

GOD

.... and other plays



ANDY KAUFMAN

God
... and other plays

ANDY KAUFMAN

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Preface

My brother, Andrew Geoffrey Kaufman, was a prolific writer.

From the time he was 12 until his death at age 35 in 1984, he wrote constantly. Poems, short stories, plays, even novels. He would write on paper napkins, small scraps of paper, address books, spiral notebooks, looseleaf paper or lined legal pads. Occasionally, he would type his work, but mostly it was all hand-written - or more accurately, hand scrawled.

Most of his early writing was done unbeknownst to the family. While Andy's classmates were awake in class, Andy was asleep. While his fellow classmates were sleeping at night, teenager Andy was awake into the wee hours of the morning, writing about his observations of the day, giving vent to his boundless imagination and developing characters and acts which we would later recognize as having been germinated during this stage of his youth. I became aware of this when I started reading his work after he died. Andy dated almost all of his writing, usually including the time of day, and after he graduated high school, would scribble the address of where he did his writing.

After graduating high school in 1967, he spent the next year driving a taxi, a delivery truck and washing dishes. While most of his affluent classmates went on to college, Andy worked, saving enough to buy a \$400 used Cadillac limousine. He once had our father dress up as a chauffeur and drive him around Great Neck while he lounged in the backseat, waving at pedestrians like a star on parade. Andy used his limo to pick me up from my summer job parking cars at a fancy country club, entertain his friends, and otherwise have a grand time doing something most kids wouldn't have imagined.

In September 1968 he enrolled at Graham Junior College. He began learning transcendental meditation on December 5 of that year and two months later started writing GOD. While Andy was a freshman, LBJ was President, gasoline was 25¢ a gallon, and the Vietnam war was in full-swing. Andy, at 20 years old, had successfully avoided being drafted into the Army by scoring a zero on the psychological exam.

GOD was written during a time when Andy was exploring and challenging the norms of the world. Actually, when wasn't he? Having been brought up in the Jewish faith he was taught to have a certain view of God. But Andy always had a devilish, impish "what if" quality to him. Along with his newly found discipline of meditation, he was exploring the boundaries of what one was allowed to think, let alone, write.

To the best of my knowledge, GOD was the only one of Andy's plays ever performed. He had it produced by his classmate, Al Parinello, who managed the coffeehouse on campus. Andy showed the world his ability to walk in and out of different characters, and be totally immersed in each one. The few people who were fortunate to be his audience at that time witnessed up close what the rest of the world would later discover, Andy's amazingly convincing ability to instantly transform characters.

When you read GOD think of the different characters of Andy that you know. Nice Andy, mean Andy, innocent child Andy, wrestling Andy, Tony Clifton Andy, Foreign man Andy, Vic Ferrari playboy Andy, and all the other Andy's or possible Andy's. You'll see one full page of "tee-hee-hee". When he performed this piece, he said each of the 124 "tee-hee-hee's", giving meaning to every one of them. He was not merely being cute or filling up a page with this innocent girl's giggle. He has another page of a baby's "ga ga goo's." Again, each goo and ga had its purpose.

Most of Andy's writings, from his poetry and plays to his short stories and novels, are a self-exposition, if not self-exploration. As such, many of his writings are somewhat obviously autobiographical. While GOD is not as obvious, I challenge you to see Andy in the story. Is he Larry Prescott, a delivery truck driver like Andy, who goes on to become an entertainer more famous than Elvis? Larry Prescott becomes even more famous than God. Is Larry Prescott Elvis? Andy? Or is Andy Tinctured Puncture, who has magical ways and doesn't find it necessary to speak, which his family doesn't understand. Is Gina his ideal girl: Innocent with a magic to her? Is the "nasal tone" character the first signs of Tony Clifton? The Queen beats up her macho King, just like bravado Tony Clifton would get beat up by females. A King as a vulnerable wimp? Go figure! But, don't limit Andy to being any one of these characters - there was probably a little of him in each.

Andy brings some personal, however innocuous, tidbits into GOD. He adapts part of the Camp Lenox alma mater, "High on a Stately Mountain High," a sleep away camp he attended for three years as a child. He works in the words to part of the Coasters' hit song, "Charlie Brown". He works in the nursery rhyme "4 and 20 blackbirds" as part of a sentence.

Andy loved amusement parks, where one could escape into a world of fantasy without being looked at funny. He viewed life through the eyes of an innocent child, who saw the world as a big amusement park. Our family would visit Coney Island every year, and after Andy was famous, he remained an amusement park enthusiast. Even if he had to wear the sweatshirt with a ridiculous hood that he would tie tightly around his head to be incognito, he would still go. In fact, Andy told me he wanted to put a roller coaster in Manhattan. It would go up, down, and around the skyscrapers. It might have been designed as a mode of transportation, according to his rationale. Andy liked to break down barriers, and thought anything was possible. I can still hear him saying "ya never know. . .".

A WORD OF CAUTION: One night, early in Andy's career, my friends, Alan and Jeff, and I drove Andy into Manhattan to perform. I parked the car with Alan, after we had dropped off Andy and Jeff on the sidewalk outside the nightclub. After parking, he walked towards the nightclub only to find them in the same spot we left them. I got angry and accused them of being lazy and waiting for us to help with the dirty work of bringing Andy's multitude of instruments and props downstairs. Then I learned that Andy had already been downstairs at the club, started setting up, lost his audience in the process of dawdling and was kicked out by an irate manager. Waiting for Andy's punchline could be slow agony. On this night the audience gave him the punch. For those who waited during the subsequent dozen years of Andy's career, the wait was usually worth it, even if there was no punchline.

GOD was written to be delivered orally, by Andy. (Our Great Uncle Sidney and Great Aunt Anne were supposedly the only two people who understood the book when Andy wrote it, as the story goes). Reading it may be slow. But remember, there IS a payoff.

The performance pieces included in this book are an example of Andy inviting us to enter his own interior world with him, something he continued the rest of his life, no matter what he did or where he went. So join Andy in his wonderful world of fantasy. Let yourself go with the flow. You be the judge if there's a message, and along the way, enjoy the ride.

Michael A. Kaufman
December 1999

Foreword

I remember September 14, 1969 like it was last Tuesday. It was the day the most interesting man I've ever known introduced me, and an audience of co-students at Boston's Graham Junior College, to his life's work. The man was Andy Kaufman, and the work he performed was a novel called, appropriately enough, GOD.

What makes this significant is the fact that Andy was in his early 20's at the time, and he was acting out his story about a life he hadn't yet lived. But only he knew that. To us, it appeared old hat to him. Sure, you may think, that's about right for Andy Kaufman, but that's because you know of his on-the-edge antics and his subsequent fame. In 1969 he was about as famous as any lonely student away from home on a college campus.

Life, as the axiom goes, throws many of us an occasional curve ball, but in the fall of 1969, Andy Kaufman was thrown into my life like a perfectly placed fast ball. I didn't swing for the seats. I didn't have to. Rather, I sat back and enjoyed our friendship, strange as it was. Nonetheless, Andy rocketed out of the ballpark and continued on that fascinating trajectory until his untimely death in 1984.

Surprisingly, meeting and befriending Andy as a young student wasn't spectacular. As a matter of fact, it was quite ordinary, even bordering on boring at times. We both missed our families and we both anticipated successful, albeit undefined, careers in media. Graham, as the pre-eminent broadcasting school in the country, was the place to learn.

I solved loneliness by running for office on the student council, and winning. My platform was to organize and open a campus coffeehouse, "Al's Place," all the rage in the 60's. Andy took a rather eclectic road to meeting people. He joined the Transcendental Meditation Center in near-

by Cambridge, where he learned the art of relaxing and contemplating every moment of his life. In a particularly telling discussion, years later in my living room, he referred to "TM" as "only thing I ever did that I take seriously." One of the great honors of my life is that I was given the opportunity to be the first person to hire Andy as a stage performer...

Andy showed up one day at my "office," the back door of the coffee house, and said, in a very straightforward, if not bland, voice, "I would like you to hire me because I'm funny." My response, "Well, you don't seem very funny," didn't deter him, despite the fact that I continued to book other promising acts, such as Livingston Taylor. After two or three more rather pathetic requests on his part, I relented, driving a hard bargain that got him hired for \$5.00. His premiere coffeehouse appearance was dominated by Mighty Mouse, conga drums, foreign man, kids' songs, some very tacky party humor and, of course, the soon to be familiar feeling that something was wrong and out of control. But the finale ultimately came and quickly cured the discomfort. Out of nowhere...a perfectly executed portrayal of his idol, Elvis! I can still hear the room buzz, coeds swooning and screaming, really screaming. Something very important happened that night.

Shortly after, Andy suggested that he perform GOD, his one-man play, as he called it. He also called it his novel, his story. I negotiated another hard \$5.00 deal and people showed up to see him again, this time reading and acting out GOD.

As you read the words to GOD I implore you to think "ANDY KAUFMAN." This is a work that needs to be more than read. It needs to be performed to get the most out of it. Andy is no longer available for the job, so I suggest that you imagine Andy in his glorious outrageous way, performing all the parts, ridiculously overacting. See him in your mind and hear his voices instantly change as he becomes the very cast of players you are about to meet. I assure you, as a Kaufman fan, you'll know instinctively just what characteristics Andy would have aptly applied to each of the personalities.

The research shows that Andy only performed the play GOD several times. Maybe only 50 or so individuals on this planet were fortunate enough to witness the performances. As one, I can still bring back the experience, and often do so. I remember being confused, but not minding the discomfort, because there was always a goal, something more. Something to look forward to. We were all brought closer and closer to an answer, closer and closer to the middle of an ever-amusing amusement park. In retrospect, Andy instinctively knew that all of us need to be motivated to keep going on, and, more importantly, all of us are searching in some way for an answer, if we only knew the question.

I wrote a review for the college newspaper about my experience that night, the reprinted version of which is included in this book. Outside of

the trite verse of a college freshman, one sentence stands out like a smack to the head with a blunt instrument: "GOD proved to be worth its weight in bottled clouds." I remember writing that sentence 30 years ago and I remember questioning myself about what it meant. I couldn't answer truthfully. I only knew that it worked to describe what I had seen. I still feel the same way. If any one person could bottle a weightless cloud and preserve its interpretive nature for everlasting enjoyment, it would be Andy. Perhaps that's exactly what he has done here.

Enjoy GOD. It's special!

Al Parinello
November 1999

God

I

Hearken thou: Art sinners all. I see ye in thou bloomers everyday picking some bits from one another's brows. Thou art comely into forbidden grounds.

I saw that ye were good. I loved ye more than ever. My patience hath abounding. Properties of perfunctory function. Yet I too have my limits; not that I have any limits at all. Nonetheless. I do not. Perfection overtakes my regular. Yet I wish to limit my perfunct. Hast thou cherished the abdominal places of thou hearts?

THOU SHALT SUFFER

my friend.

THOU SHALT SUFFER

more than ever.

Thou hast sinned. Thou ist still sinning. Every day. All de time. Thou canst doest thist to me.

GO.

Down on your knees and suffer(you shall).

Damn you ass (baby).

ha ha ha

Tinctured Puncture

Tan face and narrow eyes.

Straight mouth.

Handsome doll.

He walked down the streets of bustling city. Never grinned, never frowned. Always looked satisfied.

His legs carried his body throughout. Floated through. Arms waved back and forth in perfect rhythm. His head above all, Float. Floating. Gold hair.

People of course noticed him, but they did not stop and stare. He was not a movie star.

Never stepped on a crack on the sidewalk.

Never moved out of anybody's way; never had to. Just walked straight. A single line.

He stopped. Stared up at the big office building. Others looked up too.

His mouth opened. Just a tiny crack. Beautiful.

He looked both ways.

Coughed. Fell. Choked. Tongue.

Gina wore the cutest bellbottoms. I mean just the cutest. You know, they fit her tight at the waist and gradually became looser until they went way way out at the bottom.

She always giggled ("Tee-hee-hee").

This time she walked down a city street and window shopped ("Tee-hee-hee"). Her short black hair like a pixie. She was just the cutest thing.

A man approached her. Confidential sneer.

"Hey baby."

"Tee-hee-hee."

"Uh-uh said hey baby."

"Tee-hee-hee".

"Ahhww."

Angry frown. "Da gurls dese days don't know a good thing when they see one!"

"Tee-hee-hee".

She continued down the street. Satisfied grin.

Little girl.

da da da da da-o

"Tinc!" cried the old man as he ran. He was almost short, kind of hunch-backed, and had a stubble-beard which made him look like a bum.

A crowd had formed. Some dared not to look, though.

"Tinc!" he cried. "Let me through, please." He held a bottle in front of him. "Let me through!" Police scowled.

Tinctured just lay there, sometimes coughing or choking. A doctor had tried to pull his tongue out, but to no avail.

"Tinc!" cried the old man as he ran. He stopped short at the body and bent down. "Here!" placed the bottle into Tinctured's mouth. Tinctured drank. Movement. In the body. In the crowd.

"All right all right! Givem air! Given air!"

Soft murmur in the crowd.

Disband! Disband!

And Tinctured stood up.

"Ach. Good," said the old man.

And floated some more.

And Larry decided to stop at the window. Why couldn't people be more friendly these days?

And Gina stopped at this very same window. "Tee-hee-hee".

He heard it. Aha. Friendly. What evil is there can be found in a giggle. He stood longer. Closer. "Uh-hi."

"Tee-hee-hee".

Cute little tee-hee-hee! Innocent as hell! Wow! A friendly person!

"Say, whatcha doin'?"

"Tee-hee-hee."

Oh my! Tee-hee-hee! Yes!! Tee-hee-hee! Good God!

"Wanna do something-together?"

"Tee-hee-hee."

"Tee-hee-hee! Yes! Tee-hee-hee! All right, baby! You got me! I'll do anything! ANYTHING! for you! Understand? C'mon! Le's go!!" He took her arm. They walked away together. Her hand covered her mouth with the giggles once in a while. They skipped. They danced. His arm went up around her back good.

The kingdom of Alegadonia.

Lay in the mountains.

King Fluke sat on the throne (big chair) all day.

Queen Silga sat in the throness all day.

What a boring job. Worse than night watchman in a garage.

Alpert walked the dog. Hutch trimmed the hedges

Baby picked the flowers. Baby got spanked, of course, not by King Fluke, but by Algadern, the executioner.

The Kids were kept in the nursery. Once a day they were allowed to play Ring Around the Rosey. Esther the nurse made sure that they only did this once a day. She theorized that Ring Around the Rosey was a dangerous game when played in excess. Her job was to keep them tame. Sometimes she used Castor Oil.

Castor Oil was a slob. He spit at people. He was fat. He was bald. He was no good. The children didn't like Castor Oil.

PEOPLE IN CHINA-UNITE.

And they did the other day.

A crushed people of vengeance.

A crash of polygmy.

Slanted eyes and a tooth brush.

Waded up to their necks.

A bumble bee stings when it is mad.

A Chinese man has a temper like a bulldog.

An old lady will swat one with her stick of not careful.

A bulldog will stick out its neck to save one's life-Brandy.

o no-that's a Saint Bernard—
truly gifted dog of the alpine region
of North Dakota.

A stock bearer palls down into deep snows-of truth-pain-elbow grease.

Sammy dug. He made sure to stay far away from the ocean. "That's a good little boy," said Mommy.

Truths abound wildly around children.

Take stock of what you hear-it may prove valuable. Ahem.

The girls of the chorus stood on the side of the brown dirt road and sang lonesome-cowboy-striding-music: da da dum da-da da dum da-daaa—dadadada.

Lonesome cowboys strode down lonesome street in Old Auburndale.

What a place!

The girls showed their knees. Mustaches wiggled.

"Woo Weee!!"

"Wow!!"

"Va Va Va Vooooom!!"

"And that's just a sample of what you'll see inside," Nasal Tone was heard saying as he wiggled his own cotton-picking mustache.

"Yessir-I tell you!"

Would you believe?

Rotten to the core.

Ladies and Gentlemen

An apple a day . . .

They all piled into the saloon.

"Glubba glubba glubba."

"Hubba hubba hubba."

They all took seats. Black Bart made himself comfortable. They had a good time.

“Well, I’ve been through it all. I’ve been through a lotta shit. I’m sicka it!”

“Sa try me!”

“I dey-ah ya!”

“Oh, you ain’t sa tuff.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah!”

“Oh YEAH?”

“YEAH! ah do decleah.”

“Well, hmp!”

“Gwan, puthcer money wheah yo mout iss.”

“I c’n lick any man in da house.”

“Yeahm.”

“Well?”

“Wellm?”

“Well, gwan. Putchah money wheah yo mout iss.”

“Okay!”

POW-right in da kisser!

me and my big mouf.

So Larry had Gina under his arm. They walked. They talked. They skipped and jumped.

“Well, nice weather we’re having, huh?”

“Tee-hee-hee.”

Oh my Gawd?

They marched around a corner and under a tree.

“Well, bay-bee—”

“Tee-hee-hee.”

“Here we are . . .”
“Tee-hee-hee.”
“Just the two of us—hee-hee.”
“Tee-hee-hee.”
“Ha-ha.”
“Tee-hee-hee.”
“Ho-ho-ho my!”
“Tee-hee-hee.”
“Haw HAW!!”
“Tee-hee-hee.”
“HAW!! HAW!! HAW!!”
“Tee-hee-hee.”
“HAW!! HAW!! HEY BAY-bee, how 'bout a little kiss, huh?”
“Tee-hee-hee.”
“Cum awn, I ain't gonna hurtcha.”
“Tee-hee-hee.”
“All right?”
“Tee-hee-hee.”
“ALL RIGHT!”
“Tee-hee-hee.”
“Just pucker up that little smacker and let's get into some action!”
“TEE-HEE-HEE.”
“What?---all's I said was pucker up da smacker and lets get into some action.”
“Tee-hee-hee.”
“Oh—”
“Tee-hee-hee.”
“Awww—”

"Tee-hee-hee."

"Y'know—"

"Tee-hee-hee."

"Ya make-a me mad!"

"Tee-hee-hee."

"Oh, you—"

"Tee-hee-hee."

"Go ta hell!"

"Tee-hee-hee."

(People just aren't friendly these days).

Tinctured Puncture. Floating. Just floating around.

Never says a word.

"Hey, you're cute," says a beautiful young lady.

Tinctured Puncture. Floating. Just straight. Not stopping.

"Whell!" Young lady is embarrassed.

"It is so!"

"It is not!"

"It is so!"

"It is not!"

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah!"

"Oh YEAH?"

"YEAH!"

POW-right in the kisser-scroom, bam, pow, crash, kaboom, eek, wo, woch, aaarrghh.

gentlemen, GENTlemen---

Tinctured Puncture. Floating. Just. Open arms.

“Hey.”

“Hey-whaddaya say?”

fights are ended such.

Sammy dug the beach. Yes-he really dug it. Mommy lay in the sun on her new Sun-Risened Beachnot Blanket in her new Gogettum Cadenza Triple-R Soft White 2 piece Bikinibum Bathing Suit, curling her legs at the knees and reading News in the Adventures of the Wilds (blue yonder), once in a while curling her toes so as to crack her knuckles. Her hair bundled up into a frizz, loaded with a bang atop an artificial net-curler. She employed a twest of sun reflector once in a while, and her red face reflected an ominous smile on red lips satisfied for the longing of an incubationally rationale dotatingly fine sun-tan.

“Can I go in do watta, Mommy?” asked Sammy.

“No.” Mommy came to da beach. Mommy don’t go in no ocean. Too many fish. (Mommy get nice sun-tan-so she look pretty for Daddy).

“Why, maw?”

“Hush up and keep digging.”

“If I keep digging, will I . . .”

“Yes, if you keep digging, you’ll reach China. Now hush up.”

PEOPLE OF CHINA-can’t quit.

must go

must see and hear:

“Ching chong cho-

Ching chong cho-che-

Ching chong cho chi cha cha-

Fing fong fo

Ya ma tal e vous!!”

“Ya ma tal é vous?”

“U té, ‘Ya ma tal é vous?’”

“A wan a noh!!”

“Rad na!!!”

“Yuk yuk!!”

“Huk?”

“Ho ko tú!”

“U té, ‘ho ko tú?’ A wan a noh! Rad na!!”

“Ifn u noh tél, A weel bé madoso!!!!”

“Aw, Frita, tell de guy, heh?”

“Noh!!”

“Aw, kum on, heh?”

“Noh!! A sé Noh!!”

“Plís?”

“Noh! Ahn iss final!!!!”

“U ted it? A wan a noh!”

Well, another day, another dollar.

Gettn ready for another hard day of sittn on the Throne.

“Would you plee-as!” said a nasal tone as she brought the covers to her side of the bed.

“But dear . . .”

“But I---Okay. Ya wanna be ruff, hey? Ya wanna be ruff, hey? Then have your goddam covers? Gwan, keep ‘em! Seef I care!”

“Wot?”

“Yeah, gwan. Msick of arguing with you.” King Fluke got up and started putting on his pants.

“What do . . . just what do you mean?”

“I mean this: You Make Me Sick!”

Silence.

“Oh Yeah?”

“Yeah?”

“Oh YEAH?”

“YEAH!!”

II

Hearken thou: Art thou evil.

Lissen

Thou shalt remorse

Leggo my arm

Sinners all

Thou shalt suffer

What happened to love?

Kindness?

Thou shalt be ashamed of thou selves.

Thou speakest tongue

Lissen

I am he

Who created He

The Man

I am the Lord thy God-and don't you forget it!

Thou'd better lessen

Else thou shalt be sorry

Sinners all

I am the Supreme Being

Lissen to Me

He

Lord Thy God

Hearken Thou

Lissen

Leggo my arm

Yep
Howdy doo
Here I am
Old man
Hunchback
Not much of a man
Drink all day
Drunk
Yes
I like people out though
Ya know
Tinctured
I like Tunctured
Now there's a youth with vim and vigor
Dust free
Clavicals waning
Young whippersnapper
I like young whippersnappers
Ya know
For goodness sake
Cut that noise
A man can't hear himself think around here
These days
What's the world coming to
Anyway
(Hi)
People just aren't friendly these days.
Try ta be nice

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