Becoming Number Six

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Becoming Number Six

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Creative Writing
Playwriting

by
Ross Peter Nelson
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Abstract

_Becoming Number Six_ is an original dramatic work: Stephanie Dylar is disturbed when two shadowy figures claiming to be intelligence agents appear on her doorstep. The agents, Lovelace and Babbage, represent a government branch known as The Division, and inform her that her son Jeremy may be involved in illegal computer activity. When Jeremy subsequently goes missing, Stephanie turns to her friend Julia for help, and is confronted with the realities of constant surveillance as Julia brings the hacking group Incognito into the mix.

Drama, NSA, Surveillance, Hacking, Anonymous
BECOMING NUMBER SIX

Ross Peter Nelson
CHARACTERS

STEPHANIE DYLAR Female. Late-30s. Widowed single mom (aka Indirect Object). A elementary school teacher.


BABBAGE Male. 30s. An agent of The Division. His look is white shirt, dark suit, very Men In Black.

LOVELACE Female. 30s. An agent of The Division (aka <RainbowGirl84>, Number Nine). Also dressed in black suit and white blouse, but manages to look chic.

JULIA Female. Late-30s. Friend of STEPHANIE (aka Subject, <TinkerTailor>, <NerdyButCute>). IT worker.

NUMBER 4 Any gender. Late-40s. Director general of The Division.

SETTING

Suburban USA.

TIME

Now.

NOTES

JULIA should be seated in the audience as the play begins.

Names inside angle brackets indicate IRC handles or internet aliases. They are pronounced as if they are ordinary phrases, e.g., <FreshMeat> is pronounced “fresh meat.”

Three cell phones (referred to in the text as CELL PHONE #1, #2, and #3) should be planted in the audience so the ringing feels real. Can be simulated with sound cues if this is not possible.

The audience should be aware of surveillance before, after, and during the performance. Video or still cameras operating at the entrance, the bar or concession stand, and the ticket booth will contribute to this effect. If possible, live feed from those cameras can then be replayed on NUMBER 4’s monitors in the first and final scenes.

The program for the performance should carry the following disclaimer: Photographs, video, and audio of the audience will be captured during the course of this performance. After the performance, all such information will be discarded. Theoretically.
SCENE 1

(Split stage: one side is dominated by a large desk, the Division Seal, and a freestanding door upstage. This is NUMBER 4’s office.

Also on stage, separate from NUMBER 4’s office, sits JEREMY. JEREMY sits and types on his laptop, he is lit only by the blue light of the screen reflecting back on his face. A school backpack lies next to him. He is in his room, but there are no set items to indicate this.

Lights up on NUMBER 4, sitting at the desk downstage center, back to the audience. There is a computer and a complex phone on the desk. There are several video monitors above the desk that he/she is watching, showing surveillance photos or video (preferably of the current audience).

After watching for a time, presumably long enough for audience members to realize they are on the display, NUMBER 4 attends a list of names scrolling on one of the monitors. S/He picks up the phone receiver and punches a button on the keyboard. CELL PHONE #1 rings.)

NUMBER 4
I see that all but three of you are carrying cell phones.

(NUMBER 4 types. CELL PHONE #1 stops. CELL PHONE #2 begins to ring.)

NUMBER 4
Several of you have neglected to turn them off.

(NUMBER 4 types again. CELL PHONE #2 stops.)

NUMBER 4
Your phones are constantly sending information: location, signal strength, on or off, caller id, text messages, internet addresses. They send out names, searching for the wifi networks they remember. I see we have several Starbucks customers. Oh, this one’s good, “Hotspot in my pants.” I bet your next door neighbors get a kick out of that.

(NUMBER 4 rises and faces the audience.)

NUMBER 4
You’re here to watch aren’t you? There’s nothing wrong with that, I’m a watcher myself. But are you a passive watcher, or an active watcher?
Becoming Number Six

(Lights up on JEREMY, who digs a cell phone from his pack.)

NUMBER 4 (cont)
What have you learned by watching? Jeremy Dylar has observed that the shape and thickness of eyebrows is a significant characteristic in distinguishing gender.

JEREMY
C’mon. Pick up. ... Ethan! Oh, crap. ... Dude. The files I liberated just showed up on WikiLeaks. I'm official. Call me.

NUMBER 4
He’s just an amateur, of course. But with some gentle nudging, he could be a professional.

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE enter through the lobby, and walk down the aisle towards the stage.

LOVELACE
My question is, why bother?

BABBAGE
Number Four wants it shut down.

LOVELACE
We'll never shut it down completely. He knows that.

BABBAGE
Scare them off for a while.

LOVELACE
It leaves us with the evolution problem.

BABBAGE
Hackers evolve?

LOVELACE
Better antibiotics breed better bacteria.

BABBAGE
And you'd rather just watch?

LOVELACE
If they don’t know that we know, they'll get sloppy.

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE reach the stage, and knock on the door to NUMBER 4’s office.)

STEPHANIE (offstage)
Jeremy, you'll be late for school.
Becoming Number Six

NUMBER 4

Enter.

JEREMY

(To himself) Shit! (Loudly) Ok, mom.

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE open the door. All freeze, as lights dim except for a spot on JEREMY. He grabs a backpack and begins to run off, then turns to the audience.)

JEREMY

Every move you make, every step you take, they’ll be watching you. It’s kind of a rush.

(JEREMY exits. Lights back up on NUMBER 4’s office and BABBAGE and LOVELACE enter.)

BABBAGE / LOVELACE

Number Four.

NUMBER 4

Anything interesting?

BABBAGE

(Pointing into the audience.)

One lady was texting.

LOVELACE

(Also points.)

And one guy with earbuds.

(NUMBER 4 sits at the computer and types. The screens change to scrolling lists.)

NUMBER 4

Lets check those texts. All SMSes from the nearest cell tower are from 703-482-0623 to 301-688-6524, belonging to a Mr. Eric Blair. Communications between those two numbers had never occurred before last Friday. First contact via the app Tinder.

(NUMBER 4 stands and addresses someone in the audience.)

Miss 703, on the off chance that Mr. Blair did not mention this, he's married and has an eight year old daughter. (Turns back.) Ready to begin Operation Triangulate?

BABBAGE

Yes.

LOVELACE

One question though.
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Shoot. NUMBER 4

We were wondering -- BABBAGE

Why <LeakyFaucet> is a priority? LOVELACE

Why not continue to simply monitor? BABBAGE

Embassy pressure. The German chancellor will be visiting next month. They don't want any further embarrassments. NUMBER 4

That was GCHQ, not us. LOVELACE

None of the German data anyway. BABBAGE

I know. But if we disrupt <LeakyFaucet> now, they'll be off-line while the chancellor is here. Anything else? NUMBER 4

No. LOVELACE

Off you go. NUMBER 4

Number Four. BABBAGE / LOVELACE

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE exit. NUMBER 4 types on the computer again. One of the three screens begins to play a porn video. The stage goes dark.)

END OF SCENE
SCENE 2

(Again, a nearly bare stage. The free-standing doorway is moved to one side, now representing the door to the Dylar house. “Inside” the house is a sofa and a coffee table. “Outside” the house is a streetlight on which is mounted a CCTV camera. From time to time, it swivels, zooms, and pans, making an unobtrusive sound.

BABBAGE and LOVELACE appear at the doorway and ring the bell. STEPHANIE answers. When BABBAGE and LOVELACE speak, their sentences run together as though they were a single person.)

BABBAGE

Mrs. Dylar?

Yes?

Do you have a moment?

It’s about your son –

Jeremy.

Has something happened? Is he all right?

He’s all right, –

Nothing’s happened –

Yet.

What do you mean, yet?

That’s why we’re here.

There are patterns –
Becoming Number Six

Patterns of behavior, --

BABBAGE

Disturbing patterns.

LOVELACE

Who are you?

STEPHANIE

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE exchange a look.)

We work for the government.

BABBAGE

What part?

STEPHANIE

(LOVELACE makes a triangle in front of her left eye using the thumb and forefinger of both hands.)

Illuminati. One world government.

LOVELACE

She’s joking.

BABBAGE

Your government.

LOVELACE

A division –

BABBAGE

The Division.

LOVELACE

We keep an eye on things.

BABBAGE

What things? Who are you? Can I see some ID?

STEPHANIE

Mrs. Dylar, you’d need a security clearance –

BABBAGE

Level Three –

LOVELACE

Whiskey –

BABBAGE
Becoming Number Six

Foxtrot –

Victor –

(For BABBAGE’s ear only.) What’s our vector, Victor?

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE exchange a smirk.)

To see our ID cards.

Have you done something to my son?

No ma’am –

We’re strictly intelligence.

Surveillance.

Data management. But –

There are patterns –

Patterns of behavior, –

Disturbing patterns.

I don’t understand. Are you threatening me?

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE exchange a look.)

No ma’am –

Not at all –
Becoming Number Six

LOVELACE

We want to help.

STEPHANIE

But who are you? And what does this have to do with Jeremy?

BABBAGE

You can call me Babbage.

LOVELACE

Lovelace. (Beat) Not that one.

BABBAGE

We can be identified by those –

LOVELACE / BABBAGE (together)

(They exchange a glance.) Handles –

BABBAGE

For the duration.

STEPHANIE

But if you’re from the government –

LOVELACE

The Division.

STEPHANIE

-- you must have some identification.

LOVELACE

As we said –

BABBAGE

You don’t have clearance.

STEPHANIE

I’m sorry, I don’t know who you are, and without some ID, I’m going to have to ask you to leave.

LOVELACE

Mrs. Dylar –

BABBAGE

Up to this point, your records have been immaculate –

LOVELACE

Pristine –
Surely –

(To BABBAGE.) Don’t call me Shirley.

(They exchange a smirk.)

You wouldn’t want them tarnished.

To have your profile flagged as “uncooperative.”

If you don’t leave, I’m going to call the police.

I believe they’re going to call you.

(Number 4 enters an unused portion of the stage, holding a phone. Stephanie’s cell phone rings.)

We’ll wait.

(Number 4 closes the door, takes her phone from her pocket, and answers.)

Hello?

Mrs. Dylar?

This is she.

I’m calling on behalf of the sheriff’s office. Two officers will be arriving soon.

They’ve already—

I trust you will cooperate fully with their requests.

I understand, but can you –
NUMBER 4
They will identify themselves as Babbage and Lovelace.

STEPHANIE
Babbage and Lovelace, yes, but –

NUMBER 4
This is a matter of national security.

STEPHANIE
But how do I know –

NUMBER 4
They will brief you on everything you need to know. Is that clear?

Yes, I see.

NUMBER 4
Good day, Mrs. Dylar.

STEPHANIE
Good-bye.

(NUMBER 4 exits. STEPHANIE cracks the door open to see if BABBAGE and LOVELACE are still there. She resigns herself to opening the door fully.)

STEPHANIE
Will you tell me what this is all about?

LOVELACE
May we come in?

(STEPHANIE, still reluctant, opens the door. The two agents enter. As STEPHANIE closes the door behind them, the CCTV camera swivels. The agents sit on the sofa, and STEPHANIE fetches a chair for herself.)

BABBAGE
Your son –

STEPHANIE
Jeremy –

BABBAGE
Has recently begun to use software –
that encrypts his internet communication –

Email, chat, even –

Disturbingly –

His web browsing.

You’ve been spying on my son?

No.

The Division doesn’t spy.

Then how –

Traffic analysis.

Pattern recognition.

I don’t understand.

We don’t read email –

We read patterns.

Say you send an email to your mother --

Every Saturday.

My mother!
Becoming Number Six

If you suddenly stopped, –

We’d know something was wrong.

Perhaps you’d had a fight –

Or had taken sick.

The mere fact that something has changed is –

Significant.

How do you know I’m emailing my mother?

We don’t.

Theoretically.

Though in your case we do.

Email is just like an ordinary letter.

For the letter carrier to deliver it –

(Sings softly.) Please Mr. Postman, look and see.

The delivery address must be visible.

Every piece of data transmitted over the internet –

Has a destination address and a return address.
Becoming Number Six

So anyone can see what I’m doing?  

Not anyone. No.  

But you can.  

Theoretically.  

So you’ve tapped into my son’s computer and are –  

Oh, no.  

That would be illegal.  

Unless we had a warrant.  

Which we don’t.  

We work for the government, --  

We’re bound by the law.  

Then how do you know whatever it is about my son?  

Wiretapping your son requires a warrant –  

Placing a node on the internet backbone does not.  

Our computers don’t eavesdrop on individuals --  

We analyze the entire network.
STEPHANIE
You’re telling me it’s illegal to spy on a single person but it’s OK to spy on everybody?

We’re not spies.

LOVELACE
Other agencies spy:

BABBAGE
FBI, CIA, DIA, DCS, JIO, NSA --

LOVELACE
(To BABBAGE.) No. Such. Agency.

(They share a smirk.)

STEPHANIE
But you said –

LOVELACE
We do traffic analysis, --

BABBAGE
Pattern recognition.

STEPHANIE
That doesn’t make sense. If you don’t read his email, how do you know he’s started encoding it?

BABBAGE
Our processors classify the data, --

LOVELACE
Text, voice, video, audio, image, --

BABBAGE
But no one actually listens to the audio, --

LOVELACE
Or reads the text –

BABBAGE
Or looks at the pictures.

LOVELACE
Theoretically.

BABBAGE
We deal in metadata, --
Data about data.

What do you want?

We just thought you ought to know.

Know what?

About your son –

Encrypting his communications.

Am I supposed to do something?

That’s up to you.

Think of us like a neighbor –

Who notices a suspicious car on your block.

It might be significant --

Or not.

He’s coming.

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE stand.)

Jeremy?

(She stands as well.)

It is important –
LOVELACE

That you do not tell Jeremy about our visit.

Do you understand?

I guess.

BABBAGE

Do you understand?

Yes.

LOVELACE

Goodbye, Mrs. Dylar.

Goodbye.

LOVELACE

Be seeing you.

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE exit. The CCTV swivels to track them. JEREMY enters a few moments later.)

Hi, mom. Who was here?

JEREMY

Jehovah’s Witnesses.

STEPHANIE

Oh.

(JEREMY disappears into his bedroom.)

Jeremy?

STEPHANIE

What?

JEREMY (offstage)

I don’t want you on your computer all day. Do something outside for a change.
Becoming Number Six

I’ve got stuff to do.

Like what?

Stuff.

Unless it’s homework, I want you outside.

(JEREMY enters.)

Is something wrong?

No. Everything’s fine.

Ok. I do have homework, though.

Fine.

(JEREMY exits again. After he leaves, STEPHANIE finds her cell phone and dials. JULIA’s phone rings. She answers from her position in the audience.)

Shit! Sorry. … Steph?

Julia, can you come over right now?

I can’t talk now. I’m –

Please. I need you.

Ok. Ok. Let me call you back.
Becoming Number Six

(JULIA hangs up and leaves her seat, excusing herself to her seat-mates. Lights dim on Dylar home as JULIA walks down the aisle. Spotlight on JULIA as she reaches the stage.)

JULIA
I’m not someone who can just stand around and watch. I have to do something.

END OF SCENE
SCENE 3

(A short time later. Split stage: BABBAGE and LOVELACE are seated outdoors at a coffee shop, simply suggested by a round table and two chairs. LOVELACE checks her cell phone. In the Dylar living room. JULIA and STEPHANIE are seated on the sofa. JULIA hugs STEPHANIE, who is upset. NOTE: The actors in the split scene should speak between one another’s lines, rather than overlapping.)

STEPHANIE
It was so creepy. And I didn’t dare say anything or do anything when Jeremy was home.

JULIA
Where is he now?

STEPHANIE
At a friend’s.

JULIA
I still don’t understand why you can’t call the police.

STEPHANIE
The sheriff called me! While those two were in the house.

JULIA
You don’t know who they are, or who they’re working for?

STEPHANIE
No.

JULIA
Can you verify what they said?

STEPHANIE
What do you mean?

LOVELACE
Facebook friends forever.

JULIA

BABBAGE
How long do you think it will be?

LOVELACE
Before we finish our coffee, I bet.

BABBAGE
And you think it will be her?

LOVELACE

BABBAGE and LOVELACE sip their coffee.)
Have you looked at Jeremy’s computer? Is he using encryption software?

STEPPANIE
That’s why I called you. I don’t have any idea what to look for.

JULIA
Tor, SSH, PGP, things like that.

STEPPANIE
I don’t know what those are.

JULIA
Tor is a web browser that anonymizes –

STEPPANIE
Just go look.

JULIA
Now? What if he comes back?

STEPPANIE
OK, tomorrow morning, when he’s at school. It’s perfect. I’ll call in sick and you can come over –

JULIA
Whoa, whoa. Slow down. Have you thought about this?

STEPPANIE
I haven’t thought about anything else.

JULIA
But have you thought about what this means?

STEPPANIE
What does it mean?

JULIA
Are you ready to snoop on your son?

STEPPANIE
I don’t have any choice.

BABBAGE
I heard you wrote a computer program.
Becoming Number Six

JULIA
Sure you do; if these spooks are so concerned, let them get a warrant and do it themselves.

STEPHANIE
But then it might be too late. What if he’s doing something illegal?

JULIA
You’re still invading his privacy.

STEPHANIE
I’m his mother. Don’t I have a right to know?

JULIA
Has he done anything suspicious?

STEPHANIE
They obviously thought so.

JULIA
Shouldn’t there at least be some evidence before –

STEPHANIE
What about my responsibilities? I can’t be one of those parents they interview on TV who says, “I didn’t know anything was wrong.”

JULIA
Steph, I’m just not comfortable –

STEPHANIE
You’re not a parent, and you’ll never be one. You don’t understand.

LOVELACE
I like to keep my hand in.

BABBAGE
The Freedom of Information Act?

LOVELACE
A joke.

BABBAGE
That’s not what I heard.

LOVELACE
What did you hear?

BABBAGE
It’s going into production.

LOVELACE
Right.
Thanks a lot.

STEPHANIE
Sorry, I’m just upset. … I didn’t think you wanted kids.

JULIA
Not sure. Maybe if I met the right girl.

STEPHANIE
Are you dating again?

JULIA
Looking, anyway.

STEPHANIE
Good for you.

JULIA
I’m just saying, it’s possible.

STEPHANIE
So will you help me?

JULIA
I’ll do this because you’re my friend, not because I think it’s a good idea.

(STEPHANIE gives JULIA a big hug.)

STEPHANIE
Thank you. This means so much to me.

BABBAGE
Why did you call it a joke?

LOVELACE
Because it was. Someone was bitching about the amount of work required to do an FOIA when it would all be censored anyway.

BABBAGE
Division policy. Never release any data.

LOVELACE
And yet we have the researchers on staff.

BABBAGE
It shows good faith.

LOVELACE
Anyway, I wrote her a program to generate random text.

BABBAGE
I don’t see the point.

LOVELACE
It is then censored as if it were actual data.

BABBAGE
Brilliant.
Becoming Number Six

JULIA
But like I said, you need to be prepared for what you might find.

STEPHANIE
I’d rather see him spend time in jail than be killed by a SWAT team.

JULIA
I don’t mean that. I mean, what if you see things you’d rather not?

STEPHANIE
What do you mean?

JULIA
If you start searching though his computer … He’s eighteen you know.

STEPHANIE
Oh. You mean like … pictures.

JULIA
Porn is pretty much a given.

STEPHANIE
You think?

JULIA
What planet do you live on?

STEPHANIE
I don’t know! I deal with first graders all day, I don’t know how to think about that sort of thing.

JULIA
What if there are pictures of him?

STEPHANIE
You mean … sexual?

JULIA
That. Or evidence of drugs or whatever.
(JULIA’s cell phone rings. She looks at it but doesn’t answer.)

JULIA
I have to get to work.

STEPHANIE
OK. I get it.

JULIA
So, maybe you don’t want to do this after all?

STEPHANIE
I have to. To protect him.

JULIA
Just warning you.

STEPHANIE
You look at everything.

JULIA
Oh, no.

STEPHANIE
Yes! You can just tell me if there’s anything I need to know.

JULIA
No, no, no. I’m not going to be the villain here.

STEPHANIE
You’re not a villain, you’re just a filter. You can look at those things without being emotionally involved. You can look for patterns that I’m missing.

JULIA
But where’s the line? Do I tell you if I find out he’s using heroin, but not if he’s smoking weed?

(LOVELACE gets a text. She checks her phone.)

LOVELACE
Contact confirmed.

BABBAGE
Congratulations. You nailed it.

(BABBAGE high-fives LOVELACE.)
STEPHANIE
Of course tell me if he’s using heroin.

JULIA
And if he’s banging a 13-year old?

STEPHANIE
Julia!

JULIA
What? These are legitimate questions.

STEPHANIE
Let’s not deal with anything we don’t have to.

JULIA
But –

STEPHANIE
Let’s just see what we find. If there’s nothing there, we won’t have to worry about it. … Ready?

JULIA
There’s a project I need to finish. How about tonight?

STEPHANIE
Jeremy will be home.

JULIA
Maybe I can get the afternoon off. What time does he get home from school?

STEPHANIE
Usually around four.
OK, I'll try and come by after lunch.

Thank you so much.

The school, tomorrow morning?

I'll pick you up.

Imagine a game where neither side knows the shape of the board nor the location of all the pieces. All your information comes from watching the moves your opponent makes. It’s a lot of fun.
SCENE 4

(The next day.

Split stage: On one side an interrogation room, indicated by a freestanding door and a table. A microphone hangs from the ceiling. There is nothing else. JEREMY is seated at the table. He is uneasy, but not yet too worried. Next to him stand BABBAGE and LOVELACE.

On the other side is NUMBER 4’s office, as in SCENE 1. NUMBER 4 is watching one of the monitors as it displays the events taking place in the interrogation room.)

Tell us about Incognito.

<BABBAGE>

LOVELACE

I don’t know what you’re talking about.

BABBAGE

LOVELACE

That suggests otherwise.

JEREMY

LOVELACE

It’s just a thing I read.

BABBAGE

(Lifts JEREMY’s arm and reads.)

Before you become Incognito, you must first become Incognito.

LOVELACE

Coincidence?

JEREMY

LOVELACE

Yeah.

If you act, as you think –

BABBAGE

The missing link –
Synchronicity.

Who are you guys?

No one you know.

You’re not really cops are you.

We never said we were.

The school secretary said you were the police.

A misunderstanding.

She said two officers –

Oh, that. It’s my given name.

What a coincidence. Me, too!

Pleased to meet you. Officer.

(They shake hands.)

Officer.

Is this a test?

Yes. If this had been an actual emergency –

You would been instructed where to tune in.

An initiation?
Becoming Number Six

You mean into some secret society?      BABBAGE
Masons?                  LOVELACE
Skull and bones?        BABBAGE
Knights Templar?       LOVELACE
Are you Incognito?      JEREMY
You tell us.            BABBAGE
That’s not how it works. JEREMY
How does it work?       LOVELACE
I don’t know.            JEREMY
I detect a problem of epistemology. LOVELACE
I know.                 BABBAGE.
Perhaps we can construct a coherent reality. LOVELACE
Empirically?            BABBAGE
Ideally. (To JEREMY.) You want to contact Incognito. How does that work? LOVELACE
Why are you asking me? Just Google it. JEREMY
We want to know what you did. LOVELACE
Becoming Number Six

I went to a secure chat room.

With <FreshMeat>.

Yes.

SO you struck up a conversation, just like that.

He didn’t reply. When you message them, they try and figure out who you are. If you’ve kept your identity secret, they’ll get back to you.

And if they do figure out who you are –

Jeremy.

Mr. <InflatableVonnegut>.

Shit.

Someone figured out who you are.

Who are you?

No one you know.

What am I doing here?

Waiting.

What for?

Godot.

LOVELACE

JEREMY

LOVELACE

JEREMY

LOVELACE

JEREMY

LOVELACE

BABBAGE

BABBAGE

BABBAGE

BABBAGE
Becoming Number Six

Why are you asking about Incognito?

You tell us.

I thought you were Incognito.

Maybe you hacked a government web site –

And illegally distributed the contents of said web site –

In knowing violation of the law.

Information wants to be free.

What about you?

(A pause.)

Can I leave?

Not yet.

Why not?

We’re waiting.

For?

Lucky.

And Pozzo.

Do they work for you?
Becoming Number Six

The state of education these days. BABBAGE

Deplorable. LOVELACE

Can you tell me why I’m here? JEREMY

It’s a question we all wrestle with. BABBAGE

One is still what one is going to cease to be and already what one is going to become. LOVELACE

Cease to be? JEREMY

Bereft of life. BABBAGE

Gone to meet his maker. LOVELACE

Are you going to kill me? JEREMY

The probability is very low – BABBAGE

Through from a quantum mechanical perspective, non-zero. LOVELACE

(We hear a ringtone, “Derezzed” by Daft Punk. JEREMY pats his jeans.)

Where’s my phone? JEREMY

(BABBAGE pulls a plastic bag from his jacket. It contains the phone.)

It’s your mother. BABBAGE

(JEREMY opens the bag and grabs the phone. He answers. STEPHANIE is on the line. He can hear her, but she can’t hear him.)

Mom? ... Mom, can you hear me? ... I'm OK. Mom? ... Mom!
(The call has ended. BABBAGE takes the phone.)

LOVELACE
I believe there was some damage to the microphone.

BABBAGE
You will, of course, be fully reimbursed by the government.

LOVELACE
The check is in the mail.

JEREMY
You guys are with the government?

BABBAGE
Did we say that?

LOVELACE
It was implied.

JEREMY
Am I in trouble?

BABBAGE
Have you done anything wrong?

JEREMY
No. You brought me here for questioning.

LOVELACE
We don’t really care for questions.

BABBAGE
People give answers.

LOVELACE
We prefer suspicion, --

BABBAGE
Not actually knowing.

LOVELACE
It gives us more freedom to act.

JEREMY
Am I under arrest?

BABBAGE
No. You’re what we call a –
Becoming Number Six

Person of interest.

So I’m here because?

You’re interesting.

Can I see your badges?

Shall I?

Happens every time.

We don’t need no stinking badges.

(They smirk.)

Why not?

We’re from a division –

The Division.

What division?

That would be telling.

What about my rights?

Under federal law 107 slash 56 –

Commonly known as the USA PATRIOT Act –
Becoming Number Six

BABBAGE

*(To the audience.)*

That’s an acronym, by the way –

LOVELACE

*(To the audience.)*

Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism.

BABBAGE

*(To JEREMY.)*

A law, under which, certain rights may be suspended.

Indefinitely.

LOVELACE

Wait. You think I’m a terrorist?

BABBAGE

Thinking isn’t required.

LOVELACE

Only suspicion.

JEREMY

This is crazy. I’m not a terrorist. *(Beat.)* Do I get to make a phone call?

BABBAGE

I think we’ve established –

LOVELACE

That’s not going to be particularly effective.

*(BABBAGE and LOVELACE exit through the door.)*

JEREMY

Hey! … Where are you going? … What about me?

*(After a few beats, the lights dim. Spot on JEREMY.)*

JEREMY

Was that document important? Maybe I’ll be famous like Aaron Swartz or Chelsea Manning.

*(Lights down on JEREMY. At various points during the remainder of the scene JEREMY may get up and pace and then return to the table, but he has no means of entertaining himself.*
Becoming Number Six

_BABBAGE and LOVELACE move the door so that it is now in front of NUMBER 4’s office. They knock._

NUMBER 4

Come in.

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE enter. The following exchange is done at an almost comically rapid pace.)

BABBAGE / LOVELACE (together)

Number four.

NUMBER 4

Status?

BABBAGE

No contact yet with Direct Object.

LOVELACE

Subject has been contacted by Indirect Object.

BABBAGE

With additional pressure on Indirect Object –

LOVELACE

We believe Subject will attempt communication with Direct Object.

NUMBER 4

What about Target?

BABBAGE

Target is now Direct Object.

LOVELACE

There was an issue.

BABBAGE

The Commissioner requested we discontinue Target –

LOVELACE

As either subject or object in favor of Direct Object.

BABBAGE

The Subcommittee felt that Target had militaristic overtones –

LOVELACE

That Direct Object did not.
Becoming Number Six

To deal with the issue --

LOVELACE

New operational manuals have been issued –

BABBAGE

That specify the use of Direct Object as the subject.

NUMBER 4

And you are holding the son of Subject to apply said pressure?

The son of Indirect Object.

LOVELACE

Subject is without issue.

NUMBER 4

The son of Indirect Object.

BABBAGE

Yes.

NUMBER 4

No problem with the authorities?

LOVELACE

No.

(The conversation returns to a more normal pace.)

NUMBER 4

Excellent. Carry on.

BABBAGE / LOVELACE (together)

Number four.

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE turn to go.)

NUMBER 4

A moment.

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE turn back.)

NUMBER 4

There have been rumors circulating.

37
Becoming Number Six

LOVELACE
Always are.

NUMBER 4
What have you heard?

BABBAGE
There’s talk about the budget.

LOVELACE
Restructuring.

NUMBER 4
Nothing to worry about. It’s just….

(NUMBER 4 gets distracted by something on one of the screens.)

BABBAGE
Number four?

NUMBER 4
Outsourcing.

LOVELACE
SIGINT?

NUMBER 4
New sources.

LOVELACE
GCHQ? SGDN? Unit 8200?

NUMBER 4
Public sector.

BABBAGE
Someone is selling?

NUMBER 4
Someone is always selling.

LOVELACE

BABBAGE
Equifax? AmEx?

NUMBER 4
Everyone. There are new cross-referencing tools in the pipeline. Set aside some time for training.
Becoming Number Six

LOVELACE
Of course.

BABBAGE
Any time.

(They turn to leave again.)

NUMBER 4
Number Nine?

LOVELACE
Yes?

NUMBER 4
A moment. Alone.

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE exchange a glance. BABBAGE exits.)

NUMBER 4
Your ears only.

LOVELACE
Cone of silence?

NUMBER 4
Funny girl.

LOVELACE
Go ahead.

NUMBER 4
You wrote a computer program.

LOVELACE
The FOIA one?

NUMBER 4
Don’t miss a trick, do you Lovelace?

LOVELACE
I do my best.

NUMBER 4
Anyway, Liaison wants to deploy. Budget ran the numbers. Could save a quarter million.

LOVELACE
I don’t know what to say.
Becoming Number Six

NUMBER 4
Say thank you. You’ll be getting a bonus.

LOVELACE
Thank you.

NUMBER 4
You’re welcome. That’s all.

LOVELACE
Be seeing you.

(LOVELACE exits. NUMBER 4’s attention returns to the video screens.)

END OF SCENE
Becoming Number Six

SCENE 5

(Dylar living room. Empty. BABBAGE and LOVELACE ring the bell. CCTV cameras swivel. STEPHANIE answers.)

Where’s my son?

(STEPHANIE)

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE walk past her into the room.)

You’re asking us?

(LOVELACE)

You’re his mother, you should know.

(STEPHANIE)

You took him. His school secretary said –

We did?

(LOVELACE)

You’d need hard evidence to prove that.

Like a video recording.

(BABBAGE)

The school has eight cameras –

On a seven day rotation.

Which means you have six days –

To get a subpoena.

Before the data is recycled –

Overwritten –

Destroyed.
You’re torturing me.

Harsh.

We’re from the government.

We’re here to help.

Are you saying you don’t have Jeremy?

Can we speak frankly?

Please!

We believe that Jeremy was in contact with some –

Shall we say unsavory?

Let’s!

Characters on the internet.

Who? Who are these people?

Have you heard of a group called Incognito?

They’re computer hackers, right?

Worse.

Criminals.
Becoming Number Six

LOVELACE
Not someone you’d want your son associating with.

STEPHANIE
Are you saying that someone from Incognito took Jeremy out of school?

There are patterns –

BABBAGE
Patterns of behavior, –

LOVELACE
Disturbing patterns.

Do you know where he is?

BABBAGE
We need your help.

What can I do?

BABBAGE
Go through his computer and –

STEPHANIE
We did. We didn’t find anything.

LOVELACE
You must go deeper.

STEPHANIE
You guys are the experts, you do it.

BABBAGE
That would require a warrant.

LOVELACE
Which might take weeks.

STEPHANIE
Look, I’ll just give it to you. All right?

BABBAGE
No.
We need to be unbiased –

With regard to any potential evidence.

Evidence of what?

Besides, it might appear that you were coerced.

This isn’t coercion?

We advise.

You consent.

Do you know where my son is?

Not exactly.

But we do know his velocity.

What does that mean?

Heisenberg.

Uncertainty principle.

Is this your job? To mess with me?

You can do this.

What? What can I do?
Becoming Number Six

Find out who he was in contact with.

But why me?

*(BABBAGE and LOVELACE rise.)*

We have to go.

Listen very closely.

Peel back the layers of the onion.

What?

Do you understand?

No.

But you heard what he said?

The layers of the onion.

Yes.

Brava!

*(BABBAGE and LOVELACE go to the door and turn back to STEPHANIE before exiting.)*

Good luck!

Don’t go.

Be seeing you.
STEPHANIE
Do you want money?

LOVELACE
This is not extortion.

BABBAGE
We’re giving you useful information.

LOVELACE
Use it.

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE exit. Lights down. Time passes. That evening. Lights rise on the Dylar living room. STEPHANIE and JULIA are sitting on the sofa.)

JULIA
They were right.

STEPHANIE
You found the onion?

JULIA
Not the onion, but yes. The Tor protocol --

STEPHANIE
Cybersecurity for Dummies, please.

JULIA
You know how most web sites are something dot com? Well, for various reasons, much of the dark web is dot onion.

STEPHANIE
Really? I thought computer geeks were into Dungeons & Dragons. Not vegetables.

JULIA
(Laughs.) Yeah. It’s about layers, though.

STEPHANIE
So there are two webs?

JULIA
Essentially.

STEPHANIE
And the dark web is like the dark side?
Becoming Number Six

JULIA

Depends. Some people just use it for security, other parts, well, “a wretched hive of scum and villainy” is a pretty good description.

STEPHANIE

And Jeremy?

JULIA

I don’t know yet. I’ll go home and check out some of this stuff.

STEPHANIE

Please don’t go.

JULIA

I need my computer.

STEPHANIE

Use Jeremy’s.

JULIA

No.

STEPHANIE

There might be other things on it that you need.

JULIA

Yes, but –

STEPHANIE

Please. I’m all alone.

JULIA

You can call me.

STEPHANIE

I need you.

JULIA

You need Jeremy back.

STEPHANIE

I’ll cook for you. Anything you want.

JULIA

That would be nice, but –

STEPHANIE

I’ve got some really nice wine.
Becoming Number Six

JULIA
Then I wouldn’t get any work done.

STEPHANIE
OK, you stay here and work, and I’ll give you a massage break every half hour.

JULIA
I can’t stay here.

STEPHANIE
Why not?

JULIA
Please, don’t ask.

STEPHANIE
Julia?

JULIA
Don’t push it, all right?

STEPHANIE
What does that mean?

JULIA
It means there are things I can’t talk about.

STEPHANIE
You know something about Jeremy!

JULIA
No.

STEPHANIE
What then? Are you working with those spooks?

JULIA
I’ve never even seen them.

STEPHANIE
Then why won’t you help me?

JULIA
I will help you, Steph. I just can’t be here.

STEPHANIE
I need you.
Becoming Number Six

JULIA
Look, I can stay here and be comforting, or I can leave and be helpful.

STEPHANIE
How does leaving help me? What is it you’re not telling?

JULIA
I’ll do what I can. I’m sorry.

(Exits.)

STEPHANIE
Don’t go. I need you.

(Runs to doorway.)
I don’t have anyone else. Julia! … Julia!

(STEPHANIE starts to cry. Lights down.)

END OF SCENE
(Lights up on Dylar living room a few hours later. The table has an empty pizza box and there is a bottle of wine and two glasses. JULIA and STEPHANIE are talking.)

JULIA
I’ll install a VNC client, virtual network –

STEPHANIE
You don’t have to explain everything. I don’t understand anyway.

JULIA
OK, but I want you to know what’s going on. The program gives me access to Jeremy’s laptop from my computer at home.

STEPHANIE
You can take over his laptop, just like that?

JULIA
Well, it’s easy since you have it, though it can be done using a virus, too.

STEPHANIE
And you’ll be able to see whatever happens on his machine?

JULIA
Yes.

STEPHANIE
OK, go ahead. (Beat.) And thank you for coming back. So much.

JULIA
It’s OK.

STEPHANIE
How much do I owe you for the pizza?

JULIA
My treat. You opened the wine. Let me set up the software.

STEPHANIE
The laptop is in Jeremy’s bedroom.
(JULIA goes offstage to Jeremy’s room. STEPHANIE tidies up the remains of the pizza dinner. JULIA returns carrying a laptop. It is connected to a small black box with an antenna.)

JULIA

Steph?

STEPHANIE

Go ahead, you don’t need me to start.

JULIA

No, come here. This is important.

(STEPHANIE joins JULIA at the couch.)

What is it?

STEPHANIE

Jeremy has a femtocell hooked up to his computer.

STEPHANIE

Is that good or bad?

JULIA

Do you like having your cell phone conversations tapped?

STEPHANIE

What? Did he build that?

(STEPHANIE types at the computer during her next few lines.)

JULIA

No, you can them at any electronics store.

STEPHANIE

It’s that simple to tap a phone?

JULIA

Normally, they act like a mini cell tower to give you better reception. But this one’s been hacked to be a Stingray.

STEPHANIE

Which does what?

JULIA

Any cell phone within range will connect to this. But before the data is passed on to the phone company, but it can do almost anything.
Becoming Number Six

STEPHANIE

Listen in?

JULIA

Yes. And read texts, see photos, web connections.

STEPHANIE

Oh my god. Do you suppose Jeremy overhear something he shouldn’t have, and that’s why he’s been taken away?

JULIA

They didn’t mention this, did they?

STEPHANIE

No. But what if they’re not even from the government? What if they were just lying to prevent me from going to the police?

JULIA

I thought you talked to the police?

STEPHANIE

Just over the phone.

JULIA

Hang on, hang on. Let’s see what we can find out first. Maybe then we’ll know what to do?

STEPHANIE

Can you see what he’s been doing?

(JULIA stops typing.)

JULIA

It looks like he’s cloned some phones by stealing their internal ID.

STEPHANIE

I can’t believe Jeremy’s done this.

JULIA

It looks like this one is yours. Should we try it?

(JULIA types a command. CELL PHONE #3 rings.)

JULIA (To audience.)

Excuse me, can you check the caller ID on that? It should say Stephanie Dylar.

STEPHANIE

Don’t. That’s creepy.
Becoming Number Six

(JULIA types, the phone stops ringing.)

JULIA
I wonder who the others are. There are six more.

STEPHANIE
I don’t know if I should be worried about him breaking the law, or proud that he’s a computer genius.

JULIA
Hackers trade these programs like baseball cards.

(JULIA continues to type. STEPHANIE’s phone rings.)

STEPHANIE
Should I get that?

JULIA
Look at it.

(STEPHANIE pulls out her phone.)

STEPHANIE
It says it’s you!

(JULIA types. The ringing stops.)

JULIA
That little bastard – sorry – he cloned mine, too.

Oh god. I’m sorry.

STEPHANIE

JULIA
Steph, I’m getting in over my head. If you want this stuff looked at, I’m going to have to bring in some people.

Who?

STEPHANIE

JULIA
It might be better if you don’t know.

STEPHANIE
You say that like it’s the mafia or something.

JULIA
I’ll need to give them access to Jeremy’s laptop.
Becoming Number Six

STEPHANIE
Do they have to come over?

JULIA
No, it will be over the internet.

STEPHANIE
(Sarcastically.) Oh well that’s all right then. (Beat.) What are you up to Julia? Who are you?

JULIA
I’m not up to anything. I’m trying to help you out.

STEPHANIE
But what’s all this “some people” crap? First those guys, then Jeremy, now you. It’s creeping me out.

JULIA
Have you heard of Incognito?

STEPHANIE
You know those people?

JULIA
(To the audience.) We watch. We are unwatchable. We cannot be counted. Count on us.

END OF SCENE
SCENE 7

(Interrogation room, the next morning. JEREMY is sleeping, head on the table. BABBAGE and LOVELACE enter.)

Rise and shine.

Oh god.

Wakey-wakey.

What time is it?

Time to confess.

Is it tomorrow?

Tomorrow never comes.

What do you want?

Information.

Whose side are you on?

What do you mean?

Stolen documents.

<LeakyFaucet>.

I don’t know what you’re talking about.

You have a tattoo on your wrist –
Becoming Number Six

LOVELACE
That suggests otherwise.

BABBAGE
Before you become Incognito, you must first become Incognito.

LOVELACE
Dude --

BABBAGE
Passing classified documents can get you put away --

LOVELACE
For a long time.

JEREMY
Aren’t I supposed to have a lawyer?

BABBAGE
Spoken like a criminal.

JEREMY
If you have evidence, why not just arrest me? It's like you're fishing.

BABBAGE
He's got us there, Lovelace.

LOVELACE
He does indeed, Babbage.

BABBAGE
We are fishing, --

LOVELACE
But you’re the bait, --

BABBAGE
Boy.

LOVELACE
You’re nothing but chum, --

BABBAGE
Chum.

JEREMY
If I’m a criminal, just arrest me.
LOVELACE

Be careful what you wish for --

BABBAGE

‘Cause you just might get it.

LOVELACE

On the other hand.

BABBAGE
If you tell us a little more about <LeakyFaucet>, we might let you go.

JEREMY
I don’t know any more than what I found on the Internet.

LOVELACE

Do tell.

JEREMY
Everybody knows about Incognito.

BABBAGE
Not everyone knows about <FreshMeat>.

LOVELACE

Or <LeakyFaucet>.

BABBAGE
You know what a honey pot is, Jeremy?

LOVELACE

By the look on his face, I think he does.

BABBAGE
Maybe we shouldn’t call him Jeremy.

LOVELACE

More like Winnie-the-Pooh.

BABBAGE
That computer you hacked –

LOVELACE

Was put there to catch bears of very little brain.

JEREMY
I don’t believe you.
Becoming Number Six

BABBAGE

Denial.

LOVELACE

Next up: anger, bargaining, despair, and acceptance.

BABBAGE

Every unique login was given access to a slightly modified set of documents.

LOVELACE

Any hacker would get a version with a slightly different digital fingerprint.

BABBAGE

Believe it now?

JEREMY

You could just be lying. Trying to trick me into admitting something.

Excellent idea.

LOVELACE

We’ll have to try that sometime.

BABBAGE

If we wanted to make you confess, you would.

(German accent.) Ve haff vayz.

LOVELACE

You’re just here to trigger the next step in a larger plan.

BABBAGE

You’re the marble in Mousetrap.

LOVELACE

Trap who?

JEREMY

<LeakyFaucet>.

LOVELACE

I don’t know who that is.

JEREMY

We know.
But you’re helping us catch him anyway.

Incognito will be very unhappy with you.

I haven’t said anything.

You don’t get it. Step back. Think of the process, not the individual.

Consider what happened to those documents –

That you stole.

You’re trying to trick me.

We can leave you out of it.

If someone stole some documents –

Hypothetically.

How would Incognito get them?

I’m not saying anything.

We’re really not out to get you, Jeremy. You actually did a pretty good job –

For a first-timer.

And we’ll forgive your little indiscretion –

If you just sit tight a for a while.
Becoming Number Six

Do I have a choice?

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE exchange a glance.)

No.

(A pause.)

What are you waiting for.

Your mom, actually.

She’s doesn’t know anything about this.

We know.

You guys are crazy.

Your mom knows someone –

Who knows someone.

And as long as you’re missing –

That someone will try and find you.

You’re not going to arrest her?

Of course not.

She’s innocent.

Unlike you.
(A pause.)

JEREMY
How much longer?

BABBAGE
You’re working for the wrong side, Jeremy.

LOVELACE
You’ve got “mad skillz,” you could help the good guys.

JEREMY
Incognito is the good guys.

LOVELACE
You think DDOS attacks are a good thing?

BABBAGE
Putting Hitler moustaches on all the photos at senate.gov?

JEREMY
It’s a form of protest.

LOVELACE
You’ve Godwin’d your own argument before it even starts.

JEREMY
I suppose kidnapping me makes you the good guys.

BABBAGE
Kidnapping is a loaded word.

LOVELACE
Think of it like detention.

BABBAGE
PATRIOT act, remember?

LOVELACE
Those documents you downloaded?

BABBAGE
Distributing classified information carries a prison term of up to ten years.

LOVELACE
Given that we’re going to let you go without pressing charges –

BABBAGE
I think it’s fair to say we are the good guys. … Think about it.
Becoming Number Six

LOVELACE

Be seeing you.

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE exit.)

END OF SCENE
SCENE 8

*(Dylar living room. JULIA is working on the laptop. STEPHANIE enters with a plate of food and some juice.)*

STEPHANIE

I made breakfast.

JULIA

You should get some rest.

STEPHANIE

You’re the one who’s been working all night. It’s the least I could do.

*(JULIA dives in. Continues to eat and drink during the following.)*

JULIA

This is soooo good. Thank you.

STEPHANIE

What are you doing now, if it’s not too technical?

JULIA

Waiting, mostly. We need to hear from <LeakyFaucet>.

Can’t you just call them?

JULIA

That’s not how it works. To become –

STEPHANIE

I know, I know. To become Incognito, you must first become Incognito. But you’re Incognito already.

JULIA

But I don’t know who <LeakyFaucet> is. No one does. That’s the beauty of it.

Then how do you even contact him?

JULIA

I don’t. I can only put things where he’s likely to look at them, and tell him how to contact me.

STEPHANIE

So we don’t even know if he’ll get around to us. What if he’s gone to Florida for a week?

JULIA

That’s the way it is, Steph.
Julia. I thought you were going to do something.

I’ve been here all night, doing everything I can. If you don’t like it…

No, no, no. Don’t get mad at me.

I know, you’re frustrated. So am I.

Distract me. Talk to me. Have you done stuff like this before?

Better you don’t know.

Oh come on.

Well, you know that time the FBI accused Pakistan of hacking the US embassy?

I didn’t really follow the story.

Well, documents proving it was the Chinese mysteriously showed up at the New York Times about a week later.

Was that you?

I helped.

Who did you work with?

I don’t know. (Beat.) Incognito is sort of like a starfish.

A computer-hacking starfish?
A starfish doesn’t have a centralized brain, it has one in each arm. When one arm finds something interesting, the other arms respond.

Don’t they also regrow arms when they’re cut off?

Exactly.

Do people get … cut off?

God, I hope not.

(The computer chimes.)

<LeakyFaucet>!

What does he say?

(Typing.) Hang on. … Yes, he received documents from <InflatableVonnegut>.

Who the hell is that?

Jeremy, I saw that handle in his chat logs.

Can he tell us where Jeremy is?

No. He doesn’t know anything but that alias.

But can’t you guys find out where he is? Hack in to some database?

It’s not that easy.

We have to find him.
Becoming Number Six

JULIA
Let’s think this through. Jeremy got ahold of some top secret files, and sent them to Incognito. Babbage and Lovelace try to push you around, then pick Jeremy up at school.

STEPHANIE
Did they arrest him?

JULIA
They would have scooped up his computer as evidence.

STEPHANIE
The told me they didn’t want his computer.

JULIA
That doesn’t make sense.

JULIA
Were any of his friends involved? Are they looking for an accomplice?

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE appear at the door and ring the bell.)

STEPHANIE
Just a sec.

(STEPHANIE opens the door, sees who it is, and immediately slams it shut.)

STEPHANIE
It’s them!

JULIA
Oh shit. Let me shut this thing down.

(JULIA starts quitting programs and shutting down the laptop. The doorbell rings again.)

STEPHANIE
Ready?

JULIA
I didn’t really want to meet these guys, but go ahead.

(STEPHANIE opens the door, BABBAGE and LOVELACE enter.)

BABBAGE
Good evening, Mrs. Dylar.
Becoming Number Six

Where’s Jeremy?

Good evening, <TinkerTailor>.

(JULIA is shocked by the use of her handle, but doesn’t speak. She’s staring at LOVELACE.)

He’ll be home soon.

Cat got your tongue, <TinkerTailor>?

Why are you calling me that?

Not you. Your friend.

A small matter of paperwork.

She’s not quite as incognito as she used to be.

Is he all right?

Perfectly safe.

I know you from somewhere.

Where is he?

Maybe we shop at the same Whole Foods.

You need to sign a form.

What form?
BECOMING NUMBER SIX

BABBA G E

Acknowledging that we brought in Jeremy for questioning and you have been informed.

WHY SHOULD I SIGN THAT?

BABBA G E

Once you’ve done so, we release him.

LET ME SEE.

LOVELACE

Wait a minute...

(BABBA G E hands STEPHANIE a document and a pen.)

JULIA

Oh, fuck. Oh, fuck.

WHAT’S WRONG?

JULIA

You’re <RainbowGirl84>.

Oh, god.

LOVELACE

Lovelace?

LOVELACE

<NerdyButCute>?

JULIA


LOVELACE

You’re her!

JULIA

You said you were a social worker!

BABBA G E

You two have met?

LOVELACE / JULIA (together)

OKCupid.
Becoming Number Six

How do you know it’s her?

Profile picture.

You’re a lesbian?

Is that a problem?

No. It’s just, I never …

Wait. So you two were on-line dating?

We were only at the email stage.

(STEPHANIE signs the form and gives it to BABBAGE.)

Here. Now where’s my son?

He’ll be freed the minute this has been processed.

And thanks for your help.

With what?

You contacted <LeakyFaucet>.

Damn it.

He’s being detained as we speak.

This is all my fault.

Jeremy broke the law.
Becoming Number Six

Are you arresting her?

Should we?

We are aware that <TinkerTailor> frequently uses encryption.

That is not against the law.

At the present time.

But we don’t know the content of those messages.

We’re analysts. We look for patterns, --

Patterns of behavior, --

Disturbing patterns.

That’s bullshit. You clearly were intercepting our messages just now. You tapped Jeremy’s computer.

No.

Wiretapping is illegal.

And we wouldn’t do anything illegal.

Theoretically.

I don’t believe you.

Triangulation.
Becoming Number Six

Causality.

X is unknown.

A and B are known.

A contacts X. X contacts B.

The intersection of all parties in contact with both A and B in time frame T yields X.

Q.E.D.

But --

Metadata.

Nothing else?

A metric butt-load of computers.

Perfectly legal.


What are you talking about?

How to spy legally.

We’re not spies.

We’re analysts.
Patterns can be very revealing.

I don’t believe this.

We don’t want to delay Jeremy’s return. Thank you again, Mrs. Dylar.

&lt;TinkerTailor&gt;.

He’ll be home soon?

We’ll process the form.

Be seeing you.

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE go to the door, LOVELACE stops and turns back for a moment.)

Would &lt;NerdyButCute&gt; consider coffee with &lt;RainbowGirl84&gt;?

(JULIA flips off LOVELACE. LOVELACE shrugs and turns to leave with BABBAGE. As they exit, we hear.)

&lt;RainbowGirl84&gt;?

Shut up.

END OF SCENE
SCENE 9

(Split stage: BABBAGE and LOVELACE are at the coffee shop. The other side is the DYLAR living room, where STEPHANIE and JULIA are seated, and drinking a glass of wine. STEPHANIE is on her cell phone. JEREMY’s laptop is nearby)

STEPHANIE

See you soon, honey. I love you. (Puts away her phone.)

He said he’s on his way.

JULIA

Good.

I am so relieved this is over.

STEPHANIE

What are you going to do?

JULIA

(Pointing to laptop.)

I don’t know yet. Go out for ice cream, maybe.

STEPHANIE

I’ll think about that later. I just want to have my baby home.

JULIA

Just so you know, I deleted all the clones.

The what?

STEPHANIE

On his computer. The cell phones?

JULIA

Good. You can take that damn box, too, as far as I’m concerned.

STEPHANIE

I think getting rid of that is a good idea.

JULIA

You’ll celebrate with us?
Becoming Number Six

JULIA
I don’t think so. I feel like going home.

STEPPHANIE
Please?

JULIA
<TinkerTailor> is dead, Steph. All the work I’ve put into creating a trusted Incognito persona – it’s lost.

STEPPHANIE
Can’t you create a new identity?

JULIA
One, it’s not that simple, and two, you know that Division is going to be keeping an eye on me.

STEPPHANIE
You could volunteer for the ACLU or something.

JULIA
This is what I do. It feels more important than my real job.

STEPPHANIE
Really?

JULIA
How long have you been at Madison? What if they said you couldn’t teach anymore?

STEPPHANIE
That’s different. That’s about the kids.

JULIA
And this is about freedom. The first amendment.

STEPPHANIE
I’m just not used to thinking of you as a hacker.

BABBAGE
I can’t believe you almost dated that hacker.

LOVELACE
How was I to know?

BABBAGE
No, you’re right. It’s just hilarious, that’s all.

LOVELACE
You don’t need to blab it to everyone.
Becoming Number Six

BABBAGE

Blab? Moi?

LOVELACE

You know what I mean.

BABBAGE

Seriously, it’s not an issue, right? I mean you’re not … I mean, you’re out, right?

LOVELACE

I’m not in or out.

BABBAGE

What does that mean?

LOVELACE

It means I don’t define myself by any single attribute: sexuality, hobby, occupation, whatever.

BABBAGE

Mac or PC?

LOVELACE

I’ll never tell.

BABBAGE

Oh come on, everyone knows you’re Linux.

LOVELACE

At work, maybe, but what do I use at home?

BABBAGE

Does HR know?

LOVELACE

Mac or PC?

BABBAGE

Gay or straight.

LOVELACE

Of course.

BABBAGE

Do they ask?

LOVELACE

They can’t.
Theoretically.

Legally.

But?

They don’t ask, but when you’re up for a security clearance, they interview your spouse, significant other, whoever.

Oh yeah. I remember that.

Why?

They asked about a previous girlfriend. This yoga instructor.

I don’t want to know.

Just don’t be surprised if someone calls you RainbowGirl in the cafeteria.

Just don’t be surprised if you die a horrible death.

It would be so worth it.

I hope you like Polonium in your sushi.

Whatever you say, RainbowGirl.

Fuck my life.

(BABBAGE and LOVELACE exit. JEREMY arrives and enters the Dylar house. STEPHANIE jumps up and runs to hug him.)

STEPHANIE

Jeremy!
Becoming Number Six

Hi mom.

(The embrace until JEREMY gets uncomfortable and breaks loose.)

It’s OK, mom. Nothing happened.

Nothing! You were gone for two days.

It was barely twenty-four hours.

Hi, Jeremy.

Hi. … Plus I have to go back tomorrow.

Oh no!

They’re not going to do anything. I have to watch a video or something.

I’m coming along.

I don’t know if they’ll let you. They’re sending a car.

A car?

You have to wear a blindfold so you don’t see where you’re going.

Ugh. This is creeping me out.

Jeremy. I want to apologize, for breaking into your computer.

No. I get it. … Is that why they let me go?

Not exactly.
Becoming Number Six

STEPHANIE
Can we do all the tech stuff later. I want to do something normal. Want to go out for ice cream?

JEREMY
Sure.

JULIA
There’s more. What you did – what we did – got someone arrested.

JEREMY
What? Who?

JULIA
<LeakyFaucet>.

JEREMY
Fuck!

STEPHANIE
Language!

JULIA
If it’s any consolation, it’s partially my fault.

JEREMY
What did you do?

JULIA
I used your computer. I should have gone home and done things right.

STEPHANIE
That’s my fault.

JEREMY
Wait, you’re Incognito?

JULIA
Was, anyway.

JEREMY
But you’re old.

STEPHANIE
Jeremy!

JULIA
Thanks a lot, kid.
Becoming Number Six

JEREMY

Sorry. But I thought –

JULIA

That only cool kids were hackers? There are people in the community who still remember punch cards.

JEREMY

What’s that?

STEPHANIE

C’mon guys. Enough of this, I’ve been cooped up in his house for too long.

JULIA

You guys go. I’m gonna head home.

(JULIA picks up the femtocell and disconnects from the laptop.)

JEREMY

Hey! What are you doing?

STEPHANIE

I gave it to her. I don’t want that thing in the house.

JEREMY

Mom! That cost me ninety bucks.

STEPHANIE

I mean it.

JULIA

Do you know how much it would have cost to bail you out of jail if you’d been arrested?

JEREMY

You’re not taking my computer are you?

JULIA

No.

STEPHANIE

But you’re not going to use it for anything foolish. Right? … Right?

JEREMY

Yeah, mom.

STEPHANIE

I mean it. No more of this Incognito stuff.
Becoming Number Six

JULIA
Your handle is burned anyway, Mr. Vonnegut.

JEREMY
What?

JULIA
<LeakyFaucet>. They took him down, remember.

JEREMY
Shit.

STEPHANIE
Jeremy!

(JULIA hugs STEPHANIE.)

JULIA
You guys have fun, OK?

STEPHANIE
Sure you won’t come?

JULIA
Not this time. Sorry.

STEPHANIE
Thank you for everything. You were such a help.

JULIA
Yeah. Take care. … Bye, Jeremy.

JEREMY
Bye.

(JULIA exits the Dylar house. The CCTV camera scan and pans. JULIA sits a the coffee shop table with a coffee. LOVELACE reappears and speaks to the audience.)

LOVELACE
You know that feeling when you’ve just finished a match with a great opponent and you immediately want to start another?

(LOVELACE approaches JULIA’s table.)

LOVELACE
Do you mind if sit down?
Becoming Number Six

JULIA

Yes.

(LOVELACE sits anyway.)

LOVELACE

I was hoping you’d be here.

JULIA

Bullshit. You knew I’d be here.

LOVELACE

No, actually.

JULIA

Tracking my cell phone?

LOVELACE

I’m not. Of course, I can’t speak for anyone else.

JULIA

I told you, I have no interest in re-establishing contact. As a matter of fact, I deleted my OKCupid profile.

LOVELACE

I know.

JULIA

Of course you do.

LOVELACE

That’s not why I’m here.

JULIA

Where’s your doppelganger?

LOVELACE

Working, I presume.

JULIA

I thought you two were joined at the hip.

LOVELACE

We work for the same organization, that’s all.

JULIA

So you’re not going to arrest me?
Becoming Number Six

LOVELACE
Just the opposite. I came here to tell you not to give up. To get back in the game.

JULIA
What game?

LOVELACE
Incognito.

JULIA
How stupid do you think I am?

LOVELACE
Not stupid at all. You’re damn good.

JULIA
I don’t want to quit. I have never wanted anything less in my life. I have to quit.

LOVELACE
<TinkerTailor> is dead. You, however, can start over.

JULIA
Are you kidding me?

LOVELACE
No. You weren’t even on our radar until Jeremy cloned your cell. You hid yourself well.

JULIA
Good to know, I guess.

LOVELACE
Incognito needs people like you. People who are serious about freedom. Serious about the internet.

JULIA
What are you saying?

LOVELACE
You know as well as I do that most of what Incognito does is random. Sure, any script-kiddie can cause some damage, create some lulz, but they have no philosophy, they haven’t thought things through. They’re just cowboys.

JULIA
That should make you happy. More likely to make amateur mistakes, the way Jeremy did.

LOVELACE
But it does little to advance the cause.
Becoming Number Six

JULIA

God, I can’t believe I used his machine.

LOVELACE

Do you understand what I’m saying?

JULIA

What’s it to you? Not challenging enough to scare the crap out of teenagers? You want bigger prey?

I want you to succeed.

LOVELACE

You’ve got to be kidding me. If you’re so interested in what Incognito can accomplish, why don’t you quit your job.

How do you know I’m not working from the inside?

LOVELACE

You want me to believe that?

LOVELACE

Anyone who says they’re Incognito is Incognito.

Convenient.

LOVELACE

I don’t expect you to trust me –

JULIA

I don’t.

LOVELACE

Or even believe me. All I’m saying is, don’t give up.

You know too much.

LOVELACE

It will be harder. You won’t be able to work from home. You’d have to use public networks, virtual machines, relays, VPNs. Encrypt everything.

JULIA

I have no reason to listen to you. No reason to trust you.
Becoming Number Six

LOVELACE
You have no reason to trust anyone. That’s why you never meet face-to-face. That’s why you use secure chat instead of web sites. Anyone can be compromised at any time.

JULIA
Are you saying you’re a double agent?

LOVELACE
That would be illegal.

JULIA
And you’d never confess to a crime.

LOVELACE
Would you?

(A pause.)

JULIA
OK, you’ve said your piece. Now leave me alone.

(After a pause, LOVELACE stands to leave.)

LOVELACE
Be seeing you.

(LOVELACE exits. JULIA is left alone. After a pause, she stands and walks to the seat in the audience where she began the play.)

JULIA
Someone needs to be watching them. Will you do it if I can’t?

END OF SCENE
SCENE 10

(The next day. NUMBER 4 and JEREMY in NUMBER 4’s office. Each of the monitors displays scrolling lists of information.)

NUMBER 4
And our latest facility has over one hundred forty thousand servers, each with multiple cores. Over a million CPUs at a single site.

JEREMY
Intense.

NUMBER 4
If you worked for us this summer, you'd have access to all that compute power.

JEREMY
You want to run girls.py (pronounced “girls dot pie”) in your data center?

NUMBER 4
We're not going to run the current version of your program. But we think you could make some changes that would be interesting. You’d be helping fight terrorism.

JEREMY
How does my program do that?

NUMBER 4
Do you know how many people travel through airports every day?

JEREMY
No.

NUMBER 4
Nearly one hundred fifty thousand at JFK, and over two hundred thousand at Heathrow.

JEREMY
You take pictures of everybody?

NUMBER 4
Homeland Security does.

JEREMY
Isn't that spying?

NUMBER 4
Airports are public spaces.

JEREMY
How does girls.py help?
NUMBER 4
What we want to do is match everyone who goes through the airports.

JEREMY
You've got a lot of computers, you should be able to do that already.

NUMBER 4
If it were only two airports, yes. But if we include every major airport and make the time frame two weeks, that's too many people, too much work, even for the new data center.

JEREMY
But my program just separates girls' pictures from boys'.

NUMBER 4
By analyzing features, correct?

JEREMY
It scans a photo to find the face, then takes some measurements. Since girls have slender eyebrows and chins, it can make a pretty good guess from that.

NUMBER 4
I'm sure you could modify it so that it picked out, for example, men with dark hair and beards instead of girls.

JEREMY
Yeah, I could do that.

NUMBER 4
That kind of change would simplify our analysis by an order of magnitude. How much would you like to make?

JEREMY
What do you mean?

NUMBER 4
What kind of salary are you looking for?

JEREMY
I don't know.

NUMBER 4
Our tech people get paid in the low six figures.

JEREMY
No way.
NUMBER 4
In addition to paying you a salary, when you go to college in the fall, we could switch you to part-time, and pay your tuition as well.

JEREMY
And you wouldn't use my code to spy on anyone?

NUMBER 4
Despite what you think, we aren't spies. All the data we process is legal.

You spied on me.

NUMBER 4
No, you illegally accessed a government computer, which triggered a software alarm. We could have arrested you that day, but we were more interested in shutting down <LeakyFaucet>.

JEREMY
You said you weren't going to press charges.

NUMBER 4
We're not. You'll need a security clearance to work for us, and you couldn't do that with a felony hacking conviction.

(Pause.)
We're offering you a great job doing the kind of work you love. What will it take to convince you?

JEREMY
I'm interested. It just feels weird. Incognito always said the government was the enemy.

You're part of the government, Jeremy.

JEREMY
You mean I will be, if I work for you.

NUMBER 4
No, I mean right now. It's in the Constitution, "we the people." We elect the representatives, decide to approve or disapprove taxes, construct highways, establish fire departments. If that's the enemy, then every friend and neighbor you have is the enemy. I don't think that's the right way to look at the world.

(JEREMY speaks to the audience.)

JEREMY
What if I never get a chance like this again? I can always quit, if I don't like it, right?
Becoming Number Six

(Back to NUMBER 4.)

JEREMY

I should probably talk to my mom.

NUMBER 4

Of course. I’ll have one of our staff brief you on what you can and can not reveal.

(NUMBER 4’s cell phone rings. He answers)

NUMBER 4

Number Four. … Yes. Hold on a moment.

(To JEREMY.)

This is a private call, wait here, please.

JEREMY

Sure.

(NUMBER 4 leaves the room. JEREMY wanders around for a time, then sits at the desk. He looks around to see if anyone is watching. He tentatively punches a few keys.

The screens change to network diagrams. He types some more. The display switches to the pictures of the people in the audience from the opening scene. JEREMY watches. He types again. The middle screen switches to a porn video. He settles in to watch all three, as NUMBER 4 had done in SCENE 1.)

END OF SCENE

(As the audience leaves, CCTV cameras placed near the exits pan, zoom, and make unobtrusive sounds.)

END OF PLAY
Becoming Number Six

**GLOSSARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCS</td>
<td>Defense Clandestine Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIA</td>
<td>Defense Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFF</td>
<td>Electronic Frontier Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBI</td>
<td>Federal Bureau of Investigation</td>
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<tr>
<td>FOIA</td>
<td>Freedom Of Information Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCHQ</td>
<td>UK version of NSA (Government Communication Headquarters)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HUMINT</td>
<td>Human intelligence, i.e., that gathered by field agents</td>
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<tr>
<td>JIO</td>
<td>Joint Intelligence Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSA</td>
<td>National Security Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>SGDN</td>
<td>French security agency (Secrétariat Général de la Défense et de la sécurité Nationale)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIGINT</td>
<td>Signals intelligence, i.e., that gathered by electronic monitoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tor</td>
<td>A web browser which anonymizes the user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGP</td>
<td>A program that encodes/encrypts data on your computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 8200</td>
<td>Israeli version of NSA (Yehida Shmoneh-Matayim)</td>
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</table>
The author grew up in Helena, Montana and obtained his Bachelor’s degree in Computer Science from Montana State University in 1979. After over two decades in computer industry in the San Francisco Bay Area, he developed an interest in writing. He became a company member and writer for Playground San Francisco, which honored him with their Emerging Playwright Award in 2006. After independent study with Amy Freed, Ben Yalom, Bill Cain, Anthony Clarvoe, and Lauren Gunderson, he joined the Creative Writing Workshop in 2012 to pursue studies in Playwriting with Justin Maxwell, both at the New Orleans campus and at CWW workshops abroad program in Cork, Ireland. He has had two pieces of short fiction published, some photography, and three plays. He is also the author of two books on computer technology.