

**AN ORIGINAL SCRIPT FOR THE STAGE –**  
**CASE 121: THE SHADOWLESS CORPSE**  
**PLUS ACCOMPANYING ESSAY**

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## **Thesis Play Accompanying Essay**

### **Case 121: An Examination of the Process of Creating a Cross-Format**

#### **Genre Pastiche**

##### **Introduction**

With *Case 121* my aim was to create a pastiche of the film noir genre with a philosophical slant. It was a genre that interested me, and the tone and conventions seemed ripe for the additional interest that including philosophical elements could provide. The original pitch for the play stated the plot format was “of a protagonist’s investigation” and the style was to be a “mix of tone...dark and serious [with] some lighter content” (George, 2008). The main considerations during the process of writing centred on creating a play that successfully pastiches a film genre whilst inherently remaining a piece of theatre. I will examine the impact of the benefits and detriments of creating a genre pastiche had on the development from original pitch to the final draft. To achieve this I will analyse the decisions made about which techniques and aesthetics of film noir to keep and to alter, and their relative influence during the redrafting process.

##### **Origins**

The play arose from the merging of an image with an idea. The image was of a man fighting with his shadow, and the idea was to write about a private detective who investigated philosophical crimes. I already had knowledge of the philosophical side from the completion of an undergraduate degree in the subject, and early on I discovered Jungian Shadow Theory in *Psychology and Religion* as a system to hang

the idea on (Jung, 1958). With this knowledge in place researching the detective side of the writing became the priority.

### **Why Genre Pastiche?**

Choosing to do a genre pastiche meant that a unique set of practices and aesthetics instantly recognisable to an audience were available to manipulate to my desired end. The struggle to engage the audience with the world is eased by the provision of these standards of genre; the required leap of imagination is narrowed. However, if the choice of genre is ill matched with what the writer adds to it or subverts it with, then the benefit of a genre pastiche becomes its detriment. The play will seem incoherent if the genre is too far from what is added, or dull if it is too easily combined as to commit the offence of cliché. Therefore, it became important for me to ensure there was balance between my chosen genre and content.

### **Why Film Noir?**

Film noir may initially seem a risky choice as McKee notes the conventions of crime fiction are riddled with the possibility for cliché, and the challenge is to keep convention but avoid cliché (1999, p. 87). The benefit I found of choosing film noir is that the basic practical conventions of crime fiction were easily included, such as including a crime, suspects, and a detective. It is the style of film noir that renders it distinct from other genres, and this too was simple to include. The next step was to choose the best way for my play to exploit the practices representative of film noir.

### **Aesthetics**

To express the film noir aesthetic I included indicating dark costume, which changed to specifying black, white and grey costume in the final draft for contrast. Seeing film noir in black and white is the central aesthetic convention associated with the genre, so to transfer it to the stage was an easy decision to make. If all costume

and props are black, white and grey the immediate visual impact is not only compelling but will also provide instant recognition that the audience is watching ‘play noir’. It is a simple practice to include that has great benefits. The visual pastiche of film noir translates easily onto the stage, allowing the subversion of the genre (so it is a pastiche and not a genre-piece) to be achieved in other ways.

### **Emplotment**

As my initial pitch stated the plotting would follow a protagonist’s investigation, a staple story practice of film noir, such as in *The Maltese Falcon* (dir. John Huston: 1941). As this was one of the earliest ideas involved in the process of creating *Case 121* it is also one that I’ve been reluctant to change, and have found no reason to either. This was a plot course that has been done on stage before, and David Hare’s *Knuckle* (1984) provided a useful point of reference when considering a stage-set investigation.

The play is partially what David Edgar would define as ‘single-cycle time with changed space’ (2008) as it follows the investigation of ‘Case 121’, and the protagonist’s rite of passage. However, the protagonist narrates and offers his thoughts on the action between each scene as if he is both telling and living the story simultaneously. So it has an element of what Edgar would call ‘funny time’, which is usually expressive of irony as the audience knows something the characters don’t (2008). However, when the narrator is both in the action and in on the story, this irony is skewed slightly, with the intention of drawing the audience into the protagonist’s perception of the events, to better follow his rite of passage. The consideration to change whose voice narrated the piece did arise, but sticking with the protagonist and developing his voice was preferable to changing the viewpoint of the plotting.

### **Film Noir Narration**

I included the application of a technique heavily associated with film noir in the utilization of direct address. Film noir films are often narrated to the audience via a voiceover by the main character, such as in *Double Indemnity* (dir. Billy Wilder: 1944). Direct address as a convention has been used throughout history as a theatre practice, from the choric function in early Greek theatre, the Soliloquy in Renaissance England, up to Brecht and on. (Waters, 2008). It was the particular way to utilize it within *Case 121* that was a complex consideration. As a convention it facilitates the storytelling in a piece and acts as a window to the inner thoughts and feelings of the characters given it. In the first draft of *Case 121* the purpose of including direct address as a convention was sufficient just to be evocative of film noir. I'll discuss how the precise usage of the convention changed in later drafts when the development of the piece is considered.

What was constant was that during the direct address the protagonist would never refer to the fact he was essentially talking to an audience. They were an audience to his words and his story, but never to his play or his film noir pastiche. It was important for my play to be a pastiche and not a parody, invoking genre practices and shifting or moulding them rather than undermining them for comedic effect. To achieve this care was taken never to make the writing aware of the techniques used, like for the direct address. One example of how this was enforced was that a phrase such as 'it's just like in the films' would never be used.

### **Researching Film Noir**

As part of my process I wanted to keep my mind entirely free from the influence of any specific aspects of storyline and characters from other detective fiction during the writing of the first draft. This was in order to retain an element of

originality that I could hold onto when further research was required to influence, provoke or shape the piece. Setting the piece apart from examples of the genre was important to the process of creating a pastiche and not a genre piece, especially as what I was creating was theatre and not film.

When research was required my first source of reference was the classic film noirs (i.e. those made and released in the 1940s) such as *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *The Big Sleep* (dir. Howard Hawks: 1946) and *The Third Man* (dir. Carol Reed: 1949). Assumptions I had about the conventions of the genre were then made more explicit, and a more accurate frame of reference to pastiche was provided. I also watched neo-noirs including *Chinatown* (dir. Roman Polanski: 1974) and *The Machinist* (dir. Brad Anderson: 2004), which were helpful in getting a sense of how the genre is adapted, either to a contemporary setting or different narrative style. These films were also helpful simply as additional examples of how to structure a story around an investigation.

### **Genre Pastiche**

I aimed to detach *Case 121* from the film noir genre, thus making it a pastiche and not simply a genre piece, in both content and structure. As mentioned the conventions of film noir are easily included in the style and format of the play. Therefore, in order to avoid cliché it was important that the additional elements I chose to include were of the right nature, so the audience's expectations of the genre were offset but their belief in the story remained. The main subversive aspect I chose for *Case 121* was the philosophical nature of the investigation.

### **Philosophy in Case 121**

The philosophical content of *Case 121* is primarily intended to separate it from the normal crime fiction that classic film noir was an exploration of. My intention was

always to keep the density of the philosophy included quite light, as dense philosophical discussion would hinder the pace and accessibility of a piece designed to entertain. All philosophical references were included so that they seemed an intrinsic part of the world H inhabited. Philosophical concepts were taken and altered to fit the film noir genre practices of detection.

One example of this is the inclusion of ‘Socratic Dialogue’, where I took the pedagogical method Socrates used to teach by asking his pupils questions (Blackburn, 1994, p. 356) and modified it to be H’s chosen method of interrogation. In the final draft ‘Socratic Method’ became ‘Socratic Dialogue’ which H describes as: ‘Use someone’s own words against them, get to the centre of their beliefs and shake them until the truth is revealed’ (September 2009, Sc.3 p.19). This utilization of concepts was developed throughout the drafting process, cutting throwaway references and cultivating the more organic inclusions.

### **Cross-Format Considerations**

As film noir obviously has its roots in film it is the format of *Case 121*, being a piece of theatre and not film, which separates it most clearly from other noirs. It was the changes during the development of *Case 121* linked to ensuring it was a piece of theatre, and not film in the guise of theatre, that were most affecting. This involved practical considerations like the inclusion of theatrical conventions, the plot ending and the amount of characters, plus content considerations such as thematic issues of character and stage.

### **Direct Address**

As mentioned, the main convention from film noir I utilised that changed the most during the drafting process was the practice of direct address. In the first draft this took the shape of narration to introduce H’s feelings at the start of some scenes

and occasional ‘asides’ that only the audience could hear. The purpose of the asides was to strengthen the bond the audience have with H as the protagonist, by making them privy to his thoughts about the in-scene occurrences as they witnessed them. Often the asides were intended to be humorous by way of H’s comments being incongruous with the action or commenting critically on the other characters’ misapprehensions. This was intended to endear the audience to him as a character and make them more willing to follow his story.

After the second draft of the script I decided to use the means available to me to oversee a production of the piece at the university. Working with a director and actors during the rehearsal process highlighted a few problems with the direct address, in the way it was then being employed. In rehearsal it became clear that the asides were often unnecessarily cumbersome and therefore detrimental to the flow of the scene. During the next portion of the redrafting process any information previously included in the asides that I felt was necessary, either to express H’s character or attitudes or to the comprehension of the plot, then they were reworked into the dialogue or as soliloquies.

As an example, this extract from the second draft:

**H:** Tomasc Lakowski.

**Virginia:** That’s right.

**H:** [to audience] I know Tommy, and he is neither a gentleman, nor reliable.  
[to Virginia] So what do you want me to do?’

(April 2009, Sc.1 p.3)

Became:

‘**H:** I know the truth, and that isn’t it. I know Tommy, and he is neither a gentleman nor a reliable man. Talk.’

(September 2009, Sc.1 p. 5)

Direct address then only remained in the form of soliloquies that were reworked to become more structured. In the third draft the soliloquies were placed at the beginning of each scene and they acted as an introduction to the scene, detailing H’s retrospective feelings about his situation at that point in the play. The soliloquies showed the audience an insight to how the action of the scene that they were about to see, would lead to the consequences of the play’s end that have changed H.

The intention of creating a bond between H and the audience was preserved, but the structure of how it was included was tightened and the content honed as well. To avoid the convention detracting from the flow I endeavoured to always let the monologue run smoothly into the in-scene action that followed and to seem an invitation to watch that proceeding action. The audience effectively follows H’s voice, as does the action, his narration from the future drops into being a presence in the current scene he enters.

The film noir convention of narrating information to the audience throughout the action was a key element I wanted to retain for my pastiche. Providing a rigid structure of starting each scene with a direct address soliloquy was the chosen method of using the practice in theatre. I avoided employing the use of a recording of H’s voice over the action, as true film noir would use, and opted for an engagement with the audience to provoke their interest in his story.

## Cast Size

A plot that follows an investigation necessitates a large set of characters because with the murder investigation I opted for there needed to be various ‘suspects’ and ‘victims’. In film noir a cast of a dozen or more key and secondary characters is suitable. An audience watching a film expect to be introduced to numerous characters of varied importance to the plot, as film is often of a grander scale that necessitates the involvement of more characters. However, in theatre an ever-increasing cast size can be inefficient to manage practically and distracting to an audience, as they may be unsure of who to give focus to.

After the production and during the subsequent redrafting process this became clearer to me and therefore in the third draft a lot of plot points were cut to refine the story. Instead of a sprawling series of murders committed by H’s shadow the deaths were reduced to two. Whilst a film can easily follow an investigation across a vast area involving many people, I discovered an investigation on stage is facilitated when limited.

In the first draft of *Case 121* there were eleven characters, this was increased to thirteen for the second draft when more scenes were added. One of the more affecting changes made from the second to third draft was the removal of peripheral characters whose effect on the play was negligible. This involved cutting parts of some scenes, such as a scene set in a bank where a ‘Bank Clerk’ was removed, and a scene set in a bar where the ‘Bartender’ was removed. Whilst these characters had both comic input and aided in establishing place their inclusion was more of an easy indulgence than could be justified. Subsequently either H’s soliloquies took the responsibility of setting the scene, or scenes were removed where they would have required such representation through extra characters.

A large aspect of the second draft was the utilization of double acts; a lot of characters were paired together for comedic effect. This often consisted of pairing a focused character with a more undisciplined one unsuited to the job they were cast in. This whole practice was meant to be similar to using one character as a foil for another to highlight their difference; except I was using a host of incompatible pairs to highlight that eventually H and Freddy could be compatible. Examples include Adelaide being paired with a stargazing partner called Ossander (whose purpose also doubled up as a victim) and DC Sinker was partnered by a senior officer called DC McPatrick, who was left to despair over Sinker's ineptitude.

The benefit of this function was outweighed by the detriment of overcrowding the stage and the ensuing confusion of having sometimes seven or eight characters in a scene. This was a particularly difficult decision, as the scene that I was most proud of from the second draft involved a simultaneous interrogation of H and Freddy by Officers McPatrick and Sinker. It had to be cut for the benefit of the piece as a whole.

Consequently each organisation that encroaches on H's investigation was limited to one representative, i.e. Hullock for the higher powers of M.A.D., Adelaide for the competition of P.I.S. and Sinker for the police. These were sufficient to maintain the level of bureaucracy, rivalry and restrictions to frustrate H during his toughest case. Film can introduce character after character without it being a detriment, but I had to alter how an investigation story was told for the stage. The way I did this was by utilizing the right characters to perform more functions, rather than employing more of them to fill those various roles.

The character list of the final draft still numbers nine, and whilst doubling up of roles to actors is suggested there is another function for the characters that justifies a large cast size practically and thematically. All supporting characters (i.e. those

other than H) play dual roles, consisting of their explicit characters and ‘shadows’. The shadows are the forces that represent the darkness H faces in his frustration to overcome the case he is investigating. The idea arose after a supervision session where one criticism of the first draft was that it was too filmic and it lacked a theatrical conceit to rest upon. The shadows move from the faceless resistance H faces in the shadow area of the stage into explicit characters with a more direct frustrating influence on him onstage.

### **The Epilogue Scene**

One staple practice of film noir, or any fiction with an air of mystery, is a final scene that explains all that has happened before, the revelation scene. In the earlier drafts of *Case 121* this was expressed in the shape of a final scene between H and Freddy, where H explained to Freddy what had happened to him. In the first draft this amounted to a couple of pages, which were extended in later drafts to make the scene feel substantial enough to be warranted. However, for the final draft I moved the ‘epilogue’ scene into the confrontation between H and his Shadow by including Freddy’s presence. The play ends with H’s realisation that the Shadow was the helpful but sinister embodiment of his failure to question his own methods, through Freddy’s help. They leave together with H as a changed man, discarding the handbook he wrote into the spotlight that has represented his journey to that discovery, at least showing a determination to change his ways.

### **The Animals Within**

An early thematic device that was experimented with was subtly alluding to characters as animals that were representative of their nature. H was represented as a wolf, quite explicitly in a dream described by Tuckers in a drug-fuelled ramble. The wolf is a pack animal and H’s lone investigation casts him as independent, without the

help he may have needed. The agents of the Paranormal Investigation Services were described with words relating to birds, such as flying, to show they were ungrounded in their approach. DC Sinker was depicted with canine characteristics, such as a bark of a laugh or being told to ‘stay on his leash’, to represent his subservient nature to a system.

This convention evokes connotations of fables, where the nature of the animal a character represents tells the audience about the character’s own nature. The story then offers a truth about the aspect of human nature that is explored. An example is Ben Jonson’s *Volpone*, where the technique is used to express the writer’s view on greed by casting his protagonist as the personification of a fox trying to outwit scavenger birds (1975). This device was not wholly embraced in *Case 121* and was diluted in later drafts in order to concentrate on other representative functions of the characters.

### **Props as Metaphors**

In film the screen is filled with every item that would be in the place the writer wants to represent. On stage this is not always possible, especially if the intention is to avoid clutter and long scene changes. Therefore, the items that remain can take on added thematic significance. David Eldridge spoke of inserting props in his plays that would only take on a significance later as their use was altered or repeated, ‘a set up without a pre-planned payoff’ (2008). This organic significance is what occurred with the Propertorch.

It started as an example of a metaphysical anomaly detective’s tool of the trade, but as the story demanded it didn’t work on the first shadowless corpse it later took on new meaning. The broken torch came to symbolise everything about H: his failure to find the truth; his connection to Tuckers and Tuckers’ failing grip on reality;

his unimportance to M.A.D.; his lack of introspection and criticism, by not using it on himself as Tuckers had forbidden; and his eventual revelation by rejecting the previous. The usual association of the torch to its function to reveal the truth was one I enjoyed subverting and then re-asserting in a different light.

Another prop that acted as a metaphor was the handbook. This symbolised H's increasingly unquestioning nature, especially of himself, through his reliance on his past learning. He casually hands it to Freddy for him to follow too, providing opportunity for Freddy to reject H's path. This he does by starting his own 'Methodic' investigation in the handbook, a system H forbids him from using. Freddy's resistance to the easy way provides impetus for H to do the same at the play's climax.

### **Character in Case 121**

The characters of *Case 121* changed from draft to draft as they either had to incorporate multiple roles, were made more complex or simply just changed in style during development. As the play follows a protagonist's investigation it is the protagonist character that I paid most focus to during development, to make him a character whose story an audience would want to follow. H was one of the initial concepts that were merged to form the basis of *Case 121*, a character who was strong-minded but battle-weary. He needed to be both the archetypal hardboiled rogue detective, but also capable of intellectually upholding a philosophical investigation and being emotionally involving to an audience.

### **H The Protagonist**

The protagonist of film noirs is often independent and pessimistic and H follows in this vein. From the first draft H was roguish, described as defying authority, and saw himself outside of the rules. His language was equal parts hard-boiled detective and philosophy scholar. In the later drafts as different themes became

clearer and took focus H came to represent the individual frustrated in his attempts to rationally pursue the truth, by the bureaucratic collectives. He is now intended to represent rationality and consistency against the ‘whatever seems to work’ mentality of the organisations that control him.

The danger of having a protagonist character that is ‘representative’ is that they may not seem rounded enough to engage an audience. Therefore it was important to give the audience the most insight into H and his feelings during the case. The direct address convention facilitated this to a great degree. As the whole story is told from H’s perspective and he is ever-present during the action onstage, every character interaction involves him. The level of reflection an audience can gain from viewing varying interactions helps develop their sense of H as a person.

It is his relationship with Freddy, whose rationality and perseverance represents everything H believes missing from the world, which humanises him most. Freddy is effectively a newcomer into the world of M.A.D. with a little previous knowledge of philosophical enquiry, as many of the audience may have. His ‘formal function’, as Wallis and Shepherd would describe it, is as a ‘raisonneur’. He is the person who makes sense of the situation for the audience’s benefit and is therefore a character for the audience to anchor their experience in (2002, p.17). This function is also true of H, who explains directly what is happening and gives hints about the consequences for him.

### **Tuckers the Chameleon**

Another character whose development has mirrored the changing style of the play is ‘Tuckers’. In the first draft he was a similar age to H and, despite his inebriated state, provided specialist knowledge about Shadow Theory that put H on the right track to solving the case. In the second draft as the nature of the ‘Shadow’

became less rigidly influenced by Jung's Shadow Theory, Tuckers took on a different role. He then became more of a comfort for H in amongst the crowd of people repressing him, and this was expressed as him being the only character to wear colourful clothes and mention contemporary technology. However I thought this change took him too much out of the confines of the play, and his exact relationship with H remained a little obscure.

Therefore for the third draft, whilst his purpose was still as a respite for H to clear his thoughts, he adhered to the same rules as other characters for being of no specific place or era. Tuckers then became a former employee of M.A.D. who was fired in the lead up to the start of the play. His role still felt closer to negligible than necessary, especially in the tightened third draft, so for the final draft he has undergone the most dramatic change yet. Tuckers is now H's predecessor at M.A.D, the man who has gone before H. His formal function is to be H's foil, he represents what can happen to a man and a mind through the pursuit of truth H takes, if he is not in command of his restraint and his rationality. Tuckers' purpose is linked to H's character, as indicative of precisely how H is affected by his future imperfect self. He also serves in the plot to provoke feelings of guilt and discomfort in H, that then push his state of mind into more fragile territory when he interrogates Tommy.

### **H The Antagonist**

One aspect of the play present from the beginning was that the antagonist to H's investigation would be himself. Or rather a metaphysical anomaly produced entity that was part of H's psyche, his 'Shadow'. The part of the Shadow has also undergone important changes, starting as a near pantomime villain type character that H did battle with to conclude the play that evolved to something clearer. In the second draft his language was anchored more directly in the reality of the play and with H, as each

of his lines began with either an exact copy of one H had said earlier, or a perverted version of one of H's lines. This technique has endured and been refined to the final draft, and it both represented the Shadow's link to H, and also provided a neat way to ground the character in the logic of the play. It was an expression of 'Socratic Dialogue' in H's terms, his own words used to shake his core to reveal the truth. By attempting to offer H the easy answer to further increase his unquestioning nature, the Shadow would thus increase its own level of existence that is being drawn from H. The Shadow is the truth H seeks, both the murderer and the answer, representing H's frustration and his failure.

### **Characters as Representatives**

Wallis and Shepherd suggest that characters almost always act as representatives of something in a play (2002, p. 21). This is true of the peripheral characters in *Case 121*. All the characters that were included in the final draft perform two important functions other than their role in furthering the plot. The first function is present in their conception as crossover archetypes from the film noir genre, such as the 'femme fatale' in the case of Virginia and Adelaide and the 'corrupt lawman' in officer Sinker. The addition of recognisable film noir archetypes to the character list emphasised the sense of the genre. Their other function was as representatives of the different institutions that aim to repress H and his investigation.

The characters that fall outside of this truth are the ones who don't represent organizations, namely Tuckers and Tommy. They are ostensibly there to help, through providing tools or information, although they too end up hindering his investigation. These two characters also have a representative function, specifically the detrimental nature of toxin intake that hinders cognitive function – drugs. Tommy is addled with alcohol and Tuckers is psychologically flying on a concoction of various intoxicants.

H admits his disrespect for these – “drinking clouds the judgement. I need to be alert when contemplating a case” (September 2009, Sc.1 p.3) – but later succumbs to their influence at his lowest point. *Case 121* needed elements to be detached from the genre to make it a pastiche and not a genre-piece, and the elements I chose were setting and partially the tone and content.

### **The World of Case 121**

An early decision I made to separate *Case 121* from the majority of film noir was with regards to its setting. Most classic noirs are set in 1940s Los Angeles, so other noirs that want to separate themselves from the genre and become a pastiche often do this by changing the setting. One example is *Brick* (dir. Rian Johnson: 2006), which is set in an American High School in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but still retains all of the practices and conventions of a classic film noir.

I decided to go against both film noir and film noir pastiche practice by deliberately specifying no precise era or location of the events in *Case 121*. The existence of metaphysical anomalies already sets the ‘world’ of the play up as an ‘alternate reality’ to our own. With this in mind I didn’t want to confuse an audience by giving specific accents or indicators of place that would root the action in a recognisable space.

### **Language**

Wherever possible the language was Anglo-American neutral and any references to places were non-specific (e.g. ‘Municipal Park’). Even references to the government were all about ‘state’ without specifying any particular type of state body, such as a ‘prime minister’ or ‘FBI’. I believe by not identifying any particular location and period the leap of imagination required to accept metaphysical anomalies is lessened. Any anti-establishment sensibilities of the play are also not linked to any

particular establishment, and therefore the sentiment of following rationality rather than rules can be wholly applicable without an audience thinking of a certain set of rules.

The inclusion of the logical propositions came in the third draft. While the formal language may be unclear to many this is irrelevant, because it is something that H struggles to make sense of as well. He should be able to guide the audience through the process to an extent, although he fails to understand and is in effect trapped in a drunken delirium by the problem. So whilst the inclusion of logical language may be alienating, this is intentional to alienate H from all possible help, even that of the audience's understanding.

### **On Themes**

The theme that developed through the writing process was more about philosophy as a whole, as opposed to any specific metaphysical or wider philosophical conviction. The theme of trusting in rationality and rigorous thought that philosophy encourages came to the fore. In the final draft this is expressed through H's lapse of questioning or being critical of his own methods that leads to his Shadow punishing him into awareness. He has aimed to embody the opposite of the systems he rebels against, that changes technique whenever it doesn't seem to be working, but has become redundant by becoming uncompromising in his own approach.

H starts the play as lazy with his process and reliant on tools and tricks that have stagnated. As the play progresses he deteriorates more, and fails to question the authorities he used to until he is near to Tuckers' state of acceptance without reason. It is only when he finally questions what the Shadow tells him, which is effectively

what he wants to believe to be true (that he didn't murder), that he finds the truth he needs to overcome the Shadow's hold on him.

### **Nominal Power**

One of the smaller thematic conventions in the play is how names are a source or indicator of power, specifically with regards to H. H's name itself is intended to set him apart, he has forged his own identity by creating a nickname for others to use. His misapprehension of Freddy's name is indicative of the lack of consideration H first provides him with. H's refusal to address Hullock by his title of 'Director' (as Freddy does) is an expression of his rebellion. He refers to Adelaide by her surname when it is obvious they have had a previous intimate relationship, this is indicative of a withdrawal of those intimate feelings. When he later realises his lingering care for her, he addresses her as Adelaide when the Shadow calls her Credance (September 2009, Sc.10 p.66).

### **Comedy versus Enquiry**

The other element added to the genre conventions and intended to create a pastiche, aside from the philosophy, was humour. It was important to strike the right balance between the focus on humour and philosophical enquiry within the investigative confines of the play. The level had to be balanced so that it wasn't too much so as to risk subverting the serious elements of the piece, but not so little that it seemed a distraction or insignificant. It is a risk to include comedy, as this pushes the tone of the script closer to parody, but I could only feel comfortable offering people this new world if I allowed them the chance to laugh at it. Care was taken never to create jokes centred on the lampooning of film noir practices or conventions so that it aimed to steer clear of parody. The humour was to come from the relationships of the characters and their situations.

In the first two drafts there were numerous ‘double-acts’ of characters that provided a source of comedy both within and between the pairs. Also in the earlier drafts, the humour was always certain with some characters and experimental with others. DC Sinker, Tuckers and the peripheral characters such as the Secretary, the Bartender and the Bank Clerk were all broadly comic characters. With the removal of some of these and the development of Tuckers and DC Sinker’s roles the tone of humour has changed.

Now it is the language and verbal repartee of the characters that is intended to be the main source of humour. An example is the early jousting for power between H and Virginia. It was always a difficulty to know the exact level of humour that should be included, but after the production and the workshop of an extract of the third draft it is easier to see how much an audience want to laugh at the piece. The challenge then becomes how to engage them with the more serious aspects of the play.

### **Conclusion**

With the final draft of *Case 121* I have aimed to create a successful pastiche of the film noir genre translated onto the stage, which also provides an interesting philosophical world to engage with. The focal point of the development process during writing was maintaining the balance of alluding to the practices and conventions of film noir, whilst adding elements that kept the play distanced from the genre. This consideration has affected the process throughout, influencing decisions about characters, setting, tone, content, style and plotting. The level of both philosophy and humour had to be finely balanced with the conventions to create a pastiche and not a parody or straight genre piece. Decisions about emplotment, cast size, method of employing film noir practices, the significance of items and the

themes and thematic devices within the play all centred on creating a piece that is inherently theatre and not film.

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### Filmography

- Brick* (2006) Dir. Rian Johnson [DVD] Optimum Home Entertainment
- Chinatown* (1974) Dir. Roman Polanski [DVD] Paramount
- Double Indemnity* (1944) Dir. Billy Wilder [DVD] Universal Pictures UK
- The Big Sleep* (1946) Dir. Howard Hawks [DVD] Warner Home Video
- The Machinist* (2004) Dir. Brad Anderson [DVD] Prism Leisure
- The Maltese Falcon* (1941) Dir. John Huston [DVD] Warner Home Video
- The Third Man* (1949) Dir. Carol Reed [DVD] Optimum Home Entertainment

# Case 121: The Shadowless Corpse

## A Play Noir

### Characters

*H*

*Virginia Belvedere*

*George Hullock*

*Freddy Novus*

*Tommy 'the Pole' Lakowski*

*DC Rex Sinker*

*Adelaide Credance*

*Tuckers*

*The Shadow*

Actors may play multiple roles except for the part of H. If so, it is preferable that characters are doubled appropriately [the femme fatales- Virginia/Adelaide, the aides- Tommy/Tuckers].

All characters are dressed in shades of black, white and grey.

Mostly dark, and mostly in black.

All props and set should also be coloured similarly to give the instant visual impression that the audience is watching a film noir.

The area at the back of the stage is for 'shadows'. Actors not in a scene are in the 'shadow' area where their faces are obscured from the audience.

Their presence begins infrequently as they wader across and off. If they remain onstage they stand, observe and react. There is no interaction between them and the in-scene actors, unless mentioned.

Their presence should increase from this state as the play progresses to a constant nearly overwhelming pressure.

Note: Punctuation in dialogue is used to indicate delivery and not to conform to the rules of grammar.

/ = indicates interruption at the end of a line.

... = indicates trailing off of speech.

- = in the middle of speech indicates a short pause.

## **Scene One**

*The stage is dimly lit.*

*A spotlight comes up on a man standing casually on one side of the stage. The spotlight should invoke a streetlamp. He is wearing dark clothes, a hat and long coat. The man looks out to the audience; his delivery is dry and solemn. His name is H. Scene changes occur around his narration, the location following his voice.*

**H:** It was after midnight. I had no idea. No idea of the time, or the trouble. My complacency was about to lead me through darkness, deception and death. Murder. A case to sneak inside and shake my core. The case was a private client, always simpler. As near to a waste of time as I could let slide. Or so I thought in those days. I arrived at her hotel tired, but ready.

*He begins to walk across the stage and breaths in bravado.*

**H:** This case was going to be simple.

*Full lights come up. There is a seductively attractive woman sat in a chair waiting for him. There is an empty chair next to her. H stops. She looks him up and down, then smiles.*

**Virginia:** You must be Detective Eastfield/

**H:** /H. Everybody calls me H.

**Virginia:** H...

**H:** And you're Mrs./

**Virginia:** /Miss Belvedere, but you may call me Virginia. Can I take your coat?

**H:** No need. This won't take long.

**Virginia:** Such a shame. Take a seat.

*He does.*

**H:** Thanks, Miss Belvedere. How can I be of service?

**Virginia:** So eager you are to begin with business. Wouldn't you like a drink?

*She stands to fetch one.*

**H:** Not on the job.

*She turns.*

**Virginia:** A smoke?

**H:** No thank you.

**Virginia:** No drinking and no smoking. Why, how do you relax in company?

*She pours herself a drink and sips.*

**H:** In yours Miss Belvedere, I already am. Besides, drinking clouds the judgement. I need to be alert when contemplating a case. And smoking I consider a weakness.

**Virginia:** How so?

*Virginia places the drink down and returns to her seat.*

**H:** It's either expressive of an inability to handle stress.

*He looks, she smiles.*

**H:** Or a shallow desire to appear in a certain light. Seem sophisticated.

**Virginia:** Well I hope you don't mind if I smoke. It calms my nerves when I'm in such respected company.

*She lights a cigarette.*

**H:** Why did you call me here Miss Belvedere?

**Virginia:** A friend gave me your contact details.

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** Not how, why?

**Virginia:** I'm not even sure you should be here. I've already spoken to the police and they say they are dealing with it but it's too much of a worry for me to let lie, keeping me awake. A woman needs her beauty sleep Mr. Eastfield.

**H:** H.

*Slight Pause. Virginia takes a drag from her cigarette.*

**Virginia:** Of course, H.

*H remains silent to let her speak. She doesn't.*

**H:** Start at the beginning doll, I'm wide-awake.

*Pause. Virginia settles herself.*

**Virginia:** I recently arrived in town to visit a gentleman friend. I booked into this hotel that he recommended, adjacent to the park near to where he lives. Then I waited for him to contact me. As he said he would.

**H:** Go on.

**Virginia:** Well unfortunately, this friend has failed to make contact with me, and he is known as a reliable man. So when I heard nothing for two days I began to worry. Though we are not attached in any formal way you must understand.

*She prolongs eye-contact.*

**H:** Noted.

**Virginia:** Naturally, I contacted the police after one day, as we have no mutual friends to whom I could ask after him. The police took the information and assured me they would look into it.

**H:** What is this friend's name?

*She considers for a split second.*

**Virginia:** Tomasc.

**H:** Does he have a surname? I need all the information I can get if you want me to locate him.

*Slight Pause. Virginia flashes him another look then begins to walk towards the other room (the bedroom).*

**H:** I don't think he's in there, Miss Belvedere. His name?

*She turns, shrugs off his rejection and brushes passed him to her chair.*

**Virginia:** His name is Mr. Tomasc Lakowski. It's been three days now and the police have been less than helpful. They say they have more pressing matters to attend to, but I am lost in this place without Tomasc to look after me. A woman shouldn't be left on her own in a strange and dangerous city H.

*Pause. She inhales then blows a cloud of smoke. H smiles. He stands and begins to slowly walk towards the exit saying-*

**H:** Very good Miss Belvedere, but I'd prefer the truth.

**Virginia:** I beg your pardon.

*He turns.*

**H:** A well-considered story, with all the right looks and motions to carry it off. But you're lying.

**Virginia:** How...?

**H:** I know the truth, and that isn't it. I know Tommy, and he is neither a gentleman nor a reliable man. Talk.

*Slight Pause.*

**Virginia:** The Company I represent invest a lot in procuring certain items. When these items go missing it is necessary for them to be located efficiently. I'm supposed to meet this Lakowski as a potential buyer, but I don't have an item to sell him. It's gone. Disappeared. I need you to tell me where it is.

*H approaches.*

**H:** Are you extending the offer of a case?

*Virginia turns away.*

**Virginia:** First I need to know if you can help me.

**H:** What is the item?

**Virginia:** I'd rather not say.

*H takes his seat.*

**H:** That'll make it harder to locate. We've been here before Miss Belvedere.

*She turns and leans close to him.*

**Virginia:** A lot of people want what I've got H.

**H:** I'll bet they do. So are you going to end the histrionics and tell me exactly what it is you've lost? Or should I leave it to the police to recover this precious item?

*She stubs out the cigarette and becomes more composed. As she talks H listens and surveys her.*

**Virginia:** I am in possession of Eve's Apple, a jewel encrusted apple statuette meant for Charles I as a gift upon his coronation. It passed hands and was lost through time, until my company managed to procure it from a certain party who had no legitimate claim to its ownership. I was arriving here to meet with potential buyers, and its disappearance is a great inconvenience.

*H stands.*

**H:** Finally some truth.

*She smiles on cue.*

**Virginia:** Will you help me?

**H:** Where was the Eve's Apple last seen?

**Virginia:** Since its acquisition I've kept it in this travel case. The case was kept in the safe area of the hotel.

**H:** Guarded?

**Virginia:** Of course. Round the clock, by several trustworthy men. I went to check on it yesterday morning, and found it had disappeared. Naturally I notified the police instantly.

*She falters.*

**Virginia:** Its worth outweighs my own, to the company.

**H:** Of course.

**Virginia:** Will you help me? Please?

**H:** And in return for my involvement?

**Virginia:** Unfortunately I don't have the resources to pay you for these services. But I'm sure we can come to some arrangement.

*She flicks him a look.*

**H:** Your Company will find a way to compensate me for my time. Open the case.

**Virginia:** It's empty.

*H takes out a torch.*

**Virginia:** It's empty, not dark.

*H sighs.*

**H:** Open it.

*He sits. She opens the case. H clicks a button on the torch, no light comes out, but he smiles.*

**Virginia:** What?

**H:** Case closed.

*He goes to shut it, then stops. Virginia looks perplexed.*

**H:** The Eve's Apple is in front of you.

**Virginia:** What?

**H:** What you have there Miss Belvedere is a propertyless apple statuette. Either in the safe, the case or during transit, it has lost its properties- shape, taste, size, colour, etc. The essence of the object is there.

*H indicates the torch.*

**H:** Plain to see for those who know how to look. Only its properties have disappeared.

*Virginia is shocked.*

**Virginia:** How can you...?/

**H:** /I'm a metaphysical anomaly detective Miss Belvedere. This is what I do. I know what I'm looking at.

**Virginia:** No properties?

**H:** A simple metaphysical malfunction, I've seen it many times before. Your item is still there, just not in any sense that you can - sense.

**Virginia:** How will the properties come back?

**H:** I just analyse the anomalies Miss Belvedere. It would take a greater being to rectify them. You may have peace of mind that the item is not lost.

**Virginia:** But a propertyless statuette is worthless.

**H:** It's still there.

**Virginia:** But worthless!

**H:** I can't change the minds of men about its value. I assume that's your job.

**Virginia:** How can you prove this?!

**H:** It's the only rational explanation. I've seen this phenomenon countless times. My office will be in contact.

*H stands to leave.*

**Virginia:** You can't expect me to pay you for this information.

**H:** Good night, Miss Belvedere.

*Lights down on Virginia in the seat. A spotlight appears at the edge of the stage and H walks into it. Scene change to an office around him.*

## **Scene Two**

*There is a desk onstage. A large, official-looking man stands behind it, facing away from the audience. The man is the director of H's branch, named Hullock. Stood in a dark corner is a young man in a suit, who initially remains silent, observing nervously. H begins the scene, under streetlight.*

**H:** Miss Belvedere was left disappointed, but I left with the truth, contented. Ignorant fool. Even then the satisfaction was short-lived. The next morning I was called into the director's office, where the verballistics would begin. They were intended to distract me, and they did.

*Full lights up on the office as H walks in.*

**Hullock:** You're late.

*H takes his seat.*

**H:** I had a busy night.

**Hullock:** Imbecile.

*Slight Pause. Hullock turns to face H.*

**Hullock:** Damn imbecile.

**H:** Is that how you thank me now?

**Hullock:** And why are you deserving of congratulations you inept - imbecile?

**H:** I solved the case.

**Hullock:** Did you? Because there's no completed case file apparent on my desk.

*He sits at the desk.*

**H:** I'll fill one out now.

**Hullock:** Irrelevant! Immaterial! It's too late, have you read the papers?

*H sighs.*

**H:** What nothing have they overblown today?

*Hullock throws a paper down in front of H.*

**Hullock:** Priceless Ghost Apple Auctioned.

**H:** What?

**Hullock:** P.I.S. pilfered the damned credit.

**H:** How?

*Hullock recites from memory an article that has obviously deeply aggravated him.*

**Hullock:** ‘Virginia Belvedere announced this morning the auction of a priceless phantasmal apple statuette, which was believed lost until dynamic agent Adelaide Credance of the Paranormal Investigation Services discovered it...’/

**H:** /Credance.

**Hullock:** Yes Credance. How is it that P.I.S. have managed to claim credit and...

*He looks at the paper.*

**Hullock:** ...’a portion of the item’s sale value’...

*Then throws it down again.*

**Hullock:** When you were supposed to be administrating the case?

**H:** How did they auction a priceless item?/

**Hullock:** /Save it. The point is we’ve missed out on a high profile case, losing much needed kudos and cash, to a rival department. I need to know why!

**H:** She lied.

**Hullock:** Why?

**H:** I found the statuette, it was propertyless. Obviously she wasn’t happy with that outcome and Adelaide swooped in and/

**Hullock:** /Obviously. You imbecile.

*H stands.*

**H:** I solved the case.

*Hullock stands to face him.*

**Hullock:** To what conclusion?

**H:** The truth!

**Hullock:** Well that’s about as practical as - a propertyless apple to the governor. What we need is results. This is an additional case the Paranormal Investigation Services has solved, in the public eye, to the rapturous applause of the media. It’s another case that has slipped from our department, because of your - complacent cogitation!

*Hullock sits.*

**Hullock:** Got lost in your own - audacity no doubt, rubbing the client the wrong way. You're not irreplaceable you know.

*H sits too. Hullock stands.*

**Hullock:** You're coasting H and it's costing us. My secretary tells me you haven't appeared in your office for weeks, you haven't filed a completed case form for months/

**H:** /I'm doing them.

*Hullock grabs at some papers.*

**Hullock:** Not according to the papers that are coming my way! Department statistics show your case completion percentage has dropped an average of three points every second week for five months. How do I - elucidate that to the governor?

*H shrugs.*

**Hullock:** When did you last complete a case?

**H:** Last night!

*Hullock sits.*

**Hullock:** Before that.

**H:** Two days ago.

**Hullock:** Where's the case file?

**H:** It was a simple property shift/

*Hullock leans forward.*

**Hullock:** /Where's the case file?!

**H:** I didn't do it.

**Hullock:** Imbecile.

**H:** What's the point? I do four of those cases a week.

*Hullock bashes his desk.*

**Hullock:** Not according to the statistics!

*H stands.*

**H:** They're just statistics!

**Hullock:** Sit down!

*Slight Pause. H does.*

**Hullock:** I'll pretend you didn't say that.

*The other man leans forward awkwardly.*

**Man:** Should I come back at a more appropriate time?

*Hullock waves a hand at him.*

**Hullock:** No.

*The man steps back.*

**H:** Who's that?

**Hullock:** The governor is constantly watching me, watching you, sending our damn department dissolving into futile, chaotic - nothingness. M.A.D. is on probation. Everything you do from now on is going to be monitored.

**H:** Meaning?

*Slight Pause.*

**Hullock:** A concession.

**H:** What kind of concession?

**Hullock:** This concession is - compulsory. Forced upon me from the higher powers/

**H:** /God?

**Hullock:** The governor.

*Slight Pause.*

**Hullock:** You're to have an assistant.

**H:** No thanks.

**Hullock:** It's not up for discussion. You're to train him up. He'll help guarantee your paperwork duties aren't overlooked. He's good with information, or something.

**H:** What?/

**Hullock:** /Ah! Novus.

*The man who has been observing steps forward, he seems nervous.*

**Freddy:** Hel/

**Hullock:** /This is Mr. Frederick Novus, he's you're new assistant.

**H:** I work alone.

**Hullock:** Not anymore. Introduce yourself Novus.

**Freddy:** He/

**H:** /I'm not having some child in a suit following me round with papers to sign all day.

*Freddy steps back.*

**Hullock:** We're slipping to the peripheries H. M.A.D. doesn't have its previous influence, we're losing out to the glamour of P.I.S. Those - promulgators of the preposterous get results. Results create resources. I can't have you disregarding protocol anymore. You know what happens when departments aren't seen to be working.

*He leans forward.*

**Hullock:** Disestablishment.

*He stands to leave.*

**Hullock:** Show Novus around the office you'll be sharing. Acquaint him with our operations so he understands the M.A.D. ethos. I've obtained a case contract for you at the Municipal Park. The file is in your office.

*Hullock leans close.*

**Hullock:** No debacles H, your job depends on it.

**H:** What's the case?

**Hullock:** A state contract, perfect to get us back on track. Get me results.

*He stands back.*

**H:** Is it a possible world? Space/Time discrepancy?

*Hullock moves to the exit.*

**Hullock:** Tree trunks. Good luck!

*Hullock exits.*

*H growls to himself in frustration, then turns to Freddy.*

**H:** What's your name?

**Freddy:** Uh, Novus, Freddy Novus.

*H stands and gets his coat and hat.*

**H:** Well I don't have time for middle names Novus Novus.

**Freddy:** No, my name is Fr/

**H:** /No time. We're leaving Novus.

**Freddy:** Sure. Are we going to your office?

*H heads for the exit.*

**H:** No, I need some air.

**Freddy:** We could open a window if you're office isn't sufficiently ventilated?

**H:** We've got a case, I want to leave.

**Freddy:** But don't we need the case forms?

*H stops. Freddy pauses.*

**Freddy:** From your office?

**H:** We'll work it out.

**Freddy:** How?

**H:** Detection. Come on Novus.

*H exits. Freddy follows.*

*Lights down on the office. A spotlight appears.*

### **Scene Three**

*H steps into the spotlight as a bench replaces the office scene.*

**H:** As Novus and I arrived at a park without any tree trunks the air was thick with fog. And betrayal. The case was not the path to glory I'd been promised. But it put me on track to something much more - sinister. The trees trunks weren't the only things being hidden. But my gaze was careless.

*Full lights up as Novus enters.*

**H:** Come on Novus, stop lurking in the shadows.

**Freddy:** I really think we should go back to the office.

**H:** No.

**Freddy:** Director Hullock told you to show me round the office first and then to begin the case. Specifically in that order.

*H stops at the bench and flicks his torch onto it.*

**H:** No.

*H sits on the bench.*

**Freddy:** But Director Hullock said/

**H:** /Hullock talks a lot, he says very little. 'Promulgators of the Preposterous' – the man should know how to say bullshit.

*Freddy suppresses an awed gasp. H sighs and turns to him.*

**H:** What do you know about Metaphysical Anomaly Detection?

**Freddy:** Well, not much really. I know that/

**H:** /Fine. I better start at the beginning then.

*He leans away from Freddy and begins to reel off a rehearsed speech. Freddy tries to listen and waits.*

**H:** There are seven known areas of true, potential Metaphysical Divergence. In order of complexity they are: the difference of object and property; the nature of the mind; free will; identity; necessity and possibility; space and time; and God. It is the duty of a metaphysical anomaly detective to investigate reported divergences of this nature, and attempt to either explain the phenomena in terms of the current accepted metaphysical system, or modify it. You get all that?

**Freddy:** Yes I'm aware of this, I completed the foundation course. I just don't have any in-field experience.

**H:** Great.

**Freddy:** Director Hullock told me you basically wrote the book on MA Detection.

**H:** I did.

*H sits up and produces a tattered notebook from his pocket, throwing it to Freddy.*

**H:** Learn it.

*Freddy catches the book and looks at H expectantly.*

**Freddy:** Have you ever trained anyone before?

**H:** Once.

*Slight Pause.*

**Freddy:** Did it go well?

**H:** She left me – the office.

**Freddy:** Why?

**H:** Never mind.

*H begins to question Freddy intensely.*

**H:** What do you think of Spinozan Methodics?

**Freddy:** That's my preferred method. Scholiums, axioms, definitions and propositions! The mathematical precision of point-by-point reasoning is.../

**H:** /A waste of time. It's convoluted. Pointless when applied to real-world detection. In an ideal world with limitless time it would be perfect. But we rarely have that as Metaphysical Anomaly Detectives.

**Freddy:** Oh.

**H:** Something nimbler is often required in the consideration and pursuit of truth.

**Freddy:** Right. Surely there can't be that many anomalies to provide cases for you consistently?

**H:** I thought you were a statistician?

**Freddy:** I am.

**H:** Think about every thing and event there is and has been in the infinite universe. Every time you click your fingers and it does make a sound. Every leaf that does have a shape. The proportion of things that are metaphysical anomalies is infinitesimally small, but still enough to keep M.A.D. going.

*H sits at the bench.*

**H:** So, we're at the anomaly location.

**Freddy:** Correct.

**H:** I know.

**Freddy:** Good.

*H sighs.*

**H:** The less you talk the better we'll get on. Now, how would you begin?

*Freddy takes out the notebook, looks around and begins to furiously scribble notes.*

**H:** No, you can talk now, that was a starter question. You tell me you don't know and I explain. That's how this will work.

**Freddy:** One minute.

*Freddy continues to write. H sighs.*

**H:** Right, we know Hullock said tree trunks were/

**Freddy:** /I've narrowed down the list of potential metaphysical anomalies to: a divergence of space that has delocated the tree trunks; a transition of the tree's necessary existence to a mere ephemeral possibility; a subtracted identity;/

**H:** /Wait! These are all very complex anomalies that/

**Freddy:** /or an alteration of the trunk's visual properties.

*Pause.*

**H:** And which do you think it is?

*Slight Pause.*

**Freddy:** Well, after narrowing down the logical potential metaphysical anomalies from the empirical evidence available to us, I'd have to factor in some other conditions to find the most probable explanation.

**H:** So what would you do?

**Freddy:** Well, considering you are a metaphysical anomaly detective with considerable experience and observing you examining the bench, I'd factor in that you'd notice a connection between the substance of the wooden bench and the trees sharing some properties. In addition, you stated that object/property anomalies are the least complex, and therefore probably the most common to occur. In conclusion I'd guess at the alteration of the trees visual properties being the most likely anomaly that has occurred here. Although I'd need more time to work through the particulars of the probabilities I have determined. Just to be sure.

*Pause.*

**H:** Excellent reasoning.

**Freddy:** Really?

**H:** Unfortunately this bench is fake. It possesses no property connection to the trees.

**Freddy:** Oh.

*Freddy sits and looks at the bench.*

**H:** But I can't fault the standard of reasoning that got you to that point. If a little slow.

**Freddy:** Sure.

**H:** You're ready to begin your education.

**Freddy:** Good.

**H:** Firstly, tools.

*H takes out the torch and holds it protectively.*

**H:** This is a Propertorch. Essentially it reveals anomalies linked to objects, such as property shifts. To the trained mind it exposes the usually indecipherable essence of an object.

**Freddy:** Which is how you knew the bench was a fake.

**H:** Yes. It's a great piece of kit.

**Freddy:** Can I see it?

*H is reluctant but passes the torch to Freddy, who admires it.*

**Freddy:** Interesting.

**H:** The Propertorch saves the metaphysical anomaly detective a lot of time. Most of the cases we get are simple object/property discrepancies. The Propertorch proves as

much in a matter of moments where the old methods would have taken far longer to solve a case.

*H sits to look at it too.*

**Freddy:** Who invented it?

**H:** A man named Tuckers. Detective Tuckfield, my predecessor.

**Freddy:** He trained you?

**H:** Yep. He could spot a property shift quicker than you can blink, and developed the technology to do the same.

**Freddy:** Impressive.

**H:** He was a great detective.

**Freddy:** What happened to him? Promoted?

*H takes the Propertorch back.*

**H:** That information is above your clearance level.

**Freddy:** I apologise.

*H stands and points the Propertorch at Freddy.*

**Freddy:** What happens if you point it at yourself?

*H fixes Freddy with a stare.*

**H:** You don't, want to do that. There are some things the mind cannot or should not comprehend. Its own essence is one of them. Tuckers always warned me not to do it.

*Freddy eyes the Propertorch.*

**Freddy:** My apologies, again.

*H pockets the tool.*

**H:** Don't worry, it wasn't on. You're curious, that's good. Keep that.

*Freddy smiles.*

**Freddy:** Are there any other tools? Pieces of kit?

*H turns. Freddy begins to take notes.*

**H:** The Propertorch deals with objects. It either gives us clues for more complex cases, or reveals the answer to the simple ones. Get the simple answers out of the way first, they're usually right.

**Freddy:** Ockham's Razor.

**H:** Correct. The Metaphysical Anomaly Detective's switchblade. The next tool is for dealing with people. The other entity that conceals the truth.

*Freddy looks up. H points to his head.*

**Freddy:** The mind?

*H shakes his head.*

**H:** The forehead. A swift head butt to a suspect will always loosen his tongue.

*Freddy looks nervous. H lets out a short laugh.*

**H:** Tuckers used the same one on me. The mind, or more specifically language. Socratic Dialogue is the MA Detective's method to crack the blocks people form around the truth.

**Freddy:** Socratic Dialogue?

**H:** Use someone's own words against them, get to the centre of their beliefs and shake them until the truth is revealed.

**Freddy:** Sounds brutal.

**H:** It's effective. Sometimes you find your path to the truth blocked and all logical methods unyielding. In that case there is undoubtedly someone responsible for frustrating your investigation. Socratic Dialogue is the way to remove them.

**Freddy:** There's always someone?

**H:** In my experience.

*Slight Pause.*

**Freddy:** So in this case?

**H:** You always start from a position of Cartesian Doubt. Reduce your information to the key certainties available at the scene of the anomaly.

**Freddy:** Like/

**H:** /Like you did.

*Pause.*

**Freddy:** So what's the answer to this case? Apparently missing tree trunks.

**H:** You tell me.

*H offers Freddy the Propertorch. Freddy stands.*

**Freddy:** You think I'm ready?

**H:** You've proven you're keen. Investigate.

*Freddy stands examining the Propertorch, a brief smile crosses H's face.*

**H:** One final thing. The main thing you need to know, the only device you need as a metaphysical anomaly detective is/

*/They both look towards one exit.*

**Freddy:** What was that?

**H:** A scream.

*Slight Pause.*

**Freddy:** What should we do?

**H:** Follow me.

*The both quickly head to the exit.*

*Lights down.*

*The spotlight appears.*

#### **Scene Four**

*H steps into the spotlight. The setting is Virginia's hotel suite again. Onstage a policeman emerges slightly from the shadows.*

**H:** A lapse in judgement. If I had been focused, I would have questioned the convenience of my proximity to that crime. A crime that wasn't within my sphere, but someone wanted me to find. Needed me to find. I was just after an anomaly more interesting than a property shift. I wouldn't see it, but the truth was in that hotel room.

*H steps quickly into the scene and the police officer comes forward to meet him.*

**Sinker:** Eastfield? What are you doing here?

**H:** Heard a scream, this is an ex-client's hotel room. Came to see if I could help.

*Freddy stumbles onstage, out of breath.*

**Freddy:** Sorry H, tripped on an invisible root.

**Sinker:** Who's this?

*Sinker indicates the hunched over Freddy.*

**Freddy:** Novus...

*He breathes.*

**Freddy:** Fr/

**H:** /This is Novus Novus. He's my assistant.

*Sinker barks a harsh laugh.*

**Sinker:** Assistant! So they've finally realised you need someone to hold your hand then?

**H:** He does my filing.

*Freddy looks put out. He stands quickly.*

**Freddy:** Who're you?

*Sinker approaches Freddy.*

**Sinker:** I'm the law kiddo. So you watch your mouth.

**Freddy:** Watch my mouth? Impossible.

*Sinker grabs Freddy's front.*

**H:** He's just here to fill out my paperwork Sinker. What are you doing here?

*Sinker aggressively lets go of Freddy.*

**Sinker:** I don't have to answer your questions Eastfield. Take your strange investigation elsewhere.

*He peers into the back room.*

**H:** Of course you don't. Unless there is something strange going on? In which case I should be informed.

**Sinker:** You don't have any authority, nothing strange is going on. It's just a normal homicide investigation.

**Freddy:** Homicide!?!/

**Sinker:** /Crime scene.

**H:** Miss Belvedere?

**Sinker:** I didn't say that.

**H:** It's her hotel suite.

**Sinker:** How did you know that?

**H:** She was a client.

**Sinker:** Oh, right. Well, yeah. She's dead.

*H steps forward.*

**Sinker:** Stay back. Or I'll be forced to use the taser.

*H and Freddy look at him.*

**Freddy:** You don't have a taser.

*Sinker checks.*

**Sinker:** Used to. They were 49% inaccurate 23% of the time. Got rid of them. We've been given pepper spray now.

*H steps back, Freddy begins to discreetly scribble on a piece of paper.*

**H:** Are you sure she's dead?

**Sinker:** Of course I'm sure, I'm not an idiot. I gave her a kick to check.

*He smiles.*

**H:** A lot of people wanted what she had.

**Sinker:** What did she have?

**H:** The Eve's Apple. Don't you read the paper?

**Sinker:** That Ghost Apple?

**H:** It wasn't a/

**Sinker:** /She sold that though. Suppose there must be a lot of cash lying around here. That why you've come back for a visit? Heard your department's cutting back. Now off you go.

*Freddy steps forward.*

**Freddy:** Actually we've got a signed investigation approval form from Director Hullock, M.A.D.

*He passes the note to Sinker, H is impressed.*

**Sinker:** How did he know this would happen?

**H:** It's an enduring investigation approval from a previous case. Any suspected further anomalies that occur in this vicinity we are immediately permitted access to examine. Is the corpse in the bedroom?

*H begins to walk forwards, Sinker puts a hand out.*

**Sinker:** You're not going in there.

**H:** You want to take it up with Hullock?

**Freddy:** We've got a signed form.

**Sinker:** No-one's going in there.

**H:** Why?

**Freddy:** What's in the room?

**Sinker:** There's nothing in the room.

**H:** What kind of nothing?

**Sinker:** What do you mean?

**Freddy:** Is it the kind of nothing you don't see, or the kind of nothing we should see?

**Sinker:** What is this?

**H:** We're just trying to establish whether our efforts here are necessary. Just let us inspect the room.

*Slight Pause.*

**Sinker:** Alright, but I'm not going in there.

*He steps aside.*

**Freddy:** Why? Is that where the corpse is?

*He steps back as H moves forward. Sinker nods.*

**Sinker:** The corpse is the nothing.

**H:** What?

**Sinker:** The corpse, it had no shadow.

**H:** No shadow?

**Sinker:** Yeah, no shadow.

**Freddy:** Um, are you sure it wasn't just dark in there?

**Sinker:** Positive. No shadow. Shined torches on the body and everything.

*Sinker gets a torch out and flicks the switch, but it doesn't work. He taps it on his leg.*

**Sinker:** It worked earlier.

*H motions for Freddy to follow him.*

**H:** What do you think it is Novus?

**Freddy:** Could be another property shift?

**H:** Check it out.

**Freddy:** In there?

**H:** Yes.

**Freddy:** With the corpse?

**H:** Your chance to investigate.

*H points at the Propertorch Freddy still has.*

**Sinker:** I've told you, I already shined lights on.

*H ignores him and ushers Freddy into the room.*

**H:** You'll be fine. Cartesian Doubt, empirical evidence, Ockham's Razor...

*They exit. As H and Freddy head off the far exit a smartly dressed woman enters. She confidently approaches Sinker.*

**Adelaide:** Are you the officer in charge here?

**Sinker:** Uh, yeah. Who're you?

**Adelaide:** Agent Credance of the Paranormal Investigation Services.

*She swiftly surveys the room and moves towards the other room.*

**Sinker:** Adelaide Credance! I saw you in the paper.

**Adelaide:** You can read? Or did you just look at the pictures?

**Sinker:** Uh, both.

**Adelaide:** Fantastic.

*She lights a cigarette.*

**Adelaide:** You can tell me what's going on here.

**Sinker:** [*mumbles*] I need to see an IA form.

**Adelaide:** Speak up.

**Sinker:** Unfortunately I need to, uh, see an Investigation Approval Form.

**Adelaide:** Nonsense, this is important business and you are a part of it. The press will be arriving in ten minutes. I'll need you to bring them up here as I solve the case.

**Sinker:** The press? Sure.

**Adelaide:** And what is the case?

**Sinker:** The corpse has no shadow.

**Adelaide:** Interesting. No shadow. Could be high-force witchcraft.

**Sinker:** Yeah. Or maybe it's aliens?

**Adelaide:** It's plausible. Did you see any aliens?

**Sinker:** I saw an obese fella fleeing the scene.

**Adelaide:** Did he look like an alien?

**Sinker:** Uh, maybe?

**Adelaide:** Probably was. Corpulent Creatures Steal Shadow. The headline writes itself. Good work.

*Sinker looks pleased with himself.*

**Adelaide:** I'm going to need to take some aura readings from the corpse and set up some ETDs. Will you assist me?

**Sinker:** Sure. What's an ETD?

**Adelaide:** Extra-Terrestrial Detector, standard kit for this type of case. If you could set it up for me just there, officer?

**Sinker:** *(nodding vigorously)* Sinker. Yeah, yeah. Right there.

**Adelaide:** Wonderful.

*Adelaide reapplies make-up and checks her hair as Sinker fumbles with opening the complicated ETD box. H and Freddy return to the stage, Freddy is holding a new piece of paper with symbols on it. H is tapping the Propertorch against his leg.*

**Freddy:** It must not be working.

**H:** That's probably it. We'll consider this new information...

*H spots Adelaide and stops. She turns when hearing his voice, and casually flicks her cigarette away. Sinker stomps it out, then covertly puts it in his pocket.*

**H:** Credance.

**Adelaide:** H.

**Sinker:** Eastfield.

**Freddy:** Sinker.

**H:** *[sternly]* Novus!

**Freddy:** Who's she?

**Sinker:** Agent Credance of the Paranormal Investigation Services!

**Adelaide:** Thank you officer, I can introduce myself. So you have a file-boy to help you out H?

*H motions for Freddy not to speak.*

**H:** This is Novus Novus. He's learning the techniques of rational deduction. The ones you abandoned.

**Adelaide:** Redundant techniques H. I moved onwards and upwards from you, from your office. This is my investigation now.

**Freddy:** We've got a signed investigation approval form.

**Adelaide:** Not by the governor. As I have.

*She takes out a piece of paper and flashes it to H.*

**Adelaide:** So step aside. Any information you have belongs to me.

*She snatches the piece of paper from Freddy's grasp. H steps forward.*

**Sinker:** Hold it Eastfield. This is her investigation now. [To Adelaide] What's that?

**H:** Logic Propositions.

**Sinker:** Huh?

**Adelaide:** He's incorrect. These look like alien symbols, more evidence Sinker.

**Sinker:** Aliens, I knew it.

**H:** Quit your barking Sinker. They're not alien symbols, they're logical propositions.

**Freddy:** I wrote them.

**Adelaide:** Officer please remove these men from the premises, they are preventing the course of proper investigation. As you see them out you may let the waiting gentlemen journalists in.

*Sinker begins to usher them out.*

**H:** Proper investigation! Why would aliens murder Virginia Belvedere?

**Sinker:** A lot of people wanted what she had. Loads of money.

**H:** What would an alien want with our currency?

*H growls in frustration. Sinker forces them offstage as Adelaide inspects the symbols. Lights down on the scene. Adelaide exits to offstage camera flashes and the spotlight reappears.*

### **Scene Five**

*H steps into the spotlight as another man drags a beanbag onstage and slumps onto it. Various drug paraphernalia are scattered around him.*

**H:** I sent Novus back to the office to clock in his hours. I didn't want him to pick up my bad habits, a teacher should only pass on their strengths. Like mine did. A rise of guilt struck at the thought of my predecessor. The man I aspired to emulate. With a seemingly faulty Propertorch the time was right for a visit. I entered, the glare of his lights reducing everything to nonsense.

*H steps into the scene. The full lights swell. The man on the beanbag struggles to see. His speech is full of effort. His name is Tuckers.*

**Tuckers:** Who's there?

**H:** It's me, H.

*H steps further into the room.*

**Tuckers:** Halt! What's the password?

*Pause.*

**H:** You have a password now?

**Tuckers:** Everyone knows the password.

**H:** Is that wise?

**Tuckers:** You're right. Better make a new password. Keep the clones out. They keep sending clones to my door. I've seen their barcodes.

**H:** Who?

*Tuckers laughs.*

**Tuckers:** Always asking questions. Sit down H.

*H looks around.*

**H:** What happened to your furniture?

*He awkwardly sits on the floor.*

**Tuckers:** Got rid of it. They bug everything these days. I got rid of everything I haven't made myself. Except the toilet. I kept the toilet. They wouldn't bug the toilet.

*Slight Pause.*

**Tuckers:** I just make sure I don't whistle in there.

*Pause. Tuckers lights a suspicious looking 'cigarette' and begins to smoke. H looks uncomfortable.*

**Tuckers:** How are you H?

**H:** Fine.

**Tuckers:** You look troubled. You never used to look troubled.

**H:** I need your help Tuckers.

**Tuckers:** Help? Who sent you? What kind of help?

**H:** Your kind.

**Tuckers:** Oh.

*Tuckers begins to rifle through his collection.*

**Tuckers:** I'm sure I've got something here.

**H:** No, not that. You know I don't. I need your mind.

*Tuckers turns and clutches his head.*

**Tuckers:** You can't have that, I need that. Who wants it?

**H:** I need you to fix this Propertorch.

*H throws the Propertorch to Tuckers.*

**Tuckers:** Is this one of mine?

**H:** The one you gave me.

*Pause.*

**Tuckers:** Ok, you can stay.

*Pause.*

**H:** Why are the lights on full?

**Tuckers:** Keep the shadows away. Sometimes they disguise themselves as shadows. I read it somewhere.

**H:** Who?

**Tuckers:** Someone. Definitely someone. I'm certain.

**H:** Tuckers, can you fix the Propertorch?

*Tuckers shakes it.*

**Tuckers:** It's fine.

*He gets up and begins to slowly move around the space as if looking suspiciously out of the windows. His speech becomes more fluid.*

**Tuckers:** How are you H? Haven't seen you for a while, quite a while. How are you?

**H:** Same as always.

**Tuckers:** How's - work? Same as usual?

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** I've been assigned an assistant to train.

*Tuckers turns. His strained speech returns.*

**Tuckers:** Has he got a barcode?

**H:** What?

**Tuckers:** They've got barcodes on them. The clones. He's definitely a clone.

**H:** I don't think so.

**Tuckers:** Check him. They're planning something. I'm sure of it.

**H:** He's keen. Annoying, but occasionally helpful. Asks a lot of questions.

*Tuckers returns to his seat to stub out the 'cigarette'. He selects another bag.*

**Tuckers:** The good ones do. You did.

**H:** How have you been Tuckers?

*Tuckers picks out an indiscernible pill and pops it in his mouth. He then looks at H and smiles a broad smile.*

**Tuckers:** Good.

*He slumps slightly in the beanbag.*

**H:** Can you look at the Propertorch? I'm sure it's not working.

**Tuckers:** Sure.

*He picks it up and holds it.*

**Tuckers:** That Adelaide of yours seems to be doing well. Not with M.A.D. any more though.

**H:** No. Forget her.

**Tuckers:** She's in the papers every day. Ghost Apples, Extra-Terrestrial Essence Thieves, Identity Usurpers. Got to be careful these days. Got to keep the lights on.

*He puts down the Propertorch and slumps further.*

**H:** The apple was simply propertyless, not some ghost nonsense. There's no empirical evidence for the ontological disputes they claim/

**Tuckers:** /There is H, I read it.

**H:** It's just P.I.S. delivering easy lies. They're making things impossible.

**Tuckers:** You need to look closer H. See through the words. To the truth. That's what we do H. We look for the truth. Truth everywhere. You've just got to be ready.

*He makes a quick grabbing motion in the air in front of him, then giggles.*

**Tuckers:** We used to do that. A good team. Do you remember...?

*Tuckers slumps and lets out a small noise of pleasure.*

**Tuckers:** What were you saying?

**H:** You were talking.

*Slight Pause.*

**Tuckers:** You look vexed, H. You always had a look of concern. Just sit back, relax and the truth is delivered to your door. Simple.

**H:** It's not the truth.

*Tuckers begins to struggle in his beanbag.*

**H:** What's wrong?

**Tuckers:** Need to check the window. I've been seeing the invader crafts fly past recently. They like this area. All the darkness, I'm certain. I read it somewhere. I keep my lights on.

*He tries to get up.*

**H:** Don't worry. I'll check it.

*H gets to his feet and goes to the window. Tuckers stops struggling.*

**Tuckers:** Anything there?

**H:** No.

**Tuckers:** Good. I'll check again in a while.

*H approaches the door, but stops.*

**H:** So what's wrong with the Propertorch?

*Tuckers sighs heavily. H edges forwards.*

**H:** What's wrong?

**Tuckers:** It's terrible.

**H:** Is it fixable?

**Tuckers:** Just awful.

**H:** What's wrong with it?

**Tuckers:** I'm in love.

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** What?

**Tuckers:** I see her for two wonderful hours every night.

*Pause.*

**H:** You don't – pay?

**Tuckers:** No!

**H:** So, who is she?

**Tuckers:** She lives in the apartment opposite mine.

**H:** That's good. It's good that you're meeting people that live near you.

**Tuckers:** Every evening from seven until nine I see her from my window with her dinner. When she smiles, I smile. And when she laughs I'm transfixed, I just can't look away! But, when she cries, my soul drops a little.

*Pause.*

**Tuckers:** She sends me messages. With her lights. Flicks them on and off in different rooms.

*Pause. H looks down.*

**H:** What's she saying?

**Tuckers:** I'm still working out the code. It's very complicated.

**H:** You could ask her.

**Tuckers:** Once I've cracked the code. Then I will. Then I'll know.

*He reaches for another indiscernible drug in a different bag.*

**Tuckers:** For now this love of mine is unrequited. It's self-flagellation of the soul.

*Tuckers looks depressed but he gets distracted and starts running his hands over his body.*

**Tuckers:** It feels like a million fairies are massaging me all over when I say that.  
Soul. Soul. Soul./

**H:** /Tuckers.

**Tuckers:** Sorry H. Got a bit distracted.

*H goes to pick up the Propertorch.*

**Tuckers:** That's fine. Working.

**H:** It didn't work earlier. A missing property wasn't registering on the essence reader.

**Tuckers:** Did you read it properly?

**H:** Like you taught me. I haven't changed that since you left.

**Tuckers:** I was fired. I didn't leave.

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** I know.

**Tuckers:** Obsolete.

**H:** You weren't.

**Tuckers:** According to M.A.D.

*Slight Pause.*

**Tuckers:** Best thing that happened to me.

*Tuckers laughs to himself.*

**Tuckers:** I'm happy. They can't take that. Not here. I can still find the truth from here. More of it. Easily. They hold you back, you'll see. That's why I left.

*Pause. H slowly picks up the Propertorch.*

**H:** I've got to go test this out then.

**Tuckers:** Sure.

*H walks to the door.*

**Tuckers:** I was a good teacher, wasn't I H?

*H turns.*

**H:** Of course.

**Tuckers:** And a good metaphysical anomaly detective?

**H:** The best.

**Tuckers:** Until you came along.

**H:** I...

**Tuckers:** Find the truth H. That's what we do. What we did.

**H:** I do. I will.

*H heads for the door again.*

**Tuckers:** H!

*H turns.*

**Tuckers:** Can you check the window for me again? The crafts go past at this time. I can't see her lights when the crafts go past. They block out lights. I read it somewhere.

*Pause.*

*H looks crushed as he walks to the other side of the room, the lights go down as Tuckers leaves the stage into the shadows. A spotlight appears.*

### **Scene Six**

*H steps into the spotlight. A man brings two chairs on stage. He sits on one just off-centre. An array of bottles are strewn around him, and a bucket is placed next to his chair.*

**H:** I decided to go to a bar Tuckers used to take me to. He would frequent the place in times of trouble, and times of trouble were frequent there too. Inside were two men whose presence a lesser mind would put down to fool's ordering. Coincidence. I was looking for one of them, the other was looking for me. Both were hiding something. After a few well-chosen words to a few well-chosen sources I discovered my quarry in a backroom of the bar. My assistant had been waiting in the front. With him there, I couldn't leave the place clueless.

*Sidelights come up as Freddy walks on stage next to H.*

**H:** How did you know I'd be here?

**Freddy:** Some simple detection. I located this address in your handbook.

**H:** Good work.

**Freddy:** Should we be here?

**H:** Consider this your final lesson.

**Freddy:** But it's after office hours.

**H:** Then it's overtime.

**Freddy:** You're going to teach me/

**H:** /Someone's in the way of the truth. It's time for you to meet an acquaintance of mine. Tommy 'the Pole'.

*As they step forwards the lights change to a faint but broad spotlight on the man in the chair. This provides all the light.*

**H:** Alright Tommy?

*The large man looks up. He has been drinking heavily for a while and it shows. He looks a little scared, but mostly drunk. He is Tomasc Lakowski.*

**Freddy:** Why is he called Tommy 'the Pole'?

**Tommy:** I'm Tomasc Lakowski.

**H:** He's Polish.

**Freddy:** Oh.

**Tommy:** Alright H, not bad, I been outta town for a while, places to go you know?  
Not seen you long.

**H:** Been avoiding me haven't you Tommy.

**Tommy:** You want some whiskey?

*He offers the bottle.*

**H:** No thanks. Not on the job.

**Tommy:** Good. This my last bottle, the last thing I got in this world. Vodka, you are my best friend.

**Freddy:** [to H] That's a bottle of whiskey.

*Tommy points at H.*

**Tommy:** Shut up! Ssshhhhhhh. Vodka will hear you - she will know, she will know. Whiskey and I need to meet in secret, in secret we can meet.

*Tommy takes a big swig of whiskey.*

**H:** I need to talk to you Tommy. I need some information.

**Tommy:** Information, information. Always asking for information! Why you never tell me anything?

*H pulls the other chair towards him and sits facing Tommy.*

**H:** Have you read the papers recently Tommy?

**Tommy:** I never read the papers.

**H:** So you haven't heard anything about the Eve's Apple?

**Tommy:** No.

**H:** Know anything about its owner?

**Tommy:** Why you want to know?

**Freddy:** We want to buy it.

*H turns to give Freddy a reproachful look. Freddy steps back. Tommy takes a swig, then laughs.*

**Tommy:** You don't want it.

**H:** The woman who was selling it seems to know you.

*Tommy spits in the bucket next to his chair. Freddy begins to take notes.*

**Tommy:** Lot of people know me. You know me.

**H:** She said you were going to buy the Eve's Apple Tommy.

**Tommy:** Not me.

**H:** How can you afford the Eve's Apple Statuette? When you can't even afford the premium whiskey./

**Tommy:** /It's vodka!

**H:** Unless you knew the Apple was worthless. Or you planned to steal it?

**Tommy:** She was selling it!

**H:** So you did know Miss Belvedere?

*Tommy laughs.*

**Tommy:** I never met her.

**H:** I met her. She seemed to think you were a potential buyer.

**Tommy:** A lot of people wanted what she had.

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** What do you know about the statuette?

**Tommy:** It's a Ghost Apple now.

**H:** It's not a Ghost Apple.

**Tommy:** It's not real apple.

**H:** It's a propertyless apple.

**Tommy:** That's not worth so much.

**H:** Did your buyers know that?

**Tommy:** Did the lasencja?

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** She knew it was worthless.

**Tommy:** So was she.

**H:** Is that why she was killed?

**Tommy:** Maybe.

*Pause.*

**Tommy:** I hear things.

**H:** What have you heard about Miss Belvedere?

*Tommy laughs.*

**Tommy:** Nothing.

*He takes a swig of whiskey.*

**Tommy:** Nothing, nothing, nothing. That's what she is now.

**H:** You know she was dead?

**Tommy:** I do now.

*He laughs.*

**Tommy:** Have a drink H. You need one.

*Tommy offers the bottle, H shakes his head.*

**Tommy:** You drink. I talk.

*Pause.*

**Freddy:** H.

**Tommy:** [to H] Who's this [*he makes an indistinguishable sound*]?

**H:** My assistant.

**Freddy:** I'm Freddy Novus, a Metaphysical Anomaly Detective working with H.

**H:** Freddy?

*Tommy laughs loudly*

**Tommy:** M.A.D. No wonder you got no clue. Just like your old friend Tuckey.

*Tommy laughs again. H snatches the bottle from Tommy and takes a swig.*

**H:** What do you know about Belvedere?

**Tommy:** She's a nice-looking lasencja.

**H:** What do you know about/

**Tommy:** /Ah ah ah.

*He waves the bottle in front of H. H takes it and drinks again. Tommy smiles.*

**H:** What do you know about her death?

**Tommy:** Nothing.

**H:** Don't lie to me.

*Tommy spits in the bucket.*

**Tommy:** A lot of people wanted what she had.

**H:** And what did she have?

*Tommy laughs.*

**H:** This is a waste of time.

*H begins to walk away.*

**H:** Come on Novus.

*Freddy turns to follow him.*

**Tommy:** Wait!

*Freddy stops.*

**Freddy:** H?

*H stops.*

**Tommy:** The Apple wasn't worthless.

*H turns. Freddy steps closer.*

**Freddy:** What was it?

*Tommy spits in his bucket again. H steps forward.*

**H:** What was it Tommy?

*Tommy looks a little frightened.*

**Tommy:** The truth.

**H:** What truth?

*Tommy pushes the bottle to H, who takes a swig and shoves it back. He sits in front of Tommy again.*

**H:** What did she know?

**Tommy:** It was worthless to her.

**H:** I know she knew the apple was worthless. I told her!

*H stands.*

**Tommy:** But not to someone else!

**H:** What?

**Tommy:** It not worthless to her killer.

**H:** Who killed Virginia?

*Pause.*

**Tommy:** Sit down. Have a drink.

*H sits. He pulls his chair closer to Tommy and takes another swig.*

**H:** Who killed Virginia Belvedere?

**Tommy:** Nobody knows.

**H:** I'm not in the mood for this Tommy.

**Tommy:** She had the truth. I got the truth.

**H:** What do you know?

**Tommy:** Drink!

*H snatches the bottle and empties the contents into the bucket.*

**H:** There, all gone. Now tell me what you know!

**Tommy:** My vodka!

**H:** It was whiskey. Tell me what you know.

*Tommy grabs at the empty bottles looking for something to drink.*

**Tommy:** Nothing, nothing, nothing!

*Tommy wields one of the bottles and looks angrily at H.*

**Freddy:** It's not working H.

*Tommy drunkenly tries to hit H with a bottle, but H restrains him and wrestles the bottle away. Freddy stops taking notes and puts the handbook away.*

**H:** Who killed Virginia?

*Tommy spits*

**H:** What did she know?

**Tommy:** Nothing.

**H:** What do you know?

*Tommy laughs.*

**Tommy:** It's worthless to me.

**H:** But not her killer?

**Tommy:** No.

**H:** Who killed Virginia?

*Tommy laughs.*

**Freddy:** H.

**H:** [To Freddy] Stay out of it.

**Tommy:** Nothing, nothing, nothing.

**Freddy:** He doesn't know.

*H ignores Freddy.*

**H:** Who?

**Tommy:** Nobody.

**H:** Tell me the truth!

**Tommy:** You'll never understand.

*Tommy laughs louder as H grabs him.*

**H:** WHO KILLED VIRIGNIA!

**Tommy:** NOBODY KNOWS!

*Tommy lunges for H who wrestles him to the floor. He then forces Tommy's head into the bucket, partially drowning him and repeatedly yelling 'who?' as he lifts his head out. Freddy is frozen. Tommy sometimes manages to laugh during the breaks from submersion; eventually he just struggles for breath. Freddy unfreezes and eventually manages to restrain H from Tommy. H drops Tommy to the floor. He is unconscious. The two men stand looking at his limp body for a few moments.*

**Freddy:** We should go.

**H:** He's still alive.

*Pause.*

**Freddy:** H, we shouldn't be here. Let's go. Now.

*Freddy moves towards the exit, H stands still. Pause.*

**H:** He's still alive.

*Lights down as Freddy exits. H enters the spotlight.*

## **Scene Seven**

*The scene is set as scene three was, in the Municipal Park with the bench. H steps in to the spotlight.*

**H:** My guard wasn't just let down with Tommy, it was off-duty. My focus was on the confusing Pole. I should have been watching the other man in the room. Tommy was wrong. I would understand, all too well. But first I had to learn the secret the kid was hiding. The secret I was unaware of. We returned to the park without any trees. To the fog. Where my assistant had been lying to me from the start.

*Freddy appears onstage behind H as if he has just been running with him.*

**Freddy:** What were you doing?

**H:** People always get in the way of the truth, haven't you learnt that?

**Freddy:** But surely there's better ways to deal with them? Rationally, calmly.

*H sits on the bench.*

**H:** Not here. Not now.

**Freddy:** That man was drunk, he didn't know what he was saying. We shouldn't have been there.

**H:** There's nowhere else to go. Nothing works.

*Freddy sits.*

**Freddy:** But we can't resort to methods like that, we're better than that. You're better than that. Let's run through all the information we have, make sense of it, and find the logical possibilities.

*Pause.*

**H:** You're right. You're thinking like a Metaphysical Anomaly Detective.

**Freddy:** It's all here in your book.

*Pause. They both look forward and think.*

**Freddy:** So we start from Cartesian Doubt.

**H:** Yes.

**Freddy:** Well that's not hard.

*Freddy smiles.*

**H:** You've got time to joke now?

*Slight Pause.*

**Freddy:** Sorry.

*Pause.*

**Freddy:** It's late. Maybe we should put this aside? We can work out the anomaly that's occurred here in the park and hand in the completed case form back at the office.

**H:** We're not going back to the office.

**Freddy:** Why?

**H:** Because we've got a proper case to do here!

**Freddy:** Fine.

*Freddy gets out the handbook.*

**Freddy:** Right. If we take what Tommy said as sincere, then we know that he knew something about Virginia's death.

**H:** But/

**Freddy:** /I managed to put his words into propositions.

*H listens.*

**Freddy:** If the Ghost Apple was a Propertyless Apple then the Apple was worthless. Second, if the Apple was worthless, then Virginia was worthless to her company and therefore worthy to be killed.

*Pause.*

**H:** Good work. You...

*H smiles.*

**H:** Well done.

**Freddy:** I had the time to do this while you attempted Socratic Dialogue.

*Slight Pause.*

**Freddy:** Sorry, I didn't mean that you fail/

**H:** /No. It's fine. Carry on.

*Pause. Freddy looks at his notes.*

**Freddy:** So we know that the apple was propertyless, and therefore worthless. This is a strong indicator that Virginia would be seen as worthless by her employers.

**H:** Do we know that?

**Freddy:** I thought that's how you solved the Eve's Apple case?

**H:** With a broken Propertorch?

**Freddy:** It worked here earlier.

**H:** But not on Virginia's corpse. We don't know how long it's been faulty. Try again.

**Freddy:** The only person at the crime scene before us was Officer Sinker./

**H:** /Assumption.

**Freddy:** Tommy said nobody killed Virginia, so maybe/

**H:** /Speculation.

**Freddy:** Well what do you think?!

**H:** I don't know.

*H stands.*

**Freddy:** Should we go/

**H:** /No.

**Freddy:** Come on H, you can do this. I've heard about your ability, your drive. That's why I wanted this assignment.

**H:** Don't talk about things you don't understand.

**Freddy:** I'm just trying to help.

**H:** Well you're not.

**Freddy:** You're meant to be teaching me.

**H:** Sorry to disappoint you.

**Freddy:** Well maybe Adelaide knows and it'll be in the papers in the morning.

**H:** You don't believe that? That it was some artificial apparition?

*Slight Pause.*

**Freddy:** There's a small ontological possibility that ghosts exist/

**H:** /And maybe it was clones, or aliens or shadow thieves!?

**Freddy:** What are you talking about?

**H:** Nonsense!

**Freddy:** You don't have to patronise me.

*H sits down again.*

**Freddy:** H, maybe we should just go back to the office/

**H:** /We're not going back to the office!

**Freddy:** But/

**H:** /That's their place, not mine. I can't think in there.

**Freddy:** Hullock will want to know what we've done. He wants a completed case by the morning.

**H:** We're not going to Hullock.

**Freddy:** But we've got nothing.

**H:** NO

*H stands.*

**H:** If he knows we've got nothing, I'm finished. Years of doing a thankless job gone, because of a missing shadow. I've got nothing. No facts, no clues, broken tools, skills that can be resisted by a drunk! And you.

*H turns on Freddy*

**H:** You. Following me round, writing down little propositions, making me look foolish, stopping me from investigating properly! What hope have we got?

*H grabs Freddy by the front. Freddy drops the handbook.*

**H:** What hope have I got when you're hanging around?! As useless as all that paper you scribble on. You're worthless! You're a filing assistant!

**Freddy:** I'm NOT your assistant!

*H pulls Freddy to his feet*

**H:** Well what are you then?

**Freddy:** Your replacement!

*Pause. H lets go. Freddy instantly regrets his outburst.*

**H:** What?

**Freddy:** Nothing.

*Freddy sits. H leans over him.*

**H:** What did you say?

*Freddy breathes heavily; aware he's messed up. H grabs him again.*

**H:** Novus?

**Freddy:** I'm – I'm your replacement.

*H lets go, then sits down and stares at Freddy.*

**Freddy:** Hullock assigned me to follow you, report your methods, and stop you - losing it. He knows you're on the edge. He wanted to prevent any more lawsuits and bad press. I'm from a different department. I've wanted to work with you for ages though. So when the opportunity came I had to take it. Only later when he briefed me on the methods and about you, did he say I'd be replacing you. I'm sorry. I had to. I'm sorry.

*Pause.*

**Freddy:** He wants me to replace you once we've solved a case so I've learnt the methods. He said the department was failing because of you. I couldn't argue. I'm just...

*Slight Pause.*

**Freddy:** I'm sorry.

*Pause.*

**Freddy:** Please, we can solve this together. Adelaide will be off chasing aliens, we've got time. I've already started a broad Methodic/

*/H stands.*

**Freddy:** H, please.

*H picks up the notebook from the floor.*

**H:** We've got nothing.

*Freddy reaches for H, who turns to look at him.*

**H:** Nothing.

*Freddy lets go and H begins to walk off.*

**Freddy:** Please, I'm sorry. Where are you going?

*Without turning H says-*

**H:** Don't follow me.

*H exits.*

*Lights down.*

*Freddy exits.*

*Spotlight appears.*

### **Scene Eight**

*Scene is set for Hullock's office. Hullock is sat behind his desk in the dark. There is a desk light and a phone on the desk. H steps into the spotlight.*

**H:** The truth is elusive. It takes effort. Especially an important one. I know that now. But then I was desperate, wanted any truth I could find to put me back on track. I went to my Director's office to find it. But Hullock took away any chance I had of finding something meaningful. By making me think it was easy. All I had to do was ask.

*As the spotlight disappears H enters the office in darkness, rifles through some papers on the desk and finds a desk light. He switches it on. Faint stage lights appear. Throughout the scene Hullock glances at the phone.*

**H:** Hullock?

**Hullock:** H.

**H:** Why are you...?/

**Hullock:** /I could ask you the same thing. This is my office. Why are you rifling through the contents of my desk in the middle of the night?

*H bangs on the desk.*

**H:** You're sacking me?

**Hullock:** He told you then.

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** It's true?

**Hullock:** Yes. I have to say I'm a little disappointed with the new boy. Loyalty doesn't seem to be one of his strengths. He'll have to be disciplined.

*H turns to leave and Hullock panics, but H turns back.*

**H:** Why?

*Slight Pause.*

**Hullock:** Sit down, H.

*He does. Hullock is relaxed. He sighs, for H.*

**Hullock:** I didn't want to do this H. My hands are tied by the higher powers.

*Slight Pause. H stares in silence.*

**Hullock:** M.A.D. isn't producing results. They ask for changes, I have to provide them. You haven't completed a case form for weeks, you've barely clocked in at the office/

**H:** /You've said all this/

**Hullock:** /And nothing's changed. You haven't listened.

**H:** I'm onto something.

**Hullock:** I set up a case for you, a state contract. Where's the form?

**H:** That's not important. There's something bigger.

**Hullock:** Virginia Belvedere.

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** Yes.

**Hullock:** That's P.I.S.'s case. I've already been told about your - obstruction of that. What about the Municipal Park case?

**H:** It's a simple property discrepancy.

**Hullock:** Where's the case form?

**H:** I've told you it isn't important.

**Hullock:** It's important to improving your statistics.

**H:** Forget the statistics!

*Pause. Hullock sighs.*

**Hullock:** You haven't changed. Still chasing an apple that isn't there. Somebody else's case.

**H:** It's my case, my truth!

**Hullock:** Not anymore.

*Pause.*

**H:** I spoke to Tommy. He was resistant but if you just give me some more time I can get him to talk and we're onto something/

**Hullock:** /Impossible.

**H:** I just need more time.

**Hullock:** No. Lakowski's dead.

*Pause.*

**H:** What?

**Hullock:** Tommy's corpse was discovered an hour ago. Shadowless.

*Pause. H stands hesitantly.*

**H:** Maybe I could examine the scene, find more clues/

**Hullock:** /Sit down.

*He does.*

**Hullock:** I know you were the last person to speak to him.

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** He was still alive.

**Hullock:** He was found half drowned.

**H:** He was still alive.

**Hullock:** I know you didn't kill him.

*Pause.*

**Hullock:** I'm going to need your case-notes H.

**H:** What?

**Hullock:** Your case-notes please. They're the department's property now.

*H absentmindedly places his handbook on the desk in front of Hullock.*

**Hullock:** I'm sorry H. I need to be seen to be doing something. You're out of favour. They want quantifiable results.

*Slight Pause.*

**Hullock:** I'm sure you've done a magnificent job in educating Novus in basic detection. So - commendations for that. If I'm honest, I'm not sure how long we'll still be operating under the M.A.D. ethos. There'll be changes.

*Slight Pause.*

**Hullock:** You were a good detective H, you'll find something else.

**H:** I can't do anything else.

**Hullock:** Well. I'm certain you'll find something.

*H stands.*

**Hullock:** Wait.

*H stops.*

**Hullock:** Stay here a while. Tell me what happened. It'll help.

*Hullock glances at the phone. H sits.*

**H:** I knew Tommy was linked to the Propertyless Apple. He hears a lot of things from a lot of people. I knew it was worth talking to him. He was drunk. He resisted.

*Pause.*

**Hullock:** Go on.

**H:** I saw Tuckers earlier. I thought the Propertorch was broken.

**Hullock:** You'll have to hand that in as well.

**H:** Fine.

*H doesn't get it out. Hullock doesn't notice as he checks his wristwatch and then glances at the phone.*

**Hullock:** Continue.

**H:** He's a mess. Since you fired him it's just got worse.

**Hullock:** Detective Tuckfield was deteriorating a long time before we released him. He was provided with - plenteous chances.

**H:** He doesn't know anything anymore. He thought the Propertorch was fine.

**Hullock:** If it's working you will have to hand it in H. It's M.A.D. property.

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** And if it doesn't work?

**Hullock:** Then we have no use for it.

*H stares at Hullock.*

**Hullock:** So you went to see Mr. Lakowski?

**H:** Things got out of hand.

*Slight Pause.*

**Hullock:** And then what happened?

**H:** I'm done talking.

*H stands.*

**Hullock:** Please H. You want us to find out what happened don't you? The truth.

*Pause. H sits.*

**H:** Why are you here?

*The phone rings.*

**H:** Why are you here so late?

*The phone rings again.*

**Hullock:** Uh.

*Phone rings.*

**H:** You never stay after closing hours.

*Phone rings.*

**Hullock:** I've just got to get this.

*Hullock picks up the receiver.*

**Hullock:** [To H] I'll explain after.

*Hullock puts the receiver to his ear and speaks in hushed tones. H sits and waits. Thinking.*

*Hullock puts the phone down.*

**Hullock:** I had to remain here for a meeting with another department. Discussing the numbers. If you wait here, I'll be back briefly with your Contract Termination Acceptance Form. Wait here H. We need your final cooperation.

*Pause.*

**H:** Sure.

**Hullock:** Good man.

*Hullock watches H briefly, then leaves. H sits. He gets out the Propertorch and places it on the desk. Then stands. He makes a decision, takes the handbook and heads out of the office.*

*A moment passes.*

*Hullock enters with Sinker behind him.*

**Hullock:** Stay calm H...

**Sinker:** Where is he?

*Hullock sighs.*

**Hullock:** [*mutters*] Imbecile.

*Lights down. They exit. Spotlight up.*

### **Scene Nine**

*The scene is set as a bar. There is one table with a bottle on it and one chair where H will sit. The spotlight appears. H steps into it.*

**H:** I was replaced, redundant, obsolete. Like my predecessor before me the institution of my employment had pronounced me broken. Worthless. Like the tool I abandoned in the office and the handbook filled with my replacement's taunts. There was nothing left to do but fade away. Drown myself with others. Time for a drink. No need for clear-thinking then.

*H walks to the table and pours a drink. He drains the glass in one. He continues to drink from the bottle, and it is unclear whether he is talking to the audience, people in the bar we cannot see, or himself. Throughout this scene the shadows get closer to H.*

**H:** Tomasc Lakowski. Dead. Shadowless. In the way of the truth. Cheers Tommy.

*He raises his glass and drains it. Pours another.*

**H:** Useless.

*Pause.*

**H:** Virginia Belvedere. Dead. Shadowless. A lot of people wanted what she had. Cheers Virginia.

*He raises his glass and drains it. Pours another.*

**H:** Worthless.

*Pause.*

**H:** Like a broken Propertorch. Or a detective who can't find the truth.

*H ignores the drink he poured and takes a long swig from the bottle. He takes out the handbook and begins to rifle through.*

**H:** Case 13 – The Missing Shade of Grey. Solved.

*Turns pages.*

**H:** Case 27 – Claim of Genuine Free Will, the First. Solved.

*Turns pages.*

**H:** Case 44 – The Time-Shift Space. Solved.

*Turns pages.*

**H:** Case 68 – The Dualist Man. Solved.

*H begins to quickly rifle through pages.*

**H:** Case 79, solved. Case 92, solved. Case 105, solved. Solved, solved, solved.

*He stops without looking at the book.*

**H:** Case 121. Nothing.

*H empties the full glass. He reads.*

**H:** He took notes.

*Reads more.*

**H:** He made propositions.

*Continues to read.*

**H:** A lot of notes. The replacement started his own Methodic investigation. I knew he wasn't listening.

*H reads aloud Freddy's notes.*

**H:** There is an  $x$  such that if  $xP$  then  $xW$ . And if  $xG$  is one and the same thing as  $xP$  then  $xG$  is  $xW$ . If  $xW$  then  $vW$ . It is the case that  $xG$  is one and the same thing as  $xP$ . Therefore  $vW$ .<sup>1</sup>

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** He hasn't written the predicates down.

*H looks through the book.*

**H:** It's meaningless without the predicates.

*H continues to look through and finds something else.*

**H:** 'The Truth'. Case 121: The Truth.

*Pause.*

**H:** The replacement knew?

*He glances at the book.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Formal Proposition -  $\sum x [xP \rightarrow xW]$ .  
 $[xG = xP] \rightarrow [xG = xW]$ .  
 $xW \rightarrow vW$   
 $xG = xP$   
 $vW$

**H:** Propositions.

*H reads them from the handbook.*

**H:** Premise One, there is an  $x$  such that  $xMv$ . Premise Two,  $vKT$  and  $tKT$ . Hypothesis, there is a  $y$  such that if  $yKT$  then  $xMy$ . Proof, if  $xMt$  then  $t$  is one and the same thing as  $y$  and  $xMy$ .<sup>2</sup>

*Pause.*

**H:** 'T. Truth. What is T? The Eve's Apple? Worthless to her...'

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** It's a clue.

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** But there's no predicates for anything else. What does it mean?  $xMv$ .  $tKT$ .  $v$ .  $v$  could be Virginia.  $vKT$ . Virginia,  $KT$ . What's  $KT$ ?

*H begins to drink from the bottle as he struggles to comprehend.*

**H:**  $KT$ ,  $T$  is truth.  $KT$ , killed truth? Kept Truth? Knows Truth? Knows Truth.  $vKT$ . Virginia knows truth. She did. Tommy said she did.

*Drinks.*

**H:**  $tKT$ .  $t$  Knows Truth.  $t$  - Tommy. Tommy knows truth. Virginia and Tommy know the truth.

*Drinks.*

**H:** Knew the truth.

*Slight Pause. H looks at the handbook again. His speech becomes aimless.*

**H:**  $M$ . What's  $M$ ? The predicates. Need to know the predicates to know the truth.

*Drinks.*

**H:** Need to know the predicates. Need to know the truth.

*Drinks.*

**H:** If  $xMt$  then -  $xMy$ , what's  $y$ ? There is an  $x$ ,  $xMv$ . There is an  $x$ . What's the  $x$ ?

---

<sup>2</sup> Formal Proposition -  $P1 \sum x [xMv]$   
 $P2 \ vKT \square tKT$   
 $H \ \sum y [yKT \rightarrow xMy]$   
 $Pr \ xMt \rightarrow [t = y \square xMy]$

*Pause.*

**H:** There is an x. There is an x. There is an x.

*Adelaide enters the bar, she is wearing a headscarf to conceal herself. The shadows retreat slightly.*

**Adelaide:** H.

*He stops looking at the notes.*

**H:** What do you want?

*Pause.*

**Adelaide:** Can I sit down?

*H looks at her. Focuses.*

**H:** Why are you dressed like that?

**Adelaide:** I get followed.

**H:** Don't want the press to know you're here?

**Adelaide:** Not really, no.

**H:** I'm honoured.

**Adelaide:** I thought you might be here.

**H:** Well done. I am. Good detection.

*He pours himself a drink.*

**H:** How did you find me?

**Adelaide:** He used to come here. You used to talk about it.

**H:** Then you came along and he got fired.

**Adelaide:** It was the other way around.

**H:** Have you seen him recently?

**Adelaide:** Have you?

*Pause.*

**Adelaide:** You look a mess, H.

**H:** Observation skills too! Why did M.A.D. let you go?

**Adelaide:** I left.

**H:** That's right. So why are you here?

**Adelaide:** I can see you're not going to be civil.

**H:** Drink?

*She shakes her head. H drains his glass.*

**Adelaide:** P.I.S. was on the rise. It's what people want to hear. It's what our bosses wanted to hear. Easy results.

**H:** And that's what you deliver. Forget about the truth!

**Adelaide:** It's worthless! In our business its results that count, H. I wasn't going to spend my life rotting in a dying department. Like.../

**H:** /Like Tuckers? Like me?

*Pause.*

**Adelaide:** You never could marry our personal relationship with my professional values.

**H:** You couldn't!

**Adelaide:** I tried.

**H:** Well done. I still don't see why you're here.

*Slight Pause.*

**Adelaide:** I heard what happened.

*Pause.*

**H:** How?

**Adelaide:** Director Hullock.

**H:** Got a direct line to the Director?

**Adelaide:** Hullock still values my opinion. Or the association of it.

**H:** I don't care.

*Slight Pause.*

**Adelaide:** It doesn't have to be like this. There are other departments. If I put in a good word?

*Pause.*

**Adelaide:** We've already got a case. P.I.S. has the Belvedere case. With your extra knowledge we could get to the bottom of it. Together?

*Pause.*

**Adelaide:** The client was murdered. The buyer was murdered. It seems everyone involved with the case is losing to fate.

*H has a drink.*

**Adelaide:** We used to be good together. We could be again.

*Slight Pause.*

**Adelaide:** Trouble is following that Ghost Apple, you don't want to be next. I don't want to be next. We're both involved whether you like it or not.

*Pause.*

**H:** Propertyless.

**Adelaide:** What?

**H:** Propertyless Apple. It wasn't a Ghost Apple/

**Adelaide:** /Sure, whatever. Let's solve this case together. Like old times - but with new resources, new methods, better results. What do you say?

*Pause.*

**H:** No.

**Adelaide:** Please H. We'll go to the office now and get started/

**H:** /No!

**Adelaide:** Look at yourself. You're in this dive drinking yourself stupid pouring over a case that isn't even yours. Just - think about it.

**H:** No.

**Adelaide:** You don't want to end up like Tuckers. Holed up alone believing every/

**H:** /Every lie you put in print.

*She gets up.*

**Adelaide:** Fine. You won't be helped.

*She puts money on the table.*

**Adelaide:** You've been replaced. Ask yourself why.

*She leaves.*

**H:** Replaced.

*Pause. The shadows begin to come closer again.*

**H:** The replacement knows. There is an x.

*H exits.*

*Lights Down.*

## **Scene Ten**

*The scene is set as H's office. A desk with a chair behind is in darkness. Spotlight appears. H enters it.*

**H:** It was after midnight. I wasn't sure exactly. Of what I was looking for or what I'd find. I'd been avoiding the office for weeks, months really. I was sure that this was where the case would end. My case. My truth. The murderer was waiting for me. One thought ahead every step of the way. I entered my office, oblivious.

*Spotlight disappears. There is minimal light. The shadows slowly approach H throughout the scene. H enters his office. He rifles through papers on the desk.*

*Finds his Propertorch.*

*He examines it.*

*Sits on the chair behind his desk, points the Propertorch at himself and clicks the button.*

*The shadow area is illuminated. A man dressed exactly as H is but entirely in black with an obscured face is stood behind him.*

*The man is his 'Shadow'.*

**Shadow:** H.

**H:** Who are you?

**Shadow:** It's me, H.

**H:** Who?

**Shadow:** Start at the beginning. Cartesian Doubt.

*Pause.*

**H:** What are you?

**Shadow:** Plain to see for those who know how to look.

**H:** What?

**Shadow:** You tell me you don't know and I explain. That's how this will work.

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** I don't know.

**Shadow:** I'm a metaphysical anomaly.

*Pause.*

**H:** What do you mean?

**Shadow:** A simple property shift. A waste of time.

**H:** What are you talking about?

**Shadow:** There are some things the mind cannot comprehend.

*Slight Pause.*

**Shadow:** Should not comprehend.

**H:** This is insanity.

*He tries to get out of the chair, the shadows now hold him in place.*

**H:** What do you want from me?

**Shadow:** You're ready to begin your education.

**H:** Education? Education in what?

**Shadow:** The truth.

**H:** Truth?

**Shadow:** Been avoiding me, haven't you?

**H:** I don't know who you are!

**Shadow:** That's not important. I solved the case.

**H:** You solved the case?

**Shadow:** How can I be of service?

*Pause.*

**H:** Virginia Belvedere?

**Shadow:** She was a client. A lot of people wanted what she had.

**H:** What did she have?

**Shadow:** The truth.

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** You'll tell me who killed her?

**Shadow:** Yes.

**H:** It wasn't Tommy.

**Shadow:** No.

**H:** And it wasn't Sinker.

**Shadow:** No.

**H:** And it wasn't – the replacement?

**Shadow:** The other entity that conceals the truth.

**H:** It wasn't him?!

**Shadow:** No.

*Pause.*

**H:** It was you.

**Shadow:** Finally some truth.

*H struggles to break free. He quickly gives up.*

**H:** Who are you?

**Shadow:** I've told you, it isn't important.

**H:** And you killed Tommy too?

**Shadow:** Good work.

**H:** I don't understand.

**Shadow:** Of course you don't. Drinking clouds the judgement.

**H:** I'm not drunk.

**Shadow:** Don't lie to me.

*H struggles again.*

**Shadow:** What's wrong?

**H:** Why are you doing this?

**Shadow:** That information is above your clearance level.

**H:** Why did you do it?!

**Shadow:** It's a clue.

**H:** A clue? A clue to what?

**Shadow:** The truth.

**H:** What truth?

**Shadow:** What you want. Need.

*H violently tries to break free, but the shadows hold him tight.*

**Shadow:** Is that how you thank me now?

**H:** I don't want to hear anymore.

**Shadow:** Consider this your final lesson.

**H:** To what end?

**Shadow:** The truth.

*H slumps.*

**H:** What do you mean?

**Shadow:** Someone's in the way of the truth.

*Pause.*

**Shadow:** Who killed Virginia Belvedere?

**H:** [*meekly*] You.

**Shadow:** We've been here before. I know the truth and that isn't it.

**H:** But you said...

**Shadow:** People always get in the way of the truth.

**H:** You lied to me?

**Shadow:** Sorry to disappoint you.

*H is nearly covered by the shadows. He is weak.*

**H:** Why?

**Shadow:** I need your mind.

*Slight Pause.*

**Shadow:** Credance.

**H:** Adelaide?

**Shadow:** Forget her.

**H:** No.

**Shadow:** M.A.D.

**H:** My job.

**Shadow:** Then I came along and you got fired.

**H:** There is an x.

**Shadow:** It's meaningless without the predicates.

**H:** The truth.

**Shadow:** Forget about the truth. Replaced.

*Some of the shadows bring Freddy onstage but they conceal him. Slight Pause.*

**Shadow:** Useless.

*Slight Pause.*

**Shadow:** Worthless.

*Slight Pause.*

**Shadow:** A detective who can't find the truth.

**Freddy:** H!

**Shadow:** You've got nothing. No facts, no clues, broken tools, skills that can be resisted by a drunk. You're a mess.

**Freddy:** H, the one thing. What makes a metaphysical anomaly detective?

*The shadows inhibit Freddy completely.*

**H:** [*mumbles*] Question everything.

**Shadow:** Replaced. A detective who can't find the truth.

**H:** The Propertorch did work.

**Shadow:** What hope have you got?

*The shadows begin to bristle.*

**H:** I just read it wrong.

**Shadow:** Something nimbler is often required in the consideration/

**H:** /Her shadow wasn't missing. It was you. You stole it.

**Shadow:** I don't think so./

**H:** /She died after I visited. And Tommy too. You didn't kill them.

**Shadow:** I work alone./

**H:** /It was me. I killed them.

*The shadows begin to be disturbed by H. Their grip on him and Freddy falters.*

**Freddy:** You know!

**Shadow:** That's not the truth./

**H:** /I'm the x. I'm the truth.

*The shadows let go.*

**Shadow:** You can't think. You're worthless.

**H:** I forgot my place. I'm a metaphysical anomaly detective. I need to question. Question everything, even myself. Especially myself. The truth.

**Shadow:** Waste of time. You need me.

**H:** Shaken to the core. The truth is revealed.

*H stands and grabs the Propertorch. He points it at the Shadow. The other shadows have dispersed.*

**H:** You're simple. A shift from psychological property into psychopathic object.

**Shadow:** No. I'm H.

**H:** Not anymore. Don't follow me.

*The lights at the back of the stage go out.  
The Shadow disappears. Pause.  
H half collapses into his chair again.*

*Freddy regains his breath.*

**Freddy:** I worked it out. Then I came here to warn you, but it was too late. I guess my Methodics took too long.

**H:** But they worked.

*Slight Pause.*

**Freddy:** I'm sorry H, I should have/

**H:** /Don't worry. I needed it. Your clues gave me hope, and your – betrayal, gave me motivation. You helped me. There's a lot of darkness on the pursuit of the light.

*Pause.*

**Freddy:** What should we do about Tommy and Virginia?

*Slight Pause.*

**H:** Tell the authorities.

**Freddy:** They'll never believe it.

**H:** Let's hope so.

*Slight Pause.*

**Freddy:** We could always tell them it was aliens?

**H:** They wouldn't question it.

*H stands.*

**H:** Welcome to the office.

*Freddy smiles.*

**Freddy:** I can't breathe in here, I think we should go.

**H:** I think you're right. We don't need this place. Come on, Novus.

*A spotlight appears. H gets up. Freddy leads to the exit. H slowly walks towards the exit and pauses at the spotlight. He throws the handbook into it and walks past the spotlight, which remains.*

*End.*