

Jobs

A Three Act Play

By David Krause

ACT I

AT RISE:

(At center stage a lone pillory. Locked in pillory a MESSENGER with head down, hands limp, eyes closed. On stage below pillory a flat disc size of pillory flush with stage up down pillory can move. Nothing else on stage. Stage is grey, dim, like night. Soft light from above, cone-shaped, on Messenger and pillory.)

MESSENGER:

(Quickly.)

Twice more twice more say it twice more death death death
make it stop I can't make it stop
death death death

Steven Paul Jobs, you've heard the name,
death death death again

(Loud.)

Hahaha

(Back to moderate volume.)

Steven Paul Jobs, god among gods, king among kings
he cheated death no one cheats death let me tell you,
Steven Paul Jobs, make it stop I can't make it stop you can
make it stop, he cheated death, you've heard the name,
twice more, you'll hear it again, death death death, again
again again

it wasn't his liver

it wasn't his liver

(Very fast.)

he stole a liver, he flew to Tennessee, he stole a liver,
it wasn't his liver, Steven Paul Jobs, you've heard the
name, death death death, a god of gods, it wasn't his
liver, whose liver was it, Apollo surely nose, two together

Steve Jobs, a man, a boy, a child, a baby, back then, that is where we start, back at his birth, San Francisco, California, life life life, a mother alone, no father there, a mother alone, Steven Paul Jobs, a hero to some but not all and on that day he was a baby to her, then he was gone, the next day given away, she didn't have a choice, he was adopted, then he took over the world, a valiant effort to rid the listless in our ruling class, Steven Paul Jobs, this is where we begin, in a hospital, yes yes yes, a hospital, can you see the hospital, it wasn't his liver, he had cancer, he needed a new liver, he flew to Tennessee, he cut in line, whose liver did he steal, I don't know, death death death, make it stop I can't make it stop, lend me your ears we go back in time to Antigone, to Agamemnon, to Oedipus, to understand our time now, we are starting, yes, a play, yes, a play, again a play let us play again, the start of the play, make it stop, I can't make it stop, there it is, the play here we are.

I am calm.

Are you ready?

(Moderate speed.)

I hope so.

I am your chorus.

(Stop.)

A chora.

A messenger.

A ghost of the past, so to speak.

A timeless man. A homeless man.

(Messenger begins to lower beneath stage.)

There I go. I am going. It is time. I hope you won't miss me.

(Messenger continues to lower beneath stage while continuing to talk. Lights begin to dim.)

Death death death, make it stop, it won't stop. Death death death. Life life life. Steven Paul Jobs. Born February 24th, 1955. Died October 5th, 2011. It wasn't his liver. Whose liver was it. Apollo surely knows. Steven Paul Jobs, Steven Paul Jah-

(Voice fades out. Messenger disappears.
Light falls.)

ACT II

(No one on stage. Stage dimly lit. Center stage: a 4" x 4" x 5' wood post mounted to wood disk flush with stage floor same color too and can rotate. On top of wood post a white projector with teal trim paint around border of lens. Lens is angled slightly upward, above heads of audience. Next to wood post and projector a stool. Back of stage a white wall, horizontal left to right, taller than top of curtain. Pause three seconds. Projector lens blinks open slowly. Light cones out. No image. Lens blinks closed. Immediately wood post begins to rotate clockwise then stops after 180 degrees. Projector now faces back of stage and on white wall. Projector lens opens, light cones out again, no image still, only light again.)

PROJECTOR:

(Voice is offstage.)

Steven Paul Jobs

(Projector blinks on. Still image of older, famous Jobs on back wall.)

We knew him well

(Projector plays video clip of Jobs walking on a stage to applause and cheering and smiles. No sound heard in video.)

Born sixty-eight years ago, weighing seven pounds, four ounces. His mother unmarried

(Silent clip of childhood plays while
offstage voice continues.)

he given up for adoption, his family dishonored, an illegitimate child he was, now it in their blood. Steven Paul Jobs, adopted by two middle-class workers, he lived with them for twenty-four years and then invented a new machine, a personal computer, the personal computer, Steve discovered his dream, more money, more power, more fame, all others behind him now, he in corporate board meetings, a new kind of king, a new business man, a cool man who quoted Bob Dylan songs to those investors he ruled. Soon he became his own dream: a capitalist and a sex symbol. Then a surprise: a child ah-ha of his own, a girl, her mother his mate a Cali-hippie, but he denied the daughter was his, his firstborn child now the same as his, a fatherless child, a dishonored parent. He went on and married another and two new children came along. He did not look back, he decided never to look back, an unlikely success he was, always striving, always streaming

(Video stops. Only light is projected on back wall.
Projector off.)

Visionary, vilified, a story like those first stories of our own, a story like those Ancient Greek stories, gods and more gods, kings and more kings, Oedipus and Antigone, Agamemnon and Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles: the heart of tragedy, the start of comedy, the Greek stage. Tonight we go back to his time to explain our time, one with gods and more gods, kings and bigger kings, you know what I mean, these conquistadors, they cwabbling and cwacking. Tonight we hear his story, a true story.

ACT III

(All grey and still. Right of center stage a hospital room, a single window, a flat hospital bed, a sink, two undersink cabinets, two oversink cabinets. Indoor office plant with four leaves next to sleeping gas apparatus. Steve Jobs flat on bed with Second Nurse and Doctor looking down at his midsection. First Nurse holding an small laptop, taking notes.)

DOCTOR:

Clamp.

(Second Nurse hands a small clamp to Doctor. Doctor places clamp on Jobs's midsection. We cannot see his midsection; we can only see the clamp erect.)

Scope.

(Second Nurse hands scope to Doctor. Doctors begins to delicately dig.)

Mirror.

(Second Nurse hands mirror to Doctor. Doctor inspects Jobs's midsection.)

FIRST NURSE:

Enough room?

DOCTOR:

So far.

FIRST NURSE:

Access to liver?

DOCTOR:

10-4.

FIRST NURSE:

More light?

DOCTOR:

(Licking his top lip.)

Not yet. Hold it there.

SECOND NURSE:

(Looks at first nurse.)

Something doesn't feel right.

FIRST NURSE:

What do you mean?

SECOND NURSE:

I heard that this liver isn't meant for this patient. I heard that he got to skip in line in front of other, local people, because, well, obviously he's Steve Jobs.

DOCTOR:

(Looks up):

You heard wrong

(looks back to bed, into Steve's hole.)

And I think that you should keep such lies to yourself. We have strict patient confidentiality laws, as I am sure you are well aware of.

SECOND NURSE:

It wasn't my fault I heard it. It was all over heard the internet last night. Steve Jobs: organ transplant scheduled for Tennessee. Questions arise: Did he pay to jump to the front of the line?

DOCTOR:

A lie travels around the Earth before the truth can strap on his boots. Now focus and do your job. I don't want to file an operation misdemeanor.

SECOND NURSE:

If you file an operation misdemeanor, I'll sue the hospital. Nothing is worse than censorship of thought and speech.

DOCTOR:

I'll let you speak your mind when you are wearing my white lab coat. Until then, stand there, take orders, and shut up.

FIRST NURSE:

(bends toward Steve's midsection.):
Something doesn't look right down here.

DOCTOR:

(looks back into Steve):
I've lost my rhythm, damn you fools.
(Doctor bumps FIRST NURSE out of the way, then lowers head into Jobs's midsection. Then he reaches his hand behind him, toward Second Nurse.)
What we need is more gas.
(Doctor puts mask over Steve's mouth. Looks at Nurse Two).
Did I stumble? I said more gas!

(Second Nurse turns up gas.)

FIRST NURSE:

That's not going to work, sir. What he needs is an Endopoloy.

DOCTOR:

What the hell is that?

FIRST NURSE:

Entry through the backend.

SECOND NURSE:

Or through the nostrils. I have seen that too.

FIRST NURSE:

No, his nostrils are too thin. We must go through the base.

DOCTOR:

Enough! Shut it already, you idiots

(snaps fingers at nurses).

Just give me more gas and listen. Can't you see that he is still moving.

(Nurse Two administers more gas.)

DOCTOR:

(Tries to scope farther into Steve, but then gives up and places scope down.)

I still can't get to the back of his liver to make the cut. This is bad news.

SECOND NURSE:

Does he have a chrompolopholia?

DOCTOR:

What the smuggler lick is that?

SECOND NURSE:

A condition when the intestines grow so big they block access to the liver.

DOCTOR:

That is not possible.

(Slowly, from below his rob, Steve's hand reaches out and grabs the mask on his face, pulls it down, angles his neck and looks at first nurse.)

STEVE:

What are you doing?

(Doctor grabs Steve's hand.)

DOCTOR:

Relax, Steve. We cannot do our jobs until you ease up and we can find your liver again.

(Steve raises his hand and opens his palm in front of Doctor.)

STEVE:

Give me the scope.

DOCTOR:

What do you mean?

STEVE:

You are all bozos. I am going to do this myself.

DOCTOR:

Ridiculous.

FIRST NURSE:

(pointing at Steve who has picked up a different scope off of bed tray):

He is serious.

(Steven sits up in bed).

STEVE:

(to Doctor, pointing):

Get Out.

(Looks to Nurses, still pointing)

All of you. Out!

SECOND NURSE:

(backing away.)
It's your call.

FIRST NURSE:
He'll kill himself.

SECOND NURSE:
Not our problem.

DOCTOR:
There will be no second try.

FIRST NURSE:
Remember what he did to his homeland. He brought the Midas touch and touched everything including himself.

STEVE:
OUT!

(First Nurse exits left.)

STEVE:
OUT!

(Second Nurse exits left.)

DOCTOR:
Are you sure you want to do this?

STEVE:
OUT!

(Doctor exits. Steve turns his back on audience and starts to look as if he is operating on his stomach. Light dims on Steve and hospital room. Slightly brighter light on center of stage. Projector elevates

from below stage into light. It is pointed at audience.)

PROJECTOR:

(voice coming off stage as in Act II.)

Proud men die alone.

(Projector rotates, stops on Steve. Eye of projector blinks closed then open).

Steven, can you hear me?

STEVE:

(still looking down, continuing to operate on himself):

Yes.

PROJECTOR:

Why did you go on this journey?

STEVE:

(continuing to work.)

Hold on. I am almost done.

PROJECTOR:

(rotates back to audience.)

Men go three-footed. Steve is suffering the worst of deaths. He has lost his ability to talk with people. Memory gone, all past a fabrication, a David against the World, a winner of the world, but what world, we wonder now, he is almost dead, even with his new liver, he only has two more months to live. We know that, but he doesn't. He fought so hard to find this liver, and in his end he found too much liver, too much organ, too much of life. Whose liver is that, anyway? Who did he skip in line? Whose other life did he steal?

(Steve turns toward audience. We see stitches across his gut. He rubs his stomach, puts lotion on the scar.)

STEVE:

Perfect. Finished. No help from anyone. Bozos. Fuck 'em all.

(He stands).

Time to leave. Things to do.

PROJECTOR:

Are you sure you're better, Steve?

STEVE:

Who is talking to me anyway?

PROJECTOR:

(turning to Steve, lens opens and angles up to his face.)

I am.

STEVE:

(rubbing hands on rob.)

I must have had too much gas.

PROJECTOR:

Death is softer than tyranny.

STEVE:

What does that mean?

PROJECTOR:

Sophocles wrote it.

STEVE:

Sophocles? You don't know Sophocles. I know Sophocles. Let me tell you, you Bozo.

(He turns toward audience and shakes his head).

I have had way too much gas.

PROJECTOR:

You almost died tonight.

STEVE:

But I didn't.

PROJECTOR:

Here is one side, and only a quarter of the argument.

STEVE:

More nonsense. Let me guess: Sophocles again?

PROJECTOR:

You have your eyes but see not where you live.

STEVE:

(taking out phone from underpants under
rob.)

I really don't have time for this.

PROJECTOR:

The time in which you must please those that are dead is longer than you must please those of this world.

STEVE:

Shut up already, you bozo thing. How do I get rid of these gas effects? (he farts). That must help.

PROJECTOR:

You will be dead in two months, Steve.

STEVE:

Says a nobody like you?

PROJECTOR:

I am a blind profit, sent from the gods.

STEVE:

Crazy Bastard.

(puts on glasses.)

PROJECTOR:

(growing taller, by two feet, then
stopping.)

I have seen the future, Steve. Your wife will marry another
after you die. Your son will waste his life in dullness.
Your daughter will love objects and nothing else. You will
be remembered by them from time to time but only for
business purposes.

STEVE:

You fuckhead.

PROJECTOR:

Won't you believe my words? You have been allowed to see
your future beyond your death. Most cannot find such
fortune but the gods have allowed you this glimpse.

STEVE:

You cannot be telling the truth.

PROJECTOR:

I have been forced against my will to tell nothing but.

STEVE:

And what did you say about my wife?

PROJECTOR:

She will have many others.

STEVE:

And my son?

PROJECTOR:

Spoiled into thoughtlessness.

STEVE:

And my daughter?

PROJECTOR:

Stupefied by objectification.

STEVE:

What have I done to deserve this fate?

PROJECTOR:

Not fate, but lack thereof.

STEVE:

Your are obscuring your words. Speak plainly.

PROJECTOR:

Plain is all I know. To speak morebose is to create a lie.

STEVE:

I think I've lost my mind.

PROJECTOR:

(growing slowly, talking while growing, stopping after another foot, now eight feet tall.)

It wasn't your fault, Steve. They stole your company, so you stole it back, and made it better, anyone can understand: an eye for an eye, a dollar for a dollar, power for power. They stabbed you and you stabbed back, but in the end both of you are poisoned, you've seen Hamlet, haven't you?

(Steve looks looks down at mask. Then from below stage Messenger in pillory elevates through stage slowly in dimly lit corner outside hospital room. Steve can't see him but the audience can.)

MESSENGER:

Steven Paul Jobs

(Pause.Then slightly louder)

Steven Paul Jobs

(Slightly louder again)

Steven Paul Jobs.

(Steve lifts gas mask in front of mouth but does not place on month. Projector rotates, shines video on back wall, same video as beginning of Act II, but now sound is playing, crowd is cheering, Steve in video walks on stage dark stage he lit the chants they go, "STEVE! STEVE! STEVE!".)

MESSENGER:

(continued.)

Do you hear that, Steve?

STEVE:

Yes.

MESSENGER:

They are calling your name.

STEVE:

(holding mask, staring at it.)

Yes, I hear them now. They are calling for me, they are crying for me! It is the sound of my employees, I can recognize their voices.

MESSENGER:

They need you one last time.

(Sound of crying is heard offstage projector voice).

STEVE:

They are crying for me.

(He lowers gas mask.)

They are crying for me!

MESSENGER:

In praise and fervor time is a curse.

STEVE:

(calling out):

Cry more. Cry more!

PROJECTOR:

(offstage voice, as usual.)

I
I
I
I

STEVE:

(grabbing head)

No. No. NO!

(then quickly.)

Me Me Me Me.

PROJECTOR:

(same pace as above.)

I
I
I
I

STEVE:

No NO NO. Me Me Me.

MESSENGER:

It is I, Steve.

STEVE:

Who is I?

MESSENGER:

I am the voice of your stolen liver.

STEVE:

Oh dear Mary mother what is happening to me?

MESSENGER:

We are one now. Me and you and I there is no escape. You stole me and now you cannot get rid of me. I am your final creation. You will die with me inside of you.

STEVE:

(head drops, shaking side to side, still holding gas mask):

What is happening? What is happening?

MESSENGER:

I am the voice of your new liver. I am forever a part of you - I will be with you in your grave forever, can't you see?

STEVE:

No

(Pause. Shakes head)

No

No

No

No

NO

NO

(Steve begins to lower below stage.)

MESSENGER:

Yes, Steve, yes yes yes yes. I am your last gesture, your parting decision. Was it worth it? Two more months is all you get out of life, now forever living in the Earth with

something that is not yours, was it worth it, two more months for a grave without time, me talking to you, whispering to you, a voice you cannot shut off, isn't that what you always wanted?

(Steve lifts mask to face. MESSENGER slowly begins to lower below stage with Steve)

St_ve: you ar_ disappearing, Stev_. I cann_t see you al_ne anym_ore; we are becom_ing on_ ; it is starting alre_dy. I am your liv_r, St_ve. I am yo_r imperf_ct v_ice that y_u tried to sil_nce long ago. R_memb_r this tho_ght, y_ur last thou_ht, Stev_: The stars they m_ght be apath_tic b_t no matt_r if onl_ yo_wo_ld have chosen to listen.

(Steve lowered below stage. Messenger too. Projector lifts up above stage. Projector alone now on center stage now, blinks open, then blinks close, blinks open. Knocking below stage. Projector angles down. Knocking continues. Projector angles up. Light beams out.)

MESSENGER:

(Continued. Messenger is now below stage, out of sight.)

Twice more Twice more Say it twice more Death
 death death death death death, make it stop, I can't make
 it stop, you've heard his name, Steven Pau - Steven Pau,
 make it stop, it was a liver, it wasn't his liver, make it
 stop it won't stop, it will go on forever, it goes on
 forever.

(Lights off.)