

Melts Into Air

by

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DESCRIPTION

Just ask a middle-aged white male professional how much wiggle room the capitalist regime in a state of high anxiety gives a person who is found superfluous.

CHARACTERS

- DORITT, wife (also SHADOWY CHARACTER 1)
- CHRISTIAN, husband (also SHADOWY CHARACTER 2, POLICE OFFICER)
- ANGEL, son (also plays INTERVIEWER 1, AGENT 1, SHADOWY CHARACTER 3)
- LAUREN, daughter (also plays INTERVIEWER 2, AGENT 2, REPORTER)

SETTING

- A living room.
- A commune
- Hidden places

* * * * *

A living room. DORITT paces. She wears a shawl over her head, like a headscarf. ANGEL enters.

ANGEL

You look like a nun.

DORITT

Glad you could make it.

ANGEL

Why the—

DORITT

So my head doesn't bust out.

ANGEL

Ah.

ANGEL takes some pistachios out of his pocket, cracks them open, eats. He puts the shells back into his pocket. He holds a few out to DORITT in the palm of his hand.

DORITT

Not on this stomach. Why are you eating?

ANGEL

Hungry? No, habit. Life goes on. You shouldn't worry.

ANGEL gestures overhead.

ANGEL

About.

DORITT

Don't tell me such—nonsense.

ANGEL

You weren't gonna say nonsense.

DORITT mimics his pointing; the pointing changes into a gesture of "up yours."

ANGEL sticks both hands into his pockets.

ANGEL

I'm gonna sit down.

DORITT

I'm not.

ANGEL sits. DORITT paces.

ANGEL

Anything? Has there been—That bad?

DORITT

If I chopped off all your toes, how would you stand up?

ANGEL

Good answer. That's a good answer.

DORITT

There's blood slopped all over the floor up there.

ANGEL

You don't—not real blood—

Depends. DORITT

Maybe I should go up— ANGEL

Maybe you should. DORITT

ANGEL stands. DORITT paces.

Lights. Transition.

* * * * *

LAUREN, in full business-suit array, in the living room. DORITT has bandages on her hands.

DORITT
I got distracted. A lot of that going around. If you care to notice.

Angel called me. LAUREN

DORITT
I was trying to cook—it's like a make-believe—

LAUREN
Trying something regular. That's you all over. How bad?

DORITT
How bad which?

LAUREN
First, the hands.

DORITT
Won't get stigmata.

LAUREN
That bug you?

DORITT
I grabbed the handles without potholders.

LAUREN

I see. And in the pot?

DORITT

I don't know—maybe a favorite of his. Like make-believe, I told you.

LAUREN

You said that.

LAUREN points overhead.

LAUREN

Should I?

DORITT

Wouldn't hurt. Wouldn't help.

LAUREN

I can understand—you don't think I can?

DORITT

I think you're capable of a lot of things. It's—

LAUREN

What?

DORITT

It's like—

LAUREN

Like what?

DORITT

If I macheted off all your toes, how would you stand up?

LAUREN

He's got some fallback saved up.

DORITT

Angel understood what I just said. You talk about fallback.

LAUREN

That's me. And he does. That's why he always saved the way that he did. I just don't see—

DORITT
Seeing is—I couldn't finish cooking it.

LAUREN
I'll go up. Dad has got to come down.

DORITT
He doesn't think so.

LAUREN
What does he know what he's thinking?

DORITT
I'd forgotten to put in the parsley—that's why—

LAUREN
Parsley?

DORITT
Maybe fennel?

LAUREN
Try oregano. He likes oregano. You were distracted.

DORITT
There's blood on the floor up there, Lauren.

LAUREN takes DORITT's bandaged hands and kisses each one.

LAUREN
All right, Mom—it's all right.

DORITT
Yes and no.

LAUREN sits, keeps a hold on DORITT's hands.

Lights. Transition.

* * * * *

DORITT (hands unbandaged), ANGEL, LAUREN. DORITT dandles a rosary.

LAUREN

There's a reality to face.

ANGEL

I want to help—I really do—it's hard to think of Dad as—

CHRISTIAN stands in the doorway—shirt, tie, pants, but very disheveled. Barefoot. Toes are red.

CHRISTIAN

Think of him as what?

ANGEL turns, starts to go to him, stops. DORITT stands. She stuffs the rosary beads down the front of her dress; the cross hangs out.

CHRISTIAN

As what is he thought?

ANGEL

Dad—pistachios?

CHRISTIAN pounds on himself.

CHRISTIAN

This—garbage a tsunami leaves behind.

ANGEL

You got your ten toes. No blood on the floor it looks like. Right, Mom?

DORITT

You scared me to death.

CHRISTIAN

I'm not finished.

LAUREN

That's a good spirit—

CHRISTIAN

I said, I'm not finished—

LAUREN

That's what I meant—

ANGEL

Not what he—right? Finished—work to be done.

CHRISTIAN

Those bastards—

CHRISTIAN turns and leaves. DORITT goes to follow but doesn't follow.

DORITT

Fifty-five years old—

ANGEL

We've got nothing to offer, right?—to him, I mean—

Banging—things falling, breaking, etc.

DORITT

It's not fair—

LAUREN

It doesn't do any good to say things like that—

DORITT grabs LAUREN by her business-suit lapels and shakes her, growling as she does.

DORITT

Arrggghhh!

Then DORITT lets her go and reaches inside LAUREN's coat pocket, pulls out a pen, begins tattooing stigmata on her hands. Banging continues.

Lights. Transition.

* * * * *

CHRISTIAN by himself, even more disheveled. Red toes.

CHRISTIAN

The fuckers. How do they expect—can't walk now—fucking masters of the universe—What am I going to do?

CHRISTIAN grabs his feet and rocks back in what would be, in yoga, the Happy Child's pose

CHRISTIAN

What am I going to do? What am I—what what what what—

Then he sits up, wild-eyed.

CHRISTIAN

Dynamite for the fuckers, yes, suppository it up their ass—
asses!—boom!—tripe festooned, that's what they deserve for—
downsize, shit!—shit!—they murder and no perp walk, nah-ah,
golden parachute, bailout, and the trolls and dwarves get spit-
sucked and sporned and spun-bum-fucked into superflu[ous]—
superflu[ous]—

CHRISTIAN cries again.

CHRISTIAN

Can't say it, can't say it, can't say—

CHRISTIAN cries until he can't cry anymore. Takes a deep breath, then speaks.

CHRISTIAN

Superfluous.

CHRISTIAN pronounces with even more vigor.

CHRISTIAN

Su. Per. Flu. Ous.

*CHRISTIAN stands, falls down because he has no toes, so to speak. Tries again, falls again.
Sits. Slaps his right foot first, then his left. He rubs his feet savagely, and the red paint smears
all over this feet and hands. He wipes his hands on his clothes until he looks bloodied.*

CHRISTIAN stands again. This time he stays up.

Lights. Transition.

* * * * *

*LAUREN sits at a table, several typed pages in her hand, editing. CHRISTIAN sits as well, his
shirt still "bloodied." Feet still red.*

LAUREN

Impressive.

CHRISTIAN

Expensive.

LAUREN

You've done a lot.

CHRISTIAN

I've done not nearly enough.

LAUREN

We have to get it down to a page, though.

CHRISTIAN

You would know.

LAUREN

It's tough—not fair, not always fair to—

CHRISTIAN

You would know.

LAUREN

We can work this out together—what can we cut?

DORITT enters. She has the bandages back on her hands.

LAUREN

Did you hurt—

DORITT

I just want to wear them.

LAUREN

All right.

DORITT

Of course it's all right—

LAUREN

Of course—now, Dad, if we shorten—

LAUREN freezes in mid-edit. CHRISTIAN and DORITT momentarily turn into The Hulk or Wrestlemania.

CHRISTIAN & DORITT

Rage. Rage! Raaaaggggeeeee!!!!!!!

They turn back to LAUREN, who continues editing.

LAUREN

—if we shorten this—

CHRISTIAN

Yes, I can see that—

LAUREN

Cut some of the awards and honors—

LAUREN freezes, mid-edit. CHRISTIAN and DORITT—more rage.

CHRISTIAN & DORITT

Arrrrggghhhh!

They turn back to LAUREN, who continues.

LAUREN

Maybe not all the awards—hmm—two lines, with something like
“Representative Aw[ards]”—

CHRISTIAN

Whatever you say.

LAUREN strikes things out.

LAUREN

Yes, that will work—

LAUREN freezes, mid-striking out. CHRISTIAN and DORITT again with the rage but ending in something that looks like they've made a pact to do something unusual and unexpected and perhaps even a trifle dangerous. They turn back to LAUREN.

LAUREN

And here, Dad—right here—we can do the same with the
publications—“Represen[tative]”—

CHRISTIAN

Great—that should work just fine.

LAUREN continues to edit, ad libbing comments to herself. CHRISTIAN rises, moves away. Begins bad kung-fu moves. DORITT does a bad flamenco.

CHRISTIAN

"Résumé" is spelled the same as "resume"—

DORITT

"Curriculum vitae", the course of life—

CHRISTIAN

But, of course, when the fuckers sack you—

DORITT

When the course of life has run its course—

CHRISTIAN & DORITT

What the fuck can you resume?

They switch, he to bad flamenco, she to bad kung-fu.

CHRISTIAN

All that is solid melts into air—

DORITT

—all that is holy is profaned—

CHRISTIAN & DORITT

“So you say you want a revolution”—

DORITT

—and man—

CHRISTIAN

—and woman!—

DORITT

—is—are—at last compelled to face with—

They stop, breathless, facing each other.

CHRISTIAN

—to face with sober senses—

DORITT

—their—real—conditions—of—life—

They breathe together. LAUREN ends here ending with a flourish.

LAUREN

Got it, Dad, reduced it down to one page!

The look of triumph upon her face is painful to see.

Lights. Transition.

* * * * *

LAUREN hands the résumé to INTERVIEWER 1, who takes a seat. DORITT helps CHRISTIAN put on a suitcoat, pats down the lapels, etc.: the wifely touches. CHRISTIAN takes a seat, tucks his feet underneath.

INTERVIEWER 1

Now, this is quite impressive—

CHRISTIAN

Thank you.

(mutters to himself)

Barely half my fucking age, the twat!

INTERVIEWER 1 traces down the page.

INTERVIEWER 1

Uh-huh—

CHRISTIAN

(mutters)

The snot!

INTERVIEWER 1

Uh-huh—

CHRISTIAN

(mutters)

The baboon shit!

INTERVIEWER 1

Good—

CHRISTIAN

(mutters)

The cock-sucking—

INTERVIEWER 1

Nice—nicely done.

CHRISTIAN

Thank you.

(mutters)

Why am giving you thanks—

INTERVIEWER 1

You're very well qualified.

CHRISTIAN

I've worked hard all my life—never cheated—never—

INTERVIEWER 1

Cheated?

CHRISTIAN

What?

INTERVIEWER 1

You're not—you don't have a criminal record, do you?

CHRISTIAN

What are you talking about?

INTERVIEWER 1

Well, you mentioned "cheated"—

CHRISTIAN

(mutters)

Literal cunt!

(full voice)

No, no, nothing in the legal—I mean the illegal—sense—I meant—

INTERVIEWER 1

You meant what?

CHRISTIAN

I meant in the sense of, well, personal integrity—

(mutters)

What would you fucking know [about]—

(full voice)

Yes—always staying until the job was done, putting in the time I was obligated to give to my employers—I played by the rules all my life—

INTERVIEWER 1

Ah—that's good to know—now—

INTERVIEWER 1 shifts places with INTERVIEWER 2, hands off résumé.

CHRISTIAN

Even when I had my first job—always there, on time, eager—

INTERVIEWER 2

Yes, I'm sure—

CHRISTIAN

Worked for—

INTERVIEWER 2

We need to—

CHRISTIAN

—a dollar an hour—

This catches INTERVIEWER 2.

INTERVIEWER 2

A dollar an hour?

CHRISTIAN

Big money to a fourteen-year old—fifty hours a week—

INTERVIEWER 2

Wouldn't that—that must have broken some child labor law—

CHRISTIAN

Not the point!—sorry—you may be right—but I learned a lot about self-discipline, self-pride, sticking to—

INTERVIEWER 2

Yes, I can see that—

CHRISTIAN

Forty years I've spent—doing—what—

INTERVIEWER 2

As I said—

CHRISTIAN

And yet it can be just—thrown—ah, forgive me—just waxing nostalgic.

INTERVIEWER 2

Waxing?

CHRISTIAN

Not—hair—

INTERVIEWER 2

Isn't that what the word means?

CHRISTIAN

It has—other—meanings—

INTERVIEWER 2

Really?

CHRISTIAN

I just meant thinking about the past—no, no—time to think about the future. Which is why I'm here. Yes.

INTERVIEWER 2

I can understand—I can—I also have to tell you that the position—

CHRISTIAN

When I first saw it, I thought, "That is a job"—

INTERVIEWER 1 joins INTERVIEWER 2.

INTERVIEWER 1

That position is no longer available.

CHRISTIAN

Oh. Oh.

INTERVIEWER 2

In fact—I think I can be honest with you—that position never really existed.

CHRISTIAN

Oh.

INTERVIEWER 2

Yes.

CHRISTIAN

Oh. Then why—

INTERVIEWER 1

To be honest—

CHRISTIAN

Yes, please—

INTERVIEWER 2

Honesty is a good policy, isn't it?

CHRISTIAN

You decide that, I don't—

INTERVIEWER 1

We are trolling for résumés—seems a propitious time to do that, given the way things are—yours floated to the top—

CHRISTIAN

(mutters)

Why is a corporation like a cesspool?

INTERVIEWER 2

We all thought it was impressive—

CHRISTIAN

(mutters)

Big chunks float to the top!

INTERVIEWER 1

We wanted to have you in.

CHRISTIAN

I'm just a big chunk.

INTERVIEWER 2

What?

CHRISTIAN

Nothing—just a—thought—do you have anything?

INTERVIEWER 2

We do—

CHRISTIAN

Yes?

INTERVIEWER 1

But not as an actual employed position—contract work—

CHRISTIAN

Independent contractor.

INTERVIEWER 2

No benefits, of course—

CHRISTIAN

Of course—those are so old-fashioned now, aren't they?

INTERVIEWER 1

You understand. Lean and mean is the new—

CHRISTIAN raises both hands, fingers pointed like guns, and shoots them both. They die.

Then they all go back to the interview.

CHRISTIAN

“Lean and mean,” I hear, is the new black.

INTERVIEWER 2

Would you be interested?

INTERVIEWER 1

Yes?

CHRISTIAN shrugs, chuckles, spreads his hands open—shucks and jives and buffoons.

INTERVIEWERS exit. DORITT enters. She shows CHRISTIAN the stigmata on her hands: dollar signs. He shows her his feet: still red.

DORITT

Did you get anything?

CHRISTIAN

They offered me the blue-plate shit special.

DORITT

You put in an order?

CHRISTIAN

And I took the free seconds.

DORITT

And a doggie-bag for home.

CHRISTIAN

So I could get a doggie-bag for home—I didn't know what else to do.

DORITT

That's what you've been farm-raised to do all your life.

CHRISTIAN

All my life—

DORITT

No insult intended.

CHRISTIAN

Work is noble—none taken—do the right thing—all work is dignified—your life, too, farm-raised.

DORITT

For the slaughterhouse.

CHRISTIAN

Hmm—

DORITT

The bit in my mouth long ago broke my teeth.

CHRISTIAN

Melting into air.

DORITT

And then broke the spirit. Melting into air.

CHRISTIAN

Superfluous.

DORITT

Really, what is—

CHRISTIAN

Has been—

DORITT

—the fucking point—

CHRISTIAN

—of it all?

DORITT

At least we still complete each other's sentences.

CHRISTIAN

That is not a comfort.

DORITT

I didn't mean it that way.

CHRISTIAN

Good. I can do their blue-plate shit special work, you know.

DORITT

Of course you can.

CHRISTIAN

Eyes closed.

DORITT

Nose closed. Better that way.

CHRISTIAN

Then I won't have to see—

DORITT

—smell—the train wreck you are.

CHRISTIAN

We'll have something coming in.

DORITT

That's what the sanitation engineer says—

CHRISTIAN

—at the sewage treatment plant.

DORITT & CHRISTIAN

Something coming in.

CHRISTIAN

Big chunks to the top.

CHRISTIAN slumps to the ground.

CHRISTIAN

I really don't know any other way.

DORITT slumps to join him.

CHRISTIAN

I don't know how to play out my life any different. The rules—

DORITT

Like a chicken bone in the throat.

DORITT goes behind him and starts the Heimlich maneuver.

CHRISTIAN

What are you—

DORITT

Come on, get it out—

CHRISTIAN

Stop—you'll break—

DORITT

Come on come on come on—

CHRISTIAN

Stop stop stop stop—

But to CHRISTIAN's surprise, he coughs up a chicken bone. He shows it to DORITT. They stare at it.

CHRISTIAN

How long has that been stuck in there?

DORITT smells the bone, scratches it, holds it up to her ear, drops it to the ground—tests it.

DORITT

My dating process is imperfect, but I'd say since age fourteen at a dollar and hour. To me—do it to me—

CHRISTIAN gets behind DORITT and does the same, and she coughs up a Barbie-doll head. CHRISTIAN smells it, scratches it, holds it up to his hear, drops it to the ground—tests it.

CHRISTIAN

My dating process is imperfect, but I'd say since birth.

DORITT

Really, what is the fucking point—

CHRISTIAN

—of it all? That question comes around again.

DORITT

And again.

CHRISTIAN & DORITT

And again.

CHRISTIAN

I think it's fucking time—

DORITT

—we answered it.

CHRISTIAN

That time, finishing the sentence was a comfort.

They stand and grind the chicken bone and Barbie-head under their heels. ANGEL and LAUREN enter.

LAUREN

Look, I know about these things—this is just a temporary setback—

ANGEL

Let them do—

LAUREN

You don't have a pot to piss in, so just butt out.

ANGEL

This how you act in court?

LAUREN

I use longer words.

ANGEL

Same cutting-edge.

LAUREN

You'll get work—

CHRISTIAN

I was offered work, based on my superbly edited résumé.

LAUREN

So don't dissolve your assets.

CHRISTIAN

It's mucking-out work in a cow barn—it has as much dignity as—

DORITT

As gangrene. In both feet.

CHRISTIAN

I don't want to do it.

LAUREN

Things will get back to—

ANGEL

Don't slice me up again—but are you worried about their will?

LAUREN

I am not worried about their will.

ANGEL

You are worried about their will.

LAUREN

I am worried about how my parents are going to—

CHRISTIAN

We told our lawyer to annul the will.

DORITT

We now have changed minds.

LAUREN

You should have asked [me]—

DORITT

Changed minds, I repeat.

CHRISTIAN

There's always been a reason why we haven't had you handle our legal affairs.

ANGEL

Oh, man, this is rich!

LAUREN

You still should have asked me—

ANGEL

The zest of the dispossessed.

LAUREN

Shut up—okay, okay, so you've annulled the will.

CHRISTIAN

We said we'd get back to him with any changes in that attitude.

ANGEL

Unlikely, right?

DORITT

Unlikely. We now want as many things as possible to be unlikely.

LAUREN

So, then, what are your plans?

ANGEL

Let it go.

LAUREN gestures to cut him off. ANGEL chuckles.

ANGEL

She's drawn blood—

LAUREN

Have you thought through—

DORITT

Our principle is, "All that's solid—"

CHRISTIAN

"—melts into air."

LAUREN

What does that even mean?

CHRISTIAN

You should be better read.

DORITT

Watch out for the chicken bone in your throat.

CHRISTIAN

And the Barbie-doll head—

LAUREN

What?

DORITT

We're highly allusional.

LAUREN

You two have just—I don't know what to say—

ANGEL

Don't say anything for once. I think it's time for you two to go fuck things up a little.

DORITT

Oh, we have plans.

LAUREN

You're still angry—I can understand that—but—this isn't like you, isn't like how you two always thought outside yourself, about what was good for us—

CHRISTIAN

There comes a time when being responsible—taking pride in being responsible—

DORITT

—being the good person—

CHRISTIAN

—will kill you.

DORITT raises up her hand.

DORITT

And that time is—

DORITT drops her hand, like starting the race.

DORITT & CHRISTIAN

Now.

CHRISTIAN

What a comfort.

DORITT makes the sound of racing car engines at the starting line.

DORITT

Vroom vroom vroom vroom—

ANGEL

Yee-haw!

ANGEL gallops around the room while LAUREN fumes. LAUREN exits, chased by ANGEL.

DORITT rises, exits, returns with a bowl of water and a towel.

DORITT kneels and washes CHRISTIAN's feet. CHRISTIAN washes the stigmata off DORITT's hands.

Raucous musical transition to the farm, otherwise known as Pith In The Wind.

* * * * *

Pith In The Wind.

CHRISTIAN and DORITT in overalls, work boots, etc. Sitting on the porch doing something rural. AGENT 1 and AGENT 2 enter, dressed in something not rural and that looks governmental. They look knackered: sweating, wheezing, etc. CHRISTIAN and DORITT ignore them.

AGENT 1

You do not make it easy. It's not easy—making it up—that road of yours. Indeed it isn't. I like the sign, though, I do like the sign—Pith In The Wind.

AGENT 2

Yes—I thought that was—great—

AGENT 1

Great name—funny name—and—that upraised middle finger chainsawed out of the pine stump—

AGENT 2

—that is unique—

CHRISTIAN

Do you hear some buzzing?

DORITT

No—

CHRISTIAN

No?

DORITT

No.

CHRISTIAN

I do.

DORITT

I meant I'm not hearing anything worth listening to.

CHRISTIAN

Me neither—but I've got this buzzing butting up against my tympanum—

DORITT

Just work your little fingertip in there—probably wax junk—

CHRISTIAN

It is certainly junk coming into my ears at the moment.

CHRISTIAN roots in his ear with his little fingertip, makes as if he's flicking away something.

CHRISTIAN

Much better—cleaning out the tubes—you about ready?

DORITT

I am about ready.

They pick up what they've been working on and exit, leaving the two AGENTS standing there. AGENT 2 pulls out water, swigs, hands it to AGENT 1, who also swigs, after cleaning the bottle's mouth.

AGENT 2

Now what?

AGENT 1

I'm not sure.

AGENT 2

Didn't even get to show them our badges—damn!

AGENT 1

They know who we are—or at least what we are—

AGENT 2

Think so?

AGENT 1

Who else would be climbing up here dressed like this on a day like today?

AGENT 2

Lacks the common touch.

AGENT 1

Also lacks common sense.

AGENT 2

There is nothing like public service.

AGENT 1

And then there's what we've come here to do.

AGENT 2

You don't see the two as the same?

AGENT 1

Read their online stuff?

AGENT 2

In prep, yes.

AGENT 1

And?

AGENT 2

Thought-provoking—that would be my word for what the two of them have written.

AGENT 1

So how would you answer your own question?

AGENT 2

Have to admit—at least online, those two are not loons.

AGENT 1

Unlike the people who sent us here.

AGENT 2

I see your point.

AGENT 1

But we have a job.

AGENT 2

And so what now?

AGENT 1

And so we wait—our timecards are punched.

CHRISTIAN reenters with a tray of glasses and a pitcher of what looks like lemonade. DORITT carries in a small folding table, which she sets down in front of the AGENTS. CHRISTIAN puts down the tray. CHRISTIAN and DORITT sit and wait.

AGENTS look at each other, then AGENT 2 gestures for AGENT 1 to move forward to pour out the lemonade. AGENT 1 moves to do so.

CHRISTIAN

Before you do that—

DORITT

—show us your badges. Please.

CHRISTIAN

We know how you guys like doing that.

AGENTS pull them out and flip them open. DORITT gestures, and the AGENTS hand them over so that they can be perused.

CHRISTIAN

Pictures like that never do anyone a justice.

DORITT

The Bureau of Investigation—state level, though, right?

AGENT 2

Yes ma'am.

DORITT

Not the big federal honker, not "J. Edgar's joint."

AGENT 2

Hasn't been "J. Edgar's joint" for a long time.

AGENT 1

Yes, state level—may we have them back? We're parched.

DORITT places them next to the lemonade. AGENT 1 pours the lemonade. They sip.

AGENT 2

That's tart.

AGENT 1

Whew.

DORITT

Cuts the phlegm from walking up the road.

AGENT 2

I like it.

CHRISTIAN

What little sugar in it comes from the beets—roughly refined, like most things around here. We have different lemonades for different conditions.

DORITT

Some sweeter for when we're in repose.

CHRISTIAN

Some snappier—like this one—when you need the power of citrus to cut through bullshit.

AGENT 1 and AGENT 2 look at each other, look at the glass each holds, realize that they are drinking the right lemonade for the occasion.

AGENT 1 pours himself a second glass. AGENT 2 just sips the first. No one is in any hurry.

Finally, AGENTS both finish drinking and put the glasses down. The visit has to begin at some point, and it might as well begin now.

AGENT 1

Do you know why we're here?

CHRISTIAN

Any idea why?

DORITT

We pay our taxes, and on time.

CHRISTIAN

We sell vegetables and cheese at the farmer's markets.

DORITT

And pay our taxes for that, too. How long do you want us to go on like this?

CHRISTIAN

No, wait—I'm getting an image—

AGENT 2

This leg is feeling very pulled.

Aha! That's it. CHRISTIAN

Tug and tug— AGENT 2

It can only be about— CHRISTIAN

Words. CHRISTIAN & DORITT

Right. CHRISTIAN

Everything else we do fits in its proper place— DORITT

So says our lawyer— CHRISTIAN

And accountant— DORITT

In them we trust, not God or state. CHRISTIAN

So it must be— DORITT

It must be— CHRISTIAN

—that latest bumper crop of words— DORITT

The blogged ones— CHRISTIAN

The facebook'd ones— DORITT

The twittered ones— CHRISTIAN & DORITT

DORITT

That brought the twits to us—present company excluded, of course, since you don't control your means of production.

CHRISTIAN

Now, why do you start out with a question like that—"do you know why?"—just gets you into trouble because we are not going to play that banter with you.

DORITT

"What's your beeswax?" is the point, so pour it out.

AGENT 2

Go on—my leg is thoroughly pulled.

AGENT 1

Well, we've been sent here—

CHRISTIAN

Don't use the passive voice—right?

DORITT

Right.

CHRISTIAN

By whom, then?

AGENT 1

By the Secretary of State—

CHRISTIAN

Who is now a colonial governor, isn't he, of the Department of Homeland Security—might this visit have something to do with the DHS?

AGENT 2

We can't say—

DORITT

Because you can't say or because—

AGENT 2

We don't know—

AGENT 1 makes a gesture.

AGENT 2

Well, we don't—seems a little late to try playing our cards close to the vest.

CHRISTIAN

That lemonade'll do that to you.

AGENT 1

We—this is beginning to sound more than a little—

CHRISTIAN

Stupid?

AGENT 1

Awkward—we're here because of a threat you made.

AGENT 2

C'mon, full disclosure—

AGENT 1

Go ahead.

AGENT 2

A "terrorist threat" is how it was put to us.

AGENT 1

Sent in an email. From you.

CHRISTIAN

To whom?

AGENT 2

The Secretary of State.

CHRISTIAN

Never wasted an email on him. You?

DORITT

Wouldn't spend the electricity on such a weasel.

CHRISTIAN

Know why she called him a weasel?

AGENT 2

We are not supposed to engage in political discussions.

CHRISTIAN

You definitely need more of this lemonade.

AGENT 2

We're fine.

CHRISTIAN

Should we bring out the truth-telling snickerdoodles?

AGENT 1

Really, you shouldn't—

DORITT

The heavy guns, I see—if you must—

CHRISTIAN

You can come in with me—

AGENT 1

Sir—

CHRISTIAN

—if you want—we only have weapons of mass confection in here.
You coming?

AGENT 2

No, go ahead.

CHRISTIAN exits.

AGENT 2

Come on.

AGENT 1

This is not how we should be going about this.

AGENT 2

You want to macho it up?

DORITT

I can appreciate your dilemma.

AGENT 1

It's not a dilemma.

DORITT

Fool's errand on a warm day—and all you're going to get is lemonade and cookies for your trouble.

CHRISTIAN comes back with a plate of cookies.

CHRISTIAN

You underestimate them, dearest chuck, underestimate the bounty of this situation for them.

DORITT

Word inflation index—you're hitting a bit on the high side.

CHRISTIAN

Here—one bite, and you will want to drop all pretense to official objectivity and tell us the complete truth of why you have traipsed your way here.

AGENTS look at each other, then AGENT 2 takes a cookie and eats it, looks as if she's tasted heaven.

DORITT

Cardamom—a touch of it—

AGENT 2

May I?

DORITT gestures. AGENT 2 takes a second cookie.

AGENT 2

You don't take one now, you are not going to get any at all.

AGENT 1 takes a cookie, eats, has the same reaction as AGENT 2 but tries to hide it.

AGENT 1

They're, um, um, they're quite good.

CHRISTIAN

All right, the game's afoot—what's all this about a terrorist threat in an email we never sent to His Weaselship?

AGENT 1

May I—

Go right ahead. DORITT

AGENT 1 takes another cookie.

See? AGENT 2

We never saw the actual email. AGENT 1

We were told about it but never shown it. AGENT 2

However—the blog— AGENT 1

Which quite a few people read— AGENT 2

Where you do say some things. AGENT 1

Some “things.” CHRISTIAN

About many topics in general—about the Secretary specifically— AGENT 1

We were told— AGENT 2

She told you not to use the passive voice— CHRISTIAN

Bad bad habit—bad bad habit— DORITT

The Secretary’s election coördinator— AGENT 2

Much better— DORITT

AGENT 2

Mr. Fleisch told us—

AGENT 1

That it was time to bite back.

DORITT

They complete each other's sentences.

CHRISTIAN

Fleisch said that?

AGENT 2

I tell you, this lemonade and these cookies just do a person in.

DORITT

You two are not going to rise high in the ranks, are you?

CHRISTIAN

Should we get them chairs?

DORITT

They are going to need all the help they can get.

CHRISTIAN exits.

DORITT

Have you come to arrest us? I won't go gently. Pow pow.

CHRISTIAN reenters with two wooden folding chairs, hands them to AGENTS, who sit.

CHRISTIAN

If you thought coming up here was hard—

AGENT 1

No, we're not here to arrest you.

AGENT 2

We're just investigating—

CHRISTIAN

Such a euphemism—we're past the preliminary rounds, now that you've been fed and watered. What is this "threat" we've been accused of launching against the Fleisch Man?

DORITT

Which is the name of a margarine, I believe.

CHRISTIAN

Which is nothing more than a slab of congealed oil. A perfect description.

A momentary silence.

AGENT 2

Well—

AGENT 1

You made a historical reference.

AGENT 2

In one of the blogs.

AGENT 1

That the Secretary took as—

AGENT 1 sighs, as if what he is about to say is silly.

AGENT 1

As directed at him.

DORITT and CHRISTIAN don't say anything. For what feels like a long time. Which is all right by them.

CHRISTIAN

Nice to know the corn is growing even as nothing seems to be breaking ground here.

AGENT 2

All right—someone has to take this bull by the tail and face the situation—

At this, DORITT breaks out a guffaw.

DORITT

Well, I like that one—I'm adding it to my list—just think of it—lift the bull's tail—and there is Fleisch Man's face facing you—all crusted around with—

CHRISTIAN

This may be a moment where we have to take our thugs seriously—even though they aren't wearing jackboots—

DORITT

Oh, all right. But still—

And she breaks into laughter again.

DORITT

You lift up the tail—and there it is, the situation—all right, all right—please continue, for my husband's benefit.

CHRISTIAN

What was this historical incident?

AGENT 2

You referred to something called "The Battle of Johnson's Ford"—

DORITT

Sounds automotive to me.

CHRISTIAN

You know about this.

DORITT

Of course I know about it—you refer to it like it's a weather report—the fascist front storming across the land—

CHRISTIAN

Please—

DORITT

This lemonade is working very well today.

CHRISTIAN

He took the Battle of Johnson's Ford as a personal threat?

AGENT 2

Yes. He did.

CHRISTIAN

And you two have read about it?

AGENT 1

In our preparation, yes.

CHRISTIAN leans back and appraises them.

CHRISTIAN

Tell me—tell us—what you think.

AGENT 1

That depends.

CHRISTIAN

This matter at hand. Why you're here. Homeland Security's threat-level assessment—is Level Orange enough, too strong, too weak, not the right tint? The connection of snickerdoodles to truth-telling, of lemonade to history. We have so much on our plate.

AGENTS hold their fire.

CHRISTIAN

Go on.

AGENT 2

Well, I'm going to venture to lift the tail. Is that all right?

AGENT 1

Let's pretend we haven't lost complete control of this situation and that we are actually "investigating," as we were told to do. So—

AGENT 2

You like the story of Johnson's Ford because it lines up with what you've written about what you consider recent corrupt elections—

CHRISTIAN

Not "consider" corrupt at all—are corrupt—

AGENT 2

The electronic voting machines—

CHRISTIAN

I call them Trojan horses—

AGENT 2

The supposed irregularities—

CHRISTIAN

Not “supposed,” proved—by me and others—

AGENT 2

I’m going to stick with “supposed” because I wasn’t there and I didn’t do the crime scene work, so to speak—

CHRISTIAN

I’ll get you the proof—

CHRISTIAN starts to get up. DORITT puts a hand on his arm, pats him, smiles.

DORITT

Let it go.

CHRISTIAN sits back down.

AGENT 2

The point is, you feel passionate about the issue of election fraud.

CHRISTIAN

If you want to talk about lifting the bull’s tail and facing a situation, you should look into what the Secretary and Fleisch Man have done to wreck what is the one of the few things a citizen can do to stop a government from sucking out—

CHRISTIAN hears himself, laughs.

CHRISTIAN

If your tongue gets long enough, you’ll soon have a noose around your neck.

Looks over at DORITT.

CHRISTIAN

The soap box was starting to rise, wasn’t it?

DORITT nods.

CHRISTIAN

I think—I think that we have said enough to you. After all, you are not our friends, no matter how much you like the cookies.

DORITT

So you’re going to give up on them?

CHRISTIAN

After all, they are the fuzz, aren't they? Le flic?

DORITT

Do you ever consider anybody not educable?

DORITT looks at the AGENTS.

DORITT

He never does—he thinks anyone can learn anything—haven't you always said—

CHRISTIAN

Even shit—

DORITT

—even shit—

CHRISTIAN & DORITT

Can be shaped.

DORITT

I have never had that kind of faith in people. But he's daft that way.

CHRISTIAN

But still, I think it's prudent if—

AGENT 1

My grandfather—

CHRISTIAN

You're not going to tell me he fought at Johnson's Ford.

AGENT 1

He fought at Johnson's Ford.

CHRISTIAN

Is he still—

AGENT 1

He died a while ago.

CHRISTIAN

Ah. Well. Damn—I would've liked to talk with him.

AGENT 1

He would've thought the two of you were weird. He may have fought against the sheriffs then, but—he was pretty set in some other ways.

CHRISTIAN

He ever tell you why he did it?

AGENT 1

Yes.

CHRISTIAN

So you know it's a great story—ex-World War II GI's taking the ballot boxes and guarding them from the sheriffs so they couldn't stuff them—

AGENT 1

And you would advocate doing the same today.

CHRISTIAN

Is that a comment or a question?

AGENT 1

Both.

CHRISTIAN

And you?

AGENT 2

It's one thing to blog it—not very expensive to do that—but what would push it past the words—maybe even the words themselves could do that—

AGENT 1

What did you mean—no, what did you intend—when you brought the Battle of Johnson's Ford into your argument?

AGENT 2

You did put it squarely next to calling the Secretary a, quote, "shit."

AGENT 1

What did you intend by the reference? What kinds of action did you mean to—encourage? Permit?

AGENT 2

Maybe the Secretary has a point.

AGENT 1

Or else why bring up the reference at all if that's not the point you wanted to make?

CHRISTIAN

You are both very sly. This is how it begins.

DORITT

You do have a choice.

CHRISTIAN

Maybe—maybe not—your investigation is over. I don't know what you'll report, but I don't care.

AGENT 1

You're not a threat.

AGENT 2

That will be the essence.

CHRISTIAN

No, I know—we know—what the real threat is.

CHRISTIAN stands. DORITT stands. AGENTS stand.

AGENT 2

It's been a pleasure.

AGENT 2 looks at the plate of cookies but doesn't say anything. DORITT gathers up the remaining cookies and hands them to AGENT 2. They exit.

CHRISTIAN

I feel—I feel like the bottom's just gone out of everything.
Suddenly just not safe.

DORITT

We don't know that.

CHRISTIAN

Can't you feel the wedge digging into--

DORITT
We'll write about this—

CHRISTIAN
Yes—yes—

DORITT
Walk loudly and carry a big mouth—

CHRISTIAN
But—but—I feel like I just lost my toes again—

DORITT
I have to admit—

CHRISTIAN
What?

DORITT
I felt the sting in the palms of my hands.

CHRISTIAN
I can't do—that—again—

DORITT
We don't have to do anything but what we're already doing. We don't.

But CHRISTIAN curls in upon himself and says nothing.

DORITT sits and looks at CHRISTIAN`

Raucous musical transition to The Forge.

* * * * *

The Forge—a basement somewhere. Fluorescent lights, maybe computer and electronic equipment—maybe not. Maybe more like mimeo machines and a letterpress—something old. Whatever is there, it's a mess. ANGEL is cutting out something with scissors that looks like thought bubbles from full-sheet label paper. LAUREN enters in full lawyer regalia, with briefcase. ANGEL keeps cutting but is not pleased to see her.

ANGEL
Shit.

I heard that.

LAUREN

Sorry.

ANGEL

LAUREN waits for him to speak more. ANGEL does not speak more.

Well?

LAUREN

Still ANGEL says nothing.

Christ.

LAUREN

He's not here.

ANGEL

LAUREN comes to the bench where ANGEL sits, picks up one or two of the thought bubbles.

I've seen these. Around. Everywhere.

LAUREN

You're supposed to.

ANGEL

He speaks a fourth time.

LAUREN

LAUREN throws the bubbles back on the table, looks around.

If I can find you, anyone can find you.

LAUREN

We're not hiding out. Exactly.

ANGEL

The Grid. You. Not connected. I know.

LAUREN

I think that's a good thing, about the grid.

ANGEL

LAUREN

It's what they want you to think.

ANGEL

I think my own thinking myself.

LAUREN

Will you put the scissors down? Please.

ANGEL stops cutting, looks at LAUREN. Finishes one more cut. Then puts down the scissors.

LAUREN

All this is not a good thing.

ANGEL

About the grid. Dad says it is. Mom says it is.

LAUREN

She always agrees with what he says—

ANGEL

Not always—

LAUREN

—no matter how crazy—

ANGEL

That's not true. She has her own— You should leave.

LAUREN

Aren't you glad to see me?

ANGEL

Don't. Say that.

ANGEL hesitates, then he gets up and gives LAUREN an authentic embrace, which she returns. ANGEL sits back down.

ANGEL

Now you should go.

LAUREN

Can't—spent way too much—

ANGEL

They didn't ask you to.

LAUREN

Everyone can use a good lawyer.

ANGEL

I wouldn't say that around Dad or Mom not the way they don't trust the court system--

LAUREN

I'm just kidding—

ANGEL

—or the law they would rather, you know, make some sort of stand—

LAUREN

I'm just kidding, Angel—

ANGEL

—after what happened on the farm than—

LAUREN

Tell me what happened—

ANGEL

—not authorized to say but they bring away from that what they're doing here—

LAUREN

Which is what—

ANGEL

—and will not appreciate anything said that tags them as giving up or giving in or part of the trog—troglodytic system that pisses down their socks and makes it necessary for simple dignity to do things undignified like—

LAUREN

Like what?

ANGEL

I've said enough.

LAUREN

No you haven't.

ANGEL

Doesn't matter.

LAUREN

What has happened to you? You speak as if—

ANGEL gets up and goes back to cutting the thought bubbles. LAUREN dogs him.

LAUREN

You speak as if you're afraid to take a breath, like you're running out of time.

ANGEL

You should leave.

LAUREN

Where's the Angel that insults me? Who doesn't care a fig for the work I did?

ANGEL

You should [go]—

LAUREN

Who just disappeared on me? All of you just disappeared on me.

ANGEL

Not disappeared. Got out.

LAUREN

To do this.

ANGEL

To do this.

LAUREN

Don't you want to know why I'm here?

CHRISTIAN enters carrying a courier pouch full of colorful postcards and cradles fliers in his arm. From his belt—a gear belt of sorts—hangs a roll of duct-tape, a roll of masking tape, a cutting knife, scissors, a pouch full of markers, a water bottle, and anything else the director wants to add.

A frozen moment as the three of them acknowledge each other. As they do, DORITT enters from another part of the building. A frozen moment as the four of them acknowledge each other.

ANGEL
Mexican stand-off.

LAUREN
I found you.

DORITT
It's not hard.

LAUREN
It wasn't that easy. By the time I got to the farm—

CHRISTIAN goes to unburden himself of his paraphernalia. DORITT helps him.

CHRISTIAN
The farm is dead.

LAUREN
Thanks for telling me—I had to find out—

CHRISTIAN
You never seemed interested, interested as you were in your own
“work”—

LAUREN
The anarcho-syndicalist experiment in the hills of Tennessee—
who wouldn't be captivated by—

ANGEL
You shouldn't badmouth—

LAUREN
When did you go to be with them?

ANGEL
Those last few months when the pressure got heavy and helped
them move—

LAUREN
Why is he talking like that, like he can't afford to take a breath—

DORITT

Time is short, breath gets short.

LAUREN

You mean, like the end is near?

CHRISTIAN

The end is already here—in process—most just don't know it. He knows it.

LAUREN

How did you know where they were?

DORITT

We kept in touch with him.

LAUREN

But not me.

DORITT

No, not you.

ANGEL

Not you.

DORITT

You made it clear you didn't need it.

CHRISTIAN

And why are you here now? Don't look for thanks, by the way.

LAUREN

I just—

ANGEL

She said "everyone can use a good lawyer."

LAUREN

That was a joke.

ANGEL

I told her not to say that around you.

CHRISTIAN

He's right.

LAUREN, distraught, picks up one of the bubbles.

LAUREN

Can you—tell me—what this is all—

ANGEL takes one of the larger bubbles, grabs a black magic marker, and pens something on it, then holds the pointed end near LAUREN's temple. LAUREN reaches up and snaps it out of his hands, reads it. Smirks. Throws it on the table.

DORITT

It's an alternate narrative.

LAUREN

"Desperately seeking purpose"—

ANGEL

Did I hit it?

LAUREN

It's not funny.

ANGEL

But did I—

LAUREN

This is what you're spending the end-times on—

CHRISTIAN turns to DORITT.

CHRISTIAN

Stenciling is next—

LAUREN

You paste these up—

But the three of them are already busy getting ready for whatever the next project is. LAUREN, grabbing something solid, slams it on the table. This gets their attention.

LAUREN

Why are you ignoring me?

DORITT

Why should we welcome you?

LAUREN

I'm not an enemy.

CHRISTIAN

Do you know anything about anything that happened to us?

LAUREN rips open her briefcase and hauls out a thick binder, slamming it on the table.

LAUREN

I even interviewed those two agents who visited you.

The three of them look at the thick binder as if it were an armed explosive device. Finally, DORITT opens it, begins leafing through it.

DORITT

They were pleasant to be around until they weren't pleasant at all.

LAUREN

I told them that your daughter had died—does that get a rise?—okay—I told them I was the lawyer handling her estate—needed to find the next of kin—

DORITT and CHRISTIAN leaf through the binder—clippings, photos, documents, etc.

DORITT

They turned out to be real bastards.

LAUREN

I know how you were hounded, I know how they trumped things up to drive you out—

ANGEL

Our tax dollars at work.

LAUREN

They weren't such bastards—they gave me a last known address after you left—your last bank transaction—

CHRISTIAN

We don't deal with banks any more—

LAUREN

That little snippet gave me a clue, which led to another clue—and so on—

ANGEL

All pro bono.

CHRISTIAN and DORITT close the binder.

DORITT

So why are you here?

CHRISTIAN

Why should we trust you?

LAUREN grabs a stool, sits.

LAUREN

Would you all mind sitting or at least stop looking like you're going to bolt out the door to do the next important whatever that you're doing to keep the end times at bay?

LAUREN points at ANGEL.

LAUREN

Now I'm talking like him!

They all sit.

LAUREN

This suit? The shoes? The briefcase? My underwear? All expensive. At a level to fit my exalted station in life as an officer of the court.

ANGEL

On the corporate side.

LAUREN shrugs.

ANGEL

Well, you are.

LAUREN checks her watch.

LAUREN

As of four hours from now—

LAUREN holds up the watch.

LAUREN

Expensive—that will not matter because I will no longer have a job. The firm got indicted for some—improprieties—I was the juniorest of the junior partners—and I didn't see until it was too late to see that they had drafted me as the fall guy—the fall gal—without consulting me, of course—someone made sure that enough evidence pointed my way—I admitted to anything to save my expensively underwared ass—including disbarment—so—so.

CHRISTIAN

So you're superfluous?

LAUREN

Would seem so. Actually, always was—just didn't know it.

LAUREN taps the binder.

LAUREN

Thought I would search out my own kind and, maybe, join up with them.

No one speaks for the moment.

LAUREN

I'm not going anywhere, if that's what you're thinking. So—what are you guys doing?

CHRISTIAN

This one's called the bubble project.

ANGEL

We stick these on posters bus stop ads—

DORITT

Anything with a person advertising something—

CHRISTIAN

Some product of some sort—

DORITT

Some piece of capitalist poison—

CHRISTIAN

Some religious claptrap—

ANGEL

And people can write in what they want to think want to say rather than absorb the crap the company or church or whatever wants them to think like one we have a photo of where a bubble coming out of God's mouth says "What country would Jesus bomb?"

LAUREN

There are dozens of bubbles [here]—

ANGEL

A lot of people have a lot to say and there are a lot of places where people can have a chance to say it—

LAUREN picks up the bubble that ANGEL had written for her and holds it up next to her temple.

LAUREN

I am not "desperately seeking"—just seeking.

LAUREN stands up.

LAUREN

May I?

ANGEL

I already did it you have to do it.

First CHRISTIAN embraces LAUREN, then DORITT. These are not perfunctory hugs.

LAUREN

I promise never to reduce anything of yours again.

DORITT

Ah, well, but we do live in reduced circumstances.

CHRISTIAN

But much happier for it.

LAUREN

So, other than bubbles, what're you guys up to?

ANGEL

Culture jamming!

DORITT

We work on the assumption that every joke is a tiny revolution.

CHRISTIAN

Every true delight is a rebellion.

ANGEL

We call ourselves the “No Men”—

CHRISTIAN

To rhyme, sort of, with Gnomon—

DORITT

The ancient Greek word meaning “indicator”—

CHRISTIAN

One who discerns.

ANGEL

Saying “no” as a way to say “yes” to life.

DORITT

And so we culture-jam away. One hundred fake landmines in the park to make people think twice about what it’s like to walk on land that will kill you—

ANGEL

Made from painted Frisbees.

CHRISTIAN

Shopdropping.

DORITT

Fake labels on food to let people know where it comes from and what it really does to you—

LAUREN

We also do fake barcodes on products that come up with words like “laugh” instead of the price.

DORITT holds up her hands—on the palms have been tattoo’d bar codes. ANGEL gets the portable bar code reader, scans one, hands the reader to LAUREN, who reads the results and breaks into a really hearty laugh.

DORITT

You like?

LAUREN

I like.

ANGEL

Mud stencils on the sidewalk—washes off harms no property sticks in people's minds like the ones we did near the McDonald's restaurants—"Fat Zone"—

DORITT

And "Substance Abuse" near liquor stores in poor neighborhoods—

CHRISTIAN

Bus schedules that look like schedules but list out statistics that are meant to make you double- and triple-think—paste 'em up at bus stops.

ANGEL

Fake blowcards in magazines—

DORITT

We got a million of 'em!

LAUREN turns to the three of them.

LAUREN

But you don't use the Internet.

DORITT

Won't use it.

CHRISTIAN

Like leaving all the doors and windows unlocked and saying "come in and fuck me over."

LAUREN

I can understand why you wouldn't after what they did but—

CHRISTIAN

Low-tech—

DORITT

Old school—

ANGEL

I've tried to sell them on the opposite point but no good—

CHRISTIAN

Why send the demons an engraved invitation to come—what?

LAUREN

“Old school” is—well, no one goes to old school anymore, Mom. Like printing a book with a hand-driven letterpress—no longer the way to get out the word—hardly have books anymore, now they're “e-books” and people can port them along in their phones—the revolution is ones and zeros. How do you know that anything you do has any impact whatsoever, changes a single mind or a single beating heart?

CHRISTIAN

We have had—

LAUREN

I mean on a scale, Dad, a make-a-difference scale—

ANGEL

They don't. We don't, really—

LAUREN

The revolution is streamed, Dad, and on screens these days the size of postage stamps. People are already amusing themselves to death in our end times, so why not cut in and at least get them to amuse themselves into something less toxic? “Every little joke is a revolution” I've heard tell. What do you know?

ANGEL

I know a lot.

LAUREN

So do I. The only way they didn't nail me completely was because I had enough techie background to show them that not all of their lies could stick. You willing?

DORITT and CHRISTIAN look at each other. Together they make the Wrestlemania/Hulk anger moves they had done earlier, but this time at a lower volume and with some irony.

DORITT & CHRISTIAN

Aaaarrrrggghhhhh!

They both sit. They look tired.

CHRISTIAN

As much as I want to believe it—I don't know if any of this—

DORITT

Hits home with anyone—we just want to make a dent in the insanity—

CHRISTIAN

But the insanity doesn't dent easily—

DORITT

And it's got a lot more money than we do—

CHRISTIAN

Maybe—maybe we're not crazy enough anymore for this line of work—

DORITT

Not loony enough! Now isn't that a kick in the pants!

LAUREN and ANGEL look at each other and do their own Wrestlemania/Hulk anger moves, but louder and with much less irony.

ANGEL & LAUREN

Aaaarrrrgggghhhhh!

LAUREN

You two sound so old!

ANGEL

Old school! Old school!

DORITT

Old fools.

LAUREN

Old drools! You old farts—it's a new world you have to brave—it'll be fun—

ANGEL

Twitter tweeting retweeting flash mobs I have a flash mob idea lots of flash mob ideas texting—

ANGEL mimes frantically texting.

ANGEL

Come to Grand Central come to Columbus Circle come to Times Square be prepared to—I have this idea for a giant pillow fight and a silent disco dance people all listen to the same song on their players and hundreds of people coming to a complete stop in Port Authority while everyone else is flying by—

LAUREN

Make people do shit they like, they'll give you their open ears—

DORITT and CHRISTIAN look at each other, then nod.

DORITT

That's for you two to work on.

CHRISTIAN

We have something else to do—to be honest, I can't stand the frivolousness of the whole enterprise—

DORITT

Have to say, neither can I—

CHRISTIAN

—of tying into the idea that light-heartedness will somehow morph into reason and purpose.

DORITT

We're old school to be sure.

CHRISTIAN

Enjoy the disco dance.

ANGEL

Wait!

CHRISTIAN

Yes?

DORITT

We under arrest?

ANGEL

You don't give up you've put us all through too much to go and give up what're you going to go do start a foundation expect people to be rational influence the power people with facts no one loves facts anymore until you convince them to remember why they're important you've got to break the crust that that how we live has baked onto people this crust that's like a a a mask a tomb the only thing that breaks through is disco I mean being silly enough to stop being so egotistical and expecting the world to be just one big mashup of things that're supposed to entertain you and keep you from being bored to death with your own life it's too bad but if you don't get them to laugh first then they'll bail on you because they're selfish like babies not bad in their hearts just babies kept in baby-mode by the same things that put them inside that crust—

ANGEL's rush of speech has them all breathing hard.

LAUREN

Take a breath.

ANGEL

Breath I'm done. You're staying.

CHRISTIAN

But what's next?

DORITT

Because I don't see it clearly. I see the need but not the way—

CHRISTIAN

I'm not sure I even see the need. You all don't have to look at me like I just vomited on your shoes—I don't—

DORITT

That smells defeatist—

CHRISTIAN

Well, look, really—flash mobs? Retweets? Viral video? Cultural memes? The Facebook like?

LAUREN

You don't have to make it sound so vapid—

CHRISTIAN

This is what we would offer in the face of what just happened economically? We come the closest to financial collapse since Herbert Hoover, and what do “the people” do? Do they take to the streets? Do they rise up and demand? Tar and feather the bankers? Do they do anything that makes their leaders fearful?

LAUREN

There’s “Occupy.”

CHRISTIAN

For four well-meant months. And we’re going to bring them back even more with entertainment? Back to what? The American mind is a mosh pit of impulses going in four different directions five different ways—

CHRISTIAN gives LAUREN a direct look.

CHRISTIAN

Thanks. Welcome back to the fold.

CHRISTIAN looks at them all.

CHRISTIAN

I don’t think I’m crazy enough for this anymore. I don’t think I’m going to become crazy enough again—

CHRISTIAN hesitates, grabs his courier bag, then leaves.

DORITT

Don’t—

But off he goes. DORITT looks broken. Everyone is frozen and not sure what to do next.

LAUREN

Should we do something?

DORITT doesn’t answer.

LAUREN

I feel like this is my fault—

ANGEL

You should—

LAUREN

Brought in the snake—

ANGEL

You did—

DORITT holds up her hand, as if to say, “Just be quiet.” Which LAUREN and ANGEL do.

DORITT

It’s not your fault. He’s been feeling like this for a while.

ANGEL

No he hasn’t—

DORITT

When we had to give up the land—it worried at him terribly.
Something cut out from under him—he had nightmares about his
toes again—

LAUREN

It was, maybe, time for him to—

ANGEL

To what?

LAUREN

Reassess—it happens, Angel.

ANGEL

And “retire”?

LAUREN

Don’t snarl.

DORITT

I wouldn’t’ve minded it, if that’s what he’d wanted to do—not like
we got a nest egg—

ANGEL looks at DORITT, unbelief on his face.

LAUREN

She’s tired, Angel.

ANGEL backs away from them both.

ANGEL
I'll go—I have to—I'll go trail him—make sure that—

LAUREN
Go.

ANGEL
—he's okay—damn—damn—

ANGEL leaves. They sit there, silent.

DORITT
A fool.

LAUREN
Don't.

DORITT
If you care too much, you'll get broken—

LAUREN
Could the two of you do it any other way?

DORITT
You got screwed, didn't you?

LAUREN
My own fault—I wanted to play in the big playground—

DORITT
I—just—don't—know—

LAUREN
That's the craziness of living the way we do these days—it takes everything out of you and doesn't give you a hell of a lot back.

DORITT
It's not like there's not enough to do.

LAUREN
More than enough.

DORITT

Maybe—maybe—it's meant to be done somewhere else—this place is a lost cause, really, can't think straight, can't see straight, chasing ghosts, eating its young—your father's right, if after the money meltdown the people who screwed us get rewarded and the people who got screwed get re-screwed—

LAUREN

I know, I know, but—

DORITT

But what? But what?

LAUREN

I don't know. Just trying to find some comfort for you.

DORITT

False comfort is no comfort. A stranger in my own land—sick at heart.

ANGEL comes running in, breathless and ashen.

ANGEL

It's not good it's not good it's not good it's not good—

DORITT

What?

ANGEL

It's not good it's not good it's not good it's not good—

DORITT

What??

But ANGEL runs back out. DORITT and LAUREN rush after him. Silence descends.

* * * * *

ANGEL is in half-shadow. In deeper shadow is REPORTER.

ANGEL

You can write you can record I don't care. It took me a long time.

REPORTER

It took me a long time too—

ANGEL

I had good teachers.

REPORTER

I mean, to track you down—

ANGEL

I had good teachers. It took me a long time—

There is a catch in ANGEL's throat; he recovers.

ANGEL

Hmmm hmmm hmmm—it took me a long time to bring together the video and the pictures and the testimonies—

REPORTER

Hundreds of people there that day—

ANGEL

Not just that but also from the security cameras—

REPORTER

The police, you know, have questions about how you—

ANGEL

I had friends—have friends—there are resisters out there—

REPORTER

The “hacktivists”—

ANGEL

Just like you people to have a term for them—and others, not just them—stupid name anyway—

REPORTER

And then you released the video.

ANGEL

My father was not going to go down forgotten—

REPORTER

And the hackers' attacks against—

ANGEL

That wasn't my idea but I don't disagree with it—

REPORTER

Big names, big companies, government agencies—

ANGEL

None of them should think they can't be touched—

REPORTER

Angel—

ANGEL

None of them—

REPORTER

Why do you think your father did what he did?

ANGEL does not answer.

REPORTER

I'm sorry, I—but I have to—

ANGEL

I wish he hadn't done it naked—but I'm not sorry he did it—

REPORTER

So why—

ANGEL

Because he was heartbroken—

REPORTER

That's what your video said, but, still, it's not like he didn't have choices—

ANGEL

When your heart breaks, your choices go away.

REPORTER

And what would so break a man's heart that he would disco dance naked and then—

ANGEL

I don't want to talk about it. The video is all anyone needs. It's out there, free to you, free to anyone—

REPORTER

But, and I'm sorry for staying with this, but what's a person supposed to learn from a man who sets himself on fire? In the middle of a crowd of tourists? How would that change anything? How could that—

ANGEL is too heartbroken to say anything.

REPORTER

I do have to say, though—no disrespect, but it got people's attention.

ANGEL

Thought bubbles everywhere.

REPORTER

What?

ANGEL

Nothing.

REPORTER

What do you make of all the—

ANGEL

People found sympathy, something to sympathize with, about their own broken hearts—

REPORTER

You think so?

ANGEL

I have to.

REPORTER

And the tee-shirts and hats and the copy-cat stuff and the new laws cracking down on—

ANGEL

Nobody can control anything out there, once it's gone it's gone it's free—

REPORTER

And that's what your father would've wanted, really, in the end—a tee-shirt—

ANGEL

I can't breathe—I'm sorry—you have to go—

REPORTER

One last question—

ANGEL

Go—you have to go—I have to go I have to go I have to go—

Two SHADOWY CHARACTERS enter. ANGEL turns, terrified.

REPORTER

Sorry—sorry, Angel—had to give you up—these days, Patriot Act, national security—

ANGEL goes to run, but the SHADOWY CHARACTERS restrain him.

REPORTER

So, my last question—can you not, you know, hold him so tight so that he can answer?—

But the SHADOWY CHARACTERS hold on to ANGEL very very tightly until he doesn't struggle anymore.

REPORTER

You—

SHADOWY CHARACTERS let ANGEL slump to the floor.

SHADOWY CHARACTER 1

Like father, like son—

SHADOWY CHARACTER 2

In the service of an ideal—

SHADOWY CHARACTER 1

Admirable.

SHADOWY CHARACTER 2

Useless.

SHADOWY CHARACTER 1

That, too.

REPORTER

You—

SHADOWY CHARACTER 2

Unless, of course, it's service in one of our wars.

SHADOWY CHARACTER 1

Four in progress, as of today.

SHADOWY CHARACTER 2

Still useless, but it will be honored—

SHADOWY CHARACTER 1

More or less—

SHADOWY CHARACTER 2

And not forgotten quite so quickly.

REPORTER

You—

SHADOWY CHARACTER 1

Yes?

REPORTER

Nothing.

SHADOWY CHARACTER 2

Good. Did you get what you needed?

REPORTER

I—

SHADOWY CHARACTER 1

She got what she got, which will equal what she needed since there won't be any follow-up.

REPORTER

Are you going to remove—

SHADOWY CHARACTER 2

We don't do the clean-up.

SHADOWY CHARACTER 1

This is for the 24-hour news cycle.

SHADOWY CHARACTER 2

Attraction and distraction—the police are on their way. You should leave.

SHADOWY CHARACTER 1

You have a deadline, I suppose—do they even do that anymore in your declining world of journalism?

REPORTER

Yes.

SHADOWY CHARACTER 2

So go and meet it.

SHADOWY CHARACTERS leave. REPORTER kneels over ANGEL's body. ANGEL convulses; REPORTER falls back in terror. ANGEL lies still.

Police sirens in the distance. REPORTER leaves. Police sirens get louder and louder as the cars approach wherever ANGEL's body lies. Then silence.

Moments pass, then POLICE OFFICER enters, a machete in his right hand. He walks to ANGEL's body, arranges it for the beheading, places the machete blade on ANGEL's neck, then raises it to chop.

Lights cut to black. Raucous background sounds of a prison.

* * * * *

DORITT stands at a table, dressed as if to go to court. On the table is a wrapped cardboard box, just large enough to hold a head, bound by string.

Behind her stands LAUREN in business dress, briefcase in hand.

LAUREN

Mom, you can open it later—we have to get to the hearing—

Instead, DORITT starts tugging at the string. She does not see or hear SHADOWY CHARACTER 2 and SHADOWY CHARACTER 3 come in and abduct LAUREN.

Alone, DORITT pulls the string off the box, unwraps the paper, opens the box, looks inside, looks at the audience in panic.

DORITT

All we wanted was a chance an opportunity to makes some sort of—

Lights bump to black and cut her off.

End of play.