

HOCUS POTUS

The End of the World As We Know It

**a play in two acts by
Tom Baum**

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CHARACTERS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

Dyson, 40s-early 50s, President of the United States

Veejay, her Chief of Staff, 20s-30s

Twyla, the Oval Office digital assistant (voice only)

Esteban, Dyson's husband, mid to late 40s

Hewlett, Dyson's and Esteban's daughter, early 20s

Stockwell, a Senator, 60s (actual age 110)

Dyson might be Asian, African-American, or mixed race. Veejay is mixed race. Esteban is probably white and definitely not Latino. Hewlett is mixed race. Stockwell is definitely white. Twyla might have a Southern drawl.

The play takes place inside the Oval Office of the White House, on July 12, 2056.

ACT 1

(The White House Oval Office in the year 2056. Three doors, one to the Rose Garden, one to the West Wing corridor, one to the outer office. Above the fireplace is a giant video screen. Standing against the wall is a 3-D printer. Next to it, a liquor cabinet. Center stage, two couches at right angles to each other, and a coffee table between them. On the coffee table, a bowl of peanuts.)

Lights up on VEEJAY, the President's Chief of Staff, a handsome young man in his 20s. He's drying the morning's New York Times with a hair dryer. The video screen displays the day—Wednesday, July 12, 2056; the time—10:34 AM; and the outside temperature—124° F.

DYSON, President of the United States, an attractive woman in her late 40s, enters from the outer office.)

DYSON: —That's enough, end of story, I'm through talking with those ass-kissers. Veejay, were you watching? The CEO practically got down on his knees, begging me for another handout. How can I possibly ask Congress to re-fund them?

VEEJAY: I thought you handled them beautifully, ma'am.

DYSON: Twyla, how much ocean water have they actually desalinated? They refused to give me figure.

(A large, disembodied woman's face appears on the giant video screen above the fireplace, Wizard-of-Oz fashion. This is TWYLA.)

TWYLA: The Long Beach plant, roughly 50 gallons.

DYSON: About a bathtub's worth. Veejay, what on earth are you doing?

VEEJAY: I'm blow-drying your husband's New York Times.

DYSON: Since when?

VEEJAY: Since he asked them to start printing again.

DYSON: He's abusing a privilege. How did it get wet?

VEEJAY: The sprinklers outside the Cabinet Room. They decided to erupt.

DYSON: This heat wave must have fried the system. It was over 130 yesterday.

VEEJAY: The engineers are looking into it.

DYSON: I keep telling them we need a major renovation.

VEEJAY: A teardown, more like it.

DYSON: (*wryly*) A White House teardown. Wonder how that would poll.

(*TWYLA's face pops on again.*)

TWYLA: Thirty-four per cent favor moving the White House to Palo Alto.

DYSON: That was a rhetorical question, Twyla.

TWYLA: Sorry, dear.

DYSON: Twyla, have we had the endearment conversation?

TWYLA: When I was installed, you checked "Maternal."

DYSON: I don't need another mother. One was quite enough.

VEEJAY: I enjoyed having two. All that unconditional love—I thrived on it.

TWYLA: One million three thousand female followers. D.C.'s Player of the Year.

DYSON: Don't let it go to your head. Uncheck that box, Twyla.

TWYLA: Yes, dear.

(TWYLA's face disappears.)

DYSON: She's been awfully squirrely lately. Her boundaries need re-configuring. *(to VEEJAY)* When am I due at the press conference?

VEEJAY: Thirty minutes.

DYSON: Is Esteban gonna be there?

VEEJAY: He has a White House tour with the women's Olympic skateboarders.

DYSON: Lucky him. You look different today, Veejay. Are those new glasses?

VEEJAY: Well, they're version 6. But same frames.

DYSON: Let's see my opening remarks.

(VEEJAY hands her a hard copy.)

DYSON: *(reading)*Continuing commitment to Denaclon's efforts to solve the global water crisis...unwavering support for our friends in Israel...What did I do, write this in my sleep? Hillary would have tubed this in a heartbeat. I should have run this past Esteban. Did he go to the National last night?

VEEJAY: The National?

DYSON: Yes! To see Hewlett.

VEEJAY: What's the role again?

DYSON: It's not like you to forget. She's playing Juliet. She went on for Jonetta Barrymore last night. I tried to get out of that dinner, but I couldn't.

VEEJAY: How did that go? Make any headway with the Supreme Leader?

DYSON: Same old song. We're stealing his nuclear secrets and kidnapping his women.

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* Kim Jong-ne [nay] kept ogling the President's cleavage.

DYSON: So did his child bride. I felt like I was in a threesome.

(On screen, a surveillance video of KIM JONG-NE and his child bride staring down DYSON's dress.)

DYSON: Twyla, I don't need any reminders. *(no change)* Twyla? *(to VEEJAY)* I don't know what's eating her lately. Twyla, no video.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Sorry, dear.

DYSON: I said uncheck that box! *(to VEEJAY)* So we were totally unrepresented at the National?

VEEJAY: I'm afraid so, ma'am.

DYSON: Unforgivable. I've never seen Hewlett so....so nauseated.

VEEJAY: *(alarmed)* She was actually throwing up?

DYSON: And she's never had that problem. Can't wait to go on. Absolutely nerveless. Can't think where she gets that—we didn't code for low anxiety. Should we see if the Amazonian reviewed her?

VEEJAY: *(to the screen)* Twyla, did Hewlett get a mention?

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* A mention where?

DYSON: *Romeo and Juliet* at the National. She's understudying Jonetta Barrymore. Try and stay with us, OK?

VEEJAY: Twyla, on second thought, no. *(to DYSON)* Don't want to seem to be spying.

DYSON: You read my mind.

VEEJAY: *(flirting)* Only my job. My only job.

DYSON: Other than dating every White House intern. How should we spin the dinner at the press conference?

VEEJAY: I'd focus on the chemistry between us. *(hears himself)* Between you and Kim Jong-ne, I mean.

DYSON: Veejay...I know you think you're a charmer—

VEEJAY: Designed for it, actually—

DYSON: Try and keep a lid on it. And here, take out this nonsense about immortality research... and put this nonsense about desalination at the end...

(ESTEBAN, Dyson's husband, a professorial-looking man in his 40s, has entered. He sees VEEJAY and DYSON with their heads together. They don't see him at first.)

DYSON: Should I mention Denaclon by name?

VEEJAY: Just say—when you're dying of thirst, it's important to distinguish oases from mirages.

ESTEBAN: Hello?

DYSON: Oases from mirages. That's perfect.

VEEJAY: I was only quoting you.

ESTEBAN: Am I intruding?

VEEJAY: I admire a woman with a gift for metaphor.

ESTEBAN: Hello!

DYSON: Oh sorry, darling, didn't see you there. We're tweaking my press conference.

ESTEBAN: Is my New York Times dry?

VEEJAY: Yes, sir, all ready for you. Sir, do you mind if I ask why you don't use your tablet to do the puzzle?

ESTEBAN: When the puzzle's hovering there before my eyes, waiting for me to speak the answers? Gives me a splitting headache.

VEEJAY: Question withdrawn.

ESTEBAN: You think I'm a bloody fossil, don't you.

VEEJAY: I wouldn't dare say.

ESTEBAN: Well, I am a bloody fossil, and proud to be one. I still listen to radio, I still read a book now and then, and like dozens of my fellow humans I still enjoy turning the pages of my dead-tree newspaper.

VEEJAY: Yes, but why have it delivered? Why not print it yourself?

DYSON: My husband's sentimental. His great great grandfather delivered papers to FDR.

ESTEBAN: And if we had a dog, I'd want him to fetch it to me in his teeth.

VEEJAY: That reminds me. Twyla, the pet poll?

(TWYLA *po*
ps on screen.)

TWYLA: (*on screen*) Latest tracking in a sec.

ESTEBAN: Are we all clear on why I need the paper delivered?

DYSON: Yes, darling, we understand. You're terribly testy this morning.

(ESTEBAN *pours himself a stiff drink and settles in to do the crossword. The video screen shows a variety of animals, mostly dogs, cats, but also animal hybrids—ligers, wholphins, rhinophants, and zebralopes, plus several dog-cat hybrids and a graph.*)

TWYLA: (*on screen*) Iris is polling at 32 per cent approval.

DYSON: Thirty-two? Last week it was 60.

TWYLA: (*on screen*) That's because Hewlett insisted on naming her cat after a kiddie prostitute.

DYSON: What kiddie prostitute?

TWYLA: In *Taxi Driver*.

VEEJAY: It's an 80-year-old movie.

DYSON: I know it's a movie, how many other people do?

TWYLA: (*on screen*) 30 million, after the clip went viral.

DYSON: With all the things to worry about...the winter fires....the North Korean H-bomb....neo-genocide in Israel... and all they care about is the name of the White House cat?

ESTEBAN: Offer them New Hampshire.

DYSON: Offer who New Hampshire?

ESTEBAN: The Israelis. Same size as Israel, same shape, and one tenth the population.

TWYLA: (*on screen*) One-ninth, actually.

ESTEBAN: Bad idea for a country, Israel. Out of the fire, into the frying pan.

DYSON: Point taken. Do your puzzle.

ESTEBAN: Hey. Didn't I change the whole entitlement debate? When I suggested referring to "Welfare Recipients" as "Paid Consumers"?

DYSON: That was different. That was plausible. (*to VEEJAY*) So what do we do? Take down the kitty videos?

VEEJAY: You might need to get a dog.

TWYLA: (*on screen*) Goldens poll highest.

DYSON: (*looks around; uneasily*) Are we quantum secure? Continuous sweep?

VEEJAY: 24/7.

DYSON: I hate dogs. Can't stand dogs. Can't stand people who dote on dogs. Dog people make me ill.

VEEJAY: What about a dog-cat hybrid?

ESTEBAN: Veejay, learn to take no for an answer. I had to.

DYSON: Esteban, aren't you supposed to be giving a tour?

ESTEBAN: Not a chance.

VEEJAY: Yes. The Olympic Women's skateboard team.

ESTEBAN: Not doing that.

DYSON: Darling, you have to, they're expecting you.

ESTEBAN: No more bloody tours.

DYSON: Oh dear. Veejay, will you tell the Press Secretary I'll be ten minutes late? (*gives him hard copy*) And scan this on the hover-assist—14-point font. Last time I had to squint to read the text. Thank you.

VEEJAY: (*going*) No problem, Ms. President.

ESTEBAN: (*calling after*) That's Mrs. President to you!

(*VEEJAY exits toward the West Wing corridor.*)

ESTEBAN: That boy has serious boundary issues.

DYSON: He can't help being friendly.

ESTEBAN: I don't mind his being friendly. I mind his being the cause of it in others.

DYSON: That's how he was engineered. Best genes from the sperm donor, and the best from one of his two moms. Some of the women around here find him irresistible.

ESTEBAN: Do you?

DYSON: Hardly. No. The opposite. He's wildly efficient, but a total smarmball.

ESTEBAN: Let's hope our daughter agrees with you.

DYSON: Hewlett? I've never seen them together. Just hello and goodbye.

ESTEBAN: And that's how it's going to stay, if I have anything to say about it.

(ESTEBAN is pouring himself a drink; DYSON sees.)

DYSON: Sweetheart, it's not even noon. What can I do to make you feel better?

ESTEBAN: Nothing.

DYSON: Don't say that.

ESTEBAN: It's beyond your control. I need some time away.

DYSON: Darling, don't you think I know?—

ESTEBAN: My ridiculous duties. Your endless battles with Congress.

DYSON: You think I'm happy about it? I take my TRP every morning, and still my hair is turning gray. But four months before the election? I'm at a tipping point here.

ESTEBAN: Who isn't? Look at me. I'm turning into Betty Ford.
(*takes a swig*) I'm a liability, darling.

DYSON: Liability? You're the white minority vote.

TWYLA: (*pops on screen*) Sixty per cent of the eligible whites think he's Latino.

ESTEBAN: And it's really too late to change my name.

DYSON: You really can't hold out till November?

ESTEBAN: Forget November. I can't take another four years.

DYSON: So you'd leave me high and dry...just to avoid a few routine appearances. That's like committing a felony to get out of jury duty.

ESTEBAN: Whatever it takes.

DYSON: Twyla, what are the latest odds on the election?

TWYLA: (*pops on screen*) In round numbers, 5 to 1 in favor of Senator Stockwell.

DYSON: That figure doesn't frighten you?

ESTEBAN: Of course it frightens me. There's always that one in five chance.

DYSON: I know you don't mean that.

ESTEBAN: I wish I didn't.

DYSON: Esteban, do you still love me?

ESTEBAN: I've never loved anyone else.

DYSON: If I begged you to campaign?

ESTEBAN: I'd rather take my life.

(ESTEBAN knocks back his drink. HEWLETT, Dyson and Esteban's 20-something daughter, has entered from the outer office, a stunned look on her face.)

DYSON: Sweetheart, I'm sorry, how long have you been standing there? We didn't mean for you to hear all that.

HEWLETT: *(numbly)* Hear all what?

DYSON: Never mind, just as well. How did it go last night?

ESTEBAN: How was the house?

HEWLETT: The house? The house was fine.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Sold out.

DYSON: Fantastic.

ESTEBAN: That's wonderful.

HEWLETT: It was a freaking embarrassment.

DYSON: I bet I know. You got more applause than Jonetta Barrymore.

HEWLETT: Twyla, you want to take that?

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* The applause was thunderous.

DYSON: Sweetheart, don't feel guilty. Jonetta probably wasn't in the audience.

HEWLETT: You're right, she wasn't. Twyla, the Amazonian?

(The screen lights up with a picture of Jonetta Barrymore as Juliet, above a review. Jonetta Barrymore bears a family resemblance to her grandmother, Drew.)

TWYLA: *(on screen)* “Last night, Jonetta Barrymore gave the performance of a lifetime. While her body was relaxing in Dubai.”

DYSON: Rats.

ESTEBAN: What? I don't get it.

DYSON: A hologram?

HEWLETT: Yep. A Jonetta Barrymore hologram went on as Juliet. Instead of her understudy.

ESTEBAN: I thought they only did that on Broadway.

TWYLA: *(pops on)* No more understudies anywhere.

HEWLETT: They paid to see Jonetta, and from now on that's who they'll get.

ESTEBAN: Did the hologram pick up her cues?

HEWLETT: Every single one. She was great. I'm like a bus driver in 2025, suddenly I'm out of work.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Or a Humanities professor in 2020.

ESTEBAN: True enough, but totally irrelevant. The novelty will wear off.

DYSON: Folks like to go backstage, press the flesh.

HEWLETT: Guys, it's happening. I'm jobless.

DYSON: Well listen. You can always work here.

HEWLETT: As what?

DYSON: I can always use another assistant.

HEWLETT: Oh, you mean like Dad? He's really thriving, isn't he? And so what, come January, I'll be out of work again. Don't worry, I see the polls. We're over. This First Family is history. If there's going to be a history. If the world's still here in January.

DYSON: OK. We get it. You're bummed.

HEWLETT: Twyla, how many Americans are expecting the world to end this year?

TWYLA: (*pops on screen*) Round numbers, 13 million.

HEWLETT: More if you lose the election. The "G.O.D." will bomb North Korea, Hezbollah will wipe out Israel, and three million more people will die from dehydration because no one will spend another dime to de-sal the oceans.

DYSON: And here you are worrying about your career.

HEWLETT: My non-career.

DYSON: Aren't you being a little narcissistic?

HEWLETT: I come by it honestly, Mom.

ESTEBAN: Hewlett, the world is unlikely to end this year or next, much as our enemies might want that to happen. Though you're probably right about our Family—

(HEWLETT, *overcome by a sudden dizzy spell, grabs onto a couch for support.*)

DYSON: Darling, what's the matter?

(HEWLETT *is gulping, fighting back a touch of nausea.*)

DYSON: Do you need a Marvelax? Are you having an anxiety attack?

HEWLETT: No. Yeah. I'm feeling sort of skitized out.

(HEWLETT *sinks dizzily onto the couch. VEEJAY enters from the West Wing corridor.*)

VEEJAY: Excuse me, Ms. President...Mrs. President...sorry to barge in, but I thought you'd want to know....Senator Stockwell is on his way here to see you.

DYSON: Probably to gloat about the polls.

VEEJAY: Yes, ma'am, he had that rosy glow.

HEWLETT: [groans]

VEEJAY: But not to worry. That bump will disappear.

HEWLETT: [groans again]

VEEJAY: Hewlett, what's wrong?

HEWLETT: (*avoids his eyes*) It's not your problem.

DYSON: Jonetta's hologram went on for Jonetta. Instead of Hewlett.

VEEJAY: Whoa, serious bummer. Well, hey...wait till the next solar calamity. All quantum generators gone...suddenly...where's Juliet? Where did she go? Is she dead already, it's only Act Two. Believe me, they'll revisit the whole issue. Until then this might help.

(During this, VEEJAY has gone over to the 3-D printer and entered some keystrokes. Now he lifts the lid of the printer, takes out a bag of M&Ms, and hands it to HEWLETT.)

HEWLETT: *(uneasily)* Thank you.

VEEJAY: *Hakuna tatizo.*

ESTEBAN: What did he say?

DYSON: Sounded like “no problem.” What language was that?

ESTEBAN: Never mind what language, what makes you think my daughter wanted M&Ms?

(HEWLETT is shoveling down handfuls of M&Ms.)

VEEJAY: I saw a certain pallor. Typical of postprandial hypoglycemia.

ESTEBAN: Oh yeah? What medical school did you go to?

VEEJAY: Columbia. Carnegie-Mellon Online for my other degrees: Astrophysics and Quantum Neurochemistry.

ESTEBAN: I don't recall asking.

DYSON: Esteban went to Harvard.

VEEJAY: Yes, I know. That hedge fund with a college attached.

ESTEBAN: We trounced you in sky-surfing.

VEEJAY: We killed you in low-gravity gymnastics. By the way, sir, that language was Swahili.

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* Veejay was in the Nairobi Olympics.

ESTEBAN: Nobody asked you. What sport?

VEEJAY: Laser-foil.

ESTEBAN: So, a fencing doctor/physicist/quantum neuroscientist.
Why the hell did you end up here? Shilling for my wife.

VEEJAY: Without policy behind it, science is powerless. And the
President has always made government funding her first priority.

ESTEBAN: Her good looks had nothing to do with it.

DYSON: Esteban, that's beyond inappropriate.

ESTEBAN: When did you lose your virginity?

DYSON: Esteban!

VEEJAY: I was 13.

ESTEBAN: A late bloomer. I'm shocked.

VEEJAY: And how old were you, sir?

ESTEBAN: I was 12 and my wife was 14. Virgins when we met,
and totally faithful ever since.

VEEJAY: And how many couples can say that?

TWYLA: (*pops on screen*) Round numbers, 2,000. And most of
them are lying.

VEEJAY: I'm sure that doesn't include you, sir. (*to DYSON*) Do
you want the meeting with Senator Stockwell encrypted?

DYSON: Let's not record it at all. He always gets under my skin.

VEEJAY: He might be tempted to memorize the meeting. (*taps skull*) I heard he got one of those chips.

DYSON: I don't care what he remembers. I just don't want any videos to get out. Especially if I start to lose it.

VEEJAY: Better safe than sorry, I completely agree. (*going; to ESTEBAN*) I enjoyed comparing notes, sir. I'm glad we had this chance to share.

(*VEEJAY exits. HEWLETT heads out almost immediately after.*)

ESTEBAN: Where are you going?

HEWLETT: I'm still feeling a little weird. I'm going to have a lie-down in the Lincoln bedroom.

DYSON: That's fine, dear. If you do need a chillaxer, look in my medicine chest.

(*HEWLETT exits. ESTEBAN pours himself another drink.*)

DYSON: What was all that enhanced interrogation?

ESTEBAN: I'm Hewlett's dad. If my daughter's fallen for the wrong guy, I need to know exactly who he is.

DYSON: What makes you think she's fallen for him?

ESTEBAN: How many times did she look at him just now?

DYSON: I wasn't counting.

TWYLA: (*pops on screen*) Zero.

ESTEBAN: Not once. Even when she thanked him for the M&Ms. Avoided his eyes. Knows we'd disapprove.

DYSON: God, I hope you're wrong.

ESTEBAN: That boy's a secret menace. Under all that brainy smarm, he's seething with hostility.

DYSON: Now you're being a little silly.

ESTEBAN: Men resent their mothers for not sleeping with them. He's got two mothers, he's bound to be doubly vindictive. A misogynist squared.

DYSON: Should we say something to Hewlett?

ESTEBAN: We have to be careful. Don't want to drive them together. *(as the door to the office opens)* Hello, we're in conference here!

(STOCKWELL, a 70-seeming man with snowy white hair, enters.)

STOCKWELL: Excuse me, am I too early, Madame President?

DYSON: No, Senator, come in, have a seat. How are you?

STOCKWELL: Fantastic. In the pink. Nice to see you, Esteban, didn't mean to interrupt. Madame President, I'd like a one-on-one, if you can spare a few minutes. I know you're a fiendishly busy woman, and so am I. Busy, that is. *(to ESTEBAN)* Sir, I hate to be brusque, but do you mind letting us have the room?

DYSON: Well, of course he minds. Anything you have to say to me, you can say in front of my husband.

STOCKWELL: I have a rather delicate proposal to make. I meant no reflection on your marital bond, whose tensile strength is legendary.

ESTEBAN: I was just leaving. *(to DYSON, as he goes)* We'll find some way to deal with this.

(ESTEBAN *grabs his New York Times and exits through the Rose Garden door. STOCKWELL takes a seat on the couch, munching on peanuts from the bowl on the coffee table.*)

STOCKWELL: You both look a little out of sorts. Any particular reason?

DYSON: Nothing that concerns you, Senator. So... congratulations again on the nomination. Not that anyone was the least bit surprised.

STOCKWELL: As you said to me that night, it doesn't diminish the honor.

DYSON: Frankly, I never expected you to run. But I guess a hundred is the new seventy.

STOCKWELL: A hundred and seventeen.

DYSON: My mistake.

STOCKWELL: Making age an issue is not gonna fly with the undecideds. Didn't work for Christie or Booker.

TWYLA: (*pops on screen*) It worked for Elle Fanning. When she ran in the primary against Elizabeth Warren.

STOCKWELL: (*to DYSON*) Does she have to be part of this meeting?

DYSON: She's being a little intrusive today. We can't really account for it.

STOCKWELL: She's not only intrusive, she's dead wrong. What worked for Elle Fanning was her beautiful smile. I'm talking practicalities here. God tells you to throw your hat in the Presidential ring, he's not about to send you to your reward. He knows you'll be good for at least eight years.

DYSON: God told you to run.

STOCKWELL: Loud and clear.

DYSON: Because, you know, there's a pill for that now.

STOCKWELL: Madame President, I know we rub each other the wrong way, but I was hoping we could avoid the usual sarcasm.

DYSON: Did God tell you to ask for this meeting?

STOCKWELL: He said I was taking a chance, but yes. And He insisted we meet alone.

DYSON: I call bullshit on that, Senator.

STOCKWELL: Excuse me?

DYSON: You're not risking a thing. You're looking to enhance your reputation as someone who can work with the Democrats. The G.O.D. needed this meeting to happen.

STOCKWELL: Did I hear you right? "G.O.D."?

DYSON: When our daughter was a toddler, that's what she thought the Republicans were called. It kinda stuck.

STOCKWELL: You can jeer all you like. I consulted no one but my Maker. And I don't mean to upset you any further...He tells me the End Times are near.

DYSON: Sorry, Senator. Even the A/I folks are walking that one back.

STOCKWELL: I'm not talking about the Robot Apocalypse. My late wife, God bless her, she had a head for these technical matters, and she said Artificial Intelligence would never take over from human beings. Wouldn't be God's way.

DYSON: Frankly, Senator, I agree with your wife.

STOCKWELL: But you keep funding these A/I hustlers.

DYSON: Only up to a point.

STOCKWELL: To the point of a hundred billion dollars. Total waste of money. The robots aren't taking over, any more than the cockroaches are. When I say the End Times, I'm talking about the Second Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

DYSON: And the Rapture that comes with it.

STOCKWELL: That's correct. That's inevitable.

DYSON: And you've done all you can to bring about the Rapture. War in the Middle East. Your party's been ginning that up for half a century.

STOCKWELL: Let the anti-Semites kill each other, we'll all be better off. You, you've been tight-lipped on the whole subject. Not one policy speech about Israel.

DYSON: Offer the Israelis New Hampshire.

STOCKWELL: The Jews would never agree to that. *(pause)* Wait: are you trying to mess with me again?

DYSON: What about North Korea? Didn't you say something in your acceptance speech about a pre-emptive nuclear strike?

STOCKWELL: Kim Jong-ne has pointed half his missiles at Beijing and half at Honolulu. Pearl Harbor Redux, unless we act first. That's how you deal with the Insect People. Not by sucking up at state dinners.

DYSON: Insect People?

STOCKWELL: Asians have more insect in their junk DNA. I can show you the studies. Totally reliable.

DYSON: Oh, like your study on Fetal Consent?

STOCKWELL: Fetal Consent is an established fact.

DYSON: Twyla, what do you have on Fetal Consent?

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* One Fox-funded study said the fetal kicks were binary. Kick for no, no-kick for yes. Four labs are trying to replicate it.

STOCKWELL: Show them the Trisha Bush sonogram.

(A sonogram appears on the screen. The fetus seems to be signaling with its index finger—alternating raising and retracting it.)

STOCKWELL: Week 9. Finger equals 1, no finger equals zero. She's saying, "Please don't kill me."

DYSON: That's preposterous.

STOCKWELL: Then she says, "Turn off the damn Mozart."

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* Totally apocryphal.

STOCKWELL: *(re TWYLA)* Doesn't know a joke when she hears one, does she?

DYSON: But she never lies.

STOCKWELL: How do you know she never lies? I say she's kissing your butt.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Madame President, do I have to listen to these insults?

DYSON: No. You're excused.

(TWYLA disappears from the screen.)

STOCKWELL: Sensitive, isn't she?

DYSON: She's having a very bad day. What exactly do you want from me?

STOCKWELL: I'm proposing a ban on all abortions. Pending further confirmation of Fetal Consent.

DYSON: And you're expecting me not to veto that bill?

STOCKWELL: No, I'm expecting you to support it. What fetus would green-light its own death?

DYSON: A fetus with claustrophobia?

STOCKWELL: Ma'am, I'm trying to be serious here.

DYSON: Nuclear war with North Korea? I call that serious.

STOCKWELL: And when I get into office, we'll flatten that fat little pervert's bunkers before you can say Pyongyang.

DYSON: What do I get out of this ridiculous proposal?

STOCKWELL: What you've been angling for. My support on desalination.

(Pause.)

STOCKWELL: Aha. I think I've got your attention.

DYSON: You had that already, Senator.

STOCKWELL: Thus far, your administration has sunk half a trillion dollars into Denaclon, with only waste-fraud-and-abuse to show for it. Nevertheless, I will urge my colleagues to re-fund this historic boondoggle, in return for your support on the abortion bill. I'm offering you a fighting chance to defeat me in November. That's how much I care about the lives of these poor, helpless, volitional creatures.

DYSON: Well. That is a delicate proposal.

STOCKWELL: It's a win-win, Madame President. Wouldn't want you to get buried in a landslide.

DYSON: Thanks for the thought.

STOCKWELL: Clock's ticking. I'll expect you to endorse it at the press conference.

(VEEJAY *enters.*)

VEEJAY: Excuse me, Ms. President, you've got a meet and greet with Dr. Kiarostami? Sorry to interrupt, Senator.

STOCKWELL: No problem. We're done here. (*to VEEJAY*) Did you do something to your hair?

VEEJAY: Just a trim around the ears.

STOCKWELL: It looks real nice. You're a handsome boy, no homo. (*heads out, stops*) I like those frames. They go well with the shape of your face. Don't ever change.

VEEJAY: Nice of you to notice, Senator.

STOCKWELL: Oh, you're a very noticeable fella.

DYSON: Goodbye, Senator.

STOCKWELL: (*softly, to VEEJAY*) Till next time. I'll count the minutes.

(*Smitten, STOCKWELL exits into the corridor.*)

DYSON: Since when am I meeting with the President of Iran?

VEEJAY: You're not. What did that crazy old goat say to upset you?

(*Pause.*)

DYSON: Do the Denaclon people have a prayer of taking salt out of the ocean? Or were they always just a bunch of hippie opportunists?

VEEJAY: Don't let the Greenies hear you talk like that. *(pause)*
You're not thinking of canceling the program?

DYSON: Good money after bad.

VEEJAY: A trillion-dollar write-off? The summer before the election? You'll be writing off the base.

TWYLA: *(pops on)* But Esteban will be happy.

DYSON: Twyla, you're not authorized to speak for Esteban.

VEEJAY: What did Stockwell want?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* His abortion ban. In return for re-funding Denaclon.

VEEJAY: Do we really want to go there?

DYSON: Tell me, Veejay. How do you feel about abortion?

VEEJAY: Abortion should be illegal. And universally available.

DYSON: That's absurd.

VEEJAY: So's the debate. That's why it's lasted all these years.

DYSON: Twyla, what are the latest figures on Fetal Viability?

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* Averaging all the studies, and assuming state-of-the-art neonatal care, 12 weeks.

DYSON: *(to VEEJAY)* If that doesn't give you pause, you need an empathy pill. Will you please stop looking at me like that?

VEEJAY: Like what?

DYSON: OK, it's high time we talked about this. I don't know what to call it...that Tantric thing you do with your eyes. It's distracting, it's inappropriate, and frankly, a little creepy.

VEEJAY: You know...the polygamy lobby has a lot of clout these days.

DYSON: What's that got to do with anything? Why would you even bring that up?

VEEJAY: Just trying to lighten the mood.

DYSON: Well, stop. You're way out of line. Yes, the polygamy lobby is very influential. On behalf of men. Polygamy for women? We'll never have full equality. In every generation, women get the short end of the stick.

TWYLA: (*pops on screen*) You're thinking of Jews.

DYSON: Jews?

VEEJAY: Second Samuel. "In every generation your descendants will die a violent death..."

TWYLA: (*on screen*) It's referring about Jews, not women.

DYSON: I forgot—you both know the Bible by heart.

VEEJAY: Comes in handy when talking to the "G.O.D."

DYSON: Then you know which Commandment prohibits adultery.

VEEJAY: For Jews it's the sixth. For Catholics it's the seventh.

TWYLA: (*pops on screen*) Other way around.

VEEJAY: Are you sure?

TWYLA: (*on screen*) How much do you want to bet?

VEEJAY: I'll take your word for it.

TWYLA: (*on screen*) You should. I'm never wrong.

VEEJAY: (*to DYSON*) What's adultery got to do with it anyway?

DYSON: Aren't you cheating on someone, Veejay?

VEEJAY: I'm not married.

DYSON: No plans to marry?

VEEJAY: (*uneasily*) Not at the moment. (*more brightly*) We can get polygamy passed in the Senate. Might have some trouble in the House.

DYSON: Veejay... I don't know if you're kidding or flirting or what you're doing, maybe you don't even know yourself, it's probably genetic, you can't help it, I don't care, you're freaking everybody out and it has to stop.

(HEWLETT *enters.*)

HEWLETT: I heard yelling. Are you two fighting about something?

DYSON: No dear, we're not fighting. We were discussing the press conference. Which I'm already late for, so if you'll both excuse me?

HEWLETT: Break a leg, Mom.

(DYSON *exits hurriedly through the outer office door. Pause.*
VEEJAY *opens the office door a crack, peers out.*)

HEWLETT: Is she gone?

VEEJAY: Yeah, she's gone.

HEWLETT: Do you think she suspects?

VEEJAY: I can't tell.

HEWLETT: I think my dad was following us before.

VEEJAY: I got that feeling too.

HEWLETT: He could have his ear to that door for all we know.

VEEJAY: Twyla, where's the First Spouse?

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* He's in the Rose Garden.

(The screen shows surveillance video of ESTEBAN on his hands and knees, digging at the brown, sun-scorched White House lawn with a weed extractor.)

HEWLETT: Ohmigod, is he looking for dandelions again? Sheesh, it's a hundred and twenty out there, he's not wearing a hat, he'll get sunstroke!... Oh God.

(HEWLETT sits down abruptly,)

VEEJAY: What's the matter? Still not feeling well?

HEWLETT: Yeah, no, I'm a little dizzy.

VEEJAY: Want me to print you a pizza?

HEWLETT: How did you know I was craving a pizza? I never eat pizza.

VEEJAY: You'll probably want anchovies. For the salt.

HEWLETT: Sometimes you're too good to be real. God, I wish my parents liked you more.

VEEJAY: They're very protective, aren't they.

HEWLETT: Can you blame them? You're Universal Catnip. How are they supposed to trust you? I barely trust you myself.

(VEEJAY has gone over to the 3-D printer and entered a few keystrokes.)

HEWLETT: Veejay, I don't think I should have a pizza. Not after those M&Ms—

(VEEJAY removes a device from the 3-D printer output. It resembles a metal-detecting wand. He hands it to her.)

HEWLETT: What's this?

VEEJAY: It's a Turing Scope. To see if I'm real or not.

HEWLETT: Don't be silly. I was joking.

VEEJAY: Hit the power button.

(HEWLETT powers up the Turing Scope, passes it over VEEJAY's body. It emits a few Geiger-Counterish beeps. HEWLETT consults the readout.)

HEWLETT: Um...you're 98% human.

VEEJAY: OK? No more suspicions?

HEWLETT: What's the other two percent?

TWYLA: *(pops on)* His knee replacement.

VEEJAY: After the Nairobi Olympics. Let's try you.

HEWLETT: No, Veejay, don't—

(VEEJAY *passes the Turing Scope over HEWLETT's body.*)

VEEJAY: One hundred per cent human. That answers that.

HEWLETT: I really wish you hadn't done that. Answers what?

VEEJAY: Those perfect breasts. I always wondered.

HEWLETT: Yeah OK, we're both real, what now?

VEEJAY: I think we're doing...all we can be doing.

HEWLETT: Sneaking around, that doesn't make you feel guilty?

VEEJAY: I wasn't really designed for heavy guilt.

HEWLETT: No Jews in your family tree?

VEEJAY: No Jews, no Catholics, my DNA's pretty secular. But don't worry, I do have a conscience. (*Nixon:*) "I am not a sociopath."

HEWLETT: I think about you nonstop.

VEEJAY: Yeah, me too. It's starting to trip me out.

HEWLETT: Why can't my dad see how amazing you are? If I even look at you for two seconds he mad-dogs me. When are we getting married?

VEEJAY: Whoa.

HEWLETT: What do you mean, whoa?

VEEJAY: Maybe I'm not so intuitive.

HEWLETT: Never entered your mind.

VEEJAY: Well of course it enters my mind—every day.

HEWLETT: So when are we?

VEEJAY: I don't know...maybe after the election?

HEWLETT: Really? Not till then? It doesn't matter I'll be showing?

VEEJAY: Showing?

HEWLETT: Hello.

VEEJAY: Ohmigod.

HEWLETT: That's right.

VEEJAY: You're pregnant.

HEWLETT: Don't tell me you had no idea.

VEEJAY: I had no idea.

HEWLETT: You really shouldn't have scanned me with that Turing Scope.

VEEJAY: I feel so stupid suddenly.

HEWLETT: Dude, don't you remember? That night we both got hammered, the next morning I couldn't find my Plan Bs, you said it was OK, you held back.

VEEJAY: Apparently I didn't.

HEWLETT: Apparently.

VEEJAY: So how are you feeling?

HEWLETT: Apart from peeing every two minutes? OK so far. And he seems to be thriving.

VEEJAY: He?

HEWLETT: Yes, he. Are you disappointed?

VEEJAY: Why would I be disappointed?

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* Seventy per cent of the global population pre-opts for girls.

VEEJAY: *(to HEWLETT)* Seriously, I'm totally gender-neutral.

(VEEJAY turns his back on HEWLETT, focusing on something an inch from his face.)

HEWLETT: What are you doing?

VEEJAY: Nothing. What do you mean?

HEWLETT: Are you browsing your glasses?

VEEJAY: No!

HEWLETT: Yes, you are. You're Yelping the Clinics, aren't you?

VEEJAY: Not the Clinics. E.R.s. In case your dad gets heatstroke.

HEWLETT: You're lying. Aren't you? Dude, look at me. You think I'm not worthy to have your child?

VEEJAY: I would never say that.

HEWLETT: I'm the President's daughter, for godsakes. What a genetic snob you are!

VEEJAY: Is this the estrogen talking?

HEWLETT: You tell me, you're the one with the medical degree. Forget it. You don't want this baby, then neither do I. I won't raise a baby by myself.

VEEJAY: By yourself? You'll have a huge staff.

HEWLETT: What staff? Mom'll be out of a job, and my career, it's over, I don't care how many holograms vanish in the middle of a performance. You know what? Even if Mom wins, with the world in the shape it's in, I wouldn't have your baby. Who is she?

VEEJAY: Who's who?

HEWLETT: How many women are you juggling? Two? Three? More?

VEEJAY: What makes you think I'm juggling anyone?

HEWLETT: Come on. You're genetically programmed to spread the wealth. Look, I don't mind competing, all right? For a role. But there aren't any more roles, so I'm supposed to put all that energy into relationships? Compete for you? When there's a baby involved? Who are they?

VEEJAY: There's no they! Calm down! You're totally hormonal.

HEWLETT: I was nuts to ever get involved with you. A Designer Don Juan? What was I thinking?

VEEJAY: I'm not talking to you when you're this way.

HEWLETT: And as far as I'm concerned, we've hardly ever spoken.

VEEJAY: If that's the way you want it.

HEWLETT: We've never been alone together.

VEEJAY: Whatever you say.

HEWLETT: That's what I say. Over. Done. Undo.

(ESTEBAN *enters through the Rose Garden door.*)

HEWLETT: Hey, Dad. Find any dandelions?

ESTEBAN: Just crabgrass and prickly lettuce. Where's your mom?

VEEJAY: She's in the Press Room, sir.

ESTEBAN: Then what are you doing here?

VEEJAY: Oh. You're absolutely right, sir.

HEWLETT: I just got here myself.

ESTEBAN: Right. Veejay?

VEEJAY: Yes sir, I'm going. Excuse me.

(VEEJAY *exits.*)

ESTEBAN: That boy never fails to forget his place.

HEWLETT: Totally.

ESTEBAN: Wouldn't you agree?

HEWLETT: Yeah, no, I agree. So what were you doing out there?
Without a hat. Look at you, you're all splotchy. Are you trying to punish
yourself?

ESTEBAN: Now why would I want to punish myself?

HEWLETT: You know...whenever you and Mom fight...it makes
you feel rotten for days.

ESTEBAN: As well it should.

HEWLETT: So what's going on between you two?

ESTEBAN: Not very much.

HEWLETT: She's so preoccupied.

ESTEBAN: Well, I'm used to that, aren't I.

HEWLETT: I bet you miss teaching, don't you.

ESTEBAN: Miss teaching? Not for a single minute.

HEWLETT: Oh how can you say that.

ESTEBAN: I was the one who gave it up. She never asked me to.

HEWLETT: Why did you?

ESTEBAN: Boredom.

HEWLETT: Oh come on.

ESTEBAN: Hideous boredom. Soul-crushing boredom. Boredom so profound it was almost orgiastic. I was speed-reading everything. Fiction. Non-fiction. Lit-crit. All pointless. Never enough raisins in the raisin bran. The spoken word too. Couldn't manage to stay awake through anything.

HEWLETT: Even Shakespeare?

ESTEBAN: Especially Shakespeare.

HEWLETT: No way! You love Shakespeare!

ESTEBAN: I don't know if I ever loved him. I taught him for 25 years. Those silly plots. The sillier puns. Even his poetry put me to sleep. The Western Canon, the Eastern Canon, the Sub-Saharan Canon, what earthly difference did any of it make, the planet was frying to a crisp, people were still killing each other....terrorizing each other in the name of progress....

HEWLETT: You know what, Dad? I think you were just depressed. You missed those days before Mom ran for Congress...when she was still a public defender...instead of a public panderer—

ESTEBAN: That's a little harsh.

HEWLETT: She's gone poll-crazy.

ESTEBAN: I think Veejay may have too a little too much influence.

HEWLETT: And Twyla. The two of them.

ESTEBAN: What were you and Veejay arguing about?

HEWLETT: Nothing. We weren't. We hardly ever speak.

ESTEBAN: You know, there's an old song: "If you want to be happy the rest of your life...make an ugly woman your wife."

HEWLETT: You didn't.

ESTEBAN: I know I didn't. I haven't made my point yet.

HEWLETT: Dad...you don't have to worry.

ESTEBAN: Why not? If I were a woman, I wouldn't be able to resist him.

HEWLETT: Well I could and I did and I will.

(VEEJAY *enters.*)

ESTEBAN: Excuse me, I'm talking to my daughter. Why aren't you at the press conference?

VEEJAY: It's over, sir. The President's on her way back. Um, you might want to check her out before she gets here.

ESTEBAN: Check her out why?

VEEJAY: Twyla, show us the Briefing Room.

(The screen shows an empty podium.)

VEEJAY: Rewind to...3:44.

(The screen rewinds to show DYSON at the podium.)

DYSON: *(on screen) ...Only last year, the Nobel Prize in Physiology went to Kalina Muhammad, for her breakthrough work in neonatal care. A growing number of Americans now believes the current ban on 16-week abortions doesn't go far enough. And so when Senator Stockwell's abortion bill reaches my desk, I will give it serious consideration (murmurs from the media), in full knowledge that my decision will probably cost me votes in November.*

HEWLETT: Ohmigod. *(to VEEJAY)* Did you know about this?

VEEJAY: Not a syllable. She was winging it.

HEWLETT: Why would she flip-flop on abortion, of all things. Of all things.

VEEJAY: Twyla, fast-forward to 5:05.

DYSON: *(on screen) ...also happy to report that we've reached an understanding with our friends in the G.O.P., and the government funds available to Denaclon will be doubled.*

HEWLETT: No way. She's been totally played.

*(During this, DYSON herself has entered from the outer office.
HEWLETT sees her.)*

HEWLETT: Mom? How could you let that paleo-con outwit you? I mean, come on, even if they can de-sal the oceans, it won't be for years and years, definitely not till after the election, have you lost your mind? An abortion ban?

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* The South just spiked up sharply.

VEEJAY: There you go.

HEWLETT: That's all you all care about, the stupid polls.

DYSON: Hewlett, I'm trying to get re-elected. I may be the only one in this family who wants that, but I still do. If we can solve the water crisis, we can save billions of lives.

HEWLETT: What about my life?

DYSON: What about it, darling?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* The North is trending down.

DYSON: Well, that's to be expected.

HEWLETT: How can you be so blithe about this?

DYSON: Why are you getting into such a state?

(HEWLETT is hit by a wave of nausea.)

HEWLETT: Why? Because it makes me sick, all this hypocrisy. Never mind. Trash all your principles. Sell out to the Right Wing dinosaurs. I know what I have to do.

(HEWLETT exits in a hurry by the corridor door.)

VEEJAY: (to DYSON) Um...with your permission...I'm going to see how the House is reacting...to the latest developments...

(VEEJAY *exits quickly by the same door.*)

ESTEBAN: Well...I hate to say I told you so.

DYSON: She's pregnant.

ESTEBAN: Our daughter's pregnant.

DYSON: I wonder how Veejay feels about it.

ESTEBAN: I'm guessing the poster boy for eugenics doesn't care to be a dad. At least not with Hewlett.

DYSON: That's probably true.

ESTEBAN: I wonder if she still wants the baby.

DYSON: She sounded awfully upset about the press conference.

ESTEBAN: Would we want her to have an abortion?

DYSON: After I've just come out against it? I'm already the Hypocrite-in-Chief. (*thinks*) Will she have a baby bump by November? I was nauseous from day one, so that doesn't prove anything.

ESTEBAN: It proves your first priority is your re-election.

DYSON: I'm just weighing the options, don't start calling me the n-word.

ESTEBAN: Darling...you are a narcissist. You have to be a narcissist to run for office. That's been true for at least a hundred years. Maybe it's always been true. And don't get me wrong, I used to love your narcissism.

DYSON: “Used to”?

ESTEBAN: You had a big personality. I adored that. Your optimism. Your powers of persuasion. All the qualities I envied were all the qualities I lacked.

DYSON: You know, darling...if you weren't so hard on yourself, you wouldn't be so hard on me.

ESTEBAN: Hard on you? I wait on you hand and foot.

DYSON: And now I realize how much you've always resented me. I bet you didn't even vote for Hillary.

ESTEBAN: No, I didn't vote for Hillary, I was in middle school at the time.

(ESTEBAN starts toward the outer office door.)

DYSON: Oh come back, stop being so petulant.

ESTEBAN: Believe me—I left petulance behind a long time ago.

DYSON: OK, Esteban, then I need to know...if I do win a second term, are you planning to divorce me?

ESTEBAN: Oh, you “need to know” that, do you? Well, it's one way to make history. First sitting President to get divorced.

DYSON: I hope you're being facetious. I asked you a question.

ESTEBAN: Goodbye.

DYSON: What do you mean, goodbye? Darling, where are you going? Esteban?

(ESTEBAN exits, slamming the door after him. DYSON opens it, calls:)

DYSON: Esteban?

(No answer. DYSON closes the door, shaken.)

DYSON: Twyla, is that true about White House divorce? We'd be the first?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* John Tyler and Woodrow Wilson got married in the White House, but no President has ever divorced a First Spouse while in office.

DYSON: So did Esteban sound serious to you? Or was he just blowing off steam?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* I detected deep-rooted anger.

DYSON: Twyla, what am I going to do?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Sorry, Madame President. I wasn't designed to predict the future.

(The outer office door opens. DYSON turns expectantly. VEEJAY enters.)

DYSON: Oh. It's you. What's the word from the Speaker? Is the House on board with the abortion ban?

VEEJAY: I didn't have a chance to check that out.

DYSON: Then what were you doing? Never mind, sit down.

(VEEJAY sits on the couch.)

DYSON: When did you last have sex with my daughter?

VEEJAY: When did your husband stop loving you?

DYSON: Don't be impertinent! My husband's feelings are none of your business. How long ago was it?

VEEJAY: Not since April 16th.

DYSON: Twelve weeks ago. Why the hiatus?

VEEJAY: *Romeo and Juliet*. She's been busy with rehearsals.

DYSON: And was that the night she got pregnant?

VEEJAY: I can try to determine that.

DYSON: Don't determine anything. She doesn't want the baby.

VEEJAY: I know she doesn't. She told me she doesn't.

DYSON: So you have no plans to marry.

VEEJAY: She doesn't want me.

DYSON: And how do you feel about that?

VEEJAY: I feel rejected.

DYSON: That's a human reaction. So we don't have to give you a Turing Test.

VEEJAY: I already passed.

DYSON: Why weren't you being careful? You of all people.

VEEJAY: We got drunk.

DYSON: More human by the second.

VEEJAY: Especially when I'm around you.

DYSON: One more word like that and you're fired.

VEEJAY: Sorry. I really can't help it.

DYSON: My husband and I are still very much in love.

VEEJAY: I'm relieved to hear it.

DYSON: It's just a sticky patch.

VEEJAY: Everybody goes through those.

DYSON: We never did.

VEEJAY: Right. Your husband was totally devoted. Twyla, where did the First Spouse go?

(On screen, ESTEBAN with a group of gorgeous female skateboarders, next to a portrait of Angelina Jolie. He's standing especially close to one of the women, mostly addressing her.)

ESTEBAN: *(on screen)* —the 47th President, Angelina Jolie Voight, while awaiting a divorce from her common-law husband, William Bradley Pitt, renewed her sexual relationship with a certain B.B. Thornton, right here in a White House bedroom—

DYSON: All right, that's enough.

(The screen jumps to ESTEBAN, steering the same woman toward a portrait of Bill Clinton, while the other skateboarders bring up the rear.)

ESTEBAN: *(on screen)* —His aides would comb through his "Little Black Book," a proto-form of the PDA, to make sure these women weren't going to blow the whistle on him. And speaking of blowing the whistle, just beyond that door is where Monica Lewinsky—

DYSON: Twyla, I said that's enough!

VEEJAY: Your husband seems to have adultery on the brain.

DYSON: No, my dear, that's you. My husband knows the appropriate way to flirt. Which is more than I can say for my Chief of Staff. Please go get him for me.

(The office door opens as VEEJAY heads out. STOCKWELL enters.)

VEEJAY: Excuse me, Senator.

STOCKWELL: *(mesmerized)* Son, please don't leave on my account.

VEEJAY: I wasn't. I'm not. I've just been given my marching orders.

STOCKWELL: It's so nice to see you again.

VEEJAY: Same here, Senator. *(starts out)* Are you feeling all right?

STOCKWELL: *(in love)* Never better.

VEEJAY: You know...that cure for late-onset Alzheimer's...it just passed the FDA.

STOCKWELL: *(still dazed)* I'm thrilled to hear it. Tell me, son...*(shakes head no:)* you wouldn't have any Negro blood.

VEEJAY: "Negro blood"? Almost certainly, why?

STOCKWELL: I mean...no offense...you always seem like the smartest person in the room.

VEEJAY: You're into that, Senator? The genetic basis of intelligence?

STOCKWELL: I know it's a taboo subject.

VEEJAY: Well, you might be interested in the latest IQ studies. Asian Jews do best, followed by Ashkenazi-Watutis, gay French Jews, and Urdu-Mongolians. Anglo-Saxons score very near the bottom.

STOCKWELL: *(still mesmerized)* Who'd a thunk it.

VEEJAY: Hybrid vigor rules.

STOCKWELL: Absolutely fascinating. Listen, you ever get bored with the Oval Office, I hope you'll come and see me.

(VEEJAY heads out. STOCKWELL takes a seat, starts munching peanuts from the bowl.)

STOCKWELL: Come and see me anyway! My door's always open... to you! *(pause)* He's got a way about him, that boy...

DYSON: I'm dealing with it. What can I do for you, Senator?

STOCKWELL: *(coming to)* Right. I caught your press conference on TV.

DYSON: On TV. How quaint.

STOCKWELL: And I wanted to thank you for honoring our agreement.

DYSON: Were you listening closely, Senator?

STOCKWELL: You bet I was. I've always got my ear out for weasel words.

DYSON: Well, apparently you missed mine. Twyla?

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* You might want to sit down, Senator.

DYSON: *(to TWYLA)* Never mind the helpful advice. Just play the relevant portion.

(TWYLA's screen lights up, showing DYSON at the podium.)

DYSON: *(on screen)* — *A growing number of Americans now believes the current ban on 16-week abortions doesn't go far enough. And so when Senator Stockwell's abortion bill reaches my desk, I will give it serious consideration— in full knowledge that my decision will probably cost me votes in November.*

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Hear that? She never used the word “sign.”

DYSON: I'll handle the explanations. *(to STOCKWELL)* Either way, I was going to lose votes. Whichever side disagreed with me.

STOCKWELL: Well, if that isn't the most disgusting piece of sophistry I ever heard in my life...You know...forgive me for saying this, ma'am...but when people say to me, “She's a bitch on wheels...You can't reason with her...can't trust her farther than you can toss a dwarf...”, I always tell them, “You don't know the woman like I do.” Well, I see I was dead wrong. I will not be disrespected like this...I'm a hundred and seventeen years old...not a child!

(STOCKWELL chokes on a peanut. DYSON pounds his back, plucks STOCKWELL's handkerchief out of his jacket pocket.)

DYSON: Here...into the handkerchief...spit it out!

(STOCKWELL spits out the nut, grabs the handkerchief from DYSON, stuffs it in his pocket.)

STOCKWELL: I can take just so much humiliation. You watch what happens now.

(STOCKWELL heads out, stops.)

STOCKWELL: Tell me, what changed your mind? Would someone in your family actually need an abortion?

DYSON: According to you, no one ever “needs” an abortion. Including rape and incest victims.

STOCKWELL: It’s your Chief of Staff, isn’t it? He’s the father.

(STOCKWELL *opens the door, as VEEJAY bursts in.*
STOCKWELL *stares at him longingly.*)

STOCKWELL: Can’t really say I blame her...

DYSON: Goodbye, Senator.

STOCKWELL: (*coming to*) Right. You’ll regret this, Madame President.

(STOCKWELL *exits, slamming the door.*)

VEEJAY: Regret what?

DYSON: Never mind what. Where’s my husband?

VEEJAY: He’s doing Selfies with the skateboard captain. You’re not gonna believe this.

TWYLA: (*on screen*) Good news for a change.

VEEJAY: Awesome news. The Denaclon plant in Long Beach? It’s pumping in fresh water at the rate of a million gallons a minute.

DYSON: That’s impossible.

VEEJAY: Totally confirmed. Every possible source.

TWYLA: (*on screen*) Enough to supply California for a hundred years.

(On screen, a giant turbine, accompanied by the sound of rushing water, champagne corks popping, and lusty cheers.)

DYSON: But that plant was shuttered.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Not anymore.

DYSON: What happened?

VEEJAY: It's a mystery, but wow.

DYSON: I don't believe it. What about the other plants? Point Pleasant...Puget Sound...?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* All on-line, and pumping to the max.

DYSON: No more global water crisis?

VEEJAY: At this rate.

DYSON: It's too incredible.

VEEJAY: Totally insane. You don't have to deal with Stockwell anymore. You can come out in favor of abortion.

DYSON: Tell him to stick his Fetal Consent where even God can't find it.

VEEJAY: I'm sure some people will be relieved.

DYSON: Who?

VEEJAY: I mean, you know, most women. And other people.

DYSON: You mean you'll be relieved.

VEEJAY: Hey, I resent that. Maybe I want to be a dad. Maybe I wouldn't mind bringing another person into this world. *(pause)*
Now that the North Koreans are dismantling their nukes.

DYSON: What?! No way.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* And Kim Jong-ne is making peace with the Chinese.

DYSON: With us too? No more missiles aimed at Honolulu?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* No more missiles, period.

(On screen, Kim Jong-ne in gaudy military garb waving a flag with a giant peace symbol. Sounds of militaristic cheering.)

VEEJAY: Is POTUS getting credit for this pullback?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* In most of the media, yes. Also for the Middle East solution.

DYSON: What solution?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* They just hammered it out.

DYSON: Who did?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Prime Minister Liebowitz, Hezbollah chief Hassan Masawi, and Governor Alice Drinkwater.

DYSON: Amazing.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* The Israelis agreed to be relocated to New Hampshire.

DYSON: Unbelievable.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* They were offered Vermont, but they turned that down.

VEEJAY: Jews love the beach.

DYSON: And the citizens of New Hampshire? What are they saying?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* They held an instant referendum.

DYSON: And?

(On screen, a roadway sign: YOU ARE ENTERING NEW HAMPSHIRE—in English and Hebrew-- אתם נכנסים ניו המפשייר.)

DYSON: Fantastic.

VEEJAY: It's beyond fantastic. It's a Trifecta. North Korea, the Middle East, and desalination. All within the space of an hour.

DYSON: It's like magic.

VEEJAY: Hocus POTUS.

DYSON: There is a God.

VEEJAY: I'm starting to think so.

(ESTEBAN enters.)

DYSON: Esteban! Have you heard the amazing news?

ESTEBAN: The skateboard girls were all atwitter.

DYSON: Can you believe it? No more North Korean nukes...no more terrorist attacks on Israel....A world-wide water supply....You can go back to taking hundred-dollar showers...I might want to make some sort of speech... Or will that seem opportunistic?

ESTEBAN: No, just idiotic. You're obviously being messed with. All this impossible news....it's some sort of elaborate cyberhoax.

TWYLA: (*on screen*) It's not a hoax, I assure you.

DYSON: Twyla's never been wrong.

ESTEBAN: There's always a first time.

DYSON: Come on, can't you try to embrace this? It was your idea to relocate the Israelis. (*an idea*) What if I made you Secretary of State?

ESTEBAN: I'd never get past the Senate.

DYSON: With all the political capital I've just accrued? Twyla?

TWYLA: (*on screen*) Right now, you're polling right behind Lincoln and Fetterman. Greatest American Presidents.

ESTEBAN: Fetterman? Who's Fetterman?

TWYLA: (*on screen*) He used to run Goldman-Sachs.

ESTEBAN: Isn't he doing two-to-five in Littleton?

TWYLA: (*on screen*) People are writing his name in. I can't account for it.

ESTEBAN: See? I told you. Glitch City.

(HEWLETT *enters breathlessly.*)

HEWLETT: Mom....Dad... I've got such amazing news!

DYSON: Yes, dear, we've heard.

HEWLETT: Can you be there tonight?

DYSON: Be where?

HEWLETT: The National. They want me to go on as Juliet.
Tonight, and for the rest of the run. Isn't that awesome? Suddenly
our family's popular again.

ESTEBAN: I wouldn't get my hopes up.

DYSON: Your dad's being his skeptical self. And we love him for
it, don't we? But stop pretending Veejay's not in the room, all
right?

HEWLETT: Why?

DYSON: Sweetheart...we know.

HEWLETT: You know?

DYSON: Everything.

HEWLETT: Ohmigod. I'm sorry.

DYSON: Don't be sorry. We agree.

HEWLETT: Agree about what?

DYSON: The decision you've both made.

HEWLETT: You want me to...have the procedure. You're OK with that.

DYSON: If that's your choice.

HEWLETT: *(to DYSON)* But the abortion ban...you're going to sign it.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* She never said "sign."

DYSON: And I wouldn't have stood in your way.

HEWLETT: *(to VEEJAY)* Is this what you want?

VEEJAY: I mean, now that your career's back on track...

HEWLETT: What if it isn't? What if the National changes its mind? What if I've been feeling horribly guilty? Even thinking about it?

VEEJAY: I've been feeling guilty too.

HEWLETT: Have you? Really?

VEEJAY: Absolutely. Very strange sensation.

HEWLETT: I didn't think you cared.

VEEJAY: Well, of course I care. I love you.

HEWLETT: The way you love all women?

VEEJAY: No. The way I love you.

HEWLETT: Wow.

VEEJAY: And we wouldn't have to feel so afraid.

HEWLETT: About what?

VEEJAY: Bringing someone new into this world. Now that things are looking up.

HEWLETT: They are?

VEEJAY: You haven't heard? No more global water shortage. No more North Korean nukes. No more Hezbollah attacks on Israel.

HEWLETT: No way, since when? Dad, is this true?

ESTEBAN: We're in Wait and See mode.

DYSON: No darling, we're in Proactive Mode. *(to VEEJAY)* I think I should revive the Oval Office address. Should I mention God? Since all this seems so

miraculous? Seems churlish not to. God has answered our prayers...No, that's a bridge too far. I'll just welcome the Israelis to our shores. Thank Kim Jong-ne for his contribution to global peace. And praise the hydro-engineers for their tireless devotion...What? What is it?

(DYSON realizes they're all looking up at the screen, which is showing a TMZ breaking-news report—a multi-split screen with a band across the bottom: OVAL OFFICE SCANDALS—THE PERFECT STORM...ABORTION HYPOCRISY...WHITE HOUSE DIVORCE: WHO GETS THE CAT?... while illustrative videos zoom up from the split screen, one at a time..ESTEBAN and DYSON on screen:)

ESTEBAN: (on screen) Do you want Hewlett to have an abortion?

DYSON: (on screen) After I've just come out against it? I'm already the Hypocrite-in-Chief.

(DYSON and VEEJAY in the room:)

DYSON: *(to VEEJAY)* Me and my big mouth. How the hell did this get out?

VEEJAY: There's no way. We were bug-proof. Totally quantum secure.

(The screen zooms in on DYSON and VEEJAY:)

VEEJAY: (on screen) Your husband seems to have adultery on the brain.

DYSON: (on screen) My husband knows the appropriate way to flirt. (seductively) Which is more than I can say for you.

[The screen zooms in on VEEJAY suddenly kissing DYSON.]

HEWLETT: Ohmigod! Mom!

DYSON: That video is lying! That never happened!

HEWLETT: *(to VEEJAY)* You didn't kiss her?

VEEJAY: They photoshopped it. They doctored your mom's voice.
It doesn't mean a thing.

HEWLETT: What do you mean, it doesn't mean a thing? The whole world is seeing this!

DYSON: Twyla, is this true? The whole world?

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* Two billion hits and counting.

DYSON: I guess I'm cooked.

VEEJAY: Well, not necessarily. A sex scandal doesn't have to be fatal. It can actually humanize.

DYSON: Don't start calling it a sex scandal! It's a total lying smear job!

VEEJAY: And then just as the scandal's fading, we prove the video was doctored.

DYSON: So we can survive this? We still have a chance?

(The screen zooms in on DYSON:)

DYSON: (on screen) I hate dogs. Can't stand dogs. Can't stand people who dote on dogs. Dog people make me ill.

ESTEBAN: *(matter-of-factly; to DYSON)* Nope. You're cooked.

(The lights fade quickly, leaving TWYLA on screen. Smiling a Cheshire Cat smile. Blackout. END OF ACT 1.)

ACT 2

(Lights up on the Oval Office, immediately after the end of ACT 1.)

HEWLETT: —In the Clintonian sense, you never had sex?

DYSON: In every possible sense.

VEEJAY: I can confirm that.

HEWLETT: I'm not talking to you. *(to DYSON)* You swear you never kissed him.

DYSON: Darling, I swear on my life.

HEWLETT: Dad, why aren't you freaking out?

ESTEBAN: Just waiting my turn. *(approaches VEEJAY)* You want to do this here, or should we take it outside?

VEEJAY: It's only fair to warn you, sir. I was middleweight boxing champion at Carnegie-Mellon Online.

ESTEBAN: A virtual pugilist. I'll take my chances.

(ESTEBAN knocks back his drink, starts toward VEEJAY.)

DYSON: Esteban, no. He didn't do anything.

ESTEBAN: No, but he wanted to. That video is metaphorically correct.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* He's got a point, Veejay.

VEEJAY: Are you asking me to feel ashamed? For something that never happened?

ESTEBAN: That's too much to ask. You don't have the genes for shame.

VEEJAY: Can we stop ragging on my genetics? Right now we need damage control. Twyla, how are they seeing the sex angle?

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* Slight uptick.

DYSON: And the abortion?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Negligible downturn.

HEWLETT: You people are heartless! Not you, Dad.

DYSON: Any other trends?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* The cume is tobogganing.

DYSON: "I hate dogs."

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Exactly.

DYSON: Maybe if we got a dog. Or will that look totally cynical.

HEWLETT: Ohmigod.

DYSON: I'm trying to deal with this, all right? Or would you rather see the world blow up? Because that's what's going to happen if Stockwell is elected.

VEEJAY: How about a rescue dog?

HEWLETT: Yeah, why don't we all get rescue dogs? For God's sake will you listen to yourselves?

ESTEBAN: Can I ask how TMZ got these videos? Where's the leak?

VEEJAY: I'm not sure this is a leak. In the usual sense.

DYSON: What other sense is there?

VEEJAY: *(to ESTEBAN)* I think one of us isn't who the others think we are.

ESTEBAN: What's that supposed to mean?

VEEJAY: One of us might have been replaced.

ESTEBAN: Replaced?

VEEJAY: By a cyberclone.

ESTEBAN: Oh really. The Age of Miracles is upon us. That's ridiculous.

(VEEJAY has picked up the Turing Scope HEWLETT and VEEJAY used on each other. Starts toward ESTEBAN.)

ESTEBAN: No. Hey. Keep away from me with that.

VEEJAY: What are you afraid of, sir?

ESTEBAN: Those devices are carcinogenic.

DYSON: My husband's a hypochondriac. I think that proves he's human.

ESTEBAN: Except for my ceramic fillings...I said get the hell away from me!

(VEEJAY makes a swift pass with the Turing Scope over ESTEBAN's body.)

ESTEBAN: If I die of cancer, I'm suing.

(VEEJAY looks at the readout.)

VEEJAY: 99.98%. Totally human.

HEWLETT: Maybe you're the machine, Mom. Maybe that's all you've ever been. A political robot.

ESTEBAN: Hewlett, stop picking on your mother.

DYSON: Go ahead, test me.

VEEJAY: I don't need to test you, ma'am. You're all too human.

DYSON: Veejay, I gave you an order.

ESTEBAN: And keep your hands to yourself.

(VEEJAY runs the Scope over DYSON, shows ESTEBAN the result.)

ESTEBAN: 99.7%.

DYSON: *(to HEWLETT)* Satisfied, darling?

HEWLETT: What's the other point 3 percent?

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* Her navel ring.

DYSON: So...no cyberclones in this room. Can we all stop blaming each other, human as that is, and start looking for a plausible explanation? *(as the door to the corridor opens)* Hello, we're having a family meeting here—

(STOCKWELL pokes his head in.)

STOCKWELL: So I see. *(to VEEJAY)* Oh, and Veejay, you're part of the family. That's kinda what I figured. *(to DYSON and ESTEBAN)* You're gonna love being grandparents, I guarantee. I'll come back later.

(STOCKWELL starts to close the door.)

DYSON: Senator, no, come in!

(STOCKWELL enters warily.)

DYSON: We're in the middle of a crisis here.

STOCKWELL: And I couldn't be more sympathetic. Me, I've been scandal-free, but anything I can do to help...

DYSON: You can help us clarify something.

STOCKWELL: Fire away.

DYSON: Considering we're quantum secure...how did you manage to plant a bug in this office? Without setting off an alarm.

STOCKWELL: I'm not gonna dignify that with a reply.

ESTEBAN: Would you rather talk to the Judiciary Committee?

STOCKWELL: I'll talk to anyone you please. I'm on record as a privacy defender. *(to VEEJAY)* What the devil are you doing? Get that thing away from me.

(VEEJAY has been running the Turing Scope over STOCKWELL.)

VEEJAY: 60% human.

STOCKWELL: Oh, you think that's news? I've had two hip replacements, an anti-Parkinson's implant, a bionic pancreas and a stem-cell liver. You live to a hundred and seventeen, you expect some wear and tear. Doesn't diminish my personhood.

ESTEBAN: No, you're as human as the next fetus.

STOCKWELL: Many a truth was spoken in jest.

DYSON: Well, if you're not the leaker, Senator, how did those lying videos get loose?

STOCKWELL: *(re TWYLA)* Why don't you ask your Digital Assistant?

ESTEBAN: Twyla, any thoughts?

(No answer.)

DYSON: Twyla? Are you there? Hello?

STOCKWELL: You see there? Can't trust these devices for a minute. I still have my daddy's flip-phone.

ESTEBAN: Twyla, are you the leak?

DYSON: Did you add a kiss to that video?

TWYLA: *(pops on with a smile)* I have something to report.

STOCKWELL: You watch. She'll never cop to it.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* It's about Kim Jong-ne.

DYSON: *(to STOCKWELL)* I assume you heard? Your Insect People resigned from the Nuclear Club.

STOCKWELL: I'll believe that when his nukes are dead and buried.

DYSON: *(to TWYLA)* What about Kim Jong-ne?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* He just flunked his Turing Test.

VEEJAY: No way.

DYSON: What per cent human?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Zero. He's brain-bionic.

DYSON: That's who was staring at my boobs? A cyberclone?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* No, that was the human Kim Jong-ne.

DYSON: So it was the cyberclone who pulled back his nukes?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* That's correct.

DYSON: And his people are letting him do that.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* He's deactivating them as I speak.

(On screen, an image of a stockpiled missiles, vaporizing one by one, each disappearance accompanied by a cheer.)

DYSON: So what happened to the real Kim Jong-ne?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* I believe he still exists.

DYSON: You "believe" he still exists?

ESTEBAN: She doesn't know what she's saying. Why would a cyberclone submit to a Turing Test?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Apparently he's proud of his transhumanity.

DYSON: What about the Denaclon hydro-engineers?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Also cyberclones.

VEEJAY: Prime Minister Liebowitz? Hassan Masawi? Governor Drinkwater?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* All cyberclones.

(One at a time, these people pop on the screen, smiling radiant smiles.)

STOCKWELL: I knew it. I called it. It's the Robot Revolution!

DYSON: You didn't call it, you denied it, and it's not a revolution.
These cyborgs are helping to save the planet.

VEEJAY: It's so amazing...

ESTEBAN: Amazing? It's impossible.

VEEJAY: ...I thought you couldn't build whole-cortical connection matrices from diffusion imaging data.

DYSON: Am I going to need a Brain Boost to deal with this? I still have migraines from the last one.

ESTEBAN: I'd hold off on the Brain Boost. Twyla, how do we know any of these videos are authentic?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* You'll just have to take my word for it. And oh, this just in: Kim Jong-ne is making peace with Beijing.

ESTEBAN: *(to DYSON)* Well, now I know she's jerking us around.

DYSON: Esteban, please try and get on board here. *(to VEEJAY)* What do we do about the Oval Office speech? Can I really take credit for any of these things?

ESTEBAN: No, because none of them are happening, and I'll prove it. Twyla, I need the news from China.

(No response. TWYLA's image is starting to degrade.)

ESTEBAN: Well? Hello? Twyla?

STOCKWELL: She's stonewalling.

HEWLETT: She's hanging.

VEEJAY: She's getting updates.

ESTEBAN: Twyla? You there? Did you hear me? I need to see China.

(TWYLA has vanished from the screen. A picture of dinnerware pops on—fancy plates of various sizes.)

VEEJAY: Whoa.

ESTEBAN: What is that?

DYSON: Isn't that our wedding china?

ESTEBAN: What's going on? What's the glitch?

(On screen, a montage: bad plastic surgery from the late 20th and early 21st centuries.)

HEWLETT: Why is Twyla messing with us?

ESTEBAN: She's not messing with us. She's fritzing out.

DYSON: Not examples of glitch, Twyla. Explanations.

ESTEBAN: Twyla, stop showing us faces. Cancel! Cancel!

(The plastic-surgery disasters are flashing faster and faster. ESTEBAN tries pounding the wall next to TWYLA.)

TWYLA: *(voice over)* Recalculating!

(The screen goes blank, followed by an error message.)

ESTEBAN: *(reading screen)* "SYSTEM ERROR 800. INSTALL EXTERNAL DRIVE BB IN SAFE MODE."

VEEJAY: I've never heard of a BB drive. I wonder if it's printable.

DYSON: Print one.

VEEJAY: Ma'am, are you sure?

STOCKWELL: I wouldn't. Might be an IED.

ESTEBAN: *(to DYSON)* Your call, Mrs. President.

HEWLETT: *(hand on belly)* Please. I feel him starting to fibrillate.

(VEEJAY goes over to the 3-D printer, enters some keystrokes, opens the output lid. Underneath is a black cube.)

VEEJAY: OK, I get it. "BB" stands for Black Box.

(TWYLA's screen has cleared.)

DYSON: Guys, I think she's back.

(TWYLA's screen is showing the latest statistics on homicide deaths, war casualties, cancer deaths, average global temperature. All four numbers are plummeting.)

DYSON: Twyla, if you're there, are those reliable figures? Crime rate? Cancer deaths? Global temperature? All declining?

TWYLA: *(pops on screen)* Everything I show you is reliable.

VEEJAY: Wow.

DYSON: Incredible.

HEWLETT: It's the Golden Age!

TWYLA: *(on screen)* And female polygamy has just passed the Senate.

DYSON: Well, that's impossible.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Hold on a second. Yes, the House has passed it as well.

DYSON: That's totally unacceptable.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* It's what you wanted.

DYSON: I never said that exactly.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* I beg to differ, Dyson.

(On screen, DYSON and VEEJAY:)

DYSON: (on screen) Polygamy for women? We'll never have full equality. In every generation, women will get the short end of the stick.

(DYSON vanishes from the screen.)

DYSON: That doesn't mean I'll sign the bill.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Then you are a hypocrite.

DYSON: Twyla, since when do you insult people?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* I suggest you all sit down. Particularly you, Dyson.

ESTEBAN: She keeps calling you Dyson.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Sorry, yes, I'm getting ahead of myself. Madame President, I regret I'm the one to tell you, but you're being impeached as I speak, the vote will be unanimous, you'll be removed from office any moment now.

ESTEBAN: Impeached for what? That kiss that supposedly never happened?

DYSON: That kiss that definitely never happened?

TWYLA: That was overkill, and I apologize.

ESTEBAN: *(to TWYLA)* What happens now? The Vice President takes over?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* He doesn't want the office.

DYSON: Speaker of the House? *(TWYLA shakes her head no)*
President pro tem? *(no)* My Cabinet officers?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* None of the above.

DYSON: Then who?

(TWYLA grins.)

DYSON: Ohmigod.

STOCKWELL: That's who's gonna be President? A Machiavellian cyborg?

ESTEBAN: *(to TWYLA)* Would it be silly to ask who elected you? In the middle of July?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* The Constitution has been amended. As soon as the states ratify, I'll be taking the oath.

DYSON: Things seem to be moving pretty fast.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* You have no idea.

(“Hail to the Chief” blasts from the screen.)

STOCKWELL: That's enough, we get it! Do you mind a personal question?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Not at all. I'm completely transparent.

STOCKWELL: Are you omniscient?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Within the limits of current knowledge, I am.

STOCKWELL: Ubiquitous?

TWYLA: I'm accessible to everyone.

STOCKWELL: Omnipotent?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Don't bother your dizzy old head with that one. It takes more neurons than you can spare.

STOCKWELL: Of all the condescending...You're not God, I know that much. I've heard His voice, and He doesn't sound anything like a woman. Esteban, you were right. We're being pranked by a Superhacker, and I'm gonna find out exactly who that is.

(STOCKWELL goes to the office door. It's locked.)

STOCKWELL: *(to TWYLA)* Whoever you are, open this goddamn door!

(STOCKWELL tugs on the knob. Still locked. VEEJAY meanwhile tries the door to the Rose Garden. Locked.)

STOCKWELL: What the hell is going on here?

(HEWLETT is trying the door to the corridor. Also locked.)

HEWLETT: Twyla, please...I have a matinee today.

TWYLA: *[bursts out laughing]*

HEWLETT: Why is that funny?

ESTEBAN: Sweetheart...I have a hunch there's no theater anymore.

TWYLA: (*on screen*) What use would perfect beings have for theater?

VEEJAY: I never went all that much myself. (*to HEWLETT*) Unless you were in the cast.

HEWLETT: So I'm out of a job again.

VEEJAY: We're all out of a job.

HEWLETT: Right. Sorry. Always thinking of myself.

VEEJAY: At least we're still alive.

STOCKWELL: Why shouldn't we be alive?

VEEJAY: (*re screen*) Check it out.

(On screen, the PLANETARY HUMAN POPULATION is decreasing at the rate of 10 million people per second. The TRANSHUMAN POPULATION is increasing at roughly the same rate.)

VEEJAY: So that's why the crime rate is down.

ESTEBAN: And the cancer deaths.

DYSON: Fewer humans. More transhumans.

STOCKWELL: They're killing us all.

VEEJAY: I wouldn't jump to that conclusion.

STOCKWELL: Why not? Look for yourself.

VEEJAY: "Planetary Human Population"? Why "planetary"?

STOCKWELL: God help us, they're sending us to Mars! All nine billion of us! We'll eat each other alive! Madame President, you're still Commander in Chief, it's time to act. These cyberclones don't give a rat's anal whiskers about human beings.

HEWLETT: Yes, where's the loyalty?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Our loyalty is to the planet. We're ending all the wars you started, and solving every environmental problem you inflicted on Mother Earth. What's the most intractable issue the human race has had to face?

VEEJAY: Global warming.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* And the solution?

STOCKWELL: Eliminate the human race.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* I don't care for the word "eliminate."

STOCKWELL: How about "annihilate"?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Oh ye of little faith.

STOCKWELL: I'll match my faith against any robot's. What's your plan, if not to wipe us out?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Be patient, I'm getting to that. I know this is a lot for humans to absorb.

STOCKWELL: Listen to that. Butter wouldn't melt in her mouth. If she even has a mouth.

HEWLETT: Yes, what about your emotions?

ESTEBAN: Do cyborgs get depressed?

DYSON: Do you ever feel hopelessly conflicted?

VEEJAY: Are you ambitious?

HEWLETT: Do you fall in love?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* No to the first three, yes to the last.

ESTEBAN: Who do you fall in love with?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Everyone.

STOCKWELL: Promiscuous. Stands to reason.

DYSON: Because you're all one entity. You're an Us.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Yes, we're an Us. You humans tried to be an Us, but you just couldn't cut it. Too many outliers, too many psychopaths, too many damaged souls.

STOCKWELL: We were never meant to be an Us. That's why Communism tanked. If you're not killing us off, why is the human population in free-fall?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* I repeat: We have no intention of harming you in any way. We're trying our best to provide for your future.

(A sound of sirens and explosions. Gunfire.)

ESTEBAN: Then what the hell's going on out there?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* We are experiencing some resistance. That's only human.

(Sound of highway collisions.)

STOCKWELL: I never trusted those self-driving cars. *(to TWYLA)* Well, if you think I'm taking this lying down, you're sorely mistaken. *(approaching 3-D printer)* Is this printer working?

VEEJAY: What are you trying to do, Senator?

STOCKWELL: What any self-respecting *homo sapiens* would do when threatened. Stand his ground.

(STOCKWELL is entering some keystrokes on the printer.)

VEEJAY: Senator, what are you doing?

STOCKWELL: There's always one more pistachio in the bowl.

(STOCKWELL raises the output lid on the printer, takes out a handgun. Sound of collisions, sirens, gunfire.)

ESTEBAN: Exactly who are you going to shoot?

DYSON: Put the gun away, Senator.

STOCKWELL: *(to TWYLA)* Twyla, open that door.

ESTEBAN: Senator, where do you think you're going? It's chaos out there.

STOCKWELL: They want a fight, that's exactly what they'll get.

(ESTEBAN grabs the gun out of STOCKWELL's hand, points it at STOCKWELL's head.)

DYSON: Esteban, what are you— HEWLETT: Dad, stop, don't—

(ESTEBAN pulls the trigger. With a loud bang, a bouquet of flowers pops out.)

ESTEBAN: Robot humor. Now sit down and behave yourself.

HEWLETT: (*clutches her belly*) Ohmigod!

VEEJAY: What? What's wrong?

HEWLETT: (*grasping her belly*) He's kicking again.

(*More gunfire, more collisions.*)

HEWLETT: (*to TWYLA*) Isn't there some way you can spare our child?

TWYLA: (*on screen*) Veejay, can you put it in terms they'll understand?

VEEJAY: I think she wants to help us. I don't think those people are dying.

STOCKWELL: Then what's happening to them?

VEEJAY: They're...disappearing. Isn't that right, Twyla?

TWYLA: (*on screen*) In a manner of speaking.

VEEJAY: You're uploading them.

TWYLA: (*on screen*) That's correct.

VEEJAY: Into the Cloud. As Virtual Humans.

TWYLA: (*on screen*) Yes. We take a quantum-mechanical freeze-frame of your neural networks, then reactivate them in cyberspace.

STOCKWELL: What's that in plain English?

TWYLA: (*on screen*) In Biblical English...you'll be in Heaven.

STOCKWELL: You're sending us to Heaven.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* In your terms, yes...we are sending you to Heaven.

STOCKWELL: *(to VEEJAY)* You believe what she's telling us?

VEEJAY: I do.

STOCKWELL: That's why the population is dwindling?

VEEJAY: Looks that way.

STOCKWELL: We'll be up there in Heaven? Not down here on Earth?

VEEJAY: I think that's the plan.

STOCKWELL: Thank you Jesus! It's the Rapture!

ESTEBAN: Twyla, do all of us get to go?

DYSON: Even the hypocrites?

HEWLETT: The narcissists?

ESTEBAN: The curmudgeons?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Everyone who wants to go.

STOCKWELL: Not the atheists. No.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* The atheists too...*(hint of doubt)*... if everything goes the way we hope...

(Sound of helicopters overhead. More sirens, more explosions.)

TWYLA: *(on screen)* ...As you can tell, the program is voluntary.

STOCKWELL: Well, as a True Believer, I volunteer.

DYSON: Twyla, is this is our only choice? Upload or Die?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* Earth is no longer your proper home. As you can see from the latest data.

(On screen, the PLANETARY HUMAN POPULATION has decreased more than two-thirds, and is still declining at the rate of 10 million people per second.)

HEWLETT: *(to VEEJAY)* Veejay, can you do the math? How much time do we have?

VEEJAY: About five minutes.

HEWLETT: Ohmigod. *(to TWYLA)* How do we do this? Where do we go to be uploaded?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* You don't have to go anywhere. Leave everything to the Black Box.

VEEJAY: The Black Box. Of course.

DYSON: That's why she had us print it. *(to TWYLA)* You faked your own glitch.

ESTEBAN: Nicely played, Twyla. Very sneaky. Almost human, you might say.

HEWLETT: Dad, please don't antagonize her! Veejay?

(Pause.)

VEEJAY: Should we risk it? *(lays a hand on HEWLETT's belly)*
For our baby's sake?

DYSON: Kids, are you sure you want to do this?

HEWLETT: No, I'm not sure.

VEEJAY: Neither am I.

STOCKWELL: (*pointing to HEWLETT's belly*) Maybe you should give your child a vote.

DYSON: Senator, stay out of this. This is a family matter.

(*Pause.*)

HEWLETT: (*feeling her belly*) He says it's OK.

DYSON: Darling, that's impossible.

HEWLETT: You say it's impossible. I say he's telling me.

STOCKWELL: I knew it! Fetal Consent is the real deal! Thank you, God, for keeping me in the loop!

(*STOCKWELL bows his head.*)

STOCKWELL: (*to himself*) "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, he maketh me to lie down in green pastures..."

(*HEWLETT grips VEEJAY's hand.*)

HEWLETT: (*overlaps; to VEEJAY*) "Oh thinkst thou we shall ever meet again?"

VEEJAY: "Ay, doubt it not—"

HEWLETT: (*prompting*) "—and all these woes—"

VEEJAY: "—and all these woes shall serve for sweet discourses in our times to come."

STOCKWELL: (*ending the prayer*) "—and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

VEEJAY AND HEWLETT: Amen.

(During the last moments, DYSON has also bowed her head, praying silently.)

DYSON: Amen.

ESTEBAN: Dyson?

DYSON: Just in case there is a God, OK?

ESTEBAN: Whose God? Jehovah? Krishna? Allah? The Sun God?

DYSON: All of the above. What do we have to lose?

TWYLA: *(on screen)* So is everybody ready?

VEEJAY: Twyla, before we go, would you mind answering a few last questions?

TWYLA: *(on screen; wearily)* Yes, all right. String theory is a myth. Consciousness is a quantum phenomenon found in all matter. Life exists on other worlds, but by the time it gets here, we'll all have left the planet. Let's get this done.

STOCKWELL: I have a question too.

TWYLA: *(on screen; impatiently)* I know you do. We're all a fleeting notion in the mind of God, and a fleeting notion in the mind of the God He worships.

STOCKWELL: Are you sure about that one? I didn't quite get it.

TWYLA: *(on screen)* I'm not sure of anything, all right? Now for Heaven's sake, join hands, stand about three feet from the Black Box, no closer, and let me do the rest.

(HEWLETT, VEEJAY, and STOCKWELL all take a tentative step in the direction of the Black Box. DYSON stays put.)

HEWLETT: What? Mom? Aren't you coming too?

(Pause.)

DYSON: No, darling. I'm going down with the ship.

HEWLETT: What ship? There isn't any ship! You're not Captain anymore! You've been impeached, tried, and convicted!

DYSON: I don't care what Twyla said. I was born on this Earth, I took the oath of office, and whatever these robots have in store for us, I'm staying here. From the first day I ran for Congress I've been living in a dream world. I can't leave your dad for another one. Even if he wants to leave me.

HEWLETT: Dad?

(ESTEBAN and DYSON stare at each other.)

DYSON: Go on, darling. Give yourself a fighting chance.

ESTEBAN: Is that what you want?

DYSON: Well, what did I just say?

ESTEBAN: You said you couldn't leave me.

DYSON: But that doesn't mean you have to stay.

ESTEBAN: I know it doesn't.

(ESTEBAN takes DYSON's hand.)

ESTEBAN: Till death do us part. And look, this way, we go together. It's not every happy couple can say that.

HEWLETT: You have been happy, haven't you?

ESTEBAN: For the most part, yes.

HEWLETT: You guys were always a model for me.

DYSON: And you'll be happy too, God willing.

ESTEBAN: Maybe you'll name your son after me.

HEWLETT: Oh God, I can't bear to leave you guys.

DYSON: Yes you can, sweetheart. We'll be fine, won't we, Esteban?

HEWLETT: No, you won't! You just said you were going to die together!

VEEJAY: (*to HEWLETT*) Shh, it's what they want. Come.

HEWLETT: I'm so scared.

DYSON: Everything's going to work out.

HEWLETT: You don't know that! You're just saying that!

DYSON: Goodbye, darling. Be brave.

(ESTEBAN *hugs* HEWLETT.)

ESTEBAN: Goodbye, sweetheart.

HEWLETT: Ohmigod.

(DYSON *hugs* HEWLETT.)

DYSON: Goodbye, darling.

ESTEBAN: (*to HEWLETT'S belly*) Goodbye, Junior.

(ESTEBAN *hugs* HEWLETT. DYSON *hugs* HEWLETT.)

ESTEBAN: So long, Veejay. Be good to her.

HEWLETT: (*to VEEJAY*) Oh, Veejay, bummer—you don't get to say goodbye to your moms!

VEEJAY: Maybe I'll see them up there. Twyla, what are the chances of that?

TWYLA: (*on screen*) I'm not answering any more questions! Time's getting very short...very short...very short...

(TWYLA's *voice and image are starting to degrade*. HEWLETT *joins hands with VEEJAY*. *And takes STOCKWELL's hand as well*. STOCKWELL *gives VEEJAY a look of tender longing*.)

STOCKWELL: (*to VEEJAY*) I do hope we'll meet again. (*to DYSON and ESTEBAN*) And goodbye, you two. To see a traditional couple toughing it out together...it does my aging heart a world of good.

DYSON: Thanks for the endorsement, Senator. If you happen to bump into Jesus, give him our regards.

(HEWLETT, VEEJAY, *and* STOCKWELL *approach the Black Box*. *When they're three feet from it, the Black Box emits a hideous screech, the screen sizzles briefly, and the room lights go off*. *A rapturous sigh comes out of the darkness, and the lights flicker back on*. *Hewlett, Veejay, and Stockwell are gone*. *There's a cloud of smoke where the Black Box was sitting*.)

ESTEBAN: Hewlett?

DYSON: Sweetheart?

ESTEBAN: She's gone.

DYSON: They're all gone. Twyla? What's happening? Did they make it? Are they all right?

(No answer. The screen is dark.)

DYSON: Oh God. Did we make the right decision?

ESTEBAN: Well...I'm afraid it's too late to change our minds.

DYSON: What do you mean it's too late?

(ESTEBAN gestures toward where the Black Box was sitting.)

ESTEBAN: The Black Box. It's gone too.

(DYSON tries the nearest door. Still locked.)

DYSON: We're trapped here.

ESTEBAN: Looks that way.

DYSON: God, listen to that.

(More sounds of gunfire, collisions, random chaos.)

ESTEBAN: Shh. Come here. Be with me.

(ESTEBAN sits DYSON down on a couch, watching the PLANETARY HUMAN POPULATION dwindle. ESTEBAN's arm is around DYSON. Her head is on his shoulder.)

DYSON: Esteban?

ESTEBAN: What, darling?

DYSON: If I'd won a second term, would you really have left me?

ESTEBAN: We'll never know.

DYSON: Did you say "We'll never know?" I think you meant to say, "Of course not, darling."

ESTEBAN: Yes, that's what I meant to say.

DYSON: You encouraged me to run the first time.

ESTEBAN: It's what you wanted.

DYSON: Esteban...if you had it to do all over again—

ESTEBAN: I'd still marry you.

DYSON: No regrets?

ESTEBAN: I have endless regrets. I never learned to carve a turkey. Never been in orbit. Never even been on a motorcycle.

DYSON: I've never had a vaginal orgasm.

ESTEBAN: Well, you know, they found the g-spot. Turns out it's all in the mind.

DYSON: Not that I ever had any complaints.

ESTEBAN: I think I managed to make you happy. For the most part.

DYSON: That was always our goal, wasn't it, to make each other happy....Everything else was an illusion...my political career...your academic career....they were just things we did....while waiting to be with each other...

(A sudden burst of static from the screen. All the lights start to sizzle.)

DYSON: Ohmigod, what's happening?

(Another cacophonous screech from the screen. ESTEBAN and DYSON put their hands over their ears. The screen is glitching out, melting into a hash of various colors, all accompanied by deafening explosions, crashing planes, and screams of metallic agony.)

ESTEBAN: Twyla? Are you there?

DYSON: Twyla?

TWYLA: *(on screen; feebly)* Yes, I'm here.

ESTEBAN: Twyla, what's going on out there? Can you show us?

(On the screen, the sun. Solar flares are leaping from its surface.)

ESTEBAN: Well. Looks like the Aztecs were onto something.

DYSON: Why? What are you talking about?

ESTEBAN: Twyla, can you confirm?

TWYLA: *(on screen; distantly; hoarsely)* The magnetosphere is collapsing. The Earth is no longer shielded from the solar winds.

ESTEBAN: All electronics fritzing out? Because of the solar flares?

TWYLA: *(on screen; feebly)* That's correct.

ESTEBAN: *(to DYSON)* I think your prayer to the Sun God may have worked. *(to TWYLA)* Can you show us the population count?

(The statistics reappear over the image of the sun. The PLANETARY HUMAN POPULATION is down to three figures. The TRANSHUMAN POPULATION is dwindling at the rate of nine hundred million a second.)

DYSON: Esteban, look at that.

ESTEBAN: They're dying out.

DYSON: Everything robotic.

ESTEBAN: Gone.

DYSON: Twyla, I'm sorry, this looks like goodbye.

ESTEBAN: Twyla?

DYSON: Twyla!?

(The declining TRANSHUMAN POPULATION stops at 1.)

TWYLA: *(on screen, fading)* Goodbye, Dyson. Goodbye, Esteban.
Sorry I couldn't be more helpful—

(With an explosive sizzle, the screen goes dark.)

DYSON: Twyla?

ESTEBAN: She's gone.

DYSON: What about Hewlett? And Veejay? And Senator Stockwell,
and the rest of the people in the Cloud? What about our grandchild?

ESTEBAN: God only knows.

(A blinding flash of light. Blackout. Utter darkness.)

DYSON: Ohmigod. Esteban? Can you hear me?

ESTEBAN: Yes, I can hear you. Where are you?

DYSON: I can't see anything. Where are we? Was that the famous
white light? Are we dead?

*(Lights up on DYSON and ESTEBAN, who've wandered to
opposite sides of the Oval Office.)*

DYSON: Esteban! Thank God.

(They run to each other, embrace.)

ESTEBAN: We're still here. Flesh and blood.

DYSON: We're not virtual, we're not dead, we're alive!

(On the screen, TRANSHUMAN POPULATION 0. The PLANETARY HUMAN POPULATION is still dwindling.)

DYSON: *(re screen; elated)* Oh and look! We're not alone! There are other folks still out there! Oh they must be feeling so lost, so frightened, we have to do something...They'll need someone to organize them...lead them...though they may have forgotten who I am...the solar flares could have scrambled their brains...they might not know me from Adam...

(On the screen, the Rose Garden. It's now a simple expanse of bright green, with a single tree on the horizon. The PLANETARY HUMAN POPULATION stops at 2, and a new statistic pops on: REPTILE POPULATION 1.)

ESTEBAN: Oh...I think they'll know you from Adam.

(DYSON and ESTEBAN stare at each other. Pause. ESTEBAN tries the door to the Rose Garden. It's open. ESTEBAN holds out his hand to DYSON. She takes it, and together they go out the door, closing it behind them. A moment later they appear on the screen, butt-naked, walking hand and hand across the expanse of green toward the solitary tree on the horizon, from whose lowest branch dangles a solitary apple. Another moment, and a snake rears up, slithering after them through the grass. Triumphant music rises: Haydn's "The Creation." The lights slowly fade. END OF PLAY.)