

JUAN CARLOS CALDERON ROMERO

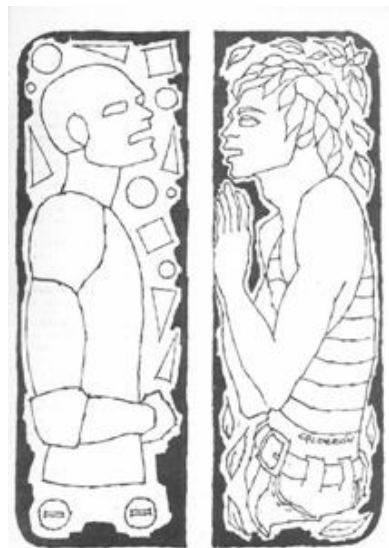
THE PENNY ARCADE

a play in three acts

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La Paz - Bolivia

PLAYERS

The Ticket Taker
The Visitor
The Boss of the Penny Arcades, voice and TV image
The Boss' Secretary, voice and TV image
The visitor's Friends
A young couple
A young man
An old man
A middle age woman
A middle age man
The Penny Arcade Dummies



ACT I SCENE I

An old fashion Penny Arcade: There are several coin-fed glass booths. The figures inside are actors performing various tasks from daily, life, firemen, carpenters, painters, etc., some of them couples. They are immobilized, like dummies, waiting for the coins to be dropped. There is a big television screen on the back wall. The Ticket Taker also has a glass booth with a round opening thru which he performs his duties. There is a nicholodeon playing. The place is empty except for an old man casually observing the machines.

VISITOR- One please - *He pays* - Not many people today.

TICKET TAKER- Most activity happens inside the boxes around here. He looks for change, and gives the visitor his ticket.

VISITOR- Thanks. *He goes in, looks, around, and starts putting coins in different booths. He finds one he likes, feeds it again, and acts as if something is not right. He tries other machines, and looks closely at the figures inside. He looks up, and speaks to a young couple who have strolled in hand in hand.* -Hey look, there is something weird about this place. The figures seem to perform differently every time I feed the machines!

YOUNG GIRL- This place is, so old it's a wonder they perform at all. *She giggles.*

YOUNG MAN- Yeah! *They walk away.*

VISITOR- *To the old man* - I was telling the kids that these figures perform differently every time one puts a coin in the slot.

OLD MAN- Young fellow, I've been coming here for years, and although the mechanisms may not be all that perfect, they still function today as well as when my wife and I used to work in the place, and that was a long time ago, believe me.

VISITOR- But there is something... human in them.

OLD MAN- Nonsense. They are just machines performing their tasks. *He leaves.*

VISITOR- Going to the Ticket Taker. Excuse me, I think I got a bonus coming in this place. the dolls inside the glass cages seem to be alive!

TICKET TAKER- So?

VISITOR- Well, I don't object to life-like robots, performing to entertain the public, but if those... figures were alive and doing the same, I would have to complain to somebody.

TICKET TAKER- In the first place fellow, I don't know who you would complain to. *He gets out of his booth and starts feeding the machines, much like a bartender when a jukebox is silent.* - The owner is a solid citizen who has always been in the best of terms with the police. He pays his taxes religiously, and has the place inspected regularly by the proper authorities. Fire regulations and other safety factors are, never overlooked, and I would venture to say that, things being what they are, if this place folded, the whole town would go with it.

VISITOR- That's all very good, about your boss righteousness and power, and all that, but I cannot see, first of all, how the whole town could sink if this place folded when I hardly see any public at all, and in the second place, how an entire community would do nothing if these... things, caged under glass, were real people.

TICKET TAKER- Has it occurred to you that entire communities could possibly be caged under glass, so to speak, happily performing their duties, being given adequate food and shelter, becoming a very organized, very disciplined society?

VISITOR- You sound just like I imagine your boss would sound.

TICKET TAKER- I am part of this outfit. I am also doing my part in the enterprise.

VISITOR- Oh hell!. *Pause. He looks around.* Anyway, if these dummies were human, one would only have to suggest thru the glass to them that, for a change, there is an outsider willing to help them out of their situation.

TICKET TAKER- The glass is sound proof.

VISITOR- One could write a message.

TICKET TAKER- The transparency is only one way.

VISITOR- The glass then could be broken.

TICKET TAKER- You should have figured by now it's also bulletproof.

VISITOR- But these... people if that's what they are, must have to rest.

TICKET TAKER- Ten minutes in the morning, and ten minutes in the afternoon the place stops, and they are served coffee and doughnuts.

VISITOR- How nice.

TICKET TAKER- And in the evenings they, of course, go home.

VISITOR- Of course.

TICKET TAKER- Do not think for a moment that would be the right time to instill in them any fancy ideas, though. They are sent to their places in the most mechanized of fashions. On their way, they generally read a sheet telling them how things were at the Penny Arcades that day, and when they arrive home, and grab something to eat, they go into their favorite hobby.

VISITOR- Which is?

TICKET TAKER- Glass making.

VISITOR- Glass making! You'd think they would have had enough glass for the day!

TICKET TAKER- Well it's not really glass making, you see, it's cage making, only they are made of glass. The children...

Suddenly, the woman of one of the couples in the booths makes a gesture of desperation, and collapses. It is very obvious now that she is human. The man remains frozen.

VISITOR- They are Human!

TICKET TAKER- Shh!

The lights dim with the music. Faintly, four black figures can be seen approaching the cage where the woman lies. They open the door, and place a black band around the arm of the immobilized man. The woman is taken out and put on a wheeled stretcher and ceremoniously taken away. The music comes back with a religious theme, very much like the abrupt transition often heard at church when a hymn trails off, and a new one is begun suddenly, and with energy. The Visitor leaps toward the open cage.

VISITOR- *Shouting to the man -Get out! get out! Before you too collapse, get out! He tries to yank him out, uselessly, Get out! The Ticket. Taker rushes toward him, and grabbing him away, manages to close the door. The lights go on, and the Penny Arcade music starts again. They are human! They are human! His voice is almost drowned by the music. He rushes out. The Ticket Taker smiles, and goes back to his booth. After a while he goes back to feed the machines; When they stop, he does it again. The Visitor comes back with three young friends. They are dressed alike.*

TICKET TAKER- Oh, it's you again. I must warn you that if you try anything like what went on before, I'll have to call the boss.

VISITOR- No, I won't try anything, but I have told my friends about this place, and we all have decided that, since you seem to have the run of it, we should have a talk.

The friends walk around the booths looking at the people, and feeding the machines.

TICKET TAKER- I am not paid to have talks. I must do my job. *He goes back to feed the idle machines.*

VISITOR- Listen, I don't know what kind of deal you have going with your boss, or how much freedom you have, but at least you can walk around, move as you please, and, I hope, have your own thoughts.

TICKET TAKER- I don't know either.

VISITOR- Know what?

TICKET TAKER- What kind of deal I have with my boss.

VISITOR- Oh- Well, anyway, we think that if you have any decency left in you, you should help us free all these poor bastards.

TICKET TAKER- Do what?

VISITOR- Give these people their freedom. Let them be what they want to be.

TICKET TAKER- But they are what they want to be.

VISITOR- You just told me not long ago that these seemingly fragile boxes are, in fact, real sound and bullet proof cells.

TICKET TAKER- That is true.

VISITOR- And you want to tell me these people are free?

TICKET TAKER- They are.

VISITOR- How so?

TICKET TAKER-Although it's true these booths are impregnable from the outside, and the people in them can't see us, they nevertheless, can be easily opened from the inside, even the glass could be broken from within.

VISITOR- And why don't they get out?

TICKET TAKER- I told you, they are happy there.

He goes and feeds the machines. Their activity seem to increase and hum, the nicholodeon plays louder.

VISITOR- they cannot be happy. They may have been brainwashed into believing they must do this for ever, but they cannot be happy. Is this all there is for these people, just sitting eight hours in a glass cage waiting for the coins to drop in to perform some robot-like duty?

TICKET TAKER- Try telling them that.

VISITOR- I have tried, but neither you nor your sound proof glass has let me.

TICKET TAKER- You talk to me as if I were some awful monster. I just work here selling tickets to the few visitors who come to see the place, thank goodness they are not as inquisitive as you have been, and I feed the machines when the going gets slow. You must know by now that's most of the time.

VISITOR- It seems to me you could stop feeding the damn machines for all the good it does.

TICKET TAKER- But it does do good. What would all these people do all day if I didn't drop the coins in? These mental tasks are their lives. If they didn't do this they would die.

VISITOR- They would be free.

TICKET TAKER- Free to do what? They know of no other activity than that which goes on in here. Even on Sundays they merely change booths, and the nicholodeon plays louder.

VISITOR- And why does the nicholodeon play louder?

TICKET TAKER- Oh, some old superstition. It supposedly gives them some kind of spiritual uplift, they feel closer to something or other, and readier to do their next week's work. *The nicholodeon plays a religious tune.*

VISITOR- But, can't these people feel the joy of being alive? Has their humanity been so eradicated that they cannot feel a part of the Universe, can't they no longer identify with Nature?

TICKET TAKER- Nature to them is a natural nuisance. If something is alive, it has to be fed or watered. How can one afford the time when one is so engrossed in the activities going on behind well lighted, air conditioned, comfortable booths? It has taken years, perhaps centuries, to arrive to these ideal working conditions. Why bother with Nature now? In fact, their houses are now being furnished with all sorts of convenient, artificial materials. Even their gardens have beautiful plants and lawns that look just like the real ones, which, of course, allows them to practice their hobbies rather than forcing them to take care of the natural things you are talking about.

VISITOR- But, what of poetry? Don't they ever feel...

TICKET TAKER- *Interrupting.* Poetry? Ah yes! A reasonable substitute of it can be had in a glass box.

VISITOR- *Pointing at the booths.* You call this a reasonable substitute for Poetry?

TICKET TAKER- I am not just talking about any glass box. I am, in fact, refering to The glass box. A marvel of glass among glass marvels. *He points at the TV screen.*

VISITOR- Tell us.

TICKET TAKER- Well you see, you have left your home to come here, and pay your money to look into these booths, one at a time, and the people inside perform one task, admittedly well enough, but, nevertheless, one task only. On the other hand, with the glass box I'm describing to you, things are different: You don't go to it, it comes to you. You don't pay any money, except, of course, to purchase it, and it's free viewing from then on.

VISITOR- But what is there to see?

TICKET TAKER- You name it. It's like a circus. Not only people, mind you, although it has its share of them doing various improbable acts, but animals also. They all perform continuously.

VISITOR- But, are the performers included in the purchase of the box?

TICKET TAKER- Absolutely.

VISITOR- Doesn't one's home get rather crowded?

TICKET TAKER- No, because, you see, they perform one at a time, and while one of them is on the others dissappear.

VISITOR- Then they aren't real.

TICKET TAKER- As real as these people here. *Excuse me. He feeds the machines.*

VISITOR- Or as unreal.

TICKET TAKER- As you please. So, you see, these people don't have it so bad after all. In the privacy of their homes they, in turn, entertain themselves watching others perform behind glass.

VISITOR- But I thought you said they build glass boxes in their spare time.

TICKET TAKER- Oh, both activities can be done simultaneously, in fact, one helps the other.

VISITOR- And their children? What about the children?

TICKET TAKER- I was just going to explain: The hobby of making glass boxes I mentioned before is an admirably selfless one. These people make them with great care, and it does take a long time to finish them, and when they are all done they put their children in them.

VISITOR- Alter what they go thru here every day they put their children in glass boxes, and you call that a selfless act?

TICKET TAKER- Of course! You must prepare a child for life, give him a task. Can you imagine what would happen if they were left to roam around at will? Why, the first thing they would do is to arrive in mass at the Penny Arcades, demand that their parents be set free, and make a big mess of the established order of things.

VISITOR- Not a bad idea.

TICKET TAKER- I bet your parents didn't build you a glass box. You are a perfect example of what I am talking about.

VISITOR- We have been talking about glass boxes ever since we got here, but what we really should be talking about is how to open them before someone else inside drops dead again. Can't we convince you to see this situation our way?

TICKET TAKER-I'm afraid not.

VISITOR- Dropping dead in a glass box. From box to box. One of glass for the unseeing eyes, one of wood for a darkened sight!

The machines stop. The Ticket Taker goes back to feed them. He has to walk thru the Visitor and his friends.

VISITOR- Your answer.

TICKET TAKER- No.

FIRST FRIEND- Your answer.

TICKET TAKER- No!

SECOND FRIEND- Your answer!

TICKET TAKER- No!!

THIRD FRIEND- Your answer!!

TICKET TAKER- Shouting. NOO!!!

The music increases proportionately to the volume of the voices. The Visitor and his friends gather around as if in the mist of some ancient, ritualistic pledge, they look threatening, almost rapacious, avenging angels. The stage darkens, the nicholodeon plays on.

ACT I SCENE II

The Penny Arcade. The Ticket Taker is sitting at his booth. The machines are working, the nicholodeon playing. The man with the black band left alone in his booth collapses like the woman in Scene I. The previous process of removing the body takes place, the empty booth is also taken out, and, as a new glass box with a young man in it is brought in, the lights brighten, and the nicholodeon plays Pomp and Circumstance. The Visitor and his friends enter behind as if following a procession. The glass box is put in place, and made to function by the Ticket Taker.

VISITOR- I see it has happened again, a new victim has been brought in with the proper ceremonies. You could have avoided all of this had you just gone along with our plans.

TICKET TAKER- *Turns, gives an impatient look.* Yes!, it has happened, just as it has happened before, and it will happen again and again. They usually go in couples. One cannot function if the other is taken out. They go in pairs. *Pause- The Ticket Taker goes about his business of feeding the machines.*

VISITOR-We want to talk to your boss.

TICKET TAKER- He is a very busy man. I don't think he'd be willing to talk to you.

VISITOR- Why not?

TICKET TAKES - Because he works on a very tight schedule and personal interviews are very few and far between. He doesn't bother with anything that will not result in the improvement of his business.

VISITOR- All right. What is the procedure one has to go thru to see your boss?

TICKET TAKER- Well. I'm not sure, since I'm not in the main office, and this has always been a very smooth running operation, but I think you have to write in triplicate to his secretary's secretary, and, if she thinks her immediate boss would consider your application, she'll write to you in triplicate also. This correspondence will have to be notarized, and will have to be included with a second letter from you, this time to the boss' secretary. If accepted by her, you will be notified in time, and given a list of instructions to follow. I don't remember them all, but I know you'll have to wear a certain apparel, and practice your motions before you enter the box.

VISITOR- Another glass box, I suppose.

TICKET TAKER- Yes, but it takes more coins to make it work.

VISITOR- I see, and if we go along with all this bureaucratic ritual, can we see your boss?

TICKET TAKER- Yes, you can see him.

VISITOR- And express to him our views freely?

TICKET TAKER- As freely as you want. Your complaints and suggestions will then be channeled thru the proper departments of his vast organization, and an answer will be forthcoming to you in an official letter.

VISITOR- Can't he give us an answer when we see him?

TICKET TAKER- No. Every possible question has already been considered, and given its proper answer long time ago. You'll merely receive the form letter that applies to your case.

VISITOR- Your boss, his organization, you, and these poor people, may as well live in rock boxes, you are so petrified.

TICKET TAKER- Not petrified, my friend, crystalized. The molecules of a solid body, you must know, are said to be crystalized when after a more or less chaotic state they arrange themselves in a disciplined, geometric pattern. Crystalization is the achievement of order. It is the controllable, predictable...

VISITOR- Never mind your allegories. We have to see your

TICKET TAKER- Then write for an interview.

VISITOR- We must see him now.

TICKET TAKER- Nobody sees my boss now.

VISITOR- We are going to see him now, and you are going to help us do it. You are going to push your emergency button. *They surround him, and draw knives.* We are going to have a very non-crystalized amount of persuasion here.

TICKET TAKER- I knew you were a bunch of mal-contents the minute I saw you coming in. *The Visitor jabs him with the knife.* Ahg!

VISITOR- Come on, keeper of the crystal, are you going to short cut us to your boss or not?

TICKET TAKER- No! The visitor jabs again. AHG!!

VISITOR- Yes or no?

TICKET TAKER- Yes!! You bastards!!

He pulls himself away from them, and runs to the TV ser, pushing the emergency button. Everything stops, an alarm bell goes off. The lights dim. The image of the boss' secretary appears on the screen.

BOSS' SECRETARY- *With the inflection of a telephone operator.* **Good morning. What Penny Arcade is this please?**

TICKET TAKER- Penny Arcade 7-418-554, Section 45359-20, Territory 5-24-16-12-15-920.

SECRETARY- Thank you, I will get your card. *Pause as she looks.* Arcade 7-18-554, I have no emergency calls from you on record.

TICKET TAKER- Yes, I know, only this time we have some... visitors who demand to see the boss.

SECRETARY- What is the purpose of this request please?

VISITOR- We demand to see him to talk about the incredible conditions here, where people are kept in glass boxes performing all day, like trained monkeys.

SECRETARY- Just a moment, please. *The image disappears. A "just a moment" sign takes its place. Canned music accompanies it. The Visitor and his friends pace nervously. The image comes back with a plastic smile.* Thank you for waiting. We are now able to bring to you, directly from head-quarters, Speech number 12-9-5, on the subject of Freedom. Ladies and Gentlemen, the Honorable Boss of All the Penny Arcades!

BOSS OF THE PENNY ARCADES- My fellow arcadians: It is not only with pleasure, but with great humility, that I comply to your requests that I appear before you today. Such requests only show that in our highly mechanized, and efficient society, the spark of freedom is still burning. It is encouraging to realize that in this great country of ours, solid citizens still pull themselves away from their daily chores, and valiantly come forth to defend what is most dear to all of us: our personal freedom. Thru the perils of our Revolution, and thru the agonies of several wars we have shown to the world that Liberty has been the inextinguishable flame ever burning in our hearts. Our brothers haven't died in vain, and, if Destiny so wills it, we too are prepared to join the ranks of the immortals.

Menacently. And make no mistake: We will not allow our freedom to falter, neither in the hands of a foreign foe, nor thru the wrong doings of a handful of malcontents. *Thank you, and good day. Canned applause. The nicholodeon plays a rousing march.*

SECRETARY- You have just heard the Honorable Boss of all the Penny Arcades giving his speech 12-9- 5. Thank you fellow viewers. *The nicholodeon plays the march again. A "Thank you" sign appear on the screen, then it fades to darkness.*

VISITOR- So that's it. Speech 12-9-5 answers our question. We can now go home, and be content that the Honorable Boss has spoken to us.

TICKET TAKER- I told you they' ve got all subjects covered.

VISITOR- Warnings and all.

TICKET TAKER- Yes, I don't think I would try to oppose him.

VISITOR- Maybe that's why you are just a ticket taker.

TICKET TAKER- Wouldn't it be more accurate if you said that at least I am the Ticket Taker?

VISITOR- Meaning that you are not one of the caged ones? I don' t think so. You may be able to open the door of your prison, and walk around, but that is just part of your act. The string may be a little longer, but it's still yanked up by your master.

TICKET TAKE:R- I hardly feel the tug.

VISITOR- That is the saddest form of subjugation when a man is not aware of his chains.

TICKET TAKER- Perhaps not as sad as when someone tries in vain to become his liberator.

VISITOR- If you are going to have futility, it's better if it be with dignity.

TICKET TAKER- Dignity! What useless nonsense!
The important thing is that everyone is content here, and that's all that matters.

VISITOR- As content as some bed ridden moron who doesn't know any better.

TICKET TAKER- But content nevertheless.

VISITOR- We are not content. We are leaving, but we are not content! *In frustration he goes to the TV screen, and shakes it up. He tries to press the emergency button. The alarm bell goes off, and a blurred image appears. The Ticket Taker rushes to the ser trying to turn it off The Boss' outline can be seen faintly.*

BOSS OF TUE PENNY ARCADES- Gargled... only show that in our mechanized and efficient society the spark of freedom is still burning. It is encouraging to realize... *He goes on while the lights dim, and the Visitor and his friends rush out with their hands over their ears.*



ACT II SCENE I

Outside the Penny Arcade. The Visitor and his friends are painting posters depicting an open hand with a V on it.

VISITOR- Don't act so impatient!

FIRST FRIEND- I am impatient! Can you imagine what these poor guys feel like waiting for us in the glass boxes just like the Test of them?

SECOND FRIEND- Months to sneak a few guys in, and we may have to wait as long.

VISITOR- Or longer. Oh well, patience is the most important requisite avengers must fulfill. That is if they want to avenge successfully.

FIRST FRIEND- Yes. So we wait.

They keep painting for a while. The nicholodeon plays inside. A young couple hand in hand come out of the Arcade.

GIRL- What are those guys doing?

BOY- They are painting some kind of a political sign, I guess.

GIRL- Ask them.

BOY- What are You fellows doing?

SECOND FRIEND- We are painting signs to help the cause.

BOY- What cause.

VISITOR- You've been inside and ask what cause?

BOY- What does inside have to do with your cause?

FIRTS FRIEND- You haven' t seen anything strange?

BOY- Well, lots of life like dummies, but nothing strange.

VISITOR- Has it occurred to you that those dummies may be alive?

BOY. You mean be real people?

VISITOR- Well, as real as people are these days.

BOY- No, we didn't think of it. They are so engrossed in their chores, and they do them so automatically, that one could hardly call them human.

VISITOR- Well, they are.

GIRL- You mean flesh and bone like us?

VISITOR- Exactly that.

GIRL- How come they are stuck in there doing all those mechanical things?

VISITOR- Well, it seems the Boss of All the Penny Arcades, who is the latest of a long line of bosses, keeps them there, isolated from Nature. The real reason for it has never been made perfectly clear, but it has got to the point where these poor people don't know other things to do than what goes on in there. Oh yes! They also make glass boxes when they go home in the evening. *The boy and the girl look at each other and giggle. What's so funny about that?*

BOY. Oh nothing, it's just that, while watching the dummies, we were talking about our parents having the hobby of making glass boxes at home.

VISITOR- What do your parents do?

GIRL- Mine work in an arcade like this one.

BOY- Mine too, but in the same one.

VISITOR- Doing what?

BOY. Oh, I don't know really, but every evening they talk about what went on at the arcade that day.

GIRL- Isn't that the truth.

VISITOR- And, they make glass boxes afterwards.

BOY- Yeah.

VISITOR- And you don't know what the fox is for?

BOY- No, not specifically, although they say that someday they'll give it to me, so I can be like them.

GIRL- That's what my parents tell me too.

VISITOR- Well, well, and how's the construction going?

BOY- Rather well. It's almost finished, both of them almost are. That's what we were talking about inside.

VISITOR- Kids, I have to give you really bad news.

GIRL- Bad news?

VISITOR- Yes, bad news. Like I told you, those dummies inside are real people. This place is just one link of an endless chain of Penny Arcades, which are run by a boss whose mind has been petrified long ago, just like the minds of the bosses before him. Your parents, and everyone else's parents are merely cogs in this infernal machine, and they are hopelessly caught in it. What's more, they are so conditioned by it, that they cannot break away from their glass cages, even though the glass is most fragile from within. A gentle tap, and their booths would shatter, yet they keep doing their hideous routines day after day, year after year, until they keel over in their jobs.

BOY- I Can't believe it!

VISITOR- But It's true, and there is more: The Penny Arcades cannot function without renewal.

Those poor bastards who collapse doing their mental tasks have to be replaced by somebody.

BOY- By whom?

VISITOR- Here kiddies is the bitter pill. Those glass boxes you have been watching your parents build are for you indeed. You are going to be using them for the rest of your lives, because you'll be inside them mimicking mommy and daddy while someone drops the coin that makes you tick. And just like them, you'll only need a gentle tap on the glass to break away, but you'll stay inside forever. What's more, when you get home in the evening, you will in turn be watching the great glass box, and making glass boxes to put your children in.

BOY- But that's ridiculous. That isn't the good life we've been told about, We don't want to be robots for the rest of our lives! It's true my parents have never explained very specifically what it is that they do at work. I always assumed it was something they liked to do, not some mechanical task like that.

GIRL- Let's go home. I don't like this conversation. Let's go home.

BOY- I have to find out more about this. I'm staying.

GIRL- I am going.

BOY- Go then.

GIRL- She starts going, stops, turns around, and goes back to her boyfriend. Let's find out.

The nickelodeon stops, and the previous funeral march starts. An old person is carried out and away along with his glass box. Another glass box is brought in with a young man in it. The bearers, who act as accomplices of the Visitor, place it aside and upright

VISITOR- One more. All right, let's get the kid out. *To the boy.* Hey fellow! You know where you are going?

YOUNG MAN *Motions as if not hearing well.* What?

VISITOR- *Louder* You know where you are going? *Young man nods affirmatively, points at the, arcade.* Yes, you know where you are going all right but, do you know what waits for you inside?

YOUNG MAN- *Nods.* Yes.

VISITOR- What?

YOUNG MAN- *Shouting to be heard.* Well prepared as I am, and with all humility, having been told that I am, rather talented, I expect I'll be doing all right.

VISITOR- Doing what?

YOUNG MAN- I don't know exactly. You know, jobs are tough to get in this arcade. When I applied for one, there were literally hundreds who were turned down, so I feel very proud that I am given the opportunity to work here. I know it won't be anything important I'll be doing at first, but later, who knows! The top is waiting for someone isn't it? Somebody has to be the boss!

VISITOR- Listen, this is your last chance to get a different view of all you've been taught. This glass box you are in is slowly becoming sound proof, and it already is impossible to break from the outside. We are already shouting, so we can hear each other. I promise you I can sneak you in afterwards if you are not convinced of what I have to tell you. Just get out of the box.

YOUNG MAN- Get out of the box! My parents have spent a lifetime preparing this for me, and you want me to get out of the box just as I am about to enter the Penny Arcade!

VISITOR- A few more minutes, and we won't be able to communicate. Haven't you felt like liberating yourself from this preparation as you call it, haven't you...

YOUNG MAN- As if shouting, but barely audible. What?

VISITOR- *Shouting louder.* Get out!

YOUNG MAN- Inaudible. Mouthing only. How? how?

VISITOR- Tap the glass!!! Tap the glass!!

YOUNG MAN- *He taps the glass. The door opens.* It's incredible!. I was beginning to lose touch with the outside world! *To the bearers.* Hey you guys. It won't take a minute. I just got scared of being inside the box while the glass started to get foggier and foggier, and all the outside sounds were getting harder and harder to hear.

VISITOR- If these guys who brought you here were the real bearers we wouldn't stand a chance kid, but we've done our homework. There is a movement afoot that might, just might do away with all this disgraceful business of the Penny Arcades.

YOUNG MAN- I don't understand.

VISITOR- *He motions to introduce the young man to the young couple. He puts his arms around both boys shoulders, and starts walking with all three toward the back, like a professor trying to convey a new concept to I'll explain.*

One of the Visitor's friends takes off his clothes. Underneath, he is dressed like the young man. He gets in the cage, the bearers close the door, wave good by to him, and take the box into the Penny Arcade.

ACT II SCENE II

The Penny Arcade. Unknown to the Ticket Taker, several of the booths have been taken over by the Visitor's friends. The Ticket Taker is working as usual, feeding the machines. The Visitor enters with two of his friends.

VISITOR- Hello. Three please.

TICKET TAKER- *Going to his booth, and giving tickets and change* Hello. Longtime no see you. It seems the boss' speech did you some good, even if it was a bit gargled at the end.

VISITOR- Yes. It gave us some strong convictions.

TICKET TAKER- *Looking at the screen to make sure he can't be heard.* Even I didn't think it was that convincing, and I've heard it a few times, believe me. *Pause.* Well, as you can see nothing much has changed around here.

VISITOR- I see some new faces inside the booths.

TICKET TAKER- New faces, old faces, what difference does it make? Just faces doing the same jobs. If it weren't for the taking out of dead bodies, and the bringing in of live ones every once in a while, you wouldn't notice the change.

VISITOR- We not ced. *Aside, he gives a sign to his friends. They scatter about the room, and place themselves in front of their comrades' booths.*

TICKET TAKER- So what brings you and your friends to this place again?

VISITOR- We just wanted to play the machines for a while.

TICKET TAKER- I thought you disapproved of the system of operation.

VISITOR- We do. We may still do something about

TICKET TAKER- I' ll be glad to call the powers again for you, only no knives please.

VISITOR- Let's see: What subject could we choose this time to be enlightened about?

TICKET TAKER- Well, I don' t know. You could ask about raising salaries.

VISITOR- Surely you have a set system fot that.

TICKET TAKER- Yes, we do. In fact. I have a raise coming. Thirty five cents.

VISITOR- Thirty five cents?

TICKET TAKER- An hour. You see, it comes with my twenty fifth year on the job.

VISITOR- How generous. I thought perhaps it could have been twenty five cents.

TICKET TAKER- Only twenty five?

VISITOR- To be more consistent with the years.

TICKET TAKER- Oh. Anyway, I don't think it would do any good.

VISITOR- What do any good?

TICKET TAKER- Ask about raising salaries.

VISITOR- No, I don't think it would. I am sure speech number this or that would take care of it .

TICKET TAKER- Well, let's see...

VISITOR- I know, let's ask about talent?

TICKET TAKER- What about talent?

VISITOR- Yes. Let's ask about wasted talent.

TICKET TAKER- There is no wasted talent. Everyone is doing his chore around here.

VISITOR- Yes, everyone is doing his task, his mechanical task. These people have started life with an aim, they had an idea, however nebulous, to express themselves in some way. Out of sheer numbers, among those millions and millions of human beings, if nothing else, by the laws of probability, there must exist many a Michelangelo.

TICKET TAKER- I don' t see any Davids in the street corners..

VISITOR- Precisely. They arn't any, and you know why? Because the spark of genius is squelched at the first symptoms of its shining.

TICKET TAKER- Nonsense. We promote any signs of ability. Look at the man in that booth. He is particularly good, that's why it takes more coins to operate his machine. All the prices are regulated according to ability.

VISITOR- Yes, I see. A specially talented man prostitutes himself for a higher price, he mechanizes his talents, and alter some time in the cage, he becomes extremely able at whatever robot-like activity he is being very well paid for.

TICKET TAKER- What more do you want? An anarchic sort of place, where everyone thinks himself a genius?

VISITOR- No. A sort of place where every human being counts, where he has a value of his own worth, however humble or brilliant, where he is not a puppet, but can hold the strings. A place where the Boss of the Penny Arcades cannot use him, and discard him, like so many other faceless, souless sad figures who shrivel and die in their glass cages every day.

TICKET TAKER- Are you serious? You actually want all that?

VISITOR- Yes! I want, that and much more!. I not only want these people to get out of their cages. I want them to use their ears, I want them to hear the sounds of Nature, so they can understand the artificiality of their present lives. I want them to hear the sound of each other's voices, each other's opinions. I want them to open their eyes, so they can see the beauty of the Universe, so they will see they are part of it, and will understand the terrible lie they have been forced to live, so they can see that, although they are different from each other, they have been made into a formless, mediocre mass that can be manipulated by the higher robots, and made to buy anything they please, from a glass box to a Boss of the Penny Arcades. I want people who will

not sell themselves to the highest bidder, who will not function at the rattle of the coins, who will reject mediocrity as the religion of the exploiter, and will embrace excellence for excellence's sake, who will love their work as part of life, and not think of it as a life sentence thru which they can buy their daily gadgets. I want this petrification to cease. I want a great thaw. I want their warm blood to start running thru their veins again, I want them to use their limbs, to walk the earth, to lie with each other, to touch the warmth of home made bread, to enjoy the texture of wood and clay, and to reject the masquerading fakery of this antiseptic world of theirs.

The nicholodeon sounds as if running out. The machines are still.

TICKET TAKER- Somewhat impressed. Let's ask, then.

VISITOR- Ask what?

TICKET TAKER- You said you wanted to ask the Boss about wasted talent.

VISITOR- You ask.

TICKET TAKER- *I will. He goes to the machines, feeds them, the nicholodeon plays louder, and their action resumes. He then goes to the TV screen, and presses the emergency button. Every- thing stops, the alarm bell goes off, the lights dim, and the tube lights up.*

BOSS' SECRETARY- Good morning. What Penny Arcade is this please?

TICKET TAKER- Penny Arcade 7-18-554. Section 45359-20, Territory 5-24-16-12-15-920.

SECRETARY- Thank you. I will get your card. Pause. Arcade 7-18-554, my files show this is the second emergency call from you in two months, three days, and twenty two minutes.

TICKET TAKER- Sorry to call again so soon. As you must also know by your records, we have had an incidence of young visitors who demand to hear some words from the Boss.

SECRETARY- Yes. Speech 12-9-5 was televised for their assimilation.

TICKET TAKER- It seems, as they put it, it gave them some strong convictions.

SECRETARY- Good.

TICKET TAKER- But now they want to hear further from the Boss, this time about wasted talent.

SECRETARY- Just a moment, please. *The image dissappears, as before, the sign replaces it. Ganned music in the backround.* Thank you for waiting. We are now able to bring to you directly from headquarters, speech number 23-1-19-20-5 on the subject of talent. Ladies and gentlemen, the Honorable Boss of All the Penny Arcades.

BOSS OF THE PENNY ARCADES- My fellow arcadians. It is not only with pleasure, but with humility that I comply to your requests that I appear before you today. Such requests only show that, in our highly mechanized and efficient society, the spark of patriotic restlessness is still burning. It is encouraging to realize that, in this country of ours, solid citizens still pull themselves away from their daily chores, and valiantly come forth to defend what is dear to us all: The exercising of our God given talents. Thru the perils of our Revolution. and thru the agonies of several wars, we have shown to the world that talent, that arcadian know bow, has been the inexhaustible resource from which we have drawn to come up to the task at hand. Our forefathers have shown us their ability. We can do no less. *Sternly.* And make no mistake: We will not allow our know how to be wasted. We will always be number one. No foreign foe will outdo us, nor will we let

individual talent to go unused, but we will work toward applying it to the great cause of an ever expanding chain of Penny Arcades. Thank you, and good day. *Canned applause. The nicholodeon plays the same rousing march.*

SECRETARY- You have just heard the Honorable Boss of All the Penny Arcades giving his speech 23-119-20-5, on the subject of talent. Thank you fellow viewers. *The nicholodeon plays the march, as before, the "Thank you" sign appears, then the screen fades to darkness.*

TICKET TAKER- Well, you can't say the subject wasn't covered.

VISITOR- It was covered all night. Covered with the same type of bureaucratic jargon that all the thousands of tapes they have are covered with.

TICKET TAKER- I must admit speech 23-1-19-20-5 was rather simmlar to 12-9-5.

VISITOR- And to all the others. Your system is so petrified you don't even have the imagination for variety. *He signals to his Friends, The signal. The y feed respective machines three times. After the third time there is a marked reaction from the Friends inside them.* We'll ask the Boss again.

TICKET TAKER- I can't use the emergency lever again so soon. I'd be suspect.

VISITOR- Well ask about foundations.

TICKET TAKER- Foundations?

VISITOR- Yes. Bases. Let's ask why in a place that is so efficient, so well run, where all the happy people are kept in such sound proof, and bullet proof glass boxes, the bases are so weak.

TICKET TAKER- *Nervously.* What are you talking about?

VISITOR- Well, you see my friend. I have been doing some investigating, some scientific research, as you may call it, and it seems all these wonderfully secure boxes have very weak bases indeed. Feet of clay, so to speak.

TICKET TAKER- So?

VISITOR- So it would be very simple, indeed, for someone who wants to do something about this mental institution, to simply topple them all, and liberate these people.

TICKET TAKER- *Triumphantly.* And that, my friend would be impossible.

VISITOR- Why?

TICKET TAKER- Because, like I told you long ago, these people do not want to be liberated, as you call it, they would merely crawl back in their cages, wait for the authorities to straighten the boxes, and quietly resume their activities.

VISITOR- Unless, of course, someone broke the boxes before they could get back in.

TICKET TAKER- You do have poor memory. They are shatter proof.

VISITOR- From the outside. *Pause.* I' II tell you what: Let's pretend we'll stage a get the people out rally.

TICKET TAKER- What?

VISITOR- You'll see. *He goes to the door, closes it, and bars it.*

TICKET TAKER- What are you doing? *He tries to rush to the door and is barred by the Friends. They show him their knives,*

VISITOR- To your cage. *The Ticket Taker complies. The Visitor and his friends take a hidden package of posters out, and paper the walls with them, They unfold a big banner with the open hand and "V" on it and display it prominently.*

TICKET TAKER- What are you doing?

VISITOR- You Honorable Taker of the Tickets have the honor of being the first witness of the first revolution of this Penny Arcade.

TICKET TAKER- You fools!. Our codes expressly forbid this type of activity. It's against the rules!

VISITOR- But not against the will of the people.

TICKET TAKER- You'll find out.

The Visitor and his friends go back to the machines, and play them again three times. The nicholodeon plays progressively louder, while the Friends inside the booths start moving and destroying the implements in them. The others begin to take the rest of the people out by toppling the boxes, and pulling them out thru the bases. The people scream, and call for help. In the melee, the Ticket Taker gets away, and runs to the TV screen pulling the emergency lever. The siren goes off. The nicholodeon winds down, as if loosing speed. The lights dim, as the screen lights up.

BOSS' SECRETARY- Good morning. What Penny Arcade is this. Please?

TICKET TAKER- Breathless. Never mind the numbers, this is a real emergency!

SECRETARY- I am sorry. I must have your Penny Arcade number.

TICKET TAKER- Penny Arcade 7-18-554, Section 45359-20, Territory 5-24-16-12-13-920. This is an emergency!

SECRETARY- Thank you, I will get your card. Pause. Arcade 7-18-554, I have several emergency calls from you on record already.

TICKET TAKER- Yes, I know, but this time the visitors I mentioned to you before are in open revolt, I repeat open revolt, revolt, revolt!!! *The Visitor sees him, and lunges toward him, wounding him in the back with his knife. The Ticket Taker staggers, and tries to hold on to the screen.*

SECRETARY- Just a moment please. *Sign and canned music as before.* Thank you for waiting. We are now able to bring to you, directly from headquarters, speech number 3851-20, on the subject of Revolt. Ladies and gentlemen, the Honorable Boss of All the Penny Arcades. *The Ticket Taker clings desperately to the image.*

BOSS OF THE PENNY ARCADES- My fellow arcadians: It is not only with pleasure, but with humility that I comply to your requests that I appear before you today...

TICKET TAKER- Boss...!

BOSS- Such requests only show that in a highly mechanized and efficient society...

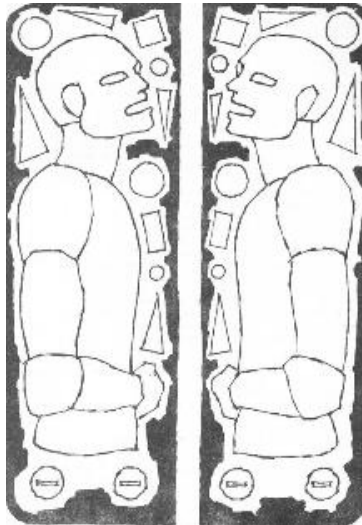
TICKET TAKER- Help please!!

BOSS- ...such as ours, the spark of freedom is still burning. It is encouraging to realize that in this country of ours solid citizens still pull themselves away from their daily chores, and valiantly come forth to defend what is most dear to us...

TICKET TAKER- Son of a bitch!! *With a last outburst of energy he shatters the screen and collapses. Only the sound of the set stays on.*

BOSS- And valiantly come forth to defend what is most dear to us, and valiantly come forth to defend what is most dear to us and valiantly come forth, etc.

The melee is general. The sound of broken glass dominates over the screams of the people, and the swearing of the Visitor and his friends, all resembling the noises of battle. The nicholodeon starts, wounding down to the lowest tones. The lights grow progressively dimmer. Only the revolutionary banner blazes with light. The stage darkens. The Boss' voice, fading, keeps repeating itself.



ACT III SCENE I

The Penny Arcade has been transformed into a workshop of sorts. All glass has been removed from the booths, and the people in them are working at their tasks in a casual, human way. The Visitor's banner is still very much apparent, and he, and his friends are working along with the people.

VISITOR- To one of the friends. **I think I'll talk to them now.** *Claps to get attention.* Please listen to me: It has been a few months since we have achieved the type of life we are living now, and, although the going has been rough at times, mainly because of outside pressure I think we can say we have achieved something here that is a marked improvement over the previous situation. It is too bad that only a handful of arcades have followed our movement, and it is sad to

see so many people elsewhere still living like robots, but perhaps, as time goes by, we'll see them following our steps. Let's hope so. *Most people applaud.* The Big Boss of yesteryear still has control of many an arcade, and his lackeys are going around trying to show the people how our standard of living has gone down since we took over.

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- Well, it's true!

VISITOR- Yes, it is true, but I hope everyone is willing to give up a few material things for the opportunity of becoming a human being again.

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- I am not. *The rest of the people try to hush her.*

VISITOR- No, let her speak. This is what the whole thing is about.

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- Well, I just want to say two things: First, all my life I've been expected to do my job in a certain way, and, after years of working in that manner, one expects to hear the arcade's siren going on at eight sharp, the coffee girl coming in at ten, and lunch time to take place promptly at twelve. The same, of course, is true of the afternoon, and then at five that siren again would tell me that I had put on a good day's work, and I could go home feeling I had done something worthwhile.

FIRST FRIEND- You mean you were glad to be a mechanized bitch whose sense of guilt was exploited by the Boss.

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- Well, I never...

VISITOR- *Glaring at First Friend.* Never mind, you had two things to say.

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- Yes. I wanted to mention also that I am not a young woman, and that the rules of the old Penny Arcade, as bad as you said they were, provided for my old age. Now we don't know I where the next meal is coming from.

VISITOR- Like I said, things aren't easy when you try to fight against an established order of things. I hope with our good will we'll pull thru.

FIRST FRIEND- *To Second Friend.* He is too lenient with these petrified bastards.

MIDDLE AGE MAN- I have something to say also.

SECOND FRIEND- Another one!

MIDDLE AGE MAN. I am not complaining like this woman here about the inconveniences of this system, but I am a God fearing citizen who is also used to putting on a good day's work. Now, I am not going to argue about the advantages of having this here workshop instead of the conditions we had before, but I thought I'd just mention one undeniable fact: Many people around here aren't working as they used to, and the rest of us who do have to support the lazy bums.

VISITOR- You are right.

FIRST FRIEND- *To second friend.* There he goes again.

VISITOR- Everyone here should do his share of the work. Only that way can we hope to be successful. One of the duties of freedom is to share the responsibilities. We cannot shrink from this fact.

SECOND FRIEND- *To First Friend.* He is beginning to sound like the Honorable Boss of All the Penny Arcades.

THIRD FRIEND- *Entering.* It looks like we are going to be isolated.

VISITOR- What do you mean?

THIRD FRIEND- The Big Boss has started blocking all trucks coming this way. We will not be able to get even some of the basic foods in, and it will be very difficult to get our products out.

VISITOR- So be it. That tactic has been tried before, and it also has failed before.

THIRD FRIEND- They are also surrounding the building with scores of empty glass boxes.

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- I've always said we were better off before the revolt.

VISITOR- All right. Listen to me people: Are you willing to withstand the hardships this new development will bring to us?

PEOPLE- *Eagerly, but not regimented.* Yes! yes!

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- Looking at some members of the crowd, as if to get encouragement. We... No! We are not!

VISITOR- *To all the dissenters.* Very well then, do you want to leave this place?

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- Why should we? It's our home. We were happy here until you came.

VISITOR- It is the will of the majority now to live this way. You cannot ruin our attempts by remaining as inflexible as that.

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN - I am not so sure you have a majority. Let's take a count to see how many would like to sacrifice themselves this way.

VISITOR- All right, let's see the bands. Who is for keeping this place just the way it is? About two thirds raise their hands. Fine. Who is against it? *A few raise theirs, some abstain. They are booed and jeered.*

VISITOR- There you have it.

SECOND FRIEND- I propose this people be expelled from the place. *The people agree.*

VISITOR- We cannot do that.

FIRST FRIEND- Why not? It's the will of the people.

VISITOR- For two reasons: First, these people have been liberated by us to live the way they please, they want to stay here, and second, many of them are in a type of work which is essential to us if we want to survive as a group.

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- You may as well forget the second reason. We will not do any work until our conditions are met.

YOUNG GIRL- Why, you selfish, no good... *Lunges at her. Some people grab her. Throw them out!!*

PEOPLE- Throw them out!, throw them out!!

VISITOR- Silence! *To the woman.* For your own sake and ours, do you want to leave?

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- No.

VISITOR- How do you propose, then, to live in peace with us here? You now we'll never give up what we gained with so much sacrifice.

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- Don't you speak to me of sacrifice! The only real victim here was the Ticket Taker, and you murdered him!

VISITOR- Lady, I give you all the rights, but watch your words, or you will regret them.

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- I don't have to watch my words, but you mark them: Long after your revolt is forgotten, people will still be talking about the murdered Ticket Taker, and his executioner.

PEOPLE- Hang her! hang her!! The Visitor's Friends restrain them from mobbing her.

VISITOR- *Shouting over the mob.* All right! all right!! Pause. I' ll tell you what I will do. *To the Woman.* I' ll meet your conditions. *Murmur of dissapproval.*

FIRST FRIEND- *To Second Friend.* He is a fool. Unless we do something about it quickly, he'll ruin the whole movement.

SECOND FRIEND- You are right.

VISITOR- *Angrily to the Woman.* Listen to me and answer: You loved your Penny Arcade just the way it was. Right?

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- Right.

VISITOR- You detest the way we do things. Right?

MIDDLE AGEWOMAN- Yes, we do.

VISITOR- You and your group refuse to do any work unless things go back to the way they were. Correct?

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- Yes.

VISITOR- Very well. Your old Boss has closed all communication between us and the outside world, but has left us scores of empty glass boxes around the building. Therefore, and to make everyone happy, we are going to bring some of those boxes in, we are going to put you to work in them, so you'll again feel at home, and the rest of us will go on living just the way we like it. *The people approve noisily.*

FIRST FRIEND- Salomon at work.

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- *Looking at her group to obtain approval.* It's all right with us.

VISITOR- You'll have your eight, twelve, one and five o'clock siren, and, if you change your mind, you can always get out of the boxes by tapping the glass, as before.

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- I don't think that will be necessary.

VISITOR- All right people, let's get the bastards in!

The people rush out with great enthusiasm, bring the boxes in, set them up, and push the dissenters in, roughing them up in the process.

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- Wait! wait!!

VISITOR- What more do you want?

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- We must have our coffee at ten in the morning, and at three in the afternoon. *The people laugh.*

VISITOR- Anything else?

MIDDLE AGE WOMAN- Yes, on sundays the nicholodeon must play the himns we love. *The people jeer.*

VISITOR- Very well, now get the hell in. The people push her in laughing. The Visitor feeds her machine, then the others. The nicholodeon starts playing, and the dissenters start their automatic tasks, as before. The people outside mock them, and merrily dance around the booths.

ACT III SCENE II

The Penny Arcade. The people are working as in Scene I. The Middle Age Woman and her friends are at their booths, the Visitor is busy with some papers. First Friend, and Second Friend are talking aside.

FIRST FRIEND- I am sure I tell you, I have talked to the people, and many are not very happy with the way things are turning out. They think we have been too lenient with the glass booth crowd and, from then on, the whole movement has been weakened.

SECOND FRIEND- I agree. The Boss of the Arcades has made so much of our bringing the glass boxes back in. He made it look as if were going back to the old ways.

VISITOR- Yes, and you know what the consequence of that was: All the arcades that were ready to revolt have got cold feet, and our own movement is practically isolated.

SECOND FRIEND- I know. You say the people you've talked to arn't very happy?

FIRST FRIEND- They are not, neither are some of our comrades.

VISITOR- *To the Friends.* I need your help.

FIRST FRIEND- *Approaching him.* Yes?

VISITOR- I guess it's no secret to anyone that we are absolutely isolated.

FIRST FRIEND- No, it is not.

VISITOR- The damage is not only physical, shortages of food, clothing, and what have you, but psychological as well. I think the people are beginning to be demoralized.

FIRST FRIEND- Yes, they aren't very happy.

VISITOR- I thought perhaps one way to diminish the impact of this situation would be for us to communicate more with the outside world, at least visually.

FIRST FRIEND- How do you propose to do that?

VISITOR- *Pointing at the broken TV set.* You know, there are many of those in the store room.

FIRST FRIEND- You don't mean bringing one of them out!

VISITOR- Why not? We don't have to talk to the Big Boss, he will not appear unless we go thru the bureaucratic process we hated so much, but from time to time we could be in touch with some of the people.

FIRST FRIEND- But that's ridiculous! You know every one of them is a regimented robot and that's exactly what we've been fighting against. That's what this whole thing is all about.

VISITOR- I can't imagine that, by now, with all the news of our movement, some of those people aren't more sympathetic.

FIRST FRIEND- But you know their minds are petrified. Look at them here: content as can be in their glass boxes.

VISITOR- Perhaps we could even try to reach them thru the box.

FIRST FRIEND- Them? Are you kidding.

VISITOR- No. The people out there. I could talk to them, appear on their Screens, convince them...

FIRST FRIEND- To Second Friend, who has approached them. He is going mad! He wants to dig up a glass box from the store room to replace this one, so we can communicate with the outside world!

SECOND FRIEND- What?

VISITOR- You heard him.

SECOND FRIEND- This is too much. *To the Visitor.* I think you have made enough mistakes already.

VISITOR- You think so? And how would you have handled the situation?

SECOND FRIEND- Much better. I can assure you.

VISITOR- All right. Never mind your wishful thinking. I want you two to go down to the store room and bring...

SECOND FRIEND- You are not sending us anywhere. You've had your chance. We've helped you, but no more. *Draws his knife.* I am afraid you are going to the store room this time. Unless, of course you prefer to venture into the outside world.

VISITOR- What are you doing!

FIRST FRIEND- We are getting rid of you, and all your fumbling.

VISITOR- Just a moment. Listen to me: You are not going to ruin this whole movement for a selfish...

SECOND FRIEND- Shut up!

VISITOR- ...A selfish desire to be the boss!

SECOND FRIEND- Shut up! ...*Jabs him with the knife.*

VISITOR- *Shouting.* People!, people!. Help me!.. *He gets away, the people rush to him, and seize the two Friends.* It's all right, it's all right!

YOUNG WOMAN- Are you hurt.

VISITOR- Just a scratch. One has to fight the enemy outside, and the traitors inside, these days. *To the other Friends.* There are some glass in boxes in the store room like the one that was here on the wall before. Take these two individuals down there with you, and have them carry one of them up.

THIRD FRIEND- What is the box for?

VISITOR- Never mind. I am tired of giving explanations. It's useless trying to be decent with some people. See where it has got me: My own friends stage, an old fashion coup, and try to kill me, go on down. *They go.*

YOUNG MAN- It really is incredible that they would turn against him.

MIDDLE AGE MAN- It really is. As bad as things are, it just doesn't seem fair to do that with him. It just goes to show you that a government can't be too close the people without the danger of being done in.

YOUNG MAN- He'll have to do something with them now.

MIDDLE AGE MAN- Yeah. I wonder what the box will be for, Maybe...

VISITOR- Listen. I want some of you people to go outside and bring two of those glass boxes lying around.

MIDDLE AGE MAN- *To Young Man.* Go, and don't ask questions. He is in no mood to answer. Some people go out. *Meanwhile the Friends come back with the TV screen.*

VISITOR- You can put it where the other one was. While the screen is placed, the people come back with the two boxes. Place them next to the others. You two chose to take part in this movement, and we have gone thru much together. Trying to kill me was no way to show your discontent with the way things are in here. I can't throw you out because the boss and his hounds would tear you to pieces, but I can't let you loose in here either. You are going to be put in those booths for a while, and you will be expected to do your share of the work. It is really ironical that I have to place you in the same situation you fought so much against.

SECOND FRIEND- You are doing this to us because you don't want us to talk about all the mistakes you've made, but you can't repress the will of the people. Somebody will succeed where our knives have failed. *The people comment, but there is no great feeling of adhesion toward the Visitor.*

VISITOR- Enough! Put them in, and lock the boxes. No gentle tap from inside will open the doors this time. *The two Friends are led in, the doors are locked, and the Visitor drops coins in the machines.* The nicholodeon starts playing, and the rebels start their mechanized action. That my idealism and good intentions would come to this! What do I have left, but a handful of free souls around me, not very sure of the advantages of their new life, afraid of the world outside, and fearful of the future inside!, and these petrified minds who started my fall by refusing to become human beings!. *He goes to the booths, and feeds the machines.* Work, work then, you puppets of your own fears! *The nicholodeon plays menacingly.* And you, *to the Friends inside the boxes,* you whom I trusted implicitly, you who shared with me all the hardships of battle, and all the joys of victory, and who, like Brutus reborn, would have buried your knife in my side! You, whom I keep under glass, when the purpose of it all was to shatter it to bits! And I, I who didn't want any power, but wanted the people to have it! I, who fought against the awesome might of the mechanized monster and won, who gave my fellow man his freedom and his humanity back, I, who no longer trust anyone, and who is afraid of everyone for fear that the next person I talk to will be the one wielding the successful weapon! Shouting toward the screen. Damn you, blind monster, exploiter of the race, raper of yourself, damn you! *The people approach him with surprise, trying to help him, some extend their arms toward him. He turns, and looks at them with apprehension. He recoils.* Get away from me!! Don't touch me! Get away!!!!.

YOUNG MAN- Calm down. We are only trying to help you. You have been thru much today.

VISITOR- What more do you want of me? I've given all I can.

YOUNG MAN- We know. We still look up to you for direction. We don't want you to be hurt or we'll be hurt also.

VISITOR- There is something you can do for me if you don't want me to be hurt.

YOUNG MAN- What?

VISITOR- Bring one more glass box in. The one with a hole in front.

YOUNG MAN- What for?

VISITOR- Bring it in!

YOUNG MAN- *To the others.* Come on, let's go. *Some people go out, and bring a booth.*

VISITOR- set it up here. *Points at the spot where the Ticket Taker's booth was located.* I have decided that, if I am to survive this ordeal, and give you directions, as you put it, I'll have to shield myself from the dangers of other possible attacks. This booth is sound and bullet proof, but you can still talk to me, and I to you, thru the round opening in front. It is too bad it has to be this way. He feeds the machines before entering the booth, closes the door behind him, and speaks thru the opening. It is too bad it has to be this way, but it's for the survival of our cause. *The nicholodeon plays on, and the people, downcast, go back to their jobs. After a while the Middle Age Man goes back to the TV screen, and pushes the emergency lever. Everything stops, as before, the alarm bell goes off, the people inside the booths are immobilized, while the ones outside stand up, and look at the tube, as if mesmerized. The lights dim, the screen lights up, and the image of the Boss 'Secretary appears on the tube. The Visitor is oblivious of the situation.*

BOSS' SECRETARY- Good morning. What Penny Arcade is this please?

MIDDLE AGE MAN- Well... It's not a penny arcade any more... I was just trying to...

SECRETARY- I am sorry, but I must have your Penny Arcade number.

MIDDLE AGE MAN- *To the people.* Does anyone remember the old number?

THIRD FRIEND- Penny Arcade 7-18-554. Section 45359-20. Territory... wait, territory 5-24-16- 12-15-920.

MIDDLE AGE MAN- *To the Secretary.* Did you hear that?

SECRETARY- Thank you. I will get your card. *Pause as she looks.* Arcade 7-18-554. my files show some irregularities on your record, but we are excited here at headquarters that you have decided to communicate with us. She Shows no sign of excitement. The Honorable Boss of all the Penny Arcades has been informed of this new development, and a suitable speech is now being prepared for you.

SOMEONE- Shut her up!. Turn her off! *The rest of the people join in.*

SECRETARY- To avoid any repetition of antisocial behaviour, it is my duty to remind you that the new screen and sound system in operation is now vandal-proof. *Smiling.* We are now able to bring to you, directly from headquarters, speech number 20-18-1-16, on the subject of escape. Ladies and gentlemen, the Honorable Boss of All the Penny Arcades!

BOSS OF THE PENNY ARCADES -My fellow arcadian. It is not only with pleasure, but with great humility that I comply to your requests that I appear before you today...

PEOPLE- Shut him off!, shut him off! *The Middle Age Man tries to turn the set off without results.*

BOSS- ..., such requests only show that, in our highly mechanized, and efficient society, the spark of freedom is still burning. *The people mob the screen trying to destroy it, to no avail.* It is encouraging to realize that in this country of ours, solid citizens still pull themselves away from their daily chores, and valiantly come forth to defend what is dear to us: Our right to move about. *The people start covering their ears with their hands, and turning away from the set. The volume increases gradually.* From the perils of our revolution, and thru the agonies of several wars, we have shown to the world that we have always protected the right of their people to shake their chains, and escape to our welcoming shores. We shall always receive them with open arms. And make no mistake: We will not allow this right to be abused, neither by the manipulations of a foreing foe, nor by the wrong doings of a handful of malcontents. Thank you, and good day. *Canned applause. The nicholodeon plays the same rousing march.*

SECRETARY- You have heard, the Honorable Boss of All the Penny Arcades giving his speech number 20-18-1-16. In celebration of the return of Penny Arcade 7-18-554, Section 45359-20, Territory 5-24-16-12-15-920, we will rebroadcast the speech for a second time. *Thank you. Canned applause.*

BOSS- My fellow arcadians, It is not only with pleasure, but with great humility, that I comply to your requests that I appear before you today. Such requests only show that, in our highly, etc. The people rush out, and bring many glass boxes in. The sound level becomes almost unbearable. Shrinking from the ons laught, the people carry their work implements into the booths, and close the door behind them... solid citizens still pull themselves away from their daily chores, and valiantly come forth, etc. *The Visitor comes out of his booth, and watches the screen in disbelief. He then rushes to the booths trying to get the attention of the people inside. He finally stops, and, after tearing down all the posters around the room, he topples the big revolutionary banner. He gives a last bonging look to the place, shrugs, and goes back into his booth...* And make no mistake: We will not allow this right to be abused, neither by the manipulations of a foreign foe, nor by the wrong doings of a handful of malcontents. Thank you, and good day. *Canned Applause.*

SECRETARY- You have just heard the Honorable Boss of all the Penny Arcades in a special rebroadcast of his speech 20-18-1-16, in celebration of the return of Penny Arcade 7-18-554, Section 45359-20, Territory 5-24-16-12-15-920. Thank you, fellow viewers. "*Thank you*" sign appears on the screen, the nicholodeon plays the march, and the tube fades to darkness. The music stops. The Visitor gets out his booth, walks slowly looking into each glass box, and then he starts feeding the machines. The nicholodeon starts playing, and the people resume their robot-like movements. The Visitor goes back to his box. Eventually, the music and the machines stop. A young man walks in.

YOUNG MAN- Not many people around here.

VISITOR- No, not many.

YOUNG.MAN: Paying. One please. *The Visitor gives him his ticket and his change. Thanks. He goes in, looks around, and starts playing the machines. The nicholodeon plays a typical penny arcade melody. He stops by one machine, and, after observing the people closely, he walks back to the Visitor's booth. Hey!, those dummies look like real people!.*

VISITOR- So?

The nicholodeon drowns their conversation. The lights fade.

THE END