

## **THE IDOL MAKER'S SON**

By

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### **Characters**

**Avi:** An intelligent young man with annoying questions.

**Mara:** The girl in the stall next to his.

**Terah:** His father, who runs an idol shop.

**Amsali:** Avi's mother.

**Raziel:** The guardian of secrets and Avi's otherworld mentor.

**Rich Customer:** Wants to buy an idol.

**Beggar:** Near death from fasting.

**Woman:** Looking for an infant.

**Customer Two:** Wants a smallish idol.

**Extras** in the market place: as many as you need.

**Act I****Scene I**

*(At rise on a busy Mesopotamian market place. Avi sits at a small table beneath a canopy lost in deep thought. A richly dressed customer approaches Avi's stall.)*

**Rich Customer**

Hey, kid! Are you selling gods for festivals and all occasions? *(Avi is still lost in thought.)* Hey, I'm talking to you! What kind of gods do you sell here? *(Absent mindedly, Avi bites into an apple.)* Hey, you piece of meat with two eyes, I need to buy a god! *(Avi is startled and knocks the gods all over the table. Everyone around him laughs.)*

**Avi**

I'm sorry. I'm afraid I didn't hear you. *(He stands the fallen gods up.)* May I help you?

**Rich Customer**

Do I have to put salt in your eyes and pepper in your nose to get a rise out of you? You look like you're the one in need of help.

**Mara**

Oh, he's like that. I'm surprised he can find his way home sometimes.

**Avi**

Mara, go back and sell your watered-down beer! I've got work to do!

**Rich Customer**

Ah, good, now we can do some business. I need to purchase a god.

**Avi**

I see, well, I've got plenty of gods on hand, today, just for you!

**Rich Customer**

All is not butter that comes from a cow...but I'm sure I'll find what I'm looking for!

**Avi**

Just a moment.

**Rich Customer**

Uhh...what's wrong?

**Avi**

Before we enter this transaction, there are certain responsibilities which need to be taken care of. It wouldn't be fair to you if I ignored them.

**Rich Customer**

Fine, I understand. Do what you must.

**Avi**

Good. First, by purchasing any deity you, the buyer, assume all responsibilities for that, or any other particular deity or deities, regardless of your good standing with the deity, or deities. Second, as the buyer, should you anger the deity or deities, the buyer, you, will assume all curses, ill will, and blights unto the tenth generation. The buyer will in no way hold the maker, the seller, or his seed, in any way responsible for said anger, curses, ill will, or blights.

**Rich Customer**

Hey, what are you trying to pull here?

**Avi**

Look, I'm not pulling anything. But any businessman and his customer need to be really clear on each other's responsibilities when a sale is made.

**Rich Customer**

I guess that goes without saying. Is there anything else?

**Avi**

Yes, just a little more. Please be patient.

**Rich Customer**

Get on with it! I haven't got all day!

**Avi**

I have to recite a disclaimer.

**Rich Customer**

Recite it so we can get on with the sale!

**Avi**

Here's the disclaimer: All gods and goddesses available from our shop are strictly fictional or delusions based on the ideas or thoughts of mad, or fearful cults, or individuals. Any resemblance to actual people, working entities, or deity or deities is strictly coincidental.

**Rich Customer**

Will you just sell me a god?

**Avi**

Are you assuming the responsibilities?

**Rich Customer**

Do you deal in gods, or just agreements and hot air?

**Avi**

Yes, I'm selling gods. Do you still want one?

**Rich Customer**

If you're done blathering, yes.

**Avi**

What sort of God are you looking for?

**Rich Customer**

I want a truly mighty one.

**Avi**

Only an idiot would ask for less.

**Rich Customer**

In fact, I want one as powerful as I am!

**Avi**

You're not asking for much.

**Rich Customer**

What did you say?

**Avi**

I said you're asking for less.

**Rich Customer**

What are you saying? Are you calling me an idiot?

**Avi**

I didn't say anything like that...but, well, now that you've brought it up, I only said you were settling for less in a god.

**Rich Customer**

Never mind, just sell me a god!

**Avi**

*(Avi reaches for the largest god on the table)* That will be five gold pieces.

**Rich Customer**

He pretty big, but is he mighty?

**Avi**

How mighty are you?

**Rich Customer**

I don't like to boast, but I have more gold at my disposal than you can imagine.

**Avi**

That's very impressive!

**Rich Customer**

I have enough resources and slaves to make King Nimrod turn a little green.

**Avi**

You're almost Royalty yourself to hear you tell it!

**Rich Customer**

No, no! Come on, please...shut your mouth! The last thing I need is for King Nimrod or one of court pets to hear you. I'd lose everything and the only high position I could count on would be from the limb of a tree.

**Avi**

Sorry, but you were sounding rather mighty.

**Rich Customer**

*(The customer holds up a money bag.)* With all this at my fingertips, I can do anything or have whatever I want...as long as I'm discreet.

**Avi**

You can do anything?

**Rich Customer**

Yes, I can.

**Avi**

Ahh...interesting. Hey, did you create a world?

**Rich Customer**

What?



**Avi**

Can you create a world?

**Rich Customer**

Are you out of your mind asking questions like that?

**Avi**

It's a fair question! Did you create this world or not?

**Rich Customer**

Only a god can do something like that, kid!

**Avi**

You said you could do anything!

**Rich Customer**

I didn't mean it that way!

**Avi**

You did ask me for a god as mighty as you!

**Rich Customer**

I don't have the powers of a god. What are you, the village idiot?

**Avi**

No, but I don't run around telling people I how mighty I am. Did you say I was stupid?

**Rich Customer**

You're stretching the point. Many things can be done with wealth.

**Avi**

But you can't create a world.

**Rich Customer**

No, of course not.

**Avi**

The god you want can't be much of a god. If you knew anything about the gods, you wouldn't have made such a request!

**Rich Customer**

And, of course, you know everything, you annoying little charlatan!

**Avi**

I wouldn't say that. But I do know that everything has to start from one point. And I don't care if there are one thousand gods! Someone, or something, started everything in this world. There must be some god over all the others!

**Rich Customer**

How old are you anyway? How much life experience do you have to make you so smart and wise?

**Avi**

I'm fifteen. How old are you?

**Rich Customer**

I've been around 55 years longer than you.

**Mara**

Just sell a god, Avi.

**Rich Customer**

I think you're a little crazy!

**Avi**

You don't know from crazy! My dad just made this god yesterday. Now you, a person of seventy plan on taking this thing that's only a day-old home, and bowing to it in prayer. And you call me crazy?

**Rich Customer**

I'm not taking any more from a punk like you. Here's your god! (The Customer throws the idol at Avi.) Now give me my money back! (Avi throws some money far out over the Customer's head.) The temple priests will hear of this! (The Customer goes running after the money.)

**Mara**

Avi, don't you think you should have just sold a god?

**Avi**

What?

**Mara**

The whole time you were arguing you never got the money. That was your money you threw.

**Avi**

I don't care. It was money made under false pretenses.

**Mara**

What are you talking about?

**Avi**

These gods don't mean a thing. They don't work, they're nothing but junk.

**Mara**

You shouldn't talk about the gods that way. What if the temple priests hear you? They can curse you. Didn't you hear what your customer said about going to the temple priests?

**Avi**

They won't hear a word.

**Mara**

What makes you say that, Avi?

**Avi**

No complaint will be lodged to the temple priests. The customer didn't lose any money. Only my money was taken.

**Mara**

That customer still came out ahead.

**Avi**

He did?

**Mara**

That person took your money, Stupid, and your father's really going to be mad at you!

**Avi**

Like that's never happened before...

**Mara**

You never learn, do you?

**Avi**

Not the things I want to learn.

**Mara**

What do you want to learn?

**Avi**

I want to know how the world started. I want to know what gods are real and what gods aren't. I want to know if there's any real purpose to our existence. Where does everything come from?

**Mara**

Everything comes from the gods.

**Avi**

And where did they come from?

**Mara**

They came from the elder gods.

**Avi**

And where did they come from?

**Mara**

Who knows? I guess they've always been around.

**Avi**

There...Mara, that's the same answer I always get. My own father, Terah, the maker of gods, tells me the same thing. That answer never satisfies me. It's no answer.

**Mara**

Stop talking that way! The priests will hear you!

**Avi**

What can they do?

**Mara**

They'll kill you with magic. Others have said some of the same things, and now they're dead!

**Avi**

Wishing for something doesn't make it happen.

**Mara**

Avi, they'll curse you. You'll die. It happened to someone just a year ago.

**Avi**

Do you know how they probably kill people?

**Mara**

I don't want to find out.

**Avi**

There's nothing special about it. They just hire some thugs to waylay their prey in the darkness of night. Or perhaps they hire some toothless old hag to drop poison in their food when no one is not looking. Where's the magic in that? They rule you with fear. *(Avi's father, Terah enters the scene.)*

**Terah**

Avi, shut up!

**Mara**

Good day, Terah.

**Terah**

Good day, Mara. How's business today?

**Mara**

Slow, sir. It'll pick up when the shops close. Everyone wants a brew before they head for home.

**Terah**

You'll have your own shop before long! Avi, how are we doing today?

**Avi**

We haven't made much today, Aba!

**Terah**

Weren't there any browsers, or people who might come back?

**Avi**

A few stopped by.

**Terah**

Have you tried selling anything?

**Avi**

There was one customer, but it didn't work out.

**Terah**

What do you mean it didn't work out?

**Avi**

The customer got mad and left.

**Terah**

You argued again.

**Avi**

Well...the customer wanted a god as powerful as themselves...and

**Terah**

If a customer says the sky is green you agree!

**Avi**

Aba, I was dealing with a total fool!

**Terah**

It doesn't matter! The only thing that matters is giving them what they want so we get their money!

**Avi**

What about the gods?

**Terah**

This is their place for us in the world and this is how we serve them.

**Avi**

We make money off of the gods?

**Terah**

Son, people need some kind of order in their life. People need to feel like someone's watching over them. I'm going home and we can talk about this tonight over dinner. Just don't aggravate any more costumers. Agree with them and give them what they want!  
*(Terah leaves the marketplace.)*

**Mara**

He's right. A customer doesn't need to know what you think. They don't care. They're only concerned with their own desires. You're just here to give them what they want.

**Avi**

You mean it doesn't matter if what they're buying is just dead rubbish with no power?

**Mara**

They put the meaning in themselves. It's not your place to judge them. Go become a priest, or a king if you want to do that.

**Avi**

I don't like taking money for meaningless work.

**Mara**

Well, think of yourself as an art dealer.

**Avi**

Dad's work isn't that good.

**Mara**

I can say the same about your selling technique. *(They both laugh. A customer approaches Avi's stall. Rejuvenated, he stands to wait on the customer. Action freezes, lights fade.)*

**End Scene 1****Scene 2**

*(It's dinner time. The family is gathered around a place by the open hearth.)*

**Terah**

Avi, you had only one job, and you failed because you couldn't keep your mouth shut.

**Avi**

I'm sorry, Aba.

**Terah**

Being sorry doesn't bring in money! We didn't get much yesterday, or today. We didn't even make enough for the overhead! And we're running out of supplies.

**Avi**

I did manage to sell four pieces the day before yesterday...

**Terah**

You should be able to sell four times that on a good day. That's a very good location and you're squandering it!

**Avi**

I'll try harder tomorrow, Aba.

**Amsali**

He doesn't want you to just try. He wants you to do what you said you'd do.

**Avi**

But I am doing what I said I'd do. I'm going out there and selling this junk!



**Amsali**

Junk? How can you call the gods junk?

**Avi**

They aren't gods! They're just pieces of wood carved to look like someone nobody has seen face to face.

**Terah**

Someone must have seen them once for the idea to exist, son.

**Avi**

Really, have you ever seen them, Aba? How about you, Ema? Has any priest ever seen a real god up close?

**Amsali**

Don't say that, son, please don't.

**Avi**

It's always the same! Every time I ask my question someone tells me to shut up, or I might be killed or cursed. What's wrong with everyone? Why is the whole world afraid to ask questions and look for truth?

What's wrong? Is truth so dangerous? Why does everyone deny it, or proclaim it can't be understood?

**Terah**

Avi, just calm down. You're just one little bug in a big world. Your question is too big.

**Avi**

Aba, are you saying I'm stupid?

**Amsali**

No, he's not saying that. Your question is too big for anyone who isn't a priest, or a king.

**Avi**

I've asked priests.

**Amsali**

What sort of things have you asked them?

**Avi**

Where do the gods come from? Why do people exist? Why do we die? Where do we go when we die? What is there beyond the moon and the stars? What's the point of being alive if all you can expect is death?

**Amsali**

Thinking about this makes one crazy. You should think in the here and now.

**Terah**

You're mother's right! Think about the here and now...and yes, the here and now is about getting ready to go to the marketplace and sell more of the gods.

**Avi**

That's no answer.

**Terah**

It's here and now.

**Avi**

To your purse and your stomach, it has meaning. But it doesn't answer my questions.

**Amsali**

Ponder on a full stomach tonight, as you go to sleep.

**Avi**

There has to be more to life than all this!

**Terah**

You're serving the gods. That should be enough.

**Avi**

I'm not serving anything but silver, gold and our stomachs.

**Terah**

When you've got enough silver, gold and food, you can think about anything you want.

**Avi**

Isn't there more to life than that?

**Both Parents**

Who knows?

**Avi**

But you've lived longer than I have. You ought to know.

**Terah**

To survive isn't enough, Avi. You want you and your family to be comfortable and live a good life. You'll understand someday.

**Avi**

Aba, I'm not stupid! But the gods, the world, the sky...I don't think it's like people, the king or his priests say.

**Amsali**

You want a stick on your back?

**Terah**

What for? His back will hurt, my arm will get tired, and the stick will only break. It won't change him, or answer his questions. Just do your job and keep your mouth shut. You're young, and you have things to learn. This is my fault. I put you out there without telling you the most important thing.

**Avi**

What's that?

**Terah**

Always remember, no matter the circumstances of the person you're dealing with...rich or poor, king or peasant, priest or supplicant...the customer is always right...even if he's an idiot, or arrogant, smells bad, or you feel like knocking him on the head...it doesn't matter. He is always right, even if he's trying to cheat you. As long as you get his money and move your goods, that's all that counts. Money is something you can see, feel, and use. Money is solid. The gods may or may not be true. You can't grasp them. But you can grasp a coin. Never forget that.

**Avi**

There's no chance of that, not with the way you keep lecturing about money.

**Terah**

The world exists because of because of Law, order, and labor!

**Avi**

What about good deeds?

**Terah**

What's the point of a good deed if you get nothing for it?

**Avi**

Doing something good for someone isn't about getting anything back.

**Terah**

Then what's the point of doing it if there's no reward?

**Avi**

You help make the world a better place.

**Terah**

What for? You've done something for nothing. That's a waste of labor.

**Amsali**

It's better to do good deeds for your family and friends. Why waste the time on strangers? A stranger will never appreciate what you do for him. But a friend or a member of the family should be more important to you.

**Terah**

Your mother's right. We need to work together. I know you have questions about life. The answers you want aren't easy to find. If they were, people wouldn't need gods, magic, or good luck. *(Avi finishes his meal, looks at his mother and father in sulky silence and gets up to leave for bed.)*

**Avi**

I'm going to bed now.

**Terah**

Think about what I told you.

**Avi**

I was going to do that anyway...goodnight. *(Avi leaves the room.)*

**Terah**

Where does his madness come from?

**Amsali**

There's no insanity in my family.

**Terah**

Yes, there is, your great-great-great grandfather, the one with the boat and all the animals, he was off his head. And he was a drunk.

**Amsali**

Never mind that. Would you like beer or wine before you turn in?

**Terah**

I'll take some wine and hope tomorrow will be a better day. *(She gets up, picks up a jug and pours it on his head. Everyone freezes and the lights fade.)*

**End of scene 2**

**Scene 3**

*(At Rise, the lights are dim. Avi is under blankets in a cave. The Stage lights are dim. He uncovers himself and rises in a sleepy stupor.)*

**Avi**

What's wrong? Is it morning? Where is everybody? Hey, what's going on? *(There is an echo.)* Where am I? I can't see anything. *(He stumbles around to find his way and bumps into a cave wall and falls down.)* This place is dangerous!... How did I end up in here? I hate this. I don't know where I'm going. I don't even

know where I've been. *(He lies on his back in dejection.)* I wish just one of those gods my dad makes was real...I may as well just die for all it's worth. Everything is pointless. If only I could have some light so I could see where I am before I die. *(The lights become brighter and he sees he's in a cave with beautiful formations.)* Oh, so that's what I bumped into. Who would have thought something so beautiful could hurt so much? *(He becomes cautious.)* Wait a minute, where did this light come from? *(An Angel steps out from behind a formation. Avi is startled when Raziel speaks.)*

**Raziel**

Wasn't that what you wanted? Some light to help you find your way?

**Avi**

You scared the beans and soup out of me! How did you get in here?

**Raziel**

I got here the same way you did.

**Avi**

I don't remember how I got here. I just ended up here. First, I was wandering around in the dark, and suddenly there was light. I don't even know how it happened.

**Raziel**

You know where you're going now...right? Wasn't that what you were whining about?

**Avi**

I can see, but I still don't know where I am or where I'm going.

**Raziel**

Of course, you do.

**Avi**

No, I don't. I'm lost in some cave. That's all I know.

**Raziel**

There you are, and now you know more than you did before.

**Avi**

I don't know much more.

**Raziel**

You didn't ask for much more...oh, that reminds me. Here's the other thing you asked for. *(He tosses a wooden god at Avi.)*

**Avi**

This is just a wooden god. It's not real.

**Raziel**

It's real enough.

**Avi**

I beg to differ.

**Raziel**

Oh, you do, do you?

**Avi**

This isn't a real god. It's just a chunk of carved wood. It won't guide me out of this place.

**Raziel**

It's real...the wood is real, anyway. I'll admit the carving's a little crude, but it has a proper physical reality.

**Avi**

It won't show me the way out.

**Raziel**

Don't be so negative.

**Avi**

You're telling me this guy is responsible for the light in this cave? Do you think I'm stupid?

**Raziel**

You could set him on fire and get more light.

**Avi**

Is that a sign from this god?

**Raziel**

No, it's a sign of how you set wood on fire and use it as a torch in dark places. You're such a caveman!

**Avi**

What you said was offensive. I'm no troglodyte.

**Raziel**

And I was all set to call you Troggy. It's a nickname my family has for guys like you.

**Avi**

Nickname? Family? I don't know you, or your family. This is the first time I've even met you.

**Raziel**

You were just a baby when we met. You wouldn't remember anyway, but you've been in here before.

**Avi**

Am I supposed to know you?

**Raziel**

You have questions, and you want answers.

**Avi**

Wait, how do you know my family?

**Raziel**

We did a little babysitting for them.

**Avi**

My parents never told me about this place or anything about your family.

**Raziel**

They wouldn't remember and if they did, they wouldn't want anyone else knowing about it.



**Avi**

Well, like who?

**Raziel**

People like King Nimrod, for starters. But he's not so important.

**Avi**

Now you've just made me more curious. You're giving me more questions than answers.

**Raziel**

You have to chase down truth.

**Avi**

You're not making any sense.

**Raziel**

You asked for light. I gave you a little. You can see now, and you know where you are. Everything else is just friendly conversation.

**Avi**

So, could I ask about something else?

**Raziel**

Sure, be my guest.

**Avi**

What's your name?

**Raziel**

I'm called Raziel.

**Avi**

That's an interesting name. What does it mean?

**Raziel**

It means Secret of the Creator.

**Avi**

Hmm.

**Raziel**

Others say it means Keeper of Secrets.

**Avi**

Yeah, sounds legit.

**Raziel**

But some will tell you it means Revealer of Secrets.

**Avi**

So, which is it? It can't have all three meanings.

**Raziel**

What not?

**Avi**

I don't think the world works that way.

**Raziel**

You know so much about how the world works?

**Avi**

Tell me how it works, then.

**Raziel**

I can't tell you.

**Avi**

Why not?

**Raziel**

Because it's a secret.

**Avi**

I think I'm getting mad.

**Raziel**

You were born mad. What I'm doing is making you angry.

**Avi**

Can't you be straight and upfront about anything? Come on, give me a straight answer!

**Raziel**

It's not that everything is twisted or covered, that's not how it is at all. It's more like this; everything is connected to everything and it only looks that way.

**Avi**

I don't know what you mean, but it makes sense and I think it's got something to do with my questions.

**Raziel**

Of course, it does.

**Avi**

How do you know?

**Raziel**

It's part of my job to know.

**Avi**

Job? Hey, who do you work for anyway?

**Raziel**

Oh, I work for my dad.

**Avi**

I work for my dad, too. What does your dad do? I've never seen him in the market before.

**Raziel**

You wouldn't see him there, but he's around. He's into building and making things. He's a designer.

**Avi**

Does he work for the King?

**Raziel**

Uhh...no.

