

Image and Likeness



a play in two acts

By Rom Watson

Contact:
Rom Watson
836 Westbourne Drive, #106
West Hollywood, CA 90069
(310) 652-3760
cnrwatson@earthlink.net

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CAST:

Eight actors are required, six male and two female.

Charlie Doth, early thirties, journalist
Nine Religious Leaders, all played by one actor
Lisa, twenties - thirties, a girlfriend of Charlie's
Emily Dickinson, spirit of the late poet
Albert Einstein, spirit of the late mathematical physicist
Hugh, fifties, a Lutheran pastor
Angela, early to mid-thirties, librarian at a newspaper
Michael, fifties, Charlie's boss
Steven MacKenzie, early thirties, actor and celebrity
Randy Qantas, Jasper's henchman
Jasper, fifties, the head of The Church of Religion
Eddie Qantas, Randy's identical twin
Bono, activist and lead singer of the rock band U2
Vanessa Hayward, Police Detective

Actor 1: CHARLIE DOTH

Actor 2: NINE RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Actor 3: LISA; DETECTIVE HAYWARD

Actor 4: EMILY DICKINSON; ANGELA

Actor 5: ALBERT EINSTEIN

Actor 6: HUGH; MICHAEL; JASPER

Actor 7: STEVEN MACKENZIE; BONO

Actor 8: RANDY QANTAS; EDDIE QANTAS

It is not solely for economic reasons that some actors play more than one role. It also enhances the effectiveness of the play.

The time: The present.

The place: Los Angeles.

Act I, Scene 1

(An arch, painted with items and symbols from nine religions. In front of the arch is a waist-high altar, on which sits a collection plate. Standing behind the altar is ACTOR #2, who will portray nine religious leaders. CHARLIE enters and crosses to the altar, his backpack slung over one shoulder. HE carries a spiral-bound notebook and a pen. The Catholic item painted on the arch lights up: an image of the Virgin Mary. ACTOR #2 wears a priest's collar.)

CHARLIE

Where is God?

PRIEST

The question is, *when* is God? Experiencing God is not dependant upon being in the right place, but in doing the right thing.

(CHARLIE writes in his notebook.)

CHARLIE

What is transubstantiation?

PRIEST

During the sacrament of Holy Communion, I raise the bread and the wine. At that moment they transform. They become the body and the blood of Christ.

CHARLIE

They actually become the body and the blood of Jesus Christ.

PRIEST

Yes.

CHARLIE

Jesus has been dead for two thousand years.

PRIEST

You don't have to remind me of that.

CHARLIE

And the bread and wine turn into his body and blood?

PRIEST

That's transubstantiation.

(CHARLIE writes in his notebook.)

CHARLIE
That's . . .uh . . .

PRIEST
You must believe.

CHARLIE
When I was a child I clapped for Tinker Bell. I'm not a child anymore.

PRIEST
Did Tinker Bell get better?

CHARLIE
Well yeah, but--

PRIEST
I rest my case.

CHARLIE
God is not Tinker Bell.

PRIEST
Walking through doubts, the way to heaven is long.

CHARLIE
Where do I start looking?

PRIEST
Where a man's heart is, there is his God.

CHARLIE
(Sarcastically.)
Thanks. You've been a big help.

PRIEST
Merry Christmas.

(ACTOR #2 exits. CHARLIE starts to exit, then stops, fishes in his pocket for some money, and puts a few bills in the collection plate. Then HE puts in a few more bills. The lights fade to black as CHARLIE crosses to the next scene.)

Act I, Scene 2

(As the lights rise, we see CHARLIE and LISA lying next to each other in bed. The bedclothes cover them.)

CHARLIE

That was great.

LISA

Mmmmmm.

(CHARLIE reaches to the nightstand and grabs two tissues. He uses one to wipe off his hand nearest LISA, and then looks under the sheet and uses the other tissue to wipe himself off.)

CHARLIE

Did you feel good?

LISA

Mmhmm.

CHARLIE

Do you need a tissue?

LISA

Mmmm.

(CHARLIE grabs a tissue from the box and wipes off her hand.)

CHARLIE

Good morning.

(LISA speaks with a British accent.)

LISA

Good morning. No lump of coal for you.

(CHARLIE reaches under his side of the bed and pulls out a wrapped gift. He hands it to LISA.)

LISA

Feels like a book.

(SHE unwraps it.)

"The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson." You remembered.
How sweet.

(When LISA opens the book, EMILY DICKINSON enters. LISA cannot see

her. As LISA reads a passage from the book, EMILY DICKINSON speaks aloud the same passage.)

EMILY DICKINSON

The Heart is the Capital of the Mind –
The Mind is a single State –
The Heart and Mind together make
A single Continent –

One – is the Population –
Numerous enough –
This ecstatic Nation
Seek – it is Yourself

(CHARLIE catches EMILY DICKINSON's eye and gives her a little wave. EMILY DICKINSON blushes. LISA closes the book. EMILY DICKINSON exits.)

LISA

Thank you, Charlie.

(LISA reaches under her side of the bed and pulls out a wrapped gift and gives it to CHARLIE. HE unwraps it. It is also a book.)

CHARLIE

"The Quotable Einstein", collected and edited by Alice Calaprice. Thank you.

LISA

I thought you'd like it because he talks about religion.

(CHARLIE gives LISA a kiss. When HE opens the book, ALBERT EINSTEIN enters. Someone who knew Einstein described him thus: "He was almost wholly without sophistication and wholly without worldliness ...there was always with him a wonderful purity at once childlike and profoundly stubborn." As before, LISA cannot see this author. CHARLIE reads a passage from the book.)

ALBERT EINSTEIN

I want to know God's thoughts.

(CHARLIE flips through the pages and reads another quote.)

ALBERT EINSTEIN

I cannot conceive of a God who rewards and punishes his creatures, or has a will of the kind that we experience in ourselves.

(CHARLIE looks at Albert Einstein and gives him a thumbs up. ALBERT EINSTEIN bows slightly. CHARLIE closes the book and ALBERT EINSTEIN exits.)

CHARLIE

Thank you, Lisa. This is great.

LISA

Happy Christmas.

CHARLIE

We say "Merry" Christmas.

LISA

Sorry, "Merry" Christmas then. I'll go make some tea.

(LISA starts to exit, then returns.)

Did you manage to get tickets to the Sibelius concert at Disney Hall?

CHARLIE

Was I supposed to do that?

LISA

Charlie. You daft prat. I asked you yesterday morning when we were getting dressed. You said you'd ring and get the tickets.

CHARLIE

I did?

LISA

Honestly, you never remember a single thing I tell you.

CHARLIE

Because you have beautiful breasts.

LISA

I fail to see the connection.

CHARLIE

I remember you saying *something* while we were getting dressed, but all I could think about was how pretty your breasts are, and how much I wanted to touch them. They hypnotized me.

LISA

Hypnotized you? I had no idea they had such power.

(SHE cups her breasts in her hands, points them at Charlie, and slowly crosses towards him.)

You are getting sleepy. Your eyelids are becoming heavy. Soon you will be under the spell of my mammary glands. You will buy me a Prada backpack. And shoes by Jimmy Choo.

CHARLIE

Sorry, it only works if you're naked.

LISA

(Dropping her hands from her breasts.)

Like so many things.

CHARLIE

I'll order the tickets online.

LISA

Don't bother. I can get them.

CHARLIE

I said I will get the tickets!

LISA

Why are you being stubborn about it?

CHARLIE

I'm going to make you happy. Even if it pisses you off!

(LISA exits. CHARLIE opens his book and ALBERT EINSTEIN enters.)

CHARLIE

Can I ask you something?

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Of course.

CHARLIE

What does it take to please her? I'm tired of trying to be perfect, because I never am, and . . .nothing I do is good enough.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

You're asking me about women? Why don't you ask me about something easy to understand, like quantum physics?

CHARLIE

You're supposed to be one of the smartest men who ever lived.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

I *am* one of the smartest men who ever lived. But I don't know anything about women. I was married twice, and failed at it both times.

CHARLIE

Can't you give me any advice on love?

ALBERT EINSTEIN

You want love? Buy a dog.

(CHARLIE crosses to the desk and sits in front of a computer. HE sets his book open on the desk. HE reaches into his backpack and pulls out his 9-1/2" by 6" spiral-bound notebook. HE opens it and begins typing from his notes. Then HE reads a quote from his book.)

ALBERT EINSTEIN

My religion consists of a deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power. That which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe forms my idea of God.

CHARLIE

Don't you ever have doubts? How can you believe in God when you can't see God?

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Push that pen off the desk.

CHARLIE

What?

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Push it off.

(CHARLIE pushes a pen off the desk. It falls to the floor.)

ALBERT EINSTEIN

I can't see gravity either. But I know it's there.

(CHARLIE picks up the pen. The lights fade as HE closes his book and ALBERT EINSTEIN exits. CHARLIE puts his book in his backpack, along with his spiral-bound notebook and the pen. HE slings the backpack over his shoulder and crosses to the next scene.)

Act I, Scene 3

(ACTOR #2 wears a fake beard and a prayer shawl, or "tallit." On top of his head is a small black box. The shawl covers the rest of his head behind the box. CHARLIE takes a yarmulke from the altar and places it on his head. The Jewish item painted on the arch lights up: the Star of David.)

CHARLIE

Rabbi, why is God so hard to find?

RABBI

Truth is heavy, therefore few care to carry it.

CHARLIE

What should I do?

RABBI

The heart perceives that which the eye cannot see.

(CHARLIE writes in his notebook.)

CHARLIE

What does the Torah say about finding God?

RABBI

The greatest wisdom is to know thyself.

CHARLIE

Know thyself. Do you know there's a box on your head?

RABBI

That is a tefillin. [TEF-ih-lin] It contains scriptural texts.

CHARLIE

Scripture. You put scripture in a box and strap it to your head? You can't just carry a book?

(CHARLIE removes the yarmulke and throws it down on the altar. As HE crosses to the next scene and ACTOR #2 exits, the lights fade to black.)

Act I, Scene 4

(A Lutheran church. CHARLIE enters and approaches the pastor, who is taking his chasuble off over his head.)

CHARLIE

Nice poncho.

HUGH

It's a chasuble, but thanks.

(HUGH puts his chasuble on a hanger, then removes his stole and puts that on a second hanger.)

CHARLIE

How do – did you find God?

HUGH

God was just . . . always there. I didn't have to go looking.

CHARLIE

So religion always came easy for you.

HUGH

Religion's the easy part. Faith is what takes constant work.

CHARLIE

Work? I thought faith was a feeling; a knowing somewhere inside of you.

HUGH

It takes constant work to not doubt. It takes constant vigilance to make sure the flame of faith doesn't flicker and go out. Most people think that seeing is believing, but actually the opposite is true. You must first believe something before you can see it.

(CHARLIE writes in his notebook.)

HUGH

How's Lisa?

CHARLIE

(Still writing.)

Fine. She said to say hello.

HUGH

Were you here for the service?

(Pause.)

No, of course not.

CHARLIE

I'm sure it was very nice.

HUGH

It was. You would have enjoyed the choir. They sang Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella.

CHARLIE

It takes more than pretty music to get me into church.

(Pause.)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean – look, I've heard your sermons often enough to know that you're good at what you do. I just
. . .

HUGH

My wife is making Christmas dinner; it should be quite a feast.

CHARLIE

No thanks,--

HUGH

You don't have to eat the lutefisk. There will be plenty of other foods you can enjoy.

CHARLIE

I'm sure the food will be great.

HUGH

But not the company. I hoped that when you were older you would come to understand why I made the choices I made.

CHARLIE

What am I supposed to understand? That you didn't love her enough? Or that she didn't love me enough?

(CHARLIE exits and the lights fade to black.)

Act I, Scene 5

(CHARLIE's office. CHARLIE sits at his desk, reading. ANGELA, a co-worker, sits at her desk, typing.)

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Whatever there is of God and goodness in the universe, it must work itself out and express itself through us. We cannot stand aside and let God do it.

ANGELA

What are you reading?

CHARLIE

The Quotable Einstein. It's very interesting.

ANGELA

It should be, he was a genius.

CHARLIE

I don't know if he was a genius, he simply . . .didn't think like anyone else.

ANGELA

Same thing.

CHARLIE

Speaking of genius, how is your novel coming?

ANGELA

I made some good progress on it over Christmas.

CHARLIE

Good.

(CHARLIE goes back to reading.)

ALBERT EINSTEIN

God gave me the stubbornness of a mule and a fairly keen scent.

ANGELA

I thought you hated books.

CHARLIE

What? Are you kidding? I *love* books. I've been learning from books since I could read. Since *before* I could read.

ANGELA

Before? You can't learn from a book if you can't read it.

CHARLIE

I learned from the peo - . . .from the pictures.

ANGELA

If you love books, why do you always make *me* go to the library anytime you need one?

CHARLIE

You're the librarian here, that's your job.

ANGELA

My job is to find information, not to be your human bookmobile.

CHARLIE

Same thing. Besides. I hate libraries.

ANGELA

How can you love books and hate libraries?

CHARLIE

Libraries make me feel claustrophobic.

(MICHAEL enters.)

MICHAEL

Rumor has it we're going to be sold again. I need some dirt. Charlie, I want you to interview Steven MacKenzie. Find out about this religion he's involved in. Is it a form of Christianity? Is it New Age mumbo jumbo? Do they sacrifice live goats and chickens?

CHARLIE

I don't think I'm the right person for this assignment.

MICHAEL

You're the perfect person for this assignment. He's staying at Le Parc Hotel, but apparently he's checking out tomorrow. So go talk to him tonight.

CHARLIE

Tonight? I have a party to go t--

MICHAEL

Go to the party after.

CHARLIE

Michael, I don't want this assignment.

MICHAEL

I don't want hemorrhoids. But I got 'em.

CHARLIE

Can't you give this to someone else?

ANGELA

I would kill to interview Steven MacKenzie.

MICHAEL

Thanks, Angela, but I need Charlie to do this. He can get closer to MacKenzie than anyone on my staff. And Charlie, if you want me to actually publish that religious article you've been spending way too much time on, you will include a lengthy section on The Church of Religion.

(MICHAEL exits.)

CHARLIE

This is going to be awkward.

ANGELA

You shouldn't have mentioned that you knew him.

CHARLIE

What if he doesn't want to speak to me?

ANGELA

You could quit. Quitting is always an option.

CHARLIE

Not in my financial situation.

ANGELA

Broke?

CHARLIE

No. Not quite.

ANGELA

Sounds like the paper. But you're very good at what you do. You could get a job somewhere else.

CHARLIE

Michael gave me a chance when I really needed one. I'll be here as long as he is.

(MICHAEL enters.)

MICHAEL

While you're at it, see if you can get a look at that book The Church of Religion is based on. And if you can bring that Church crashing down in a huge scandal, I'll give you a raise *and* a promotion.

(The lights fade to black and the actors exit. CHARLIE crosses to the next scene.)

"After taking the fences down from around our individual plots we discover that there is only one field."

-- Ernest Holmes, *Seminar Lectures*

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