

# THE WALL

## SCENE 1

(JUDGE WEARING WIG AND ROBES SITTING

IN ELEVATED. SOLITARY MAJESTY

### JUDGE BARNES:

You, the jury, must ask yourself the following questions: Did Harvey Braithwaite kill the young nanny, Beverly Thompson, in a frenzied attack just before the brick wall fell down? Or did the wall, as he claims, fall down while he was trying to drag her away from danger. We have heard conflicting evidence on this point from several witnesses who were in the park at the time.

The defendant claims that he possessed clairvoyant powers that told him that the wall would collapse. However, the council building surveyor who inspected it a fortnight before the tragedy occurred maintains that it was in a perfectly safe condition. You must ask yourself, then, why should Harvey Braithwaite have expressed the opinion to everyone who would listen that the wall was unsafe. There was no reason, in fact, to suppose that the wall would not last two-hundred years, or whatever the normal life of a well-built brick wall may happen to be. It has been suggested by the prosecution that the defendant may have tampered with the wall. But there is no evidence to support this conjecture. I must stress that the defendant's ill-advised venture into the field of prophecy has very little bearing on the case. You may reflect that, if you declare any building unsafe, the passage of time will eventually prove you to have been right. Any sensible person would agree that the sudden collapse of a wall which has been inspected and declared safe is an event which no one could possibly foresee. The fact that it fulfilled the defendant's prediction may seem remarkable. But if you are in the regular habit of making predictions the chances are that at least one of them will eventually come true. Tipsters at horse race meeting make their living in this way.

Leaving aside, then, the irrelevant question of the defendant's supposed powers of divination, you must address the key issues. Did Harvey Braithwaite attack Beverly Thompson in a fit of anger, bringing down the wall in the process? Or did she die as a result of the wall accidentally falling down while she was sitting in her accustomed position on a bench next to the wall? The defendant's version of events is that she obstinately refused to heed his warning to move and mocked him when he told her it would come down.. These questions are crucial to this case and you must judge them to the best of your ability.

Harvey Braithwaite, as we have learned, is highly gifted in certain narrow areas of mathematics. In spite of this unusual gift, he has never managed to raise himself from the relatively humble clerical position he occupied for much of his life. You have to consider what motive this staid, middle-aged man could have had for killing an innocent young girl of twenty-two. The prosecution has tried to show that he had strong sexual feelings towards her and was jealous of the attentions of a younger man, who sometimes visited her in the park. The defendant insists that his actions were intended to save lives. He makes the remarkable -- some would say arrogant -- claim that some arcane mathematical calculation enabled him to predict the exact moment of the wall's collapse. No mathematician or scientist can be found who will support this claim. The defence has maintained Mr Braithwaite lacked the physical strength to bring about the collapse of the brick wall. But a karate expert has asserted that a full-blooded, violent blow could have brought it down. Building inspectors have also suggested that the wall may have collapsed because of a small seismic shock. Seismograph recordings do not bear out this theory, but experts admit the possibility that a local tremor may have occurred that did not register on their instruments. You may consider this likelihood in your deliberations. You may also like to consider the possibility that Harvey Braithwaite forecast that the wall would collapse simply in order to impress the young nanny and her young friends

who regularly congregated in the park, and that its subsequent fall came about by an unlucky chance. You must also consider the alternative explanation that Harvey Braitwaite, angered by the young nanny's indifference to his advances, lashed out with such force that it came crashing down, killing her and almost killing the children in her care ....

## **SCENE 2**

A barrister's chambers. Large office furnished in old fashioned style with leather-topped desk and several well-worn leather armchairs. Iris Homes, a barrister in her early forties, is sitting at her desk. Jonathan Cowan, a psychiatrist of about the same age is sitting opposite her.

**JONATHAN**

It was very nice of you to think of me in connection with this case.

**IRIS:**

Someone told me that you have made a special study of *idiots savants* -- isn't that what you call them?

**JONATHAN**

Yes, I have always been fascinated by people like your client who possess amazing abilities in certain narrow areas of mathematics but who are not at all clever in other respects.

**IRIS:**

My chief clerk said my client is a sandwich short of a picnic.

**JONATHAN:**

I don't find that kind of remark helpful.

**IRIS:**

No, of course not. I'm sorry for appearing to be flippant. What I should like to ask you seriously is: do people like Harvey lack a sense of morality.

**JONATHAN:**

Not necessarily. They vary just like the rest of us.

**IRIS:**

What made you take an interest in *idiots savants*?

**JONATHAN:**

Their experiences can shed light on other areas of neurology and psychiatry.

**IRIS:**

Jonathan, you don't have to be so stiffly professional with me!

**JONATHAN:**

Sorry. It's been such a long time. By the way, do you think he committed the murder?

**IRIS:**

It doesn't matter in the least what I think. But I have come to the conclusion that it will be very difficult to persuade the jury of his innocence. A plea that he was of unsound mind might save him from a life sentence. He would have to spend many years in a hospital for the criminally insane. That's the best of two very unpleasant alternatives. If I thought there was a reasonable case of getting him off, I would not have called you in. But he seems so helpless -- he's as daft as a duck. He insists on telling everybody that he told a lot of people that the wall was going to fall down at that particular time, when it would have been so much better if he had said that it collapsed unexpectedly. Curiously, he claims to have made other predictions in the past -- all of them quite trivial and insignificant. He told me he knew his niece would have twins before the doctors did. He predicted that an accident would occur outside the place where he works. Oh, and he predicted that his local newsagent would close down.

**JONATHAN:**

If he thinks he can foresee the future, why doesn't he play the stock market.

**IRIS:**

He doesn't think he has much interest in money. He told me, by the way, that he suffered from depression after his wife died a few years ago.

**JONATHAN:** That's not unusual.

**IRIS:**

The trouble is that he is completely lacking in common sense. After the accident, he wheeled the children who had been in charge of the nanny in their pushchair to the nearest police station. Asked why he hadn't called an ambulance, he replied that he thought the girl was already dead. Unfortunately, he then told the police that he had predicted that the wall was going to collapse and that made them suspicious..

**JONATHAN:**

But it does appear to have been true.

**IRIS:**

That doesn't help his case at all. When the police discovered that he had had a crush on the girl and had been seen talking to her on a number of occasions, they referred the matter to the Criminal Prosecution Service.

**JONATHAN**

Just because he predicted that the wall was going to fall down doesn't make him responsible for it happening.

**IRIS:**

No, but they believed he brought it down during a violent attack on the girl. They have several witnesses who say he was obsessed with her. He was considered something of a nuisance by the other nannies who used to congregate in the park.

**JONATHAN:**

Did he suffer any injuries?

**IRIS:**

A few bruises. The girl took the full force of the falling masonry.

**JONATHAN:**

Surely, it's impossible to bring down a wall by just punching it. And if it did fall down it must surely be accounted an accident.

**IRIS:**

Unfortunately for Harvey Braithwaite there is a precedent.. An angry rock-climber once threw a stone which caused an avalanche that killed other people. He was convicted of manslaughter.

**JONATHAN:** Doesn't the fact that he went to the police suggest his innocence?

**IRIS:**

The prosecution allege that he did so because he had a guilty conscience. I personally think he simply didn't know how to handle the situation.

**JONATHAN:**

What do you know about his relationship with the girl?

**IRIS:**

It didn't amount to much. Apparently, he first met Beverly Thompson, when he took a walk through the park during his lunch hour. He often spoke to her. He told her he had had a premonition that the wall would fall down. He became such a bore on the subject that they eventually told a park attendant, who informed the borough surveyor. Someone came to inspect it and gave the wall a clean bill of health.

**JONATHAN:**

It is an extraordinary story. I'm looking forward to meeting Harvey Braithwaite. What did he do for a living?

**IRIS:**

He was a postal clerk. Apparently, he often astounded his customers and his fellow workers by the speed of his mental calculations. He never used a calculator.

**JONATHAN:** What kind of an education did he have?

**IRIS:** He left school when he was sixteen. His GCSE's weren't particularly brilliant, although he did get an A plus in maths. Just to test him, I gave him details of my mortgage. He gave me the monthly repayments in seconds.

**JONATHAN:**

I might call in a mathematician to test him out.

**IRIS:**

The court is concerned with his mental state not his ability to manipulate figures.

**JONATHAN:**

It might be relevant. We shall see. When can I interview him?

**IRIS:**

Would it be possible to see him this afternoon? It's quite urgent. I left this question of a change of plea until very late because I underestimated the strength of the prosecution's case.

**JONATHAN:** I'll ring up my secretary and ask her to rearrange my appointments. Perhaps we could have lunch together and continue our discussion.

**IRIS:**

Yes, but it must be on me. You brought me plenty of lunches in the past.

**JONATHAN:**

Did I? I don't remember.

**IRIS:**

There's a lot you don't remember. When I telephoned you about this case you didn't even remember my name.

**JONATHAN:**

Of course I did. I was just trying to gather my thoughts.

**IRIS:**

I hope they were pleasant ones.

**JONATHAN:** They were. They certainly were ...

### **Scene 3**

The inside of a prison cell under the Old Bailey.

The furnishings consist of a narrow bed, a chair and a toilet and wash-hand basin Harvey Braithwaite is pacing up and down his cell, humming a theme from Bach in a tuneless voice. Every now and again he call out a number and smiles a zany smile immediately afterwards.

**HARVEY:** Sixteen hundred and one (continues humming then:) One, three, eight, three, one. One, five, four, five, one. Three, nought, one, nought, three. Continues humming. Sound of the cell door being unlocked. Jonathan Cowan enters the cell. Harvey sits on the bed and motions Jonathan towards the only chair.) Hello, Doctor.

**JONATHAN:**

(Good-humouredly) Ah, you were expecting me.

**HARVEY:**

Ah've been expecting a lot of things. Ah've been expecting they would let me go but they haven't. I'm telling you this right from the start: I didn't kill that girl. Why should Ah? She were about the only thing left in the world I cared about. I wouldn't have touched a hair on her head.

**JONATHAN:**

Of course. But I'm not a lawyer. I'm a psychiatrist. Do you know what a psychiatrist is?

**HARVEY:** Of course. You're going to look into my brain to see what's inside.

**JONATHAN:** I believe that you have a very remarkable brain. What were those numbers you were calling out as I came in?

**HARVEY:** Prime numbers -- they're like little tin gods, separate and indivisible. They make a kind of tune in my head. I'm not quite so keen on ordinary numbers now I'm in here. When I count: one, two, three --by the time I have reached two, the one has already gone into the past. Where's number two gone I ask myself. It's gone where that girl's gone. And the more I count the more numbers are separating me from her. Counting reminds me of time. Prime numbers seem to stop time. They're independent primes. They're like cats they enjoy being individual.

**JONATHAN:**

Cats?

**HARVEY:**

Yes, ordinary numbers are like dogs. They run in packs. But cats are proud of their independence. They're like primes -- they owe nowt to nobody.

**JONATHAN:**

That's very interesting. But how do you know which are prime numbers.

**HARVEY:**

Just like a painter instantly knows a colour when he sees one, I can recognise prime numbers, because they're only divisible by themselves or one. If I was a painter I would paint in prime numbers. There's nowt so beautiful as primes.

**JONATHAN:**

What about girls?

**HARVEY:**

Oh, they're beautiful all right. She were very beautiful -- the one they keep saying I killed.

**JONATHAN:** Did you kill her?

**HARVEY:**

Of course I didn't. I loved that girl. She reminded me of my dead wife -- the same Titian hair. The same sweetness of nature. I'd have done anything for her. I would never have touched her -- she were too young for me. . The police have got dirty minds. They kept asking me if I had wet dreams about her.

**JONATHAN:**

If she had asked you to, would you have made love to her?

**HARVEY:**

She wouldn't have asked me in a month of Sundays. She was proud that girl. She told me once she fancied her boss's brother who was an earl. But he didn't fancy her because she was common and didn't have any money. I would have slept wi' her if she had married me. No chance of that. No chance whatsoever.

**JONATHAN:**

But you enjoyed talking to her occasionally.

**HARVEY:**

Of course. We had nice little chats. She used to ask me about my wife and would I have liked to have children and the like. I told her if I had children I would have wanted her to be their nanny -- if I could afford one.

**JONATHAN:**

You had no children?

**HARVEY:**

No, Ursula didn't want any. Her mother died in childbirth and she were frightened the same would happen to her.

**JONATHAN:**

Did you practise birth control?

**HARVEY:** What do you mean?

**JONATHAN:**

Was your wife on the Pill.

**HARVEY:** No, she wouldn't use a contraceptive. It were against her religion. And she wouldn't let me use one of them condoms.

**JONATHAN:**

That must have made it very hard for you.

**HARVEY:**

(Immensely serious) My willy used to get very hard. Dreadfully hard. I used to get up sometimes and have a cold bath. But why are you asking me all this. What's it got to do wi' the wall coming down?

**JONATHAN:**

Okay. I'm going to very frank with you. Your defence council is very concerned about you. She thinks it would be much better if she could persuade the court that when all this happened you were mentally disturbed -- perhaps as a result of your wife dying, or for some other reason we may establish later on. I may have to ask some very personal questions, some of which you may find distasteful. But if we discover that you were under great mental stress at the time this tragedy occurred, the court might send you to a hospital instead of prison.

**HARVEY:**

You want me to admit that I'm mad.

**JONATHAN:**

No, that you were mentally disturbed when the tragedy occurred.

**HARVEY:**

It amounts to the same thing. Seeing Beverly lying all bloodied in the wreckage were enough to make anyone mad. And to be put in prison afterwards for something I could never have done if I lived a million years! I couldn't kill someone I love dearly. I'm not mad -- it's them that's mad putting me in prison like this.

**JONATHAN:**

Why did you tell the police that you knew the wall was going to fall down?

**HARVEY:** Because it's the truth. I had been telling everyone but no one would listen.

**JONATHAN:**

Yes, but when you went to the police station the wall had already fallen down killing the young nanny. Was it pride that made you tell them you knew it was going to fall down?

**HARVEY:**

(Squirming uncomfortably) Ah don't know. Perhaps it were. But I weren't telling the police. I was complaining to God.

**JONATHAN:**

Complaining to God?

**HARVEY:**

Yes, I were telling Him that I didn't think much of the way He behaved. He'd told me it was going to come down and I had prayed that it wouldn't happen while there was someone sitting on the park bench. He let me down and I gave him a right telling off.

**JONATHAN:**

Did this happen while you were talking to the police.

**HARVEY:**

Yes, the police sergeant I were talking to seemed just like God at the time. God can appear in many guises.

**JONATHAN :**

Would you like to tell me what other guises he come in?

**HARVEY:**

He can be the sunset, a pretty woman, the stars, a good pint of beer, a beautiful prime number.

**JONATHAN:**

Okay. Okay. I see what you mean. These numbers seem to mean a great deal to you.

**HARVEY:**

They're very important are numbers.

**JONATHAN:**

In what way are they important?

**HARVEY:**

My family doctor told me once when I had bronchitis -- no, it weren't that time -- it were something to do with my ankles...Emeda-edema -- I can't for the life of me remember the name.

**JONATHAN:**

(Impatiently) What did he tell you?

**HARVEY:**

He told me that a famous scientist once said that God is a mathematician.

**JONATHAN:**

Do you think that's true?

**HARVEY:** Oh, yes. Everything's in the numbers, isn't it.

**JONATHAN:**

I'm not sure. Explain what you mean.

**HARVEY:** Well, take pi -- that's the number you get when you divide the diameter of a circle into its circumference. I've worked it out to thousands of decimal places and it never stops; it just goes on and on and on.

**JONATHAN:**

What does that have to do with God being a mathematician?

**HARVEY:** (In a hushed voice) It tells you He goes on forever. He's a right mystery is God. When you're born, you're still with God. Time starts off, then, very slowly. It dawdles along, hardly moving. But as you grow older, you forget how peaceful it was with God. Time starts clattering along faster and faster, reminding you that the world is a bad place and wants to hurt you.

**JONATHAN:**

Do you think about God a great deal?

**HARVEY:**

Yes, especially since they locked me up.

**JONATHAN:**

Does it comfort you thinking of God?

**HARVEY:**

Not now. It were cruel of Him, playing this trick on me. Telling me that the wall was going to fall down and then letting it fall on Beverly.

**JONATHAN:**

How did God tell you that the wall was going to fall down?

**HARVEY:**

Like he always does.

**JONATHAN:**

You haven't told me how he does it.

**HARVEY:** I don't want to talk about it now.

#### **SCENE 4**

Hotel bedroom. Large room with ample double bed.. The bedclothes flutter and writhe. Jonathan emerges, looking flustered. Iris's head then appears.

**JONATHAN:**

Are you okay? You seemed to be lying there, weighing up all the legal evidence.

**IRIS:** Sorry. It seemed so strange being with you. I was in a dreamy state.

**JONATHAN:**

There's something I want to ask you...

**IRIS:**

What? Oh, God! What's that? There's something in the bed... I felt it move. (She screams and gets out of bed.)

**JONATHAN:**

What's the matter?

**IRIS:**

For God's sake, see what is it?

(Jonathan examines the bed carefully and holds up an object.)

**JONATHAN:** There! It's just my wallet.

(They both get back into bed and settle back into the pillows.)

**IRIS:** If I was a psychiatrist, which thank God I'm not, I would think that there is something highly significant in the way you hid your wallet.

**JONATHAN:** It must have fallen out of my trousers when I was taking them off. At least you showed some passion when you felt it. And do you know something -- it has just given me an amazing feeling of déjà vu.

**IRIS:**

Probably because you're worried about money.

**JONATHAN:**

Don't be absurd. Why should you think that?

**IRIS:**

Everyone has money problems these days... Why did you divorce Margaret?

**JONATHAN:**

We got bored with each other. It might have been different if we had had children.

**IRIS:**

Didn't she want any?

**JONATHAN:**

No, I can't blame her. She probably thought they would grow up into introspective psychiatrists like me. What ended your marriage?

**IRIS :**

George couldn't stay faithful for five minutes. When Tanya, our daughter, went to university, I decided to call it a day.

**JONATHAN:**

Strange, isn't it, that we should end up in bed after all these years.

**IRIS:**

Nothing strange about it. I planned the whole thing.

**JONATHAN:**

Is that why you asked me to examine Harvey Braithwaite?

**IRIS:**

Not really. I contacted you because you wrote that book you wrote about *idiots savants*. But it was such a thrill when I saw you again. You seemed just as helpless as ever. That's what made me decide to seduce you.

**JONATHAN:**

Why helpless?

**IRIS:**

Only someone as hopelessly incompetent as you could lose his wallet in bed.

**JONATHAN:**

Professionally, I must inform you, I am extremely efficient.

**IRIS:**

I'm sure you are. You're satisfied, then, with your diagnosis of Harvey?

**JONATHAN:**

Completely.

**IRIS:**

Convinced that he's batty.

**JONATHAN:**

Absolutely.

**IRIS:**

Then just for the hell of it, I'll argue that he's sane.

**JONATHAN:**

I thought you were keen to establish that he was suffering from diminished responsibility.

**IRIS:**

I am. But I want to see it from the other side's point of view. So tell me why do you think he's mad.

**JONATHAN:**

It's all in my report.

**IRIS:**

Yes, but prove it to me now.

**JONATHAN:** Are you doing this because you didn't like the way I made love?

**IRIS:** No. I did enjoy it. It just seems so strange to be with you again.

**JONATHAN:**

The last time was in a sleeping bag -- remember? This is much more comfortable. But you didn't seem all that enthusiastic.

**IRIS:**

Are you looking for a diploma?... I hereby certify that Jonathan Cowan is competent in the field of foreplay, making love and and athletic bonking.

**JONATHAN:**

(Mildly) Will you shut up. I would just have liked some indication that you still love me after all these years.

**IRIS:**

Oh, poor Jonathan. You're still the same little boy, lacking in self esteem. Would you like diddums to give you some psychotherapy?

**JONATHAN:** Fuck you!. Sorry. Didn't mean that.

**IRIS** You'll have to pay a forfeit. I used to make you kiss my feet -- remember?

**JONATHAN:**

Okay, I'll kiss your feet.

**IRIS:**

No, don't bother. I'm genuinely interested in how you arrived at the conclusion that poor old Harvey Braithwaite is mad. I want to know the standards you used. I have to bear in mind that the prosecution will also bring in an expert witness to support their case.

**JONATHAN:**

Harvey is out of touch with reality.

**IRIS:**

What is meant by reality?

**JONATHAN:**

We define reality as what most people recognise as reality. Most people consider numbers as abstract concepts used for calculation. Harvey is different in that for him numbers are real and, as well as having emotional associations, have an existence in their own right. He responds to them in the same way as musicians responds to music.

**IRIS:**

Why should they affect his behaviour?

**JONATHAN:**

His brain seems to have been wired differently. He particularly loves prime numbers. He is constantly looking for new ones and when he finds one it makes him so excited he nearly has an orgasm.

**IRIS:**

So did I a short while ago. But the last thing I was thinking of was prime numbers. Seriously, though, I have met some mad criminals in my time. But their madness seemed to be of an entirely different order from Harvey's. I don't see an ounce of evil in him.

**JONATHAN:**

That's right. He told me that during eighteen years of marriage he hardly ever made love to his wife. She didn't want children and didn't allow him to use birth control.

**IRIS:**

That makes him more like a saint than a madman.

**JONATHAN:**

I believe he's insane. He told me with perfect seriousness that since they locked him up he has seen thousands of living creatures pass through his cell, including dinosaurs and some animals he had never seen before. I asked him if they frightened him. He said they couldn't harm him because *they* could only see *him* as a spirit. I said: 'You were just imagining them' and he said: 'Oh no. The animals were real, my mind went back to an age when animals were different from what they are now. I asked him how was it possible for him to go back in time and he said: 'Time becomes diluted when you're falling asleep, so you can absorb more of it. When you're really fast asleep, time becomes as thin as the air you breathe.' I said to him: 'Is that how you managed to prophesy that the wall was going to fall down.' He replied: 'Not exactly. That was more to do with numbers.' He rambled on about Adam and Eve. He said the reason a snake represents Satan in the Bible is because serpents move in waves just like the sea. All the waves that have taken place in nature since God placed men and woman on this earth are represented by the serpent. I pointed out that without waves -- I was thinking of physics and Hertzian waves -- there would be no such thing as light or movement of any kind in the universe. He answered triumphantly, 'That's right. Without waves we'd have perfect peace, wouldn't we!' It is impossible to have any kind of logical argument with him.

**IRIS:**

It all sounds crazy. But is he mad in the legal sense?

**JONATHAN:**

His IQ is below average. And his personality is unbalanced. I suspect that his claim to be able to see the future is a kind of compensation for feelings of inferiority.

**IRIS:**

Why should he feel inferior when he can perform mathematical calculations that are beyond the power of most people.

**JONATHAN:**

It separates him from normal people. He's not totally stupid -- he has what you might call a certain peasant cunning. For example, talking about himself he quoted the words from the Bible: 'A prophet is not without honour save in his own country and his own house.'

**IRIS:** And yet his prediction that the wall would fall down came true. Was it coincidence do you think?

**JONATHAN:**

Perhaps. But it is certainly very strange.

**IRIS:**

Did you ask him how he was able to predict it?

**JONATHAN:**

Yes, he assured me very solemnly that his friends, the prime numbers, told him. He says he can feel vibrations from objects and deduce how much longer they will last.

**IRIS:** A lot of people have strange ideas. But that doesn't necessarily mean that they're mad.

**JONATHAN:**

One has to look at the whole personality. Here, we have someone with a mind that can beat powerful calculators and yet he is incapable of grasping the simplest of scientific principles.

**IRIS:** I wonder if he could tell me how much longer my apartment block will last. The maintenance charges are getting horrendous.

**JONATHAN:** You shouldn't joke about it, Iris.

**IRIS:** I'm not joking. I am seriously trying to grasp the significance of what you have just told me.

**JONATHAN:** You cannot really appreciate how feeble his mind is until you have had a long talk with him. The man is hopelessly inadequate in every field outside a narrow range of mathematics. I'm surprised he managed to hold down his job for so long. He cannot understand other people's minds, thoughts, aspirations and motivations. He is hopeless -- he even finds tying his shoelaces very difficult. I gave him simple tests in logic which he was unable to perform. And yet he has this capacity for arithmetical calculation which

amounts to genius. Unfortunately, his talent is utterly useless, now that we have computers. He truly comes into the category of *Idiot Savant*.

**IRIS:** You're confident, then, that you will be able to convince a jury that he was of unsound mind at the time he committed the offence.

**JONATHAN:**

Yes but...

**IRIS:** But what?

**JONATHAN:**

He told me he is very reluctant to change his plea.

**IRIS:** He'll come round when he realises how much better off he will be in a mental hospital.

**JONATHAN:** He says his only crime is that he foretold the future. Oddly, in spite of his computer-like calculating powers he comes across as a very vulnerable human being. I suppose you've heard of the famous Turing test

**IRIS:**

No, what's that?

**JONATHAN:**

You interview someone in another room via a computer and try to determine if you are interviewing a real person or a computer programmed to answer questions. If I were conducting an interview with Harvey, I would immediately know that it was a human being, because he would tell me how much he loved the young nanny who died when the wall fell down. Computers don't fall in love.

**IRIS:**

Is it possible that he killed her out of jealousy?

**JONATHAN:** No, he assured me that it was the collapse of the wall that killed her and I believe he is telling the truth.

**IRIS:** If he hadn't told the police that he had predicted its collapse, they wouldn't have become suspicious in the first place. Now I'm in a situation where I have to convince a jury that even though Harvey Braithwaite knew in advance that a wall was going to collapse, he was unable to save the girl's life. They are bound to say: If he's so smart why the hell didn't he stop her from sitting by the wall in the first place. The judge will tell them that if they believe his account is true it means they have to accept his miraculous, or near miraculous, prediction. And since that defies the laws of nature they will sure as hell convict Harvey Braithwaite of murder. Judge Barnes will then commit him to one of Her Majesty's jails for life, with a tremendous sense of satisfaction at having done his duty.

**JONATHAN:**

Society doesn't like oddballs. It occurred to me while he was describing the strange animals he saw in his cell that he is a very strange animal himself.

**IRIS:**

You talk of him as though you believe he's clairvoyant.

**JONATHAN:**

It's not for me to say whether he or isn't..

**IRIS:**

If he is, I should like to ask him whether or not my daughter is going take up a fellowship she has been offered in America.

**JONATHAN:**

You don't want her to go?

**IRIS:** No, of course not.

**JONATHAN:**

I doubt if Harvey could help you! Incidentally, there was one other thing that demonstrates how naive and simple he is. He is convinced that in some future life he and the young nanny, Beverly Thompson, will come together in perfect bliss

**IRIS:**

An awful lot of people believe in that kind of romantic bosh.

**JONATHAN:**

But you don't.

**IRIS:**

Of course not.

**JONATHAN:**

Okay... Supposing I said that we owe him a great debt of gratitude for bringing us together again after all these years, what would you say?

**IRIS:**

I'd say that you're as weak-minded as Harvey and I love you for it!

**JONATHAN:**

Why didn't you love me all those years ago?

**IRIS:**

Who says I didn't?

**JONATHAN:**

You had a funny way of showing it. You ran away from me. You wouldn't talk to me. Not even on the phone. What came over you?

**IRIS:**

It was such a long time ago. I would rather not discuss it.

**JONATHAN:**

It caused me a great deal of misery.

**IRIS:**

I did what I thought was best for both of us. We both had our careers to think about.

**JONATHAN:**

I thought our relationship was much more important. I was obviously more in love with you than you were with me.

**IRIS:**

I was convinced that if we saw each other again it would lead to all sort of troubles. Let's talk about something else.

**JONATHAN:**

No, it's important to me. I want to clear up the whole wretched business. You have no idea how it affected me..

**IRIS:**

Don't exaggerate, Jonathan. We were barely out of adolescence at the time.

**JONATHAN:**

That is the best time in one's life to forge a permanent relationship.

**IRIS:**

Well, we didn't. And I was convinced that what I was doing was the very best for both of us.

**JONATHAN:**

You didn't give me any say in the matter.

**IRIS:**

Why didn't you come down from Edinburgh to Cambridge to see me?

**JONATHAN:**

I rang you dozens of time and you refused to talk to me.

**IRIS:**

You could still have traveled down to ask me why. Anyway, it's all in the distant past. Let's talk about Harvey instead. Judging from what you have told me about his marriage, at least it won't bother him being celibate if he's sent to prison. He's quite used to it. Incidentally, would it bother you?

**JONATHAN:** I think it would.

**IRIS:**

Well, I've some good news for you. It won't be necessary. Come here!

(They disappear under the bedclothes.)

## SCENE 5

Cell under the courtroom. Harvey is sitting on a chair in a dejected posture. Iris is sitting on the bed.

**IRIS:**

(Briskly) Come on now. Things aren't as bad as they seem.

**HARVEY:**

They are, if I have to say I'm guilty when I'm not.

**IRIS:**

By changing your plea you are simply admitting the truth -- namely that you were under great mental stress at the time the wall collapsed.

**HARVEY:**

But I shall be admitting that I killed the girl and I didn't.

**IRIS:**

Let me point this out to you. Circumstances have conspired against you with the result that if the jury find you guilty you will go to prison for a very long time. If you will allow me to argue that your mind was disturbed at the time the tragedy occurred you will be sent to a hospital where you will be well looked after. With suitable medical treatment you may be released after a period of time that may be considerably shorter than the sentence you will serve if you go to prison.

**HARVEY:**

Why don't they believe me when I told them that I knew the wall was going to fall down?

**IRIS:**

The prosecution will say that if you really knew this was going to happen you wouldn't have dared sit next to the girl.

**HARVEY:**

I were trying to persuade her to move.

**IRIS:**

Harvey, the jury is composed of sensible, intelligent people. Why should they believe that you knew what nobody else in the world knew, namely, that a wall which had been examined and found perfectly safe was going to collapse?

**HARVEY:**

We all know different things. We all live different lives in different worlds.

**IRIS:** We have to live in this one, Harvey. It's a very unforgiving place -- one in which young people die tragically and unnecessarily, as Beverly Thompson died.

**HARVEY:**

She would still be alive if she had listened to me.

**IRIS:**

Okay. Okay. For the last time will you tell me how you knew that the wall was going to collapse.

**HARVEY:**

Ah could feel the vibrations that were coming from t' wall.

**IRIS:** How often do you feel these vibrations as you call them?

**HARVEY:** Not often. A few times in a year.

**IRIS:**

And what do they tell you? I mean, how does the message get through? Give me an example.

**HARVEY:**

I get a series of numbers in my head and they seem to come together in a kind of explosion and they tell me what's going to happen.

**IRIS:**

When did the last one occur? Before, that is, you got into all this trouble.

**HARVEY:**

Let me see now. Last August I had this feeling that the van that collects the parcels were going to crash. I warned the driver but he wouldn't listen and he knocked somebody down on the pedestrian crossing just outside. The old lady weren't hurt that badly.

**IRIS:**

Did you get a lot of numbers in your head on that occasion?

**HARVEY:**

Oh, yes. I always get numbers. They are my best friends. They have been ever since Ah were a little child.

**IRIS:** (Looking at her watch)

I haven't much time. If I am going to change your plea, I must get a decision from you by five o'clock this afternoon. Just before I go I want you to consider this. If I leave the jury with this question of how you knew the wall was going to fall down unanswered, they will probably find you guilty. If you don't change your plea you will almost certainly be sent to prison for a very long time. But tell me this, Harvey: If I put you in the witness stand, would you be able to explain to the jury, as you have just explained to me, how you knew in advance that the wall was going to collapse. Not, I must warn you, that they would be likely to understand your explanation.

**HARVEY:**

I would tell them that there are some things that none of us understand. Ask a musician how he composes all those notes and he couldn't answer you no more than I

**Harvey (Cont'd):**

can tell you about all those numbers. Like Ah said, all our worlds differ. There's a male world and a female world and a dog world and a cat world, an ant world, a fly world and a butterfly world. Scientists says there's only one world -- the one they can see through a microscope or a telescope. But they're wrong. Numbers are part of my world and they sometimes tell me what's going to happen. God's house has many mansions, so there must be room for my little world.

**IRIS:**

But, Harvey, what makes you think you know more than scientists. You must accept that they are a lot cleverer than you.

**HARVEY:**

I suppose so. But the Almighty made me different. Perhaps he did it as a joke. But it isn't a joke, is it, since it got me into this situation.

**IRIS:**

I suspect you may be right, Harvey. But that doesn't alter the fact that most people, including the judge and jury, are suspicious and perhaps even resentful of those who are different from themselves.

**HARVEY:** Well, that's their problem. When I'm gardening, I don't mind if this plant or that flower is a little slow in growing, or has a different colours and different leaves. No one plant is more important than any others. I respect their differences. I love their differences...

**IRIS:**

Unfortunately, Harvey, we have to live in this, the real world, which certainly isn't a Garden of Eden. You must give me your answer this afternoon.

**HARVEY:** Shall I be seeing that Doctor Cowan again.

**IRIS:**

I don't think so.

**HARVEY:**

Is he able to see into your mind?

**IRIS:** I don't think so.

**HARVEY:**

Well, there you are you see. We are all different, aren't we. He can't read your mind no more than you can read mine. Hang on, no don't go just yet. (He puts his hands to his head, gives an anguished cry and then sits very still, trembling.)

**IRIS:**

What is it?

**HARVEY:**

The numbers were telling me summat.

**IRIS:** What did they tell you this time?

**HARVEY:**

I don't want to talk about it.

**IRIS:**

All right, Harvey. I only wish you could tell me what the future holds for me. I'll come and see you this afternoon.

(She signals to an unseen policeman outside. The door is opened and Iris leaves the cell. Harvey stands up, paces up and down the cell, calling out prime numbers to himself.)

**HARVEY:**One, five, nine,six, seven, eight, four three. Oh, that's a lovely one! She wants me to explain how the numbers tell me that something is going to happen. The numbers keep echoing what's going to happen. Ah don't know how a dog can smell a bone from half a mile away but he can. Or how a bird can find the nest she left the previous year to go to another continent. Nobody knows how they do it. And Ah don't know how the numbers come into my mind and tell me that summat's going to happen. God, help me. Something's going to

**HARVEY (cont'd)**

happen again that I don't want to happen and I can't stop it.

## **SCENE 6**

Iris is sitting at her desk in her chambers. The telephone rings. She answers it.

Yes, it's my daughter. Tell her to come up.

(Tanya, Iris's daughter comes in and looks around.)

**TANYA:** So this is what it's like. It's just like an ordinary office.

**IRIS:** Of course. What did you expect?

**TANYA:** Where do you keep your wig and gown?

**IRIS:** In the cupboard over there. You said you wanted to come and see what it was like during your vacation. So now you know.

**TANYA:**

Do you have any interesting cases?

**IRIS:** Yes, at the moment I'm trying to save someone who claims to have psychic powers from going to prison.

**TANYA:**

What kind of psychic powers?

**IRIS:** He claims to be able to foretell the future.

**TANYA:** Can he do that sort of thing?

**IRIS:** Opinions are divided

**TANYA:**

We all try to foretell the future. The trouble is we seem to get it wrong most of the time. Would you have married Daddy if you had known you were going to divorce him?

**IRIS:**

I don't suppose so.

**TANYA:** If you hadn't met him I wouldn't have been born. And I wouldn't be under this fearful pressure all the time to do original work.

**IRIS:** Pressure is good for you. Stops you getting slack and lazy.

**TANYA:** It's all right for you. You're in a good career and making plenty of money.

**IRIS:**

I had to work hard and pass my exams when I was your age.

**TANYA:**

I suppose so. But I sometimes wonder whether it is all worth it.

**IRIS:**

We all get depressed sometimes, honey. Enjoy your holiday and you'll feel refreshed when you go back.

**TANYA:**

This case you have now with the person who claims to be psychic. What's it all about?

**IRIS:**

The defendant claims that he knew a wall would fall down and it did, killing a young girl in the process.

**TANYA:** Oh, that's the one I read about it in the newspapers. They say he either killed the girl before it fell down, or that he brought the wall down while he was attacking her. Will you be able to get him off?

**IRIS:** I'm hoping he will change his plea to guilty of manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility.

**TANYA:**

Is he guilty?

**IRIS:**

That will be for the jury to decide. My job is to weigh up all the possible outcomes and do the very best I can for him.

**TANYA:**

It seems very unfair that he has to claim that he's mad if he's not guilty.

**IRIS:**

Life is very rarely fair.

**TANYA :**

Who says he's mad, anyway?

**IRIS:**

A psychiatrist.

**TANYA:**

Doctor Jonathan Cowan, the one who's talking to your clerk downstairs.

**IRIS:**

I didn't know he was there.

**TANYA:**

Yes, he told me you knew him years ago when you were at university. He seems very nice. You should have married him instead of Daddy.

**IRIS:**

We had a brief affair, that's all.

**TANYA:**

It's funny, isn't it. If you had married Doctor Jonathan Cowan, someone else would have been born instead of me. And in that case, where would I be?

**IRIS:**

For goodness sake! What a ridiculous speculation..

**TANYA:**

You know, Mummy dear, sometimes -- but I grant only sometimes -- you behave just like an old fashioned prat.

**IRIS:**

What on earth are you talking about?

**TANYA:**

Just because you can't answer the question I asked you, doesn't mean that one shouldn't ask it.

**IRIS:**

But why ask a question that you know is completely unanswerable.

**TANYA:**

Because that's how the world advances. That's what a scientist is supposed to do. Science is not like your world where everything depends on what's written in down in dusty law books. If you don't ask a question you don't stand any chance whatsoever of getting an answer. I asked you where would I be if you had married someone else. The answer, according to some scientists, is that I would be in a different universe.

**IRIS:**

Oh, God! -- you're beginning to sound like Harvey Braithwaite.

**TANYA:**

Perhaps in that case he's not as crazy as you make out.. Anybody who can pull hundreds of prime numbers out of the air can't be all that crazy.

**IRIS:**

Who told you about that?

**TANYA:** Jonathan Cowan, while we were chatting downstairs. By the way, he seems quite smitten with you.

**IRIS:**

I wouldn't say that.

**TANYA:** Well, I would. Here he is...

(Jonathan enters Iris's office.)

**JONATHAN:**

Hello, Iris. I met Tanya downstairs. A budding physicist, by golly. I never could understand all that stuff.

**TANYA:**

It's not all that difficult. It's just the way you are trained to think. The trouble nowadays is that we are all in little boxes. People who study the Arts don't understand Science and vice versa. And lawyers understand the Law but practically nothing else.

**IRIS:**

Isn't she terrible, Jonathan. You can see what I have to put up with.

**JONATHAN:**

She's lovely. A real credit to you.

**TANYA:**

Mother wants to have a nice dull conformist clone of herself for a daughter. I have to go now. It was nice meeting you, Jonathan.

(She kisses him impulsively on the cheek and leaves.)

**JONATHAN:**

Well, that was a nice surprise. She's lovely. And clever, too.

**IRIS:**

What have you come to see me about?

**JONATHAN:**

I was giving a lecture at a hospital near here and thought I'd pop in to see you. Did you enjoy our weekend?

**IRIS:**

It made me feel young again.

**JONATHAN:**

Seeing your daughter reminded of what things were like when we were young. Wasn't life wonderful then!

**IRIS:**

Not all the time.

**JONATHAN:**

Do you think we might have made a go of it if we had got married?

**IRIS:**

It's strange you should ask that. Tanya was speculating about where she would be if I hadn't met her father.

**JONATHAN:**

How's Harvey?

**IRIS:**

I visited him this morning. He was babbling on about us all living in different worlds. Coincidentally, my daughter, who is doing post-graduate work in Quantum theory and Relativity talks the same kind of gibberish. But could a simple fellow like Harvey know anything about modern physics? He's hardly read a book in his life from what I can gather.

**JONATHAN:**

Do you remember we used to read William Blake's poems in our student days?.

**IRIS:**

Vaguely. But I can't quite see the connection.

**JONATHAN:**

He was a mystic, remember, and Harvey claims to have mystical powers. And he certainly possesses some. You must admit that his capacity to produce those immensely long prime numbers is amazing.

**IRIS:**

My only concern is in getting the best deal for him that the law allows. You can see the practical difficulties that would arise if one accepts Harvey Braithwaite's version of events. The jury will say, if he knew a tragedy was going to occur, why the hell didn't he stop it and save us the expense and inconvenience of a criminal trial.

**JONATHAN:**

I haven't changed my conclusions about Harvey. He is undoubtedly mentally subnormal, in spite of his mathematical skills.

**IRIS:**

Well, I'm glad you still agree that he's mad. The poor chap had another attack of prognostication while I was with him, But he wouldn't tell me what it was all about.

**JONATHAN:** You didn't ask him whether your daughter is going to take up that fellowship in America?

**IRIS:** Of course not.

**JONATHAN:**

Do you remember that when I lost my wallet in bed I told you that it gave me a feeling of déjà vu?

**IRIS:**

Yes. It was probably something Freudian.

**JONATHAN:**

Don't believe all that Freudian stuff.. Déjà vu is an emotional echo usually triggered off by something similar that happened in the past.

**IRIS:** Very interesting. By the way, I think I should have mentioned that there is another aggravating factor in the case against Harvey. The girl was pregnant. The prosecution have suggested that when he learned this was the case it brought about a frenzied attack on her.

**JONATHAN:**

I don't think that argument holds water.

**IRIS:**

Tell me, do you honestly and truly believe that he had some notion that the wall was going to collapse?

**JONATHAN:**

There is no doubt that Harvey genuinely believes he has the power to foretell the future. The fact that the wall did fall down at the time he said it was going to may have been sheer coincidence and confirmed in his own mind that he has these occult powers. Coincidences

**JONATHAN (Cont'd)**

happen all the time. If I predicted that your telephone was going to ring as soon as I have counted up to ten and it did, would it be so remarkable? (Begins counting) One, two, three...

The telephone rings. Iris, looking very disturbed, answers it and says:

**IRIS:**

Hello, Tanya. No I'm quite all right. Something caught in my throat. What's that. Yes...yes...yes. I promise, Goodbye. ( She puts the phone down.) That was Tanya on her mobile.. She wants all three of us to have lunch tomorrow. I think she's fallen for you. It gave me quite a start just now. But then my telephone rings all day long.

**JONATHAN:**

Nevertheless, it's a perfect illustration of how Harvey's prediction happened to come true.

**IRIS:**

Not really. Telephones ring all day but walls don't fall down that often.

**JONATHAN:**

You obviously don't think Harvey has precognitive powers. I'm not sure myself. But it's ironic that even if he were capable of forecasting the result of the Grand National he wouldn't bother to place a bet. Nature appears to have given him a wonderful gift and has made sure that he cannot benefit from it.

**IRIS:**

Possessing such a gift -- that is if he does possess it -- caused this horrible thing to happen to him. By the way, I wonder why Tanya wants us all to have lunch together.

**JONATHAN:**

She probably finds the idea of us all old folk meeting up again rather romantic.

**IRIS:**

Did you ever regret that we never married?

**JONATHAN:**

Of course. I was absolutely heartbroken at the time. I just couldn't credit why you wouldn't speak to me after the holiday.

**IRIS:**

We were a long way apart.

**JONATHAN:**

A few hundred miles shouldn't make any difference when two people are in love,

**IRIS:**

Obviously I wasn't in love.

**JONATHAN:**

Then why the hell did you sleep with me?

**IRIS:**

Curiosity.. I wanted to know what sex was all about.

**JONATHAN:**

You said at the time that you loved me.

**IRIS:**

Perhaps I did. But something happened that made me change my mind.

**JONATHAN:**

My inept love-making?

**IRIS:**

No. I had nothing to compare it with.

**JONATHAN:**

Then what was it? Did I have bad breath or something? You enjoyed going to bed with me the other night.

**IRIS:**

I don't have to explain myself.

**JONATHAN:**

Yes you do. I deserve an explanation after all these years. I shan't see you again if you don't give me one.

**IRIS:**

Don't shout. My secretary might hear you.. Perhaps it was because you said something in your sleep.. It made me think you were disturbed.

**JONATHAN:**

Mentally disturbed?

**IRIS:** Yes, and after you woke up you talked a whole lot of gibberish.

**JONATHAN:**

What about?

**IRIS:** How do you expect me to remember after all these years! But I remember feeling very angry and upset.

**JONATHAN:**

I had a nightmare. Losing my wallet in bed the other night reminded me of it. But for the life of me I can't recall the connection.

**IRIS:**

I shall be relieved when this case is over. This stuff with Harvey is weird.. I prefer to live in a normal world and deal with plain, ordinary murders

**JONATHAN:**

You mean people who just lose their tempers and kill each other.

**IRIS:**

Exactly.

**JONATHAN:**

Strange things happen all the time. One can sympathise with Harvey when you think about it. After all, there could be nothing worse in this world than to be able to see one's fate and be powerless to alter it.

**SCENE 7 FLASHBACK**

The countryside at night. Iris and Jonathan, in their student days, are occupying a sleeping bag. A transistor radio by the sleeping bag is playing a record of Bob Dylan's Starry, Starry Night.

**IRIS:**

Switch it off, please, darling.

**JONATHAN:** It's a great song.

**IRIS:** I'm not in the mood for music.

(Jonathan switches the transistor off. Wind howls mournfully in the background.)

**JONATHAN:**

What's bothering you?

**IRIS:**

Nothing. I just don't feel like listening to music.

**JONATHAN:**

Are you mad at me?

**IRIS:**

No, of course not.

**JONATHAN:**

I do love you, you know that.

**IRIS:**

I've said I'm not angry with you.

**JONATHAN:**

Are you sure? I should have used a condom.

**IRIS:**

It's okay. It's the wrong time of the month.

**JONATHAN:**

Well, it was a sublimely beautiful experience. I shall love you forever.

**IRIS:**

No you won't.

**JONATHAN:**

Of course I will. Why do you doubt me?

**IRIS:**

Because I'll be in Cambridge and you'll be in Edinburgh. We'll hardly ever see each other..

**JONATHAN:**

Let's get married quietly without telling anyone.

**IRIS:**

It wouldn't be very sensible.

**JONATHAN:**

Don't you love me?

**IRIS:**

I do, but it would be ridiculous to marry at this stage in our lives. We'd be apart for eight months of the year. It would drive us both mad.

**JONATHAN:**

Look on the bright side -- we'd be together for four months.

**IRIS:**

Have you forgotten -- you've got to do hospital work in Glasgow. And I've got a vacation job in London.

**JONATHAN:**

Oh, God, yes. I forgot. Still, we could get married just the same.

**IRIS:**

After we have graduated. That is, if we still feel the same about each other.

**JONATHAN:**

Of course we shall. But three years seems like an eternity. I'm going to buy you a ring?

**IRIS:**

I don't want to get engaged.

**JONATHAN:**

Why not?

**IRIS:**

Everything's too uncertain.

**JONATHAN:** In what way?

**IRIS:**

We could flunk our exams. Incidentally, you were screaming in your sleep just now. I can see why you want to specialise in psychiatry.

**JONATHAN:**

Everyone has nightmares at some time or another.

**IRIS:**

I don't.

**JONATHAN:**

Perhaps you're better adjusted than I am. That's why we're so well suited.

**IRIS:**

Strange isn't it. In spite of having nightmares, you have enough confidence to want to get married. What were you dreaming about?

**JONATHAN:**

I dreamed I had I lost my wallet. I was chasing it all over the moors -- it was bobbing up and down like a will-o'-the-wisp just ahead of me. It seemed to be alive and mocking me. It was horrible.

**IRIS:** Poor darling!

**JONATHAN:**

What were you thinking of when we made love?

**IRIS:**

Pounding. You were pounding into me.

**JONATHAN:**

Is that all?

**IRIS:**

It was very nice. It made me feel complete.

**JONATHAN:**

I felt as though I was planting a huge tree that would go on into eternity, spreading its branches forever.

**IRIS:**

I hope you haven't planted anything!

**JONATHAN:**

You said it wasn't the right time of the month. But I should like to have children.

**IRIS:**

I am sure we shall some day.

(Pause)

**JONATHAN:**

They must be somewhere out there among all those stars.

**IRIS:**

Who?

**JONATHAN:** Our children.

**IRIS:** Don't be absurd.

**JONATHAN:**

They seem real to me.

**IRIS:**

They can't be anywhere until they're born.

**JONATHAN:**

I can see them in my mind's eye. And if I can do that they must already exist.

**IRIS:**

That's like saying that a photograph exists when you haven't even bought a camera.

**JONATHAN:**

We *are* the camera. We opened the shutter when we made love. That's what I was dreaming about.

**IRIS:** I thought you said you were dreaming about your wallet.

**JONATHAN:** Yes -- it was full of photographs of our children.

**IRIS:**

How absurd. We haven't got any.

**JONATHAN:**

Perhaps I was dreaming about the future. I seemed to be reaching out towards our world of tomorrow.

**IRIS:**

There may not be a tomorrow.

**JONATHAN:**

God! you're a pessimist. What do you mean by that?

**IRIS :**

We could be wiped out by a hydrogen bomb.

**JONATHAN:**

Well, even if the world ceased to exist, something, somewhere else would continue. A Creator-- a First Cause, if you like.

**IRIS:**

Jonathan, I'm surprised at you. I didn't know you were religious.

**JONATHAN:** I'm not. But one can always pretend to be.

**IRIS:**

You are an incorrigible dreamer, Jonathan. (Yawns) I'm really tired. I think I'll go to sleep.

**JONATHAN:**

Hey, just a moment. Don't you want to know what I believe?

**IRIS:** I'm too tired.

**JONATHAN** I believe that I am being dreamed of and that gives me the power to dream.... Oh, Hell, she's asleep.

The wind ceases to howl and the light fades completely.

## **Scene 8**

Restaurant interior. Iris and Tanya are sitting at a table by a window.

**IRIS:** (Looking at her watch)

I hope Jonathan isn't late. I have to leave soon to hear the judge's summing up. Tell me again -- why were you so keen for us all to have lunch together?

**TANYA:**

Since he's obviously keen on you I think we should all get to know each other.

**IRIS:**

Do you seriously believe that I would be foolish enough to get married again?

**TANYA:**

Why not? You couldn't have found a nicer guy.

**IRIS:**

I think you'd like him for yourself.

**TANYA:** I would if he weren't so old. Will you marry him do you think?

**IRIS:** You seem very keen for me to get married.

**TANYA:**

Yes. I have my own selfish reasons I won't have to worry about you if I take up that fellowship in California.

**IRIS:**

I had already advised you to take it.

**TANYA**

Yes, but if you remarry, I can go without any qualm of conscience.

**IRIS:**

Getting married again takes a lot of thinking about. Ah, here he is ...

(Jonathan arrives a little breathless, hangs his coat on the coat stand and sits down.)

**JONATHAN:**

Sorry, ladies. Terrible traffic. How are you both?

**IRIS:** I have to leave very soon to hear the judge's summing up in the Braithwaite case.

**JONATHAN:**

How do you think it will go?

**IRIS**

It is not every day that an accused asks a jury to believe he possesses precognitive powers. Naturally, I am a little worried. It's a pity we don't have the American jury system. In those circumstances, I would have requested jurors who believe in that sort of nonsense.

**JONATHAN:**

I still find it hard to think of him as a criminal.

**IRIS:**

I'm afraid the jury may think differently. Let's order. I haven't much time.

(She passes the menus around.)

**TANYA:** He doesn't sound like a murderer.

**IRIS:**

His insistence that he knew the wall would fall down combined with the fact that he didn't save the girl gave the prosecution a powerful argument.

**TANYA:** The Second Law of Thermodynamics says everything falls down in the end. This applies to every wall and every building as well as to every living thing.

**TANYA (Cont'd)**

So it might have been sheer coincidence. The alchemists in medieval times believed that Philosopher's Stone existed that would provide a single answer to all the questions of the universe. Einstein translated from the German means One stone. He spent his life trying to find that single answer. Isn't that an extraordinary coincidence!

**JONATHAN:**

Perhaps his name predisposed him to look for the Philosopher's Stone.

**TANYA:**

I think a giant computer in the sky links everything together and rings a bell when it finds strings that have something in common.

**JONATHAN:**

All this doesn't explain how Harvey obtained information about the future.

**TANYA:**

Imagine there's a mind out there much greater than our own, positioned so that it sees over the time-horizon. Such a mind might have told him that the wall was going to fall down.

**JONATHAN:**

If someone knows in advance what is going to happen. it means we have no Free Will?

**TANYA:**

Perhaps we're occasionally allowed to hear faint warning bells. And perhaps Harvey is more attuned to them than we are.

**IRIS:**

This is such a ridiculous discussion. Where is the waiter?

**TANYA:**

Mother, one should never stop speculating. That is how we unravel the mysteries of life.

**IRIS:**

Do you want the fish or the chicken?

**TANYA:** The fish -- chicken encourages battery farming.

**IRIS:** Jonathan?

**JONATHAN:**

What? Oh, I'll have the fish as well. What sort of fish is it? Oh, never mind. No, what I was going to say is that if we postulate a cosmic mind it solves a lot of problems. Cold reason tells me to be agnostic but the obvious fact that some of my patients get solace from their religion sometimes pulls me the other way.

**IRIS:**

I shall get cross with both of you in a moment. My client is languishing in a cell awaiting the verdict and you are both sitting here just playing with words.

**TANYA:**

Playing with ideas, Mother, not just words, And now I have got something to tell you guys.

**IRIS:**

What exactly?

**TANYA:**

I think you should get married.

**IRIS:**

Jonathan, I must apologise for my daughter.

**JONATHAN:**

No need to apologise.

**IRIS:**

Well, I shan't marry you. And Tanya, you've made me very angry.

**JONATHAN:**

Don't be cross with her. I was going to ask you, anyway.

**IRIS:**

Jonathan, you're very sweet. You always say the right thing... But I must go. I can't wait any longer. I must get to the Old Bailey to hear the judge's summing up.

(Iris grabs her coat from the stand and leaves the restaurant.)

**TANYA:**

I'm so sorry for putting you in a very awkward situation.

**JONATHAN:** It's okay.

**TANYA:** I thought she would go all starry-eyed when I made that suggestion.

**JONATHAN:**

You're forgetting that your mother is a lawyer. She likes to consider all the possibilities. I think she was a little upset by the idiotic conversation we were having.

**TANYA:**

Do you know why I am keen for you both to get married? I like romantic endings -- she told me she had an affair with you long ago before she married my father. What went wrong?

**JONATHAN:**

We went on a hiking trip together and it was never the same afterwards. She seemed to go right off me.

**TANYA:** Why did you allow it to happen?

**JONATHAN:** She just didn't want to know me.

**TANYA:** Did you by any chance make her pregnant?

**JONATHAN:** Whatever gave you that idea?

**TANYA:**

Something my mother said once.

**JONATHAN:**

Good heavens! That's terrible. I don't believe it. What happened?

**TANYA:**

She had an abortion.

**JONATHAN:**

Oh, God! Why the hell didn't she tell me?

**TANYA:** She should have. It was your baby as much as hers.

**JONATHAN:**

I thought she had just fallen out of love with me. She probably did it to protect me. But why did she tell you?

**TANYA:**

Because she wanted me to warn me against it ever happening to me. She said it was very traumatic. I didn't know it was you who was the father. I'm just putting two and two together.

**JONATHAN:**

I feel terrible. I shall have to make it up to her some way....We were discussing coincidences before. They seem to happen much more often than we think. All those years ago when we were on a rambling holiday I had the most frightening dream. I was roaming in the darkness over hills and lakes, searching everywhere for a wallet containing photographs of children. Recently I lost my wallet again and it sparked off an intense feeling of *déjà vu*.

**TANYA:**

Would you have liked her to have had the baby?

**JONATHAN:**

Of course. That must have been the nearest I have ever been to parenthood.

**TANYA:**

Do you really believe that you dreamed the future?

**JONATHAN:** Who knows. Perhaps I was just worried about the possible outcome of having unprotected sex.

**TANYA:**

Perhaps the dream was telling you that something was within your grasp if only you reached out for it positively enough.

**JONATHAN:** . I suppose there are such things as premonitory dreams. One reads about them in the Old Testament.

**TANYA:** Perhaps Harvey Braithwaite has premonitory dreams when he goes into a trance-like state over his prime numbers.

**JONATHAN:** You would have made a good psychiatrist, Tanya.

**TANYA:** : Why didn't Harvey make a really determined effort to prevent the nanny from sitting so close to the wall. He should have physically dragged her away kicking and screaming before the wall came down.

**JONATHAN:** He would have looked an awful fool if he dragged her away and nothing had happened.

**TANYA:** Not as big a fool as he looks now.

**JONATHAN:** You're right. We are all fools. You have just proved that I am the biggest one of all... Look, let's skip the dinner and go over the road to see what the verdict is.

## SCENE 9

CU of Judge Barnes sitting on his elevated rostrum.)

### **JUDGE:**

Did the wall come down as the result of some unexplained geophysical event about which the accused had foreknowledge? Or did he attack the girl with such ferocity that it brought about the collapse of a wall already weakened from some cause or causes unknown. I must again lay stress on the fact that experts have found no evidence whatsoever that the wall had been tampered with.

Harvey Braithwaite's world is different from that of most people. But the mere fact that he is blessed, or perhaps cursed, with an extraordinary mathematical ability does not relieve him in any way of his moral responsibilities. He has made the rather arrogant -some would say laughable -- claim that he catches glimpses of the future. If this were true it would justify his claim that he deliberately came to the park with the intention of rescuing Beverly Thompson before the wall fell down but that it fell down before he had a chance to pull her away.. It would seem much more likely on balance that he made a violent attack on the girl causing the wall, possibly weakened by subsidence or earth tremors, to collapse. The fact that afterwards he delivered the twin infants to the nearest police station may very well have been a clever ruse designed to divert attention from his crime.

Was he trying to save life or did he perform an evil deed while in the grip of madness? This is for you, the jury, to decide.

The defence has, at a late stage in the trial, presented the argument that at the time this tragic event occurred Harvey Braithwaite was mentally disturbed and suffering from a diminished sense of responsibility. You have heard the evidence of two psychiatrists and you must decide whether the accused is an old fashioned seer with the power to see into the future, or a pathological liar who carried out a violent attack on the girl, thus fulfilling his own prophecy that the wall would come down. The bizarre story he told the police, as I have said, may have been cleverly designed to cover up his criminal action ....

(A note is handed to the judge)

**JUDGE BARNES:** I have just been informed that the prisoner has hanged himself in his cell. The case is closed. The jury is dismissed.

**SCENE: 10**

Iris, Tanya and Jonathan are again sitting at the restaurant. The table is laid out for tea. Tanya offers scones all round, takes one herself and eats it

**TANYA:**

Mmm...that's delicious. Do try one, Mother.

**IRIS:**

I'm not hungry.

**TANYA:** I'm sorry. Of course you're upset. You must have got to know Harvey very well.

**IRIS:**

I didn't understand him at all. He seemed absolutely weird. Almost inhuman. But yes, I am upset. The police should have kept a better watch over him. Apart from that I am angry at Judge Barnes's summing up. I laid tremendous stress on the fact that the accused was not of a sufficiently powerful build to bring down the wall. But he ignored that absolutely vital point.

**JONATHAN:**

He didn't finish his summing up. Perhaps he was going to mention it later on.

**TANYA:**

Well, the poor man's dead. I just couldn't see why he was accused in the first place.

**IRIS:**

He had been pestering the girl. There's no doubt that he was jealous of her boy friend and angry with her for becoming pregnant. As for the wall falling down when it did...Let me put it you this way. If a man predicted that a girl would fall under a bus and he happened to be standing on the pavement beside her when it happened, you'd be very suspicious, wouldn't you. Especially if he had a strong motive for killing her.

**JONATHAN:**

Sometimes the act of prediction can help to bring about the very event one is predicting.

**IRIS:** Sheer superstition!

**JONATHAN:**

Not at all. If I tell a patient that he is going to get better he usually does.

**IRIS:**

Are you suggesting that Harvey's prediction in some way undermined the wall?

**JONATHAN:**

Of course not. That would be absurd.

**TANYA:** It is accepted in Quantum physics that the observer affects the outcome of experiments.

**IRIS:**

That may happen in the quantum world but not the real world. On the other hand, I have just remembered that when I last visited him in his cell he had one of his periodic fits of prediction. He was terribly agitated. Perhaps he foresaw his own death.

**JONATHAN:**

That may have been the exact moment when formed the intention to kill himself.

**TANYA:** Now that he is in eternity he'll have an infinite number of primes to play with.

**IRIS:**

It is a terrible tragedy. I feel that I failed him in some way.

**TANYA:**

You did the very best you could for him. I think the trouble was that, lacking absolute faith in his own prophecy because he didn't physically prevent the girl from sitting on the park bench under the wall.

**IRIS:**

The trouble is few of us trust our hunches.

**TANYA:**

That is why you two never got together.

**IRIS:** Just as well for you. If we hadn't split up you wouldn't have been born.

**TANYA:** That wouldn't have mattered in the least.

**IRIS:** What an ungrateful thing to say!

**TANYA:**

If I had waited another thousand years to be born, I might have been born into a much better world where everyone is happy and people like Harvey are not scorned and doubted.

**IRIS:**

I don't know where I got this daughter of mine from. It's as though she has come from another planet.

The younger generation always come from another planet. Which is precisely why we don't understand their language.

**IRIS:**

Well, I must go back to my chambers. I have a lot of work to do. Telephone me soon, Jonathan.

**JONATHAN:** I shall.

(Iris gets up. Jonathan helps her on with her coat and sits down as she exits.)

**TANYA:** I'm sorry my mother rejected you all those years ago. I would much rather have had you as a father.

**JONATHAN:**

You may yet have me as a stepfather.

**TANYA:**

I shall be going to America soon. It's a funny thing but I shall always wonder about what might have happened to you both if you had acted differently. Perhaps there are other worlds in which our alternative selves play out our lives in totally different circumstances.

**JONATHAN:**

Isn't that an unorthodox view for a scientist.

**TANYA:**

It's a permissible speculation. Perhaps Harvey really did catch occasional glimpses of these other worlds. Life is really strange. Look at how the chance fall of a brick wall enabled you and my mother to renew an old romance.

**JONATHAN:**

This time I won't let her get away.

Titles roll against the background of a red brick wall.

END

NB The character of Harvey in the play is loosely based on Dr. Oliver Sacks's tale of the Twins with mathematical skills in his book: *The MAN Who MISTOOK HIS WIFE for a HAT* (Harper Perennial, a division of HarperCollins Publishers)

The prime numbers Harvey speaks during the play have not been checked. The author will be happy to substitute genuine primes if the play is produced.

