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## **The Blessed** Chris Moylan

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## **Chris Moylan**

### THE BLESSED

The last day. Against a chiarascuro background flecked with sparks and tongues of flame, we see a middle-aged man, scholarly and self-assured, with grey eyes and a fringe of nut brown hair around a bald pate. For the sake of others behind him and above, he removes the axe from his brainpan and hides the slick metal under his seat. Beside him, a woman spreads her pleated skirt and tilts the silver tray so two naked eyes there may see the stars without offense. In the mezzanine, an older woman leans back in the velvet cushions of her death. Her lips move in prayer. Breasts plump under her corset as she reaches the pater noster. She is not at peace.

The theater is crowded with these. All the saints are praying, and everyone is afraid, groping in blood and bubble gum for bits and pieces of their form selves mislaid in the dark. Sets of teeth grip on bits of fabric, doorknobs. A suit of flesh hangs indecorously from a chandelier. The floor is littered with discarded emblems: wagon wheels, dental equipment, loaves of bread, tiaras, a bull tethered on a chain.

Soon all this will sort itself out, and the bodies will resolve beautifully into their perfected forms. Nonetheless, they are worried. They have heard of winding stairs, attics white with seagulls poised for the eyes, of circus rides and chain saws spun reel to reel while light shatters on a screen.

Questions fly from row seats. How does "Gone with the Wind" differ from a household appliance, "Last Days at Marienbad" from silence at Tours, Manzikert? If you need to ask, says Augustine, you shouldn't be here. But we're not here, says Clare, and you were always difficult.

They'll learn, they'll watch frame by frame, with all their might, if they must. The fellow doing rope tricks. The sexual acrobats. The wild Indians in feathers and paint. It has been explained that God will be late. But the spirit is present. Its small voice speaks to the upraised eyes. Clap your hands or Tinkerbell dies, clap your hands or the goddamned fairy dies.