Cerebral Bildungsroman:

Pens and papers swirled around the police headquarters being momentarily intercepted by officers and then shewed away to their next destination. Disorganized orders were barked over the drawn out buzz of the workstations and open air meetings. Bells rang and clocks ticked fiercely reminding each inhabitant that so long as the second hand moved, work was to be done. And over the multitude of voices the chief’s bellow managed to slice its way through the clogged mess.

“Get me Portswine Gouda!” The fat man stood breathless at his door. His coat was off and his hands firmly gripped his elastic suspenders. Sweat beaded on his bald head and dripped into the well earned mustache below. Only desperation could’ve demented Chief Toad to such a panicked state. Finally, as if on cue to prevent the chief from bursting, a thin young man was hastily ushered past his office door and onto the wooden guest chair. Chief Toad followed quickly.

“Inspector Portswine Gouda, I assure you that when I say you’re the only man for the job, I mean it. Some terribly frightening information has presented itself as a product of very sly communication and watchful eyes. You see, this case is something special. A few of our contacts have confirmed that some of our most wanted men are planning a distasteful “get together” to celebrate, and immortalize, their newfound knowledge. These men come with no light weight concerning the severity of this moral breach. Here, here, take a look.”

Chief Toad pushed a sheet of paper across the desk. The names of the men in question were inked in the middle: Mr. Burkson, Dr. Greene, Mr. Grimshaw, Dr. Martin, and Dr. Perkins. The thin inspector looked hotly at this powerful list. He had only heard stories of these legendary ethical trailblazers. Could it be true?

The chief continued on with his briefing. “You see, this is why I called upon you, Inspector Gouda. You have one of the most maturely amplified z-scores relative to the curve of professional investigation. Not to mention a doubly fortified mind with which to shield the lances of cynicism. Here’s the case file, but let me tell you, these “mighty minds” cannot be underestimated. Never doubt their mental prowess nor their material strength to adhere to their theories in methods unimaginable. The file will tell you where to go. I wish you luck.”

So that’s how it came to be that Inspector Gouda stood hunched over the window two stories up, peering into the large hall below and watching the operation unfold. The window was a lightly frosted glass, permeable enough to make out edges and colors but confounding enough to only guess what forms these were in actuality. However, the dark sky overhead allowed him a rather advantageous perspective towards the lights inside the building and he began to reconcile what it was he was seeing.

In the middle of the hall was a long conveyor belt of sorts. Being dragged along this was some small object that Inspector Gouda couldn’t quite make out. Two gentlemen stood on opposite sides of the conveyor belt and two others stood off in the far corner. These two gentlemen were clearly working away on some behemoth supercomputer. Gouda couldn't help but think that it was comically, if not unreasonably, large for any task he could imagine. But nonetheless, he had been reminded of his underestimations of these “mighty minds.” Here, as well, was another man beside them, feeding what looked to be stacks of paper through what looked to be another comically large piece of machinery, undoubtedly a scanner.

“I can’t see a thing.” Gouda thought to himself. “I have to get a clearer look.”

So, despite his encroaching fear, Gouda cracked open the window and ushered in a much clearer view of the scene beneath him. To any average ragamuffin, the operation would be thoroughly confusing. But to the well attuned mind of Gouda, he almost immediately knew what evil processes were being undertaken beneath him. From what he could tell, the man filing papers was scanning an assumed collection of the men’s complete works. From here, their collected knowledge was being uploaded to the supercomputer. The supercomputer sent the information via cables to the objects on the conveyor belts. And these objects, it was clear now, were *brains.* The horror of it now shook Gouda. “They’re immortalizing themselves by transferring their minds into others. What they’ll do with the brains is easy for anyone to imagine, but my god, what absurdity!”

The men below continued their hushed conversations. Whatever vile suggestions were being tossed around, even Gouda didn’t care to know. But for all the obscurity in their communications, Gouda could make out that they referred to this experiment as a “cerebral bildungsroman.” This caustic nomenclature revealed their proprietary neglect in the face of fanciful experimentation. It was clear that these “mighty minds” didn’t have time to tutor and mold a student to their likings. Only through cerebral breeding could they hope to plant their worldviews in the minds of the youth, the harbingers of future civilization.

But, now here’s a fact! They’re bringing in a body! Gouda turned back to the window to see two men carrying in another man, alive or dead he could not tell. He squinted, leaned a little closer. Chief Toad! They had acquired the body of the police chief himself! A machine was hooked up to his head, a circular hat of sorts with a long tube coming in and out. One of the men readjusted it and then flipped a switch. Promptly, Gouda could see that the tubes began to fill with a pinkish substance. But, could it be? Were they really replacing his brain with theirs? What amazement, what terror, what subdued enthrallment took hold of Inspector Gouda at the site of his boss’s brain being swapped.

No more! He could not take it! Quickly now he scuffled down the side of the building and out into the night.

The police headquarters's doors flew open at the entrance of Inspector Gouda. The inordinate confusion and busyness remained yet unchanged: officers still running and papers flying around carelessly in the air. “Chief Toad!” Gouda shouted as he ran towards the office. “Has anyone seen Chief Toad? Where did he go?”

“Why, I’m right here, my boy! What’s gotten into you?”

Thank god! So Gouda had seen someone else. Or perhaps…had he seen anything at all…or…

“So you weren’t…over there?” He took a moment to catch his breath.

“Over where? What do you mean, boy? Really, what’s gotten into you?” He stood with his fat hands gripping his suspenders and his brows furrowed tectonically askew.

“Well, oh, never mind. I have something to tell you. And show you,” he fumbled with his phone, “some pictures. It’s all very urgent.”

“Well, come in, come in.” Chief Toad ushered him into his office and closed the door. The next hour was spent recounting Gouda’s tale, Chief Toad writing notes, looking at the pictures, and questioning, to no success, the nature of it all. And in the end, exhausted from the night, Inspector Gouda went on his way, vowing to return tomorrow at first light to continue reporting on his discoveries.

But as he left, Chief Toad’s eyes followed him sharply. Hurriedly, he picked up the phone. “Mr. Burkson. We have a nonbeliever. I feel that his ignorance is not optimal for the reconstruction of this world. I await your guidance on my next move. I understand. It will be done tonight. Yes, immediately.” Chief Toad gathered his belongings and set out after Portswine Gouda. All would come to fruition. They just had to be very careful.