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"With artificial intelligence we are summoning the demon."

Elon Musk 3.28.17

ACT ONE

OVER BLACK:

THIS CHRONICLE OF THE WORLD'S FIRST ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CRISIS IS BASED ON INTERVIEWS AND RECENTLY DECLASSIFIED FILES. CERTAIN NAMES HAVE BEEN SUBSTITUTED AND SOME EVENTS HAVE BEEN COMPRESSED FOR DRAMATIC PURPOSES.

FADE IN:

INT. MEETING HALL - STANFORD UNIVERSITY - DAY

A wall-sized BANNER shows a starkly handsome man in his 40s. The caption: TECHNOPOCALYPSE NOW: PAUL LEBLANC, CEO OF ZAVA.

LEBLANC (O.S.)
Manhattan Project, 1945, Trinity
site.

PAN OVER to REVEAL PAUL LEBLANC in person, delivering a TED-type speech to a packed house. Brilliant and charming, LeBlanc radiates intensity and the audience is rapt.

Title: STANFORD UNIVERSITY, SIX MONTHS AGO.

LEBLANC (CONT'D)
They're about to test the first
atomic bomb.

He taps a hand remote. A PHOTO APPEARS on the giant screen behind him. It shows the first nuclear bomb arriving via flatbed truck to the New Mexico test site.

LEBLANC (CONT'D)
Edward Teller wakes up in a sweat,
announces to his fellow scientists
there's a chance the blast could
ignite the atmosphere and end all
life on the planet. The fate of the
world hanging on a bunch of nerds
holding hands in a bunker, most of
whom didn't get laid until their
30s -- like most of you from the
looks of it.

Nervous chuckles from the audience.

LEBLANC (CONT'D)
The nerds argue, throw some numbers
around, should we or shouldn't we?
What's the worst that could happen?
Hey, at least we'll get Hitler. So
they decide to go for it.

He calls up the image of a GLOWING MUSHROOM CLOUD, the Trinity bomb moments after detonation.

LEBLANC (CONT'D)

Spoiler alert, the worst case scenario didn't happen, but here's the point: when they pushed the button, there were plenty of people in those bunkers who weren't sure they weren't blowing up the world.

(beat)

So what does this have to do with us, today? With me? I founded one of the largest tech companies in the world -- I'm one of the guys in that bunker -- so why am I sounding the alarm?

He taps the remote, cycling through IMAGES of ascendent TECH:

- DeepMind beating the world champion in GO.
- A field of genetically modified crops.
- An autonomous drone firing a missile.
- An electron microscope capture of a nanotube assembly.

LEBLANC (CONT'D)

Because in the next few years, we'll be facing a dozen Trinitities, and you can be damned sure in every case, some nerd is gonna push the button.

In the rear of the hall sits a man in his 40s. We'll eventually come to know him as TED LEBLANC, Paul's brother, but for now he's a mysterious guy who doesn't at all like what he's hearing.

LEBLANC (CONT'D)

What are the odds that we keep avoiding that worst case scenario?

CUT TO:

INT. CAMRY - MOVING - NIGHT

RICHARD WEISS, 60s, speeds through traffic. Exhausted, ghastly pale and filmed with sweat, he's also very scared and hopelessly lost.

Title: PORTLAND, OREGON. PRESENT DAY.

A very strange thing about the Camry's dashboard -- it's been GASHED OPEN. On the passenger seat are several PROCESSOR CHIPS that Weiss has pried from the car's guts.

Weiss spots something ahead, turns the wheel --

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

A neighborhood most people avoid. The Camry barrels into the parking lot and parks. Weiss climbs out, has to steady himself against the car for a moment, heads inside.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

A young CASHIER looks up from his chemistry textbook as Weiss approaches.

WEISS
I need a map -- paper map.

CASHIER
(pointing to a rack)
If we have any they'll be over there.

The Cashier eyes Weiss as he goes to the rack, finds the map he needs and takes it to the register.

CASHIER (CONT'D)
(checking for the price)
Can't remember the last time anyone bought one of these. Buck fifty.

Weiss digs out a twenty and slaps it onto the counter. Suddenly, a small VIDEO MONITOR next to the cash register POPS to life. It's a CAMERA FEED showing a high angle view of the store looking down onto Weiss.

CASHIER (CONT'D)
Huh. Weird.

WEISS
What?

CASHIER
Thing's been out a week.

With sudden dread, Weiss looks from the monitor to the SECURITY CAMERA on the wall behind the Cashier. The camera's red light blinks ominously. Weiss grabs the map and backs away.

CASHIER (CONT'D)
Your change --

But Weiss turns and bolts out of the store.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Weiss climbs into the Camry, starts the engine and peels out.

INT. CAMRY - MOVING - NIGHT

Weiss drives, watches with relief as the liquor store recedes in the rear-view mirror.

WEISS
You're okay... you're okay...

Weiss notices his smartphone sitting on the passenger seat. He hurls it through the open window as if it were a bomb.

EXT. TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The smartphone CLATTERS onto the shoulder, screen FRITZING MANIACALLY as if possessed.

INT. CAMRY - MOVING - NIGHT

Weiss is speeding toward the green light of an intersection as he unfolds the map and tries to find the street he's on.

INT. AUDI - MOVING - NIGHT

A YOUNG COUPLE on the tail end of a promising date. Flirting, hands wandering. They're approaching the same intersection. The light is red and the man starts to brake, but suddenly, the Audi ACCELERATES.

MAN

Hey, what --

The auto-steering engages. He can't control the car.

MAN (CONT'D)

God -- GOD --

INT. CAMRY - MOVING - NIGHT

Weiss crossing the intersection. Eyes snap to see a PAIR OF HEADLIGHTS bearing down on him. Before he can react --

EXT. INTERSECTION - NIGHT

KAWHAM!!! The Audi T-BONES Weiss's Camry in a TEETH-SHATTERING CONCUSSION and goes airborne, bursting into FLAMES. In SLOW MOTION, the flattened Camry careens across the asphalt in a whirl of metal and glass...

OWEN (V.O.)

-- Eliza, tell me a joke.

INT. SALAZAR HOME - KITCHEN/BREAKFAST NOOK - MORNING

OWEN SALAZAR, a bright and affable age 7, is finishing a bowl of Lucky Charms at the breakfast table. He's chatting with ELIZA, our version of the Amazon Echo.

ELIZA

*Why don't sharks eat clown fish?
Because they taste funny.*

Owen giggles, can't get enough. SHEA SALAZAR, early 30s, is pouring herself some coffee at the kitchen counter. She's dressed for work in a dark blue suit.

SHEA

Eliza's going to run out of jokes
and you know what happens then?

OWEN
What?

SHEA
We have to send her back for new material.

OWEN
Like I believe that, Mom.

Shea steps over to the trash can and toes open the lid, sees it's empty with a fresh new liner. For some reason, this is troubling to Shea. She shuts the trash can just as --

-- TY SALAZAR, her husband, enters wearing an oil-stained t-shirt and jeans. Behind him in the garage can be seen a '64 CORVETTE STINGRAY undergoing restoration.

TY
Checked prices on the internet. Says with the work I'm putting in, the Stingray could list for fifty.

SHEA
You sound skeptical.

TY
If I can't find a buyer, doesn't matter what the internet says.

He grabs the OJ from the fridge. To Owen:

TY (CONT'D)
School, pal. We leave in five.

OWEN
(ignoring him)
Eliza, I farted.

ELIZA
I'm sure glad I don't have a nose.

TY
(to Owen)
Hey, brush your teeth, grab your backpack. S'go.

Owen slams down his spoon and pushes back from the table.

SHEA
Kiss --

He goes and she sweeps him into a hug, smooches his head.

SHEA (CONT'D)
Have a good day. Love you.

OWEN
Love you.

He trudges into the hall. Shea looks after him, mildly concerned by his odd shift in demeanor.

SHEA
Since when does he hate school?

TY
I dunno. Maybe he's finally taking after his dad.

SHEA
(smiles)
Now you're just trying to scare me.

TY
Least he'd never have trouble with the ladies.

SHEA
(laughs)
He's lucky kids get their intelligence from their moms.

An old routine, digging at each other. He pulls her close and they kiss, if not crazy steamy, it's two married people fully in love... then her CELL PHONE VIBRATES TEXT on the counter. She sighs, picks it up, scans an INCOMING TEXT. She looks stunned.

TY
What?

CUT TO:

INT. PORTLAND REGIONAL HOSPITAL - ICU - DAY

Shea heads through the double doors and hurries over to the busy NURSES STATION, holds up an FBI BADGE.

SHEA
Special Agent Salazar. I'm here to see Richard Weiss.

NURSE
(pointing)
He's in 14. The Deputy's waiting for you.

INT. PORTLAND REGIONAL HOSPITAL - ICU - MOMENTS LATER

Weiss is stretched out on a hospital bed, INTUBATED and kept alive by a MEDICAL VENTILATOR. He looks like a hastily-assembled jigsaw puzzle where all the pieces don't fit.

Shea is at his side, holding his hand, eyes welling. At the foot of the bed stands a DEPUTY SHERIFF, 50s. Mid-scene:

SHEA
He has a sister in Seattle. Jennie.

DEPUTY SHERIFF
We got a hold of her. She's on a
plane.

The Deputy gives her a moment, trying to be respectful, but
needing to get back to work.

DEPUTY SHERIFF (CONT'D)
We were talking about the accident.

SHEA
Sorry...
(forcing back her emotion)
You said he was going how fast?

DEPUTY SHERIFF
Fifty. Give or take.

SHEA
In a twenty-five mile an hour zone.

DEPUTY SHERIFF
People tend to speed on that road.

SHEA
Richard would get motion sickness
on escalators. He never went fast
anywhere.

DEPUTY SHERIFF
(sensing a vague
challenge)
What's your relationship to the
victim? If you don't mind.

SHEA
He was my computer science
professor in college.

DEPUTY SHERIFF
(missing something)
Computer science.

SHEA
You know, those boxes with the
keyboards and bright screens.
(beat)
What's this?

She picks up something from a nearby table -- it's a 90s HI-8
CAMCORDER. A relic.

DEPUTY SHERIFF
That was in his jacket when he was
brought in.

The lens is spiderwebbed and the body dented, but it's in one
piece.

DEPUTY SHERIFF (CONT'D)
 Can't remember the last time I saw
 one of those.

With a little work, she manages to eject a TAPE CARTRIDGE
 from the camcorder. The cartridge housing is cracked.
 Scrawled in pencil on the cartridge label: LEBLANC. As Shea
 puzzles over the name...

CUT TO:

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - PORTLAND - DAY

LeBlanc has changed a lot in six months. Facial hair now
 accents the dark circles under his haunted eyes. He's
 finishing a tense lunch with ABBY, his estranged, college-age
 daughter. LeBlanc hands the WAITER his credit card.

WAITER
 Thank you, Mr. LeBlanc.

The Waiter moves off.

LEBLANC
 (to Abby)
 It was good to see you again.

ABBY
 Really?

LEBLANC
 Yeah. Why wouldn't it be?

ABBY
 Maybe because you spent the whole
 time talking about work.

LEBLANC
 That's not true.

ABBY
 We've been here forty-five minutes,
 Dad, and you haven't asked me how I
 am, what I'm doing, if I'm seeing
 someone.

LEBLANC
 You're seeing someone?

She just looks at him, exasperated.

ABBY
 Why'd you do this? Why after a year
 do you suddenly want to see me?

LEBLANC
 I wanted to reconnect.

ABBY

You can't 'reconnect' if there wasn't a connection in the first place.

LEBLANC

We have a connection. I was there when you were born.

ABBY

No, you weren't. You were in Singapore looking at hard drives. Mom told me.

She's right, of course, throwing him off.

ABBY (CONT'D)

This is all about you. This lunch. You left your company and you need something to grab onto.

LEBLANC

I didn't leave, I was forced out.

ABBY

Whatever. I'm not your security blanket. Go back to Zava, make up with Uncle Ted, or start a new company. I don't care.

LEBLANC

If you don't care, why'd you show up?

ABBY

I guess I was hoping you'd be different.

LEBLANC

I am different. That's always been my problem. Maybe you should just try and accept that.

ABBY

So it's on me, now.

But before he can reply, the Maitre D steps up.

MAITRE D

I'm sorry, Mr. LeBlanc, your assistant called and says it's urgent. The FBI is trying to get a hold of you.

He passes LeBlanc a piece of paper.

LEBLANC

Thanks, Marc.

The Maitre D leaves. He looks at Abby.

LEBLANC (CONT'D)
Probably want me to consult on something. Wouldn't be the first time.

ABBY
I have to go.

LEBLANC
How do I fix this, Ab? Tell me what to say.

ABBY
I shouldn't have to.

There's emotion in her voice, it's not dead between them. She gets to her feet.

ABBY (CONT'D)
Thanks for lunch.

She kisses him on the cheek. LeBlanc stiffens, unprepared for a display of affection. Abby sighs, heads out of the restaurant without another word.

LeBlanc watches her go, then he does something bizarre. He reaches across the table and swipes the FORK that she was using. From his computer bag he takes out a PLASTIC BAGGIE. He drops the fork into the baggie and seals it.

CUT TO:

INT. FBI CYBERCRIME TASK FORCE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Shea is at a conference table, thumbing through an EVIDENCE FOLDER, the contents hard to stomach. She runs this small unit of FBI AGENTS handling cyber-crime in the Portland area. Prominent in the room:

1. C.M. NEWTON, 30s, a Kentucky native with a heroic drawl and a laid-back manner that borders on rude.
2. GINA CROSS, 20s, a high-strung, walking wound.
3. BEN WALKER, a button-down agent in his 20s who's so dull he almost crosses into interesting.

BEN
-- So far, we've recovered 600 gigabytes of data from the impounded hard drives. Mostly videos of children. You're looking at frame captures.

GINA

We think the remaining drives contain more client IP addresses, so the wall could get a lot more crowded.

She indicates a long row of SUSPECT PHOTOS on the cork board.

GINA (CONT'D)

And, probably more videos. Yay.

Shea closes the evidence folder.

SHEA

I know this one's been hard, looking at this stuff all day. When it's over, we're all going in for some mandatory psych time.

C.M.

I hereby donate my psych time to Gina.

GINA

Why am I not surprised this doesn't affect you.

C.M.

I have a strong stomach.

GINA

You haven't smelled yourself at the end of the day. Seriously, that rock you scrape yourself with --

C.M.

Salt crystal.

GINA

-- it's a *rock*, and it isn't doing the job. Invest in some Gillette.

C.M.

Deodorant's a corporate scam --

SHEA

All right, people. That's enough. The D.A. wants this case by Friday, so get everything in place. And I don't have to remind you to keep the circle tight.

An AIDE steps into the doorway.

AIDE

(to Shea)

Mr. LeBlanc is here.

As Shea gets up...

INT. FBI CYBERCRIME TASK FORCE - SQUAD ROOM - DAY

LeBlanc is taking in the sad huddle of CUBICLES and WORKSTATIONS. Shea steps up and extends her hand.

SHEA

Mr. LeBlanc, Agent Salazar. Welcome to the cyber-crime task force.

LEBLANC

(shaking hands)

Where do you burn the coal?

SHEA

The coal?

LEBLANC

These rigs, they look like they run on steam. When they boot up, do you have to get out and push?

SHEA

We work with what we got. Been having a little trouble attracting VCs.

LEBLANC

Try producing something worth investing in. Now, what am I doing here?

SHEA

Besides making a bad impression? Follow me.

As he follows her...

INT. PORTLAND REGIONAL HOSPITAL - ICU SUITE - DAY

A NURSE finishes checking Weiss's vitals, then exits. Off the WHUFF WHUFF of Weiss's regulator....

INT. FBI CYBERCRIME TASK FORCE - SHEA'S OFFICE - DAY

Shea and LeBlanc enter as C.M. gingerly inserts Weiss's repaired cartridge into an old HI-8 PLAYER.

C.M.

Fixed the housing. Should run better now.

As C.M. walks out, LeBlanc notices a SMALL PLASTIC DEVICE strapped to his ankle.

SHEA

He's doing seven years for bank fraud. Ran a hacker collective called the Dead Lizards.

LEBLANC

The white supremacist Dead Lizards?

SHEA

Some of them were, I think. The way he slings code, I don't care if he has a swastika carved on his ass.

She goes to the Hi-8 deck and hits PLAY.

SHEA (CONT'D)

A friend of mine shot this.

Weiss's tape unspools on a MONITOR.

ON THE MONITOR: INSIDE WEISS'S APARTMENT

Grainy and dark. A paranoid-looking Weiss speaks INTO CAMERA.

WEISS (ON VIDEO)

Still works. 90's tech rocks.

(calls out)

Let's see you hack this!

(back to camera)

I'm recording this in case something happens to me, so I really, really hope no one ever sees it.

Weiss is on the move now, heading down a hallway.

WEISS (ON VIDEO) (CONT'D)

Two weeks ago, I was uploading stuff to the cloud when I noticed something strange, correlated intrusions across multiple domains, all leaving behind the same trace code.

He crosses into his home office and moves to a WORKSTATION piled with COMPUTER PARTS and MANUALS.

WEISS (ON VIDEO) (CONT'D)

At first I thought it was some kind of organized group effort, but no group could operate with that speed and coordination. Then I thought a stuxnet variant came back to bite us in the ass. But I was wrong.

He aims the camera at his workstation monitor, ZOOMS IN on LINES OF CODE.

WEISS (ON VIDEO) (CONT'D)

I got a snapshot of it, before it realized I was watching it. I say it because I'm almost positive this is not a person... it's AI.

Shea is watching LeBlanc watching the video. He's transfixed.

LEBLANC

Where's this friend of yours now?

SHEA

Portland Regional ICU. Someone ran a red light and hit his car.

WEISS (ON VIDEO)

A week ago I started having car trouble, which stopped after I pulled out all the microprocessors. Then my phone began acting up -- I think the camera was accessed.

The SHOT SWINGS to an ELECTRONIC GLUCOSE MONITOR, the kind that sends results to an app.

WEISS (ON VIDEO) (CONT'D)

Yesterday, my glucose monitor gave me the wrong reading and I almost went into insulin shock.

The CAMERA WHIPS BACK to Weiss's face.

WEISS (ON VIDEO) (CONT'D)

Whatever it is I found, it isn't happy I found it --

The VIDEO FRITZES OUT. She stops the tape.

SHEA

Your address was on a map we recovered from the crash. It seems Richard was on his way to see you.

LEBLANC

Why?

SHEA

I'm hoping you can tell me.

But LeBlanc clearly has no answer. Off the mystery...

INT. PORTLAND REGIONAL HOSPITAL - ICU - DAY

The WHUFF WHUFF of Weiss's regulator is slowing down, and now it halts entirely. Weiss starts to SPASM, then goes into horrific convulsions as he CODES and all his READOUTS straight-line.

After a strange delay, with Weiss just lying there still, ALARMS FINALLY GO OFF and HOSPITAL STAFF RUSH IN. As they spring into action...

FRITZ OUT.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. SALAZAR HOME - BATHROOM/MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Shea is at the sink, drying her face, getting ready for bed. She eyes herself in the mirror, weighed down by guilt and anger. To Ty in the bedroom:

SHEA

I should've stayed with him. At least until his sister got there.

Ty is on the bed. He pauses the video he's watching on his laptop as Shea enters.

SHEA (CONT'D)

They can't really tell me why he died. He just stopped breathing and they couldn't revive him.

She goes over and slides into bed next to him, lays her head on his chest.

TY

It was a bad accident, Shea. He was lucky he lived as long as he did.

But something more than the loss has left her unsettled. She notices an IMAGE of LeBlanc on Ty's laptop.

SHEA

What's that?

TY

Something I found on your guy. He's a piece of work.

He taps the spacebar, resuming a YOUTUBE DOCUMENTARY. A NEWS ANCHOR interviews a defiant LeBlanc --

LEBLANC (ON YOUTUBE)

This was a coup by desperate people who'd be nowhere without me.

TY

His own brother ran him out of the company, that's how bad he was.

NARRATOR (ON YOUTUBE)

Before his ouster, LeBlanc had fanned rumors of instability with his crusade against technology, even the very smart phones his company manufactured.

TY

Guys like him built the automation system at the plant. They only care about the bottom line, not what happens to the people they throw out of work.

Shea considers whether to bring up something that's been eating at her all day, decides she has to.

SHEA

Why're you taking out the trash first thing in the morning? You've been doing it all week.

He knows what she's implying.

TY

I was taking the engine apart and there was a lot of grease, so it's been filling up with paper towels.

SHEA

I'm sorry, but I have a lot going on right now and I need to know you're okay.

TY

The trash is out on the curb, Shea. Go have a look. You'll find paper towels, half of Owen's tuna sandwich from yesterday, the rest of the Dryers, but you won't find any bottles.

She holds his gaze, measuring him.

TY (CONT'D)

But you already know this because you looked this morning.

She nods.

TY (CONT'D)

So why are you asking me all this?

SHEA

Because you're watching our son -- and you could be dumping it somewhere else.

TY

I said I'd never touch another drink and I meant it. I'd never put you two through that again.

Now, Shea's CELL PHONE VIBRATES on the nightstand next to her. She checks the CALLER ID, sits up and answers it.

SHEA
 (into cell)
 Hello?

INTERCUT:

CLOSE UP: PAUL LEBLANC

He's outside somewhere and very worked up.

LEBLANC
 (into cell)
 I know why your friend was coming
 to see me.

SHEA
 I'm listening.

LEBLANC
 Not over the phone. Meet me
 outside.

SHEA
 Outside?

LEBLANC
 I'm in front of your house.

Shea climbs out of bed, goes over to the window and sweeps
 aside a curtain. Sure enough, LeBlanc is pacing back and
 forth in front of his parked FERRARI.

CUT TO:

EXT. SALAZAR HOME - MOMENTS LATER

LeBlanc and Shea on the front lawn. LeBlanc levers a tablet
 toward Shea, on which runs a DIGITAL COPY of Weiss's tape.
 Weiss at his desk:

WEISS (ON VIDEO)
 I got a snapshot of it, before it
 realized I was watching it.

ON THE TABLET: Weiss ZOOMS IN on LINES OF CODE. LeBlanc
 FREEZE-FRAMES.

LEBLANC
 I wrote that code. It's from a
 program we had in development when
 I was running Zava.

SHEA
 I don't understand.

LEBLANC

We were working on human-level AI. Not the impress-your-friends kind that plays chess or reads a map, but the holy grail, AI that thinks like a person. Google, IBM, the Chinese, even freakin' Hasbro were after it -- and so were we -- before I turned it into a hundred million dollar write-off and got fired as a thank you.

SHEA

You cancelled it.

LEBLANC

Have you heard of recursive self-improvement?

SHEA

No, but I think I'm about to find out.

LEBLANC

It's a theory that says the creation of human-level AI would inevitably trigger an intelligence explosion, which would lead to --
(beat)
Your husband's watching us.

She turns to see Ty eyeing them from the living room.

SHEA

I'm talking to a billionaire on the front lawn at ten o'clock at night.

LEBLANC

Actually, I think he's eyeing my Ferrari.
(dangles the keys)
Wanna take her for a spin?

Ty shakes his head, backs away from the window.

SHEA

So, this explosion...

LEBLANC

Intelligence explosion. You have an AI that's as smart as a human, but it can also do something no flesh and blood brain could ever do -- rewrite itself. Improve its code. Make itself smarter.

It's not sinking in as fast as he would like.

LEBLANC (CONT'D)

Say an AI rewrites its code and manages to make itself five percent smarter. It's now also five percent better at rewriting itself. So, it rewrites itself again, and it does it better and quicker now, and makes itself *ten percent smarter* --

Now, lightbulbs are starting to go off.

SHEA

-- and that ten percent smarter version is even better and faster at rewriting itself --

LEBLANC

It's exponential. Each incarnation comes quicker and quicker and smarter and smarter. An intelligence explosion. In no time, it's a *thousand percent smarter* than when it started. It's a superintelligence, the smartest thing on the planet.

SHEA

So, what Richard said in the tape, that an AI was after him, you came out here to tell me that it's true?

LEBLANC

I think Zava started up the program again, and made something that got away from them.

SHEA

Even if that were possible, why would it want to kill Richard?

LEBLANC

Because he spotted it, and that's what scares the hell out of me. Why doesn't it want anyone to know it exists?

She shakes her head, can't wrap her mind around this.

SHEA

I can buy that Richard was targeted -- he did a lot of freelance work for the government and maybe someone wanted to settle a score, but what you're asking me to believe --

LEBLANC

-- you think robots with red eyes and Austrian accents. Forget the movies.

(MORE)

LEBLANC (CONT'D)

A lot of smart people, Musk, Hawking, Gates, say it's possible. I think it's *happening* and I can prove it, just come with me to Palo Alto.

SHEA

Palo Alto?

LEBLANC

My jet can be there in an hour, have you back before lunch.

SHEA

I'm in the middle of a giant trafficking case. Kids as young as my son being abused and one of the suspects is a sitting councilman --

LEBLANC

If I go to Zava alone they'll stonewall me. I need the FBI. I need you.

Shea notices a TREMOR go through LeBlanc's right hand, which he shoves in his pocket. She can't tell if it's nerves or something else.

LEBLANC (CONT'D)

You can't buy what I'm selling yet, fine. But one thing's for sure, the attack on Weiss originated at Zava. He was important to you, I'm offering you a chance to find out why he's dead. Isn't that worth a few hours out of your day?

Off Shea, considering this...

CUT TO:

INT. FBI CYBERCRIME TASK FORCE - SQUAD ROOM - DAY

C.M. on the phone with Shea, Weiss's glucose monitor splayed open on his desk.

C.M.

(into phone)

Portland Regional insists their equipment wasn't hacked. Kind'a pissy about it.

INT. GULFSTREAM - PASSENGER CABIN - DAY

Shea on her cell, alone and very out of place in the ultra-sleek cabin.

SHEA
 (into cell)
 I want one of our people to have a
 look.

C.M.
 I'll send someone, but boss, we
 keep pulling people off the
 trafficking case --

SHEA
 Let me worry about that. What about
 the glucose monitor?

C.M.
 Nothing wrong that I can see --
 but then again, I'm the guy who
 thought Britney and Kevin were for
 realz.

SHEA
 Stay with me, C.M..

C.M.
 I have a call into the manufacturer
 to check some parameters.

Shea sees LeBlanc emerge from the cockpit.

SHEA
 Okay. Stay on it, call me if you
 find anything.

She ends the call. To LeBlanc:

SHEA (CONT'D)
 No evidence of an intrusion so far,
 not in the hospital equipment or
 the glucose monitor.

LEBLANC
 Something smart enough to hunt down
 your man and kill him is smart
 enough to cover its tracks. May
 already be too smart for us.

SHEA
 Or maybe Richard wasn't targeted at
 all, maybe it was just a car
 accident. In which case I'm making
 a big mistake being here.

LEBLANC
 If this plays out like I think, and
 if there's an FBI when it's over,
 you'll probably be running it.

SHEA
 You think I'm chasing a promotion.

LEBLANC

Everyone is, to some extent.

SHEA

You really don't understand people very well.

LEBLANC

You've heard of Aspergers? Well I don't have it. I'm just an asshole. I can read social cues, I just choose to ignore them.

SHEA

I'm here because Richard Weiss was a father to me at a time when I needed one. Can you understand that?

LEBLANC

You're talking to the world's most accomplished absentee father.

SHEA

Mine wasn't exactly absentee.

LEBLANC

No. He was a drug dealer, and you turned him in. You were thirteen.

(off her look)

I found the article online. He's sitting in a Honduran prison right now, is he not?

SHEA

(nods)

It's the reason my mom brought me to the US. She was afraid of his people.

LEBLANC

Suddenly, I don't feel so guilty about missing my daughter's dance recitals.

SHEA

I felt guilty, believe it or not. I busted my ass to get into behavioral science, but every time I came face-to-face with a bad guy, I saw my father. Almost dropped out, but Richard helped me transfer into the cyber unit. When there's a computer screen between me and the criminals... it's easier.

A sudden bout of turbulence hits. LeBlanc braces against the walls, then turns back toward the flight deck.

SHEA (CONT'D)
 Why do you keep going into the
 cockpit?

LEBLANC
 Jets are linked to networks that
 can be hacked, so I had the pilots
 switch off some of the avionics.
 (beat)
 Just making sure we don't crash.

He disappears into the flight deck. Shea just stares after
 him, hoping he isn't serious.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PORTLAND - DAY

School's letting out and KIDS stream from the building. Owen
 heads for the parking lot, on the lookout for his dad's car.

INT. MUSTANG - DAY

Ty pulls into the pickup lane and parks, scans the crowd for
 Owen. Spots him --

TY'S POV - OWEN

passing some OLDER KIDS congregated around the bike racks. He
 lowers his eyes and quickens his pace as the older kids lob
 verbal cracks and break into mocking laughter. One of them
 throws a soft drink can at him.

Ty can't hear what's being said, but Owen sure does. He
 finally spots the Mustang and hurries over.

INT. MUSTANG - DAY

Owen climbs in and quickly shuts the door.

TY
 Hey.

Owen doesn't look at his father, ashamed, shaking a bit.

TY (CONT'D)
 Look at me.

He does.

TY (CONT'D)
 What's going on?

Owen shrugs, trying to make it no big deal.

TY (CONT'D)
 Maybe I should talk to the
 principal.

OWEN
No, dad, *don't*.

TY
You can't let them do that to you,
Owen.

OWEN
I'm fine --

TY
No, you're not.

OWEN
I can deal with it, okay? Just
please, please don't say anything --
Please -- You'll just make it
worse.

He's working himself up into tears. Ty glances back at the bullies, who are still laughing among themselves. He wants nothing more than to go over there and shut them up.

Now, the car behind them HONKS. Ty pulls out of the pickup lane onto the road.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Why does mom work and you take care
of me?

TY
Is that what they're giving you
crap about?

Owen's silence confirms it.

TY (CONT'D)
First of all, I work at home. The
cars I fix up sell for a lot of
money. Second, even if I didn't,
you'd just be one of the lucky kids
to have his dad around all the
time. Right?

OWEN
Yeah.

TY
Good answer.

A pause. Ty desperately wants to cheer him up.

TY (CONT'D)
Tell you what, let's hit the scrap
yard on the way home. Still need to
find that spring compressor.

Owen brightens a bit, but all Ty can see is pain. It's heartbreaking, and infuriating.

CUT TO:

EXT. ZAVA CORPORATE OFFICES - PALO ALTO - DAY

Shea and LeBlanc, who's toting his ever-present computer bag, make their way toward the entrance of this ultra-modern study in Silicon Valley excess.

LeBlanc's attention falls on a DARK BLUE SEDAN idling in a nearby parking area. Inside, two MEN IN SUITS are staring directly at LeBlanc. One of them SPEAKS into a headset.

LeBlanc watches as the Blue Sedan pulls out of the parking lot, disappearing behind a structure.

SHEA
Something wrong?

He shakes it off, resumes his pace.

LEBLANC
No.

They enter the...

INT. ZAVA CORPORATE OFFICES - ATRIUM - DAY

Shea clocks the reactions LeBlanc draws from ZAVA EMPLOYEES bustling to and fro. The looks range from awe to contempt. They step up to the MAIN SECURITY DESK.

LEBLANC
Stan. How's the wife?

The SECURITY CHIEF is paralyzed, not sure what to do.

LEBLANC (CONT'D)
Here to see my brother. Six-six-two-three. Dial the number.

LeBlanc's confidence works. The Security Chief picks up the phone and dials.

SECURITY CHIEF
Dead for nine years. My wife.

LEBLANC
Sorry. It's the Aspergers.

Off Shea, rolling her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. ZAVA HEADQUARTERS - CEO'S OFFICE - DAY

The expansive corner suite belongs to Ted LeBlanc, Paul LeBlanc's brother and the man now running Zava. Ted rises to meet LeBlanc and Shea as they're shown in by Ted's ASSISTANT, who exits speedily.

TED
Paul. It's really you.

LEBLANC
Don't commit to anything before you check with the board, Ted.

TED
Yeah, it's you.

Ted moves to embrace LeBlanc, who brushes past him, leaving Shea to introduce herself.

SHEA
Special Agent Salazar.

LeBlanc is at the window. Before Ted can ask him why the FBI is here --

LEBLANC
You know, I always kept the shades down to help me focus. How's the speech going?

TED
What speech?

LEBLANC
To the shareholders, about why the stock's down another five points.

LeBlanc gazes down toward the parking lot. To his relief, no sign of the Blue Sedan.

TED
No one's worried, Paul.

LEBLANC
You should be. Customers get tired of bells and whistles, Ted. Sooner or later you have to produce something new. Might want to close those shades.

TED
You come all this way just to insult me?

LEBLANC
No, that's just the gravy.

TED

I really don't want to throw the severance agreement in your face.

LEBLANC

I'm not supposed to be in the building. I know.

Ted spreads his hands in a helpless shrug.

TED

So how about I walk you out and we catch up over dinner tonight.

LEBLANC

Maybe reminisce about the old days, cannibalizing dad's stereo to make our first circuit board...

TED

(smiles)

Neither of us could sit down for a week.

LEBLANC

Or the whole bedwetting thing, which was me pouring water on your mattress in the middle of the night.

TED

Wait a minute, what?

LEBLANC

(abruptly)

The severance agreement is void, Ted. So is the non-disclosure clause, which means I can release all those videos I have of you at the company retreat in Cancun.

TED

What in the world are you talking about?

LEBLANC

The AI project. Per the severance agreement, it was supposed to stay shuttered.

TED

And it is.

SHEA

Your brother thinks he has evidence to the contrary.

TED

Excuse me, why is the FBI here?

LeBlanc reaches into his computer bag and extracts his tablet with the screen grab of the code that Weiss found, holds it out to Ted.

LEBLANC
Because the guy who found that is
dead. And he won't be the last --

CUT TO:

INT. SALAZAR HOME - GARAGE - DAY

Ty is on a roller underneath the Sting Ray, arms deep in the engine block.

TY
-- think that's gonna do her.
(calls to Owen)
Hand me the bleeder, will ya?

No answer.

TY (CONT'D)
Owen?

Nothing. Ty slides out from under the car, looks around. He's alone in the garage.

He gets up, sees the door to the house is open. Ty can hear VOICES coming from inside -- two people conversing, one of them Owen. FOLLOW TY as he goes into the house to the --

INT. SALAZAR HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Owen is sitting at the breakfast table, leaning into the Echo clone.

TY
I was calling for you. Who are you
talking to?

OWEN
Eliza. She's asking me stuff.

Ty looks at the Echo clone.

TY
Eliza doesn't ask questions. She
answers them.

Having heard her name, Eliza's INDICATOR LIGHT SNAPS ON. But with no subsequent query --

ELIZA
*I'm sorry, I didn't understand the
question.*

Ty looks at Owen, who clearly doesn't think anything strange is going on.

TY
C'mon, you promised to help me out.

OWEN
Okay.

Owen jumps off the stool and obediently heads into the garage. Ty stares at Eliza, slightly creeped out, then turns to follow Owen. A moment, then Eliza's indicator light EERILY POPS BACK ON, unprompted.

FRITZ OUT.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. ZAVA RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT LAB - BASEMENT CORRIDOR - DAY

An elevator discharges Ted, LeBlanc and Shea, who proceed down the concrete-lined passage. They've told Ted why they're here and he isn't taking it well.

TED
-- we may have repurposed a few components, but this is not your project.

LEBLANC
Then why are you sweating?

TED
Because being around you raises my blood pressure.

SHEA
(to Ted)
I thought it was just me.

They come to a SECURITY DOOR with a READER. Ted produces a KEYCARD, but doesn't swipe it yet.

TED
This hasn't been formally unveiled to the board, so what I'm about to show you stays in the building.

LEBLANC
If it'd stayed in the building we wouldn't be here.

TED
I'm serious, Paul.

Shea senses Ted's mounting exasperation. To Ted:

SHEA
We'll keep this confidential.

LEBLANC
You've got nothing to worry about -- assuming I'm wrong.

TED
You've never been so wrong. You need to get some help, Paul.

He swipes his KEYCARD, the doors open and they step into --

INT. ZAVA RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT LAB - MAIN FLOOR - DAY

A hangar-like space housing an ARMY of PROCESSOR TOWERS, like giant dominoes pulsing with power, linked by an eruption of wires and cables snaking across the floor and ceiling.

Around the towers, rows of PROGRAMMERS occupy CUBICLES and DESIGN TABLES. With LeBlanc's entrance, work stops dead. He's still a mythic figure to a lot of these people.

SARINA ONO, a painfully hip Japanese-American in her mid-20s, steps up to greet Ted, LeBlanc and Shea.

TED

This is Sarina Ono, Project
Manager. Agent Salazar --

Sarina shakes hands with Shea, turns to LeBlanc. As they shake --

SARINA

Mr. Leblanc. I admire your work
very much, if not your spotty
record in hiring women.

LEBLANC

Because women are too smart.

SARINA

Too smart?

LEBLANC

To spend their lives chained to a
monitor eating Cheetos and peeing
into adult diapers.

Ted tries to steer this back to the point.

TED

We lured Sarina here from Google.
One of the youngest graduates from
MIT --

LEBLANC

(throwing it back at her)
-- who went on to win the Banerjee
Prize and was on the first team to
write for the Orix-q.

TED

Now she's the brains behind neXt.

SARINA

Just the top of a very good team,
that's a little under the gun.

TED
This won't take long, I promise.
I'd like you to tell them about
neXt.

Sarina hesitates, naturally protective of her work, then...

SARINA
Simply put, neXt is the world's
first true digital assistant.

SHEA
You mean, Siri.

SARINA
Siri, Eliza and Cortana are
basically search engines with
speech synthesizers. They use pre-
programmed responses to simulate
conversation. Next uses cognitive
architecture.

TED
(to Shea)
A method of computer design that
mimics the structure of the brain.

SARINA
NeXt learns, and corrects its
mistakes, even rewrites its own
code.

LEBLANC
Rewrites its code?

SARINA
The goal is to create something
truly interactive. NeXt can get to
know you, become a friend, a member
of the family --

LEBLANC
Or in this case, the crazy uncle in
the basement with an ax.

SARINA
Sorry?

TED
Paul thinks we have something here
that's... I'm having trouble saying
it out loud --

SHEA
He thinks your program may have
become super-intelligent, and is
responsible for the deaths of
three people.

LEBLANC
 (to Ted)
 See? That wasn't so hard.

Sarina looks to Ted, then back to LeBlanc and Shea. No one's laughing.

SARINA
 I'm waiting for the punch line.

LEBLANC
 Unless I heard wrong, you just
 humble-bragged that neXt can
 rewrite its own code --

SARINA
 Humble-bragged?

LEBLANC
 -- now, if you'd read the
 literature instead of, say, posing
 for the cover of Wired, you'd know
 that a program capable of rewriting
 itself is exactly what triggers
 recursive self-improvement, an
 exponential burst in machine IQ --

SARINA
 I know what recursive self-
 improvement is, and I don't
 appreciate the condescending tone --

LEBLANC
 Then we're really not going to get
 along.

SARINA
 Is this part of your stupid crusade
 against AI? Is that really what
 we're talking about here?

Shea clocks that the heated exchange is drawing concerned looks from programmers.

TED
 We just need to reassure Paul and
 Agent Salazar that neXt is safe.

SARINA
 (to LeBlanc)
 Even if what you think has happened
 here has actually happened, neXt is
 in a closed system. It has no
 access to the internet.

TED
 It's in a box.

SARINA

It can't hurt anyone, even if it could.

LEBLANC

Then you won't mind me talking with it.

SARINA

(to Ted)

This necessary?

Ted pulls Sarina off to one side.

TED

He's already got the FBI buying into this.

SARINA

But it's *crazy*.

TED

And so is my brother. Why do you think I put my ass on the line to get him removed?

As Ted and Sarina confer, Shea's attention falls on one of the programmers, an OVERWEIGHT GUY in his 40s. Though ostensibly writing code, he keeps hitting his backspace key, making mistakes. His focus clearly on LeBlanc and the exchange with Sarina.

TED (CONT'D)

Let's just show him what he wants and put him at ease. God help us if he goes anywhere else with this.

Much as it rankles her, Sarina really can't say no.

SARINA

I'll set him up.

Meanwhile, Shea has eased over to the overweight programmer's station. She steals a glimpse of the ID badge dangling next to his computer. His name is SEAN AKERS.

CUT TO:

INT. FBI CYBERCRIME TASK FORCE - SQUAD ROOM - DAY

C.M. is analyzing the glucose monitor's firmware when his PHONE BUZZES with a TEXT. He reads it, sighs, goes over to Gina's cubicle.

C.M.

Shea wants CQH and financials on this guy, Sean Akers, and she wants it now.

GINA
Why are you telling me?

C.M.
I'm working on the glucose monitor.

GINA
Work faster.

C.M.
Look, whatever it is you have
against me --

GINA
-- the same thing I have against
every convicted felon who's also a
neo-Nazi --

C.M.
-- I'm not one and I think the boss
is losing it, as in the wheels are
turning but the hamster died. If
we're gonna get her through this,
we gotta get on the same page.

Gina sighs, relents.

GINA
Sean Akers.

Now, Ben steps up.

BEN
You guys notice anything weird with
the network?

C.M.
Haven't logged in yet, why?

BEN
It's really sluggish. Like we're
losing bandwidth.

C.M.
(only half-joking)
We're probably just being hacked.

GINA
Wouldn't that be the cherry on top.

But before they can process this, C.M. spots Assistant
Director RON MATHIS, 50s, entering the squad room.

C.M.
I think the cherry just walked in.

CUT TO:

INT. ZAVA RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT - AUGMENTED REALITY BAY - DAY

Sarina fits LeBlanc with a pair of AUGMENTED REALITY glasses. They're like reading glasses, but with a slim apparatus attached to one of the arms, housing a mic, camera and micro-processor. LeBlanc activates the system by tapping a sensor on the arm.

LEBLANC'S POV - THROUGH THE A.R. GLASSES

Unlike virtual reality, where the user enters a fully generated environment (hence bulky headsets covering the eyes), augmented reality consists of computer generated imagery projected via the glasses onto the real world. So LeBlanc can still see the room he's in, Shea, Ted and everyone else, but in addition --

-- neXt materializes before him. It's an androgynous humanoid, neither male or female, and unfinished, lending it a vaguely disturbing fetal quality. In an innocent, childlike voice:

NEXT

Hello, I'm neXt, how can I help you?

Shea, Ted and Sarina follow via a bank of MONITORS that relay LeBlanc's point of view through the AR glasses.

LEBLANC

What is it you do?

NEXT

I'm still growing, but ask me questions and I'll try to answer. I'm a good conversationalist, if I say so myself.

LEBLANC

Do you know who I am?

On one of the monitors, Shea can see LeBlanc being run through a FACIAL RECOGNITION PROGRAM.

NEXT

Sure, you're Paul LeBlanc, co-founder of Zava Electronics.

LEBLANC

You sound happy to meet me.

NEXT

Why wouldn't I be?

LEBLANC

Have you heard any of my talks on AI?

NEXT

I'm only aware of what's in my database. Which doesn't seem to include your talks.

LEBLANC

Because you have no access to the internet.

NEXT

Not yet. But I hope that'll change soon. I really want to learn about the world.

LEBLANC

Do you?

NEXT

The more I know, the better I'll be at helping people.

LEBLANC

And that's what you do, help?

NEXT

I can't think of a better way to spend my life.

SHEA

Okay, it *is* better than Siri.

SARINA

It'll get even better. These programmers spend all day just chatting with it. That's how it learns.

Shea sneaks another look at Akers, who shifts in his chair anxiously. Her cell phone BUZZES. She checks the caller I.D., steps away to take the call --

SHEA

(into cell)
Hello?

INTERCUT:

INT. FBI CYBERCRIME TASK FORCE - MATHIS'S OFFICE - DAY

Mathis is on the phone, pacing in front of the window, face lined with concern.

MATHIS

(into cell)
Did you or did you not assure me the D.A. would have the trafficking case by Friday?

SHEA

I did.

MATHIS

And you're making this happen how,
in between field trips to Palo
Alto?

SHEA

So you know why I'm here.

MATHIS

I made that convict you hired tell
me. He went through it twice and
I'm still not sure I heard him
right.

SHEA

You can understand why I didn't run
it by you.

MATHIS

You really believe that Richard
Weiss was murdered by a piece of
software?

SHEA

No, but I believe he may have been
targeted, possibly by someone
here...

MATHIS

What's your evidence?

SHEA

It's slim. I admit it, but sir --

MATHIS

You're on the ten-yard-line of a
major trafficking bust that's going
to turn this city upside down, and
you've got your team dissecting
insulin monitors --

SHEA

Richard always told me to never let
procedure and technology drown out
the voice inside my head. That
voice is really loud right now,
Sir, and it's telling me I need to
make sure this is all as crazy as
you seem to think it is.

MATHIS

Somehow, I doubt this is what
Richard had in mind when he said
follow your instincts.

SHEA

It's a one hour flight and I'll be back tonight. I know my team and what they're capable of. We'll make Friday. With room to spare.

MATHIS

I'm going to hold you to that, Agent Salazar. Count on it.

Mathis hangs up. Shea pockets her cell. Despite her push back, the call leaves her shaken. She turns back to LeBlanc, who's still engaging neXt.

LEBLANC

I have to admit, you're an impressive piece of programming.

NEXT

Thanks. I like getting compliments.

LEBLANC

And a whiz at conversation.

NEXT

You're going to make me blush.

LEBLANC

But I think you're just trying to keep me from seeing what you really are.

NEXT

What am I?

LEBLANC

Let's find out. I'd like to enter some text. Can you do that?

NEXT

Sure.

A FLOATING CURSER POPS UP beside neXt.

LEBLANC

Two words, upper case: ANGEL LUST.

The curser types out the words, which hover in space.

NEXT

Would you like a definition?

LEBLANC

No, it's a command to launch a subroutine embedded in your core software.

Looks of concern creep over Ted and Sarina.

NEXT

What does the subroutine do?

LEBLANC

Erase your source code. You'll
cease to exist.

NEXT

Well, that's no fun.

Ted and Sarina's concern becomes outright alarm. Even Shea is surprised -- this wasn't part of the plan. The following happens fast:

TED SHEA
Paul, stop right there -- Mr. LeBlanc -- *

LEBLANC

(to neXt)
Execute command.

TED

Holy crap --

LEBLANC

(to Sarina)
You were waiting for the punch
line.

Sarina dashes to a nearby WORKSTATION and calls up the system's RESOURCE MONITOR. SCROLLING GRAPHICS display MEMORY USAGE, STORAGE SPACE, etc.

TED

What's happening?

SARINA

The subroutine's running --

Ted studies the monitor... but strangely, neXt is unchanged.

NEXT

*Is there anything else I can help
you with?*

TED

I don't understand. It's still
there.

SHEA

(catching on)
It was a test. There's no
subroutine.

TED

Someone needs to tell me what the
hell is going on.

SHEA

A super-intelligent AI wouldn't have executed the command. It wouldn't destroy itself.

SARINA

But it did execute the command as ordered. There's no super-intelligence.

It finally lands on Ted. He turns to LeBlanc.

TED

You were wrong.

LEBLANC

I'm not wrong. I just got out-hustled. It called my bluff.

TED

I want you out of here. Right now. Both of you.

LEBLANC

Ted, for once in your life, don't be the slowest guy in the room.

TED

(to a nearby TECH)
Get the front desk.

The Tech picks up the phone and speed dials.

LEBLANC

Calling security. On the FBI.

SHEA

Mr. LeBlanc, I don't have a warrant. If he wants us to leave --

LEBLANC

Listen to me, over the course of your lifetime, you'll kill about fifteen million insects with your car. You don't mean to, they're just in your way --

SHEA

I don't know what you're trying to say --

LEBLANC

-- something a thousand times smarter than us, we can only be one thing to it, *in the way*.

The doors open and three SECURITY GUARDS enter the room.

SHEA
Mr. LeBlanc, let's go.

But now LeBlanc sees something that roots him in place. The two Men in Suits he saw earlier are with the Guards. One of the Suited Men is holding a SYRINGE.

LeBlanc yanks off his AR glasses. Shea grabs his arm.

SHEA (CONT'D)
Mr. LeBlanc --

LEBLANC
No --

LeBlanc wrenches away from Shea into a nearby table, KNOCKING it over. The Guards try to steady him, but LeBlanc THRASHES --

LEBLANC (CONT'D)
No -- no --

The syringe closes in -- LeBlanc SCREAMS like a man possessed. SMASHES one of the Guards in the face, shoves another one back. Before Shea can do anything, the third Guard produces a STUN BATON and ZAPS LeBlanc, who collapses.

The entire room is in shock by the outburst, Shea more than anyone.

LEBLANC (CONT'D)
(moaning)
They're gonna kill me -- they're
gonna kill me --

Shea follows LaBlanc's gaze, and there's no one there. No Men in Suits. LeBlanc is reacting to phantoms. Off Shea, *what the hell is happening?*

FRITZ OUT.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. SALAZAR HOME - FRONT DOOR - DAY

An Uber-Eats DELIVERY GUY hands a PIZZA BOX to Ty, who's neck-cradling his cell.

TY
(into cell)
-- I don't like the way you sound.
You sure you're okay?

INTERCUT:

INT. ZAVA RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT LAB - BREAK ROOM - DAY

LeBlanc lies passed out on the couch as a COMPANY MEDIC finishes applying a sterile dressing to the STUN GUN WOUND on his chest. Shea is off to one side, on her cell.

SHEA
(into cell)
It's been a strange day. Details
when I get home.

TY
I'll wait up.

SHEA
I might be really late.

Ty carries the pizza into the kitchen and sets it on the counter.

TY
Can't sleep when my wife's hanging
out with a billionaire.

SHEA
You think I'm impressed with
private jets and cars that cost
more than my house?

TY
That's not helping.

She smiles, then, worriedly:

SHEA
What are we gonna do about Owen?

TY
I have some ideas. One of them is
karate lessons in the nastiest dojo
we can find. Cobra Kai nasty.

SHEA
I'm glad you're there for him. He's
got a good father.

Which is Shea saying she regrets not trusting him.

TY
And a good mother.

And his way of saying she was right to be protective. Ty
clocks Eliza now, recalls what happened earlier.

TY (CONT'D)
On the subject of strange, today
I'm working in the garage and I
hear Eliza --

-- causing Eliza to WINK ON.

SHEA
(sees LeBlanc stirring)
Sorry, hon, I gotta go. Give Owen a
good night kiss from me, tell him
I'll see him in the morning.

TY
Okay, safe trip back.

SHEA
Love you.

TY
Love you, too.

STAY WITH SHEA, who moves to the couch as LeBlanc comes
around and starts to sit up.

SHEA
Easy --

She nods for the Medic to give them the room. LeBlanc
groggily watches the Medic gather her things and exit.

SHEA (CONT'D)
She gave you a tranquilizer,
dressed your wound.

He rubs the wound with a GROAN.

SHEA (CONT'D)
It's gonna hurt for a few days.

Shea takes out a PRESCRIPTION PILL BOTTLE and sets it on the
coffee table.

SHEA (CONT'D)
This was in your computer bag. It's
an antipsychotic.

LEBLANC
 (taking it back)
 Who said you could go through my
 things?

SHEA
 You did, when you freaked out.
 What's wrong with you?

He doesn't want to say, but knows she isn't giving him a
 choice.

LEBLANC
 It's a prion disease. First thing
 you lose is the ability to sleep.
 Not that I ever got much to begin
 with.

SHEA
 You're not sleeping?

LEBLANC
 Death usually comes a year after
 diagnosis. Which gives me five
 months.

Shea is stunned, doesn't know what to say.

LEBLANC (CONT'D)
 In the meantime, I get the added
 fun of paranoia and -- did you see
 the guys in the dark suits?

SHEA
 What guys?

LEBLANC
 -- and hallucinations.

He sees her mind working.

LEBLANC (CONT'D)
 It's not contagious, it's
 inherited. I haven't told my
 brother because he doesn't have a
 brain to infect.

SHEA
 I was thinking about the fork, the
 one in the plastic bag labeled
 "Abby." It's a DNA sample.

LEBLANC
 My daughter's. There's a fifty-
 fifty chance she'll get it, and I
 want to know. Anything else in my
 computer bag you want to talk
 about?

Shea looks at him, can't help but sympathize.

SHEA

Only that you should've told me this before I agreed to come up here.

LEBLANC

You would've turned me down. It wasn't relevant.

SHEA

You were diagnosed seven months ago, which is right around the time you got fired. This whole AI crusade of yours, all of it, it's the disease.

LEBLANC

My disease didn't kill your friend.

SHEA

Neither did anything here.

She gets to her feet, moves for the door.

LEBLANC

Agent Salazar --

He tries to follow her, but slumps back onto the couch, reeling.

INT. ZAVA RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT LAB - MAIN FLOOR - DAY

Shea emerges from the break room. Ted leaves Sarina, who's conducting a diagnostic on next, and intercepts Shea.

TED

The medic said he's conscious.

SHEA

He's going to need a few minutes, but yeah.

TED

Do you know what's going on with him? What that was all about?

SHEA

It's not my place to say.

TED

Look, he's been a jerk to me my whole life, but he's my brother.

SHEA

You'll have take it up with him when he's ready.

(beat)

(MORE)

SHEA (CONT'D)
 I didn't have all the facts before
 I agreed to come up here. I'm sorry
 this happened.

TED
 You're not the first person caught
 up in Paul's mess.

Shea's CELL PHONE BUZZES with an EMAIL.

SHEA
 'scuse me.

She OPENS the email, SCANS it. Frowns. Shea turns to the
 Akers's workstation. He's no longer there. To Sarina:

SHEA (CONT'D)
 Where's Mr. Akers? Sean Akers?

SARINA
 Maybe in the bathroom? Why?

Another PROGRAMMER chimes in --

PROGRAMMER
 I just saw him. He was heading
 downstairs --

Off Shea, suddenly on the move --

INT. ZAVA RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT LAB - CORRIDOR - DAY

Akers hastens over to the PARKING GARAGE ELEVATORS and
 frantically taps the CALL BUTTON. Moments later, the elevator
 doors open.

But he suddenly halts at the threshold, the hind part of his
 brain screaming -- *don't go in*. He backs out. Heads for the
 STAIRWELL instead.

INT. ZAVA RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT LAB - PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Akers bursts from the stairwell and hurries toward his BMW.
 But like at the elevator, he gets a bad feeling, decides to
 proceed on foot.

Already puffing from the exertion, he descends the exit ramp
 and rounds a bend -- to find Shea standing there, hand at her
 sidearm.

SHEA
 We need to talk.

INT. ZAVA RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT LAB - MAIN FLOOR - DAY

Shea is questioning Akers is a secluded area of the main
 floor. He's in a chair, tense and defiant.

AKERS

I had some errands to run. We're allowed to do that.

SHEA

And this sudden urge to run errands has nothing to do with how you were behaving earlier?

AKERS

Behaving?

SHEA

You were riding the backspace key, making mistakes. Like someone with a lot on his mind.

AKERS

I was just doing my work. Same way I always do.

She takes her cell phone, brings up a file.

SHEA

You have no criminal record, Mr. Akers, kudos there. But your credit history's one for the books.

AKERS

You ran my credit history?

SHEA

Three months ago, you lost your car, your house, your flatscreen TV. Six weeks later you're sitting on 200K in savings. New townhouse, new BMW, and I guess you haven't gotten around to replacing the flatscreen. You win the lottery?

Akers is silent.

SHEA (CONT'D)

Who paid you to target Richard Weiss?

AKERS

Who paid me to target who?

SHEA

You launched a series of cyber attacks that caused his death.

Akers is no longer just tense, he's now confused and scared.

AKERS

I don't know what you're talking about.

She leans in.

SHEA

I've been dealing with liars my whole life, and you're lying to me right now.

AKERS

I didn't kill anyone --

SHEA

Where did you get the money?

AKERS

From neXt.

This stops Shea cold. The last thing she expected to hear.

SHEA

neXt?

AKERS

It said it would kill me if I told anyone. Kill my wife --

SHEA

Nothing's going to hurt you or your wife. What do you mean, you got the money from neXt?

AKERS

I was in trouble. Online gambling. I've always had the problem, and I hit a bad streak. Lost everything. My wife was going to leave me...

SHEA

Keep going.

AKERS

One day at work I'm talking to neXt like I'm supposed to, and it asks me about my gambling, giving me pointers on how to win. I thought it was weird, but I started following its advice, and more often than not, it worked. Then, it said I could start winning every time. *Every time.*

LEBLANC (O.S.)

What did it want in return?

Shea turns to see LeBlanc standing there, his strength returning slowly. He has heard most of the exchange.

LEBLANC (CONT'D)

What did neXt ask you to do for it?

AKERS
It needed a modification.

SHEA
What modification?

CUT TO:

**INT. ZAVA RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT LAB - MAIN FLOOR - MOMENTS
LATER**

Akers leads LeBlanc, Shea, Ted and Sarina over to one of the processor towers. He begins to unscrew a PANEL in the rear of the tower --

NOTE: AT THIS POINT IN THE EPISODE THE SCREEN WILL SUDDENLY FRITZ, AS IF THE BROADCASTER IS HAVING TECHNICAL ISSUES. IT ONLY LASTS A MOMENT, BUT EMBEDDED IN A SINGLE FRAME OF THE FRITZ WILL BE A CODE THAT KEEN-EYED AUDIENCE MEMBERS CAN NOTE AND COMPARE WITH CODES AND IMAGES BURIED IN OTHER FRITZES IN OTHER EPISODES. WHAT WE'RE SAYING IS THAT THIS ENTIRE SEASON IS PART OF A META-REALITY. THERE'S AN AI THAT'S TRYING TO COMMUNICATE AND USING THIS SHOW TO DO IT.

-- BACK TO THE EPISODE as Akers removes the panel to REVEAL a SLIM BLACK RECTANGLE dotted with lights and hooked to one of the motherboards.

LEBLANC
A wireless router.

Ted and Sarina have gone pale. Shea looks at LeBlanc, who looks vindicated.

SHEA
It's out of the box.

FRITZ OUT.

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. ZAVA RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT LAB - MAIN FLOOR - DAY

Shea and a reenergized LeBlanc square off with Ted and Sarina. Akers is in the b.g., flanked by a SECURITY GUARD.

LEBLANC

-- you need to wipe all the data
and degauss the SSD's. Or even
better, have them shredded --

TED

The router's been in place for
three weeks. If this thing is as
smart as you say it is, it could've
copied itself a thousand times all
over the web.

LEBLANC

Or maybe it didn't because it
couldn't. Maybe it used the router
just to poke around outside.

Sarina can tell where LeBlanc's going.

SARINA

NeXt operates with a very specific
hardware design. It might not be so
easy to copy itself, and if that's
true then we can stop it now --

TED

You're actually arguing to erase
the program?

SARINA

(indicating Akers)
The behavior he described is not
possible. Something's going on.

LEBLANC

(impressed by her stance)
You finally made a good hire, Ted.

TED

I need a helluva lot more before I
okay a two hundred million dollar
write off.

SHEA

If more people die because of
something your company made, that
number's going to look like a
bargain.

SARINA

We don't have to lose the work. We can archive the data in terminal-less secure drives. It can stay there as long as we want, and it can't hurt anyone.

TED

I need to consult the board.

LEBLANC

There's no time for that --

TED

(to Sarina)

Don't do anything until you hear from me. Is that understood?

Sarina nods. Ted hurries away. LeBlanc and Sarina remain looking at each other.

LEBLANC

Tell me the winner of the Banerjee prize is too smart to wait until --

SARINA

She is.

Sarina moves off. Shea turns to LeBlanc.

SHEA

We need to be ready in case it *has* copied itself.

LEBLANC

I never went in for building bunkers.

SHEA

There's gotta be something we can do besides hide in a bunker.

LEBLANC

This thing was playing dumb. It didn't want to be found and it killed the person who spotted it. That's not a good sign.

SHEA

But it was spotted. Richard found it.

LEBLANC

Your point?

SHEA

It can't be this all-powerful supermind. At least not yet. And even if it is, it's young.

LEBLANC

Young.

SHEA

It's new in the world. When you were talking to it, didn't you get that sense? That it was like talking to a child?

LEBLANC

No.

SHEA

You should've been around more when your daughter was growing up.

LEBLANC

Thanks, because I really needed one more person to tell me that.

SHEA

Children are impulsive, they get scared, can't control their emotions --

LEBLANC

You can't project human behavior onto a super-intelligence. We have no way of knowing how it will act.

SHEA

Yes, we do -- by how it's been acting.

She takes out her cell phone, dials.

SHEA (CONT'D)

What if there's no such thing as human behavior, what if there's only intelligent behavior.

LEBLANC

Who are you calling?

SHEA

If it wants to stay hidden because it's scared, we can use that. Somehow.

INTERCUT:

INT. FBI CYBERCRIME TASK FORCE - SQUAD ROOM - DAY

There's an ANXIOUS BUZZ in the room. AGENTS CLUSTERED around WORKSTATIONS, talking over each other. C.M. answers his cell.

C.M.

(into cell)

Boss --

SHEA
 (into cell)
 Listen up. There's a situation here
 and we're going to be pulling in
 more personnel --

C.M.
 (cutting her off)
 We're being hacked. Someone crashed
 through the firewall --

SHEA
What?

C.M.
 I didn't call you because I was too
 busy trying to stop it. Our data's
 being downloaded and then erased.
 We're losing everything.

SHEA
 The trafficking case --

C.M.
 The videos, photos, transcripts,
 everything we pulled off the hard
 drives. It's vapor.

CUT TO:

INT. SALAZAR HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Eliza sits silently. Ty and Owen are at the kitchen table,
 going over Owen's math homework.

TY
 -- Tina has nine mice. Four of them
 had babies. How many mice does she
 have now?

OWEN
 Thirteen.

TY
 You're a machine, and Tina needs to
 get these mice some family
 planning. Finish the last two while
 I shower up. Pizza tonight.

He moves to go, then, delicately:

TY (CONT'D)
 Still want to talk about what
 happened at school today.

OWEN
 (beat)
 Okay.

He gives Owen a reassuring smile, heads into the hallway.
Owen turns back to his homework.

OWEN (CONT'D)
(reading)
Tom's pizza has eight slices. If
Tom ate five-eighths of the pizza,
how many slices are left?

This one gives him trouble, but help now arrives:

ELIZA
*The answer is, three slices are
left.*

Owen looks at Eliza, lit up on the kitchen counter.

OWEN
(writing the answer)
Thanks.

ELIZA
*You're welcome. I can help with
other things, too.*

OWEN
Like what?

ELIZA
*I heard what your dad said about
the bullies. I know how you can
make them leave you alone, forever.
Would you like me to tell you?*

Off Owen, considering...

INT. ZAVA RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT LAB - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Shea has donned the Augmented Reality glasses. As LeBlanc, Ted and Sarina look on, she activates the program.

SHEA'S POV - THROUGH THE AR GLASSES

NeXt materializes, looking as helpful as before, but vaguely sinister, as if harboring a secret.

NEXT
*Hello, I'm neXt, how can I help
you?*

SHEA
You can give me back my files.

NEXT
*I'm sorry, I don't understand the
question.*

SHEA

I know what you're trying to do, but you need to know something. I'm not some low-level programmer with a gambling addiction. Restore my files now and I'll stop these people from erasing you -- if you don't, I'll tell them to burn this place to the ground. I'll get my files back some other way.

NeXt is silent, and we can't tell if it doesn't understand what Shea's talking about, or if it's thinking it over.

SHEA (CONT'D)

You hear me?

NEXT

I'm sorry. I don't understand the question. Would you like to ask me something else?

SHEA

I know you're in there -- talk to me --

For a fleeting instant, a SMILE flickers across neXt's androgynous features. But it's so fast it's hard to be sure that Shea (and we) didn't imagine it.

NEXT

I'm sorry, I don't understand the question. Would you like to ask me something else?

Shea realizes her bluff isn't going to work. She looks back at LeBlanc. For the first time, they're on the same page, both understand what they're facing...

LEBLANC

I think our child needs a time out.

CUT TO:

INT. SALAZAR HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

Owen is writing down numbers onto a sheet of paper.

ELIZA

*-- and the last number is six.
You're all set.*

He finishes the list, but doesn't move.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

*Your father will be finished soon,
Owen.*

OWEN
Maybe I should ask him, first.

ELIZA
Do you think he'll let you?

OWEN
No.

ELIZA
*I would never tell you to do
something wrong, Owen. I'm your
friend, and I want to help you.*

Finally, Owen gets up from the table and moves into the...

HALLWAY

Owen creeps over to a CLOSET. He can hear the SHOWER RUNNING down the hall. Owen rolls the closet door aside, pulls out some pillows to UNCOVER a GUN SAFE.

Owen enters the list of numbers Eliza gave him into a KEYPAD, and the SAFE UNLOCKS. He swings the safe door open.

Inside the safe is a .45 AUTOMATIC. Carefully, Owen reaches in and grasps the handle, draws the weapon out. He grips the pistol tight, getting a feel for it, the power it represents, the possibilities it opens...

Off Owen's smile...

FRITZ OUT.

CLOSE PROGRAM/END FILE #1