

# The Schuman Plan

by Tim Luscombe

## Draft 9

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*Act Three*

*Scene One*

*The year 1978 is projected onto the set.*

*A table that's been bleached by the sun dominates the action. On the table are a jug of wine, some satellite photos, a map, some folders and two brief cases.*

*The lighting suggests the scene is outdoors. The sun is beginning to set.*

*We are on a terrace on a farm, near the Eastern shore of Sicily.*

*Occasionally, the sound of mechanical digging can be heard.*

*There are three men: Gaetano from Italy (late 30s), Jan from The Netherlands (mid 40s), and Bill, now 52.*

*They have their jackets off and ties loosened, evoking the heat. Gaetano has a camera round his neck. They hold glasses of wine.*

**Gaetano** (*Toasting*) Salute!

**Bill** Salute!

**Jan** Salute!

*They all drink.*

...Good trip?

**Gaetano** Lucky. Few roadblocks. I avoided Palermo.

**Jan** We only wait now for one more, the West German delegate.

**Bill** (*Flicking through notes*) It's a pretty straightforward case.

**Jan** We listen to what the farmer says and present our evidence. (*Pouring some more wine for Gaetano and himself*) You have been on these delegations before?

**Gaetano** (*Putting his briefcase on the table with the others*) No, actually, I was working with the Medicines Control Agency in Nancy. Fairly Dull. You've been working with CAP for a long time?

**Jan** Me, yes. Our Head of Delegation is newer.

**Gaetano** You don't look new.

**Bill** Strangest middle-aged crisis of all time. I ran away to Europe to work on the Common Agricultural Policy!

*Gaetano laughs.*

...But I'm proud of what we do. Especially now with the fraud commission. I tell the team in Strasbourg: as the head of your delegation, I understand that our role is to create Europe. The politicians pontificate, but we make it happen. On the ground. In the field. Getting our hands dirty.

**Jan** That is the reason you give yourself to get up in the morning? To create Europe!

*Jan and Gaetano laugh.*

...Bill is our little Messiah. (*Teasing*) Je bent onze kleine messias! [You're our little Messiah!]

**Bill** Hou op! [Shut up!]

**Jan** A very lovely woman brought the wine. We'll ask her to show us around if she comes back.

**Gaetano** Good.

**Bill** It's a classic 'paper wheat' case, this. We've got the satellite photos here. Look.

*Gaetano looks over Bill's shoulder at the satellite photos.*

...We're here. You can see Messina. That's there. And that's the road. (*Pointing to areas on the photos*) So all of that is lemon trees and all of that is olives. And that's peaches. You can tell by the colour and the pattern. Now, the subsidy claim form the farmer submitted to Brussels was for 2,500 hectares of durum wheat. Naturally, wheat gets the largest subsidy. Well, the entire farm's no more than 250 hectares, and there's not one sheaf of wheat growing anywhere, durum or otherwise. (*Indicating out-front*) Orchards and olive groves as far as the eye can see.

*Marcella, the farmer's sister, enters. She's dressed fashionably and not for farming. She brings plates of food and more wine.*

**Marcella** (*To Gaetano*) Ma ché cazzo fai! Si tu ficchi pi cuomo posteggi si siguru cha cia li corna! [Fucking hell! If you fuck as badly as you park, it's not wonder you're a cuckold!]

**Gaetano** (*Taken aback by this vulgarity*) Ma chi dici, Signura? [Excuse me? What did you say?]

**Marcella** (*Putting food in front of Jan*) Prego.

**Jan** (*Inaccurately*) Gracias.

*Jan is physically attracted to Marcella.*

**Bill** I feel almost guilty eating her food when we're going to close down her farm. What is this?

**Gaetano** Sardine alla beccafico. Sardines a la fig-eaters, literally.

**Jan** (*Mixing up his languages as ever*) Heerlijk! È deliziona! [Gorgeous! It's delicious!]

**Gaetano** See, the sardines are arranged to look like the little birds, the fig-eaters.

*Marcella stays, and Jan flirts with her through the following.*

...(To Marcella) La vistu un beccafico? [Have you ever seen a figpecker?]

**Marcella** Sì, navota nili mangiavamu, ma ora non ci ne chiù. [Yes, we used to eat them, but you don't see them anymore.]

**Jan** What is she saying?

**Gaetano** She said you do not see them anymore. Like many species, they have disappeared from Sicily. We used to eat them.

**Jan** Maybe that is why they disappeared.

**Bill** No, it's the effect of pesticides or a rise in monoculture more likely.

**Gaetano** Really?

**Jan** Don't show interest.

**Bill** Yes. CAP only approves a very small selection of grain seeds. That rewards the most technologically advanced farmers. Improves the profit margin for the richer farmer. Messes things up ecologically.

**Jan** I'm sorry, my colleague is boring. What I do not understand is why Bill works for the EEC. It makes him so unhappy! (*About Marcella*) Look at this girl. God, zij is mooi! [God, she's beautiful!]

**Bill** Behave yourself.

**Jan** Plat flicker op, Bill. Je bent niet m'n vader! [Fuck off, Bill. You're not my father!]

**Gaetano** Signura, puozzu taliari la masseria? [Would it be possible, Miss, to see over the farm?]

**Marcella** Vua taliari ora? [You wanna see it now?]

**Gaetano** Sì, grazie. [Yes, please.] She asks is this a good time to see the farm?

**Jan** I think it would be very rude to disappoint her.

**Bill** One of us better wait here for the German delegate.

**Gaetano** Would you mind, Bill? I would love to cast my eye around. I think it was a mill in the past. The stream has diverted itself over there.

**Bill** Oh yes.

**Gaetano** I want to take some photographs of the place.

**Bill** You go ahead.

**Jan** (*To Marcella*) Sì, Signora! Vamos!

**Marcella** (*Allowing Jan to go ahead of her*) Prego.

**Jan** Gracias.

**Marcella** (*Laughing and following him off*) È spagnolo, imbecille. [That's Spanish, idiot!]

*Gaetano follows the others off, taking his camera with him, leaving Bill alone on stage.*

*Frau Bettendorf is heard arriving offstage.*

**Frau Bettendorf** (*Offstage*) Guten abend! Buona sera? Hello?!

**Bill** (*Calling off*) Hello!

*Frau Bettendorf enters carrying bags. She is exhausted from travelling and preoccupied with her luggage, so she doesn't actually look at Bill for a while.*

**Frau Bettendorf** You must be the UK man. I am so sorry to be so hopelessly late.

*Surprisingly, the German delegate speaks with a native upper-class English accent. After dealing with her bags, she retouches her make up and hair, or sorts through things in her bags, and looks at the view, still not bothering to clock Bill.*

...The Dutch and Italian Delegates are here already, are they? I'm not normally late. But the whole journey's been ghastly. I've come from Frankfurt. Via London, to see relatives. And of course there was a baggage handlers strike, so I was sat like an idiot at Heathrow for years, and then it took the pilot three attempts at Punta Raisi to actually land on that damned strip of earth they call an airport.

**Bill** (*Amazed, breathlessly*) Pippa?

**Frau Bettendorf** (*Not hearing Bill*) Then the most chaotic train journey to Messina, which was madly packed and late and slow... And when I got there, the centre of town had been turned into an animal market. Impossible to find a taxi. It was like Noah's Ark. Turtles, puppies, goats, monkeys, you name it. God, this view's marvellous, isn't it? I love bougainvillea best of all, I think. (*Turning to Bill*) I'm Frau Bettendorf. English, obviously. Married a German. Hello.

**Bill** Pippa?

**Pippa** (*Properly looking at Bill*) My God! It can't be!

**Bill** But... You've changed your name? (*Consulting the notes*) We were expecting a Frau Bettendorf.

**Pippa** No, that's me!

**Bill** I thought Axel's name was –

**Pippa** My God, yes! The last time I saw you I was about to marry Axel!

**Bill** Didn't you?

**Pippa** No, I married Matthias.

**Bill** And you were going to Heidelberg.

**Pippa** We live in Stuttgart! Hah! Eleven years. Two kids. Can you believe it?

**Bill** Oh. (*Not meaning it*) Great. Good.

**Pippa** Bill, how wonderful to see you!

*Pippa instigates a hug.*

**Bill** (*Tearfully*) You look exactly the same, Pippa.

**Pippa** (*Exploding with laughter*) Oh Bill, I look a hundred and five! What the hell are you doing here?

**Bill** The same as you –

**Pippa** No! Don't tell me they're sending you off on these junkets now. When did you leave Number 10?

**Bill** I applied to Brussels as soon as the ink on the Accession Treaty had dried.

**Pippa** Poor Bill. What did you do to deserve it?

**Bill** I love it! I stayed in Downing Street for ages after you left. I was endlessly promoted and became more and more of a servant the higher I got.

**Pippa** God yes. I felt my life withering away in that awful gentleman's club.

**Bill** How long have you been working for the Common Market?

**Pippa** Since I married. He's mostly in Strasbourg. We commute to Stuttgart for the weekends. I have some languages. They get four for the price of one with me! Unfortunately, not one of them is Italian!

**Bill** Wouldn't do you any good here anyway. It's dialect. I can't understand a word of it. The Italian delegate thankfully does.

*Pippa looks at Bill, shakes her head.*

**Pippa** I always asked after you to mutual friends. I assumed you'd stay and work with your chum Teddy. He did well, didn't he?

*Bill laughs ruefully.*

...But then, you know, time moves on; people stop knowing people... How's the love life? I expect you've got hundreds of girlfriends.

**Bill** I'm fifty-two!

**Pippa** Well, is there someone special?

**Bill** Oh yes.

**Pippa** Excellent! Who?

**Bill** (*Unable to answer Pippa's question*) Listen, have some wine. Would you like some? You'll have to use my glass.

**Pippa** Sure.

**Bill** (*Pouring wine*) I imagined what it would be like running into you again –

**Pippa** And here we are, in this beautiful place.

**Bill** (*Pouring wine into one of the other glasses for himself*) It was even better when the sun was still up.

**Pippa** Oh, it's glorious!

**Bill** Salute!

**Pippa** Salute!

**Bill** (*Avoiding Pippa's eyes*) You should have a look at the notes.

**Pippa** (*Moving to the table*) These they?

**Bill** Yes.

*Pippa looks at the notes, files and photos. Bill drinks wine and looks at the view, trying to pluck up the courage to declare his feelings. Bill will continue to drink steadily through the following.*

*As the sun has set, a fire that has been, almost imperceptibly, burning in the distance (out-front) has become more noticeable. It will grow in intensity towards the end of the scene, providing a strong light source.*

...(Looking out-front at the view) This is where the Common Market was born, you know. Down there in Messina. Twenty odd years ago. The six Foreign Ministers started the process of transforming their 'Coal and Steel' union... Ironic, isn't it? They made it down there, and they're ripping it off up here.

**Pippa** (*Reading from the notes, and eating*) 2,500 hectares. It's audacious. Gosh, this fish is delicious.

**Bill** (*Drinking*) You know what that fire is? Those farmers down there are burning peaches. Hundreds of thousands of beautiful peaches that no one wants. We subsidise farmers to grow them till they're perfectly ripe, then we subsidise them to destroy 'em.

**Pippa** What's the alternative? We dump the excess on the Third World and undercut the local farmer?

**Bill** The alternative is we subsidise European farmers not to use all their land. But because we also subsidise the most technologically advanced, production actually goes up!

**Pippa** But the peasants here were starving at the end of the war. CAP has at least guaranteed them a reasonable wage. Damn, I've got sardines on these satellite photos.

**Bill** (*Drinking*) The ones who run this farm are not what you'd call peasants.

**Pippa** You sound angry.

**Bill** No, I'm... It really is marvellous to see you again, Pippa.

**Pippa** Don't drink any more, Bill. You'll go pop.

**Bill** No, you're right. (*Drinks*)

*Bill moves towards the table and Pippa.*

...I hoped perhaps, moving to Europe, I'd find you again. And I have.

**Pippa** (*Moving away, taking a satellite photo with her, the better to see it in the setting sun*) The detail on these photos is amazing. (*Looks at Bill*) I don't think I've ever before heard you criticise even one aspect of the Project.

**Bill** It was easier to love from a distance.

**Pippa** Well, that's true of everything, isn't it.

**Bill** Working inside it has been a real eye opener. Even if Europe wasn't simply too diverse to regulate fairly, this is the most bizarre system. You know, we haven't actually been able to make one of these fraud cases stick. Paper olives in Thessaloniki. Barefaced bribes in Belgium. In Lincolnshire they worked out a rather tawdry little scheme to get paid twice for each cauliflower they grew. But in actually prosecuting these cases, we've been presented with one legal loophole after another. If I can't nail this one, Pippa...

**Pippa** It's only the Agriculture Policy. Don't take it personally.

**Bill** I'm not saying I don't support the principle.

**Pippa** Can you hear what you sound like? Denis Healey! My God, you'll be telling me in a minute there's no way to reform it because of the French veto.

**Bill** It's true!

**Pippa** But you're the most gung-ho federalist that ever existed. What happened?

**Bill** (*Drinking*) It feels wonderful to tell the truth at last! I don't dare say this kind of thing in Strasbourg. It must be you! Your presence!

**Pippa** The wine more like.

**Bill** (*Looks at his glass and shrugs*) You know, there was a report doing the rounds of the UK commission last month that said CAP costs more than it would cost to cover every square inch of Common Market land with top quality carpet!

**Pippa** What a very English sounding report.

**Bill** It was Danish asherly...*actually*.

**Pippa** Oh, Bill, you've turned into a curmudgeonly middle-aged bureaucrat. Once you were flush with idealistic youth. The idea was perfect. Details were of no concern.

**Bill** My God, you're right. Now all I see is details. Fiscal, mercantile, boring details. I bore myself with it.

**Pippa** Don't worry. It's a very English response to being in Europe. I've seen it again and again.

**Bill** CAP made a kind of sense when the French could play the war victim, but to continue to justify it now, she's reduced to playing the role of spoiled child.

**Pippa** I'm ashamed of you.

**Bill** (*Drinking*) Well, either *it* has to bend or *I* do. I've been about to snap, Pippa! Tell me about Matthias. Are you happy w –

**Pippa** Oh! You should come and visit us! It's fascinating there, Bill. You'd love it. Well, at least the Bill I used to know would. Before Britain joined the Common Market, Germany practically paid for CAP single-handedly, and they didn't complain. The thinking is completely different. The country itself has been a federation of states for more than a hundred years, so they're much more used to the give and take of federal politics. Westphalia doesn't insist on having its own currency; Bavaria doesn't want its own air force. They really can't understand why Britain drags its heels every time there's some initiative towards further integration.

**Bill** Well, as long as the German economy continues to boom. What happens if you hit a recession?

**Pippa** As long as my adopted countrymen know that, per capita, the Dutch are paying more into the pot, everything'll be alright!

**Bill** (*Drinking*) We're beginning to understand in England what the Welsh and the Scots have felt like for hundreds of years.

**Pippa** I'm not going to argue with you anymore. We haven't seen each other for so long.

**Bill** You're right. (*Summoning all his courage to broach the subject of his undimmed feelings*) Pippa –

**Pippa** Listen. Bill...? You don't think this could be a Mafia thing, do you?

**Bill** Mafia?

**Pippa** It's large-scale stuff. Could it be?

**Bill** The Mafia aren't interested in wheat, are they? Isn't it all cocaine and guns?

**Pippa** I hope so.

**Bill** Strasbourg wouldn't have sent us to...

**Pippa** No, you're right.

**Bill** (*Drinking*) They don't get involved with foreigners anyway. They just kill each other.

*Gaetano enters.*

**Gaetano** It's fantastic. It is like a maze. Hello.

**Pippa** Pippa Bettendorf. West Germany.

**Gaetano** Gaetano Tantillo. Italia. Piacere. [It's a pleasure.] It is an amazing structure. Odd alcoves, and rooms that suddenly end, or are cut into. Passages that lead nowhere. Landings halfway up a wall. The machinery for milling wheat is still there, underneath, but it is rusted. Totally useless.

**Bill** Where's Jan? Is he coming?

**Gaetano** I left him with that woman.

**Bill** (*Drinking*) Well, that's the last we'll see of him tonight.

**Pippa** (*Eating again*) God, this is fabulous. Is this swordfish that's wrapped round the sardines? Bill, you'll have a terrific hangover if you carry on at that rate.

**Gaetano** Ah! We are lucky. We do not have hangovers. Well, we do not have a word for it.

**Pippa** Listen – Gaetano is it – I was just asking Bill –

*Pippa is interrupted by the entrance of Ciccio [pronounced 'chee-cho']. He is friendly and welcoming.*

**Ciccio** Salutamu a tutti! [Good evening, everyone!]

**Gaetano** (*Offering his hand to shake*) Buona sera, Signore. Gaetano Tantillo.

**Pippa** Buona sera.

**Bill** (*Focussing his thoughts again on the task ahead*) Buona sera.

**Ciccio** (*Shaking hands with Gaetano*) Benvenuti! [Welcome!] Ciccio Cataldo. Prego accomodativi. [Please sit down].

**Gaetano** Chisti sunnu personi della Comunita Europea. Chista è Pippa della Germania e Bill della Grande Bretagna. This is Ciccio, the farmer. [These are the EEC personnel. This is Pippa from Germany. And this is Bill from England]

**Ciccio** Mi fa piacere, chi vuliti sapiri?

**Gaetano** He wants to know what we want to know.

**Bill** Well, first of all we want to know does he receive our guidelines and regulations?

**Gaetano** Aviti ricevutu u documentu – l'istruzione della Comunita Europea?

**Bill** We send them regularly –

**Ciccio** Sì, li ittau tutti.

**Gaetano** (*Surprised*) He throws them all away.

*The delegates are startled.*

**Bill** Why?

**Gaetano** Pirchi?

**Ciccio** Pirchi nun h'annu importanza.

**Gaetano** Because they're irrelevant.

*Ciccio's chumminess suddenly vanishes. He is stony hard; his previous friendliness now seems to have been an act.*

**Ciccio** Vinistivu cha pi dirimi chidru cha fare con la mia masseria?

**Gaetano** Have we come here to tell him how to run his farm?

**Pippa** (*Nervously*) No, not at all. We –

**Ciccio** Io vi dicu chistu. (*Pointing*) Dopo dru mare c'é il continente.

**Gaetano** Listen. Anything beyond that sea there is the continent.

**Pippa** You know who he reminds me of, Bill?

**Ciccio** Il continente è chidri chi viennu cha a dirimi chidru cha fare.

**Gaetano** The continent is anything that comes onto the island that tells him what to do.

**Pippa** The English.

**Ciccio** Non m'interessa si veni di Roma o Bruxelles.

**Gaetano** He doesn't care whether that is from Rome or Brussels.

**Ciccio** Si vinistivu cha pi essere li ma patruna, vuandri siti lu continente.

**Gaetano** If we come here and want to be his boss, we are the continent.

**Bill** (*To Pippa*) Yes! I see what you mean.

*Ciccio takes a revolver from his pocket and puts it on the table between him and the Delegation, but closer to him and pointing at them. Pippa emits a little scream. She and Gaetano are terrified.*

**Pippa** Let's get out of here.

**Gaetano** Don't do anything quickly.

**Pippa** What about the Dutch delegate?

**Bill** (*Drunk enough to be impractically indignant*) Now, wait a moment...

**Pippa** Be quiet, Bill.

*Ciccio lets the silence last. Then he becomes charming and expansive again.*

**Ciccio** Dicimi pirchi u documentu é sbagliatu?

**Gaetano** He asks what is wrong with his claim form?

**Bill** He is claying for things... He is *claiming* for things he is not growing.

**Pippa** (*To Bill*) Don't push it.

**Bill** No! This won't do! (*To Gaetano*) Tell him.

**Gaetano** Tu riclami cosi cha non cresci. [You're claiming for things you're not growing.]

**Ciccio** Non m'interessa un cazzo. (*Gestures with the back of his fingers flicked from throat to chin*)

**Gaetano** He doesn't give a fuck about that.

**Pippa** We should agree with whatever he says and get out of here.

**Gaetano** I agree. We mustn't argue with him.

**Pippa** Tell him we'll reconsider our position and come back another time. Tell him we see his point, and if he'd be kind enough to –

**Gaetano** Sì, lu capiscinù – [Yes, they understand – ]

**Ciccio** (*Interrupting aggressively*) Ascunta. Per mia chisti regole nun cuntanu.

**Gaetano** He says he sees our rules as optional.

**Bill** (*Recklessly, thinking that the argument is worth winning*) That is beside the point. This is the kind of reasoning that –

**Pippa** Bill! Enough! Stop. Don't provoke him, for God's sake.

**Bill** Why the hell not? What have I got to lose?

**Pippa** (*Confused and frustrated*) You're being a fool. You always were a fool.

**Bill** Well, then. (*Definitively*) He can shoot me if he wants. I don't care anymore.

**Pippa** At this moment I don't care if he shoots you either. But I care a whole lot about me.

**Bill** (*To Gaetano*) Tell him, it's not important what he thinks about the Regulations –

**Pippa** You're the most naïve person I've ever known.

**Bill** But it's important he obeys them.

**Ciccio** Chi dissi?

**Gaetano** He's asking what Bill is saying.

**Bill** Tell him.

**Gaetano** Better not, I think.

**Pippa** Don't tell him!

**Bill** (*To Gaetano*) I order you, as head of Delegation, to tell him what I said!

**Pippa** Oh, for God's sake!

**Gaetano** (*Nervously*) Chidru chi vossia pensa, un ciavé importanza. [What you think is not important.]

*Ciccio, amazed that someone would be this impertinent, goes up to Bill, inspecting him closely, menacingly.*

**Ciccio** Cuéstu maniaco del lavoro? Cuestu stacanovista.

**Gaetano** He says who is this workaholic? This 'Puritan', perhaps?

**Ciccio** Oh come suffriti vuandri du Nord!

**Gaetano** Oh, how you Northerners suffer!

**Ciccio** Con i vostri forte apparenza e silenziose emozioni.

**Gaetano** With your stoic nature and your silent emotions.

**Pippa** (*Finally getting it, to Bill*) Do you mean to tell me that all these years...

*Ciccio picks up the gun and aims it at the Delegates.*

...(About the gun) Oh my Christ!

**Gaetano** Minghia! [Fuck me!]

**Ciccio** Allora, non sappiti cu cu iucati?

**Gaetano** Do you not realise what you are playing with?

**Ciccio** Un sugniu sulu ia.

**Gaetano** It is not just me.

**Ciccio** Nun putiti changiare mai li cosi cha.

**Gaetano** You will never change the way things are here.

**Ciccio** Nuautri aviemu amici in tutti pusti.

**Gaetano** We have friends everywhere. (*Understanding Ciccio's implication, that they have stumbled into a Mafia situation*) Oh my God.

**Pippa** Oh, no.

**Gaetano** We have to be very, very careful.

**Ciccio** Vini putiti iri, si mi diti cha viditi u frumientu crisci nella mia terra. Dumila cinquientu ettere di frumientu.

**Gaetano** He says we are free to leave if we agree that we see wheat growing on his farm. 2,500 hectares of wheat.

**Bill** Now, wait a moment. This intimidation can't go unreported.

**Pippa** For Christ's sake, Bill, he's going to kill us.

**Bill** If we just ignore this kind of threat, then the whole of CAP is undermined. Next thing, the entire European project –

**Gaetano** This is something for the state. This is beyond our remit.

**Pippa** Yes, we can see wheat. For God's sake. Tell him.

**Gaetano** (*To Ciccio*) Sì sì, sicuramente. Nuaudri vidiemu u frumientu. [Yes, yes. Absolutely. We can see wheat.]

**Pippa** We can see wheat. Wheat as far as the eye can see.

**Gaetano** (*To Ciccio*) Frumientu, sì, frumientu. [Wheat, sure, wheat.]

*Aware that Bill is the troublemaker, Ciccio holds the gun to Bill's head.*

**Ciccio** É chidru? [And him?]

**Pippa** Just say it, Bill.

**Bill** I want my objection registered.

**Pippa** It's registered! Now, for God's sake... You know as well as I do, the Fraud Commission's just Public Relations pap. Tell him whatever he wants to hear.

**Bill** (*Appalled*) Public relations pap?

**Gaetano** Listen to me very carefully, Bill. You cannot single handedly –

**Bill** Someone's got to stand up to them!

**Pippa** Is it worth more to you than your life?

**Bill** At this moment I don't believe I have a life.

**Pippa** Absurd little man!

**Gaetano** Bill. Please.

*Ciccio cocks the gun, still aiming it at Bill's head. Pippa screams.*

**Pippa** Just say it!

**Bill** (*Breathing hard*) Only because you ask me to, Pippa. (*After a moment*)  
Ok. (*In agony*) I see wheat. 2,500 hectares of wheat.

*Momentarily, the colour and noise of fire floods the stage.*

*With blackout comes the sound of the fire louder and louder.*

To read the entire play, please contact Tim directly on  
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