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Family Plays

GAIN: A MYSTERY

Drama adapted by I.E. Clark

Based on the story by Lord Byron



CAIN: A MYSTERY

This one act play is an adaptation of *Cain: A Mystery* by Lord Byron, whose long and talkative script in blank verse may not be entertaining in today's theatres. This acting script is in prose form with Byron's original language unchanged except for the archaic second-person pronouns, "thee" and "thou," and verbs like "believest" and "shewest." The director's script retains the poetic form and provides background on the play.

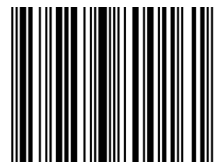
Drama. Adapted by I.E. Clark. Based on the story by Lord Byron. Cast: 5m., 3w. or 4m., 4w. Byron's tense drama about the family of Adam and Eve is as modern as today's tragic newspaper headlines. It depicts the world's first family as a family of today: Cain as the first youthful rebel, and Lucifer as the first false friend who steps into the gap between parents and offspring, supplying the son with answers when the parents lack the patience and the understanding to give him answers. He also provides excitement—in the form of a trip. This adaptation provides ample opportunities for imaginative direction, creative acting, and exciting use of lights, sound and special effects. The trip scene, especially, lends itself to psychedelic lighting. This is without a doubt one of the most exciting plays that can be found to relate to life in today's turbulent America—it may provide some answers for your audiences. Impressive for college and high-school contests. *Simple outdoor set and costumes. A director's script is available that contains drawings of costumes and set, details on all technical aspects of staging, and discussion of characterization, plot and theme. It also suggests the complete blocking and full stage directions for all movement and business. Approximate running time: 35 minutes. Code: CKI.*

Family Plays

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Cain: A Mystery

George Gordon, Lord Byron's

GAIN : *A Mystery*

Adapted
into a one-act play

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.” – *Genesis ch. iii, ver. i.*

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311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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I.E. CLARK

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(CAIN: A MYSTERY)

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NOTES ON THE PLAY

Most of the great authors are great because their works are timeless. If you had never heard of Lord Byron, you might guess that this play was written this year.

Byron's picture of the First Family is the picture of any typical family—today, yesterday, or when families began. Adam and Eve are wrapped up in their own affairs. Adam recently lost his job (when he was expelled from Paradise) and is unhappy with the menial work he now must do to support his family. Eve thinks about her Sin now and then but is even more concerned with the hour-to-hour and day-to-day tasks of managing her household.

Adam and Eve have two sons. Abel is sweet, hard-working, obedient—the apple (oops, perhaps “apple” shouldn't be used here) of his parents' eyes. Cain is independent, imaginative, curious—the kind of child who can grow into a highly successful adult if his parents guide him wisely.

Most parents don't guide their children wisely, as nearly any teacher can tell you. Adam and Eve are typical. They dote on Abel because he is obedient and gives them no trouble. They really don't like Cain very much because his curiosity causes problems and because he asks questions they don't want to hear. And so they give him the universal answers: “Shut up—I'm busy now”; “Why can't you be like your brother?”; “You can't do that because I said so, that's why!” Child abuse takes many forms, and neglect is one of them. So is indifference.

Most children with curious minds hungry to learn about the world around them will turn elsewhere when they can't get answers at home. And there is always somebody ready to step in and offer substitutes for parental love and guidance. Substitutes like dangerous adventure, narcotics, crime. The “friend in need” who comes to Cain is Lucifer, and Byron's play shows the answers that Lucifer provides.

The original play might be called a closet drama—too long and talkative to be entertaining on stage. But this one-act adaptation moves rapidly and emotionally from Cain's rejection by his parents to his encounter with Lucifer to his slaying of Cain. Byron's original language is unchanged except for the archaic second person pronouns, “thee,” “thou,” and their concomitant verbs like “believest” and “shewest.” Since modern translations of the Bible have largely discarded these forms, modern theatregoers find them disruptive and confusing. The play is in blank verse. This acting script is printed in prose form as an aid to performers. The Director's Production Script (prompt book) retains the poetic form and provides background information about the play—where Cain's and Abel's wives came from, for example (more information on the next page).

Byron depicts the world's first murder—mankind's first experience with death—with passion, suspense, and emotion. And with a message to all parents everywhere.

CAIN: A Mystery

This one-act adaptation of Lord Byron's play was presented for the first time at the 17th annual Schulenburg, Texas, Theatre Festival on April 10, and 11, 1970, with the following cast:

ADAM	Donnie Heinrich
EVE	Joan Schulze
CAIN	Sheldon Lippman
ADAH, <i>Cain's wife</i>	Candi Clark
ABEL	Ronnie Holz
ZILLAH, <i>Abel's wife</i>	Jan Pratka
LUCIFER	Tim Patrick
*ANGEL OF THE LORD.	Barbara Staha

Scene: The world without Paradise,
Sunrise to Sunset.



*This role may be played by a male or female.

**Everything You Always
Wanted to Know About
Directing Plays . . .
But Didn't Know Who to Ask**

Stage directions in this playscript have been kept to a minimum for a specific reason: Many directors want their actors and actresses to create their own characterizations without help from the play publisher. An imaginative cast member often introduces exciting bits of business and line readings if he is made to do his own thinking. But if printed stage directions do his thinking for him, his own creativity is nearly always stifled.

Some directors, on the other hand, are so deluged with details of publicity, ticket sales, and house management that they can never find time to devote full attention to staging, blocking, and characterization. For these harried directors, we provide a Director's Production Script (prompt book) loaded with fullstage directions which show every action of every actor in detail.

The Production Script provides the blocking for each scene. It contains drawings and information on costumes, scenery, props, lighting, make-up, and other technical aspects of the play. And it discusses the characterization of each role.

To save the director even more time, the Production Script gives carefully researched details on the history, background, and significance where applicable.

With the help of the Production Script the inexperienced director can present a praiseworthy show.

But our Production Scripts are a dream-come-true for the experienced director, too. Experienced directors know how many hours of research must be spent to stage a worthwhile play successfully. Although the experienced director may decide to ignore many of the stage directions and other suggestions, he will find that the Production Script saves hours of his valuable time by supplying authenticated details of costume, set, period, etc. — the fruits of extensive research into the history of the play, the period in which it is laid, and the circumstances or environment under which it was written.

Nearly all of our Production Scripts are the work of the director who successfully staged the play.

CAIN : *A Mystery*

Adapted by I. E. Clark

[The curtain opens revealing the land outside the gates of Paradise. Several jagged rocks punctuate the landscape, some large enough to stand on and sit on. On one side of the stage is a lonely cypress tree, drooping and dark with gloom. On the other side, in the background, are two or three small, scraggly, forlorn apple trees, with fallen fruit on the ground beneath them. It is sunrise. (See the introduction to the 'Stage Magic' Production Script for a detailed plan for an appropriate set.)

ADAM and EVE, ADAH, ABEL, and ZILLAH are kneeling in a semicircle, offering morning prayers. There is more loudness than fervor in the prayers of Adam and Eve; Abel, however, is sincere and devout in his worship of the Lord.

Sitting on a rock apart from them, CAIN is oblivious of the activity of the rest of his family. He is busy trying to balance an apple on a stick – perhaps the world's first game.]

ADAM. God, the Eternal! Infinite! All-Wise!

ALL. [Except Cain] All hail!

[They bow low. CAIN at this moment drops the apple he is playing with and laughs as he picks it up. EVE raises her head and looks at him; she touches ADAM and directs his attention to Cain.]

ABEL. [Raising his arms to Heaven] God, the Eternal! Parent of all things!

ALL. [Except Cain] All hail! All hail!

[ABEL, ADAH, and ZILLAH bow low. ADAM and EVE, engrossed with watching Cain, say the words and automatically make a partial bow. When the obeisance is completed, ADAM rises and crosses to Cain.]

ADAM. Son Cain, my first-born, wherefore are you silent?

CAIN. Why should I speak?

ADAM. To pray.

CAIN. Have you not prayed?

ADAM. We have, most fervently.

CAIN. And loudly. I have heard you.

ADAM. So will God, I trust.

ABEL. Amen!

ADAM. But you, my eldest-born, are silent still.

CAIN. I have nothing to ask.

ADAM. And nothing to thank for?

CAIN. No.

ADAM. Do you not live?

CAIN. Must I not die?

EVE. Alas! The fruit of our forbidden tree begins to fall.

ADAM. And we must gather it again. Oh, God! why didst thou plant the tree of knowledge?

CAIN. And wherefore plucked you not the tree of life? You might have then defied Him.

ADAM. Oh, my son! Blaspheme not; these are serpents' words.

CAIN. Why not? The snake spoke *truth*; it *was* the tree of knowledge; it *was* the tree of life; knowledge is good, and life is good; and how can both be evil?

EVE. My boy! You speak now as I spoke in sin, before your birth; — let me not see renewed my misery in yours. I have repented.

ADAM. [*Looking for a way to bring this conversation to an end, he claps his hands and speaks cheerfully as he motions his family to follow him*] Our orisons completed, let us hence, each to his task of toil.

EVE. Cain, my son, behold your father cheerful and resigned and do as he does.

[*Exeunt ADAM and EVE. ABEL and ZILLAH, hand in hand, cross to Cain, who stands with head bowed. It is not in Cain's character to resign; he wants answers, but his parents do not furnish them.*]

ZILLAH. Will you not, my brother?

ABEL. Why do you wear this gloom upon your brow . . . which can avail you nothing, save to rouse the Eternal anger?

ADAH. My beloved Cain, will you frown even on me?

CAIN. No, Adah! no; I want to be alone a little while. Abel, I'm sick at heart; but it will pass. I'll follow you at once.

ABEL. The peace of God be on your spirit, brother!

[*Exeunt ABEL, ZILLAH, and ADAH. CAIN strolls around the stage, tossing the apple in agitation.*]

CAIN. And this is life! — toil! And wherefore should *I* toil? — because my father could not keep his place in Eden. What had *I* done in this? — I was unborn . . . I sought not to be born . . . nor love the state to which that birth has brought me. They have but one answer to all questions: “ ’Twas *His* will, and *He* is good.” How know I that? I judge but by the fruits — [*looks at apple*] and they are bitter — which I must feed on for a fault not mine. [*He throws the apple offstage — and sees Lucifer, who catches the apple (offstage). CAIN takes a step backward.*] Whom have we here? — a shape like to the angels, yet of a sterner and sadder aspect. Why do I quake? He’s coming.

LUCIFER. [*Enter, holding the apple*] Mortal!

CAIN. Spirit! Who are you?

LUCIFER. Master of spirits. [*Smiling at Cain’s apparent confusion.*] Poor clay! I know the thoughts of dust, and feel for it, and with you.

CAIN. How! You know my thoughts?

LUCIFER. ’Tis your immortal part which speaks within you.

CAIN. [*Drawn to him, fascinated by his appearance, his eyes, and his words*] What immortal part? You speak of knowledge which I do not know, but which I thirst to know.

LUCIFER. Nothing can quench the mind, if the mind will be itself and center of surrounding things — ’tis made to sway. Dare you to look on — Death?

CAIN. He has not yet been seen.

LUCIFER. But must be undergone.

CAIN. My father says he is something dreadful and my mother weeps when he’s named; and Abel lifts his eyes to heaven, and Zillah casts hers to the earth, and sighs a prayer; and Adah looks on me, and speaks not.

LUCIFER. And thou?

CAIN. Thoughts unspeakable crowd in my breast to burning, when I hear of this almighty Death, who is, it seems, inevitable. Could I wrestle with him? I wrestled with the lion when a boy.

LUCIFER. It has no shape.

CAIN. And yet I fear it — fear I know not what!

LUCIFER. And I, who know all things, fear nothing. See what is true knowledge?

CAIN. [*Eagerly*] Wilt thou teach me all?

LUCIFER. Ay, upon one condition.

CAIN. Name it.

LUCIFER. [*Standing on a rock, imperially*] That you fall down and worship me – your Lord.

CAIN. You are not the Lord my father worships.

LUCIFER. No.

CAIN. His equal?

LUCIFER. [*Steps down from rock*] No; – I have nought in common with Him!

CAIN. [*Earnestly seeking answers*] I never as yet have bowed unto my father's God; why should I bow to you?

LUCIFER. He who bows not to Him *has* bowed to me!

CAIN. [*Eagerly – here at last is someone who answers his questions*] Let me but be taught the mystery of my being.

LUCIFER. Follow where I will lead you.

CAIN. [*Eagerly, boyishly*] I will.

ADAH. [*Enter*] My husband, I have come for thee.

CAIN. [*Indicating Lucifer*] Don't you see?

ADAH. I see an angel; we have seen many.

CAIN. But he is not like the angels we have seen.

ADAH. Are there, then, others?

CAIN. I must go away with him.

ADAH. And leave us?

CAIN. Yes.

ADAH. And *me*?

CAIN. [*Faces her, losing some of his determination to follow Lucifer*] Beloved Adah!

ADAH. Let me go with you.

LUCIFER. No, she must not.

ADAH. [*Leaning toward Lucifer*] Who are you who steps between heart and heart?

CAIN. He is a god.

ADAH. How know you?

CAIN. He speaks like a god!

ADAH. So did the serpent, and it lied.

LUCIFER. [*Holding the apple out to Adah, temptingly, and pierc-*

ing her with his eyes] You err, dear Adah! — was not the tree that of knowledge?

ADAH. Ay — to our eternal sorrow.

LUCIFER. And yet that grief is knowledge — so he lied not. [*LUCIFER continues to charm Adah with his eyes and his hands. ADAH fights hard, but nevertheless she is drawn irresistibly toward him closer and closer, as she speaks.*]

ADAH. Cain! walk not with this spirit. In his eye there is a fastening attraction which fixes my fluttering eyes on his . . . [*Much against her will, her hands reach out for the apple; she tries to restrain them, but in vain.*] Cain! Cain! — [*LUCIFER places the apple in her hand.*] Save me from him! [*CAIN rushes to her and draws her away. They embrace.*]

CAIN. What scares my Adah? This is no ill spirit.

ADAH. He is not God — nor God's, since he loves not. [*She throws the apple from her.*] Oh, Cain! Choose love.

CAIN. I choose my Adah; but I love nought else.

ADAH. Our parents?

CAIN. Did they love us when they snatched from the tree that which has driven us all from Paradise?

ADAH. We were not born then —

CAIN. I think the tree of knowledge has not fulfilled its promise: — if they sinned, at least they ought to have known all things that are of knowledge — and the mystery of death. What do they know? — that they are miserable. What need of snakes and fruits to teach us that?

ADAH. I am not wretched, Cain, and if you were happy —

CAIN. [*Throws Adah from him*] Then be happy all alone — I will have nought to do with happiness which humbles me and mine.

LUCIFER. [*To Adah*] Alas those tears! Could you but know what oceans will be shed —

ADAH. By me?

LUCIFER. By all.

ADAH. What all?

LUCIFER. The million millions — the all-peopled earth — the over-peopled Hell, of which your bosom is the germ.

ADAH. O Cain! This spirit curses us.

CAIN. Let him say on; him will I follow.

ADAH. Whither?

LUCIFER. [*Removing his mantle and holding it out to Cain, hypnotically. CAIN goes to him*] To a place whence he shall come back to thee in an hour; but in that hour see things of many days.

ADAH. Cain! [*She tries to follow, but LUCIFER motions her down with his hand. She slumps behind a rock as her voice fades out.*] My husband! Cain

[*A change in lighting may serve as a transition to the next scene; or the lights may remain unchanged while CAIN and LUCIFER mount rocks and appear to be flying. The flight may be treated realistically as a physical journey, or psychedelically as a mental or hallucinogenic "trip." Strobe lighting, weird music, and other special multi-media effects are ideally suited to the following scene. See the 'Stage Magic' Production Script for detailed suggestions. If desired, the scene may be played "straight" with no special effects at all. LUCIFER begins the trip by placing his mantle about Cain's shoulders; the mantle may symbolically serve as wings.*]

CAIN. [*Scarcely believing what is happening to him*] I tread of air, and sink not; yet I fear to sink . . .

LUCIFER. Have faith in me, and sink not! Doubt – and perish! Fly with me o'er the gulf of space, and I will show the history of past, and present, and of future worlds. Behold! Is it not glorious?

CAIN. Oh, thou beautiful mass of still increasing lights!

LUCIFER. Would you behold things mortal or immortal?

CAIN. The things I have not seen, nor ever shall – the mysteries of death.

LUCIFER. Away, then! on our mighty wings.

CAIN. Oh! how we cleave the blue!! [*If lighting effects are used, the stage should gradually assume a weird, ghostly aspect.*] But the lights fade from me fast . . . All here seems dark and dreadful.

LUCIFER. You seek to behold death, and dead things? Behold!

CAIN. Enormous vapors roll apart – what's this?

[*The scene becomes deathly silent; the lights brighten but retain their ghostly character.*]

LUCIFER. Enter!

CAIN. [*Stepping down from the rock*] Can I return?