

The book cover features a minimalist design with a white background. A thick black vertical bar runs down the left side. A horizontal black line crosses the page, with a yellow square on the left side. On the right side, there is a yellow square at the top and a black vertical bar at the bottom. The title and author's name are positioned in the lower-left area.

# Karl Marx In Hell

Gavin Kitching

# **KARL MARX IN HELL**

**A PLAY**

**by**

**Gavin Kitching**

## SCENE ONE

*A Victorian study. Large desk piled high with papers and books, book cases around the walls filled to overflowing, a battered armchair in one corner. Karl Marx is sitting at his desk, lighted cigar in one hand, quill pen in the other. He is composing aloud.*

KM. "The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together"... Yes, yes...er...*(He starts to compose)*...It is nearly one hundred and fifty years since I wrote these lines and time has not invalidated them. Indeed they are...er... no...they may be regarded...yes...they may be regarded as even more true today, at the end of the twentieth century, than they were in the middle of the nineteenth.

One of the criticisms... one of the many criticisms.., which I would now make of my writing at this time would be... would be.. not my overestimation but my underestimation of the achievements and potential - the as then unrealised potential - of the bourgeoisie. This underestimation followed from...followed from Oh shit! *(He throws his quill on to the desk in disgust, and then stares gloomily at the paper).*

MAN'S VOICE. Karl! I say Karl!

KM. Yes Jeremy.

J. I've got them, the whole lot.

KM. *(sourly)* Bully for you.

J. No, but every single one, and a graph.

KM *(more interested)* A graph?

J: Yes, well several graphs actually, unit prices for the last year, index numbers for the last year and last five years, percentage increases graphed against other commodities., And all in colour. Broker Net and Broker Stat Pak, that's what you ought to have Karl!

KM. Don't be funny.

J. Oh sorry... But you really, really ought to see this.

KM. Even less funny.

J. (*giggles*) Ah the wonders of a VDU, of e mail, of the wondrous fax machine. The skies are mine. ..the zapping chattering skies are mine!. ..mine!

KM. Oh piss off Jeremy. I'm trying to write something here.

J. I know I heard the scratching. What have you got there Karl? IBM quill and Macintosh foolscap?...Could be compatibility problems. I also hear that quill-pak has a virus. Look out Karl old chap, you might lose the lot and then where would posterity be?

KM. (*rising from his desk and striding to a partition at the side of the stage*). Jeremy, if you don't bloody well shut up and leave me alone, I'll I'll...!

J. You'll what old boy?. ..empty your ink well all over me? Cane me with your ruler? Or perhaps crown me with one of your folios?

KM. Oh sod off!

*KM returns to his desk and sits down gloomily. He stares at the paper again and then takes up his quill.*

KM. "An underestimation based upon a misreading of the.. .of the...developmental trajectory of.. .of.. .civil society, a trajectory not toward the simple polarization which I had postulated...postulated...but...but ...Oh shit I'm writing like some bloody twentieth century Marxist!

*He casts the pen away once more and stares ahead morosely. Meanwhile the sound of a laser printer is to be heard, interspersed with "mms" and "ah has!" from behind the partition. KM turns with reluctant interest toward the source of the sounds.*

KM. Jeremy!

J. Yes old boy?

KM. What does it show then?

J. What does what show?

KM. The graph! The bloody graph! What does it show?

J. (*triumphant laughter*) Ah ha! Thought you'd be interested. Knew you'd be interested.

KM. All right I'm interested. What does it show?

J. What would you think?

KM (*brightening at the challenge*). Well...let's see...long recession with fitful non-sustained recoveries since the mid-seventies.

J. (*enthusiastically*) Yes, yes.

KM. Real estate, Capital's favourite investment in the inflationary climate of seventies and eighties, leads of course to...

J. To?...to?

KM. To speculative boom and then to... to... big bust late eighties.. .yes.. .What's the base year for your index numbers Jeremy?

J. 1988 old boy.

KM. Well in that case, given all we know about the behaviour of the system in a period of low inflation recession, I would expect. ..I would expect...

J. Oh come on, don't play the old Prof, this isn't a first year macro and micro class.

KM. I would expect your series to show the price of gold rising sharply in the last year and in the last five years with the rise accelerating through the period and with gold also showing sharp gains relative to all. ..or at any rate most.. .other commodities.

J. Spot on Karl my old darling! My God you could have been something Karly. They'd have loved you in Price Waterhouse. You'd have shredded 'em down there on the floor, shredded 'em...!

KM. (*flattered*) Oh...oh...that's most kind of you Jeremy, most kind.. .Just an inspired guess really.

J. Not as bit of it! First class analysis old boy, first class. ..Deserves some sort of recognition.. .er.. .I know...Pass the foolscap old boy and I'll make you a copy of the composite graph.

KM. (*pleased*). Oh no, I couldn't put you to the trouble.

J. No trouble...Got plenty of time (*giggles*).. .All got plenty of time haven't we? Come on pass it through old boy!

KM. And the quill and ink well Jeremy. It has to be you know.. .otherwise....

J. Qh yes, and the quill and the jolly old ink well.. .pass ‘em all through. Sod the buggers!

*KM goes to the partition foolscap, quill and ink well in hand and slides them underneath. He then returns to his desk and returns depressedly to his constipated composition. Scene ends.*

## SCENE TWO

*Marx still at his composition. A knock at the door.*

KM *(with relief)* Yes, come in.

*A sharply dressed, dark-haired young man in his mid- thirties enters. He carries the latest in cameras and a mass of lenses .He strides busily and confidently through the door .He speaks with a barely overlaid Cockney accent.*

YOUNG MAN. Afternoon Charlie. You're Charlie Marx ain't yu'?

KM. I'm Karl Marx yes.

YOUNG MAN *(offering his hand)* Lewis Rosenbaum, pleased to meet yu'. Just call me Lew, everybody does.

KM. I'm sure they do. What may I do for you Mr. Rosenbaum?

LR. Yeh, that's what I like. Straight down to business. No muckin' about. I'm just the same myself squire. Well I'll tell yu', I've got an order for you. Five hundred quid for everything they use. Peanuts o' course. But beggars can't be choosers, eh Charlie?

KM. Don't call me Charlie. My name is Karl. And I haven't got the faintest idea what you're talking about and therefore no idea whether I wish to be a begger or a chooser.

LR. Oh. .er. ..no. Well let me give you the full strength Charlie.

KM Don't call me Charlie!!

LR Er..no..er sorry, Karl. Well what it is see, I've got an order for yu' for five hundred knicker from Express Newspapers. Now say they use a couple for the Daily and one for the Sunday, that's fifteen hundred. And then of course we can expect some knock on. The other's won't want to be out in the cold...Sun, Mirror, Mail, People, News of the Screws. Then there's the snob rags. Always slow, but they get there in the end. We could be lookin' at a fair few grand by the time it's

dead. What do you say? Normally I only offer a sixty-forty deal to a subject, but seem' how the circumstances are...well... kind of unusual, I'll go fifty-fifty. Can't say fairer than that can I? What about it?

KM What about what for God's sake ?!!!

LR. The piccis, the photos! They want some! And I tell you Charlie I know me job. You'll be pleased, they'll be pleased and we'll all be laughin' all the way to the bank. (*He pats the camera and accessories*). Only the best stuff and I really know how to use it.

KM. Let me get this straight Mr...er...Mr.

LR. Rosenbaum. Call me Lew. I've told you.

KM. Let me get this straight...er.. .Lew. You propose to take some degeurotypes of me.

LR. Degeuro- what?

KM. Sorry...er...a slip. You propose to take some photographs of me and to sell them to the popular British press.

LR (*interrupting*). Not just popular, all of 'em...I mean in the end. And not just British maybe. Once its starts to run we might get the Frogs in, the Yanks, the Itis. Who knows...er Charlie?... The sky's the limit!

KM Yes, well, at any rate. You propose to take these photographs and sell them for money.

LR That's the strength Charlie.

KM. And then to split the proceeds of the sale equally with me.

LR. That's right, right down the middle, fifty-fifty. As I say it's not my usual deal, but considerin' the special circumstances.

KM. But that's idiotic!...I mean...I mean...even more idiotic than most events here.. .I mean I'm dead man! I've been dead for. ..for...

J. One hundred and eleven years, two hundred and twenty three days and...and.... seventeen hours..er...approximately.

KM. Thank you Jeremy.

J. Don't thank me, thank Mac *Who's Who in History*. Got it in a window here. Then it's over to calculator and Bob's your uncle.

KM. For that length of time. Why should anyone want a photograph of me?! And most especially why should anyone want a new photograph of me? I'm completely old hat.

J. Yeh, well of course that's why the price is as low as it is.

KM. Low? Five hundred pounds a print is low?!

LR. Oh yeh, Jesus. I could get ten times that for a picci of Di or Fergie. And that's with clothes on. Now if you're talkin' swim suits or workout gear that's maybe ten thousand a print and topless...well topless. ..God almighty twenty thou. Five hundred - I could get five hundred for a winsome pic of one o' the corgies. An' I wouldn't have to split it! And anyway...anyway...they ain't interested in you. I mean not in you personally, if you see what I mean. They're interested in Communism, or the end of Communism like. Know what I'm sayin'?

KM. Oh yes Mr...er... Lew. Now I know exactly what you're saying. "Captured: The Guy who Guided the Russkis down the Road to Serfdom." "In The Flesh. The Dirty Jewish God that Failed". That's the kind of thing they have in mind no doubt.

LR. Yeh maybe. I dunno. I just take the pics. But those captions ain't bad. I might include them in a fax. Some idle bugger of a sub-ed might wangle me a bit extra for savin' him some effort. Don't mind do yu'?

KM. I don't mind at all Lew...In fact I mind so little that I will not only allow you to take your photographs I will sit...er pose...free. You may keep all of your five hundred pounds. I have no need of it anyway. This..er..my place here..is blessedly free from commodity relations.

LR. Come again?

KM. I have no need of the universal equivalent since no exchange relations operate here.

LR. What?

KM. I've got nothing to spend the bloody money on you bonehead! So I don't need it. It's no use to me!

LR Oh, OK squire. No probs... But what do yu' mean you've got nothing to spend

it on. What about the Mall?

KM. The Mall?

LR. Yeh, the Mall, the Shopping Mall just down there. (*He points off stage*). Harrods, Selfridges, M&S, Woolies, Boots, the works. What do you' mean, you've got nothing to spend it on?!

KM. Ah yes, but you're a mover Lew aren't you? I mean you are allowed movement. I, on the contrary, never leave this room. I cannot.

LR. What, you' mean you' just stay 'ere all the time! Why?

KM. Because, dear fellow, I cannot get out.

LR. Course you can. There's a door 'ere. I just came in through it.

KM. You came in through it indeed. But I cannot go out through it.

LR Don't be barmy, course you' can. Yu' just walk through it. Come on!

KM. I assure you Mr...er... Lew.. it would be a complete waste of time. I cannot leave this room. And as a matter of fact I have no particular wish to, or at least not in that direction. I expect that is part of the programming too.

J. Wouldn't mind coming this way though, would you Karl old boy, into this den of state-of-the-art capitalist technology, eh what?

KM. (*sourly*) Yes Jeremy... How goes the graph?

J. Slowly old boy. Haven't you got a better quill? This thing writes like a dustbin lid. Or perhaps they were all like that.

KM It's an absolutely excellent quill, I...

LR. Programmin'? What do you mean programmin'?

KM. What?

LR. You said it was all part of the programmin' that you didn't want to go out. What programmin'?

KM. Ah, that is a difficult question and a deeply disputed one I may say. I think it's Freud, Jeremy thinks it's Satan. What do you think Lew?

LR Freud, Satan, I dunno what the fuck you're talkin about.

KM. (*looking at LR quizzically*). Don't you? Tell me Lew, where do you think you/we are?

LR Dunno, heaven, hell,...dunno.

KM You mean in your view it might be either?! What about this Jeremy, a totally new cosmology.

J. Fascinating old boy.

KM. Why might it be either Lew, I mean aren't they supposed to be rather different?

LR. Oh yeh, of course. Heaven as a reward for the virtuous, Hell as an eternal punishment for sinners. I know me Bible yu know, I'm not ignorant. Me mum was a real fan of Billy Graham.

KM. Indeed. But on your own account you cannot tell which we are in. So how do you know it is either?

LR. Gotta be.

KM. Why?

LR. Because. ..because I'm dead ain't I?

KM. Are you? How do you know?

LR. I remember o' course.

KM. You remember?! Your own death? Are you sure?

LR. Well, maybe I don't actually remember dying but I remember what happened up to...up to...up to...

KM. Up to what?

LR. Up to the moment everything went black.

KM. And what happened after that.

LR. Nothin'. I mean, I was just 'ere.

KM. And what do you make of here?

LR. What do you mean? ‘What do I make of it’?

KM. Well, are you sure it’s real, for example?

LR. Course it’s real! But borin’ maybe, but real enough.

KM. How do you know?

LR. Well I’m here ain’t I, you’re here. He’s (*gesturing toward J’s partition*) here, or there anyway. All those folks down the Mall is here. You can see stuff, hear stuff, even touch stuff (*He bangs on KM’s armchair*). Gotta be real.

KM. Mm. There are situations Lew in which the Collected Wit and Wisdom of Rupert Murdoch will hardly suffice philosophically. This may be one of those situations.

LR. Eh?

KM. Never mind Lew. Let’s deal with this matter of the pics as you call them. As I said I do not want or need payment in money but I do attach a non-monetary price to my cooperation.

LR. What?

KM. I want you to do something for me in return for the pics.

LR. Oh I see. What’ I ain’t goin’ higher than fifty-fifty.

KM. I’ve already told you I don’t want money!

LR. Oh yeh...What then?

KM. I want to dictate some remarks about my views on the collapse of Communism and I want you to send them to...to...

LR. Express Newspapers.

KM. To Express Newspapers along with the photographs.

LR. (*shrugging*) OK. No skin off my nose. You’ll ‘ave to go slow, me shorthands not what it was. Been in the photography game too long, and I can’t guarantee they’ll use the stuff o’ course. In fact they probably won’t, probably go straight on the spike. But OK I’ll take ‘em down.

KM. Good.

LR. But like I says. I can’t guarantee they’ll use ‘em.

KM. That's not the only thing you can't guarantee Lew. You can't guarantee anything. You can't even guarantee that 'they' exist, or that, if they do exist, that they are who they say they are.

LR. What do you mean? Course they exist. Everybody's heard of the Express Group, and I've got their fax right here. *(He fumbles in a trouser pocket. Loud laughter from behind the partition. KM starts to laugh too).*

LR 'Ere, what's so bloody funny?!

KM. Jeremy gets a lot of faxes Lew and a lot of e mail messages. The real question is what one is to make of them. Who sent them for example?

J. Yes a ticklish question. Almost finished here Karl, and it isn't bad either I may say, within the limits of the technology available of course.

KM. Thank you Jeremy. Who sent your fax Lew?

LR Express Newspapers I've told you.

KM. To Hell? (or Heaven?! How did they manage that Lew?! I know that the power and adaptability of Capital hardly knows any bounds. I got into a holy mess underestimating it. But even if one were to believe in the reality of heaven and hell - which of course I do not - there is a fundamental cosmological problem here.

LR *(banging his head/ear with one hand)*. I'm sorry Charlie I can't hear you. Can you speak up a bit?

KM I said...how do they... *(He stops and starts to laugh. Jeremy also starts to laugh)*. He can't hear me Jeremy. He can't hear me.

J. They pulled a switch the bastards.

KM. Or he pulled it himself.

J. To be determined. ..perhaps.

LR What? What are you talkin' about? I can hear you OK now.

KM *(taking LR around the shoulder)*. Never mind Lew. It's not important.

LR OK then. Can we get on with the pics? Oh and the interview. I'll need me pad for that. Or perhaps you'd like it recorded. I've got a nice little Sanyo do the job perfect.

KM. Recorded? Yes that will be fine, just so long as I do not touch the equipment myself. Yes, bring your, your...

LR. Sanyo.

KM. Your Sanyo yes. That will be fine.

LR Now? Shall we do it now? They want the stuff quick smart.

KM Not absolutely now Lew. I have some work I want to finish off. Could you come back in a couple of hours time. I'll be ready then and I'll have my remarks worked out.

LR OK, two hours it is, but no later. This is a hot news and chip wrappins' business Charlie. We have to strike now while the dosh is on offer.

KM Oh yes, quite, quite.

LR Funny thing about that though.

KM About what?

LR About the dosh, about money, 'ere, in this place.

KM. What's funny about it?

LR. Well for one thing down the Mall...

KM. Yes?

LR. Well, like I said all the shops is there, all full o' stuff. I've got to get down there now as a matter of fact, got a pair of Gucci shoes on order at Harrods on the strength of these Express pics, want to have another look at them. You should see the stichin' Charlie and the moulded heel pieces. That's extra o'course, but I need 'em because...

KM (*interrupting*) Yes, yes, but what's 'funny' as you put it? I'm interested Lew. Remember I can't go there.

LR Oh yeh, neither yu' can, or so yu' say. Well yeh, anyway...there's all the stuff there and all these people shoppin' like, but...but...

KM (*impatiently*) Yes?

LR. But I never seen anybody buy anythin'. And also...they never seem to close.., the shops I mean.. or at least I never seen 'em close...and, and. ..there's something else, about dosh I mean. It's worryin' me a bit.

KM. (*smiling*) And what's that?

LR. Well this... this Express stuff, is the third fax I've had since...since...I got 'ere...if you know what I mean. I had one from the Sun wantin' some Royalty stuff.

KM 'Royalty stuff'?

LR. Yeh, William the Conqueror. They wanted an up-to-date pic of William the Conqueror for a special feature on "When our Royalty Had Some Balls".

KM. And did you get it?

LR. Course I did yeh. OK bloke Bill. Again it was five hundred and I offered a split, but he said he only wanted a couple o' hundred. Very fair I thought. Mind you his English wasn't too good – in fact I wasn't sure it was English - but it hardly matters for a pic does it?

KM. And the other one?

LR. Ah that was really interestin'. W.G. Grace, for a Mirror Special on "When England Ruled the Crease". No probs findin' 'im. Helluva noisy bloke. In fact he was 'alf pissed when I asked him, but I got the pics. Had to be a bit careful with the equipment tho'. He kept swishin' this great 'eavy bat about like a maniac. There's risks in this job I tell you.' Some stories I've got you'd never credit.. .But anyway...

KM. Anyway?

LR Well I sent 'em all off right on time...just the film o' course. They does all the rest themselves these days, but.. .but... I ain't never 'ad no money yet. Bit of a pissa really. I'll lose them shoes if something doesn't happen soon. That's why I want to get on with you Charlie boy. Express have always been good payers. I won't be pissed about by them.

KM (*smiling enigmatically*). Very interesting Lew.. .most interesting... in fact fascinating. But don't worry I'll keep my appointment, In fact I look forward to it. But perhaps you'll excuse me now I'd like to get on with my work.

*(KM ushers LR toward the door).*

LR Oh yeh, OK, see you' later. Cheers Charlie, cheers...er.. er...

J. Jeremy.

LR. Yeh, cheers Jeremy.

*LR exits. KM and J start to laugh. Lights down.*

### SCENE THREE.

*KM resumes work on his manuscript, but once again he is having difficulties.*

KM. “A trajectory not toward the simple polarization... no *class* polarization... which I had posited but toward a veritable fragmentation of civil society, a fragmentation by which political and social attitudes and indeed moral values became ‘relatively autonomous’, as it were, from economic determinants”. Oh Jesus, now I sound like fucking Althusser! How is it that I can talk with reasonable fluency but I can only write like some Parisian wanker! (*shouts*) This your idea of a joke is it?! Ha bloody ha!... I did say “Je ne suis pas marxiste” remember. I don’t deserve this!

*Once more he puts down the quill and stares gloomily at his MS. Then he sits back in his chair, lights another cigar and sits with his feet on the desk. He picks up Jeremy’s graph idly and begins to peruse it with interest and pleasure.*

KM. Jeremy! Jeremy!

J. Yes old boy? Getting a bit upset were we?

KM. Yes, I don’t know why. Bloody waste of time. But many thanks again for the graph. I have it here. It’s a joy to look at, and most instructive.

J. My pleasure old fellow. I only regret that I can’t show you the original, the beautiful wonders of Macgraphics...I mean I’m not being funny Karl,... I really do wish I could.

KM. I know Jeremy (*sighs*), but I’ll have to make do with this. (*shouts*). It’s all I’m allowed in this mouldy, paper infested, ink smeared, steam heated little world, is’nt it??!! Is’nt it??!!.

J. Steady on old boy. Do no good. Just bust a boiler. (*They both laugh*)....And you know. ..you know.. .what I have to put up with...

KM. Yes, sorry... (*pause*).. .Jeremy, are you in the mood for a little philosophy? I’m getting nowhere with this.

J. OK old chap, emails on the blink anyway.... Not exactly my forte though you know, not much philosophy in my old PPE.

KM. Don’t be falsely modest Jeremy. It’s a trait of the English intelligentsia I always hated.

J. Sorry.

KM. OK then. What do you feel we learnt from that last episode?

J. You mean the conversation with the estimable Lewis? Not much we didn't know already.

KM. No new light thrown on H1 or H2?

J. None what so ever.

KM. OK, give me an H1 interpretation of Lewis.

J. Nothing simpler old boy. Lewis, like all the other lost souls down at the Mall...

*KM (interrupting with a giggle) Or the market, or the bazaar, or the feitoria.*

J. Whatever, depending on the historical and cultural location of the subject...has lived his life almost entirely around the old getting and spending. So of course he is doomed to repeat some ghastly version of his chosen life pattern down here. One must assume of course that, as in so many cases, material acquisition had led either to the marginalisation of all other moral values in his life or, what is worse...

KM . What is worse.

J. Had become morally charged activities in themselves. That is...

KM. That is..

J. He measured his own moral worth and that of others entirely, or almost entirely, by the amount and type of material goodies they could afford to buy. It need hardly be added...

KM. It need hardly be added...I love these supercilious English phrases...

J. It need hardly be added, that Lewis could only be like this because he has effectively no capacity for reflection. It is doubtful whether he ever asked himself a searching question about his own life from the day he was weaned it until the day he bought it. On H1 then The Big S, with his usual unoriginality, takes full advantage of Mr. Rosenbaum's complete lack of introspection to condemn the poor sod to repeat in death the idiotic activities of his life with of course one crucial difference. He never gets the material pay off. Hence...

KM. Hence...

J. Hence we can expect him to become more and more frustrated but, at the same time, more and more driven to complete his assignments. I also surmise...

KM. He also surmises...

J. I also surmise that the assignments will become more and more idiotic and bizarre until...

KM. Until...

J. Until whatever denouement the beastly one has in mind.

KM. Oh you think there will be a denouement?

J. Oh yes. Lewis is far too simple a case for the old everlasting stuff. His molecules and atoms would be far more productively employed elsewhere in the service of evil.

KM. So what kind of denouement?

J. How the hell should I know?! (*They both laugh*). Perhaps he'll be sent to photograph Jaws under water on some incredibly lucrative offer from the Fishing Digest and get chomped into molecules. ..something pretty gruesome and *a propos*. He's...

KM. Don't be sexist!

J. He, *or she*, is not short of ideas for termination... (*pause*). ..What about that then?...Not bad eh?

KM No, very plausible, I must. admit, very plausible. But...but...

J. But?...

KM Well there is some evidence H1 does not cover in this case.

J. Such as?

KM. Such as...why has he come to see me? I mean, I know about the Mall, bazaar etc (though not in Lewis's particular ethnic variant) and. the fetishized obsessions of all the poor buggers down there, so he is not supplying any new information for my conscious mind.

J. True. But you're not his first call. Remember William the Conqueror and W. G. Grace.

KM. Yes, but that's perfectly compatible with H2. I could have made those up for my own amusement. They're the kind of examples that feed my contempt for the popular capitalist press and thereby build my ego.

J. Yes

KM. So why is *he* here. I mean why him out of all the millions of consumption addicts like him. On H1 his sins are utterly commonplace, as commonplace as the thoughtlessness that makes them possible. You said so yourself.

J. Indeed.

KM. So...so...the possibility arises that I need him for some reason. He is to fulfill some purpose for me, a sub-conscious purpose of course.

J. Such as what?

KM. Don't be silly Jeremy.

J. No, sorry...But you can have a guess...I did observe one thing. He's Jewish like you.

KM Yes that had occurred to me too. There may be something in that. One has to assume...

J. One has to assume...

KM (*laughing*) Sorry. I mean, it's a fair assumption that his role is to be fairly destructive as far as I am concerned, I mean he is to play some part in yet another bout of self-accusation. That's been the invariant pattern with other visitors. And you know that I think my treatment of ethnicity in general and of the Jewish question in particular was completely inadequate. But...(*he sighs*)...of course it could be something completely different. Certainly there are some nice juxtapositions.

J. Such as...

KM. Such as I'm Jewish and so is he. He's a commodity obsessor and a mover. I'm stationery and live trapped in some sickening parody of a Victorian

commodity-free utopia. He allows me to defend myself as the father of Communism an opportunity which I relish but which may also fuck me up - I mean psychologically, emotionally. What I'm saying then is that on H2 our Lew is an ideal catalytic agent for my sub-conscious. What do you think Jeremy?

J. Yes old boy, very plausible, just the like my H1 account. We always come round to the same fundamental problem I'm afraid.

KM. Mm...under-determination by the evidence. Everything that happens can be made compatible with H1 or H2.

J. Or probably H3 to H247 if we could just think of them...But I still think Karl...I still think. ...that the question of time is the main weakness of H2. I mean this whole business has simply been going on too long to be simply an emanation of your tortured subconscious.

KM. Think about dreams Jeremy. Time means fuck all in dreams.

J. Yes, yes I know...but...but...you do acknowledge that the last thing you remember before...before...here was being held in your wife's arms and feeling dreadfully weak. I mean isn't that at least *prima facie* evidence...

KM. (*interrupting*). Remember Jeremy, I'm quite prepared to accept that I might be dying. On H2 this could all be happening while I am dying and will end when I am dead.

J. Yes Karl old boy. But that's not the important point about time. The really important point is that things are happening here that you could never have known about, events and people are represented here that entirely post-date your death. How can that possibly be explained as...

*They are interrupted by a knocking at KM's door.*

KM. Oh damn! Sorry Jeremy, won't be a minute.

*KM strides briskly to the door and yanks it open.*

KM. I thought I made it clear that...Oh it's you...Go away!

*A bright, blonde, open-faced young man in his twenties stands in the door trying to prevent KM closing it on him. He speaks with an American accent and with American charm and eagerness.*

YOUNG MAN: I'm dreadfully sorry to disturb you again Dr. Marx. But it's just so terribly important to me...

KM. I've already told you,...er...er

YOUNG MAN. Hank sir. Hank Demount.

KM. I've already told you Mr. Demount that I'm not interested...Now please go away.

HD. But sir, if you only knew how important this is to me, how long I have admired your work, how far I've come to see you... please Dr. Marx.

KM. No!

*KM tries once again to shut the door, again HD resists.*

KM. Look, I've already explained. I have no wish to talk about my...my...previous work with anyone. It is all a source of deep unhappiness and confusion to me. I am however preparing a written commentary on that work from...from...er...my current perspective and when it is finished I will be happy to supply you with a copy. Now good day Mr. Demount.

*KM pushes the door again.*

HD. But sir, sir I. ..I...have a message...a message...from Friedrich for you Dr. Marx.

*KM stops in mid-shove.*

KM. From Fred?! You have a message from Fred? What kind of message? When did you see him? Where did you see him? My God, what kind of message? (*He opens the door*).

HD. Not a written message sir. Just something he wished me to pass on.

KM. What? What message? And how do you know Fred? Where is he? I haven't seen him since I got into this...this...place. How do you know him?

HD (*suddenly coy*). Oh, we know each other very well sir, we often speak he and I.

KM. Well then...well then...what is it?

HD. What is what sir?

KM. What is the message? Come in. Tell me at once.

HD. When might I come and see you sir?

KM You are seeing me. Now for God's sake man, give me the message.

HD. No I mean. ..when might I come and see you properly sir, so that we might discuss the matters I had in mind and so I might deliver you Friedrich's message.. .er. ..properly?

KM. Oh I see. You are going to use this supposed message to blackmail me into discussing matters I have no wish to discuss. Well sir I don't believe in your damned message or your supposed intimacy with Fred. Get out.

*KM recommences pushing HD out of the door.*

HD No sir, please..please....perhaps this will convince you.

*HD wrenches a photograph out of his inside jacket pocket and shoves it into KM's hand. KM looks at it.*

KM (*reading*) "To my beloved Hank. May you have the happiest and most productive of lives. Fred F." Yes that is certainly Fred's writing. How did you come by this?

HD. I have told you sir, Friedrich and I are...were... very...er...close. Now when may I come and see you and deliver Fred's message properly?

KM. And I suppose you would also wish to discuss these.. .these other matters prior to delivering me the message.

HD. (*sweetly*) If you do not mind sir, yes...I have come so far...

KM. It hardly seems to matter whether I mind or not, does it? (*KM stares at HD for a moment*)...Oh very well...Come here at...at ten o'clock tomorrow morning. I will speak to you then.

HD. Oh thank you sir, thank you. Ten o'clock tomorrow morning, yes sir. You have no idea how happy this makes me, how long I have wanted...

KM. (*recommences shoving, rather more gently*) Yes, yes, yes. Now if you will excuse me, I was in the midst of an interesting conversation and I have many other things to do.

HD. Oh yes sir, sorry to disturb you Dr Marx, terribly sorry, ten o'clock tomorrow...

*HD exits effusing.*

J. Well what was all that about? Fred I take it is Friedrich Engels.

KM (*thoughtfully*). Yes of course.

J. He's been to visit you before hasn't before hasn't he? That 'umble but sly youth.

KM. Yes, once.

J. Same stuff?

KM. Yes, how he's such an intense admirer of my ideas, wants to give his life to Marxist thought and socialist politics, desperately anxious for my guidance and the clarification of a few points. Blah, blah...I told him to piss off.

J. Do you think he really knows Fred?

KM. Who knows...possibly...but, but...

J. What?

KM I'm frightened Jeremy. I think this might be a bad one,..I mean I want desperately to hear something of Fred, from Fred.. .I miss him so. That's why I said yes... but,...but...

J. But on H1 it's precisely the kind of thing the nasty Meph would use to get at you, while on H2...

KM. On H2 there were so many,...so many. ..difficult moments in my relationship with Fred, and a few things of which I now feel deeply ashamed...I mean even consciously...

J. So God knows what sub-consciously.

KM. Yes, or Satan knows what.

*They both laugh.*

J. But what about this time business Karl? I've got you there I think. Freud, faxes, e mail, internet, even jolly old W.G. Grace - they all post-date you, unless of course we postulate that you lived on to the best part of 200. How can H2 possibly account for that, for your knowing all kind of stuff you can't possibly have known?

KM. Persuasive Jeremy, but not conclusive. Yes it's true. In this place I know

about Freud, I know about late twentieth century IT (though I can never get to use the bloody stuff). I even know about the history of the USSR and its collapse. But, I also know a photographer whose been hired by the Sun to photograph William the Conqueror, about a shopping Mall where nobody ever buys anything, about two people - you and I - who can never leave our respective rooms, never sleep, eat or drink but are never tired, hungry or thirsty and never get any older. I know about emails and faxes that come from God knows where and receive replies from you that go God knows where. I know that I am compelled to write all kind of stuff and post it over there (*he points*)...from whence it disappears to...to..

J. God knows where.

KM. Precisely...So really it isn't a question of knowledge Jeremy, whatever this experience is about it isn't about epistemology. On both H1 and H2 it's about guilt and sin, about crime and punishment, about fear...I'm frightened Jeremy, frightened.

J. Chin up old boy... Oh look, I think the old email has sorted itself....Oh God...oh no...Its starting again Karl...starting again...oh God!

*KM rushes to the partition, he presses his face to it and speaks in an urgent whisper.*

KM. It's all right Jeremy, it's all right...

J. Oh God, oh Jesus, no!

KM. Turn away Jeremy, turn away. Come down the room, come down, turn away.

*A mid-Atlantic voice is heard, at first at normal conversational pitch, then rising to a roar. The coloured flashing of a VDU screen can also be seen.*

VOICE: This one is guaranteed enjoyment guys. She's 23, but looks 16 and nothing is left to the imagination when she gets together with three well endowed truck drivers.

J. Oh God no, stop it...No! No!

VOICE: See it all in full colour close up guys as she sucks and licks to perfection. And she's a three way girl. Lots of bum fun too.

J. Please...please.

KM. Crouch down Jeremy, don't look, don't look.

VOICE: And for those of you who swing both ways Sexnet brings you Tranvestite Turn On. Three girls and three guys, only two of the girls ain't and two of the guys

ain't, if you see what I mean.

J. Oh God...oh God, stop, please stop.

KM Crouch down Jeremy, crouch down, I'm here, I'm here.

*Scene ends with the cacophony continuing, lights down.*

#### SCENE FOUR.

*Marx back at his desk composing. sound of J's computer keyboard from behind the partition.*

KM. "The flaws in my work were many, but perhaps the most serious was my conflation of a moral critique of capitalism with an economic analysis of its functioning. For the shortcomings in the economic analysis both...both..."

J. Ah ha! I thought so...success always has its price...Karl! I say Karl!

KM. Just a moment Jeremy...very unusually the prose is beginning to flow a little here...."both detracted from the true nature and force of my critique and led generations of my followers into a myriad blind alleys, blind alleys both intellectual and political."...Yes, not bad.

J. You haven't forgotten your appointment with the estimable Lewis have you Karl? It is...er...precisely two hours, four minutes and...er...thirty-five seconds since you made it. He should be knocking on the door immanently.

KM. Oh damn, so I had...Where the hell are those notes? (*He rummages on the desk*) ...Ah yes here they are.

J. Interested in my latest data, hot off the satellite from the "Japan watch" group of Broker Net...or at any rate that's what it says.

KM. I suppose so. It'll pass the time before he gets here. There's no point in continuing anything more serious.

J. Oh thanks!

KM. Oh, sorry Jeremy, only a playful insult intended. How are you now?

J. All right.

KM. Wasn't too long this time.

J. No...I'd prefer not to talk about it Karl.

KM. Yes of course. Give me the data.

J. Labour costs per unit of output in five sectors of Japanese manufacturing 1985-93 graphed against the rise in the yen over that period. Any guesses?

KM. Oh, up in both cases... no doubt the root cause of the latest Tokyo market panics you were telling me about.

J. Yes, yes, but which is the greater, in index number terms?

KM Probably the yen rise, there's always a speculative element to be taken into account in currency moves.

J. Well actually...

*They are interrupted by a hearty knocking at KM's door.*

J. Here he is. We'll talk about it later old boy.

*KM. walks to the door and opens it. It is indeed LR, grinning broadly, bedecked in camera equipment and carrying his Sanyo tape recorder and microphone.*

LR .Here I am Charlie boy, right on time.

J. Seven minutes and forty-seven seconds late actually.

LR. Yeh well, near as matters.

KM. Yes, come in Lew, I'm all ready for you. Take a seat in the armchair, I'll sit at my desk.

LR. Not right now Charlie, got a few things to do...light levels, angles, backgrounds, foregrounds...that kind of thing.

KM. Lew, I hope you've remembered our agreement.

LR (*engrossed*) What?

KM. My sitting for your photographs is contingent upon your recording my remarks on the recent collapse of Communism.

LR .Oh, yeh, yeh.

KM. And since... and since...I am not sure how interested you may be in my remarks once you have your...your...er...pics...as you put it. I intend...I intend (*more forcefully to gain LR 's attention*) that we should do the recording before you take the photographs!

LR (*ceasing his photographer's joint-casing*). What? Oh...oh I see...oh...er... all right if that's what you want. I'll just check that this is OK.

*LR walks reluctantly to the armchair fiddling with his tape recorder as he goes. He sits down and holds out the microphone toward KM seated at his desk.*

LR. OK. Just checking for levels, say something Charlie.

KM. Oh..er..I'm not sure what.

LR. Anything, "one two", "one two"...usual stuff.

KM. Oh..er...all right...er ...one two, one two...This little machine can really record my voice? Isn't that wonderful.

LR. *(still engrossed)* That's OK, commin' in loud and clear.. .what? ..wonderful?...suppose it is to an old geezer like you...OK Charlie I'm ready. And I'll 'ave you know I've not come 'ere green. I've been doin' a little research on you to get ready for this.Pride myself on always bein' professional.

J. Research? What kind of research?

LR Looked up the entry on Communism on Wikipedia I did. Pretty good it was. Gave me some ideas for a few questions. So its goin' to be a pretty probin' interview Charlie, better be on yer toes.

*KM. looks at LR blankly. There is a muffled giggle from J.*

LR. Not really Charlie. Only kiddin'. Relax son.

KM. Very well. I have my statement here in note form but I can easily turn it into continuous prose.

LR .Continuous what?.

J. Never mind Lew old boy. Just make sure you have the right button pressed.

LR. No, no, all systems go. Carry on Charlie.

KM....Very well.. .ahem..."Posterity will wish to know how I view the recent events generally described as the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. This is a matter easily dealt with. I am delighted by what has occurred. The dictatorships which were created in Eastern Europe, although calling themselves "Marxist" had nothing to do with communism as I conceived it. In most, but unfortunately not in all of my writing on the subject I made it very clear that a successful transition to socialism and communism could only occur from a prosperous capitalist society enjoying a real degree of democratic freedom. One or both of these conditions were missing from all the countries involved and in addition over most of Eastern Europe so-called socialism was imposed by force of

arms through the Red Army. Thus the regimes which resulted from these events, including, and indeed especially, that in the USSR, were nothing but grotesque parodies of my ideas. I therefore view their demise with delight as I am sure would my friend and colleague Friedrich Engels. I only hope that they will be succeeded by stable and prosperous democratic regimes which will bring to all the unfortunate peoples of Eastern Europe the ease and freedom which has long been denied them”.

*LR, who has almost fallen asleep during this statement, now jolts alert.*

LR. OK is that it?

KM. Yes.

LR. Oh great. Well it's all safe and sound in here Charlie, mark my words (*he pats the recorder*). Now lets get on with the pics. I thought maybe a couple against yu' book case first.

KM. Yes, in part.

LR. What?

KM. That is all I have to say for the benefit of Express newspapers. But you said, did you not Mr. Rosenbaum, that the serious press of Britain and the world might also be interested in my remarks on this subject?

LR Well...yeh...if we strike lucky that is. I mean, gotta be a bit of a scoop don't it?

KM. Well in that case I have some more remarks to add for the benefit of those more deeply interested in the subject.

LR. Oh, 'ave yu...Well all right...But not too long mind. Ain't no guarantee that they'll be used...I told yu'...and the pics are what's really wanted. They'll supply their own...er...copy.

J. Yes, I'm sure they will.

KM. Please switch the machine on again Lew.

LR. It is switched on...been runnin' all the time.

KM. Oh...good...well then...”It would however be idle and dishonest to pretend that I bear no responsibility for the deeds that have been committed in my name since the Russian revolution of 1917. In fact my responsibility is a deep and onerous one although mainly...mainly...of a negative character. I am to be profoundly blamed for what I did *not* say, for my complete failure to address the question of the construction, and indeed the very nature, of socialism or communism in my work. In retrospect it pains me to observe that my few positive remarks on socialism and communism as forms of economy and society are either

ridiculously utopian or profoundly over-simplified or both. As a result, those who regarded themselves as my followers, including the Russian Bolsheviks, were left with no guidance as to how socialism and communism were to work in practice. Most especially, I said nothing about how the economic functions of a market economy were to be carried out once such a market had been abolished. Therefore, since I advocated such abolition but did not even consider a whole range of economic, social and indeed political problems which arise from it, I hold myself to be profoundly responsible for much of the oppression and injustice which was practiced in the Soviet Union, China and elsewhere in the name of socialism and communism. This does not mean that the aspiration to turn capitalism into socialism has to be abandoned, but it does mean that it must be profoundly rethought if it is not to lead, ineluctably, to dictatorship, oppression and economic mediocrity.”

LR That it this time?

KM. Yes.

LR. Bit hard on yerself weren't yu?

KM. Probably not nearly as hard as I should have been Lew.

LR. Yeh, but I mean...

KM. What?

LR Well I mean...I mean...things ain't exactly hunky dory in the West either yu' know, and those poor buggers in Russia aren't bathin' in champagne since they got rid of communism.

KM. I know that Lew, but it's all beside the point in this context.

LR. All right, have it yu' own way. Now let's hit the pics. I'll just check me light meter again.

J. I'm inclined to agree with Mr. Rosenbaum Karl old son. I mean far be it for me - life time Tory and all that - but, well damn it, old Commie system had some merits, economic security and so forth. And as for democracy, well you know what I think. Great unwashed in the West couldn't give a bugger about democracy most of 'em. Like capitalism for the goodies that's all.

KM. That may or may not be true but again it's beside the point. The point is...the point is...that I had something of importance, of moral importance Jeremy to say about capitalism, not absolutely unique to me but I did manage to give it an original gloss. But...but...I completely obscured that moral message by wrapping it all up in a kind of pseudo-science of the capitalist economy. Had I left all that economic shit alone and stuck to the philosophy I might have said something

profoundly true and helpful to those who want to try and make a better form of society than capitalism. As it is however, I just confused them about the main point and offered them an alternative which was no alternative at all. In fact in many respects it was far worse than capitalism.

J. What is the main point then?

KM. In a nutshell?

LR. Are we still recordin' this?

J. Why not? Come on tell me Karl. You've been completely coy about all this, old boy, up to now, and it passes the time. Give us the old blinding light.

KM. The main point is...that you sell your soul when you sell your labour - or labour power as I put it - for money.

J. Oh rot old boy.

LR Can I switch off? The tape's runnin' out.

KM (*smiling*) Yes, switch off Lew. This is only for the benefit of The Big S. or perhaps the big ego, certainly not for Express Newspapers. Why is it rot Jeremy?

J. One's employer controls what one does Karl, or at least what one does while one is working for him. He doesn't control what one thinks or feels.

KM. Doesn't he? I hate to be rude but.. .but. ..what about old Lew here?

LR. Pardon? Can I get on with my pics now?

KM. Of course you can Lew. Just tell me where and how you wish me to position myself and I will obey.

J. Lew's an extreme case.

KM. Admittedly. As you said, Lew is almost entirely unreflective about the morality of his occupation. But one could argue that that makes him less rather than more morally culpable, certainly less morally culpable than...

J. Than?...

KM. Than the bulk of people, the bulk of employees whom, I would argue, know perfectly well that they act immorally or amorally in the course of their employment but do nothing about it. And they do nothing about it - this is the point - because they are afraid of the power that their employer has over them, the power not to promote, to demote, to sack, and thus the power to deny them what they crave - status, income, perhaps also power. When I say they sell their soul, I mean that they sell their independent moral judgment and agency for the time they are at work, which for most people means for a large part of their conscious adult life.

*Whilst this dialogue is going on LA has been waving KR about having him standing, sitting, changing poses etc and snapping away. KM obediently does as he is bid.*

LR. Come on Charlie, smile for God's sake. Yu 'want a bit of public sympathy don't yu'? Come on. Say 'Green beans.'

KM. Green beans...green beans. *(He adopts a variety of poses).*

LR. That's better, much better. Now over there, that's right, that's right. Now profile, profile.

*(All this may be elaborated as wished).*

J. But you can't pin all that on jolly old capitalism Karl. What about the Soviet Union etc, the majority of people went along with that system, although a lot must have hated it.

KM. Of course. That is where my analysis was too parochial, too narrowly focussed on the pressures of a market economy. But that really only strengthens the point I am making, don't you see? Why were all but a brave minority so craven in the USSR? Because the state was the only employer! Lose your job and the state could, and did, ensure that you lost everything.. .housing, health, education, even shopping privileges.

LR *(still busy about his photography, but listening)* Yeh, fuckin' awful system they 'ad. I met a Russki photographer once. Got pissed together coverin' one of them summit meetings. Told me he'd got some really juicy ones of Brezhnev and a group of his mates bonkin' with a load of tarts. Couldn't do anythin' with 'em though...scared for his family...and 'imself. Poor bugger. Been worth a lot of money those pics. ..no freedom.

J. A tragic story indeed Lewis. So what do you advocate Karl?

KM. In essence the extension to the world of work of the civic freedoms which apply elsewhere, especially a legally enforceable right of free speech and forms of democratic accountability in the work place so that employers are answerable for

their acts to the employees, or to their employees and the wider community. Also... also.. more self-employment where possible. There is a certain extension of freedom in that.

J. Oh you mean so that one can have more morally worthy types like Lewis here.

*J and KM both laugh. LR looks puzzled, but is too busy with his task to worry.*

KM. That's unfair Jeremy. Lewis may be self-employed formally, but in reality he's a minion of large-scale media capital.

LR .What?

KM. Never mind Lew. Just carry on.

KM. No, I'm thinking about forms of self-employment which allow one some freedom to choose one's activities, contractual partners and so on...some space for moral choice.

J. So you are assuming a market economy?

KM. Oh yes. I've got over my infantilism about that. Although of course the scope of commodity relations should be restricted. Keep the market out of health care, education etc.

LR 'Ere what are you talkin' about? Our eldest's got his name down for Eton.

J. There speaks the voice of the radical proletariat.

LR. Radical what?

J. Never mind. Still wouldn't work Karl...I mean your democratised enterprises. Bosses who are afraid of what their workers might do to them can't act properly as bosses. In any competitive market environment they would be severely hobbled, so most of your democratic firms would go straight down the swanny I'm afraid.

KM. I don't see why that should be. In a competitive environment, workers as well as managers are constrained in the decisions they can make, and they would soon learn that, given the power to learn it. And anyway all that's ancillary to the main point I'm making. I want a world in which teachers can refuse to teach a curriculum they don't believe in, in which insurance agents don't feel constrained to make fraudulent claims for their so-called 'products', in which people don't have to lie for a living and call it advertising, in which, in short, people

don't have to act immorally because if they don't their mortgages won't get paid or their kids won't get educated.

J. Two points. First, what you advocate is a recipe for economic and social chaos. All order depends in part on people being constrained to do what they might not choose, but this is a moral fault that can only be rectified by creating something far worse. Second, you are letting people as individuals off the hook too lightly. In the end acting honestly, morally, requires a certain kind of individual courage and integrity and if people don't have that - and most don't - all the social reforms in the world won't give it to them. You are doing what the Left always does, mistaking a spiritual malaise for a social problem.

KM. You don't believe that some institutional arrangements encourage good behaviour while other's encourage bad. What kind of Tory are you Jeremy? I would have thought....

LR. Gents...Charlie...I've done. Got some nice one's I think. Need to get 'em off now. Sooner they've gone the sooner I...we...gets paid. So I'll be off.

KM. Oh yes...oh...oh sorry Lew. We must have been boring you.

LR. Oh no, never bored when I'm takin' pics. I likes it you know, it's not just me job. I mean it's me hobby as well like. ..Do a few portraits, landscapes, stuff like that as well as these work pics...just for.. .just for...enjoyment, know what I mean. Even 'ad an exhibition once. Just the local town hall o' course..., local community show and all that...but...yu' know. I really do know what I'm doin' with this stuff...no bull... I really like it.

KM. I'm sure you do Lewis. That indeed is the terrible pity of it. I was right about that at least. Your talent, your creativity, is being used –and abused - by your employer.

LR. Ain't got no 'employer', self-employed me, like yu said. Anyway, gotta go, hit the courier service.

J. You have access to that then do you...a courier service?

LR. Oh yeh, no probs.. .just down there. (*He points vaguely*). Funny name tho', 'Meph's Messengers'. Their slogan is "We always get through to you". Weird eh? Still, as long as they do the job, who cares? I just hope they does. I don't want no more screw ups with the dosh. Can't afford it, Do yu' think it'll be all right this time? I mean...I mean...you two knows this place. Worries me a bit. There's things I need.

*KM looks embarrassed. J is also silent*

KM. I really don't know Lew. I hope so.

LR .What do yu mean, 'yu dunno'? What are you doin' this for if yu dunno? I mean yu ain't gonna get anythin' out of it if they don't pay up.

J. Yes, but who exactly are 'they' old boy?

KM. No Jeremy don't. You know what will happen. It's just a waste of time.... The thing is Lew...the thing is...whatever happens doing this - I mean the photographs and recording and so forth.. .we. ..whatever happens...it passes the time for us.

J. Rather an issue that here Lew old chap, passing the time I mean, as you'll find out after you've been here a while.

KM. And especially for Jeremy and I, as we're not movers. Unlike you Lew you we're stuck in our respective.. .er...rooms, as I've already explained to you.

LR. Yeh, but I mean, what's the point?

KM What's the point of what?

LR. All these statements and writing and interviews and things if...if...

J. If we're not sure where the stuff goes or even if it goes anywhere?

LR. Yeh.

J. Ah well.

KM. Lew, have you heard the phrase "obsessive or compulsive behaviour"?

LR. Yeh, course I have. I ain't an ignoramus.

KM. Well then, how shall I put it? We observe, that is Jeremy and I, that there is rather a lot of it around down here.

J. That's on H2 of course. On H1 it would be slightly differently explained, as a kind of satanically derived torment.

LR Torment? What kind of torment?

J. Well...er...well...the reason why one might be doing things may not be the reason that one imagines. Indeed...indeed...the boundaries of reason themselves become. .er...fluid. .even arbitrary in this environment. This itself can become a source of great...er...er... psychic pain.

LR Speak up I can't here.

J. I said the boundaries of reason become. ..become...fluid.

LR (*banging his head/ear again*). Speak up will you! I can't hear a bloody thing!

KM. Jeremy, stop it! Can't you see what's happening? I told you.

J. Oh yes, sorry...stupid...the bastards... (*he shouts*) ...Bastards!

LR. That's better...I can hear you now, Who's a bastard?

KM. Never mind Lew. Perhaps you'd better be off. Get those photos and tape to the. ..er.. .courier service.

LR. Yeh, right you are. See you', see you' both. (*He makes for the door*).

KM. See you...oh Lew?

LR. (*turning*) Yeh?

KM. You never did explain to us what happened to you before you. ..before you...er...found yourself here. It is always something of interest to us - Jeremy and I - that. Do you mind telling us?

LR. Yeh I do actually.

KM. Oh...I'm sorry.. .why?

LR. That's me own business.

J. Not down here old boy. Not with this technology.

LR. What? what do you' mean?

J. I mean I can access a file called "new arrivals" with this wondrous machine Lew old boy. All the essential details are there...Sorry Karl, forgot to tell you.

LR. Yeh well. I dunno what it says there, but you ain't gettin anythin' out of me.

J. Yes, I can see it might be a little embarrassing. Although comparatively speaking it's...it's...rather mundane.

LR. Mundane?! Ain't bloody mundane to me!

J. Oh I'm sure it was commonplace enough in your occupation...just a little - how shall I put it? - unfortunate that's all. Trees aren't always to be relied on.

KM. Oh do tell Jeremy. I can't stand the suspense.

J. Oh I'm sure Lew could tell you himself Karl, come better from the horse's mouth.

LR. I ain't sayin' nothin'.

KM. Ah ha, no choice Jeremy.

J. Apparently not old chap. Well, the file entry is rather full as a matter of fact. I'm sure that's not accidental... I suspect it's all part of some diabolical plan that we should know Karl.

LR. What?

KM. Nothing Lew. Go on Jeremy.

J. Well...well...it appears that Lew was...er...overlooking from a distance, shall we say, the Duchess of York and a group of friends playing croquet...usual royal country weekend stuff...But the redoubtable Fergie's indiscretions had just hit the front pages and photographs of her were doubtless very valuable. ..eh Lew?

LR. I told yu', I ain't sayin' nothin'.

J. Well anyway...equipped no doubt with the best of telephoto lenses, our friend Lew here was overlooking matters from the branches of a beech tree in a farmer's field some distance from the elegant action. Must have been a fine piece of equipment Lew old boy if you were so distant that you could not be spotted at all. What was it? I'm interested, bit of an amateur photographer myself.

LR. I ain't sayin' nothin'.

J. By fortunate, or unfortunate, happenstance a playful breeze just happened to blow at the moment that our Fergie bent to make a crucial hit, this revealing her expansive, black, beknickered behind.

LR. They weren't black they were pink.

J. AND KM IN UNISON: Ah ha!

LR. Oh fuck!

J. Knowing that he had a fortune in his view finder Lew bent forward a little on the branch to get a slightly more revelatory angle, when...when... the branch gave way and precipitated him head-first into an empty, cast-iron pig trough at the base of the tree.

LR A pig trough? Was that what it was?

J. Oh yes of course, you wouldn't have known...hardly have been in a position...yes a pig trough old boy.. .cast-iron, by Nortons of Sheffield 1923 and as empty as Fergie's head when you hit it...Skull fractured in two places...Too late by the time the shocked farmer's wife found you next morn. I'm sure the Princess and her friends thought your denouement quite apposite. They probably did a jig around the trough. Rumour has it in fact that the said trough has been knighted.

*J and KM laugh.*

LR. I dunno what yu' think's so bloody funny. It's my death you're laughin' about yu' know! Bloody beech tree! Must have been worth twenty-five thou that shot, must have been. Still I suppose...I suppose that's why I'm 'ere like. Me come 'uppins I suppose.

J. A fitting reprisal for your dreadful sin, the perfidious beech as the dispenser of divine justice. Yes it is tempting to look at it that way, except that.. .except that...

KM. Except that, by the standards of some of the entries in our infernal personnel files, your end seems...how shall one say...well...tacky Lew rather than spectacularly sinful. Eh Jeremy?

J. Oh indeed old boy.

KM. Take for example the case of Pierre Joinville of Paris... an overweight 56 year old.

J. File number SA 10001993, recent arrivals.

KM. Who had a massive heart attack while forcibly bugging his children's nursemaid, having only two month's previously, only two month's previously...

J. Poisoned his wife for her substantial fortune.

KM. Or the case of the dreadful Mustafa Ali of Afghanistan,

J. File No 101131992, a somewhat earlier case.

KM. Who fell to his death down a mountainside while waiting to ambush and kill his father, intending thereby to inherit 20 hectares of rock and scrub...

J. And a small herd of unprepossessing goats.

KM. His death was all the more ironic for occurring in almost the precise same spot...

J. From which he' had flung his wife to her death a mere six months earlier. He was dissatisfied with her dowry it seems.

KM. Or what about the case of the notorious Bettina Carroway of the Bronx, New York.

J. File No 1013241992, another recent arrival.

KM. Who plunged to her death from a fourteenth floor ledge of the Excelsior Hotel, Manhattan...

J. While attempting to insert three cyanide gas pellets into the air-conditioning unit of a room on that floor.

KM. She believed that the room was about to be occupied by her husband Bob and his eighteen year old mistress, a receptionist in Bob's exclusive hairdressing salon.

J. In fact however she was wrong. Bob had no mistress.

LR. What a bummer!

J. No. He was going there with his lover, Damien, the resident teaching professional at Bob's tennis club. The 'future arrivals' file has Bob down as a guaranteed resident here in 2009, unless of course some strong evidence of genuine contrition and change of sexual preference emerges. Attitudes to homosexuality among the authorities here seem...well...rather unenlightened.

KM. Oh come on Jeremy, I am - I was - an old, straight Victorian gentleman. What would you expect to find in my sub-conscious? Assuming of course that I wasn't a repressed homosexual myself.

LR What?

KM. Nothing...The point is Lew, it is hardly necessary to be so...er...embarrassed about the circumstances of your death, a great many of those whom you are likely

to meet moving about out there are - how shall we say? - hardly in a position to be seriously censorious. In fact, if you think about it, if they were in such a position they wouldn't be here.

LR. No...er...yeh, I see what you mean. Thanks for tellin' me...yeh... it has made me feel a bit better about it.

KM. Has it? Oh good.

J. Of course one is assuming that these file entries are accurate...that they are not some sort of diabolical joke.

KM. On H1, or mere black humour projections of my sub-conscious...

J. On H2.

LR. I still dunno what you're talkin' about. But I tell you what. My file is...er...right enough.

KM. It is? How do you know?

LR. Well, it fits with what I remember.. I mean before I got here.

J. What is the last thing you remember Lew?

LR. The very last thing?

J. Yes.

LR. A crackin' noise and then her knickers disappearing from my view finder.

J. No memory of the pig trough then?

LR. Of course not.

KM. Usual problem Jeremy. No conclusive disproof or proof of H1, no conclusive proof or disproof of H2. It's damnable, as it were. *(He laughs)*.

LR. 'Ere. What's all this H1 and H2 business?

J. Oh sorry old boy, sort of inspeak one develops after long period of close communication. Stands for 'hypothesis 1' and 'hypothesis 2'. Hypothesis 1 - my

hypothesis - is that we are all in Hell. Hypothesis 2 - Karl's hypothesis- is that we are all projections of his guilt-ridden and self-accusing sub-conscious, activated on his death bed. Of course he *has* to hold to something like H2 since he's an atheist.

KM. One of the few elements of my original world view to which I still hold steadfastly, despite my...er...current predicament.

LR Yeh well, whatever, I've got a livin' to earn.

KM. You have?

LR. Yeh o' course I have. Gotta get to those couriers, so these pics get there tomorrow. See yu' gents.

KM. See you Lew. Thank you for your time and effort.

LR Yeh, cheers both. I'll let yu' know when the dosh arrives.

*LR exits. KM returns to his desk, sits down thoughtfully, then after a pause:*

KM. Jeremy.

J. Yes.

KM. Why is there no file for me?

J. I...er...we don't know there isn't Karl. All we know is that I can't access a file for you from this machine. That may be deliberate of course.

KM (*distressed*) Yes, but why Jeremy. What does it mean?

J. I don't know old boy. Sorry.

KM. (*after a pause*). Do you think we'll see him again Jeremy?

J. Lew? I doubt it.

KM (*sadly*) No.

*KM drops his head on to his arms on the desk and starts to weep quietly. Scene ends.*

## SCENE FIVE

*Same setting. Marx still at his desk, reading but not concentrating.*

KM. Jeremy, is it time yet?

J. That's the third time you've asked me that old boy. Just three minutes to.

KM. I hope he's not late. I can hardly bear this waiting.

J. Unlikely, a dreadfully keen youth whatever else.

KM. Yes, but what else Jeremy? What does he want, why is he coming?

*KM rises from his desk and starts to pace.*

KM. Doesn't it strike you as peculiar Jeremy?

J. Hardly dear boy. In this place either everything strikes one as peculiar or nothing does.

KM. Yes, yes...but...

J. Yes?

KM. Well firstly he's an admirer, or professes to be, a Marxist in fact. I've never had a visitor remotely like that before.

J. True, but.. well...

KM. Well what?

J. Well, I mean the odds on at least some Marxists ending up down here seem... well... fairly good. In fact according to the files there are quite a few - Lenin, Mao, Stalin of course, Gomulka, Brezhnev, a good part of the KGB - remind me to compare their numbers with the CIA operatives in residence some time Karl. Of course one would have to control for size of universe to get a fair EQ. comparison.

KM. EQ comparison?

J. Evil Quotient dear boy, for the two security services. One might have a control group too for interest - say the Iranian SAVAK or MOSTAD.

KM. Oh be serious.

J. I'm perfectly serious old fellow.

KM. The point is none of those people has ever visited me - which is interesting in itself I suppose - but now this callow youth appears, totally wet behind the ears and all intellectual and political enthusiasm. What is one to make of it? Give me an H1 account Jeremy.

J. I don't know old boy. He's late incidentally as of...now.

KM. Oh come on, try!

J. I really don't know. I suppose he is far more likely to be a serious tormenter than old Lew, who seemed if anything to be an H2 character. The dark humour of your sub-conscious and all that - very plausible. I suppose this fellow will turn out to be totally convinced of everything you now regard as.. .as...wrong in your ideas.

KM. As dangerous Jeremy; possibly even evil.

J. Quite. So of course seeing all that wide-eyed naiveté is bound to be painful to you. ..tweak your guilt and all that.

KM. Not very convincing Jeremy...bit of pain, guilt rather tame as torment, don't you think? And there's something that you're entirely overlooking - the link to Fred - the claim that he knows Fred and has a message from him. It's that that strikes me as sinister.

*There is a knock at the door.*

KM. Oh God! Oh God! He's here.

J. Calm down old boy. I'm here. We've seen things through together before. It's all right.

KM. All right...yes. ..all right. .

*KM makes toward the door, then backs off.*

KM. Oh God!

J. It's all right Karl. I'll be just by the partition, listening, ready for anything. Now just open the door dear boy.

*The knocking is repeated, more urgently.*

KM. Yes, just a minute I'm coming!.. *(quietly)*.. .Oh God!

*KM goes tremulously to the door and opens it. It is indeed Hank Demount, dressed like a character out of the Great Gatsby and carrying a neat manila folder.*

HD. Good morning Dr Marx. It is wonderful to see you. One of the great days of my life, one of the great days...

KM. Yes, yes, please come in.

HD. *(entering)* Just to step into this study Dr Marx, what a privilege that is in itself. To think that I should be in this place where so many great thoughts, so many great words, have been written. You don't know sir... I have dreamed of this day, dreamed of it.

KM. Have you? Well...er...please sit down.

HD. *(ignoring this invitation and striding to the book shelf)*. Oh my God, oh my God, look. ...at... them... Aesclyius, Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Goethe, Balzac...all your favourite authors sir...I know them all, but to see them like this, in these wonderful folio volumes.

KM Yes, nothing postdating 1880, heavy as hell, and always dusty, no matter how many times they are dusted, God awful for my rhinitis...Always dusty and I dust them every day. Doesn't that strike you as odd Mr. Demount?

HD. *(again ignoring the remark)*. I wonder sir,... I wonder...

KM Yes?

HD. I wonder...Do you have a copy of the original edition of *Capital* volume one?

KM. Of course I have.. .extreme left hand end, third shelf down.

HD. Oh yes...oh...here it is...here it is. Make I take it out sir?

KM.. If you wish.

HD (*removing the book from the shelf*). Sir...sir...what a moment...The book, the great book, and in the original German edition. My German is not wonderful sir...but...but...

KM. You may have it if you wish.

HD. I may have it? But sir, I wouldn't dream of it...a priceless treasure.

KM. One less dust source. By all means take it.

HD. Oh sir I couldn't...I couldn't presume in such an unforgiveable way on your generosity...

KM. Take it! Take it!...Bring it here, I'll sign it if you wish.

HD. Oh sir, oh my God, even in my dreams I had never expected...

KM. Bring it here.. .here!

*For once HD obeys.*

KM. What do you wish me to write?

HD. Oh sir...I don't know...perhaps...Oh this is just too much!

KM. Come on, what?

HD. Well perhaps "To Hank with very best wishes, Karl Marx".

*KM writes as bidden, and hands the book to HD.*

KM. There you are.

HD. Oh thank you sir, I shall never forget this moment, never.

KM. Not at all. Perhaps you would sit down now.

HD. Oh yes sir, thank you sir. It was just when I saw the book shelves...

KM. Yes, yes...Now Mr. Demount I am a busy man and I don't want to spend all day on this matter. You said you had a message from Friedrich Engels. I would be most grateful if you would convey that message now so that...

HD. (*interrupting*) Oh Dr. Marx, please be assured I will not take one more minute of your time than is absolutely necessary. No one could be more aware than I am of how precious your time is, how important the work is that you have done and are doing. I will be as brief as I can possibly be...

KM. Very good. Perhaps then you will give me Fred's message, I...

HD. (*again interrupting*). I only have a few simple questions I wish to ask, about your work sir, a few simple points of clarification which I am sure you can deal with in no time at all, and then I will give you Fred's message.

KM. (*sighing*) Oh... very well, ask me your. ..your. ..questions.

HD. Oh wonderful sir. I have them here.

*HD opens his manila folder.*

HD. You should understand sir that I have been a keen student of your work since my days in graduate school - at Harvard sir.

KM. Very impressive.

HD. I have read all of your work available in English and a very great deal of the commentary literature that has been published since...since your...er.. .death.

KM. How interesting.

HD. And I am also a member of Socialist Action sir, the only genuinely Marxist party in the US.

KM. Indeed. And how many members does...er

HD. Socialist Action.

KM. Er yes, Socialist Action have?

HD. We assess ourselves by the quality rather than the quantity of our membership sir.

J. In other words about six and a half young enthusiasts like yourself no doubt.

*HD looks startled.*

KM. Oh I am sorry Mr. Demount. That was the voice of Jeremy Sanderson, my neighbour here. He is not listening in on our conversation as such.

J. It's just that one can't avoid it old boy, partition like cardboard. Best therefore to be up-front about one's presence.

HD. Oh I see. Pleased to...er...meet you Mr. Sanderson.

J. Jeremy please.

HD. Er...yes...Jeremy. Why don't you join us sir?

J. Love to old boy but not possible. Can hear everything, but can't get out of this dreadful cubicle - like Karl don't you know.

HD. Oh I see, I'm sorry.

J. OK old boy. Got sort of used to it. But don't mind if I chime in now and then will you?

KM. You will find Jeremy an interesting and informed conversationalist Mr. Demount.

HD. Yes I'm sure. No I don't mind of course. Nothing could detract from the extraordinariness of this day for me Dr Marx.

KM. Yes. So I believe. Now you were saying?

HD. I was saying that I have studied your work closely since graduate school and have followed all the major controversies that have surrounded your writings sir, since your death So I just wanted...I have always wanted to ask you directly about some important issues in Marxist theory, both to clarify my own mind and for the benefit of our...er.. .revolutionary strategy in Socialist Action.

KM. 'Revolutionary strategy' is it? Well please carry on with your questions.

HD. Very well. (*He consults his folder*). The first one sir concerns your theory of surplus value.

KM. Yes?

HD. Well sir, I wondered how you would reply to the various criticisms of the theory which have been made since your death, and especially to the many writings on the so-called transformation problem.

KM. I would not offer any reply Mr. Demount. The theory of surplus value is bunkum.

HD. Bunkum?!

KM. Alas yes. The transformation problem does pose many difficulties for my theory but its importance is overrated. The truth is that the theory rests on an arbitrary postulate - that only variable capital produces surplus value - and this postulate is indefensible.

HD. Indefensible?!

KM. Quite indefensible. Please continue Mr. Demount.

HD. (*flustered*) Oh.. .er...yes.. .the dictatorship of the proletariat.

KM. What about it?

RD. Well again, many criticisms have been made.

KM. And deservedly so Mr. Demount, the concept is either false or pernicious or both.

HD. False...pernicious...I don't understand!

KM. It is false in so far as it postulates a form of class-based political action that could probably never occur. It is pernicious in so far as, since it is false, the only form of dictatorship to which it could give rise in reality is either that of a Leninist party or some other undemocratic clique.

HD. Oh..er...I see.

KM. I very much doubt if you do Mr. Demount, but please go on to your next topic if you wish to.

HD. (*completely flustered*) Er. ..er.. .base and superstructure.

KM. Probably the very worst part of my intellectual legacy Mr. Demount. It was simply an idiotic metaphor chosen on one of my less inspired days, a metaphor which creates insoluble, because utterly confused, theoretical problems. It does not even well express my original thoughts on the relationship between material life and ideas, thoughts which, although flawed, were a good deal more sensible than the idiotic way I expressed them in the damnable 1859 Preface.

HD. I see...er...I don't know...I...er...

J. Mr. Demount old fellow.

HD. Oh...what?...Yes..er...Mr. Sanderson.

J. Jeremy.

HD. Yes Jeremy... what?

J. I think perhaps this is not the best way to proceed. I think perhaps that whatever topic you alight upon you will find Karl to be...er...similarly dismissive. I'm afraid his current views of his original work are not flattering to say the least.

HD. No...er...apparently not.

KM. Mr. Demount – Hank - why do you want to know all this?

HD. I have told you sir, to clarify my own mind and our revolutionary strategy.

KM. And why do you wish to do that?

HD. Which sir, to clarify my own mind or our revolutionary strategy?

KM. Either, but let us start with the so-called revolutionary strategy.

HD. Well obviously sir so that we might better.. .er...

KM. Better what?

HD. Better bring about a...a... socialist revolution sir.

KM. In the United States of America?

HD. In the first case, yes sir, but of course the revolution would have ultimately to be world-wide or it could not survive.

KM. Of course. Did I not say so myself? But even suppose such a revolution were to happen what would be gained thereby?

HD. Well obviously...

KM. Obviously?

HD. The liberation of the world wide, proletariat and...

KM. And?

HD. Of all humanity.

KM. Ah, so that is what you want, the liberation of all humanity - very laudable, but from what Mr. Demount?

HD. From...er...from injustice and oppression I suppose.

KM. From injustice and oppression indeed. What strikes you about the words 'injustice' and 'oppression' Mr. Demount?

HD. I don't know what you mean sir.

KM. Well what kind of words are they Mr. Demount?

RD Well, obviously, sir, they are.. er. ..normative or evaluative words.

KM. Moral terms Mr. Demount, moral terms. They are used to indicate things – arrangements - which we think are bad and which might be replaced by good, or at least better - morally better - arrangements.

HD. Yes sir.

KM. And in that case it behooves us to say clearly what is wrong with current arrangements and - just as importantly - to specify a set of arrangements which would be better, morally better. I, on the other hand, said not nearly enough about the first matter and almost nothing of any merit about the second. And why? Because I spent most of my time and intelligence on the development of a pseudo-science of the capitalist economy, a project which advanced the moral and political argument against capitalism not one whit and which led the bulk of my followers - including yourself Mr. Demount - to waste their time and intelligence on marginal issues. I mean morally marginal issues.

HD. But if...

KM Yes?

HD. If one says that capitalism is morally flawed or that another form of society would be morally better, does one not..er...not...?

KM. Require an explicit basis for such moral judgments? Indeed one does Mr. Demount - an important point - and I entirely failed to provide such a basis, or even to systematically consider the matter. I forgot my Hegel, Mr. Demount, that was the problem. Or at any rate I forgot the best of him. I forgot that “progress” is a morally loaded term; and thus I too often conflated economic advance and moral betterment. I’m afraid, Mr. Demount, that you and...er...your Socialist Action party have little to learn from me, or little that is positive at any rate, and were you to inflict my ill-thought-out original ideas about socialism on the hapless society of the United States you would only succeed in making an awful situation worse. That is of course on the assumption that you would succeed, which I very much doubt...So... Is there anything else you wish to ask me Mr. Demount?

HD. No...er...I don’t know. I’m so confused.

KM. Then perhaps you might deliver me Fred’s message.

HD. Fred? Friedrich?...Oh yes.. .Dr Marx, I...

KM. What Mr. Demount?

HD. The way you have spoken today...I don’t know...it is hard even to believe...

KM. To believe what young man?

HD. To believe...I have come all this way.. to believe that I have spoken to. .to... the founder of the science of historical materialism...the science to which I have given my life Dr. Marx...my entire life!

KM. Well perhaps you have not.

HD. What?

KM. Suppose you have not spoken to Karl Marx. After all, why do you think you have?

HD. I...of course...what are you talking about? Of course you are Karl Marx!

KM. Why “of course”? Because I look like him?

HD. Not just that...this study, the books, the entire setting. Everything is as I imagined it.

KM. No doubt it is, but that hardly proves anything. Have you not noticed certain anomalies?

HD. Anomalies? What anomalies? What are you talking about?

KM. Well, my speech for a start. Karl Marx was a Victorian gentleman, born 1818 died 1883. Do I sound like a Victorian gentleman?

HD. What? I don't know. What do you mean?

KM. Well, do I express myself like a Victorian gentleman would?

HD. Yes...well...sometimes.

KM. "Sometimes" is, I think, the right answer. It seems to depend what I'm talking about and who I'm talking to. I've noticed that myself. A bit odd though don't you think? I mean, presumably I'm either a Victorian gentleman or I'm not. Isn't all this fluctuation a bit suspicious?

HD. Suspicious? I don't know...you're just confusing me even more.

KM. And the anomalies don't end there, not by a long chalk. Consider, for example, my attitude to my dear friend Jeremy. I'm dying to see his technology for example. I envy him – oh how I envy him – his Apple-Mac T7000, his fax-cum-phone-cum-internet connection, his Canon super-graphic laser printer. I would kill to get through that bloody partition and play with all that delightful stuff.

*J. laughs*

KM. Does that strike you as the kind of behaviour. Karl Marx would engage in? Or is it just meant as some kind of ironic reflection on my supposed technological determinism - an ill-founded criticism incidentally.

J. I doubt if the authorities down here are great Marxist scholars Karl. They're probably - how would you put it? - a little 'vulgar' in their appreciation of your thought.

KM. And then there's not just Jeremy's technology, there's my attitude to Jeremy himself. Do you know why Jeremy is here Mr. Demount? Or at least do you know why he thinks he is here?

HD. What? No of course not!

KM. May I tell him Jeremy?

J. Suppose so old chap. Matter of public record after all.

KM. Well Jeremy was...er...is... a stock broker, Mr. Demount; one of your/our hated capitalists, and a very successful one. He was also a wizz at the old IT. So he put his two skills together with highly profitable results. He was the founder shareholder and principal designer of an international computerised stock-broking

network called Broker Net; making use both of an international information system and a related statistical package...

J. To provide the very best international investment analysis then available...the very best.

HD Yes, but what has all this got to do with...?

KM. Patience Mr. Demount, patience.. However Jeremy's business innovations did not end there. He was also a founding shareholder and director of another international computer network service - Sexnet.

HD. Sexnet?

KM. Yes, Sexnet Mr. Demount. As it's name implies Sexnet was..was...er

J. A pornography and sexual services network old chap.

KM Precisely, a pornography and sexual services network, supplying details of the whereabouts and availability of the latest pornographic videos, the names, addresses and telephone numbers of several thousand brothels world wide...

J. 18,742 actually Karl.

KM. And the same details on hundreds of thousands of prostitutes, particularly those providing specialist services.

J. S&M, bondage, water works, that kind of thing. We had 174,816..er... clients registered - of both sexes, though of course the majority were female.

KM. Jeremy's company not merely supplied this information. He himself took abundant advantage of it. He was a particular devotee of S&M.

J. More of the M than the S I should add.

HD. I really don't see where this... this parade of late capitalist decadence is leading us.

KM. Please bear with me Mr. Demount. I hope to make its relevance clear very shortly... Well one day Jeremy was particularly attracted by the 'plug'. Isn't that the right word Jeremy, 'plug'?

J. Yes old chap.

KM. The plug which appeared on his VDU for the services of one Sadie Lash, who advertised herself an 18 year old, genuinely enthusiastic sadist, willing to provide any level of severity that might be required. The kind of plug perfectly designed to appeal to Jeremy's...sensibilities. Her advertisement was accompanied by much illustrative video material, but unfortunately he was not able to see the face of the young girl in question, dressed as she was, head to foot in PVC. Imagine his surprise therefore when on their first...appointment.. .and in the middle of a severe whipping.. .she tore of her mask to reveal herself as...his daughter.

HD. What?!

KM. Yes, his daughter Mr. Demount. His daughter Samantha who had left home just twelve months earlier after a bitter' row with her mother - a row which Jeremy barely understood and could certainly not help resolve. He was never at home you see. Hardly saw his wife or daughter, which may explain why his wife also left, just five months after Samantha, for another man.

J. A university lecturer, a bally university lecturer.

KM. Sexually Jeremy hardly noticed the difference. He and his wife had not had sex for years. But anyway, Jeremy's health was not of the best.

J. Overweight, smoked...too much booze.

KM. And the surprise and horror of Samantha's revelation precipitated a massive heart attack which killed him.

HD. Oh I see.

KM. I need hardly add that Jeremy is convinced that Samantha did what she did deliberately..., that she committed murder in effect, or at least manslaughter. She knew all about Sexnet of course and about his sexual predilections and his dicky heart.

J. Don't blame her though. Blame myself don't yu' know, myself entirely. How can you love a father you never see? Too busy making money and peddling influence. What started out as a means became an end in itself. Kind of thing Karl's always talking about.

KM. Now what do you make of all that Mr. Demount?

HD. Its...my God it's...it's horrible.

KM. Indeed, so how do you think a conventional Victorian gentleman like Karl Marx, a gentleman who couldn't even face up to his own...

HD. His own what?

KM. Nothing...How do you think such a gentleman would, should respond to having such a man as a neighbour? Should I not abominate Jeremy Mr. Demount? Should I not morally abominate him and all he stands...er...stood for? But I don't, that is the point Mr. Demount. I don't at all. If I feel anything it is some amusement and a great deal of pity for what happened to Jeremy. In fact I have even come to like him and value him as a friend. Does this strike you as the behaviour of Karl Marx, of the Marx you have so long admired?

HD. I...er...I don't know.

KM. (*rising from his desk*). You don't know! You don't know! You don't seem to know very much! Well let me put some suggestions to you Mr. Demount. Perhaps I am not Karl Marx at all. Perhaps I am Jeremy. I mean, how come I have such fellow-feeling for someone I should abominate, for someone I would have abominated before I got here? And for someone I've never even seen. Perhaps I am he, or he is me, my *alter ego*. Anything is possible down here. Or perhaps...perhaps...I am just one of Satan's little helpers got up like Karl Marx to do a little tormenting job on you. After all, did you not say that you have given your life to my ideas? Did you not come here to get vindication from the horse's mouth as it were? And what do you get? Not vindication but vituperation, not validation but vomit. Perhaps I am the eternal flame in which you are fated to burn.

HD. Eternal flame?! I don't know what you are talking about!

KM. (*now looming accusingly over HD*) And speaking of your life Mr. Demount, how did it end? I mean how did you get here? There is no file on you, Jeremy has checked.

HD. File? What file? What on earth are you talking about? I've told you I've always admired you. I came such a long way...

KM. Ah ha! Jeremy I think we may have some proof, or at least some suggestive evidence, in favour of H2 here. How else are we to explain his total incomprehension when confronted with H1 talk?

J. Perhaps dear boy.

HD. What?! Look this is all nonsense. I think I had better go. I've made a terrible mistake.

KM. So let me put the matter directly to you Mr. Demount (*KM pokes HD in the chest*). Are you a projection of my sub-conscious?! Are you an accusing symbol of all those fine young minds I have...have...led astray, of all those generous and idealistic spirits I have blighted and wasted in generation after generation? Is that what you are Mr. Demount?!

J. Oh come on Karl. He's hardly going to answer that old chap.

HD. For God's sake! I've told you I've not got the faintest idea what you are talking about!

*KM still looms threateningly over HD. He stares at him for a moment or two. HD stares back alarmed.*

KM. (*more calmly*) Well then Mr. Demount. Please give me Friedrich's message and go.

HD Yes I will, I will. Friedrich's message is simple Dr. Marx. It is...it is 'I have not forgotten Mary.'

*KM steps back aghast from his prosecutor's stance over HD.*

KM. Mary? Mary Burns!...What!...I...How do you know about Mary Burns?!

*KM retreats across the stage. HD suddenly calm and on the offensive, follows him.*

HD. How should I not know about the woman my father loved all his life? About the woman for whom you had only contempt, whom you thought unfit to share your bed?!

KM. Your father? But...but...Friedrich had no children.

HD. No he did not Dr Marx, only the one you foisted on him...Why did you deny me father?

KM What? I can't hear; What do you say?

HD. I said why did you deny me father? Why did you foist my bastardy on your supposed dearest friend?

KM I can't hear! I can't hear!

J. (*yelling*) No you don't! Bastards, bastards!! (*He skuttles to the partition*) Karl! Karl!

*The VDU screen flashes violently again. A voice begins "But this month's porn queen gentlemen is Ms. Sadie Lash, an eighteen year old dominatrix who really*

loves her job. Chains, manacles, whips, she'll do it all, and with real enthusiasm. Here she is at work. If you gents out there who like a little severity can watch this for thirty seconds without violent arousal, I'll be very surprised..." *Voice rises to a roar.*

J. *(crouching down by the partition. hands over ears)* No, no! Bastards! Bastards! Karl! Karl! Can you hear me?! It's your son, your son!

KM. What! My son! Freddie? Freddie Demuth?!

*The dialogue that follows should be conducted against a background of continuous porn advertising, flashing screen etc. It has to be shouted.*

HD. Yes father, I changed it; It reminded me too much of my poor mother...and of you!

KM. Freddie, Hank, please.. .let me explain...

HD. Explain! What is there to explain? I know it all. How having fucked my mother you went on treating her like a scivvy, forbade her even to mention me in your presence or that of your precious wife, how you told the world that Friedrich was my father and left him to support me, educate me. How you abused the kindness and generosity of a man whose shoes your weren't fit to shine and how he bore it all for the sake of your alleged 'genius' as he had done all his dear, sweet life!

KM Yes, yes Freddie. It is true. It is true. I know it is true, but please...

HD. And it wasn't as if she didn't know, as if you were protecting her from something. She knew all about it your dear wife, but just like you she hadn't the guts to face what you'd done. And what had you done Dr. Marx? Just like any old hypocritical Victorian bourgeois you'd fucked your housemaid, made her pregnant and then denied her. Wasn't good enough for you was she, my mother? Not in your class. Good enough to screw and do the washing and cooking but not good enough to treat like a fellow human being. What was it you said about selling your soul when you sell your labour power? Well I don't know about her soul Dr. Marx, but I know my mother sold her cunt and her self-respect to you, and for a pittance, a bloody pittance!

KM. Yes, yes,... please Freddie, please let me try and explain...

HD. Not in your class was she my mother? Nor that of your precious aristocratic wife, and neither was I, and neither was poor Mary. Friedrich loved Mary Burns more than he loved his life Dr. Marx...**f-a-t-h-e-r**...and what did you have to say to comfort him when she died? Fuck all!.. All you could see was that he had wasted his life on some Lancashire cotton girl. So much for the fucking champion of the proletariat!

KM. Yes, yes, but please, please, let me say something. I had to choose Freddie, I had to choose. Jenny couldn't bear it. She thought I couldn't love her, not if...not if...I'd slept with your mother. She threatened to leave. She wanted to leave. And I couldn't have borne that Freddie. I loved Jenny with all my heart. She was the only thing that made my life bearable in all that frustration and disappointment and poverty. If she'd left me I would have killed myself. I didn't want to deny you Freddie, or your mother...

HD. Ha!

KM I didn't, I didn't...but...but...I didn't know what else to do! And yes I did take advantage of Friedrich, all the time, all my life. And yes you are right, he was twice the man I was - generous, open, loving, a revolutionary in spirit as well as in word. Not like me. You are right Freddie. I was a hypocrite, a bloody hypocrite and a snob, yes, and a snob. But I've learnt Freddie, I've learnt! I've so longed to see you Freddie, to see you and Friedrich, to beg forgiveness of you both, for myself, for Jenny...

*KM rushes across the stage. falls on his knees and grabs HD around the legs.*

KM. Please forgive me Freddie! Please, please forgive me! I was a shit. I was, but I've learned, I've learned!

*At this moment the porn advertising disappears from sound and sight and a bright light appears at the 'door' of KM's study. A stentorian voice, sounding like a cross between Charlton Heston and KM himself, says:*

OK MARX YOU'RE OUTA HERE. YOU TOO SANDERSON!

*J. gets to his feet, rushes to the partition and bursts through it. When he is finally seen he looks a bit like KM himself, although by no means identical.*

J. (*shouting joyously*) Not Hell Karl! Not Hell Karl! Pur-ga-to-ry! And we're out! We're out!

*J lifts KM from his knees and embraces him. KM is still disoriented.*

KM. What? Purgatory? But that's...that's...on H1 Jeremy. What about...what about H2?...Have I forgiven myself? Have I finally forgiven myself?

*The stentorian voice again:*

ENOUGH OF THE INTELLECTUALISING ALREADY! GO BEFORE I CHANGE MY MIND!

J. Come on Karl, come on.

*J and KM exit arm in arm via KM 's study 'door' . As they exit LR appears with his photographic equipment.*

LR. Are you Freddie Demuth, alias Hank Demount, Karl Marx's illegitimate son?

*HD smiles emptily at LR*

LR. I am authorised by Mr. Rupert Murdoch himself to offer you 50,000 big ones for your exclusive story, with pics. O' course you'll have to come with me now before the other bleedin' sharks get here, but..er... the Sun has excellent hideaway accommodation for these purposes. What do you' say?

*HD smiles glassily once more then crumples like a deflated rubber doll on to the stage. LR raises his camera to take a photo and then crumples in the same fashion.*

*Scene ends, play ends.*