically, it's the whole thing with Mizzou and what the J-School there instills in its graduates – a belief in team-play, loyalty to the American cause in the Heartland, and reasonable competition among its students. The guy who gets shot was formerly a J-School student and he got caught in-between-things en route to the U.S. Army. His future is critical to my hero.

GLEN: Okay. Let's read through the action again, SLOWLY.

DAVID: All right, but only if you promise to ask the director to stage the two climactic scenes for me next Tuesday.

GLEN: It's a deal! Now, can we read?

DAVID: I'm reading, I'm reading.

(He begins reading through the crucial section, just as the lights go out on Glen's apartment, and up elsewhere.)

NARRATOR: Now we're in the home of Stefan Szakall – legendary picture editor, Hitler nemesis, and founder with Edward Holton of *Picture Pages* Magazine in 1938. It is August 1995, and Mr. Szakall is 94 years old. He is reading through some of his old articles at his cottage in Lenox, Massachusetts, when the phone rings. It's David Lamont. Lights come up on David's apartment in Wisconsin.

STEFAN (speaking with a Hungarian-Yiddish accent): Hullo.

DAVID: Mr. Szakall? It's David Lamont in Wisconsin.

STEFAN: Oh, hullo, Mr. Lamont. How are you doing?

DAVID: I'm fine. How are you?

STEFAN: Just so-so. Moi health isn't bad for a 94-year-old man, but I am 94, not 44.

DAVID: You sound good, in any case. I'm calling because I'm wondering if you've had a chance to look at my manuscript.

STEFAN: Yes, the monuscreept. I've read it, and my assistant is typing up my comments to send you soon.

DAVID: Any general thoughts on it now?

STEFAN: Well, you know, the parts about Tom Hopkins may depend too much on his autobiography. He talks about a letter that I supposedly sent him where he claims I used the word "Fatherland." Now that's pure none-sense. Oi'm not even from Germany. Oi'm Hongarian by birth. He never did anything before I made him my assistant. Ten years before I began *Picture Pages*, I ran *Munchen Illustrierte*. He was in advertising before I brought him over to work with me.

DAVID: Yes, I may have used his autobiography too much in my manuscript. Let me know in your critique all of what you think, and I'll make the necessary changes.

STEFAN (hard of hearing): Vwat?

DAVID (louder): Let me know what you think in your written comments and I'll make the changes. Do you think you'll have your comments sent to me in the next month or so?

STEFAN: Maybe, yes, maybe by then. I'll have to see.

DAVID: Thank you, Mr. Szakall. I'll look forward to receiving everything in the next few weeks, then.

STEFAN: Yes, I'll do my best. My assistant will have more time next week, so that may be ideal for her finishing up.

DAVID: Thank you, then. I'll write once I have put in the changes.

STEFAN: That's gude. Thank you for calling.

DAVID: You're welcome, Mr. Szakall.

STEFAN: Gude-bye, then.

DAVID: Yes, good-bye, Mr. Szakall. (Lights stay up on David's apartment only.)

NARRATOR: David checks over the notes he has jotted down, not only from today, but from all their recent talks. He reads two notations aloud.

DAVID: Quote: "Bert Harter was a second-rank photographer. He wasn't bad, but he was not as great as some others.... The truly great photographers were Salomon, Brassai, Munkasci, Eisenstaedt, Mann, and a few others." And then, "Poor Tom, he died penniless and without much attention. That's what happens if your writing is not correct. You can write all you want, if it's not correct, and nobody will pay attention. As for me, I wrote one book at first, and I earned a million dollars." (David questions Szakall to himself.) Szakall thinks everyone who came after him at *Picture Pages* was second-rate and even a phony, and he did sell a million copies of *I Was Hitler's Prisoner*, but somehow still

(gazing out toward the audience), I think these were all great journalists. And in addition to his lack of respect for Mr. Harter, he doesn't even mention Henri Cartier-Bresson, arguably the greatest photojournalist of all time. Also, Tom Hopkins was knighted, as was Edward Holton – and Bert Harter won the Missouri Press Award during the Korean war, as well as numerous other awards, and he also saw his pictures used in Ed Rundell's *Family of Humanity* Exhibit. As for his part, no one can dispute that Stefan Szakall was anything less than the greatest pioneering editor picture magazines had from 1900-1950. Once he sends back his comments on my manuscript, I'll have a minor coup on my hands.

(Lights dim in that area as David reads more of his notes. The Narrator speaks to another part of the stage...)

NARRATOR: It's a bright, fall day in 1995 Wisconsin, with David Lamont walking near his apartment. As he passes the park across from that apartment, he notices an elderly African-American woman having trouble with her book-bag. It's fallen from her hands and spilled the contents into the sharp breeze blowing down the street. David crosses and helps the woman.

DAVID (chasing down some papers): This wind is terrible! I'll bet you aren't the first person to lose important papers like these today. (He catches up with the last of them.) There! (He returns them to the woman.) My name's David – David Lamont. Glad to be of service.

ELDERLY WOMAN: Mine is Jean – Jean Bell. Glad you were around to pick these up.

DAVID: Those papers look important. Looks like you collect poetry.

JEAN: Yes, you could say that. I'm a poet. Jean Lee Bell is my full name. I've been writing poetry since I was 13; and I'm 85 and still at it.

DAVID: I noticed one of your poems is called "Renaissance." That's a subject that interests me. Would you mind if I read that poem?

JEAN: No, I don't mind. Let's see... here it is. You can read it to me.

DAVID: Okay. (He clears his throat.) Let's give it a try...

The night is black, the sun is gone,
The world seems dark and drear –
Then suddenly shines forth a star,
Serene and bright and clear!

So in a heart, once dark with doubt
And hopelessness, there comes
A ray of hope that grows and swells
Like the stirring roll of drums.

And dreams, once lost on doubt's dark night
And lost faith's many fears,
Bloom forth again in glorious light,
Brighter for dreamer's tears!

This is excellent, Ms. Bell.

JEAN: Jean is fine.

DAVID: You are an accomplished poet! Have you always written this well?

JEAN: My family seems to think so. I don't know; I just put words on paper, and hope they make sense to somebody.

DAVID: Well, you've inspired one dreamer to keep his eyes open and to hang onto faith.

JEAN: Then "Renaissance" is a success as far as I'm concerned.

DAVID: Jean, I teach a writing class or two at the technical college -- nothing fancy, just non-credit classes. But we seem to enjoy each others' company, and read aloud. Would you be interested in coming in to read from your poems?

JEAN: Why, I think that would be exciting. But I have to warn you: I like being a student. I might even sign up for one of your classes.

DAVID: That would be great. Here (giving her two of his name-cards), please write down your name, address, and phone number, and I'll be in touch the next time the college offers my classes.

JEAN (writing): Sounds great. You know, if you ever teach a senior citizens class, that would be great, too.

DAVID: Actually, I've had an offer to do that, through the college, at the Harry J. Olson Senior Citizens Center, but I didn't know whether or not I should take it.

JEAN: To tell you the truth, I'm a student there myself right now; and I know that our teacher is leaving soon. Maybe I could put in a good word for you.

DAVID: That would be helpful. We'll be in touch, then, as soon as I talk with the director there.

JEAN: And I'll put in a good word for you, as soon as I can.

DAVID: Well, thanks, Jean, thanks a lot. I'd better be running now, but I'll phone you soon. Maybe the "Renaissance" lives, after all.

JEAN: Yes, maybe it does. That's what my daughter, the father, says, too. She's an Episcopalian minister, which is where the pun that's fun comes in.

DAVID: Good one, Jean. Very good.

(They shake hands, and then David is off across the street, and Jean heads through the park, as the light fades. Lights up again on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: It's almost dusk near Inchon, South Korea, on Sept. 15, 1950. U.N. forces had been bottled up in Pusan, on the southeastern edge of the peninsula, but Gen. Douglas MacArthur has just launched a risky counterattack at Inchon, on the northwestern coast of South Korea. The tides are treacherous there, and good for attack on only two days each year. This is one of those days. Leading the attacking armada is the press boat, marked with great letters "PRESS"; that's a fluke, of course, and the wrong beach is being assaulted, too, but the U.N. is still moving in. At the great sea-wall now, Bert Harter and his partner, the writer James Cameroon, are jockeying for position. Neither of them wants to be the first one over the sea-wall, but the light is fading and Bert needs pictures. The only photographer on board with small format equipment, Bert will be the only one to get good pictures from the attack. As it turns out, he is also the first man to go over the sea-wall, ahead of everyone on that beach. Once over, tin helmet and all, he decides to come back and sit atop the wall, even if it is risky.

BERT: Jesus H. Christ, they're shooting at me!

JAMES (down behind): Well, what are you sitting up there for?!!

BERT: It's the only place I can get decent pictures. (Marines are at last landing. Another shot comes close.) God Almighty, I don't like this war!

JAMES: God Almighty is going to have a field day before this thing's over. At least your mouth hasn't been shot off yet, or your eyes!

BERT (between pictures): My mouth and eyes may live on for 10,000 years, after the rest of me kicks the bucket.

JAMES: Did I tell you I'd like to take you out and shoot you myself sometimes?

BERT: Probably. But we'd both look a damn sight funnier if you missed my mouth and eyes. (Another shot comes close. Bert ducks, then another shot comes even closer, and he is over the wall and onto land.) Come on, Jimmy. Get your arse over 'ere – now!

JAMES: Okay, Bertie, I'm coming over, too. (He leaps over the wall, and lands with a thud.) Ouch, that hurt!

BERT: There's a 'ole lot more 'urtin' comin', I expect, so lace up your boots and let's get crackin'.

(They inch forward with the Marines. Bert takes more pictures, as the light goes out on them and up on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: The setting is now the offices of *Picture Pages*, a few days later. Tom Hopkins has just had Harter's pictures processed. He's alone in his office as the lab technician brings them in.

TECHNICIAN: Here's Bert's pictures, Sir.

TOM: Thanks, Gerry. Are they any good?

GERRY: See for yourself, Sir. I'd say they're very good.

TOM: Thanks. That'll be all, then. (Gerry exits, and Hopkins opens the picture envelope and immediately likes what he sees...) These are superb! They're the best I've seen in my 10 years as editor. (He arranges them on his desk.) I've got to lay these out myself. No tomfoolery here. Bert and Jimmy really outdid themselves. These tell the truth about the retaking of soon-to-be-famous Inchon! MacArthur's great gamble may have paid off for us, after all.

(Lights are extinguished at the End of Act II.)

Act III: Time for an Interview and Beyond.

Action: Lights up. The Narrator is puffing on his pipe again. The opening action imitates his speech.

NARRATOR: It is late November 1981 in Surrey, England. David Lamont has just been driven by Bert Harter to Mr. Harter's 300-year-old Kentish farmstead. Mrs. Harter, Sheila, has met them in the yard, and the three of them enter the house, Sheila first. The living room is decorated with smart leather chairs and couch, and no sign of Bert's photos as yet. The legendary photojournalist asks David if he would like a beer, or some tea or coffee. David opts for coffee and Sheila brings him some brownies with it. The three of them begin chatting about who they know in London.

DAVID: I attend the Missouri School of Journalism and my teacher here is John Whale, of the *Sunday Times*.

BERT: John Wall. Is that who you said?

DAVID: No, John Whale... W-H-A-L-E. And I came to obtain your name through Ms. Sally Soames, a photographer for the same paper.

SHEILA: Yes, Sally Soames. You know her Bert. She's done many things we've liked, and she's had work done in our lab in the past.

BERT: Oh, yes, Sally. I do remember her.

DAVID (opening his notebook): Now, Mr. Harter, where did you work before you retired and who were your editors?

BERT: I worked for *Picture Pages* for almost the complete span of the magazine, and my chief editor was Tom Hopkins. He lives in Wales these days -- Cardiff, I believe.

DAVID: And when did the magazine run?

BERT: From 1938 to 1957, I think.

DAVID: What kind of pictures did you take for that magazine?

BERT: Mainly people pictures -- famous people, everyday people, all kinds of people.

DAVID: Who were some of the more famous people you photographed?

BERT: Well, the Queen, for instance, also Marlene Dietrich, the singer Johnny Ray, and the American boxer Sugar Ray Robinson. Also, Frank Sinatra and Ava Gardner. Many famous people.

SHEILA: Don't forget your Indian pictures, Dear.

DAVID: Indian pictures?

BERT: Yes, I took pictures of Prime Minister Nehru, and his family. One of just 'im was used on the cover of the *Post*, and it's quite famous – my picture of Nehru smelling a rose.

DAVID: Do you have your pictures stored here?

SHEILA (getting up): We've got some of them here. I'll go get one of Bert's albums. I'll be right back.

DAVID: That will be good. Thank you. Now, Mr. Harter, who did you work with, besides Mr. Hopkins?

BERT: Oh, I worked with a lot of good journalists: Bob Kee, Bert Lloyd, Jimmy Cameroon, and several editors, too, after Tom 'opkins left.

DAVID: And who was the best writer you ever worked with?

BERT: Well, that's 'ard to say, there were so many good ones. I enjoyed working with Bert Lloyd quite a bit. He was a communist, more or less, but he knew how to report a story. And Bob Kee and I did a number of good stories together – one was on coloured people in Liverpool.

DAVID: Do you have any of those pictures here?

BERT: Well, some of them are in my book. It was edited by Tom 'opkins, and you can buy it cheap enough in the Limpsfield bookstore.

DAVID: Yes, we came through Limpsfield en route from Oxted, didn't we?

BERT: Yes, we did.

DAVID: I think I'd like a copy of that book. Can we stop there on the way back to Oxted?

BERT: I believe that can be arranged.

(Sheila Harter returns with a photo album. She and Bert open it to select pages, and David begins to see a fair amount of Bert's work for the first time.)

DAVID: Mr. Harter, I should tell you that the man who told me about your work said that he doesn't know you personally, but has heard from many people that your pictures are great and your stories are equally good.

BERT: I don't know who that would 'ave been, but I suppose there's some truth in both remarks.

SHEILA (pointing to the album): This is a good sequence, Bert – the shopgirl in Birmingham right after the war.

BERT: Yes, "Millions Like 'er" was the story's title, if my memory is accurate.

DAVID: I think I've seen this picture before – of the girl and boy by this window and door frame.

SHEILA: That is one of the better ones you took of her, Bert. And it could be known in America, too.

BERT: Yes, it could. (Turning the pages.) Here's my pictures from the Sugar Ray Robinson title fight in Paris.

DAVID: Yes, I'm interested in those, too. (He points to an image of a Frenchman admiring Mr. Robinson and his car.) Do you remember taking this picture?

BERT: Sure. I was driving around with Mr. Robinson, and he said, "Let's stop and meet these people." Well, we did and I got a couple of good pictures. The French people really admired the champion, especially everyday folks.

DAVID: Do you have your picture of Nehru smelling the rose?

SHEILA: I don't think we have a copy of that here, Bert. We might have one at the printing firm.

DAVID: Oh, that's okay. Don't worry about it. By the way, that's how I became familiar with your firm's name – Sally Soames gave me the directions to Grove Hardy Ltd. Do you still own that firm?

BERT: Yes, of course. I do all my printing there, and we take on many printing projects from local photographers.

DAVID: I wonder if I might be able to obtain a few of your prints for publication's sake.

SHEILA: Yes, Bert and I already have discussed that. Just give us your list of those you will need, and we'll get some ready for you.

BERT: Yes, as soon as you've seen my book, you'll have a better idea about that. Maybe you could call us later.

DAVID: Yes, that would be fine.

(Lights fade slowly as the three continue talking. Then, lights up on the Narrator, again with a book.)

NARRATOR: The next setting is a Broadway stage during rehearsal, late in 2003. Some of the actors for *The Red Tassel* are running through the first scene David Lamont wants to see rehearsed. Another excerpt from David's diary is in order here. He writes on the day before this scene is staged for him: "I've got to cement the idea in this scene that Dan Montana and Jim Glendenning are not only friends, but comrades, people who will do anything to protect the life and rights of their buddy. If this doesn't shine through the play, then the total effort will be wasted. The opening scenes set in a highly symbolic place, the newsroom of the Columbia Missourian, can help in this regard, but because these scenes are expressionistic, the scene just before combat is crucial, because it is naturalistic and REAL." (The Narrator looks up at the audience.) The stage is partially lit and five U.S. soldiers are dug into a hillside in Italy. On two sides are Gerrys – three or four rifles on one side out of sight, and across the way, a machine-gun nest manned by six Gerrys – who have been raining down fire on the Americans. There is a lull in the fighting, and the Americans talk a bit and have a cigarette. Our hero is Corporal Dan Montana. He has earned a red tassel from Mizzou's J-School and is an army reporter, but he works with a rifle and grenades here. He is talking with Jim Glendenning, another Mizzou product, who dropped out of the J-School and is having trouble finding a career, other than the army. Jim and Dan talk about their sons, Johnny and Matt, respectively, halfway through the scene.

DAN: Jim, do you know what I'm going to do when I get home? I'm going to buy Matt the best bicycle Madison, Wisconsin ever saw – a red, 3-speed Schwinn with a light, horn, and basket. He'll love it.

JIM: Yeah, Johnny probably will need one, too, someday, to go along with his mutt. But first I've got to get him out of diapers. Marge is probably up to her elbows in them by now. Jesus, it even makes me homesick thinking about diapers. War is hell.

DAN: And Chris is probably throwing fits with Matt's music teacher. My son doesn't like playing the piano. He wants to play the guitar, but Chris won't have it.

JIM: Sounds like you've got World War III brewing back at home already.

DAN: Yeah, it does sound that way. But Chris also knows how to compromise when the time comes. I think she'll eventually meet Matt half-way. Whatever that is, it will work out. It's her gift.

JIM: Marge can be like that, too – and she's supported me even when I've lost a job or run out of money. Can't ask for two better gals than we have, I guess.

DAN: Marge is good for you. You know, Jim, someday I'm going to write a book about this period in our lives. It sounds crazy, but I cherish these times – except for combat, that is.

JIM: Really, Dan? I guess I hear ya. I wish I could write better. If I could, I would have graduated from the J-School, too.

DAN: Well, maybe you'll get another chance yet. Life is funny sometimes: Where God shuts a door, He opens a window.

(Dan tosses Jim something from his pocket and says, "Here, hold onto this for me." It's a red tassel. The director breaks in.)

DIRECTOR: Stop, people, stop. This reading has no life. I know it's not exactly "D-Day" here in sunny Italy, but soon we will be opening. You'd better put a little more D-R-A-M-A into it!

(The other actors "chill," while the actors playing Dan and Jim move closer to the director. The Narrator says, "This fellow is Jake Ladou, notorious Broadway director.")

JAKE: Now, listen up. I want you both to bond at this point. After all, God doesn't open windows to just anybody. Remember that! (Looking toward the audience area.) What do you think, Mr. Lamont?

DAVID: I think it needs work, but I like the chemistry they are beginning to show. If they can improve on it for opening night, I'll be the first to applaud all of you.

JAKE: And I'll happily follow your lead.

(The lights fade as the two continue to talk. Lights up again on the Narrator. The following action imitates his speech – on film.)

NARRATOR: Next, it's opening night in the same theater, and *The Red Tassel* has moved along nicely so far, but now it's time for the climax. The scene opens at nighttime, with a three-quarter-moon shining. Dan is trying to get some sleep with his other buddies, while Jim is the sentry. Suddenly, the machine-gun nest, east of them, opens fire. Jim returns fire as his pals wake up. Before they can begin to return fire themselves, Jim gets hit in the chest. Dan tries to stop the bleeding, and he has a bit of success, but Jim needs surgery soon. Dan is in charge of what's left of the platoon, and he decides to try something gutsy.

DAN: You guys cover me. I'm going to try to get close enough to lob a few grenades at that machine-gun nest. We've got to move Jim out of here, and they won't give us a chance for quite a while otherwise. He needs surgery soon, so everybody, take a position, rifles at the ready, and when I get clear of you, keep 'em plenty busy.

(The three other GI's take their positions, and Dan leaves Ron Glover, a Private with experience, in charge. Dan braces himself and moves away from his dug-in position. The Gerrys begin firing but lose sight of Dan before long. He begins to move off to their left side.)

PVT. GLOVER: Hold fire, Men. They're stuck over there. They don't know where Dan is, and he's got a chance now. Let's be ready to fire again, and let's pray a little, too.

(The Gerrys shine a light down the gap, but there's no Dan. He is angling further around to their left side. He can see into their guns now, and he decides to let loose with two of his four grenades. He takes out two of three machine-guns and four Gerrys, but he can't be sure of the numbers yet. However, the remaining machine-gun opens fire in his direction and he has to return fire. He gets hit in the left arm, a flesh-wound. He moves behind, then around the gunners, as Pvt. Glover gives the other Americans orders to open fire again.)

DAN: (quietly, in a close-up): Mother of God, please let our guys be accurate enough with their fire.

(Dan moves into better position and gets a clear view of the remaining machine-gun personnel. He decides to let go with one grenade only. He does so, but is off-target. Luckily, the Gerrys haven't spotted him this time. One of Dan's pals takes out one of the two remaining enemy soldiers. Dan takes advantage to move in a little closer. He gets hit again, this time by one of his own men. He knows it's now or never: he flings his last grenade. It's a bulls-eye...)

DAN: No more Gerrys on this side! Got the machine-gun nest, Guys. Check to see if the Gerry riflemen are still behind your behind. If not, then move in for a search over here. I've been hit, twice – one bullet may have been friendly fire; Jesus, go easy with your aim, from now on.

(One of the Americans stays with Jim, while the other two come for Dan. They reach him near the blasted gun-site. The Gerry machine-gunners are all dead they discover, while the enemy riflemen have fled. Dan's leg wound is semi-serious, but he decides he can limp along on his rifle, if the others can make a skiff for Jim. They begin to do so, but then a platoon of Americans and their jeep roll into view.)

U.S. SERGEANT: Soldiers, halt! Friend or foe?

PVT. GLOVER: Friend, Sir. We're Americans from the 101st. Joe Dimaggio is a Bronx Bomber, and Henry Wallace is Vice President, behind FDR. Also, we've got two wounded men here, Sir. One is pretty bad and needs surgery right away. The other one is a hero.

SERGEANT: Okay, we're here for you. We're from the 142nd.

(They join up, then see to Jim and Dan, while the others have a cigarette.)

DAN: Thanks, Sarge, for stopping long enough to help out. Didn't expect to see any more relief Yanks around here for a while.

SGT. MARTIN: That's okay. Glad to help out. How's that leg wound? It looks pretty bad.

DAN: I think it'll be fine, with the right surgeon getting rid of the bullet. Can't say as I look forward to that; but I don't need a handicap either.

SGT. MARTIN: I understand. (Looking at Jim Glendenning now.) How are you, Trooper?

JIM: I can't say as I like the ventilation. It would be a lot nicer if it came from a fan in Missouri -- summertime with the family, you know.

SGT. MARTIN: I can understand your interest in hometown summers. I'm from there myself -- St. Louis. How about you?

JIM: I'm from Jeff^{er} City. My family still lives there, in fact.

SGT. MARTIN: Let's try to get you to the doctors as soon as we can, then, so you can get back to the state capital. They may be needing you there again, you know.

JIM: Yeah, I kinda think they might, too.

(Pvt. Glover and the Sergeant talk alone again.)

SGT. MARTIN: I've seen worse chest wound cases make it, and only a few so-called milder ones cash it in. As long as the bullet didn't hit too near the heart, I think he's got a good chance of making it. And based on his attitude, I doubt it did. As for your hero, he wouldn't be hopping around now on that rifle, if he didn't have guts.

PVT. GLOVER: You're right about both of them, Sir. Jim and Corporal Montana are pretty close. I hope the doctors know what they're doing.

SGT. MARTIN: We've got a military hospital set up 30 miles from here. They'll get the best care our doctors can give. And we've got some good doctors!

PVT. GLOVER: They'll make it, then. How's the terrain north of here?

SGT. MARTIN: We're taking control of it. It's a bloody business, but the Gerrys and the Italians are on the run, more and more. If we can keep them moving north, we can do a number on them in this war yet.

PVT. GLOVER: That's good to hear, Sir. For a while, I thought we were goners here. There were Gerrys on both sides of us, and we were lucky that the Corporal took one side out by himself. There were only three or four of them with rifles opposite their machine-guns, and they vamoosed when the Corporal blasted the machine-guns.

SGT. MARTIN: We'll have another look-see, but your Corporal may be up for a good-sized commendation. Fall in now, Private. (They salute each other.)

PVT. GLOVER: Happy to, Sir!

(He falls in. As the column moves through the gap, off right, they begin to sing softly, "We're in the Army Now," with some crude, impromptu lyrics included. The film fades while other Gerrys can be seen retreating, and the stage lights come up on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: Now we're in the home of George Bernard Shaw in 1930. He is re-reading some of his letters. In particular, he holds a copy of his letter to Sean O'Casey regarding *The Silver Tassie*, and is just sitting down to glance at it. Shaw is still an active man of letters in 1930, and he is a good friend of O'Casey's. He is about to begin reading.

G.B. SHAW: I like this beginning. Of course, I like Sean's play, too. Let's see, then: "What a hell of a play! I wonder how it will hit the public. Of course the Abbey should have produced it, as Starkie rightly says – whether it liked it or not. But the people who knew your uncle when you were a child -- so to speak -- always want to correct your exercises; and this was what disabled the usually competent Yeats and Lady Gregory. Still it is surprising they fired so very wide, considering their marksmanship... If Yeats had said 'It's too savage; I can't stand it,' he would have been in order... Yeats himself, with all his extraordinary cleverness and subtlety, which comes out when you give him up as a hopeless fool, and -- in this case -- deserts him when you expect him to be equal to the occasion, is not a man of this world; and when you hurl an enormous chunk of it at him, he dodges it, small blame to him. However we can talk over it when we meet. Cheerio, Titan." (To the audience more directly now.) Yes, I liked this letter, when I wrote it. I suppose it gave Sean as much cheer as he told me it did when we met. And *The Silver Tassie* was a great play about sanity. My God, mankind deserved such a play after what it did to one another during the "Great War." Sean knows his stuff, and he even thinks like I do politically; that's very rare these days, but maybe it won't be for long. Time's are a-changing, and the wheel spins us round to another part of history. I don't really believe in the Elizabethan wheel, but how else can you explain some of the round-headed malarkey the world springs on itself every so often.

(Lights out on G.B. Shaw. Lights up on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: The setting is David Lamont's apartment in Centralia, Wisconsin, October 1995. He has just received a letter from Sheila Harter. He opens it up, thinking it will have something to do with his *Picture Pages* manuscript, which he had recently written about to Bert Harter, after hearing from and reading Stefan Szakall's comments. After he reads the first two lines, though, he knows something else is up.

DAVID (reading softly to himself): "Dear Mr. Marcou: Thank you for your recent letter. Unfortunately, Bert will not be able to reply to your latest questions. He passed away on 3 July from a heart attack. He is very much missed here. In fact, there will be a Remembrance Service for him in November that you may want to take note of. Many of his friends and admirers have already expressed their sympathy to me. My husband was greatly loved, and there were many obituaries in the papers here when he died. I hope you will understand our situation. And thank you again for writing. Yours sincerely, Mrs. Sheila Harter."

(David puts the letter down and says a prayer. Then he phones his parents, to let them know. The lights come up on the Jonathan Lamont household, also in Centralia.)

JON: Hello, Lamont residence.

DAVID: Dad, hello, it's me. How are you?

JON: Hello, David. We're fine here. What's up?

DAVID: Well, I just got bad news: Bert Harter died in July. His wife just sent me her letter. I hadn't heard from them since June. I should have phoned them in the meantime. In any case, a great man and photographer has passed.

JON: That's too bad. How old was he?

DAVID: He was 82, Dad. He had a good life. But he will be missed by a lot of people.

JON: Yes, I expect he will be.

DAVID: Say, could you do me a favor? Could you bring over the box with my old letters – the one that I used when I was writing my *Picture Pages* manuscript. I want to look through my letters from the Harters.

JON: Sure, Son. Be glad to. We'll be seeing you this weekend. We can drop it off then.

DAVID: Sounds good, Dad. Thanks a lot. I'll plan on seeing you this weekend.

JON: Okay, Son. See you then. And I'm sorry about Mr. Harter.

DAVID: Thanks, Dad. See you then.

(Lights fade out on David – for a moment only – and on Jon, and come up on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: The setting is again David Lamont's apartment, but, a few weeks later. He is going through his old letters from the Harters. He comes upon one from early 1985, when Bert Harter's printing firm was printing some of David's pictures. Remembering can bring such bittersweet joy, and hope.

DAVID: "Dear Mr. Lamont: Enclosed are the prints you requested I have my man do for you. I hope they meet with your approval. I am also enclosing another price list, for future reference. If you want more pictures printed, please just let us know. We are always glad for your business. It was good to hear you enjoy my autobiography; it has some good photos in it, I believe, and the gist of my story, too. Hope you'll have your own book someday; it can give a person great satisfaction. These days I'm lecturing a bit on my photography, and I will hold a one-man show again one of these days. I still take pictures, too, when the spirit moves me. Thank you for the printing work, and let us know if we can be of service again in the future. Yours sincerely, Bert Harter."

NARRATOR: David goes over to another box, and looks through it. In it, he has all of Bert Harter's prints from David's request in 1981, plus the 100+ prints of his own work that Mr. Harter's firm made for him while Bert was still alive. He looks at two prints closely. You'll see why soon.

DAVID (speaking to the audience): What is it in a photograph that compels? Is it the subject, the composition, the lighting, the texture, the mood, the frozen, passionate action? It could be any or all of these things. My photo of Patrick Clark (showing it to the audience), a little boy with spina bifida sitting jauntily on a jukebox, reminds me of Mr. Harter's street urchins (also showing it to the audience). Just look at the expressions of the three boys' faces. They are vulnerable and yet cock-sure of themselves, too. Thank the Lord that He and this world offer all of us the chance to grow up with a good purpose in life, to make the most of our limitations and strengths, to lasso a star and take our chances by riding it. It doesn't make any difference if you're Jew or Gentile, Catholic or Muslim, black or white, red or yellow, male or female – everyone has chances to do something good with their life. If we throw our chances away, then so be it; but we each have our chances. Mr. Harter helped show me that and a lot more. He showed me the way, whether he knew it or not. Someday, when I'm married and have my own kids, maybe I'll show them the way, too. It's no accident Bert Harter won the Missouri Press Award for his Inchon report -- my school, my major, too.

(David is looking at his photos again, enjoying the memories associated with them. Then he looks up again. It's time for his sentiments to shine through, and they do. His eyes glisten with emotion, and he comes to know a sense of peace.)

DAVID: You know, it is People who help make the realization of our chances great or small, cherished or uncherished; and in my life, there have been enough People who have looked my way when it counted that I can say God knew what He was doing when he made People. God knew what He was doing, and he still knows what he is doing. And pictures can tell us that, pictures and the prayers we see answered every day by God and People, if we give them a chance. Yes, we need to give them a chance, too. Prayers make People decent and, yes, even young. My favorite people – the Sean O'Caseys and the Bert Harters of this world prayed, too. And both of them were decent and young all their lives.

(David says a prayer to himself, makes the Sign of the Crosse, and puts his letters and pictures away now. Lights fade slowly as he does. Then they come up on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: We're in a New York restaurant in late 2003. David's play, *The Red Tassel*, is a popular and critical success on opening night. Broadway audiences wanted to see old-fashioned heroism come back into style; and David's Mizzou-World War II themes have paid off for him this time. He is eating a late-night dinner with Glen Dunbar, and they are enjoying the reviews.

GLEN: Geez, it feels good to have gotten this far with everything, David. Look what the *New York Times* critic says, "This play has enough heroics for anyone interested in living the complete life... grand theatrics... superb acting... excellent direction... one for the books." By God, you did a professional job of writing on two projects, and I did a neat job of agenting both of them. How about a toast? (They pick up their wine glasses.) To a future of heroic literature in an all-too-often anti-heroic age!

DAVID: Yes, to a future of heroic literature in this age!

(They drink up, and then get back to their dinners. Soon, two young women come by. They are very interested in these new-found celebrities and have copies of the play in hand for signing.)

WOMAN #1: Mr. Lamont, we saw your play tonight and we were wondering if we could have your autograph?

DAVID (pleased, but a little embarrassed): Sure, Ladies. I can give you my autograph. But it may be bad luck to sign your plays on opening night.

WOMAN #2: That's okay, we'll take our chances.

DAVID: If you insist, then I'll be happy to do so.

(He signs both books. The women giggle, thank David, and say good-bye. David resumes his dinner, beginning his dessert. He glances out at the live audience as his agent speaks...)

GLEN: Those young ladies weren't bad-looking, David. What do you say we call up one of my girlfriends and see if she has a friend who might care for a drink or two tonight?

DAVID: That will be fine with me. But let's try to be in "early" – say, by four in the morning!

GLEN: Sounds like a plan to me.

(They finish their dinner and leave a tip, as the lights dim down on them and come up on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: We're at the Centralia Public Library next, in 2005. Jean Lee Bell and David Lamont have met in the reference section. Jean is 95 but still gets around with the aid of a female assistant, Jin-Suk Yi. David hopes to market his poetry and Jean is helping him find a publisher. They have finished their research and now sit down near the periodicals to relax. David holds Jean's book of poems, published in 2001 by Houghton Mifflin, *The Shining Spirit*.

JEAN (to her assistant): Jin-Suk, please go get my cane. I left it in one of those aisles. (Jeans points and Jin-Suk, a beautiful young Korean-American woman of 20, smiles, nods, and moves off.) David, would you mind reading two of my poems to me? I can't quite see to read them myself and I feel in the mood to hear them again now.

DAVID: Sure, Jean, I'll be happy to do that. Which ones?

JEAN: "To Those I Love" and "For Those Who Wait."

DAVID: Okay, I have them right here. (He clears his throat and begins.) "To Those I Love":

Because I love this world – and life – and you,
And every flower and tree and beast and bird,
Because I thrill at every lovely view –
Beauty of music, and the written word;
I shall meet Death as yet another friend
And take his hand, exploring pathways new
To find a new beginning – not an end,
And in that new world wait to welcome you.

That's a lovely poem, Jean. I really think you deal with the subject of life beyond death as well as any writer I've ever read. But you already know that.

JEAN (smiling): Well, I seem to know a little bit about life, and I just extend that view into the hereafter as best I can. That's all I do with poems like that one.

DAVID: Well, you give great comfort to many people, and you take so little credit for it yourself. I just think your humility as a writer is tremendous.

JEAN: Perhaps I just like to see others enjoy my work. That's the greatest reward I can have. You should know that. Your own success has meant a lot to many people, like your students. We get inspiration from you and you probably even get inspiration from us old fogies. It works both ways.

DAVID: I don't know about old fogies. I just know that the first time I taught in the Senior Citizens Center, I realized that my time there would do me a lot of good. Maybe it's even rubbing off on a few of you.

JEAN: Yes, it is. God knows when and where we can do the most good, and if we take advantage of the chances He gives us, then we can achieve great things with our lives. But I don't have to tell you that anymore. You have come to understand the value of a thorough education in the life God created for us. Now, are you going to read my other poem, or am I going to pass over, before you get inspired to do that?

DAVID: I'll be happy to. Here it is. Do you want this in my naturalistic or expressionistic voice?

JEAN: Just plain old English will do.

DAVID: Then, I'll go ahead. "For Those Who Wait":

Should Death decree that I must wait my turn
And live beyond the span of useful years,
With wind and soul imprisoned in the urn
Of wasted body, shed no bitter tears;
Rememb'ring all the good and fruitful days,
Wait patiently with me for my release
Knowing that God in his mysterious ways
Will never let the shining spirit cease:
In his good time I shall again be free
To live, and love, and serve in other guise;
This worn-out earthly carcass is not me –
I'll live again the day this body dies!

JEAN: That's what I needed to hear. Thank you, David, thank you very much.

(Jin-Suk returns with Jean's cane, and the lights go out on the three people. Then, lights up on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR: We're now at the Harry J. Olson Senior Citizens Center on a Thursday morning in early 2006. David Lamont is conducting another session of his Writing for Publication Class for the Centralia Technical College.

DAVID: I've just been reading a little more about the 1995 Nobel Laureate in Literature, Seamus Heaney. Well, I'd like to read from one of his poems. It's called "Lines to Myself":

In poetry I wish you would
Avoid the lilting platitude.
Give us poems humped and strong,
Laced tight with thongs of song,
Poems that explode in silence
Without forcing, without violence.
Whose music is strong and clear and good
Like a saw zooming in seasoned wood.
You should attempt concrete expression,
Half-guessing, half expression.

Now, what do you all think we should do about this writing?

(The Narrator has, by now, moved off stage. The class members, each wearing a brooch of wings, stands and smiles. They bring their assigned writing to David's place at the table and hand it in. Then they resume their seats and take out more writing. They leave it out on table, as Bette Midler's "God Is Watching Us" plays. Then, the group rises, moves into the audience, and pins wing-brooches on audience members. The lights eventually fade, and a half-moon is seen above the stage. The cast seen thus-far, except for the Narrator, emerges as everyone "passes over" to the lobby for refreshments, at the End of Act III.)

Act IV, Scene 1: Heaven Has No Fury Like a Human Scorned.

Action: The setting is Heaven in the ageless realm of life yet to be lived. There is the meeting of souls forever and ever, once physical life has ended on Earth. The first souls we see are those living in "Purgatory," in other words, the waiting room in Heaven for those who have sins to work off, before they receive their wings. Lights up on the Narrator.

NARRATOR: We now see Dora and Bert Harter, both in Heaven but not longing for this meeting. Dora and Bert were divorced on Earth, and they did not often see one another again, after that had occurred. Here, they are two souls trying to win their wings from the Almighty. Dora, the mother of Bert's two sons, speaks to Bert first.

DORA: Hello, Bert. How are you doing? Or should I say, how did you come about this impasse, as if I didn't know?

BERT: Impasse? Why, Dora, this is no impasse, this is as close to 'eaven as we'll ever get.

DORA: So, you think this is Heaven? Whatever gave you that idea?

BERT: You've got a point; after all, if you're 'ere, how could it be 'eaven?

DORA: *Touche*, Governor! You certainly haven't changed much since your time on Earth.

BERT: Neither 'ave you!

NARRATOR: Enter Sheila, Bert's second wife, to whom he was married 31 years. Sheila immediately senses what is going on here, and intervenes.

SHEILA: Why, Bert, aren't you glad to see Dora? You always said you wish you had a chance to settle up with her in the hereafter. Now you can do that.

BERT: Dear, I don't suppose you'll remember this, but I settled up with her on Earth, and I don't expect we'll see much more darkness between us 'ere, this being 'eaven and all.

DORA (half-sarcastically): Yes, Luv, I don't expect Heaven and its Maker will set still for us three "Lovebirds" quarreling now.

SHEILA: I don't want you to get back together; I do want you to try to be on the same team, though. After all, we all need our wings here, and it's our choice as to whether or not we get them.

BERT: Well, you've a point, Sweet'ear. I'll cease fire on Dora, if she'll do the same for me.

DORA: Ditto here, Darlings.

SHEILA: Okay, now shake hands and then draw apart for more of the Lord's work.

(They shake hands, look into each other's eyes, then draw apart as Sheila instructed. The three of them move into the background, as two other souls come onto the stage. W.B. Yeats and Sean O'Casey are talking. As they move forward, the audience begins to hear what they've been chatting about. O'Casey's Irish accent is pronounced. Yeats, on the other hands, speaks with more British lordliness, although occasionally he slips into a brogue, too.

WILLIAM: Your *Juno* was superb, as was *The Shadow of a Gunman*; but I still think *The Silver Tassie* needed more thought, or less tr-r-ouble. Do you agree that its center could not hold, but that the unique on the edge did so?

SEAN: Yaes, yaes, ya may have a pint, I'll give ya that. For your par-r-rt, your Cuchulain soycle was br-r-rilliant. Never have I seen a more cour-r-rageous male defender of Ir-r-rish ways (only semi-sarcastically), albeit a ver-r-ry tee-r-ragic one.

WILLIAM: Yes, that cycle was given little shrift by the critics abroad, but I dare say, in I-e-r-r-reland it played to all the r-r-right people.

SEAN: Yaes, if I had only written poet-tree like yours, William, they would still be singin' me praises in London and Nyu-u-u Yo-r-rk, not to mention Dooblin and Belfast.

WILLIAM: Aye, Sean. And if I would have had your command of everyday details of Irish life, and your poetry of the commonplace, I would have won thr-r-ee Nobel Pr-r-rizes, instead of jest one.

SEAN: Aye, and I wish I had won jest one of those pr-r-rizes meself – I could have donated the prize to the workers of the world.

WILLIAM: Aye, you were the BEST worker of the world.

(They continue on and become part of the background, too, as a French tart and a British bobby come into view. What they are doing in this place will soon be discovered.)

TART (in broken English, with a heavy French accent): What you troi tu-du to me-e-ennée? Me-e-ennée is gud wumon. You cannot break Me-e-ennée, no mattra what du! Jacques weel tell you dat, tu!

BOBBY (treating her better than perhaps she deserves): Minny, you cannot be trolling for victims here. And I will not put a man in jail for having sex with you, when you've agreed to it, if he didn't pay for it. It wasn't prostitution then. And you're involving a decent-enough chap like Mr. Harter is beyond me.

(Bert looks amazed in the background, and comes forward.)

BERT: What is this woman claiming I did, Officer?

BOBBY: She claims you didn't pay her two pounds for sex with her, Sir. Now I know who you are, Mr. Harter. You're a friend of civil servants everywhere for the way you reported for the *Picture Pages*, and I'm not going to have her land you in trouble simply for your having sex with her. (Whispering to Bert.) You didn't pay for it, did ya, Sir?

BERT: That's preposterous. I've never paid a penny for any sex with 'er or for any woman's body, saving what I've spent on dinner and flowers, that is. Thanks for understanding, Officer.

(The Bobby has had to restrain Minny for part of the time. She has been throwing Bert some awful looks and saying things like, "So you, you, Beeg Shot, you don't have to pay for Me-e-ennee? Who du you theenk you are?" Now she is livid.)

MINNY: You Cheep Boom, (mockingly) Baert Haerter, Baert Haerter! Jacques weel take care you!

BERT (whispering to the Bobby): She keeps talking about this fellow Jacques. I expect it's 'er pimp. In any case, I've never seen 'im. Apparently, 'e brought 'er 'ere from Gay Paree and 'as abandoned 'er.

(Dora now moves forward and challenges everyone to "start talking." They begin to do so, and even move around a bit in a limited area.)

DORA: Yes, Bert, you had sex with Meennee, and you had sex with that stupid girlfriend of yours, Maureen, and you had sex with me, at least early on. You damned womanizer! Why don't you just own up to your faults and confess your sins. We're in Heaven, after all, don't you know.

BERT (a bit miffed, whispering): Now, Dora, just because we're in 'eaven doesn't mean we 'ave to spill the beans on everything. You know that.

(Sheila moves forward now.)

SHEILA (looking at Dora and the tart): Bert, don't let that tart play you for a fool. I know your past with women wasn't the best, but you were faithful to me over the years and that counts for something.

DORA: What tart? You should be so lucky! Bert couldn't let a good-looking woman pass him by without a quick how-do-you-do, and you know that.

SHEILA: That's pure gossip, unsubstantiated rumor, and idle nonsense. In short, you don't know what you're talking about, Dora!

BOBBY: Ladies, Ladies, hold onto your hats a minute. Now, first of all, I'm not arresting Mr. Harter for anything, especially considering our surroundings. What's more, I'm asking you to all calm down or I will have to arrest the Ladies. (The women begin to calm down, after Minny has let loose with another "Beeg Shot!")

BERT (gratefully): Thanks, Officer. Couldn't interest you in a picture or two? I've me equipment just over there (pointing off right).

BOBBY: No, Sir. I would probably break your camera. (Laughing now.) But I expect the "Cat-Fight Trio" would make for a good one.

BERT: I know what you mean, Officer. Well, thanks for your kindness, anyway. I'll be pushing off now. (They shake hands.)

BOBBY: It was nice meetin' you, Mr. Harter. And we all know, this is just play in purgatory, and not the real thing, because you really were a hero, in my book.

BERT: Please, just call me Bert.

BOBBY: Okay, Bert. It was an honor.

(Bert begins moving toward the background again, as Sheila takes his arm and talks to him about what has just transpired. Meanwhile, the Bobby moves off left with the French tart in tow. Next, a young man and young woman enter. They are followed by David Lamont, who is carrying a notebook with him.)

YOUNG MAN: I bet that Lamont character is going to write about us, once he's out of this loony bin.

YOUNG WOMAN: I bet he will, too. Let's find out what he's up to. (Moving back toward David.) Hey, David, what've you got in that notebook? Anything you feel like sharin'?

DAVID: No thanks. I'm just jotting some song titles and singers down right now. I love the music they play here. It reminds me of college all over again, and, well, beyond college.

YOUNG WOMAN: So, which college did you go to?

DAVID: Well, I graduated from Wisconsin, Iowa, and Missouri, but I also started on a master's program at Missouri a while ago, and I wanted to get back there, before I came here.

YOUNG MAN: You mean you have three degrees and you wanted a fourth?

DAVID: Yes, I do. I wanted to earn my master's in Journalism to go along with my other degrees. Also, I was a master's candidate at Wisconsin in Theatre for two years, but I didn't write my thesis in time.

YOUNG WOMAN: My, weren't we ambitious?

YOUNG MAN: Yeah, that took some studyin' and some trashin' and even some downright bullshittin', didn't it, Man?

DAVID: In a manner of speaking, I suppose it did. Why? Does it bother you that I liked to study things?

YOUNG WOMAN (careful now): Of course it doesn't. What do you mean by that, anyway?

DAVID: Oh, I was just thinking that it's possible to take someone else's education for granted, until it becomes your own.

YOUNG MAN (careful himself): That's cool, Man. My education is important to me, too, but it's on hold while I'm with Lou.

DAVID: Yes, your names are Louise and Hal, am I right?

HAL: That's right. How do you know our names?

DAVID: Oh, I keep posted on developments around here, even if this moral-phrenia of mine acts up from time to time. It's a beautiful illness to create worlds within, but it sure delayed a constructive love-life for me for a long time.

HAL AND LOUISE: Cool, David. You've got "THE ILLNESS", too?

DAVID: Right you are.

(David laughs as the three of them move into the background area to continue their conversation.)

NARRATOR: Next, we see another man with a notebook. His name is Stefan Grunwald, once known as a "Jew boy" in war-torn Europe, circa 1940. Afterward, he was a notable American book publisher.

STEFAN G.: Now, let's see how this sounds:

My past often grabs me
like a furious pack of
howling wolves.
Red and Black swastikas;

the dead eyes of my
grandmother;
helpless children's exploded
brains;
the acrid smells of burning
ovens;
grown-ups in putrid mass
graves,
pervade my screams—filled
nightmares,
spilling terror/fear/
confusion into the every-
day where function I must.

Forty-years of childhood—
youth—adolescence—
manhood, spent running
from the wolves.
No platform, peace, security.

Four decades of painful
illusions.
And yet, I HAVE SURVIVED
IT ALL.
I've tamed the pack, made
it docile.
I trained the beasts into
guardians,
of my heritage around
the world.
There are many like me.
Beware Anti-Semite!
Neither touch my children
nor people.
If ever you do, I'll sic
my pack
of well-trained ferocity
on you.
My fellows will unleash
theirs' too.
We'll overtake you with
our brains,
sharpened by pain and
sorrow.
We'd rather smother you
with culture,
love, and kindness, our
classic heritage.
But if that won't do
we'll sic...

(He looks at the page closely again, he has been speaking partly from memory, after all. Then he speaks to himself again.)

STEFAN G.: Not bad, Stefan. Not bad.

(The others join in, shouting "Well done, Stefan, well done!" and clap loudly. Then they all come forward, toward the audience and begin doing a little dervish-jig. Stefan leads them...)

STEFAN G. (singing and dancing):

There once was a Jew who did things by night,

And as he fled others, he played it right.
Then, one day, the Nazis came to get all of them;
He escaped, and they carted off others, not him.
Before long, a few were roasting in Hell.
But this Hell offered a different kettle.
It kept them paying long after the day –
When ordinary men could make them pay.
But if the kettle was not always theirs, at least
Judgment Day was a good remedy for feasts.

(Everyone continues dancing as Stefan repeats the tune. As the lights are dimmed, a new tune begins to be played in the distance. The song “Don’t Know Much” can be heard, and the figures who have acted the previous scene fall gradually back into background space as angels come forward with wing brooches for them. Lights dim down, and “Don’t Know Much” plays until the next scene begins. End of Act IV, Scene 1.)

Act IV, Scene 2: Going to Hell, Photogenically, So to Speak.

NARRATOR (softly): We’re now in Hell, on a “good day.” It may or may not be a place most people would like to frequent, but neither is it as bad a place as some might expect – not now, at least. Unlike Heaven, where new residents are expected to earn their wings, Hell on a good day is a little like Earth on a moderately bad day. But then even Heaven, before one sees God, can seem the same. You will see more of Heaven and Hell in Act V, and you may be in for a surprise there – especially after you see the rest of Act IV. But for now, it’s clear the Devil does show his face to all in Hell soon, if not from the very start. And his face changes dramatically, depending on his needs, and is not always a beautiful face. God, on the other hand, never deviates from His plan, in Heaven or on Earth; and He could exterminate the Devil at any moment, plus Hell, too, for that matter. But He chooses to allow Satan to do his dirtiest while “life” in Hell continues. At the moment, we see Adolf Hitler and Attila the Hun talking together. They have just finished putting hay into the Devil’s Barn and they are a bit fatigued. They are sweating profusely, but still are filled with enthusiasm. They have Midwestern American accents.

HITLER: By the Devil, it feels good, Attila, to finish haying. My father used to say: “Finish what you start. Every job you start, you should also finish.” I now can see what he meant.

ATTILA: Yes, it feels great, Adolf, to finish what you start.

HITLER: We should have a beer to celebrate. What do you think?

ATTILA: Of course we should. Let’s drink a Special Import.

HITLER: Yes, that sounds good to me, too.

(They go into the Devil’s House just as the Devil and his chief assistant, the Emperor Nero, emerge. They also speak with Midwestern American accents. But nearly everyone else here speaks with their accents from life, at least for now.)

DEVIL: How have you been, my good friend Nero?

NERO: Excellent, Great Leader. I have just completed a novel for you. It’s a romantic novel, of course. It has a beautiful virtuous maid in it, who is corrupted by a vile, low-born man, and she eventually comes to see the light by marrying a President of the United States. It’s a spell-binder, I think, and I know you will like it. To be sure, I’ve included a juicy part in it for you, Great Leader.

DEVIL: It does sound appetizing, Nero. What is my part?

NERO: You persuade the virtuous maid-gone-bad to marry the President. It’s perfect for a leader with your range. You really do lift her out of her misery.

DEVIL: I am deeply honored. Come, let’s have a drink to celebrate. How does a Special Import sound?

NERO: Sounds like a plan to me.

DEVIL: Good, let’s have at it. And then I will read your novel – with which you’ll win a Subterranean Wurlitzer, I’ll wager, if there’s still a Devil in Hell, that is!

(The pair laugh at the Devil's joke and move inside the Devil's House. Next, two beautiful-looking young women come strolling up the Devil's Path, which runs alongside the Devil's House. On Earth, one was the black model named Naomi Campbell; the other was the singer Madonna. They are giggling over something Naomi has said.)

MADONNA: Geez, Campy, that was decent of ya. My father could be "radical," but when I saw him last, he just looked tired and gray. He was old enough, in the end, to get to "that other place" on staying power alone. Now me, I don't recall how or when I "died," but I'll bet I was givin' the boys Hell even then.

NAOMI: I'll bet you were, too. Today, we're in the Devil's Hell, and we still give it to the boys. What could be fairer?

MADONNA: Yes, I guess it just goes to show that a couple of eternally young fillies like us can sport about when we need to.

(Two handsome young men come down the Devil's Path now, one dark-haired and stocky, the other blonde and tall. Madonna points in their direction and whispers to Naomi, "I'll bet I can catch me a good night awake; just watch and see." (Speaking to the tall one...) Hey, Blondie, where have you been all my life?)

TALL MAN: Hi there, Beautiful. Say, you're Madonna, aren't you? My name is Felix. I used to see you on television all the time. How are you doing?

MADONNA: Well, Felix. It's good to see that God hasn't taken all the good ones yet. We get our share down here, don't we?

FELIX: Yes, we do. Would you like to walk with us to the beach?

MADONNA: That would suit me fine, Big Fellow. Let's get going, then.

(Madonna motions for Naomi to go with "Ben," Felix's pal, and they move off, Stage Right. The Narrator speaks...)

NARRATOR: Next, a shy, young photographer comes along. He's younger than when he actually died on Earth, but that doesn't matter in Hell. His name is W.E. Smith, but not the famous W.E. Smith.

(The unfamous W.E. Smith is taking pictures of the scenery, mainly, but when he gets to the Devil's House, he stops in awe. He sizes up the place with his camera and shoots some stills. He's using a Nikon, and it seems to be working well. However, an attractive, middle-aged woman comes out of the Devil's Barn, and he looks toward her longingly.)

NARRATOR: That's Bette Davis. My wasn't she something when she was 45?

MS. DAVIS: Hello there, Young Man. Looking for a good picture? I'll give you one. (She stops by a gardenia bush near the house, and smiles seductively with hands on hips.) There, will this do?

MR. SMITH: Yes, it will Ms. Davis. Yes, it will indeed.

(He shoots away. She eventually sits down in her red short-shorts and yellow top, after posing in many suggestive positions. Mr. Smith sits down with her.)

MR. SMITH: Ms. Davis, I've been a fan of yours since I was a kid.

MS. DAVIS (chuckling and lighting a cigarette): You don't think you're a kid anymore? Can you prove it?

MR. SMITH: Well, I've always been a big fan of yours, especially when you played in *Of Human Bondage* and *Rosemary's Baby*. What do I have to do?

MS. DAVIS: Why don't you smoke a cigarette with me?

MR. SMITH: Well, I guess that's something I'm capable of.

MS. DAVIS (looking into his eyes deeply, as she hands him the pack): Here, have one, then...

MR. SMITH (grabbing a cigarette, as she lights it, and smoking): This isn't bad. (He looks longingly into her eyes.)

MS. DAVIS: Would you like something stronger, Son?

MR. SMITH (dropping his cigarette in his lap): Oh, God... no, I mean, I wish we could talk longer, but I've got to be taking pictures, and you're just toying with me.

MS. DAVIS: Want a bet? Come on down to the beach with me, and I'll give you some real pictures. Come on. You're in Hell -- you might as well enjoy it.

MR. SMITH: Oh, I'm afraid I can't stay, Ms. Davis.

MS. DAVIS: You must be looking for eternal happiness or something, right?

MR. SMITH: Something like that. At any rate, I've got to go. Thank you for the pictures. I won't forget them.

MS. DAVIS: I'll just bet you won't. I'll just bet you won't.

(Mr. Smith moves off toward the beach, alone, and Ms. Davis goes into the Devil's House. Soon, a group of men and women emerge from that house, dressed in Renaissance costumes. Their leader -- a tall, handsome, middle-aged man named Tank -- addresses them...)

TANK: I was named for Henry VIII and my uncle Tim, and because he is tied up on the beach today, the King asked me to help celebrate his divorce from Anne Boleyn in the "here and now." (The group begins to chuckle.) Yes, he's still celebrating that infamous day. My goodness, what will we do next with our great King?

(One of the women, a pretty red-head, pipes up.)

RED-HEAD: What will we do with our great King? It should be: What will he do with us? (They all laugh. Then Tank intones something more solemnly.)

TANK: Hear now! We must be cautious about what we say, even here. Not only King Henry could become angry, but so could our real Master -- the Great Personage who waits within.

(Tank points back toward the Devil's House. Other group-members agree verbally and with their gestures. Tank concludes his spoken thoughts...)

TANK: Let us go back inside, then, for our Master does not like our comings and goings much; and we owe our upkeep to Him, "above" all else. Even the great Henry knows that. Go, then, back to where you came from. And be glad of your place in the scheme of things! (Shouts of "Amen!" erupt from the group, and they continue to use that word -- speaking like they have hot peppers going down their gullets -- as they reenter the Devil's House.)

NARRATOR: Next, a teenage boy and girl come in from the Devil's Field. A young man, named Jimmy Hendrix -- not the famous Jimmy Hendrix -- has a guitar in-hand; and a young woman, named Janis Joplin -- not the famous Janis Joplin -- is humming along with the tune he is playing.

JANIS: Gee, Jimmy, that's a grate piece of work. All it needs now is some lyrics. Do you have any ideas?

JIMMY: Why, Janis, I'm leaving that to you.

JANIS: Then let's get to work. (They sit down by the gardenia bush.) Let me see, how does this sound? And you can play along...

(Jimmy plays his tune -- an unearthly sounding melody that might wear on some, but Janis finds a way to coax a kind of poetry from it.)

JANIS (singing): There once was a man of delight --
Who sang his songs all through the night.
He came with his horse and his maid,
And he lasted long while others paid.
His price was strong and profound,
And when he was done, there was sound.
His name was Jimmy, and his maid's Janis.
Their claim to fame lives on at best

Because the Master kept them singing.
He knows songs that give bells a ringing.

JANIS (satisfied): There, how does that hit you?

JIMMY: Great, Jan, Great! Want to record it and send it to New York?

JANIS: I think it's too good for New York: but we can send it anyway. And when we make it as musicians, then we can bring it on home to the Master, for He knows all we need to be or have – AND HOW!

JIMMY: Then let me get my tape recorder and you think up a few more stanzas. We'll have it made in the shade by the time this thing gets to New York.

JANIS: Jimmy, slow down a little, slow down. I want to enjoy your flame, wherever it glows. So let's go back into his field for now. We can record our posterity later, don't you think?

JIMMY (thinking out loud): Maybe you've got a point, Little One. Yeah, let's try our hands at other things for a while. I like the sound of that. And his field is awfully inviting. Yeah, let's trip for an hour or two. I can dig it.

JANIS: That's what I wanted to hear. New York can wait, especially here, can't it?

JIMMY: New York and Hollywood and London and Paris. They all can wait. By the time we're through, they'll have already burned those places down. Know what I mean?

(She smiles affirmatively, and they head for the field again. Just as the young lovers leave, they see Adolf and Attila heading outdoors. The dictators are joined by Benito Mussolini now. The youngsters laugh openly and then shoot into the Devil's Field. Benito, in particular, gets a kick out of this.)

BENITO: Hey, those kids are great. Ever hear that kid Hendrix play his guitar? He's a wizard. Some might even say he's a god! (The dictators laugh.)

ADOLF: He's okay as kids go, I suppose. But the one I like is Janis. She's a good-looking little girl. I wouldn't mind finding her in my field. (They laugh again.)

ATTILA: Wow, that Special Import hit the spot! It makes me feel like a youngster again. Should we get another couple soon?

ADOLF: In a minute, Tillie. I've got an idea how to create a little excitement in the meantime.

(He whispers to the other two, and Attila heads toward the beach. In a flash he is back with W.E. Smith.)

ADOLF: Mr. Smith, how are you today? (Mr. Smith looks surprised, but interested.) We've got a job for you, and the payment in fun for all will be worth the effort.

(They begin to talk as the lights dim. Lights up on the Narrator and another part of the stage.)

NARRATOR: We are at the edge of the field the dictators have used themselves before. Jimmy and Janis are there, kissing and embracing. They are silhouettes in the low-light of dusk. But W.E. Smith has a flash on his camera, and the dictators are fully aware of it.

(As Mr. Smith approaches the lovers, the dictators sneak up behind them. Signaling Mr. Smith with a low whistle, the trio stands up and screams, "Love her, Jimmy, love her!" -- just as Mr. Smith takes a picture. Before they know what has happened, the lovers are apart and looking at one another, bewildered for only a moment. They know their picture has been taken, but it really doesn't faze them now. They go back to love-making. The lights go down, then come up next, as Mr. Smith is emerging from the Devil's House. The dictators are waiting.)

MR. SMITH: It's done. (Holding up three prints of the same image.) They're all yours!

ADOLF (grinning): This is better than I thought it would be. What an embrace! By the Devil, we can hang these in our trophy cases, Boys. The next time Jimmy and Janis see these, they'll be famous.

ATTILA: Yes, they will be. This is great, Kid. Good work!

MR. SMITH: Thanks, I did my best.

BENITO: That's all anyone can do, Kid. Ha, ha! The Master will love these, though. Now, let's say we get that Special Import!

ATTILA: Sounds like a plan to me.

ADOLF: Good, then let's go for it, Guys! Last one in is a rotten apple!

ATTILA: Shit! That'll be me. It always is!

(The trio race for the front door, while Mr. Smith is left standing. He pulls a picture from his pocket – a 3X5 version of the 8X10s he has just given to the dictators. Mr. Smith smiles decadently, which would have been out of character for him previously. He replaces the picture in his pocket, and then he too races for the door to the Devil's House. Inside, merriment is heard, and out in the Devil's Field, Jimmy and Janis are playing and singing their song. Lights go out as that song's tune takes over and plays like an anthem. Hell on a 'good day' is closing up shop. The next time you see Hell, it will reveal a different side of itself. The next time you see it, in fact, it will be awesomely decadent. And W.E. Smith has prepared the way for that, as much as any dictator could. End of Act IV, Scene 2.)

Act V, Scene 1: The Devil Acts Up.

NARRATOR: We are back in Hell, but this time on the ugliest of days. The Devil is directing traffic, counting up all his newest victims. They have been lined up in rows, as you can see, ten abreast and naked, except for the barest essentials. They come in all colors, and they are mainly beautiful to look at -- just don't touch. However, a few less lovely scoundrels have slipped in, as well. Satan begins cracking his whip as he finishes counting and begins commanding. His victims sway back and forth in the heat, and oh, what heat! Nero isn't anywhere to be seen. No nut cases here, just raw, undifferentiated EVIL personalities – except for one, unique soul. That man stands out near the front: He looks like a cross between a middle-aged Newt Gingrich and Bill Clinton, and is played by the actor who played W.E. Smith. He is not Mr. Smith, though. This character cringes a bit, and the Devil doesn't pick up on his weakness immediately, but the man's fear soon calls him into greater focus. The Devil catches up with him. This time the Devil looks like Herman Goering, not like the middle-of-the-road bureaucrat that ran things in the previous scene. Now, his English has a markedly German accent.

THE DEVIL (larger than life): Vat's yor naem?

THE CRINGER: Leland, Sir – Leland Heartland. And I'm not Jewish, Black, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, or a Woman. I am too much a white male from the Midwestern United States. I came here as part of a deal. My son and his wife were sent upstairs, and I took their place down here.

THE DEVIL: Vell, Lee-Land Haht-Land, I would like you to cum un sie here. (He cracks his whip, and Leland obeys, instinctively.)

LELAND (frightened as ever): Is this okay, Sir?

THE DEVIL: OKAY, OKAY -- Vat is this OKAY SHEET? (Leland gets down on his knees now.) Yaes, zat ist better! (He cracks his whip again.) NOW, Lee-Land Haht-Land, why do you think my mineons have brought you here?

LELAND (guessing, hoping): Because I am a human sacrifice, Sir?

THE DEVIL (laughing haughtily, full-throated): Yaes, Lee-Land Haht-Land, you are a S-A-C-R-I-F-I-C-E. Zer is leetel doubt about zat. You will pay the price here because you were a FOOL on zee Earth. And do you know vat a FOOL must do for me here? (Shouting.) Do you, FOOL?!!

LELAND: I don't know, Field Marshal Goering, I mean Sir. (Leland feels the whip now.) Please, Sir, tell me!

THE DEVIL: YOU MUST EARN MY RESPECT! Get eet, FOOL? You must work HARD for my respect. And I do not make that easy for you. In fact, FOOL, I make eet VERY, VERY DIFFICULT for you. Right everyone?!!!

MINIONS (as if just awakening): Yes, yes, Master, you make it very, very difficult for us. (He cracks his whip.) Yes, Master, you are great and we are weak. You control everything about us, even our consciences. We have no choice but to respect you and do what you say.

THE DEVIL: Zat is KORREKT, Mein Mice!! You will do vat I say, and YOU WILL RESPECT MEIN POWER!!!

NARRATOR: Cracking his whip, his minions bring in a cross between Bette Davis and Madonna, with a form not undesirable in the least. Even Leland Heartland notices that. Perhaps he notices it most of all. Again the whip cracks, and the woman slave begins stripping her clothes off. She does so most tantalizingly, brushing her discarded clothes against Leland's face, by his mouth, and across the front of his pants. Leland tries to resist, but this proves futile, and soon he is wanting this woman more than he has ever wanted a woman in his entire middle-aged life.

(At this point, a large, Roman-clad warrior enters with a sword, goes directly over to Leland, and kicks him hard in the genitals. He then stands over Leland threateningly with the sword. Leland screams horribly and falls down, holding his private parts. The Devil takes the others' minds off of it by cracking his whip again. This time, another warrior appears. He is Japanese, small, and ugly. He has a gun in his hand. He says Leland has but one chance to survive. The Japanese warrior stands before Leland and raises the barrel to his temple, pulling the trigger, with no shot ringing out. He hands the pistol to Leland, who hesitates, until, that is, the Devil cracks his whip again. Leland sadly puts the gun to his own head, and when the Devil cracks his whip yet again, Leland pulls the trigger. Nothing. This goes on four times more; with the sixth "shot," Leland learns that the Devil is "only" tormenting him. There are no bullets in the pistol. Six empty chambers, and nothing happens. Leland is beginning to wonder if he doesn't wish that there would be a bullet in one of the chambers. The Devil is growing bored now, so he cracks his whip again, screams "Go!" and his victims disappear, save for Leland. Instinctively, Leland feels a break in the action and moves to the edge of the stage, Right.)

NARRATOR: The Devil hasn't given up entirely on his games, and soon another beautiful maiden is brought in. This one is for the Master himself. He directs her to lie down next to him, and he immediately puts his hand down her blouse. (She giggles, and the Devil pulls her close to him.) In the darkness that envelops them, we can hear the sounds of love-making. They are horrid yet tempting, aren't they? -- not out of the realm of practice of many lovers on Earth. Leland rests for the time being; he seems to know that he will get little rest in this place, so he takes advantage of every minute to face his fears and prepare for the worst. Once the "love-making" is done, the Devil emerges, alone. He is a master of this one-to-one game, on Earth and in Hell. He moves without his whip now. Before long, though, he snaps his fingers and Pol-Pot, the Khmer Rouge murderer, and Adolf Hitler, the REAL Adolf Hitler, emerge from the shadows. They go over to Leland and drag him into the middle of the stage. Then they kick him where his genitals used to be, mercilessly. Leland begins vomiting. He spews out all the hatred he has in him, and is purified. But the Devil and his henchmen don't fully comprehend that fact. They pull him up on his feet and make him stand there, as a very handsome young man in black enters. He has a white-covered book with him, and after clearing his throat and putting on a white jumpsuit and white gloves, with white top hat and shoes, he begins to read.

YOUNG MAN: This is Stefan Grunwald's poem "To My Baba":

I met you only once; You were
on flight from Europe to
these shores.
Of the most precious things
you took along
were two white pillows
with which you and your
husband
had started many years of
marriage.
Aside from that I knew you not.

However, like echoes from
the past
through your daughter Irma, and
granddaughter Ruth, my mother,
come aspects of yourself
that shaped my life in
many ways:
kindness and empathy;
strength and conviction;
a life centered in family,

friends and children;
good cheer and humor
in times of hardship;
caution in days of brightness.

A tough woman you must
have been,
because your lineage does
reflect that down to me.

All those aspects, no doubt
will make survivors
of my children too.

Baba, Baba, no sweeter
words we have except
perhaps for Mama, mama dear.

(The handsome young man next takes off his white clothes and resumes wearing what he had on previously – black tie and tails, with black top hat, walking stick, and shoes. He exits carrying his white accessories. Then, the Devil gets back to Leland.)

THE DEVIL: Lee-Land Haht-Land, OH, L-E-E-L-A-N-D H-A-H-T-L-A-N-D! Watch vat we have in store for you now.

NARRATOR: The Devil snaps his finger, and as if by magic, a scene from Heaven appears. It reveals Leland's son, his daughter-in-law, and his grandchildren – two boys and a girl. They are playing splendidly together and singing songs. They sing snatches of "Deep in the Heart of Texas" and "This Land Is Your Land, This Land Is My Land." Next, an even more wondrous thing occurs. Out of a cloud-bank above descends Diana Lynn, Leland's wife. She had preceded Leland in death, but she has never been forgotten by him. He still loves her, and she him. Now their eyes meet, for just a moment; then the Devil steps between them, and Diana Lynn vanishes in a puff of smoke. The Devil knows his own power again, and he thinks to tempt Leland even more. He states his case.

THE DEVIL: If you ever wish to see Ms. Diana Lynn again, unobtainable as she seems, you must do vat I say. Do you understand?

LELAND (mesmerized): Yes, I understand. I will do as you say.

(The Devil steps backward next, revealing a church's interior.)

NARRATOR: Hell may seem an odd place for such a site, but stranger things have happened on Earth and even something this sinister is not beyond the Devil in his domain. At the front of this church stands an Anglican priest and a small urn with ashes. They belong to some famous personage, given the turn-out for his Remembrance Service. It is November 1995 by Earth-years; and the people in the church pews include many respected journalists, authors, photographers, and teachers. Some would think this Remembrance Service might even be for Bert Harter, for he died in July of that year, and his family, in fact, did hold a service for him the following November. Regardless of whose ashes are in the urn, the Devil wants to be sure they do not belong to one of his victims, for he likes corpses for Hell, not ashes, to begin with, and he fully expects to add another victim to his list soon. Suddenly, along the fringes of the stage, the Devil's minions begin gathering. They are marching to an oddly appealing, yet somewhat tawdry tune. What's more, they are singing words that Leland cannot abide.

MINIONS: Onward Devilish minions,
Forward toward all wars.
Pestilence has been seen since
You boarded up the doors
That now repulse the innocence
Of my father's salvaged whores.
I come toward your wincings
And reveal only me and more –
The Devil made me do it, then;
And he is great forevermore!

(They repeat this song, as they march back and forth across the stage. Finally, they relent and pass out, Stage Left.)

NARRATOR: Leland has been trying to plug his ears against all this nonsense, but he hears most of what they sing, and is appalled. The Devil senses a victory, and moves closer to the downtrodden Midwesterner. His trick just might work, he suspects, and he gives it the “old college try.”

THE DEVIL: So, Mr. Lee-Land Haht-Land, how do you feel now? Vasn’t zat Remembrance Service tempting to you? I caught you fresh from the grave, and yet you know you could have a service like that – if you only renounce Heaven completely.

LELAND: How would I, or how could I, renounce Heaven in any other way than the way I’ve done so far?

THE DEVIL: You could renounce your true love – your family. (Leland shrinks from what comes next.) I can let you have that memorial service of all memorial services, thus winning you eternal honor on Earth, perhaps even with good standing in your family – or I can return you to the Hell you’ve already seen, complete with the unobtainable Ms. Haht-Land. Ha-Ha. What do you want me to do? It’s your choice.

NARRATOR: Leland is not pleased with his predicament, but he knows there must be a way out. For sure, the Devil does not want him in Heaven, but that’s what Leland wants. That instinct has kept the human race alive, despite all adversity to date. Thus, Leland tries something himself.

LELAND: I don’t love my family, but I would indeed like that memorial service. What if I curse my family with a Grunwald lyric? Will you then set me free to find the remembrance I need?

(Not thinking at his best, the Devil hems and haws a bit. Then he decides.)

THE DEVIL: If you curse your family with a Grunwald lyric, then I will indeed set you free, as you call it. (He motions for Leland to begin.)

LELAND: Then I choose this lyric. I learned it in school.

Four decades of painful
illusions
And yet, I HAVE SURVIVED
IT ALL.

I’ve tamed the pack, made
it docile.
I trained the beasts into
guardians,
of my heritage around
the world.
There are many like me.
Beware Anti-Semite!
Neither touch my children
nor people.

If ever you do, I’ll sic
my pack
of well-trained ferocity
on you.
My fellows will unleash
theirs’ too.

THE DEVIL (thinking he has Leland now): But you are not a Jew! You are a white male from the Midwestern United States. What say you to this?

LELAND: I say that I can still sic my pack on you, Anit-Semite!

(Now come the angels in all their splendor, Cherubim and Seraphim, singing “Onward Christian Soldiers.” Satan relents.)

THE DEVIL: Begone, then, FOOL! If this is vat you vant, then good riddance!

(Lights dim as Leland finds Diana Lynn and flees toward Heaven. End of Act I, Scene 1.)

Act V, Scene 2: Heaven Is Looking Good, Very Good Indeed.

NARRATOR: We're in Heaven on an excellent day. There is a Remembrance Service going on for Bert Harter, not in a church building, but rather with all his old friends and family having "passed over" in more recent times, and before the Lord. These immortal souls include a few of his ancestors and immediate family, of course, but they also include: the Royal Family of Britain, Sheila Harter, Dora Harter, Mr. and Mrs. James Cameroon, Sir Tom and Lady Hopkins, Sir Edward and Lady Holton, Prime Minister Nehru, other old pals, teachers, and other employers. Also present are many of the photographic community, like: Stefan Szakall, Erich Salomon, Bob Capa, John Thomson, Gerry Grove, Sally Soames, Henri Cartier-Bresson, the real W.E. Smith, and photo-subjects of Mr. Harter's – black, white, red, and yellow. At the back are Ms. Minny, and also Leland and Diana Lynn Heartland. Everyone wears a wing-brooch on their lapel. The service has already begun, with the Seraphim and Cherubim singing "Amazing Grace". No one is conducting this service: A few of the "Passed Over" simply go in front of the group to praise Mr. Harter, who is seated in a chair of honor at front, and to thank the Lord. Christ watches from on high, and is pleased. Speaking first is Sir Tom Hopkins, who was Mr. Harter's best editor, of course, for *Picture Pages*. He is dressed in white, but not expensively so. Christ also is in white, and is an older version of the Jesus seen in so much art. Three-persons-in-one, he seems to be a spirit, too. There is a good selection of colors and styles among the others' dress. Sir Tom shows slides of Mr. Harter's best works, with yours truly filling in parenthetical expressions.

SIR TOM: Now, as you all know, Bert Harter may have been a little rough-and-tumble on Earth... (Everyone smiles at this, as a slide of Mr. Harter's two Gorbals street urchins comes up.) But he was also soft as a lamb when it came to the important things... (A slide of Bert's granddaughters running in a country lane comes up, followed by his close-up portrait of Lizzie, his Jack Russell Terrier, playing with a bone.) He was a good husband to Dora for a time, and to Sheila for all time, and he was a good father to his sons, too. Now, Sheila loved one of Bert's pictures more than the rest – a view of the Hercules bicycle factory... (That slide comes up, with a sigh of remembrance coming from the throng), for you all know that Bert started his career taking pictures of the cycling club he belonged to – Norwood Paragon... (Cycling pictures come up.) Also, he let the quality of mercy shine through his pictures... (Views of his parents and sons are followed by one of his views from the *Family of Humanity* Exhibit – of a newly released convict after that man had slept with a loving prostitute, also in the picture.) Of course, not everyone he photographed had earlier been accorded the same heroic quality of mercy Bert showed them... (Photos of Osnabruck and Bergen-Belsen are shown. The survivors are focused on.) Bert was no heartless slouch, then; and he surpassed most photographers in the level of compassion he showed toward his subjects... (Mr. Harter's most telling view of South Korean prisoners of conscience, squatting, comes up next.) Then, too, he could be delicate without being sentimental... (His view of Prime Minister Nehru smelling a rose, followed by his view of Sugar Ray Robinson meeting the People in Paris.) And he could get where nobody else could get, in more ways than one... (His "join-up of Queen Elizabeth entering the Paris Opera in 1957 comes up.) In wars, too, he was adept at getting where others would not or could not go... (A slide of his history-making double-page fire-fighting spread from 1941 comes up, followed by his best view of U.S. First Division Marines landing on the sea-wall during the Battle of Inchon in 1950. Sir Tom closes on a personal note.)... To be sure, Bert Harter touched us all with his work, but it is his Christmas cards for which I will always remember him best (some of those are shown), because even after he retired in 1964, he kept those pictures coming. And each Christmas, my wife and I received our personalized picture postcard from Bert and Sheila; we were always moved by those pictures – from a view of the street urchins again, to a look at a statue of the Lord on a river bank in a friendly locale, taken just a little before Bert's passing. (You see the last two now.) All were excellent! That's why the work of Bert Harter was and is a matter for the heart and the head. His work shines forth for all time as a beacon to the unfortunate, the so-called ordinary souls, and the misunderstood, as well as to other decent, law-abiding People everywhere. He did his job for me; but more importantly, he did his job for us all!

NARRATOR: Finished with his presentation, Sir Tom moves back to a seat with his wife. There is applause now, and Mr. Harter bows to the throng, and to the Lord. Next comes James Cameroon, Mr. Harter's old Korean War partner. He is dressed in a nice grey-tweed suit, and he looks dapper in a semi-sardonic way.

JAMES (satirically): I never thought I'd be in this place – of all places (the throng and Christ are amused) – at this time, telling about my experiences with Bert Harter, but here I am and I'll state my case plainly. (Smiling.) I used to say that Bert Harter was the sort of fellow you either learned to work with or took out and shot. That wasn't the whole truth. You see, Bert was as regular a fellow as I've ever met in terms of the everyday features of life, perhaps even too regular at times. On the other hand, he was like a rock at Inchon compared to me, and he was as good as gold when it came to Sheila, his two sons, and his photography. I put his photography last here, not because he was anything else but the best at it – far from it. But Bert Harter believed in photography so dearly, because he held People to be of such great

value. He took pictures because he loved People, and he made great images because People also loved him. I can't say enough, then, about his treatment of the People who mattered most to him. Even his first wife, Dora, he held in high regard, except maybe when he was in an ungrateful mood, which afflicts us all sometimes. She was the mother of his sons, and he was generally grateful for that. Also, his sons always gave him great joy, for they loved their father as few sons can. Moreover, Bert's second wife and mate for eternity, Sheila, was as precious to him as life itself. She lit up his life as no other person could – near the end of the life of *Picture Pages*. She came into his life and made him want to live it well, perhaps as he had never lived it before. And she helped redeem a man who had not really been a fallen angel, so much as a lingering soul. He no longer tarried, once he met Sheila, and he knew his course in many areas afterward, not just photographically. That said, I just want Bert to know that I loved and still love his work and his friendship; and I commend his good nature to you now, before the Lord and the Hosts of Heaven!

NARRATOR: Mr. Harter is embarrassed a bit by all this attention, but he stands up for the applause, too. The Lord smiles at all this; after all, He is quite fond of all His People. It is profoundly moving for Bert now to speak; he does so. He is dressed in a lovely green sweater and brown corduroy pants, with a gold shirt and brown shoes. He looks as he did at 82, the age when he passed over. He is a very nice man and he looks to have lived a good, if a bit rough-and-tumble life. He begins with a British accent, but not a Cockney one now. He doesn't drop his "h-s" here.

BERT: I want to thank you for coming today. I never expected when I started out my life to be accorded such high honors; but I am indeed grateful for all this Heavenly attention. (He smiles and sighs come from the crowd.) I began my life with a so-called lowly background, and today I am proof that every child can grow up to be a useful, perhaps even caring, adult. I loved my profession, and I loved and love my family and friends, as well. In fact, I love all People these days. I know, after all this time, that all People are God's children; and I know, too, that all People can achieve Heaven, if they work a little at it, and if our Lord (looking up toward Christ) so desires their life to be a useful, caring one. You know, I used to think that God didn't really matter to most people, and that the only thing they craved was some sort of "love." Well, today I realize that God IS Love. I also know that He will share that Love with anyone who asks Him properly to do so. I pray these days for those souls who are in limbo, those who have not earned their wings yet, that is, and even for those souls who will never see God, the unfortunates who are down below. God hears my prayers (looking up toward Christ again), and I am ever grateful. And just this morning, another soul earned his wings and became one of us in a new way. His name is David Lamont, and I have known him since we met in 1981, when he took my picture and began writing about my life. David (Bert motions toward the audience), will you please come forward now?

(David emerges from the audience and is welcomed with open arms by Bert. They hug and then Bert speaks again...)

BERT: David is another good friend I would not want to have to do without. He has retold my story over the years on Earth, and now he would like to share something with you that he shared with Sheila just after my passing over. (With a winsome gesture.) David, please go ahead.

DAVID: Thank you, Bert. Actually, I want to share one story with you and then introduce you to a student of mine, Ms. Jean Lee Bell. First, the story. When I met Bert Harter in November 1981, I didn't know what to expect. He could have been shy; he could have been arrogant; he could have been arrow-straight or flexible. What he was, was amiable. He loved sharing his stories with me; and he didn't mind preparing his photos for me to take with me. Moreover, he continued to share his stories with me through his Christmas cards, too, which Sir Tom has already mentioned. In January 1995, a few months before he passed, Bert and I spoke by phone. We hadn't talked in a long time, but we had kept in touch through the mail and indirectly via phone conversations between Sheila and me. However, when I spoke to Bert in January of that year, he told me this, "I don't do lectures any more. My eyes aren't good enough for reading notes and things... I do still take a picture now and then; not too many, but every now and then." That day, he also said he was glad I liked the picture of the Lord's statue that Sir Tom has already alluded to, as well. What he didn't say directly, but what he seemed to know, was that he would be passing, soon. One doesn't really know why some people realize they are ready for that passage and others don't, but Bert did. And when he told me twice, "It was good hearing from you, David," I knew that was a unique phone call. It was the last time I would speak with Bert on Earth. Well, thankfully, today I can say we haven't given up our friendship because we passed to Heaven. Today that friendship is stronger than ever; and I'm happy to see not only Bert and all of you here, but I am also happy beyond expectations to see our God here. Thank you, Lord, for showing us all the way to your heart through Bert. (Bert now moves forward to shake hands with and hug David again.) And thank you, Lord, for giving us all eternal life!

(As one body, then, the group stands and applauds Bert and David. The Lord, too, acknowledges the applause. The group appreciates what's been said; and they are pleased to be in accord over the state of grace they have just shared. Next, Mr. Harter's sons, Terry and Michael, move forward, as do Sheila, the Cameroons, and the Hopkinses. Together the group in front bows, while the larger group offers their overwhelming approval to what has transpired. Chairs now magically await the smaller group, and they sit down together in front. David still holds the floor.)

DAVID: Now, I would like to ask the best poet I've ever known personally to come forward – my student, Jean Lee Bell. (Jean emerges from the audience.) Jean shared the next two poems with me soon after we met, and they moved me so much that I sent them ahead to Sheila when I learned Bert had passed. Jean will read those poems to you now.

(David motions to Jean to stand where he has just stood; and she does so.)

JEAN: Thank you, David. The first poem I've been asked to share with you is called "To Those Who Love Me." It goes like this:

If one day I should walk these dear loved woods,
Or sit beside the brook to hear its song,
And Friend Death comes to share my happy mood—
To talk of life as we might stroll along;
Were he to bid me choose if I would Go
While life is good, and I so well aware
Of all that gives my world its lovely glow,
With grateful heart I'd give my answer there—
Go gladly to the paths beyond my wood.
Rejoice with my loves, for life and death
Are great adventures—and our God is good!

(Applause erupts. Jean thanks the group, then begins again.)

JEAN: The other poem I was asked to read for you is titled "Awakening." It isn't long, and a lot of people have said they like it. I hope all of you like it, too:

When my time comes, and Friend Death takes my hand,
My work on earth complete, at God's command,
I'll take the hand that's offered me
And look, with sweet accord
Into Death's face, but there to see (looking up)
With joyful recognition, Christ, my Lord!

(The applause erupts again. The Heavenly throng has loved Jean's performance; and David comes forward to shake his student's hand and kiss her on the cheek. Next, Bert comes forward with the rest of the smaller throng in front. They embrace Jean and each other. Then, without signal, all faces look toward Christ's. He is beaming, and says with full voice, "It is Good!" On the balcony opposite Christ, a female form appears suddenly. It is the Virgin Mary. Christ extends his arms to her regally, and says, "Mother." She bows to Him. She has been watching without anyone seeing her until now. The throng looks her way, as an angel sings the "Ave Maria." The throng sits now, and listens intently. Then, after the hymn is done, there is applause, which Mary acknowledges. Then, the great hymn sung, "Joy to the World" is played instrumentally, softly, as the throng mingles in the background.)

SHEILA: It was good to receive your poems when I did. They helped me through a difficult time.

BERT: Yes, thank you for sending those poems to Sheila. And thank you for reading them today. They were perfect for the occasion. David, this student did right by you and all of us, didn't she?

DAVID: Indeed, she did!

JEAN: You're very welcome. I only wish we all had met on Earth a while; it would have been good to share our stories and writings even then. And my daughter, the father, could have said a prayer then. Of course, we have plenty of time now!

DAVID: Yes, we all have time now. I can't wait for my wife and kids to meet us here, too.

NARRATOR: They all laugh at this remark, because David's wife and family are temporarily in "Purgatory." Won't that be exciting when they, too, are admitted to the Big Show. And this particular show was a fairly big one, I'd say. And it was a good show, a very good show. Enjoy yourselves, then, and keep visiting this theater and taking in plays like the one you've just seen. We are all grateful for your interest, aren't we troupe? God bless you, and God bless us all! Amen and Good Night to everyone!

(The entire cast comes forward for a bow, as Jim Brickman's "Angel Eyes" plays, to be followed by "If You Believe," which is to be played as people move into the lobby. Close of Act V, Scene 2, **This Play's End.**)