

JET PROPULSION
A PLAY ABOUT JOHN WHITESIDE PARSONS

A THESIS IN
Theatre

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MASTER OF ARTS

By
PETER JON BAKELY
B.A., Park College, 1992

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AN ABSTRACT IN JET PROPULSION

A PLAY ABOUT JOHN WHITESIDE PARSONS

Peter Jon Bakely, Candidate for the Master of Arts degree

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ABSTRACT

Jet Propulsion, a two-act drama on the life of John Whiteside Parsons, is the candidate's thesis, along with the essay "American Weird: Researching John Whiteside Parsons, the Occult Religion of Aleister Crowley and the Formation of the American Space Program." The essay shows the author's work process in the writing of the play, as well as the difficulties inherent in finding truthful information regarding Fringe religions and cult personalities and in using that information to create a compelling drama and to produce that drama as part of the Kansas City Fringe Festival. Biographical materials regarding the primary historical persons depicted in the play are included. Appendices of a previous draft of the script and biographical portraits have been included to illustrate the author's process in creating the drama.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences have examined a thesis titled “Jet Propulsion A Play about John Whiteside Parsons,” presented by Peter Jon Bakely, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

Felicia Londré, Ph.D., Committee Chair
Department of Theatre

Frank Higgins, Associate Professor, Playwriting.
Department of Theatre

Ronald Schaeffer, Professor, Stage Management.
Department of Theatre

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AMERICAN WEIRD: RESEARCHING JOHN WHITESIDE PARSONS, THE JOYS
AND PERILS OF PRODUCING A PLAY ABOUT THE AMERICAN OCCULT
MOVEMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPACE PROGRAM.

I. INTRODUCTION

As an introduction to the script of Jet Propulsion, I have written this essay to explain the processes involved in writing, then producing, a two-act play on the life of an American cult icon, John Whiteside Parsons. Parsons was one of the primary inventors of rocket fuel and a key figure in the development of the American space program. He was also a fervent occultist, a believer in the teachings of the English mystic Aleister Crowley and a practitioner of dark magical rituals. His unorthodox beliefs bolstered his creativity in the creation of rocket fuel, but may also have caused his contributions as a scientist to be discounted and covered up by the orthodox science community. For me, his story was a tale with great dramatic and philosophical possibilities. I wrote Jet Propulsion to tell that story.

Spelling note: in most cases I have used the word spellings favored by Aleister Crowley and the members of the Ordo Templi Orientis. These eccentric spellings, such as Babalon for Babylon and magick for magic were favored for the numerological values they give these words.

My first contact with the story of John Whiteside Parsons came in the form of a story in a large format comic book, The Big Book of Weirdos (Posey 63 - 67). This volume included a four-page article regarding the eccentric British mage Aleister Crowley, a practitioner of pagan rituals and the self-styled “Great Beast 666.” The last few panels depicted the death of John Whiteside Parsons, who, according to the story, was killed in

an explosion when he attempted to use Crowley's arcane instructions to create an homunculus. The Big Book series also yielded another piece of Parsons lore in The Big Book of Conspiracies (Moench 82-83) which illustrated a story of how Parsons and Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard had performed a ritual called the Babalon Working, which opened an extra-dimensional portal ushering in aliens from their arcane plain into our reality.

That the information appeared in a comic book setting is entirely appropriate for a telling of the life of John Whiteside Parsons. The stories of his life are sensationalistic, filled with insane-seeming details and often quite spurious. The veracity of these stories is, of course, highly suspect. Even members of Parsons's own occult community cannot agree on where the truth and the fantasy of these stories separate. For me, stumbling across the story of Jack Parsons was an amazing experience. I was astounded I had never heard of him. As a devotee of odd and obscure American personalities, I had access to hundreds of life stories. Certainly, I had heard of Crowley and Hubbard, but Parsons, an important scientist and a key figure in the American occult movement, had eluded me. Once aware of his presence, I did internet searches which led me to the world of truth and rumor, of fantasy and reality, of science and religion that made up the fascinating story of his life. I would spend the next three years of my own life researching this man.

II. THE BOOK OF LIES

If you research the life of any person, you will find yourself confronting some apocrypha. Events are remembered subjectively by those telling the story; moments are filtered to omit unpleasant connotations; all view the world through their own lens. The

same event can be seen by a dozen different people and be remembered a dozen different ways among even the most honest and objective types of person.

In the case of John Whiteside Parsons, honesty and objectivity were rarely noticeable qualities present among the chroniclers of his life. I found I was dealing with several distinct groups of individuals who had willfully obscured Parsons's history due to their own viewpoints and agendas. Parsons was a member of several diverse circles, each of which had a personal stake in presenting the man to conform to their own image of him.

Parsons was responsible for several major innovations in the development of the American Space Program. As a founder of Jet Propulsion Laboratories, he was a major player in the creation of NASA, both as an inventor and as an entrepreneur. But as an occultist, as well as being a non-degreed, self-taught scientist, he is generally regarded as an eccentric amateur by the science community. For example, in her memoir and history of Jet Propulsion Laboratories, scientist/author M. G. Lord characterizes Parsons as an eccentric and a bumbler, who moved along by trial and error (Lord 54 - 56). Prior to the nineteen-forties, rocket science was considered a trivial endeavor and as the space industry gained momentum in the fifties and sixties, it was generally felt that the industry had to project an image of sober respectability to counter its science fiction reputation. There are many terms that can describe John Whiteside Parsons, but sober and respectable are not among them. Consequently, his important contributions were downplayed for many years. Today, the science community has begun to embrace the image of this eccentric maverick, but official accounts still tend to paint him as an untrained savant when he is mentioned at all.

Parsons's mentor in the occult was the renowned British mystic Aleister Crowley. Even though the men never met in person, Crowley took a strong interest in Parsons and promoted him to the head of the Pasadena Lodge of the Ordo Templi Orientis, a loose-knit organization of the followers of Crowley's philosophy of Thelema. Crowley wrote abundantly on many occult subjects with an almost gleeful disregard for the truth and willful subversion and obscuring of facts.. Crowley enjoyed lying to his readers, coding arcane truths within the framework of his prose. A prime example of this is 777, a compendium of obscure writings regarding religious practices based on the Hebrew Kabbalah (Crowley, *777 And Other Qabalistic Writings of Aleister Crowley: Including Gematria & Sepher Sephiroth*). The book contains straightforward instructions gleefully blended with incomprehensible obscurities, supposedly decipherable to the initiated but unintelligible to the uninitiated reader.

John Whiteside Parsons's occult circles consider him to be an important spiritual leader, a mage of tremendous power (A mage, in the occult world, is a holy man who can use magic to manipulate the physical world). The science community sees him as an important, albeit flaky, innovator. The members of the Ordo Templi Orientis and other occult organizations to which he belonged mythologize him, telling stories that range from the exaggerated to the flagrantly absurd. Members of this group claim that he performed magical acts. They truly believe that he did.

Here's an example. I was told an anecdote by a UMKC professor about the funeral of Curtis Harrington, a Hollywood director who worked on the fringes of the film community. Harrington's connection to Parsons was through Marjorie Cameron, Parsons's wife and a cult figure in her own right. Cameron had appeared with Dennis

Hopper in Harrington's film Night Tide (Harrington, Night Tide). Also at the funeral was Harrington's friend and rival Kenneth Anger, a noted experimental filmmaker and a Crowleyite occultist as well. Anger had to be removed forcibly from the funeral after he disrupted the ceremony by going on a rant claiming he had seen jars of magical homunculi in the basement of Parsons's house. He was in tears as he described how you could hold their perfectly formed hands. A homunculus is a magical being of great power, a perfectly formed tiny human. Spencer Kansa's biography of Marjorie Cameron verifies this, to a point (Kansa 256). This is a great story, but also an example of the type of odd nonsense that would come up regularly as I researched Jet Propulsion. It seems that every time I attempted to verify fact, I would be led down another fascinating but unverifiable story.

Then there were the research issues regarding L. Ron Hubbard. Hubbard was first a friend, then a nemesis to Jack Parsons. L Ron Hubbard, after his time with Parsons, became the founder and spiritual head of The Church of Scientology, an organization with a worldwide membership numbering in the millions and a strong presence in the entertainment industry (The Church of Scientology). The church made Hubbard very famous and wealthy, but due to the secretive nature of its leadership, it is difficult to find any trustworthy information on him. Inside the Church of Scientology he is regarded as a saint, an enlightened being and the founder of the religion. Outside the Church, he is generally reviled as a liar and a charlatan (Spence). Most published information on Hubbard reflects one of these two biases. In the case of his history with John Whiteside Parsons, the authors of the biographies I read write extensive accounts about Hubbard. The books on Parsons all claim that Hubbard participated in the occult Babalon Working

ritual performed in the desert in 1945-1946. A version of this event is re-enacted in my script. Parsons's biographers also write about the end of the men's relationship, which involved Hubbard running off with Parsons's mistress and a large sum of his money (Pendle 267 - 270). The opposing histories from the Church of Scientology deny that Hubbard ever met Parsons. There is vague reference to Hubbard being an LAPD plant sent in to wipe out a black magic cult (Carter 154). One gets a feeling of walking on eggshells regarding Hubbard. The Church of Scientology has a well-earned reputation for litigiousness. Consequently, even the external biographies tread lightly on Hubbard's involvement with Parsons and the sections of these books regarding the relationship are frustratingly vague. So, there is conjecture regarding the interaction between these two men, but objective information and hard fact are hard to identify. Given the type of material I was working with and that I was creating a text for theatrical performance, I had my choice of events which I believed to be true and events I believed to be conjecture. This was a central problem. How do I form this wealth of information into a plausible and entertaining stage narrative?

III. THE FIRST ATTEMPT.

Note for the sake of clarity: from this point on, I will be dealing with the historical personages involved in the story both as actual people, and as characters in the play Jet Propulsion. To clarify the differences, I will refer to the actual person by last name and the character in the play by the first. So L. Ron Hubbard, the man, will be called Hubbard, and the play character will be referred to as Ron.

In the winter of 2011 I made my first attempt at writing Jet Propulsion (see Appendix A, page 88, for a copy of this draft). My concept originally began with the recording of an explosion followed by the discovery of Jack and Ron alone onstage. As the two characters spoke to each other, scenes from Jack's life would be played out. There were seven in the cast, each actor corresponding to a Tarot Card from the Major Arcana of Aleister Crowley's Hroth Tarot deck (Banzhaf and Theler). Jack would be represented as the Fool, Hubbard as the Devil. The rest of the cast would play various characters in Jack's life. The Hanged Man tarot card would represent an actor playing Frank Malina, a scientist associate of Jack's who was fired during the blacklist, and also Wilfred Smith, the head of the Pasadena chapter of the Ordo Templi Orientis who was banished from his post by Aleister Crowley. The Mage card would represent Aleister Crowley as well as Theodore von Karmen, the head of the Caltech Rocketry division. The Empress card would represent both Helen Northcutt, Jack's first wife, and her sister Betty, Jack's girlfriend, who eventually would run off with Hubbard. The Witch Card would be reserved for Marjorie Cameron. My scenic concept was that the cards would be on moveable units which would form the set. The set would have no levels except for a single raised platform where the Mage would appear. The overall framing device would be that the play begins right after the explosion that ended Jack's life and the action would represent his final thoughts before death. Hubbard's character turns out to be the homunculus that Jack has created in the ritual that caused the explosion.

I completed this draft in February 2011. It began with Parsons's poem, "I Hight Don Quixote" (Carter 123 - 124). It took Jack from his birth to the first successful firing of a jet engine using Jack's formula for rocket fuel. It showed Jack's father leaving, Jack and

Ed's first rocket experiments, their discovery and hiring by the Caltech research team, Jack meeting and marrying Helen, their discovery and joining of the OTO with Helen's affair with Wilfred Smith. It depicted the Caltech rocket team's early failures and Jack's growing relationship with Aleister Crowley via letter. It ends with Helen leaving Jack for Smith and Crowley banishing them from Pasadena. The last scene was Jack discovering the secret to rocket fuel and reciting the Crowley poem "Hymn to Pan" (Pendle 234 - 235). Explosions occur as the act ends.

This was read in the playwriting class in February. By this point I had already announced it as my entry for the 2011 Kansas City Fringe Festival. I was not pleased to discover that I absolutely hated this version of the script. At the read-through, the words seemed flat and uninspired, and the entire act read like rote recitation of exposition. The reaction from the class was not enthusiastic and I was left with something I was not happy I'd written. I put it in a drawer and spent the next two months writing another play called Couple's Night, which is still unproduced at this time.

IV. THE REWRITE

My unhappiness with the original script led me to attempt a complete rewrite. Then, in March of 2011, I was diagnosed with congestive heart failure. I was hospitalized for a week after which I immediately went into rehearsals for an original script I was producing and appearing in, Premortem by Joseph Concha. My health continued to trend upward and downward during this period, with another hospital stay in early June. With a July production date looming, my entire written output on the rewrite consisted of a left parenthesis and the capital letter A.

Knuckling down, I focused on the things I wanted the play to do. To me, the story of Jack Parsons always seemed a big slice of American weirdness, the story of a young man who, through courage and determination, created the American space program while leading a personal life that involved summoning demons and performing ritual sex acts. I went wrong in the first draft by getting bogged down in dull exposition. So I immersed myself in the material again and tried to connect with the elements of the story which intrigued me in the first place.

I connected with some old friends to help me work things out. The first suggestion, from my scheduled director and personal friend, Philip blue owl Hooser, was to go with a vaudeville theme, mostly to find an entertaining way to force out massive amounts of essential historical data. This allowed a number of scenes to be condensed into an ongoing song and dance number. Important plot points could be incorporated into the acts in an entertaining manner. Instead of linear storytelling, I could get at points about relationships and character by stage interactions. Frankly, it was just more fun.

The other issue where I felt my script was lacking was that I did not connect deeply to these characters. Since they were actual people who lived in the earlier part of the twentieth century and not characters I had created, I felt a duty to be true to them. I realized early on that I did not understand the mindset of the occultists, whose oddness was delicious, but I did not know enough about it to figure out why.

Studying the occult is daunting. Besides my Judeo-Christian mindset, which would occasionally chime into my consciousness to tell me that "This is wrong," the deliberate obscurity of the tenets of most of the occult rituals made understanding daunting.

Aleister Crowley's book on the Kabballah, titled 777, was particularly daunting. I reached a section on numerology, which mentioned that the numerological value of two and the Kabbalistic concept of two were not the same two. I gave up on it soon after (Crowley, 777 And Other Qabalistic Writings of Aleister Crowley: Including Gematria & Sepher Sephiroth iii).

I read heavily on yoga and the practice of ritual magic. Crowley founded his spiritual exercises on the practices of Tantric Yoga. As a complete non-initiate in this discipline, I turned to a friend whom I knew to be a devoted yoga practitioner, albeit the Bikram school. Actress Becca Scott gave me detailed information on the actual physical rituals which involved clearing the mind and giving oneself over to the physical body as a blank slate (Scott). My father-in-law, Douglas Meng, expanded on this. He had studied the practice of opening one's consciousness through meditation and that the clearing of the mind was to be augmented by a chant or mantra. This could be a single focus word like "health" or "joy" which was chanted at a fixed point in one's breathing. This would open the third eye and allow one to expand one's consciousness (Meng).

With this information, I was able to relate it to the practice of magic in regard to Crowley's religious rites. Grant Morrison, in The Book of Lies (not Crowley's original, but a collection of articles on the occult and named after Crowley's original work), describes the method one uses to perform a magical act, or spell. As in yoga and meditation, one clears the mind and begins to breathe rhythmically. Instead of a chant, the magician creates a physical symbol or a glyph of the object one wants to bring or create. The glyph is created from the letters of the word of the item one desires. Crowley's group practiced sex magic, believing the human orgasm powerfully opened the

mind's eye. So the practice of creating a spell involved breathing, chanting, focusing and masturbating or having sex (Morrison 21 - 38). This by itself was so amusing to me that I had Jack describe it in detail in the script.

Greta Moore, another local actress and friend, proved invaluable in helping me to understand the magical mindset. I met Greta in the summer of 2010, when we were both performing in a production of Much Ado About Nothing. At that time I had mentioned working on the script and she informed me that she had actually once been a member of the Kansas City Chapter of the Ordo Templi Orientis. As fortune would have it, Greta was also a student at UMKC and ended up in my playwriting class in the spring semester of 2011. She had a wealth of occult information. She gave me another great clue to the occult mindset.

Numerology is an important aspect of the occult mindset and very telling as to their thought processes. Numbers are assigned to everything. A word will be broken down into letters, those letters will be given a numerical value, those values are added together to get a key number and that number has a specific meaning. Interestingly, Crowley was notorious for spelling a word differently if the numbers did not add up correctly, like Babalon for Babylon and Magick for Magic. Greta explained to me that most of the members of the group were obsessed with numbers and would add constantly. As a scientist, Jack Parsons would be doubly obsessed with numbers, which he needed to create formulas to get his rockets into space. This was reflected in the rewrite. Jack was given blank paper on which he would write numbers and draw glyphs.

A philosophical theory that informed Jet Propulsion was the book The Golden Bough by Sir James George Frazer. Frazer published this first in 1890 and his twelve-volume

version was published in 1915, the year before Parsons was born. This book is a comprehensive survey of world religious and magical rituals throughout recorded history. The importance of this work was that it was able to make a fairly clear connection between the practice of magic, the practice of religion and the connection of both to science. All are attempts by man to control his environment and the repetition of the types of rituals show that there is a progression from magical practice to religion and then to science. The combining of science and religion is key to the character of Jack Parsons and while the two groups tend to be at odds in the current world view, Parsons reveals through his actions how the inspiration of religion helps inspire breakthroughs in science (Frazer). If there is any appeal at all in the character of Parsons, it is his passion and his joy of discovery. And if there is a main component to his downfall, it's that his beliefs made him suspect to the scientific community.

With these elements in place, I completely discarded my original first act and began the process of rewriting from scratch. The working draft of the play, which is included in the extra materials (see page 86), told the story of Parsons's life as a presentation of the stage show. Aleister Crowley, a master of manipulation was presented as ventriloquist, controlling the actions of his followers. Ron was shown as a cheap magician, sparring with Jack and alternately trying to win his favor and subtly undermining him. Marjorie Cameron was shown as an exotic showgirl. Each character narrated and we could see Parsons through each of their eyes. Parsons himself is shown as a serious and devout seeker of wisdom, frustrated at speaking the truth to the world.

V. PRODUCING THE SCRIPT

By mid-June of 2011, I had chosen a director for my script and began the process of casting.

In the atmosphere of the Kansas City Fringe Fest, a majority of the scripts are directed by the writer. I decided that this would not be a choice for me. In my opinion, theater works best as a communal art form. A director would assure that another talent would be on the script, another set of eyes would be available to get around my blind spots. I had a massive asset in Philip blue owl Hooser, who has a long and celebrated history in Kansas City theater. Philip and I have been friends for many years and share many of the same sensibilities. Philip also had the advantage of being a playwright. I had asked him for help on previous scripts and he had shown a gift for doctoring, pointing out weaknesses in script flow and finding the spots where the major thoughts of the script were lacking. The Fringe Festival office let us know that our space would be the 100-seat Jerome Stage at the Unicorn Theater. We set about choosing our cast.

I learned an important lesson which seems obvious in retrospect. The Fringe Festival every year presents dozens of shows in a two-week period. A local festival, it stretches the resources of the community, and key personnel are swept up quickly. Phil and I found ourselves having trouble casting the show. Performers I had wanted, local actors Becca Scott, Meredith Shea and Kyle Wallen, were cast in other productions prior to my approaching them, and this precluded their involvement. I had managed to get a commitment from Virginia Hubbard fairly early to play Cameron, Jack's mystical wife, but going into June, she was the only actor who had committed to playing a part.

Both Philip and I had discussed the possibility of playing Crowley ourselves, but neither of us wanted to split our focus by taking on an acting role. We discussed a

number of possibilities and decided we wanted Andy Chambers, a mutual friend who has a resemblance to the historical Crowley and the proper sensibility. Unfortunately, he had already committed to an out-of-town trip during the festival, so we went through our list and came up with Jeremy Lillig. Jeremy is not an actor, but a local writer and spoken-word artist. He is also a man with personal qualities which made him ideal for Crowley. He was thrilled with the possibility of playing the British mage.

Then there were the female parts. Cameron was cast with Virginia Hubbard in the part. Virginia was a recently graduated student from UMKC whom I had seen and worked with on several productions and was eager to have in my production. She did express a few reservations that the subject matter might clash with her Christian beliefs, but was convinced to take the part after reading the script. I had originally planned to have the Northcutt sisters, Jack's first wife Helen and her sister Betty, who was to become Jack's mistress, be played by separate actresses. Due to the problems of casting, I rewrote the script to allow Virginia to play all the female parts.

This left me with L. Ron Hubbard and Parsons still to cast. We ran into an issue where suitable candidates were either out of town, or already taken. We were given a lead on Ryan Neal for the part of Parsons and read him and while he had the charisma for Parsons, he was almost perfectly suited for Hubbard. We asked him if he could play guitar. He said he hadn't for awhile, but had played previously. This information became important later, as it turned out to be an actor exaggeration at best.

We told Ryan that we would let him know, then continued our search. Kyle Wallen agreed, but was almost instantly cast in a Coterie Fringe show. He offered to play the part, but I told him to take the Coterie show because it would have more direct rewards

for his career in the short run and with regret I let him go. Danny Fleming was locked into an unworkable work schedule and was unavailable. Others came and went and we were coming up on the beginning of July without an actor for the leading role.

Then a theater miracle occurred. Virginia Hubbard had been socializing with Matt Leonard, an actor of some promise. He had already been cast in another Fringe show, but was reportedly disappointed with it and when Virginia described Jet Propulsion to him, he told her "That sounds like fun. I wish I was in your show." He checked his schedule and found he had no overlapping performances with his other show. Philip knew him and was thrilled. We found our Parsons and I was given a great example of how much a really fine actor can save a play.

We ended up with only three weeks of rehearsal time, and that was compromised by Matt Leonard's work and rehearsal schedule, Virginia's work schedule, which took place at night and Phil Hooser's occasional spoken-word projects, in which I was also involved. We caught a major break when we were allowed rehearsal space on the UMKC campus. I was also unable to find an unattached Stage Manager, a real essential, as Philip and I needed ourselves freed up to work on the script.

Design elements were created due to the limitation of the Fringe Festival physical requirements. The set comprised an easel and a block. The director decided to use rolls of paper to create makeshift set and prop devices. Originally, I had planned on a desert backdrop, but time and physical constraints kept us from realizing this element. Lighting was to be provided by the facility into which we were booked, so it would be limited to generic effects. This left me with sound and costumes.

Sound design was important, as the sound of explosions both punctuate the action and are an essential plot device. I had a personal relationship with Joseph Concha, one of the better sound designers working in the Kansas City area. I had produced and appeared in Joe's play Premortem earlier in the year and Philip had directed. Joe graciously agreed to do our sound design gratis. Costumes were going to be an essential visual element, as we had minimal set and lighting. I was able to hire Morgan Myers, a talented undergraduate from Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri. By a stroke of fortune, Morgan was in a relationship with my nephew Joel. She was given the directive to design and provide costumes for the multiple characters and that she would have no budget. With these restraints, she managed to scour her own wardrobe, hit up friends and beg my sister to buy things at local thrift stores. We found that we did have to purchase a few items, but we ended up spending less than twenty dollars out of pocket for costume expenses. Morgan's presence at rehearsals turned out to be charming and relaxing to myself, Philip and the cast, so when we were unable to procure a stage manager, she stepped into that position as well.

Cast, directors and designers in place, we began the process of rehearsing, I was well aware that the script was not in its final state. For the first week of rehearsal, the cast rehearsed the text and I rewrote whenever possible. Many important changes were made to the script during this period.

Excess dialogue was trimmed. I had attempted to add references to events and characters which were not essential to the story. References to staffers at Caltech, occult worshippers and writers and scientists who influenced Jack went away, unless essential to

the plot or, to a lesser extent, the philosophy of the play. General tightening of dialogue occurred.

Other concerns came to light. Virginia Hubbard, playing Cameron, complained that the ending of the play was written in third-person narration for her character and asked that I change it to the first person and to gear it directly to the character's experience. This was, of course, the better choice for the scene, but it took an actor to point it out. Virginia was particularly useful honing in on character glitches and came up with several suggestions that were used. When the ventriloquist dummy in the script was replaced with a cloth puppet, Virginia rewrote the Charlie McCarthy-type wood jokes to cloth jokes.

Cleaning and working the dialogue helped bring out some arcs which were not apparent when I was writing the script. The scenes with Betty were rewritten to punch up the laughs. An Abbott-and-Costello type sketch was suggested to enact the scene in which L. Ron swindles Jack out of his money. Wernher Von Braun popped out of the background to become the main contrasting historical personage compared to Parsons. The comparison of Von Braun, the ex-Nazi, becoming the beloved face of the American Space program versus Jack, the occultist, being shunned brought a delicious irony to the play.

The idea for a climactic confrontation between Hubbard and Parsons came about in the rehearsal process. The two men broke off their relationship when Hubbard got Jack to invest most of his personal fortune in a boat company. Hubbard then took the money and Parsons's mistress and attempted to leave the country. The boat they were using foundered, possibly due to occult means. Jack sued them, but his fortune was already lost.

A fine conclusion, but it didn't ring true for several reasons. It always bothered me that Hubbard had a close relationship with Jack for over a year before he decided to swindle him. Parsons was upset with losing Betty Northcutt, but her relationship with Hubbard began long before they left, and Jack's beliefs were such that he did not believe in monogamous relationships. And while Jack had a strong relationship with Betty, his relationship with Hubbard always seemed even stronger. The two men spent a lot of time together, performing rituals which involved sex magic and I always wondered whether there might have been a homosexual relationship between them that neither camp was willing to confess. The moment in script when Jack confronts Ron and asks him why he, against all logic, was swindled came with a near tearful confession from Ron that he wanted to be Jack.

Helen Northcutt, Jack's first wife, disappeared from the script about a week before the first performance. Her part had been getting smaller and smaller and was reduced to a single scene in which Jack gave his blessing for Helen to leave. The scene, using a ventriloquist dummy, wasn't working very well, Virginia did not like playing it and it was holding up the flow of the narrative, so Helen was gone.

Jet Propulsion had its premiere on July 22, 2011, at 6:00 P.M. There were additional performances July 25th, July 28th and July 29th. The production played to an average of roughly fifty people per performance and earned a total of \$430 dollars, essentially making back its cost.

VI. THE FINAL DRAFT

The Fringe Festival production showed me the way to go for the final draft of the script. Time limits imposed for the festival required that we kept the length to under

sixty minutes, not quite a full length play. Many of the cuts we made were to help the show fit in the allotted time. So, when I rewrote it, Helen Northcutt, who had been sliced from the show, was reinstated. I also reconfigured the script to use two actresses instead of one. This allowed for a lost subplot regarding Helen leaving Jack for Wilfred Smith, the subsequent banishment of Helen and Wilfred, and the blasé attitude of Jack compared to the outraged reaction of Aleister Crowley. These scenes add a kind of delicious-seeming insight to the attitudes and morals of the OTO community, which I feel are important to the tone of the play.

I also sensed that the occult community in the script as it was overpowered the science side of his personality and his life. This was a committed choice, because pagan sex fiends tend to make for better theater than university scientists. Still, this part of his life was essentially missing from the Fringe script. As we see Jack through the eyes of the other characters in the play; I created the part of Ed Forman, Jack's boyhood friend and rocketeering partner. Forman was an actual person who was Parsons's friend and confidante and remained his business partner almost until Parsons's death. The character of Ed allowed me to shed some more light on Jack's early years. He also allowed me to give Jack a partner in the science of things, and Ed's interactions with the other characters allowed me to show the tension between Jack's scientific and spiritual sides.

Much has remained the same. The conflict between Ron and Jack is essentially unchanged. But the extra characters allow me to expand and play with the delicious oddities present in Jack's life.

JET PROPULSION (Final Draft)

By

Pete Bakely

4 M, 2 W

Jack Parsons - Male

L. Ron Hubbard - Male

Aleister Crowley - Male

Ed Forman - Male

Helen and Betty Northcutt (played by the same actress) - Female

Jane Wolfe and Marjorie Cameron (played by the same actress) - Female

(Note that the two actresses are intended to be double cast.)

SETTING: A Vaudeville stage.

(An empty stage set for a vaudeville show with a desert background. Onto this setting enters ED FORMAN, carrying a large tube. He looks at the desert drop and then puts down the tube. L. RON bursts onto the stage. He is dressed as a ringmaster and carries a guitar.)

L. RON:

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. Magicians and civilians, sex fiends and scientologists, xenus and xenophobes. Welcome to our presentation of Jet Propulsion, the Amazing Story of John Whiteside Parsons. Yes, Jack Parsons. The man, the mage, the myth. The man who created the American Space program, the mage with a crater on the moon named after him, the myth who called forth the whore of Babalon and heralded the dawn of the new age.

Tonight you will see miracles of science and magick. You will see Gods and beasts. You will see the holy man and the antichrist.

(L. RON notices ED FORMAN upstage and regards him momentarily. He walks with authority to him)

What are you doing?

ED:

I'm setting up the rocket.

L. RON:

We're starting the show.

ED:

The rocket's in the show.

L. RON:

The rocket's not important now.

ED:

It's the most important thing.

L. RON:

Not until later...

ED:

It would look great. Up stage center. A metaphor for Jack's entire life.

L. RON:

The show is starting.

ED:

It'll just take a minute...

(L. RON kicks the rocket over.)

L. RON:
Whoops.

ED:
Hey.

(L. RON kicks the rocket offstage)

L. RON:
Better go get that.

(ED wanders off stage)

Prepare yourself for the wonders of the ages. You will see the great beast 666 himself. A British mage of immense power. The most dangerous man in Europe, Aleister Crowley.

(CROWLEY enters and bows)

You will meet

(CAMERON enters)

The lovely and exciting Great Whore of Babalon, the Wormwood Star, the Scarlet Woman summoned forth by Jack to birth the moonchild and herald the dawn of the new age, Marjorie "Candida" Cameron.

And last, and almost certainly least, there is me. I am but a simple scribe, a lowly writer, Jack Parson's best pal, L. Ron Hubbard.

(ED enters quietly, holding the tube. L. RON sees him)

Oh, and time permitting, rocket engineer Ed Forman.

Now, the man himself, The pyrotechnic wizard, the genius who gave the world Jet Propulsion the great Jack Parsons.. Take a bow, Jack.

(JACK enters)

JACK:
You're not my best pal.

L. RON:
Now why do you have to say a thing like that for? You hurt my feelings.

JACK:
Hubbard, say what you want. I don't have a best pal.

L. RON:
You're right, Jack. You never had pals.

ED:
Jack.

JACK:
Not now, Ed.

ED:
Jack, I was your pal.

JACK:
A long time ago, Ed.

ED:
I helped you out.

JACK:
History, Ed.

L. RON:
You two are killing me.

JACK:
Shut up.

L. RON:
Killing me. We're trying to get a show started.

ED:
I knew you from the sixth grade. You can't say I wasn't your pal.

L. RON:
These folks don't care about you, Ed. These folks want to know more about Jack. So what say we get started and hear a little number? Shoo, everyone. We'll call you for your scenes.

(All exit the stage, except L. RON and JACK. NOTE; JACK does not exit the stage in the course of the show until the final explosion. L. RON sits on a rock, pulls out a guitar and begins to sing.)

L. RON:
Gonna sing you the story of John Whiteside Parsons
His friends, they called him Jack
Raised in the city of Pasadena
Relax, and I'll take you back
Born Marvel Parsons in 1916
Named for his father, a travelling man.
Dad enjoyed hookers out on the road
Then Daddy was gone, Mama was the man.
Renamed the boy John Whiteside
Called him Jack.

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Granpa came out, they formed a family
Granpa was a wealthy business man
Spoiled the boy with piles of money
Every day, put a five dollar bill in his hand
Even during the depression
The boy had a sweet life.

JACK:
Stop it. I did not have a sweet life.

L. RON:
Your grandpa was loaded.

JACK:
Yeah, but it didn't make my life sweet.

L. RON:
I know. Poor boy, growing up. No father.

JACK:
Mom was right to kick him out. Without a father around I became independent. That's what I needed.

L. RON:
You're exactly right, Jack. You're always right. Now I'm going to sing some more.
(singing)

Unhappy at school he was bested by bullies
Tried to call up the devil to fight his fight
But the devil showed up and scared our Jacky
Made him cower and shiver through the long cold night.

In the morning the devil was gone
But he'd be back
Lucky for Jack

JACK:
I wasn't ready then. I was thirteen. I couldn't control that type of power.

L. RON:
Sure, Jack,
(ED enters)

ED:
That's where I come in.

L. RON:
I'm working here.

ED:
Jack needed a friend.

JACK:
I would have been fine.

L. RON:
OK, I give up. Tell your story, Ed. Do your tap dance and tell the world how you saved Jack.

(He grabs a straw hat and cane and hands it to ED)
Just keep the show moving. There's an audience out there.

(Hands a hat and cane to JACK. He turns to the audience.)
Ladies and Gentlemen, the pyrotechnic dancing of Parsons and Forman.

(RON exits. JACK sits with his head in his hands. ED exits, then immediately stroll onstage, hat and cane.)

ED:
Say there buddy, you're looking a little down.

JACK:
I'll be all right.

ED:
That's no way to be. Have those kids been bullying you?

JACK:
What's it to you?

ED:
Nothing.
(Pause)
'Cept...

JACK:
'Cept what...

ED:
I saw you reading Amazing Tales.

JACK:
Yeah? You gonna make fun of me?

ED:
(Looks around. Quietly)
I love Amazing Tales.

JACK:
Really.

ED:
I want to meet an alien.

JACK:
I want to go to the moon.

ED:
I want to fly in a rocket.

JACK:
I want to make a rocket.

ED:
Yeah. Me too. So why were those guys bullying you?

JACK:
They think I'm weird. I have no father.

ED:
Aw, forget about them.
(he starts singing)
Would you like to swing on a star?
(he taps)
Carry moonbeams home in a jar?
(JACK gets up)
And be better off than you are?
Or would you rather be a mule?

JACK:
What are you talking about?

ED:
(speaking)
I'll tell you.
(He sings)
A mule is an animal with long floppy ears
He kicks up at anything he hears.
His back is brawny but his brain is weak
He's just plain stupid with a stubborn streak.

JACK:
Like those bullies.

ED:
(Speaking)
That's right.
(Singing)
Cause if you don't want to learn and go to school.
You may grow up to be a mule.

ED and JACK:
(sing and dance through the next chorus)
Or would you like to swing on a star?
Carry Moonbeams home in a jar.
And be better off than you are?

JACK:
(Speaking)
Wait, I've got one.
(Singing)
Or would you rather be a pig?
(Speaking)
Because those guys are pigs.

ED:
Tell me, brother.

JACK:
(Singing)
A pig is an animal with dirt on his face.
His shoes are a terrible disgrace
They've got no manners when eat their food
They're fat and lazy and extremely rude
But if you don't care a feather or a fig
You may grow up to be a pig.
(Speaking)
I hate those guys.

ED:
They're not so tough. I'll take care of them.

ED and JACK:
(singing and dancing)
Or would you like to swing on star.
Carry Moonbeams home in a jar.
And be better off than you are?

(L. RON enters)

L. RON:
Is this number still going on? Think you could wrap it up?

ED:
I have the next verse.

JACK:
I see where you're going,

ED:
(Singing to RON)
Or would you rather be a fish?

L. RON:
What?

ED:
A fish is an animal that lives in a brook.

L. RON:
Fascinating

JACK:
He can't write his name or read a book.

L. RON:
What are you getting at?

ED:
To fool the people is his only thought.

L. RON:
Oh, oh, I see.

JACK:
And though he's slippery
He still gets caught.

L. RON:
Cute.

ED:
But if that kind of life is what you wish.
You may grow up to be a fish.

ED, JACK and L.RON:
(All sing and dance)
And all the monkeys aren't in the zoo
Every day you meet quite a few.
So you see it's all up to you.
You could be better than you are.

JACK:
(Singing)
I could be swinging on a star.

L. RON:
All right, all right. You've had your fun. Let's keep this show moving.

ED:
We didn't get to the part where I beat up the bullies and Jack and I started to make rockets.

L. RON:
We'll tell them it happened. Go, go on. Plenty more to tell.

(ED leaves)

JACK:
Ed was a better friend than you ever were.

L. RON:
I was a lot closer to you. Ed would never do what I did for you.

JACK:
Ed would never have done what you did TO me either.

(Pause. The men stare at each other. L. RON grabs his guitar and strums it.)

L. RON:
(Singing)
The desert night held lots of wonder
He learned a scientist's attack
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Rocket boys and high explosives
The stars and the moon, they called to Jack
Used Granpas money to build his rockets
And make phone calls to Wernher von Braun.

(Speaking)

It's true. He and that other guy made overseas calls to Wernher Von Braun at the height of the depression.

JACK:

There were so few people who were doing what we were doing. Von Braun knew things we didn't.

L. RON:

How much did that set your Grandpa back.

JACK:

It didn't matter. We tried talking to Robert Goddard, but he was paranoid after how he'd been treated by the press.

L. RON:

Who the hell was Robert Goddard?

JACK:

Robert Goddard. You don't know Robert Goddard?

L. RON:

No, and many of these nice people may not either.

JACK:

(To the audience)

Robert Goddard. He was the first truly great scientist to understand how rockets would work. The press crucified him.

L. RON:

Really?

JACK:

They acted like he was an idiot. "There's no oxygen in space. How's a rocket going to burn?"

L. RON:

How does it burn?

JACK:

You take it with you.

L. RON:
Like, in scuba tanks?

JACK:
No. You send up an oxidizer. It's a compound with oxygen in it. It's....Nobody knows this?

L. RON:
No.

JACK:
They don't know Goddard. They don't know Von Karmen or Malina, my colleagues at Caltech? They don't know Von Braun?

L. RON:
Some of them remember Von Braun.

JACK:
Do they remember me? They're here. It's fairly common knowledge what I did for rocket exploration.

L. RON:
These folks probably don't know about you.

JACK:
They don't know I developed the first rocket engine? They don't know I invented rocket fuel? They don't know I founded Jet Propulsion Laboratories?

L. RON:
I don't think they do. They don't teach about you in the schools.

JACK:
Didn't we ever get to the moon?
(L. RON shrugs)
But I'm forgotten. Oh well, I bet more people know of me than ever heard of L. Ron Hubbard.
(L. RON just looks at him for the moment, then starts singing again)

L. RON:
Pretty soon, Jack met a lady
Sweet Helen Northcutt, a debutante
Jack was smitten the moment he saw her
So his heart was filled with want.
(HELEN enters in a prom dress. L. RON exit. JACK goes to HELEN)

JACK:
Helen.

HELEN:
Jack, it's a lovely party.

JACK:
Helen, I need to ask you something. Something important...

HELEN:
Oh Jack, what is it?

JACK:
Helen, will you?
(He gets on one knee. A pause. He starts to speak, but a smile breaks over his face. Serious again)
Will you...
(He cracks up laughing. HELEN laughs, too)

HELEN:
I can't do this.

JACK:
This is awful.

HELEN:
It wasn't like this at all.

(L. RON enters.)

L. RON:
Come on, people. Play your scene.

JACK:
This is ridiculous.

L. RON:
The people want to see a love scene.

HELEN:
It's hard to believe anybody would want to see this.

L. RON:
But sweet romance and flowers.

HELEN:
That wasn't us at all.

JACK:
No.

L RON:
You got married. There must have been something between you.

HELEN:
Sure there was.

L. RON:
Well, tell us about it.

HELEN:
Um...Raw lust?

JACK:
I'd say unholy lust.

HELEN:
You would.

L. RON:
Come on.

HELEN:
This was 1935. I was from an upper middle class home in Pasadena. I was doomed to marry an undersexed accountant. Then I met Jack.

JACK:
She was beautiful.

HELEN:
He was incredibly handsome.

JACK:
Her family had money.

HELEN:
I thought his family had money.

JACK:
We lost it. She liked to have sex.

HELEN:
He could fuck like a wild animal.

JACK:
She was open to experimentation.

HELEN:
He didn't mind if I had an occasional tryst.

JACK:
She was fun.

HELEN:
He was fun.

L. RON:
You two are killing me. Just go.

HELEN:
We were going to sing.

L. RON:
You've killed the moment. Go.

(HELEN leaves. L. RON glares after her, then at JACK. JACK giggles)

JACK:
What do you want me to say? She was a great piece of ass. Do you know how rare that was in Pasadena in the thirties?

L. RON:
(Singing)
Pretty soon our Jacky met some new friends
Bohemian types and Sci Fi hacks
The types of folks who were up to no good
Artistic types to tempt our Jack
Jack found a group holding church in an attic
Stars and goat heads on the wall
Followed the teachings of Aleister Crowley
Do what though wilt shall be the whole of the law.

JACK:
You make them sound like idiots.

L. RON:
I didn't mean that, Jack.

JACK:

Well, some of them were idiots. But, they were the first people who really made me feel like I belonged.

L. RON:

Sure.

CROWLEY:

(offstage)

I was a seeker

JACK:

Crowley was a seeker. He was trying to make a better world.

L. RON:

I never said...

CROWLEY:

I was smeared as an evil man

JACK:

He was painted as evil, or a charlatan. Aleister Crowley was truly a great man.

CROWLEY:

Jack's success would have been impossible without me

(JACK says nothing. CROWLEY louder)

Jack's success...

(CROWLEY enter and stands upstage, back to audience.)

L. RON:

Ladies and gentlemen, our next act's reputation precedes him. He is The Great Beast 666, Frater Perderabo of the Ordo Templi Orientis, and the most hated man in England, in Europe and in this spiritual plain. A mountaineer, mage and man of the world. Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you Aleister Crowley...

(Crowley turns around. He carries a ventriloquist's dummy)

...and Willy.

CROWLEY:

Thank you, thank you. You are too kind. Willy?

WILLY:

What?

CROWLEY:

Don't you have something to say to the crowd?

WILLY:

You call this a crowd? Looks like a few pathetic people who couldn't get tickets to the burlesque show.

CROWLEY:

Don't you want to say something to them about the nice ovation they gave us?

WILLY:

Sure.

(Looks out)

That was pathetic.

CROWLEY:

Willy. That's not very nice...Let me explain. He's been a little irritable lately. Termites, you see.

WILLY:

I got them from that slutty chiffarobe.

CROWLEY:

Allow me to introduce you. This is Wilfred Smith, one of my top initiates. He's in charge of The Agape Lodge of the Ordo Templis Orientis. Our sacred home for the study of the mysteries of the universe. In Pasadena California.

WILLY:

Yes.

(To Audience)

It's an abandoned garage in the suburbs.

CROWLEY:

(Pause. Out of the side of his mouth)

Yes, that's the place, thank you for sharing.

WILLY:

Glad to help out.

CROWLEY:

How are things going there?

WILLY:

Great, wonderful. Couldn't be better.

(Pause)

Why? What have you heard?

CROWLEY:

A little bird told me, you're running the place into the ground.

WILLY:
Lies. LIES. Who said that. WHO?

CROWLEY:
Jane.

WILLY:
(quietly)
Crap.
(louder)
And you call that a little bird. More like an overfed ostrich.

CROWLEY:
Oh, stop, Jane is lovely.

WILLY:
She a liar. If she were here right now. I'd give her a piece of my mind.

CROWLEY:
Really.

WILLY:
Really. Ooh. She's so lucky she isn't here.
(to audience)
We're all lucky she isn't here.

CROWLEY:
She's a fine woman. One of my oldest friends.

WILLY:
Emphasis on oldest.

CROWLEY:
A film actress of some renown.

WILLY:
Oh yeah. What did she ever do?

CROWLEY:
She played Mary Pickford's Mother in Rebecca of SunnyBrook Farm.

WILLY:
Really.

CROWLEY:
Really.

WILLY:
That's very impressive.

CROWLEY:
It is.

WILLY:
You know what would be more impressive?

CROWLEY:
What?

WILLY:
If this was 1917. Movies HAVE SOUND now. Look, she's a desperate bitter old hack. A loser.

(JANE enters and stands behind WILLY)
A no-talent Hollywood has-been with nothing better to do than assassinate my character. She's standing right behind me, isn't she?

CROWLEY:
(after a pause)
Hello, Jane.

WILLY:
(after a pause)
Jane, darling.

JANE:
(Friendly)
Hello, Frater
(Not friendly)
Hello, Willy

CROWLEY:
Hello dear.

WILLY:
(Friendly)
Jane. You're looking lovely today. And what is that aroma?

JANE:
Oh, You like my perfume?

WILLY:
No. I thought it might be the aroma of overbaked ham.

JANE:
(glaring)
Crowley, do you need to make a burnt offering? I could start a bonfire. I know just where to get the kindling.

CROWLEY:
Stop it, both of you.

JANE:
He started it.

WILLY:
Did not.

JANE:
Did too.

WILLY:
Has been.

JANE:
End table.

CROWLEY:
Stop. Please.

JANE:
He's running the place into the ground. We never get any new members. And when we do, all he wants is to make love to the women.

WILLY:
Jealous?

JANE:
If I wanted the Willy experience I'd buy some toothpicks.
(To CROWLEY)
We've lost some very good prospects to anger, disillusionment and uncomfortable splinters. We can't afford to lose any more.

CROWLEY:

Are there any prospects now?

JANE:

There is this one young man I want you to meet. He's a scientist, but he's proved remarkably adept at the magickal arts. His name is Jack Parsons.

WILLY:

I like his wife, Helen. Hubba Hubba.

CROWLEY:

Willy, behave.

JANE:

Would you like to meet them?

CROWLEY:

Does he have the required skills? Is he willing to join the path? Does he have any money? You better answer that last one first.

JANE:

I've heard they're loaded.

CROWLEY:

Bring them in.

JANE

Jack, Helen, please come. There's someone I want you to meet.

(JACK moves to CROWLEY)

CROWLEY:

Good evening.

JACK:

Good Evening, Mr Crowley

(JACK says the name so it rhymes with growly)

CROWLEY:

No, no. Don't call me Crowley, it makes me growly. Call me Crowley. It rhymes with Holy.

JACK:

I'm sorry.

CROWLEY:

No worries, boy. Happens all the time.

(To HELEN)

What did you think of the ceremony, my dear?

HELEN:

Fascinating. How do you make the ceremonial wafers

CROWLEY:

They were made with animal blood.

(to WILLY)

It should be menstrual blood.

HELEN:

Really.

CROWLEY:

Bodily fluids are essential to magick. Would you like to learn more?

HELEN:

Actually, yes.

CROWLEY:

Willy, would you show Mrs. Parsons our library of holy works and erotic etchings?

(WILLY does a double take)

WILLY:

Is this a trick?

CROWLEY:

No. I'd like to speak to Mr. Parsons, if I could.

WILLY:

Wahooo!

(NOTE: Once WILLY is in MARJORIE's possession, she provides the voice for him.)

Hey babe. Do you like Hard Wood?

JANE:

(Watching them go)

Oh, for quiet spot and a table saw.

CROWLEY:

Jane, would you mind leaving me and Mr. Parsons alone?

JANE:
Of course, Frater.

(She leaves)

CROWLEY:
(stares intently at JACK. He puts his hand on the middle of JACK's forehead)
Yes. You are the one. You are the child who will behold them all. What do you think of all this?

JACK:
Well, I think your writings are very interesting.

CROWLEY:
You, know, the writings you have access to only scratch the surface. There are many more. The earth and heaven are not organized the way the Catholic or protestant churches would have you believe. We search for a God because we need to explain the obvious power that is right under our noses. The Christian church tells us to do as they say and ignore that power until we die. This method has led us to a world where a few powerful men allow us to slaughter each other and take shiny pieces of metal as our reward. In my temple, you follow the path to attain your true will. There are rituals and practices that can take an adept person to a higher plane. There are mysteries explained. There are Gods to commune with. There are Gods to become.

JACK:
What do you want from me?

CROWLEY:
What do "you" want for you? Truly? If it could be anything you desire?

JACK:
I want to go to the stars.

CROWLEY:
It is where you belong. As the Greeks put their heroes into the stars as constellations, we will join them one day as Gods.

JACK:
Well, OK, but I'd actually prefer to go there in a rocket.

CROWLEY:
You will have the means to do both. You are an adept. You stand above the mass of men. Follow my path. Focus your mind. Expand your vision and you will reach the stars. Open yourself to the infinite and you will reach your destination.

JACK:

You have a great pitch. Were you looking for a check?

CROWLEY:

Well, certainly, a check would be very helpful. A good adept must lead others, guide them to the path and that requires funds, funds we always seem to be wanting. But more assuredly, we need a leader, a visionary like yourself, a charismatic man with drive who may realize his true will. The book of the law tells us that "Every Man and Every Woman is a Star" and as we can see, some stars shine brighter than others.

(CROWLEY exits. L RON returns with a guitar and begins to sing)

L. RON:

(singing)

Jack found the secrets to summon up demons
And chantings to call up the spirits of Earth
He found the courage to jump through the fire
He knew the secrets to find his own worth.
Jacky and Eddie would play in the desert
Building toy rockets to reach for the sky
They were contacted by great men at Caltech
Respect and finances are theirs for the try.

(ED enters with rocket. L RON exits)

ED:

Ladies and Gentlemen....

JACK:

That sounds silly when you do it.

ED:

I know.

JACK:

Well, go ahead

ED:

Do you want to do it?

JACK:

No. I'm sorry. You sound great.

ED:

OK. Ladies and Gentleman, my partner and I are going to show you, how rockets work.

JACK:

Ed and I started when we were in high school.

ED:

We both wanted to be rocket men.

JACK:

Now, if you're careful, you can do this at home. You don't have to have a fancy degree.

ED:

Neither of us has a degree.

JACK:

I had a little college.

ED:

Me, too.

JACK:

But we learned through practice. Our first few flights were just kits we bought at the hobby store. Safe.

ED:

Easy to use.

JACK:

And if you want to try this at home, that's where you want to start.

ED:

Though, for Jack and I we got tired of that really quick.

JACK:

That we did.

ED:

They didn't go high enough.

JACK:

Let me show them.

(He walks to the blackboard. ED draws while Jack talks.)

A rocket blast is basically a controlled explosion, like a bullet from a gun. The gunpowder sets off an explosion. The energy from that explosion has to go somewhere. By creating the explosion in the barrel of a gun, the resultant energy burst causes the bullet to become a projectile and it moves the only way it can, out the barrel of the gun. BANG!

ED:

Rockets are different.

JACK:

It's the same principle, but rockets are trying to do a different job. Instead of being used as a delivery system to place lead into living tissue, it becomes a propulsion system to move an object out of the atmosphere. It pushes the energy out of a small aperture, causing the rocket to react in the opposite direction

ED:

The kits we got at the hobby store wouldn't go very far. Basically they used a mild gunpowder. Jack read everything he could find about chemistry.

JACK:

Ed changed the design of the rocket to make it more efficient. But we still couldn't make it leave the atmosphere.

ED:

In order to get to outer space you need to go about 65 miles straight up. And in order to do that, you need a lot of fuel.

JACK:

Now comes the tricky part. You basically need to make a controlled burn that lasts long enough and stays strong enough to get you that far.

ED:

The rocket we have here would only go a couple of hundred feet in the air. With the modifications we made we would be able to get them maybe a mile up.

JACK:

With experimentation come some mishaps. Trying to get a controlled burn can cause some mishaps. If there is more energy than can get through the aperture, the rocket won't rise, it will explode.

ED:

That's why we had to go to the desert.

JACK:

We blew up my family's rose garden. However there is no better teacher than experience. I learned the best chemicals to make rockets fly. I also learned how to make great explosions.

ED:

Everybody wanted to see what we were doing, after they heard the noise.

JACK:

There were movies being made around here. They hired us to make explosions.

ED:

Tell them about the cops.

JACK:

A local mobster was killed in a car explosion. The cops hired me to show them how it was done.

ED:

He testified in court.

JACK:

Put them away.

ED:

Then, Von Karmen

JACK:

Yes, the top theoretical physicist at CALTECH, Theodore Von Karmen heard what was happening and hired me...

ED:

Us

JACK:

Us, to form the nucleus of his rocketry department, because I knew more...

ED:

We

JACK:

We knew more than any of his phony doctors in his lab. I didn't have a degree, but knew so much more than they did. I didn't need to waste

(L. RON enters)

my time going to college to learn the way everyone...

L. RON:

Jack

JACK:

Had failed before. I learned my own way...

L. RON:

Jack...

(He looks at ED for help)

JACK:
I was my own teacher. I was the antichrist sent from above to show the world...

L. RON and ED:
JACK!

JACK:
What?

L. RON:
Going to fire off the rocket?

JACK:
Not really. There's a roof and it was just to look at.

(There is a long pause as L. RON stares at JACK. He claps his hands briskly)

L. RON:
Party scene!

(Ballroom music begins. ED exits with the rocket. HELEN comes spinning in and grabs JACK. They waltz.)

JACK:
Darling, we have an awful lot of room in this old mansion. What do you say we rent out some of the rooms.

HELEN:
Certainly dear. But aren't you afraid that a lodger might catch fright at some of the goings on around here?

JACK:
We make sure to specify in the ad the type we want: Only atheists and those of a Bohemian disposition.

HELEN:
The neighbors will love that. Oh, and Mother and Father want my sister Betty to come live with us.

JACK:
Betty's which one?

HELEN:
She's sixteen. She and they are always fighting. Frankly, she's a little wild.

JACK:
Great, she'll fit right in.

(They waltz off. JANE and ED waltz in)

JANE:
You're Jack's little rocket building friend, aren't you?

ED:
I guess?

JANE:
Why haven't you been at one of our ceremonies?

ED:
Oh, I'm not part of that.

JANE:
Oh, you must come. We need the new blood. You can perform as a new initiate?

ED:
Oh, I...

JANE:
It's fun. You get to devour the communion wafer off the clitoris of the high priestess.
(pause)
I'm the high priestess.

ED:
Actually, I was raised Episcopalian...

JANE:
Of course, we also need to collect seminal fluid from you...

ED:
I just dropped by to see Jack. Did you see where he went?

(They waltz off. HELEN waltzes in with WILLIE)

HELEN:
Oh, Willy. You give the best ritual.

WILLY:
You know it, Babe. You're sure your husband isn't jealous.

HELEN:

Of course not. When Jack isn't off with his rockets, he's getting off with whomever he can find. Usually my sister Betty.

WILLY:

Isn't this lovely? You, me, Jack. No one has any problem at all with us.

(CROWLEY enters. He yanks WILLY off HELEN's hand.)

CROWLEY:

Willy, a word please?

(HELEN is staring at her hand where WILLY was. She looks up at CROWLEY.

He smiles sweetly at her.)

Pardon me, Helen, darling. Do you mind if I have a moment with Mr. Smith?

HELEN:

Of course not. I'll go make some ritual cakes. It's a good time for it.

CROWLEY:

I see. Thank you.

(HELEN exits. CROWLEY puts on WILLY.)

Willy, what on earth do you think you're doing.

WILLY:

I was just dancing.

CROWLEY:

Are you trying to tell me that you haven't had sexual relations with that woman?

WILLY:

Helen?

CROWLEY:

Yes.

WILLY:

The lady who was just here?

CROWLEY:

Yes.

WILLY:

I was dancing with her?

CROWLEY:

That's the one.

WILLY:

And you want to know if I...little I...have had sexual relations with that woman?

CROWLEY:

Well, have you?

WILLY:

Oh, hell yeah. Over and over again. In every position a grown woman and a ventriloquist dummy can get into.

CROWLEY:

Oh, no, Willy. That's Jack's wife...

WILLY:

I know. And so does he. He knows all about it.

CROWLEY:

But what if he's upset...

WILLY:

He's fine. Why are you so upset? These are your teachings, Frater.

CROWLEY:

I know.

WILLY:

Do What Thou Wilt...remember?

CROWLEY:

Look Willy, the temple needs Jack to get new members. That boy is doing very important things with rockets. He has a lot of friends with money. I don't want him distracted or angry.

WILLY:

He's not angry. He's banging Helen's little sister Betty.

CROWLEY:

Well, I don't like it. I don't like it at all. People are going to get hurt. I want you to break it off with her.

WILLY:

But...but...We're in love.

CROWLEY:

Then it's worse than I thought. I forbid you to see that woman, Willy. I forbid it.

(CROWLEY waltzes out with WILLY. ED dances in with L. RON. They waltz in silence for a few moments.)

ED:

Who are you again?

L. RON:

I'm L. Ron Hubbard. I'm looking for a room.

ED:

Oh

(Pause)

And why are we dancing?

L. RON:

I like this song.

(They waltz out. JACK waltzes in with BETTY)

BETTY:

Don't you have any music with a little more pizzazz? This is squaresville.

JACK:

It's a waltz, sweetheart, it's not supposed to have pizzazz. How have you been enjoying yourself here?

BETTY:

I've been enjoying you, have you been enjoying me?

JACK:

What a question...

BETTY:

Yeah, you sound like you're enjoying yourself, but do we always have to do it on top of that star thingy?

JACK:

No point in wasting the energy.

(L. RON and ED waltz back in. They join JACK and BETTY until all four dance together. L. RON gets behind BETTY and slow dances close)

BETTY:
Pardon me, do I know you?

L. RON:
I'm L. Ron Hubbard. I'm looking for a room.

BETTY:
Well, you're not going to find any room back there.

JACK:
Ed, I didn't know you were here.

ED:
I know. I've been trying to find you. I found this crazy horny lady, then I found this crazy horny guy...

JACK:
What did you need?

ED:
Oh, yeah. You and I need to get over to Caltech. The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. The government wants us to invent jet engines.

(The music stops. L. RON, ED, JACK and BETTY form a straight line.
CROWLEY and JANE enter and join the line. All sing)

ALL:
Over there
Over there
Spread the word, spread the word to beware
Because the Yanks are coming, the Yanks are coming.
(All but L. RON march offstage.)

L. RON:
We're going to take a fifteen minute intermission, then we'll be back with lots more fun.
Thanks, everyone.

(End of ACT ONE)

ACT TWO

L. RON:

Welcome back, ladies and Gentlemen. Hope you enjoyed the intermission and enjoyed treats from our concession stand. In the second part, you'll see more music and dancing, magic and demons, triumph and heartbreak as we tell you the incredible story of the man who made the space program. John Whiteside Parsons.
Listen and be amazed as Jack tells the story of how he invented rocket fuel.

(L. RON exits.)

JACK:

Ever since I was a child, I dreamed of the day I could leave this dreary world, this world where I never belonged, a world that never understood me or cared and I would find a new home in the sky. Ed and I did our first rocket experiments in this backward suburb of Pasadena. We shot our rockets away from this miserable place and right away, I wanted to go with it. I was desperate to leave, so I studied chemistry and found that I could make more potent fuels than the ones that came with the kit. Ed, a master engineer, found more efficient designs for the rocket. With research and experimentation we made rockets that could go higher and burn longer than anyone had made before. Later, we had to move our research to the desert and I knew then, even before I had ever studied with Crowley, that this was a holy place. I learned that Mount Palomar was the sexual chakra of the earth and that our rockets would draw power from the sexual energy being created in California. The conditions were ripe for great discovery, for the ancient gods to bless our work. Then, through Amazing Stories and a local science fiction club, I found a network of rocket enthusiasts. That's where I first heard of Robert Goddard, who proposed practical rocket travel and was jeered for his efforts by the public and the press. They could not conceive of how oxygen could be brought into the vacuum of space to create the controlled burn needed for interstellar travel and because of this, they treated him as a fool. The humble amateur work Ed and I were doing brought us to the attention of the other men working on space travel. I was contacted by a young German named Werner Von Braun, who would later be a driving force in founding the US space program. We spoke on an international phone line to exchange ideas, but after a while I found that I was being pumped for information without being given much in return. Although our government has covered it up, Von Braun was a Nazi during the war and I hate to think how much of my information was used to create the V2 rockets that rained on London. In my teenage years, I stayed in the desert pretty much non-stop where I could do my will without fear of property damage. I was sent for a brief sojourn in military school, but while I there all the toilets mysteriously exploded and for some reason I was asked to leave. The rockets Ed and I set off were beautiful and the explosions we made, exciting. We started to draw crowds, which led to our hiring by Caltech. Theodore Von Karmen was, like Aleister Crowley, a true visionary. Rocketry was considered a worthless endeavor, a child's fantasy beneath the notice of a doctor of physics, but von Karmen knew the value this research and his faith was repaid as soon as the war began.

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Nevertheless, Ed and I and the scientists who formed our team weren't made to feel overly welcome. Those stuffed shirt professors didn't know what to think of me, frankly. They complained about me and my team and we were banished back to the desert, just because one of my rockets destroyed a lab. They were men of small minds who were frightened, because they

sensed what I knew. My magick would far outrun their science

Then the war came. It was sad to realize that Uncle Sam's need to destroy would finally be the catalyst to change Jet Propulsion from a useless child's dream to a method of delivering destruction to an enemy, no matter how deserving that enemy was. The US was fighting a war in the pacific and needed help to get those little airplanes up into the sky from the deck of an aircraft carrier. The Nazis had Von Braun to make their bombs. My country had me. If he made rockets that would reach London, I would make planes that would reach Japan.

Our first experiments at Caltech involved the creation of the jet engine, because no matter how good the explosion, it would need an engine to get the power to reach the stratosphere. There were many attempts, and many explosions before I even had a fuel that worked partially. The fuel would have to be solid and fill the engine compartment, otherwise air would enter the chamber and it would explode. I simply took an explosive and mixed it with common household glue. This was not a perfect solution. The process of loading and drying the fuel would take four hours. And once completed, if the engine was stored overnight the mixture would develop cracks and...boom. A beautiful explosion, filled with the glory of the earth and the power of demons, but unpractical in a military application.

The Greeks had a legendary weapon which brought terror down upon their enemies. The formula was lost for centuries, only seen by kings, the last of whom took the secret to the grave with him. I needed this secret. I needed Greek fire.

Crowley taught me to open my chakras. I contacted Pan to be my guide, to allow the earth to

its secrets to me. Seven nights I stood in the desert and cast my spells but nothing came. Pan would not reveal himself. I was there with the whole US war effort depending on me, I had no solution.

I left the desert and drove home desperate and dejected. On my way I was infuriated that road crews retopping the blacktop were blocking my way. Then, it was clear. The earthy scent of tar filled my nostrils, my mind opened and in his own time, Pan revealed himself to me.

Road pitch is a fuel, an oil that burns when ignited. In its liquid form it's easy to pour. It hardens quickly. It is designed to expand and contract with the weather. It had every property I needed. I had my solid Jet fuel. I had my Greek fire. Within a day we were ready to test our Jet engine.

At the test site. I sang this song to Pan, to honor the god and have the earth release its power to us.

(JACK stomps his feet with the rhythm of the poem)

Thrill with the lissome lust of the light

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O man! My man!
Come careering out of the light
Of Pan! IO Pan!
Devil or god, to me, to me.
My man! My man!

I who wait and writhe and wrestle
With air that hath no boughs to nestle
My body, weary of empty clasp
Sharp as a Lion and strong as an asp
Come, Oh Come
I am numb
With the lonely lust of devildom.
O Pan! IO Pan!
Do as thou wilt, as a great God can.
I am Pan! IO Pan! IO Pan pan! Pan!
I am thy mate, I am thy man
Goat of thy flock, I am Gold I am God.
Flesh to thy bone, flower to thy rod.
With hoofs of steel I race on the rocks
Through solstice stubborn to equinox.
And I rave and I rape and I rip and I rend.
Everlasting, world without end
In the might of Pan
IO Pan! IO Pan! IO Pan!

We ignited the rocket and it rose into the sky in a controlled burn that Pan, our diety,
infused with the power of the earth. It blasted from this lowly world and reached the
heavens. A new star!

(L. RON appears with a show card: Jack and L.Ron: Comedy Magicians.)

L. RON:
Jack, Jack. That was great. You're on fire!

JACK:
Thank you Hubbard. My greatest triumph. And it was before I met you.

L. RON:
I couldn't be there for everything.

JACK:
What were you doing then?

L. RON:
I was becoming a pretty famous Science Fiction writer.

JACK:
So, what, 5-6 people had heard of you?

L. RON:
Ouch.
(To audience)
Ladies and Gentlemen, We are Hubbard and Parsons, magicians.

JACK:
We are not magicians. Not in the sense these people think.

L. RON:
What would you call us then?

JACK:
I don't know about you. I am a scientist.

L. RON:
You practice magick.

JACK:
Science and magick are intertwined. Religion, too. Early peoples believed in magick, that belief led to religion and the practice of religion led to science.

L. RON:
Yes, but..

JACK:
What we think of as science, primitive peoples would see as magick.

L. RON:
Really...

JACK:
Arthur C. Clarke said, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magick."

L. RON:
Who's Arthur C. Clarke?

JACK:
A science fiction writer. A famous one.

L. RON:
In that case, what do you want to call our act?

JACK:
Something that indicates the mixture of occultologist and scientist.

L. RON:
Scientologists?

JACK:
(long pause)
Let's just call ourselves magicians.

L. RON:
So, what do you want to do for our first trick.

JACK:
These are not tricks. We do essential rituals designed to bring about a new age where the beliefs of the Judeo-Christian heirarchy are destroyed.

(He draws the seven-pointed star as he explains)
Magick lead to science or religion. The old gods of the Egyptians and Greeks were superceded by Judaism, Christianity and Islam who have sent the earth into a destructive cycle of greedy powergrabbing and petty infighting. Their time is ending on this earth and when they are gone war and destruction will dissappear. I am the anti-christ come to bring about that change.

L. RON:
(pulling out a deck of cards)
Pick a religion, any religion.

JACK:
We must let nothing stop us from achieving our goal. We must have no distractions.
(Enter BETTY, dressed as a magician's assistant. She enters and puts her arms around JACK)

BETTY:
Hi Jack.

L. RON:
Hi Betty.

BETTY:
Hi, Ronny.

L. RON:
Rawf.

JACK:
Betty, we're a little busy here. What do you need?

BETTY:
It's those creepy old devil worshippers who are always hanging around.

JACK:
You mean our tenants?

BETTY:
I guess...

JACK:
What about them?

BETTY:
They're all yelling at me. All I did was replace a couple of those big stars with some posters and they got all snippy with me.

JACK:
You mean the pentagrams?

BETTY:
The star thingys... They're all over the place.

JACK:
Those Pentagrams are there to ward off evil.

BETTY:
And...

JACK:
If you move them it will tear open an interdimensional rift and we'll be infested by poltergeists and imps by nightfall. Go, put them back up, now.

BETTY:
Poo

JACK:
Go, go now.

BETTY:
(With meaning)
Will I see you later?

JACK:
Yes, of, course, but go. Ron, help her.

RON:
Oh yeah, baby.

(JACK is left alone onstage. He pulls out a knife. He turns downstage and makes the sign of a pentagram with the point of the knife.)

JACK:
Air
(He turns upstage and creates another pentagram)
Earth

(CROWLEY enters)

CROWLEY:
Jack, I must speak with you.

JACK:
(Resigned)
Yes, Frater.

CROWLEY:
You must take control. Wilfred Smith has lost sight of path.

JACK:
The temple is happy with him.

CROWLEY:
He is dipping his wick in every lonely housewife who stumbles in here. Including your wife.

JACK:
I know.

CROWLEY:
Including your wife.

JACK:
I know.

CROWLEY:
Jack, I want you to assume leadership of the Agape lodge.

JACK:
I have more important things to do.

CROWLEY:
It must be your will...
(HELEN enters carrying WILLY)
Quiet. Over here...

(They move to the edge of the stage)

HELEN:
Oh Willy, I don't know what to do.

WILLY:
You have to tell him.

HELEN:
But what if we hurt him?

WILLY:
Why? He's with your sister.

HELEN:
I never should have invited Betty to stay. She's so competitive. She always took my dolls
when we were children.
(pointed look at WILLY)
Stay away from her.

WILLY:
Just ask Jack for a divorce and marry me.

HELEN:
I don't know...

JACK:
Helen, do it. I'll grant you a divorce.

HELEN:
Just like that?

JACK:
If this is your will...

HELEN:

Willy, would you give us a moment.

(She turns WILLY away.)

Jack, if I thought it would make a difference, I would fight for us.

JACK:

Helen, I'm sorry about Betty.

HELEN:

No, I get it. You don't have to think about Betty. She doesn't care. You don't have to care back.

JACK:

I still love you.

HELEN:

I didn't lose you to Betty. I lost you to Crowley and your damn rockets. Come on, Willie. Let's go to our room.

CROWLEY:

(Jumping out)

Just a moment...

(he walks over and snatches WILLY from HELEN)

I need to have a word or two with Willy, here.

WILLY:

No. Stop him. He's going to use me to make a sex alter.

CROWLEY:

Willy. Calm down.

WILLY:

No...

CROWLEY:

I won't harm you.

WILLY:

(a pause)

You won't?

CROWLEY:

Of course not. I only want the best for you. Being a reincarnated demon and all.

WILLY:
Oh, well that's...
(Double take)
A what?

CROWLEY:
You are a reincarnation of a god.

WILLY:
Oh. Oh that's great. A god. Wow. What kind of god.

CROWLEY:
That's for you to find out. To do it you have to leave the temple and all those associated with it behind. You have to leave behind all your possessions, including your clothing.

WILLY:
Wait, what?

CROWLEY:
You are to shave off all your hair and to have the number 666 tattooed to your forehead.

WILLY:
How am I...

CROWLEY:
Wood burning kit. You are to be exiled into the desert and are not to return until you have seen a vision.

WILLY:
How will I know when I get the vision.

CROWLEY:
I will tell you when you get the vision.

WILLY:
Oh, that kind of vision.

CROWLEY:
(tosses WILLY to HELEN)
Go. Leave on your exile. You
(pointedly, to Helen)
And everyone who associates with you are banished until I give you leave to return. Go,
and speak to no one.

HELEN:
Jack...

CROWLEY:
Go...
(CAMERON and WILLY leave)
That ought to do it. Jack, you are now head of the temple.

JACK:
No

CROWLEY:
I need an adept.

JACK:
No

CROWLEY:
Someone with charisma who will bring new members. We are broke.

JACK:
No.

CROWLEY:
Jack, come here.
(JACK crosses to him. CROWLEY puts his hand on the back of JACK's neck)
Jack, will you take the position as head of the Agape Lodge?

JACK:
(CROWLEY's Voice)
Yes. I will Frater Perdurabo.

CROWLEY:
Thank you, Jack. I knew I could depend on you.
(He moves to go)
Jack, I freed you up. I removed at least two distractions
(L. RON and CAMERON, as Betty enter)
I can't help it if you keep giving yourself more.

(CROWLEY exits)

CAMERON:
Ron, stop it. Jack, Ron is terrible.

JACK:
You have no idea.

L. RON:
Jack, I was going to show Betty some of the books on our rituals.

JACK:
Ron, the magician. Trying to make my girlfriend disappear.

L. RON:
It goes great with the disappearing wife trick Crowley just did.
(pause)
Which brings me to our next trick. How would you like it if we could share Betty?

BETTY:
Wait...what?

JACK:
Uh, oh.

L. RON:
No, no, come on, this'll be great.
(He runs offstage. JACK and BETTY eye each other nervously)

JACK:
What do you think?

BETTY:
Maybe.
(L. RON returns with a saw a woman in half trick)
Oh, hell no.

L. RON:
(opens the trick)
Jack, help me with this. Hop on in.

(BETTY gets into the case. RON locks her down.)

BETTY:
What are you doing?

L. RON:
Experience. The more immobile the better. At least until the blade goes in a ways.

JACK:
Ron, What are you doing?

L. RON:
This is the way we can share her.

JACK:
This is the best way? To saw her in half?

L. RON:
There is one other way, but with that one, we all have to be in the room at the same time...

(L. RON and BETTY look at JACK hopefully. JACK considers)

JACK:
Slice her in two.

BETTY:
Jack!
(L. RON starts to saw)
You guys are assholes.

(L. RON holds up the saw.)

L. RON:
You want heads or tails?

JACK:
(Quickly)
Tails

L. RON:
Sure?

JACK:
Tails doesn't talk.

L. RON:
(With a flourish, he readies the saw.)
I think there's a precedent here. Shouldn't one of us stop this? Shouldn't the one of us who really loves her offer her to the other so she'll be unharmed?

(Long pause. The men stare at each other. Then they both laugh)
Yeah, let's just do this.

BETTY:
I hate you guys.
(L. RON again starts to saw and finishes.)

L. RON:
Jack. Grab that end.
(They pull the halves apart)
And ta-da, one half for you, one half for me.

JACK:

Let's save these for later.

(They take the pieces stage Left and stage Right.)

Take care of these boys. We're saving them for later.

BETTY:

Those stagehands better not do stuff to my other end while I'm over here.

JACK:

It's how we're paying them.

(BETTY is off)

L. RON:

Next up....

(ED enters, looking shaken)

Ed has another number? Are you going to sing about forming JPL?

ED:

Jack, can I talk to you?

JACK:

Ed, what is it?

ED:

Could he leave?

JACK:

Ron? Could you?

(L. RON exits)

What is it?

ED:

I can't do it anymore.

JACK:

What? You're quitting the job at Caltech?

ED:

Not there. Here.

JACK:

Why?

ED:

It's too weird.

JACK:
What are you talking about?

ED:
Well, first, there's this vaudeville show thing,

JACK:
Ed, that's just...OK that's fair, but that can't be all of it.

ED:
Then this lady wanted me to do terrible things with her and a communion wafer.

JACK:
Oh, you met Jane...

ED:
Then I wandered through the house and I got lost and I found an open window and there were dozens of shrieking poltergeists...

JACK:
Yeah. We're working on that.

ED:
Jack, why are you doing this?

JACK:
What are you talking about, Ed?

ED:
I don't get it. You're a scientist.

JACK:
Everyone knows that...

ED:
Why do you mess around with this hoodoo crap?

JACK:
Ed. I thought you, at least, would have an open mind.

ED:
No one takes us seriously. The government's thinking twice about doing business with us.

JACK:
Do they need our engines?

ED:
Yes, but...

JACK:
Then they'll do business.

ED:
Jack, come to the lab. Hold down the magick talk. Don't do the horny dance thing everytime we fire off a rocket.

JACK:
I can't. As of this moment, the stars are in the correct alignment. I have to leave at once for the desert. It's time for the Babalon working, the ritual where I will summon forth the whore of Babalon.

(Long Pause)

ED:
Goodbye, Jack.

JACK:
Come out with me. It'll be fun.

ED:
Goodbye, Jack
(ED leaves. L. RON enters)
L. RON:
Are we ready for this?

L. RON aand JACK:
(to audience)
The Babalon Working
(L. RON sits on the rock and strums his guitar softly.)
The rocket fuel we made worked perfectly and the US contracted us for thousands of engines and millions of dollars worth of fuel. As Caltech had no interest in being in the Rocket Business, my compatriots and I created our own company, Jet Propulsion Laboratories, to continue our research. JPL. Some folks just called it Jack Parson's Lab.

L. RON:
Subtle.

JACK

Ron and I went to perform the Babalon working. A ritual to destroy the useless world we live in and replace it with a greater one. Crowley hadn't even attempted it. Hubbard was my scribe, we went to a cabin in the desert where we could do our work unimpaired. We played the Prokofiev Violin Concerto as I performed the Conjunction of air, Invocation of Wand and Consecration of Dagger . From January 4 1946 through January 18 1946. I performed the rituals nightly I focused on the Babalon glyph.

(He draws a picture of the seven pointed star)

And I performed the sexual ritual, creating the sacred fluid to invoke the otherworldly power. I focused on the whore of Babalon. Ron wrote everything down. On the tenth day, the power went out at our cabin. Something struck Ron on the right side and knocked a candle from his hand.

(We see the actions. There is a dark creature scuttling on stage)

I rushed to him and saw a brownish yellow light five feet high. I grabbed my consecrated sword and the creature vanished but Ron was paralyzed on his right side and remained that way until morning.

(We see these actions)

The next night, after the ritual, the apparition of an enemy appeared to us. Ron threw four mystical daggers at it, pinning it to our door. We sat for 4 days in a state of high tension and fear, then, it passed. We made our way back to Pasedena. When we arrived home, waiting in the house was a tall red headed woman.

(CAMERON appears.)

Who are you? Where did you come from?

CAMERON:

I'm Marjorie Cameron. I was brought here...

JACK:

You were brought here? Ron?

L. RON:

I heard...

JACK:

Get the...

L. RON:

Going...

(L. RON exits)

CAMERON:

Who's your friend?

JACK:

It doesn't matter.

CAMERON:
(Makes sense)
Sure.
(Pause)
I came with my friend. He said this was the fun place to go in Pasadena.

JACK:
What's your friend's name?

CAMERON:
It's...um...
(Pause)
I can't remember...

JACK:
It doesn't matter.

CAMERON:
Yeah. So what do you do...

JACK:
I'm a...

CAMERON:
For fun?

JACK:
Fun?

CAMERON:
I just spent three years in the navy. I could use some fun.

JACK:
I'm sure I can provide that. We could dance?

CAMERON:
Dance?
(Looks around)
No music.

(JACK puts out his hand to dance. She snorts, then takes it)

JACK:
(Singing)
Somewhere there's music
(Cameron starts giggling)
How faint the tune.

CAMERON:
A crooner eh?

JACK:
Somewhere there's heaven
How high the moon.
(The two begin to slow dance. They move closer and lock eyes)
There is no moon above
When love is far away too
Till it comes true

JACK/CAMERON:
That you love me as I love you.

(CAMERON giggles. JACK begins to undress her. CAMERON starts to undress JACK. L. RON, carrying a book wheels in a partition. JACK and CAMERON twirl behind it and are unseen.)

JACK/CAMERON:
(still singing and giggling)
Somewhere there's music
How near how far

(L. RON opens the book . pulls a ceremonial dagger.)

L. RON:
(his chant works as counterpoint to the singing)
West - Praise to thee power of water, the ocean where life spring forth, the creeks and
rills that nourish us.
(The singing has stopped)
East - Praise to thee power of air. The cleansing force of wind and the gentle br-eeze that
cools the sun.

North - Praise to thee power of earth our mother protector of life

South - Praise to thee, power of fire. The spark of lust that leads to life.

(There is the sound of an explosion. L. RON exits, taking the screen. It reveals
JACK and CAMERON intertwined. The mood is post-coital)

CAMERON:
That was fun. Do you always go all night?

JACK:
Well, I've had some training.

CAMERON:
Where do you sign up for that class?

JACK:
Tantric training.

CAMERON:
Correspondence course?

JACK:
Not... It's not important

CAMERON:
Sure.
(curious)
Was that your friend chanting?

JACK:
Um... This is embarrassing. What was your name again?

CAMERON:
Can't remember yours either.

JACK:
Jack...

CAMERON:
I'm Marjorie.

JACK:
That's a terrible name. Aesthetically and numerologically. Let's call you Candida.

CAMERON:
Candy? I like it. I must like you, too, because I don't usually let a random date give me a new name.

JAKE:
This is not a random date.

CAMERON:

Not a normal date. I don't usually...

JAKE:

My friend and I went out into the desert and summoned you.

CAMERON:

You...summoned...me?

JACK:

Yes.

CAMERON:

How did that work exactly?

JACK:

Well, I just did a lecture on it, so I don't want to get into it too much, but basically I created pentagrams in the air with a knife while Ron chanted. Then I would masturbate five times a night while I chanted and focused on the glyph of Babalon. This is a sacred ritual.

CAMERON:

Oh.

(She laugh out loud)

And you don't mind just telling me this?

JACK:

Look. We finished. We came home. You were here.

CAMERON:

So it worked.

JACK:

Obviously. Since then we've been performing the sacred sex ritual to call forth the moonchild.

CAMERON:

Moonchild. It's beautiful. I love the moon.

JACK:

You are the moon.

CAMERON:

Don't care much for the child part. Hope I didn't get knocked up.

JACK:
It's not that literal.

CAMERON:
I hope not.

JACK:
Whatever we called forth tonight is a being of great beauty and power.

CAMERON:
That's good to know.
(Pause)
I should probably be leaving..

JACK:
Can you stay?

(CAMERON smiles)

CAMERON:
Men don't usually stop me when I'm leaving.

JACK:
Candy.
(She starts to correct him but stops)
I summoned you to me because I needed you.

CAMERON:
To make your moonchild.

JACK:
No...yes. The world needs the moonchild. The creature that comes forth will bring the world into the new age. The Christian Gods will fade.

CAMERON:
We want that?

JACK:
Yes. The world will change. People will stop waging war. People will stop using the things I made to obliterate each other. They won't strap my engines to bombs. They'll put them on rockets. We'll go to the moon.

CAMERON:
You don't need me.

JACK:
I have no one to go with me. Stay.

CAMERON:
Goodbye. Jack.

JACK:
Think about it, Candy.

(She exits. L RON enters)

L. RON:
Want to see another trick?

JACK:
No.

L. RON:
This one's lot better.

JACK:
What is it?

L. RON:
For this trick I need something from you.

JACK:
Big surprise there. What do you need?

L. RON:
Nothing. A trifle...

JACK:
What?

L. RON:
I need a mere 25,000 dollars.

JACK:
Is that all? Let me...
(Reaches for his wallet. Pause)
Wait a second. What?

L. RON:
Don't worry. I'm in it too. We'll pitch in equally.

JACK:
Equally,

L. RON:
50/50 right down the line.

JACK:
Great.

L. RON:
So together we have 30 thousand dollars.

JACK:
OK. Wait. What did you say?
(pause)
Let's try this again. We go 50/50

L. RON:
Straight down the line.

JACK:
I put in 25000. You match me equally and we end up with.

L. RON:
30000 dollars

JACK:
(hands him a pen)
Show your math

L. RON:
You can't work this out on your own?

JACK:
Humor me.

L. RON:
OK. You put in 25000 dollars
(He draws 25000 on the board)
I go 50 percent.
(He draws a 50 on the board)
There's two of us, so I move the decimal two places.
(Draws two more zeros)
Add it up. 30 thousand dollars.

JACK:
(Hands him the cash)
I'd argue further but there's no point.

L. RON:
We're going to invest in boats

JACK:
Navy boats? Military Boats?

L. RON:
Luxury boats. Yachts.

JACK:
That's ridiculous.

L. RON:
Allow me to demonstrate.
(He takes the money and shuffles it)
OK we take half the money and buy a yacht.
(The cash from one hand is gone and in its place is a paper yacht)
We take the other half of the money and buy another yacht.
(Same thing with the other hand.)
Now for the next part of this trick , I'll need our lovely assistant back.

(The two men exit and return with the two halves of BETTY .)

BETTY:
You bastards.

L. RON:
Welcome back, dear.

JACK:
Why'd we bring her back?

L. RON:
Let me show you.
(They put the two halves back together and open the lid. BETTY steps out.)
Ta-da. See aren't you glad there was a payoff?

BETTY:
My whole body's stiff.

L. RON:
Watch me.
(Pulls the pictures of the boats)
So instead of buying two yachts, we buy one.
(He changes one of the boats back into money)
Then Betty and I take the money.
(Holds up the money)
Get on the boat.
(Holds up the boat)
And sail away.
(to BETTY)
Ready?

BETTY
Let's go.
(Flash, Flourish. L. RON and BETTY are still onstage. They run off. JACK stares for a moment.)

JACK:
RON!
(To audience)
Do you want to see some real magick? Ron and Betty ran away to South Carolina where they lived high and spent most of the money on a single yacht. I chased them down there and arrived just hours after they set off to sea. Gone forever, with all my money.
(pause)
I went to my hotel. I created a pentagram. I stood in it. I focused and I chanted.
(he does air pentagrams)
The next day their boat washed up on the rocks. I took them before a judge. The boat was destroyed and my money was gone. I made them sign a promissory note for the money, if they ever got it, then they were gone. Magick.

(L. RON appears with his guitar.)

L. RON:
We have to finish the show.
(He stops singing)
So everybody, time for a few impressions. You like impressions, don't you Jack?

JACK:
I hate impressions.

L. RON:
Everybody loves impressions. Here's my first one.
(Posh accent. Thurston Howell)
Jack, let's talk. The boys and I think it's time you sold your shares of Jet Propulsion Labs
(Normal voice)
See, it's your partners.

(ED enters)

ED:
They made me sell out, too, Jack.

JACK:
We both made good money on the deal.

ED:
Yeah, but we would have made lots more if we stayed. They founded the space industry. JPL was at the top of the industry, we would have made millions.

JACK:
It wasn't about money.

ED:
No, it was about proving we could be scientists.

JACK:
We are scientists.

ED:
No we're not. We have no company, we have no degrees. We're just guys.

JACK:
Bullshit. We could find jobs anywhere...

ED:
No, we couldn't...

L. RON:
That brings us to, impression number two.
(Tough guy voice)
Parsons is a weirdo. Probably a commie. Revoke his security clearance. He ain't makin' our bombs.
(pause)
It's your government. They told your partners to get you to sell and they blacklisted you in the industry.

JACK:

I wasn't a communist. Politics are hogwash.

ED:

I wasn't either. They blacklisted me too. Just because I worked with you.

JACK:

It was immoral working for the government that used my inventions to create weapons.

ED:

Tell that to my kids.

L. RON:

And, of course, we all remember how much you complained while the war was going on. Oh wait, you didn't.

JACK:

It was different. We were fighting Hitler.

L. RON:

You made great money blowing up Nazis. Speaking of which, Third Impression.

(German accent)

I am the father of the American Rocket program.

(Normal Voice)

Got it? I'm Werner Von Braun.

JACK:

Von Braun. The government loved him. I worship a goat God and they can't have me around, but if I'd been a member of the SS, that would be peachy.

L. RON:

Officially, he was never in the SS, there are suspiciously clean documents that say so.

ED:

They had Von Braun where they needed him. You were a bigger wild card.

L. RON:

And didn't he look great standing next to Walt Disney?

JACK:

Science is a false idol. It is just a manifestation of Magick. What did pure science get us? The Manhattan project, the V2 rocket and millions of efficiently killed Jews.

L. RON:

Those grapes are sure sour.

JACK:

My true work was the Babalon working. The creating of the moonchild to bring in the new age.

ED:

Of course. Your devily/magicky thing...

JACK:

Shut up, Ed. Things went bad and you curled up into a little ball. What happened to you?

ED:

I had a family to support. I didn't believe in that magic crap.

JACK:

So, you disappeared.

ED:

I had to.

JACK:

Just go. Leave me, Ed.

ED:

It wasn't just me...

JACK:

Go!

(ED glares, then leaves)

They all left me. Ed. Crowley.

L. RON:

Crowley died. He was an ancient heroin addict living in England. He'd lived enough lives for twelve people.

(Pause)

Final impression?

(same voice)

I wrote one of the best selling books of 1950.

(a beat)

OK, that was a trick. It was me.

(Holds up book)

Dianetics. Still in bookstores.

JACK:

You stole the best parts of the OTO and charged people for it.

L. RON:

Pretty smart, huh? Crowley died in a hovel. I spent my life on a yacht. By the way, if anyone asks, I never joined the temple or did any rituals. The official story is that I was sent in by the LAPD to infiltrate a black magic cult.

JACK:

(Goes to chalkboard)

This is how I'll be remembered.

(draws a rocket)

I made rockets fly, but more importantly

(He draws the Babalon symbol)

I called forth Babalon, the Wormwood star, who would produce the godlike child...

L. RON:

Actually, it's extradimensional aliens. Here, hold onto these electrodes and I'll have you clear in a minute.

JACK:

Goddammit, Hubbard. You made a mockery out of the teachings of Crowley.

CROWLEY:

(ethereal, loud)

You betrayed me.

JACK:

See...

L. RON:

Holy shit...

CROWLEY:

(Rising from the scenery)

You betrayed me, Jack.

L. RON:

It's you. Damn, I nearly crapped myself.

CROWLEY:

You meddled in forces you could not control.

L. RON:

Xenu's looking pretty good now, I bet.

JACK:

I did what you were afraid to do.

CROWLEY:

You accomplished nothing. Where is the moonchild?

JACK:

It may not manifest for a while. I don't know how long. That's not the point.

CROWLEY:

You were supposed to run the lodge and raise money.

JACK:

The lodge was worthless. A bunch of horny old sociopaths.

CROWLEY:

I needed you spread the word. I needed those checks, dammit.

JACK:

I needed to change the world.

CROWLEY:

To what end?

JACK:

I needed a world I could be part of. It's none of your business, Crowley. You're dead, Go back to whatever hell you crawled out of..

(JACK makes the sign of a pentagram.CROWLEY disappears. Silence)

L. RON:

Jack?

JACK:

What?

L. RON:

You were telling us about the moonchild.

JACK:

I found my goddess. We summoned and Cameron came. Together, we produced the moonchild.

(CAMERON enters. She carries a wire coat hanger, which she unravels)

CAMERON:

How should I know your true Love know

From another one

With his cockle staff and hat...

JACK:
What are you doing?

CAMERON:
Ophelia's mad scene.

JACK:
You're not mad.

CAMERON:
Not yet.

JACK:
(shows her the chart)
I was showing them how I found you. How we will produce the moonchild...

CAMERON:
(Stares at the hanger)
I'm not pregnant, Jack.

JACK:
It doesn't matter. You are a mystic being destined to be with me. We are immortal.

CAMERON:
Jack, I have to leave here.

JACK:
Why?

CAMERON:
I don't belong here.

JACK:
You belong with me.

CAMERON:
I need to travel. I need to learn.

JACK:
Go, then.
Get thee to a nunnery.

CAMERON:
I don't belong here.

JACK:
I don't belong anywhere. I need you with me.

CAMERON:
Goodbye, Jack.

(She leaves. He points to Babalon on the chart.)

JACK:
We are mystically joined.
(He taps Babalon)
I love you.

(Silence)

L. RON:
Jack...

JACK:
She's gone. They're all gone.

L. RON:
I'm still here.

JACK:
No, you're not. Leave me. Just like you did.

L. RON:
If it makes any difference, you were my friend.

JACK:
Goddamn you, Hubbard. Did you need the money that bad?

L. RON:
Jack...

JACK:
Was it Betty? You didn't even like her. You wrote me and wanted to send her back.

L. RON:
It wasn't Betty.

JACK:
What was it, Goddammit? You hang around for a year just to scam me. You made me feel like an idiot.

L. RON:

You never got it Jack. I just wanted to have what you have.

JACK:

You can steal my money. You can steal my girlfriend. You can steal my whole damn religion.

L. RON:

I am the spiritual leader of millions of people across the globe.

JACK:

Yet all you are is a thief. Get away from me.

(L. RON exits)

I'm Jack Parsons. I'm Frater Belarion. I am the antichrist. Tonight you will see me perform an amazing act. I explode in a ball of flames and be blown limb from limb. It's an amazing act. There's only one thing wrong with it.

I can only do it once.

I hight Don Quixote
I live on Peyote
Marijuana, Morphine and Cocaine
I've never knew sadness
But only a madness
That burns at the heart and the brain
I've seen each charwoman
Ecstatic, Inhuman
Angelic, demonic, devine
Each wagon a dragon
Each beer mug a flagon
That brims with ambrosial wine.
I went to the city
And found it a pity
The Devil was playing at hell
And ten million mortals
Had entered hell's portals
And thought they were all doing well
(He indicates the audience)
I said "See dear people
On every Church Steeple
An Imp of the Devil at play
See Ghouls cut their capers
In daily Newspapers
And fiends in police courts hold sway
The mountains are palaces
(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

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Women are chalices
Meant to be supped and not sold
The desert a banquet hall
Set for a festival
Ripe for the free and the bold.

The wind and the sky are ours
Heaven and all its stars
Waken and do what you will
Break with this demon spawned
Hel-inspired nightmare bond
Magick lies over the hill
They said I was crazy
Ambiguous, lazy
Disgusting, fantastic, obscene
So I hied to my sagebrush
And Cactus and Corn mush
To see if the air was still clean

Oh, I hight Don Quixote
I live on Peyote
Marijuana, Morphine and Cocaine
And May I be twice - Damned
For a Bank Clerk or store hand
If I visit the city again.

(JACK moves to the side of the stage and sits, rocking and humming.
CAMERON enters)

CAMERON:

If I felt that I didn't belong in Pasadena, the world showed me I didn't belong anywhere else. I travelled all around Europe, never feeling a part of my surroundings. In Portugal, I stayed in a local Inn, but the townspeople attacked me as a witch and drove me away. I landed in a convent in Spain. The sisters took me in and let me stay. Then, one night I had a clear vision. The saints on the walls began to look at me, their eyes showing judgement and anger. I felt ill and ran to a washroom. In a mirror, I saw my face turn into a hideous beast, a wolf, carnal and hungry. Before I knew what I was doing, I was down on my haunches, howling and baying - I was the whore of Babalon, the Scarlet Woman lit only by the Wormwood Star screaming to earth. I knew I had to leave that Christian place or I would be destroyed.

(JACK begins to sing How High the Moon)
(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

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I returned to Jack, where I belonged. He loved me. The government had taken away his security clearance, so he was banned from any job in the aerospace industry and the inventor of rocket fuel was working at a gas station. When I was away, he'd written poem after poem to me and called them, "Songs to a Scarlet Woman." We made plans to move to Mexico, where magick and science were still intertwined. He was happier than he'd been in years. Happier than I'd ever seen him.

He took one last job.. Just before we were to leave a movie studio asked Jack for some pyrotechnics. We needed the money. He was starting over. Or coming full circle.

It's possible he may have been trying one more time to create the moonchild to make up for the one I did not give him. Crowley had written specific instructions for the ritual.

Later, in the wreckage, I was never able to find that book.

We never knew what the moonchild was. Crowley saw it in a vision and called it a LAM, a thin grey creature with a large head. Nine months after the Babalon working, nine months after I met Jack were the first UFO sightings

(Two huge explosions are heard. The lights go black. The lights return. JACK is lying on the floor.)

The day it happened I was across town picking up final items for our trip. I heard the two massive explosions and I knew it was him. I left my purchases and ran to our home.

Neighbors were already in the rubble, but there was no sign of Jack. We searched frantically. I held out hope that maybe he was still alive, that he'd been out of the room, that he would come walking down the street to find us there. Then, under a sink which had been blown from the wall, we saw a leg. We moved the sink and there he was. He was still conscious when we found him. He spoke to us, then lapsed into a coma.

JACK:

I am not done.

CAMERON:

Jack Parsons died in an explosion in the laundry room of our home. Jack always kept gallons of highly volatile chemicals stored there. This day they exploded, tearing off his left arm, leg, and the left side of his face. The left side of his body was gone. He lingered, unable to move, in intense pain until he died five hours later.

(JACK falls to the ground)

The next day the newspapers mentioned he had been a scientist, an esteemed member of the community.

Then the stories of black masses and sex orgies started to surface. Scandal filled the papers for about a week, devil worshipper, dark sorcerer, cult leader, the hidden evil in Pasadena.

Then, they stopped. Jack was never mentioned again. Jack disappeared. It was decades before anyone talked about him.

In the 1970s Jet Propulsion Laboratories finally acknowledged him as a founder. They put together a small memorial to the rocket boys, Jack and Ed. Werner Von Braun told the press Jack was one of the five people responsible for the American space program.

And NASA, an organization that would never have existed without him, named a crater

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

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for him on the moon. Not a mountain, not the heights he wanted to reach, but a hole on the dark side of the moon, always turning, his back to the earth, always looking to the stars.

L. RON:

Good night, everybody. Thank You all. Our cast again.

(CROWLEY enters)

Aleistar Crowley, The great beast 666.

(Pointing to CAMERON)

Candida Cameron, the whore of Babalon.

(Pointing to ED)

Rocket boy Ed Foreman.

(L. RON Steps forward)

I'm Parson's Pal, L Ron Hubbard.

And the man who invented the rocket and brought forth the new age: Jack Parsons

(He points to the still body of JACK on the floor. The lights blackout.)

(END OF PLAY.)

APPENDIX A

JET PROPULSION (Original First Act, Abandoned)
By
Pete Bakely

4 M, 2 W

J.- Male (John Whiteside Parsons)

H. - Male (L. Ron Hubbard, others)

The Emperor- Male (Crowley, Von Karmen, Grandpa, others)

The Hanged Man- Male (Frank Malina, Father, others)

The Witch - Female (Cameron, Mother, Jane Wolfe, others)

The Empress- Female (Helen and Betty, others)

SETTINGS: Various. A nearly bare stage with a raised platform upstage.

(The set contains six panels depicting six Tarot cards from Aleister Crowley's Thoth deck, The Magus, The Emperor, The Fool, The Hanged Man, The Empress and The Witch. Upstage there is a raised platform with stairs leading to it from offstage. Stage is otherwise open, with slight suggestions of squalor and damage. A utility sink, broken and on it's side, papers strewn, one or two burn out 55 gallon drums. An alter with a pentagram and the face of Baphomet is upstage center.

As the lights go down, we hear the sound of hyperactive twenties jazz.. Suddenly an explosion is heard, cutting off the music. A second explosion is heard. Lights come up on J. and H. J. is lying on his back. H. crouches next to him)

H:
You've got to get up.

J:
(Dazed)
What was that?

H:
Explosions. They were close.

J:
How close?

H:
Jack Parson's house.

J:
Parsons?

H:
(Amused)
Jack Parsons. John Whiteside Parsons.
(Pause)
You know him.
(Pause)
Expert on explosives.
(Pause)
A big man here in Pasadena. He invented rocket fuel.
(Pause)
You have to get up.

J:
(Rising)
Wait. Parsons. Belonged to some weird church?
(Pause)
What happened?

H:
Two explosions ripped through his workshop.

J:
(Upset)
Wait. What? He died?

H:
Well, he didn't survive. He was blown to bits. Lost an arm. A leg. Half his face was gone.
He was in agony before he went.
(He waits. P stares at him)
He was an expert on explosives. It couldn't have been an accident.

J:
Anyone can have an accident.

H:
Not him. Do you know what his mother did when she heard?
(The WITCH pushes the EMPRESS in a wheelchair. The WITCH moves away
and takes out a bottle of pills.)
He was his mother's boy.

J;
What did she do?

H:
They gave her pills to calm her. She was staying with a friend. Her friend was crippled.

WITCH:
He's dead.

(She quickly starts taking pills one at a time. The EMPRESS, in the wheelchair,
screams)

EMPRESS:
No!

H:
Her friend sat helplessly by as Ruth Parsons choked, stopped breathing and died on her
floor.. It was lucky Jack was dead. He was his mother's boy.

J:
(Holds out his hand to the WITCH)

No.

(A whooshing sound is heard. Fast country blues is heard. H and EMPRESS exit.
J: sits cross-legged Center stage, playing with blocks. WITCH faces out and
speaks to an unseen neighbor.)

WITCH:
Hello, Mrs. Williams.
(Under her breath)

Nosy bitch.
(Aloud)

Hello, how are you feeling? Well, of course it's lovely weather. This is Pasedena. Every
day its lovely. It never changes.

(Pause)

He's away.
(Louder)

Mr. Parsons is away.

(The HANGED MAN enters as Marvel Parsons, Jack's father. He stands upstage
and recites)

HANGED MAN (Marvel Parsons):
Dear Ruth. I may be very brutal but I think you are very foolish. Do you think I love that
woman?

WITCH:
(Out)
I don't know when he'll be back.

HANGED MAN:
Love. You are crazy to think I love her or anyone but you.

WITCH:
No, he's still not back, Mrs. Williams. His job keeps him very busy.

HANGED MAN:
Haven't you learned that it's anything except love that lets a man stay with a prostitute.

WITCH:
Oh, Mrs. Williams, terrible news. Mr. Parsons passed away while he was on the road.

HANGED MAN:
Do you think it is quite fair not to write me once in a while how the boy is? Pretty hard to
sit here and think that my own son is not being taught to say papa.

(He exits. WITCH moves to kneel beside J. J. does not acknowledge.)

WITCH:

Your father doesn't matter. Grandpa is coming to live with us.

(The EMPEROR enters. Whenever the EMPEROR appears, no matter what character he plays, he will be on a platform above the action. He speaks out front.)

EMPEROR:

Jack!

WITCH:

He's a wealthy man.

EMPEROR:

Jack, you need spending money. Here's twenty dollars.

WITCH:

He can give us things we want.

EMPEROR:

We need a bigger house.

WITCH:

Things we need.

EMPEROR:

Let's go to the symphony.

WITCH:

You'll have a better life.

EMPEROR:

Let's go to Europe.

WITCH:

You are a very special boy, Jack.

(The music swells. We see that J. has built a rocket out of his blocks. The music stops.)

J:

Boom.

(J. knocks his blocks over. WITCH and EMPEROR exit. H. appears)

H:
"Your father separated from your mother in order that you might grow up with a hatred of authority necessary to your work."

J:
What the hell are you talking about?

H:
You wrote that. But you wrote "my." "My work."

J:
My father was a non-entity.

H:
You didn't want that to happen to you.

(Offstage voices.)

J:
School.

OFFSTAGE VOICE (Child):
You ain't got a father.

J:
My father's dead.

HANGED MAN(bully):
(entering)
That what he told your mom?

(WITCH and EMPRESS enter as school girls)

H:
(Announcing)
The insult that made a man out of Jack.

HANGED MAN:
I'm talking to you, Poindexter.

(The girls giggle.)

J:
Stop picking on me, Butch.

HANGED MAN:

Aw, ya fairy. What's that fairy stuff you're always reading.

J:

Well, for your information, Butch, it's science fiction.

HANGED MAN:

Science fiction? What's that?

J;

What are you, a moron?

HANGED MAN:

You're gonna pay for that.

(He grabs J.'s arm and puts it behind his back.)

J:

Stop it, Butch. You're bigger than me.

HANGED MAN:

Your retard book gonna help you now?

J:

I read this one story. A guy commands the devil. And he makes the devil come and kill a guy who's picking on him.

HANGED MAN:

How's he do that, huh?

J:

Satan's gotta do what you say, if you say the right thing. You draw a star in a circle and stand inside so he can't get you, too.

HANGED MAN:

That what you gonna do to me? I'm so scared.

(He throws him down)

Where's your Satan, now, huh?

(He mimes kicking sand in J.'s face)

J:

Hey, watch it.

HANGED MAN:

Come on girls.

(The two girls link arms with him)

EMPRESS:
(sighs)
Finally, a real man.

HANGED MAN:
Now I'm going to take these cute girls and have sex with both of them.
(The girls smile and nod assent. They leave.)

J:
Damn it. I've had enough. I'm going to get that Butch.

H:
Really? He said he was going to have sex with them? You were thirteen...

J:
It's how I remember it.

H:
So, you built up your muscles...

J:
I went home and I found my book. I took some sand, even some that he kicked in my face, and I made a Pentagram on the floor.

(He mimes as he's doing it)
I read the ritual. I tried to call forth Satan to give me revenge against Butch.
(A rumbling noise starts small and turns into a scream)

No, stop, go back.
(Shreiking continues)

Go away. Don't hurt me.
(Shreiking)

I banish you. I banish you.

(The noise stops. J. looks up, terror in his eyes. He begins to weep.)

H:
Not a man. Not that day.

J:
I found the power out there.

H:
"Your isolation as a child developed the necessary background of literature and scholarship; and the unfortunate experiences with other children developed the requisite contempt for the crowd and for the group mores." You wrote that

J:
(Coming out of the fog.)
I did...

H:
What about Butch?

J:
He got his.

(HANGED MAN re-enters with the two girls. Their clothing is in disarray.)

HANGED MAN:
Hey, Parsons. I thought I told you to beat it. Come over here.
(J. does.)
Hold still. This is gonna hurt.

(He starts to swing)

H:
Hey. Hey Butch. Leave him alone.

HANGED MAN:
Who's going to make me?

H:
That would be me, ya bully.

HANGED MAN:
Yeah, you and what army?

H:
An army of three. Me, myself and I.
(H. lays into Butch. In contrast to the earlier tone of the scene, the fight should seem brutal. H. knocks the bully to the ground and lays into him. HANGED MAN runs offstage in fear. The GIRLS run off.)

J:
(out of the scene)
That's who you are. You're my best friend. You're Ed Forman.

H:
Among other things...
(In character as Ed)
That guy's an asshole. J:
Thanks.

H:
Whatcha reading?

J:
It's ...uh...Amazing Stories.
(No response)
Heard of it?
(No response)
"Extravagant fiction today"

H:
"Cold Fact Tomorrow"

J:
That's it

H:
Do you like rockets?

J:
I'm going to go to the moon.

(The WITCH enters, stands next to the EMPORER's platform and looks up at him)

WITCH:
Dad? Father? Jack wants to fire rockets into space.

EMPEROR:
(from above)
Rockets are a fine thing for a boy to play with. Here's twenty dollars. Give it to him to buy supplies.

WITCH:
They keep exploding .

EMPEROR:
Rockets explode.

WITCH:
He's destroying the roses in the garden.

EMPEROR:
Send him out to the arroyo.

(J and H are seen playing with a rocket)

J:
That was it. Did you see how far that went?

H:
Halfway to the moon.

J:
I knew it would work. Plain powder just explodes.

H:
Mix it with glue though.

J:
Longer, more even burn.

H:
What happens when it gets into space?

J:
What do you mean?

H:
No oxygen in space. Nothing to burn.

J:
Yeah.

H:
Can rockets even work in space?

J:
There's gotta be a way.

(J sits. H follows suit)

H:
I'm glad your grampa gives us the money to do this.

J:
He loves it.

H:
Sorry I can't contribute.

J:
You contribute plenty. You know how to build the rockets.

H:
To even get into space we need to make a rocket engine.

J:
And we have to figure out how to get oxygen into space. I've been writing this guy in Germany. Von Braun. He's got some ideas, but I don't know how much he can tell us. He's working for their government.

H:
He say anything?

J:
Just what we know. Have to mix an oxidizing agent into the fuel mixture. Have to figure out how to make it burn and not explode. Have to figure out how to make it go where you want and just have it flit about the sky.

H:
We'll make it.
(Both men lean back on their elbow)

J:
"To slip the surly bonds of earth and touch the face of God."
(pause)
Whatever God is...

H:
Maybe it's us.

J:
It is us. We are God.
(H leans over and kisses J. J kisses back. J suddenly breaks away and stands up)
This did NOT happen.

H:
It could have.

J:
It didn't. I was sent away.

WITCH:
(appearing)
Your grades are suffering. Your teachers say you don't try.

EMPEROR:
Military school in San Diego. Straighten you right up. Off you go.

(J. leaves the stage. He immediately returns)

H:
How was military school?

J:
They threw me out. I blew up all the toilets.

H:
Back to the desert.

(J and H leave. We see the EMPEROR on his platform, now in the persona of Herbert von Karmen, physics chair at Cal-Tech. He wears a jaunty hat and has a German accent. He calls to THE HANGED MAN, playing Frank Malina. Malina wears glasses and a trench coat. Von Karmen gazes through binoculars)

EMPEROR:
Frank, Frank, come here.

(HANGED MAN stands next to EMPEROR next to the platform)

HANGED MAN:
Yes, Dr. Von Karmen?

EMPEROR:
Take a look
(hands down the binoculars)
Who are those boys?

HANGED MAN:
I believe they are locals, doctor.

EMPEROR:
They're firing off rockets.

HANGED MAN:

Are you sure they're not just setting off cherry bombs?

EMPEROR:

No, no, most of their experiments just explode, but every once in a while they'll get a controlled burn. They had one recently that went for 120 seconds.

HANGED MAN:

Really.

EMPEROR:

They could help us. Go talk to them. Bring them here to Cal-Tech.

HANGED MAN:

Yes sir.

(J and H enter, with rocket. HANGED MAN goes to them)
Hello, boys. What're you doing out here?

H:

Are we on your property, mister? We'll go.

HANGED MAN:

No, no. The property belongs to Cal-tech.

J:

Aw, we were just having some fun with rockets.

HANGED MAN:

Yes, rockets are fun, aren't they? Say boys, would you like to do us a favor up at the Institute. We'll give you a shiny dime.

H:

A dime? Oh, boy!

J:

Wait. Stop.

(The other two look at him)
OK, this is bullshit. We were in our late teens, for one thing. Shiny dime.

H:

OK

J:

Cal-tech didn't even give us that. Malina was a doctoral candidate. He was doing his research on Jet Propulsion, but couldn't get any support.

HANGED MAN:
Von Karmen believed.

J:
Von Karmen and no one else. Show how it really went.

HANGED MAN:
OK
(Moves back into place. He begins to applaud.)
That's remarkable, gentlemen.

H:
Hello?

HANGED MAN:
Hi. I'm Frank Malina. I'm from Cal-Tech. Do you gentlemen go to the institute?

J:
No.

HANGED MAN:
Why not?

H:
Can't afford to go.

J:
Me neither.

HANGED MAN:
I've been watching the two of you and you have obviously...

H:
Wait a second.

J:
What?

H:
Since when couldn't you afford to go to Cal Tech.

J:
I'll show you.
(Calls Up to Emperor)
Could you go back to being Grampa.

EMPEROR:
Sure.
(As Grampa)
Jack, lad, here's money. Live your dreams, have fun, do what thou wilt...
(grabs his chest)
Arrgh
(He falls over)

WITCH:
(As Mom)
John, darling, between your grandfather's death and the depression, we're have no money.
We have to move to a smaller place...

J:
Thanks everyone.
(WITCH exits. EMPEROR recovers)
Got it?

H:
Thanks.

HANGED MAN:
Are we ready for me again? Are we...? OK
(Starting again)
I've been watching the two of you and you have obviously been working at this for
awhile.

J:
Years actually.

HANGED MAN:
How'd you get the controlled burn? That's been driving me crazy.

J:
Mixed it with glue.

HANGED MAN:
Plain household glue?

J:
By increasing the mass of the powder with a binding agent, you have a better controlled
burn. Take less chances with your oxidizer.

HANGED MAN:
What are you using?

J:
Lots of stuff, but I'm partial to Fuming sulfuric acid.

HANGED MAN:
Isn't there something more stable?

J:
Stable isn't everything. You need power.

HANGED MAN:
Who are you?

J:
John Whiteside Parsons. Call me Jack.

HANGED MAN:
(to H)
Who are you and what do you do.?

H:
I'm Ed Foreman and I build the stuff.

HANGED MAN:
Gentlemen, it is wonderful to meet you. I need your help. I'm trying to research space flight and I need experts.

H:
Caltech doesn't have experts?

HANGED MAN
Caltech is surprisingly devoid of advanced thought of any kind.

J:
Ha.

HANGED MAN:
They think rockets are for fools and schoolchildren.

J:
Fools and schoolchildren are under-rated.

HANGED MAN:
I've also been hearing lots of explosions. I thought you figured out how to control the burn.

J:
We've been trying different things.

HANGED MAN:
Where are your notes?

J:
(Pulls out a beaten notebook)
I haven't kept them for every experiment.

HANGED MAN:
Jesus wept. Come to the GALCIT building tomorrow. We'll experiment using standard scientific methods.

J:
I can feel when things are right.

HANGED MAN:
Instinct is valuable, but we need to be able to verify and reproduce our results in order for them to be practical.
(He hand them cards)
Come to my office tomorrow We will start by building a rocket motor.

(He exits)

H:
Caltech wants us.

J:
God in heaven, Lucifer below. A door opens, finally.

(The two men stare at each other. H moves toward J.)

J:
Helen.

EMPRESS:
(as Helen)
It was about this time that I met, fell in love with and married John Whiteside Parsons. It wasn't love at first sight, although he certainly was an attractive man. Wealthy, too, when I met him. But, mostly, Jack was, for lack of a better term, on a different plain. I was a pretty Pasedena girl, doomed to marry a handsome, dull Pasadena boy. Instead I snagged Jack.
Jack blew things up in the desert. Jack read constantly, Science Fiction, History,
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Adventure, Religion. His favorite book was *The Golden Bough*, by Sir James George Frazer, which is a bit of all those things. It tells of how societies move from magic to religion to science. Jack believed in all of them. Living with Jack took us to places I never would have gone in my normal Pasadena life. We knew writers, movie actors and scientists. We went to meetings of the Communist party, but politics bored Jack.

I chose the road that no one takes and it caused me a lot of joy. It also caused me agony. But it brought me two great loves and that's more than anyone can ask. It took me to many great places. But the strangest place it took me was to church.

(HANGED MAN enters as Wilfred T Smith. Smith is British, middle aged, a little bit fey. He is dressed in ceremonial robes)

HANGED MAN:

Try the cakes. We make them with pig's blood. It really should be menstrual blood...

EMPRESS:

Well, they were lovely

HANGED MAN:

Menstrual blood carries so much power. It's just so difficult to harvest. Plus, several of our ladies are no longer fertile. Ahhh, Jane, Come over here and meet the Parsons.

(The WITCH appears as Jane Wolfe, she is older, a presence)

WITCH:

Charmed, I'm certain. Are you interested in our Agape Temple?

HANGED MAN:

Our Miss Wolfe is a film actress of some renown.

EMPRESS:

Goodness. What would we have seen you in?

WITCH:

Well, I played the mother of Mary Pickford in *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*.

EMPRESS:

Oh, the silent movie.

HANGED MAN:

Miss Wolfe has not graced the screen for a while. In our little circle, of course, she is known as having been the trusted innamorata of our beloved founder, Aliester Crowley.

J:
I know Crowley. He's a magician.

HANGED MAN:
A magician? A magician does card tricks. Crowley is a mage.
(Suddenly, in the manner of a carnival barker)
Step on up and see the Great Beast. The Anti Christ. 666.

EMPEROR:
(As Crowley. He wears a giant mage's hat and a fierce expression)
Every Man and Every Woman is a Star.

HANGED MAN:
A skilled mountaineer, he left his compatriots for dead on a frozen moutaintop. A devil-worhiper, he has been vilified throughout Europe. Thrown out of Italy for practices so vile, they can't be described on a family stage.

EMPEROR:
Love is the Law. Love Under Will.

HANGED MAN:
Step right up and see. Aliester Crowley. The wickedest man in the world.

EMPEROR:
Do What Thou Wilt Shall Be the Whole of the Law.
(All the actors onstage break into wild applause. Then they become suddenly silent and are back at the party.)

HANGED MAN:
Blood has power, but our order is founded on the concept of Sex Magick.

EMPRESS:
Oh, my.

HANGED MAN:
The act of orgasm carries great mystical force. Male sperm, female fluids and menstrual blood are essential elements in our sacraments.

J:
Thank you, Father Smith.
(All cast members exit, except J and the EMPRESS)
Helen, oh, you are a goddess. Helen, this thinking is all through The Golden Bough. Cultures throughout history have used rituals to create magic. Because it is the way they learned to conform reality to their will. Science has become our great God, and magick is
(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

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treated as bunk, but if people could open their minds they'd see, they'd feel, they would know incontrovertibly that magic and science are the same thing. Helen, these are the people that can take me forward. We need to throw off the bonds of our conventional thinking. We need to join these people. We need to learn their rituals. We need to practice these sex rituals constantly, together and with others. I don't want a conventional marriage. As long as we have our love and our will, we can love at our own will. This is what we were meant to do. We can control the universe, you and I.

EMPRESS:

(long pause)

OK.

WITCH:

(as Jayne Wolfe)

To Aleister Crowley, Master Therion, London England. Aleister, I feel I need to direct your attention to one of Wilfred Smith's newest recruits to the Agape Lodge. Unbeknownst to me, John Whiteside Parsons has begun astral travels. I believe Parsons may be "The Child to Behold them all" and a potential leader of our order. 26 years of age, 6'2", vital, potentially bisexual at the very least, now engaged in Caltech chemical laboratories making bigger and better explosives for Uncle Sam. Writes poetry, "sensuous only", I see him as a true successor to you.

EMPEROR:

(standing on platform)

To Wilfred T. Smith, Grand Frater, Agape Lodge. Ordo Templis Orientis, Pasadena California.

Smith, I must ask you to redouble your efforts to gain funding. England is a dead end, financially, I am vilified in the press and barely have the money to keep myself housed and enough medicine to keep me whole. Our true hope is to find an RMW, a rich man from the west, to fully fund the OTO and allow my teaching to continue.

You need to start an entirely new habit of life. Ingratiate yourself with sane people, people of importance. Put over the law of Thelema as a spiritual, social and political movement. Get men interested in its economic advantages, first of all. The money's right under your nose and you

need only get in with the right people to have it handed to you on a tray.

If you are not up to the task, recruit a charismatic spokesman to bring men to our cause. Without funding, we are lost.

HANGED MAN:

(as Smith)

Aleister Crowley, FRA Perdurabo, London, England

Exalted Mage,

I have taken your advice and I think I have at last a really excellent man, John Parsons. He has an excellent mind and a much better intellect than myself. He is going to be very valuable.

Yours,

Smith.

(All exit the stage. The sounds of an air-raid siren, gunfire and explosions are heard. The EMPRESS comes down stage center and sings)

EMPRESS:

"When the fuhrer says, Ve ist der master race,
Sig heil (raspberry) heil (raspberry) right in der fuhrer's face
Not to love der fuhrer is a great disgrace
Sig heil (raspberry) heil (raspberry) right in der fuhrer's face."

EMPEROR:

(as Von Karmen)

When Her Goebbels says we own the world and space

(EMPRESS joins in on Sieg Heil lines)

Seig Heil (raspberry) Heil (raspberry) right in Herr Goebbel's face

When Herr Goring says we'll never bomb this place

Seig Heil (raspberry) Heil (raspberry) right in Herr Goring's face.

HANGED MAN:

(As Malina, entering)

Are ve not der superman?

EMPRESS and EMPEROR:

Aryan pure supermen?

HANGED MAN:

Are ve not der supermen?

EMPEROR:

(femme)

Super Duper Supermen.

EMPRESS, EMPEROR and HANGED MAN:

"When the fuhrer says, Ve ist der master race,
Sig heil (raspberry) heil (raspberry) right in der fuhrer's face
Not to love der fuhrer is a great disgrace
Sig heil (raspberry) heil (raspberry) right in der fuhrer's face."

(EMPRESS leaves. EMPEROR speaks as Von Karmen to HANGED MAN as Malina)

EMPEROR:
Oh, Frank.

HANGED MAN:
Yes, Doctor Von Karmen?

EMPEROR:
I need to talk to you about the boys. Parsons and Foreman.

HANGED MAN:
Yes?

EMPEROR:
They need to move back to the arroyo.

HANGED MAN:
What have they done?

EMPEROR:
There was an incident when you were gone. Explosions, damage, clouds of toxic gasses filling the hallways. You understand.. A few faculty members have complained.

HANGED MAN:
I'll reprimand them sir.

EMPEROR:
No, no, they're good boys. A little crazy perhaps. But it might be best to move them back to the desert. It's very important that nothing happen to interrupt our research.

HANGED MAN:
Sir?

EMPEROR:
The war department needs desperately to develop a way for airplanes to take off in confined spaces. A jet engine assisted take-off.

HANGED MAN:
We have the engine. We're waiting on Parsons to figure out the fuel.

(HANGED MAN walks to J and H)

J:
We have a solution.

H:
Kind of...

J:
It works. We take black powder, mix it with corn starch and ammonium nitrate, and then mix everything together with plain white paste.

H:
We call it the goop.

J:
We take and press it into the engine. We get a solid fuel that gives a controlled burn.

HANGED MAN:
So, what's the problem?

J:
Time Factor. It takes several hours to load each engine.

HANGED MAN:
We'll have to live with it.

(He moves to the EMPEROR)

EMPEROR:
How did the test go?

HANGED MAN:
Badly.

EMPEROR:
What happened?

HANGED MAN:
All the engines exploded.

EMPEROR:
Parson's fuel?

HANGED MAN:
We let it sit overnight in the engines. It developed cracks due to temperature changes.

EMPEROR:
It became unstable. Boom.

HANGED MAN:
Boom.

EMPEROR:
Keep working. Uncle Sam wants this soon.

(H and J enter. J carries a dagger.)

J:
Thank you for your help, Ed. I need to practice.

H:
Sure.

J:
Everything has to be exactly right.

H
Does it need blood? I didn't bring any blood.

J:
It needs ejaculate.
(Pause)
Don't worry. This is just a practice session.

H:
Whew.

J
Okay, I face east. Which way is east?
(H points)
I draw the pentagram. Start upper right with water.
(Moves dagger left)
Left to air
(lower right)
Lower right to fire.
(top)
Top, spirit
(lower left)
Lower left, earth.
(upper right)
Back to water. Then I face west.

H:
(starting)
Wait, did you hear that?

J:
What?

H:
Distant. It's like a shrieking.

J:
I didn't do a banishment spell. I need to stop. My will is unfocused.

H:
Shreiking. You can't hear that?

(H wanders away to find the sound.)

J:
Helen's bringing her little sister Betty to live with us. She's a little wild and her parents don't know what to do with her. She should fit right in here.

(EMPRESS, as Helen enters)

EMPRESS:
Yes, she should. Thank you for understanding.

J:
Thank you for everything. Not many wives let their husbands practice Sex magik. My mother threw my father out for one dalliance with a prostitute.

EMPRESS:
I perform the rituals, too. I wonder what my parents would think.

J:
I need to learn more quickly. Smith won't move me along. I'll write to Crowley.

(EMPRESS exits. EMPEROR stands, as Crowley)

EMPEROR:
Smith -
What is going on with our young Jack? I fear I can not stress enough his importance to our future operations. Since he has come to the lodge, or membership has increased threefold and he has connections with scientists and men of power. Give the boy what he wants.

(HANGED MAN as Smith)

HANGED MAN:

Jack, I have decided to personally oversee your passage through the degrees of the OTO. Your training will be my highest priority. I was also planning on having Helen take over the role of priestess in our ceremonies. Understand that we hold both of you in the highest regard.

That said, is it possible you could speak to Helen's sister, Betty. She's caused some problems among our membership with her open mockery of our practices. I'd ask Helen, but the girls already have enough problems with each other.

(Enter EMPRESS as Betty Northrup. Betty is the polar opposite of Helen. Confident, brash, flirtacious)

EMPRESS:

What did you want, Jack?

J:

Betty, you need to lay off the initiates.

EMPRESS:

Oh, it's not that bad...

J:

We take our religion seriously.

EMPRESS:

Look, you all go up to that weird room with the stars and the goats and chant and do God knows what and...

J:

What?

EMPRESS:

Well, you have to admit, it's pretty funny.

J:

It is our attempt to exert our will on our...

EMPRESS:

It's a bunch of twerps in robes making an excuse to do the nasty with each other.

J:

Well, for some of them, you're probably right.

EMPRESS:
Why don't you just do the nasty? Do you need all the robes and goat heads and stuff?

J:
It occurs to me that you are only 17. Is it appropriate for you to be talking this way?

EMPRESS:
You're asking me about appropriate? You and my sister are doing it with anyone you want. You know Helen's doing it with that Smith guy.

J:
We believe that jealousy and marital fidelity are remnants of a bygone era. The old morality...

EMPRESS:
So who are you to tell me what to do? I take care of that house so you all can play your little games

J:
You took over that house.

EMPRESS:
I organize the meals. I say what I please. I do what I please. I don't think anyone down there has any reason to complain.

J:
Please, try not to tease the initiates. We are just trying to reach for more.

EMPRESS:
I'm not a tease.

(She grabs J and kisses him.)

J:
No.

EMPRESS:
Why not?

J:
I think that's obvious.

EMPRESS:
You've both been with other people.

J:
It's ritual.

EMPRESS:
That's your problem right there. Why can't it be fun?

(They kiss and EMPRESS exits. H enters)

J:
Ed, you coming over?

H:
No

J:
Ed? What?

H:
I can't go to that place anymore.

J:
Why?

H:
They're still shrieking.

(H exits. WITCH enters as Jane Wolfe)

WITCH:
Aleister Crowley, London England
Fra Perdurabo,
The Agape Lodge is becoming a hotbed of romantic intrigue. Ever since Jack took up
with his sister in law, Smith has taken the opportunity to move in on Mrs. Parsons. There
is a void in leadership at the very top of the lodge and I ask you intervene before it all
falls apart.

EMPEROR:

(as Crowley)

Wilfred Smith, Pasadena, California

Smith-

What the hell is going on out there? You are supposed to be building an organization with far reaching power, not dipping your wick in any stray housewife you find.

As of this moment you are relieved of your duty as head of the Agape Lodge. Please remove yourself from the premises and cut off all contact with any members. Jack Parsons will take your place as head of the lodge and he will need an environment unfettered by your presences.

(Enter EMPRESS and HANGED MAN as Helen and Smith)

J:

I'm sorry. I'm glad you two are together. This was never my intention.

HANGED MAN:

No offense taken. It's what Crowley wants. And if Crowley wants it...

J:

He gets it. Helen, are you all right?

EMPRESS:

I'm happy. We can't leave, though. We have no place to go.

J:

Don't worry. I'll patch things up with Crowley..

EMPEROR:

(as Von Karmen)

Jack, have you solved our fuel problem.

H:

Jack, we need to find this.

WITCH:

Jack

HANGED MAN

Jack

EMPRESS:

Jack.

J:

Stop. I need to think. The glue fuel works. It just takes forever to load, and can't be stored which makes it nearly useless for military applications. I need something that can be mixed easily and that will not crack as it cools.

What I need is something like Greek fire. We never learned what it was though. The emperors kept its makeup a secret for centuries. It's been lost to time. So I'm back to glue. And now I'm the head of the Agape Lodge. And every day is an emergency. My commute is taking forever because they are re-tarring the road. The smell of tar is overwhelming.

ALL:

Tar.

J:

Tar used for roads and roofs because it can expand and contract with the weather. Tar is a type of oil.

ALL:

Oil

J:

It's basically a fuel. It can work as a igniting agent. Greek fire was probably pitch. Heated up it's a liquid, but it cools quickly into a solid, which can be ignited. Mixed with an accelerant and oxidizer, it will be strong enough to power jet propulsion.

ALL:

Propulsion.

J:

Everyone, welcome to our test of the Jet Assisted Take Off engine.

(Applause)

We should have a nice controlled burn with no explosions.

(Applause)

However, to aid in our effort, I would like to offer an ode to the gods of the earth.

Thrill with lissome lust of the light,

O man ! My man !

Come careering out of the night

Of Pan ! Io Pan .

Io Pan ! Io Pan ! Come over the sea

From Sicily and from Arcady !

Roaming as Bacchus, with fauns and pards

And nymphs and styrs for thy guards,

On a milk-white ass, come over the sea

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

To me, to me,
Come with Apollo in bridal dress
Shepherdess and pythoness
Devil or god, to me, to me,
My man ! my man !
Come with trumpets sounding shrill
Over the hill !
Come, O come !
I am numb
With the lonely lust of devildom.
Thrust the sword through the galling fetter,
All devourer, all begetter;
Give me the sign of the Open Eye
And the token erect of thorny thigh
And the word of madness and mystery,
O pan ! Io Pan !
Io Pan ! Io Pan ! Pan Pan ! Pan,
I am a man:
Do as thou wilt, as a great god can,
I am thy mate, I am thy man,
Goat of thy flock, I am gold , I am god,
Flesh to thy bone, flower to thy rod.
With hoofs of steel I race on the rocks
Through solstice stubborn to equinox.
And I rave; and I rape and I rip and I rend
Everlasting, world without end.
Mannikin, maiden, maenad, man,
In the might of Pan.
Io Pan ! Io Pan Pan ! Pan ! Io Pan !

(We hear the sound of a long controlled burn.)

(Blackout.)

APPENDIX B

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILES

JOHN WHITESIDE PARSONS (1914-1952)

John Whiteside Parsons was born Marvel Whiteside Parsons on October 7, 1914, at Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles, California. His parents were Marvel H. Parsons and Ruth Virginia Whiteside Parsons. After Marvel Senior had an affair, Ruth divorced him and renamed her son John. The boy was raised in Pasadena, California, by his mother and her parents, Walter H. and Carrie Whiteside in a section of town called “Millionaire’s Mile,” an area appropriate to Walter’s wealth and status (Carter 1-3).

Young Jack Parsons grew up wealthy, but isolated from others his own age. The works of Jules Verne and the writers of *Strange Adventures* magazine fueled his imagination and he became fascinated by the idea of space travel. With the support of his indulgent grandfather he began to make his own rockets using the powder found in store-bought fireworks (Pendle 35-42)

An older schoolmate who saved him from bullies, Ed Forman, turned out to have the same interest in rocketry and the two became lifelong friends. With Parsons creating the fuel and Forman doing the engineering, the two young men began creating rockets in the desert surrounding Pasadena (Pendle 35 -42). Parsons and Forman at the same time initiated contact with American rocket theorist Robert Goddard, who was little help, and German rocket scientist Wernher Von Braun, who spoke to them repeatedly and aided their efforts (Pendle 51 - 55).

At the age of 13, Parsons also claims to have performed a ritual to invoke and call up Satan, an event he claimed left him cowering in fear (Carter 4).

In 1935, Parsons married Helen Northcutt. That same year, Parsons and Forman approached Frank J. Malina, professor of aeronautics at the Guggenheim Aeronautical Laboratory, California Institute of Technology (GALCIT, later to become CALTECH). Malina, working under Theodore von Karmen, hired the two men on the spot (Carter 7-11).

A chance discovery of Aleister Crowley's book Konx Om Pax led Parsons to start a correspondence with the work's author. This, in turn, led Parsons to the Pasadena chapter of the Ordo Templi Orientis, the temple of Crowley's mystical organization which he and his wife joined and soon became active participants (Carter 33).

The OTO is an occult organization founded by Crowley, whose members use sexual rituals to create magical events. Parsons and his wife began hosting these rituals at their house in Pasadena (Carter 37-45). Jack continued to correspond with Crowley and eventually the English mage asked him to take the leadership of the Pasadena chapter of the OTO from the current high priest, Wilfred Smith. Crowley was angry at Smith for numerous reasons, not the least being that Smith fathered a child with Jack's wife Helen (Rydeen 25).

In June of 1939, Parsons's team at GALCIT was approached by the United States Army to develop Jet Assist Take-off (JATO) boosters for aircraft carriers. These would allow the airplanes on these vessels to take off without the need for a long takeoff strip. While the rest of the team worked on the engine, Parsons was given the task to create the powerful and stable fuel needed to work these engines. After some failed experiments

with black powder, he developed a working fuel based on road tar, the first liquid Jet propellant ever developed (Pendle 157-168).

Parsons founded Aerojet Industries in 1942, to manufacture JATO engines for the military. Parsons was a founding member of Jet Propulsion Laboratories in November of 1943. Both organizations still exist and are industry leaders in aerospace technology (Carter 66 -75).

In 1945 and 1946, John Whiteside Parsons and his friend, young science fiction author L. Ron Hubbard went into the California desert to perform the mystic Babalon Working ritual designed to call forth the biblical Whore of Babalon and create the mystical Moonchild (Moench 83). Returning from the desert, Parsons met the red-haired ex-naval cartographer Marjorie Cameron, whom he took to be the Whore of Babalon.

The late forties turned out to be a eventful time. Parsons wife, Helen, left him for Wilfred Smith. Aleister Crowley passed on. L. Ron Hubbard swindled a substantial amount of money from Parsons and left with his friend's girlfriend, Betty Northcutt (Helen's sister.). Parsons was quietly bought out of his stake in both Jet Propulsion Laboratories and Aerojet Industries.

In June of 1952, Parsons was working in his basement laboratory when an explosion ripped through the building, tearing off the left side of his body. He died on June 17, 1952 (Posey 67).

EDWARD S. FORMAN (1912-1973)

Edward S. Forman was an early rocket engineer and a lifelong friend of John Whiteside Parsons.

Ed Foreman met Jack Parsons when both men attended Washington Junior High School in Pasadena, California. Ed Forman, two years older than Parsons, had been assigned monitor duty and rescued Parsons from an attack by a group of bullies. The two men quickly discovered an affinity for science fiction and a fascination with rocket travel. With Forman's gift for engineering and Parsons's gift for chemistry plus his nearly unlimited financial resources, the two began to experiment with model rockets. Forman became an important male role model for JParsons in the younger man's formative years (Pendle 45-46).

Parsons and Forman remained a team through their adult years. They approached Fredrick Malina at the Guggenheim Aeronautics Lab, California Institute of Technology (GALCIT) together, and were hired together by the University. Both men were essential for the development of JATO engines. Together they were founding members of both Jet Propulsion Laboratories and Aerojet Industries (Lord 51-55).

In 1944, Forman was removed from the corporations he helped found. He cut ties with Parsons and spent the rest of his career working for Lockheed, helping develop their ballistic missile programs. He died in 1973 (Astronautix.com).

Ed Forman has been described as "a mechanic who could cobble almost any device out of junkyard finds" (Lord 55). He was a key figure in the development of the aerospace industry.

L. RON HUBBARD (1911 – 1986)

The life of Lafayette Ronald Hubbard has been documented in many places. A biographical web page, run by the church of Scientology, gives many of the known details. Born in Tilden, Nebraska, in 1911, he began writing while he was a student at George Washington University. While devoting much of his time to sea travel, he found time to publish stories and novels in the relatively new, at the time .genre of science fiction. He started developing his own personal spiritual system called Dianetics, writing out his system of belief and publishing it as Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health in 1950. Thereafter, in 1952, the Church of Scientology was founded on those beliefs. He spend the rest of his life leading and promoting his church, building it into an influential, world-wide organization. L. Ron Hubbard passed away on January 24th, 1986 (The Church of Scientology).

Hubbard's relationship with Parsons began in 1946, when Hubbard rented a room at Parsons's house after mustering out of the Navy (Carter 103). Parsons was continuing his work in occult ritual and immediately sensed a compatriot, writing to Aleister Crowley, "Although he has no formal training in Magick he has an extraordinary amount of experience and understanding in the field...He is the most Thelemic person I have ever met and is in complete accord with our own rituals" (Pendle 255). Crowley was less enthusiastic about Hubbard, warning Parsons that Hubbard was a traitor (Sutin 413).

By this time, Parsons's wife Helen was living with Wilfred Smith and Parsons was keeping house with Helen's sister, Betty, albeit in an open relationship keeping with

Thelemic standards. Hubbard caused much chaos in this relationship when he began a torrid affair with Betty (Carter 104-105).

In December of 1945, Jack Parsons began the Babalon Working, an occult ritual designed to conjure a magical being, and elemental mate for himself, to replace Betty and to give birth to the moonchild, a demon of great power. Hubbard assisted Parsons in every aspect of this ritual, acting as a scribe and a seer, according to Parsons's notes (Pendle 260-262).

By March of 1946, the ritual was completed and Hubbard proposed a business partnership to Parsons. The two men and Betty would consolidate their resources in a company called Allied Enterprises. Hubbard and Parsons each put their life savings into the venture, Parsons contributing \$20,970.80 and Hubbard putting up the much smaller amount of \$1,183.71 (Pendle 267).

With Parsons's money, Hubbard and Betty traveled to southern Florida with the thought of purchasing three yachts, which they would sail to California and sell at a profit. While they were away, Parsons began to get cold feet, his worries justified when he got to Florida just in time to see his friend and his mistress sailing off with his money. A boat wreck, possibly brought about by a ritual performed by Parsons, caused the couple to come to shore where they were seized by the authorities and brought before a judge. Parsons extracted a promissory note from Hubbard for part of his money and left them. Hubbard married Betty later that year, but Parsons and Hubbard were never to speak again (Pendle 269-270).

MARJORIE CAMERON PARSONS 1922-1995

Marjorie Cameron was born in Iowa, but seemed destined for more exotic locales. A rebellious free-thinker who chafed against midwestern living, Cameron enlisted in the WAVES during the second World War, which took her to Washington D.C. where she was a cartographer and an aide to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Duncan).

She appeared at Parsons's mansion on January 18, 1946, the day he came home from the desert after performing the Babalon Working ritual, leading him to believe that she was the whore of Babalon, the mystical vessel he had conjured to produce the moonchild. "I have my elemental." Parsons wrote to Aleister Crowley, "fiery and subtle, determined and obstinate, sincere and perverse, with extraordinary personality and intelligence" (Pendle 246). For her part, Cameron was fascinated by Parsons, and the two married on October 19, 1946 (Pendle 247). She was with him until his death. They had no children.

After the death of Parsons, Cameron became known as an artist and occult figure in her own right. She appeared in films by Kenneth Anger and Curtis Harrington. She published Black Pilgrimage, a book of poems and line drawings. And ran a gallery where she exhibited and sold her artwork. She died in southern California in 1995 (Duncan).

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VITA

Peter Jon Bakely was born on February 11th, 1958, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The son of a Methodist pastor, he spent his early years in Camden, New Jersey, before his father, The Reverend Donald C. Bakely, was transferred to Kansas City, Kansas, to head the Crosslines, a help agency for the poor.. Peter matriculated in the Kansas City, Kansas Public School system, graduating in the top ten percent of his class in 1976.

He then attended Park College (now Park University) from 1976-1979, studying acting and directing before enrolling in UMKC in 1981, again studying acting and directing. He left the school in 1983 without his degree. From 1981 - 1991, Peter was a ubiquitous figure on the Kansas City acting scene, working for numerous theater companies such as Missouri Repertory Theater, The Coterie Theater, Actor's Ensemble and New Directions. From 1987- 1989, he was one of the members of The Peabody Award-nominated program The Greenwich Meantime Show, a half-hour scripted comedy program airing on KKFI-FM and carried nationally on the Pacifica radio network. As a member of this troupe, he wrote, directed and produced weekly programs.

He met Lisa Lynn Meng while he was performing in the first year of Missouri Rep's production of A Christmas Carol and Lisa was working as an usher. They have two sons, Andrew, born in 1986 and Matthew, born in 1995.

Peter left the Kansas City theater scene in 1991, returning to Park College and receiving a Bachelor's Degree in Communications in 1992, graduating cum laude.

From 1992 through 2008, Peter worked for Sony Electronics and occasionally acted at Park College under the direction of marsha m. morgan. From 2003 through 2008,

he took on a second job as assistant grounds manager for The Heart of America Shakespeare Festival.

In 2008, he was offered early retirement from Sony and took the opportunity to enroll in the M. A. program in Theater at UMKC, specializing in playwriting. Since then, he's had productions mounted of his play Vickie's Desk for the Barn Player's 6 X 10 Festival in November 2010 and his play Jet Propulsion at the 2011 Kansas City Fringe Festival. Vicky's His play Skillet Tag was chosen for an award for Rockhurst University's Plays in Progress program, also in Spring 2011. His play Button was presented in the inTENSity series of short plays given at the Fishtank Theater in April of 2012 and Skillet Tag was presented in the 2012 Kansas City Fringe Festival, becoming one of the top ten most seen plays in the festival that year..

In addition to writing, Peter has continued to act, appearing in Arcadia, A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Farnsworth Invention at UMKC, Much Ado About Nothing at the Alcott Arts Center, Premortem at the Fishtank, Lovers: Winners at Martin Tanner productions and A Funny Thing Happened On the Way to the Forum at MET.. He was a performer in the Coterie's Young Playwright's Festival and is a regular reader in the ongoing series Eat Their Words performing staged readings of celebrity autobiographies.

Peter formed the theatrical company Cunning Stunts Productions (formerly Kansas City Peep Shows) in 2011 and produced Premortem by local author and UMKC student Joseph Concha in March of 2011, and his own Jet Propulsion in July 2011. In the Winter of 2012, Peter joined forces with Kansas City producer Kelsey Kallenberger

to form Play On...Productions. They produced Pete's farce, Skillet Tag in the 2012
Kansas City Fringe Festival and again at The Living Room Theater in December 2012.