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 ḥadra 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 ḥadra 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-Ṣābūr, Ziad Elmarsafy writes:

Across a series of texts that constitute his own poetic autobiography, ‘Abd al-Ṣābūr 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.¹

Elmarsafy asserts that ‘Abd al-Ṣābūr 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).² 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.³ 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. 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.

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 ʿArabi 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 ʿĪssāwiya 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 ḥadra. 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 interwoven into the songs, litanies, and Qur’anic 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. Preforming 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 ‘Īssāwiya 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 ‘Īssāwiya 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 hadra 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 ‘Īssāwiya rituals. The first is that the dhikr and hadra 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 ḥādra 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. 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. 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 Shâdhiliya 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 ḥadra. 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 ḥadra, but also Ibn ‘Arabi’s writings in which divine utterances correspond to embodied states.\(^8\) Language in Ibn ‘Arabi’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.\(^9\)

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 ḥadra. 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 Hallāj that contain dialogues composed of verse. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.\textsuperscript{16} 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.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{Waiting for Godot} shares many of the features of ritual. Two central characters named Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot who never arrives.\textsuperscript{18} Although not confirmed by Beckett, many commentators argue that Godot represents God.\textsuperscript{19} It has a similar structure to \textit{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.\textsuperscript{20} Thus, the notion of a pilgrimage or spiritual journey becomes futile with characters who endlessly wait without undergoing any profound changes.\textsuperscript{21}

In both \textit{Waiting for Godot} and \textit{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.\textsuperscript{22} 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. 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 ‘Īssāwiya 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. 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 ʿĪssāwiya 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 ʿArabī’s writings on time, which is also circular, without beginning or end. As in dhikr and ḥaḍra rituals and Ibn
'Arabi’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. 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 ḥadra 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 ḥadra) 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.
2 Ibid., p.3-5.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., p.10-11.
7 Ibid.
9 Ibid., Vol.5, p.91-93
12 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
19 Susan Brienza in *Myth and Ritual*, p.28-140.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 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.
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 a 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 marvilled 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
_80_
_E1_ preparates 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 stops searching
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
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

El 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

El 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

El 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

El examines E2’s body
E1. no signs of movement

El 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
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
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

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 waits  
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

...
that cannot be known except by those who drown into eternity annihilated in the salt water that remained in the body of a saint he returned it to the desert soil and from it they grew and grew and grew into an endless forest that seekers enter in search of the great moon’s light not realizing that the last fragments of fertile earth were not beneath their feet

the sound of the water can be heard in the distance

they were hidden at the centre of their palms in a drop of water that the three travellers had gathered from the salt river they continued the journey determined to return to earth’s depths until they reached the summit of a great mountain their knees sank into the soil and the last fragments of fertile earth fell back into the ground the sound of salt water echoed in the distance
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	hot 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