

## SUMMERLAND – audition sides

### **MUMLER.** – monologue

*(MUMLER stands before a judge.)*

I plead innocent, Your Honor. I stand before you wrongfully accused of fraudulent enterprise. In my own defense I claim no occupation beyond that as an honest spirit photographer. I alleviate grief. My process is sound and sincere. I invite you to my studio to observe. *(Beat.)* Your Honor, the real argument here is Spiritualism versus Materialism. We are debating the nature of man's spirit. Finite? Or non-finite? Judge Dowling, if you are a Materialist, and believe we are merely finite beings, then we have no further discourse and you must judge me a fraud surrounded by mere mortals who inevitably crumble into inconsequential dust and ash. All of our loved ones have become dust and ash. The land is covered in dust and ash. It pains me to think of Mrs. Mumler cleaning my studio last week. Her polishing rag brought shine to every smooth surface and metallic fitting. If, in the end, man becomes nothing more than finite particles of dust and ash sifting onto the furniture, I wonder whose lost sweetheart did she set cartwheeling into the afternoon breeze along Broadway when she leaned out the window to shake her dust rag? *(Pause.)* I am a Spiritualist, I follow the teachings of Reverend Andrew Jackson Davis who compels us to push back the veil between this world and the next where our loved ones wait for us in the paradise of Summerland. Your Honor, if you are a Spiritualist like me, then it is our belief that the spirit of man, my spirit, your spirit, every spirit in this room is an infinite being that exists beyond utility of flesh and bone. It is our belief that the spirit of man is eternal, incorporate and free to communicate with the living, according to the spirit's own will. It is our belief we can once more look upon the departed wife we never stopped loving, or the cherished face of the lost child we long to hold. If Summerland is where your belief leads, or at the very least your curiosity, then we have much to converse upon. The oldest and deepest mystery: What happens to us in the end? Where do we go when we die?

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END

## SUMMERLAND – audition sides

**TOOKER.** . – monologue in 2 parts  
(*TOOKER is speaking before the judge.*)

[part 1]

Yea, I have walked through the valley, Your Honor, where the War dead covered the ground, the blue and grey of Earth's lost armies. Death ravages without favorites. I suffered the stench of rotting corpses, searched in vain for a place to step my foot upon dirt not strewn with the maimed limb, crushed skull, or shattered rib cage of my fallen brethren. Not one of them rose up to walk beside me. Not one in a thousand. Not one in ten thousand. The dead remain resolutely dead. Am I to believe I saw no spirits for lack of a camera? Do not be taken in, Your Honor. William H. Mumler is a humbug. Do not fall for his talk of Eternal Summerland where our loved ones wait for us next to a bubbling stream surrounded by bright flowers and birds singing sweet melodies. Why are there birds in Eternity? Why birds? Are there also insects? Are there Raccoons? Do not be taken in.

[part 2]

*(The sound of a gavel pounding a sound block.)* Your Honor, answering the mayor's request, I have just come from his studio. Under false name I paid to have him make my photograph with a spirit. I made out I wished to see my dead wife. It costs ten dollars to have your portrait made with a spirit. It also costs ten dollars to have your portrait made without a spirit, because sometimes the spirits miss their appointment. Mr. Mumler takes your money all the same. Or rather I should say Mrs. Mumler, takes your money. She guards the treasury and the door to the studio. Together, they are a well-matched team. They pander to our wounded selves. In three days I will return to receive my printed spirit photograph and at that point I will have the evidence to submit in a formal complaint against him. I played the gullible well and I doubt he will resist the temptation to place some weebegone woman in the frame with me. You see, I have no wife dead or living. I will catch him at his game and bring clear evidence against this fabulist and there will be a trial. The dead must stay dead. The living must keep their money.

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END

**MUMLER / TOOKER – side 1**

pg. 1/2

[this is the first scene of the play. TOOKER is pretending to be a client named Wallingford. This is a performance of an undercover cop. He's out to get information about MUMLER. TOOKER ends up revealing more than he intends about himself.]

*(At rise, light of midmorning through skylight windows. Inside the upper-story studio of spirit photographer WILLIAM H. MUMLER, located at No. 630 Broadway in New York City, circa 1869. JOSEPH TOOKER stands facing WILLIAM MUMLER over a portrait chair with a posing stand positioned behind it.)*

**TOOKER.** This goes against nature.

**MUMLER.** This cures our nature, which is given to slouch.

**TOOKER.** Must I make any special preparations?

**MUMLER.** No.

*(TOOKER's growing agitation is contrasted with MUMLER's stillness. MUMLER remains mostly still when he is not required to perform some action in the scene.)*

**TOOKER.** Must you make any special preparations?

**MUMLER.** No.

**TOOKER.** I thought you would pull the curtains, dim the lights, at least.

**MUMLER.** Photography is the art of capturing light, not chasing it from the room.

**TOOKER.** Your procedure is ordinary?

**MUMLER.** You are expecting something *extraordinary*?

**TOOKER.** I'm not sure what to expect. I thought.

**MUMLER.** What?

**TOOKER.** Spooky. I thought it would be spooky. I think that's the word they use now.

**MUMLER.** On occasion I light a candle and chant while I roll my eyes back in a fit. I charge extra for those sessions.

**TOOKER.** That will not be necessary.

**MUMLER.** Thrift denies you a rousing chant. I am a good chanter.

**TOOKER.** Is this contraption completely necessary?

**MUMLER.** Yes.

**TOOKER.** Hard to imagine anything will occur in broad daylight. *(Beat.)* I'm trying to not be skeptical.

**MUMLER.** Mr. Wallingford, if you will take a seat and focus on that empty frame on the wall there.

**TOOKER.** Will something appear inside it?

**MUMLER.** No. The frame is for sale. Do you wish to purchase it?

**TOOKER.** I am happy there was room in your calendar for me to come in. Were you this busy when you worked in Boston?

**MUMLER.** Not so busy.

**MUMLER/TOOKER – side 1 (continued)**

**pg. 2/2**

**TOOKER.** I confess my nerves are excited in this process. We are mucking about with something we don't fully understand

**MUMLER.** There is nothing to be nervous about. I will be here with you the whole time. You have my word.

**TOOKER.** Is there no one else here to assist you?

**MUMLER.** I employ only myself. Do not be frightened.

**TOOKER.** I am not frightened. You come highly recommended

**MUMLER.** My clients assure me it is a most pleasurable experience.

**TOOKER.** You've had some very famous clients, I understand. Our President Johnson, the esteemed Judge Edmonds, William Lloyd Garrison. Mrs. Lincoln has sat before your camera, has she not?

**MUMLER.** You know Mrs. Lincoln?

**TOOKER.** No. Not at all. People talk. I saw the photograph you made of her (*Beat.*) and her husband. You and your photographs are in all the newspapers. She provides you a worthy endorsement. It must have been a comforting surprise for her to see her husband in the print.

**MUMLER.** I do not discuss my clients or their results in their absence.

**TOOKER.** Of course. How long does this take?

**MUMLER.** Each portrait sitting spans the appropriate amount of time, depending on light conditions present in the studio.

**TOOKER.** Do I look dignified?

**MUMLER.** Decidedly.

**TOOKER.** Handsome?

**MUMLER.** I think so.

**TOOKER.** Tall?

**MUMLER.** I am not a magician.

**TOOKER.** You will be sure to get my good side. I don't want...

**MUMLER.** What?

**TOOKER.** I don't want my arm to show.

**MUMLER.** Your arm will not appear in the photograph because your arm is no longer attached to your shoulder.

**TOOKER.** Thank you for your reassurance.

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END

**MUMLER / MRS. MUMLER – side**

pg. 1/3

**MUMLER.** The press is dragging my name through the mire. They have accused me publicly and ruined my reputation.

**MRS. MUMLER.** You invited the attention. Did I not warn you the press would turn on you? If you had listened to me –

**MUMLER.** I will not be scolded by a wife. Especially one who does not see fit to dress herself. You are common. Tooker claims you are strung with wires.

**MRS. MUMLER.** Why don't you check for yourself? Search me.  
*(She tries to get him to touch her body. He pulls away in disgust.)*

**MUMLER.** Leave me be! You forget yourself.

**MRS. MUMLER.** I am exactly as I was when you married me.

**MUMLER.** If the judge rules me a fraud, I am sunk. We are sunk.

**MRS. MUMLER.** You are not a fraud.

**MUMLER.** You don't know what it's like for me. I answer their call, and for that I am disparaged.

**MRS. MUMLER.** You are not the only one to be condemned. I have read all sorts of foul epithets attached to my name. According to the *Times*, you are married to a spider, an ugly beast of malice. It hurts my feelings. I am a foul harridan and there is nothing to be done about it.

**MUMLER.** Don't play the victim. We are both in a fester of your own making.

**MRS. MUMLER.** My making? What have I ever done but stand beside you from the start?

**MUMLER.** Mary Todd Lincoln. How could you lead her up the stairs without knowing who she was?

**MRS. MUMLER.** She had a veil over her face. Black specter of arrogance, she was.

**MUMLER.** How dare you speak of her that way.

**MRS. MUMLER.** She is the one to blame.

**MUMLER.** You weren't paying attention. If I had known it was her, I would have had Judge Edmonds ask her for her discretion. Foolish woman was announcing to the whole world she'd had a portrait made with her husband before I had even developed the plate.

**MRS. MUMLER.** None of that matters. Her husband appeared. You are a powerful spiritualist. No one else has come close to your success.

**MUMLER.** Abraham Lincoln –

**MRS. MUMLER.** Comes to you because of your gift.

**MUMLER.** He is in my photograph, now. Why?

**MRS. MUMLER.** He honors you. How grateful he must be. You provide the agency for him to return to a world that sorely misses his leadership. Your ability is growing. Stronger every day. You feel it, don't you?

**MUMLER.** You are ambitious.

**MRS. MUMLER.** If I am ambitious, it is only a reflection of your power. Everything I do is in support of you and the spirits who come to you.

**MUMLER.** Did you somehow tamper with the glass?

**MUMLER / MRS MUMLER – side (continued) pg. 2/3**

**MRS. MUMLER.** *(MRS. MUMLER is stunned a moment by the accusation.)* What are you saying?

**MUMLER.** Tooker is asking me about your past. Why?

**MRS. MUMLER.** He's only casting about, desperate to make a case against you.

**MUMLER.** Perhaps he is making a case against you.

**MRS. MUMLER.** Against me? He's the one who removed the plate and left you lying on the floor unconscious. How do we know he didn't tamper with the glass? How do we know he's not trying to frame you?

**MUMLER.** You are putting the blame on a chief marshal?

**MRS. MUMLER.** He seeks your glory. What a coup it would be for him to bring down the famous William Mumler, the country's most renowned spirit photographer. It would be his name in all the papers, then. Tooker is good at lying, he's already proven that.

**MUMLER.** If he were here, he would tell me you are lying.

**MRS. MUMLER.** Has he turned you against me?

**MUMLER.** If it is true, you dishonor everything I do.

**MRS. MUMLER.** Oh, woe! I am wounded to the heart! Cast me out! Throw stones at my head! Pierce my breast with poisoned barbs but do not accuse me unjustly for something I did not do.

**MUMLER.** Your performance is growing stale.

**MRS. MUMLER.** O'poor disappointed husband! O mountain of useless scorn! Stand thou before me and judge! Meanwhile the water is rising beneath your feet. If you are not careful, you will find yourself with nowhere to stand, you stupid moon-faced fainting goat!

*(In a flash movement MUMLER catches her by the throat with one hand. He is not strangling or hurting her, nevertheless she is immediately still. Their eyes are locked. A moment passes.)*

**MRS. MUMLER.** *(Frightened.)* William. You and I are in this together.

**MUMLER.** You are alone. Not a single soul, living or dead that longs to be reunited with you. What does that feel like?

**MRS. MUMLER.** *(His grip tightens.)* Please. *(Soft knocking is heard.)* The spirits are here. If you send me to Summerland, what will I tell little Edwin?

**MUMLER.** *(He tightens his grip.)* Edwin! Are you here?

**MRS. MUMLER.** *(Quietly.)* William! I swear the child himself is watching through the veil. He sees you. Do you feel his fear?

**MUMLER.** Edwin? Would you show yourself? I have no camera. He is here and I have no camera. *(The knocking stops.)*

**MRS. MUMLER.** He's gone.

**MUMLER.** Did you tamper with the plate?

**MRS. MUMLER.** No. *(MUMLER searches his wife's face, holds eye contact for a moment.)*

**MUMLER.** You are not afraid of me. *(MRS. MUMLER's manner grows stoic. He lets go of her.)*  
You have no idea the pain this causes me. *(MUMLER sits. She retrieves the tonic glass.)*

**MUMLER / MRS. MUMLER – side** (continued)      **pg. 3/3**

**MRS. MUMLER.** I'm sure I could not bear it.

**MUMLER.** You will speak to the judge tomorrow. You will dress yourself modestly, and testify that I am chosen by the spirits. He may yet confirm I am innocent.  
*(She hands him the tonic.)*

**MRS. MUMLER.** We already know you are innocent. *(Referring to his tonic.)* Now finish up.

*(MRS. MUMLER picks up the plate MUMLER made of TOOKER in their first meeting.)*

Interesting man, our Chief Marshal Tooker. *(She looks at the plate.)* Even more interesting is the man standing beside him. A soldier, Union Army, judging by his uniform. So much sorrow in his face. He is drawn to Tooker.

*(MUMLER stares at the tonic glass in his hand. He grows sleepy.)*

**MUMLER.** Do you know who...?

**MRS. MUMLER.** Shh. No worry. The spirits will not abandon you in your hour of need. The truth will out. Water flows underground, I can hear it, even if I can't see it yet. Sweet dreams, dark mountain. Close your eyes and feel the clouds gather at your crown.

*(MUMLER is asleep in his chair. MRS. MUMLER takes the glass plate from his hand and exits, leaving MUMLER asleep, snoring for a moment.) (Lights change.)*

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END

**TOOKER/MUMLER – side 2**

**pg. 1/2**

[Photo development scene]

**TOOKER.** I believe you to be a fraud.

**MUMLER.** You, a man pretending to be someone else, has seen through me. I am utterly transparent.

**TOOKER.** Hardly transparent.

**MUMLER.** You are calling me “solid,” then? I blame Mrs. Mumler. The woman puts gravy on everything.

**TOOKER.** Mrs. Mumler, does she attend you when the spirits overtake you?

**MUMLER.** My “bouts of sympathy” are my own cross to bear.

**TOOKER.** Carrying the cross is an interesting allusion. Are you a Christian?

**MUMLER.** I attended church as a child. And you, Tooker? Would you call yourself a God-loving, care giving, truth-telling man?

**TOOKER.** I can claim a couple of those qualities. I am washed in His blood, but long since strayed from His path. I am quite lost, and probably damned at this point in my life. How many people do you photograph, just the living, would you say?

**MUMLER.** I am fully booked most every day.

**TOOKER.** I wonder, if the spirits appreciate the woman's touch. Men's affairs always seem to run with more efficiency and style when a woman is in close proximity. She is always close by, is she not? Mrs. Mumler?

**MUMLER.** She is at her station.

**TOOKER.** This is your second marriage, correct? Her accent. She's not from Boston, is she? I'd say she's a bit farther south than Boylston. Closer to Virginia, I should think.

**MUMLER.** She was born in Virginia. Lost her entire family in the war. We met when she moved north soon after the surrender.

**TOOKER.** The spirits, do they wear a spirit timepiece?

**MUMLER.** There is no such device.

**TOOKER.** I wonder, how they know. When it's time for their sitting

**MUMLER.** There was a young woman here earlier today. She also gave me a false name. It is a way of testing the process. Will the spirits show up without a proper name written in an appointment calendar?

**TOOKER.** Do they?

**MUMLER.** It was her eyes. The desolation in her eyes. Grief darkened her whole countenance. The spirits see a woman like this and they return to her bearing love. She came in, sat down, smoothed her skirt, and with a nod of her head indicated I should go to the camera. She lifted her hands from her lap, held them out in front of her, arms open as if receiving a gift. The Woman With Desolate Eyes cradled something with great affection. She tilted her head in a most tender aspect. I opened the camera. Sorrow receded and her face became radiant. If I have to pray to God in the Christian Church, or to the Indian spirit guides in Summerland, I will. I beseech whatever spirit she opened her arms to and looked for with such devotion to appear on her glass plate. O'God by any name, I pray earnestly, please, let that soul be in her portrait.

**TOOKER.** That was a compelling summons, I must say. But what if the Desolate Woman's arms remain empty?

**MUMLER.** She is welcome to try again.

**TOOKER.** And she will pay another ten dollars at that time? (*moment of silence as the men regard each other.*)

**MUMLER.** Chief Tooker, do you consider yourself a seeker of truth?

**TOOKER.** I am an honest man.

**MUMLER.** Yes. You said that last time you lied to me. The truth is right here. Do you wish to examine your print?

**TOOKER.** Enough of this. Air-up the swindle now, Mumler.

**MUMLER.** "You must let your longing for the one you lost fill your entire determination." You took my words to heart.

**TOOKER.** I will examine your equipment.

**MUMLER.** Not without a warrant.

**TOOKER.** I can take away your license to do business, if you do not cooperate. *(With lightning speed, MUMLER reaches out to take hold of TOOKER's fake arm. TOOKER is shocked into momentary stillness.)*

**MUMLER.** Tell me, does it still ache?

**TOOKER.** Let go.

**MUMLER.** This is no recent wound. Yet you still forget its absence. You reach out with it in your dreams. What is it you grasp for?

**TOOKER.** My dreams are private.

**MUMLER.** It still hurts.

**TOOKER.** Enough.

**MUMLER.** Does it burn? Do the fingers still reach to touch soft things?

**TOOKER.** Stop. *(MUMLER releases TOOKER's arm.)*

**MUMLER.** Do you know why that is? Your physical self has been separated from your spiritual self. In Summerland, you will be whole again.

**TOOKER.** You're telling me it will grow back.

**MUMLER.** It will not grow back, because in Summerland you never lost it in the first place. *(Beat.)* How did you lose it in this world?

**TOOKER.** *(Beat.)* The war.

**MUMLER.** The war. The war. Yes. The war. What of your photograph, Chief Marshal Tooker?

**TOOKER.** Damn the photograph.

**MUMLER.** You have carried your grief long enough. You must look and see who has returned to you. *(Beat.)* I assure you there is someone in the photograph with you.

**TOOKER.** I believe it to be a fraud.

**MUMLER.** Before you have even seen it? *(MUMLER produces his print and holds it out for TOOKER. TOOKER hesitates, crosses to MUMLER, takes the photograph, and examines the image.)*

**MUMLER.** You recognize the man standing next to you? *(TOOKER is shaken by what he sees.)*

**TOOKER.** *(Quietly.)* How?

**MUMLER.** His features are very distinct. Often, spirits appear only as vague outlines at best. You are fortunate. *(A moment passes.)* Who is it?

**TOOKER.** How is it done?! What trick?

**MUMLER.** No trick. I can instruct you in the basic workings of the camera and plate, if you –

**TOOKER.** This is no normal photograph.

**MUMLER.** The photograph itself, is quite normal. As for the image on the plate, only you can speak to its enfabulated nature.

**TOOKER.** How is this possible?

////// (END of side) ////