

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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Part Submission for the Degree of PhD (2)

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Preface

Silence, Intoxication, and Writing

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

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

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

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

Elmarsafy asserts that 'Abd al-Ṣabūr drew on Medieval Sufi works, including al-Qushayrī's *al-Risāla (Epistle)*, so as to describe and develop his own writing process, which was centered on the notion that the creative act is contingent upon an encounter with an entity beyond the self (God, the other).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.⁴ 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.⁵

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Language, Form, and Structure

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

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

In fact, much of this thesis is concerned with Sufi attitudes towards language, explored at length by the very composition of my plays that embody the Sufi notion that the human-divine encounter is mediated by language. This raises an important question as to why these plays were written in English rather than Arabic. The most obvious reason is that this thesis was written at an English-speaking institution. Beyond that, my main concern in the study of Shādhiliya and ‘Īssāwiya rituals is not the intricacies of the Arabic language, but these Sufi communities’ approach to language and its relationship to embodiment. Commenting on Sufi Qawali rituals in New Delhi, Judith Becker asserts that the practice of listening to the Qur’ān contributed to the development of trance practices induced by states of deep listening.⁶ 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.⁷ In other words, trance is induced through the perception of language as sacred, rather than through the linguistic characteristics of the poems performed; and this capacity for transcendence to the sacred is just as valid for the English language.

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

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

My three plays are not the first to make use of poetic language. Other examples include T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and 'Abd al-Ṣabūr's *The Tragedy of Ḥallāj* that contain dialogues composed of verse.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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.¹² 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ 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.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.¹⁷

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

In both *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* repetition and ritual-like structures are part of the characters’ attempt to create meaning within the existential void that, for Beckett, constitutes human life.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.²³ Repetition, silence, and the use of a poetic language composed of short rhythmic sentences form a fundamental part of the ritual practices of the Shādhiliya and ʿĪssāwiya communities, which were developed in dialogue with Islamic theology and intellectual history.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Sacred Triangle of Silence

Characters

ELIJAH

E1

EZRA

E2

KHALID

K

SOLDIER I

SOLDIER II

Scene One

The Sacred Mountain

KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH are on a mountain

in front of them an endless desert

KHALID. from the emerald cave

EZRA. they emerged

ELIJAH. three

KHALID. clothed in the last remnants of fertile earth

EZRA. waiting

ELIJAH. for sound to be revealed

KHALID. for forty days

EZRA. they waited

ELIJAH. for past to be returned

KHALID. they remained persistent

EZRA. in their search for eternal earth

ELIJAH. it was beneath their feet

KHALID. that it realized

EZRA. its past and present glory

ELIJAH. for what greater honour could earth have

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

EZRA. that smelled of oak and lavender

ELIJAH. it was a strange predicament that they faced

KHALID. return earth to earth

EZRA. bury them in distant waters

ELIJAH. they said

KHALID. they were beyond the hills

EZRA. and the rivers

ELIJAH. the hidden gardens

KHALID. they are the eternal silence

EZRA. the sacred path

ELIJAH. the return

KHALID. so let them rest

EZRA. as we pay homage to their greatness

ELIJAH. in a moment of silence

silence

Scene Two

The Cave

as the dust rises

K gathers it in his palms

for it had been forty days

that he had waited in darkness

for their return

a mysterious sound

emerges from behind the cave

with the last of his strength

K pierces the soil with a spoon

K. the earth is coarse

K digs through the soil

the earth is coarse

a capsule appears

the sound returns

K follows the sound

and rests his ear

on the side of the cave

K digs

with the spoon

until it reveals

a silver dust

it is not coarse

the sound grows louder

K listens

to the echo of a distant breath

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

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

E1. all memories fade

E2. unless you resurrect them

E1. they are burned away by the sun

E2. we live in a cave

E1. enough of this nonsense

E2. it is the days that are burned away

E1. not the sun

E2. precisely

E1. we disagree

E2. perhaps

silence

E2. he has a capsule

E1. shuuuush

K. I shall return it to the earth

E2. give it to me

E1. will you be quiet

E1 strangles E2

E1. they might be listening

E1 releases E2

E1. do you think it's all coincidence

E2. you are paranoid

E1. the cracks between the walls

E2. some things are made known

E1. that infinitely linger

E2. in far simpler ways

E1. waiting for words

silence

E1. perhaps you are one of them

E2. he could not possibly be

E1. nothing is certain

E1 carefully examines the different sides of the cave

silence

E1 opens his palm

K examines it

K gives the capsule to E1

E2 moves closer to E1

E1. did you write this?

K. I found it

E2. as I said he would

K. hidden beneath the soil

E1 opens the capsule

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

E1, E2, and K recite the story from memory

E1. he sat there

K. contemplating the mysteries of the cave

E1. learning all of its rhythms

K. until one day

E2. he heard a whisper

E1. all sanctuaries

E2. are only temporary

K. even the dead

E2. are eventually resurrected

E2 admires the capsule

E1. before he left

K. he wrote a poem

E2. dedicated to the cave

K. that encompassed the most beautiful of prophecies

E1. they waited

K. if they left

E2. it would be known

E1. and he would be remembered

E2. he emerged from the cave

K. after forty days

E1. on his shoulders

K. the last remnants

E2. of fertile earth

fragments of earth appear in E2's palm

K. they were there

E1. waiting

E2. he never looked so serene

K. he was certain

E2. that he had found certainty

E1. they surrounded him

K. and their movements created

E2. the most terrifying of sounds

K. they pushed his knees

E1. into the soil

E2. he said his last prayer

E1. and felt them rest their arms upon his shoulders

K. and the last fragments of fertile earth

E2. fell back into the ground

fragments of earth fall from E2's palm

silence

K. he died

E1. and the earth turned barren

E2. even the cave was in mourning

K. sometimes you can still hear it echo

E1. songs of mercy

E2. but most people have forgotten

K. that this is how the desert came to be

E1. had they been aware

E2. they may have known its blessings

Scene Three

Desert I

ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID are in a desert

ELIJAH. what is the condition of the soil?

KHALID examines the sand in his palm

KHALID. dead

EZRA. how bizarre

ELIJAH. are you certain?

KHALID. dead

silence

ELIJAH. this was once the gateway to the sea

EZRA. it was here that they would depart

KHALID. to more distant waters

EZRA. that were already known

KHALID. but not remembered

ELIJAH. there they would find

EZRA. a small seed

KHALID. and within the seed

ELIJAH. a lamp

EZRA. and within the lamp

KHALID. a tree

ELIJAH. and within the tree

EZRA. an infinite flame

KHALID. words

silence

ELIJAH. there was once a city

EZRA. it was a beautiful city

KHALID. but it was known

EZRA. that its inhabitants were cruel

ELIJAH. and showed no mercy

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

EZRA. never marvelling at its wonders

ELIJAH. or admiring its beauty

KHALID. one day

ELIJAH. in a moment of anger

EZRA. he ordered the sea to retreat

ELIJAH. and it complied

KHALID. he was the most beautiful of the saints

ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID begin the sacred quest

for fertile earth

and the lost sea

Scene Four

Plant the Capsules

a white string appears

on it a capsule

that falls into K's palm

E1 and E2 gather around K

silence

K opens the capsule

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

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

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

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

E2. a prophet once lived here

K. sacrificed himself to the earth

E1. so that he may reach its depths

E2. examine its temperament

K. learn its secrets

E1. to make known

E2. things that were already known

K. but not remembered

E1. he emerged from the cave

E2. and so shall we

E1. it isn't possible

E2. I've already witnessed it

E1. surrounded by concrete

E2. all things fade

K. as all things die

E2. there will be a resurrection

E1. if they find us

E2. have you not realized

K. we are already dead

E2. forced to endure an endless ritual

a funeral procession

K. of death and resurrection

E2. how many more bodies can we bury?

K. how much longer can we wait?

E1. you shouldn't be so impulsive

E2. I wandered through a city once

E1. an ancient city

E2. and marvelled at its destruction

K. it was a great tragedy

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

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

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

Scene Five
The Escape

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

E1. what's wrong?

silence

E1. have you found something?

silence

E1. he won't say a word

E1 carefully examines E2's face

E1. not a word

E1 gently slaps E2's face

K. it was not as he had expected

E1. there must always be a sacrifice

E1 slaps E2

K. perhaps he is disturbed by the magnitude of it

E1 moves away from E2

E1. three thousand of them

K. dead

E1. buried beneath clay and dust

silence

E1. perhaps he did not realize

K. that death would be so inevitable

E1. or that it would be so lonely

K. perhaps he thought it was inappropriate

E1. that someone should be buried

K. before they have died

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

K. no

E1. I find that rather strange

K. he was always very insightful

E1. every morning he would offer water to the earth

K. he was certain

E1. that earth would one day

K. offer water back to him

E2 cries

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

K. don't be cruel

E2. I saw myself beneath the moon

E1. you certainly were not the first

E2. reflecting light

silence

E2. but what if we never return?

E1. prophets withdrew into caves

K. for moments of silence

E1. a place to contemplate

K. only the most beautiful of the saints

E1. descend from the mountain

E2. can you drown in earth?

K. what?

E2. drown-in-earth

E1. what a strange question

K. I suppose it's possible

E1. do you think he's gone mad?

K. no

E1. you aren't dead

E2. no

E1 digs

E2. stop

E1. what?

E2. it might collapse

E1. don't be paranoid

E2. it's very fragile

E1. you wanted to leave

E2. I'm afraid of small spaces

K. you live in a cave

E2. I've developed a phobia

E1. since when?

E2. now

K. calm down

E1. sit down

E2 walks around

E1. sit down

E2. I can't-

K helps E2 sit

E2. the river

E1. yes?

E2. it was once a single entity?

E1. I suppose it was

E2. and it was separated?

E1. yes

E2. but there are mountains

E1. I don't understand

E2. firmly set mountains

K. he is afraid

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

K. eternity is a long time

E1. do you hear something?

E1 walks to the edge of the cave and listens

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

E1. shuush-

E1 moves to the other side of the cave

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

silence

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

K. what a strange predicament

E2. there was not a single moment of silence

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

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

K. it was beautiful city

E2. but it did not rise

silence

E2. buried under the rubble

silence

E2. forgotten

K. eternal in the earth

E2. forgotten

K. they were not forgotten

E2. how little of them know

K. the mysteries that lie beneath their feet

E1. and so few of them will remember

E2. I cannot leave

K. if we die

E2. a funeral procession

K. if we don't

E2. a funeral procession

K. we must plant the capsules

E1. shuush

the sound of footsteps

K. they have entered the cave

E2. if they follow us

E1. they won't

silence

E1 digs

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

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

E1. they returned

K. to a great valley

E2. many years later

K. they returned

E1. and found a barren desert

K. is that all?

E1. yes

E2. what a tragic story

K folds the paper into a capsule

E1. now write another

K prepares the paper

E1. a prophet died

K. they said his name

E1. he was buried

K. at the edge of the mountain

E2. there will be a resurrection

K. is that all?

E1. yes

K folds the second paper into a capsule

E1. write another

K prepares the paper

E1. you imagine that the mountains

E2. are rigid

K. but they will one day flow

E1. as smoothly as the river

E2. tranquil

K. is that all?

E1. yes

K folds the third paper into a capsule

E2 scratches the soil

three ants emerge

they take the capsules

then disappear into the earth

parts of the soil collapse

E1. how long have you been in the cave?

K. forty days

E2. only forty days

K. I was sitting under a tree

E2. what tree?

E1 puts his hand over E2's mouth

E1. shut up

E2. what?

E1. you can't ask that kind of question

E2. we're planting capsules

E1. you don't ask that kind of question

K laughs

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

silence

K. they burned it

E2. burned it?

K. they were upset

E2. why were they upset?

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

E2. they are just words

E1. some words are eternal

K. not these words

E2. it's only a story

E1. well perhaps if you say it like that

E2. what do you mean?

E1. fine go on tell us a made up story

E2. a made up story?

E1. yes a fictional story tell us a fictional story

K smiles

K. there was once a tree–

E2. a sacred tree

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

E2. what prophecy?

K. that they would murder earth

E2. how dreadful

K. and burn all the trees

silence

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

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

K. they will burn the trees

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

K. they did not listen

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

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

silence

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

E2. how terrible

parts of the soil collapse

E2. would you return to the village?

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

K smiles

K. of course they will

E2. even after they've been neglected?

silence

K. who else would plant the seeds?

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

K. it is to earth that people return

E2. what a lovely thing to say

K. we must plant the capsules

E1. we should wait

E2. until the sun rises

E1. that's when they sleep

K. that's strange

E2. they think we are not aware

E1. but it's been years

E2. we know their patterns

E1. habits

E2. much more than they know ours

K. are they always here?

E2. always

E1. carefully listening

E2. waiting

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

K. of course not

E2. weren't you afraid?

K. of course I was afraid

E1 moves closer to K

E1 carefully examines K's face

E1. and you didn't say a word?

K. not one word

E2. I told you he wouldn't

silence

E2. the people from your village

K. yes?

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

E2. there's no need to be so secretive

E1. it's a necessary precaution

E2. is it?

E1. will you not ask that kind of question

E2. what happened to the trees?

K. they perished

E2. perished?

K. perished

silence

K. the survivors took refuge in a cave

E1. a cave?

K. a cave

E1. they have caves?

K. many

E1. many?

K. an infinite number

E1. infinite?

K. infinite

silence

E1. perhaps we should retreat to the desert

E2. no not yet

K. we must plant the capsules

K sits down

K. they didn't believe me

E1. they didn't know

E2. some believed you

K. where were they?

E2. hidden beneath the soil

K. they were?

E2. yes

E1. how do you know?

E2. I overheard

E1. from who?

E2. when the soldiers were speaking

E1. how?

E2. they thought I was dead

silence

E1. they didn't forget you

K. some did

E1. that doesn't matter

K. we must plant the capsules

E2. it isn't about capsules

E1. not even about seeds

the sound of footsteps

silence

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

E2. it is a difficult journey

E1. you must understand

E2. death is inevitable

E1. many have wandered through the desert before

E2. and many more shall wander in the future

E1. seeking knowledge

E2. inspiration

E1. refuge

silence

E1. you can't just wander into a desert

E2. it doesn't really matter

E1. you have to be prepared

E2. not necessarily

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

parts of the soil collapse

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

silence

parts of the soil collapse

Scene Six

Soldiers

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II enter the cave

SOLDIER I. there has been a violation

SOLDIER II. a transgression

SOLDIER I. breaking of the law

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II examine the soil

SOLDIER II. should we follow them?

SOLDIER I. into the soil?

SOLDIER II. yes

SOLDIER I. it might be dangerous

SOLDIER II. yes it's far too dangerous

SOLDIER I. should we poison them?

SOLDIER II. they might be too deep within the soil

SOLDIER I. should we flood the cave?

SOLDIER II. there is no more water

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II examine the soil carefully

SOLDIER I. should we bury them?

SOLDIER II. make them suffocate

SOLDIER I. under the soil

SOLDIER II. is that cruel?

SOLDIER I. if they return

SOLDIER II. then it will be known

SOLDIER I. and they will be remembered

SOLDIER II. let's bury them

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II cover the pit with soil

SOLDIER I. wait

SOLDIER II. what?

SOLDIER I. if they remain in the soil

SOLDIER II. it's only a corpse

SOLDIER I. they cannot remain in the soil

SOLDIER II. should we follow them?

SOLDIER I. no it's too dangerous

SOLDIER II. far too dangerous

SOLDIER I. we must remove their bodies from the earth

SOLDIER II. if they remain there

SOLDIER I. it will be known

SOLDIER II. and they will be remembered

SOLDIER I. let's bury them

SOLDIER II. then remove them from the earth

silence

SOLDIER II. how can we be sure?

SOLDIER I. when they are silent

SOLDIER II. they are often silent

SOLDIER I. even among themselves

SOLDIER II. we shall wait forty days

SOLDIER I. forty days?

SOLDIER I. yes

SOLDIER II. are you sure?

SOLDIER I. yes yes yes

SOLDIER II. could they survive

SOLDIER I. forty days

SOLDIER II. without water

SOLDIER I. without sustenance

SOLDIER II. without breath?

SOLDIER I. it would be miraculous

SOLDIER II. there are no more miracles

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II cover the pit with more soil

SOLDIER I. I saw them planting once

SOLDIER II. what were they planting?

SOLDIER I. seeds

silence

SOLDIER I. I removed them from the soil

SOLDIER II. what for?

SOLDIER I. to plant them in my garden

SOLDIER II. and?

SOLDIER I. they did not grow

SOLDIER II. did you water them?

SOLDIER I. yes

SOLDIER II. did they get enough light?

SOLDIER I. plenty of light

SOLDIER II. and they didn't grow?

SOLDIER I. no

silence

SOLDIER I. I decided to unearth them

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

SOLDIER II. did you hear them?

SOLDIER I. no

SOLDIER II. then how can you be sure?

SOLDIER I. I'm sure

SOLDIER II. don't be paranoid

SOLDIER I. I'm not paranoid

silence

SOLDIER II. you don't think that—

SOLDIER I. it's possible

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

SOLDIER II. they were hiding beneath the soil?

SOLDIER I. they stole them

SOLDIER II. if they return

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

SOLDIER II. they might make another

SOLDIER I. yes I suppose they could

SOLDIER II. if they return

SOLDIER I. they won't

silence

SOLDIER II. why would they come back?

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

SOLDIER II. angry?

SOLDIER I. yes angry

SOLDIER II. I've never seen them angry

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II continue to cover the pit

SOLDIER I. I found them carrying a casket once

SOLDIER II. was it a large casket?

SOLDIER I. no it was quite small

SOLDIER II. did you search it?

SOLDIER I. of course I searched it

SOLDIER II. was it a child?

SOLDIER I. tomatoes

SOLDIER II. tomatoes?

SOLDIER I. thousands of tomatoes

SOLDIER II. did you release them?

SOLDIER I. of course not

SOLDIER II. but they were only tomatoes

SOLDIER I. I wanted to be certain

SOLDIER II. certain of what?

SOLDIER I. that the tomato was indeed a tomato

SOLDIER II. and?

SOLDIER I. it was a tomato

silence

SOLDIER I. three thousand tomatoes

silence

SOLDIER I. sometimes I dream about them

SOLDIER II. that's strange

SOLDIER I. for months I dreamt

silence

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

SOLDIER II. with cigarettes?

SOLDIER I. yes cigarettes

SOLDIER II. what for?

SOLDIER I. to annihilate them

SOLDIER II. from the earth?

silence

SOLDIER II. from yourself?

SOLDIER I walks around

SOLDIER II. you seem upset

SOLDIER I. I'm not upset

SOLDIER II. are you upset?

SOLDIER I. I told you I'm not upset

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

SOLDIER I. of course not

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

SOLDIER I. I'm not nervous

SOLDIER II. are you sure?

SOLDIER I. I told you I'm not nervous

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II continue to cover the pit

SOLDIER II. this is exhausting

SOLDIER I. quite deep isn't it?

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

SOLDIER I. they might already be dead

SOLDIER II. they might be alive—plotting

SOLDIER I. you think they are plotting something?

SOLDIER II. they are always plotting

SOLDIER I. what could they be plotting?

SOLDIER II. an escape

SOLDIER I. murder

SOLDIER II. probably an escape

SOLDIER I. if they return

SOLDIER II. they won't return

SOLDIER I. do you think they would kill us?

SOLDIER II. probably

SOLDIER I. how inhumane

silence

SOLDIER I. I once saw them sitting near a tree

SOLDIER II. there are no trees here

SOLDIER I. they had a small sheep

SOLDIER II. a sheep?

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

SOLDIER II. the sheep?

SOLDIER I. I killed it

SOLDIER II. you killed a sheep?

SOLDIER I. it might have been armed

SOLDIER II. were they watching you?

SOLDIER I. from the mountain

SOLDIER II. did they do anything?

SOLDIER I. not a thing

SOLDIER II. and the corpse?

SOLDIER I. I searched it

SOLDIER II. and?

SOLDIER I. nothing

SOLDIER II presses his ear against the earth and listens

SOLDIER II. I don't hear a thing

silence

SOLDIER II. not a thing

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

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER I search the soil with the device

SOLDIER II. not one sound

SOLDIER I. they must be dead

SOLDIER II. let's wait

SOLDIER II thoroughly examines the covered pit

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II listen with the device

Scene Seven

Desert II

EZRA, ELIJAH, and KHALID are in a desert

EZRA. this is where it used to be

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

EZRA. yes I'm sure

EZRA digs through the desert soil

ELIJAH. are you sure it's here?

EZRA. I told you I'm sure

KHALID. has it been abandoned?

ELIJAH. I suppose this is the outcome of neglect

KHALID. how ungrateful

ELIJAH. well

EZRA. well what?

ELIJAH. where is it?

EZRA. it's here I told you

EZRA, ELIJAH, and KHALID dig through the desert soil

KHALID. I found it

KHALID opens his palm

three capsules appear

EZRA closes KHALID's palm

ELIJAH. aren't we going to open them?

EZRA. not yet

ELIJAH. why not?

KHALID. they're waiting

EZRA. it isn't the right moment

ELIJAH. are you sure?

EZRA. yes I'm sure

silence

ELIJAH. if they die

EZRA. they won't die

ELIJAH. are you sure?

EZRA. I told you I'm sure

KHALID. will they find the river?

ELIJAH. there is no longer a river

EZRA. that isn't possible

KHALID. it is a sacred river

EZRA. prophet upon prophet

KHALID. light upon light

EZRA. there is always a river

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

EZRA opens the third capsule

EZRA. they are looking for a river

KHALID. a river?

ELIJAH. there is no longer a river

EZRA. the last remnants of the crescent moon

KHALID. there might still be a river

EZRA. tell them where it is

ELIJAH. what for?

KHALID. they're looking for something

EZRA examines the sand

KHALID writes three capsules

then plants them in the desert soil

Scene Eight

Salt and Water

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

K. it's been three days

E2. they will return

E1. we've been forgotten

E2. three more days

soil collapses

E1. it's going to collapse

K. not for a few hours

E2 collects the collapsing soil

E1. perhaps we should leave

E2. they will return

E2 examines the soil

E2 tastes the soil

E2. salt

K. what?

E2. salt—there is salt in the soil

E1 and K examine the soil

E1 and K taste the soil

E2. I will prepare a mixture

E2 extracts salt from the soil

and prepares a mixture of salt and water

K. salt and water?

E1. an ancient ritual

E2. there's only enough for one

E1. who will drink it?

E2. I can't

E1. then I will drink it

E2. you can't

E1. why not?

E2. it's reserved for someone else

K. I will drink it

E1. are you sure?

E2. you haven't been here long

E1. perhaps you don't know much about—

E2. it is a great sacrifice

E1. an unending journey

E2. many have died this way

E1. it is a slow and painful death

K. I will drink it

E1. are you certain?

E2. it requires a great deal of concentration

E1. to listen to their words

E2. learn their secrets

E1. and you must not tell a soul

E2. not a soul

E1. even if they find you

E2. you must not say a word

E1. not a word

K. I won't

E1. they might remove you from the earth

E2. force you to endure endless nights

E1. a dreadful sound

E2. with no sleep

E1. no rest

E2. not one moment

E1. of silence

silence

E2. they might bind your hands to the soil

E1. stretch out your chest

E2. remove your clothes

E1. cast you into a fire

E2. it will not burn you

E1. there you shall find

E2. an eternal refuge

E1. you might return to the cave

E2. where you will experience loneliness

E1. a terrible loneliness

E2. you must not say a word

E1. not one word

E2. but even silence

E1. cannot prevent you

E2. from conversing with the earth

E1. for you are of earth

E2. and to earth you shall return

E1. they will tell you

E2. that you will grow weak

E1. that you have been abandoned

E2. that death awaits you

E1. that you shall fade away

E2. that you will be forgotten

E1. but remember

E2. that silence

E1. is an attribute of the eternal

E2. it does not perish

silence

E1. there was a prophet

E2. a beautiful prophet

E1. when he died

E2. they cast him into the ocean

E1. but his body kept returning

E2. and from there emerged

E1. a great valley

E2. do not speculate about the decisions that you make

E1. do not be impulsive

E2. look at your fingertips

E1. examine their nature

E2. give credence to the earth

E1. do not say their names

E2. and if you experience a moment of doubt

E1. know that you will emerge from the cave

E2. even the dead

E1. are eventually resurrected

E2. even if they neglect you

E1. you are forever present

E2. in the soil

E1. the last remnants of dust

E2. at the edges of the great mountain

E1. that venerates those

E2. who are burned away by the sun

E1. and then return

E2. hidden within the earth

E1. until it is revealed

E2. it has already been revealed

E1. but not remembered

silence

K. I will drink the salt–water

E1. are you certain?

E2. are you absolutely certain?

K. yes

E2 gives the mixture to K

K drinks it and falls asleep

E1. you killed him

E2. he's only sleeping

E1. he's dead

E1 listens to K's heartbeat

E1. oh

E2. you don't trust me

E1. of course I trust you

E2. you thought I would–

E1. we must be cautious–

E2. you're paranoid

E1. as I should be

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

E1. they might be listening

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

E1. maybe

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

E1. yes you did

E2. you only knew about the capsules

E1. he hid them there– many years ago

E2. who did?

E1. let's not talk about it

E2. who?

silence

E1. he died

E2. they killed him

E1. his final words

E2. remained hidden

E1. for years I waited

E2. you thought it would appear?

E1. at the edges of a distant cave

three ants emerge from the soil

with them three capsules

E1 unwraps the capsules

E2. what did they say?

E1 continues to unwrap the capsules

E2. what is it?

E1 continues to unwrap the capsules

E2. well—

E1 continues to unwrap the capsules

E2. what did they say?

E1 continues to unwrap the capsules

E2. what is it?

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

E1 continues to unwrap the capsules

K wakes up

K. I saw the strangest—

E2 puts his hands over K's mouth

E2. you must not say a word

E1. not a word

K notices the capsules

K. capsules

E1. here you read it

E1 gives a capsule to K

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

E2. is that all?

K. yes

E1 gives E2 a capsule

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

E1. is that all?

E2. yes

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

K. is that all?

E1. that's all

K falls asleep

E1 slaps his face gently

E1. wake up

E2. it's collapsing

parts of the soil collapse

E2. we have to leave

E1. over there

K. are you sure?

E1. it is where the river once was

they dig

the soil is damp

E2 tastes it

E2. water

E1, E2, and K dig

Scene Nine

Field I

SOLDIER I. will they come here?

SOLDIER II. yes

SOLDIER I. are you sure?

SOLDIER II. yes yes yes

silence

SOLDIER I. are you sure?

SOLDIER II. they're looking for a tree

SOLDIER I. but there are no trees here

silence

SOLDIER I. has anyone searched the soil?

SOLDIER II. no they are afraid

SOLDIER I. it should be soon

SOLDIER II. that they emerge

SOLDIER I. they might return to the cave

SOLDIER II. the cave?

SOLDIER I. the prophet's cave

SOLDIER II. he is not our prophet

SOLDIER I. you know to contemplate

silence

SOLDIER I. they won't come here

SOLDIER II. they're looking for the seeds

SOLDIER I. you burned them

SOLDIER II. they don't know that

SOLDIER I. they live in the soil

SOLDIER II examines the burnt roots of a tree

SOLDIER II. let us wait until the night falls

SOLDIER I. they will not leave the soil

SOLDIER II. let's burn the seeds

SOLDIER I. what for?

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

SOLDIER II. you're not nervous are you?

SOLDIER I. of course not

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

SOLDIER I. of course I have

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

SOLDIER I sits down

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II wait

Scene Ten

Salt River

KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH are in a valley

KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH sprinkle salt onto the soil

EZRA. there was once a river

ELIJAH. it was a very salty river

KHALID. centuries had passed

EZRA. without anyone entering it

ELIJAH. a traveller once came to the village

KHALID. and inquired about the river

EZRA. three villagers led the traveller to it

ELIJAH. he removed his clothes

KHALID. walked into the river

EZRA. then disappeared

ELIJAH. they followed the traveller into the water

KHALID. and raised up their palms

EZRA. in them they found

ELIJAH. salt and water

KHALID. they returned to the village

EZRA. revealed to their people what they had seen

ELIJAH. but they did not understand

KHALID. perhaps the traveller drowned

EZRA. or emerged from the other side of the river

ELIJAH. no they could not understand

KHALID. what had been so captivating

EZRA. about the traveller

KHALID. and the river

ELIJAH. every year

EZRA. they returned to the river

KHALID. three

EZRA. that was how they revived

ELIJAH. an ancient ritual

Scene Eleven

The Return

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

E1. three days of lingering sound

K. are they following us?

silence

soil collapses

E2. they are afraid

K. it is a distant sound

E1. if they find us

E2. we must not say a word

E1. not a word

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

K falls asleep

E1 tries to wake K up

E1. what did you give him?

E2 examines fragments of soil

E2. it's only salt and water

E1. why does he keep sleeping?

E2. it's normal

E1 looks at E2 suspiciously

K wakes up

K. I saw a river

E1. a river?

E2. what a lovely thought

K stares into the clay bowl

E2. salt might gather at the ends

silence

E2. salt gathers at the end days of the moon

E1. do you hear something?

E2 looks into the bowl

E2. look at this

E1. shuush

E2. it's creating patterns

E2 walks around with the bowl

E2. beautiful patterns

E1. will you shut up?

E2. but look—

E1. I'm trying to listen

E2. that's not important

E1. of course it's important

E2. it doesn't matter

E1. do you want to be stuck here forever?

E2. if it has been written

K. is that how he died?

silence

soil collapses

K digs through the soil

E1. what are you doing?

K digs

capsules appear

E1 examines them carefully

K. are they ancient?

E2. fragments of a past lost

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

K. they murdered the traveller

E2. because they all knew

K. that there was no such thing as sun

silence

parts of the soil collapse

K opens the capsule

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

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

K. the sun complied

E2. the prophet turned to dust

K. and sun remained sun

silence

E2. if only I could return

E1. you would turn to dust

E2. I would become sun

silence

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

E1. sometimes they do

E2. it doesn't really matter

K. I only heard a voice

silence

K. cling to silence it said

E2. even if you are questioned

E1. claim ignorance

K. cling to silence

E2. preserve them

E1. three thousand of them

K. preserve them

E1. in silence

E2. even if you are questioned

E1. claim ignorance

K. cling to silence

E2. preserve them

E1. three thousand of them

K. in silence

silence

K walks back and forth

E1. are you alright?

E2. are you nervous?

K faints

E2 places K's head in his lap

E1 examines K's face

K wakes up

K. I'm not nervous

E2. he's exhausted

silence

E2. exhausted

silence

K. if I die

E2. there are seven layers of soil

K. if we don't plant the capsules

E2. we will plant the capsules

E1. they will not perish

E2. beneath seven layers of soil

silence

K. if they remain in the soil

E2. hidden

K. forgotten

E2. there will be a resurrection

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

E1. it doesn't matter

E2. there are no more excuses to be made

E1. we must plant the capsules

E2. look at this clay

E2 gathers fragments of earth in his palms

E2. from here came the resurrection of flesh and bone

the fragments of earth fall to the ground

creating a sound

E2. and you ask about seeds

E1. we will plant the capsules

E2. they are not just words

E1. sacred

E2. infinite

E1. waiting to be resurrected

E2. in the image of endless seeds

E1. rising from the soil

silence

E2. they found the body of the deceased

E1. reflecting light

E2. that same night

E1. moon was overshadowed by earth

E2. and earth by sun

E1. they found the body of the deceased

E2. he did not turn back into soil

E1. but lay patiently

E2. waiting

E1. to be resurrected

silence

E2. no one is ever certain

E1. if it is the decisive moment

E2. every single moment is decisive

E1. that is why we plant the capsules

E2. not knowing

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

silence

K. if I die

silence

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

silence

E2. they return

E1. in moments of silence

E2. sometimes they appear at the edges of the cave

E1. or in the noises of the barren desert

E2. do you ever find yourself in awe

E1. wondering how could it have come to this

K. I suppose it is surprising

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

E2. he knows

silence

soil collapses

E1. it's been a while

K. do you think they found them?

E2. no

K. carrying the capsules

E2. they are too small

E1. and too deep within the soil

E2. let's wait

silence

K. after they die

silence

K. they display the corpses

silence

K. and wait for them to turn grey and yellow

E1. what for?

K. to be certain

E2. have you seen the bodies?

K. their colour does not change

silence

K. they examine them

silence

K. confirm their deaths

silence

K. but their colour does not change

silence

K. they remain suspended–

E2. mercy

K. but their colour does not change

E1. do they have no mercy?

silence

parts of the soil collapse

E2. they dwell at the edges of the earth

E1. constantly investigating

E2. anxiously searching

E1. it's endless

E2. they destroyed the city

E1. it was an ancient city

E2. now a cemetery

E1. where they gather

E2. to remember the deceased

E1. they live among them

K. some have forgotten

E2. they live among them

K. but they are not remembered

E2. it's only natural

E1. that there are moments of neglect

E2. of an awareness lost

silence

E1. even the dead

E2. are eventually resurrected

E1. eternal in the earth

K. forgotten

silence

K. lost in useless memories

silence

K. they are all lines

silence

K. as infinite as the river

silence

K. that reflects the great moon's light

E1. it is a strange predicament that we face

E2. forced to endure

E1. death after death

E2. loss after loss

silence

K. all I wanted was to return to the earth

E1. how ironic

K. experience its depths

K collects fragments of earth in his palm

they fall to the ground

creating a sound

K. its eternal nature

E1. it is a great sacrifice

E2. it is said

E1. that some of them do not die

E2. but remain

E1. in the final sphere of the moon

E2. until the dust rises once again

E1. they are not forgotten

E2. hidden

E1. but not forgotten

E2. like a seed

E1. waiting for the opportune moment

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

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

K rests his head on E1's lap

E2 examines K's face

E2. I'm sorry

E2 cries

K. don't be sorry

E1. it was his decision

soil collapses

E1 and E2 dig in the direction of the field

they dig further

K does not move

K. I cannot leave the soil

E1. we can't leave you here

E2. you're blind

E1. if they find you

K. I'm not afraid

E2. you might die

K. three thousand of them

E1. we won't leave you

K. remain in the cave

parts of the soil collapse

K. waiting

E2. then we will come with you

K. you must plant the seeds

E1. we can't leave you

E2. we won't

K. plant the capsules

E1. not without you

E2. we can't

E1. we won't

K. I saw myself in the cave

E1. if you die

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

E1 and E2 dig through the soil

E1. has he gone?

E2. sacrificed to the earth

E1 cries

E1. how tragic

E2. it is an ancient ritual

E1. all that remains

E2. are the revelations

E1. of deceased saints

silence

E1. they are still there

E2. waiting

E1. do you think they know?

E2. perhaps they feel the soil has been altered

soil collapses

E2 tastes the soil

E1. do you think they will follow him?

E2. into the desert?

E1. probably not

E2. they are afraid

silence

E2. should we follow him?

E1. after we plant the seeds

silence

E2. some say you can become accustomed to the ritual

E1. of dying before death?

E2. have you been to the desert?

E1. many years ago

E2. was it beautiful?

E1. terrifying

E2. would you return?

E1. in an instant

E2. what for?

E1. it is our only refuge

E2 prepares a mixture of salt and water

E1 and E2 drink the mixture

E2. I retreated into a cave once

E1. were you lonely?

E2. terribly lonely

silence

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

E1. with ants?

E2. I could hear them reciting poetry

E1. poetry?

E2. sometimes they would return with fragments of clay

E1. clay is only earth and water

E2. how easy it is to forget

silence

soil collapses

E1. they are aggravating the soil

soil collapses

ants emerge from the soil

they build a barrier above E1 and E2

soil collapses

it does not reach E1 and E2

E1 and E2 dig

Scene Twelve

Desert III

KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH are in the desert

ants emerge from the soil

with them a capsule

EZRA holds the capsule in his palm

he examines it carefully

then reads it in silence

EZRA. he has taken refuge in the desert

KHALID. turned back into dust

EZRA begins to write a capsule

ELIJAH. what are you doing?

EZRA. I'm writing a capsule

ELIJAH. what for?

EZRA. to tell—

KHALID puts his hand over EZRA's mouth

KHALID. don't say his name

silence

EZRA. to guide him to the river

ELIJAH takes the paper from EZRA

ELIJAH. he can't read that

KHALID. it's been forty days

ELIJAH. he's blind

ELIJAH looks at the ants

silence

ELIJAH. can they speak?

EZRA. of course they can

ELIJAH. I've never heard them speak

EZRA. they always speak

silence

EZRA. you just don't listen

ELIJAH moves closer to the ants

ELIJAH. I can't hear a thing

EZRA. they know the capsules

KHALID. the soil

EZRA. they know every word

KHALID. every grain of soil

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

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

ELIJAH. that guides its followers

KHALID. to bewilderment

EZRA wraps the capsule

the ants take the capsule

and disappear into the desert soil

Scene Thirteen

The Martyr's Funeral

a funeral procession

of three thousand souls

KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH

remove K's clothes

wrap K's body in white cloth

and offer K's body

to the eternal sun

they cast K's body into the sea

it returns

they cast it once again

it returns

they cast it a third time

it returns

ELIJAH. we are of the earth

EZRA. and to earth we shall return

KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH bury K in the soil

KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH recite a prayer

KHALID. he is now eternal in the earth

Scene Fourteen

Field II

it is dawn

E1 and E2 emerge

covered in earth

at an olive grove

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

silence

E2. they are reserved for the earth

E1. where they grow

E2. and grow

E1. and grow

E2. until they can no longer grow

E1. revealing words

silence

E1 and E2 dig a large pit

E1 and E2 sit inside the pit

and continue digging

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II wake up

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

and tie E1 and E2's wrists

behind their backs

SOLDIER I. what are you doing?

silence

SOLDIER II. I told you they would return

SOLDIER I looks around the field

SOLDIER I. where is it?

silence

SOLDIER I. where is it?

SOLDIER II slaps E1

SOLDIER I. where?

silence

SOLDIER I slaps E2

SOLDIER II. did you plant it?

silence

SOLDIER II slaps E2

SOLDIER I. did you plant it?

silence

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

E2. that the origins of a tree

E1. is not a seed

E2. but a fleeting dust

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II burn a capsule

it does not burn

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II throw E1 into the pit

and rest their arms

upon E1 and E2's shoulders

E1. give credence to the earth

the sun rises

and for the first time

in forty days

E1 senses the sun's warmth

upon his face

E1's tears descend

to the earth

its colour changes

for it too is in mourning

Scene Fifteen

The Sacred River/Funeral II

ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID are near a river

ELIJAH. there is no greater tragedy

EZRA. patience is a virtue

KHALID. if only they had heard of Joseph

EZRA. what do we know of pain and sadness

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

a procession

of three thousand palms

raise the bodies of E1 and E2

to the mourning clouds

that witness their return

to eternal earth

KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH

wrap the bodies of the deceased

in white cloth

then cast them into the river

Scene Sixteen

Water

ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID are near a river

ELIJAH. someone once inquired

KHALID. about the nature of the ocean

EZRA. but there was no ocean in sight

ELIJAH. they told him it resembled the sea

KHALID. he inquired about the sea

EZRA. but there was no sea in sight

ELIJAH. they told him it was similar to a river

KHALID. he inquired about a river

EZRA. but there was no river in sight

ELIJAH. they told him it resembled a stream

KHALID. he inquired about a stream

EZRA. but there was no stream in sight

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

KHALID. he inquired about the drop of water

EZRA. they told him it could be found in rain

ELIJAH. he inquired about the rain

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

EZRA. he reached its summit

ELIJAH. but there was no rain to be found

KHALID. there he opened his palm

EZRA. at its centre

ELIJAH. a drop of water

Scene Seventeen

Field III

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II examine the soil

SOLDIER I. we must remove them from the earth

SOLDIER I removes a capsule from the earth

SOLDIER I examines the capsule

SOLDIER I burns the capsule

it does not burn

SOLDIER II removes a capsule from the earth

SOLDIER II burns the capsule

it does not burn

SOLDIER I finds another capsule

SOLDIER I burns the capsule

it does not burn

SOLDIER II finds another capsule

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II collect piles of capsules

that create shapes that resemble mountains

SOLDIER II. do you think we should read them?

SOLDIER I. what?

SOLDIER II. the capsules—should we read them?

SOLDIER I. what for?

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

SOLDIER I. I suppose it is yes

SOLDIER II. that means we are burning evidence

SOLDIER I. it doesn't matter

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

SOLDIER I. I said it doesn't matter

SOLDIER II. let's read them

SOLDIER I. no

SOLDIER II. aren't you curious?

SOLDIER I. I suppose I'm a little curious

SOLDIER II. let's open one

SOLDIER I. fine—then we burn it

SOLDIER II. fine

SOLDIER I unwraps the capsule

SOLDIER II. let me see that

SOLDIER II moves closer to SOLDIER I

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

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

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

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

SOLDIER I. what do you think that means?

SOLDIER II. let's burn it

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

SOLDIER II takes the capsule from SOLDIER I

SOLDIER II burns the capsule

it does not burn

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II dig through the soil

SOLDIER I finds a capsule

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

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

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

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

SOLDIER II burns the capsule

it does not burn

the mountain of seed-capsules grows

SOLDIER I finds another capsule

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

SOLDIER II burns the capsule

it does not burn

the mountain of seed-capsules grows

SOLDIER I finds another capsule

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

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

SOLDIER II burns the capsule

it does not burn

the mountain of seed-capsules grows

SOLDIER I finds a capsule

SOLDIER II burns the capsule

it does not burn

the mountain of seed-capsules grows

SOLDIER I finds a capsule

SOLDIER II burns the capsule

it does not burn

the mountain of seed-capsules grows

SOLDIER I finds a capsule

SOLDIER I. don't you find them disturbing?

SOLDIER II burns a capsule

it does not burn

SOLDIER II. no

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

SOLDIER II. what?

SOLDIER I. the capsules

SOLDIER I stops searching

SOLDIER I. do you think wrote them for us?

SOLDIER II. no

SOLDIER II burns a capsule

it does not burn

the mountain of seed-capsules grows

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

SOLDIER II. don't be paranoid

SOLDIER II burns a capsule

it does not burn

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

and examines it carefully

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

SOLDIER I. should we just leave them?

SOLDIER II. we can't do that

SOLDIER II walks towards the mountain of seed-capsules

SOLDIER II. it's dangerous

SOLDIER I. dangerous?

SOLDIER II. yes dangerous

SOLDIER I. they are just words

the mountain of seed-capsules dissolves into the soil

SOLDIER II. we must burn the field

SOLDIER I. the entire field?

SOLDIER II. yes

SOLDIER I. that might damage the soil

SOLDIER II. it might yes

SOLDIER I. are you sure?

SOLDIER II. we must burn the capsules

SOLDIER II gives SOLDIER I a lighter

SOLDIER II. well go on

silence

SOLDIER II. burn it

silence

SOLDIER II. if they return—

silence

SOLDIER II. burn it

SOLDIER I places the flame on the soil

it does not burn

SOLDIER I attempts a second time

it does not burn

SOLDIER I attempts a third time

it does not burn

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

Scene Eighteen

The Marvellous Seed

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

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

KHALID. to the eternal silence

EZRA. until it is revealed

ELIJAH. in sacred sounds

KHALID. that grace the earth with existence

EZRA. there will be a resurrection

silence

ELIJAH. there are of course some seeds

EZRA. that never realize their full potential

KHALID. sometimes there's a draught

ELIJAH. or someone buries them too deep within the soil

EZRA. because they fail to understand

KHALID. their temperament

ELIJAH. their nature

EZRA. they lose awareness of the earth

EZRA. they grow distant

ELIJAH. impatient

KHALID. and distance then creates more distance

EZRA. it's about perception

ELIJAH. sometimes people fail to understand

KHALID. that the seed is a seed

EZRA. they cast them into the ocean

ELIJAH. hide them in the soil

EZRA. is that not a planting ritual?

KHALID. it's about intention

silence

EZRA. some burn them

ELIJAH. they do not burn

KHALID. it is a known fact

EZRA. that seeds can only be burned away

ELIJAH. by the sun

KHALID. and it is then that we are left

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

Scene Nineteen

Cave II/The Grave

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

SOLDIER II burns the roots

they do not burn

SOLDIER II. they won't burn

SOLDIER I examines the roots of the seed-capsules

SOLDIER II burns the capsules

they do not burn

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

SOLDIER II. wait I will think of something

SOLDIER I. they did this didn't they?

SOLDIER II. they are dead

SOLDIER I. they did it—I know they did

SOLDIER II. we pressed their bodies into the soil ourselves

SOLDIER I. what if—

SOLDIER II. you've become paranoid

SOLDIER I. I'm not paranoid

SOLDIER II. senseless

SOLDIER I. I'm not—

SOLDIER II. dead

silence

SOLDIER II. they are dead

silence

SOLDIER II. this is just coincidence

SOLDIER I. is it?

SOLDIER II. don't be paranoid

SOLDIER I. they wrote the capsules

SOLDIER II. don't think about it too much

SOLDIER I burns a capsule

it does not burn

SOLDIER II. they are just words

SOLDIER I. they turned it against us

SOLDIER II. they are dead

SOLDIER I. do you think it knows?

SOLDIER II. don't be stupid

SOLDIER I. that we burned that tree?

SOLDIER II. what tree?

SOLDIER I. in the field—the tree remember?

SOLDIER II. there were many trees

SOLDIER I. but there was that one tree remember?

SOLDIER II. no

SOLDIER I. he told us not to burn it

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

SOLDIER I. it was that red tree

SOLDIER II. oh that tree

SOLDIER I. then the capsules—

SOLDIER II. it has nothing to do with capsules

SOLDIER I. they're growing roots

SOLDIER II. it's just a chemical reaction

SOLDIER I. it isn't natural

SOLDIER II. and this disturbs you?

SOLDIER I. of course it disturbs me—

SOLDIER II. stranger things have happened

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

SOLDIER II. they are dead

SOLDIER II takes the capsule from SOLDIER I

SOLDIER II burns the capsule

it does not burn

SOLDIER I. don't you find it concerning?

SOLDIER II. the capsule thing?

SOLDIER I. yes

SOLDIER II. no

silence

SOLDIER II. for years they lived there

SOLDIER I. inside that mountain

silence

SOLDIER I. plotting

SOLDIER II. we put them there

SOLDIER I. it wasn't strategic

SOLDIER II. no

silence

SOLDIER I. look

SOLDIER II burns the roots of the seed-capsules

they do not burn

SOLDIER I. they keep growing

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II examine the growing capsules

SOLDIER II burns the roots of the seed-capsules

they do not burn

the seed-capsules grow

the cave gets smaller

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II move closer to each other

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

they do not burn

SOLDIER II. they are just words

the cave gets smaller

SOLDIER II. words

the seed-capsules grow

SOLDIER I. we're going to suffocate

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

they not burn

SOLDIER I. they won't stop growing

silence

SOLDIER I. if they don't stop

SOLDIER II. let's dig through the soil

SOLDIER I. they might follow us

SOLDIER II digs

SOLDIER I. until we suffocate and die

SOLDIER II. don't just stand there

SOLDIER I. look

the seed-capsules grow

the cave presses against SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II

SOLDIER I. they're creating patterns

SOLDIER II. what?

SOLDIER I. patterns

SOLDIER II. you idiot

SOLDIER I. what?

SOLDIER II. there's no time for that

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II dig through the soil

the seed-capsules grow

the cave gets smaller

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II create a large pit

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II enter the pit

the seed-capsules grow

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II dig inside the pit

the seed-capsule grow

the seed-capsules cover the pit

SOLDIER II burns the seed-capsules

the do not burn

the seed-capsules grow inside the pit

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II dig

the seed-capsules grow

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II dig

the seed-capsules grow

SOLDIER I and SOLDIER II dig

earth turns into clay

it is coarse

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

Scene Twenty
The Scream

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

KHALID. three

EZRA. were found beneath the soil

ELIJAH. reflecting light

EZRA. they were found

ELIJAH. with shaved heads

EZRA. and brittle bones

KHALID. three thousand seeds

EZRA. dead

silence

KHALID. they were found

EZRA. tranquil

ELIJAH. in the depths

KHALID. of the all embracing earth

EZRA. they wrote poems

ELIJAH. words

KHALID. that they carved into caves

EZRA. they loved the sea

ELIJAH. and the sea loved them

EZRA. from the mountain

ELIJAH. they marvelled at its beauty

KHALID. the sea went on living

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

Scene Twenty–One

Funeral III

*a funeral procession
of three thousand souls*

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

Scene Twenty–Two

The Sea

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

KHALID. look at the sea

EZRA. beautiful

ELIJAH. beautiful

KHALID. beautiful

EZRA. it suddenly appeared

ELIJAH. after forty days

EZRA. a miracle

ELIJAH. I thought it was dead

KHALID. it was only temporary

ELIJAH. how strange that it remained living

KHALID. beneath the desert

EZRA. that's only natural

ELIJAH. they found it

EZRA. beneath seven layers of soil

KHALID. they emerged from the earth

ELIJAH. looked upon the ruins

KHALID. mourned the dead

EZRA. then recited a poem

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

Paths to the Infinite Forest

Characters

ELIJAH

E1

EZRA

E2

KHALID

K

Scene One

The Sea II

EZRA, KHALID, and ELIJAH are on a mountain

the sea can be seen

in the horizon

beneath them

the prophet's cave

KHALID. spring calls forth hidden gemstones

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

ELIJAH. lost in an endless ocean

KHALID. we gaze at the sky

ELIJAH. and honour the eternal sun

EZRA. reflected in shallow water

KHALID. or perhaps hidden in its depths

silence

ELIJAH. it is here

KHALID. that the prophet died

EZRA. at the very edges

ELIJAH. of the sacred mountain

silence

ELIJAH, KHALID, and EZRA admire the sea

ELIJAH. yes it is here

KHALID. that they bury the deceased

EZRA. in infinite waters

ELIJAH. that reveal

KHALID. earth's vast depths

EZRA. perhaps it may be described

KHALID. as an ancient tragedy

ELIJAH. a proximity that cannot overcome distance

EZRA. what point is there in an encounter

ELIJAH. with the eternal sun

EZRA. if the yellow seed

ELIJAH. remains hidden

KHALID. at the edges of the finite earth

silence

a funeral procession

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

to the eternal sun

they descend from the mountain

and cast their bodies into the sea

ELIJAH. yes it was here

EZRA. that the mountain drowned

KHALID. in endless waters

ELIJAH. and all that remained

EZRA. was the image of a prophet

KHALID. with bare knees

ELIJAH. sinking into the soil

EZRA. with palms raised

KHALID. to the eternal sun

ELIJAH. yes it was here

EZRA. that they would recite

KHALID. ancient words

ELIJAH. they would recite

EZRA. and recite

KHALID. and recite

ELIJAH. until it appeared

EZRA. revealing

KHALID. earth's infinite depths

silence

ELIJAH. it is no more than a memory now

EZRA. of fragments lost

KHALID. words upon words

silence

ELIJAH. we remain

EZRA. at the summit of a great mountain

KHALID. remembering the deceased

ELIJAH. examining the soil

EZRA. tasting its depth

KHALID. to make known

ELIJAH. things that were already known

EZRA. but not remembered

silence

EZRA gathers fragments of soil in his palms

KHALID and ELIJAH examine it carefully

EZRA casts it into the sea

it returns

he casts it a second time

it returns

he casts it a third time

it returns

drenched in salt water

he gathers it in his palms

then plants it in the earth

Scene Two

The Sea III

the sea slowly disappears

growing smaller

its gradual annihilation

reveals grains of sand

that perfectly reflect

the different phases of the moon

at the edges of the sea

gather piles of salt

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

*he examines the salt-mountains
silence*

enter E2

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

E2. salt

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

enter E1

E1. what's this?

E2. a salt mountain

E1 puts on spectacles and examines the salt-mountain

E2. it's salt

silence

E2. taste it

E1. I'd rather not

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

E1 continues to carefully examine the salt in his palm

E1. salt

E2 searches the salt-mountain

one of the salt mountains collapses

E2 pauses for a moment

then continues to search the same salt-mountain

K gathers another pile of salt in his palm

it gradually falls to the ground

creating the same sound

E1. what are you doing?

E2 ignores E1 and continues to search the salt-mountain

E2 moves on to another salt-mountain

it collapses

E2 continues to search

E1 moves closer to E2

E1. what are you doing?

K. he's searching

E2. it's here

E2 continues to look through the salt-mountain

E2. in the salt-mountain

E2 continues to look through the salt-mountain

E2. it must be

E1. what is?

E2 moves on to the next salt mountain

it collapses

K. the capsules

silence

K. he's looking for the capsules

E1. they were buried

K. planted

E1. beneath seven layers of soil

E2 moves on to the next salt mountain

K. even if they were planted

the salt mountain collapses

E1. they surely must have grown

K. must have

E1. formed roots

K. long winded roots

E1. perhaps even a tree

K. several trees

E2 moves on to the next salt mountain

E1. what's he looking for then?

K. I told you

E2. a capsule

E2 holds a pile of salt in his palm

it slowly falls to the ground

it does not reveal a capsule

E2 continues to look through the salt-mountain

E2 moves on the next salt mountain

the sea grows smaller

more salt mountains appear

E1 examines the salt mountain that E2 is searching

E1. there are no capsules here

K. that's impossible

E1. they probably dissolved

K. not entirely

E1. turned back into earth

K gathers another pile of salt in his palm

it gradually falls to the ground

creating the same sound

K. not entirely

E2 moves on to the next salt mountain

E2. three thousand

E1. turned to dust

K. not entirely

E2. gradually fading into the sun

silence

E1. all things fade

E2. they're in the soil

E1. as all things die

K. unless you resurrect them

E2 walks towards the sea

E2. they're in the water

E2 moves closer to the sea

E1 pushes him back

E1. you might drown

E2. drown?

E1. it's quite deep

E2 admires the sea

E2. deep

E1. unpredictable waters

K gathers salt in his palm

he throws it into the sea

creating the same sound

K. how quickly it dissolves

E2. transformed into a liquid dust

E1. might be dangerous

E2 goes back to the salt mountain and continues to search

E2. I suppose

K continues to look at the salt granules that gradually fade

K. patterns

silence

K. the last remnants of the ancient mountain

E1 moves closer to the sea

he looks at the salt granules

then moves away

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

silence

E1. we buried them in that field together

K. they grow

E1 examines a pile of salt

another salt mountain collapses

E2. and grow

K. and grow

E1. perhaps

K. beneath seven layers of soil

E2. until they can no longer grow

K. revealing words

silence

E2 moves on to the next mountain

E2. there's a path

E2 stops searching

E2. an infinite forest

E1. an infinite forest?

E2 continues searching

E1. even if it did exist

E2. it certainly does

E1. suppose it did

E1 looks into the horizon

E1. have you not heard

K. the prophet of the cave

E1. he died

E2 continues to search

E2. the prophet of the cave

K. hidden beneath seven layers of soil

E1. the earth is barren

K. on his shoulders

E2. the last fragments of fertile earth

E1. he's dead

K. sacrificed himself to the earth

E1. turned back into dust

E2 finds a cluster of salt

he removes it from the salt-mountain

he squeezes it between his fingers

it explodes

into thousands of salt granules

E2. thought it was a capsule

E2 continues to search

K examines the sand-salt mixture

he gathers it in his palm

it falls to the ground

creating the same sound

K. I heard they entered a cave

E2. I heard they drowned in an ocean

E1. impossible

E2. or was it a river?

E1. three thousand of them

E2. annihilated

K. beneath the all-embracing sun

E1. dead

silence

K. it is an endless journey

E2. I found it

E2 reveals a cluster of salt

E1 examines it and takes the cluster from E2

E1. idiot

E1 squeezes the cluster

it explodes into thousands of salt granules

E2 continues to search

E1. obsessively looking

K. might have been a capsule

E1. senseless

K. might have-

E1. it will appear

the salt mountain collapses

E2 moves on to the next mountain

E1. when it appears

K. might have been a seed

E1. won't you stop?

E2. no

E1. you're irritating the soil

E1 gathers fragments of soil in his palm

E1. it's filled with salt

E2 stops searching for a moment

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

then returns to the salt-mountain

K sits down leaning against a salt-mountain

it collapses

revealing a capsule

K. a capsule

E2 takes the capsule from K

E2. a capsule

E2 gives it back to K

E2. open it

K slowly opens the capsule

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

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

E2. can't tell

K examines the body

K. he's dead

E1 and E2 speak at the same time

E1. dead?

E2. dead?

K. dead

E2. can't be

E2 moves away from the body

E2. the corpse-

E1. let's bury it

E2. it's reflecting light

E1. give him a proper burial

K. cast him into the sea

E2 walks back and forth

E2. it's reflecting light

E1. that's just salt

E2 walks back and forth more quickly

E2. reflecting light

E1. that's just salt

E2 walks back and forth more quickly

E1. no more than white granules

K. thousands of granules

E2. reflecting light

K carries the body towards the sea

E1. what are you doing?

K. returning him to the sea

E1. he should be buried in the earth

E2. he isn't dead

E1. he's dead

E1 places his ear on the corpse's chest

E1. see no breath

E2 examines the deceased saint's face

E1. dead

E2. what if he's alive?

K. he isn't

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

E1. I'm telling you he's dead

E2. is that not murder?

K. more a misunderstanding

E2. murder

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

E2. he isn't dead

E1. calm down

E2 walks back and forth at a faster pace

E1 places his hand on E2's shoulder

E2 sits breathing heavily

E2. let's just leave him here

K. in the middle of the desert?

E1. how disrespectful

K. we can't do that

E1. he'll be eaten by vultures

K. sink into the soil

E1. gradually evaporate into the sun

K. trapped beneath the earth

E1. no we can't do that

E2 moves closer to the saint's body

E2. there's a glimmer

E1. no more than decaying bones

K. a silver dust

E2. he's alive

E1. let's wash the body

E1 and K cast the body into the sea

then remove it

they cast it a second time

then remove it

they cast it a third time

then place it back onto the desert soil

E2. it's still reflecting light

E1. that's water

E2. he's alive

E1. that's just water

K. he's dead

E2. living

E1. dead

K. let's cast him into the sea

E2. what if he drowns?

E1. he's already dead

E2. lost in endless waters

E1. makes no difference

E2. waiting for a resurrection

K begins to move the body towards the sea

E2. let's wait

E1. what for?

E2. what if someone is looking for the body?

E1. what use is there in a decaying body?

K. the living are the living

E1. and the dead are dead

K. we must return the body

E1. plant it beneath the soil

K. cast it into the sea

E2. I heard it is a vast ocean

K. the dead cannot remain above the soil

E1. it's unnatural

K. there can be no resurrection

E1. unless he's dead

E2 sits down

silence

a funeral procession

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

they cast it into the sea

it returns

they cast it a second time

it returns

they cast it a third time

it returns

K. we are of the earth

E2. and to earth we return

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

from a mixture of sand and salt water

they construct a small tomb around it

K. eternal in the earth

Scene Three

The Saint's Tomb

EZRA, KHALID, and ELIJAH are in the desert

in the distance

the sea

and three mountains

it is the same desert

where E1, E2, and K buried the deceased

the salt mountains disappear

forming small rocks

that alter the desert soil

it is coarse

its colour changes

from a soft yellow

to deep red

ELIJAH. three

EZRA. wandered into the desert

KHALID. determined to reach its depth

ELIJAH. three

EZRA. died before dying

KHALID. sacrificed themselves to the earth

EZRA. the sun

KHALID. the earth

EZRA. it was here

KHALID. that the body was found

ELIJAH. covered in the last remnants of fertile earth

EZRA. it was here

ELIJAH. that the prophet was buried

KHALID. in a cave

ELIJAH. overlooking the sea

EZRA. patiently waiting

KHALID. to be resurrected

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

ELIJAH. it's been centuries now

KHALID. he's been forgotten

EZRA. and all that remains

KHALID. are endless landscapes

ELIJAH. ancient myths

EZRA. yearning to make known

KHALID. things that were already known

ELIJAH. but not remembered

silence

EZRA. it was here

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

Scene Four
Clay Desert

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

E1. it's no use

K examines the desert soil

E1. we're lost

E2. lost

K gathers fragments of clay desert soil in his palm

E1. lost

E2. it's been forty days

E1. whatever direction we walk in it appears

E2. beneath the all-embracing sun

E1. we're going in circles

E2. endless circles

K returns the fragments of desert soil to the earth

E1. can't stop seeing it

E2 lies down on the clay desert soil

E1. always in the horizon

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

E1. we must be going in circles

E2. gradually dissolve into the earth

E1. endless circles

E2. like the dust of decaying bones

K. clay is only earth and water

silence

K. if you examine the soil

E2. watch its colours change

E1 moves to the right

K gathers fragments of clay desert soil in his palm

K. there is a difference in the texture

E2. the sea has disappeared

K. dissolved into the desert soil

E1 moves to the left

E1. I can still see it

E2. the salt mountains have disappeared

K. hidden beneath the clay earth

E1 moves to the right facing the saint's tomb

E1. wherever I turn I see it

E2. what is he talking about?

K. the saint's tomb

E1 walks towards the tomb

E1. we buried him there

E2. the sea returned the body

K. returned it

E2. to the all-embracing earth

E1. I buried him with my own hands

E1 falls to the ground

his knees sink into the soil

he gathers fragments of clay-earth in his palms

they fall back into the ground

creating a sound

E1. with these two hands

K helps E1 get up

K. we must continue

E1. we can't wander in the desert forever

K. lost in endless paths

E2. annihilated into the golden dust

silence

E2. perhaps it's best we surrender ourselves

E1. to who?

E2. the sun

silence

E2. the sea has been annihilated

K. annihilated

E2. ascended to the eternal sun

K. it's become part of the soil

E2. the sun

K. it's in the earth

E2. the sun

E1. he's gone mad

E2 lies down on the clay desert soil

K tries to get E2 up

E2 gathers fragments of clay desert soil in his palms

his hands turn slightly red

E2. look at the desert

E1. he's mad

E2. it's turned red

E1. must be dehydration

E2. red

K tries to get E2 up again

K. we must continue

E1. where to?

K. the forest

E1. what forest?

E2. the forest

E2 opens his palms

the fragments of soil return to the earth

he rolls around on the ground

each time his body presses against the earth

it turns slightly more red

taking on the colour of the desert soil

E1. we're going in circles

E2. it's beautiful

E2 rolls onto E1's feet

E1. we should leave him here

E2 continues to roll around in the soil

K. we can't do that

E2. beautiful

E1. why not?

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

E2. beautiful

K. that's cruel

E1. he's delusional

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

E1. it's still there

E2. it's always been there

K. you just never noticed it before

E2. ever since the prophet died

E1. what prophet?

E2. he remained there for forty years

E1. who did?

E2. contemplating the mysteries of the cave

E1. who?

E2. the prophet

E1. you mean-

K puts his hand on E1's mouth

K. don't say his name

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

E1. yes I-

silence

E1. I remember

E2. look at the earth

K. we must continue

E2. it's creating patterns

E2 carefully examines the clay desert soil

E1. where's that book?

E2 continues to examine the soil

E2. what book?

E1. he wrote something about the desert

E2 moves further away from E1 and K

he searches the cracks that separate dry fragments of desert soil

E1. verse thirty three-

E2. where is it?

E1. of the thirty third

E2. where-

E1. of three thousand and thirty three

E2. it must be here

E2 searches at a faster pace

E1. of three million thirty three thousand

E2. can't live without it

E1. of thirty three million three thousand

E2. can't

E1. three hundred and thirty three

E2. impossible

E1. of the sacred book

E2 stops searching

E2. what book?

E1. that one book

E2. what is it called?

E1. I-

silence

E1. I can't remember

E2. hah-

K moves towards E2

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

K. a capsule

E2. there it is

E1. what was that verse-

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

E1. what are you doing?

E2. it's all in there

E1. what is?

E2. everything

E1. nonsense

E2. even the deceased

E1. don't be ridiculous

E2. all gathered

E2 admires the capsule

E2. in the third letter of a word

K. beautiful

E1. let's open it

E2. no not yet

E2 continues to admire the capsule

E1. let's open it

K. perhaps we should plant it

E2. no

K. return it to the earth

E2. no no not yet

E1 violently takes the capsule from E2

E1 walks away

E2 follows him

E2. give it back

E1 examines the capsule while walking away from E2

E1. no

E2. give it to me

E1. leave me alone

E2. I said give it-

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

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

E1. impossible-

K moves closer to the seed-capsules

E1 moves away

E2 examines one of the seed capsules then eats it

E1. can't be-

E2 eats a handful of seed-capsules

E2. tastes like soil

E1. idiot

E2 eats another handful of seed-capsules

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

they gradually fall to the ground

creating a sound

then disappear into the desert soil

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

K opens the capsule

E2 eats another handful of seed-capsules

K (*reading*). mountains are hidden

E1 (*reading*). beneath an unending desert

K. where thousands of dust particles gather

E1. creating patterns

K. that remind travellers of an ancient past

E1. it is believed

K. this is the sacred river

E1. where they drowned

K. into eternity

E1. all hidden

K. beneath an unassuming desert

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

the seed-capsule mountains dissolve into the desert soil

E2. they're gone

E1. dissolved into the desert soil

K. returned to the earth

E2 examines the soil in search for the seed-capsules

E2. gone

E1 turns around facing the mountains in the distance

E1. it's still there

E2. what is?

K. the saint's tomb

Scene Five

The River

ELIJAH, EZRA, and KHALID are near a river

in the distance

three mountains

EZRA. they wandered into the river

KHALID. searching for depth

ELIJAH. that could only be found past spring

EZRA. wandering into the river

KHALID. they gazed at the infinite sky

ELIJAH. met with silence

EZRA. clay and dust

KHALID. linger from their palms

ELIJAH. into the river

EZRA. creating patterns

KHALID. that reach its depths

a funeral procession

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

three

clothed in the last remnants of fertile earth

they place the bodies in three small wooden boats

then cast them into the river

KHALID. their final words

EZRA. were hidden

ELIJAH. cast into the sea

KHALID. they were buried the day they died

EZRA. clay is only earth and water

ELIJAH. there they shall find

KHALID. an eternal refuge

silence

EZRA. but most people have forgotten

KHALID. the path to the infinite forest

ELIJAH. others seek it

EZRA. not realizing

KHALID. it is beyond earth's infinite depths

ELIJAH. their words

EZRA. remain hidden

KHALID. beneath seven layers of soil

ELIJAH. patiently waiting

EZRA. for a resurrection

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

EZRA. it is from here

KHALID. that they grow

EZRA. and grow

ELIJAH. and grow

EZRA. revealing

KHALID. words

silence

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

ELIJAH. they stood beneath the mountain

KHALID. reciting names

EZRA. endlessly reciting

ELIJAH. until the sun appeared

KHALID. at the edge of the mountain

EZRA. its light reflected

ELIJAH. into the river

KHALID. that gathered

EZRA. the bodies of the deceased

ELIJAH. to make known

KHALID. their infinite depths

silence

ELIJAH. there must always be a sacrifice

EZRA. a seed can only realize its potential

KHALID. the day it sacrifices itself

ELIJAH. to the all-embracing sun

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

EZRA. it might seem strange

ELIJAH. from the desert

KHALID. emerged a great valley

EZRA. it emerged

KHALID. from the bodies of the deceased

ELIJAH. revealing

EZRA. their final words

KHALID. that emerge from the soil

ELIJAH. to honour

EZRA. the eternal sun

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

Scene Six

The Valley

the seed-capsules hidden in the desert soil grow

the clay desert is gradually transformed

into a valley

in the distance

three mountains

and the saint's tomb

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

E2 examines the soil

K. they're growing

E2 gathers fragments of soil in his palms

E2. the capsules

E1. seeds

E2. it's the capsules

E1. they're seeds

E2. capsules

E1. seeds

silence

E2 carefully examines the growing capsule-seeds

E2. where's the tree?

E1. what tree?

E2. this is the valley of the tree

E1. maybe it isn't

E2. it is

E1. maybe not

E2. I'm telling you it is

E1. how do you know

E2. I know

E2 continues to examine the growing seed-capsules

E1 turns towards the saint's tomb

E1. it's still there-

E2. shuuush

E1. it's-

E2. it appeared in silence

E1. still there

E2. at the edge of the mountain

silence

E1. perhaps we should continue

E2. no let's wait

E1. for what?

E2. for it to grow

E2 sits down

E1 restlessly walks back and forth

K examines the soil

three ants emerge

then disappear back into the soil

the seed-capsules continue to grow

E1. how much longer can we wait

K. he's restless

E1. they've stopped growing

E2. they stop growing when they die

K. not even when they die

silence

K. it is an infinite procession

E1 gazes at the mountains in the distance

E1. infinite

K. of death and resurrection

silence

K. we were told to bury the deceased

E2. to honour the dead

K. cast them into the river

E2. watch its colours change

E2 examines the growing seed-capsules

E1 turns to the saint's tomb

the seed-capsules continue to grow

E1 stops walking

E1. how much longer?

E2. patience is a virtue

E1 continues to walk back and forth

three ants emerge beneath E1's feet

he does not notice them

they disappear back into the soil

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

E1 continues to walk back and forth

K. and written words

silence

K. do you hear something?

E1. no

E2 moves closer to the seed-capsules and listens

E2. they're creating sounds

E1. can't hear a thing

E1 moves closer to E2 and the seed-capsules

E1. not a thing

E1 continues to moves restlessly back and forth

K. they drowned in this valley

E1. that isn't possible

K. it was submerged in rain

silence

E2. all that remains

K. are the ruins

E2. of an ancient city

K. that was once filled

E2. with golden dust

K. and the smell of pomegranate gardens

E1 looks to the saint's tomb

E1. we should leave

E2. no not yet

E1. it's been three days

E2. let's wait

the seed-capsules continue to grow

most of the clay desert is transformed into a green valley

except its edges

and the saint's tomb

E1. still no tree

E2. this is where it appeared to the prophet

K. at the centre of the great valley

E1. it was a mountain

E2. a valley

E1. a mountain

K. it appeared more than once

E2. this is where he heard it

silence

E1. can't hear a thing

E1 examines the growing seed-capsules

silence

E2. time passes

K. leaving us in an everlasting journey

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

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

silence

E2. in this valley

silence

E2. where it was revealed to the prophet

silence

E2. in this valley

silence

E2. this valley

E2 falls to the ground

his knees sink into the soil

as he gazes at the infinite sky

E2 loses consciousness

K tries to wake E2 up

E1. is he dead?

K. no no-

E1. is he breathing?

K. he's breathing

E1. are you sure?

K puts his ear on E2's chest

K. I can hear it-

K tries to wake E2 up this time more aggressively

E1. are you sure he's not-

K. he's not dead

silence

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

E1. emotional?

K. yes emotional

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

K. will you help me?

E1 and K try to wake E2 up

E1. what do we do now?

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

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

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

K. why not?

E1. like a seed emerging from the desert soil

K. it's possible

E1. that's not realistic-

K. he's just unconscious that's all

silence

E1 looks contemplatively at the valley

E1. isn't it strange

K tries to wake E2 up

E1. a valley emerging from a barren desert

K. some might say that it is miraculous

silence

E1. miraculous

three ants emerge from the soil

with them a capsule

K holds the capsule in his palm

silence

E1. open it

K opens the capsule

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

the capsule falls from K's palm

and dissolves into the soil

Scene Seven

River II

KHALID, EZRA, and ELIJAH are near a river

three mountains can be seen in the distance

and the saint's tomb

ELIJAH. they placed him into a casket

EZRA. cast it into the river

KHALID. so that he may realize

ELIJAH. earth's infinite depths

silence

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

silence

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

ELIJAH. hidden in earth's depths

silence

ELIJAH. there is no stillness in the earth

KHALID. a seed cannot remain a seed

EZRA. rain descends

ELIJAH. to the top of a great mountain

KHALID. he gathered it in his palms

EZRA. offering it to the eternal sun

KHALID. it fell from his palms

ELIJAH. disappeared

EZRA. into the depths

KHALID. of the desert soil

ELIJAH. and from there

KHALID. a great valley emerged

EZRA. it emerged

KHALID. from the bottom of his feet

ELIJAH. reflecting

EZRA. the endless cycles of the moon

KHALID. all gathered

EZRA. in the third letter of a word

ELIJAH. revealed

KHALID. in a moment of silence

silence

EZRA. his knees sank into the soil

ELIJAH. as he gazed at infinite sky

KHALID. there he heard

EZRA. the last fragments of fertile earth

KHALID. emerge from the ground

silence

EZRA. he disappeared

ELIJAH. some say he remained

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

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

Scene Eight

River III

E2, K, and E1 are near a river

E2 is still unconscious

in the distance

three mountains

and the saint's tomb

E1. what should we do with the body?

K. into the river

silence

K. when he wakes up-

E1. looks deep

K. we'll take him out

silence

E1 and K look at the river

with fear and admiration

E1. are you sure you want to-

K. I'm sure

E1 and K carry E2's body towards the river

E1 stops

E1. he's going to be angry

K. there's nothing to be angry about

E1. we left the valley

K. it was written

E1. the tree never appeared

K. there was no tree

E1. yes I know but-

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

E1. wait

K continues to move E2 towards the water

E1. wait

K continues to move E2 towards the water

E1. wait

K continues to move E2 towards the water

E1. you're going to kill him

K stops

K. kill him?

E1. he might drown

K. he won't

E1. unpredictable waters

K. we can't leave him like this

silence

K. it's been days

silence

K. he's been unconscious for days

E1 examines E2 carefully

he tries to wake him up

K moves E2's body towards the river

K. into the river

E1 looks at the saint's tomb

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

they stop for a moment

silence

they cast E2's body into the river

then remove it

they cast it a second time

then remove it

they cast it a third time

then place his body onto the earth

silence

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

K tries to wake E2 up

E1. he might be-

K. he's not dead

silence

E1 looks contemplatively at the saint's tomb

K returns to the edge of the river

and gathers water in his palm

he tastes it

K. salt water

E1. from the river?

K gathers salt water in his palm

then places it in E2's mouth

E1 tries to stop K

E1. you'll make him suffocate

K. you thought he was dead

E1 moves away

K makes E2 drink the salt water

E2 wakes up

E1. he's alive

K. I told you-

E2 sits up

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

it disappears into the soil

E2. where-

K. you've been unconscious for days

E2. where are we?

K. near the river

E2. what river?

K. the prophet's river

silence

E2. the valley

K. we left the valley

silence

E2. did you find it?

K. no

silence

E1. I told you before-

E2. you should have waited

E1. it will appear

K. it wasn't going to appear

E1. when it appears

E2. you should have waited-

E1. we waited for days

K. endless days

E1. not knowing if you were alive-

K. it's been written

E2. that's where it appeared to the prophet

K. the capsule-

E2. it appeared in the valley

K. it wasn't that valley

E2. where is it?

K. disappeared into the earth

E1. it's part of the soil now-

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

it disappears into the soil

E2. you're lying

K. that's what happened

E2. it can't be gone

K. it is

E2. things don't just disappear

K. it did

E2. something remains

E1. there was nothing there

K. we searched the soil

E1. there was nothing there

E2. clay-dust-bones

silence

E2. something

E1. it disappeared

K. turned into thousands of dust particles

E1. it's part of the soil now

K. it might grow in it

E1. probably not

K. you might also

silence

K. one day

E1 looks at the saint's tomb

E1. probably not-

E2 walks to the edge of the river

E2. look at the water

E1 and K move towards the river

E2. its colour's changed

E1. didn't notice

E2 moves closer to the river

E2. it's in the water

E2 tries to enter the river

E1 stops him

E1. it's not in the water

K. it is and it isn't-

E1 moves E2 away from the river

E1. that's just a reflection

E1, E2, and K look up

across the river

an endless forest

silence

E1. is that-

E2. it's in the forest

E2 tries to enter the water

E1 stops him

E1. it's dangerous

E2. dangerous?

E1. you might drown

E2. it's so close-

E1. unpredictable waters

E2 falls to the ground

he gathers water from the river in his palms

and tastes it

E2. it's only salt and water

K. it's much more than that

E2. are you afraid?

E1. it's terrifying

K admires the forest in the distance

K. isn't it beautiful?

E2. beautiful

E1. beautiful

silence

E1 look at the saint's tomb

E1. it's still there

E2 takes off his clothes

walks into the river

then disappears

E1. he's gone

K. walked into the river

E1 moves closer to the river to search for E2

E1. perhaps he drowned

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

E1. I doubt it

K. into the forest

E1 knees sink into the soil

he gathers fragments of earth in his palm

E1. the earth is coarse

K. clay is only earth and water

silence

E1. do you think he died?

K. it's possible

E1 examines the river

E1. quite deep

K gathers salt water in his palms

then returns it to the river

K. should we follow him-

E1. don't be ridiculous

K. what if he reached the forest-

E1. that's impossible

K. what if it's there-

E1. it would be suicide

K. what if he's found it-

E1. certain death

K. what if it's in the water

E1. that's just a reflection

K. it's in the water

E1. it's across the river

E1 and K look at the river

silence

K. what if he returns-

E1. he won't

K. everyone returns

E1. not everyone

K. eventually

E1. not everyone

K. there are infinite paths-

E1. the paths are infinite

K. ours is through the water

E1. what?

K. into the river

K begins to enter the river

then returns

E1. no

K. aren't you curious?

E1. of course I'm curious

K. it's so close-

E1 looks at the saint's tomb

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

K. I can almost taste the soil

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

K. it's in the forest

silence

K. deep within the forest

E1. he must be dead

K. might be alive

E1. there's no movement in the water

K. wandering through an endless forest

E1. it's perfectly still

K. or hiding in the river's depths

E1. perhaps he's drowned

K. endless streams

E1. drowned in the prophet's river

E2. it's only salt and water

E1. perhaps he's already been buried

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

E1. beneath seven layers of soil

K. beneath millions of dust particles

E1. in an endless forest

K. how beautiful

E1. terrifying

K. beautiful

silence

E1. it is not as you imagine it

K. the forest?

E1. it will never appear as you imagine it

K. it might-

E1. everything changes-

K. of course- there are cycles

E1. bones to dust

silence

E1. clay to bones

K. clay is only earth and water

E1 looks at the saint's tomb

E1. from the remnants of clay it emerged

K. they found it on his fingertips

E1. from the clay emerged a vast forest

K. it was a seed

E1. reflecting light

K. like the bodies of the deceased

E1. reflecting light

K. all seeds emerge from the soil

E1. and to the soil

K. the last fragments of clay and dust return

E1. waiting for words

silence

E1 and K look at the forest

E1. should we have stopped him?

K. no

E1. was it cruel?

K. it wasn't cruel

E1. I was only trying to help him

K. it's been written

E1 looks at the saint's tomb

E1. I was distracted

K. we should have followed him

E1. don't be an idiot

K. into the water

E1. no

K. it's in the water

E1. that's just a reflection

K. I can see it-

E1. you can't reach it

K. it's in the water

E1. it's impossible-

K. it's in the water

E1. it's beyond the water

K. in the forest?

E1. it's beyond the forest

K enters the river

E1. wait

K continues to walk into the river

E1. wait

K disappears into the river

E1. wait

silence

E1 follows K into the river

he stops

he looks at the saint's tomb

then disappears into the river

Scene Nine

The Infinite Forest

EZRA, KHALID, and ELIJAH are in a forest

at its edges

a river

in the distance

a sea

a desert

a valley

and three mountains

EZRA, KHALID, and ELIJAH enter the river

they emerge

with the bodies of E1, E2, and K

they place the bodies on the earth

salt and water

descend from the bodies of the deceased

disappearing into the soil

EZRA. mist fills the earth

ELIJAH. of the infinite forest

KHALID. under late night's sky

EZRA. where remnants of clay

ELIJAH. remind passersby

KHALID. of an ancient past

EZRA. that remains hidden

ELIJAH. beneath millions of dust particles

EZRA. that announce

KHALID. their return

ELIJAH. to the great mountain

EZRA. yearning for proximity

KHALID. in failed attempts at growth

ELIJAH. under the seemingly indifferent

EZRA. sky

KHALID. eternal was their longing

ELIJAH. to move beyond seven layers of soil

EZRA. to return to the infinite forest

silence

EZRA. they drowned

KHALID. and the last fragments of fertile earth

ELIJAH. were lost to the river

EZRA. in it they grew

KHALID. and grew

ELIJAH. and grew

EZRA. into the forest's depths

silence

ELIJAH. a beautiful myth

KHALID. it was revealed

EZRA. but they did not understand

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

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

EZRA. no they did not understand

KHALID. that the river had emerged

EZRA. from earth's core

ELIJAH. clay is only earth and water

silence

KHALID. it was here that they would gather

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

Scene Ten
The Resurrection

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

E1. we're alive-

E2. yes but in that specific moment

E1 removes dirt from his shoulders

E1. emerged from the river-

E2. when you entered the water-

E1. alive-

K. we drowned

E1. drowned?

E2. as soon as we entered the water

K. don't you remember?

E1. no

K. nothing?

E1. no

E2. not even the taste of salt-water?

E1. can't remember a thing

E1 looks at the river

E1. not a thing

E1 continues to remove fragments of earth from his shoulders

he walks back and forth carefully examining the river

E1 turns around and looks at the forest

E1. is this-

K. this is it

E1. you mean it's-

K. it's in the forest

E1 sits down

K. we must continue

E1. into the forest?

K. into the forest

E2 helps E1 get up

E1 looks at the forest

E1. seems deep

E2. it's been quite the journey

E1. perhaps we should wait-

K. no

E1. gather our strength-

K. no

E1. might not even be there-

K. it's in the forest

E2. we've already survived the desert

K. wandered into a valley

E2. surrendered ourselves to the river

K. tasted its salt-water

E2. and you ask about seeds-

silence

E1 looks at the saint's tomb

E2 and K walk deeper into the forest

E1 follows them

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

can no longer be seen in the distance

the sound of the river can still be heard

E1. wait

a capsule appears

K removes it from the soil

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

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

K. so that they could witness

E2. the resurrection of flesh and bone

K. but they did not understand

E2. how the dead could resurrect the living

K. no they could not understand

E2. how he had reached earth's depths

K. learned all of its rhythms

E2. tasted its soil

K. listened to its words

E2. they were hidden in his chest

the capsule falls from K's palm

and disappears into the forest soil

silence

K. perhaps it was neglect

E2. he was forgotten

K. eternal in the earth

E2. forgotten

K. most people do not realize

E2. this was how the desert came to be

K. they do not realize

E2. that it grew from the body of the deceased

K. and now we find ourselves

E2. at the edges of a forest-

K. an infinite forest

E2. that surrounds his gravestone

K. he is the forest

silence

K. we must continue

E1. you won't find it

K. we've come to honour the dead

E2. the dead must be honoured

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

E2. not knowing

K. if we shall survive

E2. not knowing

K. if there is a return

E2. until it is revealed

E1. it will not be revealed

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

E2. it was in the valley

E1. senseless

E2. it was in the valley

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

E2. it was there-

E1. it will appear

E2. it was-

E1. when it appears-

K. it's in the forest

E1. you will not find it

E2. it's in the seed

E1. it not is how you imagine it-

K. it's in the forest

water from the river moves backwards and forwards

parts of the forest disappear into the river

the water gradually moves closer

to E1, E2, and K

E1 has his back to the river

E2 looks directly at it

E1. you might convince yourselves-

E2. the water

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

E2. it's moving closer-

E1. you might think you are close but-

E2. behind you-

E1. I know the river is behind me

E2. it's right behind you

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

but you can not experience-

the water continues to move closer

until E1's feet are in the water

E1. water

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

E1. it's moving closer

E2. you never listen to me

K. into the forest

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

they are now surrounded by three thousand trees

three thousand seed-capsules

are hidden

beneath their feet

in the distance

the movements of the river can be heard

and the sound of the forest soil

gradually dissolving into the water

E2. thousands upon thousands

K. upon thousands

E2. upon thousands

E1. it's endless

E2 walks around examining the trees

E2. but where is it?

K. it's in the forest

E2. which one is it-

E1. it's none of them

silence

E2. was it the river?

K. they emerged from a seed

E1. a single seed?

K. one seed

E2. it was a river-

K. we must continue

E2. you see just beneath this soil-

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

E2. where is it-

E1. where's what?

E2. the path to the river

E1. you mean where we entered the forest-

E2. it's disappeared

E1. you want to return to the river?

E2. no no I-

silence

E2. we're lost

K. we aren't lost

E2. we're lost

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

E2. I didn't

E1. then nothing's changed

E2. there was a path

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

E2. it appears at the end of the path

E1. you won't find it

K. that's a terrible thing to say

E2 continues to search for the path

E2. it was in the water

K. it's in the forest

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

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

the seed-capsules begin to grow

E2 moves closer to the seed-capsules

E2. they're growing

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

E2. look at it

E1. it's just a growing seed

E2. it's beautiful

E1. you've seen it before

silence

E1. they grew in the valley

silence

E1. thousands grew in the valley

E2. it's different now-

K. it's about perception

E1. it's only a seed

E2. perhaps to you

E1. you're delusional

E2. you just don't understand

the seed-capsules continue to grow

the sound of the river can still be heard

in the distance

E2. it's in the seed

K. it appears when they grow

E2. it's in the trees

K. the earth

E2. the sounds of the forest

K. in the thousands of dust particles

E2. that gather in the soil

K. revealing words

silence

K carefully examines the forest

K. they grow from the bottom of a distant cave

E2. that's where they buried the prophet

E1. an ancient myth

K. there he would recite the most beautiful words

the seed-capsules continue to grow

K. he would recite

E2. and recite

K. and recite

E2. until it appeared to him

K. it appeared in a seed

E2. it was a tree

K. a seed

E2. that's where he heard it

K. he saw it

E2. he heard it

E1. he never saw it or heard it

K. perhaps it was in the desert

E2. it was in a valley

K. it grew in the desert

E1. it wasn't the desert

E2. it was a valley

E1. it wasn't the valley

K. it's in the forest

E2. it emerged from water

K. a seed

E2. the water

the seed-capsules continue to grow

K. you can see it-

E2 gathers fragments of the forest soil in his palm

E2. mist fills the earth of the infinite forest

silence

E1. what difference does it make?

E2. someone has to write it

K. write it then bury it deep within the soil

silence

K. it grew from his body

E2. they cast it into the river

K. they buried it in a cave

E1. it wasn't in the body

E2. he was a prophet

K. clay is only earth and water

silence

K. you think it's in the soil?

the seed-capsules continue to grow

E1. it's not in the soil

E2. well then where is it?

E1. it isn't anywhere-

E2. don't be ridiculous

E2 sits down and watches the seed-capsules grow

E1 carefully examines the seed-capsules

E1. it isn't

E2. don't you remember?

E1. it isn't in the forest

E2. we planted them ourselves

E1. you mean the capsules?

E2. words

E1 sits down

E1. words

E2. aren't they beautiful

K. beautiful

silence

the sound of the river can be heard

in the distance

K. we must continue

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

the soil is red

its texture resembles clay

they are surrounded by thousands of trees

and the growing seed-capsules

they continue to walk into the forest

E2. it's been forty days

E1. endless

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

E2. the prophet's cave

K. contemplating earth's vast mysteries

E2. do you hear something?

K. that's just the water

E1. so this is where it's buried

E2. you mean the prophet?

E1. the seed

silence

E2. three thousand seeds

K. hidden beneath seven layers of soil

E2 gathers fragments of soil in his palm

then slowly returns it to the earth

creating a sound

E1, E2, and K continue to walk

further into the depths of the forest

E2. seems endless

E1. it is endless

E2. endless

silence

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

E1. you mean the forest?

E2. that's where it appeared

K. it grew from a seed

E2. that's where the prophet died

E1. you mean on the mountain?

E2. surrendered himself to the sun

K. the earth

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

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

Scene Eleven

The Sacred Mountain II

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

ELIJAH. mountains are hidden

KHALID. beneath an unassuming desert

EZRA. that can only be found past spring

ELIJAH. it is believed this is the sacred forest

KHALID. where the prophet wandered

ELIJAH. into eternity

EZRA. seeking an ancient mountain

KHALID. that emerged

ELIJAH. from a drop of water

EZRA. there he witnessed the infinite

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

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

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

Scene Twelve

The Sacred Mountain III

E1, E2, and K are on a mountain

in the distance

the sea

the desert

the valley

the river

the saint's tomb

and the infinite forest

E1, E2, and K

write a poem

dedicated to the prophet's cave

they hide it in a capsule

and plant it in the mountain

the sound of the water

can still be heard

in the distance

E2. it's been forty days

E1. forty days in an endless forest

K. for forty days we watched them grow

E2. and grow

K. and grow

E2. waiting for it to appear

K. it did appear

E2. it appeared

E1. at the edges

K. of the finite earth

silence

E1. it's endless

E1, E2, and K gaze at the horizon

silence

E1. endless

silence

E1. there is no end to the forest

E2's tears descend

he gathers them in his palms

E2. water

K. it has no edges

E2. water

K. no peripheries

E1. there is no end to the forest

K. wherever you turn-

E2. it emerged from a drop of water

silence

the sound of the water

can be heard

in the distance

K. you can see it in the horizon

E1. I thought it had disappeared

E2. sacrificed itself to the sun

K. buried deep within the desert soil

E1. it suddenly appeared

E2. after forty days

E1. revealing what was hidden

K. in earth's core

E1. it was hidden

E2. beneath our feet

K. from the soil in which they grow

E1. revealing patterns

E2. words

K. sounds

E1. that emerge

E2. from salt and water

silence

E1. it is a strange predicament that we face

K. we were told it was an endless forest

E1. endless

E2. it appeared in the horizon

E1. at the summit of a great mountain

E2. perhaps we should have realized there was no end

K. as we watched the seed-capsules endlessly grow

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

K. are not the infinite dust particles

E2. that gathered in our palms

K. in an endless desert

E2. as we watched them grow

K. at the edges of the saint's tomb

E1. but a resolute silence

E2. that revealed itself

K. in ancient prayers

E1. rhythms

E2. words

K. endlessly seeking

E1. to remind us

E2. of the taste of salt water

the sound of the water

can be heard

in the distance

E1. the sea remained

E2. it remained in the distance

K. beneath the desert soil

E2. and in the final hours

E1. before the sun rises once again

K. it can be heard

E2. heard in the distance

E1. as it approaches the edges

K. of the prophet's cave

E2. that remains hidden

E1. deep within the mountain

K. it was there that he drowned

E1. into eternity

E2. until the body returned

K. we buried it

E1. in the saint's tomb

E2. that can also be seen

E1. in the distance

K. there they would gather

E2. and recite

K. and recite

E1. and recite

E2. until it appeared in their palms

K. as salt and water

E2. it was then that they realized

K. that what they encountered

E2. was not a river

K. but a vast ocean

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

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

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

Scene Thirteen

Cave III

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

the infinite forest

and the prophet's cave

ELIJAH. it was here

KHALID. that they would depart

EZRA. to more distant waters

KHALID. seeking the infinite

ELIJAH. that cannot be known

EZRA. it was revealed

KHALID. in the prophet's cave

ELIJAH. hidden in the centre

EZRA. of a sacred mountain

KHALID. it is believed

EZRA. it appears

ELIJAH. in the last third of the night

KHALID. in the bodies of the deceased

EZRA. that reflect

ELIJAH. the great moon's light

silence

ELIJAH. it is believed

KHALID. this is the cave

EZRA. where they encountered eternity

ELIJAH. in the image of a seed

EZRA. it appeared

KHALID. at the edges of their fingertips

ELIJAH. when they entered the cave

EZRA. it was there

KHALID. that they realized

ELIJAH. its infinite depths

EZRA. clay is only earth and water

The Eternal Seed

Characters

E1

E2

K

The Eternal Seed

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