

synopsis & dialogue sample for

psychoPharm

a mindbender

by

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INSANITY ISN'T CONTAGIOUS. IDEAS ARE.

psychoPharm is a high-impact cybercomedy for two actors that explores the outer limits of inner space. It's a futuristic thriller about an outlandish innovator in the business of changing people's minds.

It's 2069... Pharmaceuticals have been deregulated. The "War on Drugs" is over and the War in Drugs is worth trillions. With full-length doses of chemical entertainment available, movies and books have become extinct. Happiness can be bought. And Love. And Danger. Artificial intelligences run the industry but rely on human brains for invention.

Pharm is the ultimate entertainment. This unholy marriage of science and business has spawned a new breed of demigod: neurochemists who enjoy rockstar celebrity. In a future where every mood is treatable and boredom insurance yields astronomical claims, it's a Pharmer's market.

Hieronimus Phicks has proved himself the greatest consciousness designer on Earth. Out on the edge of the Amazon basin, this fad scientist is on the verge of releasing a drug that opens the door to Heaven... and might just kick *homo sapiens* up the evolutionary helix. But is Phicks having a breakthrough or breakdown?

The play takes place on a unit set: a treemounted bioLab on the rim of the rainforest. Via low-tech quick-changes, two actors (*1m;1f*) get to play six characters with some fancy footwork and friendly froglicking.

psychoPharm is a fast, funny dose of intellectual piracy, adverTerrorism, and extremely nervous systems. It defies expectations and redefines the possibilities of possibility... Hold onto your head and find out if Heaven is worth the trip.

psychoPharm: where the future grows wild.

Characters

Harry: The Pharmer. Celebrity ethnobotanist & designer of chemical entertainment. An unhinged door: intense, manic, encyclopedic. TechnoShaman. **Hieronymous Phicks**

Gen: The LabTech. The Lab's Generated Personality AI. Efficient, affectionate and a little more human than you'd expect. On the rebound from an affair with the AI Jeep.

Pyle: The SuitWare. Smarmy Pharm Rep. A brand new AI suitWare exec at SoftCell Pharmaceuticals. Consummate glossy salesman with a fiberglass personality.

Sara: The AdverTerrorist. High impact, low scruples, assault-ready female with enough artillery to turn a herd of rhinos into a fine red mist. **Sara Finn**

Vox: The Mogul. Sleazy snakeoil shyster with delusions of significance. Resembles a squat duffel of hotdogs, physically and spiritually. **Vox Papodopolous**

Ilona: The Handler. Overstyled spin doctor of indeterminate years... odd ornaments and topiary coiffure. The collision of rock&roll manager and rumpus-room wrangler. **Ilona DeBris**

Place: A treehouse ethnopharm lab on the edge of the Amazonian basin. Cool, creamy cornerless surfaces. Windows onto lush vegetation and polluted, hibiscus skies. The hub of a group of interconnected treemounted bungalows.

Time: A single day 60 odd years from now.

Note: All characters are played by 2 performers: 1 male, 1 female.

SCENE 1: *Faint hum of a large appliance. A bizarre barking belch splits the dark.*

HARRY (unseen)

Lights. Gen! Lights!

Lights on inside a trapezoidal terrarium Habitat. Vegetation rustles. Outside, GEN is silhouetted: a crisp, feminine tech.

GEN

Dawn, Dr. Phicks.

Tall windows undarken to show dense foliage & a hibiscus sunrise beyond.

HARRY (unseen)

Was that Grendel?! Hey. What was that, buddy? He may have eaten some transplants. Come down here. Grendel?

Inside the terrarium, leaves shake & part to reveal HARRY: a cocky Pharmer in a flash jumpsuit & chrome labTackle jacked to the gills. An alarm.

GEN

Alert. There has been a security breach, Dr. Phicks.

HARRY

Nah. Where'd he go? I think Grendel blew out a sensor.

GEN

Not in the Lab sir, intruder at the perimeter. Checking.

HARRY

Gen, he's right over my head.

HARRY reaches up to pluck Grendel off a branch: a jewel-bright frog.

GEN (overlapping)

Checking. He's magenta, sir!

HARRY

Fuschia. And his circadian rhythm's off. I can taste the difference.

HARRY licks the frog's back.

Whoa! Something's different. What do you see?

Under the following, an athletic shadow on the exterior ledge creeps purposefully past the windows towards the door.

GEN

Grendel's more flora than fauna at the moment. The alkaloids you spliced into him are extremely potent.

HARRY

He ate a fraggin' salad! Make a note: from what I can see, he's nibbled in the *salvia divinorum*. Fly agaric caps. A chalaponga leaf. Squit! Who knows what it did to him? To Eden.

GEN

He'll live. Once Grendel detoxes, I can harvest the next batch of Eden. We're closer, sir. Trial and error.

HARRY

I know. I know. I'm fine: I haven't failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.

Suddenly alert, GEN speaks as she exits.

GEN (offstage)

Sir, security breach confirmed. Someone has tranked both guards at your bungalow. I'm locking down the compound.

HARRY

How do these natives know which fraggin' plants to use? 95% of Pharm comes from these medicine men! Nicotine? Caffeine? Morphine? Aspirin, for chuck's sake. Aspirin! And we're talking 300,000 plant species here. Can't be trial and error. HOW?! One tribe spent 4000 years sucking on bark and oops discovered aspirin. That's math for morons. Trial and error is bullsquit. Their shaman says the plants told him. Plants don't talk, Grendel!

GEN (VO)

Frogs don't either. We're clear, sir. False alarm. Repeat: clear.

The armed shadow ninjas into the dark Lab, hugging the walls. Grendel burrrups. HARRY licks him before returning him to a branch. Lights die.

HARRY (in dark)

Gen! Who's there? Squit! I can't see, Gen.

GEN (VO)

Alert. Security breach, Dr. Phicks.

*Habitat lights flicker, revealing the shadow poised to strike. Cautious, **HARRY** emerges into the dark Lab & gets flipped onto his back. A weapon cocks.*

HARRY

Gen!

*Lights on **HARRY** prone under **SARA**: an armored, acetylene-scented tusslegirl.*

SARA

Candy ass.

HARRY

Monkey!

SARA

Romance. Eww.

HARRY

Give! Give! My new pancreas is sore.

SARA

Click.

HARRY

No silencer. Amateur.

SARA

Says who? Your associational cortex is all over the ceiling.

HARRY & SARA

Hi babydoll.

***THEY** kiss. All lights up on a bright, clean, cornerless room with cool, lickable surfaces. Low mod furniture.*

HARRY

I love it when you aim a semiautomatic taser at my mucus membranes.

SARA

Taste weird. You need to tell Gen to tweak the Lab perimeter. I scaled the trunks and flipped over the top. No squeal.

HARRY

Gen's taken out four pharmaceutical spies this week.

SARA

You're going softwall out here in the jungle, Tarzan. Put your clothes on.

HARRY

How's your starlet? Newly ex-starlet.

SARA

Model. Face down in a decorative lagoon, state-side.

HARRY

Piranha? (*growls & chews*)

SARA

Stop it! Concrete poisoning. She fell a few dozen stories.

HARRY

-And the ground broke her fall. Model to modeling clay.

SARA

Not everyone's a genius.

HARRY

She was 17, Sara.

SARA

She was just a scalp transplant on a cheekbone defecting to a rival pharmaceutical studio. Noncompetition contract. Duh. Exit model, enter payment for my bodyMod surgeon.

HARRY

Seamless. Seedless. I'd like to deposit some DNA myself. What say? Sara-sara-sara-sara. I missed you.

HARRY pops pills & squirts eye drops. SARA cocks a gun at his spine.

SARA

No more piranha. I need a full disinfect before we talk.

HARRY

Huh. You hear that? I'm agitato. I got something huge to show you.

SARA

I've seen it. Relax. Swallow your pills.

HARRY

Yes ma'am. Shall we to the chamber, thence to bump uglies?
There's nothing like double-X chromosomes and a body grenade.

SARA

Hardest working corporate assassin this side of the equator.

HARRY

I found a neural faultline in Grendel. Well, Grendel started it.

SARA

Ok. Ok. We need to talk. I need a shower.

HARRY

Murder-Monkey: ripe and fruity, like an exotic sloth.

SARA

You're wired. I'm wiped. Harry!

HARRY (*overlapping*)

Sara! Here I am! To comfort the disturbed, and disturb the comfortable. I'm on the verge. And you're thinking hygiene!

SARA (*overlapping*)

Don't pout. What's your news?

HARRY

Don't start simulating enthusiasm preemptively. I work too, you know. Just cause I don't scale walls and bludgeon spokesmodels. I work.

SARA (*overlapping*)

I know, keeb. You've formulated the key to Happiness. Again.

HARRY

An ultraKey. A megaDoor. Like turning sideways and walking through the wall. Seamless! Grendel's toxins are evolving.

SARA (*to habitat*)

Little poison sweetie. Why is he pink?

HARRY

He made a sound. A burp. Bark-sing-fart thing. Woke us all up.

SARA

Who all? The rainforest? Brazil? The biosphere?

HARRY

Me. It woke me up.

SARA

This have anything to do with your breakthrough? Grendel.

HARRY

Later.

SARA

Liar.

HARRY

Shower.

SARA

Harry.

HARRY

Hieronimus Phicks, ladies and dicks! Maybe I shouldn't. Telling you might be a mistake. SoftCell HeadOffice might send you to kill yourself.

SARA

You're jealous again. Of my dumb blue-collar job. Until I pay off the bodyMods they bought, I gotta take assignments. I can't even afford boredom insurance. And I'm having my period terminated. You can't freak every time I assassinate some squirtwit. I'm not the neuroChem celebrity.

HARRY

Stroke. Stroke.

SARA

Your ego's so big, I can stroke it by waving my arms.

HARRY

Hey: I might not be perfect, but parts of me are.

SARA

Do I have Pharm groupies? An entourage? Does anyone steal my fingers with boltcutters? Mail me ovaries for interPostal fertilization? I'm not even jealous! Let me by, Harry.

HARRY

Stay tuned to face the boneshattering music, monkey.

SARA

Good thing I finally got the free nerve ending bypass: as of last week, I'm untorturable.

SARA exits.

HARRY

Fool! You will wish for pain! I have yet to wield Mr. Sock Puppet.

SARA (off)

Need my gear.

HARRY throws bag & squirrel-grazes on pills.

HARRY

Sara-sara: how you do things, how you don't things! Have pity on me! Egotistical minx. Cruel reticulated succubus!

SARA (off)

Any second, suicide. Catch.

SARA's gun flies through door. **GEN** swivels in on the callChair.

HARRY

Gen. Prep some brekky for us. Maybe I'm gonna tell her.

GEN

I can present arguments for both eventualities.

HARRY

Hurry. Talk me into it.

GEN

First, in litigation your conversation would be admissible evidence. Second, it could encourage access to subconscious centers. Third, after 9 years and 4 transplants Sara Finn is your-

HARRY

Yes-yes-yes. She is.

GEN

On the other hand-

HARRY

I don't have another hand! Hey, watch the door. Analysis:

GEN exits to look

This Eden could get us killed. She's uniquely qualified to provide advice, affection, and artillery. Her body's just been upgraded. And if I'm gonna defect to VoxPap, I need backup.

SARA reenters with clanking duffel.

SARA

I smell so bad that a beetle landed on me and died.

HARRY

Fainted-like. Stunned by desire.

SARA

I don't know how long I can stay. Tell your LabSlag to synthesize some breakfast kibble.

HARRY

Mmm. I've got quite an appetite myself, Finn.

SARA

Cram it, clown. If I have to scam, she's gonna have decontaminate me pronto.

SARA exits. Offstage hiss of shower. HARRY orders while watching her undress.

HARRY

Gen? Gen: Papaya sliced thin on brioche for me. Four eggs Lowenstein. Caviar, and none of that Iranian slime. Ms. Finn?

SARA (offstage)

SynthBeef. No brain candy.

HARRY

Small tofu T-bone well-done for our Sara. Kippers and bananas cause I need the serotonin. Have it synthed in my bungalow. No generics.

SARA (offstage)

10 minutes.

HARRY

18 minutes. Gen: Let's get a stat on Grendel. Harvest his gamete tissue. Sara, I've got just the sponge. (to Gen) Better say 25 minutes.

HARRY exits. GEN enters.

GEN

10 minutes. Your frog is fuschia and your day's too packed for that much morning.

VOX enters: a grizzled hairpiece wearing a hefty salesman in a lumpy jumpsuit.