

**The Reincarnation of  
Leif Christian Andersen**

**By Jerold London**

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[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lord\\_Amarnath.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lord_Amarnath.jpg)

**Reincarnation is a dance. It's a movement of life to the rhythm of the universe. The idea is simple. There is spirit and there is matter. And they join together; one as one dancing partner and one as the other. The two together make a partner. They're together for a time while they're on the dance floor and then they separate and go their individual ways for a while and then they come together once again. And it goes on forever.**

**– RAMA ~ Frederick Lenz**

## **The Reincarnation of Leif Christian Andersen**

### **TIME and PLACE**

**A decade or two either side of Yeats' Second Coming.**

**Europe, China, India, and Kashmir.**

### **CHARACTERS**

**LEIF CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN, dancer, poet, and believer in reincarnation. Late 20's. For most of the play his head is covered by an invisibility cloak making him appear to be headless.**

**ANNETTE. An artist. At other times Leif's sister. Two years younger, blond, and beautiful.**

**ELISE, an artist.**

**ERIK, an artist.**

**SVANE, an artist.**

**MODEL, female. A non-speaking part.**

### **SCENE 1**

Five painters ("facing" the audience) stand behind easels that block their upper bodies from the audience's view. LEIF is the one in the center. ANNETTE, ELISE, ERIK, and SVANE are on either side of him. Downstage from them with her back to the audience sits the MODEL, ostensibly nude, her gown at her feet. From time to time the four (other than LEIF) peer around their canvases to take a look at the MODEL. Lying on the table next to her is a wrapped bouquet of dried flowers.

**Intermittent pauses, while painting.**

#### **SVANE**

Who ... do you think, were the greatest artists ever?...  
Present company excluded, of course.

#### **ELISE**

Are you bored, Svane?  
That's a bullshit question.

**SVANE**

Why, Elise? Why is that a bullshit question?

**ELISE**

Because the greatest artists ever were Greeks.  
Who sculpted the greatest statues ever.  
Of gods and goddesses.  
And they're dead, and gone, and unremembered.  
Without names, beyond memory.

**SVANE**

[*pause*] Well, aside from them, who were the greatest?...  
Ones with names.

**ANNETTE**

Michelangelo....  
Hands down.

**ERIK**

No argument there, Annette.  
David.  
The Pieta.  
The Sistine Chapel.  
And a very stiff neck.

**ELISE**

Isaac Newton.

**SVANE**

He was no artist.

**ELISE**

So ... who's to say who's an artist or not?

**SVANE**

Are you?  
Are we?

**ERIK**

John Steinbeck and Vincent van Gogh.

**SVANE**

Hell! If you're going to be like that, Erik:  
Galileo Galileo and Andrew Wyeth.

**ANNETTE**

Rembrandt and Ray Charles.

**ERIK**

Hugh Hefner and Gustav Klimt.

**ELISE**

Renoir and Barbra Streisand.

**SVANE**

Ingmar Bergman and Pablo Picasso.

**ANNETTE**

da Vinci and Baryshnikov.

**ERIK**

Jackson Pollock and Lou Reed.

**ELISE**

This whole conversation is getting ridiculous.

**Lengthy pause.**

**ERIK**

Christ! Is she thin!

**ELISE**

She *is* thin. And looks so sad.

**SVANE**

Don't mention it.

**ANNETTE**

They already have.

**SVANE**

She used to be the toast of Budapest.  
Kisses and champagne, all over her body.

**ANNETTE**

Kisses, lips, and tongues.  
Judges, magistrates, and members of Parliament.

**SVANE**

Most touched female in the country.

**ANNETTE**

The city, too.

**ERIK**

I doubt it!

**SVANE**

Take it from me, Erik, she *is* art.

**ANNETTE**

And if you can't see it, why are you here?

**ELISE**

Why are any of us here? Or even artists, for that matter?

**SVANE**

We are artists because we thrill to beauty.  
At least that's what we told the jury who voted us in.

**ERIK**

*But her?* Beauty?

**ANNETTE**

Run.  
Her beauty will follow you.  
Cry.  
Her beauty will see through your tears.  
Dance with her, and her beauty will forgive you.  
Her beauty is in the spaces everywhere.  
And, oh! How the universe needs it now.

**ELISE**

*If her beauty is the key to the universe, I'd better run!!*

**SVANE**

We are supposedly artists, Elise.  
And we can find beauty anywhere.  
So, can it.

**ANNETTE**

We are the guardians of beauty.  
The high priests and priestesses of the temple.

**ELISE**

Then paint a giraffe taking a dump!

**The MODEL suddenly gets to her feet, throws the bouquet of dried flowers at the artists, puts on her gown, and exits.**

**SVANE**

Great! Well, that ends that!

**ANNETTE**

I was almost done.

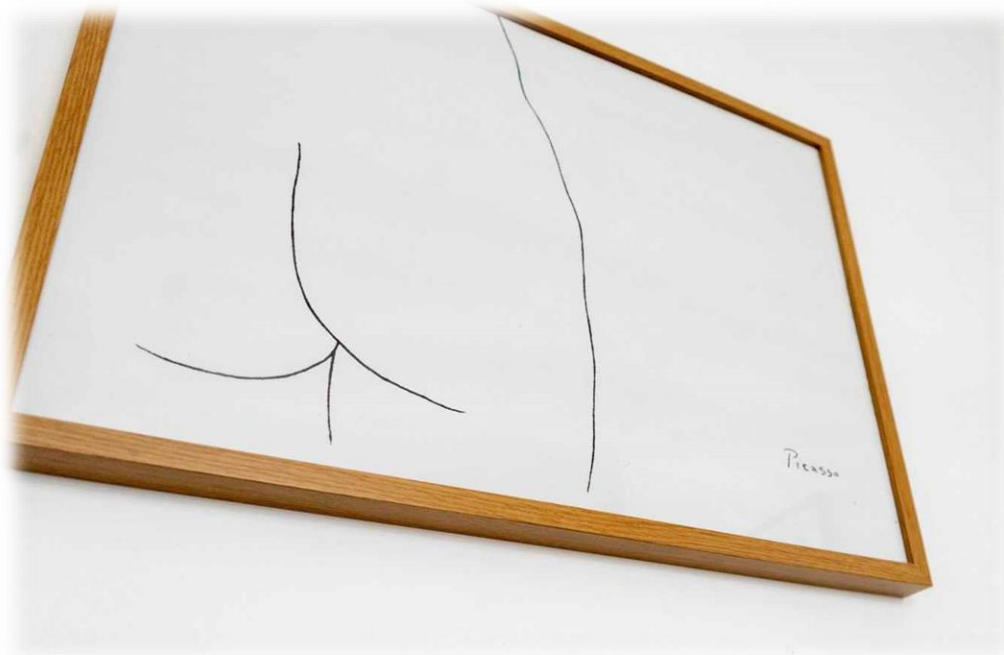
**ERIK**

I've been done an hour.

**ANNETTE**

Let me see.

**ERIK turns his canvas around so that everyone can see:**



**SVANE**

What a piece of crap!

**ERIK**

What was I supposed to do?...With her as a model?  
Anyway, we'll see what the judges think....  
Show us yours, Svane. Mr. Bigmouth.



**SVANE turns his canvas around so that everyone can see:**



**ANNETTE**

Dear God, Svane!  
Can all you do is paint pictures of swans?

**SVANE**

It's my name, isn't it?

**ANNETTE**

You will never be a great painter if you do not tell the truth.

**SVANE**

Who says I want to tell the boring truth?  
I want to *feel*.  
And to make *you* feel.  
Do you know what I mean, Annette?  
And where?

**ANNETTE**

You're a pervert.

**SVANE**

So was Zeus....  
So? What's yours?

**ANNETTE turns her canvas around so  
that everyone can see:**



**ELISE**

Certainly sad enough.  
And ugly enough.  
Especially that sneer on her lips.  
But, art?  
I hardly think so.  
It's so fake.  
You'll never learn to paint a nude. It's a tragedy.

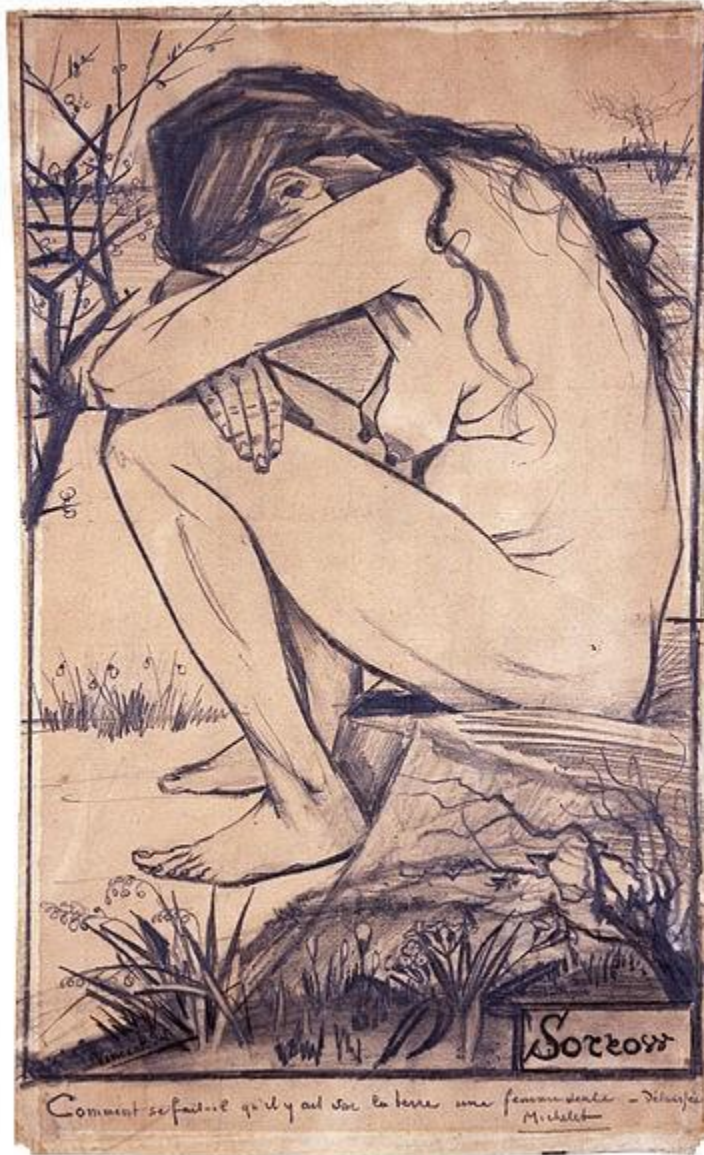
**ANNETTE**

I'm a tragedy? I'm the best artist of the lot.

**ELISE**

If you think so, just look at this.

**ELISE turns her canvas around so that everyone can see:**



**ERIK**

Call the police! Call the politically correct police!  
Here's the sorriest pornography I've ever seen.

**ELISE**

At least it's the truth. Let it speak. My art shall ever speak the truth.

**ANNETTE**

It's not art.  
It's a cartoon.

**ELISE**

It dries fast.

**ANNETTE**

It's a cartoon.

**ELISE**

Let the police come. They'll see who the genius is, in this room.

**ANNETTE**

But it's a cartoon.

**ELISE**

And it will hang in the gallery of common art.

**ANNETTE**

All *I* wanted was to be with people who could paint the human form, and wanted to.

And all I've gotten stuck with are cartoonists, perverts, and more cartoonists. I have a passion for the human form, and you all make me feel like a counter-revolutionist.

**ERIK**

I hear the sneer in your voice, Annette.  
Don't think I don't.

**ANNETTE**

And I hear the contempt in yours.  
You can't draw women, Erik.  
You can merely make fun of their bottoms.  
I, on the other hand, not only feel the gravity of painting them,  
I see its effects on their bodies.  
The mature ones, that is.  
The mature female body accepts gravity. Concedes to gravity.  
That's what it's all about.  
Life.  
Accepting gravity. Accepting change. Accepting what's different.

**ERIK**

You think you know so much; and you haven't even seen what Leif has done.

**SVANE**

Ja. Ja. Let's see what Leif has done.

**LEIF turns a plain canvas around so that everyone can see. Something not unlike:**



**ELISE**

But it's nothing.  
It's just plain canvas.

**ANNETTE**

*Nothing?*  
It's brilliant.  
It captures the very essence of nudity.  
The rawness and desperation every time a woman takes her clothes off in front of a different man.  
I would say it's one of the finest artistic interpretations the world has witnessed.

**SVANE**

That's a matter of opinion. Ja?

**ELISE**

All men are different. And it's still an empty canvas, like I said.

**ANNETTE**

Thank God you're not one of the judges.

**ELISE**

You're denying that I'm capable of seeing a point blank canvas?

**ANNETTE**

Before today, apart from occasional histrionics, I used to think you were quite sane, Elise.

**ELISE**

The same to you, Annette.

**ANNETTE**

Because, passion is art, and art is passion.

**ELISE**

And what's that got to do with the price of grass-fed milk?

**ANNETTE**

And passion has rights.

**ELISE**

And art has rights.  
And my eyes have rights.

**ANNETTE**

But not exclusive rights....  
Don't you see?

**ELISE**

You're just saying that because you feel he's your brother or something.  
Well, he's not.

**ANNETTE**

If you lived in a forest somewhere, or behind a tall-enough screen, you could expose your ignorance as flagrantly as you wished, to the trees.  
But this is society, and there are rules.

**ELISE**

Not if I had enough Bodhi trees in my garden.

SCENE 2

Five judges enter, robed, each wearing wigs and masks (except for LEIF, who enters headless). They take their places in something like a jury box, stage left (facing stage right). One by one the MODEL from Scene 1 brings in the five canvases and displays them on easels upstage center.

**The MODEL brings in Annette's.**

**FIRST JUDGE**

Curious.

**SECOND JUDGE**

Shows some promise.  
But decidedly immature.

**THIRD JUDGE**

The proportions leave something to be desired.  
And the teeth.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

What teeth?

**THIRD JUDGE**

My point exactly.  
She looks like she has false teeth.

**FIRST JUDGE**

I'd rate it, oh, say, 75 Euros, tops.  
Far too undramatic to be worth much more.

**SECOND JUDGE**

It could bring more.  
On a blustery day in the market.  
But, okay, 75 tops for today.  
Sounds right.

**THIRD JUDGE**

[beat] 75 Euros.  
Yes.  
Close enough.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

75 it is.  
Unanimous.

**The MODEL brings in Elise's.**

**FIRST JUDGE**

Not all that much better.

**SECOND JUDGE**

But better.  
A bit better.

**THIRD JUDGE**

I don't get it.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

It must be part of a series.  
You know.  
Like east and west haystacks.  
Or for a children's book of nursery rhymes.

**FIRST JUDGE**

175, to, I'd say, 200.  
No more than that.

**SECOND JUDGE**

200.

**THIRD JUDGE**

200.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

200's all right with me.

**FIRST JUDGE**

Okay.  
200.

**The MODEL brings in Svane's.**

**FIRST JUDGE**

Clever.  
If you're an animal lover.

**SECOND JUDGE**

What was her name?

**THIRD JUDGE**

Leda.



**SECOND JUDGE**

Right.... Leda.  
Helen's mother.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

Pretty damn good swan, if I say so myself.  
Ja. Ja. Pretty damn good.

**FIRST JUDGE**

So?..  
What would they give for it?  
Arm's length.  
Do you think?

**SECOND JUDGE**

500, I'd say.  
Just a guess.  
Depends on the mating season.

**THIRD JUDGE**

Maybe something more.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

5000.

**FIRST JUDGE**

That's a bit extreme.  
1500, maybe.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

1500 for the swan alone.

**SECOND JUDGE**

2500.  
That's as high as I'll go.  
Even if they were both swans.

**THIRD JUDGE**

All right.  
2500.  
I can live with that.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

5000.

**FIRST JUDGE**

2500.

**Pause. Then the MODEL brings in Erik's.**

**FIRST JUDGE**

I'm going to need some time on this one.  
There's so much depth to it.  
Questions answered.  
Questions unanswered.  
Clearly at a higher philosophical level than the others.

**SECOND JUDGE**

Obviously....  
Clearly.

**THIRD JUDGE**

Well, if I were forced to start somewhere, I'd say ... 7000.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

It's no better than the swan painting.  
No.  
Not any better at all.  
I'd give it a 2200.

**FIRST JUDGE**

The point of nature ... and God, for that matter, is to take your breath away.  
The point of art, in this day and age at least, is to make you think.  
This one wins out, hands down....  
7000, at the bare bottom minimum.

**SECOND JUDGE**

I could see it higher.  
But 7000 is certainly in the ballpark.

**THIRD JUDGE**

7000 it is.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

2500.

**The MODEL brings in Leif's.**

**FIRST JUDGE**

O! My God!!

**SECOND JUDGE**

What?

**FIRST JUDGE**

I never thought I'd see the day.

**THIRD JUDGE**

What?

**FIRST JUDGE**

The pure elegance.  
The excellence.  
The grandeur.  
The brevity.  
The beauty.  
As sublime as heaven itself.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

That piece of shit??

**FIRST JUDGE**

You can hardly say it's shit.  
You can say you don't grasp its meaning.  
You can say that you don't personally value highly anything with such a modicum  
of brush strokes.  
You can say that it doesn't move you like a Mozart lullaby.  
But you can't say it's a piece of shit.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

It's a piece of shit.

**SECOND JUDGE**

In your opinion.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

I wouldn't give more than the price of canvas for my opinion of it.

**FIRST JUDGE**

200,000.

**SECOND JUDGE**

I agree. 200,000.

**THIRD JUDGE**

200,000. Said and done.

**FIRST JUDGE**

Well, there we have it.  
Another year's new masters competition in the books.  
I, personally, will convey our congratulations to the five finalists.  
And all our well wishes for their continued success.

**SECOND JUDGE**

And our special congratulations to the winner of this year's fellowship at the  
Institute of Fine Arts.  
I am certain he ... or she ... will prove to be one of the foremost artists of our age.

**THIRD JUDGE**

Time will tell.

**SECOND JUDGE**

A master.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

Of the Dark Ages.

**THIRD JUDGE**

Sour grapes....  
Which happens to be one of *your* best.  
So-called works of art.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

Better than some lame cartoon, like you.

**FIRST JUDGE**

Our comrade seems to have a privileged sense of self.

**SECOND JUDGE**

Individualistic.

**THIRD JUDGE**

Egotistic is more like it.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

Snowflake artists wither.

**THIRD JUDGE**

What is it that you're hiding?

**SECOND JUDGE**

Or hiding from?

**FIRST JUDGE**

You hardly think you're above criticism, do you?

**SECOND JUDGE**

There.  
It's said.  
At last.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

Are you implying that I'm wrong to have my own opinion?  
Unless it agrees with yours?  
To the penny?

**FIRST JUDGE**

Absolutely not.

**SECOND JUDGE**

But ....  
All we're trying to say is that artists are powerful people.

**THIRD JUDGE**

And they can become dangerous.  
If you get the drift.

**FIRST JUDGE**

Unless they're open to guidance.

**SECOND JUDGE**

From those who know proper behavior as well as proper art.

**THIRD JUDGE**

Which is what this prize is all about.

**FIRST JUDGE**

Guidance.  
Gentle guidance....  
[beat] I'm sure you'll agree, once you've had the time to think about it.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

What are you saying?  
Really?

**FIRST JUDGE**

That artists have social responsibility.  
They're powerful, and sometimes get gags stuck in their mouths.

**SECOND JUDGE**

It's a terrible power.  
This power of touching peoples' minds and hearts with their hands.  
On paper.  
Or canvas.

**THIRD JUDGE**

Articulating what is never spoken.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

Are you saying what I think you're saying?

**FIRST JUDGE**

Not really.  
Life is just too much high tech nowadays.

**SECOND JUDGE**

Things get said faster.

**THIRD JUDGE**

And too much bloody paperwork.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

That's a matter of opinion.

**FIRST JUDGE**

Well, there's only one opinion to get exercised about, isn't there?  
Only one real principle that really matters. Correct?  
Nowadays.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

What's that?

**FIRST JUDGE**

Because the others aren't truly worthy principles, are they?

**FOURTH JUDGE**

I'm sorry.  
What is it?  
The master principle you're alluding to.

**FIRST JUDGE**

That we artists serve the public.  
Like the government serves in the public's interest.  
And we are all on the same page about it.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

Are you saying ...?  
What?  
What are you saying?  
That we all agree on everything?  
That there's no place for disagreement or criticism?

**FIRST JUDGE**

Not at this time.

**Something of a stunned pause.**

**FIRST JUDGE**

Do you have anything to say?

**FOURTH JUDGE**

I always thought art was more important than people

**FIRST JUDGE**

[*beat*] And?

**FOURTH JUDGE**

Because, to an artist, freedom of expression matters more than people.

**SECOND JUDGE**

An engineer could say the same thing.

**THIRD JUDGE**

Or a scientist.

**FIRST JUDGE**

Besides ....  
And correct me if I'm wrong.  
But if the peoples' expression isn't free, then nothing that an artist has or does or says matters.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

You mean the government.

**FIRST JUDGE**

*We* are the government. We, the people.  
Who else do you think it is?

**FOURTH JUDGE**

We're responsible for all the shit the government does?

**FIRST JUDGE**

I wish you'd stop using that term.

**FOURTH JUDGE**

There's something wrong somewhere here.

**FIRST JUDGE**

It's in who is, and who merely thinks he's a great artist.

**The MODEL comes over, takes the  
Fourth Judge's hand in hers, kisses it,  
and gently leads him offstage.**



SCENE 3

Behind a scrim.

**VOICE ONE**

This is the land of the living.  
This is the land of the loving.  
This is the land of the longing.  
This is the land of the waiting.

**VOICE TWO**

Once there was the ineluctable modality of the visible.

**VOICE THREE**

*[face pressed against the scrim]* The ineluctable modality of the visible.

**VOICE TWO**

You saw through the leaves, therefore you were.

**VOICE THREE**

*[face pressed against the scrim]* You saw through the leaves, therefore you were.

**VOICE TWO**

Cover your eyes. Close them and see....  
*[beat]* Now is the ineluctable modality of the audible.

**VOICE THREE**

*[face pressed against the scrim]* The ineluctable modality of the audible.

**VOICE TWO**

You hear through the leaves, therefore you are.

**VOICE THREE**

*[face pressed against the scrim]* You hear through the leaves, therefore you are.

**Sounds of waves, and boots crushing  
wrack and shells. Trodding against  
damp crackling mast, razorshells, and  
squeaking pebbles. Feet sinking into  
wet, silted sand.**

**VOICE ONE**

The truth told on Earth is not the eternal truth.

**VOICE TWO**

The name named you on Earth is not your eternal name.

**VOICE THREE**

[*face pressed against the scrim*] The name named you on Earth is not your eternal name.

**VOICE ONE**

If you can put five fingers through, it's a gate.  
If not, it's a door.

**VOICE TWO**

The mystery of life is a doorway.

**VOICE THREE**

[*face pressed against the scrim*] The mystery of life is a doorway.

**VOICE ONE**

The ineluctable modality of infinite patience. Crush. Crack. Crick. Crick.  
Waiting at the doorway with earthborn senses.

**VOICE FOUR**

If I open my eyes, will I have vanished?  
If I open my eyes, will I see nothing but black?...  
If I don't open my eyes, will I ever know?  
I *shall* open them, and see if I can see....  
World without end.  
Mother.  
Me squealing.  
Created from nothing.  
This time.  
When will I be stillborn? Next time?  
A misbirth with a trailing navelcord, carried in an old woman's bag out to sea?  
Ah, yes. From everlasting to everlasting.

**VOICE ONE**

And. And. And. And tell us: Jesus wept.

**Sound of a bolt being drawn back on the  
door of a shuttered cottage.**

**The door creaks open.**

**VOICE FOUR**

They thought I was someone else.  
Walking the beach through seaspawn, seawrack, and seaweed.  
Mine nuncle, aunt, and cousin. And their whiskey.

**VOICE TWO**

And. And. And. And tell us:  
Who but you ran from Jesus into the wood of madness?  
Like a stallion, his mane foaming in the moon. His eyeballs like stars.

**VOICE FOUR**

Abba.  
Barabbas.

**VOICE THREE**

Let us build a shrine for you.  
Starting with wood.

**A bell rings.  
Then another.**

**VOICE TWO**

You were never born to be a saint.

**VOICE THREE**

*[face pressed against the scrim]* Never born to be a saint.

**VOICE FOUR**

If not, what else was there for me to be incarnated for?  
A woman?  
The blessed Virgin?  
A whore?  
A naked whore?  
Or a writer?

**VOICE ONE**

When you were young, you read.  
Seven books a night you read.  
Two pages apiece.  
And you learned.  
And you looked into a mirror.  
And you saw yourself a writer.  
Writing books with single letter titles.  
F....  
Q....  
U....  
Consumed like whalemeat by the public.  
You must have enjoyed yourself then. Before you lost your head.

**VOICE FOUR**

Was *that* my life?  
Whalemeat?  
A school of turlehide whales stranded, spouting, hobbling in the shallows.  
And my people?  
With flayers' knives, running.  
Scaling.  
Hacking the blubbery meat by waterside.  
Famine-plagued slaughters' blood in me?

**VOICE TWO**

You were a student.

**VOICE FOUR**

When I was in Paris in my Latin Quarter hat.  
Hat, tie, overcoat, and nose.  
Proudly walking.  
I was going to do wonders.  
Telegram:  
Mother dying.  
Paris rawly waking, crude sunlight on her lemon streets.  
Spurned and undespairing, my soul walked home with me.

**A dog barks.**

**VOICE FOUR**

Do they let dogs bark in this place? And attack?  
Heaven forbid!...  
But I have a stick. And I'm not whalemeat.

**VOICE THREE**

Buck Mulligan, a home thief, saved men from drowning.  
And you shake at a cur's yelping?

**VOICE FOUR**

I must have lived an Irishman's life before.  
In the mist, no doubt.  
Not a strong swimmer.  
Because I can see a drowning man's eyes in my eyes.  
Screaming out to me to save him.  
But I can't. Because of the water....  
Water....  
What is water?

**VOICE ONE**

Water is not water.  
“Water” is a word.  
Just as you are not a fuck-up.  
Just a word for it.

**VOICE FOUR**

Water is death for me.

**VOICE TWO**

Once, maybe.

**Another bark.**

**VOICE FOUR**

Or maybe dogs.  
A rag of wolf’s tongue redpanting from his jaws.  
Doesn’t see me.  
Smells a rock; and from under a cocked hindleg pisses on it.  
Christ! The simple joys of animal life.

**VOICE THREE**

And the woman?

**VOICE FOUR**

Doesn’t see me either. Must be her dog.  
She walks with woman steps, loose sand and shellgrit crusting her bare feet....  
About her wind-raw face her hair is trailing as she trudges, schlepping the spoils  
slung at her back, dragging her load, tide westering in her wake.  
A winedark sea....  
[beat] Who watches *me* here?

**VOICE ONE**

If she, she would trust you.  
Her mind is gentle.  
Looking into your eyes for one of the alphabet books you never wrote.  
Into the ineluctable depth of your eyes.

**VOICE FOUR**

Touch me. I am quite alone.  
Touch me with your eyes. Your soft eyes.  
Your soft, soft, soft eyes.  
Touch my sadness. Touch my loneliness. Touch me through the leaves.  
Touch me through the sighing of the leaves. And the waves.

**VOICE TWO**

The ineluctable modality of infinite patience: wading through earthborn senses.

**VOICE THREE**

*[face pressed against the scrim]* Ineluctable modality of infinite patience.

**VOICE FOUR**

Who is to blame?

Am I?

Am I?

Am I, or not?

**VOICE ONE**

Evening will find itself....

In you.

It always does.

All days make their end.

**VOICE FOUR**

Who is to blame?

Am I?

Am I?

Am I, or not?

**VOICE TWO**

Look behind you.

**VOICE THREE**

*[face pressed against the scrim]* Look behind you.

**VOICE TWO**

Turn. Look behind you.

Turn your face over a shoulder and look.... Like Orpheus.

**VOICE THREE**

There! Moving through the air high spars of a threemaster, her sails brailed up on the crosstrees, homing, upstream, silently moving, a silent ship.

**VOICE FOUR**

*[beat]* Nowhere did they ever tell me life after life could be a life like this.

**VOICE ONE**

James Joyce did.

SCENE 4

A lab somewhere in China. Four TECHNICIANS are dressed in white lab gowns, each wearing an N95 mask. LEIF is dressed in a white lab gown with no head.

Three bats fly free of a cage and offstage.

Shit!  
**TECHNICIAN 1**

Who left the window open?  
**TECHNICIAN 2**

Who left the cage unlocked?  
**TECHNICIAN 3**

Who turned up the heat?  
**TECHNICIAN 4**

No end of blame.  
**TECHNICIAN 1**

Maybe they'll die.  
In time.  
**TECHNICIAN 2**

Or maybe no one else will.  
**TECHNICIAN 3**

The Party will understand.  
**TECHNICIAN 4**

Like they did Dr. Leif-Chen?  
**TECHNICIAN 1**

Heavens forbid!  
**TECHNICIAN 2**

Mao Zedong forbid.  
**TECHNICIAN 3**

Shut the window.  
**TECHNICIAN 4**

Lock the cage.  
**TECHNICIAN 1**

Turn down the heat. **TECHNICIAN 2**

Don't worry.  
No one will ever know. **TECHNICIAN 3**

We are invisible here. **TECHNICIAN 4**

No one is watching us. **TECHNICIAN 1**

No one knows what we don't know. **TECHNICIAN 2**

Knowledge is not the word "knowledge," just as we are not the word "fuck-ups." **TECHNICIAN 3**

We are not the word "fuck-ups." **TECHNICIAN 4**

Agreed. **TECHNICIAN 1**

Forever. **TECHNICIAN 2**

And ever. With no blame. **TECHNICIAN 3**

Who are? **TECHNICIAN 4**

Are? **TECHNICIAN 1**

The fuck-ups? **TECHNICIAN 4**

Not us. **TECHNICIAN 2**

Not without our help. **TECHNICIAN 3**



And the people?  
**TECHNICIAN 4**

I'm sorry. What are you suggesting?  
**TECHNICIAN 1**

We have nothing to hide.  
**TECHNICIAN 2**

Or hide from.  
**TECHNICIAN 3**

What?  
**TECHNICIAN 4**

Our comrade seems to have a privileged sense of self.  
**TECHNICIAN 1**

Individualistic.  
**TECHNICIAN 2**

Egotistic is more like it.  
**TECHNICIAN 3**

Scientists are powerful people.  
**TECHNICIAN 4**

And dangerous.  
If you get my drift.  
**TECHNICIAN 1**

We do.  
**TECHNICIAN 2**

And snowflake scientists wither.  
**TECHNICIAN 3**

Scientists have a social responsibility.  
**TECHNICIAN 4**

And can get gags stuck in their mouths.  
**TECHNICIAN 1**

Just an observation. Just an opinion.  
**TECHNICIAN 2**

**TECHNICIAN 3**

And you're not suggesting it's wrong to have an opinion, are you?

**TECHNICIAN 4**

What are you all saying?

Really?

**TECHNICIAN 1**

All we're trying to say is that scientists *are* powerful people.

**TECHNICIAN 2**

And can become dangerous, if they don't keep their mouths shut.

**TECHNICIAN 3**

That all of us scientists must remain open to guidance.

**TECHNICIAN 4**

From?

**TECHNICIAN 1**

From those who know proper behavior as well as proper science.

**TECHNICIAN 2**

Which is what this is all about.

**TECHNICIAN 3**

Guidance.

Gentle guidance....

[*beat*] I'm sure you'll understand, once you've had the time to think about it.

**TECHNICIAN 4**

It's a terribly responsible power.

This power of touching peoples' lives.

**TECHNICIAN 1**

Articulating what has been spoken before.

**TECHNICIAN 2**

Which is why we seek each other's opinion.

**TECHNICIAN 3**

Whether what we know should be known.

[*beat*] Do you understand?

**TECHNICIAN 4**

Are you saying what I think you're saying?

**TECHNICIAN 1**

Not really.

**TECHNICIAN 2**

Things just get said faster nowadays.

**TECHNICIAN 3**

With too much bloody paperwork.

**TECHNICIAN 4**

*That's* a matter of opinion.

**TECHNICIAN 1**

Well, there's only one opinion to get exercised about today, isn't there?  
Only one real principle that really matters. Correct?

**TECHNICIAN 4**

What's that?

**TECHNICIAN 2**

Because the others aren't truly worthy principles, are they?

**TECHNICIAN 4**

I'm sorry.

What is it?

The master principle you're alluding to.

**TECHNICIAN 3**

That we scientists serve the public.  
Like the government serves in the public's interest.  
And we are all on the same page about it.

**TECHNICIAN 4**

And truth doesn't matter?  
Is that what you're saying?

**TECHNICIAN 1**

Not at this time.

**TECHNICIAN 2**

It's not really truth that matters that much, at this time.

**Something of a stunned pause.**

**TECHNICIAN 3**

Do you have something to say?

**TECHNICIAN 4**

I always thought truth was more important than people

**TECHNICIAN 1**

[*beat*] And?

**TECHNICIAN 2**

An engineer could say the same thing.

**TECHNICIAN 3**

Or an artist.

**TECHNICIAN 4**

There's something wrong somewhere here.

**TECHNICIAN 1**

It's in who is, and who is not a true scientist.

**TECHNICIAN 2**

And something else.

**TECHNICIAN 4**

What?

**TECHNICIAN 3**

Truth is silence.

**TECHNICIAN 4**

What?

**TECHNICIAN 1**

Truth is silence when it protects the people's heart from being disturbed.

**TECHNICIAN 4**

Disturbed?

By the truth?

**TECHNICIAN 2**

If it would start a pandemic.

**TECHNICIAN 3**

And send us up Shit's Creek. With cracks in our skulls.

**TECHNICIAN 4**

I don't believe this.

**TECHNICIAN 1**

It's only three bats, for Buddha's sake.

**TECHNICIAN 2**

Who's to know?

**TECHNICIAN 3**

And besides, if something does happen, there will be no end of blame.  
They'll deny everything.  
Even us.

**TECHNICIAN 1**

Especially us.

## SCENE 5

Through their movements, gestures, rhythms, chants and highly stylized pantomime, Kathakali dancers evoke the story of Hindu god Lord Shiva: How, at the end of each predetermined cycle of time, Shiva is tasked with the duty to destroy the universe in order to make way for its renewal. Its reincarnation.

Shiva oversees and directs the portrayed destruction and re-creation of the universe, traveling (dancing) the length and breadth of the stage. His iconic features are: A third eye (in the middle of his forehead); a snake around his neck; a glow (halo) about his head; a trident carried on his back; and a two-sided drum he carries with him and every so often beats. During the destruction, and then again during the renewal of the universe, there is chanting in the background, which reaches a peak intensity, first as the sun, moon, and stars are buried under stage, and second as LEIF is brought forth from the cave.

The destruction is depicted in the following phases:

Phase 1: LEIF (headless), representing mankind, is blindly led into a cave, center stage, lit by a glowing red light.

Phase 2: Other creatures are led into a dark cave, upstage.

Phase 3: The stars, moon, and finally the sun are gathered into a silken sack and buried beneath the stage.

The cycles of time are represented by an immense receding spiral clock hovering over the stage, which emits a faint inner (white) glow.

Following Phase 3 the stage is dark but for the red glow from mankind's cave, the slight glow from the clock, and a spotlight on the place where the sun, moon, and stars are buried.

Upon a sign given by Shiva on his drum, the sun, moon and stars are retrieved from beneath the stage and distributed back into the sky.

Next (again on Shiva's signal) the animals are revived, and released into the world.

Lastly, Shiva enters mankind's cave, and to the beat of his drum Shiva ushers LEIF into the light. Leif's head has been fully restored on his body.

Upon seeing daylight LEIF breaks into a dance of unbridled joy, carrying him to the four corners of the stage (and beyond, if possible), and to all the other dancers.

SCENE 6

Front room of a residence in Oslo. LEIF (played with youthful exuberance) is standing alone. His sister, ANNETTE, enters from a back room, a book in her hands.

**ANNETTE**

Sisters and wives never find the right words to say “Goodbye.”  
Tears get in the way.... So, here. This is for you.

**Hands him the book.**

**LEIF**

[*looking at it*] Tic Not Hon. [*Thick Nhat Hanh*].  
Thank you, Annette.  
It’s wonderful.... Really, such a thoughtful gift. I love it.

**ANNETTE**

You know him, don’t you, Leif?  
I thought you did.

**LEIF**

“Dance as though you are kissing the Earth with your feet.”  
Oh, indeed, I know him. He’s “my man.”  
And, “We are here to awaken from our illusion of separateness.”  
I believe in both of those. That’s why I am.... Why I’m a dancer.

**ANNETTE**

[*beat*] The word “Goodbye” is so impossible for me.

**LEIF**

“Au revoir” then.

**ANNETTE**

Au revoir then....  
O Leif, why does your leaving send such chills through me?  
Like electric shocks. And I hate it....  
Don’t go.... Please.

**LEIF**

I love you, Little Sis. You know how much I do.  
And I’d do anything for you.  
But I have to go. It’s my life.

**ANNETTE**

Then take me with you.

**LEIF**

Cannot do, Sweetheart.  
You know that, even if I could.

**ANNETTE**

Then make me a glove.  
And put me on each day and night.  
That I may softly touch your cheek.

**They laugh.**

**ANNETTE**

Somewhere there's a safe place.  
Promise me you'll find it, and stay in it.

**LEIF**

My safe place is in my dancing.  
*Our* safe place is in my dancing.  
And I'll safely dance au revoir to you every day and night I'm away.

**ANNETTE**

Why do you have to go?  
It's so dangerous, so far away.

**LEIF**

Annette. Annette. O Annette.  
Don't bury me on the island of female worries.  
I'll be fine. I know I will. And when I'm back it will prove it.

**ANNETTE**

But I love you.  
And my female intuition tells me I *must* worry for you.

**LEIF**

**Points to the book.**

He says it, simpler than I do:  
"You must love in such a way that the person you love feels free."

**ANNETTE**

But I love you.

**LEIF**

Annette, when you look at me like that, my knees start to shake.  
There's no greater danger to my freedom than that look of yours.  
No. If I'm to be what I'm meant to be, I can't let your worries stop me.



**ANNETTE**

I know your passion.  
I know what you dream of doing.  
I'm only telling you that *my* passion is for your safety.

**LEIF**

Be calm. All is well, and all will be well.  
I'll be home, safe and sound, soon enough. You'll see.

**ANNETTE**

Your passion. My passion. Your freedom. My fear. Don't you understand?

**LEIF**

Sweet Jesus, it's only India.  
You can count on me being back before you figure out the chicken puzzle.

**Quizzical look from ANNETE.**

**LEIF**

Which came first? The chicken or the egg? That Father always asks us.

**ANNETTE**

Your promise comes first.

**LEIF**

Okay.

**ANNETTE**

But it still feels like a dream to me.

**LEIF**

Dreams. That's *your* world, Annette, not mine.

**ANNETTE**

Dreams tell me how much I cherish your company, and dread your going.  
What if something should happen to you?

**LEIF**

What? What could possibly happen to me?

**ANNETTE**

What if you die?

**LEIF**

Die? I won't *die*.

**LEIF opens the book, leafs through it a few moments, and then finds a place to read from:**

**LEIF**

[*reading*] “There is no death.  
Everything dies and renews itself, all the time.  
When we understand the truth of that, it liberates us.  
The fear of destruction is gone, and it is a great relief.  
We can enjoy life and appreciate it in a new way.”

[*beat*] I’ll always be back, Annette, because I am never really gone from you.  
My soul, like my dancing, is always with you.  
This body ... that body ... my body, your body, they don’t limit us.  
We’re without boundaries.  
And without boundaries, we’re always together.  
Can’t you see it? Can’t you feel it?

**ANNETTE**

I know you believe that.  
What I don’t know is whether I do.  
And it scares me even more.

**LEIF**

Life for me, Nanette, is a great river.  
A journey down, a long, long way.  
And on the way the water transforms you.  
I’m going to India to be transformed.

**ANNETTE**

You’re just like a child sometimes.

**LEIF**

That’s it.  
In a child’s imagination there are no limits.  
The same way I don’t want limits on me.  
So, thank you. That’s what I want: I want meaning in my life to be like a child.

**ANNETTE**

And *I want* you back home safe with me.

**LEIF**

I *will* be back.  
And I’ll bring India back with me ... a piece of it, just for you.

**ANNETTE**

Promise?

**LEIF**

I promise.

**ANNETTE**

Harder.

**LEIF**

Picture this in your mind:

**Darkness. Kathakali performance music – drums, cymbals, and chanting. When light returns LEIF is in elaborate traditional Kathakali costume; and an elephant is standing motionless upstage. LEIF reaches his arms high in the air, then bends his wrists and fingers down toward ANNETTE, in the manner of a bear.**

**LEIF**

*I am going to tell you a s t o r y ....*

**LEIF rolls on the floor.**

**LEIF**

And this is how it goes....

**ANNETTE laughs.**

**ANNETTE**

Like when we were children, and India was only a word.

**LEIF**

**Stands.**

Enough. Silence!

I am king.

Not of this forest I roam, but of a great kingdom in the north that we were driven from. My queen, my sons, my people, and I.

There is great sadness in our exile.

There is great pain in our hearts.

There is great longing to see our homeland again.

**LEIF**

The role of the king in this Kathakali dance is a real challenge to play.  
Even for the most experienced actor.  
Being a near divine hero, the king's mental agony needs to be shown with  
controlled expressions that still convey its severity to the audience.  
Slowly. Slowly walked and slowly danced.  
It's what I'm going to India to learn, and bring back to Norway.  
And perform all over Europe. Children will love it.

**ANNETTE**

What happens?... To the king, and his family, and their people?

**LEIF**

There's an enormous battle in the end. And Lord Krishna joins in.  
But it takes a much larger stage than this one to perform.

**Darkness again, and more Kathakali  
performance music. When light returns  
LEIF is dressed as before; and the  
elephant is gone.**

**LEIF**

You see now? My dancing impels me to go.  
I can't think of myself alone without it.

**ANNETTE**

What about me? Can you think of *me alone*, without you?

**LEIF**

I'll never stop thinking of you.  
I told you that.

**ANNETTE**

You have such heart, don't you? For your dancing. And not for me.

**LEIF**

Enough, Annette.  
Dancing is like Heaven to me. You are Heaven's doorway.

**ANNETTE**

*A strange* Heaven.

**LEIF**

There *is* a strange Heaven in all of us.  
Beyond the earth, and the light, and other people's expectations.

**ANNETTE**

Are you telling me the truth?

**LEIF**

Great men, like great theatre, can deceive for years.  
Great dance, not for an instant.

**ANNETTE**

So ... are you going to India to find a great man? or a great dance?

**LEIF**

Both....  
Neither.

**ANNETTE**

Neither?

**LEIF**

I go to India to learn how to dance better.  
The great dance is already there, inside me.  
It only needs the air of India to come out.

**ANNETTE**

I don't understand.

**LEIF**

It's like language.  
The language of India enchants.  
It's magical.  
And it disorients in its own peculiar way.  
The dividing line between people is those who are drawn to its magic,  
and those who are not.  
How people react to the disorientation of its magic.  
Like a person becoming like water.  
Like a river.  
Like all rivers, all at once.  
Even beyond that.  
Like all things that are nourished by rivers.  
Like that.  
Eternal. Life without end....  
I'll be fine.  
It's in my blood.  
You'll see.

**ANNETTE**

[*beat*] Give me a hug.  
A big one.

**They hug.**

## SCENE 7

LEIF is painted and costumed for a Kathakali dance performance.



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kathakali\\_make-up\\_01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kathakali_make-up_01.jpg)

See: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQuGmVFL\\_Ng](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQuGmVFL_Ng) and

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvZsoLiD5q0>

With a parrot.



Photo by [Rutpratheep Nilpechr](#) from [Pexels](#)

SCENE 8

Cave, upstage center, with a mouth covered by a scrim designed to look like a frozen waterfall, or like the ice lingam of Amarnath Temple, Jammu and Kashmir, India. Behind the cave at the back of the stage stand the Himalayas, of which the cave is a part.

LORD SHIVA enters, leading his beloved wife, PARVATI, by the hand. They step behind the scrim and out of view. Their voices are amplified.

**PARVATI**

Is this where you will tell me, my Lord?

**LORD SHIVA**

In a few moments, when all is prepared.

**Bolts of lightning crisscross the stage.**

**LORD SHIVA**

Now no one may hear but you.

Everything else has been purified by the lightning.

**LEIF, in costume with a parrot on his shoulder, stealthily approaches the cave and listens from outside.**

**LORD SHIVA**

My Beloved. My Dearest Parvati. My Wife. What I will tell you I give you, knowing it will change your life, and can never be unspoken.

I urge you, one last time, to reconsider.

**PARVATI**

You tell me you love me, Lord Shiva, and have followed me from life to life.

But how can I know it's true, if I have no memory of any past life?

My beloved, immortal Master, I need to know. I deserve to know.

**LORD SHIVA**

Not because you deserve to. Because you have begged me to tell you.

Do you understand?

**PARVATI**

I do, my Husband.

**LORD SHIVA**

And only in this hidden garden, where no one else may hear my song of love.

My story is for your ears alone, protected by these great mountains, snow and ice.



**PARVATI**

I understand.  
I will tell no one.

**LORD SHIVA**

Good.... Silence, for a moment. Feel the hidden truth in my arms.

**Pause. Meditation music.**

**LORD SHIVA**

Good. Now sit.  
Stories are spider webs.  
And great stories are webs woven with patience from the depths of  
understanding, imagination, experience, and spiritual journey.  
They bring to mind who you are.  
Where you are coming from.  
Where you are headed.  
And what you need to do.  
Are you listening?

**PARVATI**

I am, my Lord.

**LORD SHIVA**

Is your mind clear and quiet?

**PARVATI**

It is, my Lord.

**LORD SHIVA**

Close your eyes and picture:  
You enter a magical chamber that is lit with the soft white light of ten moons.  
You remove your shoes and feel your feet sink, as if into clouds.  
The walls are luminous.  
Everything is peaceful.  
At the far end of the chamber shines a point of light, like a distant star.  
You glide toward it; and as you do its light fills your complete field of vision.  
Everything is bathed by it, suspending everything in the moment.  
Time stops.  
Your breathing slows.  
Centuries seem to fall between each breath.  
You leave the ground and follow the Earth's orbit in reverse, until you and the  
Earth meet again on the other side of the sun.

**LORD SHIVA**

Gladdened, you find yourself in a landscape where you are perfectly at peace.  
To your right there are rolling, soft green hills as far as you can see.  
To your left is a meadow swaying with exquisite flowers the likes of which you  
have never viewed.

Beyond that, in the distance, a shimmering silver lake.

In the air:

Bird songs like you have never quite heard before,  
and a scent as sweet as honey and ambrosia.

Your heart lifts, happy in the sheer beauty of the moment before you.

Your eyes are not tired, yet they inherit a deep, inner weariness from within you.

You proceed, slowly, up a grassy path to a small grove of trees, where you sit....

[*beat*] Are you still awake?

**PARVATI**

Uh-huh.

**LORD SHIVA**

Underneath the tree where you are resting comes a voice.

My voice. Softly.

And you begin to realize that you have failed to realize something in your life.

Something important.

But you don't quite know what it is.

The sense of something missing.

Something lost.

Something about who you once were.

And what you once did.

And where you came from.

Something that cries to be in your life now, and isn't.

[*beat*] Are you listening, Parvati?

**PARVATI**

[*pause*] What?

**LORD SHIVA**

I asked you, are you listening?

**PARVATI**

Yes. Yes.

**LORD SHIVA**

And how do you feel?

**PARVATI**

I don't know. How should I feel?

**LORD SHIVA**

Longing?

**PARVATI**

Yes. Longing.  
Is that right?

**LORD SHIVA**

Can you see anything?

**PARVATI**

See what?

**LORD SHIVA**

Something ....  
You'll know, when you see it.

**PARVATI**

All I see is silence.

**LORD SHIVA**

Anything moving?

**PARVATI**

No. Nothing moving.

**LORD SHIVA**

No. Of course not. Only silence. I should expect that.  
Motion is part of the physical body of life. Silence is part of the body of death.  
The physical body's death is inevitable, just as the expiration of death is likewise inevitable. When motion stops, silence takes over, and, in time, you evolve above your old perishable body into a new one.  
It takes time. Reincarnation is an act beyond your control, but it takes time.  
You never die, but time exists between existence.

**PARVATI**

*[sleepily]* Time?

**LORD SHIVA**

Time is a strap which ties motion together.  
Motion of the past. Motion of the present. And motion of the future.  
What I want you to see is a vision of motion from your past. Before this life.

## PARVATI

[*sleepily*] I don't see anything moving.

## LORD SHIVA

And what I want you to understand is that between lives the inertia of motion becomes a fury.

It overwhelms the patience and drives a soul mad to beg for oblivion, to escape the hellish tedium of boredom.

And with the wish *comes oblivion*, so that when the soul is reborn, it has lost all recollection of time in the past. All awareness of its past life.

But there is a path to prevent that.

The secret of enlightened reincarnation....

Discipline. Patience. The strength of concentration.

Holding on to the meditative state through all the inaction of death.

For which two prayers are indispensable.

The first is Om Shanti.

Om Shanti.

I am a soul at peace.

Om Shanti

Shanti

Shanti.

It must repeat itself like a heartbeat at all times inside you.

The second is even more sacred:

Man man above [*man mana bhava*]

I surrender my mind to God, and think only of him.

I surrender my soul to union with the universal spirit.

It is that recollection you must keep foremost.

The one most elevated desire from one existence into the next.

It is the one thought that can liberate you from the monotony.

[*pause*] This I must say in a way that fixes itself tightly in your mind:

You may be ... you are but a tiny point of light in a universe of light.

As subtle as a distant star.

But within that pinpoint there exists infinity.

You are a universe within yourself, dwelling in a material world.

You are soul. I say *soul*. Not body. Your body is merely a guest house.

Merely clothes that you wear.

Merely transportation.

You are an eternal traveler, free like your spiritual birth parents.

You must always keep that in mind. It's called the freedom of soul consciousness.

Do you understand?

**Silence.**

**LORD SHIVA**

Parvati?

**Silence.**

**LORD SHIVA**

Silence.

She has fallen asleep....

You would think I might have guessed.

Well, my Love, my tale of reincarnation is not so griping as I might have wished....

Let flights of angels sing thee in thy dreams.

SCENE 9

The parrot is given off; and as LEIF is leaving the stage following the conclusion of Scene 8 two masked men, their chests draped in belts of ammunition, seize him and forcibly drag him (struggling) from the stage. Lights dim.

When light returns LEIF is bound to a tree.

**LEIF**

[*calling out*] Where are you?

Release me.

Untether me.

You are driving me insane....

I am a person.

I am a man. Not a cow, or a dog, or a horse.

Not some thief to be pinioned like a thief.

I'll die here like this.

My constitution cannot take it.

I subsist on freedom.

In captivity I putrefy.

[*louder*] Stop this! I need to be free.

Give Death a taste of itself.

I'm not ready to die. I have great efforts yet to do in this life.

And many friends who look to me, and will look *for* me.

[*as originally, calling out*] Why am I being trapped like this?

I simply cannot stand it.

Do you understand?

I am genetically incapable of tolerating any form of captivity.

I never could.

No wind of life has ever held me. Has ever stopped me.

What have I done to you?

To be snared like an insect in the amber of a war that is no war.

By soldiers who are no soldiers.

For a cause I have nothing to do with.

I have done nothing to wax the well of your desires with bile.

I understand freedom.

More than anyone....

**Set me free!**

**This instant!**

**Pause.**

## LEIF

All I did was come to see the Himalayas. And to hear Shiva.  
Are we not free to do that?  
Or can't a person come to Kashmir now without bodyguards?  
Where's the heaven in that?  
To fall into a Hellhole. A vacuum of morality and intelligence.  
A knife inches from my throat.  
To be in mortal danger in the hands of people without balance.

I dreamed to set the world free from ropes and chains like these.  
From the pain every time I saw a person's dreams for happiness drift away.  
I dreamed how dance could catch our dreams and make love bloom again.  
How dance could join our hands and set us free. All over the world.

Human beings who are trapped are the only animals that take their own life.  
You can't imagine what it's like to be a hostage.  
Totally at the mercy of others.

Stop it! Stop these thoughts. I'm not dead yet.  
Stop these terrible thoughts. They stink.  
I *am* going home.  
These thoughts are treacherous.  
These thoughts are untamed horses, in a sick mind, caught in a corral in the  
lightening.  
Trampling each other in their frenzy to escape.  
Am I the only one left alive here?

## Pause.

The dearest in the world to me are God, and you, in Norway, home safe and free.  
If I should die on this tree, and you could hear my last prayer, I would tell you I  
don't fear death a fraction as much as I fear all of the things I've left unfinished.  
My dances uncreated.  
My children unborn.  
My oceans of love untold to you, and them, and all my friends.  
My understanding.

They have tied me, bear-like, to a stake. I cannot fly.  
My life's as cheap as a wild beast's.  
And my true need: O God! give me the patience I need!  
You see me here, a poor, bound hostage, full of grief.  
Yet I shall not let tears stain my cheeks. I shall not weep for my fate.  
O fool, I shall go mad!

**LEIF**

[*yelling out*] Release me. Untie me.  
You are making me sick.  
And I am of the kind who disappears when he is sick.

**Pause.**

When it's over, every part of me gasping for air, there will be no screaming.  
No hysterics. No children crying. Only peculiar, naked stillness.  
My best mind destroyed by madness, starving hysterically for freedom.

**LEIF bursts into loud song.**

**LEIF**

**Singing loudly.**

We want a land that's safe and free,  
that's free of wrack to freedom's plow.  
We want a land that's ours today,  
forever on is called Norway!  
And have we not that land till now,  
then we will win it, you and me!

[in the manner of: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oRQq-3c7RA>

Vi vil oss et land som er frelst og fritt  
og ikke sin frihet må borge.  
Vi vil oss et land som er mitt og ditt,  
og dette vårt land heter Norge!  
Og har vi ikke det land ennu,  
så skal vi vinne det, jeg og du!]

**Pause.**

Oh! To be free! Free to be free!  
Free to see the streams of mild light in your eyes again.  
Free.  
Free to have a universe to breathe in again.  
Free.  
Free of dark shadows floating in the air. Free of this captivity.  
Free.  
Free to see again the joy and beauty in people who are not mirrors of death.  
Free.  
Free as caught wind in windblown sails.



**Pause.**

**LEIF**

I'm dying. There's nothing left to live for....

Annette, my dear little sister, my fair half part, let my grief only make you stronger.

The sorrow is there because you are going to be happier.

Like stuffing our mouths with earth when we were children, to taste the feeling of Earth.

You are the feeling that exists....

You always hated loudness and shouting.

**Well now I shout.**

**They have done awful things to me.**

I do my best to contain, but why have I gotten buried like this?

Karma?

What Karma?

When?

They have a way of making me feel.

Relating my torture to the capture.

A man writhed here once. The man was me.

They really hurt my ears.

SCENE 10

ANNETTE speaking aloud, as she is sitting at a table writing a letter. A full moon is in the night sky.

**ANNETTE**

Dear Leif ... you always told me you'd be home safe.  
And I believed you. And waited.  
You promised.  
You promised every day and every night you'd dance for me.  
Every day and every night of your pilgrimage.

What happened?  
You exhausted yourself, didn't you? Let down your guard.  
Exhausted yourself heavy dancing all the time with Kathakali.  
Exhausted yourself visiting Delhi, Calcutta, and Bombay.  
Big cities you should have known wouldn't be good for you. Claustrophobic.  
So you trekked to the Himalayas for some peace.  
Not thinking how they might be dangerous.  
Not thinking how Kashmir is home to murderers.  
Home to guillotiners who want Muslim control of the people there at any price.  
And you never came out of the Kashmir Valley alive.

Terror lurks in paradise. Even in the shadows of Lord Shiva's mountains.  
Terror lurks at the top of the world, and we were unaware.  
At least in Kashmir it does.  
And it found you.  
Innocent.  
Kidnapped.  
Tortured.  
And killed.

So you, my brother, my dear, dear brother ....  
And I, and all of us.  
We have become victims of politics we knew nothing about.  
And it breaks our hearts. What a waste!  
What a waste to rob the world of the golden treasures of your talent.

Do you remember how you promised, every step of the way you'd dance for me?  
Until you came back home.  
And I've waited ... and waited ... and waited.  
Will I ever see you again? In this life?  
I know that's how you believe. But it barely stops the pain.  
Each new life ending in another new loss....

## ANNETTE

[beat] I have felt the thoughts you have been sending.  
I know I have.  
And I have felt your strength. And I have felt your fear.  
I have felt your telling me that this grief will only make me stronger.  
Right?...  
Just like you.  
You always gave the best of yourself.  
Even in death.

But your death was meaningless.  
As meaningless as it possibly could be.  
Murdered by senseless, homicidal wanderers, wanting their way or blood.  
All the promise your life offered. Me and the rest of the world.

You lived for your faith in dance ... and music ... and theatre, and faith.  
And you will live forever in me.  
I will always be the half I was of us, and keep the faith in the half you are.  
You made the world a better place through your twenty-seven years of goodness.  
And never deserved to die the way you did.

And you gave so much to *me*. More than anybody else.  
And that means the world to me. Thank you.  
Thank you for giving me the power to love dance.  
And music. And theatre.  
And you.  
Thank you for giving me the power to rejoice in life and beauty.  
Thank you for giving me a sense of worth.  
You are so beautiful. Thank you.  
Thank you for giving me the power to love.  
Thank you for permitting me to love you....  
We are bound together in so many ways I'll never manage to describe.

Leif Christian Andersen, in our thoughts and in our hearts you will never be gone.  
You will live until you live again, in our breath each morning, noon, and night.  
You will never be forgotten.  
You lived so that others could live better.  
And that is one of the hallmarks of greatness.  
One of the hallmarks of *your greatness*.  
You filled the earth around you with your joy and your goodness, with your  
energy and your enthusiasm, with your radiating magic, with your peace and your  
grace, with your art and your songs.

## ANNETTE

I promise you, Leif Christian Andersen, that I will do all in my power to support and further the work you've started.  
And I promise you, like you told me so often, to take care of the nobility in myself.

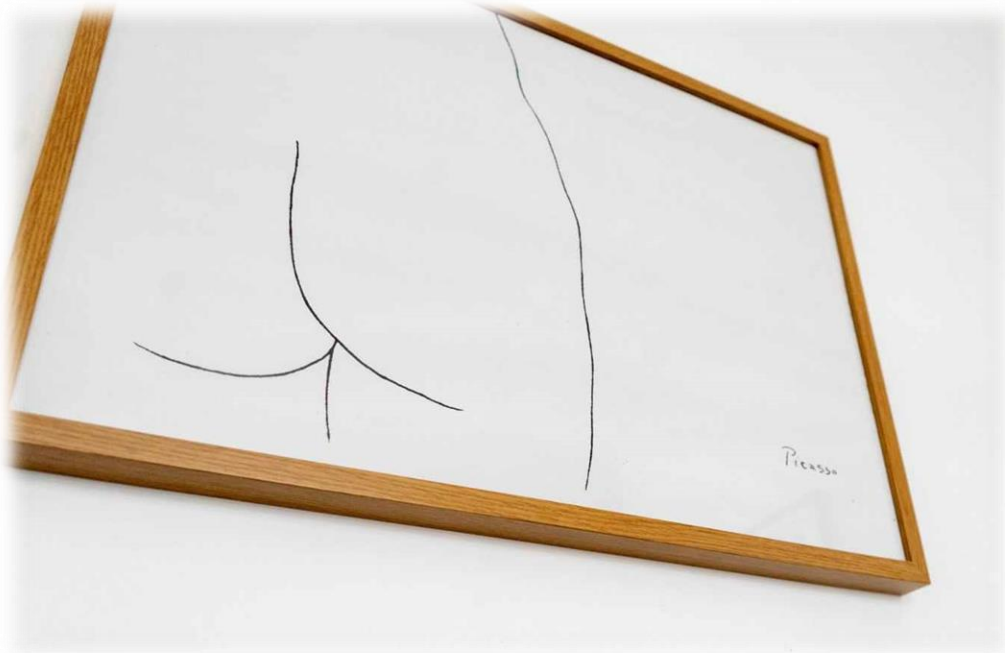
A friend once told us about his wife.  
Do you remember?  
He never thought she'd come back after she died.  
Or if she did, he pictured her as a lady in a long white dress.  
Not someone else's Golden.  
Yet, that's how he was convinced he found her.  
He'd meet the man walking her, say good morning, and stoop down to calm her.  
Sometimes tethered on the lawn, he'd sit and talk with her for hours.  
Her head in his lap, watching each other's eyes as he whispered in her ears.  
Small things, he said, about friends, which made her happy, the way it always did.  
He showed her to us.  
Do you remember?  
No, I suppose you don't.  
It doesn't matter.  
We knew better.  
Souls of humans don't migrate to dogs' bodies.  
We both knew that, but we didn't say it to him.  
He was so lonely; and she made him so happy.  
He needed to believe it.  
It was the only loving thing we could do ... to keep our peace.  
Anyway, you said to me, maybe souls can touch a dog's mind. Sometimes.  
Who knows?...

[beat] Talk to me, Leif. Touch my mind. I miss you so much.  
This body, that body, my body, your body, we are life without boundaries.  
Together.  
I need you. To help shoulder the pain.

This is my last letter to you.  
Is this the way it's going to be the rest of my life, until we meet again?  
We breathe together. Hearts beat together. I talk to you. And you listen. Silently.

**A shadow crosses the moon. It is not  
important whether ANNETTE takes  
notice of it or not.**

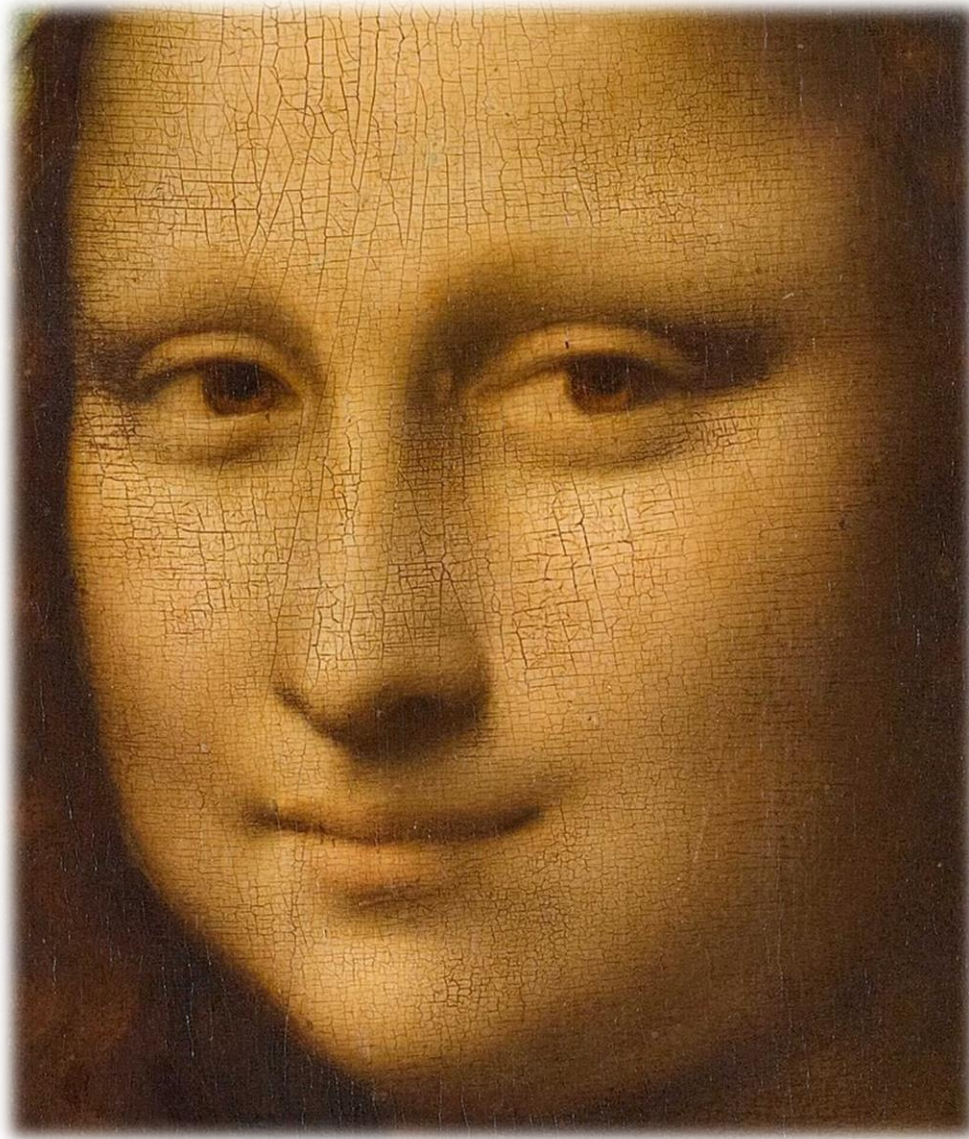
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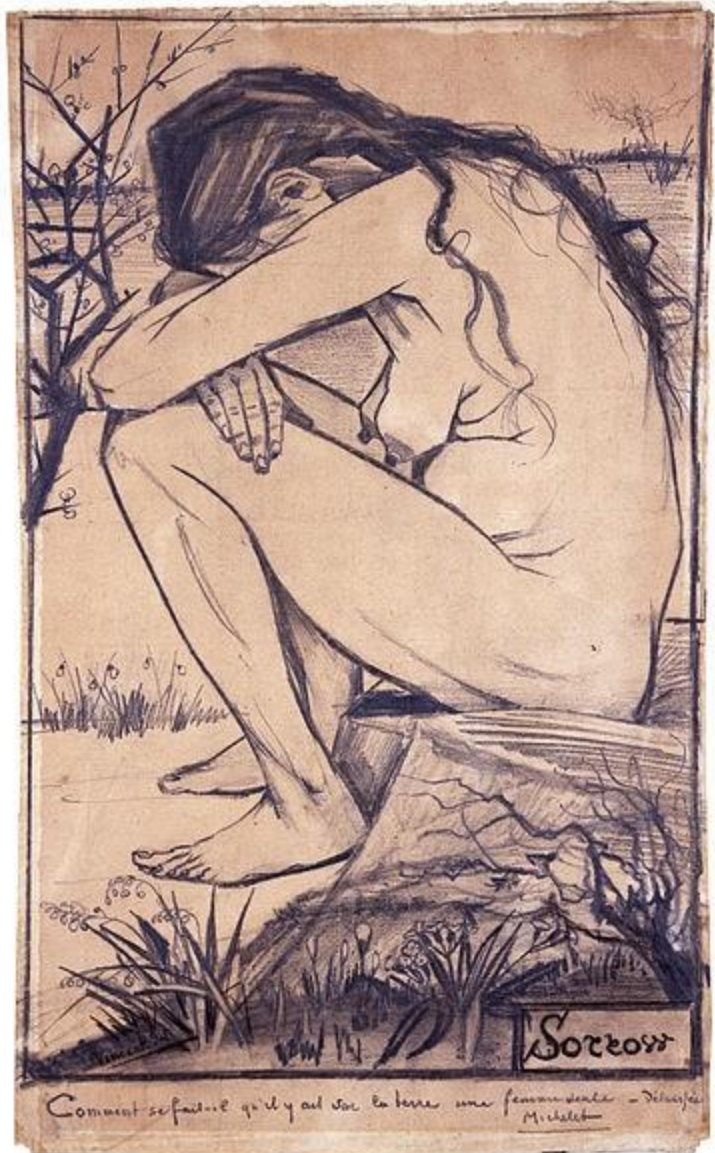
<https://encyclopedia.design/2020/09/30/works-by-pablo-picasso-marcel-duchamp-and-others-are-now-in-the-public-domain/>



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NOWHERE (2009)

<https://vimeo.com/241722334>