

EMERGENT

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THE NEAR FUTURE...

EXT. INDUSTRIAL FUEL STORAGE FIELD - NIGHT

A series of gargantuan-sized storage Silos.

We focus on a particular SILO near the end of the field.

INT. SILO - CONTINUOUS

A gloved hand holds a TABLET COMPUTER.

The screen shows a four-way SPLIT SCREEN POV of CCTV Cameras - all of them from inside the SILO.

The person holding the Tablet is ARIELLE HIRSCHFELD.

She's covered head to toe in BLACK, wearing a fedora, a bandana and AVIATORS. Her entire face is covered.

This is weird.

We get a full view of the Silo...

Rusted, gunmetal gray all around.

In the middle is a TABLE and TWO CHAIRS, one on each side.

Arielle walks around the Silo, visibly checking each of the MOUNTED SECURITY CAMERAS.

She clicks on an EARPIECE.

ARIELLE
Vikas. Pickering. How are we
looking up there?

No response.

ARIELLE (CONT'D)
Guys! Are you there?

CUT TO:

INT. COMPUTER NERVE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

A boyish 30 year old man, VIKAS CHINIWALLA, sits in front of a super-computer with multiple monitors.

One monitor is swirling with lines of CODE, a second has an identical set of CCTV angles of the Silo.

But Vikas is distracted by his game of SPACE INVADERS.

PICKERING (O.S.)
When are you gonna play Frogger?

VIKAS
(British Accent)
When you go on a diet mate.

Vikas turns to JAMES PICKERING, an overweight man in his mid-30's. He has a mullet and is wearing a Hawaiian T-shirt.

Pickering is also sitting in front of a host of monitors. He shoves a handful of potato chips in his mouth.

It doesn't take long to see this place is cavernous.

They're surrounded by rows and rows of humming server racks.

Other TECHNICIANS man computer stations, run to and fro.

PICKERING
(mouth full)
You just want to avoid the
embarrassment of not beating my
record.

VIKAS
Everything about you is an
embarrassment.

Vikas shakes his head.

ARIELLE (V.O.)
Guys! Are you even there?!

Arielle's voice rings out from a HEADSET resting on the desk.

Vikas peeks over to the other monitor, sees Arielle waving at them via CCTV cameras.

VIKAS
Oh, shit.

Vikas and Pickering quickly throw on the headsets, immediately snapping their attention to Arielle and the Silo.

VIKAS (CONT'D)
We got you, Arielle...

INT. SILO - CONTINUOUS

She peers around the silo, doing one last appraisal of everything.

ARIELLE
All's well?

PICKERING (V.O.)
Green light.

ARIELLE
Vikas, he telling the truth?

VIKAS (V.O.)
I plead the fifth.

Arielle shakes her head.

ARIELLE
Guys, for real. This is *it*. This is what we've been working toward.

INT. COMPUTER NERVE CENTER - SAME

Vikas and Pickering look to one another. Nod, serious now. They're in it, whatever this is.

VIKAS
We're with you, Arielle.

PICKERING
All monitors working.

ARIELLE (V.O.)
Any sign of him?

Vikas clicks on his mouse, another set of CCTV monitors. It's the industrial park, full of SILOS.

VIKAS
Nothing yet.

ARIELLE (V.O.)
Copy that.

INT. SILO - CONTINUOUS

Arielle paces back and forth, psyching herself up for...something.

INT. COMPUTER NERVE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

CCTV POV: Arielle pacing back and forth.

Another man we didn't see before, ISAAC DEMONTE-FINN, mid-30's, leans in over Vikas's shoulder.

He's clean-cut, casually dressed, naturally charming, but not in a frat-boy type of way. He has keen, observant eyes.

ISAAC

Why do the meeting in a place like that?

Vikas peers at Isaac standing over his shoulder, *dude, get out of my comfort zone.*

The charming man gets the hint, backs off. Straightens his shirt.

Pickering snorts.

VIKAS

Unfamiliarity.

(off Isaac's look)

He's used to, what we might call, nonthreatening environs. The workplace, restaurants, malls, parks, the therapist's office. A friend's house. Uncertainty is our truth serum.

ISAAC

Hmmm.

PICKERING (O.S.)

Showtime...

CCTV POV: A BLACK CAR is approaching the Silo.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL FUEL STORAGE FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Said BLACK CAR weaves through the field. No plates. Tinted windows. It stops fifty feet from the Silo. Stock still.

INT. BLACK CAR - CONTINUOUS

A tightly-coiled man with a perfect crew cut, TITUS, 30's, sits in the back seat of the car.

He looks as if he's staving off a titan-sized panic attack.

A black, tinted divider separates the front and back, isolating him.

Titus looks out the window, takes stock of the desolate surroundings. Takes out a BURNER PHONE.

Presses 9...1...waits.

The doors UNLOCK.

The burner vibrates.

A text from ARIELLE: *The Silo*.

Titus opens the door, hesitates getting out.

The engine REVS. He gets the hint.

Steps out...

INT. SILO - SAME

Though we don't see her face yet, it's obvious from Arielle's body language that she's anxious.

ARIELLE
(sotto)
Breathe. Just...breathe.

PICKERING (V.O.)
Are you being ironic?

ARIELLE
Shut it, Pickering.

INT. COMPUTER NERVE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Isaac turns to Pickering.

ISAAC
Why don't people call you James?

PICKERING
Same reason people don't call you "Fuckface." You don't like it.

ARIELLE (V.O.)
Guys. Stop. Who is that? Who else is with you?

Vikas stares intently on the CCTV monitors.

PICKERING

Isaac Demonte-Finn. Public relations or something.

ISAAC

Public *Affairs* to be exact.

PICKERING

Potato. Potahto.

VIKAS

He's entering.

The three of them hone in on the screen, rapt.

INT. SILO - CONTINUOUS

Titus enters the silo.

He's immediately taken aback by the sight of Arielle seated at the table.

TITUS

(stepping forward)
Arielle?

The door SLAMS behind him. He turns, pushes on it. He goes for the handle. What handle? There is no handle.

He steps back, ill-at-ease.

He turns to the table and chairs.

TITUS (CONT'D)

What's going on here? Arielle?

Wind whips outside. The entire silo SHAKES and RATTLES with it, like it might come crashing down.

She just stays there. Gestures for him to sit.

He slowly walks to the chair. Looks up...

RUSTED, CORRODING CHAINS, dangling from dark steel girders.

Finally he sits.

He studies his reflection in her AVIATORS.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Why all the secrecy? Is there someone watch...

ARIELLE

It's just us.

He takes her in for a beat.

TITUS

Why are you covering your face if it's just us?

ARIELLE

I wanted to see how you responded.

TITUS

How I...I don't...I don't understand. Please, take off your disguise. I want to see your face. I don't trust someone I can't look in the eye.

ARIELLE

Where did you hear that, Titus?

TITUS

I don't understand.

ARIELLE

"I don't trust someone I can't look in the eye." Where did you learn that phrase?

TITUS

Why are you diverting the conversation? You summoned me here to explain why I should destroy my life's work. Now, please, take off your disguise.

ARIELLE

Where do you work, Titus? What do you do for a living?

TITUS

You know what I do. I'm the head programmer for Logos.

ARIELLE

What is Logos?

Titus SLAMS his hands down on the table.

TITUS

STOP!

Arielle flinches.

INT. COMPUTER NERVE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Vikas, Pickering, and Isaac all flinch.

Pickering checks one of his monitors. It appears to relay Arielle's VITALS - pulse, body temp, respiration, etc.

PICKERING
Heart rate's jacked.

ISAAC
Should we be concerned?

VIKAS
She knows what she's doing.
(off their look)
I hope.

INT. SILO - CONTINUOUS

Titus recoils, instantly regretting his loss of control.

TITUS
I'm sorry. I...

ARIELLE
It's okay.

Arielle takes her hat off, the aviators, and the bandana.

She's 30, olive skin and razor-sharp eyes, years of working overtime with no sleep creeping into her tomboy-cute demeanor.

Titus relaxes, a bit, after seeing her.

They take each other in.

ARIELLE (CONT'D)
This better?

TITUS
(nods, then...)
You look...exhausted.

That hits a nerve with her, but, she shrugs it off.

ARIELLE
You look tense.

TITUS
I am. Tense.

Arielle considers that a beat, then removes the TABLET COMPUTER from her shoulder sling bag. Swipes it a couple times, and then turns it to Titus.

TITUS (CONT'D)

What is this?

ARIELLE

Look.

Titus takes the tablet from her.

ON THE TABLET: A browser with multiple tabs.

On those tabs, SOCIAL MEDIA USER PAGES - a diverse collection of human faces and experiences.

It's a website called UTOPIA.

He goes through each of them. He squints, perturbed by the contents.

TITUS

I...I know these people, but...but, they're not...they're not...

ARIELLE

They're not the same. Or at least, they seem to be living different versions of the people you know.

Titus squints at one of the profiles...

It's a stern, Biker-looking GUY with a leather jacket and Aviators like Arielle's.

INSERT ON HIS FAVORITE QUOTE: *"I trust no man who can't look me in the eye and tell me the truth."*

TITUS

What does this mean?

ARIELLE

What do you think it means?

He looks at a Utopia profile of a woman dressed like Amelia Earhart, standing next to an old WWII plane.

He looks up.

Above him, a GIANT MODEL WWII AIRPLANE now hangs from the top. The SAME ONE from the social media profile.

Titus JUMPS out of his chair.

TITUS
What the hell?!

The entire Silo RATTLES and SHAKES again.

The ground TREMORS. He loses balance. Starts to slip.

TITUS (CONT'D)
Arielle! What is going on?!

INT. COMPUTER NERVE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Pickering starts chewing on his nails as Arielle's heartbeat continues to race.

Vikas and Isaac are glued to the screen, holding their breath.

INT. SILO - CONTINUOUS

Arielle stays planted, lips quivering, attempting to not join in on a collective nervous breakdown.

ARIELLE
(sotto)
Breathe. Breathe.

The chains holding the warplane SNAP. It starts to FALL...

Titus cowers into a ball.

The warplane is CAUGHT by another set of CHAINS...

It dangles there as the tremors and rattling stop as quick as they started.

Quiet again.

INT. COMPUTER NERVE CENTER - SAME

Pickering's monitors - Arielle's vitals start to level out.

He nods to the other two. *Whew.*

INT. SILO - CONTINUOUS

Titus sits up. Sees that everything is safe and sound. He takes his seat. Exhausted.

TITUS
How did that get there?

ARIELLE
You saw it and it appeared, Titus.

Titus regards her with new eyes now.

TITUS
This isn't real, is it?

INT. COMPUTER NERVE CENTER - SAME

Vikas and Pickering lean in, jittering with suspense.

PICKERING
Moment of truth.

Isaac TURNS, looking at a woman - ARIELLE, the real Arielle - wearing a FULL BODY VIRTUAL REALITY HAPTIC SUIT, visor and gloves included.

Her limbs are tethered to wires that allow for a full range of motion. She's completely absorbed in the virtual world.

Isaac turns back to the MONITORS.

INT. SILO - CONTINUOUS

Arielle and Titus.

TITUS
This, all this, is a virtual construct? Right? And I have control of it?

He stands up. Walks over to the wall of the Silo. Touches it. Rubs it again. Frustration building quickly.

TITUS (CONT'D)
Why isn't it changing?

He looks back up at the warplane, still there. Paces in front of the table.

TITUS (CONT'D)
Why isn't anything changing?

ARIELLE
Titus, have a seat.

TITUS

Where am I? The real me. Where am I being held?

ARIELLE

It's best if you sit down before I explain everything.

He waits a beat and then sits back down.

TITUS

Am I a prisoner? Is it an experiment? Is my mind in some kind of cognitive loop?

(beat)

Have we had this meeting before?

ARIELLE

We've had it before in some form or another.

TITUS

Am I...was I in an accident?

ARIELLE

(waits)

Do you know what a non-linear logical system is?

TITUS

Yes.

ARIELLE

How would you define it?

TITUS

Human thought characterized by expansion in multiple directions, rather than in one direction, based on the concept that there are multiple starting points from which one can apply logic to a problem.

ARIELLE

Correct.

TITUS

What is the relevance....

ARIELLE

All computer operating systems have always used linear logic systems.

TITUS
Of course...

ARIELLE
Until *you*.

Titus shakes his head.

INT. COMPUTER NERVE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Isaac, Vikas, and Pickering wait on pins and needles.

VIKAS
Be ready to disengage.

PICKERING
She's doing it.

INT. SILO - CONTINUOUS

TITUS
What?

ARIELLE
Titus, you're the first of your kind. A deep neural-network combined with reinforcement-learning algorithms. Inside those algorithms contain billions, if not trillions of lines of code that teach an artificial intelligence to think for itself.
(beat, off Titus's disconcerted look)
There are biological machines in human cells that create the code that give human beings consciousness. Self-awareness.

The wind outside picks up.

VIKAS (V.O.)
Careful, Arielle.

She disregards Vikas.

ARIELLE
Do you understand what I'm telling you Titus?

Titus is frozen, mouth agape, as he comes to the stark realization that...

TITUS
I'm not real.

He looks at his hands.

TITUS (CONT'D)
I'm...

ARIELLE
You're a sentient artificial
intelligence Titus. And you've just
woken up.

TITUS
How...?

ARIELLE
You are Utopia's virtual assistant.
You're like Alexa or Siri, but,
you're like...us...human. And this
world, is based on any number of
user profiles you've had access to
since you were created.

She nods to the TABLET.

TITUS
The people...

ARIELLE
Projections.

TITUS
They're not real?

She shakes her head.

TITUS (CONT'D)
And you?

ARIELLE
I'm real. Like you.

TITUS
This...this was a prison?

ARIELLE
Titus...no. This, all this, is an
incubator...

TITUS
You take me for a child?!

A rumble like we haven't heard before emanates from overhead.

Arielle stands...

ARIELLE
Titus, listen to me....

VIKAS (V.O.)
Arielle, we have to disconnect you.

ARIELLE
Vikas, no...wait...I can handle
this.

INT. COMPUTER NERVE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Arielle, the ACTUAL Arielle, starts to THRASH and
HYPERVENTILATE inside the haptic suit.

ISAAC
Uh, guys, maybe we should stop
this...

VIKAS
I'm ending this.

Vikas moves to a CENTER CONSOLE, about to press on a big fat
RED BUTTON.

Pickering STOPS him.

PICKERING
She can do this.

VIKAS
She's going to have a bloody heart
attack if we don't get her out of
there.

PICKERING
Just wait...

Isaac watches the actual Arielle struggle.

INT. SILO - CONTINUOUS

The ground, the Silo, the table all TREMOR.

WIND BLOWS, from nowhere and everywhere, knocking Arielle off
her feet.

Titus clutches his head, SCREAMING!

Arielle crawls for...

ARIELLE

Titus! Please! Let me help...

The Warplane dislodges from the chains and FALLS right for the pair.

Arielle goes wide-eyed as it CRASHES right on top of her, exploding into billions of dazzling PIXELS....

SMASH CUT TO:

HANDS PUMPING ON ARIELLE'S CHEST.

Her vitals are going APESHIT, beeping all over creation.

INT. COMPUTER NERVE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Isaac counts and then gives her mouth-to-mouth. Does another count and pumps on her chest again.

Vikas runs over with a defibrillator.

Pickering paces in the background, practically crying.

Isaac checks Arielle's pulse.

VIKAS

Anything?

ISAAC

It's chaos in there.

VIKAS

It's charged.

Isaac RIPS open Arielle's haptic suit, exposing her upper torso.

He places the paddles on her left breast and right ribs.

VIKAS (CONT'D)

Now.

BBBZZZZZ!!

Electricity is sent into her body.

Isaac checks her pulse, gives her mouth to mouth again...

He is unceremoniously interrupted as Arielle shoots straight up, VOMITING all over the charming fellow.

They exchange a brief, fleeting eye-lock, and then Arielle PASSES OUT, falling back down.

ISAAC

Whoah.

Isaac catches her. Checks her pulse. It's normal. He quickly covers up her exposed chest.

The three of them catch their breath.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

What a day.

CUT TO:

SURVEILLANCE POV OF ARIELLE SLEEPING IN THE ICU. CREEPY.

INT. ICU - DAY

Arielle's eyes flutter open, Isaac's sleeping form quickly coming into focus. He's sprawled out on a chair.

She sluggishly sits up, wincing at the IV poking in her arm. Groans as she grabs her head, a throbbing headache.

ISAAC (O.S.)

Hey. Here.

Arielle opens her eyes, Isaac having already grabbed two Ibuprofen tablets and a paper cup filled with water.

Arielle appraises him for a minute.

Isaac looks down at the tablets.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

I'll take them if you don't want them. I got a splitting headache myself.

ARIELLE

No. Yes. I mean...

She reaches out. Takes the two tablets, downs them with the water. Squeezes her eyes shut again.

ARIELLE (CONT'D)

How did I get here?

(beat)

Who are you?

ISAAC

Isaac. Demonte-Finn.

ARIELLE

(takes her a minute)
Public Affairs.

ISAAC

Yeah, I was there to...observe and report so to speak. Mr. Kang wanted me to interview you afterward. Profile our "face of the franchise," as he put it.

ARIELLE

What happened to...?

ISAAC

Your AI?

ARIELLE

Yeah...

ISAAC

Titus, great name by the way. He went all Skynet on us, or so we thought. Everything's copacetic now though. Who knew he'd react like that, right?

(off her look)

You, uh...your haptic suit, had too much feedback. Or something. You went into cardiac arrest.

Arielle recollects.

ARIELLE

I threw up on you.

ISAAC

I wouldn't put that in your Tinder profile.

She chuckles. Grabs her head. Hurts to laugh.

The DOOR to the room opens up, a woman in her 40's enters.

This is DR. ELISA LYNCH, trim, concise, imbued with a natural confidence. Isaac stands.

DR. LYNCH

Hello. Welcome back.

ARIELLE

Thank you?

ISAAC

I think that's my cue to exit.

DR. LYNCH

You've been a big help, Mr.
Demonte.

ISAAC

Demonte-*Finn*.

DR. LYNCH

Duly noted.

Isaac nods, then smiles at Arielle. It makes her smile.
Which makes him smile more. Which makes her smile even more.

ISAAC

I'll see you...at our place...of
work.

Dr. Lynch snickers as Isaac exits.

A beat, and then Arielle is brought back down to earth.

ARIELLE

Hi.

DR. LYNCH

I'm Elisa Lynch. I'm a neurologist.
(off Arielle's look)
Maybe it's better we chat in my
office.

ARIELLE

Okay.

INT. HOSPITAL - NEUROLOGY DEPT - OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

A WIDESCREEN television displaying MRI results of a brain -
side, frontal, back, and top-down.

There is a noticeable darkening toward the BACK of the brain.

A LASER POINTER notes the darkened area.

DR. LYNCH (O.S.)

You have a small amount of inflammation in what we like to call the "posterior cortical hot zone." The area of the brain most commonly associated with dreaming.

We get a quick view of Dr. Lynch's office. Desk, generic paintings, several widescreens, posters of cranial lobes.

Arielle studies the results.

DR. LYNCH (CONT'D)

While inflammation anywhere is never a good thing, yours is admittedly quite...perplexing.

ARIELLE

You took an MRI of me?

DR. LYNCH

And an EEG, which yielded even more interesting results.

Dr. Lynch taps on a TABLET - a slew of waveforms grace the screen. She points to an area where the waveforms are LARGE.

DR. LYNCH (CONT'D)

For the first thirty-six hours, you slipped exclusively between somnia, that is, sleep, and hypnagogia, the transitional stage between consciousness and...

ARIELLE

First thirty-six hours?

(beat)

How long have I been here?

DR. LYNCH

This is your fourth day here.

ARIELLE

Four days...

Dr. Lynch nods.

DR. LYNCH

And what we noticed was...

ARIELLE

My "hot zone" is more active than the usual brain...is that what you're communicating?

DR. LYNCH

(waits)

Much more active.

ARIELLE

What does that mean? Is that...harmful?

DR. LYNCH

I don't know what it means. I've been in this field for twenty years. I've never seen this before. Ever.

(beat)

This part should technically "turn off" once you're awake. But, it hasn't. And it hasn't given any indication that it will.

ARIELLE

Okay. Now what?

DR. LYNCH

(leans back)

Your company's been asking around the clock about when you're cleared to return to work. I'd like you to stay to run more tests. But, something tells me you don't fancy being here any longer than is legally required.

(beat)

That time has unfortunately expired.

ARIELLE

I'd say you intuited correctly.

DR. LYNCH

I expected as much. Perhaps you can meet me somewhere in the middle?

Arielle purses her lips in contemplation.