



# SMILE, SMILE AGAIN

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY JUSTIN LOCKLEAR

Ochre House  
T H E A T E R

APRIL 29 - MAY 20, 2017 /// WEDNESDAY - SATURDAY @ 8:15PM  
825 EXPOSITION AVE. DALLAS, TX 75226 /// (214) 826-6273 /// \$17  
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SMILE, SMILE AGAIN

by Justin Locklear

*THE STAGE IS THE ROLLING, EARTHEN BARRICADE OF A WORLD WAR ONE TRENCH, STEEP, AND LITTERED, BUT SOME TIME AFTER CONFLICT, AS GRASS HAS GROWN BACK IN PLACES. THE SKY IS GRAY, AND THERE IS A SLOW BREEZE. THERE ARE BITS OF WOOD AND BROKEN RIFLE STOCKS STUCK IN THE EARTH LIKE BLOATED, MISSHAPEN SAPLINGS. TIME HAS ABANDONED THIS PLACE, AND IT SEEMS AS THOUGH CIVILIZATION, TOO, HAS FLED. THE GRASS HAS A MOISTURE, BOTH IN LOOK AND FEEL, AND THE PLACE SMELLS OF EARTH.*

*TO THE SIDE OF THE MAIN SPACE, WE SEE A CHAIN-LINK FENCE, FROM FLOOR TO CEILING. THE FENCE HAS WEEDS GROWING ALONG ITS BASE. THE WEEDS OUGHT TO BE WEEDS IN SILHOUETTE, BUT NOT IN MATERIAL OR MIMICRY.*

*CENTER, WE SEE A MESS OF GARDENING EQUIPMENT, AS WOULD COVER PLANTS FOR A FREEZE. UPSTAGE OF THE TRENCH, WE SEE THE HEAD OF A SHOVEL, MOVING STAGE RIGHT TO LEFT, AND RIGHT AGAIN. IT TAKES ON A PERSONALITY OF ITS OWN, AS THOUGH IT IS SCANNING THE HORIZON LIKE THE PERISCOPE OF A SUBMARINE. IT DISAPPEARS, AND WE HEAR DIGGING. FIRST, PROBING AND TENTATIVE, THEN DEEP AND VIGOROUS.*

*A LONG SILENCE.*

*MORE DIGGING, AND A WHILST-WORKING WHISTLING. CHEERFUL. IT STOPS ABRUPTLY, AND A SHORT SILENCE.*

*THE HEAD OF THE SHOVEL REAPPEARS OVER THE BARRICADE, GLANCING LEFT AND RIGHT. IT DISAPPEARS ONCE MORE. THE HEAD AND, MOST-IMPORTANTLY, THE FACE OF A MADMAN POPS UP OVER THE CREST OF THE TRENCH. HE SCANS THE HORIZON FOR IRREGULARITIES. HE NOTICES ONE. HE PRODUCES A NOTEBOOK AND MAKES AN ENTRY. HE ERASES IT. HE DECIDES TO WRITE IT AGAIN, BUT GETS IMPATIENT. HE REPLACES THE NOTEBOOK AND HEAVES HIMSELF OVER THE TRENCH. HE SLIDES DOWN THE GRASS AND STANDS. HE IS AN ODD SORT OF GARDENER FROM THE WAIST DOWN, WITH RUBBER BOOTS, KNEE PADS, A SMALL TOOL APRON. FROM THE WAIST UP, HE IS A RAGGED MILITARY MAN WITH WATCHES FOR RIBBONS, ADORNED HEAVILY AND SPECTACULARLY, ALTHOUGH SOMEWHAT HOMEMADE. HIS SHIRT IS CLEARLY A GIRL'S DRESS, ALTERED TO SUIT HIMSELF.*

*THE MADMAN THINK FOR A MOMENT, AND THEN COUNTS ON HIS FINGERS.*

MADMAN

No. It's more than that. Is it? I have two fingers? Where are the rest? Here they are. What fun! I have better luck now, fingers suit me for better work. A taxi man can have one hand. Where is it? Ah! It was trying to escape, but mine is a library book library. I keep all of it! If I were a plant, and not a man, a flower, a bush, or a pump-i-kan, I wouldn't know where my neck began, A taxi man can have one hand.

Is it awake? I would prefer it awake, but I myself, I am burdened with toil. Toil, T'oil, The oil of machinery, of crunchy, wet machinery, chewing at the scenery, but only with my hands. Two fingers? I should have more. I have! What fun! Oh, earth. bed. bed. Sleep before toil, the scenery is a bed. The greenery is apéd, the greenery is littered with apes. Apéd. Past tense, being littered with apes. Past tense. I slept in a pup, it was a past tent. I slept in the past, but not as these apes are sleeping now. They sleep with a vengeance. Man apes. Proving it to themselves, even. *I am asleep!* again... they cannot hear me. My voice. My shovel, my boot, they will not hear me. Without flinching. I move them. They will not wake. I roll them to suit. They will not hear me.

But the sleep is quiet. Not like me. Not like mine. Oh my nose. I should sleep again in a tent, as I did in the past tense tents. But all the trees have spoken. I cannot sleep. A tent would be good. I must make a note. Again. But I will make a note. I will. I will do it now. But they won't hear me! *I am asleep!* They will not respond to me. They want to prove to me how quiet I am. But I am a remarkable, loud man. My shovel is hardly and will not be silenced. Schup... Schuff, Schup... Schuff. My boot is also loud, like shovels, and me, I am very loud, it is also loud and can change anything for the flatter. A flatterer. A bit flatter here, a bit flatter there. Only two? I should have more. I have! What fun!

*SILENCE.*

I must work. It's only a few before the sun. Before that, and run before the sun is done. Done set is sooner than the work. There should be work. I should work.

I eat after work. I should work and then I will eat. I eat before work, so the animal sleeps. I eat after work, so the animal slumbers. It's all after work, again. Like before. It would seem, again. Eating. But it is all again, again. The work, the sun, the animal.

*ANIMAL SHAPE.*

The smell is gone. Comforting, that. The bugs are gone, the smell carried off as luggage. Odorous luggage. O, their faces more like faces again. Thin, mouth open, thin, eyes gone. But faces. Painted, shadowed by the sun. Bugs gone. Voices gone. Quiet again. Noise, then, and the quiet again, again. The chorus, the quorum, a screaming, the protestation, the arguments. I watched. Taking down the finer..

*SILENCE.*

Digging. Digging for dinner. But it could be warmer. Hard to say.

And here. The garden. Ha! Again. What fun! Inasmuch - again. Okay. To work.

*MADMAN BEGINS COLLECTING THE GARDENING EQUIPMENT, REVEALING A SLEEPING SOLDIER, IN BATTLE DRESS, STRAPPED TO AN ENORMOUS BACKPACK. THE SOLDIERS FEET AND LEGS ARE STUCK IN THE EARTH. THE SOLDIER IS WRECKED BY THE ELEMENTS, BUT ALIVE. THERE IS A RAG AROUND THE NECK, WHICH THE MADMAN RETRIEVES AND SOAKS IN WATER. HE PLACES IT BACK ON THE NECK OF THE SOLDIER. THE SOLDIER STIRS AND WAKES. THE MADMAN GATHERS PLANTS OUT OF HIS POCKET AND BEGINS PLANTING THEM.*

MADMAN

It's me.

SOLDIER

What?

MADMAN

It's me.

SOLDIER

Oh.

MADMAN

It's always me.

SOLDIER

Oh.

MADMAN

I'm going to try things the same again.

SOLDIER

Okay.

MADMAN

I found another watch. It's this one.

SOLDIER

Is it?

MADMAN

It may be. Yes, I'm sure of it.

SOLDIER

It looks new.

MADMAN

Quite old, I believe.

SOLDIER

To me.

MADMAN

Must be the one then.

SOLDIER

Could be. I wouldn't know for certain.

MADMAN

Again.

SOLDIER

I suppose.

MADMAN

Like before, like always.

SOLDIER

Not always. Sometimes I know.

MADMAN

Could know.

SOLDIER

Have they come for me?

MADMAN

Ha! Who?

SOLDIER

My men. They should have come for me.

MADMAN

Today?

SOLDIER

Could have.

MADMAN

Why today, again?

SOLDIER

Could have, it's not -

MADMAN

Who, again?

SOLDIER

Battalion. My soldiers.

MADMAN

Named? So that I will know them. As Parenthecus, before us, raised soldiers from the earth, and named each one. There are soldiers looking for you? And where is their namer? How will they be named?

SOLDIER

I told you.

MADMAN

Like before.

SOLDIER

I don't remember.

MADMAN

Like before.

SOLDIER

Not like before, I knew before.

MADMAN

A new before, again! Not like before.

SOLDIER

Before, again. Then, it wasn't before.

MADMAN

It's a mystery, I will allow it. But first, to water you.

SOLDIER

Like always.

MADMAN

No change. I shall raise you up!

SOLDIER

[pained] Like always.

MADMAN

But I can listen.

SOLDIER

For what?

MADMAN

For an argument...

SOLDIER

I haven't the time.

MADMAN

I can provide. What is the argument?

SOLDIER

You cannot raise me up. Not like this.

MADMAN

Excellent! I am free to respond!

SOLDIER

Like always.



MADMAN

With feeding, with watering, the plants all raise up.

SOLDIER

Again.

MADMAN

It is the same as plants?

SOLDIER

Not the same.

MADMAN

Is it the same, water and feeding raises up the plants?

SOLDIER

That is the same-

MADMAN

And there it is-

SOLDIER

but not the same as-

MADMAN

It IS the same-

SOLDIER

I am not a plant.

MADMAN

Like always.

SOLDIER

I *was* not.

MADMAN

A plant since before?

SOLDIER

Well, now, I am, but-

MADMAN

Well, now, you are.

SOLDIER

But past tense, planted. I am affixed.

MADMAN

As you said before, again, you are a planted. I have planted you. And I will fix you.

*PAUSE.*

MADMAN

You are a plant, and I will feed you. A feeding fixture. A needed mixture, and I am willing.

SOLDIER

And if I were not?

MADMAN

Remarkable! When was the difference?

SOLDIER

Like always.

MADMAN

From when?

SOLDIER

Never, again, like always.

MADMAN

Remarkable. I will re-mark. I will make a note.

*THE MADMAN MAKES A NOTE IN HIS NOTEBOOK.*

SOLDIER

I understand.

MADMAN

You are a remarkable - shall I say it?

SOLDIER

As always.

MADMAN

Will you protest?

SOLDIER

Again.

MADMAN

You are a remarkable plant.

SOLDIER

Come, let me free! You can raise me up, I can show you! Dig me up! I will show you!

MADMAN

As always.

SOLDIER

I CAN SHOW YOU! DIG UP MY FEET!

MADMAN

Come now... but where are they?

SOLDIER

Here!

MADMAN

You haven't seen them!

SOLDIER

I have!

MADMAN

I haven't seen them, and I planted you! Or I haven't, but I am your minder, my spartoi.

SOLDIER

I saw them before, again, and I feel them!

MADMAN

Not with your eyes.

SOLDIER

With my eyes! And I can feel them.

MADMAN

You cannot.

SOLDIER

One feels an itch, a twitch, as dust hits an eyelash. I feel them. Rotting in the dirt, I can taste the dirt. Please, dig me?

MADMAN

The tenderness, it will pass, I'm unsure. Dirt in the mouth, it will pass. A dirty mouth should pass.

SOLDIER

But I feel them, and the digging would not be long, as yet it is too long for my hands. Burnt and broken by my fall, my flying and my fall. I would be free. I could have, apart from the digging, will you dig me? Dig me up?

MADMAN

I could dig you up. But I would never hurt you.

SOLDIER

It wouldn't hurt, I can show you!

MADMAN

I would never hurt you, again.

SOLDIER

You are hurting me now!

MADMAN

Like always.

SOLDIER

Are you not hurting me?

MADMAN

When I care for you? Am I not?

SOLDIER

When you care for me, you neglect me!

MADMAN

I wish a mirror to show you your words!

SOLDIER

I wish it dearer to know what's occurred...

MADMAN

When I feed you?

SOLDIER

This serves you.

MADMAN

But I wasn't hungry!

SOLDIER

Pass.

MADMAN

But I will not be hungry.

SOLDIER

Pass.

MADMAN

But I feed you as a necessary, on a schedule.

SOLDIER

Pass.

MADMAN

I take notes, I take down the schedule, and I feed you. I water.  
I shade you. You will grow! My spartoi.

SOLDIER

Pass.

MADMAN

I shall. I shall pass, again, like always, and we shall begin,  
again, like always, when the sun is done, when the heat is done,  
again.

SOLDIER

And I expect you will feed me then, again.

MADMAN

It is in my notes to do this. To try this. I am a gardener.

SOLDIER

You are not.

MADMAN

There's a remarkable plant. Challenging it's minder. All of nature envies your resistance. You are remarkable. I will remark this, making a note, again. Challenging. Angry.

*MADMAN MAKES A NOTE.*

SOLDIER

That is not the whole of it, and you would be the same!

MADMAN

At your becks, is this the case?

SOLDIER

Would you not?

MADMAN

I couldn't say, not being a plant. I am a man.

SOLDIER

A gardener *and* a man?

MADMAN

And a stargazer, and a thief. Men are among the only that may be severally occupied.

SOLDIER

As am I!

MADMAN

A plant, but a remarkable plant!

SOLDIER

But as you say, capable of being occupied.

MADMAN

As a country, yes, as this country. As a fixture of the earth.  
This dirt. Capable of occupation.

SOLDIER

You're speaking around me.

MADMAN

Around and about you. I am fully at your becks, again, as  
always.

SOLDIER

At me, but not my answer.

MADMAN

In my youth, I was a dancer.

*LONG PAUSE.*

MADMAN

I should work. As before. But before I work, I should water you.

SOLDIER

As always.



MADMAN

And would you prefer the water?

SOLDIER

As always.

MADMAN

Even though it's a bit strange.

SOLDIER

I never said that.

MADMAN

But a plant itself asking for water...

SOLDIER

Might tip you off, if tipping were taken.

MADMAN

It isn't the traditional method.

SOLDIER

Says he, watering a soldier.

MADMAN

But I'm learning, my spartoi, to tend, tending. The dragon's teeth, the right amount of shade, the watering and feeding.

SOLDIER

And then digging me out.

MADMAN

But if that weren't the case.

SOLDIER

Apparently.

MADMAN

If it weren't the right procedure, and when?

SOLDIER

Again.

MADMAN

I wouldn't want to hurt you.

SOLDIER

Around me, in circles.

MADMAN

If digging you out too soon were to hurt you.

SOLDIER

Pass.

MADMAN

I couldn't live with myself. I wouldn't.

SOLDIER

And wouldn't the sun shine bright.

MADMAN

The same as any day, and more likely, none there to see it.

SOLDIER

Except me, again.

MADMAN

But if I hurt you, you couldn't survive. How could you be cared for?

SOLDIER

I have my faculties, I'm only stuck.

MADMAN

As a plant, stuck is your home. There are no traveling plants. Nomadic plants. Beyond creeping vines, plants are found at a place.

SOLDIER

I should be as proud of my moving, healthy legs.

MADMAN

And I should be as proud of you for dreaming them. A remarkable plant, my spartoi, alive and dead, fixed yet free, a withered kind if not for me! I suppose you'd like some water.

SOLDIER

Yes.

MADMAN

Then water I shall provide.

SOLDIER

But it will not fill me.

MADMAN

Should it? I will not drown you! I will ask again, but after.

*THE MADMAN TAKES A WATERING CAN FROM IN THE EARTH, AND WATERS THE SOLDIER. THE SOLDIER GULPS, AND THE MADMAN STOPS SHORT. HE REPLACES IT IN THE HOLE.*

MADMAN

Should it fill you?

*THE MADMAN TAKES HIS SHOVEL AND HEADS OVER THE BARRICADE UPSTAGE. A LONG SILENCE. LIGHTS SLOWLY SHIFT DURING THE FOLLOWING.*

## SOLDIER

If it were smoke, and not a sound, again  
the remembering would be a choke.  
A cold cough from camp stoves and coalfire.  
A coat length away from blasting caps with no wires.

Blasted captains wiring home to no wives.  
Seated soldiers bleeding alone to no lives,  
If it were smoke and not a sight, again,  
The remembering would be a blinking,  
hot knives undoing steady hands,  
wrinkled fever-dreaming youths in foreign lands,

Over-there was never here, a location changing  
as the news, prepared for smeared, re-arranging  
faces in the few, the proud, the blind, the waging war,  
the staging for a larger house, the moving up, the ranks,  
the banks of rivers bulging, planting bombs and bulbs,  
in virgin earth. If only I could be interred.

If it were smoke and not a word, again,  
the remembering would be a blessing, blurred,  
a ghost, a spirit, at most, I'd hear it in the night,  
not dream it, right? But no, I dream it, a dream,  
it blots out the night sky, inside,  
the world behind my right eye, the left sees out.  
What's left eases doubt,  
down my neck like hearing my own name.

What is it? I know I would recognize it.  
Say it once, I will write it down in the dirt.  
And when the wind removes me, the name will go  
as it proves weak to the touch, a wreck of sighs,  
it stands above me, a standard, above me,  
in the wind, away it flies, my name, what is it?  
I watched it go. I remember that alone.

At a moment, I was strong and held a flame,  
in the next, I stepped in the dark and lost a name.

*THE SOLDIER PULLS HIS COLLAR TOGETHER, FEELING COLD. HIS  
CHAIN IS THE EARTH AT HIS FEET. LIGHTS SHIFT TO THE FENCE.  
A FIGURE DARTS FROM THE AUDIENCE TO TOWARDS THE FENCE. THEY  
CLIMB UP A SIMPLE LADDER TO A HOLE IN THE FENCE AND MAKE A  
HISS. A FIGURE EMERGES FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE,*

*WHO PRODUCES ANOTHER LADDER, AND A GUITAR. THEY COME TOGETHER AT THE HOLE IN THE FENCE AND PLAY EITHER SIDE OF THE GUITAR. THEY SING. AFTER THE SONG, THEY BRIEFLY COMFORT EACH OTHER, A SMALL CARESS TO THE CHEEK. THEY PART, AND TAKE THEIR LADDERS AWAY. THE LIGHTS SHIFT TO THE CENTER. THE SOLDIER SITS. THE MADMAN LAYS ON THE UPSTAGE SLOPE, STARING AT THE UPSTAGE HORIZON.*

MADMAN

They are waving flags!

SOLDIER

Are they?

MADMAN

You are not going to believe what flags they are waving!

SOLDIER

Oh?

MADMAN

Would you ask me what kinds?

SOLDIER

What kinds?

MADMAN

What fun! What fun, I said! Brown ones with a yellow field, and yellow ones with a blue field! White ones with an arrow! Green ones with a bird!

SOLDIER

An arrow?

MADMAN

Arrows and birds, and bears, bolts of lightning, words, words I can't read.

SOLDIER

What do they say?

MADMAN

I can't read them.

SOLDIER

What else?

MADMAN

What else, he asks, what else, I will look. I will look, and I will tell you. It's the least I can do. It's the most I will do, as well.

SOLDIER

As always.

MADMAN

But you won't believe me, when I tell you what I see!

SOLDIER

I will.

MADMAN

But how could you? It's so highly wild and unheard of, unlikely and exciting. It will surprise you! Are you prepared to believe?

SOLDIER

I am ready to believe.

MADMAN

But you haven't seen it!

SOLDIER

Seen what, again?

MADMAN

What I have seen! How could you believe it?

*PAUSE.*

MADMAN

It must be because I can see. And you have to trust me. You would be a fool not to trust me. Because I can see. I can see, and can I tell you? Obviously. Why wouldn't I? I would be a fool not to tell you. You need to know, and I am the one to tell you. I would be a fool. Wouldn't I? I have something you need. I can see.

SOLDIER

I can see.

MADMAN

You can see, as many can, it is true, but only I can see as only I can see. I have the abilities. I have the resources. The vantage point. You would be a fool not to believe what I tell you. How would you ever know? How would you know? How does a fool know? For example, did you know that there are men out there?

SOLDIER

Of course.

MADMAN

Oh, have I told you?

SOLDIER

You have. And I can understand, as I am here, that there are others.

MADMAN

But I have told you, again?

SOLDIER

Yes, as always, but I can understand that I am not alone-

MADMAN

But you are.

SOLDIER

I am alone here, again, but not with you, but before.

MADMAN

Before again!

SOLDIER

I know that I did not arrive here alone. I would not have arrived alone, before.

MADMAN

Because you saw that you were not alone?

SOLDIER

Because it would be un-understandable.

MADMAN

But you didn't see if you were alone before.

SOLDIER

But I am a soldier.

MADMAN

A could be. A soldier-plant.

SOLDIER

Planted, I am.

MADMAN

Could be, as before, my spartoi.



SOLDIER

But I know I am. I remember that I am.

MADMAN

But which soldier? Name, so that I will know?

SOLDIER

As before, it is asleep.

MADMAN

It is asleep. As before. I know it is asleep. I can see that it sleeps. It were better awake. I would prefer it awake. The longer it sleeps, the less I can see it.

SOLDIER

But I can remember it.

MADMAN

Not all of it, as always.

SOLDIER

Some new.

MADMAN

Some, again, fool, but not all of it, as always.

SOLDIER

Some new, some new in my dreams. It runs about as I dream. As I sleep, it awakes, and I see it, and when I awake, then it sleeps. It falls to sleep before we can speak. I can see it turning from me. It turns from me to go to sleep. I see it turn, and I call for it to stay. To stay awake. But it sleeps, and I stand above it, I stand, watching it sleep. Watching it sleep without waking. The longer it sleeps, the less I can wake it.

*PAUSE.*

MADMAN

You are mistaken, again, as always.

SOLDIER

Am I?

MADMAN

You cannot stand.

SOLDIER

I can.

MADMAN

You would need, if standing, legs to stand on.

SOLDIER

I have.

MADMAN

What fun.

SOLDIER

I have legs, and I know I have them.

MADMAN

But you would be a fool not to believe me, for what I can see, as I can see more than you, again. I would be a fool not to tell you, as I can see, what I can see, again, and I can see, as always, that you have not any legs at all. You are a plant, in the ground, and I am your gardener. Your dreams are not real dreams, they are planted in your head, the head of a plant. A head without a neck, as a plant. You grow from the ground. From roots, or from roots. Root-likes. They are not legs. You would be a fool not to believe me.

SOLDIER

I should be such a fool.

MADMAN

That is your dream, to be a fool. You dream half-dreams.

SOLDIER

I dream full dreams, but I cannot believe the half of them.

MADMAN

For why I say you are a fool not to believe me.

SOLDIER

But I would believe them. I cannot believe them because it would be too full. Too heavy.

MADMAN

Then let me believe them for you. And again, I will tell you your dreams back to you. For I can see, as no one can see, and I will look at your dreams and tell them to you so you can understand. I will tell you the most of it. So that you will not be hurt.

SOLDIER

But I must dream them.

MADMAN

But I am here to care for you.

SOLDIER

Pass.

MADMAN

Do I not care for you?

SOLDIER

I must dream them. If I cannot believe them full, I must dream them again until I can, again.

MADMAN

But if this hurts you, I am not a gardener.

SOLDIER

You are not a gardener.

MADMAN

But I am.

SOLDIER

And then I am not a plant.

MADMAN

You would be a fool not to believe me, as I can see you are a plant. I can see there are flags. And men. I can see you.

SOLDIER

Yes, you can see me, and the men. The men laying. As you told me. Thin faces, no eyes. Silence again.

*SILENCE.*

MADMAN

But they are not, all men, laying down.

SOLDIER

Again, as some are sitting, dead. Like me.

MADMAN

As a plant, they are not like you, they are men. But not, again, fool, not all sitting. Not all dead. There are some standing, walking. Amongst the dead. With flags. With legs. Standing and walking.

SOLDIER

Standing?

MADMAN

Standing and walking. I can see them.

SOLDIER

Where are they walking?

MADMAN

Around. Places. Away.

SOLDIER

But they are walking?

MADMAN

Walking, again, as before.

SOLDIER

As I walked, again, as before.

MADMAN

They walk on legs, you would be a fool not to believe me when I say they have legs.

SOLDIER

I believe they have legs.

MADMAN

And you believe me when I say that I see men standing and walking.

SOLDIER

As before.

*PAUSE*

MADMAN

Because I see men. And I tell you I see them walking.

SOLDIER

And I believe you.

MADMAN

Again, as before, why do you believe me?

SOLDIER

As I would be a fool not to.

MADMAN

So I am caring for you.

SOLDIER

If you see men, and you tell me, you are caring for me.

MADMAN

If I see men.

SOLDIER

Standing and walking.

MADMAN

Standing and walking.

SOLDIER

Do you not see men?

MADMAN

I see men.

SOLDIER

Standing and walking?

MADMAN

You would be a fool not to believe me.

SOLDIER

Do you see men standing and walking?

MADMAN

As before, again, I can see.

SOLDIER

As always.

*AN EAGLE SCREAMS OVERHEAD. A LONG PAUSE.*

MADMAN

I should feed you.

SOLDIER

If you must.

MADMAN

I have a note to feed you, and I haven't fed you. I will feed you.

SOLDIER

Would be soothing.

MADMAN

Besides, I do it as part of my plan, and I am glad, again, if not indifferent, to know that it benefits you. As I do it, not for myself, in self-service, mind you, or for you, in servitude, as a servant, as I am better than you.

SOLDIER

Better than me?

MADMAN

Ha! I am mistaken, there is no need for comparison. You and I are not the same. A diamond is better than a banana, but there is no need for a comparison. It would be a mistake to take a banana over a diamond. I digress.

SOLDIER

I would never eat a diamond.

MADMAN

I waste my phrase-turning. This is not, as though you had learning.

SOLDIER

It would be a mistake to eat a diamond over a banana.

MADMAN

As though you would understand the analogy. Before, as always.

SOLDIER

But you will feed me?

MADMAN

The asking makes me obliged... I will wait.

*PAUSE.*

I am waiting. I seek a separate inspiration. Before, as again, it was the eagle screaming overhead. A punctuation. A difference. A screaming. Also, I need a stone.

SOLDIER

You don't need a stone.

MADMAN

I shouldn't unsettle you.



SOLDIER

I am not a plant! I am unsettled, as always! I am a soldier.

MADMAN

What fun!

*THE MADMAN THROWS HIMSELF OVER THE UPSTAGE BARRICADE AND BEGINS DIGGING. THE SOLDIER STRUGGLES TO FREE HIS LEGS. NO PROGRESS. THE MADMAN STOPS DIGGING AND WATCHES THE SOLDIER STRUGGLE. AN UNFORESEEN CAUTION CREEPS OVER HIS FACE. HE RETURNS TO DIGGING. THE SOLDIER AGAIN THINKS TO FREE HIS LEGS, BUT HE HESITATES.*

SOLDIER

Men walking, again. Standing and walking.  
Could they be talking towards coming for me,  
Would they be talking, even be trying,  
Through the fields of the dying,  
to discover me. To recover things left,  
lost to the battle, amongst the death rattle-ing  
chorus of saints, if heroes could gather  
me, send a boat after me,  
down the river, I'd row without water,  
a foe with out father, out feeling, out fear,  
Men seen walking, stepping and walking,  
could they be enemies, coming for me?  
Am I the last, beyond the edge of a boom,  
a blast, beyond the doors of a room,  
could my ears ringing be men,  
calling for me? calling "amen!"  
Calling "we've killed them, again,  
each one, done is our work, except for the last,  
beyond the edge of the blast,  
the one we can't see, or care to,  
he's free by omission, if he dares to  
reveal his position, we end him!"  
Am I safer here? Will I come to savor 'here?'  
My savior here, but they come to sever 'here' from 'here?'  
Obsessed, again, Several 'heres' for a man,  
a plant that no one hears, affixed without a plan.

*THE MADMAN LETS OUT A "HA!" AS HE DISCOVERS A STONE. HE RAISES IT UP OVER THE BARRICADE TO REVEAL IT. THE STONE IS LARGE, JUST SMALL ENOUGH TO CARRY WITH ONE HAND. HE MAKES HIS WAY BACK OVER THE BARRICADE.*

*A PAUSE.*

SOLDIER

Have you found inspiration?

MADMAN

Found.

SOLDIER

Did you find inspiration for feeding me?

MADMAN

Do you want to be fed?

SOLDIER

Yes.

MADMAN

I cannot make you.

*PAUSE.*

MADMAN

I cannot feed you if you do not want to be fed. I will not feed you if you will not be fed. I am a gardener, and I will feed you, but if the plant dies, the food is redundant, the feeding is the same, the gardener is the same. Will you be fed?

SOLDIER

I will be fed, again.

MADMAN

I am not making any attempts to change you. I watch you grow, my spartoi, my sapling. But you grow to defy me, it seems, again, you grow to indifference, a defense, again, from being brought up.

SOLDIER

Pass.

MADMAN

How did you know to push away from the earth?

SOLDIER

How?

MADMAN

How did you know to push your hands against the earth, to pull, or push, to thwart the roots, your roots. A fooling thing to think, to push against the earth.

SOLDIER

What?

MADMAN

As I dug, I jumped away, I was digging, again, and I heard you, I looked and saw you, before. You were pushing against the earth, again. There was a strength in you. It looked like there was a strength in you. You pushed against the earth, but you didn't move. If you need to know, as some do, not usually plants, but you did not move at all. Not at all, you see. You are rooted, by roots. You cannot move.

SOLDIER

I did move.

MADMAN

I saw you, I did not see you move. If you were a man, as I am, you would be a fool not to believe me.

SOLDIER

I suppose I am, again.

MADMAN

As before, you believed you moved.

SOLDIER

I could believe it. I can, again.

MADMAN

I am doing my best, again, but it seems like I hurt you.

SOLDIER

I, too, am tooing, again, but it dreams like it were true.

*PAUSE.*

MADMAN

I should feed you. You seem awful, and hungry, as before, your stomach ought be full, not hungry, I should feed you.

*MADMAN MOVES TO THE SOLDIERS PACK, AND OPENS A COMPARTMENT. THE COMPARTMENT CONTAINS A MEAL, PLATED AND READY. IT IS MINUSCULE IN PROPORTION. THE MADMAN TAKES THIS MEAL OUT OF REACH OF THE SOLDIER, AND THEN REPLACES THE OPENING OF THE COMPARTMENT WITH A STONE. A PAUSE. THE MADMAN MAKES A NOTE IN HIS NOTEBOOK. HE SERVES THE SOLDIER.*

MADMAN

I am sure this comes as no surprise, again, but you are eating because I am here to feed you.

SOLDIER

You will be doing everything the same, again.

MADMAN

It is important to note this. I am kind, I would regret not finding you, not feeding you, not being here to bring you up. For building up, for waking up the library without losing.

SOLDIER

Am I slow to waking?

MADMAN

Could be, a foolish plant.

SOLDIER

As a plant, do I wake?

MADMAN

You have hit on it, a plant, you open, to the sun, as the hours begun.

SOLDIER

I open, a flower to the sun.

MADMAN

But I open you. I garden you-

SOLDIER

No, stay for a moment, for a moment, that was soothing. I am a flower to the sun.

*THE SOLDIER ENJOYS A SINGULAR MOMENT OF HOPE.*

MADMAN

Yes, you see, a flower, as a plant.

SOLDIER

Without you, I am soothed by the picture. A flower to the sun. I like it.

MADMAN

The plant sees it's reflection, soothing, since, the plant doesn't know where it's neck begins.

SOLDIER

I can feel it. Could be here, I can't see it, again, as always, that is clear! I will not be removed from that feeling. The knowing.

MADMAN

Perhaps this is part of the growing. Again, to feel as though, as a plant, to know as a man. It could be this. But I can see. I can see you, and I can see the men in the distance, and the distance where things can no longer be seen. As I am not a plant, I can know where my neck begins. It is here. Or perhaps here. This is the freedom I have, to know, and to question.

SOLDIER

And I, do I not also know and question?

*FAR OFF, A HELICOPTER CAN BE HEARD. IT GROWS IN INTENSITY AS IT SEEMS TO BE HEADING TOWARDS THEM. THE MADMAN QUICKLY COVERS THE SOLDIER WITH THE GARDENING TOOLS AND HIS OWN COAT. THE HELICOPTER NOISE CONSUMES THEM, THE LIGHTS DIP AND RETURN, AND A WIND WHIPS THROUGH THE TRENCH. THE HELICOPTER NOISE IS TORRENTIAL, SHAKING THE AUDIENCE. THE MADMAN WATCHES THE HELICOPTER, AND THE SOLDIER STRUGGLES TO BE DISCOVERED. THE HELICOPTER MOVES ON, AND SLOWLY DIES AWAY. IT STILL CAN BE HEARD THROUGH SOME OF THE FOLLOWING.*

MADMAN

Are the gods awake? These odds I'll take! Ticking? From cloud to clouds abounding, up and outing, out singing a frog song to rumble apart the mountains, fire blazing clouds of whispers, painting the sky once again, in new colors, unnamed, un-aimed arrows, straight into the sun, again. Were the gods wrong? Were the stories told too long? A tale can last immortal, books growing not any longer than a nest can grow a songbird, long-stirred pots can lose it's mixture. Yum to dumb. The rest is not the knowing, but the learned rivers growing. Grow ink from the page and paint the skulls black.

Perenthecus slew a dragon, or beast. A dragon at least, and the teeth he took, and in the book he placed them, sowed them to the fields, and raised them. Dragon men, and soldiers, scales and arms and shoulders, should-ers. ShouLd the words stay the same? Perenthecus slew a dragon, and from the teeth, he grew soldiers. Planted teeth to soldiers. What fun! Could and what shoulders are growing here? Are they not different? Throwing headless, faceless things to a pit of any nightmare, again, would spit back with this ferocity? Fair old cities, bound down by mountains, taken for granite, oh holy rocks, will you be awake?

Is this different than an ancient mistake? The tears that rattle in these eyes if I am around and about myself. Up and out myself and downing fears, a screaming whistle amidst a drowning, here's the man that believes. A gardener, patient to his crop, c-rop, co-rrupted plant, but a plant from a tooth, and I, a man with truth. I will stand, stand a mile, and smile with every truth in my head, a truth-less grin forms on the dead. But alive, I stand and strive for the gods, again.

*THE MADMAN SLOWLY REMOVES HIS COAT FROM THE SOLDIER, AND THE GARDENING TOOLS. THEY SHARE A STUNNED SILENCE. THE SOLDIER TAKES A CIGARETTE OUT OF HIS BREAST POCKET. HE PLACES IT IN HIS MOUTH, AND LAZILY SEARCHES FOR A MATCH. THE MADMAN SLOWLY SEES THIS. HE WALKS OVER AND REMOVES IT, THROWING IT OVER THE BARRICADE.*

SOLDIER

Did you see!? I said, as before, I am a soldier! My men are looking for me!

MADMAN

Again.

SOLDIER

Looking for me!

MADMAN

Could be.

SOLDIER

As always!

MADMAN

Not as always, they could be about you, against you.

SOLDIER

Against me?

MADMAN

As you push against the earth, they would push against you. Flatten you. To prune too soon, the blossom, to toss some sundry weaponized push against the prize, the prey. To hurt.

SOLDIER

Could have.

MADMAN

And so, your thanks?

SOLDIER

Again, you did not see.

MADMAN

Only simple, as before. Could be simple, as before. Only simple, only small, one and one for two is all.

SOLDIER

And what is it? What have you done? Nothing simple, wasn't small! I could be above and about, running and, not running, but sitting, or not sitting, but flying!

MADMAN

While I know this, you have yet been dying, and with plants, the feeding and water, the shade, it makes you stand, and standing, in the ground, a plant will feel the running, the sitting, the flying, the changes, the challenge, the fullness, I am here to bring you up, and in doing so, you can be here and know it, as it is revealed to you.



SOLDIER

You are raising up another, again. Another, other than I, again.

MADMAN

Then to whom am I speaking? O, my plant, my spartoi, my budding one, I am here at your need, I am powerless to your flowerless roots, I lower myself, if not in stature, in my spirit, to serve you. Do you feel being served? I would, for certain, if I were a plant.

SOLDIER

Ah, knowing how plants ought to feel, again?

MADMAN

Life! I know how life ought to feel, again. I have seen life, and I, again, understand it. And what I do not understand, again, ought not be understood. So I stand in the place that I ought, helping those that have need. Helping myself when I have need, as always.

SOLDIER

Ah! There it is!

MADMAN

Wait, stay, where, what?

SOLDIER

Helping yourself. As always.

MADMAN

Do you, play? Are you jumping around the words?

SOLDIER

Is that something a plant can do? Jump?

MADMAN

The resistance, the fun, the play.

SOLDIER

The word wings means different to different birds.

MADMAN

And this is what I have done! Raising you up, the trunk, the foal, the spirit!

SOLDIER

The spirit that has and can, again!

MADMAN

And for this, and only for the transaction, I long to hear it once, a thanks.

SOLDIER

And this would mean it?

MADMAN

All of it.

SOLDIER

And you would believe it.

MADMAN

As before.

SOLDIER

If I mean it?

MADMAN

If or if not, a word is a thing. I will count it, and count on it. I will count them as part of the lot of it.

SOLDIER

So simple.

MADMAN

I am simple. So...

A PAUSE.

SOLDIER

Thank you.

MADMAN

What fun. As a gardener, I- we haven't always this gratitude, I'm glad it's you that thanks me, a plant in the ground that thanks me.

SOLDIER

Oh.

MADMAN

As Parenthecus stood, alone, and then not. Standing and looking to the fields. No one thanked, or could thank. What fun is there in you thanking. That I am able to be thanked! I am off then. Always off. And on, but now I'm off, to things about, to ring aloud the library. Watch me as I leave!

*THE MADMAN MAKES A LITTLE DANCE. CONSIDERS IT, AND DANCES AGAIN, BUT SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT. PLEASED, HE THROWS HIMSELF OVER THE BARRICADE. THE SOLDIER SLOWLY SLUMPS ASLEEP. A FIGURE DARTS FROM THE AUDIENCE TO TOWARDS THE FENCE. THEY CLIMB UP A SIMPLE LADDER TO A HOLE IN THE FENCE AND MAKE A HISS. A FIGURE EMERGES FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE, WHO PRODUCES ANOTHER LADDER, AND A GUITAR. THEY COME TOGETHER AT THE HOLE IN THE FENCE AND PLAY EITHER SIDE OF THE GUITAR. THEY SING. THEY CRY. THEY PART, AND TAKE THEIR LADDERS AWAY. ANOTHER SOLDIERS BODY APPEARS STAGE LEFT OF THE SOLDIER, HEAD FACING UPSTAGE. NO EVIDENCE OF BLOOD OR STAIN, THE BODY APPEARS TO BE ALIVE, BUT STILL.*

SOLDIER

A new kind of anger. From  
a new place, in the past. The last time I saw  
my pa, my ma, my rifle, my letters.  
The first mirror, the nearer I look at him, I fear it.  
did I know him?  
If I had legs, they would look like his legs.  
My feet, his feet. Socks, wraps, boots, and the legs.  
Did I know him before, again, a friend, the end  
of memory, before, again, as ends go, it was the worst kind.  
Refusing superlative, the first time, commemorative photograph,  
releasing control of a legacy, looking down  
to my leg and see the terminus, the germ is dust,  
the endless sand of understanding,

<i>la arena sin fin<sup>1</sup>,</i>	(La arAYna seen fEEn)
<i>me llamó desde lejos,</i>	(may yamOh dEzday LAYhoce)
<i>lejos de casa,</i>	(LAYhoce day cAsa)
<i>cualquier casa,</i>	(kwal-key-Aihr casa)
<i>donde mis padres,</i>	(dOhn-day mees pAh-drace)
<i>esperando,</i>	(es-pear-rAHndo)
<i>respirando,</i>	(res-pee-rAHndo)
<i>miran hacia el este,</i>	(mEE-rahN Acia el Estay)
<i>antes de que termine</i>	(AHn-tace day-kay tare-me-nAY)
<i>el sol, cualquier sol,</i>	(ell sole, kwal-key-Air sole)
<i>alcanzando sin brazos,</i>	(ahl-kahn-zAHNdo seen brAH-soce)
<i>susurrando,</i>	(sue-sue-rAHndo)
<i>"nuestro hijo perdido."</i>	(new-S-troe E-hoe pear-dee-doe)

But again, not a son, a picture belonging not to anyone.  
If I had his luck, unstuck from the ground,  
Able and free, in the air,  
til I'm drowned in time and soil,  
the sands of my toil, if I knew him  
should I shudder, should I gasp,  
vomit on myself and sob till I can't?  
Before, perhaps, I would have known how to act.

---

<sup>1</sup> the endless sand/  
calls me from afar,/  
far from home, any home/  
where my parents, waiting/  
breathing, look to the east/  
before the sun ends, any sun/  
reaching without arms/  
whispering, "our lost son."

*THE MADMAN PEERS OVER THE CREST OF THE BARRICADE. HE SEES THE DEAD SOLDIER. A LONG PAUSE.*

MADMAN

Well... fuck.

*THE MADMAN SLOWLY CRAWLS OVER THE BARRICADE AND MAKES HIS WAY TO THE DEAD SOLDIER. HE GOES STRAIGHT TO THE SOLDIERS WRIST WATCH, REMOVES AND POCKETS IT. HE DRAGS THE BODY UPSTAGE, OUT OF SIGHT. SOUNDS OF DIGGING AND A SERIES OF DEEP, AWFUL THUDS. BIRD SONG IN THE DISTANCE. THE MADMAN EMERGES AND EXAMINES THE WRIST WATCH. THE MADMAN WATERS THE SOLDIER. THE MADMAN POCKETS THE WATCH AND REGARDS THE SKY. HE TAKES OUT THE NOTEBOOK AND NOTES THE EVENTS. BIRD SONG. THE MADMAN BEGINS COVERING THE SOLDIER FOR THE NIGHT.*

SOLDIER

I knew him

MADMAN

Oh?

SOLDIER

I think I knew him.

MADMAN

What fun.

SOLDIER

I did. I think I did. I know I could have. He looked like me!

MADMAN

Sort of.

SOLDIER

The colors, the words.

MADMAN

I couldn't read them.

SOLDIER

He looked like I look.

MADMAN

But looking how?

SOLDIER

By the book, to the boots, legs like mine!

MADMAN

Again.

SOLDIER

Like my legs!

MADMAN

As before, again.

SOLDIER

He would be, like a plant, sunk like me, but he looked. He looked like me!

MADMAN

From your perspective, I understand perspective. He looked like you, had you legs, he looked like you, had you eyes. If you could see, as I could and can, you would have seen where his neck began.

SOLDIER

Here!

MADMAN

I don't want to be a bother, again. I could stop, but what would be the point? And where? Could I find it? Here or there? I should have more! I have! What fun!

SOLDIER

Pass!

MADMAN

Listen, if you could, as I can. I am not here, or could I be, to hurt you, you plants! I am here out of care, a perfect caring. If he looked like you, I would say so! I would be about it, and immediately. But he didn't, and I didn't have to. He had legs, which you saw, as you say, and I saw, as I can, but he, again, as you aren't, was a man!

SOLDIER

And then why was he dressed, and I dressed, each the same? What chances and tenses, over hills and since when is the same not regarded as truth!? What romance is invading the library clock? A name is not the same as a rock, both are held, only one stays put in the dark!

MADMAN

O, there are mysteries! O, so many, of men, and mustn't parade myself as a master, my plant. He must have been growing, from the earth, as you, but dug up too soon! Out, too soon. Legs from roots, or roots, too soon. Parenthecus stood, the dragon teeth were swift, scattered, swift, and soldiers grow faster in the full sun. Perhaps he was dug himself out but not done. Stubborn, Stub-born, born a stub of man, a stick, a vinéd pump-i-kan, crawling on the ground, always to be found, down, upon the floor, flora, a plant, as well, as you.

SOLDIER

Then, as a plant, were I ready, legged and ready, finally, would you dig me?

MADMAN

Pah!

SOLDIER

But perhaps you saw, that I were legged, if I could show you!? If I show you, would you dig?

MADMAN

Supposing I could?

SOLDIER

Could, and should, would you dig me?

MADMAN

Well, no, no I wouldn't. A meal, if one cannot finish it, there is no benefit.

SOLDIER

Then you couldn't!

MADMAN

Of course, again, I could dig you. I am a gardener!

SOLDIER

Pass.

MADMAN

But I could! I would dig and empty, brush the roots, and empty!

SOLDIER

But this is no good, again, as you could nearly, as nearly as you could see my legs!

MADMAN

What good would come from digging you, if death would come the same?

SOLDIER

Death would be welcomed.

MADMAN

Death?



SOLDIER

Death would be welcomed, an end is a place, as this is a place,  
and one would, death would be the better.

MADMAN

Ha! Death is a luxury, only fit for an ape, death, the coin-  
side, a flip in late quarters, a train-full of porters, lifting  
souls, packing down for the trip to the ground. As a hand-shake,  
two cars and the 'boose, a life is first needed, to be held and  
set loose.

SOLDIER

Stop.

MADMAN

I wouldn't say that death *could* come to you, or a full death, a  
real death, a real end. But you are not a real-life, a full  
life, like mine, a real start. Could seem like it, but there is  
a difference.

SOLDIER

And this body, it was real, it was full, and it's death, the  
same! My body the same! Where would there be a difference?

MADMAN

But this isn't real, you cannot see him! Where is he? I don't  
see him!

SOLDIER

And there it is.

MADMAN

I can walk to where you say he was. I can stand there. Where is  
he now?

SOLDIER

Where I cannot see, as before.

MADMAN

Then meets the end! You cannot see him, I cannot see him, and could we, I would say so.

SOLDIER

I think I knew him.

MADMAN

Could have, again.

SOLDIER

I know I think I knew him.

MADMAN

Too much of too little, I will pass along.

SOLDIER

Refrains of a song.

MADMAN

I shall return to feed you. I have a note to feed you, and I shall. To feed you. Though, I don't need to, if you are a man. If you are a man, you can dig yourself out and feed as you can. But sleep, my plant, you are yet too awake for me!

SOLDIER

I cannot sleep! I will be awake! I will expand! I will dig myself, a better plant!

MADMAN

And yet here comes a man!

SOLDIER

I am not the fool! I am not the fool! I will awake, and shake the earth!

MADMAN

Yet here comes a man, if not many, with flags, standing and walking!

SOLDIER

Then let them walk! Come legs! Come to see! Another man, keeping down, feet in ground, and here I am!!

MADMAN

But still, they are not like yours, their clothes, their show of colors, their robes, the same is said of helm and head, they are not alike to you!

SOLDIER

But the same, still, let them come! Here, a soldier! Here a son! I would call them my brothers, if they would come!!

MADMAN

But as they come, what blood! You have not seen it, but it is rust and awful, again, it's blood, and where it comes, death will fall in drips. In drops, and stops the heart. That's a man's as well, a heart life starts and ends the same!

SOLDIER

Yet come the same!

MADMAN

Aaugh!!

SOLDIER

And what, again?

MADMAN

The blood, they pull, from bodies strewn across the field, the men that sit with fat faces will grow thin in their hands. I do not know them, and you will not know them. Are they here to kill? To kill, to stop the blood. Taking it for their own! But here!

SOLDIER

What do you see!?

MADMAN

Each man on the ground, each one is flattened, they flatten, they stand and flatten! With boots, they walk, with flat steps!

SOLDIER

And are they coming?

MADMAN

Perhaps they will not? Perhaps they will stand and walk?

SOLDIER

Are they not always walking? Do they walk again?

MADMAN

And there you have it! They stand and walk, as before, as always! With blood, and boots, and looks for more, for waging war!

SOLDIER

Then escape! And dig me out, and go, and stand, and go with I, my legs will carry!

MADMAN

But it is too close! They will see you, and flatten you! Flatten me the flatter, the both of us, untimely done!

SOLDIER

Then it will come! Cover me, then, and give them a tail, a flash! if a gardener keeps the rabbits out, then cover me, and trail them out!

MADMAN

But they will see you, and know your shape! I will cover you, as you insist, again, as you say! But I will bind you down, to stay

and to keep you from a move, if swaying from sides, I will help you hide!

SOLDIER

But quick! But quick to me!

MADMAN

And here it is! They are upon us! And your mouth! The coughing would alarm them!

SOLDIER

Then do it! And return when you've led them away!

MADMAN

And here, to keep you hidden! And here, my coat as well! Being still!!

*THE MADMAN COVERS THE SOLDIER, INCLUDING A GAG AND POTATO SACK. HE QUICKLY TAKES OFF HIS SHOES AND MAKES THEM STOMP ALONG THE GROUND. HE THROWS THEM OVER THE BARRICADE. THE MADMAN SITS. HE BREATHES AND RELAXES AGAINST THE SLOPE OF THE EARTH. HE SMILES, EVEN LAUGHS TO HIMSELF. HE STUDIES HIS NOTEBOOK. THERE IS A BELL RINGING IN THE DISTANCE. THE MADMAN NOTICES THE BELL AND RUSHES OVER TO THE BARRICADE TO LOOK OUT. HE JUMPS OVER THE BARRICADE, AND THEN JUMPS BACK. HE RUSHES TO IN FRONT OF THE SOLDIER, ALMOST IN THE SAME POSE, AND ASSUMES A DESPERATE SHAPE. THE HEAD OF A CHARITY WORKER APPEARS OVER THE TOP OF THE BARRICADE. THE CHARITY WORKER SEES THE MADMAN, AND STAYS SILENT. UNSURE WHETHER OR NOT TO INTERVENE. THE MADMAN BEGINS TO SPEAK, PERFORMING FOR THE CHARITY WORKER.*

MADMAN

O poor, forgotten I!  
Left, chased by my death, I die!  
O pain, here or perhaps here,  
who is to really know?  
I am a survey of suffering,  
my immortal stars and sky,  
I reach to you for any word,  
or silence, perhaps, that too,  
I am a rough, unforméd mind

without capsule, my innocence  
spilling out, captured in my humble,  
horrible, horror bowl!  
O "o!" The letter that scores my suffering!  
The rounded, mourning dirge, reduced  
to a sound! O! It's enough? What was that ringing?  
Was it there? Is it gone? I fear my ears  
are telling stories, once again, did my heart  
patter for no matter? Is there someone here?

*THE CHARITY WORKER TAKES THE CUE TO ENTER OVER THE  
BARRICADE. SHE SETS UP A FILM CAMERA. A PERFORMANCE OF  
CARING AND SEEMING CONCERN. THE CHARITY WORKER WALKS OVER  
TO THE MADMAN AND PLACES A HAND ON HIS HEAD.*

WORKER

I am here! You are not mistaken! I was trying not to frighten!  
My bell is here! You heard it clear, and have no fear, I am  
again to help, as before!

*THE MADMAN FEIGNS GREAT WEAKNESS AND LOOKS UP, WITH A  
SEEMING BLINDNESS OF FATIGUE. HE MOVES TOWARDS HER AS  
THOUGH STARVED.*

MADMAN

Am I mad, once more? Seeing a beauty that I have yet to know? Is  
earth the source of such a thing? Or angels team to sing my  
dying dream!

*THE CHARITY WORKER WALKS BACK TOWARDS THE SOLDIER, BUT THE  
MADMAN RUSHES TO STAND BETWEEN THEM.*

WORKER

You are not mad, no reasons for alarm. I come to heal the harm  
of the world, if you ask it. I gave you a baskets of bread and  
fruit, a weeks ago, I came to you, and care bestowed, I'm sure  
it showed? Bread and fruit, does this ring?

MADMAN

No, there's not a time when you gave a thing!  
Bread? Fruit? These sound like stories  
from before, the fairy-tales, what for?!  
Perhaps you play with me, I am a sport,  
but rules, you keep from me, as I abhorred  
by you, my rags offend, I have no friends,  
and you walk to my home to nail shut my door!

WORKER

O poor... face, O poor... story, here, I walked one week ago,  
Loaded full of with food and cheer.

MADMAN

More lies, more eyes you make, you villain!

WORKER

Pouring out my patient carings, and the week before that, the  
weeks and now, months, I have come to serve, to care, to bear  
the burden for just a time, to twist the sour endings to a  
rhyme, and to give this heart, so please, use mine.

MADMAN

I have a heart, and while it beats too soft, I will be fine!

*SHE BEGINS TO LEAVE. HE FOLLOWS HER TO THE CAMERA.*

But not fine enough to be left! What apart from a heart can you  
give instead?

WORKER

But again, I have medicines and bread and since I have the  
health to walk a mile, I'll gladly guide you back to find rest  
and comfort at the home!

MADMAN

What home? No doubt, a house of death! What house?

WORKER

The hospice, where I lead many, backs to life, backs to health,  
and a solid confidence, a wealth of willingness, the others and  
I will lay hands and plans will spring to care for you in ways  
for days of better!

*THE SOLDIER BEGINS TO MAKE NOISES. THE MADMAN LEAPS TO SIT  
IN FRONT OF THE SOLDIER.*

MADMAN

Well, but ill, this gift is nill, I couldn't stand, I couldn't  
walk, there's pain enough to sit and talk! Even listening, owie!  
Now the words are bouncing of my softest, leaving burns, O  
words!

WORKER

Are they hurting?

MADMAN

Yes, as before!

WORKER

Oh no...

MADMAN

Then silence! Be about, but quiet!

WORKER

Shall I move away?

MADMAN

No, no, don't move! But move!

WORKER

Where, is this okay?



MADMAN

No! Why me!? Stand wherever there is room!

WORKER

I won't move, but carefully!

MADMAN

It seems you stand not to care for me!

WORKER

I will stand with your pain, and hunger by it.

*THE CHARITY WORKER PROVIDES FOOD.*

MADMAN

Again, my hunger and my pain, what can you help a man to stand?

WORKER

As before, to feed and to care, is all I walk for, to help those as you.

MADMAN

None such as me! Ah, so you see yourself as better, I see your hand!

WORKER

I am not better, again, and while I could be, look to my words!

MADMAN

If you could see them clearer, you would hear my shaking bones!

WORKER

Yet I am here alone, to lift the stone that sits across the gates of home!

MADMAN

Ha! You mock me, "home," ha, again! a word for the homéd, I praise you, charity, now I can see how I lack!

WORKER

Again, as before, I'm here for a task, a giving, please take, and food, for my own sake, please eat and have strength!

MADMAN

Where is it?

WORKER

Here at your feet.

MADMAN

Why!? Had I the feet of an ape, that were the rest! But I am a man, and hands are my tools, Why bring food and starve me? A fool you see, and poor, I see how you are better, again, as before!

WORKER

Forgives my foolishness, I am blundered, in course, If having chances were now, then how shall I help?

MADMAN

Well, for the first, forget this lie, I cannot feed for myself!

WORKER

It is forgotten, and gone, a borrowed wind-song, I will bring the bowl to your lips, and along with this, soul to honest soul, I shall be still.

MADMAN

And still, I shall be, and my back complete, the effort to feed will leave my bones weak. The silence that stones speak will louder become than blown, squealing horns of a storm!

*SLIGHT PAUSE. MADMAN ABOUT TO EAT.*

WORKER

And I -

MADMAN

But stillness you promised! Ack! You wave me promises and take them back!

WORKER

I didn't want -

MADMAN

Enough! Enough!

*THE MADMAN EATS. THE MADMAN MAKES A SICK FACE. THE SOLDIER MAKES A GROAN.*

MADMAN

The food is too rich! Or perhaps, it's too plain! What, have you poisoned me? Delight in my pain!? Owieeee!!!

WORKER

O my dear. My apologies. Let me take this away then.

MADMAN

But now, perhaps, it is not too bad. I can taste your wrongdoing, but I will not say it.

WORKER

How kind.

MADMAN

And yet, mayhaps the taste is too off.

WORKER

Then off shall I go, and fetch another.

MADMAN

Yes, but leave this, as with time it may soften.

WORKER

How measured, how gracious, affable, how do you become so?

MADMAN

Yes of course, but again, you should know how your task makes me suffer! Such sour stuffing, as nothing could make it better, perhaps salt, perhaps time, but nothing enoughing!

*WORKER ADJUSTS THE CAMERA.*

WORKER

Again, had I true caring, I would never have come!

MADMAN

O if you hadn't how happy I had felt!

WORKER

We are not always pleased with the cards we are dealt...

MADMAN

Mocking me again! As before!

WORKER

As before, mocking, but now my own song. Is the food still wrong? Shall I take it now?

MADMAN

The food is fine. Yet awful. Yet shameful. Yet I will abide.

WORKER

How good of you, as before.

MADMAN

As always! Perhaps a carrot! Have you seen them? They're long and they're orange!

WORKER

I have them in storage and more engines warming a porridge, full carrots and all. If you are patient, as your injury heals, I will fetch you to the hospice, as before now?

MADMAN

It is remarkable how patient I could be, and you abuse this in me, again. I cannot stand, too weak to stumble towards home!

WORKER

Oh? I shouldn't stay if I harm you, again, shall I go?

MADMAN

But shall I not go with you, to the hospice?

WORKER

O no! But yes! I could guide you there, now, I am ready.

MADMAN

O perhaps not. I have grown too fond of clean air.

WORKER

We have windows to open, at the hospice room there.

MADMAN

But windows would frighten me, I'd lay dreadfully scared!

WORKER

A room with a door, then, open for light.

MADMAN

So that anyone could enter, to kill in the night!

WORKER

And imagine my joy, but perhaps a closed room?

MADMAN

So to stare at a wall with no thought but my doom?  
No windows, no door, again, five walls and a floor,  
against my fragility, you don't care or soft pillow me.

WORKER

Well, then, by my own fault, I suppose you cannot.

MADMAN

But if I were there, only then, your charity would be real.

WORKER

But, again, as before, the hospice would scare!

MADMAN

A strife you could heal with song, or repair, or perhaps  
a story book story you could sing between naps?  
You could sit and hold my shudders, my fear to dispel!  
If well intended prayers aloud to the others?

WORKER

And that we could do, so, up, and we walk?

MADMAN

But now I am weakened, again, you must talk  
about all things you seek and forget my real needs:  
A new sock, shoelaces, a smart tie, and new braces,  
my rags would bring shame, had I walked with you there!  
Is that what you're after? Scattered rats in my rafters?  
I would never set foot in the place that has sent you,  
You couldn't heal either in the rags I present you!

WORKER

O well, that's it then, the extent of my care.  
Shall I be off, again? I have no clothing to share.

MADMAN

And leave me with nothing?

WORKER

Aside from food, there?

MADMAN

This food will not fill me!

WORKER

Well, I will redouble my caring! Next week I will carry in some fish, and a roast, buffalo heart and sweet toast, sour salted potatoes and most delicate cakes. And perhaps some tools then, a horse, and a house, a maid, and a butler, and a warm fire to douse with water from wells and little bronze bells, a better tomorrow and better stories to tells.

MADMAN

You joke with me, it would be deserved, again, in sight of my pain.

WORKER

And could I give, again, as you deserve, someday I will learn.

*CHARITY WORKER BEGINS TO LEAVE.*

MADMAN

Oh... Now you leave?

WORKER

Oh, absolutely. My obligation completed, fresh air can you breath.

*SHE MARKS HER SLEEVE.*

WORKER

Suffer lightly.

*BEGINS TO LEAVE.*

MADMAN

Walk away then, you kindness without care.

WORKER

Oh, should I walk then? But I don't know to where! While you guide me?

MADMAN

But now how you play, what do you intend 'gainst our poverty?

WORKER

Oh I shouldn't play, I dare not offend, I dare not reproach, my dearest poor friend!

MADMAN

I am not poor, again!

WORKER

Then I misplace my charity! I mistook you saying "pain" to mean the word "pain." Your spirit looked strong, I'm sorry to think for a minute I longed to alleviate pain or to find those in need. But as you lack nothing, yet alone, I will be gone with speed!

MADMAN

You witch, you dog song, I would be better alone!

WORKER



Then off will I search for honest souls to feed, to the hospice,  
to the fields, then, again, to the hill, through the valley,  
about and around and tally those killed from before, and  
hereafter, again, and the rafters of rats I will rid from those  
dying.

MADMAN

I am not the dying, or the poor, or the sick, as before! And but  
perhaps, in one week, you should bring me yet more?

WORKER

How different this sounds. What logic, again? "You haven't  
naught, but bring what you ought, you haven't money, so give  
what you've bought, you haven't mercy, but heed as you're  
taught, you are the cause, no others have caught the fevers or  
chills of the sick and the lot." I could try to understand, but  
again, I will not. If you don't have an eye for my wares, then I  
will keep what I've got.

MADMAN

So you abandon me? You strike me half-dumb!

WORKER

O, I must be a tyrant, for the tears will not come!

MADMAN

But what of before? I had heard of the food, and the care, the  
heart to use for mine, what of my pain?

WORKER

Well, keep it, keep it good, in loneliness, good. The fresher  
the pain, the sweeter my care, and next week, again, I will come  
and give more, but perhaps I will not if the pain is not sore.  
Or perhaps I will not, perhaps this is it. All. Again. Perhaps  
the rhymes end here. Perhaps the talking is over, I go away,  
there, or maybe there, again, and perhaps you will be here, as  
always, and we will never again have before. This is the only.  
You alone. And alone, you will suffer, and I will not. I can  
help, and I may not. But value will stay the same. You will

never have value. Unless I return, for you to be valued. My charity is simple, again, as before.

*THE CHARITY WORKER EXITS. THE MADMAN STOPS, STANDS, AND SEARCHES THE HORIZON FOR THE CHARITY WORKER. AFTER A MOMENT, GLANCES TO THE SOLDIER.*

MADMAN

But I am not alone!

*THE MADMAN REMOVES HIS COAT FROM ON TOP OF THE SOLDIER. LONG PAUSE. MADMAN REGARDS THE SOLDIER.*

MADMAN

But I am not alone. I am of great value. To you?

*THE MADMAN REMOVES THE GAG AND SACK.*

MADMAN

Ha! Alone. Poor. We have proved her wrong. She is blind, again. Could she see, would we be alone? Perhaps you, but me, she is blind.

*PAUSE.*

SOLDIER

Where are the men, as before? Have they killed? Are we killed?

*THE MADMAN WATERS THE SOLDIER DURING THE FOLLOWING.*

MADMAN

Ha! Haa! You see!? She is blind! Where should she walk? Charity stumbles and falls, again, as I stand, not walking, not stumbling, again, I am stationed. Not stuck, as you say, or a

plant, as you are, but stationed. My skill is a good, and I sell it for the goodness, my goodness. And, as good, I will serve. Something to drink? I can! Water? I have it here! Only a bit, not to drown. But more. But less. Ha! Do you see!? Blind! Am I not alone now, you blind, now blinded? Should I also, again, be blind? But she is a fool, as I can see, most obviously with eyes! And by no surprise, she gave me food, from fear, or from fear, perhaps, and she will return. She will return, I hope, and will give more. And she, now gone, still blind, will not see me, but I now I can see! And you, you can see that I have eyes? Will you tell me, it would help the moment.

SOLDIER

I cannot.

MADMAN

But that I have eyes, simply that I have eyes. It would help, as she is blind!

SOLDIER

As before.

MADMAN

But tell me! As she is blind, and a fool, as you, but she is gone and cannot see or know that I have eyes, that I am not alone, and all these things you can tell me, or tell aloud, to no one, to know they are not alone!

SOLDIER

But you are alone.

MADMAN

But not in jest, for in truth, tell it aloud that I am not alone.

SOLDIER

You are alone.

MADMAN

You seem mad to say this.

SOLDIER

And you are mad, simply, as before. You are alone.

*PAUSE.*

SOLDIER

Should I not say it? And not having eyes, I should not see? I am not full, but a fool, instead.

MADMAN

Should I have known, that in saying, again, you should answer, as a fool, that you would answer wrong.

SOLDIER

But you could see, having eyes, that you are alone.

MADMAN

But yet, you, as I say, you are here. And I, and you, you too, us two, we are not alone.

SOLDIER

I am not like you, as you say, and as you see, with eyes, you see that I, a plant, and not a man. I am planted, "as Parenthecus would have planted, as before," I am not a full life. I would not number as you count, I am a plant, and no amount of talk would change that, till now, in loneliness, you call. To point and say, "that isn't all! another is here!" But before, again, you clawed and cried, for she stood here, you tried to turn her back, but you couldn't rest in how she sees you, lacking all. Lacking me.

MADMAN

Clawed and crying? For you! Since dying seems the only out, again, I am here for you! Where does this food spring out? Of course, you would never think, as a plant, or a fool. She was not here to kill, no men, no blood, but by her hand, a slow death to take. And take from me, myself and you! To lay us in a house, and keep for prison! From death and dust, and took the

trust, and truth I told to you, but truth to keep you safe.  
Different, better truth! For you!

SOLDIER

But forgetting, and if not forgetting, denying me.

MADMAN

Denying nothing, but telling nothing, the same.

SOLDIER

I stuck here and slept. And in my sleep I dreamed I heard you,  
and you begging. And I heard my voice and your voice crying, one  
voice dying out in the silence. But you lied. I heard my voice  
turned to your words, and I heard my voice lying. I heard my  
pain return, but your terms, concerned with the heat of your  
burns. You were not a gardener when you saw this man, and not a  
plant, and you were not still a dreamer, but in need of one. And  
here I was, and by your hand, shall I stay to slowly die!

MADMAN

And die as well, shall I! And say it again, I shall feel the  
same. I will try the same things again. I care for you, and I am  
the best, and if not the best, the only, but not, as before,  
alone.

SOLDIER

Shall I ask? Say "pass," the word, for you?

MADMAN

I have not forgotten, it is awake, and I shall pass as I have,  
but will always return.

SOLDIER

How is it? "You dog song, I would be better alone!" And now,  
death may come, before you return, and the sun will be the  
brighter. Brighter and without me, and without needing to see  
you never see me, again!

MADMAN

What have I ever done, for you to seek death and feed the sun?  
Begins the word, how it heavies, I should know if I have done  
it.

SOLDIER

Then pass, and once passed, place my needs at the end, the last  
you think of, and I shall worry, I shall myself feed, then hurry  
the water to me, again, but leave it besides. And once gone,  
again, be free, as before, from my side, and I will be free, but  
stuck, but free still, and more free.

*MADMAN HASTILY REFERS TO HIS NOTEBOOK.*

MADMAN

And there is the last of this! I am, as before, my spartoi, your  
gardener! I am written, as it is written, the tasks, to know,  
when to feed, the dragon teeth, the shade, the water, and if a  
son to a father, you will know, my fool, that I am here to care.  
To leave my caring here, to watch it sink into the dirt, to  
watch, unblinking, and to think I make you hurt, it kills me! I  
am here, again, to care, and give you life, a life like mine,  
but as a plant, and you will see, that a man can know how plants  
could grow if patience, humble time and hands! These dusty hands  
could save you! If Parenthecus stood and saw the place where I  
stand now, but he wouldn't listen to this! But patience, humble  
time and chance, I will raise you up. But I will.

*THE MADMAN EXITS.*

SOLDIER

But I will never be raised up!

*THE SOLDIER WAITS FOR A RESPONSE. THE LIGHTS TRANSITION TO  
THE FENCE. BOTH FIGURES DART FROM THE AUDIENCE AND THE  
STAGE TOWARDS THE FENCE. THEY COME TOGETHER AT THE HOLE IN  
THE FENCE AND PLAY EITHER SIDE OF THE GUITAR. THEY SING.  
AFTER THE SONG, THEY BRIEFLY COMFORT EACH OTHER, A SMALL  
CARESS TO THE CHEEK. ONE FIGURE SPEAKS A WORD. THE OTHER*

*EXPERIENCES A STUNNED HAPPINESS. THEY ATTEMPT AN EMBRACE. HAPPILY, YET LONGINGLY, THEY PART, AND TAKE THEIR LADDERS AWAY.*

SOLDIER

And so it comes, to me, to this.  
And if there were a chance, if bliss  
were not romance, but fact, and fact  
were not romance, but truth. And truth,  
if my body were a house,  
a skin of bricks, thick and growing out.  
Only the sick of head would approach  
and beat the knock with mouths instead.  
Fools standing and greeting stones. Alone  
but not exposed, autonomous, composed  
of life, liberty, and the holy ghost, and  
wholly chosen by my birth, from earth  
I grow to my end, no friends to witness my slow descent.  
Begin, my bones, as before, defend me from one last lost war.

*THE SOLDIER TRIES TO FREE HIMSELF AGAIN. NO RESULTS. AS HE WORKS, TWO SOLDIERS APPEAR ALONG THE BARRICADE. THEY ARE EACH IN UNIFORMS, ALIKE TO THE SOLDIER, BUT DIFFERENT, AND DIFFERENT TO EACH OTHER. WARZ AND WICE, TWO WEARY YOUNG MEN THAT HAVE BEEN ON THE RUN.*

WARZ

Is it far enough?

WICE

Far enough?

WARZ

Couldn't be, I still see the lights.

WICE

Only now, too dark.

WARZ

Dark enough.

WICE

Dark enough. Could they still see us?

WARZ

They, again. Could *you* still see me?

WICE

But if we are the same?

WARZ

But not.

WICE

The same side.

WARZ

And if we are not?

WICE

If not, then still the same. Lost.

WARZ

But if not the same, they would spare you.

WICE

And so, again, if you were the same as them.

WARZ

And the two of us would they spare, if we were all -

WICE

But if we were all the same, would we be running?

WARZ



If we knew they would spare us? No.

WICE

And yet we run. We know that.

WARZ

I ran from you.

WICE

And I from you.

WARZ

Yet we both ran from them. We know that. And well.

WICE

And I from you, and from them, I would run, again, if this were not far enough.

*THEY SURVEY THEIR SURROUNDINGS.*

WICE

Is this the same?

WARZ

Not familiar.

WICE

But still.

WARZ

Still, it is, the familiar.

WICE

Like the last one. Two. The last place.

WARZ

Have you remembered anything?

WICE

The sounds.

WARZ

As much to say you haven't.

WICE

New sounds, man! And the louder.

WARZ

I saw myself in the water. My face.

WICE

The same face as any other. Could you recognize it? What good would it do?

WARZ

I think I saw my face.

WICE

Dead faces staring back. Staring up. What is it?

WARZ

Trying to think.

WICE

Would it change?

WARZ

A spark, could be, a change, any change to wake it up.

WICE

Is it far enough?

WARZ

I can still smell the lights.

WICE

I don't think that's right.

WARZ

And left it is, my memory.

WICE

Both sides, I cannot tell.

WARZ

Do I look any different?

WICE

O... with different eyes, I suppose.

WARZ

Ah, not looking but looking. Do I look different?

WICE

To me?

WARZ

Right.

WICE

Do you look any different to me?

WARZ

Right.

*PAUSE.*

WICE

I still don't know you.

WARZ

The same.

*WICE AND WARZ INSPECT THEIR UNIFORMS.*

WICE

But your. Yours is different.

WARZ

Words, then. If I could read, this would be the same.

WICE

And if different?

WARZ

I would need the energy.

WICE

To make them.

WARZ

To same them. If I could read, or remember it, I would make them meet.

WICE

And beyond this. If I were the same as them, they would kill you. They would reward me.

WARZ

And I, the same, if they were the same as me. As this.

WICE

And missed chances to go back. Unless we are out. Out of war,  
again.

WARZ

Could be, as before.

WICE

If we were out, we could go around. Unless there isn't a way  
out.

WARZ

No, there should be an out.

WICE

And could we find it? And if we did, what then? Leave? And how?  
With wings? But they would be there. They could take us. Or one  
of us.

WARZ

But if they are there, and they are the same as you, I should  
kill you.

WICE

You would meet the same by them.

*WARZ ASSUMES A BOXING STANCE.*

WARZ

Then at your hands, my man! At your hands! Or feet, head, and  
the rest!

*WICE RELUCTANTLY ASSUMES A SIMILAR STANCE.*

WICE

Why should you say this?

WARZ

I should kill you now. Or before.

WICE

Ah, this would be the same, backwards, if I should kill you, it would be that you are the same as them. To your hands, then! String and buttons and boots!

WARZ

The same, then.

WICE

And the same for them.

WARZ

What?

WICE

The same for them.

WARZ

Oh. No, what?

*THEY DROP THEIR FIGHTING STANCES.*

WICE

If they were there, and they were the same, and we, only us two, the same, they would spare neither of us.

WARZ

Of course.

WICE

And kill us.

WARZ

And in that, if that, if we were the same, then I would protect you.

WICE

And I, you. We would be protecting not only each other, but our cause.

WARZ

O! Yes, the cause. The fight. We would be protecting it.

WICE

For the better. For the future, and the little ones, the country, the contrary, and that.

WICE

Have you forgotten it?

WARZ

Of course not.

WICE

And to speak it?

WARZ

And you?

WICE

But I would be careful not to, if it were different than yours!

WARZ

And what of that?

WICE

And if it were different, then we wouldn't be the same.

WARZ

We *wouldn't* be the same!

WICE

Then it would be that we weren't the same, again, and, as before, I would kill you!

WARZ

Then we shall not speak them.

WICE

Agreed.

*PAUSE.*

WICE

But shall we stay?

*WARZ BREATHES.*

WARZ

If it stops the learning, the opening of eyes, the widening, the appetite. I will stay and learn nothing.

WICE

But would they find us?

WARZ

Well, yes. I have no mind of how, but yes. Yes sounds right.

WICE

Should we pass, then?



WARZ

And beyond, again, it would be far enough.

WICE

Could be.

WARZ

And if not far enough, it would be closer to far enough!

WICE

Then enough, and pass!

*LAUGHING, WICE AND WARZ EXIT. A SLIGHT PAUSE AS SOLDIER  
PONDERS. HE CALLS AFTER THEM.*

SOLDIER

Wait!!

*WICE AND WARZ, IF STILL VISIBLE, ARE FROZEN IN THEIR  
TRACKS. THEY MAKE THEIR WAY BACK TOWARDS THE SOLDIER. THEY  
LAUGH AGAIN.*

SOLDIER

Why do you laugh?

WICE

Because I am terrified. And you?

WARZ

Because I am afraid and sad. Why do you not laugh?

SOLDIER

Perhaps I have felt too long, and then stopped. I would try again, to laugh. But later! Please! Wait! I need help to out myself, my legs, out of the earth!

WICE

Oh! You are stuck! What did you do?

WARZ

I can see this now! At first, you may have been in pieces, or singular, a piece of a man. But you are up and about, yet I see, down and stuck!

WICE

And such were we, but not stuck. Down, and then awake, looking each other in the eye.

WARZ

With our eyes, looking across. Like lovers in bed.

WICE

Awake from a slumber. Asleep then, bam!

WARZ

We took to our feet, and ran!

SOLDIER

Yes, from each other, and from them.

*WARZ AND WICE GLANCE AROUND AT THE THOUGHT OF 'THEM.'*

WARZ

They could be close!

SOLDIER

And my fear as well!

WICE

It is close?

SOLDIER

It is my fear that they are close! And I am stuck!

WICE

And they would find you!

WARZ

And then, if you and they were not the same, they would, if not the same, they would kill him.

WICE

But they wouldn't if he were!

SOLDIER

But this question, if I can out and up, I wouldn't ask! I would be gone!

WICE

Well, then, about it! Up and out it!

WARZ

And this way! To far enough!

SOLDIER

But this is why I called out! I am affixed, and my hands are broken, and cannot dig along with wrists.

WARZ

Then how will you get out?

SOLDIER

But if you could protect me! To dig me out, and help me!

WARZ/WICE

O...

SOLDIER

Does this not help? Would you not help?

WICE

And this is the dilemma, as before.

WARZ

It is, again, a game of lengths.

WICE

Which will be travelled, and for whom?

WARZ

And against whom?

SOLDIER

I couldn't tell, but could you dig me?

WICE

And this is what we speak of, who are you?

SOLDIER

A soldier.

WICE

And a name?

SOLDIER

I cannot remember.

WARZ

But what have you named yourself?

SOLDIER

Again?

WARZ

Since you haven't remembered your name, what have you given instead, a name for yourself?

SOLDIER

Just, 'soldier,' I didn't know I had a need for a name.

WICE

But how would you know the difference between yourself and the other soldiers?

SOLDIER

But there was only me! I was the only I saw.

WARZ

But of course there were others!

WICE

At least most of them!

SOLDIER

But I hadn't known, but only one, and he was dead, and only another, alive, but he wasn't a soldier.

WICE

Ah, names were only differences.

WARZ

As it was and we saw each other, each other, and thought, good, I am not him, and if we came across another, how would we explain ourselves?

WICE

And it would be left to name oneself without purpose. If you were the only soldier, as well you were to yourself, then difference were enough. I would call you dead, and myself alive. You in the ground, you dead, and myself, alive!

WARZ

And dead, I would call you! To your hands!

WICE

And yours!

SOLDIER

But wait! Could you dig me?

WARZ

What is you? Which is you?

WICE

And this, soldier, is why we are named.

SOLDIER

Then, naming yourselves again, for me?

WICE

He is named Warz, as I have called him this.

WARZ

Warz. And he, again, I have called Wice. And by this, he is named Wice.

SOLDIER

Then Wice, called by Warz, who indeed, is named by Wice, would the two of you dig me?

WICE

But what are you named? And by whom? And what is your cause? And will you dare speak it?

SOLDIER

But I haven't an idea, an answer for these. I have only my placement, and a need. I will be named by you, and then, if you will dig me out, as they are approaching, and will find me!

WARZ

But if you are against us, by another side, then what would we do? And if we arrived, or departed out of this, and you are the same as them, then we are even more the fools for letting you out!

SOLDIER

But perhaps I am the same as you, and not them, and they would, as before, they would spare none of us, and I would willingly die alongside you!

WARZ

Well, I cannot dig. If you were alike to me, and us, I could see it. I could see digging you.

WICE

And while I know we could be the same, and I know we could be, as soon, different, but they would not care for our care, if we dug you out.

SOLDIER

But I would care, and I would spare you! I would give them cause, to pause from killing, and give you freely to your own care!

WICE

It would be kind of you, but I cannot stand with this idea, the risk. I would care to, but I will not.

WARZ

And I too, I will not. And I would, believe me! Perhaps there were more ideas of who, and why, it would be different.

WICE

Yes, well put, if there were more to tell, to explain back to myself, I wouldn't feel the need to run.

WARZ

For we ran upon waking! From anything, and the running has kept us running.

SOLDIER

But I have felt the same! The running! I have longed to run, to escape from here, to run, and arrive at another place!

WICE

And yet...

WARZ

Here you are!

SOLDIER

But I have been kept here!

WICE

And perhaps they will see this, and spare you, for they will see that you stayed. But for us, if we stayed, it would be the stranger, as we took to running. We will not stop until we are out!

SOLDIER

But take me, I would run along with you! And if I slowed, I would tell you to run ahead and away! I would find myself a pace, and keep to it, and I would find my own way across!

WARZ

But then, we couldn't see you, see where you go, and know to whom you go! You could trap us, by slowing and using a signaling speed!

WICE

But could you as well!



WARZ

And you could as well! But would we have run so far and not been caught? If your signal had taken this long, I wouldn't fear it.

WICE

Ha! Well spotted! Then I am content! Should we go then? I cannot know why I should dig him out.

SOLDIER

But for the cause, for the good of it, I would be the better, and I would leave you alone!

WARZ

But I, the same, it would be good to know before digging. And should we take him along, who would find us, but another that would know him. Perhaps someone else will come along.

SOLDIER

But there is one, and he would keep me here forever!

WICE

Then there you have it!

WARZ

And he is provided!

WICE

We believed you were alone!

SOLDIER

But I am alone, as he keeps me as a thing, as distance, a single object, again!

WARZ

And now, these words are enough. He is provided.

WICE

And were we not running, not fleeing, we could search for more.

SOLDIER

You misunderstand!

WICE

And must understand, we are off, Warz and Wice will be off, and we believe you.

WARZ

The one that will keep you, he may dig you, tell him so, but we must go!

WICE

And with this, it will be enough. It would be more than enough.

SOLDIER

But stay! But wait!

WARZ

And we have waited long, running will take us till the darkest of night, until we are not able to name the ground where we stand. We will be off!

SOLDIER

But at least leave some food, or a tool, or digging, anything! Please leave me something!

WICE

But only that, we will leave you.

WARZ

And in the distance, if they are coming, we will call out. This is the only thing.

SOLDIER

If nothing else, untie my hands! I cannot reach, and I cannot touch! I have the needs, it's nothing much, but untie my hands!

*WICE AND WARZ CONSIDER.*

WICE

This would be enough? I would want my hands.

WARZ

Agreed, enough, but then the running! I cannot say to how long, and how long we have wasted!

SOLDIER

If you would please! I would be the better for it! If nothing more! I will not be free, but free in such way to ease my time.

*WARZ AND WICE CONFER AND PROCEED TO FREE THE SOLDIERS HANDS.*

WARZ

More than enough.

WICE

And as we say, we will run.

SOLDIER

And more than thanks, I am the most thankful!

WARZ

And could you run with hands, we wouldn't have done it.

WICE

But could he run with hands, I would have!

*THEY SHARE A LAUGH.*

WARZ

Well spotted! Then off, again? I will wave then! You can wave back, now, with your hands!

SOLDIER

And I will, to thank you, but also to dig, to join you!

WICE

O, but if you could! And we will thank you, our boots greeting the earth, a clatter as music in our farewell!

WARZ

May the best for you! And think fondly on us as we go, for untying, for being here when we did.

SOLDIER

And, again, I will, to thank you, as before.

WICE

Ha! I am feeling much better! I can begin seeing myself, again, and much more!

WARZ

The last then! And good to you!

*THE SOLDIERS EXIT.*

SOLDIER

But I am coming along! I will be up and out! I will join you! I could be with you!

*SOLDIER CANNOT SUSTAIN HIS EFFORT.*

SOLDIER

O, I am to be out there. I could be. I cannot be, but I could have been, again.

*DURING THE FOLLOWING, THE MUSICIANS TAKE PLACE, AND BEGIN TO PLAY MUSIC.*

SOLDIER

I remember at times, a time before.  
Reading or seeing, looking more  
into books. Or magazines, if those are things,  
The words come back, obscured, but back,  
and not my heart, but my skin, a part of me  
is hurting, and the stars shine the brighter for it.  
Reaching down for it. I opened, a flower to the sun,  
but cannot help but feel the turning, done for now,  
but opening again, as before. O before. Where was it?  
I was looking out, with eyes, with everything.  
There was a light, and a brighter light,  
And dark before, and after there was more, and night  
had fallen, or I had fell, to here, or to here,  
was I surrounded, or who is to tell?  
I could have felt their hands that caught me,  
caught and kept me, was I stuck, or stuck before?  
I had a smile, and I felt the smile end.  
But they said to fix it "smile, yet, smile again."

*THE SOLDIER FAINTS TO SLEEP. AFTER THE SOLDIER FINDS SILENCE, THEY SING A SONG. IT IS ALMOST CONCILIATORY, AIMED AT THE SOLDIER. NEAR THE END OF THE SONG, THE BELL OF THE CHARITY WORKER IS HEARD. SHE IS SINGING ALONG, AS THOUGH HEARING IT IN HER HEAD, INDEPENDENT OF THE MUSICIANS. SHE GLANCES AROUND FOR THE MADMAN. SHE SEES THE SOLDIER AND SPEEDILY ARRIVES AT HIS SIDE. SHE LOOKS AROUND FOR THE MADMAN, BUT SEES THE DISH THAT SHE HAD LEFT WITH THE MADMAN. SHE DAMPENS A RAG WITH HER CANTEEN, AND SHE DABS HIS FOREHEAD. HE WAKES. HE DEVELOPS A FRUSTRATED MOOD THAT FEELS SOMEHOW DIFFERENT THAN BEFORE.*

SOLDIER

It's me.

WORKER

What?

SOLDIER

It's me.

WORKER

Oh?

SOLDIER

It's always me.

WORKER

Oh.

SOLDIER

I'm going to try things the same again.

WORKER

Okay.

SOLDIER

I found another watch. It's this one.

*THE SOLDIER RAISES HIS HAND, HE IS WEARING A WATCH.*

WORKER

Is it?

SOLDIER

It may be. Yes, I'm sure of it.

WORKER

It looks new.

SOLDIER

Quite old, I believe.

WORKER

To me.

SOLDIER

Must be the one then.

WORKER

Could be. I wouldn't know for certain.

SOLDIER

Again.

WORKER

I suppose.

SOLDIER

Like before, like always.

WORKER

Not always. Sometimes I know.

SOLDIER

You could know.

*THE SOLDIER TAKES A DRINK OF WATER.*

SOLDIER

Have they come for me?

WORKER

Ha! Who?

SOLDIER

My men. They should have come for me.

WORKER

Today?

SOLDIER

Could have.

WORKER

Why today, again?

SOLDIER

Could have, it's not -

WORKER

Who, again?

SOLDIER

Battalion. My soldiers. As Parenthecus, before us, raised soldiers from the earth, and named each one. There are soldiers looking for me. And where is their namer? How will they be named? I told you.

WORKER

What do you mean? What did you tell me?

SOLDIER

I don't remember.

WORKER

You told me before?

SOLDIER



Not like before, I knew before.

WORKER

A new before, again! Not like before.

SOLDIER

Before, again. Then, it wasn't before.

WORKER

It's a mystery, I will allow it. But first, to water you.

SOLDIER

Like always.

WORKER

No change. I shall raise you up!

SOLDIER

[pained] Like always.

WORKER

But I can wait?

SOLDIER

For what?

WORKER

If I should wait, are you in pain?

SOLDIER

I haven't the time.

WORKER

I can provide. Where is the pain?

SOLDIER

You cannot raise me up. Not like this.

WORKER

I can wait. I will wait. I have brought food, as before.

SOLDIER

Will you try to poison me, again? She toys with me, between the tools to feed, she keeps away all tools to free my aching bones. And slowly grows the distance I could have run by now.

*DURING THE FOLLOWING, A STRANGER APPEARS BEHIND THE BARRIER. HE STARES AT THE SCENE BEFORE HIM.*

WORKER

I should not have woken you, and poor, broken you, I am only here to serve.

SOLDIER

Then raise a banner to it! I would never have seen it, affixed as I am.

WORKER

I will be about it. I could have brought more. And more I will bring, again. You will know and see that I care, and I will make easy, any end, for any friend would do this.

SOLDIER

Then to sleep perhaps. To sleep I could go, and know any more about it than you would show. In kindness, care, and the holy most of this is darkness now.

WORKER

Then sleeping, go.

*A PAUSE.*

STRANGER

Is there more like him?

WORKER

But fields full. But stacks, and trenches, and fields the same as this.

STRANGER

Then more shall have needs before dark. I shall bring more to them.

WORKER

I shall join you. It will be soon enough. Take along, and keep in ears a pleasant song. It would be kindness, and singing on, it will be making the un-rightable, a better wrong.

*THE STRANGER EXITS.*

WORKER

Suffer lightly.

*THE MUSICIANS RE-ENTER AND PLAY A FINAL SONG. THE MADMAN ENTERS AND SINGS WITH THEM.*

END OF PLAY.