

richardthesecond

A NIGHTMARE

A large screen hangs on the upstage wall.

There could be more than one screen. More and big and loud is generally a rule here. We did a couple of productions with two screens (the original version was done with five tv sets) with different images on each, but in the end we preferred the symmetry of the single screen.

Stage right is a television set.

Centre stage is a white chair, facing upstage. It sits on a revolve. On the chair is slumped a figure, in baseball cap, hoodie and flares, assumedly asleep in front of the tv. In one hand is a toy lightsabre.

Surrounding the space is a white perimeter light box.

Only one production was done with the dj and stage manager in the booth. Having them visible to the audience is interesting. But not necessary.

Pop culture updates however, are necessary. Help yourself.

Prologue

As the audience is entering, the screen shows the “no signal” signal, those horizontal stripes seen when a channel is out of service. On top of that are the words: “This is what’s on TV after it rains and the sun comes out.”

At five minutes before time, Eminem’s “Without Me” starts and the horizontal stripes are manipulated to resemble an equalizer level thing.

After the track is done, the screen starts flipping channels, surfing through early morning television programs. The words “OVERTURE” is superimposed on top. We hear the overture. We are now beginning our programming day.

At time, “OVERTURE” fades out, the flipping channels ends, the music is gone, the houselights dim. The stage is black. We are waiting.

Here we go.

A note: BWAAAAAAA.

Long pause.

Again.

Deep n daunting, like some massive tech-anthem is about to unfold.

First we hear a cough followed by some papers rustling.

And then a voice. Gene. We’ll see him soon so hang for a description.

Gene. Diversity... is.. necessary. *(cough)*

This repeats, still all in black, and eventually we realize it is repeating to the beat. This goes on until our dj is damn well satisfied and then ... Gene's voice again:

Gene. In 1859, Charles Darwin publishes the Origin of the Species, outlining his theory of natural selection.

And another, the beat is joined by sounds that join beats, you know, those ones:

Gene. In 1866 George Mendal publishes his work on plant heredity. This work is largely ignored until the early twentieth century when his findings become the basis for modern genetics.

Un autre, s'il vous plait. Bring it.

Gene. In 1883, Darwin's cousin Francis Galton coins the word "Eugenics," in essence turning natural selection into an applied science. The universe is getting smaller.

One more, one more, I can take it:

Gene. The Nazis apply eugenics to human beings, turning "cleansing" into a dirty word.

Oh talk to me:

Gene. By the mid-60s, biochemists decipher the genetic code. We. understand. DNA. God is officially dead.

Damn.

Gene. The early seventies sees research perfecting the first commercial uses of genetic engineering.

By now the beat has, of course, intensified... it kicks out and

The screen flips on. We see a man lying in bed, sick, dying. His name is Gene. He is a scientist. This is his deathbed. We have been listening to his last will and testament.. which he is trying to videotape. He holds a stack of paper in one hand and a video camera convertor in the other.

In this pause in music, he says:

Gene. Star Wars is released.

Boom. The tune finally kicks in. We now have a slow-throbbing spot on the throne onstage which has begun to revolve around to face the audience. The figure is having a nightmare, getting worse by the instant. The shot cuts to Gene, yelling off, presumably to a nurse:

Gene. THE "ON" BUTTON. WHERE IS IT ?

Jumpcut to Gene, pointing the convertor down the barrel of the camera.

Gene. On on on on...

He coughs.

Jumpcut again to Gene, staring blankly into the camera. He has no idea it is turned on. He squints.

Jumpcut again to Gene, grumbling away to himself, banging the convertor:

Gene. Hi-tech hoo-ha.

Jump to Gene, as before, with the remote pointing at the camera, still trying to find the "on" button.

Gene. On on on on...

Jump to Gene, as before, shouting off to a nurse:

Gene. THE "ON" BUTTON. WHERE IS IT ?

He coughs.

He finds it.

WHAT ? NO. No I got it.

The tunes shift up a notch.

Jump to Gene, same shot as before, staring into the camera. Is it on ? He squints. Coughs.

Jump to Gene, addressing the camera, now nearing the end of his speech, almost teary he is so full of regret:

Gene. It is.. unavoidable: we move forwards. That's what we do.

The film loops.

Gene. That's what we do.

And loops again:

Gene. That's what we do.

And again:

Gene. That's what we / what / what / what we do / We move f/f/f/f/forwards / We move forwards / That's what we do / We move forwards / We move / We move forwards / That's what / move /

Cut to close on his face, maybe tears now:

Gene. My god.

BAM. A disco ball falls from the ceiling into the figure's hand. The lightsabre is his sceptre. The image of royalty. He is.. Richie Excellent. And like Hannibal Lector attached to that trolley, or Steven Hawking in his wheelchair, Richie has been brought to us. And we are lucky for it. He awakens:

Richie. *STOP!*

Richie is looking at us, waking, remembering that we would be here. Considering. Something. And it makes us slightly uneasy.

But wait... a wee bit more on our new best friend Richie Excellent. Richie is what we could call a "mature" clubber. Not a raver or anything neon-pacifier-whistle-like (in fact, he frowns on that crap) but rather one of the sophisticates, one of the inner sanctum. One of those who has done the scene for years and still keeps a toe in the water, two steps ahead of trends. Hell, he sets the trends. And he knows this. Which makes him a culture snob. It's that fine line these types ride between massive indifference and opinionated-to-a-fault. In another era, he's the young intellectual playboy, the Byron, with silk robe, pipe, and topless full-figured women lying about. But since this is 2000-whatever and "wits" no longer exist as a form, he remains... something of a cocky prick. The consummate reefer-roller. Smart and he knows it. The coolest of the cool. He knows it. And we love him: the stoned-psychotic-cerebral stand-up-comic.

An odd pause and then

Richie. Thanks for making the long drive out I know there were other parties n shit. You will be remembered. Welcome. Make yourself at home, it's a little messy, pretty low-fi, just a television and this chair that doesn't look comfy at first but then you find out that it's like completely cuddly Sunday Muppets at home watching alpine skiing kinda chair, it's a blankey-chair, I wanted to turn this whole place into a chill-out pad with tables and those lights that shine a bar sorta thing straight up to the ceiling and when smoke gets in it it looks amazing but I don't smoke anymore so I wouldn't know.

The mirrorball disappears to the ceiling, and he stows his sabre onto the side of the chair. He removes his hood.

Richie. For those who don't know me I'm Richie Excellent cuz I have a good time. The caterer, I know, he didn't show, so I apologize for there beinalackasatay, I know the guy too he's a friend, but it's like c'mon "Nantha" or whatever he's called in his "homeland:" "Malaysia," "Mexico," "Manitoba," "M" something, I'm rambling I know you get used to it I'm against full stops... mostly. If you haven't partied with me, forgive my brain, I suffer from tangential warfare, I get off track. The ladies find it charming.

A camera flash goes off.

On the screen: "Thank you for coming." And it's gone.

Richie. I apologize for the must and the mildew, the mites, for the dampness of the hay, the chill of the night air, the blister on my thumb, the rhymes that are dumb, the fetid water, the bile, the flies, the farts. I meant to wash but... I got thinkin and... you know how it goes. Peace.

He makes the peace sign.

Another camera flash goes off and he is blinded. He gets up, accusing:

Richie. Yo yo, what's with the flashcubes, ya hairy tourist. Tryin to distract me ? Your phone gonna ring as well ? R-e-s-p-e-c-t, turn off your toys n don't fuck with me. You'll get your photo-ops tomorrow, okay ? Save it for tomorrow, Papa. Rotsy.

What ? Are you scared, Richie ? Of what ? Go on. Get on with it.

Richie. Everything's changed so rapidelement recently, so sudden, ya know, and sometimes it gets the better of you, you become all maudlin n stoic n all those great things when one chapter closes forever and another one stretches out to the horizon in front of you, you know what I'm sayin ? You get to a point in life that you know is a major turning point, and you make that turn, you flip that page, and you kinda know in the back of your mind where you're headed but you can't really put it into words, can't finish the sentence but know how it's gonna... Like nostalgia for the future. And sometimes at that point, you get smacked with a huge sense of the common good, ya know ? And ya realize that more than anything.. you wanna make a change. A difference. Fer example, yer at brunch...

He returns to his throne to demonstrate.

Richie. ...with the paper all spread out n really good coffee n some stranger wants the sports section n you don't care cuz you don't give a shit 'bout sports really, 'cept basketball, n so you say to the guy who wants the sports section: "Sure, man. Take it." And you contribute. You make a fuckin difference there I said it, and you make a difference in whatever way you can.

Well I'd gotten to such a point, man. I woke up one morning, looked out at the horizon in front of me and I realized that I'd had it. Completely fucking had it. It was a time to make change and.. I didn't have anything else to do that day.. I was (*almost inhumanly drawn out*) reeeeeaaaaalllllyyyyy...boooooorrrredddd (*and back to pace*) so.. I sewed the Canadian flag onto my forehead, hopped on a plane and booted it down to South America.

The screen shows pictures of a lush jungle landscape.

Richie. And man is that a place, totally recommend it: sand, surfing, awesome people, the *ladies* ?! Damn! And right next to you is like actual rainforests, jungles like fuckin Dagobah man, pure perfection n soon to be devastated, logged n burned at the stake sendin animals runnin for not only their lives but their souls, losin' their kids n leavin' their holes, and I see all this n I'm like BANZAI: smacked with a path: I *know* it's a time to make change!

The jungle fades.

Richie. I'll look back on all this as a time to make change. If the National Film Board ever gets their hands on this story they'll call it "A Time to Make Change." I mean there I was, Richie Excellent, not only *outside* but like jungles n shit, get ?! I mean don't get me wrong, I don't "jog" or that shit.. I ain't one of those "I'm gonna check out B.C. for a bit" kinda guys... I won't even buy drugs from yuppies. But I feel I have a responsibility. We all do. And sometimes trailmix is

just trailmix.

He stands, with his sabre.

Richie. And in my little spin around the rainforest, I heard rumour of this tribe causing some substantial damage to the rainforests, yeah, seriously, chopping and slashing for “homes.” And there’s me, pig-in-shit-fulla-hope thinking we’ve got to share this planet, work together! It doesn’t do anybody any good to just sit around and wait for someone else to change the world, you gotta get out there, man, ya gotta *lead*: cuz someone else could really fuck it up, right? Damn right. I dug in. After some careful planning, I awoke one morning at the break of dawn, had myself a hearty breakfast, hired a handful of mercenaries, and I shot each and every member of that tribe while they prayed in a church we built them.

He smiles at us. Smug bastard. If this were a movie from the forties, another character who’d been watching him would say at this point... “Heeey, what’s his game?” He takes his sabre, dear friend and childhood icon, sweeps it up and plants it before him like a cane.

Richie. (*evangelical*;) My naaaaaame’s Richie Excellent cuz I have a good time; I’m the Slim Shady, baby: and this is my rhyme.

Music.

On screen: “TO ALL OF YOU” which fades to black.

And then “AND TO SUSIE ” and then below: “WHO GAVE ME THE PILL ”

Opening credits on screen, Blair-Witchy in their production quality, followed by a quote:

*“How dares thy harsh rude tongue sound this displeasing news?
What Eve, what serpent hath suggested thee
To make a second fall of cursed man?”*

And then fade in beneath: “- Shakespeare” in that real old Shakespeare’s-signature font. Meanwhile, during the credits... Richie knights the audience. He tests out his sabre, thrusting and parrying, a mix of fencing and Jedi swordplay. He notices a fly buzzing around his head and goes after it, swiping here and there with the lightsabre until eventually abandoning the sabre and swatting at the fly with his hands. Once he notices the fly has landed on the tv, and he goes for it with the sabre, imbedding it in the tv and being forced to abandon it there. He finally catches the fly in his fist and executes a little dance, shaking his fists about vigorously, before opening his fist and watching as the fly buzzes around dizzily and eventually falls to the ground. Richie stamps the fucker.

Screen out. Music out.

He notices the audience is still there - he’d been so caught up in lightsabre technique and dancing and fly chasing he’d forgotten who he was, where he was, what he was; in short he had forgotten about the people. Who are now are staring at him. So he admits:

Part I

Richie. Okay, I was never in South America. HEHEHEHEHEheheheh.

He thinks this is funnier than they.

Richie. I wish. It'd be seriously... different. It was... a cover. I left a message at my folks saying I was in South America, when really I was coming here, figuring they'd understand my need to screw off for a while. And this ain't my place, it's where I'm at, it's where I've been: if I was actually living here I'd groove it up a bit: a little shag is what I'm sayin, a little bamboo is what I'm sayin, a little somethin Korean-Japanesy. But. I am visiting. And you are visiting me, Richie Excellent. The First. Um. I'm supposed to read this.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out an envelope, opens it, clears his throat and reads:

Richie. "Welcome Public. You have been selected randomly as a representative sampling of the population. The time has come to spill the beans and we anxiously await the reactions and / or opinions expressed by you here today. They will offer those in charge of... (*Richie can't read it because it's been xxxed out*) something xxxed out, and below-mentioned sponsors, first and foremost 'Sportsteam / Burger chain,' an understanding of how the world will react when this is announced officially tomorrow at the gala. Return to what you were saying Richie." Oh. So.

He folds up the paper and returns it to his pocket.

Richie. Apparently we don't want the earth stunned into a state of riot or the markets to crash er George W. to get wiggly n blame some middle eastern nation or something... No no we don't... no.. So, take the news and pass it on.. but gently..

He is nervous.

Richie. I'm not entirely sure how you're gonna take this I mean I rehearsed this over and over again in my mind but now that you're here.. n bein so nice... I don't know how to do this. It seems my folks eventually got concerned, n my mom probaly panicked n then probaly wasn't long before word got out I was *dead*..

On S2 is a sequence of quotes:

"Uneducated Youth Goes Missing" - Toronto Star

"Poor Economy Causes Youth's Disappearance" - National Post

"New-fangled Drug "Ecstasy" Claims Yet Another" - Globe & Mail

"Duh. Kid Go Bye Bye in Scawee Jungle" - Toronto Sun

Richie. ... so I'm sorry if I've caused you stress n undue duress I'm afraid the press went to town with my "disappearance." I almost backed out. I almost didn't sign the paper, I almost wasn't here today. What would I tell people ? What would I say ? "No," Miss Reporter, "I'm actually fine" ?! Just march right outta here and make up some -

WHAM: another camera flash. Richie is interrupted by the appearance of Candi Phurburger (pronounced "fur-BUR-ger") on screen. She is on location outside a building: grey, stone, pillars, Osgoode-ish. Monotoned Sounds Like She's Bored Out of Her Skull Reporter But She's Actually At the Top of Her Game What's With All the Capitals:

Candi. We are here live, awaiting the release of young, determined Richie Excellent, *believed* to have *fallen* into a volcano while *travelling* in South America some month and a half ago. While he acknowledges scars from “branches” and what are being called “bug bites,” he denies reports of his death, saying quote: “Give me a break, I mean I’m right here in front of you what’s up with that ? C’mon, nah, wasn’t me man, no, it wasn’t. Quit with the dumbass questions you nosy monotoned Dilbert-reading-mouth-breather, asking everyone else questions for a living will not absolve you of your need to feel involved. Fuck you.” Endquote.

On screen we see Richie leaving the buliding behind her. Candi and cameraman rush over to get a question in and on the way, Candi trips and falls, making some gurgle noise as she disappears from sight. A beat of nothing and then she’s up again, running over to meet Richie.

Candi. How do you feel Mr. Excellent ?

Screen Richie. Whoa! What’s up with your face ?

The camera pans over to Candi who has a bloody nose and bashed forehead from falling. She smiles at the camera. And slogs on:

Candi. How does it feel to be alive ?

Screen Richie. Pretty much the same, Candi.

Candi. We understand you were chased by natives with poison-tipped blowdarts.

And he looks at her. Better than her.

Screen Richie. That’s right, Candi, I ran and I ran. And when I got to the river I shouted to my friend in the boatplane to “Start the engine! Start the engine!” but he couldn’t hear me cuz he was fishing so I guess it was just plain ol’ luck that there happened to be a vine hanging there that I could use to swing myself into the water. It was an adventure. When I finally got into the plane there was a snake in there with me. I hate snakes Candi I hate em. Hey, whatchu doin later, anyway ?

The screen fades to black. On stage:

Richie. But that didn’t happen at all. I didn’t back outta nuthin. I’m the real deal. Anyways,

He notices the movement of his arm, enjoying the fact that

Richie. I’m alive.

Pause.

Richie. N they’ve treated me real good here too. Pure unadulterated hot towel royal treatment: they even offered me whores can you believe it ?! And just to show them how indifferent I am about absolutely everything cuz that’s the nature of Richie Excellent, I responded to the offer of whores with (*long beat*) “BOO-YAH!” Which was cool. Anything I wanted to make my stay more enjoyable they said. Booze, pills, coke “up to my ears,” all of which I declined. I swore to myself to keep this body a temple for the big day and besides there were a coupla unretrievable

years with coke a ways back.. I think..

Pause.

Richie. But I'm not here to talk about drugs.. or sex... this is *awesome!* It's like.. *live* or something.. it's nice.. like -

And then the words rush out of Richie, so fast and furious that it's all he can do to keep up with them:

Richie. - goin out to yer favourite place n getting there early n feeling like a big dink cuz no one wanted to go out ntil later or maybe not at all but you just had to get out there and you end up meeting some excellent people who don't want to fuck you or fight you and you end up having a hoot with these great new people who you care about a lot. And ya laugh at it all, at the whole fucked up way the world works n think it's all pretty amazing when it comes down to it on the long walk home through Kensington Market as the dew breaks. And that truck is there with the cages fulla chickens that can't move there's so many of them in there and it's pretty much the most harsh existence you can imagine yet somehow hugely metaphorical, it's a moment of too much when I say "Too much moment, man", you feel overloaded with data, being given too much all at once shoved at you like dinner you can't ever finish you're full you're full but there's more there's more, and the more you get the less you can put it all together and it's only gonna get worse cuz the show's just begun but if you could just get a single breath.. in there somewhere.. it would be okay. *(He gets a breath, slows down:)* It would all be okay. A second or two away from the information buffet packed with MSG that makes us drowsy but damn, it's yummy.. tastes like chicken. Information tastes like cages full of chickens.. in Kensington Market.. on the long walk home.. *(and then speeds up again:)* This is harsh so you quickly think of friendly things like Miami Vice or Polaroid Film or Canadian fuckin Idol because cultural lint: it salves the soul. Or you think of that once in a blue moon when a crossword is the best, taking it to brunch, paper all spread out, stranger about to receive the sports section with courtesy. Comfort like the smell of dry-cleaning.. Comfort like the smell of dry-humping... a hug from a dear friend.. this, right now, feels like one of those times and I know I'm avoiding telling you what you're here to find out.. but I'm a little freaked out, dudes. Freaked like of the uncle who pulls quarters out of his ears and thinks it's amazing but sorta lingers after, smilinatcha. K. Well firstly, I didn't mean for this to happen! It was an accident, I swear. I sorta.. stumbled onto destiny. Birthed by must-see tee-vee.

We hear the sound of a newborn baby's cry: "WAH!" Richie takes the throne, at home, kickin' back.

Richie. It all started at my place. My real place. I'm there markering up the new guide for the coming week's viewing: green for must-see, red: stay-away. And this special catches my attention called "Charting the Genome:" brainy, very dense, very today: CBC without wagons: it'll be decent. So I give it a yellow or amber marking. And it was slotted right between Degraasi the Next Generation and Train 48 whatchugonnado, that's like the big night, right ? And I'd already been watching for like five hours I was all stiff and not about to "stand," so I end up watching it.. and this guy..

On screen we see footage of Gene as a car salesman-type, cowboy hat, waving people to "come on down" or some such, standing in front of somewhere with those plastic lil flags and a blinking phone number at the bottom of the screen.

Richie. .. this scientist guy who's like a cross between that dude from Third Rock and Dr. Zed from Owl magazine comes on and starts goin off like some ol' car salesman about how he is looking for people in the coveted 18-35 year old demographic to participate in a study: big bucks, no experience necessary, that he would "gladly entertain interested parties" is what he said.

Next thing I know I'm an "interested party." Fuckin right I'm an "interested party" I mean whatcha got ?! I'm the Jerry's kid of the attention-deficit-experience-hungry, you know what I'm sayin ? I'm *thee* interested party. I couldn't leave that alone, I couldn't *not* do it. I mean do you eat the cereal and then chuck the prize out with the. bathwater.. or something ? No. No you don't. I'm so pumped I don't even phone to check this out. I just land. At his office... this place... that's like (*searching:*) Ikea-chrome-Christina-Ricci-Dead-Ringers-green-apple.. and I'm there *without* an appointment, I'm wild, n I just march my butt right in there and I wait my turn like a good ol' Canuck. I don't wanna be a bother to anyone. I want to follow the rules. I want to do what I am supposed to do, what am I saying I -

The camera flash goes off, again blinding Richie. He searches again for it's source and accuses:

Richie. Don't! Okay ?! Fuck. Look I don't know who you are or where you're sitting but that's pretty bright.. and there are no sunglasses on this Excellent face. Do you see sunglasses ? Do see sunglasses ? No. No you don't. Pas de sunglass. It throws me off my train.. choo choo.. what was I... what was I thinking...

On screen we see a picture of a Big Mac.

No.

And then a famine-stricken child.

Peh.

And then a blossoming flower.

No.

And then Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia in that sexy Return of the Jedi gold bikini.

No.

Then on S1 we see a shot of a glowstick hitting the pavement.

Right.

The screens go out.

Richie. (*back to business:*) So I'm sitting in the waiting room tearing through the latest copy of VICE magazine to discover what the people at Gypsy Co-op will be wearing next month when suddenly it's my turn, I'm called in, and I'm sitting across the table from the old guy from the commercial. It's like meeting a star. So I take a moment and say to myself as I do so many days of my life: "you're okay Richie, you're already in the haunted house: just hold tight and learn to ride: riding it defeats the fear." So I transfer my Fear into my Determination pile: single click and drag.

I couldn't believe I'd gotten this far, that this guy's giving me the time of goddamn day, I mean don't they see who they're taking seriously here ? They *must*. He takes my name, address, the basics, and then goes on to family history, illness, tattoos and scars, and then he asks me if I have any hobbies... like stamp collecting for example...

Music: awful, scraping the bottom of the barrel club music, such as one would find on a Top 10 HMV compilation or some such shite: muscle car techno.

Richie. Be brave, Richie. Be kind. Let them know what they're dealing with here. Confess: that "No, I don't collect stamps mister...

On screen: glowsticks flying through space. Lightshow. Disco ball.

Richie. ..."I watch Electric Circus, baby. I'm a fan.. of Electric Circus" I tell him. "Tapes of it" I tell him. "My tapes are dewey-decimalized and documented by date, guest artist, and which of the beautiful and talented EC dancers are featured most that particular week. (*Moving his arms, "voguing" like an Electric Circus dancer:*) I watch Electric Circus to know I'm alive, mister. Because as long as those people are doing... *that* to their personalities... then I'm allowed to consider myself *above* them. And I need that. We all wanna feel better than something. That's why we keep the homeless around. That's why we've canonized The Osbornes. That's why we watch Jerry Springer and his circus-sideshow-retarded-lesbian-three-legged-midget-reincarnated-makin-a-difference-in-their-community-trailer-trash-goth-boys discussin the topic: 'What I Love To Fuck and Kill.' So that finally there is someone who is worse off." I told him all this.

"Gene" as I would come to know him, leans back, obviously interested, intrigued, enchanted even, and he looks at me real close, dead in the eyes, and says like some old cowboy: "Kid... let's get breakfast." (*beat*) This is just a bit odd but I don't argue: go with the flow, Richie, go with the flow. I talk when I'm nervous as you now know: I. can't. go. slow. So I just kept babbling, relentless, comin' down like a monsoon, knock you out, momma said knock you out.

The music and screen cut out.

Richie. "My favourite EC must have been 12/07/02." For those who don't remember, that was the one where Laneej wore the *orange* cowboy hat and Jamie shaved his armpits. Now are you with me people ? Come on. Let's see those hands! Raise it! Raise it! 'Member ? And there were those three classic acned girls in from Mississauga standing outside with the sign begging to see Rick the Temp's bum ? 'Member ? (*long beat*) Me neither really. I taped over it by accident. I panicked needing a tape for the premiere of Survivor Pearl Islands: I mean that crazy Rupert even looks like a pirate. Anyways, fuck. What's done is done. We move forwards.

Though if you're ever up for it, watch eight hours or so straight of alternating Electric Circus and Survivor: your brain starts functioning at such a low frequency it is guaranteed to fuck you up, man. Once I started to think that one of the beautiful and talented EC dancers was gonna get booted out of the building, I was tired.. but I felt for the dancer who was gonna get Survivored off Znaimer's Island... on some cold and blowy night in the winter I mean can you imagine ? Some post-pubescent Tammy Faye with a name like Shaleece. or Rhona. or Fondle. or Clorette. or Cathy. or Jenny. or something-ee. like Cherry. or "Zowie," the ultimate in "alternative" rich kids names, or Nancy-Fancy-Snatch or Nebachnezer or whatever man, head to toe in sparkles and sequins standing outside the Starbucks crying into her non-fat soy mochallukkachuckafuckinchino.. and she takes her twelve-dollar glow stick that she bought to

make her feel a part of the “innovative” rave crowd and lets it slip from her hand to the earth...

On screen we see the glowstick leaving the girl's hand and hitting the pavement. On stage, Richie mimics the fall of the glowstick: a leaf falling from a tree.

... and she blames her lot in life on Rob Brezny and his insightful, well-meaning horoscope and the ample-breasted Laneej who she knows will always be prettier than her and she screams screams up at the heavens, streaky cheeked and latte-lipped: because the experience before her consists of the universe crumbling around her. Pity is not a great characteristic for a leader. I know. But the more I consider.. the more something feels. familiar.

He takes his throne, thoughtful.

Richie. And some things are just plain ol' sad. Like the fact that the only artform left to us... (*pointing to himself:*) is irony. I don't think deep down I am a cynic I mean I wanna lose my voice with cheering but I find it hard to see... and I know I continue to avoid the point of it all but somehow this all relates: trust the thread. It's like.. sometimes I feel... like a locomotive burning up it's steam... or a Warner Brothers mini-van fulla gasoline...

(he follows this rhyme:)

flyin' down the highway lookin kinda mean,
eyes bugged out cuz I'm high on caffeine.
pull into the drive-through, don't make a scene:
“Gimme an extra-large coffee hold the sugar and -

Richie is interrupted by a flash and the appearance of Gene on screen, little bit of icing stuck near his mouth, who completes Richie's rhyme with:

Gene. Cream ?

And then we see Richie and Gene sitting at a table in a foodcourt, having breakfast...

Screen Richie. No. So. This is big, dude.

Gene. It's the biggest.

Screen Richie. Yeah.

Gene. Ameretto ?

Screen Richie. What what ?

Gene. Is the icing ameretto ?

Screen. Okay you're skeevin me out, dude. This whole thing is like, skee-vee.

Gene puts the danish down, cuts to it.

Gene. Look kid. You can judge me all you want but when you come right to it, there ain't no more right or wrong, there's no more morality: we're past it, it don't apply. So if I were you, I'd spend less time judging the “sitch,” and more time accepting it.

Screen Richie. (*sounding out a new word:*) "Mo-ral-I-ty" ?

Gene. There's no choice here, it's happening: we move forward kid, that's what we do. The slate is clean; the question is: are you gonna be the chalk.

Gene, misplacing his gruntles, is thus disgruntled.

Screen Richie. You got a motor-home ?

Gene. And a real nice watch.

Screen Richie. Would I get a motor-home ?

Gene. You'd get anything you want, anything, but if you tell anyone about this till we tell you to *if* we tell you to and BAF.

Pause.

Screen Richie. Whatju tell *your* peeps ?

Gene. "Peeps" ?

Screen Richie. uhh... how you say, uh: "friends, family, those you are.. representing."

Gene. (*nervous:*) Nah, never saw the point of it, no no, never wanted a family, expensive, noisy, my work... growing old in the same bed, flaked skin, I like to have my things where I know I can find them.

Screen Richie. Really ? You never wanted -

Gene. No I never wanted a family now quit talking back.

Screen Richie. Sorry, I'm just asking. (pause) I wanna do good things. I wanna help.

Gene. You are the worst option available.

Screen Richie. Aw c'mon it be fuckin wicked, man.

Gene. Would it.

Screen Richie. Yeah, it'd be fuckin' excellent.

Gene. Excellent, eh ?

Screen Richie. What the hell else am I gonna do, hunh ? Look at me. Make this *me*.

Gene picks up Richie's application form.

Gene. Moved away from home after dropping out of school, spends time smoking pot, listening to "house" music, and the occasional surf. Last book read: "Dick and Jane," have you even

heard of Shakespeare ?!

Screen Richie. Help me Obi-Wan Kenobi, you're my only hope. (*Looping:*) Help me Obi-Wan Kenobi, you're my only hope / Help me Obi-Wan Kenobi, you're my only hope.

We hear the loop of the above continuing as we get a shot of Gene watching this kid, almost in disbelief and oddly fascinated:

Gene. You bein funny ?

Screen Richie. Yeah I'm bein funny and if you don't like it you can laugh about *this*, old man.

Richie whips out a lightsabre and swings it across the table to cut down Gene. We then see Gene's clothes fall, like Ben Kenobi being cut down by Darth Vader.

Cut to Richie, at the table, shaking off this daydream.

Gene. You bein funny ?

Screen Richie. Yeah.

Gene. Hunh.

Gene realizes how ridiculously deliciously ironically perfect a choice Richie would be, recognizing himself as a younger man, studying himself as a younger man. The decision made, Gene gathers papers into his briefcase, etc.

Gene. Drop by the office Monday to draw up a contract. I'll need signatures of release on a number of forms. There may be pain involved, there may not be; it's hard to tell... with pain. Leave blood and urine when you drop off the forms. Monday for signatures, Tuesday we get jiggy.

Screen Richie wipes the bit of icing off of Gene's face. Then as Gene is leaving:

Gene. (*One last warning:*) And remember: I tell you when to spill the beans.

Richie nods as Gene is gone. Then a slow zoom in on Richie's face, dreamy, imagining all that will be his when he is king... Screen out.

Spot up on Richie, nervous, about to come clean. Spill the beans, boy:

Richie. I... *cloned* myself, man. I fuckin *cloned* myself. I mean.. why not, right ? Why the fuck not ?!

He puts a hand to his mouth and bites a nail.

The screen comes on to show the hosts of an Entertainment Tonight-type show. Behind them we see stars, red carpets, some huge Hollywood event. Our stereotypes:

Bud. Hi everyone I'm Bud Chest.

Beige. Et je suis Beige, here awaiting the arrival of Richie Excellent and "friend," isn't that

wonderful ?

Bud. Oh, it's wonderful Beige, absolutely everyone's here: Drew, Mandela, Penny Marshall, Charleton Heston and Pat Buchanan have arrived together -

Beige. oh, finally.

Bud. Alice Cooper'll be singing "School's Out" I'm not exactly sure why though..

They laugh. Yuk yuk. The film fades to black.

Onstage, Richie stands arms outstretched holding the lightsabre and triumphant, ruler over us all.

Richie. I.. am.. the most major historical figure of the new millenium.

And he goes to his throne, the smug portrait of the king.

Richie. There are bodyguards amongst you so get thee ready for a strip search equal to nothin no a-rab's felt in the last little while: tight. You see true believers, the entire planet is gonna go nuts wantin a piece o' me: tours, signings, conventions, leading to trading cards, action figures, Saturday morning cartoon, leading to bio-pic, clothing line, McRichie Meal, all leading up to *two* lifetime achievement awards. Planet Hollywood is booked for the announcement party. Mike Bullard is hosting because he's funny, talented, and deserving. I've invited Sean Desmond cuz I thought it'd be funny to watch no one hang out with him. And I've left specific instructions as regards Ben Mulrone. Send him an invite but don't let him in.. and we'll all hide n watch him outside dribblin cum outta his mouth he's trying so hard to get in. The promoters have gone so far as to exume the body of Bill Maher for use as pinyata... while Dennis Miller and Michael Moore, the surviving of the furies, cower in the corner, and weep. While I. somewhere safe n hopeful, am muttering "It'll be okay. It'll be okay." I mean it's not like I'm running for governor fer fuck's sake. Because if what we called "murderers" became what we called "warriors" became what we called "soldiers" became what we called "peace-keepers" became what we now call "hero," I figure *my* stakes at herodom are better than even odds.

The mirrorball descends to his hand.

Richie. I hold up the mirror... to see the world.. and the bravest part of me declares: how funny. HAHAAHAHAHAHA.

BOOM: music in as Richie spins in the throne.

Montage

(During which our onstage Richie does some simple dance sequence, which eventually breaks down as the montage nears it's end....)

The screen cuts back to Bud and Beige wrapping up their segment:

Bud. So welcome one and all to the surprise "Gala to Open the Doors to the Next Age of Man Brought to You by the Sony Playstation 2."

Cut to a Stoned Guy, probably an old friend of Richie's who shall enjoy shop class well into his thirties.

Stoned Guy. I don't say this about everyone... but if Elvis were alive, he'd be Richie Excellent.

Cut to some homies on the street:

Homies. RICHIE'S THE BEST etc.

Cut to Richie throwing money into the air.

Cut to three girls in Speaker's Corner talking about their idol:

Girls: Oh he's so awesome, I really love him, like, I've got all these posters.. etcetera.

Cut to Richie and his brand new motor-home.

Cut to a talk show host talking to two Richies.

Host. So, movie deals, "Just the Two of Us" an international bestseller, and now I understand a recording contract. Is there anything left for you two to accomplish ?!

Cut to a British Peter-Ustinov-Royal-Biographer-type-but-a-woman, taking a delightful look back at Richie's rise:

Broadcaster. The initial meeting between Richie Excellent and Queen Elizabeth went off without a hitch. The two were apparently twittering like old school chums about Richie's request for not only a castle, but a village, *and* a knighthood for Star Wars creator, George Lucas.

Cut to a series of photos:

Richie with George W.

Richie with the Pope.

Richie arriving somewhere with Paris Hilton.

Richie hanging with Michael Jackson: he's been diddled.

Cut to Richie giving a speech.

Screen Richie. I don't like bombs much... um. The cheap cheeseburger day at McDonalds is really good; I'm for that.

Cut to Richie with a brand new Nike swoosh tattoo on his foot.

Cut to a minister.

Minister. This *is* the Second Coming.

Cut to a coupla dykey-lookin' protestors holding placards reading "Stop Cloning Now" and "Stop Abortion Now."

Protestor 1. We don't want life given -

Protestor 2. - And we don't want it taken away.

We cut to a couple on a couch, the man is pregnant.

Wife. We wanted his eyes -

Husband. But her sense of humour.

They laugh.

Cut to some kid spraypainting something in an alley.

Cut to two little kids, throwing "Richios" cereal everywhere.

Cut to the guy finishing his spraypainting: an "R2" tag.

Cut back to Richie, again at the podium, concluding his speech:

Screen Richie. And say it with me: free at last, free at last...

He steps aside. His clone steps in...

Screen Richie. Thank God almighty we are free at last.

Cut to Richie, speaking directly to camera.

Screen Richie. And they told two friends. *(The image doubles like the Head and Shoulders commercial of old:)* And they told two friends. *(It doubles again:)* And so on. *(And again:)* And so on.

The screen image dissolves into a cell dividing, as through a microscope.

This dissolves into a small group of people, like a city sidewalk at noon or something..

And then into a larger group of people...

And an even larger group... like a nation's worth of people.

And then into a picture of the earth as from space.

And finally stars.

Le Fin du Montage.

On stage, Richie is bothered. Something inside him is.. uncomfortable.

The stage goes black.

“Intermission”

On screen, still stars, but fading in on top is the word “EXHALE.” We hear cold arctic wind. “EXHALE” fades out and is replaced by “INHALE” because it’s now time for

Part II

Lights up on Richie, staring off into the night.

Richie. A long time ago, in a galaxy far far away, there lived a young man who realized his destiny was to embarrass the world.

Richie, please, don’t get heavy on us brother.

Right. It’s good to get that off my chest. That there’s two of me now. The first. And second. And it’s odd it’s weird, cuz I mean I’m pretty good at repressin’ stuff like I thought I’d just file this snugly next to my racism and potential cancer files but.. something is.. sorry, I’m cool. It’s all good. It’s all good.

Richie. Come on.

Richie. It’s just... I find myself.. “caring” and I know I said to Gene ‘I wanna do good things,’ you know, pullin out my generation’s stock skill of whippin’ into the psychic phonebooth n changin’ from jaded cynic to zen master in two point five: “I want world peace - if I got time.” But I’m *believin’* it! And I’m indiffrent dammit, that’s the nature of Richie Excellent.. Why am I talking to you like this, fuckin corndog man, it’s supposed to be a good time and there I go once again totally pointing out an already obvious character flaw, fuck man, I am so metaphorical sometimes I mean why not just take a picture it’ll last longer.

FLASH! He is suddenly strangely focussed.

Richie. I remember. My hand burning. Chompin on a pop tart that’s too hot n escaping out back n sitting on the stairs n starin’ up at. Staaarrrs. N wondering what it’d be like without anybody around. Without any humans. Which is weird now cuz now I’ve cloned myself and that’s sorta thee.. opposite. of nobody around. It’d be lonely. Boring. There’d be nowhere to go on the weekend. Greeeen.

On screen: pairs of animals: elephants, monkeys, birds, lab rabbits...

Richie. And all the animals just go about their bouncy animal lives fulla makin love n hanging out in trees n shit and..and..

Where ya goin’ buddy ?

Richie. ... and the seals don’t get clubbed for Mrs. Allenhoffer’s 20th wedding anniversary present. A fur coat. From her husband. Who actually wants her dead cuz he’s having fabulous porno sex with Miss Poole, who lives only a few doors down and coincidentally owns a pool.

Then on screen is footage from some tacky daytime soap. Richie is remembering

something.

Richie. And she invites him over to her peanut-shaped pool for iced tea and he hangs up and says: "I'm just going for a walk" and Mrs. Allenhoffer says "Alright," and grits her teeth: "My he's gone for a lot of walks lately" and she watches the tee-vee and gets so sad inside, cuz it makes her feel even worse, and she knows this, but feels she deserves it.

Screen fades to black. Richie more intense.

Richie. And when he gets back from his quick screw in the pool with Poole, he presents his wife with a fur coat. "It smells pretty" she says. It smells pretty because Miss Poole didn't want it anymore and Mr. Allenhoffer thought it would be the perfect gift for his wonderful wife on the event of their 20th year of being ever so happily married in wedded bliss. THAT fer instance, would not have happened if we weren't around, right ? If we weren't around, there'd just be a seal on the ice somewhere, sittin with his pals, and thinking 'bout fish I guess.

On screen: a harp seal.

Richie. I haven't thought about that in. forever. Strange what life makes you.

On scree the seal turns into hearts flying through space.

Music out. Screens out. The mood lingers though Richie tries to cover it.

Richie. That Gene guy man, I uh... I felt sorry for him.. next thing ya know I'm wiping his mouth cuz there was a bitta food that he wouldn't have known was there. Ameretto. Icing. That he woulda walked away with, as old guys tend to do, and be one of those dudes you see with the bit of food on his face and you think 'fuck I'm gonna look away NOW cuz that's not really happening and I am NEVER gonna be like that' 'cept I'm actually gonna be much worse cuz the drugs are harder now. Although technically I won't really "age" at all I mean they're planning to build "me's" at age 2, 20, 40, 60, 80. I'll be able to sit with an old Richie and listen to what my life was like when I was my age. But right here, n right now, I feel like I'm Yoda and I'm 400 years old n I'm dyin,' here today deliverin' my final message before I go hang with Obi Wan down by Craft Service or the Blue Screen er whatever, an' I'm askin' you to draw near and list when I say: (*Imitating Yoda:*) There is... another... Skywalker. (*Back to Richie:*) And I don't know how to explain this to him.

A bigger FLASH than we're used to goes off, throwing Richie literally off balance. He stands.

Richie. Alright, look, buddy, c'mon man, fuck, look, I've asked you nicely. I don't want to have to ask you again.

Richie's voice changes... he is channeling his mother.

Richie. (*as Mom:*) Don't make me come in there. Open this door immediately. Richie ? Richie ? Can I come in ? I'm coming in.

The screen shows the arctic vista again. Richie is trying to shake off this memory.

We hear the Final Jeopardy music, a little "off," a little wobbly.

Richie (*as Mom*). I made some oatmeal-orange cookies, Richie are you hungry ? Sandwich ? Stir-fry ? Sushi ? Corn ? Lamb would you like some lamb ? Heroin ? Salt ? Sand ? What were you doing ? (*as himself*). I-I-I-I I was watching some tv. (*as Mom*). Well do your own darn dishes, boy-o. (*as himself*). Look, I'm sorry dad's screwing the hot neighbour, 'aight ?!

The Jeopardy music completes with a ding: time's up, let's check your answers, and is gone.

Richie (*as Mom*). I'll be in the kitchen.

We hear a phrase of the theme music from Coronation Street as Richie's headache leaves him..

Richie. And then she took away my television!

Richie rushes to his beloved TV.

Richie. She explained it was making me "strange," preventing me from developing "social skills necessary for passage into adulthood." I think she just needed to take something from someone. And that's fine... but.. it's tv and... not having.. the television being taken away twisted me up sumpin awful inside I mean what's a kid to do, *read a book* ?!

Fine, granted, it's all Dini-fucking-Petty, get over it blah de fuckin blah but the world turned.. incomprehensible. Like that ejected Electric Circus girl standing there with her hands emptying of a crumbled universe, nothing made sense anymore! I felt stupid! And I wanna be taken serious! Joshua Tree serious. I'm tellin ya the new celebrity is gonna be genetic pioneers, and if that's the case I'm like grade seven Canadian history I'm such a pioneer. I'm already scheduled for a star on the Canadian Walk of Fame, can you imagine anything more lucrative ? I'll be downloaded! I'm so hard a testicle has been engulfed by my shaft. I could give my girl *two* Richies, wonder if she could handle it. HARHARHAR..eh heh heh. (*Now I got an idea, more and more manic:*) I'll fuck mahself! Like that wouldn't mess you up a bit. I mean really *fuck* myself. I'll practice my breathing and I'll treat me right. Finally someone who knows what I like. What if only one of us is into it ??

On screen we are travelling down the hallway of a house towards the front door of a house, then out and down to the end of the walk where a tv sits.

Richie. Right. So the tv goes out on a Friday and sits at the end of the walk forever.. a discarded jack-o-lantern turning in on itself like an an appledoll, a shrunken head posted to warn of danger, a great suburban paperweight plunked there, keeping our house from flying away in the wind. And me, staring at it, realizing my life, every sentence outta my mouth comes from that box and there it sits, all my analogy, all points of reference, clinging to the earth. Life without tv: people have done it.

The camera circles the tv set, again and again.

Richie. Come Sunday my dad gets that weird dad angst about the fur coat he'd given my mom, and he snaps, slams open the door and goes to the end of the walk, towards It, I assumed to bring It back, some valiant Dad-effort to save his kid from suicidal boredom what's going on...

On screen a brief image of Hal, from 2001. Watching us. And gone.

Richie. Don't touch it! Don't touch the fucking tv! Leave it! Cuz everybody'll be in trouble if you lift up that tv. Kingdoms will fall! If you lift that up it will set in motion events that... My Dad went to the end of the walk, picked up the tv and took it over to Miss Poole's basement den. A gift. Felt like he had to give *her* something after the fur coat thing. Bein fair I guess. There since day one, nursing, soothing, a show for every mood, a station for every hour, and now you've taken my parent and given it to a *whore* !

And then the harshest FLASH of light and blast of noise yet: a mixture of bandsaws, scratching, and lightsabres clashing. Richie stumbles, and falls to the ground.

Silence. He tries to get up.

And then the BLAST again, and Richie is flattened, wounded, exhausted, it's flooding back now.

Richie. Soon after I got quiet n I waited. I'd had it! Completely fucking had it. I needed a sign. Sitting on the ice, waiting for a sign. And meeting this lonely old dude something.. recognized itself.. oh man.. my head is achin... quakin.... buster-brownie bakin. Life's flashing before me in digital THX
60 frames a second
150 beats a minute
dolby. stereo. sound.
I was born with a silver spoon. stuck. between the Baby Gap in my teeth.

He realizes he is rapping.. and lets the memories wash over...

And then a week, a month, a year goes by, and I'm five,
and Kiss comes Alive in first grade lemonade rain on my parade I didn't mean to hurt that kid with my lightsabre toy,
man I got in trouble and it really burst my bubble almost blinded him..
but he's got his Orange Crush he'll be okay.

Onstage, Richie turns to an imaginary collection of records and selects one, taking it out of it's sleeve and putting it on the imaginary turntable. He puts imaginary headphones on and drops an imaginary needle on the imaginary record and then Richie gets busy. Totally. Not. Imaginary.

Through the rap, the screen flips through product logos.

Richie. Crying when my dog it died,
I check beneath the bed he's dead with his head
resting on a stick of Juicyfruit. gum.
yum yum. rub a dub dub
"double your pleasure" embedded on my brain forever,
never never keep my teeth from the grind, act like I don't mind
and don't feel a thing, the audience is listening.
And shifting: Is this real or pretend ?
Unsure of what you're seeing ?
Come see the show again.
Cuz I'm blastin off, I'm breakin' down borders,

actin all like that Harrison Forder,
or Columbus or... "Flagellan" ?
Something like that I don't 'member, how you spell it ?
Plain and simple: I'm an explorer:
goin down the river to "the horror, the horror"
Now. Let's get sumpin straight:
I ain't your pal yer friend I'm just the latest funky trend
follow me I'll take you round the bend to shop at
Presto, sweatshops, torture n pesto, mm mm mm, I'm a
timebomb tickin n talkin n mockin
n most of all rockin how we're all just cogs turnin
n I'm yearnin' to know before we blow: "Why can't we all just join Downward Dog ?" Um. No.
I am your high-speed connection,
Your T-dot conception of a techno erection,
and when I build it, you. will. cum. AAH! Then I
roll over n leave ya, wouldn't wanna be ya,
lean back my head to sleep, I'm lethal, Rip Van
Diesel against my family tree cuz I feel
so empty without M.P.me
and another me, Google searchin for dream, man,
but File not found cuz I'm a *telegram!*
Sayin' "Stop."
Hold it right there
State your case
Then get outta my face. So.
Two hundred years ago,
Europe imports the potato.
in ships returned from far off shores
Exciting and new, come aboard,
we're expecting you, to start farming, planting,
all the voices chanting:
"Faster n faster n bigger n better,
Grow that spud bigger n better."
They breed and feed
and they speed the breed, which impedes the seed.
'Til. Boom. Bam: Genetic strain
sends us off the rails on the crazy train
then lordy lordy it's 1840
Ireland's in the dopest famine
that's the crux of this groove I am in
trouble, trouble, pop-a-matic style,
nothin grows no more and it takes a little while
but millions die and it's like a blueprint,
a bad after taste without the breathmint
or

The music cuts out.

floss.
Cuz of a lack of diversity.
UGH! HAH! History repeats itself so

Sometimes you wanna go
back to the future, to paint the picture.
of. when. I. was

The music comes back in.

holidaying with Shelley Long
god knows she needs the work even if it's on
a VIA train with Grimace, that McDonald's thing,
Don't step to me brother, I'm the Burger King. Tomb Raider
Lara Croft hands me a beer
and she welcomes me to my Carlsberg years,
I'm feelin kinda dizzy
and brought to you by Disney
soundtracked by Moby,
pixlelated babies...
Check my cv
pvcdvd. mC3PO in my SUV KFC NBC ABC
Rick D, yo man, where's my E ? F GBH I
can't think anymore I'm so fulla CBSBSBSBSBSBSBSBS
all I got's my clenched fist
only weapon a phrase
a cliché, from the day:

The beat goes out of time.

The beat gets back in time.

Music out.

Richie. "I'll house you."

On screen we are circling the television at the end of the walk as earlier.

Richie. Churning the volumes of logos and slogans,
designs and catchphrases,
commercials and crazes.
I search through my past and conclude in my prattle:
We don't change a damn thing, we just add more channels!

On screen the television morphs into a gravestone.

Richie. My soul endorses a Microsoft Heaven, remote controlled to subscribe to a Life Channel
where everyone under the General Electric sun is a Tom Hanks martyr who must die on the
cross and somewhere, a little little grave shall one day read "Richie Excellent TM."

Screen out. Richie is weak, sweating, out of breath. He cowers in his throne.

Richie. It'll be okay. It'll be okay.

BLAST FLASH! Richie spins around to face the screen.

Richie. Gene ? Gene! I'm scared. I don't wanna go through with it. Gene ?

Gene appears on screen, staring down at Richie on stage. He wears surgical gloves, his

voice calm and hypnotic. We hear the pings of a heart monitor.

Gene. (screen:) Can you hear me all right ?

Richie. (stage:) Yes, Gene.

Gene. Are you afraid of needles, Richie ?

Richie. Well, they're *needles*, Gene.

Gene. Are you a Darwinian ?

Richie. Hunh ?

Gene. Organ donor ?

Richie. I don't know.

Gene. Plans of marriage children family divorce ? Plans of death ? Plans of any kind ? Sushi ? Corn ? Lamb would you like some lamb ? You're very lucky you know.

Richie. To be the first ?

Gene. Oh lord, you're not the first, you're.. the star. You're going public.

Richie. I've been reconsidering.

Gene. We can erase that. Breathe.

Richie. But what about the potato ? Gene. Why are you doing this ?

Gene tries to hide that he feels sorry for Richie... and so with some tenderness...

Gene. Breathe.

Gene raises his hands into the shot and then zaps Richie, like the Emperor from Star Wars zapping Luke, or the Wicked Witch of the West zapping the slippers on Dorothy's feet. The zapping complete, the screen fades to black.

Onstage, Richie does not move. It is silent for the first time in the show. No talking no noise. It's beautiful. To have that again. Is he dead ?

But then a sound.. a single note.. hardly audible at first and then getting louder. Richie's hand moves.. he's alive. As the note crescendos, we see on screen the lush beautiful jungle landscape as seen earlier. Then we watch as it turns into icy arctic tundra, and finally fades out.

Richie turns back to us.

Richie. And Gene looked at all caring n defeated n says "I have to do this; it is my destiny: We move forwards, that's what we do. The apple waits to be plucked." And then he gives me a

hug.. and he looks me dead in the eye and says.. he says (*with accompanying gesture*)
"Richie, in other words -"

He stops. Revolves around a full circle. And repeats words and gesture:

Richie. "In other words -"

He revolves another circle.

Richie. "In other words -"

Richie is "skipping" and turning in circles. Each time he says "In other words," he makes the gesture.

Richie. In other words / In other words / In other words, etc..

Then WHAM! Another big flash stops the "skipping" and Richie gets to his feet, snapping on the fucker with the camera, still not being able to pinpoint exactly where it's coming from, but he makes for the audience to find him.

Richie. Alright that's it! I've fucking had it with you dude what is your fucking -

And he ZAPS into an electrified fence that separates him from the audience. OW. The perimeter throbs with electricity.

A terrible silence. What ?

He is unsure. So he carefully takes a finger and confirms that what he just hit was -

ZAP!

No.

Where ? What ?

He looks around. He is trapped in a cell. He summons his courage and this time, with some might behind it, thrusts an arm at the "wall." A huge ZAP sends him pained, over to the down left corner.

He hears something. Coming from beyond his cell. Very faintly we hear some lines from his opening jungle speech. He searches for where this is coming from. This takes him to the opposite wall. Where we hear lines from later in the play.

On screen we see the "And they told two friends.. and so on.. and so on" thing from the montage; the effect being that there are countless cells with countless Richie Excellents on every side of him, repeating this show over and over and over again.

He panics. He tries to process. He breaks down. His mind is blowing.

Richie. My name's Richie Excellent cuz I have a good time. My names Richie Excellent... cuz.. I have a good time...

He ain't no jedi; just a copy of some bullshit kid. Tears. Gagging tears.

Richie. I. am... the most major historical figure of the new millenium.

Finally, he looks at us, full of rage.

Richie. You. just. watched! What is this, the zoo ?! Is that what this is ? *Entertainment ?*
(*Looking around, trying to locate himself.*) Have I been here forever ?

He tries to get it together.

Richie. It all happened to *him*. To the first... unless I am... I may never know.. if I am him... or not. If I am the first, or second. This is REALLY FUCKING EMBARASSING this is awful.

He forces a metaphysical exit:

Richie. There must have been a time *before* all this.

On screen, Gene, in bed, as at the beginning of the show:

Gene. We move forward, that's what we do.

And screen out.

Richie talks himself through it.

Richie. Before pen-pals were extinct. Before trivia was conversational. And conversation was trivial. (*and lighting upon a certitude:*) For I.. recall.. snowflakes... falling on my face after sticking the carrot in a snowman's head... all excited cuz tonight's the Charlie Brown Christmas Special and Linus is once again gonna say some wicked stuff and this hand-me-down snowsuit makes me sweat while I make an angel on the lawn... in the snow that was home.. and always the feeling is of a terrible slowness overtaking haste.

He turns to us, defeated:

Richie. When you leave... which you will.. do something for me. In winter's tedious nights sit by the fire with good old folks, and let them tell thee tales of woeful ages long ago betid, and ere thou bid good night, to quite their griefs, tell thou the lamentable tale of me, and send the hearers weeping to their beds.

The mirrorball descends to him, ironic perfection, and he examines himself in it.

Richie. For there it is, cracked in a hundred shivers: one spirit spliced in a hundred and cast about the world. Is this the face of man ? Or man unseated, given o'er the reins to's copy ? At last outfaced by himself ? Oh learn good soul to think our former state a happy dream, from which awaked, the truth of what we are shows us but this: I am *shared*. I am nothing. And having nothing, I am as ever before: insignificant, nameless, forgotten. What do I do ?! Why am I talking to you ?! Put here with *toys*. Well take it! Take it all away!

The mirrorball flies away, he chucks away his lightsabre, and then knocks over his

throne.

Richie. All in a flick of the metaphysical wand becomes nil and never was. What more remains ?

Music. Richie gets to his feet.

Richie. Music do I hear!
Ha-ha! Keep time! How sour sweet music is
When time is broke, and no proportion kept;
So is it in the music of men's lives:
I wasted time, and now doth Time waste me.
This music mads me; let it sound no more.

The music does not stop but instead grows more disordered, more cacophonous. And will continue to grow this way to the end of the show.

Richie. Yet blessing on his heart that gives it me,
For 'tis a sign of love; and love to Richie
Is a strange brooch in this all-hating world.

FLASH! Richie is a dual personality.

Richie. That was so pretentious man, can't believe you just spoke Shakespeare, ruined the whole suspension of disbelief thing / Forget that crap it died with digital / But there's an audience right there that paid good money to / They're not real / Sure they're real, say hello to the nice people Richie / Hello, nice people!

FLASH! And Richie becomes a television announcer, America's Funniest Home Video-style, and suffering intense pain like his head is going to explode:

Richie. Alright then audience, let's check out those finalists! Will it be "Deathbed Doctor"...

On screen: Gene in bed.

Gene. "That humanity was wont to conquer this little world,
Hath made a shameful conquest of itself."

Richie. Or will it be -

On screen we see Richie as the host of some cooking show. And simultaneously on stage and screen:

Screen and Stage Richie. We actually had time before the show to put together a complete thought which should be simmering away in it's own juices just about ready to come out of the oven.

The screen goes out. Richie stumbles:

Richie. We now return you to your regularly scheduled -

On screen: Gene in bed.

Gene. Ah, would the scandal vanish with my life.
How happy then were my ensuing death.

Richie. (*exactly as the opening line, but standing now.*) Thanks for making the long drive out I know there were other parties n shit you will be remembered. Welcome.

FLASH! Richie is tossed onto the revolve. Shivering, bitterly cold, Richie offers a pathetic Teletubbies farewell:

Richie. Bye bye Lala. Bye bye Dipsy. I am the weakest link: goodbye.

On screen we see Richie walking down the hallway of a courthouse-looking building, towards the front door. In this daydream he has decided NOT to go through with the procedure. We hear Candi Phurburger. This is the same scene we had earlier with Candi but from the POV of watching Richie.

Candi (V/O). Mr. Excellent ? Mr Excellent ?

We switch to Richie's POV.. as we look out onto thousands of Candi Phurburgers, countless clones, as far as the eye can see: Phurburger. Her voice is multiplied, echoey:

Candi. How do you feel Mr. Excellent ?

Horrified but keeping it all in, he ventures:

Screen Richie. Long live the king.

FLASH! The mother of all flashes. Rapid firing off of images on screen symbols, slogans, inventions, technologies, ending with a shot of Darth Vader with his mask taken off, moments from death. Music out. We cut one last time to Gene, in bed, expiring, himself on his dying breath:

On stage, Richie resembles a new born calf, trying to find his feet.

Gene. We find out too late, as we always do, that all we looked for... was love.

Music back in, reaching a climax...

On screen we cut to the glowstick falling out of the girl's hand who got kicked out of Electric Circus. We see her Starbucks coffee falling out of her other hand. She dropped it in order to take Richie's hand who steps into frame.

WHAM! Back to the flashes of images on screen: noise, chaos, getting worse... now the images are of terrible tools, mass graves, war, sex, seals being clubbed, clearcutting. Getting harsher and louder. Flashes. There is really way too much going on and this should be unbearably bright and loud. The audience is really uncomfortable.

Richie is now standing but in complete and utter agony, convulsing, hands pulling hair in some Blakean pose.

The screen image cuts to a blurry image of two little kids playing with toy lightsabres somewhere in the streets of suburbia. For this oh so brief bit, we hear a snippit (that's right, "snippit") of Joe Cocker's "A Little Help From My Friends," a Wonder Years moment: "What would you - " and then out as the film runs off the spool like a home movie.

Silence. No screens. No music. Just Richie in a silent scream.

And then, released, calm, but throat fulla tears and shaky, Richie looks out at the audience.

Richie. In other words... (And arm outstretched:) Stop.

We hear the arctic wind sweep in as lights face to black.

On screen: "Let's be careful out there."

And then it all fades away, perhaps to "snow," because the signal.. is gone.

Bowie's "The Man Who Sold the World" as the audience exits.