

# Lights and Shadows

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## The Jackal

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MICHAEL STEELE

## Second Prize, One-Act Plays

THE JACKAL

a closet drama

## Dramatis Personae:

Jake the Cobbler - the creator

Various Devils - the negative incarnation

Phonograph - the jester

The Good Twain - contractors

The Jackal - a scavenger

Time : Twilight

I

Heaven

Jake. Various Devils.

I might shed words with thee.

V. D. Phonograph howls. I recompense.Phonograph. Meister Eckhardt with a blowtorch

he burns out your mind

and your head it begins to happen.

V. D. Phonograph is doing Bob Dylan.Jake. A good ear, that phonographV. D. Wretched is that which you have fashioned.Jake. I have carved them empty,

as if for a fit.

Phonograph. Walking down a side street

I laid eyes on a girl

who was wearing a pound of beauty

let me kiss you said I,

she said haha I'm a shoe,

I put my foot into her.

Twain. Shall you guide me to you at last?Jake. At last.V. D. Listen. Just listen.

- Phonograph. and long came a cop  
 who bristled and said  
 why do you stomp that girlie's face?  
 Are you putting out a fire?
- Jake. Hither, Twain.
- V. D. Again you call the Good Twain.
- Jake. Today is good-father day.  
 Watch how I till the glad earth.
- V. D. Today is slow but a slow boil.  
 Watch how I turn with mirth.
- Twain. Coming again. What shall we carve.
- Jake. Faithful, faithful,  
 the Twain are hearty.  
 They led loose the Zunis  
 from the earthbottom.  
 They dwelled in Ishtar and poured  
 the tender lotions of Aphrodite.  
 Their feats are filling.  
 They did erect a cataract  
 on the Nile.
- V. D. Let them go forth.  
 My man awaits them.
- Jake. Go to Babel and train the road  
 and it shall flow to here,  
 to Heaven, to Olelpanti.
- Twain. Shall you guide men to you at last?
- Jake. At last.
- V. D. Listen. Just listen.

I I  
Earth

Twain. How good is this shape.

How it soothes the heart.

(Enter the Jackal, who is wearing a tuxedo with tails)

Jackal. A fishbowl. Only a fishbowl.

Twain. The Jackal. A sad beast.

Jackal. The fish must stay in water.

They are lost in your bowl.

To let man bloom forever

will negate the bloom.

Let man wither and his

time of bloom will be precious.

Twain. That is sensible.

Jackal. So why rob us, Good Twain.

You are a faithful contractor

but here your faith must wither.

Please let us be.

Your fishbowls will conquer us.

Twain. Do you not know, Jackal,

that unconquered you die.

Jackal. I know.

(The Twain begins to fly away)

Twain. Very well, Jackal.

But the words you speak

shall haunt you.

Jackal. Let them.

They are my words.

(From Heaven, the voice of Jake addresses the Jackal)

Jake. Well done, Jackal.  
Now you may reap.  
Your pattern shall be man's also.  
You who act for self  
have privileged others.  
You will no longer be  
the only creature  
who is nourished by death.  
This privilege shall come  
to man as well.

V. D. (laughing)  
Didactic, of course.  
When the jake-spur quick  
is numbed in cells  
we will all be delivered.

CURTAINS