

Angels in America: Millennium Approaches

by Tony Kushner

Audition Monologue Options:

PRIOR: Act 1, Scene 7

I'm ready for my closeup, Mr. DeMille. One wants to move through life with elegance and grace, blossoming infrequently but with exquisite taste, and perfect timing, like a rare bloom, a zebra orchid... One wants... But one so seldom gets what one wants, does one? No. One does not. One gets fucked. Over. One...dies at thirty, robbed of...decades of majesty... Fuck this shit. Fuck this shit. I look like a corpse. A...*corpsette*! Oh my queen; you know you've hit rock-bottom when even drag is a drag.

PRIOR: - Act 3, Scene 2

Ankles sore and swollen, but the leg's better. The nausea's mostly gone with the little orange pills. BM's pure liquid but not bloody anymore, for now, my eye doctor says everything's OK, for now, my dentist says "Yuck!" when he sees my fuzzy tongue, and now he wears little condoms on his thumb and forefinger. And a mask. So what? My dermatologist is in Hawaii and my mother... well leave my mother out of it. Which is usually where my mother is, out of it. My glands are like walnuts, my weight's holding steady for week two, and a friend died two days ago of bird tuberculosis; bird tuberculosis; that scared me and I didn't go to the funeral today because he was an Irish Catholic and it's probably open casket and I'm afraid of... something, the bird TB or seeing him or... So I guess I'm doing OK. Except for of course I'm going nuts. ...I feel like something terrifying is on its way, you know, like a missile from outer space, and it's plummeting down towards the earth, and I'm ground zero, and...I'm generally known where I am known as one cool, collected queen. And I am ruffled.

HARPER - Act 1, Scene 3

People who are lonely, people left alone, sit talking nonsense to the air, imagining. . . beautiful systems dying, old fixed

orders spiraling apart... When you look at the ozone layer, from outside, from a spaceship, it looks like a pale blue halo, a gentle, shimmering aureole encircling the atmosphere encircling the earth. Thirty miles above our heads, a thin layer of three-atom oxygen molecules, product of photosynthesis, which explains the fussy vegetable preference for visible light, its rejection of darker rays and emanations. Danger from without. It's a kind of gift, from God, the crowning touch to the creation of the world: guardian angels, hands linked, make a spherical net, a blue-green nesting orb, a shell of safety for life itself. But everywhere, things are collapsing, lies surfacing, systems of defense giving way... This is why, Joe, this is why I shouldn't be left alone.

HARPER – Act 1, Scene 7

I don't understand this. If I didn't ever see you before and I don't think I did, then I don't think you should be here, in this hallucination, because in my experience the mind, which is where hallucinations come from, shouldn't be able to make up anything that wasn't there to start with, that didn't enter it from experience, from the real world. Imagination can't create anything new, can it? It only recycles bits and pieces from the world and reassembles them into visions... Am I making sense right now?

HARPER – Act 3, Scene 3

Snow! Ice! Mountains of ice! Where am I? I...I feel better, I do, I...feel better. There are ice crystals in my lungs, wonderful and sharp. And the snow smells like cold, crushed peaches. And there's something...some current of blood in the wind, how strange, it has that iron taste. Ozone! Wow! Where am I? Antarctica. This is Antarctica! Antarctica, Antarctica, oh boy oh boy, LOOK at this, I— Wow, I must've really snapped the tether, huh? That's great. I want to stay here forever.

JOE – Act 1, Scene 8

Stop it. Stop it. I'm warning you. Does it make any difference? That I might be one thing deep within, no matter how wrong or ugly that thing is, so long as I have fought, with everything I have, to kill it. What do you want from me? What do you want from me, Harper? More than that? For God's sake, there's nothing left, I'm a shell. There's nothing left to kill. As long as my behavior is what I know it has to be. Decent. Correct. That alone in the eyes of God.

JOE – Act 3, Scene 5

I love you. Roy. There's so much that I want, to be...what you see in me, I want to be a participant in the world, in your world, Roy, I want to be capable of that, I've tried, really I have but...I can't do this. Not because I don't believe in you, but because I believe in you so much, in what you stand for, at heart, the order, the decency. I would give anything to protect you, but... There are laws I can't break. It's too ingrained. It's not me. There's enough damage I've already done. Maybe you were right, maybe I'm dead.

LOUIS – Act 2, Scene 3

Mathilde stitched while William the Conqueror was off to war. She was capable of...more than loyalty. Devotion. She waited for him, she stitched for years. And if he had come back broken and defeated from war, she would have loved him even more. And if he had returned mutilated, ugly, full of infection and horror, she would still have loved him; fed by pity, by a sharing of pain, she would love him even more... If he had died, she would have buried her heart with him. So what the fuck is the matter with me?

LOUIS - Act 3, Scene 2

Why has democracy succeeded in America? Of course by succeeded I mean comparatively, not literally, not in the present, but what makes for the prospect of some sort of radical democracy spreading outward and growing up? Why does the power that was once so carefully preserved as the top of the pyramid by the original framers of the Constitution seem drawn inexorably

downward and outward in spite of the best effort of the Right to stop this? I mean it's the really hard thing about being Left in this country, the American Left can't help but trip over all these petrified little fetishes: freedom, that's the worst; you know, Jeane Kirkpatrick for God's sake will go on and on about freedom and so what does that mean, the word freedom, when she talks about it, or human rights; you have Bush talking about human rights, and so what are these people talking about, they might as well be talking about the mating habits of Venusians, these people don't begin to know what, ontologically, freedom is or human rights, like they see the bourgeois property-based Rights-of-Man-type rights but that's not enfranchisement, not democracy, not what's implicit, what's potential within the idea, not the idea with blood in it. That's just liberalism, the worst kind of liberalism, really, bourgeois tolerance, and what I think is that what AIDS showed us is the limits of tolerance, that it's not enough to be tolerated, because when the shit hits the fan you find out how much tolerance is worth. Nothing. And underneath all the tolerance is intense, passionate hatred.

ROY - Act 1, Scene 9

AIDS. Your problem, Henry, is that you are hung up on words, on labels, that you believe they mean what they seem to mean. AIDS, homosexual, gay, lesbian, you think these are names that tell you who someone sleeps with? They don't tell you that. No. Like all labels they tell you one thing and one thing only: where does an individual so identified fit in the food chain, in the pecking order? Not ideology, or sexual taste, but something much simpler: clout. Not who I fuck or who fucks me but who will pick up the phone when I call, who owes me favors. This is what a label refers to. Now to someone who does not understand this, homosexual is what I am because I have sex with men. But really this is wrong. Homosexuals are not men who sleep with other men. Homosexuals are men who in 15 years of trying can't pass a pissant anti-discrimination bill through city council. Homosexuals

are men who know nobody and who nobody knows. Who have zero clout. Does this sound like me, Henry? No. I have clout. A lot. I don't want you to be impressed. I want you to understand. This is not sophistry. And this is not hypocrisy. This is reality. I have sex with men. But unlike nearly every other man of whom this is true, I bring the guy I'm screwing to the White House and President Reagan smiles at us and shakes his hand. Because what I am is defined entirely by who I am. Roy Cohn is not a homosexual. Roy Cohn is a heterosexual man, Henry, who fucks around with guys. So, no, Henry, no. AIDS is what homosexuals have. I have liver cancer.

ROY – Act 2, Scene 6

Boy, you are really something, what the fuck do you think this is, Sunday school? This is—this is gastric juices churning, this is enzymes and acids, this is intestinal is what this is, bowel movement and blood-red meat! This stinks, this is *politics*, Joe, the game of being alive. And you think you're... What? Above that? Above alive is what? Dead! In the clouds! You're on earth, goddamnit! Plant a foot, stay a while. I'm sick. They smell I'm weak. They want blood this time. I must have eyes in Justice. In Justice you will protect me.

BELIZE - Act 3, Scene 2

“Real love isn't ambivalent.” I'd swear that's a line from my favorite bestselling paperback novel, *In Love with the Night Mysterious*, except I don't think you ever read it. You ought to. Instead of spending the rest of your life trying to get through *Democracy in America*. It's about this white woman whose daddy owns a plantation in the Deep South in the years before the Civil War—the American one—and her name is Margaret, and she's in love with her daddy's number-one slave, and his name is Thaddeus, and she's married but her white slave-owner husband has AIDS: Antebellum Insufficiently Developed Sex organs. And there's a lot of hot stuff going on down when Margaret and

Thaddeus can catch a spare torrid ten under the cotton-picking moon, and then of course the Yankees come, and they set the slaves free, and the slaves string up old Daddy, and so on. Historical fiction. Somewhere in there I recall Margaret and Thaddeus find the time to discuss the nature of love. Her face is reflecting the flames of the burning plantation—you know, the way white people do—and his black face is dark in the night; and she says to him, “Thaddeus, real love isn’t ever ambivalent.” Thaddeus looks at her; he’s contemplating her thesis; and he isn’t sure he agrees.

RABBI ISDOR CHEMELWITZ - Act 1, Scene 1
(for those auditioning for the part of HANNAH)

This woman. I did not know this woman. I cannot accurately describe her attributes, nor do justice to her dimensions. She was . . . Well, in the Bronx Home for Aged Hebrews are many like this, the old, and to many I speak but not, to be frank, with this one. She preferred silence. So I do not know her and yet I know her. She was . . .

...not a person but a whole kind of person, the ones who crossed the ocean, who brought with us to America the villages of Russia and Lithuania—and how we struggled, and how we fought, for the family, for the Jewish home, so that you would not grow up *here*, in this strange place, in the melting pot where nothing melted. ... You can never make that crossing that she made, for such Great Voyages in this world do not any more exist. But every day of your lives the miles that voyage between that place and this one you cross. Every day. You understand me? In you that journey is. So ... She was the last of the Mohicans, this one was. Pretty soon . . . all the old will be dead.

ANGEL - Act 1, Scene 7

Look up, look up,
prepare the way
the infinite descent
A breath in air

floating down
Glory to . . .

ANGEL - Act 2, Scene 5

(a reader will be available for the part of Prior)

PRIOR (A beat, then}: He's gone.

Are you still-

A VOICE: I can't stay. I will return.

PRIOR: Are you one of those "Follow me to the other side"
Voices?

A VOICE: No. I am no nightbird. I am a messenger . . .

PRIOR: You have a beautiful voice, it sounds . . . like a viola,
like a perfectly tuned, tight string, balanced, the truth . . .
Stay with me.

A VOICE: Not now. Soon I will return, I will reveal myself to
you; I am glorious, glorious; my heart, my countenance
and my message. You must prepare.

PRIOR (Afraid again): For what? I don't want to –

A VOICE: No death, no:

A marvelous work and a wonder we undertake, an edifice
awry we sink plumb and straighten, a great Lie we abolish, a great
error correct, with the rule, sword and broom of Truth!

PRIOR: What are you talking about, I -

A VOICE: I am on my way; when I am manifest,
our Work begins:

Prepare for the parting of the air,
The breath, the ascent,
Glory to . . .