

“THE WATCHERS”

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

BY SAM GRABER

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SYNOPSIS – THE WATCHERS

Against the backdrop of the Minnesota sand mining boom, an energy scavenger and his sister arrive at the river headwaters just east of Jordan. They soon learn they are not alone. A strange man roams the woods at night. He claims to carry the power of God.

The Watchers explores the nature of religious belief and steps into the dangerous crossroads of human divinity by questioning whether we should even want that belief to be true.

CHARACTERS (2M/2F)

JOSIE, 20s, female

ARAM, 20s, her twin brother

ELIJAH, old, male, African-American

BECKY, 20s/30s, female, Mexican

TIME

Father’s Day.

PLACE

East of Jordan, Minnesota.

SCENES

ACT I. Drought.

ACT II. Flood.

RUN TIME

The estimated runtime is 95 minutes.

THE STAGE

The setting is a Minnesota timber lodge cabin.

The cabin is not large nor glamorous. It is cramped, dilapidated, and somewhat dusty. Lacquer-style tiling canvasses the floor and the ceiling is a rugged patchwork of bygone plywood.

The main front doorway leading to outside is upstage right. A bedroom doorway leads off upstage left.

Between these two upstage doorways is a modular kitchen area, including cupboard cabinetry, older stovetop, and tiny sink.

Above the upstage sink is a square window providing the only view to outside. Torn curtains shroud this window, the only functional draperies in the cabin.

A doorway that cannot be opened leads to offstage right.

Downstage center is a worn davenport. Downstage of this davenport is a foldout table with one of its four legs missing; stacked cinder is used as the substitute.

On this table is an old lamp.

Set off downstage from the davenport is a red chair.

FIRST PERFORMANCE

The Watchers was first performed as *Modern Prophet* on October 16, 2013 at the Northwind Warehouse Lofts in Minneapolis, MN, as produced by Mission Theatre Company with Andrea Tonsfeldt as producing director, and directed by Anneliese Stuht, with the following cast:

JOSIE — Katie Willer

ARAM — Aaron Konigsmark

ELIJAH — Sadeeq Ali

BECKY — Maria Signorelli

In memory of my friend Pat Conway.

The question is always: why are we here?

ACT I. DROUGHT.

PRELUDE. THE VOICES SING.

We hear the singing of Eliahu HaNavi.

It is a lullaby.

One voice becomes two voices become four voices. As if specters from an ancient time.

VOICE

[Chorus] Eliyahu Hanavi, Eliyahu Hatishbi

Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu Hagiladi

TWO VOICES

Bim’hera yavoh eleinu, im mashiach ben David

Bim’hera yavoh eleinu, im mashiach ben David

FOUR VOICES

[Chorus, reprise] Eliyahu Hanavi, Eliyahu Hatishbi

Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu Hagiladi

As the final words are sung, we hear the blowing of a strange and unearthly wind...

SCENE 1. AND IT CAME TO PASS AFTER A MANY THOUSAND YEARS THAT A BROTHER AND TWIN SISTER ARRIVED AT THE DRY HEADWATERS EAST OF JORDAN.

Night.

A summer wind blows.

Through the upstage window curtain we see cusps of wind whip the outline of a forest of tall white pines. An elemental dance of night shadows plays across the interior of the Minnesota timber lodge cabin.

We hear a car engine. Headlights slash the cabin walls. The car engine stops. A door opens and shuts.

ARAM moves across the exterior of the upstage window towards the front door.

ARAM jostles the doorknob, but it doesn't open.

ARAM kicks open the front door, BAM! He stands in the doorway, a travel duffel slung over his shoulder, carrying in one hand a birthday cake.

ARAM enters the cabin but the door doesn't fully close behind him. ARAM notices his forced entry has damaged the bolt.

ARAM

Well, I hope this is the right place now.

ARAM goes to the downstage table lamp and fumbles for a pull switch, tugs, and the resulting light illuminates the cabin.

ARAM

Eww. Spacious, my ass.

ARAM dumps the travel duffel and places the cake on the table.

ARAM sees the red chair and drags it to aside the davenport. Everything is set.

ARAM goes towards out. The front doorknob spins without the latch mechanism catching.

ARAM

Doors are overrated.

ARAM exits, moving back across the exterior of the upstage window towards off.

Moments later we see a struggle as ARAM drags JOSIE past the exterior window back towards the door. JOSIE is gagged and blindfolded, her hands bound.

ARAM ushers JOSIE through the front door, closes the door behind them and situates JOSIE onto the red chair.

ARAM then removes her mouth gag, JOSIE breathing heavy.

JOSIE

Whatever you're after I don't have it. Please, I need to be returned to my house.

ARAM unzips the duffel and removes JOSIE's purse, shaking it.

JOSIE

I don't have anything of value, okay? There's nothing I have you want. No needlepoint or fancy modern electronic device.

From JOSIE's purse ARAM withdraws two knitting needles and an iPad.

JOSIE

I can't be outside my house. I'm a...a social adjuster. For school-age children. The PTA has a strict policy not to negotiate with terrorists.

ARAM

I believe you know why we're here.

Something about his voice. ARAM removes the blindfold.

JOSIE

[Seeing him] Holy—

ARAM shoves the gag back into her mouth, holds up the cake, showing one candle.

ARAM

Happy Father's Day!

JOSIE

[Spitting out the gag] You bastard!

ARAM

[Singing] Happy Father's Day to you, Happy Father's Day to you, Happy Father's Day *dead Dad...*

JOSIE

You deserting bastard!

ARAM

[Her purse] No matches in here, huh?

JOSIE

The hell are you doing?

ARAM

Trying to have a happy Father's Day for dear old dead Dad but you're kind of mucking it up.

JOSIE

This some kind of joke?

ARAM

Wait, when’s Father’s Day?

JOSIE

Today.

ARAM

Then I’m on time.

JOSIE

Back in the country.

ARAM

Obviously.

JOSIE

I don’t believe it.

ARAM

Real miracles are such a rarity these days. Tough to appreciate them when they happen. Wonder where they keep the matches around here.

JOSIE

Aram!

ARAM

Unless you got another twin brother I don’t know about?

JOSIE

You grabbed me, you kidnapped me!

ARAM

Yeah, well, the fun little abduction was supposed to occur at what I assumed would be the spacious underground garage of your gleaming downtown Minneapolis condo but it seems you’re still living at our old house! It’s been all these years and you’re still living at Dad’s house. The hell if I was ever going in that place.

JOSIE

Most people would call ahead: hey, since I ran out on you and Dad, since I haven’t made contact all these years, wouldn’t you know I’m still alive and—

ARAM has used the knitting needle to cut a slice of cake, which he now hand-feeds to JOSIE.

ARAM

[Shoving it in her mouth] So Plan B. Dressing in my regular travel cover and actually knocking on Dad’s front door and dragging you through the front yard to the car, all which I knew wouldn’t offer much in the way of resistance because I’ve come to see through all my new travels just how much people of the world tend to look the other way. Emergencies are such a nuisance.

JOSIE

[Between chews] We’re getting back in that car.

ARAM

What? We just got here.

JOSIE

We’re going back to the house.

ARAM

No can do.

JOSIE

Why.

ARAM

Because you’ll leave and spoil everything.

JOSIE

Where are the keys?

ARAM

Probably hiding with the matches.

JOSIE

This isn’t where I’m supposed to be. You know that. You took me away, *outside*, against...my free will.

ARAM

Two words which do not belong together, trust me. The will might be free but the rest of it costs.

JOSIE

I'm not engaging you.

ARAM

Certainly you weren't much of a conversationalist during the drive down.

JOSIE

You stuffed a gag in my mouth.

ARAM

I'm not the one making excuses.

JOSIE

We're leaving, Aram.

ARAM

Listen: I came back: to get you: because: well it's kind of a big surprise.

JOSIE

Yes, you're still alive.

ARAM

Fine, two surprises, one miracle to go.

JOSIE

I don't want to hear another—

ARAM

[Stuffing cake in her mouth] I finally came back home because what's about to happen will be the most incredibly important event in our lives. An event of monumental brilliance which I felt obligated not only to share with but involve my dear twin sister.

JOSIE

[Through chews] By thinking to kidnap me.

ARAM

I didn't think it, I did it. Little difference between believers and practitioners. Between those who Watch and those who actually go outside and do.

JOSIE

I sat in your car *believing* I was going to die.

ARAM

Riles the juices, doesn't it? Now that you know what those are. See? Your first experience with the outside world and you're already overdosing in extreme emotional moments. You like icing?

JOSIE

Not a bit.

ARAM

[Shoving in icing] Yes, you're thrilled I'm back because I'm sure you stayed up many a frosty North Star night, fretting over whether I had drowned, or had been split in half by hot wire, or mutilated by indigenous mobs over the plundering of their natural resources. Poor twin brother Aram! And what would you have done then, hmm?

JOSIE

I would've left the house under my own power and gone to Dad's grave to tell him he doesn't have to worry anymore.

ARAM

...yeah, I heard about that.

JOSIE

That's all you have to say.

ARAM

What happened?

JOSIE

What happened is I had to bury him. By myself. Outside, in the backyard. Next to Mom.

ARAM

Alright, so maybe you have had an extreme emotional outdoor moment. See? I'm just continuing the immersion.

JOSIE

You come back all chipper and upbeat, like you just went down the street to pick up one of those daily journals reporting the deceit and sin.

ARAM

Beats being forced to listen to Dad’s big book, his sacred Bible, and all that worthless nonsense. I discovered the other millions of books out there in the world. The million other ways to look at the world, to be shocked by the endless streams of possibility. Not much else to do at night on the forgotten ends of the planet but drink and think and talk aloud to myself because Dad once said, in a moment of clarity between his ridiculous Bible rantings, that if you can’t speak the world’s language you can’t be heard. The only thing he said that made sense. But once you get out there, once you get free of his house, you learn land is a language of its own. And the energy in that land is beyond what can be spoken. But that’s the trick, you have to walk right up to that energy and let it know you aren’t some foreigner. You belong just like it does.

JOSIE

Great, you told me, let’s go.

ARAM

Aren’t you a little curious why we’re here?

JOSIE

No.

ARAM

Not even a teeny bit? Not even about what I’ve now seen of the world? The actual world? About what it’s really like out there? Because I’ve been. I broke free, Josie, I saw it. The lights, the people, the smiles, the tears, the great, rich broth of all that supposed horrific sin. The signs. It’s nothing like what we were taught.

JOSIE

...last I heard you had gone to Canaan.

ARAM

Canada. Gas drilling the Bakken boom reservoirs. That sucked. Then European stripper wells. Then Australia for the phosphate mines. Moved to Indonesia, but the palm oil poachers didn’t like me, and I don’t like getting shot at, so I left. Which took me to Argentina. The government promised me a stake of their shale if I got them tapped, but once I did the bastards repatriated it all. Decided with another guy I met down there to go it ourselves. We grabbed a wind farm off the Atlantic coast. Apparently we needed permission first.

JOSIE

Same old Aram.

ARAM

Which finally took me to South Africa.

JOSIE

With that guy?

ARAM

Oh no, he got arrested.

JOSIE

How many enemies do you have now?

ARAM

Geography takes care of that. And iron bars. No future in iron, by the way. Anyway, South Africa figured out how to convert trees into rayon. But guess what? Turns out South Africa owns the largest paper mill in Minnesota. Well, that's home. A way back to my twin sister. I made myself a persistent nuisance until they sent me here. Purportedly to show my home team how to turn trees to threads.

JOSIE

My brother, the contorter of the land.

ARAM

We literally could become energy efficient and really rich if the world would just get out of my way.

JOSIE

Imagine all those do-gooders like me Watching the land become further defiled by people like you.

ARAM

I'll reveal my plan once you've loosened up your ears to accept grandeur.

JOSIE

Delusions of. I'd rather you loosen my hands.

ARAM

You won't run away?

JOSIE

Only one of us is good at that. Besides, I don't even know where we are.

ARAM

...Jordan.

JOSIE

Jordan, Minnesota.

ARAM

Little east of it, actually.

JOSIE

You couldn't have kidnapped me a little east of a Radisson?

ARAM

So you do know something about the world.

JOSIE

I've been Watching, Aram. It's not like I haven't Watched. Our job is to know what's going on. I've never stopped Watching.

ARAM

From inside Dad's house.

JOSIE

Which we aren't supposed to leave until the signs have come.

ARAM

Look. I agree this cabin seems a bit...suitable for slaughter. But it's better than the hovels I've had of late. And any place is better than Dad's house. Now that I've seen the world. And come back to tell you about it. To share it with you, the things that are truly true. I know you've been curious. All those years of Dad's wrath, his threats of eternal abomination, I know you were wondering just the same as I did.

They stare at each other.

JOSIE

I won't listen until you untie my hands.

ARAM

That from the PTA, too?

ARAM removes the bonds from JOSIE’s hands, and then takes some yarn from his duffel.

ARAM

[With the needle] Here. I figured a roll of this stuff would help you adjust. Comfort you. Get over the shock of being thrust from your perch.

JOSIE

One bedroom?

ARAM

Guess so.

JOSIE

You broke into this place.

ARAM

Not exactly.

JOSIE

[Tugging at the offstage right side door] This side door won’t open.

ARAM

Then your ears and that door have something in common.

JOSIE

And the front door won’t close.

ARAM

Relax. We’re east of the middle of nowhere. We’re the only ones out here. There’s no one around for miles and miles. Good thing too cuz you’re gonna need to go outside if you want to use the, uh...

JOSIE

The what.

ARAM

The facilities. You can see it, just down the dirt road there. I believe they call it a Bluff Buddy.

JOSIE

We’re leaving.

ARAM

C’mon! I just got back to the country after all these years! Give your twin brother one night.

JOSIE

I’ve never been beyond our house. I’ve never slept anywhere but our house. I can’t be here.

ARAM

Josie, it’s not unlike any other place when the clock gets late. You lie down, you close your eyes and wait for the sun to rise, when the energy calls. The only difference here is that Dad’s not around to drag me out back, tie me to that tree, punishing me whenever you challenged his authority, questioned the Word, his warped sense of logic that way, tied up for hours and hours while he preached chapter and verse.

JOSIE

While I was forced to Watch.

ARAM

Dad’s not here, Josie. It’s just us. I came back for us. I’m here for us.

JOSIE

[Scripture] ‘This is the curse going over the land—’

ARAM

—here we go—

JOSIE

—‘and it shall enter the house of the thief and the one who forgets.’

ARAM

[Quoting back at her] ‘So I hated life, for I was depressed by all that goes under the sun, because everything is futile and a vexation of the spirit.’

JOSIE

This is why we need to be home.

ARAM

This is why I had to leave.

JOSIE

Dad believed we were divinely ordained to Watch for signs of iniquity and imbalance foretelling the return of God and only then go forth to the world and proclaim the age of God’s new covenant.

A moment.

Then ARAM tosses his duffel into the bedroom with the working door.

ARAM

Dibs.

JOSIE

Don’t do this to me.

ARAM

Mañana!

JOSIE

Wish those poachers had better aim!

ARAM goes with the cake into the bedroom and slams the bedroom door.

ARAM

[From off] Happy Father’s Day!

Lights fade.

SCENE 2. BY THE FIRST NIGHT THE SISTER SAW A FIGURE IN THE FOREST.

Night.

JOSIE awake, in the moonlight, peering through the upstage window curtain, eyeing the location of the car.

JOSIE goes to the bedroom door, slowly opens it, creeps through to off.

After a moment JOSIE returns onstage through the bedroom door, now holding the car keys.

JOSIE goes to the front door, and fights herself to open the front door, to expose herself to outside, visually targeting the car’s position.

JOSIE prepares, the front door fully open, but can’t will herself move through the open doorway.

We hear the cawing of ravens, drawing nearer. And the sound of unearthly wind.

JOSIE looks towards the sound, and sees something offstage, in the woods.

JOSIE slams the front door and crouches, pushing her back against the door.

JOSIE [TO OFF]

[Whisper-screams] Aram! Aram!

Lights fade.

**SCENE 3. BUT BY SUNLIGHT THE FIGURE HAD VANISHED AND
THE BROTHER BEGAN HIS SEARCH FOR SAND.**

Morning.

*JOSIE still crouched as before, leaning
against the base of the front door, holding
the car keys.*

*ARAM emerges from the bedroom,
whistling, tying on a worker’s belt and tools.*

ARAM

Wow, I slept great! Deep and restful! Except I had this weird and discomfiting dream that //you were screaming my name all night.

JOSIE

//I was screaming your name all night.

ARAM

Weird. Wonder if that happens with other twins. [He takes back the car keys] Let me guess, Miss Watcher never even left the house to get a driver’s license.

JOSIE

I saw a man.

ARAM

Where?

JOSIE

Out there.

ARAM

When.

JOSIE

Last night. Didn’t you hear the birds?

ARAM

If I didn’t hear you calling my name I certainly didn’t hear any birds.

JOSIE

I didn’t get a good look. It was dark. But definitely dark skinned.

ARAM

African American. You wanna make it in today’s outside world, you’re gonna need to preach a little cultural sensitivity. No tolerance anymore for the whole racism thing the Bible had going on.

JOSIE

He was out there.

ARAM

I’ve dealt with plenty of strangers in plenty of strange lands and the dangerous ones usually do more than hang out by Bluff Buddies.

JOSIE

Aram, I’m not joking, I saw him, big, sort of hunched over.

ARAM

Maybe you misread the situation. Maybe what you were Watching was Dad’s ghost. Maybe this time it was him staked to a tree.

JOSIE

Take me back to the house.

ARAM

To your tabernacle of solitude. So you can sit there yarning it up at Dad’s old parlor of scorn and misery?

JOSIE

But you’re going.

ARAM

First day at the river. Trawling the trenches.

JOSIE

I told you I don’t want to know about it and I don’t want to be a part of it. Especially since there’s people running about—

ARAM

—thought it was one guy.

JOSIE

—and you broke into this place.

ARAM

I didn't break into anything... Tall Scotty set it up.

JOSIE

Oh, that's great. What does Tall Scotty, the strange kid from the neighborhood, have to do with trees?

ARAM

I'm not here for trees.

JOSIE

I thought you said—

ARAM

What I said was that I have to tell you about the most important thing that's going to happen in the history of our lives. And you didn't care to listen.

JOSIE

Well now that you're giving me a choice. Fine, Aram, if listening to you will get the keys in the ignition, please!, I would love to hear all about your latest get-arrested-quick plan.

ARAM

...I'm here to find sand.

JOSIE

...sand.

ARAM

Silica sand. Perfect sand, the rarest of sand. Pure quality Northern White, super round grain. Only in Minnesota. The state sitting on top of it all!

JOSIE

What's sand got to do with oil?

ARAM

The oilers in Dakota can't frack without it. They need the sand to dig for oil.

JOSIE

Don't you see what you're doing? Don't you realize what you've joined?

ARAM

Tall Scotty’s apparently got some whopper of a refinery up on Pebble Lake. And even better, he’s probably got rail connections to haul direct to the oil frackers in North Dakota. But Tall Scotty doesn’t have the sand. He said he needs me to bring it to him.

JOSIE

So you’re scavenging for sand.

ARAM

Once we find it we source it to Tall Scotty.

JOSIE

He wouldn’t even look you in the eye when you tried talking to him. He wouldn’t even show his face and now he’s grown up to be some company man in dirty minerals? You’ve joined some ridiculous sand hunt.

ARAM

You won’t think it so ridiculous when we’re rich and you can spin as much yarn as you want.

JOSIE

This is what Dad warned about, the corrupting of the land. We’re supposed to be Watching for iniquity not making it.

ARAM

C’mon, we’ll get out there, toil in the dry riverbed, scavenge for sand side by side and caterwaul about deceased fathers like regular kinfolk.

JOSIE

You don’t know what you did, running away.

ARAM

Well I know what I’m doing now. Perfect sand is pulling eighty a ton at market. Dakota oilers are forking out three hundred dollars a ton.

JOSIE

Can you even fit a ton in that car?

ARAM

Of course not! All we have to do is show Tall Scotty we sighted his next big sand reservoir. Once he sees our first big sample, I’ll tell him we got an untapped pit, trainloads waiting.

JOSIE

You’re not focusing on the real story here. The real story is you left. Just one morning, somehow, gone. Nowhere to be seen, nowhere to be found. No note, no explanation.

ARAM

We lived with the explanation. Dad and his Bible. How much longer did you think I could take getting dragged outside by him, tied to a tree?

JOSIE

Dad thought he killed you. He thought he failed making me believe that we were born to Watch for the return of God. And that God decided to take you, like Mom. And it killed him. And it almost killed me. And now you come back here, after all these years, sauntering around like nothing ever happened, taking me from the house, and all you want to talk about is *sand*.

ARAM

I came back for you, Josie. I didn’t die, I escaped!, I ran away!, but I came back for you. I came back so we can be together. The sand lets us be together.

JOSIE

Are you even hearing yourself.

ARAM

I’m here to take you away, finally away.

JOSIE

I don’t want to be taken away.

ARAM

You don’t know what away is because you’ve never left the house. Well I have. I’ve been to the great house of the world. The big bruising ball of yours and mine. And I’m back to tell you the world isn’t Dad barking Bible babble and punishing me for protecting you. The world is feisty and fast and has a tendency to turn off those forgettable stories of the past. We gotta turn with it.

JOSIE

‘For the land will become defiled and spew you out for defiling it.’

ARAM

No one’s getting spewed here. If you could just see I’m just trying to rip the Band-Aid off your mind. Get you out into the world and let you see for yourself that none of that Bible stuff matters.

JOSIE

Maybe I want it to matter. It’s all I’ve ever known.

ARAM

Because Dad wouldn’t let you out of the house.

JOSIE

All those times he dragged you outside instead of me, tied you to the tree, preached the Bible for hours.

ARAM

Gee, let me remember.

JOSIE

I guess I’m afraid to push back against the world because I was always forced to Watch you punished for me questioning it. Each time I challenged Dad or laughed at some difficult-to-believe part of the Bible he punished you, thinking that would get me to obey.

ARAM

Since he couldn’t stone and behead me like the good ole days of the Bible, Dad decided the next best thing was tying me to that big backyard tree. Half-naked, exposed, wet, starving, bleeding, sleeping on my feet, abandoned and desperate, while you had to Watch.

JOSIE

‘Obey them so that their work shall be a joy, not a burden!’

ARAM

You don’t know how many times I wished he was dead.

JOSIE

Well, you got your wish.

ARAM

The only decency I’ve learned from my wanderings is this: you’re born, you die. That’s it. Life is its own death sentence. People go in, people go out. And when someone goes out, you can’t—

JOSIE

—don’t—

ARAM

You can't go out with them. And you can't stay behind and become their mission. You've got to go out and decide the world for yourself. Well I've decided, Josie. The energy! To feed off it, crest on it, ride its wave.

JOSIE

And where has that got you?

ARAM

...tied up and desperate again. I'm at the end of the line here. I've run out of places to go. The energy never seems to last long enough. And the mission's always changing. Maybe this is what Dad always wanted. Me running home so you could finally leave the house and save me.

JOSIE

I don't think that's the sign Dad had in mind.

ARAM

C'mon, I'll show you what to look for! Faded lines of dry riverbed, scanning for a sparkle of speck, the sign of our future! It'll be fun!

JOSIE

Amazing how fun and sin are just that far apart.

ARAM

Yeah, well, nobody's gonna remember you for spending your whole life shut-in at Dad's tent of solitude, poring over little passages and Watching the world for God's return. The best they'll do is be puzzled by it. They'll wonder how such an inquisitive young woman could waste her one life focused on only that. If they wonder anything at all.

JOSIE

The wonder is God. And God will deliver the sign. And when that happens I won't be the one judged for contributing to the iniquity, running away, deserting his commandments, and becoming blemished and then sickened by the world like Mom did.

ARAM

Like Mom did.

JOSIE

Mom died of sickness when she wandered out into the world.

ARAM

What sickness.

JOSIE

Disease.

ARAM

Pestilence? A plague? A pox?

JOSIE

Stop laughing.

ARAM

Mom didn't wander out into the world and become struck down for her curiosity.

JOSIE

Yes, she did.

ARAM

No, she died giving birth to us. In the absence of engaging the world you remove yourself from human advancement and render yourself vulnerable to actual biblical-age calamity. Dad never said anything but I bet he made Mom deliver at home. She died delivering us. And we were dead, too.

JOSIE

How do you know.

ARAM

Dad told me.

JOSIE

Why didn't he tell me?

ARAM

Because he gave up on me. He called me a lost cause. He finally figured out how much I lived to protect you. That I didn't just accept being punished for you, that I would actually do anything to keep you from harm. He said sons obey their fathers. I said I'm not your son, I'm her brother. He said he didn't want me around anymore, that I was nothing more than walking sin. He told me to go out into the world and die in sin for myself. And he tied me up one final time and left me there, for days that final time. Well now I can say for sure he was off his rocker. Because a brother has come back for his sister from out there: the swirling ocean blues, the smoke mountain purples, the prairie pine whites.

JOSIE

God’s world.

ARAM

Pretty sure I never heard Minnesota in the daily preach.

JOSIE

You expect me to still feel guilty for all those years of you being punished.

ARAM

No, I expect you to be thankful for me rescuing you. You can come outside and join me in the real world.

JOSIE

I thought you were dead as well. That was the moment I stopped questioning. When I stopped challenging Dad and turned fully to God’s will. So that you would be forgiven in the afterlife, treated with understanding in the World To Come. But then I learned you ran away? So you’ll have to forgive me if I seem a conflicted mix of fury and relief, but you left me alone. Very alone. And I’m not going outside until the sign comes heralding God’s return.

ARAM

Then keep staying inside and Watching.

JOSIE

With a broken door? And some madman running around?

ARAM

You’ll have to come up with something better than Dad’s ghost haunting the forest. Besides, you’re an old pro at hanging back, Watching me tied up and desperate. Aren’t you.

ARAM goes.

Lights shift.

SCENE 4. YET THE GROUND WAS DRY AND THERE WAS NO SIGHTING OF SAND, ONLY THE APPEARANCE OF THE ANGEL, SEEKING TO COLLECT THE SAND AND PREPARE THE ALTAR FOR THE ARRIVAL OF GOD.

Later that morning.

JOSIE is against the front door.

JOSIE decides to move off the door and peeks through the exterior window curtains.

She sees something, moves to grab one knitting needle, holding it as defense.

ARAM kicks open the front door, BAM!

ARAM

Brutal! What a drought! Nothing but dry here, there and everywhere. And the mosquitoes! Second I bend down to sight a dusty pebble it's like my neck becomes a giant mosquito landing strip. Why we really need some rain. Nature's falling missiles, shooting down the flying beasts of sting. And I didn't find any sand, thanks for asking.

JOSIE

I saw him! Again, just now, I saw him!

ARAM

Who?

JOSIE

The man. He's out there.

ARAM

Josie, I was just out there, battling the scourge.

JOSIE

By the Bluff Buddy. He had on black robes, black pants.

ARAM

[The iPad] How the hell'd you get this?

JOSIE

It arrived after you ran away and Dad died. The only way I could Watch the world.

ARAM

Got movies on this thing? Man returns from a long hot first day sifting the riverbed, deserves some raunchy entertainment.

JOSIE

Aram, I saw him.

ARAM

Yeah, well, invite your woodland friend in for some skin flicks. [The back of the iPad] Bite of the apple. Man’s first sin.

JOSIE

Aram, *I saw him*.

ARAM

Have any tools on him?

JOSIE

Why.

ARAM

Can’t get anything done out there alone. Two person job, minimum. I figured you might not be interested so I took the precaution of enlisting the services of a day laborer.

JOSIE

Maybe it’s the South Africans checking up on you.

ARAM

Half this country can’t find Minnesota on a map, trust me, neither can the South Africans.

JOSIE

We’re not letting some random outside corrupter in here.

ARAM

You can’t even let online in here. No signal. And I was hoping this thing would come with naked wenches. Riverbed ain’t the only thing experiencing a drought.

JOSIE

A man is out there.

ARAM

All you’ve got on here are old family pictures?

JOSIE

Will you look?

ARAM

Fine...let us yank wide the anxiety curtain of twin sister Josie’s inside-impaired imagination to reveal: the outdoors! Tall white pines! Dry dirt road! A stolen Ford Probe with its two front wheels about to fall off! And...

JOSIE

You see?

ARAM

[Taking the knitting needle] Ohhhh-kay...

JOSIE

He’s there.

ARAM

Coming up the road. And wearing black.

JOSIE

But what?

ARAM

Moving kind of strange.

Knocks on the front door.

Then the front door almost seems to open by itself.

BECKY stands there. She wears black pants and black robes. She has a backpack slung over her shoulders.

This holds.

ARAM

Doesn't look like a man to me.

JOSIE

Who is she?

BECKY has entered the cabin.

ARAM

Hi. Um. Are you here for Watcher?

BECKY attention rests on JOSIE.

JOSIE

What's she doing?

ARAM

She must've learned I needed a Watcher.

JOSIE

How can you be sure?

ARAM

Why else would she be here?

BECKY moves to examine the side door that won't open.

JOSIE

Ask her if she's seen anyone else.

ARAM

Josie.

JOSIE

This isn't who I saw. Ask her.

ARAM

Pray tell, traveler, have you witnessed any supernatural apparition or inappropriate phenomenon lurking nearby?

JOSIE

You didn't learn other languages?

ARAM

I learned the less you talk to people the better you understand them.

BECKY has shifted her attention to the floor before the side door.

ARAM

She seems to have the routine down.

JOSIE

That’s not how to Watch.

ARAM

Bend down and look, exactly what I need.

BECKY is now scanning the remaining interior: floor, walls, ceiling.

JOSIE

There’s an art to Watching, and you know it. I still spend hours each morning poring over the Bible’s small passages, imagining the bigger story left untold behind each cluster of sentences. I spend the midday swallowing current events, the iniquity engulfing the world, the harm people do to each other. I spend afternoons lost in thought. I spend evenings staring through our one open window towards the east, noticing how angles of the darkening sun change the shape of the land.

ARAM

With all Dad’s lawn signs planted in the front yard I’m wondering how you could even see the land. He used to have you hold them from that front window while he healed the grass. ‘Repent’, that was my favorite sign, big and bold, repent! I don’t think he realized nobody traveled by that house, seeing we were at the end of a forgotten cul-de-sac. Otherwise they might have seen me tied up in the back.

JOSIE

Where I still spend weeks Watching the tiniest things, the seasons like minutes, the years like days, and it’s never the same way twice.

ARAM

Well now you don't have to Watch anymore. The world is the opposite of what we were told. There are so many places I want you to see. One in particular, this hidden cliff, beyond untread land, guarded by a wide valley of desert before reaching a tall circle of red rock, and you walk between this kind of cave opening and scale a high mountain pass for days before reaching this dune-like expanse of high plateau, a cliff at the column of the edge of light, overlooking everything. You're gonna love it! And once I deliver Tall Scotty's sand we'll have the means to go there first class and live the luxury we never had.

BECKY

¿Estás preparado para unirte a Dios y convertirte en los hijos de su nuevo testamento?

ARAM/JOSIE

...

BECKY

[Mi nombre] Ángel Rebeka Salinas de Montenegro.

ARAM/JOSIE

...

BECKY

[Lento] Ángel Rebeka Salinas de Montenegro.

ARAM

Becky. Call her Becky.

JOSIE

I think you're in way over your head.

BECKY produces from her backpack a bottle of tequila.

ARAM

I love this girl.

JOSIE

Something's not right.

ARAM

Gotta be cups around here somewhere.

As dialogue continues, ARAM goes to the cupboards, opening cabinets, which we see as totally empty.

JOSIE

I’ve never hosted someone before.

ARAM

First time for everything. Besides, something tells me Becky’s the kind of girl who can take care of herself. Aha! Here we go.

ARAM opens the final cabinet to discover a single golden cup.

BECKY

...la copa.

JOSIE

We can’t just let her stay.

ARAM

I seem to recall Dad sermonizing about displaced travelers seeking honest work.

JOSIE

Is that what’s going on here?

ARAM

You know all those nights Dad left me outside, drained, forsaken, tied to the tree, you never once stopped Watching to come save me. But that final time Tall Scotty did. [To BECKY] You’re hired. [Pouring from the bottle into the golden cup] And let the night’s festivities begin.

Lights fade.

SCENE 5. FLUSH WITH WINE THE BROTHER MISTOOK THE STRANGER FROM THE FOREST TO BE HIS SISTER, AND THEN DID SHOW COMPASSION FOR THE ANGEL, ALLOWING HER REST AND CARE.

Night.

On the coffee table is the iPad, perched at half-rest, facing upstage, its light the only illumination serving the room.

Also on the coffee table are the golden cup and BECKY’s bottle, both empty.

ARAM and BECKY are passed out on the davenport.

A strong tug of wind pushes the front door all the way open, waking ARAM, who groans and taps the iPad screen to deactivate the family pictures on the screen.

The front door creaks back and forth on its splintered jamb, guided by the undulations of wind.

We hear the distant cawing of ravens.

ARAM lurches forward and tries to draw from the bottle but it is empty.

Same effort and result with the golden cup.

ARAM then realizes the front door is open and swinging.

The cawing of ravens grows nearer.

ARAM stumbles upstage, looks outside, then kicks shut the front door, and places the red chair against the front door to keep it shut.

ARAM stumbles a step towards the davenport, but then pauses.

ARAM goes to the upstage sink.

ARAM pulls apart the window curtains.

ELIJAH stands there, looking in.

ARAM

HAHAHAHAHAHA! Very funny, Josie.

ARAM jerks the window curtains closed, and stumbles back to the davenport, where he sees BECKY asleep, and vulnerable.

ARAM withdraws a rolled blanket from his duffel and covers BECKY.

ARAM staggers to his original sleeping position on the davenport, and passes back out.

Lights fade.

SCENE 6. THE STRANGER FROM THE FOREST GAINED ACCESS TO THE ALTAR, AND REVEALED HIMSELF TO THE SISTER TO BE ELIJAH THE PROPHET, WHO ALSO SOUGHT POSSESSION OF THE SAND.

Morning.

*The bottle and golden cup are on the table.
The red chair is still against the upstage door.*

ARAM organizes gear as BECKY and JOSIE look on.

ARAM

It’s quite simple how this works. Only certain types of sand are bueno. Smooth bueno, gritty not bueno. Oh, and it can get beady out there so protect your eyes.

BECKY

Mis ojos están protegidos por el Señor.

ARAM

Great, well, let’s keep whatever you just said in mind while we’re Watching.

JOSIE

You’re really doing this.

ARAM

And try not to comprende a word my sister says.

JOSIE

You’re leaving me here.

ARAM

The crew is preparing to head upstream. Without rain the gully is completely parched so we’ll track upstream.

JOSIE

Just drive me back to the house first.

ARAM

You don't want to go now. We're about to prospect our way to immortality! Generations from now, children will gather to hear their fathers preach the story of Watcher Aram, who in his sort-of youngerish years cameth east of Jordan to wrestle the land and mine the pebbles of perfection.

JOSIE

While his sister got mauled by a wild stalker.

ARAM

Well, they won't tell the kids that part. C'mon Becky, upstream!

ARAM moves the red chair from blocking the front door.

ARAM

[Already heading off] Remember: smooth si, gritty no!

From her backpack BECKY withdraws a Bible, rich and golden, shiny and ornamental, almost glowing, and hands it to JOSIE.

BECKY

Pronto serás llamado a ver.

ARAM [OFF]

Vamonos, Becky!

BECKY goes.

JOSIE runs her fingers over the Bible, and opens it, moving away from the front door, which remains open.

We hear the cawing of ravens.

As JOSIE sits on the red chair by the davenport...

ELIJAH appears in the open doorway, wearing black robes and black pants.

JOSIE

[Seeing ELIJAH] Ahh...

ELIJAH ensures the doorway is fully open, scans the interior layout, enters, starts for the red chair.

JOSIE

Stop! Just stop right there!

ELIJAH freezes: is she talking to me?

JOSIE

Just stay back. [Beat] This is a private residence. [Beat] For someone. [Beat] Unless you're the someone.

ELIJAH

...you can see me.

JOSIE

Yes, I can see you, okay?

ELIJAH

...you can hear me speak.

JOSIE

Obviously.

ELIJAH

You can see me and hear me speak.

JOSIE

Look, this is all a mistake.

ELIJAH

But you are not the Angel.

JOSIE

...what?

ELIJAH

And this...

JOSIE
Is your cabin.

ELIJAH
I seek Jordan.

JOSIE
This is *east* of Jordan.

ELIJAH
But the river. The wadi. The door, the chair.

JOSIE
Take the chair.

ELIJAH
And you can see me.

JOSIE
Take the chair, take the davenport, take it all and go, okay?, back out the door.

ELIJAH moves to the table and picks up the golden cup.

ELIJAH
My cup.

JOSIE
...so...this is...

ELIJAH
[Sitting in the chair] My cup.

JOSIE
Look, I'm sure someone by the highway could drive you to town.

ELIJAH
[The cup] Empty.

JOSIE
...you sure you're in the right place?

ELIJAH
Are you?

JOSIE

...no. Not really.

ELIJAH

Yet you can see me. And hear me. And you are not the Angel.

JOSIE

No, I'm Josie.

ELIJAH

Josie, yes. I am hiding from the Angel. She must not know I am here. But you have heard from Him.

JOSIE

He's down at the riverbed.

ELIJAH

Already?

JOSIE

And could return any second. And he's got a short temper.

ELIJAH

I am aware. Does He know I have come?

JOSIE

It'll be obvious when he barges back through that door.

ELIJAH

He will descend from a cloud of fire and quake the foundation of the land.

JOSIE

Uh-huh.

ELIJAH

While you Watch.

JOSIE

...what did you say?

ELIJAH

East of Jordan, the bend in the wadi.

JOSIE

I have no idea what you’re talking about.

ELIJAH

Three thousand years since I have spoken to someone...usually it is the children who think they see me, not those who act like one.

JOSIE

Wow.

ELIJAH

The door was not open.

JOSIE

I don’t know whose place this is, alright? This whole thing is Aram’s idea.

ELIJAH

Aram.

JOSIE

My brother.

ELIJAH

...[making sense now] the one at the riverbed.

JOSIE

For sand-hacking or hack-sanding but with this drought he can’t find any sand.

ELIJAH

Yes, the sand.

JOSIE

So you’re the Watcher.

ELIJAH

I am the unseen visitor at the door, the invisible man in the chair, the drinker of wine, the questioner and the abandoned. But now the unannounced. And the returned.

JOSIE

Uh-huh.

ELIJAH is up and moving towards the door.

JOSIE

You’re going.

ELIJAH

Before He comes.

JOSIE

My brother.

ELIJAH

Our Father. His refuge is never far though it has long since been my strength.

JOSIE

Guess you can’t be too dangerous if you’re quoting Psalms.

ELIJAH

So you claim ignorance to purpose but know the poetry of King David.

JOSIE

And then some.

ELIJAH

Yes, then some. Then you believe too much, too strongly. And when your belief falters for that briefest moment...but you understand.

JOSIE

No, I...I’m not used to talking to strangers. I’ve never done this before. And I don’t really want to. No offense.

ELIJAH

Why should there be offense. It is ours to defend.

JOSIE

...give me the bottom of your robe. It’s frayed on the edge there. [Getting her needle and the yarn] I’ll fix it for you. Before you go.

ELIJAH

You will.

JOSIE

I do this for the schoolkids who’ve started to come by my house. If I see their sleeve torn or collar ripped I wonder if it isn’t something their father did to them. For what their sisters did. I mean, if you’re going to stomp around the woods at night at least do it with a mended robe.

ELIJAH

Sometimes a man does not realize his own vestments are frayed. Well, as you sit for three thousand years observing others recline in comfort, shifting further and further from original revelation, you end up relying on human patchwork. But these days any morality gets accepted.

JOSIE

I’m trying to fix your robe here.

ELIJAH

Sorry. It is just...you can hear me.

JOSIE

Well I know what it’s like. To believe too much. And wonder if the world will return to what you believe it once was.

ELIJAH

If you are foolish enough to want that to return. It was that when I first drank from the wadi. The ravens remember. After all this time, the ravens bring cake.

JOSIE

Cake.

ELIJAH

When I was condemned to remain between life and death, having neither, but serving both.

JOSIE

You have no idea. Yeah, if you only knew. Been my whole life, basically. Except for the death part. Although there were times. When my Dad would come home. Felt like death approaching. That sound weird?

ELIJAH

No.

JOSIE

You knew he was coming because he had this large set of keys from his work belt that would always dangle. He worked urban forestry, planting shrubs, helping trees. He had a green shirt and long brown pants and those keys and an old dirt pickup he parked behind the house. Kept all his work tools in there. Unless he was grabbing rope to tie Aram to the tree. Because of something I did. Yeah, he’d come into the house dangling those keys and trailing grass behind him and carrying news pamphlets and books of the day and we’d review the current state of sin afflicting the world. Compare events to the Bible, looking for the sign. He actually didn’t talk that much. Unless it was screeching verse, then his voice got loud. Not that I told him but his voice never had that commanding blast to it. Guess it’s why he was more into Watching. I picked up his little quirks, Watching like he did, studying. But I’ve been working on my heralding voice. For when I go forth to the land. God Hath Returned!...can’t believe I just told you all that. Only strangers hear the truth, right? It’s almost nice to talk to someone.

ELIJAH

You’re not going forth to the world.

JOSIE

Well not now. I’m mending your robe. [Finished] Closer to new than used.

ELIJAH

I meant, not ever.

JOSIE

...maybe you should go.

ELIJAH

The return of torment and terror? I am here to stop it. And you will Watch. [JOSIE reacts] Until I receive the sand my cup shall be eternally filled and bowl without end.

JOSIE

Your cup.

ELIJAH

And bowl without end.

*JOSIE finds in a cupboard previously empty
now a simple wooden bowl.*

JOSIE

That wasn't there before.

ELIJAH

And Aram, he who searches the wadi, must go *downstream*, away from the cragged rocks in the bend.

JOSIE

Hold on, have you been spying—

ELIJAH

There he will find the sand. The storms shall gather and clouds release their burden and the rain shall fall, the drought reversed, and tonight I will be astride the wadi to receive from him the sand. Tell not the Angel for the surprise will be ours so I alone may take fire from His mouth and in my death save you and the rest of the world from yours.

JOSIE

Uh-huh.

ELIJAH

But next time...open the door.

JOSIE

Wait! Where'd you come from?

ELIJAH

Tishbe in Gilead.

JOSIE

...what's your name.

ELIJAH

...Elijah.

ELIJAH goes.

JOSIE

Oh, my God.

Lights fade.

**SCENE 7. YET DOUBT ATTENDED THE SISTER’S WORD UNTIL
THE STORM WAS RELEASED AND RAIN REVERSED THE
DROUGHT.**

ARAM is slouched on the davenport, distracted by the iPad, munching from the wooden bowl, now full of snacks, and also drinking from the golden cup.

BECKY is focused on cleaning the cabin flooring before the side door, as well as inspecting the side door. BECKY has an ear open to the general conversation and reacts accordingly.

BECKY throughout the scene drinks from the bottle.

The front door is closed.

JOSIE

I’m telling you, he was here! He was in here! Sitting in that chair!

ARAM

Good vino, sis. Where’d you find the retail out here?

JOSIE

That’s what I’m trying to tell you! I didn’t leave. I’ve been here all day.

ARAM

Do liquor stores deliver? Welcome to Minnesota, where nobody leaves their cabin!

JOSIE

He was talking to me.

ARAM

Mmm-hmm.

JOSIE

He was quiet at first and moody but after I hemmed his vestment he opened up a bit and got pretty bitter and did this weird thing with his hands and said his cup shall be eternally replenished and bowl without end.

ARAM

Sounds exciting.

JOSIE

We didn’t even have a bowl but then I looked in the cupboard and there it was!

ARAM

How come you don’t have any pictures of Mom on [the iPad] this—?

JOSIE

[Taking it from ARAM] He was *in the cabin*.

ARAM

Too bad you’re the only one who sees him.

JOSIE

That’s right! All he could talk about was how I could see him. And wadi. He kept going on about wadi. Wadi this, wadi that.

ARAM

I was looking at family photos there.

JOSIE

You don’t remember.

ARAM

Can I have it back?

JOSIE

I thought maybe I’d gone sand crazy. Suffering from prisoner dementia, like the thirteen tribes wandering the desert in Exodus, trapped with the ghosts of their dead, a generation of God’s children stranded within the endless panorama of sand, hmmm?

ARAM

Spooky sand ghosts!

JOSIE

The signs around them, encircling them during their march to Israel, the signs a harbinger of death. Like the raven.

BECKY

¿Cuervo?

JOSIE

No, Becky, not tequila! Black birds, filling the sky. *Ra-vens!*

BECKY

Cuer-vos!

ARAM

Maybe your secret stalker’s an evil demon sent from the underworld to intervene in our affairs.

JOSIE

Or stop us from corrupting the land.

ARAM

We gonna hold a séance? Invoke the mystical spirits!

JOSIE

But when I started thinking about the cuervos...[withdraws the Bible]...*that’s* what triggered my memory of the wadi!

ARAM

Holy. Freaking. Moses.

JOSIE

Ex-actly!

ARAM

You’re carrying around a Bible.

JOSIE

A plus, Watcher! ‘Wadi! The dried bed of a once fertile river!’

ARAM

And there’s magic death birds!

JOSIE

[Reading] ‘You are to drink from the wadi!’

ARAM

Detective cuervo catcher’s on the case!

JOSIE

‘For I have commanded the ravens to provide for you...and he did what the Lord commanded and lived by the wadi where it enters east of Jordan.’

BECKY

Al este de Jordania.

JOSIE

Yes, Becky, East of Jordan! The ravens brought him *cakes* and *wine* and in the evening he drank from the wadi which *dried up* because there had *been no rain*. End quote. The Bible.

ARAM

...sometimes you make me want to enrich uranium.

JOSIE

The prophet Elijah.

BECKY

Elijah.

JOSIE

Yes, Becky, Elijah!

BECKY

¿Donde esta Elijah?

ARAM

Can we all return to normal-person programming here once you're done with Jesus-o-pedia?

JOSIE

I'm talking Old Testament.

ARAM

Well go testament somewhere else while the crew relaxes their hard-Watching eyes and catches up on old memories. By the way, top quality snacks you got.

JOSIE

That's what I'm saying. I didn't get them! They appeared!

ARAM

They appeeeeeeared!

JOSIE

How else do you think this bowl came to be?

ARAM

Like I always say, if you’re looking for answers the universe sends its apologies.

By this point BECKY is at the upstage window, looking outside.

JOSIE

Elijah travels the world unseen.

ARAM

Folklore.

JOSIE

Gospel. The last prophet, who fought Jezebel the land corrupter. Who performed miracles to defeat her, and then was banished right after by God, forced to wander the land, not being allowed to die.

ARAM

I’m familiar with the story.

BECKY is all over the cup and chair.

JOSIE

Then you know we leave the door open to receive him. Door. The ceremonial chair is reserved for him. Chair. A cup of wine is poured in Elijah’s honor. Cup. Now what else can this be?

ARAM

It’s called a co-inky-dink.

JOSIE

It’s divine intervention.

ARAM

Isn’t that a co-inky-dink?

JOSIE

Aram, I’m trying to tell you something here.

ARAM

Yes, and it’s become Shirley MacLaine meets Richard Dawkins.

JOSIE

God recalling Elijah to complete His works is the sign of the coming of the second age. God returning to earth. God coming back to the people.

ARAM

It was only a matter of time.

JOSIE

[Reading] ‘For the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword.’

ARAM

[Countering] ‘And I, even I only am left, and they seek my life.’

JOSIE

Yes! You remember! Listen, there’s more.

ARAM

No, I won’t listen. I won’t be barraged by insanity. None of it means a thing. None of it ever meant anything! I was forced to listen to it over and over when Dad staked me to the tree so I sure as hell won’t listen to it now that he’s gone!

JOSIE

Well get comfy ‘cause I got whole chapters on the prophets!

BECKY

Profetas.

BECKY has exited the cabin upstage. As dialog continues we see BECKY through the upstage window, looking towards the forest, searching.

JOSIE

Yes, thank you Becky, *profetas!* Especially profeta Elijah *the Tishbite in Gilead.* You don’t remember Tishbite?

ARAM

What’s that, New Jersey?

JOSIE

Jordan.

ARAM

Good, cuz I’m here to tell you New Jersey is the absence of God’s light.

JOSIE

Elijah, the stranger among strangers.

ARAM

Who reads wonderful as fiction but we’re a stitch occupado right now with non-fictionally Watching for sand.

JOSIE

If you could stop running away from the obvious for one minute.

ARAM

And what would I do with the other fifty-nine seconds?

JOSIE

...maybe what Dad said about us is true.

ARAM

Dad was a raving Bible thumper who thought his kids were God’s Watchers.

JOSIE

Maybe Dad was right!

BECKY has returned to inside the cabin. She has placed the red chair to keep the front door closed, and is now going into the bedroom.

ARAM

Josie, not now, please.

JOSIE

What if this isn’t something that happened thousands of years ago and then simply stopped? What if it was suspended? The final words an intermission, a pause, and there’s more to come? And there’s people God chooses to Watch it be told. What if we are part of the next chapter? The *actual* next chapter and verse.

BECKY has returned from the bedroom.

ARAM

...tell me Becky, your padre ever go loco on you?

BECKY

[Pulling from the bottle] Loco, si.

ARAM

Obsess over the big book? Believe he was some ordained conduit of holy divinity? That his kids would be the ones to Watch the return of God and only then go forth from their house and proclaim God has retaken the earth? A fanatic who couldn't even spell joy because he was engulfed by some warped devotion to an outdated book of absurdity?

JOSIE

Don't talk about it like that.

ARAM

Or what? I'll get SMITED?!?! Then sister you best step back before the big bolt of smash-a-rooni takes you down with me in a flash of fire-death! Cuz that's what happens you scoff at literary fantasy, right? No, what happens is your sister says Dad, maybe we're taking this a bit too far, maybe we're not supposed to separate ourselves from the world, maybe your version of existence is at best sad and at worst destructive. But she says that and what does he do? He ties *me* up instead to the big backyard tree and hits me with the old chapter-and-verse for hours upon hours while she's forced to remain inside and Watch!

JOSIE

Stop talking—

ARAM

'Purse thy *lips*, for the land shall be renewed!'

JOSIE

Look—

ARAM

'Shutter thy *eyes*, for the land shall be renewed!'

JOSIE

Will you listen—

ARAM

'Cleave thy *ears*, for the land shall be renewed!'

JOSIE

He said the rain will shift your sand downstream, *downstream*, away from the cragged rocks at the bend.

ARAM

...how...how'd you know where I'd been Watching.

JOSIE

He said—

ARAM

—Dad's Bible—

BECKY

—Elijah la profeta.

JOSIE

He walked into this very cabin, through that very door, sat in that very chair, drank from that very cup, and said the drought will end and the rain will flood the sand downstream. Away from the cragged rocks at the bend.

ARAM

...alright...I know Dad's death wasn't easy. For you. Because of whatever unfortunate combination of guilt and regret you still have pumping your veins. And turning to misperceived sources of healing is totally understandable.

JOSIE

This has nothing to do with Dad.

ARAM

Except you've become Dad. Look at you. *Listen* to you. You've never left the house. Your entire being is jailed by his memory. You've become the very person you spent your life silently fearing and I spent my life running away from.

JOSIE

I've spent my life fearing [the Bible] this. I've spent my entire life waiting, Watching, for this to be what it says it is.

ARAM

Why would you even want it to be true? You ever think about that? It's not pretty in there. It's kind of vicious and cruel. Why would you even want that back?

JOSIE

We don't have a choice, Aram. And I don't want you punished on my account again when it happens. And the signs are proving it real.

ARAM

What. Signs.

JOSIE

The ones you have to be willing to see. My brother: we have been called. And rain will carry the sand downstream.

ARAM

That's fine, really, except, oh wait!, one teeny-weeny detail: everything's dried up, Josie. Even if there was sand waiting to be seen, there's not a rivulet of moisture to push a pebble our way.

JOSIE

He didn't say when, he just said it's coming.

ARAM

Since you won't go outside, look outside! No cloud. No mist, no dew, no damp, not even a drop of a drop. So I don't want to hear anything more from Dad's pages of psychosis or about some unseen stranger in the woods 'cuz I got a little prophet of my own these days called the National Weather Service and it's predicting nothing but dry, dry and even more dry BECAUSE EAST OF JORDAN IS STUCK IN THE MIDDLE OF ONE. ENORMOUS. UNENDING. GIGANTO. DROUGHT.

BOOM comes the thunder from outside.

Then rain starts to fall.

Serious rain.

ARAM opens the door and looks outside as JOSIE jumps onto the davenport and holds the BIBLE towards the sky, beaming a smile.

BECKY

Mas tequila, hombre?

END ACT ONE.

ACT TWO. FLOOD.

SCENE 8. THE PROPHET ELIJAH ANNOUNCED HIS INTENT TO QUESTION THE CONTEMPT OF THE HOLY, AND THE BROTHER CONFIDED TO HER SISTER HOW HE HAD PREVIOUSLY BECOME INFECTED WITH THE POISON OF SIN.

Storm.

Serious rain. Water sloshes the upstage exterior window.

JOSIE at center stage holds the empty wooden bowl.

JOSIE moves upstage and places the empty wooden bowl into the upstage cupboard. Closes the cupboard. Opens.

The wooden bowl is full of apples.

ARAM [OFF]

[Approaching] Josie! Josie!

JOSIE

[Taking the bowl] Another sign.

ARAM barges through the front door, drenched, his face, hair and body coated with sand.

BECKY appears behind in black poncho, dry, wearing the backpack.

ARAM

Josie! Look! You gotta look! Right there. There. In my hand.

JOSIE

[More to herself] From my hands.

ARAM

[Pinching his fingers to hold up a grain] I was straddling the riverbed when the runoff came surging past the cragged rocks at the bend. And the rain filled the gully, just swarmed it, a cascade of gushing water, waist-high. And I thought there’s no way we’re gonna find any sand, but all of a sudden...it was resting on top of the water, almost holding still against the roaring current, this shimmering beautiful immaculate orb, just glowing right beside me. And then another floated by, and another, and then the tide sort of separated, the river kind of parted, and there was a mound of it. And then I started sifting through one pile, realized it was attached to another pile, and looked up to see we were standing in a riverbed of it! Total sandpot! Oh, you gorgeous thing! Hahahaha! We gotta get the car loaded!

JOSIE

The car.

ARAM

Yes! As much as that old Ford can handle before the rain flushes it and the sand down the Mississippi. With this kind of torrent we could see full flooding at any moment.

JOSIE

[Flipping Bible pages] Yes, flood.

ARAM

Get the car loaded and head to Pebble Lake!

JOSIE

We’re not leaving.

ARAM

Hell we aren’t! Although we gotta be careful, hauling around a score of illegally tapped sand, higher powers sort of frown on that.

JOSIE

[The Bible, finding it] ‘For behold! I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth!’

ARAM

You said it.

JOSIE

‘And a righteous man shall dry the world.’

ARAM

Yeah look, if you could stop quoting from Bullshitikus for one second and pay attention to current events *we just scored the motherlode!* Doesn't get any better than this! [ARAM grabs an apple from the wooden bowl] But I tell ya', we got ourselves one wild scene out there. Rainwater pelting, sky wind-whirling, trees flaying, ground shifting. Never seen anything like it.

ARAM takes a bite of the apple.

JOSIE

Aram: something otherworldly is happening.

ARAM

No doubt. But not secure. Got ourselves a tenuous situation. Roads mud up too much, could get undrivable, maybe sink the car, swallow it whole, leave us with nothing.

JOSIE

Where we're standing, east of Jordan, a prophet has returned.

ARAM

Look outside, sister, *that's* what's returned. This isn't normal rain, okay? This kind of rain can stab into our profit, F-I-T. Wash away our sand before we commercialize the bounty.

JOSIE

Yes, exactly, he foretold.

ARAM

Josie, let me turn off Crazy Dad Bible Story and reacquaint you with regularly scheduled earth to provide an update on the real future, okay? We don't get the sand to Pebble Lake, I'm in trouble.

JOSIE

What kind of trouble.

ARAM

The skin and organ kind.

JOSIE

The South Africans.

ARAM

Not a forgiving bunch.

JOSIE

Well the North African roaming the woods knew where to find the sand in the first place.

ARAM

...he did, did he?

BECKY from her backpack has been removing sand and before the side door laying handfuls on the ground in a meticulous pattern. Periodically, she makes low guttural sounds; solemn, prayer-like.

JOSIE

He'll be at the wadi tonight. [Close, sotto] Apparently, it's some kind of surprise.

ARAM

How many of him are there?

JOSIE

One! That's what I've been saying, he's the last!, he's...Becky, could you excuse us?

ARAM

Don't worry, she doesn't comprehend a word. But can she grab sand! Got real Watcher talent, that one.

JOSIE

[Taking the golden cup] Yeah? Watch *this!* Totally empty.

JOSIE places the golden cup in the cupboard and closes the cupboard door.

JOSIE

And now...

JOSIE opens the cupboard door and takes the golden cup. It's filled with wine.

ARAM

What the hell?

JOSIE

He must have given this place some kind of divine access. Some way it can manifest miracles.

ARAM

How much of this stuff have I been drinking? Mixing wine and tequila is not a sacramental act, Josie.

JOSIE

We are in the midst of some serious biblical influence.

ARAM

Sister, you can call this whatever you want but I’m here to tell you there’s two possibilities for our lifetime. The first is that we lurch along day to day doing whatever it takes to get ahead. The second is that God will appear. You figure it out.

JOSIE

Did you not just see what I did! This isn’t Minnesota cabin tricks, this is for real!

ARAM

The sand is for real.

JOSIE

Elijah’s for real. He’s come back.

ARAM

I’ve come back. For *you*. You still don’t get it, do you. You’re the only religion I’ve ever had. You’re all I’ve got left. I knew I’d come back, I was just waiting for the right time. And I knew this was it because I heard a voice out there.

JOSIE

A voice.

ARAM

Telling me what I already knew. That there’s nothing stronger in the world than brother and sister. We weren’t asked to be born here. Our Mom decided to squat us out on this flat unappealing patch of nowhere. Except we were DOA, stillborns. But Dad said an Angel arrived and the trumpets heralded and the ground shook and we were revived! And Dad basked in the glory of the world! But Mom died from complications, and Dad never talked about her again. Instead he turned from the world and buried himself in that book. And that was the three of us. Now the two of us. That’s why this can’t fall apart. Grab the sand, flip the land, and get you outside, finally outside and free from whatever remaining hold Dad and that Bible still have on your life. I’m not a helpless child staked to the tree anymore. I know my way around the world. It hasn’t been kind to either one of us but I know my way around the world.

JOSIE

All this is a sign. From God.

ARAM

Dad’s gone. He was the only God in our lives, the only real God that decided to show himself, and his Bible despair and ridiculous rules and punishment, all of that is gone. He’s not here. It’s just you and me. And I’m not leaving you again. We’re going to take on the land together, otherwise the land comes after you and does what it wants. And that kind of self-fulfilling prophecy has a dangerous way of coming true. [Seeing BECKY placing sand on the floor] Becky, what the hell are you doing?

JOSIE

Elijah has come, Aram.

ARAM

[To BECKY] Not in the cabin, *el car!*

JOSIE

But we still don’t know *why*.

ARAM

Sister, you can ask all you want while we’re cruising top speed without brakes to Tall Scotty’s, ‘kay? You can ask all you want when we get paid out for the sand. And you can ask all you want while we’re reclining in comfort and leisure at that cliff beyond the high plateau! We’re gonna live like kings among paupers! But to get there we gotta grab whatever sand is left before the flood washes it all away!

JOSIE

But Elijah needs you to bring him the sand.

ARAM

I’m sure he does. [Grabbing the needle] To pop the trunk. C’mon, Becky!

ARAM goes.

Leaving JOSIE and BECKY for a beat.

ARAM [OFF]

Vamanos, Becky!

BECKY goes.

JOSIE sets the front door full open.

JOSIE then moves downstage and takes care to position the red chair. She then arranges with earnest care the golden cup on the table. Then the wooden bowl. Perhaps smooths the cushion on the davenport.

The sound of ravens.

ELIJAH appears in the front doorway, soaking.

JOSIE

YESSSSS! Hello!...hello?

ELIJAH

...hello.

JOSIE

...come in.

ELIJAH moves to the red chair. Sits.

JOSIE presents ELIJAH the golden cup.

JOSIE

Oh!

JOSIE skips to the bedroom and returns with remnants of decimated cake, the one candle still atop.

JOSIE

[Placing it on the table] Cake! Cakes and wine.

JOSIE sits on the davenport. She exudes awe and muted glee. ELIJAH not so much.

This holds as the rain continues.

JOSIE

So! You’ve been...

ELIJAH

Wet.

JOSIE

The rain.

ELIJAH

Water does that.

JOSIE

Must be tough on those ravens.

ELIJAH

They seem not harried.

JOSIE

Must be tough on you.

ELIJAH

I do not fly.

JOSIE

Well, it’s just, you know, you’re...

ELIJAH

...[gulping the balance of the cup]...

JOSIE

...here.

ELIJAH

[Refill this] With you.

As dialog continues, JOSIE moves upstage to place the golden cup in the cupboard and retrieve, again the cup returned full.

JOSIE

It’s just that I don’t know what to say.

ELIJAH

Nothing. He is to bring me the sand and you are to Watch.

JOSIE

Like before.

ELIJAH

Before you didn’t open the door.

JOSIE

I meant, before-before. Watching. The age of God.

ELIJAH

Oh, that.

JOSIE

Yes, that. Then. The Watchers.

ELIJAH

They Watched what the prophets did, or what was done to them, and told the world about it. The things you Watch, though, the things you see. You wonder if it really happened.

JOSIE

But it did happen. You’re Elijah.

ELIJAH

The man no one sees.

JOSIE

I see.

ELIJAH

Unless you heard the voice.

JOSIE

Just yours.

ELIJAH

Echoes of prophecy.

JOSIE

Well I’ve told a story. About a prophet. Who confronted Jezebel, the Queen corrupter of the land, and after defeating her was told to go to the wadi. East of Jordan.

ELIJAH

While his people were left behind and slaughtered.

JOSIE

Oh. I didn’t get that part.

ELIJAH

Some parts go untold.

JOSIE

Maybe this man has come back.

ELIJAH

Maybe he never left.

JOSIE

I don’t understand.

ELIJAH

Three thousand years. Of this. You tell this story? The happy wanderer? The friendly saint?

JOSIE

...

ELIJAH

People have no idea. What it was like.

JOSIE

What was it like.

ELIJAH

...[scoffing]...

JOSIE

I really want to know.

ELIJAH

It’s right there in the story. A storm followed every sun. A darkness shook behind each fortune. You knew why we were here. And who you served. And you didn’t wait long for signs. The prophets were the ones who heard His voice. He knows how to laugh, doesn’t He.

JOSIE

I always thought rain was God’s laughter.

ELIJAH

We hide from Angels in the rain. You are hiding.

JOSIE

No, I’m...drinking wine with Elijah! I have so many questions.

ELIJAH

Back then the asking killed you. They don’t tell that story either, do they, Watcher. That I questioned.

JOSIE

Jezebel.

ELIJAH

God. I was a potter: bowls, cups, no one important. A meager life. The first time I heard the voice, when it cleaved my ears, I was terrified. I disowned the possibility, no one wanted to be called. But the voice returned: *Eliahu Hanavi*... a prophet. I did the only thing I could do, I turned fully to God's will. No one was quicker to pronounce His reign, or louder. I was a zealot! Otherwise, to serve with a half heart and unsure throat was to be slaughtered by a vengeful God. And he was angry. His commandments were defied, his land defiled, and His own people called into account for iniquity. So I went forth with The Watcher of the day to confront Jezebel, the Queen defiler, with her false idols, who claimed the era of God ended and the descendants of Abraham with covenant no longer. Before the entirety of the people I laid sand and raised my arms and ushered God's fire to the altar. I stood in the presence of His fire while the Queen could bring no flame and had custody of the people's faith no longer. Yet she still possessed the agony of shame, and ordered the killing of me and all God's prophets. But surely that was not to pass. Surely God would extend that flame from the altar, incinerating Jezebel and her followers. But what came instead? The voice: Eliahu, get thee to the wadi. Leave everyone behind. The Almighty, who sanctified the universe, whose kingdom is everlasting, get thee to the wadi! And this man in the story who served with such relentless devotion was ordered to flee, knowing his people were to be exterminated, his own family cut by the sword. That was the real untold in the story, the last prophet running away. And so I questioned: why have you done this, God? Why do you let your believers fall? What have we done to deserve your wrath? And God laughed. And I was condemned. To walk through doors and sit in chairs, to watch fathers carve foreskins from newborn boys, to drink at every ceremony from the cup of remembrance, to be God's never-ending fairy tale, trapped between life and death, forever serving both, because I questioned. Well. You walk through enough doors and sit in enough chairs and drink from enough cups and you realize: it just takes one question. And God will laugh at you.

JOSIE

I never read it that way.

ELIJAH

One word is three thousand years of failed interpretation if you look too much.

JOSIE

But we're still looking. We never stopped.

ELIJAH

You'll wish you had.

JOSIE

I’ve waited my whole life to know it was true.

ELIJAH

The truth is me waiting your life a hundred times over wishing it to end. Watching those living in sweet ignorance that His absence is really their bliss. You stand outside, wait for the door to open. The people smiling, singing, rejoicing. And you sit in your chair. And nobody sees you. Nobody hears you. I was safe, I was happy before hearing that voice.

JOSIE

You’re not the only one trapped. Waiting to be released.

ELIJAH

You said you work at an academy.

JOSIE

My house. Small. One window, facing the backyard. There was always food, somehow. Objects and fashions of the day. Our clothes never soiled. We had one door, a side door, where the schoolchildren gather. They like hearing me tell the old stories.

ELIJAH

The invisible woman behind the door.

JOSIE

It’s only when you Watch the world that you can see the sin. Because otherwise you think the world is good. The peace and calm just outside, as far as your eye can see, to the soft sunrise, the lovely evenings. But then my Dad. He wasn’t some gentle guy who loved his kids. He’d go off for what seemed like long periods of time and then return, carrying information of the day, the record of the times, and he’d ask if I’ve been Watching. Punishing Aram if I hadn’t, if I decided to rebel against the whole thing. If you truly believe you have the answer to why we are here, if you are convinced you have the answer to existence, wouldn’t every breath be in service to that? And yet the children ask: ‘where has God been all these years?’ ‘If God wants us to believe, why isn’t God here?’ It’s like the more we question the further away God is.

ELIJAH

Until He’s barely there at all.

JOSIE

Until the children aren't the only ones asking. [Pause] When Dad tied up Aram the final time it seemed like days and nights, the wind clutching at him, his throat unable to open, his arms and hands dangling like they were broken, and Dad said it was his final test, the final trial of Aram. After he vanished, after it was clear he was actually gone, I didn't just ask Dad, I questioned, I demanded: where is God? Because it's clear He's not here, so how could He just leave His creation? Do we even need to do this anymore? Dad didn't react, or argue, or even succumb...he just ended. So I went outside. I physically dug the grave with my hands, next to that tree, and carried his body to it, and returned the earth above him. I realized how rich the ground felt. Walking on it, touching it, rubbing it in my hands. Standing in the bright sun. Breathing that air. You know I didn't even say a prayer?

ELIJAH

Who would be listening?

JOSIE

Just the strange kid from the neighborhood. Telling me my brother was still alive, that he had run away. There I was, for the first time seeing the house from the outside. Shaped like a triangle, with old clapboard, almost covered by the branches hanging from this enormous oak in the back. I thought, well, you've walked through that door now. There's nothing to stop you. Go find Aram! Go be with him! But you become so familiar [the Bible] with it. It's the only world you want to know. Safe. Comfortable. Like old robes, from good yarn.

ELIJAH

It was anything but safe. This is what I am saying. And how women were treated? If He returns to renew the land and enter the new covenant you'll wish He never came back.

JOSIE

Tall Scotty asked if I wanted to go as well. I went back inside. I need to know there's more to life than death. And there is, you're here!

ELIJAH

Where I am not supposed to be. I am the last bridge between God and His people, and I came here not in haste but eager *contempt!* *Contempt* is the sound of our questions. No longer hushed tones behind closed doors, no longer restrained as silent screams in our questioning hearts. They pretend they never have those thoughts? It drips from that every breath while God has kept Himself afar. *His* contempt is His *absence!*

JOSIE

And you’ve come here to question God.

ELIJAH

I have come to stop God. I have come to lay sand at His feet and raise my arms before His fire and *question* and question again, not as a reunion but AN INQUISITION! I am here to wrestle God, and by confronting Him repel Him and send Him back to His absence, to keep the world as it is, and in the process exit my half-death and enter the much belated full.

JOSIE

But so many have waited, who want Him back.

ELIJAH

Such as.

JOSIE

Me.

ELIJAH

...I will take the sand and you will Watch me open [the side door] that door and send Him away.

JOSIE

I’m not going back to that house, to that life. I won’t be alone anymore. And not just me, all of us! I will be released to the world and release everyone to theirs.

ELIJAH

And what world do you think that will be?

JOSIE

Look, you’ve come here running ahead and Aram’s come running away and I’ve never ran anywhere but the important thing is *God’s coming*.

ELIJAH

And you are a fool to want Him back. It will be nothing less than the destruction of all you cherish. He will go forth with flame and burn the world in fire and lay fallow cities and houses and monuments and citadels of worship and all nations will fall before Him and He will wash it clean by raising the waters of the world. The renewal of the land. Behind will be an empty place.

JOSIE

You can’t know that.

ELIJAH

Read the story. Sacrifice, bloodthirst, judgment.

JOSIE

...punishment.

ELIJAH

As much as I hated being forced to Watch the world as it is I can't bear to think how it will be to Watch it as it will become. And you, Watching all those years, would you wish that on anyone?

JOSIE

Everyone's Watching. Everyone.

ELIJAH

The answer will never reach them. For He will descend in a cloud of fire, and that door will open, and I will walk through it to my death and save all those I've Watched from theirs. I will not abandon them a second time and run again while they are slaughtered by His vanity! But only flooring of holy origin will clear the path before that door and sanctify His arrival. Now: where is the sand.

JOSIE

...Aram's taking it to Pebble Lake.

ELIJAH rises to go.

JOSIE

He's my brother.

ELIJAH

Who I will cast from earth.

JOSIE

He's part of this.

ELIJAH

He was. Now I am. And not even the Angel can stop me. And as my surprise will be greater than the rebellion of Cain, the uprising of Babel and revolt of Gomorrah, then until I return with the sand you will keep a closed mouth, an open eye and the door shut!

ELIJAH goes off into the rain.

JOSIE

Except it doesn't shut.

The storm continues.

JOSIE

[The Bible] We never asked if we wanted it to be true.

JOSIE comes downstage and takes the golden cup.

JOSIE brings the cup upstage and places it in a cupboard cabinet. Closes the door. She waits a beat and opens the cabinet.

The golden cup is gone. In its place is a single match.

JOSIE

That's not good.

BECKY [OFF]

[Approaching] ¡Dios mío! ¡Dios mío!

JOSIE

A match?

BECKY runs in, no longer with her backpack.

BECKY

[Entering] ¡No lo creo! ¡Sálvanos! ¡Su hermano! ¡El coche, que hay en el camino!

JOSIE

Slow down. Where's Aram?

ARAM

[Now in the front doorway, dazed]...muddy floody road, wipers barely clearing the windshield.

BECKY

¡Apenas podías ver a dónde íbamos!

ARAM

A man in the woods.

JOSIE

You saw him.

ARAM

Standing in the middle of the road, his arms—

BECKY

[Raised and wide] ¡Elevado y ancho!

ARAM

The car somehow slowed down.

BECKY

¡Tranquilo!

ARAM

The wheels stopped, nothing responding.

BECKY

[Rising] ¡Flotando en el aire!

ARAM

Before I could lock the doors, he was inside, grabbing Becky’s backpack.

BECKY

¡Lo arrebató en un movimiento!

ARAM

I just reacted.

BECKY

[Making a stabbing motion] ¡Apuñala! ¡Apuñala!

ARAM shows the needle, now coated in blood.

JOSIE

Oh my God.

ARAM

The car came crashing down and he was off running with our sand!

BECKY

[Drinking from the bottle] ¡El problema mayor!

JOSIE

Okay, let's-let's-let's put away the pointy-stabby things and figure out what happened.

ARAM

I know what happened.

JOSIE

You really don't.

ARAM

Bolt the door!

BECKY

¡No! ¡Puerta abierta y el Elijah volverá!

ARAM

[To BECKY] You think he'll just come back???

JOSIE

He's not the only one coming.

ARAM

Josie, I just shalt-maybe-killed someone to protect us!

JOSIE

To protect sand, which is why he's here and He's coming. We gotta get rid of Becky.

BECKY

¿Cómo que?

ARAM

We'll leave her at Pebble Lake after we get Tall Scotty the sand.

BECKY

Hombre, I need the rest of the sand to finish the path so she can Watch God return and the land be renewed!

They stare at BECKY as she runs out the front door.

BECKY

[Off] ;ELIJAH!

ARAM

[Calling to off] Becky!

BECKY

[Farther off] ;Elijah!

JOSIE

Ángel Rebeka Salinas.

ARAM

And...we lost our Watcher.

JOSIE

She's the Angel!

ARAM

She's going to tell Tall Scotty I lost the sand.

JOSIE

She's going to tell God that Elijah showed up!

ARAM

I mean, I really stabbed him.

JOSIE

But it's okay, we can hide from Angels in the rain.

ARAM

It's not okay, Josie! I'm not that guy who stabs Africans in the back and leaves Mexicans to die in a flood! We gotta get out of here.

JOSIE

We have to stay.

ARAM has grabbed his duffel bag, stuffing it with random items.

ARAM

Now you want to stay? Grab everything, we're decamping!

JOSIE

Elijah turned out to be Mister-Not-So-Happy-Prophet who wants to stop God from returning!

ARAM

Are you even sane anymore?

JOSIE

But we need the sand back so I can Watch God’s arrival!

ARAM

[At the front door] I don’t want to hear any more, alright? Now we got enough sand spill in the car to prove our point to Tall Scotty and I still got the keys so let’s go!

JOSIE

...how’d you get that car, Aram? You steal it? Or was it simply waiting, door open, keys in the ignition, somehow ready to take you here?

ARAM

...fine, I admit, there’s a man in the woods, okay?

JOSIE

Was the cake just sitting in the front seat?

ARAM

—look—

JOSIE

You said you heard the voice out there.

ARAM

That’s not Elijah!

JOSIE

When you first saw the Angel come up the road you said she was moving strange. Was she walking?

ARAM

...

JOSIE

‘For some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.’

ARAM

...I don't know anymore.

JOSIE

You didn't run away because Dad was wrong. You ran away when you first realized Dad could be right! And you couldn't face that [the Bible] this is real. The wadi, the drought, the flood, door, cup, bowl, *Father's Day*. The miracles right in front of us. The ones we blind ourselves every day from seeing. The ones we don't even realize when they appear right before us, even when we've been looking for them our whole lives.

ARAM

...this can't be happening.

JOSIE

It's time to stop shouting over me, Aram! It's time to start listening to the question! What else did Dad say, Aram? *What else?*

ARAM

...'for the land shall be renewed...at the corner of the altar.'

JOSIE by now holds the end of the electrical cord tethered to the lamp, showing the plug end not connected to anything, the lamp lit and active.

JOSIE

This isn't a cabin. You brought us to the altar. East of Jordan.

ARAM

Jordan, Minnesota.

JOSIE

Maybe that's not where we are. A twin brother and sister, their souls recovered at birth, their father turned by the fury and acts of God, he subjects them to ancient rites, to prepare them, to keep them between life and death, until the brother runs away and the two remain separate until they are called to be together, to lay sand, the first artifact of the world, at the corner of the altar, where they Watch God's return and finally go forth together.

The sound of distant thunder.

ARAM

...alright...let's—

JOSIE

Get. The. Sand. We need it back so Becky can lay the path for God's arrival. Otherwise Elijah goes through [side door] that door and stops God from coming through it.

ARAM

...okay...sounds reasonable...

JOSIE

Assuming we want God to come back. [Pause] Because now that I think about it...we might actually have a choice.

ARAM

What do you mean.

JOSIE

I mean...it is kind of vicious [the Bible] in here. Relentless. You spend so much time being told this is the way it is, you never stop to ask whether this is the way it needs to be. Does the world deserve to be renewed? Do the people deserve to be burned for their sin? Maybe they've just outgrown this. Maybe Watching it would be a curse more than blessing. [Pause] We could just leave. We could just go. Keep the door open behind us. Elijah comes with the sand. Stops God. Nobody would know. The world would just keep on going the way it is.

ARAM

What about us?

JOSIE

We could let ourselves forget. No more worrying, no more rules, no more fear. We could slip away to that place you talked about. Just enjoy the earth that's left. We'd have a life before eternity and accept whatever comes with that.

ARAM

...alright...well...since you have a point...since we're talking about it...since we're kind of having a little moment here...maybe it wasn't such a co-inky-dink after all...me tied to the tree, you inside.

JOSIE

I'm not following.

ARAM

God wasn't there. God was never there. But Tall Scotty was. His voice.

JOSIE

What.

ARAM

A cautious step away from the tree, just a small voice, telling me he'd make it alright if I just listened.

JOSIE

...no.

ARAM

I was so battered, barely hanging off each breath. Didn't you hear him?

JOSIE

Only after you'd run away, to hiss at me that you'd gone to Canaan.

ARAM

His voice so smooth.

JOSIE

Are you telling me that Tall Scotty is...

ARAM

And in return for his help I'd someday serve him with favor. And he appeared, even taller that final time Dad left me out there, loosening my hands, releasing me from the tree, telling me to run, to assault the energy of the world. To bring him the sand.

JOSIE

So a path won't be cleared.

ARAM

It would be a path, just running the other way. [Long beat] Well. Now that we know what we are. I guess all that's left is what we're meant to do.

ARAM takes his travel duffel and grips the car keys.

JOSIE

You didn't know. Did you?

ARAM

Not sure it makes a difference. I told myself that if I saw any signs, actual signs, that I’d run. And I’m not the only one. I got enough sand in the car, so I guess...

JOSIE

We still have a choice.

ARAM

...see you around, sis.

ARAM goes out the front door, into the rain.

Thunder explodes as the storm lashes with renewed intensity. The light from the table lamp sputters...then extinguishes. The stage is in blackout.

We hear the striking of the match.

JOSIE lights the candle atop what’s left of the cake.

JOSIE

‘And they knew they were running from the Lord, for they had already done so.’

Darkness, though the candle remains lit.

**SCENE 9. TO REQUEST LENIENCY ON BEHALF OF HER BROTHER
AND THE SIN OF THE LAND THE SISTER PUT HERSELF BEFORE
THE FACE OF THE HOLY. FOR HER QUESTIONING SHE WAS
BLINDED WITH THE VISION OF ONLY SAND AND LOCKED
INSIDE THE ALTAR...WHERE SHE AND HER BROTHER REMAIN.**

The light of the single candle atop the cake suffuses the cabin interior.

There is no more storm. We hear a new sound, a distant throbbing pulse, deep and sonorous, slow in rhythm, long in frequency.

A mystical red develops from the cabin exterior, dousing the forest pines in crimson hue before overtaking the light of the candle and coating the cabin interior in red.

ELIJAH shuffles across the exterior of the cabin, reaching the upstage window. He looks inside, grimacing, breathing heavy.

ELIJAH moves from the window towards the front door. We hear the doorknob jostle, but it doesn't open.

ELIJAH kicks open the front door, BAM! He leans to one side of the doorway, wounded, BECKY's backpack gripped in one hand.

ELIJAH

Hope this is the right place now.

ELIJAH stumbles into the cabin. He unzips the backpack and takes a handful of sand. ELIJAH sifts from his fist one stream of sand onto the ground before the side door.

The pulsing sound is distinctively louder, and ELIJAH repeats the sifting of sand, now beginning a pattern.

BECKY appears in the doorway.

ELIJAH sees BECKY and concludes the sand pattern on the cabin floor.

ELIJAH

It is done!

ELIJAH stumbles. BECKY takes the backpack.

ELIJAH

The candle is lit. The Holy ground is lain, the path cleared for His arrival!

BECKY

Elijah—

ELIJAH

There is none like You, Lord. Blessed are you, King of the Universe, who enabled us to reach this occasion! Watcher! WATCHER!

JOSIE enters from the bedroom, wearing white robes.

JOSIE

It was in the cupboard.

ELIJAH

Your place, there.

JOSIE

The room's warm.

ELIJAH

There! You stand.

JOSIE

Hot.

ELIJAH

Fire before the cloud.

JOSIE

[Outside] Mist frozen in air.

ELIJAH

Drought and flood together.

JOSIE

It’s happening.

ELIJAH

That’s what He thinks.

JOSIE

You don’t have to do this.

ELIJAH

You are to Watch, not speak.

JOSIE

Maybe God has changed. The world has changed.

ELIJAH

The world bleeds. I bleed. Would He heal me? Would he heal the world? Or judge it and place it in fire?

JOSIE

This is not how it’s supposed to be.

ELIJAH

Stand back.

JOSIE

What if you’re not supposed to die? What if you’re to be the new prophet?

ELIJAH

The only prophecy is death.

JOSIE

You don’t know that. You don’t have to open that door. There’s still time.

ELIJAH

The altar is prepared and time has stopped. Now there is no time because there is no time.

The pulsing tone continues.

BECKY from the backpack takes remaining handfuls of sand. She continues forming an extended path before the side door.

El viene.
BECKY

He arrives.
ELIJAH

No hay nadie como tú.
BECKY

There is none like You.
ELIJAH

Este es el plan diseñado para el mundo.
BECKY

The sound has grown louder, perhaps now a tonal drone, almost harmonic, vibrating the ground.

Con su mano extendiéndose para concebir todas las naciones.
BECKY

What will happen.
JOSIE

That door will open and I will pass through and face Him before He can enter this side.
ELIJAH

Listo.
BECKY

There is one choice left. A path to take.
JOSIE

Stop talking.
ELIJAH

BECKY

El mundo se agrietará y se disolverá por tu palabra.

JOSIE

Standing back, staying silent and Watching, instead of going forth, walking through that door and protecting my brother. Saving him.

ELIJAH

Get back!

JOSIE

I see now. The sign already came. Dad knew this would happen.

BECKY

¡Girad vuestros ojos y arrodillaos ante el trono de Dios!

JOSIE

Dad wasn't preparing us. Dad was warning us. *Dad was my sign.*

ELIJAH

[Raising his arms] I said you are TO WATCH!

Silencing JOSIE, muting her.

ELIJAH

You will watch and tell the world. Right now they see the miracle, the cloud of fire, and not what it contains. They are out there now, the world, held in terror. They will come here to pray, to ask for clemency. When they arrive you will ascend the altar and tell them I died to keep their life. I perished to protect them from Him. A righteous savior in Death! And now...[towards the side door]...I have come again before You. Do You remember me? I am here Lord and do not tremble! I am here Lord and do not tremble! AND BEHOLD!

BECKY opens the side door and across the stage, cutting the red, streams a brilliant white light.

ELIJAH

You will take me BEFORE YOUR FACE.

The sound has reached an almost deafening pitch, shaking open cabinet doors.

ARAM appears at the upstage window, from the outside looking in.

ELIJAH

The last prophet will go BEFORE YOUR FACE, the fortress of eternity, where we will see each other, and contend with death! For only in the sight of the Holy is the death of his saints! It is I, Elijah, the final—

JOSIE moves into the light stream and goes through the side door.

ELIJAH

JOSIE, NO!!!

The booming reaches climax and we hear trees falling, ground splitting, wind screaming, the world collapsing.

And then: ARAM smashes the upstage window, crawls through, a muddy mess, carrying the needle, stopping all sound, bringing the noise and madness to a halt.

ARAM

Well! Crazy weather, huh! Not to bore you but there I was, looking for...the Angel...when the floodwaters sort of came at me through the trees, trying to drown me. But I grabbed on to the Bluff Buddy floating by and somehow made it to town. Jordan's a mess. Streets underwater, RVs upended, everything on fire and pretty much blowing up. But what happens to be sitting there amidst all the destruction? Ford Probe. With some of the sand still in the trunk. Wedged myself into the driver's seat and gripped the key...to hell with it. I've never been good at anything in this world except being a brother. So when I ditch the car and fight my way against the flood and fire all the way back here to get my sister and save her from all this mess...it's time we reset the boundaries of our little situation. Now. Where is she?

ELIJAH

She went in there.

ARAM

Uh-huh. I appreciate you happened to show up and happened to tell where the sand was hiding so I would hate for something to happen to whatever life you have left if you happen not to produce her right this second.

BECKY

It is no longer for us to decide.

ARAM

Oh, I see. The big guy has all that deciding power. Well whatever’s going to happen to me has already been done so let me take this chance to rise on up, and say to the on up: hey, God! If you’re really here, if you’re really listening: THANKS FOR NOT BEING THERE WHEN I NEEDED YOU. Or would my saying that get you upset?

ELIJAH

I have waited three thousand years to say that very thing.

ARAM

Just like my sister getting taken, that would get me upset. I don’t want to get upset! Because that kind of agitation rattles the innards, and when the innards get rattled I have to rid all that drink your cup has been providing. And so I might take this book and piss all over it. I might get a little agitated and piss all over Genesis and piss all over Exodus and piss all the way through the very last word before wiping myself clean on whatever dry spot remains before I accidentally take His last prophet outside and accidentally tie him up to the one remaining tree on earth and accidentally stick this through him because I don’t want to lose my sister. I’m not gonna ask again: Where. Is—

The side door opens.

JOSIE appears, enters the cabin, slow and unsure.

BECKY closes the side door behind her.

ARAM

...well hey, sis, you were kind of in the closet there.

JOSIE

...forty days, forty nights....

ARAM

That’s fine, I just got back from a briefer rendezvous with death-du-Jordan myself but everything’s under control and as soon as we am-scray we can head to non-biblical grounds.

ELIJAH tries to open the side door but it won’t budge. It stays shut.

ELIJAH

You.

ARAM

Back off.

JOSIE

...I can’t see...

ARAM

Josie?

JOSIE

...my eyes...

ELIJAH

You went before Him.

BECKY

She has been blinded.

JOSIE

...Aram?...

ARAM

Right here.

ELIJAH

What did you do?

ARAM

Back off!

JOSIE

...I asked...

BECKY

The land is not renewed. He has gone.

ELIJAH goes to the side door and tries to open, but it remains shut, unmovable.

ARAM

Look, you want the sand that bad? Just take it, alright? The car's at the riverbed. Just go.

ELIJAH

[To BECKY] I did not go before His face! I did not see! Am I not His prophet? I did not question!

BECKY

He is no longer able to hear you.

ELIJAH

I remain condemned. Between life and death. [Pause] I will go outside. I will rest against this place. Until the Angel comes. Until the next door opens. That should be soon, right?

BECKY goes to the front doorway, and opens the front door.

Sunshine. A beautiful day. Birds chirping.

ELIJAH

[To JOSIE] We'll be Watching.

ELIJAH stumbles through the front door and BECKY shuts the door behind him.

ELIJAH shuffles across the exterior of the upstage window. He peers inside the cabin.

BECKY

[Handing ARAM the bottle] Until God's return.

BECKY opens the side door, goes through, and shuts it behind her.

We hear the sound of ravens fading away.

ARAM
You alright?

JOSIE
Mom?

ARAM
Hey, c’mon, it’s me.

JOSIE
I saw Mom.

ARAM
Mom.

JOSIE
In there.

ARAM
...what happened?

JOSIE
I don’t really remember.

ARAM
Let’s get out of here, huh? This whole place is...was...falling apart.

*ARAM tries to open the front door. Shut.
ARAM tries to open the side door, same
thing, can’t be opened.*

ARAM
Alright, let’s just...here...

ARAM sits JOSIE down in the red chair.

*As the remainder of the scene plays out the
audience sees projected above the stage the
words of the scene headings, the story in
order, beginning with the first scene heading
and relaying the chapter and verse of the
entire play.*

‘AND IT CAME TO PASS AFTER A MANY THOUSAND YEARS...’

JOSIE

All I see is sand.

ARAM

Sand.

JOSIE

I asked for you.

ARAM

...

JOSIE

Did it really happen? You should go.

ARAM

Think I’d leave you like this? Middle of wherever we are, nothing to drink, nothing to...

ARAM opens one cabinet and finds the golden cup and wooden bowl, the latter filled with an assortment of fruit.

ARAM shuts the curtain on ELIJAH.

ARAM then comes downstage and puts the bowl and cup on the table.

ARAM

Here we go, see? First problem solved.

JOSIE

Mom?

ARAM

It’s me. It’s just us.

JOSIE

One man in the woods. One traveler seeking sand. What did we really see?

ARAM

Doesn't matter now.

JOSIE

Already seems so long ago.

ARAM

Maybe we stay here, huh? Because, you know, with your [eyes]...how about we just stay.

JOSIE

For now.

ARAM

For a little bit.

JOSIE

A while.

ARAM

A long time.

ARAM takes the iPad and puts it on top of the Bible, the screen facing towards both of them, resting atop the table.

ARAM activates the screen, as the stage lights begin to fade.

ARAM

Some snacks. Some reading material. And family pictures.

JOSIE

Tell me.

ARAM

Well, there's you and Dad. Me and Dad. At the tree.

JOSIE

Whoever took those pictures?

ARAM

Me and you.

JOSIE

It was simpler, then. Not knowing. Safer somehow.

ARAM

Hey. Um. Thanks for the rescue.

JOSIE

What are sisters for?

And the lights fade to...

ARAM

You know something? I kind of miss that tree.

Blackout.

*The final words are projected: ‘...WHERE
SHE AND HER BROTHER REMAIN.’*

END OF PLAY.