

ONE TILE SHORT

a play in two acts

by

Jeff Stilwell

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*One Tile Short*, presented in one act format, opened at New Space Theatre in Shoreline, Washington on July 9<sup>th</sup> 2009, running for nine performances, Jeff Stilwell directing. It garnered successful reviews, including from Dale Barrows of *The Enterprise Newspapers*: "...an intense dramatic comedy you don't want to miss. It is an uninterrupted, 90-minute power pack with something to say and a super-charged cast of four saying it."

The cast of *One Tile Short*...

Angie .....	Carissa Meisner Smit
Pip .....	David Bailey
Trevor .....	Lars Enden
Park Ranger .....	Mike Way

CHARACTERS

- ANGIE Careworn, a beauty faded with worry and disappointed hopes, yet still persisting with a growing toughness, 30.
- PIP An English Oxford don, excitable, dreamy, lost in the grand designs of his mind, yet dying from loneliness, 50.
- TREVOR Flip and flashy, yet ruthless, even merciless as a hunter when he spots his prey, 40.
- PARK RANGER Years spent alone in the bush, replete with woodcraft and campfire songs he is eager to share, age undetermined.

SETTING

A campsite by a river.

TIME

Present day.

ACT ONE

(Pip kneels on the ground in moonlight amid cricketsong, muttering to himself as he shuffles river rocks spread in a mosaic on the ground before him. Next to him is a sleeping bag, clearly laid out with care, but not used this night. Nearby is a pitched tent. Also other campsite minutia: pile of wood stacked with tarp alongside, a few camping stools and, oddly, pair of brooms lying in a case, much like samurai swords.)

PIP

(frantically)

Where's 'it!?! Where's 'it?! Where's 'it!?!...Ah!

(holding aloft rock, beatifically)

I love thee with two loves, love of my happiness  
And perfect love, to love thee as is thy due.  
My selfish love is that I do naught  
But think on thee, excluding all beside;  
But that purest love, which is thy due,  
Is that the veils which hide thee fall,  
and I gaze on thee.  
No praise to me in either this or that.  
Nay, thine the praise for both that love and this.

(professorially)

Rabi'a. Sufi mystic of the eight hundreds. Her poem of the Two Loves she knew for Allah. Moving, isn't it? Almost everything we know about her is legendary, though I believe that there are three things we may rely upon. One: she was born in Basra, a place that we hear quite a lot about these days, and because she, as a woman in such a distant era was educated enough in Arabic to write such beautiful poetry, we can safely surmise that she was from a wealthy family.

Two: that at some point, she was kidnapped and sold into slavery. Some of you young men might, if your minds are not too clouded from last night's den of iniquity, conjure up the image of an Arabic Paris Hilton - one capable, at least, of putting together a coherent sentence - in AD 800 being plucked out from the middle of her entourage and being sold into slavery...Ah, that pricked your interest, didn't it? However, let us not stretch that metaphor too far.

Three: that she grappled with this great tragedy by seeking union with Allah in her lifetime. Yes, she was not willing to wait for heaven. She wanted union with Allah today...What's that?...Ah...Sufi comes from the word, suf, or undyed wool, which was the garb donned by early Muslim mystics, in protest, as it were, against the increasing worldliness of Islam at that time...

(frantically, shuffling around rocks)  
Where's'it!? Where's'it?! Where's'it!?  
Where's'it!?!...Ah!

(holding up rock, beatifically)  
I, the Atman, am Brahma. I am Vishnu. I am Shiva. I am this universe. Nothing is, but I am. I dwell within; I am without. I am before and behind. I am in the south and I am in the north. I am above and I am below. The wave, the foam, the eddy and the bubble are all essentially water. Similarly, the body and the ego are really nothing but pure consciousness. Everything is essentially consciousness, purity and joy.

(professorially)  
Shankara. Ancient Hindu thinker. He died, you who have yet to put a scratch on your third decade might be surprised to learn, at the tender age of 34. But not before touring all of India, around the time Rabi'a was writing her poetry, to both challenge and trounce in debate all the leading minds of Hindu thought at that time...Yes, that's right...Guru, with a capital G...You see, Hinduism had fallen on hard times: all the old answers no longer applying, very little new thought, all ritual become empty, much like so many look at Christianity today...

Why, he simply posited two levels of truth. Imagine last night's keg party, yon wayward youths. On the one hand, with each glass drawn, the keg draws closer to emptying. At that point, what do you do? Go without?...Yes, I thought not. Such a quandary is truth, is reality, is important...On the other hand, there is a deeper, equally important truth: There is no keg, there is no glass, there is no you, nor me. All characterizations of this world that appear to separate one from something or someone else are illusions. All, indeed, are part and parcel of the Ultimate, as a drop of water is to the ocean...

(screeching, tearing at hair)

I can't find it! I can't find it! I can't find it!

(The cricketsong stops. A light snaps on inside the tent, a silhouette of Angie, clearly distraught, moves toward the tent door, but stops.)

PIP

(sobbing)

I can't find it. I can't find it. I can't find it.

(Inside the tent, she is seen sobbing, now, too. After a moment, Pip begins to settle down, shuffling through his tiles.)

PIP

Where's'it? Where's'it? Where's'it? Where's'it?...  
Ah.

(She lies back down and turns out the light in the tent. The cricketsong continues. Pip continues to shuffle his rocks quietly, as dawn comes up and the cricketsong fades. Angie unzips the front door of the tent, comes out and carefully rolls back the tent flaps.)

ANGIE

(with assumed cheer)

Good morning!

(Pip continues shuffling his rocks, ignoring her. Angie crosses over to the sleeping bag.)

ANGIE  
(still being cheerful)  
Working all night again, I see.

(He continues ignoring her.)

ANGIE  
How did it go?

(After a beat, she sighs and neatly rolls up the sleeping bag and places it inside the tent.)

ANGIE  
I forget. Which are we today, Zen Buddhists or Jains?

PIP  
(waspishly)  
Jains.

ANGIE  
(yawning)  
Okay.

(She reaches back inside the tent and pulls out a face mask that covers the nose and mouth and dons it, then crosses to the broom stand and, sliding one out, returns to the tent to retrieve his face mask to give it to him, but carefully sweeping each step before her as she crosses back and forth. He watches her with pride.)

PIP  
He who sees himself, needs no instruction. But the miserable and afflicted fool who delights in pleasures--

ANGIE  
(spotting firewood)  
Oh, Pip! You didn't cover the firewood. It's all wet with dew!

PIP

Oh. I'm...sorry. I was...distracted.

ANGIE

What are we going to do for coffee?

PIP

Knowing pleasure and pain separately, they trouble themselves about the enjoyment of the external objects. For some men in this world have such a character that they will desire to enjoy their portion, whether it be large--

ANGIE

Definitely large. Venti-sized, maybe. And hot! Oh, Pip.

PIP

I'm...sorry. I...should have remembered. Here...I'll cover it, now.

ANGIE

No! Let it dry out.

PIP

(growing distraught)

I'm really very...

ANGIE

Well, it's okay...maybe I'll...run into town later.

(He returns to his shuffling. She neatly folds the tarp and lays it alongside the firewood, then meanders around, sweeping the earth before her for a few minutes. Suddenly she pauses, remembering. It is the previous Christmas. Trevor, dressed immaculately, approaches with two glasses as she hurriedly snatches off her mask.)

TREVOR

(handing her a glass)

The perfect martini for the belle of the ball.

ANGIE  
(blushing)

Thank you!

TREVOR  
Standing here all alone? Where's Phillip, the  
brightest beacon of University of Washington's  
Religious Studies Department?

ANGIE  
The Dean wanted to speak with him. Something about  
that Lily Foundation speaking tour.

TREVOR  
The Lily Founda--...Him?! He gets it?!

ANGIE  
She likes Pip's idea about addressing the challenges  
of the world's religions finding common ground.

TREVOR  
(bitingly)  
In order to find a true and lasting international  
peace in these troubled times. That old rag. A  
worthy topic for such a mighty intellect! How his  
flame towers above us all.

ANGIE  
(echoing his tone, lightly)  
The culmination of his life's work.

TREVOR  
Oh come now! Where's that Christmas spirit?

ANGIE  
I'm detached from it this evening.

TREVOR  
The Grand Mosaic, eh? Which one today?

ANGIE  
Buddhism. The Heart Sutra.

TREVOR  
The bodhisattva, eh? Looking on all the world's  
suffering, drawing all to her, ample, bosom.

ANGIE

Something like that.

TREVOR

Need any practice? I'm in pain.

ANGIE

You are a pain.

TREVOR

(laughing)

Can't blame a guy for trying. I have yet to learn your...detachment from the world's pleasures.

ANGIE

Why am I not surprised? Where's Lana?

TREVOR

Oh...coming along in a while, I'm sure. Something about a problem at the stylist's: The Fringe Forward not laying correctly or...maybe it was the French Manicure not drying right. I forget.

ANGIE

Dr. Reel...

TREVOR

That's me. Reeling 'em in with my charm...

ANGIE

Trevor...

TREVOR

...and my millions.

ANGIE

(giggling)

*Coffeetable Taoist?*

TREVOR

Did you like it?

ANGIE

I thought it...rather...trendy...rot.

TREVOR

Maybe it was, but that little volume did buy me a new yacht. A sixty footer, this one. A real beauty. You should visit her sometime, do a little sunbathing.

ANGIE

I don't think--

TREVOR

Why not? I named her after you.

ANGIE

What?!

TREVOR

Sure. *Souffrance Saint*.

ANGIE

Which means?

TREVOR

The Suffering Saint. Come anytime you want. It's an open invitation.

ANGIE

You speak French?

TREVOR

Just enough to keep my fencing sharp. Don't look up.

ANGIE

Wha--...Why not?

TREVOR

We're standing, just the two of us, under the mistletoe.

(He kisses her. First, gently on the cheek, then more passionately on the lips. She comes out of her memory as Trevor disappears with the glasses. She tugs back on her mask and continues sweeping for a beat, then stops.)

ANGIE

Pip?

PIP

Yes.

ANGIE

I know that the idea is to live one faith tradition with each sunrise, but...

PIP

What?

ANGIE

We're supposed to be out here relaxing. Taking a break, remember? Having fun?

PIP

Of course.

ANGIE

Well, how about if I do a symbolic sweep around the tent and we call it a day?

(beat)

PIP

Well...

ANGIE

Please?

PIP

Okay. So long as we remember to press lightly with each step, that we kill not the souls of the yet to be born lingering in the soil beneath our feet.

ANGIE

(muttering to herself)

Thank God.

PIP

Which one?

(She does her sweep and puts away the masks and her broom, all as he watches with pride.)

ANGIE

Our Zen days are so much easier. All you have to do is sit under a tree, breathe through your heels and stare into an empty cup.

PIP

(purring)

Yes.

(Park Ranger enters carrying a thermos and tin cups.)

PARK RANGER

Hello there!

ANGIE

Oh, hello! Good morning!

PIP

Cheerio!

PARK RANGER

Yes, she's a beautiful dawn, this one. Almost as beautiful as your little wife there, sir.

ANGIE

Thank...thank you.

PARK RANGER

Passing by earlier, I noticed you didn't cover your firewood last night, so I thought you might like a cup of coffee.

ANGIE

Oh, thank you!

(pulling up stools)

Please sit down! I feel silly about the firewood. We, uh, forgot.

PARK RANGER

(sitting and pouring)

Oh, don't worry. You made my friendship last night when I saw that you pitched a tent. That's why I put you near the river. Nature's music, see. (*handing her cup*) Here you are. Don't see too many of those anymore, no sir.

ANGIE  
(pleased)

Really?

PARK RANGER  
Time was when all we had out here were tent sites. The whole campground dotted with merry fires and the old camp songs. Singing all night long over their toasted marshmallows and franks. Cheery songs, like Father Abraham Had Seven Sons and that sweet one, Kum By Yah...

(Pip gags.)

PARK RANGER  
...and Tenting Tonight. D'ya remember that one?

ANGIE  
I'm not sure.

PARK RANGER  
It's an oldie but a goodie. A real honest to goodness American tradition by Stephen Foster, from the century before this one past. The old soldiers of the Army of the Potomac used to sing it facing off against Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in the lines surrounding Richmond. Yep, that song doesn't get anymore American than anything.

PIP  
(singing softly)  
Tenting tonight  
Tenting tonight  
Tenting on the old campground  
We're tenting tonight on the old campground  
Give us a song to cheer  
Our weary hearts: a song of home  
And friends we love so dear

PIP, PARK RANGER  
(singing with gusto)  
Many are the hearts that are weary tonight  
Wishing for the war to cease  
Many are the hearts looking for the right  
To see the dawn of peace.

ANGIE

Pip! I didn't know you could sing!

PARK RANGER

I honor you, sir. Those were the old ways. Then, about the time of Reagan, suddenly one day out of the blue, this large, white, choking-the-clean-air-with-its-gasping-diesel-fuel monstrosity came chugging up to the camp office, demanding a tent site. Can you imagine?

ANGIE

That's horrible. What did you do?

PARK RANGER

What could I do? Had to find them a place. He was a retired World War II vet, after all. That and his darling wife, who baked good chocolate chip cookies, now that I think on it.

ANGIE

Where did you put them?

PARK RANGER

(slyly)

As far from the river as I could. Didn't want to encourage them, after all.

ANGIE

Good for you.

PARK RANGER

Not that it came to much. Next season, there were three of them. The year after that, five. Then, it was ten. That's when they started getting demanding, wanting sewage lines and electricity. Pretty soon, the boys in Olympia were demanding I set aside a whole section of the camp. Nothing for it after that. I'm afraid the RV is here to stay. Sewage lines! In a campsite for goodness' sake! Nope, don't expect you'll be finding that crowd squatting over a log anytime soon.

ANGIE

No, I suppose not.

PARK RANGER

Thatta girl! You don't have any problem squatting over a log, now do you?

(Pip turns to look at her.)

ANGIE

Uh...no! No, not at all.

PARK RANGER

No, sir, no more singing in the evening around campfires amid the crickets. Now it's all reality TV shows blaring out from one RV to the next. Tell me, who in their right mind would come all this way to watch a TV show?

ANGIE

I can't really...

PARK RANGER

I tell you, ma'am, ever year it gets worse. More and more tent sites plowed up into RV sites.

ANGIE

I'm sorry.

PARK RANGER

Oh you didn't. No, and you never would, would you? Ah, well. I'm being disrespectful to the Colonel. After what he'd done, what he'd seen, who can be upset with him if all he wants is a little comfort in his elder years.

ANGIE

Who?

PARK RANGER

The Colonel, remember? The original RV. Besides, he even served in the Big Red One, just like myself. Late at night, I used to lure him out of his caravan to my campfire and over whiskey and those chocolate chip cookies, he'd tell me stories about the boys he'd lost at Omaha Beach.

ANGIE

I...

PARK RANGER

Bless you! The Normandy landings. D-Day, in WWII. Then, he'd listen as I told him about the 1st Division boys I lost fighting for An Lôm, back in Nam. My war. *(turning to Pip)* Now, I remember where I heard that last: Cheerio! From a British military advisor in...oh, I forget where, maybe the Mekong Delta. He used to say that. Are you British, then, sir?

PIP

As a bacon sarny and Shakespeare.

PARK RANGER

I've heard of Shakespeare, of course. In fact, I've heard that you folk grow up reciting it in daily conversation.

ANGIE

*(fondly)*

Only when he doesn't know what else to say. It fools Americans every time.

PIP

True.

PARK RANGER

But what was that other?

ANGIE

Yeah.

PIP

Several rashers of bacon between two slices of white bread slathered in hot grease and ketchup. Mmm-mmm.

ANGIE

Oh, god! That sounds revolt--

PARK RANGER

I might like one of those myself!

ANGIE

Oh...well...

PARK RANGER

So are you visiting from Old Blighty?

PIP

No, I actually live here.

PARK RANGER

I see. Well, welcome to the good ol' US of A. We can always use another good singing voice.

PIP

Thank you.

PARK RANGER

What do you do then?

PIP

I teach.

PARK RANGER

A teacher!

PIP

Yes.

PARK RANGER

What do you teach?

PIP

Religious studies at the UW.

PARK RANGER

I see. Well, I (*coughs*) don't go into all that all that much myself.

PIP

That's fine.

PARK RANGER

Nope. Can't say as I do. I'm no silly atheist now, mind you. Nope. I just don't like organized religion. The mountaintop is my God, the raindrop, the dew that decorates the pine needles each morning, the sunrise.

PIP

I understand.

(beat)

PARK RANGER

You don't strike me as the kind of person who would say that without meaning it.

PIP

I do understand, except for one thing: The sunrise can truly be spectacular, truly moving. Authentically spiritually uplifting. However, once it's over, what do you do?

PARK RANGER

Wait for the next one, of course!

PIP

(intrigued)

Really.

PARK RANGER

So how about that bacon sarny?

ANGIE

(reluctantly)

Yeah, how about that...I...uh...oh, the wood!

PARK RANGER

Ah, don't worry about it. Leave the tarp off and the afternoon sun'll dry them up just in time for tonight's fire. In the meantime, I can see you've got quite a bit of birch in there. You don't happen to have any warts, do you?

ANGIE

Warts?

PARK RANGER

Sure! Wet birch bark wrapped around them'll clear them right up!

ANGIE

Okay!

PARK RANGER

You'll be singing a few songs then tonight, of course?

ANGIE

I...

(The sound of a large semi fills the campsite. All turn and watch as a large and long RV "drives by" the site.)

PARK RANGER

I'll be jiggered! Oh! Pardon me, ma'am.

ANGIE

What? Oh, that's fine.

PARK RANGER

It must be forty feet! And what's that say on the back...Is that *Sans Merci*? What kind of tomfool would bring something like that out here?!

PIP

*Sans Merci*. Without Mercy.

ANGIE

Oh! Oh, no!

PARK RANGER

Is something wrong?

ANGIE

No, I...just...think I might know him.

PARK RANGER

Well...that's about the only thing that's going to make him welcome. Still, he's your company, so I--

ANGIE (OVERLAPPING)

Not my company!

PARK RANGER

(getting up to go)

--guess I better go...Where on earth am I going to put him? I only hope this isn't a new trend. Pardon me, ma'am, sir.

ANGIE

Bye. And thank you for the coffee.

PARK RANGER

Think nothing of it. Enjoy the rest.

(He exits.)

ANGIE

(hurriedly adjusting her hair)

Well, I guess I'd better run into town and get us something to eat.

PIP

Good idea. Why not rustle me up a bacon sarny while you're there.

ANGIE

You wouldn't eat one of those, would you?

(beat)

PIP

Don't you ever tire of being a vegetarian?

ANGIE

But--!

PIP

(waspishly)

We've been through that. All dietary restrictions of all faith traditions change over time as the circumstances of their adherents change over time. Remember? (*tapping teeth*) We're omnivores.

(The RV is heard to trail off in the distance.)

ANGIE

(angrily)

Omnivores?! That's about the stupidest defense I've ever heard you throw up! For anything!

(beat)

PIP

I'm sorry that...I'm sorry that I didn't sleep in my bag last night.

ANGIE

Doesn't sleep! Doesn't eat! Doesn't exercise!  
Doesn't talk! Doesn't share. Doesn't cuddle!  
Doesn't fuck! Doesn't---!

PIP

(rushing to her)

Whoa! Whoa!

(He holds her as she begins to cry.)

PIP

There, there, my fiery little Anahita.

ANGIE

(mumbling)

Which one is she? One of your goddamn stones again?!  
(spitting out) Not that I would ever understand.

PIP

Persian. Goddess of war. You.

ANGIE

Oh. Well...

PIP

And healing. As circumstances changed.

ANGIE

Really? Maybe I could like her.

PIP

And fertility, too...

ANGIE

(kissing him)

Mmmmm. Now I do like her.

PIP

(hastily)

Uh...we don't have to plunge the depths of Anahita  
right now.

ANGIE

Oh, come on. Please?

PIP

I think...I think we're hungry. And as the old bard use to strum: Love-making, like war-making should not be made on an empty stomach.

ANGIE

(sighing)

All right.

(Trevor enters carrying a bag.)

TREVOR

What a lovely picture! I should have brought the camera.

ANGIE

Oh!

PIP

Trevor. What an unexpected surprise. Charmed, I'm sure.

TREVOR

No less than you, Phillip. Hello, there my Souffrance Saint.

PIP

Ooo. Good one, Dr. Reel. You surprise me. I would not have thought book-learning to be a pastime of yours.

TREVOR

C'est moi. No. I'm doubling as a caterer today. And like any good caterer, I brought your favorites: For the madame, goat cheese and watercress on whole wheat. For the monsieur, Olde English roast beef with hot mustard on white.

ANGIE

You're kidding!

TREVOR

Moi? Kid when it comes to the culinary arts? I had a long talk with the chef. He is quite proud of his watercress and goat cheese delight. I even brought one for myself.

ANGIE

No! About the roast beef!

TREVOR

That's what he always orders during faculty meetings.  
You didn't know?

PIP

I'm not hungry.

TREVOR

(taking a seat, taking out a sandwich)  
Suit yourself. Rather Spartan bit you got going here.  
No electricity. No running water. Oh, but then,  
you've got the river, don't you. Let me guess.  
You're doing the getting back to the essence of  
things, am I right? Not even a cooler for a glass of  
Chardonnay. I hope you at least made a fire for a cup  
of coffee this morning.

(beat)

ANGIE

Where's Lana?

TREVOR

Ummm...oh, right. She wanted to stay in town.  
There's a new stylist supposed to do an amazing  
Brazilian Cut.

ANGIE

How...nice.

TREVOR

(pointing at rocks)  
So, what's that over there. That's not...it is, isn't  
it? That's The Grand Mosaic?

(In spite of himself, he greedily runs  
over to and peers down as Pip makes a  
half-hearted attempt to stop him.)

PIP

It's nothing.

TREVOR

But...how's it work? I don't get it. It's just a bunch of...river rocks.

PIP

You wouldn't.

TREVOR

Try me.

PIP

I fear to overload your much already, fearfully over-extended intellect. Wouldn't want a stress fracture to appear, mind you.

TREVOR

You should know.

PIP

And just what does that mean?

ANGIE

Guys...

TREVOR

I don't know. Just something I heard dropped in the hallway the other day.

PIP

Which was?

ANGIE

(more loudly)

Guys!

TREVOR

Oh, some small concern raised about your fitness to represent the university on the Lily Foundation speaking tour. (*poisonously mimicking*) "He seems, I don't know, a bit tired. Don't you think? He might be slowing down a bit. Maybe."

PIP

(flaring)

Who?! Who said that!?

ANGIE  
(louder still)  
Guys, goddamit!

TREVOR  
(mimicking)  
"It is a strain after all. Everything that he has  
done. In the past..."

PIP  
You--!

ANGIE  
(shouting)  
Knock it off! Both of you!

(beat)

(Pip moves to a chair. Trevor continues  
staring at the mosaic.)

TREVOR  
So...

ANGIE  
Trevor, so help me...!

TREVOR  
Hey, I'm playing nice here! I brought lunch, after  
all.

ANGIE  
(sighing)  
Okay.

TREVOR  
So, at least tell me which part is the Buddhist side?  
How it works?

PIP  
Why? Planning a *Coffeetable Buddhist* as a followup?

TREVOR  
Absolutely! It's sexy. It sells. I'll give you part  
acknowledgment. Might even help you finally get  
published again. Someday.

ANGIE  
(hissing)

Trevor!

PIP  
No, it's all right. Will this new book of yours make the *New York Times* bestseller's list like the last one?

TREVOR  
For fifty-seven weeks in a row? Maybe.

PIP  
Will it have as little to do with Buddhism as your last one did Taoism?

ANGIE  
(weakly)  
Oh, Pip.

TREVOR  
I have no idea what you're talking about.

PIP  
The Tao that can be named is not the Tao.

TREVOR  
I didn't write that.

ANGIE  
Oh, Trevor!

TREVOR  
What?

ANGIE  
Trevor, that's...that's the first line of the *Tao de Ching*.

TREVOR  
Oh yeah.

(beat)

TREVOR

(shrugging)

Well, how helpful is that anyway? (*mimicking Pip*) The Tao that can be named is not the Tao! Oh, that's uplifting! That's helpful!

PIP

And your *Coffeetable Taoist* was?

TREVOR

Of course! I throw them a few marshmallows about peace and love, come up with a sexy title, and make sure I coo a lot at book-signings and interviews. It works. It sells.

ANGIE

(getting up to go)

I'm not hearing this.

TREVOR

Say what you want. At least I brought lunch. And from what I've seen here, that's more than your man provided.

(He exits. After a moment, Angie turns to leave in another direction, then comes back and takes a sandwich with her. She exits. Pip returns to his mosaic. Late afternoon comes on. Park Ranger enters. Sound of river flowing slowly comes up.)

PARK RANGER

Hello!

PIP

Hello.

PARK RANGER

(sitting)

It's turning into a glorious afternoon, isn't it? Yes, sir, I can think of no better way to spend an afternoon than listening to the river and letting the world float on by.

PIP

How Taoist of you.

PARK RANGER

Taoist?

PIP

The great Tao flows everywhere,  
Both to the left and to the right.  
The ten thousand things depend upon it;  
It holds nothing back.  
It fulfills its purpose silently and makes no claim.

PARK RANGER

I see.

PIP

Do you?

PARK RANGER

Well, I think so. You're saying that this Tao, this river of life, is everywhere so you might as well flow along with it.

PIP

Yes. That's right. Though (*snorting*) I certainly forget it often enough. But right now, I was more thinking about all life being suffused with the Tao, that the sage in life comes to understand that. Almost as if you spend each day peeling back one illusion after another until you get to the essence of the ten thousand things.

PARK RANGER

How many?

PIP

Ten thousand. But it's just a metaphor for all that we know in reality. Grass, trees, water, air, ourselves, our dreams, our nightmares - all wrapped up, inexorably, in the great river of the Tao flowing onward to its own purposes.

PARK RANGER

Um...I'm getting in deep water here.

PIP

(smiling)

You and me both. The central Taoist belief was wrapped up in the notion of wu-wei: not doing, not striving.

PARK RANGER

Do nothing.

PIP

In a manner of speaking.

PARK RANGER

Okay...

PIP

At first, you teach yourself to become flexible in life. When faced with an obstacle, such as a rock in a river, you simply go around it.

PARK RANGER

Sounds easy enough.

PIP

Do you think so? What if going around it means disappointing the expectations of all your friends, your colleagues, your peers?

PARK RANGER

I see. That would be hard to do.

PIP

Of course, most decisions in life are not so awful. It works for simpler problems, too.

PARK RANGER

You mean like learning to accept all those monstrosities, coughing up their diesel fumes, taking up more and more tent sites each year. Learn to accept that.

PIP

Well...

PARK RANGER

Or, at least, learn to flow around them, like setting them as far from the river as I can.

PIP

Yes, in fact.

PARK RANGER

On the other hand, it's true that I did finally grow to accept those new-fangled shower stalls in the public restrooms. After a decade or two, that is.

PIP

Precisely. What's more, it gets better. If you are able to do this long enough, eventually, you yourself come to know such integrity that the obstacles in your life tend to break up and flow around you.

PARK RANGER

I...Oh...such as a number of sewage and electrical failures mysteriously cropping up. So many, in fact, that RV campers go foul up someone else's campground.

PIP

Indeed.

PARK RANGER

Not the shower stalls, though, mind you. At my age, I don't mind admitting that I've found them a comfort. I always keep them in tip-top shape.

(There is a beat as river sound slowly fades.)

PARK RANGER

You certainly know a lot about religion. Is that what those river rocks are all about?

PIP

Maybe.

PARK RANGER

I assumed that you were playing checkers there.

PIP

Sometimes I feel like that's all I'm doing.

PARK RANGER

So, tell me about them. We've got a river, the sunlight just beginning to fade, and all the time in the world.

PIP

It's...well, why not? It's a project of mine.

PARK RANGER

A hobby? That's good. Every man's got to have a hobby.

PIP

Perhaps, but this is more professional.

PARK RANGER

I see. Go on.

PIP

It's...I don't know that I'm...

PARK RANGER

Why, you're not ashamed of your profession, are you?

PIP

Of course not.

PARK RANGER

Well then?

(beat)

PIP

I call it The Grand Mosaic.

PARK RANGER

Grand?

PIP

Grand, but not for me. It's all about them.

PARK RANGER

Them.

PIP

Yes, each represents one of the greatest thinkers of humankind when it comes to spirituality. (*picking one out*) This one is Julian of Norwich, medieval Christian mystic who came to the conclusion that God is our lover.

PARK RANGER

Lover?!

PIP

For truly our lover desires that our soul climb, cleave to him with all our might and that we be ever more climbing, cleaving to his goodness.

Not bad when every third person is dying from the Black Death and everybody else is preaching that it's God's punishment.

PR

Well, that's a bit...mind-blowing.

PIP

(*darting a look at him*)

Isn't it? But...that's what I do. At home I use tiles, but these are working out just fine. Maybe.

PARK RANGER

What's wrong with them?

PIP

It's not them. It's me. I can't find it.

PARK RANGER

Find what?

PIP

The missing tile.

PARK RANGER

The what?

PIP

The one tile that unifies them all.

PARK RANGER

Okay, now you've really--

PIP

With every day the world shrinks more. Which means that every day more and more people come into contact with others they don't understand, who might even threaten their way of life. Usually when they're not aware of it. The Baywatch Effect.

PARK RANGER

Baywatch? What? You mean that silly TV show?

PIP

With all those fetching young women running around in bikinis...It doesn't play very well in most traditional cultures around the world. Instead, it often quickly becomes a source of great resentment.

PARK RANGER

Oh, I know what you're talking about. All those Al Qaeda types shouting about Western pollution and all that, destroying their culture.

PIP

Yes.

PARK RANGER

But...don't you think that they're really just manipulating a bunch of street kids who are angry that they can't find a job? That it's one big con? I mean, kind of like: Don't blame me for you being poor, blame America.

PIP

As a matter of fact, that is precisely what they are doing. But what makes it possible is our incredibly shrinking world and the fact that so few understand and respect the faith traditions of others. In fact, they fear them.

PARK RANGER

And that's your unifying tile?

PIP

That's it. You're older than I am. Do you remember when the Western world came to the conclusion that if we all simply became secular, the world would finally find peace?

PARK RANGER

Ah, the sixties.

PIP

Didn't work, did it? You can't rule out the sacred in life. It means too much to too many. So, this is the next shot, I guess. The next try. Find that missing tile, and we'll be a lot further down the road to a true and lasting international peace. Don't get me wrong: you don't have to become a Muslim or a Hindu. All I'm asking is that you remember that being a Muslim or a Hindu or a Christian is important to people and that you respect that because you can understand why they feel the way they do.

PARK RANGER

Understand a Hindu?!

PIP

Why not? You yourself said that you don't like organized religion. Why not take a look at Hinduism? That's precisely what it is - an unorganized religion.

PARK RANGER

Don't you think playing checkers would be a little bit easier?

PIP

(laughing, with a hint of a sob)

Yes. But I don't know what else to do.

(beat)

PARK RANGER

Well...I have to admit there is something to what you say. I mean in Nam...

PIP

Really?

PARK RANGER

Yeah. In Nam, losing the first few was the hardest. I remember Tommy, tripping a wire. Wasn't his fault. He was dodging a sniper bullet at the time. Still, that mine took out all of his belly all the same. That's how he went: me holding him while he tried to stuff his stomach back inside.

(beat)

PARK RANGER

After that, it got easier because you got used to it. Eventually, seeing one of my boys die was like watching a tree fall in the forest. You got used to it. Which made it all the worse. And all that time, looking at the Buddhist Temples over there - some of 'em really quite beautiful - and their family shrines in their hamlets...I don't know. I just...kept wondering what they were like, I mean really like, whether I would ever understand them, and whether losing so many of my boys would ever prove worth it.

PIP

I see.

PARK RANGER

Yes, you do, don't you? Anyhoo, I eventually came back to take up a teaching post at Fort Benning, and I'll never forget it. There I was in the airport, my duffel in hand, when the prettiest little thing with daisies in her hair - not too different from your wife there - walked up to me and asked me in this sweetest of voices, "Are you just back from the war?" Now, I was still pretty young there myself, no matter what I'd been seeing and doing the last years, particularly when it comes to women. So, I just stood there, my face all burning up like a fireside ember, and nodded. She nodded back and spat me in the face. After that, I...well...I guess I gave it all up and came here. Been here ever since.

PIP

I'm sorry.

PARK RANGER

No, no. It's all right. Besides, there's lots here to do. Lot's here to look after.

PIP

Did you ever fall in love?

PARK RANGER

No, sir. Never did. Funny, that. People say that you can get a bit crazy spending so much time on your own, but I've never had any problem with it.

PIP

True. Perhaps a hobby, then. You said that every man needs one. What's yours?

PARK RANGER

Why, I would have thought that was obvious: woodcraft.

PIP

I thought that was your profession.

PARK RANGER

Oh. Well, now that I think on it, maybe I'm a lot like you. I don't know what else to do.

PIP

Yes. Perhaps we are a lot alike.

PARK RANGER

And there's always singing. Particularly when it comes to women. Do you know this one? Oh, better yet, wait a minute.

(He picks up the cups and spits in them, then twirls them around a bit and shakes them out. Then he pulls out a small whiskey bottle and pours out a generous tot in each and hands one to Pip.)

PARK RANGER

(toasting)

Mud in your eye.

PIP

Uh...well, what the hell? Why not?

(They both drink.)

PARK RANGER

Now then. Do you know this one?

*(singing)* Oh Shenandoah,  
I long to hear you,  
Away you rolling river  
Oh Shenandoah,  
I long to hear you,  
Away, I'm bound away  
'Cross the wide Missouri.

PIP, PARK RANGER

*(singing with gusto)*

Oh Shenandoah,  
I love your daughter,  
Away you rolling river,  
I'll take her 'cross  
Your rollin' water,  
Away, I'm bound away  
'Cross the wide Missouri.

'Tis seven years,  
I've been a rover,  
Away you rolling river,  
When I return,  
I'll be your lover,  
Away, I'm bound away  
'Cross the wide Missouri.

PARK RANGER

A true song for the adventurous in spirit.

PIP

Yes.

PARK RANGER

So, tell me, Englishman: how is it that you know all  
our American campfire songs?

PIP

I...I don't know.

PARK RANGER

Come now!

PIP

Honestly. I must have picked them up somewhere. Besides, don't you...don't you ever tire of having entertainment piped at you? Instead of making your own?

PARK RANGER

That I do. So, that mosaic of yours...what about this Hinduism you were talking about? You say it's an unorganized religion?

PIP

That it is. There is no central authority to decide what is and what is not proper Hindu belief. No Vatican in New Delhi, no Pope, no Archbishop of Canterbury.

PARK RANGER

They sound like a bunch of Baptists.

PIP

Maybe. At least not the Southern kind. Anyway, in the mosaic, there are four stones for Hinduism, plus one for Shankara himself.

PARK RANGER

Who's he?

PIP

Deep water.

(Trevor enters.)

PIP

Unlike others I have known.

TREVOR

Hey guys! What're you up to?

PARK RANGER

Well, believe it or not, we are discussing Hinduism - the unorganized religion. Have to shake my head at the very idea of spending time like this, but then, it is a gorgeous afternoon.

TREVOR

It is that.

PARK RANGER

Care to join us?

TREVOR

Ummm...no, I think I'll pass.

PIP

What? No plans for a *Coffeetable Hindu* anytime soon?

TREVOR

Now there's an idea...But, you know, I have to say no.

PIP

Why not?

TREVOR

Wouldn't sell. It's not sexy enough. Where's Angie?

PIP

Sun-bathing. (*pointing*) Over there somewhere.

TREVOR

All alone?

PIP

No. I believe there are some sunbeams playing about her as well.

TREVOR

Whatever.

(He exits.)

PARK RANGER

Shallow end of the pool, without a doubt. So, you were saying? No Hindu pope.

PIP

That's right. So. Depending on who's counting, there are several different Yogas.

PARK RANGER

You mean those skinny girls running around in spandex, stretching their ankles over their ears?

PIP

That's one of them. Hatha Yoga. But there are others. I try to keep it simple and focus on the four major ones: (*picking up a stone for each*) Hatha Yoga, the exercises that prepare you for meditation; also Bhakti Yoga, devotional practice, almost like going to church.

PARK RANGER

Hindus go to church?

PIP

Some do. And there's Jnana Yoga, disciplining of the mind through contemplation and searching out wisdom.

PARK RANGER

Which sounds like your ball of wax.

PIP

Just so. And lastly, there's Karma Yoga, the good works yoga.

PARK RANGER

Oh, I've heard of karma. Every season you see one or two bumper stickers - usually from tent campers, not the RV folk - that says "My karma just ran over your dogma."

PIP

Yes, that was a cute at first, but it's growing a bit tiresome. Particularly because it's wide of the mark. Now, Gandhi was a great teacher of Karma Yoga, for he said to all those peasants too poor to take special exercise classes or to take time out of the day to study obscure texts; he said, if you simply work for the greater good without being attached to the outcome, whether good or bad, that's enough.

PARK RANGER

Wise man.

PIP

Well, he pulled it straight from the Bhagavad Gita.  
But more the credit to him, all the same.

PARK RANGER

The wha-wha-what? Never mind.

PIP

In any case, all of the Yogas are meant to achieve the same thing: liberation from suffering. Or, to put it another way, stripping away the illusions of life that make us believe we are separate from the Ultimate until we realize that we are just that. As a drop of water going over the waterfall appears separate until it reaches the bottom and rejoins the river.

(beat)

PARK RANGER

Do you ever...and I don't mean this in a disrespectful manner, sir...Do you ever tire of others not knowing what you are talking about?

PIP

All the time.

PARK RANGER

All right, then. Time for another round. Then run that deep water mark by me one more time.

(They subside into silent conversation, drinking and mulling over the stones. Angie enters. She spots them shuffling through the stones and stares at Pip for a beat with mixed fury and longing on her face. Suddenly she is transported back in memory: It is Trevor's yacht, and he approaches.)

TREVOR

Glad you could make it, Angie. She's magnificent, isn't she?

ANGIE

I will say this, she's huge, even for a yacht.

TREVOR  
(openly admiring her)  
A worthy monument to your beauty.

ANGIE  
Trevor...

TREVOR  
Why so tense? What you need is a break from The Grand Mosaic.

ANGIE  
I certainly do.

TREVOR  
So? Here's that break. Just a wide open deck for you to sprawl on soaking up the rays.

ANGIE  
Well...maybe.

TREVOR  
Sure. And to begin with, how about a little massage?

ANGIE  
What kind of massage?

TREVOR  
The best kind. The innocent kind.

ANGIE  
(anxiously)  
Because what happened at the Christmas party, I...I'm not going to...

TREVOR  
Hey, hey, hey! Like I said, the innocent kind, okay?

ANGIE  
All right. Just for a bit, though.

TREVOR  
Fair enough.

(He massages her shoulders. At first, reluctant, she begins to yield to his touch as he continues to massage her.)

ANGIE

Oh my.

TREVOR

That's right. Just what the doctor ordered.

ANGIE

Funny. I have a hard time imagining you doing anything with innocence.

TREVOR

Oh, that's because you don't know me yet. You think you do, but...

ANGIE

Oh, really?

TREVOR

Yes. I think I know you, though.

ANGIE

I can't wait to hear this.

TREVOR

I think you are the suffering saint.

ANGIE

Oh, come on.

TREVOR

It's gotta be tough following around the Towering Crackpot--

ANGIE (OVERLAPPING)

Trevor!

TREVOR

--picking up after him as he prattles on about his International Plan for Peace. I mean, he gets all the honors. What do you get?

(beat)

TREVOR

Am I right?

ANGIE

Maybe.

(beat)

TREVOR

(lightly, solicitously)

So, how's The Grand Mosaic coming along?

ANGIE

I'd rather not discuss it. I thought this was supposed to be a break for me. Your words.

TREVOR

And it will be!...Strange how things work out. I mean, when you first showed up on campus, we were all hot for you.

ANGIE

What?!

TREVOR

You're married to one of us now, so I don't think I'm divulging any faculty secrets, here. In fact, remember that team-taught "Intro to Religious Thought" class we had in those years?

ANGIE

Oh, yeah. What a colossal failure that one was.

TREVOR

Yeah, too many peacocks and not enough worker bees.

ANGIE

Never one to shy away from mixing metaphors are you?

TREVOR

Whatever. Anyway, that's when we all spotted you. The beatific virgin with the Whore/Madonna Complex down without even realizing it.

ANGIE

(breaking away from him)

Oh, that is just disgusting!

TREVOR

What do you expect from a bunch of randy old guys who spend their days combing through dusty old tomes? We gotta have some fun, haven't we?

ANGIE

Uh...somehow, I don't think that...

TREVOR

To you. To me, it was a lot of fun. I even opened up a betting pool to see who would get the honors of your first class. After all, we know from experience: wherever you land first is usually where you stay.

ANGIE

Pip.

TREVOR

(with a hint of bitterness)

Yes. How did he get you anyway? It's not like you get to watch him take the UW's Fencing Cup every year. Hell, he's not even man enough to pick up a rapier.

ANGIE

No, Pip's not much of a fencer.

TREVOR

What then?

ANGIE

He recited Sonnet 116 to me.

TREVOR

What?!

ANGIE

Shakespeare. Pip isn't always just Tibetan Prayers for the Dead. Sometimes he'll break into Shakespeare, usually when he's nervous, though, and is playing for time. Listen:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;

TREVOR

A poem?! You got taken by a poem? Well, no wonder I lost money on that one.

ANGIE

Why? Who'd you bet on?

TREVOR

Who else? Moi.

ANGIE

Why am I not surprised?

TREVOR

However, being the enterprising type, I quickly organized a second pool to see how quickly you would see the light and choose someone else.

ANGIE

Choose someone else?! What the hell?!

TREVOR

In a manner of speaking. Hey! It's academia, after all. It's not like it's unknown.

ANGIE

Whatever.

TREVOR

Exactly! Anyway, I thought I could clear up big on that one.

ANGIE

And?

TREVOR

Like throwing good money after bad. What can I say?  
I put it out there twice for you. And twice I lost.

ANGIE

(savoring)

It's good for you.

TREVOR

So you say. Come on, now. This is your massage time.  
And you're wasting it.

ANGIE

All right.

(He continues the massage.)

ANGIE

An innocent massage.

TREVOR

Right up to the point at which you want it to go  
further. Think about it. Quoting poetry is one  
thing. This yacht on a world cruise next summer is  
altogether different: daily sunbathing, daily  
massages, champagne dinners, exotic ports of call. It  
could be wonderful. All you have to do is say the  
word.

ANGIE

What about Lana?

TREVOR

Depend on it: if I ever had to choose between chasing  
some grand dream and your happiness, I wouldn't  
hesitate.

(She turns to stare at him as he fades  
away.)

(Fade.)

ACT TWO

(All cast resume positions from just before Trevor's exit.)

TREVOR

Depend on it: if I ever had to choose between chasing some grand dream and your happiness, I wouldn't hesitate.

(She turns to stare at him as he fades away. She returns to the present, spotting the unused lunch bag. She picks it up and crushes it in her hand.)

PARK RANGER

So what's his name again?

PIP

Shankara. One of the best.

PARK RANGER

And he trounced everybody in debate, eh? Must have been quite the scrapper.

PIP

Yes, I imagine he was.

PARK RANGER

Died young though, you say? Did he have many friends? Or was he one of those types that nobody understands him when he talks.

PIP

I imagine the latter.

PARK RANGER

You two would have been friends, though.

PIP

(sadly examining a rock)

Yes, I suppose we would have.

PARK RANGER

Still, all things considered, you have it better.

PIP

How so?

PARK RANGER

You've got that darling wife of yours.

ANGIE

When he remembers her.

(Startled, like two boys caught stealing cookies, they turn around as she chucks the sandwich bag in the tent.)

PIP

(dryly)

Hello, dear.

ANGIE

(with even less affection)

Hello, honey.

PIP

How was sunbathing?

ANGIE

Hot. Then cold. Always alone.

PARK RANGER

(uncertainly, anxiously)

Well, then, you are certainly welcome here, ma'am. We were just about to launch into another song. Do you know this one?

(singing) I'll sing you one ho.

(beat)

PARK RANGER

Maybe it's a new one for you. But it's certainly easy to pick up. See, as leader, I call out:

(singing) I'll sing you one ho.

And then you reply:

(singing) Green grow the rushes ho. What is your one ho?

(beat)

PARK RANGER

And then I reply:

*(singing, but trailing off)* One is one and all alone  
and ever more shall be it so.

ANGIE

Sounds about right to me.

PARK RANGER

Well, then, I can see that you have some things to  
discuss between the two of you.

ANGIE

Oh, don't run off. Honey, we're being rude to our  
guest.

PIP

Are you sure it's we?

ANGIE

Oh, don't mind me. I've had a hot day in the sun.  
It's made me a bit light-headed. In fact, *(wantonly)*  
I'm sure that I have sweated my bikini right through.

PARK RANGER

*(eyes like quarters)*

Uh...no! No, I can't say that you have. It looks  
just fine.

PIP

Yes, dear. It looks just fine.

ANGIE

I see. All the same, with the sun going down, I'm  
starting to feel a bit of a chill. And there being no  
other source of warmth around, I guess a hot shower  
will have to do.

PIP

That would be a bath, don't you think, dear?

ANGIE

No, I think a nice long, hot shower will set me up  
just fine.

PIP

I thought that we came out here to return to the essence of things.

ANGIE

I thought we came out here to have fun.

PIP

I am having fun.

ANGIE

And to return to the essence of things.

PIP

Which things?

ANGIE

I wonder.

PARK RANGER

Yep, I definitely think that the two of you would like to have a conversation amongst yourselves.

ANGIE

Mr. Park Ranger, tell me: given the choice of a long, hot shower in what some would call a cauldron of illusion and temptation, but that others would call a campsite shower stall, or a plunge in an icy river as a symbol of one's self-negating pursuit to comprehend the Tao, which would you choose?

(beat)

PARK RANGER

(looking from one to the other)

I...uh...I...

(Trevor enters.)

PIP

In any case, your premise is illusory: didn't you just inform me, Mr. Park Ranger, that the shower stalls are experiencing some sort of mysterious sewage malfunction?

PARK RANGER

(shocked, pleading)

I...now, sir...I...

TREVOR

Nothing easier! Come on by the *Sans Merci*, Angie. It has its own forty-two gallon reservoir that travels wherever it goes. Pipe-heated water, too. All that you could ever need.

(beat)

TREVOR

All you have to do is say the word.

(She stares at him.)

ANGIE

Tell me, Trevor, which of the two of you is promoting the most good?

TREVOR

That's easy: *Moi*.

ANGIE

Why?

TREVOR

I reach the most people.

ANGIE

That's an interesting argument. Pip, do you have a rejoinder?

PIP

All that glisters is not gold.

ANGIE

(icily)

A hit. A very palpable hit.

TREVOR

What hit?! Quoting Led Zeppelin?

ANGIE

Oh, Trevor! No. That's Shakespeare, from the *Merchant of Venice*. Inside Portia's golden casket. The first of the three to choose from in seeking to win her hand.

PIP

All that glisters is not gold;  
Often have you heard that told:  
Many a man his life hath sold  
But my outside to behold:  
Gilded tombs do worms enfold,  
Had you been as wise as bold,  
Young in limbs, in judgment old,  
Your answer had not been inscroll'd  
Fare you well; your suit is cold.

PARK RANGER

Well, that was impressive! You Englishmen really can recite him like that! How do you do it?

PIP

It's printed on the backs of cereal boxes for kids.

PARK RANGER

Really?

PIP

What else does Old Blighty have to shout about? Harry Potter?

TREVOR

But...Gilded worms?! So, what? My suit is cold?!

ANGIE

No, mine. For offering up a challenge between two suitors.

PARK RANGER

Oh, my! Well, this is...I don't really know that I...

ANGIE

Now that you've successfully stalled for time, let's hear your real rejoinder.

PIP

I have none.

TREVOR

Hah!

PIP

But this: you float on a cloud of sentimental, gooey puff and your work, your thoughts are just as substantial. Enjoy your days on the best-sellers lists. I give you three years before they see you as the charlatan that you are and turn on you. You will end a laughing-stock, a joke, a jape.

TREVOR

That's it? That's all you've got?

PIP

How is your new one, that *Coffeetable Buddhist* coming along?

TREVOR

In truth, it's not.

PIP

(purring)

And why?

TREVOR

Because whatever I write comes out sounding just like the last one. Different title, but (*shrugging*) it's essentially the same book. Actually, I know what I offered you this morning, but that was only when I still believed that if I could steal some trendy Buddhist bon mots from your rocks, I could write it.

PIP

The charlatan is revealed at last. That was far quicker than I had supposed. I concede the point.

TREVOR

Don't bother. This afternoon, it suddenly hit me. I don't need to do a fluff Buddhism book.

ANGIE

Why not?

TREVOR

Because, I'm already a star. I can do whatever I want with *Coffeetable Taoist*. Following volumes using the same formula addressing all the mundane concerns of everyday life. The possibilities are endless. *Coffeetable Taoist Goes Shopping* maybe or *Coffeetable Taoist Gets An Oil Change* or *Coffeetable Taoist On A First Date* or...I know! *Coffeetable Taoist Goes On A Blind Date!* That one? That one will sell!

PIP

I...don't understand you. Why do you even play at being a teacher?! Why did you even bother to get a PhD?!

TREVOR

Publishers, baby. That's what they want to see on the book jacket these days. You know that. Oh, and I suppose I should add that the under-grads are getting hotter every year, too, particularly now that micro-minis are back.

PIP

Your cynicism knows no bounds! You stun even the most loquacious into mute speechlessness!

TREVOR

Why, thank you!

PIP

I...!

TREVOR

And what would you have me do? Be like you? Reciting obscure Jain Sutras at the drop of a hat that no one has ever heard of? Walking into a room and chilling the atmosphere with the weight of your mighty intellect? No friends, no family to speak of, no acquaintances. My last party? Three hundred and six attended. If you even dared to throw a party, who would come? Tell me that, huh?

ANGIE

Okay, you've made your point.

TREVOR

We both know you have no money. Barely a car, less of a home. Just a small apartment stacked floor to ceiling with a bunch of books that no one is ever going to read because they wouldn't understand them if they tried. Oh, and your rocks. There are always the rocks, right? That and some ridiculous pipe dream!

ANGIE

(shouting)

Stop it!

TREVOR

You embarrass me with the slipshod way you treat your wife.

PIP

Now, just a minute!

TREVOR

Hell, I'm surprised that you could afford to buy a tent for this little outing. I mean, hey, Lana turns into a downright shrew if she isn't maintained in the lifestyle to which she is accustomed. And while she's still around, I can put up with that. But, you! You can't even give your wife a decent cup of coffee in the morning.

ANGIE

(crying)

Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!

TREVOR

Tell me this: when everything else is said and done, when it comes down to - as you would put it - the essence of the matter, which is more important to you: your Grand Mosaic or Angie?

(beat)

PIP

I...!

(beat)

ANGIE

Pip!

(beat)

PIP

That is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles--

PARK RANGER

Is that Shakespeare again?

(beat)

TREVOR

(to Angie)

I'll go start that shower for you. Heated towels,  
don't you think? Maybe a glass of chilled champagne  
afterward.

(He exits. Angie stares at Pip  
disbelievingly for a long moment, then  
follows after Trevor.)

PARK RANGER

(clearing throat)

Well, uh...

PIP

River or shower. And she chose the shower.

(beat)

PARK RANGER

Son, I don't know much about women, but...I'll leave  
you to your labors.

(He gathers up his thermos, whiskey and  
cups and exits. Pip returns to his  
mosaic, at first disconsolately, then with  
more confidence, shuffling them back and  
forth, muttering to himself, as the lights  
fade to moonlight, with cricketsong.)

PIP

Where's 'it!?! Where's 'it?! Where's 'it!?!...Ah!

(beatifically holding up a rock)

Therefore, O Sariputra, it is because of his indifference to any kind of personal attainment that a Bodhisattva, through having relied on the perfection of wisdom, dwells without illusions. In the absence of illusions he has not been made to tremble, he has overcome what can upset, and in the end he attains to Nirvana.

(professionially)

Siddartha Gautama, otherwise known as the Buddha. Much of his life, like so many other religious figures of his time, has faded into legend. Nevertheless, we can be reasonably certain that he was born into wealth, and for some reason, was dissatisfied with that, sensing that it lacked a more profound meaning. Those of you here who resolutely hide from your dorm roommates that you are the beneficiary of a trust fund or two might readily identify with his predicament...

(bitterly)

Walking into a room and chilling the atmosphere with the weight of my mighty intellect. No friends, no family to speak of, no acquaintances. If I even dared to throw a party, who would come?

(With a screech, he grabs up two rocks and, shrieking, begins beating his head with them. Cricketsong stops.)

I can't find it! I can't find it! I can't find it!  
I can't find it! I can't find it!

(Angie enters running to tackle him, holding his arms at bay until he collapses.)

PIP

(sobbing)

I can't find it. I can't find it. Oh, I can't find it. I'll never find it.

(Angie holds his head in her lap now,  
stroking his hair.)

ANGIE

Sh! Sh! It's okay. You're safe now. Sh!

PIP

(tearily)

But I can't find it. I'll never find it.

ANGIE

Sh! You'll find it. I promise you. You'll find it.  
I promise.

PIP

Really?

ANGIE

Yes, I promise. I'll help you. Sh! There now.  
Rest.

(She holds him, gently rocking him for a  
beat or two. Cricketsong resumes.)

ANGIE

(gently)

Of course, if you'd let me in and told me what you are  
looking for, I could better help you.

(beat)

PIP

(beginning to babble)

It's the tile. The missing tile. The missing tile.  
The one tile. The tile I'm short. I talk to them. I  
talk to them all the time.

ANGIE

Tile? What tile? Who do you talk to?

PIP

(still babbling)

The one that unifies all the best wisdom of all the  
faith traditions into something new. I talk to them.  
The one tile. The tile I'm short. The missing tile.  
It's only one. Just one. Just one short.

ANGIE

All the best into one...what are you talking about Pip?

PIP

(still babbling, but slowing near end)

Just one. That's all I need. All the other pieces, all the other rocks are in place. I can see them in my mind. I talk to them. The one that unifies all the best of all the faith traditions into something new. The one tile. The tile I'm short. The missing tile.

ANGIE

Unify? Not into a new faith tradition? Pip?

PIP

(coming back to normal)

No, no, no, no. Not a new one. Even I'm not that stupid. Just a...a way...that...people could see, could understand that there are far more similarities to all faith traditions than differences. One tile. Just one. The one that reorients the perspectives of all the others. Or maybe the way that we view all the others. I'm not sure.

ANGIE

Is such a thing even possible? Oh, honey.

PIP

I don't know what else to do.

(beat)

ANGIE

What's that line from the Bhagavad Gita that I love so much?

PIP

O Partha, when a man--

ANGIE

(gently)

A woman.

PIP

(acquiescing)

When a woman relinquishes all the desires of her mind,  
and when her spirit delights in itself, then is she  
called a woman of steady wisdom.

ANGIE

A woman whose spirit delights in herself, as she is,  
no matter what the rest of the world may think of her.

PIP

Yes.

(beat)

PIP

I couldn't do this without you.

ANGIE

Didn't you know? A long time ago, I realized that in  
this lifetime, I might have the chance to give only  
one gift to this world, but that's enough.

PIP

What is it? This gift?

ANGIE

Keeping you alive.

(Pip falls asleep as she continues to  
stroke his hair. She looks longingly at  
the tent for a moment, then turns away  
and, instead, grabs a nearby stool and  
pillows her head on it to fall asleep.  
Time passes. Park Ranger enters silently  
with thermos and cups in hand, spots them,  
and watches them for a moment, then sets  
thermos and cups near them and covers wood  
with tarp. He turns to leave then,  
instead, crosses to tent and pulls a  
blanket from within, then lays it over  
them and exits. Dawn.)

PIP

(stirring sleepily)

Cheerio!

ANGIE

(rubbing her back)

Good morning.

PIP

(spotting thermos and cups)

Look what Puck hath wrought.

ANGIE

Oh! Do you think...Is it full?

(Pip jiggles the thermos.)

PIP

An elixir of the Gods for a sunny morning.

(He pours out some for both and hands her a cup. They return to cuddling.)

ANGIE

(sipping)

God love that man!

PIP

Yes. You didn't take the shower.

ANGIE

How did you know?

PIP

I can still smell yesterday's meadow and sweat upon you. You have never smelt so beautifully.

ANGIE

Um...thanks.

PIP

I knew you wouldn't betray me.

ANGIE

(starting)

What?! Uh...that's...that's good.

PIP

(smugly)

Trevor is a fool. He mistakes the ephemeral for the essential. Yachts, cocktail parties numbering in the hundreds, speaking tours and book-signings. Given the dilemma of the river and the shower, the correct choice was obvious. But his types never see that.

ANGIE

That's...that's what you think last night was about?

PIP

Of course. What else was there?

ANGIE

You think last night was about whether I would stay true to...pursuing the essential in life versus being tempted to the trivial with a hot shower?

PIP

(fondly)

I knew that you would choose the river. Every time.

ANGIE

(stunned)

I...think...that you could use a good dunking yourself.

PIP

Think so?

ANGIE

(with growing disdain)

Yes. In that icy river. First thing this morning, too. It will set up your day just right.

PIP

Capital idea. Capital. I think I will do just that.

ANGIE

Good.

(Humming, he strides over to the tent, stripping off his shirt and shoes as she watches in disbelief. He grabs a towel from within the tent and moves toward river.)

PIP

For Harry, England and St. George.

(He exits. She pulls the blanket more tightly around her and sips her coffee. Park Ranger enters.)

PARK RANGER

Good morning! And it's a grand one.

ANGIE

Good morning. And thank you so much for the coffee. It tastes marvelous.

PARK RANGER

No trouble. No trouble at all, ma'am. I did forget to wash the cups last night, but I took care of that along the way.

ANGIE

Yes...Would you like some?

PARK RANGER

No, ma'am. I am set just fine this morning. Walked the whole ground, as I always do. Checking on everything and everyone.

ANGIE

That's right. I suppose you brought the blanket as well. Thank you.

PARK RANGER

Well, it looked like the two of you were best left just as you were. And I thought you might prefer a blanket to the morning dew.

ANGIE

Thank you.

PARK RANGER

Besides, I'm a bit grateful to that husband of yours. Woo-wee! The stories he has to tell about other times, other people. That deep-water fellow in particular.

ANGIE

Which one?

PARK RANGER

Oh, I forget. He's got my head just full of things to think about, that husband of yours, yes, sir.

ANGIE

Yes, he does have that effect on people.

PARK RANGER

I can only imagine your Thanksgiving Day dinners.

ANGIE

Oh...those.

PARK RANGER

Yes, sir. Right between the cranberry sauce and the mashed potatoes, you'll find some long table discussion about whether there is any cranberries and potatoes or whether it's just...

ANGIE

An illusion?

PARK RANGER

That's right. Must make everybody want to come back every year.

ANGIE

(sarcastically)

Pretty much.

PARK RANGER

Oh. Well, I...uh...I'd want to come back. I mean, not that I want to...uh...

ANGIE

You would?

PARK RANGER

Only if there was an empty seat at the table.

ANGIE

(wonderingly)

You would.

PARK RANGER

You've got quite a man there. And, I can guess that you've set up quite a cozy home there.

ANGIE

I...well...I...

PARK RANGER

The thing I like best is that he...takes all those whopping big ideas - like a twenty pound turkey, see - and cuts 'em up into little pieces...that you can chew on for a while, so to speak. Instead of choking, see. Makes for a diverting day, yes sir. Particularly if your home team isn't playing football that day.

ANGIE

You know...you're right. He does do that.

PARK RANGER

(sitting on a stool)

Say, I haven't heard you sing, yet! With such a gorgeous morning, it's a fine way to start the day, don't you think?

ANGIE

Have you ever done something so terrible that you don't think you will ever forgive yourself?

(beat)

PARK RANGER

Yes.

ANGIE

I'm sorry. That was a bit abrupt.

PARK RANGER

No, no. I don't really mind. I may not be the sharpest saw in this forest, but I'm starting to see that life around you two kind of cuts to the heart of things.

ANGIE

Well, yes, I suppose we...

PARK RANGER

That's all right. Besides, talking about the weather starts to feel a bit, I don't know...mundane after you get used to your way. Not quite the real deal anymore. So! You asked me about having done something unforgivable. Well...I...would have to say that...Oh!...I would have to say, that, now that I'm thinking on it...It's pretty much impossible to live long in this world without doing something pretty terrible to someone at some point.

ANGIE

Really?

PARK RANGER

Yes, ma'am. It was in a village, a hamlet really, back in Nam.

ANGIE

Oh, please! You don't have to--!

PARK RANGER

Oh, it's all right. I mean, it's not. No, not all. And it never will be.

ANGIE

It's just that it seems...a bit early in the morning for such...hard...

PARK RANGER

Yes, I believe you are quite right about that. Why darken a bright day needlessly.

ANGIE

Thank you.

PARK RANGER

The Reader's Digest version then: a hamlet, a fierce firefight, a commander back at the firebase that wouldn't let me retreat in the face of the heavy mortaring we were suffering, no artillery support, losing men on all sides of me, some barely arrived for their tour...a young woman who looked at me the wrong way afterward...(weakly) a young lieutenant who wanted somebody else to...feel his hurt.

(beat)

ANGIE

I'm sorry.

PARK RANGER

Ah, well.

(beat)

ANGIE

Did it...did it ever get easier?

PARK RANGER

Easier? To forgive? No. No, sir. It never did.

ANGIE

(disappointedly)

I see.

PARK RANGER

What it did do, though, was recede in...importance, maybe? Emphasis? In memory surely.

ANGIE

What do you mean? That you just...forgot about it? Or that you put it out of your mind?

PARK RANGER

Well, I don't know about that. At least, I can't. I mean I tried. But then, maybe the next day, as I was walking the ground, back it would pop out at me, from behind a tree or something, like a little green monster.

ANGIE

Yeah. That.

PARK RANGER

No, sir. Can't put it out of your mind.  
Instead...oh, now that I think on it...what was it  
that your husband said yesterday about doing nothing?

ANGIE

(tiredly)

Wu-wei. The Taoist ideal?

PARK RANGER

Yeah, that. Another deep water guy. Or idea, anyway.  
But, funny enough, now that I think on it, that's  
pretty much the way it went.

ANGIE

What do you mean?

PARK RANGER

Oh...well...because there was nothing to do, I mean  
nothing I could do anyway. I didn't even know her  
name, barely where I was...no way to contact her, no  
way of going back...I just kind of...did nothing about  
it and kept on...oh, I don't know...breathing I  
suppose. And then, what was it? A few years later, I  
think...

ANGIE

(faintly)

A few years.

PARK RANGER

Not the sharpest saw, you know. A few years later, in  
fact, now that I think on it, I was standing just  
under (*pointing*) that maple right there when it dawned  
on me why I did what I did.

ANGIE

Really?

PARK RANGER

Yes, ma'am. Didn't make it any easier to accept it. Not really. But at least I could finally understand how it had happened. I mean, I was a good guy pretty much overall. At least I thought I was.

ANGIE

I think you are.

PARK RANGER

Bless you.

ANGIE

And I...don't know what...but I would bet that, in spite of that...you were a good man, young, but a good man pretty much overall at that time, too.

PARK RANGER

Thank you.

ANGIE

And that's how it came to stand.

PARK RANGER

No, no. In fact, as the years went by and I found that I was presented by other hard choices that life throws up at you...and found that...large and small...I seemed to do much better...over time, the unforgivable became just one detail in a long life. Always a sorry detail. But by no means one that defines me. No, sir. Not at all.

(beat)

ANGIE

Thank you.

PARK RANGER

Thank me with a song? I don't mind admitting that I was a bit sorry that we didn't get to sing last night. Of course (*clearing throat*), you youngsters had other fish to fry, I could see, at the time.

ANGIE

I...

PARK RANGER

Just one. A small one. A campfire one. Very soon, you'll be going back to the city and who knows when you'll get a chance to sing a campfire song again.

ANGIE

Thanksgiving?

PARK RANGER

Almost half a year away.

ANGIE

Okay. Ummm...okay, how about this?  
(*singing*) On top of old Smoky, all covered with snow...

PARK RANGER

Ma'am, I don't think--!

ANGIE

(shrugging him off, singing)

I lost my true lover from courting too slow.  
Now, courting is pleasure and parting is grief,  
And a (*breaking*) false-hearted lover is worse than a thief...

(beat)

PARK RANGER

Ma'am? I forgot to mention one thing.

ANGIE

(tearfully)

What's that?

PARK RANGER

There's a difference between not putting it out of your mind and whipping yourself to death with it.

ANGIE

Oh.

PARK RANGER

Yes, sir. Now. How about...  
(singing) Oh give me a home where the buffalo roam,  
Where the deer and the antelope play,  
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word,  
And the skies are not cloudy all day...

(He gestures at the sky and smiles at her.)

ANGIE

(singing hesitantly, then more confidently)  
Where the air is so pure, and the zephyrs so free,  
The breezes so balmy and light,  
That I would not exchange my home on the range,  
For all of the cities so bright.

ANGIE, PARK RANGER

(singing with gusto)  
Home, home on the range,  
Where the deer and the antelope play,  
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word,  
And the skies are not cloudy all day.

PARK RANGER

There you see! A song for every day and a day for every song!

ANGIE

Yes, I see.

(She springs up and gives him a warm hug to his delighted surprised.)

PARK RANGER

Oh, now there! There!...I...don't know what I...

(Trevor enters.)

TREVOR

Leave her alone for one night only to find her in the arms of another man.

PIP (OFFSTAGE)  
(loudly, proudly)  
What's he that wishes so?

ANGIE  
Oh my god!

PARK RANGER  
Is that your husband?

PIP (OFFSTAGE)  
My cousin Westmoreland? No, my fair cousin.  
If we are marked to die,  
We are enow to do our country loss; and if to live  
The fewer men, the greater share of honor!

TREVOR  
Still playing for time?

PARK RANGER  
No, he's preparing to fight. If I were you, young  
fellow, I would gird your loins.

TREVOR  
They're girded.

(Pip enters, toweling himself off.)

PIP  
My family lost distinguished forebears at Blore's  
Heath, shed blood at Mortimer's Cross and stood with  
the Duke of the Norfolk in the Bloody Meadow at  
Towton, and I want my wife back!

ANGIE  
Oh, Pip!

PIP  
The terms are simple. A duel.

TREVOR  
A duel?!

PIP  
Yes.

TREVOR

With what?

(Striding to the broom stand, with a flourish, Pip draws a broom out.)

PIP

Wits! And these.

TREVOR

Broomsticks?!

PARK RANGER

Ooo! This is going to be fun!

ANGIE

Pip!

PIP

Yes. All the better to sweep up the floor with you.

TREVOR

This is crazy. This is nuts. You're nuts.

PIP

And you, you cad, are terrified. Un-manned, I would say.

TREVOR

Whatever...! All right. And after crossing broomsticks with you...No, after kicking your ass with a broomstick, what is supposed to be my prize?

PIP

The Lily Foundation speaking tour.

ANGIE

Pip! No!

TREVOR

You would wager the speaking tour?!

PIP

Yes. Whether the world shall learn about the possibilities of The Grand Mosaic or learn how the Coffeetable Taoist gets his oil changed will be determined this day, at this hour, on this hallowed field of battle. Five passes. The best of five wins the speaking tour.

TREVOR

Nice try. What about the Dean?

PIP

If you take me in the best of five passes, I'll tell her that the demands of The Grand Mosaic have...left me incapacitated...yes, incapacitated...for the rigors of the speaking tour. And that, you had better go in my place.

TREVOR

I have your word on that.

PIP

Unlike you, I keep mine.

TREVOR

Whatever. I'm game.

(Trevor draws the second broom out, checks its balance, then swishes it back and forth a few times.)

TREVOR

Hmph! Not too different from my favorite rapier at home.

ANGIE

Pip, this is ridiculous! Stop this! Trevor's a national finalist! You've worked your entire life for that tour!

TREVOR

That's right, my Souffrance Saint. Keep it up. Get in his head, it'll make the mercy killing that much easier.

ANGIE

Shut up!

TREVOR

Oooo! Wearing his favor today are you? All right, then. I want a judge. An impartial one. (*pointing at Park Ranger*) Him.

PARK RANGER

It would be my honor.

PIP

So be it, then. En garde.

(Pip takes up fencer's stance. Trevor does same. Park Ranger stands between them his hand outstretched between the tips of their broomsticks.)

PARK RANGER

Fencers ready?...Fence!

(They fence. Trevor touches. They pause.)

TREVOR

(to Park Ranger)

Well?

PARK RANGER

Uh, well...that's a hit. A clean one.

TREVOR

(hands stretched in triumph)

Yes! Like taking candy from a baby!

PIP

That is what you're good at, isn't it?

TREVOR

What? It's just an expression.

PIP

No. It's your life. Coffeetable Taoist on a blind date? Pathetic, I would say, except that's the best you have to offer.

TREVOR

(snarling)

Maybe so. But you have even less.

(He rushes at Pip, they trade several blows, then Trevor touches.)

PARK RANGER

A hit! A palpable hit!

(Angie stares incredulously at Park Ranger, who sheepishly looks away.)

TREVOR

(pirouetting with a wide flourish)

Ah! Life is grand and the world is my oyster!

PIP

A telling metaphor! For your fame, your fortune, will lose its freshness just as quickly.

TREVOR

So you say. But that's all you have, isn't it? Words. Whereas I have only to deal the killing blow and then everlasting glory shall be mine.

PIP

I beg to differ. I thought about what you said last night.

TREVOR

Oh? All right. I'll play your little game and delay the inevitable a little longer. What did you come up with?

PIP

Only this. You place great value in numbers: your yacht, your RV with its water reserve, your weeks as a best-seller, your party guests...

TREVOR

And why shouldn't I? Numbers are the surest indicator of success.

PIP

Maybe. I grant you, such glitter and glitz are certainly beguiling. Your millions and your millions of adoring fans. Who wouldn't mistake all that for success? After all, my wife did.

ANGIE

Pip!?

TREVOR

(swishing his stick)

Spend time with the better man? Why shouldn't she?

PIP

The mistletoe at the Christmas party, sunbathing on your new behemoth of a yacht that weekend in May, even your hot showers and chilled champagne at last night's campsite...

ANGIE

(horrified)

You know--!?

PIP

It would take the most detached of minds not to be taken in by such dazzling ephemera. They sparkle so as to blind one to the truer reality.

TREVOR

Whatever.

PIP

Which is, for all your so-called friends, fans and admirers, not one truly knows you.

TREVOR

What?! What the hell are you talking about?

PIP

You, Trevor. Your dreams, your nightmares. What truly makes you burst with joy or scream with terror. Yes, not one (*sarcastically*) friend of yours takes the time to learn them. Do you know why? They don't care.

TREVOR

(growling)

Enough of this talk! En garde!

(Trevor charges. They exchange several  
furious blows, then Pip touches.)

TREVOR

No!

PARK RANGER

That's a hit! Sure enough!

PIP

Yes, I, too, got taken in by all your resplendent  
rhetoric last night. But then I remembered: Your  
sparkling parties of several hundred guests, Trevor?  
I would trade them all for one real conversation in  
front of a campfire with one true friend.

(Pip rushes him and they trade several  
more furious strikes and parries before  
Pip touches.)

TREVOR

(recoiling in dismay)

God!

ANGIE

(clapping with delight)

Oh, Pip! Oh, honey!

PIP

The national fencing finalist is a bit off his game  
today, what?

TREVOR

Fuck you! Come on!

PIP

Here's the final irony of all. There is one person in  
all this world who does know you.

TREVOR

Who?

PIP

Me. You're a betting man. Best of five passes, Mr. Park Ranger?

PARK RANGER

That's right, sir. And currently the score is tied at two hits each.

PIP

I've already surprised you by getting this far.

TREVOR

That's not--!

PIP

Why wager further upon the loss of the speaking tour? I'll give it to you.

(beat)

TREVOR

For what?

PIP

Leave Angie alone forever. In exchange for the speaking tour.

TREVOR

Just like that, eh? Angie or the tour? I take...the tour.

(Angie gasps.)

TREVOR

But...I don't have to win like that. Ha!

(With a tremendous lunge, Trevor slips past Pip's slower parry and touches.)

TREVOR

(jumping and dancing)

Ah-ha! It's mine! It's mine! It's all mine now! The international speaking tour is mine!

(He performs a whirl of rapier thrusts and parries at the air, then stops mid-stroke and turns to face Angie.)

TREVOR

(dropping his broom)

I gotta pack. See you around.

(He exits. They all stare at one another, then Pip kneels at the mosaic and begins gathering up the rocks.)

PARK RANGER

What are you doing?

PIP

Returning them to the river.

ANGIE

Pip! You can't. You...I...don't...

PIP

They've served their purpose. It's time for them to serve some other one.

PARK RANGER

Or themselves?

PIP

(smiling)

Or themselves.

ANGIE

Pip? I'm...I'm sorry.

(After a beat, he looks at her, then stands, dropping his stones as she rushes to embrace him, sobbing.)

ANGIE

I feel so stupid! Stupid, stupid, stup--!

PIP

It's okay. It's all right. God knows...with the way I was slipping out of this world, in your shoes...

ANGIE

Don't say it. Please.

PIP

Okay.

(Trevor's RV is heard driving away.)

PARK RANGER

Hey! He never paid for his RV-site! Excuse me, ma'am!

(He rushes off.)

ANGIE

You're giving up The Grand Mosaic? For me?

PIP

I think I'm the gainer.

ANGIE

(breaking away)

But...Pip, I...I...can't. It's your life's work.

PIP

I found something better. Or rediscovered, as it were.

ANGIE

No, Pip. No. What you're saying is...gallant, but...I can't be responsible for that. I just...can't.

(beat)

PIP

Well, then...do it with me.

ANGIE

Pip? Really? You don't mean that?

PIP

Yes. God knows...

ANGIE  
(tentatively)

Which one?

PIP  
(smiling)

...That I can't do it by myself. Help me. We'll find it together.

ANGIE  
Oh, sweetheart! But, honey...is it...even possible?

PIP  
Who knows? Even if it's not, should we give it an honest effort, I think the world will respect that. What do you say?

ANGIE  
(embracing him)  
Yes. We'll find that tile. I don't how. But we will. I promise.

(Fade.)