



Little Brother

adapted by Josh Costello ■ from the novel by Cory Doctorow

About the Playwright: Josh Costello is a Bay Area stage director and the Literary Manager at Aurora Theatre Company. His other adaptations include *Ubu for President* (loosely adapted from *Ubu Roi* by Alfred Jarry, directed by Patrick Dooley for Shotgun Players) and *The Rover* (adapted from the play by Aphra Behn, directed by Josh for the Chance Theatre Repertory Company in southern California and for a live television broadcast on L.A. and Orange County's PBS affiliate). His recent directing work includes *Little Brother*, *Reborn* by Zayd Dohrn at SF Playhouse, and *Toil and Trouble* by Lauren Gunderson at Impact Theatre (all world premieres). As the Artistic Director of Expanded Programs at Marin Theatre Company, Josh directed *My Children! My Africa!*, the Bay Area premiere of *Lovers & Executioners*, and several touring shows for children. Josh was the founder and first Artistic Director of Impact Theatre. He holds a BFA in Theatre from Boston University, and an MFA in Directing from the University of Washington, Seattle.

About the Novelist: Cory Doctorow (crapbound.com) is a science fiction author, activist, journalist and blogger—the co-editor of *Boing Boing* (boingboing.net) and the author of young adult novels like *Pirate Cinema* and *Little Brother* and novels for adults like *Rapture of the Nerds* and *Makers*. He is the former European director of the Electronic Frontier Foundation and cofounded the UK Open Rights Group. Born in Toronto, Canada, he now lives in London.

About the Play: *Little Brother* was originally produced in January/February 2012 by the Custom Made Theatre Company, San Francisco, CA; Brian Katz, artistic director and Leah S. Abrams, managing director.

Playwright's Note: I first read Cory Doctorow's *Little Brother* in 2009. I loved it, and it wasn't long before I started thinking about turning it into a play. It's got all kinds of things I like



Cory Censoprano and Daniel Petzold in Custom Made Theatre Company's world premiere of *Little Brother*. Photo: Jay Yamada

to put on stage: young people fighting back against authority, a pinch of science fiction, a sweet yet strikingly honest teen romance. There aren't many stories that hit so many of my buttons at once.

Since then, events in the real world threatened to move past what happens in the story; Occupy Wall Street began just as we were gearing up to begin rehearsals at Custom Made. It has been said that Cory Doctorow predicts the present. When people in New York and Cairo and around the world use technology to come together in solidarity against vastly more powerful forces—and when our president signs a bill legalizing the indefinite detention without trial of American citizens—the kind of present that Cory Doctorow predicts in *Little Brother* looks more and more like right now.

I hope fans of the book will forgive me for the changes I've made. I made some pretty big changes, not because I think I know better than Cory—I'm at least as big a fan as you are—

but because a play and a novel are different beasts. Cory clearly believes in remixing and retelling, and that's exactly what this is.

I love this story. I love that it's both epic and detailed, both serious and funny, both earnest and subversive. I love that fans of the book—including more than a few teenagers—found their way into the theatre for the premiere production, rubbing shoulders with Custom Made subscribers. I can't think of any story I'd rather tell right now. Enjoy.

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Original production presented by the Custom Made Theatre Company at the Gough Street Playhouse in San Francisco, CA. January/February 2012.

Director: Josh Costello

Stage Manager: Maxx Kurzunksi

Set Design: Sarah Phykitt

Costume Design: Miyuki Bierlein

Lighting Design: Krista Smith

Composition/Sound Design: Chris Houston

Video Design: Pauline Luppert

Video Engineer: Darl Andrew Packard

Properties Design: Sarah Spero

Set Construction: Sam Schwemberger

Choreography: Daunielle Rasmussen

Fight Choreography: Jon Bailey

Assistant Director: Sarah Nagelvoort

Assistant Stage Manager: Britney Smallwood

Original Cast

Daniel Petzold (Marcus), Marissa Keltie (Ange), Cory Censoprano (Darryl)

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LITTLE BROTHER

based on the novel by Cory Doctorow
adapted by Josh Costello

CHARACTERS

MARCUS YALLOW — 17, white.

DARRYL — 17, not white. Best friends with MARCUS. DARRYL also plays many other characters, including JOLU, DAD, and TRUDY DOO.

ANGE — 17, any ethnicity. ANGE also plays many other characters, including MOM and SEVERE HAIRCUT.

DESIGN

The setting is the interior of a more or less empty storefront on Valencia Street in San Francisco. The set for the original production included a wall of papered-over windows, including a door with window seats on either side. The windows served as the surface for video projections. Simple box benches were stage left and stage right, serving as storage for all the props and costumes and sometimes being pulled into the center of the space by the actors to become the bed and other scenic elements. A couple of rolling office chairs came in handy as well.

MARCUS narrates to the audience, stepping in and out of scenes as necessary. DARRYL and ANGE can also speak to the audience, and unlike MARCUS they each play a bunch of other roles. The design and staging should be conceived with this in mind, so that the play never has to stop moving for a costume change; fluidity is key. The same holds true for the many locations in the story; quick suggestions and a kickass lighting designer will be much more effective than big scene changes.

The video should never be the primary focus for the audience; it's always there to support the actors. There are a few sequences involving texting, chatting, and blogging. Do not ask the audience to read the text while the actors sit there typing into their prop keyboards. Instead, the screen shows prerecorded video (or still photos) of the actors at their keyboards, while the live actors are free to move around, make eye contact with each other, and address the audience directly. The idea is to present the subjective experience of having a conversation through the internet—for these characters, it feels like they are really talking to each other. And for the audience, the visceral connection between the actors that fuels live theatre isn't broken.

Whenever possible—and certainly in the prologue and epilogue—we might see DARRYL and ANGE off to the side with a laptop as if they are running the sound cues and video projections themselves.

ACT ONE

(Lights up on MARCUS, ANGE, and DARRYL. ANGE holds a video camera mounted on a tripod resting across her shoulders;

DARRYL carries a laptop and some cables—they look tough, ready to be embedded. A tableau with MARCUS in the center, not unlike the cover of the book.)

(MARCUS addresses the audience directly, perhaps with a dorky little wave that completely undercuts the badassness of the tableau.)

MARCUS: Hi.

(ANGE and DARRYL groan and roll their eyes. MARCUS snaps back into the badass pose and starts over.)

My name is Marcus Yallow. I'm a senior at Cesar Chavez High in San Francisco's sunny Mission district, and that makes me one of the most surveilled people in the world.

DARRYL: *(also addressing the audience directly)* No doubt.

(ANGE and DARRYL begin setting up—plugging the camera into the laptop, setting up the tripod.)

MARCUS: This is Darryl Glover, my best friend. He goes to Cesar Chavez too.

DARRYL: Hi there.

ANGE: You guys. Let's do this.

MARCUS: This is Angela Carvelli. When this story starts, she and I hadn't met.

ANGE: You ready?

MARCUS: Of course I'm ready.

ANGE: Then let's go. You're on.

(ANGE gets the camera set up and pointed at MARCUS. DARRYL mans the laptop.)

MARCUS: Like I said, one of the most surveilled people in the world.

(The live feed from the video camera appears on the screen—MARCUS in close-up.)

This is me.

(DARRYL hits a key, and the screen cuts to either a mug shot or a surveillance photo of MARCUS.)

And this is me.

(The screen cuts to a shot of MARCUS being waterboarded.)

And this is me. I am being waterboarded. But we'll get to that later.

(The screen cuts to a cell phone photo of MARCUS and DARRYL in the Tenderloin, looking surprised.)

This is a picture Ange took of me and Darryl, seconds before the terrorist attack that changed our lives forever.

(Back to the live feed of MARCUS.)

This is a story about me and my friends. It's a story about growing up in San Francisco—and about growing up in the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It's a story about what I did to fight back when—

(The live feed cuts off; ANGE lowers the camera.)

ANGE: Okay, wait. You're acting like you think it's *your* story.

MARCUS: Um. Isn't it?

DARRYL: Come on, Marcus. Seriously?

MARCUS: Well, I mean, I am the one who—

ANGE: *(to DARRYL)* He thinks it's about him.

DARRYL: Unbelievable.

MARCUS: Okay, look. I know it's not *only* about me. But I did do some pretty crazy stuff.

DARRYL: Dude. You can't make it all about you. It's too big.

ANGE: *(partially to the audience)* That's why we're going to help you tell it. Ready? Let's go.

(ANGE points the camera at MARCUS again; the live feed reappears.)

MARCUS: My name is Marcus Yallow, but back when this story starts, I was going by this.

(“w1n5t0n” appears on the video screen, replacing the live feed. MARCUS refers to the screen as ANGE moves the camera out of the way.)

Pronounced “Winston.” *Not* pronounced “Doubleyou-one-enn-five-tee-zero-enn”—unless you're a clueless disciplinary officer who's far enough behind the curve that you still call the Internet “the information superhighway.”

DARRYL: Benson! I'm totally playing Benson.

MARCUS: Fred Benson is one of three vice-principals at Cesar Chavez.

(DARRYL transforms into BENSON and clears his throat as if speaking into a mic. Perhaps he does speak into a mic. BENSON is a bit of a tool, and DARRYL's portrayal of him is a little goofy.)

BENSON: Marcus Yallow. Report to the school office immediately.

MARCUS: *(to DARRYL, re: his portrayal of BENSON)* Really?

DARRYL: *(momentarily dropping the BENSON act)* Dude, that's totally Benson.

MARCUS: Y'okay.

BENSON: Marcus Yallow. Report to the school office immediately.

MARCUS: *(to audience, as he crosses the stage)* The administration at Cesar Chavez was always coming down on me, just because I go through school firewalls like wet kleenex, spoof the gait-recognition software, and nuke the snitch chips they track us with.

BENSON: If it isn't Doubleyou-one-enn-five-tee-zero-enn.

MARCUS: *(to him, now in the scene)* Sorry, nope. Never heard of this R2D2 character of yours.

BENSON: Doubleyou-one-enn-five-tee-zero-enn.

MARCUS: Um, not ringing any bells.

BENSON: Marcus, I hope you realize how serious this is.

MARCUS: I will just as soon as you explain what this is, sir.

BENSON: Listen, kiddo! We know what you've been doing. You're going to be lucky if you're not expelled before this meeting is through. Do you want to graduate?

MARCUS: Mr Benson, you still haven't explained what the problem is—

BENSON: The *problem*, Mr Yallow, is that you've been engaged in criminal conspiracy to subvert this school's security system. We have reliable intelligence indicating that you are Doubleyou-one-enn-five-tee-zero-enn. We know that this Doubleyou-one-enn-five-tee-zero-enn character is responsible for the theft of last year's standardized tests.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* That actually hadn't been me, but it was a sweet hack, and it was kind of flattering to hear it attributed to me.

BENSON: And therefore liable for several years in prison unless you cooperate with me.

MARCUS: You have “reliable intelligence”? I'd like to see it.

BENSON: Your attitude isn't going to help you.

MARCUS: If there's evidence, sir, I think you should call the police and turn it over to them. It sounds like this is a very serious matter, and I wouldn't want to stand in the way of a proper investigation by the duly constituted authorities.

BENSON: You want me to call the police.

MARCUS: And my parents, I think. That would be for the best.

(A short standoff as BENSON waits for MARCUS to crack. He doesn't.)

BENSON: You can return to class now. I'll call on you once the police are ready to speak to you.

MARCUS: Are you going to call them now?

BENSON: The procedure for calling in the police is complicated. I'd hoped that we could settle this quickly, but since you insist—

MARCUS: I can wait while you call them is all. I don't mind.

BENSON: Go! Get the hell out of my office, you miserable little—

(As MARCUS grins and crosses away, DARRYL becomes DARRYL again, sitting in the classroom. ANGE might appear as MS GALVEZ.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Back in class, I shot a glance at my boy Darryl.

(We see DARRYL with his phone, and a projected image or video of DARRYL with his phone at his school desk. MARCUS pulls out his own phone, and a similar projection of MARCUS appears as well—or perhaps the two images appear simultaneously, timed to the actors sliding out their phones' little keyboards. Then the live actor playing MARCUS looks at DARRYL and speaks aloud, while the projected image of MARCUS continues to look at the phone. A light shift suggests that we are now in cyberspace—the reality in which instant message conversations take place. The text of the following lines might be projected in distorted form around the stage, not fully legible.)

MARCUS: > The game's afoot! Something big is going down with Harajuku Fun Madness, dude. You in?

DARRYL: *(to audience, as the lights shift back to normal and the projections disappear)* He didn't say that out loud, by the way. This is over text.

MARCUS: They get it. Come on.

DARRYL: Okay.

(And we're back in cyberspace. The actors can talk directly to each other as the projections show them at their phones in the classroom. The actors' movements should perhaps be nonrealistic or even dance like during this, to reflect the idea that this conversation is happening in another level of reality. The point is that the live actors can make eye contact and talk to each other, while the projected images of the actors continue looking at and typing on their phones.)

MARCUS: > The game's afoot! Something big is going down with Harajuku Fun Madness, dude. You in?

DARRYL: > No. Freaking. Way. If I get caught ditching a third time, I'm expelled. Man, you know that. We'll go after school.

MARCUS: > You've got study-hall and then lunch, right? That's two hours. Plenty of time to run down this clue and get back before anyone misses us.

(The school bell rings, bringing us back to reality. They leave the classroom together as MARCUS speaks.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Harajuku Fun Madness is the best game ever invented.

DARRYL: *(to audience)* It's an ARG, an alternate reality game.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Sort of a high-tech scavenger hunt on steroids.

DARRYL: *(to MARCUS. This is serious news.)* Crap! I forgot, I've got a library book in my bag.

MARCUS: You're kidding me.

(DARRYL pulls out the rather large book during this and maybe hands it to MARCUS. Graphics on the screen illustrate the idea of RFID tags—perhaps ANGE has hit keys on a keyboard as if to initiate the graphics.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Library books are bad news. Every one of them has an arphid—Radio Frequency ID tag—glued into its binding, which makes it possible for the librarians to check out the books by waving them over a reader. But it also lets the school track where you are at all times.

DARRYL: *(to audience)* The courts wouldn't let the schools track us with arphids, but they could track our library books.

MARCUS: *(looking at DARRYL's book)* "Introduction to Physics"?

DARRYL: I'm thinking of majoring in physics when I go to Berkeley.

MARCUS: You couldn't research it online?

DARRYL: My dad said I should read it. Besides, I didn't plan on

committing any crimes today.

MARCUS: Skipping school isn't a crime. It's an infraction. They're totally different.

DARRYL: What are we going to do, Marcus?

MARCUS: Well, I can't hide it, so I'm going to have to nuke it. There's a microwave in the teachers' lounge.

DARRYL: (*grabbing the book*) Forget it, no way. I'm going to class.

MARCUS: Come on, D, easy now. It'll be fine.

DARRYL: The *teachers' lounge*? Maybe you weren't listening, Marcus. If I get busted *just once more*, I am *expelled*. You hear that? *Expelled*.

MARCUS: Look, the bell's *already rung*. If you go to study hall now, you'll get a late slip. Better not to show at all at this point. I can infiltrate and exfiltrate any room on this campus, D. You've seen me do it. I'll keep you safe, bro.

DARRYL: (*giving in*) ...I hate you.

MARCUS: (*to audience, as the lights shift*) The arphid died in a shower of sparks. We snuck down the stairs, around the back, out the door, past the fence and out into the glorious sunlight of afternoon in the Mission. Valencia Street had never looked so good.

DARRYL: Watch it, there's an old lady with a camera phone across the street.

MARCUS: (*to audience, as they pull up their hoods or pull down their hats*) Ever since the truancy moblog went live, our world is full of nosy shopkeepers and pecksniffs who take it upon themselves to snap our piccies and put them on the net where they can be perused by school administrators.

DARRYL: So where are we going this time?

(*MARCUS has pulled out his phone; the screen shows the map he's looking at.*)

MARCUS: The clue is just GPS coordinates. I think we wanna go to Powell, then O'Farrell, then up toward Van Ness. Somewhere in there we should find a wireless signal.

DARRYL: That's a nasty part of the Tenderloin.

MARCUS: We going to talk or we going to win?

(*Light shift; we're now in the Tenderloin.*)

DARRYL: Okay, we're here. Can we go now?

MARCUS: You got your wifinder? Let's find that signal.

(*ANGE enters the scene. MARCUS bumps into her. They don't know each other.*)

MARCUS: Sorry.

(*She holds up her phone and snaps a photo of MARCUS and DARRYL.*)

ANGE: Cheese. You're on candid snitch-cam.

MARCUS: No way. You wouldn't—

ANGE: I will. I will send this photo to truant watch in thirty seconds unless you two back off from this clue and let me run it down.

DARRYL: Hey, wait—

MARCUS: Who the hell are you?

ANGE: Someone who's going to kick your ass at Harajuku Fun Madness. And someone who's *right this second* about to upload your photo and get you in *so much trouble*—

DARRYL: (*to audience*) Then the world changed forever.

(*Sound and lights—perhaps they freeze or go into extreme slow motion.*)

MARCUS: (*to audience*) We felt it first, that sickening lurch of the cement under your feet that every Californian knows instinctively—*earthquake*.

ANGE: (*to audience*) Then we saw it: a huge black cloud rising from the northeast, from the direction of the Bay.

(*Sound—including air raid sirens—and lights suggest panic and chaos.*)

LOUD RECORDED VOICE: (*played by DARRYL*) Report to shelters immediately.

ANGE: This is not good.

LOUD RECORDED VOICE: Report to shelters immediately!

DARRYL: We should go!

MARCUS: (*to audience, as they move into a new position*) Powell Street BART was a mob-scene, a huge brawl of people trying to crowd their way down a narrow staircase.

(*Sound and lights create the sense of a huge crowd of people. MARCUS, DARRYL, and ANGE mime pressing through the crowd.*)

Perhaps two of them are in slow motion and backlit while the third speaks.)

ANGE: *(to audience)* Up ahead, we saw a middle-aged lady in a hippie dress falter and fall.

DARRYL: *(to audience)* We saw her thrashing to get up, but the crowd's pressure was too strong.

MARCUS: *(to DARRYL and ANGE)* Want to take our chances up top?

ANGE: Hell, yes.

(With sound, lights, and the screen creating a sense of the crowd, they mime pushing their way out. As soon as they pop free into the daylight, DARRYL falls forward, clutching his side.)

ANGE: *(to MARCUS, helping DARRYL stay on his feet)* Someone freaking *stabbed* him in the crowd.

(Sound of sirens and cars rushing past.)

MARCUS: Hey! Hey, over here!

(ANGE and DARRYL melt away as MARCUS tries to flag down a cop car, then an ambulance. We hear them rushing by without slowing down for him.)

MARCUS: Okay, then.

(MARCUS steps out into the street, waving his arms over his head.)

MARCUS: STOP!!!

(Sound of a car screeching to a halt, then doors opening and boots hitting the pavement. ANGE and DARRYL appear as SOLDIERS in masks, pointing their big, scary automatic rifles at MARCUS, who goes to his knees.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* I'd never looked down the barrel of a gun before, but everything you've heard about the experience is true. You freeze where you are, time stops, and your heart thunders in your ears.

(MARCUS opens his mouth, shuts it, then slowly holds up his hands. The soldier played by ANGE keeps her gun leveled at MARCUS as the soldier played by DARRYL moves behind him.)

MARCUS: Hey. Hey, listen! We're just high school students. This is some kind of misunderstanding. We've got to get my friend to a hospital—

(DARRYL as SOLDIER whacks MARCUS in the head with the butt of his rifle. His head lolls, and he steps forward as if stepping right out of the scene.)

(Light shift.)

(MARCUS speaks as he and ANGE move into position for the next scene: sitting against a wall with their hands behind their backs.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* I don't know how long I was out, but I was in cuffs when I woke up.

ANGE: *(not thrilled with this situation)* You're awake.

MARCUS: *(winning)* Oh, my head.

ANGE: That's nothing compared to what I'm gonna do to you when we get out of this.

MARCUS: Where are we?

ANGE: It's the back of a semi; look at the wheel wells. They've got maybe twenty people back here. I think they've just been grabbing anyone still wandering around on the streets after the sirens.

MARCUS: What? Who are these people?

ANGE: Do I look like a freaking search engine?

MARCUS: Look, just calm down for a—

ANGE: *(a fierce whisper)* Don't tell me to calm down! It's your fault I'm in here.

MARCUS: Okay, if they're cops, ask if we're under arrest and ask for a lawyer. They can't do anything to you if you're not under arrest.

ANGE: What if they're not cops?

MARCUS: ...Where's Darryl?

ANGE: Your friend? I think he's back in there but I didn't really see.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Later, the truck started to move.

ANGE: *(to audience)* It stopped again, then the floor beneath us rocked gently and we realized we were on a ship.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* We were being taken off America's shores to somewhere *else*.

(Light shift. A GUARD played by DARRYL grabs MARCUS dispassionately and marches him to a seat, hands still behind his back. ANGE transforms into SEVERE HAIRCUT. Perhaps DARRYL and ANGE each have a squarish black jacket that they put on any time they're playing a soldier or cop in the play. SEVERE HAIRCUT might have a beret or something to distinguish her from the other

soldiers. ANGE's portrayal of SEVERE HAIRCUT is not like DARRYL's goofy portrayal of BENSON—she plays her straight.)

SEVERE HAIRCUT: Hello, Marcus. We have some questions for you.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Our captors looked *American* in a way I couldn't exactly define. One was black, another two were white, though one might have been Hispanic. They all carried guns. It was like a Benetton ad crossed with a game of Counter-Strike. A lady with a severe haircut seemed to be in charge.

SEVERE HAIRCUT: *(holding up MARCUS's phone)* What's this for?

MARCUS: Am I under arrest?

SEVERE HAIRCUT: You're being detained by the Department of Homeland Security.

MARCUS: Am I under arrest?

SEVERE HAIRCUT: *(surprised by his resistance)* You're going to be more cooperative, Marcus, starting right now.

MARCUS: I would like to contact an attorney. I would like to know what I've been charged with. I would like to see some form of identification from each of you.

SEVERE HAIRCUT: I think you should reconsider your approach to this situation. We found you and your confederates near the site of a major terrorist attack. You were out on the street after everyone else reported to appropriate shelters. And we found a number of suspicious devices on your person.

MARCUS: I would like to speak to an attorney.

SEVERE HAIRCUT: You're under the mistaken impression that you've been picked up by the police for a crime. You need to get past that. You are being detained as a potential enemy combatant by the government of the United States. If I were you, I'd be thinking very hard about how to convince us that you are not an enemy combatant. Because there are dark holes that enemy combatants can disappear into, where you can just vanish. Forever. *(Rapidly running out of patience.)* Are you listening to me, young man? I want you to unlock this phone. I want you to account for yourself: Why were you out on the street? What do you know about the attack on this city?

MARCUS: How is Darryl?

SEVERE HAIRCUT: Who?

MARCUS: Darryl. You picked us up together. My friend. Someone had stabbed him in the Powell Street BART. That's why we were up on the surface. To get him help.

SEVERE HAIRCUT: I'm sure he's fine, then.

MARCUS: You don't *know*? You haven't got him here?

SEVERE HAIRCUT: Who we have here and who we don't have here is not something we're going to discuss with you, ever. That's not something you're going to know.

MARCUS: ...I'm not going to unlock my phone for you.

SEVERE HAIRCUT: What have you got to hide?

MARCUS: I've got the right to my privacy.

SEVERE HAIRCUT: This is about your security, Marcus. Say you're innocent. You could have been on that bridge when it blew. Your parents could have been. Don't you want us to catch the people who attacked your home?

MARCUS: Lady, as far as I can tell, you're the only one who's attacked me lately. I thought I lived in a country with a constitution. I thought I lived in a country where I had rights. You're talking about defending my freedom by tearing up the Bill of Rights.

SEVERE HAIRCUT: You want to preserve the Bill of Rights? Help us stop bad people from blowing up your city. Now, you have exactly thirty seconds to unlock that phone before I send you back to your cell. This is your last chance, kid. Honest people don't have anything to hide.

MARCUS: I want to speak to an attorney.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* My parents would pay for it. All the FAQs on getting arrested were clear on this point. Just keep asking to see an attorney, no matter what they say or do.

In hindsight, maybe I should have unlocked my phone for them.

(DARRYL as GUARD roughly grabs MARCUS and manhandles him across the stage, as if throwing him back in his cell. Light shift.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* You might be wondering at this point what dark secrets I had locked away on my phone. I'm just a kid, after all.

The truth is that I had everything to hide, and nothing. You could get a pretty good idea of who my friends were, what I thought of them, all the goofy things we'd done. You could read the transcripts of the electronic arguments we'd carried out and the electronic reconciliations we'd arrived at.

There's something really liberating about having some corner of your life that's *yours*, that no one gets to see except you. It's a little like nudity or taking a dump. Everyone gets naked every once in a while. Everyone has to squat on the toilet. There's nothing shameful, deviant or weird about either of them. But what if I

decreed that from now on, every time you went to evacuate some solid waste, you'd have to do it in a glass room perched in the middle of Times Square, and you'd be buck naked?

It's not about doing something shameful. It's about doing something *private*. It's about your life belonging to you.

I spent that night and all the next day in solitary. And that's all it took. I gave them my password. I submitted.

After that, they let me walk around the yard with the other detainees. There was a patch of sky overhead, and it smelled like the Bay Area, but beyond that, I had no clue where I was being held.

(ANGE appears, seeing MARCUS in the yard.)

MARCUS: Hey.

ANGE: Oh. It's you.

MARCUS: Are you OK?

ANGE: Do I look like I'm OK? I'm being illegally detained by my own government.

MARCUS: Look. Let's start over. My name is Marcus.

ANGE: ...I'm Ange.

MARCUS: Ange. OK. Look, I don't know about you, but I'm really scared.

(DARRYL is a guard, across the stage or in darkness.)

GUARD: *(possibly amplified)* Stop talking. Prisoners are not to speak to one another in the yard.

ANGE: How's your friend?

MARCUS: I haven't seen him.

GUARD: Stop talking!

ANGE: They keep asking me questions about you two.

MARCUS: Answer them. Anything they ask, answer them. If it'll get you out.

(GUARD grabs MARCUS and pulls him violently away from ANGE, cuffing his hands behind his back and roughly pushing him across the stage. Light shift, and MARCUS is back in his cell, alone.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* No dinner came that night. No breakfast came the next morning. The plastic cuffs didn't come off, and my shoulders burned, then ached, then went numb, then burned again. I lost all feeling in my hands.

I had to pee. I couldn't undo my pants. I really, really had to pee.

I pissed myself.

They came for me after that.

(We're back in the interrogation room. DARRYL as the GUARD is behind MARCUS, who is kept standing this time.)

SEVERE HAIRCUT: Well, you've been a very naughty boy, haven't you? Aren't you a filthy thing?

(MARCUS, ashamed, looks away.)

SEVERE HAIRCUT: We have enough on you now to put you away for a very long time, Marcus. We know where you live, we know who your friends are. We know how you operate and how you think. We just want to know one thing: what was the delivery mechanism for the bombs on the bridge?

MARCUS: What?

(The GUARD kicks MARCUS down to his knees and takes hold of his cuffed hands.)

SEVERE HAIRCUT: There were ten charges on the bridge, all along its length. Who placed them there?

MARCUS: What?

(The GUARD pulls MARCUS's cuffed hands up his back, applying steady and gradually increasing pressure. MARCUS arches his back in pain.)

SEVERE HAIRCUT: This is your last chance, Marcus. You were doing so well until now. Just tell us this and you can go home.

MARCUS: I don't know what you're talking about! I have *no idea* what you're talking about!

(SEVERE HAIRCUT watches MARCUS writhe in pain, not quite smiling. She signals to the GUARD, who lets go. MARCUS collapses. The GUARD uncuffs his hands.)

SEVERE HAIRCUT: ...All right. We're through investigating you, for now.

MARCUS: ...And?

SEVERE HAIRCUT: We are going to send you home today, but you are a marked man. You have not been found to be above suspicion—we're only releasing you because we're done questioning you for now. From now on, you *belong* to us. You will never speak of what happened here to anyone, ever. This is a matter of national security. Do you know that the death penalty still holds for treason in time of war?

MARCUS: Yes.

SEVERE HAIRCUT: Good boy.

(Light shift. MARCUS is hooded. GUARD walks him forward a few steps, then removes the hood, hands him his backpack, and steps away, out of the light. MARCUS takes a couple of tentative steps forward, then ANGE suddenly grabs him.)

ANGE: You're OK!

MARCUS: Ange. Wait, where's Darryl?

ANGE: He's not here. I never saw him.

MARCUS: ...How long were we in there?

ANGE: Six days, I think.

MARCUS: I lost count.

ANGE: What did they do to you?

MARCUS: *(to audience)* I told her everything, even when I'd been forced to piss myself.

ANGE: They really hated you. Really had it in for you. Why?

MARCUS: *(realizing this as he says it)* It was because I wouldn't unlock my phone for them, that first night. That's why they singled me out. They did it to get back at me for mouthing off.

ANGE: Those bastards.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* We pumped some quarters into a San Francisco Chronicle newspaper box and stopped to read the front section. Severe haircut woman had talked about "the bridge" blowing up, and I'd just assumed that she was talking about the Golden Gate Bridge, but I was wrong.

MARCUS: *(to ANGE)* Why the hell would they blow up the Bay Bridge?

ANGE: They probably got scared off by all the cameras and stuff. There's all those suicide fences and junk all along it. Plus the Bay Bridge actually goes somewhere.

MARCUS: You're right. But I don't think that's all of it. We keep acting like terrorists attack landmarks because they hate landmarks. Terrorists don't hate landmarks or bridges or airplanes. They just want to screw stuff up and make people scared. To make terror. So of course they went after the Bay Bridge after the Golden Gate got all those cameras—after airplanes got all metal-detected and X-rayed. Terrorists don't hate airplanes or bridges. They love terror. All this crap, all the X-rays and ID checks—they're all useless, aren't they?

(She nods.)

MARCUS: Worse than useless. Because they ended up with us in prison, with Darryl—

ANGE: We have to tell our parents.

MARCUS: We can't tell them anything.

ANGE: What do you mean?

MARCUS: We can't tell them anything. If we talk, they'll come back for us. They'll do to us what they did to Darryl.

ANGE: You're joking. You want us to—

MARCUS: I want us to fight back. I want to stay free so that I can do that. If we go out there and blab, they'll just say that we're kids, making it up. We don't even know where we were held! No one will believe us. Then, one day, they'll come for us. I'm telling my parents that I was stuck on the other side of the Bay.

ANGE: I can't do that. After what they did to you, how can you even think of doing that?

MARCUS: It happened to *me*, that's the point. This is me and them, now. I'll beat them, I'll get Darryl. But once our parents are involved, that's it for us. No one will believe us and no one will care. If we do it my way, people will care.

ANGE: What's your way? What's your plan?

MARCUS: I don't know yet. Give me until tomorrow; give me that, at least.

(She nods, glumly.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* We exchanged screen names and went our separate ways, heading for home. Ange lived in Hayes Valley, and I lived on Potrero Hill.

(ANGE and DARRYL have become MOM and DAD, standing together as if in the door. A moment as they see MARCUS and he sees them. MOM will speak with a British accent.)

DAD: *(not quite believing it)* Marcus?

MARCUS: Hi, Dad. Hi, Mom.

MOM: ...Marcus!

(MOM and DAD rush forward and grab MARCUS in a huge hug. They hold each other for a moment, then step back.)

MOM: Where have you been?

MARCUS: I got trapped. In Oakland. I was there with some friends, doing a project, and we were all quarantined.

MOM: For five days?

MARCUS: Yeah. Yeah. It was really bad.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* I cribbed shamelessly from the quotes in the Chronicle.

MARCUS: They thought we had been attacked with some kind of super-bug and they packed us into shipping containers in the docklands, like sardines.

DAD: Christ.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Dad teaches in Berkeley in the library science program, and consults for third-wave dotcoms that are doing various things with archives. He's a mild-mannered librarian by profession, but he'd been a real radical in the sixties.

MOM: Barbarians.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Mom's been living in America since she was a teenager, but she still comes over all British when she encounters American cops, health care, airport security or homelessness. Then the word is "barbarians," and her accent comes back strong.

MOM: *(slightly stronger accent)* Barbarians.

DAD: How's Darryl?

MARCUS: He wasn't with us.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* The lie tasted bitter in my mouth.

MOM: Oh my God. We just assumed that you two had been together.

MARCUS: No. No, he was supposed to be there but we never met up. He's probably just stuck over in Berkeley. He was going to take BART over.

MOM: ...

DAD: Don't you know about BART?

(MARCUS shakes his head no.)

DAD: They blew it up. The bastards blew it up at the same time as the bridge.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* That hadn't been on the front page of the Chronicle.

ANGE: *(to audience)* But then, a BART blowout under the water wouldn't be nearly as picturesque as the images of the bridge hanging in tatters and pieces over the Bay.

DARRYL: *(to audience)* No one was sure, but the body count was in the thousands. Between the cars that plummeted 191 feet to the sea and the people drowned in the trains, the deaths were mounting.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* My laptop's battery had run down while I was away even though I had plugged it in. I opened it up and found something new in my keyboard. It was a little chunk of hardware, only a sixteenth of an inch thick, with no markings.

It was a bug.

I almost took it out. Then I figured that the DHS would know that it was gone. I left it in. It made me sick to do it.

(Light shift.)

Believe it or not, my parents made me go to school the next day. I went up and over the hills to get down into the Mission, and everywhere there were new sensors and traffic cameras.

ANGE: *(to audience)* BART and MUNI had completely abandoned cash fares. Now everyone had to get a Clipper Card—which had an arphid inside so you could wave it at the turnstiles to go through.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* They were cool and convenient, but every time I used one, I thought about how I was being tracked. And don't get me started about debit cards.

(DARRYL has become the TURK, handing MARCUS a cup of coffee. MARCUS pulls out his debit card.)

TURK: No more debit.

MARCUS: Huh? Why not?

TURK: You wouldn't understand. Go to school, kid.

MARCUS: What, you think I'm not good enough to shop here?

TURK: The security. The government. They monitor it all now, it was in the papers. PATRIOT Act II, the Congress passed it yesterday. Now they can monitor every time you use your card. I say no. I say my shop will not help them spy on my customers.

MARCUS: *(jaw dropping)* ...

TURK: You think it's no big deal maybe? What is the problem with government knowing when you buy coffee? Because it's one way they know where you are, where you been. Why you think I left Turkey? Where you have government always spying on the

people, is no good. I move here twenty years ago for freedom—I no help them take freedom away.

MARCUS: You're going to lose so many sales.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* I wanted to tell him he was a hero and shake his hand, but that was what came out.

MARCUS: Everyone uses debit cards.

TURK: Maybe not so much anymore. Maybe my customers come here because they know I love freedom too. I am making sign for window. Maybe other stores do the same. I hear the ACLU will sue them for this.

MARCUS: You've got all my business from now on. Um, I don't have any cash, though.

TURK: Many peoples say the same thing. Is OK. You give today's money to the ACLU.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* In two minutes, we had exchanged more words than we had in all the time I'd been coming to his shop. Now I shook his hand and when I left his store, I felt like he and I had joined a team. A secret team.

(Light shift.)

There was something new at the front of the classroom. A camera.

(ANGE is now MS GALVEZ; DARRYL is a student named CHARLES. MARCUS looks at DARRYL's empty seat for a moment, then raises his hand.)

MS GALVEZ: Yes, Marcus?

MARCUS: Ms Galvez, about these cameras?

MS GALVEZ: Yes, Marcus.

MARCUS: Isn't the point of terrorism to make us afraid? That's why it's called *terrorism*, right?

MS GALVEZ: I suppose so.

MARCUS: So aren't we doing what the terrorists want from us? Don't they win if we act all afraid and put cameras in the classrooms and all of that?

(CHARLES has his hand up.)

MS GALVEZ: Charles?

CHARLES: Putting cameras in makes us safe, which makes us less afraid.

MARCUS: Safe from what?

CHARLES: Terrorism.

MARCUS: How do they do that? If a suicide bomber rushed in here and blew us all up—

CHARLES: Ms Galvez, Marcus is violating school policy. We're not supposed to make jokes about terrorist attacks—

MARCUS: Who's making jokes?

MS GALVEZ: Thank you, both of you. This is really interesting, but I think that these issues may be too emotional for us to have a discussion about them today. Now, let's get back to the suffragists, shall we?

(Light shift.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* That weekend, I met up with Ange—at my favorite Mission burrito joint.

(MARCUS and ANGE are at a taqueria. ANGE is carefully unwrapping her burrito.)

ANGE: They bugged your computer?

MARCUS: That's why I had to meet you in person.

ANGE: *(raises an eyebrow—"you mean this isn't a date?")*...

MARCUS: *(oblivious)* I can't get online. I feel like I'm going through withdrawal.

ANGE: This is bad. If they're bugging you, they could be bugging anybody.

MARCUS: They could be bugging everybody. But check it out. You have an Xbox Universal, right?

ANGE: Yeah. Everybody has one.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* The Universal was the first Xbox that Microsoft gave away entirely for free.

DARRYL: *(to audience)* Microsoft makes most of its money charging software companies for the right to put out Xbox games, so it does make a sick kind of sense.

ANGE: *(to Marcus, in the scene, still unwrapping her burrito)* Remember those poor suckers in Halo costumes last Christmas, giving them away on the corner?

MARCUS: The DHS bugged my laptop, but I have a brand-new Xbox Universal still in its package just sitting in my closet. And I bet just about everyone we know has one too.

ANGE: I get it. ParanoidXbox.

DARRYL: *(to audience)* ParanoidXbox was an alternate operating system for the Xbox Universal.

(A ParanoidXbox logo might appear on the screen.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* It was created by hackers and intended for use by Chinese and Syrian dissidents. It siphons off your neighbors' wireless connections, and every bit that goes over the air is scrambled to within an inch of its life.

(The screen might show a clever little graphic illustrating these ideas—maybe three little houses with wifi signals, and so forth)

DARRYL: *(to audience)* You can wiretap it all you want, but you'll never figure out who's talking or what they're talking about. Anonymous web, email and IM.

(ANGE has been spraying the contents of her burrito with a little aerosol canister.)

MARCUS: What the hell are you doing to that poor, defenseless burrito?

ANGE: I'm a spicy food addict. This is capsaicin oil in a mister.

MARCUS: Capsaicin—

ANGE: Yeah, the stuff in pepper spray. This is like pepper spray but slightly more dilute. And way more delicious. Think of it as Spicy Cajun Visine if it helps.

MARCUS: You're kidding. You are so not going to eat that.

ANGE: That sounds like a challenge, sonny. You just watch me.

(He watches her take a big bite, savoring it. She smiles.)

ANGE: Want a bite?

MARCUS: Yeah.

(He takes a bite, tries not to react. He reacts. He is not okay. She passes him his horchata, which he sucks down greedily.)

ANGE: So there's a scale, the Scoville scale, that we chili fanciers use to talk about how spicy a pepper is. Pure capsaicin is about 15 million Scovilles. Tabasco is about 50,000. Pepper spray is a healthy three million. This stuff is a puny 200,000, about as hot as a mild Scotch Bonnet pepper. I worked up to it in about a year. Some of the real hardcore can get up to a million or so, twenty times hotter than Tabasco. That's pretty freaking hot. At Scoville temperatures like that, your brain gets totally awash in endorphins. It's a better body-stone than hash. And it's good for you.

MARCUS: *(Still physically unable to speak) ...*

ANGE: Of course, you get a ferocious ring of fire when you go to the john.

MARCUS: You are insane.

ANGE: Want another bite?

MARCUS: *(quickly)* Pass.

(They both laugh at how quickly he refused a second bite. Then a small pause as they look at each other. ANGE changes the subject.)

ANGE: Okay, so say you start using ParanoidXbox to get online. If I use it too, we could talk to each other. But anybody else could be a DHS snoop. It's not enough.

MARCUS: How many people can you totally vouch for? Like trust them to the ends of the earth?

ANGE: I don't know. Twenty or thirty or so.

MARCUS: What if we get a bunch of really trustworthy people together and do a key-exchange web of trust thing? We could hand out ParanoidXbox install discs while we're at it.

MARCUS: *(to audience, perhaps supported by another graphic on the screen)* Web of trust is one of those cool crypto things that I'd read about but never tried. The problem is that it requires you to physically meet with the people in the web at least once, just to get started.

ANGE: That's not bad. But how are you going to get everyone together for the key-signing? Especially without getting busted.

MARCUS: *(looking at DARRYL sitting off to the side) ...*Darryl would know. This was the stuff he was great at.

ANGE: How about a party? How about if we all get together somewhere like we're teenagers having a party and that way we'll have a ready-made excuse if anyone shows up asking us what we're doing there?

MARCUS: That would totally work! You're a genius, Ange.

ANGE: I know it.

MARCUS: We'll tell them it's a super-private party, invitational only. Tell them not to bring anyone along or they won't be admitted.

ANGE: You're joking, right? You tell people that, and they'll bring *extra* friends.

MARCUS: Argh. So what do we do? We only want people we re-

ally trust there, and we don't want to mention why until we've got everyone's keys and can send them messages in secret.

ANGE: Tell them that they can bring a maximum of one person, and it has to be someone they've known personally for a minimum of five years.

MARCUS: Hey, that would totally work. I mean, if you told me not to bring anyone, I'd be all, "Who the hell do they think they are?" But when you put it that way, it sounds like some awesome 007 stuff.

ANGE: I know just where to do it, too.

MARCUS: Where?

ANGE: Sutro Baths!

(Light shift. The screen might show some old photos of Sutro Baths.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Sutro Baths are San Francisco's authentic fake Roman ruins. When it opened in 1896, it was the largest indoor bathing house in the world.

ANGE: *(to audience)* All that's left is a labyrinth of weathered stone set into the cliff face at Ocean Beach.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* The rocks are sharp and there's broken glass and the occasional junkie needle.

It is an awesome place for a party.

JOLU: This is an awesome place for a party!

(DARRYL has become JOLU, another partygoer. Sounds and lights create the sense of a crowd of teenagers along with MARCUS, ANGE, and JOLU.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Jolu was an old friend of mine and Darryl's from computer camp, and it turned out he already knew Ange a little as well.

ANGE: *(greeting him)* José-Luis!

MARCUS: *(addressing the crowd)* OK. OK, hey, hello? Thank you all for coming. I'm sure you know we asked you all to come out here for a reason. So here it is. We know you're cool, we know you're trustworthy. If you're anything like us, you're not happy with the changes that have happened in our city since the bombs went off. The DHS is straight-up spying on people. If we want to be able to talk to each other without somebody listening in, we need to create our own network.

ANGE: *(to audience)* He explained about ParanoidXbox, and the web of trust.

MARCUS: We've burned a bunch of install discs, enough for everyone to take one home. And we're going to help you generate key-pairs and share them with each other.

(ANGE hands him a laptop.)

MARCUS: *(still addressing the crowd)* I trust this machine. Every component in it was laid by our own hands. If there's a trustworthy computer left anywhere in the world, this might well be it.

I've got a key-generator loaded here. You give it some random input—mash the keys, wiggle the mouse—and it will use that to create a random key for you, which it will display on the screen. At that point, you call over all the people here you trust, and they take a picture of the screen with you standing next to it, so they know whose key it is.

JOLU: So call me stupid but I don't understand this at all. Why do you want us to do this?

MARCUS: *(to audience)* So I told them. I told them about being detained by the DHS. I told them that Darryl was never released.

(to them) You're the first people I've told. If this story gets around, you can bet they'll know who leaked it. You can bet they'll come knocking on my door. That's why my life, from now on, is about fighting the DHS. Until we're free again. Any one of you could put me in jail now, if you wanted to.

JOLU: We're not going to rat on you. I know pretty much everyone here and I can promise you that. I hate what the DHS is doing, but I still don't get how this is going to help. We're just a bunch of kids.

ANGE: You just said it, Jolu. We trust each other *because* we're all kids. You think grownups are going to stand up to the DHS? Our parents? When they think of someone being spied on, they think of someone *else*, a bad guy. When they think of someone being caught and sent to a secret prison, it's someone *else*—someone brown, someone young, someone foreign. They forget what it's like to be our age. To be the object of suspicion *all the time!* How many times have you gotten on the bus and had every person on it give you a look like you'd been gargling turds and skinning puppies?

What's worse, they're turning into adults younger and younger out there. Back in the day, they used to say "Never trust anyone over 30." I say, "Don't trust any bastard over 25!"

(MARCUS and JOLU smile, maybe laugh a bit.)

ANGE: I mean, think about it. Who elected these ass-clowns? Who let them invade our city? Who voted to put the cameras in our classrooms and follow us around with creepy spyware chips in our transit passes and cars? It wasn't a 16-year-old. We may be dumb, we may be young, but we're not scum.

MARCUS: I want that on a t-shirt.

(Light shift.)

ANGE: It would be a good one. Where do I go to get my keys?

(A couple of weeks pass over the course of this speech; lighting and maybe the screen help suggest this.)

MARCUS: We'll do it over by the caves.

(MARCUS addresses ANGE as they move across to the cave.)

MARCUS: Thanks for that. You were great.

ANGE: *(to audience)* We don't know who came up with the name Xnet, but it stuck.

ANGE: I know.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* I used the Xnet for almost everything now, and I wasn't using w1n5ton anymore. If Benson could figure it out, anyone could. My new handle, come up with on the spur of the moment, was M1k3y.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* I retreated some distance as she ran the key-generator, listening to her typing and mousing to create randomness, listening to the crash of the surf, listening to the party noises from over where the beer was.

(This is pronounced "Mikey," of course, and "M1k3y" appears on the screen.)

(ANGE steps to MARCUS, holding up the laptop with the screen showing her key and illuminating her face. MARCUS pulls out his phone to take a photo, which we might see on the screen.)

ANGE: *(to audience)* It turned out the best way to get people on to Xnet was for the games—free and fun and unmonitored homebrew games that were way better than the locked-down versions for regular machines.

ANGE: Cheese.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* There was a good multiplayer thing, a clockwork pirate game where you had to quest every day or two to wind up your whole crew's mainsprings before you could go plundering and pillaging again.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* So it went, through the next hour or so, everyone taking pictures and making keys. I got to meet everyone there. By the time the night was out we were all buddies.

(The screen displays a bit of Clockwork Pirates. DARRYL might appear in in a Clockwork Pirate costume.)

MARCUS: *(addressing the crowd again)* So a lot of you have noted that there's a vital flaw in this procedure: What if this laptop can't be trusted? What if it's secretly recording our instructions? What if Ange and I can't be trusted?

We burned new stacks of ParanoidXbox discs every day, fifty or sixty, and Jolu and I took them around the city to people we'd heard were willing to burn sixty of their own and hand them out to their friends.

(Chuckles from the crowd.)

MARCUS: I mean it. If we were on the wrong side, this could get all of us—all of *you*—into a heap of trouble. Jail, maybe.

(We're near Mission and 24th.)

So that's why I'm going to do this.

JOLU: You know, this is kind of fun.

(MARCUS sets the laptop down and pulls out a hammer. He smashes the laptop again and again, completely destroying it. ANGE and JOLU cheer.)

MARCUS: I'm glad you're part of this, Jolu.

MARCUS: All right! Now, if anyone would like to accompany me, I'm going to march this down to the sea and soak it in salt water for ten minutes.

JOLU: I just wish we could do more for Darryl, you know?

(ANGE joins him, takes his arm.)

MARCUS: ...I know.

ANGE: That was beautiful.

JOLU: All right. See you tomorrow?

(A moment as MARCUS and ANGE look at each other. It looks like they might kiss, but it doesn't quite get that far.)

MARCUS: I'll see you tonight. On Xnet. Clockwork Plunder, right?

MARCUS: *(to audience; maybe a little to ANGE)* It was a good night, that night.

(JOLU grins and moves away. MARCUS turns to go, and ANGE appears as ZIT, a cop with a moustache. DARRYL quickly dons a moustache as BOOGER and joins them.)

ZIT: Sir, can you step over here with us?

MARCUS: Excuse me?

(ZIT flashes a badge.)

ZIT: Police. Please come with us.

(They step across the stage, perhaps mime getting into a car.)

BOOGER: We just want to ask you a few routine questions.

MARCUS: Am I under arrest?

ZIT: You've been momentarily detained so that we can ensure your safety and the general public safety.

BOOGER: Is there anything you want to tell me?

MARCUS: Like what? Am I under arrest?

BOOGER: You're not under arrest right now. Would you like to be?

MARCUS: No.

BOOGER: Good. Your Clipper Card says that you've been riding to a lot of strange places at a lot of funny hours.

MARCUS: ...So you guys follow everyone who comes out of the BART station with a funny ride history? You must be busy.

BOOGER: Not everyone. We get an alert when anyone with an uncommon ride profile comes out and that helps us assess whether we want to investigate. In your case, we came along because we wanted to know why a smart-looking kid like you had such a funny ride profile.

MARCUS: I think I'd like to be arrested now.

BOOGER: *(raising an eyebrow)* Really? On what charge?

MARCUS: Oh, you mean riding public transit in a nonstandard way isn't a crime?

ZIT: Let's take him home. We can talk to his parents.

MARCUS: I think that's a great idea. I'm sure my parents will be anxious to hear how their tax dollars are being spent—

BOOGER: *(bulking out)* Why don't you shut up right now? After everything that's happened in the past two weeks, it wouldn't kill you to cooperate with us. You know what, maybe we *should* arrest you. You can spend a day or two in jail while your lawyer looks for you. A lot can happen in that time.

ZIT: A lot.

BOOGER: How'd you like that?

MARCUS: I'm sorry.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* I hated myself for saying that.

(ANGE has become MOM, answering the front door. DARRYL is still BOOGER.)

MOM: Marcus? Who are these men?

BOOGER: *(showing badge)* Police.

MOM: What's this about?

BOOGER: We wanted to ask your son some routine questions about his movements, but he declined to answer them.

MOM: Is he under arrest?

BOOGER: Are you a United States citizen, ma'am?

MOM: *(affecting a broad Southern accent)* I shore am, hyuck. Am I under arrest?

BOOGER: We seem to have gotten off to a bad start. We identified your son as someone with a nonstandard public transit usage pattern, as part of a new proactive enforcement program. When we spot people whose travels are unusual, or that match a suspicious profile, we investigate further.

MOM: *(folding her arms)* Are you saying you think my son is a terrorist because of how he rides the bus?

BOOGER: Terrorists aren't the only bad guys we catch this way. Drug dealers. Gang kids. Even shoplifters smart enough to hit a different neighborhood with every run.

MOM: You think my son is a drug dealer?

BOOGER: We're not saying that—

(She claps her hands at him to shut him up.)

MOM: Marcus, please pass me your backpack.

(He does. She unzips it and looks through it quickly.)

MOM: Officers, I can now affirm that there are no narcotics, explosives, or shoplifted gewgaws in my son's bag. I think we're done here. I would like your badge numbers before you go, please.

BOOGER: Lady, the ACLU is suing three hundred cops on the SFPD; you're going to have to get in line.

(A quick shift as DARRYL transforms into DAD and MARCUS and MOM exchange a look; a short amount of time has passed.)

DAD: Lillian, they were just doing their jobs. The world isn't the same place it was last week.

MOM: Drew, you're being ridiculous. Your son is not a terrorist. His use of the public transit system is not cause for a police investigation.

DAD: We do this all the time at my work. It's how computers can be used to find all kinds of errors and anomalies. You ask the computer to create a profile of an average record in a database and then ask it to find out which records in the database are furthest away from average. It's called Bayesian analysis, and it's been around for centuries now. Without it, we couldn't do spam-filtering—

MARCUS: So you're saying that you think the police should suck as hard as my spam filter?

DAD: (*containing himself*) I'm saying that it's perfectly reasonable for the police to conduct their investigations by starting with data-mining, and then follow up with legwork where a human being actually intervenes to see why the abnormality exists. I don't think that a computer should be telling the police whom to arrest, just helping them sort through the haystack to find a needle.

MARCUS: But *they're creating the haystack*. That's a gigantic mountain of data, and there's almost nothing worth looking at there. It's a total waste.

DAD: I understand that you don't like that this system caused you some inconvenience, Marcus. But you of all people should appreciate the gravity of the situation. There was no harm done, was there? They even gave you a ride home.

MARCUS: (*to audience*) *They threatened to send me to jail*, I thought, but I could see there was no point in saying it.

DAD: Besides, you still haven't told us where the blazing hells you've been to create such an unusual traffic pattern.

MARCUS: I thought you relied on my judgment. Do you really want me to account for every trip I've ever taken?

DAD: If you don't have anything to hide—

MARCUS: So you wouldn't mind if they pulled *you* over?

DAD: I'd consider it my duty. I'd be proud. It would make me feel safer.

(*Light shift. MARCUS, JOLU, and ANGE are hanging out.*)

MARCUS: So my dad says, "I'd consider it my duty." Can you freaking *believe* it? I almost told him then about going to jail, asking him if he thought that was our "duty"!

JOLU: You can't tell your dad, you know. You'd put everyone at risk.

MARCUS: Yeah. But the problem is that I know he's just totally full of it. If you pulled my dad over and made him prove he *wasn't* a child-molesting, drug-dealing terrorist, he'd go berserk. He hates being put on hold when he calls about his credit card bill. Being locked in the back of a car and questioned for an hour would give him an aneurism.

ANGE: They only get away with it because the normals feel smug compared to the abnormal. If everyone was getting pulled over, it'd be a disaster. No one would ever get anywhere, they'd all be waiting to get questioned by the cops. Total gridlock.

MARCUS: ...Ange, you are a total genius.

ANGE: Tell me about it.

MARCUS: Seriously. We can do this. We can mess up the profiles easily. Getting people pulled over is easy.

JOLU: Wait, what are you saying?

MARCUS: Arphid cloners. They're totally easy to make. Just flash the firmware on a ten-dollar Radio Shack reader/writer and you're done.

ANGE: Or just download the app. Your phone can do that.

MARCUS: Even better. What we do is go around and randomly swap the tags on people, overwriting their Clipper Cards and FasTraks with other people's codes. That'll make *everyone* skew all weird and screwy, and make everyone look guilty. Then: total gridlock.

JOLU: This is too much. You could end up going to jail for this, Marcus, and not just you. Lots of people. After what happened to Darryl—

MARCUS: I'm doing this for Darryl! I'm doing this because the alternative is to let them get away with it all.

JOLU: You think you're going to stop them? You're out of your mind. They're the government.

ANGE: It's still our country.

JOLU: You're going to put everyone on Xnet in danger for their lives, and you're going to turn the whole city into terrorism suspects.

MARCUS: Jolu, *I'm* not the problem, *they* are. I'm not arresting people, jailing them, making them disappear. The Department of Homeland Security are the ones doing that. I'm fighting back to make them stop.

JOLU: How, by making it worse?

ANGE: Maybe it has to get worse to get better.

(Light shift.)

(MARCUS is at his Xbox; we're back in cyberspace with a projection of MARCUS at the keyboard while the live actor is free to address us directly. Snippets of text are projected around the stage.)

MARCUS: > The important thing about security systems isn't how they work, it's how they fail.

MARCUS: *(to audience, with a light shift out of cyberspace)* That was the first line of my first blog post on Open Revolt, my Xnet site. I was writing as M1k3y, and I was ready to go to war.

MARCUS: > Maybe all the automatic screening is supposed to catch terrorists. Maybe it will catch a terrorist sooner or later. The problem is that it catches *us* too, even though we're not doing anything wrong.

> The more people it catches, the more brittle it gets. If it catches too many people, it dies.

> Get the idea?

MARCUS: *(to audience, now out of cyberspace again)* I pasted in my HOWTO for building an arphid cloner, a link to download the app, and some tips for getting close enough to people to read and write their tags.

ANGE: *(to audience)* That's how it started.

(The following is augmented with visuals on the screen. Here's the big opportunity for the video designer to go crazy with graphics and animation. The key concept the graphics should convey is the idea that 1% of a really big number is itself a pretty big number. One way to do this (under the following lines) would be to show a whole bunch of yellow happy faces, zoom way out to show that there are more than can really be seen, then zoom way in to discover a couple of green angry faces representing actual terrorists mixed in with all the yellow happy faces, then zoom out and turn a bunch of the yellow faces green to represent the false positives—demonstrating the problem with finding the actual green angry faces in the sea of green false positives.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* If you ever decide to do something as stupid as build an automatic terrorism detector, here's a math lesson you need to learn first.

ANGE: *(to audience)* It's called "the paradox of the false positive," and it's a doozy.

DARRYL: *(to audience)* In a city of twenty million people, there might be ten terrorists at the outside. Ten divided by twenty million equals point-oh-oh-oh-oh-five percent.

ANGE: *(to audience)* One twenty-thousandth of a percent.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Now, say you've got some software that can sift through all the bank records, or public transit records, or phone call records in the city and catch terrorists 99 percent of the time.

ANGE: *(to audience)* In a pool of twenty million people, a 99-percent accurate test will identify two hundred thousand people as being terrorists.

DARRYL: *(to audience)* To catch ten bad guys, you have to haul in and investigate two hundred thousand innocent people.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Guess what? Terrorism tests aren't anywhere close to 99 percent accurate. More like 60 percent accurate. Even 40 percent accurate, sometimes.

ANGE: *(to audience)* Is it any wonder we were able to make such a mess?

(Light shift.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Tuesday morning one week into Operation False Positive. My arphid cloner was already loaded in my pocket, and full of credit card numbers, FasTrak IDs, and even passport and car-key numbers I had cloned from people on the street the day before.

(This is essentially a dance sequence. MARCUS puts on headphones and heads out into the street. We hear the music he's listening to. DARRYL and ANGE appear as various PEOPLE. MARCUS walks through San Francisco to the beat of the music, squeezing past people in crowds and on narrow sidewalks, one hand in his pocket as he triggers his arphid cloner. The screen might show graphics representing the arphids being cloned and switched—he walks past a BUSINESS MAN and a credit card appears on the screen. Another credit card appears when he walks by a SOCCER MOM. On the screen, arrows appear between the two cards or they switch places on the screen. That sort of thing.)

ANGE: *(to audience)* It was like switching the license plates on a bunch of cars, but invisible and instantaneous.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* I passed by huge lines at police checkpoints at the BART stations. Long lines of cars. People swearing at ATMs that wouldn't dispense *their* money because they'd had their accounts frozen for suspicious activity.

ANGE: *(to audience)* We'd brought the city to a standstill. The news reports were calling it the DHS gone haywire. The San Francisco Chronicle said a week of this crap would cost the city more than the Bay Bridge bombing had.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Mwa-ha-ha-ha.

The best part: Dad got home that night late. Three *hours* late. Why? Not just because he had to take the San Mateo Bridge to get home from Berkeley. No—he'd been pulled over, searched, questioned. Then it happened *again*. Twice. Twice!

(Light shift.)

(MARCUS and ANGE are in their respective bedrooms. This is an IM conversation—again we see them at their computers in a projection, while the actors are free to move around non-realistically and speak directly to each other.)

ANGE: > Did you hear about the Cal students who figured out how to set off bomb sniffers with kitchen products? They've been sprinkling it on their profs' briefcases and watching them get tackled by security.

MARCUS: > I can't believe how many people are jamming. This is sweet.

ANGE: > So. Where are you taking me?

MARCUS: > Taking you?

ANGE: > On our next adventure?

MARCUS: > I didn't really have anything planned

ANGE: > Oki—then I'll take YOU. Saturday. Dolores Park. Illegal open-air concert. Be there or be a dodecahedron

MARCUS: > Wait what?

ANGE: > Don't you even read Xnet? It's all over the place. They've got like fifty bands signed to play the bill, going to set up on the tennis courts and bring out their own amp trucks and rock out all night

MARCUS: > You don't think it'll get busted?

ANGE: > That's the point. You put a lot of civilians in a position where the cops have to decide, are we going to treat ordinary people like terrorists? It's like jamming with a bunch of awesome bands.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* I felt like I'd been living under a rock. I'd been spending all my energies on figuring out how to use the Xnet to organize dedicated fighters so they could jam the DHS, but this was so much cooler. A big concert—I had no idea how to do one of those, but I was glad someone did. And I was damned proud that they were using the Xnet to do it.

(Light shift, and sound of a huge crowd. ANGE joins MARCUS and takes his hand. TRUDY DOO, a woman, is played by DARRYL. Holding her electric guitar, she takes the mic. Sound of the bass player and other band members behind her.)

TRUDY DOO: My name is Trudy Doo and you're an idiot if you trust me. I'm thirty-two, and it's too late for me. I'm lost. I'm stuck in the old way of thinking. I still take my freedom for granted and let other people take it away from me. You're the first generation to grow up in Gulag America, and you know what your freedom is worth to the last goddamned cent!

Mic check!

MARCUS & ANGE: *(supported by the sound of the crowd joining the call and response)* Mic check!

TRUDY DOO: Don't trust anyone over 25!

MARCUS & ANGE: *(and the sound of the crowd)* Don't trust anyone over 25!

TRUDY DOO: Don't trust anyone over 25!

MARCUS & ANGE: *(and the sound of the crowd)* Don't trust anyone over 25!

TRUDY DOO: It's our goddamned city! It's our goddamned country. No terrorist can take it from us so long as we're free. Once we're not free, the terrorists win! Take it back! Take it back! You're young enough and stupid enough not to know that you can't possibly win, so you're the only ones who can lead us to victory! Take it back!

TRUDY DOO & MARCUS & ANGE: *(and sound of crowd)*
Take it back!

(She jams down on her guitar and the crowd roars; it's loud. Light shift.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* We danced until I was so tired I couldn't dance another step. Technically, we were rubbing our sweaty bodies against each other for several hours, but believe it or not, I totally wasn't being a horndog about it. We were dancing, lost in the godbeat and the thrash and the screaming.

TRUDY DOO & MARCUS & ANGE: *(and sound of crowd)*
Take it back! Take it back!

MARCUS: *(to audience)* When we couldn't dance anymore, she dragged me toward the edge of the crowd and across the street.

(They cross the stage as if crossing the street, then turn to each other.)

ANGE: Hey.

MARCUS: Hey. Hi.

ANGE: Come here.

(They kiss, once, then pull back and look at each other. They kiss

again, more passionately; then the loud sound of sirens interrupts them.)

MALE VOICE: *(heavily amplified)* Disperse immediately. This is an illegal gathering. Disperse immediately.

(The background sound of the band cuts out; the crowd noise continues and grows. Sound of helicopters.)

TRUDY DOO: *(and sound of crowd)* Take it back! Take it back!

MARCUS: *(to audience)* The police moved in, carrying plastic shields, wearing Darth Vader helmets that covered their faces.

MALE VOICE: *(heavily amplified)* Disperse immediately.

(MARCUS and ANGE take cover in a doorway.)

TRUDY DOO: *(and sound of crowd)* Take it back!

MARCUS: *(to audience)* I've never been in a war, but now I think I know what it must be like. What it must be like when scared kids charge across a field at an opposing force, knowing what's coming, running anyway, screaming, hollering.

(Sound of the crowd screaming and crashing into the police.)

ANGE: *(to audience)* That's when the mist fell.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* It came out of the choppers, and we just caught the edge of it. It made my sinuses feel like they were being punctured with icpickers. Pepper spray. Not two hundred thousand Scovilles. Three million. They'd gassed the crowd.

ANGE: What do we do?

MARCUS: *(scared)* We walk away. That's all we can do. Walk away. Like we were just passing by. Like this is none of our business.

ANGE: That'll never work.

MARCUS: It's all I've got.

ANGE: You don't think we should try to run for it?

MARCUS: No. If we run, they'll chase us. Maybe if we walk, they'll figure we haven't done anything and let us alone.

ANGE: *(to audience)* The park was rolling with bodies, young people and adults clawing at their faces and gasping. The cops dragged them by the armpits, then lashed their wrists with plastic cuffs and tossed them into the trucks like ragdolls.

MARCUS: OK?

ANGE: OK.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* We reached the corner and turned down 16th Street toward Mission. Normally that's a pretty scary neighborhood at 2 a.m. on a Saturday night. That night it was a relief—same old druggies and hookers and dealers and drunks. No cops with truncheons and flash-bang grenades, no gas.

ANGE: Okay.

MARCUS: Um. Coffee?

ANGE: Home. I think home for now. Coffee later.

MARCUS: Yeah.

ANGE: *(to audience)* I spotted a taxi rolling by and I hailed it.

MARCUS: Have you got cabfare home?

ANGE: Yeah.

MARCUS: Good night.

(She pulls him into a kiss.)

ANGE: Good night.

(ANGE leaves or moves to the side, as if getting into the taxi. DARRYL is still on stage, as himself, quietly watching.)

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Head swimming, eyes running, a burning shame for having left all those Xnetters to the tender mercies of the DHS and the SFPD, I set off for home.

(MARCUS looks at DARRYL briefly as the lights fade.)

(Intermission.)

ACT TWO

(Lights up on MARCUS, ANGE, and DARRYL in a casual tableau.)

ANGE: *(to audience)* Two months had passed since the attack on the Bay Bridge.

MARCUS: *(to audience)* Darryl had been missing for two months.

DARRYL: Did you miss me?

MARCUS: *(to audience)* I remember feeling so angry, so confused. I felt like—

ANGE: *(interrupting him)* Not about you.