

Mindsongs: Episode three

A heavenly host: God serves Paul cocktails

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and GORD GRAHAM
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"Right this way, Mr. Dorey," said the man. "God is waiting on the patio."

Paul followed the man through a hallway with many turns.

"Whaddya mean 'God' ?!" said Paul.

The man spoke without slowing his pace. "GOD! You know, Holy Father, creator of the sun, the moon, the universe, world without end, Lord of all things great and small... that God!"

"I bet," said Paul.

He came up against a huge wall of glass. The sun glanced through it and stung Paul's eyes. His guide had already vanished somewhere.

Paul noticed a sliding door and stepped through, feeling the sun warmer on his skin.

In front of him was a swimming pool and a patio with umbrella-shaped tables. The area outside the pool wasn't green or grassy, but white, fluffy, like the top of a cloud.

There was a man seated under one of the umbrellas.

"C'mere son," he called in a deep voice.

Paul approached him slowly. The man was lounging in a deck chair, wearing a slightly rumpled suit. He was a little paunchy with grey hair, balding on top. By his feet was a briefcase with the letters "G O D" embossed in gold on it.

"Sit down son," the man said. "How's it feel to meet your Maker?"

Paul sat down slowly.

"Just who are you?" he said wearily.

"I'm God, boy, God, the Holy Father, you know, maker of heaven and earth, the power supreme, causa sui, the original mover." The man sipped from a tall glass.

"I wish I could believe you," sighed Paul.

"Well look," said the man who said he was God, "we are standing on clouds. Doesn't that prove anything?"

"Oh sure, clouds! Any Hollywood whiz could do that: special effects, smoke, mirrors, all that jazz," said Paul.

"Look Paul. I'm really surprised

at your reaction. I am who I am. I'm Jehovah, the one God of Abraham and all them."

Suddenly the man stood up. He wasn't nearly as tall as Paul thought God should be.

"I'm not gonna fool around here. You better brace yourself for a few miracles..." He raised his arm dramatically.

Instantly the sky grew dark and it began to storm.

Huge chunks of hail landed all around the umbrella. Lightning zapped across the firmament. For a moment the man was transformed into a tall gray figure, tattered clothes, long beard, and then the darkness swelled over him.

Flashes of light. Celestial explosions. The winds howled, pages from the past whirled by, stained with the marks of battle, love, pain.

Mythical beasts: prancing unicorns, satyrs, horrid sharp-clawed demons, foul smells and smoke.

In a splinter of light Paul could see the whole Montreal Expos baseball team materializing even the bat boy.

Someone shouted "Rained out!" and they faded into darkness.

As the storm subsided, the man came into view, stretched up thirty feet tall over the shaken Paul. He revealed the secret of the universe, where Patty Hearst was, and told Paul how much wood a woodchuck could chuck.

Paul finally shouted up at him, "Okay, I believe. I believe! You're God? Okay?"

God returned to the first form Paul had seen Him in.

"Wheew!" He said, "That really takes a lot outta Me. I could use a drink. How about it?"

An oriental houseboy in a uniform appeared without being called. He bowed as God said, "Two screwdrivers, Kato, OK?" Then he scurried away quietly.

Paul stirred uncomfortably.

"Uh...uh, listen, God, I, ah... I'm not dead or anything am I?"

"Hell, no," God said laughingly. "I just thought it was about time we met."

"Well, I do have a lot of question I could ask you," Paul said. "Uh, when will I die? Why did World War II happen? and where is Amelia Earhart? And would you drink the

water in Tijuana?"

"Hold it, Paul, take it slower. Sit back and relax. That's the problem, you guys take everything too seriously."

There was an uncomfortable silence.

"Well if you're supposed to be so forgiving why is there so much war and death and misery?" Paul said finally.

"I give up, why?" said God.

"I don't know. I'm asking you!" Paul said.

"Oh, oh, I thought it was a riddle. I love riddles, you know."

"But what about my question?" Paul continued.

"Oh, let it pass. Here's a good riddle."

"But..."

"Why are the stars and planets rushing ever outwards towards the edges of the expanding universe as though on some cosmic quest?" God leaned forward in His chair, brimming with mirth.

"I don't know. Why?" Paul replied guardedly.

"To get to the other side, "God

laughed, slapping his knee and spilling his drink on his pants.

"Oh God," groaned Paul.

"Yes?" said God. He became very serious. "Really, though, I brought you here to give you some advice."

"What was that?" Paul said.

"Paul, my son," God grinned again, "don't eat yellow snow."

Paul decided to try another tack.

"I bet you don't really know everything! I bet I could stump you!" he said.

"Oh, yeah?" said God. "Just try me. Come on, try to stump me."

"Well then, why did you let World War II happen?"

"Paul, I have to tell you: aides. Lower level advisors dreamt it all up. They thought it was necessary so they went ahead without even telling me. I'm so busy, you know, all my planets..." God said.

"But you're God! You're supposed to have the whole world in your hands..."

"Aww, some days I just want to dump it all" God mused for an instant and looked searchingly into his glass.

"But tell me what's been happening, the experiment, what about that?" Paul insisted.

"Wish I could help, Paul. It's just not time to see the whole thing clearly yet. Someday you will. Anyway, nice talking, come again..."

Paul had the definite sensation of being lifted by his coat and propelled over the edge of the patio into the darkness. When he felt the smooth metal hull he held on very tightly.

"Apollo 11 to Mission Control. We have a person hanging off the outside of the ship..."

"Mission Control, roger. Man outside capsule. Have you been smoking again?"

"Negative, Mission Control. We haven't smoked for hours. The guy is pounding on the window now. We're getting pretty desperate up here..."

"Roger, Apollo 11. Open the hatch and let him in..."

Next Week: Paul spaces out to the moon

Article 58 is short on unified emotion

By AGNES KRUCHIO

According to some estimates, there are over five million persons in forced labour camps in the Soviet Union today.

That figure, plus testimony from incarcerated Soviet writers such as Anatoly Marchenko, who claims that "the camps today, if less numerous, are just as horrible as in Stalin's time", makes a play like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's Article 58 a very important one.

Currently in production at the St. Lawrence Centre, the play, directed by Leon Major, draws a grim and chilling picture of life in a Soviet prison.

Highlighted is Nemov, an idealistic ex-military man of high rank, who, imprisoned because he let some imprudent correspondence

about "the man with the moustache" slip out, still attempts to live up to his belief in human dignity.

Even among perverse wheeling and dealing aimed at preserving life at all costs, he attempts to maintain his highly moral principles.

"Did we not fight the revolution to abolish camps and prisons?", he asks incredulously upon arrival at the camp.

The production makes a serious effort to re-create the prison environment, and as far as the threatening, imposing sets are concerned this is

well achieved.

However, while the sheer rebelliousness of such a play on a Russian stage might be a satisfying experience, a western audience needs more unified emotional experience than is here achieved.

Moreover, no western cast could possibly render life-like the harshness and brutality of the Gulag Archipelago.

These shortcomings notwithstanding, a highly competent and un sentimental production makes this quasi-documentary well worth seeing.


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