



IMPLIED CONSENT

A PLAY ON THE SANCTITY
OF HUMAN LIFE,
IN FOUR ACTS

SECOND EDITION



G. STOLYAROV II

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Second Edition

*Written in 2004-2005
First Edition Published in 2007
Second Edition Published in 2013*

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The characters and places in this book are fictitious. Any resemblance to any living individual or existing organization is entirely coincidental.

The ideas in this book are *not* fictitious. Any resemblance to the actual ideas of any individual, living or dead, is entirely *deliberate and purposeful*.

Introduction to the Second Edition

Implied Consent was originally written during December 2004 and January 2005, with the intention of eventually producing a live performance of the play. I shared drafts of the play with the composer Christopher Schlegel, who created numerous concept melodies that reflect vividly the mood and essence of the story. I hope someday to be able to release this music for download alongside this polished version of the text.

The First Edition of *Implied Consent* was published during May 2007 on Associated Content (now Yahoo! Voices), with each scene formatted as a separate article. While this somewhat resembled the method of publishing in installments that was commonly used by 19th-century novelists, it did make for cumbersome transitions among scenes. The Second Edition is intended to be as convenient for readers as possible; hence, I have released it in PDF, MOBI, and EPUB formats, to enable easy reading on computers, tablets, e-book readers, and mobile phones.

The philosophical direction of this play is influenced by Ayn Rand's Objectivism but was also intended to challenge some prevailing ideas among Objectivists with regard to the areas to which the respect afforded to a human life must extend. Written during the height of the Terri Schiavo life-support controversy, this play makes the argument that a vegetative state does not deprive a person of humanity, rights, or the prerogative to determine his or her future by means of past instructions made while the individual was still conscious and rational. Unlike the traditional "pro-life" position in the United States, my views emphasize the role of technology – including the prospects of radical breakthroughs – in undoing hitherto irreversible states of disease and incapacity. Because of these ambitions to support the saving of an ever-expanding set of human lives, *Implied Consent* could be considered even more of a Transhumanist work than an Objectivist one.

In retrospect, eight years later, as with my 2003-2004 novel *Eden against the Colossus*, I am surprised that some of my predictions regarding the future actually ended up being rather conservative. Victoria Grummond's Virtual Reality Museum of High Art in Act II, Scene IV, on which she spent the majority of her inheritance in the year 2102 within my fictional universe, is probably no more than five years away from the vantage point of the actual year 2013 – and it would, if created, be accessible to as broad a segment of the public as mobile phones and MP3 players are today. Likewise, my hopes regarding the prospects for radical life extension and the amplification of human brains using artificial components are significantly more optimistic today than they were in 2004-2005. Perhaps, and hopefully, we will not need to wait until today's children are in their nineties in order to address the philosophical questions and dilemmas presented in *Implied Consent*. Real-world parallels to Quintus Grummond and Everett Waltonford may be found among the scientists and biotech entrepreneurs of today. We should wish them the most spectacular success, and considerably less societal and political resistance than I portray in this play.

Cast of Characters (In Order of Appearance)

Quintus Grummond, 95 - Self-made multi-billionaire

Servant

Oswald Grummond, 60 - Only son of Quintus Grummond

Wesley, 60 - Friend of Oswald

Paramedic

Edward Mark, 35 - Businessman whose firm was recently bought out by Grummond Estate

Raymond Neville, 33 - Manager of Grummond Estate

Trent Roberts, 45 - Lawyer for Oswald Grummond

Employee of the Estate of Grummond

Dr. Everett Waltonford, 25 - Biotechnology scientist at Grummond Laboratories

Victoria Grummond, 30 - Great-niece of Quintus Grummond

Guest at the Grummond Mansion

Reporters

Daniel Bailey, 45 - Correspondent for Standard News

Judge Benson, 55

Tax Agents

Guards of Grummond Laboratories

Additional paramedics, reporters, guests at the mansion, tax agents, guards, laboratory assistants, and spectators at court should also be employed as extras.

Act I, Scene I

(Enter QUINTUS GRUMMOND with SERVANT, onto a delicately kept garden path leading to a vast jogging trail outside the Grummond Mansion. It is November 10, 2102, a fine day to be outdoors.)

SERVANT: Sir, my belated congratulations to you for a birthday several days past. In your ninety-fifth year, you are fit beyond anyone's expectations, and may yet outlive us all.

GRUMMOND: Ah, yes, the wonders of the technology of our age, coupled with a modicum of self-maintenance! Longevity was not always so easily attained, you know. When I was born in 2007, most people were already dead by their late seventies.

SERVANT: And you saw an opportunity...

GRUMMOND: Yes, and their genomes were scoured for those little errors that would spring up in their middle and late years and ruin their lives. Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Huntington's, and a whole horde of cancers in their company plagued men. These are but names for you, without any special significance, but, in our time, they were scourges. Many men thought that the battle I had fought against those perils was futile, that I, an arrogant, inexperienced pup of a venture capitalist with his intricate theories and moral ideals, was defying the most powerful forces of nature, or worse, tampering with what it meant to be human. Yet my investments taught them the true meaning of humanity, not defined by its limitations, but rather by its ability to overcome them, that there was no reason to leave man at the mercy of accidental pairings of molecular bases. And there was no reason not to profit from this insight, either. I do think you know the history of my rise...

SERVANT: Indeed, sir. Are you ready for your run?

GRUMMOND: Yes. Here, take my coat and arrange for its storage. (Removes coat and gives it to SERVANT.) Afterward, you may do as you see fit.

SERVANT: Sir.

(He leaves with the coat. GRUMMOND enters the trail and begins to jog, making loops that encompass one half of the stage. On the other half, the scene shifts to a luxuriously decorated living room in the Grummond Mansion, where OSWALD sits, sipping on glass after glass of wine. He is in the company of WESLEY, a childhood friend. Both men are slouched, slightly chubby, mischievously unkempt, and steadily graying and balding, as they are in their early sixties.)

OSWALD: Marvelously fine stuff. Father never drank or bought any of it, and I think it must have been a gift someone made for him forty or so years ago. Well, then, more for us. Ever drank forty-year-old wine before, Wesley?

WESLEY: No, I've not gotten that far in my collection. I'm buying wine of every prestigious sort from every year in which it was made, in reverse chronological order. I've just finished my collection of twenty-seven-year-old wine, so I still have a ways to go. And the older the wine is, the more expensive it becomes!

OSWALD: Here, I will treat you... but, on one condition... Tell me how you got the money to do this.

WESLEY: Oh, that. My uncle died a few months ago, and left me a fortune. Now, at first, it was locked up in some useless fund someplace where I was not supposed to have access to it, but I got my lawyer, Trent Roberts, to settle things for me.

OSWALD (leaning forward with interest): Really?

WESLEY: Yes, Trent is a miracle worker. He says that he can tackle any case and any suit, just with what is already in his suitcase; he never showed me what was there, but it must be something powerful indeed. He was once able to convince a judge that the other side was composed of butterflies dreaming of being men, and, being butterflies, did not have any rights under the law. In another case, he cited the fact of his client being a butterfly dreaming to be a man as reason to apply numerous animal-rights statutes in his favor. My case was pretty easy by comparison, you see.

OSWALD: Hmm... I wonder if I could give him a call.

(In the meantime, QUINTUS GRUMMOND suddenly grasps his chest and contorts his body in agony, as a heart failure cuts short his jog. He falls to the ground unconscious.)

WESLEY: What, you have a suit?

OSWALD (drunk): I have many suits, of course! Though I prefer casual wear.

WESLEY (appropriates wine bottle after seeing that OSWALD is no longer able to lift a glass with precision): But are you sure you can afford one more?

OSWALD: If all goes well, I'll be able to pay for as many suits as I please!

WESLEY: If you wish, I'll have Trent come over. But I warn you, this man demands millions.

OSWALD (mumbling): I'll suit him with what I offer (collapses into chair).

(In the meantime, the SERVANT, walking in the vicinity, stumbles on the unconscious GRUMMOND. He is horrified by the apparent mishap, and runs back to the mansion to inform OSWALD. Several seconds later, the SERVANT rushes into the living room, breathing heavily.)

SERVANT: The young Mr. Grummond may be disturbed to know that his father has lost his consciousness and lies prostrate on the jogging path, with neither pulse nor breathing!

OSWALD (feigning shock): What? This is terrible! A calamity! Why had I not been informed of this earlier? (Glares at SERVANT.) Have you been neglecting your duties?!

SERVANT (afraid of OSWALD's wrath): My sincerest apologies. I came as soon as I could.

OSWALD (deliberates the matter with a spark in his eyes absolutely improper to the occasion): I suppose I believe you. I also think you'll be believed if you say that in court. Very well. Call the paramedics immediately! (Whispers to WESLEY): Call Trent Roberts immediately, too! (WESLEY nods and leaves.)

(SERVANT extracts a visual image transmitter and looks into it with a sense of urgency. The transmitter is connected by a special line to the underground tunnels that ambulances use to travel almost instantly to their destinations. The medics are aware of the identity of the caller and the address without needing to be informed of it, as each visual transmitter is automatically able to recognize the owner of every other through an advanced system of caller ID.)

SERVANT: Medics, come here immediately! Quintus Grummond is on the brink of death!

PARAMEDIC (appears momentarily, from below stage, at the scene of GRUMMOND's fall, begins to examine the entrepreneur.): He has been out of his consciousness for some time. It looks like his heart suddenly stopped pumping blood.

OSWALD (interested): Just *stopped*?

PARAMEDIC: Yes, there was no defect in it that I could see. And my hand-held screen here shows quite an accurate diagram of his particular heart's internal structure. He was extremely healthy in his old age. It was just that his heart, like all of ours, was naturally programmed, by his genome, to perform only a certain amount of beats, and no more. He was on his last beat when he collapsed.

SERVANT (genuinely worried): But can it still beat, potentially?

PARAMEDIC: Of course. We can place him on life support indefinitely, and induce as many artificial beats of his heart as we need. Moreover, should his heart ever begin to manifest any deficiencies, we can always infuse some fresh cells into it and restore it.

OSWALD (in a sly, devious voice) But what about his *brain*?

PARAMEDIC: That is... a slight problem. The lengthy time period between his fall and my arrival has deprived his brain of blood and oxygen and rendered it defunct. He is, I fear, brain-dead.

SERVANT (hopeful): But you will still place him on life support, no?

PARAMEDIC: Indeed. We had a... special arrangement with Mr. Grummond. In the event he should ever be disabled in any otherwise terminal manner, we were instructed to sustain him on

life support, *indefinitely*, no matter what amount of his wealth this would consume. This would not be a problem, given his immense fortune, of course.

OSWALD (scowls subtly, in a manner inaudible to the other characters): *My* fortune.

PARAMEDIC: I shall ensure that Mr. Grummond receives the optimal care, and that his life will be perfectly secure while he is with us. (Summons several assistants, who lay GRUMMOND on a mobile pallet, and disappear with him below stage.)

WESLEY (returning, with a slight grin): Oswald, Trent said it would be his pleasure to work for you. How shall you make financial arrangements?

OSWALD: Servant, leave! (SERVANT obediently departs.) Now, Wesley, how shall I pay? Through the Estate of Grummond. (They leave the stage, engaged in inaudible chatter.)

Act I, Scene II

(Scene opens with EDWARD MARK and RAYMOND NEVILLE at bargaining table.)

MARK: Then, it is agreed, Mr. Neville. (They shake hands.)

NEVILLE: Mr. Mark, I am pleased that the Estate of Grummond's offer for acquiring your company was to your liking. We understand that this business was your life's work, and we are naturally willing to give you a lifetime's worth of profit for it. In short, you need never again worry about your financial state.

MARK: And yet, I wonder, who shall operate the business; who shall now be the beneficiary of the profits?

NEVILLE: We are satisfied with your current business model and will keep it as is. Your employees will keep receiving their salaries, just as I, the Executor of the Grummond Estate, will keep getting mine. However, all the excess earnings shall be deposited into the Estate itself.

MARK: So, the Estate is, in this regard, like a corporation, a legal and financial entity in itself?

NEVILLE: Not quite like a corporation, though. There are no shareholders, and there is no board of directors. The Estate is a proprietorship, owned in whole by Quintus Grummond.

MARK (surprised): The same Quintus Grummond who is currently maintained on life support?

NEVILLE: The very same. All the permissible functions of the Estate are laid out in Mr. Grummond's will. He has determined in advance the Estate's operating budget, the salaries of its employees, its acquisition policy, its research-and-development track, its marketing policy, everything right down to the employee dress code. It is as if he himself were here to oversee its daily functions.

MARK: And, how long is this arrangement to last?

NEVILLE: Indefinitely. A good way, though not the best way, to make a man live forever is to have his accomplishments perpetuate themselves as if his mind were still somehow at work within them.

MARK: Then, what is the best way?

NEVILLE: That, Mr. Mark, is your question to figure out. You have years and decades to do it, and you might come to a consistent understanding before your time runs out. I have no doubt, however, that Mr. Grummond knew the answer, and that the Estate, this acquisition, and even our very conversation here, are all part of his design, clues he left here for the perceptive to assemble into a consistent story. But the answer itself is more than what you see before you.

MARK: But does he have any heirs?

NEVILLE: Two. One is a son who cannot be more different from him. While his father had devoted his life to living forever, this one is guided only by living for today. The other is a great-niece from his older brother's line, a young lady of considerable wealth in her own right, who, if I may recall correctly, did not know Mr. Grummond except through a few reunions scattered across the years. Yet, unbeknownst to them, neither of them is in line for any sort of inheritance while the Estate contract still stands.

MARK: And what says the government? For years, many of my most original, efficient, and innovative business contracts have... come to the attention of certain officials. I even had to fight several battles in court just to prevent *them* from running my business for me with their restrictions, mandates, and policy guidelines.

NEVILLE: The government says nothing, for Mr. Grummond still lives. While this is so, his will is tantamount to a memo or a letter of instruction a businessman would write to his subordinates. Twist and turn out of this as the officials might, matters of that category do not fall under their jurisdiction. Hmm... I see that you are most interested in this situation, and that you now possess the leisure time to understand it in necessary depth.

MARK: Indeed. This case has somewhat of a curious flavor to it, one I had not encountered in my everyday business dealings. It is as if there is more to it than the typical questions of business: what to produce, how to market, how to transport, how to manage, how to profit. It is mostly in those questions that I have dwelled for as long as I have worked, but there are others to explore, questions that lie at the core of the fundamental mysteries of life, without answering which there is left within the mind a certain void that no amount of business as usual can fill.

NEVILLE: Very well, then, you would do well to accompany me for a cup of tea, and I shall disclose to you the more sensitive information regarding the situation, as well as give you some indication as to where to go should you desire to learn more. My staff shall arrange for all the promised money to be transferred to your account. (They stand and begin to walk toward the side of the stage.) By the way, a pleasure to make your acquaintance. Your practical expertise applied

over many years has made you a wealthy man and an interesting one to do business with. If you show success in the world of the abstract, you might make a good friend as well. (They leave.)

Act I, Scene III

(Enter TRENT ROBERTS into the Grummond Mansion, where OSWALD and WESLEY are awaiting him.)

WESLEY (to OSWALD): Here is Trent Roberts, at your disposal.

ROBERTS: Good to see you again, Wes. Good to see anyone again who brings me another case. May I remind you that this one trumps them all? (Points at his closed suitcase with a shyster grin.)

OSWALD: Mr. Roberts...

ROBERTS: That's *Trent*. I get enough of "Mr. Roberts" in court. We're all buddies here. Especially since I will be getting to know some of your darker secret desires. Isn't that right, Wes?

WESLEY: Has to be.

ROBERTS: So, *Oswald* – is it? – tell me what you *really* want out of this lawsuit. We will have time to make your desire presentable, soften in up a little, add a little drama here, a touch of sentiment there, spiced with a few old catch phrases and new lingo, or maybe hide it altogether and invent something entirely new and more (grins) politically correct... but now I just want the bare truth, to know what I'm to be working with.

WESLEY: Tell him. He does this to everyone, and it works all the time. This man's a genius.

ROBERTS: Now, now, Wes, I appreciate that, but we all know that genius is relative. What is genius for you might not be genius for me, or for those other guys we'll be facing in court. For them, I might not be a genius, but just some sophist shyster lawyer! (They laugh hysterically.) So now, Oswald, the truth. Your truth.

OSWALD: My father is on life support after his heart gave out, and is currently brain-dead. I would like... for his... suffering... to end...

ROBERTS: That's what you'll be telling the courts. What do you *really* want?

OSWALD: I would like the... absurdity... of his every vital function... being artificially maintained... to be remedied.

ROBERTS: A little better, but I need to know what you *truly, genuinely* want, deep down.

OSWALD: Oh, fine. I won't pretend. I want my father to be officially dead so that I can inherit his money and spend it.

ROBERTS: A lot better, but the case still seems too easy. There remains something you're not telling me.

OSWALD: His will says that all of his fortune, if need be, has to be spent on maintaining his functionality, and that, in the meantime, his company will be run as if he had been conscious – ahem – *alive*.

ROBERTS: Wait, did you just imply that he is currently *not* alive? I thought you said you *wanted* him not to be alive, so that you could take his money. If he's *already* not alive, then what's the problem?

OSWALD: I don't get where you're headed with this.

ROBERTS: I want to know the truth – your opinion of the truth, that is. Do you think your father, in his present condition, is alive or not?

OSWALD: Well... to make any case for denying him life support, we would have to argue that he is not alive, right?

ROBERTS: Forget about what we would have to argue! That has *no relationship whatsoever* to what we actually think! The point is, if he weren't alive, we would have no need for changing his state to one of death; he would already be in one. You and I *know* that the man is alive right now; we can make up any claims to the contrary, of course, and even make them seem very formidable and compelling, but the fact that he is alive is something we cannot deny deep down. You and I *know* that if we win this case, we will be forcing the death of an innocent human being, killing him essentially.

(OSWALD's mouth progressively opens wider and wider in horror, and his eyes are glaring at ROBERTS in disbelief.)

ROBERTS: What I am here to help you with is making it seem to the judge that this is a *good* thing, and giving you some *ammunition* so that you can live with yourself afterward. After I'm through with this thing, everyone's feelings will be in just the tip-top shape you desire, and it is those feelings that truly matter, after all. People do not judge based on what actually exists, nor even on what they think or know to be true. All people are, at the core, impulsive, impressionable, superficial, short of attention span, and eager for sensation, scandal, and melodrama. They make decisions on the basis of their emotions, and it is to their emotions that we must appeal. But fear not. This suitcase (points to it) has everything we shall need. Let's get to work, as we have quite a tale to spin!

WESLEY (to OSWALD): Trust me, if this man argued in court that we all had tails and could spin them, he'd be believed!

Act I, Scene IV

(Enter RAYMOND NEVILLE and EDWARD MARK after a hovermobile flight to one of the clandestine laboratories owned by the Estate of Grummond. There is an abundance of trees in the vicinity, enough to obscure direct view of the stage except where NEVILLE and MARK are located. The entrance to the glassy structure is situated immediately behind them.)

MARK: Where are we?

NEVILLE: Grummond Laboratories. This is one of the complexes where some of the groundbreaking genetic research which Mr. Grummond sponsored took place. It is said that the key to curing cancer was found in this very building.

MARK (aside): Hmmm... could it be that a cure to some other affliction is being developed there as we speak? (To NEVILLE) This does not look like the optimal place to attract publicity.

NEVILLE: You will see why. What goes on beyond these doors is more than the public knows, and more than we can safely afford to let it know. Even the value of curing cancer took some time to effectively communicate to some of the Neo-Luddites in the mainstream. Then it took some years of argumentation to demonstrate that genetic engineering and artificial DNA enhancement were not the identity-destroying abominations that popular fears portrayed them to be. The undertakings Mr. Grummond has commissioned to occur here presently, are even more... experimental... than that.

(They begin to approach the entrance.)

MARK: But what regard do you have for the... ethics of the matter, as they call it?

NEVILLE: There is a sense of ethics to everything we do here, though it is a different ethics than the mainstream mindset will permit. After all, would such a tremendously successful entrepreneur ever attain his prominence if he believed only what the masses believed? Would any man function solely on the ideas the majority happens to hold at any given time? You, Mr. Mark, surely had to think in a *fundamentally* different way from the rest of the population in order to achieve your own prosperity.

MARK: I did not particularly *think* about popular opinion when creating my business. The majority of men, after all, know very little about small electronic parts and how to manufacture them effectively. Yet they saw my product and bought it because they relied on what I knew and expected it to work.

NEVILLE: Precisely. And how much do the majority of men know about the techniques involved in biotechnology? Yet, why is it that they seldom possess any quarrel with your occupation, but are ready to pounce on ours and condemn it as "unnatural" and "abominable"? What is it about that which they do not know that frightens them so? Or what are the interests of

the few demagogues who convince them that it is so frightening? Good questions, all. I hope you find the answer to them in due time. Ah, it seems we are about to have company...

(Enter Dr. EVERETT WALTONFORD and an EMPLOYEE from the doorway. WALTONFORD is dressed in his white lab coat and still has goggles on. The EMPLOYEE is evidently in a rush and wants urgently to speak.)

NEVILLE: May I introduce Dr. Everett Waltonford, head of Grummond Laboratories, a young but prodigious man who has risen by his personal accomplishments alone, for it is solely on merit that employment by the Estate depends. Dr. Waltonford, may I introduce Mr. Edward Mark...

EMPLOYEE: My apologies, sirs, but my news is urgent, and requires Mr. Neville's presence to consider. Minutes ago I have received on my visual transmitter the notification of a lawsuit freshly filed against the Estate of Grummond.

NEVILLE (surprised): Indeed? And the plaintiff?

EMPLOYEE: The plaintiff is listed as "The Family, Kin, and Legal Heirs of Quintus Grummond," represented by Trent Roberts, Esquire.

NEVILLE: The grievance?

EMPLOYEE: Mr. Grummond's maintenance on life support. The plaintiffs wish to overturn Mr. Grummond's will, dismantle the Estate, obtain a court order to disconnect Mr. Grummond, and allocate his property to themselves.

NEVILLE: Their principal argument?

EMPLOYEE: Implied consent.

MARK: Excuse me?

EMPLOYEE: Implied consent, the notion that an individual's next of kin have the authority to make all essential decisions for him in the event of his physical and mental incapacity to decide autonomously. This idea, if taken far enough, could even extend to overturn an individual's explicit wishes as manifested during his lifetime.

WALTONFORD: So they are putting *bioethics* into this...

NEVILLE: This is a Trent Roberts trick. We can expect nothing less formidable from that man. Gentlemen, the news is grave indeed, and perhaps signifies the greatest challenge the Estate has yet faced. (To EMPLOYEE) Regrettably, we must depart promptly for the conference hall and organize a coherent defense before all the media outlets begin to pour vitriol upon us. Mr. Mark, I leave you here with Dr. Waltonford, who shall show you the premises and give you some of the answers you desire.

Act I, Scene V

(Enter VICTORIA GRUMMOND into the Grummond mansion, where OSWALD and TRENT ROBERTS are awaiting her.)

OSWALD: Victoria, good to see you.

ROBERTS: Miss Grummond, welcome. Ah, what a marvelous gown you are wearing! The style is late Victorian, if I am not mistaken... such a clever correspondence with your first name! Is this deliberate?

VICTORIA (pleasantly stunned): Indeed it is, but, alas, so few people notice! I applaud your perceptiveness, Mister-

ROBERTS: Trent, just Trent, Miss Grummond. Perceptiveness is part of the job, and I am glad to be of service where it is appreciated. (Smiles with a fabricated charm.)

VICTORIA: It seems we have legal matters on our hands, then. May I inquire why I have been summoned here?

OSWALD: It's about-

ROBERTS (whispering in OSWALD's ear): Let me handle this one, Oswald. There's no one better than a lawyer to communicate with a lady, especially since, if you're not careful around ladies, they'll end up the clients of a lawyer, and sue you for harassment. (To VICTORIA) The reason concerns the fate of your esteemed great-uncle, a man for whom we all, I think, harbor tremendous respect.

VICTORIA: Yes, I have heard about his unfortunate accident. It is a pity that I did not get to know him more extensively while I could. When I visited him five years ago, I was convinced that I would have time... He seemed so incredibly healthy and prosperous... and busy. We each had our own lives and interests – his, in the world of business and technology, mine, in the arts, the true high arts that last an eternity, far less fleeting than our lives, which can end so unexpectedly...

ROBERTS: Alas, Miss Grummond, your uncle's health has been on a steady decline since you last met him. His loving son Oswald was so grievously overwhelmed in seeing such a great man decline in his capacities. (Shakes his head and sighs in pretend sympathy, while making subtle hand signals for OSWALD to nod in agreement.) Mr. Grummond's struggle against the ravages of senescence was a noble one, and he tried to keep his body in shape for as long as he could. Even that fateful last jog of his was a desperate final effort to regain what was once his, but, alas, his body failed him on that day, and we have all suffered much in seeing his incomparable mind being trapped in that ever-withering shell.

VICTORIA: This was the end he sought to avoid all his life. It must have been doubly devastating to him.

ROBERTS: Yes, I see that you understand this, too, for I notice that you have genuine sympathy and compassion for your uncle and would want the best for him. By the way, you are more expert in the realm of art than I. Tell me, in your judgment, what is the purpose of art and its study?

VICTORIA: To inspire man and show him the images, sounds, and ideas of the uplifting, heroic possibilities accessible to him in this world.

ROBERTS: And yet that presumes that he would *have* the capacity to access the uplifting and the heroic. What if some devastating physical barrier were imposed on him, so that such a possibility is no longer his? Would his life ever again have the same sort of fullness and value to it?

VICTORIA (pauses to deliberate): Hmmm... On first glance, it would seem not.

ROBERTS: That is what I came to think, too, after learning about your uncle's situation and all the pain Oswald here is going through just having to mentally torture himself about it (once again makes subtle gestures to OSWALD indicating that he nod). Both of us have agreed, after much careful and emotionally intense consideration, that it would be in the best interests of your uncle and his personal dignity to *let him go* and not let him languish anymore in the state of a chunk of immobile, artificially breathing flesh, so far removed from his eminent former self. That is what we think and why you may be hearing much about a lawsuit being filed on our behalf. We invited you here to learn what *your* opinion on this matter might be, and what advice you might have for us as to how to proceed. As a relative of Mr. Grummond with such a sincere amount of devotion to his genuine interests, your input on this question is essential, and we would have been quite disappointed had we been unable to consult you. Think about what your uncle would have most wanted in this situation...

VICTORIA: It seems to me that his will clearly states his intention to be maintained on life support...

ROBERTS: But would he *still* have wanted it once he found out precisely what life support meant and what personal degradation it implied? Would he still have agreed to this arrangement after experiencing what it is like to have no use of one's conscious mind, to not be able to choose, to think, to create? We all sometimes err on the side of underestimating a certain condition that we truly could never belong in. The question is, though, can we be wise enough to recognize this error once we spot it?

VICTORIA: *We*? Who is "we"?

ROBERTS: We who most care about Mr. Grummond and try to genuinely determine what he would have wanted in such tragically unusual circumstances as these. I see that decisions on such serious matters cannot be made instantly, for fear that they might be rash and impulsive. If you

need to think about this some more, please take your time. We would appreciate your sincere position more than anything else, and do not wish to pressure you to give assent to anything you are not ready to agree with.

VICTORIA (with a strained face, displaying evident signs of internal conflict): Yes... I suppose I would need... additional time to deliberate this, Trent.

ROBERTS: My client welcomes you to his home in the meantime. Please feel free to stay here for as long as you wish and make yourself comfortable. You have already suffered a great loss, and we hope that, while coping with it, all of your remaining experiences shall be as free of anguish as possible. Just head into the adjacent room, if you will, Miss Grummond. A servant will escort you to your chambers, where we have prepared a complimentary dinner that we hope you will find in accord with your exquisite tastes.

VICTORIA: Your hospitality is much appreciated, Trent. Oswald. (She nods at them and leaves.)

OSWALD: That was quite a rhetorical feat you just did...

ROBERTS: Yes, and there will be many more, for which you will be paying, by the way. Now that we're on that subject, how exactly *will* you be paying me?

OSWALD: Once we win the case, I'll have most of the Estate of Grummond at my disposal. Sure, we can give away some small piece to Victoria just to keep her happy, but the rest... I am willing to negotiate with you on.

ROBERTS: I want half of whatever you inherit.

OSWALD: Deal.

ROBERTS: And if we lose?

OSWALD: I thought you never lost.

ROBERTS: I better not lose this suit, then, for, if I do, you will be losing far more than this suit. You'll never wear a suit again.

OSWALD: Trust me, Trent, I would never enter this business with no assets to my name if I didn't think our victory a sure thing.

ROBERTS: You are actually telling me to trust myself, since I will be doing the arguing for you. And as for that advice, I don't know... It seems a bit too absolutist to me. Trusting oneself implies that one is certain of one's abilities. And one can never be certain, of *anything*...

Act I, Scene VI

(Enter EVERETT WALTONFORD and EDWARD MARK into one of the main hallways of the laboratory complex. The walls could contain pictures and blueprints of inventions, rather than the inventions themselves, and it is presumed that all the actual development proceeds behind closed doors.)

WALTONFORD: Progress, Mr. Mark, cannot be held as a contingency. It cannot be forced to rely on somebody else's approval, to jump over barriers and duck under obstacles. Progress is like a concentrated laser beam; either it is thwarted altogether by the impediment, or it burns a hole through it and continues on as it was meant to continue.

MARK: Yet what is progress, precisely, as you define it? There is much confusion in our society about using such general terms as this one.

WALTONFORD: Progress is the sum of the actions undertaken by individuals to rearrange the elements of their environment in an unprecedented and purposeful manner. It would be folly to presume that natural evolution, in all its randomness and sluggish slowness, could ever engineer the most optimal use of resources, the most functional organisms, the most efficient structures. No, there is much waste in nature, but also much untapped potential. Both of these qualities extend not only to the natural world we see outside, but to our own minds and organisms as well. We men, as we evolved, are not perfect. Yet progress has shown us that we are *perfectible*. Our genes, as we inherited them, may destine us for torture and oblivion through perilous diseases, but we men can destine ourselves for health, happiness, and vitality by altering our genes. Tell me, how long do you think most men are designed to live?

MARK: Hmm... Judging by just my general observations, about a hundred and ten years.

WALTONFORD: I must admit that was a bit of a trick question. If we asked this of a man in 1700, he would have put his guess at about forty. If we asked someone in 1900, the ceiling might be at sixty, seventy at most. Even a hundred years ago, the estimates of most would not exceed ninety. Perhaps this shows us that there *is* no inherent ceiling, that the length of our lives is just as great as our ability to sustain them through our own devices. Perhaps we die not because of the designs of some higher force, but because of the lack of our own designs.

MARK: Does that mean... that your next adversary is not just some particular disease or genetic defect, but... death itself?

WALTONFORD: Ambitious, is it not? Of course, most people would consider it lunacy, and offensive lunacy at that, to view senescence as yet another disease. It is "natural, dignified, respectable, inevitable," they would say, ignorant of the fact that all it involves is the accumulation of maleficent defects in the organism over time. Junk inside and outside cells begins to pile up, DNA strands start to wither away at the ends, deleterious mutations accumulate, and cells begin to self-destruct far more than is healthy. There is nothing in the outside environment to cause it, nothing that says it *has* to happen. Merely, the organism

increasingly malfunctions and inflicts suffering upon the individual. Why does that need to be inevitable?

MARK: Hmm... would the elder Mr. Grummond have agreed with this view?

WALTONFORD: He not only agreed with it; he sponsored it and taught me about it.

MARK: And how long has he been putting it to practice?

WALTONFORD: Longer than anyone suspects. I first entered this firm eight years ago, at the age of seventeen, and the project was already well underway by then.

MARK: How have you been able to conceal its existence for such a long time?

WALTONFORD: Give the media access to the majority of your institutions and broadcast loudly your intention to combat the next disease whose elimination the public is ready to accept, and you give the impression that your company is as open as can be. The public will have had so much coverage of your works and such a trust for your firm's transparency, that it will not hunger for knowledge of more clandestine things. Moreover, dual-use facilities are quite helpful. Remember, this is also a center for botanical studies. The same people who seem to have no quarrel with investigating plants for some reason has an aversion to analyzing something far closer and more relevant to themselves.

MARK: But what precisely does your project consist of?

WALTONFORD: That I can tell you only if we make a gentlemen's agreement to respect the privacy of this company as you would an individual's. Agree to this, and I will reward you with what you want to know.

MARK: I have no interest in disclosing what I learn here. What I ask is at my own leisure and for my own curiosity. I am accountable to no other party, nor shall I ever be, for I need no more outside favors to sustain myself. My life from this point on is entirely self-contained and self-sufficient, and I shall be the terminal point of all my knowledge and actions.

WALTONFORD: If all men shared your mindset, Mr. Mark, we would have no dishonest backstabbing in the world, for most people violate their integrity not to elevate themselves in some manner, but to discharge what they see as an obligation to someone or something else – a desire to please, if you will. Very well; I shall ask you a question: Why would a biotechnology firm suddenly wish to buy out an electronic-parts business such as yours?

MARK: Are you suggesting that my recent transaction with the Estate of Grummond was brought about by the requirements of this... project?

WALTONFORD: Think about this, Mr. Mark: How does the brain communicate its signals to the remainder of the body through the nervous system, as well as among its own cells?

MARK: *Electrical impulses*, if I recall correctly.

WALTONFORD: And who better to know how these impulses can be created and to have the machinery to bring them about on the microscopic level desired than the people who have worked on making the intricate electronic equipment that facilitates them? The brain is much like a computer in many respects, since its entire function – including its memory and very consciousness – is made possible by distinct and knowable physical pathways. It is an immensely advanced computer, one that can control all of its functions in a self-contained manner, without an outside trigger. However, as with a computer, the brain's parts wear out from lengthy use. As with a computer, its functions can be restored to an optimal level, if we know how to repair or replace its worn-out parts. There is nothing that says that we cannot have a mechanical electronic device replicate precisely the functions of an organic one, or even upload the data of memory from it. There is also nothing that inherently prevents us from combining the functions of the mechanical and the organic, our knowledge of electronics and bioengineering, so that they may work harmoniously within the same brain and produce the human consciousness we are all familiar with.

MARK: So this intervention would not alter the essential *nature* of the human mind?

WALTONFORD: No more than replacing the wheels or engine of a car would alter its essence. What it *would*, however, accomplish is render the state of "brain death" *reversible*. The way of progress has been, throughout the ages, to overcome the seeming incapacity of ever more components of the human organism to be replaced and regenerated. It was once thought that cells of the liver, kidneys, and heart were fixed in quantity and impossible to replenish once they atrophied. Cell cloning disproved that notion. Now, it seems, the same idea is all too widespread regarding the cells and mechanisms of the brain. But why have such pessimism if these parts are as material, knowable, and real as anything else? Let us say that some inborn component of the brain suffers a severe defect. With this project's success, we would be able to *correct* a problem of any magnitude by artificially restoring the brain and rebuilding the connections that constituted its memory and cognitive functions.

MARK (awed): And you would be able to make Quintus Grummond live again...

WALTONFORD: You are a smart man, Mr. Mark. I would expect no less of someone who created much of the infrastructure needed to make this accomplishment possible. This is why the lawsuit against us comes at the most inopportune moment. With it, the plaintiffs seek not only to shut down a beating heart, but also to disable what *will*, with time, become a reasoning mind and an animate body, younger and healthier than they.

MARK: How much time do you have to complete your research and implement it on Mr. Grummond?

WALTONFORD: The project should be fully actualized in six months, no more. The question is, do we have six months? Trent Roberts is known for injecting much empty sentiment into his arguments in court, and the amount of sentiment presented is directly proportional to the

likelihood of a quick victory for his plaintiff. Roberts has swayed many a jury with his sob stories...

MARK: Yet in this case – which does not involve a crime, negligence, or fault of any sort – he would not be going before a jury, but before a district judge.

WALTONFORD: Judges are not all paragons of rationality, either. Most of them are themselves former lawyers, quite used to argument for the sake of argument, and having no argument of their own against such a tactic. All we can do is hope that our own presentation will be impenetrable and the judge sufficiently amenable to reason as to find it impossible to rule against us. But this hope is not a scientific one... It is not, as of yet, empirically warranted.

MARK: I wish you well, if honest argument and productive research are the tactics you will employ. I am very much intrigued as to the motives that would cause someone to file suit against you, though.

WALTONFORD: There are people whose purposes and tactics perplex us, indeed, but everything has an explanation. You will find that those people's basic premises differ from ours, and, analyzing the nature of their deepest values and ideas, you will be able to understand why they act the way they do.

MARK: Would you advise me to probe into these ideas, to meet with the other side, and learn what they think and why?

WALTONFORD: You are free to do so, by all means, so long as you remember our gentlemen's agreement. I warn you, though, to take caution and approach them with a dose of critical thinking. What they say might not be what they think, and what appears on the surface might not be what is truly significant. Some people have fundamental ideas that they have good reason to hide, and, to understand them, you must undo the disguise.

MARK: I thank you for your time. I shall be on my way.

WALTONFORD: May clever sophistries not carry you astray. (They exit in opposite directions.)

(Curtain.)

Act II, Scene I

(Enter EDWARD MARK into the ballroom of the Grummond Mansion, where a reception is being held, with an abundance of guests in attendance, most of whom are either standing or moving about in a frenzy. On a marble bench to the side sits VICTORIA GRUMMOND, bent slightly forward, with her elbow on her knee and the hand of the same arm entwined around her chin. It would be fitting here to have two spotlights, one on MARK, the other on VICTORIA, to distinguish them from the remainder of those on stage.)

MARK (approaching one of the guests): Excuse me, might you inform me of the location of Miss Victoria Grummond?

GUEST: She is hard to miss; she is the lady in the *unique* gown, sitting on that bench in the form of a statue rather than a person.

MARK (senses something improper about the last statement, but is not yet sure quite what constitutes the impropriety. He might demonstrate his unease by pausing a bit prior to his response and then completing it at a pace more rapid than normal): Well, thank you for your help. (He departs from the GUEST's company promptly and makes his way through the throng of others present, until he reaches VICTORIA's side. While he is walking to her, the sounds of a piano become audible, and a melody begins to emerge.)

MARK: Excuse me, Miss Grummond –

VICTORIA: Wait... The melody is just beginning to develop... (quickly, being eager to return to focusing entirely on the music) Sit beside me and listen.

(MARK sits and eventually his hand also moves to his chin, and his eyes focus upward in inspiration. The piece they hear is an ambitious and dignified one, one whose contemplation will lead the mind to the most radiant and heroic thoughts.)

VICTORIA (after composition ends): Works such as this leave one with the answer to that eternal inquiry into the meaning of life.

MARK: But *whose* life?

VICTORIA. Yours, if you choose to live it.

MARK (with calm but inspired resolution): I choose it.

VICTORIA: Then come with me. Let us no more dissolve our individualities in the tumult of this gathering, for, in it, each of us in but a fraction, his purpose divided among a multiplicity of interactions at once. They may all be worthy people – you having approached me from their midst, after all – but what of their worth can we fathom from throwing around a casual exchange here, a cliché there, interspersed with a few prefabricated conventional utterances besides? When

you wish to speak to a person in earnest, no less than absolute attention on both sides will suffice. (As they walk to the front of the stage, a screen might be used to conceal the other guests from view, indicating that MARK and VICTORIA are now alone.)

MARK: Does this undivided focus apply not only to the people one deals with, but also to the *things* one delves into?

VICTORIA: To *all* things. If you cannot give an undertaking the entire devotion of your mind during the time you pursue it, do not even try it, for you shall not accomplish your aim. The first and most basic choice your mind faces is to focus or not, and if you default on that one, you cannot expect to successfully make any other choice, more complex than yet based on the first. May I, for a moment, focus on your name and learn it?

MARK: I am Edward Mark.

VICTORIA (her eyes assume a genuine glow of delight): Hmmm... that name has grand endeavors fused into its every letter, endeavors which have everywhere followed its bearer, and yet have preceded him in reaching my attentions.

MARK: Endeavors tidily concluded, as well, with enough finality put into them that, were history books written about them today, their content would not differ much from what later generations would say of my work in hindsight.

VICTORIA: Your work can never be finished while you still live. You do not have in you the capacity to just *let go*. I did not know my great-uncle very well, and I have only met you now, but this is not a quality that I can miss when observing men of this sort. It is present in your every movement and choice, even in your decision to approach me here. You surely did not come to flirt; men such as you do not flirt. You have a grave and earnest matter to address, and I dare suggest it is the matter everybody seems interested in these days.

MARK: It is. Whatever my endeavor may be at this time, it is my curiosity on this subject that drives it.

VICTORIA: Your endeavor is larger than you suspect, and involves discoveries far greater in scope than the obvious matters before you. You wish to ask me, "What do you know of Quintus Grummond?", when you should truly be asking me, "What do you know of man?" And who *is* man, anyway? Where does his existence begin, and where does it end? How is it that one entity can be considered a man, yet not another? What distinguishes them? What is life, and what is a life worth living? What things can be alive and yet not men, and how?

MARK: This is deep.

VICTORIA (smiles at him in an understanding manner, devoid of mockery): To a child who first learns to swim, each stroke his hand makes into the water is of a depth he can yet hardly fathom. We are still at the very surface of this matter, Mr. Mark, and I have only asked the questions. Most men would feign wisdom and seem profound, when asking questions is all they do, not

even pretending to propose any resolution to the problems they identify. Yet we are not meant to dwell in perpetual mystery and darkness, and it is only the answers to those questions that can enlighten us and dispel our doubts. Asking them is important, true, but if one does solely that, one only passes one's hand over the outermost film of water, absolutely unprepared to dive in and claim the sunken treasure beneath. *You* must answer these questions, Mr. Mark, and answer them in full for yourself. Do not expect anyone else to do that task for you. Others may deliberate, suggest, hint, and even put forth a full-length theory. But whether or not you accept what they say is your decision entirely, and one that you should never allow anyone else to make. Do not accept without understanding – that is my advice to you.

MARK: I shall hold it in the highest regard.

(Enter SERVANT, briskly)

SERVANT: My apologies, Miss Grummond (performs a quick, ceremonious nod to VICTORIA), Sir (nods at MARK), but Mr. Roberts has requested the presence of all the guests in the ballroom. He has arranged a major announcement to the press and to all those invited, regarding a matter that he says most deeply concerns us all.

VICTORIA: Thank you, good sir. We shall be there momentarily. (To MARK) Some of the answers may be closer to us than we suspect. Accompany me. I shall be most interested to have you at my side in examining this.

Act II, Scene II

(Enter MARK, VICTORIA, and the SERVANT, into the gathering of guests. There is now a platform on which TRENT ROBERTS stands while several REPORTERS are waiting in anticipation for him to begin to speak. ROBERTS makes a subtle hand gesture to VICTORIA, signaling for her to approach him. OSWALD is already on the platform slightly behind the lawyer. Once VICTORIA ascends, ROBERTS whispers to her and OSWALD.)

ROBERTS: I will handle this conference for you marvelously; you need not expend a moment's effort on it. Watch how I can turn this crowd in our favor, how I can reach deep into their souls and touch their true sympathies.

ROBERTS: (begins speech)

Ladies and gentlemen, you are likely all curious as to the reasons why my esteemed clients, the family, kin, and legal heirs of Quintus Grummond, have filed this suit against Mr. Grummond's own Estate. Their reasons may at first appear to us to be unusual, but we need to think about this, and try to put ourselves in their shoes.

First, it is necessary to ascertain that Quintus Grummond is indeed dead, for he cannot be said to exhibit the fundamental signs of life. Life is more than just some arrangement of molecules, or the movement of some bodily machinery, such as the heart or lungs. Life must be able to sustain

itself on its own. Life requires a central organ, a brain, to coordinate its workings. Mr. Grummond, as is known universally, is presently brain-dead, and thus lacks such a self-contained means of direction. Rather, he is dependent on – nay, *is* – a mere machine, a mere extension of the life-support machine that currently pumps air into his lungs and induces the tissue of his heart to contract. These bodily functions have their source not in Mr. Grummond's own mind, but rather in an external device which is not in itself alive. If Mr. Grummond's corpse is maintained by something that is not alive, it cannot be said to be alive itself.

Now, you may agree with my clients that Mr. Grummond has become a mere extension of a machine, but you may still be wondering why my clients wish to terminate such a machine. Machines are not all bad, right? Well, this one is. Think about what would happen if a machine took your rightful money against your desire, and required you to sustain it besides? What if a machine prevented you from living the life you wanted to live and burdened you with obligations that have no greater purpose in being fulfilled?

Look back to your own parents. They were probably good people, and raised you well. But at some point in time, you wanted independence from them. You wanted your own life and the ability to make your own decisions. You wanted to be free of their control. But how would you feel if you could not dissociate yourself from them, if your parents' control over your adult lives and fortunes extended even beyond their death? Well, here we see a parent of one of my clients controlling my client's fortune after his death. And this parent is not even the good human being he used to be anymore. He is dead as a human being, and has become a machine. Would you want a machine controlling your ability to be independent? Would you want machines to run your life? No. We, people – real, living, breathing, feeling people – ought never to bow down to a machine. We ought to be able to control the machines as we see fit. And if we see that a machine is impeding our lives, we should be able to destroy it. This is what this case is about.

There is a tried-and-true principle in bioethics, which recognizes that a man on life support is nothing more than a machine deprived of self-direction, a principle which states that, in such a case, that man's closest relatives – the people who had shared the most joy, suffering, and understanding with that man during the course of his lifetime – should have the power to act in their best understanding of the *human* needs in the family, as well as the memory of the now-defunct man – who had once been human and shared with them a certain sense of dignity and humanity, a sense that was taken away from him on life support. This power is called *implied consent*, to be used for the preservation of the dignity of the afflicted – since becoming a machine holds no dignity – and for the lightening of an already heavy and tragic burden on the family of him who has suffered.

Unfortunately, the exercise of implied consent by my clients for the termination of Quintus Grummond's life support is blocked by the provisions of Mr. Grummond's own will. In it, Mr. Grummond has created yet another machine which has devoured all of his wealth and property for itself. This machine, unlike Mr. Grummond's corpse on life support, is not a passive one, but rather a monster – a corporation without a soul – all the cold, callous, dry workings of a business without the heart of a human being to guide them. Rather than being rightfully passed on to my clients, the Estate of Grummond has obtained an existence of its own, with all the rights of a legal person, but none of the compassion, none of the spontaneity, none of the organic life that

defines us men. And *this* is what is robbing my clients – breathing, feeling human beings – from getting even the slightest alleviation of the immense suffering they are experiencing due to the loss of a man very dear to them. Even if designed by a man, the Estate of Grummond has fallen out of his control, for he is now dead. Even if Mr. Grummond had the best intentions, he is no longer with us to fulfill them. Instead, the Estate, a monstrous economic machine, is with us, and ought to be dissolved before its uncaring essence tramples on us all without regard for the finer aspects of life which make it worth living. This is a simple demand from my clients, and an urgent one. I am now open to your questions.

(Widespread applause. The REPORTERS are eager for an opportunity to put forth their inquiries.)

REPORTER 1: What are the legal barriers to nullifying a document such as a will?

ROBERTS: Nothing that a good deal of sense cannot overcome. A will, like every legal document, has its limitations. My clients can see perfectly how a man can designate his fortune to go to a real live *person*, but, when the beneficiary is not a person, nor even an established organization, but rather some soulless conglomerate created and regulated by the will itself, we enter legally ambiguous territory. My clients believe that this will is neither proper nor typical nor expected – that it violates the spirit and purpose of wills by robbing a man's next of kin of their rights of implied consent and inheritance. Thus, to preserve the true meaning of a will, we are willing to challenge this one.

REPORTER 2: Are you afraid to go up against a major financial entity?

ROBERTS: My clients will be frank with you and with the good people here. Yes, my clients are afraid, for they are human beings. They can feel things like fear. They can feel them here and now in their beautiful and terrible nature. This is what makes them human. What they are facing cannot feel any fear, for it is not human, and, not having such fear, it does not have the human weaknesses that my clients have. But human weaknesses are also human strengths, able to overcome the simplistic, predictable rationalism of dead machines like the Estate of Grummond. This is why we will win this one, I hope – hope being another human feeling, by the way.

REPORTER 3: Mr. Roberts, do you feel that the outcome of this case will ride on the momentum of your stunning victory in *Spike the Poodle v. The Health Insurance Companies of America*?

ROBERTS: My clients – (clears his throat as he recognizes his slip of the tongue) my apologies... *I* do see a compelling parallel between that most vital case and this one. When I faithfully defended my client Spike the Poodle and brought about a court ruling mandating low-cost, affordable health-insurance provision for all the pets of America, I, too, was facing a soulless conglomerate guided by corporate greed and an obsession with the bottom line above all human–ahem–*organic living creatures'* needs. This is what I think the Estate of Grummond also is, as it is designed to ravenously pursue its own bottom line above the human needs of my clients.

REPORTER 4: On the subject of feelings, how do you feel about poodles, Mr. Roberts?

ROBERTS: Poodles are fine creatures, of course! This is why the *Spike* case was so important. Alongside the health-insurance ruling, the court also declared that these fine animals can have a government-funded Union of Attorneys to plead their specific cases in court. What a splendid development...

(The voices fade into the background until they are no longer audible, while the scene darkens, until only a small spotlight remains, focusing on MARK.)

Act II, Scene III

MARK (to himself): This presentation leaves me with many questions. Perhaps Miss Grummond or Mr. Roberts will be available to respond to my inquiries.

(At this time, MARK glances in the direction of ROBERTS and VICTORIA, and the audience hears snippets of conversation.)

VICTORIA: How can you presume that I truly think the ideas you said I thought?

ROBERTS: Now, Miss Grummond, there are matters we put forth for the sake of image, publicity, reputation, popular appeal, what have you, that do not necessarily coincide with our most earnest thoughts and motivations. But who said that the public has a *right* to know the innermost recesses of our souls? Keeping our true selves to ourselves is the foremost way in which we can use our right to privacy. And I know that privacy is a notion you are quite fond of... Now, if you will, Miss Grummond, accompany me, for I would like to further discuss the matter of the case...

(ROBERTS and VICTORIA begin to walk off stage, as their conversation becomes inaudible. MARK realizes that he will not be able to speak with either of them at this time. However, simultaneously, a spotlight appears on OSWALD, who is already at the refreshments tray, drinking his fourth consecutive glass of wine. MARK notices him and sees the chance to ask his questions. He quickly joins OSWALD.)

OSWALD (semi-alert): Ah, a fellow wine-lover, I see! Join me for a glass, will you?

MARK (to himself and audience): Perhaps drinking just one glass will convince him that I am a safe companion, and he will answer my inquiries. (To OSWALD) Certainly. (Takes glass of wine.)

OSWALD: Good choice. Nothing like wine to indulge the senses. This is what life's about, after all. We're only on the Earth for a limited time, as we have become aware of all too closely due to this... incident, so why not make the best of it? Enjoy it while we can. Tomorrow never comes, they say, so why not just live for today?

MARK: And would you say that this... enjoyment... is the very purpose of life?

OSWALD: Heck, why not? The past is gone, and the future does not exist. The present is all that we have, all that we can base our lives on. Why not make it as colorful as possible?

MARK: And are you enjoying yours?

OSWALD: Hmm... maybe... not quite. I like the wine, though, but wine's not enough. I wish I had more... to indulge myself. Perhaps some additional funds would help... but then I'm sure I'll get a few as a result of Trent's fine work.

MARK (shocked, but doing his best to conceal his horror and continue with the questioning): So, *how* do you plan to indulge yourself once you obtain this money?

OSWALD: Ah, that. Well, I've always been a fan of races, especially when they involve fast cars with powerful engines. But there's also some pleasure I get in seeing those cars fail, be destroyed, explode, have all their capacity burned out of them in one brilliant flame, leaving them as worthless chunks of metal. Or I like to see them crushed, smashed, battered, so that all of those fine gadgets within them get reduced to bits, with none of their fancy design able to do anything to resist its own futility. It's all futile, in the end: life is, things are, and even the very pleasures we pursue are. The only thing we can do to savor these pleasures is to suck as much life out of them as we can, and relish the outcome. So I'd like to organize the biggest demolition derby in the history of the world, buy out all the most prestigious and finest-designed cars in the world, have them run loops for a while, then send in a few monster trucks and explosive devices, and... let the fun begin!

MARK: (slightly trembling from horror): And... what else do you plan to do?

OSWALD: Hire some... master musicians: rappers, dancing girls, pop artists. Have them put on a display of enjoying life while singing about how evil life is and how much they hate it. Have them contort their bodies in a way bodies are not meant to be contorted, but in a way that is fun and makes everyone feel good. Also, buy some... fine substances, like the one we are consuming here, perhaps of greater variety than that. Life is a big party. Enjoy it, get lost in it, succumb to it, and above all, waste it all!

MARK: (to himself and audience) What dreadful designs! (To OSWALD) But why... waste anything?

OSWALD: Because, with *my* money, I have the right to do what I please.

MARK: (to himself and audience) That does not seem to be a proper justification. Some element is missing or applied wrongly. What is it?

VICTORIA (approaches them): Mr. Mark, I have had enough of the company of Mr. Roberts. I would much more readily have yours. Come with me.

MARK: With pleasure. (They depart from the gathering hastily, and MARK does not say any official goodbyes to OSWALD. His acting should display the extent of his absolute astonishment at what he had heard from OSWALD, and his internal struggle to attempt to understand how it is even possible for a human being to harbor such motivations.)

Act II, Scene IV

(Enter MARK and VICTORIA into VICTORIA's residence. It is a house of ample size, with numerous works of classical art decorating the walls. There are two ornate chairs at the center of the stage.)

VICTORIA: Be seated, Edward, if I may call you that. Let us enjoy the true comfort of a sincere conversation among individuals, as we are at last free of that crowd of people who applaud a lot and understand not that, which they are applauding. I usually prefer to spend my time in a more *refined* manner.

MARK: How so?

VICTORIA: Unlike a certain person with whom you conversed to your own dismay, I know how to manage an inheritance well. I came upon it as the last survivor of the family line stretching from the elder brother of Quintus Grummond. Using it, I have created what no one else in the world possesses – not some passing fancy, mind you, but a permanent entity, whose contents and benefits to me are cumulative.

MARK (curious): What is it?

VICTORIA: Whence did that melody originate when we first met? How was it made audible without an instrument or a pianist, or even a stationary device that could play a recording? Do you truly think that the music started to play as a mere coincidence? No, Edward, it was a test of sorts that I performed on you, to see if you were worthy of my company, to observe if you had the ability to appreciate the greatest heights to which man, through his rational creation, can aspire. I saw your approach, and was interested as to what would motivate you to seek me out. I do not grant my acquaintance to others easily, you know.

How was I able to broadcast that melody, then? Through this. (She extracts a small black cube from her pocket.) This is my Virtual Reality Museum of High Art, the product of an investment comprising the majority of my inheritance. In it are contained the most precisely rendered digital versions of the paintings, sculptures, and musical works that represent the profoundest virtues of man. I could press a button on this cube, and project a hologram of a Vermeer, or play a Beethoven symphony in all its grandeur and intricacy. I could press another button, and unfold the entire museum before our eyes.

(She presses the button. Several additional melodies are played while MARK and VICTORIA engage in their conversation. In the meantime, an image is projected of a gallery with paintings lining the walls and sculptures arranged in a row, dividing the gallery's walkway in two.)

VICTORIA: Though the scene you now see before you is not comprised of matter, there is perhaps more substance to it than to the lives of those who would ignore contemplation of such subjects. We could spend days wandering through this expanse I created for my inspiration, but we ought to begin at the root of all things, including this gallery.

MARK: The root of art?

VICTORIA: And of every characteristic that distinguishes man from the animals and from inanimate matter. You wished to investigate the matter of the Estate of Grummond, and – recall – that, to accurately study that situation, you must first find out what it is that defines our humanity. Hint: it is *not* our capacity to feel, as Mr. Roberts would have you believe.

MARK: I suspected that much.

VICTORIA: Yes, and you had good reason to. Would your business have ever developed to the extent of securing your lifelong prosperity if you had just *felt* your way through its management? Or would it have never been a business in the first place, but rather some haphazard, cloudy, only half-identified *urge* to start something – the methodology of which you would not be aware of, since knowledge of method requires something other than feelings; the objectives of which would escape you, since feelings cannot in themselves delineate a clear purpose for you? No, to derive your purpose, you had to look at something far more fundamental – namely, *reality*.

MARK: Reality, it seems, is such a simple term, yet so many people, in their uses of it, disagree on precisely what it refers to.

VICTORIA: That is why philosophy is so important. It enables us to rid ourselves of mistaken and inconsistent uses of the most fundamental and most significant concepts we can have, and thus allows us to apply them as they can best serve us. What is reality, Edward, but that which *is*, in the broadest sense? Most of the conventional uses of "reality" presuppose that it is something far narrower. We are told, for example, that only the norms and mundane routines of the common denominator in our society constitute "the real world," whereas anything else is fantasy. They are reality, too, but so are the ambitions of the creator, the entrepreneur, the uncommon individual, who, through his skill and will, rearranges the elements of reality to form something greater than what existed before him. So long as we live, reality cannot be escaped, run away from it though one might try. The fact that things exist and have specific natures to them is inherent to our every proposition and statement, along with the fact that we possess the conscious mind to grasp what things exist and what they are. Is that not what an entrepreneur does – use his mind to grasp what is, and use his mind to see how it can best be worked with, perpetuated, altered, or counteracted to his advantage?

MARK: I cannot see any other way to do business.

VICTORIA: *I* cannot see any other way to *live*. We humans, like all that exists, too have a specific nature. Our nature requires us to use our reason, that capacity which identifies reality, for our very survival. Only by actively engaging reality with our faculties can we ever understand or accomplish anything. Our emotions can sometimes be valid indicators of reality,

but never just because they exist. Emotions, too, must have a consciously identified basis in reality for them, and must be arrived at through reason; otherwise they are sheer wanton *whims*.

MARK: Such as the whims of Oswald, who seeks his father's fortune so that he might engage in unsubstantiated destruction.

VICTORIA: Oswald is not the type of individual who would be able to survive on his own. He indulges his whims too much, rather than restructuring his mind so that these whims are neither present nor desired. But then again I try not to care about Oswald; his defiance of reality and reason has already marked him for the ultimate failure, and there is nothing that neither I nor you nor a giant inheritance can do to prevent it. Only Oswald can prevent it, and he will not. Which brings me to another point: will. Men are by nature beings of reason, which means they are beings of volition. To choose to reason, man must be able to choose. At every instant in his life, his mind can go down one of a multitude of paths, whose consequences it is the task of his mind to ultimately analyze and decide to accept or reject. Ultimately, a man's standing in life is determined solely by his will. Even if external obstacles to his advancement exist, it will depend on his will whether he shall be able to overcome them. Now, this is most important: because no one can know reality in place of the individual, and no one can choose in place of the individual, *nobody should try to impose his own way on another*. Others may suggest to the individual, persuade him, offer conditions to their association with him, trade with him, or even ridicule him, but they may never legitimately *force* him. Each individual has a universal natural right to be free of this coercion.

MARK: Hmmm... Every individual, then, is by this right legitimately free from coercion by *anyone*, including the government, the community, and even his closest relatives?

VICTORIA: Especially from them, unless that individual has committed a violation of somebody else's natural rights, in which case he should receive a punishment corresponding to the offense. But other than that, the prohibition against coercion is universal.

MARK: But what about children, who must depend on their parents to survive, and yet know not fully what reality is, how to approach it, and what goals to pursue?

VICTORIA: Even there, parents may only guide and instruct the child in what to do, and place conditions on the use of their – the parents' – property, by which the child is surrounded. However, they may not arbitrarily beat the child, or impose unlivable conditions and contradictory demands on him, and may punish him only for legitimate offenses and in such ways as will not deprive the child of the full ability to develop and use his reason. They, too, cannot be said to have the ultimate authority over the child's mind, and the entirety of their power consists of ensuring that the child may be gradually freed from their power.

MARK: But, then, what about people who can never become freed from such care-taking, people who are paralyzed in certain critical faculties?

VICTORIA: So long as they are still alive, they still possess the capacity to exercise their will in at least *some* part of their lives. As long as they can do so, they should be allowed to do so, and

no one may overrule them in these areas. In all other areas necessary for survival, but in which those individuals are physically unable to act, their guardians can only perform those actions which are unquestionably beneficial to those individuals' lives. They may feed a man whose paralysis prevents him from feeding himself, but they may not give him poison in place of food, or starve him while he is under their care. He who undertakes the role of guardian is never legitimately a master or a ruler, but rather one who consents, of his own will, to help an individual, and only to help him, where help is needed.

MARK: So, thus, you would agree that nobody has the authority to kill a dependent in his care, even if the dependent's paralysis is pervasive?

VICTORIA: Nobody has the authority to kill an innocent individual, period. The death penalty may apply to the vilest of criminals only, who have violated others' rights to life through horrid acts of murder. An individual's life is the ultimate purpose of all of that individual's values, for without living, he would not be able to value in the first place. Thus, to deprive a living individual of his ultimate value is the most heinous act of all.

MARK (excited): Then it is clear beyond all doubt! Oswald and Trent Roberts would be committing the act of murder if they were to succeed in their lawsuit! They would terminate the life of a good, innocent man!

VICTORIA: *Except*, the question remains as to whether Quintus Grummond is alive at this time.

MARK: What do you define as being alive?

VICTORIA: Mr. Roberts might have in fact gotten a part of the definition right in his speech; life requires some central mechanism, such as a brain, for coordinating its functions. Since my uncle does not have current use of his brain, the state of his life is quite ambivalent at this point. To be honest, I am not yet entirely certain whether he is alive or dead.

MARK: But do we always need to have the *present* use of our brains to be considered alive? After all, when we enter deep sleep, we also cannot use our minds, but we are nearly guaranteed to use them in the future, when we wake. Is a sleeping man not alive beyond any doubt?

VICTORIA: You are fast learning to reason like a philosopher. It seems that you are correct here: if there is a future guarantee or even a likelihood that a given person will be able to operate by at least some volitional use of his mind, we cannot have the authority to irreversibly damage or destroy that person. But, for somebody who is vegetative or brain-dead, how can we have such a guarantee?

MARK: I might know of such – (cuts himself off after realizing that he was on the verge of revealing information that Dr. Waltonford had requested him to keep secret).

VICTORIA: Yes?

MARK: Of such... cases... where individuals have been shown to recover from comas and vegetative states and regain uses of their minds.

VICTORIA: Rare cases, though.

MARK: But rare enough to claim vegetative individuals as dead beyond all doubt? How low a probability of recovery is needed to terminate somebody's last chance for living again? And is probability even a legitimate criterion on which to base such a philosophical judgment? If the conclusions of philosophy are supposed to have a universal logic to them, would not drawing the line at some probability or another be arbitrary and internally inconsistent?

VICTORIA: You ask an interesting question: if we are lacking certainty of a given outcome, as we often are, in what manner are we justified in acting? And is this manner of acting applicable to all such similar occasions where we are likewise not certain? I shall have to ponder this over. I would like to find an answer, as always, but I do not have one presently. You, too, ought to search for a consistent solution, for I can only take you so far.

MARK: Perhaps, we are in need of additional information. I do not yet know exactly how the Estate of Grummond plans to defend itself, and what arguments Mr. Neville shall use in court to advance the maintenance of Mr. Grummond and his will. Mr. Neville is an efficient worker, for what I know of him, and, by this time, he must have thought of something.

VICTORIA: But do not go to him yet. We can explore the halls of my collection for hours on end, while I explain to you how art can serve as man's guide to reason and reality, and his inspiration to act in rational ways. And, by the way, you must promise me that you will return here again, and frequently. I have much to teach you, and I do enjoy your company immensely.

MARK: I shall, with pleasure. What you offer me may well be the foundation of my new life.

VICTORIA: Or of your old life, to other things extended. Be rational in all things, and you will be a true Renaissance man, successful at every one of them. Come, Edward.

(They walk to the end of the stage, while the image of the gallery moves accordingly. The lights dim until an absolute darkness between this scene and the next, to indicate the passage of several hours of time in between.)

Act II, Scene V

(Enter MARK into a conference room where RAYMOND NEVILLE and EVERETT WALTONFORD are seated, examining stacks of papers and conversing.)

NEVILLE: Ah, greetings, Mr. Mark.

WALTONFORD: Mr. Mark.

MARK: Greetings, gentlemen. I have been to the Grummond Mansion and have become familiar with Trent Roberts's arguments, as espoused in his press conference.

WALTONFORD: What Roberts says to the press may not necessarily correspond with what he will say in court. When one treats ideas as not eternal and immutable truths, but as mere weapons – some of which will work for one audience, others for another – we can never quite be sure if the man really believes anything, much less what he believes.

NEVILLE: We know at least one belief that he holds: his utter and inexcusable contempt for ideas. This is why I see it as necessary to craft a firm set of principles of our own which we will support in argument against any kind of attack that Roberts might devise. Perhaps we may think of Roberts as a mosquito; we never know where he will land to perpetrate his malice, but, if we encase ourselves in a full suit of armor, every one of his attempts will be repelled. Our case must then be, like a suit of armor, impregnable to Roberts's wily maneuvering.

MARK: I have come to learn the arguments you have to offer. This will greatly assist my understanding of the case and my ultimate stance on it.

NEVILLE: As I see it, there is a difference here between our legal burdens of proof and our philosophical ones. Legally, we represent the defendant, and the plaintiff must actively prove the merits of his case. We are not required to prove anything; we just need to hold our own. However, Roberts will utterly devastate us if we adhere to this mentality, for his arguments, though misguided and inconsistent, will then be the only arguments on the floor. They will win by default, no matter how bad they are, if we do nothing to present a clear, consistent alternative that will conclusively disprove whatever accusations Roberts sends at us. Thus, our philosophical burdens of proof are twofold. We must demonstrate that Mr. Grummond is in fact alive, and that his will is immutable in the face of the wishes of his family.

WALTONFORD: If I have six months to fully implement the revival of Quintus Grummond, we could prove conclusively that he is alive by having him make a personal appearance in the courtroom! It is in our interests to protract this matter as long as possible, but it is similarly in Roberts's interests to hurry it along, even though he does not know of the existence of our project. He still expects an ample fraction of the settlement, and would likely wish to get his hands on it as soon as he can.

MARK: How certain are you that your revival project will work?

WALTONFORD: Without a doubt in my mind. Every single variable has now been meticulously tested, and every element of the design backed by nearly a century of data and evidence.

MARK: Would it be possible to disclose your project in the courtroom, thus demonstrating that Mr. Grummond *will*, absent the plaintiffs' intervention, regain the use of his consciousness? Then it might be possible to liken his state to an extremely long period of sleep, in which, though his present use of consciousness is lacking, his future use of it is an enormously high probability, if not a certainty.

WALTONFORD: Or the certainty will be reduced to an impossibility, if the court issues an order to shut the project down. The majority of *status-quo*-minded officials, fearful of disrupting existing patterns of life and death, will be outraged over it, and one of them will inevitably find some minor statute that we had overlooked or some obscure license that we forgot to obtain. The rest will be just a matter of sending enough raiders to the laboratories to break everything and arrest everyone. No, we must delay exposure of the project until we have irrevocable results.

NEVILLE: However, even without this disclosure, we can still refer to the argument that the *present* use of one's consciousness is not required for one to be considered alive. Consider a man who is asleep. Though his consciousness is not functioning, numerous other bodily processes *are*, enough to sustain his organism in such a state that his consciousness will be able to function once he awakens. Thus, we can say that so long as we are examining the status of an entity whose fundamental nature includes the use of volitional consciousness, it can be considered alive when even *some* of its body is performing certain active functions.

MARK: So, then, you are claiming that, because Mr. Grummond is a human being, his fundamental nature can never change; he can be asleep or awake, eating, talking, taking a walk, healthy, ill, or even incapacitated. Any of these states will not alter the deeper and more essential fact that he is the same person, defined by his *capacity* for rationality at *some* point in time, rather than by his immediate use of it.

WALTONFORD: Well, if men were defined by their immediate *use* of rationality, all too many *homo sapiens* would *never* meet the definition! Men *can* be rational; they *can* make that choice, but, alas, far too many of them refuse to entertain it. Yet men they remain, and their rights stay as sacred as ever, just in case they finally decide to make good use of them.

NEVILLE: Moreover, simply because a life-support machine is required to maintain the beating of Mr. Grummond's heart and all the other internal mechanisms that sustain him, does not mean that he is not alive. It is perfectly acceptable for a living entity to have some external source supporting it at every instant. All three of us are in fact just as dependent on external support as Mr. Grummond. We must eat regularly to introduce necessary energetic content into our bodies. We must breathe in oxygen in order to provide components for the synthesis of the compounds our bodies need to survive. Were it not for the external support provided to us by the planet on which we stand, we would float off into oblivion in outer space, unless we had the external support of a spaceship and spacesuit. Every component of our survival we must ultimately take from the external world. The moment we fail to do so, we fail altogether.

MARK: So, then, by denying Mr. Grummond the life-support machine that links him to reality, the plaintiffs would essentially be saying to a person who had once directly exercised his rationality that he is no longer deserving of life in this world. This would be an arbitrary imposition that they would have no right to carry out. They would be stating that Mr. Grummond is dead *because* he has a link to the external world that sustains him. In effect, their claim amounts to: "He is dead *because* he is alive."

WALTONFORD: Most compelling. When we bare such contradictions in a theory, we know that we have disproved it.

NEVILLE: Moreover, I think that we can clearly establish a connection between Mr. Grummond's past use of rationality and his will – both the will that made him choose to be rational, of course, but, even more importantly for this case, the will that he wrote as an instruction for the use of his property and the treatment of his person in the event of an incapacitation such as this one. First, the insightful and masterful planning that Mr. Grummond undertook in the document to create the Estate and specify the conditions of his own upkeep qualifies it for a rational decision, made with thorough consideration of the facts and arrangements of reality. This rational decision, like all other rational decisions, had its effects deferred, but so what? Let us say that I make the very rational decision of eating food when I recognize that my body requires it. Its consequences are also not immediate. After I make the decision, I must still deploy the food on the table, and reach out toward it in order to then go through the physical motions of eating it. Since every physical motion is delayed in time, so will be, by necessity, the implementation of every decision.

MARK: Ah, I see. And it should not matter that the particular condition a man is in has also changed during that lag period between decision and implementation. For example, I may decide to put money in a bank account which earns continuous interest. At a later time, when I am, say, asleep, I cannot directly claim that interest, nor can I make any financial transactions whatsoever, but that interest is still mine, because it has accumulated as a result of a past decision I had made. If we indeed have the right to be the beneficiaries of our own rational actions, which is indeed what all legitimate rights *are*, then this right applies to the consequences of all our actions, at all times, at all states of being we happen to be in.

WALTONFORD: We are beginning to use terms which suggest property rights, both a person's right to ownership of the interest earned in your hypothetical example, and Mr. Grummond's right to dispose of the property that was his. We cannot, after all, dispute that Mr. Grummond had earned his wealth through his own efforts and through voluntary cooperation with others. He should therefore have the right to determine what shall happen to it in cases of emergency.

MARK: There is even more to this, I think. For what is property but that which belongs to a person? If we employ this extremely but necessarily broad definition, we will find that property consists of everything about a person, not merely his wealth or the possessions external to his body, but also of his body itself and of his mind. For, if a man has a right to act on the conclusions of his own mind, it must mean that his mind belongs to him and him alone, and nobody may violate its use. The mind is the faculty which decides *how* a man will act, but the body is the mechanism that *does* the acting. The two cannot be severed from one another in the realm of rights. The right to independently use one's mind is nothing without the right to apply the conclusions of one's mind in the material world. Thus, if a man has a full property in his mind, he must also have a full property in his body, and in deciding what it shall do and what shall happen to it, so long as this violates nobody else's rights. Thus, Mr. Grummond's will can be said to be a manifestation of his property rights in a threefold manner: the right to determine the workings of the Estate, which is his property, the right to decide with the property which is his mind what he deems best for his future, and the right to have the conclusions of his mind be applied to his body by means of the life support under which he had decided to remain until some improvement to his condition occurs.

NEVILLE: Mr. Mark, I thought you were a novice to the field of ideas! And yet you were able to derive and formulate on your own the idea of property rights as the logical extension of the idea that man is a rational being entitled to the freedom of his mind.

You are fast becoming a master of the abstract, and I would be honored to have more of your input on this case.

MARK: Thank you, Mr. Neville. I was able to learn all the prior ideas on which this one is built through a friend, and the remaining conclusions seemed logically to follow from putting the pieces together.

WALTONFORD: Taken even further, property rights imply the absolute freedom of men in all that belongs to them: the freedom of businessmen to trade and structure their businesses as they wish, the freedom of all men to keep 100% of their incomes unless they wish to otherwise dispose of them, the freedom of scientists to innovate in whatever fields they see fit to extend their knowledge of truth and method into, the freedom of men to associate with whomever they wish and to set whatever conditions they wish on their association, the freedom of men to own as much land as they can afford to buy, and to do with it what they see fit – these are freedoms that logic necessitates but, alas, that the present government and all too large a fraction of the public do not understand. Among them is the freedom to extend the life of one's property, including one's body, for as long as one deems fit.

MARK: But then, will a government that violates everybody's property rights in a multitude of grievous ways understand the arguments of property rights on which our case is based?

NEVILLE: Hopefully, we shall be dealing not with the government in all of its convoluted bureaucracy, but with a single individual, a judge amenable to reason and able to make an autonomous judgment based on the arguments.

WALTONFORD: Yes, many factors of this trial are subject only to our hope that we will encounter a rational audience. Nevertheless, others are entirely within our control. My work necessitates that I presently take my leave, and accelerate the pace of the revival project. I shall work overtime if need be, to see if this can at all shorten my timetable. Gentlemen. (He departs.)

MARK: Best wishes to you, Doctor. Mr. Neville, I shall return here periodically in order to check on further developments. In the meantime, I shall leave you to polish your presentation. I have gotten word that you will be representing the Estate in court.

NEVILLE: Yes, I indeed have the license of an attorney, which Mr. Grummond had managed to procure for me after learning that Harvard would not give me one since I refused to write my paper on why laws are mere social conventions determined by the general will and variable from one era to the next. It seems now that I shall have a chance to prove to my former professor that failing me was an extremely poor choice on his part.

MARK: Your professor?

NEVILLE: Trent Roberts, J.D. from Harvard, head of its law department for some time.

MARK: Then it is no wonder that our legal system is in trouble, if the people who *do* manage to graduate from the most elite schools can do so only if they absorb the ideas of men such as Roberts.

NEVILLE: Indeed, Mr. Mark. Farewell. May Reason prevail.

MARK: Farewell.

(The spotlight focuses on MARK as he begins to walk out toward the end of the stage. Along his way, he stops and begins to speak to himself and the audience.)

MARK: My, what new power I have obtained! It is a power that has helped me understand the very essence of the fundamental laws governing this world and the state of man. It is a power that, when used consistently and systematically, will leave no question unanswered, and no knowledge beyond man's eventual reach. And I have Victoria to thank for it. I think I am drawn toward her entire person, for she is the very embodiment of Reason, the human ideal made flesh, and I should seek to reside with her in her world of purity and clarity for the remainder of our days. So I shall go, then, to confess the reverence that I for her possess.

(Curtain)

Act III, Scene I

(Enter DANIEL BAILEY, news correspondent, along with JUDGE BENSON, who face each other in front of the courthouse where the trial is to take place.)

BAILEY: This is Daniel Bailey, legal correspondent for Standard News, reporting. Today, three months after first filing their historic lawsuit against the Estate of Grummond, the family and heirs of incapacitated entrepreneur Quintus Grummond have, through the meticulous efforts of their attorney, the former Harvard professor Trent Roberts, been able to finally push for the trial to commence. Standard News has arranged a pre-trial interview with the judge who will be presiding over it all – Judge Benson, also a graduate of Harvard Law School. Hello, Judge.

JUDGE: It's good to be here.

BAILEY: It's often said these days that the philosophy of the judge is more important than people think in determining the outcome of a given case. How true do you think that is?

JUDGE: I think that's a valid assertion to make, given that the law codes have grown so large and perhaps internally inconsistent that one can find ten laws in support of the plaintiff, and another ten of equal credence in support of the defendant. Just by looking at the law books, it's quite difficult to make a decision either way.

BAILEY: So, then, what is *your* philosophy as a judge?

JUDGE: Well, honestly, I try not to have one, even though this might somewhat conflict with what I said previously. It's important for a judge not to be biased toward either side right away, and let the arguments in court determine the verdict. So I don't need to have a philosophy to eventually be convinced one way or the other.

BAILEY: So, if one side argues the applicability of a given law or principle persuasively enough, you are willing to accede to their interpretation?

JUDGE: Sure, if that works for them. But once again, there are no preset standards or principles. Everything is contingent on what happens in that courtroom. And it's not only arguing from laws or ideas that I will take into account, though I'll take that into account as well. I'm looking for a *balanced, holistic* portrayal, where presentation and the skills that constitute it – like good emphasis, enthusiasm, oratorical skill, ability to evoke sympathy and compassion – also figure into the decision. And we never know in advance how the sum of these factors will play out. So, I'll take whatever works in the given case, I guess.

BAILEY: So you don't think that some things are automatically more important than others?

JUDGE: That's...um... not my decision to make. As a judge, I must represent society, for it is the values of the present society that are really supposed to determine the outcome of the case. Everything – laws, arguments, words, even facial gestures – is contingent on societal convention,

so I'll decide the case based on how well each side appeals to that ever-changing, ever-fluctuating norm that is never set in stone.

BAILEY: Well, thank you for those insights, Judge. I'm glad to see someone as open-minded and impartial as yourself presiding over this very controversial case on both sides.

JUDGE: I try my best.

BAILEY: From in front of the courthouse of the trial of the Estate of Grummond, this is Daniel Bailey, Standard News.

Act III, Scene II

(Enter MARK and VICTORIA into VICTORIA's residence, from which they are making preparations to depart for the trial.)

MARK: Victoria, dearest, have you changed your mind on which side you will support in this case?

VICTORIA: Edward, dearest, have you changed yours?

MARK: Using the very philosophical base you conferred on me, I have made a firm decision to stand by the Estate. I am surprised that you have not come to the same conclusion – the fact that what the plaintiff's side is proposing is the termination of a great man.

VICTORIA: Your arguments make the flawed presumption that a brain-dead individual on life support is alive; if everyone on life support were alive and had the inalienable rights to life, nobody would ever be able to disconnect life support from anyone.

MARK: Perhaps nobody *should* be able to disconnect that life support from anyone without that person's explicit consent.

VICTORIA: But that person is not able to *give* his consent. Otherwise, he would not have needed life support!

MARK: You yourself claimed that, if somebody assumes guardianship over an individual, he can only act in the interests of that individual's life. An infant, too, is not able to give his explicit consent to whether he wants to live or die, so the guardian must assume that he wants to live, and do his best to facilitate that aim.

VICTORIA: Well, at least you are consistent in what you say. I think Mr. Roberts will be able to give an ample refutation to your claims at the trial, though. But, as much as I agree with his opinion, I am not at all fond of either him or Oswald, and I still love you just the same. And I think our marriage will be absolutely splendid no matter which way this trial is decided.

MARK: I am certain that it will, yet I will still be quite persistent in convincing you that my side is right.

VICTORIA: I would be disappointed in you if you were not. The only thing less desirable than leaving a question unanswered is accepting somebody else's answer to it on faith. By the way, Edward, I am thinking of the immense potential the two of us would have in creating an absolutely grand endeavor to infuse a colossal splendor into today's culture. We could found an Academy of the Arts, and fund it like the noble patrons of old. We are already far wealthier than they could ever have dreamed of being, and we would know how to put that money to good use. We could sponsor a whole array of new painters, sculptors, and musicians, who would portray the real appearance of noble things and the ideas they represent – as opposed to smears on a canvas or distorted sheets of metal – who would develop musical harmony, structure, and grandeur – as opposed to dissonance and banality. We could give these creators the rightful rewards they deserve so that it would be profitable for them to continue aspiring toward magnificence.

MARK: Certainly, dearest, this is a splendid idea. I am willing to spend as much on this endeavor as will be necessary.

VICTORIA: Even as your wife I would not wish to ask so much of you. I would be delighted at your participation in this project, and even your direction of it, but I could never urge you to make such personal sacrifices for it. The purpose of my Academy would be the very antithesis of sacrifice; it would be for us to personally enjoy the most elevated creations of the human mind. I would so greatly desire for you to enjoy them alongside me that I would loathe to have to take anything away from you to do it. And besides, we would be far better off financially in the long run if you invested both of our money, since you are such a capable investor.

MARK: If I were to invest our money after we got married, I would invest it into the Estate of Grummond. Of course, that depends on whether said Estate survives, does it not? But tell me, how do you propose to fund your endeavor?

VICTORIA: Well, as much as I would be disappointed to see what Oswald would do with his part of the winnings from the lawsuit, I will leave Oswald to ruin his life as he sees fit. Mr. Roberts did, however, promise me about a fifth of the Estate of Grummond if the plaintiffs were successful. The settlement would be worth more than what both of us currently own put together. Think of what uses it could be put to!

MARK: Ah, so I now see the deeper reason why you support the plaintiffs.

VICTORIA: Do you find an objection to the rationality of my self-interest in this matter?

MARK: Can your self-interest ever be truly rational if it uses the coercive power of law to take away another's rightful property? Can you ever reconcile rationality with the initiation of force? And is it even self-interest, if, by supporting the plaintiffs, you would contribute to the destruction of a major, beneficent economic entity, which could have created and marketed goods of benefit to you?

VICTORIA: But what are property rights except the rights to hold and use the material products of one's mind? If Quintus Grummond will nevermore be able to use the gargantuan fortune and business he "owns," what purpose does it serve to hold it in his ownership? Why not deprive his now-nonexistent mind of what it will never once apply itself to or benefit from?

MARK: Because it *once did* apply itself to assuring the existence of such an arrangement. And besides, you do not know whether or not his mind will benefit from this property in the future. He could always recover again.

VICTORIA: You go on thinking that, Edward, and having a fraction of a percent's chance guide your decisions while real opportunities remain unexplored.

MARK: No, I insist: he could always recover again.

VICTORIA: You have that smirk on your face, as if you know something that you are not telling me.

MARK: If this is an issue of funding that Academy, I will just create it with my own money, without you knowing about it until the arrangement is too firmly established for you to resist it, and too attractive for you to turn away from it. Then, it will make this verdict a moot issue. Just help me make sure that Quintus Grummond has a fair chance to recover again.

VICTORIA: But I told you already: I do not want you making sacrifices for me.

MARK: A sacrifice is defined as the surrender of a value to a non-value. I cannot imagine how this action on my part would constitute a sacrifice. I most certainly value you far beyond the money I would spend to assure your happiness in this way.

VICTORIA: Ah, dearest, you have come quite far in your use of concepts, enough for me to no longer be your mentor, but rather your equal. Your arguments even make me rethink certain positions at times. How glad I am of our marriage to come! I will not be testifying today, anyway; I will, for now, keep myself on Mr. Roberts's good side and act as if nothing has changed. And really, nothing *has* changed until I know the reason that you so insist on my uncle's possible recovery.

MARK (aside): I should be able to trust my own future wife to keep a secret, should I not? But, then again, when she testifies, she will be bound by oath, and will have no other option but to reveal the existence of the revival project, crucial as it would be to bringing about an accurate court decision. And it will be her very sense of justice that will endanger the Estate even further when she tries to save it. (To VICTORIA) The secret is not mine to reveal. I shall have to gain permission from the proper parties before being able to do so. And if I choose to do so, I shall have to secure your promise *not* to testify in this trial, for either the plaintiffs or the defense.

VICTORIA: What strange conditions you set! And is this all because you want to change my mind and think that what you know will change it beyond all doubt?

MARK: Beyond all doubt.

VICTORIA: I shall think on it. In the meantime, let us fly to the courthouse together and discuss more pleasant things, such as our future together, for example.

(They leave.)

Act III, Scene III

(Enter MARK and VICTORIA into the space immediately in front of the courthouse, where numerous REPORTERS, as well as NEVILLE and WALTONFORD, are already gathered.)

VICTORIA: I shall go in already, dearest, and let you speak to the defense if you wish. After all, I would not want to overhear any *secret information* you are exchanging amongst yourselves. (She enters the courthouse.)

MARK (approaching NEVILLE and WALTONFORD): Greetings, gentlemen.

NEVILLE: Mr. Mark.

WALTONFORD: Mr. Mark.

MARK: I, too, of course, am regretful that the trial has begun so early, but how fares your project, Dr. Waltonford? You were working overtime on it, correct?

WALTONFORD: Correct, and I have accomplished much, yet much remains to be done. I would say, if the work continues at the present pace, two more weeks would be needed before the... desired outcome... is attained.

NEVILLE: But unfortunate tidings may still be ahead. Do remember that this is a civil suit decided by a judge only, and all the conventionally time-consuming procedures preceding criminal trials – such as jury selection, crime-scene investigations, and narrowing down of suspects – are absent. We are arguing before one man, who is not likely to deliberate his decision at length after all the arguments are presented, and will not need to spend time negotiating the verdict with other people. So, even if Roberts does not know that he had better win this case in two weeks' time if his arguments that Mr. Grummond is not alive are to have any validity, circumstances still favor such a speedy outcome.

MARK: But what of appeals? Can you not always appeal the verdict to a higher court, and thus have all the time you need?

NEVILLE: Unfortunately, this *is* the highest civil court in the state, and, seeing as all the plaintiffs and defendants are based in a single state, the federal courts could always construe this matter as beyond their jurisdiction. Roberts could always use this line of argument with the

proper persons to prevent further appeals even if they were theoretically possible. Thus, our only real option is to win here; everything depends on it.

(Enter ROBERTS in the distance; his head turns toward the conversation of MARK, WALTONFORD, and NEVILLE, though he cannot hear the words pronounced.)

ROBERTS (to himself): Hmmm... isn't that Victoria's fiancé? I have seen him in her company quite a few times. And now he's conversing with the defense! What business does he have with them? I ought to find out. (He opens his suitcase slightly and reaches into it with his hand, but extracts nothing visible. He then addresses the audience with his hand outstretched.) What I hold in my hand presently is a microscopic... communication device, which fits quite nicely in between skin cells when it contacts the hand with the side that I now have facing outward. It is somewhat like a mini-camera and listening device in one. When I desire to turn on the monitor to which it is connected, it shall inform me of Mr. Mark's subsequent... experiences. Now, this is all for the good of the people, of course, so that the people know the truth! They deserve to know the truth in this situation, right? (He begins to walk toward MARK.)

MARK (to WALTONFORD): By the way, I am convinced that my fiancée will no longer serve as witness for the plaintiffs if you authorize me to reveal the nature of your project to her. She is quite fond of all things technological, and does not, unlike others of the public, consider any manner of improvement upon human life to be sacrilege. When she is told the information, she will agree to withdraw as a witness and to be kept to the same secrecy as I have been. Would you consent to this?

WALTONFORD: It would depend on how this day's proceedings in court go; I cannot guarantee anything at the moment. But I should be able to tell you my decision by day's end, after Mr. Neville reveals to me the details of what will have taken place during the trial up to that time. For now, however, I have matters to attend to in the laboratory, and shall take my leave.

MARK: Doctor. (WALTONFORD departs in the direction opposite the courthouse entrance.)

NEVILLE: I, too, must now leave your company to enter and prepare for the trial's imminent opening.

MARK: Mr. Neville. (NEVILLE enters the courthouse.)

ROBERTS (after a few seconds, catching up with MARK): Ah, so you are Mr. Mark. Pleasure to meet you. I'm Trent Roberts. (Stretches out hand.)

MARK (somewhat uncertain): I am pleased to meet you also, Mr. Roberts. (Shakes ROBERTS' hand. The grin on ROBERTS' face widens noticeably.)

ROBERTS: Oh, please, call me Trent. I must extend to you my warmest congratulations on your upcoming marriage to Miss Grummond. Really, she's such a fine and charming young woman.

MARK: Why, thank you.

ROBERTS (attempts to crack a joke): Now, if you ever need a good divorce attorney, you know whom to call!

MARK (appalled): And you have the gall to suggest this-

ROBERTS (lightheartedly): Now, now, I kid, of course, Mr. Mark. All in good spirit!

MARK (in a stern and booming voice): Mr. Roberts, what may be humorous to you and the hedonist circles of your typical associates, for whom marrying and divorcing is a sport, is an outrage to me! I shall stand for no more of this. Good day. (He enters the courthouse.)

ROBERTS: Some people I just don't understand. (Shrugs) Oh, well. I've done what I wanted to him. (He enters the courthouse.)

Act III, Scene IV

(The setting now shifts to the inside of the courthouse, which MARK enters and seats himself among the spectators. He does not yet have an official role to play in this trial. JUDGE BENSON is already situated in his place at the center rear of the stage, as are the representatives of the plaintiffs and the defense, arrayed at the stage's opposite sides. ROBERTS, OSWALD, and VICTORIA sit on one of the sides, and NEVILLE sits on the other, accompanied by the SERVANT who had attended to Quintus Grummond prior to his fateful jog. REPORTERS stand wherever they can find room to do so.)

JUDGE (striking the table in front of him with a gavel): I now declare the trial of this case, *The Family and Legal Heirs of Quintus Grummond v. The Estate of Quintus Grummond*, to be in session. The court shall now hear the opening arguments of the plaintiffs.

ROBERTS (walks to center stage, carrying his suitcase): Thank you, Your Honor, esteemed spectators and media at this trial. My clients' case is simple to grasp: it is a case of extreme filial devotion, a devotion great enough for them to have embarked on the lengthy and costly endeavor of setting up this trial. Their devotion has been so great as to urge them to yearn for the use of a power based on love, the power of implied consent. The power of implied consent is a power of trust, a trust vested in a man's relative for deciding some of the most critical questions concerning his loved one when the latter is unable, for some reason, to decide them for himself. Here (points to OSWALD and VICTORIA) we have a family that ardently loved its now-departed member, Quintus Grummond, a man of impressive caliber, colorful personality, and a great sense of life. Now, however, Quintus Grummond has been forced to suffer an immense affront to his dignity, and, likewise, to the dignity of his family. He can no longer exhibit any of that character that his family loved; he can no longer enjoy life in all of its delightful facets. Rather, he is paralyzed beyond recovery, confined to a bed, forever to dwell in the sorry state of being unable to execute a single bodily function without the aid of a machine. Is that a state you would consider compatible with human dignity? I would think not. My clients request that this court allow the termination of such a state.

I know that the defense will come up here and tell you that it is not out of compassion that my clients are making their request, but rather out of the consideration that Mr. Grummond's Estate is of some value, but I shall plainly and clearly demonstrate before you that this is not so. I shall engage in honest conversation with one of my clients, a man who knew his father best, and who had the highest affections for him, as befits a son. I would like to call Oswald Grummond to the stand.

JUDGE: The witness may take the stand. (OSWALD moves to the witness stand from his seat.)

ROBERTS: Now, Mr. Grummond the Younger, how old are you?

OSWALD: I am sixty years old.

ROBERTS: And would it be safe to say that you had known your father for all those sixty years?

OSWALD (in a carefully rehearsed and recited manner): Oh, yes, ever since my birth. I have been quite close to my father for all my life, even living with him and taking care of him in his old age. Naturally, I would do so, since this would repay the great upbringing my father gave me.

ROBERTS: You see, Your Honor, this is a model son, whose record of genuine concern for his father stretches for a half-century and ten years more. Now, Mr. Grummond, how do you feel about your father's unexpected collapse?

OSWALD: I was quite shocked, of course, when it happened. It came as such a surprise, after all. I reacted as soon as I heard about what happened and rushed to call the paramedics. They did all they could, too, but, alas, that was not enough. They had only resuscitated my father into a state of limbo; they cannot make him live and think and feel again, and, if they relent even slightly with their life-support procedure, all of his organs will fail.

ROBERTS: So, then, would *you* ever want to be in such a precarious state?

OSWALD: Why, no, never! I would never wish to hang by a thread in this manner.

ROBERTS: Mr. Grummond, do you believe in the Golden Rule, to do unto others as you would have others do unto you?

OSWALD: Why, naturally, that seems to me to be a sound rule to live by.

ROBERTS: So, if you would not want yourself to be in the position of being reliant solely on life support, would it not be natural to assume that you would not want others, especially those as close to you as your father, to go through the same suffering?

OSWALD: Why, yes.

ROBERTS: So, you see, Your Honor, this man is such a devoted son that he would never stoop to treating his father with any lower standard than he sets for himself. I think that this strongly

suggests that Mr. Grummond the Younger is fit to make a decision as important as the one for which he is filing this suit. I have no further questions. (He takes a seat.)

JUDGE: The defense may now question the witness.

NEVILLE (rises): Thank you, Your Honor. Now, Mr. Grummond the Younger, you have stated that you had been taking care of your father during his elder years. What has made you assume that your father needed taking care of?

OSWALD (in a clearly feebler and less resolute tone than during ROBERTS' questioning): Well... he was senile... wasn't he? Senile people need to be taken care of. (Clears his throat and tries to regain a stronger tone of voice) It was my filial duty!

NEVILLE: So, Mr. Grummond, how exactly did you take care of your father, then? (OSWALD wavers and produces no intelligible answer.)

ROBERTS (shoots up from his seat): Objection! This line of questioning is irrelevant to this case, which concerns Quintus Grummond's condition *after* the point in time when my client could have taken care of him in anything!

NEVILLE: Your Honor, it was Mr. Roberts himself who initiated this line of-

JUDGE: Objection sustained!

NEVILLE (finishing sentence): Questioning.

JUDGE: Mr. Neville, I have already sustained the objection. The defense needs not argue this matter further, as it will not alter the court's opinion. You may proceed along another line of questioning.

NEVILLE (sighs): Very well, Mr. Grummond the Younger, what do you do for a living?

(OSWALD wavers again; he is afraid to reveal to the court that he does not have a career.)

ROBERTS: Objection! This question is a clear violation of Mr. Grummond the Younger's right to privacy, especially given that he is not the person on trial here. His father's Estate is on trial, and the defense's questions should be confined to matters directly regarding Quintus Grummond and his Estate.

NEVILLE: But Your Honor, if Mr. Grummond the Younger's claims that he had taken care of his father are veritable, he must have had some material *means* by which to take care of him, such as an-

JUDGE: Objection sustained!

NEVILLE (finishes sentence again): Independent income.

JUDGE: Mr. Neville, why do you persist in pursuing lines of questioning that the court will clearly not entertain? The court frowns upon such behavior.

NEVILLE: Very well, Mr. Grummond the Younger, we are all well aware of the effort your father had invested in creating his quite formidable and profitable firm. Do you respect this effort of his to the extent that, were you to win this case and inherit his fortune, you would perpetuate it?

ROBERTS: Objection! What Mr. Grummond the Younger does or does not do with any money that he inherits is none of the defense's business! He may do with it whatever he pleases, even if the defense does not approve of it! That is his right, and should have no bearing on this case!

JUDGE: Objection sustained! (Waits for a moment to hear NEVILLE's reaction. Soon afterward, it is evident that none is forthcoming.) Mr. Neville, your behavior is unacceptable, as you continue to show opposition to the finality of the court's decision on these matters!

NEVILLE: Your Honor, it is clear and self-evident that I have said nothing after you had sustained the objection.

JUDGE: So now you are adding to your offense by your insolence! Mr. Neville, one more disrespectful outburst like that, and I will have you held in contempt of court!

NEVILLE: As Your Honor wishes. The defense has no more questions.

JUDGE: The witness may be seated. (OSWALD returns to his seat, breathing a deep sigh of relief.)

NEVILLE: The defense requests permission to address the court.

JUDGE: Granted.

NEVILLE: Your Honor, contrary to the plaintiffs' arguments, the so-called power of implied consent, when used to deprive a person of life support, is nothing more than the violation of an individual's inalienable rights to life, liberty, and property. The attorney for the plaintiffs has tried to prove to the court that Oswald Grummond is a competent and worthy person to make the decision to terminate the life support of his father, but I come before you to argue that *nobody*, no matter how competent he claims to be, should have such authority. Nobody should have the prerogative of deciding that an innocent individual ought to die and that his explicit wishes concerning the disposition of his property ought to be defied.

The life of the individual is the ultimate value; it cannot be trumped by any other, since the very capacity to value presumes an individual who is alive. This statement is true for those of us in this room who can walk, speak, and analyze this case, but it is just as true for anyone and everyone else. It is true for children, even those tiniest of infants who can barely sit up. It is true for individuals handicapped by any manner of paralysis. It is true for the sick, even those afflicted with terminal diseases. It is true for the elderly, some of whom may have lost the ability

to live self-sufficiently. It must be just as true for the comatose, vegetative, and those on life support, no matter how long the duration of their life support or how slight the prospects for their recovery. *Nobody* ought to have the authority to state that the lives of any of these individuals are not worth living, that their ultimate values are the equivalent of a zero. Remember, Your Honor, that, in a world guided by absolute moral principles, every contention we make must be taken to its logical extreme. If we are to indeed argue with a sound conscience that every individual has the inalienable right to life so long as he has not deprived another of such a right, we cannot arbitrarily exclude some innocent individuals from that definition, no matter how incapacitated those individuals may seem to us. In any case where a person assumes guardianship over another, that guardianship is a service rendered, not a power asserted. The guardian has no power to do for an individual anything that is contrary to the interests of that individual's life, just as a parent does not have the authority to kill his child – even a severely crippled child, even a bedridden, deaf-mute-blind child whose ability to interact volitionally with his surroundings is as small as that of Quintus Grummond at present. In this case, of course, the plaintiffs do not even presume to act as Quintus Grummond's legal guardians; Quintus Grummond has not asked them for their guardianship. Rather, they merely seek to terminate his life out of sheer short-sighted convenience.

In the external world, a man's right to life is manifested by the ability of his rational mind to make the decisions it sees fit. This ability, to have any value at all, must extend to the full right to dispose of one's property, the material products of the labor of the mind. In every decision, there will inevitably be some amount of delay between the time a decision is made and the time it is implemented, yet this does not alter the right of the individual to make that decision, and the right of the individual to dispose of the property involved in and arising out of such a decision. Quintus Grummond has made a clear, explicit, rational decision, extensively detailed in his will, to have his property used in a specific way that could not have been more precisely formulated. The current form of the Estate of Grummond is the way that he ordained, and it should not matter that he has lost his consciousness in the interim. If I decide to use my hovermobile tomorrow, and then go to sleep, would the plaintiffs have the right to take my hovermobile away from me, simply because the state of my consciousness has somehow been altered? Of course not. Nor should they have the right to take from Quintus Grummond not only a hovermobile, but everything he has ever earned. Moreover, my argument with regard to property concerns not only property in inanimate objects, but also property that the individual holds in his own body and mind. This property, too, ought to be governed by the individual's own decisions, however delayed in time their implementation may be. Quintus Grummond has made a decision in his will to place his body on indefinite life support, should he lose the ability to survive without it. Now, after a necessary time delay between Mr. Grummond's conscious and unconscious states, that decision is being implemented. To curtail its implementation, as the plaintiffs desire, would be a clear violation of Quintus Grummond's right to the property that is his own body and the property that is his own mind, which had devised the entire arrangement.

The plaintiffs ought to recognize that arguing that they were *supposed to* be the legal heirs of Quintus Grummond does not alter the reality that *they are not* because Mr. Grummond did not wish them to be. Supposed to, by what standard? Quintus Grummond has chosen to dispose of his property – *his* property, not theirs, in body, mind, and possessions – in an alternate manner. The only legitimate response that the plaintiffs ought to have is to respect that arrangement as

they would like others to respect any arrangements the plaintiffs would make with regard to their property. *That* is the true application of the Golden Rule to this situation, and *that* is why the court ought to reject the plaintiffs' claims.

I would like to leave it to Your Honor and the ladies and gentlemen analyzing this case and seeking to decide for themselves which side to support to internalize and deliberate over the arguments I have made today, and to recess until the next day.

ROBERTS: Objection! My clients do not yet wish to recess! The plaintiffs wish to refute the outrageous and fanatically extremist arguments that the defense has spewed forth!

JUDGE: Objection overruled. The court shall give the plaintiffs time this evening to prepare a more *polished* refutation, thus satisfying everybody's interests, in the court's opinion. The court is on recess until tomorrow. (He taps the table with his gavel.)

(The lights are dimmed.)

Act III, Scene V

(This scene takes place later in the evening, after the first day of the trial; MARK and NEVILLE are in the conference room of the Estate of Grummond, engaged in conversation. On another part of the stage, we see ROBERTS sitting in his office, with his suitcase open, and a monitor deployed, on which he is able to track MARK's and NEVILLE's words and surroundings by means of the device he had earlier implanted into MARK. He focuses on them intently.)

MARK: You know, Mr. Neville, any reasonable spectator observing what happened at the trial today would tell you that you far outperformed Roberts. The reason why he continued to object so extensively was to provide a cover, a flimsy cover at best, for Oswald's inability to answer your well-targeted inquiries. Yet the questions that Oswald cannot answer, I can. A while ago, at a reception in the Grummond Mansion, I managed to catch a moment of conversation with the man, who, in a drunken stupor, revealed to me the extent of his depravity.

NEVILLE: Indeed? And this concerns his motives for filing this suit?

MARK: Absolutely, it does. He has essentially filed it to have a fortune to throw around and stage "the biggest demolition derby in the history of the world," in his own words.

NEVILLE: Amazing! So he would kill his own father, invent a host of intricate justifications as to why he is not *really* killing his own father in the act of killing him, all for this hedonistic indulgence?

MARK: I can recall the conversation with great accuracy; you need just ask me for it in court. That is, you should summon me as a witness for the defense.

NEVILLE: One further question on this issue, Mr. Mark. Did Oswald explicitly suggest the *intellectual* justification for his plan? Did he provide any moral principles to validate his purpose?

MARK: Yes; he expounded quite a bit on the futility of life and why we should waste it all, and then added that he has the right to spend *his* money in any way he pleases.

NEVILLE: *His* money! Ha! He never earned a single cent of it, and his father knew it! It is quite ironic to hear Oswald justify his claim on the basis of property rights, when property rights are precisely what he seeks to take away from his father.

MARK: Hmm... yes, my mind was leading me along the way to such a conclusion from the moment I heard those words. I think the question of what a man legally may or may not do with his money is not relevant in this case, anyway, as we can appeal to simple rationality to demonstrate that no man who has taken legitimate efforts to earn a fortune will ever so wantonly waste it all, whether he has the right to or not.

NEVILLE: Yes. An interesting question to pose to the court would be, "What sort of person are you taking that fortune from, and to what sort of person do you intend to give it?" But, moreover, we will have ample ammunition from your testimony to demonstrate that this grand filial compassion on which the entire implied-consent argument is based is a fabrication, behind which lie far less admirable motives. I think that we can win the case on that alone, since we will have dealt a crippling blow to the very thread tying all of the plaintiffs' arguments together.

MARK: I shall eagerly look forward to my testimony, then. By the way, with regard to the... select disclosure... of the matter we had spoken of earlier, will you give me authorization to do so?

NEVILLE: To the person you had mentioned and that person only; I do not think it will do the Estate harm in that context.

MARK: Thank you, Mr. Neville. Until we meet tomorrow, then.

NEVILLE. Indeed. Mr. Mark. (They depart in opposite directions.)

ROBERTS (still sitting at his monitor): This is a most alarming turn of events. I have gone too far in my implied-consent arguments for me to backtrack now, at least to backtrack as suddenly as Mark's testimony would force me to do. And I don't think the court will buy my objections this time. So, then, there is only one way to go: prevent Mark from coming onto the stand until I can spin my way out of the mess I've gotten myself into. Give the court a week, and then present arguments that are the absolute opposite of what I used earlier – but, with the public's short attention span, who'll notice? By that time the court will probably forget what Mark is testifying about, too. Now, then... how to orchestrate a delay? Well, time to reach into the magic suitcase. (Retrieves a giant volume from the suitcase, with the words "The Big Book of Connections" inscribed on it. He displays it prominently before the audience with a shyster grin.) The Big Book of Connections. One of the *perks* of going to Harvard is being given this absolutely

indispensable tool. It's never failed me yet. Now... whom shall I summon this time? (Flips through book's pages) The local zoning board, to have Mark's home thoroughly scanned for violation of zoning statues and building codes? No, no. I owe the zoning commissioner a favor already; maybe I can use him after I win another lawsuit for him. What about the SEC? Surely they can find some paperwork error during Mark's many years as the head of a corporation, and harangue him about it without end. No, I forgot... I had married and divorced an SEC commissioner's daughter, twice. I'm not sure consulting him would be a good idea. What about the President of the United States? Surely, he could do something. No, no, I've filed a suit accusing him of international genocide against the endangered spotted slug. How could I forget? But... aha! I know of one organization that never fails to do its duty when asked.

(ROBERTS dials a number on his visual image transmitter while the shadowy figure of a TAX AGENT appears on the other side of the stage. The audience never sees the TAX AGENT's face.)

TAX AGENT (picks up his own visual image transmitter and talks into it in a grim voice): This is the Internal Revenue Service. Please be brief, or be audited.

ROBERTS: Hello, this is Trent Roberts.

TAX AGENT: In that case, you have three choices: be brief, be audited, or represent the IRS in its upcoming "crack the crooks" tax-evader suing spree.

ROBERTS: The third way's a deal. Now, I might have a lucrative audit for you to perform, if you act on my information soon enough.

TAX AGENT: The IRS is listening.

ROBERTS: Look into one, Edward Mark, who has recently come into a sizable fortune from selling his business, and has had substantial revenues even before making that deal. You might want to get all his records quickly, because a man of his financial power could very soon scatter all his funds so as to prevent you from ever being able to trace them.

TAX AGENT: Nobody escapes from the IRS and doesn't pay for it... Well, nobody cooperates with the IRS and doesn't pay for it, either, but thank you very much anyway, Mr. Roberts. We shall pay Mr. Mark a... procedural visit early tomorrow.

ROBERTS: Glad to hear it. Always glad to be a loyal citizen, too. And call me Trent.

TAX AGENT: Indeed. Your behavior is a model for all Americans to follow. The IRS wishes you to have a fine day. May you earn a lot of income in the upper bracket. (The TAX AGENT disappears into the shadows.)

ROBERTS: Now, as for that *secret* Mr. Mark and Mr. Neville seek to keep from the public knowledge, I might know a few *concerned citizens* that might be interested in discovering its nature. (The lights are dimmed.)

Act III, Scene VI

(This scene takes place the next morning. MARK is in his house, drinking tea. On one side of the stage is the entrance to the house, including a door. On the other side of the stage, separated from the entrance by several walls, is an open window. Beside it stands MARK's hovermobile.)

MARK (to himself and audience): Today shall be the day that fallacies are toppled. I am quite pleased to be able to play a hand in this. (Suddenly, several TAX AGENTS enter the stage, their faces masked by shadows, and knock furiously at MARK's door.)

MARK: Who could that be this early in the morning? Victoria would not knock with such fury, and Mr. Neville should likely be in court already, making final arrangements for today's presentation.

TAX AGENT (shouts in a grim, menacing voice): Open up, Mr. Mark! This is the Internal Revenue Service!

MARK (rushes to the door, in shock): (To himself) Surely, this is some sort of misunderstanding. (Opens door). Hello...

TAX AGENT: Mr. Mark, the IRS will conduct an audit of your income. We demand all your income records, going back six years. We expect the records to be given to us right away.

MARK: Sir, I am certain that you have the wrong man. I have always paid my taxes and filed my returns. I may dislike taxes severely, but I pay them nonetheless, hoping rather to reform the system from within.

TAX AGENT (sternly): This mentality of yours, Mr. Mark, borders on subversion. Any truly loyal American would be *happy* to pay his taxes and contribute to the strength of his government. Your shameless displeasure with the tax system further suggests the need for us to inspect your records.

MARK: Are you certain that it is proper procedure to immediately rush into a man's home and demand his files, without any regard for his privacy or any other activities he may be engaged in at the time? Is it not more *professional* to issue a written warning first, and request the files within a certain timeframe?

TAX AGENT: The IRS will have none of your businessman's procedural norms. We have our own procedural norms, and our statutes permit us to enter anybody's residence and request income records at any time we see fit.

MARK (distressed): Well, can we not resolve this at a more opportune time? I could, for example, sign a document promising you to send you my income statements by tomorrow. You will then have possession of them no later than you had intended.

TAX AGENT: What part of "*right away*" do you not understand?! Do you realize, Mr. Mark, that under one of our statutes, you are already eligible for five years in prison for disrespectful conduct to agents of the IRS and also for attempting to challenge the better judgment of IRS officials?

MARK (feigns a resigned tone of voice): Very well, my documents are in a locked cabinet in the other room. It is quite a mess, though, so I would like the ability to retrieve them myself shortly. May I get you gentlemen some tea in the meantime?

TAX AGENT: That will get you another five years in prison for attempted poisoning of IRS agents, unless you cooperate *now*! The documents!

MARK: Very well, wait here. I shall fetch them right away. (Runs through the house and into the room with the open window. Then he begins to speak to himself and the audience.) That was an unambiguous lie, but a necessary one. My documents are in a variety of places – many of them held by my attorney, some others scattered around this house, still others already with the IRS. Yet, if I had told the agents this, I would have been arrested on the spot for not being able to produce the entirety of what they wanted *right away*. Very well, I now have no other recourse. (Jumps out the window and into the hovermobile, quickly starting the vehicle and flying into the air. The play could represent this by suspending a screen on which a hovermobile flying through the clouds is shown, while a spotlight is directed at MARK inside the vehicle. That is, the actual hovermobile need not move at all.)

MARK (to himself and audience): That was, of course, a temporary solution at best. I am now a fugitive from the law, to be hunted by the IRS and vulnerable to being arrested until this misunderstanding is cleared. Hmm... or *is* it a misunderstanding? What are the chances of IRS agents knocking on my door and demanding all my records *immediately* on the very day that my testimony could have dealt Trent Roberts his first defeat in court? If I had complied and attempted to gather all my income statements as I was asked, this would have taken hours, and I would have been unable to testify today. The audit itself would have consumed even more time, perhaps preventing me from testifying until Roberts had won or my testimony was no longer relevant. As of now, I cannot prove this connection, nor that Roberts was somehow able to influence the IRS behind the scenes, yet any coincidence such as this would be too bizarre to be within the realm of reasonable probability. But, what to do next? Shall I go to court anyway and testify? Yes, go to a government institution while I am hunted by the government! Go into the lion's mouth! That cannot be. Where else shall I head, where I might escape the IRS and perhaps have time to deliberate on how to reverse Roberts' scheme? Hmm... what about a place that neither the IRS nor any other part of the government nor the general public know much about – namely, Grummond Laboratories? Mr. Neville will be absent from there, granted, but Dr. Waltonford is skilled enough in legal matters to give me advice on how to respond, and perhaps outmaneuver both Roberts and the IRS. In any case, any attempt at remedying this unfortunate turn of events will be a step forward from my present state. The situation cannot be more grave; I must do what I can, myself to save.

(Curtain.)

Act IV, Scene I

(This scene takes place in the main operating room of the Grummond Laboratory Complex. The body of QUINTUS GRUMMOND is mounted on an operating table, and several ASSISTANTS are at work examining it and running experiments at nearby tables. On and near the body, several machines and devices are placed to represent the life-support apparatus. At the front of the stage, MARK and WALTONFORD are seated in armchairs, conversing.)

WALTONFORD: This is a most disturbing turn of events. I knew that Roberts had influence, but even I did not suspect that he would have it in this form.

MARK: And he likely has enough of it to conceal the fact that he has it.

WALTONFORD: Yes, proving your suspicion in a manner that would withstand a trial is difficult at best. The most we might have on Roberts's involvement in this surprise visit is circumstantial evidence. I will say, however, that Mr. Neville is far more familiar with the intricacies of legal procedure than I. He might find a way to resolve this matter peacefully and keep the IRS at bay for some time, but you must wait until he comes here in the evening. He will be sure to arrive, as I have told him that he should bear witness to a most pleasant surprise.

MARK: A surprise? Of what nature?

WALTONFORD (pointing at the body of GRUMMOND): This. After thoroughly examining the data and blueprints we had obtained from the purchase of your company, we have managed to incorporate even more time-saving methods for Mr. Grummond's revival. Presently, I have shortened the expected timeframe required for the project's completion to no more than two or three days.

MARK: Then, has the Estate essentially won the suit?

WALTONFORD: Remember, Mr. Mark, the verdict could come today, if Roberts keeps using procedure to prevent Mr. Neville from responding to his claims. And you are in no position to attend the trial, where your service as a witness would have been our surest chance at a swift victory. And besides, it remains my task to make certain that the revival project continue to be concealed after Mr. Grummond's recovery, and the latter be made to seem as if it happened from natural causes.

MARK (pondering): If Victoria continues to serve as a witness for the plaintiffs, Roberts might have his victory sooner. After all, Victoria's presence is needed to make the suit seem as if it were anything other than a crude attempt by Oswald to grab his father's wealth. Perhaps I could assist you by summoning her here instead, and revealing to her the information that could change her mind.

WALTONFORD: You are welcome to do so, as the Estate has approved the disclosure.

(Presently the spotlight illuminates a fraction of the stage hitherto left in the dark; that part of the stage is set up as a portion of the interior of VICTORIA's house. She is within it, ready to exit, when she receives a call on her visual image transmitter from MARK.)

VICTORIA: Edward, where are you? I have tried calling you at your house and received an answer from an IRS agent stating that you are a fugitive from the law and requesting – no, *demanding* – information on where to find you. I hung up immediately, of course, but I am quite worried nonetheless. What has happened to you?

MARK: One of the consequences of Roberts's non-rational approach to his lawsuits.

VICTORIA: Are you suggesting that –

MARK: Yes. Join me where I am presently, and you shall find out the secret which I have said will make you change your mind.

VICTORIA: But where are you?

MARK: The Grummond Center for Botanical Studies, as it is generally known. It is easy enough to locate.

VICTORIA: How could one ever hide in there? Very well, I shall be there as soon as I can.

(The stage could darken momentarily and then light up again to indicate a break in time. When the lighting resumes, VICTORIA is already beside MARK and WALTONFORD in the laboratory.)

VICTORIA: Artificial restoration of the brain? With all of its memories, connections, and individual peculiarities intact?

WALTONFORD: And why not? Given our rate of progress in electronics and bioengineering, it was only a matter of time before we were able to discover how to artificially recreate matters of this degree of complexity and specificity. Of course, this is still a highly experimental and time-consuming process, needing immense work to render it compatible with the brain of a given individual, and requiring an extremely fortunate situation, like a sustainable vegetative state, during the time period it is applied. Nevertheless, this is the first step toward even greater things, if barriers are not set on our path.

VICTORIA: This is... amazing! Edward and I have argued about whether or not the minute chance of my uncle recovering from his vegetative state could qualify him as being alive, but, truly, the magnitude of this chance is wholly dependent on our technological capacities. Now, if a vegetative state has the possibility of becoming a mere curable affliction, like cancer, diabetes, or the flu, and there is no reason for treating those in such a condition as dead.

Yet, if a vegetative state can be said to be akin to an illness or injury, then, since we do not treat ill or injured people as dead, even if their afflictions are fatal, how can we legitimately treat vegetative individuals as dead, even *if* their chances of recovery are minute?

MARK: Victoria, dearest, have you changed your mind?

VICTORIA: What can I say? You were absolutely, entirely, irrefutably correct. So long as even a single organ in a person's body continues to function, he cannot be considered dead. And, so long as he is not dead, we ought to do our best to hope that he may continue to remain alive as long as his natural endurance, technology – or the combination of the two – can manage it. If he explicitly wishes to refuse treatment, that is his right, but, if he explicitly wishes to be sustained indefinitely, especially through his own funds, there is nothing our wishes, whims, or pretenses at compassion can offer to logically resist him.

MARK: Very well said, dearest. Now, have you decided against testifying for the plaintiffs?

VICTORIA: Yes, though I fear it might not help you, as your future is currently in as much danger as Quintus Grummond's, if not more.

WALTONFORD: If we hold out until the evening, there may yet be hope. In the meantime, Mr. Mark, with your expertise in your field, I am sure you will be of assistance to us in the final stages of the revival project. Come, I shall familiarize you and Miss Grummond with its closer workings.

VICTORIA: Might there be some task I can also perform to contribute to it?

WALTONFORD: Certainly, we can always find a job for a woman of your intelligence. And, at this point, your help would be greatly and urgently appreciated. It might cut our timeframe even further.

(WALTONFORD leads MARK and VICTORIA toward the operating table and begins to gesture toward certain parts of the experimental setup. The lights are dimmed.)

Act IV, Scene II

(This scene takes place prior to the opening of the second day of the trial. ROBERTS is sitting in his hovermobile in front of the courthouse, with his monitor open. He has been observing the happenings inside the Grummond Laboratory Complex.)

ROBERTS (to self and audience): Mr. Mark, you are more reckless a man than I had judged. Evasion of the IRS! What person who values self-preservation would do that? Well, the IRS will catch up with you in due time. At least you won't testify here for a while. And my, this *secret* of the Estate's is a secret no more. Yet, if carried out, it is still bound to ruin my case! I cannot use the implied-consent argument with somebody who walks and breathes and feels, as my argument for defining a human being goes. Now then, how to get out of this fix? Does Grummond *have* to

walk and breathe and feel again? Let's think of this as a good, normal American would. A good, normal American has many preconceived notions about what life is and what it's not. He likes life, to an extent. But he also thinks – no, *knows* – that death is a part of life, and he has learned to accept it. He is very suspicious, at least, of any scheme that would attempt to deny death artificially. He accepts curing diseases, and even lengthening the human lifespan... to a point. But he does not like Frankensteinian creatures roaming about, and that's what Quintus Grummond would be, wouldn't he? He was dead; now he's alive. He's been revived through scary, unnatural, artificial means, which the good, normal American deems far more suspect than natural recoveries. I can play off of that mindset. I'll tell them that the Estate's intent is to make Quintus Grummond into another Frankensteinian machine, not truly human. Such abominations should not be allowed to exist, and their creators ought to be punished, implied consent or no implied consent. Yes, this involves changing my definition of a human being a bit, but who doesn't tamper with definitions these days? Besides, the modification is obvious in light of what I've been saying all along. Human being implies *organic being*, with none of those alien, cold, mechanistic add-ons. I will still need some semblance of proof to the public that this project exists, though. How about making that *abominable abuse of science* a headline story, so that it becomes common knowledge? Dan Bailey is covering the case; he can cover this, too. But I'll tip him off subtly, to make sure he doesn't think I'm conjuring some weird science fiction.

(ROBERTS dials BAILEY's number on his visual image transmitter. BAILEY enters the stage on the other side and picks up a similar device of his own.)

BAILEY: This is Daniel Bailey, Standard News, speaking.

ROBERTS: Dan, this is Trent.

BAILEY: Hi, Trent. What can I do for you?

ROBERTS: My, do I have a story for you.

BAILEY: Related to your lawsuit?

ROBERTS: You bet. Go to the Grummond Center for Botanical Studies. I know it may sound far-fetched, but the story is all in there.

BAILEY: Are you sure?

ROBERTS: One hundred percent.

BAILEY: What is it, then?

ROBERTS: You'll have to see it to believe it, Dan.

BAILEY: All right, Trent. I can trust you, I think.

ROBERTS: That depends on how you define trust.

BAILEY: Put a little reporter's spin on it, and it'll work.

ROBERTS: Put a little lawyer's spin on it, and it'll dazzle.

BAILEY (facetiously): What might dazzle you might not dazzle me.

ROBERTS: But it'll dazzle *society*, and society is all that counts.

BAILEY: Ah yes, that great collective subconscious. This stuff's really deep, Trent, but you were always into that deep stuff. I just pass it on to society. Society likes to know that it counts. I'll be there right away.

ROBERTS: That depends on how you define "be."

BAILEY: That depends on how you define "define."

ROBERTS: That depends on how you define "you."

BAILEY: Oh, can we really ever answer these questions?

ROBERTS (after a moment's pause): That depends. Of course, if you ever get the right answers, I'll sue you for extremist absolutist bigotry. Right answers are bound to offend someone, of course.

BAILEY (chuckles): Ah, yes, good times, Trent.

ROBERTS: Time is relative. Of course, so is the verb "is," when you come to think of it. All things are relative, even the statement that all things are relative. Put a lawyer's spin on it, and it'll make sense, somehow. But good times, anyway.

(The lights are dimmed.)

Act IV, Scene III

(This scene takes place in the Grummond Laboratory complex, but, in addition to the operating room with QUINTUS GRUMMOND's body, the stage should also include the entrance to the complex, a main hallway, and a section filled with plants. The latter is the "official" laboratory complex, devoted to botanical research. In the operating room, WALTONFORD, his ASSISTANTS, MARK, and VICTORIA are at work on the revival project, while two GUARDS stand at the entrance. BAILEY sneaks onto the stage and hides in the shadows, while the GUARDS converse.)

GUARD 1: Well, it's lunch break.

GUARD 2: The next shift is not here yet.

GUARD 1: You know that the next shift is almost always late. That doesn't mean we should be late for lunch.

GUARD 2: If you say so. All right, let's go.

BAILEY (to self and audience): A perfect opportunity to get the real story on what goes on inside...

(The GUARDS enter the building and go toward the opposite side of the stage. Shortly afterward, BAILEY sneaks into the laboratory complex. At the same time, WALTONFORD happens to be exiting the operating room into the main hallway. While exiting, he accidentally leaves a slight opening in the door. He meets BAILEY with his hands crossed over his chest.)

WALTONFORD (sternly): May I help you?

BAILEY: This is Daniel Bailey, Standard News.

WALTONFORD: Mr. Bailey, I know who you are. Now, please state your business here.

BAILEY: It's in connection with the trial. I would like to do a thorough report on... exactly what the Estate of Grummond is and... how it manages its various operations. I was... informed... that this is one such operation, so I came to take a look at it. This is just meant to give the public more... background information... on the matter.

WALTONFORD: Very well, come with me. You have entered the Grummond Center for Botanical Studies. It is here that the most cutting-edge research on the genetic properties of plants is performed. If you would follow me into our gallery of plants... (They enter the room with the plants.)

BAILEY (feigns interest): Plants... so that's what you study here... interesting.

WALTONFORD: You would find it even more interesting to note that none of these plants can be found in nature. Each of them has been engineered by Grummond Laboratories to some extent. Take, for example, these two strawberry plants here. They may seem identical to you, and identical to other strawberry plants you have seen. In fact, they could not be further apart. The fruits of one plant have been modified to have immense caloric content in them, sufficient for an entire day's nutritional needs. You need eat nothing more for the entire day once you have consumed one of those strawberries. The strawberries of the other plant have been rid of caloric content altogether. They are, if you will, dietary items that you can eat without limit merely for the pleasure of it, not needing to fear any adverse consequences to your health. Grummond Laboratories sells the first sort of fruit to free developing countries. Thus, we have been able to solve the problem of hunger in every place where there is no tyrannical regime to restrict commerce. The second sort meets an immense demand among Americans themselves. You may quote me as saying that this type of work is what the plaintiffs in this lawsuit are seeking to stop by the termination of the Estate.

BAILEY (confused as to why Roberts would send him here to see this): Is there... anything else besides botanical work here?

WALTONFORD: No, just botanical work, and lots of it. I could give you a tour of some of our more specialized facilities where the actual genetic modifications are taking place.

BAILEY: No, no, that's all right. Perhaps another time. Are you *sure* there is nothing else here besides botanical work?

WALTONFORD: Yes, Mr. Bailey, I am quite certain, as I have been working here for eight years. Now, I must kindly request that you take your leave, if you wish to see nothing more.

BAILEY (disappointed): Oh, very well. (Mutters so that the audience hears, but WALTONFORD does not.) Trent Roberts misinformed me. Why?

(At that time, they are passing by the door into the operating room. Because it is semi-open, BAILEY can hear the voices of MARK and VICTORIA.)

VICTORIA: Here is the last set of data.

MARK: Excellent. Now, I will enter it into the electronic cells, and the revival of Mr. Grummond will only be a matter of cosmetic work from there on.

BAILEY (stops): What did I just hear? "Revival" and "Grummond" used in the same sentence? I must see this! (He rushes toward the door.)

WALTONFORD (fiercely): No! I forbid it! This area is *off limits* to you!

BAILEY (quickly pulls the door open and stares at the operating table. MARK and VICTORIA stare back at him in shock): The body of Quintus Grummond!

WALTONFORD: You were forbidden to see this! This is confidential information, not to be disclosed to the public!

BAILEY: The public has the right to know whatever it deems of interest! This *abomination*, this terrible violation of nature, this presumptuous, arrogant exercise of corporate greed to trump common human... um.... values, views of life, emotions, prejudices... whatever noun society chooses to use here... must be exposed to the people for what it is! It is my duty as a servant of the public!

WALTONFORD (opens his visual transmitter): Guards, there is an intruder in the operating room. Detain him.

(The GUARDS appear almost momentarily, and seize BAILEY.)

WALTONFORD (sternly): This project is within the *private realm*. It is the Estate's sacred right to keep this internal endeavor private. Do you understand?

BAILEY: Don't pull that junk with me! The general will says you are monsters, all of you! Whatever... *rights*... you might have under ordinary circumstances do not apply here, as you have defied the will of society – society, which is the source of all your rights!

MARK: That is absolutely false. Our rights are the source of society, and the only end toward which society can legitimately exist is to preserve these rights.

VICTORIA: And when society violates these rights, then it subverts its original purpose, and deserves to be altered or abolished. And you, Mr. Bailey, are a trespasser on private property.

BAILEY: If I trespass, your only authority is to escort me off the premises and *potentially* sue me later on for some nominal fines. So, go ahead, do it! Escort me off! I'll even say, "Please," to be polite.

MARK: That is precisely what he wants, now that he is aware of what happens here.

BAILEY: Escort me off! I'll report my findings, and there's nothing you can do about it. It's called *freedom of the press*.

MARK: Unless the general will suspends it, right? So you can blast us with all the "freedom of the press" you can get, while we cannot respond.

BAILEY: No, you can't! Now be quiet and get me out of here!

WALTONFORD (resigned): Guards, show this man to his hovermobile.

(The GUARDS lead BAILEY out of the building.)

BAILEY (shouts over his shoulder): You're in a lot of trouble, you know that?! (Mutters.) I should have never doubted Trent's truthfulness. (He is led off the stage.)

WALTONFORD: Alas, the secret can no longer be kept. The public will know about it, and, unless we explain ourselves sooner, we will hear nothing but smears hurled at us.

MARK: So, how do we explain ourselves?

WALTONFORD: We will receive a forum at the trial, since the matter concerns the case. If we argue it well enough, we might even win on it. That is, if the court has some bit of rationality left in its decisions.

VICTORIA: But, Doctor, Edward will be hunted by the IRS. If we go to the trial now, the tax agents will surely apprehend him there.

WALTONFORD: Not in the company of Mr. Neville, whose skillful knowledge of the law will be able to hold them back for a time, at least. The key is to reach him and take a moment to brief him on what has happened. I will arrange for a contingent of the Estate's security personnel to accompany us on our way, in the event that any *unpleasant encounters* occur. At least, this will guarantee us that the IRS agents will not dare use force even if they should intercept us. (Addresses his ASSISTANTS) In the meantime, my assistants, you have done fine work thus far, and I must ask of you to carry out the final stages of this grand endeavor without my presence. Work diligently, work swiftly, and work well. We are in a race against time, and, with your help, we might just win.

MARK: I see that there is now no refuge. We must go now and fight our battle of principles, with our integrity as our chief weapon. I am ready.

(WALTONFORD, MARK, and VICTORIA exit.)

Act IV, Scene IV

(This scene takes place in the courthouse, immediately before the second day of the trial is to open. As previously, OSWALD sits on the side of the plaintiffs, and the SERVANT sits with the defense. NEVILLE is arranging his papers and talking to himself.)

NEVILLE: Where is Mr. Mark? He promised to come today, and seemed quite eager to do so. Has there been some sort of problem that could cause his delay?

JUDGE (strikes table with gavel): I now call this court into session.

NEVILLE (to self and audience): Alas, I must start without him.

ROBERTS: Your Honor, may the plaintiffs make a request?

JUDGE: The court will hear the plaintiffs' request.

ROBERTS: On behalf of the plaintiffs, I request to engage the defense in one-on-one debate on the matter in question, with the aim of refuting the opening arguments presented yesterday by Mr. Neville.

JUDGE: An unorthodox request though this may be, the court shall grant it nonetheless. After all, this exchange is what the public has been waiting anxiously for, and it is the duty of the court to represent the interests of the public at large. Mr. Roberts, you may address the defense and the honorable spectators and media present here.

ROBERTS: Thank you, Your Honor. Now, Mr. Neville, when you were my student at Harvard, I did not fail you arbitrarily. I failed you because you made arguments like the ones you had made yesterday –

NEVILLE: Objection! The issue of my former studies at Harvard has absolutely nothing to do with this case!

JUDGE: Overruled. We must permit full freedom of debate on the floor, especially when Mr. Roberts is opening his speech with a very interesting rhetorical technique. Proceed, Mr. Roberts.

ROBERTS: Thank you, Your Honor. Interrupting his professors was yet another problem that Mr. Neville had at Harvard. (The REPORTERS burst into laughter while ROBERTS displays his shyster grin.) Now, Mr. Neville, I insist that the arguments you made yesterday are *precisely* the reason why I failed you back at Harvard. You stated, for example, that we have to take every contention we support to its logical extreme. This is false. There are degrees to which an idea can be applied, and compromises that need to be made between *different* values.

NEVILLE: An individual's life is the *ultimate* value. If you would "compromise" it with anything, it would necessarily be a non-value, since it is not grounded in the value of life.

ROBERTS: What about the lives of others and the stability of society, which confers upon the individual his right to life?

NEVILLE: Society does *not* confer any right upon the individual. Rights exist *prior* to society, inherent in the individuals' natures as rational beings. Societies are formed to preserve these rights in all of their members, and if a society should intrude upon the rights of one to provide gains to others – gains undeserved by definition – it is the society that must be reformed in subordination to the individual's liberty.

ROBERTS: Again we can see why I failed Mr. Neville. Mr. Neville, do not laws originate from society? If an individual's rights are so untouchably important as you contend, how is it that, if each individual were to make his own laws, there would be anarchy rather than society?

NEVILLE: No matter who makes them, the laws must be such as to intrude on no one's liberties. If that is the case, the law is also just no matter how many people disagree with it. And that just law will even protect the liberties of individuals who disagree with it, too.

ROBERTS: Just or not just, is it not the job of society to enforce it?

NEVILLE: Through its representatives and officials, yes.

ROBERTS: Aha! So you conceded that society must enforce just laws. Thus, society *is* a value. Now, let's say that a given individual's *condition* does not serve that value as best it could. Say, he is unable to walk, speak, or do any active work of his own. He lies in his bed and consumes valuable societal resources –

NEVILLE: *His own resources!*

ROBERTS: His own or not his own – irrelevant. Without society to enforce his possession of those resources, any odd robber who wanted to could have taken them away. Thus, society has a

part to play with regard to these resources, and thus the resources could be said to be societal ones. This man's continued maintenance does no service to society, but drains these resources.

NEVILLE: I do not accept your argument that societal value must be the basis of all considerations; the individual could well discover a way to advance the interests of his own life in a manner that others in his society have never thought of yet or have dismissed due to some prejudice or another. But, even if we considered values offered to society, Quintus Grummond contributes more of them than most of those sitting in this room. Think of the products that the Estate is currently marketing to dramatically improve your health and longevity, or the quality of your food, or the amount of scientific knowledge you have within your reach –

ROBERTS: The Estate might or might not do this – irrelevant. The point is, Quintus Grummond himself does not *directly* do this because he is incapacitated under life support. Other people do this work, and it is *their* contribution to society, not his.

NEVILLE: He *does* directly do all these things; he is their principal cause. Without his instructions for the maintenance of the Estate, none of the endeavors I have spoken of would have continued. Recall that all decisions' implementations are delayed in time, but their consequences are still to be credited to the decision-makers, no matter whether they made these decisions seconds, days, or years ago. And *dismantling* the Estate is your client's aim, anyway, so, I dare say, if we are going to argue on the basis of societal benefits, your victory in this case will take all too many of them away. This, ladies and gentlemen, is a key idea to remember in general: the rational interests of men never clash. When men respect each other's property, and all people's rights to strive for the acquisition of further property, they can cooperate together to mutual advantage. The Estate's customers respect Quintus Grummond's right to property, and trade with his business on bilaterally acceptable terms. Their interests are satisfied, and so are his. The so-called "societal interest" does not really exist except as an easy reference to the sum total of the interests of the individuals comprising a society. So, once again, the values that the Estate of Grummond brings fall into neat subordination to the ultimate value of life, which no man ought to subvert.

ROBERTS (sees that he cannot win on the present line of argument, therefore seeks to manage a transition to another one as subtly as possible): Mr. Neville, I did fail you for a good reason. Hmm... You see, Mr. Neville, if the interests of rational men cannot clash, as you say, then how is it that the interests of my client – his very deeply heart-wrenchingly human interests of respect for his father's dignity and the ability to live his own life free from the vicious corporate machine that is the Estate – are in conflict with these alleged "interests" of Quintus Grummond – really the interests of said vicious corporate machine?

NEVILLE: The answer is simple. Your client is not a rational man; nor are his interests rational.

ROBERTS: Objection! Your Honor, this man is publicly insulting my client!

NEVILLE: Your Honor, *this* man (points to ROBERTS) has not only repeatedly insulted *my* client, the Estate of Grummond, by calling it a "vicious corporate machine," as well as my client, Quintus Grummond, by referring to him as a corpse and a vicious machine (however you can

make those two compatible), but also myself personally, by continually harping on the episode wherein he had self-righteously failed me at Harvard.

JUDGE: Objection overruled. The court compliments the defense on a fine rebuttal. Going forward, insults are to be permitted in this courtroom so long as they contribute to the intensity and the public's enjoyment of the debate. The defense may proceed.

NEVILLE: Thank you, Your Honor. Now, with regard to your arguments about your client's respect for his father's dignity, they could not have been falser. How does one respect an individual's dignity by denying him the exercise of his will, in both senses of the word? Moreover, what dignity does a dead man have that its quantity would exceed the dignity possessed by Quintus Grummond at present? A dead man has zero dignity in his state of death, I would argue.

ROBERTS: Well, Quintus Grummond has even *less* dignity!

NEVILLE: *Negative dignity?* Is the attorney for the plaintiffs suggesting that Quintus Grummond's present state on life support can somehow *undo* the dignity that Mr. Grummond had earned in the past through his character and accomplishments? My, ladies and gentlemen, I never thought that time travel was possible, but apparently Mr. Roberts has hypothesized of a way to do it. One needs only hook oneself to a life-support machine, and, voila! One can *erase* the past, albeit the *positive* aspects of the past.

ROBERTS: Stop playing these vile rhetorical games, Mr. Neville! You should have known that dignity is in the eye of the beholder. Of course, the beholder has to be somebody who can, at this given instant, use his mind so as to employ the concept of dignity. My client is one such beholder. What stops him from imagining his father on life support and then getting a *worse impression* of his father, including his father's past, than he had before? Your failure to understand these things is yet another reason for your failure at Harvard.

NEVILLE: So, now, instead of basing your arguments on some objective idea of "dignity," as I have been trying to do, you are shifting to somebody's *subjective impressions* as the reasons why that person is authorized to decide to terminate somebody else's *absolute, independently existing* life! Why should your client be allowed to kill his father? Your answer, in essence, is "Because he *feels bad* if he does not do it." Well, if this is the case, I must inform you that your client would do all of us a service by seriously readjusting his feelings, not by readjusting reality to conform to their arbitrariness.

ROBERTS: Now, ladies and gentlemen, for all his talk about preserving "individual rights," whatever that means, Mr. Neville is prepared to dictate to others what they should or should not feel!

NEVILLE: There is a right and a wrong way to feel, just as there is a right and a wrong way to think. I am not *coercing* anyone by suggesting that your client ought to correct his errors instead of using them as the basis for violating the rights of others. And if you, Mr. Roberts, would wish to silence me for voicing my opinion on another's mental state, that would be a suppression of

my rights, not your client's. I think I have been able to adequately explain why your client cannot rightly argue that his father's dignity has at all been damaged, nor have any cause to terminate his life on the basis of such a claim. As for your second presumption – that your client must for some reason continuously live in the shadow of the Estate while despising it – I do not see how this is so. Your client is sixty years old. He is an adult, capable of living a life independent of the property and business of his father, if he should choose to do so. The Estate imposes nothing on him, and asks nothing of him. As a matter of fact, I will say, in my official capacity as manager and legal representative of the Estate, that the Estate would most sincerely desire that your client should have nothing to do with it. Your client, however, has no authority to *terminate* the Estate's existence simply because his subjective feelings are somehow hurt by it.

ROBERTS: But my client is the *son*, the legal, legitimate, closest descendant of Quintus Grummond! Should that not stand for something in this court? Or is the defense going to throw away all the ties of blood and kinship in favor of this cruel, cold, rationalistic calculus of corporatism?

NEVILLE: Property rights are not subject to being overruled by one's next of kin, especially next of kin who have done nothing to *earn* the property in question. An inheritance is a gift to be given freely to those deserving, not a sacred obligation to be carried out regardless of who inherits. Most people will their money to their children, it is true. The fact that Quintus Grummond did not is telling of your client's genuine standing as an individual and as a son. Yesterday, before you silenced me, I was about to ask your client how it is that he could have "supported" his father, as he claimed, if he had earned no income to support him by. Quite the contrary, your client has lived off of his father's fortune for the entirety of his life, and – rather than repaying this service with gratitude and respect, at the least – he has set himself upon the despicable course of patricide.

ROBERTS: It is not patricide if Quintus Grummond is already dead!

NEVILLE: If he were already dead, why is it that he currently happens to be on *life support*? Is there not a glaring contradiction in calling a man on life support dead?

ROBERTS: "Life support" is a misnomer! The term was constructed by cold rationalists like you, who wanted to pre-determine the conclusion that a man on life support must be alive by the name they gave to the word. If somebody had named you "the vicious Mr. Neville" and then tried to argue that "the vicious Mr. Neville" is vicious, he would win by default, just by the way he had set up his terms. But, after deconstructing arguments like that, we see that they are absurd. This is why we must toss out all analytic arguments based on definitions and instead look at real, human emotions as the basis for our judgments.

NEVILLE: Mr. Roberts, do you have even the slightest recognition that perhaps words and definitions are *not* somebody's arbitrary constructs, but rather refer to the actual data and phenomena of existence? For example, a life-support machine was so named because of its functions of sustaining the healthy operation of the organs of an individual's body. The reason why it is called "life support" is rooted in a most crucial philosophical insight. So long as a single organ in an individual's body continues to function, that individual is alive. So long as an

individual has even the slightest chance of regaining the function of his organs and/or his rational mind, he is alive. The present moment is not everything that exists with respect to an individual, and by far not everything that ought to be given philosophical consideration. An individual is *not* just his present state at a given moment, whatever that means, since time progresses continuously and it is impossible to ever put any entity in stasis with respect to time. Rather, an individual is the sum of the entirety of his past and the potential that he holds for the future; an individual is the mind that makes decisions, the body that implements them, and the property which bears their mark. An individual is his own property, and has jurisdiction over the entirety of his property, for all eternity if he should so choose. If he should decide to transfer his property to another through an inheritance, he may do so, but, if he decides otherwise, he has the sacred, inalienable right to determine the course his property will take a year, ten years, a thousand years from now. An individual's biological life extends as far as the functions of his body, aided by whatever external means he devises. The life of his property, however, can be as long as he, and only he, chooses.

ROBERTS: And the machines outlive the men, and the men turn into machines...

NEVILLE: I do not understand your contempt for technology, Mr. Roberts.

(Enter BAILEY, rushing into the courtroom.)

BAILEY: But *I* do! Ladies and gentlemen, I must report an abomination I have witnessed that will alter the entire course this case has taken.

JUDGE: Mr. Bailey, you are out of order. You may not just rush into a courtroom and interrupt procedure.

ROBERTS: My apologies, Your Honor, for this somewhat unorthodox interference, but Mr. Bailey is arriving late to testify for the plaintiffs. If I may interrupt this debate in order to bring him to the stand...

JUDGE: Permission granted. The court will be interested to hear the *news* that Mr. Bailey has brought us. The witness may take the stand. (BAILEY goes to the stand.)

ROBERTS: Thank you, Your Honor. Now, Mr. Bailey, where you have been to obtain this news?

BAILEY: I have been to the Grummond Center for Botanical Studies, so misnamed, for what actually goes on there is a perversion of all common decency!

ROBERTS: And what, if you may inform the court, is this perversion of common decency?

BAILEY: An abomination against nature: a project to revive Quintus Grummond!

(The REPORTERS and some of the SPECTATORS gasp.)

ROBERTS: Could you tell us more about what you think of this project?

BAILEY: I think, with my mind and my gut, that this project is a violation of the most sacred principles of nature, the principle of finitude. All things are finite. Nothing lasts forever. Everything must end. It is arrogance and hubris for men, mere men, to presume that they could overcome this certainty. Rather, they should resign themselves to it and cope with it as best they can. And besides, if everyone could do with themselves what the Estate is doing with Quintus Grummond, there would be overpopulation... and boredom with living too long... and our Social Security system would be overloaded. Everyone knows *that!* Right?

ROBERTS: Do you think that a lot of people would agree with this viewpoint?

BAILEY: Oh, almost everyone I know. To think... it is such utter selfishness for people to seek to postpone death when their time comes!

ROBERTS: What do you think ought to happen when a project so defies the general will?

BAILEY (fiercely): It ought to be halted, barred, impeded, trampled on by all necessary means, public and private! Or else it will endanger the very fabric of our society!

(Enter WALTONFORD, MARK, and VICTORIA, escorted by a contingent of GUARDS working for the Estate.)

WALTONFORD: Ladies and gentlemen, is it not evident that what this man suggests is to *trample* on individual rights and initiative?!

JUDGE: Sir, you are out of order! Has it become a custom in this court to enter unannounced and speak without warning?

NEVILLE: Your Honor, if the plaintiffs' witness is allowed to arrive late and will be entertained by the court, then the defense ought to have the same privilege. Will the court recognize my prerogative to question these three individuals?

JUDGE: The court grants you permission to do so, but only after the present testimony is concluded. For the moment, the newly arrived witnesses for the defense may be seated. Mr. Roberts, you may proceed with questioning your witness. (WALTONFORD, MARK, and VICTORIA sit on the side of the defense.)

ROBERTS: Thank you, Your Honor. Mr. Bailey, are you familiar with the story of Dr. Frankenstein?

BAILEY: The story of the man who created a monster out of a reanimated corpse? Yes, of course!

ROBERTS: If, as the plaintiffs argue, Quintus Grummond is currently dead, would his state, if "revived," not be equivalent to that of Frankenstein's creation?

BAILEY: Yes, but much worse! I have seen the metal gadgets that they intend to put into Quintus Grummond's brain to substitute for real, authentic, *organic* brain cells. I tell you, Frankenstein's monster was evil, but at least he was fully organic, like you and me. Now, this *creature* that the Estate seeks to let out is a Franken-robot of some sort, which will be even more distant from people as they naturally are supposed to be.

ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Bailey. You see, Your Honor, the defense has used as one of its arguments the idea that there is always a chance that Quintus Grummond might recover from his vegetative state. So, seeing how minuscule that chance is given the normal and proper course of things, the defense is trying to save face by *fudging* that chance. This is what I was referring to as the critical flaw of rationalism: rather than conforming their ideals to the way things are in the status quo, the rationalists try to conform the way things are in the status quo to their ideals. Of course, the result is always bad, and, in this case, it is especially terrible. Would anyone observing this case, as a conscientious person, ever want Franken-robots living in his community, or, worse, to *be* a Franken-robot himself? I have no further questions.

JUDGE: The defense may question the witness.

(In the meantime, WALTONFORD is whispering inaudibly in NEVILLE's ear.)

NEVILLE: Thank you, Your Honor. The defense has one question for the witness. Mr. Bailey, the project to restore the functionality of Quintus Grummond's brain was a highly confidential secret of the Estate. May I ask, by what means and by what authority did you come to be aware of it?

ROBERTS: Objection! All that should concern the court is that this project exists and its moral standing, not how the witness came to know of it!

JUDGE: I think Mr. Roberts makes a valid point. Besides, if the court indeed wishes to take *all* the factors in a situation into consideration, we must disregard such notions as privacy for the sake of the court's and the public's awareness – the common good, so to speak. Objection sustained.

(NEVILLE just shakes his head and sighs.)

NEVILLE: Very well. The defense has no further questions. However, I would like to call to the stand my own witness, Dr. Everett Waltonford.

JUDGE: The court will entertain this. Mr. Bailey, you may be seated. Dr. Waltonford, you may take the stand. (These directions are followed.)

NEVILLE: Thank you, your honor. Now, Dr. Waltonford, the attorney for the plaintiffs has made numerous erroneous attacks on the virtue of your project. Could you, as the scientist who has managed it for the past eight years, defend it before this court?

WALTONFORD: Most certainly, Mr. Neville. Contrary to the misrepresentations put forth by the attorney for the plaintiffs, combating death through artificial means is desirable and necessary. For millennia man has done this by developing his knowledge of medicine to cure illnesses and treat wounds, by his construction of sanitation systems and safety equipment to ward off disease and accidents. In the past hundred years, man has explored his own genome for the key to reforming his organism in order to make his life more fulfilling and to broaden his capacities as an individual. A key proposition of the defense's case in this trial is that, in accepting any premise, we must carry it to its logical extreme. And, indeed, the logical extreme of the proposition that combating death is desirable is the proposition that combating death through *any means* is desirable. Moreover, this logical extreme entails the idea that it is desirable not only to try to cure conditions for which there is a chance for so-called natural recovery, but also conditions for which there is not. After all, prior to the development of modern surgical techniques, a bullet wound in the stomach was mortal. Prior to the advent of genetic engineering and cell therapy, certain types of cancer were mortal. Prior to the ability to artificially alter genes in adult humans, Huntington's Disease was mortal. Should we have abstained from rendering these conditions easily curable? So, now, should we artificially draw the line at vegetative states for some reason and declare that vegetative states, which could be made curable through our newly developed techniques, should be allowed to continue to carry those afflicted by them away into oblivion?

The plaintiffs are wrong, moreover, to assert that a man rescued from the brink of death by artificial implants is for some reason an inhuman Franken-robot. Artificial enhancements have been a part of our lives since time immemorial; after all, we have artificially cross-bred certain plants and animals to serve as food for us. We have artificially manufactured prosthetic limbs and teeth, and even hearts and lungs, to replace those that had failed us despite the so-called natural perfection that the plaintiffs wrongly attribute to them. We have worn artificial fabrics known as clothing, and some of us have used artificial devices to enhance our sight and hearing. Some of us have even used artificial cosmetic substances to enhance our appearance. If we are to take to its logical extreme the argument that it is desirable to improve the naturally imperfect and fallible human condition by artificial means, then we must also concede that it is desirable to improve the naturally imperfect and vulnerable human brain, especially when it is mortally endangered, by artificial means, regenerating the memory and connections within it that would otherwise be imperiled.

The attorney for the plaintiffs speaks of this "humanity" that Quintus Grummond would for some reason lose by being subjected to our treatments. Yet, what defines humanity? What separates men from the animals? Is it not our capacity to *reason* and discover ways to interact with our environments to our advantage from the conclusions provided to us by our logic? While the animals function by instinct within whatever constraints their biology and immediate setting place upon them, man's capacity for abstract, systematic thought allows him to transcend his limitations. It is thus that man is able to *alter* his environment to better suit his purposes, especially the ultimate purpose of promoting the ultimate value, human life. Man's ability to create technology, and then to create technology derived from that technology, in a continual, ever-accelerating chain of events known as progress, is the ultimate manifestation of his unique and superior position in the hierarchy of life. By denying men the limitless use of this ability, it is precisely our humanity that the plaintiffs seek to take away from us, for our humanity is the sum

of our efforts, not the sum of the chaos, uncertainty, and peril that man encounters in the un-artificial wilderness. The latter state is precisely what the opponents of the revival plan, and of any attempts whatsoever to combat death, would rather have mankind thrust into.

Finally, the attorney for the plaintiffs has made rather superficial comments that a full-fledged attempt to combat death will result in overpopulation, boredom, and an overcrowded Social Security system. If technological progress continues to accelerate without *the plaintiffs'* intervention, however, man will continually have new lands before him to settle, on this world or on others. Moreover, I trust that individuals who have exercised their minds to develop these ingenious technologies will also exercise prudence enough not to give birth to more people than they can reasonably afford to raise. As for the boredom argument, if the individual's life is the ultimate value, would not boredom with life signify boredom with all values whatsoever, boredom with everything good and moral in this world? This would be an unjustified, arbitrary emotion – indeed, an emotion favoring evil, as evil is the antithesis of good. Rather than forcing the entire world to conform to it, its possessors ought to readjust it within themselves. On the issue of the pension system, the attorney for the plaintiffs may be correct. By reversing many of the afflictions of senility, our technology might allow men to attain such longevity as to render the pension system impractical. Perhaps it *ought* to be rendered impractical, because it is already immoral, operating on the faulty assumption that the elderly among us are somehow less competent, less willing, and less qualified to manage their lives autonomously, using money they have accumulated and saved or voluntary arrangements with charitable private parties. Quintus Grummond does not need your pension system, because his personal prudence and access to technology have set him free from its restraints. Why not give others the same opportunities on a free market?

NEVILLE: Thank you, Dr. Waltonford, for that most eloquent exposition. I think the court has seen now that there are two sides to this issue, and that ours logically outperforms the hysteria-ridden presentations of the plaintiffs' side. I hope that the court recognizes the merits of the endeavor undertaken by Dr. Waltonford and Grummond Laboratories and views it as evidence of Mr. Grummond's future recovery from his condition, his reacquisition of the use of his consciousness, and thus the impossibility of his being dead at this time. The defense has no further questions.

JUDGE: Very well, the plaintiffs' side may question the witness.

ROBERTS (fiercely): The plaintiffs' side categorically refuses to question this disgusting monster!

JUDGE: As Mr. Roberts wishes. The witness may be seated. (WALTONFORD takes his seat. As he does so, MARK addresses him in a manner inaudible to the court but audible to the audience.)

MARK: Doctor, might you have a pocket microscope with you?

WALTONFORD: I have one embedded in my eye. Why?

MARK: Could you please examine my hand? I keep sensing miniature pricks at it in one position.

WALTONFORD: Certainly. (Looks at MARK's hand for several seconds.) Mr. Mark, you have a listening device implanted in your hand! Now, who could have placed it there?

MARK: Might this be the reason why I had that unfortunate run-in with the IRS? Or why Bailey got a tip from *someone* as to where your project would be located? I shook my hand with Roberts yesterday, prior to entering the courtroom, and I am quite certain that the device belongs to him.

WALTONFORD: I shall communicate this to Mr. Neville as soon as I can. Then, that image of his that Mr. Roberts values above truth and justice shall be tainted forever.

NEVILLE (addressing the JUDGE): The defense now requests permission to call to the stand its next witness, Miss Victoria Grummond.

JUDGE: The witness may take the stand. (VICTORIA does so.)

NEVILLE: Thank you, Your Honor. Miss Grummond, is it true that you originally supported the plaintiffs in this case?

VICTORIA: It is.

NEVILLE: Then, what made you change your mind?

VICTORIA: Being informed of the same revival project that Mr. Roberts so condemned. I had known beforehand that the man whose consciousness is suspended at present is not dead, just as a sleeping man is not dead. I had questioned, however, whether Quintus Grummond could have ever recovered from his vegetative state. The revival project made that possibility quite likely, and, at the same time, enlightened me as to the nature of the vegetative state in general. If it is possible to treat the vegetative state by artificial methods, like those used to treat other afflictions, then it follows that a vegetative individual is suffering from an affliction only, not death itself, and a physically impaired individual, no matter what the impairment, is still alive. Of course, if Quintus Grummond is alive in a vegetative state during an instance in which he can be treated, this means that he would be alive even if such treatments did not exist, given, of course, that his vegetative state could be maintained. This is so because the same person in the same physical state must be either alive or dead universally, irrespective of the time he lives in or the technologies available to respond to his condition. After all, a sick, injured, or paralyzed man during the Stone Age or in Ancient Greece would be just as alive during his time as a sick, injured, or paralyzed man is during ours. And, of course, if Mr. Grummond is alive, terminating his life support is tantamount to murder, and appropriating his wealth is tantamount to theft.

NEVILLE: Thank you, Miss Grummond. The defense has no further questions.

JUDGE: The plaintiffs' side may question the witness.

ROBERTS (stares at VICTORIA contemptuously): Certainly not!

JUDGE: The witness may be seated. (VICTORIA sits.)

NEVILLE: Now, for my next witness, I call to the stand Mr. Edward Mark.

JUDGE: The witness may take the stand. (MARK does so.)

NEVILLE: Thank you, Your Honor. During the debate and past testimonies, I provided extensive proof as to the invalidity of the implied consent argument. That argument has been used by the attorney for the plaintiffs merely to cover up the plaintiff's genuine motives for filing this suit. For what these motives are, I turn to Mr. Mark. Mr. Mark, is it true that you spoke once with the plaintiff, Mr. Grummond the Younger?

MARK: It is.

NEVILLE: Could you describe the circumstances under which the conversation took place?

MARK: I encountered the plaintiff during a reception at the Grummond Mansion, where he was engaged in heavy drinking of wine, which apparently reduced his ability to restrain the expression of his true thoughts and motives. What he told me would be a shock to any civilized listener, and flatly contradicts Mr. Roberts's attempt to establish the plaintiff as a model compassionate human being.

NEVILLE: What did he tell you, then?

MARK: First, he expressed a philosophy that absolutely neglected the fact that man's existence is inextricably bound to the passage of time and the pursuit of rational objectives over time. Rather, he stated to me that the present moment is all that exists and all that matters, another way of saying that nothing really matters, since, in a life solely immersed in the present, there can be no goals, aspirations, or values. Therefore, according to him, "life is a big party" and ought to be wasted in the hedonistic pursuit of momentary pleasures. In accord with this belief, he revealed a scheme to implement waste and destruction on a colossal scale, limited only by his present inability to access funds, but which it would be quite possible for him to carry out had he inherited his father's fortune.

NEVILLE: And what is this scheme?

MARK: I quote, "the biggest demolition derby in the history of the world," in which the plaintiff would take a perverse pleasure in seeing the most intricate vehicles reduced to scrap metal, thus demonstrating, in his mind, the futility of everything. I would say it demonstrates not the futility of anything, but rather the plaintiff's hatred for the efficiency, order, and purpose of so many things in life that are not futile – his hatred of what is good *because* it is good. Such a worldview, as I have learned through my philosophical explanations, is called *nihilism*, and nobody is more depraved than a nihilist. The plaintiff further demonstrated his nihilism to me by revealing some of his other schemes to spend his father's hard-earned and diligently expanded wealth on a one-

time mass bacchanalia involving rappers, showgirls, and poisonous substances that paralyze one's rational faculty.

NEVILLE: So, allow me to paraphrase the plaintiff's motivations in full. He would *kill his father* in order to indulge in these sprees of nihilism?

MARK: Yes. We ought to consider that, because a nihilist hates all that is good because it is good, he will hate the diligence, productivity, and long-range prudence of a man such as Quintus Grummond, even if such a man had put food in the plaintiff's mouth and made possible the latter's parasitic existence. And, indeed, the only way a nihilist can indulge his hedonistic whims is by parasitizing off of those who *had* engaged in productive, value-generating activity at some point in time.

ROBERTS: Objection! This is all pure speculation! The defense cannot *prove* that my client actually thinks this!

NEVILLE: Your Honor, what else is Mr. Mark's testimony regarding the plaintiff's *actual words* but a revelation of what the plaintiff actually thinks?

JUDGE: The defense makes a good point. Objection overruled. If the plaintiffs wish to challenge the defense's analysis, that challenge should still be compatible with the factual evidence that the defense has presented.

NEVILLE: Thank you, Your Honor. Now, ladies and gentlemen, do you see the true face of the plaintiffs' side, and the reason why the plaintiff – Mr. Grummond the Younger – would need to hide behind a façade of benevolence to perpetrate his destruction? Mr. Mark, have you ever had the chance to ask the plaintiff why he so desires to waste everything?

MARK: Yes, and the plaintiff only responded that he has the right to spend *his* money as he pleases.

NEVILLE: But is the money that he had never earned and that was never designated for him truly his?

MARK: No, he is usurping it. This is clear because, had he actually been a rational value-producer deserving of that money, he would never have designed to spend it in such a wantonly heedless fashion. Quintus Grummond knew his son's personality, and recognized it as incompatible with an inheritance of that caliber.

NEVILLE: Quintus Grummond did indeed know that. I can attest to this, having personally known him. Thank you, Mr. Mark. The defense has no further questions. (NEVILLE is seated.)

JUDGE: The plaintiffs' side may question the witness.

ROBERTS (pauses for a moment): Yes, thank you, Your Honor. As a matter of fact, I *do* have several questions for Mr. Mark. (ROBERTS rises.) First of all, Mr. Mark, would you not agree

that this Estate contract, whereby my client was denied his inheritance, is highly atypical and unorthodox?

MARK: Yes, but –

ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Mark. Now, do you know of any other instances in which such an arrangement had been made?

MARK: No, but –

ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Mark. So, then, are there any laws covering such arrangements, especially laws that would explicitly permit them?

MARK: No, but –

ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Mark –

NEVILLE: Objection! The attorney for the plaintiffs is not permitting the witness to respond fully to his inquiries, thus presenting a skewed portrayal of what the witness actually thinks. The "but" clauses are of considerable importance, especially if it is Mr. Mark's intention to demonstrate why this line of Mr. Roberts's questioning does not at all undermine the defense's case.

ROBERTS: Your Honor, my inquiries did not include the option of Mr. Mark putting "but" clauses in his answers. They were simple, straightforward "yes or no" questions.

JUDGE: This is an... interesting technique by the plaintiffs' side, and the court will tolerate it. Objection overruled.

ROBERTS: Thank you, Your Honor. So, then, Mr. Mark, is it not true that any action which a law does not explicitly authorize is outside the legal sphere and thus illegitimate?

MARK: That is absolutely false. In a country based on individual rights –

ROBERTS (shouts fiercely): Answer my question, Mr. Mark! *Is it not true?!* Don't give this irrelevant jibber-jabber about individual rights!

MARK (glares at ROBERTS): I *am* answering your question, Mr. Roberts. The answer is that what you said is *not* true, and I was informing the court *why* it is not true. I am informing the court that an individual has the right to act in any manner *not explicitly prohibited* –

ROBERTS: Objection! This witness stubbornly refuses to answer the question I have posed to him in a manner that satisfies the requirements posed by the question!

NEVILLE: This is absurd! All that the witness is doing is answering the question in a manner that the plaintiffs' side disagrees with and in a manner that would derail the argument Mr. Roberts is trying to make by showing it to be illegitimate.

JUDGE: The court finds the defense correct on this. The witness is not required to agree with the intent of the question from the plaintiffs' side. Objection overruled.

ROBERTS (sighs): So be it. But the plaintiffs' side will not continue to question such an offensive and uncooperative witness.

JUDGE: The witness may be seated.

(Enter TAX AGENTS, their faces still concealed by shadows.)

TAX AGENT: Not so fast! This man deserves to be punished for evading the Internal Revenue Service!

JUDGE: Sir, the Internal Revenue Service has no special privileges in this courtroom. If you have any grievances against Mr. Mark, I suggest that you follow standard procedure in filing a separate lawsuit against him, *not* interrupting this one.

TAX AGENT (snarls): Oh, very well, but the IRS is watching you, Judge. The IRS is watching all of you!

(In the meantime, WALTONFORD is whispering in NEVILLE's ear again.)

NEVILLE (stands): Excuse me, Your Honor. The defense would like to call this agent to the witness stand.

JUDGE (sighs): So long as it is relevant to this lawsuit and this lawsuit only, the defense's wish is entertained. The witness may take the stand. (The TAX AGENT does so, snarling again.)

NEVILLE: Thank you, Your Honor. Now, before I begin questioning the witness, I remind him that he should keep in mind that he is under oath to tell the truth in what is asked of him. After all, an agent of the IRS so concerned with the enforcement of the law would never stoop to perjury and thus violate the law. (The TAX AGENT nods frantically.) Very well, sir. A simple question. Who suggested to you that you should conduct an audit of Mr. Mark's income?

ROBERTS: Objection! This witness was only permitted onto the stand under the condition that the questions asked him would be relevant to this case!

NEVILLE: Your Honor, before you decide the relevance of this question, I sincerely request that you hear the answer. That should leave not a single doubt in your mind that it is indeed relevant.

JUDGE: Interesting, Mr. Neville. You now have the court's curiosity. Objection overruled.

NEVILLE: Thank you, Your Honor. Now, sir (addresses TAX AGENT), what is your answer?

TAX AGENT: Since I must tell the truth, Trent Roberts.

(An abundance of gasps is heard.)

NEVILLE: Were you aware, when Mr. Roberts recommended this course of action to you, that Mr. Mark was due today to testify here in court as a witness for the defense, and that his testimony, which we had recently heard, could be damaging to the plaintiffs' case?

TAX AGENT: No, I was told nothing about this case by Mr. Roberts.

NEVILLE: So, ladies and gentlemen, it seems that the plaintiffs' side is the one fudging the circumstances of this case to prevent challenges to its arguments. Mr. Roberts must have known that, if Mr. Mark were to be involved in dealing with the IRS today, he would be unable to give his testimony in court –

ROBERTS: Objection! The defense has absolutely no proof that I had this knowledge or this intent!

NEVILLE: Does the court wish to be exposed to the defense's proof of this?

JUDGE: The court will entertain an exposition of the defense's proof. Objection overruled.

NEVILLE: Thank you, Your Honor. (Takes a magnifying glass out of his pocket.) This, ladies and gentlemen, is a pocket microscope. If Mr. Mark might approach me, for this demonstration... (MARK does so. NEVILLE raises MARK's hand and puts the magnifying glass to it. The audience sees a large foreign object through the magnifying glass.) This, ladies and gentlemen, is a listening device, embedded by *somebody* in Mr. Mark's hand. Who could that person be, you may be wondering? Now, for the second part of my demonstration, I would like to ask that Mr. Roberts unpack and turn on his monitor.

ROBERTS: Objection! The defense has no authority to force me to do this!

JUDGE: Objection overruled. The defense has this authority, since the court has decided to entertain its presentation of the evidence, which *you*, Mr. Roberts, had first brought up as being necessary. Turn on your monitor, Mr. Roberts, and place it in full view.

(ROBERTS turns on and displays his monitor to the audience. On it is seen the courtroom from MARK's point of view.)

NEVILLE: What is this, ladies and gentlemen, but an image of this very setting through the vantage point of Mr. Mark? We even hear at this time my voice emanating through the monitor, exactly as Mr. Mark would hear it. We see now that the listening device embedded in Mr. Mark's hand is connected to Trent Roberts' monitor. Is there any doubt as to who had embedded this device into Mr. Mark? I admit, Your Honor, that yesterday evening Mr. Mark and I discussed the

possibility of Mr. Mark's presence in court as a witness for the defense. Mr. Roberts must have overheard this conversation and decided to contact my witness in order to avert Mr. Mark's arrival in court today. I now ask my witness, when were you contacted by Mr. Roberts?

TAX AGENT: Yesterday evening.

NEVILLE: As I had expected. So, Your Honor, even if the defense's abundant arguments have not served to convince you, you should still throw out this lawsuit on the grounds of a gross obstruction of justice on the part of the plaintiffs' attorney. The procedure Mr. Roberts had undertaken in an attempt to bar Mr. Mark from the witness stand is hardly an ethical practice. I have no more questions for the witness.

JUDGE: The plaintiffs' attorney may question the witness.

ROBERTS: This is ridiculous! No, I won't question the witness!

JUDGE: Very well, the witness may be seated.

ROBERTS (in a furious tempest of words): Your Honor, spectators and media, everything that you have heard thus far from the defense is utter rubbish, all continuing to perpetuate that foolishness for which I failed Mr. Neville back at Harvard! For all of his clever words, Mr. Neville fails to grasp the very simple and obvious fact – that Quintus Grummond is dead, dead, dead, because the present *is* all that matters, and his brain is dysfunctional at the present. He does not have present use of his consciousness and thus is dead –

(Enter QUINTUS GRUMMOND, fully alert and capable of the entire range of human interactions.)

GRUMMOND: I do not have present use of my consciousness? That is news to me.

SERVANT (exclaims with joy): Mr. Grummond!

(The courtroom freezes for several seconds, and the JUDGE's mouth hangs open.)

JUDGE (recovering from the shock): Mr. Grummond, you are out of order! But, it seems that being out of order has become so common in this courtroom that I shall overlook this transgression. Due to the fact that you are in this room and no longer on life support, the court sees the plaintiffs' desire to terminate your life support as obsolete, and the main plaintiff's aim to appropriate the property of your Estate as tantamount to a request to steal it, since it now, by any standard, reverts back to you without further questions asked. As for the plaintiffs' arguments about you being a Franken-robot, the court simply doesn't buy them. You look perfectly human to me, and Dr. Waltonford provided a much more thorough explanation for why this is than did the plaintiffs' side in the presentation of its own arguments to the contrary. Case dismissed.

ROBERTS (losing all self-control): This is an outrage! I am Trent Roberts, J.D. from Harvard, and I will have you removed from the bench, Benson! I thought I could trust you with this case! I thought you would preside over it with the proper degree of gratitude to the core of our legal establishment – namely, myself! I, Trent Roberts, am the representative of society, in all of its feelings and desires and habits and paradigms and constructs and collective aspirations, and thus *am* the law! What I say must be! And Harvard stands behind me! And what did you do?! Let idiotic failures like Neville here, whom Harvard, in its wisdom, had rejected, win this case?! Say goodbye to your career, Benson! I have Harvard to make sure of that! I have the thousands of officials on my contact list to make sure you never experience peace until the end of your days! (ROBERTS rushes outside the courthouse, but remains in the vicinity.)

GRUMMOND (chuckles and walks toward NEVILLE to shake his hand): Well, Raymond, you were a good investment. You have managed to remove all disguises from this man, and now he is lashing out at the world with all the hatred he has always exhibited for it. But, truly, he is powerless now to undo the disclosure of his true personality or to exercise his former pull, a pull rooted in deception. If you maintain your philosophical integrity throughout your legal career, Raymond, all these charlatans will run from you, and will have no further place in our court system. You shall henceforth be my attorney of choice for all future legal encounters I might have to face, and your salary shall be... modified accordingly.

NEVILLE: Thank you, Sir.

GRUMMOND: And, Everett, I am thankful for your diligent work, without which I would not have been able to address you right now. You shall hitherto have unlimited funding for any scientific endeavor you would wish to pursue.

WALTONFORD: Thank you, Sir.

GRUMMOND (addresses SERVANT): You, Sir, were prepared to defend me in court, though I see that it did not come to that. Thank you, nonetheless. I value loyalty and reliability in my employees. You shall be rewarded in turn with the property title to a fully paid house.

SERVANT: Thank you, Sir.

(GRUMMOND spots OSWALD and addresses him.)

GRUMMOND: Now, what can I say about this lout? Oswald, you tried to kill me. You cannot expect to continue to remain in my good graces after that. You are hereby disowned, and barred in perpetuity from the use of any of my property!

OSWALD (shaking): But how... can I... survive?

GRUMMOND: You should have thought about that beforehand. Now go! Vanish from this place! The very sight of you disgusts me!

(OSWALD runs out in a frenzy.)

GRUMMOND (addresses VICTORIA and MARK): Now, my dear niece, I have not seen much of you in the past years, but I have been informed of your upcoming wedding. Let us now depart to make plans for the most delightful celebration we can conceive of, all drawn from my account, so to speak.

(GRUMMOND, VICTORIA, MARK, WALTONFORD, NEVILLE, and the SERVANT leave the stage together, conversing in a manner inaudible to the audience. The spotlight now moves outside the courthouse, where ROBERTS intercepts OSWALD while the latter is running.)

ROBERTS: Not so fast, Oswald. There is still the issue of my just payment for services rendered in this lawsuit.

OSWALD: What are you talking about, man? I have nothing! My father just disowned me! Can't you give me a break?

ROBERTS: As they say in the respected establishment of jurisprudence, *tough*. You must pay me; I do not care if you go into perpetual debt to do it.

OSWALD (punches ROBERTS in the face. ROBERTS collapses.): You cold, heartless, money-grubbing scoundrel... wait... isn't that what Roberts would call people? Oh, what's the use?! One can't ever know anything, anyway! (OSWALD runs offstage.)

(ROBERTS recovers and rises after a few seconds.)

ROBERTS: What? That cold, heartless, money-grubbing scoundrel! You won't escape me forever, do you hear?! I shall muster all the forces I can and will have you hunted to the ends of the Earth! And beyond! (Sighs.) Time to get the big book out again.

(The lights are dimmed.)

Act IV, Scene V

(This scene takes place a month after the trial at the reception following MARK's and VICTORIA's wedding. MARK and VICTORIA are accompanied by QUINTUS GRUMMOND, NEVILLE, and WALTONFORD.)

GRUMMOND: Well, congratulations, Mr. and Mrs. Mark. Now, I shall announce the present that I had in mind to celebrate the occasion. I have decided to give away a third of my money – to you.

(MARK and VICTORIA display amazement.)

VICTORIA (whispers to MARK): You were right. You were entirely right. This is far more than I could have ever expected to win by testifying for the plaintiffs.

MARK: We are most pleasantly surprised, Mr. Grummond, and we shall certainly put the funds to good use. Victoria, that should be more than enough money to establish your Academy of High Art.

VICTORIA: Indeed. We should never again be lacking in the means to accomplish our objectives. My sincerest thanks to you, Uncle.

GRUMMOND: You see, ladies and gentlemen, we self-made magnates are not stingy when we see good reason to behave otherwise. We reward achievement, and reward it more amply than anybody else can, since we know that it is by human achievement – our own and that of the associates we have wisely and selectively chose – that we rise to our colossal prosperity. And we see nothing more deserving of our investment than the integrity of an individual's mind and its devotion to rational principles. This is why I have chosen to so endow the young couple here. As for the remainder of my funds, they shall never partake in any inheritance. Rather, my design is to perpetuate the Estate of Grummond indefinitely, and define its operations for all time, allowing, of course, for flexibility in management due to the development of future technologies or more efficient means of production and distribution. A man's life, as I have found out all too personally, remains distressingly vulnerable to the elements, even at our unprecedented level of technological advancement. The products of a man's mind, his ideas and his purpose, however, may be far less vulnerable so long as they are implemented in practice. The techniques developed by Dr. Waltonford have been able to extend my biological life considerably, and it may even be that they shall indefinitely preserve me from peril. However, I would like to ensure that, whatever happens to my body, the designs of my mind shall ever play an active role in the world and build upon themselves in ever-increasing complexity and splendor. This manner of immortality is second only to immortality in the flesh. How can you respect this arrangement, ladies and gentlemen?

The answer is quite simple. (He extracts his will from his pocket.) You must hold this piece of paper as sacrosanct, above your wishes, whims, and spurs of the moment, above your desires for instantaneous wealth that has not been given to you of a man's free will. Respect this paper, be it a will, a contract, or a pledge, and you will thereby respect property. Respect property, and you will thereby respect life. If you fail to do either one, you will fail to do the other, and your existence shall become as wasteful and meaningless as that of the hooligan I had once called "son."

WALTONFORD: Words of wisdom from a wise man. Now, Miss Grummond, I have a most interesting proposition for you. How would you like to establish your academy – on the Moon?

VICTORIA: The Moon?

WALTONFORD: With the sort of funds available to you, it could be done several times over. Think about this: a massive residential complex, with all the conveniences afforded by modern technology: its own self-sustaining farms and ranches, its own industry, and its own government – that is, you and your husband – all working to sustain a community of individualist creators, not mired in tomes of unwieldy regulations and tangles of red tape, not bombarded with the decadent habits of pop-culture, free from any oversight but that of your own rational minds. I

have already sketched out several immensely cost-efficient methods by which this could be done, and it would be quite an interesting endeavor for me to undertake. Now that I have probed into the deepest secrets of life, I would like to try my mind at conquering other worlds.

NEVILLE: And, Mr. Mark, that would also mean the end of your legal troubles. I have been holding back the IRS from infringing upon your accounts for quite some time, but that agency, we all know, will never of its own accord agree to back out of this uneasy stalemate. How would you like to show the IRS agents your gratitude for the *immensely kind* treatment they have afforded you, by forever denying them the ability to tax you? It could be done, if you form your own independent political jurisdiction on the moon and do away with this legalized plunder known as the income tax.

MARK: This is most intriguing. I have been thinking on this subject myself and pondering about what defines a slave. If a slave is somebody whom another forces to give up one hundred percent of the products of his labor, then who is a person whom somebody forces to give up thirty-nine percent of the products of his labor? Is he a partial slave? And who is the beneficiary? A slaveholder? Or the Federal Government? Is there really a difference between the two under such a system? If so, is it a difference of kind, or only one of degree? No, if a man's property is his own, he must have full discretion over how to use it, giving it to the government only as he sees fit, for purposes in which he thinks the government will protect his inalienable rights. Perhaps in our new world, *this* kind of property could finally come to exist.

VICTORIA: Just one question: When can we begin?

WALTONFORD: I can start work right away. Of course, after that debacle with Daniel Bailey, our security and concealment procedures have been so enhanced as to prevent such snooping. An invisibility shield spanning several square kilometers will do the trick.

MARK: Whatever happened to Daniel Bailey, anyway? I have not seen a single report of his after his testimony in court.

NEVILLE: It is said that Bailey was fired from Standard News for blatantly editorializing in his news report on the discovery of the revival project. It seems to be the policy of the station that society is best served when a reporter gives the facts impartially, or at least craftily hides his own bias.

MARK: And the general will got even with Mr. Bailey for crossing it.

(They laugh.)

VICTORIA: On the matter of the general will, what was the fate of Judge Benson, the man who rejected principles on principle, and sought for his judgments to reflect the ever-changing paradigms of society?

NEVILLE: Apparently somebody convinced him that it would be in the best interests of society for him to resign from his position and permanently abandon the search for another career.

Having no philosophical convictions of his own, Benson had no means by which to counter this argument, and thus was internally moved to concede its validity and follow its recommendations.

GRUMMOND: A man who holds no philosophy of his own will inevitably succumb to the worst and most self-destructive attitudes that exist out there. That drunken lout Oswald was a good example of this.

WALTONFORD: Oswald, so I have heard, did not escape the burden of paying for the lawsuit he filed against us. Trent Roberts managed to fulfill his notorious promise of hunting Oswald wherever he went, and eventually forced him to assume tremendous debts to pay Roberts off. Now, no sane employer would ever hire Oswald, so he had no means of ever recovering the losses. Thus, he decided to die as he had lived. He entered even further debts to attend a demolition derby in which he threw himself at a flaming vehicle.

MARK: Thus did he burn away his life. Now, at the last, I am pleased to report that our old friend Trent Roberts did not get off the hook of poetic justice, either. It startled me to read in a recent Internet news magazine that Mr. Roberts had been surprised by an IRS audit, out of which he could not maneuver for all his slick sophistry – an audit sparked by Roberts' extortion of immense funds from Oswald to pay for his trial services. Now, Mr. Roberts dallied somewhat, it seems, in reporting his new income, and the IRS... I think we can guess by this time what the IRS does with people in those circumstances.

NEVILLE: And Harvard did nothing come to his defense? I am astonished!

WALTONFORD: It looks like Harvard has a new pet, in its science department, I fear. He is one of those theorists who believes that the universe is going to expand and contract and dance the polka before spiraling into a black hole and then diminishing into a single point of immaterial matter, unless, of course, we humans cut our industrial emissions immediately!

VICTORIA: I think if he cut his emissions of wasteful sophist doubletalk, man would be far better off.

MARK: But, thankfully, we do not have to deal with them. While senseless sophistries at home prevail, toward a new and better world we sail.

(Curtain.)

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