

THE BOOK OF JOB

A new play based on a 4000-year-old story

by David Snoke

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

Narrator

Mr. Job

Voice of God

Two angels/nurses

Satan

Employee 1

Employee 2

Employee 3

Employee 4

Mrs. Job

Sam Eliphaz

Jim Bildad

Pat Zophar

Joe Elihu

Several hospital orderlies/friends of Job

ACT I.

A single light rises slowly to shine on the Narrator, reading from very large book on a podium. The Narrator can be a young girl.

NARRATOR: There once was a man named Job. This man was righteous and good; he feared God and shunned evil. He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned three businesses-- a tannery in his home town, a wholesale fashion clothing distributor in Los Angeles, and a coat factory in the Phillipines. He was one of the most respected Christian businessmen in his city. He had good relations with all of his sons and daughters, and they would all take turns visiting each other's homes at different times of the year, so that it seemed his grandchildren were always around. Every morning, he prayed for his children, thinking, "God, please make them all to be true followers of you. Perhaps they are just putting on a Christian image for my sake, and in their hearts they are hypocrites."

1:1-5

While he is reading this a dim light appears on Job, stage left, wearing a business suit, seated at a desk, working busily on papers. His desk area has all appearances of a successful business office. He continues to work during the following dialogue.

NARRATOR: *(continuing to read from book)* One day, the angels came to present themselves before the Lord in Heaven.

A single beam of light shines down from above, stage right, far from Job. Smoke rolls down in the light. Two angels come, one at a time, and silently bow, looking upward toward the light. Then Satan comes, dressed like an angel, but sauntering and sassy, but also a little carefully, as if fearing he will be zapped any moment.

GOD: *(offstage mike)* Where have you come from?

SATAN: *(nonchalantly)* From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.

GOD: Have you noticed my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him. He is righteous and good, a man who fears God and shuns evil.

SATAN: Hmmph. Does he get nothing out of following you? Haven't you put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You've blessed the work of his hands, so that he makes money hand over fist. But if you stretched out your hand and struck everything he has, he would surely curse you to your face.

GOD: Are you so sure? Very well, everything he has is in your hands, but you may not lay a finger on the man himself.

1:6-12

Satan looks shocked for a second, but then rubs his hands in glee and runs off. The light stage right dims. Job is still seated at his desk, working. The light on Job increases.

There is a knock at the door.

JOB: Come in.

Employee 1, in a rumpled business suit, looking tired, enters.

EMPLOYEE 1: Mr. Job, I took the flight through the night and just got here an hour ago. Your place in Los Angeles was raided by a gang last night. They raked the place with machine guns and after they took what they wanted, they burned it down. There's nothing left. I was the only one who got out alive. I didn't want to call you on the phone...*(shakily)* I needed to come speak to you in person.

Job stares in shock, speechless.

EMPLOYEE 1: *(awkwardly)* I'm sorry, sir.

While he is speaking, Employee 2 runs in the open door, in a slightly less rumpled business suit.

EMPLOYEE 2: Mr. Job, I apologize for interrupting you, but I have terrible news. There has been a huge explosion at the tannery outside of town. They think a gas main had a leak. A fireball ripped through the whole place and killed everyone on the site. I was the only one to get out in time. I rushed right over-- it just happened!

Job continues to stare in shock, still speechless. He looks from one to the other. Employee 2 notices Employee 1 and looks uncomfortable, as no one speaks.

EMPLOYEE 2: Mr. Job, I know this is a real blow, but I don't know what to do next.

While he is still speaking, Employee 3 rushes in, also wearing a rumpled business suit.

EMPLOYEE 3: Mr. Job, I'm sorry for interrupting you, but I've got to talk with you right away. I just got in from the airport. Your factory in the Philippines, it was attacked by Muslim revolutionaries last night. I wanted to talk to you in person before it gets on the news. It has been burned to the ground. 300 employees were killed. I was the only one to get out in time. I took the flight through the night and just got here an hour ago.

Job rises, silently, a hand on his chest, leaning on his desk with the other hand.

EMPLOYEE 1: I can't believe this!

EMPLOYEE 2: That's two disasters in one night!

EMPLOYEE 1: No, three!

EMPLOYEE 3: What are you talking about? What's going on?

While he is speaking, Employee 4 comes in, a woman, with red eyes, crying.

EMPLOYEE 4: Mr. Job, I just got here from your oldest son's house. I can't-- I have to tell you-- Your children-- they were all together with the grandchildren at a birthday party this morning at your son's house-- and there was a-- a tornado-- and the whole house was destroyed, sir! I was just leaving in my car, and so I'm the only one to get out in time. They're all dead, sir! I'm so sorry! (*crying*)

The four employees stand silently, looking downward and shuffling their feet, while Job rises slowly and silently from his desk. He has a haunted look and stares past them. He moves to center stage, facing the audience, and sinks to his knees. He slowly settles with his face to the ground, and then moves back onto his knees.

JOB: (*in a haunted voice, crumpling to his knees*) Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked will I depart. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

The four employees also sink to their knees. The light on them fades, as Job stares catatonically and the Narrator reads again.

NARRATOR: The destruction of the factories forced Job into bankruptcy. He lost everything. The family had a funeral for all ten children and the grandchildren, the saddest funeral that city had ever had. But in all this, Job did not curse God or lose his faith.

1:13-22

The light stage left rises on the angels. Satan reappears. While the focus is on Satan, Job's desk, Job, and the employees disappear.

GOD: Where have you come from?

SATAN: *(again nonchalant)* From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.

GOD: Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, even though you incited me against him to ruin him for no reason.

SATAN: *(Pausing to rub his chin, as though thoughtful)* Skin for skin! As long as a man has his health, he can be happy. But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.

GOD: Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.

2:1-6

Satan again rubs his hands with glee and runs offstage. The light stage left fades. A loud ambulance siren sounds in the dark. Job reappears in a hospital bed, in a hospital gown, stage right. A nurse is tending him. He is covered with red spots. Every now and then he scratches his skin.

NARRATOR: So Satan afflicted Job with painful sores from the top of his feet to the soles of his feet. The doctors had never seen such a disease and could not cure it. The itching was so bad that Job scratched constantly at the sores.

Job's wife enters stage right. Job is silently praying, folding his hands.

WIFE: Don't tell me you're still praying.

JOB: *(looking at her, sadly)* Yes, I'm still praying, dear.

WIFE: I don't know how you can still believe in God. Why don't you curse him to his face and die!

JOB: (*hopelessly*) That is foolish. Shall we accept good from God and not bad?

WIFE: Trite religious phrases! Still the trite religious phrases! I can't take it any more! I spent the best years of my life raising our children, and all you can say is "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away!" I can't take it any more.

Job is silent.

WIFE: Don't you have anything to say?

Job shakes his head, slowly and silently, looking at her.

WIFE: I used to think you knew what you were talking about. But now I don't want to hear about your loving God! I can't take it any more! I've got to get away. (*She weeps and exits.*)

Job bows his head but says nothing. The light on him fades.

2:7-10

NARRATOR: One day, Job's three closest friends came to visit him. They knew him and loved him and were shaken to the core by the things that had happened to him. (*The light on Job in his hospital bed rises again. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar enter and seat themselves around him.*)

NARRATOR: They had agreed to spend a week together with Job in a prayer vigil. For seven days in a row, they stayed with Job. No one said a thing; his three friends just stayed with Job and grieved with him and prayed silently.

The light rises and fades seven times. During each dark period, the three friends change positions. Job remains staring catatonically.

2:11-13

NARRATOR: And on the seventh day, Job finally spoke.

The light on the Narrator fades. There is a long period of silence while Job still stares catatonically and the friends remain frozen. Then Job begins a low rumble which slowly mounts to a scream. He stands up on the bed and comes straight forward, center stage.

JOB: (*loudly, nearly screaming*) Cursed be the day I was born! Cursed be the night they said, "A boy is born!" May it turn to darkness; may it not be included among the days of the year! Cursed be that day because I did not die at birth!

Cursed be the fact that there was food to feed me. Why did I not die as a child? The weary find rest in death, the slave is freed from his master, the poor man is freed from his debt. But not I!

Why is light given to those in misery, and life to those with bitter souls? Why doesn't death come to those who long for it, who search for it more than for hidden treasure, who would be filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave? Why does life linger on for a man whom God has fenced in from every direction?

I can't eat; I can only groan. My worst fears have come upon me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only anxiety. Therefore I say, cursed be the day of my birth!

3:1-26

Job crumples back down on the end of the bed. There is a long pause, until slowly Eliphaz rises to speak. From time to time during the following dialogue, Job scratches himself severely in different places of his body.

ELIPHAZ: I really hesitate to speak. You are the one who has always counseled us. I've always had such great respect for you. But I have to say something. You have always helped others in trouble, but now you are in trouble, and you are stumbling.

Job, you've been a good Christian man. I know God will not turn his back on you. Now, I know that some people run into trouble because they bring a curse on themselves. They secretly do evil, and think they will get away with it, but in the end their deeds find them out. I've seen it myself-- men who paraded as virtuous Christians who were really hypocrites, and the truth finally came out.

Now of course you're not sinless, Job. If God charges his angels with error, how much more those who live in houses of clay! But I know you're a man of integrity. Therefore you should have faith that God will answer your prayers and rescue you. Think about how great God's power is! He is a miracle-working God. He can do anything! He sends the rain that waters the fields, and directs the rivers in the countryside. He has done more miracles than you or I can count. I believe that he can do a miracle for you, Job! Remember that the Bible says, "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much." If you are right with God, then have hope! God answers prayer! You can be healed, and you can even have another family.

Surely man is born to trouble, as sparks fly upward. Sometimes God sends troubles into our lives as discipline, to chasten us even though he loves us. But if he wounds, he also heals. So I say again, pray and expect a miracle! I know God will listen to you. (*looking around at the others*) I'm sure all three of us agree. (*They all nod in agreement.*)

4:1-5:27

JOB: (*after a pause*) What strength do I have, that I should still have hope? The arrows of God are sunk deep in my back. God's terrors are marshaled against me. There is only one thing I wish for-- that God will put me out of my misery. Then I could die knowing that I had not turned my back on God.

Your words are of no help. Will you correct what I have said? A man in despair should

have the sympathy of his friends even if he forsakes God. Instead, you are afraid to look at the truth-- it is too dreadful to you. You're even afraid to look at my face! *(They look downward, embarrassed. Job scratches himself again.)* Have I ever asked anything from you before? For favors? For money? Then listen to me now.

You say I should have hope. Let me tell you the hard truth. Look at life. Is not every man's lot on earth a hard service? We forget about it at times, but everyone's life is like a shadow, like a breath that vanishes. My suffering is the rule, not the exception.

So I will make my complaint to God; I will not be silent. I will speak in my anguish.

(To God, raising his voice and shaking his fist) Am I a monster, that you must put me under guard? What have I done to you? I can't even sleep, because of the terrible dreams that I have! You frighten me so much with your terrors that I would prefer to be strangled and die than to live this life!

What is man, that you make so much of him, to give him so much attention? Why do you care about every little detail of our lives? If I have done something wrong, why can't you forgive me? Why can't you let us live our lives without always testing us and punishing us?

He suddenly falls into a fit of scratching. In frustration, he throws a flower pot on the floor and breaks it. He then picks up a piece and starts to scratch himself with it. He ends up sitting on the bed again.

6:1-7:21

BILDAD: Job, watch out, you're coming close to accusing God of injustice. Can anyone say that they have gotten anything they didn't deserve? The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death." We all are sinners, and we all must die. Your children were sinners, and they died, because death is the penalty for sin.

But have hope. I agree with Eliphaz-- you should pray and trust God that he can do miracles. If you are indeed not hiding any sin, then you should be confident that God will listen to your prayers.

If you have a guilty conscience, you need to get right with God, but if you are at peace with God, then you should trust that the God who loves you gives good things to his children. If you have a clear conscience, then you can have hope that you will even know laughter again.

8:1-22

JOB: *(Calmly, scratching himself from time to time.)* Of course, I know that we are all sinners. God can justly punish us for any one of the many sins we do in life. Who can stand before him and claim to be without sin? But would it make any difference if he were unjust? Who could tell him he had judged wrongly? He made the sun and the stars and the mountains and the seas. If I were to argue with him, he could make my own

mouth speak words to condemn myself. I don't believe he would even listen. Is there an arbitrator to stand between me and God, someone to remove God's rod of terror from me so that I can make my case?

Suppose I decided to just put on a happy face, and forget about it. I know that in your hearts you would still think I am a worse sinner than you-- that all these things have happened to me because God is cursing me for some great sin. So I don't care what you think. Nothing worse can happen to me, so I'll say what I want.

This is what I say to God. (*Rising and looking upward, calling out to God*) What good is it to punish me for some sin, if you don't tell me what you are punishing me for? Tell me what charges you have against me!

Should I live my life every moment wondering if I have done something that you will punish me for? Do you scrutinize our lives and examine every little thing, in order to strike us down for some thing we don't even remember?

If you are so displeased with us, why did you create us in the first place? Do you despise the work of your own hands? You knitted me together with bones and sinew, and sustained me with your Spirit, and now you hunt me down like a lion. Why? If a person is wicked, then woe unto him, but even if I try hard to please you, you still attack me!

(*After a pause, sighing and scratching again.*) All I ask is that you leave me alone. Just let me have a little comfort and let me die. (*He sits again, scratching.*)

9:1-10:22

ZOPHAR: This is ridiculous. I don't want to hurt your feelings, Job, but how can you say such things? You're saying that God is unjust, as though you never sin, and God is punishing you for nothing. Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin.

I didn't want to bring this up, but since you mention it, it does seem pretty coincidental that all these things have happened to you at once. If ever there was a case for the hand of God being at work, this is it. I don't know anything that you might have done, but God is omniscient. No one can hide anything from him.

We're not trying to judge you, Job. We're trying to give you hope. If you repent of your sin and confess it to God, he is full of mercy. God promises to answer our prayers if we have faith. But if we keep sin in our life, it blocks our prayers. If you turn back to him, he'll forgive you and you won't have to fear anything. God wants to bless you and give you peace! Just turn back to him.

11:1-20

JOB: No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you! They used to say that I was wise.

Who doesn't know that God is behind this? Ask the animals, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you. The life of every living being is in the hand of God.

I know my theology as well as you. God is omniscient and omnipotent. He ordains everything that comes to pass. He sets up kings and throws them down. What he breaks, no one can rebuild.

All I want is to be able to talk to God. I just wish I could reason with him! Will you defend God with false accusations and empty platitudes?

Now hold your peace and let me make my case. I put myself in God's hands. Even though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. If I were a hypocrite, I wouldn't be able to stand before him. But I'm not, so I'll defend myself. After that, let come what may. But I have to speak, or I won't be able to stand it!

(to God) God, I want to talk with you. I want to hear from you. I just ask that you don't terrify me with your power. Let me stand before you. You can speak first, and then I'll answer you, or if you like, I'll speak first, and you answer. Are you ready?

(after a short pause) All I want is for you to tell me what sin I've done to deserve all this. Why do you hide your face? Why don't you speak more clearly? What have I done to you? Will you frighten a windblown leaf? Have you brought back on me the sins of my youth?

He crumples back, scratching, to sit on the bed.

(Contemplative) When a man dies, where is he? When a tree dies, it is reborn as a tender shoot from the trunk. But a man is gone like a dried-up river. But when a man dies and is laid away, where is he? Is there really life after death?

God, I just hope that you will overlook me after I die until your anger is past. I will wait for you to renew me. You will call me, and I will answer. You will forgive my sin, and seal it up in a bag.

But you destroy the hope of man. You wear him down. Like a torrent of water wearing away a stone, our hope is worn down until we give up and die.

12:1-14:22

ELIPHAZ: Job, you are casting off all fear of God! You are questioning everything now, and talking just like any worldly unbeliever!

Are you the first man who was born? What do you know that we don't know? We've been trying to give you consolation from God. But a gentle word has made no impact with you.

Your own mouth condemns you. You have turned your spirit against God. What have your eyes winked at, that your heart has been carried away from God?

Let me tell you something. I have lived a long time, and I've seen the way God works in this world. Sometimes a man keeps up a really good image for a long time. He gets rich and fat, but he is really an oppressor-- he hates God and defies him. Then suddenly his house collapses around him, and he is found out. He trusted in his wealth, but he was deceived. He is suddenly filled with terrors and shame. I've seen religious leaders with television programs lose their whole empires. Hypocrites are always found out.

15:1-35

JOB (*sarcastically*): Oh yes, you guys are great comforters. Words of wind, you miserable comforters!

I've heard all this before. What ails you that you keep on talking? If I were in your place, and you were in mine, I could shake my head and waggle my words against you, too. But I think I would try to really comfort you.

Now even my friends turn against me. (*To God*) God, you have worn me out!

(*Pacing around, madly*) He tears at me with his teeth in his wrath, and hates me! He gashes at me! (*Looking at his friends*) They gape at me, and reproach me! They consult together against me. God has even taken away my friends, and turned me over to having enemies.

He has set me up as an archery target! He pierces my heart, and breaks open my wounds in his wrath. He takes me by the neck and shakes me!

(*He cries, and wipes away tears as he speaks.*) Now I can't stop crying. I can't stand it.

I tried, God! You know my prayers were real. You know that I am not a hypocrite who has filled his hands with violence.

O, earth, do not let my cry have no resting place! Surely there is a witness in heaven! Oh, that there is someone in heaven who will plead for a man, as a man pleads for his neighbor in a court case.

(*To God*) God, you have hidden their heart from understanding. They spit in my face now, and mock me. They are astonished at me. They call me a hypocrite. But you know I'm not. Will you pledge friendship with me yourself? None of them will shake my hand.

(*Pacing again, madly.*) I can see the darkness coming. God has even scattered my thoughts. I can't keep my thoughts straight. Aaahh!

16:1-17:9

He convulses in scratching himself, falling down on the floor. BILDAD jumps up and runs out of the room. He comes back immediately with two nurses, who run to Job to restrain him. Hospital alarms go off as people rush back and forth. BILDAD, ZOPHAR, and ELIPHAZ start to leave.

JOB: Please, come again, all of you. I won't hear any wisdom from any of you, but please, come back.

(Madly, and weeping, as he is pinned down to the bed by nurses with hypodermic needles) Where is my hope? Shall I say to the worm, "You are my mother" and to rot, "You are my father?" Shall we rest together in the dust? Who can see my hope? Is my hope dead?

17:10-16

END OF ACT I

ACT II.

Spotlight rises on a single woman, Job's wife, who walks from the stage into the audience as she speaks.

WIFE: (*Addressing the audience.*) I bet you're wondering where I have been. "Where is Job's wife?" "Why isn't she by the side of her husband while he lies suffering in the hospital?"

You hate me, don't you? "How could she be so heartless to leave Job, to kick him when he is down?" "How could she say 'Curse God and die?'" (*To an individual audience member*) You—you hate me, don't you?

Look at things from my perspective. I had ten children. Ten children! How much energy do you think I put into raising those children? How many years do you think I spent in washing and cleaning and feeding those children, praying for them and teaching them right from wrong? They were my life! And then in one day, every one of them dead! (*Weeping*) My children!

There are freak accidents, and then there are freak accidents. Nobody else in this whole town had any injuries, but the tornado killed all my children! And on the same day—on the same day!—all of my husband's businesses are destroyed, in three different accidents! No one could believe that was coincidence. There is only one possibility: God is out to get us.

What would that do to your faith? How would that change your ideas, if you thought that God was out to get you? All those words about raising your children in the Lord and being blessed in your old age—out the window!

So I don't know what to think. I haven't left. I'll come back into the story. But I don't know where to go, what to do! Can you help me? Can anybody help me?

(*Moving back to the stage*) Do you still hate me? Pity Job's wife!

(*As light fades on her*) Are you more like Job? Or like Job's wife?

Light rises on Job's hospital room. It is a new day, and the flowers have been changed. Around the bed are seated Bildad, Zophar, Eliphaz, and Elihu. Elihu is clearly younger than the others, and dressed in an old t-shirt and jeans.

It is raining lightly, and during the Act the rain slowly increases in loudness.

BILDAD: I'd say he's pretty bad.

ZOPHAR: Do you think he will need to go to a mental hospital?

ELIPHAZ: I would hate to see that. But still... he is pretty badly off.

ZOPHAR: Well, no matter how much he raves and insults us, I'm not going to stop visiting him. He needs us.

BILDAD: Yes, what happened to him would push anyone over the edge.

Job is escorted into the room, slowly and agonizingly, by two nurses. He is seated on the edge of the bed. Job still scratches himself occasionally.

JOB: Ah, the wonderful comforters! Back to stick the knife in my back a little further? (*Looking at Elihu*) Eh? Who is this?

ELIPHAZ: This is my nephew, Joe Elihu.

Elihu waves causally at Job. In the following dialogue, while the others talk, he sometimes makes grimaces or squirms in his seat, as if he is impatient.

JOB: Have you thought of anything wiser than last time? Come on, there's nothing to chit-chat about. Look outside-- even the weather is bad. Tell me your philosophy of life.

BILDAD: (*starting slowly, almost unwillingly*) Job, nobody wants to cause you any pain. But why do you think we are so stupid? (*a long, uncomfortable pause*)

ELIPHAZ: Yes, Job, we just wanted to encourage you. All I said was that you should pray to God and ask him to heal you and restore you. He is a powerful God!

JOB: And what if I don't want to ask him for that? What if I all I want to ask him is something much harder—to tell me why he did these things to me. He is powerful enough to do that, isn't he?

BILDAD: (*gently*) Job, that is why we wanted to challenge you, just slightly, to consider whether there was any unconfessed sin in your life. I know you would never say you are without sin. God sometimes brings things into people's lives to wake them up.

JOB: So if God doesn't tell me why, I should spend my life raking over everything I have done with a fine-toothed comb?

ZOPHAR: All we are saying is that the way to restoration with God is by repenting.

JOB: Repenting of what?

ELIPHAZ: I don't think it should be so hard to think about what you might have done. Do you really need a fine-toothed comb?

JOB: I say there is no way to tell what God thinks from what happens to us. The only thing I know is that he wears us down.

recap 4:1-17:16

BILDAD: Let's just start with the obvious. God does judge people. Do you disagree?

Look at the history of the world. There have been all kinds of empires which were great and strong, which ended up falling because of their moral decay. Napoleon thought he was invincible and conquered half of Europe, but his empire didn't even outlast him. Hitler thought he was invincible, and so did Stalin and the communists, and so did Sadaam Hussein. But they all fell in God's good time, a lot sooner than anyone thought would ever happen.

They are gone and forgotten, and don't even have any children to bear their name. So it is not wrong to say that God judges people in this world.

18:1-21

JOB: Once again, I know you're attacking me. If it is true that I am being punished for my sin, that is between me and God.

Since you are going to look down on me anyway, let me tell you what I really think. God has wronged me. Listen! Even though I say that, God doesn't respond. Or if I cry out for help, he doesn't answer. All I get is a wall of silence from God. He has blocked me at every pass—I am surrounded like a city under siege.

He has turned everyone against me. My breath is offensive to my wife, and she doesn't come around any more. My brothers don't know how to deal with me and don't come around either. All my friends have turned on me. My employees want nothing to do with me.

I am nothing but skin and bones, I have escaped only with the skin of my teeth. Have pity on me, my friends, have pity. The hand of God has struck me. Will you strike me too?

Oh, that my words were recorded and written in a book, written down as a memorial forever! I know that my Redeemer lives, and in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God. I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

19:1-29

ZOPHAR: Job, I am really disturbed by what you have said. I have to say something.

You have to admit that the Bible is full of passages that talk about how God casts down the rich who oppress the poor. Now, maybe you have been thinking of sins like murder and adultery, and that you haven't done any of those, but you were rich and lived off the

work of others. Rich people come under a special judgment in the Bible. Think about it, Job.

20:1-29

JOB: You know what? If you would just be quiet and listen to me, that would be the best consolation you could give me. Let me talk, and afterwards you can all make fun of me.

You don't get it. I'm not trying to argue with you. My complaint is with God.

I am afraid to say it, and you are afraid to hear it. I'm afraid to even think it! But I will say it: Why are the wicked people winning?

There are plenty of wicked people who are rich and happy, and God doesn't judge them. We like to think of immoral rich people being unhappy, but the truth is that there are plenty of people who never give a thought for God, who have perfectly happy families, who live to ripe old age and have grandchildren dancing at their feet. They never pray, they make fun of belief in God—and they are happy. How can you sit there and tell me that God casts down the rich oppressors. There are plenty of them! Haven't you ever gotten outside your Christian world and looked around?

21:1-34

ELIPHAZ: Job, you keep talking about other people as wicked, but you too are a sinner. No one has accused you of anything specific yet. We didn't want to hurt you. But do you think God is punishing you for your good deeds? If you insist on justifying yourself, I will be specific.

(Standing and pointing a finger at Job, angrily) You were a capitalist. You followed standard business practice. You demanded that even your friends put down security for loans. How about illegal immigrants in your factory in Los Angeles? Did you pay them a fair wage? I doubt it. What kind of wages did you pay your workers in the Philippines? You left them in poverty. You never helped provide water and food in the towns. You sent away plenty of people who came to you representing charities. Do you think God doesn't know about things like that?

Return to the Lord, Job! If you return, you will be restored. Repent of your sins, and God will bless you and answer your prayers.

22:1-30

JOB: *(Talking to himself, not responding to them)* Oh, if only God would speak to me! I would defend myself to him. He could flick me away in his great power, but I know he would listen to me.

But why doesn't he ever speak to us? Look! *(running to one side of the stage, somewhat crazily)* I run forward—is he here? *(looks inside a closet)* How about now? *(Running crazily back the other way)* I run backward—is he over here? *(Turning quickly to look behind him)* Is he behind me?

He knows everything about me. He knows the truth about my business practices, that I haven't done such things. But will he speak? Who can make him change? Whatever he wants to do, he does.

(Turning back to his friends, and lecturing them.) You want to talk about rich oppressors? I know all about them. There are plenty of people who oppress the poor. People who pay off politicians to change the laws to push the poor off the land they want. People who have their own hired thugs to murder anyone who stands in their way. Men who discard their wives and take unsuspecting young girls as trophies. People who dump chemicals in the water of nations, telling them they are bringing jobs.

But God doesn't do anything to stop them. There is no rhyme or reason. No one can be sure of his life. He raises us up, and casts us down, and the wind blows us away. If I try to be good and follow God's commands, it makes no difference.

23:1-24:25

BILDAD: The Bible says that all are sinners, and no one is righteous in his sight. If even the stars are ashamed in his presence, how can you claim to be good?

25:1-6

JOB: What a help!

You guys say that I don't know God any more. But I say I that have a more real picture of God than you do. Let me tell you about the real God. He spreads out the skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing. He is a God of wrath. He destroys the wicked and overtakes people with terror. He sends plagues and storms to kill people.

As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice, the Almighty, who has made me taste bitterness of soul, as long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness, and my tongue will utter no deceit. I will never admit you are in the right; till I die, I will not deny my integrity. I will maintain my righteousness and never let go of it; my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live.

(pausing, wistfully) How I long for the days gone by, when my children were still around me, and God seemed like my friend.

So you guys think that I am being judged by God because I am an evil capitalist businessman. I will never admit it. It would be a lie to go along with that.

You guys have known me for years. Let me remind you of how I have lived my life. If anything I say is false, then contradict me.

I gave half my income to charity, and I used even more of my money to finance low-interest loans for housing for the poor. I also took my own time to lobby for cases when

the poor were not getting justice. Half of the profits from my factory in the Philipines I put into building infrastructure and education in the town where it was.

Let's talk about hospitality. Over the years I have had over a hundred homeless people stay in my house. Can any of you say that?

Far from having a trophy wife, I have taken seriously the Bible's command not even to look lustfully at a woman. I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look at a young woman. If my heart has been enticed by a woman, the let God judge me! I would admit I deserved it!

Did I ever give any trouble to any employees who came to me to complain about something? No, I encouraged people to come forward with any evidence of bad business practice or appearance of impropriety. And far from employees complaining that ther salaries were too low, the best people in town used to come looking for jobs with me.

If I had put my trust in my wealth, that would be a sin to be judged! Or if I ever rejoiced over the downfall of someone who was my competitor! But I didn't! I tried hard, honestly, truly, to do the right thing and to have integrity.

26:1-31:40

He sits. The friends look down at the ground, silent. Elihu becomes more and more agitated, as if fighting with himself, and finally jumps up to speak. While Elihu speaks, the sound of rain increases to a storm, until by the end of his speech, lightning is flashing. Elihu's voice rises by the same amount to be heard over the storm.

ELIHU: You know, I know I am younger than you all, and that's why I didn't want to speak at first. I thought I should respect you all since you are older than me. But it is the spirit in a man that gives him wisdom, and so not only old people know what is right. None of you has answered Job's arguments. So now listen to me! I must speak! I feel like I could burst!

Job, I really feel that my words are led by the Spirit. So listen to me and see if I have wisdom.

You have two complaints. First, you say that God is unjust, because you have tried to be good and yet he has found fault with you and treated you as an enemy. And you say that if you have done something wrong, then he is unjust because he ought to tell you what it was, but instead he is silent.

You are mad because God doesn't speak to us, that he never answers. But I say that he does speak—now one way, now another—even if people don't recognize it. Sometimes in a dream, in the middle of the night, God terrifies people and makes them realize their sins, to save them from hell. Sometimes a person never gives a thought to God until he gets sick, and then while he is lying near death, an angel comes to him to move him to

pray, and he finally turns to God. He prays and repents of his sins and thanks God for saving his soul. God does this out of his grace—he turns back people’s souls from hell.

Listen to what you are saying, Job—you sound like an unbeliever! You say “It profits a man nothing when he tries to please God.” It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice. There is no one above him. If he withdrew his spirit and breath, all mankind would perish together and man would return to the dust. Can he who hates justice govern? Will you condemn the just and mighty One? He *defines* what is good and just!

But if he remains silent, who can condemn him? If he hides his face, who can tell him otherwise? Yet he is over man and nation alike, to keep a godless man from ruling, from laying snares for the people.

Men cry out under a load of oppression; they complain about their troubles and plead for relief. But no one says, “Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night? Where is God, who makes us wiser than the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air?” We take these things for granted. Then we accuse God of silence!

People seem to think that God has to talk to them personally. It doesn’t occur to them that God does not answer when men cry out because of the arrogance of humanity. People think that God has to respond to them. But the Bible says that God doesn’t listen to the empty plea of the wicked; he pays no attention to it. So much for the pleasant Sunday school picture of the God who just wants everybody to be happy!

How much less, then, will he listen when you say that you do not see him, that your case is before him but he delays giving you justice, and further, that his anger never punishes and he does not take the least notice of wickedness. You seem to be contradicting yourself. You say, “I will be cleared by God.” Yet you ask him, “What profit is it to me, and what do I gain by not sinning?” Is God just, or not? If you appeal to his justice how can you accuse him of injustice?

Bear with me a little longer. God is mighty, but he does not despise men; he is mighty, and firm in his purpose. Beware of turning to evil, which you seem to prefer to affliction.

How great is God — beyond our understanding! The number of his years is past finding out. He draws up the drops of water, and the the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind. (*A thunder clap and lightning flash occur at this moment.*) See how he scatters his lightning about him! This is the way he governs the nations and provides food in abundance. He fills his hands with lightning and commands it to strike its mark.

(*The storm rises to a crescendo.*) At this my heart pounds and leaps from its place. Listen! Listen to the roar of his voice, to the rumbling that comes from his mouth. He unleashes his lightning beneath the whole heaven and sends it to the ends of the earth. When his voice resounds, he holds nothing back. God’s voice thunders in marvelous

ways; he does great things beyond our understanding. Listen to this, Job; stop and consider God's wonders. Do you know how God controls the clouds and makes his lightning flash? No one can look at the sun, bright as it is in the skies after the wind has swept them clean.

32:1-37:24

There is a crack of lightning, and all lights dim while a spotlight appears on Job. His friends remain frozen during the entire speech of God, but Job moves and responds to God's speech while the spotlight is on him. Behind Job, swirling colors appear, and images of the things God talks about are projected. Job sinks down during God's first speech, ending up on his knees, with head bowed.

GOD: (All speeches of God are direct quotes of the NIV Bible.) Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.

Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, when I said, "This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt"? Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place, that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it?

Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this. What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside? Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings?

Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up dominion over the earth? Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water? Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, "Here we are"? Who endowed the heart with wisdom or gave understanding to the mind?

Do you hunt the prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of the lions when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in a thicket?

Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Do you watch when the doe bears her fawn? Do you count the months till they bear? Do you know the time they give birth? They crouch down and bring forth their young; their labor pains are ended. Their young thrive and grow strong in the wilds; they leave and do not return.

Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread his wings toward the south? Does the eagle soar at your command and build his nest on high? He dwells on a cliff and stays there at night; a rocky crag is his stronghold. From there he seeks out his food; his eyes detect it from afar. His young ones feast on blood, and where the slain are, there is he.

Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!

38:1-40:2

JOB: I am unworthy — how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer — twice, but I will say no more.

40:3-5

GOD: Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.

Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself? Do you have an arm like God's, and can your voice thunder like his? Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor, and clothe yourself in honor and majesty. Unleash the fury of your wrath, look at every proud man and bring him low, look at every proud man and humble him, crush the wicked where they stand. Bury them all in the dust together; shroud their faces in the grave. Then I myself will admit to you that your own right hand can save you.

Look at the behemoth, which I made along with you and which feeds on grass like an ox. What strength he has in his loins, what power in the muscles of his belly! His tail sways like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are close-knit. His bones are tubes of bronze, his limbs like rods of iron. He ranks first among the works of God, yet his Maker can approach him with his sword.

Can you pull in the leviathan with a fishhook or tie down his tongue with a rope? Can you put a cord through his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? If you lay a hand on him, you will remember the struggle and never do it again! Any hope of subduing him is false; the mere sight of him is overpowering. No one is fierce enough to rouse him. Who then is able to stand against me? Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.

I will not fail to speak of his limbs, his strength and his graceful form. Who can strip off his outer coat? Who would approach him with a bridle? Who dares open the doors of his mouth, ringed about with his fearsome teeth? His back has rows of shields tightly sealed together; each is so close to the next that no air can pass between. They are joined fast to one another; they cling together and cannot be parted. Nothing on earth is his equal — a creature without fear. He looks down on all that are haughty; he is king over all that are proud.

40:6-41:34

JOB: (*in tears*) I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, “Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?” Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. You said, “Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.” My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

42:1-6

The spotlight dims on Job, and appears on Eliphaz. Eliphaz looks up with fear, while Job remains frozen during the rest of the speech.

GOD: Eliphaz!

ELIPHAZ: Lord?

GOD: I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. Now you and Bildad and Zophar go humbly to Job, and my servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.

42:7-8

There is a loud crash of lightning, and the lights brighten while the sound of rain slowly subsides. Job and his friends all look around them slowly.

ELIPHAZ: I just had the strangest experience.

JOB: Did you hear a voice?

ELIPHAZ: Did you hear it too? Oh Job, I am so sorry!

JOB: What do you mean?

ELIPHAZ: Bildad! Zophar! What fools we have been! Job is the best man we have ever known! Job, I’m sorry for everything I said! Forgive me!

Bildad and Zophar look at each other and Eliphaz and Job, confused. Before they can respond, there is a knock at the door, and a crowd of people begins to file in, in a disorganized way. Job’s wife is near the front, crying. Employee 1, Employee 2, Employee 3, and Employee 4 are among the crowd.

JOB’S WIFE: Job, it’s a miracle!

EMPLOYEE 1: Mr. Job, we all took up a collection. (*He brings out a check.*) I have a check here for you and your wife—for \$100,000!

The light dims on the crowd while they continue their hubub more quietly. A single light appears on the NARRATOR once more, with the large book.

NARRATOR: The Lord blessed the end of Job's life more than the first. With the money collected to help him, he went back into business, and became even more wealthy. He and his wife had more children, and adopted children so that they once again had seven sons and three daughters. Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers. After this, Job lived to be over a hundred years old, and saw his great grandchildren. And they all lived happily ever after.

The light slowly fades. Suddenly a spotlight appears on Satan.

SATAN: *(with emotion, contorted)* Arrgh! I hate happy endings! *(Sudden blackout)*