

**AN UNTITLED
PLAY
POSTHUMOUSLY
WRITTEN BY
PHILIP K DICK**



DANIEL J GLENDENING

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ERIC FRENEKSY, Commissioner

CHARLES FRENEKSY, } his synthetic clones.
HERB FRENEKSY, }

ROBERT ARCTOR, district Captain

Young ROBERT ARCTOR,

KATHY ARCTOR, Robert's wife

JASON TAVERNER district Captain

FRED TAVERNER, his son

CHRIS PLOUT,

MARM HASTINGS,

ANGUS BLISS,

WILL ACKERMAN,

JACOB TEAGARDEN,

JAMES BARRIS,

} enforcement officers

GLORIA BARRIS, James' wife

EDWARD BARRIS, their son

DOCTOR ACKERS,

New Path Security Guard 1

New Path Security Guard 2

Woman with Dark Hair,

Three Precogs,

Apparitions,

DONNA,

MIKE,

JERRY.

Officers, Enforcers, Civilians,
Attendants and Messengers.

SCENE: The post-war remains of
New York City.

ACT 1

SCENE 1: *A dark room lit by blue light. PRECOG 1, PRECOG 2, PRECOG 3 sit back to back, connected to each other and a large central structure via hoses and wires.*

PRECOG 1: `script=<command> runas=<FRENEKSY> pidfile=/var/run/<NAME>.pid logfile=/var/log/<NAME>.log`

PRECOG 2: `start() {if [-f /var/run/$PIDNAME] && kill -0 $(cat /var/run/$PIDNAME); then echo 'Service already running' >&2 return 1`

PRECOG 3: `echo 'Starting service...' >&2 local CMD="$SCRIPT &> \" $LOGFILE\" & echo \" $!\" su -c \"$CMD\" $RUNAS > \"$PIDFILE\" echo 'Service started' >&2}`

PRECOG 1: Murder.

PRECOG 2: Murder.

PRECOG 3: Murder.

ALL: Murder.

<Exit All>

SCENE 2: *A rain streaked urban street - neon signs in various Terran and off-world scripts blink incessantly in the dark, lighting the street corner with rotating hues. Small single-person air-cars hum in the skyways overhead, and commuter*

air-pad trains periodically rattle past on elevated tramways.

<Enter COMMISSIONER ERIC FRENEKSY, CHARLES FRENEKSY, HERB FRENEKSY and CHRIS PLOUT, in Enforcer uniform, along with several OFFICERS in uniform and street clothes. They find a bleeding OFFICER ACKERMAN, in uniform, lying against a building.>

ERIC FRENEKSY: Who's that there? See if he's alive.

CHARLES FRENEKSY : Shit. It's Ackerman - we served on the squadron together during the Lilistar push. <crouching down> Ackerman! What happened?

ACKERMAN: <groaning>That bastard MacDonald. He's getting runs coming out of the Ganymede syndicate — all the good high-priced shit. He's got Lady Luck with him for sure. Arctor charged into the precinct office and laid them all out — fire coming out of his eyes and rivers of blood and gutted the bastard like a fish. I saw his guts spill out on the desk. <coughing up blood> Sir — Arctor and Taverner cleared the precinct, but were attacked by that bastard Norwegian from the north-borough. The Captains gassed a bit of stim-pak and we mowed them down. <coughing blood>

FRENEKSY: Good work Ackerman — MacCready, Johnson — give him some Neuroin and get him to a hospital.

<Enter MARM HASTINGS>

CHARLES: Officer Hastings.

CHRIS PLOUT: Look at him, he's all fucked up on D.

HASTINGS: Officers. Commissioner. Officers. Commissioner.

FRENEKSY: Where have you been, Officer? You look like you got the bugs crawling all over you.

HASTINGS: The Norwegian is dead, sir. The City is ours.

FRENEKSY: Good news. We'll let the northern districts fall into chaos. Without their channels of distribution intact the people will start tearing each other apart, make it easier for us when the time comes.

HASTINGS: Right sir. We'll need a good man to take on the distribution network. I could —

FRENEKSY: Go greet Arctor with the news; he's earned it.

<Exit All>

SCENE 3: The precinct office. Dead bodies are slumped over desks. ROBERT ARCTOR is in the precinct captain's office, along with JASON TAVERNER. Various officers hauling bodies away.

<ROBERT swallows a small white pill with a glass of water. TAVERNER checks his wrist-com.>

TAVERNER: Something weird coming through the pre-cogs — home office just linked it through to my com; yours too I'll bet.

<ROBERT glances at his wrist-com. He taps it and holo-projections of the 3 PRECOGS appear.>

PRECOG 1: Hail Arctor; Captain of the South.

PRECOG 2: Hail Arctor; Captain of the North.

PRECOG 3: Hail Arctor; Commissioner-in-turn.

<Images of ROBERT, in Commissioner's uniform, flicker across the screen, followed by those of TAVERNER and his son, FRED TAVERNER, also in Commissioner's uniform.>

TAVERNER: *<laughing>* Well, they haven't been wrong yet, and this seems an appropriate time path, considering all you've done. Wish they'd give me more than a little peek at my own

future.

ROBERT: The future is nothing. Clay. Ice. I've seen too many futures to trust any of them. The Captain the North District lives yet, the bastard. I'm not in line to be commissioner — something must be off with the timelines; an aberration.

<ROBERT *switches off his wristcom, the projections vanish.*>

<Enter HASTINGS & ANGUS BLISS>

HASTINGS: Captains. The Commissioner has gotten news of your success here. He's very pleased — and this, coming on the same day that we seize the Norwegian's territory. Our trade is set to skyrocket. That's two additional distro-networks bringing in money, and with the Norwegian out of the way we can take over that import stream from Ganymede.

ANGUS: Commissioner wants to pass along his thanks, and a bit of a prize as well.

HASTINGS: Right. He's named you Captain of the North District. That Ganymede inflow is yours to distribute — a lot of JJ and D coming through that pipeline.

TAVERNER: No shit?

ROBERT: The Captain of the North?

ANGUS: For sure, man — Sir. The last Captain was lining his pockets and setting up trade with the Norwegian. The Commissioner won't have it, and both were taken out. No small thanks to your work here.

ROBERT: Captain of the North. Taverner, maybe you've seen more of your future than you thought.

TAVERNER: I don't trust that shit — the precogs, the JJ-180. It shows us what we want to see, feeds the ego, the lust for power. If it becomes true it's only because we make it so.

ROBERT: <Falling into a waking fugue state> The precogs gave us two truths already: prologues. It would be foolish to ignore the third. These glimpses aren't good or evil, Taverner, they're simply a possibility among infinitely possibilities, but perhaps the probabilities are narrowing in, somehow. I'm walking in a future now, and it's a good future. It's a good future but I've also walked in dark glimpses, and I've seen myself covered in blood. I've seen you die so many times. Why must I see it again and again?

TAVERNER: Shit. The drug's got him. He'll be out for a while.

ANGUS: Yeah, man — Sir. Last time I did that JJ it was like wandering through some pre-invasion version of the city, like people at the soda-fountain and shit, and the skies were still blue. It was pretty wild. I even ate a cheeseburger.

HASTINGS: How long will he be like this?

TAVERNER: Not long likely, his trips are pretty short these days. He's been using a long time.

ROBERT: What? Who are you and what are you doing in my house? I remember you — I remember this day. Our wife has — Kathy has died! What have you done? I thought I was just some hallucination! Get back! This can't be real!

TAVERNER: Robert, let's head back to the Precinct. The officers will clean this place up.

ROBERT: Sure, sure. <Shaking his head clear> Give me a glass of water. We'll talk about the future later, after we've thought on it.

<Exit All>

SCENE 4: *The Precinct.*

<Enter FRENEKSY, CHARLES, HERB, PLOUT and various OFFICERS.>

CHARLES: <checking wrist-com> We've got notice that the Captain of the North is dead, and Arctor has been informed he'll be advanced in his place.

FRENEKSY: There's treachery in everyone, no telling what a person is thinking, even those who you think you know. What was actually going on in that closecropped skull?

<Enter ROBERT, TAVERNER, HASTINGS and ANGUS>

FRENEKSY : Captains. It's unfortunate things happened as they did, but I hope you're pleased by your new appointment. The North can bring you many rewards.

ROBERT: Thank you, Sir.

FRENEKSY : You'll be a close advisor until I retire.

ROBERT: Yes, Sir. I'll be pleased to.

FRENEKSY: Which may be this year, or next year — or ten years from now. It's purely my decision.

ROBERT: Of course. You're the boss. What you say goes.

FRENEKSY: Our combined troops are shortening their lines for strategic purposes. The enemies are expending inordinate amounts of men and material. They won't be able to continue this long; they'll be bankrupt in less than a month. Victory is, of course, inevitable for us. Taverner, you've been a good enforcer, no less so than your comrade here.

TAVERNER: Thank you sir — all I do I do for the precinct.

FRENEKSY: Of course, of course, and you'll all get your rewards in due time. I hope you'll all join me in honoring Charles Freneksy as our new Chief of Cumberland — it's a natural choice, after all.

ROBERT: It'll do. <aside> I feel weary. It's been a day that

won't terminate.

FRENEKSY: I don't impress you very much

ROBERT: On the contrary. I'm just exhausted. Grant me leave, I must tell my wife of your coming.

FRENEKSY: Of Course!

ROBERT: *<aside>* Chief of Cumberland! That should be my job — it's a position I'll have to take or overstep if I'm to take control of this operation.

<Exit>

FRENEKSY: Taverner! Drinks are on you, I assume?

<Exit All>

SCENE 5: *A room in Arctor's large Modernist Home.*

<Enter KATHY ARCTOR, holding a digital holo-screen, reading a message.>

KATHY ARCTOR: *<Reads>* *It seems to me that one of the most important points about my preoccupation with "Just how real is reality?" is that one cannot sense that reality is somehow insubstantial unless somehow, unconsciously, one is comparing or contrasting that reality with a kind of hyper-reality; otherwise the intuition makes no sense. This shows how in-expert I have been regarding my own epistemological perceptions. What, over the years, I have seen I have judged correctly, the soap-bubble effect, so to speak, of the phenomenological worlds. I knew what it indicated about the world around me. Somehow it lay beyond it, or something had constructed it, as a kind of set, or backdrop, or stage, which we all take to be real. But there it is again, the world "real." So perhaps the pre-cogs speak the truth — and there that word again as well, "truth." If nothing else existed, no other universe, no other order of reality, then however insubstantial, even if dream-like, the world we see would by definition have*

to be given the name of The Real. The pre-cogs speak of the real, we know this from experience. Perhaps I will be named Commissioner, though commissioner in what world, what reality? Does reality splinter off in varied directions? What we call The Real can only be less than real if something which is not less than real exist, and presumably in some true sense behind what we do actually see. Well, I got to go because a lot of publicans and sinners, tax collectors and other riffraff abound, and I must deal with them.

The North is yours already — whatever we question about the nature of reality is beside the point; you'll get what you were promised. There's no turning back for you. You're more magnetic than Eric. He's magnetic, but you're so much, much more. After meeting you I could never love him again. Or do you think a person can love two people equally, but in different ways? My therapy group says no, that I have to choose. This has come up several times before; I've met several men more magnetic than Eric, but none of them as magnetic as you. Now I really don't know what to do — it's very difficult to decide such things because no one understands. You have to go through it alone, and sometimes you choose wrong. So, I choose you over Eric, and now Eric comes back and I don't give a shit about him; so what now? How is he going to feel? How is he going to feel when he learns that you are to be commissioner? That's important, but not as important as how I feel. If I like you better than he, then I have to act it out — that's what my therapy group says. Did you know I was in a psychiatric hospital for eight weeks? Morningside Mental Hygiene. It cost a fortune. But there I learned a lot about myself and made a lot of friends. Most of the people I truly know I met at Morningside. Of course, when I originally met them I had the delusion that they were famous people — celebrities.

<Enter ROBERT>

KATHY: Captain! Leader of the North! Your text has brought to mind a great and unrecognizable future for us both — the future is in the instant!

ROBERT: My love, The Commissioner is coming by tonight.

KATHY: How long will he stay?

ROBERT: I think he intends to stay the night — he and Jason have been hitting the bars, it would seem.

KATHY: He won't wake tomorrow! Oh, don't look so aghast. Do you know what you are? You're a very good person. Do you understand that?

ROBERT: <Shrugs> Like most truths that's a matter of opinion.

KATHY: Sit down. Pet your cat, drink your screwdriver. Don't think about anything; just be. Can you do that? Empty your mind for a little while? Try it.

ROBERT: I do it all the time.

KATHY: But not negatively. Do it positively. Do it for a real purpose, not just to avoid facing unfortunate verities. Relax. I'll handle everything.

<Exit All>

SCENE 6: *Outside Arctor's Modernist Home*

<Enter FRENEKSY, CHARLES, HERB, TAVERNER, PLOUT, JAMES BARRIS, HASTINGS, ANGUS and OFFICERS, walking up the driveway of Arctor's large Modernist Home. Everyone is drunk &/or high.>

FRENEKSY: Nice castle old A's got here. It fucking smells like roses.

TAVERNER: Yeah, it's all concrete and glass outside and polished white marble and hazy incense inside. He keeps doves in a pen out back, even. Kathy keeps a rose garden, somehow keeps them blooming all year — synths, likely.

<Enter KATHY, opening and appearing at the door>

FRENEKSY: Kathy! There she is!

KATHY: Eric, our door is always open, you know.

FRENEKSY: Where's the Chief of the North? We were right behind him, I thought, though we may have been waylaid once or twice.

KATHY: Come in, come in — he's making drinks.

<Exit All>

SCENE 7: *Interior. Arctor's Modernist Home*

<Enter ROBERT>

ROBERT: If I'm going to do it, I best do it quickly. We seem to be confined within a metal prison, but something vital has secretly penetrated the enclosing ring around us and fires assistance and advice to us in the form of video and audio signals. Neither the prison ring is visible to us nor the signal system which fires nor the entity which has penetrated through us. The signals emerge as if from cores drilled through the metal; they're in color. Thus our prison was breached a long time ago. Help is here, but we still remain here within the prison; we aren't yet free. It is like the penetrating roots of a plant which over the centuries have grown through rock or concrete. These root tips come through and into here, the enclosed open space where we're kept, carrying out the charade of our lives, and then they burst into colored changing light patterns that register only subliminally —

<Enter KATHY>

ROBERT: Has he arrived?

KATHY: Yeah, he's here; that entourage of his too.

ROBERT: Has he asked for me?

KATHY: Of course, you know he has. What's wrong with you?

ROBERT: I can't do this — I'm being set up, the Precogs, there must be a mistake — I'm being set up, deliberately and maliciously.

KATHY: Darling, all this strain you've been under — it's not really credible that someone is trying to frame you. How could they? You desperately need a rest. All this tension and trauma. You're acting paranoid. Can't you see that?

ROBERT: If we fail?

KATHY: If we fail we fail — but get your shit together and we won't fail. Eric's going to pass out sooner or later. His officers, too, are so blotto they won't remember even showing up here, let alone what happens once they pass out in their own vomit on the lawn — they'll take the blame, it'll be easy.

ROBERT: Damn, you're harsh. We'll use their blades and they may not recall, but you really think the blame will fall on his own officers?

KATHY: Who would think otherwise? You're a good actor, you can pull off a week of bereavement and distress over your good Commissioner's death, can't you?

ROBERT: Fine, we'll carry it out — “False face must hide what the false heart doth know.”

<Exit All>

ACT 2

SCENE 1: *The rose garden outside Arctor's Modernist Home*

<Enter TAVERNER and FRED>

TAVERNER: How's it going tonight?

FRED: Pretty quiet — it's getting late though, must be past midnight. Not sure what I'm doing up still.

TAVERNER: I couldn't sleep. I've just been lying there in bed thinking over the day again and again, running in a loop like some glitched out holotape.

<Enter ROBERT>

TAVERNER: Can't sleep either, friend? The commissioner has gone to bed. He's been in unusually good spirits this evening, though that may be due in part to the unusually good spirits we enjoyed on our way here.

ROBERT: It's been a long night already — a long day.

TAVERNER: I've been thinking over and over that Precog holotext — it seems they weren't entirely wrong in their assertions.

ROBERT: I'm trying not to think about it. When we get a moment perhaps we can discuss it in private, if you don't mind.

TAVERNER: Of course, whenever you'd like.

ROBERT: Maybe tomorrow then — for now, try to get some sleep, the both of you, and let me know if you need anything. There should be extra blankets in the closet.

TAVERNER: Good night then.

FRED: Goodnight.

<Exit TAVERNER and FRED>

ROBERT: Is the damaged mind trying to monitor its own damage? Man is a magic micro mirror of the macrocosm, reflecting (and hence containing) the map, or logos, of the macrocosm replicated in miniature. He contains the cosmos, and the cosmos is alive and thinks. You know what Eliade says about the dream-time of the Australian bushmen? He says that anthropologists are wrong in assuming that the dream-time is a time in the past. It's another kind of time going on right now, which the bushmen break through and into, the age of the heroes and their deeds. The way they prepare for it is to undergo dreadful pain; it's their ritual of initiation. I see colors — floating colors. That's described in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*; this is the trip across to the next world — the dream-time.

<ROBERT's *Pocket-com* buzzes - he glances at it>

ROBERT: Well then, let's get on with it.

<Exit All>

SCENE 2: *The bedroom of ROBERT and KATHY ARCTOR*

<Enter KATHY>

KATHY: I'm so worn out, from the trip, I guess. And from all I've learned today. I just want to sleep. <She sits on the bed, and closes her eyes> If I die, maybe I'll be born again.

ROBERT: <Without> Who's there?

KATHY: Oh Christ, he's fucked it up. I made it so easy for him — I'd have done it myself if Eric didn't look so much like my own father. I can't help you anymore now because I'm drunk. Anyhow, you know the truth, the brick-hard, irregular, slithery surface of truth. I'm just an observer and I can't intervene to save you now — I don't care if you get nailed for this, I care whether I get nailed. Christ, I'm empathic about myself.

<Enter ROBERT, hands bloody.>

ROBERT: It's done — he's been retired.

KATHY: Did you just speak?

ROBERT: When?

KATHY: Just now, a moment ago.

ROBERT: As I descended?

KATHY: Ay.

ROBERT: What? Who's sleeping in the second room?

KATHY: Herb.

ROBERT: This is a fucking mess. <Looking at his hands> — one of the officers started laughing in his sleep, one cried "Murder" — I think they woke for a moment and stared at me, but they fell straight back to sleep — I thought you'd drugged them.

KATHY: I did — don't worry, they won't recall a thing.

ROBERT: I heard someone shouting, "Sleep no more! Arctor murders sleep"

KATHY: What do you mean?

ROBERT: It kept shouting, something like: “Sleep no more! The District has murdered sleep and therefore the North shall sleep no more! Arctor shall sleep no more.”

KATHY: Who shouted this? I didn’t hear it, I only heard you shouting and waking the officers. Have you been having any pains in your head lately? Around your temples? *<she traces a line across her forehead>* I have. Do you know what it is? That’s the crown of thorns. We all have to wear it before the world can end and a new world take its place. I’m wearing it now. Wait — why do you still have the knives? Go put them back with the officers!

ROBERT: I can’t go back in there.

KATHY: Jesus. Give them to me; I’ll take care of it. The dead and sleeping won’t see anything.

<Exit KATHY>

ROBERT: So he has a fail-safe system built in. No chance he won’t eventually remember. Makes himself spurious to time and space and world, and death, pain, loss, decay. He’ll tear my eyes out — I’ll tear them out myself. This blood on my hands will never wash off.

<Enter KATHY>

KATHY: My hands are bloodied too — we’re in this together. A little soap and water will clear us of this.

<Exit All>

SCENE 3: *Front hall of Arctor’s Modernist Home. Someone is knocking insistently at the door. It’s early morning.*

<Enter ANGUS>

ANGUS: It’s the same, man. Everything’s the same when you break through to absolute fucking reality. It’s all one vast blur.

<Knocking at the door>. If the Mole's Police caught us we'd all be in the Army, man. We'd all be in the Army, serving out on the front. Or working in Vol-Labe camps at Llistar. Bottom, Thou art translated. <Knocking at the door; Angus affects a British accent>. "Madame, I wonder if I haven't met you before; you do seem familiar. Do you spend much time in the bay area? I have a studio and architect-designed home in the hills of West Marin, near the ocean. We hold seminars there often, people come and go." <Knocking at the door>. Methedrine is a benny, man, like speed; it's crank, it's crystal, it's amphetamine, man. It's made synthetically in a lab, it's not organic, like pot, man. There's no such thing as a methadrine plant like there is a pot plant, man. <Knocking at the door.> Catecholamines, noradrenalin, serotonin. Yeah? <Opens the door> Man, cool it — come in.

<Enter JAMES and PLOUT>

JAMES: Still awake?

ANGUS: Yeah, man. A dream woke me. A religious dream, like in it there was this huge clap of thunder, and all of a sudden the heavens rolled aside and God appeared and, man, His voice — Man, he rumbled at me and like — oh, what the hell did he say? Oh yeah, oh yeah — "I AM VEXED WITH YOU, MY SON," he was like, scowling. I was shaking, man, in my dream, and was looking up at God and I said, "What'd I do now, Lord?" and He was all, "YOU LEFT THE CAP OFF THE TOOTHPASTE TUBE AGAIN." And then I realized it was this chick I used to hang with!

PLOUT: Right, right. Arctor up yet?

ANGUS: Yeah, man, would you like to order dessert? We have fresh strawberry pie and fresh peach pie that we make here ourselves.

JAMES: Angus, is Arctor awake?

<Enter ROBERT>

JAMES: Oh, good, there you are.

PLOUT: Good morning, sir — sorry to wake you.

ROBERT: No worries.

JAMES: Is the Commissioner awake yet?

ROBERT: No, I don't think he is.

JAMES: He asked us to call on him early, we were almost late, actually.

ROBERT: Sure — I'll bring you up to his room.

<They head upstairs>

PLOUT: Again, sorry if we woke you, we don't mean to be trouble.

ROBERT: Not at all — he's in that last door at the end of the hall.

JAMES: I'll wake him. He hates to be woken but it's my job.

<Exit JAMES down the hall>

PLOUT: The Commissioner leaves today?

ROBERT: Yes

PLOUT: It was a wild night — things got a little out of hand and that storm was something wicked — heavy dust clouds and lightning. It sounded like screams of death rising out of the skies.

ROBERT: It was a rough night.

PLOUT: The worst I've seen since I moved out here, I think.

<Enter JAMES>

JAMES: Fuck! fuckfuckfuckfuckfuck.

ROBERT/PLOUT: What?

JAMES: Fuck — the Commissioner! What the fuck — Arctor how the fuck did this happen? He's dead fuckfuckfuck.

ROBERT: What? Dead?

PLOUT: The commissioner?

JAMES: See for yourselves.

ANGUS: Whoa man, whoa man — be careful, there's a lot of aphids in there.

<Exit ROBERT, PLOUT>

JAMES: Wake up! Show yourself you trash! Wake Up! Murder! Taverner, Herb! Malcom! Wake up! Party's Over!

<Enter KATHY>

KATHY: Jesus Barris. What's with the shouting?

JAMES: The fucking Commissioner!

<Enter TAVERNER>

JAMES: The fucking Commissioner is murdered in your fucking house, sleeping under your roof.

KATHY: What? That can't be, here?

TAVERNER: Too cruel anywhere — you must be mistaken, James.

<Enter ROBERT, PLOUT>

ROBERT: I wish I'd died instead. This whole business was

worked out carefully. They had every phase of it under control. Freneksy's card was set to pop regardless.

<Enter CHARLES and HERB>

HERB: What's the problem?

ROBERT: You are and you don't even know it. The fountainhead has been lopped off.

JAMES: The Commissioner — your father — he's been killed.

CHARLES: What? By who?

PLOUT: His own officers, it would seem. They slept with the weapons, smeared with blood, as if they didn't care at all.

ROBERT: I killed them in their beds.

JAMES: You didn't.

ROBERT: I did. Who could control himself when faced with murderers, sleeping like children? I did what had to be done.

TAVERNER: Alright. Nobody is to leave this house until given leave. Let's get a team in here to try to sort out this mess, see what Forensics can work out. Would've been great to question the officers, but — that's how it goes.

ROBERT: I'll call in the team — let's meet downstairs. I could use a drink.

<Exit All but CHARLES & HERB>

CHARLES: What do we do? I don't want to drink with them. It's easy for a liar to show false grief. I'm getting out of town — I'll head to Philly, I have some friends there.

HERB: Right — I'll head West, I guess, maybe New Chicago. Better if we split up. Arctor's got teeth like knives, his wife might as well be holding a pitchfork.

CHARLES: Yeah, let's get — fuck long goodbyes.

<Exit All>

SCENE 4: *Outside Arctor's Modernist Home.*

<Enter HASTINGS and ANGUS, soaking wet with a garden hose, water running.>

ANGUS: “Threescore and ten I can remember well, within the volume of which time I have seen hours dreadful and things strange.”

HASTINGS: What the fuck are you doing there all day with the garden hose?

ANGUS: I got to get the aphids off, man.

HASTINGS: I don't see any aphids. What's an aphid?

ANGUS: It eventually kills you — that's what an aphid is. They're in my hair and my skin and my lungs. The pain is unbearable, man. I gotta go to the hospital.

HASTINGS: How come I can't see them?

ANGUS: I'll show you one. Bring me a bottle or a jar or something from inside. We'll cap it or put a lid on it and I can take it with me when I go to the doctor and he can analyze it.

<Exit HASTINGS>

ANGUS: Last Tuesday, a falcon, man I saw it perched there and an owl came along and swooped right down and killed it!

<Enter HASTINGS, handing over an old mayonnaise jar. ANGUS grabs at an aphid.>

ANGUS: See?

HASTINGS: Yeahhhh....What a big one! Wow!

ANGUS: Help me find more for the doctor, man.

HASTINGS: Sure...

<Enter JAMES>

HASTINGS: How's it going in there, sir?

JAMES: Fuck. What, where've you been?

HASTINGS: We know who did it?

JAMES: Arctor killed the two officers.

HASTINGS: No chance for them to pretend innocence then, aye?

JAMES: Charles and Herb, the clones, they seem to have slipped out. Puts some suspicion on them, too.

HASTINGS: But if the clones have fled — they were to be the Commissioner's successors. Then it's likely the position will fall to Arctor.

JAMES: He's already been named. He's gone down to the district headquarters to take up the badge.

HASTINGS: Where's The Commissioner's body?

JAMES: They've taken it for an autopsy, though not likely they'll find much besides the slit throat and the booze-soaked liver.

HASTINGS: Will you head to headquarters?

JAMES: No, I'm going home.

HASTINGS: Alright, sounds good. I'll see you later then.

JAMES: Take care.

<Exit JAMES>

HASTINGS: So, what do we get for these? I mean, does the doctor pay a bounty or something? A prize? Any bread?

ANGUS: I get to help perfect a cure for them this way. Hey, Marm, man — you go on putting them in jars while I go take a leak and like that.

HASTINGS: Do these fuckers sting?

<Exit All>

ACT 3

SCENE 1: *Taverner's gardens.*

<Enter TAVERNER>

TAVERNER: You have it now — “Commissioner” — as the Precogs promised. Who else saw that holo-text? Someone must have relayed the message through to Robert from the primary dropbox. This could’ve been a future set in motion precisely because he was made aware of its potential. But if the report is true, as it seems to be, then he won’t hold power for long — by the Precogs’ reasoning it should fall eventually to Fred. Thank God for the weaknesses built into any vast, complicated, convoluted, worldwide apparatus. Too many people. Too many machines.

<TAVERNER receives a call on his Holo-Com. He answers, ROBERT and KATHY ARCTOR appear on projected holoscreen>

ROBERT: Jason!

KATHY: We’re having a party — it won’t be anything without you.

ROBERT: Tonight! Please do join us, just a casual dinner party — tonight!

TAVERNER: Commissioner — I would of course be happy to join you all.

ROBERT: And this afternoon? What are your plans?

TAVERNER: Thought the boy and I would take the bikes out — there's some good riding out West of the city if you avoid thread-zones, and Fred has fitted his bike with a new oil-converter.

ROBERT: Great — we would've otherwise sought your advice on some matters, but nothing that can't wait. You'll be gone long?

TAVERNER: Yes sir, likely we'll be out all afternoon. It's a bit of a ride even to get out past the city limits.

ROBERT: Don't miss the party!

TAVERNER: No sir, I won't.

ROBERT: We've heard Freneksy's synth counterparts have fled town. We think they've headed to Philadelphia and New Chicago, hiding out from their crimes — we can talk of this tomorrow, though. We'll see you tonight then!

TAVERNER: Yes sir.

<TAVERNER closes his holo-com>

TAVERNER: Consciousness of unconsciousness. When we do die we won't feel it because that's what dying is: the loss of all that. I'm not at all scared of dying anymore. But to grieve; it's to die and be alive at the same time.

<Exit>

SCENE 2: *A room at the District Headquarters.*

<Enter ROBERT, KATHY, PLOUT, HASTINGS and OFFICER TEAGARDEN. ROBERT closes the holo-com call with TAVERNER. He turns to address all others>

ROBERT: You're all dismissed until this evening, when I hope you'll join us for the celebration. Seven tonight!

<Exit All but ROBERT & OFFICER>

ROBERT: Officer — a word before you go. Those men still waiting?

OFFICER: Yes sir. They're just outside.

ROBERT: Bring them in.

<Exit OFFICER>

<ROBERT retrieves a small gold brooch from his pocket - he studies it>

ROBERT: Here is a piece of metal that has been melted until it has become shapeless. It represents nothing. Nor does it have design, of any intentional sort. It is merely amorphous. One might say, it is mere content, deprived of form. Yet I have spent many hours inspecting it, and for no logical reason I feel a certain emotional fondness. Why is that? I do not even now project onto this blob, as in German psychological tests, my own psyche. I still see no shapes or forms. But it somehow partakes of Tao. It is balanced. The forces within this piece are stabilized. At rest, so to speak, this object has made its peace with the universe. It has separated from it and has managed to come to homeostasis.

<Enter OFFICER with DONNA and MIKE>

ROBERT: Wait outside.

<Exit OFFICER>

ROBERT: *<Holding the brooch for the others to see>* This piece of metal — it does not have wabi — nor could it ever. But it does have wu.

DONNA: Yeah, right.

ROBERT: The hands of the artificer had wu, and allowed that wu to flow into this piece. Possibly he himself knows only that this piece satisfies. It is complete. By contemplating it, we gain more wu ourselves. We experience the tranquility associated not with art but with holy things. I recall a shrine in Hiroshima wherein a shinbone of some medieval saint could be examined. However, this is an artifact and that was a relic. This is alive in the now, whereas that merely remained. By this meditation, I have come to identify the value which this has in opposition to historicity. Tell me — was it yesterday we last spoke?

DONNA: It was.

ROBERT: Well, then. Have you considered what I had to say? The districts will be very difficult for you if they are ever under his control — he is not one to make deals. You know that.

DONNA: He's a little bit of a stickler for the rules.

ROBERT: Don't let this go. He's put more than his share of your friends behind bars, and even more in the ground. With him out of the picture, and while I sit in the Commissioner's chair, we'll forgo our history. We'll start fresh, leaving historicity behind, along with whatever past situations you may have accidentally wandered into.

MIKE: We all deserve a fresh start every once in awhile.

ROBERT: To have no historicity, and also no artistic, aesthetic worth, and yet to partake of some ethereal value — that is a marvel. Just precisely because this is a small, miserable, worthless-looking blob — that contributes to its possessing wu.

DONNA: We're both small, miserable blobs, sir.

ROBERT: Wu is customarily found in the least imposing places, as in the Christian aphorism, "stones rejected by the builder." One experiences awareness of wu in such trash as an old stick, or a rusty beer can by the side of the road. In those

cases, the wu is within the viewer. It's a religious experience. Here, though, an artificer has put wu into the object, rather than merely witnessed the wu inherent in it.

MIKE: Just tell us where and when, Commissioner. We'll see it done.

ROBERT: He's out riding — west of the city limits, likely the old interstate change-ways. He's due back here by seven — see it done before then. Him and his son. Make sure it's clean.

DONNA: We're resolved.

MIKE: We'll see it done.

<Exit All>

SCENE 3: *A room in Arctor's Modernist Home.*

<Enter KATHY and OFFICER>

KATHY: Has Taverner left?

OFFICER: Yes, sir — but returns again tonight.

KATHY: Tell the Commissioner I'd like to have a word.

<Exit OFFICER>

KATHY: Nothing's gained and all is spent.

<Enter ROBERT>

KATHY: There. You don't look so good.

ROBERT: No. This is too much for me. I didn't care for him much when he was alive — I certainly don't like him any better this way.

KATHY: *Nil nisi bonum.* To quote Thumper Rabbit, "if you

can't say nothing good, don't say nothing at all." From Bambi, an old film classic. If you attended lectures at the Museum with me —

ROBERT: Listen — I don't want to bring the old bastard back to life. How'd I get myself into this? I thought sure when he dropped like a block it meant I could kiss this bullshit goodbye forever.

KATHY: Scared of him, I guess — even now. I should divorce you, but I won't; you need to be cared for.

ROBERT: He's in his grave — nothing can touch him further.

KATHY: Clean yourself up — you look awful and you have a party to host. Be cheerful.

ROBERT: I'll try — you also. Don't leave me in that nest of snakes alone, I'll break under the strain.

KATHY: There's something I found out the other day by accident, that I don't think you or Jason realize. I was driving along one of those little tree-lined streets, just driving at random, and I saw a green clapboard house with a sign on it. "Birthplace of Ferris F. Fremont," it said. I asked the manager of the building and he said "Yes — Fremont was born here."

ROBERT: Well, he's not here now, he's in DC, miles away.

KATHY: But how grotesque — to be living in the district where the tyrant was born. Like him, it's an ugly little house, a dreadful color. I didn't want to go in, but people were walking around inside it, like it was a little museum, probably with exhibits of his school books and the bed he slept in.

ROBERT: The greatest liar in the history of the world. He probably wasn't actually born there, he probably had a PR firm pick it out as the kind of place he ought to have been born.

KATHY: This trip we're taking won't be wasted.

ROBERT: I hope not.

KATHY: Don't think too much about it. If you think too much, if you reflect on what you're doing — then you can't go on.

<Exit All>

SCENE 4: *A multi-level parking garage near to District Headquarters.*

<Enter DONNA and MIKE, followed by JERRY>

DONNA: What are you doing here?

JERRY: Arctor sent me.

MIKE: He shouldn't have bothered. Three's a crowd.

DONNA: Fine, fine. Just don't get in the way. They should be showing up any minute.

JERRY: *<Looks at his holocom>* Plate tracking has them just pulling around the corner.

<Enter TAVERNER and FRED, on motorcycles. They pull into garage and park>

MIKE: That's them.

<The thee approach TAVERNER and FRED as they dismount>

TAVERNER: It'll rain tonight.

DONNA: Then let it come down.

<The Three half-encircle TAVERNER and FRED & draw small high-powered pistols>

TAVERNER: Shit — Fred, run! Get out of here! *<Draws a pistol>*

<Bullets fly — FRED flees between cars. TAVERNER fires off several shots wildly as he is struck — his bullets shoot out several overhead lighting fixtures as he dies>

JERRY: Where'd the little bastard go? I can't see shit!

DONNA: We didn't get him?

JERRY: Taverner is down but his son took off.

MIKE: Shit — we lost half the job.

DONNA: Let's get out of here — half done is better than nothing.

<Exit All>

SCENE 5: *The corner-bar nearby to the district headquarters, where a party is underway.*

<Enter ROBERT, KATHY, HASTINGS, PLOUT, ANGUS and various OFFICERS and REVELERS>

ROBERT: If you could all quiet for a moment! Listen up friends! I'd like to thank you all for joining us, and raise a glass to Commissioner Eric Freneksy — raise a glass to a man who left this plane too soon, by too harsh a hand. The best Commissioner this district has yet seen, and I only hope I may touch his greatness in my tenure. To Freneksy!

All: To Freneksy!

<DONNA enters the bar, remains just inside doorway.>

ROBERT: Drinks are on me tonight, friends, so keep your glasses full. *<approaches doorway.>* What are you doing here? There's blood on your face.

DONNA: Shit. Must be the subject's.

ROBERT: It's done, then.

DONNA: It's done.

ROBERT: Good — now go get yourself cleaned up. The money should be in your account.

DONNA: The boy took off.

ROBERT: I thought you said the deed was done. Get out of here, we'll discuss it tomorrow.

<Exit DONNA>

KATHY: Darling, join us!

PLOUT: Sir — we're setting to have a good night. <He holds out a hand containing several small white capsules> An adventure into the unexplored by means of a new batch which has just arrived from Tampico aboard a banana boat — I hold it here, one for each of us.

ANGUS: Hallucinogenic, but more than that. Whee, whoo, fic-fic. Varies from person to person. Dives in with your sense of what Kant called the 'categories of perception,' get it?

KATHY: That'll be your sense of time and space — I have read *Critique of Pure Reason*.

ANGUS: Right on! It alters your, like, perception of time, so really ought to be called a tempogogic drug — get me? The first tempogogic drug!

PLOUT: Our first journey of the mind with you as Commissioner — will we all return? And will we be translated, as Bottom says?

ROBERT: "Bottom, thou art translated."

PLOUT: Pardon?

ROBERT: I'm quoting.

KATHY: Come on, give us the jinx and let's get started.
<KATHY *grabs a capsule from his hand*> Here we go — and
without water. <*swallows the capsule*>

HASTINGS: Is it the same, I wonder, taken without water?

KATHY: It's the same. Everything's the same, when you break
through to absolute reality. It's all one vast blur.

<ROBERT *and others retrieve and swallow capsules from
PLOUT's hand*>

ROBERT: For good old Freneksy, as it's translated into
English. Bottom, thou art translated as Freneksy.

HASTINGS : Where does this JJ-180 originate, Plout? You said
Germany, I think. But, you see, I have a number of contacts
in pharmaceutical enterprises, both public and private, in
Germany, and none of them has ever mentioned anything
about JJ-180.

PLOUT: That's the poog as I get it — take it or leave it.

HASTINGS : Then it's not actually German. I see — could this
JJ-180, or Frohedadrine as it's also called, could it possibly
originate entirely off Terra?

PLOUT: I don't know, man. I don't know.

HASTINGS : There have been cases of illegal non-terrestrial
drugs before, none of them of any importance. Derived from
Martian flora, mostly, and occasionally from Ganymedeian
lichens. I suppose you've heard; we're all informed on the topic,
or should be, anyway. Does anyone feel any change yet? Please
speak up if you do. <*He glances at ANGUS*> Your nipples seem
to be watching me, or is that just my imagination? In any case
it makes me decidedly uncomfortable.

ROBERT: As a matter of fact — I feel something. Excuse me.

I — to be frank, I'm alone. None of you are here with me. I'm all alone in the bar. None of you even exist. But the tables and chairs, the bottles, everything else exists. Then who'm I talking to? Have you answered?

ANGUS : My nipples are not watching you, man, or anyone else.

ROBERT: I can't hear you! Answer!

PLOUT: We're here.

ROBERT: Please, say something! It's just shadows. It's — lifeless. Nothing but dead things. And it's only starting — I'm scared of how it's going on; it's still happening.

<ROBERT *is struck by a beam of pink light*>

TAVERNER'S VOICE: This loneliness, this anguish of the bereaved Mind, is felt by every constituent of the universe, All its constituents are alive. Thus the ancient Greek thinkers were hylozoists.

ROBERT: No.

TAVERNER'S VOICE: 1. One Mind there is; but under it two principles contend. 2. The Mind lets in the light, then the dark; in interaction; so time is generated. At the end Mind awards victory to the light; time ceases and the mind is complete. Real time ceased in 70 C.E. with the fall of the Temple of Jerusalem. It began again in 1974. The intervening period was a perfect spurious interpolation aping the Creation of the Mind.

ROBERT: Which of you did this?

PLOUT: Did what?

HASTINGS: Commissioner's not doing too well.

KATHY: He's fine, he's fine — he'll be fine, it's just the JJ. Darling, are you ok?

ROBERT: I think I've seen the devil —

TAVERNER'S VOICE: The changing information which we experience as World is an unfolding narrative. It tells about the death of a woman. This woman, who died long ago, was one of the primordial twins. She was one half of the divine syzygy. The purpose of the narrative is the recollection of her and of her death. The Mind does not wish to forget her. Thus the ratiocination of the Brain consists of a permanent record of her existence, and, if read, will be understood this way. All the information possessed by the Brain — experienced by us as the arranging and rearranging of physical objects — is an attempt at this preservation of her; stones and rocks and sticks and amoebae are traces of her. The record of her existence and passing is ordered onto the meanest level of reality by the suffering Mind which is now alone.

<The pink beam of light fades>

ROBERT: Honey, I am so stoned you would not believe it. I love you.

KATHY: Then you must be.

ROBERT: Ask me questions. My unconscious is accessible.

KATHY: What deity or force took you over?

ROBERT: Erasmus.

KATHY: Who or what is/was Christ?

ROBERT: The style we are drawn in. There was a person seated for artists to draw him; they have a 1.5 minute time limit on their work. All draw him a little differently, all must finish fast and turn it in. Their work is crude, and each has a little bit of the subject in it. Our world is that composite work of many artists, and we are those crude drawings with the minute and a half time limit. We do as well as we can, but it's like Disneyland where they do that, various portrait

artists with one subject — or if they all had the same subject. It is like Disneyland — fast and not very expert, and still the subject sits and we approximate him. Someone else does the approximating; we are not the artists but the drawings. Hence Plato's concept of the cave and of the idea archetypes.

KATHY: Is there reincarnation?

ROBERT: <laughs> It takes place because it is easier.

KATHY: Why Erasmus?

ROBERT: I am he.

KATHY: In the past? In a former life?

ROBERT: I am always Erasmus. I always will be. I was Dr. Jonson, once, later. But always Erasmus.

KATHY: Then, there is a soul?

ROBERT: Always I was ugly. The man waiting to be killed inside the wooden house in the dream. It's a rat — I saw my father kill an animal, come to kill it. The old man on horseback who says we all must die — he's my father — he's my father, and he is Jason.

KATHY: Darling, the party.

ROBERT: Raise a glass to the father, to the Commissioner, to Jason, to all who we miss.

All: Hear, hear!

<The beam of pink light strikes ROBERT>

TAVERNER'S VOICE: Since the universe is actually composed of information, then it can be said that information will save us. This is the saving gnosis which the Gnostics sought. There is no other road to salvation. However, this information — or more precisely the ability to read and understand this

information, the universe as information — can be only be made available to us by the Holy Spirit. We cannot find it on our own. Thus it is said that we are saved by the grace of God and not by good works, that all salvation belongs to Christ, who, I say, is a physician.

ROBERT: Leave me alone, I do not want this!

KATHY: Jesus — ignore him, I'll take care of him. Plout, we can all thank you for this. He's out of his mind.

ROBERT: We need medical attention!

KATHY: No, you're fine, you're fine — calm down!

TAVERNER'S VOICE: In the vision there was an insane creator who destroyed what he created, without purpose; which is to say, irrationally. This is the deranged streak in the Mind; Christ is our only hope, since we cannot now call on Asklepios. Asklepios came before Christ and raised a man from the dead; for this act, Zeus had a Kyklopes slay him with a thunderbolt. Christ was also killed for what he had done: raising a man from the dead. Elijah brought a boy back to life and disappeared soon thereafter in a whirlwind.

ROBERT: The Empire never ended.

TAVERNER'S VOICE: The physician has come to us a number of times under a number of names. But we are not yet healed. The Empire identified him and ejected him. This time he will kill the Empire by phagocytosis.

ROBERT: The One was and was-not, combined, and desired to separate the was-not from the was. So it generated a diploid sac which contained, like an eggshell, a pair of twins, each an androgyny, spinning in opposite directions.

<The beam of pink light fades>

KATHY: This party has turned into a real shit-show.

ROBERT: We've come to see time wrongly, or, rather, we see it in its less real secondary aspect or axis. All things begin from outside. They enter the mind through the senses. Our mind soon subtracts qualities and abstracts them — do you realize how many images we carry from the first week of our life on?

PLOUT: Sorry, the JJ really took hold of him. Affects everyone differently, like Angus said.

ANGUS: Yeah man, he's faaaaaaaar out.

KATHY: Just — good night, alright? I need to settle things here and get him home.

ALL: Yeah, yeah — Goodnight — thanks.

<Exit All but ROBERT and KATHY>

ROBERT: This spirit is wearing me out. Killing me by exhausting me. He sure liked number games. That's why he's bubbling over with mirth. I've figured out who he is, at last. He is so into puzzles and riddles and puns — he's laughing. He's an astrologer.

KATHY: Come, let's get to bed.

<Exit All.>

SCENE 6: *A small, dingy office.*

<Enter PLOUT and HASTINGS>

PLOUT: An informant phoned in about Arctor.

HASTINGS: Yeah?

PLOUT: This man phoned in with information; I told him he'd have to step forward and identify himself — I challenged him to appear here and he did. He has no arrest record.

HASTINGS: What does he want? What's his information?

PLOUT: He's presented evidence that Arctor is part of a secret covert organization, well funded, with arsenals of weapons at their disposal, using code words, probably dedicated to the overthrow — well, that part is speculation.

HASTINGS: Any history of mental illness?

PLOUT: No, not that I'm aware of.

HASTINGS: Do you think this informant would be willing to sign a sworn affidavit from the D.A.?

PLOUT: I'm sure, not like the D.A. really has any pull here anymore, but as a symbolic gesture, sure. His evidence consists of tape recordings made of Arctor's phone conversations. Conversations when he didn't know he was being listened to.

HASTINGS: A tap?

PLOUT: Right.

HASTINGS: What is this organization?

PLOUT: I believe it to be — well, it's political — against the country, from outside. An enemy.

HASTINGS: Freneksy's reps — one of them has taken refuge with the Philadelphia syndicate. Barris has headed south as well, he's hoping to convince the Commissioner there to try and move in up here.

PLOUT: There have been too many bloody knives — sons killing fathers, clones killing sources — no wonder Arctor killed those sad drunk officers. If they'd stuck around Fred and the reps would have known, also, the consequence of murder. Arctor has a firm hand.

<Exit All>

ACT 4

SCENE 1: *Lower levels of District HQ, where the 3 PRECOGS are housed. The figures are wired up to a large, complex machine — they seem to be a part of the machine, and speak in overlapping phrases.*

PRECOG 1: Three meow time split dot nas —

PRECOG 2: Three one pig pig broke-gam nine debug —

PRECOG 3: Root drive harp six time split —

PRECOG 1: split nine hap we round split ent thirty-two ven pot —

ALL: Double tand bub —

PRECOG 3: Reboot run script nine three hem drab —

ALL: Dub reboot reboot two three seven four

<Enter ROBERT>

ROBERT: <swallows a small white pill> There can be no valid knowledge about the future. As soon as precognitive information is obtained it cancels itself out, or forces a person to action.

ALL PRECOGS: Reboot two three seven four dot dot —

ROBERT: I know it's pointless. Deformed monkeys sitting in

the dark — just, spit out something useful for once!

PRECOG 1: Speak de —

PRECOG 2: mand we an —

PRECOG 3: sr.

<Exit All>

SCENE 2: *City street outside district headquarters — neon signs and LED holoscreens flickering images.*

<Enter ROBERT, walking briskly. WOMAN WITH DARK HAIR appears before him, hovering just above the sidewalk, flickering. She faces him, and moves in tandem with ROBERT as he continues down the street. She wears a gold necklace.

WOMAN: Robert?

ROBERT: What — what is that necklace? It certainly is beautiful.

WOMAN: It's a fish — a sign used by the early Christians. You know Barris will come for you.

<WOMAN evaporates>

<As ROBERT walks, images flickeringly appear, replacing advertisements on the many holoscreens mounted on building facades. The images appear and flicker away: a series of abstract paintings such as those by Kandinsky>

WOMAN'S VOICE: None born of nature may harm you.

<A figure of a GREAT TALL MAN with white thatched hair appears on a large holoscreen overhead. He is wearing a great white robe and sandals, a crown, and carrying a tree>

WOMAN'S VOICE: You'll be commissioner 'til yesterday comes.

ROBERT: But — Jason? What about Jason, and his boy?

<Enter PLOUT>

PLOUT: Sir!

ROBERT: Plout — earlier I saw several patrol officers return from the outer districts.

PLOUT: Yes sir. They've brought word that Barris has fled for Philadelphia.

ROBERT: Are you sure?

PLOUT: Yes, sir.

ROBERT: Shit — that means he's turned against us. Where are the patrol officers now? I need to have a word.

<Exit All>

SCENE 3: *Queens District. Barris's home.*

<Enter GLORIA BARRIS, her son EDWARD, and HASTINGS.>

HASTINGS : Does it make you feel any better to know that fear of falling is a common phobia?

GLORIA: No.

HASTINGS: I guess there's no reason it should — but you say it's shown up before?

GLORIA: When I was eight. The war had been going for two years. I was on the surface, examining my vegetable garden. Even when I was young I grew things, tended things. The San Francisco network picked up exhaust trails of a Soviet missile and all the warning towers went off something awful. I was

almost on top of the shelter. I raced to it, lifted the lid and started down the stairs. At the bottom were my mother and father. They yelled for me to hurry. I started to run down the stairs.

HASTINGS: And fell?

GLORIA: No, I didn't fall — I froze. I suddenly got afraid and couldn't go any further. I just stood there, and they were yelling at me. They wanted to get the bottom plate screwed into place and couldn't until I was down.

HASTINGS: I remember those old two-stage shelters. I wonder how many people got shut between the lid and the bottom plate. People trapped on the stairs, not able to go up or down.

GLORIA: I wasn't scared of being trapped! I was scared of falling — afraid I'd pitch head-forward off the steps. Well, so I turned around and went back up outside.

EDWARD: During the attack?

GLORIA: They shot down the missile — I spent the alert tending my garden. Afterward, my family beat me nearly unconscious.

HASTINGS: Origin of guilt.

GLORIA: The next time I was fourteen — the War had been over a few months and we started back to see what was left of Petaluma: nothing. Nothing was left, only a crater of radioactive slag hundreds of feet deep. Workers were creeping down into the crater. I stood on the edge watching — and then the fear came. I dreamt about that crater every night for months — that big dead mouth where our homes used to be. Now it happens every time I'm up high — I can't peer over a balcony or ride a glass-elevator. I certainly can't fly.

HASTINGS: Well you can't stay. Your husband has fled with good reason and you ought to follow.

GLORIA: I told you, I can't.

HASTINGS: Look — I can't stay any longer or it'll be my head. I'm probably dead either way. It's not safe for you or your son to stay here. Get yourself out of town, go pay a visit with a long-lost friend or third cousin twice-removed or some shit. Walk out of town if you have to.

<Exit HASTINGS>

GLORIA: Your father's dead, I'm sure of it — what will we do now? How will we live?

EDWARD: Like birds.

GLORIA: What, with worms and flies?

EDWARD: With what we get.

GLORIA: Poor bird. You never really have had anything to be afraid of.

EDWARD: Why should I? Birds are not afraid. And father is not dead.

GLORIA: He is.

EDWARD: Was he a traitor?

GLORIA: That's what they are saying, isn't it?

EDWARD: What is a traitor?

GLORIA: Hmm. One that swears, and lies.

<Alarm system sounds — then is suddenly silent as the power is cut, and all lights go out>

GLORIA: I will not flee from my own home! I have done nothing wrong, I haven't done anyone any harm! Just leave us be!

<Enter DONNA and MIKE>

DONNA: Where's your husband?

GLORIA: I don't know. Where ever he is I'm sure you'll never find him.

DONNA: He's a traitor to the district.

EDWARD: You lie!

DONNA: What's that, traitor's son? <*stabs him*>

<Exit All>

SCENE 4: *The garden outside Arctor's Modernist Home.*

<Enter ROBERT and KATHY ARCTOR>

KATHY: What's your favorite Dead album? My favorite is *Workingman's Dead*. But I don't think they should advocate taking cocaine. A lot of kids listen to rock.

ROBERT: They don't advocate it. The song's just about someone taking it — and it killed him, indirectly. He smashed up his train.

KATHY: But that's why I started on drugs.

ROBERT: Because of the Grateful Dead?

KATHY: Because — everyone wanted me to do it. I'm tired of doing what other people want me to do.

ROBERT: Then don't kill yourself. I'm all alone — I really like you. It would make me feel terrible, for the rest of my life, if you did away with yourself.

KATHY: Perhaps you shouldn't leave.

<Exit All>

SCENE 5: *Philadelphia. Outside Central District
Headquarters.*

<Enter CHARLES & JAMES>

CHARLES: So I guess this is the only one in which Robert came to power.

JAMES: The worst possibility — so those in one of the more advanced universes are influencing us, breaking through from their own world into ours.

CHARLES: You see no transcendent religious power at work then?

JAMES: At work, yes, but in their world; theirs is a religious world, a Roman Catholic world with Christian sciences available to them. Obviously they've made a breakthrough in a scientific area we haven't — the ability to move between parallel worlds. We hardly even admit the existence of such worlds, let alone traverse them.

CHARLES: That's why it seems religious to me, as well as technological.

JAMES: Same thing!

CHARLES: It's interesting that the science in a religious world would be more advanced than ours.

JAMES: They never fought a Thirty Years War. That war set Europe back five hundred years — the first great religious war, between Protestants and Catholics. Europe was reduced to barbarism — cannibalism, in fact. Look what internecine religious warfare has done to us. Look at their deaths, the destruction.

CHARLES: Yeah — the Progressives — they've maneuvered all

of us.

JAMES: You don't know that. All you know is the precog—

CHARLES: I knew you'd say that! "Precog" shit — it's an arranging of all our lives by supratemporal forces!

JAMES: By a bunch of Parallel-dimension Portugese scientists.

CHARLES: Bull. They brought us together. They didn't tell me something, they just did something.

<Enter HASTINGS>

HASTINGS: Sir — I'm sorry — I need to discuss a matter with you. I wish it could wait but it can't.

JAMES: Not even until we get back to my office?

HASTINGS: I'm afraid not — there may be other policy-level personnel there when we get back. It may not be safe.

JAMES: Surely nothing —

HASTINGS: Sir — listen, it's about your wife. She's been killed.

JAMES: No — that can't be — they were to leave —

HASTINGS: Wife, and children too.

CHARLES: Shit.

JAMES: I should go home I should — Gloria?

HASTINGS: Yes sir, as I said.

CHARLES: James, you can't go home.

JAMES: No, I have a child. I'll show you a little 3-D pic of him.
<He retrieves his pocket-com and begins flipping through> He

never got the kite off the ground. Too young, or afraid. Our boy has a lot of anxiety.

HASTINGS: Sir —

JAMES: I shouldn't have left them.

CHARLES: This has gone on long enough. It's time to move; to bring this play to a close. We'll travel with the support of Philly patrols — Arctor won't stand a chance.

<Exit All>

ACT 5

SCENE 1: New Path Clinic.

<Enter KATHY, DOCTOR, *Two* SECURITY GUARDS>

KATHY: I — I'm in a bad space. I can't keep it together anymore. Can I sit?

DOCTOR: Sure — sit down, we'll bring you some coffee.

KATHY: Thank you — wow.

DOCTOR: You look like hell, miss.

SECURITY 1: Yeah — like real shit. What you been doing? Lying in your own crap?

SECURITY 2: Who are you?

SECURITY 1: You can see what she is — some scum from the fucking garbage pail. Look — lice. That's why you itch, lady.

DOCTOR: Why did you come here?

KATHY: Did you say —

DOCTOR: Yes, you may have some coffee.

<Exit SECURITY GUARDS>

DOCTOR: You feel pretty bad, don't you? Shame and disgust at

the thing you are.

KATHY: Yes.

DOCTOR: At the pollution you've made of yourself. A cesspool. Sticking that spike up your ass day after day, injecting your body with —

KATHY: I couldn't go on any more. This place is the only hope I could think of. I wash my hands constantly but they never get clean — who would've thought anyone could have so much blood inside.

DOCTOR: Yes, yes. You'll meet the family later, if you qualify. You'll have to pass our requirements, you realize. And the first one is sincere need.

KATHY: I have that — sincere need.

DOCTOR: You've got to be bad off to be let in here.

KATHY: I am.

DOCTOR: How strung out are you?

KATHY: Ounce a day.

DOCTOR: Pure?

KATHY: I keep a sugar bowl on the table.

DOCTOR: It's going to be super rough. You'll gnaw your pillow into feathers at night; there'll be feathers everywhere when you wake up. And you'll have the seizures and foam at the mouth. And dirty yourself the way sick animals do. Are you ready for that? You realize we don't give you anything here.

KATHY: There isn't anything.

<Enter SECURITY GUARD, with coffee>

KATHY: Thank you.

<Exit All>

SCENE 2: *A room in Arctor's Modernist Home.*

<Enter ROBERT>

ROBERT: There's nothing they can do — they like to think there is but we'll hold this District until they starve in the streets. "None born of nature may harm you; you will be Commissioner until yesterday comes again." That's what she said. I don't have time for doubt. Doubt is for the weak. The weak-willed.

<Enter OFFICER TEAGARDEN>

ROBERT: You look like a corpse.

OFFICER: There are hundreds of —

ROBERT: Corpses?

OFFICER: Officers, soldiers, from southward way like.

ROBERT: Get your shit together. We'll hold. This is my district — always has been.

<ROBERT fishes a small white pill out of his pocket, swallows it.>

<Enter DOCTOR>

ROBERT: Go get me my buffer shield from the hall, and my belt.

<Exit OFFICER>

ROBERT: Doctor, how's the patient?

DOCTOR: She's in a bad way and coming off hard — a twitching nightmare to be honest, thinks there are aphids coming out of the carpets.

ROBERT: Right the fucking aphids. Angus is convinced he caught them from her, he's losing his mind about them every-other day. Once barricaded himself into his apartment with his furniture and was planning on flooding the room with cyanide gas coming out of his bath faucet. Cure her. Get the aphids out, so to speak.

DOCTOR: The patient must find a way to heal herself, as must we all.

ROBERT: Fuck that — you're supposed to be the best damn clinic in the country. Fix it. Do what you have to do.

<Exit All>

SCENE 3: *The New Path Clinic.*

<Enter KATHY and DOCTOR>

KATHY: I'll take the test if you'll take it first. Wouldn't that be more fair? Then I could be sure of you. I don't know — you seem so peculiar and hard and strange.

DOCTOR: You wouldn't be able to administer the test — you haven't been properly trained. It takes considerable experience.

<They sit, across from one another>

DOCTOR: Now please listen carefully. These questions will deal with social situations which you might find yourself in; what I want from you is a statement of response. What you would do. And I want the response as quickly as you can give it. One of the factors I'll record is the time lag, if any. To begin: You're sitting watching a holo-broadcast and suddenly you discover a wasp crawling on your wrist.

KATHY: What's a wasp?

DOCTOR: A stinging insect that flies.

KATHY: How. How strange. Do they still exist? I've never seen one.

DOCTOR: They died out because of the dust. Don't you really know what a wasp is? You must have been alive when there were wasps; that's only been—

KATHY: Tell me the German word.

DOCTOR: Your English is perfect!

KATHY: My accent is perfect. It has to be, for roles. But my vocabulary...

DOCTOR: *Wespe*.

KATHY: *Ach* yes; *eine wespe*. And what was the question, I forgot already.

DOCTOR: Let's try another. You are watching an old movie, from before the war. It shows a banquet in progress. The entree consists of boiled dog, stuffed with rice.

KATHY: Nobody would kill and eat a dog. They're worth a fortune. But I guess it would be an imitation dog, right? But those are made of wires and motors, they can't be eaten.

DOCTOR: Before the war.

KATHY: I wasn't alive before the war.

DOCTOR: But you've seen old movies.

KATHY: Was the movie made in the Philippines?

DOCTOR: Why?

KATHY: Because they used to eat boiled dog stuffed with rice in the Philippines, I remember reading that.

DOCTOR: But your response. I want your social, emotional, moral reaction.

KATHY: To the movie? I'd turn it off.

DOCTOR: Why would you turn it off?

KATHY: Well, who the hell wants to watch an old movie set in the Philippines? What ever happened in the Philippines except the Bataan Death March and would you want to watch that?

DOCTOR: You rent a mountain cabin.

KATHY: *Ja*. Go on; I'm waiting.

DOCTOR: In an area still verdant.

KATHY: Pardon? I don't ever hear that term.

DOCTOR: Still trees and bushes growing. The cabin is rustic knotty pine with a huge fireplace. On the walls someone has hung old maps, Currier and Ives prints, and above the fireplace a deer's head has been mounted, a full stag with developed horns. The people with you admire the decor of the cabin and—

KATHY: I don't understand "Currier" or "Ives" or "decor." Wait. With rice, like in the dog. Currier is what makes the rice currier rice. It's *Curry* in German.

DOCTOR: Ok. You're dating a man and he asks you to visit his apartment. While you're there—

KATHY: *Oh nein*. I wouldn't be there, that's easy to answer.

DOCTOR: That's not the question!

KATHY: Your questions began to do with sex. I thought they would finally. You're not from the police department, you're a

sexual deviant.

DOCTOR: No! No! I am your Doctor! See, my identification!

KATHY: Let me see your questions. *<reads> In a magazine you come across a full-page color picture of a nude girl. Well that's one. You became pregnant by a man who has promised to marry you. The man goes off with another woman. The pattern of your questioning is obvious, and makes quite a few presumptions.*

DOCTOR: Alright, then. Perhaps that's enough for today. We can continue tomorrow.

<Exit All>

SCENE 4: *A room in Arctor's Modernist Home.*

<Enter ROBERT>

<ROBERT's holo-com alerts - incoming call from DOCTOR>

ROBERT: *<answering>* Yes?

DOCTOR: Where are you right now?

ROBERT: I'm here, at home.

DOCTOR: Your wife killed herself today.

ROBERT: Carmona talked her into going to New Path — because of her history, you know.

<ROBERT retrieves and swallows a small white pill>

DOCTOR: I'm sorry we were unable to help her very much.

ROBERT: Is that how New Path works? Techniques to break down the personality? A fascist therapy that makes the person totally out-directed and dependent on the group?

DOCTOR: Then, typically, we are able to build up a new personality that isn't drug-oriented.

ROBERT: Typically? Didn't you realize she was suicidal?

DOCTOR: Of course. Of course — you must know this was no typical scenario.

ROBERT: If you realized she was suicidal — why didn't you stop it?

DOCTOR: It's a difficult process — perhaps you'd like to come down there and teach us how to handle suicidal people. We did everything we could but in the end we had to —

<ROBERT *terminates holo-call*>

ROBERT: She should not have died today. Tomorrow, or tomorrow, or tomorrow — tomorrow creeps along day to day — all our yesterdays just lead us toward death. Out, brief candle! Life's a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more.

<Enter YOUNG ROBERT ARCTOR>

YOUNG ROBERT: What? Who are you and what are you doing in my house?

ROBERT: I remember you — I remember this day. Our wife has — Kathy has died.

YOUNG ROBERT: What have you done?

<YOUNG ROBERT *retrieves small pistol-type gun from belt*>

ROBERT: I thought this was just some hallucination! Get back! This can't be real!

YOUNG ROBERT: Security!

<YOUNG ROBERT *fires pistol, striking ROBERT*>

ROBERT: But — I remember — <ROBERT *collapses*>

<YOUNG ROBERT *fires again, striking* ROBERT>

ROBERT: I remember — I'll remember too late — <ROBERT *dies*>

<YOUNG ROBERT *fades away*>

<*Exit All*>

SCENE 5: *The same.*

<*Enter* JAMES, CHARLES, OFFICERS. ROBERT *lies dead on the floor*>

JAMES: Hail, Commissioner! Wait — he's here. Charles, check him out.

CHARLES: Yeah, he's dead — cold already even. There's no blood.

JAMES: Turn him over.

<CHARLES *turns* ROBERT *over onto his back.*>

CHARLES: Shit — there's no blood because he's not alive. He never was alive.

JAMES: A Six — we should have known. There was always something unsettling about him. His eyes never moved right. Well good riddance — these sixes would roll us all over and mash us flat if they could.

CHARLES: But who retired him?

JAMES: Who cares, all that matters is he's finished — give me the synthetic's cursed head. Officers, sweep the compound. We'll set ourselves up here and chase whatever rats are left out

of District Headquarters. The district — the region — is ours.

ROBERT: <*Bathed in pink light*> “Look where you least expect to find it.” How do you do that? It’s a contradiction.

One night I dreamed I owned a small cabin directly on the water, an ocean this time; the water extended forever. And this cabin did not resemble and I had ever seen; it seemed more like a hut such as I had seen in movies about the South Pacific. And, as I awoke, the distinct thought entered my mind: Garlands of flowers, singing and dancing, and the recital of myths, tales and poetry.

I later remembered where I had read those words. In the article on Micronesian Cultures in the Britannica. The voice had spoken to me, reminding me of the place to which Jason had gone in his search.

My search kept me at home. I sat before the TV set in my living room. I sat. I watched. I kept myself awake. As we had been told, originally, long ago, to do. I kept my commission.

<*Flourish. Exuent*>

THE END

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