

# Revolt In The Desert: An Odyssey

By Ray Alcodray

The Characters (in order of appearance)

NARRATOR (heard but not seen)

LAWRENCE

(actors can assume multiple roles of the following)

WAITER

DAHOUUM

GERMAN

BRITISH SOLDIER

ARAB COMPANION

AUDA ABU TAYI

BRITISH CORPORAL

TURKISH GUARD

BEY

GOD1

GOD2

GOD3

INTERROGATOR1

INTERROGATOR2

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*(Overture of “Lawrence of Arabia” plays. Lights up to reveal a large map of the Middle East before 1916 is displayed on a large screen upstage.)*

**Narrator**

1916. The whole of this area was under the thumb of the Turkish Empire with which Britain and her allies were at war. While the Turks were wreaking havoc on the Suez Canal, the British were too weak to launch a counter-offensive. The great battle of Somme had cost a million British casualties with little result. Blood flowed like water – yet on the whole, the war was at a stand still. There seemed no way that either side might win.

However, on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1916, an event occurred down here (pointing to Mecca) - barely noticed by the rest of the world – that would change everything. With sons Faisal and Abdullah and a tiny band of Bedouin tribesmen at his side, the Sheriff of Mecca led a revolt against the might of the vast Turkish Empire, capturing garrisons at Mecca and Jeddah. Disaster was sure to follow. But instead, four months later, something very different happened. An Englishman with sense of duty to country and a strange, yet unwavering devotion to Arab unity, arrived in Jeddah. It was a landing that would change the course of a nation and rewrite world history. A landing whose echo reverberates today, nearly a century later.

*(Enter Lawrence, interrupting the Narrator. He is dressed in a magnificent Arab desert garb – all white – with a gold braid around his headpiece, and a gold dagger about his waist. Lawrence enters in grand style)*

**Lawrence**

No, no, no!

**Narrator**

What’s the matter?

**Lawrence**

You make it sound so *dull* - so *boring*.

**Narrator**

Dull?

**Lawrence**

Yes. So matter-of-fact. It wasn’t like that at all – not in the beginning. It was an *adventure* – a tale of epic proportions - it was *fun*....

**Narrator**

Fun?

**Lawrence**

Yes!

**Narrator**

"*Fun*" does little justice to the land or its people.

**Lawrence**

The middle-east!? Ha! Why it's nothing more than a desert waste land. Little will grow there, and even less survives the inhabitants. They are a dirty, ignorant people – ready to fight as the mood strikes them.

**Narrator**

(Beat. Then slow, deliberate clapping)

Well done. To the point but, not totally honest.

**Lawrence**

Let's be honest then.

*(Taking out a match and striking it, begins watching it burn. After a moment, puts out match with fingers)*

**Narrator**

Must you do that?

**Lawrence**

Does it offend you?

**Narrator**

It's disgusting.

**Lawrence**

It's the way I'm dressed isn't it? (takes out another match and lights it)

**Narrator**

I've changed my mind. *You're* disgusting. Your tricks don't impress us.

*(Lawrence blows out the match)*

**Lawrence**

*Us?* Who are *you* anyway? Me, I've done my part. There are no lessons for the world, no disclosures to shock people.

**Narrator**

They were not ordinary times, and you were no ordinary man.

**Lawrence**

It was a time for trivial things. One must not mistake for history the bones from which a man is made.

**Narrator**

It was a time for dreams.

**Lawrence**

For God's sake all men dream!

**Narrator**

Yes, but not equally.

**Lawrence**

No, of course not.

**Narrator**

Some dream by night and wake to find it was only vanity. But danger lies in those men who dream by day. With eyes wide-open. (beat) Men like you.

**Lawrence**

Yes - this I did. So what!

**Narrator**

Dreams of a new nation.

**Lawrence**

An *old* nation. Restoration of a lost influence! A place for national thought!

**Narrator**

For twenty million Semites? You're dreams have cast the poor bastards into the fire - one by one.

**Lawrence**

Blood was always on our hands: we British were licensed to it.

**Narrator**

Did it mean so much?

**Lawrence**

It was Arab country....

**Narrator**

(interrupting) There are no Arab countries, just tribes with flags!

**Lawrence**

It was Arab *land*, and the Turks were in it: that was the issue.

**Narrator**

Lawrence...

**Lawrence**

O.K! Not just the bloody war - the corn and rice of Mesopotamia.

**Narrator**

Corn and rice – what else?

**Lawrence**

There was talk of *oil* – there, it's finished!

**Narrator**

Now we're getting somewhere. Go on.

**Lawrence**

If I had been honorable, I would have sent my men home, and not let them risk their lives for such stuff.

**Narrator**

But instead you joined the conspiracy.

**Lawrence**

I – I had to. Can't you see?! Arabs believe in persons, not institutions! They believed me sincere and through this I gave them hope, and in that hope we performed great things. But the Arab revolt had begun on false pretences – a promise of a homeland and self-government. But it was a ploy - *a trick* - to get the Arabs to fight on our behalf.

**Narrator**

"Save the interest of our ally, France" according to Sykes and Picot.

**Lawrence**

Yes. Save the interest of our ally France. Concealed in this modest clause was a secret treaty by which France, England and Russia agreed to annex the very land we had promised to the Arabs, and to establish spheres of influence over the rest. Nobody, and especially not Sykes nor Picot believed the Arab revolt possible; but I knew that it was. Rumors of our fraud reached Arab ears from Turkey.

**Narrator**

Yes...go on El-Aurance.

**Lawrence**

Having tested my sincerity in battle under fire, my men asked me to endorse the promises made by the British Government. So I assured them that England kept her word in letter and spirit. The Arab inspiration was our main tool in winning. I

believed that the vigor of the movement would be enough to prevent the creation of unduly 'colonial' schemes and exploitations....

(taking off his Arab dress)

...but instead of feeling proud with each victory, I became continuously and bitterly ashamed. In revenge I vowed to make the Arab Revolt the engine of its own making and to lead it so madly into final victory that expediency should counsel a fair settlement for the Arab's. In thirty fights I did not lose one Englishman!

**Narrator**

What about the Arabs?

*(Lawrence is distraught and looks silently into the blackness at the imaginary Narrator)*

**Lawrence**

The Arabs?! Who are the Arabs anyway? They were Semites occupying a piece of land the size of India. A race so strong, it swallowed its conquerors simply by outlasting them. Not the Egyptians, Hittites, Greeks, Persians, Romans, or the mighty Turks could maintain a permanent footing. The Arabs are a manufactured people – a repellent and unsympathetic form of primary colors – there are no half tones in Semitic vision – only black and white. Their thoughts are at ease only in extremes, and in death they find no grief. Their greatest manufacture was that of religious creeds – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – these are your Semitic successes. (beat) Then there is the *language* of Arabic – now there lay the real test!

**Narrator**

Go on Aurance....

**Lawrence**

The Turks were stupid. They banished the Arabic language from courts and offices, from the Government service, and from the best schools. But the Arabs would not give up their rich and flexible tongue for that of Turkish. No. Instead they clung so tightly it overwhelmed the crude Turkish language, filling it with Arabic words. But deprived of constitutional outlets they became revolutionary. Everywhere there were sure signs of the decay of imperial Turkey. The conditions were ideal for an Arab movement.

**Narrator**

Go on Aurance....

**Lawrence**

(yells) Stop calling me that! Only my friends call me that! (frustrated) This is the last time I mean to be the judge of what I say – do you hear me!

**Narrator**

For my part, I shall go to Ithaca and rouse Telemachus – son of Odysseus.

**Lawrence**

How's that? (quizzically and not sure of the Narrator's comment)

*(Blackout. In the dark, the pre-recorded voice of Lawrence begins...)*

**Lawrence (pre-recorded)**

I had been many years up and down the Semitic East during archeological digs, trying to answer the question – did the Arabs teach the Crusaders how to build the pointed arch, or was it the other way round? During that time I had learned the manners of the villagers and tribesman of Syria and Mesopotamia, and become fluent in the Arabic language. I spent these years living and dressing as Arabs do, and in so doing, lost my English self. I began to see the West, with all its conventions, through new eyes.

*(The scene is a restaurant in a German hotel - Beyrout, 1911. "young" Lawrence enters with a small case of clothes, some drawing pads, and equipment bag with camera. He has an obvious limp from a broken ankle injury when back in England. After walking over a thousand miles during the last month of expedition and archeological exploration of the area's castles, the ankle clearly plagues him still. His clothes are a reflection of the last month of travel. Weary and feverish, recovering from dysentery, Lawrence is exhausted. He takes a table and brings out a pad and pencil to write a letter. There are sounds of other customers, though we do not see them. There is definitely a table of German railway engineers – in voice only – present in the restaurant. This occasional ruckus perturbs Lawrence as he continues writing. A waiter approaches with a glass of water...)*

**Waiter**

Mai offendi? (water?)

**Lawrence**

Shukran (thank you)

**Waiter**

Ubyath walla Uswad (white or black)?

**Lawrence**

Qawah (coffee)

*(Lawrence is completing the letter when suddenly Dahoum comes in. Dahoum is in peasant Arab dress, an aid to Lawrence during his expedition, a young man in his teens. He has a round face and large expressive eyes.)*

*The two men have grown fond of each other and this is expressed in a bond of friendship that appears occasionally through their more formal boss-subordinate relationship)*

**Dahoum**

Aurance!

**Lawrence**

Dahoum!

(Rising but obviously weak)

**Dahoum**

No Aurance – sit.

**Lawrence**

Any word – did you find the camera or the telephoto tape?

**Dahoum**

No Aurance. We are without fruit.

**Lawrence**

*Fruitless* – our efforts to recover the stolen camera were *fruitless*.

(They both laugh. *The waiter returns with the coffee, begins pouring. Beat*)

**Dahoum**

The darek in Khun were very angry with you Aurance.

**Lawrence**

Why – because in Harran I didn't accept the Sheikh's gift of two wives? Huh? Well, I ate his food, and that should have been enough.

**Dahoum**

He say the telephoto is missing, and it is your fault for being in this country alone.

**Lawrence**

Well, we are a curious people, and there's something curious about a rough-unmannered people that wander about the desert dressed in rags. (suddenly grabs his mouth – an abscessed wisdom tooth) Damn that hurts! First we lose the camera and now my tooth! The first thing I'm doing when I get back to England is seeing a dentist.

**Dahoum**

I have a messenger searching all the dealers for the camera – there is still hope, God willing we will find it.

**Lawrence**

My thesis will suffer without the photos. Please ask your God to have mercy on me. You don't think I've angered Him do you?

**Dahoum**

What is your country like Aurance?

**Lawrence**

What is it that I have not already told you over the last 30 days and 1200 miles of walking together! Is there something we did not cover between here and Aleppo? For the sake of Allah, don't you get tired of hearing it?

**Dahoum**

I can't help but think about your country and the big people.....how do you say?

**Lawrence**

Fat. Yes. Dahoum, the whole country. It's filled with great big fat men with great big fat wives and great big fat children. They live in big fat homes, eat fat meals, and get fat ideas about fat subjects....

**Dahoum**

And the marriage– *also* as you say?

**Lawrence**

Yes – we get one wife Dahoum – sorry about that. (reflecting) Though I'm not sure if that makes us incredibly smart or incredibly naive. I don't know what's worse – four magnificent, albeit ignorant wives, or one great big, educated sow. Beg pardon on the pig reference my friend.

**Dahoum**

Are your people really free?

**Lawrence**

Yes. They are a people free to speak their own language, free to speak their own mind. And, they are not "*my*" people. Do you understand? While we in the West hunger for nations, we have no interest in the people that occupy them!

**Dahoum**

Freedom is something my people only dream of.

**Lawrence**

*Dreams*, Dahoum, are the very fuel that powers the train of destiny.

**Dahoum**

I do not understand.

**Lawrence**

Arabs believe that life is all laid out – predetermined, like a train on a track. But I say the train of life moves when there is a fire burning in its engine to propel it forward.

**Dahoum**

No Aurance – the dream of a man leaves him when the sun rises.

**Lawrence**

The problem with the Arabs Dahoum is they are standing on the tracks of life, thinking about what lays around the bend, when suddenly (smacks his hands together), they are smashed by the train of another man's dream that's come up behind them.

**Dahoum**

It is Allah's will that my people are not free.

**Lawrence**

No Dahoum – I do not agree. (Beat) I'll keep my dreams, and you keep your God, your Allah. I'll go home to freedom and a bath once a day, and you stay here under the Turkish yoke, eating bread and smelling like bloody hell. Though I must confess one thing Dahoum - I will miss the coffee! (they both laugh)

**Dahoum**

(suddenly remembering) Aurance! (pulling out a letter) I'm sorry Aurance. A letter for you. It was in Damascus.

**Lawrence**

It's from Hogarth! (*tears it open and reads quickly, skimming the contents*) June 23<sup>rd</sup>! (*His mood is suddenly happy*) "...second season *not* impossible .... " This is the best news in a long time! I will not be eating beans at Oxford next year Dahoum! And as for you my friend - I have great plans!

**Dahoum**

I think you are not so free Aurance.

**Lawrence**

Well, at least for now I'm free to drink coffee when I please! And so it pleases me now! (*yells for the waiter*) Brit Qahwi ya sheikh. We must celebrate Dahoum – celebrate my return to the great plain of Carchemish!

*(Dahoum begins dancing with Lawrence and the waiter clapping and cheering him on. There are “sounds” of others in the restaurant joining in on the fun. Suddenly, a German railway engineer enters the scene, the party pauses on his sudden and obviously violent entrance...)*

**German**

Tell your friend, that he is disturbing our lunch. If he does not stop this nonsense, we will throw him into the river at the bottom of the garden.

*(The loud sounds are immediately reduced to whispers. Lawrence is furious, he begins to take a step after the German, but Dahoum intervenes)*

**Dahoum**

Aurance. Your boat will leave soon.

**Lawrence**

Work on your dreams Dahoum. And I will return to work on mine – it is my will.

**Dahoum**

Yes Aurance.

(Blackout. Light up on “Dream Lawrence.”)

**Lawrence**

Did you see - did you see!?! The collapse of the whole Levantine empire (snaps fingers) just like that.

**Narrator**

Yes – his bound heart heaved with wild rage as his eyes were flashing fire.

**Lawrence**

You've made no habit of visiting me – why do you come today?

**Narrator**

The letter.

**Lawrence**

What – this? I never even sent it! I was going home to finish my thesis for God's sake! Bloody hell. You read it if you want to (pulls letter out of pocket and throws into darkness as blackout)

**Lawrence (pre-recorded)**

August 11th, 1911. In Beirut ready to leave. Feet better, but still feverish. It's been two years since I lost the camera: and it happened at Seruj, which is miles away. The Aleppo people knew nothing about it. The donkey-boy's wife eloped with the Sheik and they are now enemies. I shouldn't call him that anymore, his name is

Dahoum. You'll recognize him in the photos with his extremely rolled eyes. (photo projected on screen) I find Dahoum an interesting character. He can read a few words of Arabic, and has more intelligence than the rank and file. He talks of going to school in Aleppo with the money he made off us. Fortunately there is no foreign influence as yet in his district. If only you had seen the ruination caused by the missionaries of French influence, and to a lesser degree by the American, you would never wish it extended. The hopeless vulgarity of the half-Europeanized Arab is appalling. Better a thousand times the Arab untouched. The foreigners come out here always to teach, whereas they had much better learn, for in everything but wits and knowledge, the Arab is generally the better man of the two. Easily was a man made an infidel, but hardly might he be converted to another faith.

(Blackout)

*(Lights come up with Lawrence at a desk. 1916, and Lawrence finds himself in Cairo, Egypt, a map maker and intelligence office at the Arab Bureau. At the desk, Lawrence is writing a letter )*

**Lawrence**

.....I will have difficulty becoming myself again. At times, I find myself slipping between speaking English, French, and Arabic, without even realizing it.

*(A soldier walks in reading a copy of the Arab Bureau, and an article written by Lawrence. He puts down a stack of books on the desk for Lawrence).*

**Soldier**

You're not serious – " The Arab revolt against the Turks by the Grand Sherif Hussein of Mecca has opened a major new phase in the war"?

**Lawrence**

Absolutely.

**Soldier**

What war!! The real war is in Europe. There's nothing out here but a handful of savages killing each other. It's the most amateurish, Buffalo Bill sort of performance on earth, and the people who do it best are these nomadic Bedouin.

**Lawrence**

If the Arab Revolt succeeds, it will be the single biggest thing to come through the East since the Christian Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition.

**Soldier**

Yes, and likely as bloody horrific too. The Arab movement is too shallow. The Arabs don't care, and they're too few in number.

**Lawrence**

Yes, but therein lies their strength. They are perhaps the most elusive enemy an army has ever faced.

**Soldier**

Not to mention they inhabit the most difficult terrain in the world within which to launch civilized warfare. The heat in July and August is severe day and night, and even at altitude this place is nothing but a land of squalor. Why, an educated European can't even find evil refreshment.

**Lawrence**

Don't over estimate your formal education. I've had so much of it and it's such rot, saving your presence of course.

**Soldier**

I say emergent nations should not be patronized by developed ones in the matter of religion and culture but should be left to find their own salvation. I wouldn't risk the blood of one Englishman for the whole of Arabia.

**Lawrence**

No, but the Arab revolt against the Turks by Sherif Hussein is my best opportunity to exchange this Cairo desk for some real work.

**Soldier**

In the desert? My friend, you will not be released from that desk until you complete what will likely amount to the most noteworthy, highly professional, single greatest contribution to the war an intellectual like you will make - the design of a new postage stamp for the Grand Sherif of Mecca. And if you consider it an opportunity to fight and die in the desert, then you can deliver the damn stamps to him personally when you're through, and maybe get yourself killed along the way.

**Lawrence**

It doesn't seem right that I should go on living peacefully in Cairo. They were both younger than I am (pulling the letter of his Dead brother Frank from his pocket. Both brother Frank and Will died fighting in 1915).

**Soldier**

They're dead T.E. Frank and Will have died an honorable death in service of country.

**Lawrence**

(referring to letter) My brother Frank put it differently - "I am writing this letter on the hypothesis that I have been killed, so will treat it in that way. I am glad I have died, not so much for my country, as for all the many wrongs by which the war was mainly commenced and also that which it inspired... (Soldier chimes in)

*(Soldier joins in for the last sentence, as he has heard this many times before)*

**Soldier**

“The purpose for it all I do not think can be seen by us in this life, but there is a purpose all the same.” If you’re looking for that purpose T.E. – after a year in this hellhole - I can assure you that you won’t find it hiding in the sands of the desert.

**Lawrence**

Well, if not in the sand below, then perhaps in the stars overhead?

**Soldier**

I think you’re short a few buttons my friend.

**Lawrence**

“Thalassa, Thalassa” – the Sea – the Sea – cried the army of Xenophon returning from Mesopotamia.

**Soldier**

Upon their first glimpse of the Black Sea

**Lawrence**

Very good! You have been reading!

**Soldier**

Speaking of which – you owe me a pound for these. (puts hand down on books he delivered at the start of the scene). What you get out of these old things I’ll never know. Homer’s Odyssey – it’s all Greek to me! (chuckles a little)

**Lawrence**

Get the right book at the right time and you’ll taste joys physical and spiritual!

**Soldier**

And this Ko-ran you had me get?

**Lawrence**

The Arabic is such amusing stuff.

**Soldier**

Fun stuff? Back home, I’ve heard Mohammed called a “madman.” It certainly fits the modus operandi of these people.

**Lawrence**

I find that when one follows the light of another man's thought, you're never quite yourself again. A bit of your old self is pushed out with the inspiration of what is immortal in someone who has gone before you.

**Soldier**

Like I've said T.E. – an intellectual – yes, but as a soldier, you are utterly unprepared and unprofessional – in other words, you are a breath of fresh air around here.

**Lawrence**

Thank you – I think.

**Soldier**

Arabia has an East, a West, and a South – but where it is on the top, no man knows. But somehow, Lawrence, I sense you are determined to find out.

(Blackout)

**Lawrence (Pre-recorded)**

Frank's last letter is a fine one and leaves no regret. These years of detachment have cured me of any desire ever to do anything for myself, and you guessed rightly that the Arab has appealed to my imagination. It is an old civilization that has re-discovered itself void of materialism and trappings that ours seems determined to assume. This letter is nothing more than a cry for further change; which is idiocy, for now I change my abode every day, my job every two days, and my language every three days, and still remain always unsatisfied. Shortly after the start of the revolt, Allenby gave me a free hand to harmonize Arab actions within his overall strategy. I was sent to assess which of the Sherif's four sons would lead the revolt to victory. Upon meeting Feisal, I felt at first glance this was the man I had come to Arabia to seek. Having been so violently uprooted and plunged into a job too big for me, everything now seems unreal. I hate being in front, and I hate being in back, and I don't like responsibility and I don't obey orders. I do my best to keep in the background, but some day everybody will combine and down me. It is impossible for a foreigner to run another people of their own free will, indefinitely. We ride like lunatics and pounce on unsuspecting Turks – I'm secretly hoping to get killed on the way. We're calling the Arabs to fight for us on a lie, and I can no longer stand it. We destroy the Turks in heaps, and it's all very gory and nasty. How will we ever reconcile it with Oxford?

*(During the blackout, Arabic Music is heard with man singing a song that glorifies Auda Abu Tayi. Lights come up on new scene at an encampment during the campaign. Lawrence and a companion of the irregular Arab army are resting.)*

**Lawrence**

Do you hear that?

**Companion**

Music of the Howeitat praising Auda Abu Tayi.

**Lawrence**

Centuries ago, the Howeitat came from the Hejaz and prided themselves on being real Bedu. Auda is their master type. His legend reached me even in Cairo.

**Companion**

Cairo?

**Lawrence**

At the geographical division of Military Intelligence. (beat – his companion is not following this) *The Arab Bureau*.

**Companion**

Arab Bureau?

**Lawrence**

No, of course not. How would you know?

**Companion**

Are there many Arabs at the Arab Bureau?

**Lawrence**

No. Firstly, there were maps, maps, hundreds of thousands of them, to be drawn, printed, packed up and sent off – my job. Also, I was tasked with keeping track of Turkish army movements, which is a lot like hunting for a needle in a haystack while inebriated.

**Companion**

Were you an officer?

**Lawrence**

Well...let's just say I was an Emir of sorts (smiles. Music continues – they listen, music ends) Auda has reminded me many times that I am 'no Hejazi', but by God I am jealous for it.

**Companion**

I hear he loves money - the Turks pay him too much money.

**Lawrence**

True, but his generosity keeps him poor.

**Companion**

He is old with white hair.

**Lawrence**

He might be over fifty and hair streaked with white, but he is strong and active as any younger man. (becoming animated) His hospitality sweeping, his patience extreme. He ignores advice, criticism, and abuse, with a smile that is as constant as it is charming. He married twenty eight times you know?

**Companion**

Yes I know.

**Lawrence**

Auda is A great warrior. Like Achilles, the bravest and strongest of the Greek warriors in the Trojan War -

**Companion**

– wounded thirteen times and slain 75 men with his own hands -

**Lawrence**

But only in battle – and never a man except in battle. If our performance is one half of Auda's desire, we will be prosperous and fortunate.

**Companion**

How do you know so much about our country and our people Aurance? Why do you –a British and a Christian - want to serve our cause?

**Lawrence**

I've spent my life acquiring knowledge – books, school, research - made it my business to learn. Recently I have come to the conclusion that it was all a bunch of rot, and that the real education has been in these last few months, and so, in serving you and your people, I serve myself.

**Companion**

I don't understand.

**Lawrence**

Sometimes I do not understand it either (smiles). We must move on now.

**Companion**

The men are tired - I am tired – we are all tired. Why not wait until evening? What difference will a few hours make?

**Lawrence**

A few hours can make the difference between winning and losing a war.

**Companion**

War? I think you do not understand. Forgive me Aurance, but you are an Englishman and I am an Arab. For days I've heard you talk about war – the Arab war - but there is no such war. We fight the Turks because we hate them. We kill them where we can and when we can. And when we are done killing, we go home. We are the tribes of Arabia.

**Lawrence**

So long as you think like a tribe and little people, so you shall be a little people.

**Companion**

You speak of the Arabs as though we are a nation, but there is no Arab nation. And without a nation, there is no army, and without an army there can be no war.

**Lawrence**

One man with courage is an army.

**Companion**

How can we win a war against the Turks?

**Lawrence**

By not fighting them.

**Companion**

Win a war by *not* fighting? By Allah English, I believe you are a mad man.

**Lawrence**

Very well then, I dream foolish dreams. But remember, even fools are right sometimes.

**Companion**

Defeat the Turkish Empire, win our battle by not fighting, and our war by not waging it. (puzzled) - it is a riddle, is it not?

**Lawrence**

Yes my friend, it is a riddle, and the answer is all around you.

**Companion**

There is nothing around us but empty space Aurance. Here is our camels, and here is the desert.

**Lawrence**

Precisely. You see, because his mother dipped Achilles into the River Styx, he was invulnerable except at the heel by which she held him. Camels and the desert, two

weapons mightier than all the guns of your enemy, and a weakness not yet exploited. They will help your lord Feisal win his war, if he can find the faith and courage to stop killing his men by throwing them into the guns of Medina.

(there is a gunshot heard off stage)

**Lawrence**

Tell the men to save their bullets for the Turks – we leave in 5 minutes.

(companion leaves, Narrator begins talk)

**Narrator**

Do you really expect to make them believe? Desert and camels? Seems a bit of a stretch.

**Lawrence**

We had no material to lose. Our best line was to defend nothing and to shoot nothing. Our cards were speed and time, not hitting power. In Arabia range was more than force, space greater than the power of armies. With our stealth in this great open arena, we would become a menace to the Turks.

**Narrator**

What is the difference between a nuisance and a menace?

**Lawrence**

A menace can transform a local disturbance into a major campaign.

**Narrator**

Then what is the difference between a menace and a terrorist?

**Lawrence**

Strategy. (beat) I like to refer to my theory as the “Algebraic factor. You know the inventor of Algebra was an Arab – I think he would be proud.

**Narrator**

“The Algebraic Factor”?

**Lawrence**

I began to calculate how many square miles there were of desert and hills. Then I figured out how many men the Turks would need to sit on all this ground to protect it and save it from our attack. Knowing the Turkish army, and even allowing for their recent extension by aero plane and guns and armored trains, they would have need of a fortified post every four square miles, and a post could not be less than twenty men. Therefore, they would need around six hundred thousand men to meet the ill wills of the Arab people.

**Narrator**

But you did not have the Arab people, you had a small band of untrained irregulars, posing as a people in rebellion.

**Lawrence**

Yes, but the Turks would treat that rebellion as though it was war, and deal with it on the analogy of war. To fight war upon rebellion is messy and slow, like trying to eat soup with a knife. The algebraic factor promised victory (beat). The Turks have authorized a reward of ten thousand pounds for my capture.

**Narrator**

Yes, I know: The British spy, saboteur, train-wrecker, Lawrence, el Aurance, Laurens Bey, also known as Emir Dynamite – wanted for the wanton destruction of property, notably the Holy Railway from Damascus to Medina – a reward therefore of ten thousand pounds – not bad for a man who in two months transformed a local disturbance into a major campaign, isolated Medina, and who managed to draw resources of the Turkish Empire to Southern Arabia, which were desperately needed elsewhere.

**Lawrence**

When you put it like that, I think ten thousand might be a bit cheap.

(companion rushes back in distressed)

**Companion**

Hamed the Moor has killed of the Ageyl and has confessed to the killing. The Ageyl are demanding blood for blood.

**Lawrence**

Damn it!

**Companion**

Aurance. To let the Ageyl kill on revenge will mean a feud that will break your dream nation into tribes again! Now English - now do you see why your foolish dream can never be?

(ruckus is heard, noises louder, companion leaves the stage angry)

**Narrator**

It must be a formal execution and I place the burden on you. Under the circumstances, you are perfect – a stranger and without kin. And so I say oh honored stranger - my words will not offend – I pray. By trade I am no teller of fortunes, yet I fear a plot of the Gods is now afoot.

**Lawrence**

Travail upon travail for me. This may be some new snare set for me by a grudging goddess. Oh divinity – hold not this wicked deed against me.

(Blackout)

*(during the following, there are flashes of gunshots to coincide with the dialogue. These gunshots can be carried out by a stage double in the dark, so that Lawrence can get ready for the next scene.)*

**Lawrence (pre-recorded)**

I shot him in the chest. (gunshot) Blood spurted out onto his clothes. I fired again (gunshot), but my hand was shaking so bad I only broke his wrist. He called out less loudly now. Then I leaned over and shot him in the thick of his neck. (gunshot) His body shivered a little, then stopped. (beat) Some of the evil of my tale was inherent in our circumstances. By day the hot sun of the desert fermented us. At night the stars shamed us into pettiness, and in this, our purpose became ravenous. We surrendered our souls to greed and victory. Drained of morality, of choice, and of responsibility, we found ourselves puppets on God's stage, moving like dead leaves in the wind. As each day passed, I envied those tired enough to die, for success looked remote, and failure near and certain.

*(lights up on new scene with Lawrence and Auda Abu Tayi in a tent, discussing the proposal to take the port city of Akaba)*

**Auda**

Akaba!

**Lawrence**

Yes. We must not take Medina – forget about it for now. The Turk is harmless there. Let him stay at Medina and every other distant place in large numbers. His stupidity will be our ally, for he would like to hold, or to think he held, as much of his old provinces as possible. We must take Akaba!

**Auda**

It is too dangerous, even your own navy will not attack it. There are very powerful guns at Akaba.

**Lawrence**

True, but all pointing out to sea. Fixed in one direction.

**Auda**

Auda does not have such powerful guns. Your French dog Bremond has kept his batteries idle for a year at Suez! Do you think we do not see your leaders deny us the artillery we desperately need!

**Lawrence**

Yes, I agree, it is a silent, undeniable proof of French malice towards the Arab movement. But there is no gun Auda, no matter how powerful, that can fire backwards.

**Auda**

All pointing out to sea?

**Lawrence**

All out to sea.

**Auda**

How many are the Turks?

**Lawrence**

About two thousand men against your five hundred. Auda's odds.

**Auda**

Have they made no plans for an attack from the land?

**Lawrence**

The coastal hills are impractical for heavy troops, the passes through them formidable. The Turks believe an attack on Akaba from the land impossible – a *madman's dream* – they say.

**Auda**

Then they are Fools! I think Akaba would be best taken by my men descending from the hills, would it not? In war, it is more profitable to adopt a plan which the enemy does not anticipate. (smiling and laughing with Lawrence, suddenly takes out his false teeth) God forbid!! (begins smashing his false teeth on the ground with the butt of his gun. Lawrence is not clear about what is going on). Turkish teeth! A gift from Jemal Pasha.

**Lawrence**

After Akaba Auda, we will be sure to make you an allied set. (both laugh heartily)

**Auda**

The situation out here in the desert is full of surprise turns, and your finger is one of those helping to mix the pie.

**Lawrence**

Yes, but I would be much happier, in a trench.

**Auda**

Aurance, why are Westerners always wanting all? Hmh? Behind our few stars we can see God, Who we do not see behind your million.

**Lawrence**

The English hunger for desolate lands, to build them up, and so want the world's end.

**Auda**

We Arabs know our districts, our camels, and our women. But the excess and the glory are to God. To add star upon star is foolish.

**Lawrence**

But we Westerners find our foolishness pleasing Auda.

**Auda**

(drinking a toast of coffee) To foolish dreams then!

**Both**

To Akaba!!

(Lights fade)

*(Lights up on a different area of the stage, there is a Corporal sweeping the area, cleaning up, etc. It is a deserted army post being disinfected. A gramophone is playing. There is a telephone. An Arab irregular enters the light, obviously having been through battle, desert and dust stained, he looks around).*

**Corporal**

Get out of here woggie! Go on! Get out or I'll have to shoot you! This is British Army property and I'm in charge, now Shoo! Yellah!

(irregular pays no attention, and slowly lifts receiver to ear, satisfied, puts it down and leaves. Corporal shrugs it off and carries on. Lawrence enters in Arab garb, also post battle weariness and appearance).

**Corporal**

Not another one! (sprays Lawrence with disinfectant) Get the hell out of here woggie! I nearly shot your chum, and I swear I'll shoot you too if you don't buzz off!

**Lawrence**

Does this telephone work Corporal

**Corporal**

(after a moment – confused) Did you speak?

**Lawrence**

Yes. I asked if this telephone works. I can repeat it in Arabic if you'd like. (lifting the receiver to check)

**Corporal**

I am in charge of this post, and it is government property. No unauthorized person may ...

**Lawrence**

(ignoring the Corporal and speaking into phone) Naval headquarters – it's urgent. (turning to Corporal) I was wondering if the British troops had gotten bored with the war and went home...

**Corporal**

I said I am in charge of this post, and ...

**Lawrence**

Hello – Naval headquarters? I want to speak to the senior officer – whoever he is. I don't care if he's eating dinner. Then you'll forget your orders won't you? I can only tell you that if you fail to get your Admiral to the telephone this instant, you will probably face a court martial for having delayed the ending of the war by roughly three months...hold on (to Corporal) water from the tap, will you old chap?

**Corporal**

It's not for drinking. Strict orders to boil all water.

**Lawrence**

Yesterday I drank from a well that had a dead goat in it. (Corporal leaves hesitantly) He must think I'm off my bloody rocker.

(Back to phone)

The simple truth, is that in the hands of your switchboard, you hold the lives of five hundred allied soldiers and the possession of the most valuable port in Southern Arabia. The soldiers are sitting victorious, with nothing to eat except their camels and their prisoners ...thank you.

(Corporal re-enters with water and hands to Lawrence. Lawrence drinks).

I've got some men outside who need food and drink.

**Corporal**

I don't speak their lingo sir.

**Lawrence**

If you smile at them and treat them like human beings, you'll find them easy to handle.

**Corporal**

Yes sir.

**Lawrence**

Hullo? Admiral. Sorry to disturb you, it's Lawrence Sir, Captain Lawrence. Look. I want you to send a destroyer to Akaba. It doesn't have to be a destroyer, but the bigger the better, it's got to take a lot of stuff. Yes. Food for five hundred men, some guns and small arms, and some armored cars would be handy. Most important of all, about fifty thousand pounds in cash....fifty thousand....yes. How? Oh, I'm sorry I didn't tell you – we took it from the land – the long way around. No Admiral, I promise this isn't a joke, Akaba is ours. No, I won't be available tomorrow, I'm a bit tired, and shall probably sleep tomorrow and the next day.

(Blackout)

**Lawrence (pre-recorded)**

The Bedouin were unused to formal operations, but had assets of mobility, toughness, self assurance, knowledge of country, and courage. With them dispersal was strength. In mass they were not formidable, but the smaller the unit, the better its performance. A thousand were a mob, ineffective against a company of trained Turks: but three or four Arabs in the hills would stop a dozen Turks. Consequently we worked to extend our front to its maximum, to impose on the Turks the longest possible passive defense, since that was, materially, their most costly form of war. Turkish pride in their imperial heritage would keep them in the absurd position of all flanks and no front. Our duty was to attain our end with the greatest economy of life since life was more precious to us than money or time. I went into the city of Deraa, in disguise to spy out the defenses, and was caught. Two usurping Algerian brothers, evil geniuses and betrayers of the revolt, slipped away and rode in to the Turks at Deraa. I was caught by the Governor - Hajim Bey - by virtue of the traitor's descriptions of me.

*(The lights come up and the scene is dimly lit - it is a flashback to the terrible night in Deraa, the chief town of the land of Hauran. It is the place where Lawrence was unmercifully tortured and raped by his Turkish captives. A night that he would never forget, yielding ghosts that would haunt him the remainder of his life. It is night, and we see a bedroom where the shadowy figures of Lawrence in Arab Dress and a fleshy Turkish officer on the edge of the bed. The "Bey" is sweating and shaking with fever and a cough. He wears only a night gown. Lawrence's dress is dirty after months of war and the effects of a desert winter. A Turkish sergeant is next to Lawrence, an escort. They do not move.)*

**Guard**

The Bey wants you (Lawrence is clearly affected). A soldier's life is not all that bad. Tomorrow perhaps, leave will be permitted, if you fulfill the Bey's pleasure tonight.

**Bey**

Come. Sit down (Lawrence complies, sits on the floor in front of him. Stares at the speechless Bey, some time passes – in a breathless voice) Shou Ismuk? (what is your name?).

**Lawrence**

My name is Ahmed ibn Bagr, a Circassian from Juneitra.

**Bey**

A deserter?

**Lawrence**

We Circassians have no military service.

**Bey**

(slowly) You are a liar!

*(waves his hand and the sergeant leaves the room and stands sentry outside the bedroom door).*

Stand up and turn round.

*(After studying Lawrence, the Bey suddenly flings himself back on the bed, dragging Lawrence with him. What the Bey wants is now clear, and Lawrence, after some wrestling, is able to twist out of the Bey's grip, and leaps off the bed. The Bey begins fawning over Lawrence).*

You're so white, so fresh. How fine are your hands and feet. I will let you off drills and duties. You'll be paid well – I'll see to it. If you will love me. (*Lawrence is unyielding.* beat) Take of your clothes!

*(Bey claps his hand and the sentry enters quickly and grabs hold of Lawrence in a full-nelson headlock so he cannot move. As the Bey curses Lawrence for his obstinacy)*

You son of a whore! You will curse the womb that bore you! You Arabs do not know your place in this life!

*(Short of breath and coughing, the Bey sits on the bed, and with a signal, the sentry tears down Lawrence's clothes, exposing his shoulder and chest. There are bullet wounds that are apparent and fresh. At this, the Bey takes notice.)*

These wounds are fresh. A deserter for sure!

*(Lumbering to his feet, the Bey begins to paw over Lawrence who bears it for a little, but it becomes too beastly, and Lawrence suddenly knees the Bey in the groin, sending him staggering and squeezing himself together, groaning in pain. The sergeant shouts for help – might have two other sentries enter to restrain Lawrence by his feet and arms – director's choice. Once helpless, the Bey regains his courage and spits on Lawrence. Removing his slipper, the Bey repeatedly beats Lawrence across the face while the sentry holds his head back by the hair. The Bey leans forward and digs his teeth into Lawrence's neck until he draws blood. Then the Bey kisses Lawrence. Taking a bayonet, the Bey works a point into a rib of Lawrence, not to kill, but to draw blood with ½ a turn. This hurts Lawrence, as the blood wavers down his side. The Bey is pleased, and sticking his finger in the blood, begins to dabble it on Lawrence's stomach)*

You will beg! You will beg my forgiveness! It would have been wiser for you to do as I wished.

### **Lawrence**

It is said that if God so wishes, it is easy for Him to preserve a man, even in the ends of the earth.

### **Bey**

If you are divine and have heard the voice of god, then enlighten me now upon yourself, whether you will yet live to see the light of day, or is now a dead man in the house of Hades standing before me?

**Lawrence**

I declare that you have before you the unhappiest man of men, and that the long-suffering tribes shall return home without furtherance of gods or mortal men.

**Bey**

Arabs are a race gifted with uncommon quickness of mind, but the ignorance of over valuing it! *(slaps Lawrence with slipper in face again)* You must understand that *I know*.

*(All, including Lawrence are silent at this remark, the lights dim with a special on Lawrence, as he addresses the Narrator)*

**Lawrence**

I thought he knew who I was.

**Narrator**

It was a shot in the dark. He couldn't possibly know your secret.

**Lawrence**

You won't bring my mother into this will you?

**Narrator**

Your odyssey has just begun.

*(The light returns)*

**Lawrence**

Your kindness to me has been like a father's to his son, and I will ever gratefully remember it.

*(Lawrence's mouth begins to twitch, and he throws up his chin in defiance, which in the middle east is understood to mean "no." The Bey sits down, and speaks in a near whisper)*

**Bey**

Take him out. Teach him everything.

*(the scene continues dimly lit in pantomime. The attending figures enter and exit in the dark, until by the end of the scene, we will find the clothed in classic Greek costumes with masks, acting as the gods upon this broken man).*

**Pre-recorded Lawrence**

They kicked me to the head of the stairs and stretched me over a bench, pummeling me. With two on my ankles, bearing down on the back of my knees, two more twisted my wrists till they cracked. They swore it would take the tenth cut of the whip on my back to howl for mercy, and by the twentieth beg for the sweet caresses of the Bey. Then they began to lash me madly with all their might, while I locked my

teeth to endure this thing lapping itself like a flaming wire about my body. My struggles were useless. With each new series of hits, the men would squabble over who was next, and during the interval, play with me in unspeakable ways. As the whip fell, biting blacker and more wet, my flesh quivered with pain and the accumulated terror of the next blow coming. They soon conquered my determination not to cry. I remember the Corporal kicking me with his nailed boot to get me up – I smiled a vapid smile at him, for a delicious warmth, probably sexual, was swelling up inside me. Then he flung me up on his arm and hacked with the full length of his whip into my groin. Doubled over, trying impotently to scream, one of my captors giggled with amusement. I heard a voice cry “shame, you’ve killed him,” as the very core of life seemed to have been expelled from my body by this indescribable pain.

*(All movement stops as Lawrence falls back to the bench. The captors, now transformed into Greek gods, stand in a semi-circle, looking at the lifeless creature. Sound of a drum. The lights come up).*

**god1**

Wherefore he fell helpless, not able to breathe or speak; this man doth appeal to the gods.

**god2**

A luckless wanderer whom we must now kindly entertain, for all homeless and broken men are in the sight of the gods.

**god3**

A terrible weariness had possessed him, yet at last did he emerge, spewing the bitter brine from his lips while wet streams ran gurgling down his face.

*(At this, Lawrence coughs and sputters back to life)*

**god1**

Ill fated man, grieve no longer in this place. Your life shall not so fade away.

**Lawrence**

Surely this is the end at last. See what storm Zeus sends from heaven and how the deep sea is moved. Squalls rush down from the four corners of the earth; utter and inevitable is my doom. Blessed were the Greeks who perished in the plain of Troy. But now fate traps me in this ignoble death.

**All gods**

Everywhere in trouble, all over the seas, wherever you go! Yet in the end doubtless you are slipped in amongst those Zeus favored people - happy; Yet we trust you will never complain that your punishment has been *in-adequate*.

**Lawrence**

Woe is me! Has Zeus led me to behold this place, only to make me despair? I have won my way from the depths only to find there is yet no escape.

**god1**

Zeus alone assigns bliss to the good and to the evil as he wills, to each. Wherefore surely he gave you this unhappiness and now you must bear it.

**Lawrence**

Alas, what am I to do? What will become of me, after all?

**god2**

Are you not the very son to Odysseus, you who are so well grown of body?

**Lawrence**

My mother says I am his son: for myself I do not know. Has any son of man yet been sure of his begetting? Would that I had been the child of some ordinary parent. But as it is, since you press it, they do name me the child of all men born to death.

**god3**

Divine Odysseus was a clement and fatherly king.

**Lawrence**

I must confess that our house looked to be rich and well appointed while my father ruled it as master.

**god1**

In your father, deed and word marched together to their deliberate end.

**god2**

Few are the sons who attain their fathers' stature

**god3**

Few surpass them.

**All gods**

And most fall short in merit.

**Lawrence**

It is not possible for me to dine softly in your company: to be at ease. Was it not grief enough that in my childhood you shore from me so much of my precious goods? Today I am a grown man and my swelling heart prompts me to visit every evil I can contrive, whether from earth or in this place. My complaint is rather

against those who have sat by mutely, without word of denunciation or restraint: though they are many in number, and the wicked are but few.

**All gods**

Hear the truth of it! For it is Zeus that commanded you so. By no choice of our own did we ferry you across so unspeakable a journey. Who would willingly come to a place where there is no near city of man? Kinsman of Zeus, many counseled, bear witness. Is it your true wish, even yet, to go back?

**Lawrence**

You are changeless, immortal, ever-young, yet even so I choose home. To see the day of my arrival dawn. If God must shatter me, so be it. I shall suffer with a high heart; for my courage has been tempered to endure all misery. Already have I known every mood of pain, and travail. Let the coming woe be added to the count of those that have been.

**All gods**

God forgive you; may you be happy there! Woe, to you from the gods, but that the mirror of your mind show you what misfortune must yet fill your cup before you attain the home you seek.

**Lawrence**

Surely, something not at all to my advantage, something lies behind your command?

**All gods**

Here are neither oared ships nor crews to convey him over ocean's broad back. Night leaped into heaven and instantly he made equal way, swift as a breath of wind, over the ocean and over the waste places of the earth.

*(A montage of film clips of the major war battles and scenes from WWI, WWII, Blitzkrieg, German Concentration Camps, exit of Arabs from Palestine, Korean War, Vietnam, 6 Day War, Oil Embargo, Lebanese civil war, overthrow of the Shah of Iran, Iran/Iraq war, Persian Gulf War, Bosnian Concentration Camps, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Afgan war on terror, leading up to prisoners at Guantanamo bay in orange jump suits)*

*(When lighting comes up, we find Lawrence in an orange jump suit, being interrogated by prison guards at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Lawrence comes to and then cowers, not sure what to make of this strange place or his captors).*

**Interrogator1**

He's coming to.

**Interrogator2**

Man, I thought you killed him.

What...what is this place?  
**Lawrence**

He speaks English  
**Interrogator1**

Who are you?  
**Lawrence**

Yeah, with a British accent...  
**Interrogator2**

Could be a British citizen.  
**Interrogator1**

Where am I?  
**Lawrence**

You're on the island man.  
**Interrogator2**

The Island?  
**Lawrence**

Your new home.  
**Interrogator2**

Home? Ithaca? Have I returned?  
**Lawrence**

**Interrogator1**  
Yeah, you could say this is your home – for a while anyway. (to the other Interrogator) What the hell is he talking about?

**Lawrence**  
(delirious and frightened) Hear me, oh islanders of Ithaca; hear me out. Great evils are rolling down upon you...

**Interrogator1**  
Shut Up!

**Lawrence**  
...Odysseus will not longer remain sundered from his people.  
*(Interrogator2 grabs Lawrence's head by the hair from behind)*

**Interrogator2**

He said shut up!

**Lawrence**

Even now it may be he approaches, carrying the seeds of a bloody doom.

*(Interrogator1 punches Lawrence in the gut and doubles him over to shut him up)*

**Interrogator2**

You think that's some kind of code? Is he trying to talk to the others?

**Interrogator1**

These guys are fanatical. Doom this and doom that. It's that I hate America babble shit! Well let me tell you Mr. Taliban, here's what we think of that (hits Lawrence in the gut again). Pull that shit again and I'll send you back to Allah.

*(Lawrence again is coming to, slowly regaining consciousness)*

**Interrogator2**

Do you think he's talking about another attack on America?

**Interrogator1**

Could be.

**Lawrence**

(in pain) Ahh...ohh. This must be what a leaf feels like when it falls from the tree.

**Interrogator1**

Well you're not in Kansas anymore, that's for sure.

**Lawrence**

You...are you Americans?

**Interrogator1**

That's right – you see this “U.S.” – that stands for the United States of America.

**Lawrence**

That's a relief...

**Interrogator1**

How's that?

**Lawrence**

(smiling wryly) I thought it meant “us” and “them.”

**Interrogator1**

I'll tell you who "US" is - we're the most powerful and the most peaceful nation on earth!

**Interrogator2**

That's right!

**Lawrence**

Peaceful? My body and I respectfully disagree.

**Interrogator1**

Well, with all due respect – WHO THE FUCK DO YOU THINK YOU ARE TO DISAGREE!!? Have you looked around lately! Can't you see who's in control!? Your Jihad is over!

**Lawrence**

Mine might be over, but it appears yours has just begun.

**Interrogator1**

How's that?

**Lawrence**

It is authority that tests a person's character. It is power that tests a nation.

**Interrogator2**

What the hell is this guy saying? Don't be starting no anti-America shit. Look, it's simple man - if you don't love us, you hate us. If you're not good, you're evil. If you're not with us, then you're with the terrorists.

**Lawrence**

Anti-American? Terrorists? Now you look here. To label someone is racist – you risk judging them before they are heard – that is *not* democracy – that is a failure of your imagination.

**Interrogator1**

I'll tell you what's a failure - the way you people treat your women. But we fixed all that – first we came in and toppled your backwards government, and then we liberated your women!

**Lawrence**

Liberated our women?

**Interrogator1**

Yeah!

**Lawrence**

How?

**Interrogator1**

By dropping bombs on their heads.

**Lawrence**

While you may believe the cause to be right, the method used is not.

*(Interrogators look at each other)*

**Interrogator2**

We do as we're told. At least your women are free.

*(Lawrence finds something humorous in this latest remark, and cannot help laughing, despite his circumstances)*

What? What the hell's he laughing at? I don't get it.

**Lawrence**

It seems your armed forces were on what amounts to a feminist mission.

**Interrogator2**

This guy is tricky! Should I hit him again?

**Lawrence**

When the maddened king stomps his foot, only slaves tremble in their quarters.

**Interrogator2**

I'm about to stomp on you!

**Lawrence**

Let me guess - bombs rain down, contracts are signed, and resources plundered. Hmph? The hand of the free market bears down on the developing world with a clenched fist – the perfect vehicle for imperialism. (smiles) Things haven't changed much.

**Interrogator1**

We fight to protect our freedom and democracy.

**Interrogator2**

Our way of life.

**Lawrence**

You can't help innocent people by killing them first.

**Interrogator1**

No person in their right mind wants to go to war, and we don't need a fanatic intellectual to tell us that.

**Lawrence**

It's hard for me to say this, but your mighty empire, like others before it, will overreach itself - and fail.

**Interrogator2**

You mean America? Why?

**Lawrence**

Because it doesn't acknowledge there is a world outside of it.

**Interrogator1**

That's it I've had enough....

*(Lawrence backs him off momentarily with his words of warning)*

**Lawrence**

The day of Odysseus coming again to his native place is near, yet fools stake their heads upon a persuasion that he comes no more.

**Interrogator2**

It's my turn (steps up, getting in position to hit Lawrence)

**Lawrence**

Fate, do not abandon me to languish on the island, kept here by your high hand, a prisoner in this house.

*(Interrogator1 begins putting blindfold on Lawrence)*

**Interrogator1**

British citizen or not - any last words??

**Lawrence**

Only this – make it your instant and main effort to heed what I have said...

*(Interrogator1 jerks back Lawrence's head by his hair)*

...for we have deferred our case in fullest detail to the Gods. Have mercy on me.

*(Interrogator2 hits Lawrence hard enough to kill him, and Lawrence falls down lifeless. The lights go dark but for a special on the lifeless Lawrence. The gods have re-entered, and begin removing the blindfold, handcuffs, and orange jump suit)*

**god1**

I think this last move was of your scheming, for Odysseus to avenge himself on those men when he comes.

**god2**

The same way you gods are now envying me this man I live with. Yet it was I who saved him. I have loved him and cared for him and promised myself he should not die nor grow old.

**god3**

Just so did Odysseus lie while we shed down sleep upon his eyes, to shroud the dear eyelids and deliver him from the pains of his weakness.

**god1 and god2**

You have the knowledge, the power, and the skill to convey Telemachus again to his own place unscathed. Wherefore now, the father commands that you send him hence with speed; for it is decreed that he is not to die far from his friends. On the contrary he is to behold these friends again and is to sit under his lofty roof in his own land.

**god3**

See that it is so.

**god2**

If the order is from him, I must let my man go hence across the sterile sea.

*(the gods fade out of the scene, and Lawrence is once again sprawled out on the bench of the rape scene. God2 is the last to fade out and splashes water on Lawrence's face on exit. Lawrence shudders and shows some sign of life, as the lights fade and...)*

**Lawrence (Pre-recorded)**

They splashed water on my face and wiped off some of the filth while I begged for mercy. But by now, the Bey rejected me for his bed – too torn and bloody – their excess zeal had spoilt me. The crestfallen Corporal, the youngest and best looking of the guard, had to stay behind, while the others carried me down to the street. Dumped in a wooden room, an Armenian dresser washed and bandaged me in a sleepy haste. The last soldier delayed a moment by my side to whisper in his Druse accent, that the door into the next room was not locked. I climbed out, and went stiffly shaking down the road. Deraa felt inhuman with vice and cruelty, and it shocked me like cold water when a soldier laughed behind me in the street. I

wandered to the south, unobtrusively retreating out of sight. This valley provided the hidden road by which our projected raid could attain Deraa secretly and by surprise. In escaping, I solved the problem that brought me to Deraa. But it was too late, the citadel of my integrity had been irrevocably lost.

*(lights come up with a special on Lawrence in white like an angel)*

### **Lawrence**

There can no longer be any question of submission: blood feud upon blood feud, has put them on the duty of fighting to the end of their force, for they are no longer Arabs, but a people. The pity was, that we often broke down with exasperation and threw them over, blaming them for what was a fault in our own selves. A crowd ever extols the song which sounds freshest in its ears. (takes out match and lights it, admiring the flame) It is strength I lack, to meet this intolerable provocation; the grim slow sack of an innocent house. Perhaps one-day Arabia and its people will seem to them precious...and either forced good or forced evil will make a people cry with pain. But will the earth's iron ore ever admire the brutal flame which transforms it?

BLACKOUT (timed with blowing out of match)

### **End of Play**