

Eugene

A genial musical comedy

book by Julia Brettschneider and David Steinsaltz

songs by David Steinsaltz

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Dramatis Personae

Communards

Flora — Just out of college, blond, and confused.

Angela — Also just out of college and confused, but not blond. Was Flora's roommate.

Rocky — Also just out of college, but too little ambition to be confused.

Mother — About 50. Graying blond hair. Motivating force behind the Laputa Creek commune. Flora's mother.

Gavin — Also about 50. Engineer. Unemployable for the past several decades, since he missed the electronics revolution.

Kiffer — Nickname of Kenneth Feigen. Expelled from college a while back for growing pot in his dorm room. Inherited the land for the Laputa Creek commune from his grandmother.

Ivan — Laputa Creek's computer expert. Russian, about 30. Heavy Russian accent, but he rarely speaks.

Banker

Genesis Corporation

Director — mid-50's. Former academic. Founded the corporation and rules it with an iron fist. Divorced.

Eugene — Director's son. Being groomed to take over the business.

Boris — Russian émigré. Director helped bring him, and later his daughter Irena, out of Russia. Was Director's assistant at the university, and cofounded Genesis. Now the chief scientist.

Irena — Boris's daughter. Studied mathematics and biology in Moscow, but now a leading researcher at Genesis.

Mr. Merk — Peon in the Genesis marketing department.

Guard

Ezra Gibor — International lawyer.

Several Genesis Executives

Several Genesis Scientists

DNA — Dancing double helix. Appears in a dream.

Personnel Director

Personnel Secretary

Several radio voices and characters that appear on video.

Act I. Scene 1.

Sunrise. A battered barn in the background. Foreground straggly plants and grasses. Characters enter one by one to sing their verse at center stage, then withdraw to the sides to build fences, dig ditches, etc. All onstage join in singing the chorus.

*First to appear is **Eugene**. He seems to sneak in, while the stage is bare, sings the first verse, and then runs off before anyone sees him.*

Eugene: Once upon a time
in a land called USA,
a tribe of longhairs tilled the soil, and then went on their way.
Grown drunk on stocks and options,
they raped their mother Earth,
and wrote new laws to lay the cost
on those they'd given birth.
But now, they're
building the future. (3x)

Gavin *arrives on foot, with a gnarled walking stick.*

Gavin: Ten million years of apes had roamed
On the African savannah
Till one conceived to use a stick to knock down ripe bananas.
It's tools that make the man, my friends,
but with microchips and genes
the old techne's
left to chimpanzees
as tools yield to machines.
But now, etc.

Mother and Flora *arrive on a tandem bicycle.*

Mother: The men who run the world,
The men who make the rules,
they swelter in their office suites, all clutching at their tools.
Our daughters must grow free! I cried,
and sounded the attack.
Brave sisters urged me "forward, on!"
then stabbed me in the back.
But now, we're, etc.

Flora: I never knew a father's care,
he left before my birth.
My mother's my whole family,
and friend, for what that's worth.
I asked her, Mom, where is our home?
To me it's an abstraction.
She said, we'll have our land some day,
and live by our own action.
And now, etc.

Angela and Rocky enter on a motorcycle.

Angela embracing Flora: We shared a room four years in college,
shared our joys and sorrows.
But dusty classroom theories could not
furnish new tomorrows.

Rocky: I couldn't bear to sit in class,
I almost went stir crazy.
I know there was good times at school,
But my memory's kind of hazy.
Now, etc.

Kiffer (*on skateboard*): My grandma bought the farm, I mean,
I miss her, but it's mine now.
And all the great ideas I've hatched
are growing toward the sky now.
It's ganja green the planet needs,
the kindest bud I'm breeding.
The times are past of closet lamps
on one pathetic seedling.
And now, etc.

Ivan wanders in, but doesn't sing. He carries a notebook computer, and sets himself in a corner to type.

Mother: Flora, have you finished hoeing the cauliflower field?

Flora: Nearly done.

Mother: Well, hurry it up, and then help Rocky clean out the barn. Gavin!
Where are you?

Gavin who is right behind her, screwing together an intricate contraption: Right here!

Mother *startles at hearing him behind her*: Are you finished yet with that... that... what is it again?

Gavin: The water-powered ovomoliner. Delicate enough to gather eggs with less than 1 percent breakage, yet tough enough to thresh and grind the hardest winter wheat. Runs off rivers, streams, dams, rainwater. Even spit, if you've got the patience.

Mother: Do you think you could find the time to repair the truck? The starter seems to be jammed. Angela!

Angela: Yes, Ms. Eierstock? Have I told you that we read your seminal paper, "Why Johnny can't close the toilet seat" in my senior gender studies seminar.

Mother: Speaking of which, I think Kiffer could use some help there with the outhouse.

Angela: But I'm watering my zinnias.

Mother: Good you mention that. We have to move five thousand dollars worth of produce — cash crops — just to cover our bills, or the commune is finished. And you're using valuable greenhouse space, not to mention your own labor...

Kiffer: I had to cut back on my cannabis acreage.

Mother: I don't want to hear about this.

Angela: It's a brand new process. No one else is growing these starburst zinnias in North America. And they are Brenda Oodles' absolute favorite flower. Have you seen "Tomato Baby", where she played a pregnant woman. Heartbreaking! No? Everyone who cares about the environment should see this film. Her baby gets poisoned with stray fish genes, which were bioengineered into a tomato, is born with fins and a tail. She was called to testify before Congress, set biotech PR back fifty years.

Mother: That's lovely, but we need cash first, to pay for the computer hookups. Otherwise, we may not be able to turn our provisional into bona fide membership in the Beehive network.

Angela: Why is this Beehive more important than the divine Brenda Oodles?

Mother: You young people need to understand. I've had my share of experience with communes. You think they'll change the world, but they don't. The Beehive has a chance, because it's a worldwide network, in constant contact

each with the others. We need to fight their life-destroying inhuman technology with positive, woman-centered, empowering technology.

Angela: Why can't they help us get set up?

Mother: There are ideals, and then there's reality. The reality is, there are a lot of losers out there looking for a free ride. Each commune needs to prove itself, before it gets full membership and can count on the support of the others.

Rocky: What about your inheritance, Kiffer? I thought you said your grandma was loaded.

Kiffer: She sure was. Pretty much every day. She sunk her retirement money into cases of vanilla abstract. Told the neighbors she did a lot of baking. The farm is mortgaged up to its hillocks.

Flora: What about my father? Maybe we could get some money from him?

Mother: Flora Marie! I've told you never to mention that man! As far as I'm concerned, he doesn't exist.

Flora: You can't decide for me.

Mother: Not another word!

Flora: You always used to say, Flora, you'll understand some day.

Mother: It's starting to look like I overestimated you. Look, everyone, despite what those clouds look like, there's not going to be cauliflower falling from the sky. If we hope to build the future, we need to get up every morning early, and toil in the bright sun. We can't expect help, and we can't expect praise. Maybe our grandchildren will thank us, or their grandchildren, after we're gone.

All return silently to work, humming the tune of "We're building the future". Gradually, the scene has shifted, with their work, to indoors. The table is set, they sit down to eat. They bow their heads, as if to say grace, and sing a last chorus of "We're building the future". It ends with a percussive last chord, and on the next downbeat the lights go out.

Act I. Scene 2.

Sound of bustling about. Stumbling, curses. One might think it was stagehands changing scenery incompetently. Glowing green points show appear on Kiffer's body.

Kiffer: Wow, blackout.

Angela: Are those accupressure points?

Kiffer: Right on!

Inventor: You had them tattooed on your body?

Kiffer: With this kind stuff they call green fluorescent protein. I had this girlfriend, she was, like, totally into this Chinese *wu wei*, and *I Ching*, and all that, and she'd do these wild acupuncture things in bed. But it was dark, and she kept stabbing me in the nose. So finally...

Mother: I think we may have neglected to pay the bill.

Kiffer: Whatever. Power outages are so amazing. And they can change your life.

Rocky: Like how?

A candle is lit. All sit around in a circle.

Kiffer: Like, for example, there was this amazing girl I once went with. Amy. I mean, she was really, you know, amazing. But a little out of control, if you know what I mean. So, this one time, my big brother Danny — did I tell you I had an older brother who was a priest? He was just out of the seminary, and he was showing off, invited the both of us out to this really swank dive. Had the collar on, the whole getup. We'd just ordered, buttered a few rolls, when the lights pop off. Five seconds, ten, then comes this SHREEEK. It's Amy, and she yells, "Dan, you take your hand off my knee this minute!"

Rocky: Right out of seminary?

Kiffer: Aw, Amy was just shitting him. Next we heard from him was seven months later, he wrote us from an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico where he was working as a cook, with an earring and shaved head. One thing led to another, and now he's back in the God business, sort of, as a big honcho in a San Francisco ashram. He won a silver medal recently in the international outdoor

freestyle yoga championships.

Angela: That's like in *Kiss and Tell*. Have you...? Don't tell me none of you has seen *Kiss and Tell*! That's Brenda Oodle's most major starring role.

Mother: Oh, God, not your peony enthusiast again.

Angela: Zinnias. How can you call yourselves environmentalists and not love Brenda Oodles? Did you know that she gives 10% of her film salary — that's gross — to environmental causes?

Inventor: *Kiss and Tell* doesn't sound like conservationist agitprop to me.

Angela: No, but it's so romantic. Oodles is this career woman, totally beautiful, totally driven. It's her 30th birthday, and her friends have thrown her a party in a fabulous restaurant — caviar, champagne, truckloads of zinnias, thousands of bow-tied waiters hushing around. They're drinking a toast, she's circled by three men. Bachelor number one's a coworker at her publishing company, a real comer, going to be a big shot in short order. Number two's a mountain climber, big shoulders, three-day beard, the whole wildman deal. Three is a shy poet or something. She doesn't know any of them well, but she's loving the attention. The four sit down at one of the small tables for the main course: the publisher talking big contracts and Lear jets, the climber hauling out the spine-tinglingest blizzard on Everest, with just the faintest whiff of cannibalism, and how he clawed his way back up a sheer cliff to rescue the Sherpa, the poet is exploring the outer limits of his vocabulary, and how he once was on a panel with Salman Rushdie...

Flora: ... and all three eyeing each other like hyenas around the kill...

Angela: Right, and the prey is starting to feel neglected. Then, bam! Lights out. Pitch dark. Scurrying back and forth. A plate full of glass crashes down somewhere. And our heroine gets a kiss on the back of the neck that sends her swooning. The lights come on, the three men are gathered around, fanning her...

Flora: ... and she absolutely has to know which of the three men kissed her.

Angela: Precisely. So first she thinks it was the publisher. He's so suave, and he was the closest one to her. So she starts seeing him, joins him on trips to Paris and London, but it turns out...

Mother: He's married?

Angela: No.

Inventor: Gay?

Angela: No, impotent, and he can only get his rocks off by being spanked on the bottom with his mother's King James Bible.

Flora: Not the nape-of-the-neck type, in other words.

Angela: Decidedly not. Then she takes up with the mountain man. She has to quit her job to join him on his next expedition. But it's not such a hit, all crampons and ice axes, thin air, and her neck has to stay covered in any case...

Flora: So that leaves just the poet...

Angela: And she has this epiphany while she's hanging by her ankle from a safety rope 200 feet above the valley floor, and his face flashes back to her, and he speaks to her in his soothing voice, saying, why did you ignore me, just because I don't have the million dollars and the brassy muscles? and she apologizes. Cut away then, the scene is that same restaurant, the lady and the poet are celebrating their first wedding anniversary: laughing, giggling, ecstatic, and she mentions the kiss. What kiss? But she just snuggles up to him. And just then the waiter catches her eye, and he smiles, and her face freezes in horror: flash! it dawns on her, and us, that the waiter was the one who kissed her. The end!

Act I. Scene 3.

Loud knock on the door. Rocky stands up to answer it, but the Director and his minions are already coming in. They set up a scaffolding with extremely bright lights.

Director: Howdy. Glad to meet our new neighbors. Shake hands, boys. (*His stooges — including Eugene — shake hands with the communards.*) I'm Harry Brenner, president and chief executive officer of the Genesis Corporation. Heard of us? Maybe not. We're world leaders in...

Mother: Fertility treatment. Reproductive technologies.

Director: Ah yes. I'm delighted to see that our advertising has reached the gentle sex. Allowing for the delay in seeping into this quaint, ahem, swamp. One of our earliest ventures. Many years ago. A little bonus to our PR chief is in order. We were the first to implant jellyfish genes in newborns.

Flora: You mean?

Angela: The Glow Babies?

Director: It's the inventiveness of Genesis scientists that has saved hundreds, I might even dare say thousands of toddlers from being lost in the dark without a trace. And tests have found that they score more than 80 points above average on their SATs.

Gavin: Genesis moved on to genetically engineer plants and animals — packing peanuts, tango-dancing bears, hypoallergenic kittens, skinless chickens...

Director: They said it was impossible. We crossed a prime broiler with a banana slug.

Gavin: We all have our crosses to bear.

Director: However, the future belongs to bacteria. So many talk about the weather. So few do something about it. Genesis cloud-seeding bacteria, though, have transformed the Gobi Forest.

Flora: The Gobi Desert?

Director: I see you've been cut off from the news here. Look, I can tell you good people are very committed. I respect that. I was that way once... I'm sure this is a very worthy project here. All you need is the right level of investment,

to get it off the ground. Imagine the possibilities: Prime organic seeds, solar powered combines and threshers. And with no mortgage to pay off you'll be free from the Man! You can build your antiauthoritarian Athens there in the hills, away from the miasms, with leisure to discuss and publish your utopian theories.

Gavin: We'll wax our own batiks and watch fat fresh thoughts leap from the babbling brooks into our laps, while broad-hipped Polynesian maidens crush coconuts to concoct soothing drinks and lotions to soothe our brows.

Director: Allow me, if you will, good people, to explain our position. We are engaged in revolutionary, philanthropic, ground-breaking research. . .

Angela: Ground-contaminating, you mean.

Director: Many years ago we purchased a large swathe of land for our experimental farm, in a desolate, uninhabited region, to protect the public from contamination. . .

Angela: To protect yourselves from witnesses. . .

Director: Unfortunately, despite our great care to select a region entirely unsuited for human habitation, some humans have moved in adjacent. Unaccountable, but there it is. And since a stream and a fetid bog. . .

Kiffer: The pond?

Director: Ehhh. Yes. Since these glorious wetland biotopes cross the boundary between our properties, we were concerned. *Looks around.* Yes, concerned. In order to save us all from any untoward eventualities, we are willing to exchange a most excellent plot, an entire small valley, fabulously fertile, thirty miles north of here. You will own the hills all around, up to the peaks, which will be an advantage in case any of the substances you choose to grow need to be shielded from prying eyes.

Kiffer: Right on!

Mother: We don't need charity from. . .

Gavin shushes her.

Gavin: Can we perform the transfer immediately, or do we have to wait for the environmental impact statement to be approved by the EPA?

Director*jerks back in horror:* That Enormous Profit Adversary will mind its own business, if it knows what's good for it. Things move fast in industry. We don't believe in formalities. Just a handshake, and our legal department will

take care of the rest, with no further involvement on your part. Unless, that is, well, we can always use a smart fellow like yourself. We pay well. Very well. Maybe part time – and you can see from the inside how beneficent are all of our endeavors.

Gavin: I take it, I would be compensated at the same scale as the government inspectors?

Director: Absolutely! *Pause.* I can't say I haven't enjoyed this splendid badinage, my good people. But I am a busy man. I believe the legal owner of this property is one Kenneth Feigen.

Kiffer: That's me.

Director: Ah, splendid, the young are always much less ossified, more open to novelty. Will you accept our generous and unrepeatable offer, or do you intend to follow this confused old man here on his dogmatic path to perdition?

Kiffer: Yes. I mean, no. *He looks around at the others, particularly Mother, who is glaring.* I guess I do. It does sound good, though.

Director: You are all so resolved? Very well, then. We will attain our ends by other means. We always do. *A wave of his hand, and the lights are struck. Genesis employees slip out.*

Act I. Scene 4.

Sounds of engineer banging and sawing.

Kiffer: Should we run after him?

Angela: Surrender? Never.

Kiffer: Never? But my plants. . .

Flora: Can we even remain in the Beehive Network if we have no power to run the computers?

Angela: We can make our own network, even more exclusive than the Beehive. We won't let anyone else join.

Mother: Gavin, how is it coming along?

Inventor: Almost there. *More clatter.* There. It should work now. *He starts pedaling on his bicycle generator, and a weak light comes onto the stage. A computer screen is seen glowing off to the side.* We'll have to take turns pedaling.

Banker *enters, wearing a helmet lamp.*

Banker: Ah, how quaint. Please excuse the interruption at this difficult time. I represent the First Mutual Fidelity Trust Corporation. I need to speak with one Kenneth P. Feigen about the mortgage on this prime bit of real estate.

Kiffer: That's me.

Banker: You do look the part, do you not? Smashing. Yes, it has come to our attention that your enterprise is suffering certain cash flow problems, certain financial embarrassments, certain inabilities to meet certain essential payments. *Light goes out as Rocky takes over pedaling.* Yes. It is the policy of FiMFaT to support small businesses. We would never want it to be said of us that we circle like vultures around dying companies, salivating at the chance to lick the carcass clean. At the same time, we do have certain. . . obligations, to our shareholders.

Inventor: Shareholders are the Christ figures of modern business: Worshiped and draped with gold for their function of carrying off the sins of their devotees.

Banker: Oh, splendid. I must remember to have that chiseled on my tombstone someday. Indeed, the shareholders are a jealous bunch. And they would

not approve of questionable loans to organizations incapable of meeting their obligations.

Mother: But we haven't missed a single mortgage payment. Have we?

Banker: No, Mr. Feigen has been an exemplary customer... So far. But the future, my good people, ah, the future. Always such an anxious topic, this future. And the future of this enterprise looks particularly, how shall I put this, gloomy. Therefore, I am obliged to notify you, please sign here to acknowledge receipt, thank you, that Paragraph seven of your mortgage agreement is activated, allowing FiMFaT to demand full repayment of the outstanding balance, now 72 thousand dollars, within 60 days of said notification. If payment is not accomplished on that day, foreclosure may — and assuredly will — follow immediately. Good evening, madams, sirs.

Act I. Scene 5.

Angela and Flora working in the greenhouse. Angela is tending her zinnias, Flora is hammering boxes. Kiffer is puttering about in back. Rocky comes in.

Rocky: Hi, girls!

Flora to Angela: Did you see any girls come in?

Rocky: How are the boxes coming, Flora?

Flora: Why don't you ask Angela? She's done twice as much as me.

Rocky: Angela doesn't like to talk about work. Anyway, I wanted to hear it from your lovely mouth.

Flora: If you find my mouth so attractive, why is it you're staring quite a bit lower?

Rocky: I'm off to buy supplies. Do we need anything for the greenhouse?

Flora: *She hits her thumb with the hammer.* Shit!

Rocky: Are you sure? We just brought in a big load of manure on Thursday.

Flora: Will you fuck off? You made me smash my thumb.

Rocky: I did? Sorry. How?

Flora: I feel like I'm under inspection at all times. Equal rights in this commune means that women are constantly being tested, to see if they're up to par in men's work. Twenty times a day we get to demonstrate our inferiority.

Angela: I don't feel inspected.

Rocky: No, Flora's right. Let's talk more about this, Flora. I'll be back in a couple of hours. Maybe we can take a walk after dinner. . . Bye, girls. *He exits.*

Flora: You were the one who said you resented the way the men seem to be testing us, and patronizing us if we can't haul a sack of cement.

Angela: Testing, sure. But the only one Rocky is inspecting is you, and it doesn't much matter to him whether you hit the nail or your thumb.

Flora: Oh, he's just a big goofball.

Angela says nothing, but takes up a hammer and expertly knocks together a new crate.

Flora: How do you do that?

Angela: Let me show you. See, you have to start the nail gripping the hammer short, like this, then, when it's fixed in place, you can take your fingers away, and then you swing it long.

Flora tries one. The nail goes in reasonably well.

Flora: Where did you learn to do that?

Angela: It's just one of those things you just know. Doesn't everyone...? My father taught me.

Flora: Did you learn a lot from him?

Angela: A few things.

Flora: My father left us before I was even born. I don't know a thing about him. Do you two get along?

Angela: We did. Mostly. *She sings:*

My father was a failure, said my grandma, who was never wrong
nor to blame.

My mother, just a bystander worked nine to five and hinted
he should do the same.

But the same's

not the same

when it's someone else who plays the game,

said my father with a wink,

to spare me saying what I think,

he let me go.

He told me in the backyard dwelled

a troll with a bag of gold,

who had dug a tunnel clear through to

the far side of the world.

For the scraps of gold I thought I found,

he fashioned me a chest,

and engraved, "This fairy gold belongs
to a mighty magic girl."

The furniture he crafted,
perfecting hours and days on end,
he would sell to friends and strangers
for barely half of what he'd spent.

As we biked around the lake, he pedalled,
Me sprawled across the bars.
Can I fly? "Nothing's impossible
for a mighty magic girl."

The summer I was sixteen, with a boyfriend, very cool.
and Papa called him crazy, creepy, dangerous, a fool.
I know how young men are, he screamed, I once was one myself.
I knew that he was wrong, but somehow knowledge never helps.

A humid August evening, we were
wondering what to do.
The telephone rang: his bike, a car,
I'm so afraid.

At the funeral that Thursday morning
said grandma to my mom:
At least the child won't suffer, since he
kept his insurance paid.

And what did the mighty magic girl say?
She didn't even cry.

Kiffer: Sounds like you two could use an all-expenses-paid trip to Therapark.

Angela: What are you doing there?

Flora: Have you been eavesdropping the whole time?

Kiffer: Eavesdropping, my grandma's ass! Some of us have been working.

Flora: What's Therapark?

Kiffer: Only the world's leading psychotherapy-oriented theme park. Founded
and managed by my very own uncle. That's how come I went there.

Angela: Do I want to know what a psychotherapy-oriented theme park is?

Kiffer: You should. It would do you a world of good. Like me, the ques-
tionnaire found that I was suffering from my mother never having breastfed me.

So I got sent to a giant reclining mock-up mother with three-foot breasts, and I got to suckle there for hours, listening to piped in digestion noises. Other people go into a boxing ring with robots that can synthesize the voices of their parents, or their boss, or their spouse. Someone afraid of flying got to do a role-playing in a flight simulator. He thought he was just a passenger, but it turned out it he was in one of those movies where the pilot has a stroke and he had to take over the controls and bring the plane down.

Flora: Did it work?

Kiffer: You bet it did. He joined the Air Force as a pilot, and last I heard he got a medal for blowing up a suspicious wedding party in Afghanistan. For someone who was abandoned by her father I think they have an Identikit kind of mix and match so you can put together your own father, and then hang him on the wall, or tell him off, or shred him, or whatever. As for Angela, I'm not sure if they have anything for man-hating would-be lesbians who suspect their best friend of trying to steal their man. *Angela storms out.* Did I say something wrong? *Calls out.* It was just a joke, man!

Act I. Scene 6.

Mother sits at a desk, agitatedly going over the accounts. Angela knits, Flora draws, Kiffer reads a science fiction book.

Mother: Two weeks left. We haven't a chance.

Angela: The harvest is good. We'll get the produce to market in ten days.

Mother: It doesn't matter. Even if we sell our entire harvest at record prices, it's not going to bring in seventy thousand.

Flora: We could still try...

Mother *interrupts:* Gavin, is any money coming in on your patents?

Gavin: Very little. I seem to have picked an inopportune time to perfect the manual typewriter. Flywheel stores the keystroke energy to power the carriage return and a coffee grinder. I thought I'd be on easy street.

Kiffer: Neato! A combination food and word processor.

Gavin: Brought in a dollar seventy-nine three years ago. And the inkjet quill pen never got off the ground. And no investor wants to touch my hemp refrigerator. What about you, Ivan? Anything you're doing that could turn a profit on the computer market?

Ivan *with heavy Russian accent:* I am writing a mystery novel.

Rocky: A murder mystery?

Ivan: No. It is, how you say? embezzler mystery.

Gavin: No one killed? That is novel. Are you writing in Russian or English?

Ivan: No words. It is a novel of embezzler, which I write all in spreadsheets. We start with company balance sheet. Then is very funny spreadsheet with expenses from Christmas party. Then new balance sheet. Profits are having been diverted. Big suspense.

Flora: How many people do you think will read something like that?

Ivan: No people. Soon there will be intelligent computers. This will be novel

for computers to read. Only numbers. For computers, is big suspense when numbers add wrong.

Kiffer: Bummer that those hippies who came through last week ripped off my plants. They were all right dudes otherwise.

Angela: Right before the police came by with a warrant. They saved us all a dozen years in state prison.

Kiffer: You call it a coincidence. The hippies dropped the dime on us. It was some killer bud, though. It would've been cool to turn the coppers on. I still have a few plants that were in drag, though.

Ivan *hands a computer printout to Flora.*

Flora: Angela. Oh, Angela. *Embraces her.* **Angela** *baffled.*

Mother *picks up the paper and reads aloud:* Fans mourn Brenda Oodles.

Rocky: I don't get it. Don't they usually wait till someone's dead for mourning?

Mother: It was a tomato. Genetically engineered extra-firm tomatoes with fish genes. "Ms. Oodles speech at a 'Real Food' rally, had been widely publicized. Witnesses say that Oodles found herself under fire from a group of protechnology rowdies, who are alleged to have hurled rotten genetically engineered tomatoes. Police speculate that the implanted fish genes caused these tomatoes to harden, under the skin, to the consistency of concrete as they rot. Several minors, were arrested soon after, but released to their families, many of whom are believed to be employed as research scientists in biotechnology companies in the San Francisco Bay Area. "These loonies are trampling on our traditional way of life," one youth exclaimed as he was led off. Oodles was taken to nearby Disney Hospital, where she was expected to recover, but died soon after." Angela, I'm so sorry.

Mother *turns on the radio.*

Radio journalist: The fire department had to rescue a four-year-old boy who very nearly drowned in flower petals here, that should give you an idea how thick the fans have buried the 600 yard driveway leading up to Oodles' modest little Beverly Hills mansion in her trademark red starburst zinnias. Florists are striving desperately to fill the demand, but domestic supplies are exhausted. Back to you in the studio, Suzie.

Radio anchor: Thanks, José. Any further reports from the Netherlands?

Radio journalist: That's right, Suzie. In an apparently unrelated develop-

ment, just two weeks ago got so stoned that he left his greenhouse doors open. The rabbits which gained entrance used the opportunity to eat every last zinnia. The Dutch Consul General in Los Angeles refused to confirm or deny these rumors, but did issue a statement, saying that the Dutch government, quote, would not be surprised if rabbits had eaten the flowers, and that eating flowers was a legally protected activity of Dutch rabbits. The E.U. agriculture commissioner has been asked to issue uniform regulations for the diets of rabbits throughout the 15 member states.

Radio anchor: Good to hear from you, as usual, José. I miss you. If any home gardeners have a stash of these special flowers, they could make a pretty penny here. The fans are desperate, hysterical, thousands of people screaming for more red starburst zinnias.

Kiffer: Hey, Angela, don't you have half the greenhouse filled with these starburst thingies?

Angela *bursts into tears.*

Mother: Angela, tell us, how many did you grow? How many zinnias?

Angela: Eight...

Mother: That's all?

Angela: ...thousand.

Ivan *brings in another printout.*

Mother: We have an offer of six dollars and twenty-five cents per blossom. That will do it. We need to have the entire lot crated up by 5 am tomorrow. Let's go!

All run out, stage left, except Angela. Flora returns and tries to lead her gently out. Angela refuses to be comforted, and Rocky takes Flora out. Angela is left on the stage as the lights go out.

Act I. Scene 7.

Stylized activity of clipping, bundling, and crating flowers, presented as dance.

Mama and pop, brought together by bees,
Seed sits in the earth for a month or two.
They don't go to college or get degrees:
Seeds on their own know just what to do.

Soon they'll be sitting in their brown clay pots:
Pluck every blossom with a starburst bloom.
Bundle with foam in ten-flower lots;
Seeds on their own know just what to do.

Once upon a time, in a faraway land,
they say, the flowers woke up and tried to make plans.
They ordered that the roots prepare to meet a rainy day,
And tried to organize the leaves in new and better ways.

Their productivity increased sixty-eight percent.
The goats were overjoyed by all this nourishment,
They phoned up all their relatives and they said to come by:
Soon the meadow was bare and the pond was sucked dry.

They don't have money, and they don't wear suits,
still they're welcomed by each parvenu.
No one's more respectable than flowers and fruits:
Seeds on their own know just what to do.

We're building our commune from scratch, homespun,
Soaking in the lessons of our green guru:
Drink plenty of water, turn yourself toward the sun.
Seeds on their own know just what to do.

Act I. Scene 8.

Kiffer and Angela on an almost bare stage. *Kiffer is tending a row of plants.*

Kiffer: Yes, yes, sweetie. I'm sorry I left you alone so long.

Angela: What are you doing?

Kiffer: Plant massage. Poor thing has got a terrible kink in her stem. . . Look, how would you feel if you'd been left alone in a stuffy greenhouse and you hadn't been fertilized all week?

Angela: Well. . .

Kiffer: We won't have much of a party if the plants aren't in shape.

Angela: What kind of shape do they have to be in? I thought we were going to smoke them, not dance with them.

Kiffer: Hey, man, these are sensitive plants we're talking about, not some zenias that someone's going to dump in front of a movie star's hacienda. Do you want your consciousness being altered by a plant who's suffering from sap constipation or shaky roots?

Angela: When you put it that way. . . Is this good pot?

Kiffer: Pot? This is the evolutionary pinnacle of genus Cannabis, a veritable übermarijuana.

Angela: Wow. I didn't realize you knew so many words.

Kiffer: Just because I'm a slob doesn't mean I have no sensitivity for a noble creature.

Angela: Since you're so concerned about these "noble creatures", maybe you'd like to see some of these pictures. *She hands over a pile of photographs.*

Kiffer: Those fiends!

Angela: These are photographs that were smuggled out of the Genesis laboratories. These plants have had genes from whales implanted, to make them produce more oil.

Kiffer: Can they be stopped?

Angela: I have some ideas. But I need your help. The Genesis headquarters is not far from here. Would you be willing to apply for a job there?

Kiffer: A job! I couldn't...But there's an even more important principle at stake. Okay...

Angela: We can discuss this later. The celebration starts at 7, don't forget. We have to ratify our Beehive constitution to begin with. So don't be late, and don't go sampling too many of your friends here. Toodles. *She departs.*

Kiffer: Hmm. I really shouldn't expose my friends to untested drugs. Let's see now. How about you? Do you mind if I borrow a couple of leaves? *He rips up a few leaves and places them into the bowl of a pipe, which he raises to his forehead in a gesture of supplication, then lights.* Oh, this is good. You guys have really outdone yourselves this time. *He inhales again.* Man, with a little money we could make this greenhouse amazing. Decorate it. Put in a kitchen. Maybe start producing our own brownies. *He sits down.* It's hard work, taking care of these plants. I wonder if those scientists would still be interested in working on giant plants. *He yawns.* How would you guys feel about being twenty feet tall? *His head lolls.*

Scientists *in lab coats tiptoe on stage. They tug on some of the plants, which grow up toward the ceiling. Kiffer watches, with a doped, slightly intrigued grin. He remains slumped in the corner. DNA molecules strut out. Tango music starts. Scientists and DNA pair off, dancing and singing. They alternate verses, starting with the DNA, and sing together on the chorus. The ones singing also lead the dance.*

Free will's a joke from our point of view:
You make your choices, and we make you.
Over billions of years we've been shaping your fears and joys.
We build your bones, make up your mind,
You kick the bucket, and are left behind.
Our future unfurls in your baby girls and boys.

Snip a little here. Snip a little there.
Vectorize your oligos and grow chimeras!
Might cure a disease, might chew toxic waste,
Or might even find a breakthrough strain improving tofu's taste.

DNA: We don't know much, but we know what we like,

and then we make a copy.

Scientists: With all due respect, and meaning no offense,
We find your procedures much too sloppy.

Twining in pairs inside every cell:
You know where to find us, you can read our mail.
But you haven't a clue what we're going to do years hence.
Lizards to mice. Mice into rats.
Ten million years later flying vampire bats.
Random tricks up our sleeves, though you'd love to believe
there's some sense.

Some say, we're playing God. Some call us 'Frankenstein'.
With all respect, the good Lord quit the game before halftime.
His world's in a mess, our labs spick and span,
So who do you trust to patent life and build the future man?

Together:

Four billion years in the making.
Eight billion years left to go (give or take).

Scientists: You know that we'll protect and nurture life,
now that we own the stocks.

DNA: It's all the same to us, we thrive in chickens and in chickenpox.

Together:

In science, as in life, the answers hang on just who owns the ox
that gets gored, and who eats the steak.

Act I. Scene 9.

Mother's room. *Bed, small bookcase. Mother is using a hand mirror to finish dressing. Flora enters.*

Flora: Mom, I...

Mother: Ah, Flora. Good. Ready for the meeting?

Flora: Yes. No. Sort of. I just...

Mother: You must be very excited. This is your first commune. We're voting on a constitution. Making it permanent. When I was your age...

Flora: Mom, I need to talk to you.

Mother: Anything, sweetie. I hope this isn't about your worthless father again.

Flora: Mother! You're always so negative! I'm sure he's not as bad as you make him out to be.

Mother: I can't recall a single good quality.

Flora: Why can't I meet him and make up my own mind? What's so terrible? I know you two didn't get along. And it must have hurt to be abandoned like that, with an infant.

Mother: You can't imagine.

Flora: Did he beat you?

Mother: No.

Flora: What then?

Mother: I wouldn't even know where to find him.

Flora: Tell me who he is. I'll find him.

Mother: I don't think he's alive.

Flora: The last time I asked if he were dead, you said no.

Mother: Did I? Well, it's been a while. To tell the truth, I don't really remem-

ber much.

Flora: Please, Mother.

Mother, tell me, Mother, can you
tell me, what was Father like?
Who's the man who set me going,
then left me, just a tiny tyke?

Have you got a photograph,
or can you draw a sketch?
Was he sweet, with kindly eyes
or an overbearing lech?

Mother: I never had a photograph.
My drawing – worse than feeble.
I was too young then to assess
The qualities of people.

Flora: Was he tall?

Mother: Not exactly.

Flora: Short and stout?

Mother: Not as such.

Flora: Did he whisper sweet, romantic words?

Mother: Not overly much.

Flora: Was he handsome?

Mother: What is handsome?

Flora: Was he strong?

Mother: Strong enough.

Flora: Was he a gentleman with tender hands,
or masculine and tough?

Flora: Half of every cell in me
you copied from an unknown stranger.
I wasn't born beneath a star
in Bethlehem's refulgent manger.

Who was the man? Professor? Postman?
There must be something you recall.
Do you know his name, at least,
or anything at all?

Mother: Did he give you his breast to suck?
How is it I deserve
This mockery and bare contempt

alluding to a virgin birth?

Flora: Then what's the story?

Mother: It's not so simple.

Flora: I have time.

Mother: Don't be a child.

Flora: I have a right to know the truth.

You said you'd tell me when I'm grown.

Flora: You are so stubborn!

Mother: For your own good.

Flora: I'll run away.

Mother: Just go ahead!

Flora: I'll never speak to you again!

Mother: All right! You want to hear it?

Good! I'll tell you: You're a clone.

Flora: A clone?

Mother: A clone.

Flora: How can this be? It's technologically absurd.

Mother: It was experimental then, before the blunders had
occurred.

A scientist, he advertised
to lesbians and feminists:
"Release the sacrament of birth
From patriarchy's grubby fist!"

Flora: And then what happened?

Mother: It was quick,
requiring neither gas nor knives:
A scrape, short wait, a small injection,
nine months later you arrived.

Flora: And have you seen him since?

Mother: Just once.

Flora: You hid this from me.

Mother: To protect you.

Flora: I'll never trust you.

Mother: You're my baby.

Flora: Your clone! Your copy!

Mother: But you wouldn't have existed otherwise.

Flora runs out of the room. **Mother** starts to follow, then stops herself, hastily finishes dressing, gathers up her bag, and rushes out in the opposite direction. **Angela** wanders out, looking thoughtful, then leaves.

Act I. Scene 10.

In the barn. Kiffer, Inventor, Rocky, Ivan waiting impatiently.

Rocky: It's half past eight. I'm getting hungry.

Inventor: We're still missing three people.

Kiffer: It's all the girls. They're off comparing bras and plotting to take over the world.

Rocky: I wasn't suggesting we start eating without them. We could just get the work out of the way, this constitution and stuff.

Inventor: The rules say we can't vote on anything unless four fifths of the colonists are present.

Kiffer: But we haven't approved the constitution yet, so that's not in force.

Rocky: Let's make a new rule. "Voting on new rules requires only a majority of those present, as long as it's an official meeting." *These words flash up on the wall. Ivan is typing at the computer.* All in favor? **Rocky and Kiffer raise hands.** Opposed? **Inventor raises hand.** "Motion Carried" *flashes on the wall.*

Angela just coming in: I see you're getting some mileage out of your three-credit course on parliamentary procedure.

Inventor: Parliamentary procedures are to democracy what the Kama Sutra is to prostitution.

Kiffer: How so?

Inventor: They're both well organized, and make the affair seem almost elegant, but, in the end, the people just get fucked.

Angela: Oh, you two are such. . . guys.

Rocky: What about me?

Angela: Must you always make these compulsive jokes?

Inventor: It's true I always make jokes, but they're only sometimes compulsive.

Kiffer: Have you seen the girls?

Angela: They went out walking. I don't think they'll be back soon.

Kiffer: Wild. Angela can represent the girls.

Angela: Let's get started. What's on the agenda? Ivan?

Ivan presses a key on his terminal. *STANDARD BEEHIVE MEMBER CONSTITUTION* flashes up. Preamble: We the people of _____, in order to form a perfect society, and to rescue our planet and future generations from the great "denial of service attack" of the soul which corporations are trying to substitute for a living community, do establish some rules of conduct. **Ivan** types the name into the blank. Tiny print scrolls by, unreadable.

Rocky: All in favor of the standard constitution? *Everyone but Ivan* raises a hand. **Ivan** presses a key. *UNANIMOUSLY RATIFIED* flashes on the screen, together with tinny video game music. Now *OPTIONAL AMENDMENTS* flashes up.

1) All members are equal, but oppressed members are more equal than others. In Article 3.179 (Prohibition of racial and sexual discrimination) and Article 3.183 (Hate speech) the expression "all groups" is hereby replaced by "any group except (choose one or more)

- a) men
- b) white people
- c) white men
- d) dead white men
- e) able-bodied dead white men

Kiffer: That amendment is totally pre-post-victim.

Rocky: All in favor? *No hands.* All opposed? *All hands.* *REJECTED* flashes red on the screen. The amendment is picturesquely expunged, followed by flushing sounds.

2) Legal autonomy: *The Laputa Creek Commune is the vanguard of the future perfected humankind. Its members, lands, and appurtenances are subject to no present-day authority, whether spiritual or temporal; progressive or fascist; local, state, national, international, or galactic.*

Rocky: That sounds good.

Kiffer: Do you think there could be a down side?

Inventor *abstains, others in favor. UNANIMOUSLY RATIFIED...*

3) Genetic engineering: The Laputa Creek Commune rejects and condemns all forms of tampering with the genetic endowment of mankind and of all our sister and brother species. The fields of Laputa Creek Commune are to be forever free of genetically modified organisms.

Kiffer: That sounds kind of harsh.

Angela: Harsh? I'd say, it doesn't go nearly far enough.

Rocky: Why not?

Angela: It only talks about fields. Those companies want their jumping genes hopping into our kitchen, into our clothes, into our bodies, into our beds.

Rocky: So, what harm can they do? These genes are pretty small, aren't they?

Angela: This isn't about us, or our little farm. The fate of the world hangs in the balance. The amendment should say, "The Laputa Creek Commune condemns all forms of genetic engineering, wherever in the world they may be created. No organism that has been genetically modified in any way may be brought onto the commune's territory.

Rocky: None of us would bring anything dangerous onto the farm.

Angela: This is principle. Brenda Oodles must not have died in vain.

Kiffer: Oh, sure. Why not?

Murmurs of assent. All vote in favor. FINISHED flashes. Celebratory music. Dancing. Rocky with Angela. Mother enters. Inventor tries to dance with her.

Mother: Flora! Is Flora here? What's going on? Children! *No one hears. She shouts. Stop the goddamn music! Goddamn music stops.*

Kiffer: Hey, man, chill. The constitution's already in the sack.

Mother: You can't do that.

Kiffer: Sure we could. No problemo. It's right there on the screen.

Mother *inspects the small print of the final amendment. The music starts up. All dance. She is frantic, and tries to shout something at the Inventor. He*

doesn't hear. Eventually he grabs her and forces her to dance.

*Enter **Flora**. Ashen, unsteady. **Rocky** sees her, and unsubtly abandons **Angela**. She seethes visibly for a few moments, then forcibly shuts down the music.*

Angela: People! You know, it's really neat that we're all together here, and I hate to monkeywrench your celebrations, and all. But rules are, you know, really important. Flora is absolutely my best friend in the whole world. I think we should all listen to what she has to say. She has something she wants to confess to all of us. **Flora** *shrinks back, can't find her voice*. No? You know, it really feels better to get these things out in the open.

Rocky: What are you talking about?

Flora: I'm a clone. *Murmured low. No one understands. Repeats. Finally shouts.* I'M A CLONE!

Angela: I'm really sorry you have to go. But the second amendment is kind of crucial, and all.

Kiffer: I'm not much one for laws. But the electrons are barely dry on the constitution, and already it's being violated.

Mother *tries to hold her, but Flora breaks away and runs out.*

Rocky: What's a clone?

The music starts up again. All dance. Curtain falls.

Act II. Scene 1.

Flora enters stage right, bent over against the wind, wrapped in a winter parka. Snowflakes drift by. She sticks out a thumb, as we hear the Doppler shift of automobiles roaring past. She sings.

Daily, daily, daily,
Daily turns the tide.
Daily, daily, daily
the earth rolls on its side.
The season's getting colder:
you can feel it in your bones.
All men become brothers
and the women bear their clones.
And at last there's no one
in whom I can confide.

Catch the winter snows
and save them in a jar.
Perhaps you'll think to use them
when summer's gone too far.
If you were my friend
you wouldn't hesitate so long
before coming out to tell me
that something's going wrong.
Instead you rearrange the furniture
and double lock the door.

They'll drive on by.
Drive on by.
Arrive home at midnight, discover the well running dry.
Never tell their children,
never tell their wives
of the blonde apparition they passed, as they feared for their lives.

Once when I was small
I had a lovely dream,
but woke to recognize
life isn't all it seems.
Frightened in the dark,
the children find the only thing
that lights a lamp inside their fear
is song, and so they sing
loud, and with an open mouth,
regardless what it means.

Act II. Scene 2.

Same scene as Scene 1. Eugene drives up.

Eugene: Where are you headed?

Flora: I'm not sure.

Eugene: Perfect. I live there. Get in. Eugene.

Flora: Flora.

Flora sits beside him. He makes driving motions.

Eugene: Where's home for you?

Flora: I don't have a home.

Eugene: No home? Everyone needs a home to run away from.

Flora: What would you do if you suddenly found out that everything you believed about your past was a lie.

Eugene: Some people might be happy for the chance to put their past aside and start fresh. You... Why are you looking at me like... Your eyes...

Flora: What?

Eugene: I don't mean to make you self-conscious. But you have one green and one brown eye. It's totally captivating.

Flora: My mother has the same thing.

Eugene: I bet that's what attracted your father to her.

Flora: That's a lovely scarf you have.

Eugene: Thanks. My father brought it back from his last business trip to Milan. He's having the same tailor make a suit for my wedding.

Flora: Congratulations. I'm happy for you.

Eugene: My father is happy. Not for me, though. Do you get along with your father?

Flora: I can't say that I do.

Eugene: Fuck fathers! Do you know anyone with a father who is even humane? Fuck every last one of them!

Flora: My mother published a pamphlet once with that title.

Eugene: Was that pre- or post-you?

Flora: I can get out right here.

Eugene: No, please. Near where I live there's a major intersection. You can get a ride from there going a long way in any direction. Or a bus, if you prefer. I could even help you rent a car.

Flora: I don't drive.

Eugene: Why not?

Flora: Why should I? The earth is choking on the smog you drivers are producing.

Eugene: All right. No auto asphyxiation for Flora, then.

Flora: What does this father of yours do?

Eugene: He fucks with people's lives.

Flora: I mean, professionally.

Eugene: He's no amateur, believe me. Of course, in his spare time he's just president and majority shareholder of the Genesis Corporation. Their mission is to fuck with life itself.

Flora: Genesis...

Eugene: You've probably heard of them. They were the first to implant rust-resistance genes into the common couch potato. They discovered the gene that enables old dogs to learn new tricks. They patented the first cross between a camel and a trout.

Flora: Was this supposed to produce a fish that could go without water for a long time, or a beast of burden for underwater caravans?

Eugene: To be honest, it was twenty years ago, and no one remembers. But it

was notorious at the time, and it made them a mint from the Saudi government. And just recently, the German subsidiary of Genesis was in the news when they finished sequencing the entire genome of knockwurst. . . Would you like to visit our company campus? You can stay over, if you like. We have plenty of empty housing.

Flora: Why should you help me?

Eugene: I don't know. Boredom? Pity? Maybe we'll just lock you in a cage and fatten you up for experiments.

Flora: I've had worse dates.

Eugene: Here's the intersection. Are you coming, or staying?

Flora: Keep driving. So tell me more about this little company of yours.

Eugene: Are you an industrial spy? I've always wanted to smuggle a spy into headquarters.

They near a guardpost. A security guard with submachine gun salutes.

Guard: Good evening, Master Eugene. And your lady friend?

Eugene: A colleague. Dr. Florenstein.

Guard: Of course. *He speaks into his radio.* Master Eugene coming. With a, ahem, colleague. *They drive on. Gradually more employees in white coats pass by. The car rolls to a stop, and they get out. Employees assemble to sing the Genesis Song.*

Eugene: Excuse me a moment. I have this little task I have to do every day. *He tunes up the group with a pitch pipe, and begins with recitative.*

Eugene: Life! Genesis, you are life, to you we pledge our all.
Genesis! You are fields and laboratories, the ambitions and dreams,
we share.
Genesis! You are all that is highest in ourselves, in our nation, in
the biosphere, we know from you.
Genesis! You are our home and our livelihood, our friends, our
colleagues, and our very purpose. All this we owe to you.
Genesis! Above all, you are our exalted leader, whose struggles
inspire us ever more. And so we sing, each day, his story.

Chorus: He was just a simple scientist.
In those days no one'd spy on his
attempts to clone sea hyacinths,
and undo spiro gyra's twist.
But yearly his defiances
aroused more colleagues ire, and his
position was cut.
Soon his lab was locked shut.

We serve the Genesis Corporation
and our leader's great inspiration.
We dislike, despise, disdain, shun
enemies of the Genesis Corporation.

Although no one then knew it, he
had visions, how the future'd be.
Some called it gene casuistry,
his utopia free from cruelty.
While they said he couldn't do it, he
applied great ingenuity,
and the rest, you see,
is histology.

We serve the Genesis Corporation
with our will and determination.
We have no other occupation
than to serve the Genesis Corporation.

Like Moses, in the Pentateuch,
in the wilderness he found refuge;
with nothing but three bent test tubes,
a microscope, and centrifuge.
The stakes, he knew, back then, were huge.
Crying out *après moi, le déluge*,
and pressed on, day and night,
by sun and candlelight.

So began the Genesis Corporation,
In the chief's dark night of humiliation
Far from its current exaltation
came the start of the Genesis Corporation.

With one assistant, true Borís:
Faithful, smart, and studious,

he plumbed the depths of the nucleus.
His patents grew more numerous,
the enterprise grew too, and thus,
at last the firm included us.
And now this is our home,
where we handcraft chromosomes.

What's good for the Genesis Corporation
We know is good for the entire nation.
And so, we have no doubts or equivocation
when we serve the Genesis Corporation.

Act II. Scene 3.

Flora and Eugene are led through several security checks, finally being seated next to the **Director**, who waves silently at **Eugene**, just as the board meeting is beginning.

Director: First order of business: Mr. Merk from Marketing will show us the advertising campaign that they've contrived to sell the new Baby Bovine.

Merk: Thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Brenner, Sir. As you all know, our Baby Bovine genetically engineered breast milk faces several irrational marketing hurdles. After decades of state-sponsored "breast is best" propaganda, mothers have become fixated on the breast itself as essential for proper nutrition. Scientifically, we know that our genetically engineered cows produce milk that is in every way identical to what the human mother would make, but more cheaply and, what is most important, more consistently. To get past this barrier the best strategy, we believe, is to appeal to the women's vanity. We have made up this demo commercial.

Lights dim. Video is shown on a big screen. We see two business women about to enter a conference room.

Karen: How is your Jamie doing?

Linda: Four months old and growing like a weed. And Silas.

Karen: Just the spitting image of his Dad. We're so proud... Oh, no. And right before the big meeting.

Linda: What's the matter?

Karen: Every time I think about little Silas my breasts start to leak. It's almost enough to make you want to switch to formula.

Linda: You know that breastmilk is the best nutrition for your baby.

Karen: I know, but it's embarrassing. And sometimes there's not enough milk, and Silas cries. Sometimes there's too much, and I have to pump all day to send along to his daycare.

Linda: I don't have those problems.

Karen: Don't you breastfeed?

Linda: I do, but I use the udder breastmilk.

Karen: The other breastmilk?

Linda: No, the “udder breastmilk”.

Karen: The other breastmilk?

Linda: No, the “udder breastmilk”. *She pulls out an aseptic package.* No fuss, no unpredictability.

Karen: Breastmilk from a package?

Scene changes to verdant fields of munching cows.

Linda: The scientists of Genesis have guaranteed that their herds of happy cows produce milk which is chemically identical to mother’s milk. And cows (*Scene of cheerful milkmaids milking the cows*) don’t have to go to meetings when it’s time to be milked.

Scene changes to a few weeks later. Another meeting.

Linda: Hey, look who’s going around without a bra!

Karen: I’m back to my old self. No more pumps, no leaks. And the doctor says he’s never seen such a healthy little boy as Silas. Thanks.

Linda: Don’t thank me. Thank the scientists of Genesis. And thank Baby Bovine breastmilk.

Video ends. Lights come on. Genesis Executives nodding and mumbling to each other.

Director: You’ve clearly put a lot of effort into this. I want to see something better within one week. Something that looks easy. *Merk slinks out.* The next item of business is the Hazlewood process. We have invited Mr. Ezra Gibor, from our Paris law firm, to brief us on the legal ramifications of Genesis negotiations for international monopoly rights to the Hazlewood process. Mr. Gibor?

Ezra speaks rapidly, flashing photographs, charts, and graphs on a screen, while the executives all try desperately to take notes — all except the Director, who sits serenely calm, slightly bored.

Ezra: I’ve been asked to brief you on the ramifications of Genesis negotiations for international monopoly rights to the Hazlewood process. These negotiations have been underway for over a year, under conditions of the greatest secrecy. I

recognize that no one in this room can be ignorant of the overwhelming significance of this revolutionary innovation for Genesis' future standing in the world of genetic commerce. As a senior Genesis strategist wrote in a confidential memo, "All the reins of twenty-first century commerce pass through the hook of the Hazlewood process. Information technology, medical technology, genetics, advertising, financial services: anyone who wants to be taken seriously in any modern area of business, will have to come crawling cap in hand to plead for a contract to use Hazlewood. Those who try to continue in the old way will simply be swept away."

Vlada Hazlewood was a Genesis employee, and she developed the process in a Genesis subsidiary laboratory in Dambovza, capital of the former Soviet republic of Morkvukistan. That should have been the end of the story. But the Morkvuk government has been treating us in a highhanded manner, threatening our exclusive rights. Because Article 79, Paragraph 3 of the Morkvuk constitution prohibits foreign "entities" from owning businesses essential to national security, a concept broadly defined to include not merely weapons manufacturing, but even broadcasting, medical facilities, and research on hazardous agents. Their elites have been infuriatingly legalistic since the BacMed incident.

Genesis Executive 1: The BacMed incident?

Ezra: BacMed Corporation operated a research facility in Dambovza, which accidentally released pneumonic plague into the environment, killed about a thousand before they got it under control. The Morkvuk health authorities, all of them former communists, made the situation worse with their antagonistic accusations. It turned out that this strain was resistant to all available antibiotics except the BacMed flagship product Flagomatracin. This is a part of the world highly susceptible to conspiracy theories, you have to understand, despite BacMed's generous offer to sell them unlimited quantities at a steep discount, practically at cost. And the fallout from this dispute threatened to force Genesis to abandon its entire Central Asian enterprise, which controls 40 percent of the two billion dollar European Market for livestock antidepressants.

G E 2: Under GATT 4, don't we have the right to request military strikes by World Trade Organization troops to restore freedom of trade?

Ezra: That option was considered and rejected by the Genesis foreign office, in consultation with the autonomous propaganda wing of Genesis, Inc. Their reasoning is summarized in this flow chart. *Intricate chart showing arrows leading to a mushroom cloud in the corner.* It was then that our law firm, Piau and Pew of Paris, was hired by Genesis, to negotiate a solution. Our first step was to find a negotiating partner in the Slovakian government who was not blinded to Genesis's just interests by fanatical nationalism, which was not as easy as it might sound.

G E 3: Couldn't you just bribe someone?

Ezra: Of course, this would seem a very reasonable idea, to someone naive and ignorant of the sociopolitical environment. As your attorney, though, I have to limit Genesis's exposure to risk in that market. *Picture flashes up of men lynched on lampposts.* Anticorruption pogroms. This was a senior vice president with Daisy Chemical. His last reported words were to the environment minister, and I quote, "I appreciate your department's expeditious action on our permits. I hope we can be equally helpful to you and your family."

So, the coup took a year to arrange, and then we set right in negotiating an arrangement. This was to contrive a Chapter XP stroke 8 holding intermediate, called Sierb i Molot, jointly owned by Genesis and our Morkvuk partner Ignat Ignatovich, who, in turn, was owned by a Genesis subsidiary. He was able to receive the environmental catastrophe waiver, which he then conveyed to Sierb i Molot, as a two-way retroactive Lombard lease, with vertically integrated profit transfers and central liability provisions. This was the period during which Vlada Hazlewood, a Morkvukian national despite her name, was principle investigator in the Unconventional Products laboratory.

Ignatovich, unfortunately, was not adequately screened. At the time, the Morkvuk operation was seen by Genesis more as a tax shelter than as a potential source of major revenue. It turned out that he has connections to the shadowy world of Central Asian civil rights activists, and is himself an active capitalist. The harmless sounding title that he gave himself in the incorporation documents, "Smetnar", and which he translated for us as "presiding officer", turns out to have a special technical meaning in Morkvukian law, tracing its roots back to Genghis Khan's illegitimate half brother who founded the first law college in Central Asia, which gives him full power to negotiate with the government and sign official documents on behalf of Sierb i Molot. This was how he arranged to transfer the operating permit to a third company, which he and his cronies owned. Supposedly, the rights to all pending patents automatically followed. Genesis Morkvukistan applied first for a Morkvuk patent, rather than moving immediately to the international arena. Parenthetically, against the recommendation of our legal team.

We have worked out two potential strategies for you to consider. Let me outline them both first, before I go into the details. The first possibility is to continue the legal appeals as camouflage. Make conciliatory noises. Meanwhile, all relevant papers and materials for duplicating the Hazlewood process will be surreptitiously transferred to one of Genesis's American laboratories. This will require scientists here capable of rapidly reconstructing the process from what are said to be obscure and incomplete notes. We will drag the negotiations out as long as possible, while we file challenges to the patent, on any grounds at all — environmental, ethical, technical — through a front organization with impeccable Morkvuk grass-roots credentials.

The second, rather bolder...

Director: That's enough. Good work, Gibor. Men, we'll follow Gibor's scheme. I expect to see a detailed action plan on my desk by Thursday morning, 7 am. Meeting adjourned. Of course, that's just one man's opinion. *He casts his eye briefly around the table. No one moves. Then he stands and departs.*

G.E. 1 (*to Gibor*): Mr. B. seems to have taken a shine to you, Gibor.

G.E. 2: Wasn't that amazing, the way he just seized control of that meeting?

Act II. Scene 4.

Director *enters his private office, followed by Eugene and Flora.*

Director: It's a heavy responsibilities, steering the fates of thousands of employees between the Scylla of hyperregulation and the Charybdis of product failure.

Flora: Not to mention the danger of wiping out all mankind.

Director *slowly removing and wiping off his glasses:* Yes...Flora, is it?

Flora: How do you know?

Director: Know what?

Flora: My name.

Director: Did I know it? You must have told me. Have we met before?

Flora: I don't think so.

Director: No, probably not. You remind me of someone...Have you known Eugene long?

Flora: Not very.

Director: Glad to hear it. Have you seen much of our campus?

Flora: I don't know what to think.

Director: Did you miss the Genesis song? That's what it's for, to assist you to know what to think. We are building the future. I'm sorry if that was not made clear. It occurs to me...I take it you have a liberal arts degree from a serenely antiquated Eastern university.

Flora: I suppose...

Director: We are looking for a fresh and energetic person with those kinds of skills to scrounge through the records of Genesis' early years, and write a no-holds-barred hagiography. Are you interested? Not sure? Why don't you have a look. I need to speak with Eugene privately. *He presses a button in the table.* Ms. Newton, would you come escort Eugene's lady friend down to the records vault?

Flora is led off, slightly befuddled.

Eugene: Did you notice her eyes?

Director: One brown and one green. Of course.

Eugene: Genesis has been trying for years to achieve this effect in guinea pigs. She says her mother has the same thing, so it must be hereditary.

Director: Hence the silly job. Now, Eugene, tell me, where have I gone wrong with you?

Eugene: I was just killing time before the meeting.

Director: Killing time? You dare to say such a thing? Haven't I always told you, we begin by killing time. . .

Eugene: "But time always ends by killing us." So what?

Director: All my wealth. All my power. All my genius. All are as ashes in my mouth, when in the end my only son turns out to be an ignoramus. At least, you have to admit, it's not that I didn't try to teach you right from wrong. I tried to teach you how to be successful. It was your own choice to learn nothing. Is that not so? **Eugene stammers.** Do you even remember my lessons? Perhaps I should remind you.

Time is a river, its banks history:
You can paddle about and be carried out to sea,
or you turn to those banks with your capital plan,
buy the concrete and 'dozers to throw up a dam
where the current can rotate your turbines.
Time is a river.
And each kilowatt hour is profit and power.
Time is a river.

Eugene:

Time flies like an arrow — a hiss, it's gone by —
you've just learned to crawl when you're old enough to die.
First you think it's a sport, then you call it an art,
until you discover, the target's your heart,
and the arrowhead barb boring deeper.
Time flies like an arrow.
And the archer in black is chortling at your back.
Time flies like an arrow.

Both:

Time flies when you're having fun.
When you're caught in the rain she declines even to run.
You can keep time, and beat time, even kill time
if you choose,
Yet time's on our side, and time heals all wounds.
You can free time and buy time and save time, and still,
When you inquire your account stands at nil.

Director:

Time is money, you can't have too much,
and expenses track income, so there's never even enough.
As you accumulate capital, interests accrue,
when you're clear, so you thought, obligations come due
'til your debt to nature is covered.
Time is money.
But death won't accept credit or check in your stead.
Time is money.

Director: And I think it's about time you were on your way to formalize your engagement to Irena.

Eugene: I'd rather not.

Director: That's what you think. I don't think you mean to say you prefer to marry one of your roadside floozies?

Eugene: Flora's no floozy.

Director: I wasn't the one naming names. But Irena is the daughter of Boris, my loyal chief assistant. She herself, aside from being charming and beautiful, is among the most talented bioinformaticians of her generation... which also happens to be your generation, in case the comparison wasn't explicit enough for you. Since scientific talent has skipped a step in our family, I think you can recognize the value of reseeded the gene pool. Besides which, Genesis – your inheritance – has zero future if Boris and Irena decide to leave us. I think that your marrying Irena would be the best way for you to honor the memory of your poor mother.

Eugene: My mother's not dead.

Director: I didn't say she was. But she most certainly is poor, and it would behoove you to remember how her defiance of me advanced her to that condition.

Act II. Scene 5.

Director and **Eugene** remain stage left. Stage right we see **Irena** in her lab, next to a microscope, reading a letter. **Boris** comes in silently behind her. We see both pairs of father and child in tight spotlights. While one pair speaks, the other is motionless. **Boris** taps **Irena** on the shoulder and hands her a small package. She startles, and stuffs the letter into a drawer. **Boris** speaks with a heavy Russian accent.

Boris: Present. Company accepted, of course, your proposal.

Irena: That's wonderful, Papa. The Hazlewood Process is a terrific opportunity. And I've almost finished the work... *She starts to cry.* Papa, what would you do if there were a contradiction between your heart, and what you thought was your duty?

Eugene: For you, all of humanity is just like one of your cultures in a petri dish. If they don't do what you expect, if they're the least bit inconvenient, they can just be incinerated.

Director: Present company excepted, of course. Your proposal...

Eugene: There won't be any proposal.

Director: Maybe I am not understanding you correctly.

Boris: Maybe I am not understanding you correctly.

Irena: Sometimes I wonder if you care more about the company's future than about my life.

Boris: You tell me about your life. About the company I should care?

Eugene: I can't marry someone I don't love. I grew up with Irena, and she's a pal, but I don't love her. Don't you care that I'd be ruining my life?

Director: You tell me about your life?! I should care? For the company's future...

Eugene: The company's future can be stuffed up an E. coli's ass, as far as I'm concerned.

Director: Monster! Know you no gratitude?

Eugene: To whom? To you? Or your lackey Boris? *He drags out the second syllable, in an exaggerated mock Russian pronunciation.*

Irena: I'm hopeless. Why does that monster want me to marry Eugene?

Boris: "Monster"? No. You know, gratitude...

Irena: We don't owe him a thing.

Boris: We owe him our lives.

Director: We owe him our lives.

Eugene: We had lives before him. With Mom!

Director: Your poor mother...

Eugene: Let's not start that again.

Irena: I know. He brought us out of Russia. But you've paid him back tenfold.

Boris: Your poor mother...

Irena: We have to accept that we couldn't find a cure. She's gone. We have to move on. We could leave here and start over again.

Boris: Start what? There's nothing more to say. We have a saying: Be careful when the father's voice rings louder than the wedding bells. *They embrace, and he walks out slowly.*

Director *threatening, angry:* Start what? There's nothing more to say. We have a saying: Be careful when the father's voice rings louder than the wedding bells. *He storms out.* **Eugene** *glances over in the direction of Irena, shakes his head despairingly, and slumps out.*

Act II. Scene 6.

Irena is left alone onstage. She looks into her microscope, and we see the image projected onto a screen. At first, we see microbes drifting around. Then we see hearts and gray clouds drifting through. Slowly, the image dissolves and is replaced by the face of Ivan. **Irena** sighs, opens the drawer, and pulls out piles of letters.

Irena: Ivan! Do you still think of me when you stroll along the Griboyedov Canal? Do you remember the days we lost ourselves in the Ermitazh? The evenings in the Kirov Theater? Is someone else hearing your stories in our secret corner of Lenin Park? She looks over one of the letters, and reads aloud. "I will come to you when my achievements are great enough to bring us together. Already, I am closer than you imagine." What does this mean. Ivan, you don't need any great achievements.

She looks back into the microscope, and we see amoebas fighting with hearts, and tiny images of Ivan.

It's the small things
that mean so much to me,
and all the eye can see dissolves into a mist
of expectations,
of habits and distractions,
which leave us unprepared to recognize the small things.

I don't need a spyglass
to bring you close to me.
The stories that you whisper
are as quiet as can be.
A wrinkle 'twixt your eyebrows, when you're puzzling.
A smile that's both diffident and nuzzling.
The silly ditties that you know in reckless dozens.

It's the small things.
I never would have guessed.
I'm cursed, and I am blessed,
it often feels the same.
Sometimes I lose my head.
Sometimes I lose my bearings.
Somehow the only things I never lose are small things.

In the hours past midnight,
different rules pertain.
I draw you deep inside me
where there's nothing to explain.
I laughed when I first saw you, in a lecture:
so tall and thin, and pale as any specter.
But speaking, you transformed beyond my wildest conjecture.

It's the small things
another would have missed.
I miss them now, and wish
you would return to me.
Across the ocean.
Across the springs and winters.
Across the wall of time that's piled high with small things.

Act II. Scene 7.

Genesis personnel director (GPD) seated behind a desk, speaking to secretary.

GPD: Look, tell him we support the Americans with Disabilities Act, but they can't make us hire someone with narcolepsy. It's a night watchman position, for God's sake.

Secretary: I'll communicate this to his lawyer.

GPD: Is there no one else?

Secretary: There is one more applicant waiting for an interview. A Mr. Kenneth Feigen. He had a rather... colorful CV.

GPD: Oh, well, we have nothing to lose. Send him in. **Kiffer** *enters, curious like a puppy. He is dressed in his standard rags and tatters.* Have a seat, Mr. Feigen.

Kiffer: Thanks, but I prefer to stand. For the job I'd have stand too, right?

GPD: Very well... You write here that you have had several years experience with law enforcement.

Kiffer: But no convictions.

GPD: I see. Can you tell me a bit about why you're interested in security?

Kiffer: Isn't everyone? I mean, some people say it's because I was toilet-trained early that I've always been particularly insecure.

GPD: Ah huh. Perhaps you can tell us what brings you to apply to Genesis.

Kiffer: It was my girlfriend's idea. She's a lot like you. No offense. She said it would be good for me to get out of the house regularly. At night. I wonder why at night.

GPD: Just one more question, Mr. Feigen, that we ask everyone: What would you say is your greatest weakness?

Kiffer: Let's see... There are so many... I guess it would be that sometimes I can't resist giving a snippy answer when someone asks a stupid question.

GPD: I think we've heard enough. Do you have any questions for us?

Kiffer: Uh, hypothetically, if I got the job, what would I be guarding?

GPD: Most likely the bacteriology and fermenter labs. The guards are spread pretty thin there.

Act II. Scene 8.

Lab meeting. Scientists sit around their laboratory in classic white coats.

Scientist 1: So I said to her, “You can’t imagine how dull some biologists are.”

Scientist 2: Yeah, when I was at the university my best proposals kept getting turned down by those narrow-minded grant committees. How did she respond?

Scientist 1: Oh, she agreed with me. But then she had an urgent appointment with her sister. **Irena enters late, somewhat ruffled.** With Dr. Katushin’s permission, we will proceed now with our senior lab meeting. Unless Madame would prefer that the most highly paid specialists at Genesis spend a few more minutes discussing basketball scores and favorite chocolate-chip cookie recipes.

Irena: No. Let’s proceed.

Scientist 1: Most obliged. Before Dr. Katushin graces us with her update on the Hazlewood process, we have been asked to file, as a committee, a judgement on the scientific merits of several new inventions and discoveries that Genesis branch laboratories have submitted to headquarters. First, Genesis Florida has developed a novel chimera, with the head of an alligator and the body of a crocodile. Or (*He shuffles through his papers*) was it the head of a crocodile and the body of an alligator?

Scientist 2: Are we supposed to evaluate the commercial potential?

Scientist 1: No, that’s marketing. We want a scientific evaluation: practicality, novelty, likelihood of accidentally exterminating the human race.

Scientist 3: I’ll review this one.

Scientist 1: Okay. Next, the Munich laboratory of Genesis Europe has bred grease-gobbling goldfish . Placed in a dishpan, they are supposed to reduce the work by half, and the amount of dishwashing detergent required by nearly ninety percent.

Scientist 4: Don’t they have dishwashers in Germany?

Scientist 1: Thank you for volunteering. Finally, from Italy we have this chimera which they call the Caprese plant. It’s a tomato plant, with basil leaves, and mozzarella tubers. I’ll take this one.

Scientist 4: Are we moving ahead with the “mood bugs”?

Scientist 3: “Mood bugs”?

Scientist 1: The chief gave thumbs down on this. We’re talking here about a variant of *C. diphteriae* which has been found to have what some wags have colorfully termed “mind-reading” properties. It changes color, based on some moods or thoughts of people they are in contact with. We don’t understand it, and we’re not pursuing it. Now, about the Hazlewood process. How close are we to renaming it the “Katushin process”?

Irena: I don’t think we need to exaggerate my contribution. As you all know, the Hazlewood process is not a single process. The biological component is almost trivial. We’ve had for years organisms that were capable of growing cooperatively, in patterns.

Scientist 3: Like slime molds?

Irena: They have quite a bit in common. Back in the twentieth century there were already schemes for using these “print molds” in advertising. It’s an appealing idea: the billboard becomes a neutral culture medium, and the message spreads infectiously. But Dr. Hazlewood was the first to figure out how to program the message into the DNA. The problem is part biochemistry, part computer science. Developing the computer interface for a fungus was a sticky point. Together with an outside consultant, we’ve now filed a patent on the “Moldy Windows” user interface. The components have shown themselves quite robust and capable of functioning together in the laboratory. *She shows all the while slides of rough billboard-like images of corporate logos and slogans.*

Scientist 1: And when will the process be ready for field testing?

Irena: It is already. The only hangup has been the search for an appropriate site. It needs to be isolated, to prevent information about our inventions from reaching the public prematurely. And it needs to be free of related organisms. We found a pond site near here that would have been appropriate, but, so far, our people have been unable to come to an agreement with the current owners.

Act II. Scene 9.

Flora *alone in the archives, browsing through stacks of papers and file folders.*
Eugene *enters.*

Eugene: You're up working awfully late.

Flora: I could say the same for you.

Eugene: Oh, it's not work. When I can't sleep, I like to come in here and read the file of old death threats against my father. It's more soothing than warm milk.

Flora: He's a funny bird, your father. I keep asking myself, why did he offer me this job? It doesn't make any sense. I'm his enemy... or at least, his ideological adversary.

Eugene: Ideological adversary? Eugene, he once said to me, there are two kinds of people in the world. There are my admirers, and the ill-informed. He thinks he'll win you over by letting you learn more about Genesis.

Flora: But surely he doesn't care what I think of him, or his company.

Eugene: Maybe he's afraid, if he were too openly hostile to you, I might just elope with you.

Flora: Oh, poppycock! You don't really think he believes such nonsense.

Eugene: What matters is what you believe.

Flora: About what?

Eugene: About... never mind.

Flora *pulls a sheaf of papers out of a cabinet:* Look at this. I didn't realize that your father got his start working on biological weapons during the war.

Eugene: He doesn't talk much about it.

Flora: Do you remember the war?

Eugene: Vaguely.

Flora: I was born after the war ended. I've often wondered what it must

be like to grow up during wartime.

Eugene: You'd think, if a real war is going on it should be obvious to everyone. But, in fact, I don't think I ever noticed. The first memory I have of the war was my first grade teacher telling us it had ended, like we should be happy about it.

Flora: Weren't you?

Eugene: I was as indifferent as a first-grader as you were as a blastosphere.

Flora: It's quite a power, to make war so inconspicuously that your children don't notice it's going on.

Eugene: As a child I hardly knew our country was at war.
I didn't know the enemy, or what we'd started it for.
And though, at night, as anyone might,
I could feel terribly alone,
I didn't know that we were on our own.

On our own.
On our own.
Before foundations can be laid,
the acre must be cleared.
And when materials are all prepared,
The architects will appear,
But until that time, we are on our own.

Flora: In my school I learned the names of heroes of our kind,
Great beggars who rebuilt a world from splinters of their minds.
But no one tried to tell me then,
so how should I have known,
that they were dead, and we were on our own.

On our own.
On our own.
If death's the only product that they're buying anymore,
we'll proclaim the devil as a king,
or chairman of the board,
just to make it clear that we are on our own.

Eugene: I stroll the city sidewalks with this question in my head:
Is there another pillar that we should have followed instead?
But smoke or flame, it's all the same,

for all roads lead to Rome,
and once we're there, we are on our own.

On our own.

On our own.

I was only six years old when the fighting men returned,
with a lesson scrawled in blood and flame, we struggled not to learn,
that finally, we were on our own.

Flora: I dreamed that I once found myself beside a hidden spring,
where thousands gathered peaceably for water pure to drink.
I think I still could find it, though the path is overgrown,
and even though we are on our own.

On our own.

On our own.

The planet's fires still will burn beneath a narrow crust,
and the rain will ever fall both on the wicked and the just,
and we will still be on our own.

Flora *rattling on a doorknob just offstage:* Why is this closet marked "No Admittance."

Eugene: No idea. Didn't my father say you were to have full access to the archives? Fortunately, I swiped a master key, and so far no one seems to have noticed.

Eugene *unlocks the door and flips on a lightswitch. A bit of light trickles in from offstage. Flora walks offstage as well. Sound of rustling papers. Then exclamations of amazement. Lights out.*

Act II. Scene 10.

Rocky, Angela, Ivan and Kiffer *sneak into a laboratory. Weird blue light, sounds of bubbling cauldrons. Thunder and lightning, horror-movie-mad-scientist effects. Otherwise, low light. They carry flashlights.*

Kiffer: Saved again by the stoned genie.

Rocky: Say what?

Kiffer: Every time you get stoned, a stoned genie is assigned to you by the great smoke goddess Ganja. He keeps you out of trouble.

Rocky: It's 3 am, and that guard just happened to be sleeping.

Kiffer: Of course. What sort of powers would you expect a stoned genie to have? I suppose the guard could have run off to the refrigerator at the right moment.

Angela: Will you two bozos clam up? It's Ivan who hacked into their security computer. We have serious sabotage to do here.

Rocky: Maybe we should get out now. We could get into trouble here. Maybe arrested.

Angela: Sorry, I must understand you wrong, because it sounds like you're saying you'd rather wuss out and let the human race be wiped out by the new genomic plague, than let your perfect police record cherry get popped.

Rocky: Now, when you put it like that, it is kind of hard to say no.

Kiffer: Or yes. So, any ideas? Should we rip out the wires? Pour these fermenting tanks down the drain?

Angela: They're too big to move. *She hits one with a pole. It clangs like a gong.* We won't be able to break them either.

Rocky: How about if we contaminate them?

Angela: With what?

Rocky: With each other. It'll be great. This tank here, with this greenish glowing stuff, this *He reads a label.* "Mood bacteria"...

Kiffer: Cool!

Rocky: . . . we'll put a bucket of these into the tank with the . . . Hazlewood.

Kiffer: Funny name.

Angela: That's brilliant, Rocky. Whatever experiments they're up to will be wrecked. With luck, it will take them weeks to even notice that something's wrong.

*They set to work, drawing a bucket of the green liquid, and mixing it in with the glowing red liquid, stirring it up, so the audience gets to see the swirling pattern, perhaps as a video projection. They then take a bucket of the new mixture and pour it into the green vat. **Rocky** is standing on a table.*

Kiffer mumbles: Far out colors. Hey, do you think there's more of the red stuff in the green tank, or more green in the red?

*Siren sounds, lights flash. **Angela** runs to **Rocky**, but accidentally knocks over the table, plunging him into the tank.*

Angela: Rocky!

*Both pull **Rocky** out, and all run off together, crossing the stage several times, uncertain of which way to go.*

Act II. Scene 11.

Flora and Eugene *looking through papers in the archive.*

Flora: It's all a fraud.

Eugene: It's a scandal. If this gets out, the lawsuits will sink Genesis for good.

Flora: The records are all here. This sounds like the advertisement my mother might have read. "Break patriarchy's grip on procreation. Dare to make your own daughter. Confidential cloning services."

Eugene: They served hundreds of clients.

Flora: This was how your father put together the capital for the whole Genesis empire.

Eugene: And here are the lab reports. The cloning never worked.

Flora: All fake. Here's my mother's chart. The handwriting is hard to read. "Blond. One brown, one green eye. Exclamation point. Naive. No danger. Use HPB sperm." What does that mean, HPB sperm?

Eugene: Oh, no!

Flora: What?

Eugene: HPB. Harry P. Brenner. That's my father. He used his own sperm. That means you're my...

Alarm sounds.

Act II. Scene 12.

Eugene and Flora *still in the archive. The alarm quiets down.* **Kiffer, Rocky, Angela, and Ivan** *run in.*

Rocky: Flora!

Flora: What are you doing here?

Angela: We're sabotaging Moloch.

Eugene: Too late. Genesis is finished.

Angela: How so?

Eugene: Flora has turned up information that will keep the lawyers busy for decades, suing Genesis into the ground.

Kiffer: Far out.

Angela: What for?

Flora: I should introduce you. Eugene, these are my former friends Angela, Rocky, Ivan, and Kiffer. And this is Eugene. He's the heir to the Genesis Corporation, son of the founder Harry Brenner, and — the essential fact — my half brother.

Kiffer: Come on! I've got a half brother whose an even bigger dork, but you can't sue for that.

Flora: I'm not a clone. Eugene's father faked the process, and... What's that on your forehead?

Rocky: Me?

Flora: Have you been copying Kiffer's green tattoos? *She moves closer.* It says, "Maybe I can get Flora in the sack now."

Rocky: I don't know what... You've got writing on your forehead, too. That's cruel, Flora.

Flora: I don't have anything on my forehead.

Kiffer: You do.

Flora: Well, you do, too.

Irena *enters.*

Irena: Ivan! *They embrace.* What's written here on your forehead? That's so sweet.

Eugene: I think we have a problem.

Irena *taking a breath from deep kisses:* No problem.

Eugene: This writing is spreading like wildfire.

Irena: What are you talking about?

Rocky: I fell in the vat.

Eugene: What vat?

Rocky: No idea.

Angela: It said something about Hazlewood on it. We sabotaged it by mixing it with some kind of "mood germs".

Irena: The mood germs mixed with Hazlewood mold? Could it be? Perhaps they have exchanged genes? The Hazlewood mold is bred to write messages. The mood germs seem to read minds. Could it be...

Flora: A hybrid?

Irena: An infectious agent that reads minds and writes what it reads?

Angela *reads Rocky's forehead:* "If Flora can read what I'm thinking, I'm sunk with her."

Eugene: Is it still possible to quarantine?

All run offstage. Alarm sounds again.

Act II. Scene 13.

Dark stage. We hear radio reports.

Voice 1: Twelve senators have been released on their own recognizance after yesterday's brawl. Capitol police have refused to say when they can allow Congress to return to session.

Voice 2: The New York Stock Exchange has suspended trading, after stocks lost 99 percent of their value, within three hours of the appearance of the Genesis bug on the trading floor.

Voice 1: Negotiations to end the civil war in Colombia broke up in acrimony, after a government negotiator thought of the rebel leader as a "ridiculous little dwarf".

Voice 3: This is the greatest crisis to confront the republic since the Civil War. Democracy cannot survive an overdose of truth, and our political culture will not be revived until we have a cure.

Voice 4: We thought we had based a society on the free flow of information. In fact, though, implicit was the effective *control* of information.

Voice 2: Sources tell us that the informal negotiations between Colombian citizen groups and the rebels have achieved a breakthrough.

Voice 1: The United Nations General Assembly has voted to allow diplomats to wear masks during plenary sessions.

Voice 2: The US State Department announced today that it has completed its most thorough reorganization in over a century. As of Monday, the diplomatic corps has officially been dissolved. Its functions are being assumed by the new "Corps of Understanding".

Act II. Scene 14.

Director, Kiffer, Mother, Flora, Irena, Ivan, Engineer *enter in a daze.*

Director: Is this the end of all lies and treachery...?

Kiffer: Or the beginning of a fashion for big hats?

Mother: Either way, it sounds like the end of civilization as we knew it.

Kiffer: Is this the beginning of a new era of bacteria-mediated trust and understanding...?

Director: Or the hunt for new antibiotics?

Mother: Will this date be a glorious holiday to our descendants...?

Director: Or will we not have any?

Irena: Ivan! They say it's the end of civilization as we knew it. Now there's nothing to keep us from getting married.

Angela: It's not the end. Now we can have a true civilization, where no one can ignore the plight of his fellows. I believe that we are all here on this Earth only to help others.

Director: I agree.

Angela: You do?

Director: With all my heart. What I've never been able to figure out, though, is what the others are here for.

Gavin: So, what do we do now?

Kiffer: I'm going home to write my memoirs.

Director: As well you should. You've had a famous victory today. What will you write?

Kiffer: Everything.

Director: Everything?

Kiffer: Well, all the important things that happened.

Director: Which is it? My experience has been, most of the important things never really happened, and nothing that really happens is very important.

Mother: What will they say of us in a thousand years, when they recount the blunderbuss tinkering that remade the human species?

Director: Maybe something like what Heidegger told his students, when he felt compelled to begin his lectures on Aristotle with a biographical sketch. He said, "Aristotle was born in Athens. He did his work over a number of years, and then he died. Now, let us turn to the work."

Kiffer: I guess you could say that about a lot of us. Except the part about Athens.

Gavin: And the work.

*Waltz music starts. Characters pair up to dance: **Mother and Director, Irena and Ivan, Engineer and Flora, Angela and Rocky, Kiffer and Eugene. Scientist and DNA** waltz on later, when they sing their verse.*

Director: You're born, you live, and you die.
It's done in the blink of an eye.
And if you return,
molder or burn,
nobody knows.

Mother: You're born, you live, and you die.
Though it's futile you're tempted to try.
Day after day
you work, or you play,
and then find repose.

Mother and Director:
They give you a name,
it's a rule of their game,
you must come when you're called.
You arrive, find the scene
as it always has been
and depart crazy, wrinkled, and bald.

Kiffer: You're born, you live, and you die.
The best you can do is get high.

Life's that much less crazed
when seen through the haze
of Mother Nature's gift.

Eugene: You're born, you live, and you die,
and no one can quite tell you why.
The science you learn,
the money you earn,
dissolve into a mist.

Kiffer and Eugene:
Did you dream, then awake,
or was that a mistake?
The distinctions are vague.
When the history's writ,
and they come to our bit,
will they say we brought cure, or the plague?

DNA: You're born, you live, and you die,
while we're pulling the strings deep inside.
The rules are unchanged,
though the parts rearranged
from yeast to fruitfly to man.

Scientist: We're born, we live, and we die,
but we'll figure it out by and by.
We can't say just when,
or what we'll do then,
it's not really our job to plan.

Return to opening melody.

Irena: The world is made anew.
The rules have been suspended.
If the axioms are love and trust,
the theorems must be splendid.

Ivan: Computers dream of calculations,
and tasks precisely stated.
We two will stroll, an endless loop,
through sunlit fields of data.

Irena and Ivan:
And now we're building the future,
building the future,
building the future now.

All: You're born, you live, and you die.
In the end lots of things go awry.
From the Cambrian slime
to our own present time,
the same fate's written in the stone.

You're born, you live, and you die.
The wheel turns. You laugh, then you cry.
It keeps going 'round
when the curtain's gone down,
and actors and all the audience go home.