

RAISING CAIN

A Surrealist Pantomime in Five Short Acts

By Bernard Josephson

ACT ONE

THE ENCOUNTER

A conservatively dressed, middle-aged, banker-type boards a crowded bus, sporting a natty cane he has never been without. It happens there is only one unoccupied seat on this bus, next to an exceedingly unkempt derelict. Reluctantly, he takes the seat. Looking askance at the derelict beside him, he is suddenly thunderstruck by the man's resemblance to himself. He could be his identical twin, except for his filthy dress and, far worse, he bears an inconceivably hideous mark on his face. The hero, unnerved by this frightening, outrageous coincidence, feels hatred arising in his heart. He follows the individual off the bus with ill-intent but loses him in the crowd. The loathing for this unkempt *Doppelganger* and this hideous mark nevertheless grows until our hero can stand it no longer. He resolves to take action.

ACT TWO

THE CONTRACT

He ventures into an unfamiliar, run-down part of the city. He walks through the streets, recoiled at the weird, untidy characters he encounters. Eventually he finds two goons and contracts with them to do away with the derelict. Our hero uses a photograph of himself to identify the derelict, drawing with a pen the hideous mark on his own face in the photograph.

Satisfied with himself our hero returns to his part of the city.

ACT THREE

RAZOR OF TRUTH

He enters a barber shop and orders a shave. The barber, whose name is Justus, lathers him up and in the process our hero falls asleep. The barber strops the razor blade and proceeds to shave him. As this takes place, we see the two goons passing by outside on their mission. They peer in the barber shop window and then move on. When the shave is complete, our hero wakes up and finds the barber staring at him in horror. Looking at himself in the mirror, our hero sees that the hideous mark is now on his face. He gets up and flees in horror.

ACT FOUR

THE FLIGHT

The hero runs through the streets hiding the mark with his hands. We see the goons catch sight of him and chase with heavy clubs in hand. Time and time again he manages to escape their clutches but only just barely. He begins to tire and the goons start closing in.

ACT FIVE

BREAD OF MERCY

At the last minute, our hero ducks into a bakery that happens to stand right next to the barber shop. It is called Mary's Bakery and is known for producing the finest of breads. A woman stands behind the counter. She sees the goons approaching outside, and grasping our hero's plight, directs him to the room at the rear of the store. In the back, he climbs over boxes desperate for a place to hide. He trips and falls into a large flour bin and is knocked unconscious. He lies there all covered with white flour.

The two goons enter the back of the store. They spot him in the flour bin as he is regaining consciousness, unaware of their presence. He brushes the flour from his face and then sees them staring down at him.

Suddenly they back away, confused. He rubs his face: the mark is gone. He commands them to go away and the goons slink off. Our hero emerges from the bakery a new man.

On the street, he spies a derelict. He runs up to him and discovers that this creature is not like him at all. Perhaps there never was a derelict that looked like him.

Happy now and carefree, he passes by the bakery. The lady is standing in the doorway and he doffs his hat. She smiles back at him. A few steps later he passes the barber shop. The barber too is in the doorway of his shop. The barber nods in recognition and our hero greets him, raising his cane.

