



# The Last Days of Judas Iscariot: A Play

By Stephen Adly Guirgis

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**From one of our most admired playwrights, "an ambitious, complicated and often laugh-out-loud religious debate" (Toby Zinman, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*)**

Set in a time-bending, seriocomically imagined world between Heaven and Hell, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* is a philosophical meditation on the conflict between divine mercy and human free will that takes a close look at the eternal damnation of the Bible's most notorious sinner. This latest work from the author of *Our Lady of 121st Street* "shares many of the traits that have made Mr. Guirgis a playwright to reckon with in recent years: a fierce and questing mind that refuses to settle for glib answers, a gift for identifying with life's losers and an unforced eloquence that finds the poetry in lowdown street talk. [Guirgis brings to the play] a stirring sense of Christian existential pain, which wonders at the paradoxes of faith" (Ben Brantley, *The New York Times*).

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## **The Last Days of Judas Iscariot: A Play By Stephen Adly Guirgis Bibliography**

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“A real jaw-dropper. [Guirgis’s] imagination is dazzling and his command of language downright thrilling.”  
—Marilyn Stasio, *Variety*

“Guirgis may be the most extravagantly talented . . . playwright in America . . . To put it clinically, he is a master of American urban vernacular; to put it as one of his characters might put it, the s—— is real.”  
—Jeremy McCarter, *The New York Sun*

### About the Author

Stephen Adly Guirgis's previous plays--*Our Lady of 121st Street*, *Jesus Hopped the A Train*, and *In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings*--were published by Faber in an omnibus edition in 2003. He lives in New York City.

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The Last Days of Judas Iscariot

ACT 1

*Darkness. Rain. From nowhere, a woman emerges from her past.*

HENRIETTA ISCARIOT: No parent should have to bury a child ... No mother should have to bury a son. Mothers are not meant to bury sons. It is not in the natural order of things.

I buried my son. In a potter's field. In a field of Blood. In empty, acrid silence. There was no funeral. There were no mourners. His friends all absent. His father dead. His sisters refusing to attend. I discovered his body alone, I dug his grave alone, I placed him in a hole, and covered him with dirt and rock alone. I was not able to finish burying him before sundown, and I'm not sure if that affected his fate ...

I begrudge God none of this. I do not curse him or bemoan my lot. And though my heart keeps beating only to keep breaking--I do not question why.

I remember the morning my son was born as if it was yesterday. The moment the midwife placed him in my arms, I was infused with a love beyond all measure and understanding. I remember holding my son, and looking over at my own mother and saying, "Now I understand why the sun comes up at day and the stars come out at night. I understand why rain falls gently. Now I understand you, Mother" ...

I loved my son every day of his life, and I will love him ferociously long after I've stopped breathing. I am a simple woman. I am not bright or learn-ed. I do not read. I do not write. My opinions are not solicited. My voice is not important ... On the day of my son's birth I was infused with a love beyond all measure and understanding ... The world tells me that God is in Heaven and that my son is in Hell. I tell the world the one true thing I know: If my son is in Hell, then there is no Heaven--because if my son sits in Hell, *there is no God.*

JESUS, *carrying a bucket, has approached the woman. He kisses her cheek. She does not notice. They vanish.*

*A courtroom. Court is in session. A woman with wings, GLORIA, rises.*

GLORIA: Between Heaven and Hell--there is another place. This place: Hope. Hope--is located right over

here in downtown Purgatory.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *Next case!*

GLORIA: Now, Purgatory, contrary to popular belief, has plumbing, and bodegas, and they even got a movie theater and a little park that people can walk their dogs at. Hope--well it ain't got none a that, and it definitely don't smell good.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *Next case, Bailiff!*

GLORIA: I worked here in Hope for two and a half years--thass how I got these wings. And I wouldn't trade nothing for these wings--I can fly with these wings! At night, I fly down to Earth, and I watch my littlest Babyboy sleep. He's seven, and he's got a picture of me on his wall--right in between Shaquille O'Neal and the Incredible Hulk. Then, I go fly uptown to the window of my oldest Babygirl's house and watch my granchild, Little Bit, sleep. Most nights I can see my oldest Babygirl, Tanya, with her feet in a pot of hot water, always studying books; and I'll stick around to see her man, Winston, come home late at night from work, always with a muffin or a hamburger for my Babygirl. Winston's love for my Babygirl is all over his face--I was wrong about him, I always thought he was shifty ... When I get back to Heaven, I tell my husband, DeLayne, all about it. DeLayne don't like to fly, but he likes to hear the stories, and he likes how I look like when I come home from Earth all "windblown" ... Now Hope, it changes with the times, but has stood always as God's gift to the last of his children. It is said that every civilization rearranges the cosmic furniture differently. In biblical times, Hope was an Oasis in the Desert. In medieval days, a shack free of Plague. Today, Hope is no longer a place for contemplation--litigation being the preferred new order of the day.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *Where's my damn bailiff??!*

BAILIFF: Here, sir.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *Then call the next damn case!!!*

BAILIFF: Yes, sir. *"God and the Kingdom of Heaven and Earth versus Thorseen the Implacable: Motion to appeal!"*

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *Denied--Next case!*

BAILIFF: *"God and the Kingdom of Heaven and Earth versus Henry Wayne Masters--"*

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *Nope!*

BAILIFF: *"God and the Kingdom of Heaven and Earth versus Benedict Arnold--"*

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *Aw, hell, no!*

BAILIFF: *"God and the Kingdom of Heaven and Earth versus Judas Iscariot--"*

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *--"Judas Iscariot" ???! Who brings this crap before me??!*

CUNNINGHAM: Your Honor, my name is Fabiana Aziza Cunningham--

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *--Never heard of you!*

CUNNINGHAM: I live in Purgatory.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: Well you shoulda kept your legs closed! *Motion denied! Next case!*

CUNNINGHAM: Your Honor, I have a writ signed by Saint Peter at the Gates of Heaven!

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *Next Case!*

CUNNINGHAM: But I have a writ!

BAILIFF: She has a writ, sir.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: Excuse me?!

BAILIFF: Just saying: The lady, she's got a writ, so, I mean--

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *--Bailiff: let's set up a little signal between the two of us, okay?*

BAILIFF: Okay.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: Good. Now, when I come to court dressed as Ethel Merman in a one-piece bathing suit, that'll be my *signal* to you that I want your *opinion!*

BAILIFF: Yes, sir.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *Next case!!*

BAILIFF: But what about the writ, sir?

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: What's your name, Bailiff?!

BAILIFF: Julius of Outer Mongolia.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: You're on work-release from Purgatory, Julius--correct?

BAILIFF: Yes, sir.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: Wanna get to Heaven someday? Eat fried chicken and mashed potatoes, feel the sun on your face.

BAILIFF: Very much, sir.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *Then call the next damn case!!!*

BAILIFF: Yes, sir. Absolutely, sir.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: Good. Have a lollipop.

BAILIFF: Thank you, sir.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: Next case!

BAILIFF: But, like, the writ, sir--

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *Bailiff!!!!!!!!!!*

YUSEF AKBAR WAHID AL-NASSAR GAMEL EL-FAYOUMY *risés dramatically from his seat in the courtroom.*

EL-FAYOUMY: Your Honor, if I may?!

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: Who speaks before me?!

EL-FAYOUMY: It is I, Yusef Akbar Wahid Al-Nassar Gamel El-Fayoumy!

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *Who the hell are you?!*

EL-FAYOUMY: An attorney, great sir! Willing and able to prosecute this sham of a case and defend the Gates of Heaven and the Kingdom of God against this big shenanigan of a so-called writ, great handsome sir! Look no further, Your Honor! Yusef Akbar Wahid Al-Nassar Gamel El-Fayoumy is a *beacon* for justice!

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: A "beacon," eh?

EL-FAYOUMY: May I approach you?

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: *The bench, not me!*

EL-FAYOUMY: The bench! Of course! YES!--And it is a lovely bench, splendid and sturdy like the great *derrière* that rests upon it!! Your Honor, I received wind of this so-called "writ" several weeks ago. I have been preparing night and day to refute the allegations it contains!

CUNNINGHAM: Your Honor, let the record reflect I have no opposition to Mr. El-Fayoumy here.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD (to CUNNINGHAM): *Speak when spoken to!!!*

EL-FAYOUMY: Do not bait this great man, lady! He presided over the appeal of Attila the Hun when you were nothing more than a cheap shot of whiskey on your great-great-grandfather's first unpaid bar tab!

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: Well said!

EL-FAYOUMY: Forgive the outburst.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: ... You got a license to practice, Mr. El-Fajita?

EL-FAYOUMY: A license? A license! Yes. Absolutely!! Submitted for your most scrupulously discerning approval, eminently great sir!

EL-FAYOUMY *crosses, fumbles, searching his pockets for the license.*

BAILIFF (*cautiously*): Sir, his name's El-Fayoumy.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: What?

BAILIFF: You called him El-Fajita.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: Just gimme my glasses!

BAILIFF: You're wearing them, sir.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD (*exploding*): *My other glasses!!!!!!!!!!*

BAILIFF: Oh. Here.

EL-FAYOUMY: Most worshipful lord and master: very tiny problem. My license, I seem to have left it in my other suit. I could rush back to Hell and retrieve it--

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: From Hell are you?

EL-FAYOUMY: Temporarily detained--a problem with my papers.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: You sure about that?

EL-FAYOUMY: Quite sure, your grace. I attribute the mix-up to the Americanization of the afterlife--completely understandable in lieu of recent events.

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: You're damn right.

EL-FAYOUMY: Yes, your eminence--as are you, great sir!

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: Cunningham! Let me see this "writ."

CUNNINGHAM: Here, Your Honor.

JUDGE *reads the writ.*

EL-FAYOUMY (*an aside*): You have great legs, Fabiana. Free for dinner, perhaps?

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: Cunningham! This writ is garbage! *Next case!*

CUNNINGHAM: Your Honor, my client--

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: Your client is Judas Iscariot! Your client sold out the son of God, for Chrissakes!

CUNNINGHAM: Your Honor, that has no bearing--

JUDGE LITTLEFIELD: Cunningham--Judas Iscariot committed the one unforgivable sin. ...

## **Users Review**

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#### **John Cleveland:**

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#### **George Degregorio:**

This *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot: A Play* is great book for you because the content which can be full of

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