

The Good Plague

by

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ACT I

SCENE 1

CURTAIN OPENS TO REVEAL THE FRONT ROOM OF A CABIN, WITH FURNITURE - A SOFA, A CARD TABLE, A DESK. THERE ARE WINDOWS AND DOORS RIGHT AND LEFT.

CLAY IS LYING ON THE SOFA, LOOKING EXTREMELY HUNG-OVER. AROUND HIM ARE EMPTY BOTTLES AND FOOD CONTAINERS. IN FRONT OF HIM IS A TELEVISION SCREEN, FACING AWAY FROM THE AUDIENCE.

GRIFFIN ENTERS.

GRIFFIN: Wake up.

CLAY: That's impossible. I'm dead.

GRIFFIN: You don't look dead.

CLAY: It's all the preservatives I eat.

GRIFFIN: Haven't you been out at all? You've had twelve hours on the rest of us. God, what have you been eating? (PICKS UP A FOOD CONTAINER) And drinking? (GRABS A BOTTLE AND INSPECTS ITS LABEL).

CLAY: Not sure. It tasted terrible to start with, but then my tongue went numb and I couldn't taste anything, so I kept going.

GRIFFIN: You're hopeless.

CLAY: I was knackered! I got here late and waited ages to pick up the keys. Then I had to get food and beer from some grotty grocer. I turned on the television, stuffed myself, and passed out. (PAUSE) Normal evening, really.

GRIFFIN: Spare me your social schedule, Clay. We're not here to slob out. We're here on a mission. (GOES TO THE WINDOW) We have so much to do out there and it won't be easy. For God's Sake, we've got to be on our toes (WALKS BACK TO CLAY) and you can't even stand up!

CLAY: I'll be fine. What does it matter? We don't have to be on our toes, Griffin. Have you seen what's out there? Rubbish, squalor. Kids screaming. People fighting, yells and groans. It's like bad t.v. played very slowly. God, the only reason we'll have to be on our toes when we go out there is to avoid all the shit.

GRIFFIN: Of course it's crap! That's the reason we're here, you lump. We've come here from our gated compounds and marina apartments to bring about change, to make a difference, to improve our nation.

CLAY: I know, I know, spare me another sermon. I came, didn't I? I said I'd help with your changing plans. (RUBS HIS HEAD) By the way, Griffin, not all of us are duty-bound, you know. Do you think everyone on this expedition is coming along to help society?

GRIFFIN: Yes. Some of them have different reasons but they all have values. They all value order and progress. They're all respectable, unlike you. Have you got any values?

CLAY: I score points. Is that the same?

GRIFFIN: No. Some of us have ethics, Clay. Some of us want to make sure our society stays healthy. Some of us want to end the sicknesses that plagues this place.

CLAY: He's at it again. Okay, I get it. End sickness. (RUBS HIS FOREHEAD) Does that mean you're going to kill me because I'm hungover?

GRIFFIN: No. I'll just leave you to suffer your own, slow death.

CLAY: Thanks.

DOOR BUZZER.

GRIFFIN: Come on in.

AMY ENTERS, STAGE-RIGHT.

AMY: They've had to park the pickup in the underground car-park. Hi Clay.

CLAY: Greetings.

AMY: You look like a road accident.

CLAY: Yep. Someone cordon me off.

AMY: We need help with the equipment.

GRIFFIN: Clay can help you with that.

CLAY: But I'm dying here!

GRIFFIN: Only from the head down. Your arms still work.

CLAY: And you're the one with the ethics? Okay. I obey. (GETS UP. STAGGERS) Shit, it's getting worse, I'm feeling something! I don't want to feel anything! God damn it! The warning labels on those bottles lied to me!

CLAY EXITS, STAGE-RIGHT.

AMY: (TO GRIFFIN) Shall we give him a hand?

GRIFFIN: Can we just stay here for five minutes? Me and you.

AMY: Five minutes? Why? (PAUSE) Five minutes, Griffin?!

GRIFFIN: Yes, just five minutes.

AMY: Wow. Just so you know, saying 'okay' isn't foreplay.

GRIFFIN: I'm not talking about sex. (PAUSE) Did you think any more about my proposal?

AMY: You want to talk about that now?

GRIFFIN: Yes.

AMY: (BITES A NAIL) I don't know, Griffin. I don't think I'm ready for that.

GRIFFIN: I'm not saying it lightly, Amy. I can commit, I really can. I believe in us working.

AMY: Yeah? Me and you? Working, full-time?

GRIFFIN: Yes, long-term! Come on, we belong together. Our DNAs are compatible. Our immune systems are complementary. We're both going places. We have good career progression. We have a ninety-three percent chance of producing children with an IQ of one-hundred-and-thirty-plus. Do you realise how special that is? Not only that, they'll have a National-Grade athletics potential! We have a beautiful thing before us. Everyone endorses our match, Amy. The A.I. rating of us as a couple is fourteen point six! (GRABS HER HANDS) We've got to do this. We owe to each other. We owe it to our nation.

AMY: Oh Lord, I'm hearing anthems playing.

GRIFFIN: Don't mock it! This is bigger than us. It's our destiny.

AMY: (CAREFULLY RELEASES HIS HANDS) Look, can we just put our nation's future on one side for a moment? I haven't known you very long, Griffin. I haven't spent much time with you. For all I know, you could secretly be a sociopath!

GRIFFIN: Oh come on, you know I'm not a sociopath. It's on my CV.

AMY: Yes, I know your record. Your profile is very clear. You don't do torture or thrill-kills, and you never have, but hey, maybe that's just good career-sense? (WALKS AROUND THE ROOM) You're intelligent. You know what sociopathic behaviour would do to your professional rating. Everyone knows it'd mark you down as having poor attention span and team-working ability. That's my point. Maybe you are a thrill-killer, deep down, but you're too ambitious, too career-focussed to do anything about it?

GRIFFIN: Oh, come on, you're just stalling! I'm not a psycho, okay? Full stop! I'm not going to want to chop you up, Amy, and it's not because I'm eyeing promotion, or because you have Grade Four body protection and bloody vendetta insurance with international coverage. (GRABS HER HANDS) I value you. You're my future.

AMY: Right, okay, that's (PAUSE) mega. Look, let me think about it, okay?

GRIFFIN: Sure. (RELEASES HER HANDS) Fine. We can talk about it again after we've finished our work here.

AMY: Yeah, let's do that. (LOOKS AROUND) Wow, this place is a tip.

GRIFFIN: It's A.C.

AMY: A.C?

GRIFFIN: After Clay.

AMY: Right. By the way. Lisa's come with Len.

GRIFFIN: Great. What about Bob?

AMY: He's here, with all his kit.

GRIFFIN: Did he bring?..

LEN, LISA, CLAY AND BOB ENTER, STAGE-RIGHT.
THEY ARE ALL CARRYING EQUIPMENT IN BAGS
AND CASES.

CLAY: You didn't tell me how heavy they were!

LEN: (GLANCES AT CLAY) It finally speaks.

CLAY: (DROPS BAGS, THEN GROANS AND CLUTCHES HIS HEAD)
I was trying for the strong, silent type.

LEN: Well, you're halfway there. (DROPS BIG BAGS AND A CRATE
ON THE FLOOR).

LISA: (LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM) Is this it? We're going to be
here for two days? How many bathrooms does this place have?

AMY: One.

LISA: Per person? Oh my God, one, full stop? Clay, I don't want to be
rude but I'm having trouble being downwind of you, never mind
sharing a bathroom with you.

LEN: It'll do. (OPENS UP A HOLDALL BAG AND PULLS OUT A
HUGE GUN) So, when do we start killing people?

GRIFFIN: For God's Sake, Len, what's wrong with you? We're not here to
kill people.

BOB: We're not? But what about all the kit I bought? It's human specific! (OPENS UP A BAG AND PULLS OUT A BLACK, FAT SHOTGUN) I've personally modified this Amza. It produces a pulsed microwave burst. It can stop a heart at fifty yards!

GRIFFIN: We're not going to be shooting people. Our targets are the losers out there, the parasites on society, the leeches dragging our nation down. They're not people. They're a genetic pollution, a cancer, a subversion, a perversion.

CLAY: A diversion?

GRIFFIN GLARES AT CLAY.

CLAY: Sorry, wrong version.

BOB: So, does that mean we are going to shoot people? Sorry, biological parasites?

GRIFFIN: We are here to help our society, to improve our nation. We're going to help all our true people by cleansing our state of sickness.

CLAY: That mean 'yes'.

BOB: Thank God for that! I was worried there. I bought so much new kit. It'd be awful if it all went to waste. (RUMMAGES IN BAG) I've also bought a Drang 12.2. It's more conventional but supposedly very reliable. The forums say it's ideal for taking out adult... parasites.

CLAY: Practical.

BOB: I've fitted it with a Fornous sight. It's not an officially approved accessory but a review said it does a great job. Personally, I'm sticking with my Amza, but this Drang is lighter.

CLAY: What are you going to do, fire one from each hand?

BOB: No, no, as backup.(PAUSES) Then again, the Drang is lighter. Maybe one of the ladies needs one? I'd be happy to lend it.

AMY: I'm fine. I'm all sorted.

BOB: How about you, Lisa? You might like it. I mean, I'm not giving it to you (LAUGHS NERVOUSLY). It's not a gift. (GLANCES AT LEN) But you might find it useful.

LISA TAKES THE GUN. SHE HOLDS IT NERVOUSLY.

LISA: Will it work? I mean, will it turn itself off if I try and shoot a proper person, you know, someone real, with a job and insurance?

BOB: Of course! They're all setup for that. The computers mounted on their stocks automatically scan the target and read their RFID tags and bone chips. The computer then cross-refers that data with the web and automatically disables the gun's trigger if the target is a protected citizen. It's all done in hundredths of a second! I mean, be serious, I'm not a criminal. All my guns are legal.

LISA: You're sure?

LEN: Her heart's not in it.

LISA: Yes it is. It is! I'm here, aren't I? I want to help too. I want to do my bit. We should do this. It's important, okay? Those people out there deserve to die. They're so diseased and fat and ugly. We'd be helping them, putting them out of their misery. (HEFTS THE GUN) I'm ready.

GRIFFIN: That's great, Lisa. Good stuff.

LISA: (EXAMINES HER GUN) Can we add some more padding to this?

LEN: I want to bring some back.

CLAY: Oh God, no. No way. There'll be loads of mess! I paid for the deposit on this place. If you start dragging the wounded back, I won't get a penny back.

LEN: I'll clear it all up afterwards. I've checked the permit. It's allowed.

GRIFFIN: Okay. Len promises to clear up his mess. People, we need to get going. We're losing the light.

BOB: Okay, I just want to calibrate my binoculars.

FANFARE AROUND THE ROOM. AN ANTHEM
PLAYS.

THE GROUP ALL SALUTE.

A NEWSREADER SPEAKS FROM THE TV.

*NEWSREADER: Citizens, we have an important announcement. There has been a report of a disease outbreak in West Field. Emergency services and health teams are in the process of investigating.

LISA: We're in West Field.

AMY: Shh.

*NEWSREADER: Their latest assessment is that the sickness is isolated and not contagious. Symptoms, so far, are mild, but we should all be on our guard. If you are in West Field and you notice any local behaving strangely, please keep your distance and notify the authorities of your location immediately. That is all.

FANFARES. SOUNDS CUTS OUT.

LISA: A disease?

AMY: A mild one. It's probably just a noro-virus.

CLAY: Oh great. More mess!

BOB: I have kit for that. Masks, goggles, wet-wipes.

LEN: (TO LISA) Do you want to stay here?

LISA: No! I just wanted clarification. I was just being... (PAUSE) I was just being professional. If we're going to do this job properly, we should be prepared so we can do it successfully. I want to do this properly and I'm keen to do it. What's more (PAUSE) I want to bring back a body too!

LEN: (SMILES) That's my girl.

CLAY: I am so going to lose my deposit.

GRIFFIN: Right, fine, as long as we all do our job. Okay, everyone. We're ready. We can do this. Hands together.

CLAY: Do we have to?

AMY: It helps team bonding. Oxytocin release.

CLAY: That could help my hangover. Okay.

THE GROUP GATHER TOGETHER AND PUT THEIR RIGHT HANDS ON TOP OF EACH OTHERS. THEY BEND THEIR HEADS.

GRIFFIN: We're a team.

EVERYONE: Team!

GRIFFIN: Excellent. We're ready. Just remember, there's officially an infection out there, so don't get too close to your targets and watch them for symptoms; flushed faces, sweating, trembling, things like that.

CLAY: Is that before or after we shoot at them?

GRIFFIN: Before.

AMY: We have comms units. Let's keep in touch every ten minutes and notify everyone if something strange happens.

GRIFFIN: Correct. Okay, everyone ready? Have you all got your calling cards?

CLAY, AMY, LEN AND BOB HOLD UP PLAYING CARDS, MARKED WITH THE SAME DARK DESIGN.

GRIFFIN: Great. Okay, let's go.

EVERYONE LEAVES, STAGE-LEFT.

CURTAIN.

ACT I

SCENE 2.

THE STAGE CURTAIN IS DRAWN.

A TANNOY CRACKLES INTO LIFE.

*NEWSREADER: All citizens of this sector, be aware that we have detected irrational behaviour in this area. If you see anyone behaving suspiciously, report it immediately to local police. Let's be safe, let's be strong, let's be prosperous.

CLAY AND GRIFFIN WALK OUT ON TO THE LEFT SIDE OF THE STAGE, CARRYING THEIR GUNS. THEY SLOWLY WALK ACROSS, FRONT OF STAGE.

GRIFFIN: You haven't bagged anyone yet?

CLAY: What can I say? I keep finding targets and then my stupid gun tells me they're insured and switches off!

GRIFFIN: It's not that hard. What the Hell sort of people have you been aiming at?

CLAY: The ugly ones! God, it's not my fault; I've hardly been aiming at Generals! I don't know, maybe there was a special deal this week on personal insurance?

GRIFFIN: You're just arsing about. What a waste of a gun.

CLAY: Sorry, teacher, I'll try harder.

GRIFFIN: Come on. We can use that tower.

THEY HEAD OFF, STAGE-RIGHT.

You can lead a horse to water, and then you start wishing it would fall in and drown.

THE STAGE IS SILENT.

AMY CREEPS OUT, BETWEEN THE CURTAINS. SHE HOLDS HER GUN, READY TO FIRE. SHE HEARS A NOISE AND DUCKS BACK IN.

ELLIE ENTERS, STAGE-LEFT.

AMY SEES HER. SHE STEPS FORWARD AND AIMS HER GUN.

ELLIE STOPS, FIFTEEN FEET AWAY. SHE LOOKS CALMLY AT AMY. SHE HOLDS UP HER HANDS IN WELCOME.

AMY: Go on, run, you idiot. Run!

ELLIE: (SHAKES HER HEAD. SHE STEPS FORWARD) You need help.

AMY: I need help? You need help. You need putting out of your misery. What's wrong with you? Run, you stupid woman, run!

ELLIE: Why should I run? It's not me that's scared.

AMY'S WALKIE-TALKIE BUZZES. SHE TAKES IT FROM HER BELT AND LIFTS IT TO HER EAR.

AMY: What? Griffin? The signal reception's rubbish around here! Yes? What? (SHE LISTENS) Lisa's said what? (SHE LOOKS AT ELLIE) Okay, yes, I understand. I'll head back.(SHE PUTS THE WALKIE-TALKIE BACK IN HER BELT)

ELLIE: I would like to help you. You are in darkness.

AMY: I'm not in darkness. (PAUSE) All right, I am in darkness but you're the one with the problem, you freak. Run, you stupid, pathetic creature! Run so I can shoot you down!

ELLIE: I will not leave you. You need help.

AMY: What is wrong with you? Look at you. You're the one that needs help! Look at your clothes, at your figure. You're pathetic, a failure, a walking horror show! You're a horror, a reject, a monster! I'm going to shoot you down right now and end your suffering.

ELLIE: I cannot stop that. (PAUSE) If I am the one suffering, why is it that I'm calm and you're upset?

AMY SHAKES WITH EMOTION. SHE IS NEAR TEARS.

AMY: You have ten seconds, loser.

ELLIE: I can help you. I have seen the light. I can save you. (SHE WALKS FORWARD)

AMY GRIMACES. SHE RAISES HER GUN AND AIMS IT STRAIGHT AT ELLIE'S FACE.

ELLIE STOPS. SHE WAITS, CALMLY.

ELLIE: There is nothing to fear.

AMY SHAKES. SHE TENSES, THEN LOWERS HER GUN. SHE WALKS RAPIDLY OFF THE STAGE, EXITING STAGE-RIGHT.

ELLIE LOOKS SADLY AT AMY'S DEPARTURE. SHE TURNS AND EXITS, STAGE-LEFT.

TANNOY CRACKLES INTO LIFE.

*NEWSREADER: Greetings, citizens. Satellite footage shows that a crowd is forming in front of the Church of Our Lord the Conqueror. Please be aware that any unauthorised public gathering of more than six people is punishable by severe financial penalties, loss of insurance cover and death. Thank you.

TANNOY CRACKLES OFF.

CURTAIN OPENS.

THE CABIN IS THE SAME, EXCEPT THAT AT THE RIGHT-HAND SIDE OF THE CABIN IS A DEAD BODY, LYING SPRAWLED ON THE FLOOR. BOB IS STANDING BESIDE IT, LOOKING NERVOUS. AT THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STAGE, LISA IS BITING HER NAILS AND LOOKING SCARED.

GRIFFIN AND CLAY ENTER, STAGE-RIGHT.

GRIFFIN: What's the matter? Why have you come back? Are you guarding him?

BOB: He's dead.

GRIFFIN: Then why are you here? Why did you call us back?

GRIFFIN JOINS BOB BY THE BODY. CLAY
COLLAPSES ON THE SOFA.

BOB: Something totally freaky happened, okay? (HE KICKS THE BODY ON THE FLOOR) Lisa shot this guy from a distance and her gun was fine. This guy is definitely a loser. I've scanned him. He hasn't even got a bone chip, so no insurance, no protection, no nothing. We even get a small reward from one firm. Enough to pay for the bullet.

CLAY: Wow, he was less than nothing. (PAUSE) Cheap shot. (SHRUGS AND LOOKS AT THE BODY) Sorry, cheap shot.

GRIFFIN: So why did you call us back?

BOB: After Lisa shot him, while she was calling me, another guy appeared.

GRIFFIN: And?

BOB: He was a citizen, Griffin. He ran over to the body and, well, he did things to it, while the target was still alive.

GRIFFIN: What things? Lisa, come over here!

LISA: I don't want to talk about it. It was bloody weird, okay?

GRIFFIN: Tell us what happened.

LISA: Come over here and I'll tell you.

GRIFFIN: For God's sake.

GRIFFIN AND BOB WALK OVER TO LISA.

LISA: I'll tell you what happened. The weird guy, the one who just appeared, he ran over to my target and he tied him down, then he thumped him in the chest. The guy screamed and the stranger stifled him by kissing him. Then he thumped and kissed the guy some more. When the guy stopped moving, the weirdo stranger grappled with him, kissed him again and then walked off.

CLAY: Short and sweet, sort of a one night stand.

GRIFFIN: Shut up.

LISA: It was freaky, okay? It made my skin crawl. I didn't go near my target. I waited for Bob to turn up. (BITES HER NAILS) He explained to me what that weirdo had been doing and it just got worse! He wasn't even some sex-pervert on safari. He was helping my target. He was helping that ugly lump over there, that nobody, for no good reason!

BOB: I explained to her that the stranger had been doing CPR. I told her that the weird guy hadn't been tying her mark down, he'd been applying a tourniquet.

GRIFFIN WALKS OVER AND KNEELS DOWN
BESIDE THE BODY. HE EXAMINES HIM.

GRIFFIN: You're right. He stopped the blood-flow from a wound. It didn't help. The shock probably killed the mark, but it was solid technique.

LISA: He must be mad! He was trying to heal someone that had no insurance! That turd can't have even been kin. He has no status and the stranger. (PAUSE) He came up on my target screen as a master level!

GRIFFIN: A master level? In this district? Okay, you must have made a mistake. What did your gun's readout say?

LISA: Nothing! He's so high up, it wouldn't tell me anything, apart from 'identity restricted'. He was weird, Griffin. He must be so sick. Oh God, it's true, it really is.

GRIFFIN: True about what?

LISA: The good plague. There is a good plague.

GRIFFIN: What are you talking about?

BOB: Hey, look at this.

BOB PULLS A WHITE ROSE FROM THE VICTIM'S
CLOTHES.

LISA: That's it. They say they leave a rose. The ones that get infected. They change. They go mad. They go around helping people for no good reason. They give their money away!

- GRIFFIN: Calm down, Lisa. You're making no sense. Where did you get these crazy ideas?
- LISA: People have been talking. No one tags it, they're not stupid, but everyone's talking about it. They are saying that you can contract it through a kiss or an embrace. They say that if you get it, you go crazy and you get... selfless! We're screwed! If we get it, we'll start giving our money away! I'll be poor, Griffin, and some loser in the street will have my money, money that I earned!
- GRIFFIN: No one's going to make you give your money away, Lisa. Snap out of it! We still have Law and Order here. You've just picked up some mad rumour.
- CLAY: I've heard it too and it fits the facts.
- BOB: I've heard about it. Some say that the government knows all about it and they're keeping it from us.
- GRIFFIN: There's no such plague!
- LISA: Yeah? You think? Then explain that, Mr Clever. Some master level guy helped a complete nobody, a sewer-rat, a piece of trash. How does that make any sense? This is so bad. It's going to get ugly. We're going to get ugly!
- CLAY: Shut up! (HE SLAPS LISA)
- LISA: Ow! You hit me! I'm insured, you know! You're going to get time in a punishment bracelet for that!
- GRIFFIN: Fine. Zap me. But can we please calm down! Okay. Maybe it is a disease and people can contract it. Which means we all keep away from that body. (PAUSE) For God's sake, why did you bring it here anyway?
- LISA: I promised Len I'd bring back a body! Just don't tell him that it was dead when we brought it here, okay? He'll think I chickened out.
- GRIFFIN: Fine. Okay. So no one touch it, then. Bob, throw something over it.
- BOB: Right.

BOB RUMMAGES IN A BAG AND DIGS OUT A
TARPAULIN. HE THROWS IT OVER THE BODY.

AMY ENTERS, STAGE-RIGHT.

AMY: What's going on?

CLAY: All sorts.

MUSIC PLAYS.

*NEWSREADER: Greetings, everyone. Our Esteemed Leader wishes to speak to you on an important matter.

*LEADER: My friends, I have bad news. The isolated outbreaks of a foul disease that we had been working hard to eradicate have spread. It is also a disease with a horrible effect. It doesn't maim and kill, it alters the very minds of its sufferers. It alters their very souls. The infected people have turned into subversive influences. They are acting like a cancer, a rotten, corrupting influence. We must all do our utmost to stop this disease, in any way we can. We cannot let it erode our strengths, corrupt our values, crumble our traditions and laws. We must not let that happen. We will not let that happen. We will prevail.

SPEAKER CUTS OUT.

AMY: What the Hell has been going on?

CLAY: (WAVES AT THE TELEVISION SCREEN) Shit has been seriously hitting the fan, my dear. We've got Serial Samaritans all over.

AMY: What does the web say?

AMY WALKS OVER TO THE TELEVISION SCREEN
AND PRESSES ON ITS SCREEN.

CLAY, GRIFFIN, LISA AND BOB JOIN HER
AROUND THE SCREEN.

LISA: Battles. Fighting. Murders. Where have they all gone?

AMY: All the channels have switched to recording the outbreaks. They're gathering, surrounding places and singing.

CLAY: That's bad.

LISA: It must be a disease. A horrible disease. They've all going mad. Look at what they're wearing!

BOB: But if it is a disease, then proper people will be getting it, people who have insurance, protection, contracts. Our guns won't work with them; they'll automatically disable. We won't be able to stop the infected.

LISA: We're going to die. Oh God, it's worse. We're going to be poor and badly-dressed!

LEN ENTERS, STAGE-LEFT, DRAGGING BODY#1.

LEN: What's going on?

GRIFFIN: Those isolated outbreaks our government talked about earlier. They're not isolated any more. It's a full-on plague. It's a plague that could destroy our society.

LEN: Then we kill all the infected.

CLAY: We can't with our scanner-guns, we won't be able to shoot them if they're citizens.

LEN THINKS.

AMY: Why did you bring back a body?

LEN: I told you I wanted to bring one back alive.

AMY: He's dead.

LEN TURNS AND STUDIES BODY#1.

LEN: Weaker than I thought.

LISA: I brought back a body, babe. It's under cover over there. It was fresh and ready but it died after I got back. (SHE LOOKS HOPEFULLY AT THE OTHERS)

LEN: I love you.

LISA: Love you too, babe.

LEN: They're all weak. You'd last for days.

LISA: Thanks.

CLAY: If we could move on from the love-bird stuff; what are we going to do about the plague?

LEN WALKS OVER AND OPENS UP A BAG.

LEN: These have no scanners. (HE PULLS OUT THREE REVOLVERS AND DROPS THEM ON THE CARD TABLE)

BOB: Shit. (HE PICKS UP ONE OF THE GUNS) These are totally unlocked. That's illegal, Len. (PAUSE) Man, there's something wrong with you.

LEN: If you don't have the guts to defend our country, then go hide in the corner.

BOB: I want to defend our country but I'm not going to break the law. Listen to yourself. If we shoot other citizens that are sick, we'll suffer all the effects of their contractual obligations! We need to find another answer. What about a medical answer? Amy?

AMY: I don't know! I've never heard of a disease that makes people charitable. That's just too bloody weird!

GRIFFIN: But if the disease makes them genuinely insane. If it makes them rabid, then their insurance contracts don't apply, because they are no longer compus-mentis.

LEN: Good. (PICKS UP A REVOLVER) So we kill them.

AMY: But we have no idea. We haven't seen any obvious symptoms. They don't have sweating, flushed response, muscle trembling or stressed speech.

CLAY: No, that's us.

AMY: Physically. (PAUSE) Griffin, it looks as if they've just changed their minds.

GRIFFIN: No! (STARES AT THE OTHERS) That's not possible!

CLAY: Don't look at me. Plasters is my limit.

GRIFFIN: Shut up! It's not possible. Our society is noble and strong and proud.

AMY: (LOOKING AT THE SCREEN) They're in their thousands.

LISA: Oh God. Are they going to come here? We've only got three revolvers. We can't stop all of them. They'll come here and infect us. They'll change us. They'll make us give our money away. They'll make us poor and defenceless. What am I doing here? I could have played golf.

CLAY: (LOOKS AT THE TELEVISION SCREEN) Wow, that's a big march, and there's definitely master citizens in that group. They're acting as a shield for the others. Listen. (TURNS UP THE SCREEN'S VOLUME)

*REPORTER: This is footage of a non-violent march attended by thousands. Government forces are attempting to break it up. Our reporters initially identified it as a normal food riot, but they realised that it was actually much darker.

FROM THE TELEVISION COMES SINGING.

LISA: What sort of rapping is that?

AMY: It's singing. (PEERS AT THE SCREEN)

*REPORTER: On the line, we have Professor Gertrude Breen. Professor, do you have any theories as to the illness these people are suffering?

*PROF: We can only speculate. Our epidemiological studies show that the disease may exploit a psychological pre-disposition among a large quotient of the population. When they perform their selfless acts, their bodies release hormones, neurotransmitters and other chemicals including endorphins, dopamine, oxytocin and a set of related tryptamines, such as di-methyl-tryptamine, and serotonin, along with endo-cannabinoids.

*REPORTER: You mean they feel good, by doing good?

*PROF: Yes. Unfortunately, our scientists can't monitor the biological and neurological effects of the infection accurately, since they can't take the subjects' blood while the selfless acts are being performed. One researcher did gather some marchers' blood, off the pavement, after an earlier confrontation this morning, but it was inconclusive.

*REPORTER: Thank you, Professor. We are now going over to our business editor, who has the latest news from the markets. Over to you, Max.

*MAX: Thank you, Stacey. It's looking grim here at the exchange. The stock market has taken a big hit. Luxury items are down, so are arms, home defence and violence insurance. The futures market looks bleak. The bonds are suffering. Profits are nose-diving. It's pretty bleak, Stacey.

*REPORTER: Thank you, Max. Our Great Leader spoke earlier. He has vowed that he will die before allowing the destruction of our society. All of us here at the news-desk feel the same.

THE NEWS REPORT ENDS.

AMY TURNS THE SCREEN OFF.

BOB: It's the end of the world. The end of civilisation.

GRIFFIN: It isn't! We will stop this. We will prevail. We have everything to fight for. (HE GRABS A REVOLVER FROM THE CARD TABLE) We are going to go out there and be heroes.

LEN: It's game time.

CLAY: (GRABS A REVOLVER FROM THE TABLE) Oh Man, this is not going to help my headache. Who wants the last gun?

LISA WALKS OVER AND PICKS UP THE LAST REVOLVER.

BOB AND AMY PICK UP COMPUTER-CONTROLLED GUNS.

GRIFFIN: Good. Okay. We go out and take out everyone we can. Be sparing with the revolvers. They're the only defence we have against infected citizens. Okay?

EVERYONE NODS.

THE GROUP GRAB THEIR GUNS.

THEY LEAVE THE CABIN, EXITING STAGE-LEFT.

CURTAIN.

ACT II

SCENE 1

THE CABIN IS DARK.

CLAY, GRIFFIN, AMY, LISA AND BOB ARE SLEEPING ON THE SOFA AND ON BED ROLLS ON THE FLOOR. THE TELEVISION SCREEN IS ON.

LOW-KEY FANFARE.

THE LEADER SPEAKS IN A LOW VOICE.

*LEADER: My friends. Twenty-four hours have gone by since the plague went from isolated, minor cases and spread into a full epidemic. All of us, the healthy people of our society, we are still loyal to our nation and its values. We are still doing our utmost to stop this plague. I will not lie to you. Our situation is bad. People from all strata of our society have succumbed to the virulent infection that has gripped our country. Members of my own family have joined the ranks of the diseased but we will not abandon them. They were once on our side; they can be so again. (PAUSE) Do not underestimate our enemy. They are infected but they are not diseased in the normal sense. They have become even more brave, fearless and loyal to each other. They are a formidable foe. (PAUSE) Be strong, be resolute. We will prevail. Our scientists are working flat-out, trying to find an antidote to this infection. They will succeed. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER CRACKLES, THEN GOES SILENT.

CLAY'S SMARTPHONE VIBRATES.

CLAY STIRS, GROPEs FOR HIS PHONE AND PUTS IT TO HIS EAR.

CLAY: Yes? (LISTENS) Yes, yes, Your Eminence, I'm still here. (PAUSE) I understand. (LISTENS) What? Sorry, I think you need to repeat those instructions again. (LISTENS) Yes, that's clear. I will carry out those orders. (HE PUTS THE PHONE DOWN) Well, I'll be damned. (PAUSE) Then again, maybe not. (HE LIES BACK)

THE CABIN IS SILENT.

THE TELEVISION AND THE MAIN LIGHT IN THE ROOM FLICKER, THEN GO OUT.

BOB STIRS.

BOB: What? (HE GETS UP) Hey. (HE LOOKS AT THE TELEVISION AND THE LIGHT. HE TAKES OUT A SMARTPHONE FROM HIS POCKET AND STARES AT IT) Shit. Guys, hey guys! (HE SHAKES GRIFFIN, CLAY AND LISA INTO WAKEFULNESS. IN THE CORNER, AMY SLEEPS ON.

GRIFFIN: What?

BOB: The Grid's gone.

GRIFFIN: Gone? It can't have gone. It's resilient.

BOB: It's gone! Kaput! I'm getting nothing. No wi-fi, no ground induction, no peer-to-peer. Zilch. We are not connected to the Grid. (KEEPS TAPPING ON HIS PHONE)

GRIFFIN, CLAY AND AMY SIT UP.

LISA: (LOOKING AROUND) Where's Len?

BOB: Nope, still nothing. It can't be just a power outage. (PAUSE) This looks country-wide. Shit. Some one very high up has killed the web master-relay system. Guys, there's no wireless and no satellite link-up. We're blind.

LEN: (GETTING UP) Len?

CLAY: Wow. Sabotage.

GRIFFIN: But that means the security-observation network must be gone. No one's watching us. No one at all.

LISA: Wait, what do you mean, no one's watching us?

CLAY: Total data blackout, darling. We're back to the stone-age.

LISA: But that's terrible! If no one's watching us, then our insurance doesn't work!

CLAY: You're right. We can do whatever we like. There are no rules. No laws. No protection. Anarchy beckons.

LISA: We have no protection!

GRIFFIN: We are not in anarchy, Clay! We are not just dumb, cold brutes, you know. We are citizens! We have a moral code. We have laws stored in our hearts, rules and an ethical code we carry inside of ourselves. We don't need the Grid for that!

LISA: Ethics, inside of us? (LAUGHS) All I've got inside of me, you stupid Scout Leader, is a dry throat and stomach cramps! (GOES TO THE WINDOW AND LOOKS OUT) There's a plague out there and it's turning everyone into selfless nutters! If we don't have anyone powerful looking down on us, we're damned! Oh God, those freaks can come in here, any time they like, and do whatever they like with us!

BOB: Lisa, hey! Calm down.(WALKS OVER AND TENTATIVELY TOUCHES HER) Think about it. The plague just makes people charitable and selfless. They become pacifists. If they do come in here, they'll probably just hug us and sing to us.

CLAY: Shit. Now I'm scared.

LISA: (PUSHES BOB'S HAND AWAY) They're diseased, Bob! They'll give us their disease!

BOB: I'll protect you, Lisa. Don't worry. If they come too close (SNEERS) I'll blow them away.

LISA: With what? Technical jargon? Your fancy guns don't work unless they get insurance data!

BOB: But we can use Len's pistols. (LOOKS AROUND) Hey, where are the pistols?

GRIFFIN: Len must have taken them.

CLAY: Talking of Len, I know Griff here thinks we all have great, noble, strong duties and beliefs inside of us, but if there is no protection for anyone in this sector, (PAUSE) Len's a problem. What would he do if there's no protection for anyone?

GRIFFIN: What are you talking about? Len running amok? Be serious, Clay. I did service with him. He's your colleague. Lisa's married to him!

GRIFFIN LOOKS AROUND.

NO ONE SAYS ANYTHING.

GRIFFIN: Come on, Lisa. Back me up.

LISA: Me?

GRIFFIN: Yes, you! No one knows him better than you. Back him up.

LISA: You want me to endorse him? (STARTS TO LAUGH) That's funny. That's really funny. Me endorse him? Let's see now. I would say that my husband is (PAUSE) a fucking psycho! (PAUSE) With broad shoulders.

LISA PACES AROUND THE ROOM.

GRIFFIN: But you have a successful marriage!

LISA: You dick! I have a Sentinel on all the time. I work my guts out every day, week in, week out, just so I can keep paying the insurance premiums so I can sleep at night!

BOB: Please, Lisa, calm down. You're safe here.

LISA: Where are those fucking pistols?!

LISA YANKS OPEN BAGS AND PUSHES JARS OFF SHELVES.

Where are they?

THE CLATTERING WAKES AMY UP.

SHE STIRS AND LOOKS AROUND.

AMY: What's going on? (LOOKS) What's wrong with Lisa?

CLAY: Her husband's coming back and she wants to get something ready for him.

BOB: She thinks Len might turn nasty, now the Grid is off.

AMY: The Grid is off?

CLAY: Totally kaput.

GRIFFIN: We are fine! Len is a citizen. He is a responsible adult. He knows what's right.

CLAY: Great. I'll look forward to hearing his political views while he chops me into pieces. Wow, at this rate, we'll be better off with the infected.

GRIFFIN: Don't say that! I will not have such talk in this cabin! We will not let their weak madness overwhelm everything we've got, everything we've put together! We will prevail. We will preserve what we have.

CLAY: To be honest, Griff, I'm worrying more about Len preserving what we have.

LEN: (OFF STAGE) Did someone say my name?

LEN WALKS IN, STAGE-LEFT. HE'S DRAGGING MANDRAKE BEHIND HIM. MANDRAKE IS UNCONSCIOUS AND BLOOD-STAINED. HIS CLOTHES ARE TORN.

LEN PLANTS MANDRAKE IN A CHAIR.

LEN GOES ACROSS THE ROOM AND WIPES HIS HANDS. HE GRABS A BOTTLE OF WATER AND DRINKS FROM IT.

CLAY: Who is that?

LEN: I said I was going to bring some back. (SWALLOWS) Were you talking about me?

CLAY: Yes we were. Griffin and I agreed that even though the Grid is down and we're on our own, you'll have our best interests in your mind. You'll take care of us.

LEN: Yeah.

LISA: We're all prepared. (PAUSE) But Bob was scared that those plague people would get in.

BOB: What? (PAUSE) Um, yes.

LEN: Anyone who comes in this cabin is dead meat.

CLAY: That's the reassurance we wanted. Talking of dead meat, (POINTS AT MANDRAKE) who's he?

LEN: One of the infected. High-status too. I'm going to find out what they're up to. (HE PULLS A KNIFE FROM A SHEATH ON HIS BELT) He can tell me all about them.

BOB: But you'll get really close to him. You'll get his blood on you. You might get infected. You might turn good.

LEN STARES AT BOB.

BOB: It's possible.

GRIFFIN: Len, with Grid gone, our smart guns are useless.

LEN: Big deal. I don't need them.

BOB: Hey, I think there's a diesel generator in the outhouse. I saw a sign on my way in. If it's working, we could try and get it running. We'd get power and then we might be able to get a satellite linkup.

GRIFFIN: Good, excellent, let's do that. You, Len and I can work on the generator. Amy and Lisa, stay here and watch him. (POINTS AT MANDRAKE) Don't touch him. Keep at least four feet from him. We can interrogate him (PAUSE) professionally when we get the generator working.

AMY: Len, where are your pistols?

LEN: I put two in the brown bag, in case someone came in while you were all asleep.

LEN TAKES OUT THE PISTOLS

HE LOOKS AT LISA AND BOB, THEN GIVES A PISTOL TO GRIFFIN AND ONE TO AMY.

LEN: If you get scared of pacifists, just go out together.

LISA: We're not scared of pacifists!

GRIFFIN, BOB AND CLAY FOLLOW LEN OFF THE STAGE. THEY EXIT, STAGE-LEFT.

AMY AND LISA HEAR THE DOOR SLAM.

AMY: The Grid will come back, then we'll have the hunting guns back. They will work on losers.

LISA: Great, if all else fails, I can shoot myself!

AMY: Come on, Lisa! Pull yourself together. We're safe here. The plague doesn't make people dangerous. They're not going to chop you up.

LISA: Stop ignoring the elephant in the room, (PAUSE) the armed, murdering elephant! Oh God, did you see the look on his face? His blood is up. He's going to torture that man over there and then he's going to remember that anything goes at the moment and then. (PAUSE) I don't want to think what happens then.

AMY: We're here too, remember. I'm not going to let Len attack you.

LISA: Thanks.

AMY: Neither will Bob.

LISA: You think?

AMY: Yes.

LISA: He'd only get himself killed. (PAUSE) Look, I'm not saying Len is out of control or a bad citizen, it's just that if he thinks you're failing or weak, he has a permanent solution for it. He loves Samurais, all that honour and fighting and ritual and gory suicide if they're failed in their duty. He'd torture himself if he thought he'd let everyone down.

AMY: Then you're safe, Lisa. You haven't let him down. He was impressed that you brought a body back. It was dead but it's the thought that counts.

LISA: I will let him down! I'm weak, Amy. I don't want to be violent. I just want to be safe. (SHE WALKS OVER TO THE WINDOW) Pacifists. I can sing.

AMY: What?

LISA: I'm going out there. I'm going to join the infected.

AMY: Are you crazy? That's madness! You can't do that. They're infected. You'd be throwing away everything.

LISA: Would I? Who are the real losers here, Amy? Those diseased, infected, pacifist do-gooders out there have got nothing. They're all in rags or wearing things a jumble sale would reject but they look genuinely happy! They're pathetic and they stink but my life stinks more! Fear. That's all I have, fear! I have fancy clothes and jewellery and a house and shoes and drugs but I'm afraid, all the time. My days are darkness.

AMY: Nothing outside can fill the holes inside.

LISA: Where did you get that?

AMY: Someone said it to me.

LISA: I'm going, before my darling, beloved psychopath returns. I want what they've got. I want to smile with them.

LISA GOES TOWARDS THE DOOR.

AMY: Lisa.

LISA: What?

AMY: Are you sure?

LISA: Yes.

LISA LEAVES, STAGE-RIGHT.

AMY BITES HER NAILS. SHE LOOKS AROUND THE CABIN.

AMY: Shit. Shit!

SHE WALKS OVER AND INSPECTS MANDRAKE, WITHOUT TOUCHING HIM.

You don't look so good, do you? Becoming a selfless pacifist hasn't done much for your complexion.

SHE WALKS AROUND MANDRAKE.

AMY: You have fallen so far, Mr Master Level. You were private helicopters and yachts and now you're Len fodder. How bad is that? Loser. You're a fucking loser! Loser!!

MANDRAKE STIRS.

MANDRAKE: Where am I?

AMY: In Hell.

MANDRAKE: I'm still alive, then. Can I have some water, please?

AMY: What do I look like, a waitress?

MANDRAKE: Please?

AMY THINKS, THEN WALKS OVER AND PICKS UP A WATER BOTTLE. SHE RETURNS, OPENS ITS LID AND CAREFULLY POURS IT INTO MANDRAKE'S OPEN MOUTH. HE SWALLOWS GRATEFULLY.

MANDRAKE: Thank you. That was a life-saver.

AMY: Temporarily. I don't think much of your long-term prospects.

MANDRAKE: Your friend doesn't like me. He made that very plain. I wish I could help him. He is suffering greatly.

AMY: Yeah. But he doesn't keep it all to himself.

MANDRAKE: Are you happy? You seem distant.

AMY: Yep. My boyfriend's recommendation. Four feet minimum, he said. They'll be coming back soon. Just so you know, Len's planning to torture you for information.

MANDRAKE: He needs help. We want to help him.

AMY: Well, you could hold the hammer and knives.

MANDRAKE: Why do you joke about it. You don't enjoy it. Would you torture me?

AMY: I don't torture people.

MANDRAKE: I didn't think so.

AMY: I don't torture anyone because I'm a professional! Psychological studies have shown that extracting information from suspects through torture does not yield useful information. Suspects simply say whatever they think their interrogators want to hear. Only amateurs torture people. That's why!

MANDRAKE: Yes, I've heard that too, but thank you anyway. (PAUSE) By the way, it's not a plague.

AMY: I know it's not a plague. It's just low-lives thinking they can get things they didn't earn!

MANDRAKE: I'm not a low-life.

AMY: Oh yeah? You're hardly luxurious at the moment.

MANDRAKE: (CHUCKLES) That is true. I forgot to introduce myself. I am Mandrake Severin.

AMY: Bullshit.

MANDRAKE: Straight up. I'm Mandrake Severin.

AMY: You can't be.

AMY PUSHES MANDRAKE'S UNKEMPT HAIR AWAY. SHE SCRAPES BLOOD OFF HIS FACE AND TURNS HIS HEAD TO THE LIGHT.

Shit. You are.

MANDRAKE: I'm glad my face isn't so beat up that I'm unrecognisable.

AMY: What must your insurance cover be? If the Grid was back on, we'd be the ones pleading for mercy.

MANDRAKE: I no longer have vendetta insurance, Amy. Do not fear punishment from me. I have seen the light. You're already being punished. You're continuing in the darkness of violence.

AMY: You make me sound like a crazy monster! We're not doing violence, we're maintaining security! We're preserving order!

MANDRAKE: Amy, who are you trying to convince?

AMY: Thoughtless violence is just chaos. We're keeping our nation safe and healthy. If everyone gets weak, if everyone stops working for what they get, then everything will collapse. Our system keeps us going. If our system collapses, then we'll be nothing, we'll be just animals fighting.

MANDRAKE: The Grid is down, Amy. There is no system here now and you and I aren't fighting. Society starts with two people valuing each other. When we start to fear, then we react by being angry, by judging and condemning and punishing with violence. That only creates more fear, then more anger and violence. It's a system that turns people into animals. For so long, Amy, we've been killing ourselves to stay alive.

AMY: No, you're wrong! You're wrong!

A DISTANT DIESEL ENGINE HUMS INTO LIFE.
THE MAIN LIGHT OF THE ROOM FLICKERS ON.

MANDRAKE: It seems your friends have succeeded with the generator. They'll be coming back soon. If I don't get a chance to talk to you again, Amy, I want to thank you for what you've done.

AMY: I haven't done anything.

MANDRAKE: You've done a lot.

AMY LOOKS TOWARDS THE DOOR. SHE WALKS
AROUND THE BACK OF MANDRAKE.

AMY: You know, I could free you. I could get you out of here. You're officially infected but you're still... you. I could return you to the Capital. It make sense for me. There'd be a big ransom and I wouldn't be breaking any rules. We both win. You're saved and I help my career and my bank balance.

MANDRAKE: What do you want to do?

AMY: The right thing.

GRIFFIN WALKS IN, STAGE-LEFT.

GRIFFIN: Hey, Amy! What are you doing? You're really close to him!

AMY: What? I'm not! (BACKS OFF)

GRIFFIN: What are you talking about? (HE RUNS ACROSS THE STAGE AND GRABS AMY'S ARM) You were inches away from him. For God's Sake, do you want to get infected?

BOB AND LEN RUN IN. THEY SEARCH RAPIDLY THROUGH THEIR EQUIPMENT BAGS.

AMY: (PULLS GRIFFIN'S ARM AWAY) It's not a plague! (PAUSE) Hey, why are you all looking freaked?

BOB: Um, well, you see, we got the generator working. (GLANCES UP AT THE MAIN LIGHT) Which you've probably already noticed. I was able to patch into the web with a tablet and get the news. That's when we found out about the takeover.

GRIFFIN: It's only local news at the moment but the infected have control of this area. The military have moved out.(RUMMAGING IN THE EQUIPMENT BAGS) We're totally on our own.

LEN: Us versus them.

CLAY: Five armed vigilantes against five thousand huggers.

LEN: Turkey shoot.

CLAY: You never know. Bees, for example, they kill invading hornets by covering the hornets in a ball of humming bees. The hornet overheats inside the bee-ball and dies.

LEN: What?

CLAY: You're tall, but I think that was over your head. (NOTICES MANDRAKE) Hey, who woke him up?

MANDRAKE: Hello. Please don't attack those outside. They are only coming to help you.

GRIFFIN: They'll come to infect us. Destroy us!

MANDRAKE: They want to help you.

LEN: Why don't you shut up?

MANDRAKE: They want to save you from the darkness that you are lost within. They want to show your the light.

LEN: I said shut up!

LEN DIGS INTO A BAG AND PULLS OUT A ROLL OF GAFFER TAPE. HE WALKS OVER TO MANDRAKE, CUTS OFF A PIECE OF TAPE WITH HIS KNIFE AND GAGS MANDRAKE).

GRIFFIN: He's not scared. He's not scared at all.

CLAY: Yep, for someone's who looks like roadkill, he has serious chutzpah.

AMY: That's because he's Mandrake Severin.

CLAY: Really?

GRIFFIN: He can't be. The Mandrake Severin? (WALKS OVER AND STUDIES MANDRAKE) You can't be.

MANDRAKE NODS HIS HEAD.

GRIFFIN: But you're a knight!

MANDRAKE SHRUGS.

GRIFFIN: We have to let him go.

LEN: No we won't! (PUSHES GRIFFIN AWAY) He is infected. He is a loser and he is mine.

GRIFFIN: You can't torture a Knight. (SHOVES LEN) Have you gone mad? This man fought in the Peninsular War! He did two tours of duty. He got the Silver Star.

LEN: He's infected and he's weak. He's not a knight any more. (SHOVES GRIFFIN BACK) The Grid is down, Griffin. He's failed and I condemn him. He deserves everything I do to him.

GRIFFIN: You can't torture a knight! (STANDS BETWEEN LEN AND MANDRAKE)

LEN: (LEN TAKES OUT HIS KNIFE) Are you telling me what to do?

GRIFFIN: (GRIFFIN POINTS HIS PISTOL AT LEN) Yes. (GLANCES DOWN AT THE KNIFE) Looks like I'm pulling rank.

BOB: Guys. We've got hordes of diseased people coming for us. I don't think we should kill each other.

LEN: You're weak, aren't you? (PUSHES GRIFFIN) It's all shiny medals and uniforms for you.

GRIFFIN: I'm not an animal.

BOB: Hey, where's Lisa?

AMY: She left.

LEN: Left? Left? Where did she go?

AMY: I don't know!

LEN: Yeah, you do. (WALKS ACROSS AND GRABS AMY) Tell me!

GRIFFIN GRABS LEN

GRIFFIN: Let go of my wife!

AMY: I'm not your wife!

GRIFFIN: For God's Sake, let's not get technical!

AMY, LEN AND GRIFFIN WRESTLE ON THE GROUND.

CLAY WALKS OVER AND GRABS LEN.

CLAY: Help me, Bob!

BOB HESITATES, THEN RUNS OVER AND GRABS LEN. GRIFFIN, BOB AND CLAY DRAG LEN AWAY FROM AMY.

AMY: (STARES AT LEN) You'd kill us, wouldn't you? You'd kill all of us if you decided it was so! You'd just grab a gun and blow us all away!

GRIFFIN, BOB AND CLAY SHOVE LEN AGAINST THE WALL. LEN SHAKES THEM OFF.

LEN: How do you think our country works? (SHAKES WITH RAGE)
Where's Lisa?

THE OTHERS SAY NOTHING. LEN GLARES AT
THEM, THEN STORMS OUT.

BOB: Where's he going? What's he going to do?

CLAY: Pretty much anything. Actually, he's hardly the imaginative type,
so he'll probably just follow things he's seen on television.

BOB: Shut up!

CLAY: I'm getting that a lot. Is it me, or is this trip not going well?

GRIFFIN: Amy, where did Lisa go?

AMY: You can't tell Len.

GRIFFIN: None of us have the slightest bloody interest in telling Len
anything. Where did Lisa go?

AMY: She's gone to join the infected.

BOB: No.

GRIFFIN: And you didn't stop her?

AMY: What did you want me to do, shoot her?

GRIFFIN: Which way did she go? How long ago did she leave?

AMY: She doesn't want you to follow her!

GRIFFIN: I'm not going to stand here and let all of this fall apart!

GRIFFIN RUNS ACROSS AND PULLS A HUNTING
GUN FROM A BAG. HE RUNS OFF AND EXITS,
STAGE-LEFT.

BOB: Where did she go, Amy?

AMY: I don't know. (PAUSE) But she wanted to go.

BOB: I'm going back to the car.

AMY: Why?

BOB: I'm going to break the law. (HE PULLS HIS BLACK MICROWAVE GUN FROM HIS BAG) I know how to circumvent the target identification module.

AMY: Do you want help?

BOB: Sure. Can you bring that power pack?

AMY: Okay.

AMY GETS A BLACK BOX FROM THE FLOOR.
SHE LOOKS ACROSS AT CLAY AND MANDRAKE.

Clay, don't kill him.

CLAY: Do I look like an idiot?

AMY: No.

SHE AND BOB EXIT, STAGE-RIGHT.

CLAY IS LEFT ALONE WITH MANDRAKE.

CLAY: Well, some peace and quiet at last. (HE SAUNTERS OVER TO MANDRAKE) Hello, Mandrake.

MANDRAKE: Hello, Clay.

CLAY: Long time no see.

MANDRAKE: Yes. The circumstances were very different last time.

CLAY: Very much so, yet also strangely similar. (WALKS AROUND MANDRAKE) So, old friend, are you the leader of the multitude of mutants?

MANDRAKE: Our movement has no leader, Clay. When we see the light, we form a bond, a fellowship.

CLAY: Sounds lovely. Still, it's a tough way to get brightened up. We saw one of your fellows being burnt to death when we tapped into the web earlier. A mob got her and beat her, then gave her a gun and told her to shoot a low-life they'd brought with them, in order to demonstrate which side she was on.

MANDRAKE: But she refused.

CLAY: You're right, she did. So they burnt her alive. (PAUSE) It's a powerful disease, to make a person choose being burnt to death over shooting a loser. That's braver than a lot of soldiers I've met, that you've met.

MANDRAKE: When you see the light, Clay, you do not fear death.

CLAY: Death is nothing. Death is sleep. It's the dying that I was talking about. (WALKS AROUND) So, your movement. Sorry, the movement you're in. They'd all die for their fellows, wouldn't they?

MANDRAKE: Yes.

CLAY: Without any need for bribery.

MANDRAKE: Yes.

CLAY: That's what I thought.

SOUNDS OF DISTANT SINGING.

CLAY WALKS OVER TO THE WINDOW.

CLAY: Wow, now that's a crowd.

MANDRAKE: They have come to help me. They want to help you too.

CLAY: They already have.

BOB AND AMY RUN IN, ENTERING STAGE-RIGHT.

BOB: They're only fifty yards away. God, there must be thousands of them!

GRIFFIN ENTERS, STAGE-LEFT.

GRIFFIN: There's no way through! We have to make a stand here! Check your weapons!

AMY LOOKS OUT A WINDOW.

AMY: You're crazy, Griffin! We can't shoot them all.

GRIFFIN RUNS TO THE WINDOW. HE AIMS AND FIRES WITH THE REVOLVER, THREE TIMES.

EACH SHOT IS LOUD IN THE ROOM.

GRIFFIN: We don't have to shoot them all. Just take out a few and it'll scare the others. Aim for the wealthy ones and the others will be distracted by robbing their bodies.

AMY: You idiot! They're not like that. They don't do that.

GRIFFIN: They're scum! They're infected. Kill as many as you can.

GRIFFIN AIMS AND FIRES AGAIN.

THE SINGING FALTERS, THEN GROWS STRONGER.

GRIFFIN CHECKS HIS REVOLVER.

Shit. Two bullets.

AMY: You fool. It's not a disease!

THE MAIN LIGHTS IN THE ROOM FLICKER

BOB: Oh Guys, I think we might lose the generator.

AMY LISTENS TO THE SINGING. SHE TAKES OUT THE ROSE. SHE LOOKS AT IT. SHE STANDS UP AND WALKS TOWARDS THE DOOR.

GRIFFIN: What are you doing?

AMY: I'm going to join them.

GRIFFIN: What? (RUNS OVER AND GRABS HER) Have you gone mad?

AMY: No! I want to do this! I've never wanted anything more in my entire life!

GRIFFIN: But what about us? Amy, we had plans.

AMY: You wanted a contract, a legal contract, a fucking procreation of high status spawn! I want something more than... (THROWS HER HANDS UP) Things you see on adverts!

GRIFFIN: Don't lose what we have! You can't throw that away! Think of our future children. Think of how great they'll be. They'll be clever and attractive and wealthy. What more could anyone want? (HE'S IN TEARS) You can't throw that away! It's beautiful and rich and admirable. Where's your sense of duty?

AMY: Duty? To what? To power and might and physical perfection?

GRIFFIN: To civilisation! To improvement! To making perfect people, beautiful people, people who can stand on their own two feet and not go crawling for help! To strength!

AMY: But we're not strong. We have power and guns and they all make us weak because we can hide behind them! They're strong because they're not hiding behind anything at all!

GRIFFIN: You fool! They're weak, they're creating weakness! If we start give people things that they haven't achieved, we're encouraging them to beg, to feed off other people. We'd be turning them into parasites if we start helping them.

AMY: They have something we don't. There's something inside of them that no one here has, and I want it! I want what they have.

AMY WALKS TO THE DOOR.

GRIFFIN PULLS OUT A GUN.

GRIFFIN: They can't have you.

AMY: You wouldn't.

GRIFFIN: Move away from the door.

AMY: I hate you. We'll never be together.

GRIFFIN: (GLANCES AT BOB) Tie her up, Bob, and gag her.

BOB: What?

GRIFFIN: Tie her up and gag her or I'll shoot you too!

BOB: This is mad! You're going mad, Griffin. You can't shoot her. Have you any idea what insurance she's got? She had a level four vendetta contract. That's serious shit!

GRIFFIN: Tie her and gag her!

BOB: Be serious! I know the Grid is down but it'll probably come back very soon. It might be back already. The generator might be masking it and they'll see what you're doing!

BOB TAKES OUT A ROPE AND TIES AMY'S HANDS.

Think straight, man! You can't kill her. They'll hunt you down and kill you. They won't even kill you quickly. They'll probably kill you slowly, according to a detailed plan. They're very thorough about it. They're real box-tickers.

CLAY: They are thorough and Amy will probably have ticked every option on her vendetta form. (LOOKS AT GRIFFIN) I'll shut up.

GRIFFIN LISTENS TO THE SINGING OUTSIDE.

GRIFFIN: We will stay here and we will defend our nation and we will kill anyone who weakens!

BOB: My God, this is terrible! This was just supposed to be a bit of fun. If I had known this was going to happen, I'd have stuck with VR! (FINISHES TYING AMY'S HANDS. HE PUTS TAPE ACROSS HER MOUTH)

GRIFFIN: Now get back to the window!

THE ROOM'S MAIN LIGHT FLICKERS, THEN SHINES BRIGHTER.

BOB: The Grid must be back on. The Grid's on! You can't kill Amy now, Griffin. You can't!

GRIFFIN: I don't care about the God damned Grid!

BOB RUNS OVER TO MANDRAKE.

BOB: And he'll be covered too. You've got to let him go.

GRIFFIN: Let him go? (GETS UP AND STRIDES ACROSS THE STAGE TO MANDRAKE. HE GRABS MANDRAKE AND POINTS AT AMY) You did this. You've killed her with your crazy ideas.

BOB: She's not dead yet.

GRIFFIN: She's dead to me! (GRABS MANDRAKE) You killed her. You killed my special woman. She was going to be my partner and have my children. We were going to make something beautiful together and you stopped that! Go on, plead. Plead for your life. (PULLS THE GAG OFF MANDRAKE)

MANDRAKE: (LOOKS CALMLY AT GRIFFIN) She is free now. Nothing you can do can harm her.

GRIFFIN: She's lost! (HE SHOVES THE GUN AGAINST MANDRAKE'S FACE) I'm going to kill you, right now.

BOB: Griffin, stop. Think about it, man. Think about what you're doing. Think about your CV!

GRIFFIN: Screw my CV! He's got to die.

BOB: But he's a knight. You said so, yourself.

MANDRAKE: Look inside you, my friend. See the part of you that wants to join us.

GRIFFIN: There's nothing inside me that wants to join you! Nothing! I am pure. I am in control of myself! I am strong! I am a part of a noble society!

SINGING GROWS AROUND THE CABIN.

KNOCKING ON THE DOOR.

ELLIE: (OFF STAGE-RIGHT) Please let us enter. We want to help. We want to help you see the light.

GRIFFIN: See the light? We will all see the light together. (POINTS HIS GUN AT MANDRAKE)

THE SINGING STOPS.

THE STAGE-LEFT DOOR SWINGS OPEN.

LEN ENTERS, DRAGGING AN UNCONSCIOUS LISA BEHIND HIM. SHE IS BEATEN AND BLOODY.

BOB: Lisa!

LEN DRAGS LISA OVER TO WHERE MANDRAKE LIES, DEAD IN THE CHAIR. HE DROPS HER BESIDE THE CHAIR. BOB RUNS OVER TO LISA. HE KNEELS DOWN BESIDE HER.

Lisa. Lisa!

LEN: Go on, crawl next to your beloved. You deserve each other.

BOB STANDS UP. HE POINTS HIS HUNTING GUN AT LEN.

BOB: You're toast.

You think you can shoot me? You haven't the guts. (PAUSE) Hey, maybe you do, but the Grid is up now, dick-weed. This cabin's still on your stupid generator circuit and I'm a citizen. Your gun won't work on me. (PULLS OUT HIS KNIFE) But this'll work on you.

BOB: I may be a dick-weed, but I'm also an engineer.

BOB SHOOTS LEN. HIS GUN GLOWS AND MAKES A 'CRACK!'

LEN GRIMACES, FOLDS UP AND COLLAPSES.

BOB WALKS DAZEDLY OVER TO LISA. HE KNEELS DOWN BESIDE HER STILL FORM.

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, Lisa. (HE WEEPS)

CLAY: This trip really isn't going well.

THE RADIO COMES ON.

*REPORTER: We have a message from our leader.

AN ANTHEM PLAYS.

*LEADER: Greetings, my friends. I have an important announcement to make. I have made a terrible mistake. I have been wrong. I have been living in a darkness. We have all been living in a darkness.

GRIFFIN: No.

*LEADER: I understand now what I was missing, what we have all been missing. We have been rescued from our cage of ignorance. I have seen the light. From this moment on, our society will no longer attack those who have renounced violence, who have seen a better way. Our society now welcomes them. They are our saviours. We will start again. We will start anew. We have seen the light. Our nation is now, officially, a community of good people.

GRIFFIN: Good people. No. It can't be. It can't be!

THE SINGING IS LOUD AND ALL AROUND THE STAGE. THERE ARE KNOCKS ON THE DOORS.

CLAY LOOKS AROUND DESPERATELY. HE WALKS OVER TO AMY.

GRIFFIN: I will protect you, Amy, my love. I will protect us both from them. We can be pure together. (IGNORES AMY'S ATTEMPTS TO TALK) Hush, don't be scared. It'll be alright. I'll save you. I'll save us all. We can all exit together and be healthy and keep our values and our hearts.

THE MAIN LIGHTS FLICKER, THEN GO OUT. THE STAGE IS PLUNGED INTO DARKNESS.

THREE SHOTS ARE FIRED IN THE DARKNESS, CREATING BRIGHT MUZZLE FLASHES.

THE STAGE RETURNS TO DARKNESS.

CURTAIN.

ACT III

SCENE 1

CURTAIN OPENS.

THE CABIN IS CLEARED UP. THERE ARE NO BODIES. WHERE MANDRAKE HAD SAT IN THE CHAIR, THERE WAS A STATUE.

THE LEADER, CLAY, BOB, PROF, THE NEWSREADER, BODY#1 AND ELLIE ENTER, STAGE-LEFT. THEY ARE ALL WEARING SIMPLE, SINGLE-COLOURED, WELL-TAILORED CLOTHING. THE LEADER IS WEARING BURGUNDY AND EVERYONE ELSE IS IN PINK. BOB IS CARRYING A RUCKSACK.

LEADER: So this is where it all happened?

CLAY: Yes, Leader. This is where I saw the light, but so many others died. I had a statue placed in the spot where our hero (WELLS UP) Mandrake Severin was tragically killed.

LEADER: A tragedy. An awful tragedy. My friend, my dear friend Mandrake had seen the light but his life was taken away before he could enjoy seeing the fruits of his efforts, enjoying his nation becoming what he wanted it to be. I will not forget him. None of us will forget him. He was a hero in our old nation and he is a hero in our new nation. I will do my best to honour his memory and follow his path.

THE LEADER WALKS OVER TO THE STATUE AND BOWS BEFORE IT.

EVERYONE CLAPS.

CLAY: Leader, I would like to turn this place into a shrine, a place of pilgrimage, so that others can pay their respects.

LEADER: That is an excellent idea, my friend. It could be a place where people come to thank Mandrake and think for a while about what went before, and how we have escaped that darkness.

NEWSREADER: Leader, if I may interrupt. Our Active Helper Division have reported back with the latest news about (PAUSE) the Radicals.

LEADER: Continue.

NEWSREADER: The Radicals are resisting all our embraces, Leader. They insist on sticking to their unbalanced views. Also, (PAUSE) their numbers are increasing.

LEADER: But that is terrible. We have only just escaped one darkness. We cannot fall into another. How could they do this? How could they be so callous? It could be the end of our dream, of our beautiful new state.

NEWSREADER: They are repeating their demands that we destroy all our weapons.

LEADER: We have no weapons. Don't they know that? All our bullets have been melted down, our shells broken up. All we have now, in our new haven of a nation, is pacifiers. Bob here has helped so much with that, haven't you, Bob?

BOB: I think so, Leader. My team has worked so hard on creating what you wanted. They're a great team. They're all so clever and we hug regularly. We've worked day and night to make the pacifiers you specified. We've put a lot of love and attention into them. (PULLS OUT A PURPLE, ADVANCED-LOOKING GUN FROM HIS RUCKSACK) We took the modulated, microwave pulse system from the Amza and added a sonic feature that causes instantaneous numbness. That way, when the microwave pulse stops the target's heart, the target doesn't feel a thing. They depart their body painlessly and join the infinite in seconds. No suffering at all.

LEADER: That is excellent. I am against all violence, as are we all, but we cannot let the beautiful creation we've made be destroyed by people with unbalanced, unfeeling views. At least, if we know that they will enter the Afterlife without pain or distress, we can end this divisiveness and return to the harmony we've created. (PAUSE) Hug, everyone, hug.

EVERYONE HUGS.

Bob, how many of these pacifiers are now ready for use?

BOB: Two thousand, Leader.

LEADER: That is excellent, Bob. I am very grateful for all your work.
(LOOKS AROUND) I would love very much to stay longer, and think awhile of my friend, who's life tragically ended here, but I have many duties to perform.

BOB: Leader, is it okay if Master Friend Clay and I stay for a few minutes, just to have some quiet thoughts?

LEADER: Of course.

BOB: Thank you.

THE LEADER, NEWSREADER, BODY#1 AND
ELLIE LEAVE, STAGE-LEFT.

CLAY: Quiet thoughts?

BOB WALKS AROUND THE ROOM, LOOKING
NERVOUS.

BOB: Clay, after we got the power back and found Mandrake dead, and Griffin, and Amy, I thought Griffin had shot them all and then killed himself.

CLAY: Yeah. He'd gone nuts, Bob. You know that.

BOB: Yes, yes he had flipped out. But I definitely remember him saying he had only two bullets, (PAUSE) and I heard three shots.

CLAY: He lied to you, Bob. He lied to all of us. Our whole lives were a lie. Come on, let's hug.

CLAY HUGS BOB.

BOB: You know, you never liked hugging before.

CLAY: But then I saw the light. (LOOKS AT BOB'S GUN) That's a clever device you've made.

BOB: Thanks.

CLAY: Painless and quick, you said?

BOB: Absolutely. I wanted very much for there to be no pain. I don't want anyone to suffer.

CLAY: No, absolutely not. (PAUSE) Can I hold it?

BOB: Of course.

CLAY TAKES THE GUN FROM BOB. HE HEFTS IT
IN HIS ARMS.

CLAY: Nice weight.

CLAY AIMS IT AT THE STATUE AND PULLS THE
TRIGGER.

A CRACK REVERBERATES IN THE ROOM.

CLAY SWINGS THE GUN AROUND, TOWARDS
BOB.

BOB: Um, Clay, it doesn't have an automatic disable if it detects a
bone chip or RFID tag. The Radicals are citizens, like
ourselves, so I couldn't put that in, so it won't disable itself if you
fire it at me.

CLAY: I'm not going to fire it at you. (HE SMILES) This is an excellent
piece of kit. Can I keep it?

BOB: I guess so. Yes, sure. We have many of them now.

CLAY: Thanks.

CLAY WALKS AROUND THE ROOM, SURVEYING
ITS CONTENTS.

Poor old Griffin. He backed the wrong horse.

BOB: He believed in the old system and killing to maintain order.

CLAY: Yes. (STUDIES THE GUN) But we've left all that behind. Shall
we go, dear friend?

BOB: Okay, dear friend.

CLAY SMILES AND SQUEEZES BOB'S
SHOULDERS. THEY WALK TOWARDS THE EXIT.

Painless and quick, you said?

BOB: Yes. It happens in seconds.

CLAY: You're very compassionate.

BOB: Thanks.

CLAY: (LOOKS AT THE SOFA AS HE PASSES) I was drunk and hungover but now I am sober and awake. (PAUSES BEFORE THE DOOR) You first.

BOB: Thanks.

BOB OPENS THE DOOR AND EXITS.

CLAY: My pleasure.

CLAY FOLLOWS BOB OUT, CARRYING THE GUN IN HIS HAND.

CURTAIN.