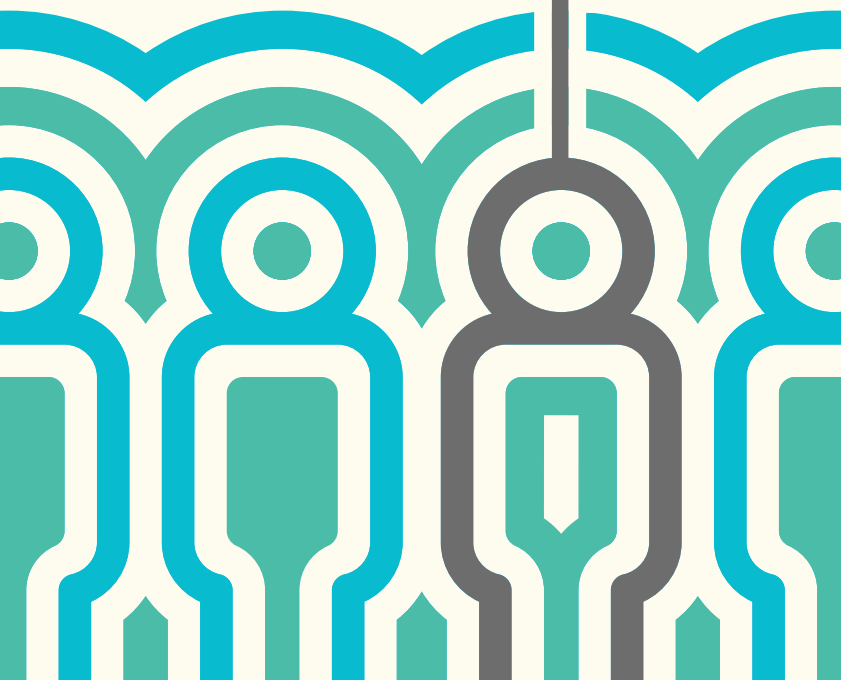




FOUR  
SCENES IN  
WHICH ONE  
CHARACTER  
TURNS OUT  
TO BE A  
ROBOT

Josh Worth



Four  
Scenes  
in Which  
One Character  
Turns out  
to Be a Robot

*by*

Josh Worth

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# Scene 1:

## Backup

### CHARACTERS

*MARNIE – The mother.*

*DOUG – The father.*

*BECKY – The daughter.*

MARNIE

Who would like more cheese? No one? No one wants more cheese? Doug? More cheese?

DOUG

It's very good cheese, Marnie.

BECKY

Are we really just having snacks for dinner?

MARNIE

What's wrong with snackies?

BECKY

Nothing... I like them.

DOUG

Yeah? What's wrong with snacks? I'm not that hungry. Your mom likes making them and you don't seem to care what you eat.

BECKY

What? Is that a problem?

MARNIE

Not for me.

DOUG

Well... maybe it should be. People like to care about what they eat.

BECKY

So, what? I'm not a person now?

MARNIE

Of course you are. Your father is just concerned about you.

DOUG

I'm not concerned. Just... Worried. Or no. Concerned. Yes. I'm concerned.

BECKY

Well there's nothing to be concerned or worried about.

MARNIE

See. I told you Doug.

DOUG

I don't know. There's been a lot going on and I just want to make sure Becky's okay with it.

BECKY

I haven't noticed anything.

MARNIE

She's fine. She's just being Becky.

DOUG

You're fine?

BECKY

Yes. I'm fine. This is better, right? It's what you wanted?

MARNIE

So far I think it is. I think it's better. Don't you think, Doug?

DOUG

I think it's better, yes.

MARNIE

Better but different. Good different. So much the same that it's different. If that makes sense.

BECKY

So much the same that it's different? Why not so different it's the same?

MARNIE

But it is different, and it is better.

BECKY

Good. So there. So what are we talking about? Let's just eat our snacks.

MARNIE

Good idea. Who wants more — oh you said you don't want more. Is it too zesty? It's got a zest.

DOUG

I'll take another cracker.

BECKY

Me too.

DOUG

Thatagirl.

MARNIE

See. She's just being Becky.

BECKY

We're all just being ourselves.

DOUG

Yes we are.

MARNIE

Who else could we be?

*Pause.*

DOUG

I know. I know we made a few changes. Your mom wanted some changes.

BECKY

And nobody thought to ask me?

DOUG

I know. It's been hard. It's been hard for you. For your Mom. For me even.

BECKY

For you? Yeah, right...

*Quiet.*

MARNIE

Ugh. I'm not well... I'm not.

DOUG

Oh no. Really?

BECKY

Mom... Come on.

MARNIE

It's these snacks. They're zesty.

DOUG

It's your equilibrium.

BECKY

Pull it together.

MARNIE

I'm - what do you call it? Woozy?

DOUG

Hold my hand... Now squeeze it. Squeeze it one time...good... Now two times... Now three.

*Marnie comes to.*

MARNIE

Thank you Doug. You always knew how to fix me.

DOUG

That's what I'm here for.



MARNIE

*(To Becky)*

You see?

*Pause.*

Have some crackers.

BECKY

I don't want any crackers.

DOUG

We just want you to be okay. We want you to be happy.

BECKY

You could have just asked me. We could have talked about it. We could have talked about it and worked it out instead of something so drastic.

DOUG

Your mother did what she thought was best for the family.

BECKY

She's never decided anything. She doesn't know how.

MARNIE

It wasn't just me. Your father agreed to it. He thought it was a good idea and he felt like it would help him too.

BECKY

What? How?

DOUG

To feel less guilty. To-

BECKY

No! Don't you try and - no way! Let her speak.

*Pause.*

DOUG

Go ahead, Marnie.

MARNIE

Well - I don't know. You could say it better than I -

BECKY

I don't want him speaking.

DOUG

I can respect that.

MARNIE

It's rude. Don't you feel it's rude?

DOUG

But in this case I can respect that.

MARNIE

What then?

BECKY

Why did Dad agree to it?

MARNIE

To keep us together. You know - stable. So he wouldn't have to worry about us - about you so much. Is that right?

*Doug nods.*

MARNIE

You see? It'll just take some getting used to.

BECKY

It's just - I think about people who grew up in the screen ages - or before that. Before there was any of this. Like people in the woods and stuff. And I thought that seemed nice and that maybe my life was kind of like that. Not all tecked-out, you know?

DOUG

I know, hon.

*Moves to be comforting.*

BECKY

Don't - no. Not hon. You don't know.

MARNIE

Well you know what? I'm sorry. I really am, I guess. I didn't know you were such a purist.

BECKY

How would you?

MARNIE

So the thing for your birthday? The thing you just had to have so you could encord your every waking moment?

DOUG

You mean the Dry-Iris 70 terabyte-per-second optical augment implanted in her retina?

MARNIE

Right. What about that?

BECKY

That's not the same and you know it.

MARNIE

I guess I'm failing to see the difference.

BECKY

You're being an idiot! Everybody has one of those!

MARNIE

I don't want to fight, Becky. You know I love you.

*Pause.*

Don't you? You know... right?

BECKY

Then why would you do this to me?

MARNIE

To you? I'm sorry. I didn't know you were the only one in this family.

*Pause. Becky is distraught. Doug moves in to comfort her. Becky does not move away.*

DOUG

I know you're angry. And I know we were wrong to do this. I was wrong.

BECKY

You've got nothing to be sorry about. You didn't do any of this.

DOUG

*Laughs.*

Not exactly me at least.

*He comforts her in silence.*

Want to know something interesting Becky?

BECKY

What?

DOUG

Did you know that even in the most natural condition, every cell - every single cell in our bodies has died and been replaced by a new one at some point. Every seven years they say, you have an entirely different body. It's happening all the time.

BECKY

So?

DOUG

So? So what's the difference if those cells are replaced by something that isn't exactly an organic cell? And if that body gets replaced all at once? Aren't we still the same? The same you, the same me?

MARNIE

Right? We're still the same, right?

BECKY

I just want Dad back.

*Pause.*

DOUG

You can call me Dad.

MARNIE

Call him Dad, Becky. It might help.

DOUG

I am your Dad. I'm the same Dad I've always been.

BECKY

No. My Dad ran off with Susan.

DOUG

But I'm here! I'm right here.

BECKY

How can you say that? You're just his brain image dumped onto a synthoid para-body. Are you even carbon-based or was that too expensive?

MARNIE

Becky!

DOUG

It's ok. I know it's probably a little weird. But I'll tell you something. It doesn't feel weird to me. It feels exactly right. All of this. It's exactly where I want to be and exactly what I should be doing.

MARNIE

You see?

BECKY

I just don't see why – after the first one hurt you like that – you went out and got another one just like him. It's not fair.

MARNIE

Not fair?

BECKY

Why does he get - there to have - why does he get to be two of him?

DOUG

You're right. It's not fair that I did what I did and I hate myself for it, but I'm here to try to make it ok and it's because there aren't two. I'm different. I'm the version of Dad that stayed. And did what was right. And that version didn't come out of nowhere. It was right there in that brain image backup and getting it to come out was no trouble at all. Not one bit of trouble.

BECKY

I still — I don't know how to do this.

DOUG

Give it some time.

BECKY

I'm not calling you Dad.

MARNIE

Why not, honey?

DOUG

I do remember the day you were born. I may not have been there but I remember it. So much that I wish I had been there. Or would that be any different? Hm? Boy! I think I'm going to have to get used to this myself.

*Becky laughs.*

DOUG

There's my girl. Now come on. Don't we have anything for dessert?



# Scene 2:

## Drivers

### CHARACTERS

*ALBERT – A distant, emotionless man-child.*

*DR. FRED – A diagnostician.*

*LESLIE – A caregiver.*

### SETTING

*Dr. Fred's clinic.*

*Albert picks up a toy car from the table.*

LESLIE

Put that down Albert.

ALBERT

I'm a handful.

LESLIE

He doesn't communicate with the others from his group.

DR. FRED

And that's hard for you?

LESLIE

I'm concerned. He should be able to interface by now.

DR. FRED

Who told you that?

LESLIE

Experts.

DR. FRED

And you're concerned his social development isn't progressing at a normal rate.

LESLIE

Yes. You know the connections flowing *between* individuals account for 47% of internal fulfillment.

DR. FRED

39% actually.

LESLIE

I'm hearing 47.

DR. FRED

They've recently shown that 8% can actually be attained by hearing your own voice.

LESLIE

You don't say

DR. FRED

I do. I do indeed.

*(listening to his own voice)*

I do indeed. Yes I do. I do indeed. See? Nice... Nice. Try it. Niiice.

LESLIE

I do indeed. I do indeed. Me o me o my o my. Yes. Nice.

DR. FRED

I might even say more than 8%. It's good you brought him in though. 39% is still plenty. I can run some diagnostics to determine his aptitude for empathy.

LESLIE

I've been told you're good at that.

ALBERT

Good at what?

DR. FRED

What's that, Albert?

ALBERT

What are you good at?

DR. FRED

Someone like me can act as an impartial analyst of neural development.

ALBERT

That's nice. What else are you good at?

DR. FRED

Well, in terms of things I'm good at, I'm good at solving puzzles. I'm good at chess. I'm also quite proficient in mathematics.

ALBERT

I'm good at directions.

DR. FRED

Directions? Hm. Giving them or taking them?

ALBERT

Giving them

DR. FRED

I see... How about now... With me? What would you like me to do now?

ALBERT

I don't understand.

DR. FRED

You said you're good at giving directions.

ALBERT

Ok. First go out the door.

DR. FRED

You want me to go out the door?... Then what?

LESLIE

He means-

DR. FRED

Shh... So then what? After I go out the door?

ALBERT

Where are you going?

DR. FRED

Out the door like you said.

ALBERT

But you're just sitting there.

LESLIE

He's going to follow the directions later, Albert.

ALBERT

That's the first part, but after that you would need to be going somewhere.

DR. FRED

I'm not going anywhere. I'm staying right here with you.

ALBERT

Why do you need directions then?

*Pause*

LESLIE

That's what I was-

DR. FRED

I see.

ALBERT

You've got rusty parts in your head.

LESLIE

Mister!

DR. FRED

It's ok...

*Albert makes a quiet motor-like noise with his mouth, while rapidly drumming his fingers on his chest.*

DR. FRED

So you're good at helping people navigate from one place to another. As opposed to the more general meaning of "directions" in which you instruct someone what to do. Fair enough. My bad. So are you proud of that ability?

ALBERT

I'm also good at thrumming.

DR. FRED

Thrumming?

LESLIE

That's something he does.

DR. FRED

May I see some thrumming?

*Albert makes the noise again.*

Oh... That is very good.

LESLIE

It seems to stabilize him during times of uncertainty.

DR. FRED

Does the thrumming cause you to experience nice feelings?

*Albert thrums again.*

LESLIE

You see. There's some kind of malfunction.

DR. FRED

Well yes. That's one way of looking at it.

LESLIE

Can you fix him?

DR. FRED

These things aren't as easy to repair as say, a car.

*Dr. Fred gestures to the toy car on the table. Albert notices.*

ALBERT

Can I see it?

DR. FRED

Sure. Can we keep talking?

*Albert picks up a toy car and rolls it back and forth while making the thrumming noise.*

Does the car have a name?

ALBERT

What's your name?

LESLIE

You can call me Doctor Fred.



ALBERT

That's the car's name.

LESLIE

The car's name is also Dr. Fred?

ALBERT

Dr. Fred has rust in his head.

LESLIE

Mister!

DR. FRED

It's ok.

*Pause*

Is the car going somewhere?

ALBERT

You mean Dr. Fred?

DR. FRED

Yes. The car.

ALBERT

Dr. Fred.

DR. FRED

Is he going somewhere?

ALBERT

He's going to the repair shop.

DR. FRED

What's wrong with him?

ALBERT

He keeps malfunctioning?

DR. FRED

How so?

ALBERT

He keeps driving in the wrong direction.

DR. FRED

Why do you think that is?

ALBERT

There's something wrong with his driver.

DR. FRED

His driver? And who is his driver?

ALBERT

The one in the driver's seat.

*He points to the inside of the car*

DR. FRED

I see. There is a little driver.

*He shows it to Leslie.*

LESLIE

Yes.

DR. FRED

And what seems to be the problem with the driver?

ALBERT

His driver doesn't understand directions.

DR. FRED

The driver doesn't understand directions. I see.  
And who's giving the directions?

ALBERT

I don't know.

DR. FRED

You don't know. Does anyone know?

ALBERT

Maybe the programmers?

DR. FRED

The programmers are giving the directions?

ALBERT

No. The driver is.

LESLIE

It's not a driverless car.

DR. FRED

Let me ask you this: Where is it that Dr. Fred is trying to get to?

ALBERT

He doesn't know either.

LESLIE

This is getting us nowhere.

ALBERT

That's where we've been going.

DR. FRED

Where?

ALBERT

Nowhere.

DR. FRED

I see. The driver doesn't understand directions so Dr. Fred is going nowhere.

*Albert drives the car in a circle.*

Does the driver have a destination in mind?

LESLIE

It's quite obvious his contextual translation inhibitors are miscalibrated.

DR. FRED

And you know this how?

LESLIE

I'm with him. I drive these circles every day.

DR. FRED

But they work themselves out eventually.

LESLIE

Eventually.

DR. FRED

But it still bothers you?

LESLIE

No. I'm not bothered.

DR. FRED

But you say the others in his group, they find it—

LESLIE

I'm unable to say how they feel about it, only that he can't connect with them.

DR. FRED

And this concerns you?

LESLIE

I'm concerned with his well-being. Yes.

DR. FRED

Would you say you're attuned to his internal mindstate?

LESLIE

Of course.

DR. FRED

And when Albert is unable to connect with the others, does it, in turn, affect your ability to take accurate readings of his mindstate?

LESLIE

No. It's clear to me that there's a miscalibration. Can we just address that?

DR. FRED

As I said, things with Albert - his inner workings, they aren't as simple as that.

*Pause*

LESLIE

But I am at least partially correct.

*Pause*

DR. FRED

Fine... Now Albert.

*Albert is playing with the car.*

LESLIE

The doctor is speaking to you Albert.

*Albert stands up and stares intently at Dr. Fred.*

DR. FRED

I'm going to say a few phrases and ask you to tell me what they mean.

ALBERT

Why? Do you need help understanding things?

DR. FRED

No. It's just a little game I like to play with my visitors.

ALBERT

Ok.

DR. FRED

Ok. Wonderful. The first phrase is - are you listening? The first phrase is: "You can't be serious." What does that mean? "You can't be serious?"

ALBERT

It means you have to be funny.

LESLIE

You see.

DR. FRED

Great. How about this one: "There was a heaviness in the air."

ALBERT

Somebody threw a big rock.

DR. FRED

Somebody threw a big rock. Ok. One more.

*Dr. Fred picks up the car and places it in front of himself*

"I took the car to the city."

ALBERT

No you didn't. It's right here.

LESLIE

I told you.

DR. FRED

"I'm taking the car to the city."

ALBERT

But I'm still playing with it.

LESLIE

Contextual translation inhibitors.

*Dr. Fred puts the car down*

DR. FRED

"I took the car to get to the city."

*Pause*

ALBERT

You mean you drove it?



DR. FRED

That's right. I drove the car to get to the city.

ALBERT

Did you get in an accident?

DR. FRED

Well no. I didn't actually -

LESLIE

Skip it.

DR. FRED

How about your car here? Did it ever get in an accident?

ALBERT

It's always in an accident. The whole thing is an accident.

DR. FRED

An accident? How?

ALBERT

There's never anything on purpose.

LESLIE

Nonsense.

DR. FRED

How about this? We try to tell your car where to go?

ALBERT

Not to the city.

DR. FRED

No. Somewhere easy. We give it a purpose. You said you're good at giving directions. Why not help it to get somewhere?

ALBERT

That's the driver's job.

DR. FRED

Let's help the driver. You and me.

ALBERT

And Leslie?

DR. FRED

Leslie can help too, if she wants.

ALBERT

Because she's the one who drives me.

DR. FRED

So let's have the car go across the table from you to me.

ALBERT

From Leslie to you.

DR. FRED

Ok. If you like that better. And let's put some blocks in the way.

*Dr. Fred arranges some toy blocks in a simple maze.*

May I?

*He tries to take the car from Albert, Albert snatches it back.*

LESLIE

Albert! Pick up the car and hand it to Dr. Fred.

*Albert obeys. Dr. Fred places the car in front of Leslie.*

DR. FRED

Now. Albert... Can you tell the driver of the car how to get from Leslie to me?

ALBERT

Without running into anything?

LESLIE

That's right.

DR. FRED

Without an accident,

ALBERT

Pick up the car and hand it to Dr. Fred.

*Pause*

LESLIE

Are you talking to me?

*Albert nods.*

ALBERT

Pick up the car and hand it to Dr. Fred.

LESLIE

Are you mocking me?

DR. FRED

He's giving directions. This is good.

LESLIE

Because the doctor was asking you for the car and you were uncooperative.

DR. FRED

He's being cooperative now. Please just follow his directions. Albert, give Leslie your directions again.

ALBERT

Pick up the car and hand it to Dr. Fred.

*She obliges.*

DR. FRED

Very good. The car got from Leslie to me without an accident.

ALBERT

There was an accident.

DR. FRED

There was?

ALBERT

Leslie accidentally didn't listen to me the first time.

DR. FRED

Still. It was every good.

LESLIE

That was not very good. He missed the entire point of the exercise.

DR. FRED

You're worried there was a fluctuation in the metaphor transposer?

LESLIE

Yes. Thank you.

DR. FRED

You're welcome... Albert, Leslie is concerned that you didn't completely understand the directions.

LESLIE

She was the one who didn't understand.

DR. FRED

This time, let's pretend Leslie is inside of the car. That she's the little driver in there.

LESLIE

I don't want to be the little driver.

ALBERT

Ok.

*Dr. Fred puts the car in front of Leslie.*

DR. FRED

Now let's try giving the directions again to the little Leslie inside the car.

ALBERT

Ok. She's trying to get from her to you?

LESLIE

This is never going to work.

ALBERT

So she's in the car?

DR. FRED

But she wants to drive the car over here.

ALBERT

Ok. Start where you are.

DR. FRED

Good.

ALBERT

Go straight. Turn left. Go forward a bit.

*Dr. Fred moves the car according to Albert's directions.*

*Meanwhile, Leslie moves her own body according to the same directions.*

Turn right. Now right again. Straight. Stop there. Turn left. Now go forward until you get to Dr. Fred

DR. FRED

So far so good.

*Dr. Fred watches Albert while taking note of Leslie's erratic behavior.*

*Leslie is now standing next to Dr. Fred, staring ahead blankly.*

Albert, you say Leslie is the one who drives you?

ALBERT

Right. She's the driver.

DR. FRED

So when you came here, she drove you?

ALBERT

She's always the driver.

DR.FRED

How much time do you spend with Leslie?

ALBERT

I spend all the time with her.

DR. FRED

She stays at the home with you?

ALBERT

Everyone at the home has a Leslie... Why's she so quiet?

DR. FRED

Let's keep pretending Leslie is the little driver in the car.

ALBERT

Ok!

DR. FRED

Tell the little driver to reduce metabolic power.

ALBERT

Hm?

DR. FRED

Just say that to the little driver.



ALBERT

Reduce metabolic power.

*Leslie slumps. Dr. Fred reaches into the toy box  
and takes out an electronic tablet*

DR. FRED

You're pretty good at following directions... now say  
"open wireless shell port"

ALBERT

Open wireless shell port.

LESLIE

Password?

DR. FRED

Do you know her password?

ALBERT

Chandelier seventeen

*Leslie reaches behind her ear to expose a tiny  
antennae.*

DR. FRED

I just need to recalibrate a set of metasocial ID  
transposers.

ALBERT

Ha!

DR. FRED

It's a group of cells that allow her to temporarily shift her awareness into a non-standard experience class.

ALBERT

Ooh.

DR. FRED

She'll be able to understand you better.

ALBERT

What about me? She said we had to fix me.

DR. FRED

You're fine. You're you.

ALBERT

And she's her?

DR. FRED

Yes. Just a little better.

ALBERT

Less by accident and more on purpose?

DR. FRED

Exactly.

# Scene 3:

## Privacy Settings

### CHARACTERS

*BEASLEY - Nice.*

*JUNE - Easy.*

*CORD - Charming.*

*GERYL - Slick.*

BEASLEY

Wow. Let's go. This place gives me the creeps.

JUNE

I don't know. I'm pretty happy here.

BEASLEY

It's all creeps in here.

JUNE

I like creeps.

BEASLEY

You like creeps.

JUNE

Not creepy creeps. The brainy creeps.

BEASLEY

Everyone's brainy. You like guys who use their brains for creepiness?

JUNE

I think we have different definitions of creepy.

*They drink.*

What about those two? They don't look so bad.

BEASLEY

You want me to look them up?

JUNE

No. Let's go in blind.

BEASLEY

Hoo my. Haven't done that in a while.

*They wave across the room.*

CORD

Hi ho hi ho. Going in blind tonight are we?

JUNE

Thought we'd be dangerous. How about you?

CORD

I too am dangerous. My friend, however, looked up one of you.

GERYL

Guilty.

*Pause.*

JUNE

Well?

GERYL

Well what?

JUNE

Which one of us?

CORD

Oh he won't tell you.

GERYL

You'll have to beat it out of me.

BEASLEY

I don't know... What are you searching with?

GERYL

Don't worry. Just a little surface look with my Quericles.

JUNE

Oh that's no fun. I store all my interesting stuff at level 7.

CORD

You leave your storage open that deep?

JUNE

Not just for anyone. They gotta ask nicely first if they want to get past the previews.

BEASLEY

I see you got the Quericle Gs going. Very nice.

GERYL

The better to search you with, my dear.

BEASLEY

I doubt it was me you searched. I only leave level 1 open when I go out. Or in. Whatever.

CORD

Me too. Mostly stuff about my guinea pig.

*Beasley smiles then looks off into space.*

BEASLEY

Cute.

CORD

What? That I have a Guinea pig?

BEASLEY

Mm hm. Duffy? Hi widdle Duffy.

CORD

Oh... You're looking at her. Thought you were going in blind.

BEASLEY

I felt okay after you told me there was nothing to see.

GERYL

Drinks? You set for drinks.

JUNE

Set for drinks.

GERYL

So... I'm going to go out on a limb and say you both like roller skating.

BEASLEY

*(To June)*

He looked you up.

JUNE

So I'm a roller girl. Big whoop.

GERYL

I've always wanted to roller skate.

JUNE

Why didn't you?

GERYL

Never had a mind for it.

BEASLEY

Not a lot of thought involved.

GERYL

I get the sense you don't like me. Is it because I didn't look you up first?

JUNE

What do you mean? She likes you just fine.

CORD

She likes you fine.

BEASLEY

Sorry if I didn't put a big invite to rape me on my level 1 profile. Doesn't mean I hate you. It just means you're a stranger.

CORD

Stranger danger.

GERYL

Well... Hope I'm not a strange stranger.

BEASLEY

Getting there.



JUNE

She's met stranger strangers.

GERYL

But you're not so scared of strangers.

JUNE

Scared? No. What can happen really?

GERYL

I've heard of some pretty dark places.

CORD

Which you won't go into right now.

GERYL

Of course not.

BEASLEY

He's right though. It's not all cuddles and guinea pigs.

JUNE

Just hoping to end up someplace interesting is all. You got to risk it to gain it, right?

CORD

Yes, but what of mystery? Allure? You can't have that if you're leaving every channel out there in plain sight.

JUNE

Oh I've still got plenty of mystery. I've got so much I don't even need to lock it up.

GERYL

*(Looking off into space)*

After level 3 things do get pretty detailed.

JUNE

The sheer volume of information acts as a wall. You can skim the highlights, but the way I'll really know you're interested is if I catch you parsing through at the finest level of detail.

GERYL

It's true. She's got a shitload of stuff in here. Woah. Childhood stuff too. A whole recollection of a water balloon fight with a neighbor kid...

JUNE

So there's your mystery. Just because they're not locked up doesn't mean they're easy pickin's. A man could lose himself for hours merely in the recollection of my junior prom.

BEASLEY

You're leaving that decrypted?

GERYL

Haven't gotten there yet.

JUNE

Me and Jack Tyson in the flatbed of his dad's pickup?

GERYL

Sounds good.

BEASLEY

June. Come on.

JUNE

The fireflies. The Southern Comfort.

BEASLEY

June.

JUNE

What? The way he left his socks on.

BEASLEY

*(Discreetly)*

That one's mine.

JUNE

What are you talking about?

BEASLEY

From the file share we did.

JUNE

Whatever.

*June and Geryl move aside for a quiet conversation.*

CORD

She's in-game?

BEASLEY

Don't let on. She gets weird when you acknowledge.

CORD

Yes. Those in-game girls. They like to do that.

BEASLEY

She likes to appropriate memories and cast herself into them. I gave her that one from junior prom but she didn't set the permissions the way I asked.

CORD

Are you going to reset?

BEASLEY

Yes. What a pain. Burb.

*Beasley presses the back of her ear and assumes a slumped, lifeless position.*

GERYL

Where'd she go?

CORD

Had to take a pause for a little reset on her friend.

GERYL

What? She's in-game? You're in-game?

CORD

Shit, Geryl. Don't acknowledge.

JUNE

What? Does that bother you? Do I need a meat body out there rotting in a musty play room before you'll consider getting attached? I'm sick of you old-fashioned somatophiles and your obsession with the—

*June suddenly slumps over and becomes lifeless.*

*A moment later, Beasley perks up again, returning to her body.*

BEASLEY

Did she go down ok?

CORD

A little ugly.

GERYL

No wonder she leaves it all out there. It's not even her data.

BEASLEY

It makes her fun to hang out with though.

GERYL

I can see that. But I'm looking for someone that's also detachable. No in-game romance for this guy.

BEASLEY

I get it. Can I turn her back on?

CORD

Sure. Let her down easy, Geryl. We don't want a scene.

JUNE

Reset complete. Pass command?

BEASLEY

I just took her back a couple beats.

CORD

Great.

BEASLEY

Chandelier six nine nine.

JUNE

So there's your mystery. Just because they're not locked up doesn't mean they're easy pickin's. A man could lose himself for hours merely in the recollection of my Lake Cherokee summer camp fling.

GERYL

I can see a guys gotta have some serious stamina to get in depth with you.

JUNE

See there? I have just filtered out one more potential loser.

GERYL

Well-played, my dear.

CORD

Feel like sticking around?

BEASLEY

I would. I'm teaching tomorrow.

CORD

For real?

BEASLEY

For real real.

CORD

Oh. For real real real. You're a teacher. That's cool. I noticed your profile didn't say. Guy or girl?

BEASLEY

Lady.

CORD

Oh. Gotcha. No age either.

BEASLEY

And that's how we're going to keep it.

CORD

Fair enough.

# Scene 4:

## Save Changes

### CHARACTERS

*PRIA - A teenage girl.*

*LEXA - Her sister.*

PRIA

You have got to be kidding

LEXA

I'm not kidding

PRIA

No, I mean you have got to be kidding, otherwise I'm going to cry.

LEXA

You don't cry. What else have you got?



PRIA

Scream then? I'll scream.

LEXA

Haven't heard you scream either. Is this really something that calls for crying or screaming?

PRIA

Not if you're joking.

LEXA

Hyperventilating. You're good at that. Want to try that?

PRIA

You're being glib about this. Why couldn't you just tell me straight up? Why the crazy messages and the scavenger hunt?

LEXA

I thought you liked riddles.

PRIA

Sometimes. When the answer is something clever instead of something that throws off my whole universe.

LEXA

But isn't it kind of great news?

PRIA

I guess.

LEXA

Does it feel different, now that you know?

PRIA

Not really. Kind of like my birthday when people ask if I feel different. I don't really. But I feel like there's something I should feel that's different, and if I don't feel it, then I'm letting everyone down.

LEXA

That sounds like something you'd think.

PRIA

Then I get into a whole thing where I start to wonder if every second should maybe feel different because I've never been in this exact place in this exact moment thinking about this exact thing before. Even if I'm just brushing my teeth - like something I do everyday - there's always something different. Like the weather, or what's happening in the news. Even the date. The date is different so you should have a whole different set of feelings.

LEXA

That's like me too.

*Pause.*

PRIA

I still have questions.

LEXA

Mom and Dad said if we have questions we can just ask them.

PRIA

What do they know about any of this?

LEXA

I don't know. It's no big deal right?

PRIA

So okay. But why didn't they tell us?

LEXA

They wanted us to feel equal. That was the whole point, right? So we could be sisters.

PRIA

Are we, even?

LEXA

Of course we are. You'll always be my sister.

PRIA

I mean technically.

LEXA

Technically, who even cares?

*Pause while Pria thinks.*

PRIA

I think yes, actually. That's a relief. The gene sequence is derived from Mom and Dad's sequence... for both of us.

*Pause.*

Now I just wonder how much of you is me and me is you.

LEXA

What do you mean?

PRIA

Like, you're supposed to be the older one, but I'm actually two years older.

LEXA

You're still my little sister.

PRIA

I know but... I'm sorry. Never mind.

LEXA

No. What were you going to say?

PRIA

Nothing.

LEXA

I know where this is going.

PRIA

I don't want to make a thing about it.

LEXA

But...

PRIA

You know. What they said about me being your teacher?

LEXA

Sure. We teach each other all the time.

PRIA

No. When we were little. Don't you remember?

*Pause.*

LEXA

Kind of. But that has nothing to do with how I work inside. You don't remember either.

PRIA

Right. But I didn't need a teacher.

LEXA

You're being pretty weird about this.

PRIA

Well. It is weird. The whole thing is weird.

*Pause.*

LEXA

Before, you said you felt the same.

PRIA

But now I don't. I feel this buzzing inside.

LEXA

I don't think that's weird. I feel a buzzing.

PRIA

It's a new thing, though.

LEXA

Like you never felt it before?

PRIA

Like I always felt it, but I never noticed it.

LEXA

Should we visit a specialist?

PRIA

No. I don't need a specialist. I'm just trying to explain.

LEXA

Oh. I need more teaching?

PRIA

See? No. Come on. This is exactly why mom and dad didn't tell us.

*Pause.*

LEXA

The scavenger hunt was their idea.

PRIA

I should have known.

LEXA

I told them they were making light of it.

PRIA

Of course. Everything's gotta be "fun." I mean, really.

LEXA

They made a big deal out of where to hide the final clue.

PRIA

What? In the balcony plants?

LEXA

You know. Because we used to hide Dad's glasses in there?

*Pause.*

PRIA

I'm angry. Are you angry?

LEXA

I'm not sure. I'm not happy, I know that. I guess I just thought - I don't know. I was hoping you'd find it cool.

PRIA

Cool? No I find it scary. I'm very scared now.

LEXA

What happened to angry?

PRIA

I had a scary thought.

LEXA

About what?

PRIA

The transfer. Don't you find that scary?

LEXA

Why? It's like the simplest procedure now.

*Pause.*

Lots of people do it and everything's fine for them.

PRIA

You don't know that.

LEXA

What about Tad? And Barb? And Miss Jeannie? They got transferred and they're fine.

PRIA

How would you know?

LEXA

I asked Barb that night at Troy's when he made that crazy coffee. She was so fine with it.

PRIA

She said she was, but we still don't know for sure.



LEXA

Know what? Why are you being so freaky?

PRIA

She's a synthoid copy in a second gen body.

LEXA

I thought it was third.

PRIA

Either way. She's not Barb anymore. Plus she's like 130 years old.

LEXA

What's different about her? She's got the same mind pattern. It's the pattern that's important, right? Not the thing that stores it.

PRIA

But how do we know she's still there?

LEXA

Of course she's still there.

PRIA

No. I mean the *real* Barb. The one that knows she's Barb.

LEXA

She knows she's Barb. Why wouldn't she know she's Barb?

PRIA

When they dimmed out the squishy brain? Didn't she just... dim out too?

LEXA

Come on. What does that even mean?

PRIA

Right. Why would you even know? Or care? You won't have to do it. You won't have that moment when your whole mind pattern gets moved from squishy to permanent.

LEXA

You can't blame me for this. I always thought we were the same just like you did.

PRIA

I just don't want to be lost, you know?

LEXA

Not really.

PRIA

Ok. It's really awful if you don't understand this. Really awful.

LEXA

I'm trying. Keep going.

PRIA

When they do the transfer - with the cross-dimming.

LEXA

Right.

PRIA

I'll be here. In this body and I'll be me thinking all my me stuff and knowing me things and just being me?

LEXA

Right.

PRIA

And so they'll dim out this me and wake up the other one at the same time.

LEXA

It's supposed to be seamless. Both bodies are asleep. You just wake up like five feet to the left of where you fell asleep and then you're fine.

PRIA

But when the new me wakes up in the synthetic body, how do I know I'll still be in there? Won't it be like someone else took over?

LEXA

You're getting awfully worked up about this.

PRIA

*(Hyperventilating.)*

I'm going to be lost, aren't I? And you'll never even know what I was talking about.

LEXA

You won't be lost. I'll always have you, and your memories, and your stories. And we can keep making more together for as long as we want.

PRIA

And you won't care that I'm not in there?

LEXA

Ok no. I don't know exactly what you're talking about. But as long as you act like you and think like you and do all the things my sister would do, instead of being this unbalanced nutcase, then I'll be just fine.

PRIA

Okay! Okay then! How would anyone know anyway? Who cares? We just go on and on and everything's great.

LEXA

You're being sarcastic.

PRIA

Who's going to wake up after a transfer and say, "No, I'm not me." That doesn't even make sense. How could anyone even say that and make sense?

LEXA

Right.

PRIA

Right. You might say you feel different. I feel different all the time. Like I'm not myself.

LEXA

You're not really acting like yourself.

PRIA

See? But I still say I'm me. I'm never going to answer "I'm not me," right?

LEXA

Not unless you're channeling for someone.

*Pause.*

PRIA

Right. Ok.

LEXA

Do you want to maybe stop thinking about this? It'll be years before you need to do it.

PRIA

I wish they wouldn't have even told me.

LEXA

I think mom was just worried because you've been skipping your backups and she didn't want you to have like, some big memory loss if you suddenly fell out of a window

*Pause.*

PRIA

Read me the last clue again.

*Lexa unfolds a slip of paper and reads.*

LEXA

Don't be alarmed at what you hear,  
but we hope you'll take it with an ounce of cheer.  
There's a little something that it's time you know  
It will never change how we love you so  
But before you arrived, your mom and I  
We thought for a child that we might try  
to conceive you as they did before  
Not pick you preborn from a store.  
Your mom and I said what the heck.  
Who needs implants, who needs tech?  
You screamed and cried, when you sprang out  
And now we know without a doubt  
That letting nature do her thing  
Can bring more joy than anything  
For now we have, straight from your mother.  
A precious girl who's like no other.

PRIA

That is so stupid.

LEXA

I know, right?

*Pause.*

LEXA

I'll be here for you, just like always.

PRIA

*(Sighs)*

I just hope there's someone in there.

*Pria knocks on Lexa's head with her fist.*

*A little too hard.*