

Anab Whitehouse

# Sovereignty

A Play in Three Acts



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Published 2023  
Bilquees Press



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Characters

**Aaron** – mid-40's; wearing Bermuda shorts and a green polo shirt;

**Anne** – retired; in her 60's; wearing a red bathrobe with light purple pajamas underneath;

**Cathy** – early 30's; wearing a blue blouse and matching skirt with a black-belt;

**Dave** – mid-to-late 30's; wearing black corduroy pants and a white shirt;

**Gloria** – early 30's, African-American; wearing dungarees with a yellow blouse;

**Jake** – early 50's; wearing a plaid shirt and jeans;

**Jane** – early 40's; wearing a brown-colored pants suit;

**Phil** – in his late 60's; wearing a gray sport jacket;

**Susan** – mid-20's; wearing a beige sweater and matching slacks;

**English-speaking soldier** – early 20's– uniform is not of any identifiable country;

**Foreign-speaking soldier – late teens** – unidentifiable uniform; unidentifiable language;

**English-speaking officer** – late 30's – unidentifiable uniform.

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Setting

Location – unknown;

Time – contemporary



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**Scene for Act I**

[The stage consists of a large room with one small, round window near the ceiling toward the back of the stage, but the window is too small for a person to fit through.

There is one door in the room that leads to a bathroom. The walls of the main room are bare.

A war of some kind is being waged outside. From time to time, one sees flashes of explosions through the high window, and one also hears the distant thunder of artillery. Occasionally, the thunder of an explosion from close by reverberates through the room – shaking it somewhat, and there are small bits of debris that fall from the ceiling.

Center stage – contains a couch and several easy-chairs. A small coffee-table is situated in front of the couch. There are several magazines and a newspaper on the table.

One person, a woman, is sitting on the couch reading a magazine. Another individual, a man, is snoozing in one of the easy-chairs.

Stage right, rear – There is a card table with four people playing cards at it (two men and two women). Occasional: Laughter, groans and cries of victory come from the table. The card-table is covered by a cloth.

Stage left, rear – two people (a man and a woman) are playing chess.

An electronic noise is heard, smoke arises between the couch but in front of the chess players. A woman appears out of the smoke and she falls to the floor. With the exception of the person who is sleeping in the easy chair, the other people in the room glance briefly at the woman



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and, then, continue on with what they had been doing ... as  
if they were familiar with the event.]





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**Act I**

Gloria

(Gloria is dazed, but rises to a sitting position. She looks around the room. Showing that she is both upset and outraged, to no one in particular, she says:)

What in hell is going on? ... Who did this?

Anne

(Without looking away from her magazine, the woman on the couch speaks calmly:)

Your questions won't be answered by anyone in this room.  
... We've all gone through what you're experiencing.

(Gloria looks briefly at Anne as Gloria is rising to her feet, and she begins to examine the room. She is looking for a way out. She tries the bathroom door, examines the inside area of the bathroom and returns to the larger room, continuing her exploration. She taps on the wall looking for weak and/or hollow spots. She looks up at the small window, near the ceiling, and, with her hands, she tries to gauge the size of the window.)



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(Anne is still looking at her magazine, but aware of Gloria's movements, she says:)

You can look as long as you like. We all have. There's no way out.

Gloria

(Gloria comes to center stage and stands near the unoccupied easy-chair opposite the sleeping man. Speaking somewhat defiantly to Anne, she said:)

How long have you been here?

Anne

(Shrugging her shoulders, Anne says:)

Hard to say! There's no clock, and, somehow, all of our watches and cell phones weren't able to make the journey with us. ... Every so often we fall asleep, and when we awake meals sometimes are waiting for us, but it always seems to be night or dark outside. ... It's like we were in a gambling casino where the passage of time is hidden from the customers.

Gloria



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(Gloria is shaking her head in an angry fashion and says:)

This is crazy! It makes no sense!

Anne

(Anne says, matter-of-factly:)

Well, it probably makes as much sense as the rest of life.

Gloria

(Gloria is still visibly upset and says:)

There are people depending on me at home. My teenagers need looking after. The only thing they know how to do is get in trouble.

(Looking around the room, she approaches the card players, somewhat frantically, and asks:)

Do you have anything to do with what's going on? Does anyone here ...

(Gloria looks toward the chess players, takes a step toward them, and continues asking:)

... Does anyone know what's going on?



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Susan

(Susan, one of the card players, briefly looks at Gloria and, then, returns her attention to the table. She lays down a card, saying emphatically:

Take that!!

Aaron

(Aaron is another card player. He strikes his forehead with his empty, open palm and protests:)

No, No, No, don't do this to me!!!!

(The other card players continue on with their game.)

Susan

Susan looks back at Gloria. Empathetically, but firmly, she says:)

We all have people back home who need us and who are probably wondering what happened to us. We all have felt exactly what you are feeling now – and still do feel that way to some extent ... upset, angry, annoyed ... perhaps a little desperate ... the situation is what it is ... Your emotions are understandable but not very productive. We are all waiting for more data so we can try to figure out what to do ... That information just hasn't arrived yet.



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[An explosion of some kind occurs outside, near the room. The room shakes. The lights flicker on and off. Everyone freezes with worry and each of the individuals in the room ducks a little. The man sleeping in the easy chair awakes with a start. Gloria nearly loses her balance, but she regains her equilibrium.]

Gloria

(She backs up toward center stage looking up at the windows where lights from explosions and gunfire are flickering through the window. She turns toward Anne, motions to the window with her head and says:)

What's that all about?

Anne

(Anne, finally, looks at Gloria and says:)

We don't even know what's going on in here, so how are we supposed to know what's going on out there? ... Besides, wars are never about what their advocates claim they are.

(Gloria is about to speak, when a loud buzzer is heard. Everyone is stunned and proceed to look at each other.)

Disembodied voice

(A disembodied voice] speaks in a seemingly computerized way ... The voice fills the room.)



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The sample is now assembled. Your task is at hand. The challenge is time-limited. When the next buzzer is sounded, you will begin, and when the following buzzer sounds, your time is up. Succeed and humanity will be spared ... fail and humanity will be eliminated. The problem before you is this: What is the essence of self-governance?

(A piercing buzzer sounds, followed by silence.)

Gloria

(With exasperation and annoyance, Gloria says:)

Things just keep getting better ... and better.

(Gloria kicks at the floor in disgust.)

Jake

(One of the chess players, Jake, rises from his chair, saying:)

This is a joke, right?

Anne

(Anne responds to Jake:)

And the perpetrator of the joke is who, and why is it being perpetrated?

Jake



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Jake

(Jake shrugs his shoulders and says:)

I have no idea.

(Thrusting his index finger several times into the air toward the apparent source of the Disembodied Voice, Jake asks:)

But, why should we believe anything that has been said by something, or someone who won't even show itself, or himself ... or, herself?

Anne

(Anne replies to Jake:)

Unless you haven't been paying attention, we don't seem to be controlling the situation here. We have arrived through means unknown and for purposes unknown by a power that is beyond our pay grade. If we can be brought here and kept here against our will, what makes you think that the forces at work behind the scenes aren't capable of doing what they want with us?

(The people in the room are thinking over what Anne has said. A few of them begin to walk about – moving toward the center of the stage to the left of Anne where three people are already gathered.)



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Anne

(Anne is still sitting, but she turns toward the others and explains:)

I might not understand what is going on, but I think we need to take what has been said seriously.

Dave

(Dave rises from the card table and moves a few steps toward the couch.)

And how do we do that? We don't even know what the criteria for success and failure are.

Phil

(Phil rises up from the easy-chair where he had been asleep, stretches, and, then, proclaims:)

Even if we were to take this whole thing seriously, what about the time issue? How much time do we have? People have been trying to solve the problem of self-governance for thousands of years, and, we're supposed to satisfy some unknown task master and jump through his hoops in some unspecified period of time. ... I don't appreciate being pressured like this. ... I hate uncertainty!

Jane

(Jane has remained sitting at the chess table but remarks:)





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Is anything that is going on here really all that different from business as usual? In life, none of us knows how much time we have, and, whether we like it or not, as long as we are together, we have to find a way to get along ... Isn't that what self-governance is ... discovering a method for getting along with one another?

(Spreading her arms, as if addressing the room itself, Jane asks:)

We can't go anywhere ... we have to do something with our time ... playing cards,

(Jane motions toward the card table and continues on:)

... reading magazines,

(She points to the coffee table)

... or, playing chess

(Jane points to herself and Jake and adds:)

These activities might help to pass the time, but they don't really accomplish anything, except to eat up time and provide a certain amount of pleasure. ... Is that what existence is all about: Engaging in pleasurable ways to eat up time until it's all gone?



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Aaron

(Aaron is still sitting at the card table and protests:)

What's wrong with enjoying life and having some fun? I like playing cards!

Jane

(Jane turns in her chair to face Aaron and responds:)

Normally, I would say: "Knock yourself out and do whatever you like," but the situation in which we find ourselves seems to demand something of us beyond spending time as if we had an infinite supply of the stuff and as if there were no consequences that might be connected to doing what we like.

Aaron

(Aaron remarks:)

Well, if someone is going to eliminate us – and, apparently, sooner rather than later – then, I think it makes sense to spend whatever time we have left and use it to enjoy ourselves.

Susan

(Susan rises from her chair near the card table)

I like to enjoy myself as much as the next person, but what about the rest of humanity? The Voice said that its fate



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depends on what we do in this room. ... Are we just supposed to enjoy ourselves and let that slide?

Phil

(Phil expresses resistance:)

I don't think it's fair to place that sort of burden on us. Why should we be held responsible for what happens to the rest of humanity?

Cathy

(Cathy has been sitting at the card table, opposite Aaron, but directs her remarks to Phil:)

Whose notion of "fairness" are you using? What you're saying seems arbitrary. How do you prove that we don't have such a responsibility?

Phil

(Phil expresses annoyance and snaps back at Cathy.)

And, how do you prove that we do have that sort of obligation? You seem to be every bit as arbitrary as you claim I am.

Gloria

(Gloria raises her arms for attention:)



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Look, I'm the newbie here, but I'm not sure any of this is helping us. Whether we like it or not – and I am more than a little upset at being held hostage like this – we've got a situation on our hands. We can treat the problem facing us as illusory and live our lives as if we were not being held captive – despite facts to contrary – or we can try to tackle the issues and see what we can come up with as quickly as possible ... hoping that whatever we produce will be satisfactory to the powers that be. ... I don't see that we have any other choice. If we do nothing, we most likely stand to lose, but if we try, then perhaps, we have a chance of getting out of this situation with our lives intact ... and, who knows, maybe also doing something for the rest of humanity as well.

Dave

(Dave poses a question to Gloria:)

So, what do you propose we do?

Gloria

(Gloria looks at Dave and shrugs her shoulders.)

I wish I knew.

Anne

(Anne, runs her hand through her hair and, then, stands to address the other people in the room:)



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I think there's only one way for us to go. We have to pool our individual resources and abilities and begin to throw out ideas. ... We're going to have to talk, share, and argue our way through this thing.

Jake

(Jake says: somewhat condescendingly,)

You mean we should pull up our tree stumps, gather around the campfire, and get all touchy and feely?

Anne

(Anne is slightly perturbed)

No, I mean that we should go about things as if our lives depended on what goes on in this room ... because they do. Someone, or something, more powerful than we are, brought us here and has kept us here. They have given us an ultimatum. How do we not take that seriously? ... even if it turns out that whomever or whatever is behind this situation is only putting us on.

Cathy

(Cathy rises from the card table and motions to the high window with the flickering light of explosions and gunfire showing through, saying:)

Perhaps the powers behind the Voice are not the only thing we have to worry about. The sound of the explosions



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and fighting seem to be getting nearer, we might have very little time to do whatever we are going to do.

Dave

(Dave asks:)

So, do we hold elections or appoint a leader? How do we go about things?

(Everyone reflects on the question. They mill about as they think about the situation.)

Jane

(Jane acts as if an idea has just bubbled to the surface of her consciousness. She rises from her seat and turns to the others, saying:)

We could use something like a talking stick, and whoever has the stick gets to speak their piece, and, then the stick is transferred to someone else in the order in which people indicate they have something to say. I'm not sure, but I think some Native American groups observed a variation on this idea ... although they might have used a feather to indicate who had the right to speak. The history might not be right, but the basic idea could still work.

Phil

(Phil shakes his head in disagreement.)



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I think we need to hold an election of some kind or appoint a leader who can guide us through the process.

Gloria

(Gloria expresses perplexity)

Guide us how? Why should we suppose that one of us is any more qualified than anyone else to oversee this task?

Phil

(Phil is adamant. He pushes his previous idea.)

Well, that is, the way things are usually done. Business, organizations, the military, and government ... they all have leaders.

Gloria

(Gloria responds, somewhat sarcastically.)

And how's that working out for everyone? ... Leaders have led the world into the mess it is in ... at least that is true in the world where I come from ... somewhere beyond this

(Looking around the room)

... place.

Jake

(Jake nods toward Gloria.)



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I'm inclined to agree with you. My experience has been that leaders are only interested in trying to control people to do what the leaders want, irrespective of how what the so-called leader wants, affects the people who are doing his or her bidding ... or how it affects anyone else. Leaders are great salespeople ... persuading others to commit themselves to carrying out the worldview or agenda of the leader irrespective of the problems which that worldview or agenda causes for anyone. ... Leaders are good at concealing their own ignorance about things or in spinning inconsistencies with respect to their words and actions while inducing people to believe that the leaders know what they are doing.

Jane

(Jane adds on to what Jake has been saying.)

None of us knows what is going on here. I don't think any of us is qualified to be a leader even if we believed in the idea ... and, from the sound of things, a number of us don't seem to like the idea of leadership. We should approach things as equals and consider whatever is said as grist for our collective mill to grind.

Dave

Okay, suppose we jettison the idea of leadership. What about the idea of majority rules? Should we make decisions in accordance with whatever the majority of us decide?





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Aaron

(Aaron is concerned and curious.)

What sort of a majority are you talking about? 50.01 %?  
Two-thirds? Three-fourths? Unanimity?

Susan

(In a cautionary sort of tone, Susan remarks:)

When people talk in terms of majorities, some minority  
always loses out.

David

Surely, we can't possibly satisfy everyone. ... It's not  
practical.

Susan

(Susan responds to Dave)

If you are in the minority on some vote, will you still  
believe that issues of practicality should continue to take  
precedence? What's right or true is not necessarily right or  
true just because some sort of majority says it is.

Jake

(Jake raises a question.)



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Why not use something like the decision process of a jury?  
In other words, we would all have to agree that something  
is true or right beyond a reasonable doubt.

Phil

(Phil is incredulous.)

How are we supposed to figure out what is true or right  
beyond a reasonable doubt?

Jake

(Jake looks at Phil somewhat dismissively. Jake shakes his  
head slightly and replies:)

Juries seem to have been figuring it out for more than two  
hundred years.

Phil

(Phil responds argumentatively.)

But, they don't always get it right. They make mistakes.

Jake

Perhaps so, but I would trust the verdict of a jury before I  
would trust the decision of some leader. ... After all, juries –  
especially grand juries -- were originally established to  
serve as the last line of defense between the state and a  
citizen. ... Juries might be the best example of self-



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governance that has been invented, despite their occasional missteps.

Phil

People on juries have biases that can affect their decisions.

Jake

I've never been on a jury, but my understanding is that the courts go through a process in which they try to select the individuals for jury duty who are the least biased about any given case and who can deliver as impartial a verdict as possible.

(Jake pauses before adding a further thought.)

What's more, whatever biases jurors have are going to get sanded down through the discussions and arguments that go on during jury deliberations. ... If a person has biases, then she or he is going to have to be able to defend them to eleven other people ... and do so beyond a reasonable doubt.

(Motioning to the people in the room)

We might not be able to have a jury selection process – since we seem to be all that is available for the job at hand – but we certainly can question one another and critically examine whatever ideas are thrown out by any of us.



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Phil

(Phil looks, somewhat nervously, toward Gloria, before returning his attention to Jake, and remarks:)

Well, even if we were to accept your jury idea, juries appoint forepersons. A leader can facilitate discussions and organize votes concerning decisions.

(As Phil finishes his words, he looks over at Gloria somewhat triumphantly.)

Gloria

(Looking a little defiant, Gloria rebuts with:)

There is a difference between a foreperson and a leader. ... A jury foreperson helps serve the purpose of the jury, while a leader tends to help serve his or her own purposes ... and, a foreperson's vote doesn't count any more than the vote of any of the other people on a jury ... but, somehow, a leader's vote always seems to count more than that of everyone else.

(Phil glares at Gloria for a few seconds and, then, walks away toward the chess table ... mumbling to himself as he does.)



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Jane

(Jane takes a few steps toward the card table to get out of Phil's way and, then, says:)

My understanding is that many Native American Indian tribes and nations worked on the basis of consensus ... and that practice seems similar to the way juries need to agree on things and establish consensus in reaching decisions ... apparently – at least for some Indians -- nothing was done without consensus.

Phil

(Phil speaks in a dismissive tone.)

The last time I looked, Indians were practically extinct and many of them are living in abject poverty ... unless they happen to own a casino, or two. I don't think requiring a consensus – if that's what they did -- worked out too well for them.

Jane

Maybe things didn't work out too well for Indians because of the unethical and duplicitous ways in which they were treated by immigrants to this part of the world. ... After all, without exception, an array of administrations representing the United States government broke every one of the treaties that had been signed with different Indian tribes or nations over the years. ... Maybe the way things turned out for Indians had nothing to do with the practice of working toward consensus and had everything



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to do with being treated unjustly throughout American history.

(Pausing briefly and, then, continuing on)

If you ask me – and I realize that no one is asking me – the idea of seeking a consensus seems not only quite democratic but very relevant to the issue of self-governance. In fact, if memory serves me correctly, a number of Indians were sought out as consultants by some of the colonists during the process when the idea of self-governance was being explored in America, and this was done because some of the Indians already had a working constitutional-like arrangement. ... They even had a set of rights to which all their members were entitled. We refer to them as savages, but in many ways – at least in terms of self-governance – they were far more advanced than the colonists were.

David

(David walks toward center stage and tries to break the tension.)

Okay, suppose we have a jury-like format

(Dave nods toward Jake!)

... either an administrative foreperson



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(Dave nods toward Gloria!)

or, the talking stick idea

(Dave motions toward Jane!)

How do we arrive at an impartial decision concerning the idea of self-governance? ... Our problem is not exactly a guilty versus not guilty sort of decision. ... It's much more complicated than that.

Anne

Presumably this would be where the deliberative process comes in. ... Like a jury, we would have to try to make our points to one another, discuss and criticize those ideas, and just let things unfold as they may. ... We can't pre-determine how things will go.

Aaron

Well, I hate to sound like a one-note Nelson here, but, again, how do we determine what our 'verdict' will be? Will we adopt a 'preponderance of evidence' standard like they do in civil cases, or are we going to adopt the more demanding 'beyond a reasonable doubt' standard of criminal cases?



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Susan

(Susan walks toward center stage.)

I think we have to go with the more demanding standard. ... After all -- our lives and the existence of humanity seem to be weighing in the balance. ... So, whatever we decide, I feel it is going to have to be a unanimous decision, and in order to arrive at a unanimous decision with which we can all feel comfortable, the decision we reach is going to have to satisfy each of us beyond a reasonable doubt ... assuming, of course, we don't become a deliberative body that becomes hung up on irreconcilable differences ... a result that I don't think is going to satisfy our task masters.

(Everyone looks at everyone else trying to gauge their reaction to Susan's proposal)

Anne

(Anne glances around the room and she shrugs her shoulders, shaking her head slightly.)

Well, I'm not trying to be either a leader or a foreperson here, but it seems like it's time for our first verdict. ... Is everyone agreed that we proceed like a jury involved in deliberations and that our final decision must be unanimous and beyond a reasonable doubt?

(Hands slowly go up -- with Anne raising her hand first -- until everyone's hand is up except Phil's. People check around to see whose hands are up and slowly all turn





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toward Phil. Phil – who is near the chess table – looks at the group near the center of the stage, then over at the card-table where Cathy is standing, and, then, down at the floor. With his head lowered, he slowly raises his hand.)

(Anne smiles and encouragingly looks toward Phil – while taking a few steps toward him.)

I don't wish to push my luck with suggesting things, but, maybe, Phil could serve as a foreperson ... as long as he understands that the position is purely administrative ... facilitating discussion, making sure that everyone gets a turn to speak, calling for votes, and the like.

(Anne turns her attention to the others to see what they think. Everyone's body language indicates resistance to the idea, but no one says anything.)

Phil

(Phil smiles and gives a look of gratitude toward Anne. He quickly looks at the others and, nodding to them collectively, he says:)

I agree with them. I would be a poor choice for such a job. I might believe in the idea of leadership, but I don't feel I would make a good leader or group facilitator ... but I think Anne would be a good candidate for the position ... that is,

(Phil looks around at the other individuals and continues on.)



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if we go ahead with the jury-like idea.

(People display verbal and non-verbal support for the idea.  
Phil looks at the others and attempts to gauge the mood of  
the room)

Well, it doesn't follow the proper protocol, but I'll second  
my own proposal and suggest that we put it to a vote.

(Everyone's hand goes up, except Anne's.)

Anne

(She raises her eyebrows, and, grimacing slightly, she  
looks around the room before saying:)

Let's hope you know what you're doing.

(Pausing and thinking, while lightly scratching her head  
and, then, combing the scratched areas with her fingers to  
smooth out her hair ... she looks at everyone and suggests:)

Why don't we take a break for a few minutes, collect  
ourselves, perhaps arrange various chairs in a group in the  
center of the room for our future discussions ... answer the  
call of nature ... whatever ... and, then, get started with our  
proceedings in a few minutes.



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(People start putting Anne's plan into action. Jane and Jake go to the chess table, put away the pieces, and bring the chairs toward center stage ... beginning to form a semi-circle facing the audience. The four people who were playing cards clean up the card-table and take their chairs to the center of the stage helping to form the semi-circle. Phil, Anne, and Gloria move the couch and easy chairs around to better fit in with the semi-circle that is being formed. Several people take washroom breaks. Jane is last into the bathroom. People slowly begin to take seats within the semi-circle.)

Anne

(Anne looks around and notices the several people who have not seated themselves. David and Jake are still standing and are talking about baseball. She addresses the two and motions to the semi-circle.)

Perhaps, we should get started.

(David and Jake walk to their seats. Anne looks at the seats and, then, counts the people in the room before observing:)

Someone seems to be missing.

Jake

(People look around, and while he is sitting down, Jake points in the direction of the bathroom and says:)



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I think Jane is still using the facilities.

(People begin to talk with one another while waiting for Jane to join the gathering.)

(A thundering explosion occurs, causing the lights to flicker on and off. Residue comes down from the ceiling. People in the room are trying to brace themselves as best they can.)

Anne

(As things return, more or less, to normal, Anne walks to the bathroom door and knocks)

Are you all right Jane?

(There is no response.)

(Knocking again ... but a little more forcefully this time.)

Jane? Are you in there? I hope you haven't fallen in.

(Anne looks back toward the seated group, first with a sheepish grin and, then, gives a puzzled but worried expression. Shrugging her shoulders and addressing the group, she asks:)

What should we do?



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David

Check the door knob and see if the door is locked.

Anne

It's not locked. ... What now?

Cathy

Do we have any choice? We have to see if she is okay ... especially after that explosion. ... Maybe she got hurt somehow.

Anne

(Turning the door handle and pulling outward, the door opens. Jane is lying on the floor. Anne rushes in to check on Jane. Anne checks for a pulse, and, then, putting her head down on Jane's chest, she listens. Anne puts her face close to Jane's mouth. The other people have risen from their chair and have taken a step or two toward the bathroom. Anne rises, and as she does, she picks up a piece of paper that has been attached to Jane's blouse. She reads it, and comes out of the bathroom.)

Jane is dead!

Susan

(Anne approaches the other people, and they take a few steps toward her. She holds up the piece of paper and shows it to everyone. Susan grabs the piece of paper and reads its contents aloud.)



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“Tick tock, Tick tock. We are not the enemy.”

(Susan hands the piece of paper to David who reads it and, then, passes it on to Aaron. Aaron reads it and hands it to Cathy ... others read the note after Cathy. Jake is the last to read the message, and when he is done, he folds the paper and puts it in his shirt pocket.)

Aaron

(Aaron is upset. Looking up toward the ceiling of the room, he proclaims:)

They, killed her!!! They, just snuffed her out!!!

Anne

(Trying to counter Aaron’s emotion, Anne speaks calmly but forcefully.)

We don’t know that. I didn’t examine the body carefully, but I didn’t see any blood or signs of violence.

(Looking at the rest of the group)

I don’t believe we have any doctors or forensic specialists here, do we?



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(Some shake their heads slightly from side to side. Others just remain silent.)

Anne

Maybe she had a heart attack or a stroke. Or, perhaps she struck her head hard in some way as a result of the explosion.

Aaron

Don't you think we would have heard something if what you say occurred ... a cry of pain, a body thudding to the ground ... something.

(Looking around at the others)

I didn't hear anything. Did anyone else?

(A few people shake their heads in a negative fashion ... a few others softly say: "No". Other people just look dazed and blank.)

Phil

I don't know about the rest of you, but I was kind of preoccupied with my own thoughts and busy getting things moved around. ... Plus, that explosion kind of threw a scare into me. ... So, I don't know how much I was paying attention to what was going on in some other part of the room. Maybe there was a sound from the bathroom, but if there was, I, didn't notice it.



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(Several people nod their heads affirmatively)

Jake

Why should we automatically assume that whatever forces are behind our current situation killed Jane? People do die of natural causes. Didn't the note say: "We are not the enemy"?

David

Perhaps, they are just trying to provide us with disinformation ... to throw us off-balance.

Jake

(Jake raises his hands toward the heavens, responding to Dave in a dismissive, angry manner.)

They already own us lock, stock and barrel. ... We've been brought here without our permission, and we are being held captive against our will. We weren't given any reasons or justifications for either of those events. ... Surely, they have no need to imply in a note that they had nothing to do with Jane's death. ... If they want to kill us, I'm sure they could do it and not feel compelled to offer us any explanations.

(Pausing and reflecting for a few seconds, Jake continues.)

There might be a purpose to all of this, ...





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(He moves his head in a way to suggest he is referring to the room and its contents)

... but not everything that happens here is necessarily connected with whatever that purpose might be.

(Pointing to the high window, Jake continues.)

There seems to be a war of some kind going on out there. Are they responsible for that? The way it always seems dark outside ... are they responsible for that? Jane dies. ... Did they cause that to happen? We just don't know what the relationship is – if anything at all -- between the forces or powers or beings that brought us here and are keeping us here with everything else that is going on.

Gloria

I hesitate to bring this up, but isn't it possible that one of us is responsible for Jane's death? Just as we weren't aware of what Jane was doing, did any of us pay much attention to what any of the rest of us was doing during that period of time?

(Looking at everyone and acting somewhat defensively  
Gloria stammers.)

... I, I, I mean, I know that I didn't do anything but, you know, I'm just saying ...



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David

Well, if none of us was paying much attention to what anyone else was doing, then, it seems to me you should be included among the ones that no one was paying much attention to.

David

(Looking at Gloria, Dave says, somewhat pointedly.)

I'm, ... just saying ...

Cathy

(Walking away from the group and, then, turning around, Cathy says:)

None of this is getting us anywhere. ... We can point fingers at one another or whomever ... whatever ... until the cows come home. ... We just don't have enough information to prove any of the suspicions or theories that are being thrown out ... and I don't feel that suspicion, per se, has any constructive value.

Aaron

(Taking a few steps back from the group, and first directing his remarks to Cathy, before looking at the others, and continuing on ... somewhat forcefully.)

Don't be so naïve! You know, we really don't know much about one another. Maybe one, or more of us, is working with whatever forces brought us here. Maybe it's all a



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game of some sort. Maybe we're just entertainment for some powerful forces that are bored with existence.

Cathy

And, what is the evidence that justifies what you are saying?

Aaron

(Staring at Cathy somewhat blankly for a few seconds, he dismisses her with a hand and arm motion, walking away from the group as he does so.)

Just because I don't have any evidence right now, doesn't mean that such evidence doesn't exist. Perhaps, we need to investigate the matter.

Gloria

We'll, I don't know if its evidence, but isn't it possible that the forces that brought us here were trying to tell us something in the note they left behind. If they are not the enemy, then, isn't the implication of the note that something or someone else is?

Jake

How do we know that the note was left behind by the powers that be rather than by one of us who is trying to confuse the issue? ... Even if those forces or beings did leave the note behind, does it necessarily imply what you



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(Addressing Gloria)

claim it does? The note is like a Rorschach ink blot test. ... It could mean whatever ideas each of us projects onto it.

David

(Shrugging his shoulders and shaking his head a little from side to side, David interjects:)

As long as we are speculating about things, isn't it possible that for reasons entirely unknown to us, Jane committed suicide by, say, poisoning herself and, in the process, she left the note to warn us that time was running out, and that we ...

(Using his hand to describe a circle that encompasses the group, he continues on.)

... are not the enemy ... that we shouldn't start pointing fingers at one another.

Anne

(Anne turns toward Aaron and says:)

You suggest that we investigate the matter. How are we going to do that? None of us has the expertise to carry out a police investigation. We're all probably closer to Inspector Clouseau than Miss Marple. How do you propose that we interrogate the forces that arranged all of this?



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(Putting her hand up and sweeping it around the room,)

Presumably, they know what is going on here, but none of us has a clue concerning the matter, and I don't see how we are going to uncover any such clues.

Aaron

(Aaron dismisses what Anne has said with a shrug and a somewhat triumphant, suspicious, facial expression.)

That's just what I would expect someone to say who was trying to forestall an investigation.

(Anne rolls her eyes and turns away, muttering.)

Aaron

(Aaron turns away from Anne and toward the other people, gesturing with his thumb over his shoulder toward Anne)

Maybe, she's right. ... Maybe there is no evidence, and we have no means of uncovering any, but we should at least take a careful look at the body, check to see if there is a pen in the bathroom or on Jane's person ... and anything else we can think of to do. ... We should at least satisfy ourselves that we have done whatever we can to investigate things.



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(Aaron, Jake, Susan, Cathy, Phil, David, and Gloria move to the bathroom ... but not all at once. The movement is staggered, beginning, first, with Aaron. The group, individually and collectively, explores the bathroom, the body, and the exterior area near the bathroom door.)

Aaron

(Aaron returns to center stage, followed by the others, and, then, he addresses Anne, by saying:)

Well, it seems you were right. There doesn't appear to be any evidence to be discovered ... at least none that we can detect without something more powerful than just our eyes. None of us could find any signs of trauma on her head. There's no blood, no pen, or paper. I suppose that if she committed suicide with some sort of poison, she could have written the note before she arrived here ... but it's all speculative. We don't know what caused her death. ... It could have been an accident. It could have been natural. It could have been suicide, or, someone could have killed her. ... We just don't know.

Cathy

We don't know who wrote the note or what it means. Is it disinformation? Is it pointing a finger at someone? Is it trying to help us in some way? We know as much about the note as we know about Jane's death ... a big, fat nothing.



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Phil

(Somewhat shyly and deferentially, Phil says:)

I think, we need to go back to our default position.

(Everyone looks at Phil quizzically. Phil looks around at the faces. Continuing on, he starts out slowly but picks up speed as he gains confidence.)

Before whatever happened to Jane happened, we were about to address the problem that has been given to us by whatever or whoever brought us here – namely, the issue of self-governance. ... We, might not know anything about Jane’s circumstances, and we might not know anything about the war that is raging outside, and we might not know anything about the purposes and reasons of the ones who arranged our transport to this room, and we might not know very much, if anything, about the meaning of the note found with Jane, and we might not know much about one another, but it seems to me that we have a need to address the issue of self-governance ... if, for no other reason than to develop a collective coping-strategy for dealing with our situation in a constructive way rather than just somewhat frantically as we have been doing in the last few minutes.

(The others consider Phil’s words. ... Slowly, there seems to be a growing consensus, via words and body language, that acknowledge the value of what Phil is saying.)



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Anne

(Anne looks from face to face, and, then, back to Phil,  
before remarking:)

You sure, you don't want to serve as foreperson for our  
group? You just did a great job of helping us to focus on the  
task at hand.

Phil

(Phil smiles, but waves his hand back and forth in front of  
him, as a way of declining the offer.)

No, I still think you should have that job. I'm happy just to  
say whatever comes to mind, from time to time. ... It's even  
better, if other people, occasionally, like what I have to say.

Anne

(Anne returns her attention to the others and scanning  
their faces, she asks:)

So, should we begin our exploration into self-governance?

(Some nod their heads, while others voice their affirmation  
of the idea. People begin to take seats in the semi-circle  
that has been formed.)

David

(David counts the seats, and, then, counts people, and,  
finally, suggests:)





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Why don't we move the couch out of the way and just use the individual chairs. ... We have enough chairs for everyone. Moreover, without the couch, we'll be a little closer together.

(Dave looks at the others somewhat quizzically and adds:)

Or, maybe, you would rather have greater separation from one another. ... I don't know.

(The individuals study one another. Finding no signs of disagreement among the group, Jake and Susan go to opposite ends of the couch, lift it up, and remove it to the back of the room – between the chess table and the card-table, then, they come forward and take seats in the semi-circle where the other members of the group have arranged the chairs to be closer together and already have taken seats.)

Anne

(After everyone has been seated, Anne states:)

I see my role as being primarily one of just keeping track of whoever wants to speak about any given issue and calling on those individuals in the order in which they have indicated to me that they have something to say. I think we should honor Jane's earlier suggestion that whoever has the floor, with respect to speaking, should be permitted to say whatever they want and not be interrupted. Everyone



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will get their chance to speak. I suppose, from time to time, I could suggest a topic for consideration, but I think everyone should have the same opportunity to introduce possible areas of discussion. So, really, for the most part, I'm just going to play the part of a traffic cop for speakers, and I'll try to do my best to ensure that the discussion moves along smoothly.

(Looking around the semi-circle, Anne asks:)

So, who is first?

Susan

(Susan begins hesitantly.)

Before we begin, perhaps the first order of business is to do something with Jane's body. ... Maybe lay her on the couch and cover her up with whatever we have ... I ..,

(Susan pauses reflectively.)

I was hoping that we could say a prayer for her.

Jake

(Jake puts up his hand as if in a halting motion.)

I don't have any objections to putting Jane's body on the couch and covering her up, but not everyone here is



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necessarily spiritually or religiously inclined. ... I know that I'm not.

(He hesitates before continuing to speak)

I feel a little uncomfortable with the whole prayer idea – especially if it means that our forthcoming discussion is going to be rooted in some sort of theistic framework. ... I don't think that's right.

Gloria

What if the forces that brought us have spiritual beliefs?

Jake

What if they don't? And, even if they did, how are we supposed to know what those beliefs are. ... We would just be flying blindly and operating on guesswork.

David

(David acknowledges Jake.)

I think he's right. I do have some spiritual beliefs, but to whatever extent other people here have such beliefs, I'm not sure there necessarily would be a great deal of common ground in our respective theologies. Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Native peoples, and New Agers all have a lot of different ideas about things ... even people within one and the same spiritual tradition have vastly different beliefs about various issues.



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(David shakes his head, as if he is somewhat overwhelmed with the array of possibilities.)

Cathy

(Cathy raises her hand and directs a question toward Anne.)

Is it okay if I say something?

(Anne checks to make sure that David has finished and, then, nods her head affirmatively and extends her hand toward Cathy as if to say: "Go ahead".)

Cathy

I'm not sure what relevance religious beliefs have to our task of exploring self-governance. I have religious beliefs, but I feel that self-governance means that a group of people can find a way of getting along despite their differences. ... If everyone believed the same way, I'm not sure there would be any need for self-governance. ... It's the differences that create the need.

Phil

(Phil has been motioning to Anne in order to be acknowledged as next in line to speak. She nods her head.)

Surely, there are ethical considerations involved in self-governance, and a lot of people feel that those sorts of things should be shaped by one's religious beliefs.



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Anne

(Jake has caught Anne's idea, and she points toward Jake.)

I think you're next.

Jake

(Jake points to Cathy)

She's right! We have to find common ground with respect to our differences, not our similarities. I think self-governance is about managing our differences in constructive ways.

(Turning to Phil)

I don't know what the answer is, but I think the same principle applies to your observation about ethics. We have got to find some sort of neutral form of ethics that would permit each of us to pursue his or her life in a moral fashion, without necessarily requiring other people to have to pursue life in the same way.

(Shaking his head, Jake continues.)

We're destroying ourselves with the insistence that our individual beliefs should control what everyone else does. Minorities become majorities and, then, treat the majority that has been reduced to minority status in the same



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outrageous way that the old minority complained about, before it became the new majority. That is not self-governance. ... It is insanity.

David

(David raised his arm earlier and had been given an acknowledgment by Anne that he was in the queue. ... She nods to him that his turn is at hand.)

I don't think we should try to guess what it is that we need to do in order to meet the apparent ultimatum that we have been given and, thereby, satisfy our keepers. Whether, or not, the forces that brought us here are spiritually inclined, we can only do what we can do. We don't know what the criteria for success and failure are. ... We don't know how anything we might do or come up with will be evaluated. All we can do is try to be ourselves and seek to offer to one another the best that we have to offer. If we are sincere with one another ... if we are honest ... if we are open to exploring various possibilities, then, I think, that is the best we can do. ... Maybe, it is all that we can do.

Anne

(Anne points to Susan who has been seeking a chance to speak and says:)

I know that you want to say something, but before you do, I would like to have the opportunity to speak ... if that is okay with you.



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(Susan extends her hands before her inviting Anne to speak and nods her head.)

(Anne acknowledges Susan's gesture with a smile, before saying.)

Since we all seem to agree that Jane's body needs tending to ...

(She looks around the semi-circle to make sure her assessment is correct before continuing.)

... why don't we put her on the couch and, if we can, find something to cover her with?

(Anne gestures toward Susan, indicating that Susan can speak.)

Susan

I just thought that since pretty much everyone observes a ceremony of a kind that marks the departure of someone from this life and seeks to honor that life in some fashion, why don't we have a moment of silence and let each of us acknowledge Jane's life and passing in our individual, respective ways.

Anne

(Anne looks around the group, checking out faces and body language.)



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Does anyone object to either of the foregoing suggestions?

(She motions to herself and to Susan)

(Without anything being said, Gloria, Cathy, Jake, and Phil get up and move toward the bathroom. They pick up Jane's body and place it on the couch. They take the cloth covering the card-table and cover Jane, and, then, they return to their seats.)

David

I don't know how long we are going to be here, and no disrespect intended to Jane, but if our situation doesn't change soon, Jane's body is going to start to decompose in the near future, and we might just begin to think that, perhaps, Jane is the lucky one. Her captivity has come to an end ... but ours continues ... under deteriorating conditions.

(The rest of the group receives David's words with grim and reluctant acknowledgement. ... Remaining silent, they try to remember Jane in their own individual ways.

Explosions, artillery, and machine gun fire, erupt.)

**End of Act One**





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**Scene for Act II:**

(As the curtain opens, the audience can see that the characters are seated in a semi-circle as they were at the end of Act I. However, before the curtain is finished opening, there is a large explosion near to the room coming from the left side of the stage just beyond the walls ... an explosion with sufficient force that it throws some of the characters to the floor. The lights go off for a few seconds – automatic weapons fire from outside can be heard in the room. The lights come back on while the curtain is being fully opened and reveal that several of the chairs have been knocked over by the force of the blast, and there are a few people lying on the ground, moaning and dazed. In the background, the two tables are tipped over, and one of the tables is missing a leg. There is damage to the walls near the tables, but the façade that has been ripped off in some places reveals a stone wall behind the interior wall of the room. Debris (mostly light) is strewn across the floor. Several iron projectiles are skewering the back portion of the stage between the two tables, and there is rock debris near where the projectiles are protruding through.)

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**Act II**

(Phil and Cathy lay dazed on the floor. Jake and David have recovered sufficiently to look around and try to apprise the situation. They see the two individuals who are lying on the floor, rush to them, kneel down, and check for injuries. Finding them to be somewhat stunned, but uninjured, they look around at the others.)

David

(David rises to his feet, concerned.)

Is everyone okay?

Susan

I don't know if I would use the term: "Okay," but my body still seems to be intact.

(Aaron gives a thumbs-up sign to David. Gloria gets up from her chair, moves her limbs as if checking for damage, and, then, nods to David. Jake helps Cathy to, first, a sitting and, then, a standing position. Cathy bends over and places her hands on her knees for a few seconds, and, finally, raises her trunk to an upright position. David returns his attention to Phil and helps him get to his feet. Phil turns his neck and upper back a little as if trying to get some kinks out. David and Jake look over to Anne, and noticing their concern, she raises her arm to say she is all right.)

(Aaron has walked to the back of the stage and is checking the walls for possible weakness or openings.)



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David

(David is following Aaron's activities and, with an interested curiosity, says:)

Are you finding anything?

Aaron

(Aaron looks around to see if David is talking to him.)

I'm trying to determine if the explosion could have opened up an escape route for us.

(Aaron returns to his inspection of the wall.)

David

(David walks toward Aaron, but he also turns his head to see if anyone else is joining them. He turns back to Aaron, and says:)

Good idea!

(David joins Aaron, and, then, Jake walks toward the two. All three of them – both individually and collectively -- begin pulling on the iron shafts that have protruded through the wall, but nothing moves. They check things out a bit more, including the bathroom.)



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Jake

(They start to return to center stage and the semi-circle of chairs when Jake, who is last in the line of three, notices something. He goes to the couch and raises the cloth that has been covering Jane. Staring at the couch for a few seconds, Jake shakes his head in disbelief, and turns to the rest of the group.)

Well, we won't have to worry about decomposition any more. Jane's body is gone.

(Several of the seated individuals stand up and look at the couch in disbelief. A few of the other individuals remain seated, look back over their shoulders, and shake their heads in acknowledgement of another mystery. Jake turns his attention back to the couch, looks slowly around the room as if searching for something, shrugs his shoulders, tosses the cloth on the couch, and joins the others at center stage, near the chairs where the other five people have taken seats and, then, says:)

Unless there is a hidden room that we don't know about with a secret doorway that hides the passageway to that room, Jane's disappearance is as inexplicable as her death, and since we were all sitting in the chairs, I don't see how any of us could be implicated in this latest event.



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Aaron

(Aaron points toward the back wall and addresses the people who are seated.)

We just checked things and didn't find any way out of this room. The explosions didn't seem to open anything up. Even if Jane has somehow been transported out of here by someone or something, we're still trapped.

(Aaron, David, and Jake take seats. There is silence for a few seconds as everyone is immersed in their individual thoughts.)

Gloria

(Somewhat despairingly and reluctantly, Gloria exclaims:)

I really don't see what the purpose is of having a discussion about self-governance ... if that's what the rest of you still are proposing to do. The conflict outside is obviously getting closer and closer. ... It seems to be all around us. Things are happening in this very room that none of us seems to understand. What's the point of continuing on with things? If the war doesn't get us fairly soon, then, the forces that brought us here likely will finish things. Or, maybe, each of us -- in some sort of an unknown order -- will just die mysteriously, only to disappear into thin air. Our prospects look pretty grim irrespective of the perspective one might choose to assess our situation.





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(With the exception of Aaron, the body language of the others suggests an existential weariness and, perhaps, partial acknowledgment of Gloria's point.)

Aaron

(Aaron looks at the others, studies them for a short time and, then, says:)

I'll be damned if I'm going to let our situation dictate what I do. Maybe the war gets us, and maybe our discussion will go absolutely nowhere, and maybe the powers that are controlling our circumstances to some degree will eliminate us. ... But, as long as I have any breath in my body ... I'm going to resist anyone or anything that tries to prevent me from being true to myself. If I only have a little time, then I would like to live it with some form of dignity. ... I think that's what being true to oneself means ... living with dignity.

(Pausing as he surveys his own internal world while the other people have begun to progressively show attentiveness to what Aaron is saying, he continues on.)

You know when I was in high school we had this basketball coach who used to tell us that he didn't care whether we won or lost, but he insisted that whatever we had to offer had to be laid all out on the floor during the game. ... We shouldn't leave a game with anything left in the tank. He never got on our case for losing. ... He got on our case for not giving everything we had to offer. He said that you



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can't always control whether you win or lose a game, but you can always control the quality of your own efforts.

(Hanging his head a little while looking at the floor, Aaron adds:)

I wasn't a very good basketball player ... but working with that coach I learned to give everything that I had ... and I really see no reason for abandoning now what I was taught then. Before the mysterious announcement of our overseers ...

(Raising his head and motioning toward the back of the stage in the direction of the card-table, he notes:)

I was whiling away the time playing cards and enjoying myself. It was sort of like sitting on the bench waiting to be sent into the game. ... And, I have slowly come to realize that the nature of the game I'm being required to play -- that we all are being required to play -- has already begun ... and, as a result, I'm going to try to commit myself to our current circumstances as best I can. So, I say, let's get on with our discussion and see where it takes us. ... It's not like we have a whole lot of choices before us ... besides

(Aaron smiles and points toward the back of the room.)

... the card-table is broken.



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(Aaron puts up his hands in a way which indicates that, for the moment, he is done talking. The others – including Gloria -- look at one another and generate body language suggesting that they are all amenable to the idea of proceeding on with their original plan to discuss the issue of self-governance ... although some do this more reluctantly than others.)

Anne

Well if we are going to get on with things, there are a couple of things I want to say. First, and this is for your sake as well as mine, unless things get heated, or people keep interrupting the person who is speaking, or everyone is talking over one another, then I think we should just carry on in a sort of conversational manner. You don't need to seek my recognition. If I think it is necessary to step in and ask us all to take a step back, then, I will, but otherwise, we should just try to be sensitive to one another and be aware of who wants to speak and who has been waiting to speak and try to let things flow from there.

(Anne looks around and confirms to herself that everybody seems to understand what is being said.)

The other thing I have to say is really for your sake.

(Anne nods toward Gloria and continues.)

The rest of us have been here for a bit longer than you have, and, therefore, we got a chance to know one another,



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a little bit. ... So, perhaps, it would be a good idea for each of us to briefly introduce ourselves to you, and vice versa ...

(Anne reflects on what she is about to say a bit more, and, then, continues on.)

... and, in the process, the rest of us old-timers can reintroduce ourselves to one another as well.

(She surveys the facial expressions and body language of the others before continuing.)

So, if that is agreeable to everyone, David, why don't you start?

David

(David is sitting furthest stage right in the semi-circle. ... Raising his eyebrows and exhaling before he starts, he says:)

Not much to say, really. My name is David. I'm divorced and have one child who is living with her mother. As I indicated earlier, I'm sort of spiritually inclined. ... Although, a lot of the time, I'm not quite sure what anyone - including myself -- means by that phrase ... because I don't really have any particular spiritual affiliation. I was working toward a degree in an architectural program but had to drop out because of financial problems. I've been working in construction for the last little while.



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Jake

(Before speaking, Jake pauses, to make sure that David has finished what he wants to say.)

My name is Jake. I guess you could say I'm skeptical about many things ... including spiritual issues. I'm single ... not much of a joiner ... and that includes political activities. Most of the work I've done has had to do with computer programming of one kind or another.

(Jake shrugs his shoulders. He turns to Susan indicating that she should begin.)

Susan

I am, a lowly salesperson in a department store. I, finished high school, but just barely. I like to paint and write poetry ... but so far ...

(Susan smiles at the others before continuing.)

... I'm an undiscovered talent. I'm sort of interested in religion and politics ... but from a distance. ... Like Jake, I tend not to participate in anything that is of an organized nature.

(Susan reflects on what she has said, briefly, before she continues on with a note of embarrassment.)



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And, oh yeah, my name is Susan. ... That's it!

(Several explosions sound in the distance. Everybody flinches and some duck and look around nervously.)

Cathy

(Cathy is sitting to the left of Susan. Cathy is waiting for the reverberations of the explosions to stop. She smiles nervously and begins.)

We'll let me see ...

(She looks up toward the ceiling somewhat nervously and, then, returns her attention to the group.)

... my friends call me Cathy ... but my given name is Catherine. I really don't care for politics ... seems too confrontational and divisive to me. I like the idea of spirituality – of feeling an essential connectedness with other people and the rest of the Universe ... that there is a basic truth about who we are and why we are here ... even if I might not know what that truth is in all its detail, but I don't like what a lot of people do in the name of this or that religion. I think all too many people use the idea of 'God' to try to justify the unjustifiable. At the moment I am – as they say – between jobs ... but, I used to work in an insurance office.

(Looking toward Phil who is sitting to her left, she says:)



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I guess I've said enough. ... Maybe too much! ...

Phil

My name is Phil. I'm retired. I used to run a small advertising business. My wife died a few years ago. I have a couple of children who are: Grown, married, and have children of their own. We don't see one another as often as I would like, but they are all pretty busy with their lives. I keep myself occupied by puttering around my workshop and hanging out with a few friends of mine who also are retired. I like to fix things. I consider myself a political independent ... which is, I suppose, another way of saying I don't like either of the major political parties.

(Phil looks toward Cathy.)

I feel that I am a religious person – although I don't know what God thinks about that -- but I agree with you that all too many people seem to be giving religion a bad name in order to impose their own delusional, theological systems on everyone else.

(Phil turns to Aaron and says:)

It seems your turn has arrived.

Aaron

(Aaron turns toward Gloria and says:)



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My name is Aaron. I'm a hunting and fishing guide. I do a little piloting in conjunction with my business. I'm separated ... what I do for a living is pretty hard on my wife since I'm away so much. ... We're trying to work things out, but I don't know what's going to happen with that. As far as politics is concerned, I've never voted in my life. ... I agree with whoever it was that said: "Don't vote, it only encourages them." I wouldn't consider myself to be religious or even spiritually inclined, but, being out in nature as much as I am, it is hard not to feel that there is much, much more to things than just humanity. ... There is an incredible mystery and wonder to existence that is both intoxicating and overwhelming. ... I don't know what to call that, but I feel it ... and, sometimes, very deeply.

(Aaron nods to Anne who is at the left end of the semicircle)

Anne

My name is Anne. Like Phil, I'm retired. I used to work at a local university in the admissions office. I'm still married ... although my husband and I have had our share of ups and downs. I have a daughter who is teaching history at the university level. I do a lot of volunteer work. I am involved in politics of a sort ... but mostly on a local level where there seems to be much more of a chance to directly influence things. ... The more removed one becomes from the local level, the more it seems that one loses any opportunity to affect what is going on, and, so, I tend to shy away from state and national politics ... although I do vote ... not that it seems to do any good. I'm not all that





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religious, but I am really drawn to some of the mystical paths of different spiritual traditions. ... At least, I like to read about the mystics and reflect on what they have to say and try to do what I can to apply some of their teachings to my everyday life.

(Anne looks at Gloria and says:)

Well, last but not least, you're up.

Gloria

(Gloria acknowledges Anne with a nod.)

I appreciate what you have done with respect to the introduction process. It has kind of helped to calm me down and not feel like such an outsider. In any case, my name is Gloria. I am married with two teenagers to look after. I'm a stay-at-home mom, and I wish I was at home right now ... because I worry about my family, and I worry about their worrying about me and what has happened to me. But, I guess there is not much I can do about that right now.

(Gloria pauses briefly while looking at the others.)

As you probably gathered from things I said before, I take religion seriously, but I kind of feel there are a lot of people – both religious and non-religious – who are making a mess of things ... including politicians, whether they are



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secularly or religiously oriented. I'm fed up with politics,  
but I don't know what the alternative is.

(Gloria shrugs her shoulders and adds:)

Not very exciting, I guess, but ...

(She looks at Aaron.)

my unexciting life takes all I have just to be able to try to  
keep my head above water.

(Gloria turns and looks at Anne indicating that she has  
finished speaking.)

Anne

(Anne throws her hands up briefly with a facial expression  
that indicates uncertainty.)

Well, we don't have any paper and pen to record what we  
say, and I really have no idea where this is all going ... if  
anywhere at all, but I guess we should just begin  
discussing things related to the issue of self-governance. I  
suppose if the powers that be have the capacity to bring us  
here and also transport one of us out, unseen, they also  
probably have the ability to monitor what we are doing  
and saying.

(Anne looks at the others encouragingly and states:)



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To those who are about to die, I salute you. ... Who's first?

Phil

(Phil fearlessly enters the fray and offers his opinion.)

Is much of a discussion needed? What's wrong with the American Constitution?

(Phil looks toward the ceiling and turns his neck a little, in a sort of pleading gesture.)

Can we go home now?

Aaron

(Aaron smiles at Phil but responds matter-of-factly.)

With the exception of the Preamble, Article IV, Section 4, and the Bill of Rights, I feel the U.S. Constitution is more about divvying up power between the federal government and state governments than it is an exercise in self-governance. Other than voting, the people don't seem to have very much influence with respect to what goes on in government.



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Phil

Doesn't the Constitution provide for a representational government? The people's wishes are given expression through political representation. ... That's how the people influence what goes on in government.

Aaron

(Aaron responds to Phil, but, as he does, he looks at the other members of the group as well.)

Do you really think any elected official can properly represent the soul of another human being? The interests of the electorate run in a gazillion different directions. ... How are those differences going to be fairly represented in the halls of government?

Phil

If you elect the right sort of leaders, they will come up with decisions and policies that will serve the best interests of the people.

Aaron

And, what are the best interests of the people?

Phil

You alluded to it yourself, earlier ... the Preamble: "We the people of the United States in order to form a more perfect



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union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish the Constitution of the United States of America.”

Aaron

I agree with you, that the Preamble is a very important, if largely overlooked, part of the Constitution. The problem is everyone disagrees about what it means. What do we mean by: Justice, tranquility, the common defense, the general welfare, or liberty? What are the criteria for determining what is meant by a more perfect union? You ask 100 different people about the Preamble, and you’re likely to get 150 different answers.

(Throwing his hands up in a gesture of frustration, Aaron continues on.)

The words in the Preamble are simple and everyone believes that the meanings of those words are obvious and commonsensical ... but people tend to believe in that way because they fail to understand they are just projecting their own understanding onto those words. ... They are not necessarily deciphering meanings that are inherent in the Preamble.

Anne

I’ve had quite a few discussions with my daughter, who is a history teacher, and she says that contrary to popular



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mythology, there was never any common consensus among the so-called Framers of the Constitution and the Founding Fathers about how to understand the Constitution. ... Hamilton and Madison who were at the 1787 Philadelphia Convention, as well as Jefferson, John Adams, Thomas Paine, and Samuel Adams who were not at that convention, but who are still considered to be among the Founding Fathers, all had very different ideas about the issue of governance.

(Anne pauses, then, as an afterthought adds to what she has said.)

Madison even had very different ideas about the Constitution, depending on what part of his life one is talking about. Prior to the 1787 Convention in Philadelphia, he had drawn up a draft of a constitution that is known as the Virginia Plan and that -- with various changes -- became the working template for the Philadelphia Convention. Originally, Madison thought that if the federal government considered it necessary or advisable, then the federal government should be able to veto all legislation passed by the states -- although his position was rejected by other participants at the Philadelphia Convention -- but during the Alien and Sedition crisis that occurred when John Adams was President, Madison formed an alliance, of sorts, with Jefferson and became an advocate for the idea that state governments had certain rights that were inviolable or superior to those of the federal government.



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(Phil is about to speak but realizes that Gloria wants to say something and lets her know she can go ahead. Gloria addresses Aaron.)

Gloria

You mentioned some article and section of the Constitution before. What did you mean?

Aaron

(Arching his eyebrows, Aaron responds to Gloria.)

I was referring to probably one of the most unheralded but, in my opinion, crucially important aspects of the Constitution – namely, Article IV, Section 4 of the Constitution says, and I quote: “The United States shall guarantee to every state in the union a republican form of government ...” The section goes on to say other things, but, to me, the portion that I have just quoted is quite essential to the whole Constitutional project.

Gloria

(Gloria is intrigued and asks:)

How so?

Aaron

All of the Founding Fathers and Framers were very much influenced by a form of philosophy that played a fundamental part of the Enlightenment that began



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somewhere during the mid-to-late 17<sup>th</sup> century and lasted until about the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The ideas of Locke, Spinoza, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, and Montesquieu were all being discussed, as well as the writings of some of the classical Roman writers like Virgil and Cicero.

(Aaron pauses to organize his thoughts.)

To make a long story short, the idea of republicanism was intended to introduce something quite new into the realm of governance. ... Leaders – that is, those who were to govern the people – were supposed to rule in accordance with a set of moral values such as: Honesty, disinterestedness, impartiality, fairness, virtuousness, critical inquiry, openness, keeping one's word, being unbiased, exercising resistance to corrupting influences, not being a judge in one's own cause, and so on.

(Aaron gives emphasis to his words.)

The Framers of the Constitution, ... didn't promise the people that their leaders would govern in accordance with the foregoing sort of republican values. ... The Framers didn't say that they would try to act in accordance with those republican values. Rather, they guaranteed ...

(Aaron repeats the phrase with even more emphasis.)

They **GUARANTEED** ...





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(Aaron looks at each member of the group briefly to let the idea of something being guaranteed by a government to sink in and, then, he states the phrase again more softly.)

... they guaranteed a republican form of moral conduct in Article IV, Section 4 of the Constitution, and the reason why they used such strong language is because all of the Framers knew that the people were highly suspicious of the intentions of government figures ... irrespective of whether those officials were foreign or domestic, and if the Framers had any hope of getting the people to agree to the Constitution, then, the Framers would have to do or say something that would allay the fears of the people with respect to government behavior. Unfortunately, I don't think there has been even, one, sitting government since America became a Republic that has honored the guarantee that was written into the 1787 Constitution in the form of Article IV, Section 4 ... and, as a result, as far as I'm concerned, everything that has transpired during the last 220-plus years in American governance has been unconstitutional ... because in one way or another everything that has been done by the federal government has violated the character of the original constitutional guarantee to provide a republican form of government.

Phil

(Phil interjects somewhat indignantly.)

What about Washington and Lincoln who are considered two of our greatest presidents? Surely, what you are saying doesn't apply to them.



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Aaron

(Aaron shrugs his shoulders.)

I don't believe we want to get bogged down into a dispute about history ... although ... who knows ... maybe that can't be avoided. ... In any event, to try to respond to your question somewhat briefly, you might want to consider a few things. For example, Washington discarded his republican values from the get-go. On the one hand, following the revolutionary war, he wrote to all the state governments that he was permanently retiring from public life, and in a very public manner, he handed in his sword to the central government. Washington's actions stunned the world because usually victorious generals leverage their position and acquire power of one kind or another, and, yet, Washington chose the republican way of disengaging himself from public service and sought no return on his public service. Nonetheless, within a few years, Washington rationalized his way back into public life, first as President of the 1787 Philadelphia Convention, and, then, as President of the United States. Washington went back on his word ... which is a very un-republican thing to do.

(Aaron reflects on things a bit more before continuing.)

Thomas Paine wrote a scathing letter to Washington during Washington's presidency. Washington had left Paine to rot in a French prison during the French Revolution despite the central role that Paine had played in the Revolutionary War with his book *Common Sense* ... a



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role that Washington acknowledged by urging his troops to read Paine's book. However, Washington was doing a lot of things that Paine felt were unethical during his presidency, and Paine ended his 1796 letter to Washington by claiming that Washington had been a treacherous friend as well as a public hypocrite, and Paine raised the question as to whether or not Washington had merely abandoned good principles or ever had any such principles to begin with.

You, probably, have all seen that famous picture of Washington crossing the Delaware. To me, the real heroes were the ones rowing the boat, but we don't know anything about them. Similarly, it wasn't Washington who was risking his life on the battlefield -- after all, there was a gentleman's agreement that neither side should attack the higher ranking officers involved in the conflict ... rather, it was the unknowns who paid the price for freedom, not Washington.

As far as Lincoln is concerned, he was a white supremacist who wanted to ship slaves to Africa or the Caribbean, and this was his position even after the Civil War began. He helped get 600,000 people killed, as well as helped bring about thousands of life-altering injuries above and beyond the people who were killed. What is more, he jailed thousands of citizens just for disagreeing with him, and quite a few of those individuals were shot for their trouble on orders from Lincoln. He threatened a Supreme Court Justice with arrest, and forced a member of the United States Congress into Canadian exile ... again, just because those individuals disagreed with what he was doing. And



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the whole Ft. Sumter thing was a farce arranged by Lincoln ... like the Gulf of Tonkin ruse in Vietnam was arranged by Johnson. ... Ft. Sumter actually belonged to the South Carolina state government and the federal government refused to vacate that state property and, consequently, the federal government was being forced to evacuate by Confederate forces ... and even though the Southern troops caused no casualties during their attempt to regain their own fort – there were two Union troops who died and this was done by the Union forces themselves when a Union canon prematurely exploded. ... Nevertheless, Lincoln went on to use Ft. Sumter as a justification for conducting a civil war and helped to get more than 600,000 people killed and totally shredded the idea of self-governance in the United States. So, how did Lincoln act in accordance with the requirements of Article IV, Section 4 of the Constitution?

Phil

(Phil is upset with respect to what Aaron has said.)

Lincoln did those things because he was Commander in Chief in a time of War. ... He had a right to do what he did ... besides he was trying to preserve the Union.

Aaron

And what is the nature of the moral calculus that says that the lives of 600,000 people are less important than being able to continue on as a nation. I thought the United States was about “We the People” and not about nationhood. When, and why, did the nation become more important than the lives of the people who live in that country?



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(Aaron responds to another part of Phil's perspective, but continues to speak in a forceful but controlled manner.)

As far as the 'Commander in Chief' issue is concerned, being a Commander in Chief doesn't permit one to interpret the Preamble to the Constitution any way one likes, and being Commander in Chief doesn't entitle a person to ignore Article IV, Section 4 of the Constitution, and being Commander in Chief doesn't permit one to ignore the Bill of Rights, especially the ninth and tenth amendments which indicate that there are very definite limits placed on what the federal government can and can't do. ... The Commander in Chief might be able to tell the military what to do, but that doesn't entitle him to tell the people what, they, can do.

(Explosions sound in the distance. ... Everyone looks toward the ceiling with anxiety, nervousness, and a touch of fear.)

Anne

(Anne had been looking for an opportunity to intervene, feeling that, perhaps, things had become too heated and that the discussion was being dominated by a couple of people, so, she makes a suggestion.)

Perhaps we could hear from some of the other people now. I feel that it is important for all of us to be given an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.



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Cathy

(Cathy looks left and right, checking to see if anyone wants to speak. When she sees that the coast seems to be clear, she begins.)

You know, I have religious or spiritual beliefs, but I have always been puzzled by part of the first amendment ... the part that talks about religion. I get it that no one should have the right to impose their religious beliefs on others ... and, quite frankly, I agree with the underlying idea.

(She hesitates, and with a puzzled expression on her face, she adds:)

A lot of people refer to the part of the First Amendment that mentions religion as constituting the 'separation clause.' However, I don't really think that's a proper way of referring to that portion of the first amendment. Nothing is being separated. Rather, the Amendment says that Congress cannot pass legislation that either establishes religion or prohibits people from observing religion.

(Cathy shakes her head slightly.)

Now, what's puzzling about all of this is that it seems to me that public policy -- which is what Congressional legislation is about -- constitutes a religion of sorts that is being established.



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Susan

How do you arrive at that conclusion? I guess I don't follow the logic of what you are trying to say. ... Religion is religion, and government is government. ... The two seem like separate things to me.

Cathy

(Cathy motions to Phil and Aaron.)

Earlier, they were talking about the Preamble to the Constitution.

(Cathy starts slowly, at first, but she begins to gain confidence as she speaks.)

Justice, welfare, liberty, ... tranquility or peace, the process of perfecting the mechanism for self-governance, and trying to defend the community against those who would attack it, ... all of these things have an essential, fundamental quality about them. There is a sense of the sacred woven into the principles that are mentioned in the Preamble, and if one reads between the lines, everything depends on determining what the truth is concerning those core values, and, therefore, there is a sense of the sacred inherent in the issue of truth and seeking the truth.

(Cathy pauses and looks at each of the individuals in the group.)



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What do we mean by the idea of sacredness? Doesn't it mean that we treat whatever we consider to be sacred with reverence ... with respect and deference! ... that, we use whatever we consider sacred as something of a compass by which we navigate our way through difficulties and life? The Buddhists don't seem to have a god-concept, but a sense of the sacred runs through their beliefs. Therefore, in order for something to count as a religion – as Buddhism does – one does not necessarily have to believe in God. Don't all religions believe that they give expression to the truth of things? Isn't the idea of public policy a government's attempt to establish what they consider to be the truth in relation to how we should proceed in order to establish the principles of the Preamble ... assuming, of course, that we give the people in government the benefit of the doubt ... which is not always warranted?

(Cathy continues to move her head from side to side as she seeks to engage each of the other individuals.)

Of course, just as the proponents of any given religion have difficulty convincing other people that this or that religion gives expression to the truth, those who advocate a given kind of public policy also have difficulty proving to people that such a perspective gives expression to the truth or that such public policy best serves the sacred ideas of the Preamble to the Constitution.

(Cathy shrugs her shoulders, shakes her head slightly, and gestures in an exasperated way with her hands.)





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There is every bit as much theology in public policy as there is in any religion. So, why do secular or so-called non-religious ideas get a free ride with respect to the First Amendment. ... Why aren't they considered to be instances of trying to establish a religion and imposing those ideas on people?

Aaron

I think Cathy has a point. Republicanism was a moral theory for the Founding Fathers ... a theory they considered to be rather sacred in nature. During the Enlightenment, reason was considered to have sacred-like properties. Just because one doesn't talk about something in overtly religious terms doesn't mean that there aren't religious-like properties inherent in republicanism, or rationalism, or any other theory of governance, in which one group seeks to impose their idea of 'the rational' on everyone else. Just like everyone has their own ideas about religion, everyone has their own ideas about what constitutes rationality. ... Isn't public policy just religion by another name?

Susan

But, if public policy is going to be considered just another kind of religious or theological belief, then, how does government go about governing people?

(Phil nods his approval.)



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Cathy

Maybe, self-governance is not about one group – say, the majority or the people in power -- ruling another group. Jane is not here anymore, but something she said when she was with us has kind of taken root in me. Isn't self-governance about finding a way of getting along with one another ... and, therefore, self-governance is not necessarily a matter of one group ruling another?

Phil

(Phil is somewhat exasperated with what he is hearing.)

If we adopt your ideas, I just don't see how anything will get done. You need someone who is calling the shots.

Jake

No one is calling the shots in a jury, and, yet, things get done. Decisions are made. Actions are taken. Juries do more to serve and advance the principles of justice, liberty, the general welfare, the common defense, and domestic tranquility than 99% of the politicians do.

Phil

So, are you proposing that juries decide issues like war?

Gloria

Maybe, if we permitted juries to decide such issues, then perhaps what's going on outside and all around us wouldn't be going on.



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David

(David checks to make sure that Gloria has finished what she wanted to say, before beginning.)

Smedley Butler was a two-time medal-of-honor winner. ...

(Noticing the bemused looks on the faces of some of the others, he shakes his head in a way that acknowledges what might be going through their minds.)

Yeah, I know the name sounds made up ... like Dudley Do-right ... but, I assure you, Butler was a real person

In any case, Smedley was the most decorated man in U.S. military history until Audie Murphy came along – and Butler wrote a book, as well as gave a speech to the VFW, entitled “War Is a Racket” in which he pointed out how various vested interests get soldiers to do the dying and bleeding so that those with unscrupulous motives for war can gain access to, and acquire control over, a variety of commercial opportunities that will lead to more profits.

(David shakes his head sadly.)

War is not about: Glory, freedom, justice, or truth. War is a spin-machine that uses whatever propaganda is necessary to get people to do its bidding. ... War uses human life as fuel, and, in the process, generates a toxic set of forces that pollutes the lives of everyone it touches. Maybe we would



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be better off with juries deciding matters of war rather than politicians and generals.

Anne

(Anne puts up her hand in a way intended to forestall possible objections to what she is about to say.)

I'm not trying to change the subject ... just trying to approach things from a slightly different and, possibly, complementary angle ... but as I indicated earlier, I have had a lot of discussions about the birth of America with my daughter, the history teacher. I realize – somewhat vaguely – that there are a lot of different theories about American history that are being thrown at people like so many barkers at a carnival trying to induce people to enter a side-show, so, what I'm about to say is just one perspective, and I guess in that respect ...

(Anne smiles in a self-deprecating, confessional manner.)

I'm just one, more barker.

(Before continuing on, Anne reflects a little, organizing her thoughts.)

I once got into an argument with my daughter because she was telling me things about early America that went contrary to pretty much everything I thought was true about its history. I had this idea about America in which the Framers gathered together in Philadelphia to discuss



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all the great ideals mentioned in the Preamble and, then, created a beautiful document called the Constitution, released that work and, thereby, set America on the road to becoming the greatest political democracy in the history of the world.

(Pausing slightly)

Apparently, however, the reality of things is different from the sort of mythology concerning America that I had pieced together from movies, television, newspapers, and high school history.

(Anne pauses again, somewhat anxiously, not knowing how what she is about to say will be received.)

According to my daughter, the first thing that the Framers did when they convened their 1787 Convention in Philadelphia was to lock everyone out and envelop their discussions in secrecy. There was a reason for the secrecy because they actually had not been given the authority to do what they were contemplating doing – which was to become engaged in writing a new Constitution. The mission that the Philadelphia Convention had been given by the Continental Congress was to revise the Articles of Confederation in order, among other things, to better accommodate and facilitate increased commerce within the 13 states. The Articles of Confederation had been ratified by all the states, and those Articles required that any changes to the Articles governing the confederation of American states had to be approved by both the



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Continental Congress as well as be unanimously approved by all 13 states.

(Anne pauses slightly to let what she had been saying sink in, a little, with her listeners.)

The Framers had something different in mind, however. They wanted to do an end-around the Articles of Confederation, the Continental Congress, and the state legislatures. In effect, they wanted to stage a coup, and use the notion of “We the People” to vote, through state ratification conventions, on what the Framers had illicitly done.

(Anne shrugs her shoulders.)

I suppose that sounds like a good idea – letting the people decide. But, that’s not what actually happened. Instead, the ratification votes in the states were highly orchestrated by political and economic interests, and, as well, those conventions were often undermined with dirty tricks. For instance, following the ratification vote in Massachusetts, John Quincy Adams sometimes frequented an office where a person used to boast about all the dirty tricks the proponents of federalism had played during the ratification convention on people who were resistant to the Constitution. The Pennsylvania state legislature actually sent officials to search for, and apprehend, several members of the legislature who were unhappy with the idea of ratification conventions but who nonetheless, were dragged back to the legislative chambers and held captive



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just so a quorum could be established that would permit the state legislature to set the ratification process in motion. Most of the newspapers gave a one-sided view of the Constitution and tended to hide the fact that there were a lot of people who had serious reservations about that document. Many people who sent representatives to the ratification conventions wanted amendments to the Constitution, but the proponents of the Constitution kept insisting that the document had to be accepted as written and used all kinds of scare tactics to pressure people to accept the Constitution as it was. The rules committees that governed what went on in the various ratification conventions were largely run by proponents of the Constitution, and the rules that were established in those committees tended to be to the advantage of proponents of the Constitution and to the disadvantage of anyone who might have objections concerning the Constitution.

(Explosions sound and shake the room somewhat. The people in the room flinch, duck, and slowly straighten up.

Anne looks at the ceiling and, then, back to the other individuals in the group, and expresses a sense of relief before adding:)

If the foregoing were not bad enough ...

(She gazes warily at the ceiling before turning her attention to the others in the group, and, then, continuing on with her perspective.)



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.. one has to consider who actually voted during the ratification process. First of all, most of the people did not directly vote for, or against, the Constitution. They had to elect representatives, and those representatives didn't always vote the way the ones who elected them wanted those representatives to vote. Secondly, when one eliminates slaves, women, and adult males who were poor and, as a result, disenfranchised and, then, combines this with the fact that in the best of times only about 40% of those who were eligible to vote actually voted, and, then, if one looks at the actual ratification votes in each of the states, only about 500 hundred people decided the matter ... hardly a case of: "We the People".

(Sighing)

James Madison -- who some consider to be the father of the Constitution, since his Virginia Plan served as the template for the 1787 discussions in Philadelphia -- wasn't interested in creating a democracy. ... In fact, what he had witnessed in the Virginia State Assembly and the Continental Congress led him to believe that there was entirely too much democracy in America, and, as a result, he wanted to create a form of government where the 'natural aristocracy' would be able to run things without interference from the people. Most of the other individuals who participated in the Philadelphia Convention shared his view, but three of the members voted against the proposed Constitution, and a number of other people had left the Convention because they were not happy with what was going on there. In any event, James Madison and the others at the Philadelphia Convention didn't create a





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democracy. ... They created a 'way of power' that would enable politicians to begin imposing various kinds of public policy on 'We the People' ... a way in which people would be able to periodically vote, but a way that would not permit 'We the People' to actually participate in decision-making in any other fashion. ... Consequently, this was not really an exercise in self-governance unless one happened to be a member of the government or a part of the so-called 'natural aristocracy' ... which always seemed to me to be a rather self-serving idea.

(Anne looks at the others and smiles.)

Well, my time as a carnival barker is over.

Gloria

(Everyone is reflecting on what Anne has said. Eventually, the silence is broken when Gloria remarks:)

I, really don't know much about American history, but one thing does bother me ... or confuses me ... I'm not sure what the right word is.

(Gloria thinks a bit more about what is going on within her mind, then adds:)

Quite apart from whatever it was that went on back during the time when colonies became the United States of America and quite apart from whether, or not ...



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(Gloria looks at Anne to acknowledge what already has been discussed.)

... the whole thing was a matter of illegal activities, or political dirty tricks, or a coup, I really don't understand why the people of today are obligated to follow what certain people decided more than two centuries ago. I just don't get it.

Phil

(Phil is somewhat exasperated with what he is hearing, but says gently:)

Don't you think that you ...

(Phil looks at the others before saying:)

... that, all of us -- have a moral obligation to adhere to the principles that were laid down by the Founders ... the, very principles that make America possible today? Don't you think that you -- that we all -- have a duty to continue on with that tradition?

Gloria

... but that's the problem ... listening to what Cathy, Anne, David, and Aaron have said, I'm just not at all sure what the actual nature of the tradition is to which you are referring,



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or why I should feel obligated to carry it on. It all seems so muddled and twisted to me. I don't have their knowledge of things ...

(Gloria motions toward Anne, Cathy, David, as well as Aaron, before continuing on.)

but I still am trying to figure out what, if anything, ties me to the ideas that a group of white, privileged guys decided upon several hundred years ago. ... This has always been a mystery to me.

(Looking apologetically toward Phil, Gloria continues on.)

I'm sorry! I really don't understand what ties me to those people in the 1700s.

(Gloria thinks a little more about the matter before adding:)

If I got together with a bunch of people today and we came up with a document that we liked, I would completely understand if people several hundred years from now might be inclined to scratch their head and wonder why they should be required to follow what we came up with ... even if what we came up with was interesting and made some good points.



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Phil

(Phil sticks to his perspective, but he tries to do so in a reasonable manner.)

Don't you feel that all Americans – from colonial times to now -- are connected by a sort of common history and shared purpose ... perhaps, even a collective destiny of some kind? Don't you think it makes sense to try to hold on to what has helped sustain that history, purpose, and destiny over the years?

Gloria

(Gloria begins laughing and, then, she tries to stop her laughter.)

Phil, I apologize! ... I'm really not laughing at you ... but my eyes begin to glaze over whenever I hear that sort of talk. ... It all sounds like gibberish ... nice-sounding words, perhaps, but gobbledygook all the same. When I look around me, I don't see much commonality at all. ... I see purposes and destinies running in all directions. ... I see people who are out of work and without health care ... I see people who are working hard but who can't make ends meet and who are going deeper into debt. ... I see divorced families and a lot of unhappy people. I see politicians bowing down to the corporations that fund their campaigns rather than collaborating with the people that the politicians are supposed to be serving. I see rich people who don't seem to be satisfied with what they have ... who always want more, and they don't appear to care what the collateral damage might be in their quest for



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more. I see a government that is spending money on the military to defend against mostly manufactured enemies ... money that should be spent on the American people in some other, more constructive way.

Phil

Don't we owe loyalty to those individuals who placed their lives at risk and who were killed or wounded while defending the rights and freedoms that so many people take for granted? Isn't the military really dedicated to serving what is in the national interests, and shouldn't we all come together and rally around those interests? Doesn't the military keep the barbarians from breaching the gate of civilization and protect us against those evils.

David

And who is going to protect us from the military? How do we know that what the military does is really in the best interests of the people? As I indicated before, Smedley Butler was a decorated military man, but, based on considerable experience, he came to the conclusion that war was nothing but a racket that served the interests of the rich and powerful. ... He was tired of seeing the lives of young men being sacrificed – not for: Truth, freedom and justice – but for: Propaganda, oppression, and injustice.

(David puts up his hand to forestall criticism.)



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Don't get me wrong. I believe that many people in the military tend to be courageous individuals who are trying to do what they believe is the right thing and who have been led to believe that they are defending their country, its citizens, and the democratic way of life back home. But, they have been, and are being, lied to by their leaders ... both civilian and military.

(Pausing briefly)

Up to a certain point I commend the loyalty, sense of duty, courage, and dedication of people in the military. However, there comes a time when people in the military have a responsibility to become aware of how they are being used, and if they are not willing to have their consciousness raised, or are resistant to the many facts which indicate that the military is, for the most part, a tool of the oligarchs and the plutocrats who are quite willing to throw away the lives of those soldiers for the sake of self-serving goals ... then, I begin to lose a lot of respect for those individuals – both within the military and outside of it -- who keep wanting to insist that the military serves the interests of democracy or that the sovereignty of the state is an inherently noble goal.

(David shakes his head in a sad fashion.)

Besides ... the vast majority of casualties in any war are civilians, not military people. There is nothing noble about killing innocent people, and I don't care how our leaders or people in the military try to rationalize that sort of



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carnage. ... Mass murder is mass murder. ... There is no justification. ... War doesn't make mass murder right ... war merely makes mass murder inevitable.

Phil

(Phil is trying to be patient but is a little annoyed as well.)

Look, I admit that everything is not perfect. ... There's a great deal of additional seeking for a more perfect union that needs to take place ... the sort of perfection that has been alluded to in the Preamble to the Constitution, but we have had Supreme Court justices who, for decades, have been diligently unpacking the possibilities inherent in the Constitution that was written more than two hundred years ago. The judicial system – at least at the level of the Supreme Court – shows that there is a whole set of precedents that tie America together in a very effective and functional way. Shouldn't we be prepared to honor that history of precedents and let the political system play out in accordance with what some very intelligent people understand concerning the nature of the Constitution and how that document binds all of us together?

David

You know ... Democrats refer to Supreme Court jurists who decide things in a way that doesn't please Democrats as being governed by ideology rather than principle, and Republicans refer to Supreme Court jurists who decide things in a way that doesn't please Republicans as being governed by ideology and guilty of judicial activism. But, as far as I'm concerned, none of them – not Republicans, not



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Democrats, and, certainly, not the Supreme Court jurists -- can justify what they do. There is no rule of law that can be established which demonstrates how there is a clear line of logic that permits one to conceptually and consistently journey from colonial days to what goes on today and do so in a way that can be justified beyond a reasonable doubt. The jurists all have their little pet theories about the nature of law, but that's all those conceptual pets are ... theories, and, yet, apparently, those jurists feel perfectly comfortable imposing their legal theologies on the rest of us. They have become judges in their own philosophical causes, and given what Aaron said earlier, this seems to be in direct violation of Article IV, Section 4 of the Constitution ... which guarantees a republican form of government. ... And, unless there is any confusion in anyone's mind here, a republican form of government has nothing to do with the policies of a party that bears the same name but that holds the principles of real republican government hostage to ideas that are every bit as corrupt as their counterparts in the other party.

Phil

Oh come on! Are you trying to say that Supreme Court justices don't know what they are doing?

David

Not at all! I'm sure those men and women know exactly what they are doing. I feel certain they are very committed to, and knowledgeable about, perusing through the tea





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leaves at the bottom of their philosophical cups of legal brews. What I'm saying is there's a substantial disconnect between what they do – in a very expert fashion I am sure ... and, the issue of being able to justify, beyond a reasonable doubt, that what they are claiming is meant by the Constitution can be demonstrated to be correct. The power to say what the law is carries the day for them ... not logical arguments that can be shown beyond a reasonable doubt to be correct or justifiable.

Phil

Why do you keep insisting that the Supreme Court justices must be able to prove their judgments beyond a reasonable doubt? Isn't that idea only relevant to criminal cases? This seems to be a rather arbitrary standard that you want to impose on them.

David

(David shrugs his shoulders and moves his head in a slightly dismissive manner.)

The whole idea of the jury system – whether in the form of a grand jury or a regular trial jury – is based on the premise that the people, not the government, are the last line of defense that protects a citizen against an overly exuberant government's desire to deprive any given individual of his or her freedom. The standard by which juries abide – at least in relation to criminal trials – requires the prosecution ... in other words, the state or the power of government – to be able to prove its case against an individual beyond a reasonable doubt.



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(Pausing to assess whether Phil is following his argument.)

Given that the decisions of Supreme Court jurists tend to affect people's freedom, as well as have serious repercussions for the lives of citizens, then, why shouldn't Supreme Court jurists be held to the same standard that criminal prosecutions are – that is, why aren't Supreme Court jurists required to demonstrate that their decisions are demonstrably true beyond a reasonable doubt? Why should one permit decisions to stand that are 5-4, or 6-3, or 7-2, or even 8-1 ... all of which tends to suggest that the jurists are not sure they are correct beyond a reasonable doubt. ... In the parlance of juries, all the foregoing sorts of split decisions of the Supreme Court constitute a hung jury and, therefore, ought to have no legal force.

Phil

(In a challenging tone but, nonetheless, simultaneously intrigued about what might be said in response to his inquiry, Phil speaks without addressing anyone in particular.)

Okay! ... I seem to be the odd man out here, but let's say, for the sake of argument, that we get rid of leaders, and we jettison the Constitution, and, then, we fire the federal government, and, finally, we dismiss the Supreme Court ... once we have done all of this, what are we supposed to do? ... To borrow from Jane's way of saying things:



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(Phil lowers his head and says:)

- may she rest in peace -

(Phil returns his attention to the others and asks:)

How do we go about getting along with one another?

(Several explosions occur near to the room. ... All the individuals try to steady and brace themselves in relation to the force of the explosions. ... A few of them hold on to their neighbors to maintain their equilibrium. When things calm down, Cathy gets up, walks toward the bathroom, enters the room, and closes the door behind her. Several people watch her as she does this.)

Anne

(Anne shakes her head in an uncertain manner and, then, looks at the others as she asks:)

I don't know how much time we have, but does anyone want to try and tackle Phil's question about getting along?

(Members of the group survey one another as they try to determine if anyone wants to rise to the challenge.)



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Jake

A lot of people have always considered me to be a fool, and since fools rush in where angels fear to tread, I guess I might be an appropriate candidate to try to engage Phil's question.

(Jake looks around the group to see if anyone might be objecting to his proposal, and encountering no resistance, he proceeds to speak.)

I always have been something of a skeptic about many things ... or, at least, I've tried to be critically reflective about what I read or what people say. Over the years, I've come to realize that most people don't know as much as they think they do ... and, I include myself in that realization.

(Jake hold up his hand in a manner that is intended to forestall possible objections to his words, that might be forthcoming.)

Now, I'm not trying to claim that people don't know a lot about relative sorts of issues -- say: Gardening, painting, mathematics, science, manufacturing, business, and so on - - because, fairly obviously, such knowledge does exist, and some people have a pretty good understanding of those topics.

(There is the sound of flushing that comes from the bathroom, and Jake briefly turns his attention toward the



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bathroom before turning back to the group and continuing on with his thoughts.)

No, when I say that we don't know as much as we often think we do, I am referring to the big issues concerning the origins of things: The origin of the universe; the origin of life; the origin of reason; the origin of consciousness; the origin of language; the origin of creativity, and, the origin of morality. ... I suppose one could add the idea of purpose to the list of unknowns ... as in, what is the purpose of life ... or, does life even have any purpose?

(Jake pauses for a moment to see if anything else should be added to the conversation and, then, he nods his head in a way which suggests that enough topics have been introduced for his purposes. Continuing on, he says:)

Of course, millions of things have been said or written about all the origin and purpose issues I've mentioned. However, everything that has been said or written is pretty much of a theory. ...And, by this I mean that there is an absence of definitive proof to demonstrate ...

(Jake looks at David before adding:)

... to use your phrase ... that any of the theories are true beyond a reasonable doubt.

(Jake shrugs his shoulders.)



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We even argue about what constitutes a reasonable doubt as well as what it means to be reasonable.

Aaron

(Jake is about to continue when the bathroom door opens, Cathy emerges, and returns to her seat. As she is sitting down, Aaron looks toward Cathy and smiles before saying:)

I'm glad that you were able to make it back to us. The last time someone went in there ...

(Aaron motions toward the bathroom with his head.)

... things didn't turn out too well.

(Cathy laughs, as do three or four of the other people. A few of the remaining individuals seem to be caught in between laughing and wondering if Aaron's comment is inappropriate or insensitive. Aaron gives a non-verbal apology to Jake and uses his hands to urge Jake to continue on. Jake pauses, recalls what he had been about to say earlier and, then continues on, nodding his head toward Aaron as he does.)

We say the universe began with the 'big bang' but we have absolutely no idea what the state of the universe was prior to the big bang or what made the big bang possible ... if that is what, in fact, happened. People talk about cosmic background radiation as being evidence for the big bang,



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but in order for this interpretation of cosmic background radiation to make sense, one must accept the notion that, for unknown reasons, space expanded for a precise amount of time, not once but twice, yet, we have no idea what could have caused space to expand in that way or whether space is even something that is capable of expanding in such a manner, and what, exactly, is it that the inflating universe is expanding into?

(Jake uses his hand to help emphasis what he is saying.)

The structure of the universe and the behavior of galaxies don't seem to make sense unless one introduces the ideas of dark energy and dark matter, but no one seems to know if those entities or forces exist, and if such things do exist, we will probably have to totally revise much of what we know about physics since we don't know what dark energy and dark matter are, even as those two unknowns are hypothesized to constitute 96% of the universe. If dark energy and dark matter exist they seem to involve a different sort of physics than the visible universe does.

(Pausing briefly)

The standard model of quantum physics has been able to describe, in some detail, the character of the dynamics governing three of the four basic forces about which we know – namely, electromagnetic energy, as well as the weak force that is involved in, among other things, radioactivity, plus the strong nuclear force that binds the nucleus of atoms together via gluons. However, no one



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seems to understand how gravity fits in with the three other forces ... although experiments are being done at CERN in Europe to find whether, or not, the Higgs boson might indicate how gravity fits together with the other three forces. Nonetheless, even if those experiments are successful, no one has any idea of why certain constants in the universe came to have the values they do – constants such as the speed of light, or the gravitational constant, or the charge on an electron, or Planck’s constant – that inconceivably small bundle of energy which is at the heart of the quantum world. ... There are about twenty of these constants whose origins cannot be explained within the framework of modern science ... that is, no one knows how those constants came to be, or why our universe seems to operate in accordance with them rather than some other basic values. ... All we have been able to do is to note that such constants seem to be woven into the fabric of the universe.

(Jake angles his head to one side as he moves in another conceptual direction.)

Great strides have been made in neurobiology, but no one has any idea how logic, consciousness, language, and creativity are possible. There are a few simplistic clues about memory that have been uncovered, but, for the most, part, we know little, or nothing, about how memory works or how it is possible or how it came into being. ... For example, we have few, if any, clues about why some people have the capacity to remember every detail of their lives or to remember everything that they have ever seen or read. Neurobiologists have traced various kinds of





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functions to certain areas of the brain, but, quite surprisingly, many neuroscientists often seem to confuse correlation with causation since those scientists are no more in a position to say that neuronal activity or glial-cell activity causes, say, consciousness or language ability, than one can say that a television set causes the content of the programming that appears on its screen.

(Nodding his head up and down)

Then, of course, there is the issue of evolution. The mantra of evolution is everywhere, but not one of those scientists can offer a plausible, demonstrable explanation for how lipids -- which play essential roles in, among other things, membrane formation and function -- were naturally produced in the organic soup that supposedly existed on early earth, or how the nucleic acids and complex sugar molecules that make up ribonucleic or deoxyribonucleic acids -- molecules that are essential to life as we know it -- were naturally produced in the environment of early Earth. In addition, even if scientists had reasonable explanations for the origins of those sorts of molecules, scientists can't really explain how the first proto-cell came into existence or how that proto-cell had the capacity to reproduce itself. ... Everything is assumption passed off as if it were knowledge.

(Jake indicates that what he is about to say with a nod of his head.)



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Maybe, later on, evolution of a sort might have taken place. ... But, even if one were to grant that evolution might occur within certain limited contexts, we don't have the foggiest idea of how consciousness, language, reason, creativity, talent, memory, or intelligence came into being, or whether it even makes sense to argue that such capacities arose through an evolutionary process. Many people assume this is the case, but they have little, or no, proof that is capable of demonstrating the likely truth of those assumptions

(Jake's facial expression takes on an apologetic expression.)

I'm sorry for taking so long to get to my point, but my point requires a context. And, the context I'm trying to convey is that human beings are ignorant about pretty much all the important issues of life.

(Jake raises his hands in a manner that suggests he is raising a question.)

Am I trying to say there is no such thing as truth? No, I'm not. What I'm saying is that the relationship of human beings to the truth -- whatever truth is -- tends to be very tenuous, uncertain, and extremely limited.

(Jake shakes his head in a slightly negative fashion.)



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And, yet, human beings enter into the issue of governance as if they knew what the truth is, when, in reality, we live in relative ignorance. Nonetheless, we seem quite comfortable with imposing our ideas on one another – despite our ignorance – and, we seek to force other people to live in accordance with our ideas of the universe even though we can't prove anything that we believe concerning the nature of the universe.

(Jake shrugs his shoulders and, then, adds:)

Am I saying such and such beliefs aren't true? Not necessarily! ... All I'm saying is that we can't prove our beliefs beyond a reasonable doubt, and, therefore, we really shouldn't have any expectations with respect to other people complying with our theories about things ... and, certainly, we have no right to try to force others to live in accordance with our beliefs about things.

Phil

Aren't you espousing a sort of libertarian point of view ... that people should be free to do whatever they want as long as what they don't harm or interfere with the lives of others?

Jake

No, not really! First of all, many libertarians preach a fanatical theology of free markets and, therefore, they tend to make people thralls of financial capital rather than the



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other way around. Secondly, I feel there is a lot of discussion that needs to take place in relation to what it means to harm or interfere with the lives of others. I don't feel this is the straightforward, simple issue that many libertarians seem to suppose it is. In addition I believe there is a difference between freedom and rights. Freedom concerns the ability to make choices, but not everything that we might be free to choose is necessarily a right to which we are entitled.

Susan

So, to what rights are we entitled?

Jake

As far as I can see, we are only entitled to one right. Each one of us should be given the right to have a fair opportunity to push back the horizons of ignorance concerning the nature of the universe, ourselves, and the purpose of life.

Susan

(Susan reflects on what Jake has said and, then, asks a question.)

Would you agree with the idea that in order to have a fair opportunity to push back the horizons of ignorance, then everyone should have a reasonable expectation to be able to access the basic necessities of life ... food, water, clothing, and housing, as well as, perhaps, education and



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health care ... because I really don't see how people would have a fair opportunity to push back the horizons of ignorance if they were preoccupied with just trying to stay alive.

Jake

(Jake reflects on what Susan has said and shakes his head in agreement.)

Yes, I think I would agree with that.

Phil

Aren't you, in effect, saying that the world owes us a living?

Jake

Not really! However, I do believe people owe one another the basic necessities of life and that no one has a right to deprive those necessities to other people. Of course, this doesn't mean people might not have to engage in work to earn their keep, so to speak, but I feel that the compensation people receive for whatever work they do needs to be sufficient to permit them to have a fair opportunity to push back the horizons of ignorance ... and people who are impoverished and struggling just to stay alive aren't usually in a position to try to push back their horizons of ignorance except in extremely limited ways.

(Pausing for a moment to review what he has said.)



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I guess you could kind of reduce what I have said down to the following maxim: Neither: Try to control others, nor: Be controlled by them! ... But, this simple-sounding maxim gets very dynamic and can become fairly complicated when one considers all the ways that the boundaries of people's lives interact with one another. However, I think this is the essence of sovereignty. ... It is a form of sovereignty that existed before states and nations came along. ... Countries don't grant sovereignty. ... Rather, countries arise from the exercise of sovereignty by individuals ... that's really what 'We the People' means ... this is really the essence of self-governance ... helping one another ... co-operating with one another to ensure that everyone's basic right to have a fair opportunity to push back the horizons of ignorance concerning the mystery of life is honored. The principles mentioned in the Preamble ... justice, domestic tranquility, common defense, the general welfare, and liberty are all rooted in the basic right inherent in the sort of sovereignty that I have been trying to describe or explain.

(Jake shakes his head in sadness.)

Unfortunately, governments are very ingenious with respect to the methods they come up with for inducing people to cede their moral and intellectual agency to people in the government so that a nation or state can leverage the agency that citizens have ceded to the people in power – whether federal or local -- to be able to do all manner of terrible things to the citizens of that country along with the citizens of other countries ... such as depriving them of their basic rights and essential



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sovereignty. We need to find ways to reclaim the agency we have ceded to governments. ... We need to find ways to reclaim the sovereignty and the underlying right to which we are entitled as individuals.

Phil

I apologize for being so resistant to what is being said. But, I can't shake the feeling that the ideas being expressed are just too ... I don't know ... radical! ... too far beyond the fringe of what might be considered to be reasonable ideas.

Jake

(Jake shakes his head in disagreement and says:)

As far as I am concerned – and, naturally, I can't speak for anyone else here – what seems to me to be far too radical or what appears to be too far beyond the fringe of reasonableness is the apparent willingness of all too many people to continue on with: War, corruption, injustice, destruction of the environment, and the loss of sovereignty and rights as an acceptable way of life.

Phil

(Phil expresses a certain degree of perplexity, before saying:)

Something still seems to be missing. I think I understand your perspective, and you make some good arguments, but I still don't see how this is going to answer the question of 'how do we get along'.



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Anne

I tend to agree with you somewhat Phil. Jake has provided an interesting framework, but something more is needed.

(Anne turns toward Jake and addresses him.)

I feel if most of us were honest about the matter, we, probably, would all agree, beyond a reasonable doubt, that we are largely ignorant about the nature of reality ... that we might have our own ideas about where the truth of things lies, but none of us seems to have the necessary evidence and arguments that are capable of convincing other people, beyond a reasonable doubt, concerning the correctness of our beliefs. Your idea about ignorance almost seems like a natural law that needs to be acknowledged by all of us.

(Anne turns her attention to the other members of the group and says:)

Earlier, when I was saying a little about myself, I mentioned that I had an interest in various kinds of mysticism and spiritual traditions, and I believe that the mystics talk about something that everyone – whether a monotheist, an atheist, or any other sort of spiritual, philosophical, or humanistic belief system – is likely to agree with. And, before I continue, I want to emphasize that mysticism has nothing to do with occult or magical forces and powers. Mysticism involves an exploratory





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journey into the essential nature of human identity and potential, as well as an investigation into the nature of the relationship between human beings and the rest of the universe.

(Anne looks at the others to try to gauge if they are appearing to be following what she is saying and feeling satisfied with what she sees, she continues on with putting her thoughts into words.)

The mystics talk about the importance of character – its constructive possibilities as well as its destructive dimensions. ... In fact, the mystics tend to indicate that nothing is really possible with respect to becoming opened up to the mysteries of Being or existence without first dealing with the issue of character. I find it interesting that virtually all spiritual and humanistic traditions talk positively and encouragingly about struggling to acquire qualities like: Compassion, patience, forgiveness, tolerance, humility, honesty, sincerity, love, friendship, gratitude, and charitableness, while, at the same time, talking critically and disapprovingly about giving expression to qualities like: Greed, anger, intolerance, dishonesty, impatience, pride, insincerity, hatred, selfishness, and ingratitude. ... It's almost like a natural law of character on which virtually everyone can agree, beyond a reasonable doubt, and that gives expression to a worthwhile perspective.

(Anne raises her hands and angling her head in a sort of 'I don't know' kind of gesture, adds:)



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If we were to couple the mystical/humanistic idea involving the natural law of character with Jake's natural law of ignorance, I think those two natural-like laws would go a long way toward helping us get along with one another, despite our many differences in beliefs, values, and purposes.

(Anne is about to continue on)

(Chairs and bodies go flying in different directions. The lights go out.)

**End of Act II**



**Scene for Act III**

(Anne is kneeling and putting the finishing touches on a sling for Phil's arm, using part of the cloth from the card-table that had been used to cover Jane. Jake's left leg is bound with remnants from the same cloth. The cloth is bloody. Both Phil and Jake are resting against a large wooden beam that has come down from the roof. Anne has scratches and some bruises but seems relatively uninjured. Their clothes are somewhat tattered, stained, and dusty. Much of the room is in shambles. The couch is under another wooden beam that has come down during the explosions. The chess table has been leveled with chess pieces strewn about. Many of the chairs in which the group were sitting are broken in one way or another ... there are only a few serviceable chairs left. The back wall is still largely intact, but there are piles of stone and brick debris that are near the wall. The lights are flickering on and off, before they seem to gain some stability.

Artillery fire sounds in the distance. From time to time, automatic weapons fire is also heard. Occasionally shouts and cries can now be heard coming in from outside the room.)

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**Act III**

Anne

(Addressing Phil)

There! How's that?

Phil

(Grimacing, Phil moves his shoulder on the injured side, seeming to test the limits of movement that can be managed without causing too much pain. Phil expresses a rather satisfied sort of resignation and says:)

Seems to be as good as it can be under the circumstances. Thanks, Anne! You did a good job in helping to patch me up.

Jake

(Jake nods his head affirmatively before saying:)

I'll second that sentiment. You did a great job on both of us.

Anne

(Anne attempts to deflect the expressions of gratitude by saying:)



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I, ... guess the time I spent volunteering in the hospital paid off. I seem to remember more about what I saw going on there than I thought would be the case.

(Anne becomes more somber and motions, with her head, to an area behind the wooden beam that Phil and Jake are resting against, before saying:)

I'm afraid there was nothing I could do for the others. Cathy, Susan, Gloria, David, and Aaron are all dead. Susan was the only one who still had some life in her by the time I got over there. ... She held on to my hand so tightly, like it was the only thing linking her to this world. ... Finally, she just smiled, ever so slightly, let go of my hand, and passed on.

(Anne shakes her head sadly before saying:)

I couldn't find anything with which to cover them up. I feel badly, just sort of leaving them there.

(Anne sits down and joins Phil and Jake, resting her back against the large wooden beam. She wipes some tears away from her eyes and sighs.)

Phil

(Phil looks back, over his uninjured shoulder, up toward the round window near the ceiling. There are flashes of artillery light flickering through the window – then, turning back around, he says:)



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I suppose it won't be long, now, before whoever is out there will probably end up in here. Trying to look on the bright side of things, however, perhaps someone, finally, will be able to tell us some of what is going on.

(Anne silently listens to Phil, and Jake nods his head in acknowledgment of the possibility. Subsequently, Jake and Anne seem to become engrossed in their respective inner thoughts, but show increasing attentiveness to Phil's words as he continues to talk.)

You know ... when Anne was fixing my arm, I was thinking about different parts of the discussion that all of us were having before the explosions. I guess it was fairly obvious that I was having difficulty getting my head around quite a few of the ideas.

(Phil arches his eyebrows before continuing on with his spoken thoughts.)

I've been asking myself why there was so much resistance in me to what was being said. ... I suppose people tend to, get set in their ways as they get older. ... They develop a comfort zone and, as a result, they feel upset when anyone comes along to threaten the way of life that has come to be considered traditional ... wherever it is one calls home. We get so used to doing things or thinking about things in a certain way that we seem to assume there is no other possible way for engaging life. ... We find fault with that which is different, just because it is different from what we



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consider normalcy to be. ... We conflate the norm with the idea of the 'right' or the 'true', and the fact something might be statistically normal doesn't necessarily make that something right or true.

(Phil silently reflects on various thoughts for a short period before continuing on.)

I never much cared for school. ... I kind of saw it as a necessary evil that had to be endured. I didn't like the way the rules were, often, so arbitrary and sacrosanct ... sort of like alleged absolute truths that were not to be questioned. I often felt that the whole process of schooling was just training for getting students to learn how to fit into a pre-ordained system of power ... a system made up of: Teachers, principals, superintendents, school boards, and state authorities who were the centers of control and who were the forerunners of the government officials who, later on, would pick up where the school system had left off.

(Phil shrugs his shoulders, grimaces in pain, and begins to try to adjust his injured shoulder in order to find a more comfortable position. Once the adjustments have been completed to his satisfaction, he continues on with giving expression to his current perspective. )

I didn't enjoy school, and I grumbled a lot, but I also was fairly afraid. I had seen what happened to kids who tried to buck the system. ... They were slapped down in a variety of ways. Negative comments went on their records. ... They





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were frequently harassed by school officials – almost like an early version of profiling -- and often those kids were shunned and ostracized in various ways by the other students. Many of those kids became outcasts, and, as a result, their opportunities in life often were curtailed by the process of schooling ... not because that which the process of schooling taught or did was necessarily the proper thing to teach or do, but because the school system was structured in the way it was and trying to change things becomes something of a nightmare ... with too many faceless, vested interests using tactics of fear to terrorize people and get the latter to act out of a sense of impending doom rather than any sort of reasoned or reasonable sort of motivation. You either got with the agenda being pushed by the school in terms of what kind of a person they believed you should be ... or, you suffered the consequences. We were taught not to question authority. ... We were encouraged to be good little boys and girls and do what the grown-ups wanted. In effect, we were dumbed down in many ways and encouraged to become uncomfortable with, if not dislike, anyone who questions or raises critical problems with what is being taught in schools, or, with the way in which subjects are being taught, or, with the alleged right of teachers and school authorities to determine what it is that is to be learned.

(Phil shakes his head slightly, in a sad manner, before speaking again.)

The fear one learns in school carries over into later life. Pretty soon, almost everything one does is, in some way, based on the issue of fear. ... The fears generated in high



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school get transformed into: The fear of losing your job; ... or, the fear that one will not be able to meet the mortgage or rent payments; ... or, the fear that revolves about what the neighbors or one's peer group will say; ... or, a fear that is directed toward the police; ... or, a fear that is concerned with the arbitrariness of authority figures and what they can do to you, with no justification, whatsoever, except their willingness to do whatever they like; ... or, fears about losing health coverage; ... or, fears about retirement and whether, or not, one will have enough money to survive ... and, of course, fear of death. Fear becomes the norm, and the possibility that there might be something better than living a fear-saturated life seems ... well ... frightening.

(Phil winces in pain, touches his injured shoulder with his other hand and, then, adjusts the sling on his arm, before proceeding to add to his foregoing observations.)

I, once, read an article about cults. Oddly enough, the more I read the article, the more I began to see similarities between what goes on in cults and what goes on in education, in particular, and politics, in general. ... All kinds of social and mental forces – I believe they are called: “techniques of undue influence” -- are used in education and politics to get students or citizens to become committed to the way the school system or the government wants things to be done, but if you begin to speak with other people about what goes on in schools or in government ... it's like one is talking to a person who is still mesmerized by the cult teachings, and those individuals often become angry because you are raising



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difficult issues that generate all too many uncertainties and questions they can't resolve. Much of what goes on in education and government is abusive ... physically, conceptually, spiritually, politically. ... But, good luck on getting anyone to do something about the abuse. ... If you object, they just consider you to be a troublemaker ... some sort of unpatriotic crackpot who is interfering with the dynamics of an abusive system that, in some way, serves their purposes and interests.

(Phil thinks about what he has just said. He smiles and, then, proceeds to share that which he finds to be ironically amusing with the two other, remaining survivors.)

I guess I have kind of answered my own question: The one about why I have been so resistant to so many of the ideas that were being described during our earlier discussions. For most of my life, I have been in a sort of educational and political cult, and those experiences have led me into a state of intellectual and moral lethargy concerning anything that falls beyond the interests of the powers that have established and are running the cult which has been shaping my thinking and feelings for so many years.

(Phil is trying to remember something. His eyes gaze up toward the ceiling, as he searches inwardly for what he is trying to remember. Finally, he begins speaking again.)

One of the terms that was used in the article about cults that I read was, if I remember correctly, "floating." ... 'Floating' refers to a condition in which a person floats



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back and forth between cult beliefs and non-cult beliefs but tends to be caught up in nostalgia with respect to life in the cult and, consequently, such an individual often remembers life in the cult as being better than it actually was or is. I found many of the things that were said during the group discussion earlier to be interesting and intriguing, but I kept finding myself being pulled back into the cult belief system into which I had been indoctrinated through the schooling process in which I spent nearly twenty years of my life, as well as through the sort of political system in which I have lived much of the rest of my life. Sadly, I am beginning to become ever so dimly aware that the toxicity of a cult – whatever the nature of that cult might be: Educational, religious, cultural, academic, scientific, medical, political, economic, or militaristic -- is very hard to cleanse from one's system.

(Phil sighs deeply and sadly before speaking again.)

I, just don't know! ... There almost seems to be a sense of malevolent purpose behind the way people are encouraged to take on a huge debt in order to get a college degree and, as well, are encouraged to take out a mortgage on a house that will take 25 or 30 years to pay off. After all, once a person is in debt, he or she tends to be owned by the system and, consequently, that individual is not in any position to have the time, the resources, or the energy that are needed to seek change. ... Indebtedness seems to be a way of ensuring that the status quo is maintained. ... People are sold the dream of a middle-class life, but what they are really sold is a form of enslavement. ... It is like we are trained to become hapless victims of a vampire-dominated



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system that continually sucks from us the life force that we need to escape from our collective nightmare.

(Voices are heard! ... A loud, crashing sound is heard stage right. Dust drifts into the room. Several soldiers of a nondescript nature rush into the room and point their rifles at the trio on the floor who are resting against the beam of wood. One of the soldiers barks an order several times in an unrecognizable, foreign language, but when the three seated individuals react with expressions of incomprehension, the other soldier addresses the latter individuals in English.)

English-speaking soldier

Stand up! Raise your hands! What are you doing here?

(Jake, Anne, as well as Phil, look at one another and share expressions which indicate that trying to answer the soldier's question presents a considerable problem.)

English-speaking soldier

(The two soldiers advance a few more steps into the room, look around quickly. and, then, return their attention to the three people on the floor. The English-speaking soldier motions to the other soldier to inspect the bathroom.)

I said: 'Get up!' Raise your hands! What are you doing here?



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(The other soldier heads toward the bathroom but stops briefly to check the status of each of the bodies along the way before reaching the bathroom and checking inside.)

Anne

(The three seated individuals, two of whom are wounded, struggle to their feet and raise whatever hands they can, and, then, Anne says:)

We were kidnapped. ... Someone brought us here.

(The non-English speaking soldier comes out of the bathroom and shakes his head negatively in the direction of the English-speaking soldier indicating that the non-English speaking soldier has found nothing about which they need to be concerned. The English-speaking soldier acknowledges the signal and says something in a foreign language. The non-English speaking soldier stands his ground and raises his rifle, pointing it at the prisoners. The English-speaking soldier re-directs his attention to his prisoners before saying:)

English-speaking soldier

Who was it that kidnapped you? How were you brought here?



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Anne

We ... We don't know who kidnapped us or why. And, we don't know how we were brought here.

English-speaking soldier  
(Somewhat incredulously)

What do you mean you don't know how you got here?  
Were you hooded or put to sleep during transit. ... What are you saying?

Anne

(Anne expresses non-verbal signs of discomfort and a sense of helplessness.)

No, we weren't hooded, and as far as I know, we weren't dosed with anything that put us to sleep during the trip here. It's going to sound strange, but one moment each of us was with our families or at work, and the next moment, we found ourselves here, in this room.

Jake

What she is saying is the truth. We don't know how it happened, but here we are.

(Phil shakes his head in agreement with what Jake has said.)



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English-speaking soldier

(The English-speaking soldier motions Anne to come closer to him, before saying.)

Your story sounds far-fetched and concocted. It's been my experience that people who lie about simple things are likely hiding much bigger secrets.

(The English-speaking soldier motions to the other soldier to keep the trio guarded, and, then, places his gun on the ground. He roughly turns Anne around, searches her quickly, pulls her hands behind her back, and, then, cuffs her hands with a plastic tie, pulling it tight, and as he does this, Anne grimaces in pain. The soldier shoves her back and motions for Jake to approach. The other soldier readies his gun to shoot if Jake does anything. When Jake is near to the English-speaking soldier, the soldier does the same thing to Jake that had been done to Anne. Again, he roughly pushes Jake back. The soldier motions Phil to come forward, and the soldier checks to see if anything is hidden in the sling, and, then, removes the sling and pulls Phil's arms behind him, and as he does, Phil cries out in pain ...

... but the soldier continues on with binding Phil's hands, and Phil continues to be in pain. The English-speaking soldier slaps Phil across the back of the head.)

Shut-up and stop being such a whiner.





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(To emphasize his words, the English-speaking soldier slaps Phil on his injured arm, and Phil groans in pain.)

Anne

(Anne protests to the soldier by indicating:)

You have no right to treat him ...

(She motions toward Phil with her head.)

... in that way. ... You have no right to treat any of us in the way you have. We haven't done anything wrong.

English-speaking soldier

(The English-speaking soldier smirks and shows contempt for the words spoken by Anne)

The only rights you have are the ones I give you. You have been found in the middle of a battlefield, and you have no believable or reasonable-sounding explanation for why you are here or how you got here. You could be spies. ... You could be terrorists. ... You could be out-of-uniform soldiers seeking to sabotage critical infrastructure behind enemy lines. I don't know what you have done, but I do know what you will do from now on. ... You will answer all of our questions. ... You will co-operate ... or, you will be dealt with in whatever manner my superior officers consider to be appropriate. You are our prisoners now. ... Your fate rests in our hands!



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(The English-speaking soldier again pats down each of the prisoners, in turn – more thoroughly this time -- looking for weapons or whatever else that might be of interest. When he checks Jake, the soldier finds a folded piece of paper. Unfolding the paper ...

--- the soldier reads the contents aloud:)

'Tick-tock, Tick-Tock. We are not the enemy'.

(The English-speaking soldier looks over to the three prisoners with renewed suspicion.)

Who wrote this? ... What does it mean?

Jake

(Jake, sensing that what he is about to say is not going to be believed, he responds somewhat defensively.)

We, ... we don't know who wrote it, or why. We found it attached to a dead body. ... One of the individuals in our group, died. ... The note was on her. We're not sure what it means.

English-speaking soldier

(The English-speaking soldier begins to look around while also keeping his rifle trained on his prisoners. ... Looking back at them, from time to time to see what they are up to,



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he, finally, motions to the bodies on the floor with his rifle  
and asks:)

Which of these bodies was the note attached to?

Jake

(Jake takes a deep breath and, then, sighs.)

She's, not here, anymore!

English-speaking soldier

(The English-speaking soldier walks back toward the three  
prisoners, before saying:)

Where is she? I would like to inspect the body.

Jake

(Jake swallows nervously!)

We don't know. ... She disappeared.

English-speaking soldier

(The English-speaking soldier folds the paper he took from  
Jake and places the note in his shirt pocket before saying:)

There isn't one part of your story that makes sense.  
Practically everything any of you have said from the time



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we came in here implicates all of you in some very underhanded business. ... What label should be applied to you three – that is, whether you are spies, terrorists, or members of the enemy militia – I don't know, but you're certainly guilty of something.

Anne

If we were spies or terrorists, do you really think we would be so dumb as to concoct such a lame-brained sounding story? Don't you think we would have come up with something better than what we have said?

English-speaking soldier

Some spies and terrorists are cleverer than others.

(The soldier smiles in a menacing manner.)

I just happened to find some dumb ones who apparently didn't put a whole lot of thought into developing a plausible cover story.

(The soldier reflects on the situation briefly before adding:)

In any event ... if I were caught with my pants down, so to speak, like you three have been, I probably would come up with some half-baked story and try to convince my captors that what I am saying must be true because it is so dumb



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and unbelievable. ... I mean what would I have to lose? ...  
However, such a plan still would have an odor of  
desperation about it.

(The soldier who previously had left the room returns with  
an officer.)

Officer

(The officer addresses the English-speaking soldier.)

Private, what seems to be the situation here?

English-speaking soldier

Sir, these three have no explanation for why they are here  
or how they got here. They've told me some sort of  
manufactured story about being transported through a  
mysterious method. I believe they are either spies or  
terrorists.

(Taking a folded piece of paper out of his pocket, he hands  
it to the officer. Nodding toward the paper while motioning  
his rifle toward Jake, he adds:)

I found that paper on him. He claims that he doesn't know  
what it means, or who wrote it, or where the body went  
that it was attached to.



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Officer

(The officer unfolds the paper, reads its contents, and, then, addresses Jake.)

Is the private's account of things accurate?

Jake

I know it all sounds very implausible, but I'm ...

(Jake looks toward Anne, as well as Phil, and says:)

... we're all telling the truth about what has been taking place here.

Officer

(The officer looks again at the piece of paper in his hand and, then, turns his head toward the private before saying:)

The words sound like some sort of code.

English-speaking soldier

That's what I thought, sir.



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Officer

(The officer turns back to Jake.)

What does this: 'tick-tock, tick-tock' mean?

(The officer reflects on the situation for a few seconds,  
then, he becomes demanding and threatening.)

Has a bomb been placed somewhere? Is it going to  
detonate soon?

Jake

(Jake shakes his head with resignation and, then, protests.)

No, no! You've got it all wrong. There was a group of us ...  
nine people. We were given a mission ...

(Suddenly, Jake realizes the implications of the term:  
"mission" and proceeds to alter what he has said.)

... we were given a challenge, that was time-limited. We  
believe the: 'tick-tock, tick-tock' phrases merely means  
that time is running out for completing the task we were  
assigned.

Officer

Assigned by whom?



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Jake

(Jake shrugs his shoulders before speaking.)

We don't know by whom. ... Perhaps by the same people, or whatever, that brought us here in the first place. We know as little about all of this as you.

Officer

Did your ... "mission" ... involve planting a bomb of some kind?

Jake

No! No! No! We were told to discuss the issue of self-governance ... to come up with a solution ... that if we succeeded, humanity would be spared, but if we failed, humanity would be eliminated.

Officer

Eliminated how? ... By a bomb? Are we talking about a nuclear weapon here, or some sort of weapon of mass destruction?

(Anne would like to say something, but the officer glares at her and cuts her off ... threateningly, with:)

Unless I ask you something, you keep your mouth shut.





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(The officer paces back and forth, deliberating, and, then, stops and faces the prisoners.)

I fear we are faced with a terrible dilemma. ... I don't want to do this, but you three have left me no choice. You have forced me into a corner. We have some rather unpleasant techniques – all perfectly legal of course – that we sometimes are forced to use when we need information quickly in order to save people's lives.

(The officer looks at each of the prisoners, evaluating them in some way, and, then, steps toward Phil, saying:)

I think, you, will be an excellent candidate for this form of closely-monitored interrogation.

(The officer turns to one of the soldiers and, in a foreign language, orders the man to immediately escort Phil to the place that has been set aside for purposes of interrogation. The soldier pokes a rifle in Phil's back, prodding the prisoner to move in the desired direction.)

English-speaking soldier

(The English-speaking private motions toward the portion of the room behind the prisoners and says:)

Sir, a number of dead bodies are ... over there. These two ...



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(He nods his head toward, first, Jake and, then, toward Anne.)

... along with the one that was just removed for processing, are very likely implicated in the deaths of those people in some way. I think we have a very dangerous situation here, sir.

(Screams of pain are heard from off-stage)

Officer

(The officer looks at the two prisoners in an appraising manner. He shakes his head up and down, as if coming to a decision. He pulls a pistol from the holster on his hip, and, in a foreign language, commands the English-speaking private to do something, and the private quickly leaves the room. The officer returns to the two prisoners and says:)

We have been receiving intelligence reports that there are spies and terrorists in this area. You are not members of our army. Therefore, a rational individual would conclude this means you necessarily must be agents for someone else.

Jake

So! ... What? Are we being charged and convicted without a trial?



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Officer

(The officer smiles but, as he speaks, there is an edge to his words.)

You must think we are barbarians. You will be the beneficiaries of due process. ... There is no doubt about that.

(More screams of pain are heard from off-stage. The officer walks about the room, both inspecting the room as well as keeping an eye on the prisoners. Retracing his steps, he turns toward the prisoners and asks:)

What were you doing here?

Anne

(Anne is upset and concerned about what is happening to Phil. She looks in the direction where Phil was dragged from the room. Returning her attention to the officer, she thinks for a moment but is uncertain how to proceed. In response to the officer's question, she replies:)

We were talking about the issue of self-governance.

Officer

(The officer has an 'ah-ha' look on his face.)



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You realize, of course, that such issues are not a proper topic of discussion. This is a rather substantial violation of the law.

Jake

(Jake is angry, but he is trying to maintain a semblance of calmness.)

What law is that?

Officer

(The officer reacts as if he were somewhat surprised by the question, but, nonetheless, he is quite confident in the answer that he gives to Jake.)

Why the law of the land. ... The law that has been passed and approved by the legislature ... The law that has extended authority to people like me to do our duty and protect that law ... to ensure it is observed and honored by everyone.

We operate in accordance with the rule of law. ... Everything we do is done in accordance with rules and principles of justice that have been duly considered, discussed, and agreed upon by those who have the responsibility for making such decisions. We are a constitutional democracy ... perhaps one of the leading proponents of democracy in the world.



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(The officer looks at both prisoners, and not just Jake,  
before saying:)

I am authorized to be here. You are not. I am authorized to  
make decisions concerning the safety of our country and  
its citizens. You are not.

(With some force and emotion, the officer continues on.)

In fact, quite possibly, your purposes here ...

(He quickly surveys the room before adding:)

... are the antithesis of everything my country believes in  
because, apparently, you have been engaged in discussions  
that have been directed toward developing a plot ... a plot  
that possibly involves an assault against the rule of law ...  
although that, of course, has, yet, to be determined in any  
formal sense.

(Prolonged screams are heard from off-stage)

Anne

(Anne is shaking in response to what she is hearing from  
off-stage, but she is still curious about what is being said  
and asks:)

So, what country are we in?



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Officer

(The officer shakes his head in a bemused fashion.)

You don't really expect me to believe you don't know what country you are in, do you? The things you are saying seem to me to be pointing increasingly in the direction of guilt of some kind. ... But, of course, duty and propriety require me to reserve judgment until all the facts are in.

(The officer reflects a little more on the situation. He smiles and shakes his index finger toward Anne, before saying in a sort of flattering manner:)

Very, very clever!

(He lowers his hand and gives a look of superior intelligence concerning the situation.)

Of course, if you actually don't know what country you are in, then if you were spies, my supplying you with such Intel might provide you with information that could further your plans of espionage or terrorism, and, therefore, I believe the course of prudence is to remain silent on the matter.

(The officer offers a smile of triumph ... feeling like he has outsmarted some clever people.)



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(Three soldiers enter the room from stage right. Two are carrying a small table, and the other soldier is carrying a chair. They place the table and chair in the center of the room, with the back of the chair facing stage right. Several folders and a pen are placed on the table by one of the soldiers. The officer sits down, and invites the two prisoners to stand before him on the other side of the table with their backs to stage left. The officer says something in a foreign language, and two soldiers leave the room, while the third soldier stands guard at the entrance through which they have come.)

Officer

(The officer returns his attention to the prisoners before him. He starts to say something, but he is interrupted by screams of pain from off-stage.

He angles his head in a way that indicates he is listening to what is going on behind him, off-stage. He patiently waits for the screams to stop. As he waits, he pages through the documents in a folder before him. While he peruses the documents, his head sways almost imperceptibly in concert with the scream. When the screaming stops, he looks at the two prisoners and smiles, before saying:)

There is nothing more beautiful than the sound of  
democracy in the morning.

By the authority of the Citizen Safety Act, I am now  
convening an emergency judicial session that is being held,



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under battlefield conditions, and, therefore, subject to the Articles of War and Justice.

(He returns his attention to the folder in front of him. He makes a notation on one of the papers. The officer says something at length in a foreign language, with respect to which, Anne asks:)

Anne

What were you saying?

Officer

It is not important that you know what I have said. It is only important that I know what I have said. But, I will say, that the rule of law requires me to say what I have said, and, therefore, I have now satisfied my obligations under the law.

(Off-stage scream.)

Anne

(Anne, looks in the direction of the screams and asks the officer:)

How can you do that to a human being? ... What kind of psychopaths are you?





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Officer

(The officer listens with equanimity to Anne's anger and words, before replying.)

You seem to have a distaste for the chimes of justice. Indeed, I believe you have things twisted around. There is considerable evidence to indicate that you two, and your comrade ...

(Using a closed fist, with a thumb sticking out, he jabs the thumb in the direction that is over his shoulder and behind him and which points toward the source of the screaming.)

... are involved in some kind of espionage, spying, or terrorist activity. There also is evidence to indicate ...

(He holds up the note that, earlier, had been taken from Jake.)

... that there might, very well, be some sort of plot in which you three are mixed up, in a yet-to-be-determined manner, that implies the possible existence of a weapon of mass destruction. I have taken a sacred oath to protect the citizens of my country and to defend our form of democratic government against all threats, and I would be remiss in my duties if I did not take every necessary step to protect citizens and my country. How will I be able to face my family and neighbors, or my superiors, if it turns out that I could have done something to save lives and protect my country, and, yet, I failed to do so?



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(The officer shakes his head somewhat sadly but with resignation as well.)

It is unfortunate, your friend has to be interrogated in such an ... unpleasant ... manner, but given the evidence that is available to me, what is taking place is the rational ... the reasonable ... thing to do. I'm not going to lose any sleep over doing what I feel is necessary to serve my country and its citizens. Anything else, would be to violate the oath I have taken.

(As he finishes defending his actions, two soldiers drag Phil into the room. He is beaten, and his clothes are soaked with water, blood, and perspiration. The soldiers throw Phil down near Jake. Jake starts to move toward Phil, and the officer speaks to the two soldiers in a commanding tone.)

If he takes another step, shoot him!

(The English-speaking soldier says something in a foreign language to the other soldiers. They ready their rifles. In a foreign language, the officer speaks to one of the soldiers who had helped drag Phil in. The soldier responds to the officer in the same foreign tongue, and as the soldier speaks, he hands a piece of paper to the officer. The officer inspects the paper and looks up at the prisoners.)

Who are ...



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(The officer looks back at the paper and reads from it.)

Jane, Gloria, David, Cathy, Aaron, and, ah, Susan?

Anne

(Anne, somewhat warily, asks:)

Are you talking to me?

Officer

(The officer speaks in an imperious sort of tone.)

I am talking to whomever has something of value to tell me.

Anne

They are the names of the people who were with us, before you came and before some explosions ended their lives.

Officer

Were the explosions the result of a bomb that you people were making?

(As the officer speaks, he stares intently at Anne.)



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Anne

(Anne, returns the officer's stare in a rather defiant manner while responding.)

No! ... We weren't making any bombs!

Officer

(The officer returns his attention to the paper in his hand and responds to Anne.)

Madam, mademoiselle, whatever you are ... your position is a precarious one. I would advise you to lose your attitude. You're not helping your own cause or that of, either of your comrades.

(The officer glares at Anne before ending his response with:)

Am I making myself clear?

(The officer looks at Anne and, then, over at Jake to see if they each have understood the gravity of their situation. Satisfied with what he sees, the officer motions to Phil who is lying on the floor unconscious.)

Your friend finally decided to comply with our entirely reasonable request and gave us the names that I read previously.



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(The officer, again, holds up the piece of paper from which he had read earlier and, then, adds:)

What are the last names of the individuals whose first names I have read out?

Jake

(Jake looks at Anne! They share worried glances with one another. Finally, Jake replies:)

We ... we never knew one another's last names. ... It was always on a first name basis.

Officer

(The officer speaks in a way as if he were confirming something that he believed he already knew.)

So, you're telling me that the names I've mentioned are code names, like spies and terrorists use? This is a very significant breakthrough.

Jake

I'm not saying that ... at all.

Officer

How much time did your group spend together?



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Jake

I'm not really sure. We didn't have any clocks or watches ...  
We didn't have any means to measure the passage of time.

Officer

(The officer is impatient with respect to what he is  
hearing.)

Was it few hours, a few days, a few weeks? What was it?

Jake

(Jake looks anxiously over at Anne, and, then, replies.)

I, ... don't know! ... Maybe a few days.

(Anne nods her head in agreement with what Jake is  
saying.)

Officer

And, yet, in all that time, you never introduced yourselves  
to one another? ... Never shared your names with each  
other?

Jake

(Jake is frustrated with the officer's attitude.)



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We did introduce ourselves at a certain point. ... But, we just never used last names. ... We didn't think it was necessary.

Officer

Why not? From what my soldiers have told me, you claim to have been transported to this place by persons or forces unknown, and you claim to have been given a mission by person or persons unknown concerning the issues of self-governance, and, yet, in all of that, none of you were curious about what the names of the people were with whom you were interacting? Weren't you even, ever curious about whether, or not, any of the other people with whom you were interacting might be part of some terrorist or treasonous plot?

Jake

(Jake is exasperated with what the officer is saying and responds with a question.)

Why would we be curious in that way?

Officer

The times, sir, the times! Everyone has a duty to be suspicious of everything that is taking place.

(The officer addresses the English-speaking soldier.)



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Private, if you saw me do anything of a mysterious nature ... something that did not seem to be in accordance with the rule of law, what would you do?

English-speaking soldier  
(Enthusiastically)

No disrespect intended, sir, but I would report you. I would do my duty, sir.

Officer

(The officer beams acknowledgement toward the soldier and, then, toward the prisoners.)

I know you would, Private, and you are to be commended for your willingness to observe your duty and to maintain a constant vigilance concerning dangers that might threaten our country, its citizens, and our democratic traditions. You have been trained well.

Jake

Perhaps, you should re-think the way your soldiers are trained. There's more to life than learning how to blindly follow orders ... and there is more to democracy than using the military to oppress and terrorize people.

Officer

(The officer, briefly reflects on what Jake has said, starts to say something, and, then, with a gesture of his hand,





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dismisses Jake's words. Turning to the English-speaking soldier, he asks:)

By the way, Private, when you searched the prisoners, did you find any visas, passports, or other papers of identification?

English-speaking soldier

No, sir, I did not.

Officer

(The officer shakes his head in a disapproving fashion and proceeds to address the prisoners.)

No visa, no passports, no identification papers. ... At the very least, you are in this country illegally, and that is a very serious crime in itself.

(Arching his eyebrows, the officer continues.)

I assume you understand how the absence of such material is quite consistent with the profile of what spies and terrorists would do.

(The officer shrugs his shoulders.)

I know all about the techniques of spies and terrorists who are taught to rid themselves of anything that would help to



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tie them to a given country or organization. What do you have to say for yourself?

Anne  
(Emphatically)

We are, not, terrorists!!!! How many times do we have to say that?

Jake  
(Angrily)

We are not spies!!!!

Officer  
(The officer shakes his head up and down.)

Yes, that is what I would expect spies and terrorists to say.

(The officer adds, in a dismissive fashion:)

Well, it makes no difference. Your friend has given up some names, and the names he has given up ...

(The officer picks up a folder and flips through the pages.)



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... fit in with the intelligence reports that we have been picking up here and there. Now, we have some solid leads on which to work.

(Reflecting on things for a moment, the officer writes something on a piece of paper, and places it in one of the folders.)

(He returns his attention to the prisoners.)

As I see it, the evidence is as follows: You do not have appropriate papers of identification; you are in this country illegally; you claim that you don't know how you got here or how long you have been here; you use code names ... code names that are linked with intelligence reports that have been gleaned from independent sources; you have been busily engaged in a conspiracy to overthrow the government with your talk about self-governance; you refuse to say for whom you are working, although you do admit that those unknown individuals or forces did give you a time-limited mission of some kind; there are wild stories about a body disappearing in an inexplicable fashion and, as well, there are a number of deaths that took place here which should be thoroughly examined. And, then, there is this:

(He pulls out the piece of paper taken from Jake. He reads out loud:)

'Tick-tock, tick-tock. We are not the enemy.'



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Obviously this is a coded message of some kind. We'll turn it over to our cryptographers ... I'm sure they will be able to break it ... hopefully, sooner rather than later.

(The officer studies the prisoners for a brief period before saying:)

If we had time, you would be shown the way to compliance as your friend has been shown that way.

(The officer nods toward the place on the floor where Phil had been dumped.)

Fortunately, for you two, duty requires my troops to go elsewhere and, therefore, we do not have the time to conduct that sort of investigation.

(Anne, as well as, Jake sigh with relief. Noting this, the officer adds:)

However, my good news is tempered with some bad news, as far as you three are concerned.

(The officer stands up.)

Under normal circumstances, I would take prisoners with me and drop them off at the first intelligence post I came across, but my current orders do not permit me to follow such a protocol. Having found you guilty of any number of



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treasonous-like behaviors, you are to be summarily executed.

(Jake, as well as Anne, slump in defeat, and their heads drop to their chest.)

Officer

(The officer notices their body language and remarks:)

You, should be thanking me. I'm doing you a favor. If I turned you over to an intelligence group, those people would merely take you to some black-hole of a detention center, and you would never be heard of again ... and I assure you that you would be subjected to some very unpleasant forms of hospitality in those places. ... I have been extremely friendly compared to what those people are capable of.

(The officer reflects on the situation for a few seconds, and, then, voicing something of an afterthought, says:)

Naturally, each of us has a role to play in securing the freedoms of our country and its citizens. We must all make sacrifices in a common cause.

(Turning to the soldiers in the room, the officer says something in a foreign language. One of the soldiers leaves and returns shortly with a few more soldiers who drag the prisoners off stage. Jake, as well as Anne, are struggling



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with their escorts. Phil is still unconscious and oblivious to his impending fate.)

(Three shots ring out.)

Officer

(The officer sighs and says to no one in particular:)

Heavy is the heart that must decide matters of truth and justice for the good of all.

(The officer issues a command in a foreign language, and, one of the soldiers, rushes out of the room and returns with a few soldiers.)

(Motioning to the table and chairs, the officer barks a command in the foreign language. Soldiers move to pick up the table, folders, and chair, as they do so, a loud, penetrating buzzer is heard.

The soldiers and officer cover their ears and begin to stagger. One by one, they fall to the ground and remain motionless.)

Disembodied Voice

(Deep and seemingly computerized)

Time has expired! Time has expired!



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(A mist begins to spread over the stage and envelop it. In the mist, bodies begin to emerge. Slowly, Gloria, Susan, Cathy, Aaron, and David come toward the front of the stage. They are looking around in bewilderment.)

Susan

(Susan has an expression of wonderment on her face and looks at the others. ... Hesitantly, she touches some of them, and, then, says:)

How can this be? I thought ... we were dead. The last thing I remember, explosions were taking place and, then, there was just blackness. Maybe it is all a dream ... maybe none of this has been real.

(She arches her shoulders and raises her hands in perplexity, as if to express ignorance about what is transpiring.)

Maybe reality is just woven from the fabric of the dreams of that which we do not know or understand.

(Out of the mists, Anne, Phil and Jake enter, from stage right, and join the others near the front of the stage. They are greeted with enthusiasm by the ones who had emerged from the mists previously.)



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Cathy

(Cathy speaks to the new-comers)

What happened?

Anne

(Anne throws up her arms up in amazement.)

I, don't know. I heard a buzzer, and, then, a deep, computerized voice said that time had expired, and, then, I opened my eyes.

(Jake and Phil nod in agreement with respect to what Anne has said.)

Anne

We heard a human voice. ... I think, it was yours, Susan ... and we came here.

Jake

(The signs of torture have been removed from Phil's appearance and Jake notices this. He goes over to Phil and grabs him by the soldiers, and, then, says:)

Are you okay? The last time I saw you, you were in terrible shape. Some unspeakable things had been done to you.





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(Jake, looks Phil up and down and shakes his head in astonishment.)

Phil

(Phil nods his head in a way that says everything is okay!)

Yes, I am okay, but it's ... I don't know. ... What those soldiers did to me seems like a dim, fading memory. Even now, those memories are rapidly dissipating in intensity.

(Another figure appears out of the mists. It is Jane. Everyone rushes to greet her. Embraces are shared by all.)

David

(David urges the others to act.)

Come on! Let's get out of here, before something else happens. Maybe we will be able find something beyond these walls that will permit us to escape from all of this weirdness and tell our story to the world.

(Several of the people acknowledge what David has said and take a step, or two, toward stage right.)

Jane

(Jane motions to the others to stop and says:)



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Wait! I have been given a message from ‘That’ which brought us here.

(Speaking to, first, the people assembled in the center of the stage, she says:)

We are being given another chance!

(and, then, turning to the audience, she takes several steps toward them and opens her arms as if to embrace the audience.)

... All of us are being given another opportunity to get things right with respect to discovering a way through which we can get along with one another ... despite our differences.

(Pausing)

I feel ‘That’ which brought us here has left us with a message of great significance. Exploring the way of sovereignty is the means through which humanity might be spared. ... Otherwise, we all – through our own destructive choices -- will be eliminated by the way of power and the manner in which that way causes us to lose our humanity. ... No one in power retains his or her humanity because the exercise of power is, for human beings, inherently insidious. ... Power might bring victory in a battle, but the war for truth, justice, and constructive freedom will be lost.



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(Jane turns and starts to leave with the others who are getting ready to depart from the room, and, then, she turns toward the audience before saying:)

And, oh yes! 'That' which brought us all here told me to tell you: "Tick-tock, tick-tock."

(Jane turns and walks away. The people leave the stage in twos and threes, arms around one another's shoulders. The lights go out and the curtains close.)

**End of Act III**

