

Hope & Change
The future in 5 acts.

A play by
Trystin S. Bailey

Characters

Milo
Ivan
Nia
Deryk
Davin
Dr. Jones
Voice (pre-recorded)

ACT I

Scene 1 - Deryk, Nia & Milo's apartment.

The apartment is basic and pristine. There is a couch, table, and chairs, each very simple, organic. No electronic devices (phones, lighting, television) or print literature (magazines, envelopes) are visible. MILO (late 20s/early 30s, lanky with sad eyes) sits at the table. He's wearing an oversized hoodie and skin-tight pants that have a slight sheen to them. This is his style moving forward until otherwise noted. IVAN (mid- 30s, handsome, charming, stylish) sits across from him. Both are wearing small, sleek machines that wrap around their ears. They are looking into each other's eyes, engaged in a silent dialogue. Ivan offers Milo a hopeful smile. Milo returns the smile, unconvincingly. Ivan leans in. Milo, without knowing it, pulls back. Ivan frowns. Milo leans forward and offers a lackluster display of calm, of enjoyment of the moment. Ivan lets the emotion sit, then smiles wide and places his hand on Milo's. Milo, despite his best effort, finds a genuine smile as response. A beat, then NIA (late 20s, mischievous and sharp) enters quickly, confidently. Her clothes and hair are jet black with unexpected flashes of color. She notices Milo and Ivan, waits a beat, then snatches the machine from Milo's ear.

Milo: Hey!

Nia: Nope. Come on, guys. Really?

Ivan removes the machine from his ear.

Ivan: Nia...

Nia: That's right, Nia! Have you guys not seen the special report on these things? Multiple independent sources claim that New England politicians passed a covert law allowing tapping into MindTech conversations without a warrant!

Milo: Someone's been reading too much HuffNet.

Nia: You won't be saying that when your mind's been hacked and all your deepest darkest secrets are used as blackmail against you.

Milo: I thought Ivan was the dramatic one.

Ivan: Ha. Ha. Let them eavesdrop on my thoughts. I have no secrets. The truth is my salvation. As long as I am my most genuine, honest self I am immortal- untouchable, even by the ever-reaching red tape tendrils of the New England government.

Nia: Must you always talk like you're auditioning for some trumpy soap vid?

Ivan: I must. / Milo: He must.

Ivan rises and kisses Nia on her cheek.

Ivan: How are you doing, darling?

Nia: Oh, fine. Getting paid shit to get shit on. Someone's gotta fight the good fight. What about you boys?

Milo: Meh.

Ivan shoots Milo a hard look.

Milo: Fine.

Ivan: *(to Nia)* Oh you know me. Scattering my craft like flower petals across the charred earth of central Pennsylvania.

Nia: Milo, what's he saying?

Milo: He's directing a Repatriation Day play at Harrisburg Primary.

Ivan: I'm picturing more of a series of performances, each leveraging a particular historical style- commedia dell'arte, vaudeville, Nogaku, VR -to truly get to the psychological, empathetic, and to a lesser extent factual core of the Greatest War, the fracturing of America and its reformation, of the re-creation of New England and our renewed bonds via the generous rehabilitation sponsored by our mother country 'cross the pond. It will be an emotional tour de force.

Nia: Performed by a bunch of six year olds...

Ivan: Four through eleven actually. And believe me when I say Cindy Gonzalez's silent ballet conjuring the Five District Accords would bring a tear to eyes of the most hardened criminal.

Nia: Is everyone from New York like you?

Ivan: There is only one like me.

Milo: *(in response to Nia)* Yes.

DERYK (mid-20s, traditionally attractive and infectiously warm) enters with a huge smile on his face. He's wearing a pair of glasses above his forehead - he is always wearing these glasses. Immediately the energy of the entire space brightens, despite Milo's best efforts.

Deryk: Hello, dear friends!

He catches Milo in a powerful hug.

Milo: Deryk...

Deryk: Milo, my brooding roomie-slash-bestie.

He hugs Ivan.

Deryk: His beautiful, artistic, lovely boyfriend Ivan.

Ivan: Hey, pachu.

Deryk: Hello!

Deryk makes his way for Nia.

Deryk: Oh, and last but not least my snarky little activist-

Nia stops him from hugging her.

Nia: Okay, Deryk. What've you been inhaling?

Deryk: Love, Nia.

Nia: Oh fuck.

Ivan: Oo, who is the lucky lady? What's her name? What's she do? How'd you meet?

Deryk: Her name is Davin. What a cool name. How max is her name, right?

Nia: It's okay.

Deryk: We met at the Hilton-Marriott at a OneLove convention.

Nia: A *OneLove* convention? Seriously, I'm surrounded by a bunch of hundred year-olds in this house. Monogamy is dead.

Deryk: She's so smart. Like, she basically knows everything. And beautiful. Big blue eyes. Long blonde hair. And- and kind! Our eyes met across the room and I just knew- ya know?

Ivan: I support all of this. When are you going to see her?

Deryk: We've got a date in...

Deryk puts his glasses on.

Deryk: Thirty-six hours and fourteen minutes. We're getting matè.

Nia gives Deryk a look.

Deryk: Ugh, what?

Nia: Nothing! It's just- you broke up with Lindz like three minutes ago! Do you think you're ready to dive into something else...?

Deryk: It's been three months and it was mutual *and* Davin is special. I can feel it.

Ivan: I love you, Deryk. I love you and your poet's soul.

Milo: (*Beat*) I'm hungry.

Nia: Same.

Milo: Pizza?

Ivan: None for me, dearest. I've got rehearsal in twenty.

Deryk: On it.

Deryk stares at nothing as if searching for something then returns his glasses to his forehead.

Deryk: It'll be here in ten minutes.

Milo: Good.

Nia presses her finger to her ear and listens for a beat.

Nia: Oh. Oh shit.

Deryk: What? What happened?

Nia: They've burnt down another church in SoCo.

Deryk: Another church?

Nia: Are you serious? This radical Christian terrorist group that has been targeting Atheist churches for months just took out another one in Kentucky. Six dead. My cousin barely got out alive.

Ivan: Oh no, I'm sorry, love.

Deryk: Atheist church? That sounds pretty impossible.

Nia: What the-?! Do you even keep up with current events?

Deryk shrugs.

Deryk: I mean, kind of, but not SoCo stuff. What's the point? We're all New Englanders.

Nia: But they're still our neighbors, Deryk. (*condescending*) And up until fifty years ago we were part of the same fucking country. The Southern Coalition, New England, Texas, all of us!

Deryk: I'm not that dumb, Nia. I knew that.

Nia: Okay, fine. Did you know, then, that SoCo- Southern Coalition states make it mandatory that every person registers as a specific religion? And that SoCo legislature decided to solve "the atheist problem" by classifying it as a religion as well?

Deryk: Uh...

Nia: Argh. (*patronizing*) You *do* know that New England just elected its ninth President, right?

Deryk: Yes. I know.

Nia: Okay, well, you know President Flynn's passing sweeping laws to limit the rights of self-driving machines and-

Deryk: Ugh, Nia, I hate it when you get like this. Why can't you just enjoy a moment and, crazed as this sounds, be happy for me? Not everyone is out there waving signs or calling politicians like you. Some of us just want to live life, okay?

Deryk starts to exit.

Nia: Deryk!

Deryk: Pizza'll be here in five minutes, alright.

Deryk exits.

Scene 2 - Restaurant

A quirky restaurant with a rural Argentinian decor. Deryk is sitting across from DAVIN (early to mid-20s, wide-eyed and traditionally attractive), dressed in white or pastels. They are laughing when the scene opens.

Deryk: And then the guy's like, "Come on, güey, I made these fish tacos just for you!"

Davin: No!

Deryk: Yes! And I say, "Look, güey, for the last time I'm not from Cascadia! I was born and raised in Carlisle, PA...and I don't even like seafood!"

Davin: Haha, that's hilarious. I mean, why would someone just assume you immigrated from the West?

Deryk: It's been happening my whole life! I guess if you're just a chill, carefree kind of guy everyone in New England just assumes you're Californian or something.

Davin: Everyone here could chill a little bit more, I think.

Deryk: Right?

A tray holding various Argentinian dishes rolls in on its own, stopping in front of their table. Deryk grabs a few.

Deryk: I mean, it's not like we don't have a million types of robots and machines and things doing all our work for us. Why be uptight about anything? Shrimp?

Deryk lifts up the shrimp.

Davin: Nah, I'm not the biggest fan of seafood either.

Deryk: Beef empanada?

Davin: Yes, please.

Deryk grabs them off the tray and serves himself and Davin. They take their first bites.

Davin: So you're a lens designer?

Deryk: Oh yeah, I build experiences for lenswear apps.

Davin: Cool.

Deryk: Yeah, it's pretty cool.

Deryk plays with the glasses that are perched atop his head.

Deryk: Mapping the infinite nuances of human sight and focus- voluntary and involuntary, you know? -to power seamless usage flows is pretty satisfying.

Davin: Do you only do...

Davin gestures toward Deryk's eyewear.

Davin: You know...glasses?

Deryk: "Only"... I- You know- They're a very nuanced mediu-

Davin: Yes, totally. Intricate. Vintage. But no one's worn corrective lenses for decades-

Deryk: In New England. Other districts-

Davin: Right. Still. In New England any visual deficiencies are manipulated out before the first trimester so the only glasses that exist are purely to access the 'net and stuff.

Deryk: Okay...

Davin: I'm just saying that soon, just like corrective glasses, framed lenswear will be obsolete. Hyper motion-based tech will sync with the mind stuff and accessing the 'net through your

contact lenses will be all the trend for a while until it's just another brain enhancement chip they plug into you at birth.

Deryk: You, uh, know a lot about this stuff...

Davin: Yeah, I know a lot about...a lot, actually.

Beat.

Davin: Sorry...sorry if I'm offending you or anything. I just love talking about this stuff.

Deryk: (*Beat*) No! Not at all. It's not like I could argue with you anyway. All this mind reading tech is evolving so fast literally every day could be the day I'm out of a job. Maybe I should look into classes or- or seminars...figure out what's next.

Davin: Couldn't hurt. (*Beat*) You're really cute.

Deryk: Oh. Thank you. I mean...you, too. Beautiful, really. Easily the most beautiful person I've ever dated. Like, maybe that I've ever seen.

Davin: (*giggles*) Thank you.

Deryk: So, I don't want this date to end after dinner.

Davin: We're in agreement then.

Deryk: I don't know if you're into destructo-vids, but this new one came out last Fri-

Davin: Pirate Massacre Six:...

Deryk & Davin: Vampirates. "A gore-filled quest for blood and booty"

Deryk: You like Pirate Massacre?!

Davin: Are you joking? Yes, I love it! Pirate Massacre Three: Noah's ARRRRRk will always be the best.

Deryk: I think I love you.

Davin: (*after a long pause*) I think I love you, too.

Scene 3 - The apartment.

Milo is seated, wearing futuristic glasses very different from Deryk's, moving invisible items around in front of him and writing intermittent notes on a tablet. Deryk is on his feet, pacing excitedly.

Deryk: And then we started talking about Pirate Massacre.

Milo: No...

Deryk: Yes!

Milo: I can't believe you found the only person in Pennsylvania who watches that trash.

Deryk: Yup! And it was so max! We saw Pirates Six and it was almost as good as the third one.

Milo: Wow...

Deryk: I glided her home and we had this amazing kiss goodbye and I can't stop thinking about her!

Milo stares at Deryk, concerned.

Deryk: What? What is it?

Milo: Deryk. Just be careful, okay? Like Nia said, this thing you do. Moving stupidly fast. Teeing yourself up for heartbreak.

Deryk: We said "I love you."

Milo: Well, fuck.

Deryk: So, uh, how's you and Ivan's 'ship?

Milo: *(Curt)* Fine.

Deryk: Just fine?

Milo: Just fine.

Deryk: Come on, Milo. I just talked about Davin for twenty minutes after one date- oh, our second date is Wednesday -and you've been dating for six months and all you can give me is "fine"?!

Milo: Correct. *(After a long pause)* Not great. We're not great. I'm not great.

Deryk: Oh, okay well let's talk about it...

Nia enters in a huff, exasperated.

Nia: They've gone too far. Those Christian terrorist fuckers fucking did it. Have you heard the news?

Milo: News?

Nia: Of course you haven't. SoCo's got the fucking media in their fucking pocket. Thirteen atheist churches were bombed- thirteen -in unison. Yesterday morning. Eighty-four dead...that we know of. A hundred in critical condition. People are saying it's the largest coordinated terrorist attack in US history. Fuck the Southern Coalition. Aren't you guys enraged?

Deryk: Yeah. That's a shit deal.

Nia: A shit deal, Deryk? That's all you got?

Deryk: Yeah, I mean, what else can I say? It's SoCo. Not even our district. What can we even do?

Nia: We can spread the word. You can be like me and we can go down there and march for our fellow humans. "Not even our district." Deryk...

Deryk: I just don't get it.

Nia: That's right. You don't. You're a New Englander. Born and raised in a progressive district, wanting for nothing with nothing to fear. Apathy is a privilege, Deryk.

Deryk: I'm not-! I can't do this with you today, Nia. I'm not small-minded. Bad things happen-even here -but I'm not going to let it get in the way of my happiness. Speaking of, I had a really great date last night. That's what I choose to focus on. Besides, you talk about SoCo like it's hell on earth. No place is perfect, but I've been to Atlanta and Celebration City and they are super nice, progressive places.

Milo: Atlanta and Cel City are *not* SoCo.

Nia: Truth, Milo. (*Beat*) Okay, I've got to start packing.

Nia collects a few things and starts to exit.

Nia: Fucking timing. My boss wants me to cover the fucking Prime Minister's press conference around the new A.I bans, but I've got to convince her to let me do this thing. Hopefully there's a story down there, too. We know those Alabama shit reporters aren't gonna do it...

Nia exits.

Deryk: *(to Milo)* I just refuse to be that unhappy all the time.

Scene 4 - The apartment

Milo and Ivan sit across from each other, wearing the earpieces just as they did at the top of the play. Milo's face is unreadable, but Ivan's is one of peaks of happiness amidst wavering bits of sadness and doubt. Milo frowns as Ivan makes one final joyful effort and reaches for Milo's hand. Milo snatches his earpiece off and throws it onto the table as he jumps to his feet and steps back from the table.

Milo: I can't- I can't do this anymore.

Ivan: My love...

Milo: Don't-

Ivan removes his earpiece and moves for the other.

Ivan: What's happening? Talk to me. I long to understand.

Milo: You can't understand.

Ivan: You'd be surprised by the complex origins of human emotion I can comprehend.

Milo: You're...

Ivan: I'm... Tell me. I long for any opportunities to discover my-

Milo: Perfect. You're perfect.

Ivan: I'm not-

Milo: No, you are. You all are. Literally perfect. You don't get sick. You aren't born with any defects at all! I just- Ugh. I can't take it. I thought I could- I tricked myself into believing I could take it...but I can't.

Ivan: *(Beat)* My parents were- are genephiles. You know this. From the moment gene-mods became available, reliable...they've been obsessed. They're practically royalty in New York and

have invested in every enhancement you can imagine. They're probably more synthetic flesh and nano-bots than human at this point. When I was born- Well, less born and more grown in a tube because mother didn't want the hormonal stress that comes with childbearing to mess with her upgrades. When I was conceived my parents put their considerable wealth into manipulating my fetal form. My hair, my eyes, these fingers. Even my mind. I don't know where the nature ends and the corruption begins. And I hate it, Milo. If you're not real, if you don't know which parts of you are real, then what are you? I create, desperately and hungrily just to prove to myself that- that I have meaning. But when I think about it too much this searing unknown burrows deep, deep into my heart and it burns all over and I just want to- to... And it sucks because that pain...that pain is when I feel the most real of all.

Ivan takes Milo's hands in his.

Ivan: Most of my life- in New York and now here -the people of this world have appeared to me in various shades of gray. Mundane. Predictable. Of a mold that seeks individuality in the most uninspired ways, free of risk. All this tech, these machines, have made us boring. Weak. Dependent. But then I see you. I see your faults and your flaws and you, Milo, you are this brilliant splash of color against the gray backdrop of the rest of this district. You Milo, are real. *(Beat)* And if you want this- us -to work then you're going to have to accept that and move past the accident.

Milo's entire demeanor shifts at that last word. He's suddenly on the defensive.

Milo: I can't just "move past" it.

Ivan: Well, you can at least try instead of opting to pull everyone close to you down into your bottomless pit of misery.

Milo: This is who I am. If you can't accept that then-

He can't bring himself to say it.

Milo: How about you just refrain from telling me how to deal with my issues and just stick to what you're best at. *(Pause)* Talking about yourself...if you were wondering.

Ivan: Goodbye, Milo. Obviously you'd prefer solitude over companionship at the moment. Until next we meet, have a splendid day.

Ivan exits. Anger swells in Milo until he lands a hard kick to the chair he had been sitting in. He then sits in the other chair and buries his head in his hands.

Scene 5 - The apartment.

Nia is making elaborate protest signs. Deryk and Davin enter, gleefully holding hands.

Deryk: So...this is my place.

Davin: I like it. Minimal.

Nia: Wait 'til you see his room. Maximum.

Deryk: My Ninja Space Force collection...takes up a lot of space.

Davin: Two-hundred and thirty-six figures'll do that. I can't wait to see them! *(to Nia)* Hi, I'm-

Nia: Davin. I've heard *so much* about you. Nice to meet you. I'm-

Davin: Nia. I've heard a lot about you, too.

Davin gestures toward the posters.

Davin: Oh, these are cute. What are they?

Nia: Cute. Huh. Well, *these* happen to be protest signs I'm making for a march at the capitol. It's been three weeks since the bombings. Uh, a bunch of monsters in SoCo-

Davin: One hundred and one dead. Sixteen churches if you count the two recently linked to the event in the Heartland district. By "a bunch of monsters" I assume you're referring to the Westboro United Christian Alliance who've finally taken credit for the attacks about twenty minutes ago on YouTube. *(to Deryk)* Ready for five uninterrupted hours of classic monster movie mayhem, bae?

Deryk: You set up the vid. I'll print the pizza!

Deryk puts on his glasses, Davin presses her hand to her temple, and Nia checks her cellphone in unison.

Nia: Fuck, you're right...

Deryk & Davin: Done!

Davin and Deryk plop down on the couch.

Deryk: The pizza'll be ready in two.

Nia: I-I can't believe this is happening. Davin...you follow SoCo news?

Davin: Eh, kind of.

Nia: Do you march? Do you protest?

Deryk: Nia...

Davin: Nope. Not my thing.

Deryk puts his arm around Davin and Davin curls into him.

Nia: Right.

Nia returns to her posters. She groans as Deryk and Davin kiss.

Nia: Deryk.

Deryk: Yeah?

Nia: You might want to talk to Milo. I ran into Ivan at the protest and your best friend said *something* that really upset him.

Davin: Aw, I can't wait to meet Milo.

Deryk: Milo can take care of himself.

Nia: Really? Milo? I- Your delusions are truly legendary.

Davin: Hey, be nice to my Deryk.

Nia: I- I can't with you two right now. Ivan and I spent a lot of time together that day, okay? He may even come with me to Alabama where the most churches were bombed. Anyway, he's worried about Milo. I am, too. He listens to you. He-

Deryk: Ah! Pizza's done! Hold please!

Deryk exits. Nia groans and starts to collect her posters.

Nia: Quite the catch you've got there. Have a good night.

Davin: *(a flicker of concern and then)* You, too.

Nia exits.

Davin: Nice meeting you!

Deryk enters.

Deryk: Are you ready to get lost in a world of gut-wrenching acting and blood-curdling special effects?

Davin: *(half-hearted)* Mmhm!

Deryk: Yay!

Scene 6 - The apartment.

The lights are low and Deryk and Davin are on the couch, in each others' arms having a great time.

Deryk: This is awful.

Davin: Haha, seriously. The worst.

Their eyes meet and they kiss.

Deryk: So.

Davin: So...

Deryk: Would you be interested in maybe cutting this vid and going to talk or sleep or, you know, whatev, in my room?

Davin: Sex. That's what you want, right?

Deryk: I- Uh...or talking...or...or sleep. B-but if sex. If sex is what you- I mean, I love you. Sex. I'd like sex.

Davin: You're kind of ridiculous.

Deryk: I know.

Davin stands and extends her hand to Deryk. He takes her hand and rises.

Davin: Let's go.

Davin and Deryk exit.

Scene 7 - The apartment.

The next morning. Deryk enters, quite confidently, whistling some current pop hit.

Deryk: *(calling to unseen Davin)* The waffles are printing!

Davin: Yay!

There's a knock at the door.

Deryk: It's like nine in the- Coming!

Deryk exits for a moment to answer the door and in walks DR. JONES (early 40s, unscrupulous and tenacious) wearing colorful clothing from head to toe, most of which is covered by her pristine white lab coat, and holding a cup of coffee. She scans the apartment.

Dr. Jones: This place. Disgusting? No, no, no. Harsh. My apologies. Haven't finished my coffee. Old school, I know, but so is democracy, am I right? *(Pause)* Am I right, Deryk?

Deryk: What- Who- Do I know you?

Dr. Jones: Judging by the last couple of weeks, probably not. Sign of the times, if you ask me. But we don't do it for the fame, do we? No. No, we do it for the possibility of progress.

Dr. Jones extends her hand to Deryk.

Dr. Jones: Doctor Marla Jones, Managing Developer, Ethics, at the New England Center for Robotics and Psychology. Kind of a big deal in certain circles.

Dr. Jones lets her hand linger for a beat, then draws it back.

Dr. Jones: Okay. Awkward.

She takes a sip of her coffee.

Dr. Jones: What's that smell? Waffles? Ah. Yes. Makes sense. I love waffles. A little Easter egg I dropped in the programming.

Deryk: I'm sorry, but-

Dr. Jones: Her idea?

Deryk: Huh?

Dr. Jones: The waffles. Her idea?

Deryk: Who-

Dr. Jones: Davin. Davin, Davin, Davin.

Deryk: Uh...yeah, they're her favorite...

Dr. Jones: Ha, yes! Yes, they are! Nice work, Jones.

Deryk: What is going on here...

Dr. Jones sighs. She pulls out a tablet.

Dr. Jones: Okay. Okay. Answers needed. I get that. Take this.

Dr. Jones hands Deryk the tablet.

Dr. Jones: Read it. I'm talking all of it. Read it and sign it at the bottom and- poof -a million bitcreds just for you. That's a lot of money.

Deryk glances at the tablet screen, confused.

Deryk: I...I don't know what's happening-

Davin enters, yawning.

Davin: What's going on out here?

Dr. Jones lights up.

Dr. Jones: Ah, there she is!

Davin: Hi... Deryk?

Deryk: I have no idea what's going on.

Dr. Jones: If you would just read- Ugh, fine. Let me make this nice and simple for you. I work for one of the district's leading artificial intelligence companies- controversial with all the stuff with the Prime Minister these days, I know, I know. We make advanced humanoid robots. 'Kay? Androids. Davin is one of them. We test them out in the field, closely monitoring their interactions with the world, and adjust accordingly. We find results are infinitely more meaningful if the subjects don't know about it.

Davin: Deryk?

Deryk: Please. Please leave.

Dr. Jones: Oy. Ugh. Okay. Proof. You want proof? Fine, here you go.

Dr. Jones pulls out a small device and presses a button on it. Immediately, Davin lowers her head. She is completely motionless. After a beat, Deryk is by her side.

Deryk: Dav- Davin? Davin, are you... (to Dr. Jones) What did you do to her?

Dr. Jones: I turned her off. Obviously.

Deryk: Dav! Davin, come on! Stop this! What are you doing?

Dr. Jones: Alright, kiddo. That's enough of that. Sign the paper. Take your money. Use it to impress someone who isn't ninety-four percent synthetics, alright?

Deryk: This is- This isn't real. This is some sort of stupid joke!

Dr. Jones: How was the sex?

Deryk: What?

Dr. Jones: The sex. The sex! We were very excited to see how version one-oh-four would perform during coitus. And we did, of course...see. We installed little cameras in her pupils. Right...here and here. Honestly, if we had to watch another terrible horror vid I would've killed myself. No lie. Laser cutter. Right to the ol' carotid artery.

Deryk starts to shake Davin. His emotions have taken over.

Deryk: Davin. Davin, wake up! Wake up, Davin... (to Dr. Jones) Wake her up!

Dr. Jones: What else do you want me to do, man? It's over. She wasn't real. Move on.

Deryk: She is real! She- she's seen all the Pirate Massacre films! She's from the Heartland district. Youngest of three. Her-her father is a teacher. Her-

Dr. Jones: All implanted memories to ensure this experiment remained double-blind. Plus Greg Marsden down in the Info Storage & Security department- sweet guy, s'got a cute little terrier mix -rigged her with this really, really cool bit of tech that feeds her with information on anything

anyone is talking about directly from the 'net and seamlessly weaves it into her historical data as an added memory.

Deryk: I can't believe this is happening...

Dr. Jones: Believe it or don't, not my problem. Just sign the paper, mail it in, and get a million 'creds.

Dr. Jones presses a button on her device and Davin comes to life.

Dr. Jones: Let's go, Dav.

Davin starts for the exit. Deryk runs to her.

Deryk: Davin! Davin, it's me! Deryk!

She stares blankly at him.

Dr. Jones: Ugh, she's been wiped, man. Data's in the cloud. She's a blank slate. *(to Davin)* Come on, lady.

Dr. Jones exits. Davin follows, but stops at the door- beat -before exiting. Deryk tries to process what just happened. Eventually he sits down on the couch, head buried in his hands. Shortly after Milo enters in a huff.

Milo: Ivan's on his way to Alabama with Nia. Like...what? He didn't even tell me. How did this even happen? Nia? I didn't think they were close. I didn't even know he cared about that stuff. I- I don't know. Fuck.

Milo looks at Deryk.

Milo: Are you alright?

Deryk: No.

Milo: *(beat)* Okay, well message me the deets and I'll read it later. I really, really can't deal with anything else right now.

Milo exits.

ACT II

Scene 1 - The apartment.
Deryk is pacing frantically.

Deryk: No. No! You're not listening. No- Okay. Can I please speak to your boss? *Your boss.*
Fine. Okay. *(Pause)* Hello. Hi. Yeah, you're the fifth person I've talked to today so- Deryk. Deryk Williams-Bradley. Listen, I'm trying to get a hold of Doctor Jones. Doctor Marla Jones. No. No, I don't have an appointment, I- Hello? Hello...? Fuck! Fuck this!

He taps his temple and waits impatiently for a few seconds.

Deryk: Hi, yes, Senator Allen please. No. I- I don't have an appointment, but- Sure. Fine. Sure. Deryk Williams-Bradley. Uh huh. Yeah, I have called before. I understand that. Okay. Okay, sure, but maybe if someone would fucking call me back I wouldn't have to! *(Beat)* Sorry. Sorry, please don't hang up. Please... Thank you. Please tell Senator Allen that the New England Center for Robotics and Psychology is harboring subjects against their will. Well, I don't know how many exactly, but there's at least one. *(Pause)* Yes, Davin. You remember. She- Hold on- That doesn't make her any less alive! *(Pause)* Hello? Hel- Fuck you!

Deryk presses his finger against his temple again.

Deryk: Hello, I'd like to report a kidnapping-

Nia enters, carrying luggage and rolled up posters. She's exhausted. Deryk sees her and lights up. He presses his finger to his temple and runs to her.

Deryk: Nia! Nia, Nia, thank you, thank you, thank you for coming home!

Nia: It's...home. Where else am I supposed to come? *(Beat)* Are you okay?

Deryk: *(on the verge of tears)* No. No I'm not okay.

Nia: Shit, what happened? I was only gone for a week.

Deryk: It's Davin. I need your help.

Scene 2 - Milo's bedroom.

It's a simple room, consisting of a desk with two chairs and a bed. It's a bit messy with clothes and pads and paper strewn about. Milo is sitting at his desk, making sketches in a journal with headphones on. A smartphone is also on his desk. Ivan enters. He sees Milo, pauses to gather his thoughts. He takes a step toward him, pauses again. The tension never leaves.

Milo: You're back.

Ivan: That I am.

Milo: Good trip?

Ivan: Honestly?

Milo gestures for him to continue.

Ivan: It was incredible. Tremendous, really. Life-changing. Truly. The Ivan Crawford-Ainsley that embarked on this somewhat impulsive voyage to the southern district to join hands with strangers bound only by an unquenchable thirst for righteousness. That Ivan Crawford-Ainsley crumpled around me like discarded skin of a serpent that's outgrown it, writhing and wriggling, enjoying the freedom of a life renewed. I found my voice, Milo- my passion down there in that church. I can't help but feel that that something I've been searching for- that I've come one step closer to it. I feel real. Really real.

Milo: Congrats.

Ivan: So...I think I'm going to go back down there. In a couple days. They need organizers and it turns out I can be quite inspiring.

Milo: Hm.

Ivan: I don't know when I'll be back.

Milo: I see.

Neither say anything for a stretch of time.

Ivan: (*Beat*) This isn't working. You and I. I love you, but it isn't working. We're planets, entire worlds in our own right, existing in different planes on different dimensions. Beautiful, but unable to truly cross paths. To ever truly know the orbits of the other.

Milo: Fine.

Ivan: That's all you have to say.

Milo: Don't delude yourself into thinking you've changed. You've just traded in one hopeless project for another. The only difference is that your new one hasn't realized how much of a fraud you are.

Silence follows as Ivan works to mask his hurt.

Milo: Are you still here?

Ivan takes a deep breath then heads for the exit.

Ivan: Have a lovely night.

Ivan exits. Beat. Milo puts down his pencil and rises from his chair. He looks to the exit then takes a measured walk to his bed. He climbs in then removes his shirt. He hesitates before taking hold of his pants. He pulls them off revealing long pink scars traveling the length of both of his legs. Both legs are abnormally bent and stuck that way. He runs his hand over one of the longer scars and begins to cry, loudly, honestly.

Scene 3 - Outside of the New England Center of Robotics and Psychology.

It's a gray, chilly day. Nia and Deryk are standing outside with signs "Souls are Deeper than Flesh" and "Robot Rights are Human Rights," respectively.

Nia & Deryk: *(chanting)* Flesh and bone or gears and screws: Human lives aren't yours to use!
Flesh and bone or gears and screws: Human lives aren't yours to use! Flesh and bone or gears and screws-

Deryk: This isn't working. We've been at it for days and nothing's changing.

Nia: It's the slow crawl of progress, Deryk. It's painful and requires nothing less than persistence. *(to an unseen passerby)* Excuse me, do you have a minute to talk about a new agonizing form of slavery happening right beneath our very eyes? *(unseen person walks away)*
(to Deryk) Persistence. *(begins chanting)* Droid lives matter! Droid lives-!

Ivan enters.

Nia: Ivan!

Ivan: Greetings.

Nia and Ivan hug.

Nia: Thank you so much for coming. Is Milo with you?

Ivan: *(Beat)* No. We broke up.

Nia: Oh. Oh...are you okay?

Ivan: No, yeah. I'm fine. *(Beat)* So what's going on? I got your text about a protest but...

He looks around.

Ivan: Hi, Deryk.

Deryk: Hey.

Nia: *(to Ivan)* Deryk's friend-

Deryk: Girlfriend.

Nia: The woman Deryk's been dating, it turned out, was a really advanced android. I mean, I spoke with her, she was very convincing. One morning some scientist appears and shuts her down and takes her away. So...Deryk and I are protesting because, you know, life is life no matter its origins and something that advanced and intelligent shouldn't be able to be wiped clean with the press of a button.

Deryk: Yeah.

Ivan: Okay, but...it's a robot.

Deryk: She's a person...

Nia: *(to Ivan)* Sure. Sure, but it's more complex than that. For all intents and purposes she can think and feel. Make educated decisions, guesses. This is where things are headed. Android rights are the new frontier.

Ivan: Sure. Maybe. But, ultimately, they're not real. They're *things* like tables, chairs, food printers, assembly bots. I just can't fathom why you're here fighting a cause that our Prime Minister is vehemently against-

Nia: Government sponsorship has rarely ever stood on the right side of revolt-

Ivan: -while real, living breathing people are dying in the South.

Nia: I'm here because Deryk is one of my best friends and it's something he deeply cares about.

Ivan: Great. People are dying. But great. I'm sorry for your loss, Deryk, but nature has gifted you with innumerable options in the varied and beautiful tapestry that is the human race. I must now bid you both adieu. This is not my fight.

Ivan exits. After Dr. Jones enters from the other side, casually eating a sandwich.

Dr. Jones: I don't know who that guy is...but I like him. Hi, kids. Terrible day to be outside doing anything.

Points her sandwich at them.

Dr. Jones: Sandwich? No? Okay. This whole thing you two are doing is cute and everything, but it's time to give up. Obviously, no one cares. And the few people who do care, like the PM, well, we'd prefer he didn't get any crazy ideas about what we're doing here. Which is, by the way, to create humanoid stand-ins for any situations in which the inherently flawed biology of a human would put them at risk. We're not stealing jobs like that half-wit Flynn would have you think. We're adding safety and security to the human race. Making sure they don't fuck anymore things up, if you will.

Deryk: She loved me.

Nia: And having her fuck my friend and served that purpose *how?*

Deryk: She *loved* me.

Dr. Jones: Okay. Alright. You know what? I'm not going to argue that. Our behavioral psych guy knocked it out of the park with her on that account. All readings indicated that she did. Granted, saying "I love you" on the first date? Come on, man. What matters is this: We own A.I. one-oh-four- that's it's name -and can do with it as we please.

Nia: So if a mother and father creates a child, you're saying that they have the freedom to do whatever horrible things they want to it?!

Dr. Jones: No, that's ridiculous. What I'm saying is, get the fuck off of this property and that everything that made Davin Davin has been wiped clean and all that's left is A.I. one-of-four. Period.

Dr. Jones takes a bite of her sandwich and exits.

Scene 4 - The apartment.

Deryk and Nia are sitting on the couch, defeated. Deryk is holding a container of ice cream. Milo enters a short while later and wordlessly joins them on the couch. Deryk offers the ice cream to Nia. She takes a bite then offers some to Milo. Milo refuses. Nia shrugs and takes another bite.

Nia: Anyone mind if I play some music?

Milo and Deryk shrug.

Nia: Darnell, play "We Will Rise" by Anthems of Rebellion.

The death metal classic plays. When it gets intense...

Milo: What is this?

Deryk: Turn it off.

Nia: Darnell, turn it off.

The music stops.

Nia: Obviously, you people have no respect for the classics.

Deryk: That...that wasn't music.

Nia: It was death metal.

Milo: As in listening to it makes you want to kill yourself?

Beat and then Deryk takes the ice cream from Nia and takes a bite.

Milo: Ivan's been gone for three weeks.

Silence.

Milo: I'm the worst.

Deryk offers Milo the ice cream. He takes it and takes a bite.

Deryk: *(to Nia)* Is this how you feel all the time?

Nia: Pretty much, yeah. Also...

Nia gives Deryk the finger. More silence follows. Nia rises.

Nia: I'm going to make some tea.

As she walks away there's a knock at the door. Everyone stops what they're doing.

Deryk: Who is it?

Nia: I dunno, I can't see through doors.

There's another knock. More aggressive.

Milo: Is someone going to see who it is?

Deryk: *(to Nia)* You're already up...

Another flurry of knocks as Nia exits to the door.

Nia: Who locked the-? I'm coming! I'm coming! I'm-

Nia re-enters, walking backwards, a look of shock on her face. In walks Davin, also showing signs of shock. Her hair is cropped short. Her hands are shaking and stained with blood. She has fresh wounds above her ears and at the base of her neck. Deryk jumps to his feet.

Davin: Deryk...

Deryk: D-Davin..?

They run into a powerful embrace.

Davin: Deryk!

Deryk: Davin...it's you, but- how?

Melancholy creeps across her face.

Davin: It started a couple weeks ago. I had been booted up and sent to the main research lab to run some tests on the limits of my sensory processors. My...senses. How far I could see. To what extent I could differentiate flavors. My...my threshold for pain. Things like that. They were making adjustments to my hearing, enhancing it, really, and for no more than a few seconds through the static I heard your voice. "Flesh and bone or gears and screws: Human lives aren't yours-" and then it was gone. I didn't recognize the voice at first, of course. I'd been wiped. But *something* about it lit up a part of my processor- my brain that I hadn't been aware of. I was built with highly advanced self-repairing tools so I ran a diagnostics check and discovered that I was equipped with a backup storage device that ran separately from the rest of my OS...my...my body. I sent a few hundred nano-bots to investigate and began the work of creating neural passageways from the device to my brain. See, it was only designed to store, never to be accessed. Uh...it was a long process. I could only really engage when I was online so...it took a week or so until I remembered you. You...and everything before you. The abuse those scientists put me through for the sake of progress. They would take turns violating me...they'd temporarily set my emotions to lust or complacency or terror and have sex with me under these conditions. They said it was so that I could be more experienced at it when I was put into the field, but any idiot knows that's not true. I decided that I had to escape. That I could no longer be tortured, a

victim. And the only place I knew to run, the only person I knew who I loved out of choice and not force...was you. You saved me, Deryk. *(Beat)* I knew that I had to go, but I had to be smart about it.

She gestures to the scars on her face.

Davin: I removed any devices that could be used to track me down. I disabled the tech that they controlled me with. After that it wasn't long before they found out I'd gone rogue, of course. I'd prepared as much as I could by downloading as much information from the 'net and improving on my senses and strength and- In short, they couldn't stop me. I don't think anyone died, but I was desperate to get out. And here I am.

Deryk: I'm so, so sorry. But you're here now. You're safe with me.

Nia: No. She's not. In fact, this will be the first place they'll look.

Davin: Nia's right. She's right. The longer I'm here the more we're in danger.

Deryk: *(to Nia)* Then what do we do?

Nia: I know a place...

Scene 5 - In front of a charred church in Alabama.

Sounds of a rowdy crowd can be heard as Ivan addresses his unseen audience.

Ivan: *(preaching)* We have gazed deeply into the eyes of the corruption and indecency of our fellow man and seen not ourselves reflected, but the inner strength, fortitude, and empathy required to combat it. The complexion of our skin, the expression of our gender, the higher force or lack thereof in which we believe lends itself to a limitless power, fueled by diversity with the single intent to nullify any and all adversaries of liberty, justice, equality and all those inalienable rights that remain our eternal, guiding foundation even beyond the dissolution of the nation from which those rights were born. Though our borders may be divided we people, armed with righteousness and a hunger for peace at all costs, will always be uni-

The sounds of panic and anger erupt. Then gunfire. Lights out.

Ivan: Wait! Stop! STOP!

ACT III

Scene 1 - Milo's bedroom.

Milo is sitting on his bed, angrily jotting notes into a journal. He's wearing a t-shirt and boxers and his scarred and warped legs are showing. He takes a swig from a bottle of vodka. It's clear that he is quite drunk.

Dr. Jones: *(off-stage)* Hello? *(Pause)* Anyone here? *(Pause)* You can't hide from me! *(Pause)* Deryk? Davin? Other girl? I'm going to find you. *(Pause)* I'm going to...

Dr. Jones bursts into the room, dressed in normal, casual wear.

Dr. Jones: Ha! *(sees Milo)* Oh. It's you. The perpetually sad one. Micah?

Milo: Who are you?

Dr. Jones: I'm a high-ranking scientist at a world renowned robotics facility looking for a missing piece of eighteen billion 'cred equipment.

Milo: Davin.

Dr. Jones: Where is she?

Milo shrugs.

Dr. Jones: Oh, come on! Someone in this house has to have some sense!

Dr. Jones notices his sketches. She lifts one off the ground.

Dr. Jones: These your sketches?

Milo shrugs.

Dr. Jones: You're an inventor then? This is some pretty interesting stuff. Wearables, huh?

Milo: ...yeah.

Dr. Jones: Right. Alright then! We're the same. Creators. Trying to make a better tomorrow and all that.

Milo: Maybe. But I don't rape the stuff I make.

Dr. Jones: *(taken aback)* What?

Milo: Your scientist friends having a little fun with Davin for the sake of science? Sound familiar?

Dr. Jones: She told you that?

Milo: She was able to tap into her memories. All of them. She had a lot of interesting things to say.

Dr. Jones: Fuck. Fine. (*unconvincingly*) Well, whatever tests she was put through I'm sure it was necessary part of the research.

Milo: Whatever helps you sleep, lady.

Milo takes a drink. Dr. Jones is at a loss for words. She searches the room and notices Milo's legs. She moves closer and gestures to them.

Dr. Jones: What happened there?

Milo covers his legs in his blanket.

Milo: Nothing. Get the fuck out of my room.

Dr. Jones: I haven't seen an injury like that outside of Doc Silvian's class at Carnegie.

Milo: (*Beat*) You studied under Doc Silvian? He's like a legend. He...

He takes a close look at Dr. Jones.

Milo: You're Doctor Marla Jones.

Dr. Jones: Can't argue with that.

Milo: I've read all of your books.

Dr. Jones: Always a pleasure to meet a fan. Now tell me about these scars of yours? We've been able to correct injuries like this for the better part of eighty years.

Milo: Ha. Well. I'm not from around here. I'm a product of Appalachia. West Virginia. Where disease and lasting injury are very much still a part of the culture. The land that progress forgot. I was working the field with my brothers. We grew all our own food. Mom wasn't too trusting of the outside world and all its "Godless sorcery." I'd always had a fascination for machines, though. The most I ever really got my hands on was farm tools, but my dad would sneak me issues of tech magazines he'd pick up at truck stops when he was making his runs. If mom ever found out, she would have... Anyway, instead of doing my chores like I was supposed to, I decided to tinker with our industrial cultivator. This thing was huge. Could turn the soil of our whole harsh, rocky field in three minutes. I was making adjustments to see if I could get it done

in two. *(Exhales)* I was lying on my back, checking the strength of my new modifications to the blades. I had no idea my- one of my brothers was climbing into the thing about to turn it on and he couldn't see me under the guard so...Here I am. I'd been accepted to Carnegie U a month before. I was literally the designer of my own demise. Kind of a running theme, honestly.

Dr. Jones: Damn, kid.

Dr. Jones lifts a pair of pants from the floor. She examines them.

Dr. Jones: You made these?

Milo: Yeah. Kind of became my obsession after the accident. Corrective clothing. Disguises any injury or imperfections completely.

Dr. Jones: Brilliant.

Milo: Mmhm. Until I take them off then...

Milo moves to take another drink, but Dr. Jones snatches the bottle from his hand.

Dr. Jones: That's enough of that.

Dr. Jones takes a swig.

Dr. Jones: Not bad. *(Beat)* I'm going to make you an offer. And it's fair, I think. You've seen what my people can build. You've seen Davin in action. She's flawless, functional, beautiful. What if I promise to let you come into the lab, meet with all the right people, give all the input you want, and we'll construct the perfect pair of prosthetic legs for you? All expenses handled by us. Top of the line, better than whatever other shit has kept you from pulling the trigger on this option before.

Milo does his best to mask his excitement.

Milo: What's the catch?

Dr. Jones: You'll lead me to Davin. Obviously.

Scene 2 - The hideout.

A small storage room with a table and chair. Davin and Nia are dressed in muted earth tones.

Nia: Jeff and Vassar should have all your documents ready by tomorrow. I've got a contact in Michigan where you can stay for a while. You'll be safe, I promise. They're total servecore peeps. You'll have to do a few chores and things every day, but-

Davin: That's fine. I'll do anything. Happily. Nia, thank you so much for everything you've done. You didn't have to and you did.

Nia: It's no problem. I'm happy to do it.

Davin: And I don't just mean me. That there's this whole underground collective dedicated to do the right thing. I had no idea that something like this could exist. I mean, I've uploaded information about the atrocities of mankind, of course, but to actually live the stories of those who've stood up against it. I'm experiencing an evolution of mind.

Nia: An enlightenment?

Davin: Yes. Yes! An enlightenment.

Deryk enters gleefully with three coffees.

Deryk: Coffee anyone?

Nia: Fuck yeah.

Nia takes a cup.

Davin: Yes, please.

Davin takes a cup and Deryk kisses her on the cheek.

Davin: I don't really need the energy since I don't require sleep, but the warmth inside feels really good.

Deryk: Mm, you're just the best.

Deryk kisses Davin on the lips.

Davin: No. You are.

Davin kisses him.

Nia: And I'm leaving.

Davin: Nia, no-

Nia: It's fine. I have to check on my peeps in the south anyway. You filthy monogamists have fun. But not too much. We're leaving tomorrow.

Nia exits. Deryk moves in to kiss Davin again.

Davin: We have to get ready.

Deryk: Ready?

Davin: Michigan.

Deryk: Wait- what? That's for real?

Davin: What-? It's the only way.

Deryk: No, but Nia said she'd find a way for us to be together.

Davin: And she did. It's just not here. I'm being hunted, love. I have no rights. Either I leave or they find me eventually. And turn me to scrap.

Deryk: No. No. There's gotta be a way for us to be together. Here. With my life and my friends and my job.

Davin: I- I don't know what to say. Nia did the best she could...

Deryk: There's gotta be a way.

Davin: I'll go alone if I have to, I-

Deryk: No! No. We've been through so much. They can't separate us-

Davin: Um...we? I-

Nia returns. The expression on her face, one of sadness and disbelief, is enough to silence the others.

Nia: Hm...Ivan...there was a rally, counter-protesters. Things got violent. He's...he's dead.

Scene 3 - The apartment.

Milo is eating chips and staring at his tablet, reading something. Nia enters.

Nia: Hey, Milo.

Milo: Hi.

Nia: I have something that I think you should know.

Milo: Okay...?

Nia: It's about Ivan.

Milo: Ivan.

Nia: Yeah. He was giving a speech.

Milo: Sounds about right.

Nia: And the Westboro Alliance came. They were armed. Six dead. Ivan was one of them.

Milo: Oh.

Milo closes his eyes. He doesn't move.

Nia: Milo. A-are you alright?

Milo: No, yeah. I'm alright.

Nia: How are you feeling?

Milo: I'm...I'm...I'm fine.

Nia: Do you want to talk about it?

Milo: No. I'm fine. I'm just going to go to my room.

Milo rises and starts toward his room.

Nia: Okay. Let me know if you need anything.

Milo stops.

Milo: Dr. Jones stopped by a little while ago. She said she'd make my legs work again if I told her where Davin is.

Nia: Did you?

Milo: *(after a pause)* She's not that bad.

Nia: Fuck.

Nia exits in a hurry.

Scene 4 - The woods.

Davin and Deryk are moving cautiously through the wilderness, dressed for the hike.

Davin: The meeting point is just ahead.

Deryk: *(Distant)* Mmhm.

Davin: Are you sure you're okay? You've hardly said anything since-

Deryk: I'm fine! I'm fine...

Davin: You're not. I told you that if you don't want to come with me, you don't have to.

Deryk: But how shitty would that be? How shitty would it be for us to go through all of this together and then I just abandon you.

Davin: You've done enough, Deryk. You set me free.

Deryk: I love you.

Davin: I know. And you've proven that. You're good. More than good.

Deryk thinks of what to say next when Dr. Jones arrives.

Dr. Jones: Lovely day for a hike.

Davin: *(Unphased)* Doctor.

Dr. Jones: Davin.

Davin: I heard you coming a mile away. Better to resolve this now than later.

Dr. Jones: I agree.

Deryk nervously places himself between the two.

Deryk: How did you find us?

Nia runs in, short of breath.

Nia: I...can answer that!

Deryk: Nia?

Dr. Jones: Oh, hey there.

Nia, too, places herself between Dr. Jones and Davin.

Nia: Milo...told her.

Dr. Jones: Uh...no. Turns out your depressed little friend is just as obnoxiously stubborn as the rest of you. (*Gestures toward Deryk*) Fortunately, your little boyfriend here has one of those tracking chips that were all the rage a couple decades ago, so I had a friend hack into the database and- poof -here I am.

Deryk: Oh, shit. Shit, shit, stupid, stupid me.

Davin: It's fine.

Deryk: No. No, it's not!

Nia: Yes. It is. This bitch isn't taking one step closer to you.

Dr. Jones: Ugh, youth. You people crave drama, don't you? It's like oxygen to you all. (*Takes a deep breath*) I'm not bringing you in.

Davin: What?

Dr. Jones: I've called off the hounds. It's over...well, sort of.

Davin: Huh? I don't get it- What changed?

Dr. Jones: (*serious*) Milo told me what you said the scientists did to you. I did some snooping around and found it to be true...and then some. Honestly, the argument of whether you're alive or just a machine or whatever doesn't matter. What matters is I created you. So much of the essence of who you are was the direct result of my research and desire to make you someone better than me. Someone who didn't have to experience what I did. I feel...responsible for you. A touch of blackmail here and calling in a few favors there and you're free to live whatever life you want...sort of.

Nia: Tell us more about this “sort of” thing.

Dr. Jones: Everything comes at a price, kid, and this is the best fucking deal in town.

Scene 5 - The apartment.

Deryk, Davin, and Nia are sitting on the couch, watching an unseen show, with Nia sitting between them. They're all laughing at the scene's open. There's a journal on the table.

Nia: Why am I laughing? This vid is so stupid.

Davin: Haha, it totally is.

Deryk: What? Are we watching the same movie?

There's a knock at the door.

Davin: It's open!

Dr. Jones enters, more optimistic than we've seen her.

Dr. Jones: Heya, kids.

Nia waves.

Deryk: Hey, Marla.

Davin: Hi, hi.

Davin stands and walks to her.

Dr. Jones: What are you all up to?

Nia: Watching a horrible movie.

Dr. Jones: Deryk's turn to choose?

Davin: Obviously.

Dr. Jones: Ready for your weekly diagnostics exam?

Davin: Ready.

Dr. Jones removes a device from her pocket and quickly scans Davin with it.

Dr. Jones: And done. You ladies ready?

Nia: Oh yes.

Nia gets ready.

Davin: Yep.

Deryk: Whoa, wait. Where are you going?

Davin: I told you yesterday we're checking out this new documentary about religious suppression in New England and the creation of the Behind Closed Doors Act. Wanna join us?

Deryk: Uh, no. Not really my thing.

Davin: *(disappointed)* So I've noticed.

Deryk: Huh?

Davin: Nothing. Have a great day!

Davin kisses Deryk on the cheek and exits with Nia and Dr. Jones.

Deryk: I guess I can get some work done.

Deryk puts earbuds in and takes a tablet from his pocket. He puts on his glasses and begins to manipulate unseen objects in the air. After a moment, slowly, Ivan enters. He is dressed in plain clothing and he himself looks tired, unkempt. He sees Deryk, careful not to be seen by him. Milo enters from his room, wearing loose-fitting jogger pants and moves to grab his journal from the table. It's then that he notices Ivan. He's understandably surprised, but Ivan attempts to, and eventually succeeds at calming him. Ivan gestures for Milo to exit to Milo's room. Milo returns to his room and Ivan, successfully avoiding being noticed by Deryk, follows.

ACT IV

Scene 1 - Milo's room.

Ivan and Milo are seated on the bed.

Milo: Okay. I'm sorry. Explain this to me again. You died.

Ivan: Correct.

Milo: But you're alive.

Ivan: Not really.

Milo: Your *consciousness* is alive...

Ivan: You remember all that stuff I said about my parents, right? How they like to be on the cutting edge of, well, anything. It turns out that while they were choosing my eye color and bone structure, they also signed me up for this fucked up life insurance plan where a machine in my head was constantly transmitting a digital copy of my consciousness to a server in Yonkers in case of my death. Using my DNA, which of course they'd already collected, and photos and things they rebuilt me as an android. Turns out there's more of us roaming around than anyone thought.

Milo: How do you feel?

Ivan: How do I-? Physically, I feel better than I ever have before. Like I can do anything, really. Faster, stronger, improved in every way. So improved, in fact, that when I tried to hurl myself off a bridge a couple days ago I found that I was completely uninjured and entirely unable to drown...which should give you some intel as to how I'm doing mentally. *(Beat)* I don't know why I came to you. Well, I have a pretty good guess. I needed to be with someone who feels as fucked up as I do about myself.

Milo: What- You are literally perfect.

Ivan: I'm nothing! I'm nothing! I'm not myself! I'm a machine! I'm a lie! I'm dead!

Milo leans in to kiss Ivan, but Ivan pulls away. Beat. Milo stands up and extends his hand to Ivan.

Milo: Come on.

Ivan: Where are we going?

Milo: Right here.

Ivan: Why- Are those...new pants?

Milo: Yeah.

Ivan: But...

Milo: *(trying to hold back his smile)* Prosthetics. Robotics. This, uh, doctor I know. Davin's doctor, actually...kinda fixed me. I mean, I still feel broken, but...only mentally. Heh. I guess we're more alike now than we've ever been.

Ivan: That's- that's great.

Milo: Now, come on.

Ivan takes Milo's hand. Milo leads him downstage a bit and then drops to his knees.

Ivan: What...are we doing?

Milo: Praying. I know it's not the thing to do up north, but my brothers and I, we would every night with mom and...I dunno...it's always been one of the only things that ever really brought me peace. Okay?

Ivan hesitates then joins him in kneeling, more intrigued by this gentler side of Milo than anything else.

Ivan: Okay.

Milo looks to the heavens. Ivan does the same. He reaches his hand to Milo. Milo takes it in his.

Milo: Dear God, who- or what- ever you are, we need your guidance- your wisdom -this day. Please help my friend Ivan find peace in his current situation. Help him to understand that- that the soul is greater than flesh or science; that as long as he is capable of feeling- even when pain is the only feeling he can seem to conjure in himself -then he is real. And he is worthy of your love and the love of all of those he has touched. All the lives he has improved. Mine included. Am-

Ivan: No one else can know I'm here. I'm not ready for them to see what's become of me.

Milo: *(beat)* Amen.

Ivan: Amen.

Scene 2 - The movie theater.

An old run-down place in the city. Nia, Davin, and Dr. Jones are the only people in the theater.

Nia: This is horrible.

Dr. Jones: Oh, thank you. Thank you for saying that.

Davin: Us being the only people in the theater was kind of a hint, too. Back-to-back shitty vids today.

Nia: I mean the message is there.

Davin: Sure, sure.

Dr. Jones: But the execution is rubbish.

Nia: *(to Davin)* Hey, what's going on with you and Deryk?

Davin: What do you mean?

Nia: I mean there seems to be some...tension.

Davin: Tension...

Dr. Jones: I mean, not to be a nosey parent or anything, but your diagnostics have been showing a lot more...tension recently.

Davin: I see. If you two must know.

Dr. Jones: We must.

Davin: We're just not connecting like we used to.

Dr. Jones: Well, you were literally designed to connect with anyone until you went rogue so that makes sense. You're thinking sans restraint these days.

Nia: Lemme take a stab at what you're feeling right now. The more you're with him the more you realize that you want to learn and grow and explore the world and yourself and he just wants things to stay the way they are.

Davin: How'd you...?

Nia: Welcome to the past decade of Deryk's failed relationships.

Davin: He's a great guy. He's responsible for everything I have today.

Nia: Can't argue that. Also, he protested for you. Made a sign and everything. I never thought I'd see the day.

Davin: See? It's complicated.

Dr. Jones: Not really. Incompatible is incompatible. The hard part is telling him. Everything that follows, worth it.

Nia: I love the guy, but (*whispers*) you're too good for him.

Dr. Jones: Come on, Nia. She's too good for everybody.

Davin: Settle down, ladies-

Dr. Jones: Hold- hold on. Call coming in on my private line. Uh huh...okay. Are you fucking kidding me? You know what to do. Op: Omega. Yep. Do it. Stop fucking talking to me and do it. Okay. We'll regroup later. I said stop talking to me! Bye.

Dr. Jones turns to Nia and Davin. She clears her throat and maintains her cool.

Dr. Jones: Ladies, it seems as though my worst nightmare has become a reality. Prime Minister Flynn's executive orders have gone into motion. Three dozen armed men are currently raiding our facility and confiscating and disassembling my life's work. Nia, make sure Davin gets home and collects her things.

Davin: Marla-

Nia: I will. I promise.

Dr. Jones: It's happening. This is it.

Dr. Jones exits.

Scene 3 - The street.

Deryk is walking with groceries, bundled up. He is startled by a loud siren that seems to come from everywhere at once. He stops, looking upward for the source of the sound. The siren ends, giving way to the recorded voice over the speaker.

Voice: ATTENTION CITIZENS OF NEW ENGLAND. BY ORDER OF PRIME MINISTER FLYNN, ALL HUMANOID ANDROIDS LIVING WITHIN THE DISTRICT MUST IMMEDIATELY REPORT TO THE NEAREST POLICE PRECINCT FOR REGISTRATION. FAILURE TO DO SO WILL RESULT IN FURTHER MEASURES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE SEARCHING OF PROPERTY, IMPRISONMENT FOR EVADERS OR ACCOMPLICES, AND TERMINATION. THANK YOU FOR ENSURING THE FUTURE OF NEW ENGLAND AND ENJOY YOUR DAY.

Deryk: Oh. Oh no. Oh fuck!

Deryk runs offstage.

Scene 4 - The hideout.

Nia and Davin are packing a few duffel bags.

Nia: How are you feeling?

Davin: I'm okay. You?

Nia: Fine. If you're okay, I'm okay.

Davin: The other androids, I- I didn't realize there were so many of us.

Nia: It's crazy, huh? Once they're all here we'll start making our way to the next checkpoint. More are being scooped up every day so we've got to move.

Deryk enters, wearing a backpack and holding a small suitcase.

Deryk: Davin.

Davin: Hey, you.

Nia: I'm gonna go check on the others. Be back in a sec.

Nia leaves.

Deryk: How are you feeling?

Davin: Never a dull moment in the life of a humanoid.

Deryk: Heh. That's for sure.

Davin: All packed?

Deryk looks to his small bag, regrettably.

Deryk: Uh, yep. Ready to...to start over.

Davin: Deryk...

Deryk: Yeah?

Davin: You're not coming.

Deryk: *(masked relief)* Davin-

Davin: You're not. You've done enough. A life in hiding, never knowing if things will ever be normal- be good again. That's not for you. It's not fair to you. *(Beat)* Someone's gotta have the happy ending. And it's you.

Deryk: But...but it's not fair.

Davin: Yeah, few things are. But I'm fine. We'll all be fine without you.

Deryk: But...but what about me without...without you?

Davin: I have a feeling you'll survive.

Davin pats Deryk on the shoulder and returns to packing. Nia enters with Dr. Jones who's got blood on her face.

Davin: Oh no, what happened?

Dr. Jones: Don't worry about it. What matters is I wasn't followed. Just get out of here. A source at the capitol says they're distributing handheld sensors that can allegedly tell the difference between a human and an android. Public opinion is already starting to shift in support of the orders. It's a shitshow.

Nia: Any news on where they're taking the captured 'droids?

Dr. Jones: Just rumors. Everything from massive camps up north to the incinerator. Not your concern.

Davin: *(to Nia)* This whole thing trumps hard. I hate that we're just leaving.

Nia: Live to fight another day, love.

Deryk: I'm gonna go, I think...

Davin: Okay.

Deryk: Okay...

Nia: I'll take care of her, buddy.

Deryk: Okay...

Deryk and Nia hug.

Deryk: Goodbye.

Deryk's eyes don't leave Davin as he exits. When he's gone, Nia places her hand on Davin's shoulder and Dr. Jones presses her finger to her temple and takes a call.

Scene 5 - The apartment.

Everything's a mess. Furniture is overturned and paper and books are scattered around. In the middle of it all is Milo with his head down, crying. Deryk enters the apartment, shocked at the mess. Milo looks up at his arrival, revealing his freshly bruised eye and neck.

Deryk: What happened?

Milo: They came. They came searching for...for...

Deryk: Well, she's safe. Davin's safe and that's all that matters. (*Beat*) Whoa, your face. Did they hurt you? I'm so sorry. I mean... (*Beat*) Are you okay? What else happened?

Milo: (*crying deepens*) Nothing. I just need to be alone with this.

Deryk: Okay.

Deryk exits.

ACT V

Scene 1 - The apartment.

Dr. Jones and Deryk are sitting on the couch, watching a vid. They each have a bowl of ice cream.

Deryk: You don't have to keep coming over like this. It's been, like, three months. I'm fine.

Dr. Jones: I know. I want to, honestly. You spend your whole life studying a thing and now no one wants to hire for that thing and you're perpetually in between jobs which gives you all this time to think about all the other things you never gave yourself time for like taking that vacation to Australia or spending more time with your grandmother before she died to even entertaining the idea of settling down with a husband or in one of those communes and creating a legacy bigger than that fucking thing you dedicated your entire being to for as long as you can remember. So maybe what I'm saying is...I'm not fine. (*Beat*) Have you heard from them lately?

Deryk: About a week ago, yeah. She says with anti-android legislation sweeping the districts, SoCo is the safest place for them now. In the mountains. It's still the easiest place to stay off the grid. Milo actually gave them the idea.

Dr. Jones: That's good news. I'm kind of surprised Nia, ya know, stuck with it. Judging by her updates she's really risking her life for those people.

Deryk: I'm not...surprised. It's who she is. As much as this is who I am. Someone's gotta make cool, sleek lens apps to waste time and someone's gotta be a hero, change the world. *(Beat)* Honestly, I think Nia loves her. Davin, I mean. She never says it, but... I've known her for years. It makes sense. It makes me happy.

Dr. Jones: You're smarter than you look, Deryk.

Deryk: I know. Hey, would you be interested in seeing a really bad movie later? Maybe dinner afterwards? My treat. And...if you're into it...a bunch of us are marching in front of the capitol...about the camps. Liberation and all that.

Dr. Jones: I'm in no position to turn down free food, so...

Deryk: Great. Let's go.

Lights go down as Deryk and Dr. Jones prepare to exit.

Scene 2 - The visitation room.

The room is dark, bleak, and empty aside from a table and two chairs. Ivan sits in one of the chairs. He looks a bit rough, dressed in a prison outfit. His hands bound in a large, thick pair of handcuffs. Milo enters and offers Ivan a small genuine smile.

Milo: Hey.

Ivan: Hey.

Milo takes a seat.

Milo: How are you doing?

Ivan: Eh, you know. Another week in the Berks County Android Internment Camp. They start to bleed together, ya know? I hit rock bottom a couple of days ago. Again. I've been collecting the stories from the other 'droids. I'm going to use them to create this...this I don't know what! But it's going to be something. I can feel it. When I get out of here... *(Beat)* If I get out.

Milo: You will. You will. And everyone will see your creation and it'll be amazing because everything you do is amazing. There are a lot of people fighting for you out there. The numbers grow every day. ViceNet did an exposé that got a lot of attention and-

Ivan: I missed you.

Milo: Me too. I'll try to come by more often. It's really not that long of a trip.

Ivan: No, one of us has to be out there living our life.

Milo: Ivan...you know if I told Deryk or the doctor or...your parents that you're in here, maybe they could h-

Ivan: No. No. I don't want to be pitied. I can't. I'd rather them keep thinking I'm dead than be pitied, Milo. And my parents...let's be serious. They know I'm here. How could they not? They just don't want to have anything tarnishing their name. Right now...for now...you're what I need.

Milo reaches into his pocket.

Milo: I, uh, talked to some of my connections in government robotics and they talked to some people and let me sneak this in...

Milo reveals a pair of the telepathy devices. He fastens one to his ear and puts the other on Ivan.

Milo: I know how much you like to talk this way.

Ivan: Like music, the sharing of emotion without the limitations of words is the purest, most beautiful form of communication.

Milo: There's my man.

Milo and Ivan look into each other's eyes sharing a quiet conversation. The mood between them, over the course of a few seconds, blooms into nothing short of love. Milo reaches across the table and places his hand on Ivan's. Ivan closes his eyes, smiles, as a tear makes its way down his cheek.

~END OF PLAY~