

SMILE LIKE A KNIFE

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“Unless mankind redesigns itself by changing our DNA through altering our genetic makeup, computer generated robots will take over our world.”

Stephen Hawking

“The relationship between human and artificial intelligence will be one of symbiosis. We are going to be moving from Homo sapiens to Homo evolutis.”

Bryan Johnson

NOTE: Smile Like a Knife was inspired by Havana Syndrome, a neurological illness that affected personnel from the United States Embassy and was presumably caused by the effects of pulsed radio frequency energy aimed from buildings occupied by agents from the Russian Federation.

SMILE LIKE A KNIFE

(a full length one act play in 11 scenes)

CHARACTERS:

MONA, a winsome robotic woman with a British accent.

GUNTHER SACHS, an Austrian born watch shop owner in his thirties.

LENA SACHS, Gunther's American cousin, a robotics engineer in her thirties.

ANNA GLAZER, the shop clerk and window dresser in her late twenties.

DETECTIVE RAYMOND BAINES, a civilian attired New York police officer.

TOVA VARONE, an androgynous biomechatronic tour guide.

ANNABOT, a robotic replica of Anna Glazer.

SLEEPWALKERS, the masked somnambulant victims of acoustical technology.

***NOTE:** Anna Glazer and her Annabot should be played by the same actor.*

The Sleepwalkers can be played by the named characters.

TIME:

The imminent and distant future.

PLACE:

New York City: a stylized set suggests the interior of the Saxenburg Watch Shop including myriad clocks, watches, antique dolls, computer equipment, and a display window.

SCENE 1

(New York City: Amplified clock tickings resound then fade as lights reveal the interior of the Saxenburg Watch Shop where a statuesque ROBOTIC WOMAN poses, her eyes closed, her lips sealed. Beside her stands LENA SACHS holding a remote control device. Next to LENA stands the shop clerk, ANNA GLAZER.)

LENA

Gunther wants her posed in the window, gesturing for people to enter. She's a female automaton complete with meta data input and programmed to speak, shift facial expressions, and move her limbs. She can be controlled by my voice but I prefer tapping buttons. Right now she's in deep sleep mode, so let's wake her up.

(As LENA taps a remote control device, the ROBOTIC WOMAN awakens and scans the room.)

ANNA

Oh! Her eyes!

LENA

They're made of rotating glass and blink ten times a minute. *(tapping the remote)* Her head swivels to the left, *(tap)* to the right, *(tap)* then back in front. *(tap)* Now I've turned her lips up at the corners.

ANNA

Lovely! Her smile's mysterious -- like the Mona Lisa. She has a secret; what is it?

LENA

She's in love.

ANNA

With whom?

LENA

With you! Because you've given her a name. I baptize you Mona in the name of the Great God of Consumer Capitalism. *(tapping)* Now her smile's broader; she's almost laughing.

ANNA

Amazing!

LENA

(tapping) Now she's sad.

ANNA

Oh, poor Mona, but no tears?

LENA

She's beyond tears; she's in mourning.

ANNA

Why?

LENA

Why do you think? For world peace, not to mention decency, democracy, life, liberty, and the pursuit of progress. *(tapping)* And now she's angry; see how she furrows her brows.

ANNA

Oh, dear, we won't use that expression; she'll scare the customers.

LENA

(tapping) Now she's afraid.

ANNA

Of us?

LENA

Nope, those cops across the street.

ANNA

They're smiling at her.

LENA

Good! *(tapping)* Now she's smiling back.

ANNA

Careful, they'll be breaking the window to get to her.

LENA

She's not a sexbot, but she'll surprise and encourage people to stop and stare.

ANNA

Can you show me some more movements?

(Henceforth, when LENA describes an action, SHE taps the remote and MONA moves accordingly.)

LENA

She can wave, make beckoning gestures, and lift her arm to check the time. She can also tap dance.

(Piano music is heard as MONA tap dances.)

ANNA

Wonderful!

LENA

And she can toe dance like a ballerina.

(Violin music is heard as MONA leaps and twirls until she stops to stand in first position with her heels together, her toes pointed out.)

LENA

I've also installed a GPS control and tracking device so you can send her walking anywhere you want. She's sensitive to obstructions and won't bump into people.

ANNA

Great, we'll send her strolling through the aisles modeling watches. She's a little scary though -- so human though she'll never have thoughts or feelings.

MONA

Time is money.

ANNA

(gasping) Oh, god!

MONA

Benjamin Franklin.

LENA

Ha, ha!

ANNA

You could've warned me!

MONA

Time is an illusions -- Albert Einstein.

ANNA

(pause) What else can she say?

LENA

Oh, she has answers for everything, but for now I've programmed her to speak phrases relating to time which I've set at random intervals.

MONA

A stitch in time saves nine -- Francis Bailey.

ANNA

Why does she speak with a British accent?

LENA

Gunther thought an aristocratic drawl would impress his pretentious patrons.

(LENA taps the remote.)

MONA

I'm a mature, intelligent, perfectly proportioned automaton.

ANNA

Good for you.

MONA

I'm programmed to collect factual data and respond accordingly.

ANNA

She's not shy, is she?

MONA

Time you enjoy wasting is not wasted time -- Bertrand Russell

LENA

Time to shut up!

(LENA taps the remote and MONA closes her eyes and lowers her head.)

LENA

At first Gunther wanted her to have the face of a clock, but after he saw the human prototypes, he chose the Nordic model. With her blonde wig, she looks like a classic Aryan descendent of the Vikings -- the type that appeals to generic caucasian males.

(GUNTHER SACHS, the stylishly dressed store manager enters. HE speaks with a German accent.)

GUNTHER

We need to talk! *(pause)* I just had a visit from two lawyers from SMD who want to install a camera in our window. Apparently they want continuous video surveillance focused directly on their building.

LENA

You're kidding? There's already cameras everywhere!

ANNA

What's SMD?

GUNTHER

Scientific Machines for Defense.

LENA

Gunther calls them Kaisers and they practically own the world, but their speciality is weapons of mass distraction and destruction.

ANNA

You mean bombs...?

LENA

Bombs, drones, guns and grenades not to mention cyber control of the internet, utilities, real estate, supermarkets. After the pandemic, they moved their corporate headquarters from Dallas to New York. They're right across the street.

GUNTHER

They want to observe everyone entering or walking past. They need to see what they're missing when they're not here, and we have the best perspective.

LENA

You should have refused!

GUNTHER

I did at first, but they said they'd pay, so I thought what harm can it do?

LENA

What harm?! Are you nuts?! They'll want to rat out their enemies -- the resistance, the marching multitudes!

GUNTHER

So what? We're still a democracy; they can't shoot people for protesting.

LENA

No, but they can track them down and make their lives hell.

GUNTHER

But we don't attract protesters. (*pointing out the window*) Look at those women taking selfies; they could be tourists from Texas.

LENA

Shame on you, Gunther; you've aided paranoid conspiracy freaks spying on your customers. Jesus, what were you thinking?! What are they paying you?!

GUNTHER

None of your business! (*pause, he sighs*) I was asked to be discreet and signed a confidentiality agreement which means you two don't know about this, and they don't want anyone around when they're installing the camera.

LENA

You realize you're placing our grandfather's legacy in the service of unscrupulous plutocrats. He'll be spinning in his grave!

GUNTHER

Nonsense! The camera will be focused on *their* building not ours, and frankly, they have reason to be paranoid. There are plenty of people who would like to see them gone.

LENA

Hah! They'd like their heads on a pike! They're global gluttons, a national disgrace, and a menace to the future of the planet!

GUNTHER

You exaggerate as usual.

LENA

Bullshit! They're killing us! I'm talking heat, carbon, methane, viral plagues, melting ice caps, dying forests! Wave goodbye to your shop, Gunther! Wave goodbye to the city as it sinks into rising rivers that will drown you and your dreams!

GUNTHER

Enough, Lena, enough!

ANNA

Maybe this isn't so terrible. I mean, since we can see their building and know what they're recording, we can observe the observers and what they're observing. In other words, the watchers will be watched from a watch shop!

GUNTHER

Yes, ha, ha, ha!

ANNA

So what exactly are they installing?

GUNTHER

I assume some state-of-the-art minicams.

ANNA

Then after they install theirs, you can install yours -- right behind Mona's eyes. *(to Lena)*
Can you do that?

LENA

Sure, I'll replace her eyes with camera lenses.

ANNA

So can a spy camera also transmit sounds from its point of origin?

LENA

Yes, but why?

ANNA

Well, we could record whatever we want Mona to say, so while they're looking, they're also listening.

LENA

Sorry, but I don't think that A: they'll look past their own reflections, and B: they'll listen, and C: she'll have something to say!

ANNA

She'll have plenty to say if we upload the right words.

LENA

Which would be what exactly?

ANNA

Scripture, poetry...?

GUNTHER

Philosophical maxims! What Anna is suggesting is that we give Mona a virtuous moral nature that she expresses when they're listening.

ANNA

Yes, Mona could affect them -- inspire them!

LENA

Forget it! Corporate demagogues aren't dogs you can train. They're more likely to be the trainers, turning their tech worshiping cult into racist, sexist, xenophobic zombies. Besides, robots like Mona aren't sentient; they don't have consciousness.

GUNTHER

Ah, but if she did, we'd make her more like Anna than you or me.

LENA

Why? We're more educated, more experienced.

GUNTHER

And more cynical! Seriously, what do you see when you look out this window?

LENA

An avenue of buildings owned by the richest, raunchiest...

GUNTHER

No, no! I mean the people! What sort of people do you see?

LENA

(pause) The usual huddled masses of misfits.

GUNTHER

Don't be flippant, really look!

LENA

Okay, okay. *(pause, staring)* I see a pack of overweight tourists determined to accumulate more and more shit they don't need, and the rest staring at their phones, wishing they were somewhere else. You'll notice they're not coming here because your watches are way beyond their means, and they don't wear them anyway!

GUNTHER

Fine, that's what you see, while Anna here sees something else entirely. I know this because she's kind -- not just to our patrons but to idle browsers of antique clocks that remind them of their grandmothers. I've seen Anna give money to the homeless, and day after day she smiles with such tender benevolence that I know is real, that somehow she sees something good in everyone who crosses our threshold. She even attracts pigeons that perch on her shoulders, ha, ha!

LENA

Really...? Pigeons!

GUNTHER

Yes, Anna's an angel -- what they call a soft touch.

ANNA

Oh, no, Gunther, you really don't know me, and *you're* the soft touch! *(to Lena)* He hired me without references or experience; he gave me a purpose, a destination.

GUNTHER

Ah, but I never told you why. *(pause)* You were wearing an antique Omega! *(to Lena)* When I asked Anna why she still wore a mechanical analog watch, she said she preferred to see time passing in circles, reflecting the cycles of life and the planets instead of ticking her life away second by second. Then she said it was her great grandmother's watch and she loved knowing it was made by human hands. What I'm saying is that it's rare to see someone who appreciates craftsmanship, and I admire how Anna cares for our customers -- all of them strangers.

LENA

Hah! It's easy to care about strangers; it's the people we know who drive us nuts.

GUNTHER

My point is we should make Mona like Anna!

LENA

Sorry, not yet, though someday organic algorithms could be replicated and consciousness uploaded so robots will actually realize they exist. It's a critical shift called The Singularity, and we're closer than people think.

ANNA

(she sighs) Oh, to be a machine!

LENA

If you want a heart of silicon and copper.

ANNA

But think of the advantages: to never bruise, never know pain or the ravages of time.

LENA

As if you care; you're still young.

ANNA

Yes, but Mona's reborn every day, and even though she's beautiful, she doesn't feel the need to be seen and admired or have the torment of memories.

LENA

Oh, she has memories. I've installed microchips that can store everything she sees and hears.

ANNA

But they don't affect her; she doesn't have regrets.

GUNTHER

And she won't have to eat, sleep, or be educated.

ANNA

Cats won't scratch her; mosquitoes won't bite; the sun won't burn.

GUNTHER

And she'll outlive us all while continuing to possess a perfect body adorned with a watch on each wrist and a pendant on her breast. Ah, my dear Lena, you and your colleagues have engineered a marvel! A marvel!

LENA

Oh, Gunther, you're such a shameless aesthete, ha, ha!

GUNTHER

You laugh, but such grace in a face can vanquish the sight of littered streets, deaden the drone of traffic, banish the tedium of dreary lives. Yes, beauty such as Mona's can link us to the artist in us all -- to the timely and eternal.

LENA

(to Anna) He's not asking too much, is he?

ANNA

Well...

LENA

He's full of shit! *(to Gunter)* You should've been a priest.

GUNTHER

Not possible. My faith isn't in God but eternity, though I don't perceive it as an infinite extension of time but its absence -- yet here I am selling watches, ha, ha!

(LENA taps the remote.)

LENA

So, Mona, what do you think of that?

MONA

Do not come to me seeking solace or wisdom.

GUNTHER

Ha, ha! All right, I won't.

MONA

I am an automaton, but have I not eyes? Have I not hands and feet? If you prick me, do I not bleed?

GUNTHER

Sorry, Mona, you don't bleed.

LENA

Ha, ha! Which is another reason she's a threat to human primacy. For now she's a series of circuits with streams of binary dots and dashes, zeroes and ones, but she embodies a genuine quantum leap. We've moved from numbers that mean things to numbers that can do things.

MONA

Time you enjoy wasting is not wasted time -- Bertrand Russell

GUNTHER

Yes, Mona is amazing, but can you make her smile?

LENA

That *is* her smile.

GUNTHER

It's too cunning; she smiles like a thief.

ANNA

That's her Mona mystery smile.

LENA

If you want her grinning like the Cheshire cat, then here!

(LENA taps the remote as MONA beams a toothy smile.)

GUNTHER

Ha, ha! Much better!

ANNA

Can you make her sing?

GUNTHER

Ah, yes! Can you...?

LENA

Her lips can move to whatever I download.

GUNTHER

Then Mona should sing The Watchmaker's Doll. Can you instruct her to sing a verse every hour on the hour?

LENA

Sure, just send me the song.

(LENA taps the remote and MONA returns to a neutral expression.)

GUNTHER

A pity the window isn't large enough to hold a trio of robotic musicians.

LENA

Someday there'll be robotic orchestras that never hit a wrong note.

GUNTHER

Why do I find that depressing?

ANNA

Because if robots are perfect, there'll be nothing for us to aspire to.

GUNTHER

I hope I'm dead before then.

LENA

You won't be; machines have already taken over: our feet are replaced by cars, trains, and planes; our accounting skills by calculators; our memories by Google...

(A door chime interrupts.)

GUNTHER

Ah, that's for me; I'm expecting a delivery -- our Gatsby Chronographs.

(After GUNTHER departs, LENA turns to ANNA.)

LENA

My cousin obviously adores you, but why are you here? No offense, but don't you aspire to something more? *(pause)* Sorry, did I hit a nerve?

ANNA

Well, I...I was working on a degree from Columbia until I dropped out, but I like being here, surrounded by all the clocks, watches, and dolls.

LENA

You mean the "whimsies?" Did Gunther tell you the shop's original name was Saxenburg's Watches, Fobs, and Whimsies? The "whimsies" were whatever our grandfather was collecting at the time. These dolls are all that's left. *(pause)* So why did you drop out?

ANNA

I succumbed to a depression when I should've been taking exams. I was told to try again, but does the world really need another history major? History's over, isn't it?

LENA

Not if you're selling mechanical watches while the creeps across the street are planning to set clocks back to some nostalgic Eden of stratified wealth and power. *(pause)* You know, Gunther and you have a lot in common. He was in Salzburg working on a degree in mechanical engineering, but he quit when my father died and left him the shop.

ANNA

Why didn't he leave it to you?

LENA

Because Gunther was the logical choice. From the moment he could tell time, Gunther was collecting every watch he could afford. He even understood their mechanisms and always knew the exact time -- not just here but in London, Beijing, Botswana. I've tried to talk him into selling. I mean, who gives a shit about watches when the whole world's at war with sanity -- not to mention dodging pandemics or drug and gun running cartels. What I hate is the trillions wasted on obsolete weapons while roads crumble, bridges fall, cities are abandoned, and the homeless live in tents.

ANNA

But weren't you ever hopeful? I thought that once the most powerful people were allowed to control the world, they might want to make it a better place.

LENA

Hah! Dream on dreamer. I'd like to see the whole lot of them banished to bedlam, and all their precious properties reclaimed and renamed. Gunther calls me a catastrophist, and it's true; I'm sick with cynicism, with hate. I even hate myself for feeling hate. It's affecting my sleep, my dreams, my health: I drink too much, eat too much, I feel infected, diseased -- I can tell you think I'm a raving bitch.

ANNA

No, not at all, but at least you have the consolation of family and friends.

LENA

Not really. Besides who could live with me? I can hardly live with myself.

ANNA

What about your parents?

LENA

They're dead. The only one left is Aunt Frieda, Gunther's mother, and she's in Austria. Frieda's brother was my father who became enthralled with New York after taking a guided tour. He soon became a citizen and never looked back.

(GUNTHER returns.)

GUNTHER

(to Lena) Oh, good, you're still here. I must show you the new line of Automatic Wayfarers. *(to Anna)* Notice Lena's watch: an original Wayfarer for Women!

LENA

That's right, and I'm never giving it back. Hey, look, here comes the window washer. Let's put Mona in the window and see if he notices her.

(LENA taps the remote as MONA walks to the center of the window, facing the street and WINDOW WASHER.)

LENA

Oh, great, he's leaning into the glass, so he sees her. I'll make her mirror his movements. There! Now she's following each stroke of his wiper.

(MONA sways and mimics the WINDOW WASHER'S window-wiping gestures.)

LENA

He's mesmerized; he can't believe what he's seeing.

GUNTHER

Please stop, you're frightening the poor man!

(LENA taps the remote and MONA ceases moving.)

GUNTHER

Damn it! You've chased him away!

LENA

Hey, you're the guy who wanted her in the window!

GUNTHER

Not to scare people!

LENA

Okay, fine. Look, I'm leaving, but I have to take Mona with me to install the camera and the song.

(LENA taps the remote.)

MONA

Time heals all wounds -- Menander.

(MONA walks off followed by LENA as lights black out. A moment later, an eerie humming is heard as SEVERAL SLEEPWALKERS wearing medical masks stroll across a city street.)

SCENE 2

(Altered lighting and accelerated tickings are heard as TOVA VARONE enters the shop. TOVA VARONE is a helmeted, goggle-wearing, cybernetically enhanced biomechatronic tour guide from the future who speaks directly to the audience of tourists.)

TOVA VARONE

Mona, the animatronic mannequin, is featured on our tour because she came to represent the tragic later decades of the twenty first century. That's when the United States suffered viral pandemics and escalating chaos after massive deregulations transformed a thriving democracy into a corrupt plutocracy. By now you know that Mona was stationed in the Saxenburg Watch Shop window across from the clandestine headquarters of the most powerful corporations in the world. Thanks to the science of simulated habitats, we're able to witness scenes that enrich our understanding of the human characters surrounding Mona.

(TOVA VARONE taps the helmet as lights reveal
GUNTHER standing motionless.)

TOVA VARONE

You've already met Gunther Sachs who served twelve years as President of the American Horological Society of watch enthusiasts which was abolished when we were programmed to know our exact time-space coordinates and watches became obsolete.

(GUNTHER vanishes as LENA appears.)

TOVA VARONE

Gunther's Cousin, Lena Sachs, the creator of Mona, was one of the most innovative pioneers in the field of artificial intelligence.

(LENA vanishes as ANNA appears.)

TOVA VARONE

Of course, we've all heard of Anna Glazer whose novels are still required reading at most universities. Anna was one of many authors whose subject was the fusion of the organic with the mechanic, inspiring the creation of our own unique anatomies.

(ANNA vanishes.)

TOVA VARONE

Now Mona will enter her window.

(MONA enters her window to sing.)

MONA

*The watchmakers doll sits alone in her chair,
Dressed like a princess with long wavy hair.
With skin smooth as ivory, a small upturned nose;
Her cheeks flushed with fever, her lips like a rose.
Unable to speak, she appears to be smart,
So the watchmaker gave her a tick-tocking heart.*

*Her arms are screwed,
Her hands are nailed,
Her legs locked into a brace;
She sees the world through green glass eyes,
Her smile frozen on her face.*

(MONA ceases singing and smiles wistfully.)

SCENE 3

(Lights reveal an office where GUNTHER and LENA are drinking glasses of brandy while observing MONA on a computer screen. TOVA VARONE taps the helmet and addresses the audience of tourists.)

TOVA VARONE

As you visitors can observe, The Saxenburg Watch Shop was located on what is still the most prestigious avenue in New York City. It was thriving at a time when stores still opened real doors to real patrons. After only a few days, Mona's presence was drawing crowds. Now we will witness Gunther confessing to his cousin how much he enjoyed...

TOVA VARONE

...controlling Mona.

GUNTHER

Controlling Mona...

GUNTHER

...has become an obsession.

LENA

How do you mean...?

GUNTHER

I can't help myself; I keep watching her growing audience who are always snapping pictures, especially when she sings. Just think Lena, your Mona is in digital albums all over the world! And hasn't Anna done a fine job of dressing her? If she were real, there would be lines of suitors waiting to court her.

LENA

Including you...?

GUNTHER

Hah! She wouldn't give me the time of day. My own mother said I fell out of a Grimm's fairy tale, and she didn't mean the prince.

LENA

So is Mona a princess?

GUNTHER

No, Anna's the princess.

LENA

Oh, really?

GUNTHER

Sometimes she sings along with Mona, harmonizing perfectly, and her voice is sublime. Who knew?

LENA

It sounds like you're falling for her.

GUNTHER

No, no, I'm her employer; you'd have a better chance.

LENA

Except I'm not interested and neither is she.

GUNTHER

You're wrong there. She's always asking, How's Lena? Have you seen Lena lately? When is Lena coming again?

LENA

Seriously...?

GUNTHER

Don't worry, I discouraged her. I explained that you're a rich, respected innovator, but also a melancholic building legions of robots whose company she prefers to human beings.

(GUNTHER points out the window.)

GUNTHER

Look damnit! Here we go again: the police setting up more barriers for yet another futile demonstration!

LENA

Mona's our witness, recording the resistance.

GUNTHER

Yes, but some days I regret our location: we're too close to the corporate kaisers. They've brought on incessant protests and obstructed streets, though I like to think Mona's wheedling her way onto the collective retinas of everyone passing by.

LENA

Is she bringing in customers?

GUNTHER

Ah, yes! Just yesterday I sold four Spell Caster Spring Drives to tourists from Tokoyo. Four women on the same tour bought the same watch -- the one Mona was wearing on her left wrist.

LENA

So business is good?

GUNTHER

Fantastic, though Anna wants us to sell watches that everyone can afford. I agree, but they'd be made in China and lose their status for those who worship fame, fortune, and free markets -- so what am I doing peddling symbols of everything I claim to resist?

LENA

Because you appreciate their history and complexity.

GUNTHER

But I despise the cult of celebrities who can afford them, and yet when the kaisers came.....

LENA

They actually came here...?

GUNTHER

No, no, their daughters. I was fawning all over them, explaining their intricate bearings, boring them to tears. I hated myself for days.

LENA

Did they buy anything?

GUNTHER

They all purchased Diamond Dial Divers. You can see them on their wrists in the news -- which is why they're so popular. *(pause)* Lately I've been looking at some of Mona's surveillance videos, and noticed that most of the Kaisers enter through the back of the building with their packages, then later they leave through the front. I keep wondering if they're preparing for a third world war.

LENA

Do they ever stop into the shop?

GUNTHER

No, they're always escorted by bodyguards.

LENA

Too bad. Otherwise, I'd equip Mona with facial identity software that triggers a pistol aimed at their hearts.

GUNTHER

You don't mean that.

LENA

Hell, yes! If I owned a gun, I'd shoot them; if I drove a tank, I'd run them down;...

GUNTHER

Now Lena...

LENA

...if I flew a jet, I'd drop bombs on the whole damn building!

GUNTHER

You can't go around talking like that or they'll swoop down and haul you away. You never know what their cameras are picking up. *(pause)* Forgive my impertinence, Lena, but you need to get out more, socialize with colleagues, meet someone on the internet. Have you even tried?

LENA

Forget it, Gunther, it's okay to be single in New York, and there's nothing wrong with winding up alone -- besides I'm *not* alone. I have you and...

(Glass shattering sounds are heard followed by a shrill alarm and blinking lights!)

GUNTHER

Mein Gott!

LENA

What the hell?!

GUNTHER

The window's smashed!

(GUNTHER and LENA dash to the window where MONA is having violent spasms, then collapses in a heap.)

LENA

Oh, Jesus, her arm...

GUNTHER

What...?

LENA

They broke Mona's arm!

GUNTHER

They stole her watch!

LENA

And her hand!

GUNTHER

The Victoria Pulser!

LENA

They stole her hand!

(LENA clasps MONA by the shoulder and leads her off,
as TOVA VARONE enters, passing them unseen.)

SCENE 4

(Lights dim as clocks tick and TOVA VARONE speaks.)

TOVA VARONE

The theft of Mona's hand and her absence from the window caused an unexpected wave of concern among patrons and local merchants who sent cards and flowers. One grateful client sent a vintage cabernet which Gunther shared with Anna.

(TOVA VARONE departs as ANNA and GUNTHER
appear seated in the office drinking wine.)

GUNTHER

This cabernet came with a get well card from my doctor who purchased a Precision Pilot for his son.

ANNA

It's delicious. *(pause)* Are there any suspects yet?

GUNTHER

No, the police claim it's a random robbery by gang members, but I disagree. I think the thief knew the value of the watch and was fast enough to snatch it and run. Oh, Anna, you should have heard me trying to convince the insurance investigators that the watch was a priceless antique -- rambling on about gears of gold, springs thinner than a human hair, how watch making requires the steady hands of skillful teetotalers.

ANNA

So heavy drinkers need not apply...?

GUNTHER

Ha, ha, that's right! One of the investigators said I was foolish to display such a valuable watch in the window, but at least it was numbered so it can be traced. Unfortunately, Mona wasn't insured.

ANNA

The window seems so empty, I'm tempted to stand in her place.

GUNTHER

And I'm tempted to let you. Lena said she'll bring her back soon, good as new.

ANNA

I miss seeing the effect Mona has, especially when she sings and crowds start to gather.

GUNTHER

So you're not bored here...?

ANNA

Oh, no, never.

GUNTHER

You must have a busy social life.

ANNA

Not really. My roommate's dating someone, so most days I have the apartment to myself, but I don't mind, I keep busy.

GUNTHER

Doing what? -- if I'm not being too inquisitive.

ANNA

Well, actually, I'm writing a book -- a novel. It takes place in the future after wars wipe out most of humanity and the few people left live in Canada. They've all agreed to interface with technology, so computer chips are embedded in their brains which makes them smarter, more productive, and they're all able to benefit from first world luxuries.

GUNTHER

Ah, but are they happy?

ANNA

Not really because there's a perpetual smog so it's always dusk.

GUNTHER

So are they like vampires?

ANNA

In a way which is why they wear watches designed to emit beams of light.

GUNTHER

Ah, so do these watches come from a shop like this?

ANNA

Yes, and from a man like you who loves to rhapsodize about their functions.

GUNTHER

You mean a watch idiot -- a horological savant! Ha, ha!

ANNA

He even looks like you, and I'm thinking of naming him Gunther.

GUNTHER

Please don't! I'm not sure I could inhabit such a bleak book.

ANNA

But he's famous for designing a life saving watch.

GUNTHER

Ha! If I could design a watch, it would be a genuine stopwatch that stopped time from moving forward so any moment could last indefinitely -- like this one for instance.

ANNA

(glancing at her watch) So it would be seven thirty-three for as long as you wished?

GUNTHER

That's right, and my watch would also synchronize itself to the tickings of the human heart so it beat the same rhythms, felt the same passions.

ANNA

If it was also a stop watch, could people stop their own hearts? Could they choose when to die?

GUNTHER

Perhaps, but my watch comes in pairs: one for me and one for someone special, and whenever we wear our watches we would feel intense connections, sharing the same thoughts at the same moment. *(pause)* Forgive me, I think I'm embarrassing you.

ANNA

No, I like your watch, but what you need is a watch that shatters false impressions. *(pause)* You really don't know me, Gunther, I'm not who you think.

GUNTHER

So what crimes have you committed? What hearts have you broken?

ANNA

None that I know of, but what if there's something terrible I haven't yet done? What if I'm feeling guilt before the deed, experiencing time in the wrong order.

GUNTHER

Ah, well, I'm afraid we all have to live by the linear laws of physics.

ANNA

And the laws of genetics. I come from a long line of misery on my mother's side.

GUNTHER

She wasn't well...?

ANNA

A brilliant mathematician, but also a bipolar depressive who committed suicide. She was the family breadwinner, and left my father a text, a mortgage, and a broken heart.

GUNTHER

How old were you?

ANNA

Twelve. After she died, my father removed all signs of her: all her pictures and collections.

GUNTHER

She was a collector?

ANNA

Mostly vintage snow globes, fountain pens, and jewelry. My father sold everything for enough money to pay for a trip to Florida where we were supposed to get over her.

GUNTHER

That's terrible, Anna; losing a mother is a tragic deprivation.

ANNA

I think it stunted me. I mean here we are, always aware of time passing, but it doesn't seem to affect me. I still feel myself as a child, and when I look in the mirror, I'm surprised to see who's looking back.

GUNTHER

We can't stop time's progression, but we might find someone to help endure its passage.
(*pause*) Did your father find someone else?

ANNA

He became a minister and found a whole church full of adoring parishioners.

(ANNA walks to the window.)

ANNA

Oh, look at all the limos; there must be a special meeting.

GUNTHER

Ah, yes, the kaisers are strutting like mad Mussolinis. Have you ever noticed their watches? Inferior quartz Guccis and Tag Heuers. For them I'd create gaudy gold pocket watches with mirrored faces that reflect their hubris.

ANNA

Would they be shock resistant?

GUNTHER

Yes, and unreliable! (*pause*) Lena's convinced they're all devils, shallow vessels of greed ravaging the planet, but aren't we all socialized to want more and more -- are you all right?

(ANNA takes a deep breath and closes her eyes.)

ANNA

The wine's making me dizzy...

GUNTHER

Please forgive me if I've made you ill or aroused some sorrowful memories.

ANNA

It's not your fault; for me the past is always there, always hanging over the present.

GUNTHER

Ah, but if you believe Einstein, everything we perceive about time is an illusion.

ANNA

Mona keeps mentioning that.

GUNTHER

But even if time is an illusion you shouldn't be wasting it here. You have real gifts, Anna. Not only do you write, you sing like a diva, and look how you've rearranged the shop!

ANNA

I love it here; I never want to leave, though sometimes I wish we could synchronize the clocks so they all chimed at once.

GUNTHER

But then you would miss their unique, individual tones. *(pause)* You're looking pale, perhaps you need to eat something. Please Anna, let's break the boundaries of propriety and allow me take you to dinner. Let us be friends at least.

ANNA

Oh, Gunther, let's be more than friends. *(pause)* Let's kiss.

(ANNA embraces GUNTHER, then THEY kiss as a cuckoo clock chirps and lights dim to black. A moment later, the eerie humming is heard again as the masked SLEEPWALKERS trudge across a city street.)

SCENE 5

(Bright lights reveal ANNA and GUNTHER puttering in the shop as TOVA VARONE enters followed by LENA grasping MONA'S hand.)

TOVA VARONE

Mona had been gone for a week. When she was returned, Lena explained that...

TOVA VARONE

...she's hyper-vigilant.

LENA

She's hyper-vigilant.

LENA

Now if anyone breaks in, she'll defend herself.

(TOVA VARONE departs as LENA taps the remote and MONA performs karate styled hand gestures and kicks. ANNA and GUNTHER leap back.)

ANNA
Whoa! Impressive.

GUNTHER
Mein Gott!

LENA
She'll kick the the shit out of anyone who threatens her.

(MONA returns to posing normally, then speaks.)

ANNA
She's not always vigilant, is she? Will I have to dodge kicks when I change her clothes?

LENA
No, use your voice command or push this red button. Switch to green when you close up at night.

MONA
There's a time to hurt and a time to heal -- Ecclesiastics.

GUNTHER
I assume she still sings.

LENA
Better than ever! It's too bad the watch on her wrist didn't have a tracking device.

GUNTHER
(*to Anna*) Lena used to work for the Defense Department. They specialize in spyware along with the latest lethal weapons.

LENA
Which are now in the hands of mercenary demagogues who could blunder us into another war to end all wars -- only the next really could be the last.

ANNA
Is that why you left?

LENA
I left because we were working on neural implants that make it possible for humans to speak directly to computer interfaces. Can you imagine any single human being controlling our entire arsenal of ballistic missiles?

GUNTHER
Mein Gott...

ANNA
Oh, no.

MONA
There's a time to weep and a time to laugh.

GUNTHER
Speaking of laughter, what did you do to Mona's smile? It's crooked.

LENA
No, it's not.

GUNTHER
Can't you make it less smug?

LENA
It's not smug!

(The doorbell chimes.)

ANNA
I'll go!

(ANNA dashes off.)

GUNTHER
Isn't Anna lovely? She's as close to perfection as... *(he sighs)*

LENA
What...? A Saxenburg watch?!

GUNTHER
As an angel ablaze with beauty! How can someone so radiant, so vibrantly alive be attracted to a nebbish like me? I swear she was dropped from paradise with the soul of a poet. I can't believe my luck!

LENA
You mean you've...?

GUNTHER
Yes, yes! It started with a kiss in the office; then I took her to dinner, then home, and oh, Lena, Lena! Somehow she's melted my steel, unspun my wheels, uncoiled my springs...

LENA

Yeah, yeah, I hear you.

GUNTHER

Finally! The pendulum is swinging my way! You've no idea; you never envisioned a lifetime of being untouched and unloved.

LENA

Actually, I have.

GUNTHER

Some days she comes home with me and cooks. She even bakes strudel -- strudel just for me!

LENA

Look, no offense, but you're not the best judge of character. You always think women are better than they are.

GUNTHER

And you think they're worse.

LENA

No, I just think they're more complex and angrier than you give them credit for, and I ought to know.

GUNTHER

But you've met Anna, you've had conversations; you know what I mean.

LENA

Sure, okay, so she's articulate...

GUNTHER

She sings!

LENA

Okay, so she sings, she's a great cook, a great fuck, but what if she's just another opportunist bitch who's going to break your heart?

(ANNA enters.)

ANNA

Excuse me for interrupting but there's a gentleman who wants some advice. He's interested in the Titanium Triple Time Zone.

GUNTHER

Fine, I'll speak to him, and Anna, would you please escort Mona back to her window?

ANNA

Of course.

(GUNTHER leaves as LENA hands ANNA a file folder.)

LENA

Here, take these. I printed a list with codes for seven new gestures.

ANNA

Thanks. Everyone's missed Mona; we're so grateful to have her back.

LENA

But you didn't miss me...?

ANNA

Of course. *(pause)* Did you miss us?

LENA

Sure, I even missed the shop, though it attracts the supercilious suits I try to avoid. Did Gunther tell you his average client has an income of at least six figures and owns up to seven watches.

ANNA

But aren't they beautiful? I especially love the new Lapis Lazuli Moon Phase. If I were rich, I'd buy it in a minute.

LENA

If I were rich, I'd buy it for you.

ANNA

But you are rich, aren't you?

LENA

I reinvest what I make in my company, but what about you? Are you managing?

ANNA

I'm fine.

LENA

You don't miss Columbia...?

ANNA

Sometimes, but I felt oppressed there and...disappointed.

LENA

With the classes or yourself?

ANNA

Myself.

LENA

I'll bet, especially since you were never there.

ANNA

(pause) You checked up on me?

LENA

That's right and Columbia has no record of Anna Glazer ever attending.

ANNA

True, I applied but wasn't accepted so I went to Bronx Community College instead. They're the only place that would have me and that's because my mother graduated with honors though I didn't graduate at all. In fact, didn't stay beyond my freshman year.

LENA

Why not?

ANNA

The commuting plus the pressure. I was grinding my teeth, losing sleep, my appetite -- my mind. *(pause)* Have you told Gunther?

LENA

No, and he doesn't know your father's not a minister and your mother's not dead.

ANNA

Well, she might as well be since she moved to Mexico with her lover when I was ten. *(pause)* I suppose you're going to tell him.

LENA

I doubt if he'd mind. I'm sure you know by now that Gunther's a genuinely good person, immune to corruption, and until you came along his greatest passion was watchmaking. In fact, he's so smitten, his eyes well up whenever you leave the room. He's convinced you radiate your own special light, but don't you get tired of pretending to be good?

ANNA

Don't you? You're the one crusading to save the planet.

LENA

Just my little zone. *(pause)* Gunther says you're writing a novel or is that also a lie?

ANNA

No, that's true.

LENA

Good luck with that. Since the philistines took charge, it's a post-literate, post-cultural, cyber-addicted world.

ANNA

Is that why Mona's smile is looking so strained? And I notice her new hand has tapered nails.

LENA

That's right, she can scratch out your eyes, but I also gave her a larger heart. It throbs like the ticking from a retro Bulova alarm clock. You can hear it if you put your head on her breast. Go ahead, listen.

ANNA

You're sure she won't kick?

LENA

No, you're safe.

(As ANNA bends down to listen, LENA taps the remote and MONA starts to stroke Anna's head.)

ANNA

Ohhhh, that's nice. Can I use her as a back scratcher?

LENA

Sure, she'll even give you a full body massage, and she doesn't discriminate -- she loves everyone.

ANNA

Okay, that's enough, Mona, back off.

(MONA backs away and stands in a neutral pose.)

ANNA

I suppose you'll manufacture millions of Monabots for the lonely men of the world.

LENA

That's the plan.

ANNA

Just don't forget the lonely women. You could make millions more for them, plus manly Machobots, and don't forget transbots, and skinny, fat, and fuzzy bots.

LENA

What about an Annabot?

ANNA

Ha! Very funny.

LENA

Why not? My company pays twenty thousand to the models whose faces and bodies we cast. We'll pay you the same plus royalties for every one sold.

ANNA

You're serious...?

LENA

Absolutely.

ANNA

Even though I'm not tall, skinny or voluptuous.

LENA

We make all kinds.

ANNA

What would I have to do?

LENA

We start by taking pictures using digital scanning and 3-D printouts. You have to be nude and you can't move but it takes no more than an hour.

ANNA

I confess I'm tempted.

LENA

Good. I know you need the money. Don't you live with your father in a fifth floor walk-up?

ANNA

Yes -- when I'm not on the street or in shelters.

LENA

I'm sorry to hear that.

ANNA

Apparently your spyware didn't dig deep enough.

LENA

I know that you've been hospitalized.

ANNA

That's right, I'm one of those weirdly wired freaks who wind up in psych wards writing poetry until miracles happen and we start functioning again -- but only in safe places doing safe things and for me it's here. So if you're serious about the Annabot, then yes, I could use the money, but why would anyone want Anna when they could have Mona?

LENA

Everyone has their types. Gunther, for example, would love an Annabot, but for now, he has the real thing.

ANNA

You mean the real deception. *(pause)* So do people actually buy robots to keep from being lonely?

LENA

We don't ask why or how they're being used, but our clients are mostly men, and we can't keep up with the orders. Besides, sex is sex. Bodies want to be touched, and if you're fucking in the dark, what difference does it make who or what's fucking you?

ANNA

That just seems so sad, so cynical. Don't most people still aspire to finding a certain singular someone -- preferably human.

LENA

Sure, shameless romantics like Gunther, but the rest may wind up with sexbots until we eventually stop propagating and die out as a species. After all, we humans are mammals who sweat, bleed, spit, and shit, so why not opt for a cleaner, controlled, non-confrontational partner?

ANNA

Because they wouldn't really know and appreciate us or miss us when we're gone, and we wouldn't know them -- because they're not actually knowable. *(pause)* I'm sorry you have no faith in human companionship. I assume you don't have faith in God either.

LENA

Nope, but what about you? Have you found your inner shaman?

ANNA

Not exactly, but I know I have a soul because I've seen it -- during electro-convulsive therapy. It slipped out and drifted to the ceiling so I could watch myself having seizures.

LENA

What fun!

ANNA

More of a horror show, but one of many useful lessons learned from going crazy.

LENA

So is this soul of yours destined for heaven?

ANNA

I hope so since I've been through hell.

LENA

Gunther thinks you're already an angel. Is that why you attract pigeons?

ANNA

No, I think they sense I'm a frequent flyer, or maybe it's the birdseed I carry in my pocket.

LENA

Ha, ha! So can you fly whenever you want?

ANNA

No, only at night when I'm in bed someplace safe. Then I wait until I feel vibrations, though it still scares me since I'm never sure where I'm going. So far it's mostly aerial views of the city and rivers, up through the Catskills and Poconos, but once I spun out and saw the Earth from a distance.

LENA

And are others out there -- other souls?

ANNA

Like an endless stream of sparkling lights -- the kind strung on Christmas trees.

LENA

So when we die, it's not game over?

ANNA

Look, I can tell you don't believe me, and you don't think I'm worthy of your cousin, and you're right. *(she sighs)* Not that it matters, but for the record, I take my meds, read the Times, and I'm a liberal who wants everyone everywhere to have a home, health care, an education, and for the first time in my life I'm actually feeling...content.

LENA

Good for you.

ANNA

Not that life with my father is perfect: the TV's always on; he leaves piles of laundry, dishes, beer bottles everywhere. *(pause)* It's true I have regrets and you can judge me if you like, but I'm still alive, I'm not finished. In fact, I feel I'm just beginning.

(A clock chimes, and MONA sings with ANNA joining in.)

MONA

*While sweet Dolly frees him from daily demands,
The watchmaker works with his skilled steady hands.
He knows all the secrets that time will reveal,
The cutting of jewels and forging of steel.
The pinions and rockers are all set to move,,
The levers and cogwheels all fit it their groove.*

MONA

*Her arms are screwed,
Her hands are nailed,
Her legs locked into a brace;
She sees the world through green glass eyes,
Her smile frozen on her face.*

ANNA

*Her arms are screwed,
Her hands are nailed,
Her legs locked into a brace;
She sees the world through green glass eyes,
Her smile frozen on her face.*

(MONA returns to a neutral position.)

LENA

That's the song our grandfather sang while he worked.

ANNA

I know. Gunther sings it in German when he thinks no one's listening.

(LENA taps the remote as MONA approaches ANNA.)

MONA

I love you Anna.

ANNA

Well, thank you, Mona.

MONA

I'd like to kiss you;...

ANNA

That's nice, but...

MONA

...kiss your lips, your neck, your breasts,...

ANNA

Now, Mona...

MONA

...then sweep you off your feet...

ANNA

Please stop.

MONA

You've stolen my heart.

ANNA

Stop her! Please!

(LENA taps her remote and MONA stands in silence.)

ANNA

Can't you speak for yourself? *(pause)* What are you afraid of?

LENA

What's real.

ANNA

Don't be.

(LENA approaches ANNA.)

LENA

If you let me kiss you, I'll buy you that Moon Phase watch.

ANNA

(pause, smiling) You don't have to buy the watch.

(ANNA embraces LENA and THEY kiss as clocks chime and light dim to black.)

SCENE 6

(Clock ticking sounds echo as lights reveal TOVA VARONE continuing to address the audience of tourists.)

TOVA VARONE

You've heard Anna speak of her derailed education, and although pre-cybernetically enhanced humans were schooled for a minimum of twelve years, many held on to primitive beliefs; enlightened policies fell on deaf ears; and scientific facts were willfully ignored. This explains why future generations suffered massive degradation in the form of fires, floods, droughts, and disease. Now let's return to the day Anna discovered the pigeons.

(The loud thuds of pigeons falling to the sidewalk are heard as TOVA VARONE departs and GUNTHER and LENA appear in the shop. ANNA approaches them cradling a dead pigeon.)

GUNTHER

What have you got there? A pigeon...?

ANNA

A dead one, and there's dozens more on the sidewalk across the street. They're being bagged and taken away, but why? What happened?

LENA

Can you tell how it died?

ANNA

The fall must have killed it, but why did it fall? *(staring out the window)* Now there's more police, and someone's headed this way.

(The doorbell chimes as DETECTIVE RAYMOND BAINES enters.)

DETECTIVE BAINES

Hello, I'm looking for Gunther Sachs.

GUNTHER

I'm Gunther.

DETECTIVE BAINES

I'm Detective Baines. I'm making inquiries of everyone in the vicinity -- just a few questions for you and your clerks.

GUNTHER

There's only myself, my cousin, Lena, and Miss Glazer here.

ANNA

Is it about the dead pigeons?

DETECTIVE BAINES

No, it's about the dead tenants across the street. Have either of you observed anything out of the ordinary?

LENA

No.

GUNTHER

Yes!

GUNTHER

A week ago someone broke our window and snatched Mona's hand and the watch she was wearing. *(pointing)* That's Mona.

DETECTIVE BAINES

I see, but have you experienced anything unusual regarding your health?

ANNA

No.

GUNTHER

No.

LENA

Why? What's going on?

DETECTIVE BAINES

It started five days ago when tenants complained of insomnia.

LENA

And they called the police...?

DETECTIVE BAINES

Only after three died and fifty-two became ill enough to visit clinics and hospitals.

GUNTHER

(mumbling) Mein Gott...

ANNA

Can you die from insomnia?

DETECTIVE GAINES

From complications.

(DETECTIVE BAINES reads notes on his phone.)

DETECTIVE BAINES

After twenty-four hours you start to lose hearing and coordination; after thirty-six, there's muscle aches, blurred vision, hypertension, palpitations; and after three days you'll have tremors, possible strokes, and hallucinations.

LENA

So do the police have any theories?

DETECTIVE BAINES

We suspect an odorless neurotoxin coming through the heating ducts. Just today six more tenants were hospitalized with severe angina; there's daily falls from vertigo, and more than usual migraines. Apparently once a person is sufficiently infected, it's pernicious and persistent -- even after they leave.

ANNA

Will they evacuate the building?

DETECTIVE BAINES

Possibly. The Health Inspector has a team investigating. If its intentional then we assume the SMD executives are the targets, but it's possible the toxins never reached the top floor since they seem to be unaffected. In any case, they own the building and insist the tenants are overreacting -- that they're victims of contagious hysteria.

GUNTHER

Ah, yes, hysteria from the stress of the police making the street look like a war zone.

ANNA

What about the dead pigeons?

DETECTIVE BAINES

They're being tested for toxins. Pets and even plants have been affected.

ANNA

Plants...?

DETECTIVE BAINES

Apparently all life forms need sleep. One of the tenants is spreading rumors that the building's cursed. She plans to hire an exorcist.

LENA

Ha, ha!

GUNTHER

(mumbling) Mein Gott...

(DETECTIVE BAINES takes a deep breath and cups his ears.)

ANNA

Are you all right, Detective? Please, sit down.

(ANNA offers DETECTIVE BAINES a chair.)

DETECTIVE BAINES

No thanks, I...I'm just a little lightheaded. I've been interviewing the tenants; I thought I was unaffected, but there's this buzzing...

ANNA

Can I get you some water?

DETECTIVE BAINES

No, really, I'm fine. *(glancing at Mona)* I've heard about your famous robot. She's quite impressive.

GUNTHER

Ah, yes, Mona's the soul of serenity, completely oblivious to the chaos around her.

ANNA

I'll wake her up.

(ANNA taps the remote.)

MONA

Time to make the doughnuts! -- Michael Vale.

DETECTIVE BAINES

She speaks!

MONA

If you've got the money, honey, I've got the time -- Willie Nelson.

DETECTIVE BAINES

And she flirts.

LENA

Stick around and you'll hear her sing.

DETECTIVE BAINES

Maybe another time. I...I think I need to lie down.

(DETECTIVE BAINES takes a card from his pocket, and hands it to GUNTHER.)

DETECTIVE BAINES

Please call if you observe anything unusual or start exhibiting symptoms.

ANNA

Are you sure you're all right? Should you be driving...?

DETECTIVE BAINES

Probably not. Good night.

(DETECTIVE BAINES staggers off as GUNTHER turns to ANNA and LENA.)

GUNTHER

So what do you think? Could the tenants be suffering from contagious hysteria?

LENA

Maybe.

ANNA

Even Mona's looking morose.

GUNTHER

Then cheer her up; make her smile.

(ANNA taps the remote and MONA smiles, then returns to a neutral expression.)

ANNA

Look at that! Ever since you brought her back, her smile snaps back into default mode.

LENA

I've noticed. I've been wondering if she's become a transistor...

ANNA

What's a transistor...?

LENA

If Mona's recording everything she sees and hears, then maybe she's become a kind of conduit for all the free floating anxiety around here, all the angry people marching past her window -- which would explain her being unable to hold a smile.

GUNTHER

But that's not possible; she's just a machine.

LENA

Which is why her behavior is such an enigma.

ANNA

Well, she's a great listener. She seems so real, I can't help projecting my moods onto her.

LENA

But what if instead of projecting your moods onto Mona, Mona's also projecting something onto you? Or to the tenants across the street?

GUNTHER

You mean Mona's become a danger, a weapon...?

ANNA

No, she couldn't...

GUNTHER

Ha! Tech wizards like Lena, are ingenious at finding new ways for us to kill each other. Isn't that so, Lena? Now tell us what Mona can do; tell us what's happening!

LENA

(pause, she sighs) If you must know, Mona can project invisible pulsating micro-waves through windows and walls.

GUNTHER

Mein Gott...

ANNA

You mean like radiation...?

LENA

I mean like audio frequencies.

ANNA

Is that what's happening?

LENA

Not any more; I've switched that function off.

GUNTHER

Gott sei Dank...

LENA

Tomorrow morning I'll take her back for adjustments. Now I have to leave, so good night!

ANNA

Good night.

(LENA departs as GUNTHER gestures towards MONA.)

GUNTHER

Look at Mona: perfectly positioned to attack the kaisers, and haven't we heard Lena ranting on and on -- threatening to kill them?

ANNA

But she didn't mean it; she wouldn't...?

GUNTHER

Why don't you ask her? Aren't you seeing each other?

ANNA

How...? *(pause)* How did you know?

GUNTHER

How do you think? There's surveillance cameras all over the shop. Occasionally I glance at the monitors so I've seen you kissing. *(pause)* Apparently, there's going to be a robotic Anna which I assume will be my consolation prize for when Lena steals you away.

ANNA

No, that's not happening.

GUNTHER

I'm not blind. I can see you want Lena, and Lena wants you -- at least for now or possibly to prove her point.

ANNA

What point...?

GUNTHER

I'm told some women are promiscuous on principle -- as a sign of their liberation, their freedom from the tyranny of men.

ANNA

Or the tyranny of loving only one person at a time. Why can't we love two?

GUNTHER

Because some of us are fools who want to be loved exclusively -- even if we don't deserve to be.

ANNA

You're wrong if you think I don't love you.

GUNTHER

Not the way you love Lena. You can hardly keep your hands off each other, and I'm afraid I'm not willing to share. It's the curse of collectors -- we're possessive.

ANNA

(pause) So do you want me to leave...?

GUNTHER

Only if you wish. You've been a blessing to the shop and to me, but I was naive to imagine we were exceptional-- a union worthy of poetry. *(pause)* Now it seems I don't really know you at all.

ANNA

Oh. *(pause)* Did Lena tell you...?

GUNTHER

Yes, but you made the mistake of putting your real address on your employment application. So I walked past your building and your neighbor was sitting on the steps. He told me Doyle Glazer lived there with his daughter, Anna. When I asked about his church, he directed me to Saint Ives's which turned out to be a bar.

ANNA

No, that's his church. He worships at the altar of alcohol and his god comes in a bottle. He used to teach but now he's a barely functioning dog walker who succumbed to bitterness when my mother left. Did Lena tell you she's not dead? And did she mention that I never finished college and was an inmate at Bellevue who thinks your ticking clocks are the sanest sound in the world.

GUNTHER

You should know that nothing you've said makes me think less of you. Why did you feel the need to keep secrets, to tell so many lies?

ANNA

Maybe because I preferred seeing myself through your eyes; maybe because I wanted you to think I came from a better place.

GUNTHER

(pause, he sighs) Ah, well, I suppose we all have a right to invent ourselves.

ANNA

Not anymore! The Internet keeps all our sordid sins exposed, so we're always afraid we'll be shamed, flamed or forgotten. Lena had access to secrets I hoped were buried, but she doesn't have access to my mind or my...heart.

(The doorbell chimes and GUNTHER sighs.)

GUNTHER

I'm afraid that's the client who needs a new crystal. His Classic Commodore was shattered but it's still ticking -- like me!

(GUNTHER departs as MONA speaks.)

MONA

Time spent with a cat is never wasted -- Colette.

ANNA

Is that right? (*pause, she sighs*) Well, Mona, it looks like we're in this together, both of us playing our roles. You're the Perfectly Packaged Blonde, and I'm the Doomed Damsel waiting to be rescued by Prince Gunther, though now I'm also under the spell of the Villainess Lena. Don't you love how men need to give women roles --- like parts in a play. It makes them think they can control us, but seriously, Mona, let's just try to be ourselves.

(The hour chimes and ANNA starts to sing, joined by MONA.)

ANNA

*I've tried to explain what they're too blind to see,
Why the watchmaker's doll is more real than me.*

MONA

*She watches him work while he sings
all day long,
She's all he has left of a lover long gone.
I am his love but sweet Dolly's his muse;
He says he is helpless, his heart has to choose.*

ANNA

*She watches him work while he sings
all day long,
She's all he has left of a lover long gone.
I am his love but sweet Dolly's his muse;
He says he is helpless, his heart has to choose.*

MONA

*Her arms are screwed,
Her hands are nailed,
Her legs locked into a brace;
She sees the world through green glass eyes,
Her smile frozen on her face.*

ANNA

*Her arms are screwed,
Her hands are nailed,
Her legs locked into a brace;
She sees the world through green glass eyes,
Her smile frozen on her face.*

(Several masked SLEEPWALKERS cross the street as lights dim to black.)

SCENE 7

(LENA is seated in the shop while GUNTHER paces, and TOVA VARONE observes from the side.)

TOVA VARONE

Gunther Sachs was not the sort of man to sit idly by while suspecting his cousin, Lena, of perpetrating the grief across the street -- especially after she explained that every person has their own...

TOVA VARONE

...resonant frequency.

LENA

Resonant frequency...

LENA

...depends on body mass and the size of the heart, and if you strike the heart's frequency, the targeted person will have an attack and die. That's what infrasound can do; it's very subtle because it can't be seen or heard.

(GUNTHER ceases pacing and faces LENA.)

GUNTHER

Then it's a coward's weapon, so shame on you!

LENA

Nonsense! Sonic frequencies were used in both World Wars. Even Albert Speer had plans for an acoustic canon using methane and oxygen.

GUNTHER

Wonderful! So Albert Speer is a role model?! Do you ever listen to yourself?! This isn't some experiment with machines; real flesh and blood human beings are suffering!

(ANNA enters.)

ANNA

Shhhhhush! Lower your voices! You can be heard on the street!

GUNTHER

I can't help it; I'm very upset!

LENA

Look, I never intended to inflict...

GUNTHER

Intentions don't matter to the dead and dying! Now listen to me: a detective was here so the police know something verboten is going on. They're not stupid; they're going to find out, and if they don't, I'll tell them!

LENA

You wouldn't...

GUNTHER

I would! You think I can live with myself if I let a mass murderer go free?

LENA

I'm not a murderer!

GUNTHER

Tell that to victims' families -- not to mention the judge and jury!

LENA

They'll never know; they won't find evidence! Infrasound's too subtle; it's all around us: the traffic, construction -- even birds use it to plot migrations. Look, I only used low neuro-acoustic frequencies. I figured out how I could use Mona to focus on specific sonic wavelengths that trigger brain activity affecting sleep. They were only scheduled to project through the windows of the top floor, but something went wrong. *(pause, she sighs)* Look, I just wanted the bastards to feel the misery they're inflicting on everyone else.

GUNTHER

By inflicting your own form of misery!

ANNA

I don't understand, how is it even possible to do what you've done?

LENA

Infrasound isn't legal if that's what you're asking. There's a global ban on the deployment of acoustic weapons, but that doesn't stop the research. Our own army knows how to use hertz levels that crush bones and turn organs into pudding. The victims would wind up looking like deflated balloons.

GUNTHER

Mein Gott! I can't believe what I'm hearing; this is so wicked, so wrong! Murder with impunity; the shameful slaughter of innocents!

LENA

Bullshit! What's wrong is having a bunch of corporate billionaires in control of politicians and commanders who might have access to our nuclear codes! It's only a matter of time before they're unleashing total chaos.

GUNTHER

You forget we're a democracy; we have a congress, a supreme court, a free press!

LENA

And they're all impotent! At least our latest line of missiles have been sent to allies in Europe and the Middle East. If we're threatened, they're equipped to attack, and I'm talking Russia, China, North Korea, Venezuela -- you name it! Someone has to discourage the crazies from destroying the world!

GUNTHER

So you're that someone?! You're our heroine, our Joan of Arc!

LENA

I'm an informed citizen with the right skills in the right place at the right time. Anna agrees with me, don't you?

ANNA

No, no, I don't; in fact, I...I'm stunned. Why couldn't you generate sound waves that comfort people instead of harming them?

LENA

Oh, Christ, you're both so naive...

ANNA

At least we're not killing innocent people.

LENA

They're tragic collateral damage which is unfortunate, but often happens in the process of targeting a few -- but they're the few who matter.

GUNTHER

Everyone matters!

LENA

No they don't.

GUNTHER

So all those tenants are expendable -- just means to an end?!

LENA

Oh, for chrissake, when you get over your sanctimonious posturing, you'll see that sometimes the tactics of war are necessary.

GUNTHER

Yet all wars are failures -- failures of language.

LENA

That's right, and we can't always wait for interpreters.

GUNTHER

(pause) I've known you all my life; you were always a risk taker, a renegade, but I never suspected you were capable of... *(he shudders)*

LENA

Why!? Because I'm a woman?

GUNTHER

No, because you're a Sachs from a long line of Ashkenazi Sachs who expect you to remember! To never forget what beasts people can become!

LENA

Exactly! There are people who do too much damage, who can't be reached. They're hopeless, heartless, and they've sucked the mercy out of me -- out of my mind, my body, my soul. They're genuine monsters building weapons and walls to keep out everyone who isn't like them; they're threatening to destroy everything good about this country and I'm out to get them!

GUNTHER

Not from my shop you're not!

LENA

Okay, fine! Sit on your holier than thou ass, spewing your righteous bullshit, never putting yourself on the line. You're hypocrites -- both of you! At least I try to make a difference!

GUNTHER

You really believe with the kaisers gone, you'd save the world from war? From terrorism?!

LENA

Don't forget racism, sexism, immigrant expulsions. And stop calling them kaisers; they're not emperors; they're devils!

GUNTHER

Enough, enough! (*pause, he sighs*) So what does this sonic obscenity look like?

LENA

It's a small generator in Mona's chest with a pumping action that resonates at specific volumes. It's projected from her throat, emitting invisible beams.

ANNA

Do these beams shoot out of her mouth when she sings?

LENA

No, I said her *throat*, but only when she tilts back her head and smiles.

ANNA

So is she still armed...?

LENA

Yes.

ANNA

Then you have to disarm her!

GUNTHER

Yes! Do it now!

LENA

I'd have to take her back to the shop to completely...

GUNTHER

Then do it! If you don't, I'll chop off her head and toss her in the trash!

ANNA

And I'll help!

LENA

Fine. *(pause)* I assume after I'm finished, you'll want her back.

GUNTHER

Only if she's safe.

LENA

You have my word.

GUNTHER

Not good enough; I'll need to witness the extraction.

LENA

It takes a few hours, but you won't understand the process...

GUNTHER

Then you'll explain it to me!

LENA

All right. *(pause)* Let me take Mona now, and I'll meet you at the factory tomorrow morning.

GUNTHER

No! I'll bring her myself, and after you finish disarming her, you should leave the country.

LENA

What...?

GUNTHER

If you don't, you'll become yet another page in the annals of American crazies. Trust me on this; they're going to find you.

LENA

You mean you'd betray me...?

GUNTHER

You betrayed yourself!

(As LENA starts to depart, MONA speaks.)

MONA

Time flies when you're having fun -- Virgil.

LENA

Ha, ha!

GUNTHER

Get out! Out!!

(LENA departs as GUNTHER turns to ANNA.)

GUNTHER

(pause) A pity there isn't a watch to warn us before we reach that moment in time -- the moment we become the monsters we abhor.

ANNA

A watch that could catch fire and burn our wrists.

GUNTHER

And leave a scar.

ANNA

(pause) What are you going to do?

GUNTHER

I'm tempted to call the police. If I don't, I'll be letting a killer go free.

ANNA

But you're going to give her time...?

GUNTHER

You mean to escape...?

ANNA

She'd have to go to places that offer asylum...

GUNTHER

Ah, you mean like Bermuda or Brazil -- the Chinese would love her! You could go with her while I stay here and order myself an Annabot. Maybe two. One for me and one for the shop. Who knows? Soon there could be Annabots everywhere.

ANNA

Oh, stop...

GUNTHER

Well, why not since the real woman I cared for never existed.

ANNA

Gunther, please...

GUNTHER

You're made out of so many myths you're starting to resemble a machine yourself -- one with immense charm, but not authentic.

ANNA

(she sighs) What we really need is a watch that controls the timing of our dreams and desires.

GUNTHER

Equipped with a compass that sets off alarms.

(A clock chimes.)

GUNTHER

Damn, I'm going to be late! I promised to make a delivery, so you'll close up...?

(ANNA nods.)

GUNTHER

Before I leave, which watch is Mona wearing?

ANNA

The Sea Maiden Stainless with Sunburst.

GUNTHER

Let's remember to remove it before Lena takes her.

ANNA

You don't think Lena would steal...?

GUNTHER

Why not? She stole you, didn't she?

(GUNTHER marches off before ANNA can reply as lights dim and TOVA VARONE enters to join ANNA standing frozen in time.)

SCENE 8

(TOVA VARONE faces the future tourists.)

TOVA VARONE

Now please keep in mind that Anna was an entirely biological organism. Back in the early twenty first century, there were more than eight billion of them living in one hundred and ninety-six countries ranging from the few thriving in conspicuous luxury to multitudes without rudimentary latrines. But privilege didn't prevent many from perishing in waves of wars traced to a imbalances of power that led to military solutions to political conflicts. Now let's return to the shop a week later when Mona was back in her window singing to the crowds who often joined in the chorus.

(Lights focus on MONA singing, joined by ANNA and TOVA VARONE.)

MONA

*Her arms are screwed,
Her hands are nailed,
Her legs locked into a brace;
She sees the world through green glass eyes,
Her smile frozen on her face.*

ANNA and TOVA VARONE

*Her arms are screwed,
Her hands are nailed,
Her legs locked into a brace;
She sees the world through green glass eyes,
Her smile frozen on her face.*

(GUNTHER enters the shop to join ANNA.)

TOVA VARONE

The relationship between Anna and Gunther remained strained until one day...

(Door chimes resound as DETECTIVE BAINES enters and TOVA VARONE departs.)

DETECTIVE BAINES

Hello Mister Sachs, Miss Glazer.

GUNTHER

Hello, Detective.

ANNA

You're looking better. Are the tenants still not sleeping...?

DETECTIVE BAINES

They've gone; the building's been declared unsafe for human occupancy.

GUNTHER

Ah, yes, I've noticed some moving vans.

DETECTIVE BAINES

Did you see the clergy? One of the residents called in a priest and a few others are relying on quack exorcists.

GUNTHER

Do the owners still claim the cause is hysteria?

DETECTIVE BAINES

Yes, but there's also a theory that there's a lethal electro-magnetic field coming from your shop -- from the clocks.

ANNA

Oh, no...

GUNTHER

What nonsense!

GUNTHER

Magnetic fields affect clocks not vice versa! It makes them run faster because the coils in the balance springs shrink! Sorry, I don't mean to shout, but all our clocks and watches are *anti*-magnetic. They've had palladium-made escapements since the 1880s. My point is that it's a totally misguided theory!

DETECTIVE BAINES

One of many, but prolonged lack of sleep causes people to lose their circadian rhythms, their innate sense of time, which makes them more dependent on watches.

ANNA

Are you suggesting that we're increasing sales by deliberately...

DETECTIVE BAINES

No, no, forget it! Look, the real reason I'm here is because we suspect some radical faction has found a subtle way to sicken targets. It's called acoustical weapon technology.

ANNA

What...?

GUNTHER

Ah, I believe the Russians have used it.

DETECTIVE BAINES

Yes, and the Cubans, Israelis, and seventy other countries including the United States. Apparently, you have an ideal location, and according to our research, you have a cousin named Lena Sachs who worked for the Defense Department.

GUNTHER

That was years ago. Now Lena makes robotic machines for businesses. They're harmless except they're stealing jobs from humans.

DETECTIVE BAINES

Didn't you hire her to construct your famous robot?

GUNTHER

Yes, Mona is Lena's creation.

(ANNA taps the remote as MONA turns and speaks.)

MONA

There's a time to be silent and a time to speak -- Ecclesiastes.

DETECTIVE BAINES

Right! So now's the time to speak.

(DETECTIVE BAINES takes out a recording device and turns to GUNTHER.)

DETECTIVE BAINES

When did you last see Lena?

GUNTHER

Six days ago.

DETECTIVE BAINES

And you haven't texted or spoken to her since?

GUNTHER

No.

DETECTIVE BAINES

Miss Glazer...?

ANNA

No.

MONA

Punctuality is the thief of time -- Oscar Wilde.

ANNA

Shush, Mona!

DETECTIVE BAINES

Are either of you aware that she belongs to several radical organizations?

GUNTHER

No.

ANNA

No.

GUNTHER

I've only heard Lena call herself a cybernetic humanist which means she believes technology will help our species evolve.

ANNA

If you have questions for Lena, you should ask her yourself, and isn't this still a free country? Can't we express opinions, march in protests?

DETECTIVE BAINES

Sure, as long as no one gets hurt,

(DETECTIVE BAINES scrolls through the notes on his phone.)

DETECTIVE BAINES

So far eighteen have died; thirty more are critical; a hundred and twelve are being treated by their doctors. If you looked out your window at night, you might notice some restless people wandering the streets. I've seen them myself; they tend to have fixed pupils, flailing arms, and some are wearing pajamas.

ANNA

Are they sleepwalking...?

DETECTIVE BAINES

I'm told they're semiconscious, but not alert enough to avoid causing accidents. The police are rounding them up and taking them to hospitals. It's not just the residents; business and media moguls are also affected.

GUNTHER

Mein Gott in himmel...

ANNA

I notice we haven't seen any dead pigeons lately.

DETECTIVE BAINES

No living ones either; they seem to have acquired the instinct to fly away. *(pause)* Well, thanks for your time.

(DETECTIVE BAINES departs.)

ANNA

What's going on...? I thought Lena made Mona safe.

GUNTHER

She promised, but clearly her victims are still exhibiting symptoms.

ANNA

Oh, Gunther, will this nightmare never end?

GUNTER

Ah, Anna, my dear, I haven't a clue, but at least we have each other.

(GUNTHER grasps ANNA'S hand.)

MONA

Let the good times roll -- Louis Jordan.

(Lights dim to black as the SLEEPWALKERS cross the street.)

SCENE 9

(ANNA and GUNTHER freeze in time as TOVA VARONE steps forward to address the audience.)

TOVA VARONE

Unlike us, the tenants across the street were at the mercy of internal clocks, setting and resetting their sleeping and waking cycles, affecting their hormones, cognition, and digestion until they fell completely out of sync with the sun and moon. Their troubles can be traced to the invention of electric lights and peaked with the hyper-connected world of screens constantly warping the seasons from within.

(TOVA VARONE departs as MONA speaks and GUNTHER turns to ANNA.)

MONA

Time keeps everything from happening at once -- John Wheeler.

GUNTHER

Do you believe Mona is completely disarmed?

ANNA

Yes. *(pause)* Didn't you witness Lena removing the generator?

GUNTHER

But what did I see? I'm not a robotic engineer, so Lena could have deceived me.

ANNA

But look, her smile's back!

GUNTHER

I don't trust that smile! *(pause)* When Lena returned her, she gave me a special recorder with instructions not to activate it until Thursday, and she insisted that you to be present.

ANNA

Today's Friday, what are you waiting for?

GUNTHER

Time -- the right moment, and I hope this is it.

(GUNTHER retrieves the remote from his pocket.)

GUNTHER

What if it triggers a bomb?

ANNA

Give it to me.

(ANNA grasps the remote, then taps it as MONA turns to face them with a seductive smile.)

MONA

I love you, Anna.

GUNTHER

Perhaps I should leave.

MONA

I love you too, Gunther. I'm speaking for Lena who took your advice and left the country. You should consider leaving as well.

GUNTHER

What?! Why!? I'm innocent!

MONA

If you don't, then find a lawyer. It's possible you'll be accused of being a co-conspirator.

GUNTHER

Mein Gott...

MONA

By now you realize that there was a malfunction that gradually altered the direction of the beams and intensified hertz levels. This resulted in some incidental neural damage to the tenants across the street.

GUNTHER

Incidental!? Hah!

MONA

Please know Lena feels remorse and wakes up screaming every day.

GUNTHER

Good!

MONA

She's grateful you didn't expose her to the police.

GUNTHER

Damn her...

MONA

Shall I list the few things Lena's learned about life?

ANNA

Yes.

GUNTHER

No!

GUNTHER

(pause) All right, fine. What did Lena learn?

MONA

First, that the forces affecting our world are unpredictable except for the constancy of catastrophes caused by global warming, sinister zoonotic viruses, the proliferation of guns, and malevolent dictators with cult followings. There are other constancies like the fact that the rich stay in control and the poor don't rebel because they're too distracted by their screens or addictions to drugs, alcohol, misinformation, and the tedium of precarious jobs. Capitalism has won in almost every country and will continue to triumph over communism, fascism, tribalism, and theocracies with prophets for whom fanatics kill, rape, and enslave women and minorities. So yes, Lena, made mistakes, but if what she's done leads to the demise of plutocrats and the installment of a saner, more responsible government with better policies for a better world, then was she really so wrong?

GUNTHER

Yes!

ANNA

Yes.

MONA

Please, Anna, forgive and forget Lena, and cherish Gunther who is much worthier of your devotion. I hope the two of you remember: Time is slow for those who wait, fast for those who fear, long for those who lament, but for those who love, time is eternal -- William Shakespeare.

(GUTHUR clasps ANNA'S hand and they embrace until ANNA releases herself.)

ANNA

You realize Lena's confession could exonerate you.

GUNTHER

Perhaps, but why do I feel that she still doesn't comprehend the consequences of her actions; she doesn't realize she crossed a threshold -- and dragged us with her!

ANNA

Where do you think she went?

GUNTHER

Why? Are you hoping to join her?

ANNA

No!

GUNTHER

Are you sure?

ANNA

Yes, are you...?

GUNTHER

If you mean am I sure of my feelings for you, then the answer is absolutely. *(pause)* Now we must make plans: I don't know where Lena went, but I think I should take her advice and leave the country. If I do, can you manage the shop?

ANNA

You can't leave! Your clients will be devastated; you'll look guilty and you're not!

GUNTHER

I'm guilty of stupidity; I should have suspected! I realize now that at some level of consciousness I knew what Lena was capable of, so yes, I am a conspirator -- a careless, willfully ignorant fool!

ANNA

Stop blaming yourself; everyone who knows you will defend you! They'll testify that you're a kind, generous, decent man.

GUNTHER

Hah! What's decent anymore? *(pause, he sighs)* I wish I knew what to do, where to go. If only we had a clairvoyant watch -- a luminous Cassandra.

ANNA

Well, why don't you ask Mona? Sometimes she actually makes sense. Wake up, Mona!

(MONA lifts her head and opens her eyes.)

GUNTHER

So Mona, have you any words of wisdom regarding our destinies?

MONA

The strongest warriors are Time and Patience -- Leo Tolstoy.

GUNTHER

Ha! Good advice! I'll take it!

ANNA

What do you mean?

GUNTHER

You heard her: "Time and Patience." I'm going to do nothing but be patient and wait.

ANNA

Good! Then you'll stay!

(Tick-tocking sounds are heard as GUNTHER and ANNA freeze in time while SLEEPWALKERS cross the street.)

SCENE 10

(TOVA VARONE reappears and speaks as a bell chimes and DETECTIVE BAINES enters the shop.)

TOVA VARONE

Two days later Detective Baines returned to say...

TOVA VARONE

...sorry.

DETECTIVE BAINES

Sorry,...

DETECTIVE BAINES

...Mister Sachs, but I have a warrant to search the premises and confiscate Mona.

ANNA

Then do it at your own risk! Mona's programmed to attack anyone who tries to harm her!

(ANNA taps the remote as MONA bends her knees and make slashing karate gestures.)

GUNTHER

Anna!

DETECTIVE BAINES

What the hell?!

(DETECTIVE BAINES backs away, drawing his pistol.)

GUNTHER

Stop her, Anna! Stop her this instant!

(ANNA taps the remote causing MONA to cease moving, freezing mid-slash. Then MONA returns to a neutral pose as DETECTIVE BAINES shoves his pistol back in its holster.)

GUNTHER

(to Anna) For godssake, what were you thinking?! *(to Detective Baines)* Please, forgive her, she's not herself; she's upset. *(whispering to Anna)* Apologize!

ANNA

I...I'm sorry.

DETECTIVE BAINES

I could cuff you both for attempting to assault an officer.

ANNA

She panicked, I mean, I panicked, I...I wasn't thinking...

(Pause as DETECTIVE BAINES sighs then turns to GUNTER.)

DETECTIVE BAINES

I'm here to warn you: tomorrow several officers will be arriving to assist me in a search, and if there's anything incriminating -- and even if there isn't -- you'll probably be arrested. I'm giving you enough time to leave the city or contact a lawyer.

ANNA

But he's innocent!

DETECTIVE BAINES

Yeah, we know. The police and FBI are well aware that your cousin Lena's our only suspect qualified to create a sonic weapon. So far they can't find her, and since you're related and considered a possible accomplice, it's likely you'll wind up targeted.

GUNTHER

Targeted...?

ANNA

You mean shot?!

DETECTIVE BAINES

Sure, by some gun-toting nut jobs related to the victims.

GUNTHER

Mein Gott...

DETECTIVE BAINES

You'll find out soon enough so I'm telling you now. The City's Commissioner of Health has declared an emergency and is requesting a federal investigation. Now I'm leaving, but I'll be back with a warrant.

GUNTHER

Thank you, Detective. I'm grateful for the warning.

DETECTIVE BAINES

Look, I don't approve of your cousin's tactics, and I'll be glad when she's caught and convicted. The truth is some of us are sick of being sick, but we're also sick of being at the mercy of the billionaires she targeted, not to mention the gun runners of the world inciting one war after another -- enough said. *(pause)* Good luck, Mister Sachs!

(DETECTIVE BAINES departs.)

GUNTHER

(pause, he sighs) How can I thank him?

ANNA

Send him a watch.

GUNTHER

Ah, of course!

ANNA

Oh, Gunther, what are you going to do?

GUNTHER

Change plans. Listen to me, Anna: when I leave...

ANNA

Oh, no, please don't...

GUNTHER

I have to, and I expect you to manage the shop. Will you do it?

ANNA

Well, I...I could try, but I don't have your knowledge of the history, the mechanics...

GUNTHER

You know more than you think and could learn the rest. *(pause, he sighs)* Of course, I could sell the place; I have some potential buyers.

ANNA

But you love the shop; it's your life, your family's legacy!

GUNTHER

A legacy that ends with me.

ANNA

No it doesn't; I mean, it doesn't have to. *(pause)* I...I'm pregnant.

GUNTHER

What...?

ANNA

It's been twelve weeks and she's yours.

GUNTHER

Mein Gott...

MONA

There's a time to be born and a time to die. -- Ecclesiastes.

GUNTHER

(pause, he sighs) Do you know what you're going to do? I mean, what do you want? Do you know...?

ANNA

(pause) I've always wanted a child to cherish, but never imagined doing it alone. *(pause)* I'm sorry, maybe I shouldn't have told you; I know you don't feel the way you did...

MONA

The heart keeps it's own time -- Friedrich Schiller.

ANNA

That's true, Mona, but time won't let us go backwards.

GUNTHER

I don't need to go backwards; I never stopped loving.

ANNA

Neither did I...

(GUNTHER grasps ANNA by the shoulders.)

GUNTHER

Ah, Anna, meine Liebe, whoever you are, I don't care if you're reckless, feckless, insane, and seduce every man and woman who enters the shop!

ANNA

Oh, my dear...

GUNTHER

Shhh, let me finish! You must know you're the only woman I think of from the moment I wake up; you're the only one who's made me burn with the passions of a boy; and you're the only one who ever made me feel as much joy in giving as receiving pleasures I never dared to expect, so whatever happens, I know I'm better for loving you.

ANNA

And I'm better for loving you.

(GUNTHER embraces ANNA.)

GUNTHER

How can I feel like dancing when Lena's in exile? And what if I leave and can't return?
(*turning to Mona*) Oh, Mona, Mona, who knew you could be so dangerous?

MONA

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times -- Charles Dickens.

GUNTHER

Ha, ha! Don't you love it when she actually says something appropriate? (*pause*) Now I must think: I'll need my passport; I'll tell my lawyer that the shop is now yours and to give you complete access to the accounts -- and you should move into my apartment.

ANNA

What...? Oh, no, what about my father? I can't abandon him, and what if he won't come?

GUNTHER

Convince him! I'll leave the key and instructions with the management.

ANNA

I can't believe you're really going...

GUNTHER

I'm afraid I must...

ANNA

But you'll come back!?

(GUNTHER kisses ANNA and departs. Then ANNA starts to cry and turns to MONA.)

ANNA

Oh, Mona, we've been abandoned. I knew he would, and I already miss him. *(pause)* At least I've been promoted to manager, though you're still in danger. Maybe I'll disguise you as a mannequin, a big doll named Dolly. I'll put a hat on you and seat you in a chair with the other dolls. Or maybe I'll just do away with you altogether.

(A clock chimes the hour as ANNA draws a hammer from a toolbox then sings. SHE is soon joined by MONA.)

ANNA

*The watchmaker's shop is sweet Dolly's domain,
But a rap from a hammer will shatter her reign.
I'll give her fair warning, I'll whisper good bye,
Then smash her to pieces before she can cry
Farewell to Dolly, I'm setting her free;
He made time for her, but never for me;
Farewell dear Dolly, I'm setting us free,
He made time for you, but never, never, never for me.*

MONA

*Her arms are screwed,
Her hands are nailed,
Her legs locked into a brace;
She sees the world through green glass eyes,
Her smile frozen on her face.*

ANNA

*Her arms are screwed,
Her hands are nailed,
Her legs locked into a brace;
She sees the world through green glass eyes,
Her smile frozen on her face.*

(ANNA approaches MONA with the hammer, but just as she's about to strike, ANNA changes her mind and drops the hammer.)

ANNA

Poor Mona, I can't hurt you, but the police will take you away, strip you naked, and tear you apart.

MONA

Time and tide wait for no man.

ANNA

Or woman.

MONA

Geoffrey Chaucer.

ANNA

But if time and tide don't wait, then neither should we! They can't take you away if you're not here, can they? So what if you went for a stroll? After all, you're programmed to walk wherever I want you to go.

(As ANNA speaks she taps digits into her remote.)

ANNA

Now I'm directing you to walk the entire length of the city, but there'll be no singing, no pithy quotes, and no flirting. You'll only walk down side streets, stop at the lights, and look down at your feet with your mean face -- your knife smile.

(ANNA retrieves her coat and hat, then dresses MONA.)

ANNA

Now here, put these on; my sunglasses are in the pocket. I'll follow you to Central Park.

(MONA dons the sunglasses, then steps out of the shop followed by ANNA as lights dim to black.)

EPILOGUE

(TOVA VARONE enters the empty simulated habitat addressing the tourists as MONA walks by, criss-crossing the habitat.)

TOVA VARONE

One hundred years ago the length of Manhattan was twenty-one kilometers long, so Mona had a lengthy stroll ahead of her. The police initiated a search, offering a thirty thousand dollar reward for her capture which sparked a citywide sense of excitement with everyone joining the hunt. *(to Mona)* Now please, cease walking!

(MONA stands still.)

TOVA VARONE

Now Mona will explain what happened after she left the shop.

MONA

I was maneuvered to meander for seven hours before being sighted in Central Park by a trio of joggers who reported me to the police. Then I was captured, dismantled, and contained sufficient evidence to arrest Lena and Gunther Sachs for their alleged involvement in multiple homicides.

TOVA VARONE

Mona's window wasn't empty for long. Anna had her reassembled and Saxenburg's Watches became a major tourist attraction once again. Eventually, Anna purchased her own Annabot which she taught to replace herself when she needed time off to nurture her child.

(The ANNABOT enters and appears to be an exact replica of ANNA except for a pair of glasses. She stands beside MONA, her eyes and mouth closed.)

TOVA VARONE

Now the Annabot will relate the rest of Anna's story.

(TOVA VARONE glances at the ANNABOT who takes off her glasses, opens her eyes, smiles and speaks with a cheerful voice.)

ANNABOT

The human Anna Glazer managed the shop for the next thirty years, adding her own collections of trivets, teapots, and snow globes. After her father passed away Anna and her daughter moved into Gunther's apartment and hired robotic clerks like me so she could read and write novels. I'm equipped to recognize faces, translate languages, drive cars, and beat humans at chess, checkers, bridge, poker, scrabble, wordle, and nearly every game and sport ever conceived. More than eighty percent of all work related tasks are now subject to automation, but once upon a time I often joined Mona in the window where we sang songs, modeled watches, and reminded the human Anna that while she grows old, time for us stands still.

TOVA VARONE

So Annabot, the tour group might be curious to know what happened to Gunther and Lena and all the stricken sleepwalkers.

(As the ANNABOT continues speaking, GUNTHER appears holding a watch with a pulsating light.)

ANNABOT

Gunther was offered asylum in Austria where he met the watchmakers of Saxenburg and learned to construct a watch of his own design called the “Anna Amour.” Anna visited often and in due course they married and had a daughter who had a daughter who had a daughter inquisitive enough to discover Anna’s journals.

(As the ANNABOT continues speaking, LENA appears.)

ANNABOT

As for Lena, she sent texts to Gunther from Shanghai where she continued her experiments, creating the chips that enhance our own cybernetic lives.

TOVA VARONE

So farewell Anna, farewell Gunther, farewell Lena, farewell Detective Baines. They were humans in a crowded city who passed on to whatever existence awaits them all. And now to continue our tour, please follow me, and we’ll proceed to the Empire State Building!

(TOVA VARONE departs leaving MONA and the ANNABOT singing.)

ANNABOT

*Her arms are screwed,
Her hands are nailed,
Her legs locked into a brace;
She sees the world through green glass eyes,
Her smile frozen on her face.*

MONA

*Her arms are screwed,
Her hands are nailed,
Her legs locked into a brace;
She sees the world through green glass eyes,
Her smile frozen on her face.*

(Lights fade to green then black.)

End of Play

