**Clockwork Unwound. A new play**

1. CAST – all multi-role and are in the ensemble. Also, all parts are interchangeable with signifiers

ALEX – OUR HERO. Moody, insecure, a little immature

BOUNCER )

ED ) male members of the ‘Reppros’ (Alex’s ‘gang’)

GEORGIE )

CHARLIE )

ALEX 1

ALEX 2 Narrators

ALEX 3

ZARA – OUR HEROINE. Optimistic, fun, better adjusted than Alex.

FREDDIE ) Female members of the ‘Reppros’ (Alex’s ‘gang’)

HEN )

DONNIE – 1ST SCIENTIST

MIKEY – 2ND SCIENTIST

JENKINS – The Minister of Truth

LINCOLN – Newsreader and ‘face’ of The Ministry

JACKSON – Lincoln’s runner

KARLOF – An opposition politician,

IMOGEN – An opposition activist

BROWN – Imogen’s source at the ministry

WHITE – Imogen’s 2nd source at the ministry

EDEN - Alex’s Mother

MS JANETH ­- Zara’s mother

‘CHAIR’ - Leader of the community forum

TANNER – A concerned citizen

MR JANNETH – A teacher

Hospital Orderlies/Police officers/Court Ushers/The BLAND

1. Introduction

The stage is uncluttered. Defined by polythene walls fixed to moveable weighted poles (These ‘walls’ move throughout the play and offer a little screening for the actors when not involved in the action. The upstage right corner of the stage is raised by a metre or so creating a platform. This is the ‘visualisation space’ where we will ‘see’ the imagery that we assume is being played on the VR headsets watched by the cast.

(Music plays: Bach’s Toccata and Fugue in Dm on electric guitar. Violently loud.

The ensemble create a mosaic of dance style patterns. Each holding a card containing a word on one side and a colour on the other. In controlled movement they swirl and create sentences that will placard the performance.

From the centre of the group a young man steps out. Dressed immaculately, suit and tie and a bowler hat, he addresses the audience in calm mature tones. Music fades)

ALEX

My dear ladies and gentlefolk. May I say that it is a pleasure to welcome you to this evening’s cultural event. My name is Alex and this is my sad story. Worry not however, oh viewer, for there will be a happy ending. I tell you this to calm your heightened nerves. All will be well in this best of all possible worlds.

(ALEX walks back through the ensemble who part around him. He hands the hat to another cast member who becomes ALEX 2. ALEX 1 undergoes a transformation as ALEX 2 speaks)

ALEX 2

Our story begins, as all stories do, in the recent past, or is it the near future? When the world was much as it is and, even if it were different, no-one would believe it.

(LINCOLN steps DSR as if fronting a news bulletin. As she speaks she is constantly interrupted by her PA - JACKSON handing her new stories)

LINCOLN

News just in – a terrible event in Midtown. More violence and antisocial behaviour as mobs of youngsters storm a gallery in Midtown destroying the latest display by the award winning collective “artists for the people”. Is civilization on the decline and what can we do… (*JACKSON hands her a new sheet, LINCOLN quickly adjusts her story)*

An update on that story, official sources are praising the great display of social conscience in Midtown tonight as concerned citizens took down a lewd and offensive display of seditious so-called-art in what officials call an act of National Respect. The Ministry of Truth has demanded 10,000 more officers on the streets of our great nation to keep our country pure in thought and deed.

(The ensemble swirl around again and collects LINCOLN, a new ALEX 3 is DSL)

ALEX 3

For what is truth but a moveable feast my friends? However, it is true that I was not always the suave, debonair vision you see before you. Indeed, as our story starts, I looked different, perhaps even indifferent. But we run before we can toddle my friends, let us sweep back the mists of time and examine the winding paths that led us to this vale of tears…

1. *Scene 1 – Prologue – a backstory*

ALEX 1

In the beginning was the screen, and the people saw that it was good, and it was good.

(The ensemble become a ‘public meeting’ anxiety is evident; these are ‘good people’ concerned for their civilization/culture/way of life. One person takes on the role of ‘Chair’ and calls the meeting to order, all characters are multi-roled by members of the ensemble)

CHAIR

People, people, people. It is not helpful to have you all speaking at once. Let us have some order now? Thank you, fine, perhaps, Ms. Janeth you can start us off?

MS JANETH

*(She is a shy, tentative person who reverts to anger and bitterness when stressed)* Thank you, sir. What I wanted to ask is when will these promises actually come to something?

MR JANNETH

We were told the neighbourhood would be safe, that undesirables would be off our streets and our children could play without fear!

(the crowd agree strongly, there are shouts of encouragement. However, one voice clearly disagrees)

EDEN

(Ms. Eden is a calm, confident woman. Unafraid of standing against the prevailing tide)

Our children already play without fear. It is you parents who are afraid, and you’re raising your families to feel it too. There is nothing going on in the streets, but you’d need to step outside to find that out!

MS JANETH

Oh, of course, again with the ‘everything is beautiful’ fantasy. I know what I know. The streets aren’t safe for my children.

EDEN

And how exactly would you know that? When did you last let your children out to play in the park? All day sat down with their screens and their online worlds.

MS JANETH

At least I know where my Zara is. Your Alex is part of the problem – running around like a wild thing. I hear he doesn’t even login to school.

EDEN

Alex is just a boy. He logs his school time and completes his lessons – faster than most I might add – He loves to sit and listen to music –Bach, Beethoven, but he also knows the feel of the dirt under his feet and the wind in his hair.

MR JANETH

The dirt on his skin more like.

EDEN

(ignoring the barb and addressing the crowd)

You all know what I mean. When was the last time your families spent time out on those terrible streets? Your shopping is done online, delivered to your door. Your family visits are done on video link from your own living room. You holiday in covered domes where you can enjoy the scenery without risk. When did any of you actually live in your community?

TANNER

(a quiet, well meaning soul. He wants no trouble)

Well that’s true enough as far as it goes but the streets are not safe, that’s why we don’t go out much

EDEN

And who is it telling you that the streets are not safe?

TANNER

Well we see the newsfeed and they say//

EDEN

//They say! Don’t you see? It’s always ‘them’, ‘they say’ and you all just abdicate your lives to them without a thought! Who here has actually been attacked? *(no-one responds)*, I thought as much. Where is your free will? Your independent thought?

MR JANETH

I have plenty of independent thought. I think I should keep my daughter indoors where it is safe and not listen to your dangerous ideas. *(the crowd agree; this is safe ground)*

MS JANNETH

You want to raise your son as a luddite, removed from the real world that’s your choice. Just don’t expect us to be there when it all ends in tears.

EDEN

He is in the real world. A world where he feels real feelings, not the plastic implanted emotions on the video feed. He knows how it feels to fall and graze his knees. He needs to understand, to feel, it’s what makes us human!

MS JANETH

I don’t want my child to be human, I want her to be safe!

EDEN

Be careful what you wish for. And don’t blame me when one night you open your daughter’s door and she’s not there. If you don’t let them explore the world outside your four walls, there will come a time when they will go without your blessing!

CHAIR

Ladies, ladies, perhaps we should take a step back? Let me take this chance to mention that, in answer to the concerns of worried citizens, The Ministry of Truth has set up a new immersive online experience for us all. Bringing together the many parts of our digital experience into one, helpful package they call ‘Virtuality’. No need to worry about it anymore – ‘Virtuality’ will meet all your needs. Just sign up online for your headsets and The Ministry will address all your concerns.

EDEN

And what if we don’t want to sign up?

CHAIR

Well of course it’s not compulsory, but you wouldn’t want to miss out now would you?

(The ensemble swirls. Time is passing. The ensemble is now all sitting engrossed in VR feeds. ALEX 2 stands and comes forward)

ALEX 2

And so time passed. And, like good little robots, society buckled under and did ‘the right thing’. ‘Virtuality’ took off and everyone signed up, everyone was on line. We little ones grew, as young ones are wont to do, but all was not well in this new earthly paradise. Not for everyone… School days, 8 years old. *(ALEX 2 vanishes and 8-year-old ALEX joins the class.)*

MR JANNETH *(teacher)*

Alright class sit down. Settle yourselves. Take out your headsets and put them on. Now let’s see who’s here? Zara Janneth? Yes there you are, Benedict, Charles, Edward, George, Fredericka? Ah yes Alex… of course. Sit down Alex! Thank you. Now where was I? oh yes, Anna, Leigh? Lynette, Carl? Denise? Alan… and Jane? Excellent, let us begin. Please set your headsets to immersive and work quietly, I do not want to be disturbed.

*(The ensemble are all kids at their online ‘virtual’ school – that is, they all sit staring into screens wearing headsets, performing identical gestures, singing identical twee songs)*

*“I love triangles,*

 *I love triangles,*

 *I love triangles but not as much as squares.*

*I love squares*

*I love squares*

 *I love squares but not as much as circles*

 *I love circles*

 *I love circles*

 *I love circles but only when they’re round.”*

YOUNG ALEX

*(after a short while takes off his headset in frustration and call to the teacher, who doesn’t respond – he is engrossed in his VR feed)*

Sir! Sir, my headset’s broken – I’m not getting a signal. Sir, Sir!!!*(his frustration grows – he throws his headset down. It hits the next child by accident. She looks up and removes her set too, they smile)*

YOUNG ZARA

Did you drop something? *(jokingly throws it back. It misses ALEX and hits another child – BOUNCER. He too takes off his set and smiles at the new game)*