

In The Name Of

by

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DESCRIPTION

The terror of the war on terror has found its home.

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
- 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.)

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.

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.

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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 sawhorses. 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[ate] -- ?

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 --

SPURGEON spits.

SPURGEON: -- to us.

A moment of suspended silence.

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: 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 points to the camera.

BALKIS: 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: 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 --

BALKIS indicates SLOH's clothes.

BALKIS: Off.

SLOH: Balkis --

BALKIS: You'll notice that the prosecution is finished.

SPURGEON: 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!" 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 lispig 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 sawhorses: 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 sawhorses, 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.

BALKIS speaks into the camera.

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

BALKIS speaks in an almost ritualistic tone.

BALKIS: 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, 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, strobos moving faster and faster until the strobos 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 protesters, 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 records 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. 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. Good. Now bark. 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: Ain't nothin' but a hound dog!

SPURGEON: Rockin' all the time.

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ACT I, Scene 4: Jimmy Sloh Is Dealt To

Transition music: Elvis Presley. LEE and TORRES exit. SPURGEON brings a chair, slams SLOH into it, pulls out a bungie 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 --

SLOH: They were kidding me, eh?

SPURGEON: Dawn comes late, eh?

BALKIS: You were at a demonstration 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 rules, that you obviously don't know about? Really, only one new rule: 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.

SPURGEON chops him in the back of the neck.

SPURGEON: 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 stare at SLOH 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: 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 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: The pay, butt-suck, is that we don't bury you on the first date.

BALKIS: Mr. Spurgeon. 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.

SLOH hesitates for a moment.

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 5: 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!

SLOH addresses ACTORS 3,4, and 5.

SLOH: Do you believe the Arabs invented the zero?

ACTORS 3, 4, 5: Yes.

SLOH: 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.

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ACT I, Scene 6: Jimmy Becomes Homeless

SLOH's dirty apartment. His LANDLADY, older, agitated, appears "foreign." SLOH enters, cocky.

SLOH: (startled) Yo.

LANDLADY: Rent.

SLOH: It's due?

LANDLADY: Several months.

SLOH: Well -- I'm sorry to have to do this. But not really.

SLOH pulls an official-looking "report" out of his jacket pocket, opens it.

LANDLADY: My payment?

SLOH: Do you have a brother in Cairo?

LANDLADY: What?

SLOH: Ibrahim?

LANDLADY: I have only sisters.

SLOH: Yeah, sure. And your father --

LANDLADY: Don't slander my father!

SLOH: -- is a nuclear scientist who traveled to, well, a country we don't like.

LANDLADY: My father was a baker in Queens! What do you have there?

SLOH: That's government prop[erty] -- hey!

LANDLADY: As I was thinking. "The Office of Information Awareness" -- what is that?

SLOH: Give it back!

LANDLADY: What is that?

SLOH: Very top se[cret] -- c'mon!

LANDLADY: This isn't me. You got the wrong name.

SLOH: Really?

LANDLADY: I'm a citizen -- didn't you know that?

SLOH: Yeah, well -- I know what you are. You're a fart-sucking parasite of the rentier class!
Yeah. Got that at a rally for social justice -- enemies of the State, yeah!

LANDLADY: I want you out.

SLOH: You can't --

LANDLADY: Out.

SLOH: Wait!

LANDLADY: Don't tell me you'll get me the fucking rent -- I wouldn't take dirt from you if I had the last seeds on earth. Out!

SLOH: You can't kick me [out] --

LANDLADY in fact kicks him, hard, right in the back of the knees, and SLOH buckles to the ground, where she gives him several more well-placed kicks, then stops. She rips the "report" in half and drops it on SLOH.

LANDLADY: Balkis is going to get an earful.

SLOH: No!

LANDLADY waits.

SLOH: Don't tell Balkis! Don't. Jesus Christ Buddha tits -- All your frigging names sound alike, anyway. Can I at least take --

LANDLADY: You touch anything, I'll break your metacarpals twice.

SLOH: Fine -- fine -- We're going to nail you, you know.

LANDLADY: Like they nailed your balls to the wall?

SLOH: You got a mouth.

LANDLADY: Look who I have talk to. Slither out of here.

SLOH retreats, pointing threateningly -- no effect. Lights out on LANDLADY.

SLOH: Every dog needs a lower dog to kick. Shit!

Video arcade lights and sound come up. SARAH GRIG sits at the arcade. Transition music.

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ACT I, Scene 7: Jimmy Must Find A Pal

SLOH jumps into playing a video game that requires shooting/ blasting things. GRIG sits at a table with a glass of water. A second table, two chairs: SLOH's. A beer, several empty bottles.

SLOH: Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck -- got you, you lousy towelhead. C'mon, c'mon -- up the alley -- around -- over -- where are you? where are you? bam! bam! bam! bam! bam! bam! bam! bam! bam! bam! Ah, yes, yes, yes, yes.

SLOH pauses, moves the gun around as if following a target, then fires.

SLOH: Got you, you sand snake, you Bedouin bunghole! Yee-haw, yee-haw, yee-haw!

The word "yee-haw" finally breaks down into BRAYS, like a mule.

SLOH looks over at GRIG, who looks away from him, but slowly, with no embarrassment at being discovered looking at him.

SLOH: Love these freaking video ex-tra-va-ganzas, you know? Great for venting, you know, the bullshit of the world that gunks up your veins? Man who invented these should be made a hero of the nation. Probably keeps down the murder rate.

SLOH makes an especially important kill, to which he raises his arms, shouts continually "yo, yo, yo, yo", lifts up his shirt and wags his pelvis at the game.

SLOH: Got the fucking Madam Saddam [pronounced mah-DAHM sah-DAHM] himself! Oooh, free games racking up! Care to pop a few? That deliberate dead-eye of yours -- look, close, then turn away -- I've gotten that a lot, you know? From people most likely better than you, higher up the food chain than you. Not one not for blood or guts? Then you must be an angel -- "yoo-neek" in this world, maybe.

SLOH slowly brings the gun to his shoulder.

SLOH: Even as a kid -- taken away by the sleek recruit lingo, you know, the sleek military way they'd throw the ropes down in the adverts and sleekly fly to the ground like -- well, avenging angels.

SLOH points the gun at GRIG.

SLOH: The promise of being all a person could be -- while getting paid for it. That was a me I dreamed that could be. But now --

SLOH reaches out to punch in his next game.

SLOH: Now I have the sloppy seconds of this machine. Fuck the dream.

Suddenly, SLOH stands up straight, looks straight at the machine, then at GRIG, who in fact has been watching him and now looks away again.

SLOH: I think this game should be yours. It's only a game, angel. Everyone's veins need a good reaming out. Or are you never one for a reaming out? Nothing hurt by asking.

SLOH stands to a sloppy attention and salutes the machine, puts the imaginary gun back into its imaginary holster.

SLOH: An act of amazing -- something -- on the part of Jimmy Sloh here, being that he will not use his racked-up games but leave them for the next doinker to find unplayed, thus giving said doinker the feeling that it is, indeed, his -- or maybe her -- lucky day.

SLOH goes back to his table, slugs from his beer.

SLOH: What do you think of that? Why do you come to a video arcade and don't play? Pose of waiting for someone -- drinking either vodka or water -- water, I guess, for you.

SLOHG takes his last swig.

SLOH: I need a room -- do you have a room I could share?

GRIG: No, I don't.

SLOH: No, you ain't got a room, or no, you ain't got a room to share? I'm not finicky about a three-by-six floorspace to crap out on, you know? I'm compact. Grave-size. I can even curl up baby-like if the floorspace --

BALKIS enters, carrying a very small leather case, wearing an elegant black coat with the Insignia on it.

BALKIS: Hello, Jimmy.

SLOH: Hello, hello, hello!

BALKIS: Much luck, Jimmy?

SLOH: Got Madam Saddam. Twice.

BALKIS: If only reality could accommodate us so easily.

SLOH: Yeah!

BALKIS: Get me a chair, will you? Ms. Sarah Grig?

SLOH brings over a chair. BALKIS sits, opens case, takes out a device and a rather elegant looking stylus. He will check off items.

GRIG: Yes.

BALKIS: Mr. Balkis.

SLOH: Do you mind if I -- ?

BALKIS: No, Jimmy -- I called you to this meeting, too.

SLOH sits. Video sounds and lights out; light remains on the three of them.

BALKIS: Ms. Grig, I'm glad you are here together --

SLOH: About my room --

BALKIS: On the agenda, Jimmy, but not at the top.

GRIG: He asked me if I had a room.

BALKIS: That's because our mascot here --

GRIG: He works for you?

SLOH: I'm not a mascot.

BALKIS: Works with us, yes.

SLOH: I'm not a fucking mascot.

BALKIS: It takes all kinds, Ms. Grig, to keep track of all the kinds we have to keep track of these days, Post-Attack.

ACTORS now begin to set up for the next scene, using SLOH's table.

SLOH: I'm not a mascot.

BALKIS: If you insist. Jimmy, our non-mascot, was recently evicted for calling his landlady -- ah, yes -- a "fart-sucking parasite of the rentier class." Is that accurate?

GRIG: Can we move on with --

BALKIS: We should.

SLOH: Wait. She's getting stroked a lot nicer than you ever stroked me. Why do you rate? All I get are slaps.

BALKIS: Go ahead -- tell him the story-- we have time.

GRIG: Do I have to?

BALKIS gives her an appraising stare.

BALKIS: It does not hurt in our line of work to make a practicing show of pity.

SLOH: I don't really need the real thing -- really, I don't --

GRIG gets up from the table.

SLOH: Good.

GRIG: This is why I do not have to bark.

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ACT I, Scene 8: How Grig Shows She Is Not Like Jimmy

A restaurant, fancy. SECRETARY LAXMETER and her son MICHAEL at a table, frozen. Wine, bread, menus. LAXMETER is dressed in a black business suit; on her

left lapel is the Insignia. GRIG in but not of the scene. She puts on a black vest, buttoned, and drapes a cloth over her forearm: a waiter.

GRIG: Secretary Laxmeter, the head of The Department.

BALKIS: Your ultimate boss, Jimmy. And mine.

GRIG: Her son, Michael. He hates her. She's invited him to lunch to once again try to make up.

GRIG snaps her fingers. The scene begins as if a recording has been released from "pause."

MICHAEL: Touching upon said newly legislated terrorists, where is your ever-vigilant Spurgeon?

LAXMETER: You don't see him?

MICHAEL: I'm sure he's body-guarding quite well even if you can't see him --

LAXMETER: Where is he?

MICHAEL: My mother afraid to be "x-ed" out --

LAXMETER: Be quiet!

MICHAEL: -- just when she's balanced on her cusp of greatness.

LAXMETER: Where is he?

MICHAEL: Rubbed out by, let's say --

MICHAEL indicates GRIG.

MICHAEL: -- the waiter.

GRIG stands to attention but does not move.

LAXMETER: Two years have not stopped you being the shit you were two years ago when you left.

SLOH: That's pissant soap opera, man --

MICHAEL: And yet you're sitting here with me now.

LAXMETER: Because I never lose hope that my son will take some pride in what I have found myself having to do, what I have been called to do.

MICHAEL: I loathe what you do.

SLOH: Ooooooh!

MICHAEL: Have done. Are going to do. Whether you feel called or not.

BALKIS: Ms. Grig.

LAXMETER and MICHAEL freeze. Snap of the fingers. The scene, further along.

SLOH: Why sit there with that mother?

MICHAEL: When I got your beseeching letter, I think I was struck by a momentary familial blindness --

SLOH: Pop go the fangs!

MICHAEL: -- but when I saw you walk in here, your constipation-faced bodyguard --

SLOH: *(whispering)* Excellent!

MICHAEL: -- eyeing everybody to protect the Secretary from anti-terrorism, it all went -- pfft! It seems I still think you're as vile as I thought you were then.

LAXMETER: And all this before the appetizers.

MICHAEL: Did you really expect anything more or less?

SLOH: In the ribs!

They open their menus again. GRIG, seeing the lull, makes for LAXMETER's table, grabbing a chair enroute.

BALKIS: Notice her initiative.

LAXMETER: Who are you? Who are you? Spurgeon!

MICHAEL enjoys the interruption. SPURGEON enters, trips.

MICHAEL: *(to GRIG)* What is this dagger I see before me?

SPURGEON: Damn!

GRIG: I've followed you here because I have --

SPURGEON: Get away from her!

SPURGEON falls again, gets up.

MICHAEL: *(laughing)* Iced and wasted while he gains his feet!

GRIG: I've followed you because I have a favor to ask of you.

SPURGEON: Get away!

MICHAEL: I'm sure your bellowing will blow her away, Spurgeon.

GRIG: My name is Sarah Grig.

LAXMETER: Everyone has to go through my office.

MICHAEL: Sarah Grig, one of the commoners, mom --

LAXMETER: Everyone has to --

MICHAEL: -- come to petition her government.

LAXMETER: -- go through my office.

MICHAEL: Give her leave.

GRIG: I want to offer you --

MICHAEL: Grig the commoner has an offer, mom.

LAXMETER: I am not going to listen to you unless you do it the right way.

SPURGEON: Up. Now.

MICHAEL: For Christ's sake, Sarah Grig, spit it out! Spurgeon, keep your pistol in your pocket. Go on! Go on! Now! Or forever hold your peace!

SPURGEON looks at LAXMETER, who nods. He stands to the side.

SPURGEON: I'm right here, if needed.

GRIG: Thank you. I want to be an agent. An agent of the government.

MICHAEL: A spy, she means.

The silence of LAXMETER and SPURGEON.

MICHAEL: You both look like the other farted and neither will admit it. *(to GRIG)* You're going to have to be much, much, much more forceful.

GRIG: I'm out of work. And out of money.

MICHAEL: *(prompting)* And so you've been drawn, thanks to my mother, to join the one growth industry in the Post-Attack country of today.

GRIG: Yes.

MICHAEL: You want to be part of the one third of a nation spying on another third of the nation with the third third of the nation spying on the spiers, and a fourth third hovering like the gods.

GRIG: If I could explain it to you.

MICHAEL: Information hotlines, neighborhood watch groups, interlaced databases, summary detentions, little moles and great big moles burrowing through the dung heaps -- all care of my mother --

GRIG: If I could explain.

SLOH: (*echoing GRIG, overlapping*) If I could explain --

MICHAEL: So, spread cheeks, extend tongue, and lick, lick, lick --

SLOH: Slut-butt nasty, man!

MICHAEL: -- such is the state of their art, and such is the state of your ambition. And from such a pretty one. Am I right?

GRIG: If I could explain. On my own.

BALKIS: This was priceless.

GRIG: May I? Thank you.

GRIG clears her throat, stands.

GRIG: The price of liberty is everlasting vigilance against those who would steal it from us. It is. When I was a child it was a golden age. My father told me so, showed me how it worked, said to me that here anyone with a drive and an ambition could have success that other people in other places could only imagine -- and would be jealous about. But things -- changed. I had that drive, had that ambition -- and yet others got the success. Something new had come into being, and it was not good. Things, ways had been lost, broken. I saw my father dry up and blow away. And now, after the Attack, even less good, what with those surrounding us committed bodily and soul to our destruction. I am not going to sit here and watch more things be taken away from me. From us. Everlasting vigilance. And that is why I want to be an agent. (*to BALKIS*) I had practiced it a lot.

SLOH: I'm fucking impressed -- now about my room --

MICHAEL: Impressive shamelessness.

GRIG: Careful what you say about people's beliefs.

MICHAEL: Your "beliefs" are like underwear, Sarah Grig -- off and on depending upon who's groping. (*to LAXMETER*) Which means she is definitely your man, so to speak.

BALKIS: And that, Jimmy Sloh, is why she isn't made to bark. Thank you, Ms. Grig.

LAXMETER and MICHAEL freeze. GRIG moves back to SLOH and BALKIS.

SLOH: Wait. Wait!

BALKIS: What?

SLOH: The Secretary and her son -- what happens? Come on, just a coupla minutes more. It's a great story, don't you think -- son hating the mother and all that ja-zazz. C'mon. C'mon!

GRIG snaps her fingers.

LAXMETER: There are no clean hands in this business, Michael.

MICHAEL: And when you became anointed --

LAXMETER: Appointed.

MICHAEL: As the patriotic leader of The Department --

LAXMETER: I personally think democracy is still worth defending.

MICHAEL: If we had any left to defend.

LAXMETER: You said you had one more point to make?

MICHAEL: I'm leaving. This country. Soon.

SLOH: Wow.

MICHAEL: Your country isn't my country anymore. Everyone seems to have the same face you do --

LAXMETER: Which is?

MICHAEL: Full of fear and hobnails and a mouth giving up any name they can think of.

LAXMETER: I wish you wouldn't leave.

MICHAEL: The price of attachment to you is eternal vigilance.

LAXMETER: I'm going to the country house this weekend. We can talk there. Come and stay.

MICHAEL: We should order.

BALKIS snaps his fingers. Lights out on LAXMETER, MICHAEL, and SPURGEON, who exit. Table, chairs, etc. off as well.

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ACT I, Scene 9: Grig Gets Her Assignment and Jimmy Is Samaritan'd

The scene continues without break.

SLOH: They're like mosquitoes at a blood bank. That's sad. But he's got a spine.

BALKIS: Enough.

SLOH: He does! I think I admire him.

BALKIS: Enough.

SLOH: *(to himself)* I do.

BALKIS: One more thing before we get to our business -- and take this as a warning, Jimmy.

SLOH: What?

BALKIS: Why, Sarah? I will call you "Sarah" now.

BALKIS indicates SLOH.

BALKIS: For him: why do you want to join?

SLOH: Yes, Sarah, my angel -- why spy?

GRIG: The real reason?

BALKIS: As far as "real" operates in the real world.

GRIG: There are too many delays.

BALKIS: Your time is rapidly not becoming your own, which means that there are no such things as delays for you. But I'll make a nod to courtesy, one last time: tell him the real reason.
(to SLOH) Listen.

GRIG: Because doing this job sends a thick shiver of unprocessed pleasure right down my spine into my groin.

SLOH: A pretty fucking good answer, Sarah.

BALKIS: I agree, Jimmy.

SLOH: *(to GRIG)* Told you you were an angel. Good. Now, my room --

BALKIS: *(to SLOH)* Because our work cannot be sustained by anything close to the heat of principle or duty.

BALKIS shuts off his device, puts it in the case.

BALKIS: Though I tell you, it is difficult impressing that upon people, now that we've extended our outreach to take in many we might not have taken in before.

SLOH: He means doinkers like me.

BALKIS takes a manila envelope out of his case.

SLOH: Now, about my room --

BALKIS: I have made my note, Jimmy.

SLOH: You don't understand -- "about my room" because I have no room!

BALKIS: I appreciate everything you've done.

SLOH: Well, it would be nice to be shown it.

Enter FLETCH, LEE, TORRES, BENT, LOUDER in uniform and full equipment. Their uniform bears the Insignia. They arrange themselves in conversation. FLETCH is in the middle. HANNAH stands to one side, rag in hand. Freeze.

BALKIS: You are on the top of my next list, Jimmy --

SLOH: Hey!

BALKIS: Nothing you do goes unnoticed by me.

SLOH: Hey!

BALKIS: Now, Sarah, we like to have our associates plowing the fields, so to speak, in order that our harvests be regular and full.

BALKIS takes photos out of manila envelope, hands one to GRIG.

BALKIS: Do you know the man in the middle?

A STROBE flashes, SOUND EFFECT of a SHUTTER. Group shifts to new position.

SLOH: No photo for me?

SLOH moves to see the photo.

GRIG: No, I don't recognize him.

BALKIS: Any of the men surrounding the one in the middle?

Another STROBE, SOUND EFFECT.

SLOH: Let me see.

BALKIS: Hands off, Jimmy.

GRIG: None of them, either.

BALKIS: The woman?

SLOH: No great looker.

BALKIS: Bent, Lee, Torres, and Louder -- he's from out West.

The OFFICERS exit.

BALKIS: They -- and others -- congregate at a small coffee shop --

BALKIS gives her a piece of paper.

BALKIS: -- at this latitude and longitude. The woman, Hannah, owns it. Like the coffeehouses of old -- caffeine as the drug and spur of revolution --

SLOH: Beer's got a radical bite. Sorry.

BALKIS: They call themselves the Movement -- capital "M" -- and something is brewing there --

SLOH: Brewing! Coffee-house!

BALKIS: Watch them, Sarah. Bring your reappings to me, Sarah. Consider me the lord of the manor taking in his tithes on a very regular basis. Clear?

GRIG: Yes.

BALKIS packs his things and rises.

SLOH: My room --

BALKIS: But before you go, Sarah, I have an assignment for the two of you. To share. Please stand, both of you. That's better. *(to GRIG)* Do you have any hobbies?

SLOH: I like to --

GRIG: No, I don't.

BALKIS: I do. Bonsai. Do you know it?

ACTOR holds up a perfect bonsai tree, light tight on it.

BALKIS: Snip, clip, shape, discipline -- all about reducing essences to essences. Quite relaxing.

Lights out. ACTOR exits.

BALKIS: A hobby, Sarah, is a comfort.

GRIG: So I've just been told.

BALKIS: Consider it strongly.

BALKIS looks at GRIG for several seconds -- longer than one would socially do, examining her. GRIG does not look away. SLOH watches, rapt. Then BALKIS takes out an Insignia and pins it to her jacket, like a corsage.

BALKIS: Goodbye.

BALKIS exits.

SLOH: We are now in service together. Pal?

GRIG: I suppose so.

SLOH: Don't get a hernia being too excited.

GRIG: We can be pals. Comrades.

SLOH: Good. Because I don't have pals. Do you? Tricky business, ours -- a need for bonding, right? So now we are bonded.

GRIG: All right.

SLOH: And when I say that, I mean that. I may be a half-finished bastard about a lot of things, but when I have a pal, I am not half about it at all. You and me, in service -- back-to-back, protecting each other's back. This is serious.

GRIG: Agreed.

Unexpectedly, SLOH punches GRIG in the flesh of the upper arm, hard. Then he points to his own arm.

SLOH: Go ahead. If you want to be my pal. I told you, nothing by half.

GRIG, with unexpected force, slams SLOH hard enough to knock him back. He laughs, but before he is ready, GRIG slams him hard again -- clearly vicious. SLOH laughs again, but not quite so heartily. GRIG slams him a third time, then lights into him, then stops sharply, as if a switch switched off.

SLOH: All right! All right! Christ, meant to be friendly! Blood brother shit without the blood! Why does everyone have to pound on me to prove a point? Back yourself off!

GRIG backs off, waits.

SLOH: Is it really true about you not having a room?

Transition music. Table, chairs off. Park bench on. GRIG exits.

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ACT I, Scene 10: Jimmy Meets The Movement And Is Moved

A street. A park bench. Clothes come flying onto the stage, and SLOH changes into ratty clothes while SWAT OFFICERS TORRES, LEE, and BENT, dressed in uniform bearing the Insignia and full equipment, watch him. If possible, a low buzz of CHATTER through their radios. SLOH throws back clothes he won't use.

SLOH: A Mr. Balkis "special" assignment -- what's so special about some shovel and some shit?

SLOH eyes them; they eye him.

SLOH: "Probe their reactions -- pinch 'em, poke 'em, prod 'em -- see what the Movement does." More frigging pain, that's all this is going to be. More frigging pain for the fucking dog that gets kicked when a dog needs to get kicked. "Jimmy will be in and out, on 'special' assignment." Fuck, fuck!

SLOH finishes, a deep breath, then exits and enters at a different entrance.

SLOH: You are all a bunch of bucket shitters, you are!

LEE: *(hissing)* Get the hell out of here!

SLOH: Ass-wipe ossifers --

TORRES: Do you know him?

SLOH: -- waiting for the knife to kiss your ass!

NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIER, in riot gear, enters opposite, sees SLOH.

SLOH: Christ, Balkis! You didn't have to send in the fucking clowns, too --

SLOH runs, chased by the SOLDIER in a kind of quick-march.

BENT: Christ!

LEE: What?

BENT: You heard him! He's right --

LEE: Don't --

BENT: That prick-head is right on the fucking nose.

LEE: Don't be too hard on yourself. Or us.

BENT: Why not? Either of you tell me why we are dicking around playing at being the --

A second SOLIDER in riot gear runs in and points his visored face at the OFFICERS. TORRES points in the wrong direction, and the SOLDIER exits.

TORRES: Because our work --

BENT: Our "work" is a crock! We sit around and pretend --

TORRES: No!

BENT: Well, what then, pray tell, amigo?

TORRES: Our work is grounded on being in service to --

BENT: "The great cause of freedom." (to LEE) His fucking constant mantra.

LEE: It's not a bad one.

SLOH runs through, razzes the OFFICERS, pulls up his shirt, etc.

SLOH: You'll all be fucking grave-meat by the time you guys do anything!

BENT: Get out --

SLOH dances away from BENT.

SLOH: No fucking movement from the Movement. The moveless Movement.

SLOH starts swiveling his hips.

SLOH: I got better fucking movements than the Movement. My fucking bowels move more than the Movement --

SLOH moons the OFFICERS but suddenly spies the SOLIDERS somewhere.

SLOH: Fuck!

SLOH exits in a rush. BENT follows for a few steps, then stops.

LEE: He's going to get himself killed.

BENT: So why aren't we protecting him?

TORRES: In service to a great truth, I was going to say.

LEE: I second that. I truly do. The Constitution's been betrayed, hasn't it? Hasn't it?

BENT: Every day on every shift.

LEE: And we took an oath -- we said the words, we made a promise!

BENT: It was always just about getting a good job and a pension, not --

TORRES: And now it won't be. And now you won't be.

LEE: So why not sign on to set it right side up? That's what Chief Fletch said to us.

BENT: But the pretending -- all the time -- this nothing-doing I hate!

SLOH runs on again, stares at the three of them.

SLOH: Shit-eaters. Piss guzzlers.

The TWO SOLDIERS chase him, running in quick-step. SLOH nimbly bolts. The three stand silent for a moment, digesting SLOH's analysis.

BENT: Where is he?

LEE: Chief Fletch will be here.

BENT: I have some complaints --

TORRES: When don't you?

BENT: About the way we have been forced to break things up -- break up meetings -- people -- the people we're supposed to be -- (to TORRES) -- that's what our fucking "service to a great truth" has come to --

SLOH runs on again.

SLOH: Why are you fucking over the protestors? Because you'll take it up any hole, won't'cha?

SOLDIERS appear on the other side. SLOH razzes them, turns and exits.

SOLDIER 1: That slimebag is a terrorist.

SOLDIER 2: A terrorist is a person thinking he or she can do whatever he or she wants to do.

LEE: Your new marching orders, hey?

BENT: Smear that bastard! Go! Go!

SOLDIERS exit.

BENT: Yesterday --

LEE: That one boiled me.

BENT: Giving "protection" when Immigration rounded up --

TORRES: Head 'em up, move 'em out --

BENT: What was it this week? left-handed swarthy types who -- (in a silly accent) -- "speak-a funny"? (to TORRES) That is not what I signed up for --

Enter FLETCH, dressed as they are, but wearing the white hat of a police chief. He is followed by LOUDER, dressed as they are. SLOH runs in, goes to say something, looks over his shoulder, and bolts.

FLETCH: The hunt is on, I see.

BENT: When is it ever off now?

LEE: Good to see you, sir.

BENT: I've got some complaints. Sir.

FLETCH: This is Louder. From the West Coast. They have started to organize there, like us -- he's here about linking the Movement --

LEE: Welcome, friend.

LOUDER: We're small -- all these laws rolled down so quickly after the Attack --

BENT: Like a frigging iron rain.

LOUDER: -- but something is happening.

FLETCH: And like it or not, Bent, we are the keepers right now of that most bitter virtue, patience.

SLOH comes on again to insult them, but the SOLDIERS come from behind him, scoop him up by the arms, and carry him over to FLETCH and the others.

SOLDIER 1: Notice how his tongue no longer flaps.

SOLDIER 2: Notice how silent he has become.

SLOH does not speak, looks at the OFFICERS with only partly mock terror on his face. Several beats as the SOLDIERS wait. BENT looks at FLETCH, who looks back but says nothing. BENT decides to act.

BENT: (to SOLDIERS) Uh, you can put him down.

The SOLDIERS do not put him down.

BENT: (to SLOH) You have been making a big mistake fighting against what is in your best interests.

SLOH: Not like that --

BENT hisses at him, as if to say, "Shut up!"

SLOH: They don't care if --

BENT: You'll ruin all of us if you continue to think that thinking for yourself is what this country of ours needs now after the Attack.

SOLDIER 1: Do you have an answer for him?

BENT: It'd be better for you to just go home, enjoy what you have there, go to your work the next day with a --

BENT fumbles for the word.

TORRES: Chastened.

BENT: Chastened heart.

SOLDIER 2: *(to FLETCH)* Sir?

BENT: He's dangerous to nobody.

SOLDIER 2: *(indicating BENT)* Is he speaking for anybody?

BENT: *(to FLETCH)* They can release him, right?

FLETCH does not answer.

SOLDIER 1: Sir?

BENT: It's all right. Really. He can go.

SLOH: *(hissing)* That's not right, that's not right, you've got to --

The two SOLDIERS exchange looks, confused by BENT's leniency and FLETCH's silence. They turn and escort SLOH away.

SLOH: *(hissing, to FLETCH)* Hey!

FLETCH: You can let him go.

The SOLDIERS stop.

SOLDIER 1: I'm afraid we can't unless you --

FLETCH walks up to SLOH and punches him, hard.

FLETCH: *(very quietly)* And get your head on straight, you bucket shitter.

LEE: Sir!

TORRES then kicks SLOH several times.

TORRES: *(equally quiet)* Get out of my sight, traitor!

The SOLDIERS drop SLOH, who falls to his knees. SOLDIER 2 takes out a form.

SOLDIER 1: Better.

SOLDIER 2: We'll be watching for you.

SOLDIER 1: By the way, are you left-handed?

SLOH holds up his right hand. FLETCH signs the form.

SOLDIER 1: Next round-up, then.

SOLDIERS exit. FLETCH helps SLOH up.

SLOH: *(to BENT)* You almost bought me the farm, you pisshead! *(to FLETCH)* Your guys don't know crap from crayolas!

BENT: Who the hell are you?

SLOH: Common man.

FLETCH: *(to BENT)* Can't you tell who he is?

SLOH: I am what I said I am.

FLETCH: No you're not. *(to BENT)* He's our test. He's the man who fell on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho.

SLOH: And who the fuck would that sad sack be because that ain't me!

FLETCH looks long and hard at SLOH.

FLETCH: A Sunday school teacher was telling her class the story of the Good Samaritan, in which a man was beaten, robbed and left for dead on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. She described the situation in vivid detail so that her students would catch the drama. Then she asked the class, "If you saw a person lying on the roadside all wounded and bleeding, what would you do?" A thoughtful little girl broke the hushed silence. "I think I'd throw up."

SLOH: What? What?

FLETCH: But, lo, behold -- we haven't done that as we look at you. You don't belong there. And you don't belong here. Not yet, at least.

SLOH: What in Christ's piss are you jabbering about? I'm one of the people --

FLETCH: We saved your ass -- you know that. We didn't have to. It would've been safer not to. You think your keeper would've cared? We did you, a complete and foul-mouthed stranger, a service.

SLOH: I don't get the fuck of why you did that. I don't. But thanks.

FLETCH gives him a firm shove, and SLOH goes to exit but actually climbs onto a ladder to eavesdrop, occasionally glancing at GRIG.

LEE: You didn't have to do that to him!

FLETCH: Weren't you watching them?

BENT: (to LEE) What they wanted to do to us, not him, because of my --

LEE: Because of your what?

BENT: Charity makes you a suspect now, Post-Attack!

LEE: It made me sick. We can't go around pummeling the people we're supposed to be helping!

BENT: Chief Fletch did the right thing. Torres did --

LEE: They can't be right!

FLETCH: Torres.

TORRES: To resist Them, we'll have to be like Them --

LEE: That's stupid!

TORRES: -- be more than like Them.

LEE: Even stupider.

TORRES: Use violence for peaceful ends. Use pain for future pleasure. So as to keep Them off our scent.

LEE: That is [absurd] --

FLETCH: Only the best of us -- the best in us -- will be able to remember our original reasons why as the fight makes us hard and necessary. (to LEE) You should have done what we did yourself -- vomit afterwards, scratch your face, wail if you want -- but still have done it.

TORRES: Doing that is not what I would want. For any of us. Just to know that about me. But what I want may not be what I really need to want.

BENT: In service to a great truth. (to FLETCH) What do you want us to do?

FLETCH: Patience is a minor form of despair, isn't it?

BENT: I think, Chief, that it ain't so minor.

They exit. SLOH climbs down. ACTORS set up GRIG's room.

SLOH: Why do these guys have the feel of pals about them? Eh?

SLOH takes several steps toward where they exited. GRIG climbs down.

SLOH: Fletch -- he saw -- something --

GRIG walks up to SLOH.

GRIG: There are certain things you should keep to yourself.

SLOH and GRIG exit into the next scene. Transition music.

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ACT I, Scene 11: Jimmy Cannot Match Sarah's Ambitions

GRIG's room, not much different from SLOH's room earlier, though neater, and with a table. SLOH on a blanket on the floor, GRIG in the narrow bed. SLOH rubs ointment into his bruises and grimaces whenever he hits a particularly tender place.

SLOH: I appreciate your letting me. Awake?

GRIG: Yes.

SLOH: I said thank you.

GRIG: All right.

SLOH: That's the longest hand-off of words we've had since --

GRIG: That ointment stinks.

SLOH: Blame Balkis. He pitched me like a penny against the wall.

GRIG: Each according to his own worth.

SLOH: I'm sniffing out the terrorists for him, it's that plain and simple, and I'll tell you that since I've been looking I have been finding them everywhere, in places low and high and everywhere. If they the least little criticize, I brand them right then and there "terrorist," and if they go on defending themselves, appealing to rights and whatnot, their name goes up to him. Mr. Balkis. Many names up to him by now.

SLOH pauses in rubbing.

SLOH: Weird, though, today -- that guy, Fletch? That look -- wait -- wait --

SLOH puts the ointment down, picks up two water glasses and puts them to his eyes, like binoculars.

SLOH: That look -- microscope-like, you know -- like he knew. Said, "You don't belong there -- "

GRIG: I heard.

SLOH: " -- and you don't belong here. Not yet, at least."

GRIG: If you said nothing at all, you'd still talk too much.

SLOH: I didn't know what the fuck he meant! But I knew he meant something! I could feel it!

SLOH looks at GRIG through the glasses.

SLOH: What do you think he meant?

GRIG: Put the glasses down.

SLOH: *(glasses still up)* What do you think --

Like a shot, GRIG is off the bed and has the glasses in her hands before SLOH realizes anything. Slams them down.

GRIG: And you don't listen.

SLOH: Story of my life, Sarah.

GRIG returns to the bed.

GRIG: Your life is shit and yet you go on.

SLOH: You don't agree with doing that?

GRIG gets up again, takes a leaf of newspaper, and from it makes an origami pirate's hat.

SLOH: So what bank do you put your money in?

GRIG: In nothing but my own appetite, Jimmy.

SLOH: Nothing else?

GRIG: I wouldn't know how else. In all this dismantling of rights. In all the sheep lifting up their necks for the knife. In this tarring of everybody with terror. In the categorizing and butchering done in the name of the good. I will find what my appetite wants. That's our difference, Jimmy. I won't ever bark.

SLOH: *(half-joking)* Woof, woof.

GRIG: I won't stay here for very long. Where there is an "up" to go, I will go up.

GRIG puts on the hat.

SLOH: I think you're going to be whatever you want to be. I've never dreamed of wanting anything like that. Never.

GRIG: Because you settle for pals.

GRIG puts the hat on SLOH.

GRIG: Encompassed in a nutshell -- that's me. The rest everybody else can have -- let them all be sticky with their needs. But not near me.

SLOH: I can't believe you believe that having pals is -- If being alive's just all piss and blather and nothing else --

SLOH shakes his head.

SLOH: I believe there will always be a pal somewhere --

GRIG: I'm going to sleep.

SLOH grabs the ointment, moves away from the bed. Lights out on the bed. He rubs in the ointment meditatively.

SLOH: A fucking shooting star. I think that what you want blows a hole right through me in a way like nothing has -- that kind of wanting so clear. Pure. No, no -- that's not right. Not like nothing has. The look that guy Fletch gave me -- "You don't belong there. And you don't belong here. Not yet, at least."

SLOH shakes his head to clear it.

GRIG: *(from the darkness)* Are you now headed in the right direction, Jimmy Sloh?

SLOH: I would say so if I knew.

GRIG: Sleep.

Caps ointment, takes off hat.

SLOH: I don't know.

Transition music.

* * * * *

ACT I, Scene 12: Jimmy Is Wholly Unmasted

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 wanders into the scene, preoccupied, wearing the Insignia.

ACTOR 1: *(hissingly)* Come on!

SLOH: What? Oh, all right. Do you love this country?

ACTOR 1: Better. *(quizzical)* What? Of course I do --

SLOH goes to say "Hup, not quick enough. Enemy. Guards!" as he had before, but something grips him like a hand around his throat, and nothing comes out. Light out on ACTOR 1, exits. SLOH moves to the next person.

SLOH: Do you love Western culture?

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

SLOH goes to say "Mocker! Blasphemer! Guards!" as he had before, but something gets caught in his throat, and nothing comes out. Light out on ACTOR 2, exits. SLOH moves to the next people.

He addresses the rest.

SLOH: Do you believe the Arabs invented the zero?

ACTORS 3, 4, 5: Yes.

SLOH goes to say "Fundamentalists!" as he had before, but a pain shoots up the side of his neck, and nothing comes out. ACTORS exit. ACTOR 6 just looks at SLOH, then exits.

BALKIS enters and tosses SLOH a "treat," but it bounces off him. BALKIS gives him a hard slap on the cheek, exits.

Immediately the video arcade lights come up, and he aims at the target -- but cannot pull the trigger. He puts the imaginary gun back into its imaginary holster. Arcade lights out.

SOLDIER 1 and SOLDIER 2 drag in the naked body of a MAN, clearly post-crucifixion, a bloodied sack. They pull as if the body is incredibly heavy. They pass in front of SLOH.

SOLDIER 1: Done nothing wrong -- right!

SOLDIER 2: To speak out against -- wrong!

SOLDIER 1: Since any little disturbance of what is established --

The SOLDIERS let go of the MAN but continue moving across the stage with the same movements as if they still had the MAN in their hands.

SOLDIER 2: Only makes it easier for them to infiltrate and undermine. Therefore, a loose mind -

SOLDIER 1: Is a necessary thing to waste. Rule Number 1.

SOLDIER 2: And also Rule Number 2, referring to Rule Number 1 for guidance.

SOLDIER 1: So sayeth.

SOLDIER 2: And sayeth again and again.

They exit. SLOH stares at the MAN. The MAN sits up and stares back at SLOH.

A series of really fast STROBE flashes, then the guillotine SOUND of the sword falling. Blackout.

INTERMISSION

ACT II, Scene 1: Sloh Observes How The Movement Will Be Set Up

LAXMETER's country home. LAXMETER and MICHAEL are pitching horseshoes, all mimed -- sound effect, acoustically made or done electronically, when the shoe hits the pitch, such as a clang against the stake, etc. Off to one side, a table with a water pitcher, glasses, an extra pair of horseshoes, and binoculars. In the center of the table is a perfectly sculpted bonsai tree. Outdoor chairs. Off to the other side is something like an Adirondack chair, indicating another part of the outdoor space.

MICHAEL: Anyone servicing you these days?

LAXMETER: Michael.

MICHAEL: Do you?

LAXMETER: Your word choice sometimes.

MICHAEL: Shtup, then? Hot dog in the bun? A push in the bush? And does he take his socks off?

LAXMETER: He actually reads to me.

MICHAEL: Such as?

LAXMETER: Poetry.

MICHAEL: During?

LAXMETER: He finds a stanza or two before and after quite sufficient.

MICHAEL: A sufficient sockless reader -- you're coming up in the world.

LAXMETER just misses a ringer.

LAXMETER: Damn!

LAXMETER goes to pour a glass of water and sits. MICHAEL continues to pitch.

MICHAEL: How did you find me?

LAXMETER: We do use more than directory assistance.

MICHAEL sits as well, but not for long -- fidgety. Through his next lines he makes use of the binoculars.

MICHAEL: I was trying hard to be out of your sight, and thus out of your mind. But then -- your letter. The day I received your letter.

LAXMETER: You're going to tell me a story.

MICHAEL: I had just come home from work -- you probably have that recorded in my dossier.

LAXMETER: You don't have a dossier.

MICHAEL: Liar. I live in an apartment complex --

LAXMETER: I know that.

MICHAEL: Four towers, so that from any window you can see the other three. Wretched -- but within my means. On slow evenings I drag out the binoculars and troll. All these everyday framed dramas -- except for this couple -- man, woman -- with a somewhat nightly ritual.

LAXMETER: You're going to tell something I don't want to hear.

MICHAEL: Binoculars, too, and they stand naked at their respective windows watching each other masturbate. They time it to lift off together -- well, you can see his liftoff, though she could be faking it -- but they do time something for some kind of mutuality.

LAXMETER: And you watch?

MICHAEL: Not alone in that.

MICHAEL turns the binoculars backward.

MICHAEL: Binoculars ping-ponging from window to window -- multiple sets of binocular eyes meeting across space, eyebeams tangled, all of us, diddling or not, continuing onto our sweet and bitter ends.

LAXMETER: I used to have a son who liked his mother.

MICHAEL: I'd like to meet him.

LAXMETER: I guess this was a mistake.

MICHAEL: A strange intimacy strung out along that distance -- touching but not touching. After all such servicing was done -- then that was the proper time to read your letter.

LAXMETER can stand it no longer.

LAXMETER: I think it's disgusting. I think you're disgusting.

MICHAEL: You're saying you wouldn't watch? Couldn't?

LAXMETER: It's smut.

MICHAEL: It's choice. And no one gets hurt by anyone else. Which is not a bad -- which is an unusual -- outcome these days.

LAXMETER: And that kind of thinking will pull us down now, right to the depths --

MICHAEL: Freely choosing? Each to his own?

LAXMETER: I mean being unthinking and selfish. Not acting for the greater good.

MICHAEL: An orphan phrase coming from your mouth.

LAXMETER: I am doing the best I can.

MICHAEL: Said the Mother of the Nation.

LAXMETER: I am!

MICHAEL: That little voice quiver -- But these days I can't seem to forget that those doing the best they can, like my dear mother of the nation, are doing the best they can to unlock the lowest instincts in the species --

LAXMETER: This was a mistake.

MICHAEL: -- while having poetry read to them before, not during, and after looking through their own private -- releasing.

LAXMETER grabs the pitcher.

LAXMETER: We need more water.

LAXMETER moves to the exit, comes back.

LAXMETER: Michael, you have to be very careful about disgust.

MICHAEL: I am very strict in my disgust.

LAXMETER: It tricks you into thinking you're righteous when all you are is empty. It may give you a thick shiver down your spine, but it doesn't make you any better --

MICHAEL: Or worse.

LAXMETER: -- than any one else.

MICHAEL: I'd be happy with "not worse" if I could get away with it.

LAXMETER: We need more water.

LAXMETER exits with the pitcher. MICHAEL drain his glass, picks up a horseshoe and handles it. BALKIS enters, followed by GRIG and SLOH, GRIG dressed now in Department black clothing, with Insignia. BALKIS carries his case. He sees MICHAEL but says nothing.

BALKIS: I was told she'd be here, in the backyard.

MICHAEL sits, holding the horseshoe.

BALKIS: This is very nice. Horseshoes. A near-ringer --

MICHAEL: Hers.

BALKIS: Is she here? I was told --

MICHAEL: She's just gone into the house.

BALKIS: Ah. Mr. Balkis.

MICHAEL: I'm her son.

BALKIS: I know.

MICHAEL: I'm sure you would.

BALKIS: This is our weekly meeting.

LAXMETER enters, carrying the pitcher of water. MICHAEL looks through the binoculars.

MICHAEL: Are you her poetry reader?

BALKIS: What?

MICHAEL: Her stanza before and stanza after?

BALKIS: I am not one for poetry.

LAXMETER: I forgot to tell you.

MICHAEL: Your weekly meeting.

LAXMETER: I'm sorry.

MICHAEL: Your weekly meeting to do the best you can.

MICHAEL trains the binoculars on GRIG.

MICHAEL: I know you. So they took you in. *(to LAXMETER)* Do you remember her? Sarah Grig. You thought she was an assassin-waiter. Such initiative -- almost took her heart away!

LAXMETER: Michael --

GRIG: I have a lot to thank Madam Secretary for.

MICHAEL: So say hello to your valued Department employee, Madam Secretary.

LAXMETER: Michael.

MICHAEL: *(chidingly)* Mother --

A stand-off moment between mother and son. MICHAEL surrenders.

MICHAEL: I will move along. *(to BALKIS)* The "eff-to-eff," so essential for the proper functioning of government --

MICHAEL waves.

MICHAEL: -- long may it wave.

MICHAEL puts down the binoculars, picks up a horseshoe and tosses it to BALKIS, who catches it handily, then exits.

A moment of silence, then BALKIS gives LAXMETER an inquisitive look.

BALKIS: Should we?

LAXMETER hesitates, then nods yes.

BALKIS: *(to GRIG)* Follow him.

GRIG hesitates.

BALKIS: Go. Ahead.

GRIG exits to follow MICHAEL.

LAXMETER refills her own glass but does not offer one to BALKIS. She sits, then indicates for BALKIS to sit as well.

SLOH stands several steps back but within hearing and seeing distance. LAXMETER and BALKIS completely ignore him. BALKIS opens his case, takes out the same photos he'd shown GRIG.

LAXMETER: Let's begin so we can put an end to this.

BALKIS: Do you know any of these people?

LAXMETER: Officers in our special squad --

LAXMETER looks closer.

LAXMETER: -- a chief, too, it looks like -- but no, I don't know them. But if I am going to have to know them, why do I have to know them?

BALKIS: That man in the middle --

BALKIS takes out another photo and a loupe that LAXMETER uses to look at the photos.

BALKIS: -- Johnson Fletcher -- here is a closer photograph.

LAXMETER: Still no. What are these about?

BALKIS taps the photo with his index finger.

LAXMETER: What?

BALKIS: Did you notice this? Across the Insignia.

LAXMETER: It looks like a black --

BALKIS: It is tape. An obscuring -- perhaps even insulting -- strip of black tape.

LAXMETER: You can barely see it, it's so thin.

BALKIS: They're all wearing it.

LAXMETER: Yes -- they are.

LAXMETER hands back the photo and loupe.

LAXMETER: Maybe someone fell in the line [of duty] --

BALKIS: These officers work for you, and yet -- And no one has fallen. That I know.

BALKIS draws a line across his own Insignia.

BALKIS: So, why, Madam Secretary? And this.

BALKIS shows her one more photograph. She looks at it, looks dismayed, off-handedly hands it to SLOH.

BALKIS: *(to SLOH)* Give it to me!

SLOH hands it back to BALKIS after sneaking a peek at who it is.

BALKIS: You recognize the Attorney General.

LAXMETER: Of course I recognize the Attorney General!

BALKIS: And you saw the eradicating tape --

LAXMETER gets up, agitated -- perhaps even tosses a horseshoe.

LAXMETER: Before you tell me something I feel I'm not going to like hearing --

BALKIS: That black tape is like the canary in the cave -- he did resist setting up the Department
--

LAXMETER: Careful what you are saying. Attacked, yes -- society, values, buildings, all
attacked -- but also some sense of proportion.

BALKIS: And proportionate responses.

LAXMETER: But respond to what? Very easy to shine a light and then be scared by the
shadows you create yourself and then think every shadow holds an enemy, and then
and then and then and then -- it's not my duty to trump up conspiracies for the sake of --

BALKIS: You are Madam Secretary of The Department.

LAXMETER: And what security have we won if everyone comes to think we're no different or
better than the assassins we say we want to defeat?

BALKIS looks around him, as if trying to see someone.

LAXMETER: What?

BALKIS: There is no press gallery here, Madam Secretary.

LAXMETER: Don't get flippant, Balkis!

BALKIS: I just wanted to remind you that here you don't have to play to --

LAXMETER: I actually believe this, you know. That we're doing this to protect a way of life worth
protecting. Like being a parent, Balkis -- you must be straight with your children if you

want them to trust you, but sometimes, you have to -- maneuver -- things -- without them knowing --

BALKIS: A loving by lying.

LAXMETER: You miss the point.

BALKIS: Of course.

LAXMETER: You maneuver things to put control where a parent is supposed to put control. That is my duty.

BALKIS: Understood, Madam Secretary -- understood how, on your level, that -- higher level. But --

BALKIS picks up the photos, shuffles them.

BALKIS: Having my ear pinned to the ground, as you pay me to do -- there are, out there, things that cannot be ignored. Let me put it to you straight. A movement -- no, The Movement -- people, citizens, not the illegals this time, banding together, people in trusted positions, who truly believe --

LAXMETER stops him, paces, agitated. BALKIS neatens his pile of photographs. LAXMETER finally sees SLOH.

LAXMETER: Who is he?

BALKIS: He's been surveilling Fletcher and the others.

LAXMETER: Get him out of here.

BALKIS indicates for SLOH to leave, so SLOH backs up toward the house.

LAXMETER: Wait!

LAXMETER picks up the binoculars and tosses them to SLOH.

LAXMETER: Get these wretched things out of my sight.

SLOH retreats a few steps more but doesn't quite exit yet.

BALKIS: If there were not conspiracies, The Department would not have been created. The fact that it has been created must mean that the conspiracies exist. And if they exist, then --

LAXMETER: You might as well say that creating The Department created the conspiracies.

BALKIS: And in a sense, Madam Secretary, is that not true? Was that not what was needed in response to the Attack? What the people wanted? Done in their name? So that they could believe paradise had not been lost? And do we not answer to what the people want? It is my job to put these things together and inform you about them.

LAXMETER: All right.

BALKIS: That is why you --

LAXMETER: All right!

BALKIS: -- hired me.

LAXMETER: We have to be careful of our language. I mean it. If we let the language slip, then everything else falls apart.

BALKIS: Point taken.

LAXMETER: I am not being academic about this!

They look at each other.

BALKIS: Of course. Speak clearly.

They continue to look at each other.

LAXMETER: It's just hard to think that --

BALKIS: If these officers decide to do whatever they are deciding to do -- if Fletcher is allowed to lead them on -- then --

LAXMETER: We do this right. It's important for the President --

BALKIS: And the people --

LAXMETER: -- that we do this right.

BALKIS: I have my people watching. We will watch our language. Does it being this close upset you?

LAXMETER: I stay in the loop, do you hear me? Do you hear me?

LAXMETER looks up and sees SLOH, and SLOH scuttles out. BALKIS takes a form out of his case, unfolds it, offers LAXMETER a pen.

BALKIS: Your directive.

LAXMETER signs it.

BALKIS: It is very pleasant out here. A real treat to be able to get away, to escape.

BALKIS points at the horseshoe pitch.

BALKIS: Almost a ringer there. "All created equal," e pluribus unum, but this is very nice, isn't it?

LAXMETER: I need something stronger.

LAXMETER exits into the house.

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ACT II, Scene 2: Sloh Watches Grig In Action

Scene shifts without pause to the Adirondack chair. BALKIS unrolls a small leather pouch of tools and proceeds to work on the bonsai, occasionally glancing at the scene with MICHAEL and GRIG. Light on him should be well-defined.

MICHAEL enters, sits. GRIG enters and startles him. In the background, unseen, is SLOH, who watches everything through the binoculars.

MICHAEL: My "tail."

GRIG: I do what they want me to do.

MICHAEL: Would you seduce my mother if they told you to? Someone already reads her poetry.

GRIG: If they told me to.

MICHAEL: How would you do that?

GRIG: This is what I would whisper in her ear.

MICHAEL: I've spent a life trying not to --

GRIG: "Sanctimony stirs the juices of your cunt -- "

MICHAEL: That said to my mother?

GRIG: *(ignoring him)* " -- you feel it but deny it but still feel it under the denial -- "

MICHAEL: You give my mother far too much --

GRIG: *(ignoring him again)* " -- the air fills with your moist fruit-fish smell, perfume of power that rims my nostrils and rides my tongue with a tingle to lick the first silver dew drop hanging off your clitoris -- "

GRIG pauses, looks directly at MICHAEL.

MICHAEL: Go on.

GRIG: You want me to.

MICHAEL: Finish it off.

GRIG: " -- a light lick to spark a thick shiver up your spine before I suck -- "

MICHAEL: I can't but think that my mother might just -- she just might, you know. The sound of it -- (*with disgust*) But the thought of it --

GRIG: If not mother, then son?

MICHAEL: Let me tell you a story about the use of binoculars --

GRIG: Yes or no?

MICHAEL: Did they tell you to offer me that?

GRIG: Yes or no?

MICHAEL: Did they or didn't they?

GRIG waits.

MICHAEL: Or is this a rogue assignment?

GRIG waits.

MICHAEL: Is this the face that my corruption will wear?

GRIG: Is it such a bad face?

MICHAEL: I can't say if it isn't because it isn't or because wanting to do what my mother would never want to do to you but you would do to her --

GRIG: And you might do to me --

MICHAEL: -- makes this face more delicious than it is.

GRIG: So will you do?

MICHAEL: I will hate myself for saying yes. But yes.

BALKIS pitches what he says to SLOH, though he never faces him.

BALKIS: Like bonsai -- the corruptions, through disciplined desire, become pure and sculpted.

The "entanglement" of GRIG and MICHAEL should be choreographed and precise. It is a dance of mutual exploitation and animal desire and should appear so. BALKIS continues to work on his bonsai. SLOH stands behind him.

BALKIS: I had started out as a young man starts out in the world -- with a drive and a draft of stupidities otherwise known as "dreams." But things of great evil sickened me, and evil made me ask so many questions that had no answers. It drove me mad -- my questioning boiled down everything into a doubt that was drowning me. Until I decided to doubt no more. I found that those who didn't ask questions were much, much happier. And I wanted to be like them. So I resolved to ask no more questions that could not be

satisfied by interrogations, evidence, reports, conclusions. In bonsai I found art. In espionage I found security.

GRIG and MICHAEL freeze -- BALKIS gives a few more snips, then stops for several beats. GRIG and MICHAEL melt out of their pose into post-coital rest. BALKIS puts away his tools and gets ready to leave.

BALKIS: Inquisition is not health. Much better to have controlled idealisms, things rounded-off and well-maintained. In that lies more than enough happiness.

GRIG and MICHAEL stand, arrange themselves.

MICHAEL: I am going to postpone my leaving.

GRIG: I'm not asking you to.

MICHAEL: I don't want to be asked.

GRIG: I promise nothing.

MICHAEL: What better gift?

BALKIS walks into their area.

BALKIS: (to MICHAEL) You are out of your league with her.

MICHAEL: You forget whose son I am.

BALKIS: You forget whose son you are.

GRIG: Don't forget.

MICHAEL exits.

BALKIS: You are so governed by appetite.

GRIG: Lucky for you.

BALKIS: Prove I'm lucky.

GRIG: Why be so hard on me?

BALKIS grabs her arm.

BALKIS: Because I think a person guided by appetite is an idealist -- and idealists are always like tits on a bull, and thus useless to me.

GRIG: You misread these tits, Mr. Balkis.

BALKIS: I am not weak like Michael Laxmeter.

GRIG: No one is that weak, even Jimmy Sloh.

BALKIS: Then make me trust your appetite.

GRIG: Let me go first.

BALKIS lets her go.

GRIG: I do this job well -- I do, don't I?

BALKIS: So far.

GRIG: Because I am just like you.

BALKIS: I don't bend to flattery.

GRIG: I am completely empty of faith.

BALKIS: Go on.

GRIG: Clean as a hollow log.

BALKIS: You're in the black so far.

GRIG: All beliefs are equal to me because they are all equally useless. I don't care because I don't have any ideas, and I don't have any ideas because I don't care. And why? Because only appetite is dependable. Isn't it?

BALKIS: I remember your answer to my question "why."

GRIG: Thick unprosthetic shiver down the spine.

BALKIS: You'd thought about the answer before answering.

GRIG: And I still think before doing. Isn't it possible that having an in with the son of the Secretary of The Department might prove useful at some point? And if it doesn't -- then what's been the harm?

BALKIS: Disguised as a waiter, she grabs a chair and --

GRIG: I am your perfect employee, Mr. Balkis. I am the perfect post-Attack jack-of-all-trades janitor on red-alert homeland clean-up. I am the perfect patriot.

GRIG picks up the bonsai, examines it.

GRIG: Someone like me allows her to get a good night's sleep while she shoulders her incredible burden. We let them all sleep soundly in the face of their hidden terrors. You shouldn't let any distrust of these tits get the best of you.

BALKIS: Find Sloh -- we have to leave.

GRIG: I take it that means the answer satisfies you.

GRIG puts down the bonsai and exits.

BALKIS: Satisfies. Where, oh where, are there more like her?

Lights out on BALKIS. Lights stay on SLOH, who comes to the Adirondack chair. He smells the chair, circles it, smells the air around him.

SLOH: These are things I must remember. Must. Not. Forget.

Lights out. Transition music.

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ACT II, Scene 3: Sloh Has To Face Himself In The Coffee Shop

The coffee shop. LOUDER, TORRES, BENT, and LEE at a table, coffee cups in front of them. HANNAH, the barista, stands by the coffee-making machines, rag in hand. Other tables and chair. Off to one side, with headset and binoculars, sits GRIG on a ladder eavesdropping. A heavy silence.

TORRES: We're sorry, Hannah.

LEE: We all are.

HANNAH: For what?

TORRES: Your -- pain.

BENT: For how they wasted Sam --

HANNAH: Fuck the sentiment. How did he look?

TORRES: You don't need to --

HANNAH: My shop. My rules. What'd they do?

LEE: Dumped his body in the field, after, you know -- through the wrists --

LOUDER: Poor bastard.

HANNAH: Now Fletch can have himself a martyr.

LEE: Don't run Fletch down!

HANNAH: Dead Sam's no use to me. Let Fletch have him. That'll make Sam more useful than he ever was alive.

LOUDER: They assassinated the man you called your --

HANNAH: He knew what price [for] --

LOUDER: -- and I didn't see you cry -- instead, you're ready to --

HANNAH: And what would your fucking West Coast genius suggest?

LOUDER: There are still laws. There are. We are still a nation of laws -- or what else are we doing here?

Without warning, HANNAH snaps her cloth into LOUDER's face; he grabs his face in pain.

HANNAH: They dumped his body in a field. Food for ravens. Those're the "laws" now.

HANNAH garrotes LOUDER with the rag. No one puts a hand on her.

HANNAH: You're the stranger around here -- maybe you're the fink who did him in.

LOUDER: I'm not --

TORRES: Hannah --

In desperation, LOUDER grabs one of the cups and throws the contents of it into HANNAH's face, which makes her let go. In a heartbeat LOUDER is out of his chair and bearing down on HANNAH. BENT gets in his way.

FLETCH enters, catching the last of what happened. He looks exhausted.

LOUDER: I'll kill her!

BENT: It's her grief, Louder.

LOUDER: That's grief?!

BENT: Can't you find a place for it?

HANNAH: Let him!

BENT: It's grief, goddamn it!

HANNAH: You gave Sam up! You are the snitch!

LEE: No he's not. *(to LOUDER)* He's not. We checked.

LOUDER: You checked?

LEE: Don't look so insulted.

LOUDER: My record --

BENT: Sit. Down. Christ, the last thing is to do their work for 'em.

FLETCH: It's always easier for the jailers if the prisoners punish themselves.

FLETCH sits, HANNAH serves him.

FLETCH: Hannah, I'm sorry.

HANNAH: Apparently I'm supposed to be officially in grief --

HANNAH lets loose an ear-splitting wail.

HANNAH: Done. You look grey.

FLETCH: If I have any bowels left after today, I will be surprised.

BENT: We've been infiltrated.

FLETCH: That can wait.

BENT: Wormed their way in. The Movement has now been -- open season --

FLETCH: The Attorney General -- have you heard this?

LEE: No.

FLETCH: The Attorney General has been -- detained. Secretary Laxmeter, with an okay from the President. The man who appointed him. The secret tribunals under the Act -- have started --

HANNAH: *(to LOUDER)* There go your "laws" --

FLETCH: I think I've lost everything from here to here. Everything feels --

BENT: Then there's only one choice --

TORRES: And what's that?

BENT: We have to let up, we have to stop organizing!

FLETCH: No.

BENT: Our meeting, it's treason, now. Written on the wall. Smearred on the [wall] --

HANNAH: I'm all for that.

BENT: Don't be stupid!

HANNAH: Lick my eye teeth, Bent. I'm grieving.

BENT: And if what we're doing is now treason, then we're going to hang.

LOUDER: Drawn and quartered.

LEE: And nailed.

BENT: We have to go underground, we have to plan, structure -- build cells --

FLETCH: And be worms? Not for me, not for us, not for Sam.

BENT: Suddenly I feel like wheat, with the reaper in the row.

FLETCH: What we're doing is honorable, but only honorable if we keep it in the open.

BENT: Great! An open conspiracy. Let's have us a treasonous picnic and invite --

LEE: Don't be stupid.

BENT: So, do we post full-pagers in the newspapers -- assuming they haven't been completely bought off -- announcing our meeting times, our goal of organizing to resist the -- Thursdays at 7 PM at Café Caffe. Bring a friend. Is that what we should do, Fletch? Is that what we should do?

Everyone looks at FLETCH, who himself looks ashen and undecided.

BENT: I want to live, not be --

HANNAH: (*shouting*) Bloody fucking carrion! (*to BENT sweetly*) Right?

SLOH enters, hears HANNAH's line. GRIG reacts to SLOH's entrance.

BENT: This funny thing about not going to the boneyard before my time.

FLETCH: No.

BENT: Christ!

BENT looks at everyone, seeing if they're with him. When they aren't, he exits.

FLETCH: He'll be back.

TORRES: All part of the boneyard anyway.

Everyone looks at SLOH.

HANNAH: An actual customer.

SLOH: Black, no sweet, no cow.

HANNAH serves him. Everyone watches SLOH.

SLOH: I'm looking for a man named Fletch.

LEE: Would he be looking for you?

SLOH: I was told he'd be here.

LEE: Who told?

SLOH: I was told.

TORRES: A name?

SLOH: Someone --

TORRES: A name.

SLOH: A someone! Said that if a man was a friend of freedom, he should come here, talk to Fletch. That's what someone told me.

FLETCH: Are you?

SLOH: What?

FLETCH: A friend of freedom?

SLOH: Like it as well as the next.

FLETCH: "Like it as well as the next." A man?

SLOH: I have some questions --

FLETCH: What about the singular you?

SLOH: Me?

FLETCH: What has the government of, by, and for the singular you been doing lately in your singular name?

SLOH: Not much of a paper reader --

FLETCH points at SLOH's cup.

FLETCH: Black, right, you said?

SLOH: Yes.

FLETCH: No sugar --

SLOH: No milk. So what?

FLETCH: Then a new taste for you. (to HANNAH) The almond. Go on.

HANNAH takes one of the flavor bottles and walks to SLOH's table. After shooting him a sour look, she pours a shot into SLOH's cup.

SLOH: Hey!

FLETCH: Try it.

SLOH tries it.

SLOH: It's good.

FLETCH: Now offer me, us, something, friend of freedom, for our taste. Tell me, us, one thing -- any one thing -- that is a clear and present danger to any friend of freedom.

SLOH, flustered, drinks his coffee, looking at the others look at him.

SLOH: What're you talking about?

FLETCH: Just one.

SLOH: There's a fuckload of dangers.

FLETCH: A "fuckload."

SLOH: Yeah.

FLETCH: Come on, stand up.

FLETCH walks to SLOH's table, claps a hand on his shoulder in a way both friendly and not friendly.

FLETCH: Stand up and announce to us the dangers we face. At least one of the dangers. Shouldn't be hard if there's a "fuckload" from which to choose.

FLETCH pulls out a chair, slaps his hand on it for SLOH to stand on.

FLETCH: Rise above us, with the smell of almonds on your breath, and tell us what we do not know.

SLOH hesitates.

SLOH: You don't think I can do it.

FLETCH: I don't know what to think about what you can do -- stranger.

SLOH stands on the chair.

HANNAH: Go on.

SLOH: Well --

FLETCH: Just one from the “fuckload.”

SLOH: Um -- I mean, who can just pick one?

FLETCH: You asked for me, you came to tell me of your love of liberty --

SLOH: There're so many --

FLETCH: -- and yet --

SLOH: I'm thinking!

FLETCH: -- and yet --

SLOH: Well -- Christ, it's not right to put someone on the spot like this --

FLETCH: He thinks he's on a spot.

SLOH: Look, there's --

FLETCH: On the “X” that marks the bulls-eye.

SLOH: Quit interrupting me!

FLETCH: Get down.

SLOH: I'm not some jerk-off little kid that you can --

FLETCH: Get down.

SLOH: Habeas corpus!

HANNAH: Get the fuck down!

SLOH: There! See! Habeas --

HANNAH walks up to SLOH, grabs his belt, and pulls him off the chair.

HANNAH: What a fucking embarrassment to biology.

FLETCH: Let me tell you what you should've told us.

SLOH: Look --

FLETCH: Sit.

SLOH: You think you got the fucking right to --

FLETCH: Sit! Down! You came here! You bark for them! We didn't invite you.

SLOH sits.

FLETCH: Ecce homo! Upon these shoulders freedom rests.

HANNAH: God have mercy or vengeance --

FLETCH: Of all the things I hate that they have done, are doing, to shred what had a rough but fair face, what gave people hope -- of all the things I hate, I hate you most of all. I hate that they have sent such a low-rent shit-piece to rat us out.

SLOH: Taking that as a compliment.

FLETCH: That they have peeled you apart, sucked out the pulp, and sent us the leftovers.

HANNAH: It's a crying fucking shame.

FLETCH: No guts, this waste of clothes --

SLOH: You done?

FLETCH: A bum-fuck bent-over for anybody with a passing whim.

SLOH: Hey!

FLETCH: Ecce the new homo! Don't you ever want to taste what it's like to be a free man? A man who's free?

SLOH: I'm not free?

HANNAH: As free as these nibbles on the bar. Offering your dick to any mouth.

SLOH: No, I am a free man! I am!

TORRES: Any rat --

SLOH: I'm no rat!

TORRES: -- who gets enough cheese thinks the maze is paradise.

SLOH: I got money in my pocket -- some -- I got food in my gut, I can get a fuck whenever I want it --

HANNAH: Who'd want to fuck a jar of used jelly?

FLETCH: "I got, I got" -- that's what they want you to believe. "I got" is all they let you have.

SLOH: No, wait -- wait!

HANNAH: The barking dog wants to speak --

SLOH: It's all up in your heads, this freedom stuff -- It's you who don't get it! Don't got! You! Food, roof, clothes, pin money -- that's freedom. That's freedom! I'm not worrying my gut with the idea of it, I'm living it! I am! I go and come as I want.

FLETCH: Poor poochy on his leash. When they gab you up about "preserving freedom" -- they're just nailing the likes of you to the wall --

HANNAH: And they won't even give you the steam off their piss to warm your hands.

SLOH: Well, who's got freedom, then? Huh? If spit like me don't have it, and the archangels upstairs don't have it, then whose got it? Where is it? What is it? Where do I find it? Where? Where?!

SLOH has more desperation in his voice than he had expected.

SLOH: Not that I'm -- you know --

HANNAH: They're using you, slug, "in the name of," because you think so low of yourself --

SLOH: Hey, wait --

HANNAH: -- no more than scum thinks it's anything but the scum that it is --

LEE: -- when the scum bothers to think at all --

SLOH: No one uses me!

TORRES: It's people like you taking a bullet behind the ear --

SLOH: Stop that!

TORRES: -- even as They declare that the bullet's shot in your name.

SLOH: I don't kill any[body] --

HANNAH: A lot easier when They hide the bullet behind a face like that.

LEE: Usable --

SLOH: No one uses me!

LEE: -- because you're nothing but "yes" and "yes" and "yes" and "yes" for anyone who asks you for one.

FLETCH: Freedom, my lap dog?

SLOH: I'm not --

FLETCH: For you, pooch? Freedom?

SLOH: What?

FLETCH: Only when you can say no. Only when you can say no.

GRIG escorts SLOH downstage into a separate light.

GRIG: Remember that the future of your freedom depends entirely on saying “yes” early and often and without hesitation to whoever pays you whenever they ask you.

GRIG pushes SLOH away, goes back to her ladder.

GRIG: Get away from me, you momzer.

SLOH: Like fucking ashes in my mouth! Like a fucking wasp in my brain!

SLOH exits in anger. GRIG watches him, then looks at the people in the coffee shop. Lights out. Transition music.

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ACT II, Scene 4: Tribunal

LAXMETER and BALKIS join GRIG, seated in three seats, or on three ladders, like a tribunal. SLOH watches them.

SLOH: So many wheels turning within wheels --

LAXMETER: I have just signed off on the arrests --

BALKIS: Johnson Fletcher and his merry band of traitors are --

The three “punctuate” with a choreographed snipping motion.

GRIG: I have proof they have a “dirty bomb.”

LAXMETER: They’re calling me a fascist.

BALKIS: Exceptional times need exceptional acts by exceptional [people] --

GRIG: Fuck history.

The three look at each other on the curse.

GRIG: The Attack justifies.

BALKIS: We do what must be done --

GRIG: In the name of --

LAXMETER: -- so that we will not be “done to” again.

A final choreographed snip. Lights out on their section. SLOH back to the coffee shop, though it does not need to be set up completely. GRIG’s apartment is set up. BENT joins them.

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ACT II, Scene 5: Sloh Comes Back for Another Shot

SLOH: You guys are fucked. They said you had a “dirty bomb.”

HANNAH laughs and points to her head.

HANNAH: Yeah, up here. And the bomb’s got “Fuck Laxmeter” tattoo’d on the fuse. What does the weasel want?

SLOH: I want to know -- I want to know!

No one responds to him.

SLOH: I want to know who I am!

Another silence, and then HANNAH claps once on “pop.”

HANNAH: And pop! goes the weasel!

FLETCH indicates to HANNAH to hold off.

FLETCH: Sit down and tell us what you know.

SLOH: Stop her making a fool of me.

HANNAH: Then stop opening your mouth.

SLOH: I left here and didn’t know a fucking thing! Tell me. Tell me who I am.

FLETCH: We can’t. We don’t want to.

SLOH: You told me before! You were all telling me. Give me a hook to hang onto!

LEE: Go to your boss, the butcher, if you want a hook.

TORRES: They’re hanging carcasses every day --

HANNAH: Not rags and bones like him, though.

FLETCH: You already know everything you need to know about who you are.

SLOH: No! No!

BENT: We have to go!

Something in SLOH's desperation gets FLETCH to relent.

FLETCH: Tell me about your thumb.

SLOH: Thumb?

FLETCH: The one that's up your arse at the moment. Pull it out and look.

SLOH: My thumb.

SLOH looks at his thumb.

SLOH: Another joke, right?

HANNAH: Can't compete with the joke of you.

SLOH: I'll stick this up your --

HANNAH: Wash it first.

SLOH: It's a thumb.

FLETCH: And?

SLOH makes as if he's hitchhiking.

SLOH: When I was sixteen, I used this to get me across the country.

FLETCH: Away from home.

HANNAH: Away from your mother.

SLOH: And father -- yeah.

HANNAH: With their blessing.

SLOH: I didn't hate them. I hated --

TORRES: You hated --

SLOH: I did -- I hated everything about their lives. But not them.

FLETCH: And so now you are beginning to tell yourself to yourself.

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ACT II, Scene 6: Sloh Explains His Self-Discovery To Grig

SLOH crosses to GRIG in GRIG's apartment. GRIG is getting ready to go out. Lights out on coffee shop.

GRIG: I'm going out.

SLOH: That flat dumb face they gave me, at first, making me stand on the chair, making me come up empty --

GRIG: You shouldn't have gone back.

SLOH: Wanted to explode -- bleh! -- all over them. But for the wrong reason, man, because they were just making me see how empty a vessel --

GRIG: Vessel?

SLOH: -- I was.

GRIG: Vessel?

SLOH: But not empty now.

SLOH holds up his thumb.

SLOH: See this -- they got me thinking. Yeah. They did. Fletch did.

GRIG: Johnson Fletcher is now prime cut to be cut [out] --

SLOH: I have respect for all of them. For how they know who they are. I've never had respect for anything in my life -- I have been careless, really careless, paying attention to trash, not keeping my eyes straight-on, level, so I've decided that I respect only two people in the world. Fletch. And now myself. That's all.

GRIG: Not me?

SLOH: Not you. And not Balkis. No more dogging for him.

GRIG: So now a member of The Movement, eh?

SLOH hesitates.

SLOH: Yes.

GRIG: That makes you a charter member of shit.

SLOH: You just don't know. Like having this real mirror I can see myself in.

GRIG: Move away [from me] --

SLOH: I never had anyone to tell me why this screwed-up face is in the mirror. But there are reasons --

GRIG: So Jimmy Sloh has a vision.

SLOH: And why the Christ shouldn't he? me?

GRIG: Like a monkey in a tuxedo.

SLOH: You miss the point.

GRIG: I'm warning you --

SLOH: Look at what we're doing with our lives --

GRIG: Stay away.

SLOH: Look at how someone's pulling our strings and we just dance.

GRIG: I'm not in a prison.

SLOH: Oh ho, you say that, but you don't know.

GRIG: Ignorance is bliss.

SLOH: You are in a prison.

GRIG: I'm going out.

SLOH: I want to tell you --

GRIG: I want you out -- Jimmy, Jimmy --

SLOH: What?

GRIG: Once Fletch and company take their hand off your cock --

MICHAEL enters.

MICHAEL: The garbage I can walk around -- on the other hand, the drunks piled three-deep in the lobby --

GRIG: Meet my "pal" Jimmy Sloh.

MICHAEL: I know who you are -- dog and pony for Mr. Balkis. Your "pal"?

SLOH: Him?

GRIG: Disgusted?

SLOH: Sad. I'm sad.

GRIG: Jimmy's been yakking it up with Johnson Fletcher and crowd, and they have led him to the light.

SLOH: You shouldn't tell --

GRIG: Do you think I care? Do you think anything is going to matter after this?

MICHAEL: *(to SLOH, with compassion)* That was not a good move.

SLOH: Yeah, well, what do you know -- you're locked in a prison just like Madam Secretary of Garbage over there.

GRIG: The dead speak.

SLOH: Not me, not anymore.

SLOH taps his forehead.

SLOH: Got it all up here now, and no one can muscle it away from me. It's mine.

GRIG: You look stupid trying to look intelligent. Not two cents worth of bone in your back.

SLOH sticks his tongue out to MICHAEL.

SLOH: You got this muscle bulked up, son of homeland security? Because you may lick every square inch of her each hour on the hour, but you'll never wash off the dirt of her because it roots itself right into her bones. You'll just gag to death while the mud queen here laughs -- no, she won't even give you that. *(to GRIG)* Your face is like a spider's web and all of us just flies.

SLOH exits.

GRIG: What are you looking at?

MICHAEL: You're going to just let him go?

GRIG: He loves his new freedom -- let him take it for a walk if he wants.

MICHAEL: No loyalty among spooks?

GRIG: I'm not my brother's keeper.

MICHAEL: You know Balkis won't tolerate --

GRIG: Is this your first lick, this concern for Jimmy Sloh? Because it is turning me off.

MICHAEL: No -- just that his face -- the way he held himself -- Next to Balkis, he always brought to mind a dog at heel. But --

GRIG moves closer to MICHAEL.

GRIG: Have you now started feeling sentiments?

MICHAEL: For the sake of national security, "due to conditions after the Attack" -- do you know this?

GRIG: What?

MICHAEL: The major networks today were nationalized. Did you know that? Of those, the ones who'd editorialized about such now outdated ideas as rights -- arrested.

GRIG: Your mother must be all a-tingle.

MICHAEL: Tomorrow goes the universities.

GRIG: Another tongue stroke for me? Because now I am all a-tingle. And so are you. Otherwise, why be here? You think you should be appalled, your decency keeps trying to make you go north, to the Pole Star, but --

GRIG takes MICHAEL's hand and puts it down her pants.

GRIG: But what you really want is far to the south, in heat, in swamps, in carelessness --

GRIG pulls out MICHAEL's hand and sticks his fingertips into his mouth.

GRIG: You are appalled by not being appalled at the chaos. You are appalled that your own decline should have such a loose taste.

MICHAEL: You are very wicked.

GRIG: I am very nothing. I am the edge of the abyss. You like the edge of the abyss.

MICHAEL: And I am appalled at myself for liking --

GRIG begins to undress MICHAEL.

GRIG: For liking that I am the stars falling out of their orbits and comets screaming across the sky.

MICHAEL stops her.

MICHAEL: And that's where you're --

GRIG: Oh?

MICHAEL: You've raised self-disgust to an art, which in itself is disgusting.

GRIG: And that no longer draws you in?

MICHAEL: I can no longer keep up with you.

GRIG: And you're suddenly very much a drag. And a disappointment. But not yet useless.

GRIG puts MICHAEL's hands on her breasts and gives him a long, deep kiss, from which he tries to pull away but can't. Lights out, transition music.

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ACT II, Scene 7: Sloh Is Betrayed By Grig And Balkis

A cemetery. The funeral of SAM. FLETCH, TORRES, BENT, LOUDER, HANNAH, SLOH. A CLERGYMAN.

CLERGYMAN: Ashes to ashes --

BENT: All Sam gets?

CLERGYMAN: Sssh! Dust to dust --

HANNAH: Shut up, Bent. *(to CLERGYMAN)* Sorry. *(to BENT)* Anyone spits something out, it's me, and I'm not.

BENT: So, just dump Sam in --

CLERGYMAN: By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ --

FLETCH: We're not here to satisfy your oratorical desires.

CLERGYMAN: May his soul find everlasting peace --

BENT: He was tortured, and all he gets is a scared little whisper?

CLERGYMAN: The resurrection and the light --

BENT: We are all fucked, and we might as well make the most of the worst that's going to be done to us.

LEE: Heroics, Bent -- that world is gone.

BENT: Cowards!

TORRES: The dirt is about all we can afford.

BENT: Weaklings!

BENT edges the CLERGYMAN aside.

BENT: Here lies a man who gave his all for --

In sharp formation BALKIS, along with SPURGEON, leads on a squad of SOLDIERS, who quickly surround FLETCH and everyone else.

CLERGYMAN: *(almost a bleat)* Now and at the hour of our death, amen.

The CLERGYMAN bolts.

BALKIS: Go on.

SPURGEON: 'Tis important to do the proper honors, ain't it?

FLETCH: *(directly to BALKIS)* Here lies a man who gave his all.

BALKIS: Please, continue.

SPURGEON: All look like gaffed whales, blank and rubbery --

FLETCH: Who died at the hands of thugs and --

BALKIS: Defamation of character.

FLETCH: To protect --

SPURGEON: I'm insulted.

FLETCH: To serve --

BALKIS: I am beyond embarrassed -- Marc Antony you're not. Perhaps that's their greatest crime, eh?

FLETCH: Because he cared --

SPURGEON: Can't even honor the dead with poetry -- what a bunch of fugs and failures.

FLETCH: Because he cared --

BALKIS gestures to the SOLDIERS.

BALKIS: Before this gets any more pathetic.

The SOLDIERS handcuff everyone.

BALKIS: *(pointing at SLOH)* Except for him.

SLOH: I'm with them!

HANNAH: And why does he opt you out, Jimmy Sloh?

BALKIS: You don't have to act any more, Jimmy.

SLOH: I'm not acting! *(to FLETCH)* I'm not!

SPURGEON: He got good, didn't he?

SLOH: You can't do this to me. I quit. I am one of them. One of you.

FLETCH: Judas was born Judas.

BALKIS: *(to SPURGEON)* He has perfected his techniques, to be sure. All right, Jimmy -- Good job.

BENT: The cock crowed three times.

SLOH: It's not true, it's not true, it's not true --

BENT: I can't hear a dead man.

SLOH: It's not true, it's not true, it's not true --

But they do not hear him as the SOLDIERS lead them off. LAXMETER enters, riding in a bicycle rickshaw peddled by a DRIVER.

SLOH: You better send me with them. I am with them.

BALKIS: You heard them, Jimmy.

SPURGEON: Judas. Dead man. Not very welcoming.

SLOH: No more dog for you. Hear that?

BALKIS: We are way ahead of you.

SLOH: I will find a way to make you pay. I won't keep my mouth shut.

SPURGEON: Talk all you want to the air, Jimmy --

SLOH: I will!

BALKIS: -- we own that now --

SLOH: I will!

BALKIS: -- in the interests of national security.

SLOH: And you'll have to rip out my tongue to stop me.

BALKIS: It takes much less than doing that. Go on, now. You have your life to live as a free man.

SLOH: You don't scare me.

BALKIS: That's because you're still as clueless as you ever were. Your whole life has been nothing but a cock-up from the day they snagged you from your mother's cunt to the day they put pennies on your eyes and rouge on your pasty cheeks. Go.

SLOH exits.

LAXMETER: I'd never seen an operation. That went well.

SPURGEON: The fish helped by putting themselves into a barrel.

LAXMETER: And now?

BALKIS: Now the interrogations -- up to and beyond the third degree, as called for. You do want convictions? If you arrest, you have to convict.

SPURGEON: What's the point, otherwise?

LAXMETER: It's just that it's become so heavy.

BALKIS: But what gets heavier will only make us stronger.

LAXMETER: If only people would just listen to reason! Behave!

BALKIS: There's something else. A rogue agent.

LAXMETER: And that is my problem? Mr. Balkis, below a certain level of abstraction, I am not required to know or admit to anything. Agents, rogue or otherwise, are very far down the slope.

BALKIS: He needs to be -- corrected. He has flipped.

LAXMETER: So flip him back! You don't need my signature for that.

BALKIS: I was just checking --

LAXMETER: All I have is this desire to get on with it! Ideals, aspirations -- they just get in the way. The people get in the way. Rogue agents get in the way. Of course, it's important to do this as humanely as possible.

BALKIS: The corrections will be made.

LAXMETER: And then on we go, don't we? Warriors of a kind, right? Bloodied but unbowed. Yes -- that raises it to the higher plane, the higher purpose. Knowing that suffering is necessary if we are going to conserve what is right. Above politics, above the messy democracies, above the complications of desires and disagreements. Yes -- that will do.

LAXMETER squares her shoulders, tries to stand up taller.

LAXMETER: I am ready, Mr. Balkis.

LAXMETER gets into her rickshaw and exits.

SPURGEON: "Bloodied but unbowed." As long as it's not her blood.

BALKIS: Rank and its privileges.

SPURGEON: At our rank, correction feels exactly good.

BALKIS: And suffering is necessary.

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ACT II, Scene 8: Grig Betrays Michael For Ambition

Action is continuous from the previous scene. BALKIS and SPURGEON walk into an "interrogation room." Seated there is MICHAEL, under a harsh downlight. To one side, in the shadow, is GRIG, holding BALKIS' small leather case. On the far side of the stage is LAXMETER, watching, as if on the other side of a two-way mirror.

BALKIS: It seems to be an infection.

MICHAEL: Why am I here?

BALKIS: We have information that you have -- changed sides, so to speak.

MICHAEL: This is absurd -- you know who I am --

BALKIS takes the case from GRIG, opens it, and pulls out a dossier.

BALKIS: You like white pizza, don't you? Your latest movie rental was --

MICHAEL: How do you know that?

SPURGEON: Don't move so abruptly.

MICHAEL: How?

BALKIS: *(reading)* You've taken out some interesting books from the library lately.

MICHAEL: Let me see --

SPURGEON: I told you not to move.

BALKIS: A bit of junk-food binging, it seems, from your shopping records --

MICHAEL: How --

BALKIS: Databases. All linked together --

BALKIS flips through the pages in his hand.

BALKIS: Trips, bills you've paid -- available at a whim and a keystroke.

BALKIS hands the material back to GRIG.

BALKIS: Here is how your life stands at the moment.

LAXMETER: I am his mother, yet --

BALKIS: I can show you meeting with people we have designated as undesirable -- Jimmy Sloh,
for one --

MICHAEL: I was just trying to --

LAXMETER: Yet the evidence is there -- I have seen it --

SPURGEON: Quit moving.

BALKIS: You have traveled to places we don't like, read suspect books --

MICHAEL: Show me.

LAXMETER: We don't have to.

BALKIS: We don't have to -- the efficiency of our new laws.

SPURGEON: Due process no longer due to anyone.

LAXMETER: I can't believe my own son would turn --

BALKIS: Suffice it to say that your case is made. Constructed. What's left is punishment.

MICHAEL: *(to GRIG)* All yours, isn't it? You got bored --

BALKIS: The more you protest --

LAXMETER: I have to be prepared to pay this price.

BALKIS: The more you will pay.

MICHAEL: Fine!

LAXMETER: Order is most important.

BALKIS looks at LAXMETER, who makes a gesture. BALKIS nods.

BALKIS: You can go.

MICHAEL: Go?

BALKIS: Go.

SPURGEON: Go.

MICHAEL: You're freeing me?

BALKIS: I didn't say that. Just go.

MICHAEL hesitates, then gets out of the chair, but before he exits, he walks over to the two-way mirror, stares at LAXMETER, then exits.

LAXMETER comes out from behind the "mirror."

LAXMETER: (to GRIG) Are you sure? Are you sure?!

GRIG looks at BALKIS, who barely nods to her.

LAXMETER: (to GRIG) Are you sure? Are you sure?!

GRIG: We are sure about anything we need to be sure about. So, yes, we are sure.

LAXMETER: I know you. I know you. Sex and power. Aphrodisiac. The high-voltage fuck. Right? Right? Don't believe it. Power? It shields me against what's scraped from the bottom of the barrel.

BALKIS: Bloodied but unbowed, I believe it was -- yes?

Lights out.

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ACT II, Scene 9: Grig And Michael Deleted

Continuous with the last scene. MICHAEL seated stage right of center, GRIG seated staged left of center. Two HOODED ASSASSINS enter, guns drawn, burlap bags in their hands.

ASSASSIN 1 slides a bag over GRIG's head.

ASSASSIN 1: In the name of The Movement.

ASSASSIN 2 slides a bag over MICHAEL's head.

ASSASSIN 2: In the name of the State.

The two ASSASSINS look at each other. At that moment, SPURGEON enters, pulling the red wagon seen at the top of the play. He nods to them both as he crosses upstage and exits. The ASSASSINS salute each other, then execute MICHAEL and GRIG.

ASSASSIN 1: Do you have anything to say --

ASSASSIN 2: -- in your defense?

ASSASSIN 1: I guess not.

ASSASSIN 2: Be seeing you.

Exit.

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ACT II, Scene 10: The Cruciform Aftermath Of Jimmy Sloh

Light up on SLOH, extreme upstage, standing naked, arms outstretched, bloodstained. Hesitantly at first, then with increasing joy.

SLOH: Free. Free. Free. Free.

SLOH walks from upstage to downstage as he speaks.

SLOH: No. And then "no." And then "no" again.

On the floor is cast a cross in light, with the base of it against SLOH's feet. SLOH stretches out his arms, leans his head back, and closes his eyes.

SLOH: Yes.

Lights begin to fade, but just before they do, stage lights go out, house lights go on, and SLOH looks directly at the audience.

SLOH: Go. Go. It's all out there. See it for yourselves. Go. Go!

House lights bump to black.