

Red Delicious

by Layla AbdelRahim

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e-mail: layla.ar@gmail.com

Act I

Scene 1

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Scene 1

Scene 2

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Act III

Scene 1

Scene 2

Scene 3

Scene 4

Finale

The Rehearsal

The Scene

The Great Feast and the Great Fast

Characters in order of appearance:

SHE

HE

SERPENTORIUS – may be a puppet.

GOD – a person or a projection or a voice, open to your imagination.

DOCTOR PUBERTSON – male, early 50s, voice and doctor in the execution scene.

BABY's glee.

PROFESSOR TIN SCHNITT, male, late 40s early 50s.

AUDIENCE.

CHILD girl – voice.

CHILD boy – voice. Both of these voices may be used later in chorus.

SAM – male, may be ethnic-looking, mid 40s.

FRANK – male, any-looking, mid 30s.

KELLY, female, late 30s early 40s.

PHANTOM's VOICE – Serpentorius'.

IMPORTANT MR. WHITE GUY – male with greased hair – elegant 60s.

KALINA – female, mid 20s.

ALICE – female, mid 20s.

CLIMPT – male, early 30s.

ORIENTAL – male, mid 30s.

PROFESSOR KROT WUNDERDS – female, early 50s.

MARK – ZE BOSS GENERAL OF COMBINED NATS'IONZ's voice – male, mid-50s.

DIPLOMATS – 4 males and females of various diplomatic ages.

AMBULANCE.

GOFF LING – male, mid 30s.

2 LAWYERS, JUDGE and 2 WARDS – any gender or age.

CHILD girl.

Lights dim and before the curtains draw a text appears visually and audibly:

An important disclaimer:

Like any theoretical, philosophical or scientific inquiry, this work is fiction. It is an elaborate elucidation of the author's personal journey into the realms of thought, history and culture. Like any work of fiction, imagination is based on our limited experience in this world. Hence, even if you find the characters alien, you may recognize them in the depth of your humanness. Remember, any such resemblance is coincidental and illusory. Science and literature feed off this echo and illusion alone.

Act I, Scene 1

Curtains rise. The stage is dark. Gently, dawn illuminates the Garden of Eternity. Two figures wander about, dance, hum and gather the ripe fruit and nuts that fall on the soft green earth. Animals walk by. Birds chirp. Water gurgles. Eternity whispers confessions of love.

HE: And we never have to need more, for we desire no more than the necessary. Our sense of comfort stems from living in eternal love, in the eternal bliss of not wanting anything softer than the earth, warmer than the velvet night, more beautiful than seeing life flourish eternally in the kingdom of God.

SHE: And we may never know otherwise...

HE: What?

SHE: Ah, you never get it, do you? What about having more? Different? Why do I always have to wait for the same fruit to fall, why not try it fresh from the tree?

HE: But that is murder. You sure don't want to cause God pain?

SHE: O' boring. Don't you want action? Don't you want to know pain?

He: This sounds like something from another world. You mean you want to feel pain?

SHE *nods in an ambiguous smily manner.*

HE: Cause it?

SHE: *nods on.*

HE: On a regular basis?

SHE *continues nodding in that same manner.*

HE: Liking it?

SHE *still nods and smiles.*

HE: Luckily, I don't want to know. I want to heed the instinct of life. I want to keep my promise of love to my God. I suggest you stop your serpentosity. Com'on.

SHE: Bah, you're such a bore...

She turns around to whisper with Serpentorius.

He makes mathematical instruments from fallen branches, measures the stars and the distances between the trees; mumbles: Pegasus with Virgo meet the sun, while the Solstice is everywhere... This is a poem, a song...

SERPENTORIUS *to Her*: Change the tense and follow me. Just think of what you could do if you stop relying on what drops from trees.

SHE: Hmmm (*Licks her lips and gives him a mischievous conspiratorial smile*).

SERPENTORIUS: You could, you know, pluck the fruit straight from up there... and adjust your tenses... *with his head points to a branch above.*

She looks at him in awe, SERPENTORIUS continues: See that apple tree? You could bring some change into your primitive existence. Look at yourselves. Pathetic. Pathetically primitive. Bring romance into your world, woman. Get some style. Some excitement. A plot. Aren't you tired of this boring eternal reality? That red apple is so juicy, crisp, delicious. A change for the daring. Risk and discover a whole new universe. You could even build Civilization. Com'on. Just one apple... just one, just red, just delicious...

She grabs an apple hanging close to her on a branch. Tastes it. Giggling she approaches Him and playfully puts it on His lips. He bites. He laughs. The experience kindles a new sparkle in his eyes. An expression of passion lights up his face. He grabs her. She squeaks.

ACT I, Scene 2

God appears. Sad. Tears.

GOD: O' my child. O' my child. What have you done? You have awakened desire in your heart. Impatience. You have awakened greed. O' you have roused Time. From this point onwards, there will be "Before the Coup" and "After the Deed". This creates many problems: syntactical, grammatical, philosophical, existential, you name it. O' my child...

God pauses; stretches arms towards them. But they look stressed and pale and don't dare to reciprocate the move. God's hands drop. Continues:

Yes, you have conjured the spectre of choice. And that entails choosing between right and wrong, making wrong an eternal possibility.

My child, my child. You have selfishly taken away the life-force of a tree. You have consumed it, incorporated it, made it yours, made it your Self. This is your first murder. Until this act, you had been resistant to evil, because you were indifferent to it; because you had no desire to possess – yes, (*nods vigorously*) for to possess is to control – that is to destroy. No, you had none of that. But from now on, having tasted the difference, you shall always be tempted to own. Owning induces pain. And pain shall perpetually return to you, and you shall possess

and be possessed, and you shall hurt and be hurt, and you shall fear and be feared and you shall reproduce all these over and over again – forever. That pain, that murder, that finality. You have evicted yourselves from reality and stepped into literary existence. For, as the notion of time becomes an aspect of your lives, you will invent memory to counteract temporality. And like memory you shall fade away and die. You shall fear it and try hard to vanquish evanescence. Yes, yes, now I see. You'll resort to specific inventions in an attempt to defeat your mortality. For one, you'll transfer this mortality to metaphors. You'll invent allegory and various literary traditions – even writing. But all this will only reconfirm to you your death and reinforce your fear. And the more you fear, the more fragile you become. You'll come up with child-birth. And, once more, you'll use it in order to reconfirm yourSelf. You'll use your children as literary depositories so that you can inscribe your meaning unto them. But since your meaning will be that of greed, fear, and death, your children shall reproduce your text, your lives, your drives. The seed has sprouted in your bosom.

Deep sigh. They move closer to each other and further away from God.

This literary existence shall be the punishment that you have inflicted upon yourselves. O' how I wish I could save you from it. But you are no longer real people. You are literary characters embarking upon a war with your literary ephemeron – the fading memory of your Self – that self that you shall grow so fond of. You are your death. You are your own oblivion.

You have a chance to save these new selves, but how to find the love in your heart that will be as pure as it had been? How to free your love from greed, your desire to give from your desire to possess? I shall not abandon you, my children. I shall remind your children of this chance. But in the end, only you can make the choice.

God weeps. Thunder. Lightning. Darkness.

End of Act I

ACT II, Scene 1

Stage plunged into darkness. Voices.

SHE: I'm frightened.

HE: Don't worry. We'll be fine.

SHE: I feel scared, tired. We should grow old.

HE: Ssshhhhh. Come here...

SHE: We must do something in face of this total darkness. I think, I want to have a child with you. Then we can teach it stuff.

HE: Of course, come closer...

She screams in pain. We hear a baby's scream.

SHE: What are we going to do with this?

HE: Don't worry, we have civilization to take care of it. Now, we've got to focus on our civilization. Work, sweetheart. Don't forget, you too've got to work. O' look. He's so cute. Such a lovely baby. Let's ask the script-writer what are we to do next.

VOICE OF DR. PUBERTSON: Helloeee...

SHE: Of course, come in, Dr. Pubertson. We have only just about mentioned you doctor...

DR. PUBERTSON: Yes, the baby looks fine. Very well, very well, indeed. It's time to send him to day-care. O' look at him. *Tickles and cajoles the baby who glees.* 3 months old and such a fatty, hungry tot. Keep it up, sonny. O', you teeny-tiny shneety-shnity baby... Aha, yaha, oogooogoooo. We have just the place for yooou. O' he'll have a glorious future, this one.

When baby glees fade away, lights turn on a contemporary university hosting an international conference. The audience claps enthusiastically.

PROFESSOR TIN SHNITT: Thank you Professor Humperton. This was a revolutionary paper. Such elaborate study of intricate detail! A sheer delight for the connoisseur! Our lives are filled with such minute elements whose true meaning can elude only the savage. That is what makes scholarship indispensable; and that is, despite the light-speed of the revolution in technology and the possibility of using other means in, in, in, eeeeeeh, I mean, eeeeeeh, the media stuff. Moreover, the way you connect historicity and literature is truly remarkable. Despite ultramodernism, history and memory are present everywhere in postmodern culture. Your examples are so exquisitely pertinent: films like *Gangs of New York* or *The Patriot*, the oldies radio, historical theme parks, Civil War re-enactments, recovered childhood memory, genealogy, museums, ad infinitum... And yet, just as you said, we do need to identify this past that we assume and we do assume it just like we do our identity or science. Yes, what is this past that we assume, resume, consume, invent, prevent, comment and finally experience, subvert and pervert? You ask, are postmodernism's invocations of the past due to mere nostalgia? Or are they a symptom of fantasy, escapism, commodification, even illusion? Finally, does postmodern historicity deserve praise for valorizing memories of repressed cultures and everyday life and making history more lively and accessible to ordinary people using narrative, performance, and lifelike reconstructions? And I respond, yes, then again, I say, no. Yet, these are only some of the questions that mark today's search through the debris of history and literature. I invite the audience to think about the historical nature of our civilization and the value of research. More important, I invite more funding into such important projects as our next field trip to Mesopotamia – the cradle of Civilization. The secret script of our world. Once again, thank you professor Humperton. You are all welcome to join us for wine and snacks.

Applause.

ACT II, Scene 2

Stage plunges into darkness. Voices.

HE: O.K. class. now let's recite the important moments in history.

CHILD BOY: The 100 years war... eh, eh, the Wars of the Roses...

HE: Excellent! Do you know any other significant moments? Pause.... Have you learnt all the wars by heart?

CHILD BOY: Yes, the great wars. The Turkish invasions. The Arab conquests of Africa.

HE: Europe too. Don't forget Europe...

CHILD BOY: Europe's conquest of Africa, Asia, Antarctica, Australia, and the Americas...

HE: Not that. That you'll learn in grade 7. Now in grade 5 you're supposed to know the Arab threat to Europe, think of the 20th century tyrannical Africa, Ruwanda, for example...

CHILD GIRL: I don't understand why do we have to learn all these wars... I mean, I read somewhere that those people had some amazing cultural achievements in sciences and arts, even in the black and impoverished Africa...

HE *condescendingly*: Gooooooooood. *Snappishly*: That's all very well, but remember, you have to know, instinctually, by heart and by flesh, the enemy's deeds in the past so you can trust your government to handle the threat in the present and, and in the future...

SHE: But I wonder, I wonder, how did we end up writing all this stuff?

Lights on.

Student-looking people and other outsiders leave. An academic clique stays behind. An important looking guy all in white with white hair, thick white eyebrows and white nails, walks in and sits quietly in corner's shade. The professors don't notice him. They look at each other and burst out laughing.

SAM: Tin, you bum. You almost blew it, man; almost gave us away. That was incredible "the possibility of using other means in, in, in,..." ha ha ha!

TIN *wiping sweat from his forehead*: God, Sam, I'm so sorry. I know. I was so tired. Sometimes I mix up this reality and literality business. Don't know what's literature, what's theory, what's life anymore. I almost slipped there. Forgive me. Won't happen again. Promise...

FRANK: Tin, Jeez, man. Just what were you thinking? I mean, had you uttered the words...

TIN *imploringly*: Frank, but I didn't, I didn't...

The important looking guy in the corner who's been silently unseen so far, nodding grimly, interjects at this point and as he speaks everyone in the room is paralyzed with fear: Yeah, that was close.

The Important Guy nods in a long, dreadfully quiet pause. You're getting dangerous here, Tin. You know very well, we don't give notices... Pauses. Significantly nods in silence. Everyone else together with Tin Schnitt nod in mortified silence. Important Guy continues: You haven't actually slipped. *Long pause*. We do consider your enormous contribution to the sphere of, ehem, legitimizing, ehem, claiming, ehem, and confirming the track of Spinoza, Foucault and others. Yeah. Mr. Spintz has been very pleased with your performance to this day. Now, Tin Schnitt, Mr. Spintz would be very, very sad if you start talking nonsense. Remember this. We'll make one exception. This time.

The important Mr. White leaves. Silence follows. Then professors begin to talk, at first, cautiously gradually heating up.

TIN: Sam, I'm getting tired, man. Real tired. Every year the same darn thing. Writing those darn proposals. Always waiting for the darn money. It's good that we get away with doing nothing. But till when? Sam? Till when? My kids are growing up. One's going to college soon. We're not the dreamers we used to be, Sam. We're not the dreamers...

SAM: Tin, I know what you're trying to say – just the basics. After all these years of writing proposals, we simply cover the basics. I ask myself, WHY? Sometimes, I really ask myself, why?

KELLY: Guuuuys, hellllloooooee! We don't have it that bad. It ain't like we're toiling away. At least not like in those dark middle ages... neh? It's a party... ha ha ha...

TIN: Kelly? You call this a party? After all the committees, lectures, grading, papers, publications, conferences, I'm surprised I find the time to go home.

KELLY: Yeah, so what? I got a couch installed in my office, under the pretext of making visiting lecturers comfy – and yes sometimes I do dose off between office hours and so what? I even spent a few – very, mind you, extremely – delicious nights catching up with the sleep I never get at home (*she chuckles*).

TIN *interrupts or tries to interrupt*: but, but, but, I wonder...

KELLY: But tell me one thing, Tin. No, no, just tell me this, where have you heard of slaves having couches in their offices, ah? Aha, hahaha...

SAM: Here, I hear you Tin. Man, and viagra doesn't help...

KELLY: Try ginseng and oysters...

TIN: OK, OK, so you make your point. I mean about the couches – *nods and waves with his hand* – (viagra goes along)... Come to think of it, I don't think many slaves got couches in their offices and anyway, doesn't having a couch in your office imply that you are a slave to your office? I mean, you really do believe this crap that you're well, happy and free?

KELLY: O' Tin, there are no slaves today. Wake-up man, you've obviously been overworking yourself. Today, you have willing victims, I mean workers, willing workers...

TIN: Halloeee! Kelly! Come land back on earth, will ya? Your home planet earth, woman! I don't think anyone would willingly chose to work for Nike, Adidas, Coca-Cola, Nissan or whatever else our amazing civilization produces and opt to live in the conditions of the workers on our civilization's plants in Malaysia, India, or wherever else. Anyway, that's off topic. I'll tell ya this much, Kelly. We think we're so clever and funky, we write these proposals, submit them, get the funding, get the extensions, write n'importe quoi, submit more proposals and we think we're being sleek, that we're above the System, that we're beyond control and beneath the open blue freedom of the vastly deep sky. No, no, no, don't interrupt, hear me out...

KELLY: Wow, wow, some of us just, perhaps have you stopped to think, really like this System that you call it, this organizational method of our civilization? Well, perhaps we don't want to subvert or even change anything – after all, we have good milking here, cream, I'd say...

TIN: Fine, fine. I'll talk about myself. Fine. I, for one, don't think it's fair, this Organizational System of yours and don't want to be a part of it. But see no way out. Like a trap. I can't live outside it. But I thought, I just thought that if I'd get those proposals funded I'd be doing nothing harmful, I'd be doing a proposal-career, so to speak, I'd be doing nothing to feed the beast...

KELLY: But you can't not feed the beast. It's in you. It feeds off you...

TIN: Precisely. That's what I've been wondering. Are we really doing nothing? What are we doing? Lately, I've been feeling like a medieval serf. Worse. I chose this job to have the time to do my own stuff. They promised me a lot of free time. But where is it? I don't get to spend time with my kids. My son's going to college and I don't even know this guy. I guess this slip today was because I've been thinking about some things lately...

KELLY: Com'on, Tin. Cheer up. Here's some whiskey. John and I had this argument once. Can we as a human species survive without whiskey? We finally both conceded that no. And, you know why? 'Cause, if we didn't indulge in ephemeral illusions of earthly bliss, the whole galore – the civilization thingamagiggie – would collapse – go -bingo- out of function. So, there you go. Drink.

SAM *raises his glass*: There are also those who need the comfort of post-death compensation, so to speak.

KELLY *sings*: Paraaaaadise- LOST.

TIN *takes the drink, waves his hand as if to dismiss it all*: So, have you heard anything 'bout the project?

KELLY: I'm sure we'll get the confirmation of funding on Monday. You'll be alright...

SAM: Ha ha ha! That last proposal we did, I must say was excellent! Unsurpassed! I wonder, how long will this freebie halawa keep coming? More non-sensical than that? Bah... It's all a matter of giving the right form...

KELLY: I love the title: *the Linear Superimposition of Reality into Virtual Thinking Modes!* That was brilliant Tin!

TIN: Yeah, whatever. I guess. But in my free time, I no longer find myself. I don't know what to do, 'cause I don't have my own stuff to do any more. Are we what we believe we are or are we what we do? What do we do? Jeez. P'rhaps, I should have a drink and it will all go away.

He drinks.

KELLY: It's the excitement, Tin. Next week we'll start figuring out how to get around the work for the *Mesopotamia* project.

Explosion of laughter.

TIN: That Civilization project is weird. I wonder why it got financed in the first place. I mean, yeeeah, we got thousands of useless projects funded before. But there's something tricky 'bout this one. I wonder, why we... Ah, never mind. I'll just have another drink...

They talk some more. Drink some more. Happy, tipsy, then drunk they leave.

ACT II, Scene 3

Darkness. Voices.

SHE: So now, grade 7. Who are the most significant authors of our civilization?

GIRL: The ones that sell best...

Class bursts out in laughter.

SHE: Have you memorized them?

Class bursts out in laughter.

Lights on.

A student, who was serving drinks, sits down on a sofa and dozes off.

A phantom VOICE from the beyond rocks in echo and laughter: Aaa ha haha hahahaha! The cloddish oafs! Ha ha ha ha ha! Hilllarious! Aha hahahahahahaa! They think they are little tricksters, the fools. They think they get money for doing nothing! Ooooouuuhooohouhooouhouuu! For doing nothing you get eternity. You get paradise. Ha ha ha! But you're writing proposals and practicing malicious deviousness. Aha hah haa. Proposing greed for bucks. (*The voice turns mean*). The institutionalization of death. This is what you practice.

KALINA: But, who are you?

THE VOICE: Haven't you recognized me?

KALINA (*quietly*): Don't tell me... My alter ego? My demon? My tempter? History inscribed in my flesh? Does this mean that I am your text and you are my conscience? I remember. Now it makes sense – perfect sense. But what is to be done?

THE VOICE: Aha hahahahahahahahaaaaaaaaaaaaa...

End of Act II

ACT III, Scene 1

Darkness.

HE: Remember, students as you walk out that door that has kept you safe from the real world- shut out from possibility, from tasting life in its full bloom – remember to listen to your flesh. What you have learnt in your head shall fade away, but the lessons of your flesh shall live in you till you die. Remember, you shall die. Inevitably. That is the most important lesson. Remember the fear of being cornered, of being seized by a stronger will. That is the fear that shall keep you in track on the right side of the law. Those who will go on to the university shall be reminded once more of this lesson. Those proceeding to employment shall instinctually occupy the place imprinted behind these walls upon the memory of your text, inscribed into your meat and blood. Most of all, remember, fear God. For in fear lies love.

Lights.

Kalina has changed her student's uniform of blue fashionable jeans and a skimpy shirt that barely covered nipples to an earthly rag-looking long dress. Her once tied hair is now loose. She looks calm and confident. Tin looks like a cross-breed between hippie and yuppie. They meet outdoors in a rather yellowish, shrubby setting and chat as Tin takes out a cigarette from a cigarette box.

TIN: How do you do it, Kalina? [*Attempts to light a cigarette*].

KALINA: Tin. I don't follow the script. Neither the plot. Nor whatever you want to call it.

TIN: What do you mean?

KALINA: Here's a very actual textual example. Give me that cigarette box. *He gives her the box; she shows it to him.* You see the drawing? Have you read the warning? Why do you think the Ministry of Health put this warning and the drawing here?

TIN: To deter people from smoking...

KALINA: Has it deterred you from smoking? Obviously not. What's the Ministry's business? Your illness. Right?

TIN nods No.

KALINA *continues*: Right. It puts this picture to help you programme yourself to the type of lungs you should develop. Since to you the Ministry is an authority, you look at the picture and believe that if you smoke your lungs should look concretely and to the dot like in this picture. So, your brain sends the necessary impulses to your nerves and to the rest of your system. It dictates the script. You follow the plot and you develop the type of lungs your Ministry needs for its statistics in order to keep the business rolling.

TIN nods No.

KALINA *continues*: It needs your fear, your frailty, and your faith. Bingo. That's the script. You'll die in the end because you believe you have to die and because you fear it and you'll die with this picture of cancerous lungs in your chest. For my part, I refuse to follow the plot.

TIN: O' com'on, Kalina. This is really far-fetched! The health industry is called health, I mean ministry is called health because it promotes health... Plus, you know the theory of probability?

KALINA: O' don't give me that crap. Probability! As long as there is one chance in a million for something to occur, there is the infinite possibility and probability for it to keep popping up forever.

TIN: Wait a minute, how does this tie together?

KALINA: It ties together perfectly, because if there's one chance that a person can smoke and not develop those lungs and die, then you don't have to develop anything. Statistics and the theory of probability itself fail to demonstrate that 100% percent of smokers develop cancer. So, even if there's one person who doesn't, that disproves the rule. Anyway, didn't you yourself give a lecture last year on how belief in statistics makes the statistics?

TIN: Yeah, I did, but I didn't have any of this in mind...

KELLY: Of course you didn't. You were following the script. But, well, all this is only part of the methods of pressure that compel some of us to succumb to the script. You know, you don't have to die at all if you don't want to.

TIN: Wow! My 3-year old asked me about death the other day. He asked: dad, why do flowers die? I told him because they're alive. He paused, then said so seriously, so solemnly, so absolutely, it made my heart jerk: Dad, if I'm alive, does that mean that I shall die too?

KALINA *with a startle and concern*: So, what did you tell him?

TIN: I told him the truth. I told him that yes, one day he'll die too. He was so sad. He said he didn't want to die. And it gave me a sour taste somewhere deep inside...

KALINA: It made you feel bad?

TIN: Yes, very bad. Actually, I didn't sleep that night.

KALINA: Truth does not make you lose sleep. Lie does. You felt bad because deep inside you knew that you told him a lie. You planted the seed of fear in your son, the seed of death.

TIN: Wo, wo, wo. That's too much now. You've lost me...

KALINA: It's up to you, Tin. You asked me what I did. I told you. The rest is up to you. You know, you could have simply told your son: if you don't want to, you don't have to die and leave the rest up to him. Instead you lied. You pretended you knew the answer. Sorry, Tin, I got to run now. Take care. You're a special friend. I wish I could help you. But in the end we each choose whether to adhere to or discard the script.

TIN: Tell me, has the script got anything to do with our habitus?

KALINA *smiles*: That you'll have to figure out for yourself. I only hope you'll overcome the time and space factors... Remember the rule that your science, your faith rejects: everything that you do not see has a larger bearing on what you think you see, including the argument that if you see animals die then death exists, if we cannot go through a wall, then it is impenetrable...

She kisses him on the forehead and runs off.

ACT III, Scene 2

Darkness.

HE: I just love my job. All those kids... All those wide, bright eyed kids... They come here and it is I who makes them into what goes out. Their parents... O' Gosh, their parents... When is science going to do away with them? If we get rid of the parents, me the TEACHER will have no problem drumming into their heads that $2+2$ equals 4.

SHE: Don't worry. Genetics' getting there. Just be patient. You've become so restless lately.

HE: I'm stressed. The kids just don't get that $2+2$ equals 4. What do those parents do to them?

SHE: Luckily not much. Anyway, they mess up the definitions. It's all a matter of what categories get into each of the 2s and the definition of the categories that make up the 4. Which implies that 4 can have more than $2+2$ in it. Or less.

HE: Hhhh? What was that?

SHE: Baaaah, never mind. Their parents don't do much to them, don't you worry. When would they have the time even if they wanted to? Wanting is a big thing, you know. And whoever gets the monopoly over that – gets the golden key...

Lights on.

Kelly enters with a suit-case. Professor Tin Shnitt grabs the suitcase hidden behind where he's been sitting. They spread their arms like wings (their suits have special tissues with Velcro sown between arms and body-side to spread like wings). Making plane-engine sounds they "fly" and dive off stage through under a sign that appears on stage and which says: MESOPOTAMIA DIGS. Palm trees emerge.

Enter a man and a woman and begin to dig out things and place them on a table with the various ceramics. An "Oriental"-looking man enters and squats digging out and cleaning. These two present him with two fake smiles and proceed to ignore him. Alice digs out a vase and shows it to Climpt.

ALICE: Wow, Climpt, these must be the earliest tools of civilization...

CLIPMT: Why, yes, Alice, this is what made our ancestors economize time and effort.

ALICE: Come to think of it, these somehow must have been OUR ancestors. I mean, somehow, what a boggle... *Points with her eyes towards the digging and cleaning "Oriental".*

Professor Wunderds comes "on-site".

CLIMPT: Professor Wunderds, we were just wondering how to mark these latest digs...

PROFESSOR WUNDERDS: O' never mind those. We've got a more urgent task to attend to right now.

Alice and Climpt come closer to her and put down whatever they were holding. Professor Wunderds begins to arrange the pots and bits in a special order, sticking tags on things. The phone in the middle of this cultural/political/historical/literary paraphernalia rings, Wunderds answers, the diggers continue to arrange the setting.

WUNDERDS *on the phone*: Yes, Krot Wunderds speaking.

MALE SEMI-FRENCH-SEMI-GERMAN VOICE: Yah, zis iz ze Boss General of Combined Nats'ionz.

WUNDERDS *giggling piggishly and snorting girlishly*: Aha, hee hee, grh hmhaa ha ha. It's me the General Writer for the Academy of Archaic Digs, Ms. Wuunderds. Remember me? Is this Mark?

MARK: Aha, ja, ja, zo it eez. Just waz wondering if all is zet fur ze party. The Major General fur ze Unmending States of Anomalia vonts ze evening very well prepared, very well indeed.

WUNDERDS: Don't worry. We're done rehearsing; just putting the last dots on the i's...

MARK: Ajaha, I know u, Krots. Zit very vell organized uzually. But zis iz very zpecial and ze Major General vonts all zpeeches to match ze new come-out book on iztory zponzored by Mr. Von Zrots.

WUNDERDS: Of course, I have Mr. Von Srots' guide right here and we have finished marking the pottery. I noticed, we're switching the orientation: Assyrian is now dated 2 thousand years back and the Myssirian 35 000 years Before the Coup. Also, just double-checking, the diplomats all got the scripts, I mean the programmes for the evening speeches?

MARK: No problem with zat. Zo, zee u very zoon my Big Bab Baby.
Both giggle, she hangs up, turns to the diggers:

WUNDERDS: OK. Alice, Climpt, zoom now. Here's the guide.

ALICE & CLIMPT: Yes, professor Wunderds, we know it by heart. Just wondering...

ALICE: Just wondering, how do you know that the General Assembly is going to raise the amount predicted, even the precise amounts that each member of the international community is going to contribute?

CLIMPT: Just that we saw the budget and were wondering...

WUNDERDS *smiles slyly she is obviously in a good mood*: That, my dear-darlings, is the secret of the trade! You'll be handed it when you get your Ph.Ds. If your theses are good enough, they might even become part of the guide book. Ha ha ha. That is, if you know what's in the guidebook, you'll write the right thing. And anyway, it's never been anything unexpected out there. Just do the right thing, the proven thing, follow the methods that'll ensure the smoothness of Operation History. Most important, remember, no aberrations; remember, sweethearts, no aberrations, only A's... (Claps). So, after all the speeches, it'll be professor Tin Shnitt's turn. When he's done with appraisals, Mrs. Kinkton will donate 100 thousand, and that is when Mr. Blabs will get up and cough out, hee hee hee, I mean, solemnly deliver his cheque – THE cheque...

Professor Shnitt and Kelly fly in.

PROFESSOR TIN SHNITT: And here I am.

CLIMPT: O' you must be the famous Professor Tin Shnitt!

Shnitt and Kelly nod their heads.

WUNDERDS *goes out to meet him with a stretched out hand*: Welcome to Mesopotamia Digs, professor. Professor Krot Wunderds.

Shnitt ignores her and her hand; instead, he walks and sniffs around. Kelly shakes Wunderds' hand which was still stretched out towards Tin Shnitt.

ALICE: Hope you had a good flight professor.

TIN SHNITT: Yeah, it was good, it was good. He stops. *Stoops. Scratches his head.* T'was jolly good, n'fact. Had some time to think things over. What have they told you?

Wunderds and Kelly conspiratorially bend over the GUIDE and ignore the diggers' interaction with Tin Shnitt.

CLIPMT: Soon the fund-raising diplomatic conference will be gathering here.

ALICE: In the meantime, we're here to help you in any way we can and do anything you ask for, sir.

CLIMPT: Yeah, we're assistants, going back to grad school this year, really glad to serve such a famous professor...

TIN SHNITT *snappishly*: Yeah, yeah – just cut it short, will ya? Got no time to lose. What's this?

ALICE: This is an early Sumarian vase. According to Mr. Von Srots' latest guide, it is dated 2010 BC. Climpt here thinks it's actually much older than that. In fact, he believes it's one of the first signs of abundance. That's, when...

CLIMPT: Yes, like Alice said, I believe this was the first time that humans got to afford or invented the possibility to collect flowers not as a necessity, that is, not as a food item, but as a whim, as something they could beautify with simply because they could afford to. Or something along those lines.

TIN *gets a strange sparkle in his voice and eye*: Ahaaaaaa! *She was right, then. Shakes his head.* Ah, Kalina, Kalina! *Turns to the Assistants.* You mean this is the oldest item of luxury to collect dead flowers...

DIGGER 2: No, sir. I mean yes, sir. I mean not exactly. The flowers must have been alive when they cut them... You know just like Christmas trees...

TIN *gets ferociously sparkling in voice and eye*: *Murderers...*

Diplomats and fund-raisers begin to stream in. They are dressed in suits and carry those menacing-looking black leather brief-cases in left hands.

TIN SHNITT *continues to scream and bang about the ancient vases and ceramics first with hands, then finds a stick, finally picks-up a gun with which he proceeds to shoot around. People run about.*

TIN SHNITT *shouts*: Monsters. Freaks. What have I been doing? O' my God, I'm a freak. I'm the biggest freak, a monster like all and each and single one of you. I'll kill you, I'll kill you all... *Mumbles*: Finally, I'll just shoot myself. *Screams*: We have been practicing malicious deviousness. We have been aesthetically killing for the sake of aesthetics, for the sake of killing. O' monsters...

KELLY: Tin, stop...

He tries to shoot her, she ducks in. He puts the gun to his own head, presses the trigger, but there are no more bullets left. The diplomats are all hiding here and there. One of them orders the assistant-diggers:

Grab him quick before he threatens us again.

ANOTHER DIPLOMAT: Who's that anyway?

THE FIRST DIPLOMAT: Some loser-terrorist...

THE SECOND ONE: Ha ha ha, terrific loser
Both laugh.

At this moment the “Oriental” comes out from his hiding place with a hand-grenade and while he’s screaming the two diggers tie TIN SHNITT up and carry him to the ambulance. One diplomat manages to sneakily pull Tin by the ear and another one to bite his leg. They throw him in the ambulance that drives TIN SHNITT away.

The “Oriental” screams: Allahu Akbar! Ha’aktikum, kullukum. Al mujremeen. Freedom for Mesopotamia to write its own script and history...

One of the diplomats takes out a pistol and shoots down the “Oriental”. The others sighing and with various exclamations emerge, hug and congratulate each other, joke and leave the scene pulling away the tables, the digs, the sign, the palm trees and the killed-”Oriental”.

ACT III, Scene 3

Darkness. Voices.

SHE: Have you heard of this philosopher called Matthews? He did stuff on children and philosophy or children’s philosophy?

HE: No. Why?

SHE: ‘Cause I found this in his book: a six-year old found to his chagrin that the three children of his parents’ friends monopolized the television; they kept him from watching his favourite programme. “Mother,” he asked in frustration, “why is it better for three people to be selfish than for one?”

HE: I mean really! Don’t tell me this Matthews dude took this seriously. And they let him publish this?

SHE: Hmmm. Come to think of it, why is it good for any people to be selfish than not?

Lights on.

Campus. Enters Sam and walks towards Frank.

SAM: Hi, Frank. Have you seen Kelly?

FRANK: Hey, Sam. She’s back from the trip with some wild stories about Tin’s Mesopotamian screw-up. How is the man?

SAM: I don’t know. Haven’t seen him ever since he got back. But heard he’s out and even giving a speech. Ha, ha, ha...

FRANK: Not on the trip?

SAM: Actually, I believe it’s precisely that. Ha ha ha...

Both laugh and turn to greet Kelly as she gracefully floats in.

KELLY: Hi guys. How are you?

GUYS: Great, great. Do tell. We’ve heard some...

KELLY: O’ poor Tin. He really blew it. He mumbled the whole trip about how he doubted the uselessness of all these projects that he thought useless and then just as the conference was about to begin and the diplomats began to flock in, he blew it completely. Wow, I hadn’t taken his rambling seriously...

SAM: You mean during the trip or during that Humperton presentation?

KELLY: I guess both. But during the trip he went on about how he needed to bring with him an army to Mesopotamia and that he needed to destroy the empire of evil. That the monsters shall rise from the dead. Then he said that they have never died but that we have and that they, the monsters will inhabit us. Then all that shooting, the hospital... The doctors say he's recovered...

FRANK: Good there were no victims, imagine had he shot somebody...

KELLY: Yeah, they say he killed a local, but nothing serious, thank Goodness...

SAM: Yes, thank God. We've heard he's out and lecturing...

KELLY: He's at Carnage Hall right now. Let's run there, I want to hear what he's got to say.

They jump off the stage and mingle with the audience.

ACT III, Scene 4

Darkness.

Children's voices singing:

1. There was an old woman
and she had a little pig,
Oink, oink, oink,
It didn't cost much
and wasn't very big,
Oink, oink, oink.
2. That little pig did a heap of harm,
Oink, oink, oink,
A-rooting 'round the old man's farm,
Oink, oink, oink.
3. The little pig died for want of breath, etc.
Now wasn't that an awful death! etc.
4. The little old woman, she sobbed and she sighed, etc.
Then she lay right down and died, etc.
5. The old man died for want of grief, etc.
Wasn't that a great relief! etc.
6. There they lay all one two three, etc.
The man and the woman and little piggee, etc.
7. There they lay all on the shelf, etc.
If you want any more you can sing it yourself, etc.

Lights on.

Carnage Hall.

Tin Shnitt stands in a corner of the stage, surrounded by a slide projection of a huge auditorium. The effect of the auditorium has to be encompassing – the ceiling, the floor, and all the sides.

TIN SHNITT: Like I said earlier, the value of research lies in the overwhelming amount of digging up minute detail. Only upon arrival in Mesopotamia, did I realize that the minute detail is what we bury our truth in – deluded that this is an attempt to unearth the hugeness of ideas. Actually, of one idea, really. Modernism,

postmodernism, and all those movements are a make-belief that something is changing, that we're doing something, that we're moving somewhere. But in fact, ever since the Deed, nothing really changed. The future of science and research are so tightly connected to death, that it is useless to make distinctions between disciplines, literary traditions, science and magic, oral or literal cultures, whatever. There in Mesopotamia, I suddenly saw... I realized... All of a sudden... I knew...

At this point someone shoots from the audience. Tin Shnitt falls. Then more people get up and start shooting. Lights turn off. There is scramble in the audience. Someone's dragged on stage.

End of Act III

Finale

In the dark, a child's voice sings the first stanza, a second child joins in the second stanza, a third in the third and so on in ascending crescendo and intensity of accompanying noise.

There was an old lady who swallowed a fly
I don't know why
She swallowed the fly.
Perhaps she'll die.

There was an old lady who swallowed a spider
That wiggled and jiggled and tickled inside her
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly.
I don't know why she swallowed the fly.
Perhaps she'll die.

There was an old lady who swallowed a bird.
How absurd she swallowed a bird.
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider.
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly.
I don't know why she swallowed the fly.
Perhaps she'll die.

There was an old lady who swallowed a cat.
Imagine that! She swallowed a cat.
She swallowed the cat to catch the bird.
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider.
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly.
I don't know why she swallowed the fly.
Perhaps she'll die.

There was an old lady who swallowed a dog.
She went whole hog to swallow the dog.
She swallowed the dog to catch the cat.
She swallowed the cat to catch the bird.
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider.
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly.
I don't know why she swallowed the fly.
Perhaps she'll die.

There was an old lady who swallowed a cow.
I don't know how she swallowed the cow.
She swallowed the cow to catch the dog.
She swallowed the dog to catch the cat.
She swallowed the cat to catch the bird.
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider.
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly.
I don't know why she swallowed the fly.
Perhaps she'll die.

There was an old lady who swallowed a horse.
She died of course.

Lights on.

A court convenes. All lawyers wear the attire of the previous diplomats and carry their brief-cases only in their right hands.

JUDGE: Maitre Vandome, please, make your presentation.

LAWYER MAITRE VANDOME: I shall be brief, Your Honour. We have exhibit 1 with the weapon of the crime. Exhibit 2 presents the criminal and Exhibit 3 displays the victim. *He points to a gun, then to Goff Ling, then to a coffin.* *Continues:* Yes, we all knew that it will come to this. However, ladies and gentlemen, I implore you, let justice rule.

JUDGE *coughs as if giggles*: eh, eh, eh, very good and concise. Maitre Platz, do you have anything to say in defense of the client?

LAWYER MAITRE PLATZ: Your Honour. Ladies and Gentlemen. We all know that our client Mr. Goff Ling did not act randomly. He followed the script and concrete orders. We also know that Professor Tin Shnitt, although famous and brilliant in the field of Culture and Civilization, succumbed to the fatal sin of doubt. His questioning led him too far and almost compromised the existence itself of our Civilization. We also know that he shot a local in Mesopotamia. Of course, we don't prosecute on those grounds, still he could have turned dangerous on his own people. Think of the Oklahoma bomber or the Washington sniper. Those were the brave soldiers, graduates of the Academy of Kill, and look at what they've done – they've cowardly turned against their own and didn't even have the guts to kill themselves like the kamikadze do when they come to realize that they too are implicated – yes to their teeth – in the system of evil and that if they resort to killing they should kill all including themselves. We can grant this much the terrible Tin Shnitt: he did attempt to kill himself and hence we can say that Goff Ling helped him in achieving that end. I am not here to judge or exonerate. I am here to plead cases. In conclusion, I beseech you to find that fluffy white spot in your hearts and forgive Goff Ling.

JUDGE: Very well presented. Eh, eh, eh (*coughs as if giggles*). Excellent. Eh, eh, eh... The court shall read its verdict.

The JUDGE *reads the verdict*: Even though we all knew that Tin Shnitt committed a grave wrong towards our humanity, and even though we all knew that he virtually begged to be killed, we need to reconfirm the basis of our civilization. We have gathered here today in order to find justice and justice, my friends, needs constant reconfirmation. We have no right to doze off when the basic drive of our culture is at risk of peril. Hereby, we reconfirm murder and sentence Goff Ling to death by fatal injection. For those of you not familiar with the details of how this is done, please refer to Christopher Davis' *A Peep into the 20th Century* or any other relevant material – just remember to substitute the guillotine and electricity with a poison shot. Those invited to the show shall

receive invitations by mail specifying the details. We like all our audiences, regardless of whether they attend or not, to be literate in the art of murder. Thank you.

Loud applause and standing ovations. The judge turns around and pats Kelly on her shoulder: The amazing part of all of this is that there's always an excuse to kill. Your job, my job, you weave sentences into your text; I sentence to death, and yet, we both practice the same and yearn for the one and only...

Kelly smiles sadly and turns away to wipe a tear. The judge begins to throw invitations at the gathered crowd. The invitations fly in the air. People grab them greedily and proceed to read them out loud as they cheer (various names are pronounced): Mr. Tang, Mrs. Troots, Ms. Klinton... You are most cordially invited to attend the death of the respectable Mr. Goff Ling, known for his shooting of the historian-terrorist who attempted to subvert the Academy, Mr. late Professor Tin Shnitt. The execution is scheduled for 3pm. You are also invited to attend a reception in this honour scheduled for 3:30pm.

The Rehearsal

*Two wardens and Goff Ling practice and rehearse Goff Ling's execution. The Chief Warden holds a large notebook that says: **Executive Manuscript**. A medical couch is rolled out. As the characters speak, they clean and prepare and rehearse.*

CHIEF WARDEN: Right den, I'll call ya Goff, OK? I mean ya don't have much to lose at dis point... eh eh eh, *winks at him*.

GOFF LING: Never mind...

CHIEF WARDEN: Right, den, de Executive Manuscript says here, right on de first page: Most important is dat everyting proceeds smoothly. No surprises. Smoooooodeeey... *Winks at Goff Ling.*
I mean, we all know what's bound to happen anyways, so, we just want to convey a feeling of decision, control...

ASSISTANT WARDEN: Goff, man, they've set such a bash (*shakes his head and licks his lips*) hn hn... after your execution. You must feel really honoured...

GOFF LING *shakes his head*: Actually, I'd rather go to a party in someone else's honour. What will you be having there?

ASSISTANT WARDEN: Anything you wish, man. Anything you can imagine. They'll have stuffed beasts, plucked and grilled, lots of gravy, all sorts of fruit and veggies and 53 types of apples. Man, that's all the apples our humanity has mustered... (*winks and licks his lips*).

CHIEF WARDEN: Right... Now 'nough of dat drooling. We need to make it smooth, Goff. Are ya going to say anything before ya die? De Manuscript says ya're allowed to say someting. Anyting, since it won't matter anyway, I mean, it won't change de script or anyting. So, anyting you'd like to say?

GOFF LING: Hmmm... (*thinks hard, frowns*). Hmmm... I guess, not. (*Shakes head*). No, nothing I can think of...

CHIEF WARDEN: Dat's my boy. Good, let's keep it simple, precise, concise, short and to de point. Dose make de best scripts. Ever seen dose films of ole times full of dem eloquent speeches before de death, s'if dey were gonna change someting? Well, de films made teary endings, dats true, and I did shed a tear each time and how many times dat was, I can't begin to tell ya, but dat's 'bout all. We, here, are heading to a party after dis, not a teary ending. Right Goff?

GOFF LING: I guess...

CHIEF WARDEN: Right, den. So, we bring you here to de couch. You'll lie facing dat camera. Right boy. We'll film you for our own personal, eh eh eh (*coughs*) records. So, when I take de shot, you'll make a gesture with your right hand. Yes like dat, as if you invite me. Yes, dat's the cue...

ASSISTANT WARDEN: That's the cue, so I take the black book and ask you if there's anything you'd like to say before your death and you say "no", so I put down the book on the table and tie down your arms, legs and neck and step back.

CHIEF WARDEN: No, it's de oder way round. You first tie him down, like dis, yes, make sure he's strapped down well, den you take de book and ask your question, he says "no", so you step back I come and do de shot. Lights off. De people are going to be very happy and probably call for more. We keep Anne Rights for dat occasion. We clean up everything and roll her in, she too doesn't have anything to say, so it'll be swift. We'll ignore de applause and off to de party.

ASSISTANT WARDEN: YOU'll off to the party, I'll have to clean up first, dump them in the fridge (*pokes Goff Ling*). Up and off you go.

The Scene

The audience trickles in carrying seats and assembles on the sides of the stage. Everyone is excited. When all is set, the wheeled couch with straps is set under an overhead camera projecting on large side screens, the Chief Warden rolls out a little medical table with a syringe on a large plate under a huge glass platter cover and the Assistant Warden solemnly brings out Goff Ling. Everyone hushes. The Assistant Warden straps Goff Ling to the couch. The Chief Warden takes the cover with his left hand and the syringe with his right. Goff Ling makes a gesture, as much as the cuffing allows, with his head and hand as if to invite the Chief Warden. In reality, on the backdrop of his suffering expression and head- and hand-cuffing the gesture looks pathetic. But the Chief Warden seems pleased. He bows and the Assistant Warden takes a large hard-cover black book and turns towards Goff Ling:

Goff Ling, is there anything you wish to say?

GOFF LING: hn hn hn, nods a no

ASSISTANT WARDEN *looking slightly anxious*: Speak up, please...

GOFF LING *quietly*: No.

Assistant Warden sighs relief, steps back, and places the book on the syringe table. The Chief Warden approaches him, makes the injection. Goff Ling shivers and spasms, then dies. A doctor comes on stage, bows, checks the pulse.

DOCTOR: I pronounce this man dead.

The audience jubilates, applauds, stumps, whistles.

They roll Goff Ling away.

The audience screams: Encore, encore, encore...

The judge and the execution staff come out and bow: Thank you ladies and gentlemen, thank you.

The audience howls: Show us the dying man's eyes...

THE JUDGE: The rest is not in our Executive Manual. However, we can oblige. You may see Anne Rights now.

Applause. The wardens roll out Anne Rights already tied down to the couch on wheels and perform the same procedure only much swifter. That is: The Chief Warden takes the cover with his left hand and the syringe with his right. Anne Rights makes a face. The Chief Warden looks pleased. He bows and the Assistant Warden takes a large hard-cover black book and turns towards Anne Rights:

Anne Rights, is there anything you wish to say?

Anne Rights pulls out a tongue. Then turns away.

Assistant Warden sighs, steps back, and places the book on the syringe table. The Chief Warden approaches her, makes the injection. Anne Rights shivers and spasms, then dies. The doctor comes back on stage. Checks her.

DOCTOR: I pronounce this woman dead.

The audience jubilates, applauds, stumps, and screams: Encore, encore, encore...

The judge and the execution staff come out and bow: Thank you ladies and gentlemen, thank you.

The audience screams: Show us her dying eyes.

THE JUDGE: This is not in our Executive Manual. However, we may all proceed to the reception hall now.

He bows and points to the exit. Everyone leaves. The Assistant Warden cleans up and mumbles: Ah, there's always that stench... Rolls Anne Rights and the rest of stuff off-stage.

The Great Feast and the Great Fast

People run about the stage opening Champaign bottles, hugging, dancing, eating food and throwing around apples. 53 types of apples with labels of types and qualities are projected on the walls and the ceiling. There is loud music and loud buzzing of talk and action.

Suddenly, the stage plunges into darkness and silence. Tin Shnitt projects on the wall, holding a scroll. People step aside. Kalina and a child-girl walk around picking the fruit and nuts that fall on the ground. Overhead light follows Kalina and the girl.

GIRL: Mummy, I'm so happy...

KALINA *kisses her*: I love you...

GIRL: And what about the stars?

KALINA: Anything you wish to imagine...

GIRL: Will it be true?

KALINA: With us, it shall always be true...

They continue to wander and whisper.

TIN SHNITT'S VOICE: I always believed that everything happened for a reason. This belief denied the possibility of other possibility, since other possibility entailed other reasons, thus making obsolete the inevitability of the current evolution of events. But now I see things that you there don't even suspect. There was another way. Kalina was right. For, ever since we chose the Red Delicious we have chosen literary chaos for our lives – even in death. Perhaps, particularly in death. But how to find the love in our hearts that will be as pure as it had been? How to rewrite the script?

CURTAINS

The END