

# SAPIENS!

A play in one act for solo actor



Rich Espey

[richespey@gmail.com](mailto:richespey@gmail.com)

[www.richespey.com](http://www.richespey.com)

## SAPIENS!

*(One actor plays all parts in the play.  
Biology textbooks are scattered across the  
stage. ADAM enters.)*

### ADAM

There is a picture in this Biology textbook I teach from, in the chapter about the human brain.

*(ADAM flips on a slide projector and we see  
the famous young girl/old woman illusion.)*

Here it is. What is this a picture of?

*(He takes responses from the audience ad  
lib. He makes sure the audience can see  
both the young girl and the old woman.)*

I'm just curious...how many people first saw a young girl when you looked at this picture? How many people first saw an old woman? When I first looked at it I saw the young girl. When my wife Karen first looked at it she saw the old woman. I guess that means something. How many people can see both a young girl and an old woman? Now if you can't see both a young girl and an old woman, don't worry. Keep trying to see both...I think you'll be able to in time.

This picture is actually an optical illusion called an ambiguous figure. In the textbook it says, "Ambiguous figures capitalize on the human brain's ability to change its interpretation of what it perceives."

This particular figure is said to be from an old German engraving. It is said to be of a woman named Angela Schmidt. In the picture we can see her both as a young girl on the verge of womanhood and an old woman whose life has been nothing short of remarkable. Later you are going to hear Angela's story. It is not important *if* you believe her story or not, but *why* you believe it or not.

But first, here's another ambiguous figure.

*(He shows another slide – the rabbit/duck  
illusion)*

What do you see?

When I first looked at it I saw a rabbit. When Karen, my wife, first looked at it she saw a duck. (*He makes sure we can see both the rabbit and the duck.*) It can be a rabbit or it can be a duck. But can you see them both at the same time?

Does anybody know what this is a picture of?

*(He shows a slide of the Laetoli Diorama.  
He waits for a response.)*

It's not an ambiguous figure. At least, it's not supposed to be.

We were looking at this picture when the principal came for the first of three official evaluations and observations to determine the renewal of my teaching contract. I was nervous and I guess that it showed.

*(The slide now says "Today's Lesson – The Earliest Humans.")*

Now class, this is a picture of the famous Laetoli diorama at the Museum of Natural History. In the picture you see a male and a female of the species called *Australopithecus afarensis*, walking side by side, leaving tracks in some ash from a nearby erupting volcano in a place called Laetoli in what is now Tanzania 3.6 million years ago.

And from the back of the room, Ben Christopher stands up and says

**BEN**

Mr. Russell?

**ADAM**

I'll answer questions in a minute, Ben. How do we know this took place? In 1976 Mary Leakey unearthed a seventy-five foot track of preserved footprints

*(He shows a slide of the Laetoli footprints)*

**BEN**

Wait, Mr. Russell -

**ADAM**

Please, Ben. The footprints were preserved as the wet ash hardened. Later those footprints were buried under more ash, and then millions of years of erosion exposed them so we could start thinking about who made them.

*(Slide of the Laetoli display once more.)*

**BEN**

Mr. Russell, that scene never happened.

**ADAM**

Of course it happened, Ben! Not only did it happen, say hello to your great-great-great-great-great to the ten-millionth power grandparents!

**BEN**

Mr. Russell, we didn't come from apes. The Bible says that we're all descended from Adam and Eve, humans like us who were created in God's image. Your story's not true. And anyway, how would you know?

**ADAM**

Well, Ben, the scientific view is that based on fossil evidence and radiometric dating – remember, we talked about that – there's actually lots of evidence –

**BEN**

It's all false evidence based on false assumptions by people who refuse to believe the Word of God. And the Word of God can mean only one thing! The Earth is 6000 years old and apes are apes and people are people and that's the way God made it.

**ADAM**

And I look over at the principal who's been observing and I see her shake her head and write something down. And I say, "Ben, the Bible is a lovely story, but all the scientific data gathered proves otherwise."

**BEN**

Second Peter, Chapter two. "There will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Bold and arrogant these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings. They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done."

*(BEN pulls out an Exacto knife. BEN cuts the pages out of the book.)*

**ADAM**

And he slashes the picture in his book. And half the class is cheering. "Yeah, Ben! Praise the Lord!" And then Ben starts slashing the pictures in the other kids' books. And the other half of the class is either crying or screaming. And the principal is just writing and shaking, writing and shaking. And I'm standing there paralyzed. Paralyzed. And when Ben finishes slashing he walks up to me... - Back off, Ben, just back off – ...Ben, Dear God!...and then he drops the knife and he drops to his knees and he bows his head. And then he looks up at me...and there are tears rolling down his cheeks. And he says

**BEN**

I used to think you were a good teacher, Mr. Russell.

**ADAM**

The principal suspended Ben for a week.

**PRINCIPAL**

OK. So, Adam, how do you think the lesson went?

**ADAM**

Well, you know, it could have gone better.

In all my years of teaching I've never seen anything like this. I mean the evolution unit gets harder every year, but the thought that a picture could drive a student to do something like that...

**PRINCIPAL**

You didn't do a very good job defending the state-mandated curriculum. Perhaps you might be better prepared for my second observation?

**ADAM**

That night I talked to Karen, my wife.

Karen, this kid, this great kid, went ballistic because of this picture, this idea...and Karen says

**KAREN**

Well, you struck a pretty deep nerve, I guess. Maybe when he gets back you talk to him, one on one -

**ADAM**

Karen, it wasn't just him. Half the class was cheering, refusing to accept the facts.

**KAREN**

Well, maybe you can let the class have a civilized debate?

**ADAM**

In science class I am not allowed to mention anything supernatural, and not that I should have to. The principal thinks I just need to be better prepared to defend the curriculum, but I'm not an expert on this stuff. I know a little about a lot and that works for every other topic I teach except this one.

**KAREN**

You're smart, Adam. So become an expert.

**ADAM**

So I think, "That's it!" I just need to become an expert. I've always accepted Evolution on faith, so to speak. But for people who don't accept it on faith, I'll become an expert and prove it to them. So Spring Break is next week, I can go to the museum, talk to

people there, become an expert, defend the curriculum, and my job...and I'll do it right this time!!

So I go to the Museum of Natural History

*(Slide of a museum)*

and I speak with one of the curators and I ask him to tell me about all the evidence that went into making that display.

**VINCE**

Vincent DelBracco, nice to meet you.

**ADAM**

Mr. DelBracco.

**VINCE**

It's Vince, or Vinnie, I go by either.

**ADAM**

OK, Vince. I know about the Laetoli trackway, and I know a little about radiometric dating and I'm confident about the age of the footprints being 3.6 million years old.

**VINCE**

Well, it's between 3.4 and 3.8 million.

**ADAM**

OK. That seems like a pretty wide range.

**VINCE**

We're in the ballpark.

**ADAM**

And you're confident that decay rates have been constant through time.

**VINCE**

Whoa. You're not one of those Creationist whack jobs who claims you can't prove that the rates were the same 4 million years ago?

**ADAM**

No, I'm a staunch evolutionist...but I thought it was 3.4 to 3.8 million?

**VINCE**

Don't get me started on those Creationist whack jobs!

**ADAM**

OK, OK, I just...what I really wanted to know was what other pieces of evidence you used to construct the diorama?

**VINCE**

Evidence? What, we on trial here? Huh, huh, huh.

**ADAM**

Um, sort of. Bones, maybe?

**VINCE**

There were no bones in the area.

**ADAM**

But I thought there were bones...

**VINCE**

No bones, just prints. Which is better because with bones you're always trying to figure out what's genuine and what's an artifact of the post-mortem fossilization process.

**ADAM**

But there are bones, right? What about Lucy?

*(Slide of the Lucy skeleton.)*

**VINCE**

She's roughly the same age, but there's no guarantee these tracks were made by the same species. To be honest, when you're talking about early hominids you could probably fit all the bones ever found into the back of an SUV. It's fragments, mostly.

**ADAM**

Then how did you know how to build the sculptures?

*(We see the Laetoli slide again.)*

**VINCE**

The footprints can mean only one thing.

**ADAM**

What can it mean?

**VINCE**

Two bipedal apes in an upright position with the dimensions shown. That's clear. The rest...I do have to admit that some of this is conjecture. Did the male have his arm around the female? We don't know. Maybe it was a parent and child. Who knows? Some people think that there was a third hominid who walked behind the big one and placed his feet in

the other one's footprints. A lot of guys in anthro got really pissed we didn't put the third hominid in. Some people think the female was probably walking a stride behind the male, but the feminists really went ballistic when we suggested building it that way. They still went ballistic when we put this worried expression on her face, but he's worried too, and they would have probably been worried because they were out in the open and they were still sleeping in trees at that point. Probably.

**ADAM**

You use the word probably a lot. You're not troubled by all this conjecture?

**VINCE**

Well, we put in a disclaimer.

**ADAM**

So I read the fine print. "Certain physical features of the figures are entirely conjectural. These include lip, ear and nose shape; eye and skin color; and hair color, texture, and distribution."

**VINCE**

Did it happen exactly this way? Probably not. But does the scene evoke the spirit of the time and place? Absolutely. You gotta have faith that your data confirm your theory. Hey, you find a set of footprints and it's human nature to want to know who made them. And which is more interesting to look at? Just the footprints?

*(Slide of the footprints)*

Or this?

*(Slide of the diorama)*

The schoolkids love this display. I like to think of it as a parable of sorts.

*(Slide of the young girl/old woman, with the caption "THE PARABLE OF ANGELA")*

Think of it as a parable.

*(ADAM looks at the slide of ANGELA intently. He becomes ANGELA.)*

**ANGELA**

When I was the young girl, I knew a man who would take me to a meadow of violets at night and fill me with wonderful feelings of joy. Through him I could feel all the love and beauty of the universe flowing through me. And one night, as I lay back on the soft, thick grass and the gentle flowers, and felt his love coursing through me, I saw a great burst of light in the eastern sky, a star exploding. And as I saw the star explode I knew that a new

life was starting to explode inside of me. Is that what makes a new life begin, I wondered? Is it because a star explodes? I turned to tell the man...but he was gone. Months later my father, shaking with fury...

**PAPA**

How could you let this happen?

**ANGELA**

Papa, a star exploded! My mother said

**MAMA**

Your sin is our sin.

**ANGELA**

And when my little girl was born, there was no pain. She emerged into the world with a perfect, but tiny head, slender, quivering arms, two perfect hands, ten perfect fingers, and then a body, that narrowed like a little vase for flowers, with one single leg, finishing in one tiny, perfect, toe. I turned to my mother. My mother wept. I turned to my father. My father turned away in disgust. I turned at last, to the minister.

**MINISTER**

It can mean only one thing!

**ANGELA**

What does it mean?

**MINISTER**

Your sin has angered God and this is how he punishes you!

**ANGELA**

I named her Violett, because she was shaped like a little vase, and violets are my favorite flower, the flowers that I smelled lying on my back in the meadow on the night she was created, when I saw the star explode. Violett lived for thirty-three hours. I buried her in the field where she was created, for they would not bury a child who bore such a stamp of God's disapproval in the village churchyard. And as I wiped the dirt from my hands my mother said

**MAMA**

It is all part of God's plan.

**ANGELA**

It was decided by the elders that I should leave the village for I had brought them great shame. And I said to my mother, "I do not want to leave!" And she said

**MAMA**

It is all part of God's plan, Angela, it is all part of God's plan.

**ANGELA**

No, Mama, it is not true! And anyway, how would you know?

*(ADAM picks up a book.)*

**ADAM**

In Biology we know a lot now about DNA, genes and chromosomes. Violett was a case of a condition called sirenornelia, or mermaid syndrome. I need to warn you: it is not pleasant to look at.

*(Slide of a child with sirenornelia.)*

So let's look at DNA instead.

*(Slide of DNA)*

Mermaid Syndrome results from the deletion of gene called CYP26A1 from the DNA of chromosome 10. This gene is the instructions for an enzyme that breaks down a substance called retinoic acid. Too much retinoic acid in an embryo and things go wrong. That's the short version. But this we know, this is certain, and on this we all agree. DNA is tricky stuff and a lot can go wrong. But why do things go wrong? The amazing thing, the miracle, if there is one, is not that things go wrong,

*(Slide of sirenornelia)*

but that so much of the time, things go right.

*(Slide of a healthy baby)*

DNA is tricky stuff. The baby that Karen and I were going to have,

*(Slide of the baby fades away)*

it turns out, had an entire extra copy of chromosome 10. When it was over they asked if they could examine some cells, just to see what went wrong. We said of course, we wanted to know. And we were brave and it was just so much easier to chalk it up to a bad roll of the genetic dice. Death of the unfit, instead of survival of the fittest. We had a little service anyway. And it was very comforting.

*(Slide of stars)*

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;  
 Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
 Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;  
 Praise Father, Son, and Holy...

Can you believe that, Karen? I come all this way to talk to this guy to get more evidence and I find out the display is largely conjecture? That beyond the footprints and a couple of boxes of unrelated bones there are a few hundred people in the world who largely disagree on how to interpret even this scant evidence? And Karen says,

**KAREN**

It's like you tell your students after they fudge results on their labs: It is amazing how the conclusions drawn by scientists correspond with their preconceived assumptions.

**ADAM**

In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Something Ben said to me. The only thing they're 100 percent sure of is that at least two beings walked upright.

*(Slide of the Laetoli diorama.)*

You'll get a kick out of this. If one was female it proves she had already evolved a load-bearing pelvis to hold herself upright, which means she had a narrow birth canal, which means she was the earliest creature in history to give painful birth. And Karen says

**KAREN**

Let me get this straight. Two upright people walked side by side, and the female was the first one to give painful birth? Sounds to me like those could be the footprints left by Adam and Eve being kicked out of the Garden of Eden. Sorry. I know this is really hard for you.

**ADAM**

Yeah. I've never really questioned my faith in evolution, you know?

*(Slide of blank white screen)*

So I go back to school after Spring Break, I don't see Ben, but I'm scheduled for my second observation. The lesson is Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection. And I think this is a slam dunk because there's tons of evidence – bacteria, viruses, birds - and I've got a great hands-on lesson and I plan what I'm going to say to Ben, and to the class, to try to heal this rift, and I walk into my room, and the principal is there ready to observe... and the books all have warning stickers in them.

*(Slides of these stickers appear on the screen)*

WARNING: drawings of human "ancestors" are based on little evidence. WARNING: Radiometric dating is flawed and relies on untestable assumptions about decay constants. WARNING: No scientific experiment has ever been able to generate life from a mixture of chemicals.

And someone has even covered one of the books with a handwritten copy of the first chapter of Genesis.

*(ADAM shows us one of these books)*

And I say where did these come from?

And one of the kids says, “They just evolved out of chemicals in the air.”

And somebody else says, “You can’t bring your religion into a public school.”

And somebody else says, “You can’t spread lies!”

And the Principal is there writing and shaking, writing and shaking.

And some of the kids start tearing off the stickers and then the name-calling starts and the fighting and the screaming and the crying.

And the writing and the shaking.

And then I realize that Ben isn’t even there.

Where is Ben? Where is Ben?? WOULD SOMEBODY TELL ME WHERE BEN IS?

**PRINCIPAL**

Oh, his parents pulled him out to home-school him.

**ADAM**

I’ve lost him. Karen, I’ve lost Ben. Brightest, nicest, most polite kid in the class, when he doesn’t have a knife. Of all the kids in the class he is the one most capable of understanding the complexity of all this. And Karen says

**KAREN**

Maybe he just wants a version that makes him feel better. At least the unit’s almost over.

**ADAM**

Karen, tomorrow I am required by the syllabus to teach the lesson on Origins of Life.

**KAREN**

You could call in sick.

**ADAM**

No, I can’t. It’s my third and final observation. I’ve bombed the first two. I screw this up and that’s it for my job! If I teach the textbook one side will erupt, if I stray from the standards the other side will explode... My career, the career that I love, comes down to

the most polarizing lesson in the most polarizing course at the most polarizing time in our nation's history and I have absolutely no idea what to say or do. And Karen says

**KAREN**

Why don't you call Dave?

**ADAM**

Dave? My college friend from Australia? Dave, who once hanged himself in effigy to protest our college's dining service? Dave, who is an astrophysicist and a lay minister as well?

Of course!

Dave? Hey, it's Adam! And I tell him the story of Ben and the knife and the Museum and the stickers and he says

**DAVE**

*(with a heavy Aussie accent)* You Americans have gone absolutely crazy. Look at you, shouting at each other with your own volume turned up so high you can't hear what anybody else is saying. You see everything as black and white. Or Blue and Red. And if the other side scores even the tiniest victory you think it portends the extinction of everyone who thinks the way you do. But it's like you're already extinct with your brains as fossilized as those Laetoli footprints. You've forgotten that *Homo sapiens* means wise man, thinking man.

**ADAM**

OK, Dave, point taken, but what I really need to know is how do I teach a class on the Origins of Life as required by my principal that doesn't ignite civil unrest and allows me to keep my job. Look, can you just give me a quick and easy irrefutable and noncontroversial explanation of the origin of life?

**DAVE**

No.

**ADAM**

See, that's the problem. But at least tell me how you reconcile everything as man of science and a man of faith?

**DAVE**

Why do you assume they're different? Look, here's what we think we know. One day there was a supernova.

*(Slide of a supernova.)*

A giant exploding star that forged elements and sent them into a giant swirl that coalesced and made the Sun and the Earth and all the other planets with all these loose

elements. And of all the planets, Earth turned out to be the Goldilocks planet. Not too hot, not too cold, but just right. With a nice moon to keep our orbit steady, a nice magnetic center to deflect all the cosmic rays, and lucky enough to not get banged into by too many asteroids. And amidst these propitious circumstances, somehow, and this is where it starts to get sticky, somehow, some of the elements came together to form some interesting molecules, and somehow those molecules found a way to reproduce themselves and somehow what was once just a bunch of leftover stardust eventually gave rise to the first cells who got the party started. The amazing thing, the miracle, really, is that with so many things to go wrong, this one time, everything went right.

**ADAM**

But if I say it's just an explosion, random chemicals, blind luck, then half the class –

*(Slide of a supernova)*

**DAVE**

Who ever said it was blind?

**ADAM**

So you think those first cells had to be put together by a Creator? That it wasn't all random? That it was designed? Dave, I'm not allowed to say that.

**DAVE**

I know, Adam, but the way I see it, mate, when you're talking about that first moment, that first spark of life, whether it was God or whether it was spontaneous - it's pretty much the same either way. It was a magical moment. The magical moment. It all depends on how you want to look at it.

*(Slide of the young girl/old woman illusion captioned "THE PARABLE OF ANGELA, CONTINUED")*

**ANGELA**

Years after Violetta, when no one remembered her anymore, except for me, after many years in Bremen as a servant, I married a man named Hans. He was a good man, and a poor man. And one night, as I lay with him, I looked out the window, and I saw a star explode. I felt the spark of life. And I turned to Hans...Hans, there will be a child! And he held me, and we wept. And when the child was born there was much pain. The feet came first...but there were two feet this time, two perfect feet with ten perfect toes! And then a perfect little body of a little girl, and then two arms, with two perfect hands and ten perfect fingers, and then a head...and then...another head.

*(Slide of a two headed baby, then back to the previous slide.)*

We asked the minister why had this happened to us? We are good people! And he said

**MINISTER**

It can mean only one thing.

**ANGELA**

What does it mean?

**MINISTER**

That God has sent them for a reason. He has a special plan.

**ANGELA**

What is the plan?

**MINISTER**

I do not know. Only God knows. But you must love them and pray for them and God will take care of you.

*(Slide of Angela.)*

So we named them Maria and Christina.

Maria was the happy one. She would smile and gurgle and make little bubbles with her drool. Christina was not such a happy one. She slept most of the time and cried when she was awake...her lips were always a little blue. Christina would have fevers, but Maria would be perfectly fine. We took them to a doctor to see if there was some way to help Christina. The doctor said

**DOKTOR**

There is nothing I can do. I would pray for them if I were you. Now pay me thirty marks.

**ANGELA**

But we did not have thirty marks. We did not even have enough food for ourselves we were so poor. And how could God send us two mouths to feed when we could not even afford one? Now by this time the whole town had heard of Maria and Christina. And people are very curious, and they wanted to see, they wanted to look. Doctors, scientists, even the nuns. At first we let them look, but later, when there was no food, Hans said,

**HANS**

You will pay one pfennig for a look. You will pay for a look, ja?

**ANGELA**

And the people came and made a long line. "There are so many people in line, Hans! And the girls need to rest."

**HANS**

Then we raise the price. Ten pfennigs a look.

**ANGELA**

And the line grew longer.

**A FRAU**

If they charge *ten* pfennigs it must really be something!

**HANS**

Angela, don't you see, this is God's plan!!

**ANGELA**

But the magistrate said

**MAGISTRATE**

NO! This is indecent! This must cease at once!

**ANGELA**

But the people clamored to see. Some came back again and again. They brought their friends. They wanted to see, you see they wanted to learn. But the magistrate said

**MAGISTRATE**

No! We will not allow such things in this town! Have you no decency? You must leave this place at once.

**ANGELA**

Hans, were will we go? And what about the girls? But it did not matter to them. After thirty-three days, Christina's cries ceased. Maria still smiled, and she curled her perfect little fingers around my thumb. What do we now, Hans? What about Maria?

**HANS**

We must pray.

**ANGELA**

And as we prayed, Maria made a little cry, and I felt her little fingers slip from around my thumb.

And I wondered, "Is this part of God's plan, too?"

*(Slide of a supernova with DNA imposed on it is shown)*

**ADAM**

Today we know that conjoined twins like Maria and Christina are the result of an errant process in embryonic development. A carefully choreographed dance of migrating molecules – hundreds of varieties, each signaling to each other which step to take next in the elegant unfolding of an embryo, the unfurling of a new life. Sometimes that dance

develops to perfection, sometimes there is a misstep. It is only barely understood at the molecular level.

I wonder if understanding it in a scientific way makes a parent feel better when something goes wrong? Do they shed a different number of tears?

And even when we are lucky enough, when we are blessed with genetic viability at birth, our genes can disappoint us later on, far earlier than seems fair. For Karen, it happened in some DNA in a cell in her ovary that for whatever reason decided to keep on dividing long after it should have ceased. And that rogue cell's daughters then had the audacity to travel all over Karen's body and take up residence in any number of very important locations. At least they had the decency to do their work quickly, if not painlessly.

*(He opens his wallet to look at a picture of Karen.)*

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy...

Yeah, I still talk to her even though she's... Do you ever do that? It really does make me feel a little better. To think that she can hear me. To think there's a spirit there somewhere. And to think that someday I might be able to...

See, the idea that we are just a bunch of molecules, a bunch of leftover stardust arranged randomly, just here for a split second awaiting decomposition...it seems plausible but not pleasant.

OK, I still need a lesson on the Origins of Life. And I'm going to need some help. Karen? Angela? Lucy?

Dave?

### **DAVE**

It's a shame you can't teach about the end of life instead of the origins. See, Adam, if you could teach a lesson about the end of life, you wouldn't have to worry about proof because it's all speculation. And isn't the end more interesting anyway? Because it will end and there's any number of ways it'll happen. My money's on an asteroid.

*(Slide of an asteroid impacting the Earth)*

There's a big one every million years or so. Roughly. And the last one was a little over a million years ago. So we're due. A really big one would just about incinerate everything it impacts and make life a complete no go for everything it misses. And that could happen any day.

*(Slide of a solar flare)*

Of course, a really massive solar flare would rip to shreds the DNA of every living thing here on Earth and we'd never know what hit us. That could happen any day, too. But no matter what, in two billion years the moon is going to slip from its orbit and the Earth'll be wobbling around like a drunken sailor till the whole planet boils away.

**ADAM**

Dave, did you just suddenly have a crisis of faith here?

**DAVE**

Crisis? Hardly! It's in Second Peter. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with a fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."

Don't be downhearted, mate. Worlds end all the time. I've seen it. Dozens of times.

Supernovas.

*(Slide of a supernova)*

Whenever a really big star explodes, and they explode every so often, if they've got planets, and if there's life on those planets, then that's it. That won't happen to us. We're too far away from any really big stars. It's a shame though. I'd like our world to end from an exploding star, because even though it'd be the end of our world, it could be the beginning of another. It's all in how you look at it really.

*(Slide of the young girl/old woman,  
captioned "THE PARABLE OF ANGELA,  
CONCLUDED")*

**ANGELA**

Many years later, after Hans and I had moved away, it was during a war, some war, I forget which one, Hans was killed. I was alone in our home one night when the bombs were exploding all around me, but as I slept, in my dreams I thought the explosions were stars. And I dreamed that I conceived a child. And when the child was born it was a boy, with two arms, two legs, ten fingers, ten toes...and not one, not two, but three heads. I was told the bishop wanted to see them...at no charge. Would he banish me? Would he tell me to pray? I would not go to the bishop. The bishop came to me.

**BISHOP**

What are their names?

**ANGELA**

I have not named them. My babies never last very long and I am tired of burying babies.

**BISHOP**

It can mean only one thing.

**ANGELA**

If you are going to tell me that I have displeased God or that I should pray...

**BISHOP**

Angela...Angel. You have not displeased God. God has looked upon you with special favor. He has blessed you with the sign of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit...in one body! You are blessed among women and your reward will be rich.

**ANGELA**

How do you know?

**BISHOP**

Angela, what else could it mean?

**ANGELA**

But that was just a dream. I never had any other children. And now I am the old woman. But sometimes when I look in the mirror, if I look in just the right way I can catch a glimpse of the young girl who looked up at the sky and saw the stars explode.

*(The slide fades to black. ADAM addresses us.)*

**ADAM**

Class, today's lesson is on the Origins of Life. But first, I'd like to start with a picture. You have a very powerful brain, you *Homo sapiens*, the most powerful thinking machine there is. And I want you to try to push that brain as far as it can go. I want you to see if you can hold in your head two completely different realities at the exact same time.

*(The Slide of the young girl/old woman fades in slowly. It fades out slowly.)*

**End of play**