

The Inner Circle

Libretto for an opera in two acts based on the book by T. C. Boyle

Composer: Daniel Felsenfeld; Librettist: Kate Gale

Characters

Dr. Alfred Kinsey (“Prok”), Bass-Baritone. Older (mid- to late-40s), professor of Entomology and, eventually, sex research.

Clara Kinsey (“Mac”), Soprano. Wife of Kinsey, older (mid-to-late 40s),

John, Baritone. Young student of Dr. Kinsey, research assistant

Iris, Mezzo-soprano. Wife of John, not thrilled about sex research.

Dr. Herman B. Wells, Justice, Mr. X, Bass Baritone. Department chair, wedding officiator and disgusting oversexed pervert, respectively. Three small but important roles.

Purvis, Tenor. Sex Researcher, John’s rival.

Violet, Dierdre, Soprano. Wife of Purvis and mother of Iris respectively.

Betty, Alice, Soprano. Prostitute and not-so-repressed faculty wife respectively.

All roles save for Wells/Justice/Mr. X require nudity. All roles require singing as part of chorus.

Act One

Scene One

Iris and John meet. Iris asks John to be engaged to her so they can attend the marriage course. At the marriage course, Prok speaks about sex to a mixed audience. John and Iris retire to a bar to discuss the lecture. Betty discusses her voracious need for sex; the chorus chimes in.

Scene Two

Prok takes John’s history. Betty comments that he needs to fuck. The chorus chimes in.

Scene Three

Prok meets with John, hires him, explains the H scale to him. John meets with Iris and invites her on a date. Prok invites John to the house, the same night and John decides to go to Prok’s house to meet Prok’s wife and cement the relationship with his new employer/mentor.

Scene Four

Iris and John on a date. John and Mac in bed. Iris and John on a date. John and Mac have sex on the kitchen floor. Iris and John on a date. John and Prok in a hotel room prepare to have sex. John interviews Alice. Iris reveals to John that she knows he has had sex with Mac.

Act Two

Scene One

Iris and John get married. The Sexual History of Men read by Prok. Purvis is hired and seduces Iris. Iris falls in love with him, and Prok orders the relationship to end.

Scene Two

John has an encounter with Violet. Prok and Corcoran. On the road. Corcoran, Prok and Milk take sexual histories. They take the history of Mr. X. The three men have sex. Iris wants a baby, Prok agrees that it would be good and John and Iris’ duet shows Iris to have the upper hand.

Scene Three

Betty has sex with Corcoran while Prok and Milk watch. Coming home to Iris, John finds he is going to be a father. Baby is born the day before Prok's birthday. Milk goes back to work. The letters to Dr. Kinsey are read.

Scene Four

The reading of the Sexual History of Women. Outcry across the country against Prok. The filming of different members of the Inner Circle which ends with Prok demanding Iris. Prok and Milk fight and Iris leaves. We end in Iris' mother's house. While Prok talks with Iris' mother, John and Iris reconcile. Iris and Prok have the last duet about sex vs. love.

Act One**Scene One****[ARIA: PROK]**

Prok enters, striding to the front of the room. He has two people, John and Betty, who he will point to occasionally, and when he explains sexual positions, he will have them get into these positions to show what he is discussing. He treats them like insects.

PROK

As you all know, I am an expert on gall wasps, an endocrinologist. But today, we will focus on my new subject, human sexuality. We will discuss sexual response and orgasm in the human animal. Let's start with the male. The male penis enlarges through vasocongestion, blood rushing to the organ. At orgasm, it releases between two and five million spermatozoa. To make all this work, the female organ must be ready, the vagina must be spread open as the male organ enters it. For the female to orgasm, the clitoris must be stimulated. Many different positions are possible. The missionary position. The dog-style position, the scissors position, standing up, one standing and one lying, quite a variety. I could go on. But at our next lecture, we will discuss how the human female becomes fertilized and how a married couple might avoid fertilization if they were not ready for a child.

[CHORUS]**CHORUS**

They call him Dr. Sex. He's angering the Provost. Upsetting the mothers, the fathers, the grandparents. Something our parents wouldn't approve of. They told us to go to college, wear a tie, wear long skirts, focus on studies, get a job, get married. Dr. Sex wants us to enjoy our bodies. He says the only abnormalities are celibacy, abstinence, delayed marriage. Nothing wrong with masturbation. Nothing wrong with sex. Nothing wrong with fellatio, nothing wrong with cunnilingus. We didn't even know there were such words. Except for Harry with his dirty books. The rest of us didn't know. Dr. Sex says there's nothing wrong with us. Let's go; let's take a long shower.

INTERIM DUET: JOHN AND IRIS

Class breaks up and Iris and John leave together.

IRIS

I can't believe it.

Neither can I. Do you want a drink?
JOHN

I think I need one.
IRIS

Sitting down at a table at a bar

If my mother knew I'd been there.
IRIS

In my family, there is no sex.
JOHN

Mine as well. No discussion where little boys and girls come from. You know he does interviews about people's sex lives. He wants the details.
IRIS

Or lack of details.
JOHN

I would hate it, he's not even a medical doctor. Would be embarrassing.
IRIS

Case histories, how else will he know what the human animal does?
JOHN

But it's personal.
IRIS

It's important to science.
JOHN

We're not science. We're people..
IRIS

He's studying sexuality, like the mating of insects.
JOHN

We aren't insects. We're not bugs.
IRIS

They both rise.

We're still engaged.
JOHN

Sure we are.
IRIS

She kisses him.

BETTY
We may not be bugs; but we are animals. We're all animals. We want a rough and tumble. God, I love when a man throws me on my back, and I see him reaching for his belt, his zipper. Down there, I think, god love you, let me see you down there.

CHORUS

We're human animals. We all want to be loved down there, touched down there. Adored down there. If we're not fucking, then we're just wooden puppets carrying our brains around on our shoulders. What did Pinocchio want? To be a real boy with a real penis. That could go and explore the wetlands and the headlands.

Scene Two

[DUET JOHN AND PROK]

Prok's study, he is sitting behind his desk and John comes in. Prok rises to meet him and they shake hands. As the interview begins, Prok begins taking notes.

PROK

John Milk, good of you to come. I hope you've enjoyed the marriage course. That's it helped with any misconceptions you and your fiancé might have had.

JOHN

Ah yes.

PROK

Don't worry, I know these attachments are conveniences to follow university rules.

JOHN

Thank you sir.

PROK

How old are you?

JOHN:

Twenty-one.

PROK:

Birthdate?

John: October second, 1918.

PROK:

Birthplace.

John: Michigan City.

PROK:

Parents?

JOHN:

My mother teaches elementary school. My father died at the lake. They don't know what happened. No body was found.

PROK:

How old were you?

JOHN:

Nine.

PROK:

I too have had to do without a father. My father wanted me to be an engineer. Once I went to college to become a scientist, I was on my own. How old were you when you first became aware of the differences between boys and girls?

JOHN:

Five..

PROK:

Any nudity in the home?

JOHN:

No.

PROK:

What happened if your parents saw you naked?

JOHN:

Happened once, I was five, came in from bathing, removed my trunks, my mother enraged, I had no idea why.

PROK:

When did you first masturbate?

JOHN:

Eleven.

PROK:

When did you first see a female naked?

JOHN:

Fourteen.

PROK:

First pubic hair?

JOHN:

Fourteen.

PROK:

First actual sex?

John stands and talks to himself, walking over to a window

JOHN:

I can't tell him. He'll think I know nothing. I can't have that. But I can't lie.

PROK:

Yes?

John, returning

JOHN:

Never, not yet, that is.

PROK:

When did you first see a male naked?

JOHN:

Twelve.

PROK:

When did you first see an erect penis?

JOHN:

Twelve.

PROK:

When did you first touch an erect penis?

JOHN:

Twelve.

PROK:

When did you first bring another male to orgasm?

JOHN:

Twelve.

PROK:

When did you first bring another male to orgasm orally?

JOHN:

Twelve.

BETTY:

He needs a fuck. His mother would say he needs love; that Iris girl that he needs a mate; he needs to fuck. He needs warm; he needs wet. He doesn't need love. He needs to frenzy shoot until his needs are met, and his needs aren't kids or wife or lawn. He's a man, not a pawn in some nuclear haze. This isn't a phase; this is nuclear meltdown. He thinks life's small; he thinks he's stuck. The boy's needs are simple. He needs to fuck.

CHORUS:

His mother would say that he needs love; his girlfriend would say he needs a mate. His needs are simple; he needs to fuck. He doesn't need house or deed, lawn or seed. The man really has only one need. He needs to fuck.

Scene Three

[INTERIM DUET: JOHN AND PROK]

Library, Prok enters, sees John shelving books.

JOHN:

Hello sir.

PROK:

Glad to see you.

JOHN:

Didn't think you'd recognize me.

PROK:

Of course, John Milk. Michigan City, born October 2, 1918. Do you work here?

JOHN:

A lot of late nights.

PROK:

I could use an assistant in the biology library and in my garden.

JOHN:

I'll take it. Thank you.

PROK:

I was just leaving.

JOHN:

May I walk with you sir, I have a question.

PROK:

Of course.

JOHN:

It's about the interview, the questions on homosexuality. Is that normal?

They walk out of the library.

ARIA: PROK

PROK:

I've invented what I refer to as the H scale. It's from 0-6. Zero being completely homosexual. Six being completely heterosexual. In our purest state, we would all be pansexual, but given most religious views, certain forms of sexuality may be taboo, therefore not possible. Most of us suffer from sexual maladjustments. Most of us would be closer to the middle in our natural state. Even with religion, a great percentage of the population hovers between heterosexual and homosexual on the H scale.

BETTY:

I'd do a girl, I'd do a boy. I like equipment. Give me a toy. I want it hot; I want it wet. Think you can keep up? You want to bet? I'll over-run you, I'm hot as hell. I want to suck and suck you well. You want to see this; (*unbuttons her blouse*) come look, come smell, you trembling now, boy, well go to hell.

CHORUS:

We're all somewhere on the H scale, religion has our hands tied behind our backs. Give us unfettered promiscuity. Give us no rules. Give us fucking. We're done with marriage beds and love, what about a good fuck?

Prok heads off, John keeps walking, meets Iris.

INTERIM DUET: JOHN AND IRIS

IRIS:

Hello there John, I'd been wanting to see you, to thank your mother for having my brother and I over. She's so nice.

JOHN:

She can cook. And those cookies. My grandmother's recipe.

IRIS:

Well, it's good to see you.

JOHN:

Would you like to have dinner Saturday night? See a play?

IRIS:

I would love to. You can pick me up at my dorm room. Oakwood Hall.

She leaves. John walks toward his car, encounters Prok.

INTERIM DUET: PROK AND JOHN

PROK:
Ah, I was just packing and leaving.
JOHN:
Good night sir.
PROK:
Was just wondering what you're doing Saturday night. I'd like you to meet Clara, I'm so impressed with you.

To himself
JOHN:
He's so impressed with me.

PROK:
We'd love to have you over for dinner. If you're free. You don't have any plans for Saturday, do you?

JOHN:
No. Not really.

[INTERIM DUET: CLARA AND JOHN MOVES INTO A TRIO]

MAC:
I'm Clara.
JOHN:
Delighted, Mrs. Kinsey, I'm John.
MAC:
Oh please, it's Clara, or better yet, call me Mac. All my closest friends do.
JOHN:
So glad to meet you.
PROK:
(entering) So good of you to come. *(Bringing a platter of cheese and a bottle, pours drinks)* To our research. *(John and Mac join)*

ALL:
To our research.
PROK:
To ten thousand sex interviews.
ALL:
To ten thousand sex interviews. *(They move to the dinner table.)*

PROK:
Did you know ministers and doctors teach that masturbation can cause blindness? Insanity? Ministers should encourage masturbation. It's fun, releases sexual tension easily, quietly.

MAC:
A person can zip down their pants, find relief from that tight feeling in the jaw in just a few moments.

PROK:
Of course having a partner to perform fellatio is even better.

MAC:

Or cunnilingus, although that often takes just a tad longer, requires a trifle more skill.

PROK:

Yes, that's a skill, but not one that can't be mastered with a bit of practice. Why any man who wanted to could bring a female to orgasm. He just needs to take a lot of deep breaths.

MAC:

And the results.

PROK:

A well balanced feeling in the loins.

MAC:

Hard to imagine deciding to invade Greece or Mexico if you were getting laid every day.

PROK:

Impossible.

JOHN:

It's getting late. I should go. It's been too wonderful.

MAC:

You must come back.

PROK:

I'll walk you out. *(They exit.)* I'll need help with taking sex histories. I'm going to Chicago to meet a group of homosexuals. Their histories are so important to the project. I thought you could help. That you'd understand, be attuned. *(Prok takes John in his arms; they embrace deeply.)*

Scene Four

MAC

Our honeymoon was a disaster. A camping trip in the White Mountains, and he couldn't successfully mount me. I cried. We tried. The doctor explained my sturdy hymen, his huge organ, four children later, he's begun to rove. I cannot blame him. He dreams of intercourse. He sees it daily. They tell him tales. And when I dream of sex, it's not with him, it's with the boys he works with. I see them gardening. I see them shirtless. I want them nude. I know he's playing. Why not me too? If we're all insects, all in a zoo, then I'm a gall wasp too, I too can mate. It's not too late for me. I'm ready now. I'll lick their ears, I'll break them in. Their wives will thank me. Or if they don't. I'll thank me anyway. Don't think I won't.

SERIES OF SHORT DUETS

PROK AND JOHN

PROK:

It's good having you as an assistant. I need one. You're learning fast. And our time together, it's good. *(Kisses him.)*

JOHN:

I need to ask you something.

PROK:

Yes?

JOHN:

It's about Mac.

PROK:

Mac?

JOHN:

How you'd feel about me and Mac?

PROK:

Why certainly, I didn't know you wanted to. That is. Why certainly. *(He leaves. Mac enters.)*

MAC AND JOHN

MAC:

Prok is gone for the day. With the children.

JOHN:

I've thought about you every day.

MAC:

I'm flattered.

JOHN:

About us.

MAC:

(Pulling him close) About this. *(She pulls him down on a blanket beside her.)*

JOHN:

I'd always thought sex would be love and marriage.

MAC:

Sometimes it's just sex and friendship.

JOHN:

I like that.

MAC:

Sometimes it's just sex. *(Pause and then John is walking down the street alone. Iris enters.)*

IRIS AND JOHN

IRIS:

Good to see you.

JOHN:

I'm so sorry I missed our date.

IRIS:

I'm not. I had a good time, went with Bobby.

JOHN:

Can I try again?

IRIS:

Sure.

JOHN:

You hungry, want dinner at a roadhouse?

IRIS:
You ever been to a roadhouse?

JOHN:
Hundreds of times.

IRIS:
You're lying, but let's have dinner. *(They sit at a table.)* So what are you doing these days?

JOHN:
I'm Professor Kinsey's assistant.

IRIS:
Sex research? Sounds dirty.

JOHN:
It's not. It's completely normal. *(They walk toward the exit, and outside begin kissing.)*

IRIS:
Is this research?

JOHN:
I'm researching you. I wish we could go some place.

IRIS:
You're suffering.

JOHN:
I'll survive. Good night. *(Iris enters her dorm.)*

MAC AND JOHN

(John knocks on Kinsey's door.)

MAC:
Come in.

JOHN:
I know he's out of town. Just wanted to stop by.

MAC:
Of course, come on up. *(Kisses him, leads him toward the stairs.)*

JOHN:
I've missed you so much.

MAC:
What have you missed?

JOHN:
I missed your lips.

MAC:
I missed your nose.

JOHN:
I missed your hips.

MAC:
Get out of those. *(Undressing him.)*

John, Iris, Mac, Prok, Dr. Wells and the entire cast standing outside, chairs in auditorium style having been vacated.

PROK AND JOHN

PROK:

Congratulations young man on graduation. You have a bright future. I met your mother this afternoon. She must be very proud.

JOHN:

Yes sir, she is. *(He moves away.)*

PROK:

Your mother is a very fine woman.

JOHN:

Yes.

PROK:

A beautiful woman.

JOHN:

Yes.

PROK:

She's just agreed to give me her sex history.

JOHN:

Glad to hear that. If you'll excuse me. *(He goes back into the house, finds Mac in the kitchen, they immediately begin kissing.)* I should go back, to Iris and my mother.

MAC:

Not until we play around.

JOHN:

I'll wrestle you right to the ground. *(She kisses him; they have sex on the floor. He exits, finds Iris.)*

IRIS AND JOHN

JOHN:

I should go. I have to be at work early. I've been starting with my first sexual histories.

IRIS:

Sounds exciting.

JOHN:

Most are boring. They haven't done much. Even the young faculty wives, haven't done much at all.

IRIS:

Tomorrow night then?

JOHN:

Tomorrow night. *(She exits.)*

DUET: ALICE AND JOHN

JOHN:

Thank you so much for coming.

ALICE:

All in the interest of science.

JOHN:

Cigarette?

ALICE:

Please. *(He lights hers.)*

JOHN:
Mrs. Foshay, you're the wife of the new math professor.
ALICE:
Please call me Alice.
JOHN:
Alice, perhaps you could tell me something about yourself.
ALICE:
I grew up in Trenton.
JOHN:
Until what age?
ALICE:
Fifteen.
JOHN:
When did you first begin to masturbate? (*Lights a cigarette for himself.*)
ALICE:
Eleven. In my little room with Mother Goose curtains, my sister Jean was twelve, already had the hang of it, showed me her techniques.
JOHN:
And what technique would that be?
ALICE:
Well, Jean and I and my brother Charlie, we're all double jointed.
JOHN:
Yes?
ALICE:
So Jean and I would get together on the bed, side by side, do a sort of little back flip, hold it there; being double jointed is nice, because we would lick ourselves.
JOHN:
Is this your first marriage?
ALICE:
Yes indeed.
JOHN:
Had you experienced deep kissing prior to marriage?
ALICE:
Yes.
JOHN:
Petting?
ALICE:
Yes.
JOHN:
Had you fondled male genitalia?
ALICE:
Yes.
JOHN:
Cunnilingus?
ALICE:
Yes.
JOHN:

Fellatio.

ALICE:

Oh yes.

JOHN:

Had you experienced orgasm with a partner?

ALICE:

Yes.

JOHN:

Full intercourse, prior to marriage?

ALICE:

Yes.

JOHN:

With how many partners?

ALICE:

Twenty to twenty-five, give or take. It's hard to remember.

JOHN:

How many orgasms do you experience on average?

ALICE:

Ten or twelve.

JOHN:

Monthly?

ALICE:

No. Daily.

DUET: IRIS AND JOHN

(John shows her to the door and then follows her out, goes to Iris' dorm. She joins him, and they walk off together. We then see them in a car.)

IRIS:

Nice dinner, now what?

JOHN:

You know what. *(They begin heavy petting.)*

IRIS:

I love you.

JOHN:

Do you want to? In the backseat?

IRIS:

I love you, but I can't go all the way.

JOHN:

Why not? What's the matter?

IRIS:

I just can't. I'm not.

JOHN:

Come on, Iris, it's nothing. It's easy. You'll like it. You know what Prok's found out?

IRIS:

What?

JOHN:
Premarital sex is beneficial. People who have it are better adjusted. They're more normal. Their married lives are better.

IRIS:
Pre-marital, is that what you said?

JOHN:
Exactly.

IRIS:
I take it this is a proposal.

JOHN:
Indeed. *(They tear off each other's clothes and the stage goes dark.)*

DUET: PROK AND JOHN

(John enters the office where Prok is working.)

JOHN:
Prok, I'm getting married to Iris.

PROK:
Congratulations! This will be so helpful to the project. A married man inspires more confidence in the interviews.

JOHN:
In March.

PROK:
It will have to be May. My garden is perfect then. Mac can make something special, a persimmon cake. I'll make a dinner feast, cold meats, goulash, and of course, champagne.

JOHN:
Iris' mother and my mother may have plans.

PROK:
May will be perfect, how is the sexual adjustment? Does she understand that sex outside of marriage is normal? That you must have an observable sex life?

JOHN:
We're fine, sexually.

PROK:
Ah, cars, glad I've loaned you the Nash. Before cars what did we do? And Iris? She'll need to give me her history.

JOHN:
Ah, yes.

PROK:
Ready for a short trip? Gary, Indiana.

JOHN:
But of course. *(They exit. They enter a hotel.)*

PROK:
A good trip. It's good to get the history of Negroes. Very important for people who like to insist on differences.

JOHN:

That prostitute, so sad, sex with her father, her older brother, married at fourteen, the venereal diseases, the pimps. I wanted to help her.

PROK:

That's not what we're here for. We're researchers. As you know, a white prostitute's history is often exactly the same.

JOHN:

Yes.

PROK:

(Coming toward him, kissing him.) Want to join me in the shower, then we can call it a night?
(Stage goes dark, then John is alone with Iris.)

DUET: IRIS AND JOHN

IRIS:

Prostitutes? You were interviewing prostitutes?

JOHN:

It's part of the research.

IRIS:

Do you ever sleep with them?

JOHN:

Of course not. It would be unprofessional. We don't have sex with any research subjects.

IRIS:

Did you ever sleep with anybody? Besides me?

JOHN:

Of course not.

IRIS:

But doesn't Dr. Kinsey say sex is normal? Isn't sexual experimentation part of the program?

JOHN:

He's happily married. He wants us to be as well.

IRIS:

You're lying to me. You've slept with people.

JOHN:

Right, who have I slept with?

IRIS:

Mac, that's who.

JOHN:

Who says?

IRIS:

Mac told me.

JOHN:

Well?

IRIS:

Maybe I'll have sex with Mac too.

Act Two

Wedding Scene**TRIO: JUSTICE, JOHN, IRIS**

JUSTICE:

Do you, John Milk, take this woman, Iris McAuliffe to be your lawfully wedded wife? Will you love, honor and cherish her, from this day forward, forsaking all others, keeping only unto her for as long as you both shall live?

JOHN:

I do.

JUSTICE:

And do you, Iris McAuliffe, take this man, John Milk, to be your lawfully wedded husband? Will you love, honor and cherish him, from this day forward, forsaking all others, keeping only unto him for as long as you both shall live?

IRIS:

I do.

PROK:

(Off to the side we see him in his office, reading aloud.) The book is emerging. Sexuality and the Human Male.

18 per cent of males have at least as much of the homosexual as the heterosexual in their histories for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55.

13 per cent of the population has more of the homosexual than the heterosexual for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55.

At all social levels, premarital intercourse occurs much less frequently among males who are devoutly religious. It occurs more frequently among city boys than farm boys.

Marital intercourse, although it is the most important single source of sexual outlet, does not provide even half of the total number of orgasms experienced by the males in our American population.

There seems to be no question but that the human male would be promiscuous in his choice of sexual partners throughout the whole of his life if there were no social restrictions. Extramarital intercourse may occur . . . irrespective of the satisfactory or unsatisfactory nature of sexual relations at home.

We've only begun on Sexuality and the Human Female, but that book will follow.

We've learned that the majority of females are not affected by the display of an erect phallus. A significant percentage are offended by it.

DUET:

IRIS AND PURVIS

IRIS:

You must be Prok's new assistant Purvis. I've come for John.

PURVIS:

He went with Prok for interviews, but he should be home tonight. Let me give you a ride. But first, let's sit and chat a bit. I want to get to know you.

IRIS:

Are you here to take John's place?

PURVIS:

Of course not, I'm here to help. As we all are. It's such a pleasure getting to meet you. Knowing we're all on the same team. Have you given your sex history?

IRIS:

Not yet.

PURVIS:

But you will, beautiful. Come see me tomorrow. We can take it then.

IRIS:

I can come tomorrow. John's been after me for months. Prok as well.

PURVIS:

Well, you're key here. You're inner circle.

IRIS:

It's good to get to know you too.

PURVIS:

Come on, have a drink, it can't hurt. *(Pours them both a drink, they clink glasses and drink.)* To getting to know you.

IRIS:

Sounds about right.

PURVIS:

I hear you play the clarinet.

IRIS:

I love it, I love to practice when John's away. I get lonely.

PURVIS:

I'd love to hear you. You should always feel free to call if you're lonely. A woman like you, Iris, should never be lonely.

IRIS:

My father was a milkman. I come from a small town and here, there's just the sex research. I feel outside.

PURVIS:

Oh, Iris, you should feel inside. We all want to be inside.

IRIS:

What does it mean to be inside

PURVIS:

That's what I'm going to find out. *(The lights go low and they begin kissing and gradually collapse onto the desk.)*

INTERIM DUET: JOHN AND IRIS

JOHN:

Where were you? It's late.

IRIS:

I went to the office to find you, found Purvis instead.

JOHN:

He convinced me to give my sex history. He's very persuasive. And Prok says if I do, he'll get a waiver so you and Purvis don't have to go to war.

JOHN:

He'd do that anyway.

IRIS:

Blackmail, but there it is.

JOHN:

What do you mean 'persuasive'?

IRIS:

We're all human animals. Just like you and Mac. She told me everything. You lied to me, you, John Milk, my husband.

JOHN:

I didn't want to surprise you or hurt you.

IRIS:

Well, you lied about Mac, but you were right about sex. You said sex was just the human animal rubbing their parts together. That's all I'm doing.

DUET: PURVIS AND JOHN

JOHN:

I feel like my gut's been punched. Like air's been let out of me.

PURVIS:

The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor. Nothing will ever be the same. It's as though history is speeding up.

JOHN:

I was thinking of my own life.

PURVIS:

You don't think I did anything without asking Prok?

JOHN:

You asked Prok's permission to fuck my wife?

PURVIS:

He gave the go ahead. I know you've probably seen my sexual history and know I keep a book and I've fucked hundreds of males and females in equal numbers, but Iris? Going for her without Prok's blessing would be suicide.

JOHN:

What about asking me?

PURVIS:

She doesn't belong to you. She belongs to herself and to the Project. Wait till my wife Violet gets here. She's fully initiated; she's ready.

JOHN:

What am I? Some obsequious little clerk in a Dickens novel?

DUET: IRIS AND JOHN

IRIS:
I'm in love.

JOHN:
He's a player.

IRIS:
He makes me float on air.

JOHN:
He's an operator.

IRIS:
He's a musician. A conductor. A violinist.

JOHN:
He's not a conductor. Conductors focus. He's more like a tenor, a soprano. His voice going everywhere.

IRIS:
I've always loved a good tenor, or even a soprano. Maybe I have an H scale too.

JOHN:
We haven't even been married a year.

IRIS:
You'll always be my first love. But this is bigger. Better.

JOHN:
He's married.

IRIS:
You can't imagine how he feels. You should see him.

JOHN:
I have seen him. What do you think we do on these road trips? Masturbate? He's a sex researcher. It's just sex to him.

IRIS:
Ah, that's what you call it, research. I can do this too, I'm going now. I'm going off to do some research of my own. He's a virtuoso. He can play the horn and whistle. You shouldn't even shine his shoes. He's got this wild throbbing...

JOHN:
I don't need to hear this.

INTERIM DUET: JOHN AND PROK

JOHN:
(Alone outside Prok's house.) She left me a note, some poem.
"I never again shall tell you what I think.
I shall be sweet and crafty, soft and sly...
And some day when you knock and push the door,
Some sane day, not too bright and not too stormy,
I shall be gone, and you may whistle for me."

(Knocks and Prok opens the door.)

JOHN:

She's left me. We haven't been married for even a year and she's left me. Purvis got started on her. She's in love with him. She's moving in with him.

PROK:

We can't have that. Not good for the Project. We need people to take us seriously. Not think we're bed hopping. *(Calling to the next room.)* Mac, call Purvis, have him bring Iris here.

JOHN:

You gave your blessing to the whole thing.

PROK:

We're consenting adults. No one needs my blessing for anything they do in bed. We all do exactly what we want. The point is that we keep track; it is all documented, that we have records.

JOHN:

I love her. I want her back.

PROK:

We can't afford to give the public ammunition.

JOHN:

She says she's doing research.

PROK:

These things should be pleasure given, pleasure taken, but strictly confidential. We can't have this. Not acceptable. I'll deal with Purvis. You deal with your wife. *(Iris and Purvis enter.)*

CHORALE GROUP: Iris, Purvis, Prok

PROK:

You can't do this. John, take your wife out of here. Take her home.

IRIS:

Not leaving. Not until you tell me who elected you God.

PROK:

Explain the situation to Mrs. Milk.

PURVIS:

I'm a sex researcher, I work here. I'm married. I will stay married. What we were doing was play. Playtime. Nothing more. Exercise. Like anyone might do. It isn't love. Love is your life. It's who you spend your life with. Sex is the movement of the body toward pleasure like eating food or drinking wine. Who you eat or drink with does not sustain life and love. We're sex researchers. We document the private.

PROK:

If you continue Mrs. Milk, your husband will lose his job as will Purvis. Your affair is over.

IRIS:

Do I have a voice here? Do I have a say about who I am in love with? Who I live with? Who I sleep with? Isn't anything sacred? Isn't anything personal?

PROK:

You have no voice. The personal is public. The sacred has been subverted. The private space is now our collective space.

IRIS:

What about a love that touches on divine.

PROK:

Sexual love is not divine. It's the two genders wishing to mate. Your life is part of my hive. Go home now. Go home.

Scene Two:

DUET: JOHN AND VIOLET (at the office)

VIOLET:

So good to meet you, I've heard so much about you from Purvis.

JOHN:

Mrs. Corcoran.

VIOLET:

Call me Violet. Prok says things have been difficult.

JOHN:

They have.

VIOLET:

That's why I moved the girls in the middle of the semester. We were going to wait and let them finish, but...

JOHN:

Purvis needed you.

VIOLET:

I'd like to think I can be a help with the Project.

JOHN:

In what way?

VIOLET:

Well, Prok seemed to think that perhaps, in the light of things, it might bring symmetry to our inner relationships if...

JOHN:

You're a beautiful woman, a smart one, I can see that.

VIOLET:

Prok suggested it; I'm game if you are.

JOHN:

I like the way you think. Thinking ahead.

VIOLET:

Well, you see, Purvis and I are free spirits, but we are married and we intend to stay married. I don't know if Iris fully appreciates that. Purvis is worried about her. That's why I thought you and I might work something out.

JOHN:

I hear you. I do.

VIOLET:

Come on, *(pulling him to the couch, seating him and stepping gracefully into his lap)* Come, come John, let's enjoy ourselves.

ARIA

PROK:

(outside the office alone, holding a newspaper)

PROK:

All you read is the war, the news, we've dropped the atomic bomb, the war is ending, there will soon be another. The Project is proceeding. More sex diaries. More H histories. We have found ways the female can increase the grip of the vaginal walls on the penis thus increasing pleasure.

DUET: PROK AND Mr. X

(Mr. X enters, John and Purvis join Prok and Mr. X, John is taking notes. Purvis sits by as well.)

MR. X:

Dr. Kinsey I presume.

PROK:

Indeed. Your sex diaries have been very helpful to our research. And will remain completely confidential. I can't say how happy I am to meet you. Someone of your experience.

MR. X:

You've seen the diaries, now see the pictures. *(He begins handing out photos, sex toys, lubricants and a large drill)* What you see here is evidence of infant sexuality.

PROK:

I see. Very interesting. And the drill? *(Holding up a drill.)*

MR. X:

It's for drilling.

PROK:

Drilling?

MR. X:

I work for the government; most of my life is in hotel rooms. I drill and then I observe. Everything. Midgits, monkeys, whores, children, old men; sex is my hobby, observing sex is my other hobby.

PROK:

I see. Very interesting.

MR. X:

Dr. Kinsey, you have encountered a rare specimen. I am the most highly sexed individual you will ever come across. Numero uno. No one like me. No one.

PROK:

Really, is that so? Tell me.

MR. X:

I'm an old man now. I still beat off all the time. You know how they'll say a Sapphire can go from zero to sixty miles an hour in 13 seconds? I can go from nothing to orgasm in ten seconds flat. Is that a record?

PROK:

I would think so.

MR. X:

You don't believe me? Take out your watch? Got a second hand? Tell me when.
(Opening his trousers, pulling out his penis.)

PROK:

When. *(Ten seconds later, he is finished, puts himself away. Purvis lights a cigarette.)*

MR. X:

You see? I'm a hell of a thing.

PROK:

Indeed. Shall we take your sexual history? We can break for lunch if necessary.

MR. X:

We'll need to. Absolutely.

TRIO:

PROK:

Excellent research. Amazing. Unbelievable. I've been corresponding with him for years.

JOHN:

Iris would say he's disgusting. We should turn him in.

PURVIS:

Almost perfect recall. Two and a half days for his exploits.

PROK:

All those family members. Father, grandmother, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles. Boys, girls, so many children, women, men, dogs. Sheep, I get, but the parrot? That was a surprise.

JOHN:

A surprise is candy for Christmas. This is a tragedy. A travesty. A horror.

PROK:

It's an observable phenomenon.

JOHN:

Wasps are observed and preserved in their natural state.

PROK:

This is his natural state.

JOHN:

Iris is right. He shouldn't be allowed to live.

PROK:

But he is alive. And we're watching him.

JOHN:

Why are we just watching?

PROK:

The journalist, the researcher observes. *(Stripping down.)* John? Purvis? You ready?

PURVIS:

(Stripping to the waist and reaching for his pants.) As ready as I'll ever be.

JOHN:

(Taking a sip of the flask.) Getting there. Getting there.

Scene Three

(Back at the office)

INTERIM DUET: John and Prok

JOHN:

It's Iris, she's angry that we were away for a month. She's gotten a cat. And now she wants a baby.

PROK:

But this is wonderful. Children are such a blessing.

JOHN:

I'm not ready. I'm young; we don't have the money.

PROK:

You'll be ready when the kid's born.

JOHN:

I told her no; she made me sleep on the couch.

PROK:

You want to sleep in the bedroom? I say you're ready to be a father. Or haven't you learned anything as a sex researcher? Good Lord, John, wake up. Women control us with their legs. Like scissors, opening and closing. Yes. No. Yes. We wait for yes.

JOHN:

What if we go for yes elsewhere?

PROK:

Sometimes it works. Gives a little relief. But it backfires. Couches are hard on the back.

John:

ARIA becomes DUET (John walking home alone)

Ah, Iris, Prok's given his blessing. Isn't that wonderful? We can have a baby. A family. Iris, if you want a baby, I want a baby. But just remember, you can't give me ultimatums. You can't issue orders. You just can't. But this time, this is okay. Prok says so. I just want to make something clear. *(entering the house, he sees a glass of whiskey on the table, goes over, takes a drink, swings open the bedroom door, Iris is standing there naked)* Iris.

IRIS:

John, I was just waiting for you.

JOHN:

Should we?

IRIS:

There are no condoms. I flushed them down the toilet.

JOHN:

Well then.

IRIS:

You were going to say something?

JOHN:

(approaching) Not really, no.

IRIS:

You weren't going to lecture me a teeny bit?

JOHN:

I completely forget what I was going to say.

IRIS:

Who's in charge John.

JOHN:

I wouldn't know?

IRIS:

Is it Prok? Is it you?

JOHN:

I'm not sure.

IRIS:

Why don't you get down on your knees right now and we'll make sure.

JOHN:

Well, I was going to.

IRIS:

Don't make me say it twice.

JOHN:

(Getting down on his knees.) You're the boss.

IRIS:

Very nice.

Scene Three

BETTY:

In school you learn about the explorers. All men. Magellan circled the globe. Captain Cook's men got syphilis in Hawaii. I want to be an explorer. Of the male of the species. I want to walk in the garden, take off my clothes, invite the snake over for dinner. Eve calls, Adam answers.

QUARTET: Prok, John, Purvis, and Betty

PROK:

Betty, can we count on you for absolute secrecy?

PURVIS:

She's okay.

PROK:

Betty?

BETTY:

Absolutely, these lips are sealed after tonight.

PROK:

Well then, a scientific moment. We will observe, take notes, the human animal in congress. You see mostly when one is engaged in the act of coitus, one cannot focus on each second, the moistening of the vulva, the hardening of the penis, the opening of the lips, one is distracted. John and I will observe, scientifically, of course.

BETTY:

I'm game. I like fun times. Transgression.

PROK:

We must understand sex from the outside. Observe. Take notes. Teach ourselves.

PURVIS:

Why don't you all take a seat, enjoy yourselves. We will demonstrate.
Purvis and Betty begin to kiss and undress.

PROK:

You see the excitement, the arousal.

JOHN:

I do.

PROK:

We can only observe thus casually because we are not involved.

JOHN:

Not involved.

PROK:

(taking notes) Science requires distance.

JOHN:

This is actually a rather short distance.

PROK:

Thus perfect.

JOHN:

Quite.

PROK:

One can take notes, without arousal.

JOHN:

(turning around to stare at Prok) That's probably an overstatement.

PROK:

You see her state of excitement.

JOHN:

Quite so.

PROK:

His state of excitement.

JOHN:

Indeed.

PROK:

What do you feel seeing this? In the interest of science.

JOHN:

That certainly if the Pope were present, he would feel arousal.

PROK:

I'm not clear what you're saying.

JOHN:

If we had a whole audience here, they would be feeling arousal.

PROK:

Are you sure?

JOHN:

Maybe the men.

PROK:

Exactly. For women, male genital display equals threat. For men, female genital display equals invitation.

JOHN:

It feels like we shouldn't be here.

PROK:

I only wish I could watch this every day, take notes, like I watched the gall wasps. Thousands of gall wasps. I wish I could watch all the members of the inner circle, mating like insects. We are all insects.

(Stage goes dark. John emerges. Goes home, opens the door to find Iris waiting for him.)

INTERIM DUET:

IRIS:

Hard day at the office?

JOHN:

Long day.

IRIS:

Need a drink?

JOHN:

Need you.

IRIS:

Drink first, I have news.

JOHN:

Are you drinking?

IRIS:

Strawberry soda for me. We're going to have a baby. *(They toast. John puts his arm around her to lead her toward the bed.)*

JOHN:

Let's celebrate. *(They lie down and the stage goes dark.)*

DUET: (Office, Prok and Dr. Wells)

DR. WELLS:

Well, you've put Indiana University on the map. With the book on the Human Male, you have made history. People are talking about you all over the world. More students apply to this university because of you than any other professor.

PROK:

The letters flow in.

DR. WELLS:

(Picking up one) Dr. Kinsey, my husband wants to perform unnatural acts like kissing my private parts. Could you write to him, tell him to cease and desist?

PROK:

Dr. Kinsey, I have a fine wife who's a good mother to our six sons, but she no longer wants sex. Is this natural for a woman her age? She's thirty-eight.

DR. WELLS:

Dr. Kinsey, I am a young teenaged girl, I like to play with myself and with two other girls in my class. Do you think I'm normal?

PROK:

They all want to be normal. That's just the point. Normal is just an idea. There's a huge range out there. *(Stage goes dark, then we see John leaving the office.)*

JOHN:

Prok, Dr. Wells, good night. *(He enters a bar, sees Betty sitting at the bar. Sits down, orders a drink.)*

DUET: JOHN AND BETTY

JOHN:

Good evening.

BETTY:

Good to see you. I hear your wife's pregnant.

JOHN:

Big as a house.

BETTY:

Close then. Is she difficult?

JOHN:

It's not what I expected. She slouches around the house. I come home to hot and messy. No dinner. Been working all day. And not so much as a can I please you?

BETTY:

Want some of my steak. I take it rare to bloody. Goes well with whiskey. Pleasing isn't everything. What about teasing. *(Takes off her sweater.)*

JOHN:

Are you a professional?

BETTY:

No, I don't take money, I just really like men. How they feel, how they smell, here, taste the steak. I like them. I like you. *(Unbuttons the top of her dress.)* A woman doesn't need to be a pro, to like a throw. Can't I just want you?

JOHN:

Betty, I like you too.

BETTY:

Is liking men a crime? Is being frisky? *(She pulls her skirts up revealing her garter belted legs.)*

JOHN:

Not a crime to be risky? To like fun.

BETTY:

Do you know what I like after a good steak?

JOHN:

Let me guess.

BETTY:

Let's walk toward my flat while we guess. *(She continues to unbutton her dress.)* Don't you like when the air's steaming in the night time? Don't you like when you've finished spinach and steak and the air's all wet, the sky flat gray and then arced with stars and then nothing, you can't see anything any more. *(They walk out and John kisses her, puts his arm around her. She bites him.)* I'll eat you, boy. When I'm done with you they'll be nothing left. No stars in the night heaven. No God.

Scene Four:

INTERIM DUET

(Hospital room, Iris is in labor.)

JOHN:

Iris, our baby is about to share a famous birthday. Five minutes from now, he will share a birthday with Prok.

IRIS:

Nooooo. *(The baby is born.)*

JOHN:

He missed it by four minutes.

IRIS:

Yes, yes, yes.

(Fade to black and then open on a film of porcupines having sex, John and Iris, Prok and Mac, Purvis and Violet watch)

PROK AND PURVIS

PROK:

We must use this in our research.

PURVIS:

Invaluable. No one has ever filmed the human animal copulating.

PROK:

We will be pioneers.

PURVIS:

It could be dangerous.

PROK:

Exactly. You think films of sex could be the kind of thing people like?

PURVIS:

Quite possibly.

PROK:

You never know what could catch on.

PURVIS:

Sometimes I wonder if people wouldn't even pay money for films about sex.

PROK:

Sex films, if widely available would interfere with work.

PURVIS:

You think? It's hard to imagine.

PROK:

People preferring to watch sex films than putting on a tie, facing their desk?

PURVIS:

Or watching sex films at their desk.

PROK:

Quite unlikely. *(Fade to black. John and Iris leave together, get into the car.)*

JOHN AND IRIS

Was that okay?

It was good to get out for a night.

Yes.

Porcupines mating. It's an idea.

You getting ideas?

I am.

Well, let's get home then.

No, I'm thinking no.

What are you thinking?

(Pulling his head down.)
Here, now.

JOHN:

IRIS:

JOHN:

IRIS:

JOHN:

IRIS:

JOHN:

IRIS:

JOHN:

IRIS:

QUARTET: PROK, MAC, PURVIS, JOHN*(Hotel Room)*

Mac, so glad you could join us.

Well, now that the kids are gone, I get to see what happens on these trips. I always wondered.

We take sex histories and stay in rotting places like this.

Eat rotting food.

Those porcupines could manage sex, yet so many humans can't. Too much armor.

When one wants to, the other doesn't.

We're all guilty. We don't seize the day, don't seize the moment. When the possibility for pleasure is right in front of us, we hassle, we wait.

We debate, we buy another drink, we survey the room to see if a better partner appears.

PURVIS:

MAC:

PURVIS:

JOHN:

PROK:

PURVIS:

PROK:

PURVIS:

MAC:

It's amazing the human race has survived at all considering religion and the rules around sex.

PROK:

I say we break them all. We're sex researchers. We're at the core, at the inner fountain, at Delphi, we should be stripped of contaminated rules. We should be living in the body. Fully in the body and in the mind, not strapped to the social or religious apparatus.

PURVIS:

There's nothing holding us back. I don't just worship at the temple of Dionysius. I live there. God of sex, wine and intoxication, though probably not in that order.

PROK:

Oh, we're still as inhibited as the next guy.

PURVIS:

Speak for yourself.

PROK:

Take Mac. She's a desirable woman sitting here, while we chat about sex. One of us should take advantage of the situation. Mac, you're game, yes?

MAC:

(putting down her knitting reluctantly) All right.

PURVIS:

Ah, well, convention doesn't allow us to quite...

PROK:

Screw convention. Purvis, you first.

(Room goes dark as Purvis and Mac disappear into the bedroom.)

DR. WELLS AND PROK

(Fade to black, come up on Dr. Wells and Prok)

DR. WELLS:

Professor Kinsey, you knew this would happen.

PROK:

Dr. Wells, I am a scientist. I study science. When I released *Human Sexuality and the Female*, I knew there would be an uproar.

DR. WELLS:

Your funding has been cut. The university is asking me to answer for you. About you. The Rockefeller Foundation has cut your funding.

PROK:

This research must go on.

DR. WELLS:

What did you expect? You're undermining the morals of American women.

PROK:

I researched. I wrote about what they do, not what they should do.

DR. WELLS:

According to your research, women masturbate, they think about sex, they like sex, they fool around. They're thinking sexual beings. They're just like men.

PROK:

Oh no they're not. That's why two different volumes. Women, men, we're all people. The only mammals that mate 365 days a year, in heat 365 days a year, who continue to mate, even after the female is infertile. We humans mate.

DR. WELLS:

Well, we mate without money then.

SEXTET: JOHN, IRIS, PROK, MAC, PURVIS, VIOLET

PROK:

What we are here for tonight is to film sex. So I would like you to all start by taking off your clothes. (*All undress.*) This is science. What we are doing here tonight is in the interest of science. It is because we all believe in the project. We all want the project to go forward. We all believe in this. Filming is the next step in the process of observing humans mating. John, would you like to begin?

JOHN:

I'm not ready.

PURVIS:

I was born ready.

(*Prok and Purvis approach the bed. Then Mac and John.*)

PROK:

Iris, it's your turn.

IRIS:

I'll do it with Purvis.

PROK:

No, you'll do it with me.

IRIS:

No, me and Purvis.

PROK:

You'll do it with me.

IRIS:

I would die first.

(*Iris gets to her feet, dresses and is running down the stairs, while John launches on Prok and they roll about the floor in a free for all sort of fight. When John gets to his feet, he grabs his clothes, pulls on his clothes and follows his wife.*)

DUET: JOHN AND PROK: In the office

JOHN:

Prok, can we talk?

PROK:

Certainly.

JOHN:

There were difficulties.

PROK:

With the female of the species, that's par for the course. They don't accept fucking as fucking. They don't understand math, science, counting. They confuse sex with feelings. They start to get emotional.

JOHN:

But do we? If it's our own wife. Our own wife just fucking someone else. Do we males take that as par for the course?

PROK:

I do. And you, you're my own son. What you did was emotional. It has no part in our research. Do you understand?

JOHN:

Iris has left me.

PROK:

She'll be back. Research shows women have the same needs as men. She'll be back. It's a crime to put them on some Victorian pedestal. They don't want to have sex in the dark once a month. They like fucking as much as men. They're not aroused as often. Men are mentally aroused many times a day. Women are aroused by contact not visual stimulus. In most they cases find male genitalia ugly and loathsome. Therefore women get to be the keepers of morality.

JOHN:

What if she doesn't come back?

PROK:

Your wife is sex shy, she needs to open up.

JOHN:

She's not Violet; she's not Betty. Betty's a nymphomaniac.

PROK:

John, a nymphomaniac is someone who has sex more than you do.

JOHN:

Prok, I love her. She's gone and I love her.

PROK:

And I love Mac, and I love you. Come on, I have a lecture to give in Michigan City, you can help. Her mother lives there, yes?

INTERIM DUET: DEIRDRE AND PROK

Living room, Iris' mother's house

JOHN:

Deirdre, this is Dr. Kinsey.

DEIRDRE:

Oh yes, I would have known you anywhere. Please, please come in.

PROK:

Very nice to meet you.

DEIRDRE:

Tea, sweet buns? the drive must have been exhausting.

PROK:

Ah we're used to it, John and I, but tea sounds wonderful.

(The sound of the clarinet is heard.)

DEIRDRE:

She plays that whenever she's lonely.

PROK:

Sounds like Liebestod. *Tristan und Isolde*. Ah Wagner.

DEIRDRE:

It's nice.

(John leaves bounding up the stairs as Prok replies.)

PROK:

Heroic.

DUET JOHN AND IRIS

JOHN:

Iris.

IRIS:

Sweetheart.

(She is standing with the clarinet. He rushes forward and is on his knees in front of her, his arms wrapped around her legs.)

JOHN:

You know I can't live without you. And the baby. I need you.

IRIS:

How much?

JOHN:

Desperately.

IRIS:

I never have to sleep with him.

JOHN:

Never.

IRIS:

He doesn't own me.

JOHN:

Right.

IRIS:

Neither do you.

JOHN:

Of course.

IRIS:

The Project doesn't own me.

JOHN:

Absolutely.

IRIS:

I own me.

JOHN:

Completely. And you own me.

IRIS:

You've learned so much as a sex researcher, John.

JOHN:

Yes, but I may still have something to learn.

IRIS:

(her hand on his head which is very near his waist) Oh yes, but I'll teach you, step by step, I'll teach you. (She plays another triumphant Wagnerian note.)

Finale*(Prok is downstairs with Deirdre)*

PROK:

Sex research shows that in this brave new world, the female is triumphant.

DEIRDRE:

Oh, Dr. Kinsey, the female has always been triumphant.

PROK:

You the female in the end makes the choice. The choice to procreate. The choice of who to mate with. The choice of what males to gift with her bed. The males are indiscriminate. They'll have sex with each other given the alternative of nothing.

DEIRDRE:

And what if, over nothing, the female chooses love? What if she chooses love over nothing? What if she makes love out of nothing.

PROK:

It's all mating.

DEIRDRE:

It's not all mating. It's wandering in the dark and then finding.

PROK:

It's biological.

DEIRDRE:

It's magical.

PROK:

It's physical. It's fundamental.

DEIRDRE:

You reckon without the heart. Without the shape of the human heart against the vastness of the Milky Way.

PROK:

I worked for years with a microscope.

DEIRDRE JOINED BY CHORUS:

Step outside, Dr. Kinsey. Look up, see the stars, so very far away, like God breathing down from space or a lover breathing in your ears or a man pausing at the top of the stairs, listening to Liebestod, a man whose heart is breaking, a man who would do anything to get his wife back. The edge of a precipice. Insects do not dream of eternal life. Insects mate and die. The man at the top of the stairs has let his papers and reports fall on the third stair, he is looking upward, outside the window, the Milky Way is spread out for him, he has only to grasp it.