Snowed In: An Imagining

By Paul Hufker

paulhufker@gmail.com

Some thoughts on this play:

*This play revolves around notorious American information leaker Edward Snowden, taking place mainly during a small portion of the two weeks he was trapped at Sheremetyevo airport in Russia. Snowden was fleeing America, and though his asylum was ultimately rejected by every country he applied to, he was unaware of that during his initial time in the airport. Russia -- always eager for a chance to piss off the US - agreed to allow him to stay in the airport until the ordeal was settled. Snowden is still in Russia today.

*In the play, we meet Snowden's girlfriend, Lindsay Mills, as well as Snowden's father (Lon) and mother (Wendy), and his lawyer Ben. These are actual people in Snowden's real life (for instance Lindsay has a rather infamous yoga blog, and is a performance artist in her own right) though of course I have fictionalized them to suit my own purposes. In fact, a good many portions of the play are taken from actual events, but this is not an "information play" and therefore we should always be more concerned with how Snowden is reacting to the whirlwind of situations he encounters in the play, and not as concerned with every single piece of scientific jargon being *understood* completely by the audience.

We also meet Angela Merkel, British Secret Services officers who act as circus performers, a drunken Swiss man who was manipulated by the CIA, a talking stapler and a talking cat. Just go with it.

*Any time the play refers to "the sound," we are jumping through spacetime. "The sound" gets us from one potential reality to another, where we encounter visions and versions of what Snowden's life might have been or might still become.

*In terms of the set, yes it seems as though a lot of flashy things happen here. But if the budget is your concern, this play can be simplified to using only a metal desk, a chair, and white wall where you can project a few static slides, so long as you are attune to the play's sharp changes in place/time, and the characters your actors present are large and clear.

*Finally, if you choose to do this play, you should research and learn about Snowden. Especially if you're playing Snowden. But don't worry about learning every detail of his life, the escape ordeal, or the Holographic Principle. The science is theatrical. The play knows enough to take you on your journey. Never forget that this is ultimately a love story; a play about how our decisions affect our lives, and those in our lives. Snowden and his needs should be the focus from start to finish.

It's a quick, intense ride.

Good luck and enjoy.

Paul

Character Breakdown

*5 total

1)Snowden (m) *Edward Snowden*

2)Stapler (m/f) *a desk stapler*

3)Cat (m/f) *a cat*

4)1 additional actor plays all other males

5)1 additional actor plays all other females

Blackness on stage. A plane lands extra-loudly. The wheels screech as they meet the runway. As the sound fades, it blends with a voice that begins talking. The voice is metered, calm but firm, and has a legit Russian accent. It's talking through an airport intercom.

VOICE:……caution, the moving walkway is ending……caution, the moving walkway is ending……caution, you're not in Elizabeth City, North Carolina anymore……caution, the universe may be a two-dimensional projection of itself…… Но если это так, то, что свет бьет нас? Какой свет?

Pronounced "No yesli eto tak, to, chto svet b'yet nas? Kakoy svet?" the line reads "But if so, what light is hitting us? What light?" in Russian.

A projection appears sharply on the back wall of the set. It is an image of an empty seat on an airplane. Shoved in the face of the no-one sitting there, are tape recorders, microphones, and cameras.

We hear voices of reporters.

REPORTER #1 He's not on this flight? Where is he?

REPORTER #2 Has the Ecuadorian Embassy granted him asylum?

REPORTER #3 Any word from Castro? Will he be allowed access to Cuba?

The REPORTERS repeat themselves – faster and louder – leaping on each other's words, fiercely overlapping until their words are an indecipherable mess of questions. The swirling questions reach a crescendo and stop abruptly when, above the fray, we hear REPORTER #1 yell:

He's not planning on *staying* in Russia, is he?

Silence.

Another image replaces the first. A large tree with a mighty brown trunk and healthy green leaves is set against a stark-white background. But it's an image painted with finger paint; thick clumps here and there, colors blurring and slipping well outside the lines, cartoonish, and all in odd proportions. Did a child draw it?

We hear different voices:

VOICE #2: (*American accent*) About two-thirds of the way up the trunk there's a hole. If you slip in during the day, it's heat relief from the sun. At night, you look out the hole and bed down under a bowl of stars.

VOICE #3: (*a different, cartoony Russian accent*) Is there much rain?

VOICE #2: Sometimes. Sometimes it floods.

VOICE #3: How would I get in the hole?

VOICE #2: I'd strap you to my back and climb. But the best thing, the very *best* thing about the hole, is that it faces upward, and the view is never the same. Clouds sweep across the sky, and they don't leave traces of what was, or hints of what's to come.

VOICE #3: (*amazed*) Clouds like erasers…

VOICE #2: I don't like to go far but I like to pretend. So I climb in the hole, get a good view of the sky, and off I go. 'Swhy I started with the tree.

VOICE #3: It's gone now? You miss it.

VOICE #2: (*sadly*) I've only ever had two best friends. And that tree was one.

The projection shifts. We are in a utility room at Sheremetyevo Airport. An old, solid-metal desk is revealed as the only set piece onstage, while the image becomes one of a small, dimly-lit room with janitorial supplies (a janitorial-yellow mop bucket, a few large cardboard boxes filled with paper towels, etc.) and little else, save one window that shows wave after wave of unending blue-white snow drifts, folding out into the deep Russian night.

A CAT and a STAPLER are sitting on the floor of the room, "finger-painting" a tree on a white section of wall. Theirs are the voices we just heard.

STAPLER looks around the utility room.

STAPLER: (*the same cartoony Russian accent*) I've never had a home to paint. Except this one.

CAT studies the tree.

CAT: More green. It could get *so* green.

CAT uses his paw to paint.

STAPLER: And the house? What color is the house?

Another area of the stage lights up sharply. This is an even smaller room inside the already small utility room. A young man, skinny, scruffy, unkempt, is looking into a small mirror with a

stand, shaving. The lights strobe and give a dangerous effect to this man and this room. The only set piece we can clearly make out is a painting easel which can be the demarcating line between rooms. Or there can be a door. Between flashes, we watch him shave. A few shaving strokes and he's gone.

STAPLER: How much was lost? In the flood?

CAT: Nothing. It hasn't flooded yet.

STAPLER: But it will flood?

CAT: And then things will be very different.

STAPLER: Don't use all the paint on the tree. You still have to do the house.

CAT saddens.

CAT: I don't remember the house.

The door to the smaller room opens and the shaving man enters. He's as wired as he is bedraggled. He's holding the mirror, a razor in his hand, shaving cream patches on his face, a small white towel over his shoulder. He looks at the ceiling, squints.

SNOWDEN: Better light. In here.

He sets the mirror on the desk and shaves in it. CAT gets up and crosses over to him.

CAT: Eddie, I'm starting to forget things…

SNOWDEN: You wanna talk about *heroes?* Bekenstein and Wheeler! 't Hooft and Susskind. I *thought* these guys were cool, but those books I found in there -- they aren't just *cool*, they're *actual heroes.* Know why?

CAT: Like what color is the siding?

SNOWDEN: *These* guys…AGH…

He's cut himself. He checks for blood. Yes. He dabs the blood with a towel.

SNOWDEN: *These guys* knew how to shake things up. All the way up to Einstein, ehhhhhverybody feels certain, *the physical world is*

made up of matter and energy. But here come these forward-thinkers, these *pioneers,* and they all play celestial piggyback on each other, trying to build a ladder up to this new science. *Christ.*

He's cut himself again. He dabs the blood. He finishes shaving.

SNOWDEN: They say, nono, think *2D*, not *3D.* Or 4D or 5D for that matter, but instead think, *2D.* The *whole* shee-BANG, they say, can be seen as a *two-dimensional* structure "painted" on the cosmological horizon. They call it the *holographic principle.*

He's holding the towel to his face, stopping blood.

CAT: (*only STAPLER hears*) I don't want to talk anymore about horizons.

STAPLER: (*to SNOWDEN; helping CAT*) Have you heard from Lindsay?

SNOWDEN: (*driving*) Painted *on.* What do you think about *that?*

CAT: I don't think everything you're saying is 100% accurate.

SNOWDEN: Well, you're a cat.

CAT: Have you heard from Lindsay?

SNOWDEN stops, saddens.

SNOWDEN: No.

SNOWDEN opens the towel, looks at all the blood. A smile comes across his face. He asks a question in Lindsay's voice:

SNOWDEN: *Start shaving in the dark?*

He answers it in his own.

SNOWDEN: Maybe it's a map, Linds. Connect the dots and see.

The smile fades.

CAT jumps up on the desk and peers out the window.

CAT: Russian winters. Brutal. How long have we been here? Minutes? Months?

SNOWDEN sees the finger painting on the wall. He crosses to the wall and studies it.

SNOWDEN: Don't worry, buddy. You'll be climbing the tree in the front yard again in no time.

SNOWDEN picks up a tube of paint from the floor near the painting. He puts a glob on his finger. He adds a thick, hearty brown reinforcement to the tree's trunk.

SNOWDEN: Remember when I found you? A puffed up little fur ball out on a limb, crying in the snow? We'll get you back there again. Soon.

SNOWDEN steps back to admire his addition.

CAT: (*astonishment*) It's there again? *The tree grew back??*

SNOWDEN ignores that or doesn't hear it. He wipes his hands on the bloody towel and sets it on the desk. He blows on his hands.

SNOWDEN: Why don't they turn on the *heat?*

He puts on a thin coat, his heaviest. He picks up STAPLER and tries to have fun talking for it.

SNOWDEN: (*his own clumsy, cartoony Russian accent*) I have no intention of hiding who I am because I know I have done nothing wrong.

He suddenly doesn't find it all so amusing.

SNOWDEN: (*as himself*) I have done nothing wrong.

He sets STAPLER down on the desk.

CAT: Eddie, do I like *wet or dry food?*

SNOWDEN looks at CAT. He seizes what little forward momentum he can, and snatches up the mirror.

SNOWDEN: Right/yes/so, so for there to be a hologram, I was thinking, there has to be a *reflection,* right? *Right?*

SNOWDEN moves around the room, studying his face/cuts in the mirror.

SNOWDEN: This mirror doesn't give an exact representation of the thing reflected. Obviously one difference is that it provides an *opposite* reflection. Still, a connection between the image and the "real" thing is established.

STAPLER: Eddie, *you* remember the color of your house, right? Maybe you could remind him (*CAT*).

SNOWDEN holds up a single finger as if to say "one sec."

SNOWDEN: If we're all flat, all 2D, then everything that's inside us can be determined from the information that's stored on the *surface* of us. Take a grape, squash it flat. All the information that described the grape is still there, it's just spread out on a 2D plane. Get it? And all you need to reconstruct it is just to…bring the information back together again.

STAPLER: (*trying harder*) I think our cat friend needs more litter.

A question occurs to SNOWDEN.

SNOWDEN: But can I *get at* that information? If I needed to. If I lost something…important…

Suddenly deflated, he looks to each of them for a genuine answer.

SNOWDEN: What can I get? If everything that happens…is holo…is a hologram?

They can't provide him one. SNOWDEN's heart gets sick. He sets the mirror face-down on the desk and goes back through the door he came from, closing it. He's gone.

After a moment, STAPLER crosses over and tries the handle.

STAPLER: Why does he lock the door?

CAT: He means Lindsay. What he's lost.

STAPLER: He's choosing a smaller room inside a very small room.

CAT: He's hurting. But so am I.

STAPLER: Come, let's paint. Let's paint the house.

CAT: *I don't remember the house.*

A beat. STAPLER tries something else.

STAPLER: TV was saying some bad things about him.

Strobe lights up on SNOWDEN in the smaller room. The jagged light cuts his movements into pieces.

STAPLER: They asked, *is he a patriot or a traitor?* They took a poll.

He's lifting and studying several different tubes of paint, and referencing something in a thick, open book which rests on the easel.

SNOWDEN: If I took a piece of your hair.

STAPLER: And the poll

SNOWDEN: And put it to my nose.

STAPLER: The poll said

SNOWDEN: If I breathed in deep, Lindsay, your yellow hair

STAPLER: It wasn't good

SNOWDEN: Like a bloodhound

STAPLER: 61-39 for

SNOWDEN: Could I pick you out from a sea of golden heads?

STAPLER: 61-39 for traitor.

The strobes go out and SNOWDEN is gone.

STAPLER: He's scared.

CAT: So am I!

The electricity in the airport browns out.

CAT and STAPLER look up in wonder and fear.

STAPLER: Snow. On the wiring.

A cell phone rings. CAT jumps sky-high. STAPLER darts backward. They both look back to the ringing phone which is on top of the metal desk. It rings again. They hide.

SNOWDEN crosses back into the larger utility room. The melody of the ringing has frozen his blood. He stops and stares at it. It rings. He sets down the armful of tubes of paint he's holding on the desk, and picks it up. He hesitates a moment, then musters up what he needs to and answers it.

SNOWDEN: …hello…?

The legit Russian VOICE comes through the phone.

VOICE: Edvard, this your sister.

SNOWDEN: Jess! Oh, *jesus.* Listen, call-

VOICE: Edvard, plane hit Pentagon.

SNOWDEN: *What?*

VOICE: Plane. Hit. Pentagon.

SNOWDEN: A plane? *Another* plane?

Static sounds swell.

SNOWDEN: *Hello?*

She's gone and the static goes with her.

SNOWDEN: *Shit. Jess?*

He checks the phone.

SNWODEN: Yea, no bars. We would've heard if a plane hit…*any*thing, right? I mean, this is an airport…

He walks around the room, holding the phone at high, awkward angles, trying to get a connection.

SNOWDEN: I was in the Pentagon on 9/11. *That* was a scene. Why would Jess be -- she sounded…*little*…like when we were kids…

He gives up and sets the phone back on the desk. He sees STAPLER in his hiding place, picks him up, and talks with his cartoony Russian accent.

SNOWDEN: My whole family. My sister ze federal lawyer. My mother ze Chief Deputy of the District Court of Maryland. My father, ze Coast Guard Officer. (*American accent*) Conformity and dissent have long divided my house against itself.

He sets STAPLER down. An idea hits him that drives through the near-delirium and ignites him.

He goes to the desk, sits cross-legged on it in a position that resembles something Eastern, and closes his eyes.

He clears his throat. The projection image shifts to one of an outline of a body. He takes a deep, cleansing breath.

SNOWDEN: Lindsay. Performance artist. Shoulder-length dirty blond hair.

Hair is filled in as shoulder-length and dirty-blond on the outline.

SNOWDEN: Yogic frame.

The body is filled in and shown to be taut, tight, muscle-y.

SNOWDEN: Kind eyes.

Kind eyes fill in.

SNOWDEN: Full mouth.

A full mouth fills in.

SNOWDEN: I miss her hands most.

Her hands do not fill in. SNOWDEN opens his eyes but does not see the image.

SNOWDEN: (*immediately disappointed*) Even in my *mind*. Looks nothing like her.

The image vanishes and is replaced by that of the utility room.

A knock on the door.

SNOWDEN turns, freezes.

Another knock.

SNOWDEN goes shakily to the door. His hand reaches towards the knob.

It bursts opens before he can touch it. A bright white light blinds the room. CAT peeks out from wherever he's hiding. STAPLER goes stock-still – like a stapler.

Two WORKMEN enter in blue overalls. They wordlessly carry on, then assemble, a large, foam, puzzle-piece map of South America at SNOWDEN'S feet. It's ultimately large enough for him to stand on a single country at a time.

SNOWDEN: Can…I help you…?

A WORKMAN hands a note to SNOWDEN. He reads. They continue assembling.

SNOWDEN: (*it sinks in as he reads*) Austria, no. Brazil, no. China denies getting a request. Cuba, no response. Finland, no, France, no – Germany, Iceland, India, Italy, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Switzerland. All no.

WORKMAN ONE slaps his coworker on the arm and points into the white light of the door. WORKMAN TWO nods his head in agreement, walks back into the light and is swallowed.

SNOWDEN: Who told you to come in here?

WORKMAN ONE stares at SNOWDEN. Silence.

WORKMAN TWO returns with a basket full of fruit. He hands it to SNOWDEN. They go back to assembling.

SNOWDEN sets the basket on the desk and takes a second card from it. As he reads, he holds up each piece of fruit.

SNOWDEN: From Bolivia, the acai berry.

Image of the same outline of a body appears, acai-berry-hair fills in.

SNOWDEN: (*reading*) From Ecuador, the guanabana.

Guanabana eyes fill in.

SNOWDEN: (*reading*) From Nicaragua, the calala.

The pulpy insides of a calala spread out, to fill in a smiling mouth.

SNOWDEN: (*reading*) And from Venezuela, the maracuya.

SNOWDEN looks up at the image. The second he sees it, it fades, as though it was hiding from him.

SNOWDEN: I'm not hungry, thanks. (*re: the notes*) Where did you get these?

The men finish assembling the large South American map. An image of a map of South America appears onscreen. The names of the mentioned countries are the only names written on it.

SNOWDEN: (*re: the notes*) Look, you think you're telling me something I don't know? I know who said yes and who didn't.

It's obvious SNOWDEN didn't know.

WORKMAN ONE stops and stares at SNOWDEN.

Then, WORKMAN TWO notices the finger painting on the wall. He crosses over to it and glares disapprovingly. He points a single finger towards it, and locks eyes with SNOWDEN.

SNOWDEN: What? The painting? They told me I could use what I found in here…

The workmen share a look.

Then they each take an arm of SNOWDEN, lift him off the ground, and as though they're positioning a piece of lighting equipment, move SNOWDEN onto the country of Bolivia.

SNOWDEN: (*as he's being moved*) It's washable. I'll *wash it.*

They set SNOWDEN on Bolivia which then lights up on the image onscreen. SNOWDEN realizes what they're doing.

SNOWDEN: I'm not going to South America.

In unison, they look up to a single point, check something, nod, and move him to Ecuador.

SNOWDEN: (*as he's being moved*) I know who's doing this. I know this is CIA.

Bolivia's light goes out. They set him down. Ecuador lights up onscreen.

SNOWDEN: They don't *want* me in South America.

The men look at him with puzzled faces.

SNOWDEN: They cancelled my passport when I left Hong Kong. They *wanted* me in Russia.

The men look at each other with puzzled faces.

SNOWDEN: The photo op with Putin was on me. That was my fault. But even still, the American people were 50-50 at *best* on the whole thing.

The men look up in unison again, checking whatever they're checking, then move him to Nicaragua which lights up onscreen as the light on Bolivia goes out.

SNOWDEN: (*as he's being moved*) They can't even decide which photo op they want for my capture!

The men set him down, look up again, give a thumbs-up to something, and start to pack up.

SNOWDEN: I *was* CIA. Don't forget that.

They cross to the door. He yells after them, suddenly hoping they might stay and grant him his wish.

SNOWDEN: Tell them I want to testify before Congress. Get me something in writing and we'll *talk!*

The men are gone. The bright white light goes with them.

CAT reemerges and checks to see the coast is clear.

CAT: Eddie…the water here…my fur is falling out. Please find somewhere nice for us to *go…*

SNOWDEN: (*re: the notes, the foam map*) I guess we're going to South America.

It's all too much for SNOWDEN who sits on the edge of the foam map and buries his face in his hands.

CAT: I don't *wanna* spend my life on the run!

STAPLER unfreezes and crosses to SNOWDEN and rubs his back.

STAPLER: Well, no one is going anywhere with four feet of snow on the ground, so let's just relax.

STAPLER picks up the paint tubes from the desk and offers them to SNOWDEN.

STAPLER: Maybe you could paint where you want to go…

SNOWDEN sees the tubes, rises, takes them and tries to summon that forward momentum from before.

SNOWDEN: Ben Wizner -- my lawyer -- is on it. OK, now, these *actual heroes*, listen to THIS.

There is a short stack of blank paper on the desk. SNOWDEN squirts paints onto one sheet, and uses his fingers to mix them.

SNOWDEN: Cats aren't the smartest animals in the world – no offense – but this guy'll do. To get at the information stuck to his edges, you don't cut him open and reveal the rings of the trees, but instead you focus on the smell of airplane hangars that comes off the animal even at a distance.

He wipes his hands, picks up CAT and holds him high.

SNOWDEN: The trace amounts of lemon floor cleanser dried at the tips of the fur. Or you stare into the creature's eyes.

He turns CAT to face him, and stares into its eyes.

SNOWDEN: Every piece of information this cat ever ingested builds homes, sewage plants, skyscrapers in its eyes.

He sets CAT back on the desk. CAT cleans itself in disgust.

SNOWDEN starts to finger paint on a blank sheet of paper. As he does, the image shifts to another bright-white blank screen. With each stroke, each streak of paint left by his fingers, a cartoon image of CAT's body begins to form onscreen.

SNOWDEN: And now I'm thinking: if we have all the info, we can reconstruct the real thing! We can all be described by 2D

information, right? But what they're exploring now, is universes bubbling off, one after the next. Multiverse. What if THEY might have info stored as well? Maybe infinities of this cat are squashed on top of infinities of this cat, this Stapler on this Stapler! If someone disappears beneath the legs of the dining room table in one reality, we can find him reemerging beneath the breakfast table in another! Or. Maybe I'm stretching. Maybe I'm pulling at the edges of the science too much.

STAPLER: You definitely are.

SNOWDEN: Ok, fine, but I think *basically*, what I'm understanding …is that when something *goes*…it might be very difficult, sure, but it's not *impossible*…to get it back.

He holds up the paper and looks at this paint CAT. His smile fades.

SNOWDEN: Looks nothing like him.

He crumples the paper and as he does, the image returns to that of the utility room.

STAPLER: Maybe someone could paint the house. I'd like to see it.

SNOWDEN: So would I.

STAPLER: It hasn't been *that* long. What *do* you remember?

SNOWDEN goes to the desk, sits in cross-legged fashion again, and closes his eyes.

He takes a deeeeeep breath.

SNOWDEN: Performance artist. Shoulder length hair.

The cell phone rings. It startles SNOWDEN. It's on the desk and he stares at it. His hand trembles as he picks it up. He answers. Before he can speak, the VOICE comes through the phone.

VOICE: (*legit Russian accent*) Eddddddddd-vaaarrrrddddd…

SNOWDEN: Jess!

VOICE: Can you name countries of South America yet?

SNOWDEN: I—I don't really *want* to go to South America…

VOICE: Edvard, bad news. You have mono. Kissing disease.

SNOWDEN: (*did I hear that right?) Mono?*

VOICE: You miss nine months of grade eleven. You must get GED.

SNOWDEN: Jess, you're breaking up…

VOICE: Why you kiss pretty girls behind bike racks?

SNOWDEN: I haven't kissed *anyone*.

VOICE: You cannot graduate with class. You have *nine months* homework due!

Static sounds swell. He's losing the connection.

SNOWDEN: Jess, call *Lindsay!*

VOICE: Each dot in wallpaper is seeing eye, Edvard.

SNOWDEN: *Hello?!?*

SNOWDEN checks the phone. He's lost the signal.

SNOWDEN: *DAMNit.*

The sound quality of VOICE changes. It's now coming from the airport speakers.

VOICE: Edvard. You have visitor.

SNOWDEN stops. He's confused, but he talks upward.

SNOWDEN: Oh. Uhh, OK. Who?

Voice: Какое это имеет значение, кто, когда вы не знаете, какой вы есть вы?

(Kakoye eto imeyet znacheniye, kto, kogda vy ne znayete, kakoy vy yest' vy?)
(What does it matter who, when you don't know which you is you?)

SNOWDEN: *Please*. In English.

VOICE: (*sharply*) Be patient.

The strobes kick in, cutting the room to pieces. The encroachment of the strobe from the small room to the larger room is complete, and an extra-terrifying factor for STAPLER and CAT who immediately cling to each other.

SNOWDEN goes to the desk, pulls out a handful of something unseen, and tosses it high into the air. It's confetti and it falls around the strobing world like wonderful, strange snow. As it falls, the WORKMEN return to remove the foam map. SNOWDEN tosses confetti high until they are finished.

When the map is gone, the strobes stop and the door to the outside bursts open. The white light returns, blinding the room.

A very drunk, animated Swiss man in an expensive suit stumbles in and grabs hold of SNOWDEN.

SWISS BANKER: Ich bin nicht aus diesem Land. Ich weiß nicht, wohin sie gehen. (*I'm not from this country. I don't know where to go*.)

The white light fades. A tall, slender blond woman has entered as well. It's LINDSAY. Her mouth moves, but her voice is the Russian VOICE.

LINDSAY: Your old CIA coworkers were at a bar lubricating this guy pretty good.

SWISS BANKER: (*to SNOWDEN*) She your wife? BeeYOOOteefulll.

SNOWDEN has been staring at LINDSAY the whole time. He can't quite decide if it's her.

SNOWDEN: I…tried to close my eyes and see your face, Linds.

SWISS BANKER: Taxi? *Please* taxi.

SNOWDEN: I saw *some*thing but it wasn't you.

The banker feels ill and goes hands-on-knees. LINDSAY sees an unopened beer bottle sticking out from the top of his suit pants. She takes it. She inspects the label.

LINDSAY: (*first line the VOICE, second line her*) They had a funnel in his mouth. Head tilted back like his neck was broken.

SWISS BANKER: Good friends, yah! Come here, beeYOOteefull wife!

SWISS BANKER stumbles again and weakly grabs at LINDSAY. SNOWDEN catches him again and struggles to get him to the desk chair.

SNOWDEN: (*practically dragging him*) You were talking to the CIA?

SNOWDEN drops him in the chair.

LINDSAY: (*her voice*) Heyheyhey, I saw somebody in trouble, and I rushed him on over at lightspeed to Mr. National Traitor, here.

SNOWDEN: *Traitor?*

Static sounds swirl. LINDSAY rewinds.

LINDSAY: Saw somebody in trouble, and I rushed him on over at lightspeed to Mr. National Treasure, here.

Static fades. SNOWDEN is struggling to stay on top of all this. LINDSAY continues.

LINDSAY: "Genius of geniuses." Isn't that your nickname already?

SWISS BANKER: (*starting to panic*) Ich frage mich, ob du mir einen Gefallen tun könnte. (*I wonder if you could do me a favor*). Please. English? OK. Please, *favor*.

LINDSAY grabs a piece of fruit from the basket.

SNOWDEN: Lindsay, I've been trying to paint you…

LINSDAY: I'm not Lindsay.

She takes a loud bite, chews. SNOWDEN stares.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: I'm someone *like* Lindsay.

SNOWDEN: …oh…

SNOWDEN is lost. She tries to clarify.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: Crawl in the hole in the tree in the front yard. At night you see me in the face of an owl. In the morning, I'm what blinds you and makes you squint at the horizon.

He looks at her helplessly.

SNOWDEN: You're the only thing I want to touch. Can I?

He takes a few feeble steps towards her.

SWISS BANKER holds out his hands like a child.

SWISS BANKER: *Please*. Help me taxi. Help me *home*.

SNOWDEN looks from him back to SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY.

SNOWDEN: Can I…take your hand…?

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: You don't want to help him?

SNOWDEN: I will if I can touch your hand.

SNOWDEN extends his hand. SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY doesn't take it.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: You *can't* help him. They don't let him get a taxi. They stuff him in the driver's seat of his rented car and browbeat him into stepping on the gas. I just came to see how much of the impossible you'd try and rescue.

SNOWDEN doesn't love that.

SWISS BANKER: Fall and try. Stand and try. Fly and try!

SWISS BANKER is trying to smile through how ill he feels. SNOWDEN notices and can't help himself.

SNOWDEN: Maybe we *should* help him get a taxi?

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: (*pissed*) And I knew it. And I KNEW it. UN-REAL.

SWISS BANKER begins to cry.

SWISS BANKER: Please, now. Friend? OK? No enemies.

LINDSAY breathes and tries to soften.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: I'm bendable, Eddie. You know that. But this ain't hot yoga. And you ain't downward dog.

SWISS BANKER digs in his suit pockets and produces car keys.

SWISS BANKER: Ah, yes! With this! I become home with this.

SNOWDEN sees the keys, gets frustrated.

SNOWDEN: *Why bring him, then?* If you don't want me to --

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: Not here, Eddie. Not in this version. Here he naps in the chair and dreams about something. Something far away but flying towards him. But in this room somewhere *else?* In *that* room, he doesn't sleep. He drives and gets arrested.

With the keys jingling in his hand, SWISS BANKER starts to nod off.

SWISS BANKER: I have. Become home.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: Question is: how many *somewheres* are you prepared to try and save?

SNOWDEN certainly doesn't love that question, but suddenly something clicks.

SNOWDEN: Is he the…he's the one the CIA tells they can make it go away if he wears a wire.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: (*nodding*) All to do with banking transparency. His buddies go under, he stays afloat. For three months. Then he gets nine years.

They stare at the helpless SWISS BANKER who slumps and sleeps.

SNOWDEN: But…they were doing *some*thing wrong, right?

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: (*she nods, finishing the fruit*) Oh, yea. But this guy… (*she points at SWISS BANKER with her thumb)* …this *Swiss* banker? Is the *only* person who does any *actual* time for the entire US housing market crash. The *only* one.

SNOWDEN is confused. Remembers. Is disheartened further.

He leaves the banker to sleep, and turns to this version of his girlfriend.

SNOWDEN: They rejected me. Every place but here.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: (*blowing on her hands*) It's *freezing*. I'm frozen.

SNOWDEN: Find a country we can go to! I know we just got the house but my parents'll sell it for us. Let's pack up Paine and leave. Or, wait… Does that happen? What *happens?*

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: (*shaking her head*) Once you left, Eddie, they put a camera in my lipstick. A tiny camera for close ups on the ridges of my lips. They bugged every corner of our little home. Little lenses in the blades of your razors. Between Paine's blades of fur. They wanted to know if terrorism was in the sewers, and they went down our toilet to find out.

SNOWDEN: I thought it would change. Under Obama. But things change *now*, right?

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: (*a raised eyebrow*) …do they…?

SNOWDEN: *Do they?*

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY stands. Maybe she's leaving…

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: Where are your keys?

He comes towards her, soft, exposed.

SNOWDEN: Nononononono, *please*, let me hold your *hands*.

He's not touching her but he's so close.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: Eddie. Eddie Spaghetti. How many times have I told you? Keep an eye on your car ke—

Strobes. SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY walks off. SNOWDEN watches her go. When the strobes stop, SNOWDEN is holding the armful of tubes of paint from the desk, with a helpless look on his face.

SNOWDEN: Our little yoga room…did she paint it…the same color as the dishwater in the sink…or like the sun did it…hurt to look at?

A beat.

SNOWDEN: I can't remember.

Lights out on him. Image onscreen of a lovely garden, an open window, a light breeze. Perhaps the bright paint coloring of the room does in fact hurt to look at.

LINDSAY enters in yoga clothes, unrolls a mat, and goes into downward dog.

LINDSAY: The image and its opposite: bright eyes in eager conversation, belly laughs, and bare shoulders. Versus. One of three button-down plaid shirts, a hairstyle always overdue for a cut, and an almost somber, internal reflection, bordering on an academic exploration of pathos. Imagine us at a party. Then there were fewer parties. Then there were none. Then I started going everywhere alone. Until I was completely alone.

She rises from her pose, takes out her cell phone and types. Within the projection, a box containing a blog called LS JOURNEY *appears. As LINDSAY types, her words are typed onscreen.*

A sad day for lost love. My love grew wings and flew very far away. Too bad that's all I can--

Strobes. LINDSAY takes her mat and exits. SWISS BANKER rises as though never drunk and, puts on a wig a la Samuel Adams. He takes the beer bottle SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY left behind and raises it high.

Strobes stop.

The projection abruptly shifts. We see the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place podiums for the Sam Adams Beer Awards. SNOWDEN is illuminated, standing helplessly where we left him, still holding the tubes of paint.

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR: And the winner of the Sam Adams Brew-a-like Award is……Eddie Spaghetti!

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR crosses to SNOWDEN, lifts his hand high, and drags him into the scene. The paint tubes fall. The crowd cheers. The projection shows balloons dropping. SAM ADAMS REENACTOR tries to yank SNOWDEN up on the desk. SNOWDEN awkwardly climbs. He's confused and ill-prepared.

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR climbs up on the chair. He suddenly has a mic which he talks into.

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR: *Telltelltelltell*TELL us…HOW…did you get your beer to taste *so similar* to my famous concoction?

He thrusts the mic into SNOWDEN's face.

SNOWDEN: I…I, uh…

The mic screeches feedback.

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR: The *secret ingredients*. How did you know?

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR is waiting for SNOWDEN to address the crowd. SNOWDEN is too confused.

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR: Did you taste the lips of MY brewmaster?

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR grabs SNOWDEN's face with his hand and squishes it into a 'fish mouth'.

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR: Did you use the analytical elements of the tongue to break down the remnants from the fibers around his mouth? *How*, without knowing the ingredients, did you get your beer so *identical* to mine?

SNOWDEN is trying to speak but SAM ADAMS REENACTOR has a tight grip on his face. He releases it. SNOWDEN rubs his jaw and again goes to speak but SAM ADAMS REENACTOR grabs SNOWDEN's nose. SNOWDEN lets out an "AGGH."

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR: *TELL TELL TELL!* Did you not place a camera inside my brewmaster's nostril? And when the camera gave him a nosebleed, did he not sneeze out that camera into a vat of barley? And did he not blow on his whistle long and loud because he could see every ounce of his livelihood being encroached upon by dark, dark forces?

SNOWDEN: I never wanted to hurt anyone.

He releases SNOWDEN's nose.

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR: Let's present Mr. Snowden with his first-place trophy!

SNOWDEN: I don't want a trophy.

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR: But you wanted to be first. You wanted people to have something and you wanted to be the first one to give it to them.

A white spot hits just to the side of where SNOWDEN is standing. The outer world sharply pauses, goes black and quiet. SNOWDEN steps into the spot. The following words appear onscreen as

SNOWDEN says them. They are written over the image of the podiums.

SNOWDEN: (*actual quote*) *No, I realized…every other person sitting around the table had the same capability I had but they didn't do it. So somebody had to be the first.*

The spot fades. The words fade. SNOWDEN takes the two steps back to where he was. The world returns.

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR: And who elected you, Mr. Spaghetti, to be the breaker of big silences?

The spot hits just to SNOWDEN'S left again. He steps into it again. This time he takes the mic.

SNOWDEN: (*actual quote*) *Dianne Feinstein elected me when she asked softball questions in committee hearings. Mike Rogers elected me when he kept these programs hidden. The FISA court elected me when they decided to legislate from the bench on things that were far beyond the mandate of what that court was ever intended to do.*

SNOWDEN takes his two steps, hands the mic back. World resumes.

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR: Every country can now brew my beer, Mr. Snowden.

SNOWDEN challenges.

SNOWDEN: …maybe that's a good thing…

The crowd boos. A tense moment. SAM ADAMS REENACTOR quiets them.

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR: LS Journey. Am I right?

SNOWDEN stares hard at SAM ADAMS REENACTOR who climbs down from the chair.

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR: Dot com. LS Journey dot com, Right?

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR goes to the door.

SAM ADAMS REENACTOR: That's Lindsay's blog? Naked yoga blog? Nice picks. Nice tits. You guys just bought a new home, right? I'm pretty sure I could find it. If I had to.

He's gone.

The projection goes with him. We are back in the airport utility room.

SNOWDEN climbs down and blows on his hands. He checks the phone. Nothing. He holds it high and hopes for bars. Nothing. He takes a deep breath, picks up the fallen paint tubes, and exits into the smaller room.

After a moment, STAPLER peeks his head out. Once he knows it's okay…

STAPLER: Cat?

No response.

STAPLER: *Cat!*

Silence.

STAPLER: I think I remember something about your house.

CAT emerges. STAPLER is jazzed.

STAPLER: Lamp table! You told me. Only spot to see out the basement window. And the sunlight changing on the street told you the one stable thing was what you were standing on.

A small blurry image of a lamp table appears onscreen within the image of the utility room. CAT leaps up on the desk chair to get a better view.

STAPLER: Close up on a window? Where *you* were the fixed point and it was the world that was woozy. Maybe…you could paint that?

The lamp table becomes slightly clearer, in sharper focus. CAT can almost make it out. He leans in, eyes wide with wonder. He reaches a paw out to touch it. He nearly does.

Then…

Strobes rip apart SNOWDEN's room. The lamp table vanishes. CAT is devastated, paws at the missing image.

SNOWDEN is painting furiously.

SNOWDEN: Lindsay in two-dimensional form, Lindsay buried deep within an event horizon, Lindsay *appears* to be three-dimensional

when hit by light – but what light source is hitting her? I mean, there's *got* to be a light source. It's a hologram, right?

CAT desperately wants to make the image reappear. He goes up on his hind legs, leans against the projection, stares hard, and talks directly to the screen as if it might answer.

CAT: What color WAS the table? Black?

CAT and STAPLER stare at the screen. Nothing.

SNOWDEN: Not the sun. That'slikethat'slike saying a 60 watt bulb in a desk lamp of a FIVE HUNDRED MILLION room mansion can light the whole mansion, inside and out.

STAPLER wants to help, suggests something to the screen.

STAPLER: Wasn't it the chocolate brown of a Labrador you once saw?

They stare with hopeful eyes.

SNOWDEN: (*a new thought*) Is Lindsay's *hair* the light? Golden follicles, mapping the way forward? (*flipping through a book*) Because these guys are saying a light source isn't necessary to get at the information and that…can't be right…

The lamp table doesn't return. CAT gives up, turns to STAPLER.

CAT: (*verge of tears*) I want to go home.

STAPLER: (*deeply; with a sigh*) I don't think. My cat friend. You have a home anymore.

The cell phone rings. Lights out on SNOWDEN.

CAT jumps, STAPLER backs away.

The phone rings again. They hide.

The projection shifts to a stately governmental boardroom.

A WOMAN steps onstage. She's older, a graying-blonde boxy bob cut on her head. She's wearing an unflattering green power pants suit. She goes to the desk, picks up the phone and answers.

WOMAN: (*German accent, on the phone throughout*) Hallo? Yah, Nun, wenn die Griechen denken, sie bekommen etwas von uns außer einem festen Händedruck, sind sie so verwirrt wie ihre Haare

schneidet. (*Well, if the Greeks think they get something from us except a firm handshake, they are as confused as their haircuts.*)

She laughs. She listens.

WOMAN: Why would I be afraid to say it in English? America may wave goodbye to Europe with one hand, but the other is like a child, begging mommy to come approve of its mess.

A spotlight hits SNOWDEN's father, LON SNOWDEN, illuminating him from darkness. He's wearing a suit, his hair is gray, and he's sporting a mobster's crew cut. He's a hard man. He chomps a half-smoked cigar and talks on a cell phone.

LON SNOWDEN: (*on the phone throughout*) He learned Portuguese from listening to the cleaning woman. He counted to a hundred and got a room full of adults to give him a standing ovation on his first birthday. And he knew right from wrong in the *womb*.

WOMAN: (*shaking her head*) The Greeks. They want too much. They should have known. From *birth* they should have known.

LON SNOWDEN: …and even if I knew, why would I tell *you?*

WOMAN: Why would we disclose that? No, no. We keep our cards to the vest. Tell them—

LON SNOWDEN: I don't *care* what you tell them. Don't tell them anything.

WOMAN: Tell them only what they need to know.

A horrible static screeching blasts the audience and characters. Everyone onstage covers their ears. This is "the sound."

It's gone.

In a single motion, they all move past the sound as though they never heard it.

LON's cigar is now whole, unlit. He goes to light it and puff but…

LON SNOWDEN: (*hearing for the first time*) Russia? *Where* in Russia?

WOMAN: (*pacing*) …and *who* has been reading them? Why can't you give me *names?*

LON SNOWDEN: I'm sure he had a reason for doing it. He has a reason for doing everything!

WOMAN: They have been reading my emails! What have they *read?*

SNOWDEN emerges from his room. He looks haggard. He watches.

LON SNOWDEN: You want my statement, this is my statement: I intend to provide every effort to aid my son and make every allowance for him to have a comfortable--

WOMAN: (*suppressing outrage*) How is it that the Chancellor of Germany cannot so much as disclose a family recipe to a dear friend on the phone without her every move being scrutinized by the United --

The sound blasts the characters again. Ear-covering, eyes shut tight. After the sound, the same seamless moving on as though nothing happened.

MERKEL: Happy birthday, honey! You are my – oh, that's *lovely* – you are my favorite niece. How does *that* sound? Did your mommy give you the gift I sent?

LON SNOWDEN: (*huge grin, no cigar, putting on his suit coat*) 7 lbs, 9 ounces! A bouncing baby boy. Little Eddie. Edward. Where's my cigar?

He slaps at his pockets.

The sound again, the actions.

MERKEL: (*a wholly different tone, she fingers her necklace*) Hello, my love. I miss your smell. Your scent. Get here soon, please.

LON SNOWDEN is unwrapping a new cigar from its plastic.

LON SNOWDEN: No, no. He's only got mono. He'll graduate. Just not with his class. So what?

The sound, the actions.

MERKEL: (*with finality*) And so they have heard me speak in low tones to my loved ones. They have heard me share endless confidences with Greece's president. They have heard my nighttime sighs and whispers. I feel as though my beliefs have been invaded.

LON's cigar is nearly finished, splitting, chewed to hell. The suit jacket is gone.

LON SNOWDEN: (*for the millionth time*) So, what, my secret chili recipe? They've heard when to put in the paprika? Is that supposed to be alarming?

He listens intently.

LON SNOWDEN: (*for the first time*) …well, what else did they *hear*, then…?

The sound. MERKEL is gone. LON SNOWDEN takes out a long fake beard and a green, military head wrap. He puts them on. He resembles images of Taliban soldiers. The cigar is gone.

LON SNOWDEN WITH BEARD AND SCARF: (*either a good Arabic accent or a terrible one*) …facilities are scattered in the mountains. I won't say more over the phone.

SNOWDEN steps forward.

SNOWDEN: …dad…?

LON SNOWDEN WITH BEARD AND SCARF: It's all a game of circles. They trade our allies weapons for oil, our allies give us the weapons, we use those weapons against them, and they use their oil to come after us.

CAT: What language is he speaking?

SNOWDEN: Pashtun. It's a mountain language. Born from borders. *Dad?*

LON SNOWDEN WITH BEARD AND SCARF: (*delightedly*) Their venom is poisoning their own attack.

CAT: He's not your dad. Maybe he's…someone *like* your dad?

LON SNOWDEN WITH BEARD AND SCARF: I'll be in the Durand next week with- (*the connection is breaking up, he speaks up*) *I'll be in the Durand next we—*

An explosion rocks the theatre. When the dust clears, LON SNOWDEN WITH BEARD AND SCARF is gone.

A voice over the intercom, American accent.

VOICE: In international news, a high-ranking Taliban official's death has been confirmed in the borderland area between Pakistan and Afghanistan known as The Durand. The drone strike hit a crowded market place. The initial report of civilian casualties is high, and the toll is expected to climb.

The projection shifts -- it tells us we are back in the utility room.

A TV-sized box within the projection pops up. It's the Russian equivalent of CNN. The VOICE we just heard is now talking through the "TV", though it's speaking Russian and the volume is too low for us to hear. Russian words and graphics scroll onscreen.

STAPLER pops up, opens a desk drawer, pulls out a remote and mutes the TV.

STAPLER: The tapping worked. They got their man.

SNOWDEN: (*sick about it*) One hundred thirty seven civilian deaths.

SNOWDEN is overwhelmed and slumps with his palms flat on the desk.

CAT: (*really trying*) Well. It might not have happened. It might have happened…somewhere…but it might not have happened…in *this* somewhere. Right?

STAPLER: You can't worry about *all* the somewheres.

CAT: Eddie. What is that?

CAT points to the utility room's window. A large black hole is visible.

SNOWDEN: It's a black cloud. An electrical storm.

CAT: I'm scared. I've been throwing up so much. I threw up bile.

SNOWDEN pets his cat. Both are trying not to come apart at the seams.

SNOWDEN: I know, buddy. I'm sorry.

CAT looks at its master with watery eyes.

CAT: (*gently but firmly*) Why did you *do* this?

SNOWDEN considers processing this, then pushes the thought far away. He crosses to the window and looks out at the snow. STAPLER has seen enough, and with the remote, turns off the "TV". SNOWDEN goes to turn off the lights.

CAT: Eddie, I'm *sick.*

The lights go out. Through the window, we see the black cloud, and around it, trying to creep through, are rays of moonlight reflecting off of snow, and airport lights. It's still rather dark.

A desk drawer opens. A flashlight pops on. SNOWDEN sets it on the desk and does shadow puppets on the window. His fingers become menacing forces, trying to capture the electrical cloud.

SNOWDEN: It's a cloud of information. Gravity swoops in, sucks all the pertinent info to the periphery, and holds it there. The question is, what does it *do* with the information?

CAT: *Eddie…*

He turns the flashlight on CAT. CAT squints.

SNOWDEN: Can we use it to calibrate our compasses to universal north? Nope. No such thing. More digging, fewer answers, more questions.

He turns the light to the wall and has his fingers dance on it.

SNOWDEN: For instance: am I the fixed object, the flickering candle, or simply the shadow dancing on the wall?

CAT: I'm *dying* and I think you should care about that.

The flashlight flickers and goes out. We hear a desk drawer open. Fumbling.

SNOWDEN: You're not dying.

CAT: Eddie, you don't really love me.

In the dim light, we see SNOWDEN fiddle with the flashlight and some small objects.

SNOWDEN: (*hurt*) What? Of course I do. Who showed you the patch of sun that cut up the living room rug in the afternoon? Who taught you how to stop yourself from sliding on the marble counter top?

The flashlight flickers back on. SNOWDEN changed the batteries. This time SNOWDEN's fingers are dancing along the finger painting on the wall. His fingers climb the tree, jump from its branches, etc.

SNOWDEN: (*he admits*) Lindsay was good with you. Better than me. More than anything I have ever wished for, I wish she was here.

CAT: You could have left me with her! With the marble, with the rug. But your gravity dragged me with you.

SNOWDEN's fingers caress the tree trunk.

SNOWDEN: C'mon, don't do that…

CAT: And now all my information is stuck to the sides of you. Of this place. You know everything about me and so you know *I'm sick.*

SNOWDEN flips the flashlight off and the lights back on. He sets the flashlight on the desk. Refusing to stay in that emotional place, he pushes forward.

SNOWDEN: Riiiiight, and what if you wanted to *hide* that information? What if you needed it kept *private?* Now it's frozen to the wallpaper in here and circulating through the vents. I breathe in, and I know all your secrets. Does that seem right??

The silent "TV" video within the projection turns back on. This time, SNOWDEN is giving a press conference.

STAPLER looks at the remote like "I didn't do that. How the hell did that just happen?"

SNOWDEN points.

SNOWDEN: See?!?! There's a 2-D version of me. I'm information, pulled into particles and blasted through cables for anyone in the *world* to see…

STAPLER: *You* aren't. Only the image of you.

SNOWDEN: Well, in this version it's my image. In another version, who knows?

STAPLER: (*looking at the video*) You don't seem like you want to be giving this interview.

SNOWDEN: I'm a private person. I did a very public thing but that doesn't mean I enjoyed it.

He's sick to death of seeing himself on TV. He takes the remote and tries to turn it off. The remote does nothing. He smacks it and tries again. Nothing. He takes the batteries out, sets it on the desk, and begins to rummage through the desk for more batteries, which he does not find.

SNOWDEN: Listen, I'll get Ben to make a cat food run. We'll get you proper wet food and some litter and you'll feel better.

Rummaging.

SNOWDEN: OK?

Silence. He turns back.

SNOWDEN: Paine?

CAT is gone. A note is in his place. SNOWDEN turns to see the note, illuminated by a small, white spot.

He goes to the note and looks at it.

He reads.

SNOWDEN: Eddie, you were my best friend. Not the tree in the front yard. Not Lindsay. You. You were the person I was contented to spend the rest of my life with. I wasn't just a cat and you weren't just my owner. We were bonded. Fused together like the basic elements of existence. But. *But*, Eddie. And but is a hard word when you only live to be ten. But. You chose something over me. You neglected me and I got very sick and thin and died.

SNOWDEN tries not to cry.

SNOWDEN: (*reading*) But don't cry. Now I am everywhere. I will live forever in your skin – dander on dander. Breathe and breathe me in. Like the particles you love so much. Don't be sad you didn't feed me, Eddie. Just remember to feed yourself.

SNOWDEN holds up the inside of the card for STAPLER to see.

SNOWDEN: (*his heart breaks*) Finger paint.

SNOWDEN slumps.

STAPLER: I'm sorry.

SNOWDEN: I killed my best friend.

STAPLER: You didn't kill him.

SNOWDEN: I let him die.

STAPLER: Maybe.

The projection shifts. SNOWDEN and his utility room, along with the TV press conference, for the moment die away.

Image onscreen of a lovely garden, an open window, a light breeze. Perhaps the bright paint coloring of the room still hurts to look at.

LINDSAY enters in yoga clothes. Instead of unrolling a yoga mat, she plants a stripper pole onstage and shows off some sick moves.

LINDSAY: It only took a minute and eighteen seconds and his eyes were scrunched tight. *He* had seen me. *He* had run his fingers over every inch of me. Swedish hills and valleys, he said. But once my nipples were laid bare? The *instant* my sacredness – his word -- was made public, he scrunched his eyes. My Youtube, my Instagram, my taut human frame as spatial ART, exploring its physical horizons, and Eddie with his scrunched eyes on my couch, doing the naked math.

She climbs off the pole.

LINDSAY: And all he would say is *your hands, I love your hands*. We never fought about it, and of course I kept doing it. But I heard him. I got it. Some things we want just for us.

LINDSAY starts to walk coolly out of the scene. She's nearly offstage when she's yanked by something, ripped and pulled backward. Something starting very far away but tied ultimately to the middle of LINDSAY's back.

It hooks and digs in.

Against her own will, LINDSAY puts on a traditional, bright sarong. Against her own will, she takes out a cane. Against her own will, she puts on a Tibetan animal mask, half-red, half-yellow, striped down the center, and in the exaggerated form of a yak.

Simultaneously: the projection of the garden begins to change. The pole vanishes and the room takes on an ancient feel. The bricks in the earth split slightly, crack and grow moss. The window becomes overgrown with vines. When it's finished, light sounds of birds.

An unseen cat meows. As it does, SNOWDEN comes to life from the blackness of the previous scene and enters this one.

SNOWDEN: (*whipping around*) *Paine?*

The meow becomes metallic, electronic, an echo. It reverberates, mixes with static, fizzles out.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST extends a cane to SNOWDEN.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST: (*the voice is gentle, also electronic, from everywhere)* Here. For your legs.

SNOWDEN: Do you have my cat?

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST: Have they healed from your training accident?

SNOWDEN: Training? Oh, from…*basic training?*

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST: (*nodding*) They're badly broken.

SNOWDEN: Nonono, they healed years ago. I couldn't go to Afghanistan, I had to be discharged, but I don't need a cane. Do you have my cat?

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST: Your cat is light, Edward. Your cat is pure light.

SNOWDEN: Is this because I checked Buddhist on the military form? They didn't have agnostic. They made me check *some*thing.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST: It should give you comfort to know he's a member of endlessly streaming particles. He cannot get sick now.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST again extends the cane.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST: Come, I am taking you to the Sangha.

SNOWDEN: No, I'm not interested in meeting anyone. I want my cat. And if I can't have him, I want to gather all the particles I can and make him again.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST: I have a broom for you. You will sweep the leaves beneath my Bodhi Tree. Until your legs are strong.

SNOWDEN: My legs healed *years* ago.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST: And you will use those legs to spread the message that every country is just an extension of the same patch of land. Come.

SNOWDEN: Look. I believe in *some*thing, I think. I'm a fairly secular person, but—

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST holds up a single finger. It stops SNOWDEN.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST: There is a point. Where your science and our beliefs collide.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST goes to the projection and runs that raised finger along the image of leaves of one of the garden's trees.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST: You call it a zenith point. The further you stretch your calculations, the more they meet our simplest forms.

Her finger rests on a green leaf.

SNOWDEN: I'm *not a Buddhist. I just checked a box.*

She plucks the leaf from the screen and it becomes real in her fingers. She holds up the leaf for SNOWDEN to see.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST: Do not close your eyes to the connectedness of all things.

SNOWDEN: (*losing his cool*) *Close my eyes?* When I close my eyes I see a bloody revolution in the street. I see my face on a poster taped to the wall of a burned out building. And the last person scribbled out traitor and wrote patriot. And the *last* last person wrote traitor in blood. I try not to close my eyes.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST produces a small paper house, car, and television, holds them in her upturned palms.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST: A house, a car, a television. The trappings of modern life. But these are made of Joss paper. Food for hungry ghosts. You look hungry, Mr. Snowden.

SNOWDEN: Sure. Maybe you could try and find my lawyer?

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST places each item carefully on the desk.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST: Their hunger, their emptiness is what weighs them. From deeds on earth, they hang on thin strings between this world and the next. Sound familiar? Burn these. Pay tribute. Unlock souls.

SNOWDEN: *Tribute? How much more tribute can one man pay??*

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST smiles. Fair enough.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST: Seek out a tree, Mr. Snowden. And sweep it with strong legs. Until you find your cat in light.

LINDSAY AS BUDDHIST PRIEST steps out of that world and vanishes.

An image of a rustic broom -- carved from ancient wood, with coarse branches acting as bristles -- appears onscreen in the garden. SNOWDEN goes to the image.

Determined not to be deflated, SNOWDEN raises a single finger a la the monk, hopes this'll work, then touches the image of the broom. The broom becomes real in his hands. He's pleased.

A projection of a Bodhi Tree appears. SNOWDEN goes to sweep but realizes he has nothing for his broom to gather. He picks up items from the desk (pens, pencils, staples, crumpled papers etc.) as well as the Joss paper items, and with some flair, tosses them high in the air. Strobes. They explode from his hands, falling everywhere like a ticker-tape parade. Strobes stop. He begins to gently sweep the items into a pile.

SNOWDEN: A monk is taking a walking meditation through the countryside. He comes upon a frog who cannot croak. The frog begs the monk to heal him but the monk tells the frog he is not inferior, he is already healed. The frog tries with all his might to croak but still cannot. The monk then comes upon three men: one with no arms, one no feet, one no eyes. The man with no arms says, help me monk, I cannot touch the stars. The one with no feet says, help me monk, I cannot follow the northern star. The one with no eyes says, help me monk, I cannot see to reach out and grab the twinkling stars in the sky. The monk looks to each of them and says, you will see better without your eyes,

grasp better without your arms, and follow better without your feet. The men are puzzled but hear the frog trying to croak from a nearby creek. He only chokes. The men rush to the frog and begin to croak for him. Four arms lift the frog towards heaven. Four feet now carry the frog towards any star it wishes. And four eyes will guide them home. The monk smiles, for he knows that through the budding trees, the wind whispers, no such thing born of ancient dust is independent from another.

As he finishes sweeping, he places the items from his pile including the Joss paper neatly back on the desk. He holds the Joss house up and takes a moment to admire it.

SNOWDEN: (*to CAT and STAPLER, wherever they're hiding*) I've always been fascinated by the east. Especially Japan. I showed Lindsay pictures of a little town at the top of the Kiso Mountains and she said she could see herself--

A pounding on the door. Utility room projection reappears and within it, the TV press conference with SNOWDEN plays on.

MALE VOICE: (*muffled shouting*)

SNOWDEN takes a step towards the door.

The door is flung open. The same burst of white light hits him.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN enters wearing a man's suit and tie, juggling apples.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN: *JEEEEEsus*, Ed, there's a black cloud out there from horizon to horizon.

The door snaps shut and the light goes with it.

SNOWDEN: Ben?

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN: I'm gettin *real* tired of this, buddy. You got a loooot of people jumpin through a loooot of hoops.

SNOWDEN: I'm *sorry.* I didn't think *this* would happen. I didn't KNOW what would happen!

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN: Yea, well, listen. Putin, fucking *Putin himself*, wants you at a press conference. Now.

SNOWDEN looks at his face on-screen.

SNOWDEN: Wait…*that* press conference?

The punishing sound returns. The pair clasps their hands over their ears and shut their eyes tight.

When the sound fades, the apples are in the fruit basket on the desk. SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN is juggling knives.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN: That was bad, Ed. That was bad. I'll take the heat for this one. How did I miss it? Thethethethe—ya know, from a *distance*, I can see how that looked. But we don't have the benefit of distance. We're being held in chains right in the middle of the thing.

SNOWDEN: The press conference is over? We gave it *again?*

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN: The *last* thing the US wanted was a smiling photo op with the country's most notorious information leaker and Putin. How did I *miss* that?

SNOWDEN: (*his mind working as fast as it can*) Well, let's control the story. What's done is done. Let's dole out information at *our* pace. Right?

The sound, the actions.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN tosses the knives high. They come crashing to the ground. The metal clanging is awful. The lights strobe on impact. SNOWDEN is mesmerized by the crazy reflections bouncing from the blades. He watches the light dance before crossing to the knives.

Just as SNOWDEN is kneeling down to touch them, SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN whips around, pulls him towards her, and clasps SNOWDEN's face with both hands. The strobes stop as SNOWDEN is thrown back into this world.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN: OK, kid. You ready? Your first big press event. Through that door, OK? Through that door it all lies. Some bizarre combo of the forest and the trees, the grains of sand and the whole beach. Give Putin a firm shake. You only make one first impression. And try not to let the flashes tear your eyes out of their sockets.

SNOWDEN looks terrified. SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY as BEN takes a breath and properly softens.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN: Hey, WE have the information. The upper hand. It's all glued to the sides of your brain and only your brain. OK? You're a distant light shining on endless black space. Get in there. Paint the canvas.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN shoves SNOWDEN into the hungry white light. The door snaps shut behind him.

She watches him go, takes a breath, and loosens the tie. She removes the suit jacket. She's no longer Ben. She confides in the closed door.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN: I'm tired, Eddie. I'm so tired.

The TV image of SNOWDEN at the press conference continues to play, on mute. SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY watches a moment.

She gets out her phone and types. In another box within the projection, the LS Journey *blog returns, and the words* "That's where I found him. In Russia on TV" *appear as SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY types them.*

While she types, she says the words out loud.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: That's…where…I…found…him…In…Russia…on…TV.

She puts down the phone, and simply speaks the words.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: No yoga for me. Sorry, you guys, for not posting for *months*. You understand. My stomach was too sick. With a wave of his hand, Eddie put my life on hold.

She slumps into the desk chair, exhausted.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: We just bought a house together. But there he was on the screen. Hours before, it seemed, lying next to me, mumbling in his sleep nervously about the nightmares of the day, maybe, and then gone. Then nothing but a noticeable absence. Then much later, in Russia, on TV.

She takes the battery-less remote and pauses SNOWDEN's TV interview.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY: And all I could think was, give me a *reason.* I mean, not necessarily an answer, but a reason. Why. But I knew Eddie. I knew the reason. *I* just wasn't the reason. And that's what hurt.

She picks up her phone and types in the LS JOURNEY *blog box. Her words appear onscreen:*

And here I am still, confiding my deepest secrets in a glowing box full of strangers.

The sound, the actions. The screen is blank.

She's wearing the suit jacket, tie pulled up tight. She grabs an apple from the basket. She's Ben again.

She checks her watch.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN: OK. Timeta go. Where's Ed? Probably nervous as hell to meet Putin.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY AS BEN takes a big, noisy bite of apple and exits.

Against the projection's bright-white background, an anime version of SNOWDEN appears -- big, round eyes, lively hair. Poised in an action pose, the streaks around him indicating movement are like animated lightning. Intense rock n roll anime action music plays.

ANIME SNOWDEN looks keenly around.

ANIME SNOWDEN: Amarini mo ōku no jigen. Amarini mo ōku no kakure basho. Watashi no yūjin wa doko ni arimasu ka?

Subtitles read "Too many dimensions. Too many hiding places. Where is my friend?"

Suddenly, two small-but-growing balls of pure white light appear on-screen. ANIME SNOWDEN sees them.

ANIME SNOWDEN: Koko demo? Komatta monodesu. Jibun jishin o shikibetsu shimasu. Teki mikata?

Subtitles read "Even here? Sheesh. Identify yourself. Friend or foe?"

The balls of light advance on ANIME SNOWDEN.

ANIME SNOWDEN: O tto! Jikan ga iku tame ni!

Subtitles read "Oops! Time to go!"

ANIME SNOWDEN takes evasive maneuvers. The music intensifies.

ANIME SNOWDEN*:* Chikadzukimasen. Watashi o nomikomu shinaide kudasai!

Subtitles read: "Stay away. Don't swallow me!"

The balls dart high and low, hanging for a moment before shooting down at SNOWDEN. They are closer.

BALLS OF LIGHT:(*shrieking*) Watashitachi wa anata no zangedesu!

Subtitles read: "We are your penitence!"

SNOWDEN darts, too. His anime-wide-eyes squint as he lunges left and right. He's trying his best to escape. He's no match. We watch ANIME SNOWDEN and the BALLS OF LIGHT dancing the dance of pursuit and evasion until -- the BALLS OF LIGHT gain on and collide with SNOWDEN. The music builds to a crescendo on collision. The screen goes all-white. Then black.

When the next image appears, it's of ANIME SNOWDEN'S CAT drifting in space. Adorable, sad, wide-eyed, alone. Lighter music.

An anime version of a modest house appears. It floats in space along with CAT. A front yard, on a sunny day. A caption reads "A Modest Home in North Carolina."

ANIME SNOWDEN's CAT begins to dig a hole in the animated earth. He's sniffing after something.

ANIME SNOWDEN'S CAT: (*talking throughout*) One time? Light tried to hide from me. It dug and dug into the earth to escape. But guess what? It wasn't light, it was a tree!

From CAT's hole, a tree begins to grow. At varying stages of height, CAT puts it in a bonnet, bottle-feeds it, burps it, takes it on a walk in a stroller, etc., talking throughout. He loves the tree. It's his baby.

ANIME SNOWDEN'S CAT: But the tree isn't always a tree. I woke up one day and it was a rosebush. Then it sounded like Lindsay crying. Then it was an idea I once had. But most of the time it's a tree and you can find me in it. It's my other best friend.

ANIME SNOWDEN'S CAT is hiding in the tree, peeking out.

ANIME SNOWDEN'S CAT: Look, Eddie! I'm in the tree in the front yard where you found me.

There is no response. The mood changes sharply. The music stops. The tree and CAT disappear. We hear the frightened CAT cry out.

ANIME SNOWDEN'S CAT: (*thick static mixing in*) *Eddie. Find me where you found me!*

The projection goes out. Darkness.

VOICE: (*Russian accent, from the intercom*) Caution: the moving walkway has ended. Caution: it's walking or nothing from here on out. Caution: an airport is a portal, not a destination. Caution: a new portal.

A fresh, white spot hits the back wall. We hear the din of an eager crowd.

VOICE: (*American accent*) Ladies and Gentlemen, recipient of the 2013 Patriot Award for integrity and ethics in the intelligence field, Edward Snowden.

Applause.

SNOWDEN enters sheepishly into the light. Flashes go off. He's dressed in all-black.

In SNOWDEN's hand is a clicker that controls the slides. We start with blankness.

SNOWDEN: Good morning. No, Mr. Putin will not be joining me today. We learned our lesson with that one. Those of you who wish to storm out can do so now.

Polite laughter.

He clicks and the screen shows the front of the Booz Allen Hamilton building where he worked and obtained a large portion of the information he leaked.

SNOWDEN: Booz Allen Hamilton. This was my office.

He clicks. The image is a closer view of one of the windows. But, a black mass looms over the building.

SNOWDEN: That was my window. You may wonder what exactly I did there. They called me various things – system admin, infrastructure analyst. Really, I was there to hack information.

He clicks. The black hole has swallowed the building.

SNOWDEN: This was my office. Imagine, the same little cubicles you sit in, I sat in. Only I had access to all your phone calls. Your emails. I could listen in on a lover's quarrel, or a dying mother's last wish.

He clicks. The earth is being swallowed.

SNOWDEN: When Obama was elected, (*he gestures to the screen*) I was hopeful. I held off. I thought, this guy isn't going to stand for the infringement. I was wrong.

He clicks. We're in the blankness of space. Distant galaxies. Darkness and light contrast.

SNOWDEN: This is National Director of Intelligence, James Clapper. In this picture he's lying under oath to Congress. That was my breaking point. I worked *for and with* this man.

He clicks. We are on the edge of a black hole. The circling planets and stars around the center are bent, elongated by gravity, and are in the process of being sucked in.

SNOWDEN: So I went to work at Booz Allen. I knew they'd give me clearance and I could collect everything I needed. And they did.

He clicks. A picture of the Snowden family: Lon, mom Wendy, sister Jessica, and 11 year-old Eddie. A caption of the picture reads "Snowden Family, 4th of July, 1994. Elizabeth City, North Carolina."

SNOWDEN: A reporter, Mark Hosenball, (*he gestures to the screen*) attempted to convince prosecutors that I persuaded colleagues to give me passwords, and help me obtain and leak information. Nope. I acted alone.

We see him set the clicker on the desk and come towards the "audience."

SNOWDEN: All I was sure of was that we had a reasonable right to privacy that was being ignored.

The image changes on its own. The black hole is visible and encroaching on the Snowden family. SNOWDEN doesn't notice.

SNOWDEN: See, information – in the elemental sense – is what defines us. It is our make-up, our essence.

The black hole is hovering over the family.

SNOWDEN: The remnants on the tips of our fingers are just as much a part of us as our blood type, who we've kissed, or what we say on the phone. And that fundamental belief is what motivated me.

The family has been swallowed. They are gone.

SNOWDEN suddenly gets a shiver. He blows on his hands.

SNOWDEN: Brrrr. It's freezing in here.

SNOWDEN looks to an unseen moderator.

SNOWDEN: Is my…is Lindsay out there? Did Lindsay make it?

The projection shifts sharply.

We see a bench beneath a bay window, and through the window, a dark gray cloud dominates the skyline. A soft rain is falling. SNOWDEN enters wearing a raincoat. He's somehow much older.

He crosses into the projection and sits on the bench. He's holding a freshly-picked rose. There's a little bowl of topsoil under the bench. SNOWDEN brings it up, and runs his hands through it, sifting it through his fingers. He then tries to place the rose in the soil in such a way as to keep it upright. But it only falls. And falls.

He sighs.

SNOWDEN: Drowning. Is the whole world drowning?

LINDSAY enters holding a large glass bowl full of rose petals floating in water. She too is wearing a raincoat. She too is older.

LINDSAY: This was all I could save. So many on the ground, already fallen.

SNOWDEN: Thirty years. We've had that rose garden thirty years.

LINDSAY: Didn't we plant it last July?

SNOWDEN: Thirty-one years.

LINDSAY: (*remembering*) Three straight July weeks on your knees. Such a strong, young back you have.

SNOWDEN: No, no. We planted it for the children and the children are as old now as we were when we planted it.

LINDSAY: (*she still doesn't quite believe it*) Oh.

LINDSAY looks at the bowl and it saddens her.

LINDSAY: Well, now it's gone. Each fallen petal, a possibility. Every un-bloomed bud, one of life's opportunities missed.

SNOWDEN: But the ones you *took* – before they fell – the ones you snatched out of the air, and kissed, and pressed to your chest, pressed between the pages of the family Bible – they're still with us. They are the residue of our lives.

LINDSAY: (*huh? US?) Bible?*

SNOWDEN: (*a shrug)* We used it to prop the coffee table up. We used it to keep the whole thing level.

LINDSAY ceremoniously sets the bowl on the floor. She stares at it.

LINDSAY: Do you think anything will grow?

SNOWDEN has been pulling the petals from his rose. He kneels down and gently adds his handful to the bowl.

SNOWDEN: If nothing grows in this house, we'll take what we have to a neighbor's. If nothing grows there, we'll be very patient, and take it all to another home with a high, firm table near the sun. Somewhere is the right combination for life.

He steps back to admire his contribution. She looks out the window.

LINDSAY: It's raining so hard. Maybe nothing grows again.

SNOWDEN: If not the front yard, maybe the back.

The light in the room -- and LINDSAY with it -- take on an eerie glow.

LINDSAY: Edward. This torrent of information you wish to spill on fallow ground may not be a life raft, but the flood itself.

SNOWDEN again kneels over the bowl, this time using the water to wash the topsoil off his hands. His knees ache.

SNOWDEN: I have considered what I am capable of considering.

LINDSAY: How will you feel in, say, thirty years' time?

SNOWDEN: It's *been* thirty years.

LINDSAY: How do you feel?

SNOWDEN: Like I had no choice.

LINDSAY: When the garden is gone?

SNOWDEN: The garden *is* gone.

LINDSAY: How do you feel?

SNOWDEN: Like I had no choice.

LINDSAY: When the children are grown?

SNOWDEN: The children ARE grown.

LINDSAY: (*really pressing*) *And how do you feel, Eddie?*

SNOWDEN: (*pressing back*) *I had no choice.*

The eeriness gets eerier. Electronic sounds swell in the distance.

LINDSAY: (*genuinely*) Did we get married? I'm not sure we ever got married.

He wipes his hands on his pants and achingly stands.

SNOWDEN: What, you're mad??

LINDSAY: On our wedding day, you called my phone from a noisy airport. *Hello*, I said at the altar, *what language are you speaking?*

SNOWDEN: You *encouraged* me to do it! Why does that part *always* get forgotten?

LINDSAY: (*realizing*) We never had children, did we.

SNOWDEN: (*how many times has he said this?*) YOU never sat around that table. YOU never stared into those blank faces. If it wasn't me, Lindsay, it may have been NObody.

The projection flickers in and out.

LINDSAY: (*remembering*) And you left and a web developer put my needs front-and-center for a change.

The projection is breaking up.

SNOWDEN: Don't do that. That's not *fair*. That's not FAIR, Lindsay.

The door bursts open. The white light blinds. It hits the back wall, creating a bright spot. The bay window world vanishes.

Circus music is heard in the background throughout the scene.

LINDSAY slips off her raincoat to reveal a formal gown. If her hair was up, she lets it down.

A MAN enters through the door. He's rolling a magician's wheel onstage. LINDSAY (as WOMAN) meets him as though they came in together. They are humming with aggressive energy. They are English.

They sing the famous circus clown music that goes "Doot doot doodle oodle doot doot doo doo…" (The Entry of the Gladiators by Fucik)

LINDSAY (as WOMAN) helps MAN roll the wheel onstage. They position it along the back wall, directly in the spot, as they sing. SNOWDEN steps into the spot. He's wearing all-black again, and not the raincoat. He's no longer older. He stands, frozen from fear and confusion. They rush him, grab his wrists and ankles, and strap him in.

MAN: (*hooking SNOWDEN to the wheel*)
When was the last time you were
at the circus, Mr. Snowden?
Let's get him strapped in!
Arms and legs inside the vehicle!

WOMAN:
Welcome to the big top, my
Boy! You're the star of
the show! That's it, strap
him in nice and tight.

They finish strapping SNOWDEN in.

MAN:
There, now. Theeeerrre now.
Circulation OK? Pardon our
Outfits. We were pulled away
from an event.

WOMAN:
Comfortable, Mr. Snowden?
Do you like my gown?

WOMAN: We are well aware this is not a *traditional* circus act where you're from. But, when in Rome, yes? All set?

MAN gives the wheel a good spin. SNOWDEN shuts his eyes tight and grits his teeth.

MAN AND WOMAN: (*circus song*) *Doot doot doodle oodle doot doot doo doo…*

WOMAN picks up the fallen knives from earlier, and places them methodically on the desk. MAN stops the wheel sharply. SNOWDEN is upside down.

MAN: This is Ethel. She's a specialist in these matters.

MAN spins SNOWDEN upright.

MAN: Ethel is not her real name, of course.

NOT ETHEL holds up one of the knives. It gleams in the light. She then marks out her paces from the wheel. SNOWDEN watches, terrified. When she's at the proper distance, she loosens her elbow, stares hard at her target, mimes a perfect throw, and readies herself.

MAN: Don't worry, Mr. Snowden. This is a simple question and answer session. You're quite used to those, if I'm correct?

MAN spins the wheel hard. Poor SNOWDEN.

MAN: State your imya.

SNOWDEN: (*twirling*) *What??*

MAN: State your *name.*

SNOWDEN: Edward.

NOT ETHEL throws a knife at SNOWDEN. It sticks hard in the wheel and nearly misses him.

MAN: Country of allegiance?

SNOWDEN: That was my name!

MAN: Which country do you *affiliate* yourself with?

SNOWDEN: I don't have one.

NOT ETHEL throws another knife. Same. SNOWDEN winces.

MAN: What time period, other than your own, would you most like to visit?

SNOWDEN: *What??*

MAN: (*as though he's repeating himself*) If you could be any animal, which would it *be?*

SNOWDEN: I don't know!

NOT ETHEL throws another knife. MAN turns up the heat.

MAN: *Did your cat climb to heaven on the tree in your front yard? Or did YOU cut it down before he got the chance?*

NOT ETHEL cocks back to throw another knife.

SNOWDEN: (*near tears*) Please…*stop!!!!!*

MAN stops the wheel hard. SNOWDEN jolts. NOT ETHEL stands poised to throw. SNOWDEN has tears in his eyes and is panting. MAN spins him upright.

MAN: Are these questions too mindless for you, Mr. Snowden?

SNOWDEN: …I didn't mean to hurt anyone…

NOT ETHEL, holding a knife, comes close to SNOWDEN and gets eye-level with him.

NOT ETHEL: (*as if patronizing a slow child*) Do you know what it's like, to listen helplessly to the terrified phone messages of Her Majesty's special forces agents, hiding in a closet, *literally* pissing themselves from fear, expecting to be executed, *because some goddamn American hacker fool decided to play SHERIFF??*

The knife is near SNOWDEN's throat.

SNOWDEN: …I'm *sorry…*

SNOWDEN closes his eyes.

MAN: But the thing is: you're *not*, are you?

SNOWDEN breathes.

SNOWDEN: (*almost inaudible)* No.

MAN is sweating. He wipes his brow. He then wipes SNOWDEN's brow, and pushes the sweaty hair from SNOWDEN's sweaty forehead.

MAN: Pardon the inane questions. It's been a busy couple of days. Perhaps I'll dig at something more towards the *meat*. Given what you've already *admitted* to, I wonder, Mr. Snowden, just what would prevent us, from –

MAN shoves SNOWDEN's hand flat against the wheel. He holds SNOWDEN's wrist in place, and spreads SNOWDEN's fingers out wide. SNOWDEN struggles but is locked tight.

MAN: -- *cutting off your thieving little fingers???*

NOT ETHEL draws back the blade.

SNOWDEN: *OH GOD PLEASE DON'T*

NOT ETHEL hacks at SNOWDEN's fingers. Nearly misses. SNOWDEN screams. She wrenches the blade out.

NOT ETHEL: (*with venom*) We were nearly in Putin's *phone* you little fucker!

MAN: Are you left-handed or right-handed? Just kidding, we know.

Hack. Near miss. SNOWDEN screams.

SNOWDEN: OH GOD STOP

They stop. NOT ETHEL wrenches out the blade. They happily step back and watch SNOWDEN pant and cry as though this is all they came for.

When they've had their fill, they unstrap him. SNOWDEN falls hard and crumples into a heap on the floor. He lies in the blinding circus spot, crying softly.

SNOWDEN: …oh, *Paine*…your little, happy eyes…Lindsay's blond fur…*Paaaaaaine…*

NOT ETHEL and MAN stand over the crumpled SNOWDEN.

NOT ETHEL straightens MAN's tux.

MAN: We have to get back.

MAN straightens NOT ETHEL's dress, she fixes herself.

NOT ETHEL: You're a lucky little fucker, Snowden. In this version? Where your Benedict hands are clenched and your Arnold feet are shaking? You stay in one piece. The Snowden next door – or wherever he is – in the next whatever -- *that* Snowden? They feed him to pigs.

As the English officers go to the door, NOT ETHEL sees the flashlight atop the desk. She takes it, unscrews the back, and lets the batteries slide into her hand. She replaces the empty flashlight back on the desk.

As they exit, they sing…

MAN and NOT ETHEL: (*circus song*) *Doot doot doodle oodle doot doot doo doo…*

They roll off the magician's wheel and are gone. The lights go out and the projection and circus music goes with them. Darkness, except for a thin sliver of moonlight from above which reveals SNOWDEN in a deep hole.

From his crumpled position, he looks up.

SNOWDEN: (*realizing*) The bottom. *Great.* GREAT. I *get* it. I GET IT, OK? I read about this, too. The bottom, where we don't know what happens to the information.

He looks around the dark hole.

SNOWDEN: Where the parts that are familiar go away and refuse to come back. I *get* it! Where we're very aware we're talking to NOTHING.

He tries to stand but gravity knocks him down, hard.

He slumps.

SNOWDEN: Where there is no one like Lindsay.

STAPLER appears.

STAPLER: (*nervous*) Eddie, the cloud. The black cloud is the only thing I can see.

SNOWDEN: (*unraveling*) OK, the whole thing's *flat*, or it *looks flat,* and there're flat versions of us trampling all over other flat versions of us. *So what??*

STAPLER: (*looking around at the encroaching darkness*) I think we should be figuring things *out* here.

SNOWDEN: (*yelling up the hole*) I *tried.* I TRIED, Lindsay! I thought if I could just *mash us together*…

STAPLER: (*loud enough to get the attention he wants*) The news is saying some alarming things. I may be Russian but I want out of here, too!

SNOWDEN: You're not Russian.

STAPLER is knocked flat.

STAPLER: I'm…not?

SNOWDEN: No. You're cheap Chinese plastic.

STAPLER goes to say something—stops, is really hurt. SNOWDEN is falling back into his own head.

SNOWDEN: I'll *get it*, Linds. I'll remember the color of the siding and I'll--

STAPLER: (*has had enough*) *Eddie. Stop.* Stop diving into some hole in your head where you think you can't be found, because--

SNOWDEN: and I'll paint our house *everywhere!!!*

STAPLER: Be*CAUSE*, Eddie, the hole hides you from bad people but it also hides you from people you need. Friends!

SNOWDEN: (*really losing it for the first time*) *Friends??* What friends? Where's my cat? Where's my girl? Where's my lawyer? I'm the most wanted man on *earth*. Tell me *who are my friends*?

STAPLER: (*timidly*) I'm your friend. I'm here, aren't I?

SNOWDEN takes a breath.

SNOWDEN: I appreciate that. But. I made up your voice. I made up who you are. Even a stapler version of me cannot be someone else. And therefore you are not my friend.

STAPLER's turn to take a breath.

STAPLER: You're smart, Eddie. We all know that. But no one is so complex they can happily exist only in their mind.

SNOWDEN: (*matter-of-fact*) The world is being swallowed up.

STAPLER: Maybe. Only maybe.

A flashlight shines into the deep dark hole from above. It searches around the darkness throughout the scene, never finding what it wants.

Voices swell, swirl, mix with static, become electronic here and there.\

VOICE: Eddie?

SNOWDEN's head jerks up.

SNOWDEN: *Lindsay?!!?*

VOICE: Eddie, honey?

SNOWDEN: Mom!

WENDY SNOWDEN: Wanna back out? You can back out of this.

SNOWDEN: I…*how??*

WENDY SNOWDEN: Your father thinks the car's blocked in. You can back out, Lon!

SNOWDEN: Mom, I need *help.*

WENDY SNOWDEN: It's time to get dressed. The bus'll be here soon. Did you eat your breakfast?

SNOWDEN: I'M NOT ELEVEN. Tell Ben to get me out of Russia. I don't CARE if I'm caught. I want to testify before Congress.

WENDY SNOWDEN: I heard Congress. Did you say *laundry?*

The sound. SNOWDEN lets out an "AGGGGGHH," clasps his ears. The sound dies away.

LINDSAY AS VOICE: Они не правы. Вы не можете вернуться из этого. (Oni ne pravy. Vy ne mozhete vernut'sya iz etogo.)(They're wrong. You can't back out of this.)

SNOWDEN: Mom, call BEN!

LINDSAY AS VOICE: This big house is so empty, Eddie. You're not even an *echo*.

SNOWDEN: LINDSAY! Linds, REACH! Reach down and *grab me.*

From his knees, he reaches upward.

WENDY SNOWDEN: Stay home today, Eddie. Stay with mommy.

LON SNOWDEN: Son. Don't break your father's heart. We're proud of you, no matter what. Stay home and make us proud where we can *touch* you.

LINDSAY AS VOICE: Paine's lost *so much* weight…

SNOWDEN: *You have Paine???*

LINDSAY AS VOICE: (*pleading*) He hasn't stopped crying since you left! *Come home.*

SNOWDEN: I don't know where I *am!*

WENDY SNOWDEN LON SNOWDEN

Russia isn't *safe!* Russia isn't *safe!*

SNOWDEN: (*on the verge of totally losing it*) I want home. I want to *become home!*

The sound.

LON SNOWDEN: Я не думаю, что я твой отец!
(YA ne dumayu, chto ya tvoy otets.)
(I don't think I'm your father!)

SNOWDEN: *Christ somebody HEAR me…*

LINDSAY AS VOICE: (*venom and tears*) Eddie, Paine and I are *leaving!*

LON SNOWDEN: Your mother's *dead*, Ed!

A loud banging at a door. The projection flickers between the airport utility room and the blackness of the hole, landing on one for a moment, then shifting, but never landing fully on either. Electronic voices are heard approaching.

STAPLER: Shit. Timeta go. *Climb.*

SNOWDEN goes to stand. This time his legs give out.

SNOWDEN: Aggggghh. I think they're *broken.*

The voices and the banging reach menacing and cartoonish proportions. Jackals howling.

STAPLER: The black cloud is knocking, Eddie. DIG!

SNOWDEN starts digging with his hands. He's losing the fight to hold back tears.

SNOWDEN: (*the audience is aware he's mumbling, but probably doesn't know what he's saying*) 1, 2, 3, 4, fingers. One thumb. A silver ring. The small scars

STAPLER: It's gonna tear us apart!

SNOWDEN: The small scars from the bike accident down the long hill. The cuts in your yogic hands from being pressed into photo shoot wood. 1, 2, 3, 4

The projection flickers and goes out. All sounds go with it as if they were sucked out of the room.

Blackness onstage, silence onstage.

Then…

Strands of white Christmas lights light up. They are wrapped around SNOWDEN. He's still wearing all-black and appears to be disembodied. He looks like hell.

SNOWDEN PULL APART BY GRAVITY: Sure, you can see her. Naked frame online. Information laid bare. But, who cares? *All I want.* If I could ask you particles for anything, is for my fingers to be locked into her fingers.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY lights up, dressed the same. Two floating heads and white lights.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY PULLED APART BY GRAVITY: My naked, twisted frame is a key, Eddie. It unlocks many doors.

He sees her. He cannot contain his joy. Sure, he looks and feels like hell, but now he has her. He crosses to her, takes her hands in his, brings them to his mouth, closes his eyes, and holds a long kiss to her knuckles. She breathes him in.

A video appears onscreen of SNOWDEN trying to dig his way out of the hole.

SNOWDEN PULLED APART BY GRAVITY: I wonder. In this version. Do I get out?

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY PULLED APART BY GRAVITY needs more from him before she can soften.

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY PULLED APART BY GRAVITY: Does it matter?

Her eyebrow is raised. It prompts SNOWDEN to pull her to him, and bury his face in her chest. He then drops to his knees and buries his face in her stomach. It's lovely but also deeply penitent.

Now she can soften.

Snow begins to fall. SNOWDEN feels it and looks up.

SNOWDEN PULLED APART BY GRAVITY: Even here, huh?

SOMEONE LIKE LINDSAY PULLED APART BY GRAVITY: Even here.

He rises.

She tries to put a hand out to touch the snow. He pulls her hand back into his. He can't let go.

SNOWDEN PULLED APART BY GRAVITY: (*deeply*) I'm gonna keep. You. Warm.

She puts up a finger to say "one sec." He is forced to let go of her hands. She moves to the desk, takes out a lighter, and gently, methodically, lights the paper house, car, and television. She then rejoins him and retakes his hands.

They stand to one side, watching the fire and snow as the lights fade and go out on them.

Just before it all ends, one last illumination of flashing light reveals the airport utility room, and its once-white walls, now covered floor-to-ceiling in hundreds of finger-paintings of the fully-remembered house, and the little tree with the hole.

The light fades.

The End.