

A MATTER OF SURVIVAL

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ACT ONE

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

The banquet hall holds 300 employees and spouses. A podium sits at the main table. A banner is placed on the back wall: 'Henderson Electronics 35 Years of Service'. JOHN Smith, 57, balding and overweight, sits next to the podium. TOM Henderson, President of the company, sits next to John.

TOM

I'm gonna miss you, John.

JOHN

Bah. Tom, you got so much young blood in here you won't miss me.

TOM

They don't work like you did, John. They're young, but they want as much time off as I can afford.

JOHN

(wistful) Yeah, I kinda remember time off.

TOM

I'd have to hire a team of robots, and the mechanics to keep 'em going to replace you. My own private automaton.

JOHN

Easy enough when you have no family. Nothing to look forward to but work.

TOM

Put it this way. You'll have enough time to write that book now.

JOHN

Yeah, been writing the same book for ten years.

Tom clinks his glass with his fork. The room grows quieter. Tom gets up and stands behind the podium.

TOM

We're here to honor a man who gave his all for Henderson Electronics. His name is on no less than 100 patents, and I'm the one who has to sign his royalty checks every
(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)
month. (Laughter) But despite
this, his inventions and his
dedication have made Henderson
Electronics profitable and paved
the way for you guys to take
advantage of me! (more laughter)

Tom pats John on the shoulder.

TOM
For this man an 80 hour week was a
vacation. One hundred or more
hours was the norm. So he has
earned the right to retire and
receive his sizable pension that
goes along with it. I'll miss you,
John, and my money, but I hope you
accomplish all your retirement
goals.

The crowd applauds. Tom shakes John's hand, then forces him
to stand. John stands behind the podium and looks at the
crowd.

JOHN
Thank you. I don't know what to
say. (Pause) My mother used to
catch me pacing around my room
when I was a teen. She told me if
I had that much energy, I should
be out earning money with it
instead of wearing a hole on her
carpet. (Laughter) So I took that
energy and I made something of
myself.

John takes a deep breath, slowly, in pain. He rubs his
chest. He looks out into the audience and sees a girl,
RACHEL Wilson, tall, slim, raven hair, age 5. She waves at
him then disappears before his eyes. He rubs them, then
looks out at the crowd.

JOHN
The old body ain't what it used to
be, but I still pace, (smiles)
just a little slower. (laughter)
But now, I'll be pacing right out
that door (points to exit) and
giving this body a rest. I already
have a trip to Europe planned, a
condo in downtown Chicago, and
season tickets to the Cubs. So you
young guys out there wondering
when your ship will come in. Well
(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)
mine was powered by hard work and
dedication for 35 years.

Applause breaks out. John sits, out of breath.

EXT. PARIS CAFE - DAY

[Super: 2 months later] John sits at a table, typing into a laptop. His face shows frustration. He pounds the table hard.

JOHN
Why can't I find the words?

A waiter comes up to him.

WAITER
Pardonnez-moi, monsieur. S'il de
plait ne frappez-pas la table.
C'est de verre.

JOHN
(confused) I'm sorry, I don't
speak French.

The waiter looks at him with contempt, then walks away. A girl at the next table, a teen with a British accent, turns to him.

TEEN
He said don't hit the table, it's
glass.

JOHN
(relieved) Oh, thank you. I know
it's glass. I know how much force
it will take to break it.

The girl rolls her eyes.

JOHN
Do languages come easy to you?

TEEN
(shrugs) My mother is French. I
speak both languages at home.

JOHN
I speak computer language. But
it's all about logic, not Romance
Languages.

TEEN

You've never been in love?

JOHN

Well, I didn't say that. I've
(beat) been around. Just not for
long. Work came first.

TEEN

(Shrugs) And where has that left
you?

JOHN

(smiles) In a cafe in Paris,
talking to you.

The teen turns her back on him.

TEEN

I'm not interested in fossils.

JOHN

(laughs) That's not what I meant.
(eyes go unfocused) I've always
wanted to dig for fossils. I just
never thought I'd be one when I
did. Am I really that old? (looks
down) I feel old right now. And I
still can't talk to girls.

John looks at the girl, then looks past her to see a boy,
JEFF Peterson, age 5, smiling at him. Jeff waves. John waves
back and Jeff disappears. John scowls, then packs up his
computer and gets up.

EXT. PARIS ALLEY - DAY

John walks slowly down the alley. Two males approach him,
then pin him to the wall.

JOHN

What are you doing?

John struggles, but has no strength. They take his computer
case and his wallet. John is left on the ground, panting.

JOHN

I can't even defend myself.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

[Super: One month later] John sits on the exam table in an undershirt and boxer shorts. Doctor HALE comes in and smiles at John. They shake hands.

JOHN

Tim, thank you for seeing me on such short notice.

HALE

No problem, John. What can I do for you?

JOHN

Oh, well, I've been feeling tired lately. I wanted to take a self-defense class, to get some exercise and learn to defend myself, but they won't let me enroll without a doctor's note.

Hale takes John's pulse.

HALE

Let's run a few tests before you commit yourself to that. How was your vacation?

JOHN

Fine, if you like getting insulted and robbed. Insurance covered everything, but I lost the book and notes I was writing. I have to start from scratch.

HALE

That's too bad. Look, I don't think you're ready for a self-defense class, but how about I recommend a good aerobics class for (beat) a man in your condition.

JOHN

You make it sound like I'm pregnant.

HALE

You should be so lucky. The weight would come off after 9 months. No, your weight will take longer to come off and you'll have to work harder, but it will come off in the end.

Hale slaps John in the rear.

JOHN
Doc, (hesitates) what causes
hallucinations?

HALE
Well, in your case probably
overworking. You should get some
rest, then get some exercise!

John nods, not convinced.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

[Super: One year later] John's home office has a desk with a computer. A treadmill sits unused in a corner next to a window with a view of the Chicago skyline. A chair sits in front of the desk, and another behind. The desk is covered with manuals with various diagrams and formula highlighted. The floor is covered with crumpled up balls of paper. John comes in escorting KAREN Foster, 22, geeky, with large round glasses. John kicks a couple of paper balls out of the way as he comes in.

JOHN
Sorry for the mess. I haven't had
time or energy to clean.

KAREN
(looks around) That's (beat) okay,
I've (beat) seen worse.

JOHN
Have a seat. You're the first
person I've interviewed for the
job, but the damn phone keeps
ringing with others calling in.

KAREN
Yeah, putting your number on
Craig's List in Chicago probably
wasn't the best idea.

Karen sits in the chair and kicks a paper ball under the desk. John sits heavily and leans back.

JOHN
First, I apologize if I seem
gruff. I'm used to interviewing
men for a factory floor.

KAREN
You didn't hire women?

JOHN

(points to self) I didn't hire anyone. HR sent men to me to interview. I'm sure women got hired because I saw a few of them around. I just never had the time to talk to them.

KAREN

Well no wonder you're so gruff. You were apparently not taught manners or how to clean.

John looks at Karen. Silence reigns supreme for a moment. John laughs.

JOHN

So, Miss Manners. Tell me about yourself.

KAREN

Well, I'm 22. I go to the University of Chicago, trying to get a Master's Degree in Statistical Analysis. I uh, ran into a little Financial Aid problem, and I need money to get into the program.

JOHN

Why statistics?

KAREN

I'm good with numbers. All right, I'm great with numbers. I see patterns no one else can see. I enjoy that.

JOHN

(unamused) What writing skills do you have? Ever edit a book before? Proofread?

KAREN

All the time. I make a few bucks on the side helping others with their term papers. If you looked at my resume, you'd see a double major of statistics and English.

JOHN

Foreign Languages?

KAREN

French, some Spanish, a little German.

John leans his face against his hand.

JOHN

References?

Karen pulls a sheet of paper from her portfolio and hands it to John.

JOHN

(reading) High School references?
(looks at Karen) Have you worked at all? Put in a hard day's work for a hard day's pay? Not even a recommendation from a college professor?

Karen looks hard at John.

KAREN

Look, it's increasingly obvious I'm not going to get the job, so I'll tell you why I don't have any recent references, why I don't have a work history, and why I'm having financial troubles. I dated one of my professors while getting my Bachelor's. Some people thought my 4.0 GPA was due to that, but I earned every grade. I kept all my tests and all my term papers. You're welcome to read them. But when it came out that I was having sex with that professor, he was suspended and I was kicked out of the Master's Program. He actually had the temerity to sue me for his lost wages, so I have a huge lien, a ton of college debt that I have to pay because I'm no longer in school, and no one in the university that I can use as a reference if I ever want to get a job! (gets up) Now, if you're sufficiently amused, I'll take my leave!

Karen, shaking, heads for the door.

JOHN

(shakes head, smiles) Wait.

Karen stops, turns.

JOHN
Can you add in your head?

KAREN
Yes.

JOHN
Geez, I wish my brain worked like
that. I need a calculator.

John picks up a large stack of paper from his desk.

JOHN
Can you read fast?

KAREN
Yes, and I have a perfect memory.

John points to the stack.

JOHN
If you can read this before 5pm
today, and give me a synopsis, the
job is yours.

Karen looks at the stack.

KAREN
That looks like over a thousand
pages.

JOHN
One thousand, one hundred and
twenty three.

KAREN
I like a challenge.

John shrugs. Karen comes to his desk.

KAREN
Can I use your office?

JOHN
Use the couch in the living room
if you like. Help yourself to the
refrigerator.

Karen takes the stack and leaves. John's phone rings. John
picks it up.

JOHN
Yes? (pause) The job's filled.

John hangs up the phone.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

Karen sits in front of John with the stack of paper on her lap.

KAREN

It's very technical. What's the target market?

JOHN

Everyone. I'm not prejudiced.

KAREN

(smiles) Um, okay. I was able to follow it well enough, even laugh at the in-jokes. It's very logically set up. But the average Joe won't understand a word of this.

JOHN

So?

KAREN

(smirks) So, you either have a small market, and most of those won't learn much from this, or you have to simplify it so your target market increases in size, or no publisher will take it.

JOHN

I'm not a simple guy.

KAREN

(smiles) I can see that. Do you have children, Mr. Smith?

JOHN

Heh, if that was a suggestion...

KAREN

(cross) Not at all. What I am suggesting is that you start by writing it so that a ten-year-old can understand it, and work your way up.

JOHN

(Mulls it over) You think an electronics book for children will sell?

KAREN

I can do research on that, if I get the job.

JOHN

(waves) That happened when you took the challenge. Welcome to the company. You know where the kitchen and the bathroom are? That was your orientation. Any questions?

KAREN

(shocked) How much do I get paid?

JOHN

Let's start with enough to pay off your debts, plus survive and go to a different school when you're not working for me. You tell me how much that is, since you're so good with numbers.

KAREN

Um, I'll get back to you on that.
(sits straighter) May I ask why?

JOHN

I've got more money than I know what to do with, right now, and you don't. Besides, with your help that book might sell and I'll get a return on my investment.

John gets up.

JOHN

Why don't you go home and get your financial records in order, then be back here at 8 am so we can get back to work.

Karen stands, starts to move toward the door, then launches herself at John, kissing him passionately. John is surprised for a moment, then pushes her away.

JOHN

Geez, you'd think you'd learn from the last older guy!

Karen turns red, then bolts for the door.

JOHN

Eight am tomorrow! Don't be late!

A door closing sound is heard. John goes back to his desk

and sits down.

JOHN
Geez, what I know about girls.

John holds his fingers in a 'zero' sign.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is fairly simple. A full kitchen on one side, doors to the bedroom and office on the other. John sits at a table eating breakfast, consisting of toast covered with peanut butter and orange juice. A knock on the front door is heard. John gets up slowly and opens the door. Karen stands in the doorway. She wears a sundress that is low cut. John averts his gaze.

JOHN
Come on in. I'm enjoying
breakfast.

John goes back to the dining room. Karen follows, closing the door behind her. John sits at the table and resumes eating. Karen comes up, sees what he's eating and wrinkles her nose in disgust.

KAREN
That's what you're eating for
breakfast?

JOHN
(mouth full) I hate cooking.

KAREN
Yeah, I saw all the microwavable
stuff yesterday. Do you have eggs?
Milk?

JOHN
I do. I make myself French Toast
every now and then.

Karen goes to the kitchen and opens the refrigerator. She rolls her eyes at the sight, then takes out a few supplies and then closes the door. She searches the cupboards for other supplies, bowls, plates and utensils.

KAREN
For someone who uses logic so
much, you aren't very tidy.

JOHN
Bless this mess.

KAREN

Yeah...No. Today is office and kitchen clean up day, for both of us. Or you can find yourself a new assistant.

JOHN

Demanding terms already? You Marxist! (grins)

Karen begins to combine ingredients.

JOHN

May I ask what you're making?

KAREN

An omelet. Better for you than that crap.

JOHN

(sighs) May I ask you a question?

KAREN

You just did. Ask another.

JOHN

What made you sleep with your professor? Some fatal attraction to older men?

Karen stops cooking, looks at John, starts again.

KAREN

He asked me. It's not like I was a virgin. I lost that in High School. And he was only 40, not (beat) whatever you are.

JOHN

Fifty-seven. Not that age matters and not that I'm asking. But I got to thinking last night after you left about wasted opportunities. If you have a compulsion for older men, leave it out of here, but if what you showed last night was something else...(pause) I'm not opposed to it.

Karen finishes cooking the omelets, puts them on plates and brings them to the table. She grabs a glass and pours herself some orange juice. She sits across from John and starts to eat. John looks at her while eating. After a moment, she stops eating.

KAREN

It's not an age thing. Maybe it's authority, I dunno. I like direct men. I don't think it's a compulsion. I've been on my own since I was 17. A plane crash took my parents and my little sister. I was supposed to be on that plane. I had an argument with my dad and he grounded me - literally. Maybe the first few years after that I overcompensated. But, well, I got to thinking that maybe I was spared for a purpose. I'm still searching for that purpose. But don't think that casual sex is a way of life for me.

Karen resumes eating. John smiles.

JOHN

I get that feeling sometimes, not about the casual sex, but about some kind of destiny. Yeah, some of what I've invented changed the world a little, but I got a feeling that I need to change the world a lot! That something I will do will have a great impact. I just need time to finish my work.

They finish their meal.

KAREN

You, uh, wanna finish what we started yesterday?

JOHN

The manuscript?

KAREN

(hurt) No, silly.

JOHN

(grins) I know what you mean.

John gets up and takes Karen by the hand.

JOHN

The best advantage of a home office is the bedroom is close by and no prying eyes.

Karen smiles as John leads her to the bedroom.

EXT. PARK - DAY

[Super: Six months later] Children play at the park. John sits on a bench. A wedding band is prominent on his left hand. With John sits ARIEL Bunting, age 10. Ariel holds a manually bound book, titled 'Electronics For Kids'.

ARIEL

I don't know, Mr. Smith. I liked some of it, like the drawings, but the words are too hard to understand. It's too much like school.

Ariel hands the book to John.

ARIEL

But thanks for letting me read it!

Ariel gets up and runs to where the other children play. John taps his wedding band on the book. Karen comes up and sits next to him. She taps her ring on the book and smiles.

KAREN

Any better?

JOHN

Nah. They all like your drawings, but not my words. Have kids always been this dumb?

KAREN

They have too many distractions. When you were young you have television and radio. Now they have those, plus computers, video games and the Internet.

JOHN

We could throw in a game.

KAREN

About electronics?

JOHN

Sure, starring Sparky the Wondervolt!

KAREN

That's not bad. See, you can be creative.

John takes Karen's hand.

JOHN

You've rejuvenated me in just 3 months of marriage. I want to take just the pictures and a few select words, plus the game idea to the publisher. Maybe explain our research.

KAREN

I'll put together the book proposal!

Karen leans against John's shoulder.

KAREN

John? Do you think you're obsessing a bit about this book? I mean, it's a nice idea, but you put in so much work, and it might not be accepted.

JOHN

You married a workaholic. I gotta do something.

KAREN

Then you should do something healthy. Let's go for a power walk and burn off some of that fat and energy.

Karen drags John up and they begin to walk fast around the park. As they pass a group of children, one of them, JENNY McCallum, age 4, red hair, waves at him, then disappears. The other children do not notice. John glances around, but keeps walking.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

[Super: 6 months later] John works at his desk. Medicine bottles sit to one side. Papers clutter the desk and even on the floor, crumpled next to the trash can. John sits behind the desk, pulling his hair out. A knock is heard at the door. John leans back from the computer and sighs.

JOHN

Come in.

Karen comes in carrying a flash drive.

KAREN

John, I have those last few drawings ready for you.

John hardly looks up from the computer.

JOHN
Thank you, dear.

Karen scowls, puts the flash drive next to his computer, moves around behind him and begins to rub his shoulders.

KAREN
You are so tense!

JOHN
Deadlines will do that. (sighs)
That feels good but it's very
distracting.

KAREN
That's the point.

JOHN
Sometimes I wish I'd spent more
time learning to do different
things: To write well, to do the
math that you find so easy, to let
my imagination soar, to know more
about the medicines these damn
doctors prescribe for me.

John swipes out with one hand and knocks the bottles off the desk.

KAREN
So you want to be a writer, a
doctor, a mathematician and a
dreamer?

Karen kisses John.

KAREN
I love you because you are super
smart and make me laugh, but you'd
have to be two or three different
people to accomplish that. Or you
could hire them like you did me.

JOHN
I must admit being two or three
people would have its advantages.
(looks up at Karen) You wouldn't
have an old man for a mate, for
one.

Karen smirks and stops rubbing his shoulders.

KAREN

Oh yes, you could just take over
the pool boy's body.

JOHN

(grins) We don't have a pool.

KAREN

Semantics!

Karen pushes John away from the desk and sits in his lap.

KAREN

You are all the man I ever need.

JOHN

(smiles) You weren't exactly a
virgin when we met.

Karen sticks her tongue out at him, then licks his nose.

KAREN

And I didn't need those guys. They
needed me. Seriously, I fell in
love with a brilliant man whose
age belies his strength of
character and virtue.

JOHN

(Chuckles) Virtue? We were in bed
on the second day you came to work
for me!

KAREN

Yes, you dirty old man, but you
said no the first day!

She kisses him.

KAREN

I have something I need to talk
with you about, but right now I
want to recreate our second day!

JOHN

(smiles) I'll get the peanut
butter.

They laugh. He stands, grasps his chest and sags.

KAREN

Are you all right?

John collapses.

FADE TO:

INT. JOHN'S SOUL - DAY

It is black. The throb of a heart is heard in the background. It is erratic. Voices can be heard echoing.

KAREN

(V.O.)

You could just take over the pool
boy's body.

JOHN

(V.O.)

I want to write well, learn
foreign languages, be good in
sports, find the secrets to the
universe, but I don't have time.
Time. Time.

The throb slows then stops. A light begins to form, rising in brightness. John's face appears, covered with a breathing mask. The camera rises until half his body appears. He is in an operating room, his chest is cut open, his heart exposed. Doctors work on him. A picture forms between the camera and John's body: a schematic. It is titled 'Soul Catcher'. A light appears, followed by a thin black box. The light on the box comes on, and the light outside the box is sucked in. The box flashes red. The vision fades.

CARDIOLOGIST

Clear!

The cardiologist holds paddles to John's heart and jolts it. The camera descends into John's body.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

John lays in a hospital bed. A heart monitor beeps regularly. The room is dark. Karen sits in a chair by the bed, her head resting next to John's arm. John's arm moves. His voice is weak and raspy.

JOHN

Karen?

Karen's head shoots up.

KAREN

I'm here.

JOHN

What happened?

KAREN

You had a heart attack. You had to get a triple bypass. Too much cholesterol, the doctor said.

JOHN

I saw that. Myself, on the operating table.

KAREN

You had an out of body experience?

JOHN

(nods) I saw more. I saw...No. I can't say it.

KAREN

You didn't see God did you?

JOHN

(smiles weakly) No. Nothing that dramatic. But I - I saw the future. But it's horrific. I can't (beat) I can't do it.

KAREN

Aw honey, you can do anything you want. I know that.

JOHN

I - I need to think.

KAREN

You need to rest. Our baby needs his daddy.

JOHN

What?

KAREN

(nods) I confirmed it while I was here. It's a boy, daddy!

Karen kisses John.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

[Super: 8 Months Later] John sits at a work bench added to his office. A thin black box sits at the table. A switch beckons him. He reaches out, then pulls back.

JOHN

You don't want to die yet, John.
Not with your son so close to
being born. It can wait.

He puts the box in a locked drawer in his desk.

Karen comes in, her belly swollen.

KAREN

Did you take your meds?

JOHN

(unenthused) Yes.

Karen looks at the treadmill.

KAREN

A whole mile? That's wonderful!

JOHN

I've got someone, some two to live
for.

Karen comes up to him and hugs him from behind. She presses
her belly against his.

KAREN

Feel him?

JOHN

No.

KAREN

Hmm. He's quiet today. Yesterday
he was turning somersaults.

JOHN

My son, the gymnast.

Karen moves back. Fluid starts to stain her pants.

KAREN

Oof, your son just broke his
water.

Karen sits. John comes to her and feels her belly.

JOHN

Just like we rehearsed it. I'll
call the doctor and the driver.
Your bag is by the door. We're not
in any rush.

KAREN
Especially not you. (grunts) Let's
both move slowly.

John is on the phone.

INT. OBSTETRICS WARD - DAY

Doctors and nurses surround Karen as she is wheeled in a bed. A fetal heart monitor is strapped to Karen's belly. The nurse turns it on.

NURSE
No pulse, doctor.

DOCTOR #1
Battery issue?

NURSE
Negative, doctor. It reads as
operational.

DOCTOR #1
Prepare for emergency C-Section!

The bed goes through double-doors.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The room is well-lit. Karen lays in her bed, attached to tubes and a beeping heart monitor. John sits a few feet away, his head down.

Karen begins to awaken and groans. John stands and moves to her side. He takes her hand. Karen looks up at him.

KAREN
What happened?

JOHN
(pause) You had an emergency C-
Section.

KAREN
And the baby?

John squeezes Karen's hand. His voice cracks.

JOHN
Stillborn.

Karen's heart monitor increases its pace.

INT. HOSPITAL CHAPEL - NIGHT

John sits in a pew, head down. FATHER CAREY, a man around 50, comes in and sits next to John. He pats John on the back.

FATHER CAREY

I've just visited your wife, Mr. Smith. I am so deeply sorry for your loss.

JOHN

What words of solace can you bring, Padre?

FATHER CAREY

God has a mission for all of us, John. But sometimes we get called back sooner than we should. Your son's soul was needed elsewhere.

JOHN

So God wants us to suffer?

FATHER CAREY

No. Not at all.

JOHN

So God pulled my son's soul right out of his body. Such power has he.

FATHER CAREY

I know you grieve, but God will bless you again. Your wife is very young, still.

John smiles and gets up. He sees a child appear, ANDRE Lucas, Hispanic, age 5. Andre smiles, waves, then disappears. John blinks.

JOHN

Thanks, Padre. You've been a help.

John shakes Father Carey's hand and leaves.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

[Super: Three days later]

John is on the phone.

JOHN

They'll let you go home tomorrow?
(pause) That's great, honey! I'll
be there first thing. (pause) I
know. I miss you too! We'll start
to rebuild as soon as you recover.
(pause) Love you too! Bye bye.

John hangs up and opens the locked drawer in his desk. He pulls the 'soul catcher' box from the drawer and plugs it into his computer. A screen pops up: 'Length of time to hold?' with a counter in minutes. John enters one minute and hits enter. A message comes up: 'Press OK to begin sequence.' John sighs.

JOHN

Well, if God can pull a soul, why
can't I?

John pulls a letter out of his desk drawer and puts it on the desk.

JOHN

And just in case God gets pissed
off at me...

John takes a deep breath, picks up the box and presses it against his head. He closes his eyes and hits enter. The box begins to glow, then opens. John's body stiffens. His eyes pop open but are glazed over. He screams. His eyes roll to the back of his head. The box snaps shut. The scream is cut off. John's head falls face-first to the desk. The box falls next to his head, flashing red.

INT. JOHN'S SOUL - DAY

A bright light exists in the center of John's brain. The light begins to move forward, slowly at first, then tears away. Memories of John and Karen flash by too fast to recognize. The light accelerates and exits the brain. It rushes toward the box. Indistinguishable voices fill the air, along with ideas. An hourglass-shaped object grows. Half is white, the other half blue. Seven children line up, Rachel, Jeff, Jenny, Andre, TERRANCE and TORRIE Jones, black, age 5, and LING Xiu, Chinese, age 5, all smiling. The light enters the box and it snaps shut.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

The box flashes red on the desk beside John's head. The time on the computer screen counts down to zero. The box beeps and opens. John's body twitches. He suddenly lifts his head, drawing a tremendous breath. He nearly falls back. He breathes hard for a moment, his eyes and mouth wide open.

JOHN

I'm alive!

John looks around the room.

JOHN

A camera! I need a video camera!

John tears around the office, opening drawers, boxes and closets.

JOHN

Camera, camera, camera...

John finds a video camera in a closet.

JOHN

Camera!

John flips it open, and starts to record. He heads for his desk, out of breath. He looks directly into the camera lens at close range.

JOHN

I have just experienced the most incredible thing ever! I need to get this on video before I forget. I - my soul left my body and went into my machine. Oh my God. No. That's not quite how it felt. (eyes widen) My soul was ripped from my body. The blinding pain of it leaving my body was unbearable. Then it stopped and I saw my own memories flash by too fast to recognize.

John raises his hands to his head.

JOHN

And once I left my head I felt a rush of, well, knowledge. Ideas came into my head. I saw schematics. I saw...

John's eyes widen. He lets go of his head.

JOHN

I saw something called a Nanosoul. An artificial soul. I saw schematics first, then how to make it, right in this office. I saw programming, such complex code. I - I saw children whose bodies contained Nanosouls. I - I put them there.

John covers his ears.

JOHN

Oh it's like my head is on fire
with ideas and they won't stop
coming!

John gets up and runs around the room. He gasps and holds his chest.

JOHN

Angina! I - I need to calm down.

John reaches for a pill bottle, opens it and takes out a small pill. He pops it into his mouth.

JOHN

Ah, Nitro. That'll do it.

John sits at his desk, panting.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John tosses and turns in bed. He covers his head with a pillow, then tosses it aside. John looks at the clock on the nightstand. It reads 4:30am.

JOHN

(agitated) Ah! My head is still
on fire!

John goes to the dresser and uses a pen and paper to write down some of the ideas burning in his head. He takes a deep breath and goes into the bathroom.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

John draws a cold bath. He steps gingerly into the water and gasps. He eases down and then lays his head until the back of his head is submerged. Steam rises from the water.

JOHN

Oh, that's it.

INT. JOHN'S SOUL - NIGHT

John's flaming bright soul leaps from his body, out the bathroom door and through the bedroom window. The dark city is silhouetted against the star-lit sky. John's soul soars around the city of Chicago, then heads for Lake Michigan. His soul dives into the water, leaving a vapor trail and a spray of steam as it enters.

EXT. JOHN'S SOUL - DAY

Daylight hits Lake Michigan as John's soul comes out of the water, less bright. It heads directly for the city and his apartment building, then into his bedroom window. It freezes in the bathroom, as it sees Karen trying to give John's body CPR. Karen is in tears. Sirens can be heard. John's soul rushes back into his body. A giant electrical shock pulses through John's entire body. His body glows red.

INT. JOHN'S BATHROOM - DAY

John draws a tremendous breath and sits up. He bumps heads with Karen, knocking her back. She throws herself into John's arms.

KAREN

(in tears) Oh my God! I thought you were dead! You weren't breathing!

John embraces Karen then kisses her several times.

JOHN

I'm okay! Better than okay! What are you doing here?

KAREN

You never picked me up at the hospital or answered your phone! I took a taxi and I was going to chew you out but good! But I saw you in the bathtub. (sobs) I called 911 and pulled you out! The paramedics will be here in a minute.

John starts to get up.

KAREN

What are you doing? Stay still 'til they get here!

JOHN

I don't want them to see me undressed.

KAREN

Oh don't be silly. They're used to it!

A knock is heard.

KAREN

They're here. Don't you move,
mister!

INT. ER CUBICLE - DAY

This room is an offshoot of the emergency room. John is in a bed, attached to an EKG machine. John's Cardiologist is reading the paper coming from the machine. He looks at John with suspicious eyes.

CARDIOLOGIST

You say you had an out of body
experience - the second one you've
had recently - and when you came
back into your body, you felt
something akin to a shock.

John nods.

CARDIOLOGIST

Well, I can't explain it, but your
EKG is absolutely normal. There's
not even a sign that your heart
stopped. If I hadn't opened you
for your triple bypass, I'd swear
that your heart was as strong as a
30 year old.

JOHN

(smiles) Guess a little
electricity is good for me.

CARDIOLOGIST

(Not amused) I can't find a reason
to hold you, but if you want to
follow my advice, don't ever do
that again. Your wife could have
had a heart attack trying to save
you. Lord only knows why she loves
you. Now go on, get the hell out
of here.

The cardiologist tosses the paper at John, then leaves.
Karen comes in as John sits up. John gives her a thumb's up.

JOHN

I have an idea for the next book.

KAREN

Yeah, hire a ghostwriter for it.

JOHN
(laughs) Funny you should mention
ghosts. Because the topic is
souls.

Karen frowns.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

The door opens and Karen and John come in. Both move a bit gingerly. Karen flops down on the couch. John goes directly to the bedroom.

KAREN
What are you doing?

JOHN
(from the bedroom) Just cleaning
up a bit. I'll be in my office for
a minute.

KAREN
You're working after just getting
back from the hospital?

John comes out of the bedroom carrying a box. He goes to his office door and unlocks it.

JOHN
Just to tidy up. I was a pig while
you were gone.

KAREN
How's that different from normal?

JOHN
(from his office) Ha ha!

The door closes.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

John comes in and begins stuffing all the notes he made the previous day into the box. He takes the soul catcher from where he left it on the desk and puts it in the box. He goes to the wall safe, opens it and puts the box in the safe.

KAREN
(from the living room) I could use
a little company!

John closes the safe.

JOHN

(loud) I know. I want to talk to you too!

KAREN

(from the living room) You do? That will be a first.

John goes out the door.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

John comes out of the office and sits next to Karen. He hugs her gently and nibbles on her ear.

KAREN

(giggles) Both our doctors said no cuddling.

JOHN

Something for the future, then. Speaking of which, I want to talk to you about our future.

KAREN

Oh?

JOHN

Yes. I've been thinking of investments, so you'd be well cared for when I go.

KAREN

John, I'm not some old biddy. I can take care of myself. Even when (beat) you know.

JOHN

I know. But, well, someday I hope we'll have another child, a true blessing, and I want him or her to have a steady home. So I want to buy this apartment building.

KAREN

Yeah. I'll just get the checkbook out and write a check for a hundred million or so. (sighs) Even with the royalties from the electronics book, we're barely breaking a million. (wrinkles her nose) Did I just say that? Why don't we sell this apartment and buy a nice big house?

JOHN

Because I want to give back. I want to bring couples here and let them have children. I want to teach them and teach them well.

KAREN

Well, that's all fine and dandy, but I won't let you go into debt to fund your own private utopia.

JOHN

As well you shouldn't. But between book sales and other ventures I plan to start, I don't think money will be a problem - ever!

KAREN

You know, most men your age and health are thinking about retiring.

JOHN

I tried that. I feel great. As soon as you heal up you'll feel how great!

They burst into a fit of giggling.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John and Karen are spooning. John has his arms around Karen's waist. Karen sleeps.

INT. JOHN'S SOUL -NIGHT

John's soul leaves his body and enters Karen's head. Karen's memories stream by, including a brief scene with her professor, her argument with her dad and finding out about her family's death. John's soul breaks into an open area and sees a bright light. As it draws near, the light takes the shape of a female angel. The angel opens her arms wide and the two lights embrace.

John's soul begins to find its way back into his head.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John wakes, and nuzzles Karen's neck gently.

JOHN

(whispers) I love you.

ACT TWO

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The classroom is bare, except for several rows of adult chairs. 15 couples fill the chairs. A table and podium sit in front of the chairs. The table has a stack of information packets on it. The couples are all young.

John and Karen come in. Karen is 4 months pregnant. They stand side by side at the podium.

JOHN

(animated) Welcome! I'm so glad you could all make it! I'm John Smith and this (puts arm around Karen) is my lovely wife Karen. We've talked to all of you on the phone, but I know you have questions about the program. So let's get started!

John picks up a tablet computer from the table and taps a few buttons. The lights dim and a light comes from an overhead projector. It shows an image on the wall: 'America: 17th in the World in Education.

JOHN

I know you can all read English, and though some of you aren't from America, you should be concerned about that number on the wall. I'm not here to complain about the state of American education, I'm here to change it! I know, none of you have children yet. Yet I also know you're all in love and someday, those children will come. You've all been selected because of your intelligence, your youth and your flexibility. All of you can speak multiple languages, something I'm still struggling with, just ask my wife! (laughter) And all of you have multiple skills. We have a computer engineer here, an architect, a software developer, a nurse, a doctor, a writer, a graphic artist, a business analyst, a nuclear engineer and other fields. Skills that today's kids need to learn in order to make it.

John looks out over the couples, smiling.

JOHN

This is a pilot program, starting with 15 couples. I want you to make your children in your own image. I want them to follow in your footsteps. But can you trust public schools to train your children? No. Private schools are better, but they're expensive. I know you're all fresh from college, freshly in debt. I want to help. I want to provide you with jobs. I want to provide you with furnished luxury apartments right here in this building, with all the food you and your family need. I want to provide the best health care. I want to pay off all your debts and provide all these services for free, just like I did for my wife.

Karen smiles. The crowd gets excited.

JOHN

Lastly, I want to educate your children, personally, then send them off to college at Harvard, or wherever they want to go, tuition and books, room and board paid for by me!

Several people gasp.

JOHN

Now I don't do this completely from the bottom of my heart. I expect all of you to work hard for me in your chosen field. I expect all of you to spend time not only with your own children, but with other children in the program too. So everyone gets to teach once a month.

John looks out at a sea of smiling faces.

JOHN

And now, it's time for the other shoe to drop, because some of you aren't going to like the last part of my speech. For me to provide as much as I'm offering, I need control over your reproductive cycle. (murmurs) I want to select

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

the best eggs, the best sperm you have to offer to make the best children you can. I plan to use in vitro fertilization to implant the perfect embryo at the perfect time. I want to control when you have your babies so that you and they will be the healthiest they can be. And they will be your babies. The rest is up to you.

The room erupts in talk. John nods to Karen, who begins to pass out the information packets.

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

This office is part of the larger penthouse suite of the apartment building. It has a different view of the skyline, a fancier desk and a state-of-the-art computer system that includes 3 screens side by side, like a cockpit.

John sits at his desk, typing. Karen comes in and closes the door.

KAREN

We lost 9 couples.

JOHN

Not surprising.

KAREN

The whole reproductive cycle thing.

JOHN

They want everything for free, but not to pay the piper.

KAREN

Is that really necessary? We didn't use in vitro.

John looks at Karen and smiles.

JOHN

No, but our children won't be officially part of the program. Oh yeah, I'll teach them, but it's a given that we'll pay for their room, board and education.

KAREN
(sighs) All right. The first couple are outside. Mark and Cindy Wilson.

JOHN
Show them in.

Karen goes to the door and opens it. MARK and CINDY Wilson, each 23, stand at the door.

KAREN
Come in! We're ready for you.

They come into the office and sit in two chairs facing the desk. Karen sits next to John. John smiles at them.

JOHN
Thanks for staying. I know there has been some contention about my terms.

CINDY
Well, yes. We talked about it. Mark and I, (takes Mark's hand) we had a lawyer look at the contract and tell us outright not to sign it. We do have some questions.

JOHN
Certainly.

MARK
Why did you choose us?

JOHN
Oh, a number of reasons. First, we started with test scores. My wife is excellent at picking out patterns with numbers, and she saw some really good signs coming out of both of yours. Then we looked at the skills you would bring, not only to the company, but to the children you will eventually produce. We feel those children will be exceptional.

MARK
And what are we? Chopped liver?

JOHN

No sir. You will find a position at our genetic research lab to be very challenging, but not beyond your talents. (turns to Cindy) We have a vast medical department that could use a most excellent nurse. You might even work side-by-side with your husband, Mrs. Wilson. But the whole purpose of the program is to take children from birth, put them in a nurturing and educational environment and watch them grow into world citizens who can make a real difference to their generation.

MARK

And for that opportunity you're willing to pay all our debts? To pay for a swanky apartment, and for fine food? To pay for a Harvard education for our children?

JOHN

Two years ago I started Smith Enterprises with a million dollars of my own money and ideas popping out of my head. Today the company is worth two billion. Money is not an issue for me, Mr. Wilson. The future is. We need to reclaim it for all our children.

Cindy looks at Mark.

CINDY

I do have one last question, Mr. Smith. What happens if, during this (beat) experiment, we change our minds?

JOHN

Well, I'm not holding your or your children hostage, Mrs. Wilson. You can leave any time you want, but you would have to repay everything I've paid to bring you here. I think that's only fair. I wouldn't even charge you interest.

Cindy looks at Mark again.

CINDY

I have to say that I'm not happy about being told when I can and I can't have a baby, but well, you can't beat the perks in this economy.

JOHN

When did you plan to have a baby?

CINDY

(blushes) Well, as soon as possible after we find jobs. I want to have as many children as I can!

JOHN

(smiles, satisfied) I may be able to accommodate you.

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - NIGHT

John stands in front of the window of his office, staring at the skyline. He pulls the video camera out of the closet and points it at his desk. He turns it on and starts recording. He sits at his desk.

JOHN

We have our first (beat) participants. I'll finally get a chance to use...

John unlocks the drawer to the desk and pulls out a tray. It has 100 slots in it, each with a blinking red light.

JOHN

These. Nanosouls. The vision was so vivid and stuck in my memory long enough for me to design these. Each slot has a nanosoul, ready to be programmed. Oh, whoever wrote the programming was very thorough. I can program personality traits, even sexuality, though that I'll leave neutral at first. But I have no idea what each trait does, so I'll be experimenting with them, probably starting small. I'll leave the experimenting to the first child, to see how well it works. I think the Wilson's will have a girl, a playmate for my own daughter.

John closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

JOHN

I gave serious thought to implanting my own children with nanosouls. (sighs) In the end, I can't do that to my own children. I've had a lot of second thoughts about what I'm doing. But I think I can do so much for the world with these children I'm creating. I actually think I can enter their bodies, like I did with Karen, and if I can get the nanosoul to move, I may even put my own soul into a new body. Just like that pool boy, Karen suggested. That would be the best miracle of all, to be able to keep living. (smiles, excited) That would make it all worth while!

INT. CLINIC EXAM ROOM - DAY

[Super 5 months later.] The clinic is on the 20th floor of the apartment building, as a service to the families in the program. The exam room is simple, an exam table and cabinet for supplies. Cindy Wilson sits on the table with a gown on. A Physician Assistant (PA) listens to her heart and to the baby's heart.

PA

Sounds strong. All over.

The PA smiles at Cindy. They hear a knock on the door. The PA opens the door. John stands in the doorway. He smiles. He is wearing a stethoscope.

JOHN

May I have a word with Mrs Wilson?

The PA looks at Cindy, who nods. The PA leaves. John comes in and closes the door.

JOHN

Thank you. I wanted to see how you're doing.

CINDY

Thanks. I'm okay. A touch of morning sickness, nothing too annoying.

JOHN

That's good! (fingers stethoscope)
May I listen to the baby?

Cindy appears uncomfortable.

CINDY

I don't know.

JOHN

Just for a few seconds. I borrowed this (raises stethoscope) from one of the PA's here. I just want to hear our first prodigy.

Cindy smiles and nods. John puts the stethoscope on her belly. He looks at Cindy while pressing a button on the stethoscope.

JOHN

Strong! She'll be a fine addition when our classroom opens.

John takes the stethoscope off Cindy's belly and squeezes Cindy's arm.

JOHN

And a friend to Marie.

CINDY

I'm sure she will.

JOHN

Thank you for that opportunity. If you need anything, don't hesitate to ask.

CINDY

I feel like a celebrity as it is!
I'm fine!

John smiles and shakes her hand. He leaves.

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

John sits in front of the video camera, already recording.

JOHN

I placed the nanosoul into Cindy's fetus. (sighs) The extractor was designed to hold a soul and to be able to release the soul to go back into the body.

John holds the stethoscope up. It has a light blinking red.

JOHN

The blinking light means a soul is in it, but it's not the nanosoul. This is a real, live soul. I've stolen it from the body it had

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)
claimed already. I came too late
in the process. I've effectively
killed someone's soul.

John presses the button on the stethoscope. The red light
stops flashing.

JOHN
I hope it finds a new body, just
not one of mine. (pause) I'm not
happy about this. Obviously I need
to do research on the subject.
(sighs) I can't tell Karen, she'd
make me stop. It's too late for
that. I'm not worried about
wasting money, or about going to
prison. I'm, well, call me
selfish, but I want a new body. I
need time for this baby to be born
and mature. There are 3 other
babies in production. (snorts)
That sounds like I'm running a
baby factory. But I'm going to try
to release nanosouls into those
bodies and see what happens. I
mean, for a soul to enter a brain,
doesn't there have to be a brain?
These fetuses don't have that
much. Well, time to experiment.

INT. WILSON APARTMENT - DAY

[Super: 5 months later] The sound of a baby crying permeates
the apartment. Cindy, eyes red, tries to feed Baby Rachel.
Rachel takes a couple of gulps, then cries again. A knock is
heard. Mark Wilson comes out of the bedroom, hair
disheveled. He opens the door. John stands at the threshold,
smiling.

JOHN
I'm sorry if I'm interrupting.
I've heard from several tenants
about Rachel's crying.

MARK
I'm sorry, Mr. Smith. She just
won't stop.

JOHN
I understand. Have you taken her
to a doctor?

MARK

Of course. They can't find anything wrong.

JOHN

May I come in? I've found I have a knack for calming Marie's crying.

Mark looks at Cindy. She looks hard at John, but nods. John comes in and approaches Cindy, who covers up her breast. John touches Rachel's head.

INT. JOHN'S SOUL - DAY

John's soul leaves his body and enters Rachel's head. Rachel's brain is underdeveloped, but is pulsing madly. John's soul approaches the nanosoul, a blue and white hourglass. Power emanates from it. John's soul returns to his own body.

INT. WILSON APARTMENT - DAY

John blinks, then takes a deep breath. Rachel is still crying. John reaches into his pocket. Rachel suddenly stops crying, but breathes heavily. Her eyes go unfocused. John turns to Mark.

JOHN

I'll be right back. I want to try a colic medicine.

CINDY

We've already tried them all!

JOHN

Not this one. We make it. Keep her warm until I get back.

John rushes out the door. The Wilsons look perplexed.

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

John rushes into the office and locks the door. John pulls a small box from his pocket. It blinks red.

JOHN

I'm sorry, Rachel. I tried to put too much into your tiny brain.

John unlocks his drawer and pulls out the programming array. Several slots are not blinking. He plugs the array into his computer and a program runs. He presses the button on the box and it stops blinking. The first slot in the array starts to blink. The computer screen shows a number of personality traits, most of which are checked off. John unchecks most of the other traits that are checked off.

JOHN

No fine motor control, no
cognitive thinking, no
communications, no, no, no. Just
let her breathe, feed her, poop
and pee her and let her flail her
arms and legs. And no crying!

John saves the configuration. The light on the slot blinks green, then flashes red. John presses the button on the box again and the slot stops blinking. The box begins to blink. John grabs a bottle from the desk and bolts out the door.

INT. WILSON APARTMENT - DAY

John approaches Cindy, out of breath. He smiles at Cindy.

JOHN

Give her this.

John hands the bottle to Cindy, while pressing the button on the box in his pocket. Cindy looks at the bottle.

CINDY

This is just Children's Tylenol.
She doesn't need this.

JOHN

You're right. I'm sorry. I'm just
so worried about her. She's the
first of the program!

Rachel starts to move and her breathing comes under control. Her arms and legs flail slightly. Cindy looks down at her, then at John.

CINDY

What did you do?

JOHN

Me? Nothing. But I think you'd
better feed her. I'll leave you
two alone.

John smiles at both of them and then leaves hurriedly.

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

John sits in front of the camera.

JOHN

Six months have passed since
Rachel's birth, and the correction
of my mistake. I corrected the
programming of the other souls
(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

before the babies were born, and the subsequent programs. All of the initial six families either have a baby or are in the process of having one. After the disaster with Rachel, I have decided to err on the side of caution, and as such, poor Rachel is falling behind the curve of baby development. That will change today I hope. I'm going to try to enter her body with my soul. Her nanosoul has now been programmed to leave her body when my soul enters her, then go into my own body. I don't want any body to be without a soul for long, or what happened to me in the bathroom will be repeated. I'm trying to learn from my mistakes. My body can live without much of a personality for the time it takes for me to examine Rachel's mind to see where it stands. I'm also working on programming the souls remotely, but I'm not there yet. Cindy and the other parents are not happy with my interference. Well, tough. I pay the bills. But I don't want them to get so upset that they leave. So I'll cooperate by not showing up as often. I have a new nanosoul programmed for Rachel, to correspond to her older body and the growth she will experience for the next 6 months. When I'm done there, I'll report back here.

INT. WILSON APARTMENT - DAY

Rachel sits on the floor facing John, who kneels before her. Her eyes are open but unfocused. She flails her arms at set intervals. Cindy sits nearby, her arms crossed. John touches Rachel's face. Rachel looks up at him.

INT. JOHN'S SOUL - DAY

John's soul flies out of his body and into Rachel's head. The nanosoul flies past him, on its way to his head. John's soul settles in.

INT. WILSON APARTMENT - DAY

Rachel gives a squawk, then looks around. Cindy stands and kneels down. Rachel looks at Cindy and smiles, then giggles.

CINDY
She's smiling! That's the first
time!

Cindy picks up Rachel and hugs her. She brings Rachel's face close to her own. Rachel reaches out and touches Cindy's face.

CINDY
She knows me! Finally! Yes! That's
mommy!

Rachel turns to John and reaches out. Cindy holds her tight. Rachel starts to cry and reaches out to John. Cindy looks at John.

CINDY
What's she want with you?

John stares blankly ahead. Cindy snaps her fingers at John.

CINDY
Hello? Anyone home?

John moves his head and stares blankly at Cindy. Rachel cries and reaches out for John. Cindy gives an exasperated grunt and puts Rachel on the ground in front of John. Rachel starts to crawl to John and takes his hand.

INT. JOHN'S SOUL - DAY

John's soul leaves Rachel's body, passing Rachel's nanosoul on the way back to his own body.

INT. WILSON APARTMENT - DAY

John blinks, then smiles at Rachel. Rachel sits back and stares ahead blankly. John reaches into his pocket and presses a button. Rachel blinks, then her eyes light up. She moves around and starts to crawl away from Cindy.

CINDY
Whoa, missy! What's got into you?

Cindy picks up Rachel and hugs her. The look in Rachel's eyes is less blank, staring at Cindy.

JOHN

I think you'll find that she needs to be changed.

Cindy glares at John.

CINDY

Funny that. She hasn't cried much since those first few days and we have to rely on our sense of smell to tell when she needs to be changed.

JOHN

You might find that she'll be more (beat) communicative of her needs. Marie is the same way. She's definitely got a mind of her own. (chuckles)

Cindy looks hard at John.

CINDY

Anything else, boss?

JOHN

(smiles) No.

John gets up slowly, brushes Rachel's hair and nods to Cindy.

JOHN

Karen wanted to set up a play date between Rachel and Marie. Call her when you get a chance.

Cindy nods. John leaves. Cindy looks at Rachel.

CINDY

Well looks like you made some strides today!

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

John sits in front of the camera.

JOHN

My soul has entered another body for the first time. It was an incredible experience. I had control of another body. Limited control. But I could still remember who I was, John Smith, 59 years old, CEO of Smith Enterprises, all that. I could
(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

understand what Cindy was saying, but I couldn't get my body to talk. That will come in time. But I could access Rachel's memories, though her eyes seemed to be unfocused. I've corrected her programming, and the others as well. I had limited control over her arms and legs. But I think they need strengthening. I've added a crawling subroutine to her motor skills.

John leans back, smiling.

JOHN

But just to be in a young body, to not have the aches and pains, and cares and worries of (points to self) this body. It was amazing. I'm looking forward to doing it again, but I get the distinct impression that Cindy won't let me near her again, so I'll have to find another way to get to Rachel, probably when she's playing with Marie. I'd stay in that body all the time, except that Karen and Marie still need John, and I don't like Cindy. Plus the contracts would end with my death. I think this is the only reason why some of them don't leave. (smiles) They're waiting for me to die, knowing I can't live forever. Perhaps they're wrong.

INT. NEW SMITH LIVING ROOM - DAY

The remains of a birthday party litter the floor. BABY RACHEL wears a birthday hat with a big '1' on it. Several babies are on the floor. Parents sit on the couches. John sits next to Karen. John has a vacant stare, almost asleep. Cindy and Mark sit opposite them.

KAREN

Hard to believe it's been a year already, eh, Cindy?

CINDY

It's certainly been a weird year. Rachel's development has been so (beat)odd.

KAREN

Well, she seems to have settled down. Marie loves to play with her.

Cindy looks at John.

CINDY

Are we boring him?

Karen nudges John.

KAREN

Hey, wakie, wakie.

John's eyes flutter open. He smiles at Karen, then closes his eyes.

KAREN

He's been working so hard. I keep telling him to slow down. Guess it finally took. Let him sleep.

Baby Rachel watches Karen, gets up and walks over to her. She crawls into Karen's lap and hugs her.

BABY RACHEL

Love, love, love.

Karen laughs.

KAREN

Affectionate little thing.

CINDY

(suspicious) Not always, but sometimes.

Baby Rachel lets go of Karen and climbs down. While the adults talk, she walks behind the couch to John's office. She looks around at the guests, then reaches up to a panel on the wall. She presses her hand to the panel and the door opens. Baby Rachel looks back at the guests, then slips into the door.

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

A video camera is facing the desk. Baby Rachel closes the door softly, walks to the camera and turns it on. She presses the record button. She steps in front of the camera and smiles.

BABY RACHEL

Hi. My name is Rachel Wilson, and today is my first birthday. But at the moment, John Smith's soul is in my body. I wanted to show how well I can really talk while John's soul is in it. I can't stay long or mom'll get upset, and I have to pee. I hate using diapers! I don't want to freak her out too soon! Oh, and I can read! So this really works! Bye bye.

Baby Rachel waves at the camera and turns it off. She goes to the door, listens, then opens the door. She walks out, closing the door behind her. A voice is heard coming from the living room.

CINDY

There you are!

INT. CLINIC LOBBY - DAY

[Super: Six Months Later]

The lobby is a waiting area for patients for the clinic within Smith Towers. Cindy sits behind a counter. The lobby is quiet. The elevator dings and the door opens. John comes out of the elevator and sees Cindy. He smiles and approaches her.

JOHN

Hi. May I have a word with you?

Cindy frowns, but nods.

CINDY

This isn't about Rachel running naked through the hallway is it? She can be slippery at times.

John laughs.

JOHN

No. I thought that was adorable. It's a shame Mrs. Adams chose that moment to come out of the elevator. But she'll survive. (Beat) No, in fact, I'd like to discuss an addition to the family. Do you feel up to having another child?

Cindy's jaw drops.

CINDY

Um, well...

JOHN

Give it some thought. Rachel has worked out so well that I'd like to try it again. Talk to Mark about it. Let me know when you're ready, okay?

John smiles, touches Cindy's hand and heads back to the elevator.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The classroom has a semi-circle of small chairs and one large chair, sitting in front of a video camera. Seven children sit in the small chairs. One adult sits in the large seat. From left to right: John; Rachel, age 5, long, curly, raven hair, pale skin, bright gray eyes; Andre Lucas, age 5, Hispanic; Ling, age 5, Chinese female; TERRANCE Jones, black male, 4 and TORRIE Jones, black female, 4 , twins; Jeff, 4, White, brown hair; Jenny, 4, red hair, green eyes; BONNIE Wilson, age 3, brown hair. They all sit, staring straight ahead, unmoving, smiling.

JOHN

Jenny, could you start recording, please?

Jenny gets up and stands behind the camera. She presses the record button and sits down.

JOHN

Thank you. Welcome to the Smith Academy for Excellence. My name is John Smith, and I am the teacher of these gifted children. We all have a story to tell, including me. I'll let the children introduce themselves quickly, and tell a little about themselves. Jenny, can you take the camera?

Jenny gets up and walks behind the camera. She zooms in on Rachel.

RACHEL

(smiles, mechanical) Hello. My name is Rachel Wilson. I am 5 and a half years old. I want to be a doctor someday.

Jenny zooms in on Andre.

ANDRE

(smiles, mechanical) Hello. My name is Andre Lucas. I am 5 years old I like to play soccer and build computers.

Jenny zooms to Ling.

LING

(smiles, mechanical) Hello, my name is Ling Xiu. I am 5 years old, I like math and I hope to teach someday.

Jenny zooms to Terrance.

TERRANCE

(smiles, mechanical) Hello. My name is Terrance Jones. I am 4 years old. I like sports and playing musical instruments.

Jenny zooms to Torrie.

TORRIE

(smiles, mechanical) Hello. My name is Torrie Jones, sister to Terrance. I am 4 years old. I like singing and writing poetry. I'm learning how to write songs.

Jenny zooms to Jeff.

JEFF

(smiles, mechanical) Hello. My name is Jeff Peterson. I am 4 years old. I like to write stories.

Jenny zooms to Bonnie.

BONNIE

(smiles, mechanical) Hello. My name is Bonnie Wilson. I am Rachel's sister. I am 3 years old. I don't know my specialty yet.

Jenny moves the camera to her empty seat and sits in her chair.

JENNY

(smiles, mechanical) Hello. My name is Jenny McCallum. I am 4 years old. I like to learn about science, especially physics.

Jenny gets up and goes behind the camera. She pulls the view wide.

JOHN

Thank you, Jenny. Now if you think these kids are a little wooden, you'd be just about right. Not exactly 'Excellence' is it? Well watch this.

Jenny zooms in on John and Rachel. John puts his hand on Rachel's face. They both blink at the same time. Rachel turns to the camera. She becomes more animated, smiles.

RACHEL

What you just witnessed was John's soul passing into my body, and my artificial soul moving into his.

Rachel grimaces. She looks at the other kids.

RACHEL

Who else here needs to use the bathroom?

Rachel raises her hand. The other children raise their hands in unison. John remains still. Rachel giggles, then faces the camera.

RACHEL

Sorry about that. They all know this is important to me, so they won't come out and say they have to pee! Why don't we take a bathroom break and meet back here!

The other children get up and begin to march in unison out of the door. Rachel follows them with her eyes, then shakes her head. She turns to the camera and shuts it off. Rachel turns to John.

RACHEL

I know you don't have to go. Wait here until I get back!

JOHN

(nods, robotic) I will wait.

Rachel runs out of the room.

INT. RACHEL'S APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is luxurious, comfortable and filled with high tech entertainment systems. CINDY Wilson, 28, cleans the refrigerator. She has raven hair like Rachel's. She is 3 months pregnant, barely showing. The door to the outside opens and Rachel comes running in as Bonnie comes walking out. They smile at one another.

RACHEL
(yelling) Bathroom!

Rachel runs past her mother and heads to the bathroom off camera. Cindy sighs and continues her work. A minute later Rachel comes out to the sound of a flushing toilet.

CINDY
Did you wash your hands?

Rachel stops, turns around and heads back to the bathroom. The sound of running water fills the air.

CINDY
Where have you two been all morning?

RACHEL
(offscreen, yelling) With Mr. Smith! We're making a video!

The water stops and Rachel comes out shaking her hands.

CINDY
On a Saturday? (suspicious) What kind of video?

RACHEL
Just me and Bonnie and the other kids in the class. He wants to make one a year to show how we change.

CINDY
(relieved) Oh, thank God!

Rachel starts to run out.

CINDY
Hey!

Rachel stops and looks at Cindy.

CINDY
You'd tell me if Mr. Smith did
(beat) something to you and the
other kids, right?

Rachel looks puzzled.

RACHEL
Like what?

CINDY
Like asks you to undress, or touch
your private parts?

RACHEL
(scowls) Don't be disgusting! He'd
never do that. Seriously, you
should be ashamed of yourself!

Cindy is taken aback.

CINDY
You're acting snooty today. Excuse
me for looking after your well
being. I (beat) don't like that
man, trying to tell me when I can
and can't have a child.

Rachel looks down at Cindy's belly.

RACHEL
How long until you have the baby?

CINDY
Oh not for another 5 or 6 months,
dear.

RACHEL
(under her breath) I didn't
realize it was that far along.

CINDY
What?

RACHEL
Oh nothing. You don't need to
worry about Mr. Smith, mom. He
lets us stay here for free, after
all! I'm learning a lot from him.
I gotta get back to the video! See
'ya later!

Rachel scampers out the room. Cindy leans up against the
wall.

CINDY
(yells) Is he teaching you to act strange? Because you're doing such a good job!

Cindy sighs, then stands.

CINDY
That did it. We have to find a way out of this contract, before (pauses) before I lose both of them altogether.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The other children have returned to their seats. John sits in his, impassive. Rachel comes bounding in, turns the camera on and starts recording. She sits next to John.

RACHEL
(to John) By the way, Rachel, your mother is far enough along for you to implant your brother's Nanosoul. Stop by my office when we're done here and I'll give you the box.

JOHN
(mechanical) Yes, Mistress.

Rachel giggles and turns to the camera.

RACHEL
Isn't that cute? Oh, let me explain. (looks inward) When I'm in John's body - my regular body, they sometimes refer to me as 'master'. But when I'm in a female body, they call me 'Mistress.' The whole concept is silly, something I programmed in the early days, forgot about, and have been trying to get rid of ever since.

Rachel sighs and takes John's hand.

RACHEL
Obviously I need to better explain why we're here and what we're doing. If you're watching this for the first time, you probably think they're all brainwashed or something like that. But how do you wash a brain that has no soul?

Rachel shrugs, then gets up and starts to pace around the

room.

RACHEL

I think better when I pace, something I used to do in John's body all the time. But, (passes behind John, points to him) he's not well. That's one reason why I'm doing this, to have a young body to move to when this body dies. But there's more to it than that, so let's start at the beginning.

Rachel puts her hands on John's shoulders.

RACHEL

I - John - am a workaholic. I worked so hard in this body that it's plain exhausted. He's dying, in fact. But I have so much that is left undone. I need more time. So this (spreads arms) is my answer. I can be in any of these bodies when I want. I do it to escape the pain; to broaden (points to head) my mind; to feel (twirls) energetic; to start over.

Rachel begins pacing again.

RACHEL

I've done some research into what happened to John's body when his soul reentered it. His soul was so super-powered from being captured by the Soul Catcher, that it re-energized his body. Every organ gained a few years of operation over what it had before. Unfortunately, this energizing process is starting to wind down, and John's body is going back to it's regenerative state. But now you know what has been driving John all this time.

Rachel stops beside Bonnie.

RACHEL

This is my sister! She's got a brain that's just as smart as mine, but I haven't made a determination on what she'll be best at. She's not the only

(MORE)

RACHEL (CONT'D)
sibling. Every family has at least two children by now, but most of them are too young to meet me here today. We even added an Indian couple to the mix. They're all intelligent, but I still haven't got the personality program right. They're still a little bit stiff when I'm not in their bodies. So let's call it a day and I'm going into John's body.

Rachel goes to John.

RACHEL
How do you feel?

JOHN
(smiles, mechanical) This body is worn out by the day's activities.

RACHEL
I'm sorry, we shouldn't have stayed so long at the park. But I need to be inside him for the remainder of the day and night.

Rachel touches John's face. They blink at the same time. John's face becomes more animated.

JOHN
Thank you, Rachel. Come by my office after dinner and I'll give you your assignment.

RACHEL
(smiles, mechanical) Yes, master.

JOHN
(irritated) Knock it off. Call me John.

RACHEL
Yes, John.

JOHN
(sighs) All right. Boys, let's get the tables back out. Girls reset the chairs. I'll be in my office if you need anything.

The children rise. The boys work together to set up tables that have been folded up. The girls work with the chairs.

JOHN

Goddamn robots. Well I'll fix that.

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

John works at his workbench. A camera is poised to look down at his work.

JOHN

One of the biggest problems I've had with this whole nanosoul program is that the idea, the schematics and the programming all came to me in a vision. Like a dummy, I didn't question the source of the vision. Was it God? Was it the devil? Something else that had evil in mind? I just don't know. I can't change what happened but I've been working on producing a new nanosoul that I've built from the ground up.

John opens a new programming array, exposing a thousand slots.

JOHN

With this soul I'll be better able to control personality and even have them better able to mimic my personality when the nanosoul is in my body. And they won't be doing any synchronized walking like they did before. They will be individuals. I'm trying to get them to use their own talents. I've been in each body for short times, but the only one I've spent real time with is Rachel. I think that will change. But with this new soul, they'll still obey my commands, but when I'm not there they'll be able to take charge. Plus they'll be able to communicate with each other and my computer system, so I won't have to have them come here to accept new programming. Each soul is personalized for each child.

John puts his head in his hands. A knock is heard. John raises his head.

JOHN
Come in, Rachel.

The door opens and Rachel comes in. John turns to her and smiles. He motions for her to come to him. She smiles and walks to him. He hugs her.

JOHN
Do you feel love, Rachel? I know I
do when I'm in your body. I should
just take your body and let John
die.

RACHEL
My body has always been yours,
master.

John sighs and lets go of Rachel.

JOHN
That's creepy. No. I have to play
this through. I'm replacing your
soul with a new one. A better one,
I think. As always you get the
prototype. If it works, the others
get theirs.

John smiles at Rachel.

JOHN
Is that all right with you,
Rachel?

Rachel smiles vacuously at John and nods. John loads a soul into the soul catcher, closes his eyes and hits the button. Rachel's eyes go blank, then come back to life. John opens his eyes.

JOHN
How do you feel, Rachel?

Rachel smiles broadly and hugs John.

RACHEL
I - I feel different. Alive.

JOHN
I see the life in your eyes. I
think this is going to work.

John loads another soul into the soul catcher.

JOHN

This is your brother's soul. I want you to sleep with your mother tonight. Show off that sparkling new personality. Press this against her belly and press the button. Don't let them see you.

John hands the soul catcher to Rachel, who puts it under her shirt.

RACHEL

(animated) Okay!

John pats Rachel on the head.

JOHN

Go play with Marie.

Rachel skips out the door. John smiles after her.

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

John sits at his desk. A knock is heard.

JOHN

Come in.

The door opens and Jenny comes in.

JOHN

Hi Jenny. What can I do for you?

Jenny comes to John and stands next to him.

JENNY

John, you told us to report anything unusual with our new souls.

John puts his hand on Jenny's face.

JOHN

So I did. What's wrong?

Jenny looks at John with questioning eyes. She takes his hand.

JENNY

I have (beat) seen visions. I do not understand them.

JOHN

Visions? Like dreams?

Jenny nods.

JENNY

They are like dreams, about us.
But they feel so real. I sometimes
get them when I sleep and
sometimes when I sit and think. I
could not interpret them before
the new soul.

JOHN

Let me see.

They both blink. Jenny looks at John, then climbs into his
lap. She hugs him.

JENNY

Wow. I never realized that you had
this gift, Jenny. I haven't spent
enough time in your body. I
apologize for that. Yes, I can see
those dreams now. Thank you for
telling me this. (eyes grow wide)
It gives me so much more
information. Let me sit for a
while and think about this, if
that's okay with you.

John nods, and caresses Jenny's back.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John sits at the edge of the bed. His head is down. His eyes
are closed.

JOHN

Give me a sign that I'm doing the
right thing.

Karen comes into the room. She is 4 months pregnant and is
dressed in a night gown. She slips into bed.

KAREN

Marie and Michael are finally
down. (Looks at John) You okay?

JOHN

Too tired for my own good.

KAREN

You're pushing yourself too hard.
You can't be a teacher and a CEO
at the same time. You should
promote Dave Littleman and
concentrate on one thing.

JOHN

I don't know if I can trust Dave.

KAREN

That's silly. He's made you more money than we can ever use.

JOHN

Has he? Or has he made money for Dave Littleman?

KAREN

What's the difference? We don't need the money.

John smiles, lays in bed.

KAREN

Is there anything you need to tell me?

John's eyes go unfocused. He hears a whispered voice.

JENNY

(V.O., whispered) Japan.

JOHN

Yeah. I think we need a field trip. When do your classes end?

KAREN

Two weeks until summer break. Where are we going, the zoo?

JOHN

No, to Japan.

KAREN

Japan? For a field trip?

JOHN

I want to test their language skills, and introduce them to Japanese culture. The Kimuras are going to join us. Let us go to them first. We'll take the parents too, a free vacation.

KAREN

How long?

JOHN

A month. Can you make the arrangements?

KAREN

That will cost a fortune!

JOHN

Good thing we don't need money. I also want to study Mount Fuji, a geological lesson.

KAREN

That's a long way to go for a language, cultural and geological lesson.

JOHN

That's why we're the best. I don't want to be stuck in the classroom all the time. Plus we'll give Dave some space for his new job.

KAREN

You mean that?

JOHN

Yeah. Time he took the center chair. I'm semi-retired - again.

INT. WILSON BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rachel sleeps between her parents, her back to her father, facing her mother's belly. Rachel opens her eyes and listens to them breathing. After a moment, she takes the box from under her night gown. The red light is blinking. She presses the box softly against her mother's belly and presses the button. The box stops blinking. Rachel returns the box to under her night gown and falls asleep.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

John sits at the desk in the classroom. The door to the lab opens and Bonnie comes out. John looks up from his tablet and smiles at her.

JOHN

Hello, sweetheart. How's the new soul doing?

Bonnie comes up to him.

BONNIE

I wanted to talk to you about that. I've taken some tests to find out what I'm good at. I could be a doctor like Rachel, but I like something else.

JOHN

(Leans in) What's that?

BONNIE

Politics! I get along with all the other kids!

JOHN

You certainly do, even Marie and Michael. You know about the visions Jenny has had, right?

BONNIE

(nods) Yes, and I want to help. I thought maybe I could be an ambassador in case things don't go well.

JOHN

Well, we don't have a politician yet, so that would be a possibility. Do you enjoy it?

BONNIE

I like being around people. I like to hear different ideas. I think I would do well being a leader.

JOHN

Hmm, that would mean I would have to give you perhaps a little more independence than the others. Do you think you can handle that?

BONNIE

(Nods) I'd like to try, if you'll let me!

JOHN

Do you promise to follow the three laws?

BONNIE

Housing, food and education for everyone. Yes. I promise.

John taps on his tablet, then smiles at Bonnie.

JOHN

Be very careful of power, Bonnie. I fear that even a nanosoul can be corrupted. I guess we'll find out. I've removed all restrictions from your programming. If you have any questions, please ask!

Bonnie hugs John.

BONNIE
I won't let you down!

EXT. BASE OF MOUNT FUJI - DAY

[Super: 3 weeks later]

Rachel, Jenny, Ling, Jeff and Marie gather at a rail, watching Mount Fuji. Their parents linger behind.

MARIE
Where are the Kimuras? They were supposed to meet us here an hour ago.

JEFF
Mr. Kimura called and said they'd be late. They had to pick up their daughter from school.

A young couple, the Kimuras and 5-year old YUKI Kimura walk down a path toward them. Mrs. Kimura is 3 months pregnant. Karen comes forward to meet them. Karen bows.

KAREN
Thanks for coming, Mr. Kimura. John's feeling tired. He said he'd meet you in the village.

MR. KIMURA
(bows) I understand Mrs. Smith. This is my wife, Kyoko, and my daughter, Yuki.

Karen bows, they bow back.

KAREN
I must say, when John told me you were coming back with us I was surprised. Why would anyone leave this beauty to come to America?

MR. KIMURA
Your husband wanted my nuclear expertise. He wants to design the ultimate safe nuclear power plant.

KAREN
(perplexed) Ah. I see. Let's go meet everyone.

While the adults introduce themselves, Yuki wanders near the children. She bows. Jeff smiles and bows back.

JEFF

(butchered Japanese) Konichiwa.
Watashinonam Jeff.

YUKI

(without an accent) I speak
English very well, thank you.

JEFF

(blushes) Sorry. I didn't know.
(turns to the mountain) I'm trying
to write a story about the
mountain. What do you know about
it?

YUKI

(looks at the mountain) At the top
of Mount Fuji there is a shrine to
the goddess Sengen. She is said to
direct her invisible servants to
throw any who are not pure of
heart into the volcano. (coyly)
Are you pure of heart, Jeffsan?

JEFF

(blushes) I think so.

YUKI

Is it nice in America?

JEFF

Sometimes. We have mountains, but
nothing quite like that (points to
Fuji). We'll be living in a city,
though, with buildings as big as
mountains.

Yuki rolls her eyes.

YUKI

I've been to Tokyo. I've seen big
buildings.

JEFF

Sorry, I thought you lived out
here.

YUKI

We do, but we're not, what's the
word? (pause) Yokels. We use
computers and the Internet.

JEFF

Yeah, you kinda have to to work
for Smith Enterprises.

YUKI

So you write stories. Are they any
good?

JEFF

I dunno, maybe. I also learn
Jiujitsu.

Yuki winces and suddenly lets out a shout and attacks Jeff,
who is caught off guard, but defends himself until she flips
him onto his back and sits on his chest. She smiles.

YUKI

You should learn Judo, so you can
defend and attack.

Yuki reaches down and kisses Jeff on the cheek. Jeff's face
turns red.

MRS. KIMURA

Yuki! Sono shiro no shonen o oriu!

[super: Yuki, get off that white boy!]

Yuki gets off Jeff, a frown on her face. She goes to her
mother and they argue about racial purity in the distance.

Jeff gets up.

JEFF

(under his breath) Well Mrs.
Kimura. How unexpectedly racist of
you.

Jeff reaches into his pocket and presses a button.

JEFF

Good thing I'm interested in your
children and not you.

Jeff smiles at Yuki. She smiles coyly back.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

[Super: 4 weeks later]

Mark and Cindy Wilson sit in the office of attorney Burt
RHODES. Rhodes is reading the contract.

RHODES

Why do you want out of this?

MARK

Because we hardly ever see Rachel any more. She's either in class or gymnastics or some field trip. Plus she keeps changing so fast. We're afraid of losing her.

RHODES

Sounds like a progressive private school to me.

CINDY

Mr. Smith just plain creeps me out. He doesn't even teach any more. He just sits there and lets Rachel talk.

RHODES

Any sign of abuse?

CINDY

(signs) Not that we can see, or the other parents. We can't afford to buy out this contract. Is there another way to break it?

RHODES

You want my opinion? Just walk away. The worst that can happen is you file for bankruptcy and start over. He can't put you in jail or hold you.

CINDY

We've thought about that, but, well, we both want to keep working for Smith Enterprises, just not under that contract. They have some cutting edge projects that are really interesting. Is there another way, just to break the experimental part of the contract?

RHODES

Only if it can be proved that his techniques are dangerous. You said something about her personality?

CINDY

Yes. It keeps changing. I would have thought it would be stable by now.

RHODES

Well, if you can prove he's the cause of the instability, I could have the contract nullified. Hire a psychologist.

Cindy nods.

INT. GYM - DAY

The gym consists of mats, a half basketball court, and a running track. Outside the window, rain pours down from a dark sky. Jeff and Yuki spar on one mat. Rachel practices gymnastics on another. Marie, Jenny, Bonnie and Ling practice ballet on a third. Andre kicks a soccer ball against a wall with Michael and Bonnie. Terrance and Torrie play one-on-one on the basketball court.

Karen comes in.

KAREN

All right, sports time is over!
Art appreciation time is now! To the painting room!

The children stop what they are doing. Jeff and Yuki bow. The boys and girls go into separate locker rooms to change.

INT. PAINTING ROOM - DAY

Rain continues to pour down. Each child wears a tunic with paint splattered on it. Ten easels are spread out in the room. Each has a different painting. Michael finger paints, the others use water color except Ling, who uses oil-based paints.

Karen comes in and looks at each work. Torrie paints a picture of a frog.

KAREN

Appropriate for today. Good work Torrie.

Karen moves to Jeff's picture of Mount Fuji.

KAREN

Nice. Is it supposed to be erupting?

Jeff nods. Karen moves to Yuki's picture of a garden.

KAREN
That's really good, Yuki. You've
fit in well here!

YUKI
(beams) Where's John?

KAREN
Out inspecting a factory in
Columbus. He'll be back soon.

YUKI
Didn't he stop being CEO?

KAREN
Yeah, but he's still the only
stockholder. He takes it
personally.

Karen moves to MICHAEL.

KAREN
What is...? Is that...?

MICHAEL
Daddy!

KAREN
Oh yes. I see him now. You nailed
the bald head!

Karen pats Michael on the head.

KAREN
Good job, Michael.

Michael grins and wipes his hands on his gown. Karen moves
down to Rachel's depiction of Wrigley Field.

KAREN
Feels like I'm there now, Rachel,
only it's not raining in your
picture.

Rachel smiles. Karen moves to Marie's picture of a rabbit.

KAREN
Is that the rabbit that was in our
garden?

MARIE
(nods) Just before Jeff caught
him.

KAREN

Yeah, Jeff, you were pretty quick to get him. Good job!

Karen bends down and kisses Marie. Karen moves to Jenny's picture.

KAREN

What is that?

JENNY

I dreamed about it last night. It's an island in the Pacific.

KAREN

That's very realistic. Who are those people? (points to people on picture)

JENNY

Us, when we're older.

KAREN

Oh. Well I guess that's pretty accurate. Is that a helicopter?

JENNY

No, it's a spaceship.

Karen smirks, then moves on to Ling's painting, her gaze lingering on Jenny's picture a moment. Karen turns her head to Ling's portrayal of a bouquet of flowers.

KAREN

Oh we have a winner, as usual, Ling. The colors on that are so realistic. You really have some talent.

LING

Thank you, Mrs. Smith!

Karen looks at her watch.

KAREN

All right, lunch time! Double-time it to the cafeteria!

The children remove their cloaks and run or jump out of the room.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The children lay or sit on mats. They are all quiet. Jeff and Yuki sit back to back on the same mat, in a lotus position, leaning against one another. They are both smiling, both have their eyes closed. The lights are off to the classroom.

John comes into the room wearing an overcoat. He takes it off quietly and hangs it up. Rachel sits up, smiles and comes to John. They touch faces quietly and blink simultaneously. John leaves the room. Rachel turns the lights on.

RACHEL

Wakie, wakie! Let's put our mats
away and come sit in our
discussion circle.

Jeff opens his eyes and moves forward. Yuki leans back on him and grins. Jeff looks back and giggles. He pulls forward suddenly and Yuki falls back giggling. Jenny, Ling, Terrance, Torrie, Bonnie and Andre gather their mats and place them against the wall. Marie and Michael remain curled on their mats.

Rachel approaches Marie.

RACHEL

Come on, sleepy head. Let's talk.

MARIE

I don't feel like talking. Go
away.

Rachel bends down and feels Marie's forehead.

RACHEL

You don't have a fever! Come on,
Michael, it's talk time.

Michael rolls over. Rachel looks inward for a moment. John comes in a moment later.

JOHN

All right, kids. Up, up and away
with your mats.

Michael, Marie and Yuki get up and drag their mats to the wall. The children sit in a semi-circle facing John. A man appears at the door. Dr. Emilio RUSH, about 50, greying hair. John sees him, nods and motions for him to come in. Rachel goes to John and touches his face. They blink. Rachel sits down.

JOHN

(to Rush) Good afternoon. Can I help you?

RUSH

Yes sir. My name is Dr. Emilio Rush. Mrs. Wilson wanted me to attend a class session, if that's all right with you?

JOHN

Sure. Everyone's welcome. Have a seat, Doctor. We were about to start our afternoon discussion topic.

Rush sits uncomfortably in a child's chair.

RUSH

Oh?

JOHN

Yes, where we pick a topic out of a hat and talk about it as a group. Rachel, may I have the hat, please?

Rachel stands, goes to the desk and picks up a hat with pieces of paper in it. She brings it to John.

JOHN

Thank you, Rachel. It's Marie's turn to draw and read the topic.

Rachel takes the hat to Marie, who sleepily draws a piece of paper. She opens it and looks at it.

MARIE

(slowly) World H-hunger.

JOHN

An excellent suggestion, Marie. Who wants to start?

Rachel, Ling, Jeff, Terrance, Torrie, Andre, Bonnie and Jenny raise their hand simultaneously.

JOHN

Um, Torrie, why don't you start us off?

TORRIE

The world is hungry because there are too many people and not enough food.

JOHN

Good point. Terrance?

TERRANCE

If we could convert sea water into fresh water efficiently, we'd have a lot of fresh water.

JOHN

Right, and why is that important, Marie?

Marie looks around, confused. Rachel whispers in her ear.

MARIE

So we can grow more plants?

JOHN

Very good, Marie. Now who remembers our trip to the farm in March?

The same 8 children raise their hands at the same time. John does a face palm, Rush takes notes.

INT. WILSON APARTMENT - DAY

Dr. Rush sits with Cindy, who is now 5 months pregnant.

RUSH

Tell me your concerns, Mrs. Wilson

CINDY

Well, I guess it all started before Rachel was even born. (Pause, looks at Rush) You understand the terms of the contract forbid me from talking about this with (beat) outsiders.

RUSH

I understand. I won't say anything.

CINDY

(relieved) We could manage on our own, of course, but if we were to break the contract, we would be forced to pay for rent, food, healthcare and our school loans
(MORE)

CINDY (CONT'D)

for the last 7 years, and Rachel would lose her scholarship. She wants to go to Harvard and it would break her heart if we couldn't afford it.

RUSH

If she's as exceptional as you say, a scholarship will be found.

CINDY

I appreciate that. Well, let me think. John Smith gathered us all together 7 years ago and told us he wanted to create a grand social experiment. He was willing to pay us to work at his company - All of us, and it pays well, and also pay room and board and for any health issues we had if we allowed him to control not only when we have children, but the sex of the child too. You know, the whole test tube thing. Well we were just out of college, and in this economy finding this type of job with these benefits was next to impossible. I mean, some of the couple backed down. There were 15 at first and only 6 started the program. He's added 3 more since then. There are currently 20 children, not counting his own two.

RUSH

He has 2 children of his own?

CINDY

Oh yes. His daughter, Marie is Rachel's best friend. (looks inward) In fact she and her brother are the only children in the whole program that have been acting normally the whole time.

RUSH

Define normal.

CINDY

Well, you know. They cry, they fuss, they whine, they fight and they argue, like normal kids.

RUSH

And the others don't?

CINDY

No. Not at all. Even the new girl, Yuki, is just the sweetest thing, has a crush on one of the boys, but she doesn't argue either. The first few days after she was born, Rachel wouldn't stop crying. Then John Smith comes along and she stops. And I mean she stopped crying period. Oh she got hungry, she needed to be fed, but she never cried to let us know she was wet. We had to check her diaper every few hours to see if anything was there.

RUSH

(writes notes) Interesting.

CINDY

And it didn't stop there. When she began to walk - at 8 months - and she fell, she never cried. One time she accidentally cut her arm on a sharp corner. She didn't cry. She just looked at it with a puzzled look on her face. I'm pretty certain it hurt, but she never reacted to pain. I mean never. She has scraped her knees and gone off running, bloody knee and all. That was until she discovered bandages, and now she's very meticulous about using them. She tells me she wants to prevent infection, like a good doctor should.

RUSH

Tell me about her personality.

CINDY

You mean personalities, because I've seen at least 3 in her lifetime. Well at first there wasn't much of a personality. She never laughed, never smiled, never cried. Then it gradually improved until she laughed and giggled with the other kids. But she was so quiet most of the time. They all are quiet except for Michael and Marie, John's kids.

RUSH

Introverted personalities are difficult to understand.

CINDY

You know, I thought so at first, which is why I never said anything, but then the second personality showed up. She was about six months old when it first appeared, and we thought she was developmentally delayed. I was trying to play with her, interacting with her when John Smith came in and asked how things were. He kind of pinched Rachel's cheek and then Rachel let out a squawk. Not exactly a cry, but it was like she was surprised by something. And then she looked at me like she was seeing me for the first time. She looked out me, let out a giggle, flapped her arms and then frowned. She reached out for Mr. Smith and started to cry. She took his hand and then she went back to normal. Well, for a little while. That's when I started seeing improvements in her. But every so often I'll see her and that same spark - that distinct personality will show up and she's a lot more animated.

RUSH

Her IQ scores are stellar.

CINDY

Oh my yes, and everyone is so happy about that. The whole group of them is really smart, but then that's what John Smith wanted for his 'Social Experiment'.

RUSH

Did he tell you exactly what the experiment is?

CINDY

Not exactly. He wants to take children from birth and educate them. It involves a lot of group activities, like learning languages. But we teach them sometimes. His wife helps out too.

(MORE)

CINDY (CONT'D)

I really like her. She seems genuinely interested in helping the kids.

RUSH

And John doesn't?

CINDY

(scowls) It's really hard to describe. He gives topics of discussion and then seems to blank out while the children do the talking - one at a time - those are the rules, though Marie and Michael often interrupt. It does seem effective, though. They take turns reading. Even the two-year-olds can read Dr. Seuss. The older children use the computers for actual presentations. A couple of them are really good at painting and they all try. I can't complain about his methods or his results, but he doesn't lead them much. He just sits there and lets the children take over, and they just know what to do. Always in turn. It's creepy, sometimes.

RUSH

You mentioned a third personality for Rachel?

CINDY

Oh yes. Well, maybe it's an extension of the first one, since I haven't seen the 'robotic' part of her since before Japan. But just before the trip she suddenly started acting a lot more normal. She still doesn't cry or whine, but she's a lot more inquisitive, asking questions. She's skipping now. Maybe it's the gymnastic classes Mr. Smith paid for.

RUSH

Hobbies can bring out personality traits.

CINDY

Can they? I hope so. See seems to like the tumbling and her instructor - not John - calls her a natural. (sighs) Am I imagining things, doctor, or is there something wrong?

RUSH

Let me talk to her.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The tables and chairs form a semicircle. A large chair sits in the middle. The classroom is nearly empty. Karen sits to one side eating a salad. She is six months pregnant.

Dr. Rush comes in.

RUSH

Excuse me, Mrs. Smith?

KAREN

(jumps) Yes?

Karen puts down her salad and stands uncomfortably.

RUSH

I'm Doctor Emilio Rush. I wonder if I might have a word with one of your students.

KAREN

Oh, Doctor Rush. My husband told me about your visit yesterday. They're out in the park across the way. They're enjoying the lack of rain by having game time.

RUSH

Do you mind if I wait? I'd love to find out more about this school.

KAREN

Go right ahead. Adult chairs are hard to come by, but help yourself. Which student did you want to talk to?

RUSH

Rachel Wilson. Her mother is worried about a personality disorder.

KAREN

(smiles) Well, Cindy has a habit of exaggerating problems. My husband is always complaining about her interference.

RUSH

(sits) Funny, she says the same thing about him. Were you referring to the Experiment?

KAREN

Oh I wouldn't call it that. Yes, we're trying some new techniques here, but the kids have access to equipment and resources like trips they'd never have if it weren't for us.

RUSH

Like what?

KAREN

Like the lab, for one. Nothing dangerous, of course, and always under adult supervision, but we demonstrate a safe chemical reaction, and let them handle plastic test tubes, microscopes, and especially computers. Of course, nowadays you can't find a classroom without computers. They're so essential. But we teach them to build the computers and to program them, like their parents.

RUSH

That's wonderful. But I'd like to know why?

Karen takes a bite out of her salad and a sip of water.

KAREN

He wants to, well, make up for a child that never got even this far. I had a baby 7 years ago that was stillborn. That changed him very much.

RUSH

How?

KAREN

It energized him. After his bypass he sort of lost interest in a lot of things. I was hoping the baby would put a bounce in his step. You know, motivate him to stay alive. I was deathly afraid he'd ended it when I found him in the bathtub, unresponsive.

RUSH

But he recovered.

KAREN

(animated, smiling) Oh yes! He claimed he had an out of body experience He even wrote a best seller out of that experience.

RUSH

I read that when it came out.

KAREN

Anyway, he's been a bundle of energy ever since then. Two and a half (pats belly) kids, this building, bought with money from the book and Smith Enterprises, and this classroom. All of it came to him through a vision he had while out of his body.

RUSH

I see. Very interesting. Let me ask you this, though. Have you seen or heard anything that you might think is wrong?

Karen looks up. The word 'wrong' echos.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

[Super: 2 years ago]

Karen, John, 3-year-old Rachel and 3-year-old Marie are in bed with the lights out. Rachel and Marie whisper together. Rachel has her arm twisted around John's John lies on his back, his eyes closed, breathing softly. Karen is 8 months pregnant.

Karen rolls away from John.

KAREN

John, can you ask the kids to be quiet?

The children continue to whisper.

KAREN

John?

Karen sighs and rolls slowly to face John. She taps his forehead.

KAREN

Anyone home?

Rachel stops whispering. John's eyes roll and he blinks.

JOHN

Yes?

KAREN

I was asking you to tell the girls to go to sleep.

Rachel lets go of Jon's arm. Rachel and Marie settle in.

JOHN

Done. May I go back to sleep now?

KAREN

You've been zoning out a lot lately. I think maybe you need to see your doctor.

JOHN

If by zoning out, you mean falling asleep, well, yeah. Old guys need it more.

KAREN

No. I mean sitting in the classroom, not asleep, but not all there either.

JOHN

I like to let the kids talk. You know that helps build communications skills.

KAREN

Doesn't make you much of a teacher.

Marie giggles. Rachel follows suit a beat later.

KAREN

Go. To. Sleep. Or sleep in your room.

JOHN

Yeah, Marie, take Rachel to your room. Your mother and I need to talk.

MARIE AGE 3

Aw, daddy! We'll be quiet!

JOHN

Go. (points to the door.)

Rachel gets out of bed and tugs at Marie. Marie hesitates, then they both leave. John scoots to the middle of the bed. Karen scoots after him.

JOHN

You think I'm a bad teacher?

KAREN

No. It's just that you need to take a greater role. You are the one who set up this classroom. Take charge!

JOHN

I do. I set the topic or the task and the pace. It's not a free for all in there.

KAREN

I still wonder how you do that. Marie's a handful by herself.

JOHN

They know the boundaries. And Marie's learning them too.

KAREN

(Sighs) I'm still worried something is wrong with you. Please see the doctor.

JOHN

I will. I promise. Mad at me?

KAREN

(Kisses John) Never. But I do worry about you. You work so hard.

The phrase 'work so hard' echoes.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Karen faces Dr. Rush. She blinks.

KAREN

(smiles) Not so much wrong as just different. We're building a generation of superstars here, doctor, and giving them the tools they need to make their dreams come true. Do you know we bought the building across the street? We're turning it into a pediatric clinic for everyone. We even brought another couple into the fold: Van and Dr. Zoe Anderson. They'll run the clinic and give young Rachel a taste of the real thing. That was John's idea.

RUSH

Under the same terms? They have to have a baby when he wants them to?

KAREN

Actually, no. They already have 3 children and want at least a couple more. Just like me! And I think he's done with the whole baby thing. But at this rate we'll have to convert another floor to classroom space and hire more teachers.

Children begin to run into the room.

KAREN

Speak of the devil!

Karen stands, her arms spread wide. Michael runs into them. Rachel and Marie come in, followed by John, who is huffing and puffing, and pale.

MARIE

Hi mom!

Marie hugs Karen and then Marie runs to a pile of toys, where other children already play.

Rachel stops and looks at Dr. Rush.

RACHEL

You're than guy from yesterday.

RUSH

Good to see you again, Rachel.

John comes up behind Rachel and touches her shoulders. They blink.

JOHN

We meet again, Dr. Rush. Can't get enough of this class?

RUSH

Indeed, no. I could spend hours here. But Mrs. Wilson had some concerns about Rachel. I wanted to relieve her anxiety and talk to Rachel.

JOHN

Of course! Rachel, why don't you take Dr. Rush to the lab. Can I get you anything to eat or drink, doctor?

RUSH

Some water, please.

JOHN

Terrance! Can you get the doctor a bottle of water, please?

Terrance rises from the toys and runs to a refrigerator by the desk. He brings it back and gives it to Rush.

RUSH

Thank you.

Rachel takes Rush by the hand and takes him toward the lab door. They go in. John watches them go in, blinks and touches his forehead, then turns to Karen.

JOHN

Have a pleasant conversation?

KAREN

Cindy told him about our (beat) arrangements.

JOHN

(smiles wanly) I won't hold that against her. She's worried about Rachel. But she has nothing to fear about our top student.

KAREN

It just got me thinking, though. Most of these kids at one time or another has acted strange - detached. The same way you act from time to time.

JOHN

Because I'm teaching them to think. To use their eyes and ears to observe the world rather than react to it without thinking.

KAREN

And what about just being kids? I think you put too much pressure on them.

JOHN

(smiles) You're right. I promise to lighten up. In fact, why don't we turn this afternoon's session into playtime. And speaking of psychologists, it might be a good idea to hire one to work at the clinic with Dr. Anderson. Can you start a search?

Karen stands and kisses John.

KAREN

That's a wonderful idea! I'll get on it!

JOHN

I'm feeling a little tired. Can you handle things for the rest of the day?

KAREN

(concerned) Of course. Get some rest. You do work hard!

John kisses her, then leaves.

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

John sits at his computer, looking up articles on detachment. He leans back, closes his eyes and presses his hand to his head.

JOHN

Activate voice mode.

COMPUTER VOICE
(V.O.) Activated.

JOHN
Has Rachel finished her interview?

COMPUTER VOICE
(V.O.) Negative.

John opens his eyes.

JOHN
As soon as she finishes ask her to
join me. I've just had an episode
of (beat) something and I need her
diagnostic capabilities.

COMPUTER VOICE
Affirmative.

JOHN
Send a flash message to all
nanosouls to expect an upgrade
tonight while they sleep. There
will be no more 'detachments'.

COMPUTER VOICE
Affirmative.

John gets up slowly. His right arm drags. He limps, favoring
his right side.

JOHN
I'll be in my bedroom until she
shows up. Have her switch bodies
immediately.

COMPUTER VOICE
Affirmative.

INT. LAB - DAY

The lab consists of rows of tables, each containing
microscopes, test tubes and computers. A centrifuge is in
one corner. A cabinet marked 'Adults Only - Chemicals' sits
in another corner. Rush and Rachel sit at the first table.

RUSH
You're very smart for a six-year-
old.

RACHEL
(smiling) Thank you, doctor. I hope to make it into Harvard before I'm 15.

RUSH
Why so quickly?

RACHEL
Why not?

RUSH
Well maybe you should give yourself time to grow up.

RACHEL
Ah, I see. You want me to learn to socialize with my peers.

RUSH
That's very odd language for such a young girl.

RACHEL
(raises an eyebrow) Mr. Smith is teaching me to socialize and to speak like adults. Is that wrong?

RUSH
I'm worried about undue pressure being used to make you into a 'wunderkind'. Do you know the term?

RACHEL
(nods) I am a wunderkind, Dr. Rush. I've never heard it used in a derogatory way.

RUSH
Now you see, that's the kind of language I mean. 'Derogatory'. Six-year-olds don't use that word.

RACHEL
(blinks, confused) I do. Why is it wrong for me to use adult language?

RUSH
Well, because you shouldn't be thinking like an adult. Your brain isn't that developed yet. Let me ask you something and I'd like an honest answer.

RACHEL
(gulps) Okay.

RUSH
Has Mr. Smith ever (beat) touched
you in a wrong way?

RACHEL
(eyes narrow) What do you mean by
'wrong'?

RUSH
Well, in your private parts, for
instance?

RACHEL
I'd like to know what that has to
do with my talking like an adult?

RUSH
Well, I...

RACHEL
(turns red) Just because I'm
smarter than average doesn't make
me easy to prey on, doctor, and
that includes your questions.

RUSH
Really, I think...

Rachel stands and slaps Dr. Rush hard.

RACHEL
How can you talk about him like
that? You don't know him! You
don't know how hard he works so we
can be as smart we can be. He
never touches us the wrong way!

Rachel begins to cry.

RACHEL
I think this interview is over!

Rachel turns to the door.

RUSH
If you're going to be a doctor,
you might have to ask the same
question to a child someday. How
would you feel if that child
reacted the way you just did?

Rachel turns back, looks at him scowling, tears in her eyes.

RACHEL

I have to go. I don't want to see you again!

Rachel bursts through the door, past students and Karen. Rush makes notes.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

John lays face down on the bed. Rachel comes in quietly, checks to make sure she is not seen and closes the door behind her. She carries a book bag. She comes up to John and lays a hand on his back. She blinks. She climbs into bed next to John and looks him in the face.

RACHEL

Is it bad?

John raises his head slightly.

JOHN

You appear to have suffered a small stroke. You should have called 911. immediately.

RACHEL

Can you do anything about it?

JOHN

Heparin, 5000 units by injection.

RACHEL

(slaps forehead) I should have known that. I'm too worried.

Rachel gets out of bed and goes out the door.

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

Rachel unlocks the door and goes in, closing the door after her. She goes to a picture on the back wall and opens it, revealing a safe. She unlocks the safe and opens it to reveal medical supplies. She chooses the appropriate medicine and a syringe. She closes the safe and the picture and puts the syringe under her shirt. She heads for the door, then pauses when she hears the voices of Karen and Marie.

RACHEL

Damn, I need a distraction.

Rachel waits a moment, then hears a knock on the outside door. She cracks the door open to see Karen open the door. Jenny stands smiling.

JENNY
Is Marie home?

Marie heads for the door. Rachel steals behind Karen and Marie and closes the door to the office. She stealthily goes to the bedroom door and goes in, closing the door behind her.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Rachel comes in quietly and closes the door noiselessly behind her. She pulls the syringe from her shirt and approaches John, who is sitting up with a tourniquet on his arm. Rachel gets rid of the air bubble in the syringe and injects the contents into his arm. John pulls the tourniquet off and lays back down on the bed. Rachel looks into John's eyes.

RACHEL
How much damage?

JOHN
Not enough to be noticeable. Right side weakness. I can hide it. I'd recommend not getting up tonight.

Rachel looks inward.

RACHEL
That psychologist was thorough.
It's a shame you overreacted.

JOHN
I tried to be consistent with him.
He made me feel dirty.

RACHEL
(sighs) I want to stay in this
body overnight and see how he
feels in the morning. Report to
the computer if things get worse.
Put his brain to sleep. Be
prepared for an upgrade tonight.

John falls immediately to sleep. Rachel touches his face and fights back a tear.

RACHEL
Hang in there, John. I'm not
ready.

She takes a deep breath.

RACHEL
Jenny, I'm in need of your
visions. Sleep with me tonight if
your parents will let you.

Rachel walks out the door.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Karen is cooking dinner. Marie and Jenny are playing a board game, with Marie facing away from the bedroom door. Jenny watches the door as Rachel comes out the bedroom door. Karen looks up.

KAREN
Hey! I didn't see you come in!

RACHEL
John wanted me to tell him what
the doctor said. He's sleeping
now.

KAREN
Yeah, well, let him rest - all of
you, okay?

Rachel sits down to play with Marie and Jenny. Marie gets up and approaches Karen.

MARIE
Is daddy going to be okay, mommy?

Karen pats Marie on the head.

KAREN
I hope so, sweetie.

INT. WILSON APARTMENT - DAY

Dr. Rush sits with Mark and Cindy.

RUSH
You understand I don't have enough
information to tell what the
problem is. She seems very loyal
to Mr. Smith and treats any
perceived attack as something that
needs to be defended. That could
mean anything. Has her
pediatrician said anything?

CINDY
There's no sign of any physical
trauma.

RUSH

(shrugs) I'm not saying there's nothing happening, but I can't prove it in a court of law. May I recommend a different psychologist? She doesn't trust me at all. Hard to say if she ever did.

CINDY

Thank you, doctor.

INT. WILSON APARTMENT - DAY

Rachel comes in to see her parents on the couch. She stops, then moves forward to her room.

CINDY

Rachel, can we talk for a minute?

Rachel stops, takes a deep breath and comes to the couch. She smiles at her parents.

CINDY

The doctor told us what you did.

RACHEL

(under her breath) No big surprise. (to Cindy) He insulted Mr. Smith. He had no reason to ask that question. I already answered it to you.

CINDY

He was doing what he was trained to do. Your reaction only made him more suspicious.

RACHEL

I know, it didn't look good. (looks at Cindy, then Mark) Mom, dad, do you trust me?

CINDY

To be honest, we don't know, Rachel. Your father and I have been talking. Maybe it's time to move on. We're trying to get a loan to cover the costs of breaking the contract.

Rachel's face is frantic.

RACHEL

No! I haven't even started at the clinic yet! You're taking the best chance of getting into Harvard away from me!

CINDY

Oh, no, sweetie! We'd put you in the best private schools. Harvard will be falling all over itself to get you when the time is right.

Rachel crosses her arms.

RACHEL

I'm. Not. Moving.

CINDY

Now, see honey, this is why we're so worried. Your personality is changing so fast that Dr. Rush is worried about a breakdown. First you're acting like a robot, then you're acting too sophisticated, then you seem normal for a little while and now you're acting like a...

RACHEL

Spoiled brat?

CINDY

Like a girl who can't control herself. Harvard would never take someone who can't control their emotions.

Rachel takes a long breath.

RACHEL

If we stay I promise no more tantrums. Dr. Anderson wouldn't like that anyway.

CINDY

Aw, honey. Look, sleep on it, and we'll talk more in the morning. Maybe daddy and I can take you to a Cubs game?

Mark nods.

RACHEL
(sulky) I'd like that. (looks up)
Can Jenny sleep over tonight and
come with us tomorrow?

Cindy looks at Mark, who shrugs.

CINDY
Yeah, sure. We'll all go.

Rachel hugs Cindy and Mark. She runs to her room and stands
at the threshold.

RACHEL
(under her breath) Good luck
getting that loan.

INT. RACHEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Rachel's room consists of a bed, a desk with a computer. It
is perfectly neat. Her room is decorated with baseball
memorabilia from the Chicago Cubs. Jenny sits on the bed in
a night gown. Rachel comes out of the bedroom wearing a
night gown. She turns the light out and crawls into bed with
Jenny.

RACHEL
All right. The parents are in bed,
likely planning to take me away,
so I'd like to enter your mind for
the rest of the night and the
morning. I need to talk to your
muse about what's going to happen.

Jenny slips under the covers. Rachel puts her nose to
Jenny's ear and cuddles next to her. She kisses Jenny's
cheek. They both blink.

RACHEL
I've never been in Rachel's body
before. It's so quiet in here. I
don't hear the voices like I do in
my body.

JENNY
Well, right now I need to hear
them. Rachel's had a tough day.
Why don't you put her brain to
sleep and give her a rest. Cubbies
tomorrow!

RACHEL

I'm not used to shutting down my brain. It will be an interesting experience. Will I still dream?

JENNY

Oh yes, honey. Rachel has the most pleasant dreams. All about saving people's lives.

RACHEL

(smiles) Okay! (kisses Jenny)
Goodnight, Mistress.

Jenny giggles.

JENNY

I like that so much better than
'Master'. Goodnight.

Jenny puts her head on Rachel's chest and closes her eyes.
Rachel falls asleep with her hand on Jenny's shoulder.

INT. RACHEL'S ROOM -NIGHT

Jenny lays next to Rachel, tossing and turning. She suddenly sits up, her eyes wide, gasping for breath.

JENNY

(sad look on her face) Oh, John. I
hardly knew ye.

Jenny pokes Rachel, who twitches.

JENNY

Come on, we have to have an
emergency meeting. All nanosouls.

Rachel turns toward Jenny.

RACHEL

It's four in the morning.

JENNY

I know. We have to make a decision
now.

Jenny gets out of bed and starts to put on her clothes.
Rachel follows suit.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAWN

Seven of the original eight children gather in a sitting semicircle. There is no camera, and no John. Rachel comes in and faces the children.

RACHEL

Thanks for coming at such short notice. John is still recovering and couldn't leave without disturbing Karen anyway. I will be using Rachel's and Jenny's bodies for the most part until... well for the time being. Bonnie's keeping watch on our parents. We need to discuss the future. I want to ask all of you the same question I ask myself, as John, every day. Each of you answer based on your memory, your skills, your talents and your feelings. The question is: Why am I doing this?

The focus turns to Andre.

ANDRE

To play soccer.

The focus turns to Ling.

LING

To make sense of everything, using math!

The focus turns to Terrance.

TERRANCE

For power.

The focus turns to Torrie.

TORRIE

To make beautiful music.

The focus turns to Jeff.

JEFF

To explore human creativity.

The focus turns to Jenny.

JENNY
To explore the mysteries of the
universe.

The focus turns to Andre.

ANDRE
To find God.

The focus turns to Ling.

LING
(giggling) To find out what it's
like to be a girl!

The focus turns to Terrance.

TERRANCE
To learn about different cultures.

The focus turns to Torrie.

TORRIE
(singing) To sing!

The focus turns to Jeff.

JEFF
To have time to think.

The focus turns to Jenny.

JENNY
To have fun!

The focus turns to Andre.

ANDRE
To build computers!

The focus turns to Ling.

LING
To learn Chinese and other
languages.

The focus turns to Terrance.

TERRANCE
To be young and energetic.

The focus turns to Torrie.

TORRIE

To learn how to paint!

The focus turns to Jeff.

JEFF

To fall in love!

The focus turns to Jenny.

JENNY

To dance! (twirls)

The focus turns to Rachel.

RACHEL

For knowledge, to be graceful.
(flips, stands, thoughtful) To
live!

RACHEL

(eyes point down) Jenny has
foreseen John's death.

Several of the children gasp.

RACHEL

(holds head up) It won't be for a
few years. So let's not panic. But
we know that none of us will reach
adulthood before it happens. So we
need to plan on what will happen
when he dies. Any suggestions?

All the children raise their hands simultaneously. Rachel
smiles.

RACHEL

Transmit your ideas to me, please.

Rachel looks inward for a moment. The other children close
their eyes. After a moment they all open their eyes
together.

RACHEL

Such talented minds. I'd like to
cause as little damage as
possible, so Jenny, your idea of
splitting up is a good one, but if
we split up I can't guarantee your
safety. I love you all, you know
that. But we'll keep that option
open. Terrance, your idea of
taking the souls of anyone in our
(MORE)

RACHEL (CONT'D)
way is a little too extreme, but
it may come to that. I have to
think about it. We either stay
with our parents (wrinkles nose)
or we run. If we run, where?

Jeff raises his hand.

RACHEL
Yes, Jeff?

JEFF
What about Yuki?

RACHEL
(smiles) I turned on your love
circuits because I felt the same
way about her, but Jeff, she isn't
one of us. She can't come.

JEFF
Isn't that what her mother said
about me?

Rachel comes to Jeff, bends down and hugs him. She lets go
and kisses him on the lips.

RACHEL
Love is a wonderful feeling, Jeff.
Don't ever lose it. We'll keep our
options open with Yuki, okay?

Jeff nods.

RACHEL
(stands) Let's keep those ideas
coming, my friends. One thing we
will be doing over the next few
years is travel, even if John
can't make it.

Rachel opens her book bag, and take out 6 soul catchers

RACHEL
I want you each to take one of
these.

Jenny passes out soul catchers.

RACHEL
It's time we were more aggressive
in our search for more like us.
When we travel, we'll be spreading
nanosouls. The souls are
(MORE)

RACHEL (CONT'D)
programmed to enter fetuses that don't already have a soul, so all you need to do is spy a pregnant lady, and let 'er rip. Each one of these holds a hundred nanosouls. We'll refill when we come back here. Also, we're going to be more public than we have been, and I'm not talking about nanosouls. So (turns to Jeff) Jeff, we're going to publish your stories, (turns to Ling) Ling, you're going to illustrate his books and show your own paintings. (turns to Terrance and Torrie) T and T, you're going to be performing in public everywhere we go. The others will have their own assignments. I have to work in the clinic, for instance. Andre will be working on the new computer, and Jenny will be working on how to get all of us to our destination. Any questions?

The children shake their heads simultaneously.

RACHEL
Good. Because there's one soul I need to take - before he bleeds us dry.

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

John, Rachel, Ling and Jenny come into the office. John is limping, leaning on Rachel's shoulder slightly. Rachel helps him to sit down. Four chairs sit in front of John's desk. Jenny sits at the far one from the door. She looks glassy-eyed out the window. Ling sits next to Jenny. Rachel sets her book bag on John's desk and sits next to Ling.

JOHN
(Slowly, slurred) You sure this body can take the pressure?

RACHEL
Yes. You need more rest, but this should only take a few minutes.

A knock is heard. Rachel gets up and opens the door. DAVE LITTLEMAN stands at the threshold. Dave is in his 40's, sharply dressed, good-looking, a cocky swagger to his step. Rachel smiles at him.

RACHEL

Come in! John is waiting for you.

Littleman steps into the room. Rachel closes the door. John looks at him and sighs.

JOHN

Dave, have a seat.

Littleman sits in one of the chairs. Rachel sits in the other, and pulls a tablet PC from her book bag.

LITTLEMAN

Geez, John. You look like shit.

JOHN

Watch your mouth in front of my assistants.

Littleman looks at Rachel. She smiles sweetly.

LITTLEMAN

Assistants? a little young, don't you think?

JOHN

(upset) It's not like I'm screwing them, Dave. Sorry Rachel, Jenny, Ling. They're extremely sharp, a lot more mobile than I am and they know how to run the school. Speaking of screwing things, Dave, let's talk about the Columbus factory.

LITTLEMAN

You caught it on a bad day, John. You should have called first.

Jenny shakes her head at John.

JOHN

(sighs) I'm tired. Of playing games. You think that Smith Enterprises is so big that you can slowly suck it dry. But luckily I have an accountant (points to Ling), who tells me exactly where my money is going. I have a business partner (points to Rachel) who can tell me when things are going downhill, and I have my own private psychiatrist (points to Jenny) who can give me insights as to why you're trying to bury my company.

Littleman looks at the children, incredulous.

LITTLEMAN

You believe children? John, I think you're the one who needs help. Besides. If you don't like the job I'm doing, (nasty) fire me!

JOHN

Oh, I'd love to. But my financial consultants tell me you've got your fingers buried so deep in corruption that if I pull you out now, the company would collapse.

LITTLEMAN

(smiles, nods) That's right, John. Why don't you stay in retirement and I'll make sure your family has enough money so they can continue this lifestyle after you die.

JOHN

(smiles) I have other plans. Rachel?

Rachel has a tablet in her lap. She has a scan of Littleman's brain on the screen. It locks into his soul. She taps a button. Littleman freezes, then lets out a yell. His body goes limp. Rachel taps another button and Littleman moves, then raises his head and looks at John.

JOHN

That soundproofing was a good idea, Rachel. Tell me, Dave, how can we dig ourselves out of this trouble?

LITTLEMAN

(mechanical) We will need time, however the corruption should be removed within 2 years.

JOHN

See to it.

John nods to Rachel. She comes to him and touches his face. They blink.

RACHEL

Put him to bed. (turns to Littleman) Dave, I expect a full report to be transmitted to Ling as soon as possible.

LITTLEMAN

Yes, Mistress.

INT. WILSON BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cindy is 8 months pregnant. Rachel sleeps between her parents. She looks up at her mother, then pushes down until her head lays on Cindy's belly.

INT. JOHN'S SOUL - NIGHT

John's soul leaves his body and enters Cindy's belly. It makes its way to Baby Alex. Alex's nanosoul passes him on its way to John's body. John's soul enters Alex's head and implants itself.

INT. CINDY'S WOMB - NIGHT

Baby Alex moves, then opens his eyes.

INT. WILSON BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cindy grabs her belly.

CINDY

Oof! Rachel, get off, please.

Rachel moves away from Cindy. Cindy rolls on her back.

CINDY

Wow, turning somersaults tonight,
aren't you, Alex?

Cindy takes a deep breath.

INT. CINDY'S WOMB - NIGHT

Alex looks at his hands, then his feet. He takes a breath and touches the uterine wall. He smiles.

INT. WILSON BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cindy clutches her belly, distressed.

CINDY

Am I in labor? Oh, Alex, this is
too soon. Please go to sleep,
Alex. Mommy loves you very much,
but I need my sleep too!

INT. JOHN'S SOUL - NIGHT

John's soul leaves Alex's body and returns to Rachel's. Alex's nanosoul returns to Alex's body. Alex stops squirming.

INT. WILSON BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cindy blows out a breath, then relaxes.

CINDY

Oh, finally. Done bugging mommy
for the night, Alex? Good.

Cindy rolls toward Rachel and pats her on the head.

CINDY

You weren't half to trouble Alex
is.

Rachel smiles.

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

Rachel faces the camera, a grin on her face.

RACHEL

Another incredible experience to share! I was in an unborn baby last night. Alex Wilson, who is about a month from being born. I'm so tempted to be inside him while he's being born. That would be a unique experience, I think, but let's look at last night's experience first. His brain was so undeveloped. I could barely get things to move, and worse, I could barely remember who I was. I was afraid of being stuck in there. But I did have enough sense to know that I needed to leave soon. But it was a glorious experience. Breathing amniotic fluid! I really wish I had a camera in there. (laughs) One good thing to come out of that was that I bugged Cindy Wilson like crazy. She must have thought she was in labor. But that wasn't the point, just a fringe benefit! (smiles)

INT. CINDY'S WOMB - DAY

Shots of Alex Wilson being born. These alternate between shots of Rachel witnessing the birth.

ACT THREE

EXT. MONTANA - DAY

This begins a montage of images. The first scene is the children digging for dinosaur bones in Montana. Andre finds a big one, and the children pose for a picture around it.

Cut to The children and adults boarding a plane to Paris. It cuts to a scene of Ling looking critically at the Mona Lisa, and then Jeff having lunch with Yuki in a Paris cafe. A slightly pregnant woman passes Jeff, and he reaches in to his pocket to press the button on the soul catcher. Terrance and Torrie perform at the same cafe, with Jenny as a drummer.

Cut to London where the children attend a session of Parliament. The children ride horses in the English countryside.

Cut to Chicago, where Cindy and Mark get rejected for a loan. The children enjoy a Cubs game with John, looking better. Ling shows a few of her paintings at a gallery in Chicago. Jeff holds up a copy of his book 'The Goddess of Mount Fuji' with Ling and Yuki, posing for pictures.

Cut to Jenny working on levitating an object. It falls.

The children start to get older. More trips to Russia, China and Japan. In each location, one of the children is shown being near a pregnant woman, and releasing a nanosoul.

Cut to Andre, age 7, trying to plug a computer in, and it catches fire. He hastily unplugs it and puts the fire out.

Back in Chicago, an older Jeff and Ling are awarded the Newbery Medal for their book.

On the road again, with older children, leads them to South America. Terrance and Torrie, dressed as gauchos, perform.

INT. HARVARD DEAN'S OFFICE - DAY

[Super: 3 Years Later] This is the office of Dean RICHARDS, Dean of Harvard Medical School, 55, distinguished and hyper-intelligent. The room has a monstrous desk with a throne-like chair behind it. A smaller chair sits in front. Richards sits behind his desk as the door to the outer office opens and RACHEL AGE 9 comes in. She is tall and thin, and her hair comes down to her waist. She wears a dress and heels. She smiles at him.

RICHARDS
(Stands) Rachel, thank you so much
for coming.

Richards comes from behind the desk and shakes Rachel's
hand.

RACHEL AGE 9
Thank you for seeing me! This is
so exciting!

RICHARDS
Please, have a seat.

Richards motions to the chair in front of his desk. Rachel
Age 9 sits.

RICHARDS
I know you and your mother have
come a long way for this
interview. Normally we'd send a
representative to your home to
conduct a first interview, but
you're such an intriguing person
that I wanted to meet you in
person.

RACHEL AGE 9
Why thank you doctor! I really
looked forward to meeting you too!
I've read your paper on future
medicine. It's quite fascinating!

Richards smiles.

RICHARDS
Let's get started. First, why are
you so keen on starting Harvard
Medical School at such a young
age? You'd be the youngest, you
know.

RACHEL AGE 9
(nods) Perhaps the youngest at
Harvard, sir, but not the youngest
to enter a college with the intent
of entering medical school. I
would share that distinction with
Sho Yano. But to get to your
question, I want to enter Harvard
in the fall because first, I want
the best college education I can
get. As to why I want to do it so
young, all I can say is that I am
ready and willing to do the work
(MORE)

RACHEL AGE 9 (CONT'D)
necessary to succeed and do well at Harvard. I've been studying medicine since I was 4 years old, watching both my mother and father at work. And in the last 3 years I've been working alongside one of the preeminent pediatricians in the world: Dr. Zoe Anderson. I've seen hundreds of cases with her and helped to diagnose problems from leukemia to Diabetes to Crohn's Disease. I've done lab work, supervised, of course, and taken blood from the veins of a baby. I've been all over the world and in each place I've seen diseases and conditions that would make your skin crawl. So I think I'm ready for whatever Harvard may throw at me.

Richards pauses, looks down at his notes and smiles.

RICHARDS
I've seen the recommendation that Dr. Anderson provided. I am most impressed with that. Do you think you have the maturity to (beat) interact with older students and professors?

RACHEL AGE 9
(smiles) My mother still thinks of me as a little girl. It's true that I have just turned 9, and most kids my age should be out playing, or being with friends, and I do that. But I interact with adults all the time too, including Dr. Anderson, her husband, Mr. John Smith, my primary teacher and his wife Karen. In my travels I've met children and adults from many different cultures and backgrounds. Every adult I've talked to has called me very mature. I anticipate some push back from my fellow students and even some professors. I can take it with a smile on my face. I don't hold grudges.

Richards pushes back his chair.

RICHARDS

What am I going to do with you, Rachel? You've got talent, you've got brains, you've got the highest overall test scores I've ever seen, but what you lack in size you make up for in the size of your heart and, well I hate to put such a delicate word to such a small girl, but you've got passion. I had my doubts that you could have written the essays you did, but you've convinced me. (leans forward) It's not written in stone, you understand, but it would be my recommendation that we accept you for the fall semester. (sighs) I'd really like to meet the teachers who have turned you from little girl to well, (puts hands out to Rachel) this fine specimen of a future doctor.

RACHEL AGE 9

(grins) I'm sure Mr. Smith and his wife would love for you and your staff to come visit. There is so much talent in our school. I think there's one or two more who might want to apply in the next year or so!

RICHARDS

(Smiles) Rachel, thank you for coming today. I'll contact Mr. Smith about sending a (beat) research team over to your school. I'm looking forward to seeing you in one of my classes down the road!

Rachel stands, blushes and shakes hands with Richards. She leaves.

INT. HARVARD OUTER OFFICE - DAY

The outer office consists of a secretary's desk, the SECRETARY, and several chairs where Cindy and BONNIE AGE 7 sit. Bonnie is tall and thin, but has short dark brown hair.

Rachel Age 9 comes out of the office door. Her expression changes from ecstatic to downcast in an instant. She turns to face Cindy. Cindy's gaze softens. She comes to Rachel and hugs her.

CINDY

Aw, honey. Don't worry. You'll get into Harvard someday.

Bonnie rolls her eyes and grins behind Cindy's back.

CINDY

Come on. Let's go back to the hotel and then we'll have a great dinner on Mr. Smith's money.

Rachel sighs, nods to Bonnie. They follow Cindy out.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Cindy, Rachel and Bonnie enter a hotel room. There are two beds. A PORTER enters after them with suitcases and boxes from expensive stores. The porter leaves the boxes and faces Cindy.

CINDY

Thank you so much for helping.
Just charge a nice tip to the room!

The porter tips his hat.

PORTER

Thank you Mrs. Wilson!

The porter grins as he leaves. Bonnie sits on the bed closest to the door. Rachel faces Cindy and crosses her arms.

RACHEL AGE 9

You're being a bit obvious, mother.

CINDY

Are we going to have that argument again? John Smith is too rich to care what I charge on his cards. Besides, I've put up with a lot from him over the years. It's about time he gave back.

Rachel rolls her eyes and sits next to Bonnie.

CINDY

I'm going to take a quick shower and then I'm going for a night out. You two can take care of yourselves, right?

Cindy takes off her dress, exposing a bra and a slip. Her belly is exposed and bulges slightly. She looks at herself

in a mirror. Rachel's eyes widen.

RACHEL AGE 9
Mom, are you pregnant?

Cindy's eyes narrow.

CINDY
Hush! Don't tell Mr. Smith. Just
for once your father and I wanted
to make a baby that he had nothing
to do with. It'll be our secret!

Rachel heaves a heavy sigh. Bonnie giggles.

BONNIE - AGE 7
I think he'll notice eventually,
Mom!

CINDY
And what can he do about it,
really? Is he going to throw us
out simply because we didn't
follow his timetable? Of course he
won't.

Cindy goes into the bathroom.

CINDY
(off screen) Order room service
for yourselves!

The bathroom door closes and Rachel gets up and goes to her
suitcase. She pulls out a soulcatcher and checks to make
sure it's loaded. Bonnie looks over her shoulder and
shudders.

BONNIE - AGE 7
Is that really necessary?

Rachel turns to face Bonnie.

RACHEL AGE 9
I've been thinking. Rachel's soul
needs a place to go once John's
body dies. If Cindy's baby is a
girl, I think she'd like the
chance to grow up without my
influence. And my constantly
borrowing her body.

Rachel goes to the bathroom door. She points the soul
catcher at the door and a figure of Cindy's body appears on
the screen. It locks into a small part of Cindy's abdomen.
Rachel presses a button and a small, dim light comes out of
the soul catcher and moves under the door to the bathroom.

Rachel turns to Bonnie.

RACHEL AGE 9
Consider that a placeholder.

Rachel puts the soulcatcher back into her suitcase and sits next to Bonnie.

RACHEL AGE 9
What would you like for dinner?

Bonnie puts her head on Rachel's shoulder.

BONNIE - AGE 7
What would an ambassador eat?

RACHEL AGE 9
Something fancy no doubt. How about a little sushi?

BONNIE - AGE 7
Just as long as it doesn't have eyes. That creeps me out.

RACHEL AGE 9
I can always enter your body if it does. Eyes don't bother me.

Bonnie wrinkles her nose.

BONNIE - AGE 7
Please don't. Every time your soul enters my body you leave behind (beat) unsettling thoughts. Sometimes I just don't want to know what's going to happen.

Rachel puts her arm around Bonnie.

RACHEL AGE 9
Me either, my friend. Me either.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

[Super: 3 months later] John lays in a hospital bed, a heart monitor beeps. Cindy Wilson comes in, 6 months pregnant. She stares at John for a moment, then looks smug. She approaches John.

CINDY
Well, look at you. Barely alive. I just had to drag my daughter away from your bed. Is this how you envisioned her future?

JOHN
(wheezing) I have a bit more time left.

CINDY
Oh, so now you can see the future? I have an alternative. End this. Let everyone go their separate ways. What have you proved? Is your grand social experiment a success?

JOHN
(smiles) More than you know.
(wheezes) I have a counter
(wheeze) proposal for you.
(wheeze) Let Rachel go to Harvard(wheeze) in the fall like she wants. (wheeze) I'll release you from Bonnie's and Alex's contracts. (wheeze)

CINDY
She's not even ten yet, and you want to put more pressure on her?

JOHN
She can handle it. (wheeze) She, Bonnie and Alex (wheeze) will all be away (wheeze) from me. Isn't that what you want?

CINDY
Even if I wanted that I would have to discuss it with Mark. I suppose you're stubborn enough to last long enough for me to talk to him.

RACHEL AGE 9 comes into the room. She is tall and thin, her raven hair reaches down to her waist now.

CINDY
(to Rachel) I thought I told you to wait outside.

Rachel goes straight to John, touches his face, blinks, and walks out the door. Cindy watches her leave, then turns to John.

CINDY
Why don't you die already? Haven't you done enough damage?

Cindy walks out the door.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Karen and Marie Age 10, sit in the waiting area outside John's hospital room. Rachel Age 9 sits next to Marie and takes her hand.

Cindy comes out the door and stands before Karen.

CINDY

You could end this.

KAREN

Your contract is with Smith Enterprises. He still controls that until he dies. I really have no control over it. (Looks at Rachel) She's improved so much over the last 3 years. Why do you have to push it?

CINDY

He can't even teach anymore.

RACHEL AGE 9

I teach, along with Jenny.

CINDY

You're not even certified.

RACHEL AGE 9

It's a private school. I don't need to be certified. And teaching like I have helped get Harvard's attention.

KAREN

I'm certified. I manage the class in John's absence. Just the way he did, by letting the kids teach themselves.

CINDY

It's a flawed system, full of chaos.

Rachel Age 9 rolls her eyes.

KAREN

Flawed enough for Harvard to take interest in 3 of our students.

CINDY

Oh yes, for the future, not now.

RACHEL AGE 9

But they are interested in me right now, and the sooner I get in, the sooner I can become a doctor.

CINDY

My lawyer says to just take the kids and go, rent a place of our own and take our financial lumps. I've been told that no reference will be given for either Mark or me as long as we're under contract, and our bank accounts and assets will be seized if we break the contract. Is that fair?

KAREN

(cross) You had an option of not taking the contract, or even leaving earlier. You chose to take John's offer.

Cindy sneers at Karen, takes Rachel Age 9's hand and drags her off.

KAREN

I'll really be glad to see her go.

MARIE AGE 10

I'd really miss Rachel.

KAREN

Me too. Hard to believe they're related.

EXT. PENTHOUSE POOL - DAY

[Super 3 months later] The penthouse pool is at the very top of Smith Towers, partly open to the air. A party is in progress. A banner on the fence surrounding the pool reads 'Good Luck Rachel'. Children swim, Adults lounge. Rachel Age 9 and Marie Age 10 lay on beach chairs sunning themselves. Dr. Zoe Anderson, age 40, plays with her daughter CHLOE, age 1 in the pool. Both have straight blonde hair. Jenny Age 8 splashes in the pool with Ling Age 9, who throws a beachball. Jeff Age 9 and Yuki Age 9 lay on a beach towel. They lay so that Jeff's head and Yuki's head face each other, but their bodies lay in opposite directions.

JEFF AGE 9

Do you like it here?

YUKI AGE 9
Are you kidding?

JEFF AGE 9
I mean compared to Japan?

YUKI AGE 9
Of course I like it. I like you
more!

JEFF AGE 9
(smiles) I'm glad. What if (beat)
we get separated?

YUKI AGE 9
You mean when Mr. Smith dies?

JEFF AGE 9
(nods) I know my parents will take
my little brother and me right out
of here.

YUKI AGE 9
That's stupid. But my parents will
do the same with me and my sister.

JEFF AGE 9
At least Rachel's getting out the
right way.

YUKI AGE 9
I'm glad for her, but getting back
to what you were saying, (beat)
I'd miss you!

JEFF AGE 9
I'd miss you too!

YUKI AGE 9
We'd still have our tablets,
right? We could stay in touch.

JEFF AGE 9
Yeah. I'd like that.

Jenny Age 8 suddenly freezes in the water. A beachball hits
her in the head. Jeff sits up and looks at her.

JEFF AGE 9
You okay, Jenny?

Jenny Age 8 looks at Jeff, eyes wide, and gives a slight
shake of her head.

Jeff Age 9's eyes widen.

JEFF AGE 9

Mother!

YUKI AGE 9

What?

Jeff Age 9 takes a quick look at her.

JEFF AGE 9

I just remembered, my mother wanted me to take my brother for a walk.

YUKI AGE 9

(coyly) May I come?

JEFF AGE 9

Not this time, Yuki. Maybe later.

Jeff Age 9 gives Yuki Age 9 a quick kiss on the cheek and gets up. He nods to Jenny, Rachel and Ling. They all get up, out of the pool and head inside. Chloe looks after them and whines at her mother.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Eleven children stand in the classroom. Rachel, Jenny, Terrance Age 9, Torrie Age 9, Andre Age 9, Jeff, Ling, Bonnie, ALEX WILSON, age 3, RANDY PETERSON, age 4 and MISUKO KIMURA, age 3.

RACHEL AGE 9

Plans have changed. My mother is about to renege on her agreement. Some how she got a hold of enough money to buy out our contract. She'll keep me from Harvard. We need to take one last vote on whether we stay or go. Don't let your feelings for me get in your way. Choose from your brains, not your hearts. Think your responses to me.

The children all close their eyes. After a moment Rachel opens her eyes.

RACHEL AGE 9

It's decided. We'll go. Preparations are being made. We meet tonight at midnight. Jenny, don't forget Chloe.

Jenny nods. Rachel goes to Jeff and takes his hand.

RACHEL AGE 9
I'm sorry, I loved her too.

Jeff nods.

RACHEL AGE 9
Everyone, act normal. I have one
last video to make.

The children leave except for Rachel. Rachel gets the video camera from the closet. She sets it up, starts it recording and stands in front of it.

RACHEL AGE 9
Hello. This is Rachel Wilson. In
reality this is John Smith in
Rachel's body. By now you know
we're gone. If you've seen the
other videos, you know that I
control the other children that
are missing - all of them. I
realize the implications of this.
I'm sorry to leave my body behind,
but my hand has been forced.
(sarcastic) Thanks mom. If you're
wondering what we plan to do, keep
wondering. When we're ready, we'll
let you know. Thanks for watching!

Rachel stops the camera and turns it off. She picks it up off the tripod and takes it to the wall safe, opens it and places the camera in it. She closes the wall safe. She pauses, looking around the room nostalgically. She sighs and heads out.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM -NIGHT

John sits up in bed, staring straight ahead. Karen comes in with a plate of food.

KAREN
Ready for a late din-din?

John smiles, nods.

KAREN
Good!

Karen sits on the edge of the bed and begins to feed John strained food.

KAREN

Good food to make you strong
again. Maybe even get your voice
back, eh?

John chews, staring straight ahead.

KAREN

You there, honey?

John nods. Karen brushes his face.

KAREN

Cindy and Mark Wilson want to meet
us in the morning. I think she
wants to finalize the end of the
contract so she can take Rachel to
Harvard and Alex - where ever.

Karen squeals.

KAREN

Our first student heading for
college! This will show the other
parents why they should stay!

John nods.

KAREN

I've been talking to Marie. She
wants to take the SAT's to see how
well she'll do. Isn't that
exciting? Maybe she can get into
Harvard too!

John smiles, then nods. He glances at the clock on the
table. it reads 11:55pm. He turns to Karen.

JOHN

(slowly, deeply) I'm sorry.

KAREN

For what?

INT. SECURITY ROOM - NIGHT

Closed circuit monitors fill one side of the room, each with
a different view of Smith Towers. SECURITY GUARD #1 and
SECURITY GUARD #2 sit watching. They have blank stares.

One monitor shows Jeff and Randy Peterson come out of their
apartment carrying a suitcase.

SECURITY GUARD #1
Exodus has begun.

SECURITY GUARD #2
No threats detected.

Focus on an outside camera view. Two white vans roll up in front of the building.

SECURITY GUARD #1
Transportation is ready.

Several monitors show Ling, Andre, Terrance and Torrie, and Misuko Kamura exit from their apartments with suitcases. They all head for the elevators.

Security guard #2 flips a switch on his console.

SECURITY GUARD #2
Synchronizing elevators.

One by one the children load into elevators.

On one monitor, Chloe Anderson steps out of her apartment. She does not have a suitcase. She waddles toward the elevator.

SECURITY GUARD #1
Baby is waiting. Repeat, baby is waiting.

On the same camera view, Jenny comes to Chloe and takes her hand. Jenny is carrying a suitcase.

INT. WILSON APARTMENT - NIGHT

The door to Rachel's bedroom opens a crack. The lights are off in the room. Rachel's head pokes out and she steals a glance. Animated talk can be heard from the master bedroom. Rachel comes out with a small suitcase. At the same time Alex comes out carrying a small backpack. Noiselessly they go to the front door and let themselves out.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Rachel and Alex come out of the apartment and close the door silently. They come to the elevator. It opens to reveal Jenny and Chloe. They wave silently at Rachel. Rachel and Alex board the elevator. It goes down to the lobby.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

The lobby is empty except for the doorman. The elevator opens noiselessly and the children step out. The doorman nods vacantly and opens the door for them. They go through.

INT. SECURITY ROOM - NIGHT

The guards continue monitoring as suitcases are loaded into the vans and children get in. On one screen, a door opens and Yuki steps out.

SECURITY GUARD #1
Possible problem. Yuki Kimura
coming out. Should we stop the
elevators?

RACHEL AGE 9
(V.O., via radio) Negative.

On the screen, Yuki boards the elevator and heads down.

SECURITY GUARD #2
Interloper headed down.

EXT. BUILDING ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Outside the building, two non-descript vans sit. One van is fully occupied with Jeff, Randy, Terrance, Torrie and Misuko. Ling and Andre sit in the first van. The doorman lifts Chloe and buckles her into a baby seat in the first van. Alex and Jenny enter the first van. Rachel looks back and sees Yuki come out of the elevator, wearing a night gown. Rachel moves to meet her. They meet at the door.

YUKI AGE 9
What are you doing?

RACHEL AGE 9
Leaving. I don't have time to
explain. Jeff will explain it to
you. If you want to stay, fine. If
not, the driver will take you back
home, but hurry!

Jeff motions from the van. Misuko waves. Yuki looks at them, then back at Rachel. She runs to the van.

Rachel gets into the front seat of the first van, buckles her seat belt and watches Yuki get into the van from the mirror. The doors close on all the vans.

RACHEL AGE 9
Punch it.

The vans pull out simultaneously.

EXT. AIRFIELD - NIGHT

The vans pull up to a gate and are waved through. The sign over the gate reads 'Smith Industries'. The vans drive to a private jet and then stop. The children begin to unload. The drivers begin to unload luggage onto a cart. Jeff, Yuki, Rachel and Misuko wait at the van. The others board the jet. Yuki wears a borrowed jacket and shoes. Rachel approaches her.

RACHEL AGE 9

Do you understand what's going on?

YUKI AGE 9

Sort of. (looks close at Rachel)
John?

RACHEL AGE 9

(smiles) I'm glad you got that much. It would mean a lot to me if you stayed, and to Jeff and Misuko. But I'm not going to force you. I need a decision, though.

YUKI AGE 9

I don't know. This is a lot to take in.

Rachel nods to Jeff and Misuko. They board the jet.

RACHEL AGE 9

If you're not sure you shouldn't go. But I want you to know that I'll miss you.

Rachel hugs Yuki. Yuki cries.

YUKI AGE 9

Does - does he feel love?

RACHEL AGE 9

He feels the same things I feel.
So yes, he does feel love.

Yuki breaks away from Rachel and runs for the jet. Rachel smiles and moves toward the van drivers. She makes a chopping motion.

RACHEL AGE 9

Chop shop. Chop chop.

The drivers nod and the vans pull away. The jet begins to rise from the ground noiselessly, then vanishes.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The room is dark. A pounding on the door is heard. It gets louder each time. Karen comes out, covering herself with a robe.

KAREN

(loud) Hold your horses! It's 4am!

Karen pulls open the door to reveal Dr. Zoe Anderson on the threshold.

ZOE

(Frantic) Have you seen my daughter?

KAREN

Which one?

ZOE

Chloe! She wasn't in her crib when I checked just now!

KAREN

Have you checked with building security?

ZOE

I'm so frightened.

Karen motions and Zoe comes in. She starts to pace the floor. Karen picks up the phone and dials.

ZOE

I left her at 11:30, sleeping soundly. She's never climbed out of her crib before!

KAREN

(on the phone) Thank you. (hangs up) Security is searching the building. Would you like some coffee?

ZOE

Oh, apologies, I have been rude.

Karen goes to the kitchen and begins preparing coffee.

KAREN

Not at all. I'd do the same if it were one of mine!

The phone rings. Karen answer it.

KAREN

Hello? (pause) Really? (worried)
Keep checking. (Hangs up) Several
other parents just reported their
children missing. Security has
called Chicago Police.

The coffeemaker beeps. Karen pours two cups and hands one to Zoe.

ZOE

Aren't you going to check your own
children?

KAREN

I have very sensitive hearing. I
heard a couple of them moan and
groan when you knocked.

The front door bursts open and Cindy charges in, dragging
Bonnie, dressed in a night gown.

CINDY

(loud) Where is he?

KAREN

(annoyed) Where is who?

CINDY

That kidnapper! Your husband!

KAREN

He's in our bed! He's in no shape
to take your children or anyone
else's!

Cindy bolts for the master bedroom. Bonnie smiles at Karen.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The light is off, but the door is open as Cindy charges in.
John lays on his back. Cindy turns on the light and marches
up to John. She shakes him.

CINDY

Where are they?

Karen comes into the room and pulls Cindy away from John.
Marie comes in running.

MARIE AGE 10

What's going on?

CINDY
(loudly) That man stole my
children!

MARIE AGE 10
What? Does he look like he could
steal anything?

Marie places herself between Cindy and John.

CINDY
He may not have stolen them
himself, but he arranged it. He
knew we were buying out our
contract tomorrow.

KAREN
What? You agreed to let Rachel
attend Harvard. There's no need to
buy it out!

CINDY
I changed my mind. I begged and
borrowed every penny I could. I
wasn't going to let him dictate
when she left our home!

Karen takes Cindy by the arm and drags her out of the room.
Marie looks at John. His eyes glitter.

MARIE AGE 10
Is that true dad? Did you arrange
for them to be kidnapped?

John smiles. He reaches under his pillow and pulls out a
piece of paper. He hands it to Marie.

MARIE AGE 10
(reads) That's Rachel's
handwriting. (looks up) A safe?
(pause) Where are they dad?

Bonnie appears at the door.

BONNIE - AGE 7
Isla Nano.

Marie turns to her. Bonnie motions for Marie to follow her,
then heads out the door.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Zoe and Karen sit on the couch. Cindy paces the floor. Bonnie comes in, with Marie following, an intense look of curiosity on her face. Karen looks up at Bonnie.

KAREN

Bonnie, did you know about this?

Bonnie sits next to Karen and nods. She hugs Karen.

BONNIE - AGE 7

I've known all along. He's sorry,
but felt it had to be done.

Cindy turns and sobs while yelling at Bonnie.

CINDY

What do you mean, you knew? You
let Rachel and your brother just
walk out without telling us? What
kind of daughter are you?

Bonnie looks sternly at Cindy.

BONNIE - AGE 7

I am not your daughter.

Bonnie stands and clears her throat.

BONNIE - AGE 7

I am the official ambassador for
the newly created country of Isla
Nano. As such I demand diplomatic
immunity.

CINDY

(incredulous) What?

Bonnie draws a deep breath.

BONNIE - AGE 7

Follow me and I'll show you the
videos John made, and tell you
everything you need to know.

CINDY

(suddenly sweet) Don't be silly,
sweetie. Where are they?

BONNIE - AGE 7

You don't need to know that right
now.

Bonnie begins to move out the door. Cindy grabs her by the arm, and Bonnie defends herself by flipping Cindy to her

back. Karen moves in to break them up.

KAREN

Wait, wait, wait. Bonnie, I know that you're trying to help. Why don't you show us what you mean. Cindy, please shut up for just a minute!

Bonny dusts her night gown off, looks at her mother with contempt and turns to the door. Cindy gets off the floor and grudgingly follows as Zoe, Marie and Karen follow Bonnie out the door.

INT. JOHN'S NEW OFFICE - NIGHT

The office is dark. On one wall a painting hangs. It is the painting of an island that Jenny drew 3 years earlier. The camera zooms slowly toward it. It shows the island with houses, an airfield, a small stadium and sports fields. It shows hand-painted pictures of children. A jet points toward the island. The picture blends in with a real island.

EXT. ISLAND - DAY

A jet comes toward the island, hovers over the landing pad and then settles down. The island is filled with children, mostly under the age of 3, playing or running around. A dome half covers the island. At the gate, Rachel and Chloe meet new arrivals. The camera zooms into Rachel's eyes and a picture of John is shown in each of her eyes. She smiles, bends down and picks up Chloe. Chloe waves. The dome begins to close. In Chloe's eyes, the form of a nanosoul appears, an hourglass half blue, half white. The children all wear shirts with the same logo. The camera pulls out of the gate as the dome closes, then moves above the dome, showing the same nanosoul logo.

END