

A Glimpse of the Future

A One-Act, Three-Scene Play

Characters:

JOHN HANCOCK → Statesman and signer of the Declaration of Independence. Proud, refined, and eloquent.

JAKE → Teenage barista. Casual, sarcastic but good-natured.

CALEB → Jake's coworker, relaxed and practical.

THE MAN IN BLACK → Silent, emotionless observer in a trenchcoat and hat.

Scene I

Boston, Massachusetts. July 4th, 1785.

A quiet garden near Beacon Hill. Faint fireworks echo in the distance. Children run across the stage waving flags.

HANCOCK enters slowly, cane in hand, watching them with quiet pride.

HANCOCK

Ah... the Fourth of July. A fine day to remember what courage and patriotism can accomplish.

A small child approaches, can be boy or girl, it doesn't matter.

CHILD

Merry July 4th Mister Hancock!

HANCOCK

Thank you laddie / lassie, happy 4th to you as well. Go and enjoy the company of your fellows.
Hancock points to the group of children as he tells her / him this.

He smiles faintly.

HANCOCK

My signature was certainly the most memorable and notable contribution. Can't you agree?

The boy / girl giggles and runs off to the group of kids.

The children run offstage laughing.

A faint shimmer forms in the air nearby.

HANCOCK squints at it.

HANCOCK

Good heavens...what curious trick of light is this?

He reaches out cautiously and taps the air with his cane.

The shimmer ripples.

HANCOCK

Surely my eyes deceive...

The instant the cane touches the air, a sudden pulse of light erupts.

A deep rushing/booming sound.

Blackout.

Scene II

Boston, Massachusetts. July 4th, 2025.

Traffic roars. Horns blare. Pedestrians rush by.

HANCOCK suddenly appears mid-stage, stumbling forward.

HANCOCK

Merciful heavens!

He watches a car speed past.

HANCOCK

What manner of iron carriage travels without horses?!

A pedestrian walks past, staring at a phone.

HANCOCK

Sir! Pray tell me...

The pedestrian continues walking.

HANCOCK watches him in disbelief.

HANCOCK

Either I have been transported...*somewhere*... or Boston has lost its manners entirely.

He looks around again, overwhelmed.

Across the street, he notices the sign for The Thinking Cup.

HANCOCK

Well... if civilization yet survives, it must surely involve tea.

He gathers himself and heads toward the café.

Lights shift.

Scene III

Inside The Thinking Cup. Warm lighting. Quiet conversation and clinking cups.

JAKE stands behind the counter. Caleb is offstage, left or right, on the side closest to the coffee shop counter.

HANCOCK enters cautiously, staring at the espresso machines with fascination.

HANCOCK

What a strange contraption.

JAKE

Uh... can I help you?

HANCOCK

Yes. I require the finest beverage you possess.

He gestures toward the machines.

HANCOCK

And perhaps an explanation for... whatever those are.

JAKE

Those are coffee machines.

HANCOCK studies them.

HANCOCK

They resemble instruments designed by a very anxious blacksmith.

JAKE chuckles nervously.

JAKE

True enough. ***He calls toward the back.***

JAKE

Caleb! Think you could cover for a minute?

CALEB (offstage)

That depends. Is this one of your quick breaks or do you actually need me to take over?

JAKE

It's a quick one. I probably won't actually *need* a break for a while. My brother...the doctors say his condition is getting better each day.

CALEB enters.

CALEB

I'd hoped so. It's been rather empty in here without mini you around to stir up some trouble. Since this is one of your quick breaks though, you owe me lunch.

JAKE gestures for HANCOCK to sit at a nearby table.

He places a cup of coffee in front of him.

HANCOCK studies it cautiously.

HANCOCK

Tea would have suited me better, but...***HANCOCK takes a sniff***...coffee will do.

HANCOCK takes a sip and recoils slightly.

HANCOCK

Good Lord! It burns!

A beat passes.

He takes another sip.

HANCOCK

And yet... it invigorates me beyond belief. Is this some exotic form of coffee?

JAKE laughs.

JAKE

That's the caffeine in the coffee giving you a boost of energy.

HANCOCK

Interesting.

HANCOCK looks around the café thoughtfully.

HANCOCK

This city; it bewilders me. And yet...There is order here, though it is hard to perceive.

JAKE

Yeah. Boston can be like that sometimes.

A moment passes.

JAKE studies him.

JAKE

So... what's with the outfit?

HANCOCK

Outfit?

JAKE gestures to the wig and coat.

JAKE

The whole colonial-general thing.

HANCOCK straightens proudly.

HANCOCK

Young sir, I am John Hancock.

JAKE blinks, and then looks amused.

JAKE

You're serious. ***Meant to be sarcastic.***

HANCOCK

I led the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, opposed the Stamp Act, and signed the Declaration of Independence; large and bold.

He pauses slightly.

HANCOCK

Large enough, I was told, that even King George could read it without his spectacles.

JAKE blinks again and grins.

A customer walks into the Thinking Cup

JAKE

...Okay, that's actually a pretty good line for a cosplayer.

JAKE grabs Hancock's receipt from the counter.

JAKE

Alright, hold on.

JAKE

This...***JAKE slides Hancock's receipt across the table...*** is the true test. If you're really John Hancock, sign this the way you signed the Declaration.

CALEB glances over while getting orders from the new customer.

CALEB

Jake, you're not testing customers again, are you?

JAKE

Just give the guy a moment.

HANCOCK signs the receipt with flourish and hands it back.

JAKE studies the signature.

JAKE

Okay. That's...pretty impressive.

He glances toward the window.

JAKE

Also... not to freak you out... but that guy outside has been staring at you for the past ten minutes.

HANCOCK turns.

Under the streetlamp outside the café stands THE MAN IN BLACK.

Unmoving.

HANCOCK

A spy?

JAKE

Probably just some guy.

The café door opens. The bell chimes softly.

THE MAN IN BLACK enters.

The room grows quiet.

He speaks quietly into a radio.

MAN IN BLACK

Subject located. Hancock, John.

Temporal essence confirmed.

Extraction window active.

HANCOCK rises slowly.

HANCOCK

Sir, if your intent is intimidation, you will find me difficult to frighten.

The MAN IN BLACK studies him without expression. He brings the radio to his ears. It crackles unintelligably.

MAN IN BLACK

(Into his radio) Yes, I can confirm, Subject 732 is clear for extraction. ***(He puts it down and faces HANCOCK)*** You misunderstand.

A faint hum begins building in the air.

MAN IN BLACK

We are not here to frighten you.

He tilts his head slightly.

MAN IN BLACK

We are here to observe... and collect what time didn't preserve; what is rightfully ours.

HANCOCK stiffens.

HANCOCK

Collect what?

The MAN IN BLACK pauses, as if considering how much to say.

MAN IN BLACK

Historic people leave powerful impressions on time itself.

A small beat.

MAN IN BLACK

Your century has already given us several.

He turns toward the door.

MAN IN BLACK

You will not remember us. Clear for extraction.

The MAN IN BLACK disappears.

The humming continues.

Moments later.

The MAN IN BLACK is gone.

A faint scorch mark now stains the café floor where he had been standing.

JAKE stares at it.

JAKE

Okay... that's new.

CALEB crouches slightly and studies the mark.

JAKE scratches his head.

JAKE

What are we supposed to tell the boss about that?

CALEB shrugs.

CALEB

Tell him someone ordered their coffee extra hot.

JAKE chuckles nervously.

JAKE

I'm already on my second strike because of the breaks I've been taking; the boss isn't going to be happy. ***JAKE says this with a sigh.*** Could you take the blame just this once?

CALEB

Yeah, it's fine. My slate's clean anyways so it's not that big of a deal.

Behind them, the faint shimmer begins forming again in the air.

JAKE notices it first.

JAKE

Uh... Caleb?

CALEB turns.

CALEB

...Looks like some type of portal or something.

HANCOCK looks out the café window wistfully at the busy street.

HANCOCK

I recall Boston at dawn... church bells, wooden carts, the laughter of free men.

He gestures toward the rushing traffic.

HANCOCK

Now it hums like a forge whose smithy never sleeps.

JAKE shrugs.

JAKE

It's just traffic. Everybody's always in a rush here in Boston.

HANCOCK nods slightly.

HANCOCK

So were we.

A small pause.

HANCOCK

Only our rush was for liberty... not for unending labor.

The shimmer intensifies.

Wind rushes through the café.

JAKE and CALEB each grab one of HANCOCK's arms.

JAKE

Hey! Hold on!

CALEB

He's getting pulled!

HANCOCK tries to steady himself against the table.

HANCOCK

Tell the people of this land—my land—

The wind grows stronger.

HANCOCK

—that liberty endures only so long as men remember why it was fought, and never forget!

(HANCOCK gets pulled through the portal).

The portal surges one last time, and then closes.

Silence fills the café.

The signed receipt flutters to the floor.

JAKE picks it up slowly and studies the signature again.

JAKE

You know...

He turns the receipt toward Caleb.

JAKE

That might have actually been the real John Hancock.

CALEB

And he came in for coffee.

JAKE nods.

JAKE

I hope he liked it.

The café returns to its quiet hum.

Lights fade.

Blackout.