

**THE AGONY
AND THE ECSTASY
OF STEVE JOBS**

By Mike Daisey

Release 1.0
2/21/12
<http://mikedaisey.com>

Dear Reader,

This document is an experiment.

Working together as monologist and director for the past fifteen years, we have never committed any of the monologues to text before. They are created in the room as they are told to live audiences, again and again, and refined over time. We've never allowed other people to perform the monologues, because there is no script, and because it never seemed right—in the same way that no one would perform, say, a transcript of *Cosby* or *Hicks*.

But the massive response to this work has made us want to open a path so that others in the theater can participate. We've received an overwhelming number of inquiries—over 500 different groups and individuals in more than eleven countries, all asking if they can have the rights to perform the monologue.

The answer today, to everyone, is yes.

From the largest American theaters to the smallest high school drama clubs, from prestigious European theaters to the lone actor who tells us he wants to mount a production in Kurdistan on the Iraq border—we invite you, artists of all stripes, to take our monologue and put your own unique spin on it.

Since our announcement that this document would be available royalty-free, the response has been overwhelmingly positive from artists everywhere—and confused and wary from the media. We've been asked if we are afraid of what will happen when these words are free, if we're afraid of what will happen to this work?

We're not afraid at all. We're truly excited to see what people will make. One of the most powerful forces for humanism is that we are capable of doing things that are not motivated by profit—something corporations are incapable of. We're delighted to throw away the royalties and control in favor of real openness, so that the work will bloom everywhere.

To that end, below you'll find some thoughts and guidelines that may be useful as you think about how to make this work your own.

ADAPTATION:

The truth is that this work is not ours now—it is yours. The transcript is a theatrical blueprint which you can amend or change as you see fit. You are encouraged to use whatever is useful in this transcript—from performing the entire piece verbatim, to editing it, to amending it in any way that furthers the needs of your particular production. Perhaps your production is not a monologue, but an ensemble of five actors? Perhaps you'd like to use this material as the framework for a musical? Perhaps a traditional play, built out of pieces of the show transformed into dialogue? Perhaps you will intercut sections of this text with short films of your own devising or use the text to score an opera? The possibilities are endless. Please explore them if you feel inspired to do so.

STAGING:

Those who have seen Mike’s monologues before will know they are staged in a particular manner, with Mike seated at a table, and the outline of the work in front of him. This work has no outline, as it is a transcript derived from those performances, and there’s no need to feel beholden to that staging. Feel free to adhere as closely to, or as far away from, that staging as is useful to you in your work.

CASTING:

Please don’t feel hamstrung by casting. There’s a tendency in the theater to sometimes think linearly about casting, and it is utterly unnecessary. To be specific: you do not have to be a very large white man in his thirties to speak this monologue. In fact, we are very much hoping that there will be a great diversity of speakers for this work, and if your particulars makes certain lines of the text not work, you should amend or delete them.

CONNECTIVITY:

We are hoping that people embarking on productions or using this text in any way will let us know about this. You can do that by emailing us at agonyecstasy@mikedaisey.com, or sending twitter messages to [@mdaisey](https://twitter.com/mdaisey), and by using the hashtag [#agonyecstasy](https://twitter.com/hashtag/agonyecstasy). You do not have to do this, but we hope that you will, because part of this effort is trying to track how far the show spreads, what happens to productions of it, and you might get synergy for your efforts as you find other people who have been following this work.

ACTIVISM:

This monologue has always had an activist component by its nature—it charges people to examine their lives, their roles in our economic realities, and take action within those frameworks. In our productions we follow the performance with a “reverse program”—a kind of action sheet that is handed out at the door as you leave, just as you got the program when you came in. We have included a version of this document at the end of this file, and we’d urge you to consider using it, or if you have other ideas on how to connect this work to action, feel free to implement those.

We sincerely hope that this transcript is provocative, exciting, and useful to you—and please know that you can make a difference. When we started performing this monologue in the summer of 2010, few would have believed that it would become a powerful force for change in the world. In fact, many in our age believe it’s impossible for the arts to ever make a difference. But one should never doubt the power that comes from humans gathering together in a charged space. The fact that you are reading this now is testament to the transformative power of art and theater, something that is larger than any of us.

We are delighted to welcome you into this process, and we can’t wait to see what you dream up.

Break a leg,

Mike Daisey & Jean-Michele Gregory
Creator and Director

OPEN PERFORMANCE LICENSE

TERMS:

This is a non-traditional license, written in simple English. As such it may not cover every contingency, but it outlines the parameters, and presumes good faith on the both the part of the person drafting it and the people reading it.

DISTRIBUTION:

The document this license is contained in is available at <http://mikedaisey.com>. People are free to distribute that file however they wish, but are asked not to amend the document itself. Whenever possible, please link to the site instead of hosting the file separately, as that way people will have access to the most updated version of the transcript. Note that this last point is a request, not a requirement.

USE:

Anyone is free to use and stage THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY OF STEVE JOBS (TATESJ) for live performances. There are no restrictions as to venue, location, or size of live performance. There is no permission needed from anyone at anytime to perform the work in any venue.

ROYALTIES:

There are no royalties or payments of any kind for staging TATESJ—it is free to use for all theatrical purposes, from readings to full productions. No one may profit from the distribution of this transcript without express permission—in other words, agencies can't charge people to produce the show, and they have no right to negotiate such things. It is free.

TRANSLATION:

Permission is granted to translate the text into any other language for the purposes of staging the work. Any translations must be made free under the same terms of this license, and it is requested that artists making those translations send their translations to agonyecstasy@mikedaisey.com so that they can be made available for others to use.

ADAPTATION:

Any and all parts of the text of the transcript may be amended or altered in any fashion by anyone for the purposes of staging a live production. The work may be abridged or expanded. The transcript of the monologue is provided as a theatrical blueprint—individual artists adapting it are expected to use their judgment and make changes accordingly.

TITLE:

It is asked that if artists are staging a work that is substantially similar to what is presented here, they call it THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY OF STEVE JOBS. If the work has been wildly adapted by the artists they are still free to call it TATESJ, or if they feel another title is now appropriate, they may call it that instead.

CREDITING:

It is requested that one of the following credits be used: “by Mike Daisey,” or “Adapted from the monologue by Mike Daisey,” or “Adapted from the monologue ‘The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs’ by Mike Daisey,” as is deemed appropriate for your production.

CONTACT:

It is requested that artists staging the work contact Mike Daisey with details of their productions, so that word can be spread about productions around the world. This is absolutely voluntary, and not required, but if one wishes to take part they should email agonyecstasy@mikedaisey.com or via twitter to [@mdaisey](https://twitter.com/mdaisey) and using the hashtag [#agonyecstasy](https://twitter.com/hashtag/agonyecstasy).

RECORDING:

Artists are free to record and disseminate work that arises out of live performances of this work. If the artists wish to post to the public more than excerpts, they are asked to contact agonyecstasy@mikedaisey.com.

OTHER USE:

This license is expressly for the staging of theatrical productions and live events, and in the creation of work toward that end. Quoting from the text, attributed and referred to as a transcript, is permitted for commentary and analysis.

CONTEXT:

This work is not Mike Daisey’s monologue, because that is a living construct made of ideas in the moment it is executed. It does not represent the totality of TATESJ, as each performance is an extemporaneous, live event, and this transcript should not be interpreted as the definitive version. If people would make an effort to be mindful of this distinction, Mr. Daisey would appreciate it.

**THE AGONY
AND THE ECSTASY
OF STEVE JOBS**

By Mike Daisey

“Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know
to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose.

You are already naked.”

—*Steve Jobs*

“If you have money, you can make the ghosts and
devils turn your grindstone.”

—*Chinese proverb*

“If you want to enjoy a good steak, don’t visit the slaughterhouse.”

—*American proverb*

1 — MIDNIGHT IN THE CHUNGKING MANSIONS

The Mira Hotel in Kowloon, Hong Kong, is exquisitely designed. It's like the inside of a sailing ship: everything has a place and everything is in its place. I actually find myself opening and closing the little drawers just to see the intricate way they're fitted together...I can't help it. It's just the way I'm wired.

And I head down to the lobby of the Mira Hotel in Kowloon, Hong Kong, and I step out into a twenty-first century Hong Kong monsoon season night—the air is so thick with moisture that it's smearing the ubiquitous neon like we've all done just a little bit of LSD—

—and I'm walking down the streets and even though it's after midnight, there are hundreds of people on every block, and there's this humid sort of animal smell, the smell of humans in close proximity with one another, a smell we've all almost entirely forgotten.

And a few blocks down from the Mira Hotel in Kowloon, Hong Kong, sits the Chungking Mansions.

The Chungking Mansions are a wretched hive of scum and villainy. They sit in the heart of Kowloon; they are nothing more and nothing less than a mall of inequities. Anything you want to get that you probably aren't supposed to have you can find in the Chungking Mansions after midnight, and I am there, walking up and down the aisles.

It's like globalism in action. It's like a pirate-themed Benetton ad.

Sub-Saharan Africans with tribal scars are getting into arguments over garbage bags filled with second-hand cell phones, mainlanders are debating with Koreans over some mysterious root, and in an Indian food stall there are stacks and stacks of tiffins and an off-brand Slurpee machine called a Slurvee.

And in all of this, I am the only minority. Because I am white, and large, and I am wearing...a Hawaiian shirt.

Because you get to a certain point where you realize you just aren't going to fit in. You get to a certain point and you realize it might be advantageous to just Columbo yourself right into the middle of a situation. I've been doing this for a long time, it's a kind of professional blundering. I just kind of...*wot, wot? Wot wot wot wot wot!*

You get in the most interesting situations that way. Doesn't help you get back out of them again, but it does make for an interesting life.

And I make my way up to the third floor of the Chungking Mansions, which is where things start getting a little sketchy. And in the course of half an hour I am offered hashish, opium, heroin, sex with women, sex with men, and sex in a combination only described as "delightful."

And I decline all these offers because that's not what I'm here for—I find what I'm looking for in a far corner of that third floor next to a rack of cut-rate papaya...there's this booth.

And in this booth on strands of fishing wire are hundreds and hundreds of cell phones—as though they've been caught by some fisherman—and in a sense they have, because the man in the booth is seated at a workbench, he has a phone in front of him with the back popped off, he has a soldering iron in one hand and a big magnifying glass over his left eye. When I walk in he looks at me and his eye looms at me enormously.

And I speak to him in the only international language I know: I say,

"iPhone?"

And he smiles, and there's his gold tooth, and he reaches under the counter and he pulls out an iPhone...except it's not an iPhone. You can tell right away from the packaging: the kerning on the fonts is all fucked up.

Then when you open it, the phone itself is a pretty good copy but when you turn it on, instead of the graceful swoop of icons onto the screen, these icons stagger on like they all got drunk in Kowloon. And then when you press one of them, instead of a photo-realistic address book, you get a big blue window and the words "ERROR IS MAKING."

I hand back the "iPhone" and show him what it I mean: I reach into my pocket and I take out *my* iPhone and when he sees it, he understands and he reaches out his hand. And I take my baby, and I put it in his hand, and he takes a grimy dock cable and he *shoves* it into the bottom of the phone and his screens light up.

Because this man is a pirate. He's a hacker, a jailbreaker, an unlocker, a person you go to to fiddle with the baseband of your phone, a person who writes tailored viruses to crack your phone open and give it back to you again, because—you may not know this—but there's a war going on right now over all those devices in your pockets. A war over who owns them.

You probably think *you* own them. Why? Because you paid for them?

Silly! The corporations would see it a different way. They would say the devices run on their networks, so they should control them, and there's a war going on right now, back and forth, over who will own those devices...and in a war like that, there's a small percentage to be made by pirates like this one who give people back ownership of the things they thought they already owned.

And as he works, we talk back and forth in broken English, and I ask him if it's hard to stay ahead of Apple and Nokia and Samsung and all the different technology makers who are always building up their defenses that the pirates then have to tear back down again.

And he smiles...and there's that gold tooth again. And he gestures, a grand gesture that seems incongruous in this tiny booth, and for a moment—he doesn't look like a hacker in the Chungking Mansions.

He looks like a warrior prince, and these are all his subjects.

He smiles, as if to say,

“It's me against Apple. Who do you think is going to win?”

2 — THE WORLD BEFORE

My only hobby is technology.

I love technology, I love everything about it. I love looking at technology, I love comparing one piece of technology with another, I love reading rumors about technology that doesn't exist yet, I love browsing technology, I love buying technology, I love opening technology—even when it's in that bubble packaging—I love it. I love the *smell* of a new piece of technology—that sort of burnt PVC smell when you run electricity through it the first time?—I love that.

And of all the kinds of technology that I love in the world, I love the technology that comes from Apple the most.

Because I am an Apple aficionado, I am an Apple partisan, I am an Apple fanboy, I am a worshipper in the cult of Mac. I have been to the House of Jobs, I have walked through the stations of his cross, I have knelt before his throne.

And like so many of you who may be members of this religion with me, you may know that it can be difficult, at times, to keep the faith. And I have strayed now and again. Like many of you, I indulged in the Linux heresies. And in the late nineties, I did sleep with a Windows system or two...but who didn't, really?

But for the most part, I have been faithful. And we speak tonight of the operating system as a religion and I submit to you, how could it be otherwise? Because in this age, when so much of our lives are mediated by technology, I say to you, if you control the metaphor through which people see the world, then you control the world itself.

What I'm saying is, if you have never thought, in a deep way, about your choice of operating systems...you may be living an unexamined life.

And if my time with Apple has taught me anything, it has taught me that to be in love with Apple is a little bit to be in love with heartbreak itself. Because they break your heart, again and again...because Steve Jobs was the master of the forced upgrade.

Just when you think everything is finally working out, just when you think all of your systems are in alignment—not only in their capabilities but also aesthetically—just when you think everything you own can actually speak to one another—he fucks you.

I remember, there was one week in 1999, I looked at all of my systems and I thought, “Oh! It's perfect! Everything I own is bulbous and fruit-colored. This will never go out of style!”

But it did. It did!

And Steve Jobs was so good at telling us the story we long to hear, the story of a future where technology actually works.

I've never been to that place. I really want to go.

And when the devices rise up on their glass pillars—as though they were born from the mind of Jobs himself! Like one day he's walking down the street and he's like, “An iPad!” and MWRRRAAAP, *there it is!* —they're so beautiful!

He was so good at making us need things we never even knew we wanted.

Like I never knew that I *needed* a laptop so thin I could slice a sandwich with it. I didn't know that. But then I saw it. And I *wanted* it.

<<*mimes slicing a sandwich*>>

And there are some of you out there in the darkness right now, watching me, thinking, “Mike . . . use a knife.”

But I say to you, in a better designed world, I would need only one tool: the tool that Steve has given me.

<<*mimes slicing a sandwich again*>>

And when I watch the keynotes, I am filled with a curious combination of lust and geekery. I stare into the screen and I have one window open with the livestream running, showing the devices being introduced, and I have multiple other windows open with chat rooms filled with other people—also in their underwear—in apartments all over the world, typing furiously. And when it is over, I rise up, transformed, and I go to the other room of our apartment, where my wife is—who is, I should note, a more normal person—and I try to explain to her what I have seen . . . and it is like I am speaking in Egyptian:

<<*in the voice of the devouring consumer*>>

“I want a new router. I want a new router! Because our current router—ha-ha!—our current router is 802.11.g . *G!* Pathetic *G!* It’s sooooo sloooowwww. I can’t believe how slowwwwww it is. I didn’t even know it was slow until minutes ago but now that I *do* know . . . I can’t even LOOK at the fucking thing! I just want to rip it out of our systems and smash it against the edge of the toilet and flush it away. The new router—ahhhh! —the new router is 802.11.n. *N!* *N* is *fast*. With *N*, everything is finally going to work the way they always said it would. With *N*, we’ll finally be able to stream high definition video wirelessly across our apartment from our RAID array server!”

And there is a rational voice in the back of my mind saying,

“Michael. You do not own a RAID array server. And you do not stream *any* high definition video. In fact, the only thing you use your router for is downloading webpages from the internet.”

And I speak to that voice, and I tell that voice to SHUT UP.

Because I want it! Because it is small, and white, and square... and has perfect Bauhaus-inspired design.

And before we go too much further here tonight, I think we should speak, for a moment, about the nature of geekishness.

Because geeks are a little bit like lowland gorillas: they fight for dominance. And out there in the darkness I feel certain that there is someone who believes that they are geekier than me. They're sitting out there in the darkness, even now, watching me, thinking...

<<*in a shrill nasal manner*>>

“I don't think he knows anything about Steve Jobs. I have a tattoo of Steve Jobs' face on the back of my skull. When I have a USB thumb drive that doesn't work the way I want it to, I like to write my own drivers for it in machine code.”

You win.

You are geekier than me.

You, out there in the darkness.

If...you made it out of your apartment this evening.

But I do think it's important to understand where I sit in that hierarchy for the purposes of our story, and so the best way I know to describe it is to say that I am at the level of geekishness where, to relax, after performances like this one, sometimes, I will go back to my apartment and

I will field strip my MacBook Pro into its 43 component pieces. I will clean them with compressed air and I will put them back together again.

It soothes me.

So the truth is, I never would have questioned this religion, I never would have looked deeply at this belief system—because it gave me so much pleasure—if it hadn't been for the pictures.

Because one day, I was relaxing on the internet—which for me means reading Macintosh news sites, which, I should specify, have no actual news in them. They're instead filled with rumors about what Apple will do next, written exclusively by people who have no fucking idea what Apple will do next, but, for some reason, I find this soothing.

So, I'm reading one of these news sites when this article gets posted. And it's about the fact that someone bought an iPhone and when they got it, it wasn't blank—it had information on it from inside the factory. And in fact, in the camera roll, there were pictures on it. From inside the factory. They posted these pictures into the article, and I looked at these pictures, and they took my breath away.

They're not very good pictures, you know—they're just testing that the camera on the phone works, they're not *of* anything, but I'll never forget them. There were four of them.

First was of a stack of pallets, wooden pallets, stacked up; and the second was the edge of a conveyor belt; the third was totally out of focus—it could just be an enormous space—and the fourth was a woman. She doesn't know her picture's being taken. She's looking off in another direction, she's wearing a clean suit, she has no expression on her face.

And I looked at these pictures, and I downloaded these pictures to my desktop, and I put them in a folder on my desktop, and in the weeks and months that followed I found myself

returning to them again and again, almost compulsively. I would mouse over, and I would open that folder, and then I would use Exposé and I would fan the pictures across my desktop and I would look at them.

Who are these people?

Because you have to understand, I have dedicated an embarrassing amount of my life to the study of these machines. I'm an amateur, but I am a dedicated amateur. I understand as best I can how the hardware works and how the software rests on the hardware, and in all that time, until I saw those pictures, it was only then that I realized I had never thought, ever, in a dedicated way, about how they were made.

It's actually hard now to reconstruct what I did think. I think what I thought is they were made by robots.

I had an image in my mind that I now realize I just stole from a *60 Minutes* story about Japanese automotive plants. I just copy-and-pasted that and I was like, *PWOP*, Command-V...it looks like that.

But smaller.

Because they're laptops. Instead of cars.

I started to think how if this phone has four pictures on it, taken by hand in testing, then every iPhone has four pictures on it, taken in testing, every iPhone in the world. By hand. I started to think. And that's always a problem, for any religion.

The moment when you begin to think.

3 — FRUIT OF EARLY PIRATES

IN THE BEGINNING there were two Steves, and this is very important: there was Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak.

Wozniak was a geek's geek, sort of like a geek version of Santa Claus: very fat, very jolly, and he could code like a motherfucker. He would drink Mountain Dew—WHARRRRRRRRRRGGGGGHHHHH!—then he would code, all night long. Serious geek—serious genius.

Steve Jobs was something else entirely. He wasn't even really a geek, he was more like a showman, like an inventor-entrepreneur, and he loomed over the tech industry.

You know, we don't have many giants like Steve Jobs anymore. I mean, who do we have today?

Ballmer? At Microsoft?

<<makes horrible cat throwing up sound>>

Ballmer's a fucking monkey! He throws chairs at his subordinates when he's angry.

Steve Jobs didn't need to throw chairs.

Steve Jobs could do that shit with his *mind*.

If Steve Jobs even looked at a subordinate in a certain way, the subordinate would get up and go and get a chair...and beat themselves to death with it.

That's power. That's real power.

Jobs was adopted into a working class family. He was always driven and idiosyncratic. He went off to college and dropped out after one semester, but he stayed on campus, auditing the

classes he wanted to take while he surfed on other people's couches, and he began to live a kind of dual existence: half of it in the Pacific Northwest, where he went to vegan communes and dropped a lot of acid, and the other half in what is today Silicon Valley, where he became more and more obsessed with electronics.

And he fused these two parts of himself together until he became a kind of techno-libertarian hippie—someone who believed passionately in the power of technology to transform all our lives, and believed that transformation could be welded to humanist values.

And he hooks up with Wozniak, and the first thing they work on together is a pirate box: it's a box that lets you hack into the telephone company and steal long-distance calls.

They don't just make one of them—they make hundreds of them, and they sell them to everybody, but they need to test it, so Jobs has Wozniak test the box by using it to place a call to the Vatican—but spoofing the call so it looks like the call is coming from the White House.

So Wozniak does this and says, “Hello Vatican, this is the White House. I have Henry Kissinger on the line for the Pope.”

And the cardinal—or whoever the fuck answers the phone at the Vatican in the middle of the night—says, “His Holiness is sleeping, but please hold on, we'll go and wake him.”

And Wozniak says, “OH MY GOD I'M SORRY DON'T DO THAT THIS WAS A MISTAKE DON'T WAKE THE POPE GOODBYE!”

Because he's a regular geek so he's like,

“It fucking works, proof of concept. Jesus Christ!”

Now if Jobs had placed that call, Jobs would've said,

“Excellent.

Please go and get him.

And while I have you here on the line, listen to the sound of my voice...”

Their next project together is the Apple I. It’s a computer, but it doesn’t look very much like a computer as we imagine them today. And that’s because the beginning of the personal computer revolution was a hobbyist movement, so the kind of people who are going to buy a computer are the people who are into chemistry sets and ham radios.

And so the Apple I is a bundle of circuit boards; it actually comes with a manual that explains exactly how it’s circuited because it’s expected you’ll want to hack it or modify it or fuck with it. It doesn’t even always have a case, and it definitely doesn’t have a keyboard—and that’s a feature, not a bug. Because if you’re the kind of person who bought one, you’re the kind of person who would say, “There’s no keyboard? You mean I get to make my own keyboard? Awesome!”

Now their next project, the Apple II, is entirely different. This looks like a product, it looks like something you could buy in a store, and indeed, thousands of Americans run out and buy it. And they have this brand new experience that Americans had never had before, the experience of going out and buying an incredibly expensive piece of machinery, setting it all up correctly, turning it on...and nothing happens. It just goes:

<<mimics the sound of an Apple II booting up, disk drive whiring, then mimes a cursor blinking>>

That’s because a computer fundamentally is an appliance, and appliances, by their nature, do one thing: your blender blends, your iron irons, and your computer computes—it executes the programs that are run on it. What’s different about a computer is it’s kind of like a chameleon: it *becomes* whatever program is executing on it—so the value of a computer increases exponentially as more programs are written for it.

And the Apple II drops at this fortuitous moment, when a critical mass of Americans are getting into computing, and it's them—the users—they are the ones that give value to that machine, that make that computer a success.

They come up with programs that Apple never would've thought of, like spreadsheets. People are like,

“You know what'd be great? If there were spreadsheets on the computer. That would be so much better than these clay tablets we're using now.”

And the Apple II goes on to be the best-selling computer in the history of the world, and a mind virus starts to spread across America, infecting parents everywhere with the idea that if they do not get a computer for their child, their child is *fucked*.

And parents everywhere fall prey to this—they don't even know what they do, but they're like, “Well, Junior, this was certainly very fucking expensive...I hope you know what the fuck to do with it!”

And that's how I got my first computer.

My first computer was an Apple IIc.

It was bought for my family by my grandfather, who was fairly well off—my family was actually fairly poor, so when the Apple IIc came into our home, it was easily the most expensive thing that had ever been in our home, and so it was treated with a degree of deference as befitting something with that lineage: it was given its own room—the Computer Room—where it sat in its own desk, and we had to ask permission to go and speak with the computer.

It was a beautiful machine. I think everything I fundamentally understand about industrial design I learned looking at and working with that machine. It had this beautiful off-white platinum finish, and there were these slits cut perfectly, vertically, into the top case...the keys

had this wonderful travel to them, they were a delight to use, and the font on the keys was Garamond—a font I still feel strongly about today. The disk drive would open and close with a satisfying chunk, and I learned on that machine. I started with the tutorials, played a lot of Lemonade Stand, and moved on to programming in Basic, Pascal, typing in programs from magazines.

I became a writer on that machine. I and the machine learned to write together late into the night, the cold Maine night, everyone else in the house is asleep, I would be there, seated before the computer, the thoughts in my fevered brain traveling down my arms, out my fingers, into the keys, up through the computer, into the screen and spraying back at me as light, this virtuous circle, I and the computer, learning together.

I remember everything about that machine. I remember how the power brick would oscillate...in the depths of the night you could hear the whine going up and down and up and down. I remember how you had to stack pillows on top of the printer if you wanted to print in the middle of the night because it was dot matrix, and it would go:

<<emits a horrifying, piercing impersonation of a dot-matrix printer>>

AIIIIIEEEAAAAAAAAA! AIIIIIEEEAAAAAAAAA! AIIIIIEEEAAAAAAAAA!

<<audience recovers from horrifying dot-matrix printer sound>>

And there were two axes that ran right through Steve Jobs' character. One is that he was passionate about design, and the other is that he was ruthless in business. And the place where these two best intersect is the Breakout story.

When Apple was barely out of the garage, just starting out, Jobs goes to Wozniak and says, "Listen, I got us a project. It's a rush job, we have to do it in seventy-two hours. It's programming this game, Breakout, for Atari. Here's the deal: if we can make the game fit on

fifty chips then we get seven hundred dollars. But if we can make the game fit on forty chips...then, we get a thousand dollars.”

And Wozniak listens to this, and then he goes, “WHARRRRGGG!” and he drinks three liters of Mountain Dew! And then he just starts coding—day and night and night and day—and three days later, he’s done it and he goes to Jobs—

<<groggy incomprehensible bear-like geek sounds>>

—and he’s made the game fit on thirty-eight chips. The people at Atari don’t even understand how he did it. They’re like, “What the fuck? I don’t even understand this...just ship it. Just fucking ship it.”

It isn’t until years later, when Apple is a global company and everyone involved are multi-multi-millionaires, it isn’t until then that Wozniak discovers that Jobs was paid five thousand dollars for that project.

And further, there were no conditions from Atari about the number of chips to be used.

Jobs just liked things to be efficient.

4 — THE GATES OF FOXCONN

Shenzhen is a city without history.

The people who live there will tell you that, because thirty-one years ago, Shenzhen was a fishing village. They had little reed huts, little reed walkways between the huts, the men would fish into the late afternoon—I hear it was lovely. Today, Shenzhen is a city of fourteen *million* people. It is larger than New York City, it is the third largest city in all of China, and it is the place where almost all of your shit comes from.

And the most amazing thing is, almost no one in America knows its name.

Isn't that remarkable?

That there's a place where almost all of our shit comes from and no one knows its fucking name?

I mean, we think we do know where our shit comes from—we think our shit comes from China.

Right? In kind of a generalized way? "China."

But it doesn't come from "China"—it comes from Shenzhen. It's a city, it's a place, and I am there, in an elevator, going down to the lobby of my hotel to meet with my translator, Cathy.

Cathy is fascinating: she's very small, and she has sort of rounded shoulders, and she has these glasses that are *way* too big for her face so they keep sliding down and she has to push them up assiduously. She also has this sort of unnerving habit that when she is listening to you, she leans forward...indeterminately. So you get the feeling that if you were to talk to her for long enough, she would actually fall into your chest, and you'd have to pick her back up again.

We go outside and get into a taxi and begin to drive through the streets of downtown Shenzhen.

Shenzhen looks like *Blade Runner* threw up on itself. LEDs, neon, and fifteen-story-high video walls covered in shitty Chinese advertising: it's everything they promised us the future would be.

We get out to the edge of the core of Shenzhen and we come to the gates. Because thirty-one years ago, when Deng Xiaoping carved this area off from the rest of China with a big red pen, he said, "This will be the Special Economic Zone," and he made a deal with the corporations, he said, "Listen, use our people, do whatever you want to our people, just give us a modern China." And the corporations took that deal and they squeezed and they squeezed and what they got is the Shenzhen we find today.

And on the other side of the gates it's the factory zone and WHOO! —it's like going from the Eloi to the Morlocks: everything changes. I've never seen anything like it. Everything is under construction. Every road has a bypass, every bypass has a bypass—it's bypasses all the way down. I swear to God, I actually see buildings being built up on one side as they're being torn down on the other.

And we pull onto an elevated expressway, and we begin to drive under a silver poisoned sky, because the air in Shenzhen...it's not good in Hong Kong, but when you get to Shenzhen, you can actually feel it. Like a booted foot pressing down on your chest. But it's amazing, what human beings will get used to, isn't it?

Because after just a few days

<<*takes a deep breath*>>

you hardly even notice it at all.

And as we're driving, we're passing by arcology after arcology, these immense buildings that are so large they are redefining my sense of scale moment by moment, and then our taxi driver takes an exit ramp, and he stops.

Because the exit ramp stops. In mid-air.

There's some rebar sticking out...and an eighty-five foot drop to the ground.

The only sign that the exit ramp ends is a single, solitary, orange cone.

It's sitting there, as if to say,

"We're busy...? Be alert...?"

We back back onto the expressway and begin to drive again, and then Cathy turns to me, pushes up her glasses, and says, "Excuse me, but I do not think this is going to work."

And I hasten to assure her that it *will* work, but I'm talking out of my ass because I don't know that it's going to work; in fact, I have a lot of evidence that this is not going to work. In fact, all the journalists I have talked to in Hong Kong, when I tell them about my plan, you can actually see them wrestling with just how to express to me just how totally fucked my plan is.

My plan is this: We are in a taxi right now, in the factory zone, we are driving on our way to Foxconn.

Foxconn is the biggest company you've never heard of. Foxconn makes almost fifty percent of all the electronics in the world. So if you're ever wondering how much of your shit comes from Foxconn, just take all the electronics you have in your house, put them together in a big pile, cut them all in half: that's Foxconn.

And at this plant, they make all kinds of things, including MacBook Pros and iPhones and iPads, and so my plan is to take this taxi to the main gates, and then I'm going to get out of

the taxi with my translator, and then my plan is to stand at the main gates and talk to anybody who wants to talk to me.

And when I tell journalists in Hong Kong about this plan, they say,

“That’s...different. That’s not really how we usually do things in China...ah...that’s really a bad idea—”

But I don’t know what the fuck else to do. I have been trying to do things “the right way,” I can’t get anywhere. I’ve been working with a fixer for the BBC—all the doors are *closed*.

And you reach a certain point when you realize you may need to obey your natural inclinations.

And at the end of the day, I am large,

I am American,

and I am wearing a fucking Hawaiian shirt.

And we are going to the main gates.

But I have to say, when we get there...my resolve wavers.

Because the Foxconn plant in Shenzhen is enormous. The Foxconn plant in Shenzhen has four-hundred-and-thirty-thousand workers.

That can be a difficult number to conceptualize. I find it’s useful to instead think about how there are twenty-five cafeterias at the plant and you just have to understand that some of these cafeterias seat thousands of people.

So now you just need to visualize a cafeteria that seats thousands and thousands of people.

I’ll wait.

No, really. I'll wait.

You can do it. Try visualizing a cafeteria from your youth—maybe one from grade school, maybe one you went to hundreds and hundreds of times against your will, that would be appropriate. Summon it up in your mind.

Ok. Now. Hold it in your mind.

What I want you to do now is push the walls outward...start cloning the space like a Photoshop tool, over and over and over until it holds thousands of people.

Now, imagine twenty five rooms, all that size, all next to each other.

And now imagine them always full—because they always are. If you're late from your shift, even a little bit, you aren't getting any dinner.

And I get to the main gates, and I get out of the taxi with my translator, and the first thing I see at the gates are the guards.

And the guards look pissed. They look really pissed.

And they are carrying guns.

And I look back at the taxi which is now pulling away...and I'm involuntarily reminded of this Google News alert that popped into my inbox a few weeks earlier about an Reuters photographer who was taking pictures not *at* the Foxconn plant but *near* the Foxconn plant and Foxconn security went out, scooped him up, and beat him before releasing him.

I hope they're in a better mood today.

And I look up past the gates and the guards, I look up at the buildings, these immense buildings, they are so enormous, and along the edges of each enormous building are the nets.

Because right at the time that I am making this visit, there's been an epidemic of suicides at the Foxconn plant.

Day after day, week after week, worker after worker is climbing all the way up to the tops of these enormous buildings and then throwing themselves off, killing themselves in a brutal and public manner, not thinking very much about just how bad this makes Foxconn look.

Foxconn's response to month after month of suicides has been to put up these nets.

<<silence>>

I think it's Foxconn's version of corporate responsibility.

It's shift change, and the workers are coming out of the plant, and I'm standing there under the hot monsoon sun in the gaze of the guards. I feel ridiculous. I look absurd in this landscape—I mean, I wouldn't talk to me!

And Cathy surprises me—she's a spitfire, who knew?—she runs right over to the very first worker, grabs them by the arm, drags them over to us, we start talking...and in short order, we cannot keep up.

First, there's one worker waiting, then there's two, then there's three, and before long the guards are like,

“mrrrrrrr??? RRRRRR,”

and we move further and further away from the plant, but the line just gets longer and longer—everyone wants to talk! We start taking them three or four at a time—we still can't keep up. Everyone wants to talk. It's like they were coming to work every day, thinking,

“You know what'd be great? It'd be so great if somebody who uses all this crap we make, all day long, it'd be so great if one of those people came and asked us what is going on. Because we would have stories for them.”

And I'm just ad-hoc-ing questions, I'm asking the questions you would expect: “What village in China are you from? How long have you been working at Foxconn? What do you do at

the plant? How do you find your job? What would you change at Foxconn if you could change anything?”

That last question always gets them. They always react like a bee has flown into their faces and then they say something to Cathy and Cathy says, “He says he never thought of that before.” Every time. Every time.

And the stories are fascinating. I talk to one young woman who works on the iPhone line. She cleans the screens of iPhones by hand, in these huge racks, thousands and thousands of them every day, and she shows me how she does it, and I show her my iPhone and I hand her my iPhone—I take a picture of her holding my iPhone—and I say to her, “We’ll never know, you may have cleaned the screen of this iPhone when it came by you on the line, we’ll never know.” And, quick as a whip, she takes my phone and she rubs it against her pants and then she says, “There, I’ve cleaned it a second time.”

And I say to her, “You seem kind of young—how old are you?”

And she says, “I’m thirteen.”

And I say, “Thirteen. That’s young. Is it hard to get work at Foxconn when you’re...?”

She says, “Oh no,” and her friends all agree, it’s not that hard. There are inspections, but Foxconn always knows when there’s going to be an inspection, so what they do then—you’re going to love this—they don’t even check ages then, they just pull everyone from the affected line and then they put the oldest workers they have on that line.

You’d think someone would notice this, you know? You’d think someone would say, “My god, you guys are amazing! I can’t believe you keep up with our BRUTAL iPhone quotas and your median age is...ahhhh...74! Chinese productivity, am I right? We gotta get some of you guys back home to Cupertino!”

I am telling you that I do not speak Mandarin, I do not speak Cantonese, I have only a passing familiarity with Chinese culture and to call what I have a passing familiarity is an insult to Chinese culture—I don't know fuck-all about Chinese culture.

But I do know that in my first two hours of my first day at that gate,

I met workers who were fourteen years old,

I met workers who were thirteen years old,

I met workers who were twelve.

Do you really think Apple doesn't know?

In a company obsessed with the details, with the aluminum being milled just so, with the glass being fitted perfectly into the case, do you really think it's credible that they don't know?

Or are they just doing what we're all doing?

Do they just see what they want to see?

5—CHANGE THE WORLD

Xerox PARC is a think tank, and as a think tank, it's a place where ideas go to die. Because for an idea to thrive, it needs to be transmitted from person to person—you keep ideas locked up, it's like fish in a fish tank—they don't fucking like it.

And at Xerox PARC, they had some amazing ideas, they just didn't know what the fuck to do with them. They'd be like, "Oh my god, that's *amazing*, this thing you've made! You know what you should do with this? You should take this thing and you should put it IN THAT CLOSET OVER THERE."

And before long, they filled up all their closets and they still didn't know what the fuck to do. So they started having open houses and they would invite everyone in Silicon Valley and be like,

"Hey, open house at our place this weekend! We got some crazy shit up in here! Also...there will be Doritos!"

And people came, and people from Apple came, and they saw something in one of those closets that blew their minds, and they went back to Steve Jobs and they said, "Steve, Steve. You gotta go to Xerox PARC, you gotta see this thing we saw," and Steve Jobs said, "No."

Because one of the ways Steve Jobs organized the universe is he divided everyone in the universe into Geniuses and Bozos—and there are only a few Geniuses and there's a FUCKLOAD of Bozos. And everyone who's making this suggestion was, currently, a Bozo.

So it takes a while until someone who is currently a Genius says, “Seriously, Steve. You really need to go to Xerox PARC, you really need to see this thing.” At which point Steve Jobs says,

“I’ve had an idea.

I think we should go to Xerox PARC.

I think something may be happening there.”

And what they saw in that room will not seem amazing to you because you live in the world that came after. But I would ask you tonight to try—try to see it the way they saw it, try to see it with fresh eyes.

They walk into a room, there’s a computer there, it looks normal, it’s off. There *is* one new thing: there’s this box there with a cord coming out of it? They call it a *mouse*.

That’s not the crazy part.

The crazy part is when they turn that computer on—because before this moment, the dominant metaphor in computing was that a computer was, fundamentally, an electronic typewriter.

People didn’t think about that very often because sometimes it’s hard to see the metaphor you’re embedded in from inside of it, but fundamentally, every computer was a typewriter that happened to be electronic. Until now.

They turn on this computer and...ahhhh,

It’s not a fucking typewriter.

Instead, on the screen, there are *windows*...and a *cursor*...

And it is an amazing thing, to be there at the moment when the metaphor shifts.

Those of you out there in the darkness who love technology the way that I do, you know what

I'm talking about: that moment when you can feel the ground going out beneath your feet, when you know you will never see things the same way again.

And Steve Jobs leaves that room a changed man, and he goes back to Apple and he starts putting together a team, *Ocean's Eleven*-style.

He starts stealing people from all these different groups, all the freaks and weirdos and misfits, all the very best people from all these different groups—he steals them and he puts all the weirdos together in a secret base. He rents this building away from the rest of Apple's campus—no one knows what the fuck is going on in there—he puts the weirdos in the secret base and then he decides secrecy is overrated and he puts a pirate flag ON TOP of the secret base, as if to say,

<<in the manner of a serious pirate>>

“ARRRRRRRRRR!, fuck all y'all, ARRRRRRRRR!”

And he tells them, “Your job is to destroy Apple. Your job is to destroy the Apple that exists today.”

And he is serious.

Because Steve Jobs was always the enemy of nostalgia. He understood that the future requires sacrifice. Steve Jobs was never afraid to knife the baby.

I'll give you an example. A couple years ago, Apple's best-selling product—best-selling!—was the iPod Mini. It was awesome—it was an iPod, but it was mini! Everybody loved the iPod Mini.

And one day, Steve Jobs is making one of his fabulous keynotes and he's saying,

“Today...the iPod Mini...is...no more.”

And it was like, <<*in the pleading manner of a bereft, Gollum-esque consumer*>>
“NOOOO! Don’t hurts us, Steve! Don’t takes it away, we’ll be good...”
<<*back as Steve again*>> “Instead...we give you...the iPod Nano.”
<<*Gollum doesn’t know what to think, looks back and forth between the Mini and the Nano, then suddenly bursts into crazy-delighted applause*>> “YAYYYYY! Nano is smaller than Mini! YAYYYYY! It’s exactly what I wanted! I’m going to lose it even faster now!”

Everyone’s delighted, and Steve flies away in his black helicopter, and the tech press is jizzing on themselves...it’s a magical day.

And later, people are talking to the Apple reps, and they’re saying, “My god, the iPod Nano is smaller, and it’s thinner, and it holds even more songs than the iPod Mini!” And the Apple people say, “Errrrrr—actually...it doesn’t hold more songs.”

And they say, “Oh. Well, you know, it’s smaller, and it’s thinner, and it holds just as many songs as the iPod Mini!”

And the Apple reps say, “Errrrr...actually...it’s a lot less.”

And people said, “Oh. Well that sucks.

...hey, can I still get an iPod Mini?”

NO! They’ve been pulled from the stores that very day, you cannot have one for love or money—you will have an iPod Nano, and you will fucking like it!

Now, I ask you: Can you think of any other company, in the world, that behaves anything like this?

That would take their best-selling product, pull it from the stores overnight, replacing it with a new product that is more technically advanced but does half as much...and when people complain about this, they are told, vigorously, to fuck themselves.

I'm saying it's kind of radical.

And so Steve Jobs is serious when he's telling them he wants them to destroy Apple—the Apple of that time is built on the Apple II platform, their entire empire is built on that, and he's saying,

“No, don't be compatible with that, fuck that shit! Shove it off the table!, MAKE something NEW.”

And these are the people that create the Macintosh.

And in 1984, the Mac is born. It goes on to be the dominant computer of its generation. Never in market share—the Mac never dominates in market share—instead, the Mac dominates in mind share.

Over time, every computer that is not a Mac evolves until it looks and thinks and works like a Mac. It's a mind virus that spreads absolutely everywhere.

My favorite Mac was the Macintosh SE/30. I never owned one, but they had one at the security office where I did work-study in college and I would sign up for overnight shifts so I could spend more time with the SE/30.

It was a wonderful machine. It had the form factor of the original Macintosh, so if you were seated at it, if you squinted, it looked like a little anthropomorphic human face staring back at you. And I would type into its tiny gray-scale screen...it was the first computer I used regularly that had real networking and I would telnet out from it to repositories of information around the world; I would post to bulletin boards and people in other cities—other countries!—would post back, and we would talk about the future...and how in the future, this “web” that was just starting now, it would grow and grow until one day...it would touch everyone, everywhere and when that happened...information would be free. And people everywhere would be free.

We were very young.

But we could have been right.

<<pause>>

And Steve Jobs was many things, but he was two things above all others, inextractably welded together: He was a

<<left hand>> visionary

<<right hand>> asshole.

And you cannot have one without the other: the two things speak to one another. He was an impossible manager. I would not wish on my worst enemy to be personally managed by Steve Jobs. He was not a micro-manager, he was a nano-manager—he would climb into the bodies of his subordinates and try to move them around with his mind.

The head of the Macintosh project, when asked for public comment on Steve Jobs' management style, the only thing he would ever say publicly was this:

“He would make a most excellent King of France.”

But you have to admit it's working for him. It is! The only people who are just a little tired of this bullshit is Apple's board of directors; they're just a little tired of it. They're like, “Oh my god. I KNOW he's a fucking genius, I just wish sometimes at meetings that he would stop cursing at us, and I just wish sometimes at those meetings that he would wear shoes.”

And so they came up with an idea, they thought, You know, what if we had someone *next* to Steve, you know, someone who's a little older, someone who doesn't freak the investors out so much, somebody who looks good in a suit...somebody who wears shoes.

And so they convince Steve to do this, and so Steve and the board go out looking for someone, and who they find is Scully.

And Scully was at Pepsi, and Scully didn't know fuck-all about computers, but he did look great in a suit.

And so Jobs goes to Scully and says, "Come. Join me at Apple."

And Scully says,

<<in the manner of a recalcitrant Scully>>

"Errrr, I don't know...I don't know about the clicky-clicky-clicky, I don't know..."

And Jobs says, "What? Do you want to sell fucking sugar water for the rest of your life, or do you want to CHANGE THE WORLD?!" and he looks at him with Steve Jobs' Laser Death Vision—DA-DA-DDD-DA! DA-DA-DDD-DA! And Scully goes, "ACK! Change-the-world, change-the-WORLD—!" and he goes and he joins Jobs at Apple.

And everything is great.

For a while.

And you'll find this a lot, in Steve Jobs stories. Things are always great!...for a while.

And then Scully makes the inevitable slide...from Genius to Bozo.

And Jobs realizes he needs to throw him out of the company, and Jobs stages a coup d'etat.

And the thing about staging a coup d'etat is that you really want to win.

Because if you don't win, it is so...awkward. At the office the next day.

And the board backs Scully, and in short order, Jobs is thrown out of his own company.

He's a laughingstock in Silicon Valley—the metaphor had shifted right out from underneath him.

6 — WHERE ALL OUR SHIT IS MADE

Emboldened by my success at Foxconn, I decide to embark on a new plan. But I'm going to need Cathy's help if it's going to work, so I meet with her in the lobby of my hotel and I say to her,

“Cathy, now you work with a lot of American businessmen, don't you?” And she says, “Yes, I do.” And I say, “Great. Here's what I want you to do: I want you to call all of the factories you have connections with, I want you to call them, and I want you to tell them that I am an American businessman, and that I want to buy whatever they are selling.”

And she listens to this, and she says, “But you...are not a businessman?”

And I say, “That's true, I am not a businessman.”

And she says, “And you...aren't going to buy their products?”

And I say, “That's true. I am not going to buy their products.”

She says, “You...will lie to them.”

And I say, “Yes, Cathy. I'm going to lie to lots of people.”

And for a moment, I think it isn't going to work.

And then you can actually see the idea leap the synaptic gap from a Problem to a Problem-To-Be-Solved.

She says:

<<very slowly, carefully, clearly, and quietly>>

“You...are going to need a lot...of business cards.”

And two days later we head out into the factory zone. As we come to each factory, Cathy briefs me on what it is they make and what it is I have said I am going to buy.

The factories are all different, but really, they're more similar than different—there's always gates and guards, you get past those there's always a lawn, big and green and plush—no one walks on it, no one uses it. You go into the lobbies—the lobbies are these huge, empty Kubrickian spaces, totally empty except for a tiny little desk for the receptionist. You cross the HUGE empty lobby to the tiny little desk, introduce yourself, and then the executives always come down in a gaggle *loolololo* all together *looloolololo* they pick you up *looloolololo* and you go up together *loolooloolooloolooloololo* to a conference room. For the exchanging of the business cards.

And Cathy had told me this would be very important, that when we got in that room it'd be very formal, and each person would come up to me in turn and they would offer me their business card with two hands, and it was very important that I accept it with two hands, and that I then examine it:

“Mmmmmmm...Lucida Grande. Excellent font choice. Mmmmmmmmm...”

And after each and every one of them have done this, they are all staring at me. Because it's my turn. And I reach into my pocket and I pull out...some grimy slips of fucked-up paper.

Because it's hard to find a Kinko's in Shenzhen!

And the business office at my hotel, it's like it's from before the fucking revolution, and the woman there is totally scary, and the keyboard doesn't make any fucking sense, and the paper is slimy and gray, and they don't have scissors, they're like child safety—it's so fucked up. I don't even know how to tell you how fucked up it is.

It's really fucked up.

And so I take...my fucked-up piece of paper, and I go...

<< holds out card with two hands while turning face away in embarrassed grimace >>

Thank God for the protocol of the Chinese! They do not even blink. They take my fucked-up piece of paper and they go, “Mmmmmmm...interesting made-up business name with fake address. Mmmmmmm...” And then, it’s time for the PowerPoint.

And one of the reasons I have lived my life in the manner that I have is so that I do not have to go to PowerPoint presentations.

That was sort of the fucking point of all this.

But life has its little ironies sometimes, doesn’t it?

And I made up for it in Shenzhen...oh, yes I did. Because I went to *all* the PowerPoint presentations. Every last fucking one of them, because PowerPoint is a tool designed by Microsoft.

Microsoft, whose motto should be, “Building Tools That Do Shit We Can Already Do.”

Because the point of PowerPoint is that it enables people who are in the same room to communicate with one another.

<<a gesture indicating this process>>

As you can tell from the form of my theatrical presentation, I believe we have a tool that does that already: it’s called the human voice. It’s built-in and it hardly ever crashes.

But why would we want to *talk* to one another when instead we can use PowerPoint with all its fucking features—like the clip art? AARRRGH...the clip art makes my eyes bleed!

And the fonts! Ohhhhhh, they use *all* the fonts! Comic Sans?

There’s nothing comic about Comic Sans.

They put up the first slide, and it's got a big jpeg that's all pixilated, like someone's smacking me in the retina with a ball-peen hammer. And then the person running the PowerPoint goes <<*slowly and deliberately hitting a mouse button*>> ...clllliiiiick. And a single line of text appears, in English, and the text says,

“The plant uses thirty thousand gallons of water every day.”

There's a pause.

And then the click-er says:

<<*pause*>>

“The plant uses thirty thousand gallons of water every day.”

!!! And then nothing happens! Until and unless—I manually nod. I have to literally go,

<<*big, exaggerated nod*>>

“Mmmmmm . . .”

And only then will they...clllliiiiick, and another line of text appears.

It's fucking interminable! It goes on and on—I swear to God there are nights I wake up in the middle of the night, even now, thinking,

“Is it still going on? Am I still at the presentation?”

It goes on for so long I seriously start thinking about the fact that I am an “actor” playing the “role” of an American businessman...

There are *actual* businesspeople out there! For whom this is their actual life!

How does that happen to someone?!

You go to school, you fall in love, and this, *this*, THIS is what you're spending your one precious life on?

What the fuck happened to you?!

They must have a penknife in their pockets, you know, just for luck, just for something to hold onto, just so they can rub it as the slides are going by, just so they can know that if it ever gets to be too much, if it ever gets to be too fucking much, then they can STAB themselves in the FUCKING neck, and it will be *over*.

Worst job in the fucking world.

After the PowerPoint, we head down to the factory floor. And I retract my previous assertion because this is the worst job in the fucking world.

Industrial spaces with twenty, twenty-five, thirty thousand workers in a single enormous space, they can exert a kind of eerie fascination—there's a beauty to industrialization on such a massive scale. You don't have to deny it—there's a wonder to seeing so much order laid out in front of you, and people are walking around whispering statistics in your ear, it's easy to slip into a kind of Stalinist wet dream. I try to subvert that by locking onto actual faces as they take me up and down the aisles. And the first thing I notice is the silence.

It's so quiet.

At Foxconn, you're demerited if you ever speak on the line, at no factory that I went to did anyone ever speak on the line—but this is deeper than that.

As a creature of the First World, I expect a factory making complex electronics will have the sounds of machinery, but in a place where the cost of labor is effectively zero, anything that *can* be made by hand *is* made by hand.

Rest assured, no matter how complex your electronics are they are assembled by thousands and thousands of tiny little fingers working in concert, and in those vast spaces the only sound is the sound of bodies in constant, unending motion.

And it is constant. They work a Chinese hour, and a Chinese hour has sixty Chinese

minutes, and a Chinese minute has sixty Chinese seconds—it's not like our hour.

What's our hour now? Forty-six minutes? You have a bathroom break, and a smoke break, and if you don't smoke, there's a yoga break...

This doesn't look anything like that. This looks like nothing we've seen in a century. They work on the lines and a line only moves as fast as its slowest member, so each person learns how to move perfectly, as quickly as possible—if they can't do it, there are people behind them, watching them, and there are cameras watching both sets of people, and people watching the cameras—they lock it down. They sharpen it to a fine, sharp edge, every hour, and those hours are long.

The official workday in China is eight hours long. That's a joke. I never met anyone who'd even heard of an eight-hour shift. Everyone I talked to worked twelve-hour shifts, standard. And often much longer than that: fourteen hours a day, fifteen hours a day, sometimes when there's a hot new gadget coming out—you know what the fuck I'm talking about—sometimes it pegs up at sixteen hours a day and it just sits there for weeks and months at a time, month after month of straight sixteens—sometimes longer than that.

While I'm in country, a worker at Foxconn dies after working a thirty-four-hour shift. I wish I could say that was unusual, but it's happened before. I only mention it because it actually happened while I was there.

And I go to the dormitories. I'm a valuable potential future customer: they will show me anything I ask to see.

The dormitories are cement cubes, ten foot by twelve foot—and in that space, there are thirteen beds. Fourteen beds. I count fifteen beds. They're stacked up like Jenga puzzle pieces all the way up to the ceiling. The space between them is so narrow none of us would actually fit in

them—they have to slide into them like coffins. There are cameras in the rooms, there are cameras in the hallways, there are cameras everywhere.

And why wouldn't there be? You know when we dream of a future when the regulations are washed away and the corporations are finally free to sail above us, you don't have to dream about some sci-fi-dystopian-*Blade-Runner-1984*-bullshit. You can go to Shenzhen tomorrow—they're making your shit that way today.

And you need to know that these people are among the best and brightest of their generation. You need to know that when I interview them outside the factories, they are, each of them, as bright and individual as you are out there in the darkness. You need to know these are exactly the people who fought their way out of their villages, to make a new life for themselves in these cities. These are exactly the people who could have the spirit to think about democracy.

But, fortunately for Beijing, they have a heat sink in the south of the country, they have an economic honey trap that soaks up all those people and keeps them busy, too busy to think about freedom, too busy making all our shit.

When I leave the factories I can feel the metaphor shifting underneath me. I can feel myself being rewritten from the inside out; the way I see everything is starting to change.

I keep thinking, how often do we talk about how we wish more things were handmade?

Oh, we talk about that all the time, don't we?

"I wish it was like the old days, I wish things had that human touch."

But that's not true. There are more handmade things now than there have ever been in the history of the world. Everything is handmade. I know. I have been there. I have seen the workers laying in parts thinner than human hair, one, after another, after another.

Everything is handmade. If you have the eyes to see it.

7 — THE SECOND COMING

At this point, people at Apple are excited about Scully. They feel like maybe it's time for Apple to be a grown-up company.

What they don't understand is that while Steve Jobs is kind of a megalomaniacal asshole and a little bit of a brutal tyrant, he's also the glue that's been holding the company together—and as soon as he leaves, it's only then that people realize that Apple is filled with mad geniuses.

Thousands and thousands of mad geniuses! And as soon as Steve Jobs is out the door, they're all going,

“MWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! Finally! My plan will come to fruition! I will finally mate a monkey and a pony! MWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!”

And Scully? What's Scully doing? Scully's walking up and down the halls going,

<<in an excessively low-key Scully voice>>

“Hey...does anybody want to ship anything? Okay, well...let me know if you want to ship anything. I'll be in my office, drinking a Pepsi.”

And all the rigor goes out of the place and things start getting real weird, real fast. And pet projects that should stay small start getting bigger and bigger and bigger because there's no one there to knife the baby. Like the time that Apple tried to create its own version of the internet...yeah, that didn't go very well.

Or, most famously, the Newton.

And the Newton is a tale of heartbreak for the ages because the Newton was a fantastic machine. The Newton was a personal electronic organizer—and when you tell people that they say, “Oh, like the Palm Pilot?”

Noooooo. Fuck the Palm Pilot—the Palm Pilot was made of Legos and bullshit.

The Newton was amazing. The Newton could understand your fucking handwriting; you’d just write whatever you wanted, it’d automatically put it in the address book, in the calendar...

It was the future! In your hand!

Except...it didn’t work.

And they tried, oh my GOD, they tried, and they delayed it and delayed it and they finally ship it, and all the Apple faithful run out and buy it and they’re like, “My precious!,” and they take it home, “Honey, honey, come see this! I’ve got the future, in my hand! Watch this: <<*mimes writing onto the Newton*>> Doctor’s appointment at 2pm tomorrow.”

And the Newton says...

HEMORRHOID FISHSTICK.

<<*studying the Newton with great consternation and a palpable sense of loss*>>

“That isn’t what I wrote...

...it’s embarrassing...

...I don’t know why the future isn’t working... Maybe it’s me.”

Because in this, Apple users are a little bit like battered wives.

They blame themselves: “I can change! I can change my handwriting so that the Newton likes it! I know that we can have a relationship, I have to make it work!”

<<*now writing the same script, but grotesquely exaggerated*>>

DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT AT 2 PM TOMORROW!

And the Newton says...

LUSCIOUS ASSMUNCH.

This is the era of the PowerBook 5300—the flaming PowerBook. I don't mean that your laptop gets warm or it gets hot—I mean actual fucking fire comes out of the keyboard! Your laptop bursts into flames! They recall them all, they replace the batteries...now, they do not burst into flames, but they only get seventeen minutes of battery life.

This is the era when on Apple's early internet website, they have an actual, approved troubleshooting tech note telling users to take the affected machine, hold it six inches over the surface of the table...and drop it.

Doesn't. Inspire. Confidence.

At this point, Apple is fucked. No tech company has ever come back from a deficit like this. *WIRED* magazine actually does an entire issue called "The Death of Apple" and it's filled with obituaries written by prominent tech pundits mourning the fact that Apple is gone. And Apple is in the humiliating position of having to issue a press release in response saying,

"Ha-ha-ha, actually, it's ok, everything is really ok, ha-ha-ha."

It's like a Viking funeral where the Viking is saying,

"Oh! Actually, I'm okay! I think I'm okay!"

And everyone else says, "No, you're not," and they push the barge out onto the lake and they set it on fire.

And at this point, the unlikeliest savior appears:

Apple asks Steve Jobs to come back.

And if you're like me...

...don't you wish we could've heard that phone call?

<<in the manner of Bob Newhart's famous one-sided phone calls>>

“Hey, Steve! Long time no see!...Yeah, it's been about twelve years *<<listening>>* since we threw you out the company, that's right, that's right. But you've been busy! Yes, we've been busy, too *<<listening>>* running the company into the ground, that's right, that's right.

Listen, Steve. The board has asked me to call you to ascertain if you'd be interested in the possibility of...

<<puts hand over receiver and gesticulates wildly to other board members, miming a silent argument with them, begging them to talk to this asshole in the crassest terms. After a standoff, returning to the phone>>

—the board has asked me to call you to ascertain if you would be interested in the possibility of—

<<as before, but even more animatedly, with weeping and agitas, until being dragged back to the phone to say through gritted teeth>>

—WILLYOUPLEASECOMEBACKANDSAVETHECOMPANY?”

<<hangs up>>

Because each side has exactly what the other side needs.

Apple...needs Jesus Fucking Christ.

But He is not available...

...so Steve Jobs will have to do.

They also need a working next-generation operating system, because while they were busy pissing away hundreds of millions of dollars trying to mate a manatee and a walrus, they forgot to make a working next-generation operating system.

Meanwhile, Steve Jobs in his years in exile has actually created his own computer company in his own image: NeXT Computers.

And NeXT Computers sort of embodies everything that is both fabulous and frustrating about Steve Jobs. It's sort of like a narcissism supernova of Jobsian id.

On the fabulous side, the operating system is amazing: it's the world's first object-oriented operating system. It's literally *ten years* ahead of its time. The thing about things that are *ten years* ahead of their time? Is that they are *ten years* ahead of their time.

So they're not compatible with fuck-all that you are using today.

On the frustrating side, this *is* Steven P. Jobs, a man who does not know the meaning of the word "compromise."

His idea of a reasonable computer to break into the crowded computer market of the late 80s is the NeXT Cube.

Which is a solid black cube of milled magnesium.

It is a TRIUMPH of industrial design.

It is compatible with NONE of your peripherals!

It can run NONE of your software!

And it costs FOURTEEN THOUSAND DOLLARS!

It doesn't do very well. It really doesn't do very well, and at this point, NeXT has no assets to speak of except for a kick-ass next-generation operating system. And so Apple acquires NeXT—but in reality, it feels a little bit more like tiny little NeXT somehow swallows up Apple.

Steve Jobs comes back and in one of his first orders of business, he makes some subtle changes to the board of directors so that this shit will never happen again. Then he installs his lieutenants to take control, and he interviews everyone at Apple, looking for diamonds in the

rough—this is how he finds Jonathan Ive, a junior industrial designer. He promotes him up and a new order begins to take hold.

The Mac OS with its smiling Mac face and its friendly error messages...they take it out behind the barn and they shoot it in the back of the head, and they throw its body in a ditch.

And they take the NeXT operating system, which, as I told you, was ten years ahead of its time, well...it's ten years later. So it's right on schedule.

They transplant it into the heart of the Mac and it becomes Mac OS X—it becomes the system that runs all of Apple's devices today.

And a new Apple begins to rise. An Apple that's more design-driven, more focused, more ruthless, more elegant, more...secretive. The old Apple was practically an open shop, you could just ask people what was going on and they would tell you. Now, the gates are closed, the doors are shut, no one knows what the fuck is going on in there in Cupertino. It's like Willy Wonka after Slugworth.

And then devices start coming out that the old Apple never would have thought of—lifestyle devices, like little boxes that play all your music, and they're compatible with Macs *and* PCs, and they spread out like a halo around the world, changing people's ideas about what Apple is as a company.

And then, when Jobs showed us the iPhone...those of us who follow technology could feel here was the metaphor, shifting again. Here was the new new thing. Gone is the cursor, gone is the windowing interface—it's so simple, even a child could use it. But the changes go much deeper than that. Every device that runs that touch interface is locked down. You will never touch that operating system, that belongs to Apple and Apple alone. You will never install your own programs on those machines, instead you will download them from Apple's servers, and

Apple will choose what is available and take a healthy cut of each and every proceeding. Unless you jailbreak those devices, you will never truly own them.

And a walled garden begins to rise up around all the Apple users who frolic and play...and a new deal is struck between Apple and its users and the terms of the new deal are:

<<In the voice of Apple—Zeus meets Charlton Heston>>

WE ARE APPLE. Have we not always given you the very finest devices? Have we not given you the best user experience?

We did that because *we* have exquisite taste.

We have exquisite taste.

And you...do not.

We are going to protect you from your taste.

We are going to lock this shit down once and for all. And let's be clear—you're going love what's coming next, but this is the end of the garage, this is the end of hacking your own shit, this is the end of Wozniak—this is the rise of the consumer.

And that will be your role. You will consume.

You will drink from Apple's servers—it will be a new virtuous circle between each of you and the corporate entity that is Apple, you will be tied together, and with each app you download you will be bound even more tightly.

But you will not mind...because you will never leave. Why would you leave? They're the very best devices in the world, are they not?

You will use them, and you will love them.

You will love them, and they will own you.

8 — THE SECRET UNION

I'm at a restaurant in the factory zone, seated at a table with Cathy, and this aphorism is running through my head over and over again—I can't remember who said it originally—that paranoia is not paranoia when they're actually out to get you.

And I go through my checklist again: I've gone through my pockets and found every slip of paper with an email address or a phone number and I've destroyed all of those. I've hidden all my paper notes off of my person, and I've erased everything on my laptop, and anything I can't erase is on an encrypted partition that I hope is encrypted enough. I have done all of these things because I am at this restaurant to meet with a union.

Because there are unions in China. There are the ones that are fronts for the Communist Party, and then there are actual unions, interested in labor reform. They're called "secret unions" because in China, if you are caught being a member of or affiliating with a union like that, you go to prison. You go to prison for many years, and that's why I've had to take these precautions.

And getting this meeting involved climbing a ladder of associations, going to meeting after meeting, and each step of way just making good my intentions, just being clear that I am a storyteller, that I just want to hear people's stories, I just want to hear what they have to say.

And the union organizers come in and sit down, and it's awkward at first, and then they tell me about the situation on the ground. There is so much turmoil in southern China, so much happening just beneath the surface. And they tell me about the two Honda plants that have gone on strike in the north of the province and how they helped organize that strike, and I think about

what it would mean to go on strike in a country where even being a member of a union can get you thrown in prison, what it would take to be pushed to that point.

And these organizers are young. They don't even look college-aged, they look younger than that. And I say to them, "How do you know who's right to work with you? How do you find people to help you organize, to do what you do?"

And this sort of breaks the narrative, and they look at each other bashfully, and they say, "Well, we talk a *lot*, we have a lot of meetings—we meet at coffeehouses, different Starbucks in Guangzhou, we exchange papers, sometimes there are books..."

And it's so clear, in this moment, that they are making this up as they go along.

The way so many of us do.

The way pirates do. The way rebels do.

The way the crazy ones who change the world do—they all make it up as they go along.

Then the workers start coming in. They come in twos and threes and fours, they come in all day—it's a nine, ten hour day. I interview all of them. Some of them are in groups—there's a group there talking about hexane.

Hexane is an iPhone screen cleaner; it's great because it evaporates a little bit faster than alcohol does, which means then you can run the production line even faster and try to keep up with those quotas. The problem is that hexane is a potent neurotoxin, and all these people have been exposed. Their hands shake uncontrollably, some of them can't even pick up a glass.

I talk to people whose joints in their hands have disintegrated from working on the line, doing the same motion hundreds and hundreds of thousands of times. It's like carpal tunnel on a scale we can scarcely imagine. And you need to know that this is eminently avoidable: if these people were rotated monthly on their jobs this would not happen—but that would require

someone to care. That would require someone at Foxconn and the other suppliers to care, that would require someone at Apple and Samsung and the other customers to care; currently, no one in the ecosystem cares enough to even enforce that.

And so, when you start working at fifteen or sixteen, by the time you are twenty-six, twenty-seven—your hands are ruined.

And when they are truly ruined, once they will not do anything further—you know what you do with a defective part in a machine that makes machines.

You throw it away.

And the thing that unites all these people is that they are all the kind of people who would join a union in a place where joining a union can ruin your life.

I talk with one woman—bird-like, very nervous—and she just wants to explain to me how it is she came to be in a union. Because she never thought she would be in a union, it's just that she couldn't get her company to pay her overtime. And she complained and complained, this went on for weeks and for months—and Cathy says to her, kind of sharply, "Why didn't you go to the Labor Board? That's what they're there for. You should have complained to the Labor Board."

And the woman says, "I did. I went to the Labor Board, and I told them about my problem, and they took down my name and my address and my company, and they took my name and they put it on the blacklist. And they fired me."

And then she shows me a copy of the blacklist—a friend of hers in accounting photocopied it and snuck it out to her. She gives it to me, I hand it to Cathy to translate. You know, in a fascist country run by thugs, you don't have to be subtle. You can say exactly what you fucking mean. The sheet is very clear that it comes from the Labor Board, and it says, right

across the top, “The following is a list of troublemakers. If any of them are found in your employ, dismiss them immediately.”

And then there’s column after column after column of names, page after page after page of them.

Cathy’s hand trembles as she translates it.

I talk to an older worker with leathery skin. His right hand is twisted up into a claw. It was crushed in a metal press at Foxconn.

He says he didn’t receive any medical attention and it healed this way, and then when he went back to work, he was too slow, and they fired him.

Today he works at a wood-working plant. He says he likes it better. He says the people are nicer and the hours are more reasonable. He works about seventy hours a week.

And I ask him what he did when he was at Foxconn, and he says he worked on the metal enclosures for the laptops and he worked on the iPad.

And when he says this, I reach into my satchel and I take out *my* iPad, and when he sees it, his eyes widen. Because in one of the ultimate ironies of globalism, at this point, there are no iPads in China. Even though every last one of them was made at this factory in Shenzhen, they’ve all been packaged up in perfectly minimalist Apple packaging and then shipped across the seas so that we can all enjoy them. He’s never actually seen one on. This thing that took his hand.

I turn it on, unlock the screen, pass it to him. He takes it. The icons flare into view. And he strokes the screen with his ruined hand, and the icons slide back and forth, and he says something to Cathy, and Cathy says, “He says it’s a kind of magic.”

<<*silence*>>

It's a long day. And at the end of it, I'm packing up everything to go, and Cathy says something to me—out of nowhere—she says, “Do you think these people are mentally ill? Do you think it is possible that they are making all this up?”

And I look at her, as though for the first time, because, I mean, let's be clear: she's my Chinese worker. I mean, I pay her for her time, I don't think about her very much at all. But now, I really look at her. She is exactly who all these workers I've been talking to for weeks, she is exactly who they all are dreaming that their children will one day be. She has a good life in the center of Shenzhen for her, for her family—what does this look like to her?

I say to her, “What do you think? Do you think they're mentally ill?”

And she suddenly looks very tired. And she takes off her glasses. And she rubs the bridge of her nose. And she says,

“No. I do not think they are mentally ill. It's just that...you hear stories, but you do not think it is going to be so much. You know?”

It's just so much. Do you know what I mean?”

And I reach across the table and I touch her hand.

It's the first and last time we will ever touch, I and this woman whose real name I don't even know. I say to her,

“I know exactly what you mean.”

9 — A VIRUS OF THE MIND

I used to hear from Steve Jobs occasionally.

Never directly.

I don't even think he knew I heard from him.

Because people who have sat in the seats you are sitting in right now, in theaters all over the world, sometimes, after they heard the words you have been hearing, sometimes, they would write to him.

And sometimes they would cc me and bcc me, and I would see hundreds of messages flooding out to a single fixed point, filled with questions. And sometimes, an answer would come back.

And sometimes, they would forward his answers to me.

And there were all kinds. Sometimes a short, sharp word, sometimes a link, sometimes a simple line of text:

“Mike doesn't appreciate the complexities of the situation.”

And I looked on every message that came back with hope.

And I would keep my head down. And I would tell my story, night after night. In city after city.

And when tech journalists would let themselves be flown all the way to Shenzhen in the company of PR reps for Foxconn, and walk around the gleaming factories, and then write cover stories for glossy magazines without ever speaking to a single worker...

...I would keep my head down. And I would tell my story.

And when the press would ask Steve Jobs, “Steve, what’s up with Foxconn? What’s it like?” and Steve Jobs would say, “Gosh, it’s a factory, but it’s not like any factory we’ve ever seen. It has swimming pools and movie theaters—it’s amazing.”

I would keep my head down. And I would tell my story.

And when Apple would call journalists who had spoken to me, and tell them, “You know, I don’t know if you want to be associated with him. He’s kind of unstable. You know, he does work in the *theater*.”

I would keep my head down. And I would tell my story.

And tonight—we know the truth.

You can read it in the newspapers, it is humming in the radio, reflecting in the televisions, it is all across the net. Everyone is learning it, day after day. It is too large for any PR department to contain.

We now know that it is everything you have heard tonight and it is more. We now know that they knew. They always knew. They turned their back on their workers a long time ago.

And they squeezed their margins so tight that they made much of what you have heard tonight happen. And they made themselves the most profitable company in the history of the world.

And Steve Jobs—this genius of design and form—blinded himself to the most essential law of design: that the way in which a thing is made is a part of the design itself.

But you won’t forget that, will you?

You won’t forget that...because tonight is a virus.

It started in the first scene but you couldn’t feel it.

And by the third scene, it had jumped your firewalls and it's been leaping from protected memory to protected memory all night long.

It's been re-writing your code from the inside out and I'm letting you know now, you will never be rid of it.

It is inside of you, just like it's inside of me, twisting and wriggling. And when these lights come up, when this theatrical construct falls away, it will still be in you.

You will carry it out these doors, you will be vectors for it. You will carry it to your homes, and when you sit down in front of your laptops, when you open them up, you will see the blood welling up between the keys. You will know that those were made by human hands. You will always know that. When you take your phones out outside to check the time, and the light falls across your face, you will know that it may have been made by children's hands. You will know that.

And you will live with it. Just as I live with it. Just as we're all going to have to start seeing it if we're going to make the shift.

Tonight, the door is open if you want to walk through it.

Tonight we are jailbroken.

Tonight we are free.

END

THE REST OF THE STORY IS IN YOUR HANDS

The monologue you have seen tonight has been performed over two hundred times in eighteen cities since summer of 2010. Over 75,000 people have been in attendance around the world and heard the words you have heard this evening.

On January 6th of this year, *This American Life* broadcast an episode based entirely around an excerpt from this monologue that had been adapted and performed for the radio. In its first week the episode was the most downloaded in *This American Life*'s history. That same week news broke that hundreds of Foxconn workers had a stand-off that lasted two days, threatening mass suicide by throwing themselves off the roof of the plant over their working conditions.

On January 13th, Apple announced that after years of stonewalling and silence, they would release the full list of their suppliers, and agree to outside monitoring of working conditions in the factories they use. Sources inside Apple have said they believe that hearing this monologue on *This American Life*, a program many Apple employees listen to with their families and their children, created "a morale situation" that finally compelled Apple to begin to act.

On January 25th, the *New York Times* published a devastating expose on Apple's supply chain in China, corroborating everything in this monologue and going even deeper. The story details Apple's systemic negligence in unsafe environments, chemical poisoning, excessive hours, and horrendous working conditions, as well as how Apple in particular brutally squeezes its supply chain, resulting in many of the harsh stories you heard tonight. Reporters who saw this monologue and met with me in the fall followed that story to China, and did the hard work necessary to help drag this story into the light.

This led quickly to corroborating reports of abuses from investigations by CNN and the International Herald Tribune. Then on February 9th petitions with signatures from 250,000 Apple users calling for Apple to treat its workers ethically were delivered to Apple stores around the world.

Foxconn announced on February 18th that it would be raising its employees base wages by 25%. This is the first time Foxconn has pledged to raise wages above the legal minimums for their region in China, and if they make good on it represents a small but measurable improvement in the bottom line for millions of workers.

The good news is that Apple has the resources to change everything. Apple makes 60% profit on every device. Apple is sitting on a cash reserve of \$100 billion dollars in the bank. It's a staggering figure. That's more cash than the federal government has on hand. And yet Apple has not been able to manage its supply chain in a humane way. It hasn't done this because until now it has not been a priority for them, and its workers have paid that price.

But that is changing. Apple knows its brand is in jeopardy, and thanks to the voices of concerned users, they are committing to actual change. Apple has long been a pioneer in technology—now they have the opportunity to lead the entire field into an era of ethical manufacturing. Let's keep pressure on them to do the right thing.

CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

If you feel moved to take action from what you've heard tonight, there are concrete steps you can choose to take.

You Can Speak To Apple

Tim Cook says he is “furious” that people would question Apple’s integrity. Ask him yourself. His email is tcook@apple.com. Don’t accept talk of extra inspections and half-measures—ask him if he will step up and do the right thing today for his workers. Ask that he pay a dividend for change, and put 1% of Apple’s massive reserve up to prove his commitment. Ask him to work with labor rights organizations that aren’t suborned to corporate interests. Ask him to put Apple to work transforming how they treat workers so we can be proud of them again.

You Can Speak To The Industry

Apple is hardly alone—every major electronics manufacturer uses the same inhumane labor practices in the creation of their products. We are advocating for pressuring Apple specifically because they are industry leaders, but many may wish to contact Nokia, Dell, Samsung, LG, Motorola and many others. There are no alternatives today, but that does not mean that is where the story has to end—we hope Apple will be a leader and spark the beginnings of change across the industry.

You Can Think Different About Upgrading

When Apple releases their next amazing device, you can ask yourself if you really need to upgrade immediately. Choosing not to participate is not only ethically defensible, but economically sensible—instead of a boycott, simply opting for a more sane upgrade cycle can take some of the energy out of electronics mania, and put pressure back on the companies. These are tools for us to use, not to be used by them. We can push back.

You Can Connect and Educate Yourself

Like the beginnings of many movements, awareness counts. China Labor Watch and SACOM are organizations that work to track and hold accountable our largest corporations which routinely abuse, poison, and exploit China’s people to make electronics. On Twitter the hashtag #agonyecstasy can be used to connect with others as well, and the transcript to this monologue is available, royalty free, for anyone to perform anywhere at <http://mikedaisey.com>.

You Can Tell Others

This is a monologue—a single voice telling a story of a single experience. But if I have opened a door for you, consider opening a door for others. We do not like to think about China and its implications, but that silence can only exist if we are complicit with it. Talking about it, thinking about it when making purchasing decisions, and understanding it is not just symbolic. In a world of silence, speaking itself is action. It can be the first seeds of actual change. Do not be afraid to plant them.

Spread the virus,

md