

# Synopsis/Sample of In The Name Of

by

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## **BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

The time and place for In The Name Of is set just past the present day. In the moment of the play, all proposals for terrorist prevention contained in the "Uniting and Strengthening America Act by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act" (USA-PATRIOT Act) and "Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003" have become standard practice, the database-linking proposed by The Information Awareness Office has been accomplished, any restraints on law enforcement infiltration of suspect groups have been abolished, and American citizens can routinely be named "enemy combatants." It is Lewis Lapham's "participatory fascism," Terry Gilliams' Brazil, Jeremy Bentham's "panopticon."

## **CHARACTERS**

(ethnicity does not matter in casting; roles can be doubled where needed)

- Jimmy Sloh, agent, The Department
- Sarah Grig, agent; The Department
- Mr. Balkis, special agent in charge, The Department. He speaks with an accent -- Southern, perhaps.
- Mr. Spurgeon, field agent, The Department. He speaks with an accent -- Irish, Scottish, or Jamaican would work.
- Secretary Laxmeter, Secretary of The Department
- Michael Laxmeter, her son
- Fletch, Lee, Torres, Bent, Louder -- SWAT officers in a special unit of The Department but also members of The Movement

[NOTE: The image of The Movement should be like those platoon movies emblematic of a melting-potted America: one Italian, one Jew, one corn-fed Midwest Protestant, and so on.]

- Hannah, Movement member; also plays WOMAN AT THE DEMONSTRATION and LANDLADY
- 4 UTILITY ACTORS, who will move on scenery and play various roles (SOLDIERS, ASSASSINS, etc.)

## **TIME**

Just past the present day, deep into the panopticon.

**SETTING**

Total surveillance and interaction.

**NOTES**

- The "Insignia" mentioned in the play is an Insignia of the Nation, worn much like the American flag pin is now worn by police officers, fire fighters, etc. Its design is up to the director and his or her team, but wherever possible, the Insignia should be omnipresent.
- The SWAT Officers should have a special uniform of some kind to set them apart from the army.
- The music used for the scene transitions should always have an energized quality to it, sometimes through sheer volume and percussive drive, sometimes through ironic comment on the action, sometimes by a contrasting quietness (a simple snare drum, say, such as the beginning of Paul Simon's *Fifty Ways to Leave Your Lover*). Choice is up to the director.
- SOUND DESIGN: In addition to the music and suggestions in the script, the director is free to come up sound design/soundscape ideas as needed.

# Sample of In The Name Of

## Act I, Scene 1 : The Cruciform Deletion of Jimmy Sloh

Stage is dark, but when the light comes up, it is a hidden basement room. On the floor, lumber, sturdy but not top-grade. Two pieces are crossed and bolted, though the audience will not know this until they are picked up from the floor. Three saw-horses. A wooden box with hardware, such as bolts, various tools, etc. Other items as desired to show the discarded nature of the room. From off-stage, the voice of SLOH yells old cheerleading chants.

SLOH

"Two - four - six - eight / Who do we appreciate?" Me - me - me!

A click, and the stage bursts into buzzing fluorescent light. SPURGEON backs into the scene pulling a red wagon, in which stands SLOH, still chanting. Following is BALKIS. Both SPURGEON and BALKIS wear something like pea coats and black leather gloves. On their pea coats is an Insignia large enough to be noticeable. SLOH is dressed in a tee-shirt and jeans, sneakers with no socks.

SLOH

"Hit 'em high / hit 'em low / hit 'em where / their cherries grow."

SPURGEON

Sloh, shut your hole.

BALKIS

That's enough, Jimmy.

SLOH

"The ref brought his lunch -- eat it, ref, eat it!"

BALKIS

Jimmy.

SPURGEON

You can't wake the dead here, so stop your blabbering. It bothers me to no end.

SLOH

"Who" or "whom" do we appreci -- ?

BALKIS

At this point, Jimmy Sloh, if I were you --

SLOH  
You're lucky you're not me, then.

SPURGEON  
Step off. Now.

SLOH jumps out of the wagon. SPURGEON puts the wagon to one side, then sets up a video camera for recording.

SLOH  
(indicating wagon)  
That could be a collector's item.

BALKIS  
In a sense, it is, isn't it, Jimmy. It has collected you, has it not?

SPURGEON  
It has collected the likes of you --  
(spits)  
-- to us.

A moment of suspended silence, even perhaps slight embarrassment.

SLOH  
The likes of me. It's whom. "Whom do we" --

SPURGEON  
Rhymes with tomb.

BALKIS  
I do want to thank you for --

SLOH  
My coöperation.

BALKIS  
Yes.

SLOH  
I've always coöperated with you.

BALKIS  
You have always coöperated, Jimmy, in this strange new world of ours.

SLOH  
Post-Attack.

BALKIS  
One of your -- perhaps your most --

SPURGEON

His only.

BALKIS

-- saving grace.

SPURGEON

Not like you have many to spare.

SLOH

Always flexible.

SPURGEON

Lacking a spine, you mean. Nothing personal, Jimmy, but you have to admit --

BALKIS

(holds up his hand)

I wanted to thank you.

(to SPURGEON)

He made our work easier in this, our Post-Attack world. Until now -- of course. Ready, Spurgeon?

SPURGEON

Now uncoöperative.

(to BALKIS)

Yes.

SLOH

You mean I have a spine now.

BALKIS

You can mean this however you like, Jimmy -- you have claimed that freedom for yourself. A wonderful thing, isn't it? That freedom. To allow yourself to believe whatever crosses your mind, to make yourself feel good about what is, well, not really so very good -- for you -- at this moment -- but you do now have that freedom!

SLOH

Balkis --

BALKIS

You'll notice that I am finished.

SLOH

Post-Attack.

BALKIS  
(pointing to camera)  
Now, look over there. Look! Repeat after me --

SLOH  
(chanting)  
"Whom do we appreciate / Me, me, me -- "

SPURGEON comes behind SLOH and puts him in a full nelson and then sits on a sawhorse, SLOH in his lap as if a ventriloquist's dummy.

BALKIS  
(to SPURGEON)  
Let him raise his head a little. Now, repeat after me. "I, Jimmy Sloh -- "

SLOH  
(guttural)  
"I, the fucked one -- "

SPURGEON bends his head forward painfully until SLOH can hardly breathe.

BALKIS  
Relent a little, Spurgeon. Now, Jimmy, again:  
"I, Jimmy Sloh -- "

SLOH  
(hoarsely)  
"I, Jimmy Sloh -- "

BALKIS  
"Do hereby declare myself an enemy combatant."

SLOH  
"A fucking enemy combatant -- "

BALKIS  
(not letting him finish)  
"A foe of the Nation -- "

SLOH tries to reply, but BALKIS barrels through the pro forma declaration. SLOH sputters to a stop, scarcely able to breathe.

BALKIS  
"An abettor of terrorism and giver of comfort to the opponents of freedom. In the name of the Victims of the Attack, in the name of the Obligations of the State, and under security laws passed in the defense of the Homeland, I declare myself null and void."

BALKIS indicates to SPURGEON to release SLOH, which he does.

BALKIS

Your declaration of freedom was an act of beauty,  
Jimmy -- like most useless, artistic gestures.  
But now --

(indicating SLOH's clothes)

Off.

SLOH

Balkis --

BALKIS

You'll notice that the prosecution is finished.

SPURGEON

(indicating his clothes)

Off with them.

SLOH does not make a move.

BALKIS

Jimmy. Jimmy.

SLOH still does not move to take off his clothes, speaks right to the camera.

SLOH

"Elevator, elevator -- we got the shaft!"

(to SPURGEON)

Hey, what is that drooling from your sticky lips?

SPURGEON

That's uncalled for --

SLOH

Ripe sons-a-bitches, you are. To do this to me.

After all I --

SPURGEON moves toward SLOH again, but BALKIS stops him.

BALKIS

After what, Jimmy? Pal? What you had was never  
very good -- always wanting a lispng hand to pet  
you and stroke you, a lubricated voice praising  
you, always wanting a pal, your crotch and your  
belly --

SPURGEON

Creature of appetite --

BALKIS

-- too often calling the shots for your brain --

SPURGEON

-- a downfall in these times.

SLOH

Until I reasoned -- until I thought! --

BALKIS

And as I said, a most wonderful, useless, antique gesture in our strange new world of Post-Attack. Off, Jimmy. No other choice, Jimmy. We are not forever patient.

SLOH hesitates, then relents.

SLOH

Fine.

SLOH slips off his tee-shirt.

SLOH

It'll be fucking good to get it over.

BALKIS

And the rest, please -- you should not have to be told something so -- elementary.

SLOH kicks off his sneakers, unbuttons his pants, slips them off. SPURGEON puts the clothes in the wagon.

Meanwhile, BALKIS and SPURGEON set up the three saw-horses: one upstage, one stage left, one stage right. They then pick up the crossed pieces of lumber -- clearly a crucifix -- and place the head and arms against the saw-horses, the foot of it downstage.

SPURGEON brings over the wooden box, then walks over to SLOH and in one swift movement pulls SLOH's underwear to his ankles. He then knocks SLOH's calf, indicating for him to step out of them, which SLOH does. SPURGEON throws the underwear into the red wagon.

SLOH

I won't! I fucking defy you! I --

Before SLOH can finish his sentence, SPURGEON smoothly disables him. BALKIS and SPURGEON lay SLOH on the cross, SLOH choking but struggling until SPURGEON punches him in the groin. BALKIS pins down one arm.

From the box SPURGEON takes a ball peen hammer and a spike and drives it through SLOH's wrist. He then hops over and does the same to the

other wrist. BALKIS steps away while SPURGEON ties SLOH's feet to the wood with rough rope, then moves the video camera for a close shot.

BALKIS

The bleeding will be quick, Jimmy, since we have crushed some vital anatomical infrastructure. A long-tested method for empires.

(speaking into the camera)

This will close out the case of Jimmy Sloh for treason.

(in an almost ritualistic tone)

In the name of the Victims and the State, and pledging our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor in the terrorcide -- so be it.

BALKIS and SPURGEON step downstage, SPURGEON rubbing his hand.

BALKIS

What?

SPURGEON

Bruised it.

BALKIS

Let me see.

BALKIS takes SPURGEON's hand, examines it.

BALKIS

Ice. I'm sorry it hurts. I'll get you ice when we get back.

SPURGEON gets the wagon.

SPURGEON

I appreciate that.

SPURGEON exits with wagon. BALKIS takes from his coat an official-looking form with a seal and molds it over SLOH's face.

BALKIS

Everything breeds its paperwork.

BALKIS pokes a hole through it where SLOH's mouth is, then exits.

Lights tighten on SLOH's head. The harsh INTAKE and OUTBREATH, the paper moving in and out. SOUND EFFECT comes up of this breathing, louder and louder and louder until it suddenly cuts out.

A suspension of time.

Then SLOH gets off the cross, stands, peels the paper off, faces the audience naked, arms outstretched, bloodstained, a look of joy on his face.

Lights bump to black and transition music kicks in.

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**Act I, Scene 2 :  
Jimmy Sloh Is Captivated By Balkis**

Transition music morphs into CROWD SOUNDS of a political demonstration: chants, music, etc. The area where the protesters stand is roped off, forcing them to crowd together. In front of the CROWD, angriest of all, is the WOMAN.

STROBE LIGHTS show the crowd: young, angry, with placards sporting slogans like "FUCK FASCISM" and "CAPTIAL PUNISHMENT FOR CAPITALISTS." Crowd chants as well: "There's no way we're gonna pay!", "It's about time to kill the swine!" Louder and louder, strobes moving faster and faster until the strobes bump out, lights bump up, crowd in full chant, CROWD SOUNDS continuing underneath.

SLOH moves through the crowd. By this time SLOH has insinuated himself behind the WOMAN and snakes his hand around her waist so that he can grope her breasts. She tries to fend him off, but the crowd is so dense she has nowhere to move, and he begins to hump her in time to the chants.

SLOH & CROWD

It's about time to kill the swine! It's about  
time to kill the swine! It's about time to kill  
the swine!

WOMAN

(drowned out)

Stop it! Stop it!

SLOH has his right hand down her pants, stupid grin on his face. Then, a harsh light, CROWD SOUNDS out, AIR HORNS blow, and BENT, LEE, TORRES, and SPURGEON along with the rest of the protestors, except for the WOMAN, rip off their jackets to reveal themselves as undercover SWAT POLICE, batons thrashing until everyone is belly-down on the ground.

SPURGEON puts a boot on SLOH's neck, pinning him. BENT helps the WOMAN sit up. BALKIS enters, surveys the "catch," then gestures. The rest of the POLICE move off, taking the barricades. LEE stays. TORRES has a video camera and tapes the following action.

BALKIS gestures again. SPURGEON takes his foot off SLOH's neck, drags

him up to his knees. BALKIS takes SLOH's right hand and smells the fingertips, then has the WOMAN smell the fingertips.

BALKIS  
(to WOMAN)

Yes?

WOMAN  
Not supposed to be like this. This is not  
supposed to happen --

BALKIS  
(to BENT)  
Escort her, nicely, to the detention area --  
she's had a shock to her idealism.  
(to WOMAN)  
We are doing the best we can.

BENT and WOMAN exit. BALKIS hovers around SLOH, then gestures to SPURGEON, who hits SLOH so that he falls forward onto his hands and knees. BALKIS snaps his fingers and speaks to SLOH as if he were speaking to a dog.

BALKIS  
Come here, boy. Come here, come here. Come  
here, come here.

SLOH lifts his head, and SPURGEON smacks him again. He drops it.

BALKIS  
Come on, pal. Come on over here.

SLOH crawls on his hands and knees. BALKIS slaps his own right thigh.

BALKIS  
Heel, boy. Heel. Pull in tight. That's a boy.  
(to SPURGEON)  
What do you think?

SPURGEON  
I think he'll do. I think he'll do what you want  
to be done.

BALKIS  
And do, and do, and do, no doubt. Sniff, my boy.  
(SLOH sniffs)  
Good. Now bark.  
(SLOH barks)  
Good. Again, in a continuous manner.

SLOH barks again, but this time BALKIS raps him on the back of the head.

BALKIS

Now, bark.

SLOH hesitates, then barks but at the same moment pulls away.

BALKIS

Good.

SPURGEON

He's a quick idiot.

BALKIS

(to SPURGEON and the others)

Ain't nothin' but a hound dog!

SPURGEON

Rockin' all the time.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Act I, Scene 3 :  
Jimmy Sloh Is Dealt To**

Transition music: Elvis Presley. LEE and TORRES exit. SPURGEON brings a chair, slams SLOH into it, pulls out a bungee cord, and wraps it around SLOH and the chair. He then wheels in a contraption that has what looks like Excalibur hanging from a thread and puts it behind SLOH so that the sword dangles right over him. Affixed to the front of the device and pointing at SLOH is a little spy-cam. Music bumps out as the lights bump up to frame only a terrified SLOH.

BALKIS

You don't know the rules now, do you?

SLOH

Didn't know there were new rules.

SPURGEON

Of course.

SLOH

My pals told me you can always find radical pussy at a demonstration -- the juice of injustice flowing -- you know --

BALKIS

With pals like those --

SPURGEON

You now have some enemies.

SLOH

They were kidding me, eh?

SPURGEON

Dawn comes late, eh?

BALKIS

You were at a demonstration that we had disallowed.

SPURGEON

Of course we didn't tell the yahoos who showed up that. Why the fuck should we?

BALKIS

Bad choice on your part to be there. The new ones, that you obviously don't know about? Really, only one: hide or not hide, we seek.

SLOH

What's that over my head?

BALKIS

The truth, well-hung. You lie to me --

SPURGEON

I slit the thread.

(chops him in back of neck)

Those without a spine, it slides in like butter.

SLOH

If you got a spine? Not that I --

BALKIS

It still slides in like butter.

SLOH

Spine don't matter, then.

SPURGEON

Spine is like an appendix -- better if you take it out.

SLOH

Am I in a lot of trouble?

BALKIS

You are in trouble's ninth circle, Jimmy. Do you know what that reference refers to?

SLOH

No.

BALKIS and SPURGEON look at SLOH intently, wait for as long as they want.

SLOH

What can I do, you know, to get my ass out of this sling? I really don't want --

SPURGEON

(slowly)

What can the slug do to unsling his ass?

BALKIS

Would you like a job?

SLOH

A job? A job?

BALKIS

In service? To your country?

SLOH

A job? You're dicking me, right? Your version of spanking the monkey, right?

BALKIS and SPURGEON just look at him, wait for as long as they want.

SLOH

How much does this job, like, pay?

SPURGEON

Listen to him!

BALKIS

(to SPURGEON)

Remember, old rules.

SPURGEON

(to SLOH)

The pay, butt-suck, is that we don't bury you on the first date.

BALKIS

Mr. Spurgeon.

(pointing)

That camera up there? Technology is a marvelous thing, Jimmy. But technology can only -- probe so far. Our enemies -- your enemies, if you decide to accept -- move in camera-less shadows - - your eyes, your ears --

SLOH  
You want me to be, like, a spy?

BALKIS  
You will become, like, an agent of The  
Department, part of our Total Information  
Network.

SPURGEON  
In service to your Post-Attack country.

SLOH  
Be like you two?

BALKIS  
You can aspire --

SPURGEON  
But probably not.

BALKIS  
But you will be something.

SLOH hesitates for a moment. BALKIS gestures to SPURGEON.

BALKIS  
Cut.

SPURGEON  
Cutting away.

SLOH  
No!

SPURGEON  
Sorry.

SLOH yells -- but the sword does not fall, though there is a  
GUILLOTINE SOUND EFFECT as if the sword fell. Instead, SPURGEON  
simply puts his hand on SLOH's neck and pets him. He leans down to  
laugh in his ear in staccato syllables.

SPURGEON  
Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. First paycheck.

As SPURGEON mock-laughs, SLOH barks in concert, looking at BALKIS for  
affirmation. BALKIS takes an Insignia and plasters it to SLOH's  
sweating forehead, then kisses SLOH on the cheek.

BALKIS  
It takes one on whom one has been shit to shit on  
others. Welcome aboard, Jimmy Sloh.

BALKIS holds out a form, the one pasted over SLOH's face in Scene 1. SPURGEON unwraps the bungee cord, and SLOH signs the form without looking at it. SPURGEON pulls out a tee-shirt and hat that bear the Insignia and hands them to SLOH, who takes off his old tee-shirt and puts on the new one.

Guillotine SOUND again and lights bump out, then transition music, something pseudo-Middle Eastern, like Loreena McKinnett.

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**Act I, Scene 4 :**  
**Jimmy Sloh Begins His Life's Work**

In separate spots, five ACTORS dressed in what passes for Western misunderstanding of Middle Eastern men: turbans, beards, etc. ACTOR 6 is dressed as an "ordinary" person.

SLOH

Boo!

ACTOR 1 jumps in fright.

SLOH

Do you love this country?

ACTOR 1  
(quizzical)

What?

SLOH

Do you love --

ACTOR 1

Of course I do --

SLOH

Hup, not quick enough.

SLOH slaps in Insignia sticker on the ACTOR's forehead.

SLOH

Enemy. Guards!

ACTOR 1

I'm not --

BENT and LEE come in, take away ACTOR 1.

SLOH

One for me.

(to ACTOR 2)  
Allahallahallahallah --

ACTOR 2  
What?

SLOH  
Do you love Western culture?

ACTOR 2  
Well, the Arabs did invent the zero --

SLOH slaps in Insignia sticker on the ACTOR's forehead.

SLOH  
Mocker! Guards!

LEE and TORRES come in, take away ACTOR 2.

SLOH  
I love my job!  
(addressing ACTORS 3,4,5 )  
Do you believe the Arabs invented the zero?

ACTORS 3, 4, 5  
Yes.

SLOH  
(pointing)  
Fundamentalists!

BENT and LEE spray mace in everyone's faces and drag them off.

SLOH  
(to ACTOR 6)  
And what about you? You look normal.

ACTOR 6  
You know, like you're shredding the fucking Bill  
of Rights -- what the fuck are you guys fucking  
doing --

SLOH  
Blasphemer!

SLOH does a Three Stooges two-fingers to the eyes, and TORRES drags  
ACTOR 6 away.

The GUILLOTINE SOUND. BALKIS enters and tosses SLOH a "treat." SLOH  
smiles. BALKIS gives him a gentle slap on the cheek. Transition  
music.