

# Shea Man

by

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## DESCRIPTION

On a farm in Upstate New York, 1900s, fossil bones are found that point to an American version of the Piltdown Man—a scientific and political victory for the New World. When a P.T. Barnum-style entrepreneur comes into town, a struggle ensues over who owns the bones and what they mean.

## CHARACTERS

- JOHNSON SHEA, Farmer
- SARAH SHEA, his wife
- THOMAS SHEA, Johnson and Sarah's son
- PROFESSOR HARLAN JORDAN
- FLETCHER CALVIN, Thomas' college roommate and friend
- DAN MORAN, REPORTER
- L.T. HOUSEMAN, entrepreneur/SCHOLAR 1
- MISS JENNINGS (Jordan's assistant)/REEVES (Houseman's assistant)/SECRETARY/BETTY'S VOICE
- PORTER'S VOICE/CONDUCTOR/GRAVEL DIGGER/SCHOLAR 2/DANIEL GOLENBOCK/PR DIRECTOR/PROFESSOR CHARLES HERRNSTEIN

## SOUND DESIGN

Throughout the play, sound cues/effects are indicated. Others can be added as needed.

## VISUAL DESIGN

Rear projections are used throughout the play. Others can be added as needed.

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## Scene 1

*On a rugged upstate New York farm in the 1900s.*

*Downstage JOHNSON SHEA and his son THOMAS SHEA sift dirt through a wire mesh until they sieve out two perfect Indian arrowheads. They inspect the artifacts.*

JOHNSON: Can you see it?

THOMAS: I can see it.

JOHNSON: The whole arrow nocked into the sinew—

THOMAS: —sinew tied to a bow drawn by the lean hands of an aboriginal—

JOHNSON: —sighting along the arrow's length and ready to release it.

THOMAS: Which he does.

JOHNSON: Thwack!!

*SOUND: Arrowhead strikes.*

*JOHNSON holds up the arrowheads.*

*SOUND: Second arrowhead strikes.*

THOMAS: Thwack!!

JOHNSON: Keepers.

THOMAS: For sure.

*PROJECTION: A barn wall, on which are arrayed arrowheads of all shapes, each resting on two brass brads and labeled by a strip of stiff white paper perfectly lettered with date and location.*

*To the side are shelves lined with fossils, also dated and located: trilobites, mastodon bones, etc.*

*THOMAS moves to a workbench and sits.*

*MIMED: THOMAS prints in perfect miniscule letters.*

*SARAH SHEA enters, drying her hands.*

SARAH: You two will have more arrowheads than all the Indians ever had.

THOMAS: A logical impossibility.

*MIMED: THOMAS hands a label to JOHNSON, who holds it with tweezers while THOMAS applies a thin line of glue. Together, they press the label home under the new arrowheads.*

SARAH: I wonder how many mothers get insulted like that in a day.

JOHNSON: He wasn't insulting you.

*MIMED: They put up the second label.*

JOHNSON: Come see.

*SARAH SHEA joins them, drying her hands on a towel, and the three look at the admittedly impressive, if amateur, scientific display.*

SARAH: My little scientist. My big scientist.

*JOHNSON grabs her towel and playfully snaps it at SARAH's behind.*

JOHNSON: And the woman who keeps 'em fit.

*JOHNSON and SARAH laugh as she tries to get the towel away from him. Suddenly he turns and faces her.*

JOHNSON: Come dance with me, Sarah Shea.

*SOUND: A reel played on a fiddle.*

*They dance a jaggedy reel over the rough floorboards. THOMAS can't conceal a smile at his foolish parents.*

JOHNSON: C'mon, Thomas—give the belle of the ball a whirl!

*JOHNSON pulls in his son, and THOMAS and SARAH high-step around the barn as JOHNSON claps time and LAUGHS.*

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## Scene 2

*SOUND: Fiddle reel fades out.*

*SOUND: A breeze, a rustle of leaves, a wind chime.*

*PROJECTION: Barn wall out.*

*On one side of the stage, THOMAS' bedroom. THOMAS at his desk, schoolbooks open, studying.*

*On the other side of the stage, JOHNSON and SARAH at the kitchen table. Between them is what looks like a new book. Also two mugs and an accounting ledger.*

*SOUND: A clock ticks throughout the scene.*

*As THOMAS hears their voices, he moves to overhear them, as if sitting on the stairs.*

JOHNSON: He is going to go to state university after next year—I don't care what it costs.

SARAH: Not if you keep buying books—

*JOHNSON lays his hand on the book, strokes the spine.*

JOHNSON: We will find the means.

SARAH: Not if you buy books which would feed us for a month.

JOHNSON: This book— He is not going to turn into a dirt farmer.

SARAH: You're not just a "dirt farmer."

*JOHNSON opens the accounting ledger.*

JOHNSON: Look at this, Sarah.

SARAH: I know what it says.

JOHNSON: Look at it.

SARAH: I know what it says—I write it there!

JOHNSON: And all our work has gotten us what? That's it. That's all. And any easier?  
Everything in this town's drying up—us included. But not for him. Not for him.

*JOHNSON lets the ledger close with a thud.*

*SOUND: Thud of a heavy book. Clock is still ticking.*

JOHNSON: We'll make it fine for this year, and probably the next couple, as long as the crews  
keep digging the gravel for the roads and the cows milk clean.

*SOUND: Along with the clock ticking, the house creaks.*

SARAH: I want him to go, too, you know.

JOHNSON: He's got the head for it.

SARAH: Just look at his parents.

JOHNSON: But you and I never wrote a paper. A paper! A goddamn—A scientific paper at  
fifteen. And he sends it to the state university museum director.

*SARAH moves the two mugs around, like they were dancers.*

JOHNSON: Sarah?

SARAH: Yes?

JOHNSON: I am not the guy with all the big plans you married.

SARAH: Plans have changed, the man hasn't.

*JOHNSON lets his finger trace over the book.*

JOHNSON: It's me, you know—

SARAH: I know—

JOHNSON: —who wants to go.

SARAH: I know. Freshman Johnson Shea – what a sight!

*SARAH hands JOHNSON a mug, and they clink them together, then put them down.  
JOHNSON takes up the book and they move to THOMAS' room.*

*SOUND: Ticking clock out.*

*THOMAS moves back to his desk.*

JOHNSON: Thomas?

THOMAS: It's open, Dad.

*JOHNSON and SARAH enter, JOHNSON holding the book.*

JOHNSON: Special delivery.

*THOMAS takes the book, but when he sees the title, his whole attitude changes—his face softens, his eyes shine.*

*He hands the book back.*

THOMAS: Hold this.

*In a rush he clears off his textbooks, then re-takes the book and lays it gently on the desk, like some sacred text, which, to him, it is.*

THOMAS: "Geological Evidences of—"

JOHNSON: —of the Antiquity of Man"

THOMAS & JOHNSON: By Sir Charles Lyell.

JOHNSON: I wanted to go for the three volumes of his Principles of Geology, but—

*THOMAS leafs through, his face filled with wonder and joy.*

THOMAS: This is amazing. Look at this.

*SOUND: Breeze, wind chimes.*

*JOHNSON and SARAH join him on either side, and they leaf through the book, THOMAS and JOHNSON exclaiming, as if leafing through a volume of family pictures.*

*Lights fade on them all.*

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### Scene 3

*THOMAS moves away from his desk, grabs a lantern.*

*PROJECTION: As he does, a sheared-away cliff flies in, revealing a perfect layering, each layer labeled with its proper geological name.*

*The sky fills out with stars.*

*THOMAS names the ages out loud.*

THOMAS: Paleocene, Eocene, Oligocene, Miocene, Pliocene, Pleistocene, Holocene—

*MIMED: And as he says "Holocene," he reaches up and pulls from that stratum a perfect fossil.*

*JOHNSON enters, lantern in hand.*

THOMAS: Who's there?

*JOHNSON holds up his lantern to show his face.*

JOHNSON: Late night geology?

THOMAS: The book—couldn't sleep.

JOHNSON: I couldn't sleep because you couldn't sleep

*JOHNSON refers to a fossil.*

JOHNSON: Nice find.

*THOMAS puts it in his pocket.*

THOMAS: I heard what you and Mom were talking about tonight.

JOHNSON: Our voices do travel.

*They sit.*

*MIMED: They throw stones.*

*SOUND: Thrown stones*

THOMAS: And that means I'm going to have to travel, doesn't it?

JOHNSON: Only if you want to. There's no "have to" about it, Thomas. You can stay here and raise dirt and no money—

THOMAS: You mean, I should stay and help you and Mom.

JOHNSON: —or you go to state university and raise your chances of being somebody. Dirt—or success. Simple as that.

THOMAS: Simple?

JOHNSON: If you stay to home out of being scared or you think you're betraying something or out of loyalty to me and your mother—then you're being a fool. And we didn't raise a fool.

THOMAS: It's not that bad here, Dad—

JOHNSON: Then you are going to make one terrible scientist because the evidence is all around you. Property auctioned off every day, mastitis running through herds—you're not blind, Thomas, I know you know this stuff.

THOMAS: Would you come visit?

JOHNSON: I am going to embarrass the hell out of you, I'm going to visit you so often. I will miss you.

*SOUND: Footsteps on the road.*

*SARAH appears, carrying a lantern and a basket.*

SARAH: Couldn't sleep.

JOHNSON: Tea, bread, jam—a moonlight picnic.

SARAH: Would you mind, Mr. Shea?

JOHNSON: 'Twouldn't mind at all, Dame Shea.

*As JOHNSON serves, SARAH caresses THOMAS' cheek.*

SARAH: You will do us proud.

*They drink, eat, talk, laugh as the stars wheel overhead.*

*PROJECTION: Stratigraphy out.*

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#### **Scene 4**

*Spring semester freshman year: the lecture hall of PROFESSOR HARLAN JORDAN, museum director and department head, who stands at a table with various items on it.*

*THOMAS sits next to FLETCHER CALVIN, his roommate.*

*PROJECTION: A blackboard. On the blackboard JORDAN has written "Lines of Ascent." Under that he has drawn parallel lines labeled "Neanderthal," "Cro-Magnon," "Java Man," "Piltdown," and "???".*

JORDAN: The Piltdown Man's fossil remains show clearly that modern man arose from the apes and gorillas.

*FLETCHER raises his hand.*

FLETCHER: Professor—

THOMAS: Fletch—

JORDAN: I'm well aware, Mr. Calvin, that God and Mr. Darwin may differ about how you evolved enough to end up in my class, so let me finish before you bring the wrath of the Almighty down among us. Mr. Calvin resents that he may be a descendant of apes.

FLETCHER: Human beings are not just animals.

THOMAS: Fletch, hold off.

JORDAN: We don't yet know, however, what the apes think of having such a cousin as Mr. Calvin.

*SOUND: A small ripple of laughter.*

JORDAN: The ways of God are mysterious, Mr. Calvin—but he's not a trickster.

*JORDAN picks up a pair of knuckle bones from his desk and rolls them across the tabletop.*

JORDAN: He does not play dice with our minds. Everything is available to us if we only put our minds to finding it out. Which should give us a good dose of that Christian humility you prefer.

*JORDAN picks up the skull of an ape.*

JORDAN: And who knows? Perhaps in some jungle university, as we speak, an orangutan Harlan Jordan is holding forth to a group of primate freshmen—

*JORDAN wiggles the jaw.*

*SOUND: Laughter.*

JORDAN: —about this creature called Homo fletcher calvinus and wondering if he, indeed, despite his protests, is really the be-all and end-all of God's creation. Which leads us to—Thomas Shea, would you stand up?

*THOMAS, startled at hearing his name called, stands.*

*SOUND: Murmuring of the audience.*

JORDAN: Ah, good. Quiet please. Mr. Shea, who is Mr. Calvin's roommate, if I'm not mistaken.

THOMAS: Yes, sir.

JORDAN: Mr. Shea wrote an excellent response to my question to you all last class about Neanderthal, Java Man, Piltdown Man, and the "missing link."

*SOUND: Rustling of the audience as it turns to face THOMAS.*

THOMAS: Sir?

JORDAN: You made a point about human nature, Mr. Shea, that I would like you to repeat to the rest of us.

THOMAS: Sir?

JORDAN: The chimpanzee need not be afraid of this old orangutan. Mr. Shea—your point. For the rest of us.

FLETCHER: Should've let me keep talking.

THOMAS: My—point. If the "missing link" exists—

JORDAN: It does—it just hasn't applied for admission to my class yet.

*SOUND: Laughter.*

THOMAS: If it did show up for class—then we have some hard questions to ask about—whether it is human, if it would be our brother.

JORDAN: Mr. Shea is modest. He said that we would have to re-define what it means to be human—even better than that—

THOMAS: Professor Jordan—

JORDAN: He said that this thing we call "human nature" doesn't exist at all but that we make it up as we go along. A story we tell ourselves about who we are. Mr. Calvin, that would seem to put God out of a job.

FLETCHER: I don't think God has a job, Professor.

JORDAN: Not in Mr. Shea's universe.

FLETCHER: Though He wouldn't mind being a university professor.

JORDAN: I'll see if I can get him tenure, Mr. Calvin. Thank you, Mr. Shea. If all of you can't find the missing link by the next class, at least read the next chapter and give me the usual 2-page summary of its major points.

*SOUND: Lecture hall emptying out—voices, movements, etc.*

*PROJECTION: Blackboard out.*

*THOMAS and FLETCHER stand. FLETCHER punches THOMAS playfully in the arm.*

FLETCHER: Teacher's pet. Teacher's pet.

*THOMAS punches back.*

THOMAS: Lucky me—I get the missing link for my roommate.

*JORDAN approaches them.*

JORDAN: No lightning bolts yet.

FLETCHER: Zeus, Professor.

JORDAN: Cannot keep all those gods straight.

FLETCHER: That's okay, professor—they'll keep you straight.

JORDAN: Like him as a roommate?

THOMAS: Enough bananas, he's fine.

JORDAN: You've got a sharp tongue, Mr. Calvin—we'll convert it to science yet.

*FLETCHER playfully cowers, looking up at the ceiling, then snaps his fingers.*

FLETCHER: Can't get a lightning bolt when you need one. I might lose faith after all.

JORDAN: It's a start. Thomas—come with me?

FLETCHER: I release you. Just be sure to get back in time to write the literature essay for this poor gorilla.

*THOMAS and JORDAN leave and circle the stage. FLETCHER watches them walk away.*

FLETCHER: He is a star worth hitching a wagon to.

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## **Scene 5**

*JORDAN's table becomes the desk of MISS JENNINGS, JORDAN's secretary, who is opening mail, the opener deftly slicing the envelopes.*

*Another table with chairs is set for JORDAN—the desk is vastly over-burdened with the paraphernalia of a famous anthropologist. Prominent is what looks like a misshapen skull and jawbone.*

*SOUND: Envelopes being opened.*

*JORDAN and THOMAS enter, THOMAS in awe.*

THOMAS: Are you sure I'm supposed to be here—

JORDAN: I am Virgil, guiding you through.

*JORDAN sees that THOMAS doesn't get the reference.*

JORDAN: We have to expand your reading. I'll make you a list.

*JORDAN indicates THOMAS to JENNINGS.*

JORDAN: Miss Jennings. My muse and savior.

JENNINGS: A letter here from Dawson, in England, and—

JORDAN: All later.

JENNINGS: The helmet before he goes in there?

JORDAN: It's a bit of a mess.

*SOUND: The zip of the opener through a thick envelope.*

JENNINGS: Never found the last student.

*SOUND: Another deft slice.*

JORDAN: Actually, they did—his femur's in drawer 4A, west annex.

JENNINGS: Nice to have known you.

*They move into JORDAN'S office.*

*During their conversation, JENNINGS files, sorts, writes, etc.*

JORDAN: Plato had his cave, and I have mine.

*JORDAN sees THOMAS' puzzlement.*

THOMAS: My school only had one room.

JORDAN: And thirty students and half that in books, excluding Bibles. And one teacher. Do you know how remarkable it is for you to be here?

*JORDAN picks up an arrowhead and hands it to THOMAS.*

THOMAS: Susquehanna group.

*JORDAN takes it back, looks at THOMAS.*

JORDAN: Most would have guessed—

THOMAS: Easy to confuse—the edges—

JORDAN: I know the differences. And so do you. But not why I brought you here.

*JORDAN points to the skull.*

JORDAN: Recognize that?

THOMAS: Piltdown—a cast of—

JORDAN: Went to England to see the shards myself. Would like more bits of him, certainly.  
But—our supposed missing link.

THOMAS: May I?

*THOMAS turns the skull in his hands.*

JORDAN: Alas, poor Yorick—on the list.

*But THOMAS doesn't hear him. As he puts the skull back, utter amazement wreathes THOMAS' face.*

THOMAS: I can't believe—

JORDAN: A lot of people still don't. He is just too – odd—for their tastes. But Mr. Darwin said we need him, Mr. Charles Dawson of Piltdown, England, has delivered him, so what can mere mortals do? Come, let us reason together.

THOMAS: That I know.

JORDAN: Did you also know that somewhere in those drawers out there are fossils your father sent to us? Mastodon bones, I believe.

THOMAS: My father?

JORDAN: Correctly named, dated, measured. Not bad for a dirt farmer, eh? And like father—I'm sure I could dig up that paper you sent me—

THOMAS: Still have that?

JORDAN: Courtesy of your teacher. That's why you have a scholarship—courtesy of this teacher, impressed with father and son.

THOMAS: Thank you.

JORDAN: And that's why I have a – proposal – for you. I didn't bring you here just for my exercise.

THOMAS: Yes, sir.

*JORDAN turns to scrutinize THOMAS.*

THOMAS: Sir? Sir?

JORDAN: Like you, Thomas, I got hooked as a child. For fifty years, the search for man has never disappointed me. Thomas, I am going to say something I've not said to anyone else—yet. Piltdown—that supposed "missing link"? I think we can do better.

THOMAS: Better?

JORDAN: Why should Europe and Asia have all the glory?

THOMAS: Sir?

JORDAN: Boule with his Neanderthals, Breuil with his Cro-Magnons, Dubois with his Pithecanthropus. Haeckel predicted a missing link, but he never said where. Well, why not here?

*JORDAN gestures at his office.*

JORDAN: Well, not here—but in the United States. Piltdown – “Dawn Man”—eoanthropus. Why not our own “dawn man?” What do you say to that? The New World, the New Man—eoanthropus libertatis. Doesn't our nation deserve it? The American Dawn Man—the origin of what has become good and fine in the world. It'll take a lot of hard work—but think of the glory if we can do it. The pride of America. And not just that—the pride of the American race. Just imagine if we find it!

THOMAS: Do you really think—

JORDAN: Without a doubt. We are not a doubting people, Thomas, are we? Those storage rooms? We have stuff no human has ever cleanly examined. I need a keen eye next to mine to sift through it. I need a good brain to read and analyze.

THOMAS: Mine.

JORDAN: Yours.

THOMAS: To work for you.

JORDAN: Not work, Thomas, not work—discovery, exploration—a grand journey. I want you to travel that journey with me. I want you to be my assistant, my protégé—Watson to Holmes. On the list. Accept?

THOMAS: I would be paid?

JORDAN: You would have money enough to send home—where I understand it would do a lot of good. You'll start now, stay here for the summer. Yes?

THOMAS: When's my first payday?

JORDAN: Miss Jennings—an employment application, if you please.

JENNINGS: He's still alive?

JORDAN: Yes.

JENNINGS: Will wonders never cease.

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### Scene 6

*SOUND: Music to study fossils by.*

*SARAH stands next to JOHNSON as he opens an envelope and pulls out money. Paperclipped to the money is a notecard, which JOHNSON shows to SARAH.*

JOHNSON: My mastodon bones—he sent me the catalogue card—

*Lights off them as THOMAS, wearing a white lab coat, reads a letter, a burlap bag of books at his feet. FLETCHER pops in.*

FLETCHER: Coming to the pep rally?

THOMAS: No.

FLETCHER: Hey, doom and gloom, what's up?

*THOMAS hands him the letter.*

THOMAS: My father has never said a word.

FLETCHER: How long has the bank—

THOMAS: I don't know—he and the banker know each other pretty well. I figure—I don't know what to figure.

FLETCHER: I'm sorry.

THOMAS: I don't know what to do.

FLETCHER: So come to the pep rally.

THOMAS: Can't—got to get back to work for Jordan.

FLETCHER: He slaved you all summer—

THOMAS: Without Jordan's money—

FLETCHER: I'll shout extra hard for you, my friend.

*SOUND: A pep rally, rising in volume.*

FLETCHER: I want to say "don't worry"—

THOMAS: Don't worry—go.

*FLETCHER leaves. THOMAS picks up the bag of books, moves to JORDAN's office through shifting autumn light.*

*SOUND: Pep rally to crescendo.*

*SOUND: Pep rally out. The wind, the rustle of leaves.*

*THOMAS takes out a set of keys, unlocks a door.*

*SOUND: Keys in lock, door unlocked.*

*THOMAS closes the door, locks it.*

*SOUND: Door locked, keys put away.*

*JORDAN sits at a work bench, the lamp on, room full of autumn light.*

THOMAS: Professor? I've brought back the books.

JORDAN: You are one glutton for punishment. Come in. Sit.

*On the workbench THOMAS sees sepia bottles labeled with chemical names, pots of paints bristling with brushes, pieces of bone scattered, an electric drill.*

JORDAN: Thomas, closer, I want to show you something. And I will pay you for the showing—consider this a paid night off.

*THOMAS wrinkles his nose at the strong chemical smells.*

JORDAN: A hobby of mine—faking fossils. Keeps me on the look-out.

THOMAS: Fakes?

JORDAN: Big business in forgery. And always a step behind.

*JORDAN holds a piece of fresh bone. In front of him is a piece of fossilized bone, much darker in color.*

JORDAN: Fresh bone, unfossilized—full of organic matter. Feel how light compared to this.

*JORDAN clamps the bones into a vice, takes up an electric drill with a thin bit.*

JORDAN: Now this.

*SOUND: Electric drill*

JORDAN: Smell that?

THOMAS: Like burning horn.

JORDAN: Now this.

*JORDAN drills into the fossil.*

*SOUND: Electric drill.*

THOMAS: Nothing but powder, no smoke at all.

JORDAN: But now watch this.

*JORDAN takes out the fresh bone, then takes a brush from a pot and paints the fresh bone.*

JORDAN: Potassium bichromate. Watch.

*Slowly the bone colors like the fossil.*

JORDAN: It's only skin-deep, so to speak. When it dries, you can wash in off with hydrochloric acid—or scratch it with a pin. But if you don't—it'll look real. And it hardens the bone, too. Give me that tooth there.

*JORDAN takes a tooth no larger than a little fingernail, dabs into another pot, and paints the tooth.*

JORDAN: Now that one.

*JORDAN holds them both up, and they look remarkably alike.*

JORDAN: Van Dyke brown adds a couple of thousand millennia in an instant.

THOMAS: How many—

JORDAN: In this museum? Don't even want to think about it, even though as director I have to. Question for another time. Let's call it a night, dear friend. The discovery of the spectacular can wait until tomorrow.

THOMAS: Professor, I got a letter from my father today.

JORDAN: Let me see.

*JORDAN reads, then hands it back.*

*SOUND: Wind, rustle of leaves.*

JORDAN: Don't worry, Thomas. Things will work out. Go get some rest.

*JORDAN shakes THOMAS' hand.*

JORDAN: Lock up for me?

THOMAS: Of course.

JORDAN: You can leave the books on the bench. See you tomorrow.

*JORDAN walks into the darkness. THOMAS sits for a moment in the quiet punctuated by the autumn wind. He stares at the paints, chemical bottles, drill, bits of bone. Then a look of realization comes across his face. He moves off into the darkness.*

*JORDAN's bench goes away.*

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## **Scene 7**

*SOUND: Train whistle, train idling.*

*FLETCHER holds a suitcase. THOMAS enters, breathless, duffel bag slung over his shoulder.*

*SOUND: Train sounds, PORTER's voice.*

PORTER: All you jackasses goin' home better geeeeeetttt aboard!

THOMAS: That's my call.

*THOMAS and FLETCHER pause, then give each other a "masculine" embrace, with a sharp slap on the back.*

FLETCHER: You're coming back.

THOMAS: Can't miss arguing with the preacher's son.

FLETCHER: What would I do if I didn't have the heathen to convert?

THOMAS: You can always tell a religious man—

THOMAS & FLETCHER: But you can't tell him much.

FLETCHER: Good luck.

*FLETCHER leaves.*

*SOUND: Train up to speed.*

*THOMAS sits on a bench in one of the train's cars. He is startled by the CONDUCTOR leaning over his shoulder.*

CONDUCTOR: Ticket?

*THOMAS hands it to him, and the conductor, with a brisk succession of pops and snaps, punches it, hands it back.*

CONDUCTOR: University?

THOMAS: Second year.

CONDUCTOR: Lot nicer there than out there.

THOMAS: So many For Sale signs. Auction signs.

CONDUCTOR: Sad sight, eh? Like that all along the line. Drying up and blowing away.

THOMAS: You live around here?

CONDUCTOR: I live on the rails—lot safer.

THOMAS: Lonelier.

CONDUCTOR: Lonely's better than starving.

*JOHNSON and SARAH enter.*

*SOUND: Train coming in to the station.*

*THOMAS joins JOHNSON and SARAH. They embrace.*

*They enter THOMAS' room: Desk, chair, simple bed.*

JOHNSON: Just the way you left it.

THOMAS: Sounds like I've been on a world tour.

JOHNSON: Compared to around here, you have. You saw? Never great even in the best of times, and these are not—

*THOMAS opens the duffel bag and sets his clothes. He carefully puts a burlap bag down next to his desk.*

THOMAS: I wish—

JOHNSON: Don't even—not a thing you could do to make it any better. The only thing keeping off the wolf is your money and that gravel pit—the road crews are digging it out and laying it down as fast as they can.

THOMAS: So, some "stones in your pocket"—

JOHNSON: Bank's pocket, you mean. Sit down. I just want to tell you how proud I am of you. Proud that my son—

*SARAH clears her voice.*

JOHNSON: She thinks she had a little something to do with it.

SARAH: We're both proud.

THOMAS: I just wish—

SARAH: We've always survived—no reason to forget that we know how to do that.

JOHNSON: Yes, well—you must be tired.

SARAH: Sleep well.

*Awkwardly, JOHNSON kisses his son on the cheek.*

JOHNSON: Sleep well.

*JOHNSON and SARAH leave.*

*THOMAS grabs the burlap bag. THOMAS' room goes away. He has a lantern in his hand, and he is outside the house.*

*SOUND: Wind, rustle of leaves.*

*PROJECTION: The sky is full of stars.*

*THOMAS grabs a shovel and pick, a geologist's hammer and a small garden spade. He moves several steps downstage, then puts everything down. The lantern throws out a circle of light.*

*THOMAS moves to the trench of dirt downstage.*

*He picks up the pick, loosens the dirt.*

*SOUND: Pick in gravel.*

*With shovel, THOMAS moves the dirt aside.*

*SOUND: Shovel in gravel.*

*From the burlap bag THOMAS pulls out three pieces of discolored skull bones he had lifted from the museum.*

*SOUND: Mucking about in the gravel.*

*He scoops out some dirt and rubs the bones, then works them down until the dirt grabs them tight. Then a skim-coat of gravel to cover them.*

*THOMAS moves to another part of the pit with the lantern, does the same type of seeding.*

*THOMAS moves to third part of the pit with the lantern. He takes a partial skull and a partial jaw with two teeth out of his bag. The bone fragments already salted come from this skull, but the jaw is of a very different size, even though it shares the brownish patina of the skull.*

*THOMAS tucks them into a hole and covers them up.*

*THOMAS sits back and stares at the sky as it turns to dawn.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Scene 8**

*JOHNSON enters, pulling on a pair of work gloves, accompanied by the GRAVEL DIGGER, also pulling on gloves.*

GRAVEL DIGGER: Ready to dig today?

*GRAVEL DIGGER makes a gesture.*

*SOUND: Truck engines roar to life.*

JOHNSON: Gravel digging it is!!

*THOMAS, kneeling, geologist's hammer in his hand and small spade by his knee, looks up as the growl of the trucks turns into a loud roar as they close in. Then he starts testing rocks with his hammer.*

*JOHNSON and GRAVEL DIGGER see THOMAS working.*

GRAVEL DIGGER: What's he doing?

JOHNSON: What is he doing?

*THOMAS sees his father. He does a few flicks of his spade to expose the tips of the first planted skull bones, then stands, waves his arms, yells.*

THOMAS: Dad! Dad! Come here!

*JOHNSON sprints to THOMAS. GRAVEL DIGGER makes a gesture, and the trucks gear down.*

*SOUND: Idling trucks.*

*THOMAS points to the ground, and they both drop to their knees.*

THOMAS: Look.

*JOHNSON presses his face close to the ground, an inch away from the bone tip. He sniffs. He rests a very light fingertip against the bone, feels the rough edge.*

GRAVEL DIGGER: Mr. Shea! Those better be emeralds you're looking at.

JOHNSON: Dig it out.

*THOMAS carefully pulls the bone out of the muck with a "pop."*

*SOUND: Small sucking sound.*

*The second and third pieces appear, and THOMAS pulls them out as well.*

*He lays all three pieces in JOHNSON's hand.*

JOHNSON: You tell me—you're the expert now.

GRAVEL DIGGER: Mr. Shea.

THOMAS: Probably skull pieces. See how thick it is. Fossilized.

JOHNSON: Real, then. Human?

THOMAS: Probably.

*JOHNSON lets out a WHOOP.*

*JOHNSON turns to GRAVEL DIGGER, cradling the bones as if they were glass.*

JOHNSON: See these?

GRAVEL DIGGER: Look like bones.

JOHNSON: Skull bones.

GRAVEL DIGGER: So?

JOHNSON: No, you don't understand—

*THOMAS walks up, lays a hand on his father's shoulder.*

THOMAS: Dad.

JOHNSON: These are ancient!

THOMAS: Dad—

JOHNSON: I mean, ancient. Feel how heavy they are.

GRAVEL DIGGER: Older than my foreman over there, who's older than dirt?

JOHNSON: Aren't they beautiful? And he found them, right over there, my son, he found them.

*THOMAS again puts a hand on his father's shoulder.*

THOMAS: Dad.

*JOHNSON turns on THOMAS with an unusual fierceness.*

JOHNSON: What?!

*THOMAS freezes as he hears the anger in JOHNSON's answer. And several beats behind, JOHNSON hears it himself.*

JOHNSON: They're just some old bones—really old, probably 50,000 years old.

GRAVEL DIGGER: Well, I think that's really interesting.

JOHNSON: Probably older than your foreman.

GRAVEL DIGGER: Not by much.

*The tension breaks.*

THOMAS: We used to do this when I was kid.

JOHNSON: Would you mind—I know it's a hell of a thing to ask—but could you dig over in the south forty?

GRAVEL DIGGER: You really like those bones?

JOHNSON: It'd just be for today—promise. Promise.

*GRAVEL DIGGER gestures, and JOHNSON hands him one of the fragments, which he weighs in his hand.*

DRIVER: Fifty thousand?

JOHNSON: Give or take a birthday or two.

THOMAS: Dad—

*GRAVEL DIGGER hands the fragment back.*

DRIVER: All right, Mr. Shea. Adds 10 minutes at either end of the day, but—

THOMAS: That's 20 minutes of sunshine in December—how often you get that?

GRAVEL DIGGER: You got a smart son.

*GRAVEL DIGGER gestures.*

*SOUND: Trucks come back to full throttle, then move off.*

*GRAVEL DIGGER exits.*

*The day becomes quiet.*

JOHNSON: Let's dig.

THOMAS: Dad—

JOHNSON: They don't need me—I dig with 'em just to keep myself from going stir-crazy. Get paid whether I dig or not. Like old times, eh?

*JOHNSON and THOMAS sift dirt—they find the bone fragments hidden by THOMAS. With each one JOHNSON lets out an exclamation and adds it to the pile.*

*SOUND: Music to find bones by.*

*SARAH, carrying a basket, enters. She looks at JOHNSON and THOMAS, grimed and grinning.*

SARAH: Johnson and Thomas Shea.

*JOHNSON looks up, sees her, whoops, and embraces her with a swirl.*

JOHNSON: Look at what I found. We found!

SARAH: Eat first.

JOHNSON: Eat?

SARAH: Eat.

JOHNSON: Help your mother.

*THOMAS helps SARAH while JOHNSON carries in the burlap bag, on which are the bones. They sit, they eat.*

SARAH: All right, let me see one.

*JOHNSON hands SARAH one of the bone fragments.*

JOHNSON: Fifty thousand years old.

SARAH: Are you sure?

JOHNSON: Of course I'm sure—I mean, he's sure—he's being taught by the best!

SARAH: But can you really tell?

JOHNSON: Of course he can!

SARAH: Eat your sandwich. I just mean, all that digging you two did here—and then the road crews, all their digging—and never once—

JOHNSON: It's like that—big haystack, one needle. Most of the time—straw. Right?

THOMAS: Right.

JOHNSON: That's how it works.

SARAH: Well—there's a smile on that face I haven't seen in a while.

*SARAH bounces the fragment in her hand.*

JOHNSON: Her skeptical mind works.

*SARAH tosses it back to JOHNSON, who catches it.*

SARAH: Look, muck about with bones if you want. I've got to do such boring things as clean your underwear and cook some food for your ordinary bones.

JOHNSON: Ah, what a fine woman she be, eh?

*THOMAS watches his parents joke. For the moment, his face looks completely relaxed.*

JOHNSON: All right, off with you. We have work to do.

*THOMAS helps SARAH put everything into the basket.*

SARAH: Please be careful—

THOMAS: I know—I will—he's—

SARAH: At least he's happy for today.

*SARAH exits. JOHNSON slaps his hands together.*

JOHNSON: Let's dig!

THOMAS: How about over there?

JOHNSON: Let the maestro conduct.

*They move to where THOMAS had salted the skull and jaw.*

JOHNSON: This looks good—a turn in an ancient river, water slows down, things settle in.

THOMAS: Want to try?

JOHNSON: Give me the spade.

*JOHNSON, using THOMAS' small spade, pulls away dirt and stone.*

*SOUND: Scraping.*

*Then JOHNSON stops.*

THOMAS: What?

*JOHNSON points, and THOMAS sees the protruding end of the jawbone.*

THOMAS: Maybe just a branch. From the trees.

*JOHNSON carves around the jawbone, exposing more and more of it. He leans in to smell the bone, then points with the shovel-tip.*

JOHNSON: This isn't a branch.

*Together they unearth the bones and lay them on the burlap. JOHNSON handles them as if they were glass.*

*SARAH sets up the kitchen table. JOHNSON carries the burlap bag while THOMAS gathers the tools. He lays the bag on the table.*

JOHNSON: Goddamn!

SARAH: Johnson.

JOHNSON: Sorry.

*JOHNSON points at the bones.*

JOHNSON: Missing link—that's what I think. *(to THOMAS)* And we're going to go to Professor Jordan and get him to say that. Because it's true.

*SOUND: Trucks accelerating up a hill, then grinding to an idling halt.*

*GRAVEL DIGGER enters.*

GRAVEL DIGGER: Just wanted to let you know—hey, more bones, I see.

JOHNSON: Not just bones, you see—the Missing Link.

THOMAS: Dad—

GRAVEL DIGGER: You don't say.

JOHNSON: I do say.

GRAVEL DIGGER: Maybe you've got my foreman's great-great-great aunt right there.

JOHNSON: My son and I—we have found the missing link.

GRAVEL DIGGER: You don't say.

JOHNSON: I do say, again.

*SOUND: Cacophony of different voices all saying the phrase "missing link."*

*THOMAS catches SARAH's eye. She looks at him as if to say, "What gives?" But he shrugs and looks away.*

*MIMED: JOHNSON looks absolutely ecstatic as he explains to GRAVEL DIGGER about the missing link and geology and so forth and so forth—as if he were Professor JORDAN in front of his freshmen.*

*Lights out as voices continue.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Scene 9

*Lights up.*

*SOUND: Voices fade, followed by knuckles rapping on a door.*

*DAN MORAN, reporter, enters, a fedora cocked back on his head, pad and pencil in hand. He mimes knocking on the door again.*

*SOUND: Knuckles rapping on a door.*

*SARAH, as if looking through a window, sees MORAN. She opens the door.*

*SOUND: Door opening.*

MORAN: Morning.

SARAH: Morning.

MORAN: Is Johnson Shea around?

SARAH: Not within shouting distance.

MORAN: How far would I have to go to be in shouting distance?

SARAH: Who are you?

MORAN: Dan Moran, newspaper reporter.

SARAH: There's been no killings around here.

MORAN: I am here for the missing link. I understand Mr. Shea has one?

SARAH: How can you have a link that's missing? If it's missing, you can't have it, so leave.

MORAN: If I lose something, I still have it, even if it's missing.

SARAH: Who told you?

MORAN: I got a call at the paper from someone here in town.

SARAH: Who?

MORAN: Confidential.

SARAH: He's off digging.

MORAN: How can I get there?

SARAH: See that grove of trees over there?

MORAN: I can't walk down that road over there?

SARAH: You saying I don't know my own property?

MORAN: All right—grove of trees.

SARAH: Go through that grove of trees.

MORAN: Through those trees—I can't just, you know, the road? All right, trees it is.

*MORAN enters the grove of trees and is immediately lost and thrashing.*

*SOUND: Thrashing through branches and brambles.*

MORAN: Fuck! Fuck! Goddamn—

*JOHNSON enters at the gravel pit. MORAN stumbles out of the woods.*

JOHNSON: Who are you?

MORAN: Who the fuck are you? Goddamn—

JOHNSON: Johnson Shea.

MORAN: Oh.

JOHNSON: And who, as you say, the fuck are you?

MORAN: Dan Moran, reporter—newspaper.

JOHNSON: Why didn't you just come down the road?

MORAN: Your wife—I assume she was—

JOHNSON: Evil-looking woman, sneer on her face?

MORAN: Wouldn't go that far.

JOHNSON: Some would.

MORAN: She told me to come that way.

JOHNSON: My house is a half mile that way.

MORAN: I walked—

JOHNSON: You've had a good long jaunt, Mr. Moran. And for what purpose?

MORAN: The missing link. I want to do a story about you and the missing link.

JOHNSON: You don't say.

MORAN: Do say.

*MORAN takes out his pad.*

MORAN: S-H-E-A or S-H-A-Y?

*Lights out on them.*

*Lights up in the SHEA house, kitchen. Table, chairs, the bones.*

*PROJECTION: The front page of the newspaper: "The Sun Times" with a headline: "Is This America's 'Missing Link'?"*

*Under the headline, a sub-headline: "Local farmer got a crop he didn't expect."*

*Under the sub-headline, a sketch of the skull and jawbone, along with an artist's rendering of what the "missing link" might look like, wildly inaccurate and a hoot to look at.*

*JOHNSON, SARAH, and THOMAS look at the newspaper.*

JOHNSON: Now that is beautiful.

*SARAH, arms crossed, scowling, gives THOMAS a "look."*

SARAH: Based on this, the bank will now forgive the mortgage—

JOHNSON: The wet blanket. I wonder what else is out there, Thomas? What else haven't we dug up yet?

THOMAS: Dad, don't go getting yourself—

JOHNSON: I'll bet you there's more out there. I'll just bet you. Shea Man. We're gonna call it Shea Man.

*JOHNSON continues to admire the front page of the newspaper. SARAH looks at THOMAS, who can't give his mother a straight look back.*

*SOUND: Telegraph keys*

*SARAH pulls a telegram out of her pocket and hands it to THOMAS, who scans it.*

SARAH: Came earlier.

*JORDAN enters, carrying a small leather satchel. He knocks on the door. Just behind him is MORAN.*

*SOUND: Knuckles on wood.*

JORDAN: Mrs. Shea?

MORAN: Professor Jordan—

JORDAN: How do you know who I am?

MORAN: Name's Dan Moran.

SARAH: Our intrepid bloodhound.

JOHNSON: And you wrote the article.

MORAN: I am the perp.

JORDAN: How did you know I was—

MORAN: Investigators investigate.

SARAH: Telegraph clerks take bribes—right?

MORAN: Investigator's investigate. Thought I'd tag along.

SARAH: Like a tick on a dog.

*By now, THOMAS is at the door, behind SARAH.*

JORDAN: Thomas.

THOMAS: Professor.

JOHNSON: Who is it?

SARAH: Come and see for yourself.

*JOHNSON does.*

*PROJECTION: Newspaper out.*

JORDAN: Mr. Johnson Shea, I presume?

*JOHNSON shakes his hand.*

JOHNSON: Professor Jordan!

*MORAN tips his fedora.*

MORAN: Remember me?

JOHNSON: I like your style.

SARAH: If you like blood-sucking.

JORDAN: Mr. Shea—we have some business together—and we can't do it—

MORAN: Thomas Shea, right? You were with—

JOHNSON: Leave the boy alone.

MORAN: Then let me tag along, and I promise to bother only those people who should be bothered—on my mother's grave.

SARAH: A shame some parents die before their children.

JOHNSON: Can't blame a bulldog for biting.

JORDAN: She's right—this is not how to do things.

JOHNSON: But it's how things are being done, Professor—new age, new ways. Mr. Moran—you're in.

SARAH: Will you at least invite them inside?

*Which JOHNSON does—and they find themselves in front of the bones. SARAH and THOMAS get chairs.*

*An intense bright light from overhead lights the bones on a white cloth, the dirt still clinging to them.*

*JORDAN sits before the bones, JOHNSON, THOMAS, and MORAN in the background.*

*SARAH brings a cup of tea to JORDAN.*

JORDAN: Many thanks, Mrs. Shea.

*The cup shakes in JORDAN's slightly nervous hand, nervous because what he sees looks as genuine as it does improbable.*

*THOMAS gnaws on his fingernails. SARAH gently but firmly pushes his hand away from his mouth.*

JOHNSON: We didn't wash them. Tried not to handle them much.

JORDAN: Did you mark the site?

THOMAS: Not exactly.

JORDAN: I taught you—

JOHNSON: They all came from the gravel pit, within yards of each other.

JORDAN: But stratigraphy—for dating—

*But his voice trails off as he looks ever more closely at the bones. He puts the cup down but just on the table's edge, and SARAH moves to catch it—but JORDAN completely ignores her.*

MORAN: Professor—

*JORDAN ignores him as well as he reaches into his bag and pulls out white cotton gloves and a small leather roll, which unrolled is full of what look like dental tools.*

*He uses the tools to turn over the bones, poke at them, scrape them. Only when he's done this for a minute or so does he actually pick up one of the skull fragments and the jaw and weigh them in his hands.*

JORDAN: The first way to test if bone is new or ancient?

THOMAS: By its weight—fresh bone, full of organic matter, is light compared to—

JORDAN: Compared to fossilized bone.

*JORDAN hefts the fragments, then abruptly puts them down and pulls back, as if catching himself at the edge of a cliff, and takes a deep breath.*

JORDAN: Thomas, your theory.

JOHNSON: Thomas.

THOMAS: Well—the end of the jaw—

JORDAN: The condyle—use the right term.

THOMAS: The condyle. Is missing, so it's hard to know how the jaw hinges to the skull.

JORDAN: I noticed that right away.

THOMAS: But all the bones were found close to each other.

JORDAN: The jaw, Thomas—the jaw.

THOMAS: The color of the jaw and the skull are close. The densities are close.

*MORAN scribbles. THOMAS hesitates. He looks up at his father, whose face is set in anticipation and delight.*

THOMAS: I think we may have eoanthropus, Professor.

JORDAN: Mr. Shea, would you sit down, please? More tests, of course—more tests—these will have to go back to the lab. But—

MORAN: Does that "but" mean what I think it means?

JORDAN: This is the Dawn Man—

*MORAN whispers, writes.*

MORAN: Shea Man is Dawn Man—

JORDAN: Today, Mr. Shea, America triumphs. Take that, Piltdown!

MORAN: Piltdown?

THOMAS: The missing link found in England.

*MORAN scribbles.*

MORAN: "Take that, Piltdown!" Don't know what it means, but it makes a corker sub-head.

*JORDAN stands—he is now in a lecture hall, the bones before him. The other actors, standing to the sides, will play his questioners.*

*THOMAS, squirreled against the wall, watches everything with eyes that look frightened and cornered. He gnaws his fingernails without pause.*

JORDAN: And my laboratory has confirmed, by the most modern methods of analysis, that these bones are genuine, and that their proximity at the site indicates they come from a single individual.

SCHOLAR 1: But have you done the necessary stratigraphic analyses—

JORDAN: I have visited the site myself.

SCHOLAR 2: In the face of evidence that, to me at least, is quite incredible and hard to swallow—

JORDAN: Most bitter pills are, my friend—I've been swallowing a few of them myself lately.

SCHOLAR 2: You are willing to, well, bet your reputation on this Shea Man?

JORDAN: My good friend—I already have.

*SOUND: As if JORDAN's voice is on a record that is slowing to a stop.*

*THOMAS turns abruptly and moves downstage. The lecture hall goes dark.*

FLETCHER: You okay, pal?

THOMAS: Hot in there.

FLETCHER: You look green!

THOMAS: I'm fine, I'm fine—just got to get some air.

FLETCHER: Definitely green. Must've been really hot—

THOMAS: I'm fine.

FLETCHER: Always been a bad liar.

THOMAS: I'd like to be alone. I'd like to be alone.

FLETCHER: Shouldn't lie to a preacher's son.

THOMAS: Fletch—is it wrong if something you did wrong makes someone else happy?

FLETCHER: How happy is happy if you always got a sword hanging over your head? I have no idea if that's a good answer.

THOMAS: Neither do I.

FLETCHER: How about this? Mixing sugar with shit doesn't make the shit taste any better.

*Lights come up in the lecture hall.*

SCHOLAR 2: You are willing to, well, bet your reputation on this Shea Man?

*SOUND: The record with JORDAN's voice on it comes back up to speed.*

JORDAN: My good friend—I already have. For science, for the greater glory of my country, for my race—I already have. Now, let me review the findings in more detail—

THOMAS: It sure does not taste any better.

*Lights out. Stage clears.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### Scene 10

*PROJECTION: "The L.T. Houseman Museum of Amazing Wonders." With some appropriately garish logo and cartouche to go with it.*

*Underneath the headline is a line of display cases filled with humanoid shapes, all with fanciful titles, such as "Orangutangu Man" and so on. Over the display cases is a placard: "The Hall of Missing Links."*

*Lights up on the office of L.T. HOUSEMAN—as furnished with curios and quiddities and oddities as the budget permits.*

*In the midst of this garish office sits REEVES, HOUSEMAN's assistant, filing papers and separating the morning mail with practiced wrist-flicks and hand-tosses.*

*As HOUSEMAN enters, REEVES holds her arm straight up, and HOUSEMAN tosses his hat, which settles neatly on top of her outstretched fingers. In turn, REEVES stands and places the hat on top of a coat pole topped with a rack of antlers.*

HOUSEMAN: Unbroken record.

REEVES: Don't forget your dinner tonight.

HOUSEMAN: I never forget a dinner with rich businessmen.

REEVES: And they never forget you.

HOUSEMAN: Which is why I can pay you such a handsome salary for being such a good target.

*HOUSEMAN holds up a newspaper.*

REEVES: Old news.

HOUSEMAN: New story—professor certifies them as authentic.

*HOUSEMAN says nothing, continues to hold the paper.*

REEVES: I'll get Chalmers Diggs on the phone.

HOUSEMAN: Always ready to speak to the owners of the Fourth Estate.

*REEVES calls.*

REEVES: Mr. Chalmers Diggs, please? From Mr. L. T. Houseman.

*REEVES holds up the phone for HOUSEMAN to take.*

HOUSEMAN: Chalmers! No, no, no, this is not about La La, the Siamese twin—that has been taken care [of]—I'm glad to hear the relief in your voice. No, I have a favor to ask. You have a reporter on your staff—Dan Moran. Right, your front page on the missing link. About Shea Man. I need to get in touch with him. Many thanks.

*HOUSEMAN hands the phone to REEVES, who writes down what she hears and hangs up without saying anything. HOUSEMAN goes to say something. REEVES interrupts.*

REEVES: Have him here as soon as I can dig him up, pun intended.

*HOUSEMAN chuckles and moves to his "inner office," a sitting area upstage.*

*Light up on MORAN reading a telegram and his subsequent arrival in front of REEVES, who is typing a letter and completely ignores MORAN, even speaks to him without looking at him.*

REEVES: Your hat. You can't wear it in here.

MORAN: All right.

*MORAN takes off his hat but doesn't know where to put it.*

REEVES: Toss it here.

*MORAN hesitates, then sails it toward REEVES, who catches it, stands, and settles it on one of the antlers.*

*SOUND: Something like the Westminster CHIMES played on a bunch of tin cans.*

REEVES: He'll see you now.

*MORAN moves to the "inner office" and finds HOUSEMAN standing in front of the wall of missing links. MORAN doesn't know whether to be impressed or appalled. He decides to be transfixed.*

HOUSEMAN: I've liked your stories.

MORAN: What?

HOUSEMAN: Mr. Moran.

*MORAN tears his eyes away from the display.*

MORAN: Yes—sorry—my editor says you wanted to see me. Why would you want to see me?

HOUSEMAN: Could you read me that quote from Professor Jordan—

*MORAN pulls his pad out of his pocket.*

MORAN: I quote to you Professor Jordan's quote: "I have bet my fortune and honor on the truth."

HOUSEMAN: He really said that?

MORAN: Words to that effect.

HOUSEMAN: I like their effect. Would you care to take another visit to the countryside? Your editor won't be a problem.

*But MORAN is still mesmerized by the display.*

HOUSEMAN: Mr. Moran.

MORAN: Sorry—sorry—what? Why would you need me?

HOUSEMAN: I need someone to introduce me to Johnson Shea.

MORAN: I could do that, but—

HOUSEMAN: What's in it for you, except for a nice trip upstate? And a good meal? Excellent liquor?

MORAN: I don't drink.

HOUSEMAN: Really?

MORAN: Makes me like one of your monsters here.

HOUSEMAN: Don't be so quick to judge what is a monster and what isn't.

MORAN: That's sort of my job.

HOUSEMAN: For now. What about my offer?

MORAN: What about "what's in it for me?"

HOUSEMAN: Reeves?

*REEVES reaches into a desk drawer and pulls out a manila envelope, brings it to MORAN.*

REEVES: It won't explode—unfortunately.

*MORAN opens it, looks inside, seems satisfied.*

MORAN: Mr. Houseman, this is the kind of distilled spirits I like—meet Mr. Johnson Shea.

*SOUND: A telegram being sent.*

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### Scene 11

*HOUSEMAN's office off, the SHEA dining room on.*

*REEVES helps HOUSEMAN put on a coat—a coat made from the pelts of some unnamable exotic animal.*

*MORAN has his hat and little more. REEVES hands him a tubular carrying case, inside of which are rolled up architectural plans on tracing paper.*

*REEVES exits.*

*They move to SHEA's door.*

*MORAN knocks on the front door.*

*SOUND: Knuckles rapping.*

*JOHNSON answers the door.*

HOUSEMAN: Mr. Shea?

JOHNSON: I got your telegram.

HOUSEMAN: May we?

*JOHNSON stands back as they enter the house and sit in the dining room.*

*SARAH brings in tea, bread, and jam, then sits. A tense silence, though HOUSEMAN does not seem tense at all.*

SARAH: Would your driver like anything?

HOUSEMAN: He's quite self-sufficient. Do you like the car?

JOHNSON: It's—

HOUSEMAN: A model not even on the market yet—I know the manufacturer personally. He made it just for me.

SARAH: Mr. Houseman, we are very impressed. Our neighbors are impressed.

HOUSEMAN: "Now what?"

SARAH: Exactly.

JOHNSON: It doesn't do to be rude.

SARAH: This is a man who made the money sitting in the yard out there from being rude. And crude.

HOUSEMAN: And lewd. Money in all three. But the funny thing, Mrs. Shea? The money stays innocent, free and clear, because you can put it to anything you want. I have seen money start out crude and end up angelic—money is the true universal solvent.

SARAH: And you want to help us get our wings?

HOUSEMAN: As you say.

SARAH: Not interested—

JOHNSON: Sarah—

SARAH: Johnson—

JOHNSON: The next few mortgage payments? I don't.

*SARAH, without a word, gathers up the tea, bread, and jam.*

SARAH: If you'll excuse me—

*SARAH moves toward the kitchen.*

HOUSEMAN: I don't want to be the cause—

JOHNSON: She'll be fine.

*In the "kitchen," SARAH puts down the tray and turns to face the three men at the table, her breathing heavy, her hands shaking.*

HOUSEMAN: I don't want to be hypothetical about this, Mr. Shea. Mr. Moran here has confirmed for me that Professor Jordan has authenticated the bones.

MORAN: "I have bet my fortune and honor on the truth." Exact quote.

HOUSEMAN: The question that comes to me is this: who owns Shea Man? Because he who owns the bones—

JOHNSON: What would you want with the bones?

HOUSEMAN: What would I want with the bones? Mr. Johnson, you said mortgage payment—how would it be to never hear "mortgage" again?

*SARAH, tense, her right fist smacked into her left palm.*

SARAH: Don't.

JOHNSON: That would be a word worth losing.

HOUSEMAN: Then let me show you.

SARAH: No.

*MORAN pulls the roll of tracing paper out the tube he brought in and hands it to HOUSEMAN. HOUSEMAN spreads it open on the table.*

*PROJECTION: The architectural plan.*

HOUSEMAN: Let me explain.

JOHNSON: Wait. The Museum of the Missing Link?

HOUSEMAN: Right here—well, in town at least.

*JOHNSON pores over the sketch.*

JOHNSON: How much did Hotchkiss ask for these properties?

HOUSEMAN: It doesn't matter.

JOHNSON: Money always matters.

HOUSEMAN: Here's why it doesn't. Spend much time in the city?

JOHNSON: I don't—

HOUSEMAN: Not the little podunk you have here, but "the city," in capital letters, the one we hail from?

*SARAH enters.*

SARAH: The one filled with horseshit and bums—

JOHNSON: Sarah—

SARAH: —the city that you can drive away from any time you want.

HOUSEMAN: And there are many who would do just that if they could—and why not provide them with such a chance—a chance to get away from the putrid and the poisonous—

SARAH: And come upstate—

HOUSEMAN: By special train—

SARAH: To the Museum of the Missing Link.

HOUSEMAN: An outing, carefree—cheap—stay in the hotel overnight if they want to—

SARAH: Eat in the restaurant—

HOUSEMAN: Buy some items in the gift shop—

SARAH: "Shops"—

HOUSEMAN: Diversification—

SARAH: All done in a day—here and back in a flash.

*HOUSEMAN turns to JOHNSON.*

HOUSEMAN: She has the architectural sense—the entrepreneurial verve—

SARAH: I know how schemers scheme.

HOUSEMAN: But—but—this all depends—this all depends—on who owns the bones. Mr. Shea, I think you own the bones—do you think you own the bones?

*JOHNSON scans them all, lingers longest on SARAH. SARAH wants to speak but doesn't.*

JOHNSON: We do own the bones.

HOUSEMAN: So—some business together?

*SARAH and JOHNSON move into a different light, SARAH taking the architectural plan with her. HOUSEMAN and MORAN exit.*

*PROJECTION: Plans go away.*

JOHNSON: Don't say—

*Several moments of tense silence.*

JOHNSON: Well, say something!

SARAH: Not supposed to—

JOHNSON: I'll give you ten.

SARAH: How's it feel to sell your soul to the devil?

JOHNSON: Pretty good, actually.

*JOHNSON suddenly looks very deflated, not able to keep up this tough stance at all.*

JOHNSON: Sarah, we got no pot to piss in—and this Houseman is giving us the pot.

SARAH: And the piss.

JOHNSON: What do you want me to do? I'm supposed to take care of my family—what do you want me to do?

*SARAH strokes his hair.*

SARAH: We'll make it through—we always do.

*But this angers JOHNSON.*

JOHNSON: No, we won't! You know we won't! There's no fooling ourselves. I am going to license those bones—they're mine—

SARAH: And Thomas'. And mine, don't forget.

JOHNSON: Then we, all of us, are going to license those bones, and I'm going to let this Houseman guy set up his museum, and we are going to make ourselves some money!

SARAH: We should call this house the museum of missing links.

*JOHNSON is not pleased with her words, but he doesn't respond.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Scene 12

*JORDAN's office, as in Scene 5, with JENNINGS. JOHNSON, HOUSEMAN, MORAN (with a leather portfolio), and DANIEL GOLENBOCK, HOUSEMAN's lawyer, sit in a tense half-circle around JORDAN. GOLENBOCK wears pince-nez attached to a cord strung with small pearls and also has a leather briefcase. THOMAS stands off to the side, chewing on his fingernails.*

JORDAN: You can't take the bones!

HOUSEMAN: Again, I'll have Mr. Golenbock render his legal opinion.

GOLENBOCK: The bones were found—

JORDAN: I know where! Mr. Shea, you can't—

*JOHNSON goes to speak, but HOUSEMAN halts him and gestures to GOLENBOCK, who opens his briefcase, takes out a legal document, and hands it to JORDAN.*

HOUSEMAN: That, Professor Jordan, now speaks for Mr. Johnson. You'll notice it's a power of attorney.

JORDAN: So, you own the bones now.

GOLENBOCK: No—we simply speak for the bones. Mr. Johnson still owns them.

JORDAN: Mr. Johnson—

HOUSEMAN: Look at me. We have come for their release. Unless you want the police to take them away for me, which we have every right—

*JORDAN, seething, sweeps the legal document off the desk.*

*JENNINGS, sitting up straight in her chair, begins to shadow-box, throwing jabs into the air.*

JORDAN: You don't know what you're doing.

*MORAN retrieves the legal document and hands it to GOLENBOCK, who takes out a handkerchief and cleans his pince-nez.*

HOUSEMAN: I—we—know exactly.

JORDAN: I've staked my reputation!

HOUSEMAN: 'Tis bitter—I understand. Would there be anything that would sweeten life for you at this moment?

JORDAN: What—what do you mean?

*HOUSEMAN gestures, and GOLENBOCK retrieves another document from the depths of his briefcase, hands it to JORDAN.*

JORDAN: What?

HOUSEMAN: A contract. You would have sole access to Shea Man for research. Only you. Only you would be able to publish about them, talk about them, pontificate about them.

JORDAN: That goes against everything I've ever believed—

HOUSEMAN: I commend that.

JORDAN: —about sharing knowledge—

HOUSEMAN: Don't you commend that, Mr. Golenbock? But if it's facts you deal in, deal in these: either you sign, or you will never handle the bones again.

*JENNINGS mimes that she has just been knocked out by a well-placed punch. She starts boxing again.*

JORDAN: Why me?

JOHNSON: Dr. Jordan—

HOUSEMAN: A gift from Mr. Johnson. He thanks you for what you've done for Thomas.

JORDAN: I can't— I can't—

HOUSEMAN: I don't really care about scientific advancement, the search for knowledge, and all that. But when a scientist like yourself blesses these bones—opportunities arise.

*HOUSEMAN gestures again to MORAN, who takes a poster out of his portfolio and holds it up—the usual garish HOUSEMAN poster, for the new "Museum of the Missing Link."*

*PROJECTION: The garish poster.*

*HOUSEMAN points to a line on the poster.*

HOUSEMAN: I had this made up to show you something—right there. "As verified by—

JORDAN: I can read who.

HOUSEMAN: A new approach for me—truth in advertising. Your name, right there—stamp of approval—money. For me. And for you.

*JENNINGS bobs and weaves, takes a hit.*

JORDAN: I don't care—

HOUSEMAN: Math, Dr. Jordan, simple—you will make more money than your pitiful salary will ever bring you—apply that money to your "work." Contribute to young scholars like Thomas—opportunities that will never exist as long as you wait upon the kind heart of the legislature. Dr. Jordan, more money—more freedom. More glory. For America.

*JORDAN takes a slow look at everyone, then down at the legal document.*

*GOLENBOCK offers him a pen. He takes it.*

*JENNINGS is knocked out for the final time.*

JORDAN: Miss Jennings?

*JENNINGS pops awake.*

JENNINGS: Yes, Professor?

JORDAN: I need you to witness.

*JORDAN's office off.*

*HOUSEMAN's press conference/unveiling.*

*On a large table is a model of his new Museum of the Missing Link.*

*PROJECTION: New Museum of the Missing Link from various angles.*

*MORAN with a clipboard, now HOUSEMAN's public relations go-to guy for this project. JOHNSON and THOMAS stand by awkwardly, unsure.*

HOUSEMAN: And the newest amusement for the well-to-do. Travelers will catch the train here in the city, then end up here—

*HOUSEMAN points to a renovated train station.*

HOUSEMAN: Take up their hotel rooms here—

*Points to a grand hotel, ornamented and ornate.*

HOUSEMAN: Be driven out to the site of the world-famous find—

*Points to the black ribbon flowing out to the Shea house.*

HOUSEMAN: On the newly macadamized road. And visit the newest addition to the L.T. Houseman caravan of wonders: The Museum of the Missing Link. Mr. Moran?

MORAN: We have a new name for what we plan to do—we're calling it a "theme park"—and—

*MORAN continues to talk in mime. JOHNSON goes to THOMAS.*

JOHNSON: This is out of our hands, isn't it?

*THOMAS nods yes, afraid, as MORAN and HOUSEMAN gesture at the model.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Scene 13**

*PROJECTION: Museum goes away.*

*The dorm room of THOMAS and FLETCHER, night, THOMAS and FLETCHER sitting. There is a liquor bottle on the floor between them. They each hold glasses.*

THOMAS: Fletch.

FLETCHER: Yes?

THOMAS: You good at confessions?

FLETCHER: Is that what we're drinking?

THOMAS: Are you?

FLETCHER: That's really my old man's game—

THOMAS: Because I am sitting in the dark.

FLETCHER: What are you talking about? We're not—

THOMAS: The museum opened last night.

FLETCHER: We missed it.

THOMAS: And people are happy, and some money's coming in.

FLETCHER: Not just "some," from what you say Houseman says it's going to bring in.

*No response from THOMAS.*

FLETCHER: An "and" built in to this silence of yours? Should I try to do the confession thing?

THOMAS: I'd appreciate it.

FLETCHER: You got my two ears.

THOMAS: And it's all a lie. A big, fat, sweaty lie.

FLETCHER: There's a beginning buried somewhere in those sentences, right?

THOMAS: Yeah.

*FLETCHER stands and grabs the bottle.*

THOMAS: Where are you going?

FLETCHER: It's not my ears that need to hear this.

*FLETCHER pours himself a shot, then one for THOMAS. They each down that shot and move to JORDAN's office, JORDAN at his desk.*

*JENNINGS has a water glass stuck to what would be the office door.*

JORDAN: You stole the bones? You stole the bones?

THOMAS: Yes.

*JORDAN leaps from his desk toward the office door.*

JORDAN: Miss Jennings! Miss Jennings!

*JENNINGS hides the glass as JORDAN slams open the door.*

JORDAN: Houseman, on the phone—now! And train tickets!

*JORDAN's office away. The SHEA dining room.*

*JOHNSON, SARAH, JORDAN, THOMAS, FLETCHER, HOUSEMAN, MORAN—everyone tense. Except for HOUSEMAN, who cleans his nails with what looks like a well-filed shark's tooth.*

HOUSEMAN: Have we all eaten a big enough meal of doom and disaster?

JORDAN: You don't have a reputation that's ruined.

HOUSEMAN: Who outside this room knows what we know? Hmm?

JORDAN: My secretary, Jennings. She eavesdrops through a water glass.

HOUSEMAN: And is she a poor working girl with something like an aged mother at home?

JORDAN: Father with lung disease.

HOUSEMAN: A generous contribution to his health care would go a long way. My assistant Reeves—but she knows who owns her tongue. So, no one, then, outside our little circle.

SARAH: I know what you're getting at.

HOUSEMAN: Do you?

SARAH: Do you know what he's getting at?

*But silence greets her because everyone knows the answer.*

SARAH: You won't get away with it.

HOUSEMAN: Thomas—

SARAH: You leave him out of this.

HOUSEMAN: Thomas, everything you did, you did out of love—right?

THOMAS: Yes.

SARAH: You don't have to talk to him.

HOUSEMAN: Love?

THOMAS: Yes.

HOUSEMAN: And the hotel manager, whom your family knows, has known for a long time—I bet you right now his family is counting up more money than they have ever known. And would you want everything good that's now happened to the people you love—money for your parents, for the town, for Professor Jordan—

JORDAN: Tainted—

HOUSEMAN: Would you want all of that to go away?

THOMAS: But I stole – cheated—it's all a lie.

HOUSEMAN: Yes – but you didn't answer my question. Would you want things to go back to the way they were? Banks foreclosing. People moving away—friends you'd known all your life gone. The town you grew up in dying.

SARAH: You are the devil!

HOUSEMAN: Would you?

*All eyes focused on THOMAS.*

THOMAS: No.

HOUSEMAN: Because you love them.

THOMAS: Yes. It's true!

HOUSEMAN: Because you did what you did out of love.

THOMAS: Yes.

HOUSEMAN: Would any of you? Want to go back? I'm going to take your collective silence as a "no."

JORDAN: Not from me. My reputation as an honest scientist is shot full of holes.

HOUSEMAN: I was getting to something for you.

JORDAN: You're getting to me, all right.

HOUSEMAN: Don't bite the hand that feeds you just yet. Let me ask you this, Professor: so what if it's all a fake?

JORDAN: So what? So what? You can't do proper science—

HOUSEMAN: False things are not a part of science? I thought that—

JORDAN: Well, of course they are—you cut out the false things to get the truth.

HOUSEMAN: Is there a timeline for that?

JORDAN: What?

SARAH: Man—

JORDAN: What?

SARAH: Man, oh man alive. You are slick, Mr. Houseman.

HOUSEMAN: The son obviously gets part of his intelligence from his mother.

JORDAN: What?

SARAH: Let's say that at some future date—

HOUSEMAN: Twenty years.

SARAH: —it becomes known—

HOUSEMAN: Even by the scientist who "proved" it twenty years earlier—

SARAH: That eoanthropus libertatis was an elaborate hoax—

HOUSEMAN: And that science—

JORDAN: Wait, wait—

HOUSEMAN: In its ever-onward quest for truth—

MORAN: I get it!

JOHNSON: What?

JORDAN: Wait!

HOUSEMAN: Uncovers and corrects, reveals and re-directs—

JORDAN: You're suggesting—

SARAH: Definitely suggesting.

MORAN: Professor, if it's a couple of double fins down the road—

HOUSEMAN: Science, ever self-correcting.

MORAN: You talk or don't talk as you see fit!

HOUSEMAN: And since you control access to the bones, by contract—a legal contract, which you have signed, by the way—

MORAN: Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones!

HOUSEMAN: The professor makes a tidy sum with the publication of his popular history of human evolution—

*HOUSEMAN gestures to MORAN.*

MORAN: "Onward and Upward: A Popular History of Mankind, by Prof. Harlan Jordan.  
Published by L.T. Houseman Press."

HOUSEMAN: Very popular, I hear.

MORAN: I get to keep my book on the hook: "How The Missing Link Was Found, by D. Moran."

HOUSEMAN: Published by—

MORAN: "L.T. Houseman Press."

HOUSEMAN: The museum—which has never pretended to be a model of science anyway—  
continues to roll on.

SARAH: The town keeps cashing in—

HOUSEMAN: Thomas gets a fine education all the way to a professorship if he wants.

JOHNSON: And everyone becomes happy.

HOUSEMAN: On board everyone? And you, son of a preacher man?

FLETCHER: "Mum" has now become my everyday word.

HOUSEMAN: All right. So? Now that we all know the truth—we band of brothers—does anyone  
else need to know? Hmm?

*Everyone looks squarely at each other.*

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **Scene 14**

*The dining room goes away.*

*The stage becomes several locations.*

*PROJECTION: Beach in Florida*

*SOUND: Gentle waves on a beach, seagulls.*

*Under dual umbrellas on lounges lay JOHNSON and SARAH, cool drinks by their  
side, eyes closed, breathing easily.*

*Beach goes away.*

*PROJECTION: Bookstore, with easel announcing the signing of copies of "The  
Apeman Cometh" by Harlan Jordan, the fifth in his series of Apeman science fiction  
novels.*

*SOUND: Buzz of a crowd*

*JORDAN sits at a table, beaming, pen in hand.*

*Book signing goes away.*

*PROJECTION: Front page of "The Daily Tab" with headline "Baby Born Reciting The  
Bible" and a front-page "photo" of a three-headed goat.*

*A stogie-chomping DAN MORAN at a desk.*

*SOUND: MORAN's voice barking out orders to copy boys, writers, and others as they get the next issue of "The Daily Tab" ready.*

*Daily Tab goes away.*

*PROJECTION: Deck of a ferry.*

*SOUND: A ferry.*

*REEVES holds a burlap bag.*

REEVES: Dem bone, dem bones—

HOUSEMAN: It's time.

*REEVES, standing by the railing, with no one looking, lets go of the bag, and it disappears into the river.*

*SOUND: Burlap bag disappearing into water.*

*Ferry goes away.*

*PROJECTION: Logo of a major university.*

*SOUND: Busy office.*

*THOMAS and FLETCHER huddle with the PR DIRECTOR of a major university fleshing out the upcoming giving campaign. Charts, potential slogans, graphics—shirtsleeves rolled up, brisk pace.*

DIRECTOR: Now, let's see what Houseman Advertising plans to do to increase the endowment by 30 percent—

*SOUND: A business-like knock on the door.*

DIRECTOR: Excuse me. Come in!

*A SECRETARY carries in both a poster and a worried look.*

SECRETARY: Sir—

DIRECTOR: What is it?

*She hands him the poster. A frown settles on DIRECTOR's face.*

SECRETARY: I've got reporters crawling everywhere, I've got radio people wanting to set up a broadcast, newsreel people—

THOMAS: What's the problem?

*DIRECTOR hands over the poster.*

DIRECTOR: Academic freedom.

*As THOMAS and FLETCHER read the poster, they struggle to keep the horror off their faces.*

*PROJECTION: Poster announcing the following lecture: "Shea Man, Negroids, and Evolution: The Scientific Case for Segregation." Under that: "Professor Charles Herrnstein, Department of Anthropology."*

DIRECTOR: Supposed to be just a simple keynote address at an obscure conference.

THOMAS: I can see your problem.

DIRECTOR: Okay, the usual protocol for these things—

*SECRETARY backs out of the office.*

DIRECTOR: Keep me updated, every couple of hours. We don't need a race war inside the ivied walls.

*SECRETARY leaves.*

DIRECTOR: Now, back to getting the wealthy alumni to cough up.

*PROJECTION out, DIRECTOR's office away.*

*THOMAS and FLETCHER move into their own office. They throw down their charts and briefcases, loosen their ties, unbutton their jackets, and stare.*

FLETCHER: I need a drink.

THOMAS: It would help.

*But they don't move an inch.*

THOMAS: I have to make the call.

FLETCHER: I know. Bourbon or scotch?

THOMAS: One for each hand.

*MIMED: THOMAS punches the intercom button on his phone.*

*SOUND: Intercom button punched.*

THOMAS: Betty? I need your special magic. In two minutes, I want you to track down the phone number of one Harlan Jordan.

*SOUND: "The science fiction writer?"*

THOMAS: That very one.

*SOUND: "I have his newest Apeman book right by my bed."*

THOMAS: To each his own bedside partner. Put him through directly to me.

*SOUND: "Up, up, and away!"*

*FLETCHER brings over three glasses.*

FLETCHER: Scotch for the right, bourbon for the left. Vodka for me, right down the middle.

*They both sip and stare until the phone rings.*

*SOUND: Phone rings.*

*THOMAS punches in the speakerphone button as if it were dynamite.*

*SOUND: Speakerphone button pushed in.*

*SOUND: "Harlan Jordan on the line."*

*On another part of the stage, JORDAN sits at a desk completely bare except for his typewriter and a neat pile of finished pages, along with a phone on speakerphone.*

THOMAS: Hello, Harlan. I've got Fletch here.

FLETCHER: Hel-lo.

THOMAS: Sorry to bother you on what is probably a nice day where you are, but do you believe in ghosts?

JORDAN: If you're calling me now, then I am going to have to believe.

THOMAS: Because we are having a visitation.

FLETCHER: The sins of the fathers—

THOMAS: By way of Charles Herrnstein—heard of him?

*JORDAN rolls a piece of paper into the typewriter.*

JORDAN: Yes.

THOMAS: We have seen a poster—

JORDAN: I know. I heard. I still have ties.

THOMAS: Were you going to do anything?

*JORDAN does not answer, simply taps the "X" key on the typewriter.*

FLETCHER: What's that sound?

JORDAN: "X" marks the spot.

FLETCHER: Ah.

THOMAS: So?

JORDAN: So, it's time to put the old ghosts to rest, isn't it?

FLETCHER: An X-orcism.

JORDAN: Reserve me a room at the Plaza. Leave a message where to meet you. I can get a plane out of here tomorrow.

THOMAS: You once told me that fossils never stop talking.

*But JORDAN has already hung up. He takes out the piece of paper and crumples it as light goes dark on his office.*

*FLETCHER finishes his vodka.*

FLETCHER: Goddamn fossils never shut up.

THOMAS: I'll call my parents.

FLETCHER: I'll call Moran. And Houseman, speaking of fossils.

*A heavy silence between them.*

FLETCHER: Did you really think it would never come back?

THOMAS: I had hoped.

FLETCHER: Me, too.

THOMAS: Stupid, eh?

FLETCHER: Ah, the right thing—why doesn't it feel so good?

*FLETCHER takes the bourbon and downs it while THOMAS does the same with the Scotch. Lights out on their office.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Scene 15

*THOMAS and FLETCHER move into a lighted space—perhaps the back booth at a Chinese restaurant—where they are joined by JOHNSON, SARAH, JORDAN, and MORAN.*

SARAH: It's about time.

MORAN: Just in case, I got a reporter covering the conference for my upscale rag.

*From the darkness they hear the familiar boom of HOUSEMAN's voice, and then the force that is HOUSEMAN sweeps in. The only difference between then and now is that he carries a polished walking stick as tall as he is.*

*He also holds a burlap bag.*

HOUSEMAN: When shall we seven meet again, in thunder, lightning, or in rain?

THOMAS: When the hurlyburly's done, when the battle's lost and won. *(to JORDAN)* I got to your list.

*HOUSEMAN lets the bag drop onto the floor with a thunk. The same puzzled look crosses everyone's face. JORDAN kneels down and looks into the bag—and an involuntary smile crosses his face. He holds open the top of the sack so that everyone can look in.*

THOMAS: They're the originals.

MORAN: I thought you had—

HOUSEMAN: I had Reeves drop a bag of shrunken heads over the side.

JOHNSON: And you kept—

HOUSEMAN: Insurance policies have many shapes.

SARAH: Shrunken heads—appropriate.

HOUSEMAN: I knew you would appreciate it. Now, besides having dinner and getting reacquainted, what is our plan?

JORDAN: I have some thoughts about that.

*Another part of the stage becomes a lecture hall.*

*CHARLES HERRNSTEIN stands triumphant behind a lectern. A small table, filled with books and papers, stands next to the lectern.*

*PROJECTION: A slide of Shea Man's skull thrown up on a large screen.*

HERRNSTEIN: Though the actual Shea Man bones have been mysteriously lost, innumerable casts of the reconstructed skull exist, one of which you see here. Next.

*PROJECTION: The slide changes—Shea Man as drawn by an artist.*

HERRNSTEIN: That speaks for itself. Next.

*PROJECTION: The slide changes—Shea Man on the left, a Negroid drawing on the right.*

*The seven move smoothly into the hall, JORDAN in the lead, HOUSEMAN holding the burlap bag.*

HERRNSTEIN: Modern anthropologists have tried mightily to erase what they believed was the racist science of the 19th century—but they were wrong to do so. Races do exist, and they differ in their abilities, and the dark-skinned races rank lower than the white race, with Shea Man—

*HOUSEMAN bangs his walking stick three times.*

*SOUND: Three resonant booms of the walking stick.*

THOMAS: Now I know what the sheep feels like when the wolf comes knocking.

HOUSEMAN: Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye.

JORDAN: Mr. Herrnstein.

HERRNSTEIN: Doctor. And who are you?

JORDAN: You are seriously, seriously mistaken.

HERRNSTEIN: Who are you?

*HERRNSTEIN watches the group moves towards him.*

HERRNSTEIN: You can't—

*But HOUSEMAN moves HERRNSTEIN aside easily with his stick, and JORDAN steps up to the lectern. HOUSEMAN drops the burlap bag on the table beside the lectern.*

*SOUND: Thunk.*

JORDAN: My name is Harlan Jordan. Formerly Professor Harlan Jordan. Some of you may know me. The—what?—well, whatever I was, my name has been attached to that thing up there.

*SOUND: Whispering in the crowd, pop of flashbulbs.*

*JORDAN nods to HOUSEMAN, who hands his stick to THOMAS, opens the bag, and gently pulls out Shea Man.*

JORDAN: And to these as well.

HERRNSTEIN: They were lost.

FLETCHER: Once was lost has now been found. Hallelujah!

*HERRNSTEIN goes to touch them.*

HOUSEMAN: Off!

JORDAN: Professor Herrnstein—whatever your ideas—no matter how wrong they are—and they are very wrong—you can't base any of them on Shea Man. Because he never existed. Never. Existed. We—the seven of us—have a story to tell you. Let me start.

*Stage goes to black.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Scene 16**

*SOUND: The sound of film going through a projector.*

*LIGHTS: The flicker of a movie projector.*

*Seated amidst the light and sound are The Seven.*

*PROJECTION: Part of a trailer for "ShaMan," a superhero who combines in himself both animal and human and fights against prejudice everywhere.*

*Credits follow the trailer. Clearly emblazoned on the screen is the following:  
"Screenplay by Harlan Jordan. From a story conceived by Johnson Shea, Sarah Shea, Thomas Shea, Fletcher Calvin, Dan Moran, And L.T. Houseman."*

*Lights come up, and they all turn to JORDAN.*

SARAH: Like it a lot.

JOHNSON: I second that.

MORAN: It's got the juice.

HOUSEMAN: Already booked into my theatres for its opening. With expert publicity by—

THOMAS: Thomas/Fletcher Inc.

FLETCHER: And a great print campaign in—

MORAN: The Daily Tab's family of newspapers and magazines. And a top-dog product line of toys and stuff—

JOHNSON: By J&S Manufacturing Enterprises, based in sunny Miami, Florida.

HOUSEMAN: You're looking pensive, my friend.

JORDAN: I was just thinking what a good friend Shea Man—ShaMan—has been.

HOUSEMAN: Here, here.

ALL: Here, here.

JORDAN: "With a clarion call—"

SARAH: "ShaMan fights—"

THOMAS: "For justice to all—"

FLETCHER: "And everyone's rights."

*THOMAS' VISION: On the screen in a packed movie theatre ShaMan swoops through the sky defeating evildoers while MARCHING MUSIC prompts the movie audience of old and young alike to applaud wildly.*

*END OF PLAY*