Notebook to Stage: The Creative Process in Dramatic Art

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Terry Kroenung

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Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................. 1
Acknowledgements ................................................................. 3
I. Introduction ......................................................................... 4

II. The Play as Literature
   A. Writing the Play ............................................................ 5
   B. A Structural Analysis of the Play
      1. Theme ................................................................. 6
      2. Plot ................................................................. 8
      3. Character ......................................................... 10

III. The Play as Theatre
   A. Casting .................................................................. 12
   B. Rehearsals ............................................................... 13
   C. Direction ................................................................ 13
   D. Designing the Play
      1. Setting ............................................................. 15
      2. Properties ......................................................... 16
      3. Lighting ........................................................... 18
      4. Sound ............................................................... 19
      5. Costumes .......................................................... 19
      6. Publicity ............................................................ 21

IV. Conclusion ......................................................................... 22

V. Appendix
   A. Script of Sons of the Morning
   B. Ground Plan and Lighting Plot
   C. Photographs
Abstract

The following paper is the description of a creative fine arts project involving the writing, direction, and design of an original play, Sons of the Morning. This work is examined from both literary and theatrical viewpoints, with an eye to evaluating the entire learning experience.

Structuralism is used as the critical mode in the literary analysis. This technique reveals the existence of many dichotomies—good/evil, strength/weakness, love/hate—in theme, plot, and character. These opposites create conflict, the basis of drama, and contrast. They are the source of tensions between the characters and within each individual. The dichotomies are also seen to exist in the world, making its message applicable to the audience as well as to the characters.

The theatrical design of the play—sets, costumes, lights, sound, properties, and publicity materials—is shown to have been carefully planned to support the statements of the text. Each aspect of design not only bolsters theme, plot, and character, but is thoroughly compatible with every other design element.

The text of Sons of the Morning and the design of its premiere production are not separate entities, but rather coexisting parts of a unified work of art. One does not fully exist without the other. Although the script may be read and understood, it is intended to have its true realization through performance. The visual element also may be seen and appreciated as art, but has no real purpose except to support the text.

The conclusion of the paper is that intuition, more than conscious
planning, was most important in both the writing and production of the play. This is not to say that a script or design is executed haphazardly, but that the ideas are chiefly intuitive. They spring from the unconscious and are, then, carefully reworked in the conscious mind. The result is a cohesive work of art.
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my examination committee members--Lucy Gabbard, Dick Rogers, and Doug DiBianco--for their unquenchable enthusiasm for this project every inch of the way. Despite extensive responsibilities elsewhere, they always made the necessary time for readings and suggestions. The paper is much the better for their loving attention.

I also wish to thank my cast--Tim Arganbright, Kevin Dick, Dwight Parker, and Kevin Reed--for the time and effort they spent on the production. All of them made contributions that improved the play and make it a greater theatrical experience. I thank Merel Ray, Teresa Meves, Lynn Lupo, Nancy Paloian, and particularly Alene Rasmussen for the unheralded work they did on the technical aspects of the show.

To Lucy Gabbard I express undying gratitude for the countless improvements she made on both the play and the paper. She was a constant source of encouragement, and this project owes at least as much to her as it does to me. Lucy has my eternal love and admiration.

And, of course, thank you, Kim, for the typing.
Notebook to Stage:
The Creative Process in Dramatic Art

I. Introduction

This project was designed to combine the fine arts areas of theatre and literature through the writing and production of a play. Its aim was to confront the problems encountered in the creation of an original work of art. As my career goals encompass both drama and creative writing, a project of this type was ideal as a thesis and also as a personal workshop for honing skills.

The educational theatre experience is generally based upon established scripts, therefore students rarely have the challenge of solving a play's problems for the first time. Character development and design have been dealt with already by someone else. An entirely new play like *Sons of the Morning* allows the student himself to have the experience. Every problem must be worked out as it arises, which increases the difficulty but also the excitement.

Out of this awareness, my goals were formed as follows: to increase my knowledge of the technique of dramatic writing, to add to my experience of how character, action, and dialogue translate into rehearsal and performance, and to strengthen my appreciation of how the visual arts are integrated into the final theatrical product.
II. The Play as Literature

A. Writing the Play

The first draft of Sons of the Morning was written in December and January of 1980, during the semester break. Second and final versions, under committee supervision, were written in the first seven weeks of the spring semester. The final draft was approved for performance on March 1, 1981.

Playwriting textbooks recommend the preparation of a detailed outline of theme, plot, and character before the actual writing of a play begins. I have found that this does not work for me. An involved outline soon becomes useless as ideas suddenly come to mind in the course of writing. More often than not these flashes of inspiration take me far wide of the course laid down in the outline, which then turns out to have been a waste of time to prepare. I made only a very general sketch of the plot and characters for Sons of the Morning, as a framework for any ideas that appeared.

This is not to say that there was no conscious control of the writing of the play, but that the initial ideas were chiefly intuitive. In the succeeding drafts careful planning was used to knit together these ideas into a complex yet logical network.

My reliance on intuition, rather than conscious planning, inhibits my ability to explain precisely some of the ideas, actions, and lines in the play. Now that the play is complete I can try to analyze it as any other critic would, but being the author adds little to my understanding of the play. As most playwrights declare, writing appears to come
from the subconscious mind. When Professor Doug DiBianco identified a list of themes and points that he had discovered in the play, I was surprised. I had had no idea that, for example, the Master's character was grounded in Beckettian concepts of God. I can see it plainly now, but I did not plan it.

B. A Structural Analysis of the Play

I examined the play from as many critical vantage points as possible before directing it and again before undertaking this paper. A number of critical modes are in some degree applicable, but the most fruitful seems to be the structural approach. Scholars disagree on the precise nature of structuralism, but for the present purpose it can be safely defined as a literary analysis of the dichotomies, the opposites, that appear in a given work. As drama is built on conflict, this approach has obvious merit.

1. Theme

On the surface the play deals with Lucifer's revolt against God, and his subsequent expulsion from Heaven. But the play is not intended to be religious in nature, a theological tract. Rather, I wanted it to serve as an allegory for humanity. The play is about man, not angels.

The major theme, easily applicable to this world, is the degenerative effect of power and the corruptibility of all men. In three short months Michael becomes violent and autocratic because of his position as Lord High Archangel. Dichotomies of war and peace, authority and servitude, and love and hate are evident in Michael's actions and in the reactions of the other angels. Michael exhibits a constant tension
between love and hate for Lucifer, and vice versa. In addition to hav­
ing this attitude toward himself, Michael also displays ambivalence for
the Master. At times he refers to Him as Father and says, "It is a duty
and an honor to serve you", yet he also aims a sword at Him and implies
that He is fomenting war amongst His children. A tension between war
and peace also runs throughout the play, as the characters are forced
to choose and maintain sides. Lucifer is most torn since it is more or
less his decision to start the war. Several times he insists that he
does not wish to fight, although he continues his preparations. The
dichotomy between authority and servitude is a double one; the strug­
gle is for the Lord High Archangel's authority, yet all of the angels
are supposed to be subject to the Master's authority as well.

In the theme of power the angels are seen to behave exactly as men
behave--acquisitive, yet unable to control themselves when they obtain
power. The pursuit and maintenance of authority eventually force in­
trospection and self-realization, but do not make surrender of the au­
thority any easier. In the end, as history confirms, authority destroys
if not carefully controlled.

In the theme of the angels' relationship to the Master a correla­
tion can be made to the man-God relationship, particularly as seen by
post-World War II playwrights such as Samuel Beckett. The Master, like
Beckett's God, is never of much use. He abandons His children as often
as He comforts them. He is constantly deserting Michael in moments of
crisis and seems only incidentally to rescue him from Lucifer's sword.
This inconsistency may well be the spur toward Michael's ambivalence
toward the Master. Lucifer's attitude in this respect is difficult to
discern until Scene Seven, when he calls the Master a "pitiful firefly."
The Master supports Michael, at least nominally, and earns Lucifer's enmity. These conflicting feelings for the Master are universal among mankind, who live with unexplained suffering—such as the war Master permits—in the shadow of a mysterious, uncommunicative God.

Love and friendship comprises the least major theme, in which, of course, the love/hate duality of Lucifer and Michael is foremost. In Chemos and Cassiel tension exists between the power of friendship to conquer all and its seeming inability to save even one small individual. Cassiel claims that friendship is "Everything", and in his embrace Chemos seems to agree. Yet Chemos immediately warns that he will kill his friend if they meet on the battlefield. Ever the simple optimist, Cassiel insists that he will not. Friendship and love are stronger than war and death, he seems to be saying. But in the end he kills Chemos, his best friend, though in self-defense.

2. Plot

*Sons of the Morning* is chiefly a play of character, not plot. The end is predetermined by myth, and only the means of reaching it can really vary. The plot is primarily a vehicle for the dichotomies inherent in the themes.

In Scene One the fight with staves, symbolic of war, is only a sport. Yet, it stresses a pull between friendship and aggression, made more important because it indicates the growing love of the angels. By Scene Two hostility is evident even in the deep friendship of Chemos and Cassiel. Cassiel manages to reduce Chemos to sobs. And Chemos, taking part in Lucifer's revolution, rejects his friend for war. In the Wastelands scene, Lucifer calls Michael his closest blood relation, essentially his kin; yet he is planning to kill him. Moments later, Lucifer,
with one breath, orders Chemos to begin the insurrection and with the
next warns his against bloodshed. This war versus kinship conflict re-
appears in Scene Five, when Michael is full of ire and Cassiel cautions
him not to enjoy the killing. Scene Six presents the friendship/war
dichotomy most forcefully. The war is only in its beginning stage, yet
Chemos not only tries to kill Cassiel outright, but also twice insists
that he must try again in the future. Cassiel's defense is with words:
friendship, like war, is much vaster than just Chemos and him. But ul-
timately Cassiel loses Chemos, who goes off to war as if his friend had
never spoken to him.

Lucifer reveals his own difficulty with ambivalence in the con-
frontation with Michael in Scene Seven. He is obviously sincere when he
mentions brotherhood and the "early days, when pride and power were the
furthest things from [their] minds." Throughout the entire scene Mi-
chael is hard-minded, but he too is tormented by the need to fight his
kin. When Lucifer exits Michael starts to call out "Brother!" and actu-
ally does whisper it to himself. Then, at swordpoint, he blames the
Master for the impending fratricide, manifesting that, for the moment,
he hates the Master as much as he loves him. Even in the midst of the
war in Scene Eight there is reference to friendship. Cassiel has no
sooner stated his difficulty in attacking his brothers than the great
conflict is upon him. He meets Chemos and is forced to fight. Lucifer
and Michael fight without agonizing over friendship, but afterward Mi-
chael expresses the sentiment as he wails that they "have smashed fine
crystal". Finally, Cassiel carries in the dead Chemos and sings a song
of love--the words of which: "Friendship bright as the Master above..."
constitute a challenge to the Master's glory--thus taking the love and
death dichotomy to its limit.

3. Character

The play's major dichotomies are important to the substance of the characters. Lucifer is undeniably a strong character, as he is traditionally in myth. He is intelligent, athletic, and confident. He is fearless and aggressive, knowing what he wants and how to achieve it. Michael is strong also, which is in keeping with literary precedent, but his is a quiet, unassuming strength. However, the office he ascends to modifies and distorts his strength into a grotesque parody of Lucifer's.

Cassiel is weaker personally, but is bolstered by his resolute faith in the existence of friendship as a force for good. He is simple in thought, language, and motivation until he is forced into complexity by Chemos' actions. Chemos demonstrates best the dichotomy between strength and weakness. He is weak in that he is easily manipulated into unthinking allegiance to Lucifer. Apparently he seeks to be more than "little Chemos" by hanging onto the coattails of a great figure. Yet his unwavering conviction throughout the play lends him strength. Cassiel makes a determined effort on several occasions to win Chemos over to his side with its double advantages of both numbers and the presence of the Master, but Chemos stands firm. And this strength leads to his death.

Clearly, all of the characters possess both strong and weak points. Lucifer gives the impression of perfect strength, but he is blind. He cannot see needs of others, nor that war is effective only for political aims, not moral ones. Michael becomes dictatorial, but that is more an unavoidable consequence of power than a character flaw. His weakness lies in his blind faith in the Master, which allows no
compromise with Lucifer. Cassiel's simplicity is both a strength and a weakness. He is less open to corruption, but he is also less able to comprehend the impact of the enormous events that are reshaping his world. The once pliable Chemos steadfastly maintains his stance, but his stubbornness becomes almost a tragic flaw.

These character oppositions create the tension and conflict without which theatre can not exist. Tension underlies the decisions each character faces: Lucifer to fight a civil war against friends and brothers for an ideal, Michael to retain the title of Lord High Archangel and thereby make his personality change permanent, Chemos to stand by Lucifer and lose both Cassiel and his own identity, and Cassiel to defend a half-crazed Michael and kill Chemos. These decisions are difficult as they stand, the security of the angels' world depending on them. But the decisions are made even more difficult because the character traits that make them necessary blend and intermix. Chemos is clearly with Lucifer, yet he is more like Michael in his poetic temperament. Cassiel stands with Michael, but resembles Lucifer in athletic ability and attempts at moderation. Moreover, the two archangels are constantly seen to think and react alike. They draw one hundred sixty-nine times in combat. In a sense the play cannot end until the characters sort out their emotions and make their decisions, which does not occur until Scene Eight. The tragedy is that after the decisions are made, some by themselves and some by the Master, the original situation still exists. "The Games go on," says Lucifer. "Only the battlefield is different," Michael echoes. So it is with man. The play, like the pattern of life, is circular. The great irony is that the circle is historically the symbol of perfection and of God. In Sons of the
the circle becomes a symbol only of pain.

III. The Play as Theatre

A. Casting

Casting Sons of the Morning involved no difficult evaluations of actors' abilities. Only four actors auditioned, due to the late performance date—April 9. As a semester advances, students accumulate commitments. Other plays have already been cast and are in rehearsal, and year's-end papers are due imminently. Understandably, students are reluctant to undertake projects that require a great expenditure of time in April and May. Furthermore, an unproven original script may have frightened off prospective auditioners who had had negative experiences with student-authored works in the past. I was very fortunate that those who did audition had been active, both as actors and as technicians, in university productions. Thus, I was familiar with their potential and abilities and could avoid errors in casting caused by mistaken first impressions. Each actor fit one role and only one, and fit it well, both vocally and physically. Three of the four were performance majors in either theatre or music, and the two men playing Lucifer and Michael had had stage combat experience, which simplified my job. I did not have to use precious time explaining the fundamentals of swordplay. I could, and did, simply describe the desired result and Kevin Reed and Dwight Parker achieved it.
B. Rehearsals

After the cast list was posted I held a read-through of the script to clarify definitions, pronunciations, and characterizations. I explained what was planned in the technical area and passed out rehearsal schedules. These schedules gave the time and place of each rehearsal and the material to be covered. The rehearsals were held chiefly in the late afternoon, a time open for all the cast members and not in conflict with the Theatre Department's mainstage production rehearsals. The afternoons were preferable to late-night rehearsals, the only alternative, which often leave actors tired and unable to concentrate. After two weeks the rehearsal period was interrupted by spring break, which was an inconvenience as it broke the continuity of the rehearsals. It did, however, provide the actors an opportunity to solidify their lines before dress rehearsals.

C. Direction

The rehearsal period was not particularly brief, but the individual rehearsals were. This meant that I could not use many of the directing techniques I had planned, such as improvisation for character exploration. Luckily, these activities were expendable due to the cast's experience and talent. The actors were capable of effective character analysis on their own.

I spent the first week of rehearsals blocking the basic movements of each scene. As the staging was arena style, with the audience completely surrounding the acting area, I had to make certain that the
actors excluded no portion of this audience for too long a time. This required me to be in constant movement from seating area to seating area, changing my vantage point.

During the second and most important week of rehearsals I went through each scene individually and concentrated on characterization. The actors and I would discuss the objective of the scene and the best way to reach it. We also spent considerable time practicing the physical aspects of the show—the staff and sword fights, the Scene Two "Winner Is" segment, the disarming of Chemos in Scene Six, and the final battle sequence. As the audience was extremely close to a great deal of violent acrobatics in a small stage space, the fights had to be carefully worked out and rehearsed to be safe. Both the staves and the swords could have done damage if permitted to stray. The result was a seemingly dangerous conflict which effectively gripped the audience.

During these first two weeks of working out the general aspects of the show, my approach was democratic rather than dictatorial. I gave the actors free rein to experiment and challenge my concepts. I did not wish to tie them down to specifics and stifle my creativity. As a result, they came up with a number of excellent ideas, vocal and physical, that were improvements upon my own ideas. Their enthusiasm for their roles led to constant searching for ways to make a greater impact on the audience. I confined myself, as much as possible, to acting as a mirror for their experiments and a source of reminders about articulation, projection, and body position.

One of the gratifications of this period of rehearsal was the small amount of rewriting that was needed. Frequently, drastic revisions are made when original scripts are first acted, but this was not the case
with Sons of the Morning. The performance and my concept meshed very well, and almost no rewriting was done. The battle scene at the beginning of Scene Eight was the only exception. It turned out to be too long and repetitive, and was cut down considerably to keep up the pace of the show.

I used the first two weeks to make certain that the actors fully realized what I had in mind for every line. They, in turn, demonstrated repeatedly that there was more than one "correct" interpretation of many of the lines. By the time dress rehearsals began, I was certain that we all agreed on our objectives and that we were satisfactorily achieving these. Since I was both the author and a performer, I took the precaution of having Professor E.G. Gabbard, my supervisor for the theatrical end of the project, view the play twice. He made many correct and helpful observations of problems that I was unaware of, due to my preoccupation with the writing and my performance duties. A sample problem that came to light was that the Voice in Scene One, which I performed in addition to playing the timpani, needed amplification to enhance its impact. My failure to realize this was the result of a loss of objectivity occasioned by my performance.

D. Designing the Play

1. Setting

The role of a theatrical designer, particularly the scenic designer, is to create a fitting environment for the play. Designs are not the show in themselves, but support to increase the effectiveness of the organic whole. The most important aspect of the setting of Sons of the
Morning was that the playing area was circular. As previously mentioned, the circle is a symbol of perfection and God. I kept the stage as uncluttered as possible to allow for a great deal of movement. This was necessary for the fights, but I also wanted to let the characters pace about like caged animals. They were trapped in their situation, and the movement had to portray this. Also, the arena staging allowed for increased realism in the acting. Since the audience was all around the actors, the performers were not limited in the directions they faced, as they would have been on a proscenium or even a thrust stage.

There were only three set pieces, the scenic design relying primarily on suggestivity and imagination. In Scene One benches were used to indicate the domains of Lucifer and Michael. They were basically white, symbolic of purity and the Master, and red, symbolic of aggression. Lucifer's bench also had a bit of the green in his costume, and Michael's likewise had some blue. In Scenes Three, Five, and Seven, a boulder was used to indicate the Mount, with the intention of calling up associations of Peter (Cephas--Rock) and stolidity in the minds of the audience. Constructed of wood and Celastic to be portable, yet bear the weight of an actor, it was sponge-painted brown for Chemos and Cassiel, white for the Master, red for war, and black for death. Two diamond-shaped screens were hung on the Playroom walls, one in Lucifer's green and one in Michael's blue. Originally these were intended to receive lighting projections. When this proved impossible, they served to break up the large expanses of black wall and add interest to the room.

2. Properties

Although the properties were not numerous, they comprised the bulk of the play's financial expense. Besides the candle in Scene Four, and
the two wooden swords in Scene Eight that Chemos and Cassiel used briefly and in dim light, the play called for two quarterstaves, two broadswords, and a dagger. I wanted these to be genuine in order to suggest the reality and danger of actual combat. Due to the close proximity of the audience, substitutes would be immediately apparent. The two fights between Lucifer and Michael involved actual contact, and there is no method of achieving the sound of swords in an intimate theatre other than by using genuine steel.

The staves were simply 1½" hardwood dowels, six feet long, that were suitably painted for each archangel. Lucifer's was painted green with black and silver bands. Silver is traditionally considered less pure than gold and is frequently associated with dark mythic powers. Michael's staff was painted blue, with white and gold bands. Gold symbolizes both purity and the powers of good. Both staves were varnished to give the paint protection from chipping with contact.

A great asset to the production were the two broadswords and the dagger, purchased from American Fencers Supply Company of San Francisco, who were cooperative throughout our dealings with them. Kevin Reed bought the dagger himself, wishing to have it as his own after the show. The swords, purchased with funds from the School of Fine Arts, became the property of the Theatre Arts department. These were nearly four feet long and modified for stage combat. Both they and the dagger were elaborately detailed and historically authentic, and were perfectly appropriate to the total design concept of the show. Unfortunately, one of the sword's developed a loose blade, due to the extremely rough use it received, and required a replacement part from the manufacturer, which did not arrive until two days before the production. This cost
much rehearsal time and forced a scaling-down of the Lucifer-Michael fight.

3. **Lighting**

The original plan for the lighting called for many special effects that became impossible when eight of the Playroom's twelve dimmers broke down. The remainder allowed for only a bare minimum of general lighting of the stage space. Luckily an old autotransformer was available to provide control for the battle specials and the light that symbolized the Master.

Besides the general illumination, I had designed spotlights to pinpoint Lucifer and Michael at the beginning of Scene One, gobos to throw leaf patterns in Scene Four, and a strobe light for the climax of the archangels' fight. None of these were possible without the rest of the dimmers. The few specials we did have were effective. For the Master we used a single ellipsoidal spotlight to throw a white circle on the exact center of the stage, where the Mount boulder was placed. This light created marvelously expressive shadows on actors who stood in it. For the battle scenes we used two ellipsoidals that threw a pulsating red glow.

Also intended but not possible were blue lights for the night scenes. As a substitute we reduced the general illumination by half. The darkening of the stage was a dramatic necessity as the war approached. At the end of Scene Seven the lights gradually returned to full intensity with the coming of dawn, which was an ironic comment on the darkest of days and an indication of the beginning of a new way of life for the angels. At the end of the play Cassiel and the body of Chemos are in the Master's light at center, as if cradled by the God
who had had a hand in their destruction.

4. Sound

As with the lighting, lack of materials made many of the planned sound effects impossible. The sound of wings could not be satisfactorily achieved and neither could the distant laughing and singing in Scene Two. I originally planned a trumpet for Lucifer's call to his followers, but fearing identification with Gabriel, I substituted the sound of a large gong. The Scene One Stadium crowd was taped from a sound effects record, and the volume control was used to create cheers.

A timpani and a triangle were borrowed from the Music Department to provide sound between scenes and as a mood-setting device during scenes. As I do not know music-making, only its history, the drumming must be considered more of a sound than as actual music. I could not write down what I wanted, nor could I adequately explain it to anyone else, so I myself played this "music" during the performance. It consisted of very simple themes of aggression and death, on the timpani, and a single note of friendship on the triangle. The most effective sound sequence was the loud, militaristic drumming played during the stylized battle of Scene Eight, which greatly increased the tension.

5. Costumes

The costumes came the closest to the desired effect of all the designs. I wanted a skintight "Marvel Comics" superhero look to humanize the characters and avoid the stereotypic impression of angels, while keeping a serious tone. To get the colors I needed I was forced to buy and/or dye tights and leotards at my own expense. Next to the properties the costumes cost most, and they were the most time-consuming items to construct. The side trim was a major problem on all the costumes.
We originally tried spray-painting it, which was totally unsatisfactory as we could not get a clean edge. Eventually we hit upon elastic, which, with the proper stitch, would stretch enough to remain on the costume through violent movement without ripping.

Lucifer was put in green because red was considered too trite, too expected. Green symbolized his jealousy of Michael's position, and it symbolized life and vitality. His trim was black, and his emblem, on belt and chest, was a black circle with a diagonal line through it. The belt covered the joint of tights and leotard, giving the costume a single-piece look. Lucifer wore the red headband of the Lord High Archangel in Scene One and a black headband during the rest of the play. As jewelry he wore a silver neck chain, a silver wedding ring (his link to the Master), a gold/silver/copper archangel's ring, and a bloodstone.

Michael's costume was serene blue with white trim. The emblem was a circle with a vertical line, pointing up to God. In Scene One he wore a yellow headband, as close to gold as was possible, and later he wore the archangel's headband. His neck chain was gold, as was his wedding band, and he, too, wore an archangel's ring.

Cassiel's bodysuit was a rich rusty-brown--a solid, earthy color--with white trim. His emblem was a circle with a stable horizontal line through it. The neck chain was gold and the headband was the color of Chemos' bodysuit.

Chemos' costume was gold, based in brown but more exciting than Cassiel's. The trim was black, the emblem a simple, lonely circle with no line. Seemingly the plain circle would be the most perfect, but in actual practice it looked lost, out of place. His headband was rusty-brown, and he wore a silver neck chain, a pale blue ring, and a pale
red ring. The ring colors, as well as the color of the bodysuit, were chosen to demonstrate Chemos' ambivalence and confusion.

Two costume pieces were common to every character—the black, soft-soled slippers and the white robes. These robes were originally designed to be of near-transparent chiffon sewn through with glitter. In stage lighting the effect would have been of the actors surrounded by stardust as they moved. But the cost of chiffon was prohibitive, and the robes had to be obtained from stock. They were white, billowy chorus robes that pulled over the head and were belted with material the color of the bodysuits, like ancient Greek chitons. To make them less "angelic", we slashed them on the sides up to the knee. Had I had a choice I would not have used these robes because they had to be removed on stage. As they were pulled over the head they looked awkward and slightly muffled the actors' voices. But their solid whiteness did give all of the angels a veneer of purity which they shed for battle.

6. Publicity

The programs and posters had the same design, consisting of the play's title and a star. Sons of the Morning was set in a fantasy-type script, freehanded, similar to scripts popular on sword-and-sorcery titles. The star was composed of faceted rays that made it resemble the star of Bethlehem. Each ray also looked like a sword blade, and the star rose out of the word "Morning" to suggest a rising sun. At the top of the posters was Michael's final comment in Scene Seven--"The fratricide is underway." I felt that these words stated the play's message and were enticing enough to attract interest in the play.
IV. Conclusion

Having participated in every phase of the creation and presentation of a dramatic work—from writing and directing to designing and constructing sets, costumes, properties (even hanging the lights and playing the timpani in performance)—I can say without hesitation that I now have a more comprehensive understanding of the various arts involved. The project was to relate two fine arts areas, literature and theatre. But theatre is a composite of all the arts, and I found myself of necessity incorporating visual art, music, and even dance into the final product. The aim of the project was to confront the problems encountered in an original work of art. Some of these problems were dealt with more successfully than others, but the whole experience was of educational value from first to last.

I learned that writing, directing, designing, and acting all benefit from planning, but that they truly become art when the creative unconscious is allowed to operate freely. The script would have suffered had my intuition been stifled. The play would have appeared forced and "well-made". This is also true of the other esthetic elements involved in the project.

I also learned that creating a play is a collaborative art, as well as a composite one. Even though I undertook a great many tasks myself, Sons of the Morning was not a solo effort. My cast, my committee, my stage manager, my lighting crew, my costumer—all of these made invaluable suggestions prompted by honest enthusiasm for the play. They made it a better play than it would have been with only my decisions.

Finally, I learned that the act of writing is akin to giving birth,
and the acts of directing and designing resemble rearing the child. So it is in all of the arts. There is little guaranteed quality control in either, but the work can never be considered a waste of time. Even if the child is not perfect—and Sons of the Morning does have flaws—there is much to be learned. And, as every father loves his child, I love this play. "There was good sport at his making," says Gloucester in King Lear, "and the whore-son must be acknowledged." So it is with Sons of the Morning.
Appendix
SONS
of the
MORNING

a play by
Terry Kroenung

© 1981
SONS OF THE MORNING was first presented at Eastern Illinois University on April 9, 1981, with the following cast:

- LUCIFER: Dwight Parker
- MICHAEL: Kevin Reed
- CHEMOS: Kevin Dick
- CASSIEL: Tim Arganbright
- VOICE: Terry Kroenung

The production was directed and designed by Terry Kroenung, with additional lighting design by Dwight Parker and Alene Rasmussen. Fight choreography was by Kevin Reed.
To Alene,
who came along the same time
as this play
Scene One takes place in the spring; Scenes Two through Seven on one evening three months later; Scene Eight the following morning.

**Scene One**--The City Stadium

**Scene Two**--Philosopher's Hill

**Scene Three**--The Mount of Holies

**Scene Four**--The Wastelands

**Scene Five**--The Mount of Holies

**Scene Six**--A City Street

**Scene Seven**--The Mount of Holies

**Scene Eight**--The City Streets and The Hall of Light
Scene One

Scene--The floor of an athletic stadium, mid-afternoon.

Set--A circular open area, arena staging. Two simple but substantial stone benches face one another across the stage. Two screens, large diamond shapes in the colors of Lucifer and Michael, occupy the walls above and behind the audience.

A timpani offstage begins playing an ominous cadence, which becomes oppressive and militaristic as it speeds up. At its height a single triangle note sounds, and the general lighting reveals the actors in place.

Lucifer is standing in front of his bench, with Chemos beside and behind him, holding his quarterstaff. Michael and Cassiel occupy similar positions across the stage. The sounds of a large crowd fill the arena.

VOICE (off-stage, amplified)

And now, Brethren, I direct your attention to the stadium floor for the final match of these Spring Games: the long-awaited contest between our Lord High Archangel, victor in all of his bouts thus far... Lucifer!...

(Lucifer waves all around to the crowd with both arms, smiling broadly and confidently. The crowd cheers.)
VOICE (as cheers ebb)

...And our other archangel, no lower in our sight, undefeated as well in both sword and hand-to-hand competition...Michael!

(Michael waves almost tentatively with one hand, smiling shyly. The crowd cheers.)

VOICE (over crowd)

Seconding Lord Lucifer is our brother Chemos.

(Chemos steps to Lucifer's side.)

VOICE

And seconding Michael is our brother Cassiel.

(Cassiel steps to Michael's side. Both seconds begin assisting the archangels in removing their robes.)

VOICE

You are all familiar with the regulations governing staff bouts. The first to touch his opponent is the winner. The head and the hands are not targets. Are the judges ready? Are the contestants?

(Lucifer and Michael take staves from their seconds. Lucifer indulges in some exercises and showy antics with his staff. Michael merely stands ready. Lucifer finishes his antics, salutes the crowd and Michael. Michael nods slightly. The timpani begins to beat, slowly.)

VOICE

Begin!

(The crowd lets out a roar as the archangels leap to meet one another at center stage. The match is perfectly even. Lucifer is a quick, flashy athlete, making many unnecessary leaps and turns. He deliberately leaves himself open several times, always saving himself at the last instant. Constantly laughing, he seems to be taunting Michael. Michael
is cool, solid, economical in his movements. He is expressionless, voiceless. The match proceeds, building in speed, the crowd and the drum at white heat, until there is a simultaneous touch.)

VOICE

Enough!

(All sound and movement stops. There is a long, expectant pause.)

VOICE

You are too evenly matched, Brothers. The contest is declared...a stalemate.

(A tremendous ovation. Lucifer laughs, tries to embrace Michael, who turns away and goes back to Cassiel. Lucifer stares after him for a moment, then makes a show of laughing it off. He returns to Chemos.)

VOICE

And the Master congratulates you both on your sportsmanship, your showmanship, and the high calibre of your competition.

(Another ovation. Lucifer jumps up onto his bench and raises his arms for silence. He receives it.)

LUCIFER

Tell the Master that I thank Him...humbly...and that next time I'll snap his staff like a dry twig: (looks at Michael, laughs; the crowd shrieks) On the first pass: (laughs again; the crowd roars again)

MICHAEL

(as the crowd quiets, remaining on the floor) I, too, thank the Master, with all the humility my heart can hold. And I dedicate my performance in these Games to Him...along with my life and soul.

(The crowd gives its greatest cheer, gradually quieting as the stadium empties and the contestants prepare to leave. Lucifer intercepts
Michael and begins speaking to him in a near-goadng manner. Michael is obviously working very hard at patience. They cannot be heard because Chemos and Cassiel have met near Lucifer's bench.

CASSIEL

(casually, a foot on the bench) Well, this makes it no wins, no losses, a hundred and sixty-eight ties. (tosses Michael's robe onto a shoulder)

CHEMOS

(reserved, tense; he is seated, Lucifer's robe carefully folded in his lap) It's getting to be a tradition--the Festival, the Games, and another draw. (smiles; Cassiel laughs aloud)

CASSIEL

At least they're consistent. Archangels should be.

CHEMOS

Yes. (pause; stares at Lucifer and Michael) A hundred and sixty-eight...(to Cassiel) But you know, Michael fought well today. More confidently, I think.

CASSIEL

He ought to've. He practiced for weeks.

CHEMOS

(raising an eyebrow) Michael?

CASSIEL

It surprised me, too. He's never bothered to prepare for the Games before. He'd just put in an appearance--I imagine the Master strongly suggested he ought to---, get it over with, and hurry back to his other business.
CHEMOS

He has always preferred thinking to athletics...and singing, too.

CASSIEL

Yes. (a touch of pride, looking at Michael) Didn't you just love that song he wrote to commemorate the Games? I liked it because it was... (struggles for the word)

CHEMOS

Sensitive?

CASSIEL

Sensitive: Right. It was sensitive, without being weak. Beautiful.

CHEMOS

(singing, chiefly to himself)

"Power of love,
Power of love
Friendships bright
As the Master above..."

CASSIEL

(mildly surprised) You're a better singer than I gave you credit for being.

CHEMOS

I work at it a little. I have to be good at something. I'm so bad at the Games.

CASSIEL

You're not all that terrible. You just need some training. (hefts Michael's staff, nods at Lucifer's) Come on, let's try a few passes. (looks at the archangels) They don't look like they're going to be
ready to go very soon.

(They move away from the archangels and spar with the staves. Cassiel is much the better athlete, fast and limber, and he scores three times in rapid succession. He gives a tip to Chemos each time, but Chemos does not improve. This goes on silently through the archangels' conversation.)

LUCIFER

(good-naturedly) You can't fool me. Confess. You finally took my advice and got yourself into shape, hmm? Some clandestine practicing in the hills? (laughs)

MICHAEL

If you must know, that is exactly what I did. Cassiel there was very helpful.

(They pause for a moment to watch Chemos lose again. Lucifer winces.)

LUCIFER

He does move well. More like my technique than yours, though.

MICHAEL

Yes. Why do you think I chose him?

LUCIFER

A surrogate. (smiles) Now I see why you suddenly started anticipating some of my moves.

MICHAEL

But why try anything? That's what I'm wondering. It's so out of character for the Great Thinker. (smiles knowingly) Has Michael finally caught the fever of competition? Has he decided to feel the thrill of a victory instead of the (chuckles) trill of a melody?
MICHAEL

Hardly.

LUCIFER

What, then?

MICHAEL

It was decided that you--(checks himself) Never mind. I'd rather
not say.

LUCIFER

I thought so! You're embarrassed! You're ashamed to be like the
rest of us, valuing your body as much as your mind.

MICHAEL

As usual you only grasp the physical aspect of the situation.

LUCIFER

It's hard to grasp anything that isn't physical.

MICHAEL

(sighing) Wit.

LUCIFER

In a way. (pause) So, would you care to have at it again? With­
out an audience this time?

MICHAEL

No.

LUCIFER

What's the matter? Do you only fight...compete...when there's
praise to be won?

MICHAEL

You would know more about that sort of thing than I.
Oh, ho! Wit. You are just like the rest of us.

(Their voices fade as the focus shifts to the sparring angels. Cassiel is pressing Chemos. He scores on Chemos' shoulder, harder than intended. Chemos grimaces and sinks to one knee. Cassiel drops his staff and kneels beside him, noticeably concerned.

CASSIEL

(a mother hen) Are you all right?

CHEMOS

I'm fine.

CASSIEL

I got carried away. I'm sorry.

CHEMOS

Don't worry about it.

CASSIEL

I'm so clumsy sometimes. I could just--

CHEMOS

(near laughter) Cass, will you relax! I'll live, believe me.

CASSIEL

(smiling) Sorry. Come on, sit down. (steers him to Lucifer's bench) Does it still hurt?

CHEMOS

(rubbing his shoulder) Only when you mention it.

CASSIEL

It's been so long since I played strictly for fun that I suppose I all but forgot how. We've been going at it so seriously--
CHEMOS

Who has?

CASSIEL

Michael and I. I didn't tell you, I know. He didn't want to risk losing the surprise on Lucifer. Michael had me practice with him out there in the Wastelands. He said I moved so much like Lucifer that I would be a great help to him. Flattering, really. Don't you think?

CHEMOS

Yes. (pause) He just came to you out of a clear blue sky and said, "Get me in shape for the big match, Cassiel"?

CASSIEL

(smiling) Just about. I was sitting on Philosopher's Hill around two months ago, watching some of the cherubim play tag above the trees, when the tip of a staff landed on my shoulder. (Cheemos winces) Sorry. Well, I was worried for a second, until I heard Michael's voice behind me. "Let's go," he said. "I want to improve my form for the Games." Just like that. I stared at him with my jaw hanging open, not believing that pious Michael wanted to practice weaponry. Apparently he decided some sort of explanation was needed, because he went on and said, (looks at archangels, whispers to Chemos) "Lucifer needs some lessons in humility. Before it's too late."

CHEMOS

He didn't!

CASSIEL

You know I wouldn't say it if it weren't true.

CHEMOS

(jumping up) But that's treason!
CASSIEL

(grABBing his arm, pulling him away from archangels) Careful! That's an archangel you're talking about.

CHEMOS

Yes, but it was the Lord High Archangel he was talking about. And it's still--

CASSIEL

Will you hush? Either of them could wipe us out with a yawn. It's not our place to judge them.

CHEMOS

I know, but-- (stares at archangels, Michael is waiting out a speech of Lucifer's)

CASSIEL

But what?

CHEMOS

Nothing.

(Lucifer exploded into a huge, rolling laugh that contains little mirth. He pats Michael on the cheek and swoops out. Michael glares after him.)

LUCIFER

Come on, Chemos! Bring my staff!

(Chemos hesitates, then picks up Lucifer's staff and follows. He stops at center stage, looks back at Cassiel.)

CASSIEL

Nothing?

(Chemos turns back to the exit, is stopped in his tracks by Michael, looking at him. They remain this way for a long moment, then

-10-
the lights fade out, accompanied by an aggressive timpani that remains until the next scene begins.)

Scene Two

Scene--Philosopher's Hill

Set--An open area. The benches have been removed.

Chemos and Cassiel lie on their backs at center stage, watching some activity in the sky above them.

CHEMOS

(pointing) Look! There he goes again!

CASSIEL

(excited admiration) Can he ever move!

CHEMOS

Oh-oh...now they've got him.

CASSIEL

Wrong. Watch. (they do)

CHEMOS

(a gleeful laugh) What a feint! He's beautiful!

CASSIEL

I told you he was.

CHEMOS

Look! They're running into one another trying to catch him. I love it! He's flying circles around them.

CASSIEL

Everyone admits he's the best.

CHEMOS

Everyone is right. (up on an elbow) Why haven't we ever done this
before?

CASSIEL

(sitting up) I asked you to a hundred times. You always found something else to do.

CHEMOS

I really didn't think I'd like it. But I do. It's like a dance, isn't it?

CASSIEL

They have a dance. Worked it up with the seraphim. It started out as an elaborate game of aerial tag, like this, and sort of accidentally turned into a performance. So Raphael choreographed it and came up with a hundred-angel sky ballet. It puts our earthbound dances to shame.

CHEMOS

I can imagine. (pause) You know, if it is that good they should try to get it included in the Autumn Games.

CASSIEL

They're going to. They've been trying and trying for ages, but they could never get it past Lucifer. I suppose it wasn't physical enough for him. Plus, he's never favored contests he couldn't dominate. You know that. Remember when some of the seraphim went to him and asked for air races? He all but threw them off the Mount. And the Master's never heard an appeal over the head of the Lord High Archangel--no matter who he is--so no flying events have ever been allowed. (pause, sighs) Well, now that Michael's making the decisions that should change without too much trouble.
CHEMOS

(jumping up and moving away) I thought we had an agreement?

CASSIEL

Sorry. I forgot. (stands) You know, you're stupid to mope about it. It's been three months. More. (pause) I know he's your friend but...(searches for the term) water under the bridge, hmm?

CHEMOS

(his back to him, not moving) You mean tears under the bridge.

CASSIEL

(smiling) You talk more and more like him every day. Poetry every five minutes.

CHEMOS

(sharply) What's wrong with that?

CASSIEL

(soothingly) Not a thing, not a thing. Don't be so defensive all the time. You never used to be. I mean, Michael's a poet, too.

(pause) It's just that sometimes you're harder to understand than you were last spring.

CHEMOS

Hard to understand? Like Lucifer?

CASSIEL

Well...yes. Like Lucifer.

CHEMOS

(with surprising heat, turning to him) That's the whole trouble, isn't it? No one's ever understood him, or even tried. Except me, and a few others. More than you--(checks himself) None of you know the first thing about what moves him, drives him. All you know is that the
Master replaced him with Michael, so he must be undesirable somehow. You don't care about a thing except today--this breath, this chance--while Lucifer worries about all our futures. I don't even believe that the Master--

CASSIEL

(scandalized) Chemos!

CHEMOS

(turning to him, calm) You shrieked?

CASSIEL

It was talk like that that cost Lucifer his crown. Your words can be pretty sometimes, but they can also be stupid. If the Lord High Archangel isn't immune from punishment, how can you expect to be? Honestly, you can show the common sense of a --

CHEMOS

This is a reprimand, right?

(From this point on the lights very slowly fade, to indicate a setting sun by the end of the scene.)

CASSIEL

(pause, moves to the edge of the stage, a triangle chimes beneath the speech) It's getting dark. They're lighting the torches along the main boulevards. You can see the faces of the lamplighters, even from up here. (pause) This is my favorite time--the fires in the temple-homes, the torches, the stars, the laughing and singing as everyone goes home for the night...

CHEMOS

(at the opposite edge of the stage, a timpani sounds softly beneath the speech) We're up above the evening haze. The torches are
shimmering in it, like Lucifer's eyes do sometimes. Doesn't everything have a swimmy look? It could almost be underwater. (pause) Listen! The singing...how distant and unreal it sounds...voices in a dream. (pause, softly) The haze...it's ominous the way it slithers in from the western Wastelands, so slowly that you never notice it until it's around you...and in you. Then it's too late. The mist has reshaped your world. The old, familiar places seem chilling and eerie instead of cozy and reassuring; your best friends are all but impossible to recognize, even face-to-face... (half-looks over his shoulder toward Cassiel) especially face-to-face; and the Master from the golden thoroughfares of the City, can't be seen at all.

CASSIEL

(after a long pause, looking off-stage) Is it just me, or is the Master's Essence faint again?

CHEMOS

(crossing to him, looking out) You're right, it is. That's the fourth time in as many days. Odd...

CASSIEL

I wonder what's going on? Michael says that when the Master fades like that it means He's elsewhere, that He's not on the Mount.

CHEMOS

Yes. Lucifer told me that once, too.

CASSIEL

I don't suppose he ever mentioned where He went?

CHEMOS

No. Never.
CASSIEL

Do you think he knew? Michael seems to.

CHEMOS

I could never tell. I imagine he did. He's always kept half of his knowledge to himself.

CASSIEL

If he'd shut up entirely he'd still be Lord High Archangel. (he grimaces as Chemos stomps away) Ohh! I did it again! (goes halfway to Chemos) Chem, I'm sorry. I don't seem like much of a friend when I rub salt in a wound. (pause) Do you think I spend too much time with Michael? He doesn't like Lucifer very much, you know.

CHEMOS

And, by extension, he doesn't like me very much.

CASSIEL

Now I didn't say that.

CHEMOS

You didn't have to say it. I've seen the looks he's given me. At the Spring Games, after the stalemate with Lucifer and that scene later on, he gave me such a glare...it was like being kicked between the eyes.

CASSIEL

(a humorless laugh) Funny...

CHEMOS

Hmm?

CASSIEL

That's what we've always said about Lucifer. That his stare was like a physical blow.
CHEMOS

That is funny. Maybe we should add that to the Autumn Games.

CASSIEL

Add what?

CHEMOS

A staring match between Lucifer and Michael. To see who would look away first.

CASSIEL

Don't be silly.

CHEMOS

I'm not. I'm serious. Just as a one-time contest. They draw at everything else. Perhaps this would break the deadlock.

CASSIEL

You aren't joking.

CHEMOS

(giving him a hard look) I haven't joked in three months. (becomes strangely enthusiastic) Can't you see it? The Gamesmaster calls out their names...(acts this out) they march to the center of the stadium floor...they salute the cheering throng...one another...the drums begin (timpani starts, low) ...the contestants face off...get set...wave that they're ready...and go! (slowly moves in on Cassiel) Their eyes lock like swords, straining against one another with all of their weight...pushing, pushing, pushing!...until one of them can't be held back any longer...until one of them is unable to withstand the power of the other...and the winner is---: (drum stops, long pause, Chemos smiles with slight embarrassment)
CASSIEL

Say it.

CHEMOS

No.

CASSIEL

Oh, come on.

CHEMOS

No.

CASSIEL

We have to have confidence in our heroes. Otherwise they're no better than we are. Say it.

CHEMOS

(backing away) No!

CASSIEL

(pursuing) It's just one word. What can it hurt?

CHEMOS

Please! (covers his ears) Don't, Cass!

CASSIEL

(keeping after him) "And the winner is--!"

CHEMOS

(stepping back) Cass! In the name of friendship...

CASSIEL

(pursuing) Exactly. In the name of friendship. "And the winner is--!"

CHEMOS

(backs away, falls) I won't!
CASSIEL
(following) You must: "And the winner is--!"

CHEMOS
(on his knees) No!!

CASSIEL
(directly above him, insistently) "And the winner is--!" "And
the winner is--!" "And the winner is--!"

CHEMOS
(on his knees, shrieking to the heavens) LUCIFER!!! (half-pause)
The winner is Lucifer! (crumbles to the floor) Lucifer...Lucifer...
Lucifer...

(A long pause. Chemos sobs, center stage. Cassiel kneels, puts a
hand on his shoulder.)

CASSIEL
(a whisper) With friends like me...

CHEMOS
(sniffing) Why'd you do that? (looks at him) Why'd you do that?

CASSIEL
You had to be shown. You had to be made to see what Lucifer's done
to you.

CHEMOS
(looking away) He hasn't done anything to me.

CASSIEL
(stands) No. Nothing except bury you in a pit of false hero wor-
ship, in a trench you've dug with your own gullible fingers. And the
dirt's been flying so thick and fast around you that you can't tell any-
more whether it's leaving that pit or falling down on top of you. I
just tried to make you stop digging long enough to check, that's all.

CHEMOS

Well, now look who's judging archangels. (stands) You're jealous, aren't you?

CASSIEL

Of what?! Of whom?!

CHEMOS

Of me. It upsets you that I'm in on the ground floor of the New Order, and you're being left in the ashes of the Old.

CASSIEL

Chem...(struggles for words) My order's not in ashes.

CHEMOS

Unlike you, we fight for fire. We demand it.

CASSIEL

And you'll get it. That's what I'm afraid of.

(A gong sounds in the distance. Chemos looks at Cassiel, then starts out.)

CASSIEL

Not again?

CHEMOS

What?

CASSIEL

You're going out into the Wastelands for another one of those ral-

lies of his.

CHEMOS

Discussions.
CASSIEL

Isn't that a little like calling a sword a table knife? What do you discuss? Or is that a secret?

CHEMOS

It is a secret.

CASSIEL

Meaning Lucifer told you to keep quiet.

CHEMOS

Meaning he asked us to keep quiet, yes.

CASSIEL

Yes. Well, I've seen how he asks people to do things. It chills the blood.

CHEMOS

Why do you all think he's some sort of monster? He asked me, all right? He didn't twist my arm or hold a dagger under my arm or even make the most oblique threat. He asked me. And gave perfectly good reasons why we should keep quiet.

CASSIEL

Sure. Fine.

CHEMOS

I mean, I can take care of myself. I'm not crippled.

CASSIEL

Not physically, maybe. But emotionally you're completely paralyzed, totally immobile...and you're trying to swim in deep water.

CHEMOS

Now you're getting poetic.
CASSIEL

You want me to be blunt? You're out of your depth. You're floundering. You're...marching bravely into battle with a bag over your head. Lucifer's plotting something—I don't know what yet—and its benefits are intended for no one but him. The only word in his vocabulary that has ever had any importance for him is "Lucifer", and whatever he's plotting is bound to destroy everything and everyone but that.

CHEMOS

(fiery) And blessed Michael is the only one who can save us, right? Michael the Chosen? The same Michael who decided all by himself that the Lord High Archangel needed a lesson? The same Michael who groveled before the Master for ages in order to assure himself Lucifer's crown? The same Michael who has grown more and more distant, more and more the arbitrary, sulking governor, with each day he has spent atop the Mount of Holies? That's my choice? Michael the Flattering Flunky or Lucifer the Son of the Morning? (snorts) I wish all my decisions were so simple. (starts to go)

CASSIEL

(standing in front of him) Don't go. Get out from under while you still can.

CHEMOS

(moving past him) I have to go.

CASSIEL

(grabs his arm) Don't. (their eyes meet, pause) I'm begging.

CHEMOS

(gently freeing himself) My pockets are empty. I'm sorry.

(moves toward exit again)
CASSIEL

Chem, please...

CHEMOS

(stops, doesn't turn) No. The cripple's head is still above water. He must get to shore.

CASSIEL

I'm the shore.

CHEMOS

(on the verge of choking) You're the undertow. (runs out)

CASSIEL

(calling after him) You'll never make it! (to himself) The dam's about to burst. He'll be lost in the flood. (sighs) Who won't be, though?

(Lights fade. It is night. The timpani sets a slow, funereal tone for the scene shift.)

Scene Three

Scene--The Mount of Holies, minutes later.

Set--A small boulder at center stage. A bright white light shines upon it from directly above--this is the Master.

Michael is seated on the boulder, in the Master's light. When he begins speaking the general lighting comes up, suggesting night.

MICHAEL

(looking up occasionally) I don't wish to seem a chronic complainer. I'm Lord High Archangel--I should be complained to. And I realize that You have much more of importance to do than listen to my insignificant problems. (stands, moves aimlessly around the rock, as if lost)
But I never expected this to be such a...terrible strain, such unrele-
ing tension. I honestly cannot see how Lucifer managed. Dozens of dis-
putes to judge, order to maintain, the Games to plan--none of which ever
seem to lessen. And Your...absences...don't help. They double my work-
load. Every time your Essence fades I have a hundred white-faced cher-
ubs up here, trembling and clinging to my robe and demanding to know
what's going on, what's happened to You. I reassure them as far as I'm
able, but You won't let me tell them where You are or what You're doing
there. (pause, listens) I know, but it's so wonderful that they ought
to-- (pause, listens) All right. But they never seem very satisfied
when they fly back home.

It isn't the constant work that I have difficulty with. No. It's
a duty and an honor to serve You. Any angel would give his arm to be
in my place, to be so close to You. But there's a worse problem, one
that isn't easily resolved, try as I might.

Yesterday, while You were gone and I was left in charge of the
City, I almost...struck one of the seraphs. (pause, sits, listens)
Yes. His eyes were as wide as fists. I apologized endlessly, of
course, but that couldn't alter the fact that I actually raised my hand
in anger against a brother. And for no reason! Because he asked me to
explain a judgment. I hissed at him--yes, hissed!--that the Lord High
Archangel's commands were law as they stood, and before I knew it my
arm was drawn back. It terrified him and all the others who were there,
but I was the most shaken. It made me look back over the past three
months, really look, for the first time.

(stands) When I was called to this office I intended to be just,

fair, equitable. I would treat my brethren as absolute equals--as
peers, not as subjects. But then came the barking, the snapping, the browbeating, the purely arbitrary rulings made solely because I wasn't in the mood for full consideration and I knew that no matter what I said it had to be automatically accepted— (pause, kneels at boulder) Father... I'm no more just than Lucifer ever was. Am I? Perhaps I feel more guilt over it than him, but I suspect that that will pass with time. (pause, looks up) You knew about this, didn't You? That this hallowed office destroys from within. (stands) Why did You give it to me--force it upon me? You've imprisoned both Your archangels in shackles of megalomania. Lucifer will stop at nothing to regain his place, and I will dare everything to retain mine, as much as I desire to be free of it. (to light) You are the Father of Love. Why do you engender hate? The Creator has become the Destroyer. Why are You setting us at each other's throats? (gong sounds in the distance)

He's called another meeting. They're more frequent now. We both know what that means. Neither of us can afford to wait any longer. Not a moment. May I take those steps now? Thank you. (runs toward exit) He must be shattered...! (Master fades out, Michael stops, doesn't turn) Did You mean for this to happen? From the very beginning? (pause) Father? (turns, sees he is alone) Orphaned again... (runs out)

(Lights fade out. Timpani plays theme of aggression during scene change, loudly.)

Scene Four

Scene--A forest clearing in the Wastelands outside the City. Immediately after Scene Three.

Set--An open area. The boulder has been removed.
The drum stops and the lights come up suddenly and simultaneously, revealing Lucifer at center stage, broadsword in hand. Chemos rests on one knee across the stage, holding a lit candle.

LUCIFER

(to audience, representing angels at the meeting) Are we all here yet? (points into audience) Ha! About time, Armaros. I hope we aren't taking you away from something of world importance...like your bed. (Chemos laughs) Quiet. (to "Armaros") You weren't followed? You're certain? All right, get to your place. And be on time from now on. It's someone else's turn to sleep in. (Chemos laughs) Quiet. Is that everyone?

CHEMOS

(quickly counting around) A hundred and eighteen. Yes.

LUCIFER

Good. No absentees, and only one latecomer. We're becoming more responsible, more disciplined. We've needed that. And now to the Recitation. Whose turn is it?

CHEMOS

We've gone all the way around.

LUCIFER

Then it's you.

(Chemos stands, goes to center. Lucifer holds the sword in his left hand, parallel to the ground, head high. Chemos grasps the blade near the hilt with his left hand. Lucifer releases the sword and backs away.)

CHEMOS

All rise!
(Lucifer walks around the edge of the stage, counterclockwise, always facing Chemos, who turns with him at center stage. Chemos' responses to Lucifer's questions are in a mystic, ritualistic tone.)

LUCIFER
Who are we that have gathered here tonight?

CHEMOS
"We are the Brethren of the Wastelands."

LUCIFER
What is our mission?

CHEMOS
"To establish a New Order in the City!"

LUCIFER
What is the nature of the New Order?

CHEMOS
"To be the glory of all the Brethren of the City."

LUCIFER
And?

CHEMOS
"The shame of all our enemies."

LUCIFER
Who are these enemies?

CHEMOS
"Every angel who follows the Pretender."

LUCIFER
Who is the Pretender?

CHEMOS
"Michael."
LUCIFER

What is his destiny?

CHEMOS

"He shall be thrown down."

LUCIFER

By whose hand?

CHEMOS

"By Lucifer, Son of the Morning, Child of Light, Firstborn of all the Brethren."

LUCIFER

Why must this be?

CHEMOS

"To preserve the ancient honor of the City and the Brethren. To ensure our survival as the First Race."

LUCIFER

And how is this to be accomplished?

CHEMOS

"By steel and by subtlety. By might and by craft. So are the ways of the Brethren."

LUCIFER

(to audience, grasping sword handle again) So are the ways of the Brethren! (to Chemos) Well done, brother. (Chemos returns to his previous position) So are the ways of the Brethren. But they are the ways of the Enemy as well. Never forget that, friends. Michael is no fool. If we underestimate him we'll be annihilated, believe me. I know him—we are the closest in blood of all the angels. He is a worthy foe. He has numbers and he has intelligence. Especially intelligence, however
misguided it may be. That is why archangels were created, for organization, leadership. So we must be careful. A single mental mistake by any of us, even on the tiniest operation, and we'll find ourselves crushed like a handful of dry leaves. Things have gone well so far—they know we're meeting but they have almost no details. Let us keep it that way.

One more thing: At the last meeting I overheard one of you express an...overenthusiastic desire to strike immediately. Something on the order of "Let's hit them now." For him—and any of the rest of you who just itch to go charging into the City with swords in your hands and flame in your hearts—I have a message. We aren't here to satisfy any petty personal grievances you may have, or to allow anyone to indulge in gratuitous violence. The Brethren exist to forge a better world—out of the rubble of the old, if necessary, but preferably not. If any of you is even considering an action that will tarnish our honor or interfere with our goal, I advise you to abandon it. Because if you get in my way—our way—and disrupt our mission, I'll kill you myself without thinking twice. And I'll do it with a smile on my-- (he stiffens, looks up) Seraphim! Scatter!

(Lucifer dives to the floor, sword ready. Chemos blows out the candle and throws himself face-down. They listen for a moment.)

CHEMOS

(whispering) Seraphim can see in the dark.

LUCIFER

(whispering) So can I. (stands) Damnation! Straight back to Michael, no doubt of that. (laughs) This will show those fool comrades of ours that I know what I'm talking about. (shouts to the skies)
Well done, Michael! I told them you were bright! But it won't help you! By dawn I'll have my crown again! (stiffens again, his shock turns into an appreciative smile) He left a straggler! (to Chemos) We're pressed now. We'll have to accelerate things, before Michael can prepare a defense. I'm not certain we can. (removes robe, hands it to Chemos) Round them all up again and make sure that they know their target assignments. They must be letter-perfect or everything will fall down around our heads. Take the hostages as they sleep, one to a man. That will neutralize the numbers advantage, and we'll be able to attack with even odds, if an attack can't be avoided. That will be at dawn. No killing unless and until I give the word, do you understand? I want this to be bloodless if at all possible. Just before dawn I'll go to the Mount and try to talk Michael out of a fight. The threat of violence may be enough. If I can't get him to see reason you're to kill the hostages and attack your other targets. If he gives in you'll release them unharmed. I'll give the signal from the Mount either way. Do you have all that? (Chemos nods, starts to go) Wait. Make absolutely certain that everyone knows that Michael is not fair game. This is the only sword that touches him. Impress that on their tiny minds. Go. (Chemos exits, Lucifer paces at center, introspective)

Seven hours...why is it so much easier to destroy a world than it is to create one? (slides his hand absent-mindedly along the sword blade, cuts himself slightly, sucks the drop of blood) Bitter...bitter...

(Lights fade out to slow, funereal timpani.)
Scene Five

Scene--The Mount, moments later. The Master is absent.

Set--Boulder at center.

Lights come up on an empty stage. The timpani undercuts the whole scene, very low.

CASSIEL

(running in) Michael, what's going-- (stops at boulder, looks around) Michael?

(Michael enters, without his robe, carrying a sword and a whetstone. He looks at Cassiel but says nothing. He sits on the boulder, lays the sword across his knees, and begins to sharpen it aggressively.)

CASSIEL

You don't want to practice now, do you? The Games aren't--

MICHAEL

No, I don't.

CASSIEL

I didn't think so.

MICHAEL

Go get your sword.

CASSIEL

But you just said--

MICHAEL

(sharply) I know what I said. Go get your sword anyway. You can use this (holds up the whetstone) when I have a killing edge.

CASSIEL

(a horrified silence) Killing?
MICHAEL

You heard me.

CASSIEL

Then...then it's finally... (Michael nods, not looking up, Cassiel turns away) So that's why there's so much commotion down there.

MICHAEL

Yes. We're getting ready for the monster's assault. He believes that I don't know about it. When his miserable commandos try to take their hostages they're going to find it anything but easy. I suggest that you hurry and arm yourself before those traitors swarm out of the Wastelands. They aren't likely to spare anyone who can't defend himself...especially a leader and a fighter like yourself.

CASSIEL

You talk about them as if they were a pack of animals.

MICHAEL

(standing) What would you call revolutionaries who desire to overthrow a perfect kingdom by murderous violence? Models of deportment? Get going.

CASSIEL

I just can't help thinking that they--

MICHAEL

The seraphim were there! They heard those assassins' plans from Lucifer's own mouth. I told you to get your sword. I don't like to repeat myself.

CASSIEL

But maybe the seraphim--
MICHAEL

They were there, I told you! Now move!

CASSIEL

Wait! I--

MICHAEL

(backhands him, Cassiel flies very far) I gave you a direct order: Obey it!

CASSIEL

(after staring at him a long moment) All right. All right, sir. (picks himself up) But I have something to say to you first, Lord High Archangel or not. You're forgetting that those angels you call animals and assassins are your brothers, regardless of what the seraphim tell you. And that includes Lucifer. I don't have any special love for traitors, and if they attack the City or the Mount I'll do what I have to do, I'll use my sword. I'll kill, if necessary. But I won't get any pleasure out of it. Can you say the same, Michael? (turns and runs out)

(Michael jumps after him, pounding the sword into his palm in anger and cutting himself. He puts his hand to his mouth, frowns.)

MICHAEL

Odd. Blood should taste sweet, not--

(The Master suddenly returns to full brilliance. Michael spins, rushes into the light. He throws himself to his knees at the boulder, bowing his head.)

(The general lights fade, leaving only the Master. The timpani begins an aggressive theme, not loud, as the Master fades.)
Scene Six

Scene--A dark City street, moments later.

Set--An open area. The boulder has been removed.

The timpani ends with a single soft triangle note and the lights come up on Chemos, creeping around the edge of the stage. He is anxious, nervous. He goes halfway around the stage to the exit, starts to back into it. The lighting is brightest here.

CASSIEL

(runs on, collides with Chemos) Chemos!

(Chemos lets out a started cry, spins, aims a dagger at Cassiel. Cassiel parries it, pulls the weapon arm down and back in a hammerlock.)

CASSIEL

It's Cass! It's Cass:

CHEMOS

(stops struggling, relaxes) Hello.

CASSIEL

Since when do you carry a knife?

CHEMOS

I decided it was a good habit to get into.

CASSIEL

(takes knife away, hands it to him) Just make sure it doesn't get into me. Are you all right?

CHEMOS

(innocently) Why?

CASSIEL

Why! Come on. You're shaking like a leaf in a gale, you're constantly looking over your shoulder, you try to cut my throat...
CHEMOS

I'm fine. Really. You just...you just startled me, that's all. Jumping from around a corner--

CASSIEL

Do you stab everyone who startles you? Don't make up stories for my benefit. You're scared half to death.

CHEMOS

(pause, turns away) Yes. Further than that, even.

CASSIEL

What of?

CHEMOS

(tries to go, Cassiel blocks him) I've got to go.

CASSIEL

Not again. The only thing running out tonight is time. Now calm down and talk to me. Tell me where you have to get to.

CHEMOS

I can't.

CASSIEL

Why not?

CHEMOS

Because if I did, I'd have to kill you afterwards.

CASSIEL

(long pause, amazed and terrified) What have you got yourself into? Little Chemos, who used to hate the Games because they were too rough, is talking of killing his best friend. Do archangels have that kind of power? Can Lucifer cast spells against your better nature? That must be it, because otherwise murder would never even enter your
mind, much less leave your mouth. Has he stolen your free will?

CHEMOS

Free will is a fiction. And murder has become a duty—for you as well as for me. Let me go, I'm late. (starts out)

CASSIEL

For what? (Cheemos stops) Does Lucifer's marionette have to go do his duty in some blind alley? Can't the Son of the Morning do his own killing? Or does he have so many victims that he has to subcontract his business?

CHEMOS

You can't taunt me into being what your Michael thinks I am. Let me go. I have things to do and you can't stop them. No one can. Not even the Master. (moves to the exit) This is all much...vaster than just you and me.

CASSIEL

(not looking at him) So is friendship...or so I used to think.

CHEMOS

(stops, whirs, pained) Damn you, Cassiel, will you let me sin in peace?! The knife you're twisting in me hurts a thousand times more than this little dagger ever could! What's the friendship of two lowly, lonely angels in times like these?

CASSIEL

(turning to face him) Everything. (a triangle note sounds, softly)

CHEMOS

(torn several ways, exhausted with arguing) Oh, you... (embraces him, sings, lets it fall at end) "Power of...love..." (pause, separates) It's come to a boil.

-36-
CASSIEL
I know.

CHEMOS
I am out of my depth.

CASSIEL
Aren't we all?

CHEMOS
Yes. But depth hardly matters now. By the time the bleeding stops even the Hall of Light will be submerged...if not the Mount.

CASSIEL
Chemos...

CHEMOS
But I can't give up. I can't simply stop treading water, as easy and as painless as that might be. It wouldn't slow things down by five minutes. We both know that.

CASSIEL
So that's a valid reason for war, for the demolition of everything we know? "I can't stop it, so why not join in." A pretty dangerous precedent to set.

CHEMOS
That's not what I meant. I meant that we can't impede what's going to happen--what's already begun--much less stop it. Why try to prolong the agony? Let's hurry up and get it over with. If we must have death, at least make it an incident and not a way of life.

CASSIEL
Any other day that might have struck me as funny.
CHEMOS

Perhaps tomorrow we'll both be able to laugh at it... if we don't meet one another on the field.

CASSIEL

Don't talk like that.

CHEMOS

I wish I didn't have to.

CASSIEL

I won't fight you!

CHEMOS

If we meet you'll have no choice.

CASSIEL

No! I won't!

CHEMOS

(sighs) What will you do? Run away? You mustn't confuse your conscience that way.

CASSIEL

Define "conscience".

CHEMOS

Only you can do that. (gong sounds in the distance) My appointment.

(They raise their hands for a clasp, Chemos uses his left, Cassiel his right. There is a moment's pause at this awkward moment. Their eyes meet. Then Cassiel grabs Chemos' hand with both of his. Chemos follows suit.)

CHEMOS

Goodbye. Avoid me tomorrow. Please. (starts out)
CASSIEL

Wait!

CHEMOS

(not stopping) I can't! (he is out)

CASSIEL

Goodbye!

CHEMOS

(off-stage) Goodbye! Remember, we're both doing the right thing!

CASSIEL

(looking away) That is the whole trouble. Everyone is right.
(turns, stares after Chemos) Why do some of us have to die for the privilege?

(A gong sounds in the distance as the lights fade. A soft aggressive timpani covers the scene change.)

Scene Seven

Scene--The Mount, some time later. It is near dawn.
Set--The boulder at center stage. The Master's light is still on Michael, kneeling as at the end of Scene Five.

Lights come up. By the end of the scene they should indicate sunrise.

Lucifer enters, stops, watches Michael from behind for a moment.

LUCIFER

(to himself, smiling ironically) Such devotion. It touches the heart. It moves one to verse. (aloud) You're an inspiration to us all.

MICHAEL

(frantically grabs sword, whirs to his feet) All right, worm!
LUCIFER

(extendng arms to indicate weaponlessness) You must be right. I'm unarmed. (smiles at his joke, does not advance) Go ahead. Slay the terrible demon while he's defenseless. (indicates Master) Won't that make Him proud?

MICHAEL

What do you want?

LUCIFER

Do I have to want anything?

MICHAEL

You always want something. (pause) I'm in Communion with the Master.

(The Master fades out.)

LUCIFER

(sees this, smiles) So I see. Don't let me interrupt. (advances)

MICHAEL

(retreats a step) You already have. State your business so I may get back to mine.

LUCIFER

Perhaps I'm waiting to Commune.

MICHAEL

(snorts) Perhaps water can flow uphill.

LUCIFER

It can, when the world is turned upside-down.

MICHAEL

Leave me. (places boulder between them)

-40-
LUCIFER
(advancing further) No. (puts foot on boulder)

MICHAEL

(brandishing sword in his face) Remember where you are!

LUCIFER
(unimpressed) I know precisely where I am...at all times. For instance, this is the Mount of Holies, and bloodshed up here is a First Crime against the Master. The Lord High Archangel should know that better than anyone.

MICHAEL
(angrily, sword at Lucifer's throat) Say what you have to say and get off my Mount! I'm Lord High Archangel now, as you said!

(Lucifer laughs, turns away. His foot suddenly lashes out, knocking the sword across the stage. He easily puts himself between it and Michael, who goes to the other side of the boulder.)

LUCIFER
(after an uneasy silence) Don't ever try to pull rank on me, Michael. It doesn't pay.

MICHAEL

(eyeing sword) I trust you'll keep in mind the law you just mentioned.

LUCIFER

Oh, didn't they tell you? Didn't you get the news from your seraphim spies? Lucifer follows his own law. He plans to ravage the City and establish himself as the new Master. At least that's the way your people behave.
MICHAEL

With good cause. Get out.

LUCIFER

Not till we've had a talk.

MICHAEL

Leave me! It's His will! (points upward, notices Master is gone)

LUCIFER

If He wanted me gone He'd have already blasted me off the hill and you know it. Quit blustering. It won't wash with me. It's just the two of us now. He's not going to play Father Protector for you. You'll have to handle the big rogue angel all by yourself, as a Lord High should. Because there's more to your lofty position than prayer, pretty words, and a patch of high ground.

MICHAEL

As you discovered.

LUCIFER

We'll get to that later. Right now I want to have a perfectly civilized conversation with my...superior.

MICHAEL

If only you believed that.

LUCIFER

Oh, I'm definitely giving you the benefit of the doubt. For the sake of argument.

MICHAEL

Did you come here to converse or to argue?

LUCIFER

That depends on you. Why don't we begin as friends?
MICHAEL

(incredulous) On the eve of a--?: (shakes his head) All right. As friends, then.

LUCIFER

Fine.

MICHAEL

I'm giving you the benefit of the doubt. Go ahead.

LUCIFER

I will. (picks up sword, Michael stiffens) Relax. If I had assassination on my mind you'd be dead already. I want a public victory. (moves to edge of stage) Look down there. What do you see?

MICHAEL

The City, and the Wastelands beyond.

LUCIFER

What's in the City, Lord High Archangel?

MICHAEL

All our brethren...most of them loyal.

LUCIFER

(ignoring this) Nothing else?

MICHAEL

No.

LUCIFER

(shaking his head) Michael, Michael, Michael...

MICHAEL

What?

LUCIFER

When was the last time you spent any time amongst your brethren?
Three months? Five? Longer?

MICHAEL

What are you saying?

LUCIFER

I'm saying you've lost touch with your kin, your...constituents. There's something in the City that's larger than just them, larger than just you. Ever greater than--(half-looks up)

MICHAEL

And that is?

LUCIFER

Discontent. Your perfect world is far from perfect. They've finally noticed that in the City.

MICHAEL

(satisfied indignation, backs away) Blasphemy! You've condemned yourself out of your own mouth for the second time tonight. The Master--

LUCIFER

--Isn't listening. It only took me a few weeks to discover that when His Essence is that low He isn't even on the Mount. No, He's off working on that secret little project of His. The one He won't let you talk about. Your Master hasn't been keeping an ear open to awful Lucifer's diabolical words. And where there's no hearing there's no blasphemy.

MICHAEL

He'll hear...from me.

LUCIFER

No doubt. But hearsay heresy has less power, even coming from
Saint Michael, the Blessed Virgin of the Mount. (pause) Besides, how can you—or the Master—consider the truth blasphemous?

MICHAEL

Truth!

LUCIFER

Yes! Truth! I say discontent exists, and that is undeniable. You sacrosanct sheep, you haven’t spoken to another angel as an equal since you moved up here. You bathe in the Master’s warmth all day, never venturing down into that great city you once loved...

MICHAEL

I still love it!

LUCIFER

You’re so busy playing Lord High Archangel that you never get around to being Lord High Archangel. Small wonder you’re out of touch with the unrest that’s simmering beneath those golden streets.

MICHAEL

Nurtured by you.

LUCIFER

Acknowledged by me, yes. Blindness can’t help us now. Your brothers need a leader who can look ahead without fear. You only look up. You don’t seem to care about their welfare.

MICHAEL

Their welfare! Oh, listen to this, everyone! Lucifer has decided to look out for the rest of us, instead of only for himself! Oh, happy day! Let the cherubim blow their trumpets! Let their be dancing in the skies! (pause, sneers) You disgust me.
LUCIFER

(almost sadly) Only because I'm holding a mirror, Michael. You're being forced to look at what you've probably suspected for months—thath you're ready to believe anything of anyone, no matter how vile it may be, to keep a stranglehold on your windfall throne. I know just how it feels. (crosses to him) I have the same sickness. That's what really frightens you, that I've come to terms with it. I'm comfortable in my fever, and you're deathly afraid you may come to be. (pause) You don't want to be Lord High Archangel. Everyone knows that. It's too worldly a position. You'd rather devote your time exclusively to the Master. (smiles) Monkish Michael...did you know they call you that? That's your destined role, not Small Claims Judge.

MICHAEL

(moving away) Obviously you would like for me to resign.

LUCIFER

Wouldn't that be the best solution?

MICHAEL

Only if the world were to end tomorrow.

LUCIFER

It may. (sincere, close to desperate) Michael, open those icy blue eyes of yours and see, for once, instead of groping and assuming. I'm not the serpent you'd like me to be. I only wish to better our world. Look at us! Thirty thousand immortal beings sitting in a city of ivory and gold, on a green plain surrounded by immense, untouched wilderness. To what purpose? A civilization that has never known war, disease, poverty, starvation, or death. Magnificent! Awe-inspiring! Let us lift up our voices in song! But with what mission, what goal? Set aside the vituperation and the polemics and tell me. Honestly...
what is the point of our existence? We have athletes, poets, writers, philosophers, dancers, musicians—all sublime in their talents. But for what, hmm? We've reached the pinnacle of stagnation. Every day is a fresh challenge—"How shall we amuse ourselves this time?" Were we created to waste eternity admiring our own perfection? Or are we merely the Master's ageless handmaidens? We attained the summit without a struggle, and now there is nowhere left to go. No purpose, no goal, no mission befitting such a race. Doesn't it make you feel even the slightest bit guilty, the least bit ashamed of inheriting the top niche in the universe, then sitting back and watching the cobwebs grow on our glory? Pigeon-holed amongst the stars, but never shining ourselves. It's criminal. It's like possessing a mountain of clay and never molding even one beautiful, worthwhile object with it.

But if I were back on the Mount, all that would change. The Brethren would actively pursue their destiny, instead of waiting benignly. We would be a race to be reckoned with—proud and mighty, and free! Every one of us would be a prince of the cosmos. Isn't that better than festering in a useless Utopia?

MICHAEL

Oh, yes. It sounds wonderful.

LUCIFER

It is wonderful!

MICHAEL

(staring hard at him) Now I see why so many of us are willing to butcher for you. As great as you are with a sword, your tongue is a better weapon. You could convince the sky to change color.
LUCIFER
But not you to change your mind.

MICHAEL
No. (pause, seems struck by an idea) Are you really going to wage a war for a dream?

LUCIFER
I was hoping I wouldn't have to.

MICHAEL
Perhaps you won't... if you are willing to shift dreams.

LUCIFER
What do you mean?

MICHAEL
I mean that you were only a few days too impatient. We have a destiny.

LUCIFER
(instantly interested) What?

MICHAEL
The Master wants it kept secret. He hasn't quite finished with it yet.

LUCIFER
That's why He's been gone so often?

MICHAEL
Yes.

LUCIFER
Tell me. (pursues him) Come on, He's not listening. Stop a war!

MICHAEL
We were created with a purpose. Our mission is on the verge of
outside of this world, our world...there is another.

(satisfied smile) I'd always believed so. Go on.

The Master says that it is much like the Wastelands, in some areas. Unspoiled forests. In other places there are immense seas, awesome deserts, massive mountains, endless prairies, and even great plains of ice. But nothing like the City. Only tiny villages of huts or tents.

It sounds--

Wait: It is a new world, its race is only beginning to progress. The Master predicts unsurpassed grandeur.

(enthusiastic) Our mission. A new and better City?

That is beyond imagination. No. We are to foster this race, aid its growth. Think of it! We have been selected to aid an entire world in its drive toward the Master, toward undreamed-of accomplishments. Through us they will attain fantastic heights! Isn't that a goal worthy of us? Is that wasting eternity?

(crusched) Nursemaid. I'm expected to drop to my knees and give
heartfelt thanks for the rare and special opportunity to be a nanny!?
To lead a race of...barbarians, of animals, by the hand to their des-
tiny! To subjugate myself so that they might achieve! No, thank you!!
Tell your Master to find another zookeeper!! And tell him that the dis-
content is far more justified than I thought!!

MICHAEL

You ingrate! You should be down on your knees, for even being
allowed on this Mount at all. And here you are whining about not hav-
ing work worthy of your hallowed hands! I was out of my mind, believing
in you and your bogus dream. All you want is conquest, power. That's
all you've ever wanted. You're a deadly growth on this community, and
we have to cut you out before you infect all the others.

LUCIFER

They've already been exposed. The disease is a plague called Re-
form, and you have an epidemic on your hands.

MICHAEL

Reform? Reform builds. Your infection only destroys. Your fall
from grace has made you so bitter that you're willing to annihilate
everything and everyone you know for a little private vengeance.

LUCIFER

Me? Don't try to lay this on my conscience, bootlicker!

MICHAEL

What conscience?

LUCIFER

(calming) You see? You see what you've let your office do to you?
Accusations, insults, threats. Reason and restraint are dead and
buried...or, hopefully, just imprisoned. The rational Michael who might
have saved his world has been stuffed into a closet somewhere, while his hard-minded surrogate browbeats his peers. (pause, softly) I don't want war. I want to take charge of a healthy city, not a reconstruction project. None of my people think killing is the answer. We are all still brothers, Michael, now and forever. Especially you and I, though we've had precious little time to show it. Remember the early days, when pride and power were the furthest things from our minds? We can have that back again, if you step down. It's a simple choice. There aren't many of those anymore: peace, reform, and everlasting brotherhood; or war, death, and everlasting hatred. Choose like the wise angel you are, as the Lord High Archangel, guardian of all the Brethren, and resign in my favor. I promise that you'll be the First Prince of my realm, with more power and honor than you have now. You'll be able to Commune with the Master to the exclusion of all else. A chance such as that is precious to you, Michael. I know it is. Resign.

MICHAEL

If I resigned--if I could--it would only set in motion a vicious cycle that could never end except with the permanent deposition of one of us. That will happen today. I refuse to condemn my race to ages of agony for such an inevitable fate. Let it be decided today, now, so we may begin moving to our divine destiny. Get off the Mount, Son of the Morning, and prepare to fight. (timpani begins low aggression theme) We've spoken too long and to no point. It's time to purge you from the land, so that the air will be fit to breathe again.

LUCIFER

(finally hardened) All right! Hear me, Lord High Archangel!: I am going to cast down you and all those who wear your colors. The
Brethren of the Wastelands shall find their destiny on their own, and so shall your unwashed other-worlders. You can oppose me or you can ease my way. It makes no difference to me whether I put a crown on your head or a sword in your heart. My conscience will be clear either way. It's too bad it must do for the both of us.

MICHAEL

Don't do it. He can still forgive you.

LUCIFER

He doesn't even enter into this.

MICHAEL

That's a fatal mistake.

LUCIFER

It's mine to make.

MICHAEL

Then make it! I wash my hands of you! Make it! It won't be the first mistake you've made today.

LUCIFER

Meaning?

MICHAEL

Meaning you've already lost your best weapon—surprise. You have no hostages. Right now there are a hundred pitched battles going on down in the City. And we outnumber you two-to-one.

LUCIFER

Congratulations. But that only makes it a fair fight. My men are twice as good as yours. They have a dream to sustain them. All yours have are you.
MICHAEL
That'll be more than enough, scum.

LUCIFER
You'd better hope so. Because name-calling will not carry the day.

MICHAEL
Neither will your orations.

LUCIFER
True. So I'll leave you with something you can appreciate. Something you seem to expect from me: a short-term goal. It's to see your grinning head on the point of my spear, and that pitiful firefly you serve blackened forever. That's my idea of a truly angelic goal, and I drool at the prospect:

(Lucifer throws the sword beyond and behind Michael. He removes his wedding band, spits on it, and hurls it to the ground at Michael's feet.)

LUCIFER
I'll see you on top of the Hall of Light, alone. And sharpen that thing! (runs out)

MICHAEL
(picks up sword, runs after him, stops at edge of stage) Lucifer! You've already lost! Come back to the fold! He'll destroy you, Lucifer! Lucifer!! Bro--! (to himself) Brother...

(The Master returns. Michael runs into the light, aims his sword straight up into it.)

MICHAEL
(accusingly) The fratricide is underway:

(It is dawn. The general illumination fades out, leaving Michael
frozen in the Master's light for a moment. Then it, too, fades out.)

(The aggressive timpani becomes so loud as to be all-consuming, and continues into Scene Eight.)

Scene Eight

Scene--The City, then the Hall of Light roof. Morning.

Set--An open area. The boulder has been removed.

A red glow illuminates the center. The timpani is fast, loud, militaristic. The angels are in a ten-foot circle at center, all armed, with swords. Their hands and faces are bloodstained.

Chemos cuts in slow motion at Michael, Lucifer, Cassiel. Then the angels swirl at random to suggest a melee. Chemos and Lucifer end up in one corner, Cassiel and Michael in the other. They are exhausted, sprawl on the floor. The drum continues at reduced volume.

MICHAEL

(leaning on his sword) How is it in the west?

CASSIEL

Not good. We're holding them, but just barely.

MICHAEL

Things aren't any better at my end. I'm beginning to think that Lucifer was right.

CASSIEL

About what?

MICHAEL

He told me his men were better fighters.

CASSIEL

I don't know about that, but I do know that they have no qualms
about killing. Our men do. We can hardly bring ourselves to hit even in self-defense.

MICHAEL

I feel the same way, believe me. You'll just have to remember what you're fighting for and show no mercy. His men have nothing to lose, that's the trouble. They're fully committed to take the City. If they don't they might as well be dead anyway, when the Master's wrath falls on them. All they can hope for is a complete victory by being aggressive. It's their only chance.

CASSIEL

(looking about) And where is the Master? His Essence has been down all morning.

MICHAEL

I don't know. We'll have to win without him, I'm afraid. All right, rally as many of us as you can and fight your way to the Hall of Light. I must get to the roof.

(They stand and run off.)

CHEMOS

They're only delaying us. They can't bring themselves to wade in and kill in hot blood. We're gradually wearing them down. Our numbers are almost even now. It's only a matter of time.

LUCIFER

(cleaning his sword) So it seems. But keep an eye out for some kind of surprise move. Michael was too confident. And I don't like the Master being gone. It's too convenient for us. It makes me suspicious. Let's try to wrap this up before He gets back. Gather some squads together and cut through to the Hall of Light. It commands a good central
position. I'm going to meet Michael on the roof. When I'm done with him we'll have won a headquarters, and they'll have lost a general. Go!

(Lucifer exits through the nearest exit. Chemos stands, starts across the stage in the opposite direction.)

(Cassiel runs on, across the stage from Chemos. They see one another and freeze. Chemos raises his sword. Cassiel shakes his head plaintively.)

(The lights fade briefly and the timpani booms as loudly as before. When the lights return Michael stands slightly off center, sword point on the floor, both hands resting on the handle, waiting. Lucifer runs in, sees him, stops, smiles. The timpani's volume recedes again.)

MICHAEL

I hope you blocked the door.

LUCIFER

With bodies. We're all alone.

MICHAEL

Good. Soon I'll be all alone.

(Lucifer laughs and charges him, slashing. The fight is rollicking, exuberant, acrobatic, prolonged. Michael is excessively flashy, Lucifer is more reserved.)

(Michael repels Lucifer's first assault. There is a brief lull.)

MICHAEL

(taunting) What's the matter? Losing your touch, Son of the Morning?

(Michael makes a spinning, risky attack. In the course of it an unnecessary turn leaves him slightly out of position. Lucifer kicks him to the floor, disarming him. They are at center.)
LUCIFER

(above him) No, I haven't lost my touch. (lifts his sword for the killing stroke)

(The Master's light strikes Lucifer, accompanied by ponderous drum-beats. Lucifer drops his sword and collapses like a rag doll, conscious but paralyzed.)

(Michael recovers from his disadvantage, grabs his sword, tries to behead Lucifer. But an invisible barrier prevents him. He makes several furious attempts, all with the same result. His frustration is enormous, pathetic. On his knees, he lets the sword fall and slumps, near tears.)

MICHAEL

(to the Master) No! We need a clear victory! He must die! By my hand! Can't you see?! My power has to be-- (stops, staring blankly outward) It...I...I...

LUCIFER

(unmoving, calm) Hail the new Son of the Morning. No better...or worse...than the old. (pause) I think I expected him to do this, to save you at the last instant. Still, I had to make the attempt. The strange thing is, I don't feel particularly disappointed. I wish I knew why. (pause, sighs) No wins, no losses, one hundred sixty-nine ties. The Games go on.

MICHAEL

(gazing at his bloody hands) What have we done? (screams at the Master) WHAT HAVE WE DONE?!! (stands, goes to edge of stage, calls down to City) Answer me, you madmen! We have smashed fine crystal! Why?!!
LUCIFER

(pause) You're wasting your breath. The answer's up here.

MICHAEL

(looking at the Master) Shut up. (listens) You and your surviving followers are offered a choice: remain here, with myself as Lord High Archangel for all time, and working the Master's will without question--

LUCIFER

Or.

MICHAEL

Quiet. I'm listening. (pause, face falls, stares at Master in shocked disbelief) No! No!! You can't! He would-- (pause, bows head) So it will be. (to Lucifer) Your other choice is... to be banished. To the new world I told you of.

LUCIFER

That's a choice?

MICHAEL

What do you want? An election? Choose. It's your decision. They all wanted to follow you, and so they shall.

LUCIFER

You know my decision. I'd rather rule in a wilderness than serve in a... paradise. We go. And the sooner the better.

MICHAEL

I was afraid of that. He believes your influence will force those... barbarians to us. I don't. (pause) Nothing's really changed, even after all the slaughter. All that is different is the battleground.
LUCIFER

You see? We think alike after all. Sharpen your sword, Michael.

MICHAEL

I shall. Get up and go to the Stadium. He'll transport you from there.

(The Master fades out, releasing Lucifer. He stands stiffly, eyes his sword, reaches for it.)

MICHAEL

Don't bother. He won't allow any more bloodshed.

(Cassiel staggers in with the bloodied body of Chemos in his arms. Cassiel is in shock. He stops, stares at the archangels. Lucifer takes Chemos, lays him on the floor at center, kneels. Cassiel slumps to the floor beside them.)

CASSIEL

He wouldn't stop swinging at me. I tried to only wound him, to stop him. But it was too much. His soul was tied in knots. I untied it. (pause) As he lay there, he sang to me. (looks at Michael) One of your songs. (Lucifer moves to a corner of the stage, opposite Michael. Lights on the archangels, the Master comes up. Both archangels look away, Cassiel sings softly, tiredly)

"Power of love,
Power of love;
Friendships bright
As the Master above.
Love till death--"

That's...when he died. (pause) That's when we all died...

(Tableau. A triangle sounds once. The lights slowly fade through
two more triangle notes. The Master is the last light to fade. As it diminishes, there is a low, funereal timpani sequence.

BLACKOUT
New Eastern Play
Premieres April 9

CHARLESTON — The premiere of a new play will take place at Eastern Illinois University at 5 p.m. April 9 in the Fine Arts Playroom.

“Sons of the Morning” is the thesis project of Terry Kroening, a graduate student in Related Arts. In addition to writing the play, he is also directing and designing it.

The play concerns the fiery clash of wills between the archangels Michael and Lucifer that ultimately leads to the revolt in Heaven and to Lucifer’s expulsion.

Good and evil become blurred, as they so often do in real life, and the awesome effects of an excess of power are seen to work on two supposedly incorruptible beings.

“Sons of the Morning” is the first completely original play to come out of Eastern in several years, and as such is a theatrical event not to be missed.

Admission is free, and seating is unreserved.

“Sons of the Morning” will be performed as part of Eastern’s Celebration ’81, but details are not yet available as to time and location.
"THE FRATRICIDE IS UNDERWAY."

SONS
of the
MORNING

A NEW PLAY BY
TERRY KROENUNG

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ADMISSION

E Arts Playroom
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