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CHATTER

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CHARACTERS

ADLER DANIELS (ADI)

An ambitious, coloured entrepreneur in his mid-twenties whose printing and binding business is thriving. Wears a suit and tie, known to gym.

ALBERT WALLACE DANIELS (ALBIE)

Adler's older half-brother by a different mother. He's white, and is a slightly grungier, less well-shaven example of the Daniels' gene pool. He's been in England for the past eight years, living in a squat and working as a barman and teddy bear stuffer.

AIMEE ALBERTON

Petite and prone to pouting, Aimee teaches geography at Edenvale High.

TILLY GRIEG

Appearing in a smart business outfit, Tilly's a passionate go-getter.

MADELEINE

Tilly's friend. Owner of the "Only Connect" Internet Café.

KARIEN

Aimee's colleague and friend. Teaches P.T.

STAGING SUGGESTIONS

Animation

The play is accompanied by an animated backdrop which adds technological communication as another character. From the start, a chat-room text streaming across the back becomes "animated" in that the graphics embody and articulate emotion, tone and so on. At another point, cell-phone calls zigzag across the space and SMS messages scoot through the ether; cartoonishly bouncing about the parameters of the stage before finding their destinations in other phones. Occasionally these could even head out over the auditorium (if such a thing can be done) breaking through the fourth wall. Although it is not entirely impossible to imagine the play being performed without these technological elements, they may add an element of spectacle to its delivery.

Titles

Each scene has a specific title which appears on the screen at the start of the scene. And yet, the transition between scenes remains as fluid as possible, without any unnecessary interruptions or complete black outs. As one area of the stage darkens, another lights up. As one character exits, another enters.

CHATTER

prologue

Tilly walks on in business outfit. She's slightly nervous, though she addresses the audience in a friendly, up beat tone.

Tilly: Good morning (or "evening", depending on the time of show). Who are you? No, really...who *are* you? In the past, who you were might have referred to some sort of substance, something essential...but today, it's all about You and Your Brand...

*She clicks a remote and Power Point Bullets come up behind her.
All subsequent bullets are underlined in text.*

You are your Brand.

And identifying your brand is all about communication.

Communicate your Brand.

As Tom Peters observes about Harley Davidson: (*Reading off the PowerPoint.*)
"Harley is selling, first, Harley-ism...and second, that lumpy machine." Tom Peters
The Circle of Innovation (1997:17)

Now, in order to develop and franchise a new brand offering a wide variety of communications facilities is a double challenge. (Challenge), but given the opportunity (= Opportunity) to promote your emerging brand, I believe (Belief) that I will soon prove that I have the commitment (+ Commitment) to meet your vision. (= Vision). Because I believe that to meet the market (Market), one needs to know...to have knowledge (+ Knowledge) about where...you're/one/I are/is/am going...and what we want to say = Message!

(*Pause, hesitation*) Is that really what I want to say?...What I mean is that it's all about gaining access (Access) to the channels (Channels) to communicate what you need to say about the connotations of the challenges of the channels of the checks and balances of your communication flow...and, and how it conduits into into...of... ..
Fuck! (*Notices time.*) **FUCK!**

Closes lap top and rushes off. Lights fade. Music up.

scene one

TITLE: ONLY CONNECT

Music: "The Typewriter", by Leroy Anderson.

Spot up on Adi, sitting at a console in the "Only Connect" Internet Café, typing. With the help of an animated projection, the words seem to stream out of his machine and into space. The words are:

wolfman: ...any1 1n2 wrangle?

After hesitating momentarily in the ether, the words trail into Karien's laptop, as the spot comes up on her sitting up on a platform on the opposite end of the stage.

Karien responds:

dixi-E: ...what's yr story, wolfman?

As with Adler's message, Karien's mail scoots out into the screen and finds Adi's computer. After this initial exchange, the words from their machines sail straight up to one side of the screen and slot in underneath each other to form a dialogue.

While this dialogue gets underway, a spot appears on Aimee, sitting in her bed with her laptop up on a platform opposite Karien. Aimee writes:

tiglet: ...bobo?...u there?

The words find Albie. Spot up on him at a terminal, with a rucksack leaning against his chair. His first words are:

bobo: ...just landed...i'm waiting for my brother at the airport...

As with the other dialogue, this stream now continues on the other half of the screen, so that the two chats go on simultaneously with all four merrily typing away. The words now appear faster than what it's possible to type, and with the Leroy Anderson tune clattering in the background, the two chat conversations scroll along. The clock time is consequently being pushed faster than normal.

wolfman: ...any1 lnt 2 wrangle?
 dixi-E: ...hiya - what's yr story?
 wolfman: ...how u doin', dixie babe?
 dixi-E: ...pretty good, & u?
 wolfman: ...very well indeed - u local
 or global?
 dixi-E: ... ?
 wolfman: ...where do u live?
 dixi-E: ...in a city...
 wolfman: ... ???
 dixi-E: ...what do you mean local, or
 global?...it depends on
 where you are....?

wolfman: ...good point...
 dixi-E: ...so?...where are you?
 wolfman: ...out in africa...
 dixi-E: ...sounds mysterious...
 wolfman: ...well, it's not really
 africa...i mean, it's south
 africa...

dixi-E: ...sounds pretty african to
 me...

wolfman: ...u ever been here?
 dixi-E: ...?...i live here...
 wolfman: ...genuine?
 dixi-E: ...we're chatting in the SA
 room?...hello?

wolfman: ...ja, but...
 dixi-E: ...ja, but what?...anyway, i
 have to go...

wolfman: ...wait - where u from?
 dixi-E: ...jozi...bye now...
 wolfman: ...don't u wanna fool
 around?

<dixi-E has left the chat room>

wolfman: ...hey wait!!!!...

<wolfman has left the chat room>

tiglet: ...bobo, u there?
 bobo: ...just landed...i'm waiting
 for my brother at the
 airport...

tiglet: ...how was yr flight?
 bobo: ...ok...
 tiglet: ...and heathrow?
 bobo: ...they took away my pencil
 and x-rayed my shoes...

tiglet: ...shit...
 bobo: ...but a strange kind of
 solidarity between the
 passengers...

tiglet: ...because everyone was
 scared?

bobo: ...sure...

tiglet: ...wow...i can't believe
 you're in joburg...
 this is so freaky...

bobo: ...uh-huh...so when we
 finally going to meet?

tiglet: ...tonight?

bobo: ...yea, sure...where?

tiglet: ...maybe melville?

bobo: ...ok, i'll ask my brother
 tiglet: ...i'll let you know where...
 there's a nice spot called
 casablanca's...maybe?

bobo: ...okay, just wanted to say
 hey...think i'd better
 give my brother a call...

tiglet: ...okay...give me his number
 as well...then i'll call
 you later...

bobo: ...it's 082 324 3048...

tiglet: ...i'm nervous...

bobo: ...don't be...it's going to
 b gr8...i love you...

tiglet: ...thanks...alright...love u2

bobo: ...c u soon...

<tiglet has left the chat room>

<bobo has left the chat room>

Tilly walks into Albie's spot at the airport and Madeleine appears in Adler's space. Since Tilly is holding the handle of her suitcase with one hand and at the same time trying to dial a number on her cell phone with the other, it's hardly surprising that she accidentally trips over Albie's rucksack.

Tilly: Oh my God.

Albie: That's alright.

Tilly: Sorry!

Albie: No problem.

A different form of electronic communication signal now goes out from her phone up into space where it locates a sketchily drawn telecommunications tower. After connecting with the tower it then bounces out to the sketch of a satellite which has just rolled into the screen, before traversing down to earth again into Madeleine's phone, which rings.

Madeleine: Hello?

Tilly: Madeleine! It's Tilly.

Madeleine: Hey Tilly! You here already?

Tilly: Ja, the flight was early.

Madeleine: I'm still at work. Won't be able to get away for another hour.

Tilly: Doesn't matter. I'll get a taxi. Where should I meet you?

Madeleine: Come around to the shop. It's in Melville, next to The Punctuation Mark.

Tilly: Great. See you now.

Madeleine: Ciao!

While this conversation has been going on, Albie and Aimee's chat stream has ended. Aimee sighs, closes her computer and snuggles down into her bed. Albie stands up and looks around for a payphone. Aimee has already whipped out her cell and dialled.

The same telecommunications signal line goes out and the phone line reaches Karien.

Karien: Aimee! Hey darling.

Aimee: Hi.

Karien: How you feeling?

Aimee: Nervous.

Karien: It's going to be fine.

Albie has found a phone and now dials. The phone line reaches Adler, who's still typing.

Adler: Speak.

Karien: It's so exciting!

Albert speaks in a slightly mangled lower London accent.

Albert: Hey Adi – how the fuck you doing, mate?

Adler: Albert? Albie?

Albert: Yea.

Aimee: Yes, I know! It's just –

Adler: Shit, sorry.

Karien: Just relax, It's going to be fine.

Aimee: Ja.

Adler: I completely forgot about the time.

Albert: It doesn't really –

Adler: I thought –

Albert: – matter, mate.

Adler: – you'd still be stuck in customs?

Karien: Time for a coffee?

Aimee: Sure.

Adler: Give me 30 minutes.

Karien: Half an hour?

Adler: I'll be there now.

Albert: Where should I wait for you?

Aimee: Better make it an hour, I'm still in my p.j.'s.

Adler: Sit down so long at the...at the...

As he's been talking, Adler has forgotten himself and started walking out of the Internet Café.

Adler (*contd.*): ...at the Burgundy's...I'll see you –

Albert: Where?

Madeleine, *trying to get Adler's attention*: Excuse me, sir?

Karien: Okay. The Punctuation Mark?

Adler: I'll see you now.

Aimee: Sure.

Madeleine: Hey!

Albert: What?

Karien: Bye measles.

Madeleine: Stop!

But Adler has already rushed off. Madeleine goes out after him as lights fade. Music.

scene two

TITLE: THE AIRPORT

Adi and Albert walk on. Albert is wearing his rucksack on his back and Adler carries Albie's kitbag. They walk as they talk. Airport sounds create an ambient backdrop as they negotiate the maze out of OR Tambo which is seemingly permanently under construction.

Adler: Crowded?

Albert: Nah, flight was empty.

Adler: Lucky you.

Albert: Hey, it's good to see you Adi, mate. I'm chuffed to hear you're doing so well.

Adler: Ja, pushing 70 kgs at the gym; got my golf handicap into single digits. Business is booming. I might be getting my first franchisee.

Albert: Sounds wicked.

Adler: Wow, listen to that accent.

Albert: What accent?

Adler: Mr ex-pat. Throw him in with some souties for half a dozen years and he turns fuckin' roinek.

Albert: Fuck off, mate.

Adler: When's the big interview?

Albert: Hey, I don't know...I mean, it's...uh...

Adler: So much has changed since you left.

Albert: Yea?

Adler: The malls have moved in with a vengeance. Campus Square, Sandton, Fourways, Killarney. Menlyn has already been rebuilt twice! They don't even wait for a mall to grow old anymore.

Albert: Capitalist bastards. Won't build anything that lasts anymore, innit?

Adler: Hey, but that's progress – that's growth. Got to keep changing, got to keep making it new. Hey, I've got to take you to the Apartheid Museum.

Albert: Apartheid's in a museum? Wicked.

A square light defines a lift they're waiting for.

Adler: Completely. The bad old days. We can do the city tomorrow. Con Hill. And there's Maropeng, the Cradle of Humanity. You should see it, it's the same guys who did Jurassic Park, (though they did this one with about nought point nought one percent of the budget). But you can phone this talking Dodo and the Cel C girl answers – and, and, and, Barker Heynes is the woolly mammoth...

The lift has arrived and they climb in.

Albert: Floor?

Adler pushes a button.

Adler: Over the weekend we could do the zoo, they've completely revamped it.

Albert: Sure, and why don't we also visit a prison and stare at some of the inmates, yea?

Adler: Sorry? Prisons are some of our best cultural heritage sites! The breeding ground of our nation's leaders and other Unisa graduates. You'll be doing Robin Island, surely? And there's a reconstructed solitary confinement cell at –

Albert: No mate. No malls, no zoos, no prisons – not for people, not for animals. Sorry.

Adler: Sorry?

Albert: If that's cool. Sounds like a wicked programme though. Especially the woolly mammoth? Juicy, mate. It's just I have to meet someone in Melville. Tonight.

Adler: Tonight? Well okay, if you've got to. Who?

scene three**TITLE: THE PUNCTUATION MARK**

Another section of stage lights up as Karien enters with a tray, carrying a beer for herself and a herbal tea for Aimee. She joins Aimee at the table.

Karien: So what else is new on Second Life? You still addicted to that nonsense?

Aimee: It's not nonsense. It's fun!

Karien: At least on Facebook you've got some control.

Aimee: You've got control on Second Life. You can control whoever you want to be. You get to choose your looks, race, hair colour, gender – like everything!

Karien: You been spending too much time out of the sun, measles. Just be yourself?

Aimee: That's the great thing. Your avatar is yourself.

Karien: With a phoney name, false skin colour and fake tit-*eez*?

Aimee: This cuts through the masks we wear and your avatar becomes like a pure reflection of, like, your soul, you know? Whatever you imagine, whatever you want, you can become. Instantly. Just like that.

Karien: But is who you want to be, who you are?

Aimee: Isn't it?

Karien: You've never seen an idols audition, have you?

scene four

Adler is driving, Albert in the passenger seat.

Adler: So who do you have to meet?

Albert: I have an...uh...an appointment...

Adler: ...with?

Albert: ...someone.

Adler: Someone?

Albert: Yes...some...person...

Adler: Okay...*(pause)*...Who?

Albert: Ehrmmm...Eh...

Pause.

Adler: Whatever. You don't have to tell me.

Albert: Well...

Adler: What time you need to be there?

Albert: Not sure. I gave her your number.

Adler: Her?

Albert: Mmm-hmm.

Pause.

Adler: And?

Albert: And it's a bit...you know...umm...

Adler: No. Actually I don't know?

Albert: Url.

Pause

Adler: What the fuck. I don't have a friggin clue what you're "Urm"ing and "Url"ing about, but you really don't have to say a word.

Pause.

Adler, *contd*: Okay?

Pause.

Adler, *contd*: Not a word.

Pause.

Albert: It's a bit embarrassing.

Adler, *interested*: Ja?

Albert: Yea, I thought you might find it – I don't know – "silly"?

Adler: Albert – just tell me what's going on!

Albert: But you must promise you won't tease me, or mock me, or tell me I'm being –

Adler: Why would I mock you?

Albert: Silly. I don't know...

Adler: Why would I do that?

Albert: Okay.

Adler: I'm your brother.

Albert: Alright.

Adler: Cut me some slack.

Albert: Sure.

Adler: So who is she?

Albert: I met her online.

Adler: On the Internet?

Albert: Yes.

Adler: And?

Albert: No biggie.

Adler: Not?

Albert: No.

Adler: So?

Albert: Well.

Adler: What?

Albert: That's all.

Adler: That's cool.

Albert: That's it.

Adler: That's nothing.

Albert: I know.

Adler: No problem.

Pause.

Adler: And how long has this little affair been sizzling along?

Albert: Oh – about...three months.

Adler: Nice.

Albert: Or so...

Adler: Very nice.

Albert: No.

Adler: Oh?

Albert: Maybe two...

Adler: Still. It's kind of romantic, man.

Pause.

Albert: Definitely more than...six weeks.

Adler: And you've spoken to her?

Albert: On the telephone?

Adler: Yes.

Albert: No.

Adler: Only online?

Albert: Second Life and Google Talk.

Adler: So why would I make fun of you for something like that?

Albert: I don't know.

Adler: Albie?

Albert: Okay, sorry mate.

Adler: Come on.

Albert: I underestimated you.

Adler: So you met a girl –

Albert: Yea.

Adler: So?

Albert: I don't really have a job interview.

Adler: No?

Albert: I only came back here to meet her, actually?

Adler: But that's friggin fantastic.

Albert: Thanks.

Adler: So what's her name?

Albert: Uh...Tiglet.

Adler: Ja?

Albert: Yea.

Adler: Tiglet?

Albert: Tiglet.

Adler: That sounds kind of Iranian or something?

Albert: I don't think it's her real name.

Adler: No?

Albert: It's the name of her avatar? You know, something like a cross between a tiger and a piglet, I think: "Tiglet"...or something...

Adler: You don't know her real name?

Albert: No.

Pause.

Adler: Now why would I make fun of you for that? You fell in love with this girl on the Internet and you've come to meet her after six weeks–

Albert: Five...Definitely more than four.

Adler: You don't know her name.

Albert: Not really.

Adler: But you know what she looks like?

Albert: Oh Ja...(Albert has folded a picture out of his wallet which he shows Adler. The picture appears on the screen.) Twelve foot tall, bluish skin, red hair down to her waist, greenest emerald eyes. There she is – Tiglet, my fiancé.

Adler: Your what –?

Swerve of the car.

Albert: We're going to be married next week. Wednesday. You're invited.

Adler: Wednesday? (*He does a double and a triple take back at the picture in disbelief.*) You've got to be friggin kidding me, man.

Albert: Sorry, we had to make it Wednesday.

Adler: But –

Albert: That's the only day they do marriages at the embassy.

Adler: But friggin Albie, that's a friggin cartoon character!

Albert, *offended*: No it's not. It's her avatar on Second Life. She specifically chose that hair and those (*he indicates a generous bosom*).

Adler: Sheesh, Albie...she's got three –

Albert: I'd like you to be best man. We'll probably go to a restaurant or something afterwards. You know a nice place?

Pause.

Adler: This isn't *The friggin Bloodknot* Albie, and even Ethel lange sent a photograph!

Lights down on them.

scene five

TITLE: THE INTERNET CAFE

Cut to the Internet Cafe. Mads is behind the counter and Tilly enters. They greet each other like old friends who haven't seen each other for a few years, which is exactly what they are.

Tilly: Mads!

Madeleine: Tilly!

Tilly: Mads!!

Madeleine: Tilly!!

Tilly: Mads.

Madeleine: Tilly.

Madeleine: Uhh!

Tilly: Uhh!

Beat.

Tilly: So this is your shop?

Madeleine: And?

Tilly: I love it. Communications! I can almost feel the information coursing through the ether, creating this constellation of meanings, this symbolic –

Madeleine: Come on, we're out of the classroom now. We really don't need to keep on regurgitating the jargon.

Tilly: What?

Madeleine: That whole "communications" thing.

Tilly: Mads. Here you are at the forefront of the greatest global movement since the industrial revolution and you're –

Madeleine: It's a shop, Tilly. I sell stuff.

Tilly: This is just like the shop I want to open. Internet, faxes, phones. I want to go further. Printing, copying and binding, skypeing, gaming, and multi-media video booths...I really want to open the channels...

Madeleine: Whatever you say.

Tilly: And it's such a positive thing to be involved in. All this technology is contributing to a better world, helping us to be open and real and part of each other. It's true!

Madeleine: You think? Well, as long as everyone's talking the same code, I suppose.

Tilly: Mads, can't you sometimes just tap into the dream?

Madeleine: I don't believe in dreams, I believe it when I see it.

Tilly: God, you're so boring. Anyway, can I use a machine?

Madeleine: Sure. Already going through withdrawal?

Tilly: Ha ha.

scene six**TITLE: ADLER'S APARTMENT**

Back to the brothers. They're now entering a house, putting down Albie's bags etc. While they're talking, Albie digs in his bag for fresh clothes. He takes off his shirt, jeans and socks while they talk.

Adler: This is just like you. You're so fucking irresponsible, Albie. You don't know her name? You don't know what she looks like? And now you're engaged? For fuck's sake, Albie! This isn't the fucking *Blood-Knot* and even Ethel sent a picture. And what sort of a name is "Tiglet"? Hey, Albie? Tiglet? Hello? Do have any idea how old she is?

Albert, *pouting*: We didn't find it necessary to cloud our affections with hierarchical classification systems.

Adler: Albie.

Albert: We want our feelings for each other to stay pure. We don't want to be tied down by definitions like names and numbers.

Adler: But that's not the –

Albert: You wouldn't understand.

Adler: What if it turns out to be a friggin fifty-five year old tannie? Tannie Tiglet. Albie? Hello?

Albert: Ageism is so out of date.

Adler: You'll be lucky if it's a woman at all!

Albert: Gender isn't important to us.

Adler: Albert Daniels.

Albert: I referred to her as female only because I didn't wish to shock your provincial

sensibilities.

Adler: But I thought you said you were engaged?

Albert: And I thought the Civil Union Bill went through?

Adler: What? But how could you, I mean, fall in love with someone if you don't know what they...I mean who they...I mean, how they –

Albert: It's a meeting of minds, Adi. Up here.

Adler: Albert Daniels.

Albert: Well, not only up here...In the space of a few short weeks, the relationship moved rather swiftly from the polite to the friendly to the intimate. It has even become "physical", yea?

Adler: You mean, you've –?

By the time Albert delivers the following line, he's standing in only his underpants.

Albert, *breathy*: We've been very close.

Adler: But how the hell can you "get physical" if you don't even know the "physique" of the–

Albert: We've got a top range of products available in the EU these days, mate. Top. Mostly from Amsterdam. Shouldn't be too long before you get them. They're finding ways to interface –

Albert begins to make a rather complex hand gesture, but Adi interrupts him before it can be elaborated any further.

Adler: You know what? I don't think I want to hear about it.

Albert: Whatever you say, mate.

Pause. Albert starts to put on his fresh clothes.

Albert: I gave her your number. She'll call you to confirm where and when, yea?

Adler: Why doesn't she call you?

Albert: Mobile was nicked on the subway, mate.

Adler: Albert Wallace Daniels.

Albert: Sorry, man. I would have taken those Taekwando classes if I knew it meant so much to you.

Adler: Yes, so whatever. I'll give you a ride tonight, but I think maybe I should also come along.

Albert: If you like.

Adler: Just to make sure it's not a scam.

Albert: No problems at all, mate.

Adler, *sulkily*: But if you can't go to Maropeng tomorrow – the new Cradle of Humanity Centre with its original Fossil Display room conveniently located just around the corner from the Sterkfontein Caves – then I'm sorry, cause that was the plan. I can't take you on Thursday!

scene seven

TITLE: MEANWHILE, STILL AT THE PUNCTUATION MARK

Back to Aimee and Karien at the Punctuation Mark. Aimee is drinking herbal tea, while Karien nurses a Black Label.

Karien: You're joking!

Aimee: No.

Karien: You had sex with this guy on the Internet?

Aimee: Don't say it so loudly.

Karien: That's crazy, Measles. That's sick girl.

Aimee: It was...very strange.

Karien: He was...?

Aimee: Mm-hm.

Karien: And you were – ?

Aimee, *like a naughty school girl*: What's wrong with it?

Karien: You don't know who is out there!

Aimee: I have a pretty good idea.

Karien: The idea of some guy "feeding the pony" on the other side of –

Adler and Albert have entered.

Adler: Over here?

Karien: – the screen.

Albert: Looks good.

Aimee, *squeals*: Please, Karien!

Karien laughs.

Albert: I was joking, by the way.

Adler: About?

The two conversations now interweave as each dialogue fills in the pauses of the other exchange. Very occasionally, the voices overlap, as indicated.

Albert: About not knowing anything at all about the girl I'm engaged to...

Karien: And when's the horse whisperer getting here?

Albert: She's twenty-three –

Aimee: He's already here –

Albert: Teaches Geography –

Karien: Really? Where?

Albert: ...at a government school.

Aimee: His brother's fetching him at the airport.

Albert: She loves her job.

Karien: Have you spoken to him yet?

Albert: Yea, she's so sweet...

Aimee: No.

Albert: ...prefers Oprah to opera...

Aimee: We're meeting tonight.

Albert: ...favourite colour: petal pink...

Karien: Wow

Albert: ...loves Adam Sandler comedies...

Karien: ...that's exciting.

Albert: ...drinks herbal tea...

Aimee: Ja, but also nerve-wracking...

Albert: ...but one thing is true...

Aimee: What if he doesn't like me?

Adler: What's that?

Aimee: What if I don't like him?

Karien: It'll be fine. What does he look like?

Albert: I don't know what she really looks like...

Aimee: I don't really know what he looks like...and

Albert: I'm not sure about her real name. Aimee: I'm not sure about his real name.

Adler: Well, I don't know, Albie...

Karien: I don't know Aimee.

Adler: It's your life.

Karien: But I think it's fantastic.

Albert: Thanks.

Karien: ...that you're doing this.

Aimee: Thanks.

Karien: Because it's so unlike you.

Aimee: Is it?

Albert: I think.

Karien: You're always so prissy.

Aimee: You don't know the half of it!

Pause. Karien takes out a cigarette.

Karien: What do you mean?

Aimee: He hasn't been the only one.

Adler: Where's this friggin waitron?

Karien: If Headmistress Mavriopolous knew, she'd have a cadenza!

The lights cut. Pause. What might work well is if the actors start to talk almost hesitantly, as if they're ad-libbing over a genuine power cut.

Adler: Fucking ridiculous. Welcome to the third world Albie.

Pause.

Karien searches for a light.

Aimee: And the best part of all is that if everything works out, I could soon be getting my hands on a Euro Passport! Think of it – 24 hour electricity!

Karien: Sweet.

Aimee: But I've got to meet him first. He gave me his brother's number.

Adler: The state of this country...I'm telling you...

Karien: So why don't you call him?

Aimee: I'm out of airtime.

Karien: Shit, I really thought I had a light here somewhere. Maybe those guys have a lighter.

The lights come back on again.

Aimee: Can I use your phone?

Karien: Of course. Here.

Adler: Got to take out the trouser snake for some air.

Aimee: Okay.

Adler: Be back now.

Adler gets up.

Karien approaches Adler as he's leaving.

Karien: Sorry, do you maybe have a light perhaps maybe?

Adler, *sarcastically*: Do I look like a smoker to you?

Adler leaves. He's left his phone on the table.

Karien: Well, Excuse Me!

Albert: I'll help you out.

Aimee dials a number. The zigzag jagged electronic communication line loops around and crosses down into the phone on the other side of the stage.

Albert laboriously goes through all the zips and buttons of his jacket, shirt and jeans, which involves a vigorous amount of unzipping, unbuttoning and unlacing.

Adler's cell-phone on the table rings. Albert continues digging away. Taking off shoes to look inside.

Karien: Ag, actually...you know...

Albert, *flustered*: Just give me one second.

The phone keeps ringing.

Karien: Don't worry about it.

Albert: I've definitely got one here somewhere.

The phone keeps ringing.

Karien: It's okay.

And ringing...

Karien: Really!

And ringing...

Albert: Aha – here we go!

He retrieves a worn strip from the edge of a box of matches which he hands over triumphantly.

Karien: And...a match?

Albert: Fuck.

He resumes his search with more vigour while the phone rings on. Finally he locates half a match lying on the floor.

Albert: There it is! I knew I had a spare somewhere.

He hands over the broken match.

The phone keeps ringing.

Albert is still smiling, stupidly satisfied, pleased with himself for having found the light.

Karien: You gonna answer that?

He grabs it and has started talking as it opens.

Albert: Fuck! Shit.

Karien lights her cigarette with some degree of eye-rolling.

Karien: Thanks.

And goes back to her table.

Aimee, *cautiously*: Hello...?

Adler walks back in.

Adler: Now the fucking toilet's out of order.

Albert: Sorry. I mean "Hello"?

Aimee: Hi, can I please speak to your brother please?

Albert, *flustered*: Sure, just a second. It's for you.

He hands the phone over to Adler.

Adler: Speak.

Aimee: Hi. It's me. Tiglet.

Adler: Tilly? You'll have to speak up. I can't hear a thing.

Aimee: Hello?

Adler walks out of the restaurant, trying to find a stronger signal. Aimee also wanders off.

Aimee: I'll walk around a bit –

Adler: Can you hear me?

Aimee: Here.

Adler: You here?

Aimee: Yes, I can hear you.

Adler: Hello? You arrived already?

Aimee: Hello.

Adler: Tilly?

Aimee: Yes?!

Adler: You here in Joburg?

Aimee: Yes...I...can...hear – !!!

Adler, *startled*: Stop shouting!

Aimee, *small voice*: ...you.

Adler: Alright, let's calm down. You're here. I'm here. And both of us can hear.
So when can we meet...here.

Aimee: I thought we were meeting tonight?

Adler: Tonight? Sure. Where?

Aimee: There's a place called Casablanca's in Melville. I can meet you there at six o' clock.

Adler: Perfect. I'll see you there.

Aimee: Okay...bye-bye Bobo.

Adler: Later...(closes phone and silently to himself mouths the word) ...Bobo?

Aimee gives the phone back to Karien.

Albert: Who was that?

Karien: And?

Adler: Tilly...Tilly Grieg...

Aimee: He sounds...different...to what I imagined.

Adler: It's the girl from East London I was telling you about? Who might become my first franchisee?

Karien: Ag shame, maybe he's just nervous.

Adler: Pretty exciting stuff.

Albert: Rockin'...

Aimee: Could be.

Karien: I'd better run. I've got under 14's for Night Netball.

Aimee: Thanks for the tea, Karien.

Karien: Plezsh. You going home?

Aimee: No, I'm too restless. I'll just browse around a bit, maybe check my mail.

Karien: Let me know how it goes with the EuroPass treasure hunt. Call me anytime.

Aimee: Thanks, that's sweet of you.

Karien: Love you, bye.

They kiss each other goodbye and exit in different directions.

Adler: Where the fuck is this waitron! This would never happen in *London*, hey?

Albert: No. Well, maybe.

Adler: Bullshit. You're probably right to stay on in England. This country's going backwards.

Albert: Hmm...

Adler: Though you haven't had too much success in the UK. Stuffing teddy bears by day. Barman by night.

Albert, *defensively*: Nothing wrong with that.

Adler: Nothing at all. Though from what I hear half the people serving the English their stouts are white South Africans, and the rest of them are *au pairing* the kids or in caring jobs wiping rich British bottoms. Ja, serves them right. Now they've become the ousies and the meids.

Albert, *grimly*: Yea? There are a lot of us out there, innit? Did you know there are more South Africans in England than what there are Griquas in the whole world? Over a hundred thousand. Technically we should qualify as an ethnic group on our own by now: "White South Africans in London". Well, the money's good and at least it's safe.

Adler: Safe? Bomb blasts in the subways? Terrorists trying to blow up planes? Global warming. Wasn't it just the hottest summer ever?

Albert: Not ever, no –

Adler: Oh.

Albert: Only since 1664.

Adler: And the miserable winters?

Albert: It does get pretty cold.

Adler: And I hear the people are pretty icy.

Albert: Yea, I suppose.

Adler: But at least it's systematic. I mean, it's efficient. Look at what's happening out here. Petrol, Electricity –

Albie: People will have to learn to be more self sufficient, that's all. To be responsible for their energy – get a solar stove, or whatever. Maybe it's not so bad that all those electro-magnetic waves are resting once in a while.

Adler: And the mines shutting down? That's very restful to the economy, I'm sure. Very soothing.

Albie: It's not such a great thing to be taking the essence out of the earth. Digging down into Mother. Taking everything out. Gives you guys a trial run for what's eventually going to happen all over the world, the day the fuels run out, the day we've spilled her guts.

Adler: We, kemosabi?

Albie: Humans, man. Human beings. *Pause.* Yea, anyway, electricity is so Eurocentric, innit?

Adler: What?

Albie: Fuck efficiency.

Adler: You don't know what you're saying.

Albert: Life isn't about being able to do things more efficiently, but to be happier, innit? And what we need isn't material, it's something spiritual¹, some sense of community. We've got to care for each other, mate...

I mean, I'll tell you – yesterday, when I caught the bus to Heathrow, a woman comes running right up to the door as it's closing, her bags in her hand, shouting – everybody could hear her – "please wait," she shouts. What does the driver do? Hey – he's got a schedule to keep. He has to be efficient. So he drives off without so much as a second glance. You wouldn't see that happening here so much, 'ey? Sure the bus might be a bit late, but, you know, people are more...I don't know...caring.

Adler: With our murder rate?

Albert: Show some respect for where you come from, mate.

Adler: Excuse me? I must respect where I come from? Where do you come from? If I

¹ This sentence comes straight out of an interview with George Harrison. Keep in mind that sitar twanging in the background to help with the delivery.

remember right you come from the Eugene Marais Hospital in Pretoria...and you've been trying to erase your identity ever since.

Albert: I'm not into defining myself in terms of a piece of land, an arbitrary slice of geography, nah.

Adler: I believe you've got to stick with your brand if you want to build capital.

Albert: I don't think I really want to be branded, myself, mate. Not sure I want to belong to a herd. Not sure I want to have an emblem burnt into my skin, you know? (*singing*): "All in all you're just another brick in the wall"... (*Beat*) Hey – isn't there maybe an Internet café around here?

Adler: Right next door.

Albert: Check up on the status.

Adler: Ja, we should go. This is ridiculous.

Albert: Let's blow this rice paddy.

Adler: Sure.

Albert: I'm surprised she hasn't called yet. You sure you don't have any missed calls?

scene eight

TITLE: BACK @ THE INTERNET CAFE

Albert and Adler walk into the Internet Café. Madeleine is behind the counter and Tilly is sitting at a console.

Madeleine: Hey!

Adler, *sarcastically*: Hey! Hey, what?

Madeleine: You never paid.

Adler: I never paid?

Madeleine: This morning.

Adler: This morning?

Albert: Can I take a machine?

Madeleine: *(to Albert)* Yes and *(to Adler)* yes. Now you going to carry on repeating everything I say, or do you think you might settle your bill?

Adler: Am I going to carry on repeating –

Madeleine: Stop it!

Adler: Sheesh, what caterpillar crawled onto your catwalk, sweetcheeks?

Albert takes a console. Aimee walks in.

Aimee: Hi – can I take a machine?

Madeleine: Yes!

Text emanates from Albert's machine:

<p>(SCREEN) <bobo has entered the room> bobo:...tiglet?...r u there?</p>

Adler: So what do I owe you?

Madeline: I'll have to find the slip.

Aimee starts typing:

```
bobo: ...tiglet?
<tiglet has entered the room>
```

Madeleine, *contd.*: You also want to use a machine?

Adler: Sure.

Madeleine: Let me look for it and then you can pay when you leave.

Adler: No, let me pay you now. In advance. I insist.

Madeleine, *her teeth now fast approaching an intractably clenched condition*:

I'm going to have to look for it. Please sit down, sir.

Adler, *winks*: Whatever you say, sweet pea.

Albert sits down and starts typing. Madeleine puts the kettle on.

```
<wolfman has entered the room>
wolfman: ...hello...?...any1 out
there?
```

Madeleine looks up. While the kettle boils she starts typing at her console. Adler's words are zooming around and have found a home in her machine. Two streams of text scroll up behind very quickly as before. Yann Tiersen's "La lettre d'explication" plays. Now a kind of technological dance drama takes place. The jagged zigzagging electronic lines connecting the machines take off and acquire a life of their own, dancing, moving, momentarily creating the outlines of shapes, such as, for examples, roses and hearts flying between Albert and Aimee. The shapes relayed between Adler and Madeleine, on the other hand, are rather ruder. These are perhaps more in the order of phallic shaped daggers, and so on. They all four play their keyboards operatically, like Craig Higginson at the keyboard. The music surges. The images dance. The digital time moves faster.

lovelyshinytiara: ...hello...?

wolfman: ...hey baby...6xe
handle...

lovelyshinytiara:...thanx
wolfman..

wolfman: ...what u up 2?...feel
like fooling around?

lovelyshinytiara:...a, l, s?

wolfman:...26, jhb, m - u?
lovelyshinytiara: ...17, jhb, f...

wolfman: ...well built & hung
like a hippo...

lovelyshinytiara: ...charming...

wolfman: ...what you wearing?

lovelyshinytiara: ...nothing...

wolfman: ...sweet...

lovelyshinytiara:...i'm completely
naked underneath my anorak,
overalls, cardigan, lady's
business suit, blouse, vest,
thermals, whale bone bodice,
corset, pantaloons...and of course
my pooch pants, which help guard
against incontinence...

wolfman: ...jeez, okay forget
it...

wolfman: ...you sound like too
much trouble...

bobo: hello?...

tiglet: ...bobo? you there?

bobo: ...yes!!!...hey Tiglet
...i'm missing you...

tiglet: ...i've missed you too...

bobo: ...the whole morning...

tiglet: ...but it won't be long
now...i can't wait for
tonight...

bobo: ...it's going to be great.

tiglet: ...u nervous?

bobo: ...of course...i mean...

tiglet: ...i'm not...i know it's
going to be perfect
we're soul

bobo: ...mates...yes...
... ..
...

A slight lull. Madeleine takes a mug of coffee to each brother.

Then we're back to the frenetic activity as before.

<p>wolfman: ...hello?...hello?</p> <p>wolfman: ...u still there?</p> <p>lovelyshinytiara: ...sure, big boy, what u want?</p> <p>wolfman: ...i want to run my hands all over you, i want to lick u from top to toe...</p> <p>lovelyshinytiara: ...ja?</p> <p>wolfman: ...i want to bend you over and...hey...what u doing right now?</p> <p>lovelyshinytiara:...yawning</p> <p>wolfman: ...come off it...</p> <p>lovelyshinytiara: ...gotta go -</p> <p>wolfman: ...wait!...yo - don't you want to mess around?</p> <p>lovelyshinytiara: ... yo - no...</p> <p><lovelyshinytiara has left the chatroom></p> <p>wolfman: ...oi!</p>	<p>bobo:...so where d'you want to meet?</p> <p>tiglet:...i told u...casablanca's at 6...?</p> <p>bobo:...oh? did u?...sorry...</p> <p>tiglet:...how will i recognise you?</p> <p>bobo:...hmm, let's see...what about if i bring something with...</p> <p>tiglet:...a book...</p> <p>bobo: ...yes...i'll be holding jonathan' spence's ..."the memory palace of mateo ricci"...</p> <p>tiglet: ...cool...</p> <p>bobo: ...and what will you be holding?</p> <p>tiglet: ...i'll be holding you soon...</p> <p>bobo: ...hmmm...</p> <p>tiglet: ...ok - c u soon baby.</p> <p>bobo: ...ciao.</p> <p>tiglet: "the memory palace...".</p> <p><tiglet has left the chatroom></p> <p><bobo has left the chatroom></p>
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And again, slow down to normal time. Music fades. Normal lighting resumes.

Albert: Should we go?

Adler: Sure...just give me a second.

wolfman: ...hello?...yo - tiara?

wolfman: ...hey!?!

Adler: Okay.

<wolfman has left the chatroom>

Adler: Let's go.

Madeleine: Not without –

Adler: Jesus, enough already! It was just –

Madeleine: An oversight

Adler: – an oversight.

Madeleine: Sure.

Albert: What do I owe?

Adler, *ostentatiously*: Don't worry Albie, it's on me. I'm doing alright at the moment.

Albert: Thanks Adi.

Madeleine: Twenty-five rand and fifty.

Adler: Keep the change.

Adler pays Madeleine. As they're leaving Tilly dials. Zigzag of the cell phone communication as before. Adler's phone rings as they're stepping out. They keep walking.

Adler: Speak.

Tilly: Hello?

Adler: Ja, what is it?

Tilly: Sorry to disturb, is that Mr A. Daniels?

Adler: Aha! Yes, at last. Well, well, well. It's about time!

Tilly: Sorry?

Albert, *excited*: Is it her?

Adler: The poor boy's been slobbering all over the sidewalk waiting for your call.

Albert: Adi!

Tilly: Excuse me?

Adler flamboyantly hands the phone over with a mock butlerish bow.

Adler: For you, sir.

Albert: Hello?...Hello??

Tilly: Um, hello. It's Tilly Grieg.

Albert: Tiglet?...*(momentarily struck speechless)*...Wow...

Tilly: Hello?

Albert: Your voice...It's so...so...so lovely...

Tilly: My...voice?

Albert: I can't believe I'm talking to you!

Tilly: Oh? Well. You are...*(pause)*...Hello?

Albert: Unreal!

Tilly: Really?

Albert: Totally.

Tilly: Hm...I just wanted to check up on what time we'll be meeting tomorrow?

Albert: Tomorrow? But – what about tonight, Tiggles?

Tilly: Tonight? (*to herself*: Tiggles?)

Albert: I thought we were going to meet here in Melville? We're on our way to Casablanca's right now.

Tilly: What time?

Albert: Six.

Tilly, *surprised*: Six?

Albert: Yes, hurry!

Tilly: I...I suppose I'll have to, Mr Daniels.

Albert: Don't call me Mr Daniels, my name's Albert – Albie.

Tilly: Okay, uh, Mr –

Albert: I'll bring the book.

Tilly: Albie.

Albert, *emotional*: Bye...

Albert is ecstatic, though Tilly looks a bit nonplussed at his forward manner. They continue walking.

Tilly, *confused*: What book?

Adler: All set?

Albert: Yea. This is great. She knew my surname? We were going to keep all of that secret.

Adler: G-mail address?

Albert: Could be.

Adler: You don't want a shave before your "big date"? You look like shit.

Albert: No, I don't buy into that conspiracy.

Adler: What conspiracy?

Albert: The shaving stick conspiracy.

Adler: ?

Albert: Nowhere are the reprehensible ways of the powers that be, more nefariously displayed than in the proliferation of research and development into designing new models of shaving sticks which are wholly incompatible with any razor ever created before on the planet. Ever.

Adler: Ah-huh?

Albert, *growing increasingly excited*:: Do you know how many millions of shaving sticks are littering up the world? As soon as you need to buy a new blade they've replaced the design, charging you twice the price for all that "research". First, there were double blades, then triple, now quadruple. Where will the insanity end? We're going to have a half-dozen blades housed within an intricately conceived rubber-cushioned, heat-softened head; while kids are still walking ten kilometres to fetch drinking water!

Adler: Okay. Yes, I think you've made your, uh, point.

Albert: And the worst of all is that you don't even need a shaving stick! You can just hold that little sucker in your hand like this. It works just fine.

Adler: Not that you do.

Albert: No, I don't do that either...Not much, no.

