

HUMANITY, HERE'S TO YOU

A One Act Play

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Translated from the Turkish by Fred Stark

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CHARACTERS:

Michael Connors—20-25 years old. A sergeant in the army, he clearly has not had much formal education, but is nevertheless an intelligent rube of spirit.

Dr. Samuel Davis—Around 40 years old, a psychiatrist. An intellectual from a well-to-do family who has gone to good schools.

Ralph Hodgson—Also 40 or 50 years old. A successful, wealthy lawyer.

Betty Hodgson—Ralph Hodgson's mother. She should be a generation older than the actor who plays Ralph. She is an attractive, well-groomed housewife with a well-off husband but has not had a higher education, nor does she have a profession.

Howard Hodgson—Betty's husband. Also of an age to be Ralph's father. A well-off, enterprising businessman.

Martha and Charlie—Of advanced middle age, they are homeless alcoholics, or rather their home is the streets.

From the audience's point of view, the righthand two-thirds of the stage is raised by a platform of one step (the definitions of right and left are always from the viewpoint of the seated audience). This portion of the stage, with no change of set, will be used by turns as the offices of the psychiatrist and lawyer. However, when it is used as the living room of Betty and Howard Hodgson's home, minimal additions to the set may be made (such as a coffee table and lamp or a painting). A large projection screen occupies the rear wall in the middle of the platform. It should not cover the entire wall, but be of a size to represent a very large television screen. At the front (i.e. near the audience) of stage right there is an armchair with its back mainly toward the audience, and immediately in front of it an ottoman which serves as a footstool. The armchair is placed so that its occupant can watch the screen, and this person's face can be seen only in half profile (or else the chair has a back high enough to completely obscure the occupant). At right rear there are a desk and armchair, situated diagonally. Next to them there is a music set. On the desk there is a lamp, a few books, a letter opener and other simple office paraphernalia, plus a telephone and a laptop computer with its cover open. On the lefthand side of the platform are two armchairs diagonally facing the audience, so situated that the people sitting in them (doctor and patient or attorney and client) can talk to one another.

The lower part of the stage, on the left relative to the audience, should be divided into two halves, front and rear. At the front, in the corner closest to the audience, there is a large oil drum with fair-sized holes through which comes flickering light that gives the impression something is burning inside. At the rear is a small, plain wooden table with chairs to right and left. Behind the table are iron bars or the like to indicate that we are in the visiting room of a prison.

At first the stage is dark. In the background is heard the long, high-pitched sound of the violins in the overture to Boris Sinkin's opera *Amok*, starting just after the narrator has spoken (i.e. at 1 minute 01 second). After the first beat following the violins, marching troops appear on the screen. These pictures should be from World War Two, in black and white. If possible, the marching should be in time to the music, as the pictures show troops from various countries, tanks on parade, flights of airplanes on show, and closeups of

soldiers' boots marching. The overture is built on two themes (A-B-A), exuberant, romantic and then again exuberant in character. The pause before the second theme (2 min 15 sec) is marked by the image of a bomb exploding. Throughout the romantic theme there is footage of fleeing and weeping human beings, people trying to avoid being shot, children in the arms of their mothers, mass graves, and other signs of the savagery of war. When the first theme returns (2 min 43 sec) so do the pictures of marching troops. The final beat at the end of the overture (3 min 43 sec) is accompanied by the image of a violent explosion. Darkness engulfs the stage.

Inside the oil drum at the left, the burning trash begins to send out red and orange light. We see Martha huddled up on the sidewalk right beside the drum. She is wearing a thick cardigan and a ragged, dirty skirt plus old boots of the GI variety. Her back leans against the side wall, her knees are drawn up, both hands tightly grasp the cardigan she is wrapped in, and she is motionless, huddled up, freezing from the cold. (Throughout the play Martha's speech should be punctuated by the coughs of a heavy smoker.) Charlie enters from the right wearing an old, long coat and holding a bottle of wine.

C – Hey, Martha! (waves the wine bottle) Martha, look what I've got.

M – (slowly raising her head, surprised and happy) Well what do you know! Where did you find that?

C – What do you mean, find it? I bought it, what else? You don't find these things, you buy them. I only wish they were there to be found.

M – What did you use for money?

C – I worked for it, gal. All day. (approaches and sits down next to Martha)

M – How's that? Did they hire you at the World Bank?

C – Well, something like that. I hauled loads at the warehouse a few streets down.

M – You mean you were a common porter?

C – What's wrong with that? At least it was work. What an ingrate! I've brought some first class wine, even have money to buy a little grub, and this broad is questioning my career.

M – (laughs loudly) Oh Charlie, you're the real ingrate. Some day you're going to croak under those loads. Now you'll have a stiff back for two days.

C – I'll be fine.

M – But last time you bellowed like an ox for three days and nights. I tell you, you're honestly going to croak.

C – Well, it's better than starving to death. (Opens the bottle) What did you do today?

M – What do you think? I huddled up right here. Once I went to this gas station to clean the bathrooms, but the bastards sent me away.

C – Why?

M – They've found three poor guys, immigrants, I couldn't figure out where they were from. Probably they're paying them just enough to buy cola. There was one kid, Charlie, you should have seen him. Great big dark eyes he had, Charlie. He was up to his ankles in shit, Charlie (On the point of tears, she holds her hand 30-35 inches above the ground) He was only this tall, Charlie.

C – Forget it, next thing you'll be crying again. Take a swig (Holds out the bottle).

M – (Takes a long swallow, then wiping her lips with the back of her hand) Wow! You keep working, bub. Work tomorrow, too.

C – I will. If I know this moment is coming, I'll carry loads or even clean shit.

M – What will I do, though?

C – Nothing. I'll come up with something. It will do for both of us.

(brief silence)

C – Martha, you know a war has started.

M – What?

C – I said a war has started.

M – Where?

C – I don't know. Somewheres a long way off. It was on the television at Fred's Bar. Our side is bombing somebody. But nowhere near here, a long ways off.

M – What's it about?

C – I don't know. I think they have some kind of dangerous weapons.

M – What do you mean, dangerous weapons?

C – I don't know.

M – You mean our bombs are safe? They don't kill anybody when we drop them?

C – How should I know, Martha, that's what they were saying. And somebody said it's all about oil.

M – What's this oil stuff good for. You can't even drink it.

C – Well, they don't fight wars over wine.

M – Why do they fight them, then?

C – Out of greed. Interests, money, wealth, whatever you want to call it. I mean you've got to gain something, if you're going to fight. Something that will make you more prosperous. Like land, or mines. I mean, wars are fought so that something that belongs to someone else will be yours. Like, if there was no greed there'd be no war. Of course sometimes you may fight to protect yourself or what you've got, but then it's a question of the other guy's greed. I mean, the basic cause is the same.

M – OK, who's right in this war, Charlie?

C – (with a loud laugh) Us, of course. There's no other answer to that question, Martha. Us. We're always right. The problem lies in which us we are. Their us believes they're right, and so does ours. Anyway, if you can't make people believe "we're right," you won't find anybody willing to die.

M – It's terrible, Charlie, really terrible. Kids die, Charlie, kids with great big eyes...

C – Grownups die too.

M – (Shouting) It's grownups who start the wars, Charlie. And they're the ones who fight.

C – When there's war, someone's going to die. Big or little. Fat, thin, married, single, rich, poor... It's bound to happen, Martha.

M – What, you mean this business is normal? Is that what you mean? How easily you say it! It's bound to happen, Martha!! And while it's happening, children will just happen to die, no trouble!! So what if we're a few thousand kids less? Aren't there enough children in the world? Sure, like sand. And anyway, new ones will come along to replace those that are gone. Ain't that so?

C – Come on, Martha, you know perfectly well what I mean. Unfortunately, notice how I say unfortunately, that's how it's always been. It's a fact of human nature. (Speaking with great emphasis) UNFORTUNATELY!!

M – Fine, just accept it, then. Don't do anything about it.

C – What can I do? If you like I'll stop this war right now.

M – Nobody expects you to stop it! Just don't talk as if it were so ordinary. Get mad, cuss, swear, spill out some bile!

C – At who?

M – (After a pause) If all this is caused by human nature, then at this kind of human nature.

C – Look, that's just up my alley, you know that. If only getting mad, and shouting, and cursing and swearing could stop this savagery! You'd see my tongue wagging all night.

M – But kids are dying, Charlie, those kids with their great big eyes. (In a kind of delirium) The children... The children... With their huge eyes... Those dark, shining eyes... Kids only this tall...

The lights go down, and come up on the table in the rear. After a brief pause, Ralph Hodgson the lawyer appears carrying a briefcase. He sets it on the table, then sits down on the chair to the right. He opens the briefcase and pulls out a

few papers, puts on the glasses he has produced from his jacket pocket, and sets to perusing the documents. A short time passes and a door is heard to open with a metallic squeal. Then Dr. Samuel Davis appears at stage left wearing an orange convict's jumpsuit. He takes a few steps toward the table. The lawyer has taken off his glasses at the sound of the door opening, and when Samuel enters he gets up and holds out his hand.

R – Hello, Samuel.

S – Hello. (They shake hands and sit down facing one another.)

R – How are you?

S – Let's say I'm fine.

R – Dr. Davis...

S – Call me Sam.

R – All right, Sam, I have good news. In all likelihood we'll be able to plead self defense. But first we'll ask to get you released. Then we'll work up a strategy. Will the amount be a problem?

S – What amount?

R- Now most probably they'll release you on bail. I'm asking if getting it together will be a problem.

S – How should I know. This has never happened to me before. If it's a few hundred thousand dollars, I don't know...

R – No, no. I mean it's at the discretion of the court, but usually it's around ten or twenty thousand.

S – No problem.

R – No problem, then... You know we're talking about cash here...

S – No problem.

R – Then I'll talk to your wife.

S – O.K.

R – Now, tomorrow we'll probably get a decision to release you, and if we can make the payment you'll likely be out on Wednesday.

S – I hope so.

R – Look, don't be so pessimistic, everything seems to be going our way. The fingerprints on the knife and so on. They even know where he bought it—the knife, I mean. We're going to make it, Okay? Are you listening to me?

S – Sure.

R – Good. Now, you've got to buck up. Look, everything's going great. If tomorrow they decide to release you, we can meet at my office on Thursday. All right?

S – All right.

R – We'll discuss the details and whip our defense into its final shape. Look, I'll repeat this, everything's going our way. Got that?

S – (fed up) Yeah.

R – Fine, then, if the decision comes through tomorrow I'll expect you at my office on Thursday. It doesn't have to be early. First pull yourself together, wake up in your own home, read the paper...

S – I don't read the papers.

R – Well, whatever then. Get up, take a shower, I don't know, (laughs) when the kids go to school maybe you can play cards with your wife, or something even better. Then drop in on me. Call first, anytime you say will be fine with me. Okay? Just so long as we get you released. Anyway, I'm leaving. If nothing goes wrong, I'll see you Thursday. All right?

S – OK.

R – You know the address, don't you? Anyway, if you don't have it I'll give it to you on the phone.

S – I know it.

R – Parking is a big problem down there. Take a cab if you like, it's easier.

S – Fair enough. I'll phone you first in any case.

R – (rises, holds out his hand, and they shake) OK. See you, then. Buck up.

S – See you.

(The lawyer walks to the right and calls out)

R – Guard!

(The same metallic squeal of a door and the lawyer exits. Samuel gets up from his chair and walks to the left of the stage. The sound of the door is repeated and Sam exits. The lights over the table go out.)

(The lights come up on Howard Hodgson, who is seated at the desk on the platform engaged in a phone conversation.)

H – Ralph? What's up?... Just fine... Your mother's fine, too. We squabble, what else?... (with a loud laugh) Son, what can people do when they get old? At this age all we can do is argue. No, no. I was just joking! Everything's OK here. Listen, what have you done about that business?... That case you had, what was it? That psychiatrist.... You got it? Great!... When?... Fantastic... Fantastic... Listen to me now, you've got to take advantage of this opportunity, don't be stupid!... Look, it'll be glorious, incredible advertising... I mean in the media... Magazines, TV, newspapers, you know... Oh son, you're still wet behind the ears! You can't sit around and wait for it to happen... You know, they just might mention your name in passing... Look, Ralph! These days advertising is everything, understand? Whatever profession you're in, packaging comes first... OK, that's what I was going to say. I'll find the people. They'll get in touch with you and arrange everything... Well, you know, a program, an interview, whatever... Of course... Well of course.... But don't be a tightwad like your mother, pay them whatever they want, all right?... (mocking) No, for free! I mean, they'll fall in love with you and do it for old times' sake... Are you having me on, son? You know what a half-page ad would cost in a major newspaper? Never mind the ad, you couldn't even get an obituary... No, no, not an advertisement, a news story... Advertising disguised as news... Well, I would imagine... You've still got a lot to learn... Listen, you're a grown man now, a lawyer no less, do you still need your father to teach you these things?... All right, all right... I'll set it up... I'll give them your home phone, too... By the

way, how's Sue doing? What are the rascals up to?...OK, my best to all of you...I'll call you... Or let me know the minute you talk to them... All right, son... See you....

(The oil drum at left front lights up. Martha is standing beside it, while Charlie is seated on the pavement, wine bottle in hand)

M – Charlie?

C – Hmm?

M – What do these people want from us?

C – What people?

M – I don't know. Everybody, I guess.

C – No one wants anything from us.

M – What do you mean?

C- Just that. We don't exist.

M – Don't exist?

C – That's how they act. As if we didn't exist.

M – So why?

C – Because we don't do anyone any good.

M – But we're not hurting anybody, either.

C – Still. We've accepted being nothing, Martha. That is, we're not winning. We've agreed not to win. When you don't win, you don't help someone else win. This is a vast machine, Martha. Unless you agree to be a tiny cog, the big gears grind you down. Because your only choice, Martha, is to turn on the axis that's been assigned you. For eternity. Or rather till you're worn out and break. Then they change you for another gear. (Takes a sip from his bottle and hands it to Martha. She reaches out for the bottle and sits down beside him) But us?

We're not even the grease lubricating the gears. In a word, Martha, in the eyes of society you're one big NOTHING.

M – What society? (takes a large swig) You mean the people who turned their asses on us, my mother and brothers and sisters, when our father beat us and threw us out on the street? Was that society? Just who do you call society? Maybe the men who humped my mother for ten dollars and then went to church on Sundays. Or is it the people who shove that big-eyed kid into shit because he'll work for cheaper than I will. Oh Charlie, he had such beautiful eyes...

C – Drop the philosophy. Anyway, it's too late for you to change anything. Enjoy your wine.

M – (looks at bottle) It's already half gone.

C – Don't worry. (Takes a second bottle out of his overcoat pocket) There's more where that came from.

M – Sayyy now! You're a real pearl of society, Charlie!

C – Flattery will get you nowhere.

M – What do you mean, flattery? (laughs loudly) I'm just fitting in with society.

C – You're too late, pal.

M – Too late for what?

C – To fit in with society.

M – True enough! Once upon a time at least I had treasures to put at society's service (cups her breasts), but they're wrinkled now.

C – (Laughs) Ha ha! A new term for the economists: Wrinkled treasure! Or let's be nicer about it and say deflated treasure.

M – Bastard!

C – What did I do? You're the one who said it.

M – Fine... You better mind your own business. (Points at Charlie's unbuttoned fly) Your treasure is just about hanging out.

C – (flustered, fumbles at the fly but can't button it) The hell with it. The door to the dead man's house is always open, Martha!

M – (laughing loudly) Aren't you the one! (holds out the bottle) Here, take this and do something for yourself, even if you can't help society.

C – (raises the bottle) Then here's to society.

M – Won't do, Charlie. Let's drink to humanity.

C – OK, we'll have it your way. (At the top of his lungs) Humanity, here's to you!

(As the lights go down around the oil drum, they come up on the platform. The living room of Betty and Howard Hodgson. Howard is standing as he reads the newspaper spread open on his desk. He has on an undershirt, and with the towel around his neck, and newly shaven, gives the impression that he has not yet finished dressing)

H – Say now! (calls into the kitchen) Betty! Come here and have a look, our boy is on the fourth page. They've got a big picture of him.

(Betty enters, drying her hands on a cloth)

B – What's it about? That doctor's case?

H – That's right, that's the one. Look, here it is.

(Betty pulls the newspaper toward her)

B – What kind of a shot is this? It's got nothing to do with Ralph. It makes him look old.

H – Well, your son is no longer a high school student...

B – Well, maybe not, but he's much more handsome, for one thing.

H – Never mind the picture... Betty, this is terrific. This will make him.

B – How?

H – What do you mean, how? Look at this advertisement! Just think how many people read this paper! Suddenly, you're one of the best-known lawyers in the country. It's just terrific!

B – My son would have been successful even without being in the papers.

H – Come on, now... I mean, that's all very well, but he didn't exactly shine in school. It was nip and tuck all the way.

B – Maybe so, but then he got his wind.

H – That's true. Success in life doesn't depend on your school record. You've got to be an opportunist. On your toes...

B – Like you.

H – Well, I guess some of this applies to me. I had a horrible time in school!

B – Just look how you turned out! (Plants a kiss on his cheek) Feel like scrambled eggs?

H – I think I'll skip breakfast this morning.

B – How come? I was just fixing it.

H – I guess I overdid it last night. I'll just have coffee.

B – (heads back for the kitchen) I'll bring you some, then.

(disappears at stage rear)

B – (from offstage rear) When does the trial begin?

H – (raising his voice to make himself heard) A week from Tuesday. You'll see Ralph on all the channels.

B- (comes in holding two mugs of coffee, giving one to Howard before she sits down in an armchair) I'll buy a few more papers today and we can save them. What else is in the news?

H – Another attack. Four more troops died. Yesterday it was twelve people all together.

B – Oh my God. When is this war going to end? Didn't they tell us it was over months ago?

H – Doesn't look like it *is* going to end. Seems to be just heating up.

B – That's bad news. It's just awful!

H – But true. It's always happened, and it always will.

B – How many more people will die. And think of the expense. How is the country going to pay for it?

H – Better not think about that part.

B – What do you mean, not think? The food and drink for all those soldiers, the ammunition, the bombs... I wonder what it all costs. And it comes out of our pockets, Howard.

H – Honey, wars are usually based on a calculation of profit and loss. Look, whenever there's a fearsome economic crisis, war follows. Think of the great war. If we hadn't won that one, we never would have had today's prosperity.

B – So you're saying war brings prosperity, is that it?

H – Provided you don't lose.

B – Each bomb costs a fortune, they were telling about it on TV the other day. And they said the monthly cost...

H – (interrupts) Look, this isn't my little idea. It's a theory they teach in economics at the universities. Got that?

B – Fine... We'll see. By the way, what happened to our vacation?

H – How can you talk about vacations at a time like this?

B – I thought we were going to go down south.

H – Right now we're not going anywhere, OK? This is our big chance.

B – You mean we're stuck here this year until the damn war's over?

H – Listen, if we land this contract, you know how many people we’ll be feeding? Do you have any idea how many troops are stationed over there? This is a huge contract I’m talking about! And then there are the weapon parts, we’re going to bid on that one too, and if that comes off...

B – What do you people know about weapons?

H – You don’t have to know anything. We’re middlemen. Anyway, these things don’t just happen by themselves. There’s a lot of money involved, and the more money there is the more people you have to share it with.

B – You mean it’s dirty business.

H – No ma’am. Look, don’t get mixed up in things you don’t understand. These are simply the rules of the game. If you’re making money, or want to, you’ve got to share.

B – Make hay together, you mean. Is this sharing business legal?

H – Not everything is written in the law books, sweetie. Besides, if you want you can find legal names for what you do. Like commission.

B – In other words, slick packaging.

H – (burned up) That’s enough. All right, you’ve got a dishonest husband. Who doesn’t at all become a paragon of virtue like yourself. Your way of life, the house you live in, the car you drive, those trips you take—you earn them all thanks to that lily-white virtue.

B – Howard, you’ve got me wrong. Or rather you’ve become too sensitive lately.

H – How can I get you wrong? “Is it legal?” “Making hay,” “slick packaging...”

B – Honey, I was just asking. Didn’t you tell me I don’t understand these things? That’s why I’m asking.

H – Then don’t ask. Anyway, a vacation or whatever is out of the question this year. OK? If you want it badly enough, you can go by yourself.

B – (mocking) Oh, sure. Like that other time. And while the cat's away? Who will you get in bed with this time?

H – (fuming, sits on the edge of the desk) Mind your manners. We've worked this all out before, haven't we?

B – Obviously you've worked it out. Unfortunately I still have a problem in my mind.

H – (shouting) Look, leave the past alone, will you?

B – Don't shout at me. The least you could do is try and show a little respect.

H – (still shouting) What do you mean, respect? I'm tired of hearing the same old story again and again. When are you going to forget it? Or don't you plan to? In which case I'm fed up with this business.

B – (raising her voice) What are you trying to say? Be more clear.

H – More clear? I say I've had enough. Got that? Enough. We can't change the past. But if you can't handle it, if you can't forget it, no one's keeping you here. Is that clear enough?

B – (her voice stupefied but calm) Eminently clear.

(abruptly rising, she heads rapidly for stage rear and exits)

B – (shouting from offstage rear) Tomorrow Linda can pack my things. And keep the line free. My lawyer will be calling you.

(sound of a door slamming. The lights go out)

(And come up around the oil drum. Martha and Charlie are rubbing their hands over it, trying to get warm)

C – It's freezing!

M – I wonder what it'll be like in a few hours. I'm croaking as is (coughs).

C – Shall we try walking? It might warm you up.

M – Naw, I couldn't take a single step.

C – Did you get real tired yesterday?

M – What did I do to get tired?

C – Actually I've been feeling a little weak lately myself. Still, you know what they said today at the warehouse?

M – What?

C – That I'm like a mule. I do the work of four men.

M – And you were tickled pink to hear it. Moron...

C – Hey now. What makes me a moron?

M – It means they got you to do quadruple the amount of work. Did they pay you quadruple, too?

C – Just enough to feed a mule. Half a man's pay.

M – They're all bastards.

C – As long as it suits you!

M – (subdued) Yeah, that's the rule, isn't it? As long as it suits you.

(there is a longish silence)

C – The cold came suddenly this year. Be nice if they opened the subway stations at night.

M – They did, one winter. Was it two years ago?

C – Four.

M – Come on. Has it been that long?

C – Sure has. Goes by fast, doesn't it?

M – (laughing) Good thing it does! Just imagine if it went slow! (coughing fit).

C – (smiles) Anyway, I'm worried about other people.

M – You're so kind-hearted!

C – That's me. Don't you worry about other people? Egotist!

M – (pauses, and then through her coughing tries to get something out) My problem is the ch... (the coughing cuts her off)

C – The children!

(She nods)

C – With their great round eyes.

M – That's right. Them.

C – Ah Martha! Children don't just die in war. They curl up and die in alleys. The other night on that street near the supermarket, there were three tiny little men, you should have seen them. The biggest must have been about thirteen...

M – Well?

C – What else? They were smoking pot.

M – You don't mean it!

C – They'd run away from the home. I tried talking to them, but of course it didn't do any good.

M – I must say, you're such an imposing figure! Look who's talking—that's what they must have said.

C – Well, I wish they *had* looked at me. It might have made them worry about their own future.

M – Were you any different at that age, Charlie?

C – I wasn't, but the world was. Different, I mean. Just think how long it's been, Martha. And think of all that's happened. Men on the moon, computers, telephones you could stick in an orifice... But childhood is the same for those kids as it was for us, Martha. Where's all this progress humanity talks about?

M – You said it, remember. Don't forget the rule...

C – What rule?

M – (smiling wryly) As long as it suits you.

C – Suppose it *doesn't* suit you?

M – If there's nothing else to do (takes the bottle out of her pocket, brings it up to eye level to see whether there's a drop left, then raises it high) you can drink to humanity...

(As the lights go down we see images of bombing on the screen, accompanied by the loud sound of explosions. The impression is one of a TV screen where someone is surfing the channels, with a series of images depicting war, bombings, and fleeing people, all interspersed with commercials for automobiles, perfume, hamburgers, deodorant, vacation resorts, catchup and the like. As the doorbell rings, a hand sticks out from the armchair (the back of which is to the audience) and points a remote at the screen, which then darkens as the sound stops. The arm sticking out from the chair belongs to Ralph Hodgson, who stands up and exits at stage rear right.)

R – (the voices come from behind the stage) Good to see you.

S – Hello, good to see you too.

R – Was it easy to find the building?

S – I didn't try. I came by cab.

R – That's the best way. Come on in and make yourself at home.

(Sam comes on stage, wearing his everyday clothes. He advances to the middle of the platform, looks around, and sits tentatively on one of the chairs.)

R – (His voice still comes from behind the stage) Want something to drink? Coffee or maybe something stronger?

S – No thanks.

R – (Enters holding a bottle of champagne and two glasses) Come on, doctor, we should celebrate your release. (Shows the bottle) Don't say no to this, at least.

S – All right. Actually, there's not much to celebrate if you ask me, but OK. I'll keep you company.

R – That's the ticket! Look, Sam, you've got to come out of mourning. (Sets the glasses on the desk and goes on talking as he pops the champagne) There'll be lots more to celebrate in your life. I know what's happened to you seems incredible. We only read such things in the papers, you never dream it could be you, but actually it's just a breath away. All of us... It can happen any moment, Sam.

S – Yes. So it seems.

R – But look how different everything is now... Just think of a day or two ago... Right?

(Sam nods)

(Ralph puts a CD on the music set next to his desk)

R – Let's have a little music to go with this. Music—That's what relaxes me the most, you know? Of course I haven't asked whether you like opera.

S – I do. Or rather, I used to. These days I don't know what I like or dislike.

R – You'll get over it.

(In the background we hear the female chorus that precedes the "Doctor's Aria" (the beginning is at 65 m 10 sec))

S – What was that?

R – You probably haven't heard it. Don't find it much in these parts. None of the record stores carry it. An opera by a Russian composer named Sinkin. Contemporary.

S – What's the name of the opera?

R – Amok.

S – Well, I *hadn't* heard of it? Where did you find it?

R – I asked a friend to bring me a copy from St. Petersburg.

(Ralph appears holding two glasses, one of which he hands to Sam. Sam gets up to take it, and they click the glasses.)

R – Here's to better days.

S – Yes, much much better days.

(the tenor's aria has begun)

R – (pointing toward the music) How's that?

S – Terrific! Very sensitive. Later could you make me a copy?

R – Whenever you like. Right now if you want.

S – No, no. Not just yet. Later...

R – All right, let's sit down and get started. We can turn this down (lowers the volume of the music until it is barely audible)

(Ralph sits down)

S – Let's get started on what? We've said it all, Ralph. What's left that you don't know? I've told you countless times.

R – OK, maybe you're sick and tired of it, Sam. But I want to hear everything, down to the last detail. Look, it may not sound nice, but this is a murder trial. And details, some incident or object that may have escaped our notice, could be very important. You understand that, don't you? I'm not trying to bore you or make you fed up. Now, let's go back to the very beginning. You first saw Sergeant Connors at the prison, is that correct?

S – Yes, in the visiting room of the prison.

R – Very well, why you? Were you appointed by the court?

S – Actually it's unusual for a military court to assign a civilian psychiatrist, but I had worked in a similar capacity on that earlier trial of policemen.

R – The ones who were on trial for mistreating those two blacks.

S – That's right.

R – How did that trial end, anyway?

S – Nothing much happened.

R – What do mean?

S – One of them was acquitted, the other drew a token sentence just to appease the public. And that was it.

R – So you were of some help.

S – You could say that.

R – Is torture your field of expertise, Sam?

S – My PhD dissertation was on institutional violence. Well, you know better than I do, once you've written a few expert's reports you're a prize piece of goods, your phone never stops ringing...

R – All right, let's go back to that first day. Right where this all started.

S – (Thoughtful) OK, fine. I remember like it was yesterday. (a considerable pause) Jesus Christ, it's all so vivid!

(The stage gradually darkens, and the oil drum in the righthand corner lights up. Martha and Charlie are sitting beside it, their knees drawn up to their bellies, drinking wine. Martha is in the throes of a coughing fit.)

M – (her voice husky) Got a fag, Charlie?

C – You wanna croak?

M – I swear it'll be only my third since this morning.

C – But you've got a terrible cough.

M – But that's not the reason. I think I've come down with something. For two days now I've been weak as a kitten.

C – Oh great! And you want a cigarette!

M – For Christ's sake stop preaching and give it to me! They'll think you're a fine gentleman who's very careful about his health! My noble ass!

C – Don't you like it? (Averts his head as if upset, and scrounges in his coat pockets)

M – Of course I do, sweetie. You're the true prince of my heart.

C – (Laughs) So I'm promoted from your ass to your heart!

M – What's wrong with my ass?

C – Well, it may not be so noble, but it's a good ass. Here (hands her a cigarette). But don't smoke the whole thing, leave a butt for me.

M – That's the stuff. You're a gem. (Lights up, takes a deep drag, and, gagging as the coughing starts again, says...) Tell me, what's different about noble asses?

C – The surface they sit on, and the toilet paper they wipe with.

M – (Laughing) So the only difference is environmental (coughing continues).

C – Give me that! (grabs the cigarette from her) I know you're going to croak anyway, but why be in such a hurry? (Waits for her cough to die down) You know, those gentlemen and ladies...

M – Asses that sit on silk cushions.

C – Right, them. In the restaurants they go to smoking these things is illegal, did you know that?

M – Well, that's because those ladies and gentlemen have graduated to cocaine.

C – No, ma'am, it's because cigarettes don't just harm the people who smoke them. You poison the person next to you, too. Whereas this wine is only bad for the fool who drinks it. Understand?

M – No, I don't get it. We don't harm anyone either, but we're outlawed. People avoid us like the plague. There's slews of alcoholics: artists, politicians, reporters...But it's us they outlaw.

C – (Rips off a laugh) Oh Marthat, you're a jewel! Listen, in this world there are the powerful and the weak. Any other classification is phoney. Those people are POWERFUL luses. What gives them their power? Money. That's right, just money. If you're powerful, I mean if your ass touches silk, it costs a wad of money just to fire you from your job. But the asses that touch concrete don't even have a job. In a word, if you don't have money, you're cheap. Got that? CHEAP. And there are laws to protect the powerful, Martha. Not just for people, either. There are laws for nations, too.

M – So why do they have these wars?

C – That's what I'm talking about. The laws are there to put the weak in their place. And who makes the rules in this blessed world? The strong.

M – And those laws, those rules among nations, they look the other way when children die, is that it?

C – That's exactly it! What was the rule? As long as it suits you.

M – What a world it is, Charlie! What a vicious world... (pensive) And how pitiless, how primitive...

C – And HYPOCRITICAL!

(The lights go down, and come up on the tabletop to the rear. There is the metallic creaking of a door, and Sam enters wearing an elegant suit and holding a file, which he lays on the tabletop before pulling up the chair to the right and sitting down. In a moment we hear the sound of the door again, and Sergeant Michael Connors enters from stage left wearing an orange convict's jumpsuit. Sam rises and holds out his hand)

S – Hello, Sergeant Connors, I'm Doctor Samuel Davis.

M – Glad to meet you. You must be the psychiatrist my attorney mentioned.

S – Yes, that’s right.

(they sit down facing one another)

M – I don’t see why he thought this was necessary.

S – He thought it might help your case, and he’s right.

M – What are you going to prove, doctor? That I’m crazy or something?

S – Look, Sergeant, let’s get something straight. I’m not here to judge but to help you. If I think you’re unwilling I won’t go on. Fair enough?

M – (listless) OK.

S – Now, your lawyer has probably told you, we expect the court to accept your application for release tomorrow. After you pull yourself together a bit, I’ll expect you at my office.

M – All right.

S – (pulls a wallet out of his back pocket and goes through it) I’ll leave my card with you. If all goes well you can call me Wednesday or Thursday. But please no later than that. So everything’s OK, right?

M – Everything’s OK.

(they rise, Sam holds out his hand again, and they shake)

S – See you later.

M – See you.

(Sam walks toward stage rear)

S – (shouting) Guard!

(the metallic creaking comes again. Sam exits, and we hear a steel door close. Michael walks toward left rear, and waits for a moment with his back to the audience. The same sound of a door opening is repeated, and Michael Connors exits. We hear the door clang shut)

(The lights come up on Betty, who is holding the telephone receiver as she leans up against the desk)

B – Ralph, hello... I'm fine, honey, how are you?... He's fine too, life here is pretty much as usual. How are Sue and the kids?...How's Johnny doing at school?...Never mind, he'll straighten out later... Well, who knows? As long as his luck holds... Never mind, never mind... How's business?... Sure, we've been following it in the papers, every day. The other day it was on ABC... Are you crazy? We're probably following closer than you are... Of course we're very proud... Listen, you're really famous now... Way to fire... Great... When's the next hearing?... That day we'll check all the channels... Aren't you going to come over? We've forgotten your face, son... Of course, of course, I was just kidding... Of course I know... I can imagine... Sure... Sure... No, I was just thinking if you dropped by I'd give you a ride in my new SUV... (with a loud laugh) Right!...Cerise...I tell you, the neighbors are burning with envy. It's a little big for me, but what the hell... It wasn't my idea. A surprise from your father... Oh, you know your father, he loves to surprise people... Nice man... OK honey, you get back to work... Fine... Fine... I'll tell him... Give my love to Sue and the kids... OK, hon...See you... See you...

(The stage slowly darkens, and the oil drum in the righthand corner lights up. Martha is curled up next to it asleep. Charlie is nowhere to be seen, but soon he enters from stage right with his arms full of scraps of wood, paper and cardboard. Moving towards the oil drum he dumps his load into it. The fire flares up)

C – Hey Martha! Would you look at that fire? That'll do it till morning, I'd say. (He turns his head toward Martha and bends down trying to see her face)
You're not sleeping, are you?

M – I'm freezing, Charlie.

(Charlie squats down and puts a hand on her forehead)

C – What do you mean, freezing? You're on fire, gal, you're burning up!

M – It'll go away... It was like this yesterday, too. You shiver a bit, then when the sweat breaks out the chill goes away.

C – Do you ache anywhere?

M – (Shivering, she has difficulty speaking) I don't have any real aches, but there's been a throbbing all over for the past few days. Don't worry, I'll be well before you know it. (Coughing) Mornings especially I feel fine.

C – Well at least you can cover up a little more.

(He takes off his overcoat and covers her with it, leaving him with a jacket which buttons with difficulty and whose sleeves are too short)

M – What do you think you're doing? You'll freeze in this weather!

C – If you don't freeze in that cardigan, I'll be just fine.

M – I've got newspapers underneath.

C – And I've got the Sunday supplements.

M – (managing a laugh) Good... As soon as I warm up we can trade. Mine are from Thursday.

C – What happened to your coat?

M – It's gone.

C – Where did it go all by itself?

M – It left with Rose.

C – Did you give it to her?

M – She was so cold, what could I do?

C – OK, but why didn't you take it back?

M – Come on, Charlie, do you want me to take the clothes off a dead body? It would have been like grave-robbing.

C – So they buried her in your coat, then!

M – Well, of course they must have taken it off, but I'm not the one who did it, understand?

C – How romantic! I'd like to find a dead man and give him my socks.

M – Not a bad idea. At least the dead can't smell anything.

C – I see you're perking up a bit. Feel strong enough to joke, do you?

M – I'm still freezing. Listen, take this thing I'm wearing, or pretty soon I'll be OK and you'll take over on the sick list.

C – (Stands by the oil drum rubbing his hands) I'm just fine. Cut it short, would you?

(a brief silence)

M – Charlie?

C – Hmm...

M – I can't stop thinking about those children and their dark eyes... The children's... Eyes... Great round.... Shining eyes....

(The stage darkens and a newscaster appears on the screen)

N – The world is talking about the recent pictures showing prisoners of war being tortured.

(the screen fills with pictures depicting this abuse)

N – Sergeant Michael Connors, who figures prominently in the incident, had been serving in the military prison for three mon...

(an erotic deodorant commercial appears on the screen)

(the images on the screen change rapidly as if someone were channel-surfing)

(Now an elderly woman appears on the screen, with a legend at the bottom: "Maryanne Tindall, Sergeant Michael Connors' elementary school teacher")

Woman – In those days he was a very nice boy, very well-behaved. I couldn't imagine him even hurting an insect. We don't bring our children up this way. I remember very clearly, one time...

(on the screen there is suddenly a beer commercial, with people drinking the stuff and having a good time)

(Now we see a middle-aged man and the legend, “Fred Seamann: neighbor of Sergeant Michael Connors)

Man – Well, I tell you, he was a good neighbor, you wouldn’t expect anything like this, especially torture and stuff. He was always polite with us, and we got along very well. Maybe you could say he was a little introverted, but...

(A commercial appears for the latest model of car)

(a wiener commercial)

(Now the newscaster appears)

N – An official statement declares that these actions go against American values and reflect the perverse initiative of individuals...

(a holiday resort commercial, posh restaurants, people having a ball)

(a condom commercial)

(now the screen shows a well-dressed commentator fairly along in years)

Commentator – First of all, our image as a country has been damaged internationally. And this is serious damage...

(images of bombing)

As the doorbell rings a hand reaches out from the armchair, whose back is to the audience, and holds a remote toward the screen. It blacks out and the sound is cut off. The hand belongs to Dr. Samuel Davis, who now rises and disappears at the rear right of the stage.

S – (the voices come from behind the stage) Hello there.

M – Hello.

S – Come in and make yourself at home.

(Michael comes on stage wearing ordinary clothing. At the middle of the platform he looks around and sits down on the edge of one of the armchairs.)

S – (His voice comes from behind the stage) Something to drink? Coffee or liquor?

M – No, thanks.

S – I'm having coffee myself, so it's all ready.

M – All right, then, I'll have some too.

S – Milk or sugar?

M – Black, please.

(Sam comes in with two mugs, gives one to the sergeant, and sits down)

S – All right, Sergeant Connors. By the way, can I call you Michael?

M – Sure. Or Mike, if you prefer.

S – Good. And you can call me Sam.

M – Forget it. That's not so easy for me.

S – However you feel comfortable. Let's get started, if you like.

M – I still don't understand what we're going to start *on*.

S – This isn't an interrogation, Mike. We're just going to talk. Tell me whatever you feel like. Tell me about yourself, for example.

M – (gets out of the chair) No, doctor. Don't ask me to do that. When did your mother toilet-train you, did you see your father's prick—I'll answer stupid questions like that, and you as the mastermind will understand how pathetic I am. Is that the game? No thanks, buster, I'm not having any.

S – Hold on a minute, just hold on. Why don't you sit down, for one thing. Look, Mike, do you believe in science?

M – Not this kind.

S – What do you mean, this kind?

M – Who was that bearded con man? The one you all worship?

S – Are you talking about Freud?

M – That's the one! Hasn't he gone out of style yet? If you ask me that guy wasn't a doctor or anything. I don't know whether to call him a sociologist or a philosopher or what. To him anything longer than it is wide is a male organ. I mean you hesitate to say you dreamed of a banana. What kind of science is that, doctor? Then there's a slew of characters around who think they're witch doctors, I won't say like you because I don't know you, but they're a bunch of snobs with complexes who all say, "Come on, little worm, tell me your story so that I'll know every little pathetic detail about you."

S – (laughs) Look, Mike, the scientific community is debating what you've just said, not in the same terms, of course, but...

M – Fine, then, don't test something on me if it's debatable. Ask me definite questions. Don't play God and judge me because of what I have or haven't done. If you want to share, go ahead, I'm willing. Whatever good it will do...

S – You're very uptight, Mike!

M – Uptight? That's rich! I'm uptight! Why on earth could that be? Billions of people are watching me on television. Yesterday I couldn't resist and turned it on. A savage among all these innocent, affectionate, virtuous people! A vicious hoodlum, a merciless, stone-hearted creature who, who hasn't a shred of humanity! What more do you want? I can't go out, I can't stay in my home, they're lynching me, doctor, do you hear me? And then you say I'm uptight.

S – All right, I'll ask you something more definite. (Smiles) Why don't you drink your coffee?

(Michael takes a sip of his coffee, and there is a brief silence)

S – Look, I'm not the D.A. I'm not the judge, either, or a member of the jury. But simply to share certain facts I'm going to ask some questions. Is it true, Mike?

M – Is what true?

S – All this that we're reading, hearing, and seeing in the photos and videos? I mean, how much of this torture business really happened?

M – (Softly, after a brief silence) All of it... And more.

S – (Hesitates momentarily) Well, then, what do you feel?

M – What should I feel?

S – I don't know... Regret, guilt, things like that.

M – What about you?

S – Me?

M – Yeah, you. Don't you feel guilty, after all that's happened?

S – Well, all right, but none of this was my doing. Why should I take responsibility for somebody else's actions, Mike?

M – (Leaps to his feet and starts to bellow) Why? You ask why! Because you've made me less than human, that's why. You used me for your own savage purposes. Me and so many others like me!! You pushed us into the jaws of death. Thrust us into the heart of fear, blood and atrocity and then watched us, remote in hand, from the comfort of your homes, just to catch up on what those people you sent to die and kill were doing! Of course you had the right. You'd paid for it.

S – I did all this?

M – You, the corner butcher, cab drivers, businessmen, your downstairs neighbor, all of you!

S – OK, let's talk this over a bit more calmly. Why are you standing?

M – (snaps back) I like it this way (walks around the office fumingly, taking measured steps and with his hands in his pockets)

S – Could you elaborate on what you've said?

M – What needs elaboration, doctor? (he has calmed down somewhat) You're an educated man. You've studied much longer than I have, and in expensive schools, so don't tell me you don't understand. Look, nations owe a lot to their soldiers, you realize that? I mean, back at the beginning, the first people, they fought all together, men, women and children. And why? To protect their caves. (laughs) Or to take somebody else's cave and food away from them. Later they trained soldiers, told them "Die and kill for me." Can you imagine a heavier duty? They said, "Go meet death. While I stay here and fatten my ass you fight for me out there." And still later societies laid down rules. Rules of war... Rules for savagery and barbarity, for this primitive, what can I say, for dying and killing. Why were these rules laid down? So that people like you could stay at home. They marked us...

S – What kind of mark?

M – (raising his voice) The mark of the bulls-eye—the uniform! The message to the opponent is clear!! Your kind have sat down and drawn up all the rules of the fight. OK, we're going to fight, but let's not harm everyone. Some of us will be marked, and they're the ones we're willing to sacrifice. Do the same on your side, and let them wipe each other out. The spoils go to the victor... And what's more, our kind will make the decisions. If we see fit they'll have it out and we'll watch from a distance. If we can reach an understanding, there's no need to go to all that expense. You know what riles me the most, doctor? They always make such a fuss about how many civilians have died! Not how many people, how many civilians... What am I, doctor, would you please tell me? Whichever side I happen to be on, why is the death of my kind more natural? Why should I deserve to croak so that you can earn more in your office?

S – Mike, wars aren't built just on greed and aggression. Human societies have values which they consider sacred and are bound to protect. Some of them are extremely concrete, like one's native land. And when people die in this cause we don't say they've "croaked."

M – Come off it! Don't skew the subject, doctor. If someone is defending, isn't someone else attacking? And did they come down from space? If you're saying mankind is greedy, primitive and barbaric, so where there's humanity there's war, well fine then. Right, we agree. But if, amid all this savagery, you call me barbaric, or cruel, or God knows what, in my book that's hypocrisy, got it?

S – You're the one who's skewing the subject, Mike. All this has no connection with what you did. If you're seeking an excuse for that, at least admit it. Face

the truth. What I asked was a very simple question: Are you sorry? And you still haven't given me an answer.

M – You want a simple answer, and I'll give you one. (yelling) Was what I did reprehensible, YES. Were they things that someone with a shred of feeling left in him could do? NO. Do I wish it had never happened? YES. But am I sorry? I DON'T KNOW!! Because if I were pitched into the same primitive barbarism I can't be sure whether I'd do it again. I told you before, doctor, I was less than human, and you people made me that way. You people!! And just tell me, you keep harping on this sacred business, what was I protecting over there that was so sacred? Your interests made it necessary for me to be there, that's all. It suited you. It's that simple. If sometime soon you decide that this war was pointless, that the profit hasn't made up for the loss, and you could well say that, then how are you going to apologize to me, huh? Where will my suffering be then? I'll tell you: I'll just have to be content with it. Does it matter to you? And anyway, who am I, do I have any importance for you? Oh sure, right now I matter a lot. You've got your toy, so play with it. It'll help you pass the time, and ease your conscience to boot. You know what it's like? It's like you were holding hands with a girl in front of the whorehouse, and all the broads come out to boo you for immoral behavior. They don't just shout, they stone you.

S – Very well, wasn't it in your interest to enlist in the army? Did you earn the rank of sergeant just for our sake? You were paid to fight, Mike. You were the one who asked for the job. War was your business. If you dreamed of writing romantic poetry, you chose the wrong profession.

M – What did your father do, doctor?

S – What's that got to do with it?

M – A lot. It's not such a hard question. I don't suppose your father's profession is a secret?

S – He was a doctor.

M – For crazies?

S – I think you're asking whether he was a psychiatrist.

M – Whatever! OK, was he a psychiatrist too?

S – Yes. What of it?

M – (big laugh) Well there you are, it's genetic! Try not to believe it. Just look at this talent handed down from father to son! A noble professional talent. I'm sorry, doctor, but we folks lack that talent. My father was a poor farmer. I'm all my family's resources were good for. Actually my dad was about to send me to Harvard so I could study law, but I talked him out of it. Forget it, Dad, I said, my ideal is to become a sergeant. I said, not only is it slicker work, but in a world where everybody dies who can take all those years at Harvard? So of course he gave up on the idea. Being a sergeant is a better deal, he knows that.

S – Professions are not gifts made to people by their fathers, Mike. I spent years studying at the best schools in the country, I worked hard, I got here through my own efforts. Besides which, there are many lawyers I know, many doctors, engineers and businessmen whose fathers were poor farmers.

M – But among the people I know you never see the reverse.

S – What does that mean?

M – I mean so far I've never run across a poor farmer who was the son of a doctor or lawyer. Have you? You studied at the best schools in the country...my ass. You were sent, man!

S – Mike, I know you're going through a hard time, but I'd be happy if you wouldn't have this aggressive attitude toward me, at least. (a slight edge comes into his voice) Don't forget I'm only trying to help you. And there's one other thing you shouldn't forget. There are tens of thousands of troops serving in the army—do you think they all acted like you?

M – Have you seen how everybody acted on TV, doctor? I hope the war didn't make you miss the NBA playoffs? And you must have sized them up, too. Now this soldier's a good kid, he's got a sound character. That one behind him has complexes, you can tell by the way he holds his rifle. The barrel's pointing down. Everybody made fun of him when he was little. And his father used to beat him. Oh God, the one way in the rear is vicious! He's got a disgusting personality. He'd make a great torturer... I mean, you're a psychiatrist aren't you? You understand everything. A superior being!

S – Look, I may be a psychiatrist, but that doesn't give you the right to insult me, which you are doing more and more all the time. (raises his voice) I won't stand for insolence, get that straight.

M – What’s this? Are you losing your temper, sir? Does that befit someone who’s had so much education? What’s more, don’t you think it’s worth being a little patient? Worth it, I say. How much will you make out of this trial? Maybe you expect me to pay something extra, that would make you more patient, eh?

S – That’s enough! This consultation is over! I’ll call your lawyer and tell him I’m pulling out, all right? Now get out of here, and don’t come back again.

M – (yelling) I wasn’t the one who asked to come. And I’m not all that anxious to see you. I’m not going to watch your swishy preening again just so you can make a nickle, pansy.

S – I said get out, killer! You’ll never get well, son, they haven’t found the therapy to make your kind well. You’re a black mark on humanity!

(Having headed for the door, Michael stops and slowly comes back)

M – A black mark on humanity, eh? Killer, eh? How could your kind understand me? Have you ever been exposed to war, buster? (approaches with slow steps) Have you ever been through it? War makes you think of Ben Hur, mister! Did you see The Deer Hunter? They play Russian roulette in it? Remember? Realistic, wasn’t it? I’ll bet you really liked it. Did you find it oh so humane?

(Sam has risen from his chair, and now he retreats backwards with fear all over his face)

M – (goes on, shouting) Have you ever defied a gun barrel that was pointing at your head? Tell me! Have you ever thought this expensive hardwood floor might blow up with the next step. Tell me, I say!!

(Sam faces Michael as he retreats, while Michael’s body is almost touching his, as the slow march has brought them to the edge of the desk. Michael’s hand dips into his pants pocket, and we hear the sound of a switchblade opening)

M – (bellowing) Do you know what the fear of death means?

(he presses the blade against Sam’s throat)

M – (still bellowing) Come on, Mr. Polite, defender of human values, my fine dandy, let’s hear it!! Do you know what the fear of death means?

S – Mike, look, keep cool. I wasn't trying to... I...

M – (at the top of his lungs) Answer my question, mister!!

(he presses the blade harder against Sam's throat. Sam, his back almost touching the desk, is leaning backwards)

M – (bellowing) Have you ever felt like this before, felt that you were going to cr...

(he stops midway through the sentence. For a time both are motionless. Then Michael's body slowly doubles up and he slumps to one knee. Sam is holding a bloody letter-opener. His voice is full of confusion)

S – Mike? Oh my God!

(He holds Michael under the armpits and drags him to a chair.)

S – Mike? Mike, answer me!!

M – My stomach...

S – What have I done? My God, my God. Mike, wait... Wait, I'll call for some help.

(springs to the telephone on the desk and as he is dialing...)

S – I can't believe it! How did this happen? Good Lord! Hello, this is Dr. Davis. One forty-two Sixth Avenue, number fifty-two. There's a wounded man.. a stabbing...

M – (in a feeble voice) Can't you say "I stabbed him"?

S – Urgent? Yes, extremely urgent.

M – Tell them it was inhuman but you did it.

S – I don't know, his shirt's all bloody... In the abdomen, that's right.

M – Tell them you were scared...

S – Right now he can talk...All right...*Please* hurry...

M – Tell them you lost your humanity...

(Sam runs to Michael's side and drops to his knees. As he speaks he tries to peel away the shirt.)

S – They'll be here any minute, Mike! They're coming now!! My God! Are you OK, Mike? You're OK, aren't you?

M – I'm freezing. My lips are numb. My hands...

S – Hold it, hold it. Don't try to talk...

M – Noo, you listen. This is my defense, doctor. (haltingly) I am a human... Cruel... Savage... Primitive... and... Above all... Hypocritical...

S – All right, Mike, all right... Look, now, take a deep breath... My God, my God... They're on the way... Oh Lord, what's happening...My God.... Mike?... Mike!!!

(the stage goes dark)

(the light radiating from the oil drum comes up. Covered by Charlie's coat, Martha lies doubled up on the sidewalk, while Charlie, tightly bundled up in his jacket, stands by the drum. He turns his head to look at Martha, then slowly goes over to her, first bending and then squatting down beside her.)

C – You're still shivering, Martha. Aren't you over being cold yet?

(Unintelligible moans from Martha)

(Charlie runs a hand over her forehead)

C – Wow! You're like an oven. But when someone's temperature goes up they stop being cold. What's going on?

(No answer from Martha)

C – Just let morning come and we'll go to the poorhouse. A doctor comes in there twice a week, Martha! (Pauses) What day is it tomorrow? No, that's no good. Never mind, their doctor is the same age as Napoleon anyway. Hey! Old Fred has a customer who's a doctor. I mean, he used to be. He's a good guy.

Whatever, we'll take care of it, OK?...I mean, don't worry about it. You get some sleep now. Sleep's the best medicine, Martha. Remember last year. After two days you were fit as a fiddle. What a constitution you've got, old lady. Right? A little fever can't hurt *you*. Right? That's right, huh? Martha?

(for a time he squats there in silence, watching Martha. Again he runs his hand over her brow and hair. Then, as if making a sudden decision, he pulls off his jacket and spreads it over the coat that covers her. He is left with nothing but an old shirt on his upper half.)

C – Now you get some sleep. Sleep's the best medicine... Just let morning come... Don't worry about it, Martha.

(He rises to his feet and moves his hands over the oil drum trying to get warm. Slowly he squats down until he is bent double next to the drum with his back to the audience, waiting there motionless.)

C – Don't worry about it...

(the stage darkens)

(the lights come up on the armchairs that occupy the platform, revealing the doctor and the lawyer sitting in them. Ralph is leaning back, while Sam is bent forward with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands. He slowly straightens up.)

S – That's the size of it! Is there anything else you'd like to learn?

R – Noo. It's all very clear. As I said before, the way events unfolded, the fact that the sergeant had tortured prisoners of war, meaning he had a violent streak, your clean record, the fingerprints on the knife, the fact that a switchblade is an instrument of assault whereas you chose a letter opener to defend yourself...All of this will make things easier for us. Nevertheless, there are points vulnerable to an offensive by the prosecution, Sam.

S – What might those be?

R – Firstly, everything would have been much easier if we had a witness.

S – Well, forgive me, I was so flustered I didn't think of calling someone in to watch.

R – But that's not the real problem.

S – Well, then?

R – Sam, you're a psychiatrist.

S – What of it?

R – I mean, your job, or I should say your duty, is to communicate with everybody, from the totally mad to the most pathologically aggressive characters.

S – Then let them try me for dereliction of duty, not for murder. What's my profession got to do with it, I'm a human being first of all. A human being, with all that implies in terms of foibles, weaknesses, I don't know...emotions and instincts.

R – All right, that man was an aggressive psychopath, I agree.

S – (pensive) No, he wasn't aggressive...

R – What?

S – I say he wasn't aggressive.

R – What was he, then? He was a killer who caused pain and humiliation to helpless people. He was a bastard without any saving grace of humanity. Isn't that enough?

(Sam declines to answer and maintains silence)

R – How can you say he wasn't aggressive? Calling him aggressive is a compliment.

S – (soberly, as if talking to himself) He was right...

R – What?

S – I said he was right.

R – You think he was right when he committed those vile acts?

S – No... He was right about us, that we're not aware of our cruelty, savagery and primitive nature. That we were lynching him to ease our own consciences.

R – Come off it, Sam. Think about this a little bit: Who are the victims of torture? The helpless... People whose hands are tied... The powerless... And you, even though you know this person can do nothing, fearlessly exert your power on him. There's a risk in any fight, Sam. But this isn't even a fight. There's no chance of losing. Is such a mean, unfair, dishonorable show of force thinkable? I watched this documentary about an aging lion that couldn't see. He had been chased from the pride by a young male rival. He was unable to hunt any more, and there were sores on his scrawny body. You know how he died? Jackals and vultures took turns eating him, creatures that a few years before couldn't even have come near him. They ate him alive. Then when he was dead they shared up the carcass. Well, let's say that was the duty given them by nature, to get rid of carrion. Do you think people have a similar duty? Is it part of human nature to torment the helpless and powerless? But those who torture are human, Sam. Please don't try to make me think this abomination is excusable.

S – I have no such intention. And I have no doubts about the meanness, the viciousness and the dishonor of committing torture. I was talking about something else, Ralph. And I believe that's what Michael was trying to tell me.

R – What's that?

S – We've created a concept of humanity. In the name of the beautiful and the true we've exalted certain values and cursed others. But in the meanwhile our interests have led us to tolerate other villainies. We call torture inhuman. And that's true. It *is* inhuman. Even discussing the opposite disturbs me. Certainly I don't put what a terrorist does when he abducts children on the same plane with what goes on in war. Some kinds of savagery are worse than repulsive, that's true. But if the act isn't quite that repulsive it's tolerable, eh? What about a bomb that kills more than two hundred thousand people in a few seconds, and leaves many more crippled? Someone designed it, made it, decided to drop it. Someone else pushed the button that opened the hatch to let it fall. All this was more innocent, more acceptable, is that what you're saying? A child who faces a lifetime without an arm or leg, who will be crippled or blind as long as she lives, does she suffer any less pain than those victims of torture? But if these primitive acts are called war then it's all inevitable, eh? Of course there will be deaths and smashed houses, of course children will lose their arms, and young bodies will burn. Isn't that right? And you and I, as if we had no responsibility for what goes on, will send people hardly older than children into the heart of

this primitive cauldron and expect them to be virtuous. Is that what you're saying? Michael had been trained in the midst of this hypocrisy. He had the same primitive drives, just like me. Just like you, in fact.

R – Just like me? What do you mean?

S – What do I mean? (leaps to his feet, begins raising his voice and paces the room) I mean we're at least as guilty as he was. We condone war, the greatest savagery of them all; we pat these people on the back, give them the order to go and kill, see them off to the tune of marches; our children bathe the computer screen in blood at the touch of a button, as we sit with a can of beer watching thousands die on the TV screen. So who do we have the right to judge, I ask you.

R – Certainly not those who give their lives for their country. Listen, just look at nature. Look at other living creatures. Life is a war from the word go. Don't you understand that, a war! What we're putting on trial is infamy, just infamy, got that? Just the snakes in the grass. But humankind, like the other animals, has been fighting ever since it first appeared on earth, Sam.

S – That's true. Fighting ever since it first appeared on earth. Stabbing with knives, slitting throats, taking metals out of the ground and shaping them into tubes, putting smaller bits of metal into those tubes, then propelling them with explosives he himself invented so they go out and puncture another human's guts, or go right through their head! He gives harmless plastic imitations to children so they can get advance practice in killing. As if that weren't enough, he makes larger versions of these metal tubes. Bigger so they can puncture hundreds, thousands of intestines at a single stroke. He uses those metals to make devices that can fly through the air, and into them he places capsules that explode, burn and shatter when they hit the ground. He sends them off, and when they're over a large collection of living creatures of his own kind those capsules are released. Killing dozens won't do, humankind makes shells that can destroy thousands, tens of thousands, millions of human beings in an instant, along with trees, birds, snakes and insects. (he begins to yell) And he spends money on all this. Six or seven times what it would take to eliminate hunger on the whole planet. Because he *makes* money out of this business. MONEY. It serves his interest and brings power. His interests are served and he subdues other people; the human being crushes others, he wins and earns by crushing, Ralph. He gets a barbaric pleasure out of doing it, and this barbarity, this savagery, is the same no matter what his race, religion or nation, for it's the most easily shared human trait, Ralph. Do you understand?

R – So you're saying there's no such thing as a just war, is that it? Even if you're faced with killers who have taken thousands of innocent lives, even if they are full of blood lust that threatens, if not you, your children and their world, even then your struggle isn't justified, eh? Sam, there are concepts which humans have shaped over the course of history. Like honor and freedom. And nations commemorate with extreme gratitude the warriors who have lost their lives defending these principles. Those heroes have played a large part, I think, in bringing mankind to where it is today.

S – Look now, we're talking about different things. I say humankind is primitive, and you come back with matters of right and wrong.

R – What do you expect me to do? If I'm right I'll fight to the bitter end. If I'm under threat, if I fear for my children's future, I'll fight rather than take it lying down. I'll fight for my country and my freedom.

S – If you're fighting for your freedom, it means other people are restricting it. If you're fighting for honor, who's trampling on it? Isn't it other human beings like yourself? Just look at history. It's full of massacres. And it was always humanity that carried them out. All through the ages, whoever gained a little power trod the powerless down. And everybody points at other people's societies, as if their own record was clean. Even we live on land that centuries ago belonged to others, and that was watered by the blood of our ancestors. We teach our children about what other nations have done in the past, and tell them, "See how barbarous they were." Our own crimes are offered up to those young minds as heroism. But we're all descended from the same primitive mammal, Ralph. When they get the chance, peoples who have suffered the greatest massacres don't hesitate to commit even worse kinds of cruelty. And this cruelty is not only accepted, but receives the blessing of the world. Our children are told the virtues of fighting and spilling blood.

R – (annoyed, raises his voice) What our children are told, sir, is the reason we exist! Our history!! They're told about things that make us what we are!

S – Us... It's always us that are in the right. And who are we? We, the people whose interests coincide. And then there's them, the people apart from us. They are cruel, they don't share our virtues. Everything we have done in the past has a justifiable basis. It is always pardonable, you can find a way. But they, in the past they've done things to make them deserve extermination. Yet the odd thing is, exterminating them doesn't solve the problem. If they disappear, we divide and become a new us and them. (shouts) Do you get me, Ralph? What we really need is to get rid of this hypocrisy. Good will. That's right, simply good will.

Individuals, groups, nations in fact, they all lack this good will. They're all incredibly hypocritical. I don't mean to defend tyrants and murderers with blood on their hands. But first we've got to realize something, Ralph. We've got to accept the fact that, whatever nation, religion or skin color we belong to, we're all savage, primitive and intent on our own interests. Let's accept that so we can make an effort to correct it. Otherwise this hypocrisy will end our species.

R – You're dreaming, Sam. Like it or not, this is the human race. What's more, it's a law of nature that there's no room for the weak on this planet. Whether you're an individual or a nation, you've got to be strong. And the strong win, Sam, although being strong is not enough if you want to survive and be free. For that you've got to strive, toil and if necessary fight. Your romantic dreams have nothing to do with real life.

S – No, because you and those like you profit by this savagery, Mister Attorney. All this is done in the interest of human groups. Everything comes down to a calculation of profit and loss. If it's a question of your gain, others, other human groups, people like you who breathe and love, who can be cheerful or sad, people who laugh and cry and nurse their babies, well, you just destroy them. So these are the facts of life, is that it Mr. Attorney? As long as these facts serve your interests, they can readily be accepted, isn't that right?

R – If humankind has been involved in this madness for hundreds of thousands of years, and if as an individual I have no way of laying a brand new foundation for humanity, then we call it reality, Sam.

S – You have no way, then. But have you ever tried?

R – Well, well, I see you're starting to judge me. But I believe you're the one in need of a defense. And don't keep jawing about my interests. I don't think my interests are any different from yours. Don't tell me you've been a peacenik all along without our knowing it. I guess when you closed up the office in the evening and headed home, you weren't dreaming of a new car, you were mourning the victims of war. Or did these revelations only come to you after you got in hot water? And there's something else I should say. All this doesn't give you the right to do what you did to that sergeant, or to take a human life, Sam.

S – No kidding. But it doesn't give you any responsibility either, does it, my fine attorney?

R – (his temper is frayed) I've never lost it enough to have designs on another person's life, Mr. Doctor.

S – Never lost it! (his voice is calm) What a good, well-bred little boy! A good citizen who earns well and has made it in his profession! (slowly draws a switchblade from his pocket and flicks it open) Tell me, do you see this?

R – Don't be ridiculous, Sam, what are you doing with that knife?

S – (approaches) Would you be scared if I pressed this blade to your throat? Huh? Tell me, would you be scared?

R – (uneasy) This is nothing to joke about, Sam. Look, please stick that thing back in your pocket.

S – (yelling) Answer my question!! Would you be scared!!

R – (stammering) Of..of course I would, Sam. Who wouldn't?

(By this time Sam is quite close to Ralph's chair. He leans his weight down on him and presses the knife to his throat)

S – Tell me now, attorney. Tell me loud and clear! Are you scared?

R – (in a choked voice) Yes...

S – I can't hear you!

R – (louder) Yes...

S – And tell me this...If you knew I was going to waste you, and you had a knife in your hand, would you stick it into me? Huh?

R – (in a pinched voice, haltingly) How could I, Sam. I...not you, Sam...

(Sam presses the knife quite firmly)

R – What are you doing? Stop, I beg you, stop!!

S – (at the top of his lungs) Tell me, buster!! Tell me!! If you had a knife...

R – (gurgling) I'd stab you.

(for a while they are motionless. Sam slowly pulls the knife away and rises. Ralph's eyes are horrified as he rubs his throat. He looks like he can't believe he has escaped with his life. With slow steps Sam heads toward stage right to exit, but when he is halfway there he stop and flings the knife down. He begins to speak calmly)

S – I'm leaving, Mr. Attorney. Now you can sit back down, pick up a glass and listen to some music. You've heard my defense... You can repeat it... (raises his voice) I am a human... Primitive!...Savage!... Cruel!... And above all...HYPOCRITICAL!! Then you can raise a glass and drink to humanity.

(the lights go out)

(light comes up around the oil drum to reveal Martha and Charlie, as at the end of their previous scene, with Martha lying curled up on the sidewalk. Charlie, wearing his shirt, squats by the drum with his back to the audience. For about 30 seconds nothing stirs on stage, nor is there a sound. Everything seems frozen. The only movement comes from the light inside the drum. Charlie slowly topples to his right, falling stiffly like a plaster statue. The instant his body touches the ground the lights in the oil drum go out and the sound of an explosion introduces a series of bombing sequences to the screen. The doctor's aria starts, not from the beginning, but from 66 min. 14 sec., at first softly and then quickly increasing volume until it fills the hall. The bombing footage mingles with the music, and we see Ralph's arm rise from the armchair, which faces the screen. His hand holds a champagne glass. For a while the glass stays raised and motionless; then with the finale of the music (immediately after the last note of the aria there should be a loud bell or the sound of an explosion to match a massive explosion on the screen) the lights and sounds are extinguished)