

SUPERPOMO  
by Aaron Hammond

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### Cast of Characters

Andy WARHOL, a thin and pasty-skinned pop artist who wears a distinctive bleach blonde wig and sunglasses throughout the play

Henry KISSINGER, an elder statesman who speaks severely with a slight German accent

SONNY Malone, a middle-aged waiter at Studio 54 and later at a “hip” bar

Kurt LODER, a middle-aged male entertainment reporter and veejay for MTV

Nina BLACKWOOD, a younger, female entertainment reporter and veejay for MTV

Courtney LOVE, a young, female grunge rocker with Marxist sympathies

Vladimir PUTIN, a serious Russian politician, played by the actor who plays WARHOL

INTERN, a buoyant young woman who works at MTV

The play takes place during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s in various suggested settings in New York City and Moscow.

## ACT I

### SCENE 1

At RISE:

(A mostly empty Studio 54, 1980. Night. The room is darkly lit and decorated with muted pastel colors. A morose disco track plays in the background. A table with a single ashtray sits in the center of the stage, flanked on either side with chairs and bathed in a spotlight. KISSINGER is seated at one of the chairs, impatiently waiting.)

(SONNY Malone, dressed as a waiter, enters and offers KISSINGER a menu; KISSINGER brusquely places an order and returns to his impatient waiting.)

(WARHOL enters from behind KISSINGER. He impishly tiptoes behind the seated KISSINGER and pokes him on the shoulder. KISSINGER dramatically turns while WARHOL quickly takes the seat opposite KISSINGER, evading his sight. The music fades to a barely audible level.)

#### KISSINGER

Auf! Do you know how long I've been sitting here, idly hoping to go unnoticed? You know a man of *my* eminence shouldn't be seen in places like this. How can I negotiate drug wars and *détentes* if the Reds think I'm some sort of poofster?

(WARHOL laughs and pats KISSINGER on his sleeve.)

#### WARHOL

I doubt any of the kids in here would even recognize you, *Henry*.

(KISSINGER curses under his breath, fishes out a cigarette, and lights it.)  
Although, you know, maybe Johnny Red would just give up. Talk about being confronted with the success of the West: even *the gays* have the freedom to choose which tie they'll wear to state dinners. Maybe you can answer a question that's been nagging at me, Henry. Do the *Reds* even wear ties to state dinners?

(KISSINGER, resigned, begins to rub his temples. WARHOL becomes progressively more animated.)

I suppose they'd wear whatever drab jumpsuit is in style, but then what do they eat? How can you eke seven courses out of turnips, vodka, and sadness?

(WARHOL waits for a response, with an expression of curiosity that progresses to a neat grin. Beat.)

#### KISSINGER

Are you much done? I really don't know why we have to do this *here* of all places. Why did you refuse to come to Washington?

**WARHOL**

Because you refused to tell me why. You know, I'm not here for you — this is where I usually spend my otherwise unoccupied nights. Except, I typically talk to men about a quarter of your age who have a lot more hair. But I guess you'll do in a pinch.

(WARHOL places his hand on KISSINGER's. KISSINGER locks eye-contact with

WARHOL, glaring. WARHOL removes his hand from KISSINGER's.)

Well, you can't blame a guy for trying. *Realpolitik* and all that.

**KISSINGER**

I will ask again. Done?

**WARHOL**

As a fried up dodo. The speaker yields the floor to the rather brutish gentleman from Germany with the most divinely aquiline nose.

**KISSINGER**

I swear. I would have thought your ebbing spotlight would do a number on your irreverence. Now, I will say this once, what we speak of tonight, you cannot repeat to anyone. Understood?

**WARHOL**

*Jawohl, mein kommandant.*

(Beat. KISSINGER glares dismissively.)

What? You *know* I know the rules. You're acting like I've never been involved in a covert psychological operation before.

**KISSINGER**

I would have thought that the last one would have inspired just a bit of seriousness.

**WARHOL**

Hey, you guys *wanted* me like this. You don't put on a charade for decades without losing a few screws in the process. Think about what I had to work with. At least Rothko got to have fun with his tour of duty. Me? Just cans of soup.

**KISSINGER**

*Patriotic* cans of soup. How else could we show the superiority of the capitalist system without...

(WARHOL interrupts, putting his index finger to KISSINGER's moving lips.)

**WARHOL**

... without showing the unparalleled cultural achievements made possible by consumerism. I remember the pitch, Mr. Kissinger. It's just a shame that you have none of the, uh, *je ne sais quoi* of J. Edgar.

**KISSINGER**

Would you please hush? We're not talking about cocaine or Coca Cola here. These are state secrets!

# WARHOL

I know it's your day job, but why muddy up the night with such insufferable worry? You're sitting with Andy Warhol in Studio 54. Do you expect anyone to believe that we're *not* talking about cocaine or Coca Cola? It's 1980!

**KISSINGER**

I am well aware of the year. The 70s are behind us, and the government is still feeling awfully sore after all of the PR beatings. First, Vietnam. And then, those goddamn Iranians. We really thought—I really thought—that disco would solve the problem. But look at this place! It's deserted!

# WARHOL

Ah, I think I understand why the esteemed Herr Henry Kissinger has chosen *now* to call on the humble artist before him...

**KISSINGER**

I called you many times! You never picked up the phone! And when I did get through, you or whichever pool-boy or easel-boy  
(WARHOL begins to grin.)  
or carpet-boy who picked up urinated on the handset!

**WARHOL**

I can't think of even one in my circle who would do such an awful thing to a telephone!

**KISSINGER**

Well, not urinate *on* it, urinate *in front* of it.  
(WARHOL looks up in thought and begins to smile. Beat.)  
But, all is forgiven. We need the insight of a man of your...  
(Beat.)

## WARHOL

Artistic genius?  
(Beat. KISSINGER considers replying, but nods instead.)  
You know, I can't say I'm surprised. Since McCarthy, I doubt you'd be able to find a single man in Washington that would even admit to picking up a paintbrush. But, tell me, why should I waste even a moment of my fleeting time away from my pool-boy and easel-boy and carpet-boy?

**KISSINGER**

Are you... trying to *negotiate* with *me*?

(WARHOL nods.)

Admittedly, I usually deal more with dictators and despots than...

(KISSINGER's rises slightly in his seat, and his gaze pans over WARHOL.)  
whatever epithet you have chosen this week.

**WARHOL**

Über-famous?

(KISSINGER begins to stand from his chair to leave.)

Now, now, now Henry. That was purely for your benefit.

(KISSINGER irately returns to his seat.)

I thought that maybe if I used your native tongue, you would warm up a little.

**KISSINGER**

I guess I shall use a direct approach. We have the leverage here. How would it play out if the world knew that Mr. Andy Warhol, grand debutant of the counter-culture ball, owes his career to the military-industrial complex?

(Beat. WARHOL ponders the idea for a moment, and then begins to shake his head negatively.)

**WARHOL**

You're right. The irony would fly over *their*

(He motions to the empty room.)

heads. So what'll it be this time? Shall we put someone shitting on a bust of George Washington in the MOMA?

**KISSINGER**

Crass! No, we need something... subtler. We've already beat the Reds to

(KISSINGER uses finger quotes)

"*the moon*," and capitalism is looking rosier and rosier to the Muscovites. The Soviet Union is floundering, and their people damn sure know it. We only need now to convince their youths too.

**WARHOL**

So, Mr. Kissinger, what do the young people like?

**KISSINGER**

Pornography? Light opera?

**WARHOL**

... and another one of your wrinkles gets its shadow.

**KISSINGER**

I don't know, goddamn it! I thought the discotheque would be a winner. I mean, who can say no to a negress in a pastel minidress?

**WARHOL**

You really are used to dealing with tin pot dictators.

(Beat.)

No. Young people like art. Or at least they *say* they do.

**KISSINGER**

So we start a revival? I've heard that Aaron Copland is looking for work...

**WARHOL**

No, *that* art is *old*. Young people don't like *old* things. Problem is, everything's been done. And that's why a turd on a bust of George Washington would fit in well in the MOMA.

**KISSINGER**

So it needs to be *new*; it needs to be *fresh*. But it can't be too serious.

**WARHOL**

Winner winner chicken dinner.

(KISSINGER, perplexed, looks to WARHOL. WARHOL begins to explain the idiom to KISSINGER before quickly giving up.)

Enter: *post-modernism*.

**KISSINGER**

Ack, I don't understand that garbage.

**WARHOL**

That's the beauty! Nobody does! Nothing means anything!

**KISSINGER**

And the punch line is?

(Beat.)

**WARHOL**

We're back to nothing.

**KISSINGER**

Auf.

(KISSINGER and WARHOL remain silent. WARHOL pulls two cigarettes from his coat, offering one to KISSINGER. KISSINGER retrieves a matchbook and lights both.

WARHOL looks upwards in thought, while KISSINGER removes his glasses and resumes rubbing his temples. Beat.)

(SONNY returns to the table with a cocktail. He passes it to KISSINGER and begins to walk away. KISSINGER takes a sip.)

Wow. Hey, garçon!

(SONNY turns to face the table.)

This is marvelous!

**SONNY**

Well, *shucks*, mister. You know, I just *live* to serve, but it's not every day I receive such an *eloquent* review.

(WARHOL glances first towards SONNY and then stares at him, abandoning his thoughts.)

**WARHOL**

You should see him at the United Nations.

(KISSINGER sharply glares at WARHOL, who doesn't notice.)

I'll admit, you have piqued my curiosity. How does one make a *marvelous martini*? Marijuana?

**SONNY**

Well, Mr. Warhol, I like to make every drink a little different. You should try my rum and coke—I call it soda pop art.

(Beat. SONNY turns to walk away. KISSINGER begins to laugh, while WARHOL stares at the back of SONNY's head as he leaves.)

**KISSINGER**

Funny boy, huh? Warhol?

(Beat.)

Andy?

(WARHOL's focus remains fixed on SONNY. He stands up.)

**WARHOL**

Hey, Mr. Garcon!

(SONNY turns to face the table.)

What do you know about art?

**SONNY**

Well, I used to paint. But I gave it up—there's no point in any of it anyway.

(He turns again to leave. WARHOL leans in and motions to KISSINGER to do the same.)

**WARHOL**

Look at him! He's exactly what we need. Someone young enough to have a good eye, but burnt out enough to realize that nothing matters!

**KISSINGER**

I don't know Andy. You know the paperwork I'd need to file...



(As KISSINGER speaks, WARHOL quickly stands and strides over to SONNY, taps him on the shoulder, and then pulls him back to the table. WARHOL retrieves a chair, brings it to the table, and pats the seat while invitingly looking at SONNY, who sits down at the table.)

**WARHOL**

Two questions, kid. I'm assuming you weren't christened in that panache uniform, so if we are going to make any progress here, I can't keep calling you garcon. What's your name?

**SONNY**

I'm Sonny Malone.

**WARHOL**

Sonny? *Marvelous*. I think my friend here was going to call you that anyway.

(KISSINGER shoots WARHOL a glare. WARHOL's focus continues on SONNY.)  
Now that we have a name for you, what's your pedigree?

**SONNY**

Huh? Like, my lineage? Well, the kids always told me that Malone meant dirty 'tato farmer, but I like to take a little pride...

(SONNY trails off. Beat. WARHOL now removes his glasses and begins to massage his temples.)

**KISSINGER**

What the hell does his family have to do with it, Warhol?

**WARHOL**

Why is everything so hard with you people? Your *story*, Sonny. What is it?

(WARHOL and KISSINGER lean in as SONNY begins to inaudibly speak. The still-playing disco fades out. "Magic" by Olivia Newton-John begins to play in its place with increasing volume as the lights dim to blackout.)

## SCENE 2

(Studio 54. Early morning. A disco track plays in the background. The same table sits in the center of the stage, but the ashtray is now conspicuously full of butts and ash.

Several dirty drinking glasses are also present. The same three chairs remain, and KISSINGER, WARHOL, and SONNY are seated in the same positions. The dress of the three is more casual; ties are no longer knotted and jackets have been removed.

During lights up, the three are laughing, more comfortably acquainted.)

### KISSINGER

Well, son, that is a *story*.

### SONNY

What are you getting at, *Henry*?

(SONNY glances over to a grinning WARHOL.)

### KISSINGER

It simply could not have happened. If there were contact between a citizen of this country and extra-terrestrial life, then I would have certainly heard about it. You didn't say that this all happened in Roswell, did you?

### SONNY

Roswell?

### WARHOL

It's a city in New Mexico...

### SONNY

I know where Roswell is! I don't think you get it—she wasn't a little green man! She was a muse! Like the Greeks. A physical and real and beautiful inspiration.

### KISSINGER

Beautiful lady, little green man, it doesn't really matter, does it? You expect me to believe that the planet was visited by some beast from outer space and the United States didn't get the memo? Don't you understand the present geopolitical situation? First we find out, then the Russkies, then the Vatican.

### SONNY

What the hell does some old guy in Rome know about an all-knowing muse from beyond the stars?

(Beat.)

No, I'm telling you, it all happened! After we lost Xanadu, the *club* that is—you know, inflation is a bitch—I just couldn't do it anymore. I had to get away, and that's why I'm here now, living in such *luxury*.

**KISSINGER**

*Sure.* It was “inflation.”

**SONNY**

I don’t need to sit here with some ex-kraut telling me I’m crazy. I have dishes to wash.

(He turns his back on KISSINGER to face WARHOL.)

It was nice talking to you fellas.

**WARHOL**

The pleasure was entirely mine.

(SONNY extends his hand towards WARHOL to shake. WARHOL stares at the extended hand quizzically. SONNY lowers his hand, turns around, and walks away, carrying two drinking glasses from the table. He trudges toward another table, which he begins to scrub.)

**KISSINGER**

Can you believe that kid’s chutzpah? What kind of scam is he trying to pull? Telling me about extraterrestrials. I would know! I would know, goddamnit!

**WARHOL**

Simmer down, Henry. Remember why we started this conversation?

**KISSINGER**

Well, I asked if you had any ideas for a new psy-ops cultural campaign, and then you proceeded to joke around and ignore the seriousness of the situation!

**WARHOL**

After all that. You know, the conversation which just ended, the one that lasted all evening...

**KISSINGER**

I don’t think I catch your meaning, Warhol. Haven’t we already established the kid is no good? What does he think, trying to lie to me?

**WARHOL**

I still don’t think you get the whole postmodernism thing.

**KISSINGER**

How am I supposed to? I am a man of a strong, classical upbringing. Nothing means anything? Rubbish. That’s not art.

**WARHOL**

Ignoring your increasingly and miserably apparent philistinism, his story is exactly what we need!

**KISSINGER**

What? Muses? Xanadu?

**WARHOL**

Think about it. A reimagined race of extra-terrestrial super-cultural beings descend to Earth. They bring ridiculous clothing, colors, music and all that. It's a good story. It's *new*!

**KISSINGER**

Ahh. I think I might understand now. It doesn't matter that it didn't really happen. Because fiction is permissible in art.

**WARHOL**

I wouldn't resign from the cabinet if I were you, but yes, Henry. *Fiction*. Say it with me. *F-I-C-T-I-O-N*

(KISSINGER glares at him. He remains nonplussed.)

Not to mention, he's a wholesome American boy with a face nobody can object to. From the Beltway to Belgrade, his story is sure to reaffirm American cultural supremacy. I can see it now, *Xanadu*.

**KISSINGER**

And what should it be then? I believe a poem by the same name already exists, and I don't see how such a complex narrative could be painted.

**WARHOL**

No, Henry, take it from me. Visual art is dead.

**KISSINGER**

Well, the medium is but a secondary consideration. Look now, I think he might be leaving.

(SONNY walks into view, cutting across the stage and wearing a coat.)

Garcon!

(SONNY turns towards the source of the noise. When he sees KISSINGER, he begins to shake his head and walk reluctantly towards their table.)

**SONNY**

I don't have to talk to you two no more, my shift is over. Consider my presence a sign of respect...

(He turns towards WARHOL.)

to you.

**WARHOL**

You're right to ignore him. Take a seat again, if you wouldn't mind too terribly. We have a job for you.

**SONNY**

Well, for you Mr. Warhol, it'd be \$120. \$150 if *he* wants to watch.

(KISSINGER looks to SONNY, confused. WARHOL begins to grin while shaking his head.)

**WARHOL**

Let's table that proposition for now. I mean, a real job. A gig. We want your story, we want Xanadu.

**SONNY**

Like what? You want me to write it down or something? I don't think I'm the right man for that. I've never been too good with words.

**KISSINGER**

Then paint it!

**SONNY**

With all due "respect" sir, I don't paint anymore. I lost my muse.

**KISSINGER**

Do you know whom you're speaking to? Do you understand the gravity of this situation?

**SONNY**

Frankly?

(Beat.)

No. Just five minutes ago, you told me I was a liar. And now you want me to paint?

**KISSINGER**

If your country asks you to paint, you paint! I should say no more in *this* location, but I assure you, the balance of power may depend on it. Now, paint!

**SONNY**

But...

**WARHOL**

No, *not* paint. Weren't you listening, Henry?

(He looks to KISSINGER, shaking his head.)

We need something fresh. Film!

**SONNY**

Let me get this straight. You guys want me to make a movie? Now you're just screwing with me.

**WARHOL**

Picture it, *Xanadu*. The story of a muse, fallen to Earth, in love with a bright-eyed young man. That's you, Sonny.

**SONNY**

Who's gonna pay for all this? Are you two trying to pull some sort of scam?

**WARHOL**

Mr. Kissinger will focus on the finances. You just gotta get the creative juices flowing!

**KISSINGER**

I suppose we can film it in Washington. The National Film Studio hasn't seen much use since 1969. The equipment might still be dusty from the moon landing job, and it's definitely a little old...

**WARHOL**

Vintage! Even better! Now, of course, the missing component is you, Mr. Malone. What do you say?

**SONNY**

A chance to make art again?

**KISSINGER**

And serve your country! Don't forget that silver lining!

**SONNY**

... sure sure, serve my country. Does this gig come with a paycheck?

**KISSINGER**

Well, we may be able to allocate...

**WARHOL**

Naturally! So, are you in?

**SONNY**

Hell, sure, why not? Let's show up some reds.

(KISSINGER begins to inaudibly speak, while SONNY begins scribbling down details on a notepad pulled from his coat. WARHOL sits silently grinning. The still-playing disco fades out. The lights dim to blackout.)

**SCENE 3**

(A projection screen sits on an otherwise empty stage. Only the screen is illuminated by a spotlight.)

(WARHOL enters holding a projector and stand. He places the stand in front of the screen with the projector on top. He starts the projector and leaves.)

(The music video for Olivia Newton-John's & Electric Light Orchestra's "Xanadu" plays on the projector. When it completes, blackout.)

#### SCENE 4

(A mostly empty Studio 54, 1980. Night. The room is darkly lit and decorated with muted pastel colors. "Xanadu" by Olivia Newton-John and E.L.O plays faintly in the background. A table with a single ashtray sits in the center of the stage, flanked on either side with chairs and bathed in a spotlight. KISSINGER is seated at one of the chairs, impatiently waiting, again.)

(A buoyant WARHOL enters and slowly meanders to the chair opposite KISSINGER. While walking, he waves to different parts of the otherwise empty stage. He sits down, pulls out a cigarette, and lights it.)

#### KISSINGER

Warhol, I can't believe you. How the hell can you be so chipper? Xanadu was a total flop!

#### WARHOL

How do you mean? It was great!

#### KISSINGER

*Great?* We barely broke even at the box office. Ebert crucified us!

#### WARHOL

Who is *Ebert*, and why should I care?

(KISSINGER slams his fist down on the table in front of him. WARHOL remains calm.)

#### KISSINGER

*Who is Ebert? Why should I care?* Are you crazy? The film was a failure! The critics said it was a goddamn war crime! And you know, I can't blame them. What the hell were you thinking? Olivia Newton-John? A record company album painter? Roller skates? The only good parts were the musical numbers with the older gentleman and his delightful big band!

#### WARHOL

Now Henry, what do you have against roller skates? I went out and bought myself a pair just last night. They have these divine, plastic rhinestones on them.

#### KISSINGER

What do I have against roller skates? I have nothing against roller skates! I *do* have a problem with such an embarrassment for the federal government. I saw Oliver North in the break room, you know. He just giggled at me, and for good reason. He sold weapons, and I sold a pile of shit!



**WARHOL**

Oh, what a crisis! Ollie North laughed at you! Did he take your lunch money too? I can imagine it now...

**KISSINGER**

Would you be serious for just one moment? We fucked up, Warhol.

**WARHOL**

Now, Mr. Kissinger, is such profanity really fitting for a man of your...  
(WARHOL rises in his seat and looks at KISSINGER's figure.)  
*gravitas?*

**KISSINGER**

Goddamnit, Warhol! This isn't a joke! You don't understand how much boiling water we find ourselves in!

**WARHOL**

I think you meant "hot water."

**KISSINGER**

You know exactly what I meant, Warhol! I don't even know why I brought you back from the grave.

**WARHOL**

Grave is a little harsh.

**KISSINGER**

That's it.

(KISSINGER stands and begins to put on his coat, previously draped on the back of his chair.)

I'm leaving. I've already paid my tab.

**WARHOL**

I don't think Miss Maxine will do much for you now, Mr. Kissinger.

(KISSINGER approaches WARHOL, index finger pointed accusingly.)

**KISSINGER**

You. I can't believe you.

**WARHOL**

Take a seat, Henry. I think you're overreacting here.

(KISSINGER sits back down, index finger still pointed towards WARHOL.)

**KISSINGER**

Overreacting? Someone started a new award because of Xanadu. Do you know what they call it? *The Golden Raspberry*. They made an award just to be able to call Xanadu the worst film of the year!

**WARHOL**

See? That's *hilarious*!

**KISSINGER**

*Hilarious*? You're delusional, Warhol!

**WARHOL**

And that's why they love me.

**KISSINGER**

Yeah, well, count me out of your fan club.

(KISSINGER stands to leave again.)

**WARHOL**

Now, Henry, simmer down. This is exactly what we *wanted*.

(WARHOL puts his hand on KISSINGER's forearm. KISSINGER pushes it off and sits back down)

**KISSINGER**

How the hell can you say that? How the hell will the Russkies take me seriously now? Roller skates!

**WARHOL**

Now, who didn't like Xanadu?

**KISSINGER**

We've gone over this, Warhol. The critics!

**WARHOL**

And who are the critics?

**KISSINGER**

The most established figures in the industry.

**WARHOL**

Good. Now who doesn't like the establishment?

**KISSINGER**

Yippies.

**WARHOL**

It's not the sixties anymore, Henry.

**KISSINGER**

What?

**WARHOL**

The *kids*, Henry. The kids *hate* the establishment.

**KISSINGER**

So?

**WARHOL**

Put on your realpolitik hat for a moment here. Now, we wanted to start a new art movement. Who *always* starts new art movements?

**KISSINGER**

The kids?

**WARHOL**

Right on. The kids... who hate the *establishment*. Now, what did the *establishment* think of Xanadu?

**KISSINGER**

They hated it.

**WARHOL**

So what will the kids think of Xanadu?

(KISSINGER looks down towards his chest.)

**KISSINGER**

They'll... they'll...

(Beat.)

**WARHOL**

Say it, Henry, say it!

**KISSINGER**

They'll love it!

(KISSINGER reaches across the table and puts his hands on WARHOL's cheeks.)  
You're a genius, Warhol!

**WARHOL**

Most people just call me Andy, you know.

**KISSINGER**

Okay, okay. So we got the kids hooked on Xanadu. But what now? *Xanadu... II?*

**WARHOL**

A sequel? Really, Henry?

**KISSINGER**

It worked for Lucas, didn't it?

**WARHOL**

We're not making *Star Wars*, here. That's the Department of Defense's shtick. We're doing something *bigger*.

**KISSINGER**

What exactly is it that you are proposing, Warhol?

**WARHOL**

We take Xanadu, and we put it on...

(Beat.)

television.

**KISSINGER**

Of course, yes! The kids love television! We can make a Saturday morning cartoon!

**WARHOL**

You're showing your age, Mr. Kissinger.

**KISSINGER**

Bah, at least I'm trying over here! What is it that you would do?

**WARHOL**

We take the music of Xanadu...

**KISSINGER**

Okay.

**WARHOL**

And the aesthetics and the pastel pants and the chintz...

**KISSINGER**

And...

**WARHOL**

We put it all on a new cable channel. We'll call it, *MUSIC TELEVISION*.

**KISSINGER**

Now you're just putting words together. How can there be music on television?  
That's what record players are for!

**WARHOL**

Not just music: music videos! We'll get people to make weird music and lay it over  
weird videos of people dressed in weird clothing doing weird things.

**KISSINGER**

This is starting to sound a little subversive, Warhol.

**WARHOL**

That's the beauty of it! We'll make the kids think they're *rebell*ing by embracing  
consumerism! They won't do anything subversive, Henry, they'll just watch the  
television.

(WARHOL stands, chest protruding with his chin up, and faces the audience.)  
Can you imagine it Henry? All over America, the youth will cry out:

(Beat. WARHOL shouts now, pausing briefly after each word for emphasis.)  
"I WANT MY MTV"

(Blackout. End of Act I.)

## ACT II

### SCENE 1

(Six desks, decorated with various office supplies and arranged in two columns, sit on an otherwise empty stage. WARHOL stands on a crate at the rear of the stage in between the two columns, facing the audience and the desks. At each desk is seated one of the original five MTV veejays and Kurt LODER, with Kurt LODER and Nina BLACKWOOD seated at the two desks closest to the audience. The veejays and LODER all face WARHOL in their seats, with back to the audience. WARHOL clears his throat and clasps his hands behind his back.)

#### WARHOL

I suppose you're all wondering why I've gathered you here...

#### BLACKWOOD

I know, I know! We're gonna do some kind of super secret psychological operation to beat the commies!

(The other veejays, embarrassed, rub their foreheads)

#### WARHOL

Yes, Miss Blackwood. Now, if I may continue...

(Beat. BLACKWOOD raises her hand. WARHOL shakes his head. BLACKWOOD puts her hand back down.)

We have assembled a team with a very particular set of skills, skills that you all have acquired over the lengths of your respective careers...

#### BLACKWOOD

I was in Playboy!

#### LODER

Yes, Nina, we *all* know. Now will you shut up?

(BLACKWOOD raises her hand and begins speaking before WARHOL can respond.)

#### BLACKWOOD

Mr. Warhol, Kurt Loder told me to shut up!

#### LODER

Really Nina?

(WARHOL sighs.)

**WARHOL**

A very particular set of skills indeed. What am I even doing up here? Just... get to work!

(WARHOL steps down from the crate and begins to pace downstage in between the columns.)

Let's make some *magic*, people! And remember, this is for your country!

(The veejays pick up phones on their desks and begin chattering. A spotlight shines on LODER.)

**LODER**

Yes, yes, Dexy. I'm glad everything is going well with you. Dublin sounds marvelous.

(Beat.)

Uh huh. Yeah. Well, I think I might have some work for you.

(Beat.)

No, *WORK*.

(Beat.)

Yes, yes, yes, it will be paid. How do you feel about television?

(Beat.)

Terrific.

(Beat.)

Oo, denim does sound great. Overalls? Now that just sounds ridiculous!

(Beat.)

No, Dexy, that's a good thing, a very good thing. When can you get to New York?

(Beat.)

Terrific.

(LODER returns the handset to the receiver, and turns back to WARHOL, who is still pacing upstage and downstage between the columns. The spotlight on LODER cuts out.)

We got Dexy!

**WARHOL**

Oh jeez, is he still wearing overalls?

**LODER**

Yup.

**WARHOL**

Perfect.

(LODER picks up the handset and dials again, and then resumes chattering. A few beats pass. The veejays periodically put down the handsets, redial, and resume chattering on the line. A spotlight shines on BLACKWOOD.)

**BLACKWOOD**

Yes, David Byrne. B-Y-R-N-E.

(Beat.)

Oh, *hi Davie*. Are you still, oh yes, I'm sorry I couldn't make it to your gallery opening.

(Beat.)

Yes, uh huh. Yeah, okay. I'll call your secretary and set a date, but first, are you still in that band? What was the name again?

(Beat.)

Ah, yeah, The Talking Heads. Well, are you guys still doing that really weird sound?

(Beat.)

Oh, you've gone mainstream? That's no good.

(Beat.)

Yeah, yeah, I know, rent to pay and all that. But what if I told you that you guys could be weird *and* not be poor?

(Beat.)

No, *not* be poor.

(Beat.)

Yeah, yeah, it might sound too good to be true, but it's real, Davie.

(Beat.)

Uh huh. I've got a job for you here.

(Beat.)

Where? New York of course. Okay, cool. Get the band together and pack your tuxedo.

(Beat.)

Yeah. Of course, bring the synth. Awesome, see you in a bit.

(The spotlight on BLACKWOOD cuts out. BLACKWOOD turns to face WARHOL, still pacing.)

David Byrne's in!

**WARHOL**

The poet?

**BLACKWOOD**

He's in a band now. He calls it "The Talking Heads." He said they mostly just hammer on a synthesizer.

**WARHOL**

Beep boop.

(WARHOL begins to dance the Robot. BLACKWOOD and LODER both shake their heads. WARHOL notices the two and straightens his body.)

That's great!

(WARHOL turns to address the whole room.)

Keep it up guys! Keep it strange! Keep it electronic!

(BLACKWOOD picks up her handset, dials, and begins chattering again. A few beats pass. A spotlight shines on LODER.)



**LODER**

Yes, operator, I'm trying to reach The Buggles.

(Beat.)

Yes, you heard me right, The Buggles. Okay, I'm holding.

(Beat.)

The Buggles? Yes, this is Kurt Loder speaking. Wait, what's wrong? What?

(Beat.)

Oh, okay, you guys ate too much acid.

(LODER covers the receiver on the handset and turns back to face the rest of the veejays.)

The Buggles ate too much acid, guys.

(LODER turns back around and uncovers the receiver on the handset.)

Well, that sounds great. Uh huh, there's a dragon.

(Beat.)

No, no, relax, I'm not the dragon. Remember, I'm Kurt Loder?

(Beat.)

You're speaking to KURT... LODER... Yes, yes, Kurt Loder.

(Beat.)

Okay, are you guys good to talk? No, no, I don't want to talk to the dragon.

(Beat.)

Yes, you guys are The Buggles. We're talking on the phone right now. Yes, the telephone. How would you guys feel about making a music video?

(Beat.)

Yes, a video. No, no, no, not a radio show. On television. Do you think, okay I'll wait for the dragon.

(Beat.)

Everything okay? Everyone alive? Awesome. So, do you think you guys could make a video? For the television?

(Beat.)

Yes, not the radio. Oh, you guys are radio stars now? Awesome, well, can you make it to New York?

(Beat.)

Okay, well, the dragon *could* fly you, or you could take a plane.

(Beat.)

No, a plane is not a dragon. Yes, yes, we would buy your tickets.

(Beat.)

Okay, terrific. Yes, please pack your rubber suits. Terrific. See y'all in a few days.

(The spotlight on LODER cuts out. LODER hangs up the handset and turns in his seat to face WARHOL, still pacing.)

I'm not totally sure, but I *think* The Buggles are in.

**WARHOL**

Well, they certainly sound like a... *fun* crew.

**LODER**

They're definitely... something. But I think they're exactly what you want. Which reminds me. Hey Nina!

**BLACKWOOD**

Yes, Kurt?

**LODER**

Your sister, Nena, is she still studying German?

**BLACKWOOD**

Well, she just finished her degree.

**LODER**

Does she still have the balloon fetish?

**BLACKWOOD**

Eww, why are you bringing *that* up?

**LODER**

I have a crazy idea for a video...

(WARHOL returns to the crate from which he originally addressed the room. The veejays turn to face him.)

**WARHOL**

Kissinger and I had our doubts, but you guys are great!

**BLACKWOOD**

I got David Byrne!

(Blackout.)

**SCENE 2**

(A projection screen sits on an otherwise empty stage. Only the screen is illuminated by a spotlight.)

(WARHOL enters holding a projector and stand. He places the stand in front of the screen with the projector on top. He starts the projector and leaves.)

(The original introduction sequence for MTV's premiere plays.)

(The music video for The Buggles' "Video Killed the Radio Star" plays.)

(The music video for Dexy's Midnight Runners' "Come on Eileen" plays.)

(The music video for Talking Heads' "Road to Nowhere" plays.)

(The music video for Nena's "99 Luftballons" plays.)

(The ABC News coverage of the celebration at the Berlin Wall on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1989 plays. When it completes, blackout.)

**SCENE 3**

(A mostly empty Studio 54, 1989. Night. The room is still darkly lit and decorated with muted pastel colors. "Celebration" by Kool & The Gang plays faintly in the background. A table with a single ashtray sits in the center of the stage, flanked on either side with chairs and bathed in a spotlight. KISSINGER is seated in one, and LODER is seated in the other. The two hold half-full beer tankards, which they swing back and forth. They are singing.)

**KISSINGER & LODER**

NOW THE WAR IS OVER,  
GORBACHEV IS DEAD.  
HE WANTS TO GO TO HEAVEN  
WITH A CROWN UPON HIS HEAD.

THE LORD SAYS NO,  
HE'S GOT TO STAY BELOW,  
ALL DRESSED UP AND  
NO WHERE TO GO.

(The two crack up laughing when the song completes. They are drunk.)

**KISSINGER**

I can't believe you kids did it! The Cold War is over!

**LODER**

Well, it wasn't *all* MTV.

**KISSINGER**

Now is not the time for modesty, Kurt. You guys, with your rock and roll, you got to the Soviet youth. And how do you control a nation?

**LODER**

Through the youth.

(KISSINGER hiccups.)

**KISSINGER**

I couldn't have said it better myself, pal.

**LODER**

I mean, they are your words, you know...

**KISSINGER**

Agh, Loder. Nothing gets through to you does it? The war is over! This is a time for celebration, yes?

(KISSINGER stands, pulls a few bills from his pocket, and lays them on the table. He pulls on his coat.)

Which reminds me. I'm going to go find a couple of pretty young brunettes and have some fun so debauched that even Warhol would get squeamish.

(Beat.)

Want to join me? I can tell the couple of pretty young brunettes to bring a couple of pretty young blondes. How does that sound?

**LODER**

No, no, you go ahead. Have fun. I think I'm gonna stick around here for a little longer and have a few more drinks.

**KISSINGER**

Suit yourself, sad man.

(KISSINGER extends his hand down to the seated LODER, and the two shake.)  
I'll show you pictures tomorrow. Good night!

(KISSINGER exits upstage, struggling to walk in a straight line. LODER stares down into his tankard.)

**LODER**

Warhol. Andy. I can't believe he's dead. The Cold War is over, and Andy Warhol is dead. And me? What's left for me? Now that the Reds are finished, is MTV over too? Kissinger didn't say it, but why would the government still care about a bunch of kids and their rock and roll? The project is over. I'm done.

(Beat. He perks up and finishes his tankard.)

What am I saying? I'm Kurt fucking Loder. I'm not done!

(LODER pounds the table with his fist. He looks around to make sure no one saw his outburst. Beat.)

I'm on the top of the world! Everyone else might have retired. Everyone else might be infected with AIDS or, or

(Beat.)

feminism or, or

(Beat.)

*political correctness*. But not Kurt fucking Loder. Kurt fucking Loder isn't done.

(Beat.)

Kissinger is moving on. This is *my* time. MTV is *my* station. I built it. And, fuck it. I'm not going anywhere.

(LODER stands and puts on his coat.)

The 80s might be over, but how *bad* can the 90s *really* be?

(Blackout. End of Act II.)

**ACT III****SCENE 1**

(A projection screen sits on an otherwise empty stage. Only the screen is illuminated by a spotlight.)

(LODER enters holding a projector and stand. He places the stand in front of the screen with the projector on top. He starts the projector and leaves.)

(The music video for Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" plays. When it completes, blackout.)

## SCENE 2

(A rundown office building, Moscow, 1991. A single desk, decorated with Soviet kitsch, sits in the middle of an otherwise empty page. Vladimir PUTIN sits at the desk, completing paperwork. After a few beats, Courtney LOVE enters, wearing sunglasses and looking around suspiciously. She approaches the desk and PUTIN.)

**LOVE**

Mr. Putin?

(PUTIN stands to greet her, and extends his hand. While they are shaking hands, he begins to speak.)

**PUTIN**

Ah, please call me Vladimir. Mr. Putin was my father, you see.

**LOVE**

Oh, yes, of course.

(PUTIN sits down at the desk and gestures for LOVE to sit in a chair opposite him. He puts on reading glasses and begins to flip through pages on a clipboard.)

**PUTIN**

He was what you Americans call

(Beat.)

A piece of shit. Now you must be

(Beat, while PUTIN continues to flip through pages on the clipboard.)

Ah yes, Miss Courtney Love. I apologize for the delay. There aren't so many Americans defecting now to the Soviet... uhh, I mean Russia of course. Still, the FSB doesn't have nearly the budget the KGB did. Those really were the glory days...

(PUTIN looks askance, reminiscing.)

**LOVE**

I can imagine.

**PUTIN**

But look at me here, soggy with nostalgia. Let's get Miss Courtney Love defected! First off, did you bring what I asked?

**LOVE**

Yes, but

(LOVE begins to dig around in her purse.)

I don't really see why you wanted

(LOVE pulls out a can of Campbell's Tomato Soup.)

A can of...

**PUTIN**

Ah, superb! Excellent, excellent, excellent. You must understand, Miss Courtney Love, that I am a man of simple pleasures.

**LOVE**

Uh huh.

**PUTIN**

And the one thing the West really knows how to make is...

**LOVE**

Tomato soup?

**PUTIN**

Exactly. At least in Soviet Union, I could buy it on black market. But now, I have to go to supermarket, where everything is twice the price. It is absurd, really.

**LOVE**

Well, naturally the bourgeois swine tries to screw the noble proletariat with their faulty consumerism.

**PUTIN**

Sure, sure, sure. All that Marx stuff.

**LOVE**

And Das Kapital.

**PUTIN**

Yes, yes. Now, onto the questions. First, what is your name?

**LOVE**

Courtney Love...

**PUTIN**

And where are you defecting from?

**LOVE**

Seattle, Washington.

**PUTIN**

Interesting. Very interesting... Now, Miss Courtney Love, what was your profession in Seattle?

**LOVE**

I was a musician there.



**PUTIN**

Oh, did you play the Yankee Doodle Dandy? I *love* the Yankee Doodle Dandy.

**LOVE**

No, not like that... My band played grunge, mostly.

**PUTIN**

What is this word, grunge?

**LOVE**

Well, we wore flannel and shot up heroin and sang about teenage angst. That sort of thing.

**PUTIN**

Oh, yes! Of course! I saw one of your performers, Kurt Cobain, on the Em Tee Vee.

**LOVE**

Oh, Kurt is actually my boyfriend. Well, *was*, I guess. We were going pretty steady before, you know, I decided to defect. And now I'm here.

**PUTIN**

Did you tell him where you were going?

**LOVE**

Oh no, don't worry. He just thinks I'm out to score. I left and drove straight to the airport.

**PUTIN**

Excellent. Now, another question. Why have you decided to defect today?

**LOVE**

Well, I started reading *The Catcher in the Rye*...

**PUTIN**

Oh, of course. And let me guess, you discovered that everyone was a phony.

**LOVE**

Wow. How did you know?

**PUTIN**

If I had a ruble every time someone showed up here in Moscow after they read *The Catcher in the Rye*...

(Beat.)

And let me guess, you tried to kill John Lennon?

**LOVE**

Well, yeah. I looked him up in the phonebook, but I found out...

**PUTIN**

That he was dead?

**LOVE**

Well, yeah. But how did you know, Mr. Putin?

**PUTIN**

Before he shot the Beatle man, I actually met with Mark Chapman.

**LOVE**

Wait, what?

**PUTIN**

Oh, Miss Love, Mark Chapman sat once where you are now. He came to Soviet Union after reading *The Catcher in the Rye*. We talked about it for a few minutes, and then I gave him his assignment. And the rest, as you know, is history.

**LOVE**

So you're telling me that the Soviets...

**PUTIN**

Assassinated John Lennon. Yes, that is correct. You know, Lennon started off as one of us. We got to him right before he and the other British boys first invaded your United States, and he proceeded with his mission to destroy your Christian country from the inside. But then, the whole India thing happened. The next thing we know, Lennon is eating acid and wearing paisley. Then the Japs got Yoko involved, and, you know, we had to *deal* with the situation. When Chapman showed up here, it was like a miracle, straight from Father Stalin. We gave him a gun, booked him on a flight back to New York, and boom!

(PUTIN makes a gun with his finger and points the "barrel" to his temple.)  
No more hippie man.

**LOVE**

That is... brilliant.

**PUTIN**

Yeah, the whole scheme actually got me promoted. But that was in old KGB. There isn't so big a budget for assassinations and coups anymore.

**LOVE**

Was he the first to defect? You know, after reading *The Catcher in the Rye*.

**PUTIN**

Oh no, Miss Courtney Love. You know the author, yes?

**LOVE**

Of course. J.D...

**PUTIN**

Salingerinsky. Josef Deena Salingerinsky. He was a double agent, actually. We slipped him on a boat back to the United States after the World War II. Nobody noticed, and he followed his orders. You know, we had to do *something* after the war. The Americans had Rothko, and then the great Andy Warhol. *Consumerism* was the new vogue. Miss Love, we have a saying in Russia: if you can't beat the vogue, you must *change* the vogue.

**LOVE**

I bet it sounds lovely in Russian.

**PUTIN**

Not really. There's a reason why we Russians don't have such a word, *lovely*.

**LOVE**

Of course. How could I forget?

**PUTIN**

At any rate, Salingerinsky wrote a few sappy stories about brooding adolescents, and then boom, *The Catcher in the Rye*. Since then, we've knocked out Lennon and gotten close to Reagan.

**LOVE**

Really?

**PUTIN**

Yes. Some real cloak and dagger work. Since the end of the Cold War, though, our appetites have changed considerably. Now, defectors mostly just eat turnips.

**LOVE**

*Turnips?*

**PUTIN**

The turnip really is a magical root. My mother made the best turnip gruel. I could give you the recipe, if you'd like.

**LOVE**

I dunno. I just thought I'd be doing something a little more, I guess, *subversive*.

**PUTIN**

Ohoh, Miss Courtney Love wants some subversion. Well, I'll let you in on a little secret. We just got in a wonderful new shade of...

(PUTIN begins to dig around beneath his desk. Beat.)  
jumpsuit. Look at this mauve!

(PUTIN passes her a gray fabric swathe. LOVE examines it. Beat.)

**LOVE**

"Mauve" jumpsuits weren't exactly what I had in mind.

**PUTIN**

You're looking for something more... *dangerous* perhaps?

**LOVE**

Yes! Give me a gun... or a cyanide capsule... or, or... *something*. I want to kill a phony!

**PUTIN**

Well, Miss Love, I think we may be able to help each other out.

**LOVE**

How do you mean?

**PUTIN**

Well, I am not doing so good here myself. My specialty in KGB was covert operations, but Yeltsin wants "transparency." How am I to make a name for myself with *democracy*? It's impossible!

**LOVE**

You could run for president or something...

**PUTIN**

Hah. That is a good joke, Miss Love. Me, Vladimir Putin, *running* for office.

(Beat.)

No. Not yet, anyway. But... what if I said you *could* kill a phony?

**LOVE**

Finally we're getting somewhere! This is the Mr. Putin I expected!

**PUTIN**

What I am going to propose is, of course, highly illegal, Miss Love. Well, at least it probably violates the so-called "international law." But, no matter. Your boyfriend, Mr. Kurt Cobain.

**LOVE**

What about him?

**PUTIN**

What if I told you, Miss Love, that Kurt Cobain is...

(Beat.)

a *phony*?

(Blackout.)

**SCENE 3**

(A projection screen sits on an otherwise empty stage. Only the screen is illuminated by spotlight.)

(LODER enters holding a projector and stand. He places the stand in front of the screen with the projector on top. He starts the projector and leaves.)

(The music video for Nirvana's live acoustic performance of "The Man Who Sold The World" plays. When it completes, a shotgun blast is heard. Blackout.)

(After a few beats, the lights come back up. Kurt LODER's announcement of Kurt Cobain's death on MTV plays on the projector. When it completes, blackout.)

**SCENE 4**

(A large non-descript “hip” bar, New Year’s Eve, 1999. Night. The room is brightly lit with strobe and colored lights. Generic boots-and-cats techno music plays. A table with the prominent outline of an absent ashtray sits in the center of the stage. Kurt LODER sits with a female INTERN. The depressed LODER is drinking a half-empty beer, while the INTERN has a nearly-full, neon pink drink in front of her. The INTERN is fiddling on a large cellphone, while LODER is scribbling on a note pad. He looks up to the still-fiddling INTERN.)

**LODER**

I don’t know why you picked this place. I told you I wanted to go somewhere low-key.

(The INTERN continues to focus on her phone.)

**INTERN**

What are you talking about, Mr. Loder? It’s New Year’s Eve in New York City! This place *is* low-key.

**LODER**

First off, I may be your boss, but *please* don’t call me Mr. Loder. And are you talking to me or to your phone?

(The INTERN puts her phone down on the table and looks up to LODER.)

**INTERN**

No, *silly*. Speech-to-text isn’t coming until the next model. I’m playing Tetris!

**LODER**

Tetris? Is it 1984 again?

**INTERN**

What do you mean? I didn’t think the cell phones in 1984 even *had* games.

(LODER takes a swig from his tankard.)

**LODER**

No, they didn’t. Were you even alive in 1984?

**INTERN**

Of course, I was 4 years old. Besides, I already told you I was legal.

**LODER**

Of course you did.

(The INTERN resumes fiddling with her phone. LODER closes his notepad.)  
Can you please explain to me in the simplest terms why this place is any good?

**INTERN**

What do you mean? This place is the hippest!

**LODER**

And what does that mean?

**INTERN**

What do you mean, "what does that mean?"

**LODER**

Exactly what I goddamn said!

**INTERN**

It's just like...

(Beat.)

I don't know. Hip.

(Beat. LODER shakes his head. After he stops, the INTERN looks up from her phone.)  
Chill out, dude. Let me pick your next drink.

(The INTERN waves for a waiter. SONNY notices and walks to the table.)

**LODER**

I'm good with another beer.

**INTERN**

Nonsense! He'll have a Velvet Warhol. Make it super, what do you call it...

(Beat.)

*pomo* for the old-timer.

(SONNY nods and exits.)

**LODER**

Now, what in the hell is a Velvet Warhol? And what in the hell makes it *super pomo*?

**INTERN**

I don't know. I think it means they add absinthe or something. But it might just be a label or something. Like, it makes the drink cooler.

**LODER**

How can a drink be cool?



**INTERN**

In the same way that this club is cool.

**LODER**

You mean this bar?

**INTERN**

No, this is a club.

**LODER**

No, this is a bar. There's table service and waiters and nobody's dancing.

**INTERN**

What do you mean? There are people dancing! Look over there!

(A generic "young person" in flannel meanders across the stage. His arms are extended in front of him, giving the impression of a zombie. One hand holds a neon pink cocktail.)

**LODER**

Dancing? I thought he was part of an art installation...

**INTERN**

Art installation? What do you think this is? 1984?

**LODER**

You have no idea how much I wish that were true.

(Beat. The INTERN focuses on her phone again. She begins to clack furiously.)

(The INTERN shrieks.)

What's wrong?

**INTERN**

My friends are on the way! I'm gonna go wait outside for them.

**LODER**

...okay?

**INTERN**

Can I bum a cigarette?

**LODER**

Camels okay?

**INTERN**

Never mind. I'm gonna try to find someone with Capris. See you later!

**LODER**

Sure. I'll just wait here.

(The INTERN jumps up and scurries off as he's speaking. Beat.)

With your tab.

(LODER sighs. SONNY enters and walks to his table with a neon pink drink.)

**SONNY**

Your date left?

**LODER**

Yeah, I guess. And she's not my date. She's my intern.

**SONNY**

Kid's these days.

**LODER**

Kid's these days.

(LODER finishes his beer.)

**SONNY**

Well, here's your drink.

(SONNY passes LODER the neon pink cocktail.)

I have to say, you don't seem like the kind of man who'd drink a Velvet Warhol, super pomo.

**LODER**

That is the most sensible thing I've heard all night.

**SONNY**

You know, I once collaborated with Andy Warhol.

**LODER**

No shit. Let me guess, you're... Valerie Solanas?

**SONNY**

I'm not joking around, mister. I used to work at Studio 54.

**LODER**

Every time someone calls me "mister," I think I grow a wrinkle.

(Beat.)

But take a seat, won't you? I don't think she'll be back anytime soon.

**SONNY**

Hell, why not? Nobody even drinks anymore.

(SONNY takes the INTERN's seat.)

I'm Sonny Malone.

(SONNY extends his hand forward to LODER.)

**LODER**

Wait, Sonny Malone? Like, *Xanadu* Sonny Malone?

**SONNY**

Yeah, you saw it?

**LODER**

Nope.

(Beat.)

But I worked on... I guess you could call it the sequel.

**SONNY**

MTV?

**LODER**

You knew about that?

**SONNY**

Of course. Kissinger and Warhol wanted me to join up. But *no*, I said. I wanted to start my club back up.

**LODER**

And you're back to waiting tables?

**SONNY**

Oh, you know, the same old story.

**LODER**

Inflation?

**SONNY**

Yup.

**LODER**

At least some things never change.

**SONNY**

Some things never do.

(Beat. LODER takes a sip from his drink and puckers. He pours out the rest.)  
What do you think Andy would think about all of this?

**LODER**

All of what?

**SONNY**

I mean, *this*.

(SONNY gestures out around him.)

How do you think he'd feel about the results of his grand postmodern experiment?

**LODER**

I never could get a read on the guy. I think it was the sunglasses.

**SONNY**

Must have been the sunglasses.

(Beat.)

You still at MTV?

**LODER**

My retirement starts tomorrow.

**SONNY**

Don't want to see it through the millennium?

**LODER**

I can't. Pastel, dead kids, heroin, flannel, more dead kids, more heroin, more pastel.  
It's a vicious cycle, you know?

**SONNY**

So you're just gonna sit here with your *super pomo* Velvet Warhol?

**LODER**

Sounds good to me.

**SONNY**

You know, I never could get into all that pessimism. I figure someone has gotta start it all over again.

**LODER**

*It?*

**SONNY**

I dunno. *Meaning*, I guess.

(LODER shakes his head. Beat.)

And besides, the 90s are over. How bad can the 2000s *really* be?

(Blackout. End of Act III.)

## ACT IV

## SCENE 1

(A projection screen sits next to an anchor desk with two chairs on an otherwise empty stage. LOVE sits, wearing a pantsuit, in one of the chairs behind the anchor desk. Only the screen is illuminated by a spotlight.)

(LODER, wearing a suit and a tie, enters holding a projector and stand. He places the stand in front of the screen with the projector on top. He starts the projector and takes his seat behind the anchor desk.)

(The music video for Lady Gaga's "Bad Romance" plays.)

(The music video for Macklemore & Ryan Lewis's "Thrift Shop" plays.)

(The music video for Kanye West's "Bound 2" plays. When it completes, all lights come up, exposing the anchor desk with LODER and LOVE.)

(LODER and LOVE both speak here with the obnoxiously optimistic and upbeat mid-Atlantic accent common to local television news anchors.)

# LODER

Well, Miss Love, wasn't that just a treat?

# LOVE

You said it, Kurt. I have to say, you know,  
(LOVE adopts a scandalous tone.)  
I might get fired for this one, but...

# LODER

Oohoh, Courtney. Maybe we should have the studio audience close their ears then.

(A laugh track plays.)

# LOVE

Now that Kanye. Let's just say, if I were going to motorcycle across a green screen American Southwest, I would definitely do it with Kanye.

(A laugh track plays.)

**LODER**

Oh Court, just don't let Kim find out!

**LOVE & LODER**

Ohohohohoh.

(A laugh track plays.)

**LOVE**

You know Kurt, I might be showing my age here, but...

**LODER**

Ohoh, don't let Kanye find out!

(A laugh track plays.)

**LOVE**

Oh, you.

(LOVE playfully slaps LODER's shoulder.)

But you know, I just think it is so gosh darn great that the new generation has picked up the MTV torch!

**LODER**

How do you mean, Court?

**LOVE**

These music videos! They just feel so *new*! They're doing things no one else has ever thought to!

**LODER**

You got that right, Courtney. Now, I might be showing *my* age here, but...

**LOVE**

Ohoh, don't let Kim find out!

(A laugh track plays.)

**LODER**

Seriously, Courtney. You know, people of our age, people that remember me on MTV, they get down on the *kids these days*.

(A laugh track plays.)

But I think the music industry just keeps getting better!

**LOVE**

You can say that again, Kurt!

(Beat.)

Oh, I'm getting the signal from our producer. Looks like it's time to wrap up your entertainment hour with Kurt and Courtney. I'm Courtney Love...

**LODER**

And I'm Kurt Loder.

**LOVE**

And together, we're bringing you, America, the entertainment news you need when you need it!

(LODER and LOVE both smile gratuitously. Beat.)

(A voice from offstage calls out "And... You're clear!")

(LOVE pulls out a flask from under the anchor desk. LODER brusquely removes his tie.)

**LODER**

Fuck.

(LOVE passes the flask to LODER. He takes a swig. Blackout.)



**SCENE 2**

(An anchor desk with two chairs sits on an otherwise empty stage. LOVE sits, wearing a pantsuit, in one of the chairs behind the anchor desk. LODER sits, wearing a suit and a tie, in the other chair. LODER and LOVE still have their newscaster accents. LOVE begins speaking as soon as the stage lights come up.)

**LOVE**

Good afternoon, America! Reporting from New York City, I'm Courtney Love.

**LODER**

And I'm Kurt Loder.

**LOVE**

And we're here together to give you the entertainment news you need...

**LODER**

When you need it!

**LOVE**

And we sure have got some news for you today. Isn't that right, Kurt?

**LODER**

It sure is, Court!

**LOVE**

First up, we have some news from MTV.

**LODER**

We sure do! The president of the network announced today that the channel will in the near future transition entirely to reality television.

**LOVE**

In a press conference, the president of the network had this to say:

(LOVE begins reading from a piece of paper on the anchor desk.)

"Here at MTV, we are committed to pushing the boundaries of what can very generously be called entertainment. America is changing, the culture is changing, and we can't expect to set the culture if we fall behind it, can we? The people have spoken. Reality television is the future, and MTV is committed to giving everyone exactly what they want."

**LODER**

I have to say Court, it is a bright new future, isn't it?

**LOVE**

I think it might just be the brightest, Kurt.

**LODER**

In the press conference, the president of the network cited changing demographics as justification for this new direction.

**LOVE**

He said that the young people just aren't interested in music videos with bedazzled white men playing electric twangers.

**LODER**

Now, isn't that the truth, Court?

**LOVE**

It sure is, Kurt. You know, I, for one, just *can't wait* to watch Kim Kardashian 24/7.

**LODER**

Ohoh, Court. Don't let Kanye find out!

(A laugh track plays. LOVE playfully slaps LODER's shoulder.)

**LOVE**

Oh, you.

**LODER**

Next up, we have a story coming from the American Medical Association.

**LOVE**

Now, that doesn't sound like entertainment news, Kurt.

**LODER**

Well, the paper says to talk about it, so let's talk about it!

**LOVE**

It seems the American Medical Association released a report today on the rapidly growing rate of Attention Deficit Disorder, or ADD.

**LODER**

The rate of diagnosis for the disorder has exploded in recent years. According to this new report...

**LOVE**

That is, the one published by the American Medical Association.

**LODER**

Yes, Court. According to the new report—the one published by the American Medical Association—nearly 1 in 3 Americans now suffer from ADD.

**LOVE**

Wow, Kurt. That's terrifying news!

**LODER**

The AMA—that is, the American Medical Association—is officially calling this new development an epidemic.

**LOVE**

Wow, Kurt. Is there any cure?

**LODER**

It seems that amphetamine is the best treatment.

**LOVE**

I guess you learn something new every day, Kurt!

**LODER**

You sure do, Court.

**LOVE**

Looks like we have another human interest story, Kurt. Mothers of America, there might be one more reason to not vaccinate your children.

**LODER**

That's right. According to a new study, intravenous vaccines could be a gateway to heroin!

(Beat. LODER elbows LOVE, who is fiddling with her earpiece. Beat. He smiles and elbows her again.)

**LOVE**

Breaking news from Washington, America! We have just received confirmation from the Pentagon that the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, has initiated a nuclear attack on the United States. Yes, you are hearing me correctly, America. The Pentagon is now projecting that in t-10 minutes, the first intercontinental ballistic missiles, tipped with nuclear warheads, will touch down on the Eastern seaboard.

(A ringing alarm begins and continues until the end of the scene.)

This is not a drill, America. We are under nuclear attack.

**LODER**

I'm getting word now that the Pentagon *has* launched a counterstrike. In t-11 minutes, Moscow will be leveled. I repeat, Moscow *will* be leveled. Viewers, do not change the channel. Do not go online. Do not waste your last precious moments—stay tuned!

**LOVE**

That's right Kurt. I've received word from our producers that we will continue as normally scheduled with commentary on these new developments.

**LODER**

Well, you know, Court, I really can't condone the use of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

**LOVE**

Neither can I, Kurt.

**LODER**

But you know, at least Mr. Putin is giving us something *new*!

(A laugh track plays.)

**LOVE**

You can definitely say that again!

(LOVE pulls out the flask from underneath the anchor desk. She takes a swig and passes it to LODER. He takes a swig and then makes eye contact with LOVE. She shrugs, and the two begin making out on top of the anchor desk. A scandalized laugh track begins playing. When it concludes, an explosion is heard. Blackout.)

**SCENE 3**

(The stage is empty and bathed in red light. Vladimir PUTIN enters, shirtless, carrying an easel and a canvas. He walks to the center of the stage, sets up the easel and the canvas, and begins painting with his back turned to the audience. While he paints, Paganini's "Moto Perpetuo" plays.)

(PUTIN paints a crude rendering of a Campbell's Tomato Soup Can.)

(PUTIN completes the outline of the can, and, in the place of the "TOMATO SOUP" label, paints the word "POMO.")

(When he finishes painting, PUTIN turns to face the audience and steps aside, allowing all to view his painting. From his pants, he fishes out WARHOL's bleach blonde wig and sunglasses. He wears both.)

(The music stops with the sound of an explosion. Blackout. End of play.)