SCREEN TEST

(also, PHILIP'S SCREEN TEST; SCREEN TEST I)

Shot at the Factory, 231 East 47th Street, Fifth Floor, NYC on January 23, 1965.

The first reel began rolling at 5:17PM, the second at 6:09PM.

Black & white, 16mm sound, 24 fps, 70 minutes.

Sharp focus, stationary camera: close-shot.

with
Philip Fagan and Ronald Tavel
On camera: Andy Warhol

In those days - late 1964, early 1965 - Andy Warhol's lover was Philip Norman Fagan. Surprisingly little is known about him and he is remembered now largely for his appearance in HARLOT, his performance in the unreleased as of 1997 SCREEN TEST, and the ambitious film project which Andy had planned around him, a work here and there obliquely referred to as AGING.

So little, in fact, is recoverable about this young man, that he commonly is alluded to more in discussion of my work at the Factory than in any mention of his murky relationship with Andy - for it was Philip who prevailed upon the artist to make me a scenarist, and Philip who made sure that that happened.

In the cynical language of the day, Philip, out of earshot, would have been called a "twinkie." That is, a presentable young man, literally presentable everywhere he might have to be presented, relatively cultivated or good at faking as much, who always and above all was enviable for his looks. In short, the perfect roommate and escort, one who made his companion feel important at home and superior in public - to wit: would anyone else in any plausible place be likely to be so eye-catchingly accompanied?

A toy-boy, then, of the relatively well-healed, relatively arrived gay. But while Hollywood had its established twinkie call-in agencies, of the free-lancers in this service on the east coast, often more was expected - and delivered. For a number of such charmers set their sights on the most talented and reknowned in homosexual circles, and further flattered themselves by fancying that, in line with their qualifications, they had suitably singled out their target for his genius and accomplishment rather than reknown.

Self-deluding Philip was among these. Albeit highly selectively, he'd attached himself in the course of time to more than a few comfortably situated, somewhat older gay intellectuals. But he found an uncommon, not to say insurmountable, challenge in Andy, for Andy appeared to expect from Philip everything that

his appeal and profession suggested. Not just the lip service and the illusion, but the goods.

To Andy's displeasure, these in time were not forthcoming. For starters, Mr. Fagan did not put out. To be sure, it is rife in this pretending-not-to-be-a-paid-companion racket to hold that once you've gone to Promethean extent with the mark's sexual fantasies about you, you've nowhere else to take the affair and, in effect, unwittingly stamped it yourself with its expiry date. But Philip actually had problems in this area. As the SCREEN TEST script implies, he related to the nates and male seam in distancing fetishes, and the contemplating of, let alone submission to sex induced near panic. However, Andy had said, and on occasion seemed to believe, that imagined sex was more fulfilling than physical love - an obvious rationalization that sympathizers at the time had the taste not to challenge. Still, this configuration enabled the affair to go a few rounds, indeed, to be at all.

Philip could bake a mean cake, though, and deflected Andy's advances by teaching him to as well, and letting Julia Warhola, Andy's widowed mother, judge the results. A down-to-basics kind of guy myself, I found all this to be girlish and silly, but it was relatively harmless and fit neatly into Andy's well-documented food and food-preparation devotionals.

Ultimately, and sad to say, it was not Philip's ambition that did him in, but that he hadn't the gray matter to ground its eagle precinct. Let's say men didn't trip over each other to get his attention because they wanted to discuss Hegel and Hume.

The artist had met the engaging, Black-Irish seafarer at a concert in 1964. To Philip's persuasive credit, he became the first love-interest Andy ever invited to reside in his townhouse at 1342 Lexington Avenue, in whose basement Julia lived. Of course, it was Andy's eye for the slightest alteration, holding Philip's then unusually continuous image, that gave Andy the idea for AGING, literally, a time-exposure project. As the story went, it was to be three minute, stationary-Bolex close-shots of Philip taken daily and spanning six months, hopefully six years. It was to document

a truly traditional, not to say romantic, subject: that of finding ourselves here, "Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies... where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes/ or new Love pine at them tomorrow."

This accounts for the 103 hitherto unaccounted-for three minute takes that we have of Philip Fagan and the lack of clear labeling intent on their rolls, which has confused researchers. They are unlabeled because Andy was silently furious at having to abandon this above-the-reach-of-criticism film entry in his series of eschatalogical studies. Paradoxically, the "reality recording" filmmaker-painter thought nothing of painting over history.

We owe that abandonment to the fact that Philip was possessive, as only the asexual can be, and determined to rid his playing field of any and all competition - an obvious impossibility since a factory and its workers were so central to the whole Warholian concept, and modus operandi. His primary target was Gerard, however hard to understand why, but ultimately he wanted the Factory emptied of everybody except myself. Not only did he appear to conceive of me as no rival, but as an actual aid and potential benefactor. He proposed to Andy that I, on the proof of my fiction, should be put to creating screenplays for him, which Andy would direct. He also thought these scripts should feature no one but himself and, that being the case, the Factory should be downsized - with all they assembly-lined there forthwith pink-slipped. The remarkable thing is the degree to which the smittened entertained this strategy.

Thus, in the course of a long Merce Cunningham-style Dead Chicken Dance Concert staged shortly thereafter at the Judson Memorial Church, Andy instructed me to come up with a seventy minute scenario for Philip. The noisy, hip audience was reclined on the sprawling floor of the cavernous nave and the dance troupe occasionally came through this unruly roost throwing real and/or rubber chicken corpses at it. Andy spotted silver screen promise in the good-time crowd, and felt that the informality of the proceedings would support our diluted concentration while zigzagging our way amongst it, soliciting here and there future film

talent. He was teaching me never to let pleasure totally replace business. So during this art-filled, or art-flung walk he in effect proposed our collaboration, the brain-child of, and present to, a hard-to-please lover.

SCREEN TEST was the most intimately filmed of our combined efforts, and is the most intimate portrait we have of any of Warhol's lovers. It introduces my off-camera character called, "Tester's Voice," a disembodied examiner intent on humiliating the auditioner; and whose exasperation and vehemence grow when the intended victim becomes unimaginative in response, reticent, evasive, or withdrawn. In the first reel, Philip is reminded of an unpleasant incident that puzzled him, his shoplifting of a pair of red panties he'd convinced himself he intended as a gift to a girl. The memory is interlaced with painful misgivings concerning his father, then brother, for his convoluted relations with them actually caused the shoplifting. He evidently conjures up for himself on screen a forceful and incestuous image of the insteps of both these men. Then he quietly struggles as he relives his guilty transference of them to the girl - which guilt had sought assuagement in his being caught shoplifting. disturbing, foot dual-substituent reflects interestingly on Warhol's own full-blown foot fetish (besides linking the lovers in a way that needs no comment), and the foot theme with sadistic (i.e., punishing) imagery is reprised a few months later in Tosh Carillo's performance as Mex in HORSE. The theme and images of guilt assuagement (via policewoman sadism and legal retaliation) through shoe shoplifting and transference to a girl is reprised, of course, in the even better known film shot the following year, HEDY, OR THE FOURTEEN YEAR OLD GIRL.

SCREEN TEST enters a second phase when the Tester seems to be entertaining an infatuation with Philip's close-up itself, his head tilted slightly to the left, and he lulls that image with a sonnet. But Philip, who would have heard hidden references to Gerard in the sonnet ("he can write beautiful poems"), grows suspicious, distrustful, and taciturn. He watches me warily through the corner of his light-reflecting eye for much of the

insight-dwindling denouement.

I had found this making of Philip's portrait very tense, both because of the patience needed to knead Philip, and Andy's anxiety and bewilderment while enduring the actor's pervasive equivocality. This following his insistence on his performance resourcefulness. And I live with an everlasting afterimage of Andy hovering over the Auricon directly to my right. Time has weighed it with the burden of what I now know he required this film to be and the decision which he, as I was to learn, was reaching rapidly.

I also was disoriented by the ordeal of being caught between the two of them. Because it should have been suffocating. And wasn't.

One afternoon a few weeks later I found Andy spraying white, pink, and red primaries on the petals of the poppy flower silk screens. The paintings were laid on the floor in flush squares in the sunlight from 47th, and he squatted, literally, on top of them while he selected a color can, sprayed one flower at a time, and reflected on the result. He looked up at me long enough to say, "Philip likes you. But he doesn't like anyone else. I don't think he understands what we're doing here. I asked him not to come back."

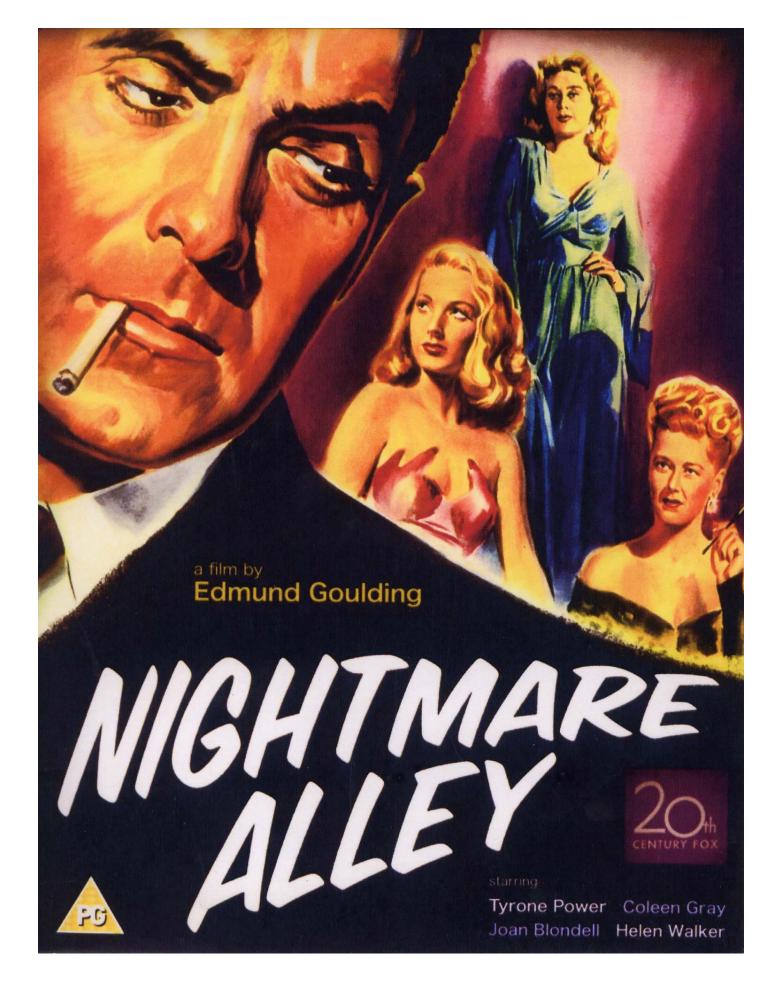
Edited and assumptive, as would be most of his pronouncements to me, it held the compliment and dubious observation that I, as well as the other studio denizens, did understand what he was up to (and, of course, a warning). But I believe this delusion testifies to a certain, common self-induced naivety, perhaps for his own survival, which I'd like to underline. For as the confessions of the surviving Factory workers show, in memoirs, interviews, sound bites, and panel chats, few there were who took the trouble to think about what he was doing back then, or in all the intervening years.

In a display of perceived betrayal and habitual retaliation,
Andy refused to release SCREEN TEST. And after his sudden
departure, Philip tried his luck in other gay milieux, beginning
with the cream of the Beat experimenters. William Burroughs'

close associate and collaborator, Brian Gysin, found him uncommonly attractive and invited Philip to go through his sales pitch in and around the Chelsea Hotel. But Gysin remembered me as having referred to Philip once as "a bad boy." He told me the statement had perplexed him at first, but that afterward, having grown wise to the young man's unbending chastity, he knew what I meant. So Philip felt that for the time being, he'd played New York for about what it was worth.

As if he were in need of any addition to his romantic appeal, Philip, being actually a tatooed sailor and erstwhile merchant marine, was on speaking terms with wide stretches of Central America and the Far East, notably Hong Kong. Declining in fortune and reverting to type as it were, Philip discovered himself later that year on a yacht in the South Pacific. But there, apparently, his virginity cut less ice and was, we speculated, in the confines of the cabin multiply displaced. He managed to send a Christmas card and later an S.O.S. to Andy, claiming to be a prisoner on this yacht and pleading to be rescued, but Andy, in the first of a roll call of such reactions in front of me, said, "Good for him!"

Not long after, Philip Norman Fagan, professional trophy boy, died in the South China Sea. His large tatoo, which had so riveted my fancy and distracted me during the fiming of SCREEN TEST, was a 17th Century scythe-bearing and cloaked skeleton, memento mori of Death on Wings.







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Philip Fagan in PHILIP DYING





Ronald Tavel, Philip Fagan III, and Gerard Malanga, 11/07, photos by Sherry Fagan

UPDATE ON "SCREEN TEST I" (February 2008)

In 2007, Philip Fagan III, nephew of the subject of SCREEN TEST I, contacted me concerning three proposed projects on his uncle: a biography, a biopic, and the setting up of an archive containing the artifacts related to famous persons, which his uncle had amassed and had intended to make public.

This led to my seeing SREEN TEST I (aka PHILIP'S SCREEN TEST and, simply, SCREEN TEST) at MoMA for the first time since it was filmed forty-two years previously; to re-evaluating it; and to sitting (November '07) for a color-filmed interview shot by Philip's nephew, Philip Randolph Fagan, in the cafeteria of MoMA's movie museum, its entrance on West 54th Street, NYC.

I watched SCREEN TEST I in addition to HARLOT and a hitherto unseen 3-minute roll, PHILIP AND GERARD, all in Black & White, along with the performer Philip Norman Fagan's younger brother by two years, his wife, and Philip Randolph Fagan and his wife, Sherry. SCREEN TEST I was restored in 2001, and, since it has no contractual consents, illegally copyrighted then by the Warhol Foundation. Notably, Andy Warhol's name is never mentioned in the read-aloud credits (by me) in the course of the film.

I must say that the experience was amazing. We tend to judge all entertainments (restaurants, plays, concerts, movies) by our expectations. In 1965, both Andy and I anticipated a far more varied and energetic appearance by Philip; and Andy, at that point, was increasingly displeased with Philip's off-screen behavior. Hence, both our dissatisfactions with the feature and its (unwarranted) dismissal in January 1965. Seen today, and on its own terms, it is a beautiful study and must be welcomed into the canon of successful Warhol features.

The strong lighting (most likely arranged by Billy Linich, excused by Andy before the shooting) comes from screen left and presents Philip's face to intense advantage. It sometimes casts his profile, when turned right, into too dark an angle for me – but that is to quibble. Compared to the opii between it and VINYL, SS I is masterfully shot.

A number of the interrogation's obscure elements are more evident now. Philip always reminded me, his family and many others, of Tyrone Power in Power's famous vehicles, EAST OF SUEZ, THE BLACK SWAN, THE MARK OF ZORRO, and BLOOD AND SAND – but most of all in the noir classic, NIGHTMARE ALLEY, whose yarn compels Power's celebrated looks and charm to erode, to deteriorate into outright degradation and depravity. Much against Darryl Zanuck's advice and a studio-first for a big-box star, this corrosion explains my stress on the geek in SS I – a crucial plot-point in NIGHTMARE ALLEY. It also partly explains, in addition to his prominent tattoo, why Philip continually turned my thoughts to death. When I participated on a panel in Hollywood, 1994 (during a Warhol Film Festival Week), I remembered a more devastating title for the ambitious AGEING: that 3-minute daily, simultaneously shot, to-be-six-year project. The original title was PHILIP DYING. So here we have sufficient reasons for why the late performer instigates my anxieties over mortality throughout the touchy interrogation.

According to his family, Philip was of pure Irish descent, and his having part Amerindian blood was romantic fantasy. His delightful Texan accent enlivens SS I, and he is never absent, never synthetic. Yet he declines to refer to his troubled childhood (he and his brother were alternately raised by separated parents) or to theorize on his recent shoplifting or the reason(s) he wanted to be punished for it (he was busted). Nor does the muted film opt to make apparent that we were fond of each other – either to what degree or why.

PHILIP AND GERARD (restored, 2001) is an unmoving heads-shot of Andy's two assistants on the silk-screenings of his Poppy Flower paintings. Philip Fagan is in full, left-turned profile, monopolizing circa 65% of the frame. Just below the nose and to the join of his throat is so miraculously vibrant that this portion of his profile appears to be advancing on us. Gerard Malanga's front-face is positioned directly behind Philip's profile, is a third hidden by it, and in softer focus. It is a stunning roll.

The sound on the restored HARLOT is crystal clear, and, if you ask the projectionist to turn it up slightly higher than usual, you can hear Andy directing the four performers' every movement, down to the timing of each and every single movement, throughout the entire movie. Andy did not, to my knowledge, ever do this again.

The nephew, Philip Randolph Fagan's 2-hour color-filmed interview of me in MoMA's cafeteria (November, 2007) is an inadvertent Warhol feature in itself, one that might perhaps be called THE OTHER SIDE OF SCREEN TEST I (available through faganfilm@att.net). If shown on a double-bill with SS I, the two films become a study on the subject of shooting in Black & White and color.

A Black & White film invites the eye deep into the image and the image can therefore remain perfectly still (as Philip largely does in the second reel) and hold our interest indefinitely. A color film stops the eye on the surface of the screen and thereinafter bounces it about the image. If the image is not kept in continuous motion, the eye will become bored. Aware of this, I sat in a corner table of the cafeteria, behind which was its wall-size window: giving onto a mammoth reproduction of Andy's cow-head paintings, multiply repeated and wallpapering the staircase to the cafeteria and a lounge. I compulsively fidget when interviewed, so I hid my fingerchafing beneath the table, but made certain never to stop shifting my positions at, and over, the table, playing with the paper cups set upon it, or the pen, straws, and note pad. THE OTHER SIDE is primarily devoted to discussing SS I, everything offcamera (on SS I and THE OTHER SIDE) before it goes on to recall further matters in my relationship with Philip. The cows, crossing about half the screen behind me, make a still and peering, dull counterpoint to my radical adjustments; and, perhaps, humorous deflation of my sometimes inflated responses. The interview has amusing highlights when Fagan III urges me to revision, or balance, my sketch of his uncle in the above Intro to SS I; and when it records me attempting to circle some tough accusations. I furnish a lesson in diplomacy.

Gerard Malanga lunched with us before this shooting, and his account of Philip's split with Andy is in dramatic variance with Andy's report to me in February 1965. Gerard states that Andy had bought three overnight (non-sleeping) train tickets to Toronto for March of that year, where and when the Poppy Flowers were to have their formal opening. He says that Philip insisted that only he and Andy should go, and that when Andy turned thumbs down on this, Philip threw his belongings into a valise and left without further argument.

Tracking Philip following that, today, is again in critical variance with what I say in my Intro (written in early 1996) – derived from how Andy chose to fashion it for me in the spring, summer, and fall of 1965. Andy's sketchy references may also have arisen from a chain of misunderstandings, embarrassments, or dissembling. He's not here to tell us and wouldn't if he were.

When he left Andy, Philip apparently rejoined the merchant marine, and his notorious telegram from the South Pacific may have been sent from a marine ship and not a pleasure yacht. If so, and if the gang rape is true, then the crime and its effect are more horrendous than previously considered. Philip disembarked in Vietnam and evidently visited towns and villages a week in advance of invading forces, which subsequently burnt them to the ground. The same recurred in Cambodia and he eventually made his way down to Indonesia. There, he entered one or more monasteries, as was not uncommon for young Westerners at the time. And may have discovered, as so many, that the only Enlightenment to be had is that there is no Enlightenment.

He reappeared in New York in 1969, phoned Andy, and desperately pleaded for a one-way ticket to his home in Fort Worth. Andy hung up. At length, Isabelle Eberstadt interceded, told Andy the matter was indeed serious, and, at her insistence, Andy came through with a ticket. Philip flew home, put his affairs in order, presumably for an archive of his unique artifacts, and then destroyed himself.

My triangular involvement with Andy and Philip is eerily reminiscent of the one with Andy and his lover Danny Williams, and together they frame my collaboration with Andy Warhol. Danny Williams' mother forever recalled her phoning the Factory when only Andy and I were there, and asking to speak with Andy concerning her son's disappearance (recounted in the award-winning 2007 release, A WALK INTO THE SEA). I answered the phone, told Andy who it was and Andy said he would not speak with her: that I was to claim he wasn't there. More than any other, this moment, swelling Andy's consistent displays of inhumanity, forced me to conclude that I could no longer be part of his indefensible behavior.

If you read the shooting script of SCREEN TEST I, and watch the movie, you realize that I did far more (necessary) improvising than reading straight from my blueprint script. So this may be as good a place as any to emphasize that Andy considered there to be no qualitative difference between my improvising during a shoot and my typewriting several days or weeks before that. Whatever I wrote, or finally said, was all "writing." In addition, an actor departing from what I'd written was nevertheless enacting what I'd written. (According to the Screen Actors Guild, all changes in a script become the copyrighted material of the credited screenwriter.)

I wish to repeat, and go on record as affirming, that no man had so decisive an impact on the course I would take as Philip Fagan did. When he insisted that Andy Warhol make me his screenwriter, it would lead to my spending the next twenty-five years in film and theatre.

But whatever his torments, Philip Norman Fagan joined the unfortunates before and after him in this saga who tested the limits of masters at controlling people and power with his own precious life.

ANDY WARRICL'S

SCRBEN TEST

participants: Norman
The Actor: Fhilip Hill Fagan
Tester's Voice: Ronald Tavel

scenario by Ronald Tavel

5.17

TESTER'S VOICE: Any I have some more light? A little less, CK, CK that!s good. How, Mr. Fagan, just relax. Do you feel comfortable? Do you? Well, tell me, let me hear it.

Actor responds.

TESTING VOICE: I am not convinced, Er. Fagan. Let me hear again how confortable you are and let me see it.

ACTOR RESPONDS

TESTER'S VOICE: Now, Mr Fagan, we want to see what your profile looks like. Can we have a profile please.

ACTOR RESPONDS

TESTER'S VCICE: I want you to smile like the Mona Lisa..... you know what a Mona Lisa smile is? Tell me. No, no, keep the profile, while you're telling me.

ACTOR RESPONDS

TESTED'S VOICE: OH, now smile like the Hona Lisa..... Now, Hr Fagan, hold that Fona Lisa smile and give me your full face.

ACTOR RESPONDS

TESTIT'S VOICE: XXXXXXX Now, let's have a full face, Mr Fagan, full face again please. Now I want you to think about your family.
..... You are thinking about your mother...... Is there anything you want to tell me about your mother?

ACTOR RUSECHDS

TESTER'S VOICE: You are thinking about your father now........... Is there anything you want to tell me about your father?

ACTOR RESPONDS

TESTER'S VOICE: Do you have any siblings, Mr. Fagan? Think about them. Think what it would be like to have 10 brothers and sisters......

ACTOR RESPONDS

TUSTER'S VOICE: You know what you are, Fagan, you're a geek! A STEM! You know what a geek is? Do you? That's someone who cats chickens alive - with all their feathers on. Vell, that's what you are - so act like one!

ACTOR REMECTES

TESTED'S VOICE: Now, Hr Fagan, repeat after me:
I'D LIME TO HISS HER WHEN SHE HOWS
I'D LIME TO HISS HER WHEN SHE BOWS
(repeat many times with different words emphasized)

Where would you like to kiss her when she bows? Think about her bowing. How where would you like to kiss her when she bows? Do it, please.

ACTOR RESPONDS

TESTER'S VOICE: Mr Fagan, you know the expression, "Oh, Lord, I commend this spirit into thy hands?" Well, the religious gesture would be like this..... Let's see you do it. That's good, now say: "Oh, Lord, I commend this spirit into thy hands".... again, again..... OH that's good.

ACTOR RESPONDS

TESTER'S VOICE: Now say these lines please:
"There will be a competition for his heart.

The runners all at the starting line.

There will be a competition for his heart.

Ah! - the hurdles, the leaps - (his own phrase)

There will be a competition for his heart.

God, how long it takes to run a single circle!

There will be a competition for his heart.

But I will not write him poems, he can write beautiful poems, he will not hear....

There shall be a commetition for his heart.

I will give him my face - can anyone dank here deny I have a beautiful face?

preserve me, freeze me for a millennium and then defrast me and feed my flesh to the logs!

And I will give him my nipples and soul

Tut do not put it down in a poem, he can write beautiful noems, he will not listen

If I put it down in a poem, it is for you

It is for you, not for him.

CH, give me a fer away look. A fer away look, far, far, fer avey..... islands, blue lagoons, palm trees, symbolic sand ACTOR RESIGNOS

TESTER'S WICE: Dear enomaley, Say: "I am Tondalayo".

say: "Dear Anamoley"

ACTOR RESIGNOS

ACTOR RUSBONDS

TESTER'S VOICE: I don't believe you , hr Fagan, again: "I am Tondalavo."

ACTOR RUSHONDS ACTER RESPONDS

Show your tatoo _ death on wires

THEFE'S VOICE: Now, I'r Fagen, I went you to open your fly..... - can you wait Go chear, go ahead.....now, there's nothing to worry about, the to comera won't greatch a thing. I just want to get the gesture of your hands..... go chead. Now this is important. Your career depends on it. Ok, then, just unzip your fly half way. I have time to die, I have time this audience has time That's it, good. good, boy, very good.

TESTED'S VOICE: OH, A you can zipper up tonin. your fly please, we can't have Now, I went you to just improvise along with me. I'm a real people taking screen tests with sexy girl, see? Ch, much, what long and sinuey muscles you have their flies open,

> Would you like to - er - play a game of checkers with me? I'll give ya two kings to start.

> Ya Emow, I got caught in a raid last nite - they xer was pickin up all undesirables. Ya don't consider me to be undesirable do ya? remarram, tell me again, gorgeous.

How will you please react to the following words:

pigeon l'exico Janette MacDonald Hong Hong fruit cake semen sailors semen red panties my brother