

HEAVEN'S DISTANT SHORE

by

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DIALOGUE SAMPLE

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CHARACTERS (in sample)

DAVID, male, early 30s, born-again missionary from Chicago, converted from Judaism. He wears a light linen shirt, khakis and sandals.

RAYNALDO (RAY), male, 50s, from all over the U.S.A., ex-biker, now born-again Christian missionary. He wears a t-shirt, beat-up jeans and boots.

NOUHAK, male, 30s, must be older than David, a soldier in the Laotian People's Army. His fatigues are well worn, but he wears sandals, not boots.

CHARACTERS (not in sample)

CAROLINE, female, early 30s, another missionary, from Corpus Christi, born into the faith. She also wears a linen shirt and long, natural-fiber pants and sandals.

SETTING

A bamboo shed at a compound in northern Laos. There is a single makeshift plywood door, with a small window in it. Outside and unseen, a narrow walkway leads to a ladder to the ground. The floor is made of bamboo planks. An iron loop is imbedded in the planks. Two sleeping mats are on the ground. It's the end of the rainy season, November, 1999. This is during the "Visit Laos" years (1999-2000), a government program to encourage tourism to the country.

NOTE ON DIALOGUE

Slashes (/) in dialogue indicate where the following speaker should interrupt the preceding speaker.

Italicized, bracketed text is the English translation of dialogue in Lao.

Paragraph breaks within a character's speech indicate a short silence.

(*Beat.*): Indicates a short silence between the lines of characters

(*Pause.*): Indicates a longer silence

Scene 1

(Afternoon of the first day.

DAVID and RAY on mats. Their ankles are padlocked to either end of the chain, which runs through the iron loop in the floor.)

DAVID

We shouldn't argue.

RAY

You're right.

DAVID

Let's just shake hands and forget about it.

RAY

Yeah, peace, friend, peace.

(They shake hands.)

RAY *(cont'd)*

[groans]

DAVID

Are you all right?

RAY

I used to smoke like you, 'fore I came 'round. My old lady Garland couldn't stop. I'm only meanin' to help you -

DAVID

Yeah, well...don't...

(NOUHAK appears at the door. He looks in. RAY clenches his fists together to pray. DAVID bows his head. Long beat. NOUHAK exits.)

RAY

What you think's goin' on out there?

DAVID

I don't know.

(Beat.)

RAY

I do. I sure as hell do.

DAVID

We'll be okay, don't worry about it.

RAY

I wanna hear your testimony.

Lemme hear your / testimony.

DAVID

Now?

RAY

I just / wanna hear -

DAVID

Okay, sure, no problem, no problem...

(He stands. He looks toward the door.)

DAVID *(cont'd)*

I'm gonna do this not like I'm actually in service, you know, because of -- okay.

(He delivers this by rote.)

DAVID *(cont'd)*

I want you all to know something. Jesus is coming soon. So, soon you must come to Him. I know that it's hard for you to come to Jesus. It was hard for me. I was a Jew. I turned my back on my family, my culture, and my people. I turned my back on my father for Our Father and His Son. / You can do it. Repent your sins, accept Jesus -

RAY

I tell you somethin', I got no interest in what bullshit speech you tell 'em -- the whitewash Christians -- back home. I wanna hear about how Jesus came into your heart.

(Beat. DAVID pulls a near-empty pack of cigarettes from his sock. He puts one in his mouth.)

DAVID

It's like I told you before.

RAY

You afraid of somethin', friend?

DAVID

Cancer...but I like how they taste.

RAY

Friend, that's what I mean, now why you even put that in your mouth if Jesus's in your heart? It's impure. I mean - how many times to I got to tell you? Romans, Chapter thirteen, Verse fourteen.

DAVID

Yes, but Romans Fourteen-Seventeen clarifies that -

RAY

First Corinthians Six-Nineteen.

DAVID

"Body is a temple" yes, referring to sexual sin. Ephesians Six-Twelve: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, / against the authorities, against-"

RAY

First Corinthians Six-Nineteen! First Corinthians Six-Nineteen!

DAVID

I thought we weren't gonna argue...

(NOUHAK comes to the door again. DAVID hides his cigarette. RAY groans, clenches his hands and prays. Long beat. Then DAVID tries to cross to the door. He can't reach it because his length of chain isn't long enough.)

DAVID (*cont'd*)

Can you give me a little slack?

RAY

Hey, I'm bein' nice. / You're the one don't -

DAVID

No, stand by the loop-thing for a minute.

(MORE)

(RAY moves closer to the eye. DAVID pulls on his end of the chain to gain slack. Stretching, he's within arm's reach of the door.)

DAVID self-consciously gives the "nop", the traditional Lao greeting: palms placed together at chest level -- similar to Christian prayer -- not touching his body. He bows slightly. Then he reveals two cigarettes.)

DAVID (*cont'd, to NOUHAK:*)
Sa bai dee [*hello*]. Um am I saying that...sa bai dee?

NOUHAK
[*chuckles*]

DAVID
Heh...um...a light? I don't know what -- a light? No harm.

(DAVID puts the cigarettes through the small window. NOUHAK puts them in his mouth, lights them with a match, and takes a drag. NOUHAK puts one back through the window. DAVID takes it.)

DAVID (*cont'd*)
Thanks. Uh...kop jai [*thank you*]. Kop jai. "Thank you," kop jai. Thank you. Kop jai.

NOUHAK
Baw pen nyang [*You're welcome*].

(NOUHAK exits. DAVID smokes, turns to RAY. RAY is staring at him.)

DAVID (*re: NOUHAK*)
See? Nice guy.

Look ah...point taken about the smoking. I'm sorry. I'll tell you what: I promise that if I get some kind of sign -- a shower of light or whatever -- something that says, "Thou shalt not smoke," then I'll stop. Until then, let's just agree to disagree. 'Kay?

C'mon, Matthew five-nine. We shouldn't argue.

RAY
Friend...I'm concerned. You got / me concerned.

DAVID
We're in the same boat here.

RAY
Are you?

DAVID
We're -

RAY
The same boat?

DAVID
Yes.

RAY
Are you?

DAVID
Didn't I just answer that?

RAY
Don't look to me like where you're sitting. You look like you're sitting pretty. Your buddy will take care of you.

DAVID
He gave me a light.

RAY
And what'll you give him tomorrow?

DAVID
Okay look - !

Okay, okay...let me explain: you know what's going on out there? They're coming up with ways to scare us. Turn us on each other. That's part of their game.

RAY
This ain't a game.

DAVID
Okay I know you didn't get any kind of orientation or anything, but this is par for the frickin' course. Same thing happened to Caroline and me in India. You want testimony? Here: we were in Gujarat working on a drainage project -- those people don't know from adequate drainage -

RAY
You lordin' over me, college boy?

DAVID
What? / I'm not -

RAY

I don't care where you been.

DAVID

No, I -- that's not what I'm saying, listen. Caroline and I were -- we're in the market buying snake gourd -- crazy frickin' vegetable, you ever seen snake gourd?

Not important. We're in a public market. This gang of like six Hindu guys grab us in broad daylight in front of a crowd. Shouting, waving swords. Scary. But that was the point. Scare us, so we'd get them money. That was the game. The scare for the money. Same thing here. They're gonna do things to scare us. I predict...

(He pretends to have a vision:)

DAVID *(cont'd)*

Oh, I'm getting a message from the beyond...I predict that these soldiers will YELL AT US! They will POINT THEIR GUNS AT US AND SHOOT OVER OUR HEADS! They will MOVE US AROUND FOR NO REASON! This concludes our MESSAGE FROM THE BEYOND!

(He laughs. RAY doesn't.)

DAVID *(cont'd)*

Trying to lighten the atmosphere.

RAY

You make your jokes. I'll trust Jesus and Kyle.

DAVID

Look, Kyle? You trust Kyle? Kyle brought Caroline and me in for this. We've been in this -- exactly this -- before. Two years in India. Kyle seriously needed us. I mean he wasn't even affiliated with any group or church / or group. He needed -

RAY

Friend, there's only one kind of experience I need, and that's how to smell bullshit, that's all the college I need, a class in bullshit detection from the school of hard knocks. I call bullshit on you.

DAVID

I am not bullshitting.

RAY

It's all right. We're all bullshitters, friend, each of us.

(MORE)

RAY (*cont'd*)

Except Jesus. Jesus and Kyle, the rest of us are bullshit. My bullshit I done on this Earth could bury me. What I done to Garland...

Friend, if you keep Jesus in your heart, you and me will stand together before His throne, when the angel reads our names from the Book of Life. Remember why we're here. Remember? We're here for Jesus.

DAVID

Yes, but also to teach English.

RAY

Friend, I need you to focus. This look like a classroom?

DAVID

If we'd taken the river taxi, we'd be in a classroom. I told Caroline. I don't know why she -- water under the bridge, I guess, but just so you know, if we'd stuck with the tourists on the river taxis like I said, we'd be fine.

But it doesn't matter, 'cause we are fine.

RAY

The girl -- Caroline -- said you lost your faith.

DAVID

What?

No.

RAY

No?

You tell me how Jesus came into your heart.

DAVID

He had a court order.

RAY

You know when fellas make jokes? When they're scared. You're scared, boy you're glowin' from it. [groans]

(He bends over, in pain.)

DAVID

You didn't -- you didn't eat those fried bananas, or whatever it was they were selling on the bus?

RAY (*to the door, shouting:*)
 JESUS IS COMING! HIS TRUTH / CAN'T BE STOPPED BY YOU!

DAVID
 WHOA WHOA WHOA whoa whoa okay that's exactly what I need you
 not to do.

RAY
 You gonna stand by me at His throne, friend? You gonna let
 them do it to us?

DAVID
 They're not gonna do anything we don't make them do.

RAY (*in pain:*)
 We made 'em do it already. Our existin'. The Truth.
 Persecuted for it. Let 'em. Let 'em. Bring it. Right?
 'Cause I will too. Bring it all down on them.

DAVID
 Okay, okay, okay, listen: I need you -- I need you to not go
 off on them again. Okay? / Okay?

RAY
 I look like I'm goin' off?

DAVID
 You almost gave 'em a reason to on the bus!

Okay, I'm sorry but let that go, you know? Romans twelve-
 twenty. You know? Okay?

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him," etcetera.

(*RAY recovers from the pain.*)

RAY
 Yeah. I was weak on the bus. They had those faces, like
 the pigs always do. But I confess. I struck a man, that
 wasn't right.

But that one punk disrespected me -

DAVID
 I know, yes.

RAY
 You're right. You're right, friend. Keep that young eye on
 me, so I don't lose sight of what we're here for again.
 We'll get each other through. [groans]

DAVID

You ate those fried bananas, didn't you?

RAY

I gotta take a dump.

DAVID

So take a dump.

(He indicates the bucket.)

DAVID *(cont'd)*

They provided a facility at no charge.

RAY

That ain't a facility. That ain't even a Port-a-Potty.

DAVID

Look, you're obviously holding back a whopper. I'm gonna use the bucket too.

RAY

I offer the pain to our Lord and Savior. [groans] I seen worse before I found Jesus. [groans]

(He doubles over again.)

DAVID

C'mon. C'mon man.

(He helps RAY to the bucket.)

RAY

Please tell me your testimony. How'd Jesus come into your heart?

DAVID

You know the funny thing about this place, the birds. It's like supposed to be prison here but -- outside -- they've got the most incredible jungle bird songs I've ever heard.

RAY

Friend. It'll help, please.

(During the following, he helps RAY get his pants down and sit on the bucket.)

DAVID

It wasn't like...it wasn't anything interesting, a wave of love or a -- a shower of light. I just went into a church once. Okay? I just felt like going in, and so I did.

RAY

What kind of day was it?

DAVID

I don't know, a rainy day, I / don't know.

RAY

What kind of rain? The hard heavy kind? A good piss?

DAVID

I don't know.

RAY

I remember mine, crystal clear. I was fucked up on all kinds of shit, but I still remember the way the air smelled...like burnt toast...the heat of the sun on my arms. In the depths of that, midday on highway eighteen, the pigs found me, I was driven bat-shit crazy by the drugs and the drink and even the smokes -- yes -- and the despair of my sorry soul, but I remember the light, the blessed glow right above me. My eyes rolled back. My heart jumped up outta my mouth and reached for the light. Just outta reach, that light. Never forget that.

It's not coming out.

DAVID

Give it a chance.

You were high though, I mean -

RAY

[groans] Help me. God, please help me.

DAVID

You know, you coulda been like hallucinating.

Forget I said that. I don't know what happened to you.

You're gonna be okay. We'll be okay.

RAY

Friend...remember what we're here for. We came for Jesus friend. You're here to die in Jesus' name.