

Crack the Pretty Armour

A One-Act Play

By Julia Weisser

Setting:

Prologue: Toronto, summer 1977 (wedding).

Scene 1: The University of Victoria, 1974.

Scenes 2-12: The kitchen of a house in the Annex neighbourhood of Toronto, spring 1977/
a church basement (“The Space”), same time.

Epilogue: Toronto, summer 1977 (wedding).

Playwright’s note: Red font indicates text from the plays *Everlasting Salvation Machine*, *Glory Train*, or *The True North Blueprint Trilogy* (*To Become a Drummer*; *I Love You Billy Striker*; *In Search of the Last Paradiddle*), all written by Louis Capson and the Creation 2 ensemble.

Crack the Pretty Armour is inspired by research and interviews with former members of the Toronto-based theatre company ‘Creation 2’ (1968-1977). It is, however, a work of fiction.

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Characters:

Daniel, male, mid 20s. Slightly effeminate and insecure; tries to hide it.

Jeremiah, male, early 30s. Charismatic and moody.

Rebecca, female, early 20s. A dancer; unassuming.

Naomi, female, early 20s. Cool and self-possessed.

Jacob, male, early 20s. Serious; rarely smiles.

Prologue: *Summer 1977. A wedding in Toronto: Tableau. Rebecca is wearing a bridal dress and holding a simple bouquet of flowers; she is staring straight ahead at the audience. Daniel is wearing a black suit; he is next to Rebecca; he is holding her arm and looking at her. Jeremiah is wearing a light-coloured suit and is standing next to Daniel; he is looking at Jacob. Jacob is also wearing a light-coloured suit and is looking at Rebecca. Naomi is wearing a dress suitable for either formal or casual; she is standing next to Rebecca. Naomi, the narrator, is the only one who is not frozen in tableau.*

Naomi: Everyone always wants to know how we got into this situation. But I'll tell you what's even more interesting: This the story of how we got out. Me, Rebecca, Daniel (*gestures*); all of us except Jacob, I guess. He never really did get out, did he? (*pause*) This wedding in 1977 was the last time we were all together. And just like that, we became nothing more than a footnote in Canadian theatre history.

I'll indulge you, though. I know you want to know how we all ended up living together in a communal Christian theatre company. I'll tell you: we were recruited. Or, most of us were, anyway. Jeremiah came to our schools, and told us about this radical company he had started in Toronto that was shaking up the theatre world. It was the 1970s, and you'd better believe, we wanted to shake things up too!

It all sounded so romantic. Living and working together in a house in the Annex; putting on plays all over Toronto; changing the world with our art. Jeremiah had such fire, such passion, it was easy to get swept along. It wasn't until later that we realized what we'd gotten into. Like the proverbial frog in the pot of boiling water, by that time it was too late.

My own journey started in 1974, at the University of Victoria. Jeremiah came to my school to teach for a semester. I had never come across anyone like him. Meeting him changed the course of my life.

Scene 1: *1974. An acting studio at the University of Victoria. Naomi, Jeremiah and Jacob are standing; Jacob has a notebook and pen with him.*

Jeremiah: So what role are they having you play?

Naomi: Um, the stage manager in *Our Town*.

Jeremiah (*scoffs*): The stage manager. You! The stage manager!

Naomi: What's wrong with –

Jeremiah: They do these stupid, boring plays, and then they don't even cast you!

Naomi: Well actually the stage manager in *Our Town* is –

Jeremiah: Forget it. I say you don't even do the show. You don't even do it! They clearly don't appreciate you here. So, protest! Walk out!

Naomi: Walk out?

Jeremiah: Yes! Walk out! Give them a taste of their own medicine. You don't need them. You're already an actress. You live your whole life as though you have a camera filming you, Naomi. When I look at you, you glow. And you have such a wonderful laugh, it lights up the whole room.

Naomi (*flattered*): So what do I –

Jeremiah: I'll write a letter to the school. I'll tell them that I support your decision. That the conditions that they have created at the University of Victoria are not conducive to... fostering true artistic talent and vision. Yes. (*to Jacob*) Are you getting this down?

Jacob: Um, yes, sure (*writes something down in notebook*).

Naomi: And then what? I...walk out, and then what?

Jeremiah: You come and join my theatre company in Toronto, of course.

Naomi: Toronto!

Jeremiah: Sure, why not? It's a big country. It's a big world. We're doing really cutting edge work, you know. We're going to wake people up. Jolt them out of their boring, routine existence. When people come see one of our plays, they're not going to know what hit them. We're dealing with all the really taboo subjects that don't get shown onstage. Sex, violence, the church. Your parents are atheists, right?

Naomi: Yeah, I guess.

Jeremiah: And what do you believe? You, yourself, Naomi. What are your own personal religious beliefs?

Naomi: I don't really know.

Jeremiah: Wouldn't you like the opportunity to find out? In my group, you'll have room to explore. We have Christians, Jews, agnostics... people trying to make sense of what they've been taught. We're doing things differently, aren't we, Jacob?

Jacob: Yes.

Jeremiah: See? I found Jacob here (*places a hand on Jacob's shoulder*) at a theatre workshop, too. Just like you. Only he was in high school, can you imagine? Only 17. (*pause*) We need

people like you, Naomi. Bright, talented, dedicated, inquisitive. The theatre you're doing here is dead, it's meaningless. It's theatre your parents want to watch. It's not *saying* anything. Ditch the straight-jacket and come to where the real change is happening.

Naomi: I'd... I'd love to.

Jeremiah: But?

Naomi: But nothing. I'll do it.

Jeremiah: Wonderful. I've already asked your classmate, Sarah. She said yes too. So you'll be going together.

Naomi: *(a bit disappointed)* Oh.

Jeremiah: *(doesn't notice)*: You're going to be just perfect for the next play we're doing, *I Love You Billy Striker*. It's the sequel to the play we put on last year at the St. Lawrence Centre. It's about fascism in Canada, about the future. About where we're headed if we don't turn things around. Eventually it's going to be a trilogy, the *True North Blueprint* trilogy. *(to Jacob)* Wouldn't she be great as Donna?

Jacob: Yes, for sure.

Naomi: Is that a big role?

Jeremiah: It's a very important role. But of course, all the roles are important. We work as an ensemble. There are no stars in our productions. Have you ever done any ensemble work? With movement?

Naomi: Not really. We mostly do character work here.

Jeremiah: You'll love it. I can already tell you'll have an aptitude for it. You'll fit right in. Are you a good cook?

Naomi: A good...cook?

Jeremiah: We all cook together. On a rotation. But the food has been really boring lately. Someone needs to spice it up a bit. You look like you're a good cook.

Naomi: Yes, I'm not bad.

Jeremiah: Modest. Well, start saying your goodbyes. We're going to go draft you that letter. Come on, Jacob.

(Jeremiah and Jacob exit. Naomi is left alone onstage).

Naomi *(to audience)*: I said my goodbyes, and yes, I walked out of the production of *Our Town*. I got suspended from school and I sold all my possessions. By then Jeremiah had already returned to Toronto; just days before I was supposed to get on the airplane, I received a letter in the mail. It was from him. He said that he had changed his mind; that he was rescinding his invitation. I couldn't believe it. Especially since Sarah was still invited! But then I made a decision: I was going to go anyway. Just show up on the doorstep and let him know what kind of person I was. I had never been to Toronto before; I took a limo from the airport, because I was too scared to take the subway. I knocked on the door of the house and Jeremiah answered: "I guess you think you're pretty smart, eh?" Three years later, I was still there.

(Lights fade)

Scene 2: 1977. The kitchen of the house in the Annex; a table and some chairs. In the corner is a rotary phone on a table. Daniel and Rebecca are having a cup of tea together. They both have a copy of their scripts for the play 'Everlasting Salvation Machine'; Rebecca is reading hers. It is four o'clock in the afternoon. There is a small plate of untouched cookies between them. When there is silence, it is comfortable.

Daniel: *(mumbles his lines to himself, not looking at his script. Gets audibly louder and clearer halfway through)* We will not go to the public for funds. It is too easy to let the good men of the world go on thinking that they are made right by their good deeds. And we have let the very devil take over this movement in the form of men like Reich; men who make the machine run everlasting until they save us all and send us to the Pit to burn. We are starved, deprived.

Rebecca: Deprived.

Daniel: *(had not noticed that she was paying attention)* What?

Rebecca: *(kindly)* It's deprived, not depraved.

Daniel: Darn it. *(starts again)* We are starved, deprived. We are not God's poor ones. We have no right to call ourselves the soldiers of Christ. I'm tired of trying to crack the pretty armour of this movement. *(pause)* I'm never going to get it.

Rebecca: You are. You definitely are.

Daniel: This play makes no sense. Who wants to go see a play about the Salvation Army? Don't answer that, nobody obviously. Nobody is going to go see this. Do you know that in our last newspaper review, Herbert Whittaker wrote that there were more people onstage than there were in the audience? It's embarrassing.

Rebecca: Try not to think about that.

Daniel: Try not to think about it. Try not to think about it! *(looks around, sees that no one is there, whispers and leans in)* Two nights ago, I ran away.

Rebecca: *(appalled)* You what?

Daniel: I ran away! I couldn't stand it anymore. I snuck out of the house at 2am and I just walked. Aimlessly. I ended up trying to sleep under a bush on somebody's lawn in Rosedale. A bush!

(Jacob enters and stands in the doorway of the kitchen, watching and eavesdropping. Rebecca notices him, but does not say anything. Daniel does not immediately notice him).

Rebecca: But you're here now.

Daniel: Yeah. Turns out bushes aren't very comfortable for sleeping under. Plus, I realized that I had no money, no job connections, no family in Canada, and no friends. So I came back.

Rebecca: I'm your friend! I can't believe you left.

Daniel: I know, I'm sorry. I don't know what I was thinking. It was crazy. When I joined five years ago I wanted to be an actor, at any cost. Now I just want to be normal, and I don't know how. *(startled; notices Jacob)* I didn't see you there, Jacob. Would you like to sit down?

Jacob: No thank you. I'm not hungry.

Daniel: We're not really eating, we're just having a cup of tea.

Jacob: I don't like tea. It's the tannins. They give me gas.

Daniel: *(rolls eyes)* Thanks for sharing, Jacob.

There is an awkward silence. After what seems like a small eternity, Jeremiah enters, several books under his arm, accompanied by Naomi. His energy is frantic, and it changes the mood of the entire room. He looks around.

Jeremiah: What are you all doing? Sitting around!

Daniel: We're not –

Jeremiah: Yes you are! Sitting around! After everything that's happened!

(Daniel looks at Naomi, who shrugs at him, out of view of Jeremiah).

Rebecca: What's... happened?

Jeremiah: My GOD, does nobody even care about this company except me? You all just sit around here twiddling your thumbs, absolutely no awareness about the financial trouble we're in. Not a care in the world, any of you. I envy you, I really do. I wish someone would take care of me the way I take care of all of you.

Daniel: What kind of financial trouble?

Jeremiah: GRANTS, Daniel. Grants. We didn't get any this year. Goddamn bastards don't appreciate good art. They just want to put on *Waiting for Godot* for the 800th time. They have absolutely no understanding of what I'm trying to do here. What I'm trying to say. But we're going to show them. Eh, Jacob?

Jacob: Yes.

Jeremiah: I am finally going to finish my trilogy. My masterpiece. That's right folks, there's finally going to be a part three to the *True North Blueprint*. It will be called... *In Search of the Last Paradiddle*.

(silence)

Jeremiah: That's a great title! Jeez! You people have about as much taste as those bastards at the Ontario Arts Council. *(gestures)* Forget whatever you were doing here –

Daniel: – learning our lines for *Everlasting Salvation Machine*.

Jeremiah: Forget *Everlasting Salvation Machine*. That's yesterday's news. I'm over it. There's a new play in town. Get your shoes on, we're going to the space!

(All five exit: first Jeremiah, followed by Jacob, followed by everyone else).

Scene 3: *"The Space" (the rehearsal space, in the basement of an old church). Wooden chairs are lined up upstage, not in use. Daniel, Jacob, Naomi, and Rebecca are doing 'The Machine' exercise, in the style of Viola Spolin. They are extremely coordinated, functioning as one ensemble, making sounds like a symphony. Eventually the pace of the 'machine' speeds up until it goes out of control. The 'machine' explodes and breaks down. All four actors throw themselves on the floor, exhausted. Jacob most of all is completely wrecked from having given more than 100% to this exercise.*

Scene 4: *The kitchen. Jacob is sitting at the table. He has fancy pencils and pens for drawing, and a notebook. At the moment he is not drawing; he is writing a letter in his notebook. After a few moments, Naomi walks in. She starts making coffee.*

Naomi: What are you working on?

Jacob (*tries to hide his letter*): I'm... drawing the poster for *In Search of the Last Paradiddle*.

Naomi: I'd certainly like to see what the poster for that play is going to look like!

Jacob: It's not done yet.

Naomi (*tries to lean over and look at his notebook*): That's not a poster.

Jacob: I told you, it's not done yet.

Naomi (*grabs his notebook and reads aloud*): It's a letter. Dear Rebecca –

Jacob (*lunges for the notebook*): Give that back!

Naomi (*continues to read aloud*): I have loved you since the first time I saw you dance –

Jacob succeeds in grabbing the notebook from her; he rips the letter out of the notebook and crumples it up. He throws it in the garbage can.

Naomi (*softly*): Why don't you tell her, if that's how you feel?

Jacob: What's the point?

Naomi: What do you mean what's the point? Love... is the point!

Jacob: Sometimes love isn't enough.

(pause)

Naomi : How long were you together, anyway?

Jacob: Six months. The best six months of my life.

Naomi: So why did you break up with her?

Jacob: It became too much for me. The passive aggressive comments. About how women were harpies, they suck you dry... how real artists don't have time for relationships.

Naomi: Jeremiah.

Jacob: Yeah. He's always telling me what a talented artist I am. I have absolutely no idea if it's true or not. Or if he's just placating me to get me to do his bidding. (*imitates Jeremiah*) "Are you getting this down, Jacob?" (*pause*). Honestly, Naomi. I look at my drawings and I just see lines on a page. I don't even know.

Naomi: Show me.

Jacob: Show you what.

Naomi: The poster.

Jacob: There is no poster. I've just been sitting here trying not to think about Rebecca. Obviously, it hasn't been working.

Naomi gets up to leave, with her coffee.

Jacob: *(before she can leave)* I see her with him, you know.

Naomi: See who with who?

Jacob: Daniel. I see Rebecca spending all her time with Daniel. I'm not stupid; I know what's going on.

Naomi: Nothing's *going on*, as far as I know.

Jacob: Doesn't matter. It just goes to show you. Jeremiah was right: she doesn't care about me. I'm replaceable. I've been replaced.

Naomi: She can't wait for you forever.

Jacob: No.

Naomi exits. Jacob is left alone on stage with his notebook. He fishes the letter out of the garbage can and smooths it out. The lights fade.

Scene 5: "The Space": Naomi, Jacob, Rebecca and Daniel are doing a 'Viewpoints' exercise, in the style of Mary Overlie, conducted very intently by Jeremiah. Music is playing.

Scene 6: Kitchen. Naomi is sitting at the table, alone. She is kneading dough. After a moment, Rebecca enters.

Rebecca: Hi.

Naomi *(looks up)*: Oh, hi.

Rebecca *(gestures at the dough)*: Future bread?

Naomi: Huh? Oh, yeah. Ha.

Rebecca: Has anybody called recently?

Naomi: What?

Rebecca *(gestures towards the phone)*: Called. For me.

Naomi: Oh, no. Not since I've been sitting here, anyway.

Rebecca: Sometimes I wish the phone was somewhere more... private.

Naomi: Yeah, I agree. Are you waiting for a call? From someone?

Rebecca: I guess not. I just... miss some of my friends.

Naomi: What about your family? Your mother's Jewish, isn't she?

Rebecca: Both of my parents are Jewish. *I'm... Jewish.*

Naomi: What do they think about you being part of this group?

Rebecca: I honestly don't know.

Naomi: Do you want to help me? There's more dough on the counter.

Rebecca: Um, sure. *(she gets a lump of dough and joins Naomi at the table)*

Naomi: I see you spending a lot of time with Daniel lately.

Rebecca: Yeah. We're becoming really good friends.

Naomi: Just friends?

Rebecca: I don't... I'm not sure. It's confusing.

Naomi *(leans in and whispers)*: I think it's great that you have someone. You could get married, you know? And... leave.

Rebecca *(whispers back)*: What do you mean?

Naomi: Haven't you noticed? The only people who are able to leave this theatre company without Jeremiah completely losing his mind are married couples. He can't say anything, even though it's obvious that he wants to. A married couple needs their own home, their own space, their own shared bed. Even he can't argue with that. Wouldn't be very Christian, would it?

Rebecca says nothing for a moment. She continues kneading the dough. After a small pause, she continues.

Rebecca: Do you think he's cute?

Naomi: Who?

Rebecca: Daniel.

Naomi: Yeah. He's cute.

Rebecca smiles to herself as she kneads the dough.

Naomi: He's no Jacob, though.

Rebecca: Why would you say that?

Naomi: I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything by it.

Rebecca (*after a short, awkward pause*): I'm no good at this. I give up.

Naomi: Don't say that! Rebecca –

Rebecca (*gets up from the table*) I'll put the dough in the fridge.

Naomi: Wait –

Rebecca (*while exiting*) I'm sorry.

Lights fade on Naomi still seated at the table.

Scene 7: "The Space": Rebecca modern dance solo, in the style of Martha Graham.

Scene 8: "The Space": 'In Search of the Last Paradiddle' Rehearsal. Wooden chairs are scattered around the stage. All of the characters are on stage, holding scripts. The actors have been there for eight hours straight, with no break. It is almost 8pm.

There is a director's chair. It is meant for the play (for Billy Striker to sit in) but Jeremiah uses it at some points for himself.

Jeremiah: No, no, no, no, NO people! We're not getting the urgency! It's the end of the world, here. All humanity has been reduced to numbers. Goebbels is going to be killed and Billy Striker is finally realizing he made a mistake. Do you even know who Goebbels was? He was Hitler's propaganda man! It's a metaphor, people. Let's make sure every single person in the audience gets it. I don't want anyone walking out of the theatre saying they "didn't get it" because they "don't understand." Not even that dummy Urjo Kareda. Ok?

Let's take it back to scene six. Daniel, you're actor three. Rebecca, you're going to play the Controller for right now. Do you think you can handle that? Be authoritative. Ready? Get to your places. (*the actors get into position*).

Rebecca: **Input Six: The re-enactment of the Tribulations of Billy Striker. He Succeeds. First Tribulation. Places.** (*the actors stay where they are*).

Jeremiah: That's where you're supposed to get into position! When the Controller says "Places!" Not before! My God, do I have to spell everything out for you? For heaven's sakes. (*throws his hands up in the air and then lets them fall back down. Everyone stares at him*). Just keep going. We don't have time to go back. Daniel?

Daniel: Billy Striker was led to the top of the Mount Royal in the centre of the city. His eyes were blind. The light he could not see. And all around the only sound was a maze of hunger rising in cries from every street, in every city in every nation of the world. For days and nights he wandered there alone starving in the hollow body of his mind fighting in a war that never seemed to end. From somewhere behind him he heard a voice:

(awkward silence)

Jeremiah: Jacob, that's you. You're number five.

Naomi: But he's Billy Striker. Jacob has always played Billy Striker.

Jeremiah: It's the SAME ACTOR. Number five and Billy Striker are the SAME ACTOR. Did you even read the first page of the script?

Naomi: Ok, sorry.

Jeremiah: Oh good, you're SORRY. How about instead of being sorry you stop interrupting me? Ok, forget this, this isn't working. I'm going to give you the new scene, we'll work on this later. *(turns to Jacob)* Jacob, give them scene four.

(Jacob walks to the side of the room and gets papers, which he starts handing out. The others start reading the scene. They have looks of astonishment and confusion on their faces, to various degrees).

Jeremiah: Ok, we're going to read it aloud. This should really jolt the audience out of their slumber, eh? *(he is pleased with himself. He points to each actor and tells them which character he is going to read)*. Controller, One, Two, Five, uh *(realizes he doesn't have enough actors)*, Four, Three. Ok?

Rebecca *(quietly)* Who's playing the...

Jeremiah *(sarcastic)*: I'm sorry, I can't hear you.

Rebecca *(louder)*: Who's playing the Chairman?

Jeremiah: I'll read for the fucking Chairman if it will get all of you to shut up! Now let's go. Rebecca, start!

Rebecca: **Input Four: The Execution of the Two Witnesses. Let the celebration of the death of the two witnesses begin. Places.**

Jeremiah: Do it. Lie in a circle with your heads toward the centre. *(the actors do so, still holding their scripts)*.

Daniel: Acid drop by drop

Jacob: falling, melting the skin.

Rebecca: The shells of their ears

Naomi: fuse with the flesh of their faces.

Rebecca: No hearing remains.

Daniel: The hands of the two witnesses

Jeremiah: *(who is sitting in the directors' chair)* Finger the holes eating

Naomi: into the sides of their heads.

Jacob: Their hands

Rebecca: are pulled from their festering earholes.

Daniel: Young women

Naomi: Hot in their groins

Jacob: Burst forward

Jeremiah: And licking

Daniel: And sucking

Jacob: They smother the bodies

Rebecca: And wash them clean

Daniel: With their tongues.

Naomi: One girl

Jacob: Grabs

Jeremiah: An arm

Daniel: and doubling the hand

Jacob: into a fist.

Rebecca: **She kneels**

Naomi: **legs spread**

Daniel: **And drives the swollen hand**

Rebecca: **Into her... hole**

Jeremiah: Excuse me? I can't hear you.

Rebecca (*embarrassed*) **Into her hole.**

Jeremiah: That's better. I didn't know I had a bunch of prudes on my hands. Does anyone else have a problem with the material? (*no one says anything*). Continue.

Rebecca: **blood rushing to muscles**

Daniel: **never used.**

Jacob: **Legs spring.**

Naomi: **People jumping up and down.**

Jeremiah: **young men**

Daniel: **sticky wet in their pants**

Jacob: **pain pushing**

Rebecca: **until their balls**

Naomi: **scream for release**

Daniel: **and some... faggot designer**

Jeremiah: Some what, Daniel?

Daniel: **Some faggot designer**

Naomi (*jumps up, pointing at her script*): I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I just... what???

Jeremiah: Excuse me?

Naomi: What IS this? I mean honestly. What is this?

Jeremiah (*livid*): This is art! Which you are obviously too stupid to appreciate!

Naomi: I can't do this. I'm sorry. It makes me... sick!

Jeremiah: My play makes you sick, does it? You knew what you were getting into when you joined this group! You couldn't wait to do something cutting edge! And now when push comes to shove, you're a prude. Well you don't deserve to be here at all. You're an ungrateful little cunt.

Naomi: What did you just call me?

Jeremiah (*steps forward into her personal space*): I said you are an ungrateful. Little. Cunt.

Naomi: How dare you.

Jeremiah: Someone needs to teach you a lesson (*rips her blouse*)

Naomi: I can't believe you! (*runs out of the room*)

Jeremiah: Any of you goody-goodies have anything you'd like to say? Huh?

Everyone is silent. Over the course of the argument they have moved from lying down to sitting on the floor. They look at him.

Jeremiah: I'm done here. I am so done. Get out of here. Go home.

No one moves.

Jeremiah: I SAID GO HOME!

Rebecca and Daniel leave. Jacob goes to leave; Jeremiah stops him.

Jeremiah: Not you.

Scene 9: *Kitchen. Rebecca and Daniel are sitting at the kitchen table, whispering loudly to each other. They are drinking tea.*

Rebecca: She left in the middle of the night.

Daniel: I can't believe it.

Rebecca: I believe it. She hadn't been happy for a while, she told me.

Daniel: I suppose you're right. She seemed like she was starting to get... restless, or something. And then she just had to go and provoke him.

Rebecca: Well I mean she was right, you know! That script is... disgusting.

Daniel: All his scripts are weird!

Rebecca: I'm worried he's going to send people after her.

Daniel: Yeah. Remember when Sarah left? How angry he was?

Rebecca: I was terrified. I hid under the blankets on my bed until Jeremiah stopped screaming.

Daniel: They never did find her. But Jeremiah made Jacob hunt down all her friends and family.

Rebecca: I know.

(Jacob and Jeremiah enter the room. Daniel and Rebecca look apprehensive. Jeremiah sits down at the table. Jacob goes and gets him a glass of scotch, brings it to him, and then sits down at the table himself).

Jeremiah: What are you two looking so pie-faced for? You look like you're afraid someone's going to slap you in the face.

(Rebecca and Daniel do not answer)

Jeremiah: Well don't just sit there all day. Sheesh, do I have to tell you what to do every minute of every day? You can't take initiative for yourselves? I don't know what you would do without me. *(rolls his eyes at Jacob)*.

Rebecca: What would you like us to do?

Jeremiah: What would I like you to do. Well, Rebecca, for starters you can take over in the kitchen now that Naomi has shown her true colours. I always knew she didn't have what it takes, I don't even know why I let her stay when she showed up here, I should have thrown her out right then and there.

Rebecca: ... ok.

Jeremiah: And Daniel, go over your lines, you're a mess. It's embarrassing.

(Daniel says nothing)

Jeremiah: Are you deaf? Get out of here! Get to work! Go!

(Daniel and Rebecca leave)

Jacob: What do you want to do?

Jeremiah: What do you mean what do I want to do? I don't want to do anything! Good riddance. Impudent little bitch.

Jacob *(gets up, brings Jeremiah another drink)*: We might not have enough actors to put on the show.

Jeremiah: I KNOW THAT, JACOB! Don't you think I KNOW that?

Jacob: Do you want me to find someone?

Jeremiah: FIND SOMEONE? Everyone is leaving. None of these people have any dedication. They don't understand what I'm doing here. That I'm trying to make the world a better place. No one has any sense of commitment, any loyalty. *(looks at Jacob)* They're all selling out. If anyone else is planning on leaving, I want you to tell me about it.

Jacob: Yes.

Jeremiah: You say that now, but you've missed the signs before. I'm counting on you.

Jacob: I know.

Jeremiah: FUCK. *(throws his glass across the room; it barely misses Jacob, who ducks out of the way. The cup smashes into pieces. There is a pause. Eventually Jeremiah sits down. Jacob starts picking up the pieces and putting them in the garbage can).*

Jeremiah: Honestly, we shouldn't even have any fucking women in this group. They're more trouble than they're worth. And they don't know their place. Not the ones we've got, anyway. Goddamn women's libbers. But they'll get what's coming to them alright. One day they'll wake up alone and childless and realize they wasted the best years of their lives and now they're shrivelled old dried up prunes and no one wants them. And by then it will be too late. *(pause; looks at Jacob)*. I'm a wreck. I need a massage. I'll meet you upstairs in my room after you've taken the trash out. I don't want those shards cutting anyone; like they need another thing to blame me for! *(rolls his eyes, and then exits)*

Jacob ties up the garbage bag. He realizes he has cut his finger on one of the shards. He examines the cut and then sucks on the wound. He exits with the garbage bag. Blackout.

Scene 10: *The stage is split. On the one side, Jeremiah is sitting alone, typing on a typewriter. On the other side, Jacob is alone. Jacob's arms are outstretched like Jesus on the cross; his eyes are closed.*

Jeremiah (*as he types*): Would you like a piece of my body? Well, my mind. Thy rod and staff they comfort me. They deaden me. There was peace in my mind until you came along. I felt the push of eternity in my mind. I made new worlds until my head grew out behind me like a giant balloon. The beginning, the end, I saw pictures of the universe flash by. Who put eternity into my mind? Yet, I cannot tell the beginning from the end. I want out of my body. (*Jacob holds his wrists together above his head*) I tied my hands over my head until they reached beyond myself. (*Jacob opens his eyes. At this point, Jeremiah stops speaking, and Jacob takes over. Jeremiah continues typing.*)

Jacob: I opened my eyes. (*Reaches out with one hand*) I touched this darkness. I want out. I want out of this hole. All around my universe a web is growing. I brush my body against this web. Someone is laughing at me in this darkness. I am hardened with bleeding and pounding my body in and out against this wall of death. Do you hear the laughing? I am afraid I am the only one in the world. I am all things to all of me. But the dark. What is out here? Something. I am afraid. What is left when the body of this idol dies? Who goes on?

(lights fade)

Scene 11: Rebecca and Jacob are seated at the kitchen table. Jacob is trying to control his emotions. He succeeds, but it is difficult. Rebecca is trying to be brave; she succeeds beyond even her own expectations.

(The scene begins with an uncomfortably long silence).

Jacob: So when are you planning on leaving?

Rebecca: After... *Paradiddle* closes.

Jacob: Have you told Jeremiah?

Rebecca: Not yet.

Jacob: (*pause*) Where will you live?

Rebecca: I don't know. We'll have to rent a room in a house.

Jacob: How will you afford it?

Rebecca: Sarah's aunt takes in boarders. She's giving us a deal.

Jacob: How are you going to support yourselves? Don't tell me Daniel is going to play provider now?

Rebecca: He has a few...ideas. He might go back to school. Become a minister.

Jacob (*scoffs*): A minister? A preacher. Like his father.

Rebecca: I'm not thrilled either. I'm Jewish, for heaven's sake. We're not telling my mother about this idea.

Jacob: Has he even met your mother?

Rebecca: Of course he's met my mother. She... loves him.

Jacob: (*long pause*) How did it even happen?

Rebecca: How did what happen?

Jacob: What did he like, get down on one knee? With a ring, and everything?

Rebecca: That's none of your business.

Jacob: I don't see a ring on your finger.

Rebecca: We're going to pick one out together. Soon.

Jacob: Have you two ever even...

Rebecca: Stop it, please.

Jacob (*reaches for her hand*): Rebecca –

Rebecca (*pulls away*): Just stop it.

Jacob: For Christ's sake, Rebecca! *Him?* I mean I knew you would find someone else eventually, but *him?*

Rebecca: What's wrong with him?

Jacob: He's a...he's a...

Rebecca (*daring him to answer*): He's a what?

Jacob: I thought he preferred the company of men.

Rebecca: The same might be said of you.

(*Jacob is shocked. He looks as though he has just been slapped across the face.*)

Rebecca (*realizing she has crossed a line*): I'm sorry, I have to go.

Rebecca gets up from the table. Jacob looks at her, silent.

Rebecca (*goes to leave, then changes her mind and turns around*): Will you come to the wedding?

(Jacob does not answer. She leaves him at the table, alone).

Scene 12: *Jeremiah sits in a chair, drinking beer. He is holding a copy of the Bible. He is visibly intoxicated; this is not his first beer. Jacob is sitting in a chair across the room from him, observing him silently.*

Jeremiah (*reads from the Book of Samuel*):

“And it came to pass, after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king Daniel, and said unto Daniel, arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you. Then Daniel arose, and all the people that were with him, and they passed over Jordan. And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey, and arose, and went home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died.” (*puts the Bible down on the bookcase next to him. Takes a long sip of beer.*)

Jeremiah (*mumbling*): **We squeeze out the life/The brute savage life/And now he is dead. (pause) God damn all of you to the pit, to the everlasting pit where you have sent innocent people, poor innocent people damn you to that place where there is no place, to that place where no one do you hear me no one will be able to care. (pause) Two men sit facing each other, and both of them are me. Quietly, meticulously, they are blowing each other’s brains out with pistols. (he laughs)**

You remember that monologue, don’t you Jacob. You remember that one. You were the drummer.

Jacob (*mumbling*): **Rise up off your hands and knees. Spit on the dust of the past. We are entering a New Age. You need a leader; I can do it. All men will finally live in peace.**

Jeremiah: You were such a good leader. I knew you would be. I knew it. I knew it the minute I saw you. I said to myself, that boy...that boy has what it takes. (*Pause*) Me, on the other hand... **‘I am not the man you are looking for.’** Ha. (*Long pause*) You knew, didn’t you.

Jacob says nothing.

Jeremiah: You knew, didn’t you?! That they were planning to go off and get married. Daniel and Rebecca. Ingrates. I told you to warn me if anyone else was going to leave.

Jacob: I –

Jeremiah (*gets up out of his chair*): DON'T THINK I DON'T SEE YOU LOOKING AT HER, JACOB. I see the way you look at her, I'm not blind. I'm not stupid, either.

Jacob: I don't –

Jeremiah: I TOLD YOU TO TELL ME! IF ANYONE. ELSE. WAS GOING. TO LEAVE.

Jacob: I –

Jeremiah (*gets into Jacob's personal space*): What else are you hiding from me? Eh? Eh?

Jacob: Nothing –

Jeremiah (*pushes Jacob; Jacob does not fight back*): I SAID WHAT ELSE ARE YOU HIDING FROM ME? (*pushes him two more times in succession; Jacob stands there and does not react*).

Jeremiah: (*breaks down crying, puts his arms around Jacob for a second, then sits back down. Jacob stays where he is*). Everyone is leaving me, Jacob. Off to get married, live their own lives. (*cries silently, drunkenly*) After everything I did for them. After everything we've been through together. I know you won't leave me, though. Not you.

(*Jacob stares at him intently, his emotions contained. There is a pause.*)

Jeremiah (*softly*): Are you getting this down?

Epilogue: *Summer 1977. Wedding scene, same tableau and configuration and costumes as prologue. Naomi narrates.*

Naomi: Rebecca and Daniel got married in the summer of 1977. Jeremiah ignored me the entire time, but I didn't mind. It was a wonderful occasion. Towards the end, Jeremiah got a bit tipsy and tried to convince everyone to keep things going, that he had found this piece of land in New Brunswick and we should all live there "in harmony with God and the land." I'm pretty sure he knew there was no way that was going to happen. But he had to try.

Jacob lived with Jeremiah for 18 years, until Jeremiah drank himself to death. Rebecca and Daniel were married for 17 years, until Daniel came out of the closet. At that point, Jacob mailed Rebecca a letter. It said that he had loved her ever since the first time he saw her dance. They've been married now for 20 years.

After that summer in 1977, I went back to Victoria and finally finished my university degree. I was glad to be accepted back.

No one in the company ever went on to become a professional actor. Jeremiah never wrote another play again. He finally finished his masterpiece, I guess, and then he was done.

(small pause). So now you know. How we got in; how we got out. This wedding in 1977 was the last time we were all together. And just like that, we became nothing more than a footnote in Canadian theatre history.

The End.