

One Act Play



At the Rim of Destiny



Chicago Literary Club

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Philip Liebson

Timothy Thursby – The Interviewer
Alan Jayston – The Interviewee
Ann Norwall - An employee with Thursby

Set: An interviewing room on the second floor of an isolated building on the outskirts of a small city in the Northeast United States.

Time: The present.

[Thursby is sitting at a table looking over a document, lasting about 10-15 seconds, then looks at his pocket watch, shakes his head and goes back to the document].

[Jayston knocks on door,]

T-Come in. –

[Gets up to shake his hand]

T- Hello Mr. Jayston. [They shake hands] I'm Thursby, Timothy Thursby, the person who contacted you.

J – Hello. Glad to meet you.

Thursby: Please sit down.[Motions to chair]. [They sit down].

I just have a few questions to ask you. Merely a formality. I trust you had no trouble finding the building.... You were a little late.

Jaston: Well, it's a little out of the way and the instructions about getting here were somewhat difficult.

T: Yes. It is an out of the way place but quiet and we are never interrupted by unwanted visitors. Not very upscale. No elevators. [Pause]..... You did what we asked? You took public transportation and didn't discuss this meeting with anyone?

J: Yes. I don't understand the secrecy.

T: This is a safe house and we don't want people knowing about it. From your previous work with the other firm you must understand the situation. We'll have our own driver to get you back. By the way, do you want a cigarette?

J: I don't smoke, but I could use a drink.

T: I don't have any including vodka. I know that's your favorite.

J: I didn't expect any! How did you know?

[There is a period of quiet. T stares at J and J appears a little uncomfortable]

T: I take it that you lived in London for several years.

J: Yes- My firm sent me to do some marketing.

T: How did it turn out?

J: Fine at the start but things went downhill toward the end, which is the reason I came back to the States and I'm now looking around.

T: We have some fine recommendations but looking at your resume, there are two periods in which you seem to have dropped out- 2002-2004 and 2007 to the present. You had been in Panama before then, and in 2004 you started working in London for several years with your previous firm again.

J: Yes, well, actually, I left my firm in 2002 from Panama and came to England late that Fall. I really wasn't doing much for those two years, a little sightseeing, travelling in Europe. Fortunately I had a source of income that allowed me to live freely .As you know I was rehired to work for the firm in London for 3 years but left 6 years ago on private business and travelling.

T: And now?

J: After London I got tired of just wandering around again and started thinking about my future. What am I destined to do? Do I want to continue working in that area, or something more adventurous? Your contact with me out of the blue suggested an opportunity.

T: If I may ask, have you been approached by other similar organizations?

J: That's confidential.

T: OK. We pride ourselves as being probably the leading organization in this area and carefully screen our applicants. Now then, do you have any questions?

J: Yes, is there any danger in the work I would be doing?

T: Very little, I would expect. You would occasionally have to carry a gun, but you understand that in the work we do, we try to protect our staff as well as our clients.

J: I somehow expected that. I am not experienced with guns but have had one in the past, primarily for outdoor sports.

T: Of course you would have a training period to make you expert in all aspects of the work you would expect to be doing. By the way, had you heard of us before?

J - As a matter of fact I had not heard of you until I received the information on my computer about your organization. That's some logo with the burnished trees.

T - Yes- We send it out to selected persons periodically. We have dossiers on persons whom we think may benefit our organization.

J – How did you find me?

T – One of our part time employees, Ann Norwall, recommended you. Do you know her?

J – I met her several times when she was working for our firm in London – I didn't know her very well and we didn't work together.

T- Indeed- She seems to remember you quite well and had some glowing comments about you – you would fit right in with the organization.

J- Strange that someone I hardly knew would give me such a recommendation. Certainly she had little contact with me and I don't think she even knew my background, although she was working for my London branch of the firm at the time.

T – She indicated that when she met you in London, you had just come back from travelling and though you rejoined your firm you were inquiring at that time about work along the lines of our organization.

J_ Yes. I had one more job to finish and after that I was on my own.

T – Getting back to the present. One of the interests we have with our staff is their separate visions. Could you please comment about yours?

J- What do you mean, visions?

T– Well, we all have ideas and ideals. What are yours?

J – I haven't thought about it. (Pause) Your question reminds me of a short story I read by EB White- A fellow is seeing a psychiatrist because of bizarre thoughts and the psychiatrist asks him in effect what his vision is. The patient can't answer that but asks the psychiatrist what HE wants. The psychiatrist thinks about his home, his interests, his future but can't come up with an answer. The fellow leaves the office in a quandary and when walking home sees a tree burnished by the fading sunlight. That's what he wants- the second tree from the corner just as it is. He had no bizarre thoughts for almost an hour. I guess visions are hazy and timely focused.

T – Still- what do you see as your future. What bizarre thoughts do you have?

J – I didn't expect a psychiatric evaluation but sometimes I see cloud patterns and think of the passing of time, and what I call the rim of destiny. I would like to live 500 years so that I can see what we will learn about the universe. I see myself on a lawn with metal chairs, red, green, blue

and yellow, covered with a glaze of raindrops from a passing shower. Not exactly a vision of the future but such thoughts keep me going.

[Knock on the door]

T- I have a surprise for you. I hope it is a pleasant one. Ann Norwall will be joining us now and may have some questions.

T [while opening the door and letting her in] Hello, Ann...

[Ann walks in. Ann and Jayson shake hands].

J – Hello, Ann. It’s been a while [while shaking hands].

Ann – Yes, and it was a pleasant surprise to me that you were being interviewed. I don’t usually get involved in screening but decided to come because of our past experience.

[T motions her to sit down. They all sit down]

T – Ann, I’d just like you to clarify some information for me. J indicated that he had seen you on several occasions several years ago.

Ann – Yes, we were working for the same firm at the time but in different areas and I met Alan in a group meeting in London at the time. There were some areas of mutual involvement, however, and we straightened things out.

T– [To Jayston] Again, you haven’t seen each other for how many years?

J – At least seven.

Ann - that’s about right.

T – Haven’t communicated?

(Pause) J – Not that I can recall.

T– Well Ann- Do you have any specific questions now that you’re here?

Ann – Yes- Do you still fantasize about a new ice age?

J- That was a while ago. Now I see the world as a desert with the dimming of the tide.

Ann – Do you think that the difficulties you had previously would prevent you from working here?

J – No, I don't think so- I admit that sometimes I was rather anxious about my surroundings and would not go over bridges or through tunnels and avoid pasta.... Why are you asking me these questions? Mr. Thursby- Did you put her up to this?

T – We do have some concerns about whether you have overcome the difficulties you had.

J- [Jumping up]. Difficulties? I was hounded by these messengers from ancient Babylonia warning me about the coming ice age, describing their famine and the death of their cities. Now it is happening again!.

T – Sit down. We can't have you acting up like this if you want to be part of our group.

Ann – We want to support you and have confidence that with the proper support, you can provide us with the information allowing us to see that our firm will continue to thrive. We need to know where the relics are hidden.

J – I can't tell you. It is out of my hands.

Ann – You know where they are.

J- (Sobbing). I just can't. I need to protect them.

Ann – They will protect us against an ice age, or drought or famine.

J- My masters will not allow me.

Ann – We are your new masters. You have no choice.

T – Be reasonable. There's no way you can get out of this. You must work with us.

J- That's what they said 10 years ago and I had to get out of it then.

T– You no longer have an option. It's us or we send you back to them.

Ann – Please, for my sake, and for your protection, find the relics for us.

J – The relics have probably disintegrated by now- they are scattered over oceans and deserts. You can only find them through your mind.

[T and Ann look at each other]

T – Well, thank you Mr. Jayston. We need to look into your situation a little more deeply but we will contact you soon.

J- Do you mean that it's not definite?

T– Just a few more things to look into. Our driver will take care of you. Just wait outside.

J.- Thanks. Goodbye Ann.

Ann – Goodbye and good seeing you again

[J leaves]

[They pause for about 10 seconds- T goes to the door and opens it to see if Jayston has gone downstairs]

T – Are they ready for him downstairs?

Ann – I left them downstairs. There should be no trouble and they can dispose of the body.

T – It took a while getting him back here but you did it! But how did you do it?

Ann – Sending him our simulated logo with sun burnished trees is what did it.

T – Amazing! Throughout the interview he didn't remember meeting me and we worked together for his firm for two years. He seemed a sober, rational fellow when I knew him.

Ann – Now in his state of mind, he probably doesn't even remember killing my brother in Panama. He could never have been indicted and no investigation was ever initiated. He was perfectly sane until then according to my informants.

T – I was not involved with this as I told you. What about your name?

Ann – My brother was working under an alias. Jayston would never have recognized the relationship.

T –My dear, I hate to break this to you but I'm told he killed the wrong man.

Ann –He killed the wrong man!?! My god! [Pause]

T– Well, let me help you recover with a late afternoon cocktail under our own burnished trees. But what about his relics?

Ann – (Shaken) Nothing but illusions.!

T– So are all of ours!

Ann – I need the drink!

(They stroll out with T's arm around Ann).

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