

JOE Are you selling something? If you're a salesman I'll kill you with my bare hands!

LIPTON Do I look like a salesman? Do I look like a man who deals in goods and hardware? I am a man of flair, of fancy, a bizarre and unique guide to the world beyond our world, a companion into wild and soaring flights beyond human comprehension.

JOE A travel agent? Is that what you are, a travel agent?

LIPTON (*Yells, angrily*) *You have no imagination!* I am trying to jazz this up. I have a wonderful sense of the theatrical, and you keep pulling my curtain down. What do I have to do to tell you who I am? Think, Joe, think!

JOE I think you're a *nut*, that's what I think, and I want you out! (*He grabs LIPTON by the arm*) Out, do you hear me? OUT!

LIPTON Easy, easy. No rough stuff, I'm not a physical person.

JOE Ten seconds and I throw you out that window head-first. One, two—

LIPTON Don't force my hand. I deal a heavy hand—

JOE Three, four—

LIPTON (*Stops; points a long finger*) *STAY! I STAY YOU!* Yea, you would banish He who brings thee the gift of life and the eternal bliss of the joyful soul? . . . Forget that! Forget I said that. That was a slip. A boo-boo. Slipsies! I have a charley horse in the middle of my temple. Does Bengue work on the head?

JOE I'm getting a funny feeling. There's something funny going on here. You're not who you pretend to be at all, are you?

LIPTON Aha! Aha, getting somewhere. Getting warm . . .

JOE This is all an act. A game. Something is up, here . . . Somebody sent you, didn't they?

LIPTON Hot! Getting hot!

JOE Somebody sent you to get something from me!

LIPTON Hotter! Hotter! Boiling hotter!

JOE Somebody important who knows me sent you to get something that I have that has

enormous value.

LIPTON Boiling! Roasting, burning, boiling! August fifteenth through the twentieth—scorching.

JOE Something I have that no other man on earth has.

LIPTON *Scalding! Steaming lava!* Two weeks in a sauna bath!

JOE My Bible! My Gutenberg Bible!

LIPTON Cold. Freezing cold. Winter. A room for two in Toronto.

JOE Damn you, what is it?
(*He bangs his fist on the table*)

LIPTON Hey! Hey hey hey! Calm! Calm, please. Take it easy. Let's not break our blood vessels. Let's behave ourselves. The last thing I want is for you to get sick. I mean, you *are* in good health, aren't you?

JOE (*Knocks wood*) Thank God!

LIPTON *Hot! Boiling hot! Getting hot again!*

JOE What? Good health?

LIPTON Cold.

JOE Knocking on wood?

LIPTON Cold, cold . . .

JOE Thank God?

LIPTON HOT! HOT AS A PISTOL! THE FOURTH OF JULY! AN ALL-TIME RECORD BREAKER!

JOE (*Screams*) What are you saying? You're driving me crazy with these stupid games.

LIPTON Temper, temper. What a nervous disposition. And I was told you were such a patient, wonderful man.

JOE Who told you? Who told you I was a wonderful man?

LIPTON (*Softly; side of his mouth*) You know.

JOE I *don't* know.

LIPTON (*Softly again*) Sure, you do, Joe . . . *He* did.

JOE Who's he?

LIPTON He! Him! Capital "H," small "i" small "m" . . . Do I have to spell it out for you? Oh, I just did, didn't I? Went on and on about you. Crazy about you. I'll tell you the truth, you're His favorite. Out of everyone. I don't mean just this neighborhood, I mean EVERYONE! Yes, you, Joe Benjamin, are considered to be His—that's capital "H" again—His absolute favorite. And that is the honest to God's truth . . . God's truth . . . *(He makes a cross on his chest, then a circle, a square, all sorts of signs—then unbuttons his raincoat, revealing a football jersey with an enormous letter "G" on the front)* Am I getting through to you at all?

JOE I can't understand what you're saying.

LIPTON *Can't understand or afraid to understand?*

JOE Afraid? I'm not afraid of anything on the face of this earth except God himself.

LIPTON BINGO! BULL'S-EYE! Ding-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling! Fire, fire, fire! Home run, home run! *(He jumps around in an excited jig)*

JOE STOP IT! I beg of you to stop it and tell me who you are, in plain, simple language. I'm a plain, simple man, I can't understand all this fancy hocus-pocus rigamarole. Who are you, please?

(LIPTON stands erect, clasps his fingers together)

LIPTON *(Solemnly)* Very well. Forgive me, my son. I have taken these extraordinary measures, this bizarre form, so that I might present myself to you in some acceptable dimension, for had I told you the truth straight on of my identity, even I could not have given you the power to accept or comprehend. Yes, Joe—I am—who you think I am!

JOE *(Sits on the sofa)* Are you trying to tell me that you're—that you're—are you trying to tell me—

LIPTON Say it, Joe. You will only believe if you say the words yourself.

JOE —that you—are you trying to say that you—

LIPTON Yes, yes . . . I can't answer unless you ask me, Joe.

JOE I can't get the words out. It's so *inconceivable* to me.

LIPTON Conceive it, Joe. Get the words out. *Who, Joe?* Who am I trying to tell you who I am?

JOE *God?* Are you trying to tell me that you're *God?*

LIPTON Who? . . . God? GOD? Is *that* what you thought? That I was going to say I was

God? My God, that I never figured on. Nothing personal, but that's really crazy. Why? Do I look like God? Would God wear a filthy Robert Hall raincoat and a pair of leaky Hush Puppies? In the winter? Would God wear glasses? I mean, if anyone's going to have good eyes, it's going to be God. He's the one who gave them out . . . No, Joe, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I am not God.

(He sits on the sofa)

JOE Then who are you?

LIPTON I'm a friend of God's.

JOE *(His body sags)* I can't take any more of this.

LIPTON Not a *close* friend. We met a few times.

JOE You met God?

LIPTON Twice on business, once on a boat ride.

JOE What business? *What business do you have with God?*

LIPTON My capacity is such that I perform services for Him that deal with vital and important functions in areas related to the contact of individuals whose special interests—

JOE *What business?*

LIPTON *I deliver messages!*

JOE You're a messenger boy?

LIPTON *(Hurt, indignant)* Don't say it like that. I'm not a lousy kid from Western Union, I work for God!

JOE You're a messenger from God?

LIPTON Important documents only; no packages.

JOE I don't believe you.

LIPTON Nobody does. Not even Sylvia. She laughs when I tell her . . . What am I going to do, bring my boss home for dinner?

JOE You're either drunk, a madman or both.

LIPTON Don't start in, please, I have a headache that goes right into my hat. Even my eyeglasses throb. Didn't I tell you you wouldn't believe me? Look, Mr. Benjamin, I understand you're a wonderful man. Charitable, philanthropic, religious. Am I right?

JOE I serve God as best I can.