

That the Multitude May Live

John Bandler

Decades from now, in an era of altered realities, mind-augmentation and institutional terrorism, the dirty bombing of the Luton Maxwell Tower leaves Manhattan uninhabitable. Actress Naomi Verne, believed to have perished alongside billionaire-inventor Luton Maxwell, challenges Walter O'Dwyer, the new President of the American Union—the man she calls Daddy—to a rendezvous. Now on board the hyper-yacht “Luton Maxwell” a struggle ensues between the players—one of whom seems all but dead.



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That The Multitude May Live

A stage play in one act, 53 pages

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THAT THE MULTITUDE MAY LIVE - A STAGE PLAY IN ONE ACT

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PLOT SUMMARY

Actress Naomi Verne, believed to have perished alongside billionaire-inventor Luton Maxwell after the dirty bombing of the Luton Maxwell Tower that leaves Manhattan uninhabitable, challenges Walter O'Dwyer, the new President of the American Union--the man she calls Daddy--to a deadly rendezvous.

CHARACTERS

NAOMI VERNE, an actress, 30
LUTON MAXWELL, an entrepreneur-inventor, 30
WALTER O'DWYER, President of the American Union, 60's

TIME

Just decades from now

SETTING

The Yacht "Luton Maxwell"

PLACE

On-board living room

SCENE: LIVING AREA ON BOARD THE "LUTON MAXWELL" - NIGHT

Same set throughout, including both PHYSICAL and VIRTUAL objects, constitutes NAOMI/LUTON'S PERSONAL COGNITIVE ASSISTANT. At will, 2D interactive IMAGES play on ANY SURFACE: fine art, exotica, video. Depending on the budget, these images may be INVISIBLE to the AUDIENCE. Similarly for 3D autostereoscopic HOLOGRAPHIC sculptures, stationary or moving, visible or invisible at will. Projectors and SOURCES of sound are invisible.

Chairs, table. A pair of SCISSORS. A bottle of SCOTCH. Drinking glasses. Museum pieces suited to a high-end yacht.

No: door-handles, lamps, phones, TV sets, clocks, computers, or other gadgets. Update as necessary. They're all obsolete.

INVISIBLE, seamless, brain-machine and neural interfaces include the table and WALLS: audio, video, tactile. DARK I-GLASSES augment and alter reality. A TIE and pearl NECKLACE round out the various COGNITIVE/COMMUNICATION PORTALS.

NAOMI wears a pearl NECKLACE and I-GLASSES. She is barefoot, her shoes lying by the table.

LUTON'S brain augments NAOMI'S through a Band-Aid-like MAXWELL MASTER-PATCH fused to her chest. He exists only in her head. "Dialogue" between them takes place in millisecond bursts. LUTON does not wear I-GLASSES.

WALTER O'DWYER wears a suit and TIE and I-GLASSES. He has a ROSE in his lapel. A BOUQUET OF BLUE ROSES in hand.

When NAOMI is real, visible and audible to O'DWYER, she exists with him in real time. Initially, O'DWYER neither sees nor hears LUTON, nor does he hear what NAOMI "says" to LUTON. During "dialogue" between LUTON and NAOMI, O'DWYER should seem to move in slow motion in a different time frame. Later, LUTON appears as an AUTO-PROJECTION, an autonomous intelligent, autostereoscopic projection that responds in real time. O'DWYER then becomes aware of "LUTON."

The curtain rises.

We find LUTON and NAOMI asleep, curled up on the floor. As NAOMI rises and stands over him, she speaks. He, meanwhile, awakens, rises to his feet.

NAOMI

Six. Six months on it's been. From hell. Since I let the most hated man on the planet re-engineer my life. "Mil-spec, customized." Right? "Renders you invisible to all neuro-scanners, all drones, all known viruses." Right, Luton? I'm alive so that you could die. Or is it the other way around?

She takes off her I-GLASSES, lays them on the table. Goes to a WALL, sweeps her hands over it as if searching for something.

LUTON approaches her, kisses her neck.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

It's no good, Luton. I still forgive him.

LUTON stops kissing her.

LUTON

The question is, Naomi, will he ever forgive you?

NAOMI

(swinging around)

He had higher priorities.

LUTON

He could have made a stab at your rescue. He'd time enough.

NAOMI

Obviously, he assumed you'd do something.

LUTON

I did. I locked down my tower and restrained you. I allowed an orderly evacuation from the surrounding towers.

NAOMI

You also promised me our brains would fuse.

LUTON

You resisted.

NAOMI

Still, you're tampering.

LUTON

Tinkering. It's okay, though.

NAOMI

What is?

While LUTON circles and inspects NAOMI'S head...

LUTON

The incubation period is over. Long since. So a radical rewire is all but impossible. Fortunately, "Daddy" O'Dwyer's cyber-drones left your brain intact. Largely intact. Surprising, given his desperation.

Now agitated, NAOMI grabs her I-GLASSES, puts them on. Once calm...

NAOMI

Daddy loves me.

LUTON

Love. Yeah. Asking me to purge you of your memories. That raises the bar on deniability.

Pause.

NAOMI

(reaching out; trance-like)

Carolyn, dear. I see you, more sharply, more vivid than ever. You're so... Pretty...

(To LUTON.)

She's as real as you are. Strange. I feel. Something. No. She's... Comforting?

LUTON

It's because--

NAOMI

She doesn't want me to suffer.

LUTON

She?

NAOMI

He?

LUTON

The truth, Naomi. The truth!

NAOMI

Resistance training makes the trainee stronger, right?

LUTON

Reshaping you is simply a matter of practice, repetition.

NAOMI

Reshaping "you"?

LUTON

Reshaping yourself.

She puts her I-GLASSES on the table.

NAOMI
First tinkering, now reshaping.

LUTON
(to himself)
Besides, you're hardly even aware of it.

NAOMI
I heard that.
(Pause.)
How things have changed. God, how they've changed.
(Looks into a WALL. Prens.)
I have this damn freckle...

He approaches her, touches her affectionately.

LUTON
You're salon-perfect.

NAOMI
My dress?

LUTON
Unnecessary.
(She looks at him.)
Okay. Show-stopping.

NAOMI
(looking at her shoes)
The truth...?

LUTON
Which truth?

NAOMI
I feel stupid.

LUTON
You've lost weight.

She turns away from him.

NAOMI
Fake. Fake. Fake. I'm so fake.

She gets the SCISSORS, sits on a chair and snips a thread on her dress, then puts on her shoes and rises.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
(eyes shut, swaying)
Round and round. Dizzy, dizzying, like our "conversations."

LUTON
Thought-bursts. Millisecond bursts of pure thought.

Jesus. NAOMI

You'll get used to it. LUTON

God. Who'd have imagined--? NAOMI
(Staring at a WALL.)

Oh shit.

What? LUTON

Nothing. NAOMI

What? LUTON

Pause.

He really came. NAOMI
(stroking the WALL)

Backed by his personal physicans and an armada of robo-warrior brown-shirts. LUTON

I'm not... I mean, I don't feel quite... NAOMI

She goes for her I-GLASSES. LUTON
blocks her. A small stand-off.

Your senses are crucial. LUTON

They're useless, anyway. NAOMI

She gives up, goes to a WALL, leans forward, sniffs.

Roses. NAOMI (CONT'D)

Delegated to the hands of exterminator-in-chief Popovic. LUTON

Blue roses. NAOMI

Real. LUTON

NAOMI

Course they're real.

LUTON

Likely pinched from a handy vase outside his presidential bedroom. A smarter choice than his new portrait in oil.

NAOMI

My God. He actually stepped out of the White House Compound.

LUTON

As we predicted.

NAOMI

Bringing along some two-dozen long-stem roses?

LUTON

A small oversight.

NAOMI

A rose in his lapel. It's like he's on his way to a royal wedding.

Pause.

LUTON

(quietly)

Of sorts.

NAOMI

Are you quite sure I look okay?

LUTON

If anything...

NAOMI

Shit.

LUTON

Pale. A bit. Pale.

NAOMI studies herself in a WALL.

LUTON (CONT'D)

Nevertheless. Gorgeous.

(Pause.)

Perfect. Virtually.

NAOMI

(staring into the WALL)

What's keeping him?

LUTON

Deployments. Last-minute pleas. Methinks, General Popovic would rather grace us with one of O'Dwyer's many disposable clones.

NAOMI

I didn't realize how I missed him.

LUTON

How tragic.

NAOMI

What's tragic, Luton, so very tragic, is you inventing a mom. A mom, for God's sake. A mom, who, incidentally, you haven't spoken to in quite a while. Her I know you miss.

LUTON

It's the idea you miss.

NAOMI

He's proud of me.

LUTON

When it suits him.

She sits down on a chair.

NAOMI

At least you left me able to feel. Something. This acute missing-my-daddy feeling.

LUTON

(sarcastic)

What you really miss is tennis and those endless champagne brunches. Don't fret. Your missing-my-daddy feelings are quite generic and easily neutralized.

NAOMI

Damn you, it was you I wanted to take down on that horrible night. You. Never him.

LUTON

He's not your bio-dad, Naomi.

Pause.

NAOMI

You and your monstrous Patch...

(her hands to her chest)

Why am I still terrified?

LUTON

You dread humiliation.

NAOMI

Things feel utterly futile, pointless.

LUTON

Remember your aims.

NAOMI
Aims... Yeah. A baby.

LUTON
You have enough of my sperm.

NAOMI
I'm so unsure.

LUTON
You have your freedom.

NAOMI
You provoked him.

LUTON
I provoked him. You challenged him.

NAOMI
God. He must have hated you.

LUTON
Even more than you?

NAOMI
I don't dare imagine how much.

LUTON
Your surprise invitation to him upstaged his speech.

NAOMI
Same tactic you hooked me with. And now you've left me.
(She rises, approaches a WALL.)
Alone. Without a baby. Without anything.
(Pause.)
I'm scared.

LUTON
You should have had some breakfast.

NAOMI
We had a God-awful night.

LUTON
O'Dwyer's must have been infinitely worse.

NAOMI
He's not set one foot on board and I'm all but berserk.

LUTON
(pointing to the SCOTCH)
We have a backup.

NAOMI
I feel cold, hollow.

LUTON

So. Flip on your Master-Patch. Dial yourself "fulfilment and security." Freedom from pain is a bonus.

NAOMI

Don't joke.

(Beat.)

I just had a thought.

LUTON

Why not? We're about to face your "papa."

NAOMI

A horrid thought.

LUTON

He needs us both dead.

NAOMI

Worse.

LUTON

Awesome. Worse than dead and Sigmund Freud isn't on hand.

NAOMI

Not Carolyn. No. I can't possibly be glad that Carolyn's dead. Or Mommy. I can't. I absolutely can't.

LUTON

Of course you can't.

(Pause.)

Can you?

NAOMI

I suddenly miss her. And Mommy. Very much.

(Pause.)

You know, I'd have traded places with Carolyn to please him. Him. Senator Walter O'Dwyer. How odd. I can't think why I'd want to please that man. My father? Carolyn's father.

(Pause.)

Funny. I always thought they looked so good together.

(She rushes towards him.)

Let's put this thing off.

LUTON

Stay on edge. It serves us.

NAOMI

I need one more day, Luton. Just one.

LUTON

Your senses are sharp enough now.

NAOMI

Please.

They both stare at a WALL.

LUTON

Okay, guys. Get on with it. The time is right. The place is secure. Open sesame. Enter the real President O'Dwyer.

Annoyed, she pushes him away.

LUTON (CONT'D)

Gentlemen of the presidential security detail, you have Naomi Verne's permission to vamoose. So go away. Go home. Shoo!

(Pause. To NAOMI.)

Sweep your hand.

NAOMI

What are you doing?

LUTON

Sweep.

NAOMI

No.

LUTON

Do it.

Reluctantly, NAOMI lifts her right hand.

LUTON (CONT'D)

Left hand.

She lifts her left hand.

LUTON (CONT'D)

Index finger...

She points with her left index finger.

LUTON (CONT'D)

Up high. Eyes steady... Yes.

She sweeps her left hand over the invisible WALL.

LUTON (CONT'D)

See? Breaking news. President O'Dwyer declares California-Nevada's secession illegal. President O'Dwyer threatens to nationalize Maxwell Corporation. President O'Dwyer--

NAOMI

(dropping her hand)

Two arch ass-holes in a pissing contest.

LUTON

Actually, it's your doing. Maxwell Corporation's downward spiral screeched to a halt the instant you announced you were alive. Yet rebels are sprouting like dandelions.

(Off her look.)

A paradox, I agree. This polarization for and against the Maxwell Patch.

(Pause.)

I never reckoned...

NAOMI

On what? Food riots? On a suspended Constitution? On an uninhabitable Manhattan?

Pause.

LUTON

Unforgivable.

NAOMI

Unforgivable?

Pause.

LUTON

Naomi. I'm on your team.

NAOMI

As my parasite!

LUTON winces and retreats. She backs him up aggressively.

LUTON

The multitude must hear from you live, censor-free.

NAOMI

Parasite. Parasite. Parasite!

LUTON

You own the Corporation. You'll promise them new protocols.

Sound of a BUZZER.

NAOMI raises her hand, checks a WALL.

NAOMI

He looks whacked.

A BOUQUET OF BLUE ROSES in hand, a ROSE in his lapel, O'DWYER enters slowly, moves slowly in his own time frame.

LUTON and NAOMI keep their distance.

LUTON

I told you he'd come in alone. Probability: point nine--

NAOMI

Shut up.

LUTON

He can't hear us.

NAOMI

Damn you. "Get thee behind me."

LUTON

I must help.

NAOMI

I will be myself. I will. Be. Myself.

O'DWYER can see but not hear her, takes her for a flash HOLOGRAPHIC projection.

O'DWYER puts down the BOUQUET, approaches an invisible WALL, preens, adjusts his collar and TIE.

O'DWYER

All clear out there, Popovic? Good. Say when, Sir Julian.

LUTON sweeps his hand. This causes NAOMI to wave her right hand. A RED LIGHT comes on. NAOMI looks at her hand, surprised at her action.

NAOMI

What the hell...?

O'DWYER takes off his I-GLASSES, stands erect, ready to address the people.

O'DWYER

Ladies and gentlemen. Proud citizens of our great American Union. Today, six months after our greatest tragedy since the Golden Gate Debacle, I pause to bring you happy tidings.

(Pause.)

I am overjoyed to announce my reunion with Naomi Verne, my daughter. Until recently, we all believed she'd perished when the Maxwell Tower shattered into radioactive dust and ash. Then news of her survival cut into my State of the Union address and we heard from her own dear lips.

(Pause.)

To that evil Coalition of God, those rats and gangsters, again we pledge, "we'll wipe you off the face of the earth."

(Pause.)

As to Luton Maxwell himself: brave captain going down with his ship, or guilt-ridden, through self-induced death evading charges of high treason? A criminal culpable through nefarious connections with that despicable Coalition? But here, now, on this most lavish example of Luton Maxwell's fleet, to be soon impounded, of course, General Popovic's sensors report no traces of his living presence, certainly not in our immediate proximity. Maxwell is surely dead.

(Looks around.)

Dear friends, you will recall the accused's last-second plea, "Should Miss Naomi Verne survive me and be of sound body and mind, to her and her alone I bequeath my worldly possessions, including but not limited to Maxwell Corporation, its subsidiaries and holdings..." etcetera, etcetera.

LUTON

Assets that eclipse him.

O'DWYER

In view of our state of emergency and unresolved charges against him, I ordered the Justice Department to delve swiftly into the disposition of Doctor Maxwell's holdings. A conclusion is at hand. The central government will act.

(Pause.)

Imagine my shock. I discover myself on opposite polarities with my own daughter. Still, she is as faithful as she is beautiful. Indeed, I bear an olive branch...

LUTON

Blue roses.

O'DWYER

Good news. We sat down today, Miss Verne and I. We have spoken. We have agreed. We are united. Shortly, she will join me to address the American Union and the world.

LUTON

The man's delusional.

O'DWYER

But I digress. I digress. This is such a joyous day.

Abruptly, as NAOMI waves her hand...

LUTON

Bugger. You self-serving, arrogant...

...the RED LIGHT goes out.

NAOMI

(to LUTON, surprised)

What are you doing?

LUTON exits.

Annoyed by the apparent termination of his live feed to the American Union, O'DWYER puts on his I-GLASSES.

O'DWYER (CONT'D)

Popovic. You out there, good sir...? The light's gone out.

(Lifts his TIE.)

Don't go tongue-tied on me, Popovic. Special Services better still be in line-of-sight. Answer me. Confirm your photo-coordinates relative to the "Luton Maxwell" yacht.

O'DWYER, sombre, paces. Takes off and examines his I-GLASSES, wipes them with a handkerchief, goes to WALLS, probes, tries to open communication portals.

He approaches NAOMI. Addresses her vaguely, as if unsure she's there.

O'DWYER

Naomi, dear, wherever you are. No more play-acting. Operas. Whatever. You insisted I come alone. Well, my dearest, here I am. Against sanguine advice. My real self. Defenseless outside the newly refortified White House Compound. You must come visit us there. Naturally, we're overjoyed that you're safe. Now kindly snuff out that distracting hologram and enter this room. I prepared a short script for you to read. Our American Union awaits your affirmation.

NAOMI

(with sadness)

This is such a joyous day.

Not hearing her, O'DWYER watches her for a moment, then sits down on a chair, pours a drink of SCOTCH.

O'DWYER

I await our agreed-to signal, good General Popovic.

(Insistent.)

One way or another, man, get me the God-damn signal.

(Drinks. Calm again.)

Alternatively, I request your assurance that the "Luton Maxwell" is secure and tethered, that we are not in motion, that we are no longer live to the Union.

LUTON enters, approaches NAOMI, comforts her.

NAOMI

I haven't slept properly...

LUTON

You're drifting.

I need sleep.

NAOMI

He'll probe you about Carolyn.

LUTON

Then do me in?

NAOMI

Not if the world is watching.

LUTON

It isn't.

NAOMI

Let him think it is.

LUTON

Think. That's what I need to do. For myself. For a change.

NAOMI

O'DWYER rises, goes to a WALL.

O'DWYER
(calls out to NAOMI)
How do you adjust the temperature? It's devilish hot. Dear. I must check in with my detail. What the devil's the time? Preparations. I must get a message to Miranda. She'll be beside herself. The reinauguration, tonight's ball...

LUTON

He's suspicious.

NAOMI

Quit talking over me.

LUTON

Face the truth.

NAOMI

Fuck the truth.

LUTON

We'll scare it out of him.

NAOMI

He'll scare it out of me.

LUTON

He'll face his truth.

NAOMI

Then I'll face my shit.

LUTON

Look at him. Waiting. Waiting for the reassurance a dance coach's bastard daughter.

NAOMI

Whose truth? Whose?

(Beat.)

In fact, Doctor Maxwell, you're exquisitely jealous of any hominoid I've so much as glanced at. That includes my dad--

LUTON

My dad.

NAOMI

As well as every prick I've ever played opposite.

Pause.

LUTON

You're mind's unwell.

NAOMI

Berge Ivanoff?

LUTON

You're sick.

NAOMI

Tormented.

(Fondles her breasts.)

God, how I could do with a distracting hunk in a dark suit.

LUTON

Shut up!

NAOMI

Or a waiter with a cute ass.

SCOTCH in hand, O'DWYER rises and slowly exits.

LUTON

The villain of our opera awaits your move. First, ask him about Carolyn.

NAOMI

He sanitized her record.

LUTON

Surprise him with your own "lack" of recollections. Get him to relax.

LUTON/NAOMI

Then wham. Wham the bugger.

Pause.

NAOMI

Imagine. Me, still figuring out how we'll make love, whether we'd tear each other apart. All that seems so long ago.

(Beat.)

Help me. We've got our wires crossed. I think.

(Beat.)

Untangle us, Luton.

LUTON

My shield's almost ready.

NAOMI

There's this weight, this dreadful weight.

LUTON

I'll have the process on-line. Soon.

NAOMI

(ruefully)

On-line. Love-birds. Huh! Here's something I recollect: I always choose wrong.

LUTON

Repeat and keep repeating, the President of the American Union, our mutual "daddy," requires you dead.

LUTON/NAOMI

Very dead.

NAOMI

(about to sob)

You've changed. I've changed. Into what I wish to God I knew. "Last bugger standing faces absolute unrelenting loneliness."

LUTON

Our interface needs neuro-trimming.

NAOMI

When you finally seal yourself off, it'll be me who'll want me dead.

(Beat. In tears.)

The two of us listening to each other, telling each other stories. How naive, no, how terribly sad. And I still know next to nothing about your mom, real or invented.

LUTON

Then, when you need it, you'll have my strength.

NAOMI

(aggressively)

Back off. Back off. Back off!

Silence.

LUTON

Okay. Go tell O'Dwyer we're not ready for him.

NAOMI

I really feel sick.

O'DWYER (O.S.)

Naomi. Where are you, girl? Time is flying. Popovic. General Julian Popovic. Get your security ass in here pronto! I'm outta here. Now!

NAOMI

Let me back in, Luton. Let me back in.

LUTON

Not now.

NAOMI

(distant)

Not now. Not now.

LUTON

Think "security."

NAOMI rubs her MASTER-PATCH.

NAOMI

The only thing your prototype Patch manages so perfectly is walling me out from your secrets. From you.

LUTON

Master...

NAOMI

What?

LUTON

Master-Patch. Don't knock it. It's kept you safe from O'Dwyer's neuro-scanners and drones.

NAOMI

So why does "prototype" come to mind?

Pause.

LUTON

I didn't want you to know.

NAOMI

"Prototype" comes to mind because you didn't want me to know?

LUTON

My brain leaked.

NAOMI

(sarcastic)

Leaked! Will I feel close to you? How will we make love?

(Beat.)

Let me die now, Luton. I'm tired, I'm so tired.

LUTON

I'll let you in gently.

He holds her.

NAOMI

(a flood of tears)

I've never felt so fucking miserable in all my life.

LUTON

We're together.

NAOMI

In a small room. Small, crowded. Fusing "key parts" of your brain with mine. "Will we be a man or a woman."

LUTON

Soon. Soon.

NAOMI

I wake up, groggy, everyone yelling.

(Looking at her hands.)

You guys are scared too. Right? Ready to kill, are you? Who'll we blame then? Who'll they blame?

LUTON

It must be done.

NAOMI

Empty him.

LUTON

Then kill him. Of your own free will.

NAOMI

(simultaneously with "free will")

Free will.

LUTON

With your own hands.

NAOMI

Make me.

(Abruptly, ready for action.)

Oh, for God's sake let's get it over with.

LUTON

I must persuade you.

Convince me. NAOMI

I'm trying, damn it. LUTON

He moves close to her.

Get out of my face. NAOMI

(retreating)
You've got to believe in what you're doing. LUTON

Get lost. For God's sake, get lost. NAOMI

Otherwise it's for nothing. LUTON

Know what I believe? Actually? But of course you do. NAOMI

You'd give anything... LUTON

This is friggin' wearing me out. NAOMI

Anything to void yourself of me. I know. LUTON

What am I? Man or woman? NAOMI

You're losing focus. LUTON

O'DWYER enters in slow motion. Waves, annoyed, at what he still thinks is a HOLOGRAM of NAOMI.

There's this void... This expanse... NAOMI

Concentrate. LUTON

Things that once belonged where they belonged, don't. NAOMI

Focus on the business at hand. LUTON

NAOMI

Hand. My hand. Things that once belonged to me.

(Looks at her left hand.)

Business. Yes. You make me touch myself. I find myself masturbating. In front of a mirror. In front of a friggin' mirror. I see you. Watch you. The one and only time we even remotely make love. You use my dumb, totally numb, left hand--

O'DWYER

Where exactly are we, Naomi?

NAOMI

You take over my eyes. You look at me.

LUTON

Your hurt look hurts me.

NAOMI

Then you try to take away my pain.

O'DWYER

What the hell is going on?

NAOMI

Which just makes it worse.

O'DWYER

The feeds.

LUTON

Pay attention.

O'DWYER

The feeds have been severed.

NAOMI

Your favorite mistress looks just like me.

LUTON

She is you.

O'DWYER

It's essential I invoke the Mayday protocol.

LUTON

Tell him it's useless.

O'DWYER

(lifts his TIE)

Mayday. Mayday. Mayday! This is your President. Walter O'Dwyer. Your president. Mayday. Mayday. Mayday.

NAOMI

She's tall, symmetrical, devastating. And I loathe her.

LUTON

O'Dwyer's talking to you.

O'DWYER approaches a WALL, feels it as if searching for a way to activate it.

NAOMI

She looks like Carolyn. Like Carolyn.

LUTON

O'Dwyer!

O'DWYER

Where are the backup feeds?

(He turns to NAOMI.)

Help me, damn it.

NAOMI lashes out at LUTON, who retreats and exits.

She puts herself into the same time frame as O'DWYER.

NAOMI

(to O'DWYER)

Sorry? What? Me help you?

O'DWYER

Indeed.

NAOMI

Yes, it's time.

O'DWYER

The backups.

NAOMI

It's time we caught up, Daddy.

O'DWYER

Yes.

NAOMI

I know. I know. The Union comes first.

O'DWYER

Turn on a window, will you, my dear?

NAOMI

Port-hole.

O'DWYER

I need to rest my eyes.

NAOMI

Why not? Let's sail through the Stingray National Reserve.
Or how about a Mediterranean meadow filled with poppies?

O'DWYER

Drop the temp a tad too, will you?

(Beat.)

A moment ago, you--

NAOMI

How about a glade filled with cute little orchids? You like
orchids, Daddy. So did Mommy. So did Carolyn.

O'DWYER loosens his TIE.

O'DWYER

God damn it, but my media's still blank.

NAOMI

I'm glad to see you too, Daddy.

O'DWYER throws her a strange look.

O'DWYER

Needs fixing. Call someone.

NAOMI

Roses.

O'DWYER

What roses?

She picks up the BOUQUET OF BLUE ROSES.

NAOMI

Red roses, and those pink carnations you sent me... Mom's.

O'DWYER

Your Mommy's dead, Naomi.

NAOMI

Thank you. Thank you.

O'DWYER

(pacing)

God damn it, but this place's jammed, cluttered.

NAOMI

...At least, they're in your office's catalogue.

She puts down the BOUQUET.

O'DWYER

(stops)

What office?

NAOMI

Mommy's on your side.

O'DWYER

For God's sake, girl, make sense.

NAOMI

You didn't know that I checked, did you?

O'DWYER

Kindly turn up a port-hole. A window. Anything.

NAOMI

Standing order. Cyber-Flora. Deliver a seasonal bunch to Miss Naomi Verne, double the blooms on galas, triple on opening nights.

O'DWYER

Naomi. A window, please.

NAOMI

Miss Naomi Verne sings "The Chosen Shall Arise."

O'DWYER

Where are we, Naomi?

NAOMI

No white flowers, though. Too funereal. They'd remind us of Mommy and Carolyn.

LUTON enters.

LUTON

(whispers)

Ivanoff.

NAOMI

The name "Ivanoff" comes to mind. A certain Berge Ivanoff.

(Beat.)

What happened to my script, Daddy?

O'DWYER

(pointing at a WALL)

I have your script for you here. Once we get the damned feeds up and running.

NAOMI

The script for my play. The original script.

LUTON

Your script placed him at key moments--

NAOMI

(to LUTON)

I offered alternatives.

LUTON

All made up.

NAOMI

Hadn't the foggiest-- No! I don't want to hear it.
Research wasn't my greatest strength.

LUTON

Still, the divergence of your sketches from reality forced happily remarried candidate O'Dwyer to purge all traces of your script.

NAOMI

Whatever reality is.

(To O'DWYER.)

When was the last time you saw me perform without Carolyn?

O'DWYER

I order you to inform me of our whereabouts.

NAOMI

Or you'll spank me? Go ahead. I could do with a good one.

O'DWYER

I boarded this yacht in Baltimore. The Inner Harbor has been evacuated and every nook of the Chesapeake Bay, right down to Newport, bristles with the Coast Guard and special forces.

Pause.

NAOMI

They say you have their feet cut off. Is that true?

O'DWYER

Have we set sail?

NAOMI

Welcome to the Flying Dutchman of the Chesapeake Bay.

O'DWYER

Quit the wise-cracks, Naomi. Where are we right now?

NAOMI puts on her I-GLASSES, crosses to a WALL, runs her fingers over it.

NAOMI

Anatolia.

O'DWYER

There's no escape.

NAOMI

Amazonia.

O'DWYER

This yacht is one of Maxwell's assets. Imminently to be requisitioned, recommissioned, decommissioned. You do not have legal possession. Your response?

NAOMI

Patagonia.

O'DWYER recomposes himself. Approaches NAOMI's WALL.

O'DWYER

So you know how to operate Maxwell's feeds.

NAOMI

Would that make you happy, Daddy?

O'DWYER

We are alone, of course.

NAOMI

(looking around; ignores LUTON)

I don't see anyone else.

O'DWYER

I can't get a reading.

NAOMI

Ah. You are right to fear that we're on line. And that the entire cosmos is watching you, the American Union's new President, at loggerheads with his song-and-dance daughter, known mainly for her role in The Terminator: The Opera, the semi-talented but lovely yours truly, Naomi Verne, in real time, performing in a... What did they once call those old-style low-budgets? Reality. We're in a reality show, Daddy. Smile. You're the star.

O'DWYER stiffens and gazes around as if into a wall of cameras.

O'DWYER

Jokes are most inappropriate, Naomi. Some ninety thousand people lie dead, and I am--

NAOMI

Save it. I know who you are.

O'DWYER

Naturally, I postponed my inauguration out of respect--

NAOMI waves him to silence as a SOURCE interrupts. In fact, LUTON, off stage, now adopts a SOURCE "persona" and wills NAOMI to ratchet up her defiance.

O'DWYER only hears NAOMI's side of the conversation. He paces, agitated.

NAOMI

We'll find her.

LUTON (O.S.)

It's not my mother.

NAOMI

Oh? Then why were you sobbing again?

LUTON (O.S.)

You were sobbing.

Pause.

NAOMI

I wanted to please Carolyn.

O'DWYER

Is that the opposition you're talking to? Giving hope to those who seek the collapse of the American Union?

NAOMI

(looking at O'DWYER)

I wanted to please him too. Strange. Can't think why.

LUTON (O.S.)

(sarcastic)

To thank him for "sending" you flowers.

O'DWYER

Naomi, I insist we sit down.

NAOMI

(looking at O'DWYER)

He'll straighten things out.

LUTON (O.S.)

Your story had Carolyn mugged in his driveway--

NAOMI

I roughed out lots of endings.

LUTON (O.S.)

Your notes and doodles were dangerously naive, badly encrypted. Ask him who supplied my sister with drugs. Ask about the night she smashed her way out of rehab. Our Senator O'Dwyer here monitored everything she did.

NAOMI

In other words, he knew everything I did. Like you do, now.

O'DWYER

This is madness. Who on earth are you addressing?

LUTON (O.S.)

A presidential candidate's number one daughter OD'ing, dying in a back-street alley under his own surveillance does not gain him many political points.

NAOMI

Is there anything you're not monitoring, right now?

LUTON (O.S.)

Walter O'Dwyer's moral decline started long before he--

NAOMI

Silence!

LUTON (O.S.)

This is getting us nowhere.

NAOMI

I am with the President--

LUTON (O.S.)

You're out of your depth and time's running out.

NAOMI

Do not interrupt again.

LUTON (O.S.)

This is a coward's way out.

NAOMI

Around here, from now on, I control time.

She waves LUTON to silence.

O'DWYER

Well said. Good. You're in charge. Now what exactly are you in charge of?

Pause.

NAOMI

Let's say, Luton's hideout.

O'DWYER

In Baltimore's harbor?

NAOMI

Baltimore, Washington, the Potomac, anywhere. I control his retreat.

(Off O'DWYER's look.)

You don't seem convinced.

O'DWYER

Perhaps you should speak more plainly.

NAOMI

The guy you wanted me to meet. Luton Maxwell. Kind of prominent. Ethics charges. Human rights. High treason. Wanted by Congress, before you neutralized it.

O'DWYER

You got suckered.

NAOMI

He trapped me.

O'DWYER

You burst into his suite, they say, thirsting for his blood.

NAOMI

"They."

O'DWYER

Lucky you escaped. Nick of time. Stroke of genius.

(Beat.)

Come here dear...

He approaches NAOMI to give her a hug.
She rebuffs him.

NAOMI

When do "they" think New York will become habitable again?

LUTON enters as an AUTO-PROJECTION.

O'DWYER

(as if to himself)

Why didn't he fly, and save himself?

LUTON wills NAOMI to stay defiant, to ask O'DWYER questions. It's a three-way battle of wits.

NAOMI

Everyone Luton loved was in his tower.

O'DWYER becomes aware of "LUTON."
Approaches and waves his hand across "LUTON's" face. Knows "LUTON" is an auto-illusion, a smart but lifeless form presumably under NAOMI's control.

O'DWYER

(staring at "LUTON")

Now why do I have this unsettling feeling that you're about to tell me he survived the Coalition's bomb?

(Turns away from "LUTON.")

What the hell's keeping Popovic?

NAOMI

He and his thugs are probably quite far away.

O'DWYER

Impossible. Yep. Elite. Presidential. On this here mission, we got every sniffer and jammer going.

NAOMI

(innocently)

On your "mission" to see me?

O'DWYER

Can't be too careful, once you requested this rendezvous on the "Luton Maxwell."

NAOMI

Luton's counter-measures are re-armed, active, perpetual.

O'DWYER

(turning to "LUTON")

The hell they are. Just like his projection.

NAOMI

Right. There's no turning them off.

O'DWYER

What counter-measures?

NAOMI

I gave myself forty-five minutes total.

O'DWYER

To do what?

NAOMI

To be with you.

O'DWYER

To be...? Then what? What? Where's Maxwell hiding?

(Raises his TIE.)

Popovic! Come in, Popovic. Where the fuck are you?

(Drops his TIE.)

Might as well cut the damned thing off.

NAOMI picks up the SCISSORS, brandishes them in O'DWYER's face.

She hesitates: her action surprises her. But she keeps going.

O'DWYER (CONT'D)

(retreating)

Right. Right. We'll eviscerate the bastard.

NAOMI
(still surprised, advancing)
Dad.

O'DWYER
(still retreating)
Yes?

NAOMI
(less surprised, still
advancing)
Suppose you had forty-five minutes to explain yourself.

O'DWYER
(horrified, still retreating)
Forty-five?

NAOMI
(menacing)
Yeah...

O'DWYER
(fearful)
To explain what?

NAOMI
And pray.

O'DWYER
Pray.

NAOMI
For your soul. Before...

And she lunges forward.

O'DWYER
(leaping back)
Are you MAD?

Instead, she calmly threatens to cut
off his TIE. She seems pleased, as if
released from an inhibition.

"LUTON" exits.

NAOMI
You look terribly uncomfortable, Daddy.

O'DWYER
This yacht's surrounded. If you weren't my daughter...

NAOMI
Yes...?

O'DWYER

The death penalty.

NAOMI

Why, we're just sailing, Daddy, like we used to.

O'DWYER

If you're in cahoots with Maxwell...

NAOMI

(waving the SCISSORS at him)

Your presidential tie's kind of "loser." Did your new wife choose it? What's her name?

(O'DWYER glares at her.)

Right. Well, the CIA has better taste.

(Beat.)

Remember the tie I once bought you? I was six, I believe.

O'DWYER

Six.

NAOMI

It was a dark yellow, gold, with fall-colored leaves and a cute little teddy on it.

O'DWYER

When we nab your Luton Maxwell, and we will, you know, I'll personally slam him into solitary. Where's he hiding?

NAOMI

I'm afraid he left his legacy to me.

O'DWYER

Point number one: that's illegal. Point number two: we've alternate ways to harvest his so-called legacy.

(Abruptly looks around.)

He's here?

NAOMI

Who?

O'DWYER

Maxwell.

NAOMI

Doctor Luton, resurrected. Perhaps on board, right in this cabin, sporting his new purple-colored meta-cloak. Man-size.

O'DWYER

(incredulous)

He admitted he was working on i-cloaks?

NAOMI

Actually, I was the one who brought up the subject.

O'DWYER

I'll be damned. He succeeded. No. It's a hoax, right?

She puts her SCISSORS on the table.

NAOMI

We chatted. That night in his suite. Something about rendering invisible a tube of Crest toothpaste wrapped in Hanes underwear. Out of my league. You know, in one ear, straight out the other.

O'DWYER

Crest toothpaste?

NAOMI

A private joke.

O'DWYER

Try me.

NAOMI

Sit down.

O'DWYER

I'd rather stand.

NAOMI

Those scissors say you'll sit.

O'DWYER

Those scissors say...what?

NAOMI

You'll be seated in thirty seconds and remain calm. Otherwise those scissors will start cutting for real.

O'DWYER

(laughing)

My "loser" tie. That bad, huh?

Pause.

NAOMI

Perhaps, your ear.

O'DWYER

What?

(Pause.)

Say you're not serious.

NAOMI

Take the gamble.

Pause. O'DWYER sits down.

"LUTON" enters.

O'DWYER

What else did you and Maxwell discuss?

NAOMI

In his opinion a man-sized metamaterial invisibility cloak is still a hell of a technological stretch.

O'DWYER

In his opinion...?

NAOMI approaches a WALL, consults it.

NAOMI

Think inverse. Think mass. Think yacht-sized.

O'DWYER

The way you speak...

NAOMI

(turns)

Makes you think Maxwell is still with us?

(Returning to the WALL.)

What's the optimum cloak to hide a single blade of grass?

O'DWYER

Grass?

NAOMI

Invisibility in a desert or visibility in a lush meadow?

(Reading from the WALL.)

Awesome!

O'DWYER

What is?

She turns to "LUTON" and shakes her head in disbelief. He nods at her.

NAOMI

Greenland.

O'DWYER

First it's "grass" now it's "Greenland"?

NAOMI

What if I told you we're well on our way to Greenland?

O'DWYER

First I'll refer you to my psychiatrist, then I'll tell you that Luton Maxwell's hyper-yacht is hardly a blade of grass. Thirdly, I'll inform you that there isn't a chance in hell we've drifted more than spitting distance from our mooring.

"LUTON" continues his pressure on NAOMI, now virtually his mouthpiece.

NAOMI

(reading from the WALL)

Meta-magneto-hydro-dynamical turbulence generates an illusion of mass.

(Turns to O'DWYER.)

But what do I know of the meta-mass paradox? I'm just an actress.

Pause.

O'DWYER

This technology is priceless. You understand what I'm saying.

NAOMI

You want me to sell it to you?

O'DWYER

Join us.

NAOMI

As what?

O'DWYER

Join me.

NAOMI

As a vendor?

O'DWYER

As my second in command.

NAOMI

(turns to the WALL; reads)

Scalable, software-defined weapons platforms. Joint strike. Neuro-command. Backbone and photonic warfare.

(Turns to O'DWYER.)

Didn't understand a word.

O'DWYER

Not surprising.

NAOMI

In the beginning. Then.

O'DWYER

Then?

NAOMI

Join me.

O'DWYER

I beg your pardon?

NAOMI

Interoperable systems embedded with organic adaptation capabilities.

(Looking at "LUTON.")

How about counter-insurgency, hyper-jammers...?

O'DWYER

You were in his suite for barely an hour.

NAOMI

Yet I'm in charge of his Foundation, his neuro-collective push. We spoke of our privilege to serve the community.

O'DWYER

Maxwell has been known to brag.

NAOMI

Time Magazine quotes Luton as saying, "A visionary doesn't need to brag."

O'DWYER

Odd you should say that. I thought you couldn't stand him.

"LUTON" exits.

NAOMI

As Director of Union Defense Research and Engineering, you once showered him with awards.

O'DWYER

He deserved them, then.

NAOMI

Until he wrote, "Walter O'Dwyer's department harnesses a politically docile army of geeks, where hyper-conformity is praised as individuality. R&E workers are mere chickens: they take no action unless they find a fox in their coop."

Pause.

O'DWYER

You should have contacted me ASAP.

NAOMI

About a forwarding address for my next bouquet?

O'DWYER

I was worried about you.

NAOMI

I needed time.

O'DWYER

I don't understand.

NAOMI

Actually, right here, on board. My incubation period.

O'DWYER

Was that his price?

NAOMI

My sentient indoctrination into Luton's legacy left me weak, vulnerable. His tutors have a sense of humor, and they're kind. When needed. This yacht is really quite idiot-proof. There's nothing to it when your own collective vital signs form the pass-code.

O'DWYER rises to his feet.

O'DWYER

Where are the blueprints for his Master-Patch?

NAOMI

How did you know I was in his suite for barely an hour?

Pause.

O'DWYER

We'll get them, you know. Eventually.

NAOMI

You did nothing to save me.

O'DWYER

Nothing will stop us.

NAOMI

You pushed for "treason" for Luton...

O'DWYER

Nothing.

NAOMI

So then, Daddy, you'll have to slap "treason" on me too.

O'DWYER

You are not permitted to sit on classified data.

NAOMI

Dispense with me and you've dispensed with Luton's legacy.

O'DWYER

No one's indispensable.

NAOMI

Not even if he's your son?

Silence.

O'DWYER

He thumbed his nose at me.

NAOMI

So you charge him with treason?

O'DWYER

(raises his TIE)

Popovic! Popovic!

NAOMI

(touching her NECKLACE)

My crap didn't work in his New York fortress either.

O'DWYER

(into his TIE)

General Julian Popovic!

NAOMI

(lifts her NECKLACE)

Security. Give me security... Security 911, this is Naomi Verne, on board the hyper-yacht "Luton Maxwell."

(Pause. To O'DWYER.)

See, Daddy? Doesn't work for me either. Here, you try it.

O'DWYER approaches her. Lifts her NECKLACE.

O'DWYER

(into her NECKLACE)

This is Walter O'Dwyer, your President. I request immediate confirmation. Confirm zero vibration, zero acceleration, zero displacement. Jump to it! Am I still on board the "Luton Maxwell" with Naomi Verne and are we or are we not moored in Baltimore?

(He drops her NECKLACE; to NAOMI.)

For the last time, where are we?

NAOMI

(surprises herself with)

Anatolia, Amazonia--

O'DWYER

Damn it, Naomi.

NAOMI

Right now, every god-forsaken swan in the Chesapeake Bay is a replica of the "Luton Maxwell."

(Off O'DWYER's look.)

Just a guess. Something triggered "Code Emergency High." I responded with "Expedite." Then I dialed "Retreat" and "Spawn Decoys."

O'DWYER

You did what?

NAOMI

This yacht is self-aware.

LUTON (O.S.)

There's a high probability--

NAOMI

(to "LUTON")

Quiet.

(To O'DWYER.)

My guess is it detects a high probability that the Coalition of God has sensed the two of us together.

O'DWYER

This is monstrous.

NAOMI

Suppose we're both about to die...

O'DWYER

You're mad.

NAOMI

Take off your tie.

(She approaches him.)

You have no further use for it.

He undoes the knot, takes off his TIE.
She takes it, plays with it.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Tell me a story, Daddy.

O'DWYER

A story? Ridiculous.

NAOMI

Before I die. A story. Tell me about Luton's mother.

O'DWYER

What...?

NAOMI

Remember those scissors.

O'DWYER

Popovic. You're fired. You're fired!

NAOMI

Jail him.

She and O'DWYER stare at each other.

O'DWYER

Questioning the central government is off limits.

NAOMI

Martial law. Submit to the Patch or face indefinite detention after the "neutralization" of your feet.

O'DWYER

My head. My head. What's in this drink?

NAOMI

What happened to justice?

O'DWYER

"I would rather kill my friends in error than to allow my enemies to live."

She puts away his TIE.

NAOMI

Saddam Hussein.

O'DWYER

(scratching himself)

God damn it, but it's dry.

NAOMI

Here's a quirky idea, Daddy. Luton Maxwell influencing the progress of the Coalition of God.

Silence. She sits down.

"LUTON" enters.

O'DWYER

This place needs a humidifier. Real bad.

(Beat.)

He said "influencing"?

NAOMI

Managing, influencing. What's the difference?

O'DWYER

Where did you say we were? California-Nevada? The Kalahari? My throat's on fire. Turn on a window now, will you, dear?

NAOMI

Ice.

O'DWYER

Ice? You mean our lake in winter. Iced over. Got to get rid of it. Disused, losing value by the bucket. Must make sure you won't inherit it. Our lake, huh?

Pause.

NAOMI
Tell me a story, Daddy.

LUTON
This isn't the time.

NAOMI
About the boat.

O'DWYER
We had many boats.

LUTON
Be direct.

NAOMI
Our toy boat.

O'DWYER
As I recall you had several.

NAOMI
The one we capsized. When Carolyn was five.

O'DWYER
You were both being silly.

NAOMI
Childish.

O'DWYER
Right.

NAOMI
So tell me. About that time. Like our nanny did.

O'DWYER
Nanny. Funny you should say that.

NAOMI
Louise saw it all.

O'DWYER
What happened.

She rises and brings O'DWYER his drink.

NAOMI
Right. Louise was there.

Pause.

"LUTON" looks on with concern.

O'DWYER
Once upon a time. Louise. Wow.
(Pause. Quietly.)
I saw it too.

NAOMI
What?

O'DWYER
Hold on.

He looks around as if checking for
eavesdroppers.

NAOMI
Keep going.

O'DWYER
Right. This girl.
(Takes a sip of SCOTCH.)
This fish-fry girl.
(Takes another sip.)
This pretty...

NAOMI
This story had better be headed where I want it to go.

O'DWYER
This girl in Iceland. Next I knew, she was on our doorstep
applying for a job as a domestic helper.

NAOMI
Not Louise.

O'DWYER
No. Okay, she showed up at Christies in London while I was
negotiating an acquisition.

NAOMI
Have I missed something?

O'DWYER
What?

NAOMI
The boat, the lake? The nanny?

"LUTON" stays attentive, apprehensive.
O'DWYER sits down.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
I could look this up, you know. You've already given me more
than enough data.

She walks to a WALL. Turns.

O'DWYER

Yes. I ducked out of a blizzard into a fish-and-chip shop.

NAOMI

In Iceland? Straight from Christies in London?

O'DWYER

(eyeing the SCISSORS)

Those scissors. Sorry. Shocked. Still shocked. Christies was much later, of course. Iceland. Dingy brown tables and chairs. A wall. A menu display behind the high counter...

NAOMI

Does this pretty girl have a name?

O'DWYER is lost in thought.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Her name.

Pause. "LUTON" is visibly anxious.

O'DWYER

Valdis. Valdis looked at me.

(He rises and reflects.)

I became aware. Faint over the speakers: "Winter, spring, summer or fall; All you have to do is call..."

LUTON

This is pathetic!

NAOMI

How old was she?

LUTON

Fuck this.

O'DWYER

Nineteen, give or take.

"LUTON" approaches NAOMI, hugs her.

LUTON

Kill him now.

O'DWYER

"What do you recommend?" I asked, rubbing my chilled hands. She pointed. I ordered wolffish, rosemary potatoes, a Greek salad... Half a liter of draft, I forget the name. She assigned me the number 5. I made my way to a table, holding this little paper-weight flagpole with the number 5 on it.

"LUTON" clings to NAOMI.

LUTON

I don't wanna hear any more.

O'DWYER

I sat down; kept my coat on. Turned my chair around so I could watch her serve tables. She seemed incredibly shy. When she brought me my meal, she asked, "Do you mind, sir, may I know your real name?" I obliged her. Then: am I the Walter O'Dwyer who'd just won that case for SaraLeaGoogle?

LUTON

He's lying, Naomi!

See pushes "LUTON" away.

O'DWYER

Beer. Beer.

LUTON

There's no record of him being in Iceland at that time.

O'DWYER

(eureka)

Gull beer.

LUTON

What?

NAOMI

What?

O'DWYER

That's what it was.

NAOMI

What?

O'DWYER

The beer.

NAOMI runs her hands over a WALL.

NAOMI

(to "LUTON")

He's telling the truth.

O'DWYER

She wore ballet-type slippers. I remember her pony tail, her arms, her shiny black tights. Her dress, black, short-sleeve, covered by an apron with white outlines. Daisies. A bow around her neck. A bow around her waist.

LUTON

Ask him...

NAOMI

It's obvious.

LUTON

Get it over with!

NAOMI

We are speaking of Luton's bio-mother, yes?

O'DWYER nods "yes."

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Who worked in an Icelandic fish-and-chip shop.

O'DWYER nods "yes."

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Her real name. Valdis. Valdis what?

O'DWYER

Check the wall.

NAOMI and "LUTON" consult a WALL.

NAOMI

A missing person case, unsolved. Still unsolved.

(Turns to O'DWYER.)

Go on with London.

"LUTON" goes to a chair, sits down.

O'DWYER

Let's back up a bit. Your mom never hired her. Turned out her biometrics were fake. Next, she turned up at my office, serving coffee. Try as I would, we rarely found ourselves at the same time in the same spot. When we did, someone else... Now, here in London, auction over, there she is--

NAOMI

Fake? Of course! You erased her existence.

O'DWYER

Painfully self-conscious. Standing off-center in a doorway. "What are you doing here?" I must have asked. I'd never seen her so... "On vacation?" I was afraid she was here with a boyfriend. "No," she said. No. Softly. "I came here to see you. Do you mind?" Of course, I extended my stay.

NAOMI

When did you find out she was pregnant?

O'DWYER

I put her up in New York.

NAOMI

You continued your affair. Did Mom know?

O'DWYER sits down.

O'DWYER

Nothing.

NAOMI

You argued, of course, about possession of the baby.

O'DWYER

A few days before Valdis was due, she disappeared.

(Pause. Sobbing.)

A black dress. A bow around her neck, around her waist. I had a drone watch her fish-and-chip shop.

LUTON

This is high melodrama!

NAOMI

(to "LUTON")

Operatic, right? Face the truth. Remember?

LUTON

He never turned any of this information over to the authorities.

NAOMI

He was the authority.

(To O'DWYER.)

Baby Luton. Dumped in Karl Maxwell's janitorial dumpster.

O'DWYER

No trace. Nothing. Of her baby. Of her. Only rumors. In those days, Caucasian girls were a valuable commodity.

In shock, "LUTON" rises, retreats.
NAOMI sits on his chair.

NAOMI

Jesus Christ.

O'DWYER

Drugged. Chained.

NAOMI

Caucasian sex slaves.

LUTON

Mom, mom, mom!...

O'DWYER

In those days too, the Coalition of God was impenetrable.

NAOMI

Is she alive, right now, at worst in some harem?

O'DWYER

Filth. Rats and vermin.

LUTON

Mom's dead. Dead! Merciful God, I searched everywhere for her.

NAOMI

I'm sorry, Luton. So sorry. So sorry, dear.

NAOMI goes to "LUTON." She kisses him, comforts him.

O'DWYER

He's here, isn't he? On board. He escaped after all.

NAOMI

Take a nap, dear. It's time for your nap.

O'DWYER

(rising to his feet)

In fact, I must hurry back to that inauguration...

LUTON

I do feel tired. Yes. Very tired.

Like a cripple, "LUTON" shuffles away, eases himself onto the floor, then balls up like a foetus.

LUTON (CONT'D)

The plank, Naomi. Don't forget.

NAOMI/LUTON

Make him walk the plank.

O'DWYER

The plank. Congratulations. Well-programmed. Convincing.

NAOMI

Were you in love with Mom when you had Carolyn?

O'DWYER

Yes.

NAOMI closes in on O'DWYER.

NAOMI

I'm planning a baby.

O'DWYER

Not you and Luton...

NAOMI

I found a vial of his sperm.

O'DWYER

I don't want to know.

NAOMI

I need more.

O'DWYER
More what?

NAOMI
Semen.

O'DWYER
Luton Maxwell's sperm is decommissioned. By executive order,
the sperm of criminals is to be destroyed.

NAOMI
Go to the bathroom.

Pause. O'DWYER seems baffled.

NAOMI
(pointing)
My bathroom. Go!

O'DWYER
Good idea. Good idea. This whiskey's running right through
me.

NAOMI
You'll find all the necessary gear.

O'DWYER
Whatever for?

NAOMI
To harvest your semen.

O'DWYER
Stop this. I have doctors outside.

She picks up the SCISSORS.

NAOMI
It's quick.

O'DWYER
I order you to stop.

NAOMI
(pointing with the SCISSORS)
Go.

O'DWYER
Absolutely not.

NAOMI
(brandishing the SCISSORS)
I'm stronger than you, Daddy.

O'DWYER rises. NAOMI backs him into
the bathroom and stands in the doorway.

O'DWYER (O.S.)
Why on earth?

NAOMI
As a backup. For my security.

Pause.

O'DWYER (O.S.)
Not with you watching.

NAOMI strides after him through the doorway.

NAOMI (O.S.)
Right now.

Pause.

O'DWYER (O.S.)
My God, what did you put in this drink?

A long silence.

NAOMI (O.S.)
Good.

Offstage NAOMI SLAMS a drawer shut.

O'DWYER emerges, unkempt, without jacket, pours some SCOTCH. Sits.

SCISSORS in hand, NAOMI enters distraught, goes downstage.

NAOMI
What if I jumped out of this boat?

O'DWYER
Put away those scissors.

NAOMI
What if I fell off Luton's plank?

O'DWYER
Off Greenland? Instead of me? Then swim, Naomi, swim.

Silence.

NAOMI
You knew I couldn't. Go ahead. Tell me. You knew I couldn't swim.

O'DWYER
I can't do that, Naomi.

NAOMI

No. Of course not. You weren't ever there for me.

O'DWYER

I was a public servant.

NAOMI

Right. Making the world a better place for all of us.

O'DWYER

I'd seen you together.

NAOMI

When?

O'DWYER

Earlier. You and Carolyn.

NAOMI

No. No.

O'DWYER

You were water babies, for God's sake.

A silence as this sinks in. She approaches him.

NAOMI

But Louise--

O'DWYER

I ordered Louise to never breathe what she'd witnessed to anyone, above all, to you. That you capsized your boat. That you dragged Carolyn under the water. Deliberately.

She drops her SCISSORS at his feet.

NAOMI

No, Daddy, no!

O'DWYER

That I'd had to rip you off her.

(Pause.)

I read your script. Your fantasies; your denials. Yet year after year you set her up.

(Pause.)

Carolyn often came to you for help--

NAOMI

For pills. I swear. I tried to stop her. She begged.

O'DWYER

You used her.

NAOMI

Carolyn the beautiful, the talented. Your favorite.

O'DWYER

Who fell foul of her new pusher.

NAOMI

(hysterical)

I forgive you, Daddy. I do. You're busy. Doing things. You send me flowers, though. Exotic flowers. Oh Carolyn!

She falls to her knees beside him.

O'DWYER

Oh yes. Conveniently dead -- her record cleansed by yours truly -- easy to worship. So easy.

(Pause.)

Berge Ivanoff, your bio-scum father, her first pusher. His demise, my gift to the world. Remember how you and your mommy found him sodomizing Carolyn?

(Pause.)

Mommy lost her will to live. And you, Princess Naomi? Were you furious? Sure you were. Your musical had been ruined.

NAOMI picks up the SCISSORS. Presses the tips of the blades to her throat. She faces O'DWYER, who shrugs as if to say, "Go on, do it. Do it. I won't stop you."

O'DWYER (CONT'D)

I hated all your shows. Your dance crap. You. The spawn of a pusher who wrecked my family and deprived me of Carolyn. Parading as my daughter. I wanted you dead. Many's the time. Write that into your fucking opera.

A horrific silence as NAOMI looks from O'DWYER to "LUTON" still curled up on the floor. She hands O'DWYER the SCISSORS. He's tempted, threatens to stab her. Tosses away the SCISSORS. Touches her.

O'DWYER (CONT'D)

We're it, Naomi. Dearest. We're all we've got.

NAOMI

Promise.

O'DWYER

What, dear?

NAOMI

Promise. You'll never use the word "script" with me again and you'll never send me another flower.

O'DWYER

We'll start over. Renew our search for Luton's mom.

I'll join the rebels.

NAOMI

Excellent.

O'DWYER

Against you.

NAOMI

I expect nothing else.

O'DWYER

Luton knew, didn't he?

NAOMI

That you tried to drown Carolyn? Yes.

O'DWYER

But he never knew why you distanced yourself from him.

NAOMI

I had to keep him from what I feared might have happened to his mother. Protect him. And her. At all costs. If her abductors ever suspected who she was...

O'DWYER

Charging your only son with...treason?

NAOMI

He deserved it. After proof of concept, he was to institute a fail-safe strategy to thwart evil. His theory apparently called for the sacrifice of something of value, in this case, something attractive to the Coalition of God. When I discovered he'd designated his own Tower as bait, I could no longer stand by. I hit him with treason. What he'd done was surely so unbearable he let himself die with "The Chosen."

O'DWYER

His chosen. "One child dies so that the multitude can live."

NAOMI

She presses her head into his chest. He hugs her. "LUTON" remains lying down, curled up.

Fade to dark.

END