

No Title As Yet

A play in ν parts.

INT. SERENITY

NARRATOR

Two spaceships, travelling not aimlessly
Through th'outer rim, where lies our
scene
A firefly class transport named Serenity
And one blue box, of dubious esteem

Miranda's revelation now behind
They flee the one who now flies at their
tail
Th'attention of the press they hope to
find
'Neath which to shelter, else forever
fail

The curious events, which shall these
crews
Befall, and form the most part of our
play
Shall make you think we're loose just a
few screws
But nevermind, should all work on the
day

So now, the scene, enough of all this
rhyme
We're rather tired, and running out of
time

EXT. SIRIUS PRIME

NARRATOR

We join our band of troubadours towards
the end of their dalliance with the
agents of the press...

MALJEAN

So, as you can all see, plain as one
of those tentacles, the Alliance has
been messing with mind control drugs.
Sure as I know anything I know this:
they will try again. Maybe on another
world, maybe on this very ground swept
clean. A year from now, they'll swing
back to the belief... that they can
make people... better.
And I do not hold to that!

CROWD

(Assorted cries of
'no', 'shame', 'a
duck' etc.)

The crowd begins to shuffle and the like; Rose steps on a tentacle.

TENTACULAR VIKING

ahem You have insulted me, and must
pay the price. Or words to that effect!

NARRATOR

Good gentles, we would not expose your
ears to such profanities as are, in this
conversation, expressed, such is our
concern for your nervous sensibilities.
As such, we cut straight to...

Fighting! During the course of action, Javert enters the scene, and Rose
dies. The former is by far the more important event.

JAVERT

I have a song to sing, oh!

CROWD

Sing us your song, oh!

JAVERT

It's a song that is sung when the bell
is wrung
To sound out a hidden wrong, oh!
It's a song of the president, new elect
Who jumped in rage at the great effect
You made with your announcement,
ill-thought out
And bad for your health, without a doubt
The Alliance's rule you'll no more
flout,
When we are done with this little bout,
I'll cut you up and I'll wring you
out...

THE DOCTOR

I don't think the line with Alliance
scanned properly

JAVERT

Maljean! I have you now!

THE DOCTOR

(*frowns*)

Now that didn't even rhyme. The rest of it mostly worked, I'll grant you, but I think you're losing it towards the end.

JAVERT

(*Turns to the Doctor,
meeting his eyes*)

What a lonely child you were, Maljean.
What a poor, lonely child...

THE DOCTOR

(*Looks slightly
worried*)

You're not going to kiss me now, are you? Because, you know, I get enough of that from Jack...

JAVERT

(*Snaps out of his
trance*)

You're not Maljean? Where is he?

THE DOCTOR

(*Thumbs over his
shoulder.*)

Over there. Big ship, looks a bit like a pregnant insect on steroids. Lifting off...

(*Turns around*)

...with my Tardis! My Tardis!

JAVERT

(*Shrugs, rolls his
shoulders*)

Fancy a lift?

THE DOCTOR

(*Raises an eyebrow,
then puts his arm
around Javert's
shoulders*)

Great. Now, I don't suppose you speak French, do you?

FADE OUT

NARRATOR

We now rejoin the crew of that most tranquil ship upon the sands of...

(*Turns offstage*)

...look, does it really have to be called this? I mean, it's enough you have me doing this ridiculous mock-Shakespeare thing, without calling planets after vegetables...

CROWD

Yes! (or no)

NARRATOR

... ahem, Mouse, a completely implausibly named planet, wherein our two most elusive protagonists reside, hidden from the clutches of the alliance...

EXT. MOUSE, OLD TOWN

SIMON

Damnit, Simon, damnit, you fool. You know where you are now, out here on the rim. Out here, the law belongs to whoever takes it in his hands and squeezes hardest. They don't like the Alliance, but the day you convinced yourself you could hide behind them, that was the day you signed your death warrant.

GAIL

Tell me, Doctor boy, why I shouldn't just hand you over to the Alliance, next one of them comes visiting?

SIMON

My sister...

GAIL

Your sister what?

SIMON

(*Looks puzzled*)

I... I don't know. Aren't you meant to punch me before I can properly explain things?

GAIL

(*Slaps Simon*)

Your sister can take care of herself. Doesn't explain why you're here, without permission, drawing every eye in the Alliance towards us. Some here might not appreciate that.

SIMON

She was right, I knew that. I had no right to be here, out in Mouse's Old Town. Problem was, they knew it too...

HOOKER

Gail, there's a ship just docked. A whole division of Alliance troopers, armed to the teeth and ready to play.

GAIL

(to hooker)

Alright. Get the girls ready; I want the roofs covered, the streets cleared, snipers in the windows.

(*Turns to Simon*)

You're lucky. You get a preview of how justice is enforced around here. Not many people can say that... not for long, anyway.

River emerges from a side street, holding a sword in each hand, and proceeds to lay about the Alliance troopers.

SIMON

She was a work of pure beauty, violence given form. She was Kali, Eris, Morgan... she was a weapon, and her weapons were part of her. She cut through them like a laser cutting torch through the hull of a derelict ship. When she'd killed all his lackeys, she stood before him, crouched with weapons extended to either side. Just as she was about to kill him, he turned - a fatal mistake, I thought at the time, but maybe it was the only thing that saved his life.

JAVERT

Maljean!

MALJEAN

Javert!

MALJEAN

Believe of me what you will
The truth of the Alliance must be known
They will try again like this
Truth is all I want right now
You know nothing of the world
Alliance wants control, how?
I will not tolerate this mind control

I am warning you Javert
I am a stronger man by far
There is power in me yet
My race is not yet run
I am warning you Javert
There is nothing I won't dare
If I have to kill you now
I'll do what must be done!

JAVERT

You are wrong, you can't be right
You are wrong, you can't be right
Recant your lies, Jean Maljean
My duty's to the law
You have no rights
Recant your lies, Jean Maljean
Miranda did not occur
Jean Maljean is nothing now
Dare you talk to me of sin
Or the price you have to pay
Every man is born in sin
Every man must choose his way
You know nothing of Javert
I was born inside a jail
I was born with scum like you
I am from the gutter too

Javert shoots at Maljean, misses, hitting Simon.

SIMON

Look after her for me, Mal...

Maljean grabs River, they both exit.

RIVER

(over Mal's shoulder)

Killy, killy, killy; swathes, swathes,
swathes...

THE NIGHT BEFORE, OUSFG PARTY PANTO WRITING

PRESIDENT

Mr. Stratton?

STRATTON

I recognised immediately the identity
of the one who addressed me; who
wouldn't? President of OUSFG, high
up as they went. "At your service,"
I told her immediately. "How may I be
of assistance?"

PRESIDENT

I've been following some of your work.
Some of it's quite impressive.

STRATTON

I nodded graciously at the compliment.
"I hadn't realised it was so well known"

PRESIDENT

It's my job to know these things. Would
you happen to be free for a moment?

STRATTON

I nodded my affirmative, and without
a word she led me down a flight of
stairs to a door whose existence I'd
never noticed. And it was my staircase!
She held it open for me and I stepped
through. Upon the wall was a sequence
of scripts, black lettering upon white
paper. "What are they?" I asked of
her, though I had a suspicion welling in
the pit of my stomach.

PRESIDENT

OUSFG Punt Party Panto scripts. You're familiar with the work of Dan Brown, I trust?

Stratton looks embarrassed, but nods

Then you're aware of the technique by which one looks at prior works and can extrapolate the full content of future ones?

Again, Stratton nods

We've had to update the technique somewhat - we're dealing with far more advance material, of course, but we've done it. And this is what we see.

STRATTON

She raised her hand towards the far end of the room, where the scripts grew smaller and finally vanished. I looked at the top of the page, reading the title. 'OUSFG PUNT PARTY PANTO, 2011'. I turned back to the president. "Where's it gone?" I asked her.

PRESIDENT

It never existed. We've rerun this experiment hundreds of times, even worked out the entire deduction basis from scratch. After 2010, there is no OUSFG panto. There's just not enough material to work with... even with the books in the library, there are only a finite number of spec. fic. concepts that can be filked to put into a panto. We're within 5 years of the final generation.

STRATTON

My mind reeled desperately. "But there'll be more things written, surely? We can buy more books..."

PRESIDENT

Perhaps. But how long can that go on, how long until the library will no longer fit in Tim's car? Until all the useful ideas have been used up?

STRATTON

So what do you suggest?

PRESIDENT

We've been working on ways of distilling the essence out of Pantos, finding common elements that we can permute to generate new ideas. So far, we're not having much success. I'd hoped you could help us out.

STRATTON

Over the next few hours, I worked with the President and some other members, trying to come up with some method by which we could circumvent the perceived end of OUSFG Pantos. We managed to isolate the bad attempts at humour, the faux-intellectualism, but none of it seemed to help. It occurred to me that if we were successful, OUSFG would be able to create new pantos without the limitations imposed by working from material that was actually published. Would the world be enriched by the resulting works, or would the society destroy itself in the pathological ramblings of its members? There was no way to tell.

OUSFG PUNT PARTY WRITING SESSION, A FEW HOURS LATER

STRATTON

I thought I had it. I was playing with source material of the texts, and various means of incorporating them into the panto. I turned to the president, showing her my results. I'd taken last year's panto and plugged it into itself, getting a whole new play by recycling both theme and structure from last year's. "So what do you think we get out of this?"

PRESIDENT

I think you're writing it.