

Title

The use of Keith Johnstone's concept of 'Circles of Expectation' and Vogler's generic story structure as directorial aids in comedy theatre

by

**Cory Robert Morgan McLeod
MCLCOR001**

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature

Date

Cory McLeod

29 August 2000

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ABSTRACT

The area of research the author of this written submission has investigated is directing comedy theatre. The research problem dealt with in the research was the use of Keith Johnstone's concept of 'Circles of Expectation' and Vogler's generic story structure as directorial aids in comedy theatre.

The method with which the research problem was explored was through writing and directing a comedy with UCT Drama Students entitled Image! The play opened at The Standard Bank National Arts Festival in Grahamstown on 1 June 2000 and later opened at The Arena Theatre in Cape Town on 18 June 2000. The following written submission contains two parts. The first part of the written submission is a theoretical explication of the creative method applied in directing Image! The second part contains the script of Image!

In the first chapter of the theoretical explication the author examines the theory of the creative method, which was applied in directing Image!, which views actor-director communication as improvisation.

In the second chapter of the theoretical explication the author examines a theory of laughter, based on Arthur Koestler's The Act of Creation (1971) and explains how Koestler's theory of laughter informs the author's creative method of actor-director communication in comedy theatre.

In the third chapter the author outlines the theories underlying Vogler's generic story structure and Johnstone's concept of 'Circles of Expectation' and how these were used as directorial aids in the process of directing Image! The author examines how these theories were used as methods of script development and how they were used to inform the comic specifics of the performance.

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Script of Image!

INTRODUCTION

I have to admit a weakness. I love to make people laugh. When I'm with friends, I love to tell jokes. And, when these jokes make people laugh, I can feel a tingle run down my spine. When I sit in a performance I have directed and the audience breaks out in laughter, a self-satisfied smile grows on my face. This weakness has led me to study comedy plays, teleplays and screenplays. I have devoured every bit of literature on comedy acting and directing. I rent videos and tape TV sitcoms I admire and watch sequences over and over again; in order to study the techniques employed to make people laugh. And, whenever I have the rare opportunity to meet a comedy actor or comedian I admire, I pester them with questions which have always intrigued me about comedy acting.

This weakness is what led to the research project which took the final form of a 90 minute performance entitled Image!, which opened in Grahamstown at the Victoria Gymnasium on 1 July 2000 and had its final performance in Cape Town at the Arena Theatre on 29 July 2000.

Image! combined two different agendas for myself. The first agenda was my personal interest in comedy and my desire to develop my knowledge of comedy and develop my skills in the writing and directing of comedy, more specifically, situational comedy. The second agenda I pursued through Image!, which is the topic of the following theoretical explication, is how Keith Johnstone's concept of 'Circles of Expectation' and Vogler's generic story structure can be used as directorial aids in making comedy theatre.

I first came across Vogler's The Writer's Journey (1998) and Johnstone's Impro for Storytellers (1998) in the early stages of writing Image!. During the writing process and the numerous occasions that I sat staring at a blank computer screen, trying to

figure out how to develop a scene, I often referred back to Johnstone and Vogler. What I found is that both of these works proved to be useful tools in the writing process. This prompted the question whether Johnstone and Vogler could also be used as directorial aids in comedy theatre.

The following written submission is a theoretical explication of the use of Keith Johnstone's concept of 'Circles of Expectation' and Vogler's generic story structure as directorial aids in creating comedy theatre. In the first part of the written submission I will discuss the theory of actor-director communication, which was applied a system of rehearsal in the rehearsal process of Image! and formed the fundament upon which fostered the use of Keith Johnstone's concept of 'Circles of Expectation' and Vogler's generic story structure as directorial aids. In the second part I will outline the theory of laughter in relation to the theory of actor-director communication as was applied in the rehearsal process of Image! In the third part I will outline the theory of Keith Johnstone's concept of 'Circles of Expectation' and Vogler's generic story structure, the creative method with which the theory was applied and briefly touch upon some of the findings of the research.

1. THE THEORY OF ACTOR-DIRECTOR COMMUNICATION

Directing is by its very nature a multi-disciplinary profession. The director works with design, text, music, lighting and actors. Even if the director hires the services of set designers, lighting designers, musician etc. s/he still has to communicate his/her vision to the given specialists. But since the liquidation of the performing arts councils, the role of the director has changed substantially in South African theatre practice. Directors who used to be able to direct theatre within the framework of

highly subsidised institutions, now have to act as their own producers. Due to the scarce funding available directors have started to take over tasks traditionally associated with other professionals, such as set and lighting design and, more often than not, marketing, administration, stage and front of house management and so forth. Due to the constant changes taking place in the profession and the changing demands set on directors, directors often lose sight of their artistic centre. In this light it is difficult to speak of absolute givens with regard to directing theory and it is imperative to re-examine the core task of directing and its theoretical premises.

An examination of the discourse of directing theory reveals the complexity surrounding the question of the director's core task and consequently the theory of performing this task. Fernald's viewpoint is that the director's work "is exclusively concerned with what play and performers need *from him* [...]." (Fernald 1968: 13) Morrison, on the other hand, stresses the interdisciplinary nature of the director as designer, manager etc., yet at the same time stresses that the director's primary task is to be a "[...] midwife to good acting. This involves being at best a connoisseur of acting, and expert in its techniques, and at worst recognizing the phenomena of good acting when it occurs, and making encouraging noises in the hope that it will go on occurring. He must be aware of the exercise of acting skills, and be able to demonstrate his points." (Morrison 1973: 9) Ball on the other hand approaches the theory of directing from theories of creativity and states that "the most important thing a director can do for an actor is to awaken the actor's intuition that is going to be witnessed and used. [...] When one is directing a play, the critical judgment and the intuition work together. When acting, the actor allows himself to rely very heavily on emotion and impulse." (Ball 1984: 17)

Although Fernald, Morrison and Ball reveal a wide range of viewpoints on directing theory, what they all inadvertently agree on is that the essence of directing is to be found in actor-director communication. They reject the idea of an autocratic director or the director as the maker of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, for a director whose primary function is to facilitate the actor's process. In Morrison's view the director takes on the role of a pedagogue, who watches his actors as if s/he had a Geiger counter to detect when a problem arises and have the know-how how to fix that problem. Marowitz takes the stance of the director as facilitator of the actors' process to its outmost extreme when he writes:

“[...] the rehearsal process has strong parallels with psychoanalysis in that the director (analyst) must penetrate the actor's (anaysand's) unconscious at least so far as to bring into open the actor's hidden choices. Just as the stumbling block in an analysis is the patient's unwillingness to confront certain unpleasant truths about himself, so the problem in rehearsal can sometimes be the actor's repression of choices about which he is ashamed or reluctant to speak.”
(Marowitz 1989: 67)

On the one hand I agree with Marowitz's view that actors often tend to repress discomfoting choices. Because the discomfoting and unpleasant choices are, more often than not, the choices which will facilitate dramatic tension, the director spends a great deal of time trying to get such choices out of the actors. But in my opinion this is not just particular to actors, but human behaviour on a whole. In this regard Barba's distinction between daily behaviour and extra-daily behaviour i.e. performance behaviour is of interest. Barba notes that:

“Daily body techniques generally follow the principle of minimum effort, that is, obtaining a maximum result with a minimum expenditure of energy. Extra-daily techniques are based, on the contrary, on the wasting of energy. At times they even seem to suggest a principle opposite to that which characterises daily techniques: the principle of maximum commitment of energy for a minimum result.”
(Barba 1995: 15 – 16)

Although Barba's distinction between daily and extra-daily behaviour refers specifically to physical behaviour and physical theatre, I think it can be applied to theatre practice on a whole. In daily life people generally tend to avoid conflict, excessive emotions and tension in order to achieve a goal and thus conserve energy. But in the theatre we seek conflict and tension and thus waste energy. The actor's reluctance to waste energy, whether it is physical or emotional energy, is part of what makes us human beings. My difficulty with the view of the director as a psychoanalyst, as stipulated by Marowitz (1986), is that the director also undergoes the same reluctance to waste energy as the actor. The director has also undergone the same social conditioning that has taught him/her to avoid conflict and tension and has built up the same defence mechanisms to avoid the wastage of energy. To think of the director as an omnipotent figurehead, who is immune to the problems actors face and can thus take over the role of psychoanalyst, fails to realise the common sense reality of the rehearsal process.

Due to the status configuration of the rehearsal process, directors will always, willingly or unwillingly, be in a leadership role and accountable for the success or failure of the artistic product. On the other side to assign the director such roles as pedagogue and psychoanalyst emphasises the creative needs of the actor and represents a disregard for the creative needs of the director. In order to meet my own creative needs and at the same time encourage the creativity of the actors, the model of actor-director communication, which I have begun to develop in my own practice and applied in such projects as Image! is one that sees actor-director communication as improvisation.

“Here is the process: a playwright imagines an improvisation and gives it form through his use of given circumstances, dialogue, dramatic action, character, idea, moods, tempo; a director then reimagines and recaptures the improvisation he sees and feels in the way he sees and feels it, and to

recreate it through himself, thus giving it intensive personal life, if the images they create are strong enough and appropriate enough, the improvisation will be projected in such a way that viewers can receive it and act on it by reimprovising what they have seen and heard on their own terms.”

(Hodge 1971: 165)

Hodge's view of the entire creative process of making theatre as a series of improvisations and form giving of these improvisations thus sees actor-director communication one of the improvisations in the series of improvisations in the theatre making process. Viewing the actor and director as improvisers regards actor-director communication as an exchange of proposals. Actors and the director become equal partners, working through each other, in an exchange in which actors improvise with the director's proposals and the director improvises with the actors' proposals. In ideal circumstances the interchange of proposals bounces between the actor and director so many times that it becomes almost impossible to trace the origin of the final proposal.

The question the improvisational view of actor-director communication prompts is: what is the material of the actor-director improvisation? Or, more specifically, how is the actor-director improvisation given form? If a writer imagines an improvisation and gives it form through his/her use of given circumstances, dialogue, dramatic action, character, idea, moods, tempo, then what are the fundamental materials actors and directors employ to give their improvisation form. The answer to this question depends on the system of rehearsal employed in the rehearsal process. The system of rehearsal employed in the making of Image! is an extension of the Stanislavsky System.

In recent years the Stanislavsky System has been subject to a heated debate amongst theatre practitioners and theoreticians. Through acting courses I have attended at

UCT in the past few years and tutoring P1 Small Group Acting¹ assignments, I have come to the conclusion that the Stanislavsky System is fundamentally a systematic means of script analysis based on objectives and obstacles in relation to the given circumstances of the script and giving the analysis form through the development of a score of psycho-physical actions.

Over the past few years I have developed my own personal approach to using the System as a means to facilitate improvisational actor-director communication. Very often key words like actions, obstacles and objectives will not even be mentioned as such. Action proposals will often be articulated simply through verbs and sounds and at times permutations of various swear words. The improvisation consists of trying out all the possible obstacle and objective choices, in relation to the given circumstances which modify objectives and obstacles, such as historic period, character, style, moods, tempo, time of day, story and idea, until one is found which will best facilitate the meaning of the play.

The work on a score of psychophysical actions often runs parallel to the improvisations on actions, obstacles and objectives. This is a process I have come to favour as a director. At other times they are two entirely separate processes, one worked through around the table, the other worked through on the floor.

Once the score of psychophysical actions has been established, there comes the second phase of the actor-director communication. Once the actor-director improvisation has been given the form of a score of psychophysical actions, there comes a reverse process of trying to figure out the most effective means of expressing this score. The tools the director has at his/her disposal are composition, pantomimic dramatisation, rhythm, movement and picturisation.

¹ Small Group Acting i.e. tutored classes with groups of 2 – 3 acting students.

Before I outline the relationship between the above practice of actor-director communication and comedy theatre, I would first like to explore a specific problem, which occurs in the process of making comedy theatre. Anyone involved in comedy, whether it be a ghost writer of a TV sitcom, a stand-up comedian or director, is constantly in search of humour. Sometimes the maker of comedy discovers humour spontaneously. At other times it is a long and lengthy process. Each writer has his/her own way of dealing with this. Some writers draw up brainstorming until they arrive at a suitable idea and others go for long walks. In directing however I have found it detrimental to the dynamics of the rehearsal process to leave problems unsolved. One could say that the rehearsal process has a life of its own, which constantly wants to move forward and improve upon previous work. This characteristic of the rehearsal process makes it very difficult for the writer-director to halt the process so that s/he can work on the script. The writer-director thus has to find a way of gelling the writing process and the rehearsal process. The tools by which Image! facilitated the gelling of the writing process and the rehearsal process are Vogler's generic story structure and Johnstone's 'Circles of Expectation'.

2) A THEORY OF LAUGHTER IN RELATION TO ACTOR-DIRECTOR COMMUNICATION

Before I enter a discussion of the problem of this research project in relation to Vogler's generic story structure and Johnstone's 'Circles of Expectation' as directorial tools in comedy theatre, I would like to illustrate the theory of laughter that has informed my work and its relation to the Stanislavsky system of rehearsal.

The question of what makes people laugh is a question many of the greatest minds have taken on including Kant, Bergson and Freud. Most of these attempts have failed dismally at comprehending the essence of laughter. I, a humble master's student, will not attempt to succeed where these great minds have failed. Instead I have found it necessary to develop a theoretical understanding of laughter and apply it to my own practice of making theatre. Whether my understanding of laughter can be disputed in an academic discourse is of little interest to me as a theatre practitioner. What interests me is how my understanding of laughter can be applied to my work and thus facilitate laughter.

My understanding of laughter has evolved from Arthur Koestler's The Act of Creation (1970). Koestler regards laughter as an involuntary reflex, in the same way that knee jerks or papillary contractions are involuntary reflexes. The uniqueness of laughter, unlike the knee-jerk, is that "it serves no apparent biological purpose; one might call it a luxury reflex. Its only utilitarian function, as far as one can see, is to provide temporary relief from utilitarian pressures." (Koestler 1970: 31)

Koestler illustrates how the stimuli and the reflex of laughter function through two examples.

The first is a story of a Marquis at the court of Louis XIV who, on entering his wife's boudoir and finding her in the arms of a Bishop, walked calmly to the window and went through the motions of blessing the people in the street.

"What are you doing?" cried the wife,

"Monseigneur is performing my functions" replied the Marquis, "so I am performing his."

The second example quoted by Koestler is the story of two mothers who meet at a supermarket. One looks cheerful, the other depressed. The cheerful one inquires:

"What's eating you?"

"Well, if you must know, it's my little Jimmy."

"What's wrong with him?"

"He's seeing a psychiatrist and the psychiatrist said he's got an Oedipus complex."

"Well, well, Oedipus or Shmoedipus, I wouldn't worry so long as he's a good boy and loves his mamma." (see Koestler 1970: 32 – 33)

According to Koestler (1970) the pattern underlying both of these anecdotes is that both deal with serious and tragic circumstances. The first dealing with adultery and the second dealing with a serious psychological disorder. As the two stories unfold, tension mounts. But instead of reaching the expected climax established through the logical development of the situation, the stories are brought to an abrupt end, which debunks our dramatic expectations. Or, "the narrative acted as a channel directing the flow of emotion; when the channel is punctured the emotion gushes out like a liquid through a burst pipe; the tension is suddenly relieved and exploded in laughter." (Koestler 1970: 33)

Furthermore Koestler goes on to say that:

"The pattern underlying both stories is the perceiving of a situation or idea, L, in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference, M1 and M2. [...] The event L, in which the two intersect, is made to vibrate simultaneously on two different wavelengths, as it were. While this unusual situation lasts, L is not merely linked to one associative context, but bisociated with two."
(Koestler 1970: 35)

Koestler's concept of bisociation provides a workable formula for rehearsing comedy theatre. Let us apply the above-mentioned system of rehearsal in a hypothetical rehearsal process using the story of the Marquis. Moving backwards, if

laughter is induced by the clash of two incompatible frames of reference, then the actors and director will search for choices that will accentuate the clash as much as possible. The prerequisite of realising this clash is the tension, which arises with the Marquis' entrance. Thus the actors and director will search for objectives and obstacles that will accentuate the tension. For example a realistic objective for the Marquis' entrance is that he enters in order to *win his wife's love*. The given circumstances which could inform this choice is that the Marquis and his wife have been experiencing marital difficulties and when a servant told him that his wife is currently having intercourse with the Bishop, the news did not come as much of a shock. Although this proposal is justified in terms of life-logic, it is not an effective choice in terms of comedy theatre in that it tames the tension of the Marquis' entrance. The choice thus weakens the clash that will occur between the two incompatible frames of reference. On the other hand if the Marquis entered the room with the objective of *seducing his wife*, informed by the fact that he has been out horse riding, which in turn has got him sexually worked up, then the shock of seeing his wife with the bishop would be all the more greater and would thus serve to intensify the tension. On the other side of the room one would search for an action that would also serve to intensify the tension. If, say, the Bishop and the Marquis' wife had completed intercourse and were fast asleep, then the tension would be less so than if the Marquis walked in while they were in the midst of intercourse and exercising one of the more compromising positions in the Karma Sutra.

The paradox of this systematic approach is that it is a system to empower actors to forget about the system. If the system essentially says: 'Follow this approach and you will end up with a good product', then the system essentially takes over the role Ball subscribes to the director and allows the director and actor both to think intuitively.

The reason intuitive thinking is so important in theatre can be found in Koestler's formula. If laughter is a result of the clash between two incompatible frames of reference, then making comedy theatre is an exploration of those two incompatible frames of reference. From my experience as both a writer and a director, this exploration demands that one constantly look at things from different angles, searching and probing different objectives and obstacles and exploring the given circumstances that can inform these objectives and obstacles. At some point, which can occur after simply a few minutes of exploration, sometimes an extended period of time, the answer suddenly strikes one like a bolt of lightning. Often, the natural response is to laugh. If this happens to me during a rehearsal, I will propose it to the actors. If they burst out in laughter as well, then we know we have found the answer.

In this respect Ball (1984) argues that laughter should be forbidden in the rehearsal room because:

'an actor is extremely sensitive to everything that happens in the room. If he does something very funny one day and the entire room falls out with laughter, he approaches the moment the next day with anticipation and nervousness. He tries to do the same piece of business or use the same inflection that he used the day before. [...] When he gives his attention to the memory of what he did yesterday, his belief in the character disappears, with the result that he begins to imitate; he externalises and does merely a cheap imitation of what he did so successfully the day before.'

(Ball 1984: 166)

Ball's stand on the issue of laughter during rehearsal stems, in my opinion, from an overprotective approach to actor-director communication, which inadvertently regards the actor as being incapable of comic and situational analysis. In my opinion spontaneous laughter has always acted as a significant beacon during a rehearsal process. When both actor and director are involved in a dialogue that promotes each other's creative impulses, in search of the right proposal, then a spontaneous outburst of laughter acts as a sure signal that the right proposal has been found. In my personal

experience I have found that these are the proposals that always stand out in performance and are appreciated by audience members. However if the director retains a critical approach while searching for the best proposal, then one creates a situation in which discovered proposals are always theoretically funny. A spontaneous and honest outburst of laughter gives both the director and cast the reassurance that a given proposal is sincerely funny. But without the reassurance of one's own laughter, one does will never be certain whether audiences will find it funny. Thus during a performance these proposals will often be approached with uncertainty on part of the actor. This insecurity is bound to make a punch line fail.

This sense of security is extremely important for both actors and the director in a rehearsal process with an undeveloped play like Image! Famous farces such as Dario Fo's Accidental Death of an Anarchist, or Can't Pay, Won't Pay!, or even classic comedies such as Noises Off, have been through several stages of development. They have been tried out, tested and reworked a dozen times. It is common practice in New York that new comedies do not open in New York, but are first tried out in cities like Boston and reworked according to audience response. But plays like Image! in their initial stages of development, do not have that kind of security net and thus it is important to allow that security net, however small, to emerge during the rehearsal process.

3) THE THEORY OF VOGLER'S GENERIC STORY STRUCTURE AND JOHNSTONE'S CONCEPT OF 'CIRCLES OF EXPECTATION' AS DIRECTORIAL AIDS IN COMEDY THEATRE.

Up until now I have outlined a general theory of directing comedy theatre. A rehearsal process such as Image! poses an interesting problem in that the writing process and directing process are not entirely divorced from each other and the two processes intersect.

During the process of making Image! I found that the intersection between the scripting process and directing process compensated each other quite neatly. On the one side, one had units and beats, in which the script demanded reworking. In such instances we would improvise with units and actions and the text would flow naturally from the proposed actions. The other scenario, which often occurred, is that actors would make proposals, which clashed with the script and demanded reworking. In such instances we would improvise a new text. In both instances I would make notes of the improvisation, rework the text at home and give it to the actor the next day.

But at other times the flaw of the script is fundamental, in that, if one refers back to Koestler's formula, the two frames of reference, which are meant to clash, are not incompatible and thus not funny. Such instances demand a re-examination of the script. As I mentioned earlier, it is thus necessary to find a way of gelling the writing process and directing process. The means by which I explored this in the research project Image! was by bringing narrative techniques into the rehearsal room.

3a) VOGLER'S GENERIC STORY STRUCTURE AS A DIRECTORIAL AID IN COMEDY THEATRE

Joseph Campbell's work The Hero with a Thousand Faces is a study of the hero myth from a wide range of cultures and historic periods. Campbell's thesis is that all storytelling, consciously or not, follows a pattern Campbell termed the hero's journey. Campbell's research found that the hero's journey is not only characterised by constantly repeating archetypes, but also a reoccurring story structure.

Vogler's own research began when he was a story analyst for Hollywood studios. When he first came across The Hero with a Thousand Faces he used it to try to understand the phenomena of movies such as Stars Wars and Close Encounters of the Third Kind. What intrigued Vogler about these films is that audiences would not only view these movies once, but several times and, so it seemed, these films reflected the universally satisfying patterns, which Campbell found in myths. Vogler used Campbell's work as a set of tools for diagnosing story problems and prescribing solutions. Shortly after going to work as a story analyst for Walt Disney Company, Vogler wrote a seven-page memo called A Practical Guide to The Hero with a Thousand Faces, with examples from motion pictures. This work eventually grew into a longer essay entitled A Practical Guide. Vogler began teaching at the UCLA Extension Writer's Program and giving seminars, in which he presented and debated his research, which eventually took the form of the Writer's Journey. (Vogler 1998: 1-7)

Vogler's theory, which runs parallel with Campbell's, is that all stories consist of a few common structural elements found universally in myths, fairy tales, dreams, and films. (Vogler 1998: 1) Much like the realm of ideas advocated by Hegel, Vogler

suggests that there exists a kind of absolute story or monomyth and that all stories are not merely variations of the monomyth, but far more stories render this absolute and abstract idea with a tangible form. The conclusion I have arrived at, which has informed my research into Vogler's generic story structure, is that all stories, in some form or another, are improvisations with the 'monomyth' or hero's journey.

Vogler identified that the monomyth, what will be referred to henceforth as the Hero's Journey, consists of twelve stages. These are:

- 1) Ordinary World
 - 2) Call to Adventure
 - 3) Refusal of the Call
 - 4) Meeting with the Mentor
 - 5) Crossing the First Threshold
 - 6) Tests, Allies, Enemies
 - 7) Approach to the Inmost Cave
 - 8) Ordeal
 - 9) Reward (Seizing the Sword)
 - 10) The Road Back
 - 11) Resurrection
 - 12) Return with the elixir
- (Vogler 1998:14)

Vogler first describes each of these stages of the journey and in the epilogue applies the principles of each stage to such films as Star Wars, Titanic, The Full Monty, Pulp Fiction and The Wizard of Oz. Although Vogler's illustration of each of the stages of the journey and the practical analysis they serve for the above mentioned films illuminates how the hero's journey resonates with contemporary stories, Vogler's research fails to go beyond analysis and explore how these principles can be applied when encountering common problems during the writing process. In this respect Image! represents an extension of Vogler's research for possible application.

The hypothesis of the research into the application of Vogler's generic story structure was that once the groundwork of the production has been done (meaning that the play has run once or twice and certain scenes are being reworked) the

identification of a stage of the hero's journey in relation to the material opens up the scripted text and performance text and thus enables the actors and director to re-examine the work from a new perspective. In this respect Marowitz employs the useful metaphor of a key signature in relation to ideas. In Prospero's Staff (1986) Marowitz discusses a rehearsal process of Hamlet, which he directed in a German theatre. The actor playing Claudius, Marowitz explains, based his characterisation on the persona of Joseph Stalin. After a discussion with the actor Marowitz suggested that the actor lean his characterisation towards Konrad Adenauer, a strong, authoritative head of state but with somewhat more democratic leanings than Stalin. Within hours the actor's performance had transformed. Marowitz notes:

“Had I tried to remove each specific gesture and mannerism related to the previous conception (as indeed I had done for a while), I would have got nowhere – as the actor had set his character, as it were, in the key of C, and I was constantly suggesting sharps and flats that did not belong to that key. But as soon as the key signature itself was changed, all the new chromatics came along with it. One idea had become the equivalent of several dozen specific ‘directions’, and a fundamental interpretative shift had taken place.”
(Marowitz 1986: 66)

If all stories, consciously or unconsciously, are variations of the hero's journey, then there will always be a resonance between the two. An exploration of the resonance between the two opens up the material in that it can be explored from the perspective of a new frame of reference, yet at the same time inherent to the material. The process of opening up the material, much like in Marowitz's above mentioned example, can lead the director and actor to realise that a certain scene or unit demands a certain key and that the work is employing sharps and flats that do not belong to that key. And, just like in Marowitz's example, a changing of the key will inform the new chromatics.

An example of how the resonance between a stage of the hero's journey and the material can be found in the process of developing Act II Scene 2 in Image! Lauren

Howden, Tyson Cross and myself had spent a great amount of time rehearsing Act II Scene 2 and was arguably the scene that was given the most rehearsal time. The scene was entitled 'The Training Session'. In the first few weeks of rehearsal we had improvised with possible actions, scores of psychophysical actions. It was clear to us that if Mao had to undergo some form of transformation, then one of the obligatory scenes would have to be a training session. The problem, which arose, is that we seemed to be confronted with an endless number of possible forms of training sessions. The more possible proposals we discovered, the more difficult it became to select a final proposal.

It wasn't until we had identified which stage of the hero's journey resonates with this particular scene, that we were able to open up the scene to a re-examination and thus arrive at ideas which organically furthered the development of the story. The stage of the hero's journey, which we identified resonated with the scene, was 'Meeting with the Mentor'. Vogler describes this stage as a preparatory stage that is done with the help of the wise, protective figure of the Mentor. (Vogler 1998: 118) Some of the Meeting with the Mentor scenes Vogler identifies are Clare Starling's meeting with Hannibal Lecter in The Silence of the Lambs and Luke Skywalker's meeting with Obi Wan Kanobe in Star Wars, both of whom are sources of great wisdom who prepare the hero for the journey. But the Mentor can also take on off beat shades, as in Pulp Fiction. In the story entitled Vincent Vega and Marsellus Wallace's Wife Vincent's mentor is his drug dealer, Lance. However unusual a drug dealer as a mentor might seem, it is consistent with the criminal underworld theme of the film. Vince approaches the Mentor before he crosses the threshold to deal with Mia. The Mentor, like a shaman equips Vince with an array of magic potions and healing herbs, which in this case are an array of heroin options. (Vogler 1998: 283)

What I discovered in this particular instance, which I also discovered in several other instances while making Image!, is that the act of resonating the hero's journey with the material makes one see the work in a completely new light and sheds an uncanny sense of clarity upon it. Unfortunately I cannot say with absolute clarity how the stages of the hero's journey manages to perform this magic trick and can only speculate from my own experiences and those of my actors. What I have found is that most actors have a very good memory for stories and thus have a large reservoir of stories, which they often employ as a springboard for their own practice.² The stages of the hero's journey have a way of keying into this rich reservoir of stories and consequently exploring scenes from films and plays that resonate with the particular stage of the hero's journey. Through picking out 'Meeting with the Mentor' scenes from our reservoir of stories, we were able to identify reoccurring actions and, as a result, come up with new ideas.

One of the principles we discovered was that the Mentor often helps the hero tap into an unknown resource of power. In some instances this can be a spiritual power, as in the relationship between Morpheus and Neo in The Matrix in other instances it is a yearning the hero did not know, or simply a skill or talent, such as Erin's discovery that she is a talented researcher in Erin Brockowitch. The consequence of this newly discovered power is that it leads to a change in the character.

As a result of this discovery we started improvising with elements already contained in the scene. These improvisations led us to refer back to the vacuum cleaner, in the same way that Obi Wan Kanobe helps Luke Skywalker tap into his inner powers

² The statement that most actors have a large reservoir of stories is a generalisation I have arrived at through my own practice. But this is not always the case. I have also worked with actors who do not have this reservoir of stories. Some of the actors just don't read and watch films and TV on a regular basis and thus have not built up this reservoir I have attributed to actors. In such cases I have found that the hero's journey is not an effective tool for a re-examination of the material.

through the lightsaber in Star Wars. This opened the way to the redevelopment of the unit in which Mao taps into his inner powers through the vacuum cleaner and, consequently, investigates the comedy techniques required to make this unit work.

The relationship between the investigation of the hero's journey and comedy theatre arises when Koestler's theory of laughter is put into place. If, as Koestler (1971) notes, laughter arises when two incompatible frames of reference clash, then the two incompatible frames of reference that clash are the performance text and the master text, i.e. the hero's journey, clash. What underlies the unit in which Mao embraces the power of the vacuum cleaner is the movement of the hero's journey. Audiences, like actors, have seen films and read books and, consciously or unconsciously, have seen or read dozens of 'Meeting with the Mentor' scenes.³ Thus they intuitively know that the mentor, Linda, will lead the hero, Mao, to embrace an inner power. This intuitive knowledge creates one frame of reference. In this particular beat this frame of reference is clashed with a frame of reference which is incompatible with the audiences' expectation, yet one which is consistent with the inner-logic of the story of the play.

A further idea we arrived at through investigating the resonance between the hero's journey and the material was that 'Meeting with the Mentor' scenes are often followed by a series of beats in which we see the mentor and the hero in different teaching situations. In films these are usually told through constructive cinema language, in which each shot is like a block building on top of the previous shot. These constructive cinema language sequences are often without dialogue and have only music. This led us to the idea of translating this filmic convention into a theatrical sequence, which would be juxtaposed with the Roman March from the film

Ben Hur. Using the musical score as a basis, we improvised sets of actions until we arrived at a score of actions with which we felt satisfied.

The exploration of Vogler's generic story structure in the research project Image!, arrived at the conclusion that the process of resonating stages of the hero's journey with the given material inevitably leads to the view that stories are not created out of the blue, or as Hodge notes, imagined improvisations which are given form through use of given circumstances, dialogue, dramatic action, character, idea, moods, tempo (Hodge 1971: 165), but are improvisations with the hero's journey. As an improvisation with a master plot, it suggests the writing process is never brought to a definite close in that no matter how much one explores the resonance between the hero's journey and the material, deeper resonance will always be discovered. This not only opens up an avenue for the actor to enter the writing process during rehearsals, but also empowers the actor to discover resonance the writer-director was not aware of.

This exploration is not only pertinent to involving the actors in the scripting process, but also as a directorial aid in developing the comic specifics of situation. As I mentioned before Image! is a situational comedy, meaning that humour arises from the situations characters are placed in. But what often happens during a rehearsal process is that so many aspects of the performance are being developed parallel to each other, that actors and directors can lose sight of what defines the situation they are dealing with. As a consequence the humour arising from the situations the characters are placed in becomes cluttered. The stages of the hero's journey therefore can serve to clarify the situation and enable the actors to play into the situation.

3 Of course this generalisation cannot be applied to all audience members. An audience member who doesn't watch films or read popular fiction will not have this intuitive feel for story development and probably won't find the unit in question funny.

An example of this can be found in the previous example. The scene title 'Meeting with the Mentor' defines a very specific situation involving a teacher, Linda, and a student, Mao. The situation lends itself to comedy when the roles assigned to each character by the situation are sidelined by new agendas. For instance, Linda teaches Mao how to make an opening for a sale. But Linda also has a compulsive eating disorder, which she is reluctant to admit. Thus, when Mao takes out a box of Smarties, Linda is caught in an awkward situation. The situation demands that she maintain the role of teacher, but at the same time she craves to get one of Mao's Smarties. In order to maintain her assigned role, she tries to find ways of getting a Smarty without Mao knowing about it. The humour of the situation arises when Linda is caught in the act of not being a teacher in her pursuit of a Smarty. An example of this is when Mao practices flexing his muscles and Linda gets on her knees and with an open mouth tries to catch a Smarty which could fall out of the box. At this moment Mao stops his action and catches her in a position in which her mouth is wide open right in front of his pelvic area. But the comedy of this moment does not arise from the image, but rather from Linda's reaction to being caught in such a compromising situation.

Although Mao's and Linda's score of physical actions might seem straightforward on paper, during performance this score of physical actions proved to be difficult to execute in relation to the timing of the actions. As a result Lauren Howden got so caught up with the technical execution of the action, that she lost sight of comic specifics of the moment. Through pointing out to her that the scene is 'The Meeting with the Mentor' and thus the essence of the situation, she was able to rediscover the comic specifics of the scene and that particular moment.

In summary the application of Vogler's generic story structure opens up a process by which the director and actors can discover material to improvise with. In many cases the material itself will organically lead to the development of new scenes and units. But in other cases a further investigation of the material through improvisation has to take place. I will now turn my attention to narrative techniques specific to improvisation, namely Johnstone's 'Circles of expectation'. If Vogler's generic story structure is the material, then Johnstone's 'Circles of Expectation' becomes the tool by which this material is processed.

3b) THE USE OF KEITH JOHNSTONE'S CONCEPT OF 'CIRCLES OF EXPECTATION' AS A DIRECTORIAL AID IN COMEDY THEATRE

Unlike Vogler, Keith Johnstone is no stranger to theatre practitioners. His two books Impro – Improvisation and the Theatre and Impro for Storytellers have had a profound impact on theatre practice and actor training. And, unlike Vogler whose research does not provide hands on input into how the principles of the hero's journey can intervene and assist the writing process, Johnstone's writing always deals with concrete problems frequently encountered in teaching and rehearsals. His style of writing in Impro for Storytellers mixes prose and dialogues from teaching situations and is thus reminiscent of the dialogues between an imaginary group of acting students and the all knowing teacher Torstov in Stanislavsky's two books An Actor Prepares and Building a Character.

In both Impro (1989) and Impro for Storytellers (1997) Johnstone devotes an entire chapter to narrative. In Impro (1989) Johnstone's emphasis is on the relationship

between content and structure. The thesis Johnstone proposes is that: "You have to trick students into believing that content isn't important and that it looks after itself, or they never get anywhere." (Johnstone 1989: 142) As a means of helping improviser forget about content, Johnstone illustrates a series of improvisations in which a predetermined structure will allow the improvisers to improvise freely with content. Sixteen years after writing Impro (the first edition was published in 1981) Johnstone's interest in narrative has turned to specific narrative skills, techniques and common problems that hinder story development.

In Improv for Storytellers (1997) Johnstone deals with several narrative techniques, some of which he also touches upon in Impro (1989), such as dramatic action, moral choices, the interruption of a routine etc. But what in my opinion forms the cornerstone of Johnstone's thoughts on narrative is his concept of 'Circles of Expectation'. Johnstone found that the failure or success of an improvisation could be traced to the improviser's ability to develop a dramatic action within the 'Circles of Expectation' of the given action. Johnstone argues that every dramatic action creates a justified circle of expectation. For instance, an improviser is walking down the street with a worm. This action creates 'Circles of Expectation', as I have interpreted it, has two different meanings.

The first meaning of 'Circles of Expectation' is linked to the associations the audience connects to an action. In this respect Johnstone argues that "The spectators create a 'shadow story' that exists alongside the improvisers' story. Storytelling goes well when there's a close match between the players' stories and the spectators' shadow stories." (Johnstone 1997: 79) The viewer of an improvisation, in which an improviser is walking down the street with a worm, attaches a series of associations to worms and thus connects certain expectations to the action of walking down the street

with a worm. Although no two-audience members will have exactly the same associations, one can assume there are certain associations common to the majority of people from the same community and time. Associations that could possibly be associated with worms are that they are small, live in dirt, move extremely slowly and are used as bait for fishing. In this respect working within the circles of expectation means to make action proposals consistent with associations or 'shadow stories' attached to worms. If the worm had just escaped from a fishing shop and was trying to convince the improviser to help him escape, then this proposal would be consistent with the associations attached to worms and consequently the expectations. But if the worm reveals that it is an extraterrestrial life form and had come to earth to take the improviser to his planet, then this proposal would not be consistent with associations attached to worms and thus outside the circles of expectation.

The second meaning of 'Circles of Expectation', as I have interpreted it, pertains to the Gestalt of the action. This can best be explained with the old theatre aphorism: If a vase is knocked down, it has to be picked up. Ball (1981) argues that: "In the concept of Gestalt there is revealed a longing in the individual to complete an act that has not been fulfilled." (Ball 1981: 171) Thus a vase that has been knocked down longs to be put back in place and the audience expects it to be put back in place. The action of walking down the street with a worm is a Gestalt, in that the audience expects that action to be developed, which thus creates justified 'Circles of Expectation'. (Johnstone 1998: 76) For instance, if the worm wants to be helped to get back into a lawn, then this proposal is inside the circle of expectation and the Gestalt of the action is developed. But if the improviser defines the worm as a bookworm, then this creates a whole new circle of expectations. The bookworm becomes a whole new can of worms in that it prompts a new question: how did the

bookworm get to the street. Perhaps it fell out of a book. By redefining the worm as a bookworm the improviser has ignored the Gestalt of the previous action. The result of ignoring the Gestalt of the previous action, Johnstone argues, is that the audience loses interest.

According to Johnstone the improviser's tendency to search for proposals outside the 'Circles of Expectation' can be traced back to two fundamental problems improvisers experience. The first is the self-inflicted pressure of the improviser to be original and consequently make original proposals. Original proposals are ones which are divorced from the spectator's immediate associations and thus outside the circles. An example of an original proposal, which Johnstone quotes, is Little Red Riding Hood stepping out of the house and getting hit by a ton of spaghetti. Johnstone argues that such a proposal "is a form of sidetracking in which the improviser expects to be admired for dragging in 'clever' irrelevancies." (Johnstone 1997: 124) Although the original proposal will often be rewarded with a laugh, the original proposal breaks the inner logic of the story and thus fails to move the story forward. The obvious proposal, on the other hand, is one bound to the spectator's shadow story and thus associations. Johnstone quotes an example of an improvisation in which a sexually liberated grandmother was asked for advice by her prude granddaughter. After the grandmother had made a weak proposal, Johnstone suggested that they drag out a Victorian vibrator operated by a foot-pedal. (Johnstone 1997: 80) The reason this proposal is obvious is because it is consistent with circles of expectation set up by the sexual education class and the grandmother's age. The paradox, however, is that obvious proposals are the ones which seem to be the most original.

The second problem Johnstone has observed pertains to the nature of dramatic action. Dramatic action, according to Johnstone: "is the product of 'interaction', and

I'd define 'interaction' as 'a shift in the balance between two people.'" (Johnstone 1999: 77) Johnstone has observed that improvisers tend to choose actions that will allow them to remain 'intact'. Johnstone argues that what the audience wants is to see relationships which will be altered and quotes terse descriptions of movies from *TV Guide* to illustrate this point.

Image! was the first project in which I had used Johnstone's concept of 'Circles of Expectation' as a directorial aid in comedy theatre. Independent of its relevance to its connection with Vogler's generic story structure, Johnstone's concept serves as a useful tool to not only discover action choices, but also examine action choices in relation to comedy. If a rehearsal process is in its essence a process of negotiating a score of psycho-physical actions through the analysis of objectives and obstacles in relation to the given circumstances of the play, then Johnstone's concept can be used to reinvestigate the choices being made, both in terms of the associations the audience attaches to an action and also in terms of the Gestalt of the action.

An example of how Johnstone's 'Circles of Expectation' served to discover an action choice and subsequently reveal the technical requirements in order to make this choice comic, is, what I will refer to as 'The Cell Phone Turn Off'. The turning off cell phones occurs on three different occasions in Image! The first time during Mao's training session in Act II Scene 2. The second time while Mao is trying to seduce Liu in Act II Scene 5. And the third time when Mao first meets Vito Botma in Act III. What we were looking for in all these instances was an action that would function as a 'turn on'. During the workshop of the script we searched for an action choice by investigating the associations attached to such a community such as the Image Society e.g. fax machines, designer clothes, expensive cars, cell phones etc. After this we played around with how these different objects could be used to turn someone on.

The idea we eventually stayed with was the action of turning a cell phone off for someone.

After having explored the circles of expectation related to the Image Society and chose to make 'The Cell-Phone-Turn-Off' as the means of turning on, we were able to analyse *how* to execute the action, in order to reveal the humour of the action. In this particular case it was in the individual character's attitude towards the action. In Act II Scene 5 Mao executes the action with an overbearing attitude and is thus completely aware of the seductive power that he has at his disposal. The comic specifics of the moment lies in the group's collective reaction i.e. an intake of breath and a turn of the head and therefore show that they are seduced by this trivial action.

3c) THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VOGLER'S GENERIC STORY STRUCTURE AND JOHNSTONE'S CONCEPT OF 'CIRCLES OF EXPECTATION' AS DIRECTORIAL AIDS IN COMEDY THEATRE.

The hypothesis I formulated before entering the rehearsal process of Image! was that if an investigation of the resonance between Vogler's generic story structure and the scripted and performance text can lead to the discovery of new material which can be improvised on the floor, then an exploration of the circles of expectation is the technique by which the material can be developed. However during the rehearsal process of Image! and thus started to work with these directorial aids, I quickly arrived at the sense that there is a flaw in this hypothesis. It is only in retrospect that I am able to articulate this flaw.

The difficulty with Johnstone's 'Circles of Expectation' in relation to the research conducted in Image! is that Johnstone's interest lies in improvisations that are closed

stories, rather than improvisations that are part of a larger story and thus bound by predetermined given circumstances. The examples Johnstone gives relate to specific action choices made by improvisers and how to develop these action choices into stories by developing the circles of expectation. Here a problem arises in relation to Vogler's generic story structure. As I mentioned earlier if an investigation into the relationship between Vogler's generic story structure and the scripted text and performance text can lead to new material and Johnstone's 'Circles of Expectation' is the means by which this material is processed, then it is necessary to distil from the relationship between Vogler's generic story structure and the scripted text and performance text specific action choices.

The problem I encountered in developing these action choices with Johnstone's narrative techniques pertains to the application of these techniques during an improvisation. Although Johnstone does not go into detail about how he himself applies these techniques, one can get a good sense of their application through his style of writing. Rather than giving these improvisation techniques before an improvisation, Johnstone feeds these techniques into the improvisation by stopping the action. If, for instance, an improviser makes a choice that lies outside the circles of expectation, then Johnstone will stop the action and encourage the improviser to find an idea within the circle of expectation. Although I have found that this technique works well with improvisations which are closed stories, it prompts problems when working within a larger story such as Image! Because the given circumstances of the story are already predetermined, the actors tend to fall back on old choices, already contained in the scripted text and performance text, rather than explore new choices. The work, which has already been done, becomes like a straight jacket, which is difficult to break out of.

One possible way of breaking out of this straight jacket, which was explored in Image!, was to remove the improvisation completely out of the given circumstances of the play and relocate the improvisation in a different set of given circumstances. While rehearsing Act II Scene 2 we did improvisations with Tyson Cross playing Luke Skywalker and Lauren Howden playing Obi Wan Kanobe. This enabled us to see the improvisation as a closed story and thus develop the story with Johnstone's narrative techniques. After these improvisations we translated the given circumstances back into the given circumstances of the play. A variation of this technique is to translate the given circumstances into an entirely different genre, such as a soap opera.

An example of an unsuccessful application of Vogler's generic story structure and Johnstone's concept of 'Circles of Expectation' can be found in the development of Mao's entrance. During the rehearsal process Mao's entrance underwent several changes. The idea behind Mao's entrance was to accentuate the clash between Mao's world and that of the Image Society and thus make the prospect of Mao taking over Doug's place look as bad as possible. In the first proposal I had Joan condemn Mao for forgetting to pack certain aroma-therapeutic oil, while Liu watched this argument in total bewilderment. This proposal underwent many changes and cuts until it was finally decided to cut from Mao's entrance straight to Liu's reaction to Mao's entrance.

In the third week of rehearsal we were reworking Mao's entrance. During this rehearsal we had been improvising with ways in which Liu could build up her expectations of Mao and then clash her expectations with Mao's entrance. At some point in the rehearsal I posed myself the question: what stage of the hero's journey does Mao's entrance resonate with? The answer I arrived at was: The Special World.

In stories, Campbell argues, “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder.” (quoted in Vogler 1998: 81) In relation to Mao and the story of Image! The Image Society is such a special world. I then sidetracked the rehearsal with a brief problem posed by the plot of the story. If the means by which a storyteller highlights the hero’s transgression into the special world by juxtaposing it with the hero’s ordinary world, then the plot of the play fails to establish this juxtaposition. The reason this juxtaposition could not be established was due to logistical problems posed by space. In order to solve this problem, we would have to find a way of creating this juxtaposition within the frame of the special world i.e. The Image Society.

After this discussion we resumed rehearsing the unit immediately preceding Mao’s entrance. While rehearsing this unit Steven Pillimer, who played Mao in this scene, came up with the proposal to cross between the two upstage flats, looking completely lost. Steven’s proposal was met with a roar of laughter from the other cast members and myself. What Steven managed to achieve with this very simple and yet logical choice was to distil from the concept of the juxtaposition of the ordinary world and special world a specific action choice and at the same time debunk Liu’s expectations of him.

What I have only recently come to understand is that Mao’s action of ‘getting lost’ set up justified circles of expectation, which, in terms of its Gestalt, demanded to be explored. In retrospect I see that what should have happened is that we should have taken Mao’s action into an improvisation, which would develop the story within the set up circles of expectation and through this improvisation renegotiate the scripted and performance text. Instead the action was left hanging and thus unresolved. The

result of this was that Mao's cross remained a gag, instead of developing the action into the story.

What the above mentioned example shows is that in order to use Vogler's generic story structure and Johnstone's concept of 'Circles of Expectation' effectively as directorial tools in comedy theatre, the director needs to be able to identify the beacons which will tell him/her that a certain action demands further exploration. In some instances the exploration will lead the scripted and performance text far adrift from the original proposal, in other instances it will only lead to a minor detour.

CONCLUSION

The process of making Image! was a rewarding experience for me. The combination of having an experienced director of comedy theatre as a tutor and the opportunity to engage in a lengthy process with a large cast, gave me the unique opportunity to develop my knowledge and skills in making comedy theatre. Furthermore the feedback I have received from audience members, staff members and my examiners has not only shown me how the work on Image! needs to be developed, but also which theoretical and practical issues I need to clarify for myself as a writer and director.

The process of making Image! also gave me a unique opportunity to research two, relatively new, directorial aids and their application in comedy theatre. However, where I think the research needs to continue is developing the specific link between Vogler's generic story structure and Johnstone's 'Circles of Expectation' as a directorial aid in comedy theatre. For me the research into this link did not move beyond the script development in the rehearsal process. The research needs to be taken further into the specifics of comedy theatre.

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IMAGE!

Image!

by Cory McLeod
4 Leinster Terrace
St Martins Road
Three Anchor Bay / Cape Town 8005

IMAGE!

Image premiered at The Standard Bank National Arts Festival on 1 June 2000 with the following cast:

Mao (before haircut) and Vito Botma's Assistant:	Steven Pillimer
Mao (after haircut) and Doug Cave:	Tyson Cross
Doctor and Vito Botma:	Thain Torres
Liu:	Esther Pan
Stuart:	Bangikaya Poni
Linda:	Lauren Howden
Joan:	Jessica Haynes

IMAGE!

Act One Scene One

The scene takes place in a hospital. Doug is sitting in a wheelchair. His head is bandaged and he is dead to the world.

LIU: Doug, snap out of it!

STUART: Doug, it's me, Stuart. Come on, wake up! Say something at least. Anything!

LIU *(to doctor)*: Can't you do something about this?

DOCTOR: I fear there is little we can do for Mr Cave at present. As you can see he has taken a severe blow to the cerebellum. He can neither hear, see nor feel anything. Although his bodily functions are stable, it is impossible to predict when he will regain consciousness.

STUART: What kind of time frame are we looking at?

DOCTOR: Weeks.

LIU: What?

DOCTOR: Possibly even months.

LIU: That's out of the question! We need this hunk up on his feet ASAP.

STUART: Doc, you've got to understand that Doug is a key player in a major financial upswing. We're talking Swiss bank accounts, a listing on the JSE, franchises in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

LIU: There must be something you can do. Isn't there some kind of experimental treatment.

STUART: Trial medication?

LIU: Electroshock therapy?

DOCTOR: In all likelihood Mr Cave will regain consciousness only when he is ready. A prematurely induced regaining of consciousness could cause irreversible damage to his brain functions.

LIU: With a face like this do you think it matters how his brain functions?

DOCTOR: I don't think you understand the gravity of Mr Cave's situation.

LIU: His situation? What about our situation. We've got a major investor coming in five days and our seller is a vegetable. If you can't do your job, I am going to have a very interesting conversation with the board of this hospital.

STUART: Let's cut to the chase, shall we? Is your Jaguar paid for? Have you been thinking about opening up your own practice? Name your price.

DOCTOR: May I be frank? You two should be ashamed of yourselves. Greed and selfishness will not nurse Mr Cave back to health. What this brave young man

IMAGE!

needs more than anything else is your undivided love and attention. Now, if you'll excuse me I have to see the superintendent about a promotion.

LIU: *(trips Doctor.)* Sorry.

Doctor exits.

LIU: Stuart, let's just take a deep breath and look danger in the face. Worst case scenario: Doug stays a vegetable and Botma pulls back his investment. What are you seeing?

STUART: Bleakness.

LIU: How much bleakness?

STUART: A lot of bleakness. We're looking at a major bombshell in our financial indicators. Our revenue stands at only 60% of our overhead. We've got an overdraft that would make Nick Leason blush. Internal Revenue is so far up our noses, that we're going to need surgery to get them out. If we don't close Botma, then it won't be long before the bailiff comes around to repossess the underwear we're wearing.

LIU: Doug, I'm this close.

STUART: He's in a coma!

LIU: Always thinking of himself. I'm the one who's going to be damned to a life in the misery of middle management. I'm the one who's going to have to deal with the humiliation of flying economy class. So wake up!

Liu slaps Doug on the back. Doug falls out of wheel-chair. Stuart picks up Doug and puts him back in wheel-chair.

STUART: Listen, maybe we should consider alternative options.

LIU: What options?

STUART: Doug isn't the only seller in our staff.

LIU: Are you proposing that you give Botma the pitch?

STUART: I know that my sales talents are nothing compared to Doug's. Let's face it, Doug could sell snow to Eskimos. But it was my idea to begin with. I looked at Botma's dirty money and said this man needs a laundromat. And I have been brokering the deal so far. I can sell.

LIU: Let me tell you something about Botma. This is a man who has been impotent for the past year. He's tried everything from kinky lingerie to viagra. For some uncanny reason this face does something for him. That's why we need this face. Because anyone else is just going to blow the deal. And besides, I've heard your dire attempts at selling and you make us sound like an escort service.

STUART: OK. What do you suggest?

LIU: I'm going to wire him.

IMAGE!

STUART: Wire! Do you think that's such a good idea? I mean, you heard what the doctor said.

LIU: Doug is going to stay a vegetable unless we do something about it.

STUART: But this is Doug we're talking about. Doug always comes through in the end. *(to Doug)* Come on! Wake up Doug!

LIU: Step aside.

STUART: In the interests of the firm I can't allow you to do this.

LIU: Stuart, have you ever wondered what it's like to have your withdrawal denied by an ATM?

STUART: Wire the son of a bitch.

LIU: Doug, I'm giving you three seconds to wake up. Don't make me do it. One...two...

DOUG: OW!

STUART: Did you hear that? He's trying to tell us something.

LIU: That's a sign of pain, Stuart, not a word.

STUART: Come on, Doug. You can do it.

DOUG: MA!

STUART: He's saying 'ma'. Did you hear it? He said 'ma'!

LIU: That doesn't make any sense, Stuart.

STUART: Doug, you're going to have to do a little bit better than that.

DOUG: MOW!

LIU: What did he say?

STUART: Mow?

LIU: I'm wiring him.

STUART: Come on Doug, you can do it.

DOUG: MAU!

STUART: He's saying Mao! Mao...Mao...think. That's it! Mao! Doug's got a twin brother called Mao.

LIU: Since when?

STUART: Since birth. But he didn't know about him until a couple of weeks ago. They were separated at birth.

IMAGE!

LIU: There is another one of these heart eating womanisers out there.

STUART: Do you realise what this means?

LIU: Stuart we've still got five more days until the meeting with Botma. You've got to find this Mao.

STUART: We're going to need access to birth records. Maybe have to hire a hacker. Travel expenses. What if he isn't in the country?

LIU: Money is no object.. Do whatever you have to do. Just find him!

Act One Scene Two

The scene takes place in the foyer of the Image Society, a young image consulting firm in Cape Town.

LIU *(speaking on the phone)*: I must say Mr Botma, everyone here at the Image Society is very excited about the meeting. Everything's set up and ready to roll. Mr Cave? Yes, well... *(Notices that Stuart has just entered. Covers the phone with her hand.)* Is he here?

STUART: His bakkie just pulled in, but...

LIU: Mr Cave is very excited about meeting you and telling you all about the Image Society. No problem, I'll fax you another pic ASAP. His...what? Yes, of course, I'm sure we could arrange a photo of that. Great! Then in that case we'll see you Friday. *(hangs up.)* Where is he?

STUART: He's outside, but, look, there's been a minor complication with the twin situation.

LIU: Did you say anything about Doug? Because if you did...

STUART: No, he's still 100% in the dark, it's just that...

LIU: Then march our pin up boy in.

STUART: Look, Doug and his brother have been separated for a long time and they've kind of grown apart. Let's just say Mao is aesthetically disadvantaged.

LIU: Stuart, when I found Doug, he hopelessly imageless too. You should have seen him as a nude housecleaner for bored housewives. But he had hunkness stamped into his DNA and so does this Mao. We'll turn him into the stuff Peter Stuyversand ads are made of.

STUART: Are you sure you want to see him?

LIU: Yes.

STUART: Positive? You don't want me to run off to the chemist to get you a refill of prozac first?

IMAGE!

LIU: Stuart! (*to portrait of David Hirschfeld hanging on the upstage flat.*) David, I have a good feeling about this Mao. You remember how hopelessly imageless Doug was? A nude housecleaner for bored housewives. But he had hunkiness stamped into his DNA. And so does this Mao. (*Mao and his girlfriend Joan wander in.*) Stuart, get these vagrants out of here. (*to Mao.*) Look, here's ten rand, wash the Landrover in the parking lot. Don't scratch the paint. Now would you get out, we're waiting for a very important guest.

STUART: (*whispering*) That's him.

LIU: No it's not! (*pulls Stuart away.*) Stuart, are you absolutely positive that this is Doug's twin brother? Shit! OK, it's crisis management time. Where the hell is Linda?

STUART: She's on the phone with the police.

LIU: I told her to stop mugging Mr Delivery men. (*into intercom.*) Linda, darling, if it's not too much trouble could I have a word with you in the reception room.

JOAN: (*looking at the portrait.*) Who's the guy with the twinkle?

LIU: That just happens to be David Hirschfeld, the pioneer of image therapy.

JOAN: Looks a bit like Barbie's boyfriend.

LIU: (*taking a pill.*) Stuart, get rid of them before I hurt somebody.

LINDA: This had better be good, because I was this close to getting a Mr Delivery voucher. Not that I'd want one. (*notices Mao.*) I haven't seen so much hair since Planet of the Apes. And I'll bet there's a lot more hair hiding underneath that shirt.

JOAN: Hey, get your hands off that chest!

LINDA: Heel, boy. Heel.

LIU: Mao and his spouse were just about to leave.

LINDA: Mao? What a quaint name. Is it Mao as in Marius?

MAO: As in Mao Tse-tung.

LINDA: Well, Mr Chairman, shame you have to go. I bet there's a gorgeous face hiding underneath all that hair. Nice broad forehead. Good symmetry. Prominent cheek bones. Strong chin. If it weren't for all that hair I'd swear you were... Wait a second! You must be Doug's...

LIU: Linda! A word upfront centre please. Are you saying that a Doug Cave could be hiding underneath that tribal veneer?

LINDA: Well, you never can be too sure what's underneath. But in my expert opinion I'd say that after a radical make-over we could have a potential Doug Cave look-a-like on our hands.

JOAN: Mao, let's get our petrol money and get out of here.

IMAGE!

- LIU: I'm greenlighting the makeover.
- LINDA: The works.
- STUART: Wait, let me just see if we're on the same wave length on this one. Are you seriously considering this image disaster area as an option?
- LIU: Yes.
- STUART: Just wanted to straighten that out.
- LIU: OK...58...72...hut. Mao, I don't believe we've been properly introduced. I'm Liu Wong, CEO for the Image Society South Africa. You've met Stuart, head of our financial department. And this is Linda Bester, one of the top image trainers in the country. She's helped managers, TV presenters and politicians increase their market value by 312%. Now that we've all been properly introduced, I'd like to make you an offer you won't be able to resist.
- JOAN: Careful Mao. That's exactly what those people from the Freedom Front said.
- MAO: I'm not interested in moving to the Volkstaad.
- LIU: Mao, I understand that all of this can seem somewhat intimidating. In reality The Image Society is as down to earth as your sandals. We offer the public training programmes in 'image therapy'.
- JOAN: In other words you make people look like Barbie's boyfriend over there.
- MAO: What's this about?
- LIU: This is about money. And lots of it. In exactly 72 hours we are having a meeting with an investment prospect, Vito Botma. We want you to represent our firm and give a sales presentation on our behalf. We want you to be our seller.
- MAO: Me?
- JOAN: He doesn't want any part of it.
- MAO: I don't?
- JOAN: No, he doesn't. Just because we run a backpacker's in Port St Johns doesn't mean we're not clued into how you people operate. We know all about your devious tricks and backstabbing.
- MAO: We watch Isidingo.
- LIU: Linda, help me out.
- LINDA: Mao, do you think it would be at all possible to discuss our proposition in private?
- JOAN: I get it. Get rid of the girlfriend...
- MAO: Come on, there's no harm in talking to the people.

IMAGE!

JOAN: And leave you alone with these yuppies? Not over my dead body. And I'll just bet they've got a tokoloshe. One of them nasty Tanzanian ones. (*Mao gently hums in her ear. The action arouses Joan.*) Mao, stop it. Not here.

MAO: Take the bakkie, I'll meet up with you.

JOAN: Stop it, this isn't fair. OK. You win. I'll meet up with you at the fair. But if you people turn him into Barbie's boyfriend, I'll put a Mayan curse on the whole building.

Joan exits.

MAO: So what's this about?

LIU: When Vito Botma walks through that door, we are going to need to play hard ball. We're going to need the kind of salesmanship that makes sparks fly. That's where you fit in. Now, you're probably asking yourself: 'Why me?' Of all the sellers roaming the cappuccino bars in the Mother City, why me? Why did they track me down and bring me all the way from Port St Johns to give a sales presentation? That's what you're thinking, right?

MAO: No.

LIU: That's good, because it would require a very lengthy explanation.

MAO: Now that you mention it...

LIU: First of all Linda, who just happens to be one of the most gifted beauticians in the city, is going to access the full success potential of your appearance.

MAO: No problem, just don't touch the hair.

LINDA: I might just have to cut a hair or two.

MAO: I've got a backpacker's to run. I've got to think about the way I look.

LINDA: Did I happen to mention that I bought Jim Morrison's personal scissors at a Sotheby's auction?

MAO: You lie.

LINDA: Oh, look, there's still a hair in it. Think of the transcendental voyage that lies ahead when psychedelic genius snips through your hair.

MAO: You're not going to take much off, are you?

LINDA: You won't even notice the difference.

MAO: Promise.

LINDA: Would I lie to you?

Act One Scene Three

IMAGE!

- LIU: Linda! What's taking you so long?
- LINDA: *(off)* Done in just a minute. Will you hold still!
- STUART: With all due respect, I think we're making a serious time management misjudgement. We should focus on Doug and not this loser from the Wild Coast.
- LIU: Stuart, Doug is brain dead.
- STUART: His brother is too. And I must say that I am extremely concerned about this course of action. Do you really want to put the assets of this firm in the hands of...
- MAO: *(off.)* Try to set the night on: FIRE!
- LIU: Stuart, let's see what's underneath all that hair first and then I'll make decision. OK?
- STUART: I just want you to know how strongly I object to this.
- LIU: Write me a memo. Now, get out of my way. Linda!
- LINDA: We're ready.
- Linda enters followed by Mao.*
- MAO: That was sublime. Jim Morrison's scissors! I can't wait to tell Joan about this.
- LIU: He looks exactly like him.
- MAO: Like who? What's the matter? *(to Linda)* You didn't take that much off, did you. Tell me you didn't take that much off. Get me a mirror. *(Linda holds a mirror to his face.)* NO!
- LINDA: Don't you like it?
- MAO: Do you realise what you've done? It's going to take me years to grow my hair back. By that time it's going to start falling out. Joan's going to kill me.
- LINDA: How can you not like it?
- MAO: You've ruined my life!
- LIU: So? It's not as though there was much of a life to ruin. Listen, this face has serious market value. We can make you serious money. Stuart.
- STUART: If we take your annual revenue from your backpackers, generously estimated at 70% capacity, subtract taxes and overhead, it would take you 384 years and 7 months to earn that kind of money.
- MAO: Stay away from me! You people are weird. No, you're evil. Like primal evil.
- LINDA: Stop it! Stop being so selfish and consider just how privileged you are? Think of all those people who aren't so fortunate to be blessed with a face like yours. People for the Plateland, who look like they've been inbred a dozen times. Good

IMAGE!

people starving for a crumb of self-esteem, thirsty for just one drop of what you take for granted.

MAO: Hey, don't guilt trip me, 'cause I teach kids from disadvantaged communities how to play the didgeridoo.

LIU: Mao, this is my house. My BMW. My summer cottage. My personal trainer. My plastic surgeon. My live in lover. Make your mouth water?

MAO: I don't want anything from you. Is that your bakkie?

STUART: Doesn't anybody see what's happening? He might look like a seller, but he is never going to be a seller.

LINDA & LIU: Stuart!

MAO: Stuart's right. I'm never going to be your seller. Because I don't want your cars, your fancy clothes, your designer furniture. I just want my hair back. I've got to go.

LIU: That's the closet.

MAO: I knew that.

LINDA: Why did you come here?

MAO: What?

LINDA: What made you come here?

MAO: I don't know.

LINDA: You just got in your bakkie and drove across the country and you don't know why.

MAO: I guess it's a combination of a lot of things.

LIU: Do you expect me to buy that? Admit it, deep down in that holistic heart of yours, you're a depraved materialist. Admit it, you'd rather be driving a luxury 4 x 4 than that hunk metal.

MAO: Hey, don't knock the bakkie.

LINDA: Let me ask you a couple of questions. You're twenty-five?

MAO: Yes.

LINDA: You run a backpackers?

MAO: Yes.

LINDA: You have a girlfriend called Joan?

MAO: Yes.

LINDA: So you want to become our seller.

IMAGE!

MAO: Yes. Wait, no!

LINDA: But you just said yes.

MAO: You tricked me.

LINDA: Only because you wanted me to trick you.

MAO: No I didn't.

LINDA: Subconsciously you did.

MAO: Hectic. Wait, I see what you're doing. You are good. First you turn me into Barbie's boyfriend and then you start screwing with my head. And I'll bet those aren't really Jim Morrison's scissors. Well, I'm not falling for it.

LINDA: But you've got to admit, I did make you curious. Just a teensy weensy bit?

MAO: I guess.

LIU: Then close your eyes and relax. No obligations, no strings attached. You're free to leave whenever you like. Now clear your thoughts.

MAO: Done.

LIU: I want you to look into your deepest desire and tell me what you see.

MAO: Dali Lama returning to a free Tibet.

STUART: Hello.

LIU: No, that's not what I had in mind. Go deeper. Look into the recesses of your mind.

LINDA: What's happening?

MAO: I hear music. I can see this face. It's Joan. But there's something different about her.

LIU: What is it?

MAO: She's not talking. She's just, happy. We're sitting on this beach. Palm trees and turquoise blue water. There's a dirt road and a procession of women balancing towers of fruit on their heads. There's a backpackers. It's called Joan's and Mao's backpackers – Bali.

Bali. God I love the sound of that word. Joan would be so happy. Bali, yeah.

LINDA: Is that what you want?

MAO: Yes.

LIU: What are you willing to do to get it?

MAO: Anything.

LINDA: You know we can help you make that dream come true.

IMAGE!

MAO: Yes.

LIU: Will you be are seller?

MAO: Yes.

LINDA: It won't be easy. We'll have to prepare you for the pitch. You'll have to go through a vigorous training programme.

MAO: I can do it.

LIU: You'll have to cut yourself off from the outside world. You won't be able to see Joan.

MAO: She'll understand.

LINDA: You won't be able to smoke any dagga.

MAO: OK, I think I can do that.

LIU: Mao, welcome to The Image Society.

Act Two Scene One

A dim orange light illuminates Joan downstage left, who is doing a headstand and she speaks on the phone to Mao.

JOAN: Mao, where were you? I spent hours waiting for you at by the Reikki stand. But I had the most amazing tarot reading. All of a sudden I start pulling these cards I'd never even heard of. The twins! Would you believe that? Mao, I miss you so much. I want to go home. Cape Town gives me the creeps. The people here are so superficial that they think that affirmative action is a pop band. And there are people who've got 'Guess' printed on their clothes. What am I supposed to be guessing? Weird, huh. Let's go home, Mao.

MAO: Listen, you're going to have to head back to Port St Johns without me.

JOAN: This is so not OK. How am I supposed to run the Backpacker's all by myself? What if I get into an accident? What if the bakkie breaks down?

MAO: Don't knock the bakkie.

JOAN: But I miss you so much.

MAO: I miss you too, baby. But it's only going to be a couple of days.

JOAN: What if...

MAO: Listen, Joan, things are going to be different when I get back. I'm beginning to see what I really want out of life.

JOAN: OK.

IMAGE!

MAO: I want to take you away. Bali. How does that sound? Just you and me, running our own backpackers. We're going to be so self-actualised.

JOAN: Self-what? Are you OK? Have those yuppies been making you smoke anything non-organic?

MAO: Joan, put your ear close to the telephone. Listen. *(He hums.)*

JOAN: Mao, stop it, I'm with my sister.

MAO: So?

JOAN: Ag, Mao, I love you too.

MAO: I love you more. I've got to go. I'll call.

JOAN: I'll be staying with my sister. Hang up now.

MAO: No, you hang up.

JOAN: You hang up.

MAO: You hang up.

LIU: I'll hang up. Bye.

Light on Joan fades to black and Joan exits.

MAO: You hung up.

LINDA: We've got a lot of work to do.

LIU: Twelve years ago David Hirschfeld had dream: to create a global enterprise offering workshops which would fuel client's obsession with success and milk their bank accounts like a cow. It was inevitable that Scientology would sue us for copyright infringement. So what? One day we are going to drive Scientology out of business. Because we don't fart about with Dianectics and spirituality. We focus on what really matters in life.

LINDA: Money.

LIU: You are about to enter a brave new world. A place where achievers are made. Usually we guide new voyageurs across the threshold with the assistance of a user friendly virtual reality programme starring Lara Croft.

LINDA: But we can't figure out how the helmet works.

LIU: So you'll have to use your imagination. Imagine if you will a crowded street. Pedestrians moving in fast motion. Cars zipping by. Voiceover:

LINDA: Time is constantly speeding up. Modern life is lived in the fast lane.

LIU: Pan down supermarket shelf: instant coffee, instant noodles, instant glue...

LINDA: Decisions are made in the blink of the eye.

IMAGE!

- LIU: Cut to stock market.
- LINDA: Value judgements in an instant.
- LIU: Cut to news.
- LINDA: Life choices at the speed of light. There isn't any time to scratch beneath the surface. Artifice is the whole. The brand name is the product. The package is what's inside. Your survival depends on:
- LIU: IMAGE!
- LINDA: Image is everything. It tells us who you are,
- LIU: What you do.
- LINDA: Where you live.
- LIU: How much you pay your psychotherapist.
- LINDA: How many sugars you take in your cappuccino.
- LIU: Image.
- LINDA: Movie's over.
- LIU: This is the Interpol file on Vito Botma. Now you're probably asking yourself why Interpol has a file on Botma.
- MAO: No.
- LIU: Good, because it would require a lengthy explanation. Fact: Vito Botma has got money and lots of it. Fact: we want a chunk of it. Fact: people with money are the toughest sales. Botma's been there done that and seen the movie a dozen times. A sexy smile and cucumber in your pants isn't going to cut it with him. The only way you're going to be able to sell to him is to play into his soft spot.
- LINDA: His penis.
- LIU: Which hasn't been hard for over a year.
- MAO: Wait a second, you don't expect me to have sex with this guy. Because if you do, you can forget it. I am not gay. Not that there's anything wrong with it.
- LIU: Newsflash! Sex sells. It sells everything from washing powder, calculators...
- LINDA: Cigars!
- LIU: All it takes is for one woman to marinade a cigar between her legs and boom! Cigar sales go through the roof.
- LINDA: Just because your using sex as a sales tactic doesn't mean you have to give all your clients blow jobs.

IMAGE!

MAO: Just wanted to get that straight. Look, what makes you think that I can pull this off? It seems as though you're after one of these guys off the cover of Men's Health.

LIU: We're not interested in those toy boys.

LINDA: We aren't?

LIU: They've got nothing to offer.

LINDA: Who needs it? Bulging biceps, tanned skin, oiled chests... Boring! Mundane! They all suffer from premature ejaculation.

MAO: So how am I supposed to pull this off?

LINDA: Think of your life as a movie. Now tell me, where do you feature in the movie of your life. You're not the lead. You're not even the supporting actor. You're not even in the credits.

It's all about image. You haven't got one, so the casting agents took one look at you and said: get to the back of the line. What we want to do is recast you in your own movie. We're going to rewrite the script, fire the director, remake the whole thing and make you the star.

MAO: It's that simple.

LINDA: It's that simple.

MAO: It can't be that simple. You can't just rethink yourself.

LINDA: Why not?

MAO: Because personality's a complex thing. There's upbringing, spiritual interconnection with the universe and surely there's tons of stuff I've got to know.

LINDA: Mao, knowledge is like so out.

LIU: Knowledge is one of the top three reasons for career failures. Look at Ronald Reagan. Best politician America ever had. You know why? Because he knew absolutely nothing about politics.

LINDA: Let's get started with your programme. We'll start with aerobics to get rid of those love handles. After that we'll move onto image workouts, followed by self-actualisation meditation. These is your material. David Hirschfeld's audio-books. *Chicken Soup for the Image*. And, *The Seven Habits of Highly Successful Sellers*.

MAO: I just have one question before we get started. I'm still going to be me when we're done. I want to maintain my individuality, my Maoness. You're not going to turn me into a completely different person, are you?

LINDA: You'll hardly be able to tell the difference.

MAO: Promise.

LINDA: Would I lie to you?

IMAGE!

Act Two Scene Two

- LINDA: ...nine-hundred-ninety-eight, nine-hundred-ninety-nine and a thousand. Whew, I'm exhausted. Keep repeating your mantra.
- MAO: I'm the real thing... I'm the Camel Man... I'm Simunye..
- LINDA: Now the manual says I'm supposed to start with operational stuff. Boring. How about we get right down to something exciting?
- MAO: OK.
- LINDA: What does every great seller have? What do those leggy *überbabes* have that makes them irresistible? What do they have that gets us to buy food that makes us fat?
- MAO: Anorexia?
- LINDA: No. They've got 'it'.
- MAO: 'It'?
- LINDA: 'It' is what it's all about. Either you've got 'it', or you haven't. And if you haven't, we can help you get 'it' with the help of our scientifically tested image workout called *Iting*®. *Iting* a process by which we rid image trainees of all those undesirable attributes which aren't 'it'. What we're going to do is rid you of all that negative energy stored up inside you and turn you into pure 'it'. Are you ready to 'it'?
- MAO: I think so.
- LINDA: Wrong answer. If you want to become 'it', the answer is: 'yes'. Are you ready to 'it'?
- MAO: Yes.
- LINDA: I can't hear you.
- MAO: Yes.
- LINDA: Well done. One star for you. Now, look into the painful part of your past. Dive into those deep wounds and scars and tell Linda your most painful memory.
- MAO: The day I found out that Hansie took money for match fixing.
- LINDA: I was thinking more on the lines of personal tragedy: death of a loved one, emotional abuse... something really good.
- MAO: There was this one thing.
- LINDA: Good. Focus on the experience.
- MAO: It is kind of weird.
- LINDA: We can work with weird.

IMAGE!

MAO: I was up in Sandton selling incense door to door. I walk up to this one house. I ring the doorbell. There's no answer, but I can hear the sound of a vacuum cleaner. I look through the window and see this guy vacuum cleaning in the nude. I think, weird but I'm open minded. So I knock on the window. Then the nude guy turns to me. And I see that he looks exactly like me. He's like my doppelganger, my twin.

LINDA: You saw your twin brother?

MAO: He wasn't my brother, he just looked like me. Anyway, I...

LINDA: Oh, time's up!

MAO: But I thought we were going to image.

LINDA: I'd love to, but I'm really dying for low fat sushi.

MAO: Wait, we should finish this thing. I'm standing there looking at my double, but at the same time he was everything I wasn't. You know the type, captain of the rugby team, school prefect, toy boy for bored housewives...

LINDA: ...wealthy father, dominating mother, suburban upbringing, lifetime membership with The Health & Racket Club...

MAO: That's the guy!

LINDA: Aren't you craving for sushi? And you'd just love this sushi bar. They have this conveyor belt...

MAO: I thought this imaging stuff is really important for my process of self-actualisation.

LINDA: Look! I want you to forget that this ever happened. OK? Erase it from your memory. OK? You have to forget all about it!

MAO: Why?

LINDA: Why? That is a very good question. Very good. When you start asking questions like that, then you are one step down the road towards self-actualisation. One more star for you. Now let's go get some sushi.

MAO: You still haven't answered my question.

LINDA: It's because... Because... Because it didn't happen!

MAO: You're not trying to screw with my head again, are you?

LINDA: Has it ever crossed your mind that that nude housecleaner you saw through the window that day could very well be 'it'?

MAO: Him? 'It'? No way. He is definitely not 'it'.

LINDA: Trust me on this one, he's 'it'.

MAO: Him?

IMAGE!

LINDA: Him.

MAO: How would you know? I saw him, not you.

LINDA: Image life law number thirty-eight: you are your own metaphor. Mao, you're not the first person who has told me that they've seen their twin doing household chores in the nude.

MAO: Really?

LINDA: You are your own metaphor, Mao. On the one side you're this outsider and you can't think of yourself as anything but an outsider. What you saw that day was your own metaphor. A projection of yourself as an insider. Deep down in that holistic heart of yours you want to be that insider.

MAO: Why would I want to vacuum clean in the nude?

LINDA: It's not about vacuum cleaning. It's about being on the inside. It's about being somebody who's got it all. It's about walking into a bar and picking the woman of your choice. It's about making a six digit income. It's about driving down Main Road Camps Bay in a red convertible and making people wish they were you. It's about being 'it'. I know you want it, Mao. You're scared to admit you want it.

MAO: Come to think of it, I really could go for some sushi.

LINDA: Raw fish? Yuk! Mao, we're on the threshold of a self-actualisation breakthrough. I know what you're thinking. Do I really want to do this? There's a bit of anxiety going on, a bit of xenophobia. But don't be afraid of what you want.

MAO: I'm the real thing...

LINDA: Now look at your double vacuum cleaning in the nude. He's 'it'. He's what you want to be. Walk towards him. Your legs become his legs. Your bum becomes his bum. Your chest becomes his. Your face becomes the face of a self-actualised selling machine. How does that feel?

MAO: It's nice.

LINDA: Try vacuum cleaning.

Mao mimes the act of vacuum cleaning. The action builds to an ecstatic climax. Liu enters.

LIU: I've updated script... (notices Mao's.) What's with him?

LINDA: A *coup de grace* in image therapy. Five minutes with Linda Bester and he's a changed man.

LIU: Put a lid on it! This is the updated script for the Botma pitch. The script is in a flipchart format. For every reaction Botma gives, you flip to the appropriate answer. Got it?

Liu exits and Mao follows her towards the exit with a vacuum cleaning sound..

IMAGE!

LINDA: OK, now we can get started. Hello? Are you listening?

MAO: Yes, of course.

LINDA: Now then the first thing you need to know about your sales pitch is the opening. No opening, no sale. Selling is like algebra. There's a formula for everything. And the formula for a good opening is A plus B plus C equals sale.

MAO: A plus B plus C equals sale, right, got it.

LINDA: Watch and learn. A is for adrenaline. You're wearing a silk g-string from Adult World. Your chest is oiled with Spanish Fly. You've got full bodied Monica Lewinsky lips. The lips that can blow the most powerful man on earth out of office. And a band is standing behind you singing 'You sexy thing.'
Now add B to the formula. B is for body. Flex those beautiful muscles, show him what's on offer. This is high quality merchandise.
Now you add C to the formula. C is for cell phone. It rings. 'Moshimoshi Mistua Yokihama. Dochirahe?' A foreign language is always a turn on. 'Tuesday? I'm in Kuala Lumpur on Monday, in Seoul Tuesday morning so I could catch a flight in the afternoon and meet you in Tokyo at fiveish.' You spot Botma. 'I can't speak to you at the moment.' Hang up. Now you want to get him to eat from the palm of your hand, so you give him the biggest turn on known to modern man. The cell phone turn off. This isn't just any cell phone you're turning off. It's a Nokia. Now you try.

MAO: A plus B plus C...OK. *(Mao starts to execute the actions as Linda showed him. While he is doing this however, Linda notices the box of Smarties he is holding in his hand. She stares at them, craving to get one.)* Sorry, would you like a Smarty?

LINDA: No.

MAO: A. G-string... Spanish Fly... Lips... 'Sex machine.'

LINDA: No, you've got it all wrong. You've got to feel it in your hips. *(As Mao sways his hips, Linda secretly tries to get a Smarty.)* Let's go to B.

MAO: B is for body.

As Mao flexes his muscles, Linda follows the path of the box of Smarties with her mouth. Mao catches her just when her mouth is wide open in front of his pelvic area.

LINDA: Go to C.

MAO: 'Moshimoshi ...moshi? I'm in Kuala Lumpur on Monday, in Seoul Tuesday morning so I could catch a flight in the afternoon and meet you in Tokyo at fiveish.' 'I can't speak to you at the moment.' Bye.

When Mao crosses the stage he drops the box of Smarties. Linda rushes to it, only to find out that it is empty.

MAO: How was that?

LINDA: We've got a lot of work to do.

IMAGE!

Sound cue: The Roman March from Ben Hur. With the rhythm of the music Linda demonstrates various actions, such as how to hold a cell phone, how to straighten out ones tie and the gestuality of giving a sales presentation. But when Mao tries to do these actions on his own, he ends up with his hands on Linda's breasts, chocking himself with his tie, or hitting Linda over the head with a file.

Act Two Scene Three

MAO: The people who have come to the Image Society, let's be honest, they were a sorry lot...

LINDA: But we really are making progress. Monica Lewinsky lips Mao.

LIU: I do not want to see progress, I want to see results. When I look at him, I don't want to see a loser. I want to see Doug. I want him walking, talking and selling like Doug.

LINDA: I can't turn an image delinquent into Doug Cave overnight.

LIU: Then you can go right back to where you came from: the Edgar's perfume counter.

LINDA: You're chirpy. A little early for cybersex.

LIU: David won't be online for another hour.

LINDA: Hips, Mao. Hips! What do you want me to do? Put Viagra in his coffee?

LIU: I was thinking more along the line of a wire..

LINDA: The wire! Don't you think that's just a little drastic?

LIU: The clock is ticking. We've only got 48 hours left.

LINDA: And if your beloved wire turns him into a vegetable, what then?

LIU: Suicide. Kidding. Strap him into the chair.

LINDA: He's making tremendous progress. In fact I'd say that I've never seen anyone make such progress. We are on the brink of a self-actualisation breakthrough. Liu, we are this close. (*Mao falls with a thump.*) Maybe not.

LIU: I'll strap him in the chair myself.

LINDA: Look, just give it 24 more hours. Then I guarantee he'll be 'it'. OK? Now I've got to go to the powder room. Don't try and wire him while I'm gone.

Linda exits.

LIU: Vomit fast, you've got work to do.

Lights turn to green. We hear Balinese music. What we are seeing is Mao's fantasy. He moves towards Liu with an imaginary vacuum cleaner. Liu takes out a whip and starts to whip Mao.

IMAGE!

When lights return to the general lighting state we see Mao with his finger in his mouth, spanking himself, while Liu watches his peculiar behaviour.

LIU: Mao?

MAO: Yes.

LIU: Are you fantasising about me?

MAO: What?

LIU: When you look at me do you see my naked flesh embracing yours. The sweat of passion on our bodies. Do you?

MAO: Yes.

LIU: That's just great, Mao. *(into intercom.)* Linda, get in here.

Linda rushes in cleaning her index finger.

LINDA: Have you got a breath mint?

LIU: Mao's been fantasising about me. *(Linda laughs.)* Mao has been fantasising about me.

LINDA: Mao! How could you do this to me. This could jeopardise everything we've worked for. I know she has a certain charm, like a dominatrix. But you don't want to do this to yourself. Do you know what the guys at Giovanni's call her? The Terminator.

LIU: And frankly, I see this as a major breach of trust. We had an arrangement. You promised to act professionally. Now does this constitute professional behaviour.

LINDA: Thank you for that boost of confidence, Lady McFreeze. Come on, show some compassion.

Liu unwillingly approaches Mao.

LIU: Mao, I'm sorry South Africa lost that World Cup bid.

LINDA: Feel better?

MAO: Yes.

LINDA: Now distract yourself. Go back to your superobjective. Think of Joan.

MAO: Joan?

LINDA: That cute little red head you're doing this for.

Stuart enters..

STUART: Have I got news for you. *(To Mao.)* Take a hike.

LINDA: Mao, take five. (

IMAGE!

Mao exits.

- LIU: What's happened?
- STUART: Mr Doug Cave, seller extraordinaire, the marketing backbone of the Image Society, the role model of image therapeutics...
- LIU: Get to the point.
- STUART: Doug's regained consciousness.
- LIU: What?
- STUART: He's 100% back to himself. Couldn't be better.
- LINDA: Where is he?
- STUART: I'm working on the whereabouts situation. I've got a dozen men combing the streets of Cape Town as we speak. These are top notch men. The best money can buy. And tax deductible. They'll surely find Doug before the police.
- LINDA: The police?
- STUART: Minor incident. Not even worth mentioning.
- LIU: Why are the police looking for Doug?
- STUART: Someone tried to kill him. A lone amok runner. A few amok runners, actually. More like a mob. But that's OK. Because Doug is back and we can kiss the reject from the Wild Coast goodbye.
- LIU: Stuart, backtrack, what did the doctors say?
- STUART: There was a lot of psychological mumbo-jumbo. Something about bi-polar disorders...I can't remember. Why's this important?
- LIU: Stuart, think!
- STUART: Something about personality...um...personality retrograde.
- LIU: Retrograde personality disorder.
- STUART: That's it.
- LIU: Do you realise what this means?
- LINDA: No, what?
- LIU: Look it up in the manual.
- STUART: What's with the uptight attitude. Doug's back.
- LINDA: Got it, retrograde personality disorder! 'The effects of retrograde personality disorder include, amnesia...wada, wada, wada...'

IMAGE!

- STUART: So what? Doug never had a good memory.
- LINDA: No!
- LIU: What?
- LINDA: No!
- LIU: Linda!
- LINDA: 'Research conducted by Image Society therapists has proved that RPD can result in total self-actualisation degeneration.'
- LIU: No!
- LINDA: 'Furthermore RPD patients suffer from brief 30 – 60 seconds seizures triggered off by certain words. During these seizures RPD have displayed uncanny mental telepathic abilities. These seizures are coupled with an incessant urge towards verbal violence.
- STUART: Could somebody please translate that into English?
- LIU: Doug's become an anti-seller.
- LINDA: He's a walking time bomb.
- LIU: Linda, worst case scenario. Doug happens to show up while Botma's here. Doug gets one of these attacks, there's a lot of verbal violence and Doug happens to mention Botma's erectile disability. What do you see?
- LINDA: I see Botma crushing us, grinding us into powder and blasting us into oblivion.
- LIU: Will he pull back his investment?
- LINDA: Probably.
- LIU: Stuart, find Doug.
- STUART: I'll have him here by yesterday.
- LINDA: No. Don't bring him here.
- LIU: Lock him up in a room and make sure he can't get out.
- STUART: Wait! What is going on here? This is Doug we're talking about.
- LIU: Doug isn't Doug anymore.
- STUART: Let me just make sure our wave lengths are in sync. You want me, to lock up Doug, the prime assets of this firm, a seller who has made us millions. And in the mean time you are putting our entire financial future in the hands of a deadbeat.
- LINDA: Yes.

IMAGE!

STUART: I have a minor problem with that.

LIU: Stuart, when all of this over we'll get you into a support group for accountants where you can talk about all your problems. But right now we've got to focus on a real problems, which is Doug Cave. So be a good little accountant and do as your told. Bye.

Act Two Scene Four

Doug Cave enters wearing the hospital frock and head bandage from Act one, Scene one. He is also wearing ear muffs.

DOUG: Hello? *(takes off ear muffs.)* Is anybody here? Hello?

JOAN: Mao? Mao? *(notices Doug's back.)* Mao! What's got into you? Do you think I like hanging out at my sister's waiting for you to call. I know we have an open relationship, but still expect you to call. Mao, are you listening to me. Mao!

She touches Doug. He turns around. She screams. He screams.

JOAN: Who are you? What are you doing with Mao's clothes?

DOUG: Don't hurt me. I didn't mean to do it. I can't even remember doing it. It's just that these words come out of my mouth I can't control it. They just pour out of my mouth. Listen, I'm going to take off my ear muffs off now. I'll just warn you that certain words set me off. So if I start bombarding you with verbal violence, it's nothing personal. *(takes ear muffs off.)* Hi I'm Doug. Doug Cave.

JOAN: Wo!

DOUG: What?

JOAN: I'm sensing seriously negative energy.

DOUG: You can?

JOAN: Reikki. I'm a certified reikki master. Did a whole three week course. Oh yes, it's definitely negative.

DOUG: That dream!

JOAN: No wonder.

DOUG: What?

JOAN: Dreams are a very powerful cosmic force. It's trying to communicate. You've got to open up those lines of communication and figure out what it's saying.

DOUG: How do I do that?

JOAN: Tell me your dream.

DOUG: I'm about seventeen in this dream and I'm in this place like Sandton or Randburg. And I'm vacuum cleaning in the nude.

IMAGE!

JOAN: What kind of vacuum cleaner is it?

DOUG: Is that important?

JOAN: It makes all the difference in the world. A Hoover has a completely different symbolic message than a Filter Queen.

DOUG: It was a Dirt Devil

JOAN: Interesting. Go on.

DOUG: I hear a knock on the window. I look and see this guy. He's got long hair and is holding a pack of incense. He just stood there, looking at me with this stunned expression. This is the weird part. He looked exactly like me. He was my twin.

JOAN: That is so weird.

DOUG: I don't know about 'weird'.

JOAN: I mean weird as in synchronicity. Cause the other day I was having this tarot reading and you wouldn't believe which card I pulled out. The twins.

DOUG: What do you think that means?

JOAN: I haven't got a clue.

DOUG: I've got to figure it out. I can't go on like this much longer. The amnesia's bad, but these attacks are killing me. One minute I'm casually walking down Main Road and the next thing I know an angry mob is chasing me through Woodstock. If I could just remember who the hell I am, I could get it to stop. You must think I'm a total lunatic.

JOAN: Yes. But it's cool. Tell me about these attacks.

DOUG: Well, they get triggered off by certain sounds. I still haven't figured out which ones. And then it's like I'm connected to these live wires. I'm like battered by a thousand volts of electricity. Then these words start coming out of my mouth. Oh, I forgot to sell you about the humming. I can hear it gently in my ear just before the electricity. It goes something like this. (*he hums in her ear.*) Then I get the shock.

JOAN: I didn't quite catch the humming sound. How does it go again? (*He hums once more.*) One more time.

DOUG: You have got such beautiful...

Liu enters.

LIU: What the hell is the bimbo doing here? And what the hell are you doing with ear muffs?

DOUG: Give those back, please. You're going to set you off.

IMAGE!

- LIU: We had an arrangement. I shouldn't have listened to Linda. I'm putting a stop to this, otherwise we'll never get you to sell. (*Doug has an attack.*) I've had it with you.
- JOAN: Leave him alone, he's not well.
- LIU: I don't need him well, I need him to sell!
- DOUG: Nei drae de nie si su mu ren? Nee jzan de nu li, czwan de nee de czo ee fu, gain wo jzeong jzi gadong shi. Nee si say? Mai yo ren.
- LIU: Wo jzi dow wo si say!
- DOUG: Nei bu jzi dow! Nee bu ren si nee jzi jee, bu ren si ling way de ren. Nee bu ren si ee ga don shi! Nee jzi ren si David Hirschfeld.
- LIU: Beow jzeong David Hirschfeld de ming jzi!
- DOUG: Oh, David Hirschfeld si nee de jzu. Nee mai yo jzu ren, mai yo shean sin, mai yo show hai. Nei su mu dow mai yo. Ne si hin chong nre ren.
- LIU: I'm going to wire you.
- Liu exits.*
- DOUG: ...eyes.
- JOAN: You speak Chinese?
- DOUG: No.
- JOAN: That is so cool.
- DOUG: Did I just have another attack?
- JOAN: Oh yeah.
- DOUG: Was it bad?
- JOAN: She looked pretty upset. But it's cool, she's a bitch. We better get out of here before she gets back. She said something about wiring you. I think it's some kind of Chinese torture thing. You know, maybe we should go to my bakkie and talk about that humming thing.
- DOUG: I'd like that.
- JOAN: Me too. She's coming. Let's get out of here.
- DOUG: You don't happen to know where we can get some take-away perlemoen?
- JOAN: We don't need it.
- Joan and Doug exit. Linda and Liu enter.*
- LIU: I knew this would happen. I should have wired him a long time ago.

IMAGE!

LINDA: Are you sure it was a relapse?

LIU: I know a relapse when I see a relapse.

LINDA: Maybe it was just a moment of weakness.

LIU: It was a relapse. He's mutated back to his old self. He was wearing his old clothes and blowing away in his girlfriend's ear.

LINDA: How could this have happened? He was doing so well.

LIU: Obviously not well enough. Where is he?

LINDA: You shouldn't have left him alone in his condition. He's probably run off.

Mao enters.

MAO: ...they weren't happy. Their success rate was down to naught. But then they came to us and we gave them our scientifically tested method, with a 100% success rate. Now isn't that something you want to get involved with? Botma answers: not really, flip to 7. Botma answers: yes, flip to 4.

LIU: Look at him. Acting as though nothing happened.

LINDA: It's worse than I thought.

LIU: I'm going to wire him.

LINDA: Wait, let's give him one more chance to come clean. Mao, we'd like to have a word with you.

MAO: What's up?

LINDA: Have you had these clothes on all this time?

MAO: I went to the bathroom, if that's what you mean.

LINDA: And has Joan been here recently.

MAO: No. That's why I was in the bathroom.

LINDA: I'm so disappointed in you.

MAO: It's no big deal. Just a release of tension.

LIU: And why didn't you tell me you speak Chinese?

MAO: What's going on here?

LINDA: This is going to hurt us, more than it hurts you.

LIU: David Hirschfeld gave me this wire many years ago. Now I'm going to use it on you.

IMAGE!

Liu and Linda strap Mao to the chair. They connect wires to his head, which send electrical impulses through his body.

Act Two Scene Five

The scene takes place the morning after the wiring. Mao is still strapped to the chair, wires connected to his forehead. He is in a zoned out state of mind.

LINDA: Mao, try saying something.

MAO: Are you frustrated? Discontent? Do you feel impotent? Well, look no further, because The Image Society has the answer. Do you want to be led down the path towards self-actualisation? Yes, flip to eight. No, flip to twelve.

LINDA: Linda says, get up. Linda says, follow the finger. Linda says, present cell phone. Mao, don't go near that window. Mao, you're not ready to look out the window.

MAO: Look, there's my bakkie. God, I love that bakkie.

LINDA: You shouldn't be looking out that window in your condition.

MAO: Look! You see that woman in the bakkie? That's Joan, my girlfriend.

LINDA: Get away from that window!

MAO: And you see that guy she's having sex with. That's me!

LINDA: Mao, you're hallucinating! Get away from that window. *(She looks out.)* Oh, my God. *(Mao freezes.)* Mao, snap out of it. Mao! *(runs to intercom.)* Security, there's a bakkie. out in the parking lot. Chase it away. Mao, it's not real. Nobody's there. It's not real. It's part of the same hallucination thing we were talking about. You know, the Hodgehodgkins Effect Disorder thing. Repeat after me. It's not real.

MAO: It's not real.

LINDA: My girlfriend isn't having wild and passionate sex with my twin brother. I'm hallucinating.

MAO: I'm hallucinating.

Mao returns to his zoned out state, starring out the window.

Act Two Scene Six

Mao is still starring out the window.

LIU: How long has he been like this?

LINDA: Four hours, twenty-seven minutes.

LIU: Has he moved at all?

LINDA: He blinked an hour ago.

IMAGE!

- LIU: Damn! Botma's going to be here in eighteen hours, one of sellers is a raving lunatic and the other seller's a vegetable. Stuart, I am holding you personally responsible for this. If you would have found Doug and done as I told you, this would have never happened.
- STUART: Me? Linda's the one who practically made him look at his twin brother having sex with his own girlfriend. What were you thinking?
- LINDA: It was the best I could do under the circumstances. And Doug would have never have got around to bonking Mao's girlfriend if Liu had been able to tell the difference between Mao and Doug. Come on, where do you get off thinking that Mao can speak Chinese?
- LIU: Shut it! Botma is going to be here in twenty-four hours. This juvenile bickering isn't going to get us anywhere. Let's just take a deep breath and agree that this is all Stuart's fault.
- STUART: Me!
- LIU: Stuart! Linda, what does the manual say?
- LINDA: We're looking at two possible scenarios. The first is that he snaps out of it, he goes back to old loser self and we can say *asta la vista* to self-actualisation. The second is that he snaps out of it and becomes utterly and totally 'it'. We're talking the superlative of 'it'. We should be able to spot the signs right away. A passionate look in his eyes. His head should automatically fall into a slight tilt. And his jaw will also correct itself so that the mouth is always slightly parted.
- As Linda is saying this, Mao slowly regains consciousness and gradually becomes all the things Linda is describing.*
- LIU: Give me that! Model like walk, sway in his voice...what time is it? Damn, David won't be online yet.
- MAO *(to Liu)*: I've been looking for you.
- LINDA: Mao, how are you feeling?
- MAO: Oh, I'm feeling good. *(his cell rings.)* Mr Yokihama. Tuesday in Tokyo. I think I just might be able to squeeze you in. *(notices Liu.)* I've got to go. *(He turns off his cell phone.)* Hi there.
- LIU: Hi. *(Mao walks towards her.)* Stay right there please.
- MAO: I can't do that. 'Cause I'm wired and loaded with a thousand volts of electricity, baby.
- LIU: This really is not a good idea.
- MAO: Can you hear that?
- LIU: Yes.

IMAGE!

Sound cue: 'You Sexy Thing'. Mao rips off his clothes. Liu rips off her clothes. And the group breaks out into dance, ending with Mao and Liu in a romantic pose. Joan enters.

MAO: *(realising that Joan is in the room.)* It's not what it looks like.

JOAN: How could you do this to me, Doug?

MAO: Who's Doug?

JOAN: I can't believe this. You told me I was the love of your life. We made wild and passionate love. You hummed in my ear not five hours ago.

MAO: I did?

JOAN: Please, don't tell me you can't even remember. No, don't say you can't remember what happened in the bakkie.

MAO: The bakkie thing, of course I remember. How could I forget a traumatic experience like that?

JOAN: How the hell can you say that making love to me was traumatic?

MAO: Joan, look, let's just backtrack. I've been going through this entire process, iting and wiring and along the way fantasies and hallucinations crop up, which result in things like this. What I'm trying to say is that I'm doing this for you.

JOAN: For me! You're doing this for me? What kind of a sick bastard are you? *(to Liu.)* What have you done to my Mao?

MAO: Joan, I'm here. I'm still the same Mao.

JOAN: I don't know who you are, but you're certainly not Mao. Mao would never do something like this. Mao is a caring and loving human being.

MAO: I'm still that same caring and loving person.

JOAN: What have you done with my Mao? I want him back!

MAO: I'm right here.

JOAN: Don't touch me! I want my Mao back. I am going to make you people pay. I'm going to put a curse on the entire building. I'll be back. And when I'm back, prepare to deal with the wrath of the Mayan Goddess of the Earth.

Joan rushes out.

MAO: Joan, come back. Can't we leave Mayan Earth Goddesses out of this? Come back. What have I done.

LINDA: There's a perfectly rational explanation for all of this.

MAO: There is. I've lost touch with myself. I've become my own nemesis. Look at me! I can't even talk like myself anymore. I can't walk without feeling a cucumber up my bum. Stop it!

IMAGE!

- LIU: Just pull yourself together. You've only got to stick it out for another twenty-four hours. And then you can go back to being a pathetic neo-hippie with a sorry future.
- MAO: I can't do that.
- LINDA: Don't say that. You've come so far.
- MAO: I'm sorry, but I can't go through with the meeting. It is the point of no return. If I go through with it I'll never find the way back to myself again. I hope everything works out for you, but I can't help you.
- STUART: This is just great! This reject from Port St Hippiefontein has been tearing this firm apart from the moment he walked in here. I tried to tell you. I've written memo after memo. But nobody listens to Stuart. Stuart this, Stuart that. I've devoted three of the most financially productive years of my life to this firm and you just go doing it, before my very eyes. Do you realise what that does to my sense of self?
- MAO: I'm sorry, Stuart. I'm an ubuntu kind of guy, but you're going to have to go solo on this one. I hope you make a lot of money anyway and make the Fortune 500 one day.
- STUART: Listen to him. Just listen. This is the level of intelligence you have entrusted our future to. He bails out on us and he thinks this is still about money. He's been preparing to sell himself to Botma for the past seventy-two hours and he doesn't even have an idea who he's dealing with.
- MAO: I'm sensing some seriously negative energy here, Stu.
- STUART (*showing Mao a newspaper*): Have you ever seen one of these? It's a newspaper. There's an article on Botma on page three.
- MAO (*Mao scans through newspaper*): Oh my God... He actually did this to a doctor?
- LINDA: He's very sensitive about his impotency.
- MAO: Oh my God... He actually did this?
- LIU: He hasn't been convicted of anything.
- MAO: This is like primal evil in its purest form. And this guy has my picture.
- LIU: I'm afraid so.
- MAO: Oh my God.
- STUART: Get the picture!
- LIU: Stuart, where are you going.
- STUART: I'm going to try and save what's left of this firm.
- Stuart exits.*

IMAGE!

LIU: Mao, people talk about people with a long list of felonies as a negative thing. Try to look at the good he does.

MAO: Good?

LIU: Like helping the UN in their campaign against overpopulation.

LINDA: And underneath that sadistic facade, he's really a sweetie.

IMAGE!

Act Three Scene One

Stuart enters. Looks around. The stage is somewhat darker than before.

STUART: I'm sure glad I found you hiding underneath that bridge, Doug. Because in just a few short hours our lives are going to turn around in a big way. Liu and Linda didn't want to listen. They said: 'Doug's off his rocker.' And I said: 'Doug always comes through.' I can't wait to see you selling again. I can just see the expression on Liu's face when she says: 'You're were right.' We'll show them. You're not crazy. Isn't that so, Doug? Doug?

Stuart enters with Doug.

STUART: Are you looking forward to getting back to work?

DOUG: Stanley?

STUART: Stuart.

DOUG: *(taking off ear muffs.)* Did I really work here, Stanley?

STUART: Stuart.

DOUG: Who's Stuart?

STUART: I'm Stuart.

DOUG: Stuart, right. Of course. I have absolutely no recollection of this place. You'd think something might snap. But it doesn't do anything for me. Nothing. Except for that water cooler. Yes, I definitely know that water cooler.

STUART: Are you OK, Doug?

DOUG: I'm fine. Just trying to find myself.

STUART: In the water cooler.

DOUG: Nothing. Help me out here, Steven.

STUART: Stuart.

DOUG: Stuart?

STUART: That's my name.

DOUG: Right.

STUART: Don't worry about it. Hey, I'll write it down for you. Is that better? You're OK. You're not crazy. You'll be able to...

DOUG: *(quickly puts on earmuffs.)* Don't say it!

STUART: What?

DOUG: That word!

IMAGE!

STUART: Se...

DOUG: *(slowly taking off ear muffs.)* That word. It'll set me off. Any permutation will give me an attack. First person singular, third person plural, past participle, infinitive, as a noun, adjective, compound... Don't say any of them.

STUART: That's OK with me Doug. I want you to know that. No matter what Liu and Linda say, I still believe in you.

DOUG: Now you've got to help me out. Give me something that will kick start my memory. Some sort of object.

STUART: What about this Doug? *(takes out cell phone.)* The ce...

DOUG: Don't say the word!

STUART: You could work magic with this mobile phone. So, does that bring back memories.

DOUG: No.

STUART: How about this? *(takes out G-string.)* Do you remember how you used to put these on to psych up for a sa... a presentation?

DOUG: No.

STUART: What about this chair? The straps. We had a lot of good times in this chair. Huh?

DOUG: Was I a prostitute?

STUART: No!

DOUG: You had me scared there for a minute. Has anyone ever told you that you make this place sound like an escort service?

STUART: Many times.

DOUG: What's the matter?

STUART: Doug...Doug, Doug, Doug... I just can't seem to get it right. *(he starts plucking pedals off of a flower.)* I've listened to all the audio tapes. I've done the seven step programme. I walk and talk just like the manual says. But I still can't...you know.

DOUG: Can't what?

STUART: That word.

DOUG: You're in love, aren't you.

STUART: How did you know?

DOUG: Plucking pedals from a flower is usually a dead giveaway.

IMAGE!

STUART: Doug, you've got to help me. If I can just prove to her that I was right, then maybe she'll start to respect me. And maybe that will grow into love. Do the pitch and help me win her heart. Do it for love.

DOUG: Get a grip on yourself.

STUART: Then do it for money.

DOUG: Listen, I'd like to help you, but I can't. I don't know who this Botma guy is. I don't know what I'm supposed to do...

STUART: You just have to be yourself.

DOUG: I've got amnesia. I can't remember who I am.

STUART: Insignificant details.

DOUG: And all this Botma has to do is say the wrong word and I'll be off on one of my attacks. Believe me, he won't like it. We're talking messy stuff. We're talking verbal violence.

STUART: It can't be that bad.

DOUG: OK, see for yourself. Say the word. Set me off. Go ahead. Say it! Chicken. You know I'm a lunatic. You know I'm psycho.

STUART: So you've got a few minor quirks. Big deal. We can work around it.

DOUG: I'm a walking time bomb. I've even managed to offend the woman I've fallen in love with. God knows how I did it. One minute we're making love in her bakkie, the next minute she acts as though she caught me making love to another woman. I'm nuts! Why can't you get that through your head?

STUART: Because I'm desperate. Doug if you don't do the pitch, then we're dead. We need you Doug.

DOUG: I came here to find out who I was. Now are you going to tell me or not?

STUART: Of course Doug. I'll tell you everything you want to know.

DOUG: Good.

STUART: Right after you're done with Botma. (*straps Stuart into the chair.*) Doug, what are you doing?

DOUG: I'm warning you. Tell me who I am, or you'll regret it.

STUART: I could tell you stories.

DOUG: No, just the facts.

STUART: Well, it's kind of hard, because your occupation involves certain words. Let's just say it rhymes with teller.

IMAGE!

DOUG: You mean I was a Rockefeller. That's fantastic. I must be one of the richest people on earth.

STUART: No Doug. The other word that rhymes with teller.

DOUG: Mozzarella?

STUART: No, the word that does funny things to you.

DOUG: I see... I was the word that rhymes with 'umbrella'.

STUART: Exactly.

DOUG: And what did I 'smell'.

STUART: Well, you weren't your Joe Soap kind of Cinderella. You were the best. You could 'hell' anything to anybody. But above all you sol... I mean, 'mould', image.

DOUG: It's all coming back to me. A is for adrenaline: 'I'm a sex machine.' B is body. C is for... 'Moshimoshi Mr Yokihama.' That's terrible. That's depraved. I should be ashamed of myself. As a matter of fact I am. No wonder I can't remember who I am. As of right now I am going to clean up my act. Wait! Clean...vacuum clean... The dream!

STUART: Does that mean you'll do the pitch?

DOUG: It's coming together. The house represents my past deeds. The vacuum cleaner is my new mission in life. My twin, what does he represent? Oh my God, I'm wearing his clothes.

STUART: Doug?

DOUG: Yes, Stuart?

STUART: I think you've finally convinced that you're totally off your rocker.

DOUG: I'm glad I could help you.

STUART: So could you please get as far away from this building as possible. Have you ever thought of going to Argentina? Beautiful country.

DOUG: (*puts on ear muffs.*) Stuart, I just know you're going to set me off. I don't have time for this, I'm on the brink of self discovery!

STUART: Doug, please. I'll give you anything you want. Money, one way plane tickets. Anything. Just get out of here before Botma gets here. Botma's dangerous. (*Doug locks himself up in the closet.*) Doug, please, don't do this. Doug! Please!

Linda enters.

LINDA: Stuart, what are you doing?

STUART: Just saying a little prayer, make sure that everything goes smoothly today. Amen.

IMAGE!

- LINDA: Well you'd better start psyching yourself up. We just got word that Botma's jet landed at the airport. He's running ahead of schedule and is going to be here in twenty minutes. Did you find Doug?
- STUART: Oh, I found him.
- LINDA: Where is he?
- STUART: Locked up.
- LINDA: Thank heavens. God, I was so worried I could barely sleep last night. I having these nightmares of Doug bursting in here and leashing out verbal violence on Botma. It's was terrifying.
- STUART: What exactly do you mean by 'terrifying'.
- LINDA: As in 'The Blair Witch Project' terrifying. And look. (*Hands Stuart newspaper.*) He's made the front page today.
- STUART: (*scans through newspaper.*) That sounds pretty messy...
- LINDA: I've heard that men are sensitive about their potency, but Botma takes the cake. But luckily we don't have to worry about Doug.
- STUART: Listen, I've got a confession to make.
- Liu enters.*
- LIU: Fifteen minutes to go people. What's the situation with Doug?
- LINDA: (*scanning through newspaper.*) Stuart's got him locked up.
- LIU: Thank you Stuart. This has been a trying time for all of us. We haven't treated you with the respect you deserve. I'm sorry for all the things I said: like when I said that you make The Image Society sound like an escort service. And I know you were seriously considering unilateral action to prove yourself. I just want to tell you how touched I am that you stood by the team and when all of this is over, I want to thank you properly.
- LINDA: You were saying something about a confession, Stuart?
- STUART: I love you guys.
- MAO: ...the people who have come to the Image Society were a sorry bunch. They had never known what it meant to be satisfied...
- LINDA: How are you feeling?
- MAO: Considering that I'm about to come face to face with an arch villain, I feel pretty good.
- LIU: Botma's running ahead of schedule. He'll be here any minute.
- LINDA: Everything is going to be fine. Breathe in your mantra, remember your ABCs...

IMAGE!

A loud noise comes from the closet. Stuart rushes towards it and imitates the noise by banging his foot.

STUART: You can do it, Mao.

LIU: Mao, before we get started, I want to give you something.

She hands him the wire.

MAO: But this is the wire David Hirshfeld gave you. I can't take this.

LIU: I want you to have it. It's been a long journey and I want you to know how much you mean to every person in this room.

MAO: I won't let you down.

LIU: I know you won't. Just stick to the script and whatever you do, don't mention Botma's penile handicap. OK?

Bell rings.

STUART: He's here.

LIU: Lock and load.

LINDA: You know, I think that's the first time I've ever seen you act purely out of your heart.

LIU: Stuff it. I've got a whole box of wires.

STUART: Wait, there's something I've got to tell you.

LIU: Not now!

STUART: There's something you should know.

LINDA: Stuart!

LIU: Let him in!

Botma's assistant enters with an electronic device. Stuart stands in front of the closet. Assistant scans the space with the electronic device. She goes towards cupboard.

ASSISTANT: What have you got in the closet?

STUART: Just a skeleton.

ASSISTANT: Cool. *(calling out.)* It's clean.

BOTMA: Hello everybody! Vito Botma has arrived.

LIU: Mr Botma, it's a pleasure to meet you at last. I'm Liu Wong, we spoke briefly on the phone.

IMAGE!

LINDA: I'm Linda Bester.

BOTMA: Where's Stuart? You! Come over here. (*Stuart is hesitant about moving away from the closet.*) Come on, I won't bite your head off. Stuart here, now he knows how to sell. He talks my kind of language. (*to Liu.*) But you are a big disappointment. You make this place sound like some kind of fancy fancy image workshop provider. The joint's got class. I like that. Everybody listen up, I want to make one thing perfectly clear. We're flying strictly upmarket on this one.

LIU: We keep things as upmarket as they come.

BOTMA: Good answer. Upmarket equals big bucks. So we've got to keep everything slick. First class all the way. I want those execs to feel as though they are in the comfort of their own office getting a good spanking from their personal secretaries. But we've got to sort a thing or two out. You don't have to tell Vito Botma how important it is to keep a good cover. But you people take the concept of cover way too far. How the hell is anybody supposed to figure out what you're really selling? Think of the customers. And the listing in the yellow pages, was that your idea?

LIU: Yes.

BOTMA: Do you know how long it took me to find your listing in the yellow pages? How long did it take me Dino?

ASSISTANT: Over an hour.

BOTMA: You know where I finally found it?

ASSISTANT: Under Image Consulting Services.

BOTMA: What the hell were you thinking?

LIU: Mr Botma, I just want to make sure we're on the same wave length. Where in the Yellow Pages would you suggest we place our listing?

BOTMA: Stuart, what kind of amateurs are you working with? Under escort services! The listing should read: The Image Society – Barely legal male and female escorts standing to fulfil your every desire.

ASSISTANT: All major credit cards accepted.

Mao enters in his rehearsed manner.

BOTMA: Well what do we have here.

MAO: (*cell rings.*) Moshimoshi, Mr Yokiyama. Tuesday in Tokyo. I'm sorry I can't speak now. (*turns off cell phone.*) You must be Mr Botma. It's a pleasure to finally meet you and demonstrate what The Image Society can do for you.

BOTMA: This boy is good. You are going places in this business.

MAO: Let's cut through the preliminaries and get right down to business.

BOTMA: Here? In front of all these people?

IMAGE!

MAO: I'm sorry I don't have a flip card for that question.

BOTMA: A flip card? Did you hear that, Dino? He's funny too. Continue.

MAO: The people who have come to The Image Society, let's be honest, they were a sorry lot. They had never experienced what it meant to be truly satisfied. They were limp. Their success rate was down to nought. They were literally impotent.

BOTMA: You can do something about it?

MAO: The Image Society can do even more. Our award winning and scientifically tested programme guarantees fast results and promises sustained life long drive.

BOTMA: Listen, about this programme. I've got this friend who's got this problem. How exactly does this programme work?

MAO: What our easy to use programme does is it taps into your wells of potential and allows all that blocked up energy to come bursting out.

BOTMA: So you can actually get these people to perform?

MAO: Our programme guarantees maximum performance, or your money back.

BOTMA: Nobody can do that. Nobody. Vito Botma does not like being screwed around with. Dino, we're out of here. I'm leaving here with a warning. You people try to screw with me again, you'll regret it.

MAO: How about I give you a taste of what we can do?

BOTMA: This is you're last warning.

MAO: Right here, right now. I am going to take you to a place you've never been before.

Mao takes out a wire and shows it to him.

BOTMA: You are good. (*Mao ties Botma up.*) Dino, how about you check out the other rooms.

Assistant exits.

MAO: Are you ready?

BOTMA: I'm ready.

Joan enters holding a dead chicken and wearing a Sangoma wig.

MAO: Joan!

JOAN: Where's Mao.

MAO: Joan, please, there's a perfectly logical explanation for all of this.

JOAN: Stay away from me. This is your last warning. Where's Mao?

MAO: Joan, it's me.

IMAGE!

JOAN: Prepare to deal with the fury of the Mayan Goddess of the Earth. Goddess of the Earth, I beseech you. Curse this building. Blow your breath of fury. Damn these treacherous beasts to everlasting suffering.

BOTMA: What the hell is going on?

JOAN: You people are in deep shit!

MAO: *(to Botma)* Don't go anywhere, this will take just a minute.

Mao drags Joan off.

JOAN: Leave me alone, I'm not done with my curse.

LIU: Mr Botma, I'm afraid there's been a minor misunderstanding.

BOTMA: Don't unstrap me! Stuart, come over here. *(Stuart hesitates.)* I said come here. He knows what he's doing, right?

STUART: I think he does.

BOTMA: Good, then I'll just go along with it. But if you are screwing with me, I swear...

Doug bursts out of the closet.

ALL: Doug!

BOTMA: Talk about coming out of the closet!

DOUG: I think I've finally figured it out. In my previous life I used to work for this firm. And if I'm not mistaken what I used to do rhymes with...

STUART: Hell.

DOUG: That's right!

BOTMA: Excuse me! But you've got some unfinished business here. You were in the middle of selling...

DOUG: You depraved degenerate lowlife.

BOTMA: This is not turning me on.

DOUG: Turned on, you want to get turned on.

BOTMA: This is definitely not turning me on.

DOUG: You walk around as though you had a ten inch long dick, then please explain to me what you're doing with this. *(pulls an enormously large dildo from Botma's pants.)* What kind of wus does this? A wusifed piece of shrivelled up, soggy and flimsy one incher, Viagra eating, couldn't get it up if his life depended on it, marathon wanking, self-inflated and impotent piece of white trash.

Joan enters.

IMAGE!

JOAN: Hello everybody. Goddess of the Earth, listen there's been a minor misunderstanding. You see my boyfriend recently cut his hair without me knowing and now he looks like someone I slept with in the bakkie and when I caught him in his underwear I thought... Well, it's all very complicated and I don't quite understand it myself. So if it's too much trouble, don't damn everyone here to everlasting suffering. Especially not the one who's tied up, because he's not the evil felon the papers say he is.

DOUG: Joan?

JOAN: Mao?

DOUG: It's me, Doug.

JOAN: Did he just have one of those attacks.

BOTMA: Dino!

JOAN: Doug I need you to apologise to this man.

DOUG: I missed you so much. I've been thinking about you day and night.

Doug is handed a newspaper. He scans through it. He matches the photo in the newspaper up with Botma's face. Doug exits.

BOTMA: What the hell is going on here! Dino! Dino!

Assistant runs in and Joan hits him over the head with the chicken.

LIU: What are you doing?

JOAN: Give me something to tie him up.

BOTMA: I am going to kill you.

STUART: We are dead in a big way.

JOAN: Stop whining and figure out what to do.

LIU: You're right. We need to transfer all our money out of the country. Linda, get on the line to our lawyers. We're selling everything. I'll try to get us tickets out of the country. And you, watch the door just in case a small army comes crashing through here.

BOTMA: Just you wait until I get my hands on you people.

STUART: I don't suppose it would still be possible to convince you to invest some money into our firm.

BOTMA: I'll kill you!

STUART: No. Shame. *(stuffs his mouth with a handkerchief.)*

IMAGE!

While they are busy with their various tasks, Mao enters. He notices Botma. He goes to untie him. Nobody else notices him.

MAO: I'm terribly sorry about the interruption.

ALL: No!

Mao unties him. Botma draws his guns.

BOTMA: Everybody on the floor.

MAO: But I haven't finished telling you about our group discounts.

BOTMA: Everybody shut up! Never in my life have I experienced anything like this. And you! I've seen some things in my life, but this takes the cake. You're like two people in one. Let me just ask you one question. Will you marry me?

MAO: What?

BOTMA: I've been tortured by sumo wrestlers. I've been held at gunpoint by 32 AK-47s, but never in my life have I experienced a thrill like this. I've been looking for this kind of excitement all my life. You have made me so homey! And if I'm not mistaken I need a change of underwear. So marry me. We'll take the jet to Copenhagen and be wed before sunset. Will you marry me?

MAO: I don't know whether that's such a good idea.

BOTMA: *(holds gun to his forehead.)* Marry me!

MAO: I've always wanted to go to Copenhagen?

BOTMA: Stuart, I'm buying the place. I want to whole lot of you to work for me. We are going to make this the best damned brothel South Africa ever saw!

The play ends with the image of the assistant holding Mao and Vito forcing a wedding ring onto Mao's finger.