

Gospel Beacons

A Play in One Act

by
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CHARACTERS

DR. CARL FIAT,	a middle-aged doctor,
MINDY WILLOW,	a young woman,
EMIL,	an illegal organ broker,
CHIP,	helicopter pilot.
SCENE,	exam room in a clinic (bad part of town),
TIME,	late at night in the not-so-distant future.

Gospel Beacons

Scene 1

SCENE: A doctor's office, late at night in the not-too-distant future. There are two doors and one window. The room contains a desk with two chairs, one along side the desk. DR. FIAT'S medical bag sits on the desk.

AT RISE: DR. FIAT, dressed in a lab coat, stethoscope around his neck, paces as he talks on a cordless phone.

DR. FIAT

She's not here yet... She'll be here... I don't know. Any minute, I guess. What do you want from me? I'm a doctor, not a mind reader?... No. You are not authorized to go in there... NO! You cannot borrow my lab coat...Good-bye Emil.

(DR. FIAT hangs up. PHONE RINGS. HE answers)

DR. FIAT

Dr. Fiat. How may I help you?... Ms. Willow? Is that you? I can barely hear you. Can you speak up?... There. That's better my dear... I was starting to get concerned...

(HE gets up and starts pacing as HE talks)

Where are you?... I know. I know. That's perfectly understandable.

(EMIL ENTERS and listens in on the conversation)

DR. FIAT (Continued)

It was a hard decision to make. But you've made the right one. Trust me.

EMIL
Is it her?

DR. FIAT
Yes.

EMIL
Ask her about the money.

DR. FIAT
I know this is a bit indelicate...uhh. But...uhh...do you have the money?... You have to tell me what?... Never mind. Tell me when you get here.

(DR. FIAT hangs up the phone)

EMIL
Is she getting cold feet?

DR. FIAT
No.

EMIL
And, how 'bout you?

DR. FIAT
I have been giving this a lot of thought.

EMIL
So, you're telling me you're gonna bail?

DR. FIAT
We'd spend the rest of our lives behind bars.

EMIL
Like your kid? (Beat) Don't forget little Susie, all strapped in and no place to go.

DR. FIAT
You know I meant in prison.

EMIL
Then we won't get caught.

DR. FIAT
I would never be able to practice medicine again.

EMIL

I've got news for you, Doc. If you bail on me, you'll never practice *anything* again. So, any way you slice it—

DR. FIAT

--How can you take this so lightly?

EMIL

Don't get your balls in an uproar. It's a business deal... pure and simple.

DR. FIAT

This isn't right. I am a respectable doctor. I was.

EMIL

My heart bleeds for you, man.

DR. FIAT

I took an oath to *preserve* life.

EMIL

You *are*—your own.

DR. FIAT

After tonight, I'll feel like a murderer—thanks to you.

EMIL

Don't hang this one on me, pal. You knew perfectly well what this deal was. You were all ears about the money.

DR. FIAT

Yes. But--

EMIL

--But nothing. I remember how it went down. I said, "I got a lead on this broad. She doesn't have a thing wrong with her, but thinks she's dying. She's looking for someone to snuff her." And you said, "I can put her out of her misery ...blah blah blah!" And then I said, "We could make a hell of a lot of money." After which you said "Yes, we could." Do you remember that conversation?

(HE starts looking through the files. Dr. FIAT takes the files from EMIL. This action/reaction continues until EMIL tells DR. FIAT to "*Sit down. Shut up.*")

DR. FIAT

Yes. But I didn't think you were serious.

EMIL

Right.

DR. FIAT

I didn't.

EMIL

But, you can use the money. Right?

DR. FIAT

Yes, but...

EMIL

Takes money to keep your daughter on that funny farm. Right?

DR. FIAT

It's a hospital.

EMIL

Funny farm. Hospital. Whatever. It takes money to keep her there. Right?

DR. FIAT

Yes. But...

EMIL

Screw you and your "yes buts". Sit down. Shut up. And listen.

(As he pulls a notebook out of his pocket)
OK, here's the deal. Seventy thousand—each—for the kidneys.
And, for the heart, a hundred "g's"—
if it takes a lickin' and keeps on tickin'.

DR. FIAT

This is funny to you?

EMIL

Just trying to lighten it up a bit, Carl.

DR. FIAT

This isn't funny to me.

EMIL

Will you chill already?

DR. FIAT

Could we get on with it? I want you gone before she gets here.

EMIL

The skin--for grafts--is going anywhere from a thousand on up. I'm not sure if that's by the inch, or centimeter, or what? I'll have to check on that. So, with the liver, and with the corneas thrown in, we're lookin' at a couple-three hundred thou--if everything is in A-number-one condition.

DR. FIAT

I assure you, Emil, everything is. She's a young, healthy woman, physically, anyway.

EMIL

Let's do a "what if?"

DR. FIAT

"What if" what?

EMIL

What if she changes her mind and starts thinking she's well? Then what?

DR. FIAT

I'm sure you'll think of something, Emil. Anything else?

EMIL

That's it for now. Chopper's due any minute. And I know how Chip can get. Mess up his schedule? He goes bonkers. It ain't pretty. So chop chop.

(EMIL closes the notebook, leaving it on the table)

See you later, docky. Chop chop.

(EMIL EXITS, whistling "We're in the Money". DR. FIAT is looking over the figures in the notebook when he hears a KNOCK AT THE DOOR. HE closes the notebook and opens the door)

DR. FIAT

Ms. Willow. Come in. Come in.

(MINDY WILLOW ENTERS. She is wearing a coat over traveling clothes, and is carrying a suitcase. DR. FIAT helps her in as he takes the suitcase and puts it next to the second chair)

DR. FIAT (Continued)

Why do you have a suitcase?

MINDY WILLOW

That's what I wanted to talk to you about. Please, call me Mindy.

DR. FIAT

Please, have a seat. Let me take your coat.

MINDY WILLOW

No, that's OK. I won't be staying.

DR. FIAT

Please, Ms. Willow, I insist.

(SHE refuses, and sits. SHE reaches into her coat pocket and pulls out some money)

MINDY WILLOW

Before I forget, I want you to have this.

DR. FIAT

This isn't the amount we agreed upon.

MINDY WILLOW

I'm not going through with it. I wanted you to have something—for your trouble.

DR. FIAT

You can't do that Ms. Willow. We have an agreement.

MINDY WILLOW

I'm going to Pomona.

DR. FIAT

Pomona?

MINDY WILLOW

I have an aunt there. Please call me Mindy.

DR. FIAT

An aunt? I thought you didn't have any living relatives.

MINDY WILLOW

I didn't think I did.

(Opening her suitcase and pulling out a diary)

I found this—my mother's dairy.

(Looking for something in the diary)

Here it is. She talks about my father's sister, Beth—from Pomona.

DR. FIAT

Your parents never mentioned this "Aunt Beth" to you? Don't you find that strange?

MINDY WILLOW

A bit. But, don't you see, Dr. Fiat? I'm not alone. I have a living relative.

DR. FIAT

How do you know she's alive?

MINDY WILLOW

She still has a Pomona listing. I called the number and she answered.

DR. FIAT

So, she knows you're coming?

MINDY WILLOW

No. I hung up.

(EMIL ENTERS, bursting into the room, carrying a hammer, and dressed in a shirt with an ACME REPAIR insignia on it)

DR. FIAT

Excuse me? May I help you?

EMIL

I've got this work order...to fix...uh...

(His eyes land on something randomly)

those pipes.

DR. FIAT

Those pipes are fine.

EMIL

I'll just take a little look-see—as long as I'm here.
Do you mind?

DR. FIAT

Yes. But go ahead.

(To MINDY WILLOW)

Where were we?

MINDY WILLOW

We were talking about my Aunt Beth.

DR. FIAT

So, Aunt Beth doesn't know you're coming. In fact, she
doesn't know that you exist. Right?

MINDY WILLOW

No. Well, I don't know. I'm not sure. But, she will. I've
got a bus ticket for tonight.

EMIL

(As HE bangs on the pipe with his hammer)

Boy, this thing is ready for the bone yard.

DR. FIAT

Do you mind?

EMIL

Oh, sorry.

DR. FIAT

(To MINDY WILLOW)

What about your pain? You wanted to die, remember?

(WE hear the HELICOPTER. DR. FIAT opens his
bag and pulls out his syringe)

DR. FIAT (Continued)

It will be quick and painless. I assure you.

(As HE readies the syringe)

You'll feel a little pinch—and then you'll sleep. You'll dream. And then, as I explained before, I'll take you into the operating room, hook up the IV, and then, after a few minutes— of which you will be totally unaware— it will be over. You will have no more pain...

(EMIL hits the floor with the hammer)

DR. FIAT (Continued)

...or suffering. No more pain.

(EMIL hits the floor with the hammer)

DR. FIAT (Continued)

No more suffering. Doesn't that sound wonderful? Wouldn't that be a relief?

MINDY WILLOW

Yes—it would.

EMIL

Shouldn't you be wrapping things up? It's gettin' kinda late.

DR. FIAT

Excuse me?

MINDY WILLOW

I'm going to Pomona.

DR. FIAT

What if your aunt doesn't want to deal with an invalid?

(He tests the syringe)

People can be cruel.

EMIL

Lotta pollution in Pomona.

DR. FIAT

Do you mind?

EMIL

Well, not much more I can do on this sick little puppy.

DR. FIAT

I'll call you.

EMIL

(Hitting his palm with the hammer)

Don't wait too long or there might be two casualties. That would be a shame.

(To MINDY WILLOW as HE EXITS)

Ma'am.

MINDY WILLOW

Dr. Fiat, I appreciate all you've done for me. And I know you want to help me, but my mind is made up. I'm going to Pomona.

DR. FIAT

You are going to die. Do you want to put Aunt Beth through that ordeal?

MINDY WILLOW

She's family. And actually, Dr. Fiat, I am feeling a little better. I really am.

DR. FIAT

That's your mind playing tricks on you, my dear. It's a phenomenon that happens to people just before they die—sometimes. Roll up your sleeve, my dear.

MINDY WILLOW

(SHE pulls away)

Aunt Beth might have children. And, maybe even grandchildren.

(SHE opens her suitcase and pulls out a teddy bear and holds him to her)

MINDY WILLOW (Continued)

Teddy will need someone after I'm gone.

DR. FIAT

Susan had a teddy bear.

Susan?

MINDY WILLOW

My—my daughter.

DR. FIAT

You have a daughter?

MINDY WILLOW

Yes. She's about your age. What will you do if Aunt Beth won't take you in, Mindy?

DR. FIAT

She will.

MINDY WILLOW

What if she won't? Where will you go?

DR. FIAT

I can always come back here and let you...

(SHE stabs at the teddy bear)

...you know?

MINDY WILLOW

Why don't we just get it over with now? One less thing on your mind. (Beat) Here, let me help you.

(HE sees something clutched in HER hand)

What's that?

MINDY WILLOW

It's a poem my dad wrote. I found it tucked away in my mother's diary.

DR. FIAT

Do you want to share?

(MINDY WILLOW stands. SHE and the teddy bear read the poem)

MINDY WILLOW

Life unfolds its empty pages.
 With quickened quill we make our mark
 Communicating through the ages,
 Gospel Beacons pierce the dark

(HELICOPTER can be heard in the distance)

MINDY WILLOW (Continued)

Gospel beacons pierce the dark. Guiding me to Pomona-
to Aunt Beth.

(Suddenly, CHIP ENTERS, bursting into the
room, containers in hand)

CHIP

Oh, sorry. I thought you'd be finished. Doc, we've got a
schedule to keep. Chopper's waiting. Chop, chop. Where do
you want the containers?

DR. FIAT

Chip. Wait out in the hall. We'll discuss this later.

CHIP

Come on, doc. You know the drill. We don't have all night.
Chop, chop!

DR. FIAT

Chip, please. Please leave. This is not a good time.

CHIP

But Emil said--

DR. FIAT

--Chip!

CHIP

Okay. Okay. Alright already! But I'll be back.

(CHIP deposits the containers with a thud.
DR. FIAT closes the door on CHIP, as he
EXITS. HELICOPTER SOUNDS CONTINUE)

MINDY WILLOW

Well, I don't want to keep you. It looks like you have a
deadline to meet. And, I do have a bus to catch.

(SHE gets up, puts everything back in her suitcase but her teddy bear, and the poem, which she has tucked into teddy's collar. SHE secures the latches on her suitcase and picks it up)

DR. FIAT

Well, my dear. It seems as though your mind is made up.
(He discreetly slips the syringe into his pocket)

You know I wish you only the best.
(HE holds out his arms for a hug)

May I have a good-bye hug?

(MINDY WILLOW and Teddy hesitate. DR. FIAT coaxes HER and Teddy to embrace HIM. HE pulls the syringe out of his pocket discreetly)

MINDY WILLOW

(Caught up in the comfort of HIS hug)
You remind me so much of my father.

(DR. FIAT hesitates)

MINDY WILLOW (Continued)

You are such a kind man—like he was.

(DR. FIAT holds MINDY WILLOW closer, then closes his eyes and plunges the needle into her. MINDY WILLOW winces)

DR. FIAT

I'm sorry, Mindy. So, so sorry.

(MINDY WILLOW slips through HIS arms to the floor)

DR. FIAT (Continued)

It will be over soon. I promise you.

(DR. FIAT guides HER down to the floor. HE
cries over HER prone body as EMIL ENTERS)

EMIL

For God's sake Carl, Chip's having a cow.

(Notices MINDY WILLOW on the floor)

EMIL (Cont'd)

All right! I knew you had it in you, Carl.

DR. FIAT

She's only drugged.

EMIL

Well, let's get her to the OR before she wakes up. Let's get
this show on the road!

(EMIL whistles "We're in the Money", while
DR. FIAT kneels over MINDY'S body)

EMIL (Continued)

Carl, come on. Snap out of it. We don't have all night.

(EMIL starts to open the suitcase)

What was in the suitcase?

DR. FIAT

(Slamming the suitcase shut)

Nothing! (Beat) Everything!

EMIL

How touching.

(As he struggles with MINDY'S limp body)

Can I get a little help here?

DR. FIAT

You go on. I'll be right there.

EMIL

You'd better be. Don't forget your scalpel.

(As he EXITS, dragging MINDY WILLOW through the operating room doorway)
 I'm gonna end up with a G.D. hernia over this. You better be right behind me, Carl. You've got some slicing and dicing to do. Slicey, dicey. Chop, chop!

(DR. FIAT picks up the teddy bear, which is on the floor near where MINDY was lying. HE takes the poem from its collar, smooths out the poem and reads it to himself, IDLING HELICOPTER SOUNDS IN THE BACKGROUND, LIGHTS FLASHING THROUGH THE WINDOW)

DR. FIAT
 Life unfolds its empty pages
 With quickened quill we make our mark
 Communicating through the ages,
 Gospel Beacons pierce the dark

(HELICOPTER LIGHTS FLASH)

DR. FIAT (Continued)
 (HE picks up the syringe)
 Gospel Beacons pierce the dark.

EMIL (OFF)
 CHOP, CHOP!

DR. FIAT (Continued)
 (HE holds the teddy bear to him)
 Gospel Beacons pierce the dark.

(DR. FIAT rocks, holding the teddy bear in one hand, the syringe in the other)

EMIL (OFF)
 ANYTIME TODAY! MINDY'S WAITING. CHOP, CHOP!

DR. FIAT
 I'm sorry, Susan. I'm so sorry..
 (HE drops the syringe)
 I can't do it. I can't.

(As he hugs MINDY WILLOW'S teddy bear)
I love you Susan. (Beat) Oh, God, help me.

(FADE TO BLACK)

END OF THE PLAY