

FREEDOM

Written by

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EXT. EASTLAKE SECONDARY SCHOOL - DAY

ANGLE ESTABLISHING

TITLE: AMERICA, FEBRUARY, 2105

The edifice of concrete, built in the early 2000's, stands as a reminder of the distant post-industrial age - tall escarpments of windowless gray with long featureless lines and sharp angles. Every space has a utilitarian and economic purpose. In the area surrounding the building, there is no room for trees and grass, barely enough room for the people, who move slowly in and out of the structure, like termites.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

ANGLE WIDE ON A BROKEN ESCALATOR

As a student walks up. Two students at the top are conversing. Everyone moves slowly, emotionlessly, with a common goal.

ANGLE ON A CORRIDOR

A few more students move through the hall, and up and down some stairs. The only color comes from tall LED panels, showing happy, active young people advertising soft drinks and clothing.

ANGLE HIGH OVER A LARGE CLASSROOM

Students are placed evenly around numerous rectangular tables, arranged in long rows, like crops in a field.

LONG ANGLE ON HALLWAY

Large digital clocks lining the hall have equal importance to the advertising. At 10:00, all clocks change in perfect synchronization, an electronic bell goes off, and students gush like heavy syrup from classrooms. The students move silently and purposefully, as expected.

INT. HISTORY CLASS - DAY

ANGLE TIGHT ON a television screen. An attractive, smiling female teacher is delivering a lesson.

TEACHER1

Before there was privatization as we know it today, there were many problems in the world. What were some of those problems? Can anyone tell me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She looks down O.S., then back up.

TEACHER1 (CONT'D)
Jim?

JIM (O.S.)
Widespread hunger?

TEACHER1
Right. Many people were hungry. But the opposite was also true, wasn't it? Umm April?

APRIL (O.S.)
Many people had too much food.

TEACHER1
Right. The balance of resources and the power that controlled the resources was all out of whack.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK slowly, revealing a large monitor hanging from the ceiling. We continue back down a long row of teen-age students seated at modern desks, watching the screen or referencing their personal tablets.

TEACHER1 (CONT'D)
There were people who had more than enough and others who had next to nothing. Anything else? Umm Bob R.?

We pass BOB R's desk, as he speaks into his tablet.

BOB R.
There were many governments.

TEACHER1
Right. In fact, every country in the world had its own government, with its own set of laws set forth in documents known as constitutions. In America, we also had our own form of government. Does anyone remember what our form of government was called?
(She waits for a response)
Remember? Before the Privatization Charter of 2068 was ratified, what was our form of government?
(waits)
Susan K?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SUSAN K. (O.S.)
(with difficulty)
Democracy?

TEACHER1
Very good. We were controlled by
democracy.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

ANGLE MOVING PAST STUDENTS

As they wait in lines to take plastic-wrapped trays from automated mechanical dispensers. There are thousands of students, ranging in age from 11 to 18. But even though it's crowded, the students move in an orderly fashion from line to line.

WE STAY with two 16-year-olds, JAY and THEODORE, as they take their trays, and search for a table.

JAY
When's your test?

THEODORE
You mean the SLSA?

JAY
Yeah. Aren't you taking yours
today?

THEODORE
Yeah, two.

JAY
Mine's at 2:30.

THEODORE
Oh.

They sit.

JAY
Aren't you frightened?

THEODORE
By the test? No. You're not
supposed to be. Are you?

JAY
I must admit to some trepidation.

THEODORE
How can you be frightened?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAY

I just don't know what it will lead to.

THEODORE

No one does.

JAY

I know. I guess it's just not knowing that frightens me.

THEODORE

(Confused)

How can not knowing something frighten you?

JAY

You're right. It doesn't make any sense.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Kids are moving quietly between classes. They converse only when necessary. Surveillance cameras and uniformed adults are everywhere, controlling the flow.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)

(Friendly)

If you are scheduled for Standardized Life Skills Assessment testing today, remember to arrive a few minutes early. If you are late, you may have to be rescheduled. So please arrive early. Thank you.

INT. SOCIAL SKILLS CLASS - DAY

ANGLE ON STUDENTS

As they watch the ubiquitous monitors.

ANGLE ON TEACHER'S ASSISTANT

Sitting at the front of the class. She does nothing except monitor student activity in the room. She watches them, and can see what they are entering into their tablets.

ANGLE ON TV

STUDENT NARRATOR

For our assignment, we did skits to show inner... interpersonal skills to use instead of fighting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kids do their skit in front of a backdrop they painted.

KID1
Want to see my new game?

KID1 holds up his tablet.

KID2
Yes.

KID2 takes it and starts playing the game.

KID2 (CONT'D)
Hey, this is fun.

KID1
I know.

As KID2 keeps playing, KID1 starts becoming restless.

KID1 (CONT'D)
Can I have my game back, please?

KID2
May I finish this part first?

KID1
All right. I can wait.

On the student narrator.

STUDENT NARRATOR
Both kids were frustrated, but knew that by being patient and considering the feelings of the other person, a fight could be avoided. Here's another example between a brother and sister.

ANGLE ON JAY IN THE CLASS

At his desk, as the bland presentation continues O.S. Jay is watching the clock on his tablet. It's 2:17.

ANGLE ON A GIRL IN THE CLASS

Typing on her tablet.

ANGLE ANOTHER GIRL

As she reads, then types.

INTERCUT BETWEEN the two as they send messages back and forth on their tablets. The presentation drones on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VARIOUS ANGLES ON OTHER STUDENTS

As they become fidgety.

RESUME TV

KID1

(miffed)

How come you get to go to the mall
and I have to stay home?

KID2

Because you don't need new shoes.

KID1

How come you get new shoes and I
don't? I need them too.

KID2

I don't know the answer to that. It
was Mom's decision. Why don't you
ask her?

ANGLE WITH TEACHER'S ASSISTANT

As she scans the class. She notices the two girls giggling.
She looks down at her monitor and touches the icon of one of
the girls. The girl's screen pops up and the TA notes the
messages being sent. She matter-of-factly touches the message
window and types: "Busted."

ANGLE ON THE FIRST GIRL

As she sees the message. The giggling stops and she looks up.

RESUME TV

KID1

(calming down)

Okay.

KID2

I understand how you feel. I have
felt left out before too. If Mom
does not agree to let you come
along, don't take it personally,
okay? There will be another time.

STUDENT NARRATOR

Younger siblings often have not
learned how to handle difficult
situations and cope with
disappointment.

INT. SLSA WAITING ROOM - DAY

Jay holds his ID card over a reader and the LAB RECEPTIONIST'S screen pulls up Jay's data.

LAB RECEPTIONIST
(Smiling)
So... Jay Potter. How do you feel today?

JAY
A little nervous.

She makes a note of this, typing: "Nervous, upset."

LAB RECEPTIONIST
Well, you're not alone. Many children feel apprehensive at first. But as soon as you start the assessment, you'll see there's nothing to it. Students that have said they were nervous in the beginning always end up having a good time, and they're amazed at how quick the procedure is.

JAY
I'm nervous about what they'll find. That's all.

Adding another note: "anxious about outcome."

LAB RECEPTIONIST
Well, I'm sure they won't find anything unusual. Why don't you have a seat? It'll just be a minute.

INT. SLSA TESTING ROOM - DAY

The LAB TECH is facing JAY with a big, soothing smile.

LAB TECH
Okay, Jay. Just relax, remember to keep your eyes open, and just enjoy yourself. It will take about two minutes. Are you ready?

Jay is seated in a comfortable medical treatment chair, wearing a virtual reality helmet.

The Lab Tech views a screen with multiple tracks moving left to right, monitoring different areas of Jay's mind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAY
(mumbling)
Yeah.

We see a blip on one of the tracks in response. The Lab Tech clicks a start button.

Jay starts to move his head around, and raise and lower his arms, responding to what he is experiencing.

INT. INSIDE VR HELMET - DAY

We SEE and HEAR what Jay is responding to - a high-speed barrage of images and sounds. QUICK CUT faces, animals, explosions, historical photos, flashing colors, hypnotic rhythmic pulses. The SOUNDS are intense staccato tones mixed with classical music, mixed with voices reading words and nonsense.

ANGLE CLOSE MAN'S NEUTRAL FACE

As he speaks in quiet tones, his lips slowly going out of sync with his voice.

VR MAN1
(mechanically)
I think therefore I am. I am
therefore I think. I am therefore I
am, I think. I think I am therefore
I am I think I think. I am because
I think. Because I think, I am
therefore.

ANGLE TIGHT ON A WOMAN

VR WOMAN1
(Screaming)
Clean out your skeleton!

ANGLE SAME WOMAN, JUMP CUT

VR WOMAN1 (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Come along crisp thought to build
bridges interior fortunes wind and
begin to the end or top or how to
manufacture well-done caustic
serenity.

RESUME VR MAN1

VR MAN1
I know I am am I think I know I am.
I know I am I am.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VR MAN1 (CONT'D)

I think I know I have to be. To be.
To be. If I think then therefore
therefore I must.

ANGLE HIGH-SPEED TRAIN, MOVING

INTERCUT with a clock showing conflicting times and a map that shows four stops.

VR NARRATOR (O.S.)

If a train traveling at 40 miles per hour makes three 10-minute stops and arrives at the third stop at 4:30pm, two-and-a-half hours after it starts, at what time does the train arrive at the first stop?

ANGLE TRAIN INTERIOR

Stopped at a station. We study the faces of the passengers. A child is crying. A woman wearing a thick fur coat is cutting pieces out of a newspaper. A conductor is holding his shoe.

VR NARRATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

If the train makes an additional stop after the second stop, does it arrive before or after the third stop, if the first stop were the same as the third stop, would there be a second stop?

INT. SLSA TESTING ROOM - DAY

It is SILENT, except for the WHIR of computers. But we can see the turmoil in Jay's mind from the jumble of waves and blips reading out on the screen.

Occasionally, a particular move that Jay makes prompts the Lab Tech to make a note in the computer.

INT. INSIDE VR HELMET - DAY

SWIRLING colors.

VR WOMAN1 (O.S.)

(without emotion)

Cool. Stop. Park. Enter. Bird. Bus.

The colors change.

VR WOMAN1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Blood, friend, pine, sector, table, kiss.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Another change.

VR WOMAN1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Oxylotl, precox, riticulated, onyx,
broom.

ANGLE ON TWO MEN

In a cold, hard-walled room. One man leans over another man who is lying face-down on a concrete floor. The man on top holds the other man by the hair on the back of his head, and starts repeatedly bashing the man's face against the floor.

ANGLE A BOY AND HIS MOTHER

Rocking on a porch swing.

ANGLE, FLASH CUT OF A PENIS BECOMING ERECT

ANGLE, TIME-LAPSE OF A FLOWER OPENING

FLASH CUTS of more seemingly disconnected SHOTS - some natural, some unnatural, some imaginary.

ANGLE, WIDE ON A MOUNTAIN LAKE

A placid scene of a lake with a yellow sky, accompanied by a high-pitched tone.

INT. SLSA TESTING ROOM

Strangely, this scene produces a flurry of activity on the screen. The Lab Tech notes this.

INT. INSIDE VR HELMET

ANGLE ON VR MAN1

VR MAN1

Each individual exists for the good of the whole. The corporation is the whole. The health of the corporation depends on maintaining the cycle of life within. The health of the cycle of life depends on the flow of the economy. Each individual has complete freedom to exercise his or her will. This freedom is the key to the survival of the corporation, which is the people.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGLE TEST ENDING

With staccato, intense pulsing tones synchronized with black to white to black hypnotic CUTS.

Finally, it all stops. The VR screen goes black and it is SILENT.

INT. SLSA TESTING ROOM

As Jay goes limp. The Lab Tech walks over to him and carefully removes the helmet.

LAB TECH
(Smiling, as expected)
That's all there is to it, Jay. How do you feel?

JAY
(Extremely dazed)
Okay.

She notes his condition.

LAB TECH
You did very well. If you feel dizzy, you can lie down for a moment.

JAY
No, I'm Okay.

He stands and starts to walk, then nearly collapses. The Lab Tech helps him to a cot, where he lies and stares straight up.

INT. THEODORE'S HOME WORKOUT ROOM - DAY

A fit, attractive, thirty-something woman works out on a high-tech treadmill, while watching a relevant show on a TV.

ANGLE ON TV

Happy people jogging and smiling, always smiling.

TV ANNCR (V.O.)
The secret ingredients of a healthy, happy life are daily exercise, eating right, drinking plenty of liquids, and one Constabula tablet every day.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TV ANNCR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Constabula helps your body find the right balance of nutrients to maintain health and eliminate excess fats and other harmful elements. Not only does Constabula help your body find the right balance, it helps your mind stay alert and active, and your spirit maintain its balance and a positive outlook.

A smiling elderly man is jogging.

ELDERLY MAN

I'm 80 years old and I've never felt younger and more full of life. Constabula balances my systems, so I feel great all the time. And if you feel great, your whole outlook on life is great. I plan on feeling great right up until my last day, which for me is 83. With Constabula, I don't have to live my final 4 years with aches, pains, worries, and progressive illnesses...

INT. THEODORE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A robotic vacuum cleaner is moving through the room in neat rows.

INT. THEODORE'S LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

A tall contraption that resembles a washer/dryer makes a series of CLACKING NOISES, and a folded shirt emerges from a slot in the side and lands on a pile in a basket.

INT. THEODORE'S KITCHEN - DAY

The only SOUND is the CLANKING and WHIRRING of an automatic food processor preparing dinner. A light goes on in an oven and begins cooking something that looks like a roast. In another window, a thick batter is squirting into stainless steel cupcake molds. In another window, potatoes are baking. The machine is preparing an entire meal for three.

Theo enters the kitchen from the back door. He opens a panel on the side of the food processor and takes a warm cookie from a drawer. As he does, the inner workings of the processor are visible - arms shuttling ingredients from place to place, panels turning.

INT. WORKOUT ROOM - DAY

The woman finishes, wipes perspiration from her face, and turns off the TV/computer device. As soon as she steps off, the treadmill automatically folds up neatly. She walks out to...

INT. THEODORE'S HALL - DAY

She crosses paths with Theo as he heads toward his bedroom.

THEO'S MOM

Hi Theo, how was the test?

THEODORE

It was a very interesting experience.

THEO'S MOM

Did you relax and focus, like they tell you?

THEODORE

Oh yeah. It was easy.

THEO'S MOM

I think you'll do great.

THEODORE

Oh yeah, I have no doubts.

He goes into...

INT. THEODORE'S BEDROOM - DAY

He walks by a desktop tablet screen on his way to dumping his backpack on the bed.

THEODORE

(To tablet)

Call Jay.

Immediately the tablet comes to life. Theo slides his office chair out and sits in a slouched teen-age position. Jay's face appears on the tablet.

JAY

(depressed)

Hi.

THEODORE

What's wrong?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAY
I screwed the test.

THEODORE
How do you know?

JAY
I worried. I was nervous. I
couldn't concentrate. I couldn't
relax. I got sick afterwards.
Everything was wrong.

THEODORE
You aren't depressed now are you?
My Mom won't let me talk to you if
you're depressed.

JAY
No.

THEODORE
(Assessing Jay)
I think you are.
(quietly)
Go take a pill or something and
call me when you feel better. I
gotta go.

Theo presses a key and hangs up. He didn't want to do it. He
feels bad, but can't allow the feeling to stay.

THEODORE (CONT'D)
(To tablet)
Help me.

The tablet comes to life. An animated digital image of a kid
Theo's age pops up.

THEO'S TABLET
What's wrong, dude?

THEODORE
I feel... sad.

The digital kid becomes a quick-fix shrink. It speaks in low,
pleasant tones, but with a teen-age voice.

THEO'S TABLET
Why do you think you feel sad?

THEODORE
I feel concerned... about Jay's
feelings. He seems depressed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THEO'S TABLET

About what? Anything in particular?

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jay's bedroom is small, dark and windowless, not nearly as nice as Theo's. Jay too is consulting his tablet shrink, which has been customized for him.

JAY

I'm... upset because I don't feel I was up to par for the test today.

JAY'S TABLET

Which test is that?

JAY

The Standardized Life Skills Assessment.

JAY'S TABLET

Hmm. What makes you feel you didn't do well?

JAY

I was nervous and worried. I couldn't focus. I was very confused, and I got sick afterwards.

JAY'S TABLET

I see. Well, there's absolutely no reason to worry.

JAY

Why?

JAY'S TABLET

Because with the SLSA there is no right or wrong way to take the assessment. It assesses the way you are. It records your mind's reactions to various stimuli and analyzes the results.

JAY

But I feel I was... I don't know. I couldn't focus.

JAY'S TABLET

Many students have the same concerns after taking the assessment. I wouldn't worry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAY

I just don't...

JAY'S TABLET

Don't what?

JAY

I'm just concerned about what will happen... to me. I mean, if I was nervous and couldn't focus, what will happen. Where will I end up?

JAY'S TABLET

Jay. You have nothing to worry about. The SLSA is for your good and ultimately the good of the corporation.

JAY

Right.

JAY'S TABLET

There's no way to lie or throw off the assessment. It cannot be tricked and there is no way you can do anything by mistake or on purpose that will give an erroneous result.

JAY

(He knows all this)

I see.

JAY'S TABLET

The best thing you can do is to not worry. Okay?

JAY

Okay.

JAY'S TABLET

Do you feel better now?

JAY

Yeah.

JAY'S TABLET

Are you sure? I sense uncertainty in your voice.

JAY

(Trying to sound certain)

No. I feel fine. You really helped put my mind at ease.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAY'S TABLET

Good. Drink a small glass of Somex
and relax tonight. Why don't you
play a game with Theo?

JAY

Sounds good.

EXT. CITY - NIGHT

In TIME-LAPSE WE see the last deep red wash of a polluted
sunset give way to an ocean of twinkling city lights. Car and
airplane lights flash by in a buzz.

INT. JAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

CLOSE SHOT of a plate of food as Jay's mother IRENE ladles a
green sauce over a white lump of processed fish. The green
beans look a little too green and uniform to be real.

ANGLE WIDER. The kitchen is very small and windowless, but
efficiently laid out. She picks up two dishes and carries
them into...

INT. JAY'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

It too is small and dim with Spartan furnishings and no
windows. Jay and his father MORRIS sit in silence as she
places the dishes in front of them. Then, she sits. We HEAR
the CHATTER of a distant TV. They speak calmly without
emotion.

IRENE

(To Morris)

Was the elevator working?

MORRIS

When?

IRENE

Just now when you came home.

MORRIS

Yeah.

IRENE

Hmm. It wasn't earlier.

MORRIS

Did you call the building manager?

IRENE

He wasn't in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORRIS

You seem unperturbed. Has this happened before?

IRENE

Oh, it happens all the time. Yesterday, I was stuck on the 15th floor for half an hour.

MORRIS

Well, someone should look into it.

IRENE

I'll try again tomorrow.

Irene looks at Jay and smiles.

INT. COMPUTER CLASS - DAY

ANGLE ON TV

COMPUTER CLASS INSTRUCTOR

For homework install the test program from the lesson 23 folder on the share, and apply your code module to it. If it doesn't run or you get asserts, debug your code and try again. If you want extra credit, look at the encoderdist dot CPP source file and see if you can debug the networking...

The school BELL RINGS. WE PULL BACK down a row of students as they pick up their tablets and walk out. JAY is the only one who remains seated, trying to listen as the RUSH of activity drowns out the instructor.

COMPUTER CLASS INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

...Error that's raised when attempting to connect to a class 2 Internet tap. Don't forget to download the special project assignment too. Bye.

ANGLE ON TV

As the screen CUTS to a title: Programming with Network Protocols.

RESUME JAY

Jay stands and grabs his tablet. Connie, a friend sitting next to him, stands too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNIE

Did you get all that stuff about
system info?

They head for the door.

JAY

Yeah. The example was bad. He used
system info in a really stupid way.
Normally, a program uses it to find
out things about the machine it's
running on.

CONNIE

Why?

JAY

(Tossing it off)

Well, like with a game, you can
write code that does terratables
for fast machines and megatables
for slow machines. See? And then
use sysinfo to choose which code to
run based on processor speed and
ram.

CONNIE

Oh.

JAY

You could even read the name and ID
of a machine's owner. Then you
could write code, like a virus,
into a program that only executes
on one particular machine.

CONNIE

That's interesting.

JAY

The virus code would be dormant on
every other machine in the world.
It would only run when it was
installed on the computer that was
owned by the guy you wanted to
attack.

CONNIE

(She smiles)

Hmm.

JAY

Of course, I wouldn't do that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CONNIE

No, of course not. I'll buy you a cookie at Molly's sometime if you'll tutor me on this crap.

JAY

Tutor you?

CONNIE

It wouldn't take long. Well, actually it could, but it doesn't have to.

(Points to her head)

I mean, it could take a very long time.

Jay would always rather be writing games than dealing with people. But Connie has a way of lowering his resistance.

JAY

Well, okay.

His tablet makes a SOUND and he turns to it.

CONNIE

See you.

She heads out the door, as Jay reads a message.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Jay is seated in a waiting area outside the principal's office. Office workers and students converse across a long counter beside the seats.

The door opens and the principal, Mr. Stanley, smiles and motions for Jay to come in.

INT. MR. STANLEY'S OFFICE - DAY

As Jay enters, he is surprised to see his parents, Irene and Morris, seated in front of the desk, and another man he doesn't know, standing next to it. Mr. Stanley enters and takes a seat, and they all face Jay and smile. Jay tries.

MR. STANLEY

Jay, I'd like you to meet Mr. Frakes. He's with the school district.

MR. FRAKES extends his hand. Jay hesitates.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORRIS
(Still smiling)
Shake hands with Mr. Frakes, Jay.

Jay offers a tenuous handshake.

MR. FRAKES
Nice to meet you, Jay. Have a seat.

MR. STANLEY
Jay, I invited your parents here
today to talk with me and Mr.
Frakes about your SLSA results.

Jay turns ashen.

MR. STANLEY (CONT'D)
Oh, everything's okay. There's
nothing to be concerned about. In
fact, you did very well.

MR. FRAKES
Jay, you did so well, we want to
transfer you to a different school.
We want you to take part in the
Stanton County Gifted Children
Program. You'll be with other
children who had similar SLSA
results. It will give you the
intellectual stimulation you need
to succeed at a level more
appropriate for your abilities.
Sound good?

JAY
(Not so sure)
How can the SLSA results show that
I did well? I thought it wasn't a
test.

MR. FRAKES
(Smile dropping a bit)
That's right. It's not a test, it's
an assessment.

MR. STANLEY
You're interested in programming,
aren't you?

JAY
Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. STANLEY

You'll have the opportunity to go well beyond what we offer here. The class sizes are smaller, so you'll get more hands-on time.

MR. FRAKES

In fact, you'll get your very own dev. computer.

MR. STANLEY

Pretty cool, huh?

Jay likes that.

MR. FRAKES

There will be less emphasis on general education requirements, so you'll have more time to spend on subjects in which you excel... and enjoy.

Jay looks at his parents.

MR. STANLEY

We've already spoken to your parents and taken care of the details. But we wanted you to have a say in this, too. After all, it is your life.

Everyone CHUCKLES a bit, except Jay.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

As long lines of customers wade through automated check-out counters. They wait silently with long faces, as a cacophony of automated checker voices cheerfully and efficiently move them along.

CHECKER VOICE 1

Did you find everything to your satisfaction?

(No answer)

Do you have any coupons?

(No answer)

Thank you. Your account has been accessed and charged successfully. Come again. Next please.

Workers are repairing one of the checkers, whose voice is defective.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEFECTIVE CHECKER

Than-Than-Thank you. You. You. Do
you find everything successfully.
Thank you. Next. Next. Next.

EXT. RETAIL STREET - NIGHT

An ultramodern street as hundreds of people move silently between stores. The ubiquitous Muzak is busy keeping the throngs in check and motivated to buy.

Large LED billboards advertise The Corporation with shots of happy workers and families, "The Freedom Corporation - You have the freedom to make this country great!"

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE ON COMPUTER SCREEN

As a video game is being played. A very realistic character - a distinctive-looking, 13-year-old boy with red spiky hair - walks slowly into a large windowless, circular room with granite walls. The room is lit with medieval sconces.

JAY (O.S.)

That's it. Walk to the center of
the room.

THEODORE (O.S.)

Then, what?

JAY (O.S.)

You'll figure it out.

The character moves to the center.

THEODORE (O.S.)

So, you start at that new school
tomorrow?

JAY (O.S.)

Yeah.

THEODORE (O.S.)

What do I do now?

JAY (O.S.)

You'll see.

A star-shaped area beneath the character appears and glows like fire.

THEODORE (O.S.)

What's happening?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVIL GAME VOICE (O.S.)

(God-like)

So Tranquo, we meet at last. If you have come bearing gifts, place them on the floor. If you have no gifts, await your doom.

THEODORE (O.S.)

Cool. Where did you get the voice?

JAY (O.S.)

That's me.

THEODORE (O.S.)

You?

JAY (O.S.)

I just shifted the pitch down.

THEODORE (O.S.)

Cool. What do I do now?

JAY (O.S.)

Put your gifts on the floor.

THEODORE (O.S.)

Gifts? Where do I get the gifts?

JAY (O.S.)

Remember the shop?

THEODORE (O.S.)

What shop?

JAY (O.S.)

Think about it.

THEODORE (O.S.)

What?

JAY (O.S.)

You're dead.

THEODORE (O.S.)

Cool.

The fire rises up and consumes Tranquo in a very, graphically dramatic fashion.

THEODORE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The best part of your games is dying, definitely.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAY (O.S.)

Thank you.

The effect slowly finishes.

THEODORE (O.S.)

Are you glad to be going to this new school?

JAY (O.S.)

I don't know.

THEODORE (O.S.)

Well, you should be. I wish I could go.

The game is paused, waiting for the next move.

JAY (O.S.)

Yeah. We'll see.

EXT. CLEMMONS SCHOOL - MORNING

It's a gray morning on a busy city street. Clemmons looks more like another dull, faceless office tower than a school.

INT. CLEMMONS COMPUTER CLASS - DAY

The classroom is very different from the overcrowded spaces Jay is used to - only five students and a live teacher. MR. FARLEY sits casually on the corner of his desk.

MR. FARLEY

(Smiling, as always)

At your last school, you got some basic programming skills, which is not a bad thing to have. But in this class, we'll be digging a lot deeper into writing low-level code, machine code, and problem-solving - making user interfaces more intuitive, processes more efficient, etcetera, etcetera. Follow me and I'll show you the lab.

The students head toward the door.

MR. FARLEY (CONT'D)

One thing you'll notice right away, is you won't have any homework. And you won't get grades. But you may have to work at home to finish a project.

INT. CLEMMONS HALL - DAY

As students leave the classroom. The hall is long, wide and sterile, with no lockers.

WE STAY with Jay as he comes out the door and turns. Someone calls to him O.S.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, Jay.

He turns back. Connie is with another small group heading for the lab.

JAY

(Now, he smiles)

Connie?

CONNIE

Hey. So, what brings you here?

JAY

I don't know. I guess they think I'm smart or something.

CONNIE

If that's the case, then why am I here?

JAY

(Smiling)

I don't know. You must have some latent intelligence that was stifled at the previous school.

CONNIE

Hmm. Interesting theory.

JAY

The SLSA doesn't deal in theories. If you're here, you belong here. It's simple.

CONNIE

Simple.

(Quietly)

If I belong here, then this place has nothing to do with gifted children.

They stop by the lab door. Others go ahead of them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAY
(Very quietly)
If I were you, I'd trust the
assessment.

CONNIE
That's the problem. I do trust it.
It's the people I don't trust.

JAY
It's not good to have doubtful
feelings. You should know that.

CONNIE
Don't you ever get doubtful
feelings?

JAY
(Reciting the company
line)
Yeah, sometime. Everybody does.
That's why we have counselors.

Connie continues into the lab.

CONNIE
(Shaking it off)
Okay, you're right. I'm here for a
reason and I'm sure it's a good
one.

JAY
Of course.

INT. CLEMMONS COMPUTER LAB - DAY

As Connie stops Jay by the door.

CONNIE
(Whispering)
I'm really glad you're here. This
place would be very weird without
someone familiar around... who
understands. I think you
understand. Don't you?

Before Jay can answer, Mr. Farley grabs their attention.

MR. FARLEY
Okay, everyone gather over here.
This is the lab. You'll be spending
a great deal of time here because
the best way to learn programming
is to write programs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Mr. Farley continues, Jay and Connie wander among the rows of computers and racks of equipment. The lab is very modern and sexy. Obviously, a lot of money went into it.

MR. FARLEY (CONT'D)

You will each be issued a computer that will serve as your development platform and communication portal. All computers are connected to a 10 gigabit network, which has class 2 access to the Internet. Also, you will each have class B permissions on the network.

Jay and the other students seem very pleased with this news.

MR. FARLEY (CONT'D)

All right. Don't let your imaginations run amuck. You have this level of access, so you can do your schoolwork. Anyone found abusing this privilege will lose their access rights. It goes without saying, that anyone found hacking or performing any illegal activity will not only lose their rights, but could face prosecution. Okay, with that said, you are free to explore and learn. But use your heads.

Jay is like a kid in a candy shop. He sits at a terminal and rapidly types a few lines.

ANGLE ON MONITOR

As a screen immediately pops up, "Stanton County School District Records - Access Restricted".

RESUME JAY AND CONNIE

Connie looks over his shoulder and shakes her head.

CONNIE

Bad.

He quickly logs off.

JAY

Just testing.

CONNIE

You seem happy with all these flashing lights and stuff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAY
It's pretty cool.

CONNIE
Hmm.

She walks off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLEMMONS HISTORY CLASS - DAY

The small class is watching a slick documentary.

HISTORY TEACHER
Globalization in the early 2000's made it imperative that world governments communicate. But it all happened too fast. There was widespread unrest and terrorism. The technologies that had promised to free people were enslaving them. Globalization forced people to come together, but it also tore them apart, at the speed of light.

SHOT of a nuclear bomb test.

HISTORY TEACHER (CONT'D)
The global language that was to eventually unite the world was the economy. The economy was to be the common currency. Privatization was the means.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLEMMONS SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS - DAY

The social studies teacher is sitting in a circle with the students.

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER
Who knows what the chief export of Uganda is?

SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENT 1
Water.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER
 Right. The plentiful resource that
 had made the Congo region an
 uninhabitable rain forest, became
 Uganda's main source of wealth.
 What else?

SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENT 2
 The rain forest could support
 agriculture.

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER
 Right. The rain forest is no longer
 wasted real estate.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLEMMONS COUNSELING OFFICE - DAY

As Jay sits across a small desk from a human counselor, who
 spends most of the time looking through a document on her
 tablet.

COUNSELOR
 (Smiling)
 Your schoolwork is coming along
 fine. How do you feel about the
 school?

JAY
 It's okay.

COUNSELOR
 Do you ever get angry or depressed?

JAY
 No.

COUNSELOR
 Schoolwork can get pretty tedious,
 can't it?
 (Looking at Jay,
 knowingly)
 Ever get bored? Want to do things
 on your own?

JAY
 No.

COUNSELOR
 (Studying his face)
 Mm Hmm.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLEMMONS SCIENCE CLASS - DAY

The science teacher is leading a discussion.

SCIENCE TEACHER

What does sustainable mean? Anyone?

SCIENCE STUDENT 1

Able to support life.

SCIENCE TEACHER

Good. What is an example of something that is sustainable?

SCIENCE STUDENT 2

Like recycling?

SCIENCE TEACHER

Right. Reusing resources. What is an example of something that is not sustainable?

SCIENCE STUDENT 1

Biodiversity?

SCIENCE TEACHER

Umm. Right. In order for something to be sustainable, it must be transformed into what?

SCIENCE STUDENT 3

A commodity?

SCIENCE TEACHER

Right. Who decides what is sustainable?

SCIENCE STUDENT 2

The World Economic Council.

SCIENCE TEACHER

Good.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLEMMONS COMPUTER LAB - DAY

Jay, Connie, and other students are quietly focused on long columns of code on their computers.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLEMMONS HISTORY CLASS - DAY

Another day, as the history teacher paces.

HISTORY TEACHER

With old systems of government, like democracy and socialism, power was supposed to belong to the people. But to whom did it really belong? A few corrupt politicians, power brokers, the very wealthy, everybody but the people. When nations privatized, power went immediately to each and every person in the world. Instead of voting in crooked elections once every two years, today we vote every time we use one of these.

He holds up a modern payment card.

HISTORY TEACHER (CONT'D)

This is our power. This is what keeps the world turning and sustains life.

SLOW DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. CLEMMONS COMPUTER LAB - NIGHT

It is empty and dark, except for one terminal. Jay is focused on a program he is writing. He stares at a long list of code, then types in a new value and stares some more.

It is four months later and Jay has changed. He has filled out and seems more mature. There is also something about him that looks wilder, more independent.

CONNIE

You work too hard.

Jay jumps. Connie has appeared out of nowhere.

JAY

Connie. Shit.

CONNIE

Come on, let's get some dinner. I'll buy.

JAY

Dinner? What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNIE
It's seven-thirty, dude.

JAY
The transport.

CONNIE
You can catch a Metro.

JAY
(Still a bit flustered)
What do you mean?

CONNIE
The transport has left. You can
take a Metro and walk home from the
station. I do it all the time. Come
on.

He stands and shuts down the computer.

JAY
But my parents...

CONNIE
You can call them later. Come on.

He throws on his jacket, as she drags him out.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

It's fairly busy with young people in wild, contemporary
clothing passing by, talking noisily. The slow drizzle makes
the scene more electric, the flashing neon more engaging.

JAY
It's weird being here so late.

CONNIE
Stop worrying about it.

JAY
I'm not worried. It's just weird.

CONNIE
You'll get used to it.

JAY
What do you mean?

CONNIE
I mean, you work too hard. You need
to get out and see the world. Open
your mind. Try something new.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNIE (CONT'D)

You're too serious. You take that school shit too seriously.

JAY

What do you mean?

CONNIE

You're either in school working or at home working.

JAY

That's not entirely true. How do you know what I do? Do you follow me around all the time?

CONNIE

I can just tell.

Jay rolls his eyes.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

You can't tell me it doesn't feel good to be outside away from the security cameras and bullshit.

JAY

That doesn't bother me.

CONNIE

Don't you ever feel like you're in a fishbowl?

JAY

What do you mean?

CONNIE

What do you mean, what do you mean?
(Quieter)
We're being observed for some reason. Can't you tell?

JAY

It's a school. That's what they do.

CONNIE

No, this is different. It's not just about teaching kids. They're watching us. They follow us. Like those tests.

JAY

Which ones?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CONNIE

The one-on-ones where they ask us how we feel about shit. You know, what would you do if a fellow student asked you to take drugs or steal something? And there's that one-way glass. It's creepy.

JAY

It's only a problem if you have something to hide.

CONNIE

(Hiding something)
You're right.

JAY

Do you have something to hide?

CONNIE

I don't know.

INT. RETRO CAFÉ - NIGHT

The Retro is a clean-cut teen hangout the size of a casino, and just as colorful and noisy. Endless rows of video games spread out below the crowded café, as Jay and Connie sit at a table for two.

CONNIE

So, what are you working on?

JAY

We're not supposed to talk about it. You know that.

CONNIE

So?

JAY

We could get in trouble.

CONNIE

So? How are they going to find out? And what would they do about it if they did?

JAY

Connie. What are you trying to do?

CONNIE

I just want to know what's going on. Don't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAY

Well, yes and no. I want to know what's going on, but I don't see the point in doing something that'll get me in trouble.

CONNIE

(Smiling)

You need to get in trouble.

JAY

I can't believe you're saying that.

Connie stares at him for a moment.

CONNIE

I'm working on "what if" scenarios. Like, what if a hacker got into the secret memory space that holds all the FBI records. And, in what ways would young people like us be interested in stealing military weapons secrets. That's weird. Don't you think?

JAY

You're just making that up.

CONNIE

Well, those aren't the exact words they use, but that's exactly what I'm doing.

JAY

Why are you telling me this?

CONNIE

What are you working on?

JAY

I told you, I can't-

CONNIE

You can. What harm is it going to do? It's just knowledge. Isn't that what we're supposed to be doing in school? Getting knowledge?

JAY

Why do you want to know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CONNIE

I want to know, because we're not supposed to know and that bothers me. I want to know why, what's going on? Why can't we talk about it? What's the big deal?

JAY

That's subversive. I shouldn't be listening to this.

CONNIE

You're right. I guess it is.

JAY

How do I know you're not like working for them and you'll bust me if I tell you?

CONNIE

I told you what I'm working on. You could bust me too.

JAY

I could.

CONNIE

But you won't, because I trust you. Don't you trust me?

JAY

I don't know.

Connie takes a sip of coffee.

CONNIE

That's how they control us. Through fear.

JAY

What do you mean, control us?

CONNIE

They manipulate everything, so we don't trust each other. We only trust the corporation. And the only reason we trust the corporation is because we're afraid not to. You know it's true.

Jay shakes his head, is noticeably nervous.

JAY

What are you trying to do?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CONNIE

I told you.

JAY

I don't believe you.

CONNIE

But you believe everything the corporation says.

JAY

Okay. It might not all be true, but...

CONNIE

Why fix something if it isn't broken. Right?

JAY

Right. As long as we're happy and healthy-

CONNIE

It is broken. It's very broken.

JAY

We shouldn't be talking-

He stands. Connie grabs his arm.

CONNIE

Fear. What's going to happen if you tell me what you're working on?

JAY

I don't know.

They start walking through the café.

CONNIE

Are they going to put us in a dungeon or stockade? This isn't the 21st century, you know.

JAY

I don't know what they would do.

CONNIE

Trust me. I trusted you. I think the problem is you don't trust yourself.

He pulls her into a quiet corner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JAY

I'm writing a module for a larger program.

CONNIE

Cool.

(He hesitates)

Keep going.

JAY

The program intercepts encrypted messages on class D communication channels. My module tests encryption algorithms.

CONNIE

Shit.

JAY

Okay. Now we know each other's secrets. Do you feel better now?

CONNIE

I do. Don't you?

Jay is not so sure, but it feels good to be standing close to Connie.

INT. RETRO GAMING AREA - NIGHT

As the two walk down rows of kids huddled around video games.

CONNIE

Do you really believe these are merely school assignments?

JAY

I don't know.

CONNIE

Well, guess what? We're writing all these programs for them, for their top secret national security thing.

JAY

That's not true.

CONNIE

Think what you want, but there are many things I've discovered that I haven't told you about.

JAY

Like what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNIE

Things that scare even me.

Jay can see it in her eyes.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

It just pisses me off that I'm
doing all this work and not getting
paid for it.

They stop at a small door marked "Staff Only." Without missing a beat, Connie looks both ways and presses her thumb on a sensor. The door opens. Jay's mouth drops.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Cool. It works.

JAY

What are you doing?!

CONNIE

I hacked into the Retro site and
made myself a security manager.
Let's go in.

JAY

You're crazy.

CONNIE

Come on.

They enter.

INT. RETRO SECURITY BOOTH - NIGHT

As she closes the door behind them and they make their way up a narrow flight of stairs.

The booth is only big enough for one large guard and a box of donuts. They squeeze in next to a console with a large monitor, showing multiple security cameras.

She sits and starts typing on the keyboard.

CONNIE

We don't have to worry. No one's
here. It's monitored offsite. I
want to show you something.

She logs on to the Retro security site.

JAY

(Shaking his head)
You shouldn't be touching that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNIE

I know. It's okay. They don't monitor who's in this room... I don't think.

Jay loosens up, looks at activity on the cameras.

JAY

I didn't know they went to all this trouble to secure a bunch of video games.

CONNIE

(Shaking her head)

Jay, Jay, Jay. Security is only part of it. You're not thinking like a corporation. The corporation is all about what?

JAY

The economy?

CONNIE

Exactly. Maximizing profit. Finding that critical balance between supply and demand. I found something when I hacked into their network. Look.

He looks at a screen that lists all the video games. Next to each game are rows of numbers that are constantly updating.

JAY

What is it?

CONNIE

It's a program that controls whether players win or lose.

JAY

How does it do that?

CONNIE

What do you mean? You thought it was all luck and skill? Not here.

JAY

You're saying the games are rigged?

CONNIE

Of course. They really aren't games at all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAY

That's ridiculous.

CONNIE

There's no law against it. The Retro is owned by the corporation. The corporation makes the laws. They know what keeps players pumping money into their machines. Sometimes they let them win, sometimes they let them lose. They give them what they want and the corporation gets what it wants.

JAY

How do you know all this?

CONNIE

I told you. I like to know what's going on. It's all right there. All you have to do is open your eyes. The corporation doesn't like it when people open their eyes.

Jay sits next to her and watches the screen, as the numbers flash by. Then, he watches the players on the floor, feeding their addiction.

JAY

It's like a big game, isn't it.

CONNIE

Nah. The corporation doesn't play games.

JAY

But they do. They just make sure the odds are stacked heavily on their side.

CONNIE

(Smiling at him)

Now, you're getting it.

She glances at a camera, and immediately shuts off the computer.

JAY

What happened?

CONNIE

Security. Look.

ON MONITOR showing two guards heading toward the booth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ON THE TWO as Connie leads them down the stairs.

JAY
Shit, how do we get out?

CONNIE
Only one way.

She opens the door.

INT. RETRO GAMING AREA - NIGHT

As the two leave the booth. The guards see them and take chase. Connie and Jay run in the other direction. The guards pick up speed.

CONNIE
Let's split up and meet back at the school. If they catch you, tell them we were making out in the booth.

They split up and run interference around the rows of games. The guards can't keep up.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE RETRO - NIGHT

As Jay runs out, he looks back briefly, then takes off down the street. The guard runs out and stops, as Jay disappears into the shadows. The guard decides to give up rather than face a coronary.

EXT. METRO - NIGHT

A sleek, modern Metro train flies by silently on an overhead track, carried along by magnetic propulsion.

INT. METRO - NIGHT

Jay and Connie are seated across the aisle from each other in a near-empty car. They aren't talking.

CONNIE
There's nothing to worry about, Jay. You'll be home by eight.

JAY
I'm sure my parents have called the police. What if they connect me with the Retro? I'll be screwed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNIE

Okay, here's the scenario. The guards went back to the booth, ate a donut to unwind, and checked the entry log. The log showed me as being the last one to enter the booth. So, they called the police and the cops sent out a bulletin to pick up one Carla Standell.

JAY

Who's that?

CONNIE

The fake name I used.

JAY

They can match your thumbprint.

CONNIE

I put a timebomb on the thumbprint file. It deleted itself immediately after the first time I accessed it. So, it's already erased.

He thinks awhile.

JAY

That's pretty smart. All that shit about you not understanding programming and playing dumb - that was all an act, wasn't it?

She shrugs her shoulders.

JAY (CONT'D)

What's the deal with you anyway? What's all this subversive shit about?

CONNIE

It's not about anything.

JAY

Why did you break into the booth? Why did you have to know about my project?

CONNIE

I'm curious, that's all. Aren't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAY

Yeah, but not if it means doing something wrong.

CONNIE

You want to know the truth?

JAY

Okay.

CONNIE

(Not looking at him)

I like you. Kinda.

Now, he's embarrassed.

JAY

Oh.

(Beat)

Then, let's go out or something. We don't have to break any laws.

CONNIE

Well, let me just say this. I will agree to go out with you. But you got to understand one thing. I'm sort of driven, you might say, to get inside the mind of the corporation. That's real. There's something about it that... I don't know. There's good and bad about everything, but we only hear good about the corporation. Nothing's that good, especially something that big and powerful.

She crosses the aisle and sits beside Jay.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

I want you... to be curious too. I think you are, but you have the same fear that everybody has, that something bad will happen if you're curious.

JAY

The fear is very real, Connie.

There is a palpable electricity between them now.

CONNIE

(Searching)

What are you afraid of?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JAY

I think most people are afraid of losing everything we have. And what we have is pretty damn good. We're lucky.

CONNIE

What's that?

JAY

We live comfortably, we have a good lifestyle, the economy's good, there's no wars. Why question it?

CONNIE

Sounds like you're reciting a history lecture.

JAY

So what?

CONNIE

I'm a good citizen.

Jay reaches out, touches her.

JAY

I'm not so sure.

CONNIE

Is it a crime to want to know? Does that make me a bad citizen?

JAY

Questioning something that is good is... I'm sure the corporation has its faults, but what good does it do to spend all your time looking for them? Are you making anything better? You're just making yourself tense and putting yourself in danger for no good reason.

CONNIE

Yeah, you're right.

She goes back to her side of the car, looks out the window, and they continue in silence.

INT. JAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As Jay enters. Irene looks up casually from the TV and smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IRENE

Hi, honey.

Jay is surprised that there is no emergency.

JAY

Sorry I'm late. I got busy and lost track of time.

Irene turns back to the TV.

JAY (CONT'D)

Uh, what's on?

IRENE

Presidential address.

JAY

Where's Dad?

IRENE

Asleep.

JAY

Okay, well, good night.

IRENE

'Night.

Jay leaves. WE HOLD on a SHOT of Irene favoring the TV.

The President is more of a slick commercial actor than a politician. He looks and sounds polished and trained, without an ounce of sincerity. Patriotic MUSIC plays behind him.

PRESIDENT

(On TV)

...Been the best year we've had for over a decade. Exports are at their highest level in the history of the United States, the GNP is also high and inflation is flat. And the best news is more Americans than ever are working, with an unemployment rate of eight-tenths of one percent and an average income exceeding two-hundred thousand a year.

The TV slowly DISSOLVES to an American flag animation that slowly morphs to the Freedom Corporation logo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRESIDENT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Today, Americans can feel proud
 that their country is one of the
 most successful in the world and
 that the American flag continues to
 be a symbol of leadership and
 quality. Keep up the good work,
 America.

The MUSIC RISES to an uplifting conclusion, as Irene kills
 the last of her beverage.

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As Jay talks to Theo on the computer. They are playing a
 video game at the same time.

THEODORE
 (On computer)
 You know that kid Carl in biology?

JAY
 Uh, I think so. I don't remember.

THEODORE
 He transferred to another school
 too.

JAY
 Why?

THEODORE
 I don't know. But that's it. You're
 one of the lucky ones.

JAY
 It has nothing to do with luck.

THEODORE
 I know, but you were lucky to get a
 brain.

JAY
 I suppose.

THEODORE
 I finally got to play in a game
 last week.

JAY
 Cool. Make any touchdowns?

THEODORE
 Basketball.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAY

Oh. I thought you were playing football.

THEODORE

That was four months ago.

JAY

Oh.

THEODORE

So, what else is going on?

JAY

You remember Connie?

THEODORE

Yeah.

JAY

She's uh...

THEODORE

What? Did you have sex?

JAY

No, no. Nothing like that.

THEODORE

Well, what?

JAY

Just talkin'.

THEODORE

What do you talk about?

JAY

You know, I shouldn't have brought it up.

THEODORE

Well, it's too late now. You have to tell me something.

JAY

All right. I've asked her out.

THEODORE

And...

JAY

And... she accepted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THEODORE
That's it?

JAY
Yeah, pretty much.

THEODORE
Hmm.

Jay smiles.

EXT. CLEMMONS SCHOOL - DAY

As Connie and Jay wait in line at an automated Starbucks stand. Customers talk to a machine that takes their orders, and makes the drinks. Connie steps up.

CONNIE
A grande, iced, double-mocha half-
caf latte with no whip and a shot
of vanilla. No wait. Make that two,
but add whip on the second... and
no vanilla... and make it a decaf.
Actually, make the first one a
decaf too.

STARBUCKS MACHINE
(mechanical but friendly)
One grande, iced, double-mocha,
decaf...

CONNIE
Forget the ice.

STARBUCKS MACHINE
(Resetting)
One grande, double-mocha, decaf...

CONNIE
I still want ice on the second one.

The machine takes a moment to calculate. Connie and Jay crack up.

STARBUCKS MACHINE
One grande, double-mocha, half-caf
latte...

CONNIE
Both are decaf.

The machine takes a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STARBUCKS MACHINE

Bo- Both decaf, half-caf, do-
double. Ple- Please repeat the
order.

Connie and Jay walk away laughing.

INT. CLEMMONS SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS - DAY

The small class is sitting in a circle, another dull
discussion. Jay and Connie are together.

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER

Okay then, what should the role of
government be in deciding the size
of a family?

She notices Jay is daydreaming

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER (CONT'D)

Jay?

JAY

I don't know. The government has to
decide what is best for the
economy, I guess.

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER

How do you feel about the current
limit?

JAY

It's okay, I guess.

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER

What if the government were to
limit family size even more?

JAY

No. That wouldn't be right.

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER

How about less?

CONNIE

(Breaking in)

The government should not tell
families what to do at all. It's
wrong.

Connie is ready for battle, as usual. She can barely contain
herself. The students smile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER
(Ignoring Connie)
Why does the government need to
decide family size, Dan?

DAN
If families were able to decide on
their own, we'd have a population
explosion.

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER
Right, in the last century the
world did have a population
explosion, huh.

CONNIE
There are better ways to control
the population than usurping basic
human rights.

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER
Choosing the size of your family is
not a basic human right.

CONNIE
It is a basic right of a man and
woman to choose how they want to
run their family. It's one of the
few rights we have left-

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER
Does anyone know how many
privatized countries have family
size rules? Jay?

JAY
All privatized countries, except
Sweden and Norway.

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER
Right. And how many is that?

JAY
I don't know. All of them?

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER
Does anyone else know how many?

Jay has had enough. He can't hold it any longer.

JAY
(Nervously)
Can I say something?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAY (CONT'D)

Not only is it wrong to tell families what to do, it's stupid. There are certain things that people do that are basic to living, like breathing and eating and dreaming and loving. And when a government tries to control when we can breath, or what we can dream, it never works because there are some things that are just more important to people than the government. In the end, all the countries are going to see that the population is still out of hand and all they managed to do was control the people who didn't need to be controlled, and make people distrust and despise the government even more. Laws like this always backfire.

The class is silent.

CONNIE

(Mocking the teacher)

But what about the problem of overpopulation, Jay? Can you really trust people to make those tough choices on their own?

JAY

(Thinks for a moment)

No one wants overpopulation. Reasoning with people makes more sense. When you impose family size restrictions, you're in effect telling people you don't trust them enough to use reason to make wise choices. If the government trusted people, people would trust the government.

They both turn to the teacher.

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER

(Half smiling)

Those are some good points.

Suddenly, the class erupts. The dam bursts. It's chaos. Hands go up, all the students start talking over each other. The teacher is overwhelmed.

INT. CLEMMONS COMPUTER LAB - NIGHT

Jay is working. As before, Connie appears out of nowhere, looking over his shoulder.

CONNIE

That was really cool what you did
in social studies.

He smiles, then realizes she can see his screen.

JAY

Hey, don't look at my stuff.

CONNIE

I know what you're working on. You
told me.

JAY

You're crazy. You don't care if we
get in trouble.

CONNIE

Sure I do.

JAY

I don't think so.

CONNIE

Sorry. Guess what this is?

She tosses a small piece of paper on the table. Jay looks at it.

JAY

I don't know.

CONNIE

I think it might be a way into the
National Education Agency network.

Jay is interested now.

JAY

How do you know?

CONNIE

It's a location on a server that
teachers upload test data to. All
we'd need to do is get Farley's
password. It'd be easy. Instead of
test scores, we upload some code
that takes over the server and
gives us administrator access.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Then, we can log on and own the site.

JAY

Yeah, but how do we get his password?

CONNIE

Oh, didn't I tell you. I got it.

JAY

How did you do that?

CONNIE

I had access to his machine one day, so I installed a little program that logs keystrokes. Come here.

They move to her computer. The "NEA" site is up.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

I know how to get to the site and I got the password. I just need help once I get in.

JAY

No. I'm not going to get involved. This is way too risky.

CONNIE

I'm just looking for information. And I know you are too. Don't you want to know what we're doing here at this alleged school? What this SLSA shit is all about?

JAY

I suppose.

CONNIE

I mean, it decides our fucking future and we don't have a clue how it works.

JAY

Okay, I'll get you the code... and maybe show you how to work it. But you're on your own. I'm curious, but I'm not crazy.

CONNIE

(Joking with him)
I've angered you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAY
No, no. It's not anger-

CONNIE
Fear?

JAY
Ok, it's fear.

CONNIE
And what have we said about fear?

JAY
I know. That's how they control us.

CONNIE
If you don't allow fear to control
you, you don't allow them to
control you. Without fear, they
have no power. Without their
power... we're free.

Jay relents.

JAY
I'll get you the code. Then, I'm
going home.

CONNIE
Fair enough.

He goes back to his computer and turns around. She's watching him. They make funny faces at each other for a bit. Then, he shakes his head and turns to his computer.

EXT. CITY STREET - MORNING

ANGLE ESTABLISHING SHOT

The streets are grid-locked as usual, sidewalks are packed with office workers and students.

INT. COMPUTER CLASS - DAY

During class...

STUDENT 1
I'm having trouble instantiating an
object in a network memory space
with encryption turned on.

MR. FARLEY
What happens?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STUDENT 1
No object gets created.

MR. FARLEY
Ok, that could be a million things.
What kind of encryption?

ANGLE ON JAY

As the discussion drags on, Jay turns and looks across the classroom. He's concerned about something.

ANGLE HIS POV

An empty seat.

RESUME JAY

As he turns to his tablet, making sure Mr. Farley doesn't see.

ANGLE ON TABLET

Jay opens a text program and types, "Connie Spencer." An error pops up, "Connie Spencer, USER DOES NOT EXIST."

INT. COMPUTER CLASS - AFTER CLASS

As students file out. Jay hangs back and approaches Mr. Farley at his desk.

JAY
Um, Mr. Farley.

MR. FARLEY
Yes, Jay?

JAY
I was just wondering if Connie...
if she called in sick or something?
Do you know?

Farley looks up.

MR. FARLEY
Connie, huh?

JAY
Yeah.

MR. FARLEY
(Choosing his words)
Well, she uh... she was transferred
to another school.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAY
Transferred?

MR. FARLEY
Yeah, the Carlos Technical School.
Do you know her parents? I can't
really tell you much more.

JAY
No.

MR. FARLEY
Well, I believe they requested the
transfer.

Jay doesn't know what to say.

MR. FARLEY (CONT'D)
As I say, I don't have all the
details.

JAY
(Very confused)
Oh. Okay.

Jay starts to turn away. The room is empty now.

MR. FARLEY
How well did you know her?

JAY
I knew her from my last school.

MR. FARLEY
(Smiling)
Were you guys... you know?

JAY
(Thinking first)
No, no. I was just curious, I mean
about where she was.
(pointing to his tablet)
I thought it was odd that her user
account was...

Jay looks up and stops. Farley is staring at him.

MR. FARLEY
Well, that's all I can tell you.
You would have to talk with her
parents.

JAY
Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jay turns and leaves, but he can feel Farley's eyes on his back.

INT. RETRO CAFÉ - NIGHT

The place is NOISY and crowded as usual. Jay is using a public Internet computer. He is focused, works quickly, occasionally looks back over his shoulder.

ANGLE ON COMPUTER SCREEN

As a no-frills site pops up: "Stanton County School Records - RESTRICTED ACCESS, AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY." Then another message wipes on: "Logged on as T. Goodman."

A "Search for" dialog box opens, and Jay types: "Connie Spencer." The computer thinks, then displays a profile screen for Connie, including a picture. Jay clicks on "View Status." The computer thinks, and then displays: "Current status: INACTIVE - REMOVED."

ANGLE ON JAY

His eyes grow wide. He glances around, then starts typing furiously.

ANGLE ON SCREEN

As another no-frills page pops up: "Clemmons School - RESTRICTED ACCESS." He types "Conniesp" and a password and the site opens: "Connie Spencer workspace." It's her personal school Web pages.

He scrolls through a list of project files, passes by several files with "Security Scenarios" in the names. Then, he stops on a video file labeled, "Carla Standell."

ANGLE ON JAY

He thinks. His mind is flying. He checks around him, then turns back to the computer.

ANGLE ON SCREEN

As he selects "Carla Standell." A video player opens and there's Connie, facing her computer camera. She seems uncharacteristically nervous, speaks quietly.

CONNIE (ON SCREEN)

Hi. I think they're after me. I found a back door into the National Education Agency site that's like got top security access restrictions.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNIE (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)

I mean, why would the education agency need as much security as the military? And I found all this weird shit about the SLSA tests and student profiling. Most students are profiled as astronauts and dentists or whatever. But there were a few profiles that were pretty... fucking scary... like subversive and chronic malcontent. It said that "subversives who are not remediable are removed." I don't know what that means because at that point I got this big fucking message saying that I've been discovered by security.

(Rushing)

I got off right away and recorded this. I don't know what they're going to do, probably nothing. But if you see this video and you don't see me, you'll know what happened. Bye.

The video stops.

ANGLE ON JAY

He is frozen, his eyes are wild with fear.

ANGLE ON SCREEN

As Jay quickly deletes the file and ends his session.

ANGLE ON JAY, MOVING

As he stands and makes his way through the crowd to the front doors. Suddenly, the world is a very scary place. He is no longer a docile member of the society. He is a subversive and he feels it.

As he approaches the front door, he passes a person who sees him and turns. It is one of the security guards from the previous night.

GUARD

(Shouting)

Hey, kid. Stop.

Jay pretends he doesn't hear and continues faster.

GUARD (CONT'D)

(louder)

I said stop.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The group near the Guard freezes and turns. Jay stops.

GUARD (CONT'D)
Come here, bud.

Jay turns back.

GUARD (CONT'D)
Yeah, you. Come here.

Jay approaches the Guard.

GUARD (CONT'D)
Come here, I want to show you
something.

The Guard takes his arm, and walks him back toward the
computer he was using.

GUARD (CONT'D)
You were here the other night,
right?

JAY
(After a beat)
Yeah.

GUARD
Thought so. We got a problem. See
that?

They stop at the computer and the Guard points to an empty
coffee cup.

JAY
Yeah.

GUARD
What is it?

JAY
A coffee cup.

GUARD
Good. See that?

The Guard points to a sign that reads, "Please throw waste in
receptacles."

GUARD (CONT'D)
What does that tell you?

JAY
Sorry. I was in a hurry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GUARD

Weren't you using that same computer the other night?

JAY

Yeah, I think so. Sorry.

GUARD

Thought I recognized you. If you leave cups around, stuff gets spilled inside computers. Boom. They're fried.

Jay tries to squelch a laugh.

JAY

I'll be more careful.

GUARD

It's not funny, ok? Thousands of kids use these computers here everyday. What if everyone left their cups lying around?

JAY

I'm sorry.

GUARD

Now, I never forget a face. Remember that.

The Guard gives him a wink and walks off. Jay let's out a deep breath and picks up the coffee cup.

INT. METRO - NIGHT

It's late, the car is mostly empty. Jay is seated staring out the window. He turns back in and looks at the others.

ANGLE JAY'S POV

One middle-aged man in a nice suit is staring back at him.

RESUME JAY

As he turns away.

INT. CONDO ELEVATOR - NIGHT

As Jay rides to his floor, slowly. The fabric on the walls is old and ripped. The light flickers. Occasionally, the elevator stutters and metal objects outside RUB and SCRAPE.

INT. JAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As Jay enters, his mother is watching the same TV show.

JAY
Hi, Mom.

IRENE
(Without turning)
Hi, honey.

Jay continues toward the hall.

IRENE (CONT'D)
A man and woman from your school
came by. They wanted to talk to
you.

He stops. She is still facing away from him, staring at the TV.

IRENE (CONT'D)
They said you're doing so well
they'd like to transfer you to a
different school.

Jay's heart jumps to his throat.

JAY
Really?

IRENE
I forget the name. They were
disappointed you weren't here.
(She shrugs)
Oh well. They'll find you. Isn't
that something though?

He comes over and sits next to her. She turns.

JAY
Mom?

IRENE
Yes?

He can't find the words.

IRENE (CONT'D)
Do you want some dinner?

JAY
No thanks. I ate. These people, did
they talk about anything else?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IRENE

Yeah. I don't remember though.

JAY

Did they say where the school is?

IRENE

Umm, no.

Jay's mind is racing. Irene goes back to her TV.

JAY

Mom?

IRENE

(Without looking at him)

Yes, honey.

JAY

I don't... Do I have to go to this new school?

IRENE

Why wouldn't you want to go?

JAY

Did they say I have to?

IRENE

I don't remember.

JAY

Would you be upset if I didn't?

IRENE

I don't know.

Jay stands, looks at his mother. He sees a different person now, one who has given up freedom of thought in favor of a confined life that is free of pain. He looks at the TV.

ANGLE ON THE TV

A woman observes a scruffy youth spray-painting the side of a building.

TV ANNCR (V.O.)

Citizen action can make safer communities and reduce the cost of law enforcement. It's your life. It's your choice. Make a difference. Report crime when you see it happen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The woman goes for her cell phone. Titles over the scene:
"Report Crime 512 33 454 55561."

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jay is lying in bed staring at the ceiling, too wound up to sleep. His dark little windowless room is illuminated only by the light from his computer screen. He turns over onto his side. The computer RINGS.

Jay gets up and presses the space bar on the keyboard. Theo pops up on the screen.

THEODORE

Hi. Where were you?

JAY

At, uh, school. Doing some research.

THEODORE

Anything wrong?

JAY

No. Nothing. Some weird stuff happened at school.

THEODORE

What?

JAY

Connie was transferred.

THEODORE

What do you mean?

JAY

She's not uh, they sent her to another school.

THEODORE

That's weird.

JAY

(Trying to smile)
Yeah.

THEODORE

That's too bad. Guess what? My dad said he'd buy me a car if I get a good score on my economics report.

JAY

That's great.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THEODORE

It'll have to be used of course.
I'm thinking of a used Goster.
Maybe a '93.

Jay doesn't react.

THEODORE (CONT'D)

Are you sure you're ok?

JAY

Not really. I'm kind of tired. Been
a long day.

THEODORE

Is it about Connie?

JAY

A little.

THEODORE

(Getting scared)
What else?

JAY

Well... we were talking about...
some things she had discovered on
the network...

Jay studies Theo. He wants to tell him, but he sees the fear
in his eyes.

JAY (CONT'D)

Anyway, I guess I was just more
attached to her than I thought.

THEODORE

I better go.

Jay nods.

THEODORE (CONT'D)

See you.

Theo hangs up, the screen goes black. Jay goes back to his
bed and lies face up. A moment later, the messenger window
activates again.

JAY'S TABLET

Hi Jay, how's it going?

Jays sits upright, a little surprised.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAY

All right.

JAY'S TABLET

Theodore says you are feeling down.
Do you want to talk?

JAY

(Fake smile in his voice)
I'm feeling okay. I'm just a little
upset about Connie being
transferred. I'll take a Somex and
get some sleep. I'll be okay.

Jay gets up reaches for the computer, then stops as the voice
continues.

JAY'S TABLET

Connie was transferred?

JAY

Yeah, they're sending her to
another school.

JAY'S TABLET

Too bad, dude. You must feel bad
about that?

JAY

Yeah. So... I'm going to get some
sleep now and I'll be okay.

JAY'S TABLET

Tell me how you feel.

JAY

Well, I'm sorry to see her go, but
I feel okay.

JAY'S TABLET

Did she ever discuss with you what
she was working on?

Jay's heart stops.

JAY

Working on?

JAY'S TABLET

Her school project.

JAY

We're not supposed to discuss what
we're working on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JAY'S TABLET

Right. I just thought that since you were friends, she may have mentioned something.

JAY

No. She didn't.

Jay knows the computer can read tension in a voice.

JAY'S TABLET

I just wouldn't want you to get in trouble... for not being entirely honest.

JAY

I understand.

A long, unbearable pause.

JAY'S TABLET

Jay. Subversive actions are simply not tolerated by the government. I wouldn't want you to be implicated in a subversive act by association. Do you know what I mean?

JAY

How... How do you know?

JAY'S TABLET

Being open and honest is the best way to demonstrate your loyalty to the government and society.

JAY

How do you... are you?

JAY'S TABLET

I think you have something you want to tell me.

Jay stands and approaches the tablet computer.

JAY

How do you... where did you get the idea that there was anything subversive going on?

JAY'S TABLET

I never said that. I merely suggested that if you and Connie had discussed your projects...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JAY

How did you even know about the projects?

JAY'S TABLET

(It thinks first)

Why, you must have told me about them...

JAY

I don't think I did.

JAY'S TABLET

How else would I...

JAY

You're connected to them. You know...

JAY'S TABLET

I don't understand. I'm here to help you. You seem very upset and there's no reason you should have to be that way.

Jay reaches for a large, heavy book.

JAY'S TABLET (CONT'D)

You'll feel better if you tell me what happened. It's just between you and me. No one's going to...

SMASH! Jay brings the book down hard on the tablet, ending the conversation.

EXT. RETRO CAFÉ - NIGHT

As Jay passes by. He goes to the front door and looks in. It's closed.

EXT. CLEMMONS SCHOOL - NIGHT

The vast concrete quad in front of the school is dark and empty. The only movement comes from the central water feature. Jay enters SHOT in the FOREGROUND facing the school.

ANGLE ON JAY, MOVING

As he makes his way to the front entrance, keeping in the shadows. He stops, looks up.

ANGLE HIS POV

A surveillance camera pointing away from him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RESUME JAY, MOVING

He keeps his eye on the camera and looks around for more cameras, as he makes his way around the side of the building. He approaches a metal door and stops.

He tries the door. It's locked, of course. He flattens himself against the wall and thinks. He is wracked with fear, but determined and desperate. Slowly, he musters every bit of courage he's got.

He reaches out quickly and presses his thumb against the sensor. He waits, nothing. He turns to leave, then SNAP. He stops. To his surprise, the door lock opens. He doesn't take the time to figure it out. He grabs the door handle and runs into the building.

INT. CLEMMONS SCHOOL LOBBY - NIGHT

As he races toward a metal door beside the elevators. He enters.

INT. CLEMMONS STAIRWELL - NIGHT

ANGLE ON JAY, MOVING

As he leaps up the steps, skipping two and three at a time. He reaches the 3rd floor and runs through the door into the hall.

INT. CLEMMONS SCHOOL HALL - NIGHT

ANGLE ON JAY, MOVING

As he runs down the dark hall to the computer lab, and enters.

INT. CLEMMONS COMPUTER LAB - NIGHT

He enters and runs through the dark to his computer.

He flips on the monitor and immediately starts typing - logging in, locating the Internet console. He works quickly, knowing that he is sure to be tracked.

ANGLE ON SCREEN

He logs on and the site opens: "Stanton County School Records - RESTRICTED ACCESS, AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY." He opens the "Search for" dialog and enters "subversive." A moment later, a hundred results scroll up the screen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGLE ON JAY

He allows himself only a second to be disappointed, and then starts attacking the results.

WE INTERCUT between his fingers typing desperately and pages of text scrolling by. Nothing.

A light comes on. Jay looks up briefly.

ANGLE HIS POV

Through the small window in the door, as the light comes on in the hallway.

RESUME JAY

As he pours through text.

ANGLE ON SCREEN

A heading reads, "Subversive Thinkers." He scrolls quickly. He stops on another heading, "Processing Non-Remediable Subversives." He scrolls. The lab door opens OS.

ANGLE ON JAY

He reads frantically.

SCHOOL SECURITY (O.S.)
Hey, what are you doing here?

Jay continues scrolling.

SCHOOL SECURITY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Did you hear me? You aren't
supposed to be here now? What's
going on?

Jay sees something on the page and freezes. Whatever it is, it's not good.

ANGLE ON SCREEN

As a message pops up, covering the text: "ACCESS DENIED: LOG OFF IMMEDIATELY." Jay closes the session, turns off the browser.

ANGLE ON THE SCHOOL SECURITY COP

As he approaches Jay.

SCHOOL SECURITY (CONT'D)
Do you know what time it is?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAY

I'm sorry. I was concentrating...
and didn't...

SCHOOL SECURITY

It's almost eleven-thirty. Students
aren't allowed in here past eight.
You know that. How did you get in
the side door?

JAY

I'm sorry. I needed to work on a
project. It's late.

SCHOOL SECURITY

You didn't answer my question.

JAY

I pressed my thumb on the sensor
and it opened.

SCHOOL SECURITY

That's impossible. Come on, get up.

JAY

What do you mean, impossible? It
opened.

SCHOOL SECURITY

No students have clearance on that
door, ever. Come on, let's go.

JAY

Where are we going?

SCHOOL SECURITY

I'm escorting your ass out of here.
Come on.

Jay is confused, but follows the guy out.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JAY'S BEDROOM - DAY

ANGLE ON AN OLD ALARM CLOCK

As it changes to "6:30" and BUZZES.

ANGLE ON JAY IN BED

He is confused by the alarm clock, reaches over and switches
it off. He sits up, shakes his head. Then he remembers - the
tablet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He slides over to his desk and picks up the remains of the tablet. A few shards of plastic fall off. He sets it down and opens the door.

INT. JAY'S HALLWAY - DAY

As he steps out. Irene calls from down the hall.

IRENE (O.S.)

Jay. Could you come here for a minute?

INT. JAY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

As Jay enters wearing his night clothes. Irene is standing beside a smiling, polite, nicely-dressed couple, BILL and GWENN.

IRENE

Jay. These are the people I was telling you about. Bill and Gwenn.

BILL

Hi Jay. Please, excuse the early hour. We wanted to talk yesterday, but you were out.

GWENN

(Cheerfully)

We're taking you to your new school.

JAY

I didn't know...

BILL

As I say, we were hoping to get to you yesterday. I think you'll like the new place.

GWENN

You've been showing a lot of promise at Clemmons and the district wanted to make sure you were adequately challenged.

BILL

We'll explain more later.

JAY

Mom?

IRENE

What dear?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He doesn't know what to say.

BILL

Take your time. When you're ready,
we'll give you a lift.

They all smile at each other.

EXT. URBAN HIGHWAY - DAY

A white unmarked government sedan moves slowly through
morning traffic.

INT. GOVERNMENT CAR - DAY

As the three drive in silence. Bill is in the passenger seat,
casually filling out a form on his tablet. He is affected and
tidy, the perfect bureaucrat. He finishes.

BILL

Ok, then. Everything's set.

Gwenn nods. Bill turns back to Jay with a big, fake smile.

BILL (CONT'D)

So, Jay I imagine you're curious
about your new school. Hmm?

Jay nods.

BILL (CONT'D)

Gwenn and I work for a special
division of the National Education
Agency. We handle students with
special talents or gifts, like you.

He pulls up a form on his tablet.

BILL (CONT'D)

On your SLSA, you scored, wow, way
over the top.

(Choosing his words
carefully)

You are a very, very, gifted young
man. Someone with your abilities
needs to have the freedom to excel.
That's why we've decided to start
you in a school for highly gifted
individuals, where you will be
provided with the challenges you
require to succeed in society, as
well as the room to expand on your
talents.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He waits for some acknowledgement from Jay, but gets none.

BILL (CONT'D)

Not very many young people get this opportunity. The school is a lovely, open facility with plenty of grassy fields in which to play sports and go for walks or whatever.

(down-plays the next part)

It's some distance from your home, so you will spend most of your time actually at the facility.

JAY

(Eyes widen)

I'll be living there?

BILL

That is what most students choose to do, yes. I think you'll find the living quarters very homey and pleasant.

Jay begins to panic.

JAY

What, uh, what if I want to go back to Clemmons? What if I don't like it?

Bill looks at Gwenn.

GWENN

Jay, most students have the same concerns at first. But I assure you, every student ends up being very pleased. I've never had a student ask to go back.

JAY

What if I want to go back?

GWENN

(Lying)

Then you can go back, of course.

EXT. URBAN HIGHWAY - DAY

As the government car takes an off-ramp leading to another highway. The new highway leads to an empty two-lane road surrounded by open prairie, stretching all the way to the horizon.

EXT. JAY'S CONDO - AFTERNOON

As an identical white car pulls up and parks in a loading zone. The condo is a 20 story, concrete structure - not unpleasant, but devoid of foliage and warmth.

Mr. Williams, a tall man wearing a nice suit, gets out of the car, checks his tablet, and walks toward the building lobby. His face is hidden.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON

As the government car with Jay approaches on a deserted two-lane road, hours from the city. The car passes a small farmhouse, then slows and turns off onto a dirt road. Beside the road is an unassuming, weathered sign, "Absco Quarry, Sand and Gravel."

The car disappears over a shallow ridge, behind some low trees.

INT. CONDO ELEVATOR

Mr. Williams is the only one in the elevator. His face is hidden, as he rides up.

INT. GOVERNMENT CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

They ride down the rough road in silence. Jay's eyes are fixed on the countryside flying by the side window.

INT. CONDO HALLWAY

As Mr. Williams exits the elevator. He stops and checks the number on a door, then heads down the hall. His face is still hidden.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON

ANGLE ON THE CAR, MOVING

As it slows and turns down a narrower dirt road. WE FOLLOW as the car turns behind a stand of low trees, revealing a very large and sturdy metal gate. Razor wire tops the gate and the high fence next to it.

The car stops and waits while the massive gate opens. Then, the car proceeds through the gate and down another dirt road. The gate closes.

The area that the car enters is completely enclosed by two or three layers of razor-wired fences and protected by an abundance of surveillance cameras.

INT. JAY'S KITCHEN

As Irene makes dinner. The DOORBELL RINGS.

IRENE
Morris, can you get the door,
please?

INT. JAY'S LIVING ROOM

Morris is reading in an easy chair. The TV is on, as usual.

MORRIS
Sure.

He goes to the door and opens it. MR. WILLIAMS, is standing there with a dour expression.

MR. WILLIAMS
Hello. Mr. Potter, Morris Potter?

MORRIS
Yes.

MR. WILLIAMS
(Holding up his badge)
I'm Deputy Williams with the
Stanton County Sheriffs Office. May
I speak with you and your wife?

MORRIS
Sure.
(Calling)
Irene.

IRENE (O.S.)
Yes?

MORRIS
Can you come here a minute?

MR. WILLIAMS
Do you mind if I come in?

MORRIS
Not at all.

MR. WILLIAMS
Thank you.

Mr. Williams enters. Irene comes in and they stand, facing each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORRIS

Honey, this is Deputy Williams with
the Sheriffs Office.

MR. WILLIAMS

Perhaps, we should sit.

Morris and Irene share the deputy's dour expression, as they sit.

INT. GOVERNMENT CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

As the car continues down the dirt road. Jay's eyes are wide,
as he surveys the high fences and manicured grass fields.

JAY

Where are we?

BILL

At your new school. Perhaps I
understated the size of the-

JAY

(Raising his voice)

What kind of school is this?

BILL

(Still composed)

You'll see in a minute. Just around
the next bend.

Jay looks.

EXT. DAVIS INSTITUTE

As the car takes the bend, revealing the campus. The school
is the size of a small university. Groups of low brick
buildings are set among broad lawns and dense stands of
trees. Small groups of uniformed students stroll down gravel
paths and converse on benches. The school environment is a
vivid contrast to the concrete sterility of the city.

EXT. DAVIS SCHOOL ENTRANCE - DUSK

As the car pulls up. The three get out and a large armed
guard approaches Jay. He shows no sign of resistance, so the
guard merely follows him, as the three walk toward the
entrance.

INT. DAVIS HOLDING ROOM - DAY

A large woman at a counter is collecting personal items from
Jay. She catalogs things like his watch, keys, and wallet in
a database. Jay is impatient with her dull, methodical pace.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAY
May I ask you a question?

HOLDING ROOM WOMAN
(Annoyed)
All right.

JAY
Why do you need to take all my
things?

HOLDING ROOM WOMAN
It's part of the intake procedure.

JAY
Will I get them back?

HOLDING ROOM WOMAN
After you meet with your counselor.

JAY
When will that be?

HOLDING ROOM WOMAN
Very soon.

JAY
Where am I? What is this place?

Every time he asks a question, she has to stop cataloging,
which annoys her greatly.

HOLDING ROOM WOMAN
It's the Davis Institute.

JAY
I mean, why all the security and
uniforms? Is it a prison? Am I in
prison?

HOLDING ROOM WOMAN
It's not a prison. Please, save
your questions for the counselor.

He wanders around the small room. The doors are secured with
large locks and the few windows have wire mesh.

HOLDING ROOM WOMAN (CONT'D)
Mr. Potter. Please sign here and
take a seat.

He presses his thumb on an electronic screen, and the woman
gathers his items and exits through a locked door. He
approaches the door and looks through a small window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ANGLE HIS POV

As students go about their business in an internal hallway. There is something different about these kids. They do things that would not be tolerated at the city schools, like running in halls, touching each other, and talking loudly, and they do the things freely and with no malicious intent. They seem naturally happy, and no one appears to be concerned about this behavior.

INT. DAVIS INFIRMARY - DAY

Jay stands in his skivvies, as a doctor checks him over. Jay looks out a narrow window running along the top of a wall.

ANGLE HIS POV

A bright blue sky with small puffy clouds.

INT. DAVIS PRINTING ROOM - DAY

As Jay gets fingerprinted. He is wearing the school uniform now - a thick green tee-shirt with the school logo and khaki pants. The technician finishes, and then leads Jay to a machine that takes a retinal scan.

INT. DAVIS COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The counselor MR. HARRIS speaks without looking up from the forms he is looking through and filling out on his tablet. He is middle-aged and not unpleasant, wears a beard. Like everyone else at the school, Harris moves at an unrushed, methodical pace.

MR. HARRIS

Are you a pretty happy person? Or serious? Or what? How would you characterize yourself?

JAY

Uh, happy I suppose.

Harris knows better and smiles.

MR. HARRIS

Do you like people, get along with people?

JAY

Yeah.

Harris looks at Jay's reaction for just a moment, then back down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. HARRIS

Mm, hmm. Says here you're a natural with computer software development. Do you enjoy that?

JAY

Yes.

MR. HARRIS

A lot of young men enjoy hacking, you know, breaking into secure networks and causing havoc. How do you feel about that? Is that something you would enjoy doing?

He looks at Jay.

JAY

Of course not.

MR. HARRIS

You can be honest with me. You know why? Because I have all your records right here. The government and the corporation keep very complete records of any and all attempts to gain access to their secure servers. And they have names. So, if you tell me you have not hacked and the record shows you have, then we cannot have a meaningful conversation. See what I mean?

JAY

Yeah.

MR. HARRIS

Well?

JAY

Does it say I have?

Harris stares at Jay for a moment. Then, smiles.

MR. HARRIS

I like that answer. We'll go with that.

Harris types on the form.

JAY

The woman in the other room said I could ask you questions.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. HARRIS
(Still typing)
All in due time. All in due time.

INT. JAY'S QUARTERS - DAY

As Jay sits on the bed, taking in his new surroundings.

The room is small, with government green walls, lit by a glaring ceiling fixture. It's just big enough for a cheap, single bed, and tiny wood desk - not much different from a prison cell.

Jay stands and paces. He steps toward the door to look through the small window. Then, it suddenly flies open. The Holding Room Woman enters with some paperwork.

HOLDING ROOM WOMAN
Excuse me.

She puts the folder in a tray on the back of the door.

JAY
What do I.. What's happening?

HOLDING ROOM WOMAN
They didn't tell you?

JAY
No. Nothing-

HOLDING ROOM WOMAN
Okay, well, just hang out here until someone comes for you.

JAY
Who?

HOLDING ROOM WOMAN
It won't be long.

She leaves, closing the door behind her.

Jay paces to one end of the room, then back to the door. He is bored and hungry, but no longer panicking. He looks out the small window, and then tries the doorknob. To his surprise, it's unlocked.

He opens the door slowly all the way, and peers out.

ANGLE ON HIS POV

A young woman is getting a drink at a fountain across the hall. She finishes and looks his way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RESUME JAY

As he quickly closes the door. He looks through the window and watches her go by. Then, he tries the door again. It opens again. He closes it. Then, goes back to the bed and sits.

INT. JAY'S QUARTERS - LATER

Jay is rolled over on his side asleep. There is a knock at the door. Jay awakens.

JAY

Come in.

A security guard enters - the same one who escorted him from the government car.

DAVIS GUARD

Jay. Follow me.

The guard is an imposing size. Jay jumps up and follows him out the door.

INT. DAVIS HALLWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

ANGLE GUARD AND JAY, MOVING

As they walk down the hall. It's not unlike other school halls he's been in, except this one has more interesting angles, colors, windows, and no advertising.

INT. WAITING ROOM BY PRESIDENT'S DOOR - LATE AFTERNOON

ANGLE ON DOOR

The nameplate on the door reads, MS. FOSDICK, PRESIDENT. The guard knocks.

MS. FOSDICK (O.S.)

Come in.

The guard opens the door, revealing a modest office with a nice view of the grounds, and Ms. Fosdick. She is not what Jay was expecting.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

As Jay enters. The guard stays out, closing the door behind him.

MS. FOSDICK

Jay Potter, right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAY

Right.

MS. FOSDICK

I'm Ms. Fosdick. Have a seat.

Jay sits in a metal office chair in front of her desk. Ms. Fosdick finishes some work on her tablet.

She appears to be about 18 or 19 years old, not much different from Connie. She wears casual clothes - jeans, school tee-shirt. Her office is stacked with books and interesting art objects created by students.

MS. FOSDICK (CONT'D)

Sorry to make you wait, Jay. It's been a crazy day.

She finishes something on her tablet.

MS. FOSDICK (CONT'D)

I know you're probably confused as hell. Just a second.

She presses a key and talks into her tablet.

MS. FOSDICK (CONT'D)

Sara, can you file the rest of this crap. I'll deal with it tomorrow. I'm wasted.

SARA (V.O.)

Sure.

MS. FOSDICK

Okay, Jay. I think I'm now 100% present.

(Looks at her tablet)

You know, I don't trust this thing. Follow me.

Jay follows her through a private door that leads outside.

EXT. DAVIS GROUNDS - LATE AFTERNOON

ANGLE THE TWO, MOVING

The setting sun is coloring the sky with deep reds and yellows. Ms. Fosdick and Jay stroll down a concrete path leading through a massive lawn dotted with magnolias and cherry trees.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MS. FOSDICK

I'm not always sure where to start with a new student. Sometimes they're belligerent and distrusting, and that's understandable. Other times they're cautious and confused, and that's understandable too. So, what are you?

JAY

I don't know. I don't seem to have much control over what I can or can't do.

MS. FOSDICK

All right, we'll start there.

They stop and she invites him to sit beside her on a bench.

MS. FOSDICK (CONT'D)

Jay, you and I and everyone here, except for the two who brought you this morning, have complete freedom to go wherever we want, anytime we want, be whatever we want, and do whatever we want. In fact, you can go right now. The only thing we can't do, however, is leave the school. We can't go beyond those fences.

She points.

ANGLE ON HER POV

Way across the lawn, a section of fence, twenty-feet tall, is exposed in a clearing between trees.

RESUME THE TWO

Jay panics.

JAY

You mean, we can't get out?

MS. FOSDICK

Yup.

JAY

Ever?

MS. FOSDICK

That's the way it looks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAY

What about everything? My parents,
my friends? My home?

MS. FOSDICK

Oh, you're never going to see them
again.

JAY

But I can call them.

MS. FOSDICK

Not any more. You're completely cut
off from the outside world. Go
ahead. Check your phone.

Jay pulls his phone out. Sure enough, his account is
deactivated.

JAY

But those people who drove me here
said-

MS. FOSDICK

They lied.

Jay stands. He wants to run, but where. His thoughts are
racing and jumbled.

JAY

Okay... Okay... How do I know
you're not lying?

MS. FOSDICK

You don't, I suppose.

JAY

This is insane.

MS. FOSDICK

That's one way to look at it.

JAY

Is this a joke?

MS. FOSDICK

Afraid not.

JAY

Do you... are you saying... we're
all prisoners?

Fosdick weighs the answer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MS. FOSDICK

Sort of.

JAY

You're a prisoner?

MS. FOSDICK

We all are.

JAY

But why? What did I do? Did I break some law? Why won't anyone tell me?

MS. FOSDICK

I'm sorry. We all went through this. It's hard-

He looks back.

JAY

What the fuck?

MS. FOSDICK

Exactly. What the fuck?

He doesn't know why, but he starts to smile. He pounds his head with his fists.

JAY

I don't believe this is happening.

Jay paces in front of her.

MS. FOSDICK

Jay, I know you don't trust me. But for right now, I'm all you got. Just bear with me, okay? It'll all make sense, eventually. Well, maybe not make sense. But at some point, you'll come to the conclusion that you may as well trust us, because it's just us. That's it. And you can either trust us or not.

Jay stops pacing and looks at her. She smiles.

EXT. DAVIS GARDEN - DUSK

Jay and Ms. Fosdick are strolling through an ornate Japanese garden.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MS. FOSDICK

About ten years after America was bought out by the corporation, otherwise known as the Privatization Charter of 2068, the executives realized their biggest problem wasn't defending the country against foreign invaders. It was dealing with Americans. The corporation's goal is to increase profits. But how can they if they have to deal with people? People cause problems. They have ideas, they want to be independent, they have emotional ups and downs. If people aren't consuming because they're upset, or they're not producing because they're uncomfortable, the whole corporate system becomes very unpredictable and unprofitable.

She sits on a bench on a small stone bridge.

MS. FOSDICK (CONT'D)

So, the corporation decided the best way to have a predictable economy was to tame Americans, sort of domesticate us, turn us into cattle. They fed us drugs to numb our minds and make us docile. And they kept us happy and healthy and fat by controlling our environment. And the plan worked. Most Of the population became predictable, and the economy hummed along and generated profits.

She stands and approaches Jay, who is leaning on a post.

MS. FOSDICK (CONT'D)

But there was one big problem - how to deal with those small pockets of people who just couldn't be made to fit in. You know, there was the violent pocket, people who murdered and raped and burned down buildings. And there were the people with mental issues and birth defects. And then, there were people like you and me who could see right through the bullshit - in other words, subversives.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MS. FOSDICK (CONT'D)

The corporation needed to take us out of the system. With us out of the system, out of the gene pool if you will, eventually subversive tendencies would be bred out of the population. In theory.

They start walking again.

MS. FOSDICK (CONT'D)

They designed a test called the SLISA to decide each person's destiny. Everyone would have a role in the corporation that was perfectly suited to them. There would be no more resources wasted trying to educate someone who was unteachable, no more dealing with individuals who could not be domesticated. Problem individuals were separated from the herd into schools for the gifted or some other bullshit name, and most ended up being useful to the corporation.

She stops and turns to him.

MS. FOSDICK (CONT'D)

But there was still a small minority of individuals who simply could not be made to fit the mold, no matter what. And they ended up in a place like this.

JAY

How do you know all this?

They head toward a building, surrounded by tall edible plants.

MS. FOSDICK

Just put two and two together. The first people to be dumped here 47 years ago were simply left in the field to fend for themselves. No one has ever told us anything. We had to just figure it all out. We built the school, created the grounds. Grow most of our own food on roughly 2,500 acres. And we have survived and flourished. So far.

JAY

That sounds incredible.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MS. FOSDICK

To the corporation, we were subversives. But in reality, we were intelligent and highly motivated, and not about to give up without a fight. That's how we did this. The area was an old quarry, so we produced cement and bricks for building. A river runs through the northern section, so we were able to grow food. And we got electricity and other things we couldn't create by bartering with the corporation. You see, after they started dumping us here, they quickly discovered that they were losing their most creative thinkers. In exchange for computers, refrigerators and washing machines, we sell them our intelligence in the form of software, books, and things like video games. Come on, I'll show you.

INT. DAVID COMPUTER LAB - NIGHT

Ms. Fosdick and Jay enter.

The lab is a large, bright, crazy, open space with computers and desks, beanbag chairs, fish tanks, and pop can towers all over. A couple dozen people are camped out talking, working on programs, shooting pool, and playing guitars.

Jay takes it all in.

MS. FOSDICK

One of the things you won't see at the institute are TVs. Once you get into the culture here, you'll see why. People aren't that interested in seeing what's going on out there or listening to that music or buying all that consumer crap. Those things all seem kind of silly. We create our own entertainment. And here's a fun fact... No one has ever tried to escape. Well, one guy. But it ended up being an issue with a girlfriend and he came around after some intervention.

She stops and faces him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MS. FOSDICK (CONT'D)
So, any questions?

JAY
Well, umm... Yeah. I have a lot,
actually.

MS. FOSDICK
Good.

JAY
Like. What am I supposed to do now?

MS. FOSDICK
You're free to do whatever you
want. I think you'll learn the
rules as you go along.

JAY
This is... very strange.

MS. FOSDICK
I know. But you'll figure it out.
No rush.

(Looks at a clock)
Listen, I gotta run. If you have
questions, just ask anyone.

JAY
Okay, I guess... I'll just uh...

MS. FOSDICK
Hey, we're all just as clueless.
Gotta go. We're expecting one more
"student."
(Finger quotes)
Happens this time of year. You
okay?

Jay nods.

MS. FOSDICK (CONT'D)
See you.

JAY
Thanks.

Jay wanders through the lab. Occasionally, someone looks his way and they smile and nod.

At the other end of the lab, he recognizes someone facing away from him, with her head lowered. She is sitting in a low chair looking out the window at the lawn. He approaches her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAY (CONT'D)

Connie?

She sees him and smiles broadly. Jay sits next to her and they just look at each other. Then, they hug.

INT. CONNIE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Connie is lying in bed with her head propped up. Jay is sitting in the desk chair with his legs on the bed. The room is identical to Jay's.

JAY

And what about Ms. Fosdick? She's the President?

CONNIE

Pretty weird, huh? How do you like my room?

JAY

It's just like mine.

CONNIE

I think after you've been here awhile you can try for a room with a window. Some people just get pissed off and build their own house. Might as well. Nothing else to do.

JAY

What do you do if you're hungry?

CONNIE

I'll show you. Come on.

She gets up and heads for the door with Jay in tow. At the door, she turns and faces him - their faces inches apart.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

I'm really glad you're here.

She closes her eyes and moves in, and they kiss.

INT. COMMISSARY - NIGHT

As they walk along a buffet table. The food presentation is not at all like they were used to in the outside world. There are large wicker baskets filled with whole fruits and vegetables, simple breads, hard-boiled eggs, and no meat. Everything is fresh, nothing out of a can or box.

They grab a few items and add them to a tray.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNIE

It's like one of those old-fashioned communes, where everyone trades off working in the fields and kitchen.

JAY

Who pays for it?

CONNIE

No one. There's no money. People just... you know... cooperate.

JAY

What if they don't?

CONNIE

I don't know. I guess they find something else for them to do.

Jay just nods. They fill their cups from a coffee dispenser.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

I thought this was coffee at first, until I drank it. It looks the same anyway. No more Starbucks. Forever!

She makes a scary face, then leads Jay to a table.

JAY

I don't believe this place.

CONNIE

I know. I don't know what I'd do without you here.

JAY

Did you get depressed?

CONNIE

Yeah. But think about it. No more pills. No more digital counselors. We're on our own. Our minds are free.

JAY

Free to be depressed.

CONNIE

And there's definitely a lot to be depressed about, if you want. No one knows why they were sent here. No one knows what happened after they left.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jay thinks about that for a moment.

JAY
I wonder what my parents were told.

CONNIE
Lies. That's for sure.

JAY
I guess so.

CONNIE
You can be depressed. It's okay.

JAY
Maybe I will.

INT. JAY'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

He is lying on his bed unable to sleep, thinking about how everything has changed.

EXT. DAVIS GARDEN - NIGHT

Jay is walking beside the water in the moonlight. The environment is intensely beautiful. All we hear are the natural SOUNDS OF NIGHT - frogs, an owl. He sits on the railing of the bridge and takes it all in.

He steps across the bridge and lies in the grass, staring up at the stars. His eyes start to close.

INT. DAVID COMPUTER LAB - DAY

Weeks later. Jay sits at a computer, concentrating on a program he is writing.

EXT. DAVIS GROUNDS - DAY

Jay is sitting in a group with Connie, having a small picnic. Connie is telling stories and the group is laughing.

EXT. DAVIS FIELD - DAY

As Connie and Jay till the soil on a warm day.

INT. DAVID COMPUTER LAB - DAY

As Jay and a group discuss the design of a video game. They talk excitedly, pace and point to the game displayed on a big monitor.

EXT. DAVIS GROUNDS - LATE AFTERNOON

As Jay and Connie hold each other in the shade of an old maple tree.

INT. CONNIE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

As Connie lies in bed talking to Jay, who is sitting on the desk. Jay moves to the bed and reaches out to her. She stops talking and reaches back. Then, he gets in bed with her and they embrace.

EXT. DAVIS LOOKOUT - DAY

Months later. A bucolic panorama from a high vantage point of the Davis community nestled in long, green meadows. In the distance, WE HEAR the VOICES of Jay and Connie approaching from OFFSCREEN, struggling, out of breath.

JAY (O.S.)

Slow down.

CONNIE (O.S.)

Make me.

JAY (O.S.)

You shouldn't be pushing yourself so hard.

CONNIE (O.S.)

I'm okay. You're the one who's out of shape. Come on.

JAY (O.S.)

You're crazy.

CONNIE (O.S.)

I think you need more time in the fields.

JAY (O.S.)

I hate the fields.

CONNIE (O.S.)

You'd get used to it. The problem with you is you don't get out enough.

Connie runs into VIEW from a steep path. She stops when she reaches the crest of the hill and faces the view. Then, she bends over to catch her breath. Jay enters, dragging, covered in sweat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAY

Really, you shouldn't be doing this.

He collapses on the grass.

CONNIE

I told you, I'm okay.

JAY

I don't know why I bother.

She sits beside him.

CONNIE

You should know me by now.

JAY

You would think.

CONNIE

What do you expect me to do, sit around in a rocking chair and knit diapers for nine months?

JAY

You're exaggerating, as usual.

He lies down with his head in her lap, closes his eyes. She strokes his hair and looks off across the field.

CONNIE

There's so much to do.

JAY

Let somebody else do it.

CONNIE

Who? Too many of these people here are... I don't know. Nobody is willing to take a risk.

JAY

You're never happy. Why can't you just sit still and be happy?

CONNIE

No. Not when the rest of the world is living in misery.

JAY

Here we go, again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CONNIE

Everyone should be living like this. It's wrong to sit around and do nothing. Stop being a such a downer.

Jay sits up and puts his arm around her, pats her stomach gently.

JAY

I'm not. I'm being realistic. Nothing's going to happen unless we are very, very careful and smart. Patience.

CONNIE

(Mocking)

Patience and perseverance.

JAY

Right. You got a problem with that?

CONNIE

Maybe.

Jay smiles, then leans in and they kiss.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Are you trying to distract me? Because it won't work.

He kisses her again, longer.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

(smiling)

I'm still committed, very committed.

Jay GROWLS as if all that commitment talk is turning him on. Then, he moves in and gently pushes her back in the grass.

SLOW FADE OUT
AND THEN UP ON:

EXT. CITY WATERFRONT PARK - MORNING

The deep red sun is rising over the sprawling city skyline. Freighters and barges clog the industrial river that glows steel-gray beneath rainbow slicks of chemical waste. A small dying park fronts the river. Hundred-year old structures and rows of barren cherry trees provide a decaying reminder of the last time anyone cared.

TITLE: Six years later

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A young man and woman come into view jogging along a concrete trail.

ANGLE ON JOGGERS, MOVING

MAN

I have to go into work for awhile this morning.

WOMAN

On Saturday? What about Jay?

MAN

What about him?

WOMAN

You said you'd watch him for an hour while I got my hair done. Remember?

MAN

Yeah, I remember.
(He doesn't)
When is that again?

WOMAN

Ten o'clock. This morning.

MAN

That's cool. I can just take him with me.

WOMAN

You're going to take Jay to the office?

MAN

Sure. He's okay. I've done it before.

WOMAN

What's he going to do while you work?

MAN

It's okay. I just give him a tablet and he plays with the buttons.

WOMAN

Whatever.

INT. INTERCO SOFTWARE - DAY

Across an ocean of office cubicles that normally seats 500 employees. Today, only a handful are working, including the man.

ANGLE CLOSER ON THE MAN

He is busy typing on his tablet. Jay, a 2-year-old, is busy with another tablet and some toys. An office-worker calls from another cubicle.

OFFICE WORKER

Hey Theo.

The man looks up.

OFFICE WORKER (CONT'D)

The old lady's cracking the whip, huh?

THEODORE

No, not at all. We're just getting some quality time in.

Jay drops the tablet on the carpet. Theo turns back.

THEODORE (CONT'D)

Hey Jay, watch out.

JAY THE BABY

I sorry.

THEODORE

If you break that, daddy'll get fired.

Theo picks up the tablet. Meanwhile, Jay takes off, crawling under desks like a worm.

THEODORE (CONT'D)

Jay. Come back here.

The office worker laughs.

THEODORE (CONT'D)

Jay, where are you?

Jay is laughing too. He pokes his head up like a jack-in-the-box several cubes away.

JAY THE BABY

Hi daddy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THEODORE

Jay, I can't play now.

He takes off again, leaving a trail of giggles. Theo takes a cleansing breath and starts the chase. Jay pops his head up, Theo goes in that direction. Jay pops his head up someplace else, Theo turns around. Theo stops and listens for the giggling and changes his direction to head Jay off. It doesn't work. He doubles back, giggling harder.

The game goes on like this for awhile. Then Theo gets smart and looks under the desks. He spots Jay. He finally realizes that Jay is tracking him by watching his feet, so Theo gets up on a desk. The office worker laughs. Theo gingerly steps across the desks toward Jay.

Jay pops up, confused, sees Theo mere feet away. He SCREAMS and runs off down an aisle. Theo leaps to the floor and takes chase. He holds back a bit to give Jay a lead. Then, he goes in and grabs him, picks him up, tickles him. Theo carries Jay back to his cube.

THEODORE (CONT'D)

Now, you're going to have to be patient for just a little longer while Daddy finishes some work. Then we'll... go get some ice cream.

JAY THE BABY

I want ice cream now.

THEODORE

When I'm done.

JAY THE BABY

Now.

THEODORE

I'm almost done. Just a few more minutes. You can play with, I don't know.

(Calling to the office
worker)

Hey Carl, you want to take the kid for awhile?

He laughs, Jay keeps kicking.

As Theo approaches his desk, he sees MR. BOLLITZ waiting for him, with a fake smile. Bollitz is short, tense, and well-dressed. Theo puts Jay down. Jay is scared straight by the sight of Bollitz and hides behind Theo's legs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. BOLLITZ

Hi, Theo.

THEODORE

Mr. Bollitz.

MR. BOLLITZ

Glad you're here. Do you think you can get me that sales report this morning sometime?

THEODORE

Yeah, no problem. That's why I came in.

MR. BOLLITZ

Good. We're running a little late, so... put a fire under it, okay?

THEODORE

Sure. Sorry it's taken so long. I was busy this week.

Bollitz understands only that the report is late and Theo is a screw-up.

MR. BOLLITZ

(Still smiling)

Mm hmm. And Theo... This is a place of business not a daycare. Let's leave the kids at home, okay?

Bollitz gives Theo a wink, Theo smiles and nods. Bollitz turns away. Theo looks over to the office worker.

ANGLE HIS POV

The office worker is focused on his work now.

RESUME THEO

He picks up Jay and sits him on the desk, then looks at the form on his tablet. He pats Jay on the head. Then, he reaches over and shuts off the tablet.

EXT. ICE CREAM STAND - DAY

As Theo and Jay sit on a dirty old plastic table eating double scoops. Jay, of course, has chocolate all over his face and shirt, but Theo doesn't care.

THEODORE

So Jay, how's it hangin' dude?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAY THE BABY
So Dad, how's it hangin' Dad?

THEODORE
Do you always repeat everything you hear?

JAY THE BABY
Do you repeat everything you hear?

THEODORE
A skunk sat on a stump.

JAY THE BABY
A skunk sat on a skunk.

THEODORE
The stump thunk the skunk stunk.
The skunk thunk the stump stunk.

Jay does a bad job of repeating. Jay wriggles and the top scoop falls off onto table.

THEODORE (CONT'D)
Look out dude.

Theo picks it up and plops it back on the cone.

THEODORE (CONT'D)
You gotta concentrate when you're eating things so big and messy.

Jay resumes eating, concentrating now.

THEODORE (CONT'D)
Do you know where you got your name?

Jay shakes his head.

THEODORE (CONT'D)
I had a friend named Jay when I was a kid.

JAY THE BABY
(Smiling, shaking his head)
Huh uh.

THEODORE
It's true. We went to school together and played video games and talked about things. Just like you and me. He was my best friend.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

This concept is foreign to Jay.

JAY THE BABY
I'm Jay.

THEODORE
I know. But his name was Jay too.

JAY THE BABY
Huh uh.

THEODORE
But he went away one day and I
never saw him again.

Jay empathizes.

THEODORE (CONT'D)
It made me very sad. And I cried.

JAY THE BABY
(Thinking he's kidding)
Huh uh.

THEODORE
Then, I married your mommy and we
had you. And now, I'm not sad
anymore.

Jay is just a kid, but he can read the truth. He stares at Theo as he licks his ice cream.

JAY THE BABY
Am I your friend now?

Theo smiles.

THEODORE
Yes. You are my best friend.

JAY THE BABY
Is mommy?

THEODORE
Yes. She's my best friend too.

JAY THE BABY
And Pickles?

THEODORE
Yes.

JAY THE BABY
And the fish?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

THEODORE

Yes. Everyone is my best friend.

JAY THE BABY

Dad?

THEODORE

Yes.

JAY THE BABY

What about Pootus?

THEODORE

Of course. Pootus is my best friend too.

INT. VIDEO GAME STORE - DAY

The store sells games and has a small arcade, which is packed with kids. Theo is looking through a stack of games, while Jay stands on a high chair playing something next to him.

Theo turns to a counter display with a poster. The game is called "Tranquo." He recognizes the artwork, but can't think of why. He picks up the game disk, looks over the packaging. There's something about it that grabs his interest.

INT. ADULT THEO'S GAME ROOM - DAY

ANGLE CLOSE ON SCREEN

As the Tranquo game is being played. The character enters a store and talks to the clerk.

GAME CLERK

Are you here to purchase gifts?

Numbers and icons flash, and gift icons appear around Tranquo.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Theo, work called. Theo?

ANGLE ON THEO PLAYING THE GAME

The game room adjoins the kitchen. Theo sits in an easy chair, facing a large gaming screen. Jay is next to him playing with objects on the floor. The woman, SARA, is standing over him with new hair.

THEODORE

Yeah? Sara, you're home. Your hair looks good.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Theo puts the controller down.

SARA

Thank you. I've been home for an hour. Didn't you hear the phone?

THEODORE

No, no. Sorry, the game.

SARA

(Not sympathetic)
Is this a new one?

THEODORE

Yeah.

SARA

You went to the game store?

THEODORE

Yeah.

SARA

Theo, that was Mr. Bollitz on the phone. You were supposed to turn in some report.

THEODORE

Oh yeah. I can do that Monday.

Sara turns abruptly and walks away. Theo sets the game controller down and heads after her.

THEODORE (CONT'D)

Sara, wait.

He follows her into...

INT. ADULT THEO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A large, spacious room filled with modern furniture that won't be so modern once it's paid off. The room features a picture window that frames an expensive view of downtown.

Theo stops her.

THEODORE

Don't worry, okay? I've turned in reports late before. It's not a big deal.

SARA

It sounded like a big deal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THEODORE

That's just the way Bollitz sounds.
Everything's a big deal to him.
It's okay.

She shakes her head and sits on a nice couch.

SARA

Theo... I don't want to lose all
this. We've worked so hard.

THEODORE

I know. I know.

SARA

I don't think you do.

THEODORE

You don't think-

SARA

We can't afford for you to lose
another job.

She starts sobbing. Theo sits next to her and reaches out.
She pulls away.

THEODORE

I'm not going to lose another job.

SARA

(Frustrated)

Well, you keep doing things, like
not turning in reports and not
showing up for work and it's not
because you're not smart. You just
don't seem to care.

THEODORE

I do.

SARA

You need to talk to the therapist
again, Theo.

THEODORE

I'm okay.

SARA

I don't think so.

THEODORE

You're upset.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SARA

I'm sorry.
 (Closing her eyes)
 What are we going to do?

THEODORE

Nothing. I'm on top of it. I'm
 happy. I'm motivated. I'm okay.
 We're okay. Everything's fine. Take
 another Somex and-

SARA

I've already taken one. It's not
 going to solve this problem.
 (Looking him in the eye)
 Can't you see, the problem is you.
 You're hurting yourself, you're
 hurting me, and you're hurting Jay.

Theo has no answer, as usual.

THEODORE

I'm sorry.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Theo is playing pick-up with two men and two women. They have
 a lot of energy, but not much talent. MARGIE, who is a bit
 overweight, takes a shot, misses.

MARGIE

Ah, shit!

They laugh. Theo retrieves the ball, hands it off to SAM.
 DORIS and Margie attempt to block. Sam passes to BOB. Bob
 goes for a shot, but Margie is in the way. Bob jumps and
 shoots anyway, misses. Doris retrieves, slips, falls on her
 ass. They laugh. The ball rolls away. Margie grabs it, shoots
 a lay-up. Score!

BOB

Doesn't count. The ball was dead.

MARGIE

No, it wasn't.

SAM

It was rolling on the ground.

MARGIE

So.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOB

It's dead. Don't you know anything about basketball?

MARGIE

No. All I know is I got it in the basket and you didn't. That means I'm better than you.

BOB

Girls are no fun to play basketball with.

DORIS

Fuck you.

BOB

Ok, let's just shoot from the foul line and see how many baskets you make.

THEODORE

I got a better idea.

Theo goes over to the grass next to the court and sits. They follow him. A few grab their bottles and dump water over their heads.

Theo speaks quietly, just to the group.

THEODORE (CONT'D)

Okay guys. We can't fight.

BOB

Theo, we weren't fighting.

DORIS

We were just messing around...

THEODORE

You don't get it. People who take their Somex like their supposed to don't fight at all, even when they're playing.

DORIS

Sorry, Theo.

THEODORE

No problem. It's going to take extra work to hold it together. A lot of work. The last thing we want to do is get busted for not taking our medication.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THEODORE (CONT'D)
(Looking up)
Smile.

A man dressed in a government uniform passes the group. They smile and laugh, throw the ball back and forth. After he passes...

THEODORE (CONT'D)
Is he gone?

BOB
Yeah.

THEODORE
Okay, who wants to go first?

BOB
I will. I asked my parents what happened the day my brother was taken to the school. They said nothing happened. They just drove him off and that was that.

DORIS
How were they told about his death?

BOB
A school official showed up a month later. Said my brother drowned in a swimming accident.

THEODORE
Didn't anybody check the body?

BOB
I guess not. He was cremated.

MARGIE
And the county performed the cremation at no charge, right?

BOB
Yeah.

DORIS
Smile.

The uniformed man approaches from the other direction. The group starts to laugh and throw the ball. He stops.

UNIFORMED MAN
Hey, anybody got the time?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DORIS
Six, thirty.

UNIFORMED MAN
Thanks. Nice day to play
basketball.

DORIS
Sure is.

He heads off. The group continues playing.

DORIS (CONT'D)
You think he suspects anything?

THEODORE
Who knows? If we see him again,
we'll move just to be safe. How
about Bob's place?

BOB
Sure.

MARGIE
He's gone.

They stop playing.

THEODORE
Is it safe to assume that no one
has ever actually seen a body?

The group agrees.

THEODORE (CONT'D)
Then, either the body's were...
disposed of somehow, or they're
still alive. Right?

MARGIE
I know he's still alive.

DORIS
You don't know that for sure.

MARGIE
I can feel it. Everyday.

Margie starts to get weepy.

SAM
We can all feel it. That's why
we're here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

THEODORE

We're here to find the truth.
Whatever it is. And we're not going
to find it if we get emotional.
Without the Somex, we're vulnerable
to our emotions. We're all sad, but
we've talked about this before.

MARGIE

I'm sorry.

THEODORE

Don't be sorry. It'll happen. But
all it will take is one of us
blowing it with some emotional
outburst. Now let's be happy and
productive. Sam, did you find out
anything about the SLSA tests?

SAM

No. No one will say a thing. I
don't think anyone knows. All the
records are kept in a top secret
database somewhere. My guess is
only a handful of people know
anything.

THEODORE

Well, keep looking. Remember
everything, even the smallest
detail.

DORIS

How do we do it? It's so damn
frustrating.

MARGIE

The government has complete control
over our lives.

THEODORE

That's what they want us to think.

MARGIE

It's true though.

THEODORE

They are powerful, but you know
what? They got that power because
we gave it to them.

MARGIE

What do you mean? I didn't give
them any power. They took it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

THEODORE

You produce and consume and follow their rules. You do that on your own. That's what feeds the system. Without us, they could not exist. We did what they wanted us to do. We helped them build this system. We believed in them. They promised us a good life.

BOB

But it's not a good life.

THEODORE

Our lives ARE good. It's the system that's bad. Don't ever forget that. The system is bad, and it's everywhere. But we ultimately control it. Smile.

They laugh and throw the ball, as a woman pushing a stroller walks by.

INT. ADULT THEO'S GAME ROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE ON SCREEN

As Theo plays the Tranquo game.

ANGLE ON THEO

Sitting in the easy chair.

SARA (O.S.)

Theo.

ANGLE THE TWO

Sara is standing over him, wearing a night shirt. Theo looks up.

THEODORE

Yeah?

SARA

I'm sorry about this afternoon.

THEODORE

That's okay.

SARA

Do you want to come to bed?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THEODORE

In a minute.

She looks at the game with extreme disinterest. Then, she bends over and kisses the top of his head, and leaves.

He continues playing.

ANGLE ON GAME

Tranquo, a boy with red spiky hair, enters a large, windowless, circular room with granite walls, lit by medieval sconces.

ANGLE ON THEO

He stops playing, stares at the scene. A very intense, frightening realization washes over him.

ANGLE ON GAME

Theo moves Tranquo to the middle of the room. A star-shaped area beneath the character appears and glows like fire. Then a voice...

EVIL GAME VOICE (V.O.)

(God-like)

So Tranquo, we meet at last. If you have come bearing gifts, place them on the floor. If you have no gifts, await your doom.

ANGLE ON THEO

He stares, unmoving, at the screen. A loud rumble of flames and thunder consume Tranquo (OS). Theo pauses the game and reaches for the phone, dials.

THEODORE

Hi, it's Theo. Can you come over right away?

INT. ADULT THEO'S GAME ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Bob is pacing. Theo is in the easy chair. The game is still paused.

BOB

We can't jump to any conclusions. Let's think this thing through.

THEODORE

I am positive that's the game that Jay created.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOB

He didn't get it from someplace else?

THEODORE

No. He wouldn't do that. He had an ego about his games. And that monster voice? It was Jay. All we'd need to do is speed it up and we'd hear his real voice.

BOB

Okay, I believe you. Then, he must have given it to someone or sold it.

THEODORE

I don't think so. He was very protective of his work. He wouldn't just give it away. And if he had sold it, he would've told me.

BOB

Then, somebody found it on his computer.

THEODORE

It wasn't on his computer. He kept his stuff in network storage. And he was the only one with a password.

BOB

After he died or was... whatever... I'm sure someone got access to his storage.

THEODORE

Okay. Let's say the government went through his storage after he died. Why would the government care about a video game?

BOB

(Picking up the game case)
The corporation owns the video game company. They found it and took it. Simple.

THEODORE

But... I just can't believe the government would bother... They wouldn't... You're right. It could've happened.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BOB

Well, it could've happened a million ways. This game doesn't prove that he's alive.

Bob sits and stares at the screen.

BOB (CONT'D)

But it's awful damn weird.

THEODORE

It would make more sense that he is alive.

BOB

I agree. But as I say, it doesn't prove anything.

Bob tosses the game case on a table.

ANGLE TIGHT ON GAME CASE

MATCH DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. ADULT THEO'S GAME ROOM - LATER

ANGLE ON GAME CASE

It's late. The lights are off. Everyone is asleep. We PULL BACK from the case and PAN to the game screen. We MOVE IN SLOWLY to a TIGHT SHOT of the game cartridge plugged in the side of the game machine. It is dark and silent.

A green activity light flickers on. We PULL BACK. A moment later, a number of activity lights flicker on and off on the machine. We PULL BACK to include the screen. A moment later, the screen comes to life. But it's not a video game. It looks like a computer screen. A macro or batch file is being run. Commands appear, text prints on and scrolls up the screen. We can hear the MACHINE clicking and whirring as things happen.

A moment later, the screen goes black and the only movement comes from the tiny light on the game cartridge. Then the screen lights up. It's the log on screen we've seen before, with the text: "Stanton County School Records - RESTRICTED ACCESS, AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY." Then, a message box: "Logged on as T. Goodman."

The screen goes wild. Files are accessed, destroyed, moved. Records are searched, moved, destroyed. In less than 20 seconds, we see the Stanton County school records laid to waste. Then, the screen goes black again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And a moment later: "Freedom Corporation, Financial Records - TOP SECRET, ACCESS HIGHLY RESTRICTED." Then: "Log on accepted."

We MOVE IN to an extremely TIGHT ANGLE as the same thing happens to the corporate network, and text and numbers fly by. The movement becomes a blur, which becomes flashing colors, which becomes black.

EXT. CITY SKYLINE - DAWN

The deep red sun is rising over the megaplex.

INT. ADULT THEO'S LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Sara sits on the couch, watching the morning light. Theo pads silently into the room and stops behind her.

SARA

You know, you sound just like your son when you're trying to sneak up on me.

He grabs her shoulders and squeezes.

THEODORE

I was thinking. Why don't I make breakfast. Then, you can take off today, if you want. Jay and I will just stay home and hang out. Okay?

SARA

Sure. Or how about if the three of us do something together?

He thinks.

THEODORE

Even better.

He sits next to her.

THEODORE (CONT'D)

You know. You're right. I've been acting weird lately.

SARA

Are you going to see a therapist?

THEODORE

Yeah. Sure.

SARA

Do you promise?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THEODORE
I want you to be happy.

SARA
Do you promise?

THEODORE
I promise that things are going to
change.

They kiss. The DOORBELL RINGS.

THEODORE (CONT'D)
I'll get it.

He walks to the door.

ANGLE PAST THEO

As he opens the door. A group of about six policemen wearing
SWAT uniforms faces Theo.

SWAT OFFICER 1
Theodore Carsey?

THEODORE
Yeah.

SWAT OFFICER 1
Step over here please.

The officer signals the others to enter, holds Theo, cuffs
him and sits him in a chair. Sara stands.

SWAT OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)
Sit down, please.

She does. The officers move quickly through the house,
searching, tossing things around. The first officer walks
over to Sara and cuffs her too. Sara starts to cry.

SARA
What's going on?!

SWAT OFFICER 1
Anyone else here besides you two?

THEODORE
Umm, just our son. What's the-

SWAT OFFICER 1
That it? You can tell us. We'll
find out anyway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THEODORE
That's all.

SWAT OFFICER 1
How old is he?

THEODORE
Two.

SWAT OFFICER 1
(Shouting to others)
One two-year-old. That's all.

An officer SHOUTS from another room.

SWAT OFFICER 2 (O.S.)
Found one.

SWAT OFFICER 3 (O.S.)
Found another one.

SARA
(Screaming)
Would someone please tell me-

SWAT OFFICER 1
(To Theo)
How many devices do you have
connected to the network?

THEODORE
Two.

SWAT OFFICER 1
(Shouting)
He says he has two devices.

The officer calls on the radio.

SWAT OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)
Base, we're in. We'll need a social
worker for one two-year-old.

Seconds later, officers return with the game machine and two
other computer-like devices. They set the items on the floor.

SWAT OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)
Johnson, you stay here with Spode
and continue searching.
(To Theo and Sara)
Mr. And Mrs. Carsey, please step
this way.

Sara looks at Theo. He shrugs.

EXT. THEO'S BUILDING - MORNING

The officers escort the two to a waiting cruiser. As soon as they are in, the cruiser takes off. The police action has attracted a small crowd.

ANGLE ON CROWD

Among the faces, WE see Doris. Her panicked expression stands out against the docile and passive expressions of the others. She turns away from the group.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

As they play with little enthusiasm.

DORIS

We've been discovered.

SAM

Not necessarily.

DORIS

They arrested them! Took them away in handcuffs! What the hell would you call it?

BOB

Please, we have to stay calm. It could be anything, including some kind of mistake.

MARGIE

Maybe it has to do with that game.

BOB

It could. Think, what kind of connection could there be?

MARGIE

I don't know.

SAM

A million people have bought the game. What's wrong with that?

MARGIE

I just brought it up.

BOB

That's okay. We need to keep thinking. Doris, you did a good thing. Keep your eye on the place. But don't get caught.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOB (CONT'D)

We need to stay together. Remember what we're here for. We can't give up, because if we give up, they win... and we lose.

INT. CITY JAIL

Jay is alone in a small clean, gray cell. He wears a prisoner jumpsuit. A guard approaches the cell and opens it.

JAIL GUARD

Ok, Theodore. Your lawyer is here to see you.

INT. JAIL MEETING AREA

Sara and Theo are seated across a metal table from their lawyer, MR. JONES.

MR. JONES

The networking authority says they traced the activity to a computer in your house. There's no mistake about it. The destruction that was done took well over five minutes, so they had ample time to trace the connection and double-check it several times. You tell me. How could that have happened?

SARA

Well, don't look at me. I know nothing about computers.

THEODORE

I play video games and do spreadsheets. I have no idea how to be a hacker. The only one I ever knew who could do that was...

He stops.

MR. JONES

Do you have a name?

THEODORE

Yeah. My friend Jay.

MR. JONES

How do we get hold of him?

THEODORE

Well, he died six years ago, so that could be difficult.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. JONES

All right.

(Standing)

You're being arraigned tomorrow morning. They're checking over your devices now. Believe me, they have every cop in the city on this. You did quite a bit of damage and scared a lot of very important people. If there's anything on your devices, we'll know about it tomorrow. There isn't, is there?

Theo shakes his head. Jones turns away.

MR. JONES (CONT'D)

This is a weird one. I hope to hell you're telling me the truth.

INT. POLICE LAB

The game machine is on the bench. A technician has taken it apart and is probing it with instruments. He pulls the cartridge out, looks it over. Then he sets it down and attaches probes. POOF! In an instant, a flash of bright light and a trail of smoke, and all that is left of the cartridge is a smoldering plastic shell.

Another technician comes over, shaking his head.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBER - DAY

The Judge Richard Culkin is seated behind his desk. Mr. Jones and the prosecuting attorney Mr. Hill face him. On the wall behind the judge is the Freedom Corporation symbol.

MR. HILL

Judge, the police tech squad had every indication that the virus was being spread from a device in the Carsey residence. However, we tested all devices and came up blank. There was a game cartridge that... well it must have had a self-destruct mechanism that got activated when the tech started testing it.

MR. CULKIN

What?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. HILL

It's a common practice used in the industry to keep games from being reverse engineered by the competition. It may have been the source. But we'll never know.

MR. CULKIN

How the hell could a video game destroy a bunch of corporate files?

MR. HILL

I know. It doesn't make sense, but...

MR. CULKIN

So, what you're telling me is your guys destroyed the only evidence we had.

MR. HILL

Well, that's not necessarily true.

MR. CULKIN

Something got fucked up here!

MR. HILL

It was a technician. He-

MR. CULKIN

Fire his ass. Get him out! He's incompetent. We don't have room for incompetence. We're in a very embarrassing situation now. This was on the news this morning. People are expecting an arraignment and speedy conviction.

MR. HILL

I'll look into it.

MR. CULKIN

You'll do more than that. Do you understand?

MR. HILL

Yes sir.

MR. CULKIN

So what do we do here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. HILL

We could hold them. Search their residence for, I don't know, something. Check records, look through previous network traffic. See who they've been talking to, what network resources they've been accessing.

MR. CULKIN

I don't like it. What if you don't find anything? There goes our credibility.

MR. JONES

Your honor, may I say something?

MR. CULKIN

Why not.

MR. JONES

We have nothing to hold them on. We need to let them go. I don't think we have a choice.

MR. HILL

Your honor, give us a day-

MR. CULKIN

Continue, Mr. Jones.

MR. JONES

Thank you. I think we have to apologize and let them go. Then, we can watch them. See what happens. I'm with Mr. Hill. I think they're guilty as hell, but we can't take the chance of making more stupid mistakes.

The judge stands. The two attorneys follow suit.

MR. CULKIN

All right. I'm going to have to send this one up to corporate for a final decision. I'll include your comments. Release them for now.

The judge turns and leaves through a private door.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

At Bob's condo building, as the five attempt to play. They are even worse at tennis. Doris serves one over the back fence. Bob is mid-court, keeping score.

BOB

Game goes to Margie and Theo.

DORIS

I didn't even have a chance.

SAM

Someday I'll have to show you how to play tennis.

DORIS

Don't bother. It's more fun this way.

They gather by the net.

MARGIE

(To Theo)

What did they do after apologizing?

THEODORE

That was it. They said we could leave. We took a bus home.

BOB

No reasons, no explanations?

THEODORE

No. They said they made a mistake, they're sorry for the inconvenience, and we're free to go.

DORIS

But the original accusation was that you destroyed all those government documents?

THEODORE

Pretty much.

MARGIE

I think it's bullshit. Theo wouldn't destroy government documents. I think we've been discovered and they're trying to frame him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DORIS
How could we be-

MARGIE
We're out in the open. I don't know. They could be monitoring us right now for all we know.

SAM
And what would they learn. Not enough to arrest us.

MARGIE
That's why they grabbed Theo. They don't have enough to charge us with anything, but... maybe they figure if they arrest one of us, that would scare us into breaking up.

BOB
That really does sound reasonable.

THEODORE
It's all about intimidation and show. It's a PR game. That's how they rule. That's what keeps us in line, keeps their profits rolling in.

DORIS
Let's all keep an eye on Theo. You know, walk by his place occasionally. Look out for anything weird.

SAM
That sounds good.

Doris goes to Theo and gives him a big hug.

DORIS
We don't want to lose you too.

INT. ADULT THEO'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As Theo and Sara cuddle, facing the view of city lights. Jay is playing on the floor beside them.

SARA
Are you feeling better now?

THEODORE
Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARA

We have to trust each other. And be honest with each other. Okay?

THEODORE

You know I couldn't have done all those things they accused me of.

SARA

I know. And I also know that you wouldn't do anything to hurt us.

THEODORE

Of course, I wouldn't.

SARA

And if you don't like your job and you want to do something else. That's okay. I was thinking about what would happen if we lost all this. And you know what? It doesn't matter. None of it. We can take the condo and the furniture and entertainment center and bedroom set, all of it and just throw it away. What matters is us - you, me, and Jay. We can live in a cardboard box for all I care.

THEODORE

That makes me feel... I'm so glad you feel that way. Because that's exactly how I feel too. Can we make a deal?

SARA

It's a deal.

THEODORE

You let me choose the direction for my life, and I promise I'll never let you down.

SARA

What do you mean, choose your direction?

THEODORE

There are things I need to do.

SARA

What kind of things?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THEODORE
Things that will make our lives
better. I promise.

After a moment, she nods and they hug.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

It's lunch hour on Monday. The sidewalk is crowded with office workers. Theo comes into view, walking out of his office building.

ANGLE ON THEO, MOVING

We follow him to a hot dog vendor.

THEODORE
(To vendor)
One please, extra mustard.

The vendor starts assembling the dog. A familiar person walks up and stands next to Theo. Bill is smiling, as usual. The vendor looks his way.

BILL
(To vendor)
One hot dog, no mustard.

Theo grabs his hot dog, hands the vendor some cash, and walks off. Bill does the same and follows after Theo.

BILL (CONT'D)
(To Theo)
Hey, uh, aren't you Theodore
Carsey?

THEODORE
Yeah?

BILL
Bill Rogers.

Theo doesn't know him.

BILL (CONT'D)
We went to the same high school.
You were friends with, uh, Jay
Potter. We were in History class
together.

THEODORE
I'm sorry. I don't remember.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILL

Well, whatever. It's nice to see you again.

Theo nods, keeps an eye on him.

BILL (CONT'D)

You know. I'd like you to meet my wife. She went there too. You might remember her.

Bill puts a hand on Theo's shoulder and guides him to the government car waiting at the curb.

ANGLE FROM ACROSS THE STREET

As Margie sits at a bus stop and watches.

RESUME THEO AND BILL

At the car.

BILL (CONT'D)

It's so nice to see you again, man. You remember Gwenn. Her maiden name was Carlisle.

(To Gwenn)

Hey Gwenn, you remember Theodore don't you?

Bill opens the back door and positions Theo next to it.

GWENN

Of course, we were in, let's see, that personal management class, I think.

THEODORE

I remember the class, but I'm sorry. I don't... it's nice to meet you though.

BILL

Look, you need a ride somewhere?

THEODORE

No thanks, this is my building here.

BILL

That's cool. Well, maybe we'll get together sometime.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THEODORE
Well, all right.

In one swift move, Bill removes a handkerchief from his pocket and holds it over Theo's mouth and nose. No struggle, no one on the sidewalk suspects a thing. Bill smiles the whole time.

Theo starts to go limp and Bill quickly eases him into the backseat and closes the door. Bill gets in the passenger seat and the car takes off.

ANGLE ON MARGIE

She stands and watches anxiously.

SLOW DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. DAVIS INSTITUTE SLEEPING QUARTERS - NIGHT

The lights are off. Someone wearing the Davis uniform is sleeping on his side in bed. There is a KNOCK on the door. The person turns over. It's Theo.

THEODORE
(Groggily)
Come in.

The door opens. We see a familiar outline, but don't see the face. Then, we hear the VOICE...

JAY
Hey Theo.

Theo sits up. Jay reaches in and flicks on the light. Connie is right behind him, with her arm around a five-year-old girl. Theo can barely speak.

THEODORE
Jay?

JAY
Nice to see you. Welcome to freedom.

Theo gets out of bed and approaches Jay slowly. They hug.

FADE OUT: