

## LONE OF FAITH

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gorman@the.inter.net.au

<u>Cast</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Description</u>
Dennis	Male	38 - 42	Healthy Looking
Hephaestus / Poseidon / Onwards	Male	55 - 65	Fit For the Age
Ares / Hermes / Stanson	Male	30 - 35	Very Muscular
Aphrodite / Clarycine / Athena / Artemis	Female	20 - 25	Very Attractive

*The stage is in darkness.*

*Spotlight comes up on **Dennis**; a modern priest who is lying on the floor. He lies in a peaceful position with his eyes closed and his hands clasped on his midriff.*

*He slowly opens his eyes and sits up, and seems to be very confused.*

*He looks at his hands and gets even more confused.*

*Dennis runs his hands over his arms and face, as if to see if there are any marks.*

*Then he stops and stares off for a moment . . . and makes a sigh of epiphany.*

**DENNIS** I remember the fire. Bright orange energy that didn't know fear or sadness. I also remember the blaring whiteness that came after it, with the smell of chemicals and plastic.

*He smirks.*

The thing that killed me was beautiful. The disturbing memory is of the vehicle that was supposed to save my life.

*The setting around him starts to light up . . .*

*The backdrop shows various displays of a craftsman's workshop: metallurgy, stonemasonry, ceramics, architecture, carpentry.*

*Dennis looks very troubled.*

No . . . This isn't . . .

*The stage is now fully illuminated.*

*To the left are two more characters: a fit elderly man and a very beautiful woman. They are arguing, but – right now – they do not make any sound.*

*The man, **Hephaestus**, wears a thick leather apron. He has a pair of ironwork tongs strapped to his right arm, positioned upwards like a symbol of status.*

*The woman, **Aphrodite**, wears a long cool-blue dress. She has something strapped to her arm as well: it looks like a scepter with the figure of a scallop shell on top.*

*Dennis gets up and cautiously approaches them . . . and now they can be heard.*

**APHRODITE** It's ruining my life!

**HEPHAESTUS** We don't *have* "lives."

**APHRODITE** You know what I mean!

**HEPHAESTUS** Those who *do* have lives deserve this.

**APHRODITE** They didn't create the world.

**HEPHAESTUS** Neither did you.

**APHRODITE** I gave them pleasures.

**HEPHAESTUS** They weren't the only pleasures they ever wanted.

**APHRODITE** Yes they were!

**HEPHAESTUS** Sex isn't everything. People know that.

**APHRODITE** They don't respect what *you* give them.

**HEPHAESTUS** I'm sorry, but as a matter of fact they do.

**APHRODITE** Do they ever say your name?

**HEPHAESTUS** No, and I don't need them to.

**APHRODITE** And I *do* need them to!

**HEPHAESTUS** You still exist.

**APHRODITE** I refuse to exist like this!

**HEPHAESTUS** Now it's our chance to make the most of what we've got.

**APHRODITE** This is easy for you to say, you haven't changed much.

**HEPHAESTUS** I make things for Peace, now. So I have changed.

*Pause.*

And you *should* be for Peace as well.

- APHRODITE** I am!
- HEPHAESTUS** But who did you go to when you got bored?
- APHRODITE** Oh, still upset about the affair are you?
- HEPHAESTUS** That's in the past.
- APHRODITE** So are you! I wish we never got married.
- HEPHAESTUS** You've said that before.
- APHRODITE** But this time it's *not* because you're so dull in bed!
- Pause.*
- And I'm not much in bed either, now. Whose fault is that?
- HEPHAESTUS** It's no one's "fault."
- APHRODITE** Yes it is! It's because of a self-indulgent Christian.
- HEPHAESTUS** But he was a mortal!
- APHRODITE** Fine! Since he's dead now, that should be the end of it.
- HEPHAESTUS** What he created deserves to live forever
- APHRODITE** Even more than we do?
- HEPHAESTUS** Yes.
- APHRODITE** How can you say such a thing?
- HEPHAESTUS** I didn't say it. You did.
- Pause.*
- APHRODITE** You've become a tool!
- HEPHAESTUS** Aphrodite, I have *always* been a tool.
- APHRODITE** There! You have not changed as much as the rest of us!

**HEPHAESTUS** But *you* are still desirable.

*She indicates to herself.*

**APHRODITE** This is not desirable!

**HEPHAESTUS** It can be.

**APHRODITE** Not to me!

**HEPHAESTUS** It can be to others. Thousands of others.

**APHRODITE** But *you* desire what *you* became!

**HEPHAESTUS** I just adapted to change.

**APHRODITE** No, you lost your identity!

**HEPHAESTUS** A moment ago you said that I “have not changed as much as the rest of us.” So how have I lost my identity?

*She cannot answer back at that.*

*She turns to leave, and then she sees Dennis.*

**APHRODITE** You!

*She grabs her ‘scallop shell scepter’ and holds it up at Dennis.*

**HEPHAESTUS** Remember our agreement!

*She glares at him, then she storms out.*

*Hephaestus approaches the priest.*

**HEPHAESTUS** Reverend Dennis?

**DENNIS** Yes.

*He offers his hand, with a warm smile.*

**HEPHAESTUS** Welcome to the Afterlife.

*Shake.*

**DENNIS** Who . . . are you?

**HEPHAESTUS** Hephaestus.

**DENNIS** Pardon?

**HEPHAESTUS** The god of craft.

*Pause.*

**DENNIS** God?

**HEPHAESTUS** I'm sorry, Dennis, but you were never going to meet Gabriel.

*Pause.*

Yes, you died because of the fire. The baby survived and you died a hero. You *lived* and died a hero. But your spiritual path has never been fact.

*Pause.*

Zeus, Poseidon, Aphrodite, me . . . we have been the truth all along.

**DENNIS** There are millions of Christians!

**HEPHAESTUS** And they go to the Elysian Fields.

**DENNIS** What's that?

**HEPHAESTUS** It's what the ancient Greeks called Paradise.

**DENNIS** That's not Heaven!

**HEPHAESTUS** It is to the people who go there.

**DENNIS** People don't worship the Pantheon any more!

**HEPHAESTUS** We do not need to be believed in. We need to be *acknowledged*.

**DENNIS** There are lots of different pantheons from different countries!

**HEPHAESTUS** True. But which one is in the Olympic Games?

*Pause.*

Hospitals have the staff of Hermes. Newspapers have zodiac predictions. Prometheus and Nike are brand names. We made sure that all happened, and so we stayed the same as centuries went by.

*Pause.*

Then you became a priest, and things changed.

**DENNIS** *(skeptical tone in voice)* So why am I here?

**HEPHAESTUS** There are priests who wear the collar just for its power, and there are other priests who make the world a better place. And then there are a select few who make the world a better place *without* resenting other religions.

*Pause.*

And of those select few, you – Dennis – were the best. You fed the hungry without trying to convert anyone. You kept your cool when atheists made cruel jokes. You made Christianity look powerful *and* reasonable.

*Hephaestus has a little smirk to himself.*

You were so good at glorifying sex *after* marriage that Aphrodite has turned into a “pretty shy girl.” She gets lots of kissing and cuddling . . . but she doesn’t get further than that.

*Then he grins self-indulgently.*

You were so good at anti-glorifying war that Ares has turned into a farmyard bully. Now he can’t wear armor or fire a bow.

**DENNIS** So how could I affect Zeus?

**HEPHAESTUS** You couldn’t change his image. Instead, you made him completely categorized as a mythical god. So he is literally an image *of* himself.

*Pause.*

Because of you, Zeus has turned into a metal statuette of a man holding a lightning bolt.

*Dennis clearly is not believing any of this.*

**DENNIS** I wasn't the Pope!

**HEPHAESTUS** A Pope gets too much glory, and that counteracts his global influence. That was a formula that prevented us from being altered by the Church, and it worked.

*Pause.*

Until, of course, you became a priest.

**DENNIS** You haven't answered my question. Why am I here?

**HEPHAESTUS** When you died, I made sure you came to my domain.

**DENNIS** You want to punish me the most.

**HEPHAESTUS** Dennis I *love* what you've done! Because of you I make tools, and not weapons.

**DENNIS** So . . . I'm safe?

**HEPHAESTUS** In my domain, yes. You are safe.

**DENNIS** Didn't Aphrodite get in here?

**HEPHAESTUS** I let her in, if she agreed to leave when you recovered.

**DENNIS** That's very trusting!

**HEPHAESTUS** We were married. Didn't you know that?

**DENNIS** No.

**HEPHAESTUS** If she did anything wrong, I would have—

**DENNIS** No! No!

**HEPHAESTUS** Relax, I'm not going to—



**DENNIS**                    There is a God! *You* are a myth!

**HEPHAESTUS**        I'm sorry, Dennis, but the One-True-God is a myth.

**DENNIS**                    No!

*Sound Effect: something HACKING INTO A STONE WALL.*

*Hephaestus takes his tongs off his arm and holds it up to the where this sound comes from. He closes his eyes, concentrates for a moment, and then opens them.*

**HEPHAESTUS**        Ares! What are you doing?

**ARES**                    (*off stage*) I'm going to bash his soul into ethereal slop.

**HEPHAESTUS**        You can't break into my domain.

**ARES**                    I can with this!

**HEPHAESTUS**        With what?

*Ares doesn't answer.*

**DENNIS**                    If you are a god, why is your life threatened right now?

**HEPHAESTUS**        It's not.

**DENNIS**                    You look pretty worried.

**HEPHAESTUS**        He's after you!

**DENNIS**                    If you're a god, then how can someone break in here?

**HEPHAESTUS**        I don't know!

**DENNIS**                    Stop it! This is ridiculous!

*Sound Effect: the STONE WALL CRUMBLES.*

*Ares comes onto the stage. He is holding the statuette of Zeus, which he has just used as a mallet to break the wall down. (Ares is very muscular, but he wears simple farmer's garb and no armor. His 'arm scepter' has the figure of a vulture on it.)*

*Hephaestus grabs his tongs and makes a SWIPING gesture with it.*

*This makes Ares DROP the statuette.*

*Ares takes up his 'vulture scepter' and holds it up.*

*The two male gods stand and hold their symbols up at each other for a few moments.*

- ARES**                    You have forgotten your parents!
- HEPHAESTUS**        I could never do that.
- ARES**                    You're protecting someone who turned your father into a little model!
- HEPHAESTUS**        Our father doesn't want pity.
- ARES**                    I'm not pitying him! I'm avenging him.
- HEPHAESTUS**        Doing harm to this man is not going to turn Zeus back.
- ARES**                    I would still be doing something *for* our father!
- HEPHAESTUS**        He hasn't ordered you to do this.
- ARES**                    He doesn't need to.
- HEPHAESTUS**        Coming here to attack a priest is *not* what a true "warrior" would do.
- ARES**                    I know!
- HEPHAESTUS**        So why do you want to do this?
- ARES**                    I don't!
- HEPHAESTUS**        Then why are you doing this?
- ARES**                    It's for family! *You* should be doing this!
- HEPHAESTUS**        A brother doesn't have a right to tell me what I should do.
- ARES**                    But what you're doing disrespects your parents.
- HEPHAESTUS**        They gave me freedom of choice, as they did for you.

- ARES** And *with* that freedom, you nurture the man who ruined them.
- HEPHAESTUS** But with *your* freedom, you're not being a true warrior.
- ARES** At least I'm being true to our family!
- HEPHAESTUS** Your parents want you to have free will.
- ARES** All right then, I do this out of my free will!
- HEPHAESTUS** But you don't want to do it this way.
- ARES** I don't have to *like* what I choose to do.
- HEPHAESTUS** Challenge me to a duel. A "warrior" would do that.
- ARES** You would name the time and get a champion.
- HEPHAESTUS** And you would have a good fight.
- ARES** But there's no time for all that!
- HEPHAESTUS** How do you know?
- ARES** Hera said so!
- HEPHAESTUS** So you're just doing this because your mother told you to!
- ARES** I agree with her.
- HEPHAESTUS** Well I don't.
- ARES** There! You're disagreeing with family!
- HEPHAESTUS** Ares, I thought you were more independent than this!
- ARES** I'm more independent than a god who's manipulated by a mortal.

*Ares reaches for the Zeus statuette. But Hephaestus forces him back with his tongs.*

*The war god sneers.*

**ARES** Never call me brother again!

*Ares exits.*

*Hephaestus looks at the area that Ares came in through.*

*Then he calls out:*

**HEPHAESTUS** Stanson!

*Then he turns to Dennis.*

Follow me.

**DENNIS** I'm not buying this nonsense!

**HEPHAESTUS** Do you want to be near this opening?

**DENNIS** Why not? I could get out of here.

**HEPHAESTUS** Take a look.

*Dennis looks out of the hole in the wall, and fear spreads over his face.*

**DENNIS** Who are they?

**HEPHAESTUS** They're the other gods, Dennis. And every single one of them wants to hear you scream.

*Hephaestus leaves the room, taking the Zeus statuette.*

*Dennis – reluctantly – follows him.*

### SCENE CHANGE

*The backdrop now depicts that it is a different room.*

*There is no craftsmanship, but the color of the walls are the same as before.*

*Hephaestus and Dennis come in. Hephaestus closes the door.*

*Dennis turns to him.*

**DENNIS** Who is Stanson?

- HEPHAESTUS** One of my cyclops'.
- DENNIS** One?
- HEPHAESTUS** The cyclops' are my helpers. Stanson is the only one who dedicated himself to repairing instead of forging. And trust me, he is good.
- DENNIS** I've never heard of him.
- HEPHAESTUS** He was only born five hundred years ago.
- DENNIS** And all these angry gods will just let him fix the wall?
- HEPHAESTUS** He has repaired things for them. So: yes, they will.
- DENNIS** Oh, a one-eyed giant fixes their plumbing?
- Pause.*
- HEPHAESTUS** You think this is all a joke.
- DENNIS** It must be! And it's a sick one! Expensive, yes, but it's sick!
- Hephaestus walks to the other side of the room, and opens a window curtain.*
- HEPHAESTUS** If you have been abducted by pranksters, then you would still be on Earth. Correct?
- DENNIS** Yes!
- HEPHAESTUS** You need to look out this window.
- Dennis looks out the window, his eyes widen.*
- DENNIS** What???
- HEPHAESTUS** You can keep your Faith, Dennis. You can go to the Elysian Fields and forget about all this. But for now—
- DENNIS** You're demons!
- HEPHAESTUS** Dennis, that's irrational.

**DENNIS** This is Hell!

**HEPHAESTUS** It's above Earth!

**DENNIS** I don't know why you're doing it like this, but *this is Hell!*

**HEPHAESTUS** Dennis please.

*Dennis PUNCHES him, but that does nothing.*

**HEPHAESTUS** Dennis, you can't hurt me. But calm down, please—

*Dennis grabs the Zeus statuette, and CLOBBERS Hephaestus with it.*

*And that injures Hephaestus.*

*Hephaestus falls. Dennis CLOBBERS HIM AGAIN with the statuette.*

*And AGAIN!*

*Hephaestus is now barely able to move.*

*Dennis drops the statuette, goes onto his knees and mumbles a prayer.*

*Sound Effect: hundreds of characters, in the distance, CHARGING inside.*

**HEPHAESTUS** Now they can get in!

*The voices sound angry, and they are getting closer.*

Why couldn't you reason with me?

**DENNIS** How was I supposed to reason with all this!

**HEPHAESTUS** You didn't have to injure me!

**DENNIS** I was scared!

*The angry shouts get even closer.*

*Dennis looks out the window again, and looks downwards.*

*Hephaestus frowns.*

**HEPHAESTUS**      What are you doing?

**DENNIS**            Poseidon hates Zeus, right?

**HEPHAESTUS**      Immensely.

**DENNIS**            Poseidon stays in the ocean.

**HEPHAESTUS**      Always.

*Pause.*

**DENNIS**            Can you help me get to him?

*Hephaestus thinks for a moment.*

*The ANGRY VOICES are EVEN CLOSER.*

*Hephaestus reaches into his leather apron, and takes out a small hammer.*

*He puts it up to his forehead, for a second, and then gives it to Dennis.*

**HEPHAESTUS**      Take this.

**DENNIS**            What is it?

**HEPHAESTUS**      I fashioned his trident with it.

**DENNIS**            Will it get me to Poseidon?

**HEPHAESTUS**      Only once.

*Dennis goes to the window, and is about to jump out.*

*But then he comes back into the room and picks up the Zeus statuette.*

**HEPHAESTUS**      Why are you taking that?

**DENNIS**            Insurance.

*Then Dennis gets back to the window.*

*Hephaestus painfully gets to his feet, and holds up his tongs to the doorway.*

**HEPHAESTUS** I can hold them back for a while.

*Dennis is about to jump out, but he turns to Hephaestus once more.*

**DENNIS** I'm sorry.

*Then Dennis jumps out.*

*Hephaestus holds his tongs up towards the door.*

*The VOICES OF ANGRY GODS are now right at the doorway.*

*Hephaestus falls to one knee, but he still holds his tongs up defiantly . . .*

### SCENE CHANGE

*The backdrop depicts that this is under the sea: coral and seaweed and exotic fish.*

*Dennis is lying on the floor, in a fetal position. The Zeus statuette is in his right hand.*

*Then Dennis stands up, and looks about.*

***Poseidon** comes on stage. (His trident is a scepter, strapped to his arm.)*

*Dennis sees him and he holds up the Zeus statuette.*

**DENNIS** Poseidon, I come with an—

*Poseidon takes out his 'trident-scepter' and points it at Dennis.*

*Sound Effect: WATER CURRENTS.*

*The statuette FLINGS out of Dennis' hand, and goes off stage.*

**DENNIS** That was Zeus!

**POSEIDON** I know.

**DENNIS** It was an offer!

**POSEIDON** I made an oath that he would never be allowed here.

*Poseidon puts his trident back onto his arm.*



If he ever does come here, the entire ocean would go insane.

**DENNIS** Even if he was turned into a little model?

**POSEIDON** No exception.

*Pause.*

**DENNIS** I guess you know who I am.

**POSEIDON** Yes, Dennis. But you are not welcome.

**DENNIS** Don't you want to get your own back?

**POSEIDON** How?

**DENNIS** Zeus is furious at me.

*Pause.*

**POSEIDON** And?

**DENNIS** If you give me sanctuary, it would insult him.

**POSEIDON** It's no concern of mine what he thinks.

**DENNIS** You did fight, didn't you?

**POSEIDON** Yes, and then he banished me.

**DENNIS** So you're stuck here now.

**POSEIDON** "Now?"

*Pause.*

I have been "stuck" here for a lot longer than "now."

**DENNIS** And don't you want a comeback?

**POSEIDON** But "now" I love being here.

**DENNIS** Why?

- POSEIDON**            There is more life here than there is on dry land.
- DENNIS**              So I will admire it just as much as you do.
- POSEIDON**            You came here out of necessity, not for discovery.
- DENNIS**              I was a discoverer in life.
- POSEIDON**            You went to many different countries; but you did it as a priest who was helping people. You never did it as an explorer.
- DENNIS**              So I discovered hundreds of different *people* instead. They are just as fascinating as countries.
- POSEIDON**            But there are no people in the ocean for you.
- Dennis points into the far distance.*
- DENNIS**              Actually, there are.
- POSEIDON**            Nymphs and Tritons are not people!
- DENNIS**              Do they have choices and opinions?
- POSEIDON**            Yes.
- DENNIS**              That makes them people.
- POSEIDON**            They live in a world that provides everything for them. There are no impoverished countries here, Dennis. There is no religious angst and no sexual discrimination. Life is simple, yet various. There is absolutely no need for a savior like you.
- DENNIS**              Aren't you at least curious?
- POSEIDON**            No. I see fascinating things every day.
- DENNIS**              So you're just going to cling on to what you know.
- POSEIDON**            But what I know is more than enough!
- DENNIS**              You're afraid!
- POSEIDON**            What in the name of existence would I be afraid of?

- DENNIS** You don't want to have a strange new being in your realm.
- POSEIDON** So?
- DENNIS** That is fear of change.
- POSEIDON** It's just something I'm not interested in!
- DENNIS** It's relying on familiarity.
- POSEIDON** You don't want to stay here for its beauty, Dennis. You're just here to escape danger.
- DENNIS** Why is that too much to ask?
- POSEIDON** If I let you do this, thousands of others will come here with the same request.
- Poseidon takes his trident-scepter off his arm, again.*
- You have to leave. Now.
- Poseidon points his scepter at Dennis.*
- DENNIS** You're insulting the church that gave you respect!
- Poseidon lowers his trident.*
- POSEIDON** That doesn't make sense!
- DENNIS** Think about it. The Church was always against the notion of several gods.
- POSEIDON** What does that prove?
- DENNIS** The Church *could* have attacked your image, but it did not.
- POSEIDON** I was always about the sea, Dennis. Not the sky! I was never compared to God in the first place.
- DENNIS** But the Church *could* have compared you to God.
- POSEIDON** When?

**DENNIS** In the 1700s.

*Pause.*

The Church influenced trade, and trade was done at sea. The Church resented pagans, but it never ridiculed stories about sea monsters. In fact, a lot of clergymen believed they were real.

*Pause.*

It was a time when priests said there was only one god up in the sky . . . but they never said there was no god in the ocean.

*Long Pause.*

Am I the first *Christian* soul to come here?

**POSEIDON** Yes.

**DENNIS** That's what I can be. The Epitome of How The Church Never Lamponed You . . . even when it had the chance to.

*Poseidon Laughs.*

**POSEIDON** Why would I need that?

**DENNIS** If the Church ever *does* ridicule you, I can counteract it.

*Long Pause.*

**POSEIDON** I would need you to do a lot more than *just* that.

**DENNIS** I'm open to suggestions.

*Pause.*

**POSEIDON** You know what would happen if I met someone more qualified.

**DENNIS** Yes.

*Poseidon smirks.*

**POSEIDON** You have an agile tongue, Dennis.

**DENNIS**                   And a lot to lose. Even though I'm dead.

*The Sea God ponders on this.*

**POSEIDON**               No matter how careful you are, I will know everything you do sooner or later. You do understand that!

**DENNIS**                   Yes.

*Pause.*

**POSEIDON**               All right, I will take you up on this.

*Poseidon puts his scepter back onto his arm. Then he starts to exit.*

                                  Welcome to the afterlife that is amongst life.

*And then Poseidon leaves.*

*Dennis breathes a sigh of relief.*

### SCENE CHANGE

*Spotlight comes up on Dennis. He does not wear a priest collar now.*

**DENNIS**                   For years I have been in this realm where the people give themselves nutrients by observing how marine life eats. Sometimes it's as delicate as a clownfish eating moss, other times it's as bitter as a shark eating a seal.

*Pause.*

I am happy but, despite Poseidon's opinion, I am not in a haven. It is beautiful, yes, but it's not a haven . . . there's too much freedom.

*Clarycine, a sexy sea nymph, comes up behind him and kisses him on the neck.*

**CLARYCINE**            Still reminiscing about mortality?

**DENNIS**                   Not really.

*They face each other and embrace gently.*

**CLARYCINE** Your report last night was magnificent.

**DENNIS** Thanks, but Poseidon wasn't impressed.

**CLARYCINE** Yes he was.

**DENNIS** His face was flat.

**CLARYCINE** You're still here, aren't you?

**DENNIS** That's only because he needs me.

**CLARYCINE** That's not true.

**DENNIS** I'm the only one who . . . can . . .

*Clarycine has put her mouth right in front of his, making him stop his flow of speech.*

**CLARYCINE** He was fine before you got here. Trust me, he likes you.

*Clarycine kisses him on the lips – heavily.*

*Then she steps back. And she gloats while he goes all giddy for a moment.*

**CLARYCINE** Have you found dinner?

**DENNIS** Was I supposed to get dinner?

**CLARYCINE** You said you were tired of hermit crabs.

**DENNIS** But you have tried other things.

**CLARYCINE** Yes, and how were they?

*Awkward Pause.*

**DENNIS** They were all right.

*That was clearly a lie.*

**CLARYCINE** You didn't fall for my culinary skills, mister!

**DENNIS** Okay, okay. Can you wait an hour?

**CLARYCINE** I'll give you two.

*She kisses him again.*

You know what you'll get if dessert's good, don't you?

*She gives him a wink, and leaves.*

*He stands still for a while, to recover his wits.*

*Then he faces the audience.*

**DENNIS** I had sex before I wore a collar, but they were rushed and naïve moments. Clarycine is the first real intimacy I have ever had as a mature adult.

*He looks off to where she just exited.*

She's an eccentric sea nymph. She found me enticing because my being here was so odd.

*Pause.*

She is warm, alluring, gentle, mysterious . . . if she didn't have so much lust she would be everything an angel should be.

*Dennis takes up a spyglass, which is made out of shells.*

Well . . . looks like I better start hunting.

*Then he patiently searches along the sea grounds.*

*A few beats pass.*

I still haven't gotten used to eating without a table. Getting used to chopsticks – when I was a mortal – was easier!

*He spots something in the distance, and cringes.*

I know I have to accept a shark feeding now and then, but that one's just sick!

*He searches a little more, and spots something else.*

Jellyfish eating minnows is sour and has a weird aftertaste.

*Suddenly Dennis spots something up close.*

A starfish eating coral. We haven't had that for a while.

*He takes out a pearl, and looks at it.*

I love the fact that currency, here, is done with favors.  
Expensive minerals are used as location markers.

*He puts the pearl at this area.*

It's really quite ironic.

*Athena comes onto the stage. She is dressed like an ancient Greek scholar, carrying a leather case filled with scroll documents. (Her 'arm-scepter' is shaped like a spear with a round shield.)*

**ATHENA** "Ironic" is a man who does what his courtesan tells him to!

**DENNIS** Who are you?

**ATHENA** Athena.

**DENNIS** . . . Goddess of Wisdom.

**ATHENA** Wisdom and War Tactics.

**DENNIS** Not the goddess of arbitration?

**ATHENA** Of course I'm not!

**DENNIS** So how did you get here?

*Athena puts her case down and takes out a peacock feather.*

**ATHENA** Do I have to tell you who Hera is?

**DENNIS** Zeus' wife.

**ATHENA** She is the Queen of the Gods, Dennis!

**DENNIS** So . . . she is Zeus' wife.



**ATHENA** Yes, all right, Zeus' wife!

**DENNIS** And does she love peacock feathers?

**ATHENA** It's her symbol. You should know that by now.

**DENNIS** Poseidon doesn't talk about his family much.

*Athena holds the feather up to Dennis' eyes.*

**ATHENA** Hera made me this. So I can come here without Poseidon knowing.

**DENNIS** But he knows where I am.

**ATHENA** Not if you're near me.

**DENNIS** I assume you're going to give me a lecture.

**ATHENA** Oh I'll give you more than that!

**DENNIS** I never disregarded wisdom.

**ATHENA** That's not my problem with you.

*Pause.*

**DENNIS** I criticized war, not war *tactics*.

**ATHENA** But when you criticized war, you made the tactics look like a necessity.

**DENNIS** Shouldn't you like that?

**ATHENA** You took away the beauty of it.

**DENNIS** War tactics is not an art form.

**ATHENA** It *was*. But now it's all just contracts and computers.

**DENNIS** There are people who re-enact historical battles.

**ATHENA** But you made them all look like silly games! They don't provide for me anymore.

*Pause.*

Now I only get energy from the army commanders *of* this era. And they don't give it any glamour. They give it tradition, yes, but the grandeur isn't there.

**DENNIS** So fix it! I won't stop you!

**ATHENA** It's gone so far that I need the other gods to help me.

**DENNIS** Terrific! You can all bond now.

**ATHENA** They will only co-operate if I bring you to them.

*Pause.*

**DENNIS** Would they really co-operate *after* I'm punished?

**ATHENA** Yes. You will be punished before, during, *and* after it's all fixed.

*Poseidon walks onto the stage.*

**POSEIDON** You want to make a party out of punishment?

*Pause.*

That's not really your style, Athena.

*Athena looks at the peacock feather.*

**ATHENA** How did . . . ?

**POSEIDON** Hera doesn't outrank me while I'm still *in* the sea.

*Athena looks right at Poseidon.*

**ATHENA** "Isn't my style?" Looking after a human isn't *your* style!

**POSEIDON** He earns his place.

**ATHENA** Not as much as he damaged Olympus!

**DENNIS** You can see it that way, but I am not leaving here.

*Athena turns back to Dennis.*

**ATHENA** I challenge you to a duel of chess.

**DENNIS** Good for you. I refuse.

**ATHENA** Then I'll come back, with more than just a peacock feather!

**DENNIS** Keep it coming.

**ATHENA** There is only so long Poseidon's status can last against Hera!  
Even in the sea! I will keep coming until I can stay for as long  
as I want.

*Pause.*

If you accept a duel from me now, it will be your best chance!

**DENNIS** What's in it for me?

**ATHENA** You win, I leave you alone. I win, you're coming with me.

**DENNIS** Where should the duel be?

**ATHENA** Here!

**DENNIS** You named the time and the place, so I name the weapon.

*Pause.*

**ATHENA** All right, what?

**DENNIS** If I beat you, you leave me alone forever?

**ATHENA** Yes!

**DENNIS** I need your word.

**ATHENA** As the Goddess of Tactics and Wisdom, if you win I will not  
bother you again.

**DENNIS** And my weapon of choice is . . .

*He points at Poseidon.*

Whatever Poseidon makes for us.

*Poseidon holds down a chuckle.*

**POSEIDON** Give me a moment.

*Poseidon leaves.*

*Athena and Dennis are alone, for now.*

**ATHENA** And what do you think it will be? Brass knuckles?

**DENNIS** Hmm. Shell knuckles, maybe.

**ATHENA** I could defeat you with boxing gloves!

**DENNIS** It's a pity you didn't challenge me to Monopoly. Poseidon could have joined in.

**ATHENA** I am going to make you beg for mercy when this is done!

**DENNIS** Careful. You're turning into Ares.

*Poseidon comes back: holding something white in his hand.*

*Athena frowns.*

**ATHENA** A sperm whale tooth?

**POSEIDON** He fought against harpooners and giant squids his whole life. He witnessed the ships and submarines of two world wars. This whale had seen and felt more violence and destruction than any other sperm whale has.

*Poseidon holds the tooth between Dennis and Athena.*

Hold onto this tooth, and every type of violence you have been in or have witnessed will resurface. You will share those memories, and you will know whose is whose.

**ATHENA** And the victor?

**POSEIDON** The victor is the one who is still holding it.

*Athena holds onto the tooth, and then she looks at Dennis.*

**ATHENA** I've seen more wars than you have!

*Dennis holds onto the tooth.*

**DENNIS** True. But how many have you really been in?

**ATHENA** More than you have!

**DENNIS** How is that?

**ATHENA** Because I'm immortal!

**DENNIS** Exactly. I said how many have you *really* been in, not *actually* been in. There is a difference.

*Poseidon takes his hand off the tooth.*

**POSEIDON** Commence.

*Dennis and Athena look each other in the eyes.*

*They both tremor a little bit.*

**ATHENA** I have not been on the field as much as you, because I'm a tactician.

**DENNIS** Your point?

**ATHENA** Tacticians are unsung heroes.

**DENNIS** Really? People who sit in an office and look at maps?

**ATHENA** Yes! We never get the glory that a soldier does.

**DENNIS** I wasn't a soldier.

**ATHENA** *Or* as much as a journalist!

**DENNIS** The men on the field fight for their country a lot more than for glory.

**ATHENA** But men love guns and swords, Dennis. Even you did.

**DENNIS** When I was a teenager. And even then, it was an illusion.

**ATHENA** Yes! And tacticians don't deal with macho illusions. They plan things in the real world.

**DENNIS** While the people on the field *do* things in the real world.

*They both look a little more traumatized than before.*

**ATHENA** I've been on Earth in human form.

**DENNIS** I know.

**ATHENA** I even wiped my memory, to see life as a mortal.

**DENNIS** How generous.

**ATHENA** And I took part in wars!

**DENNIS** And in every single one of them, you were a tactician. You were not actually on the field.

**ATHENA** I still thought my life was in danger!

**DENNIS** Only if the enemy got close.

**ATHENA** And that *did* happen.

**DENNIS** But you never saw cadavers scattered about you, Athena. You never saw dead children. You got the reports, yes, but you were never actually *there*.

*Athena has a look of sheer terror on her face. Dennis responds.*

Yes, Athena. This is what drove me to the Church in the first place.

*Athena SCREAMS and lets go.*

*Dennis stands there, triumphantly holding the tooth.*

**DENNIS** It doesn't have to be this way, Athena. Be the noble one and just fix the problem yourself.

*But she doesn't listen. She just leaves.*

*Pause.*

**POSEIDON** Very good, Dennis. Very good.

**DENNIS** Do you remember when you said, "You do know what would happen if I find someone more qualified"?

**POSEIDON** Oh don't concern yourself with that, now.

**DENNIS** Thank you . . . well, I better give this back.

*He offers Poseidon the whale tooth.*

**POSEIDON** Ugh! Keep that away from me!

**DENNIS** Why?

**POSEIDON** It hurts.

**DENNIS** Hurts?

*Poseidon starts to exit.*

**POSEIDON** You just defeated a *god* with it! That tooth is now banal to me.

*Poseidon is now gone.*

*Pause as Dennis looks at the whale tooth, deeply.*

*Clarycine comes on.*

**CLARYCINE** Dennis!

*She rushes to him and they embrace.*

*Then Dennis steps back, and holds up the whale tooth.*

**DENNIS** So this won't hurt you?

**CLARYCINE** No. I'm not a god.

**DENNIS** Right.

*The two of them look at the tooth.*

Should I get rid of it?

**CLARYCINE** Why? You might as well wear it proudly.

*Pause.*

**DENNIS** Was that the first time Athena ever invaded the sea?

**CLARYCINE** Yes. She didn't do a good job at it, eh?

**DENNIS** But how many times has a god invaded here?

**CLARYCINE** Why ask that?

**DENNIS** What if it happens again?

**CLARYCINE** Let them try.

*Pause.*

**DENNIS** Has Poseidon ever had to surrender?

**CLARYCINE** Of course he has.

**DENNIS** I know, but for as long as he's been in the ocean.

**CLARYCINE** . . . No.

**DENNIS** Really?

*Pause.*

**CLARYCINE** I suppose there was one incident.

**DENNIS** What happened?

**CLARYCINE** There was a warship that had a vulture figurehead. It was magnificent. It sank and Poseidon claimed it. But Ares demanded it because the vulture is his symbol.

**DENNIS** How soon did he surrender?



**CLARYCINE**       Hardly “soon.” Ares complained for centuries, and it didn’t do anything. So he got Aphrodite to help him.

**DENNIS**            Did Aphrodite owe Ares a favor?

**CLARYCINE**       No. They were intimate.

**DENNIS**            So this was before she married Hephaestus.

**CLARYCINE**       No, it wasn’t.

*A look of realization comes over Dennis’ face.*

**DENNIS**            What did she do?

**CLARYCINE**       She went to the sea, and posed in various ways to make the sea nymphs jealous of her beauty. And that didn’t work. So she just kept whining about it. Poseidon got sick of all the noise and gave it over.

*Pause.*

He didn’t really “surrender.” He just couldn’t stand any more of Aphrodite’s squealing.

*Pause.*

I better check the oyster beds now.

**DENNIS**            Is it time already?

**CLARYCINE**       It will be soon, and I was late last time.

*She kisses him on the lips.*

See you in the ravine?

**DENNIS**            Same spot as last week.

*They kiss again, and she leaves.*

*The set goes dark.*

SCENE CHANGE*Spotlight on Dennis.*

**DENNIS** It's a bit self-indulgent . . . okay *very* self-indulgent . . . but after dealing with Athena, I was expecting to become an idol.

*Pause.*

Ultimately that has happened. But instead of getting favors and interviews; the tritons all offer me arm-wrestles and the sea nymphs all sing at me.

*The setting lights up again.**There is an anchor on the sea floor. Its chain goes upwards.**Dennis approaches it, and he looks somewhat surprised to see it there.**Hephaestus walks on.*

**HEPHAESTUS** I like them old-fashioned.

**DENNIS** Hephaestus!

**HEPHAESTUS** Hello Dennis.

*They shake hands.*

**DENNIS** You're feeling better?

**HEPHAESTUS** Much better.

**DENNIS** Well enough to come here uninvited?

**HEPHAESTUS** Poseidon likes me enough.

**DENNIS** So you are invited?

**HEPHAESTUS** Not really.

**DENNIS** Then how did you get here?

*Hephaestus points at the anchor.*

**HEPHAESTUS** I made this with my ears plugged and with a blindfold on. So if we stay near it, no one else can hear us or see us. Not even Poseidon.

**DENNIS** Someone already tried that.

**HEPHAESTUS** There wasn't much effort put into that peacock feather. Trust me, this one will work.

*Long Pause.*

**DENNIS** I honestly am sorry I hurt you.

**HEPHAESTUS** The things you did in life taught me forgiveness.

**DENNIS** So is there a reason why you're here?

*Hephaestus now gets very solemn.*

**HEPHAESTUS** You've lost your faith, Dennis!

**DENNIS** It was faith in a God that never existed.

**HEPHAESTUS** You did not become a priest out of curiosity. You wanted to help people.

**DENNIS** And I did.

**HEPHAESTUS** But the driving force you had *for* that compassion is dead now.

**DENNIS** That "driving force" still made results, when I was alive.

**HEPHAESTUS** But your soul is lost.

**DENNIS** I'm in the ocean, instead of a cookie-cutter storybook version of the Afterlife. And I love it!

**HEPHAESTUS** You did not have this mind when you were a good priest.

**DENNIS** I was a good priest from my actions, more than from my beliefs.

**HEPHAESTUS** So tell me the truth: do you honestly think you would have done all those wondrous things if you did not believe in a Christian Heaven at the time?

- DENNIS**                    There are atheists who do good for people.
- HEPHAESTUS**            Yes, I know, but you! Would *you* have done all those things if you were an atheist? Some, maybe, but all of them?
- Long Pause.*
- You saw the horrors of war when you were a journalist. And then you turned to a compassionate method.
- DENNIS**                    Yes, a *compassionate* method. It wasn't so spiritual as much as it was compassionate.
- HEPHAESTUS**            So why didn't you become a social worker?
- DENNIS**                    War scared me. I needed the delusion of God for comfort.
- HEPHAESTUS**            There! You needed to believe in him!
- DENNIS**                    Yes. Being compassionate was a choice I made later; once I felt safe. It was not my reason for becoming a priest. Not really.
- Pause.*
- HEPHAESTUS**            Did you ever resent other religions?
- DENNIS**                    No, and you know that.
- HEPHAESTUS**            Did you ever resent homosexuals?
- DENNIS**                    Of course not!
- HEPHAESTUS**            You could have cared for people *without* being a priest. So why did you – nonetheless – become a priest?
- DENNIS**                    Maybe I liked the free train tickets.
- HEPHAESTUS**            This is not a laughing matter!
- DENNIS**                    Why take this so seriously?
- Pause.*
- HEPHAESTUS**            I feel responsible for what's happened to you.

- DENNIS** But I'm happy here.
- HEPHAESTUS** You strived for *Heaven* Dennis!
- DENNIS** But where I am now is just as wonderful!
- HEPHAESTUS** It has beauty, but does it have the love that you were expecting from Heaven?
- DENNIS** I have love here!
- HEPHAESTUS** No, you have *gratification* here.

*Pause.*

Honestly. Do you feel the warmth from that nymph that a married man has from a good woman?

- DENNIS** Yes! As a matter of fact I do!
- HEPHAESTUS** So ask for her opinion about my offer.
- DENNIS** What offer?

*Hephaestus points to the anchor. Then he points up along the chain, which goes upwards and out of the ocean.*

- HEPHAESTUS** This anchor leads up to a sailboat, which can float through space. And the sails can only catch the waves of energy from your soul. Only you can drive this boat, Dennis. And you have total control over where it goes and how fast.
- DENNIS** How did you make this?
- HEPHAESTUS** Back when you were a mortal, I caught the essence of your best prayers and put them in bottles. I used that essence to make the fabric of these sails.
- DENNIS** Thoughtful.
- HEPHAESTUS** Get in this boat, draw the anchor, and set off. Far away from Earth and from Olympus and the gods.
- DENNIS** And just keep going?

**HEPHAESTUS**      Once you travel out of our perception, *then* you can stop.

**DENNIS**            But you're gods!

**HEPHAESTUS**      Just of Earth.

**DENNIS**            How far would I go?

**HEPHAESTUS**      Until your sun becomes a star.

**DENNIS**            And then what?

**HEPHAESTUS**      There are four sacks in the boat. When you've finished traveling, open them.

**DENNIS**            What's in them?

**HEPHAESTUS**      Creation Clay.

*Pause.*

With that, you can create Heaven. And it will be Heaven the way it was supposed to be *for you*.

*Pause.*

I know, deep down inside, it is what you want.

*Hephaestus starts walking away.*

Goodbye Dennis. And thank you for showing me the compassionate faith.

*Hephaestus leaves.*

*Dennis looks at the anchor:*

### SCENE CHANGE

*Setting lights up . . .*

*The backdrop shows it to be on a boat, in the middle of a vast seascape.*

*Dennis is alone. He wears the whale tooth around his neck, on a thick string.*

*He has a conch shell in his hands. He brings it up to his mouth and speaks into it.*

**DENNIS**                    The depths of space are eternal, but the depths of the ocean are dimensional. Thank you, Poseidon. I am sorry to part with you so abruptly.

*Dennis drops the conch shell into the sea.*

*Hermes comes on to the stage. He is in the typical white-shawl garb that most ancient Greek types wear, and he also has his winged helmet and winged sandals. His staff – the rod with two coiling snakes – is strapped to his arm.*

**HERMES**                    Shakespeare would be impressed.

*Dennis is startled, but only a little bit.*

**DENNIS**                    Poetry was an elective when I studied journalism. And even then I wasn't the best student at it.

**HERMES**                    No, you're just brilliant at ruining gods!

**DENNIS**                    You don't look like you've been altered much.

**HERMES**                    I'm too handsome to be changed by sermons and preaching.

**DENNIS**                    So have you changed at all?

**HERMES**                    What is my traditional purpose?

**DENNIS**                    You're the messenger.

**HERMES**                    But because of you, people acknowledge a very *different* type of "celestial messenger."

*Pause.*

**DENNIS**                    Angels.

**HERMES**                    Mmm! Dainty blond people without genitals! They've been glamorized so much that now I can't fly like the wind.

**DENNIS**                    You got here without any problems.

**HERMES** Oh I can still fly, but not like I used to.

*Pause.*

**DENNIS** I didn't preach about angels.

**HERMES** You gave others the confidence to.

**DENNIS** Whatever the case, you don't have the power to take me.

**HERMES** I know. I'm here to strike a deal with you.

*Hermes takes out a quill and a sheet.*

*He comes up to Dennis, places them on the floor, and then steps back.*

*Dennis sniggers.*

**DENNIS** Scared of getting germs off me?

**HERMES** No, it's that awful tooth around your neck! It's hard enough to just look at you.

**DENNIS** So what is this document for?

**HERMES** To write and sign a statement. Signify that you – the once Reverend Dennis – now do *not* believe in angels . . . Which is technically true.

**DENNIS** And you'll use that to convince the world?

**HERMES** It won't be easy, but yes.

**DENNIS** In return for what?

**HERMES** I let you go.

**DENNIS** We don't have a deal!

*Hermes holds his hand above his belt pouch.*

**HERMES** Prometheus gave me an ember from his torch. I've covered it in a ball of dust from Olympus. All I have to do is crumble that ball of dust and then fling it at the sails, and they will burn up



instantly.

*Pause.*

**DENNIS** I'm not going to shatter people's beliefs.

**HERMES** *Your* beliefs were shattered, and you coped.

**DENNIS** There are people who need Christianity more than I did.

**HERMES** But I'm not attacking Christianity.

**DENNIS** Yes you are!

**HERMES** No, I am only attacking the notion of angels.

*Pause.*

Let people believe in God, but get rid of angel nonsense.

**DENNIS** All this just because you can't fly so well?

**HERMES** You should appreciate what I'm doing!

**DENNIS** Why?

**HERMES** The belief in angels violates Christianity.

**DENNIS** That's ridiculous!

**HERMES** Christianity is supposed to be about a One-True-God.

**DENNIS** And it is!

**HERMES** But when war is suddenly acceptable, there's Archangel Michael. When people get sick, there's Archangel Raphael. The list just keeps going. There's going to be an angel for the internet soon.

**DENNIS** People will always acknowledge God *more* than angels.

**HERMES** But people will always expect to *see* one.

**DENNIS** So they need the sense of hope. I'm not going to tarnish that!

*Pause.*

**HERMES**            Very well.

*Hermes reaches down to his belt . . .*

Where is it?

**DENNIS**            About seventy feet underwater by now. You better go get it before Poseidon gets angry.

**HERMES**            How did you do that?

**DENNIS**            I didn't.

*Clarycine walks onto the stage, from behind Hermes.*

*She indicates to the whale tooth around Dennis' neck.*

**CLARYCINE**        It's amazing what you don't notice when you're ignoring pain, eh?

*Hermes scowls, and he turns to leave.*

*But he turns back, just before he's gone, and says something else.*

**HERMES**            You will wish you signed that sheet!

**DENNIS**            Who's going to get me now? You?

**HERMES**            Artemis is just as quick as I am. And she can still use a bow.

**DENNIS**            I criticized game hunting.

**HERMES**            But not hunting-for-necessity. She held on to that glamor.

**DENNIS**            Why would she hunt me for necessity?

**HERMES**            She would be under an order.

*Hermes leaps off stage.*

*Dennis and Clarycine get right into setting sail.*

**DENNIS** Said goodbye to everyone?

**CLARYCINE** Yes, and they all think I'm joking.

*Lights out.*

SCENE CHANGE

*A Projection displays a visual of moving through the cosmos.*

*Masses of star constellations, nebulas, gas giants, asteroids.*

*All amidst the sheer black void of space.*

**DENNIS** *(off stage)* So many Darwin-Buffs showed me pictures of this, to ridicule my beliefs. They would say "If God loves the Earth so much, then why bother making all this?" or "Are other gods creators of other planets? If so, how do we know our god worthy to be called The Supreme Being in comparison to them?"

*Pause.*

The truth is I was open to the thought that the universe itself was God. And I never thought the world was really made in seven days. But when I told them this they thought I was just being passive and avoiding controversy.

*Pause.*

Yet it's true, I never expected God to be a man with a beard and dressed like a shepherd. But what all these science-addicts don't realize is that – for the record – life *on* other planets has not been officially identified yet.

*Pause.*

And astronomers have been looking for life on other planets, for a very long time, with just as much faithful dedication as a priest who clings on to his religion does.

*Projection out.*

SCENE CHANGE

*The backdrop depicts a garden: vibrant with colorful flora.*

*Dennis sits on a throne made of oak & leaves.*

**DENNIS** In Poseidon's realm I was a value. But here I am myself.

*He looks about himself, at his bountiful garden.*

Each flower stimulates my memories in a different way. Some of them bring Diana Kralls' music to my mind's ear, others bring the taste of baked potatoes with garlic butter to my mouth. The list doesn't stop.

*He looks off into the distance.*

All the while, Clarycine has her own miniature sea to wallow in. I don't see her as much as I used to . . . but we still see each other, with the sense of romantic brevity as if we were still getting used to each other.

*Pause.*

Sometimes I miss the presence of an upcoming death, because there's no sense of urgency now. And I have so much control that there are no surprises. I could recreate a physical body, and I could abandon my control over this place: but such a decision would only have merit if I make it absolute. If I make it something I cannot undo.

*Projection: a bright purple nebula appears behind him (Onwards).*

**ONWARDS** You need a mortal's decision.

*Dennis looks up and – although he does not turn around – he can “see” it.*

**DENNIS** What in the universe are you?

**ONWARDS** Onwards.

**DENNIS** Onwards?

**ONWARDS** Onwards as a concept. As a state of being. As a value.

*Pause.*

**DENNIS** Where are you from?

**ONWARDS** I have asked myself that question for centuries.

**DENNIS** And you don't know?

**ONWARDS** No.

**DENNIS** Then how do you know who you are?

**ONWARDS** I don't. I only know what I am always doing. Always settling the next thing and the next. No plans for the distant future, and with little recollection of the past. I am always going onwards.

*Pause.*

**DENNIS** Why are you here?

**ONWARDS** You have left your world in peril.

**DENNIS** The gods don't hate the world they made, they just hate me.

**ONWARDS** Their hatred for you is boundless.

**DENNIS** So let them brood.

**ONWARDS** But they won't brood. They will focus on vengeance.

**DENNIS** I'm out of their reach.

**ONWARDS** So they will let that vengeance out onto the human race.

**DENNIS** If I can deal with angry gods, so can other people.

**ONWARDS** But no one in the world knows they are real.

**DENNIS** But if I go back, what would I use?

**ONWARDS** You have that tooth.

*Pause.*

- DENNIS** And become a god slayer?
- ONWARDS** No, but a god *beater*.
- DENNIS** Then thousands of people will worship me in the afterlife.
- ONWARDS** Is that a bad thing?
- DENNIS** I'm not going to start a religion *in* the afterlife!
- ONWARDS** But the people would be secure.
- DENNIS** No! I will let them fight their own battles, and give them independence.
- ONWARDS** Then the afterlife will be a war zone.
- DENNIS** A war that the gods would only *like* to win, but where the humans will *need* to win.
- ONWARDS** But since they will need to win, why won't you help them?
- DENNIS** If I help them, they will no longer have that need.
- ONWARDS** Would you let thousands of innocent souls go into a war zone?
- DENNIS** None of them could possibly die.
- ONWARDS** Instead, they can lose their minds.
- Pause.*
- DENNIS** If I stay here and let them help themselves, many of them will be in danger; when they are supposed to be ethereal. But if I go back and save them, many of them will forget their self-reliance; when they are supposed to be free.
- ONWARDS** Do you honestly think there is a middle ground option?
- Dennis ponders.*

SCENE CHANGE

*Lights are still out.*

*Sound Effect: STONE BEING HACKED AWAY, but in small pieces.*

*Spotlight – on one side of the stage – there is Dennis. He has his back turned to the audience. He viciously hacks at a wall . . . and he is using the whale tooth to do it.*

*Spotlight – on the other side of the stage – a muscular man walks on. He is a **cyclops** (use a blindfold with an eye in the middle), and he's carrying bricks & mortar.*

**CYCLOPS** Desecrator!

*Dennis turns around and is dwarfed in comparison. (They both stay under their spotlights. Dennis looks upwards, while the cyclops looks downwards.)*

**DENNIS** Stanson!

*Pause.*

**(CYCLOPS)**

**STANSON** Yes?

**DENNIS** Do you know who I am?

*Pause.*

**STANSON** You would have to be that ex-Christian.

**DENNIS** Correct.

**STANSON** How did you do this?

*Dennis shows him the whale tooth.*

**DENNIS** This can hurt a god. So it can damage these walls.

**STANSON** But only Zeus could do this much damage!

**DENNIS** This part of the wall is exactly where Ares bashed it down, by *using* Zeus as a mallet. So this part of the wall is weak enough.

**STANSON** But why are you doing this?

**DENNIS** So that you would come to me.

*Dennis holds up the whale tooth.*

This is now yours.

**STANSON** Why would I want that?

**DENNIS** Apart from Hephaestus and Poseidon, the gods are going to revolt soon. And it will not be pleasant!

*Pause.*

This will be your weapon.

**STANSON** Why not Hephaestus?

**DENNIS** A god can't use it. And besides, he's now too much of a pacifist to lead a rebellion.

**STANSON** Why give it to me?

**DENNIS** With everything I discovered in the afterlife, you – Stanson – are the best at repairing things.

*Pause.*

With this tooth, you will have the power to repair only what *you* choose to.

*Dennis kneels, and is about to put the tooth down on the floor.*

*Between Dennis and Stanson, a spotlight comes up on Artermis. She has a bow drawn and is ready to shoot. (Movement suggests that she has just taken her 'arm scepter' off and it has turned into this bow.)*

**ARTEMIS** Give him that tooth, and I'll pin you with this arrow.

**DENNIS** That's hardly a threat.

**ARTEMIS** I made this arrow myself. It can maim you long enough, then I'll take you to the others.

**DENNIS** What if I don't hand it over?



**ARTERMIS** Then don't. Keep your tooth and go back to your warm soft garden and live there forever; while everyone else in your world will be in constant anguish.

**DENNIS** How did . . . ?

**ARTERMIS** I was on your tail the whole time. I heard every word that purple "thing" said to you.

**DENNIS** If I'm abducted, you'll all be too occupied with a war to do much to me.

**ARTERMIS** There's over fourteen of us!

*Pause.*

Either abandon your race to save your own skin – like a typical male – *or* give the tooth to Stanson, so that we can torture you forever.

*Pause.*

The choice is yours.

**DENNIS** Why would I choose to abandon the human race?

**ARTERMIS** Because Hera and Athena know how to hurt you! Believe me, they've been practicing!

**DENNIS** But I would have a clear conscience.

**ARTERMIS** You would be in so much agony that you wouldn't be able to *have* a conscience.

**DENNIS** So then I would not truly exist. Then what would you have a victory over?

*Pause.*

**ARTERMIS** So you would choose eternal damnation?

**DENNIS** It would be torment, but not damnation.

**ARTERMIS** But it would be eternal.

*Dennis points to Stanson.*

**DENNIS** Not if he gets me out.

**ARTERMIS** Are you so sure he would be able to?

**DENNIS** If he is unable to save me, why are you afraid of me giving this tooth to him?

*Pause.*

**ARTERMIS** If you are saved, after years of torture, do you honestly think you would recover?

**DENNIS** Yes.

**ARTERMIS** You said so yourself: that we would be too occupied with a war . . . so would your side! It would be a very long time before you could be treated.

**DENNIS** Then I'll have a merry time anticipating it.

*Pause.*

**ARTERMIS** So why don't you just give him the tooth?

*Pause.*

Take all the time you need. I can wait.

*Stanson speaks up.*

**STANSON** Not if I tell you to leave.

**ARTERMIS** You do not outrank me, cyclops!

*Stanson makes a downwards HAND SWIPE.*

*This BREAKS Artermis' bow in two.*

*Artermis looks at her broken weapon, then at Stanson, with pure astonishment.*

**ARTERMIS** You just broke something!

**STANSON** It wasn't exactly a peace offering.

**ARTEMIS** You are the quintessential fixer, you don't *break* things!

**STANSON** True, I do not break things . . . if you address me as who I am and not as "cyclops."

*Artemis starts to leave, but she says one more thing to Dennis.*

**ARTEMIS** We will all make you cry for mercy, priest.

**DENNIS** My name's Dennis.

*Artemis leaves.*

**STANSON** It's sad. She used to be one of the sensible gods.

**DENNIS** Maturity comes from adapting to limitations. Just give her time.

*Dennis kneels down and puts the whale tooth onto the floor (out of his spotlight).*

I'd better leave, now.

*Dennis turns to leave.*

*Stanson points to the floor.*

**STANSON** When will you take this back?

**DENNIS** I won't.

*Then Dennis is gone.*

*The cyclops reaches down and picks up the whale tooth (which is tiny in his hand).*

*Stanson looks at the whale tooth deeply . . .*

*Lights Out.*

*CURTAINS CLOSE*