



Fluffy

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Introduction

Fluffy is a play about an imaginary goldfish. It requires three actors. It contains surreal images, illusion, magic and music. It is a three act play, with a single set.

Fluffy Online

The latest draft of Fluffy, with supporting sounds, music, images and other information, is available at:

<http://www.nealemorison.org/writing/fluffy>

Characters

Sarah, Hart and Bern can be any age. They are named and written as a woman and two men but it might be fun to play them other ways. They all need to sing well and dance a little. Bern needs to strum a guitar and play a few notes on a keyboard. To play Fluffy you need many similar goldfish.

Objects and Ideas

Objects include an impossible magic coffee table, two magic profile shaped bookends, two magic arrases (see set details below), a doorknob that comes loose, a combination padlock that fits Sarah's ring finger as an engagement ring, a container of fish food, a number of books, a three color digital light bulb. There are three framed pieces of string, one for Bern without fins, one for Bern with fins and and one for Hart with fins.

There's a collection of large surrealist and illusionist paintings for the Browse Her scene.

Sarah's Stuff: a skull, an iron, a bicycle seat, a feather duster, a clock, a small print of Escher's Two Hands

Bern's Stuff: a black box (remote control sized), a Jacob's ladder toy (two are required - see Scene - Whack), two brain science hairnets with long flexible wires, a clipboard, a pencil

Hart's Stuff: a glass containing a melted snowball, a switch pitch ball



Coffee Table

Illustration 1: Impossible magic coffee table

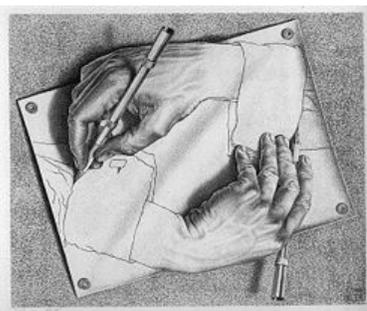


Illustration 2: M. C. Escher - Two Hands

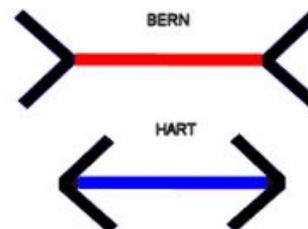


Illustration 3: Pieces of string measuring Bern and Hart



Illustration 4: Homunculus



Illustration 5: The Man Inside (Men in Coats midget dance)



Illustration 4: Arras



Illustration 7: Jacob's ladder

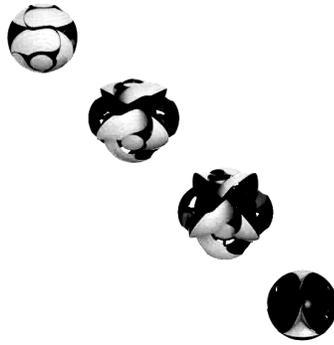


Illustration 8: Switch Pitch - Hoberman



Illustration 9: Brain Science Hair Net

Set

An underfurnished proscenium arch apartment. The walls are made of books. Some can be removed and read. A sofa bed and a low coffee table. A guitar. A synthesizer keyboard. A pile of pale yellow sand.

On the coffee table is a black box. This is by turns a mobile phone, a video camera, a still camera, a remote control, a brain science hairnet display panel, and a GPS system.

A bare light bulb hangs center stage above the coffee table. This is a magic digital light bulb that can glow red, blue, green or white in various sequences.

The sofa bed is magic. It has a bed concealed inside. It is a generous three seater, perhaps a king size bed. The sofa has a flat platform, suitable for ironing and lying on, along its back.

The coffee table is impossible. It has two legs at the top and three columns at the bottom. The coffee table is magic. It has a secret compartment inside for the handbag trick in Scene 3 - Stuff.

There are two windows on the rear wall. The windows are magic. They show scenes in various seasons and moods, but in some scenes a person can be seen standing at the window.

Between the windows is a fireplace. There is a shelf above the fireplace. We are calling this the mentalpiece. The fireplace is magic. On occasion it emits a strange unearthly glow. There is a concealed exit in the fireplace.

The wall should be white behind the mentalpiece for contrast with objects on it.

On the mentalpiece there are a few books, held between two black bookends in the shape of the profiles of faces, facing away from each other. These are magic bookends, as becomes apparent in Scene 3 - Stuff.

Above the mentalpiece is a mirror. This is a magic mirror. Sometimes you can see through it for mirror tricks. There is space on either side of the mirror to hang the Escher picture on one side, and on the other side Bern and Hart's piece of string, one above the other,

On one side of the stage is a door to the outside. Let's say Stage Right. On the other side there's a door to another room. Let's say Stage Left.

At the left and right, upstage of the two doors are two identical booths. These are magic booths. They have curtains at the front and back and concealed access off stage. They contain props and are large enough to contain two standing men. We are calling a booth of this type an arras. People can teleport from an arras to any other door or arras.

An arras is used as the booth for the homunculus song (The Man Inside) and for magic disappearances and appearances.

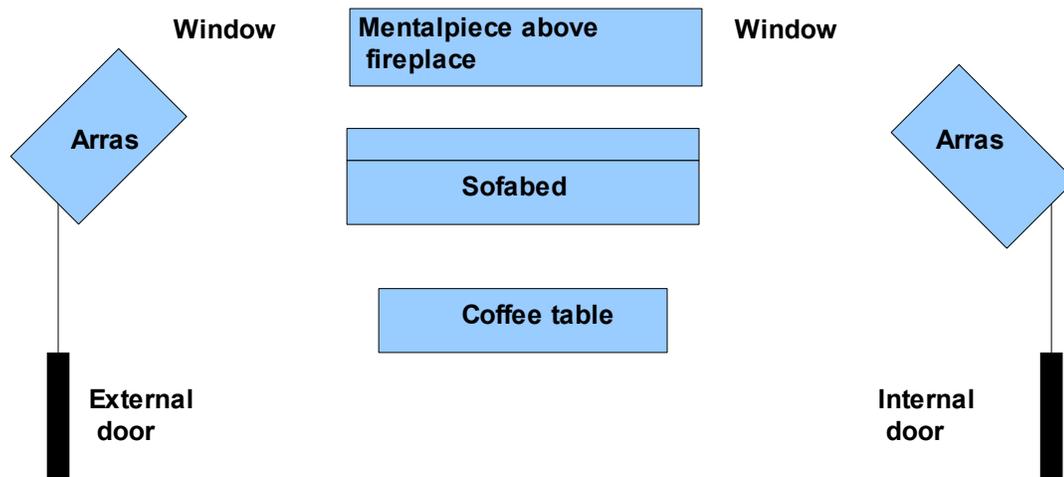


Illustration 10: Set

Sound and Music

Electronic computer music compositions are suggested for the overture, doorbell, and scene change sounds. Demonstration sounds are provided.

The songs can be performed with a two or three piece band. Guitar, synth and percussion would work. Percussion is strongly indicated for a couple of songs, however in an emergency you could get away with a single good guitarist or synth player.

The actors cannot play musical instruments for many of the songs, as they are doing something else such as dancing.

It would be an awful shame to use backing tracks or sequenced drums. Don't do that.

Bern needs to be able to strum a guitar and play a few sounds on a keyboard.

All the actors have to be able to sing and harmonize.

All actors need some basic dance. Sarah has to be a reasonable dancer.

Lighting

Some lighting effects, including disco effects, colored lights and strobes, are required. The effect in the Light Bulb disco effect is complex.

ACT I

Scene - Opening

The overture plays.

In one window it is winter and snowing and in the other it is summer and bright sunshine.

Bern is standing on one leg, shaving with a cutthroat razor.

The doorbell rings (chime 1). It's a two part chime, of the kind where the first note happens when you press and the second note happens when you release. Consequently the rhythm of the notes expresses the emotional state of the person pressing. These chimes begin as simply insistent and become increasingly impatient.

Bern looks around startled.

The doorbell rings (chime 2).

Bern realizes it is the door. He reaches towards the door, but cannot decide what to do. He does not put his foot down, so he cannot move. He suffers conflict.

The doorbell rings (chime 3).

In his writhing Bern unbalances and puts his foot down. He looks at it in wonder and amazement. He experiments with his feet, lifting first one and then the other. Bern starts to move forward, walking, but is struck by a thought. He stops, one foot raised, experiencing a Eureka moment.

The doorbell rings (chime 4).

Bern struggles to recapture his thought, but has to surrender. He walks to the door, still carrying the razor. He pulls the doorknob but it comes away.

The doorbell rings (chime 5).

Bern manages to get the doorknob back in, turn it and open the door. The moment before he opens it the first part of the chime starts (chime 6).

Bern surveys his unseen visitors dispassionately.

Bern Enter.

Sarah enters. The second part of the chime completes (chime 7). Hart enters.

Bern Yes?

Hart Do you care about the environment?

Sarah Perhaps you'd like some of our literature.

Bern takes a pamphlet and glances over it.

Bern Is there life after death?
Is there an ultimate meaning?
Is there a beginning?
Is there an end?
Are we such stuff as dreams are made on?

At this line Hart frowns and tries to read the pamphlet. Bern covers it.

Bern Ok. I'll answer your questions if you answer mine? Deal?

Hart Ah...

Sarah Ok.

Bern All right. No, no, yes, yes, yes. Any questions?

Sarah Oh. Well, the first one...

Bern All right. Is there life after death?
No. It's an oxymoron.

Hart looks offended.

Bern It's a contradiction in terms. If it's life, there is no death, and if it's death, there is no life. QED. Any more questions?

Sarah and Hart look at each other. They are getting around to speaking but Bern moves briskly on.

Bern So much for the low hanging fruit. Now, here's my question. I'm sorry, but this one is harder. If you had five legs, what would be the most efficient way to walk?

Sarah and Hart look at each other again. They look at the razor. Bern puts it away in his pocket.

Bern There are so many possible gaits. Fortunately, we don't have to think about it. We can experiment. Now, I'm Bern, and you are?

Hart Hart.

Sarah Sarah.

Bern Great. Now, Hart, I'm going to ask you to be the abdomen. Your legs are right four, left five. Can you place your hands on Sally's hips, there, that's right. View's always the same, eh, Hart? Sally, you're the thorax, if you can put your hands on my waist, your legs are right two, left three, now balance, people, I am leg one, one leg only, I can't hold this thing up.
Now when I call the number of your leg, move that leg forward one step, one step only, make it a small step at first, we have to walk before we can run.

All right, are we ready?

5, 3, 4, 2, 1,

5, 3, 4, 2, 1,

how does that feel, keep going, let's pick it up,

5, 3, 4, 2, 1,

Hart missteps and they wobble and stop.

You all right there, Hart? Pretty tricky, remember you have two legs, right four, left five. Watch Sally, she's got it.

Okay, again, we're going to try a pentatrot, ready?

I am going to name two legs at the same time, and they must move together in unison. There will be a slight pause, then I will name another two legs. This is a rhythmic exercise, people, so please, no hesitation, do not think, just act, in unison, all right. Ready?

2-5, 3-4, 1,

2-5, 3-4, 1,

Hart is not managing this at all. He is behind on every movement. The others are becoming increasingly annoyed with him. The pace slows, as Sarah and Bern try to compensate by moving later and later. Eventually they fall in a heap.

They pick themselves up. Hart moves toward the door. Sarah is between Hart and Bern.

Hart Sarah, we should...

Bern You're welcome to stay.

Hart Come on, Sarah.

Sarah is torn. She turns first to Hart, then to Bern. Bern takes a piece of string out of his pocket and hands it to her. She takes the end, and pulls. It passes through Bern's fingers without resistance until only Sarah is holding it.

While she is taking the string, Hart realizes he, too has a piece of string in his pocket. He tries to show it to Sarah but he cannot attract her attention away from Bern's string.

Sarah takes the string and uses it to measure Hart in various ways. She marks the result on the string with a knot. She moves to Bern and measures him in a similar way. She marks the result with another knot. She holds up the string with the knots in each hand and we see that Bern has eight or so inches on Hart.

She turns to Hart and shows him apologetically. He glowers at Bern. She shows Bern. He beckons her over and takes the string, retaining the measurement with his fingers. He looks at the string, surprised and pleased. Bern looks at Hart with self-deprecating triumph.

Hart turns and stalks out, slamming the door.

Bern Well.

Sarah Mmm.

Bern Are you going to offer me something?

Sarah This is your place.
Bern Must we be slaves to convention?
Sarah Is there anything you would like?
Bern World peace. Universal equality of opportunity. A free press. Clean water.
Sarah Ice?
Bern No ice.

Sarah goes and gets Bern a glass of water from the other room. He turns to face the audience, toasts them and drinks it with attitude.

Sarah indicates the guitar.

Sarah You play?
Bern Yeah.
Sarah Play something.
Bern Ok.

Bern plays and sings

The Fluffy Song

Bern I want to own a goldfish,
So I can call her Fluffy.
I want to own a red dog,
So I can call him Blue.
Da dah da dum da dah da
Da dah buddum buddum
I have a perfect vision,
I want to call it you.

Dumdy dumdy dum dum,
Dah, da dah, da dah dah,
When I am six feet under,
The sky will be above,
Bum ba bum ba bah bum,
In the name of dah dum
I have an aching feeling,
I want to call it love.

Sarah Wow.
Bern Thank you.
Sarah Is that you? Did you make it up?
Bern Uh huh.
Sarah It's so... it's beautiful.

Bern It's not finished.
Sarah How will you know when it's finished?
Bern Form. Function. Structure. Content.
Sarah So are you an artist of some kind?
Bern I deal in metaphor.
Sarah Ok.

Scene - Squirrels

On the rear wall, above the mentalpiece, Bern's piece of string measuring the difference between him and Hart hangs in a frame, like a diploma.

One window shows a sunrise and the other shows night with a full moon.

Sarah and Bern sit cramped together on the sofa as if they are flying economy class together. They are eating tiny meals from tiny trays balanced on their knees.

Sarah Do you think I could do it? Deal in metaphor?
Bern When I was a kid, there was a row of garages at the back of the apartments. They were never open. I couldn't see in and I never knew what was in there. Then one day a big truck came. Two guys got out. They opened up the doors. Those garages were so full of shit. They just kept on hauling it out and throwing it in the truck. Half of it you couldn't tell what it was. Some of it looked familiar but you couldn't put a name to it. And some of it I recognized. It was stuff I had when I was much smaller. A high chair. I knew the pattern, blue and yellow checks. An old ball with a sailing boat on it.
And I knew that was the last time I'd see those things, and I'd probably never remember them again.
Sarah A dream. That's what a dream is. Is that what you're saying?
Bern I'm saying there were these garages. Squirrels used to run around on the roof.
Sarah The conscious mind. Scampering, sniffing, rummaging, twitching, halting.
Bern They used to chase each other. One would go around the other side of the tree, and the other would follow it. They'd end up tracing a double helix around the tree.
Sarah Rapid, nervous, urgent.
Bern Once I saw one of them on a branch, and another ran up the branch just below it. It jumped up, and at the exact same moment, the other squirrel jumped down. Then they jumped back the other way.
Sarah Like acrobats. Electricity, a circuit.
Bern They were having fun. I can't prove it, but they were.
Sarah The squirrels are happiness. Intelligence. The experience of the moment.
Bern There was this cable, with this tensioning wire that ran above it and joined it in the middle.

The squirrels would use the cable for a highway, they would run down it, and when they got to where the wire wrapped around the cable, they each had a different solution. One squirrel would thread its way through, one leg then the next leg, another would swing down underneath, spiral around, another one would leap off and land swaying on the twig of a nearby tree. They could fly.

Sarah The cable is conventional wisdom, the mainstream channel, the wire is the exception, the unexplained, the different squirrels are our various accommodations to the anomalies of existence, to retain happiness we must be light, agile, we must consciously spiral around the tortuous...

Bern Go on.

Sarah I've lost it.

Bern One day there was a raccoon in the tree.

Sarah Forget it. I'm not doing a raccoon.

Bern stands up and paces. He is lost in thought. He takes a combination padlock out of his pocket and fiddles with it.

Sarah What's that?

Bern I found it.

She holds out her hand. He gives it to her.

Sarah Did you lock it?

Bern It was locked when I found it.

Sarah What's the combination?

Bern I don't know.

Sarah So what good is it?

Bern It's a souvenir.

Sarah Wow. That's so great. Instead of buying a souvenir, you just find one. And it's more part of the place and the time, because it's a found object, an objet trouvé, not some garish snowstorm or fridge magnet made by slave labor masquerading as globalization. It's not just a trophy, it's an artwork. And free. It's so political, so right.

Bern Yeah.

Sarah What does it remind you of?

Bern I don't know. A lock.

Sarah Wow. A single piece of information, coded in its dials. The key is information, and yet the only purpose of that information is lost when it is used without the key. And because the key is lost, even though it is doing what it was made to do, it is just a memory of itself. It is a symbol of futility, of forgetfulness, of coded information hidden forever in the darkness of our minds, in the mists of time, in our unrecorded history. You are amazing, you know?

Bern You can have it if you like.

Sarah Don't you want it?
Bern It doesn't work.
Sarah If I take it, does it mean anything?
Bern Like what?
Sarah You know.
Bern No.
Sarah About us.
Bern Us.
Sarah You know.

She puts the lock on the ring finger of her left hand and admires it.

Bern I changed my mind. Give it back.
Sarah Really?
Bern Yes. I want it.
Sarah Oh. Ok.

She tries to get it off but she can't.

Sarah It's stuck.
Bern Great.

He tries to get it off.

Sarah You're hurting me.

He spins the dials.

Sarah What are you doing?

Bern Maybe I'll get lucky.

Sarah Leave me alone.

Bern Ok. But I want it back.

Sarah All right. I'm going.

Bern You can't.

Sarah Why not?

Bern You've got my lock. You can't take my lock.

Sarah Goodbye.

She goes to the door and pulls the doorknob. It comes off in her hand. She looks back at Bern. He shrugs and exits.

Scene - Stuff

Sarah puts her small handbag down on the coffee table. She unpacks from it, one by one, a skull, an iron, a bicycle seat, a feather duster, a simple round wall clock with large clear numbers, a framed print of the Escher engraving with two hands drawing each other. She hangs the Escher print beside the mirror. She arranges the other objects on the sand.

Then she takes out a goldfish in a plastic bag. She looks around for somewhere to put it. She puts the bag on the coffee table.

Sarah goes to the mentalpiece. She moves the books to one side of the mentalpiece. She picks up her skull. She takes the bookend at the far end of the mentalpiece and replaces it with her skull. She positions the bookend at a small separation from the other bookend with the face profiles facing each other.

Now they outline a vase between the profiles.

Sarah picks up the plastic bag from the table and empties it into the vase. The goldfish swims around.

Bern enters. He looks at the things on the sand.

Bern What's this?

Sarah It's my stuff.

Bern What are you doing? Are you moving in?

Sarah Well I can't leave. You don't want me to leave.

She massages the finger with the lock. Bern notices the goldfish.

Bern Fish?

Sarah She's for you. That's Fluffy.

Bern Fluffy's a metaphor!

Sarah Not any more.

He picks up the black box and uses it to remotely control Sarah as if she were a slide show presentation.

He clicks the black box to change Sarah's pose. She does various poses, holding each pose for the duration of a bullet point haiku.

Bern Pure information,
Randomly accessible,
True intelligence.

Zero latency,
Parallel execution,
Minimum delay.

Rack mounting, hot plug,
Robust scalability,
Self replicating.

High fault tolerance,
Multiple redundancy,
Parts replaceable.

Military strength
Unbreakable encryption,
Through obfuscation.

Industry standard,
Nothing proprietary,
Easy maintenance.

Simple interface,
Completely integrated,
Hides complexity.

Power consumption
Totally negligible
Runs on a promise.

Sleekly attractive,
Variety of colors,
Individual.

It's a no brainer,
Discount for bulk purchases,
Almost too easy.

Scene - Piece of String

*The doorbell rings. Sarah walks so her face is right next to the door, without opening it.
The doorbell rings again.*

Sarah Who is it?

Hart It's me.

Sarah Who's me?

Hart You know who me is!

Sarah I know who I am.

Hart Do you?

Sarah What do you want?
Hart You know what I want.
Sarah Do you know what you want?
Hart I want you.
Sarah I want him.
Hart You don't know him.
Sarah Neither do you.
Hart You want me.
Sarah Me? Want you?
Hart I brought you something.
Sarah What?

Hart feeds his piece of string through the keyhole. Sarah pulls it. It passes through the keyhole without resistance until only Sarah is holding it.

Sarah opens the door. Hart enters. He holds out his arms to be measured. She reluctantly measures him. She makes a knot at the spot.

Hart goes out. Sarah closes the door. Bern enters from another room.

Bern Who was that?
Sarah No one I know. Hold out your arms.

Bern holds out his arms and Sarah measures him. Hart turns out to be bigger than Bern, according to Hart's piece of string.

Sarah shows Bern and indicates she is expecting an explanation.

Bern How long is a piece of string?

Bern exits

Sarah takes Hart's string and measures it against Bern's string in the frame. They are exactly the same length.

Scene - Cracks

Hart's piece of string is framed and hanging above Bern's framed piece of string. Bern has drawn fins on the ends of each piece of string, angling in on Hart's and opening out on Bern's, so that Bern's looks longer.

The sofa is made into a bed. Bern and Sarah are in bed, in a post coital trance like state. The doorbell rings.

Sarah It's open.

Hart enters.

Hart Oh. I'm sorry, I didn't...

Bern Hi Hart. Sit down. How's it going?

Sarah It's so great to see you.

Bern Now, Hart, what's your take, is there an absolute reference, or is everything relative?

Hart sits on the bed.

Hart Well, I suppose...

Bern And can you back up what you're saying, Hart? That's the main thing, isn't it? An untestable theory is no theory at all, it needs to make predictions. Does your theory predict anything? Anything at all?

Hart I'm not...

Bern Because if anything is possible, nothing is possible, Hart, you see what I'm saying? If there are no rules, there is no cause and effect, if there is no cause and effect, there is no action, no reaction, and if there's is no action, well, Hart, I guess we've lost the plot.

Hart You think some puzzle, some, like. Bern, a toy, a game? No. This is the, big, you know, like, hard. You're saying we can't understand it, then, hey, you know? Existence? Realness is, like real. You arrogant! Small, little. Tiny. It's, you know it's awesome and you're.

Bern The frightening thing is I understand what he's saying.

Sarah Stop it, you two.

Bern Hart, chill, man, I mean, what are you saying, that we can't question, that we can't attempt to understand? Isn't that a little complacent, a little acquiescent, a little goddam passive, I mean what do you suggest, we just fall backwards with our legs apart and watch the cracks in the ceiling, is that your position?

Hart You ought to try it sometime, Bern, you know, like the ceiling has cracks and someone has to fix them.

Bern What's that supposed to mean?

Sarah The ceiling is shelter, comfort, it's the fulfillment of our day to day needs. He's saying don't sweat the big stuff.

Hart Is that what I'm saying?

Bern I'd really like to know what he's saying. Is he saying that the cracks are a bad thing? Because quite frankly I like the cracks, you know, sometimes the cracks are the best part, I like the way you can see an elephant up there, or a starfighter strafing a dinosaur.

Hart Where's that?

He lies down on the bed with them

Bern Over there, in the corner.

Hart Oh yeah. That's great. Oh, hey, a cloud.

Bern A cloud?

Hart Right there.

Bern Hart, clouds look like things, things don't look like clouds.

Hart Sarah, can't you see it?

Sarah I can see it, but ...

Hart is looking at the fourth wall now.

Hart And look, there's a face.

Sarah Oh, Hart, anyone can do a face.

Bern Ok, Hart, work with me, what kind of a face, what does it say to you, just a face isn't much to go on, you know, is it the mask of comedy, is it the mask of tragedy, is it the face of despair, of exultation?

Hart It actually looks a lot like the face of my aunt Hilda. She had a mole, it used to totally freak me out.

Bern You deal with him.

Bern gets out of bed and stalks off.

Sarah lifts the sheet so that Hart can get in with her.

Sarah Tell me more about aunt Hilda.

Scene - Hart's Idea While Shaving

Hart and Bern are in bed together. Bern is shaving with a cutthroat razor. He makes weird faces directly to the audience.

Hart Why are you always shaving?

Bern I get my best ideas while shaving. I wonder if girls get ideas when they shave their legs?

Hart Do guys with beards ever get ideas?

Bern Hart, you're coming along.

Hart Where are we going?

Bern Here, try it.

Bern throws the razor to Hart. Hart catches it without incident. He looks at the razor and reads with difficulty.

Hart Oc-cam.

Bern Acme. I get all my stuff from them. It's not that reliable but they deliver anywhere.

Hart starts to awkwardly imitate Bern's shaving. He does faces.

Careful, Hart. You'll cut your own throat. Always go against the grain.

Hart Why?

Bern Well, some say it gives a smoother shave, but I just like to go against the grain.

Hart shaves.

Anything?

Hart Did you ever wonder...

Bern Yes?

Hart Nothing.

Hart shaves.

Hart What if...

Bern Yes? Yes?

Hart Doesn't matter.

Hart stops shaving.

Hart It's no good. I can't think about anything. Except Sarah.

Bern Yeah?

Hart Love is everything, you know?

Hart hands back the razor. Bern takes it and looks closely at the razor, then at Hart. Bern starts to shave.

Bern I see possibilities.

Scene - Bonding and Soul Stealing

Hart and Bern come in through the door. Bern is in a Hawaiian shirt, shorts and sandals. Hart is in puffy jacket, ear warmer hat and snow boots. He is carrying a snowball.

Sarah Where have you been?

Hart Just out.

Bern Cruising.

Hart Hanging out.

Bern Shooting the breeze.

Hart Chewing the fat.

Bern Looking around.

Hart Checking things out.

Bern Taking care of business.

Sarah What did you do?

Bern Plenty.

Hart Nothing.

Sarah What's that?

Hart I found a footprint. I think it's yours. I dug it up and brought it home to show you.

Sarah A footprint?

Bern I told him.

Sarah Where's the footprint?

Hart It's in here. I dug up the whole thing.

Hart looks at the snowball.

It's in there somewhere.

Bern Ya big galoot.

Bern cuffs Hart affectionately.

Sarah It's melting.

Sarah goes out and comes back with a glass. She holds it out to Hart and he puts the snowball in it. She puts the glass with the snowball on the mentalpiece next to Fluffy.

Hart I think it was your footprint.

Sarah goes over close to Hart and touches him.

Bern picks up the black box.

Bern Ok, you two. Look this way. Arms around each other. Little kiss. That's right. Come on Hart, come on baby, give me some attitude, let it out, give me some pouty pouty, that's it. Hold up the glass.

Sarah holds up the glass

Give it to me. Beautiful. Hold it.

Bern lifts the black box to take a picture with it.

Hart What are you doing? Stop. No.

He covers himself with his arms and turns away.

Sarah What is it, honey?

Hart He's going to steal my soul.

Bern Your what?

Hart No. No.

Hart runs out of the room.

Sarah What did you have to do that for?

She puts the glass back on the mentalpiece.

Bern Do what?

Sarah Try to steal his soul.

Sarah runs out after Hart.

Hart There comes a time when you realize that you really are the only one who is sane.

Scene - The Beginning of the End

Bern and Sarah slow dancing, while Hart sings.

Song - The Beginning of the End

Hart It's the end of the beginning,
The beginning of the end,
Together we dance through the middle of our lives,
Who knows which way the road will bend?

Hart tags Bern, Bern takes the microphone and Hart dances with Sarah.

Bern Looks like everyone is here now,
We all know our names and roles,
Baby come into my dark room, and see what develops,
Hear what harmonies can happen in this symphony of souls,

Bern tags Sarah, Sarah takes the microphone and Bern dances with Hart. Bern and Hart sing oohs and ahs to harmonize with Sarah.

Sarah Behind us the sunrise, revealing all anew,
And see, the sun is setting up ahead,
I'm walking in the sunshine, in the middle with you,
There is nowhere I would rather be instead.

All three sing and dance together.

All It's the end of the beginning,
We're determined, completely, by our past
Let's take it now, together, wherever we can go,
It's the only way we're going to make it last
We're right at the beginning, a brand new beginning,
The beginning of the end.

ACT II

The order of scenes in Act II may be altered. Scenes may be omitted, added, improvised and altered. However the essential plot points must be maintained, in the scenes One Fish, Two Fish, Light Bulb On, Experimentation, Light Bulb Disco, and The Wink.

Scene - Wrong Number

Bern having phone sex on the black box. Starts like a normal phone conversation.

Sarah and Hart listening, exchanging glances, looking uncomfortable.

Bern Yes. Yes. oh yes. Oh....yes.

...and so on, to orgasm.

Bern puts the black box down.

Sarah Who was that?

Bern Wrong number.

Scene - The End of Time

Sarah picks up the clock. She holds it up to Bern.

Sarah We're late

Bern Think of it as early for the next one.

Sarah I told you last week

Bern My computer crashed. Tell me again.

Sarah You have no concept of time.

Bern It's an illusion.

Sarah It is not.

Bern It's relative.

Sarah Not within a single frame of reference.

Bern Give me that.

Bern grabs the clock. He stuffs it under a sofa cushion.

Sarah Give it back.

Bern It's the end of time.

Sarah Give it back.

Sarah goes over to the sofa. Bern steps aside. She reaches under the sofa cushion and takes

out a limp clock.

Sarah What did you do to it?

Bern Nothing. It just broke. It came apart in my hand.

Sarah drapes it over the mantelpiece, so part of the clock hangs limply off. This segues to Gunned Up.

Scene - Gunned Up

The segues from the End of Time scene. Bern surreptitiously offers Hart gum. Hart takes it and starts chewing.

Sarah is impatient to leave. They start to go out but Hart does not follow. Sarah turns around and summons him. He does not move.

She goes to Hart and holds her palm up to his lips. He spits the gum into it.

Sarah then turns to go out. Hart can now follow.

Sarah gives Bern a furious look. Bern looks innocent. They exit.

Scene - Arras

Sarah walking around the room discontentedly, dusting with her feather duster. Hart and Bern on opposite ends of the sofa looking catatonic. Throughout the scene they face the audience with thousand yard stares.

Bern What?

Sarah Do you really love this furniture, Bern?

Bern How can you love furniture?

Sarah What do you call this, anyway?

She is standing next to one of the closets.

Bern It's an arras.

Sarah What's it for?

Bern Concealment.

Sarah Well, I don't like it.

Bern The arras, or concealment?

Sarah Either. Both.

Bern It's where I keep my stuff, ok.

Sarah Do you need all this stuff?

Bern Yes, I need all this stuff.

Sarah Hart, what about your stuff?

Hart It's on the mentalpiece.

Sarah Where?

Hart In the glass.

Sarah looks at Hart tenderly.

Scene - Can't Cut It

Sarah is asleep on the couch. Her left hand with the lock is lying on the coffee table. Bern approaches with his razor. He looks furtively around, then raises the razor aloft.

Hart enters.

Hart Hey, Bern.

Hart quickly stands on one leg and begins shaving.

Bern Hey, Hart.

Hart What's happening?

Bern Political turmoil, global warming, environmental destruction, genocide, mass extinctions.

Hart Yeah? Cool.

Hart goes over to Fluffy.

Hart Hey, Fluffy. What's happening?

Hart appears to listen to Fluffy.

Hart Yeah? Cool.

Hart exits. Sarah wakes.

Sarah Oh, hi. Were you watching me sleep.

Bern Yeah.

Sarah That's so sweet.

Scene - Leg Shave

Sarah is shaving her legs with the razor. Bern enters.

Bern What are you doing?

Sarah What does it look like I'm doing?

Bern Shaving your legs.

Sarah That's what I'm doing.

Bern That's so scopophilic.

Sarah Things get hairy.

Bern Isn't hairy some sort of statement?

Sarah It's a statement that it's time to shave my legs.

Bern You'll blunt my razor.

Sarah That's so phallocentric.

Bern You are paradoxically both chaste and inviting. Aren't you worried that by watching you I'm going to define you in some way?

Sarah Then bugger off.

Bern Aren't you worried that by talking to you in my patriarchal language I'm going to somehow linguistically control you?

Sarah Then shut up.

Bern You're just doing this to heighten your appeal to me. You're allowing me to define you as an object for sexual stimulation. You're exploring the tension between image and self-image.

Sarah I'm trying to do a tricky bit without creating a bleeding wound. You're not helping.

Bern Yow. Don't you sometimes wish you had a penis?

Sarah I can get one when I want one. And right now, Bern, read my lips, I do not want one.

Bern You're freezing the action in a moment of erotic contemplation.

Sarah Nothing was happening anyway.

Bern So are you getting any ideas?

Sarah Yes. I have a truly wonderful idea.

Bern Great. What is it?

Sarah My idea is this. You go away and leave me alone, and I will do exactly what I was doing before you showed up, just as if you had never showed up at all.

Bern That's your idea?

Sarah That's my idea.

Bern Right. Fine.

Bern exits.

Sarah continues to shave her legs.

Scene - Acting Dumb

This sets up a way for Hart to indicate that he has actually gained intelligence by having his mind swapped with a goldfish in the What Really Happened scene.

Bern standing around looking dumb. Hart comes in.

Hart What are you doing?

Bern Have you ever noticed that with a slight difference to attitude, to posture, you can completely change the way you appear to others? Just the slightest differences, you know, a Martian would never notice it, but we do, we pick it straight away. You can look like there's something really wrong with you just by standing a certain way, holding your head a certain way.

Hart No.

Bern Check it out.

Bern drops his head to one side, mouth slightly open, decreases muscle tone around knees, wrists and elbows.

Hart Huh?

Bern Ok. Now, a psychotic.

Bern changes posture slightly but now looks like a person with serious issues.

Bern You try it. Straighten up. Close your mouth. That's right. Do something about the look in your eyes. Eyes are the windows to the soul, Hart. You're going loose again. Back up. That's it. Close the mouth. I mean lips together. Almost. Hang on to that.

Now, Hart, let it all go. Loll. Now, look a bit too happy. You know what I mean? Just a little happier than called for by the circumstances. That's perfect. That is so good, Hart. Well done.

You know, it is strange. Why would showing a little happiness mean there was something wrong with you? Ok, now back up. Back to the other one. The other one. The clever one.

Hart I don't get it.

Bern Don't worry about it, Hart. You did the other one so well.

Scene - Walkies

Sarah enters to feed Fluffy. The tank is empty.

Sarah Fluffy? Hart? Bern?

She looks for Fluffy in the sky. She looks for Fluffy in the audience. She looks for Fluffy in the fireplace. When she looks in the fireplace a strange unearthly glow starts to come out of it, and we hear the strange unearthly glow sound. Sarah draws back in awe.

She goes to an arras and takes out a big, hooded puffy coat and puts it on. It is the same type and color as the puffy coat Hart wore earlier in the Bonding scene. When Hart and Bern appear later in the scene they are in identical puffy coats. They are all wearing pants of the same color too, maybe blue jeans.

Sarah goes out the external door. What follows is a farce door scene using the arrases and the other entrances. It is also a magic scene because the identical costumes make it easy to trick the audience into thinking they are looking at one character when they are looking at another.

For example Sarah can come out of the SL arras allowing the audience to see her face, walk back in, appear to come straight back out and go to into the SR arras without the audience seeing her face. She can then emerge immediately from the SL arras and let the audience see her face again.

One of the hooded figures is carrying Fluffy. Actually they all have goldfish in plastic bags, but as we have established that there is only one Fluffy we can create some odd effects.

There is at least one mirror trick. A hooded figure comes out of an arras. We don't see the face. They turn to the mirror and another hooded figure appears in the mirror. They do a mirror act for a while. Then they exit in asymmetrical directions.

The idea is to pull enough of these so that the audience gives up trying to track who is who. Then you might be able to pull some really odd tricks. It should be pretty fast to move behind the windows between the arrases. If you have trick windows that sometimes are projections, and sometimes allow a character to be seen passing behind them, you can create real confusion.

Finally they all arrive together in the living room.

Sarah Where's Fluffy?

Hart Right here.

Hart holds up a plastic bag containing Fluffy.

We just took her bowling.

Bern It was Hart's idea.

Hart You wanted to do it.

Sarah Oh, Hart. It's not good for her. Too much excitement.

Hart She did pretty good, considering.

Bern Come on Hart. We thrashed her.

Hart She did good.

Scene - Light bulb

The light bulb goes red. Everything goes red.

Hart Do you think this is a judgment? On us?

Sarah You mean this is hell? I've been wondering.

Bern Damn it, I should never have got that digital light bulb.

Sarah Well, aren't you going to fix it?

Bern Me?

Sarah gets up on the coffee table and fiddles around.

Sarah Oh, Bern. Make a video.

Bern picks up the black box and shoots a video of Sarah changing the light bulb.

Sarah is having trouble. As she adjusts it the light bulb turns quickly green (everything goes green), then blue (everything goes blue), then red again (everything goes red).

Hart is concerned Fluffy might be frightened, and tries to comfort her.

Hart Fish.

The light bulb turns white. Everything goes cyan.

Sarah Great, now it's really broken.

Bern Afterimage. Let your eyes adjust.

Slowly everything turns white again.

Bern I could have done it better.

Scene - Experimentation

Hart is juggling a switch pitch ball. The ball is black and white. When you throw it with a spin it changes color.

Hart is throwing it up and catching it, watching it change from black to white and from white to black.

Bern enters.

Bern Hey, Hart. Can I have a look?

Hart throws the ball to Bern. Bern catches it. When Bern catches it, it does not change color. He throws it in the air. It does not change color. He throws it in the air again. It does not change color. He throws it to Hart. When Hart catches it the color changes. Hart throws it again. It changes color.

Bern Hart, your case interests me, I don't mind telling you. Your thought processes, if I may call them that, are in some ways a total mystery. I wonder if I could ask you to assist me in a few simple experiments.

Bern stands in front of Hart and holds his arms outstretched to either side.

Bern Now, Hart, look at my nose.

Bern extends three fingers on his left hand and one on his right hand.

Bern How many fingers am I holding up?

Hart All of them.

Bern looks dissatisfied.

Hart Except the others.

Bern Outstanding. Now, Hart, please sit down, make yourself comfortable.

Bern assists Hart to sit down on the sofa. Bern goes to an arras and takes out a clipboard which he places on the coffee table. Out of the arras he takes a metal hairnet, connected to a bundle of wires, and puts it over Hart's head. He adjusts it, and connects the other end of the bundle of wires to the black box, which he holds in his hand.

Bern looks around, then gets the skull and puts it on the mantelpiece next to the Fluffy vase.

He goes to the arras and takes another metal hairnet, connected to a bundle of wires, and puts the hairnet over the skull.

Bern connects the skull hairnet wire bundle to the black box.

Bern Control, Hart. Always important to have an experimental control. How you doing, are you all right there? This won't hurt a bit.

Bern looks at the black box as if reading some kind of graphical output.

Bern All right, now Hart. Just checking the levels. In your own words. What is your name?

Hart considers the meaning of this. He looks searchingly at Bern to try to understand what Bern is getting at, then answers cautiously.

Hart Hart?

Bern Good. Male or female?

Hart What for?

Bern Excellent.

Bern makes a note on the clipboard.

Bern Now Hart, I toss a coin ten times. Every time it lands heads up. I am about to toss it again. Is it more likely to show a head or a tail?

Hart Go on then.

Bern I'm not going to toss it. I just want to know how it's going to come up.

Hart You're not going to toss it.

Bern No.

Hart Then it's not going to come up.

Bern But suppose I did toss it.

Hart Go on then.

Bern Before I do, what will it be? Heads or tails?

Hart Toss it. Let's see.

Bern Can you do this in your head?

Hart Toss a coin in my head.

Bern Yes.

Hart Are you crazy?

Bern I'm getting some interesting readings here, Hart.

Bern traces the wires to the skull hairnet and to Hart's hairnet, just to make sure which is which.

Now Bern is going to try a little Albert on Hart. He's going to condition him to be frightened of something.

Bern looks about for some object. He picks up the bicycle seat.

Bern Ok. Hart, what do you make of this?

Bern hands Hart the bicycle seat.

Hart It's Sarah's bicycle seat.

Bern And how does it make you feel?

Hart I feel...what do you mean?

Bern It doesn't bother you?

Hart This...what?

Bern Sally's bicycle seat?

Hart It's ok. I don't get...

Bern Fine. No problem.

Bern takes the bicycle seat back from Hart.

Bern Ok, Hart, now I want you to relax. Close your eyes if that helps.

Hart Ok.

Bern Here's the bicycle seat back, Hart. Just hold it in your hands. That's right. Relax. Comfortable? You like the seat?

Hart It's fine.

Bern takes the black box and goes to the internal door as if about to leave.

Bern I'm just going to leave you two together. Enjoy. Take your time.

Hart Bye.

Bern leans back in and presses a button on the black box. Hart experiences a tremendous electrical shock. He convulses, gripping the bicycle seat. Bern turns off the juice. Hart subsides. He drops the bicycle seat.

Bern rushes back in.

Bern Hart? You ok.

Hart What was that? What the...

Bern Oh look. You dropped your bicycle seat.

Bern picks up the bicycle seat and tries to hand it to Hart.

Hart Take it away. Take it away.

Bern Don't you want it? I thought you liked it.

Hart No. Take it away.

Bern Ok, Hart. I'll take the bad bicycle seat away. There. It's gone. You're safe now.

Hart Thank you Bern. You're good to me.

Hart squeezes Bern's hand gratefully. Bern pats him encouragingly. Bern takes a few readings from the black box and makes a few notes on his clipboard.

Bern Interesting.

Scene - Browse Her

This is a word association exercise. It can be improvised. At first the prompter is Bern, and the responder is Sarah, but this may change as the scene progresses. The prompter says a single word, and the responder goes into a monologue inspired by the word. The prompter then picks a word from the monologue and the responder goes into another rave. This continues throughout.

Sarah is ironing. Bern picks up the black box and he begins to browse her.

The doorbell rings. A surrealist painting has been delivered.

Hart goes and takes delivery. He carries the large painting on the side of him facing the audience. It obscures Bern as he passes through. Hart swaps places with Bern smoothly, Bern takes the painting and goes on to hang it on the wall.

Hart continues to browse Sarah.

Bern puts the painting on the wall and considers it. He doesn't like it. He puts it in an arras, where it is swapped with another surrealist painting.

The doorbell rings. Another surrealist painting has been delivered. Bern answers the door, takes the painting, hangs it on the wall, isn't sure, takes it down and puts it in the arras.

Then he goes and gets the other painting out of the other arras, but now it's a different painting, and walks past, obscuring Hart, who swaps with him, then he hangs it on the wall.

This painting and person swapping can go on for a while. The idea is to confuse the audience.

It might be possible to swap with Sarah too. Eventually the word association might devolve to 'fish', and they all start saying it, softly at first, hypnotically, in a crescendo.

It would be nice somehow to make them all disappear at the end.

Prompter Open

Responder The door was open. At first I thought I must have left it unlocked but then I saw the broken glass. Everything was on the floor. There were...

Prompter Glass

Responder They were beautiful. You couldn't tell they were glass unless you leaned close, and of course you couldn't touch. It took them almost sixty years to make, the Blaschkas, father and son, beginning in the nineteenth century, Dresden in its glory, all done before the second World War, before the firestorm, beautiful botanical models of plants, blown, shaped, heated, painted, some larger than life, brilliant colors, the most impossibly delicate petals and ...

Prompter Models

Responder Strutting with that spiky self-sufficiency, that fierce display of independence, yet there only for the product, only for the money, their sexuality entirely in service of some label, some....

Prompter Label

Responder So I sit down and they say what an interesting résumé, and give each other this look, and immediately I'm thinking what does that mean, I'm on the defensive from the word go, they're doing these sickly smiles at me and I'm going what is your problem and the one with the comb over says And would you describe yourself as a writer or as an administrative assistant and I tried to smile back for the life of me I couldn't do it and I just said do we have to put a label to it. And the one with the bad tie says Where do you see yourself in five years and I say Far, far away, And they say well I think we're done here if you have any questions you'd like...

Prompter Comb

Responder She'd massage it in, the smell like oranges rotting in the sun, acrid, and there was the steam and the soap and the brightness of the tiles, and that metal comb that caught your hair and my mother would kneel beside the bath and slowly, carefully run the comb through my hair and her face was so close and I was so warm but I could feel the teeth running over my scalp and she'd say Found a crawly and pick it out and lay it on the white bath and there was this little creature, tiny legs, a little black body, that was living on me, I was its world, its home, there was no shame, no blame it was something we did together, something close, she picked my nits, a primate mother, she knew me all over, between the world and me there she was, warm and damp and close...

Prompter Home

Responder I got so I could carry it in one bag, with little wheels and a long handle, a laptop, a phone, a few decent clothes, changes of underwear, a book, a little travel clock with an alarm, a few photo frames, me and mother that time I got her to come away to the mountains, at the lookout, the sun was in her eyes, and the one of my twenty first, with Ellen, we were so

flushed and red eyed, it was before the accident, and for a while I had that one of Allan, and what else, my toothbrush, a few toiletries, I'd unpack it all in the hotel and I was home...

Scene - She Didn't Say

Bern having phone sex on the black box. Starts like a normal phone conversation.

Sarah and Hart listening, exchanging glances, looking uncomfortable.

Bern You don't say. You don't say. Ooooh, you ... don't ... say.

...and so on, to orgasm.

Bern puts the black box down.

Bern looks around but Sarah and Hart are deliberately avoiding catching his eye. He decides to deliver the punch line anyway.

Bern She didn't say.

Scene - The Man Inside

Hart and Bern go into an arras. Hart puts out his head and uses his arms as the midget's feet, dressed in little pants legs and shoes, while Bern puts out his arms to act as the midget's arms. They look like a homunculus. They need a little coat to join the arms to the legs. This may also require padded gloves and lips or a mask. The tongue should protrude on occasion.

Sarah sings "The Man Inside" while Hart and Bern dance the homunculus.

Song - The Man Inside

Sarah Some men are very big, some men are very small,
Some men you never ever find out what they are at all,
But always there is this, the thing they cannot hide,
The itsy bitsy teensy weensy little man inside
The man inside.

Some men are very weak, some men are very strong,
Some men can never ever keep it up for very long,
But always there is this, the thing you know is true,
Inside a tiny little man is waiting there for you,
The man inside.

He's not superficial, he's dark and he's deep,
He's there when I'm waking, here's there when I sleep,
He speaks to my spirit, he tells me no lies,
He feels what I'm feeling, he sees through my eyes,

Some men are very good, some men are very bad,
Some men will drive you staring, screaming, permanently mad,
But always there is this, explain it if you can,
Inside inside inside another tiny little man,
The man inside.

Scene - Whack

Hart finds a Jacob's ladder toy in Bern's stuff and starts to play with it. It has six panels. On one side all panels black, with the word WHITE in white letters, one letter each on the bottom five panels. On the other side all panels are white, with the word BLACK in black letters, one letter each on the bottom five panels. As Hart plays with it, black turns to white and back.

Bern comes in.

Bern Hey, that's mine.

Hart continues to play, watching the mechanism closely.

Bern I didn't say you could play with that.

Hart continues to play and inspect.

Bern You know Einstein's definition of insanity? Doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.

Hart twists the top panel again. The panels are now black/white/black/white/black/white, and spell the word WHACK.

Scene - One Fish, Two Fish

Bern and Hart are sitting together on the sofa. They are staring at the audience. Sarah is ironing and reading.

Hart Bern.

Bern Yeah?

Hart How did you get to know so much?

Bern I don't know anything.

Hart Yes you do.

Bern You know, Hart, the one thing I know is that I know nothing.

Hart But Bern, you can just talk and talk and talk.

Bern Anyone can do that. That's easy.

Hart I can't.

Bern Sure you can. You just need a lot of words.

Hart I don't know any words.

Bern Read some books.

Hart I don't like reading books.

Bern looks searchingly at Hart.

Bern What don't you like?

Hart They're just. They take too long. They're like.

Bern Hart, I think I have the book for you.

Bern goes to the mentalpiece and picks a book. He hands it to Hart. Bern prompts Hart while he reads.

Bern What do you make of this?

Hart One fish, two fish.

Bern rrr...

Hart Red fish, blue fish.

Bern That's great work, Hart. So how do you like the story so far?

Hart I don't know. Maybe a little far-fetched. These fish. None of them seem real.

Bern I think you're going to find he wraps it all up in the end.

Hart turns to the end and reads with difficulty.

Hart Funny things are everywhere. I don't get it.

Bern You don't do that Hart, you don't just turn to the end.

Hart Why not?

Bern Because it's not about the end. It's about how the beginning leads to the middle and the middle leads to the end. It's about movement. Action.

Hart It's not about fish?

Scene - Light Bulb On

Hart is alone on the sofa, under the light bulb. He's reading One Fish, Two Fish. He comes to the end and closes it triumphantly.

He looks around, gets up and puts it back on the shelf. He picks up another book from the shelf and sits down. He starts to read. He becomes absorbed.

The light bulb goes on above his head.

Scene - One, Two, Three, Fish

Hart and Bern on the sofa. Sarah is ironing and reading.

Bern Ok, Hart. What's next in the sequence? One, two, three?

Sarah holds up four fingers and mouths 'four'. Hart glances at Fluffy.

Hart Fish.

Sarah holds up four fingers and mouths 'four' again..

Bern Don't prompt him, Sally. Hart? What's next?

Hart I don't know. Could be anything. There are obvious rules for four, five, six and seven.

Bern How do you get five?

Hart Add the previous two numbers.

Bern What about six?

Hart Multiply the previous two numbers.

Bern Seven?

Hart Add the previous number to the square of the number before that.

Bern And there's a rule for fish? What's the rule for fish?

Hart Every fourth number is fish.

Bern I love you, Hart.

*Hart and Bern exchange charged glances. Hart and Sarah exchange charged glances.
Sarah and Barn exchange charged glances.*

Scene - Light Bulb Disco

Hart is reading alone, as in Light Bulb on, with a pile of books beside him. He reads a little, then cross-references to another book. Then another. The bulb starts to flick between its various colors, and everything flicks in color with it. Then the bulb goes back to white, and starts to pulse. An elaborate disco light show appears as Hart becomes more absorbed in his studies.

Scene - Same Fish

Bern is standing on one leg shaving. Hart enters, warily skirts the bicycle seat, and gazes at Fluffy. Sarah is dusting her stuff with her feather duster.

Bern Fish.

Hart and Sarah look at Bern with a mixture of expectation and resignation.

Bern Do you ever think it's all the one fish?

Sarah An omnipresent cosmic intelligence that touches us all and informs our perception as the vital spark that we call consciousness but is in fact a shared mind, a universal gestalt, call it God if you will?

- Bern Just the same fish, Sally. There are no individual fish. Fish are just a fish. The fish.
- Hart There is only one fish. You're the fish, aren't you, Fluffy? You're the little fish. Ontologically speaking.
- Bern What did you say?
- Hart I'm saying we may seek in vain for epistemological certainty. Plato would have it that Fluffy is a mere shadow of some ideal fish, projected on the wall of our humble cave. Descartes tells us that by experiencing Fluffy, we can be certain only of our own existence. For Wittgenstein it is the inherent nature of Fluffy herself that determines her possibilities, her interactions with the other objects of her universe.
- Bern Where is this coming from?
- Hart One Fish, Two Fish.

Scene - Rubik

Bern has a Rubik's cube. He is struggling with it. He gives up and throws it over his shoulder. Hart catches it and looks at it. It is solved.

Scene - Metaphor for Metaphor

Hart picks up a book from the mentalpiece, sits on the sofa and starts to read. The list below can be altered at will.

- Hart Thales, Pythagoras, Euclid, Apollonius, Hipparchus, Ptolemy, Fourier, Helmholtz, Kelvin, Gibbs, Aristotle, Tycho Brahe, Galileo, Kepler, Euler, D'Alembert, Lagrange, Laplace, Herschel, Adams, Hill, Poincare, Newton, Democritus, Plato, Averroes, Bacon, Descartes, Pascal, Napier, Davy, Regnault, Foucault, Franklin, Harvey, Linnaeus, Jenner, Agricola, Hutton, Lyell, Dana, De Beaumont, Suess, Bessemer, Pasteur, Boyle, Cavendish, Priestley, Dalton, Gay Lussac, Berzelius, Wohler, Liebig, Bunsen, Mendelejeff, Perkins, van't Hoff, Lavoisier, Gilbert, Coulomb, Volta, Oersted, Ampere, Ohm, Henry, Maxwell, Morse, Siemens, Gramme, Hertz, Faraday, Gutenberg, Watt, Arkwright, Whitney, Perkins, Fulton, Fairbairn, Froude, Otto, De Laval, Wright, Archimedes, Ictinus, Phidias, Vitruvius, Anthemius, De Coucy, Giotto, Brunelleschi, Wren, Bulfinch, Leonardo da Vinci, Guericke, Torricelli, Chladni, Huygens, Young, Arago, Fresnel, Daguerre, Kirchhoff, Rowland, Darwin, Black, Rumford, Joule, Clausius, Carnot, Telford, Stephenson, De Lesseps, Rankine, Eads, Copernicus, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Hume, Locke, Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, Popper, Einstein, Bohr, ...

The list continues. Bern and Sarah are sitting on the sofa. They give each other a look and begin to make love. Each new name drives them to further frenzies. For certain names there are big reactions, e.g. Pythagoras, Aristotle, Newton. Sarah stretches out on top of the back of the sofa and Bern nuzzles and caresses her. Eventually they go down behind the sofa and we hear much grunting, moaning and scuffling.

Hart picks up another book.

Hart Context. Syntax. Subject. Predicate. Sensation. Cognition. Trope. Image. Symbol. Metaphor.

At this word there are passionate howls from behind the sofa.

Hart stops and ponders.

Sarah Don't stop. Don't stop.

Hart What's a metaphor for metaphor?

Bern gophers.

Bern How many letters?

Hart How would I know?

(Hart gives the answer when he awakens in the final scene)

Scene - The Disciple

Bern attempts to enlighten Hart by the Socratic method.

Sarah is ironing and reading.

Bern and Hart are sitting on the sofa staring at the audience. Bern picks up the black box and presses a button.

Hart Hey. I was watching that. That's my favorite movie.

Bern I've seen Die Hard a hundred times.

Hart That's not fair.

Bern Fair? You speak of justice and injustice?

Bern takes Hart by the arm and raises him from the sofa. They walk side by side as might a teacher and student at an Athenian academy.

Bern But how is this, friend Hart? Have you forgotten that you do not know this, or have you been to the schoolmaster without my knowledge? Has he taught you to discern the just from the unjust? Who is he? I wish you would tell me, that I may go and learn of him - you shall introduce me.

Hart You are mocking me, insufferable Bern.

Bern I most solemnly declare to you by Zeus, who is the God of our common friendship, and whom I never will forswear, that I am not.

Hart Yeah, right.

Bern But of the quarrels about justice and injustice, even if you have never seen them, you have certainly heard from many people, including Homer; for you have heard of the Iliad and Odyssey?

Sarah And of course Die Hard?

Hart To be sure, Bern.

Bern A difference of just and unjust is the argument of those works?

Hart Are you asking me or telling me?

Bern Which difference caused all the wars and deaths of Trojans and Achaeans, and the deaths of the suitors of Penelope in their quarrel with Odysseus.

Sarah Not to mention Hans Gruber.

Hart Very true.

Bern And can they be said to understand that about which they are quarreling to the death?

Sarah Hans Gruber had a classical education.

Bern I'm asking Hart.

Sarah Actually it's a key point. Gruber was fully conscious of the evil of his crimes. No insanity plea, all meticulously planned, the plastic explosive in the roof, right down to second guessing the FBI. If anyone deserved to be thrown off Nakatomi Tower, he did.

Bern Hart? A simple no will suffice.

Hart Fish.

Bern But how are you ever likely to know the nature of justice and injustice, about which you are so perplexed, if you have neither learned them of others nor discovered them yourself?

Hart You are so full of it, Bern.

Sarah You tell him, Hart.

Hart The suggestion that knowledge is either taught or discovered by this unspeakably tedious process of dialectic is frankly absurd.

Bern And that knowledge, how did you come by that?

Hart Your general point, that people talk about things like justice without thinking about them enough, is conceded. Big deal. Done. Are we finished now?

Bern I think not, gentle Hart, for there remain many humiliating concessions I have yet to extract.

Sarah And your broader point, Bern, with all this I am the wisest because I admit I know nothing crap, is simply a ruse by which you hope to maintain your sexual and social advantages in lieu of any examination of your merit.

Hart She's got a point.

Bern You're all ganging up on me. That's not fair.

Sarah Go drink some hemlock.

Scene - Threesome - Hitler was So Gay

Bern and Sarah are in bed.

Sarah Did you put out the garbage?

Bern No.

Sarah Well, who did?

Bern I don't know.

Sarah It didn't put itself out.

Bern Hart?

Hart appears from under the covers.

Hart Yeah?

Bern Did you put out the garbage?

Hart Yeah. And I fed Fluffy. She was hungry. And lonely. Poor little thing.

Hart bursts into tears.

Sarah What is it, sweetie.

Hart I'm just...this feels...I don't....

Hart sobs again.

Bern Hey. Big guy.

He puts an arm around Hart. Hart flinches away.

Bern What? What's the matter?

Hart We shouldn't...it's not...

Sarah Relax, honey. Tell mother.

Hart It's wrong. What we're doing. We're not supposed to do this.

Sarah Says who?

Bern That's just guy stuff, Hart. Flicking towels in the locker room. Wrestling. Man to man. One on one. Hanging tough.

Hart I feel so...

Bern Gay?

Hart bursts into tears again.

Sarah Hart, sweetie, not that you're gay, but lots of famous people have been gay. Are gay.

The lists below can be changed at whim.

Bern Oh yeah. Heaps. Socrates, Sappho, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar.

Sarah Donatello, Michelangelo, Leonardo.

Hart asks hopefully.

Hart Raphael?

Sarah Not really.

Hart is disappointed.

Bern Gerard Manley Hopkins, John Keats, Walt Whitman.

Sarah Patrick White, Virginia Wolf.

Bern Isaac Newton,

Sarah Leibniz?

Bern Maybe.

Sarah Alan Turing,

Bern Cole Porter, Alan Bates, Cary Grant.

Sarah James Dean, Montgomery Clift, Rock Hudson,

Bern Ian McKellen, Nigel Hawthorne, Simon Callow,

Sarah Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs,

Bern Gertrude Stein, Leonard Bernstein, Ludwig Wittgenstein,

Hart Really?

Sarah Really.

Sarah and Bern sing "Hitler was So Gay". They do a conga line dance and eventually Hart joins in. The conga line forms a circle and of course there are line dancing opportunities.

Song - Hitler was So Gay

Hitler was so gay, deny it if you dare,
The way he wore his boots, the way he wore his hair,
Of training camps for boys he was so very fond,
He wanted to create himself the perfect blue-eyed blond,

Sigmund was so gay, his actions will avouch,
He only had one dream: to get you on the couch,
Of sucking big cigars he never used to tire,
He managed to invent a word for sexual desire.

Jesus was so gay, so gentle, sweet and kind,
That perfect skin, his facial hair a little too designed,
He had that thing for feet, he never had a wife,
He hung around with other guys in dresses all his life.

We are all so gay, that's what this is about,
The world would be a better place if only we came out,
It's time to break the bars, it's time to smash the locks,
It's time to sing the songs, dance the dances, wear the frocks,

Everyone is gay, the message for the night,
The person on your left, the person on your right,
The person in between, you see them every day,

Now see them with the certainty that everyone is gay.

Scene - The Wink

This scene is inspired by the 1969 interview of Noam Chomsky by William F. Buckley on The Firing Line. Bern, Stage Right, is Buckley, Hart, Stage Left, is Chomsky. They use the body language and vocal mannerisms of Buckley and Chomsky.

At first they are doing Art as Technique, with Bern as Potebnya and Hart as Shklovsky.

In addition, Bern is Hitler and Hart is Groucho Marx. Clearly Groucho is also Karl.

In the following a slash / indicates the entry of the following speech, which then proceeds simultaneously with the current speech.

Hart and Bern are sitting on the sofa, turned toward each other; their legs crossed. Bern has his clipboard on his knee. He fiddles with a pencil, sometimes laying it across his upper lip like a mustache.

Bern patronizes the daylights out of Hart, and Hart wipes the floor with him. They are ranging freely over the nature of consciousness and art.

Sarah is ironing and reading. She interjects and does the commercial breaks.

Bern hands Hart a Groucho glasses-nose-no mask.

Bern Would you mind putting this on? It's intended to humiliate you.

Hart Certainly.

Bern I rejoice in your disposition to argue this issue.

Hart Of course.

Bern Especially when I realize what an act of self-control this must involve.

Hart It does. Sometimes I lose my temper. Maybe not tonight.

Bern Maybe not tonight. Because if you would I'd smash you in the goddam face.

Hart Yes.

Bern. You queer.

Hart Yes. Ha ha.

Bern Now, you and I were talking about the role of image in art, the role of metaphor.

Hart I don't think we were talking about that. We were talking about art in general.

Sarah Weren't we just trying to get laid?

Bern Did you hear something?

Hart Don't think so. We were talking about the formalisms, the technical aspects of art/, and how that relates to the nature of thought, to consciousness.

- Bern We were talking about the visual nature of art, about form, about function, about structure, about content. There are people who would agree/ that the role of the artist is to reinterpret, to make familiar the unfamiliar.
- Hart I'm not aware of that. I'm not aware that the people have been heard on this issue. I'm not aware of anyone who would agree with you. In fact the role of the artist is quite the opposite, /to make the familiar unfamiliar.
- Bern Scarcely the opposite, one wouldn't have thought, although to accommodate opposites/ is to encompass a greater whole.
- Hart To accommodate opposites is to immerse oneself in a mire of Orwellian newspeak and doublethink/, to admit the most extreme revisionism, which is precisely the four legs, two legs, good, bad, pigs in charge, ...
- Bern Here's tired old George again, hello George, I think 1984 came and went without too much of an upheaval, go back to sleep Georgie Porgie.
- Hart ...web of deceptively persuasive but ultimately corrupt and misleading cant we have come to expect from so profoundly limited, intellectually dishonest/ and essentially meager a school of thought.
- As he delivers the following line, talking over Hart, Bern makes a little walking away gesture with his right hand, and tips Hart a spectacularly condescending wink.*
- Bern Look, I follow you. I follow you. If you want me to pursue that digression, I will. But let's suspend it for a moment.
- Hart Okay.
- Sarah Get a room.
- Bern Did you say something?
- Hart Me? No. Go on.
- Bern Would you agree that the role of the artist is to pursue a dialectic, you'd like that wouldn't you/, some sort of metaphysical nonsense about a dialectic, in which case the accommodation of opposites...
- Hart If you mean some kind of tennis match, call and response, the only purpose of which is to push some line in crypto-fascist propaganda, no, I wouldn't like it at all and/ I can't imagine anyone who would.
- Bern I can't imagine what you mean, the accommodation of opposites /within the dialectic would surely...
- Hart I'm saying that art is about the question, not about the answer.
- Bern And what exactly, in your view, is the question?
- Hart The question is...
- The interruption chime sounds. Sarah stands up with the black box.*
- Sarah Having trouble remembering what the argument is about? Acme, for the ultimate in reviewing pleasure.

Sarah presses a button on the black box. Hart and Bern rewind. Sarah presses another button.

Bern It's intended to humiliate you.

Sarah Acme: not too reliable, but we deliver anywhere.

Sarah presses the button again. Nothing happens. She shakes the black box, reorients it and presses again. Hart and Bern resume from where they left off.

Bern I interrupted you, I'm sorry.

Hart Yes. I'm saying question everything./ Even this.

Bern Even what you just said? So as well as what you are saying, you are saying the opposite,/ which I think was my point.

Hart I repeat, it is not about opposites, certainly not in accommodating opposites. Just saying here is white, here is black, even saying black is white/, does not constitute art. It's about seeing black anew, experiencing white afresh with wonder and amazement.

Bern Does not constitute art, but is anybody saying black is white? That would be absurd. I think we are saying white is black/, certainly not, certainly not that black is white.

Hart Certainly not, certainly not. Revolution, not reconciliation. And let's distinguish between a conceptual distinction and a factual distinction. The difference between white and black/ is a factual distinction. With some minor exceptions.

Bern Is a factual distinction. All right, okay, let's talk about the exceptions then. White is black, I think you will agree, in the dark, when no one is there/, and we really want it to be.

Hart No, I don't believe that/, I believe white is white and will never be black, regardless of the observer.

Bern I know you don't believe it. It might be refreshing to listen to this point of view. Now, the schizophrenia, how/ do you explain that?

Hart What schizophrenia?

Bern Of black and white, the oscillation between the extremes?

Hart I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about.

Bern I think you're being evasive.

Hart I'm not being evasive at all.

Bern You are aware that being indignant doesn't/ make you right.

Hart I have a right to be /indignant.

Bern You have a right to be indignant if you are right. But if you are not right/ you have no right, no right to be anything.

Hart May I say something? May I complete a...

The interruption chime sounds. Sarah uses the remote control to turn them both off.

If we need an interval, this is the place.

ACT III

Scene - Sarah, is it you?

Sarah is wandering discontentedly, dusting with her feather duster. When Hart calls her name from offstage, she does not react.

Hart Sarah? Sarah?

Hart enters.

Hart Sarah? Sarah?

Sarah does not acknowledge Hart. Hart studies Sarah with puzzlement as if seeing her for the first time.

Song - Sarah, is it You

Hart Sarah, is it you?

Sarah I'm not Sarah.

Hart Did you put on something new?

Sarah I'm not Sarah.

Hart Have you changed the way you walk? Have you changed the way you talk?

Sarah I'm not Sarah. I'm not Sarah.

Hart Glasses, did you wear?

Sarah I'm not Sarah.

Hart The color of your hair?

Sarah I'm not Sarah.

Hart Have you changed the way you smile? Did you reassess your style?

Sarah I'm not Sarah. I'm not Sarah.

Hart Have you changed your laugh, your sigh?

Sarah I'm not Sarah.

Hart The twinkle in your eye?

Sarah I'm not Sarah.

Hart You have even changed your name. Do you love me just the same?

Sarah I'm not Sarah. I'm not Sarah.

Scene - Hart's Confession

Hart becomes depressed. Knowledge, introspection, and increasing powers of discrimination have depressed him. He takes to wandering around in a revolting dressing gown, or maybe shivering in his puffy jacket.

Sarah tries to help him. She treats him with cognitive therapy. He confesses that he loves her and can't bear her to be with Bern. Hart is incoherent and irrational but understandable. When he talks about his feelings for Sarah he is crystal clear.

Hart is sitting on the couch, with a one thousand yard stare. Sarah enters. At first she avoids noticing him but eventually gives up. She steels herself and asks the question.

Sarah What is it?

Hart Nothing.

Sarah Come on. Tell mother.

Hart It's just I'm useless. I can't do anything right. You can't stand me. Bern doesn't like me. Even Fluffy is tired of me. I can see why. I'm just annoying. I used to be an idiot, and now I know lots of words and I can drop lots of names but I'm still an idiot. I'm no closer to having any idea of what is going on, I've become all the things I used to hate, I've squandered my potential, I smell, I'm fat, I wear bad clothes...

Sarah Oh, Hart.

Hart Aren't you going to contradict me?

Sarah Hart, honey. Don't be so hard on yourself.

Hart I'm just being honest. I'm being realistic. Look at me.

Sarah You're not being rational. You're a good person. You have a lot to be proud of. You taught yourself to read. You can be proud of that, can't you?

Hart I suppose. But I still have to move my lips sometimes. For Henry James.

Sarah And you can out-talk Bern now. Have you noticed he's avoiding you? That's because he doesn't want to debate you.

Hart I thought it was because he hates me.

Sarah Oh, I don't think so. Not completely. That would be expecting a little too much feeling from Bern.

Hart And why are you avoiding me?

Sarah I'm not...it's just...the fact is you do talk a lot. And it's mostly...well...crap. It's really very boring. Very, very, very boring.

Hart But I was only doing that for you.

Sarah For me?

Hart You liked Bern. Bern could talk.

Sarah Hart, sweetie, that's not what it was.

Hart What was it?

Sarah Oh, I don't know. He was different.

Hart Different to me.

Sarah He had something I thought I wanted. It was as if he could show me something new. But now I'm not so sure it is new. I've learned something, but it wasn't what I thought I was going to learn.

Hart I wish I could unlearn what I've learned.

Sarah No you don't, Hart. You like what you are now. You're stronger. You know more tricks. You won't let someone like Bern make a fool of you again.

Hart All this knowing, it just makes me miserable.

Sarah Happiness isn't everything. And you know yourself a little better.

Hart All I know is how much there is to know that I don't know.

Sarah You're sounding like Bern.

Hart I know one thing. I love you, Sarah. I love you with my whole body. With my whole mind. With all the rest, with everything. I don't want to share you. I don't care if it's wrong. I want you to myself. I want you to want me. I love you.

Sarah Oh, Hart.

They kiss.

This scene segues into the bicycle seat soliloquy.

Scene - Bicycle Seat Soliloquy

Bern enters and soliloquizes to the bicycle seat. Sarah and Hart try to conceal themselves. They think they are secretly observing him, but he knows they are watching. He gives a very detailed and dramatic performance. Hart reacts in horror to the bicycle seat.

Bern I feel, when I'm thinking of thinking,
A disturbing sensation of sinking,
In endless recursion
And so for diversion
I'm thinking of thinking of thinking.

Bern goes out.

Sarah Hart, he doesn't really need us.

Hart Yeah. He has each other.

Scene - Say the Words

Bern is talking to Fluffy.

Bern Hey Fluffy. A swordfish walks into a bar. And the bartender says "Why the long face?"
Hey Fluffy. A swordfish walks into a bar. And the bartender says "Why the long face?"
Hey Fluffy. A swordfish walks into a bar. And the bartender says "Why the long face?"

Sarah enters. She hovers.

Bern What?

Sarah This is difficult to say.

Bern How come? Some kind of aphasia? Try this. Look at my nose.

He extends his arms wide apart and holds up three fingers with his left hand and one finger with his right.

Now, how many fingers am I holding up? I want the answer in French.

Sarah I'm leaving you. I'm going with Hart.

Bern Not even close.

Sarah You don't love me and Hart does.

Bern Hart does what?

Sarah Hart loves me.

Bern Interesting hypothesis. What is your evidence?

Sarah He says he loves me.

Bern A behaviorial tic. A conditioned response. He says it, he gets nooky. So he says it again.

Sarah I believe him. I can't prove it. I believe Hart loves me.

Bern Let's see if we can devise an experiment. I'm thinking a cage, a little lever, maybe a flashing light. An electric grid. Definitely a grid.

Sarah You never say you love me.

Bern That's true. But I also never say I wear my underpants inside out. And yet I do.

Sarah Why?

Bern It stops the seams chafing.

Sarah Why do you never say you love me?

Bern I distrust portfolio words.

Sarah Just say the words and see how it feels.

Bern Why would I do that?

Sarah You can't do it. You're not up to it.

Bern I can do it. I choose not to.

Sarah You're not the man Hart is.

Bern Hart couldn't find his ass with both hands and a GPS system. Now that we can test.

He picks up the black box and makes some adjustments to bring up GPS functionality. He looks around for Hart.

Bern What are the coordinates of Hart's ass again?

Sarah takes the black box in annoyance and begins to program coordinates into it while she speaks.

Sarah Hart can say it. You can't. Can you? Go on. I dare you.

Sarah gives Bern back the black box. She goes over to the mentalpiece. She picks up the skull. She speaks to it.

Sarah Bern?

Bern hears it as a call on the phone. He puts the black box to his ear.

Bern Yes?

Sarah Do you have something to say to me?

Bern I love you.

Sarah That was crap.

Bern I love you.

Sarah Rubbish.

Bern I love you.

Sarah Garbage.

Bern I lo...

Bern is having trouble completing the thought.

Sarah You're breaking up.

Bern I'm losing you.

Sarah puts the skull down and Bern lowers the black box.

Sarah No. I don't believe you. And I do believe Hart. So.

Bern Is that all I have to do? Just figure out how to say I love you so you'll believe me. Is that the challenge?

Sarah Yes. That's all there is to it. Trivial.

Sarah exits.

Bern goes over to Fluffy.

Bern I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you.

Scene - Where'd You Get This?

Hart is talking to Fluffy.

Hart Hello, Fluffy. How was your day? What did you do, Fluffy? You know what, Fluffy? You should get out more. Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to get you a bicycle. A tiny little bicycle. Yes I am. Then we can go on rides together. Yes we can. I'm going to get over my phobia. Yes I am. Once you learn, Fluffy, you never forget.

As Hart speaks the next line, with perfect sincerity, Bern walks in, holding the razor, and overhears.

Hart Hey Fluffy? I love you.

Bern Hart, glad I found you. What do you make of this?

Bern hands Hart something tiny he holds between thumb and forefinger. Hart rolls it around between thumb and forefinger.

Hart Hmm. Feels like shit.

Hart examines it closely.

Looks like shit.

Hart sniffs it.

Smells like shit.

Hart tentatively tastes it.

Tastes like shit. Where'd you get this?

Bern Off a hair on my bum.

Hart attacks Bern. They fight. They brawl offstage.

Scene - Simplification

Bern and Hart enter brawling. Hart manages to hold still Bern for a moment.

Hart Bern. I am your father.

Bern Nooooooo!

Moment of quiet.

Bern You are not my father.

Hart It's a metaphor.

Bern You bastard. I do the metaphors.

Hart And I'm Sarah's father.

Bern She's my sister?

Hart She's your mother.

Bern hits Hart.

Hart She's your sister.

Bern hits Hart.

Hart She's your mother.

Bern hits Hart.

Hart I'm your sister.

Bern hits Hart.

Hart I'm your mother.

Bern Fuck you.

They fight. Bern drops the razor. Hart picks up the razor and holds Bern off with it. Bern picks up the bicycle seat. Hart reacts with horror.

Hart No! Take it away!

Bern Drop it. Drop the razor.

Hart drops the razor. Bern recovers it. Bern holds the razor aloft. Hart runs off.

Bern There's going to be a simplification.

Bern chases Hart.

Scene - Sleeps with the Fish

Sarah is looking for Hart. She looks for him by picking up her things, one by one, and calling his name into them.

Bern enters.

Sarah Where's Hart?

Bern His mother called.

Sarah His mother's dead.

Bern She was speaking through a medium.

Sarah He never had a mother. He was not of woman born.

Bern Maybe it was Aunt Hilda.

Sarah Where is he, Bern?

Bern He sleeps with the fishes.

Sarah Fish.

Bern What?
Sarah Why are plurals so difficult?
Bern He transcended.
Sarah Transcended.
Bern He went beyond.
Sarah He always wanted to. It was his dream.
 You killed him, didn't you? Because of me. That's how you said it. I love you. Because you
 couldn't say the words.
 I love you, too, Bern.

Scene - Sarah's Version

Flashbacks and presentiments. Sarah is holding the black box and looking at it. She responds emotionally to the images. Sarah is playing her own version of events.

Sarah 848331236

Bern poses as we saw him at the beginning, shaving on one foot

Sarah 848331237

Hart covering his face with his hands to avoid losing his soul.

Sarah 848331238

Bern poses holding the bicycle seat in soliloquy

Sarah 848331239

Bern caught just after throwing the Rubik's cube over his shoulder.

Sarah 848331240

Bern and Hart fighting

Sarah 848331241

Bern holding the razor aloft.

Sarah 848331242

Bern with Hart slumping to the floor

Sarah 848331243

Bern stands sated over Hart's body, holding the razor.

Sarah gazes at this scene for some time with strong but ambivalent feelings.

She exits.

Scene - What Really Happened

The picture flashing starts again and speeds up, turning from still pictures into a movie. Bern unfreezes and moves on from the action caught in the last photo. We are seeing what really happened.

Bern puts the razor away. He helps Hart up and supports him, walking him around a little, then sits Hart down on the sofa. Hart is passive and unresisting, a bit groggy, but seems happy enough.

Possibly Hart ends up on the floor and Bern has trouble getting him onto the sofa and ends up levitating Hart onto the sofa. He'll need a large cloth.

Bern Ok, Hart. Sorry, buddy. All in fun. Guess we got a bit carried away there. You ok? You're fine. You're doing great. Lucky the floor broke your fall.

Hart, talk to me. Do you know where you are? Do you understand why you're here?

Hart shrugs, then nods, then shakes his head.

Do you know who you are? Do you know who I am?

Hart shakes his head, then smiles at Bern.

You're going to be just fine. We just need to do a few tests.

Bern goes to an arras and takes a metal hairnet, connected to a bundle of wires, and puts it over Hart's head. He adjusts it, and connects the other end of the bundle of wires to the black box, which he holds in his hand.

Bern looks around, then gets the skull and puts it on the mentalpiece next to the Fluffy vase.

He takes another metal hairnet, connected to a bundle of wires, and puts the hairnet over the skull.

Bern connects the skull hairnet wire bundle to the black box.

How you doing, are you all right in there? We're going to get you back, Hart. You'll be back to your old self in no time. I mean, you know, one thing I will say for keeping it simple, Hart, there's not much in there to get broken.

Bern is holding the black box and pacing a nervously. There's the risk of tangling the wires. He steps over the wires in a kind of dance.

Bern is frowning, trying to get the whole apparatus up and running. He adjusts Hart's hairnet, tests, the apparatus is still not working, he goes over to the skull, but as he fiddles with the skull hairnet he drops it into Fluffy's vase.

There is a series of strobing flashes, illuminating Fluffy, Hart, Fluffy, Hart. We see Hart

convulsing in the flashes.

Bern gets the hairnet out of Fluffy's vase. The lights come back up. Hart is changed, a little more alert, his muscle tone improved, his general air of intelligence heightened, He opens his mouth, then closes it, repeatedly, like a fish.

Bern looks at Fluffy, then Hart.

Bern Hart?

Hart opens and closes his mouth like a fish.

Fluffy?

Bern looks around in a panic.

Ok. Come on, boy. Up you get.

Bern supports Hart and leads him over to an arras. He puts Hart in and closes the door. He checks the room for evidence, puts the hairnets away.

He registers bewilderment at the complexity of his predicament. He exits.

Scene - Hart's Ghost

Sarah is feeding Fluffy.

Sarah Fluffy, is it you? You've changed somehow. Bern, have you noticed anything different about Fluffy?

Bern is playing spooky Theremin sounds on the keyboard. He does not respond.

Hart appears to Sarah. In general when he appears to someone he comes from an arras out of their line of sight. He does not speak. Occasionally he opens his mouth silently like a fish. Bern acts as if he does not see Hart.

Sarah Hart. Is it you? What do you want. Revenge? Is it revenge? Do you want justice? Is it forgiveness? Do you want to tell me to move on with my life? That recipe for lemon pudding, I kept forgetting to give it to you. I have it somewhere. Can you move? Can you nod your head?

Hart does not nod.

One nod for yes, two nods for no. Or if you can shake your head, then shake for no. It could be very confusing to nod for no. But if you can't shake your head, I guess you'll have to. If you can nod. Ok?

Hart does not nod.

Ok, I'm going to ask you a question. Are you ready?

Hart does not nod.

Bern, can you stop that for a moment?

Bern stops and exits huffily. Sarah speaks to Hart again.

Do you understand the rules?

Hart does not nod.

Can you nod your head?

Hart does not nod.

Can you shake your head?

Slowly, Hart shakes his head.

No? Well, that's a shame. Good to see you, anyway, Hart.

Hart slowly retreats and goes into an arras.

Scene - Fish Food

Bern enters and goes over to the mentalpiece. He picks up Fluffy's fish food and looks around furtively. He takes it over to the arras in which he put Hart and draws aside the curtain. Hart is not there.

Bern thinks for a moment.

Bern goes over to the other arras and draws the curtain. Hart is standing there. Bern puts the fish food in Hart's hand and closes Hart's hand around it. He cuffs Hart affectionately.

Bern Ya big galoot.

Scene - The Ghost at the Feast

Sarah and Bern are eating cramped together on the sofa. Hart appears. Sarah and Bern smell something bad.

Bern Fish.

Sarah What is it?

Bern Hart.

Sarah Oh yeah. I saw him the other day.

Bern So, what, is he going to keep coming around?

Sarah Well I don't know.

Bern Can't you say something to him?

Sarah He never listens to me any more.

Bern There comes a time.

Sarah Yes. But you know, he doesn't have anyone.
Bern He has to try. You know?
Sarah I know, but...
Bern It's not about you any more, Hart.
Sarah Bern, he has feelings.
Bern You're off the island.
Sarah I'm so sorry, dear.
Bern You're on your own two feet, Hart. Find your own, you know, space.
Sarah Call us if you need us.

Bern takes money out of his pocket and tries to hand it to Hart.

Bern Here.

Sarah Take it, honey.

Bern takes a piece of food off his tray and tries to hand it to Hart.

Bern Here.

Sarah Please take it, sweetie.

Bern What do you want me to do, sharpen a stake?

Hart slowly withdraws and returns to an arras.

Sarah I'm going to miss him.

Bern You're going to forget him.

Sarah I don't want to.

Bern You're going to forget him.

Sarah I don't want to.

Scene - Crossing the Beams

Bern has a plan to reverse the process and somehow recover Fluffy and Hart.

Bern enters. He walks over to Fluffy, looks around furtively, and takes the hairnets out of the arras. He goes to the other arras, open it, does not find Hart there, crosses to the original arras from which he took the hairnets. Hart is there.

Bern How you doing, big guy? You're going to be fine. I had a little shave, I realized we just have to ... it's technical, we just have to cross the beams. It's so obvious when you think about it. Here put this on.

Bern places a hair net over Hart's head and connects it to the black box. He draws the curtain on the arras, leaving the hairnet wire trailing behind the black box. He connects

the other hairnet to the black box and then heads over to Fluffy with the intention of putting the hairnet in with Fluffy.

Sarah enters.

Sarah Bern.

Bern Hmmm?

Sarah What are you doing?

Bern Nothing.

Sarah What is that in your hand?

Bern What? This? Oh, it's an apparatus. It's scientific. Technical.

Sarah What is it for?

Bern as he speaks the next speech casually unhooks the hairnets from the black box, puts the black box down, and strolls over to the arras from which the hairnet wire is protruding. He shoves both hairnets into the arras without opening the curtain.

Bern Sarah, so many questions. Don't you think there are some things best left unexplained? Some questions best left unasked? Perhaps it is merely an accident of language that we can form these questions at all. They appear syntactically correct, but that, in and of itself, is no proof that an answer exists, no proof that the question makes any kind of sense. Semantically, ...

Sarah Bern. What are you up to? Were you doing something to Fluffy? Because something is odd about Fluffy. And when something is odd, Bern, I think of you.

Sarah whips open the arras where Hart used to be. There is nothing there.

Bern Sarah, trust is the foundation of any relationship.

He exits. Sarah walks over to examine Fluffy.

Sarah Oh, Fluffy. What's happened to you? What's happened to us? I've done a terrible thing. I did it for love, but that doesn't make it any less terrible. I let Bern do something, I think I may even have wanted him to do something. A terrible thing. And now, I don't have Hart, Hart loved me and he's gone, and I don't have Bern. Bern isn't there for me. He's somewhere else. There's no trust. It's as if there's nothing there at all. Maybe there was never anything there. I was so sure there was something. But now there's no one.

I just have you. Oh Fluffy, it's just us. You and me. Do you love me, Fluffy? If only there was a way you could say it. Fluffy, open your mouth if you love me.

Oh, Fluffy. Oh, I love you too. I love you, Fluffy. I love you.

Scene - Finale

Sarah is always with Fluffy now. The clipboard is on the coffee table.

Sarah Oh, Fluffy. I love you. Fluffy. Are you hungry?

Sarah cannot find the fish food. She looks for it by divining with stretched fingers. She makes a search around the room, and is drawn to an arras. She whips open the curtain at the front. Inside is one of the brain science hairnets, but nothing else. She picks it up and examines it. She puts it on the coffee table.

Sarah goes to the other arras. She whips open the curtain. There is Hart, holding the fish food. He is still wearing a brain science hairnet.

Sarah Hart?

Hart makes fish mouths.

Sarah takes the fish food from his hand. She leads him out of the arras. She touches him.

Sarah Hart. You're alive? Oh darling, what's happened to you?

Sarah looks at Fluffy. She looks at the fish food. She looks at the hairnets. She looks at Hart. She is struggling to preserve the phenomena. She knows something is fishy, and she knows Bern is behind it. She picks up the black box from the coffee table. She plugs Hart's hairnet into it. She plugs the other hairnet in. She wonders what to do with the other hairnet. Hart makes a fish mouth. She walks away and looks at Hart. He shakes his head to show she is cold. She walks past Fluffy the other way. Hart shakes his head. As if compelled by an invisible force she goes to the Fluffy vase. Hart does not shake his head. She takes a breath and lowers the other hair net into it. Strobing. Hart convulses. She removes the hairnet from the Fluffy vase. Hart subsides and shakes himself.

Sarah Hart.

She kisses him. Hart awakens.

Hart Three.

Sarah Oh, Hart.

Hart Three letters. Art.

Sarah What?

Hart A metaphor for metaphor. Three letters. Art.

Where am I? Who am I?

Sarah No time for that, Hart. Go outside and wait for me. Go on.

Hart Sarah? Is it you?

Sarah It's me.

Hart I love you, Sarah.

Sarah I love you, Hart.

Hart Where's Bern?

Sarah Bern is no good for you, Hart. Stay away from Bern.

Sarah opens the outside door and pushes Hart out. She removes the hairnets from the black

box and puts the blackbox in her handbag.

Sarah Bern? Bern?

Sarah exits by the internal door.

Bern steps out of an arras. He goes to the external door and removes the doorknob. He steps into the opposite arras.

Sarah enters and puts her handbag on the coffee table. She packs it with her stuff. One by one, she inserts the Escher hands engraving, the feather duster, the limp clock, the bicycle seat, the iron, and the skull.

Sarah walks to the door. The doorknob is missing. She tries to find it by sweeping her hands over the door. She starts looking everywhere. Under the sofa cushions and down the back of the sofa, along the mentalpiece. She looks without her eyes, by sweeping her hands along surfaces.

She reaches the center of the mentalpiece and is arrested by Fluffy. Sarah looks long and hard at Fluffy, wondering what to do about him.

Sarah is fiddling with the padlock as she often does. She finds the combination. She looks down at her finger in surprise. She removes the padlock and holds it up, examines the settings and commits them to memory. She locks it and opens it. She locks it and opens it again.

She thinks for a moment then she locks it back onto her finger.

She looks from one to the other of the bookend profiles forming the Fluffy vase.

Suddenly the Fluffy vase ceases to exist. The water pours out and Fluffy is left in a puddle. Sarah picks Fluffy up and drops her into the glass containing the melted snowball Hart imagined to contain Sarah's footprint. Fluffy swims around.

Sarah sees the clipboard on the coffee table. She reads it. She becomes still.

Bern enters. He smiles at her. She looks stonily back. He looks down and sees the clipboard.

Sarah You finished it.

Bern Yeah.

Sarah Form, function, structure, content.

Bern Yeah.

Sarah Play it.

Bern Do you really...

Sarah Play it.

Bern picks up the guitar

Song - Good Old Speak

Bern I want to own a goldfish,
So I can call her Fluffy,
I want to own a red dog,
So I can call him Blue,
I'm filing the invasion
Under L for liberation,
I have a perfect vision;
I want to call it you.

I have you in safekeeping
For your own protection,
I built a wall around us,
I'm calling it a home,
Hush, my darling, quiet now
So I can tell you're happy,
As long as you have me dear,
You'll never be alone.

So many voices, so many choices,
There is nothing to fear but fear,
So much dying, so much crying,
Why I really have no idea,

I'm sharpening my razor,
To be on the defensive,
When I am six feet under,
The sky will be above,
I sacrifice my everything
In the name of freedom,
I have an aching feeling,
I want to call it love.

I want to own a goldfish,
So I can call her Fluffy,
I want to own a red dog,
So I can call him Blue,
I'm filing the invasion
Under L for liberation,
I have a perfect vision;
I want to call it you.

Sarah Wow.

Bern Yeah.

Sarah Please tell me this is not about oil.

Bern What did you want it to be about?

Sarah I wanted it to be about us.

Bern looks at her helplessly.

Sarah Not really a love song, is it?

Bern No.

Sarah More of a psychotic, imperialistic, kidnapper, serial killer, bastard scumsucker song.

Bern Yeah.

Sarah Murderer, motherfucker.

Bern Look, if I draw a banana, does that make me a banana?

Sarah It's not a banana.

Bern I'll draw you a banana.

He takes the clipboard and starts to draw on it with his pencil.

Sarah I don't want a banana.

Bern It's only a drawing of a banana.

He hands it to her

Sarah That's a pretty good banana.

Bern So, am I a banana?

Sarah Let me give you something. Here.

She undoes the padlock and hands it to Bern.

Bern Thank you.

Sarah You're welcome.

Bern I have something for you.

He goes down on one knee, takes the doorknob out of his pocket hands it to her.

Sarah Does this mean what I think it means?

Bern I have absolutely no idea.

Sarah What does it mean?

Bern What to you, to me.

Sarah I won't forget you, Bern.

Bern Nor I you.

Sarah You're just experimenting with sentence construction.

Bern looks sheepish.

Sarah Ok.

Bern Bye, Sally.

Sarah Sarah.

Sarah takes the knob, opens the door and goes out. Bern stands around disconsolately for a moment.

He takes out his razor. He stands on one leg and starts shaving. Slowly an idea dawns on him. It is not a nice idea.

Bern goes to the mentalpiece.

The doorbell rings, repeatedly, and increasingly urgently.

Hart appears at a window.

Bern raises the razor; weighing, it, considering it, but thinks better of it. He puts it down on the mentalpiece.

Bern picks up one of the brain hairnets and puts it on. He looks around for the skull. It is gone. He puts the other hairnet on his head over the first (he could stick it down his pants, either at the back or the front. Let me think about that). He holds the end of a wire in each hand. He looks around for the black box. It is gone.

With deliberation and portent, he brings the ends of the wires together. Nothing happens. He tries it again. Nothing. He twists the ends together and holds them in one hand.

Bern picks up the glass.

Bern turns to face the audience. He stands on the coffee table to make a performance of it. He makes sure everyone knows he is seriously thinking of drinking down the contents. He lifts the glass tauntingly. He licks his lips.

Sarah appears at the other window.

A strange unearthly glow begins to come out of the fireplace. We hear the strange unearthly glow sound.

Bern raises the glass in toast to the audience.

Bern Exit.

The doorbell chimes its first note.

Bern puts the ends of the wires in the glass.

Strobes silhouette, one after the other Hart, Sarah, Bern, Sarah, Bern, Hart.... It is pseudo-random, not a cycle. In the flashes of Bern we see him experience some kind of transformation. There's a period that is flashing between Sarah and Hart, with Bern unlit. The flashing stops. The lights come up.

Bern opens his mouth like a fish.

Bern drinks the contents of the glass.

Blackout.

Lights up.

Bern, Hart and Sarah are gone. On the table is the glass containing Fluffy. The doorbell chimes its final note. The strange unearthly glow swells from the fireplace, with accompanying resolution sound.

Fluffy swims around.

END

Curtain Call

Song - We Make the World, We Make the Rules

How did it come to this? How did we get to here?
It seemed so very simple at the start.
But nothing ever is. We take it as it comes,
With open eyes, with soul and brain and heart,
We do what we can do, we give what we can give,
We play it out according to some plan,
But maybe we can find a better way to live,
A better way to do the best we can,

We make the world, we make the rules,
Create it all anew every day.
Sometimes we're saints, sometimes we're fools,
And we decide the part that we play.

How do we really know? How can we say for sure?
We taste, we smell, we see, we hear, we feel.
But is there nothing else? Surely there is more,
Some way to find the truth, to know what's real,
The answer is inside. The answer lies within.
The answer is our heart, and brain and soul,
We have to learn to trust, we have to trust to learn,
It takes so many parts to make a whole,

We make the world, we make the rules,
Create it all anew every day.
Sometimes we're saints, sometimes we're fools,
And we decide the part that we play.