

# The Struggle for my Reason: Impressing God

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SCENE 1 (PROLOGUE): INT. SCHREBER'S ROOM. MORNING. 1901. (01:05)

**SFX:** (BIRD-SONG: FIRST *BLACKBIRDS* FADED IN, FULL THROTTLE FOR FIVE SECONDS, THEN FADING IN *FINCHES*, THEN *WOODPECKERS*. *BLACKBIRDS* FADE OUT WHEN THE FOLLOWING TEXT STARTS, BIRDS IN B/G UNDER TEXT (*FINCHES* AND *WOODPECKERS*), *SWALLOWS* FADED IN UNDER TEXT, THEN *SPARROWS*, *FINCHES* FADED OUT UNDER TEXT; BIRD-SOUND FADED UP WHEN TEXT ENDS, *CROWS* FADED IN).

SCHREBER: (FROM MEMOIRS). The month of November, 1895, marks an important time in the history of my life and in particular in my own ideas of the possible shaping of my future. I remember the period distinctly; it coincided with a number of beautiful autumn days when there was a heavy morning mist on the Elbe. During that time the signs of transformation into a woman became so marked on my body, that I could no longer ignore the imminent goal at which the whole of my development was aiming. In the immediately preceding nights my male sexual organ might actually have been retracted had I not resolutely set my will against it, still following the sense of my manly honour; so near completion was the miracle. Soul-voluptuousness had become so strong that I myself received the impression of a female body, first on my arms and hands, later on my legs, bosom, buttocks and other parts of my body.

**SFX:** (BIRD-SONG FADED UP, *SWALLOWS* AND *SPARROWS*. *SWALLOWS* FADED OUT. SOON *CROWS* ARE FADED IN AND UP. CROSSFADE WITH SCENE 2).

SCENE 2: INT. SCHREBER'S ROOM. MORNING, NOVEMBER 1893. (01:45)

**SFX:** (HUMMING NOISE [FLANNER?]. ECHO ON THE WHOLE SCENE.

BIRD-SONG: SPARROWS. CROSS-FADED WITH LAST SCENE. KEEP  
BIRD-SONG IN B/G).

(VOICES: SOFT WHISPER - SOFT, LISPING NOISES. SOME OF THE  
SENTENCES GO VERY FAST, MANY A TIME ONE HAS NOT ENDED  
HIS WORDS WHEN THE SECOND STARTS HIS SENTENCE).

(SCHREBER'S NERVES ARE SPEAKING, HIS MOUTH IS CLOSED – HE IS  
“THINKING”. The Birds-(voices)-scenes are technically similar to this scene).

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VOICE 1: Concerning Him Who is and shall be ...

SCHREBER: You mean God?

VOICE 2: And the tested souls, the Devils, Assistant Devils, Senior Devils and  
Basic Devils.

SCHREBER: Meaning untested souls.

VOICE 1: The human race?

SCHREBER: Fleeting-improvised-men, that is to say Devils. Carrot-red.

VOICE 2: The basic devil ...

VOICE 1: Judas Iscariot.

VOICE 2: The Devil's ...

VOICE 1: ... Kitchen ...

SCHREBER: ... the Asylum ...

VOICE 2: ... the God's Nerve-Institute.

VOICE 1: We are ...

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SCHREBER: ... the Rays, Souls. Jehovah rays, Zoroaster rays, Thor and Odin rays.

VOICE 2: The lower ...

SCHREBER: ... God, Ariman, the Sun God – the higher God: Ormuzd, at a colossal distance.

VOICE 1: The forecourts of heaven ...

VOICE 2: ... being part of God. Miraculous structure.

VOICE 1: Daniel Furchtegott Flechsig ...

VOICE 2: Assistant Devil.

VOICE 1: Soul murderer.

VOICE 2: Soul murders. Flechsig.

VOICE 1 AND 2: Soul murders.

VOICE 1: God's omnipotence ...

VOICE 2: ... Leader of rays. A seer of spirits ...

VOICE 1 AND 2: ... merely a Schreber soul.

VOICE 1: Help

VOICE 2: You must be ...

SCHREBER: Unmanned?

VOICE 1 AND 2 (HARMONIZING – FIFTHS NOTES): Unmanned.

VOICE 2: Why do you not say it ...

SCHREBER: ... aloud? Because I am ...

VOICE 2: ... stupid perhaps?

VOICE 1: 14 Leipzig Catholics.

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VOICE 2: The scorching ray. The leader ...

SCHREBER: ... the pope?

VOICE 2: Voluptuous excesses.

VOICE 1: Eternal Jew. Wandering Jew.

VOICE 2: Forsaken.

VOICE 1: Forsaken.

VOICE 1 AND 2: Forsaken!

SCHREBER: Forsaken!!

VOICE 2: Fight the attendants ...

VOICE 1: ... it's your duty. Prove your manly courage.

**SFX:** (BIRD-SONG FADE IN: ADD CROWS).

VOICE 2: Purifying baths.

VOICE 1: Holy baths.

SCHREBER: I don't want to drown!

VOICE 1 (NEXT THREE SENTENCE FAST, RYTHMICALLY): Venom juice.

SCHREBER: Poison myself!

VOICE 1 AND 2 (LOUD): Buried alive!!!

**SFX:** (CROWS FADE UP. CROSS-FADE TO A PIANO VERSION OF "THE VENGEANCE OF HELL BOILS IN MY HEART, DEATH AND DESPAIR" FROM 'THE MAGIC FLUTE'. FADE OUT UNDER TEXT IN NEXT SCENE).

SCENE 3: INT. DR. WEBER'S OFFICE. DAY. (02:30)

WEBER: (PROOF-READING). Sonnenstein, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1899. The retired *Senatspräsident* Daniel Paul Schreber, Doctor of Law was admitted to this Country Asylum on 29<sup>th</sup> of June 1894 for treatment and has been here ever since.

According to the formal certificate of Professor Flechsig of Leipzig issued for the transfer of the patient to this Asylum, President Schreber had already had a serious attack of hypochondria in 1884-1885; he recovered from it but was admitted for the second time to the University Psychiatric Clinic in Leipzig eight years later, on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1893. At the beginning of the stay there he mentioned mostly hypochondriacal ideas, complained of softening of the brain, that he would soon die, etc.; but ideas of persecution soon appeared, based on hallucinations, while simultaneously great sensitivity to light and noise made their appearance. Later disturbances of common sensation, ruled his whole feeling and thinking; he thought he was dead and rotten, suffering from the plague and that he was going through more terrible states than anybody had ever known. All that for a holy purpose, as indeed he still maintains. He sat for hours completely stiff and immobile (hallucinatory stupor); at other times the morbid ideas tortured him so much that he wished for death, repeatedly made attempts at drowning himself in the bath and demanded the “cyanide destined for him”. Gradually the delusions took on a mystical and religious character, he communicated directly with God, devils were playing their games with him, he saw “miracles”, heard “holy music”, and finally even believed that he was living in another world.

**SFX:** (“HOLY MUSIC” FADES IN).

WEBER: In this Asylum he was at first completely inaccessible and shut off in himself, lay or stood immobile and stared with frightened eyes straight ahead of

himself into space; gradually the patient's moderate sleep was disturbed, a further excitement manifested itself in loud laughter in attacks. That striking behaviour was a reaction to hallucinations as he stated that the world had come to an end, and that he and the persons around him were only lifeless shadows. According to his hypochondriacal ideas his body was completely changed, one lung had disappeared altogether, and he could hardly breathe sufficiently to remain alive.

**SFX:** ("HOLY MUSIC" FADES UP. PRECEDING TEXT FADES OUT, STARTING FOUR LINES ABOVE. MUSIC: CROSS-FADE WITH BIRD-SONG).

SCENE 4: INT. SCHREBER'S ROOM. MORNING, APRIL 1894. (03:45)

**SFX:** (SIMILAR TO SCENE 2. BIRD-SONG: BLACKBIRDS CROSS-FADED IN)

VOICE 2: The work of the past fourteen thousand years has been lost.

VOICE 1: Leipzig has been dug out and removed to some other celestial bodies.

SCHREBER: How can that be?

VOICE 1: Little men ...

SCHREBER: ... a few millimeters; dripping down on my head in thousands.

VOICE 1: We are from the stars ...

VOICE 2: ... Cassiopeia, Wega ...

VOICE 1: ... Capella, Gemma. Wega has to be given up.

VOICE 2: Venus has been flooded.

VOICE 1: The whole solar system has to be disconnected.

VOICE 2: The Cassiopeia stars have to be drawn together into a single sun.

VOICE 1: Only the Pleiades can still be saved.

VOICE 2: For heaven's sake - that is a human being with several heads.

VOICE 2: *The seer of spirits.*

SCHREBER: Schreber?

VOICE 1 AND 2: Schreber.

VOICE 1: Hyperbolic woman!

SCHREBER: Schreber?



VOICE 2: You. Jesuit Novice in Ossegg!

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VOICE 1: A Burgomaster of Klattau!

VOICE 2: An Asian girl who has to defend her honour against a victorious French officer!

SCHREBER: Schreber?

VOICE 2: The running out of the clocks of the world.

SCHREBER: I am the last human being left.

VOICE 2: 212 years are allotted to the earth.

VOICE 1: Devastating epidemics.

VOICE 2: The starry sky has been largely extinguished.

SCHREBER: I crossed my wife's grave.

VOICE 1: Leprosy!

VOICE 2: *Lepra orientalis, Lepra indica.*

VOICE 1: *Lepra hebraica, Lepra aegyptica.*

SCHREBER (INCANTATION): I am the first leper corpse and I lead a leper corpse.

VOICE 2: A holy disease ...

SCHREBER: ... disease of nerves.

VOICE 1: Plagues!

VOICE 2: The blue plague, the brown plague.

VOICE 1: The white plague, the black plague. Bubonic plague!

VOICE 2: Evaporations of the body.

VOICES 1 AND 2 (HARMONIOUS: CLOSE TO SINGING, PREFERABLY 5<sup>TH</sup> 'S.

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SLOWLY): Soul-voluptuousness!!!

SCHREBER: Take these talking scorpions out of my head!

VOICE 1: Aryan scorpions.

VOICE 2: Catholic scorpions.

SCHREBER: Black bears, great and small, sitting around me with glowing eyes.

VOICE 1: Yellow men.

SCHREBER: My head is surrounded with ...

VOICE 1: ... a shimmer of light ...

VOICE 2: ... massive concentration of rays ...

SCHREBER (SLOWLY, ADMIRINGLY): ... like the halo of Christ.

VOICE 1: Crown of rays.

VOICE 2: The moon is Mars.

SCHREBER (DIGNIFIED, AMAZED): I have entered into not only continual contact with departed souls, but with the totality of all souls and with God's omnipotence itself.

VOICE 1: Determinant nerve.

SCHREBER: I don't want a determinant nerve. Take these Jesuits away with their determinant nerve.

VOICE 1: Flechsig's hell.

VOICE 2: He calls himself ...

VOICE 1: ... God Flechsig to his wife ...

VOICE 2 (CHUCKLES): ... so she thinks he is mad.

SCHREBER: I probably have Professor's Flechsig's whole soul in my body.

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VOICE 2: Read this newspaper.

SCHREBER: My own obituary notice!

VOICE 2: English bishop ...

VOICE 1: ... with sixteen English rays.

VOICE 2: Number 14 ...

SCHREBER: ... the director of the Asylum? (BEAT). Highest number?

VOICE 1: 240.

VOICE 2: Flechsig serving Schreber ...

SCHREBER: ... as a fleeting-improvised charwoman.

VOICE 1: You are accused ...

VOICE 2: ... of masturbation.

VOICE 1: The Advancing Flechsig and Councillor Gerhardt ...

VOICE 1: ... suspended under Cassiopeia ...

VOICE 2: ... students Corps of Saxonia. ...

VOICE 1: ... pushed back into their graves ... (STARTS WAILING).

VOICE 2: ... by a strong hand. (WHIMPERS).

VOICE 1 AND 2: (WAILING, WHIMPERING: FIVE SECONDS)

VOICE 1: Flechsig's soul parts.

SCHREBER: How many?

VOICE 1: 40 to 60.

VOICE 2: Superior and middle Flechsig. Bigger souls.

VOICE 1: New human beings ...

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VOICE 2: ... out of Schreber's spirit. Smaller beings. A new human world.

VOICE 1: National saint.

VOICE 2: Divine veneration ...

SCHREBER: Schreber!

VOICE 1: God ...

VOICE 2: ... Apostle rays of the little people...

SCHREBER: ... in my belly. (WITH SELF-PRAISE). With a practical turn of mind,  
like myself.

VOICE 1: Law for the restoration of the rays.

SCHREBER: Two suns.

VOICE 1 AND 2 (SLOWLY, NEARLY SINGING, 5<sup>TH</sup> 'S): Two suns!!!

**SFX:** (MUSIC: PIANO VERSION OF THE ARIA "OH I FEEL IT HAS  
VANISHED, GONE FOR EVER, LOVE'S DELIGHT" FROM 'THE  
MAGIC FLUTE'. FADE OUT IN NEXT SCENE).

SCENE 5: INT. SCHREBER'S ROOM. JULY 1901. (04:25)

SCHREBER (FROM SCHREBER'S DEFENSE. REHEARSING. UNSUPPORTED VOICE. HIS SATISFACTION WITH HIS TEXT CAN BE DETECTED IN THE VOICE): As far as the danger goes into which I place *myself* by making my "Memoirs" public, "laying myself bare" or compromising myself, I shoulder the risk in full confidence and with complete equanimity. The worst that could happen to me after all, is that one would consider me mentally deranged and *this one does already in any case*. I could therefore hardly lose anything. But I cannot convince myself that there is any fear of people thinking less of me after reading my "Memoirs" attentively. If sexual matters are widely discussed, this is not due to my taste or predilection, but rests entirely on the fact, that these matters have played a very large role in the communications of the voices that talk to me, and this again is linked with the fact that voluptuousness is closely related to the state of Blessedness of departed spirits – a fact hitherto unknown to other human beings. I am sure nobody could say I have shown particular pleasure in vulgarities; on the contrary one cannot miss the moral seriousness which pervades my whole work and which seeks no other goal but the achievement of truth.

It is true that I use strong language occasionally in my Memoirs; but these words did not spring from my own spiritual soil, but are used only as far as I can see, *when I relate* the content of conversation the voices carry on with me. It is not my fault that these voices often use expressions not fit for drawing rooms; to give a faithful picture I had to render these forms of speech literally. Besides my Memoirs are not written for flappers or High School girls; no understanding person will therefore want to blame me if I have not always hit the form of expression which sensitive school matrons think fit for their charges. A person who wishes to pave a way for a new conception of religion

must be able if need be to use flaming speech such as Jesus Christ used toward the Pharisees, or Luther toward the Pope and the mighty of the world.

The surest proof of “my not compromising myself before other people” in any way, is afforded me by the behaviour of the doctors in this Asylum, among them the medical expert himself Dr. Weber. There can be no question that I have been treated very *much more respectfully* in this Asylum since the contents of my Memoirs became known and my intellectual and moral personality appreciated differently than had perhaps been possible before. Similarly I believe I would gain not lose in the moral evaluation of other people.

But it is also said that I “used insulting words about persons still living and highly respected.” This can only refer to Professor Flechsig in Leipzig. It is however not true that I used insulting words about him; I must acknowledge the *possibility* that everything reported in connection with the name Flechsig, is only to be taken as referring to the soul Flechsig as distinct from the living person, the separate existence of which although certain, cannot be explained in a natural way. The danger of penalty could perhaps rise here. But I am fully alive to this risk and prepared to run it. Should I wish to add the martyrdom of a threatened penalty to the burden of the untold suffering which has already been mine for a holy purpose, no human being in my opinion would have the right to prevent me. I cannot wish that the knowledge of God which has been revealed to me, shall vanish for ever with my death, whereby mankind would lose an opportunity of attaining truer conceptions about the beyond which may perhaps never occur again. Besides it is an open question whether Professor Flechsig would bring an action, and if he did whether such an action would lead to my punishment. In any case I refuse with due acknowledgement the *protection* planned for me: it would mean, in order to save me from a few months’ imprisonment at the most, locking me up in an Asylum *for a lifetime* deprived of my person and fortune.

SCENE 6: INT. SCHREBER'S ROOM. JUNE 1994. (01:20)

**SFX:** (BIRD-SONG: SWALLOWS. FADED IN UNDER LAST LINES OF LAST SCENE. FADE UP. FADE DOWN).

VOICE 1: The Devil's Kitchen.

VOICE 2: The Devil's Castle.

VOICE 1: Flechsig's soul's favorite expression ...

VOICE 2 (IMITATING FLECHSIG): ... among the fossils.

VOICE 1 (EXPLAINING): Among the fleeting-improvised men.

VOICE 2: Principle of light-telegraphy ...

SCHREBER: ... the mutual attraction of rays and nerves.

VOICE 1: Rascals ...

SCHREBER: ... attendants.

VOICE 2 (IN ASTONISHMENT): Good heavens.

VOICE 1: Rascal's miracles.

VOICE 2 (IN ASTONISHMENT): Hail and Thunder.

VOICE 1: Large nerve ...

SCHREBER: ... a jelly like mass about the size of a cherry.

VOICE 1: Let me ...

SCHREBER: ... find their end in Schreber's body.

VOICE 2: Encapsulated ...

SCHREBER: ... wife's nerves; dissolving in my body.

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VOICE 1: Superior Flechsig ...

VOICE 2: ... middle Flechsig.

VOICE 1: Tying-to-celestial-bodies.

VOICE 2: Writing-down-system.

VOICE 1 (ASTONISHED): Is he not unmanned yet? Take his boots off.

VOICE 2 (MOCKINGLY): Miss Schreber?

VOICE 1: You are to be *represented* as given to voluptuous excesses.

VOICE 2: Soul voluptuousness.

VOICE 1: Forsaken.

SCHREBER: Forsaken.

VOICE 2: Should we retain Schreber on the masculine side?

VOICE 1: Do not forget that rays must speak.

SCHREBER: If only my fingers were not paralyzed.

VOICE 1: If only the cursed piano-playing would cease.

VOICE 2: If only the cursed cleaning of nails would cease.

VOICE 1: Why don't you say it ...

SCHREBER (DESPERATE): ... aloud!!!

VOICE 2: Because I'm stupid perhaps.

VOICE 1: Because I'm frightened of Mr. Müller.

VOICE 1 AND 2: We have already got this!



SCENE 7: INT. SCHREBER'S OFFICE. 1899. LETTER TO WIFE. (04:20)

SCHREBER: 15<sup>th</sup> January 1899.      Dear Sabine!      The last years have been very difficult for me and I am sorry that my health has been so poor that I did not trust myself to see you, or better said I did not want you to see me in the terribly miserable state I was in. And further the last time you visited me here at the Sonnenstein Asylum I was petrified when I saw you entering my room; I had long believed that you were no more among the living. You might find this hard to believe but man must reconcile himself to the fact that things exist which are true although he cannot understand them.

One example of my sufferings was that “*scorpions*” were repeatedly put into my head, tiny crab- or spider-like structures which were to carry out some work of destruction in my head and the inner table of my skull was lined with a different brain membrane in order to extinguish my memory of my own ego. And every night I went to bed in my padded cell I doubted whether the door would open again at all in the morning.

But I feel much better now and have managed to understand why I have had to live through all these difficulties. The abnormal state of affairs arose because the Order of the World itself was out of joint and that is the reason why God turned against me and souls and rays have attacked me, but now I know better how to deal with them. Souls or their single nerves could in certain conditions assume the form of tiny human shapes, only of a few millimeters in size, and as such make mischief on all parts of my body, both inside and on the surface. For example those of them occupied with the opening and closing of my eyes, stood above the eyes in the eyebrows and there pulled the eyelids up or down as they pleased with fine filaments like cobwebs.

One can form some picture of the disagreeable sensations these happenings cause if one considers that these are the souls or rays of a whole world – somehow mechanically fastened at their point of issue – which travel around my head, and attempt to tear it asunder and pull it apart in a fashion comparable to quartering. The threads which are pulled into my head – they are also the carriers of the voices – perform a circular movement in it, best compared to my head being hollowed out from inside with a drill.

The inner voices I have been hearing the past years reiterated that it was my duty to die of hunger and in this way to sacrifice myself for God. God Himself must have known of the plan, if indeed He was not the instigator, to commit soul murder on me, and to hand over my body in the manner of a female harlot. I will explain all of this better for you later.

I am sorry that I could not write to you before but it has taken a lot of energy to deal with these attacks on my nerves and I have not been able to engage in an intellectual communication with the outer world. I hope you will visit me soon and I promise you will receive my greetings in much more respectful manner than I have been able to show you for these past years.

My love for you is unshaken. And I hope to be out of this madhouse sooner or later. Greetings and respect; yours ever. Daniel Paul Schreber.

**SFX:** (SABINE FADED IN. TEXT CROSSFADED).

SABINE (CLOSE TO CRYING. READS RATHER SLOWLY): ... respectful manner than I have been able to show you for these past years. My love for you is unshaken. And I hope to be out of this madhouse sooner or later. Greetings and respect; yours ever. Daniel ...

Oh, my dear. What horrible things life offers some people. Oh, I hope your health will improve; but – who are you now – and who will you be? Why can such thing happen? My dearest Daniel such a gifted person and so much out of the world for so many years. (SIGHS). Will you ever again be the man I

married? I was so proud of you and wanted to be such a good a wife for you.

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But the children we wanted never came. Six miscarriages, all my fault. Would this have come over you if ... (CRYING. HAS DIFFICULTY BECAUSE THE CRYING GETS GRAUDUALLY HEAVIER.) ... and you were always so good to me, such a loving man (THROUGH HEAVY CRYING); your family never liked me but you stood by me always – and now ... (CRYING HYSTERICALLY).

**SFX:** (CROSS-FADE TEXT WITH BIRD-SONG).

SCENE 8: INT. SCHREBER'S ROOM. AUTUMN-DAY. 1894. (01:40)

**SFX:** (BIRD-SONG: SPARROWS).

VOICE 1: Not the slightest movement.

VOICE 2 Listening-in-thoughts.

SCHREBER: Cursed creation of a false feeling.

VOICE 1: God Ariman.

VOICE 2 (AS GOD ARIMAN, A MIGHTY BASS): I wonder whether to make you somewhat smaller.

SCHREBER: I once had a different heart.

VOICE 1: Jew's stomach.

SCHREBER: Inferior stomach.

VOICE 1: A pure body ...

SCHREBER: ... I am immortal

VOICE 2: Little Flechsig.

VOICE 1: Little von Walter.

SCHREBER: Stop walking around on my head.

VOICE 1: Poison of intoxication.

SCHREBER: Flights of rays.

VOICE 1: Wretch ...

SCHREBER: ... Schreber.

VOICE 1: Little devils.

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SCHREBER: Little Flechsig, little von Walter, get out of my feet.

VOICE 2 (AS A LITTLE MAN): Compression-of-the-chest-miracle!

SCHREBER: No, not the compression.

VOICE 1 (AS A LITTLE MAN): The head-compressing-machine.

SCHREBER: No, not the machine. (SHOUTS): Don't saw my head asunder!!!

VOICE 1: Prince of Hell ...

SCHREBER: ... Schreber.

VOICE 2: God's omnipotence has decided, that the Prince of Hell is going to be  
burned alive.

VOICE 1: The Prince of Hell is responsible for the loss of rays.

VOICE 2: We announce victory over the beaten Prince of Hell.

VOICE 1: Not Schreber, but Flechsig is the true "Prince of Hell".

VOICE 2: Soul conception ...

VOICE 1: ... do not think about certain parts of your body.

VOICE 2: Thought of decision ...

VOICE 1: ... wishful thoughts ...

VOICE 2: ... thoughts of hope ...

VOICE 1: ... thoughts of fear.

VOICE 2: Thinking-it-over-thought.

VOICE 1: The-human-thought-of recollection.

VOICE 2: Beds ...

SCHREBER: ... feminine.

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VOICE 1: Chess ...

SCHREBER: ... masculine.

VOICE 2: Female nudes ...

SCHREBER: ... stimulate *both* sexes equally.

VOICE 2 (CLEARLY): Armamentarium ...

SCHREBER: ... distinction between masculine and feminine clothing.

VOICE 1: Do not forget that you are bound to the soul-conception.

SCHREBER: (Bellows).

VOICE 2: Now then, that is too much according to the soul-conception.

VOICE 1: Pacify it.

**SFX:** (FADE SPARROWS).

SCENE 9: INT. HARDRAHT'S HOME. JULY 1902. (01:20)

JUDGE HARDRAHT (PRACTICING HIS SPEECH): Plaintiff was *placed under tutelage* as an insane person at the instance of the Royal Prosecuting Authority by an order of the District Court at Dresden of 13<sup>th</sup> March 1900. The District Judge declared that he was convinced by virtue of Dr. Weber's expert report in whose care plaintiff had been since 1894, and by the impressions he personally gained by interrogating the patient, that plaintiff was deprived of the use of his reason and therefore incapable of managing his affairs. He held that Dr. Schreber was dominated by delusions, that he considered himself chosen to redeem the world and restore to it the lost state of Blessedness. This however he could only do by first being transformed from a man into a woman. In this sexual transformation the patient imagined himself the object of continuous divine miracles, and believed he could hear the birds and the winds talking to him, which fortified him in his belief in miracles.

A person influenced by such delusions and hallucinations is no longer master of his own free will. He is subject to external influences independent of his own will, against which he is powerless and which render him incapable of managing his actions and affairs according to practical and reasonable deliberation.

**SFX:** (CROSS FADE THE PRECEDING TEXT WITH FOLLOWING TEXT).

SCENE 10: INT. WEBER'S HOME. AFTERNOON. (07:00)

SCHREBER: This was such a tasteful dinner. Your wife is an excellent woman.

WEBER: Thank you. You are very kind.

SCHREBER: It means a lot to me to be able to make your acquaintance and get the opportunity to prove to you that my so called madness is not at all as thorough as it might seem to some people.

WEBER: You have a good mind and a clear one, not least when you write. You write very good letters.

SCHREBER: When I write the voices don't bother me as much. When I play chess or billiard, or play the piano, in fact whenever I engage in some intellectual matter my mind is in quite a good shape. And I need to talk to educated people to keep the voices away. That's why I appreciate so much to have this opportunity to talk to you and your family at these dinners.

WEBER: And it is a very good exercise for you to find a way to try to control your strange and spontaneous behaviour in front of my family.

SCHREBER: Yes, and I am progressing. That's why I was so surprised that my tutelage was made permanent in the court. And I will work now on rescinding it through legal means.

WEBER: That will be a very healthy exercise for you.

SCHREBER: You will see that my mind is absolutely clear and my reasoning without fault.

WEBER: I'm sure.



SCHREBER: One thing I want you to understand; that the voluptuousness I have mentioned to you is absolutely without any physical hedonism. It is exercised only to soften the negative rays that attack me. The hostile disposition of the rays – that is of God – ceases as soon as they are reassured that they can spend themselves in my body with soul-voluptuousness.

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WEBER: (DOUBTFUL). Indeed.

SCHREBER: Yes, it took me a long time to realize this. And I have gained insight into the nature of human thought processes and human feelings for which many a psychologist might envy me.

WEBER (SMILES): Even psychiatrists.

SCHREBER: I have come to know the soul-character so thoroughly through years of contact with them as no other human being has before. God on the other hand does not know the living human being and indeed He had no need to know him.

WEBER: Have you always been religious?

SCHREBER: Not at all. That is why I think my experiences are so valid. And it has not been easy. I gradually fought my way to an increasingly correct understanding of supernatural matters.

WEBER: And you believe that God wants you to be a woman? “. . .

SCHREBER: Everything feminine attracts God’s nerves. When the rays approach, my “nerves of voluptuousness” become more marked, my bosom bulges in a feminine way. (CLEARS HIS THROAT). In uncovering these things, I trust I have not laid myself open to the reproach of having touched upon issues of which as a man I have to be ashamed.

WEBER: I don’t think so.

SCHREBER: When I am lying in bed at night I can give myself and the rays the impression that my body has female breasts and a female sexual organ. The picturing of female buttocks on my body – *honi soit qui mal y pense* – has become such a habit that I do it almost automatically whenever I bend down. (BEAT). You are smiling.

WEBER: No, not at all.

SCHREBER: The feeling of bodily well-being rests upon soul-voluptuousness which is at times highly developed and so strong that especially when I am in bed, it requires only a little exertion of my imagination to attain such sensuous pleasure as gives a pretty definite foretaste of female sexual enjoyment in intercourse.

WEBER: Ummmmm.

SCHREBER: My whole body is filled with nerves of voluptuousness from the top of my head to the soles of my feet, such as is the case only in the adult female body. When I exert light pressure with my hand on any part of my body I can *feel* certain sting or cord-like structures under the skin; these are particularly marked on my chest where the woman's bosom is, here they have the peculiarity that one can feel them ending in nodular thickenings. Through pressure on one such structure I can produce a feeling of female sensuous pleasure, particularly if I think of something feminine. I do this, by the way, not for sensual lust, but I am absolutely compelled to do so if I want to achieve sleep or protect myself against otherwise almost unbearable pain. There are periods every day, when I float in voluptuousness so to speak, i.e. when an indescribable feeling of well-being corresponding to feminine feelings of voluptuousness pervades my whole body.

WEBER: It is good that you have found a way to sooth your pains. And there is no sensual lust?

SCHREBER: My dear doctor. Few people have been brought up according to such strict moral principles as I, and have throughout life practised such moderation especially in matters of sex. Mere low sensuousness can therefore not be considered a motive in my case; were satisfaction of my manly pride still possible, I would naturally much prefer it; nor would I ever betray any sexual lust in contact with other people. But as soon as I am alone with God, if I may so express myself, I must continually or at least at certain times, strive to give divine rays the impression of a woman in the height of sexual delight; to achieve this I have to employ all possible means, and have to strain all my intellectual powers and foremost my imagination.

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When I speak of my duty to cultivate voluptuousness, I *never mean any sexual desires toward other human beings – females – least of all sexual intercourse*, but that I have to imagine myself as a man and a woman in one person having intercourse with myself, or somehow have to achieve with myself a certain sexual excitement, which perhaps under other circumstances might be considered immoral – but which has nothing whatever to do with any idea of masturbation or anything like it.

WEBER: You speak very clearly.

SCHREBER: And I believe that God would never attempt to withdraw – which always impairs my bodily well-being considerably – but would follow my attraction without resistance permanently and uninterruptedly, if only I could *always* be playing the woman's part in sexual embrace with myself, *always* rest my gaze on female beings, *always* look at female pictures, etc.

WEBER: I have heard many strange things and this is one of them. But you will not become a woman though?

SCHREBER: I don't think so. For several years I lived in the certain expectation that one day my unmanning – transformation into a woman – would be completed; this solution seemed to me absolutely essential as preparation for the renewal of mankind, particularly while I thought the rest of mankind had perished. But whether unmanning can really be completed I dare not predict. It is therefore possible, indeed probable, that to the end of my days there will be strong indication of femaleness, but that I shall die as a man.

SCENE 11: INT. SCHREBER'S ROOM. MORNING. NOVEMBER. 1895. (1:50)

**SFX:** (SONG-BIRDS: CROWS).

VOICE 1: Are you not ashamed in front of your wife.

VOICE 2: Fancy a person who was a *Senatspräsident* allowing himself to be  
ffffffffff . . . . . (LAUGHS IN AN INTROVERTED, SHY WAY).

VOICE 1 (WITH A GRADUALLY INCREASED SPEED): David and Solomon ...

VOICE 2: ... salad and radishes ...

VOICE 1: ... little heaps of flour ...

VOICE 2: ... David and Solomon ...

VOICE 1: ... salad and radishes ...

VOICE 2: ... little heaps of flour.

VOICE 2: ... David and Solomon ...

VOICE 1: ... salad and radishes ...

VOICE 2: ... little heaps of flour. (INCREASING SPEED ENDS).

VOICE 1: Two parties have formed.

VOICE 2 (AS LOWER GOD, ARIMAN): All nonsense cancels itself out. Don't  
forget that you are tied to the soul-conception. Don't forget that the end of the  
world is a contradiction in itself.

SCHREBER: The end of the world.

VOICE 2 (AS LOWER GOD, ARIMAN): Well, since you've made the weather  
dependent on one human being's thoughts.

VOICE 1: That was not a mistake.

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VOICE 2 (AS LOWER GOD, ARIMAN): Well, you have made any holy occupation impossible.

SCHREBER: Yes!! I want to play the piano or play chess, so stop the manifold interfering miracles.

VOICE 2 (AS LOWER GOD, ARIMAN, GUILTYLY): If only *I* had not put you among the fleeting-improvised-men.

SCHREBER: Yes, you should not have.

VOICE 2 (AS LOWER GOD, ARIMAN): What is to become of the whole cursed affair? The feeling is lacking.

SCHREBER: Yes, the feeling we ought to have for every decent human being, even for the most abominable sinner .

VOICE 2 (AS LOWER GOD, ARIMAN): Hope that voluptuousness reaches a degree ...

SCHREBER ... so that divine rays will lose all *interest* in withdrawing, resulting in a solution in consonance with the Order of the World.

VOICE 1: God has colossal powers. Your resistance is hopeless. Now he should say: I will resign myself to the fact that I am stupid. (MONOTONE LIKE A BARREL ORGAN): Why do you not say it ...

SCHREBER: ... aloud.

VOICE 1 (MONOTONE LIKE A BARREL ORGAN): But then for how much longer ...

SCHREBER: ... will my defence against the power of the rays still be successful.

**SFX:** (BIRD-SONG FADES UP AND THEN DOWN SOON IN THE NEXT SCENE).

SCENE 12: INT. SCHREBER´S ROOM. DAY. (07:30)

SIDONIE: How are you my dear brother?

SCHREBER: Thank you Sidonie, much better. My head is quite clear.

SIDONIE: No voices bothering you?

SCHREBER: I suppose they will bother me in some ways for the next few years but they are not as noisy as before.

SIDONIE: It is so strange, all these voices and how you experience God and these rays.

SCHREBER: It is quite natural to me, one only has to realize the supernatural. I had never thought about matters like these before I got to experience the visions.

SIDONIE: It must have been quite shocking at first.

SCHREBER: Not really. The first one was six years ago, and I was of course very surprised when God, if I may express it so, revealed Himself to me. It has though happened only once that I have seen God´s omnipotence in its complete purity.

SIDONIE: Tell me about it.

SCHREBER: It was during a night that the lower God, Ariman, appeared. The radiant picture of his rays became visible to my inner eye, while I was lying in bed awake – it was reflected on my inner nervous system. Simultaneously I heard his voice; but it was not a soft whisper – as the talk of the other voices – it resounded in a mighty bass as if directly in front of my bedroom windows. The impression was intense, so that anybody not hardened to terrifying miraculous impressions as I was, would have been shaken to the core. And what was spoken did not sound friendly by any means: everything seemed

calculated to instill fright and terror into me and the word “wretch” was frequently heard, meaning me, a human being destined to feel God’s power and wrath and to be destroyed by God.

SIDONIE: You must have been frightened, being threatened like that?

SCHREBER: No, my impression was not of alarm and fear, but largely one of admiration for the magnificent and the sublime; the effect on my nerves was therefore beneficial despite the insults contained in some of the words. And I found myself saying “Oh how pure” - towards the majesty of the divine rays. Further, the divine rays read my thoughts and gave them verbal expression in a rhythm corresponding to the natural movement of human nerves, so that despite of all the frightening side effects, the total impression I received was a calming one and eventually I fell asleep.

SIDIONE: That was good. You have been suffering so much my dear brother. You said “The Lower God”?

SCHREBER: Yes, Ariman. Two days later, in the garden, I saw the upper God, Ormuzd, this time not with my mind’s eye but with my bodily eye. It was the sun, although not the sun in her usual appearance, but surrounded by a silver sea of rays which covered a 6<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> part of the sky. The sight was of such overwhelming splendour and magnificence that I did not dare look at it continually, but tried to avert my gaze from the phenomenon. And this was repeated on several consecutive days and lasted for several hours on each single day.

SIDIONE: This is amazing. Did someone else see this?

SCHREBER: One of the many things incomprehensible to me is that other human beings should be totally indifferent to this phenomenon. I am absolutely at a loss to make sense of the fact that such a phenomenal impression should have passed other people by.



SIDIONE: Yes, that is amazing. Really amazing. I wish that I would have such sensitivity as you have.

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SCHREBER: You should not wish for that; it has cost me a lot. I wish I could have experienced it without all the pain that I have lived through the last years. I am certain that if the influx of God's pure rays had lasted unhindered, as in the days described above and the nights following, then in a short time my recovery would have had to follow.

SIDIONE: That would have been wonderful.

SCHREBER: And The First Divine Judgment was majestic in impression and grandeur.

SIDONIE: A Divine Judgment. That must have been very interesting to you, since you are a judge yourself.

SCHREBER: A retired judge. You would have found it interesting too, even though you are not a judge. (SMILES). Very few are given direct connection with God through his rays.

SIDONIE: God has given you a special role.

SCHREBER: Yes, like Jesus Christ. Except that God is not as perfect as people think. There are so many things rotten in The Order of Things and God has not been able to steer his course straight. That is why he is in conflict with me.

SIDONIE: How unfortunate.

SCHREBER: It has been a tremendous fight. But the biggest shock was not spiritual but factual: finding out that I had been held here in this Asylum against my will through tutelage for so many years. But I will write myself out of here.

SIDONIE: How will you do that?

SCHREBER: I am writing my *Memoirs* so other people will better understand my situation; and I will also write an appeal to the Court. But I ask you not to tell anyone about what I have related to you. I will explain all of this further in my *Memoirs* so my wife will better understand my behaviour which has often seemed like actions of a madman, but all can be explained and nothing is without it's reasons.

SIDIONE: I promise my dear brother not to tell anyone.

SCHREBER: The time will come when other human beings will also have to recognize as a fact that my person has become the centre of divine miracles.

SIDIONE: Do you think maybe you might become a prophet?

SCHREBER: I don't know yet. But since God entered into nerve-contact with me exclusively, I became in a way for God the only human being, or simply the human being around whom everything turns, to whom everything that happens must be related.

SIDIONE: This is so remarkable.

SCHREBER: When God *wills* that something should be, then by dispatching rays with this will, *what He wills immediately comes into existence*. The Bible expresses this significantly in the words 'God said, Let there be light: and there *was* light'"

SIDIONE: Yes, there certainly was light.

SCHREBER: But . what is to become of God – if I may so express myself – should I die?

SIDIONE: I don-

SCHREBER: I am certain that the whole relation into which God brought Himself to our earth and to other human beings rests at present upon the particular relation which exists between Him and me. And I am absolutely certain that God speaks to me through the mediation of the sun and in the same way creates or works miracles through her mediation.

SIDIONE: My dear brother, I -

SCHREBER: The sun herself is not a living or seeing being; but the light emanating from her is or was the means by which God can perceive all things which happen on earth. The absolutely certain knowledge that a living God exists and the soul lives on after death, could only come as a blessing to mankind.

SIDIONE: This is so marvelous my dear brother. But – now I have to go home again. I'll visit you again next month.

SCHREBER: You have always been so good to me, dearest Sidione.

SIDIONE: Never good enough.

SCHREBER: Give my best regards to our mother. I wish that she would visit me one of these days. I have not seen her for six years.

SIDIONE: I will bring her here soon. Goodbye my dearest brother.

SCHREBER: Goodbye. And thanks for the visit; and all the other visits.

**SFX:** (BIRDSONG).

**[See appendix 1]**

SCENE 13: INT. WEBER'S HOME. EVENING. (05:00)

SCHREBER: This was a lovely dinner.

WEBER: Thank you.

SCHREBER: Your wife is an excellent cook.

WEBER: I agree with you absolutely on that.

SCHREBER: Since we are alone, I would very much like to talk to you about my communication with the rays. As you will be asked to make a resume of my situation for the court, because of me asking for the rescinding of my tutelage, I find it very important that you will get to know all the sides of my spiritual life so as to better understand me.

WEBER: Very good.

SCHREBER: When my nerves broke down I could not express myself at all in a sophisticated, cultured and social way. So I was extremely glad when I became able to express myself again through writing; that had not been possible when my nerves were shattered. But all the seemingly unreasonable behaviour has its reasons.

WEBER: Yes. The ways of the mind can be very strange and how the mind relates to our behaviour. (HESITATING. CLEARS HIS THROAT). I was wondering – can I ask you a question?

SCHREBER: Be my guest.

WEBER: When you were always putting your naked feet through the iron bars of the open window at night during wintertime – why did you do that?

SCHREBER: For some time I did that in order to expose my feet to the cold rain. As long as I did this the rays could not reach my head and torment me, which of course was of foremost importance to me, and I felt therefore perfectly well – apart from frozen feet. Inimical souls always aspired towards my head, in which they wanted to inflict some damage, and sat particularly on my left ear in a highly disturbing manner.

WEBER: That is strange.

SCHREBER: Strange? Do you believe in the supernatural?

WEBER: No.

SCHREBER: I did not either, until I started to have the revelations in the Asylums. Then I realized that man must reconcile himself to the fact that things exist which are true, although he cannot understand them.

WEBER: I prefer to deal with the things I understand.

SCHREBER: You are dealing with me. Do you know why I nearly didn't move at all the first year I was here at Sonnenstein?

WEBER: You were close to being catatonic.

SCHREBER: Catatonic; that is a label, a description. It is not understanding. I stood still because the rays expected me to remain totally immobile. That must again be connected, with God not knowing how to treat a living human being, as He is accustomed to dealing only with corpses or at best with human beings lying asleep, dreaming.

WEBER: You call it rays?

SCHREBER: It is difficult to describe. Rays, yes or souls. The soul is not purely spiritual, but rests on a material substrate, the nerves. And there are many types of souls. The presence of one of them I felt as a sort of watery mass which covered my eyeballs. What they do I call miracles and those which always appear most threatening to me are in one way or another directed against my reason. These concern firstly my *head* and secondly the *spinal cord*, which next to the head is considered as the seat of reason. One therefore attempted to pump the spinal cord out, which was done by so-called “little men” placed in my feet.

WEBER: In your feet?

SCHREBER: Yes. I ought to have the right of being master in my own head against the intrusion of strangers.

WEBER: Of course. Everyone has.

SCHREBER: And the talking voices – lately in particular the voices of the talking birds – I feel like *inner voices* which move like long threads into my head and there cause a painful feeling of tension through the poison of corpses which they deposit. On one occasion 240 Benedictine Monks, suddenly moved into my head to perish therein. And strange things also occur in relations to earthly people especially demented patients. I have repeatedly witnessed that some of them changed heads without leaving the room and while I was observing them they suddenly ran about with a different head.

WEBER: Do you relate that to the supernatural?

SCHREBER: I don't know. One soul bothered me very much for many years, but about the end of 1897 this soul eventually disappeared altogether unnoticed by me. I had lately become so accustomed to its company that one day, not having thought of it for some time, I suddenly realized that it had vanished; (SMILING) I found myself moved to play the funeral march from Beethoven's “Eroica” on the piano in honour of its departing.

WEBER: (SMILING). That was very becoming. Well, well doctor Schreber. –  
I – have a busy day tomorrow ....

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**SFX:** (START FADING DIALOGUE).

SCHREBER: Yes mister director, I'll be on my way. Thanks very much for the  
opportunity to talk to you.

WEBER: My pleasure.

**SFX:** (TEXT CROSS-FADES WITH “THE FUNERAL MARCH” FROM  
BEETHOVEN’S ‘EROICA’).

SCENE 14: INT. SCHREBER'S ROOM. EVENING. NOVEMBER 1897. (00:45)

**SFX:** (MUSIC FADES DOWN, BIRD-SONG MIXES WITH MUSIC, BOTH IN B/G).

VOICE 2: Now I shall ...

SCHREBER: ... resign myself to being stupid.

VOICE 1: You were to ...

SCHREBER: ... be given to voluptuous excesses.

VOICE 1: I shall ...

SCHREBER: (HESITATING)... have to think about that first.

VOICE 2: It will be ...

SCHREBER: ... done now, the joint of pork.

VOICE 1 AND 2: We, the rays ...

SCHREBER: ... have no thoughts.

VOICE 1 (VERY FAST [TWELVE LINES]): If only ...

SCHREBER: ... my voluptuousness was not disturbed.

VOICE 2: If only ...

SCHREBER: ... my boots were not removed by miracle.

VOICE 1: If only ...

SCHREBER: ... my nose would not be affected by miracles.

VOICE 2: If only ...



SCHREBER: ... my eyes would not be affected by miracles.

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VOICE 1: If only ...

SCHREBER: ... my knee-cap would not be affected by miracles.

VOICE 2: If only ...

SCHREBER: ... my skull would not be affected by miracles. (VERY FAST ENDS).

VOICE 1: We have had this before.

VOICE 2 (VERY SLOW): B.b.b.u.u.u.t.t.t. n.n.n.a.a.a.t.t.t.u.u.u.r.r.r.a.a.a.-  
l.l.l.y.y.y.

VOICE 1 (VERY SLOW): W.w.w.h.h.h.y.y.y. d.d.d.o.o.o. ....

SCHREBER (SHOUTS): Stop it! Stop it!!

**SFX:** (BIRD-SONG + MUSIC FADE OUT).

SCENE 15: INT. ASYLUM, WEBER'S OFFICE. DAY. (02:20)

WEBER: Welcome.

SABINE: Thank you.

WEBER: How have you been?

SABINE: Alright, thank you.

WEBER: You are concerned about your husband.

SABINE: Yes.

WEBER: If he wins his case and can leave the Asylum, you would be interested in getting him back home?

SABINE: I don't know.

WEBER: It might be difficult.

SABINE: Yes.

WEBER: It seems that he needs to make a lot of noise when he is fighting off his demons.

SABINE: Yes, there might be some noise at home, maybe even during the nights. Maybe it would be alright, if it will not get worse.

WEBER: Maybe. But ... then there is ... one more thing?

SABINE: One more thing?

WEBER: I suppose he has not told you about it.

SABINE: About what?

WEBER: He thinks – he is changing into a woman.

SABINE: Changing into a woman. (LAUGHS). That is ridiculous.

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WEBER: He dresses in women's clothes.

SABINE: In women's clothes? Why do you say this?

WEBER: It's a fact.

SABINE: I don't believe it. He is a very strong man.

WEBER: Yes, he is.

SABINE: (PAUSE. SHE SWALLOWS). I don't understand.

WEBER: Are you shocked?

SABINE: I ... are you telling the truth?

WEBER: Yes.

SABINE: (HAS DIFFICULTY BREATHING).

WEBER: I suggest you think about this and try to make up your mind about what you want to happen if he wins his case.

SABINE: Think about it?

WEBER: Yes.

SABINE: What's there to think?

WEBER: If you want him to live with you.

SABINE: I .... Well.... Thank you for – allowing me to talk to you. I will – talk to Schreber about this. By the way. He has said that I can divorce him. And when I am not in favor of his attitude he says that I can leave him.

WEBER: Yes. Well. What can I say.

SABINE: Anyway. Thank you for – this – telling – for the opportunity to talk to you.

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Farewell.

WEBER: Thank you. Farewell.

**SFX:** (BIRD-SONG: SPARROWS).

[See Appendix 2].

SCENE 16: INT. DR. WEBER'S OFFICE. DAY. (02:00)

WEBER: (READS FAST WITHOUT FULL VOCAL SUPPORT. READING HIS REPORT OVER FOR THE LAST TIME).

Sonnenstein, 28<sup>th</sup> November 1900. ASYLUM AND DISTRICT MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT. The undersigned has found new viewpoints in the writings of the Memoirs which the patient commenced some months ago. These writings are elaborated in very complicated and subtle manner and are valuable from the scientific point of view for assessing the total character of his illness.

A mental illness is present (CORRECTING) is doubtless (WRITES) present but the question is if, owing to his illness, if the patient is capable of looking after his affairs. His noisy outbursts occur against the patients will and cause considerable annoyance to his environment and can often be heard for hours, even at night. He suffers a lot from these vociferations and tries to counter-act them in many nonsensical ways. He moves about his room half-naked to evoke soul-voluptuousness and stands in front of the mirror in a very low-cut vest decorated with gay ribbons, gazing at what he believes his female bosom. He also believes that the most serious injuries and toxics cannot affect him.

The patient lacks insight into the pathological nature of the hallucinations and ideas which influence him; what objectively are delusions and hallucinations are to him unassailable truth. The tremendous overvaluation of his own person is a pity as he is otherwise tactful and of fine feeling. He has worked his delusions and hallucinations into a system, leading to compulsion of thoughts and actions but the judge will decide if the present mental illness is sufficient in severity to prevent the patient from looking after his own affairs.

Dr. Weber, Superintendent of the Asylum, Area Psychiatrist, Psychiatric Adviser to the Court.

SCENE 17: INT. SCHREBER'S ROOM. DAY. (00:45)

**SFX:** (ABRUPT, LOUD BIRD-SOUNDS. THEN FADE DOWN AND B/G).

(VOICES MAINLY AS BIRDS : SLOWER; NOT AS LOUD AS BEFORE:

HISSING. ACCORDING TO WHAT HE TOLD DR. WEBER: “weaker and at present only a soft lispng noise, a hissing comparable to the sound of sand running out of an hour-glass”).

VOICE 2 (THE LOWER GOD, ARIMAN): Voluptuousness has become God-fearing. Excite yourself sexually.

VOICE 1: What will come of this cursed affair?

SCHREBER: What will become of me?

VOICE 2: A new race of human beings from the spirit of Schreber.

VOICE 1: Help.

VOICE 2 (THE LOWER GOD, ARIMAN): I am pleased.

VOICE 1: Fancy such a person was a *Senatspräsident*.

VOICE 2: Do you still speak ...

SCHREBER (INSULTED): ... foreign languages?

VOICE 2 (SOFT LISPING NOISE): Are you not ashamed ...

SCHREBER (WHISPERING): ...in front of my wife?

VOICE 1 AND 2: Destruction of his reason!

SCHREBER: If only miracles would not affect my knee-cap.

**SFX:** (WILD BIRD-SOUNDS FADES FAST UP. FADE DOWN).

SCENE 18: INT. SCHREBER'S ROOM. DAY.

SCHREBER: I am sorry that I did not want to see you all these year when I was sick -.

SABINE: Aren't you sick still?

SCHREBER: I'm better. But some days and nights I can hardly endure because of attacks of bellowing, mental torture caused by the chatter of voices, and bodily pain.

SABINE: But you have been treated well here?

SCHREBER: Sometimes I have been shown indignities and have responded with actual resistance, particularly . . . when one wanted to move me from my own bedroom to sleep in the cells fitted out for raving madmen. Later on I desisted from all opposition because it led to senseless scenes of violence; I kept silent and suffered. (PAUSE). But God will never succeed in his purpose of destroying my reason. I have been absolutely clear on this point for years.

SABINE: (PAUSE). Dr. Weber told me that you dress.... that you undress.... that....

SCHREBER: That I had some women's clothes?

SABINE: Yes. (CLEARS HER THROAT). Can I see them?

SCHREBER: They are not really clothes, just trinkets.

SABINE: All the same.

SCHREBER: They are – they are – here. Nothing much, just these ribbons and ....

SABINE: And you put them on?

SCHREBER: Just around the chest.... on the naked....

SABINE: (SOBS). If only we could have had children, then .... These horrible miscarriages ....

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SCHREBER: No my dearest. No, no. My nervous illness has nothing to do with you. Do not at all blame yourself. It is all because of overwork and weakness of nerves. (ENTHUSIASTIC). I have good tiding my dearest Sabine . I have decided to apply for my release from the Asylum in the near future in order to live once again among civilized people and ... we can ...

SABINE: That is good. You will succeed I'm sure.

SCHREBER: Yes. Dr. Weber is an intelligent psychiatrist, but he is not a lawyer.

SABINE: But you are a very good lawyer.

SCHREBER: I am absolutely certain that I will achieve the suspension of my tutelage and with it my discharge from this Asylum, if not in the immediate future then in the course of a few years. When I learnt some years ago that I had been placed under temporary tutelage as early as 1895, I approached the authorities last autumn, 1899, demanding a decision as to whether it could be rescinded. Contrary to my expectations, a formal order for my tutelage was made this March by the District Court Dresden, based on Dr. Weber's medical report and a court hearing of last January.

SABINE: I hope everything goes well.

SCHREBER: I'm sure it will. I have the impression that in my future life some *great* and *magnificent satisfaction* is in store for me. The scales of victory are coming down on my side more and more.

**SFX:** (MUSIC: "I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH" FROM *MESSIAH* BY HANDEL. PIANO-VERSION. FADED IN UNDER PRECEDING TEXT, FADE UP BETWEEN SCENES).



SCENE 19. INT. COURTROOM. DAY.

**SFX:** (MUSIC CROSS-FADES WITH TEXT. A LITTLE ECHO. HAMMER IN TABLE).

HARDRAHT (IMMEDIATELY, FAST TALKING, UNINTERESTED, ROUTINE):

The Royal Superior Court in Dresden is in session. 14<sup>th</sup> July 1902. In the name of the King in the case of Daniel Paul Schreber, Doctor of Law, *Senatspräsident*, retired, Plaintiff and Appellant, versus the Public Prosecutor at the Royal Superior Country Court, Dresden, Defendant and Respondent; (re:) concerning contesting the order placing plaintiff under tutelage. I, Judge Hardraht, President of the Senate of the Court ask plaintiff to relate the GROUNDS OF APPEAL and Dr. Weber, if you so please, you may answer when I permit. Dr. Schreber:

SCREBER (DELIVERED AS HE IS IMPROVISING WITHOUT ANYTHING

WRITTEN DOWN): Thank you your honour. First: *The Expositions of the facts*: I do not deny, that my nervous system has for a number of years been in a pathological condition. On the other hand, I deny absolutely that I am mentally ill or ever have been. My mind, my intellectual powers, is as clear and healthy as any other person's; it has been unaltered since the beginning of my nervous illness.

*And I do not expect any advantage to my health by extending my stay in the Asylum.* There can be no question of the return of mental clarity because this has always been present undiminished; the hyperexcitability of my nerves can however not be removed by human means; it will continue to the end of my life because it is connected with supernatural matters.

Second: *The Grounds of the Judgement.* It was not my own merit that gave me insight into the true state of divine matters and was granted me in an

incomparably higher degree than any other human being before; I have had to pay dearly for this insight with the loss of my whole happiness in life for a great many years. Every moment in my life God reveals himself to me in His miracles and in His language.

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Dr. Weber mentions in his report to the Court my idea of “fleeting improvised men”. This belongs to a time which lies years behind me; it only existed during the first year or two at the most of my stay in this Asylum so it is not a valid argument for withholding my tutelage.

And concerning the publication of my Memoirs which Dr. Weber thinks shows a sign of mental illness if I publish them: If I succeed only therewith, in arousing in other people a serious doubt – whether it had not been granted me to throw a glance behind the dark veil which otherwise hides the beyond from the eyes of man – my work would certainly still belong to the most interesting ones ever written since the existence of the world.

I have been treated fairly in the Asylum, considering that I was for a while a dangerous patient. But for five years I was not allowed outside the walls of the Asylum even for the small walks allowed to many other patients.

HARDRAHT: Five years?

SCHREBER: Yes. I sent a letter to Dr. Weber of this exposition on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November 1899. Yet, after that I had to wait six months before being invited to take meals at his family’s table and being given the opportunity of an excursion outside the Asylum. I can not allow the statement to go uncorrected that it was only my fault that one did not get to know me sooner as a human being in full possession of his mental powers and able to conduct himself correctly in decent society.

The *only thing* which could be counted as somewhat unreasonable in the eyes of other persons in my behaviour is that at times I was seen standing in front of the mirror or elsewhere with some female adornments (ribbons, trumpery

necklaces, and suchlike), with the upper half of my body exposed. This by the way happens only when *I am alone*, never as far as I could avoid it within sight of other people. I have *very good and important reasons* for this behaviour, however stupid or even despicable it may appear to other people who can at worst only see in this behaviour an incomprehensible *whim*, the *absolute harmlessness* of which cannot be denied – except perhaps in relation to my wife. This whim is also meant to impress God. (BEAT). And anyway it is a private matter.

My so-called delusions are concerned solely with God and the beyond; they *can* therefore *never in any way influence my behaviour* in any worldly matter. I could even say with Jesus Christ: “My Kingdom is not of this world”. What the law subsumes under the term “affairs” *cannot* be affected by my delusions and hallucinations. I have no intentions whatever as the medical expert imputed to make pecuniary sacrifices to propagate my belief in miracles. I shall never undertake anything by way of spreading my experiences and beliefs among people except publishing my Memoirs. In this my point of view is like Luther’s: “If it is man’s work it will perish; if it is the work of God it will last”.

Only two possible points remain for upholding my tutelage which are specially dealt with in the Court’s judgment, namely that if my liberty to dispose of my person and my fortune were restored to me “my relationship with my wife would be destroyed”, and that I would compromise myself in front of other people or expose myself to the danger of penalty through publishing my Memoirs. I want to go into these two points in greater detail in the following:

HARDRAHT: Before you proceed; Mr. Weber! Would you like to comment on this?

DR. WEBER: Thank you your honour. A little later perhaps.

HARDRAHT: Dr. Schreber, please proceed.

SCHREBER: Thank you your honour. Concerning the first cause for apprehension,

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it seems to me that the remark in the judgment, that through unreasonable actions “the relationship with my wife would be destroyed” advances a consideration which, although of great importance for the emotional life of the persons concerned, could hardly have a legal bearing on the question of my *legal capacity*. The marital partnership between myself and my wife has in any case for years almost completely ceased to exist in consequence of my illness and would, particularly if my tutelage were prolonged indefinitely, remain in abeyance until the end of the life of one of the partners. If the remark about the threatening destruction of the relationship with my wife is to make any sense at all, it can only mean that the feelings of respect and love which my wife still harbours for me could thereby be shaken and stifled. Clearly one is dealing with a most delicate matter, which third persons who have never known the intimacy of that marital relationship should judge most carefully and hesitantly.

But above all else I must emphasize most decidedly that *a person can be placed under tutelage only in his own interest*, in order to safeguard him from threatening dangers caused by his tendency to unreasonable actions; but a person can never be placed under tutelage, in order to safeguard others, however closely related, from any annoyances; this may be of importance to their spiritual equilibrium, but does not belong to those affairs of life which are regulated by law.

I think I have proved that everything said in the report and in the judgment about the “threatened destruction of the relationship with my wife”, and “damage to the marital state”, etc., is irrelevant for the decision of the present case.

All the statements in the report concerning my relationship to my wife, show *gross misunderstandings*; As an example of my consideration for my wife I would like to read an example from my Memoirs, with the permission of the court.

**SFX:** (RUSTLING OF PAPERS).

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HARDRAHT: Go on please.

SCHREBER: I read: “I must use particular discretion in contact with my wife, for whom I retain my former love in full. I may at times have failed by being *too frank* in conversation or written communications. It is of course impossible for my wife to understand my trends of thought fully; it must be difficult for her still to retain her previous love and admiration for me, when she hears that I am preoccupied with ideas of possibly being transformed into a woman. I can deplore this, but am unable to change it; even here I must guard against false sentimentality”. End of quotation.

I do not know how one came to assume that I would neglect that tact and fine feelings towards my wife for which one otherwise praises me. *Naturally* I would spare my wife any painful sight; I showed her my female ornaments only with some reluctance when out of forgivable feminine inquisitiveness she insisted upon it. In the same way I would *naturally* not expect my wife to live with me nor misuse my marital rights to force her in this direction, if experience should prove that living together with me is unbearable for her because of the so-called vociferations or attacks of bellowing. The medical expert misjudges me a little when he speaks of “pathologically increased egoism” in that I “do not give a thought” to how my wife suffers “through my behaviour” and also that I look upon the annoyance to my environment as irrelevant and complain only of my own malaise. Yet the medical expert acknowledges that the vociferations proceed compulsively and automatically against my will. As far as these are concerned my wife does not suffer at all by them at present because she lives apart from me.

HARDRAHT: (LAUGHS IN AN INTROVERTED WAY).

SCHREBER: The nuisance caused by the bellowing or so-called vociferations is a matter for the *police* only, which, as the judgment itself acknowledges, must remain out of consideration in deciding the legality of my tutelage. Should

breaches of the peace occur through my bellowing attacks when I am out of the Asylum, I would be sufficiently sensitive to the impossibility of staying outside a closed institution and would return to the asylum of *my own free will* without there being any necessity for compulsion which could be employed on police grounds.

(B). A second “example” concerning how far my actions are subject to the compulsion of pathological ideas, is supposed to be furnished in the judgment I contest, by my “Memoirs” and my wish to have them published. Every poetaster who has hammered out a few verses strives to have them printed and everybody thinks this it reasonable, even if the poems are obviously without any poetical value. Similarly my Memoirs might at first appear to the reader as muddled, fantastic, and not worth the printer’s ink. Nevertheless, it remains precarious to judge in advance whether a mental product is fit for publication or not; not even the authorities in the fields of human knowledge are always capable of such a judgment, much less individual persons; it would not be the first time in history for a new scientific discovery, a new way of looking at the world, a new invention, etc., to be ridiculed by its contemporaries, mocked at and taken as the product of an insane mind, which later had to be granted more or less epoch-making importance. Nevertheless – so the Country Court informs me – my Memoirs are not fit for publication because in them I and my family are compromised in an unheard of manner which would expose me to the danger of criminal proceedings; because I use in them most offensive vulgar words, reveal the most intimate family secrets, and use insulting descriptions for people still living and highly respected, give without modesty an account of the most delicate situations and prove thereby that I have totally lost the capacity to distinguish between the permissible and the impermissible.

In reply I want to say first of all that my intention of publishing my Memories is not to be understood in the sense that I will necessarily give them to the printer *in the present form without changes*. I did not write them with the purpose of publishing them. I mention this expressly in the “Preface” at the

beginning of the “Memoirs”. As this Preface contains *in nuce* my (anticipated) reply to the reproaches in the – at the time not even existent – medical report and judgment, I append it here word for word. If I may?

**SFX:** (RUSTLING OF PAPERS).

HARDRAHT: Please go on.

SCHREBER: I read: “I started this work without having publication in mind. The idea only occurred to me as I progressed with it; *I did, however, not conceal from myself* doubts which seemed to stand in the way of publication: mainly considerations for certain persons still living. Yet I believe that expert examination of my body and observation of my personal fate during my lifetime would be of value both for science and the knowledge of religious truths. In the face of such considerations all personal issues must recede”. End of quotation. As far as the danger goes into which I place *myself* by making my “Memoirs” public, “laying myself bare” or compromising myself, I shoulder the risk in full confidence and with complete equanimity. The worst that could happen to me after all, is that one would consider me mentally deranged and *this one does already in any case*.

HARDRADT: (CHUCKLES. CLEARS HIS THROAT, REGAINS HIS DIGNITY).

SCHREBER: (CONTINUES WITHOUT A PAUSE) I believe I have refuted all the more important points which were made in the report and in the judgment upholding my tutelage. My stay in the Asylum is at present not so unbearable that I would prefer a lonely life outside the Asylum to the present state of affairs – should it turn out to be impossible to live with my wife. As long as I need artificial aid to sleep, I am satisfied *to do the correct and sensible thing* and stay under medical supervision; the simplest being to remain in this Asylum where I have now been for seven years. I must insist that my stay in this Asylum is a measure in the interests of my health. It is a *point of honour*. Which person of my high intellectual standing would not feel it an indignity to be treated in legal matters like a child under the age of seven, to be denied

every disposition of his fortune, even in written form, and to be prevented from obtaining information about his financial affairs, etc., etc?

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If my health would improve even more than it has done for the past year and I would then suggest a change, perhaps a transfer on trial to a private institution, I would as long as I am under tutelage have to fear being sent from pillar to post with my request.

I close with the hope that the medical expert will not take any of my statements amiss, as I have no intention whatever of offending him or denying him the high respect which is his due. I have finished.

**HARDRAHT:** Thank you Dr. Schreber. And now we have Dr. Weber with an expert's estimation.

**WEBER (SPEAKS AS HE IS IMPROVISING WITHOUT WRITTEN PAPERS):**

I have been the appellant's doctor for some years, for a long time he was my daily guest at meals, for my part I regard the relations between him and me, if I may say so, as a friendly one, and it is my sincere wish that this man, so sorely tried in the past, will obtain that measure of enjoyment in life to which he thinks he is entitled after so much adversity.

I wish to deal briefly with some of the objections the patient raised against my report. I have tried to show, how on the basis of his hallucinations he at first developed fantastic ideas of influence which ruled him to such an extent that he was driven to suicidal attempts and how from these pathological events, at last the system of ideas was formed which the appellant has recounted in such detail and so vividly in his Memoirs.

**SFX:** (THE TEXT STARTS TO FADE DOWN AND CROSS-FADES WITH NEXT SFX).

**WEBER:** It would be a waste of time to argue with him about the reality of his impressions. One patient said: "If what I perceive should be erroneous I must



doubt whether I see you.” The hallucinating person does not apperceive the world, but himself, i.e. events in his own central nervous system.

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**SFX:** (THE FOLLOWING TEXT FADES UP, CROSS-FADES WITH LAST SFX.

[See Appendix 1]).

**WEBERS:** The appellant’s assurances “that he does not permit his delusions to influence his affairs” can hardly alter this, as on the one hand he need not become aware of such influences and on the other the pathological processes may gain so much in strength that resistance becomes impossible. No assurance can therefore be given that important life interests of the patient might not be endangered were he freed from his tutelage. I have finished.

**HARDRAHT:** Thank you very much. Based on all the information gathered for the Court, the judgment of the Royal Superior Country Court Dresden, is as follows: First the FACTS OF THE CASE, Pleadings and evidence.

Plaintiff in due course *contested* the order placing him under tutelage by bringing a legal action for suspension of the order. He denies that he is in any way prevented from managing his affairs by the mental illness (paranoia) diagnosed by the medical expert: factual evidence of this assumption had not been produced by the District Court. It is merely a *petition principii* when stated that a person under the influence of delusions and hallucinations is not master of his own free will. What to the Court may appear as delusions has nothing whatever to do with the question of his legal capacity; in any case his illness is not of a kind to make him incapable of judging correctly those matters of social behaviour which in law are “his affairs”.

The medical expert is wrong in stating in his written report that the appellant acted unreasonably in recent illness by refusing medicines ordered for him. He closely followed medical instructions, proof: attendant Müller, and it cannot be said that he fails to appreciate the value of medicines, even despises them. Besides, he has diligently sought every opportunity lately of conversing with other people including strangers while on his walks, excursions, and

journeys. He wished to refer to their evidence. Of the great many people concerned he wished to name as witnesses for the time being only 18 people, among them the President of the District Court Schmidt in Leipzig; the physician Dr. Nakonz; Dr. Hennig and the publisher Nauhardt, the possible publisher of his “Memoirs”, both in Leipzig and finally retired President of the Court Thierbach in Dresden. They would all confirm that during their meetings with him they received the impression of a completely reasonable person capable of every demand of social and business life, in whom they as laymen did not notice the least sign of mental illness, let alone one making him incapable of managing his affairs.

And now for the GROUNDS OF THE JUDGMENT. The Court is in no doubt that the appellant is insane. (PAUSE). One would not wish to argue with him whether in fact he suffers from a mental illness known as paranoia.

**SFX:** (THE TEXT STARTS TO FADE DOWN AND CROSS-FADES WITH NEXT SFX).

**HARDRAHT:** He lacks insight into the pathological nature of the inspirations and ideas which move him. What to objective observation is hallucination and delusion is for him irrefutable certainty. Even now he holds fast to the conviction that God manifests Himself to him directly and continuously performs His miracles on him. This conviction, as he says himself, towers high above all human insight and science.

**SFX:** (FOLLOWING TEXT FADES UP, CROSS-FADES WITH LAST SFX.  
[See Appendix 2]).

**HARDRAHT:** Placing under tutelage is primarily for the well-being of the person concerned. It is inadmissible in the interest of others.

The Court of Appeal has therefore arrived at the conviction that plaintiff is capable of dealing with the demands of life in all its spheres here discussed. There is no evidence and it cannot be regarded as ascertained that he is

incapable of managing his affairs owing to his delusional ideas. To  
conclude: the Royal Superior Country Court of Saxony, with Judge Hardraht,  
President of the Senate of the Court, finds the judgment of the Seventh Civil  
Chamber of the District Court , Dresden of 13<sup>th</sup> April 1901 confirming the  
order of the Lower Court, Dresden, of 13<sup>th</sup> March 1900 placing plaintiff under  
tutelage, is *rescinded*. (BEAT). The court is dismissed.

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SCHREBER: Thank you your honour. Thank you.

**SFX:** (THE TEXT FADES DOWN. CROSS-FADE WITH BIRD-SONG).

SHREBER: An excellent judge. Thank you. I was sure I would win. It went  
without saying. An excellent judge. Marvellous. An excel.....

SCENE 20: INT. SIDONIE´S HOME. EVENING. (01:25)

**SFX:** (BIRD-SONG).

**SIDONIE:** (WEEPING. NOSE RUNNING. BREATHING HEAVILY. PAUSE).

My dearest brother. Now you are not any longer with us. Your life was so strange. Up to the highest honor in your professional field and down to the deepest despair of pain and madness. Yet there was a method in your madness. And you were such a gentle person. Your stepdaughter told me that you had been more of a mother to her than your wife. Nine years deteriorating in an Asylum for mad people. The big moment came when you fought your way out of the tutelage by defending yourself in such an excellent dealing with the law. And then you wanted to stay again with your wife but she was not ready. So you stayed with mother and me for two years. But other blessings came for you: your wife became ready for you and – you published your Memoirs and adopted the stepdaughter your wife had taken in. And also you had such a beautiful house built for the three of you with some notes of Siegfried´ s motif from Wagner´ s opera hammered in the concrete over the entrance. You were such a clever piano player . But then the tragedy started again. Your wife had a gentle stroke (SOBS), she lost her ability to speak for some days and you lost your balance again and stayed for your last four years in an Asylum gradually losing your sanity more and more. How delicate our nerves can be. God bless your soul my dearest brother. I hope you are now fully in tune with the birds of Paradise.

**SFX:** (BIRD-SONG UP. CROSS-FADE WITH HOLY MUSIC).

**THE END**

**Synopsis**

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The play tells the story of Dr. Daniel Paul Schreber (1842-1911) the German, paranoid judge and his sufferings. He is one of the most quoted patients in the history of psychiatry because of the way he managed to describe his illness from the inside in his *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness* (1903). Schreber's fame might have escaped him if the world renowned psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud, had not written about him. Those like Freud who try to find reasons for people's behaviour have had a field-day writing about Schreber, but probably they have all been mostly wrong. Freud thought that Schreber's sufferings were caused by a repressed homosexuality (like his own towards Jung?) and later psychoanalysts have blamed Schreber's father for his madness because of his emphasis on strict upbringing both physically and psychologically .

In the play I try to show Schreber's positive sides; the other characters in the play are mirrors to his mind. Hopefully the other characters are also portrayed with clear and different personalities even though they get much lesser space than Schreber. Schreber died in an asylum when he fell ill for the third time, but in the play the concentration is on his second period of illness, when he spent nine years continually in Asylums (1893-1902) mainly at Sonnenstein, near Dresden, where Dr. Weber was the director.

Schreber famously fought his way out of Dr. Weber's Asylum through a legal battle, in spite of Dr. Weber fighting against him. That is a remarkable feat and to my knowledge has never been repeated. I portray Dr. Weber as a medical doctor who is stuck in his way of looking at his patient(s) through glasses of medicine. Schreber's sister, Sidione, is the good person who lives for others; Schreber's wife is a simple woman of lower-middle class but has a sunny disposition and abundant voluptuousness, but does not understand Schreber's anima.

It is a complicated feat to narrate Schreber's inner life, the voices he hears drive him mad and would drive radio listeners mad too and they would become very bored if the voices were portrayed in the repetitious manner Schreber describes them. A creative BBC technician might make his day mixing sounds of rays, wind, trees and birds. As it is I have mostly left out of the play description of how to portray the voices Schreber hears.

(396 words: these included).

**TO THE DIRECTOR**  
(if the play will be produced)

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or a Shawian preface

*TRANSLATION:* The original work of *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* is of course written in the German language. I use the translation of Ida MacAlpine and Richard A. Hunter with full permission. As English is a second language for me I have categorized the script with English as a second language in the BBC competition. But I do not suppose that MacAlpine and Hunter had English as a second language so maybe the script should be categorized with those who compete in the rubric for plays in English as a first language. It does not matter to me; my main aim is to have the play produced. As Schreber died in 1911 there is no right holder to his material (it expires 70 years after the death of an author).

*THE VOICES:* The ideal would be to have many actors portraying the voices. The choice of two voices is based on the compact BBC form. The voices are extremely annoying for Schreber. If they were as annoying for the radio listener one should not have written the play. So the voices need to be varied and interesting, done in a poetic, Beckettian vein with a lot more entertainment value than they had in reality. And it is not possible to have them as repetitious and as long standing as they were for Schreber. In the post- production the director should cut them down as much as possible, only letting those moments live that spring to life between the actors. To make this part of the text fully alive I suppose it needs a lot of rehearsal time as timing is of key importance. Instead of having the voices continuously in Schreber's head, as they were, the listeners are given a break without bird-sounds close to every other scene. That would have been correct from Schreber's point of view as he did not hear the voices as much when he was talking to educated people. The types of the souls have to be dramatic so they will work, and probably the audience would appreciate that they had the audio characteristic of Snowwhite's Seven dwarfs so they would accept them. But it would be nice to be able to do some experimental work with the actors to find an original way of portraying those voices of madness. The style of acting should be Artaudian.

*THE BIRDS.* Bird sounds are used among other things as bridges between scenes. The play opens with the songs that would sound the most beautiful as will be found out in the effects library. The different bird-sounds in scenes should indicate different seasons, the flow of time and different years, mainly

from 1893 to 1897. November was the most difficult month for Schreber. His father also died in November.

*(IDEAL) CASTING:*

SCHREBER: Derek Jacobi, or another intellectual actor.  
VOICES 1: Andy Serkis  
VOICE 2: Billie Whitelaw or Judy Dench  
DR. WEBER: Ian McKellen  
HARDRAHT (THE JUDGE): Jim Broadbent  
SIDONIE (SISTER): Juliet Stevenson  
SABINE (WIFE): Julie Walters

(These make seven characters. If six characters are a maximum Sabine may take Sidonie's dialogue. That would call for a different ending, probably without relating the last years of Schreber's life. Another possibility would be to have one of the actors portraying the Voices, double as one of the other characters. A scene between Sabine and Sidonie had been planned but it was never finished and never put in the play when it became obvious that the play was too long. One other possibility is to cut Schreber's wife, Sabine, out of the play).

*BETWEEN SCENES:* Birdsong. Starts fading in ca. 10 seconds before the end of each scene. Full throttle for: ca. 10 seconds. Fades into next scene: fade out in ca. 10 seconds.

*Springtime:* finches, blackbirds, woodpeckers.

*Summer:* swallows. *Winter:* sparrows, crows.

*THE LANGUAGE:* About 95% of the text comes from Schreber and the thesis connected to the court papers. The Voices are taken from Schreber's descriptions of what he called the basic language, the language of the rays or souls or nerves.

*THE SCRIPT:* The commas, semicolons are for the actors, not following official rules for publishing material. All the italics are from Schreber's writing.

The court proceedings are here built up on the basis of dramatic device. These were originally long isolated papers (the judgment being more than 40 pages).

*SCHREBER*: The case with paranoid people is that they maintain their rational thoughts very clearly, as can be seen in the Schreber's court proceedings and also his *Memoirs*. Their illness is isolated with a certain area of thought, in Schreber's case religion and delusions. A play could not be made about a paranoid patient that is sick today because of three reasons: Very few of them could write like Schreber, very few of them are respectable lawyers or judges; but the main reason is that today schizophrenic people are given strong medicine, which takes away their delusions so they could of course not write about them. That is one of the reasons why Schreber's writing is so important and original. When Schreber is rehearsing his defence speech (Scene 5, and also Weber's scene no. 3) the style of acting should be Brechtian.

*AUTHOR*: Studied acting at Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art in London 1977-1979. Holds a BA-degree in psychology and teaches psychology, history of art and culture e.g. cinema in an Icelandic college. Studied Comparative Literature at New York University from 1984 to 1987 resulting in MA- and MPhil degrees where his pre-doctorals included among other psychological studies of literature, a study of Schreber. The MA-thesis dealt with the prose work *Mercier and Camier* by Samuel Beckett and how Didi and Gogo in *Waiting for Godot* had in the beginning the names Mercier and Camier. Worked for some years as an actor at the National Theatre in Iceland, where he e.g. portrayed Pinocchio for the first time in Iceland. Worked for some years as a director and has worked as an actor and director in the Icelandic State Radio.

*LENGTH*: If the play is too long and has to be adapted to a time slot it is probably easiest to fade down the text on different places in the trial scene and fade it up again so the time frame will be right. When the first draught of the script was finished it was nearly 90 minutes. So it has already been trimmed down, close to one third. The rest of the Darlings must be killed by the director (if there ever will be one). Examples of these shortenings are in the two appendixes, where what has been cut out in the trial scene is shown. Where this may be done in a similar way, to shorten the script even more, is in Schreber's monologue in the court scene, but for the moment it is kept in the script as it was originally. The timing of the scenes is made through straight reading; acting out might take a bit longer.

*THE STORY OF THE PRESENT SCHREBER SCRIPT*: The first idea in the history of the present Schreber play was to make an opera in the vein of Robert Wilson and Philip Glass e.g. *Einstein on the Beach* etc. but that opera was on the list of the pre-doctorals of the author. The script was started in 2000 with an Icelandic composer and one of the ideas was to produce the work in the Icelandic State Television. Those in the Icelandic State Television, both in the production



department and design, who looked at the ideas of the script were quite enthusiastic. The emphasis was on Schreber's delusions in a surrealistic vein. The only thing that was lacking was the music. The composer had worked more in ideas from the style of Ligeti than Glass, or maybe the reason was his lack of experience in the theatre.

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When the author of the present play heard about the BBC radio play competition in November 2008, he blew the dust off his opera manuscript and read Schreber's Memoirs for the third time. The rest is in your hands.

**[Appendix 1]**

SCENE 13: INT. SCHREBER'S ROOM. NOVEMBER 1896. (01:05)

**SFX:** (BIRD-SONG FADED IN: SPARROWS AND CROWS).

VOICE 1: Tying-to-the-celestial-bodies.

SCHREBER: Stop.

VOICE 1: The posterior Flechsig.

VOICE 1: Abdominal putrifaction of von Walter.

VOICE 2: The Anyhow von Walter.

VOICE 1: The O damn von Walter.

VOICE 2: O damn, that is hard to say.

VOICE 1: O damn, it is extremely hard to say that God allows himself to be  
ffffff . . . . .

VOICE 2: Mid-day von Walter.

VOICE 1: The little von Walter-Schreber.

VOICE 2: New human beings from Schreber's spirit.

VOICE 1: Help.

VOICE 2: If only the cursed cries of help would stop.

VOICE 1: The Golden drop ...

SCHREBER: ... balsam

VOICE 1: A soul in a bird's form ...

VOICE 2: ... my little friend ...

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VOICE 1 (JOKINGLY): *Picus*, the woodpecker. (SPRING).

**SFX:** (ADDED TO BIRDSONG: WOODPECKERS, THE LOUDEST OF THE THREE FOR ONE SECOND: FAST FADE-UP. THEN FAST CROSS-FADE TO BLACKBIRDS BEING LOUDEST FOR ONE SECOND AFTER NEXT SENTENCE).

VOICE 1 (AS A BLACKBIRD, IMITATION): Santiago – Carthago. (SPRING).

**SFX:** (BIRDSONG: BLACKBIRD FAST FADE UP; CROSS-FADE TO SWALLOWS).

VOICE 2 (AS A BIRD: A SWALLOW, IMITATION): Chinesenthum – Jesum Christum. (SUMMER).

**SFX:** (SWALLOWS, ETC.)

VOICE 1 (AS A BIRD, SPARROW): Abendroth – Athemnoth. (WINTER).

**SFX:** (SPARROWS, ETC.)

VOICE 2 (AS A BIRD, A CROW): Ariman – Ackerman. (WINTER).

**SFX:** (CROWS, ETC.)

VOICE 1 (AS A BIRD, A FINCH): Briefbeschwerer – Herr Prüfer schwört. (SPRING).

**SFX:** (FINCHES, ETC.)

VOICE 2 (AS THE LOWER GOD, ARIMAN): Railways. Hopless resistance.

VOICE 1 (AS THE UPPER GOD): Hopes.

**SFX:** (CROSSFADE BIRD-SONG WITH TEXT IN NEXT SCENE).

**[Appendix 2]**

SCENE 16: INT. SCHREBER'S ROOM: EVENING. (00:45)

**SFX:** (BIRD-SONG: SPARROWS).

SCHREBER (THINKS): This rose has a nice smell.

VOICE 1: Why?

VOICE 2: Let it be then.

VOICE 1: At least.

VOICE 2: But why?

SCHREBER: How would you appear if eaten up by a cat?

VOICE 1: If only the cursed railways would cease to speak.

VOICE 2: If only the cursed chain-steamers would cease to speak.

VOICE 1: Has been recorded ...

SCHREBER: ... into comprehension.

VOICE 2 (MECHANICALLY [NEXT TEN LINES]): The senior attendant ...

VOICE 1: ... has been recorded.

VOICE 2: Joint of pork ...

VOICE 1: ... has been recorded.

VOICE 2: Railway ...

VOICE 1: ... has been recorded.

VOICE 2: *Senatspräsident* ...

VOICE 1: ... has been recorded.

VOICE 2: Butterfly ...

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VOICE 1: ... has been recorded.

VOICE 2: Help!

SCHREBER: Forsaking me.

VOICE 1: Has been recorded.

VOICE 2: Why don't you say it ...

SCHREBER:(ANGRY) ... aloud. Because I am stupid. Because I am afraid.

**SFX:** (SPARROWS FADE OUT).

**[APPENDIX 3. WEBER´S REPORT.]**

It would be a waste of time to argue with him about the reality of his impressions. One patient said: “If what I perceive should be erroneous I must doubt whether I see you.” The hallucinating person does not apperceive the world, but himself, i.e. events in his own central nervous system. That hallucinations usually gain much greater power over the total content of patients’ consciousness than *real* perceptions is due to the fact that they fit in with the direction of the dominant complex. There can be no doubt that the appellant was and still is hallucinated and they have been shaped according to his individuality.

I must further contradict the appellant’s belief that I have changed my opinion about his condition. It is not my opinion but the condition itself which has gradually changed and gone through markedly different phases. Between his earlier state of being occupied by tremendous hypochondriacal delusional ideas, of severe hallucinatory stupor, of markedly negativistic behaviour, characterized by refusal of food and turning away from every contact and occupation, and the present picture of sensible and sociable approachability, no longer shut off from the demands and interests of the day, there is a vast difference. The voices he hears have gradually become weaker, while their content also is poorer and more scurrilous, the “voices” are drowned by an ordinary conversation and, though a nuisance and a burden to the patient, do not influence his feelings and thoughts to any great extent.

But the appellant’s firm intention of publishing his “Memoirs” must be regarded as pathologically determined and lacking sensible consideration. The manuscript is in the possession of the Appeal Court and its contents will have been carefully examined. It is a bulky work, about 350 pages. Every impartial observer particularly the expert would call this a very interesting presentation of a complicated delusional system, but would regard an

unabridged version “impossible” for publication as being both offensive and compromising for the author. But reasoning with him about the propriety of publishing it is hopeless; he sees in it the revelation of a new truth vital for the world and wishes to make known to mankind through the printed word the knowledge granted him of God and the beyond; he is prepared to shoulder all personal unpleasantness that may arise. When the appellant states that his constant cheerfulness of mood, his benevolence towards people little worthy of it, etc. rest on this, then it is not likely that this mighty current of thoughts and feelings would never under any circumstances influence his actions, particularly as even at present some of his actions are caused against his will directly by “miracles”. The appellant’s assurances “that he does not permit his delusions to influence his affairs” can hardly alter this, as on the one hand he need not become aware of such influences and on the other the pathological processes may gain so much in strength that resistance becomes impossible. No assurance can therefore be given that important life interests of the patient might not be endangered were he freed from his tutelage. I have finished.

**[APPENDIX 4. HARDRAHT'S JUDGMENT.]**

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And now for the GROUNDS OF THE JUDGMENT. The Court is in no doubt that the appellant is insane. (PAUSE). One would not wish to argue with him whether in fact he suffers from a mental illness known as paranoia. He lacks insight into the pathological nature of the inspirations and ideas which move him. What to objective observation is hallucination and delusion is for him irrefutable certainty. Even now he holds fast to the conviction that God manifests Himself to him directly and continuously performs His miracles on him. This conviction, as he says himself, towers high above all human insight and science. But – that is not sufficient grounds for placing plaintiff under tutelage, that his mental processes are pathologically disturbed. It is true plaintiff's way of looking at the world is falsified by the idea ruling him about his extraordinary position towards God, and Dr. Schreber suffers much from hallucinations. He acknowledges that the center of his life is his conviction that he is the continual object of the divine power of miracles. But only *one single field* of plaintiff's mental life is affected, the field of religion. What in our views is connected with divine matters and our belief about the relation of man to God, plaintiff will never be able to judge correctly, because he lacks insight into the pathological nature of his mode of thinking. But it does not necessarily follow that his judgment in all other fields of mental life must be equally pathologically altered. The Court of Appeal now has much more factual material for its judgment than the lower Court had at the time. The observations which have been made in this matter, are altogether *favourable* to plaintiff.

SCHREBER: Thank your sir.

HARDRAHT: Please. I continue. *One* observation was forced on the Judges of the Court of Appeal in their dealings with plaintiff during the proceedings; it was that Dr. Schreber's intellectual powers and the clarity of his thinking had *in no way* suffered by his illness. The way he personally took up the fight against



the tutelage under which he was placed and how he carried it through according to plan, the acuity of the logical and juristical operations developed by him, the reasonableness with which he conducted himself, and last but not least the refined measured attitude he showed when in opposition to the medical expert and the Prosecutor – all this affords indisputable proof that in *this* field plaintiff has no need of protection by a guardian; rather in conducting his case he was able to preserve his interest to the full and independently, better indeed than anybody else could have done it in his place.

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Plaintiff has only recently brought clear proof of his competence in this direction, in that he dealt with the extraordinary difficult question of making further use of his father's book "Medical Indoor Gymnastics" after its publisher had gone into liquidations; he showed such acuity, clarity and circumspection in a report which he wrote at the request of his family, that they had no scruples whatever in following his suggestions.

It is said that Dr. Schreber's relationship with his *family* is threatened, *the marital bond with his wife* in danger of being destroyed. This also cannot be conceded. As plaintiff rightly stresses, marital union with his wife has been almost completely in abeyance for years owing to his mental illness and the necessity created by it of living apart from her. How then could this relationship be worsened if freedom to decide over his person were now returned to plaintiff? Dr. Schreber has the sincere wish to resume domestic union with his wife and to live in the seclusion of a quiet country seat for the rest of his days, as soon as his discharge from the Asylum is granted. He therefore strives on his part to *improve* existing marital relations.

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VOICE 1: The Schreber's ...

SCHREBER: ... the highest nobility of heaven ...

VOICE 2: ... Margraves of Tuscany and Tasmania.

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VOICE 1: Souls suspended from the firmament.

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VOICE 2: The Lord of Hosts. The Almighty.

VOICE 1: The Good Shepherd.

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