

# Moonshine

By Snoo Wilson

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## Cast

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Abraxas, Lord of Heaven

Serena, Queen of Heaven

Moloch....A magnate, son of Abraxas

Morgue...}

Arsile.....} Twin daughters to Moloch

Weege....Assistant to Doyle and Moloch

(Two cloaked figures, struggling to strangle each other, against a backdrop of crashing water, lit by lightning flashes.

Doyle enters, perhaps from the audience, a dominating, squareish Edwardian with a walrus moustache. The noise of water fades, the lights on the figures go out. )

Doyle       What would you say, ladies and gentlemen, to the perpetrator of a coolly premeditated murder, when he shamelessly introduced himself to you? What would your reaction be if the killer appeared to show no regret for his act, indeed boasted of his crime to law-abiding citizens, like you? Just such a murderous ruffian stands before you. The death of my victim, far from arousing feelings of remorse in me, was experienced as an upsurge, a profound personal release, at first.

Writing to my dear mother of my lethal intentions, I told her that I was going to arrange for Sherlock Holmes' fatal tumble over the Richenbach falls with Moriarty, and furthermore, I was looking forward to getting rid of him. Motive? I was tired of standing in the shadow of my creation, and I had many other books in me. Lost worlds and the age of chivalry were infinitely more rewarding to produce than the Great Detective's elephantine deductions, which I was creating less and less rejoicingly.

I now draw open the curtain on a chilling personal drama, the story of how a writer came to be haunted by the ghost of his own former creation.

( Lights on the struggle again. Two figures, commence trying to strangle each other, again. Then Abraxas and Serena are discovered. Serena's dress is vast and floral: Abraxas' is concealed for the moment in the foliage train blurring into Cottingley.)

Doyle       Shortly after the end of the First World War, I proposed to a committee for the Great London Spiritualist Association a follow-up vigil to be conducted in Yorkshire to record the controversial

Cottingley fairies a second time, if possible, on camera. The first evidence had been obtained by two innocent young girls from a rural Yorkshire family, using their father's box camera. The fairies recorded were of human shape, not more than an inch or so high, with gossamer wings.

The published photographs had met with scepticism and even hilarity. Although the likenesses had not left the family circle for a number of years, the press shamefully implied a lust for publicity, and completely discounted the innocence of the girls, who were uneducated children with no skills or motives for deception. But the negatives had been exhaustively examined and the technicians at Kodak agreed there was no double exposure. Determined to raise the profile of spiritualist researches away from the public perception of psychics and mediums as brazen hoaxes, I decided to fund the trip myself. At the suggestion of one of the Spiritualist committee members, I would not touch the camera, but bring a camera operator whose qualifications would include complete scepticism on psychic matters.

We arrived at the dell in Yorkshire shortly before noon in a splendid new motorcar I had just purchased, a Napier tourer, which went like the wind.

( Weegee, in Edwardian motoring clothes, perhaps dust veils, camera tripod, coming into Cottingley dell, observed by Abraxas and Serena who are partly concealed there.)

Doyle (to audience) Miss Weegee Undine was chosen to be the camera operator accompanying me, a self-confessed materialist and modern sceptic, a thoroughly modern woman.(Hushed, to Weegee) Miss Undine, this is the exact spot where the fairies were photographed five years ago.

Weegee Weegee I'd say this was a darling place to mount a daytime vigil.

Doyle I'm sorry the car is so far away. I didn't want to risk upsetting things by being parked too close.

Weegee Assuming they don't meet a motor car, how long are fairies meant to live?

Doyle Fifteen hundred years, generally.

Weegee F.8 exposure at a thirtieth of a second under this leafy canopy. Do call me Weegee, please, Sir Arthur. England in high summer, the ground covered with woodland flowers. And I'm alone here with a Lord. Oh wow! We should have a photograph of us together. I could squeeze the shutter bulb with my naked foot, or something.

Doyle You should keep your voice down.

Weegee Oh I'm so sorry.

Doyle We shouldn't speak here, unless it's absolutely necessary.

Weegee But if I see a fairy you'll have to pinch me on the butt to make sure I'm not dreaming.

(Weegee sets up camera. Doyle observes Serena with magnifying glass)

Weegee Seen anything?

Doyle A very unusual shrub.

(Doyle wanders away from her)

Serena What is this beauteous place?

Abraxas You awoke as we were borne earthwards just now, my eternal queen. We may not avoid a summonse from the Seven Immortals, to serve our sentence here.

Serena This spread of woodland where we shape ourselves in matter is so fine, it hardly ranks as penance, with the trees variously green, yet well proportioned. Under silver birches, look, high summer calls up redcap mushrooms. Fount of ecstasy of the ancients, whose fearless shamen drew truth from airy trances- visiting other worlds!- and nearby, little rivulets which babble amiably to sober and transported souls alike, in little waterfalls, with banks of moss and dappled stones. What is our punishment here to be?

Abraxas We are to witness the planet's destruction by the great evil, the Elect One of darkness, my son Moloch.

Serena So all this is to be looked upon now, for the last time. Now I remember. Why did you not wake me for your trial? The Seven Immortals could never have conscripted us if I could have gone before them as your advocate. I would have poured ashes on my head and rent my clothes.

Abraxas Beauty, abasing itself to them on my behalf, would not move them to leniency. The fact is, that Moloch was born from my most regrettable act, a solitary pollution. It is recorded forever on the Akashic record.

Serena Eloquence has a way with facts. (Posturing)  
“ It is true, my Lords, that the masculine aspect of the supreme godhead, here by my side; the Archon blinked once in the eternal night, and from that eddy in the divine sight, a darkling thought grew; from a momentary self-doubt. Who has not momentarily doubted themselves? Each mortal does, not once but many times a day; on average. My husband may be the foremost being in creation, but he is still subject to the laws of creation, which include the Law of Averages.”

Abraxas I did not wake you before the trial, dearest, because this penance of ours could turn to our advantage and become a gateway to the Ineffable realms, where we would be troubled no more by the Seven Immortals, indeed by anything. There is a clause drafted which under certain conditions. permits transmigration of the godhead to the Ineffable

Serena This is not the first time I have heard how you will pierce the final mystery of the Ineffable. How is the present venture different?

Abraxas This time, I am prepared with the most expert assistance available.

( Serena now examines Doyle. Tweeting of birds. )

Serena An author, outwardly calm and broad of back, but behold his mind- What creatures of this glade his imagination has a lease on! (Fairy music)

The horns of Elfland sound, far away, and straightway there are throngs of fairies, disgorging from fairy courts under these grass tussocks, massed together they form dazzling necklaces, like jewelled snakes, which glide through the grass about his feet to ancient music, played by courtiers on tiny flutes and tabors. Brownies, elves, gnomes, tree-devas, mannikins, cloud-fairies, hobgoblins, and dancing sylphs. And in the midst of the procession, look-wimpled princesses in jonquil gowns, riding sidesaddle on fairy palfreys, spindle shanked, and shod in silver never banked, who leap the small streams fearlessly and melt under the roots of trees. He has certainly got a most inventive mind. But is he not born too soon to assist you? Mortals die.

Abraxas It is true he will be dead some while, when it comes for the end of the earth; we can however bring him on in time, the little that is necessary.

Serena But during the time of penance, that is not permitted.

Abraxas By the time the Seven Immortals have filed an objection, it will be too late.

( Weege goes to Doyle, seductive . )

Weege Isn't this the best sundappled mossy bank ever? Sir Arthur, I know you believe in fairies: what else do you believe in?

Doyle Spiritualism. And decency.

Weege Oh my, look at all those spiders. And now I am going to lift up this spider up by its thread, and put in on the petals of a buttercup, and now it's going on you! Oh look, the back of your hand has got some pollen on it.

Doyle Yes, from the snakeshead fritillary. A woodland dweller. Unmistakable scaly bronzed pattern on the outside petal, see?

Weege Like a fairy bonnet. Sweet.

Doyle Could you not talk, please.

Weege Sir Arthur. Do you believe in.....free love?

Doyle        The very idea is a cruel device to rob Woman of her natural chastity. Hush now.

Weegee      But what about the fairies? Don't they believe in free love?

Doyle        Miss Undine, I am not an expert on the morals of fairies, merely a would-be observer.

Weegee      Call me Weegee please.

Doyle        Weegee, there's a good girl, stand by with your camera.

Weegee      I hear what you're saying. I'll keep watch.

(Weegee goes to camera. Serena goes and puts her influence over Doyle, magically.)

Doyle        At once my eyelids began to feel heavy and I found myself dreaming I was back at home, in my study, engaged in typing the final chapter of a well researched and bloodthirsty medieval novel. The manuscript had to be completed at short notice; indeed by midnight that night. It was obviously a dream because every time I finished a page Weegee came in and dashed to the printers with it.

(Sounds of clashing swordfights and expiring shrieks, interspersed with the thunder of a typewriter as Doyle mimes typing to the noise. Weegee takes the mimed pages one by one in a number of trips on and offstage.)

Doyle        As I typed, my deerstalker hat started falling off its peg by the door. I hung it up, a number of times, but then the Inverness Cape in a corner of the room started getting a life of its own, making a number of bids for escape, on one occasion flapping away emptily as far as the hall. And on every occasion, on my return, the large magnifying glass on my desk would be in a different place. And then the keys seized up before my very eyes, tangling themselves above the page, into a lifeless leaden ball! Hunting through my desk drawers, my hand chanced on an ancient italic pen. Dashing it into the inkpot, I completed the final sentences as the hall clock struck twelve. In high elation, I picked up

the inkwell, and threw it as hard as I can at the wall.  
(Shouts) "I've done it!"

(Weegee exits with the final page. )

Serena He is ready.

Abraxas Bring him now.

Doyle The inkwell shattered, and long fingers of ink started making their way rapidly down the wallpaper, but then slowed , as if time itself was having second thoughts. I become aware of a sort of buzzing, as if the insect of that particular moment was trapped, struggling to be free of its silken cocoon. The ink-fingers onthe wall arrested their downwards rush and the wallpaper parted to reveal the sunlit glade in Cottingley where I had fallen asleep only a moment ago. I noticed two strange figures in the glade.

Serena Arthur Conan Doyle, we have been trying to get your attention for some time.

Doyle I am sorry madam. You have surprised me.

Serena What of the summmonse two weeks ago, from a silk-muffled silver trumpet, suspended in the air, in a seance in New York ?

Doyle I haven't been in New York for some months.

Serena The voice from the trumpet was very clear. It said, "Serena, Queen of Heaven and Night, is to give you audience. Doyle, prepare to assist the creator, and serve He Who Is Who He Is." You have been chosen to be Three Six Five's monitor on earth, at the end of earth's long day.

Doyle Pardon my ignorance: who is Three Six Five?

Serena The male principle of ourself. He stands before you now. The greatest of the Old Ones!

(Serena unfurls the greenery from around Abraxas who stands forth as Holmes.)

Serena He revealed himself to the ancient Mesopotamians

before the magus Zoroaster judged all liars to eternal fire. Three hundred and sixty five star-studded Mesopotamian nights first made the length of a year. His priests charted the geometry of the skies, and planted the seed of consciousness in mankind. His thoughts are immeasurable. They dwarf the zoetropes of creation. The explosive birth, the implosive death of galaxies are all foretold in the superabundant consciousness of his brow! Abraxas is the god above gods, and takes precedence over all later manifestations of deity: Jehovah, Zeus, Mahomet and Krishna, all bow the knee and acknowledge his paternal superiority.

- Abraxas Can you see me now?
- Serena He is also Ur-Archon Abraxas, but his names should not be uttered all together, or the fountains of the deep break up.
- Doyle I see. What are the fountains of the deep ?
- Abraxas They lie on the seabed, below where the chill river Styx, darker than a thousand nights, outpours to Oceanus.
- Doyle Not a scientifically exact place, then.
- Serena Never mind what one-eyed dame Science preaches. Watch your tongue or the Archon will take you there. 365 comes to earth in the final days, in a small penance for giving birth to Moloch in a rash moment. He will now assume the character of Sherlock Holmes and you will correct him if there are infelicities in his observation.
- Doyle I should say to you both straight away: I have done with Sherlock Holmes and foggy London streets.
- Serena We are penalised by the Seven if he steps out of character during a time of travail.
- Doyle I've killed him off.
- Abraxas Unkill him off, then. You are a man of chivalrous instinct. Evil cannot triumph, unchallenged. The earth is threatened.

Doyle This must be a practical joke arranged by my old friend Harry Houdini-of course it is. (Calls) Very funny Harry. I'm calling your bluff! Come out now! (Pause)

(Doyle looks around the stage. )

Abraxas Harry Houdini!

Serena Harry's dead. If there were ever faires behind these trees, they'd be weeping now.

Abraxas A blow to the solar plexus, from an over-athletic admirer, septic duodenum.

Doyle Good Lord, you're right.

Abraxas Died a hundred years ago, now, before you ever went to Cottingley. In the coffin, six foot down, and Doctor Death's patent handcuffs proved impossible for even Harry to unpick. After twentyfive years, even his faithful widow had the eternal flame quenched on his grave.

Doyle Would it be possible to talk to him now?

Abraxas Sadly Harry's lack of belief in the afterlife means he is now incommunicado.

Doyle My dear late mother believed.

Serena Your mother says she says is happy as a sandgirl you are going to help us.

Doyle Did she really say 'sandgirl'?

Serena Do not question messages from your mother, mortal. (Pause)

Abraxas Are you not a gentleman, Doyle? Sworn to protect the weaker sex?

Doyle I would hope so.

Abraxas This lady is an indivisible aspect of me, so you will be protecting her too. (To Serena) He is no gentlemen, if he refuses now. And if he claims to be a gentleman

and is not, he lies. So we have him, either way.

Doyle I do not lie.

Abraxas Here's a statement you make, which is untrue. "No women are ugly!" you have said, at least once a week, before witnesses too numerous to invoke. Now that's a lie. My earliest representative, Magus Zoroaster cast liars into a lake of brimstone.

Doyle It's true.

Abraxas Oh no it's not. Ha ha! Decent folk feel it *ought* to be true, but that's not the same is it? And you not only lie regularly, Doyle, but the lies appear in print. Did you ever seek a retraction from the Times of London, which on the ninth of January 1923 opposite an advertisement for Cherry Blossom bootpolish, published the following? "There are fairies" affirmed A. Conan Doyle.'

Serena "There are fairies", indeed!

Abraxas Magus Zoroaster would have had you roasted you for eternity, both sides for that. You are lucky to get off with a couple of days light domestic service, answering the door, fixing the salad dressing, and so forth, in Baker Street, before the world's end.

Doyle What do you mean, the world's end?

Abraxas Only if nothing's done about it. Collision with a fifteen million ton meteorite, the bulk of which was spewed out and condensed when the earth was still a gaseous ball. Caledonia was wandering in space, until my misbegotten son stumbled on her, and accelerated her, with dark and violent copulations towards her own beginnings. Once, if you passed out through the Oört cloud's circumference, several lifetimes would pass before you would approach where Caledonia lay. Now she is closing fast.

Doyle Can nothing be done...Fifteen million tons!

Abraxas That was her weight, at birth, a consolidating child of chaos. Through her long chill sojourn in the void, it has redoubled many times. Pelted by snowballs of

methane, cloaked in interstellar grime and scooping up ammoniac shards of ice from comets' tails, this lethal confederacy all yoked and bound together with a mesh of steel, by my son, for single lethal impact.

Doyle      What kind of god are you, that lets these things happen?

Serena     The kind who does solitary acts.

( Arsile and Morgue dance on, carrying sparklers for a dance around the stage. Music, Edge of Space.)

Serena     Behold the adversary and his brood, as they outstrip Caledonia, coursing through hyperspace, in their etheric pod, to enact evil's own *festschrift*, the world's dark destiny!

Arsile }

Morgue} (sing)- *I'm not complaining, but planets all seem to be closer this year.*

*Their faces mirrors of hope and despair  
Invading my dreams with low gravity schemes, Stars  
in my eyes say I'll never die,  
And yet nights into days  
flicker away.*

Serena     Know that Moloch performed procreatively with the asteroid, which union hatched out two daughters into the starlight. He sheltered them at first in a cave hewn from a glacier of methane. But now he has removed them entirely from their mother's alkaline bosom.

Arsile }

Morgue} (sing)- *No one goes up after they drown  
And yet it goes round with never a sound.  
I'm not complaining, not even in training  
Cos I got four feet on the ground.*

( Arsile and Morgue are clad in extravagantly bad taste trailer trash rag-doll punk, they subside after their song. Moloch enters with a long tail coming out of his jodhpurs.)

Serena     The unfortunate offspring find themselves bound for earth, where their father intends to violate them, just before Caledonia herself arrives, his motive being to

add his unborn incestuous offspring to the general sacrifice.

- Moloch Remember Arsile and Morgue, when you are on earth, the daughter of a Moloch always walks upright on its rear legs. Otherwise, people will think you're reverting.
- Arsile We got space sickness. We wanna go home!!
- Moloch You'd be puking more than your rings, back on Caledonia. I left the nursery airlock open .
- Morgue Why did you pluck us from the only home we knew, father? Why do we need to get to earth ahead of momma?
- Moloch It will become clear in due course. Trust me. You're on course. And you don't have to wait long for the rest of your education. As soon as the pod crosses into the earth's radio footprint, the tv in the corner will activate, and you can receive reassuring, step by step bulletins on how I am taking charge.
- Morgue But will the earthlings not crucify us when we arrive?
- Moloch You'll pass till I find you, easy. It's the minerals in your mother's soil which give you your cast-iron disguise. It's easy for you- I've had to chomp on gravel picked up from round Ayres Rock, every day so I'll be able to blend in.
- Arsile If our mother was from earth, doesn't that make us a wee bit human?
- Moloch Naa. You soaked up the local dialogue preferences through the molecular lattice in your cubation pods. But no trace of arsewipe humanity gets through.
- Morgue I'm still missing Mother.
- Moloch You can't miss what you never had .
- Morgue It's not fair. How can we not have a mither, with all our feelings about her?

- Moloch Look at me. I don't have a mother. You don't need one! And you don't need a father, either except for those special moments, so don't you start.
- Arsile When it rained ammonia we used to think Mother was in a bad mood with you for going off, as we wandered through space. Lava would boil up inside our cave, poison the air, and everything would shuggle.
- Moloch She became chemically more active, sure, when I shifted her out of deep space. Passing solar systems used to upset her insides. Finally I had to lash her together, she was so bloody unstable .
- Arsile We used to pretend the explosions were her way of saying she loved us, and we were her favourites and she was actually beautiful, with long black hair, and a pale face like a sexy witch.
- Moloch Next time you're in the dunney take a good look astern. Caledonia is about fifteen kilometers wide with two volcanic cones of ammonia and hydrogen cyanide which only look like tits a hundred miles away! The ugly truth is out there visible, the seedbed for your lives. It was a nightmare getting you two started. I had to go to earth and do a lengthy infant genocide programme to get in the mood.
- Arsile What's an infant ?
- Moloch Oh, who's not doing their homework, Morgue? Hint. Molochs bypass that stage, emerging as fully formed adults in many regards. And... I gotta downsize to one when I get to Oz. There's just time to show you before I pop off. The Toltec Indians knew me as Chac-Mool and the women would do -what? Look, they're offering up their.....
- (Moloch makes an area with his hands into which the girls stare. )
- Arsile .....‘Infants’?
- Moloch To me. Good girl. .. They start off small, without hardwired speech centres. The naked blokes opening up the little preverbals, with oldfashioned

lapiz lazuli blades, see, are my temple priests.

Morgue What sex are temple priests?

Arsile Male. Tackle in front, look.

Moloch Go in close on the man. Focus on the fresh blood  
Put the magnification up three hundred and sixty five,  
what do you see now?

Morgue A wiggly thing.

Moloch It's a cheeky little piece of microbiology, a paradigm of  
nano-engineering; the malaria virus. Even when they  
work out how it goes, it still will kill more human  
'infants' than everything else I've thrown at them! To  
end up, some holiday snaps to show you what a fun  
time you can have on earth. There's me crossing the  
Bering Straits in a kayak sew from human skins. Now  
I'm in Persia, where I got the Zoroastrians to make  
war on me. The Tigris and the Euphrates were so  
choked with human bodies, look, even the crocs  
look like they got indigestion. And here I am at the  
end of my long trek- outside Jerusalem setting my  
temple up in the valley of Hinnom.

Arsile Is that a ziggurat there made up of human skulls?

Moloch Yeah. Look close and you'll see they're *Baby* skulls!  
(Beat) Right. Arsile and Morgue! We're passing the  
Two Ravens, and I don't have to remind you the  
gravitational field of a double neutron star is the ideal  
personal accelerator. I do a backflip of here, a figure  
of eight slingshot round the Ravens, and I'm on my  
way. Get there twenty earth years before you arrive.  
I've got it all worked out. Who says I'm not a good  
dad, eh?

Arsile Why don't you use the black hole for a faster  
slingshot?

Moloch Black hole surfing at my time of life? You got to realise  
I did my back in permanently, getting you two started.  
You put one toe wrong inside the event horizon and  
you're morphed. No, nice and easy does it. You  
probably want your old dad to come back as a one-  
eyed mermaid with alopecia, but I'm done with short

cuts.

- Morgue How did you do it? Get us started?
- Arsile He laid on his back and put his tail in a hole. (Laughs)  
Is it true, when we get us pregnant, the little puppies  
when they're ready eat their way out of us?
- Moloch Don't worry, I can bite their heads off so fast they'll  
never get a chance to gang up on you.
- Morgue Why should we have them at all?
- Moloch I would tell you, but I gotta go, because at this very  
moment, a dingo's dragging an infant out of its buggy  
which is parked under a bottlebrush outside the Little  
Bethlehem laundrette in Brisbane. I'm going  
downsize, and crawl into the stroller instead, before  
the junkie mum comes back, there she is, cashmere  
cardie and fuck-me pumps. I'm going to be suckled on  
synthetic heroin but it's worth it for the ID. It always  
fools 'em; the old changeling routine can't be beat!  
(Moloch exits in a puff of smoke. )
- Morgue It's alright for him being so cheerful, but what have we  
got to look forward to?
- Arsile I tell you what we've got. Father, waiting for us on  
earth!
- Morgue Not waiting to put his tail in us?
- Arsile Yes, and then, pregnant Moloch bitches *die*, because  
the kids all come out together. The mother explodes in  
this cannibal frenzy of wains, where the pup that wins  
eats the rest. In a twinkle, it gets big enough to eat you  
and in ten minutes you're just a red smear on the  
hospital gurney.
- Morgue Let's make a spell to *refuse* father's tail.
- Arsile We need to sacrifice something.
- Morgue Schrodinger's cat? Half the time it's dead already.
- Arsile Then we got half a chance! Haul the auld black tom  
out of its box again; if he's alive we'll twist and string

'is guts for a violin to summon the Fates. Unless they're properly bid they pay no mind to anyone with a smidgin in them of earthly clay.

Morgue The Fates govern mortal ends, but surely not the likes of Father?

Arsile It depends who asks them.

Morgue No harm in asking for a sign.

Arsile If Schrodinger's cat's alive then we'll go forward. Here's his little box. (Presents imagined box to Morgue) Well, sister? Here's the cat. Is it asleep or dead?

Morgue It's a miracle. The cat was cold at first, and now it's getting warm. It's the sign we asked for. Schrodinger's cat's alive!

Arsile Don't just stand there, slit its guts -

(Morgue mimes. Arsile gives dying cat noises. Music)

Arsile }  
Morgue } (Invoking) Sister Atropos, shred his shoot!

Arsile Cut father off at the root!

Morgue Chop-chop, and it's done!

Arsile } (Sing)  
Morgue } Clotted blood and rusted nails-  
He will lose what makes him male  
This is our unholy grail  
A bloody stump, and naught avails-  
Father's loss, screams and wails,  
And plastic surgeons, they all fail-

(Morgue and Arsile exit to music Lights move to Doyle, Abraxas, Serena.)

Abraxas "All that is necessary for the forces of evil to win, is for good men to do nothing," the statesman wrote. You would agree with the noble sentiments of Edmund Burke, would you not, Doyle? Will you not harken to the voice of conscience, and help combat evil?

- Doyle It seems I have no choice.
- Abraxas Excellent fellow! Let us go forth like knights of old, to do battle with Moloch! Will you not come with us, Serena?
- Serena Holmes is unmarried, so the Seven would object.
- Abraxas What will you do instead. You should not stay here on your own.
- Serena Stay here. You have your plan, does that mean I shall not have mine? I shall save the world too but in my own way, with a reproach to your son on what glories he will destroy if he does not stay his hand.
- Abraxas The Seven forbid that we declare ourselves . Stay with us and we can go through to the Ineffable together, you and I.
- Serena Even your dull author knows the Ineffable is a lost cause. (Beat) There are so many spiders, everywhere.
- Abraxas That is because the world is poisoned Moloch who will laugh at you for your assumptions!
- Serena I am not listening to you, I am composing. (Poem)  
"Fearless navigators, clinging to single strands above each ocean, netting destiny from the wind; ascending and descending like Jacob's angels everywhere, so each fresh morning over land, the sun discovers dewed, discarded threads of these intrepid stratonauts in millions, silvering the grass." (Serena exits)
- Abraxas This will end badly; we have lost my better half in a flood of praise for lethal arachnids.
- Doyle I didn't think English spiders were dangerous.
- Abraxas Once they were harmless, true. But the farmers now grow little else but sugar cane. The sugar spider is epidemic now, and its bite induces a very particular madness. Damn my son!

Doyle How were the spiders Moloch's intent?

Abraxas The spiders were his agents; He stitched a hydrocarbon converter enzyme into their airborne threads. The takeover of the world was spider-sweet. Where they alighted, every oil well in the world jammed with the oozings of crude black strap molasses so he was ready to pounce when the economy collapsed.

Doyle If Serena is exposing herself so recklessly, should not one of us go after her?

Abraxas It's equally dangerous for us, too.

Doyle Dammit, If you don't go after her, I will.

Abraxas Doyle, I forbid you, and if I don't wish it, your foot does not lift from yon tussock. I'm not risking losing my ally, so close to the portals of the ineffable. She'll come back and we'll go through together. You'll see.

(Weegee arrives bearing a smaller camera  
She is futuristically dressed, with a number of electronic leads implanted in her, which grow in number each time she appears. )

Doyle Who is this? .....What have you done to Weegee?

Abraxas Ask rather what Moloch has done for her. Born and raised in this new world, she now will now only remember she is Moloch's foremost indentured serf, blind in her ambition to his intentions, even on the eve of destruction.

Weegee (To Doyle) Hey, old timer! What are you doing here, on your own?

Doyle I'm alone?

Weegee Yeah.

(Abraxas is preening himself)

Abraxas She cannot see me yet. I want to make sure everything is quite right before I stop being.....a rhododendron. Just chat to her, Doyle, I won't be a

moment. See what you can glean.

Doyle So, what's the news?

Weegee Aliens are meant to have landed near here and Mr Moloch's sent me out to get photographs. Don't see why he can't fake them, since he never lets truth get in the way of a good story.

Doyle Had you heard, that the world to be destroyed?

Weegee That's right. Not today though. Twelve midnight, tomorrow. The skies will darken and fill the howling air with smoke thicker than a thousand volcanoes. "All growth from vegetation will cease as dust storms in the upper air cuts us off from the sun. "Count them blessed those who do not survive the tidal wave after the impact. The last rituals of humanity are most like to be stark cannibalism, as the survivors devour each other in some darkling cave." Or that's what it said yesterday in the Thistle, the last paper on the face of the planet that Mr Moloch didn't own -till today. The seas are all going to drain away to salt pans, as the water gets locked up in domes of ice at the poles.

Doyle I'm surprised that a great power, such as Britain, or indeed the United States hasn't declared a state of emergency-

Weegee Where *are* your memory pills, granpa? America's long gone. It's history. The States all got disunited by Mr Moloch though they did get to keep their personal weapons. But even if they fire their Colt 45's all together, it won't make much difference, will it? But there are so many signs that this is the end. There's even a total eclipse this afternoon. (Weegee gasps and points at Abraxas) Another sign!! Did you know Sherlock Holmes is meant to appear at the end of all things, according to the latest interpretations of Nostradamus?

Doyle I did not, no.

Weegee Well there he is. Confirmation. Right behind you! (To Abraxas) Could I trouble you for a photograph, sir?

Abraxas No trouble. Delighted. I always like to have my

likeness taken. (Weege clicks) What do you think of this asteroid scare, then?

Weege I'm hoping it misses and I get promoted for this scoop. Would you like a printout?

Abraxas Delighted.

Weege I got a printer in my incey-wincey Wattcopter.

(Weege exits with plate from camera.)

Doyle The Wattcopter!! What on earth..?

Abraxas The Wattcopter replace the motor car after it disappeared when petrol vanished. Since the car had been responsible for forty million deaths in the twentieth century alone, Moloch was cast as a saviour. (A boom) That was no rebuke from the almighty, but the sonic boom as the daughters' travel pod enters the stratosphere; they will join us very shortly.

Doyle Weege could still get her scoop, then.

Abraxas Quite a perilous assignment for a single young girl. They could eat Weege if she got too close. They may be ripening against their will, but at oestrus, the female Moloch's desire for flesh becomes overpowering. You should remember to lie down if they come this way. If you keep as still as possible, they may leave you for carrion.

Doyle Should something not be done about Serena's safety?

Abraxas Too late, far too late. Serena will have fallen to another fate, his spider's strategem. With dedicated hallucogenic toxins added to the spider's bite, Moloch may specify the exact delirium into which a particular victim will fall. The daughters are coming. Lie down!

( Enter Morgue and Arsile Doyle lies down on his back.)

Arsile I don't like this planet. You land with a bump and then you can't see the curve in the horizon. Maybe I'd feel better if I have something to eat-

- Morgue     Arsile- Come and look at this! (Doyle, recumbent)
- Arsile       He's making babies.
- Morgue       (Excited) He's never!
- Arsile       Is this not just how Father brought us about? He put his tail in the ground, laid down on his back and wheeshed away.
- Morgue       This one must have finished. He's not jigging.
- Arsile       Let's see if he's done. (They roll Doyle over)
- Morgue       He's human. But he'll do.
- Abraxas      Careful now, the sugar spiders have poisoned this one. He is in the early stages of dementia. His gaze, look, traps only phantoms; tiny equivocators, who whistle through the windsock of his soul. (Doyle stares wildly) Eat him and you will end up like him.
- Arsile       My stomach thinks my throat is slit. Where can we get satisfaction ?
- Abraxas      You may think I am being backward about offering myself, but we old stags are hardly the tender nourishment that you deserve. Besides I am a little mad today, but not mad enough to forget to tell you, you should be on your way. Your father already has scouts in this area, looking for you.
- Arsile       Father? Come on Morgue, let's run home and hide from him.
- Morgue       Where's home?
- Arsile       Scotland. And get that grey gluey keck off your scut or you'll go crazy too-
- (Exit Arsile and Morgue. Doyle stands up. Enter Serena, staggering, cobwebbed)
- Abraxas      Here she comes, dressed in bombyx caterpillars' spume, and a three tiered mayhem of the mind.

Serena The spiders stung me. They stung me all at once with a thousand needles- help me. Help me. (She collapses) Get them off me ! Eugh!

(Serena brushes at herself )

Doyle Is there a remedy?

Abraxas None ; for thirty six and a half hours, the sufferer is driven to invention and madly improvises some arbitrary history.

(Serena pretends to ride a horse)

Abraxas A mincing miniature, no doubt in the vanguard of a fairy ride: which is to say she thinks now, her father was a fairy prince.

(Serena stops riding and approaches, begs from Doyle, lewdly and suggestively.)

Abraxas And now fairyland drops away and she turns earthly woman of the town, selling herself for pennies in the street.

Doyle (Fleeing) Madam, this will not do.

(Serena, rejected, mimes a straitjacket and gag)

Abraxas Now the neural synapses reaggregate for another fractal spin down memory lane, her earlier selves are outvoted and make getaways into oblivion while she is crowned prisoner, atop a three tiered mayhem of the mind.

Doyle (Approaches) Serena? Do you know your name, madam?

Abraxas See? Not a flicker.

Serena Of course I know my name. Serena. I hate it, that is all, because I hate myself. I hate myself because I hate the world, which was created by a very wicked god, all for his pleasure in suffering. And this god in his wisdom has seen to it that Moloch, a devilish presence, married me and delights to see me shackled and if I am not smeared daily in my own

excrement in protest, why, he kindly provides his own. Is that not why you have come, gentlemen? You do this to me every day, do you not? Quickly now. Get it over with.

Doyle She thinks she is imprisoned, married to your son. You are not in prison, here, but open air, amongst trees you delighted in openly just now. Look up, the sky is blue.

Serena You lie, here is a wall.

Abraxas You're very gallant Doyle, but you can do nothing for her.

Doyle Try pushing your hand through it madam.

(Serena does so in mime, fails to pass wall. Doyle impulsively picks her up and carries her through the invisible wall and puts her down the other side.)

Doyle You are free.

Serena You are very strong!

Doyle What is your husband's name, madam?

Serena Moloch is my tormentor-husband's name, for the second time.

Doyle How long do you think- how long have you been married to Mr Moloch, Serena?

Serena Twenty years. For all that time, I have been imprisoned in an upper chamber at our house. I have been constantly defiled. I was not even allowed to cut my own wrists, when he murdered our little children in front of me.

Doyle When did he commit these murders?

Serena When they were babies, after he had raped them. And then he dragged them both outside the house, cracked their skulls open and ate the brains.

Doyle Where is this house?

- Serena Far to the south, on a plain with imported trees and grossly and cruelly mutated animals. That is his other amusement. Two headed hyenas.
- Doyle In England?
- Serena Yes, but closer to a replication of Africa, now. Near the house were handsome settlements; towns had stood for a thousand years, but at my husband's nod the wreckers threw them down.
- Doyle This is your consort, madam.
- Serena (To Doyle) You did well to free me, but it is past belief that I could be married to this man.
- Doyle Serena, do you truly not believe that you are not nor have ever been, this man's consort? (Pause)
- Serena No, I have never been married to Sherlock Holmes.
- Doyle How did you arrive in Cottingley?
- Serena It must have been when I heard about the meteorite. You see, I am on a mission here. I am on my way to Moloch. My husband can help us, if he repudiates what lies in his black heart. But there is so little time. That girl can take me to him, can't she? Weegee!  
(Exits)
- Abraxas Moloch has programmed her now, to go to him. But hitching a ride from Weegee is a rather perilous undertaking.
- Doyle How so?
- Abraxas The steampowered Wattcopter has such poor power to weight ratio that even without a passenger on board, I imagine Weegee will hardly be able to clear Hadrian's Wall. We can very easily follow them.
- ( Huffing and puffing. A model of a Heath Robinson like flying contraption flies, a model Weegee pilot, and Serena passenger.)
- Doyle Is this world now entirely without petrol?

Abraxas Entirely, so we will use the rapid travel mode of Tibetan monks who can cover long distances between monasteries effortlessly, with a bounding run which reduces effective body weight by self hypnosis. This is completely safe and can be used by those with irritable bowels, cardio-vascular problems or even allergies to ancient oriental wisdom. Do exactly as I do. Ignoring the varied topography of North England, fix the mind on the middle distance..... One seventh gravity mode, commence!

(Lighting change. Abraxas does an exaggerated stride on the spot. Doyle imitates. Effects.

Abraxas Don't concentrate too hard or you'll shoot upwards, and never be seen again. Until the Chinese invasion, uncontrolled levitation was one of the most common causes of death among Tibetans. They just used to fly off the planet. (Points) There go Moloch's daughters. But be they swift as cheetahs, or Diana's hounds, they will not escape their father if they go that way north!  
(beat)

Doyle Abraxas, I know it may matter very little to you... what happens to me at the end of the world?

Abraxas Don't worry! I'm looking after you, because I like you Doyle. The instant the meteorite hits, you invoke the Seven Immortals by name.

Doyle The Seven Immortals?

Abraxas Yes, and they will transplant you back to within three hundred and sixtyfive cubits of your car. This is not a dream. In dreams, people can't look at their hands or toes. (Doyle does this) I see that apart from minor wiring trouble with the nearside headlight which your garage should be able to rectify, your fast and powerful Napier will give you yeoman service. You love zooming around at speed, don't you! I can tell! I can see you piling up speeding tickets for the rest of your life! And you believe in fairies too! In fact you die, believing in fairies. What delicious contradictions humanity are made up of!

Doyle And the names of the Seven Immortals are?.....

Abraxas There is a little word trick I used to remember them. You should memorise it as well. "If India slams into Asia, Tibet rises, Everest catches a cobweb, the earth cools"- wait, that's climate and plate techtonics, not mnemonics. Damn. Oh dear! I need to keep my wits about me. Because I'm trying to get out, too, you know, even though the Seven Immortals have made it so damnably hard. In order to achieve the Ineffable I have to, quote, "Be consumed by the virgin seed of the dark word". What's all that mean? Does anyone know? But now I foresee you're going to ask me about the Ineffable.

Doyle I thought you weren't allowed to foresee, during your trime of travail here.

Abraxas Fair enough. I deduce you are curious about my yearning for the Ineffable, and will explain it. Even as Supreme Being, one is still chained to the tedious soap opera of the next episode; desire begets being, and being begets bathos, etcetera. Nobody learns anything, because nobody can. In the swamp of existence, the bullfrog starts as a teeny tadpole, grows up, gets a big idea and then inflates itself till it bursts. The ripples of the explosion spread, the water goes quiet for a moment, the black hole covers over with pond weed, then the damn thing happens all over again, with another friggin' tadpole somewhere else, with no one any wiser. It's the same story at the subatomic level. As above, so below. A bloody zoo.

Consider the star map I accidentally generated. Millions of collisions! Anywhere in space, wait long enough, Kaboum! The universe is one big pileup. It is only the tragically short life of that deluded worm, Man, that prevents the species seeing that the game's just not worth the candle. So while I am nominally doing penance here, invigilating the evil one's plans to munch his way through the full Glyndebourne picnic hamper of humanity's squeaking souls, at the same time, I am trying to work out how to get myself and my better half to - Oh, I say. Almost overshot. Weege is being flagged to land. Gently resume the sevenfold mantle of full gravity and allow the landscape about you to come into focus (Halts, looks round.)

Below are valleys of green cane, while all around us on the uplands, is knee-high purple heather bisected by intermittent coveys of small brown birds hugging the contours of the hill. (Distant popping of guns) If we accept the world's cruel master is somewhere near, we can now assign the gunfire reports to directors of the Thistle News group, who will be taking potshots at fleeing grouse, while awaiting the arrival of the large bribe that induced their betrayal of their shareholders. I fear the only thing that is going to stop this sort of corrupt collusion between the fourth estate and big business is a large meteorite...

Doyle        Abraxas- I know it's not meant to be till tomorrow but something already appears to be coming between the earth and the sun.

Abraxas     Only the moon. Caledonia is still a million miles away. But this eclipse will serve our purpose well enough: we may eavesdrop here effortlessly.

(We see a moon, huge, black, with the sun's corona behind it flaming. Enter Moloch, accompanied by Weegee, importantly as loyal lieutenant.)

Weegee     (Speech) Thistle shareholders! Your paper and your proud reputation for independence is safe in Mr Moloch's hands because truly he is one of you. I give you Mr Moloch! (Exits)

Moloch     (Speech) My family tree shows unequivocally, my penniless and innocent ancestors were forced from these moors in the Highland clearances. These innocent victims of greed were then criminalised by society before being arrested and abused, reamed out before the mast, halfway round the world, to Norfolk Island penal colony. And now the long-lost son returns; fertilising the matriarchal sod with showers of gold;—

( Shotgun salute off for Moloch. Serena enters)

Serena     Moloch. Moloch!

Moloch     Who's there? If it's a bleeding animal lover, you can stroll on by. It's so dark the grouse have gone to bed. In fact I can't hardly see which brown envelope is for

the Thistle chairman!

- Serena Pity us for once. Pity the end of the human race!  
Sherlock Holmes has been seen.
- Moloch It cannot be, and yet... it is. It's the wifelet!
- Doyle Wifelet! He connives with her delusions.
- Abraxas (Dry) Well done, Doyle.
- Moloch What's new, pussycat? Are you frightened by the  
eclipse? Down all the ages, it's never meant bugger  
all.
- Serena I know the sun will return,  
But nothing pierce the darkness after tomorrow  
Here will be nature, roiling all sunless  
And in the raw, with nothing of her sweet creatures,  
only the devouring wolves of the new- wintered sea.  
I see you exulting inwardly, drunk on the prospect of  
extinction. You have made sure of this catastrophe.  
Where are the telescopes that could have predicted  
this? Why has astronomy withered on the vine?
- Moloch I'm human, too. I know you don't think so. Tell me  
what I should do, and I'll do it.
- Serena There is a holy Russian man who can save us all. He  
can miraculously light himself up.
- Moloch Is this a bloke who used to be a fixture with a high-  
voltage show on Siberian Mobster tv?
- Serena The same.
- Moloch He used to hump these big Archangel hookers, their  
hair would stand on end and he'd glow. He went off  
air.
- Serena He became a Christian.
- Moloch It happens to the nicest people.
- Serena Having found Jesus, Sergei now glows a thousand  
times more brightly.

- Moloch He's already refused to work for me. I offered him a novelty cooking programme where he could hump a Llama and barbequed it at the same time. But he turned me down flat.
- Serena He is prepared to lay down his life as a Christian to save the world.
- Moloch He's going to be dead anyway, so how is saving the world a religious act? These religious types are all double talk. Abraham used to say he was substituting sheep for people, but all the same, he used to fill the first woolly ones from behind, while he cut the animals' throat- you could smell his barbie, all across the valley of Hinnom.
- Serena Sergei can heat frozen gases, he could cause the asteroid to explode or change course.
- Moloch Not with his two feet on the ground. He'd have to be up there, in space.
- ( Music; Edge of Space. Light changes to pink as Weegee enters with Arsile and Morgue handcuffed. Weegee behind, the triumphant jailer with the pistol. As soon as Moloch approaches Arsile or Morgue they try and bite him.)
- Serena What cruel mischief is this now?
- Moloch Oh, don't go all animal rights on me. Weegee's had these aliens lightly tranquillised, so they don't run off or bite your arse out. I'm adopting them. I name them- Arsile and Morgue- Hey, gently now, I'm not your dinner! Have I got surprises for you! I'm going to spoil you rotten! I'll take you to town tomorrow, girlies, and you can have anything that catches your eye- but you gotta learn to do what your new daddy says. Weegee, get your bed out of my dressing room and put in two camp cots.
- Weegee Yessir!
- Serena No! Stop! They are not to sleep anywhere near you.
- Moloch Mrs Moloch I'm not turning them out into the park ! They could catch foot and mouth from a wildebeeste.

- Serena I'm not going to move from their side until I find out what you are really trying to do to them.
- Moloch You've going to have to get into training then. Before they were caught, these two were clocked on the moor at around fifty five miles an hour. Weegee! Make aliens the headline news tonight and push anything on Caledonia past the watershed. Thistle leader begins, "Humanity may be threatened, but that should not stop our heartfelt rejoicing that the family of Man is not alone in the universe," etcetera.
- Weegee Yessir!
- Moloch Weegee- In celebration of Sherlock Holmes' homecoming, have my steam pantehnicons tip cocaine till it fills Trafalgar Square! Find enough Peruvian flake, and you could get yourself aboard the matrix.
- Weegee Yessir!
- (Exit Weegee, Arsile and Morgue)
- Moloch Empty the prisons! Tonight, every hooker and rent boy will be on the street. Not a single murderer or child molester will be behind bars.
- Serena How fortunate for you.
- Moloch What's that supposed to mean?
- Serena You have no innocence, only cunning to serve your ends. It is dark wherever you tread.
- Moloch I wish no harm to any living thing.
- Serena I know where they are buried. The bodies of our little ones.
- Moloch I'm not a murderer. We never had any children. You're barmy. I could get the best detective in the world and you'd never find any evidence.
- Serena Then get Sherlock Holmes to investigate you.

Moloch Fine, you got him. I'll go to Baker Street first thing in the morning. How else can I help you?

Serena Use one of your satellite rockets to launch Sergei.

Moloch I do have a couple of launch units left over from the bad old days of space. But where could we find a space suit?

Serena The British Museum.

Moloch Yeah, right, I expect they've got one.

Serena So what is the next obstruction?

Moloch There isn't one. It's the one brilliant idea that could save us all at the eleventh hour. Mind you, the boffins are still doing their sums about the collision course. If Caledonia was due to brush past the earth, and Sergei gave the rock a nudge in the wrong direction, so it splatted, well, that would be a damn shame, wouldn't it? But I give you my word, Sergei will have his shot at Christian salvation, if I have to light the blue touch paper myself.

(Exit Serena, Moloch)

Doyle I find it hard to restrain myself, watching Serena being humiliated.

Abraxas Have you thought how much harder I find it to stop myself leaping to her rescue? But we must use brains, not fists. And all is not lost. I have picked up an important clue from this painful vigil. Our enemy may not be 'all there'.

Doyle What do you mean, he's a lunatic?

Abraxas The green stain on the seat of Mr Moloch's trousers; what does it whisper to you? It says to me he may have been 'cut' to tidy him up, when he was a little changeling.

Doyle A green stain also might say he had slipped on some grass.

Abraxas No no. This is a single round patch of intense regular

colour, which is an exact spectroscopic match for Moloch propagator. What we may be seeing is seepage from the inexpertly amputated organ's stump.

Doyle Do you meant he won't be able to force himself on his daughters in the traditionally approved manner?

Abraxas Precisely, Doyle!

Doyle But what does that mean?

Abraxas It means some work for you! The Edinburgh medical college where you trained has become a world centre for plastic surgery. Ask for a search of the southern hemisphere database for all remedial cosmetic operations over the last fifty years. Tell the medical librarians to get the records in a cabriolet to Waverley Station, Edinburgh in time for the 8.10 sleeper train to Euston.

Doyle Kings Cross, surely.

Abraxas Any trouble, just tell them who you are. You're going to need to use one of these. It's a telephone, Doyle.

(Abraxas removes a cell phone from his pocket and passes it to Doyle, who examines it.)

Doyle A call from a long dead writer will surely be treated as a prank.

Abraxas I meant, tell them that you are Doctor Watson.

Doyle Who equally improbably, does not exist.

(Abraxas snatches phone back)

Abraxas Oh, alright.

Doyle If this is as all-important as you say, should it be discussed at all, over the telephone?

Abraxas Very well, I'll go to Edinburgh myself and see what I can garner. You go straight to Baker Street and get a good night's sleep, so you can be fresh tomorrow. The housekeeper will wake you with a cup of her very best tea, at seven forty three tomorrow morning,

before she goes to mass, in that dreadful black coat of hers with the fake fur astrakan collar. You will help yourself to one of the kippers for breakfast, then pick up a copy of every newspaper from the newsagent's downstairs. That is very important, alright? Every paper. We need to know which lies Moloch wants us to believe.

Doyle       What about the errors Serena fears may creep in if you are left alone?

Abraxas     My dear chap, you don't want to go to Edinburgh, now if you can help it. It's full of the sort of mindless dionysiac revelries characteristic of the Scottish character. On morning television yesterday, a reporter on the Royal Mile yesterday couldn't find anyone sober enough to speak.

Doyle       How can you have watched morning television yesterday, if you've only arrived just now?

Abraxas     I must have read the Thistle's television review. But do please remind me if I step beyond the bounds of probability. If I enter a revolving door behind you yet contrive to leave in front, raise a warning flag.

Doyle       What kind of warning flag?

Abraxas     Not a real one. Just say, 'Warning flag!' Just think, Doyle, this time tomorrow we will be rolling across the desert that was once Wessex, for the final battle. Are you excited? I am.

Doyle       Whatever happened to Salisbury cathedral?

Abraxas     Your sentence repeats the exact last words uttered by the last bishop of Salisbury, as the fearless old bulldyke lashed herself to the falling cathedral spire. Moloch also blew up Stonehenge during midsummer Solstice rites. There was a photograph of one of the great Sarsen stones, airborne from the explosion, about to land on the densely packed crowd. The headline read, "Stoned Again!" That was donkey's years ago.

Doyle       Warning flag. You weren't here donkey's years ago.

Abraxas Let us say I read it in an old old, newspaper, lining the cat-litter box at home.

Doyle Holmes doesn't have a cat.

Abraxas Alright! It's not my cat, it's Schrodinger's cat which I look after for him.

Doyle Holmes does not look after a cat for any neighbours, German or otherwise.

Abraxas Of course you won't have seen Schrodinger's cat. It is not your average fictional tabby but a quantum physics laboratory cat which I look after.

Doyle When?

Abraxas Whenever anti-matter matters take Herr Schrodinger away.

Doyle This is nonsense.

Abraxas You're getting tired.

Doyle No I'm not.

Abraxas Yes you are. Your eyelids are feeling heavy. Heavy.

A large metal sign lights up. Illuminated from within, the letters '221B' blaze out from it. Above, a street light in the shape of a flying saucer.)

Abraxas That way. A few steps through that door will bring you to a room with a truckle bed containing a leaky hot water bottle, and some offwhite cotton sheets which the housekeeper hasn't changed as often as you might have wished.

Doyle You aren't allowed to do this. We were in Scotland a moment ago.

Abraxas I still am. I want to be alone. If anyone asks, just say Doctor Watson was so drunk that he couldn't remember! They'll believe you. Alcoholism runs in your family, doesn't it?

Doyle (Drunkenly) Not where Doctor Watson lives...Straker Beet.

Abraxas You stay at Baker Street tonight. It suits me. Off you go and try not to tipple so much in future.

(A door opens under the sign. Yellow light pours out. The door closes and Doyle pursues the light above, as it slowly zigzags offstage, and blackout)

End Act 1

Act 2

(Abraxas is on his hands and knees. The inside of 221B Baker Street is the same minimal style as Cottingley. Half an armchair with the stuffing coming out, three flying saucers going up an otherwise invisible wall.)

Abraxas Behold the addict. I am in a hell of physical and emotional deprivation. Miserably looking for tobacco to satisfy my craving. I can't think of anything without it. My brain has jammed with raw need. With such opportunities for distress, who'd be human, eh?

Doyle Well you're not human, are you, Abraxas?

Abraxas Well spotted, Dotson, Datsun, Woyle, Boyle: Eustace; whatever your name is. (Dismissive) Beetle. (Pause)

Doyle Where did all that horse manure come from?

Abraxas A horse's behind, unless I am mistaken. Next door, at 221A, are the offices of an animal-rights style cabhorse sanctuary. They have been targeted by Moloch's media for an hate mail campaign today, their day of street demonstrations. We get the overflow.

(Distant cries of demonstrators, whinnying of horses, and shots.)

Doyle When did you arrive?

Abraxas Thirty six minutes and fifty seconds ago, precisely. Almost an eternity of misery. Considering how new it must be, everything's been aged frightfully skilfully, don't you think?

Doyle This doesn't look much like the way I described Holmes' study, either.

Abraxas It's called deconstruction, but don't ask me to explain it. What's on show may not be much, but it is home. Have you had breakfast?

Doyle No.

Abraxas Would you like to reconsider your plea in the light of

the evidence of a recently severed parts of a kipper in the kitchen? The flesh around the fish's midriff bears the unmistakable stamp of a lower middle class underbite, such as your own.

Doyle Well I did have a mouthful of kipper, as you recommended, but it tasted as if it had been poached in old dog-ends.

Abraxas Now I remember, I did put a kipper in a jug full of pipe dottle a couple of days ago.

Doyle Flag! You weren't here a couple of days ago.

Abraxas I was trying to make up some ratpoison. Cheeky rodents were coming through the laundry chute at the back of the flat at night, chatting amongst themselves, jumping up on the sideboard and helping themselves to apples, making themselves at home. Probably using my credit cards to order fast food - (Imitates rat, speaking on phone) "A Four Seasons pizza and two milk shakes, 221B Baker Street. (Beat) Just a minute! Oh my god! The cat's arrived! Schrodinger's cat! He's eating me now. Aaah! I'm not a happy rat because I'm not a whole rat. In fact there's only me tail left. Notness beckons. At least save the last of me from the maw of the undead beast belonging to the noble (gasping) Herr Doktor Professor Erwin Schro-dinger!"

(Abraxas assumes a horrified rat like death pose, the phone in his hand.)

Doyle Very amusing.

Abraxas The rats are real enough. You'll see.

Doyle Is that prediction, or deduction?

Abraxas To have a chance to change this black future, we may have to tinker a little with the equations of things past. Indeed if Baker Street is to win this battle, we must both of us, lie not only to each other but ourselves. Sustain the mystique, or Moloch will percieve we could be some here-today, gone tomorrow, soapbubble of fancy, and pop you with the end of his tail, as he pleases (Pause) You were out for quite a

while. I was worried.

Doyle I was seeking newspapers, as instructed. Did you get the files from Edinburgh?

Abraxas I got them. (beat) In a moment of forgetfulness, I left them on the train. It doesn't matter: I pulled potted biographies of all antipodean cosmetic surgeons off the internet at a cyber-cafe at King's Cross. Not a single Queensland cosmetic surgeon in the last forty years has died in their beds. They've all had their hearts hacked out, with a pre-Inca sacrificial knife. Naturally no one has ever been arrested for this unusual, and rather anachronistic crime.

Doyle I still don't see how this tail business alters the likely fate of the earth.

Abraxas It would be clear to anyone of average intelligence. The secrecy with which Moloch has pursued his vendetta against the medical fraternity gives you some idea of how vital the tail is, and how keenly he must have felt his loss. If he fails to inseminate his daughters today, his planned sacrifice of all species will be incomplete. The slaughter of Moloch's own brood, unborn, conceived on the eve of tonight's destruction through incestuous rape, is a masterpiece of evil, you must agree. But just as a master chef delays delivery of the *piece de resistance* for want of a single herb that only he himself would detect, Moloch may postpone the cataclysm.

(Abraxas puts a brown bowler on Doyle)

Doyle He's not a master chef. He's a mass murderer. If he cannot impregnate his daughters before the cataclysm, he will still have the voluptuous pleasure of annihilating them and their mother, as well as countless other species.

Abraxas True, true, but the Moloch is fond with a great passion of its tail, and there are several cases where Molochs, having lost their tails lost their knack for dedicated evil. Though he can always find your weak spot.

Doyle And what's that?

- Abraxas There's some vestigial bizarreness- erratic behaviour, recurrent in the Doyle family.
- Doyle What are you getting at?
- Abraxas Automatic writing, spirits....Don't you go in for ectoplasm and the like of an evening with the wife and kiddies? Talking to dead people like your mother, or even more bizarrely, people who aren't there at all, and never have been? Your family circle includes a spirit counsellor called (Sneer) 'Aeneas' (Mocking) "Aeneas Speaks! "
- Doyle I conduct seances with my family, my wife, and children, true. As I have made known in books and lectures worldwide, Aeneas is a kindly guiding spirit.
- Abraxas It's a bit much to involve very young children, in all that hogwash, isn't it?
- Doyle It's not hogwash, to teach children that death is the gateway to further life.
- Abraxas I bet Aeneas never warned you about going eyeball to eyeball with my son. 'Aeneas' never told you the one dark secret, did he?
- Doyle Which one?
- Abraxas You might as well hear it. When humans die... (Abraxas snaps his fingers) *Rien ne va plus!* Poor Doyle. Aeneas sold you the whole spiritualist circus. Your wife impersonated Harry Houdini's mother after her death; so badly he was not fooled.
- Doyle That was no impersonation.
- Abraxas What a load of horse's arse! In life, as Harry told you afterwards, Mamma Houdini was an illiterate Italian peasant. She could hardly string three words of English together. ( Waves arms, mocking Italian) She talk-a like-a that-a! But in death, she suddenly acquired all these flowing Edwardian phrases. Oh, Doyle, please. What can I say to you to make you understand your delusion?
- Doyle Some very eminent and responsible people are

spiritualists!

- Abraxas Most of them come from pretty tainted stock, though. Your father was mad enough to be put away.
- Doyle My father was periodically afflicted with a melancholy. Not madness. I resent anyone calling it madness.
- Abraxas But that's what the family saw it as. Your mother did everything to keep you from him, as if the taint he had was infectious.
- Doyle (Pause) Mother said it was drink. I am not sure.
- Abraxas Was it that or was it .....general paralysis of the insane? Was it that shape shifter, syphilis, that pushed him out over the edge of the cliff, with nothing but air under his feet? Even when he was dried out, hadn't touched a drop for months, abandoned by his family, all alone in various chilly low-priced lunatic asylum gardens, he would see little pixies, keeking out from under geraniums- (Abraxas imitates) Squeak! Squeak! He drew them in a little book. Little folk, for company. Day in, day out. Little twisted people who weren't there, hatched into a halfcooked existence by rogue spirochete in the spinal fluid, scratching and biting and sometimes even nesting in his arse like the devil himself-
- Doyle I've had enough of you insulting my father!
- Abraxas You signed the form committing him! And straight after, you went out and KILLED SHERLOCK HOLMES!
- Doyle (Pause) For you to suggest that I do not have self mastery, because of some inherited disability, syphilitic or otherwise, is hurtful, offensive and entirely unwarranted! I demand a retraction.
- Abraxas (Pause) I retract. It was a beastly thing to suggest that your poor mad father picked up something from a working girl in the Grassmarket. He was from a highly artistic family and was probably just too frail for the harsh world of the Scottish Office of Works, poor man: enduring pawky nineteenth century office jokes about McPixies and Mcgnomes all day at his desk. I'm

just jealous of you having parents at all. And I'm also jealous because you are good.

Which means people love you. They also love you because of what you create: something memorable and engrossing, for the ride, whether it's the suburban train between Guildford and Winchester, the 'Frisco to Sausalito shuttle, the Transiberian express or the Tokyo bullet train..., astronauts, lost in space, reading your bloody books. Loving them. People don't love *the creator* for what I've created. Why should they? Could there be anything worse than this, the world we are in? Can there be another, even more treacherous experience than this one, where people could be sent? No. Impossible. I have made the ultimate torment. And now to round it off, I am a character forced to witness the torments I have initiated, in my own private hell. Well, serves me right.

I've always lived here, alone; cigars in the coal scuttle. Bayonet- (Mimes stab) -choonk!- impaling business letters to the wooden fireplace. No letters of love, personal, *billets-doux*, ever. Out of tune violin cats' guts, yowl yowl. Come in Schrodinger, your time's up.... Pistol practice, bang bang, which has destroyed the rear wall. Take a look back there - the landlords would be justified in terminating the lease. I destroy the wall, Doyle, but what I really want to do after dinner sitting in my armchair is put the pistol in my mouth, and pull the trigger so my brains go splat. Then someone else with carbolic soap and a stiff brush and a ladder can clean the ceiling mouldings of the mystery of the great 'I am'. Damn you, Doyle, for creating me. I am detestable. Do you know as soon as I got into London, I got a cab straight to Trafalgar square, and got on my knees with a penknife and grubbed between the paving stones for the least crumb of cocaine... What else could your creation have done? The time was, the place to score was prison, but they're empty now.

Well, the great man, my other tormenter draws ever closer, devouring the wasteland in his thirtysix point five ton armoured half-track, with a plume of dust pointing back across the Africanised landscape. Somewhere beyond the railhead there is a house. Serena's waiting there for Sherlock Holmes, Doyle,

outside the gates of her perfectly realised prison of the mind. I wish I had the code to the Ineffable.

Doyle "The virgin seed of the dark word"

Abraxas It would still be useless, useless, if she refuses to know me. I can't go through on my own.

Doyle What does it mean? "The virgin seed of the dark word"?

Abraxas I am not sure. The only reference I have been able to track down is in a little known gnostic tract, the Gospel according to Judas, and appears deliberately misleading.

(Clock strikes)

Doyle What exactly lies behind the doors of the Ineffable?

Abraxas As I told you, it is impossible to say. If you do ever manage to describe it, the Ineffable immediately removes its attributes from your definition.

Doyle But it must follow then, that the Ineffable cannot be logically a constant, if it's always changing according to what people say about it.

Abraxas True, or rather it was true, until you said it.

Doyle I hope you're not chasing some will-o'the-whisp, that's all.

Abraxas It's hard to tell, because this universe is made from such fundamentally bad mathematics. But I live in hope. (Beat) Why did you take so long getting the papers?

Doyle I was only....forty minutes, or so, I believe. We just missed each other.

Abraxas Forty minutes, to pick up some papers from next door downstairs?

Doyle No no, the time it took to walk to Euston and back.

Abraxas But why did you go all the way to Euston, you great

booby, when I had set everything up for you downstairs and you only had to ask the Patels?

Doyle The paper shop downstairs is closed. It even says it's closed in a note in the window, if you look.

Abraxas It never closes. It's a fact. It's even down in black and white in the instruction book. (Reads) "Dear Sherlock Holmes, welcome. You can always pop down to the paper shop next door where Mr Raji Patel, who has read all your books, will greet you like an old friend. 222 Baker Street will never close"- See?

Doyle I've read it too, before you arrived. "Baker Street will never close -till-"

(Abraxas turns page)

Abraxas (Reads) ".....till the day the world ends." Damnation. I was so looking forward to being greeted like an old friend. (Beat) I didn't imagine that Mr Patel could be so....literal. (Beat) Doyle, if you found me some tobacco, I would really see you alright, you know. When the time comes. Creator's honour, for what it's worth, not much, to you, I know. Some would value it.

(Doyle produces persian slipper. Abraxas snatches it and looks inside feverishly.)

Abraxas Where did you find it? (Abraxas fills pipe and lights it.) Bless you. Ah, the goddess Nicotine, enchantress, eternal in-dweller at the Temple of balm, whose joys may be indulged in solitude comparatively harmlessly... unlike my own moment of solitude, which has traduced the whole of the time-space continuum for ever.

Doyle Well, you said it, not me.

Abraxas Poor you. You could have given yourself a hernia carrying all the Sunday papers home from King's Cross. Let's have a look, then.

(Doyle pulls a crumpled one tabloid newspaper from under his jacket, slowly)

Abraxas Is that a complete set of Sunday papers? Surely not.

Whole forests have to be felled, to satisfy one household.

Doyle It's just The Thistle. I didn't have any money.

Abraxas You shoplifted, then? (Whistles of surprise) Risky. More risky than you realise.

Doyle No one saw me. The assistants were all watching a simulation of the future impact, on cathode ray tube diffraction device. Apparently there's going to be a three and a half mile high tidal wave, to begin with, which travels at supersonic speed-

Abraxas I know, I know. -It's not the assistants you have to worry about. God, you are a simpleton, Doyle. Did you not note the surveillance cameras which would take account of your every move? Moloch will stop at nothing to split up this team; if you leave the house by the front door now, you could be arrested- (Pause) I need you Doyle, I really need you to help me get me through to the Ineffable!

Doyle It may not be good enough for you, but I'll do my best.

Abraxas I wouldn't be surprised if the newspaper didn't carry pictures of your light-fingered exploits.

Doyle (Reads from paper) The front page reads, "Our Sparky Saviour."

Abraxas Who?

Doyle "Sergei the sparky-peckered sexpert is perched today atop a rocket which he vows will smash the meteorite. Using his miraculous electrical powers, the static star and former sex stud says he will expode the methane inside Caledonia so that the death dealing meteor will explode harmlessly into a cloud of small glass beads, saving six billion human lives and uncountable plant and animal species. Your vote, readers, will decide if Sergei is then to become an overnight cooking superstar with his own saucy cooking programme, to be shown after the watershed. " What are Sergei's chances of saving us?

Abraxas Nil, obviously, if we are being told about them. Caledonia is clad in a cage of steel mesh, remember. Next.

Doyle Something about you, centre page. "Sherlock Holmes arrives to save world. centre pages."(Turns pages) "As predicted by scarey frog futurologist Micky Nostradamus, the druggie supersleuth in the deerstalker has popped up in the final days. A crater on Wessex Plain has been proved to contain the ...Uffo...?"

Abraxas Unidentified flying object.

Doyle ....The UFO propulsion unit after mysterious mutilations to cattle were found in the vicinity and Holmes vows he can locate the powerful counter-gravity motor which will then be used to tow the earth out of the path of the approaching juggernaut." I don't understand.

Abraxas Moloch mocks us, tempting us into a futile pursuit of salvation. We should go along with it. How's your back, Watson old man? Up for a spot of digging, I hope?

Doyle My back is perfectly fine, thank you, Abraxas, but my name seems to have slipped a disc. It's not Watson, except when we have company. (Beat) How's *your* back, O Lord above all matter?

Abraxas Watson's the one who has to dig the hole, I'm afraid. I'm going to have my work cut out, deprogramming Serena.

( Resurgence of demonstration noises, then a clanking of tank treads, which stops amidst screams. Silence. Doyle looks out)

Abraxas Hear that? It's going to be Watson, from now on.

( Doyle looks out of the window: Abraxas openly snorts some coke, which Doyle observes him doing.)

Abraxas Nothing for you here to get the flag out for, Doyle. You said it was what Holmes does between jobs. Well- (Sniffing) We're not employed yet. So what is

happening out in the big wide world?

Doyle Demonstrators are fleeing: either scattering or taking refuge in the cabhorse sanctuary offices.

Abraxas I know, I know, and there will be blood spreading over the cobbles, from under the rear tracks of a sinister looking armoured transport.

Doyle How did you know? You can't see from there.

Abraxas Deduction. And it is also almost certain that on the nearside of the murderous vehicle, there will be an abandoned placard which reads, "Today is the day of the Horse".

Doyle Are you cheating?

Abraxas Deduction, Doyle. A riot outside a cabhorse sanctuary is unlikely to be protesting about hippopotami, or performing fleas, is it?

( Enter Moloch)

Moloch Which one of you is Sherlock Holmes?

Abraxas I am, sir. Do you have an appointment?

Moloch I've got one with you.

Abraxas You must be Mr Moloch!

Moloch The wife wants something dug up.

Abraxas Would that have anything to do with today's newspaper reports of ongoing excavations adjacent to your mansion in Wessex?

Moloch No, but funnily enough it's in the same spot.

Abraxas I read that I was already engaged in UFO excavation. I confess it came as news to me.

Moloch That's what newspapers are for, aren't they? News. Shock and amaze, on every page. I was pretty surprised when I stepped through your front door to find what I did. When you had the entry hall

downstairs Feng Shui'd, did they say to put the brown 'welcome' mat out fresh, every day? You should warn visitors to arrive in gardening boots. It's alright, I'm a good sport: I can take a joke. I've been kneehigh in worse.

Abraxas Goodday to you sir. This is Doctor Watson, my assistant.

Doyle How do you do, sir.

Moloch (frisking him) Well, Doctor, the metal detector that supervises our lawabiding citizens at the crossroads of each street had nothing to say about you, but I am just checking that you have left your trusty army service revolver at home; we don't want you shooting yourself in the foot.

(Claps him on the back and steps away)

Abraxas By the way, Mr Moloch, congratulations on your beatitude, sir, awarded I understand for your abolition of the motorcar. Is it official yet?

Moloch I told the Vatican where they could stuff their sainthood. Face it, titles are for pillow-biters.

Doyle Is there anything that I as a doctor could do about the little upset in the street just now?

Moloch Let him die! I can't stand religious nuts. He was waving this bloody placard saying "Today is the Day of the Lord"

Doyle How infuriating for you. If it's anyone's day, today, it's yours, sir. Except the placard doesn't say Today is the Day of the Lord.

Abraxas I don't think we need trouble ourselves over details.

Doyle It is a significant detail. Look out the window at the man you killed. His placard reads "Today is the Day of the *Horse*"

Abraxas I don't think the difference needs concern us unduly. It would appear that Mr Moloch has unknowingly disposed of his one remaining public enemy, the

chairperson of the Cabhorse League of Pity.  
Congratulations, sir, on this happy accident.

Moloch No sweat. What these pinko shirt-lifters never credit, is - If it wasn't for me, there wouldn't be any cabhorses to get all steamed up over, in the first place.

Abraxas How true. Now while your newspapers are full of our collaboraton, Mr Moloch, have you really come here with the intention of employing us?

Moloch Yeah, up to a point. I dunno about *both* of you. I took the liberty of bringing up your mail. An indictment for Doctor Watson! Looks like you got a criminal record, doctor. Shoplifting, this morning. Charges are filed automatically, and a locum has already taken over your practice. If he turned himself in now, he'd get a suspended sentence.

(Hands letter to Doyle. )

Abraxas I insist Doctor Watson stays at my side today.

Moloch We should be locking up criminals like him!

Abraxas But he's looking through the Gospel of Judas for me.

Moloch What for?

Abraxas Clues. You are familiar with this work sir?

Moloch I most certainly am. I commissioned it to reflect a certain ethos. The Gospel boasts diabolic verses suitable for keeping the spirits up in the darkest of times. Even more openly than the original New Testament, the Judas Gospel perversely embraces the end of all things, with joy.

Watson To have been involved in publishing a first century AD manuscript, you yourself must be quite long lived, sir.

Moloch It's down to not smoking. Watson, I never realised you were an expert in coptic hieratic script. would you be interested in translating the prequel of the Judas Gospel ? Genesis, from the point of view of the

snake.

Doyle I'm rather pressed for time at the moment.

Moloch Can you explain, Doctor Watson, why you are not showing ID like the rest of your news-hungry brethren? I know Holmes only strings you along so you can get him the gear. But that doesn't mean you can thumb your nose at the rest of us forever.

Doyle I did get tobacco for him, it's true.

Abraxas Mr Moloch, any physician would concur with Doctor Watson, that his tobacco based treatment for my nerves is the only truly effective regime against the terrible pressure of this latest scare. I'm going to give up tobacco as soon as the asteroid passes.

Moloch You know I don't employ smokers.

ABraxas Then I'll give up here and now, and we look forward to commencing this job on the marvellous new savannah I understand you've created, out of Wessex!

Moloch One last thing. As far as the wife's concerned, you're digging for bodies of murdered babies twenty years ago.

Abraxas We'll dig for whatever you want, Mr Moloch! Mum's the word!

(Moloch exits. )

Abraxas There is exactly half an hour before we need to go to Waterloo to catch our train. In that time, we are going to break into Moloch's informational matrix, and publicise just who is the author of the coming disaster.

Doyle It'll make no difference who knows it now!

Abraxas You don't want people to know who killed them? I do. He's a bastard, we can't have all those people dying in ignorance of the fact. Let's splash it over the networks, so at least a decent collective hatred sours his feast of innocent souls. It just so happens I have

the perfect disguise for penetrating the electronic cemetery of disembodied journalists. It must need dusting occasionally so- We are a pair of lobotomised, radio controlled contract cleaners, humbly displaying the Mark of the Beast.

(Abraxas hands out space-age janitor's jacket and puts one on himself, then he and Doyle take on baseball hats with tv ariels on them )

Abraxas Beyond the rear wall there is a disused builder's chute with a minor rodent problem, which leads at a steep incline towards the heart of Moloch's London operations centre. This way.

(Abraxas hands Doyle a bar code which he sticks on his forehead. Abraxas follows suit.)

Abraxas (Showy) We now descend into the abyss! *Einz, zwei, drei!*

( Blackout. Several pairs of red eyes, squeaking and twittering.)

Doyle Abraxas, something ran over my feet..

Abraxas Ow! What, did you nip me you little bastard? Bit me again! Ow!

( Loud roar of falling waters, recedes. Rats depart, orderly)

Abraxas I was distracted and now we have a slight navigational problem. That fall of water; I've heard it before. We are far beneath things, but this is not the road to the informational matrix.

(A flying saucer, spotlit, appears against the Richenbach falls . The saucer opens itself to reveal a red plush interior holding a round contact mine. The mine falls out and falls out of sight. Exit UFO .water noise fades.)

Doyle What is that??

Abraxas Oh, that will be a psychopomp transport, disposing of the soul of the Chairman of the Cabhorse League of Pity, into the infernal Styx.

Doyle The Styx! Are we in Hades, then?

Abraxas Close! The Styx has an outfall, outside Hades, look, where the black torrent cascades down the barren rock into Oceanus. We are on the underworld's edge; yonder through the swirling mists is the bleak crag of Nevermore, where the eagle which eats the liver of Prometheus returns to nest, at night .

( The saucer enters again, and mines fall out. Exit UFO .)

Doyle Again! But there was only one man I saw died.

Abraxas I know, I know. It's...what are they called. Depth charges. Time delayed explosive devices which will come to rest over the Fountains of the Deep.

( The saucer enters again, and mines fall out. Exit UFO .)

Doyle Why should they be doing that? So the fountains will all break up together?

Abraxas Oh really, don't don't be so melodramatic. Mortals cannot ever see the future, as you know. Back into the mundane.  
Here we are at the bottom of the disused building chute, thirtysix and a half floors below Piccadilly.

( Dusty cobwebbed clothes, women's and men's, and shoes.)

Abraxas Welcome to Moloch's muniment-room, with the evidence of yet more technologically accomplished evil, which hardly cares if it is discovered. See those teeth? Look inside that bag. If you want to find out how many editors Moloch's had, just count the pairs of shoes.

( Doyle picks up handbag)

Doyle Asthma inhaler, condoms, lipstick, and thick spectacles belonging to Alethea Galatea, twenty eight years old, graduate, unmarried, member of the International Fraternity of Journalists. Is she ....dead? Murdered?

Abraxas In a manner of speaking. Consciousnesses, d'you see are dissolved and put into slavery, the same process that poor little Weegee has been taught is

promotion. Alethea will have ended her days as as an electrostatic gateway; her imprisoned circuits burning out from sleepless finessing of the *stupor mundi*, until one day the last one ceases to glow. Even more devilishly sophisticated than I had imagined. And alarmed, against unwanted intruders...damn!

(Doyle and Abraxas pretend to clean. )

Enter Weege who goes to scan the bar codes on Abraxas and Doyle, and uses her handheld reader to consult for info. Enter Moloch)

Moloch Weege, you should be getting ready to take Professor Holmes the scenic route through the park, so he understands that I'm fostering any number of creatures who without my intervention and guidance would be extinct. What are you doing?

Weege Checking identity of all personnel. Intruders have been detected. Sir, something very strange is happening. I'm not getting anything. Verification should be fifteen digit. The matrix is closing itself down!

Moloch Then we won't need security clearance any more, will we? Clear the area, sharpish.

Weege But what about my promotion?

Moloch We'll talk about it tomorrow. Out of here, go. And take these clowns out with you. Fast!

(Weege pushes Abraxas and Doyle out, shouting at them in Cantonese. Moloch, alone. Sound effects, Arsile and Morgue, descending metal stairs, distant. Echoes.)

Moloch (Softly) This way, girls. Come on. Come along girls: down those steps, that's right, don't be afraid of the shadows. No one's going to hurt you.

(Arsile and Morgue arrive)

Arsile What nasty beast has its lair, here, so far under the great ball of the darkening earth?

Morgue The only doors open lead down. We're lost. You said you knew the way home.

Arsile That was before you bit the balls off that wee doorman for trying to stop us. I was totally disorientated by his screams. My ears are still ringing. What happened then?

Morgue You nipped his weasand out. That stopped him.

Arsile We should return, I'm starting to choke on the thick air here already.

Morgue Me too. And I thought I'd be fearless in any shape that nature poured me into. What strange sorcery has tricked us into this headlong run into the abyss? No game hides here, for sure.

Moloch Don't worry, you'll get the hang of it. Your body's telling you to start eating for more than one. A wise body is an obedient body. Does what its told.

Arsile What are you doing here, father?

Moloch Preparing for you. Why was every other street blocked off and every elevator tagged? So you'd be standing on that spot, at this exact moment. Would you like to peek inside the Informational Matrix? It's nothing much to look at, I know. All the journos are dead.

(Moloch produces two green-filled floppy plastic tubes. )

Arsile What's this?

Moloch Refreshment. You've come of age, my princesses. To fulfill yourselves, bite the ends of these and swallow the contents.

Serena (Off) Wait! Arsile! Morgue! (Enter Serena, ) Don't drink that! I knew it- he's trying to poison you.

Moloch No I'm not. Why would I want to poison them?

Serena So what is it if it is not poison.?

Arsile It would kill us, but we're going to die anyway.

Serena How?

- Arsile By Caledonia.
- Morgue This is Moloch seed which goes into us, and in seven days the babies woulda come exploding out of us, eating us alive!
- Moloch See? No deception. The girls know what the score is.
- Serena I don't understand. You have a pregnancy of only seven days and die?
- Morgue Yes. Normally he'd would put three foot of barbed tail up your jacksie, with no by-you-leave. But we made a spell.
- Moloch Yeah, you've interrupted an adapted courtship ritual. If this was a wildlife programme, you wouldn't have dared. May we proceed?
- Serena This is courtship?
- Morgue We're aliens, right? Well, he's our father.
- Serena Your father? Give those here.
- (She takes the green sticks)
- Moloch That's right, dear, I'm their father.
- (Moloch takes green sticks)
- Moloch I'm not forcing my little chooks to do anything they don't want to. What's it to be girlies? You choose.
- Serena How can you say anyone on earth has a choice any more when we are bound for oblivion?
- Moloch The choice is they can die pregnant by me, or not. They will die anyhow at midnight: they may not be human but they are built of clay. Here I am, asking them for a small sacrifice, for the enhanced glory of our species.
- Serena Evil is now a species, is it?
- Moloch And like any other species, struggling to survive in an

unfair world. I'll get by but when Caledonia hits, I have to say, I will miss a top-dressing mulch to my glory, of foetal Moloch souls.

Arsile Thanks for the suggestion, father, but we're reverting.

Morgue We choose virginity as our destiny, from the cradle, so to speak.

Moloch What, you go for dumb meat harvesters? My girls? In evolutionary terms of choice, that's nothing. That's the wooden spoon. Might I ask why?

Arsile It's not personal, it's just ....we don't like you.

Moloch And I am glad to say I shall shortly forget I ever had a pair of such thankless daughters. Get out of here and take your chances. To famine, night and fog!

Arsile Come on Morgue. Eight hours till the food chain goes down.

(Exit Arsile and Morgue)

Serena I'm leaving too. While I'm alive, I'm going to see no harm comes to those girls.

Moloch If I were you, I'd give them a wide berth. By the time they arrive home, they'll have lost the power of speech. They've already got twice the number of teeth they had at three o'clock!

Serena I always thought you were inhuman.

Moloch I'm immortal.

Serena You never met Christ in the desert. (Serena Exits)

Moloch If it wasn't me who tempted him, who was it, then?

(Blackout. Whistle of train. Elephants trumpet. Lights.

Announcer“Melchester Parkway , Melchester Parkway. We apologise for the late arrival of the last train from Waterloo; this was due to a genetically modified rhinoceros which charged the locomotive and burst

the boiler.”

(Weegee now has a tail, made of plaited electric leads, going down to the floor. She leads Doyle and Abraxas. )

Weegee This way, Professor, and Doctor Watson. Dear oh dear, you are late. You won't be able to see much of the park, I am afraid.

(Abraxas, Doyle get into a tall hackney, with Moloch crest on the side. Weegee mounts the driving seat and drives off. Horses clopping hooves. Doyle and Abraxas, facing each other.)

Weegee Note those mighty-trunked trees along the way, grey giants, their bark thick scarred. Seven Zeppelins were lost, ferrying these baobab trees from Madagascar. Those hairy looking elephants tusking the bark for forage are actually mastodons, back bred from sperm found in retreating Alaskan glaciers. The park also boasts the fearsome sabretoothed tiger. These nocturnal predators proved such efficient killers they upset the delicate ecological balance but the tiger's kill rate was reduced after genetic manipulation of their genes made them fluorescent, which advertised their night time presence to the buffalo.

Doyle “Tiger, tiger, burning bright, in the forests of the night, what immortal hand or eye can frame thy dreadful symmetry!”

Weegee What did you say, sir?

Doyle It wasn't me speaking- it was William Blake.

Abraxas How is our host, Weegee?

Weegee Mr Moloch has been snarling at everyone today. Mrs Moloch wouldn't let him spend quality time with the aliens last night She kept chasing him out of the ballroom where the aliens had their cots. Observe the clouds of pink flamingoes as they take off at dusk from the alkaline lake. It now seems likely that in nature, up to twenty percent of species are homosexuals or engage in-

- Abraxas (A great cry) Eureka! I've got it. The twins, defying their father is the final breakthrough, Doyle! Now all the Ineffable's entry conditions can be satisfied.
- Doyle I don't understand.
- Abraxas "The body of the Logos must pass through twin *virgins* who have themselves turned against the dark seed of the Word." Moloch's two daughters -twin virgins- have turned against him. Moloch being the dark seed of the Word. Me being the Logos.
- Doyle Yes, but can you be sure they're still virgins?
- Abraxas Knowing Serena's character as I do, she will have lain all night across the lintel, to protect them. She would be a tigress, on their behalf. An absolute tigress.
- Doyle I hope the ballroom where they spent the night didn't have more than one door. Anyhow, how does the Logos propose to 'pass through' the twin virgins, and still keep their virginity?
- Abraxas Easy. They eat me.
- Doyle In which case, I need the names of the Seven Immortals *now*.
- Abraxas I could be penalised, for giving them out too soon. Only four Immortals need to take that decision. And I tell you, at least four don't like me.
- Doyle Why are there Seven Immortals?
- Abraxas There used to be twelve, but they fell out over the function of Beauty; (Horse farts. Beat.) Correction from my fourlegged friend there. Gas; chaos! It wasn't *Beauty* on its own the Twelve fell out about, it was how beauty stood in relation to *chaos*, the prime matter.
- Doyle How does beauty relate to chaos?
- Abraxas -Poorly. (Horse farts again) -Or not at all, as my learned friend suggests. Five Immortals resigned, saying this universe had been created on a

false premise, the first lie, if you like, which would lead it to be dominated by evil and destruction, with badly designed creatures roaming round constructed largely out of the rubble of former collisions. Monsters. And they were right. Look at you. Everything is tainted. The traces of gold in your blood was forged in the clumsy death throes of stars. Man is the receptacle of this sad destiny, resonating with everything that has happened: unfortunately, the original premise for creation is fatally flawed. But for me, from now on, it's goodbye, cruel colliding worlds. Goodbye, bad biology. Goodbye, cut-and-shut universe.

(Clip clops stops Weegee whips the horse, vigorously.)

Weegee (In Cantonese) Get a move on then, you brainless piece of meat.

(Weegee lashes at the horse, and curses it in Chinese)

Abraxas No, no. Don't blame the horse so extravagantly, Weegee. The smell of death is in the air, and poor Dobbin sees his own end foreshadowed in a fellow ruminant's demise. Shine your torch over there, and tell me what you see.

(Weegee shines torch into darkness.)

Weegee The body of a Thomson's Gazelle. With some very curious mutilations. Something has cut the lips and eyes out....almost surgically...and at the other end, it's as if the anus has been precisely cored. (Clip clop resumes)

Abraxas So what do you think caused that, Weegee?

Weegee It's not lions, who stifle the prey by putting the animals' head in their mouth. It could be jackals, which generally go into the body through the soft tissues round the back passage.

Abraxas You'd surely hear the pack barking.

Weegee I don't know. I've not seen anything like it outside alien contact websites on the net.

Abraxas Quite so, when the impossible has been excluded, the

improbable becomes the only answer. Doctor Watson, which creature, recently encountered, can nip out a windpipe, and testicles with surgical precision, but is new to the world and the bestiary of Moloch's savannah? *Gaudeamus igitur! Puellae Molochii adveniunt!* "Rejoice, for the girls have arrived here before us."

Doyle (Flash of light) Oh my giddy aunt!

Abraxas Nothing to worry about, yet. That scrap of debris from the Leonid shower was probably no bigger than a peanut. When Caledonia breaches, you'll feel it through the soles of your feet.

(A floodlit [model] house, somewhat like the White House, pillared and portico'd covered in satellite dishes, revealed upstage. A sign handpainted, CHILD MURDER INVESTIGATION AREA, in foreground, which spins to reveal another sign, UFO INVESTIGATION AREA .)

Clip clop stops. A full moon, behind the house )

Weegee This is where Mr Moloch wants you to start. It's been a pleasure showing you the park and we hope you will come again.

Abraxas Weegee? Come again? Do you realise what you are saying? Look me in the eyes.

Weegee I'm sorry sir, we are not permitted to stare back at clients.

Abraxas You poor little robot. He's really done for you hasn't he? You can't see what is going to happen because he has already reeled in eaten your soul, with the bait of ambition.

Weegee I don't know what you're talking about sir. I have a dream. They take the signature of your vital intelligence, and then suddenly, you're in there with the elite. Only a few thousand ever make it, but then you are the news that makes news. They say it's like making out with god.

Abraxas The things you young girls say! Making out with god! Mind you, if you'd been there on the last night of

Planet of the Ladyboys.....but that's not the kind of thing Holmes ever shared with Watson.

Weegee I can't believe it is going to be the end for life. I just can't believe it.

Abraxas It's true the odd cockroach and diatom always pull through and mother nature is always pelting this lucky planet with snowballs full of the building kits for all kinds of interesting life forms; things are bound to pick up again in around ten million years.

Weegee Thank you sir. That's so.....encouraging. (Exits)

Doyle Perhaps you could give me the names of the Seven, now.

Abraxas There's a thirty six point five seconds between the first seismic shock, and the arrival of the supersonic three mile high tidal wave of dilute nitric acid. In that time I could give you the names of dozens of Immortals.

Doyle Abraxas! Do you actually know all seven names?

Abraxas What! The puny mortal challenges the Archon's access to the Akashic record? I shall overlook your insolence and begin the awakening of my better half. If you want to help me, do not let Moloch suspect for a moment that we keep any other agenda, than the one he has set. Dig deep, and loud while I work on Serena, and in god's good time, you will be rewarded for your labour. The Logos gives you his word. Nothing is more binding than that.

(Enter Serena. Doyle digs. Abraxas goes to Serena.)

Abraxas Good evening, madam.

Serena So, Professor Holmes! My husband has kept his word for once. Inexplicable, but no doubt you can tell me exactly what is going on.

Abraxas Your husband wishes you to believe that Doctor Watson and myself are investigating his long buried crimes, although we are actually engaged to perform another nonsense for him, which we will now do, to give us time together, you and I. I must try to raise the

veils of delusion that have so cruelly dropped around you. Dearest Serena, I should make the underlying theme plain to you as rapidly as possible. It is that you and I are one.

(Takes her hand. She removes hers.)

Serena Can we keep this entirely professional, Professor? I may die tonight, but I want to know that I was right. I want to see these bones.

Abraxas The truth is, this can be our moment of breakthrough, Serena. If you can come to yourself in some regard, you and I will be able to escape to the Ineffable, together. Forget what you think happened. I have the key to something better.

Serena I cannot simply forget what my husband did.

Abraxas He's not your husband. You have been deluded by a venom, and now you can awake. And together we can pass through the portals to the Ineffable, but we must do it together and before midnight.

Serenas I have waited twenty years for this. I thought Sherlock Holmes was going to be my saviour, but you makes no sense at all.

Abraxas Quickly then. You have a memory of twenty years ago, your so-called husband savagely killing your children here?

Serena Yes I do. Exactly here, upon this spot.

Abraxas This distance from the house, do you think you saw Moloch standing here baying the moon, with your children's limp headless bodies about his feet, a little broken skull in each hand, his chin dribbling brains and blood?

Serena Those are the exact pictures in my mind. How did you know, Professor Holmes?

Abraxas Call me Abraxas. The remains, he buried on this spot, did he not? - Moloch using his forearms with prodigious skill and speed, to dig a hole?

Serena Just so. It was terrible, terrible.

Abraxas It was terrible, and untrue. There are no human children buried here. In fact, you had no children with him. You never married him. You first set eyes upon him yesterday when you arrived with me.

(Enter Moloch who stares into the hole)

Serena Surely we are married?

Moloch Of course we are. A thousand choirboys were castrated to sing for our wedding.

Serena Yes, and wild asphodels, food of the dead, strewn a foot thick, for miles round the wedding feast- I should have known it would end badly.

Abraxas Do tell, what happened to the intrepid astronaut, Sergei?

Moloch Not good news, I'm afraid. Put it this way, we're more than ever dependent on Watson, now.

Abraxas Did he not get away?

Moloch It was like a human sacrifice. This good old man, glowing gently, but pulsing occasionally in anticipation of a future crowning discharge, was led out and put in the place of the warhead of the backup rocket. He must have peaked prematurely, because the rocket caught fire, and burnt up from the nose down, in front of the house, like a roman bleeding candle. It never left the lawn. I wept.

Abraxas Doctor Watson! Anything to report, down there, to Mr Moloch?

(Doyle pops up his head out of the hole)

Doyle I've worked my way down to the bottom of a comparatively fresh soil chimney. The gravel moraine I'm now going through, now I would say, is relatively undisturbed so rather less promising. It contains fragments of knapped flints from the earliest settlers who moved onto this then-fertile territory after the collapse of the last ice age, perhaps ten thousand

years ago.

Serena Are there no remains?

Doyle Nothing recent, no.

Moloch That's laid out Serena's hopes for justice, cold. She was hoping you were going to find a nest of freshly crushed babies' skulls.

Doyle Nothing like that, no. (Animal cries, off)

Moloch Those aliens are proving bloody insatiable. Nothing scares them. If we survive tonight there's going to be practically nothing left left alive in the park. (Exits)

Serena He could have dug them up later, and left them for the jackals.

Abraxas Does the name Abraxas still mean nothing to you, madam? I am Abraxas, your beloved. Abraxas. Believe that and let all else melt away. Accept that you have been my consort, for eternity.

(Snogs her. Doyle surfaces to see them)

Doyle Oh I beg your pardon. (Disappears)

Serena Bride to Abraxas! The idea is strangely attractive. Give me time.

Abraxas We don't have time. The truth is, Serena, that you and I are Pan's godparents, ancient overlords, the Old Ones. However, all is flux; old gods pass away. To step through to the Ineffable together, we need to place ourselves on the menu of Moloch's daughters. They eat us. Those are the terms for release.

Serena Abraxas, I remember now. You always make me do these things and they never work.

Abraxas Trust me one last time. Will Arsile and Morgue come if you call?

Serena They are very wild now. This evening I opened the ballroom windows and played the piano till my fingers bled: they would not come near.

Abraxas The only roof they'll stoop below is here , where the weak starlight falls, but light enough for them to take their prey. Tickle up our brokers quickly, now.

Serena Kitty kitty kitty!

(Doyle puts his head up.)

Abraxas Don't stop, Doyle. Deeper, ever deeper. Moloch is in earshot so keep blethering, fortissimo.

(Doyle throws up the soil industriously. Abraxas and Serena embrace)

Doyle Here's something. Mixed in with the earliest flints are fragments of pottery from the Beaker folk, a sophisticated civilisation. There is certainly continuing evidence for humanity to between fifty and a hundred thousand years ago. But then it ceases. I'm now passing two million years ago, and any relics left, hand tools and so on, are getting pretty scarce.

Abraxas Splendid, Doyle, eminently believable.

Doyle I am now going through layers of Cretaceous and Jurassic deposits and Lower Old Red sandstone. I would say nothing has disturbed these deposits, for twenty, thirty million years. And now there's a curious uniform dark discolouration band, between the strata. This could be the one deposited after the last meteor strike; the one which annihilated the dinosaurs sixty million years ago. Yes! A band of rare iridium salts, evidence for the earth's periodic reforging, in the foundry of the stars! Abraxas - if I'm not mistaken, the iridium layer is starting to glow - ?!

(Lighting effects from the hole. )

Abraxas Molecular memory; universal sympathy and so forth.

(Enter Arsile and Morgue Doyle gets out)

Serena Something is stopping them.

Abraxas Doyle, get back in the hole.

( Doyle crouches. Arsile and Morgue approach and start to consume Abraxas,)

Abraxas That's better. Doyle, Serena and I are at long last going through. Thank you for covering for us in a way that has made it easy. Moloch suspects nothing. You are dismissed. Bounteous Spirit, Good Mind, Truth, and Rightmindedness, are the Seven names.

( Arsile eats Abraxas. Morgue eats Serena.)

Doyle That's only four names you've given me. Serena- are you familiar with the Seven Immortals?

Serena Of course, but I've always been terrible with names.

Doyle Abraxas! I need three more names!

Abraxas You need what? No panic, we'll do it another way. There are more ways to kill a cat..... See the the Zodiac up there? There's a handy little mnemonic built into the circle of animals. (Beat) I've forgotten it. Shakespeare's got the answer as usual. "In me thou see'st the twilight of such day, as after sunset fadeth in the West;  
which by and by black night doth take away, Death's second self, that seals up all in rest."....Hot booty! I'm shooting the rapids of molten tin on Mercury, in a burning canoe! This beats white water rafting, hands down!

Doyle Three names, Abraxas!

Abraxas Keep your voice down, Doyle. There's ullage in life's wine, as well as lees. Come close. (Doyle approaches) Doyle; humanity is a spreading poison. Scum. Give yourself away to the girls quickly. Don't go back to your earth. Forget the wife and kids. Come with us. It is a most thrilling transgression. And who's this purring softly, wanting to jump up on my lap..... come, Schrodinger.....

Doyle I charge you, Ur-Archon Abraxas Three Six Five, tell me THE NAMES!

(Glugging noises, Abraxas disappears. Serena disappeared Serena, and Abraxas are eaten. Enter Moloch. Arsile and

Morgue flee)

Moloch Serena warned you, did she not, against invoking his full name or the fountains of the deep break up. And they are about to break up, and it's all your fault! Better believe me, for I the despis-éd son of Abraxas am now taking up my rightful inheritance. Bow down and worship me. On your knees, if you please. (Doyle assumes boxing mode) Are you trying to pick a fight? Why?

Doyle Because I have witnessed you in the last two days, grievously deluding and mentally tormenting a lady. (Moloch laughs) The fact is you are an universal infernal pest. (Moloch laughs) Indeed there is no deadly sin which your character does not willingly embrace, so up with your dukes, man!

(Doyle tries to punch him and Moloch waves the punch aside.)

Moloch You pathetic little pipsqueak. Don't even think about it. I always win! No Queensberry rules, here. No duality of good and evil, falling down the Richenbach Falls in a slow fade. If I were you, I would do your best not to offend the new governor, or he could rip your heart out. But I can respect the little bloke who stands up for himself. Go on, bugger off home.

Doyle Abraxas left me three names short.

Moloch Typical. Let's see, the names you need are (Pause) Dominion; Health, and oh dear! The last fellow's name has been inexplicably erased from the Akashic Record!

Doyle I know what it is. The deduction is hardly taxing. It is your character, sir, which betrays you, and gives me the name. Life is everything which all your diabolical ingenuity has been aimed to pervert, twist, and negate on the altar of your vile self. Anyone familiar with the Mesopotamian influence in Judaism would have come to the same conclusion. It's Life, isn't it? The name of the seventh Immortal. Life. (Pause)

Moloch Mmm. Maybe Watson's not stupid after all. Maybe he is. Time will tell. Not long to go. Tick, tick, tick..

Doyle        There can be no shadow of a doubt. The seven candles on the menorah stand for the seven visible heavenly bodies which are the Seven Immortals in another guise. You think you hold the aces in this game, sir. But I shall trump you. The name of the last Immortal is handed down to us in the toast that the Jews raise their glasses to! *L'chaim!* To Life!

Moloch      You're welcome to try it. In about thirty seconds. No worries!

(Moloch exits.

A clock on the house starts to chime like a tinny Big Ben. Light starts to flicker faster and faster. Lighting change to ghastly grey-green. A great awesome thump as Caledonia strikes. Stage flooded with red light. Rumbling and Moloch Hall collapses. The front pillars roll around. Stage floods with smoke Approaching roar of the tidal wave. The moon turns blood red. )

Doyle        (Confident) Bounteous Spirit! Good Mind! Truth! Rightmindedness ! Dominion, Health! LIFE!!!

(Smoke slowly clears. Sound slowly dies. Doyle on his knees. Moon in same place but now a pale afternoon moon. Below the moon the Cottingley glade resumes. Enter Weegee dressed Edwardian again, as in beginning. She goes and helps Doyle up, and dusts him down.)

Weegee      What's going on, sir? I heard these cries. I thought you might be having a heart attack.

Doyle        Miss Undine.....Does the old testament god Moloch, mean anything to you?

Weegee      No. What did he do?

Doyle        Oh, I think the children of the Israelites were made holocaust, sacrificed in an ordeal by fire to him.

Weegee      Oh, right. (beat) I'll finish packing the car.

Doyle        Thank you Miss Undine.

( Exit Weegee. Doyle turns to audience)

Doyle        And that was the end of the Cottingley haunting. No fairies were found on the negatives, true. But I leave the sceptics among us- and there must be quite a few in this audience- with this question. Who has overseen the living apothecary of nature, since ancient times, on our behalf, if not entities? How, ladies and gentlemen, in one small space could there be a cornucopia of plants as in Cottingley, plants useful to man, unless there are active guardians, identified with our welfare who are looking after these wild plants for us, until we are wise enough in their ways to reap the benefits? In one corner of this enchanted wood alone, I saw marigold, a saffron substitute, as well as medicinal eyebright; fat hen, that guardian against the scurvy; foxgloves in profusion - which yield digitalis, for unsteady hearts, and a clump of what the Welsh, I think, call bears' garlic; from the hellebore family, very useful against all kinds of mental confusion...

( Rest of cast join him. Music, reprise. Curtain call. End play)