

Performances of the Sufi Ascent in Ibn ‘Arabī’s Metaphysics, Tunisian  
Ḥaḍra and Dhikr Rituals, and Three Sufi Plays: Journeys in God’s Vast  
Earth

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## Preface

### Silence, Intoxication, and Writing

Language and embodiment are intimately tied up with both Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysics and Shādhiliya and ‘Īssāwiya performances of divinely inspired writing. Drawing on performance techniques from the *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra* rituals and Ibn ‘Arabī’s description of the ontological significance of writing, I experimented with this culturally specific Sufi understanding of performance by composing three plays through which I explored writing as an embodied practice. This direct experience significantly altered my creative process.

Writing, for Ibn ‘Arabī and other Sufis, is a performance of the loss of self that allows the Absolute to speak through them. The dialectic of silence (annihilation) and speech (subsistence) facilitates God’s endless self-disclosure in the cosmos, including in the form of divinely inspired writing. The notion that God reveals Himself to the adept through divinely inspired words is prevalent among members of Shādhiliya and ‘Īssāwiya who consider the composition of these kinds of poetic verses to be part of the spiritual work carried out by the order, ensuring the continuation of the tradition. My own experience of writing these three plays mirrored that of my informants. The more frequently I attended the *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra* rituals, the more I engaged in intense near-involuntary sessions of writing, induced by spiritual intoxication (*takhmīr*). These heightened emotional states may be described as a kind of inner silence that makes audible the innermost depths of the human subject, which Ibn ‘Arabī would consider the ‘polished’ image of God.

So moving are these experiences that one is tempted to believe that they reveal an essential truth common to all created entities. However, my experience does not attest to God's presence in every human being, but to the fact that I had internalized this element of popular Tunisian Sufi culture. This internalization may be described as a form of acculturation through which I learned to perform states of deep listening (intoxication, silence) and divinely inspired writing. It is important to highlight the fact that several Arab writers were familiar with this notion of writing, using a Sufi vocabulary and framework to explain their own creative process. Thus, commenting on the work of Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Ṣabūr, Ziad Elmarsafy writes:

Across a series of texts that constitute his own poetic autobiography, 'Abd al-Ṣabūr pursues the comparison between the activity of the poet and the life of the mystic: both poetic creation and mysticism involve spiritual and mental exertion (*ijtihād*) unencumbered by the laws of cause and effect; if they are rewarded with anything it will be something sent by the infinite Other, God; both seek a way towards reaching the sort of truth that transcends the quotidian.<sup>1</sup>

Elmarsafy asserts that 'Abd al-Ṣabūr drew on Medieval Sufi works, including al-Qushayrī's *al-Risāla (Epistle)*, so as to describe and develop his own writing process, which was centered on the notion that the creative act is contingent upon an encounter with an entity beyond the self (God, the other).<sup>2</sup> This idea has parallels with automatic writing, which was an important part of surrealist artists' exploration of the unconscious. Although not a religious movement, surrealists promoted the idea that automatic writing was a means of discovering internal truths inaccessible through rational thinking.<sup>3</sup> According to the renowned Syrian poet Adonis, writing for both surrealists and Sufis is

not only about generating poetic material but is also a means of exploring the self. Both stressed the importance of process, perceived as an encounter with God or the unconscious, which transforms the writer/mystic.<sup>4</sup> And although Sufism is several centuries older than surrealism, Adonis does not claim that Sufism influenced it. His interest is in exploring the parallels between these two, each developed in very different social and cultural contexts, one for religious reasons and the other for artistic experimentation and the search for artistic freedom by means of the unconscious.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, exploring writing as part of a process that allows the human subject to come into contact with what is beyond our ordinary daily lives, whether God, the spirit, or the unconscious, is certainly not a new phenomenon. These ideas were prevalent in the works of Medieval Muslim writers, including Ibn ‘Arabī as well as contemporary Arab and European artists. The difference lies in the fact that that my plays are not only based on Islamic understandings of poetic composition, but also on the rituals of the Shādhiliya and ‘Issāwiya communities who incorporate these ideas into an embodied practice.

It is no coincidence that I experienced these states of semi-unconscious writing after attending the *dhikr* or *ḥaḍra*. They were possible because these rituals encompass a method: bodily techniques that guide performers to heightened emotional states that transform them into intermediaries for the revelation of God’s words. Essential to this was my participation in the rituals, which gave me insight into how adepts gradually open up their bodies to God. Intoxication may be part of an inward spiritual journey, but it is deeply physical. It is induced by a complex process that includes meditative practices

such as following particular breath patterns interweaved into the songs, litanies, and Qur'ānic recitations, which allow adepts to generate creative material by embodying the dialectic of speech and silence. In addition to the physical practice, the culturally specific association of particular movements, gestures, and utterances with certain metaphysical ideas leads the performer into a state of intoxication. This is why it took me many months to learn how to enter into such states.

The physical and emotional effects of intoxication allowed me to experience states of deep listening in which I would transcribe the images and words revealed to me in this meditative state. Performing these states of silence does not require any active form of thinking. It entails listening deeply and intently to whatever may appear during one's 'presence with God.' Writing in such a state feels almost effortless, as if one was merely transcribing scenes or words revealed in a dream. And this is precisely what it means to become a *barzakh*, to make concrete that which is witnessed in the 'spiritual world.' All this was not unique to myself; many adepts shared similar experiences with me, such writing considered to be one of the many ways in which the seeker may perform intoxication.

The practice-based approach of performance ethnography allowed me to explore how the metaphysical ideas examined in ritual can be interwoven into creative practice by being subject to the same spiritual states (annihilation, subsistence) that form a fundamental part of the religious life of Sufi adepts. My plays emerged out of these physical, emotional, and ethnographic experiments that were part of my integration into a Sufi way

of being, which required learning how to embody the cyclical states of speech and silence so as to experiment with this Sufi mode of creative expression. I usually experienced such varied states of intoxicated loss of self during or after collective performances of the *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra*. After I acquired a deeper understanding of the physical practices that induce such states, I learned how to perform intoxication on my own by reciting a litany or the Divine Names. However, my experiences of intoxication were always more profound when performed with a group over several hours. These activities formed an important part of my creative process because they were the means through which I developed the characters and their interplay of silence as a form of annihilation and communion with God which is the substance of my plays.

My writing process was not only informed by my personal experience of performing intoxication but also by the research I conducted through participant observation. Because my aim was to write plays that were based on the metaphysical ideas embodied in ritual, it was essential that I understood which parts of my personal experience were relevant to the broader cultural context of specific religious ritual. For example, seeing images of the desert while performing intoxication was clearly due to my exposure to ʿĪssāwiya myths in which the desert represents the space for an encounter with the divine. I did not write any of my plays within a single session of intoxication. Instead, I gathered the material I wrote during and after the *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra*, including field notes, and, with cumulative insight into this material, created a narrative that was based on these different sources.

I made a conscious effort to retain the elements and techniques similar to those performed in Shādhiliya and ʿĪssāwiya rituals such as the inclusion of frequent moments of silence in the stage directions that represent the method through which adepts have an encounter with God. It must be stressed that I did not use any parts of the litanies, songs, or recitations performed in the *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra* as such but explored how the images and metaphysical ideas included in these rituals can take on a new form. As noted earlier, the constant creative engagement with the songs and music performed in these rituals is an important part of the activities of the order, and it is through them that members continuously develop the methods inherited from previous generations. The major difference was that I engaged in these experiments with the intention of creating a theatrical performance, whereas, for other adepts, these creative activities are part of the collective refinement of a spiritual method defined by the order.

### **Language, Form, and Structure**

There are several reasons why I chose the medium of playwriting for my work on the Shādhiliya and ʿĪssāwiya rituals. The first is that the *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra* are performance events in which adepts are exposed to metaphysics through the content of the poems sung in these rituals, as well as by embodying these metaphysical principles. Thus, apart from incorporating metaphysical ideas, the purpose of writing my plays was to also create new avenues in which they can be performed, that is, in the theatre. Second, one of the aims of this thesis is to present an alternative to staged performances of Sufi rituals that do not take into account their culturally specific meanings – ‘culture’ here defined by religious practice and metaphysical thought specific to defined social groups. Therefore, my three

plays are very much concerned with exploring how these indigenous traditions can alter contemporary theatrical practice beyond the appropriation of content and mimicking of gestures. Third, Ibn ‘Arabī’s writing provides a framework in which language represents an ontological condition, which, in addition to being helpful for understanding the metaphysical dimensions of *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra* rituals, seems particularly well suited to the theatre since the concept of language goes far beyond the text to include embodiment.

In fact, much of this thesis is concerned with Sufi attitudes towards language, explored at length by the very composition of my plays that embody the Sufi notion that the human-divine encounter is mediated by language. This raises an important question as to why these plays were written in English rather than Arabic. The most obvious reason is that this thesis was written at an English-speaking institution. Beyond that, my main concern in the study of Shādhiliya and ‘Īssāwiya rituals is not the intricacies of the Arabic language, but these Sufi communities’ approach to language and its relationship to embodiment. Commenting on Sufi Qawali rituals in New Delhi, Judith Becker asserts that the practice of listening to the Qur’ān contributed to the development of trance practices induced by states of deep listening.<sup>6</sup> Even though Qawali poems are not written in Arabic (they are composed either in Urdu or Farsi), they still have profound effects on listeners because of the enveloping quality of their sound and their belief in the transformative power of language.<sup>7</sup> In other words, trance is induced through the perception of language as sacred, rather than through the linguistic characteristics of the poems performed; and this capacity for transcendence to the sacred is just as valid for the English language.

The Shādhiliya and ‘Īssāwiya communities share this belief in the transformative power of language, whether through the repetition of the Divine Names in the *dhikr* or the singing of poems in the *ḥaḍra*. And it is precisely this aspect of the rituals that I wanted to explore in my three plays, particularly the notion that language is not merely an utterance, but a higher embodied state. This idea was not only derived from the *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra*, but also Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings in which divine utterances correspond to embodied states.<sup>8</sup> Language in Ibn ‘Arabī’s ontology is the intermediary between God and the created world and is thus the means through which the divine attributes are made manifest in the worshiper who engages in acts of devotion.<sup>9</sup>

The main aim of this thesis is not to engage in the complex debate on Arab theatre but only to provide an alternative, an example of how theatre-makers can experiment with the indigenous traditions of my research. Thus, the focus of my thesis is on how the religious ideas and philosophies surrounding their performances of language contribute to the formation of a culturally specific Sufi understanding of performance that has the potential to alter theatrical practice. The aim is not an in-depth examination of the Arabic language, but an exploration of the relationship between language and embodiment within an identified Islamic intellectual framework and Sufi worldview, which can also be put into effect in English. My purpose for writing my plays was to examine how Sufi understandings of performance can alter playwriting practice in terms of both content and process, as opposed to focusing on the linguistic characteristics of the poems and songs performed in the *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra*. This of course does not exclude the possibility that such experiments can be conducted in Arabic.

Of particular significance is the notion that poetic images are a means through which to explore one's relationship to the Absolute. Given that my plays are based on Shādhiliya and 'Īssāwiya rituals, it is not surprising that they employ a poetic language primarily composed of short rhythmic repetitive sentences. For, the use of this kind of language in the *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra* rituals is precisely what leads adepts into a state of intoxication. The poems performed in Sufi ritual are part of an oral tradition. They are almost never recited on their own, but are incorporated into songs that may or may not be accompanied by instrumental music. Thus, they are best described as a performance tradition rather than literary works. In a similar vein, the short rhythmic verses that constitute the dialogue and stage directions of my plays were created for performance, for actors who are meant to embody the metaphysical ideas represented by each character.

My three plays are not the first to make use of poetic language. Other examples include T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and 'Abd al-Ṣabūr's *The Tragedy of Ḥallāj* that contain dialogues composed of verse.<sup>10</sup> Theatre scholars have described these works as 'poetic plays' or 'poetic dramas' because they were created for the purpose of being performed in a theatre.<sup>11</sup> Badawi asserts that these plays are not simply works composed of poetry, but whose use of a poetic language is essential for conveying their meaning.<sup>12</sup> Such works constitute their own genre of plays written in verse. Likewise, my three plays are not 'simply' literary works because the full expression of their meaning requires that they be embodied in performance, not merely recited.

How actors decide to engage with the text is dependent on their own process, which is part of the collaborative work of theatre making. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, after Stanislavsky introduced the idea that a theatrical work should be an act of ‘collective creation,’ it has been a generally understood principle that the creative input of the actor is a fundamental part of the stage work that is developed in dialogue with the director and other actors.<sup>13</sup> Stanislavsky also considered the audience a ‘co-creator,’ and his ideas on collective theatre making influenced some of the most prominent directors of the twenty-first century such as Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brook, who subsequently contributed to the dissemination of the notion that actors are active collaborators in the production.<sup>14</sup> Since the playwright is not generally considered the sole creator of a production by the fact that s/he wrote its play, nor responsible for determining how it should be performed, I do not wish to dictate to an actor or director how they should engage with these texts. My only requirement is that they give attention to the metaphysical ideas from which these plays have emerged.

To the western reader it may seem that my plays are similar to Samuel Beckett’s, particularly in their use of short rhythmic sentences that could be seen as reminiscent of Beckett’s minimalist style. This, in addition to the repetition and silences that occur frequently in the stage directions, may make my plays seem to have been influenced by Beckett. However, they were not created through any research on, or conscious engagement with, the works of Beckett. Any perceived similarity is simply due to the ritual evocations (repetition, silence, myth) that appear in Beckett’s works.<sup>15</sup> Take, for example, *Endgame*, a play about a character called Hamm who is blind and cannot stand

and his servant Clov who cannot sit, both of whom seem to be stuck, unable to engage with the outside world.<sup>16</sup> The play includes a lot of repetition not only in the dialogue but also the action. Each character continuously performs certain routines: Clov climbs up the ladder to look out the window; Hamm has a compulsive need to readjust himself to the centre of the room. The repetition of these actions and certain phrases in dialogue creates a circular sense of time quite similar to the one found in ritual, in which certain routines are continuously performed.<sup>17</sup>

*Waiting for Godot* shares many of the features of ritual. Two central characters named Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot who never arrives.<sup>18</sup> Although not confirmed by Beckett, many commentators argue that Godot represents God.<sup>19</sup> It has a similar structure to *Endgame*, that is, it is based on repetition without a clear beginning or end, making it seem as if nothing happens in the play. Susan Brienza asserts that Beckett drew on the myths and ritual practices of several traditions, especially Christianity, which he ‘distorts’ by rendering them meaningless.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the notion of a pilgrimage or spiritual journey becomes futile with characters who endlessly wait without undergoing any profound changes.<sup>21</sup>

In both *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* repetition and ritual-like structures are part of the characters’ attempt to create meaning within the existential void that, for Beckett, constitutes human life.<sup>22</sup> And although Beckett’s plays share such attributes as mythic elements and ritual-like actions with the works of western avant-garde theatre artists, they differ in that his characters fail to achieve the acts of transcendence that would allow

them to supersede meaninglessness. This already shows that there are profound differences between the works of Beckett and my three plays in which the utterances and actions performed by the characters have spiritual and ontological significance and connect with a transcendent force. The repetition of sentences and actions is not futile. Much as happens in Sufi ritual, repetition is the means through which the characters discover esoteric truths hidden in the body.

Even though I am familiar with Beckett's plays and appreciate his valuable contributions to the European theatre tradition, his work was not an important influence on my plays. It is perfectly understandable that their silences, short rhythmic dialogues, repetition, and circularity may remind readers of Beckett. However, this is not due to the direct influence of Beckett but to the fact that my plays are based on a ritual practice that contains elements that can be found in a wide range of traditions including Christianity, which Beckett had at his disposal.<sup>23</sup> Repetition, silence, and the use of a poetic language composed of short rhythmic sentences form a fundamental part of the ritual practices of the Shādhiliya and ʿĪssāwiya communities, which were developed in dialogue with Islamic theology and intellectual history.

This does not preclude the possibility that the broader western cultural context in which I have lived for several years may have had some unconscious residual influence on my work, but it remains unlikely that Beckett was a major influence since I did not engage in any in-depth research on his work. Marvin Carlson has stressed the importance of taking works that developed from indigenous traditions seriously, without assuming that they

are based on European models.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the existence of certain parallels does not necessarily mean that my plays draw on European sources. My plays are more closely aligned with the work of Arab avant-garde theatre-makers who were interested in indigenous traditions. Much of what is valuable about these traditions is lost when the theatrical experiments that attempt to engage with them cannot be explored outside of a European framework. This is not to negate the important influence that the European performing arts have had on Arab theatre, but to stress the importance of exploring each work on a case-by-case basis, without making assumptions.

My plays were specifically oriented around my experience of participating in *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra* performances, which was a central part of my practice-as-research methodology. I wrote my plays through an immersion in a specific Islamic Tunisian Sufi context that required engagement with the physical practice of intoxication. Thus, the theoretical part of my thesis has focused on the religious culturally specific aspects of these Sufi modes of performance and writing rather than on cross-cultural comparisons, which although interesting, are beyond the scope of this thesis.

The influence of the *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra* rituals can be observed not only in the content of my plays, but also in their structure. Their circular structure – they begin and end in a cave (the esoteric dimensions of the body) – mirrors Shādhiliya and ‘Īssāwiya rituals, which are composed of symbolic actions that represent this movement from the esoteric to the exoteric. This circular structure was also shaped by Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings on time, which is also circular, without beginning or end.<sup>25</sup> As in *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra* rituals and Ibn

‘Arabī’s description of the ascent, the aim is not to reach a particular place, but to journey through endless cycles of annihilation and subsistence that allow E1, E2, and K to experience God in the form of different landscapes, never in the same form twice.

Thus, the plays are not based on established European dramatic plot structures, inspired by the so-called ‘well-made play’: ideally, plays should have a beginning or exposition, a climax, and an end.<sup>26</sup> They are much more concerned with process, with the constant spiritual and physical development that occurs through the performance of the metaphysical ideas that are the foundations of *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra* rituals. These developmental characteristics involve repetition, frequent silences, the use of short rhythmic sentences, and a symbolic poetic language that creates an open-ended flow, which contribute to the formation of the plays’ circular structure. In contrast to plays that adhere to more rigid plot structures, my plays are supple, yielding a broader range of meanings that can only be fully articulated in performance. In other words, how these plays will be staged is more open-ended, depending on the performers, who are meant to develop the material continuously by engaging with the metaphysical ideas explored in them.

As noted above, this developmental bodily process extends to the writing process that includes a meditative practice composed of singing, dancing, and the repetition of short rhythmic sentences (participation in the *dhikr* and *ḥaḍra*) that make possible a performance of the loss of self. It is from this Sufi idea of writing as spiritual encounter

that the following plays were created. I am deeply indebted to the Sufi communities who taught me how to perform intoxication and write from these meditative states.

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- <sup>1</sup> Ziad Elmarsafy. *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012, p.3.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.3-5.
- <sup>3</sup> Adonis, trans. Judith Cumberbatch. *Sufism and Surrealism*. London: Saqi, 2005, p.95-105. Also see Andre Breton, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen Lane. *Manifestos of Surrealism*. Ann Arbor: Michigan, 1969, p.1-49.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.10-11.
- <sup>6</sup> *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004, p.82.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiya (The Meccan Revelations)*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiya, 1999, Vol.4, p.185-190.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., Vol.5, p.91-93
- <sup>10</sup> *Murder in the Cathedral*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988; *Ma’sāt al-Hallāj (The Tragedy of Hallāj)*. Beirut: Dār al-Adab, 1965.
- <sup>11</sup> Khalil Semaan. ‘T.S Eliot’s influence on Arabic Poetry and Theater,’ *Comparative Literature Studies*, 6, no.4 (1969), p.483. Also see Muhammad Badawi. *Modern Arabic Drama in Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.228.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Maria Shevtsova. *Rediscovering Stanislavsky*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, p.10-12, 255-259. Also see Christopher Innes and Maria Shevtsova. *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Directing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p.218-246.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> See Katherine Burkman (ed). *Myth and Ritual in the Plays of Samuel Beckett*. London: Associated University Press, 1987.
- <sup>16</sup> Samuel Beckett. *Endgame*. London: Faber & Faber, 2006.
- <sup>17</sup> In Katherine Burkman (ed). *Myth and Ritual*, p.13-26.
- <sup>18</sup> Samuel Beckett. *Waiting for Godot*. London: Faber & Faber, 1959.
- <sup>19</sup> Susan Brienza in *Myth and Ritual*, p.28-140.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid. Beckett makes many references to Christianity, even though his stance towards religion was ambiguous. Also see Lois Oppenheim (ed). *Samuel Beckett Studies*. New York: Palgrave, 1988, p.154-169.
- <sup>24</sup> In James Harding and John Rouse (eds). *Not The Other: The Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2006, p.125-141.
- <sup>25</sup> *The Meccan Revelations*, Vol.6, p.365-369.
- <sup>26</sup> John Taylor. *The Rise and Fall of the Well-Made Play*. London: Methuen, 1967.

## **The Sacred Triangle of Silence**

Characters

ELIJAH

E1

EZRA

E2

KHALID

K

SOLDIER I

SOLDIER II

Scene One

The Sacred Mountain

*KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH are on a mountain*

*in front of them an endless desert*

KHALID. from the emerald cave

EZRA. they emerged

ELIJAH. three

KHALID. clothed in the last remnants of fertile earth

EZRA. waiting

ELIJAH. for sound to be revealed

KHALID. for forty days

EZRA. they waited

ELIJAH. for past to be returned

KHALID. they remained persistent

EZRA. in their search for eternal earth

ELIJAH. it was beneath their feet

KHALID. that it realized

EZRA. its past and present glory

ELIJAH. for what greater honour could earth have

KHALID. than to know that it had embraced their dead bodies

EZRA. that smelled of oak and lavender

ELIJAH. it was a strange predicament that they faced

KHALID. return earth to earth

EZRA. bury them in distant waters

ELIJAH. they said

KHALID. they were beyond the hills

EZRA. and the rivers

ELIJAH. the hidden gardens

KHALID. they are the eternal silence

EZRA. the sacred path

ELIJAH. the return

KHALID. so let them rest

EZRA. as we pay homage to their greatness

ELIJAH. in a moment of silence

*silence*

## Scene Two

### The Cave

*as the dust rises*

*K gathers it in his palms*

*for it had been forty days*

*that he had waited in darkness*

*for their return*

*a mysterious sound*

*emerges from behind the cave*

*with the last of his strength*

*K pierces the soil with a spoon*

K. the earth is coarse

*K digs through the soil*

*the earth is coarse*

*a capsule appears*

*the sound returns*

*K follows the sound*

*and rests his ear*

*on the side of the cave*

*K digs*

*with the spoon*

*until it reveals*

*a silver dust*

*it is not coarse*

*the sound grows louder*

*K listens*

*to the echo of a distant breath*

*E1 and E2 listen  
from the other side of the cave  
K moves closer  
E1 and E2 dig through the cave  
with bare hands  
until stone and dust  
fall back into the ground  
K's eyes rest upon  
their frightened faces  
and for a moment  
K sees the reflection of the moon  
hidden in the depths  
of their attentive eyes  
they press the last fragments of concrete  
towards the earth  
and stretch out their palms  
there K sees the emerald mountain  
and seven spheres encircling it*

E1. three days of lingering sound  
E2. it is the hidden prophet  
*E2 embraces K*  
E1. you idiot  
E2. what?  
E1. he's a spy  
E2. are you a spy?  
K. no  
E2. it's settled then  
E1. lingering sound  
E2. the last remnants of the crescent moon  
E1. you could not possibly remember it  
E2. I do

E1. all memories fade

E2. unless you resurrect them

E1. they are burned away by the sun

E2. we live in a cave

E1. enough of this nonsense

E2. it is the days that are burned away

E1. not the sun

E2. precisely

E1. we disagree

E2. perhaps

*silence*

E2. he has a capsule

E1. shuuuush

K. I shall return it to the earth

E2. give it to me

E1. will you be quiet

*E1 strangles E2*

E1. they might be listening

*E1 releases E2*

E1. do you think it's all coincidence

E2. you are paranoid

E1. the cracks between the walls

E2. some things are made known

E1. that infinitely linger

E2. in far simpler ways

E1. waiting for words

*silence*

E1. perhaps you are one of them

E2. he could not possibly be

E1. nothing is certain

*E1 carefully examines the different sides of the cave*

*silence*

*E1 opens his palm*

*K examines it*

*K gives the capsule to E1*

*E2 moves closer to E1*

E1. did you write this?

K. I found it

E2. as I said he would

K. hidden beneath the soil

*E1 opens the capsule*

E2 (*reading the capsule*). a prophet once lived here

K (*reading the capsule*). this was his refuge

E1 (*reading the capsule*). they were many

E2 (*reading the capsule*). he was alone

K (*reading the capsule*). they followed him

E1 (*reading the capsule*). to the edge of the mountain

E2(*reading the capsule*). his feet bare

K (*reading the capsule*). they were not expected

E2 (*reading the capsule*). he recited a prayer

K (*reading the capsule*). a cave appeared

E1(*reading the capsule*). at the edge of the mountain

E2 (*reading the capsule*). this was his refuge

*E1, E2, and K recite the story from memory*

E1. he sat there

K. contemplating the mysteries of the cave

E1. learning all of its rhythms

K. until one day

E2. he heard a whisper

E1. all sanctuaries

E2. are only temporary

K. even the dead

E2. are eventually resurrected

*E2 admires the capsule*

E1. before he left

K. he wrote a poem

E2. dedicated to the cave

K. that encompassed the most beautiful of prophecies

E1. they waited

K. if they left

E2. it would be known

E1. and he would be remembered

E2. he emerged from the cave

K. after forty days

E1. on his shoulders

K. the last remnants

E2. of fertile earth

*fragments of earth appear in E2's palm*

K. they were there

E1. waiting

E2. he never looked so serene

K. he was certain

E2. that he had found certainty

E1. they surrounded him

K. and their movements created

E2. the most terrifying of sounds

K. they pushed his knees

E1. into the soil

E2. he said his last prayer

E1. and felt them rest their arms upon his shoulders

K. and the last fragments of fertile earth

E2. fell back into the ground

*fragments of earth fall from E2's palm*

*silence*

K. he died

E1. and the earth turned barren

E2. even the cave was in mourning

K. sometimes you can still hear it echo

E1. songs of mercy

E2. but most people have forgotten

K. that this is how the desert came to be

E1. had they been aware

E2. they may have known its blessings

### Scene Three

#### Desert I

*ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID are in a desert*

ELIJAH. what is the condition of the soil?

*KHALID examines the sand in his palm*

KHALID. dead

EZRA. how bizarre

ELIJAH. are you certain?

KHALID. dead

*silence*

ELIJAH. this was once the gateway to the sea

EZRA. it was here that they would depart

KHALID. to more distant waters

EZRA. that were already known

KHALID. but not remembered

ELIJAH. there they would find

EZRA. a small seed

KHALID. and within the seed

ELIJAH. a lamp

EZRA. and within the lamp

KHALID. a tree

ELIJAH. and within the tree

EZRA. an infinite flame

KHALID. words

*silence*

ELIJAH. there was once a city

EZRA. it was a beautiful city

KHALID. but it was known

EZRA. that its inhabitants were cruel

ELIJAH. and showed no mercy

KHALID. you see they lived in great proximity to the sea

EZRA. never marvelling at its wonders

ELIJAH. or admiring its beauty

KHALID. one day

ELIJAH. in a moment of anger

EZRA. he ordered the sea to retreat

ELIJAH. and it complied

KHALID. he was the most beautiful of the saints

*ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID begin the sacred quest*

*for fertile earth*

*and the lost sea*

#### Scene Four

#### Plant the Capsules

*a white string appears*

*on it a capsule*

*that falls into K's palm*

*E1 and E2 gather around K*

*silence*

*K opens the capsule*

E1 (*reading the capsule*). you cannot hide in the cave forever

E2 (*reading the capsule*). even the dead

K (*reading the capsule*). are eventually resurrected

*the capsule falls from K's palm  
and disappears into the soil*

E2. a prophet once lived here

K. sacrificed himself to the earth

E1. so that he may reach its depths

E2. examine its temperament

K. learn its secrets

E1. to make known

E2. things that were already known

K. but not remembered

E1. he emerged from the cave

E2. and so shall we

E1. it isn't possible

E2. I've already witnessed it

E1. surrounded by concrete

E2. all things fade

K. as all things die

E2. there will be a resurrection

E1. if they find us

E2. have you not realized

K. we are already dead

E2. forced to endure an endless ritual

*a funeral procession*

K. of death and resurrection

E2. how many more bodies can we bury?

K. how much longer can we wait?

E1. you shouldn't be so impulsive

E2. I wandered through a city once

E1. an ancient city

E2. and marvelled at its destruction

K. it was a great tragedy

E2. not a single being was spared  
K. not even the hidden roots of the trees  
E1. I witnessed the splitting of a great mountain  
E2. I wondered how it could ever rise from ruin  
E1. at its centre I found water  
E2. there will be a resurrection  
E1. I gathered it in my palms  
*E1 gathers soil in his palms*  
E1. and offered it to the sun  
K. it is an ancient ritual  
*silence*  
E2. we must leave the cave  
E1. we don't know where we are going  
K. we are not certain no  
E1. we don't have a plan  
E2. no  
E1. a strategy?  
E2. no  
*silence*  
*a capsule appears*  
*K removes it from the soil*  
*K gives the capsule to E1*  
E1 (*reading the capsule*). plant the capsules  
E2. you have the capsules?  
*silence*  
E2. give them to me  
K. I'd rather not  
E1. he doesn't trust you  
K. it isn't the right moment  
E2. where did you find them?  
E1. he doesn't know who you are

E2. of course he knows who I am  
E1. don't be impatient  
K. let's plant the capsules  
E1. we should wait  
E2. for forty days we waited  
E1. if they find the capsules  
K. we must plant  
E1. we will return to the cave  
E2. they will alter the soil  
K. there are seven  
E2. only seven?  
K. what do you mean?  
E1. perhaps we should wait  
E2. the capsules we plant  
K. seven  
E2. are you sure?  
*E1 moves to the right*  
*E1 listens carefully*  
*E1 moves to the left*  
E1. yes he's sure  
*K opens his palm and reveals seven capsules*  
*E1 closes K's palm*  
E1. they might be listening  
K. three hundred of them  
E2. for the three of us?  
E1. it must be done at the right moment  
*a capsule appears*  
*K removes it from the earth*  
E1 (*reading the capsule*). wait till dawn  
*E1 lights a cigarette*  
*E1, E2, and K gather around the centre of the cave*

*E2 examines fragments of soil  
that he places at the centre of his palm  
he returns it to the earth  
creating a sound  
E1, E2, and K listen  
to the sounds emerging from the edges of the cave  
and wait*

Scene Five  
The Escape

*K digs through the soil  
it is coarse  
K. the earth is coarse  
E2. clay is only earth and water  
water appears in E2's palm  
clay turns to earth  
it is not coarse  
E1, E2, and K dig through the soil  
with bare hands  
and a spoon  
E1. I've found something  
E2 (removing a spoon from the soil). a spoon  
E1 (finding a second spoon). a spoon  
K also finds a spoon  
they dig  
and uncover  
three thousand spoons  
E2 sits down  
E1. what is it?  
K. he's just confused that's all  
E1. what is it?  
silence*

E1. what's wrong?

*silence*

E1. have you found something?

*silence*

E1. he won't say a word

*E1 carefully examines E2's face*

E1. not a word

*E1 gently slaps E2's face*

K. it was not as he had expected

E1. there must always be a sacrifice

*E1 slaps E2*

K. perhaps he is disturbed by the magnitude of it

*E1 moves away from E2*

E1. three thousand of them

K. dead

E1. buried beneath clay and dust

*silence*

E1. perhaps he did not realize

K. that death would be so inevitable

E1. or that it would be so lonely

K. perhaps he thought it was inappropriate

E1. that someone should be buried

K. before they have died

E1. was he not certain that we would emerge from the cave?

K. no

E1. I find that rather strange

K. he was always very insightful

E1. every morning he would offer water to the earth

K. he was certain

E1. that earth would one day

K. offer water back to him

*E2 cries*

E1. did you really think that you were the first?

K. don't be cruel

E2. I saw myself beneath the moon

E1. you certainly were not the first

E2. reflecting light

*silence*

E2. but what if we never return?

E1. prophets withdrew into caves

K. for moments of silence

E1. a place to contemplate

K. only the most beautiful of the saints

E1. descend from the mountain

E2. can you drown in earth?

K. what?

E2. drown-in-earth

E1. what a strange question

K. I suppose it's possible

E1. do you think he's gone mad?

K. no

E1. you aren't dead

E2. no

*E1 digs*

E2. stop

E1. what?

E2. it might collapse

E1. don't be paranoid

E2. it's very fragile

E1. you wanted to leave

E2. I'm afraid of small spaces

K. you live in a cave

E2. I've developed a phobia

E1. since when?

E2. now

K. calm down

E1. sit down

*E2 walks around*

E1. sit down

E2. I can't–

*K helps E2 sit*

E2. the river

E1. yes?

E2. it was once a single entity?

E1. I suppose it was

E2. and it was separated?

E1. yes

E2. but there are mountains

E1. I don't understand

E2. firmly set mountains

K. he is afraid

E1. one is never given a burden greater than what they can bear

K. eternity is a long time

E1. do you hear something?

*E1 walks to the edge of the cave and listens*

E2. you don't understand I've seen terrible things mountains collapse thousands dead naturally there was a flood afterwards to collect the bodies was it neglect? had they forgotten to honour the dead?

E1. shuush–

*E1 moves to the other side of the cave*

E2. some said that it was malicious I suppose it was malicious – what use could they make of a corpse? they would display them at the square it was very bizarre you see they were all missing their hands and feet

*silence*

E2. they have grown very distant—from the earth— from themselves —oh and silence

K. what a strange predicament

E2. there was not a single moment of silence

K. the dead displayed above the soil and the living beneath it

E2. I thought that I would marvel at how a city could rise from destruction

K. it was beautiful city

E2. but it did not rise

*silence*

E2. buried under the rubble

*silence*

E2. forgotten

K. eternal in the earth

E2. forgotten

K. they were not forgotten

E2. how little of them know

K. the mysteries that lie beneath their feet

E1. and so few of them will remember

E2. I cannot leave

K. if we die

E2. a funeral procession

K. if we don't

E2. a funeral procession

K. we must plant the capsules

E1. shuush

*the sound of footsteps*

K. they have entered the cave

E2. if they follow us

E1. they won't

*silence*

*E1 digs*

E2. wait  
E1. they're gone  
E2. I'm not certain  
E1. what?  
E2. about the direction of the field  
E1. what?  
E2. don't be angry  
E1. angry?  
K. everyone returns to the earth  
E1. we are trapped beneath seven layers of soil  
K. eventually  
E1. are you mad?  
E2. I thought it was the right moment  
*E1 strangles E2*  
*K separates E1 and E2*  
K. it had been many years  
E2. and we continued to endure  
K. loss after loss  
E2. what difference does it make?  
K. they take refuge in the sea  
E2. you would have died in the cave  
K. it is their nature  
E2. waiting  
K. for the return  
E2. an encounter  
K. with an ancient river  
E1. we descended from the mountain  
K. into earth  
E2. everyone does  
K. eventually  
E2. well not everyone

K. it's complicated  
E2. they descend  
K. and don't descend  
E1. you made me leave  
E2. it wasn't us  
K. it's been written  
E2. the capsules—  
E1. I could have waited for eternity  
K. are you not grateful then?  
E1. no  
E2. it would have been useless  
E1. perhaps to you  
E2. what use is there in endless contemplation?  
E1. or thoughtless action?  
K. both are necessary  
*silence*  
*E1 moves to the edge of the cave*  
*he listens*  
E2. let us write a capsule  
*K prepares a very small paper*  
E2. three people wandered into the desert  
*K writes*  
*E1 moves closer to K and E2*  
E1. they gathered around a fire  
E2. one marvelled at its beauty  
K. the other examined its nature  
E2. and the third died  
E1. they buried him  
E2. after many years  
K. they found a seed  
E2. many years later

E1. they returned

K. to a great valley

E2. many years later

K. they returned

E1. and found a barren desert

K. is that all?

E1. yes

E2. what a tragic story

*K folds the paper into a capsule*

E1. now write another

*K prepares the paper*

E1. a prophet died

K. they said his name

E1. he was buried

K. at the edge of the mountain

E2. there will be a resurrection

K. is that all?

E1. yes

*K folds the second paper into a capsule*

E1. write another

*K prepares the paper*

E1. you imagine that the mountains

E2. are rigid

K. but they will one day flow

E1. as smoothly as the river

E2. tranquil

K. is that all?

E1. yes

*K folds the third paper into a capsule*

*E2 scratches the soil*

*three ants emerge*

*they take the capsules*

*then disappear into the earth*

*parts of the soil collapse*

E1. how long have you been in the cave?

K. forty days

E2. only forty days

K. I was sitting under a tree

E2. what tree?

*E1 puts his hand over E2's mouth*

E1. shut up

E2. what?

E1. you can't ask that kind of question

E2. we're planting capsules

E1. you don't ask that kind of question

*K laughs*

K. it was a beautiful tree – the red tree I would go there every morning before we planted the fields – gather the dead leaves – watch their colours change until they eventually turned back into soil

*silence*

K. they burned it

E2. burned it?

K. they were upset

E2. why were they upset?

E1. I told you not to ask that kind of question

E2. they are just words

E1. some words are eternal

K. not these words

E2. it's only a story

E1. well perhaps if you say it like that

E2. what do you mean?

E1. fine go on tell us a made up story

E2. a made up story?

E1. yes a fictional story tell us a fictional story

*K smiles*

K. there was once a tree–

E2. a sacred tree

K. three farmers would visit the tree– to contemplate its depths– its eternal nature until it revealed a terrible prophecy

E2. what prophecy?

K. that they would murder earth

E2. how dreadful

K. and burn all the trees

*silence*

K. the farmers returned to the village to reveal the prophecy –

E2 (*in the voice of the people of the village*). who would burn trees? unimaginable – absurd – it isn't true – it would not come to that – let us plant the field in peace it's only a tree –

K. they will burn the trees

E2 (*in the voice of the people of the village*). they won't burn the trees it won't come to that –

K. they did not listen

E2 (*in the voice of the people of the village*). let us plant the field in peace

K. there was no more field– no more seeds– no more trees

*silence*

K. on the day the great fire emerged they remained hidden in a cave – they were not remembered until several months later – a funeral procession was held in their honour even though they remained–living–in a distant cave

E2. how terrible

*parts of the soil collapse*

E2. would you return to the village?

E1. I told you not to ask that kind of question

*K smiles*

K. of course they will

E2. even after they've been neglected?

*silence*

K. who else would plant the seeds?

E2. I'm not sure that I would do that

K. it is to earth that people return

E2. what a lovely thing to say

K. we must plant the capsules

E1. we should wait

E2. until the sun rises

E1. that's when they sleep

K. that's strange

E2. they think we are not aware

E1. but it's been years

E2. we know their patterns

E1. habits

E2. much more than they know ours

K. are they always here?

E2. always

E1. carefully listening

E2. waiting

E1. you didn't say anything to them did you?

K. of course not

E2. weren't you afraid?

K. of course I was afraid

*E1 moves closer to K*

*E1 carefully examines K's face*

E1. and you didn't say a word?

K. not one word

E2. I told you he wouldn't

*silence*

E2. the people from your village

K. yes?

E1. I told you not to ask that kind of question

E2. there's no need to be so secretive

E1. it's a necessary precaution

E2. is it?

E1. will you not ask that kind of question

E2. what happened to the trees?

K. they perished

E2. perished?

K. perished

*silence*

K. the survivors took refuge in a cave

E1. a cave?

K. a cave

E1. they have caves?

K. many

E1. many?

K. an infinite number

E1. infinite?

K. infinite

*silence*

E1. perhaps we should retreat to the desert

E2. no not yet

K. we must plant the capsules

*K sits down*

K. they didn't believe me

E1. they didn't know

E2. some believed you

K. where were they?

E2. hidden beneath the soil

K. they were?

E2. yes

E1. how do you know?

E2. I overheard

E1. from who?

E2. when the soldiers were speaking

E1. how?

E2. they thought I was dead

*silence*

E1. they didn't forget you

K. some did

E1. that doesn't matter

K. we must plant the capsules

E2. it isn't about capsules

E1. not even about seeds

*the sound of footsteps*

*silence*

E1. look if you're going to continue with us

E2. it is a difficult journey

E1. you must understand

E2. death is inevitable

E1. many have wandered through the desert before

E2. and many more shall wander in the future

E1. seeking knowledge

E2. inspiration

E1. refuge

*silence*

E1. you can't just wander into a desert

E2. it doesn't really matter

E1. you have to be prepared

E2. not necessarily

E1. understand its nature  
E2. not necessarily  
E1. be aware of all the possibilities  
E2. don't overwhelm him  
E1. don't be reckless  
E2. it doesn't matter  
K. I understand  
E1. do you?  
K. there are different paths  
E2. naturally  
E1. have you seen a desert before?  
K. no

*parts of the soil collapse*

E2. it's beautiful  
E1. the last place that anyone ever saw  
E2. the ancient tree

*silence*

*parts of the soil collapse*

Scene Six

Soldiers

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II enter the cave*

SOLDIER I. there has been a violation

SOLDIER II. a transgression

SOLDIER I. breaking of the law

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II examine the soil*

SOLDIER II. should we follow them?

SOLDIER I. into the soil?

SOLDIER II. yes

SOLDIER I. it might be dangerous

SOLDIER II. yes it's far too dangerous

SOLDIER I. should we poison them?

SOLDIER II. they might be too deep within the soil

SOLDIER I. should we flood the cave?

SOLDIER II. there is no more water

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II examine the soil carefully*

SOLDIER I. should we bury them?

SOLDIER II. make them suffocate

SOLDIER I. under the soil

SOLDIER II. is that cruel?

SOLDIER I. if they return

SOLDIER II. then it will be known

SOLDIER I. and they will be remembered

SOLDIER II. let's bury them

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II cover the pit with soil*

SOLDIER I. wait

SOLDIER II. what?

SOLDIER I. if they remain in the soil

SOLDIER II. it's only a corpse

SOLDIER I. they cannot remain in the soil

SOLDIER II. should we follow them?

SOLDIER I. no it's too dangerous

SOLDIER II. far too dangerous

SOLDIER I. we must remove their bodies from the earth

SOLDIER II. if they remain there

SOLDIER I. it will be known

SOLDIER II. and they will be remembered

SOLDIER I. let's bury them

SOLDIER II. then remove them from the earth

*silence*

SOLDIER II. how can we be sure?

SOLDIER I. when they are silent

SOLDIER II. they are often silent

SOLDIER I. even among themselves

SOLDIER II. we shall wait forty days

SOLDIER I. forty days?

SOLDIER I. yes

SOLDIER II. are you sure?

SOLDIER I. yes yes yes

SOLDIER II. could they survive

SOLDIER I. forty days

SOLDIER II. without water

SOLDIER I. without sustenance

SOLDIER II. without breath?

SOLDIER I. it would be miraculous

SOLDIER II. there are no more miracles

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II cover the pit with more soil*

SOLDIER I. I saw them planting once

SOLDIER II. what were they planting?

SOLDIER I. seeds

*silence*

SOLDIER I. I removed them from the soil

SOLDIER II. what for?

SOLDIER I. to plant them in my garden

SOLDIER II. and?

SOLDIER I. they did not grow

SOLDIER II. did you water them?

SOLDIER I. yes

SOLDIER II. did they get enough light?

SOLDIER I. plenty of light

SOLDIER II. and they didn't grow?

SOLDIER I. no

*silence*

SOLDIER I. I decided to unearth them

SOLDIER II. the seeds?  
SOLDIER I. after forty days  
SOLDIER II. were they dead?  
SOLDIER I. no  
SOLDIER II. living?  
SOLDIER I. they disappeared  
SOLDIER II. you mean they were stolen?  
SOLDIER I. stolen  
SOLDIER II. who entered the garden?  
SOLDIER I. no one entered the garden  
SOLDIER II. are you sure?  
SOLDIER I. I was guarding them  
SOLDIER II. you were guarding seeds?  
SOLDIER I. for forty days  
SOLDIER II. are you mad?  
SOLDIER I. it was necessary  
SOLDIER II. what a waste  
*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II continue to cover the pit*  
SOLDIER I. I didn't want them to take them back  
SOLDIER II. they are only seeds  
SOLDIER I. it's much more than that  
SOLDIER II. well?  
SOLDIER I. well what?  
SOLDIER II. how did they disappear?  
SOLDIER I. they stole them  
SOLDIER II. stole them?  
SOLDIER I. stole them  
SOLDIER II. but you were guarding them  
*silence*  
SOLDIER II. did you see them?  
SOLDIER I. no

SOLDIER II. did you hear them?

SOLDIER I. no

SOLDIER II. then how can you be sure?

SOLDIER I. I'm sure

SOLDIER II. don't be paranoid

SOLDIER I. I'm not paranoid

*silence*

SOLDIER II. you don't think that—

SOLDIER I. it's possible

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II stop covering the pit for a moment*

SOLDIER II. they were hiding beneath the soil?

SOLDIER I. they stole them

SOLDIER II. if they return

SOLDIER I. they can't return we covered the pit

SOLDIER II. they might make another

SOLDIER I. yes I suppose they could

SOLDIER II. if they return

SOLDIER I. they won't

*silence*

SOLDIER II. why would they come back?

SOLDIER I. I don't know—they might be angry

SOLDIER II. angry?

SOLDIER I. yes angry

SOLDIER II. I've never seen them angry

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II continue to cover the pit*

SOLDIER I. I found them carrying a casket once

SOLDIER II. was it a large casket?

SOLDIER I. no it was quite small

SOLDIER II. did you search it?

SOLDIER I. of course I searched it

SOLDIER II. was it a child?

SOLDIER I. tomatoes

SOLDIER II. tomatoes?

SOLDIER I. thousands of tomatoes

SOLDIER II. did you release them?

SOLDIER I. of course not

SOLDIER II. but they were only tomatoes

SOLDIER I. I wanted to be certain

SOLDIER II. certain of what?

SOLDIER I. that the tomato was indeed a tomato

SOLDIER II. and?

SOLDIER I. it was a tomato

*silence*

SOLDIER I. three thousand tomatoes

*silence*

SOLDIER I. sometimes I dream about them

SOLDIER II. that's strange

SOLDIER I. for months I dreamt

*silence*

SOLDIER I. then I began to draw them— I would draw them and then immediately burn their faces with cigarettes

SOLDIER II. with cigarettes?

SOLDIER I. yes cigarettes

SOLDIER II. what for?

SOLDIER I. to annihilate them

SOLDIER II. from the earth?

*silence*

SOLDIER II. from yourself?

*SOLDIER I walks around*

SOLDIER II. you seem upset

SOLDIER I. I'm not upset

SOLDIER II. are you upset?

SOLDIER I. I told you I'm not upset

SOLDIER II. you don't feel sorry for them do you?

SOLDIER I. of course not

SOLDIER II. you seem a bit nervous that's all

SOLDIER I. I'm not nervous

SOLDIER II. are you sure?

SOLDIER I. I told you I'm not nervous

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II continue to cover the pit*

SOLDIER II. this is exhausting

SOLDIER I. quite deep isn't it?

SOLDIER II. do you think they have been there for days?

SOLDIER I. they might already be dead

SOLDIER II. they might be alive—plotting

SOLDIER I. you think they are plotting something?

SOLDIER II. they are always plotting

SOLDIER I. what could they be plotting?

SOLDIER II. an escape

SOLDIER I. murder

SOLDIER II. probably an escape

SOLDIER I. if they return

SOLDIER II. they won't return

SOLDIER I. do you think they would kill us?

SOLDIER II. probably

SOLDIER I. how inhumane

*silence*

SOLDIER I. I once saw them sitting near a tree

SOLDIER II. there are no trees here

SOLDIER I. they had a small sheep

SOLDIER II. a sheep?

SOLDIER I. yes a sheep— it started to walk towards me

SOLDIER II. the sheep?

SOLDIER I. I killed it

SOLDIER II. you killed a sheep?

SOLDIER I. it might have been armed

SOLDIER II. were they watching you?

SOLDIER I. from the mountain

SOLDIER II. did they do anything?

SOLDIER I. not a thing

SOLDIER II. and the corpse?

SOLDIER I. I searched it

SOLDIER II. and?

SOLDIER I. nothing

*SOLDIER II presses his ear against the earth and listens*

SOLDIER II. I don't hear a thing

*silence*

SOLDIER II. not a thing

*SOLDIER I gives SOLDIER II a special device for listening to sounds under the ground*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER I search the soil with the device*

SOLDIER II. not one sound

SOLDIER I. they must be dead

SOLDIER II. let's wait

*SOLDIER II thoroughly examines the covered pit*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II listen with the device*

## Scene Seven

### Desert II

*EZRA, ELIJAH, and KHALID are in a desert*

EZRA. this is where it used to be

ELIJAH(*looking around the desert*). are you sure?

EZRA. yes I'm sure

*EZRA digs through the desert soil*

ELIJAH. are you sure it's here?

EZRA. I told you I'm sure

KHALID. has it been abandoned?

ELIJAH. I suppose this is the outcome of neglect

KHALID. how ungrateful

ELIJAH. well

EZRA. well what?

ELIJAH. where is it?

EZRA. it's here I told you

*EZRA, ELIJAH, and KHALID dig through the desert soil*

KHALID. I found it

*KHALID opens his palm*

*three capsules appear*

*EZRA closes KHALID's palm*

ELIJAH. aren't we going to open them?

EZRA. not yet

ELIJAH. why not?

KHALID. they're waiting

EZRA. it isn't the right moment

ELIJAH. are you sure?

EZRA. yes I'm sure

*silence*

ELIJAH. if they die

EZRA. they won't die

ELIJAH. are you sure?

EZRA. I told you I'm sure

KHALID. will they find the river?

ELIJAH. there is no longer a river

EZRA. that isn't possible

KHALID. it is a sacred river

EZRA. prophet upon prophet

KHALID. light upon light

EZRA. there is always a river

ELIJAH. it is no longer a river  
KHALID. was it burned away by the sun?  
ELIJAH. it was buried beneath the earth  
KHALID. clay and dust  
ELIJAH. its last remnants hidden  
KHALID. at the centre of a seed  
ELIJAH. earth upon earth  
EZRA. dust upon dust  
ELIJAH. patient  
KHALID. waiting  
EZRA. even the dead  
KHALID. are eventually resurrected  
*silence*  
*EZRA draws a circle*  
EZRA. it is the moon  
*EZRA moves away from the circle*  
EZRA. at its edges you can see it  
*EZRA walks around the circle*  
EZRA. reflecting light  
*EZRA takes the capsules from KHALID*  
*he reads in silence*  
EZRA. they have the seeds  
*ELIJAH and KHALID gather around EZRA*  
ELIJAH. where are they?  
EZRA. beneath seven layers of soil  
*ELIJAH opens the second capsule*  
ELIJAH. they followed them  
KHALID. to the edge of the mountain?  
ELIJAH. they took refuge in the earth  
KHALID. are they dead?  
ELIJAH. no

*EZRA opens the third capsule*

EZRA. they are looking for a river

KHALID. a river?

ELIJAH. there is no longer a river

EZRA. the last remnants of the crescent moon

KHALID. there might still be a river

EZRA. tell them where it is

ELIJAH. what for?

KHALID. they're looking for something

*EZRA examines the sand*

*KHALID writes three capsules*

*then plants them in the desert soil*

## Scene Eight

### Salt and Water

*E1, E2, and K are beneath seven layers of soil*

K. it's been three days

E2. they will return

E1. we've been forgotten

E2. three more days

*soil collapses*

E1. it's going to collapse

K. not for a few hours

*E2 collects the collapsing soil*

E1. perhaps we should leave

E2. they will return

*E2 examines the soil*

*E2 tastes the soil*

E2. salt

K. what?

E2. salt—there is salt in the soil

*E1 and K examine the soil*

*E1 and K taste the soil*

E2. I will prepare a mixture

*E2 extracts salt from the soil*

*and prepares a mixture of salt and water*

K. salt and water?

E1. an ancient ritual

E2. there's only enough for one

E1. who will drink it?

E2. I can't

E1. then I will drink it

E2. you can't

E1. why not?

E2. it's reserved for someone else

K. I will drink it

E1. are you sure?

E2. you haven't been here long

E1. perhaps you don't know much about—

E2. it is a great sacrifice

E1. an unending journey

E2. many have died this way

E1. it is a slow and painful death

K. I will drink it

E1. are you certain?

E2. it requires a great deal of concentration

E1. to listen to their words

E2. learn their secrets

E1. and you must not tell a soul

E2. not a soul

E1. even if they find you

E2. you must not say a word

E1. not a word

K. I won't

E1. they might remove you from the earth

E2. force you to endure endless nights

E1. a dreadful sound

E2. with no sleep

E1. no rest

E2. not one moment

E1. of silence

*silence*

E2. they might bind your hands to the soil

E1. stretch out your chest

E2. remove your clothes

E1. cast you into a fire

E2. it will not burn you

E1. there you shall find

E2. an eternal refuge

E1. you might return to the cave

E2. where you will experience loneliness

E1. a terrible loneliness

E2. you must not say a word

E1. not one word

E2. but even silence

E1. cannot prevent you

E2. from conversing with the earth

E1. for you are of earth

E2. and to earth you shall return

E1. they will tell you

E2. that you will grow weak

E1. that you have been abandoned

E2. that death awaits you

E1. that you shall fade away

E2. that you will be forgotten

E1. but remember

E2. that silence

E1. is an attribute of the eternal

E2. it does not perish

*silence*

E1. there was a prophet

E2. a beautiful prophet

E1. when he died

E2. they cast him into the ocean

E1. but his body kept returning

E2. and from there emerged

E1. a great valley

E2. do not speculate about the decisions that you make

E1. do not be impulsive

E2. look at your fingertips

E1. examine their nature

E2. give credence to the earth

E1. do not say their names

E2. and if you experience a moment of doubt

E1. know that you will emerge from the cave

E2. even the dead

E1. are eventually resurrected

E2. even if they neglect you

E1. you are forever present

E2. in the soil

E1. the last remnants of dust

E2. at the edges of the great mountain

E1. that venerates those

E2. who are burned away by the sun

E1. and then return

E2. hidden within the earth

E1. until it is revealed

E2. it has already been revealed

E1. but not remembered

*silence*

K. I will drink the salt–water

E1. are you certain?

E2. are you absolutely certain?

K. yes

*E2 gives the mixture to K*

*K drinks it and falls asleep*

E1. you killed him

E2. he's only sleeping

E1. he's dead

*E1 listens to K's heartbeat*

E1. oh

E2. you don't trust me

E1. of course I trust you

E2. you thought I would–

E1. we must be cautious–

E2. you're paranoid

E1. as I should be

E2. it's only the three of us down here

E1. they might be listening

E2. they can't hear anything– we are too deep within the soil

E1. maybe

E2. anyway I told you he would find us didn't I?

E1. yes you did

E2. you only knew about the capsules

E1. he hid them there– many years ago

E2. who did?

E1. let's not talk about it

E2. who?

*silence*

E1. he died

E2. they killed him

E1. his final words

E2. remained hidden

E1. for years I waited

E2. you thought it would appear?

E1. at the edges of a distant cave

*three ants emerge from the soil*

*with them three capsules*

*E1 unwraps the capsules*

E2. what did they say?

*E1 continues to unwrap the capsules*

E2. what is it?

*E1 continues to unwrap the capsules*

E2. well—

*E1 continues to unwrap the capsules*

E2. what did they say?

*E1 continues to unwrap the capsules*

E2. what is it?

E1. will you shut up? I haven't even unwrapped them yet

*E1 continues to unwrap the capsules*

*K wakes up*

K. I saw the strangest—

*E2 puts his hands over K's mouth*

E2. you must not say a word

E1. not a word

*K notices the capsules*

K. capsules

E1. here you read it

*E1 gives a capsule to K*

K (*reading the capsule*). beneath the emerald mountain

E2. is that all?

K. yes

*E1 gives E2 a capsule*

E2 (*reading the second capsule*). three people wandered into the desert the body of the deceased was found reflecting light earth will diminish at the centre of the great mountain salt and water a great sacrifice was made they found the body of the deceased reflecting light hidden in their palms salt and water they found the body of the deceased reflecting light

E1. is that all?

E2. yes

E1 (*reading the third capsule*). in their search they came upon fertile earth beneath it salt and water

K. is that all?

E1. that's all

*K falls asleep*

*E1 slaps his face gently*

E1. wake up

E2. it's collapsing

*parts of the soil collapse*

E2. we have to leave

E1. over there

K. are you sure?

E1. it is where the river once was

*they dig*

*the soil is damp*

*E2 tastes it*

E2. water

*E1, E2, and K dig*

Scene Nine

Field I

SOLDIER I. will they come here?

SOLDIER II. yes

SOLDIER I. are you sure?

SOLDIER II. yes yes yes

*silence*

SOLDIER I. are you sure?

SOLDIER II. they're looking for a tree

SOLDIER I. but there are no trees here

*silence*

SOLDIER I. has anyone searched the soil?

SOLDIER II. no they are afraid

SOLDIER I. it should be soon

SOLDIER II. that they emerge

SOLDIER I. they might return to the cave

SOLDIER II. the cave?

SOLDIER I. the prophet's cave

SOLDIER II. he is not our prophet

SOLDIER I. you know to contemplate

*silence*

SOLDIER I. they won't come here

SOLDIER II. they're looking for the seeds

SOLDIER I. you burned them

SOLDIER II. they don't know that

SOLDIER I. they live in the soil

*SOLDIER II examines the burnt roots of a tree*

SOLDIER II. let us wait until the night falls

SOLDIER I. they will not leave the soil

SOLDIER II. let's burn the seeds

SOLDIER I. what for?

SOLDIER II. it will provoke them  
SOLDIER I. we might starve  
SOLDIER II. we must burn the seeds  
SOLDIER I. if we don't  
SOLDIER II. then it will be known  
SOLDIER I. and they will be remembered  
*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II burn seeds*  
SOLDIER I. someone told me they speak to the trees  
SOLDIER II. they don't actually speak to trees  
SOLDIER I. yes they do  
SOLDIER II. they are just lonely  
SOLDIER I. I've seen them  
SOLDIER II. I've never seen them do that  
SOLDIER I. thought I might try it one day  
SOLDIER II. don't be stupid  
SOLDIER I. why not?  
SOLDIER II. don't be an idiot  
SOLDIER I. I saw them  
SOLDIER II. they were probably insane  
SOLDIER I. do you think they all go insane?  
SOLDIER II. what do you mean?  
SOLDIER I. from the cave  
SOLDIER II. probably  
*silence*  
*SOLDIER I walks back and forth in the field*  
SOLDIER I. I don't feel well  
SOLDIER II. stop walking around  
*SOLDIER I continues to walk around*  
SOLDIER II. they might hear you  
SOLDIER I. I feel like I'm going to throw up  
*SOLDIER I throws up*

SOLDIER II. you're not nervous are you?

SOLDIER I. of course not

SOLDIER II. you've seen them before haven't you?

SOLDIER I. of course I have

SOLDIER II. then there's nothing to feel nervous about

*SOLDIER I sits down*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II wait*

Scene Ten

Salt River

*KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH are in a valley*

*KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH sprinkle salt onto the soil*

EZRA. there was once a river

ELIJAH. it was a very salty river

KHALID. centuries had passed

EZRA. without anyone entering it

ELIJAH. a traveller once came to the village

KHALID. and inquired about the river

EZRA. three villagers led the traveller to it

ELIJAH. he removed his clothes

KHALID. walked into the river

EZRA. then disappeared

ELIJAH. they followed the traveller into the water

KHALID. and raised up their palms

EZRA. in them they found

ELIJAH. salt and water

KHALID. they returned to the village

EZRA. revealed to their people what they had seen

ELIJAH. but they did not understand

KHALID. perhaps the traveller drowned

EZRA. or emerged from the other side of the river

ELIJAH. no they could not understand

KHALID. what had been so captivating

EZRA. about the traveller

KHALID. and the river

ELIJAH. every year

EZRA. they returned to the river

KHALID. three

EZRA. that was how they revived

ELIJAH. an ancient ritual

## Scene Eleven

### The Return

*E1, E2, and K are beneath seven layers of soil*

E1. three days of lingering sound

K. are they following us?

*silence*

*soil collapses*

E2. they are afraid

K. it is a distant sound

E1. if they find us

E2. we must not say a word

E1. not a word

*E2 gives K a mixture of salt and water in a clay bowl*

*K falls asleep*

*E1 tries to wake K up*

E1. what did you give him?

*E2 examines fragments of soil*

E2. it's only salt and water

E1. why does he keep sleeping?

E2. it's normal

*E1 looks at E2 suspiciously*

*K wakes up*

K. I saw a river

E1. a river?

E2. what a lovely thought

*K stares into the clay bowl*

E2. salt might gather at the ends

*silence*

E2. salt gathers at the end days of the moon

E1. do you hear something?

*E2 looks into the bowl*

E2. look at this

E1. shuush

E2. it's creating patterns

*E2 walks around with the bowl*

E2. beautiful patterns

E1. will you shut up?

E2. but look—

E1. I'm trying to listen

E2. that's not important

E1. of course it's important

E2. it doesn't matter

E1. do you want to be stuck here forever?

E2. if it has been written

K. is that how he died?

*silence*

*soil collapses*

*K digs through the soil*

E1. what are you doing?

*K digs*

*capsules appear*

*E1 examines them carefully*

K. are they ancient?

E2. fragments of a past lost

E1. of people sacrificed  
K. should we open them?  
E1. perhaps we should wait  
E2. let's open them  
*parts of the soil collapse*  
K. I once heard a story  
E2. it was a beautiful story  
K. about a saint  
E2. who loved the sun  
K. the sun loved him  
E2. when it set  
K. he would light a candle  
E2. watch the flame  
K. for endless hours  
E2. the people of the village grew jealous  
K. and on the third night of the full moon  
E2. they decided  
K. that they would murder sun  
E2. it disappeared from the village  
K. and from that day  
E2. it only appeared to the saint  
K. in the form of a candle flame  
E2. many years passed  
K. the saint died  
E2. and the sun was never seen in that village ever again  
K. for years  
E2. they lived in darkness  
K. a traveller once came upon the village  
E2. and told them stories  
K. about a beautiful sphere in the sky  
E2. called sun

K. they murdered the traveller

E2. because they all knew

K. that there was no such thing as sun

*silence*

*parts of the soil collapse*

*K opens the capsule*

K (*reading the capsule*). a prophet once asked the sun to descend

E2 (*reading the capsule*). so that he may take its place

K. the sun complied

E2. the prophet turned to dust

K. and sun remained sun

*silence*

E2. if only I could return

E1. you would turn to dust

E2. I would become sun

*silence*

K. they don't really tell you much before you come here

E1. sometimes they do

E2. it doesn't really matter

K. I only heard a voice

*silence*

K. cling to silence it said

E2. even if you are questioned

E1. claim ignorance

K. cling to silence

E2. preserve them

E1. three thousand of them

K. preserve them

E1. in silence

E2. even if you are questioned

E1. claim ignorance

K. cling to silence

E2. preserve them

E1. three thousand of them

K. in silence

*silence*

*K walks back and forth*

E1. are you alright?

E2. are you nervous?

*K faints*

*E2 places K's head in his lap*

*E1 examines K's face*

*K wakes up*

K. I'm not nervous

E2. he's exhausted

*silence*

E2. exhausted

*silence*

K. if I die

E2. there are seven layers of soil

K. if we don't plant the capsules

E2. we will plant the capsules

E1. they will not perish

E2. beneath seven layers of soil

*silence*

K. if they remain in the soil

E2. hidden

K. forgotten

E2. there will be a resurrection

K. what if it isn't the right moment?

E1. it doesn't matter

E2. there are no more excuses to be made

E1. we must plant the capsules

E2. look at this clay

*E2 gathers fragments of earth in his palms*

E2. from here came the resurrection of flesh and bone

*the fragments of earth fall to the ground*

*creating a sound*

E2. and you ask about seeds

E1. we will plant the capsules

E2. they are not just words

E1. sacred

E2. infinite

E1. waiting to be resurrected

E2. in the image of endless seeds

E1. rising from the soil

*silence*

E2. they found the body of the deceased

E1. reflecting light

E2. that same night

E1. moon was overshadowed by earth

E2. and earth by sun

E1. they found the body of the deceased

E2. he did not turn back into soil

E1. but lay patiently

E2. waiting

E1. to be resurrected

*silence*

E2. no one is ever certain

E1. if it is the decisive moment

E2. every single moment is decisive

E1. that is why we plant the capsules

E2. not knowing

E1. if they will grow  
E2. not knowing  
E1. if we shall survive  
E2. but they survive  
E1. they persist  
E2. in their quest for fertile earth  
E1. even if it is beyond our perception  
E2. even if we remain in the soil  
K. it is a terrifying thought  
E2. there will be a resurrection  
E1. or a return to the cave  
E2. sometimes that's necessary  
K. a place to contemplate  
E1. all sanctuaries  
E2. are only temporary  
E1. even the dead  
E2. are eventually resurrected

*silence*

K. if I die

*silence*

K. will you write me a poem?  
E1. we will write three thousand poems  
E2. and bury them in the soil  
E1. and when we die  
E2. others will write  
E1. and write  
E2. and write  
E1. until the day  
E2. that it is made known  
E1. and they are remembered

*silence*

E2. they return

E1. in moments of silence

E2. sometimes they appear at the edges of the cave

E1. or in the noises of the barren desert

E2. do you ever find yourself in awe

E1. wondering how could it have come to this

K. I suppose it is surprising

E1. perhaps you are unaware of the history of the cave

E2. he knows

*silence*

*soil collapses*

E1. it's been a while

K. do you think they found them?

E2. no

K. carrying the capsules

E2. they are too small

E1. and too deep within the soil

E2. let's wait

*silence*

K. after they die

*silence*

K. they display the corpses

*silence*

K. and wait for them to turn grey and yellow

E1. what for?

K. to be certain

E2. have you seen the bodies?

K. their colour does not change

*silence*

K. they examine them

*silence*

K. confirm their deaths

*silence*

K. but their colour does not change

*silence*

K. they remain suspended–

E2. mercy

K. but their colour does not change

E1. do they have no mercy?

*silence*

*parts of the soil collapse*

E2. they dwell at the edges of the earth

E1. constantly investigating

E2. anxiously searching

E1. it's endless

E2. they destroyed the city

E1. it was an ancient city

E2. now a cemetery

E1. where they gather

E2. to remember the deceased

E1. they live among them

K. some have forgotten

E2. they live among them

K. but they are not remembered

E2. it's only natural

E1. that there are moments of neglect

E2. of an awareness lost

*silence*

E1. even the dead

E2. are eventually resurrected

E1. eternal in the earth

K. forgotten

*silence*

K. lost in useless memories

*silence*

K. they are all lines

*silence*

K. as infinite as the river

*silence*

K. that reflects the great moon's light

E1. it is a strange predicament that we face

E2. forced to endure

E1. death after death

E2. loss after loss

*silence*

K. all I wanted was to return to the earth

E1. how ironic

K. experience its depths

*K collects fragments of earth in his palm*

*they fall to the ground*

*creating a sound*

K. its eternal nature

E1. it is a great sacrifice

E2. it is said

E1. that some of them do not die

E2. but remain

E1. in the final sphere of the moon

E2. until the dust rises once again

E1. they are not forgotten

E2. hidden

E1. but not forgotten

E2. like a seed

E1. waiting for the opportune moment

E2. to rise once again  
E1. earth embraces the deceased  
E2. they are hidden  
E1. in its core  
E2. beneath seven layers of soil  
E1. in earth's core  
E2. it is only temporary  
E1. earth tells them its secrets  
E2. then wraps their bodies in white cloth  
E1. earth kisses the deceased  
E2. then casts their bodies into a river  
E1. as it witnesses their ascent  
E2. to the meeting point of the two seas  
E1. there will be a resurrection  
K. if I remain in the soil  
E1. you won't  
*ants emerge from the soil*  
*holding a capsule*  
*K holds the ants in his palm*  
*then passes them to E2*  
*E2 reads the capsule in silence*  
E2. they are in the field  
E1. waiting  
K. waiting for our return  
E1. they know about the seeds  
E2. you mean the capsules?  
E1. they know it's much more than that  
K. they prohibit planting rituals  
E2. it creates uncertainty  
E1. they don't like that  
K. if they find us

E2. they will take them  
E1. they might hide them  
K. burn them  
E1. they might read them  
E2. they can't read them  
K. they are written in words they do not understand  
E2. I have an idea  
K. what is it?  
E2. I will prepare a mixture  
E1. salt and water?  
E2. yes  
E1. don't be an idiot  
K. they are incapable  
E1. killed their own prophet  
E2. it might make them sleep  
E1. what if it doesn't  
K. if they sleep  
E2. we can plant the capsules  
*parts of the soil collapse*  
K. what a marvellous idea  
*E1 collects salt from the soil and gives it to E2*  
*E2 prepares a mixture of salt and water*  
*E2 gives the mixture to the ants*  
*they disappear into the soil*  
*K falls*  
K. I can't see a thing  
*E2 and E1 gather around him*  
*E1 waves his hand in front of K's eyes*  
*K does not move*  
E1. he's gone blind  
E2. it's been forty days

*K rests his head on E1's lap*

*E2 examines K's face*

E2. I'm sorry

*E2 cries*

K. don't be sorry

E1. it was his decision

*soil collapses*

*E1 and E2 dig in the direction of the field*

*they dig further*

*K does not move*

K. I cannot leave the soil

E1. we can't leave you here

E2. you're blind

E1. if they find you

K. I'm not afraid

E2. you might die

K. three thousand of them

E1. we won't leave you

K. remain in the cave

*parts of the soil collapse*

K. waiting

E2. then we will come with you

K. you must plant the seeds

E1. we can't leave you

E2. we won't

K. plant the capsules

E1. not without you

E2. we can't

E1. we won't

K. I saw myself in the cave

E1. if you die

K. plant the capsules  
E1. we will plant them together  
E2. then it will be known  
E1. and they will be remembered  
K. I must return  
E2. you will die  
E1. you cannot wander in the desert forever  
E2. it's unnatural  
K. plant the seeds  
E2. I will return instead  
K. you are not prepared  
E2. I've tasted the soil  
K. it was reserved for someone else  
*parts of the soil collapse*  
E1. are you certain?  
K. it has been written  
*K gives the seven capsules to E1 and E2*  
*E1 and E2 remove K's clothes*  
*and wrap white cloth around his body*  
*E2 prepares a mixture of salt and water*  
*K drinks it*  
*silence*  
K. let us write a capsule  
*E2 writes*  
K. there is a god  
E2. that lingers in each of us  
E1. patiently waiting  
K. to be resurrected  
*E2 wraps the capsule*  
*and plants it in the earth*  
*K returns to the desert*

*E1 and E2 dig through the soil*

E1. has he gone?

E2. sacrificed to the earth

*E1 cries*

E1. how tragic

E2. it is an ancient ritual

E1. all that remains

E2. are the revelations

E1. of deceased saints

*silence*

E1. they are still there

E2. waiting

E1. do you think they know?

E2. perhaps they feel the soil has been altered

*soil collapses*

*E2 tastes the soil*

E1. do you think they will follow him?

E2. into the desert?

E1. probably not

E2. they are afraid

*silence*

E2. should we follow him?

E1. after we plant the seeds

*silence*

E2. some say you can become accustomed to the ritual

E1. of dying before death?

E2. have you been to the desert?

E1. many years ago

E2. was it beautiful?

E1. terrifying

E2. would you return?

E1. in an instant

E2. what for?

E1. it is our only refuge

*E2 prepares a mixture of salt and water*

*E1 and E2 drink the mixture*

E2. I retreated into a cave once

E1. were you lonely?

E2. terribly lonely

*silence*

E2. that's how I learned to converse with ants

E1. with ants?

E2. I could hear them reciting poetry

E1. poetry?

E2. sometimes they would return with fragments of clay

E1. clay is only earth and water

E2. how easy it is to forget

*silence*

*soil collapses*

E1. they are aggravating the soil

*soil collapses*

*ants emerge from the soil*

*they build a barrier above E1 and E2*

*soil collapses*

*it does not reach E1 and E2*

*E1 and E2 dig*

## Scene Twelve

### Desert III

*KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH are in the desert*

*ants emerge from the soil*

*with them a capsule*

*EZRA holds the capsule in his palm*

*he examines it carefully*

*then reads it in silence*

EZRA. he has taken refuge in the desert

KHALID. turned back into dust

*EZRA begins to write a capsule*

ELIJAH. what are you doing?

EZRA. I'm writing a capsule

ELIJAH. what for?

EZRA. to tell—

*KHALID puts his hand over EZRA's mouth*

KHALID. don't say his name

*silence*

EZRA. to guide him to the river

*ELIJAH takes the paper from EZRA*

ELIJAH. he can't read that

KHALID. it's been forty days

ELIJAH. he's blind

*ELIJAH looks at the ants*

*silence*

ELIJAH. can they speak?

EZRA. of course they can

ELIJAH. I've never heard them speak

EZRA. they always speak

*silence*

EZRA. you just don't listen

*ELIJAH moves closer to the ants*

ELIJAH. I can't hear a thing

EZRA. they know the capsules

KHALID. the soil

EZRA. they know every word

KHALID. every grain of soil

EZRA. that has descended from the mountain  
KHALID. into earth's depths  
EZRA. like a seed  
ELIJAH. a kernel  
KHALID. hidden between two seas  
ELIJAH. until it rises once again  
EZRA. there will be a resurrection  
KHALID. these are the last remnants  
ELIJAH. memories  
EZRA. words  
ELIJAH. of those who have returned  
KHALID. they remain hidden  
ELIJAH. creating patterns  
EZRA. movement  
ELIJAH. patterns  
EZRA. in places we know  
KHALID. words we understand  
ELIJAH. and then they exclaim  
EZRA. what a marvellous tree  
KHALID. forgetting that it was once beneath their feet  
ELIJAH. they were asked to honour the dead  
EZRA. the dead must be honoured  
KHALID. by assembling a procession  
ELIJAH. an infinite procession  
EZRA. for forty days  
KHALID. until the next death  
ELIJAH. then forty more days  
EZRA. sometimes they do not even return the body of the deceased  
KHALID. and then there is no procession  
EZRA. but a lingering silence  
ELIJAH. until the return

EZRA. when the body  
KHALID. is raised above their heads  
ELIJAH. three thousand palms  
KHALID. hold up the body of the deceased  
EZRA. in another procession  
ELIJAH. they return to the desert  
KHALID there is not a single being that does not eventually return  
EZRA. in death  
ELIJAH. in moments of contemplation  
KHALID. in silence  
*silence*  
EZRA. it is not the same  
KHALID. a choice was made  
ELIJAH. in a moment of defiance  
EZRA. to die before death  
KHALID. to ensure a return  
ELIJAH. to earth's greatest depths  
EZRA. they remain there  
KHALID. hidden  
ELIJAH. at the centre of a seed  
EZRA. there will be a resurrection  
KHALID. let's write the capsule  
EZRA (*writing*). beneath the cave  
ELIJAH. the prophet's cave  
KHALID. at the centre of the emerald mountain  
ELIJAH. at the furthest point in the desert  
EZRA. where earth ends  
KHALID. and sea begins  
ELIJAH. there you shall encounter no sea  
KHALID. but an ocean  
EZRA. an endless ocean

ELIJAH. that guides its followers

KHALID. to bewilderment

*EZRA wraps the capsule*

*the ants take the capsule*

*and disappear into the desert soil*

### Scene Thirteen

#### The Martyr's Funeral

*a funeral procession*

*of three thousand souls*

*KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH*

*remove K's clothes*

*wrap K's body in white cloth*

*and offer K's body*

*to the eternal sun*

*they cast K's body into the sea*

*it returns*

*they cast it once again*

*it returns*

*they cast it a third time*

*it returns*

ELIJAH. we are of the earth

EZRA. and to earth we shall return

*KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH bury K in the soil*

*KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH recite a prayer*

KHALID. he is now eternal in the earth

### Scene Fourteen

#### Field II

*it is dawn*

*E1 and E2 emerge*

*covered in earth*

*at an olive grove*

*the trees are dead*  
*in E2's palms*  
*seven capsules*  
*each dedicated to the sun*  
*and its seven spheres*  
*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II sleep*  
*E1 looks at SOLDIER I*  
E2. is he asleep?  
*E1 kicks SOLDIER I*  
*SOLDIER I does not move*  
*E1 and E2 examine the soil*  
*and plant the seed-capsules in circles*  
E1. it is in his memory  
E2. that we plant  
E1. he was beautiful  
E2. he loved the earth  
E1. the earth loved him  
E2. it was in the cave that he learned  
E1. earth's most intimate secrets  
E2. do you think they feel shame?  
E1. sorrow?  
E2. regret?  
E1. probably not  
E2. it is beyond their capabilities  
*E1 and E2 plant the seven capsules*  
E1. what was in the capsules?  
E2. I never asked  
E1. neither did I  
*silence*  
E1. do you think he knew?  
E2. probably not

*silence*

E2. they are reserved for the earth

E1. where they grow

E2. and grow

E1. and grow

E2. until they can no longer grow

E1. revealing words

*silence*

*E1 and E2 dig a large pit*

*E1 and E2 sit inside the pit*

*and continue digging*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II wake up*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II violently remove E1 and E2 from the pit*

*and tie E1 and E2's wrists*

*behind their backs*

SOLDIER I. what are you doing?

*silence*

SOLDIER II. I told you they would return

*SOLDIER I looks around the field*

SOLDIER I. where is it?

*silence*

SOLDIER I. where is it?

*SOLDIER II slaps E1*

SOLDIER I. where?

*silence*

*SOLDIER I slaps E2*

SOLDIER II. did you plant it?

*silence*

*SOLDIER II slaps E2*

SOLDIER I. did you plant it?

*silence*

*SOLDIER I slaps E1*  
*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II throw E2 into the pit*  
*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II examine the soil*  
SOLDIER I. they are hiding it in the soil  
*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II search the soil*  
SOLDIER II. where is it?  
*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II search the soil*  
*SOLDIER I finds a capsule*  
SOLDIER I. a seed?  
SOLDIER II. you idiot  
SOLDIER I. what?  
SOLDIER II. it's a capsule  
*SOLDIER I throws the dirt in his palm onto the ground*  
SOLDIER II. we should burn them  
SOLDIER I. burn them?  
SOLDIER II. burn them  
SOLDIER I. they are just words  
*SOLDIER II gathers more seed-capsules from the soil*  
*SOLDIER II gives the seed-capsules to SOLDIER I*  
SOLDIER II. burn them  
E1. the sacred is hidden  
E2. in valleys of moisture  
E1. that grace the earth with existence  
E2. all hidden in the third letter of a word  
E1. do not belittle them  
E2. it is the sacred mountain  
*silence*  
*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II search the soil*  
E1. it was not intended  
E2. for them for them to experience such great loss  
E1. we only wanted to remind them

E2. that the origins of a tree

E1. is not a seed

E2. but a fleeting dust

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II burn a capsule*

*it does not burn*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II throw E1 into the pit*

*and rest their arms*

*upon E1 and E2's shoulders*

E1. give credence to the earth

*the sun rises*

*and for the first time*

*in forty days*

*E1 senses the sun's warmth*

*upon his face*

*E1's tears descend*

*to the earth*

*its colour changes*

*for it too is in mourning*

#### Scene Fifteen

#### The Sacred River/Funeral II

*ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID are near a river*

ELIJAH. there is no greater tragedy

EZRA. patience is a virtue

KHALID. if only they had heard of Joseph

EZRA. what do we know of pain and sadness

ELIJAH. he was the last to see the sun in its horizon

*a procession*

*of three thousand palms*

*raise the bodies of E1 and E2*

*to the mourning clouds*

*that witness their return*

*to eternal earth*

*KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH*

*wrap the bodies of the deceased*

*in white cloth*

*then cast them into the river*

## Scene Sixteen

### Water

*ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID are near a river*

ELIJAH. someone once inquired

KHALID. about the nature of the ocean

EZRA. but there was no ocean in sight

ELIJAH. they told him it resembled the sea

KHALID. he inquired about the sea

EZRA. but there was no sea in sight

ELIJAH. they told him it was similar to a river

KHALID. he inquired about a river

EZRA. but there was no river in sight

ELIJAH. they told him it resembled a stream

KHALID. he inquired about a stream

EZRA. but there was no stream in sight

ELIJAH. they told him it was similar to a drop of water

KHALID. he inquired about the drop of water

EZRA. they told him it could be found in rain

ELIJAH. he inquired about the rain

KHALID. they told him it was at the top of a great mountain

EZRA. he reached its summit

ELIJAH. but there was no rain to be found

KHALID. there he opened his palm

EZRA. at its centre

ELIJAH. a drop of water

Scene Seventeen

Field III

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II examine the soil*

SOLDIER I. we must remove them from the earth

*SOLDIER I removes a capsule from the earth*

*SOLDIER I examines the capsule*

*SOLDIER I burns the capsule*

*it does not burn*

*SOLDIER II removes a capsule from the earth*

*SOLDIER II burns the capsule*

*it does not burn*

*SOLDIER I finds another capsule*

*SOLDIER I burns the capsule*

*it does not burn*

*SOLDIER II finds another capsule*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II collect piles of capsules*

*that create shapes that resemble mountains*

SOLDIER II. do you think we should read them?

SOLDIER I. what?

SOLDIER II. the capsules—should we read them?

SOLDIER I. what for?

SOLDIER II. well it's evidence isn't it?

SOLDIER I. I suppose it is yes

SOLDIER II. that means we are burning evidence

SOLDIER I. it doesn't matter

SOLDIER II. what do you mean it doesn't matter

SOLDIER I. I said it doesn't matter

SOLDIER II. let's read them

SOLDIER I. no

SOLDIER II. aren't you curious?

SOLDIER I. I suppose I'm a little curious

SOLDIER II. let's open one

SOLDIER I. fine—then we burn it

SOLDIER II. fine

*SOLDIER I unwraps the capsule*

SOLDIER II. let me see that

*SOLDIER II moves closer to SOLDIER I*

SOLDIER I(*reading the capsule*). wherever you turn

SOLDIER II(*reading the capsule*). you shall cast your eyes

SOLDIER I(*reading the capsule*). upon their faces

SOLDIER II(*reading the capsule*). three thousand of them

SOLDIER I. what do you think that means?

SOLDIER II. let's burn it

SOLDIER I. it's strange isn't it?

*SOLDIER II takes the capsule from SOLDIER I*

*SOLDIER II burns the capsule*

*it does not burn*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II dig through the soil*

*SOLDIER I finds a capsule*

SOLDIER I (*reading the capsule*). on the day the bones assemble

SOLDIER II(*reading the capsule*). at the prophet's tomb

SOLDIER I(*reading the capsule*). there shall be a deafening silence

SOLDIER II(*reading the capsule*). and then regret

*SOLDIER II burns the capsule*

*it does not burn*

*the mountain of seed-capsules grows*

*SOLDIER I finds another capsule*

SOLDIER I (*reading the capsule*). this was his refuge

*SOLDIER II burns the capsule*

*it does not burn*

*the mountain of seed-capsules grows*

*SOLDIER I finds another capsule*

SOLDIER I (*reading the capsule*). when they die

SOLDIER II (*reading the capsule*). you shall sense it in your collarbones

*SOLDIER II burns the capsule*

*it does not burn*

*the mountain of seed-capsules grows*

*SOLDIER I finds a capsule*

*SOLDIER II burns the capsule*

*it does not burn*

*the mountain of seed-capsules grows*

*SOLDIER I finds a capsule*

*SOLDIER II burns the capsule*

*it does not burn*

*the mountain of seed-capsules grows*

*SOLDIER I finds a capsule*

SOLDIER I. don't you find them disturbing?

*SOLDIER II burns a capsule*

*it does not burn*

SOLDIER II. no

SOLDIER I. do you think they left them for us?

SOLDIER II. what?

SOLDIER I. the capsules

*SOLDIER I stops searching*

SOLDIER I. do you think wrote them for us?

SOLDIER II. no

*SOLDIER II burns a capsule*

*it does not burn*

*the mountain of seed-capsules grows*

SOLDIER I. they're quite specific aren't they?

SOLDIER II. don't be paranoid

*SOLDIER II burns a capsule*

*it does not burn*

*SOLDIER I finds a capsule*  
*SOLDIER I unwraps the capsule*  
SOLDIER II. stop  
SOLDIER I. what?  
SOLDIER II. stop reading them  
SOLDIER I. why?  
SOLDIER II. we were only supposed to burn them  
*SOLDIER II takes the capsule from SOLDIER I*  
*SOLDIER II burns the capsule*  
*it does not burn*  
*the mountain of seed-capsules grows*  
*SOLDIER I finds a capsule*  
*SOLDIER I burns the capsule*  
*it does not burn*  
*SOLDIER II finds a capsule*  
*SOLDIER II burns the capsule*  
*it does not burn*  
*SOLDIER I finds a capsule*  
*SOLDIER I burns the capsule*  
*it does not burn*  
*SOLDIER II finds a capsule*  
*SOLDIER II burns the capsule*  
*it does not burn*  
*the cycle continues*  
*three thousand times*  
*the mountain of seed-capsules grows*  
*SOLDIER I sits down*  
SOLDIER I. I'm exhausted  
SOLDIER II. it must have been centuries ago  
SOLDIER I. that they started to plant  
*SOLDIER I removes a capsule from the soil*

*and examines it carefully*

*then puts it with the other capsules in the seed-capsule mountain*

SOLDIER I. should we just leave them?

SOLDIER II. we can't do that

*SOLDIER II walks towards the mountain of seed-capsules*

SOLDIER II. it's dangerous

SOLDIER I. dangerous?

SOLDIER II. yes dangerous

SOLDIER I. they are just words

*the mountain of seed-capsules dissolves into the soil*

SOLDIER II. we must burn the field

SOLDIER I. the entire field?

SOLDIER II. yes

SOLDIER I. that might damage the soil

SOLDIER II. it might yes

SOLDIER I. are you sure?

SOLDIER II. we must burn the capsules

*SOLDIER II gives SOLDIER I a lighter*

SOLDIER II. well go on

*silence*

SOLDIER II. burn it

*silence*

SOLDIER II. if they return—

*silence*

SOLDIER II. burn it

*SOLDIER I places the flame on the soil*

*it does not burn*

*SOLDIER I attempts a second time*

*it does not burn*

*SOLDIER I attempts a third time*

*it does not burn*

SOLDIER II. burn it  
SOLDIER I. it won't burn  
*SOLDIER II examines the soil*  
*SOLDIER II removes fragments of earth from the soil*  
SOLDIER II. water  
SOLDIER I. what?  
SOLDIER II. there's water in the soil  
*SOLDIER II digs through the soil*  
*SOLDIER II removes a capsule*  
SOLDIER II. look  
SOLDIER I. it's just another capsule  
SOLDIER II. it has roots  
SOLDIER I. what?  
SOLDIER II. it's growing  
SOLDIER I. that's impossible  
*SOLDIER II gives the capsule to SOLDIER I*  
SOLDIER I. they are inanimate  
SOLDIER II. they are living  
*the capsules grow*  
*and emerge from the soil*  
*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II burn the capsules*  
*they do not burn*

#### Scene Eighteen

#### The Marvellous Seed

*KHALID, ELIJAH, and EZRA are in the desert*  
KHALID. all prophets emerge from the desert  
EZRA. and to the desert  
ELIJAH. all prophets return  
KHALID. a stream can only ever realise its potential  
EZRA. the day that it decides  
ELIJAH. to surrender itself to the sun

KHALID. here was the annihilation  
EZRA. of many streams  
KHALID. and the birthplace  
ELIJAH. of many suns  
*KHALID digs through the soil*  
*KHALID finds a seed–capsule*  
KHALID. look at this seed  
ELIJAH. it is a marvellous seed  
EZRA. in this seed  
KHALID. you can observe  
ELIJAH. the sea  
EZRA. the earth  
ELIJAH. the passing of night and day  
KHALID. and infinite mountains  
EZRA. all hidden  
ELIJAH. in the third letter  
KHALID. of a word  
EZRA. what greater means is there to honour the dead  
KHALID. than to place the entire universe  
ELIJAH. beneath their feet  
EZRA. the constant witness  
KHALID. to their death  
ELIJAH. and resurrection  
*silence*  
EZRA. it is quite sad  
ELIJAH. that it is now disregarded  
KHALID. as only a seed  
*KHALID hides the seed–capsule in the soil*  
ELIJAH. until the day comes  
EZRA. they shall remain in the soil  
ELIJAH. listening

KHALID. to the eternal silence

EZRA. until it is revealed

ELIJAH. in sacred sounds

KHALID. that grace the earth with existence

EZRA. there will be a resurrection

*silence*

ELIJAH. there are of course some seeds

EZRA. that never realize their full potential

KHALID. sometimes there's a draught

ELIJAH. or someone buries them too deep within the soil

EZRA. because they fail to understand

KHALID. their temperament

ELIJAH. their nature

EZRA. they lose awareness of the earth

EZRA. they grow distant

ELIJAH. impatient

KHALID. and distance then creates more distance

EZRA. it's about perception

ELIJAH. sometimes people fail to understand

KHALID. that the seed is a seed

EZRA. they cast them into the ocean

ELIJAH. hide them in the soil

EZRA. is that not a planting ritual?

KHALID. it's about intention

*silence*

EZRA. some burn them

ELIJAH. they do not burn

KHALID. it is a known fact

EZRA. that seeds can only be burned away

ELIJAH. by the sun

KHALID. and it is then that we are left

ELIJAH. with a flower  
EZRA. and not a seed  
KHALID. but it is a seed  
ELIJAH. and from the seed more seeds emerge  
EZRA. it is an infinite process  
KHALID. if only they understood the nature of the earth  
EZRA. then the sacrifice of a prophet  
ELIJAH. would no longer be needed  
EZRA. but that is not how the people came to be  
KHALID. and it was then  
ELIJAH. that the three of them faced  
EZRA. a strange predicament  
KHALID. return earth to earth  
ELIJAH. they responded to earth  
EZRA. with an ancient prayer  
KHALID. a resolute silence  
ELIJAH. creating for earth  
KHALID. an eternal refuge  
*silence*

Scene Nineteen

Cave II/The Grave

*the capsules grow  
and create a cave  
made of tiny yet impenetrable red roots  
the cave surrounds SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II  
SOLDIER I. what a strange structure  
SOLDIER II. burn it  
SOLDIER II burns the roots  
they do not burn  
SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II are trapped  
at the centre the cave*

*SOLDIER II burns the roots*

*they do not burn*

SOLDIER II. they won't burn

*SOLDIER I examines the roots of the seed-capsules*

*SOLDIER II burns the capsules*

*they do not burn*

SOLDIER I. we're stuck here aren't we?

SOLDIER II. wait I will think of something

SOLDIER I. they did this didn't they?

SOLDIER II. they are dead

SOLDIER I. they did it—I know they did

SOLDIER II. we pressed their bodies into the soil ourselves

SOLDIER I. what if—

SOLDIER II. you've become paranoid

SOLDIER I. I'm not paranoid

SOLDIER II. senseless

SOLDIER I. I'm not—

SOLDIER II. dead

*silence*

SOLDIER II. they are dead

*silence*

SOLDIER II. this is just coincidence

SOLDIER I. is it?

SOLDIER II. don't be paranoid

SOLDIER I. they wrote the capsules

SOLDIER II. don't think about it too much

*SOLDIER I burns a capsule*

*it does not burn*

SOLDIER II. they are just words

SOLDIER I. they turned it against us

SOLDIER II. they are dead

SOLDIER I. do you think it knows?

SOLDIER II. don't be stupid

SOLDIER I. that we burned that tree?

SOLDIER II. what tree?

SOLDIER I. in the field—the tree remember?

SOLDIER II. there were many trees

SOLDIER I. but there was that one tree remember?

SOLDIER II. no

SOLDIER I. he told us not to burn it

SOLDIER II. they always don't want us to burn them—that's why we burn them

SOLDIER I. it was that red tree

SOLDIER II. oh that tree

SOLDIER I. then the capsules—

SOLDIER II. it has nothing to do with capsules

SOLDIER I. they're growing roots

SOLDIER II. it's just a chemical reaction

SOLDIER I. it isn't natural

SOLDIER II. and this disturbs you?

SOLDIER I. of course it disturbs me—

SOLDIER II. stranger things have happened

SOLDIER I. we don't know what they are capable of—it's—it's dangerous

SOLDIER II. they are dead

*SOLDIER II takes the capsule from SOLDIER I*

*SOLDIER II burns the capsule*

*it does not burn*

SOLDIER I. don't you find it concerning?

SOLDIER II. the capsule thing?

SOLDIER I. yes

SOLDIER II. no

*silence*

SOLDIER II. for years they lived there

SOLDIER I. inside that mountain

*silence*

SOLDIER I. plotting

SOLDIER II. we put them there

SOLDIER I. it wasn't strategic

SOLDIER II. no

*silence*

SOLDIER I. look

*SOLDIER II burns the roots of the seed-capsules*

*they do not burn*

SOLDIER I. they keep growing

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II examine the growing capsules*

*SOLDIER II burns the roots of the seed-capsules*

*they do not burn*

*the seed-capsules grow*

*the cave gets smaller*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II move closer to each other*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II burn the roots of the seed-capsules*

*they do not burn*

SOLDIER II. they are just words

*the cave gets smaller*

SOLDIER II. words

*the seed-capsules grow*

SOLDIER I. we're going to suffocate

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II burn the roots of the seed-capsules*

*they not burn*

SOLDIER I. they won't stop growing

*silence*

SOLDIER I. if they don't stop

SOLDIER II. let's dig through the soil

SOLDIER I. they might follow us

*SOLDIER II digs*

SOLDIER I. until we suffocate and die

SOLDIER II. don't just stand there

SOLDIER I. look

*the seed-capsules grow*

*the cave presses against SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II*

SOLDIER I. they're creating patterns

SOLDIER II. what?

SOLDIER I. patterns

SOLDIER II. you idiot

SOLDIER I. what?

SOLDIER II. there's no time for that

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II dig through the soil*

*the seed-capsules grow*

*the cave gets smaller*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II create a large pit*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II enter the pit*

*the seed-capsules grow*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II dig inside the pit*

*the seed-capsule grow*

*the seed-capsules cover the pit*

*SOLDIER II burns the seed-capsules*

*the do not burn*

*the seed-capsules grow inside the pit*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II dig*

*the seed-capsules grow*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II dig*

*the seed-capsules grow*

*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II dig*

*earth turns into clay*

*it is coarse*

SOLDIER II. the earth is coarse  
*SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II cannot dig  
they remain beneath seven layers of soil  
in a grave  
for eternity*

Scene Twenty  
The Scream

*KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH are on a mountain  
the sea can be seen  
in the distance*

KHALID. three

EZRA. were found beneath the soil

ELIJAH. reflecting light

EZRA. they were found

ELIJAH. with shaved heads

EZRA. and brittle bones

KHALID. three thousand seeds

EZRA. dead

*silence*

KHALID. they were found

EZRA. tranquil

ELIJAH. in the depths

KHALID. of the all embracing earth

EZRA. they wrote poems

ELIJAH. words

KHALID. that they carved into caves

EZRA. they loved the sea

ELIJAH. and the sea loved them

EZRA. from the mountain

ELIJAH. they marvelled at its beauty

KHALID. the sea went on living

EZRA. hoping  
KHALID. that they would one day descend  
ELIJAH. the sea waited  
EZRA. patiently  
KHALID. for their return  
ELIJAH. when they died  
EZRA. a scream was heard  
KHALID. and from then on  
ELIJAH. the sea remained  
EZRA. in an eternal state  
KHALID. of silence  
*silence*  
EZRA. there was a prophet  
ELIJAH. a beautiful prophet  
EZRA. who learned all of earth's secrets  
KHALID. they said his name  
EZRA. he died  
ELIJAH. they buried him  
EZRA. at the edge of the mountain  
KHALID. he remained there  
EZRA. waiting  
KHALID. there will be a resurrection  
ELIJAH. three thousand of them  
EZRA. remain here  
KHALID. beneath our feet  
ELIJAH. waiting  
EZRA. to be resurrected

Scene Twenty–One

Funeral III

*a funeral procession  
of three thousand souls*

*E1, E2, K, ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID*  
*raise the bodies of the deceased*  
*to the all embracing sky*  
*they wrap their bodies in white cloth*  
*and cast them into an ancient river*  
*they bury the deceased*  
*in the eternal earth*

Scene Twenty–Two

The Sea

*KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH are on a mountain*  
*in the horizon*  
*an infinite forest*  
*and the sea*

KHALID. look at the sea

EZRA. beautiful

ELIJAH. beautiful

KHALID. beautiful

EZRA. it suddenly appeared

ELIJAH. after forty days

EZRA. a miracle

ELIJAH. I thought it was dead

KHALID. it was only temporary

ELIJAH. how strange that it remained living

KHALID. beneath the desert

EZRA. that's only natural

ELIJAH. they found it

EZRA. beneath seven layers of soil

KHALID. they emerged from the earth

ELIJAH. looked upon the ruins

KHALID. mourned the dead

EZRA. then recited a poem

ELIJAH. a prayer  
EZRA. their knees sank into the soil  
ELIJAH. in a moment of reverence  
KHALID. of remembrance  
ELIJAH. of humble adoration  
EZRA. they praised the mountains  
KHALID. the sun  
ELIJAH. the ancient sea  
EZRA. in order to reveal  
KHALID. what was hidden  
EZRA. in earth's core  
ELIJAH. they waited for its return  
KHALID. and the sea complied  
ELIJAH. they were the most beautiful of the saints

## **Paths to the Infinite Forest**

Characters

ELIJAH

E1

EZRA

E2

KHALID

K

Scene One

The Sea II

*EZRA, KHALID, and ELIJAH are on a mountain*

*the sea can be seen*

*in the horizon*

*beneath them*

*the prophet's cave*

KHALID. spring calls forth hidden gemstones

EZRA. revealed in the depths of a whale's eye

ELIJAH. lost in an endless ocean

KHALID. we gaze at the sky

ELIJAH. and honour the eternal sun

EZRA. reflected in shallow water

KHALID. or perhaps hidden in its depths

*silence*

ELIJAH. it is here

KHALID. that the prophet died

EZRA. at the very edges

ELIJAH. of the sacred mountain

*silence*

*ELIJAH, KHALID, and EZRA admire the sea*

ELIJAH. yes it is here

KHALID. that they bury the deceased

EZRA. in infinite waters

ELIJAH. that reveal

KHALID. earth's vast depths

EZRA. perhaps it may be described

KHALID. as an ancient tragedy

ELIJAH. a proximity that cannot overcome distance

EZRA. what point is there in an encounter

ELIJAH. with the eternal sun

EZRA. if the yellow seed

ELIJAH. remains hidden

KHALID. at the edges of the finite earth

*silence*

*a funeral procession*

*EZRA, KHALID, and ELIJAH raise the bodies of the deceased*

*to the eternal sun*

*they descend from the mountain*

*and cast their bodies into the sea*

ELIJAH. yes it was here

EZRA. that the mountain drowned

KHALID. in endless waters

ELIJAH. and all that remained

EZRA. was the image of a prophet

KHALID. with bare knees

ELIJAH. sinking into the soil

EZRA. with palms raised

KHALID. to the eternal sun

ELIJAH. yes it was here

EZRA. that they would recite

KHALID. ancient words

ELIJAH. they would recite

EZRA. and recite

KHALID. and recite

ELIJAH. until it appeared

EZRA. revealing

KHALID. earth's infinite depths

*silence*

ELIJAH. it is no more than a memory now

EZRA. of fragments lost

KHALID. words upon words

*silence*

ELIJAH. we remain

EZRA. at the summit of a great mountain

KHALID. remembering the deceased

ELIJAH. examining the soil

EZRA. tasting its depth

KHALID. to make known

ELIJAH. things that were already known

EZRA. but not remembered

*silence*

*EZRA gathers fragments of soil in his palms*

*KHALID and ELIJAH examine it carefully*

*EZRA casts it into the sea*

*it returns*

*he casts it a second time*

*it returns*

*he casts it a third time*

*it returns*

*drenched in salt water*

*he gathers it in his palms*

*then plants it in the earth*

Scene Two

The Sea III

*the sea slowly disappears*

*growing smaller*

*its gradual annihilation*

*reveals grains of sand*

*that perfectly reflect*

*the different phases of the moon*

*at the edges of the sea*

*gather piles of salt*

*that grow into mountains  
as it gradually ascends  
to the all-embracing sun  
its colour transforms  
as water turns into clay  
and clay into dust  
enter K*

*he examines the salt-mountains  
silence*

*enter E2*

*he walks towards K  
and examines the same salt-mountain  
carefully extracting a few grains of salt  
that he places at the centre of his palm  
he continues to examine them  
then tastes them*

*E2. salt*

*K gathers a large pile of salt in his palm  
it gradually falls to the ground  
creating a sound*

*enter E1*

*E1. what's this?*

*E2. a salt mountain*

*E1 puts on spectacles and examines the salt-mountain*

*E2. it's salt*

*silence*

*E2. taste it*

*E1. I'd rather not*

*K gathers another pile of salt in his palm  
it gradually falls to the ground  
creating a subtle but distinct sound*

*E1 continues to carefully examine the salt in his palm*

E1. salt

*E2 searches the salt-mountain*

*one of the salt mountains collapses*

*E2 pauses for a moment*

*then continues to search the same salt-mountain*

*K gathers another pile of salt in his palm*

*it gradually falls to the ground*

*creating the same sound*

E1. what are you doing?

*E2 ignores E1 and continues to search the salt-mountain*

*E2 moves on to another salt-mountain*

*it collapses*

*E2 continues to search*

*E1 moves closer to E2*

E1. what are you doing?

K. he's searching

E2. it's here

*E2 continues to look through the salt-mountain*

E2. in the salt-mountain

*E2 continues to look through the salt-mountain*

E2. it must be

E1. what is?

*E2 moves on to the next salt mountain*

*it collapses*

K. the capsules

*silence*

K. he's looking for the capsules

E1. they were buried

K. planted

E1. beneath seven layers of soil

*E2 moves on to the next salt mountain*

K. even if they were planted

*the salt mountain collapses*

E1. they surely must have grown

K. must have

E1. formed roots

K. long winded roots

E1. perhaps even a tree

K. several trees

*E2 moves on to the next salt mountain*

E1. what's he looking for then?

K. I told you

E2. a capsule

*E2 holds a pile of salt in his palm*

*it slowly falls to the ground*

*it does not reveal a capsule*

*E2 continues to look through the salt-mountain*

*E2 moves on the next salt mountain*

*the sea grows smaller*

*more salt mountains appear*

*E1 examines the salt mountain that E2 is searching*

E1. there are no capsules here

K. that's impossible

E1. they probably dissolved

K. not entirely

E1. turned back into earth

*K gathers another pile of salt in his palm*

*it gradually falls to the ground*

*creating the same sound*

K. not entirely

*E2 moves on to the next salt mountain*

E2. three thousand

E1. turned to dust

K. not entirely

E2. gradually fading into the sun

*silence*

E1. all things fade

E2. they're in the soil

E1. as all things die

K. unless you resurrect them

*E2 walks towards the sea*

E2. they're in the water

*E2 moves closer to the sea*

*E1 pushes him back*

E1. you might drown

E2. drown?

E1. it's quite deep

*E2 admires the sea*

E2. deep

E1. unpredictable waters

*K gathers salt in his palm*

*he throws it into the sea*

*creating the same sound*

K. how quickly it dissolves

E2. transformed into a liquid dust

E1. might be dangerous

*E2 goes back to the salt mountain and continues to search*

E2. I suppose

*K continues to look at the salt granules that gradually fade*

K. patterns

*silence*

K. the last remnants of the ancient mountain

*E1 moves closer to the sea*

*he looks at the salt granules*

*then moves away*

E1. there's no use – they've already been planted

*silence*

E1. we buried them in that field together

K. they grow

*E1 examines a pile of salt*

*another salt mountain collapses*

E2. and grow

K. and grow

E1. perhaps

K. beneath seven layers of soil

E2. until they can no longer grow

K. revealing words

*silence*

*E2 moves on to the next mountain*

E2. there's a path

*E2 stops searching*

E2. an infinite forest

E1. an infinite forest?

*E2 continues searching*

E1. even if it did exist

E2. it certainly does

E1. suppose it did

*E1 looks into the horizon*

E1. have you not heard

K. the prophet of the cave

E1. he died

*E2 continues to search*

E2. the prophet of the cave

K. hidden beneath seven layers of soil

E1. the earth is barren

K. on his shoulders

E2. the last fragments of fertile earth

E1. he's dead

K. sacrificed himself to the earth

E1. turned back into dust

*E2 finds a cluster of salt*

*he removes it from the salt-mountain*

*he squeezes it between his fingers*

*it explodes*

*into thousands of salt granules*

E2. thought it was a capsule

*E2 continues to search*

*K examines the sand-salt mixture*

*he gathers it in his palm*

*it falls to the ground*

*creating the same sound*

K. I heard they entered a cave

E2. I heard they drowned in an ocean

E1. impossible

E2. or was it a river?

E1. three thousand of them

E2. annihilated

K. beneath the all-embracing sun

E1. dead

*silence*

K. it is an endless journey

E2. I found it

*E2 reveals a cluster of salt*

*E1 examines it and takes the cluster from E2*

E1. idiot

*E1 squeezes the cluster*

*it explodes into thousands of salt granules*

*E2 continues to search*

E1. obsessively looking

K. might have been a capsule

E1. senseless

K. might have-

E1. it will appear

*the salt mountain collapses*

*E2 moves on to the next mountain*

E1. when it appears

K. might have been a seed

E1. won't you stop?

E2. no

E1. you're irritating the soil

*E1 gathers fragments of soil in his palm*

E1. it's filled with salt

*E2 stops searching for a moment*

*he examines the mixture of salt and soil in E1's palm*

*then returns to the salt-mountain*

*K sits down leaning against a salt-mountain*

*it collapses*

*revealing a capsule*

K. a capsule

*E2 takes the capsule from K*

E2. a capsule

*E2 gives it back to K*

E2. open it

*K slowly opens the capsule*

K (*reading the capsule*). light descends onto the mountain

E2 (*reading the capsule*). amid thousands  
E1 (*reading the capsule*). of unending golden hills  
K (*reading the capsule*). that surrender themselves willingly  
E2 (*reading the capsule*). to the eternal sun  
*E2 continues to search the salt-mountain*  
E2. mountains  
*a salt-mountain collapses*  
*E1 buries the remains of the capsule*  
E1. we should wait  
*E2 continues to search the salt-mountains*  
K. can't bear the separation  
*silence*  
K. can't bear it  
E1. patience is a virtue  
*a salt-mountain collapses*  
*revealing a body*  
E1. what's that?  
*E2 removes the body from the salt-mountain*  
*it collapses a second time*  
*E1 and K move closer to E2 and the body*  
E2. it suddenly appeared  
K. emerged from the silver dust  
E1. how strange  
*E1, E2, and K carefully examine the body*  
E1. is he alive?  
*E2 gently slaps the deceased saint's face*  
E1. unconscious?  
*E2 tries lifting his arms*  
*they quickly fall back to the ground*  
E1. dead?  
*E2 closely examines the saint's face*

E2. can't tell

*K examines the body*

K. he's dead

*E1 and E2 speak at the same time*

E1. dead?

E2. dead?

K. dead

E2. can't be

*E2 moves away from the body*

E2. the corpse-

E1. let's bury it

E2. it's reflecting light

E1. give him a proper burial

K. cast him into the sea

*E2 walks back and forth*

E2. it's reflecting light

E1. that's just salt

*E2 walks back and forth more quickly*

E2. reflecting light

E1. that's just salt

*E2 walks back and forth more quickly*

E1. no more than white granules

K. thousands of granules

E2. reflecting light

*K carries the body towards the sea*

E1. what are you doing?

K. returning him to the sea

E1. he should be buried in the earth

E2. he isn't dead

E1. he's dead

*E1 places his ear on the corpse's chest*

E1. see no breath

*E2 examines the deceased saint's face*

E1. dead

E2. what if he's alive?

K. he isn't

E2. what if we bury him and he's alive

E1. I'm telling you he's dead

E2. is that not murder?

K. more a misunderstanding

E2. murder

E1. can't be murder if he's already dead

E2. he isn't dead

E1. calm down

*E2 walks back and forth at a faster pace*

*E1 places his hand on E2's shoulder*

*E2 sits breathing heavily*

E2. let's just leave him here

K. in the middle of the desert?

E1. how disrespectful

K. we can't do that

E1. he'll be eaten by vultures

K. sink into the soil

E1. gradually evaporate into the sun

K. trapped beneath the earth

E1. no we can't do that

*E2 moves closer to the saint's body*

E2. there's a glimmer

E1. no more than decaying bones

K. a silver dust

E2. he's alive

E1. let's wash the body

*E1 and K cast the body into the sea*

*then remove it*

*they cast it a second time*

*then remove it*

*they cast it a third time*

*then place it back onto the desert soil*

E2. it's still reflecting light

E1. that's water

E2. he's alive

E1. that's just water

K. he's dead

E2. living

E1. dead

K. let's cast him into the sea

E2. what if he drowns?

E1. he's already dead

E2. lost in endless waters

E1. makes no difference

E2. waiting for a resurrection

*K begins to move the body towards the sea*

E2. let's wait

E1. what for?

E2. what if someone is looking for the body?

E1. what use is there in a decaying body?

K. the living are the living

E1. and the dead are dead

K. we must return the body

E1. plant it beneath the soil

K. cast it into the sea

E2. I heard it is a vast ocean

K. the dead cannot remain above the soil

E1. it's unnatural

K. there can be no resurrection

E1. unless he's dead

*E2 sits down*

*silence*

*a funeral procession*

*E1, E2, and K carry the body of the deceased towards the water*

*they cast it into the sea*

*it returns*

*they cast it a second time*

*it returns*

*they cast it a third time*

*it returns*

K. we are of the earth

E2. and to earth we return

*E1, E2, and K bury the body beneath the desert soil*

*from a mixture of sand and salt water*

*they construct a small tomb around it*

K. eternal in the earth

### Scene Three

#### The Saint's Tomb

*EZRA, KHALID, and ELIJAH are in the desert*

*in the distance*

*the sea*

*and three mountains*

*it is the same desert*

*where E1, E2, and K buried the deceased*

*the salt mountains disappear*

*forming small rocks*

*that alter the desert soil*

*it is coarse*

*its colour changes*

*from a soft yellow*

*to deep red*

ELIJAH. three

EZRA. wandered into the desert

KHALID. determined to reach its depth

ELIJAH. three

EZRA. died before dying

KHALID. sacrificed themselves to the earth

EZRA. the sun

KHALID. the earth

EZRA. it was here

KHALID. that the body was found

ELIJAH. covered in the last remnants of fertile earth

EZRA. it was here

ELIJAH. that the prophet was buried

KHALID. in a cave

ELIJAH. overlooking the sea

EZRA. patiently waiting

KHALID. to be resurrected

*ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID gather around the saint's tomb*

ELIJAH. it's been centuries now

KHALID. he's been forgotten

EZRA. and all that remains

KHALID. are endless landscapes

ELIJAH. ancient myths

EZRA. yearning to make known

KHALID. things that were already known

ELIJAH. but not remembered

*silence*

EZRA. it was here

KHALID. that they would gather  
ELIJAH. in the last third of the night  
EZRA. forming endless circles  
KHALID. contemplating the different phases of the moon  
EZRA. until mist  
ELIJAH. filled the desert soil  
KHALID. annihilating dust  
EZRA. mist filled the desert soil  
ELIJAH. until  
KHALID. granule upon granule  
EZRA. dust upon dust  
ELIJAH. it revealed  
EZRA. rivers  
ELIJAH. forests  
KHALID. the sacred mountain  
*silence*  
EZRA. the bodies were  
ELIJAH. buried in the earth  
EZRA. cast into a river  
KHALID. clay is only earth and water  
*KHALID moves closer to the tomb*  
KHALID. and here in this cave  
ELIJAH. it is a tomb  
KHALID. in this cave  
ELIJAH. a tomb that was built to honour the deceased  
KHALID. in this cave  
EZRA. the last remnants of fertile earth  
*KHALID enters the cave then emerges with seven capsules*  
*KHALID gives ELIJAH and EZRA some of the capsules*  
*they plant them in the desert soil*

Scene Four  
Clay Desert

*E1, E2, and K are in the desert  
the sea has disappeared  
and the salt mountains dissolved  
into the desert soil  
making the earth coarse  
its texture resembles clay  
its colour deep red  
in the distance  
three mountains  
at the edge of the desert  
the saint's tomb*

E1. it's no use

*K examines the desert soil*

E1. we're lost

E2. lost

*K gathers fragments of clay desert soil in his palm*

E1. lost

E2. it's been forty days

E1. whatever direction we walk in it appears

E2. beneath the all-embracing sun

E1. we're going in circles

E2. endless circles

*K returns the fragments of desert soil to the earth*

E1. can't stop seeing it

*E2 lies down on the clay desert soil*

E1. always in the horizon

E2. we're going to die here aren't we

E1. we must be going in circles

E2. gradually dissolve into the earth

E1. endless circles

E2. like the dust of decaying bones

K. clay is only earth and water

*silence*

K. if you examine the soil

E2. watch its colours change

*E1 moves to the right*

*K gathers fragments of clay desert soil in his palm*

K. there is a difference in the texture

E2. the sea has disappeared

K. dissolved into the desert soil

*E1 moves to the left*

E1. I can still see it

E2. the salt mountains have disappeared

K. hidden beneath the clay earth

*E1 moves to the right facing the saint's tomb*

E1. wherever I turn I see it

E2. what is he talking about?

K. the saint's tomb

*E1 walks towards the tomb*

E1. we buried him there

E2. the sea returned the body

K. returned it

E2. to the all-embracing earth

E1. I buried him with my own hands

*E1 falls to the ground*

*his knees sink into the soil*

*he gathers fragments of clay-earth in his palms*

*they fall back into the ground*

*creating a sound*

E1. with these two hands

*K helps E1 get up*

K. we must continue

E1. we can't wander in the desert forever

K. lost in endless paths

E2. annihilated into the golden dust

*silence*

E2. perhaps it's best we surrender ourselves

E1. to who?

E2. the sun

*silence*

E2. the sea has been annihilated

K. annihilated

E2. ascended to the eternal sun

K. it's become part of the soil

E2. the sun

K. it's in the earth

E2. the sun

E1. he's gone mad

*E2 lies down on the clay desert soil*

*K tries to get E2 up*

*E2 gathers fragments of clay desert soil in his palms*

*his hands turn slightly red*

E2. look at the desert

E1. he's mad

E2. it's turned red

E1. must be dehydration

E2. red

*K tries to get E2 up again*

K. we must continue

E1. where to?

K. the forest

E1. what forest?

E2. the forest

*E2 opens his palms*

*the fragments of soil return to the earth*

*he rolls around on the ground*

*each time his body presses against the earth*

*it turns slightly more red*

*taking on the colour of the desert soil*

E1. we're going in circles

E2. it's beautiful

*E2 rolls onto E1's feet*

E1. we should leave him here

*E2 continues to roll around in the soil*

K. we can't do that

E2. beautiful

E1. why not?

K. we can't abandon him in the desert-

E2. beautiful

K. that's cruel

E1. he's delusional

*E1 turns to left and looks at the saint's tomb*

E1. it's still there

E2. it's always been there

K. you just never noticed it before

E2. ever since the prophet died

E1. what prophet?

E2. he remained there for forty years

E1. who did?

E2. contemplating the mysteries of the cave

E1. who?

E2. the prophet

E1. you mean-

*K puts his hand on E1's mouth*

K. don't say his name

*E1 turns to the right and sees the saint's tomb*

E1. yes I-

*silence*

E1. I remember

E2. look at the earth

K. we must continue

E2. it's creating patterns

*E2 carefully examines the clay desert soil*

E1. where's that book?

*E2 continues to examine the soil*

E2. what book?

E1. he wrote something about the desert

*E2 moves further away from E1 and K*

*he searches the cracks that separate dry fragments of desert soil*

E1. verse thirty three-

E2. where is it?

E1. of the thirty third

E2. where-

E1. of three thousand and thirty three

E2. it must be here

*E2 searches at a faster pace*

E1. of three million thirty three thousand

E2. can't live without it

E1. of thirty three million three thousand

E2. can't

E1. three hundred and thirty three

E2. impossible

E1. of the sacred book

*E2 stops searching*

E2. what book?

E1. that one book

E2. what is it called?

E1. I-

*silence*

E1. I can't remember

E2. hah-

*K moves towards E2*

*he extracts a capsule from the cracks that separate dry fragments of desert soil*

K. a capsule

E2. there it is

E1. what was that verse-

*E2 takes the capsule from K and examines it carefully while he removes the fragments of clay earth that surround it*

E1. what are you doing?

E2. it's all in there

E1. what is?

E2. everything

E1. nonsense

E2. even the deceased

E1. don't be ridiculous

E2. all gathered

*E2 admires the capsule*

E2. in the third letter of a word

K. beautiful

E1. let's open it

E2. no not yet

*E2 continues to admire the capsule*

E1. let's open it

K. perhaps we should plant it

E2. no

K. return it to the earth

E2. no no not yet

*E1 violently takes the capsule from E2*

*E1 walks away*

*E2 follows him*

E2. give it back

*E1 examines the capsule while walking away from E2*

E1. no

E2. give it to me

E1. leave me alone

E2. I said give it-

*E1 and E2 fight for the capsule K tries to pull them apart*

*a few moments later three thousand tiny yellow seed-capsules emerge from the one capsule creating shapes that resemble mountains*

E1. impossible-

*K moves closer to the seed-capsules*

*E1 moves away*

*E2 examines one of the seed capsules then eats it*

E1. can't be-

*E2 eats a handful of seed-capsules*

E2. tastes like soil

E1. idiot

*E2 eats another handful of seed-capsules*

*K takes a handful of seed-capsules and examines them carefully*

*they gradually fall to the ground*

*creating a sound*

*then disappear into the desert soil*

*K removes a capsule from one of the seed-capsule mountains*

*K opens the capsule*

*E2 eats another handful of seed-capsules*

K (*reading*). mountains are hidden

E1 (*reading*). beneath an unending desert

K. where thousands of dust particles gather

E1. creating patterns

K. that remind travellers of an ancient past

E1. it is believed

K. this is the sacred river

E1. where they drowned

K. into eternity

E1. all hidden

K. beneath an unassuming desert

*the capsule falls from K's palm to the ground and dissolves into the desert soil*

*the seed-capsule mountains dissolve into the desert soil*

E2. they're gone

E1. dissolved into the desert soil

K. returned to the earth

*E2 examines the soil in search for the seed-capsules*

E2. gone

*E1 turns around facing the mountains in the distance*

E1. it's still there

E2. what is?

K. the saint's tomb

## Scene Five

### The River

*ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID are near a river*

*in the distance*

*three mountains*

EZRA. they wandered into the river

KHALID. searching for depth

ELIJAH. that could only be found past spring

EZRA. wandering into the river

KHALID. they gazed at the infinite sky

ELIJAH. met with silence

EZRA. clay and dust

KHALID. linger from their palms

ELIJAH. into the river

EZRA. creating patterns

KHALID. that reach its depths

*a funeral procession*

*ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID gather the bodies of the deceased*

*three*

*clothed in the last remnants of fertile earth*

*they place the bodies in three small wooden boats*

*then cast them into the river*

KHALID. their final words

EZRA. were hidden

ELIJAH. cast into the sea

KHALID. they were buried the day they died

EZRA. clay is only earth and water

ELIJAH. there they shall find

KHALID. an eternal refuge

*silence*

EZRA. but most people have forgotten

KHALID. the path to the infinite forest

ELIJAH. others seek it

EZRA. not realizing

KHALID. it is beyond earth's infinite depths

ELIJAH. their words

EZRA. remain hidden

KHALID. beneath seven layers of soil

ELIJAH. patiently waiting

EZRA. for a resurrection

*ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID plant capsules in the desert soil*

EZRA. it is from here

KHALID. that they grow

EZRA. and grow

ELIJAH. and grow

EZRA. revealing

KHALID. words

*silence*

*ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID continue to plant capsules in the desert soil*

ELIJAH. they stood beneath the mountain

KHALID. reciting names

EZRA. endlessly reciting

ELIJAH. until the sun appeared

KHALID. at the edge of the mountain

EZRA. its light reflected

ELIJAH. into the river

KHALID. that gathered

EZRA. the bodies of the deceased

ELIJAH. to make known

KHALID. their infinite depths

*silence*

ELIJAH. there must always be a sacrifice

EZRA. a seed can only realize its potential

KHALID. the day it sacrifices itself

ELIJAH. to the all-embracing sun

*ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID continue to plant capsules in the desert soil*

EZRA. it might seem strange

ELIJAH. from the desert

KHALID. emerged a great valley

EZRA. it emerged

KHALID. from the bodies of the deceased

ELIJAH. revealing

EZRA. their final words

KHALID. that emerge from the soil

ELIJAH. to honour

EZRA. the eternal sun

*ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID continue to plant capsules in the desert soil*

## Scene Six

### The Valley

*the seed-capsules hidden in the desert soil grow*

*the clay desert is gradually transformed*

*into a valley*

*in the distance*

*three mountains*

*and the saint's tomb*

*that can be seen at the edge of the desert-valley*

*E2 examines the soil*

K. they're growing

*E2 gathers fragments of soil in his palms*

E2. the capsules

E1. seeds

E2. it's the capsules

E1. they're seeds

E2. capsules

E1. seeds

*silence*

*E2 carefully examines the growing capsule-seeds*

E2. where's the tree?

E1. what tree?

E2. this is the valley of the tree

E1. maybe it isn't

E2. it is

E1. maybe not

E2. I'm telling you it is

E1. how do you know

E2. I know

*E2 continues to examine the growing seed-capsules*

*E1 turns towards the saint's tomb*

E1. it's still there-

E2. shuuush

E1. it's-

E2. it appeared in silence

E1. still there

E2. at the edge of the mountain

*silence*

E1. perhaps we should continue

E2. no let's wait

E1. for what?

E2. for it to grow

*E2 sits down*

*E1 restlessly walks back and forth*

*K examines the soil*

*three ants emerge*

*then disappear back into the soil*

*the seed-capsules continue to grow*

E1. how much longer can we wait

K. he's restless

E1. they've stopped growing

E2. they stop growing when they die

K. not even when they die

*silence*

K. it is an infinite procession

*E1 gazes at the mountains in the distance*

E1. infinite

K. of death and resurrection

*silence*

K. we were told to bury the deceased

E2. to honour the dead

K. cast them into the river

E2. watch its colours change

*E2 examines the growing seed-capsules*

*E1 turns to the saint's tomb*

*the seed-capsules continue to grow*

*E1 stops walking*

E1. how much longer?

E2. patience is a virtue

*E1 continues to walk back and forth*

*three ants emerge beneath E1's feet*

*he does not notice them*

*they disappear back into the soil*

K. I was once told this was the valley of poets

*E1 continues to walk back and forth*

K. and written words

*silence*

K. do you hear something?

E1. no

*E2 moves closer to the seed-capsules and listens*

E2. they're creating sounds

E1. can't hear a thing

*E1 moves closer to E2 and the seed-capsules*

E1. not a thing

*E1 continues to moves restlessly back and forth*

K. they drowned in this valley

E1. that isn't possible

K. it was submerged in rain

*silence*

E2. all that remains

K. are the ruins

E2. of an ancient city

K. that was once filled

E2. with golden dust

K. and the smell of pomegranate gardens

*E1 looks to the saint's tomb*

E1. we should leave

E2. no not yet

E1. it's been three days

E2. let's wait

*the seed-capsules continue to grow*

*most of the clay desert is transformed into a green valley*

*except its edges*

*and the saint's tomb*

E1. still no tree

E2. this is where it appeared to the prophet

K. at the centre of the great valley

E1. it was a mountain

E2. a valley

E1. a mountain

K. it appeared more than once

E2. this is where he heard it

*silence*

E1. can't hear a thing

*E1 examines the growing seed-capsules*

*silence*

E2. time passes

K. leaving us in an everlasting journey

E2. we were told  
K. there is no return  
E2. but we persist  
K. in our endless search  
E2. for fertile earth  
K. we persist  
E2. not knowing if they survive  
K. if we survive  
*silence*  
K. they are eternal  
E1. we should leave  
E2. no  
K. it appeared to the prophet of the cave  
E2. after forty days  
K. in written words  
E2. perhaps we should search the soil  
K. no  
E2. what if it's trapped beneath the earth  
K. it isn't  
E1. perhaps it appeared at night  
E2. then turned back into soil?  
K. it didn't  
E2. he's right it didn't  
*silence*  
E2. let's wait  
*E1, E2, and K sit*  
*E1 gathers fragments of soil in his palm*  
*then returns them to the earth*  
*the seed-capsules continue to grow*  
K. it appeared to him in a cave  
E2. remained hidden

K. forgotten  
E1. he died  
E2. and from his gravestone emerged  
K. a marvelous seed  
E2. it grew  
K. and grew  
E2. revealing its innermost depths  
K. it appeared in the prophet  
E2. the tree  
E1. it remained hidden in the cave  
E2. is death not the final meeting point?  
E1. there is no final meeting point  
*the seed-capsules continue to grow*  
E1. only endless paths  
K. an infinite forest  
E1. it guides seekers to bewilderment  
K. under the great moon's light  
E1. no there is no final meeting point  
E2. it will grow  
*silence*  
*the seed-capsules continue to grow*  
E2. it will appear  
E1. it won't grow  
E2. in the last third of the night  
K. depends on the temperament of the soil  
E1. unpredictable  
E2. but there are patterns  
E1. can't be known  
E2. cycles  
E1. a true mystery  
E2. it will appear

*silence*

E2. in this valley

*silence*

E2. where it was revealed to the prophet

*silence*

E2. in this valley

*silence*

E2. this valley

*E2 falls to the ground*

*his knees sink into the soil*

*as he gazes at the infinite sky*

*E2 loses consciousness*

*K tries to wake E2 up*

E1. is he dead?

K. no no-

E1. is he breathing?

K. he's breathing

E1. are you sure?

*K puts his ear on E2's chest*

K. I can hear it-

*K tries to wake E2 up this time more aggressively*

E1. are you sure he's not-

K. he's not dead

*silence*

K. he just got a little emotional that's all

E1. emotional?

K. yes emotional

E1. doesn't seem like there is much to be emotional about

K. will you help me?

*E1 and K try to wake E2 up*

E1. what do we do now?

K. we wait  
E1. you can't be serious  
K. we can't just leave him here  
E1. we should leave  
K. let's wait  
E1. what if he never wakes up?  
K. he will-  
E1. we can't wander around this valley forever  
K. it's just for a while  
*E1 looks at the saint's tomb*  
E1. in endless circles  
K. calm down  
E1. endless  
*E1 looks at the saint's tomb*  
E1. it's been forty days  
*the seed-capsules continue to grow  
and the last remnants of the clay desert  
disappear into the soil*  
E1. I can't take it anymore  
*E1 puts his ear on E2's chest*  
E1. he's dead  
K. he's not dead  
E1. we should bury him  
*K moves E2 away from E1*  
K. he's not dead  
E1. he isn't breathing  
K. he's breathing-you just can't hear it  
*silence*  
E1. we waited for it-  
K. it is a sacred tree  
E1. now a resurrection

K. he isn't dead  
E1. it never appeared  
K. perhaps we didn't notice it  
*E1 looks at the saint's tomb*  
E1. didn't notice it?  
*K looks at the saint's tomb*  
K. anticipating an encounter- we didn't notice it  
E1. that doesn't make any sense  
K. perhaps this is it  
E1. we haven't found anything  
K. my point precisely  
E1. I'm leaving  
K. you don't know where you are going  
E1. I'd rather be lost than wait  
K. endless wandering  
E1. I'm not sure what the point is anymore  
K. I don't think there is supposed to be a point  
*K tries to wake E2 up*  
*E1 looks at the saint's tomb*  
E1. it's still there  
K. have you been inside?  
E1. no  
K. I have  
E1. what for?  
K. thought he might be lonely  
E1. they don't experience loneliness  
K. everyone experiences loneliness- even the dead  
*the seed-capsules continue to grow*  
K. perhaps you should enter the tomb  
E1. it's always in the distance  
K. it's not the same

E1. I'd rather not  
K. it's about perspective  
*E1 looks at the saint's tomb*  
K. can you hear it?  
E1. don't hear a thing  
K. I hear its echo in the distance  
*silence*  
K. it wasn't that long ago  
E1. what wasn't that long ago?  
K. that we buried him there  
*silence*  
K. beneath the mountain  
E1. we buried him by the sea  
*E1 looks at the saint's tomb*  
*K gathers fragments of soil in his palm*  
K. hidden beneath the soil  
*the fragments of soil fall to the ground*  
*creating a sound*  
K. clay is only earth and water  
*E1 looks at the saint's tomb*  
E1. what should we do with the body?  
K. he isn't dead  
E1. it's been three days  
K. we can wait three more days  
*E1 examines E2's body*  
E1. no signs of movement  
*E1 continues to examine E2's body*  
E1. no breath  
*K moves E2's body away from E1*  
K. you just can't hear it  
E1. you can't expect him to suddenly come to life-

K. why not?

E1. like a seed emerging from the desert soil

K. it's possible

E1. that's not realistic-

K. he's just unconscious that's all

*silence*

*E1 looks contemplatively at the valley*

E1. isn't it strange

*K tries to wake E2 up*

E1. a valley emerging from a barren desert

K. some might say that it is miraculous

*silence*

E1. miraculous

*three ants emerge from the soil*

*with them a capsule*

*K holds the capsule in his palm*

*silence*

E1. open it

*K opens the capsule*

K (*reading the capsule*). there is no tree

*the capsule falls from K's palm*

*and dissolves into the soil*

## Scene Seven

### River II

*KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH are near a river*

*three mountains can be seen in the distance*

*and the saint's tomb*

ELIJAH. they placed him into a casket

EZRA. cast it into the river

KHALID. so that he may realize

ELIJAH. earth's infinite depths

*silence*

ELIJAH. and from the river  
EZRA. three rivers emerged  
KHALID. and from those rivers  
ELIJAH. three rivers emerged  
EZRA. and emerged  
KHALID. and emerged  
ELIJAH. until clay and dust  
EZRA. dissolved into the ground  
KHALID. the sea appeared  
ELIJAH. at the edges of the finite earth  
EZRA. it emerged  
KHALID. from his fingertips  
ELIJAH. when clay and dust  
EZRA. fell into the ground  
KHALID. creating sound  
ELIJAH. they listened  
EZRA. and from the last fragments of fertile earth  
KHALID. emerged a seed  
ELIJAH. one seed  
EZRA. made of millions of dust particles  
KHALID. that gather  
ELIJAH. at the centre  
EZRA. of finite earth

*silence*

ELIJAH. it might seem strange  
EZRA. that a valley should emerge  
KHALID. from the body of a saint  
ELIJAH. it is no different  
KHALID. from the movements of the moon  
EZRA. reflected in shallow waters

ELIJAH. hidden in earth's depths

*silence*

ELIJAH. there is no stillness in the earth

KHALID. a seed cannot remain a seed

EZRA. rain descends

ELIJAH. to the top of a great mountain

KHALID. he gathered it in his palms

EZRA. offering it to the eternal sun

KHALID. it fell from his palms

ELIJAH. disappeared

EZRA. into the depths

KHALID. of the desert soil

ELIJAH. and from there

KHALID. a great valley emerged

EZRA. it emerged

KHALID. from the bottom of his feet

ELIJAH. reflecting

EZRA. the endless cycles of the moon

KHALID. all gathered

EZRA. in the third letter of a word

ELIJAH. revealed

KHALID. in a moment of silence

*silence*

EZRA. his knees sank into the soil

ELIJAH. as he gazed at infinite sky

KHALID. there he heard

EZRA. the last fragments of fertile earth

KHALID. emerge from the ground

*silence*

EZRA. he disappeared

ELIJAH. some say he remained

KHALID. hidden at the centre of a great mountain  
EZRA. others say he drowned  
KHALID. lost to the sacred river  
EZRA. some say he is none other  
KHALID. than the clay earth  
EZRA. onto which we rest our feet  
ELIJAH. others believe  
KHALID. he was destined to spend eternity in the cave  
EZRA. contemplating earth's vast mysteries  
ELIJAH. there he was overcome  
KHALID. by an unbearable loneliness  
EZRA. and from the cave emerged a sigh  
ELIJAH. that revealed  
KHALID. earth's infinite depths  
*silence*  
ELIJAH. we are told the infinite cannot be known  
KHALID. perhaps not to those  
EZRA. who have forgotten  
KHALID. to gaze at the earth beneath their feet  
EZRA. clay is only earth and water  
*silence*  
ELIJAH. they've grown distant from the earth  
KHALID. distant from themselves  
EZRA. forgetting the temperament of the soil  
KHALID. its cycles  
EZRA. its infinite depths  
ELIJAH. perhaps they were afraid  
KHALID. afraid to enter the tomb  
ELIJAH. perhaps they found the darkness unbearable  
EZRA. or grew impatient  
KHALID. while they waited for it to appear

ELIJAH. not realizing  
EZRA. it had always been there  
KHALID. lingering in the distance  
ELIJAH. at the edges of the finite earth

Scene Eight

River III

*E2, K, and E1 are near a river*

*E2 is still unconscious*

*in the distance*

*three mountains*

*and the saint's tomb*

E1. what should we do with the body?

K. into the river

*silence*

K. when he wakes up-

E1. looks deep

K. we'll take him out

*silence*

*E1 and K look at the river*

*with fear and admiration*

E1. are you sure you want to-

K. I'm sure

*E1 and K carry E2's body towards the river*

*E1 stops*

E1. he's going to be angry

K. there's nothing to be angry about

E1. we left the valley

K. it was written

E1. the tree never appeared

K. there was no tree

E1. yes I know but-

K. he will understand  
E1. he's going to be angry  
K. we couldn't stay there  
E1. never wanted to  
K. endlessly waiting  
E1. it was impossible  
K. couldn't leave him there unconscious  
E1. you never listen to me  
K. that isn't true  
E1. I told you from the beginning  
*K begins to move E2's body towards the river*  
E1. it will appear  
*E1 follows K*  
E1. when it appears  
*K pauses for a moment*  
K. you think it will?  
E1. maybe  
*K continues to move the body towards the water*  
K. are you going to help me?  
*E1 and K carry E2's body towards the water*  
*they stand near the edge of the river*  
*E1 stops*  
E1. are you sure-  
K. into the river  
E1. seems deep-  
*silence*  
E1. might be dangerous  
K. you aren't afraid are you?  
E1. what if he drowns?  
*K begins to move E2's body towards the water*  
K. he won't

E1. wait

*K continues to move E2 towards the water*

E1. wait

*K continues to move E2 towards the water*

E1. wait

*K continues to move E2 towards the water*

E1. you're going to kill him

*K stops*

K. kill him?

E1. he might drown

K. he won't

E1. unpredictable waters

K. we can't leave him like this

*silence*

K. it's been days

*silence*

K. he's been unconscious for days

*E1 examines E2 carefully*

*he tries to wake him up*

*K moves E2's body towards the river*

K. into the river

*E1 looks at the saint's tomb*

*E1 and K move the body to the edge of the river*

*they stop for a moment*

*silence*

*they cast E2's body into the river*

*then remove it*

*they cast it a second time*

*then remove it*

*they cast it a third time*

*then place his body onto the earth*

*silence*

*the water on E2's body slowly dissolves into the soil*

*K tries to wake E2 up*

E1. he might be-

K. he's not dead

*silence*

*E1 looks contemplatively at the saint's tomb*

*K returns to the edge of the river*

*and gathers water in his palm*

*he tastes it*

K. salt water

E1. from the river?

*K gathers salt water in his palm*

*then places it in E2's mouth*

*E1 tries to stop K*

E1. you'll make him suffocate

K. you thought he was dead

*E1 moves away*

*K makes E2 drink the salt water*

*E2 wakes up*

E1. he's alive

K. I told you-

*E2 sits up*

*water continues to descend from E2's body to the earth*

*it disappears into the soil*

E2. where-

K. you've been unconscious for days

E2. where are we?

K. near the river

E2. what river?

K. the prophet's river

*silence*

E2. the valley

K. we left the valley

*silence*

E2. did you find it?

K. no

*silence*

E1. I told you before-

E2. you should have waited

E1. it will appear

K. it wasn't going to appear

E1. when it appears

E2. you should have waited-

E1. we waited for days

K. endless days

E1. not knowing if you were alive-

K. it's been written

E2. that's where it appeared to the prophet

K. the capsule-

E2. it appeared in the valley

K. it wasn't that valley

E2. where is it?

K. disappeared into the earth

E1. it's part of the soil now-

*water continues to descend from E2's body to the earth*

*it disappears into the soil*

E2. you're lying

K. that's what happened

E2. it can't be gone

K. it is

E2. things don't just disappear

K. it did

E2. something remains

E1. there was nothing there

K. we searched the soil

E1. there was nothing there

E2. clay-dust-bones

*silence*

E2. something

E1. it disappeared

K. turned into thousands of dust particles

E1. it's part of the soil now

K. it might grow in it

E1. probably not

K. you might also

*silence*

K. one day

*E1 looks at the saint's tomb*

E1. probably not-

*E2 walks to the edge of the river*

E2. look at the water

*E1 and K move towards the river*

E2. its colour's changed

E1. didn't notice

*E2 moves closer to the river*

E2. it's in the water

*E2 tries to enter the river*

*E1 stops him*

E1. it's not in the water

K. it is and it isn't-

*E1 moves E2 away from the river*

E1. that's just a reflection

*E1, E2, and K look up*

*across the river*

*an endless forest*

*silence*

E1. is that-

E2. it's in the forest

*E2 tries to enter the water*

*E1 stops him*

E1. it's dangerous

E2. dangerous?

E1. you might drown

E2. it's so close-

E1. unpredictable waters

*E2 falls to the ground*

*he gathers water from the river in his palms*

*and tastes it*

E2. it's only salt and water

K. it's much more than that

E2. are you afraid?

E1. it's terrifying

*K admires the forest in the distance*

K. isn't it beautiful?

E2. beautiful

E1. beautiful

*silence*

*E1 look at the saint's tomb*

E1. it's still there

*E2 takes off his clothes*

*walks into the river*

*then disappears*

E1. he's gone

K. walked into the river

*E1 moves closer to the river to search for E2*

E1. perhaps he drowned

K. perhaps he emerged from the other side of the river

E1. I doubt it

K. into the forest

*E1 knees sink into the soil*

*he gathers fragments of earth in his palm*

E1. the earth is coarse

K. clay is only earth and water

*silence*

E1. do you think he died?

K. it's possible

*E1 examines the river*

E1. quite deep

*K gathers salt water in his palms*

*then returns it to the river*

K. should we follow him-

E1. don't be ridiculous

K. what if he reached the forest-

E1. that's impossible

K. what if it's there-

E1. it would be suicide

K. what if he's found it-

E1. certain death

K. what if it's in the water

E1. that's just a reflection

K. it's in the water

E1. it's across the river

*E1 and K look at the river*

*silence*

K. what if he returns-

E1. he won't

K. everyone returns

E1. not everyone

K. eventually

E1. not everyone

K. there are infinite paths-

E1. the paths are infinite

K. ours is through the water

E1. what?

K. into the river

*K begins to enter the river*

*then returns*

E1. no

K. aren't you curious?

E1. of course I'm curious

K. it's so close-

*E1 looks at the saint's tomb*

E1. perhaps it's better it remains in the distance

K. I can almost taste the soil

E1. it is no different from the earth beneath your feet-

K. it's in the forest

*silence*

K. deep within the forest

E1. he must be dead

K. might be alive

E1. there's no movement in the water

K. wandering through an endless forest

E1. it's perfectly still

K. or hiding in the river's depths

E1. perhaps he's drowned

K. endless streams

E1. drowned in the prophet's river

E2. it's only salt and water

E1. perhaps he's already been buried

K. you think he's part of the forest?

E1. beneath seven layers of soil

K. beneath millions of dust particles

E1. in an endless forest

K. how beautiful

E1. terrifying

K. beautiful

*silence*

E1. it is not as you imagine it

K. the forest?

E1. it will never appear as you imagine it

K. it might-

E1. everything changes-

K. of course- there are cycles

E1. bones to dust

*silence*

E1. clay to bones

K. clay is only earth and water

*E1 looks at the saint's tomb*

E1. from the remnants of clay it emerged

K. they found it on his fingertips

E1. from the clay emerged a vast forest

K. it was a seed

E1. reflecting light

K. like the bodies of the deceased

E1. reflecting light

K. all seeds emerge from the soil

E1. and to the soil

K. the last fragments of clay and dust return

E1. waiting for words

*silence*

*E1 and K look at the forest*

E1. should we have stopped him?

K. no

E1. was it cruel?

K. it wasn't cruel

E1. I was only trying to help him

K. it's been written

*E1 looks at the saint's tomb*

E1. I was distracted

K. we should have followed him

E1. don't be an idiot

K. into the water

E1. no

K. it's in the water

E1. that's just a reflection

K. I can see it-

E1. you can't reach it

K. it's in the water

E1. it's impossible-

K. it's in the water

E1. it's beyond the water

K. in the forest?

E1. it's beyond the forest

*K enters the river*

E1. wait

*K continues to walk into the river*

E1. wait

*K disappears into the river*

E1. wait

*silence*

*E1 follows K into the river*

*he stops*

*he looks at the saint's tomb*

*then disappears into the river*

## Scene Nine

### The Infinite Forest

*EZRA, KHALID, and ELIJAH are in a forest*

*at its edges*

*a river*

*in the distance*

*a sea*

*a desert*

*a valley*

*and three mountains*

*EZRA, KHALID, and ELIJAH enter the river*

*they emerge*

*with the bodies of E1, E2, and K*

*they place the bodies on the earth*

*salt and water*

*descend from the bodies of the deceased*

*disappearing into the soil*

EZRA. mist fills the earth

ELIJAH. of the infinite forest

KHALID. under late night's sky

EZRA. where remnants of clay

ELIJAH. remind passersby

KHALID. of an ancient past

EZRA. that remains hidden

ELIJAH. beneath millions of dust particles

EZRA. that announce

KHALID. their return

ELIJAH. to the great mountain

EZRA. yearning for proximity

KHALID. in failed attempts at growth

ELIJAH. under the seemingly indifferent

EZRA. sky

KHALID. eternal was their longing

ELIJAH. to move beyond seven layers of soil

EZRA. to return to the infinite forest

*silence*

EZRA. they drowned

KHALID. and the last fragments of fertile earth

ELIJAH. were lost to the river

EZRA. in it they grew

KHALID. and grew

ELIJAH. and grew

EZRA. into the forest's depths

*silence*

ELIJAH. a beautiful myth

KHALID. it was revealed

EZRA. but they did not understand

KHALID. how could a forest grow from the bodies of the deceased?

ELIJAH. were they not lost to the river's endless depths?

EZRA. no they did not understand

KHALID. that the river had emerged

EZRA. from earth's core

ELIJAH. clay is only earth and water

*silence*

KHALID. it was here that they would gather

EZRA. and recite  
ELIJAH. and recite  
KHALID. and recite  
EZRA. until it appeared to them  
ELIJAH. at the edge of the water  
KHALID. they moved closer  
EZRA. and closer  
ELIJAH. and closer  
KHALID. until it was revealed  
EZRA. in their own reflections  
*silence*  
ELIJAH. it is believed  
KHALID. this is the sacred river  
EZRA. where the prophet drowned  
KHALID. into eternity  
ELIJAH. hidden beneath  
EZRA. seven layers of soil  
ELIJAH. every year  
KHALID. they return  
EZRA. bringing with them  
ELIJAH. fragments of the desert soil  
EZRA. earth that had turned to dust  
KHALID. and dust to water  
ELIJAH. that was how  
KHALID. they revived  
EZRA. an ancient ritual  
*ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID carry the bodies of the deceased*  
*into the water*  
*then bury them*  
*at the edges of the infinite forest*

Scene Ten  
The Resurrection

*E1, E2, and K are in the infinite forest  
at its edges  
a river  
in the distance  
the sea  
the desert  
the valley  
three mountains  
and the saint's tomb  
the bodies of E1, E2, and K  
are hidden  
in a cave-like structure above the ground  
made of the forest's clay-earth  
water from the river  
moves back and forth  
towards the edges of the infinite forest  
each time the water touches the soil  
parts of the cave  
fall to the ground  
disappearing into the soil  
as they gradually reveal  
the bodies of E1, E2, and K  
when the last fragments of the clay cave  
fall to the ground  
E1, E2, and K wake up  
K. we followed you into the water  
E1 moves from side to side almost losing his balance  
E1. what happened?  
E2. you died*

E1. we're alive-

E2. yes but in that specific moment

*E1 removes dirt from his shoulders*

E1. emerged from the river-

E2. when you entered the water-

E1. alive-

K. we drowned

E1. drowned?

E2. as soon as we entered the water

K. don't you remember?

E1. no

K. nothing?

E1. no

E2. not even the taste of salt-water?

E1. can't remember a thing

*E1 looks at the river*

E1. not a thing

*E1 continues to remove fragments of earth from his shoulders*

*he walks back and forth carefully examining the river*

*E1 turns around and looks at the forest*

E1. is this-

K. this is it

E1. you mean it's-

K. it's in the forest

*E1 sits down*

K. we must continue

E1. into the forest?

K. into the forest

*E2 helps E1 get up*

*E1 looks at the forest*

E1. seems deep

E2. it's been quite the journey

E1. perhaps we should wait-

K. no

E1. gather our strength-

K. no

E1. might not even be there-

K. it's in the forest

E2. we've already survived the desert

K. wandered into a valley

E2. surrendered ourselves to the river

K. tasted its salt-water

E2. and you ask about seeds-

*silence*

*E1 looks at the saint's tomb*

*E2 and K walk deeper into the forest*

*E1 follows them*

*the river, the sea, the desert, the valley, the mountains, and the saint's tomb*

*can no longer be seen in the distance*

*the sound of the river can still be heard*

E1. wait

*a capsule appears*

*K removes it from the soil*

K (*reading the capsule*). this is where the prophet died

E2 (*reading the capsule*). sacrificed himself to the earth

K. so that they could witness

E2. the resurrection of flesh and bone

K. but they did not understand

E2. how the dead could resurrect the living

K. no they could not understand

E2. how he had reached earth's depths

K. learned all of its rhythms

E2. tasted its soil

K. listened to its words

E2. they were hidden in his chest

*the capsule falls from K's palm*

*and disappears into the forest soil*

*silence*

K. perhaps it was neglect

E2. he was forgotten

K. eternal in the earth

E2. forgotten

K. most people do not realize

E2. this was how the desert came to be

K. they do not realize

E2. that it grew from the body of the deceased

K. and now we find ourselves

E2. at the edges of a forest-

K. an infinite forest

E2. that surrounds his gravestone

K. he is the forest

*silence*

K. we must continue

E1. you won't find it

K. we've come to honour the dead

E2. the dead must be honoured

K. and so we must enter the depths of the forest

E2. not knowing

K. if we shall survive

E2. not knowing

K. if there is a return

E2. until it is revealed

E1. it will not be revealed

E2. until it is revealed  
K. as the prophet's wisdom  
*E1 looks in the distance searching for the saint's tomb*  
E1. the tomb's disappeared  
E2. you won't be able to see it from here  
K. we are too deep within the forest  
*silence*  
*K gathers fragments of the forest soil in his palm*  
*it gradually falls to the ground*  
*creating a sound*  
E2. we've spent years travelling  
K. anxiously searching  
E2. for the origins of the seed  
K. now we realize-  
E2. it is from his body that they grow  
K. it is from his body that it was revealed  
E2. from the soil beneath your feet  
K. in an endless forest  
E1. I don't understand  
E2. of course you don't understand-  
E1. it is an endless journey  
K. endless  
E2. you never wanted to enter the river  
E1. and I followed you into it-  
K. he did- he followed us into it  
E2. he didn't want to-  
E1. you wanted to stay in the valley  
E2. it was a beautiful valley  
E1. we would have spent eternity in it  
E2. no we wouldn't-  
E1. waiting for it to appear

E2. it was in the valley

E1. senseless

E2. it was in the valley

E1. I've told you a million times before-

E2. it was there-

E1. it will appear

E2. it was-

E1. when it appears-

K. it's in the forest

E1. you will not find it

E2. it's in the seed

E1. it not is how you imagine it-

K. it's in the forest

*water from the river moves backwards and forwards*

*parts of the forest disappear into the river*

*the water gradually moves closer*

*to E1, E2, and K*

*E1 has his back to the river*

*E2 looks directly at it*

E1. you might convince yourselves-

E2. the water

E1. yes you thought it was in the water but-

E2. it's moving closer-

E1. you might think you are close but-

E2. behind you-

E1. I know the river is behind me

E2. it's right behind you

E1. then you thought it was in a forest- a forest you believe to be infinite and perhaps it is

but you can not experience-

*the water continues to move closer*

*until E1's feet are in the water*

E1. water

E2. that's what I was trying to tell you

E1. it's moving closer

E2. you never listen to me

K. into the forest

*E1, E2, and K walk further into the infinite forest*

*they are now surrounded by three thousand trees*

*three thousand seed-capsules*

*are hidden*

*beneath their feet*

*in the distance*

*the movements of the river can be heard*

*and the sound of the forest soil*

*gradually dissolving into the water*

E2. thousands upon thousands

K. upon thousands

E2. upon thousands

E1. it's endless

*E2 walks around examining the trees*

E2. but where is it?

K. it's in the forest

E2. which one is it-

E1. it's none of them

*silence*

E2. was it the river?

K. they emerged from a seed

E1. a single seed?

K. one seed

E2. it was a river-

K. we must continue

E2. you see just beneath this soil-

K. that's where they grow  
E2. there must be water  
K. we must continue  
E2. what if it's here-  
E1. it isn't here  
E2. we should stay a while  
E1. we can't do that  
E2. examine the leaves  
K. it's in the forest  
E2. watch the colours change  
K. deep within the forest  
E2. as they gradually turn back into soil  
E1. it isn't here  
E2. then grow again  
K. into the forest  
E2. revealing words  
*silence*  
K. the water is moving closer  
E1. can't hear a thing  
E2. because you never listen  
E1. not a thing  
K. always in the distance  
E1. what is-  
K. there's a sound-  
E1. you mean the water?  
*E2 frantically moves back and forth as he looks for a path*  
E2. where's that path?  
E1. what path?  
E2. we were on a path-  
*E2 carefully examines the forest soil*  
*searching for a path*

E2. where is it-

E1. where's what?

E2. the path to the river

E1. you mean where we entered the forest-

E2. it's disappeared

E1. you want to return to the river?

E2. no no I-

*silence*

E2. we're lost

K. we aren't lost

E2. we're lost

E1. I didn't realize you knew where you were going-

E2. I didn't

E1. then nothing's changed

E2. there was a path

*E2 continues to look for remnants of the path in the forest soil*

E2. it appears at the end of the path

E1. you won't find it

K. that's a terrible thing to say

*E2 continues to search for the path*

E2. it was in the water

K. it's in the forest

E2. it was in the water but we didn't realize-

E1. it's too late now- we can't go back

*the seed-capsules begin to grow*

*E2 moves closer to the seed-capsules*

E2. they're growing

E1. of course they're growing- it's a forest

E2. look at it

E1. it's just a growing seed

E2. it's beautiful

E1. you've seen it before

*silence*

E1. they grew in the valley

*silence*

E1. thousands grew in the valley

E2. it's different now-

K. it's about perception

E1. it's only a seed

E2. perhaps to you

E1. you're delusional

E2. you just don't understand

*the seed-capsules continue to grow*

*the sound of the river can still be heard*

*in the distance*

E2. it's in the seed

K. it appears when they grow

E2. it's in the trees

K. the earth

E2. the sounds of the forest

K. in the thousands of dust particles

E2. that gather in the soil

K. revealing words

*silence*

*K carefully examines the forest*

K. they grow from the bottom of a distant cave

E2. that's where they buried the prophet

E1. an ancient myth

K. there he would recite the most beautiful words

*the seed-capsules continue to grow*

K. he would recite

E2. and recite

K. and recite

E2. until it appeared to him

K. it appeared in a seed

E2. it was a tree

K. a seed

E2. that's where he heard it

K. he saw it

E2. he heard it

E1. he never saw it or heard it

K. perhaps it was in the desert

E2. it was in a valley

K. it grew in the desert

E1. it wasn't the desert

E2. it was a valley

E1. it wasn't the valley

K. it's in the forest

E2. it emerged from water

K. a seed

E2. the water

*the seed-capsules continue to grow*

K. you can see it-

*E2 gathers fragments of the forest soil in his palm*

E2. mist fills the earth of the infinite forest

*silence*

E1. what difference does it make?

E2. someone has to write it

K. write it then bury it deep within the soil

*silence*

K. it grew from his body

E2. they cast it into the river

K. they buried it in a cave

E1. it wasn't in the body

E2. he was a prophet

K. clay is only earth and water

*silence*

K. you think it's in the soil?

*the seed-capsules continue to grow*

E1. it's not in the soil

E2. well then where is it?

E1. it isn't anywhere-

E2. don't be ridiculous

*E2 sits down and watches the seed-capsules grow*

*E1 carefully examines the seed-capsules*

E1. it isn't

E2. don't you remember?

E1. it isn't in the forest

E2. we planted them ourselves

E1. you mean the capsules?

E2. words

*E1 sits down*

E1. words

E2. aren't they beautiful

K. beautiful

*silence*

*the sound of the river can be heard*

*in the distance*

K. we must continue

*E1, E2, and K walk further into the depths of the forest*

*the soil is red*

*its texture resembles clay*

*they are surrounded by thousands of trees*

*and the growing seed-capsules*

*they continue to walk into the forest*

E2. it's been forty days

E1. endless

K. that's how long he remained in the cave

E2. the prophet's cave

K. contemplating earth's vast mysteries

E2. do you hear something?

K. that's just the water

E1. so this is where it's buried

E2. you mean the prophet?

E1. the seed

*silence*

E2. three thousand seeds

K. hidden beneath seven layers of soil

*E2 gathers fragments of soil in his palm*

*then slowly returns it to the earth*

*creating a sound*

*E1, E2, and K continue to walk*

*further into the depths of the forest*

E2. seems endless

E1. it is endless

E2. endless

*silence*

E2. I heard it grew from the centre of a mountain

E1. you mean the forest?

E2. that's where it appeared

K. it grew from a seed

E2. that's where the prophet died

E1. you mean on the mountain?

E2. surrendered himself to the sun

K. the earth

E2. it was the sun  
*as E1, E2, and K's feet brush against the earth of the clay forest*  
*they gradually take on its colour*  
*turning red*  
*the seed-capsules continue to grow*  
*now at a faster pace*  
*the sound of the water*  
*can still be heard*  
*in the distance*  
K. they're growing  
E1. it's endless  
E2. can you hear it-  
E1. can't hear a thing  
K. it's in the seed  
E2. they're creating sounds  
K. patterns  
E2. sounds  
E1. not a thing  
*E2 moves closer to the growing seed-capsules*  
*K observes them from a distance*  
*they grow at a faster pace*  
K. we must continue  
*K gently moves E2 away from the growing seed-capsules*  
*they walk further into the depths of the forest*  
*as they ascend to the sacred mountain*  
*the river*  
*the valley*  
*the desert*  
*the sea*  
*and the saint's tomb appear in the distance*  
*as E1, E2, and K continue their ascent*

*more trees appear  
and seed-capsules  
that grow at a faster pace  
the sound of the water  
can still be heard in the distance  
the further E1, E2, and K ascend  
the faster the seed-capsules grow  
the cycle continues  
three thousand times  
until they arrive  
to the summit of a great mountain*

Scene Eleven

The Sacred Mountain II

*ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID are on a mountain  
in the distance  
the sea  
the desert  
the valley  
the river  
the saint's tomb  
and the infinite forest*

ELIJAH. mountains are hidden

KHALID. beneath an unassuming desert

EZRA. that can only be found past spring

ELIJAH. it is believed this is the sacred forest

KHALID. where the prophet wandered

ELIJAH. into eternity

EZRA. seeking an ancient mountain

KHALID. that emerged

ELIJAH. from a drop of water

EZRA. there he witnessed the infinite

KHALID. in the horizon  
ELIJAH. as it continued to approach him  
EZRA. until he was surrounded  
KHALID. by the sound of salt water  
*the sound of the water*  
*can be heard*  
*in the distance*  
ELIJAH. his knees sank into the soil  
EZRA. he recited a poem  
ELIJAH. a prayer  
KHALID. they buried him  
EZRA. at the edge of the mountain  
ELIJAH. centuries passed  
EZRA. they remained persistent  
KHALID. in their quest for fertile earth  
ELIJAH. it is only now that they realize  
KHALID. that the forest grows  
EZRA. from the edges of his fingertips  
ELIJAH. it grows  
KHALID. and grows  
EZRA. and grows  
KHALID. creating patterns  
ELIJAH. that lead them to its infinite depths  
*silence*  
*EZRA, ELIJAH, and KHALID gaze contemplatively at the landscapes in the distance*  
EZRA. it is known  
ELIJAH. that the path to the forest has no end  
KHALID. it guides seekers to bewilderment  
EZRA. as they wait for it to appear  
KHALID. under the great moon's light  
ELIJAH. not realizing

EZRA. it was hidden  
KHALID. in the earth beneath their feet  
ELIJAH. while they witnessed the seed-capsules  
EZRA. endlessly grow  
KHALID. revealing the last words  
ELIJAH. recited by the prophet of the cave  
EZRA. before he was hidden  
KHALID. in earth's infinite depths  
*KHALID collects fragments of the mountain's soil in his palms  
it gradually falls to the ground  
creating a sound*  
ELIJAH. he remains there  
KHALID. hidden  
EZRA. patiently waiting  
KHALID. to be resurrected  
ELIJAH. while their journey continues  
EZRA. they pass through endless landscapes  
KHALID. endless  
ELIJAH. that all emerge  
EZRA. from a seed  
ELIJAH. a single seed  
EZRA. to make known  
ELIJAH. the infinite dust particles  
KHALID. that gather beneath their feet  
EZRA. creating patterns  
KHALID. words  
ELIJAH. sounds  
KHALID. that reveal the sacred  
EZRA. in moments of silence  
*silence*  
ELIJAH. they ascended to the top of a great mountain

EZRA. a place to contemplate  
KHALID. there it was revealed  
EZRA. it was revealed  
KHALID. that the forest had no end  
ELIJAH. they remained there in the distance  
EZRA. contemplating the infinite  
KHALID. they encountered in the horizon

Scene Twelve

The Sacred Mountain III

*E1, E2, and K are on a mountain*

*in the distance*

*the sea*

*the desert*

*the valley*

*the river*

*the saint's tomb*

*and the infinite forest*

*E1, E2, and K*

*write a poem*

*dedicated to the prophet's cave*

*they hide it in a capsule*

*and plant it in the mountain*

*the sound of the water*

*can still be heard*

*in the distance*

E2. it's been forty days

E1. forty days in an endless forest

K. for forty days we watched them grow

E2. and grow

K. and grow

E2. waiting for it to appear

K. it did appear

E2. it appeared

E1. at the edges

K. of the finite earth

*silence*

E1. it's endless

*E1, E2, and K gaze at the horizon*

*silence*

E1. endless

*silence*

E1. there is no end to the forest

*E2's tears descend*

*he gathers them in his palms*

E2. water

K. it has no edges

E2. water

K. no peripheries

E1. there is no end to the forest

K. wherever you turn-

E2. it emerged from a drop of water

*silence*

*the sound of the water*

*can be heard*

*in the distance*

K. you can see it in the horizon

E1. I thought it had disappeared

E2. sacrificed itself to the sun

K. buried deep within the desert soil

E1. it suddenly appeared

E2. after forty days

E1. revealing what was hidden

K. in earth's core

E1. it was hidden

E2. beneath our feet

K. from the soil in which they grow

E1. revealing patterns

E2. words

K. sounds

E1. that emerge

E2. from salt and water

*silence*

E1. it is a strange predicament that we face

K. we were told it was an endless forest

E1. endless

E2. it appeared in the horizon

E1. at the summit of a great mountain

E2. perhaps we should have realized there was no end

K. as we watched the seed-capsules endlessly grow

E1. perhaps we should have realized that the origins of the seed

K. are not the infinite dust particles

E2. that gathered in our palms

K. in an endless desert

E2. as we watched them grow

K. at the edges of the saint's tomb

E1. but a resolute silence

E2. that revealed itself

K. in ancient prayers

E1. rhythms

E2. words

K. endlessly seeking

E1. to remind us

E2. of the taste of salt water

*the sound of the water*

*can be heard*

*in the distance*

E1. the sea remained

E2. it remained in the distance

K. beneath the desert soil

E2. and in the final hours

E1. before the sun rises once again

K. it can be heard

E2. heard in the distance

E1. as it approaches the edges

K. of the prophet's cave

E2. that remains hidden

E1. deep within the mountain

K. it was there that he drowned

E1. into eternity

E2. until the body returned

K. we buried it

E1. in the saint's tomb

E2. that can also be seen

E1. in the distance

K. there they would gather

E2. and recite

K. and recite

E1. and recite

E2. until it appeared in their palms

K. as salt and water

E2. it was then that they realized

K. that what they encountered

E2. was not a river

K. but a vast ocean

E1. that cannot be known  
E2. except by those  
K. who drown into eternity  
E1. annihilated in the salt water  
E2. that remained in the body of a saint  
K. he returned it to the desert soil  
E1. and from it they grew  
E2. and grew  
K. and grew  
E1. into an endless forest  
E2. that seekers enter  
K. in search of the great moon's light  
E1. not realizing  
E2. that the last fragments of fertile earth  
K. were not beneath their feet  
*the sound of the water*  
*can be heard in the distance*  
E1. they were hidden  
K. at the centre of their palms  
E2. in a drop of water  
E1. that the three travellers had gathered  
E2. from the salt river  
K. they continued the journey  
E1. determined to return  
E2. to earth's depths  
K. until they reached the summit of a great mountain  
E1. their knees sank into the soil  
E2. and the last fragments of fertile earth  
K. fell back into the ground  
E1. the sound of salt water  
E2. echoed in the distance

K. as it moved closer  
E1. to the prophet's cave  
E2. that was how they revived  
K. an ancient ritual  
*K collects fragments of soil in his palm  
then returns it to the earth  
a capsule emerges from the soil  
E1, E2, and K carefully watch it  
as it grows  
creating a sound  
it continues to grow  
and grow  
and grow  
until it appears  
in the image of a tree  
with leaves that are coloured red  
several of them  
fall to the ground  
then disappear into the mountain  
E1, E2, and K gather around the tree*  
K. it finally appeared  
E2. as I said it would  
E1. this was how it appeared  
K. to the prophet of the cave  
E2. and the one before that  
E1. and the one before that  
E2. as they patiently waited  
K. for it to be known  
E1. it was already known  
E2. revealed in the earth beneath our feet  
K. it is in their memory

E2. that the seed-capsules grow  
E1. they remain hidden  
K. beneath seven layers of soil  
E2. endlessly reciting  
K. the prophet's final words  
E1. until it appeared  
E2. in the image of a tree  
*the tree dissolves into the mountain*  
E2. it's gone  
K. disappeared into the soil  
*K gathers the remnants of the tree's soil in his palm*  
*then returns it to the earth*  
*a capsule appears*  
*K unwraps it*  
K (*reading*). beneath the emerald mountain  
*E1, E2, and K admire the landscapes in the distance*  
E1. beautiful  
E2. beautiful  
K. beautiful  
*E1, E2, and K begin their descent*  
*from the emerald mountain*  
*that remains hidden*  
*at the centre of their palms*

### Scene Thirteen

#### Cave III

*EZRA, ELIJAH, and KHALID are on a mountain*  
*in the distance*  
*the sea*  
*the desert*  
*the valley*  
*the river*

*the infinite forest*

*and the prophet's cave*

ELIJAH. it was here

KHALID. that they would depart

EZRA. to more distant waters

KHALID. seeking the infinite

ELIJAH. that cannot be known

EZRA. it was revealed

KHALID. in the prophet's cave

ELIJAH. hidden in the centre

EZRA. of a sacred mountain

KHALID. it is believed

EZRA. it appears

ELIJAH. in the last third of the night

KHALID. in the bodies of the deceased

EZRA. that reflect

ELIJAH. the great moon's light

*silence*

ELIJAH. it is believed

KHALID. this is the cave

EZRA. where they encountered eternity

ELIJAH. in the image of a seed

EZRA. it appeared

KHALID. at the edges of their fingertips

ELIJAH. when they entered the cave

EZRA. it was there

KHALID. that they realized

ELIJAH. its infinite depths

EZRA. clay is only earth and water

## **The Eternal Seed**

## Characters

E1

E2

K

## The Eternal Seed

*seeking the eternal seed  
that could only be found  
at the edges  
of the finite earth  
descending into the cave  
E1, E2, and K realize  
the eternal is hidden  
in sacred words  
revealed to the seeker  
in moments of  
silence*