

## The Element of Surprise

Title: The Element of Surprise

INT. DAYTIME TV TALK SHOW SET - DAY

LINDA, 50s, in professional suit, is looking straight at us, with a pleasing expression on her face.

Audience CLAPPING sound effect STARTS playing.

LINDA

Thanks, thanks a lot for tuning  
into us today, for this very  
special occasion, ...

Audience CLAPPING sound effect STOPS playing.

LINDA (CONT'D)

... because today we have here with  
us the heads of the biggest names  
in the entertainment industry.

She sits in an uncomfortable-looking designer armchair, which perfectly matches the whole style of the stage she is in the center of, and has, on either side, three men seated on a couch.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Ninety-nine percent of all the  
content that is consumed worldwide  
entertainment-wise is provided by  
the companies they are in charge  
of.

RONALD, 30s, BART, 30s, and TOM, 30s, sit to her right, while HARRY, 30s, FRANK, 30s, and JACK, early 40s, sit to her left. The furniture has a v-shaped layout. There is an oval table in front of them with some flowers and cups with the logo of the TV show on them. The logo is that of a fist bump over the name of the show, 'Ovaria'. Behind the people on stage, a screen displays a slideshow of beautiful landscapes, each fading into the next.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Please give a very warm welcome to  
our esteemed guests.

The audience CLAPS. The names of the men on stage and their positions in the companies they work for and have come to speak on behalf of appear written on a hologram over their heads:

Ronald Luckowsky, CEO of The Arts at their Finest;  
Bart Bernard, CTO of The Arts at their Finest;

Tom Feder, CFO of Lit and Burnt;  
Harry Osmanov, CEO of Lit and Burnt;  
Frank Casares, CTO of Funtastic;  
Jack Singh, CEO of Funtastic.

LINDA (CONT'D)

You have come a very long way in your journeys to fulfilling your dreams, which is a huge cause for celebration for us all, as it has, in turn, brought joy galore to all of our homes and hearts.

The whole audience tilts their heads to the right and smiles in unison. Spooky.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Ronald and Bart, let's start with you two. Without going into too much detail, please explain to our audience what your baby does, what it's about and how it contributes to the betterment of humanity as a whole.

RONALD

I see, the pressure is on! Well, Linda, first of all, thank you very much for having us on your show. It's a pleasure to be here, like always. I feel like we've almost become regulars by now!

LINDA

I know, right? The world just can't get enough of you guys, and me, I'm just a humble servant, I have to give my audience what it wants so as to preserve my job and all that!

LAUGHTER is heard coming from the audience.

RONALD

Oh, Linda, you're hilarious.

Ronald smiles.

RONALD (CONT'D)

So, in short, what we do at The Arts at their Finest is, basically, invest in talent.

(MORE)

RONALD (CONT'D)

We find smart and, you know, inventive kids with goals and aspirations and turn them into legends, because we are big believers in what the right guidance can achieve for kids with potential who are, of course, willing to persevere and work hard to carve their own paths.

"AWWW" from a pouting audience.

LINDA

You can definitely feel proud of yourselves. Given the world's skyrocketing suicide rate, we need more people invested in injecting some fun into our everyday lives. I'm guessing you lads at Funtastic are of the same opinion.

Jack's face beams at the camera.

LINDA (CONT'D)

'Cause your business also revolves around the art of nurturing and shaping young minds to produce geniuses, right?

One person from the audience bursts into a LAUGHTER that is immediately CUT SHORT.

JACK

That's right, Linda. You know, as the name of the company already suggests, at Funtastic, fun is at the core of what drives us. Fun as in fun-damental! That's our motto! And I am proud to say I've the best job ever, because working with creative children is such a huge blessing.

LINDA

I can only imagine. But still, with the amount of grownups we have in our country trying to come up with new ideas, why do all of you guys only work with children?

TOM

That's an excellent question, Linda.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

See, from my perspective, and this is just my point of view, children are more accommodating and grateful. They're less prone to hold on to their preconceived notions, less set in their ways, to put it bluntly.

HARRY

Yeah, and also, let's be candid, with globalisation, unfortunately, the competition is fierce, like, look at us, we approach entertainment in different ways, but at the end of the day, we are all in the business of making ...

Harry signs "Pay Me" with his fingers.

The audience rocks their shoulders, SNAPS their fingers to the beat and sings to the tune of "I WANT MONEY, THAT'S WHAT I WANT", the beginning of the chorus of The Flying Lizards' song, "Money".

HARRY (CONT'D)

... and, as you well said at the beginning, we have to give the audience what it wants and can only afford to put the best content out there, the one we can expect to be devoured. And there are thousands of variables that have to be taken into account, so many, it's dizzying. Like, according to the experts, it's humanly unfathomable how much goes into the process of making a media sensation, ...

An INSTAGRAM PICTURE of Taylor Swift's teenage daughter with Saint West, visibly aware of the heart-throb he has grown into, is shown on the screen behind them. He has his arm wrapped around her shoulder and she is holding him around the waist. They're flashing money and smiling at the camera.

HARRY (CONT'D)

... or anything worth casting a glance at, for that matter.

LINDA

So, basically, Harry, what you're saying is that humans can no longer create original content on their own.

The audience is taken aback with an "OHHH".

HARRY

They can, but they cannot expect their creations to achieve the level of sophistication required to reach an audience. And you know, as harsh as it may sound, we should be conscious of our limitations, because pain and disappointment stem precisely from the gap between expectation and reality.

"AHHH", the audience seems to understand.

LINDA

There's certainly no point in arguing that statement. The amount of articles confirming it is, frankly, overwhelming.

FRANK

Correct, and, as you already mentioned, suicide is the leading cause of death and we should all pitch in and do our best to combat this plague to the utmost of our capacity. We cannot leave anything to chance. Lives literally depend on us getting it right.

The audience nods.

LINDA (O.S.)

Never have truer words been spoken.

A man in the audience has fallen asleep and is SNORING LIGHTLY. A hand grabs him by the shoulder and rocks him, to induce him to join the rest in their nodding.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Ok, now that that's been settled, let's move on to more fun stuff. I'd thought we could play a game of Never Have I Ever, Audience Edition. What do you guys think? You ready? Let's have a look at the submissions received from our lovely audience during the time we were having our wonderful chat.

Linda grabs the tablet on the table in front of her.

The screen behind her displays the sentence she is about to read out loud, which appears written in a playful font style.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Ok, so here goes the first one:  
 "Never have I ever felt worthless."  
 Wow, we start strong! Ok, any takers?

BART

Well, Linda, I think we all have felt worthless at some point or the other of our lives. I mean, life is after all a roller-coaster ride of a box of chocolates, is it not? But the important thing to remember is that nobody is alone in this world and that, if you're going through a rough patch, you should reach out, because we, as a society, need you.

LINDA

Well said, Bart! Yass, I love that answer, so deep! Ok, good, now on to the next.

The screen at the back of the stage displays a new sentence, the one Linda proceeds to read out loud from her tablet.

LINDA (CONT'D)

"Never have I ever been deprived of the right to be heard." Wow, it seems our audience is all about radical honesty. But that's alright, I know you guys can handle anything thrown your way, so, who's feeling bold and unapologetic?

JACK

I don't know about feeling bold and unapologetic, but I'd love to give it a crack.

Some members of the audience sit up, lean forward and stretch out their necks in anticipation of Jack's speech.

JACK (CONT'D)

I think there is this public misconception that everyone has something to say and deserves to be heard. Unfortunately, I don't believe that to be the case.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

We live in a big world and we should all strive to become the best version of ourselves. If we were all born with the right to be heard and recognised no matter what we uttered, why would anyone make an effort to shape their discourse in a coherent way so as to make it understandable?

Phone RINGS.

LINDA

Jack, that makes total sense! I can't believe how intelligent you guys are, I'm truly amazed by your wisdom!

And RINGS.

LINDA (CONT'D)

And I'm absolutely loving every minute of this. Ok, ok, on to the next.

The image freezes.

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

MARTHA, 30s, wears an oversized T-shirt and sits on a couch with a dirty couch blanket thrown over her crossed legs. She looks unkempt, scruffy, depressed.

The walls are sprinkled with acquarella paintings, ethnic masks, and testaments to her success in literary contests, i.e. photos and framed certificates.

She looks at the screen of the phone on the table in front of her, next to the laptop whose screen is still displaying the last image from the previous scene, with the talk show scenario. PETER is calling.

She picks up the phone.

MARTHA

Yes?

PETER (V.O.)

I'm about to leave the office. Do you want me to order something for dinner?

MARTHA

Sure.

PETER (V.O.)

Sushi or Portuguese tapas?

MARTHA

Either's fine.

INT. PETER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

PETER, 30s, tall, handsome and on the phone. He slings his backpack over one shoulder and heads to the door.

PETER

Ok, I won't be long. How was your day?

Peter shuts the door behind him.

A small plaque on the side reads, "CTO, Peter Morente".

INTERCUT - MARTHA/PETER

MARTHA

I don't know why you even bother asking still.

PETER

Sorry. Let's talk at home. See you in half an hour.

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

She hangs up, leaves the phone on the table and turns her attention back to the laptop. She presses the button to exit the full screen mode of the video she was watching (of the talk show) and clicks on the other tab that is open next to it on her Internet browser.

It's her PROFESSIONAL PROFILE. It shows her picture, her name, "Martha Miller", tabs to browse her academic and professional history and a ranking system with graphs. The range goes from -100 to 100 points. Her rating is 5 points. Her value is displayed in an orange section. The green section to its right starts at 25 points, and the red to its left, at 0 points.

She stares at the page, lifts the index finger of her right hand and starts dancing with it over the spot on the screen displaying the number that stands for her position in the ranking.

SCRATCHING OF GUITAR STRINGS STARTS producing grating sounds.

Her finger strokes the spot, at first, lightly, but then, as the guitar SQUEAKS grow in intensity, she starts rubbing it, until, at the end, it looks almost as if she wanted to scrape the number off the screen.

Verging on abuse, that ceaseless SCRATCHING of guitar strings.

Her eyes go watery.

MARTHA

Enough!!

The awful NOISE STOPS.

Martha presses her eyes shut and opens them back again. They seem less watery.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Enough.

She stands up and goes to the bathroom. She washes her face, dries it off with a hand towel and looks at herself in the mirror. Her face is covered in acne scars.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

You are pretty. And smart. And  
you'll make it, 'cause nobody can  
tear you down.

She zooms in on her face.

Ligetti's POÈME SYMPHONIQUE FOR 100 METRONOMES STARTS playing.

She starts picking it. She keeps picking it, until it starts bleeding. She stops.

The soundtrack of the Poème Symphonique is jumped forward by half a minute, give or take.

She cleans the wound with a sheet of toilet paper, sighs and tabs with her finger on the bathroom countertop.

A menu appears. It shows icons for different filters. She clicks on one called "Natural Look".

The Poème Symphonique is jumped forward by another half a minute.

Upon selection, a masque is cast over her face that removes all of its scars, covers all its imperfections and smoothens it out. She examines the results.

Then she selects a filter, called "Date Night Look".

The next half a minute of the Poème Symphonique is skipped.

It casts a heavy layer of make-up on her face, giving her a glamorous and seductive date-night look. She throws a kiss at the mirror, but doesn't smile.

She then selects the "Classy Professional Look".

Fifty seconds of soundtrack, skipped.

It's an everyday no make-up make-up look, that comes with a bun updo. She slowly tilts her head both ways while examining her image in the mirror. She half smiles, still staring pensively back at the revamped version of herself.

Next she clicks on a folder called "Past Appearance". A pop-up window with a date picker opens, asking her to select a past date. The date on the screen reads, "12th of March, 2038".

She chooses the 30th of October, 2034.

Fifty seconds, skipped. Only very few metronomes keep TICKING, at a slower pace.

The filter that appears over her face makes it look like it did on that day, three years and a bit over four months prior to the time of occurrence of events. Her face looks noticeably younger and with less marks. Her hair is visibly shorter as well.

TICK. Ligetti's Poème Symphonique COMES TO AN END.

She smiles.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Some years take more of a toll than others.

INT. OFFICE ROOM - DAY

ARM WATCH on STEFFIE, HR Manager, in her late 20s. She is throwing a quick peep at it. It TICKS.

Three people sit around an oval table: STEVEN, Martha's boss, who is male and in his early 30s, Steffie and Martha, who has the same past appearance she retrieved in the previous scene, save for the makeup she's wearing to cover her scars. The office is almost entirely made of glass windows.

A LED-LIT WORD CLOCK hanging on the wall close to the door TICKS. The lit-up words scattered among the rest pinned on the black board that makes the fancy artifice form a sentence that reads, "IT IS HALF PAST TEN".

STEVEN

My problem with you is that, if I tell you to spend two extra weeks working on perfecting a solution to a problem, I would like you to listen and do as I say.

MARTHA

I understand, but didn't you start the meeting by saying you were disappointed in me because I'd added functionality to the system I'd been asked to develop?

STEVEN

So?

MARTHA

I really don't want to disappoint you. But when I feel like I've completed the task assigned to me and you ask me to spend more time working on it before casting a look at the results and without specifying what it is you believe is missing, how am I to know what's going to do the trick?

Steven is taken aback.

He takes a second to stare at Martha with eyes on fire.

The led-lit word clock TICKS again.

STEVEN

This is pointless. We are running in circles.

(turning to Steffi)

Can I take five?

STEFFIE

Sure!

Steven stands up and storms off the room.

Steffie looks at Martha.

STEFFIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. This is uncomfortable for all of us. But it's necessary, because you guys need to be able to get along. You understand that, right?

MARTHA

Of course, there is nothing I'd like more than for us to be able to get along. I just ...

Her voice cracks. TICK.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

... don't know how.

Tears start streaming down Martha's face.

STEFFIE

Allow me to give you a free piece of advice. Sometimes it's a bit hard to follow you. Maybe if you tried to be more concise ...

Martha smiles.

MARTHA (V.O.)

If I only knew how.

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Martha sits on the couch of the living room. Peter enters the room carrying, in one hand, his backpack, and in the other, a big delivery bag.

Martha doesn't even lift her eyes from the laptop screen to acknowledge his arrival.

PETER

Hi. I brought dinner.

Still no reaction from Martha.

Peter takes three boxes out of the bag, two beverages and two smaller dessert containers. He loads the fridge with the beverages and desserts and stacks the boxes on the kitchen counter. He then walks over to the couch.

PETER (CONT'D)  
 Scooch! I want to sit next to you  
 and tell you about my day.

Martha keeps staring at her laptop screen. Peter sits down to her right, facing her, with his left knee bent on the couch.

PETER (CONT'D)  
 Look at me!

Martha turns around and faces him, reluctantly.

PETER (CONT'D)  
 I know it sometimes feels like it's  
 never going to happen, but you have  
 to have a little faith in yourself.  
 You have been working your ass off  
 to improve your profile and it  
 shows.

Martha has a defeated expression on her face.

PETER (CONT'D)  
 The last package you developed was,  
 not cutting-edge, otherworldly!

A drop falls into a BUCKET OF WATER, generating waves on the surface, which suddenly is overlaid with a holographic display of speech bubbles filled with squiggles.

PETER (V.O.)  
 The pipeline to conceptually  
 arrange the elements of a speech  
 ...

Pieces cut from SQUIGGLES in the speech bubbles appear highlighted in different hues of green, orange and red. They even gain some definition and start sticking out.

PETER (V.O.)(CONT'D)  
 ... and extract the feature  
 importance of the different  
 appreciable notions that are  
 conveyed in conversation, ...

The WORDS "nice", "fine", "beautiful", "extraordinary", "relief", "funny", "excellent", "par excellence" fly away from the speech bubbles and to the forefront. The background behind the highlighted words and word compound, three in green, three in orange and two in red, changes to ...

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Martha and Peter are having a fight in the living room, but they can't be heard. Instead, the SOUND WAVES they produce appear drawn as cartoon illustrations over their scenario.

CARTOON SCRIBBLES circle the masks, paintings and certificates of literary awards on the walls.

PETER (V.O.)  
 ... taking more than fifty  
 conceptually distinct contextual  
 features into account, ...

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Martha and Peter sit on the couch, as previously seen. Peter holds Martha's hands.

PETER  
 ... come on, nobody is doing shit  
 this interesting and advanced, and  
 you know it!

Martha smiles weakly.

MARTHA  
 It's not making any difference.

PETER  
 Not yet. You cannot be this  
 impatient! You released the last  
 version just three months ago! And  
 since, you've had two interviews!

MARTHA  
 Yeah, but now I'm back at the  
 start. Exactly as I've been for the  
 past three years, without work,  
 without any sort of feedback,  
 hoping pointlessly that, thanks to  
 the few points I can rack up with  
 these projects of mine, I will soon  
 somehow seem reliable enough for a  
 company that cannot afford to hire  
 someone with a better score.

PETER  
 That's not true. You still haven't  
 heard back from Rewrite Your Story!  
 You may now be closer than ever!

MARTHA

That's a super long shot. It's already a miracle I've made it so far into the process.

PETER

Why do you say that? They should be so lucky to have you! Trust me, you wait and see.

He gives her a reassuring kiss and smiles at her.

PETER (CONT'D)

Come on, don't despair, you also have "Cassandras' Forecast", which is receiving more views and likes each day. You should write a new short story! Perhaps something a bit more light-hearted and less brainy, to up the fan club!

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Martha is alone on the couch, wearing an aquarelle-stained apron and holding a fine brush, with which she is retouching her painting on the white A5 card lying on the table in front of her:

MONSTER BULLDOG with its mouth open, displaying several layers of revolving teeth chains. It's fed envelopes and written pages, and it excretes different emojis.

MARTHA (V.O.)

Yeah, I can already visualise my motivational speeches becoming all the rage.

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Martha and Peter sit on the couch, still. Peter is holding Martha's hands.

She shoots a bitter look at Peter.

He frowns at her and clucks his tongue.

MARTHA

Sorry, today was just one of those days, you know? VoiceMEmail sent me a reply. Apparently they have found a candidate that fits their needs a bit better than me.

PETER

They'd given you a bad vibe in the last interview anyways, when they asked you to jot down the formula of the regularisation parameter of the linear regression model out of the blue.

MARTHA

Yes, but I can't afford to be picky right now. It may be a different story if I manage to reenter the workforce and spend a few years in it. But for the time being, I just need to get in.

PETER

Of cou--

The phone on the table in front of the couch RINGS, cutting him off. It's an unknown number. She looks at him and hesitates.

PETER (CONT'D)

Pick up, it might be important!

Martha picks up the call.

MARTHA

Yes? Martha speaking.

DIANE (V.O.)

Hi, it's Diane, from Rewrite Your Story.

MARTHA

Oh, hi, Diane! Nice to hear from you.

INT. DIANE'S OFFICE

Diane is behind a desk in a dark office only lit by her laptop screen.

DIANE

First of all, your preferred pronouns, she and her, if I remember correctly, is that still the case? I wouldn't want to overstep.

INTERCUT MARTHA/DIANE

MARTHA

I don't have much of a preference  
when it comes to pronouns, but-

DIANE

Good, yes, so, I am calling because  
I wanted to tell you over the  
phone, instead of via email. At  
your last interview, ...

Diane takes a sip from the cup on her desk.

DIANE (CONT'D)

... you managed to leave the team  
super impressed with your skill  
set, both hard and soft ...  
(clears her throat)  
... skills, of course, so we have  
decided to offer you the position  
and were wondering if you could  
drop by some time before the end of  
the week to sign the contract.

A huge smile spreads across MARTHA's face. She starts jumping  
up and down in place.

Peter smiles like saying, "See?"

INT. HQ OFFICE ROOM - DAY

Two people in suits, DIANE, late 20s, and CESAR, late 40s,  
sit opposite Martha at a long and expensive-looking wooden  
desk in a minimalist office with a projector and a screen.

Martha appears consecutively signing three pages of a  
several-pages-long contract bound into a book. The title on  
the cover reads "NDA".

DIANE

Nice. Now that that's out of the  
way, Cesar, would you mind  
explaining to Martha the details of  
the nine-months-long probation  
period lying ahead of her?

CESAR

Sure. So, as you may have noticed,  
you will be working with extremely  
sensitive information.

(MORE)

CESAR (CONT'D)

It's essential that we safeguard our client's right to privacy and you will need to have access to their entire history to complete your assignment, namely, the recordings of all the rooms of their Google Home device, ...

COMPUTER SCREEN divided into a grid layout displaying in each of its cells video footage of different rooms of what seems like a luxurious mansion.

CESAR (V.O.)

... together with those of their phone ...

UPSIDE-DOWN SEEN STREET, bouncing from left to right and back as the person holding the phone recording what is seen walks along it.

CESAR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

... and those of the phones of all the people who have ever wittingly or else caught them on camera.

COMPUTER SCREEN divided into a grid layout showing in each of its cells a different video footage.

CESAR

Aside from that, given that you may, in light of new discoveries, want to understand how trauma was defined, in order to perhaps tweak the definition by ...

Close-up of Cesar's face with academic expression.

CESAR (CONT'D)

... adjusting the weights of the model that was used to predict the kind of trauma suffered by each of the individuals in the data set exhibiting the symptoms, ...

His mouth is zoomed into.

CESAR (CONT'D)

... you will be supplied with millions of recordings of other people with and without traumas, of the same as well as different nature. All labeled data, of course.

Martha throws a quick glance at her watch.

CESAR (CONT'D)

I'm telling you all this because it's important you understand why we can't afford to take any risks with information leakage.

Diane presses a button on a remote control and a slide show starts being projected on the screen. Each slide contains a small video that shows spaces in 3D.

The first slide, with the title "Home, sweet home" shows a castle among lush greenery.

DIANE

That's why you will be placed for the entire duration of the programme that will hopefully grant you a place at our company in a special housing complex with the rest of the experts who have been chosen to work on this initiative, ten in total, including you.

Projector-slide-change WHOOSH and CLICK.

THE SECOND SLIDE is displayed. The clip on it shows a nice office space.

DIANE (V.O.)

You will have co-working areas, ...

Projector-slide-change WHOOSH and CLICK.

The clip of THE THIRD SLIDE shows a big living room, a small party area with a disco ball, and a room with couches and several instruments (a piano, a bass, a drum set, a few guitars, etc.) and a small chimney in one corner with colourful cushions on the floor.

DIANE (V.O.)(CONT'D)

... but also spaces to socialise,  
...

Projector-slide-change WHOOSH and CLICK.

The clip of THE FOURTH SLIDE shows a well-furnished and stylishly decorated apartment with a large bed, a couch, a working space with a desk and a laptop, apart from a kitchenette, a bathroom with bathtub, and a small terrace with an outdoor chair and table.

DIANE

... as well as, of course, each  
your own private apartment.

Diane turns to look at Martha.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Contact to the outside world will,  
unfortunately, have to be kept to a  
minimum. Phone calls will be  
allowed, of course, but need to be  
recorded, and visits will be  
restricted to four hours on Sundays  
and will only be allowed from  
visitors who have been properly  
vetted and approved first.

Projector-slide-change WHOOSH and CLICK.

The clip of THE FIFTH SLIDE shows a cabin in the middle of  
the woods that looks extremely inviting.

DIANE (CONT'D)

The cabin to serve as the visitors'  
meeting area is, though, like taken  
out of a fairy tale.

Diane turns her eyes away from the presentation to Martha.

Martha looks puzzled.

DIANE (CONT'D)

I know this may come as a bit of a  
shock, but we'll make sure all your  
needs are covered.

EXT. GREENERY BY A LAKE - DAY

Group of people sit in a circle and try to play the ukelele  
together but fail miserably at emitting anything even  
remotely resembling a harmony.

DIANE (V.O.)

Activities have been planned for  
the afternoons alongside morning  
yoga and mindfulness sessions. And  
the food, ...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A steel dome-shaped food cover is removed by hands in white Italian leather gloves, revealing a steaming PLATE with a steak, side vegetables, salad, and perfectly home-fried and cut fries.

INT. HQ OFFICE ROOM - DAY

Diane, Cesar and Martha still sit at the wooden desk.

DIANE

... well, let's just say we've also managed to convince an expert chef to embark on this exciting adventure together with the rest of you alpha geeks.

Diane smiles at Martha.

Projector-slide-change WHOOSH and CLICK.

THE SIXTH SLIDE is shown, with a man dressed as a chef emulating Uncle Sam and winking at the camera with his finger stuck out.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Because we decided very early on that we would not skimp on making sure you'd feel taken care of.

Projector-slide-change WHOOSH and CLICK.

THE SEVENTH SLIDE shows a gif of a cat sitting on a chair like a person and smashing the keyboard of the laptop in front of it with its front paws.

MARTHA

Oh, thanks, good to hear--

CESAR

(interrupting Martha)  
Regarding the job itself, your team will be tasked, first, with building a model to identify the events and word exchanges that caused the trauma now manifesting as transgenderism.

Projector-slide-change WHOOSH and CLICK.

THE EIGHTH SLIDE shows a gif of a grid, with, in each square, a different hand chopping a different vegetable.

Martha gulps.

CESAR (CONT'D)  
 Afterwards you'll be working on  
 developing a model to assemble ...

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Martha and Peter are seen screaming at each other in the living room, but they can't be heard.

CESAR (V.O.)  
 ... the best alternative versions  
 to those events, ...

Suddenly, a scanner goes over the scene and the resulting image is that of Martha and Peter making out.

CESAR (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 ... as well as to those that helped  
 the wound caused by them fester.

INT. HQ OFFICE ROOM - DAY

Diane, Cesar and Martha can still be found as they were in the previous scene.

CESAR  
 These improved versions will end up  
 being the ones with which our  
 client will have their memories  
 replaced, or well, retouched.

Projector-slide-change WHOOSH and CLICK.

The ninth slide shows a neurone being cut and reshaped by a laser.

MARTHA  
 But--

CESAR  
 (interrupting Martha)  
 Don't worry, you won't have to  
 concern yourself with that last  
 bit. And it won't look this gory in  
 real life either.

DIANE  
 (chiming in)  
 That's my fault, for not choosing  
 the right image, sorry.  
 (MORE)

DIANE (CONT'D)

But, yeah, expect a much more kid-friendly reality.

CESAR

It'll be a minimally invasive procedure involving hypnotherapy sessions combined with some very light brain stimulation. The neurolinguistic programmers will be the ones in charge of that side of the business.

MARTHA

Ok--

CESAR

You'll have a product owner assigned to your team and you'll be required to deliver ...

Code is pushed to a GIT SERVER on display on a laptop screen.

CESAR (V.O.)

... the last version of your code at the end of each week, so that your peers can review it and we can ensure no one gets stuck.

On a LAPTOP SCREENSHOT a window of a folder called "trauma\_handler" and, overlapping it, a window of an open requirements.txt file, which reads:

```
"beautifulsky==4.6.3
dreamer==0.14.1
librasosa==2.5.2
listener==6.3.1
lector==4.3.3
readtrex==7.7.5
multisaver==3.8.2
traduttore==0.2.9
imagine==5.2.2
neuralconstruct=8.0.0
aitransformer==6.6.6"
```

CESAR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You will have access to all our technology, which will help you process sound and image and retrieve data transformed into text.

Cesar turns to look at Martha.

CESAR

That way, you can just focus on the natural language processing aspect of the problem at hand.

MARTHA

That's good, it makes for a more immersive experience.

DIANE

Ah, you're going to love it. I can already tell! And you can rest assured that, although you won't be allowed outside, it's not like you're going to miss it. Not with the garden, the gym with a traditional-library feel to it, sauna, jacuzzi, pool, tennis and basketball court, ...

CESAR

A little something for each taste bud, really.

MARTHA

I appreciate the thought you have put into it. The whole experience sounds like a dream. But it's a huge commitment and I would have to discuss it with my partner. By when do you need an answer?

DIANE

Well, the sooner, the better, of course, because the programme starts next month and you still need to undergo all the physiological tests that allow us to anticipate all possible contingencies.

CESAR

Does tomorrow sound reasonable? We don't want to pressure you, but I feel like when you know, you know, don't you?

MARTHA

I guess so.

CESAR

Good! Then, if there aren't any further questions?

MARTHA  
As a matter of--

CESAR (CONT'D)  
Sorry to cut this short, but  
I have a meeting now and  
can't be late.

Cesar stands up and stretches his hand out to her. Diane and Martha follow suit.

CESAR (CONT'D)  
(shaking Martha's hand)  
It was a pleasure to see you again.  
If you have any further concerns,  
mail them to me. I'll answer them  
as best I can.

MARTHA  
Will do. Thanks for everything.  
You'll receive my final answer, at  
the latest, by tomorrow.

They all head to the door.

CESAR  
Hope you choose to join us, I get  
the feeling you would regret it  
otherwise.

EXT. STREET BY A CANAL - DAY

Martha and Peter are strolling down the street hand in hand.

MARTHA  
A full-term pregnancy.

PETER  
Yes, and I will miss you like hell,  
but it's the way in.

MARTHA  
I know. They mentioned they were  
willing to make an exception with  
me and look past my professional  
score because of how much they'd  
liked my work.

PETER  
See?

MARTHA  
But what if they turn out to be  
like Scrollable?

PETER

No, now you won't have to fear your boss feeling threatened by you.

MARTHA

Don't flatter me.

PETER

I'm just stating the facts.

MARTHA

The bigger issue I have with this offer, though, is that I don't know whether it can be done, what they want to do.

PETER

How do you mean?

MARTHA

Like, whether it's even feasible, and if so, whether nine months is enough time for us to succeed.

PETER

They must have hired very competent professionals.

MARTHA

Still. A cure for trauma?

PETER

You won't be asked to strive for a long-term solution.

MARTHA

Sure, it's just, within what fits the definition, transgenderism? That's where you'd start?

PETER

The resulting product markets itself.

MARTHA

I guess. But also, from the client's perspective, why would anyone seek help to convince themselves of the opposite of what they're claiming to believe in? Don't you find that bizarre?

PETER

Don't self-sabotage. These are good news! It's exactly what you were after!

She smiles.

MARTHA

You are right.  
(sarcastically)  
Perhaps this can become a new chapter in my life!

Peter leans in to kiss her.

PETER

It will, I'm positive, for both of us. And don't worry about the time we have to spend apart. We've already passed the acid test.

He smiles at her.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

NIKITA, male, 30s, enters the spacious living room, which has inspirational quotes of famous people on its walls. He is wearing a baby pink shirt.

NIKITA

Seems like I'm the only one on time.  
(scoffing)  
People.

Nikita wanders around the room in a slow pace, rubs the flower petals of a bouquet resting on a side table to check their authenticity and runs his finger over the main table, which has a buffet stretched out on it, to check for dust. He then examines the food, grabs a canapé on a toothpick, looks at it, smells it, touches it with the tip of his tongue, and finally, puts it in his mouth and starts chewing. He puts on a 'not-too-bad' expression on his face.

THEODORA, 30s, scrawny and dressed like a librarian, enters the living room.

THEODORA

Hi! I'm Theodora! Nice to meet you.

NIKITA

Likewise! Nikita. Theodora, you said?

THEODORA

Theo, Dora, call me whatever is easiest.

NIKITA

Cool, cool. So, which team are you in?

THEODORA

Oh! You mean here? NLP.

NIKITA

Me too! One or two? Natural or neural? Processing or programming?

THEODORA

One. Natural language processing.

NIKITA

Then we are in different teams. But it's exciting, right? To be here?

Nikita grabs another canapé and puts it in his mouth.

THEODORA

Oh, yes, super exciting. We'll be venturing into uncharted territory with the ground-breaking research we've been asked to implement.

Nikita nods repeatedly, while chewing. He seems distracted.

THEODORA (CONT'D)

Perhaps this can also turn therapeutic and we get to rid ourselves from our own demons.

NIKITA

So true. I can't wait to start. And I have so many techniques I've developed over the years I want to teach you guys ...

HASAN, early 20s, enters the living room. He has long hair and wears it in a messy bun. His T-shirt reads, "Zen as fuck".

THEODORA

Brilliant!

HASAN

Hi, guys! How is everyone doing?

THEODORA (CONT'D)

Hi! I'm Theodora. Theo, Dora, you choose. Nice to meet you!

HASAN  
 (shaking hands with  
 Theodora)  
 Hasan. My pleasure.

Hasan turns to Nikita and stretches out his hand.

HASAN (CONT'D)  
 And you are?

NIKITA  
 (shaking hands with Hasan)  
 Nikita. Hi!

HASAN  
 How awesome is this, right?

NIKITA  
 Yeah, we were just saying.

HASAN  
 I don't know why, to me this still  
 feels a bit like summer camp.

THEODORA  
 Totes. And we have beer!

Theodora grabs a beer bottle and looks for the opener, which is next to Hasan.

NIKITA (O.S.)  
 Well, imagine if we didn't. They  
 cannot expect us to be working  
 24/7.

Hasan grabs two further bottles, plus the opener. He opens both, offers one to Nikita, who takes it, and opens Theodora's, which she's holding out to him.

HASAN  
 I'm wondering how we're all gonna  
 cope with the stress we're gonna be  
 under in a few months time!

NIKITA  
 I see, already plotting! Don't get  
 me wrong, I love strategic minds  
 and am hundred percent there with  
 you, man. At first, it'll be all  
 smiles and no hard feelings, but  
 further down the road, without  
 barely any contact to the outside  
 world and way too much among us,  
 ...

Nikita glides his tongue over his lips.

NIKITA (CONT'D)

I mean, ... The situation is bound to lead to some friction, intellectual or else, if you catch my drift.

THEODORA

I beg to differ. There are lots of open spaces and resources available to us in case we feel trapped or anxious.

Hasan looks out the window into a LARGE GARDEN that turns near the horizon into a forest.

THEODORA (CONT'D)

And also, it's highly unlikely the company has invested so much into this to see it flop because of our lack of self-discipline. If they've placed their trust in us, it's because they believe we deserve it.

NIKITA

I'm just saying, history has rarely ever proven confinement to be a sure recipe for ...  
(clears his throat derisively)  
... bringing the best out of people.

HASAN

I'm just super into the science behind personality types and group dynamics. I, for one, am wired like a playful puppy, which makes it very easy for me to connect with people. But I consider myself quite the exception in my line of work.

NIKITA

Which is?

FRED, late 30s, a stud of groomed appearance in casual black attire, and HELEN, 20s, an attractive and voluptuous woman wearing a colourful, flowy, knee-long summer dress, walk into the living room.

FRED

Hi! I'm Fred.

HELEN

And I'm Helen, we just met in the hallway.

THEODORA

Oh, nice, more people! Hi, I'm Theodora, you can call me Theo or Dora or whatever suits you, really.

Fred and Helen take turns shaking everyone's hands.

FRED

Nice to meet you.

HELEN

Yeah, nice to meet you.

HASAN

Hasan, hi!

NIKITA

Nikita.

HASAN

So, I was about to tell Nikita I'm part of the Engineering team. What about you guys?

HELEN

A teammate! I'm also in Engineering, I'm a machine learning and back-end engineer.

FRED

I am in the hypno team.

NIKITA

Hypno?

FRED

I'll basically be checking that the right conditions apply to the environment in which the subliminal messages chosen by the programmers to repair the patient's inner speech are relayed through hypnotherapy.

A small frown sets on Hasan's face, whose eyes start to rove around the scene. He shudders at the sight of some canapés consisting of roasted eggplant and tomato stacked between mozzarella cheese slices.

Theodora looks puzzled.

FRED (CONT'D)  
 The repetitions, the volume, the  
 pitch, the emphases, the levels of  
 distortion, the background noise,-

HELEN  
 The atmosphere!

Fred smiles at her.

FRED  
 Yeah, that sort of thing. NLP2 is  
 what I think they're calling it  
 here.

NIKITA  
 Right, then you are with me.

FRED  
 (to Nikita)  
 Awesome!

NIKITA  
 (to Fred)  
 Of course. I'm more into the whole  
 stimulating-the-brain business,  
 though.

Theodora and Helen start chatting and began distancing  
 themselves from the men in the group.

THEODORA  
 (to Helen, aside)  
 I used to work as a machine  
 learning engineer for a while.

HELEN  
 (to Theodora)  
 Do tell?

FRED  
 (to Nikita)  
 Oh, so you'll be the one fixing the  
 magic mind-opening combo.

NIKITA  
 I don't know what that's supposed  
 to mean.

HANS, late 30s, one of the two members of the Product Owners  
 team, enters the living room and joins Theodora and Helen in  
 their discussion, as they stand closer to the entrance. He is  
 dressed in a tailored suit and wears his hair slicked back.

FRED

As much as I enjoy trampling on people's sensibilities, this was just meant as a joke. I'm sorry it didn't come across as intended.

NIKITA

Don't flatter yourself, you punk. You think you can upset me? Think again.

Hasan places his hand on Nikita's shoulder.

HASAN

Hey, hey, dude. He meant nothing by it, come on, let's all grab a beer and sit down, we lads have to be a united front.

They go sit down on one of the couches in the room as PHILIP, 30s, the third member of NLP2, MARKUS, 30s, the third member of NLP1, and DANIEL, 30s, the second member of the Product Owners team, wearing a Hawaiian shirt, enter the living room.

Martha arrives last. She grabs a beer and looks at the groups of people scattered around the room, hesitating over whom to approach.

MARTHA (V.O.)

They were already in groups. But then I found a girl who stuck out as someone I'd click with. So I approached her.

She spots Helen and goes join the crowd she's with.

HANS

You don't believe trauma should be cured?

HELEN

All I am saying is I wouldn't be able to do y'all's job.

Hans frowns.

HELEN (CONT'D)

To me, all these quick remedies are just driving us to feel alienated and lose interest in building rapport with people.

Theodora sticks her hand in her pocket, only to realise she doesn't have what she was looking to pull out of it with her.

Her eyes scan the room in search of something.

They fall on a BANANA, a KITCHEN BOARD, an EMPTY BEER BOTTLE, a HANDBELL, ...

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

Perhaps it's okay to have a missing piece, one a machine can't supply us with, so that we can feel the need to look for it in a more human exchange.

HANS

So you're all about the human exchange. Interesting! Preferably, of bodily fluids with telenovela hunks, I'm guessing. Or does everyone make the cut?

HELEN

I'm all about preserving some of life's appeal. But you may very well pre-program your ideal life and never deviate from it, God forbid something unexpected were to come along and rock your boat.

Helen sees that Martha has entered the group.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Hi, sorry, Helen, I didn't mean to scare you. I just get flared up easily, more so after a couple of drinks.

MARTHA

Martha, a pleasure.

Martha and Helen shake hands.

THEODORA

I think we should be more careful when discussing topics like these. Do we even know if we are being recorded? Do any of you guys know?

Martha takes a sip from her beer and pulls a grimace.

MARTHA

(to Helen)

You're right, these crafty concoctions are strong.

Theodora looks anxiously at all corners of the room.

HANS

(to Theodora)

Don't speak nonsense. Recording us without our consent? That goes against the law!

PETER (V.O.)

Who was she?

Martha strikes conversation with Helen.

MARTHA (V.O.)

An engineer. She's here to make sure the data is stored correctly, is easily accessible from within and secure from the outside, in a nutshell. But she's smart, and outspoken, which may play to my advantage in the long run.

The clip starts playing at FAST-FORWARD SPEED.

Martha and Helen are still talking animatedly.

PETER (V.O.)

I see, already playing Game of Thrones.

Both women go together to fill up their plates with food and grab another drink.

MARTHA (V.O.)

I had a great mentor.

Next they sit down in a separate corner and start gossiping about the people in the room.

PETER (V.O.)

Oh, so you own it? Now I'm intrigued. What else did you learn? I wanna hear all the gossip!

The clip goes back to playing at NORMAL SPEED.

MARTHA (V.O.)

You're the cutest! Ok, let's start with Markus.

Markus is chatting with Philip and Daniel in a corner of the room.

MARTHA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He is in my team. Super woke guy. You know the type.

(MORE)

MARTHA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Hardcore vegan, as in has a larger-than-life-size replica of an avocado with voodoo pins sticking out of it in the freezer. But he seems harmless.

MARKUS  
 And the technology is there! That's what drives me peanuts!

INT. MARKUS' APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Markus is praying in front of a shrine to Greta Thunberg, who appears depicted as Venus in a painting resembling Sandro Botticelli's 'The Birth of Venus'.

MARKUS (V.O.)  
 We could be doing so much more to live in a society of equal opportunities ...

INT. LIVING ROOM OF THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Markus talks to Philip and Daniel.

MARKUS  
 ... that I simply don't get why we have to spend hours upon hours, centuries upon centuries, chewing theoretical crap over and over.

Markus continues talking, his voice on mute.

MARTHA (V.O.)  
 Judging by the way he speaks, the only peanuts he's ever tasted are the ones to be found inside cans.

INT. MARKUS' APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

The GRETA in the portrait crosses her legs further.

INT. MARTHA'S APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Martha sits in a chair, while talking on a landline phone.

PETER (V.O.)  
 And I here thinking hipsters were in vogue.

MARTHA

I wouldn't know. After twelve years of being in a committed and strictly monogamous relationship, I sometimes fail to keep up with the latest trends.

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Peter is sitting up in bed, his hairy chest exposed. He's on the phone.

PETER

He must be some lucky gent!

INTERCUT MARTHA/PETER

MARTHA

Stop it, you're gonna make me blush!

Martha has a silly smile.

PETER has one too.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Theodora is speaking to Hans, who seems to be looking for an excuse to leave the conversation.

MARTHA (V.O.)

And then there is Theodora, my other teammate.

THEODORA

Imagine we develop this technology and people all over the world start making decisions with their heads, instead of their hearts.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT [ANIMATED]

THEO, an animated character with Theodora's facial features who bears a striking resemblance to Aladdin's Jasmine sits on a levitating carpet and stretches her hand out to ABDUL, an animated character who looks like Hans in Aladdin's costume.

THEO

(singing in the tune of the chorus of Aladdin's A WHOLE NEW WORLD)

(MORE)

THEO (CONT'D)  
 A world that's a whole ...  
 one that just got a brand new face-

The song is interrupted by the sound of a cassette tape getting stuck.

INT. MARTHA'S APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Martha is still on the phone, in the same position as in the previous scene.

MARTHA  
 But she's a sweetie. And the only  
 other girl besides me and Helen, my  
 new ally.

PETER (V. O.)  
 The girl squad.

MARTHA  
 Yeah, I think the girl squad is  
 pretty alright.

PETER (V. O.)  
 Nice! See? Already forging  
 alliances. And who else is there?

INT. LIVING ROOM OF THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

The groups have changed their distribution. Nikita and Daniel chat with each other close to Theodora, Fred, Markus and Philip, who form another group.

Hasan chats with Hans a bit further away.

MARTHA (V.O.)  
 The only other person I got to talk  
 to for longer than a couple of  
 minutes was Hans, one of the two  
 product owners.

PETER (V.O.)  
 And? What vibe did he give off? Was  
 he chill?

Hans checks his teeth and winning smile in the round pocket mirror at the end of a golden chain receding from view at the second to last button of his vest.

MARTHA (V.O.)  
 No, chill is definitely not how I  
 would describe him.

Hasan is at the fridge, taking a couple of beers from the inside.

PETER (V.O.)

Why?

Hasan returns.

Hans puts the mirror back into his right vest side pocket, takes the beer Hasan hands out to him, raises it to his eyes' level and stares ostensibly at the label.

MARTHA (V.O.)

He thinks he has conquered the top of the pyramid and can now afford to look down on the rest of us clueless mortals, who don't seem to get that, when armed with faith, all goals are attainable.

Hans frowns.

Hasan tries to strike up conversation with him, while Hans dusts off his suit's lapel.

PETER (V.O.)

Religious type.

MARTHA (V.O.)

Yes, but I doubt he's ever felt like sinking to his knees.

The camera shows a 2000-piece puzzle of Michelangelo's 'The Creation of Adam', complete except for one missing piece, the one of the space between the fingertips of Adam and God.

MARTHA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He just gets a hard-on when he glimpses an opportunity to put someone in their rightful place.

A MALE HAND completes the puzzle by inserting the missing piece, which CLICKS into place.

INT. MARTHA'S APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Martha is still speaking on the landline phone, like seen previously.

MARTHA

I played along like a good girl,  
'cause I got the feeling he's the  
kind of guy you don't want to  
cross.

PETER (V.O.)

I see. But you don't have to work  
with him every day, do you?

MARTHA

Just for an hour or so on alternate  
days. Unfortunately, he's the  
product owner assigned to our team.  
NLP2 has Daniel and we have him.

PETER (V.O.)

Sorry to hear that. But, overall?

MARTHA

Good, yes. I'm happy. I miss you  
already, which is not ideal, given  
it's barely been a week.

PETER (V.O.)

I know, me too. But it's easier  
when I know you're enjoying  
yourself.

MARTHA

So far, so good.

Martha smiles.

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Peter, resting his back against the bed headboard, looks at  
his phone pensively for a second, sighs, leaves it on his  
beside table and turns off the light.

Everything goes black.

An OUROBOROS LOADING GIF plays over the black background.

After loading is complete, someone KNOCKS at the door.

INT. MARTHA'S APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Martha turns on the light and looks at the alarm clock on her  
bedside table. It strikes 8 a.m.. Martha stands up and goes  
to the door. She opens it. Theodora is at the other side. She  
looks at her and notices Martha's disheveled appearance.

THEODORA

Sorry if I woke you, but I thought you would want to know.

Martha throws a quizzical look at her.

THEODORA (CONT'D)

(talking fast)

Hans is convinced we are at the crossroads, because management is urging us to assure them we have things under control, our deadline for identifying the problem's origin and providing a solution is Friday, in two days, Helen hasn't pronounced herself on the issue as of yet, and so,-

MARTHA

Wait, slow down. You're talking about the brief data transmission delay of last week? I thought that wasn't such a big deal and had been sorted out already!

THEODORA

It wasn't and it should have, but now he's threatening with reporting her at the 12 o'clock debrief scheduled with management.

MARTHA

What?

THEODORA

I shouldn't be telling you this, but I know you two were tight, at least before your falling out, and I don't think she's going to hang around for long. Perhaps now's the time to say goodbye.

MARTHA

No, no, she can't be let go off!

THEODORA

I know, this isn't the outcome I was hoping for either.

MARTHA

No, Theo, you don't understand. This will ruin her life! Her career can't take another hit!

## THEODORA

Nobody deserves to be in her situation, but it's not like she's all innocent either. She's the only one who can shed some light on what the people at the top said had raised their alarms, and she's been zero co-operative thus far. That, coupled together with what has surfaced, it's not allowing for much room for doubt.

Martha looks concerned.

## INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Martha looks at herself in the mirror. She is wearing the make-up look of the "Classy Professional Look" filter that is part of the repertoire of masks stored in her bathroom countertop at home and was seen cast over her face previously, unlike her reflection, which smiles back at her with a clean, scarred, make-up-free appearance and long hair worn loose over her shoulders.

## MARTHA'S REFLECTION ON THE MIRROR

I hope you're happy.

Martha smushes her head into the mirror and CRACKS it.

Her forehead starts bleeding. Steven's grim smile of satisfaction spreads over his fractured face, some of whose slivers start to manifest on a fair share of the mirror shards.

PRE-LAP: GIGGLES.

## EXT. GARDEN IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

The complex' residents are having a mindfulness-slash-yoga session in the garden with a female TRAINER. Martha and Helen are next to each other, stretching on their mattresses while trying to suppress a laugh.

## TRAINER

And now, release, slowly, slowly.

## MARTHA

Stop it, they're gonna call us out.

HELEN

Ok, but just do yourself a favour  
and, you now, every now and again,  
when you're feeling lonely and  
such, and the prick of your husband  
takes longer to take the call,  
picture that toned mindful ass  
slamming you against the kitchen  
table.

Fred is shown from behind, stretching.

Martha pulls a face of shock and clucks her tongue at Helen.

The trainer starts clapping.

TRAINER

Ok, guys, well done! The class is  
over for today. I'm impressed with  
most of you guys' progress,  
everyone knows who I'm talking  
about.

The trainer winks at Hasan.

TRAINER (CONT'D)

Keep it up! And see you all  
tomorrow morning!

People say goodbye, stand up, gather their things and head to  
the locker rooms.

Martha wipes her face with the hand towel she had lying next  
to her mattress.

HELEN

You know, self-love is one such  
activity we barely have time for  
but would make for a warm welcomed  
addition to our calendars.

MARTHA

Oh, you can't find time to jack off  
to the collection of suitors you're  
assembling, 'cause meeting up with  
them is cramming your schedule?  
Ain't that a shame!

Helen throws her hair back in a melodramatic manner.

HELEN

Don't know what you're talking  
'bout?

MARTHA

Speaking of which, you're being a terrible friend, cause common courtesy demands you allow me to vicariously enjoy the wild wet dreams you're to live out for the both of us, but you've yet to spill the tea on how your pseudo so-not-a-date get together in the woods with Nikita went.

HELEN

Shh.

Helen looks around her and drags Martha by the arm to a more private corner.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I don't want anyone to know.

MARTHA

What?

HELEN

He couldn't.

MARTHA

Couldn't what?

HELEN

Perform.

MARTHA

Shut up!

HELEN

I know.

MARTHA

After the constant, no, in actuality, ceaseless bragging about his conquests and sexploits. I really thought he would at some point ask to hold a contest in the living room to put his faculties on display.

HELEN

And then you blame me for being mean.

MARTHA

I know, sorry, you poor thing. But come on, you have to tell me exactly what happened. You know me, I need the deets.

HELEN

Well, you know how he'd been bringing me coffee and flowers, all attentive and caring, putting his best foot forward to become a good listener, despite tripping at times and winding with it in his mouth.

MARTHA

Aha.

HELEN

He wasn't my go-to option, you know that. But after Daniel told me, well, what I told you last time, I don't know, I wondered, why not? He wasn't having second thoughts. And I was kinda hoping it would make Daniel realise what he was missing out on.

MARTHA

I get that. You wanted to see him at least mildly hurt, after his retreat.

HELEN

Kinda.

Helen gets emotional and tears up.

MARTHA

Hey, don't get all teary on me because of that pathetic excuse for a man.

Martha squeezes Helen's arm to comfort her. Helen fans her eyes with her hands, while trying to hold back the tears.

HELEN

You're right. I'm cool, so cool. But that's the thing.

She tears up again.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I haven't told you the worst part yet.

She takes a beat to wipe off her tears.

HELEN (CONT'D)  
I made a mistake.

Martha rubs Helen's arm.

MARTHA  
Come on, girl, don't worry,  
whatever it is, with the  
unstoppable force of our two great  
minds at work together, I'd like to  
see anything try and faze us.

Martha offers Helen her towel.

MARTHA (CONT'D)  
Fill me in, but start at the  
beginning.

Helen wipes her nose with Martha's towel.

A look of disgust flashes through Martha's face, before quickly vanishing behind a smile, meant as an emotionally supportive one.

HELEN  
So, at the end, I caved in to  
Nikita's wishes and met up with  
him, mainly to hear more about his  
fascinating research. He'd asked  
Jeffrey to cook something special  
for the both of us. A romantic  
dinner.

Helen pulls a face.

HELEN (PRE-LAP)(CONT'D)  
Imagine.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Helen and Nikita sit around a small romantically dressed table with fancy-looking food on their plates.

Nikita, who looks particularly well put-together, raises his glass.

NIKITA  
Salute!

They clink their glasses.

HELEN

Nasdrovia!

NIKITA

Funny you'd say that, "nasdrovia", Russians don't actually say that when toasting.

HELEN

What do I care what Russians say? This is my "nasdrovia" and it would seem you got the gist of what I meant by it.

NIKITA

You're so fiery, I love that about you!

HELEN

Hold your horses, Nikita. I am not jumping into bed with you just yet.

NIKITA

Not with me, you aren't.

Nikita raises his brows and smiles archly.

HELEN

Tell me. I see you're dying to. What have you heard?

NIKITA

It's not like it's a secret by now. Daniel had no qualms about laying it all out there.

Nikita draws spirals on the tablecloth with a spoon, while looking into Helen's eyes.

NIKITA (CONT'D)

Gotta love his narrative skills.

Nikita flashes her a smile, still drawing spirals with his spoon.

NIKITA (CONT'D)

What do you think got me so interested in you in the first place?

Helen takes the spoon he is playing with from him and puts it down on the table.

HELEN

Well, aren't you funny!

NIKITA

You don't believe me, ask Hans,  
he'll be happy to confirm my story.

HELEN

Perfect! In that case, you already  
know what there is to know.

NIKITA

I'm just curious. What did you see  
in him, being you the woman you  
are?

HELEN

You sure you wanna play that game?

NIKITA

Hit me.

HELEN

You wouldn't understand it,  
anyways.

NIKITA

Come on, show me a bit of respect!  
What sort of halfwit do you think  
you're talking to?

Helen smiles.

HELEN

He doubts, he hesitates, he doesn't  
have it all figured out.

NIKITA

And that's sexy?

HELEN

It is to me.

Helen plays with her fork and a piece of food on her plate.

Then she lifts her eyes slowly and seductively to look Nikita  
in his.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Sometimes.

Helen smiles.

Nikita smiles and reaches to lay his hand on hers, resting on the table.

NIKITA

How come? Now you've got my attention.

HELEN

I don't know, why do people like what they like? Weren't you the ultimate expert in that?

NIKITA

Oh, trust me, you don't want to hear my expert opinion.

HELEN

I don't?

Nikita smiles and clears his throat.

NIKITA

I think you are secretly head over heels for me, and if you decided to dip a toe into those murky waters it's just because you wanted to switch things up a bit and infuse some excitement into an otherwise uneventful existence, probably due to the steady exercise of sound judgement.

HELEN

Bravo!

Helen claps, but her facial expression doesn't read she's impressed.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Nice move! So, let me try and get this straight. Sleeping with you equates to steering my life back on track?

She looks extremely serious.

NIKITA

Sorry, I'm such a jerk! That was completely out of line and probably the reason why I'm still single.

Helen breathes out forcefully.

HELEN

It's alright. No harm done.

She takes a large sip from her glass and a bite of the food on her plate.

NIKITA

Argg! Right when everything seemed to be going so smoothly, I had to go fuck it up.

Helen swallows and takes another sip from her drink. She is starting to calm down.

She wipes the corners of her mouth with her napkin.

HELEN

No, it's not you. I get defensive, because, unlike the character in your story, I ...

Helen stops speaking and looks away. She's trying hard to choke back tears. Nikita lies his hand back on hers.

NIKITA

You don't have to tell me if you don't want to.

He smiles.

She smiles back at him, gently.

EXT. GARDEN IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Helen and Martha are still in the garden after the mindfulness-slash-yoga class. Everyone else has left.

HELEN

And I blurted it out, 'cause I still gotta learn how to rein in my bloody trap! I made him promise to keep it a secret, but now that he's been hurt in his pride, all bets are off!

MARTHA

I don't understand, what did you tell him?

HELEN

Promise?

MARTHA

You kidding me? Cross my heart and hope to die.

HELEN

I am two points away from being unemployable.

MARTHA

What? Wow! First of all, I'm very sorry to hear that, I'm not the greatest champion of the system myself, but what I don't get is why you'd tell him, Nikita, of all people?

HELEN

He, I don't know, I felt like he seemed into me, and if I was going to disappoint him, I thought, why wait? Better do it right off the bat.

Martha rubs Helen's forearm and nods.

HELEN (CONT'D)

We've been locked down in this gilded cage for over three months now, I need someone to confide in, like you have your Peter and, when Daniel bailed on me, I felt ...

Helen chokes up.

MARTHA

Rejected, as you should, it's completely normal.

HELEN

And he was being presumptuous.

MARTHA

Nikita? As is his wont.

HELEN

And I wanted to prove him wrong.

MARTHA

Have you thought, knowing him, he might have engineered the whole situation so as to tease it out of you? I wouldn't put it past him.

HELEN

And what should I do if he tries to use it as leverage against me?

MARTHA

As I see it, the worse that can happen is: ...

Martha makes a small pause and looks straight at Helen.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

The information gets out.

HELEN

What do you mean, "it gets out"?

MARTHA

It gets out as in all of us inside the complex find out about the fact that your score is low and that you told Nikita.

HELEN

That would be horrible! I'd be ostracised!

MARTHA

But you can't get fired over it, right? Because the people who run the programme, the ones who hired you knew it and hired you regardless.

HELEN

Of course. But still, ...

MARTHA

I know, but if it comes to that, these are all intelligent people and can't ignore the fact that the company hired you for a reason.

HELEN

Yes, but that won't keep them from wondering whether it was the higher ranks' Good-Samaritan spirit getting in their line of vision or my strategic approach to opening my legs.

Helen pauses. Martha nods in silence with an understanding look on her face.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Don't look at me like that! You can't possibly understand it.

Martha chuckles.

MARTHA

And what did Nikita say?

HELEN

He was surprisingly nonchalant about it, actually, now that you mention it. Bet he strained a brain muscle trying to avoid passing judgement.

MARTHA

Or not.

HELEN

But can I risk finding out?

MARTHA

I think you may.

INT. OFFICE AT THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Martha and Markus sit next to each other in front of a desk with a laptop and two big computer screens. The one on the right displays a scatter plot with, on the x-axis, the label "Ratio of nominal versus verbal speech components" and, on the y-axis, "Probability of having suffered sexual abuse at a young age". The title reads, "Feature #26". The figure on the left screen, called "Feature #27", shows another scatter plot with, on the x-axis, the label, "Relative frequency of notions belonging to ontology branch #15". Same y-axis label as the plot on the right screen.

MARKUS

My professional score is a disaster.

EXT. GARDEN IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Helen is still with Martha, alone in the garden with their yoga equipment.

HELEN

Wait, what? Rewind that for me, please.

INT. OFFICE AT THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Markus, still sitting, as seen previously, next to Martha, looks disgruntled.

MARTHA

I asked you to review it already three weeks ago and you've been avoiding me like the plague for the past two. No word about the presentation whatsoever. Have you even seen it?

MARKUS

You don't know what it is you're asking of me.

MARTHA

All those speeches about what's fair and what's not, tell me, what exactly were they inspired in?

Markus scowls at her, eyes ablaze with indignation.

MARKUS

What do you want me to conclude? That their behaviour, linguistic choices and mannerisms are statistically closer to that of people who have suffered sexual abuse at a young age? Yes, according to your findings, it would seem that way. You should definitely share the presentation with the rest and submit your code, but don't urge me to substantiate your allegations.

MARTHA

Why not?

MARKUS

Come on, Martha, can't you see I'd very much like to drop the topic now?

MARTHA

Your professional score.

MARKUS

What? No. I don't know what you're talking about.

MARTHA

I knew it! Mine is shit too.

MARKUS

Don't say?

MARTHA

Markus, come on.

MARKUS

Ok, so perhaps it's best if you forgot about these results, at least for the time being.

MARTHA

I'd love to, but if we choose the events related to the incident to be altered, because they're obviously related to her trauma, we're burying the evidence of it ever happening and leading to consequences.

MARKUS

It's what they want. We are only here to honour their wishes.

MARTHA

Whose wishes? Theirs or hers?

MARKUS

Ok, now you're just being utterly disrespectful for no reason.

INT. LIVING AREA OF THE CABIN - DAY

The room looks cozy bordering on busy. It exudes the unmistakable tang of Ukranian-granny-inspired interior designs. Mats with flowers embroidered in warm and bright colours rest over almost every slightly bigger surface.

There are stuffed-animal taxidermy heads on the walls.

Aside from that, there is a guitar and a piano, a huge-amount-of-inches-long TV, and a vintage-looking annexed kitchenette.

Peter sits on a couch while Martha lies with her head on his lap.

PETER

And what did she say?

MARTHA

I didn't share with them my doubts  
about whether our patient is, in  
fact, our client.

Peter strokes Martha's shoulder.

PETER

That's good, you should keep that  
to yourself.

MARTHA

Nor my latest discovery.

He puts on a serious face.

PETER

Martha! Keep digging and you'll end  
up digging your own grave!

Martha sits up.

MARTHA

I need to know! How am I going to  
decide what to do otherwise? And it  
doesn't look pretty, I can tell you  
as much.

PETER

What if they discover what you've  
been up to? How are you going to  
talk your way out of it then?

MARTHA

I'm being careful. I'm not leaving  
any trace on the company's hardware  
and I'm meeting all the deadlines  
at work. Hans told me last Friday  
he was very happy with what I'd  
delivered so far.

PETER

That's good! See? And now that  
you're making progress and are in  
everyone's good graces, why would  
you risk being finally able to  
escape the ordeal your life had  
become? This could have an  
irreversible impact on your score!

Martha is furious.

MARTHA

Everything revolves around the fucking score! My whole life is a slave to a highlighted number on a virtual space!

PETER

Hey, don't yell at me, I'm not the one at fault here!

MARTHA

I know, apparently, it's nobody's fault but my own.

PETER

And what do you want me to do? If we try to go off the grid, we lose all possibility of ever returning. We'd have to go back to living in a medieval society, for all intents and purposes. You prepared for that?

MARTHA

I'm aware of the implications. Thank you, professor.

PETER

Sorry, I didn't mean to lecture you.

Peter pulls her gently towards him.

PETER (CONT'D)

Come here.

He gives her a kiss on the lips and smiles at her.

PETER (CONT'D)

We barely have time to see each other, let's not waste it fighting.

She half-smiles and goes back to laying her head on his lap.

He returns to caressing her shoulder.

PETER (CONT'D)

I just worry, because I sometimes feel like you forget what we've gone through.

MARTHA

I wish that were an option.

PETER

But you're not taking the aftermath  
this little diversion of yours  
could have to heart.

MARTHA

I am, I swear. But I have to wait  
for the models to finish training  
anyhow, and in the meantime, I just  
want to explore all the aspects of  
the problem I'm facing, not to do  
anything about it, just to be aware  
of them, that's all.

PETER

Promise you won't address the topic  
with anyone until you have a plan  
of action we've been able to go  
over together?

MARTHA

Promise.

A STUFFED RHINO winks at Martha from the wall.

She looks startled.

THEODORA (PRE-LAP)(V.O.)

Nobody deserves to be in her  
situation, ...

INT. MARTHA'S APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Martha and Theodora are still at the door, as we had left  
them.

Martha has a blank look on her face.

Theodora's voice sounds very distant and muffled.

THEODORA

(barely audible)  
... much room for doubt.

MARTHA

Wait, how did you find out about  
her score. Did she tell you?

THEODORA

That's not what's important right  
now-

MARTHA

It is to me!

THEODORA

I understand you're angry, but don't take it out on me.

MARTHA

Sorry, but, come on, you owe me the truth, if nothing else, considering I saved your ass by covering for you and outright lying to Hans in the last meeting we had.

THEODORA

I've also not told anyone about the amount of storage space you're blocking.

MARTHA

See? We should be sitting down to have a chat and clear the air, like friends who hold each others' backs do.

Martha opens the door wider and signals Theodora to step inside the apartment.

THEODORA

I don't know. I appreciate the gesture, I do, but with all that's going on-

MARTHA

Don't decline the offer just yet. What if I told you I know you're as desperate as her to keep your job here?

Theodora freezes.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Come inside. I won't hold you up, I promise.

Theodora and Martha head inside the apartment.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I'm going to make myself a cup of coffee, you want one?

Martha goes to the kitchenette and fixes herself a cup of coffee by putting a cup inside a machine and pressing a button. Theodora heads to the couch.

THEODORA

I won't be staying long.

MARTHA

Still, I'll fix one for you too, so I'm not the only one drinking. Sugar, milk? I always put plenty of both in mine.

Martha takes out the previous cup, filled with coffee, and puts in a new one.

THEODORA

Black is fine, thanks.

Martha returns with two cups of coffee.

She puts them on the table, gets a chair and sits down opposite Theodora.

MARTHA

Ok, let's get right into it then. How did you find out?

THEODORA

First I'd like you to apologise. How dare you presume that my professional score is low?

MARTHA

Because mine is too, and the three girls in this, all with low professional scores, purposely so, sounds more likely than accidentally two out of three, more so, if they'd been assured they were the exception.

Martha takes a sip of coffee and looks at Theodora.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Come on, Theo, you do the math.

Theodora sighs.

THEODORA

I think your argument is based on a set of questionable assumptions. For starters, we don't have enough data points to arrive at statistically relevant conclusions.

Martha shoots a look at her that says, "Really?". Theodora takes a sip of coffee.

THEODORA (CONT'D)

But ok, continue, what's your theory?

MARTHA

This programme we are enrolled in is a high-risk investment for the people at the top. Many things can go sideways. But they have a brand they care to keep clean. And women, come on, as if I had to tell you, we're the most convenient scapegoat there is. And they'd be able to say they'd just wanted to give us a chance.

Theodora looks pensive.

INT. HALLWAYS INSIDE THE HOUSING COMPLEX'S MAIN BUILDING - NIGHT

Theodora approaches the Product Owners' office with her laptop open and a code script on her screen. The door to the office has been left ajar and several male voices can be heard coming from the inside.

Theodora stops at the door and starts listening to what they're saying.

FRED (PRE-LAP)(O.S.)

I can't quite put my finger on it,  
...

INT. OFFICE AT THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Fred, Daniel, Nikita and Philip are drinking beer and chatting.

FRED

... but there is something almost frightening yet captivating about her that leaves me craving for more.

DANIEL

Don't get overly excited, Fred, she's a married woman.

NIKITA

Married, perhaps, but closed for business?

INTERCUT - OUTSIDE/INSIDE OFFICE

Theodora sits down on the floor and starts spying through the door gap.

PHILIP

Oh, my God, Nikita, always stirring up shit!

NIKITA

Why don't you go cry to your momma or lose your virginity to a hand puppet or, I don't know, whatever it is adorable little bed-wetters do nowadays that doesn't involve crashing grown-up parties?

PHILIP

I-

NIKITA

Yeah, not interested.  
(turning towards Daniel)  
And what about you, you Romeo, you're definitely punching above your weight!

DANIEL

I'm bound by the don't-kiss-and-tell honor code of the old school.

NIKITA

Pff, you're no fun.

Nikita shakes his head and drinks from his beer bottle.

NIKITA (CONT'D)

I feel like we should be living our best lives right now, you know, enjoying the moment, at the peak of our careers, and perchance, it's not like they've send us much to work with, but, you know, have our efforts rewarded every now and again. As in, ...

He rocks his hips as if he were fucking someone from behind.

FRED

You're not getting laid, is that what you're moaning about?

NIKITA

Precisely, my moaning has been largely misdirected! I mean, there's not much on the menu, really. The only babe in sight is taken by this motherfucker over here.

Nikita wraps an arm around Daniel and pulls his head down.

FRED

Nikita, let the poor guy breathe.

Nikita frees Daniel from his grip.

NIKITA

(talking to Fred)

The one you jerk off to could have a pass, but is also off limits, or well, to be determined.

(talking to everyone)

And the only one left, I don't know, I think I'd rather climb onto Gollum.

Theodora is shocked by the general laughter that erupts inside the room. She claps her laptop shut in anger, which lets out a bang that can be heard inside the office.

PHILIP

Did you hear that?

NIKITA

No, Philip, the voices are just inside your head.

FRED

I think I heard it too.

Fred stands up and goes to the door. He opens it and looks to both sides of the hall, but doesn't see Theodora, because she is hiding behind the door. Fred shrugs and closes the it shut.

INT. MARTHA'S APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Martha and Theodora still sit on the couch in front of their cups of coffee.

THEODORA

Say, for the sake of argument, I buy into your story. What do you suggest we do moving forward?

MARTHA

We have to help Helen keep her job.

THEODORA

Have you gone absolutely bonkers?  
The decision has already been  
taken, there is nothing left for us  
to do.

MARTHA

That's how fast you want to give up  
on us three musketeers?

THEODORA

Are you kidding? What do you  
propose we do then?

MARTHA

Daniel was in the committee as  
well, right? What did he say?

THEODORA

He barely spoke.

Martha chuckles.

THEODORA (CONT'D)

The evidence was clearly pointing  
towards her, though. I couldn't say  
much in her defence either. The  
data packages that were momentarily  
unavailable were those related to  
the sensorial recordings of the  
fence, to boot, which makes the  
need for a firm response all the  
more pressing.

MARTHA

But I thought it'd been already  
established that the security had  
not been compromised.

INT. OFFICE AT THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Theodora waits, sitting next to Hasan, for the execution of  
system checks to complete on the laptop in front of them.

THEODORA (V.O.)

The devices have passed all the  
tests and are running as expected.  
The recordings are being properly  
updated ...

INT. OFFICE AT THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Daniel and Hans sit opposite Philip. They seem to be interrogating him.

THEODORA (V.O.)

... and everyone was accounted for  
and had an alibi for the twenty-  
four hours before and after, so,  
...

INT. MARTHA'S APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Martha and Theodora are still sitting on the couch in front of their cups of coffee.

THEODORA

... in that regard, it could all  
just have been due to an  
unfortunate oversight, but she  
won't come forward and explain what  
she believes may have caused the  
data flow interruption. It's her  
job to know and someone has to be  
held accountable.

MARTHA

I have to talk to Helen.

THEODORA

Yes, that would be for the best.

MARTHA

But first, you still haven't told  
me how you found out about her  
score.

THEODORA

It was during the last meeting we  
had behind closed doors.

INT. OFFICE AT THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Spacious office with views to the garden and flowers on the windowsill.

Theodora is at a meeting with Daniel, Hans and Nikita.

Theodora examines the small drip irrigation devices incorporated into the technological flower pots. Tiny drops of water are released at intervals.

A DROP OF WATER falls onto a leave. BLOOP.

HANS

She won't speak? That's completely unacceptable! Who does she think she is? Does she even know the price we would all have to pay for her dereliction of duty? What when management calls expecting to hear a solution to this mess? Are we just to stand there and say, "Oops, no, sorry, no progress whatsoever, we're still fumbling about in the dark."

THEODORA

Perhaps we could ask for a bit more time. I truly believe she may come around. She's just under a lot of pressure right now.

Another drop of water. BLOOP.

HANS

Pressure, my ass.

DANIEL

Ok, ok, let's all calm down for a sec and start working together on figuring out our options.

HANS

I'll tell you what our options are: We report her insubordination or we're all under suspicion of wanting to thwart the project's success, meaning, for a project of this scale, everyone's immediately sacked.

BLOOP.

NIKITA

Let's not get all hot and bothered here. We don't know that yet.

HANS

Rich!, coming from you, Nikita. You would be on my side, if you weren't banging the chick.

NIKITA

Nice of you to show your true colours, Mr. Perfect.

DANIEL  
 (talking to Nikita)  
 Are you?

BLOOP.

THEODORA  
 That information is not relevant to  
 the subject under discussion.

NIKITA  
 Exactly, Theodora, thank you. I  
 know I can always count on you to  
 have my back.

Theodora looks puzzled.

NIKITA (CONT'D)  
 But just for the record, what we do  
 is called to make sweet sweet love.

Nikita throws an amused look at Daniel. BLOOP.

DANIEL  
 (talking to Nikita)  
 Congratulations, man! You've  
 scored, finally! You may want to  
 review the terms of your agreement,  
 though. She's just such a free  
 spirit!

NIKITA  
 What are you implying?

DANIEL  
 You want me to spell it out for  
 you?

Nikita's face starts getting red. BLOOP.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
 You didn't know she'd spent the  
 night over at my place just this  
 past week?

HANS  
 Ok, enough! I'm sorry I said  
 anything.

Nikita looks as if about to fly off the handle.

DANIEL

(talking to Nikita)

You may not be satisfying her as much as you think you are.

BLOOP.

THEODORA

Please, guys. Don't mix your personal feelings into this. We have to stay clear-headed and professional-

NIKITA

Ok, then! Professional and all. I say we throw her to the wolves. She was asked to provide an answer to how a potential security breach came to be and has failed miserably at it, despite it being her responsibility, putting all our jobs on the line and betraying our trust in the process.

HANS

Hear, hear!

NIKITA

She can no longer be trusted to be serving the group's interests. She never should have, as a matter of fact. Her professional score would attest to that.

BLOOP.

NIKITA (CONT'D)

She's just not cut out to be a reliable individual.

INT. BEDROOM OF THE CABIN - DAY

Peter and Martha lie in a heart-shaped four-poster bed together. They are laughing. Peter stops laughing and looks into her eyes.

Martha sits up.

MARTHA

I'm sorry. I can't hold it any longer. I lied to you. I'm really really sorry.

(MORE)

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Three weeks ago, when I told you I hadn't shared my doubts about our patient's real identity with Helen. And you were right, I shouldn't have, and now I'm stuck and don't know what to do.

PETER

Martha!

MARTHA

I know I fucked up massively, but, please, help me figure this out.

PETER

Ok, tell me what's happened, from the beginning.

INT. CAFETERIA OF THE HOUSING COMPLEX - LUNCH TIME

Martha and Helen, sitting opposite each other, are left alone after everyone has progressively stood up, returned their trays and exited the half-empty cafeteria.

HELEN

And he calls me yesterday to tell me he has been adopting this new technique that's supposed to help, I don't know, and I said yes. Am I a fool? Probably, but I feel like him being so straightforward and all, it allows me to be blunt. And it's so refreshing, to be able to vent and voice my truth.

MARTHA

Your truth! Don't get all philosophical on me now.

HELEN

Well, after what you told me, I've definitely been in an overall much more philosophical mood.

MARTHA

But you have to keep it under wraps, you get that, right? You promised.

HELEN

Yes, but we have to do something about it-

MARTHA

No, we won't be doing anything about it. There is too much at stake.

HELEN

I've already devised a way to disconnect the sensors of the fence without triggering the alarms to get out of here for a few hours.

MARTHA

Don't! Are you crazy? You shouldn't even consider announcing such a thing out loud! Don't make me regret telling you.

HELEN

But standing idly by or worse, contributing to this, goes against everything we hold true and precious in society. We would be tampering with someone's memories against their will, stealing their past, their identity!

MARTHA

Believe it or not, there are women who don't treasure every sexual encounter they've had in the past. And they should have the right to erase them from their recollections, if that's what they want, which, for all we know, is what she wants.

HELEN

Exactly, for all we know. And you wouldn't wanna know for certain?

MARTHA

Not at any expense.

HELEN

Ok, good! I respect that, that's your decision. But I'm free to make my own.

MARTHA

No, you promised.

Helen stares at her for a moment, eyes aflame with rage.

HELEN

You're an ass, you know that, right? You can't hold someone hostage to a promise made in the dark.

Helen stands up and leaves the cafeteria. Martha sinks her head in her arms, resting on the table.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Helen opens the front door. Martha is at the other side.

HELEN

I was about to go to your place to say goodbye. I'm leaving.

MARTHA

I've heard. You've given up.

HELEN

Funny you'd say that.

MARTHA

Come on, let's not fight right away. At least, invite me in and offer me some tea and cookies first.

Helen opens the door and goes to the living room. Martha follows her, closing the door behind her. They sit down on the couch.

HELEN

What else have you heard?

MARTHA

Mainly that, that you aren't standing up for yourself.

HELEN

What would you have me say in my defence?

MARTHA

That's what I'm here for, to figure that out together with you.

HELEN

You're not mad?

MARTHA

Yes, I'm just seething inwardly.

She smiles.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

But I'm mostly pissed at myself,  
for dragging you into this.

HELEN

You didn't, I'm sorry. You were  
right, I shouldn't have tried to  
meet up with her. I'd little to no  
chance of making it to begin with.

MARTHA

It's ok. Water under the bridge.  
Now, let's see what we can do to  
get you out of this mess.

HELEN

Not much, I'm afraid. I've all odds  
stacked against me.

MARTHA

What if you told them, I don't  
know, that the data was momentarily  
unavailable because you wanted to  
migrate the database content to a  
more secure and scalable object-  
storage architecture?

HELEN

Why would I've done that?

MARTHA

Perhaps you just wanted to have the  
safest system available out there  
in place. I'm pretty sure they'd  
buy into it, it's consistent with  
every man jack's modus operandi.

HELEN

It doesn't really matter, they  
won't listen to what I've to say.  
They know about my score, I've lost  
all credibility with them.

MARTHA

You don't know that, not before  
trying. You know they're probably  
all in the same position as you.  
And it's chiefly Hans you have to  
sway.

HELEN

Yeah, I guess I could keep trying.  
I could keep trying forever,  
wouldn't that be amusing?

MARTHA

For whom? I'm not following.

HELEN

For Rewrite Your Story, for the  
people in power, for the fucked-up  
world we live in, that has us  
gagged and unable to become  
productive members of our society,  
if there's still such a thing as a  
society with a common  
understanding.

MARTHA

Ok, so we're throwing a pity party  
now. Take my word for it, in the  
past few years I've become the  
ultimate expert at wallowing in my  
sorrows, and holding a grudge  
against the world doesn't allow for  
the promising future one is willing  
to fight for.

HELEN

(sounds offended)

Good point, but you can spare me  
the pep talk, I've heard it before.

Helen stands up.

MARTHA

Where're you going?

Helen goes over to the kitchenette and pours herself a glass  
of water, dispensed directly by the fridge.

She returns to where Martha is sitting with her glass of  
water.

HELEN

You know what else sounds rational  
to me, though, apparently, I'm the  
only one able to see it?

MARTHA

Let's hear it.

HELEN

We've been tasked with helping a woman stop wishing she weren't one. Let that sink in for a second.

Helen looks into Martha's eyes.

HELEN (CONT'D)

And we're supposed to accomplish that, firstly, as women who, in hindsight, wouldn't have chosen to be born as such, not with what it entails, ...

The makeup on Martha's face has magically vanished, and thus, it's taken on its bare, scarred, natural appearance.

Helen looks into her eyes.

HELEN (CONT'D)

... and secondly, ...

Martha's face has returned to its initial appearance, with makeup covering its imperfections.

HELEN (CONT'D)

... by virtue of what, tweaking some of her memories? To me, that's like trying to turn an elephant into a butterfly by playing with the lighting.

Helen takes a sip of water and, before laying the glass on the table, proffers it to Martha, who declines the offer with a slight head shake.

HELEN (CONT'D)

And all that, without even having access to what everything suggests must have been the most scarring incident of her entire life!

MARTHA

But we can at least hope that, by the time she realises she's still the same person she was before the procedure, the company has given us a rating that'll boost our score to the point of making us look reliable enough for prospective new employers.

Helen throws a cynical look at Martha, who puts on a resigned smile.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

You know how it works. Nobody is after long-lasting effects anymore.

HELEN

Don't play stupid. It won't work, and you know it as well as I do.

Martha grabs the glass of water and takes a sip from it.

HELEN (CONT'D)

You accuse me of being reckless, but I think I'm the only one actually betting on an outcome that doesn't leave us stranded, back where we started.

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Martha selects the number 31 as the candidate's age in an application form and then clicks on the dropdown menu to select the candidate's gender. There are three options to chose from, "female", "male" and "other". She hesitates. She scrolls up to look at the number of applicants, which amounts to 1247. She clicks on "female" after moving the mouse around between the three options in circles for a while. Then she clicks on "submit application".

She goes to the bathroom and shuts the door behind her. The bathroom door is shown from the hall as the clip starts running at fast-forward speed, which it does for a second, until she opens the door again.

She exists the bathroom with a few new red spots on her face and returns to sit on the couch, in front of her laptop.

She has been sent an email. It's an ad from an online baby store.

She sighs, shakes her head in disbelief and reports the message as spam. Suddenly, she receives a new email. It's from the company she just applied to, an automatic rejection.

She clicks on it and reads out loud.

MARTHA

Please do not view this decision as a rating of ...

She lets out a scoff. She stares blankly into the distance for a second, and then, suddenly, as if taken by aliens and treated with some sort of demonic force, she grabs the empty glass on the table and smashes it against the floor.

She is shaking from head to toe.

INT. LIVING AREA OF THE CABIN - DAY

Peter and Martha both sit on the couch together.

PETER

Please, Martha, this has already gone too far!

MARTHA

What has?

PETER

This insanity! You're going to lose your job and, with it, all hope of ever being readmitted into the workforce.

MARTHA

But Helen is right, the chances of this project working out are extremely slim, even in the short term. What if it was doomed to fail from the start? What if the real purpose of it is to make a mockery of us all, to prove to the world that the system is fair and we deserve to be outcast?

Martha starts looking around for hidden cameras.

The stuffed animals' eyes fasten on her.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Theodora's concerns may have been warranted after all!

PETER

Oh, come on, Martha. Don't get paranoid. Nobody is out there to get you.

MARTHA

Remember that recurring nightmare I used to have?

INT. BIG AUDITORIUM - DAY

Martha is standing on a podium, in front of a microphone, facing a big audience.

Over her hangs a big neon sign, reading, "AUTOCOMplete: ON", "AUTOCOMplete" in orange, "ON" in red.

MARTHA

Yes-

MARTHA (V.O.)

That's exactly right.

MARTHA

ter-

MARTHA (V.O.)

Terracotta is my second to least favourite color.

MARTHA

day-

MARTHA (V.O.)

Daily exercise is the complement to the apple that guarantees the doctor is kept away.

Martha stops talking, her eyes go watery, she lifts her right hand to her throat, grips it and starts rubbing it vehemently.

PETER (V.O.)

The hardcore autocomplete machine? The one that would fill in all the words of the sentence you were about to say right after uttering the first syllable? The one that would even grow back limbs?

INT. LIVING AREA OF THE CABIN - DAY

Like in the previous scene, Peter and Martha are both sitting on the couch together.

MARTHA

Ye-

Martha gulps.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Remember I told you I'd not had it since I'd joined the programme?

Peter nods, as he caresses the back of her neck.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

It's back.

PETER

And you think it's related to the whole situation?

MARTHA

I don't know what to think or do. I just know I'm completely terrified to make any sort of decision.

PETER

Hey, don't be scared! I'm here with you until the end no matter what, you know that, right?

Peter gives her a reassuring kiss and smiles at her.

PETER (CONT'D)

Ok, let's explore the options. What's Helen's plan? She wants to track down the patient and then what?

MARTHA

In theory, if the patient didn't commission the project, she probably won't object to signing a written statement to confirm it, which could translate into us having enough clout to negotiate in the hope of cutting some sort of a deal.

PETER

And if she did?

MARTHA

If she did, we could warn her of the risks of the procedure, tell her about the low likelihood of it being effective long term, perhaps even the fact that she'd be erasing parts of her recollections that may be vital to understanding who she is, why she acts the way she does and how she fits into society.

PETER

And you think that, in that hour, tops, you should be so lucky to have to chat with her, in case you manage to persuade her to sit down with you to begin with, you two are going to be able to establish some sort of camaraderie that'll allow her to see it's worth throwing all she's invested in the programme out the window?

MARTHA

(raising her voice)

Yeah, I know, I'm a moron living in fucking wonderland. You got a better idea?

PETER

Hey, don't snap at me, I'm just trying to help!

Martha stands up and starts pacing around the room.

PETER (CONT'D)

And no, you're right, I don't have a perfect solution either, but I wouldn't defy my superiors' orders and risk being shunned by society with a half-cooked plan because of the fear of failure.

MARTHA

Easy for you to say! You've never had a hard time being accepted!

PETER

This affects me too! I wanna be with you for the rest of my life and seeing you constantly down breaks my heart!

MARTHA

Why? I don't get it! Why would you wanna be with someone like me, ugly, depressed, resentful, ...

Martha starts crying. Peter stands up and draws her into his embrace.

PETER

Stop it! You're the most beautiful, creative, intelligent and brave human being I've ever met and I love you. Come here.

He holds her again. A progress bar appears at the bottom of the screen and a circle with her profile picture at the right corner. Three quarters of the bar's length are already coloured, as it's filled up to completion.

Martha pushes Peter away.

MARTHA

I'm inadmissible.

INT. OFFICE AT THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Martha knocks on the door of the Product Owners office.

DANIEL

Come in!

Martha enters.

It has framed pictures of Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk, and several other entrepreneurs hanging on the walls.

Daniel and Hans are working back to back, each on his own laptop.

MARTHA

Hi, guys, sorry to disturb. I just wanted to have a few words with Hans, if he isn't too busy at the moment.

Daniel turns around to look at her, but Hans continues typing, as if he hadn't heard her.

HANS

I'm actually having a pretty hectic morning, can it wait?

MARTHA

Unfortunately, no, it cannot. It shouldn't take long, though. I just found out about your decision-

Hans finally turns away from his laptop to face her.

HANS

Yes, it's not a decision we've taken lightly, but it's for the best.

MARTHA

Is it, though, for the best?

Hans finally turns around and looks at Martha with contempt.

HANS

It is, and now, if you'll excuse us, ...

He turns back to his computer.

MARTHA

It wasn't her fault. It was mine.

HANS

(turning back to face her)  
You wanna go down, too?

Martha is startled.

DANIEL

Hans, perhaps you should hear her out before coming to hasty conclusions.

MARTHA

I don't want anyone to go down, because we're in the final stretch and I think the project's success depends on us all staying on board.

HANS

You wanna know what I think? I believe you're doing yourself a disservice by sticking up for her. She lied, she blatantly shirked her responsibility and has yet to apologise and offer an explanation for her conduct.

MARTHA

I'm about to give it to you right now. I was using a lot of data to decide on how to modify the scenarios that spurred the patient on to wish she'd been born with a massive dick ...

ELON MUSK's jaw drops.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

... and oversaturated the system by training several neural networks in parallel.

A tense silence ensues. Hans' leg is shaking nervously, as he sits, listening.

HANS

That sounds like a simple enough explanation to me, which begs the question as to why neither one of you came to any of us in the committee a week ago, when this issue came to light.

DANIEL

I'm going to step out and let you guys talk. I'll be back shortly.

Daniel leaves the office space.

MARTHA

Helen and I were mad at each other at the time, I didn't know I'd caused the glitch and she didn't want to point a finger at me.

HANS

That makes zero sense. Why would she risk losing her job and ruining her career to spare you a slap on the wrist, more so, if you two weren't even on speaking terms?

Hans grabs his knee and puts pressure on it, to stop it from shaking.

MARTHA

'Cause ...

The screen splits and the right side displays a WEBSITE with a shaking object in the centre and the word "cause" written over it. A mouse clicks on it and a dropdown menu appears, with three blurred-out options, one highlighted in red, one in orange and one in green. The text is not readable. The green one is selected, which becomes a cartoon missile that makes a few flips in the air, crosses over to the other side of the screen and hits Martha's mouth as it opens.

HANS (O.S.)

You were saying?

MARTHA

She didn't foresee everything would  
unravel so quickly and knew ...

(pauses)

... that my professional score is  
just three points higher than hers.

Hans looks shocked, at first, but then, he sneers, smiling  
deviously.

Martha's face goes white, and suddenly, she starts turning  
into a cartoon character, which, in turn, becomes a simple  
and schematic drawing.

PETER (V.O.)

What a load of crap! Inadmissible,  
what's that supposed to mean?

EXT. GARDEN IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Martha and Helen have their yoga mattresses under their arms  
and a towel wrapped around their necks.

MARTHA

Have you apologised to him yet?

HELEN

By when do you have to be back at  
the office?

MARTHA

In twenty minutes, why?

HELEN

That will do. I did, don't worry.  
And I have a plan.

MARTHA

We agreed we would refrain from  
coming up with plans for the time  
being.

HELEN

I'm not asking you to get involved,  
just to lend me an ear.

Martha frowns.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Come on, what do you have to lose?

Martha sighs in resignation.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Ok, this is what we know for certain:  
She lives in the city, close to the town hall, at a five-minutes walking distance from the bakery "Una Pistola, por favor", to be exact.

MARTHA

I should never have shared that with you.

HELEN

That's yesterday's drama. Now, to today's: Something else we know is that on Sunday she will be at the bakery from 8:00 to 11:00 o'clock working on her laptop.

Helen takes a large sip from her water bottle.

HELEN (CONT'D)

And last week, and I know you're gonna want to kill me but you have the right to know, I fixed what produced the delay and was also able to extend the window. Now I have five hours from the moment the clip of the recordings jumps to the prerecorded tape to the moment where it returns to register the fence's surroundings in real time.

MARTHA

No.

HELEN

That's time. And also, ...

MARTHA

What?

HELEN

I hadn't told you, because I knew you were going to get all het up.

MARTHA

Helen!

HELEN

I've already tested it out. The day before yesterday, I was out at night for almost three hours.

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)  
Went back to my flat to check on  
the cacti.

INT. HELEN'S FLAT OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Several different cactus species rest on a windowsill, in front of drawn translucent curtains. Their spikes start to grow, piercing everything standing in their way.

MARTHA (V.O.)  
It's still not enough time.

HELEN (V.O.)  
It never will be.

The cacti spikes have almost filled up the shot, generating a grid-shaped forest of straight lines crossing in every direction.

INT. LIVING AREA OF THE CABIN - DAY

Peter and Martha sit on the couch together.

MARTHA  
Inadmissible as in broken, not as  
in barren, much worse, as in  
unwilling to comply.

PETER  
But, at the same time, there is  
something about what only you can  
contribute to society, thanks, in  
part, I want to believe, to the  
idiotic tongue we have developed  
for ourselves and the home we have  
built on top of it and nurtured for  
over a decade now.

MARTHA  
Of course, you make all the  
difference, ...

MARTHA (PRE-LAP)(V.O.)  
... and you know it.

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Credits of a movie cast on the projector screen in front of the couch where Martha and Peter sit with the lights turned off.

MARTHA

What a rip-off.

Martha stands up and starts to tidy up the table in front of her.

PETER

Why?

MARTHA

The guy who has an actual more or less multifaceted personality discovers he has a knack for putting paint on his mug and decides to become a woman hence, and the only girl whose character has been painted with a color palette of not just the one hue gets shot and then we have to spend an eternity looking at clips of her looking adorable in her role as a mother, as if it were our duty to fall in love with her post mortem.

PETER

You're right. But you know there is only one unchallengeable discourse. Taking that for granted, there are other factors: the rhythm, the imagery, the angles, I mean, all in all, this one ...

MARTHA

Wasn't just another dud by another find-of-the-season male designer. Oh, sorry, they're called creatives nowadays.

PETER

Environment-hopping, that's what we all do nowadays, in one way or another. You, however, won't let me do that with you. And I love you for it.

PETER (V.O.)

Even if, at times, it makes me fear I'll be rejected.

INT. LIVING AREA OF THE CABIN - DAY

Peter and Martha still sit on the couch together.

PETER

Not that, I meant your innate ability to ...

MARTHA

Yeah, it's proven to be a real game changer.

PETER

Well, patience has never been your strong suit, that we know for a fact.

INT. MARTHA'S APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Martha writes code on her laptop.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

Martha stands in front of a human hamster wheel with a neon sign on top, reading, "Mean while". It is empty and still.

INT. MARTHA'S APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Martha writes a documentation page with several graphs added to it.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

On the bottom of the attraction, a screen displays the three spinning reels of slot machines. The one further right shows an eggplant symbol. The two remaining ones spin fast and stop at intervals to reveal different symbols, none of which match the eggplant on the right.

INT. OFFICE AT THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Martha knocks on the door of the Product Owners office.

HANS (V.O.)

Enter.

Martha walks in. Hans turns away from his computer and sees her standing by the door.

MARTHA

I-

HANS  
(turning his back to her)  
I'm busy.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

A woman sitting in an Andalusian bulrush chair punches the ticket Martha hands out to her.

Martha steps into the wheel, which starts spinning as Martha walks on it.

INT. MEETING ROOM AT AN OFFICE - DAY

Markus, Theodora, Hans and Martha are in a meeting.

MARTHA  
The transitions are lacking some-

HANS  
NO!

PRE-LAP: NO! Resonating, like a faint buzzing echo.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

Suddenly, it seems like Martha is no longer in control of the wheel's speed, which starts increasing dramatically, while all the slot reels but the one with the eggplant symbol spin frantically. She falls and starts tumbling down, unable to stand up again.

HELEN  
STOP!

The wheel stops. Martha stands up slowly and clumsily. Her limbs and head ache.

Helen stands at a distance.

HELEN (CONT'D)  
It's time.

Helen turns around and starts walking away. Martha follows her.

INT. MEN'S PUBLIC RESTROOM IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Martha sees Fred walk into the men's restrooms. She waits a second, looks around her and takes out of her backpack a rolled sign, which she proceeds to unroll and glue to the side of the door facing the hall. It reads, "Out of order". She opens the door, following him inside.

The lavatories seem empty. She inspects her image in the mirror and retouches the make-up on her face.

FLUSHING SOUND. Martha throws a kiss at her reflection and smiles confidently.

Fred is seen in the mirror coming out of one of the cubicles. He looks surprised. Martha turns around to face him.

FRED

What are you doing here?

MARTHA

I wanted to talk to you in private.

Fred walks over to the sink as he rolls up the sleeves of his neon blue shirt.

FRED

Ok? So?

Fred washes his hands.

MARTHA

I need you to cover for me.

FRED

Say again?

Fred dries his hands with some tissues he grabs from a paper towel dispenser.

MARTHA

The task we are supposed to be working together on next ...

FRED

The integration of the selected events' textual transcription with the mood, as I like to call it.

MARTHA

Fair enough. If Hans, at any point in time, comes to you to inquire about my whereabouts tomorrow morning, I need you to say I was with you working on that task.

FRED

And if he wants proof of that in the results?

Martha takes out a card of her pocket and hands it out to Fred.

MARTHA

Here is all you're going to need. There are two tabs on the main page of this website, ...

A WEBSITE with a fancy design of a person cut in half at the umbilical cord by a straight line with the upper part of the body corresponding to that of a male, and the lower, to that of a female. The upper part reads, "For Fred", the lower, "For the World".

MARTHA (V.O.)

... one is only for you to read and will automatically be deleted tomorrow at 11 a.m.. There you'll find the different approaches I thought had to be considered, the one I decided to follow and why, my methodology and results, achieved thanks to the data you uploaded at the beginning of the week.

Martha presses her lips together while looking at Fred.

FRED

I see you've thought it through.

Martha smiles.

MARTHA

You know me.

FRED

And the second, I'm guessing, is an explanation as to why I'd be willing to jump on board this fascinating yet somewhat wobbly banana boat.

MARTHA

That's a part of what's in it, yes.  
But, at the end of the day, you are  
free to make your own choice, and  
no matter what you end up doing,  
I'll understand.

FRED

Nice. In my field, that's called  
'emotional blackmail'.

MARTHA

I know it's not fair of me to put  
you in this position, but I ...

Martha's voice cracks, her eyes go watery. She looks away,  
gulps back the tears, sucks in a deep breath and finally  
looks back into Fred's eyes.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I can't take it any longer. Hans is  
torturing me and I can't just hope  
he'll deliver a favourable  
character reference to management.  
He knows my professional score and  
hence, the impact his venom could  
have on my life's prospects.

FRED

It cannot be that bad.

MARTHA

I'm telling you, he's out to get  
me.

Martha tears up again.

FRED

Hey ...

Fred rubs her shoulder, trying to comfort her.

MARTHA

He never reads my documentation  
pages, he doesn't review my code,  
he doesn't allow me to open my  
mouth in meetings, ...

Martha starts crying in despair.

FRED

Do you want me to go talk to him?

Martha grabs a tissue from the dispenser, wipes her nose clean and composes herself.

MARTHA

We're past that point, I'm afraid.

INT. MEETING ROOM AT THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Hans, Fred, Nikita and Philip sit in a meeting room with Theodora, Markus and Martha. Theodora is holding a presentation with slides projected onto the screen behind her.

THEODORA

And that was a sample of the hundred and fifty scenes we have kept to alter, after reducing the original size of the selection by another 20%, as requested.

NIKITA

(talking to Theodora)

Yeah, I ran the code you pushed yesterday to inspect the output manually. Overall, pleasant surprise, but there was one instance that didn't sit quite right with me, if you don't mind us going over it real quick.

HANS

Excellent idea, yes, I love that we're already in the refining stages of the process.

THEODORA

Of course, say no more. Which index?

Theodora moves her finger over the mouse of the laptop on the table standing to her right side.

NIKITA

Fifty three, I think. The one where they is, are, is, fuck that, I'm just going to say 'he' for the sake of clarity.

HANS

The patient, Nikita, please, stick to the terminology.

NIKITA

Ok, whatever. The patient is at work, in a meeting room with their work colleagues, and the patient is mocked and panics.

THEODORA

Yes, I remember the scene.

Theodora clicks on a file called 'input', in a folder, called '53', inside a folder with 150 numbered folders. It opens.

INT. MEETING ROOM AT AN OFFICE - DAY [ANIMATED]

BILL, the patient, F2M transexual in his 30s, of small but muscular build, is cast by BILLY, the cartoon character presented as the lead in the computer-generated animated version of the event meant to be recreated. Billy is in a meeting with five other men, seated, and CHRISTINE, female, in her 30s, who stands in front of a screen, onto which a short clip is being projected, which is paused at the start. She is holding a remote control.

THEODORA (V.O.)

Here it is.

CHRISTINE

My proposal for the TV ad.

Christine presses play on the remote control.

EXT. RED CARPET - NIGHT [ANIMATED]

A model is holding a tray with a toilet paper roll on one hand and a smartphone on the other. Lights FLASH. THE NARRATOR, female, 30s, has a voice with a husky and almost erotic tone to it.

THE NARRATOR (V.O.)

The cyber toilet paper. It almost seems too sexy to be true. Bottom line, you eat, you shit, you are, simple as that. But that's where simple, ...

INT. ESCHER FACTORY - DAY [ANIMATED]

The narrator roars, while the zoomed-in toilet paper transforms into a very complicated computer-generated Escher factory full of Penrose stairs.

THE NARRATOR (V.O.)(CONT'D)  
 ... becomes something else. Nothing short of deserving a few gapes of astonishment, dare I say, because this toilet paper is one of a kind.

SHEET OF TOILET PAPER with a table engraved on it in gold-brown.

THE NARRATOR (V.O.)(CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 That's right! It will read the report your intestines file each time you go potty. And through their app, you'll get your comprehensive assessment of how your innards are faring updated, as well as, and here comes the riveting bit, ...

A computer-generated image of a BRAIN EXPLODES INTO COLOURFUL RAYS THAT MORPH INTO BUTTERFLIES.

THE NARRATOR (V.O.)(CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 ... statistics on your mood swings, your mental state, it may even help, at some point, ...

EXT. BENCH ON A CLIFF - DAY [ANIMATED]

A woman and a man watch the sunset.

THE NARRATOR (V.O.)(CONT'D)  
 ... shed light on the nature of our quirks and kinks, ...

The man turns around, smiles at the camera and with a wet tissue, wipes all the makeup off his face, which is revealed to be that of a woman. She winks at the camera.

BILLY (PRE-LAP)(V.O.)  
 STOP!

INT. MEETING ROOM AT AN OFFICE - DAY [ANIMATED]

Billy sits together with five men around a table, while watching the clip Christine is showing them, like before, but more agitated.

CHRISTINE  
 Excuse me?

BILLY  
Stop the clip immediately!

Christine stops the clip.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Who do you think you are?

CHRISTINE  
I don't understand.

BILLY  
This is a stereotypical portrayal of a very delicate reality that thousands of people experience every day and actually commit suicide over. And to add insult to injury, it's completely uncalled for. You're displaying a flagrant lack of appreciation for the journey and struggle of a huge part of our audience for what? You think someone's gonna find this funny? That's just inexcusable.

CHRISTINE  
But the app includes statistics on triggering events, so I thought-

BILLY  
Exactly that's the problem, you thought. Next time, content yourself with looking pretty.

INT. MEETING ROOM AT THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Hans, Fred, Nikita, Philip, Theodora, Markus and Martha are still in the same meeting of the previous scene.

NIKITA  
Correct, that's the one. I think we cannot just overwrite the ad without changing the patient's reaction, possibly together with that of their co-worker.

Martha smiles.

HANS  
(talking to Martha)  
And what are you smiling for, if you don't mind me asking?

FRED

Since when do we have to cite our  
reasons for showing we're alive?  
This is news to me!

MARTHA

Sorry, I just deemed Nikita's input  
insightful.

NIKITA

Thanks.

HANS

(talking to Martha)  
Aren't you the top smart ass?

NIKITA

Hans, come on, dude.

HANS

(talking to Martha)  
But I'm onto you, so you better  
watch your step.

Martha lowers her gaze.

EXT. GARDEN IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Martha and Helen sit on a bench of the housing complex's  
garden. They are watching the sunset.

HELEN

Will you cover for me?

MARTHA

At what time are the sensors at the  
fence scheduled to stop being  
operative?

HELEN

This next Sunday, at 7:00 a.m..

MARTHA

And by when will you be back?

HELEN

I should be back by 12:00 a.m.,  
half an hour before lunch.

Helen looks at Martha in the eyes.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Is that a yes?

MARTHA

No.

Helen looks surprised.

HELEN

No, as in, let me think about it?

MARTHA

No as in you're not the one who should be going.

HELEN

I don't understand, I thought you didn't want to get involved.

MARTHA

I've changed my mind.

HELEN

But this is my plan, I drew it up and stuck to it, and now you want to play wonder woman?

MARTHA

You're right and I'm sorry, but you know as well as I do we only got one chance to make it work. If we touch the wrong chord, tick her off, and she blows the whistle on either one of us, that person is fucked for the rest of her life.

HELEN

I'm willing to take that risk.

MARTHA

No, you aren't. You don't know what it is, day after day, and I had Peter, but-

HELEN

But what, you have to have a knight in shining armour to deal with life's curveballs?

MARTHA

That's not what I meant and you know it.

Helen looks away.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I know more about her to know what will and will not work, it's that simple. We got a better shot at this if I go.

Helen's eyes are lost in the horizon.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Hey, look at me.

Martha rests her hand over Helen's shoulder.

Helen turns around and looks at her.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I know you need this to work at least as much as I do. I've studied her inside out, I know what I'm doing, I promise, and I need you to trust me. Can you, trust me?

Helen casts an inspecting gaze at Martha's face.

INT. LIVING AREA OF THE CABIN - DAY

Peter arrives at the cabin. He takes off his shoes, hangs his coat and backpack from the coat stand, goes to grab a glass of water to the kitchenette area, sits down on the couch, looks at his watch and starts browsing some magazines on the table in front of him.

He stands up to get a book from his backpack, sits back on the couch and starts reading, while looking intermittently at his watch.

Martha arrives. She seems a bit too hyped.

MARTHA

Oh, you're here already.

PETER

It's quarter past.

Martha throws a look at her watch.

MARTHA

Oh, sorry, my bad, it's just been a super hectic day. Let me leave these things here and I'll come join you.

Martha takes off her shoes, hangs her coat and goes to sit next to Peter.

PETER  
Wanna tell me about it?

MARTHA  
Only if you promise not to get overly upset.

PETER  
I can promise to try.

MARTHA  
Deal.

INT. MARTHA'S APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

The ALARM CLOCK on the bedside table goes off. It's 6 a.m..  
Martha wakes up and gets out of bed.

MARTHA (V.O.)  
I had an early morning.

Martha takes a shower.

Martha puts on make-up.

MARTHA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Fred and I had arranged to meet to work on the task of integrating text and sensorial volume, if you will.

INT. HALLWAYS INSIDE THE HOUSING COMPLEX'S MAIN BUILDING - DAY

Martha leaves her apartment and goes down the hallway.

MARTHA (V.O.)  
And on the way, ...

As she is about to exit the building, Nikita appears seemingly out of nowhere.

NIKITA  
Wow, wow, wow, where to this early and in such a rush.

Martha looks startled.

Nikita is standing in Martha's way.

MARTHA  
I'm meeting up with Fred.

Nikita smiles from ear to ear.

NIKITA  
So you're meeting with Fred now?

Martha looks anxious.

MARTHA  
Am I missing something?

NIKITA  
No, I just thought you were a  
married woman, but I guess,  
liberated women and all that. More  
power to you, sis.

MARTHA  
Yes, Nikita, very witty remark. I  
don't have the golden medal here  
right now, but if you don't mind  
waiting until the end of the month,  
...

NIKITA  
Are you denying the accusations?

MARTHA  
Really? Goodbye, Nikita, I don't  
have time for you right now.

Martha walks away, veering to the left instead of to the  
right, which is the way that leads to the building's exit.

Nikita raises his eyebrows.

MARTHA (V.O.)  
He was his charming self.

Martha strides across a labyrinthian layout of hallways.

PETER (V.O.)  
I'm sorry to hear that.

She seems lost.

MARTHA (V.O.)  
And then, you know me and my sense  
of orientation.

Finally, after turning a corner, she sees the exit.

MARTHA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
But I finally found my way.

She runs towards it.

She keeps running through the garden and the woods until she reaches the fence.

She takes a sophisticated but handmade-looking tool out of her purse and makes a perfectly geometrical round hole in the fence.

She slips through it, puts it back in place and repairs the broken rods with another fancy tool from her purse.

Finally, she runs away.

MARTHA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
And went to the meeting.

INT. LIVING AREA OF THE CABIN - DAY

Martha and Peter sit together on the couch, like in the previous scene.

PETER  
And? How was it?

MARTHA  
More exciting than I expected,  
actually.

PETER  
How so?

EXT. OUTSIDE THE BAKERY "UNA PISTOLA, POR FAVOR" - DAY

Co-working space with copious amounts of all sorts of pies, muffins and other tasty-looking baked goodies. The few people inside work on their laptops with, on the table they're at, most, a large cup of coffee, and some, a scone or a tart on a small plate.

Bill sits among the crowd with a regular coffee and types on his laptop.

Martha, outside, inspects her target.

The way he sits, the way he sips his coffee, the way he types, ...

Martha walks to the bakery's entrance.

She crosses the bikers' lane without looking and is nearly run over by a FIT YOUNG MAN in the appropriate fitness outfit and gear, who, after skilfully dodging her, turns around and yells.

FIT YOUNG MAN  
Watch your step!

She shudders and keeps walking.

Upon arrival, she opens the door of the bakery and steps inside.

A BELL on the upper part of the door frame JINGLES.

INT. LIVING AREA OF THE CABIN - DAY

Martha and Peter sit together on the couch, like in the previous scene.

Martha looks into Peter's eyes.

MARTHA  
It wasn't Fred who I ended up meeting with.

PETER  
Who was it then?

MARTHA  
You've noticed how lately I've been kind of obsessing over whether our patient was in fact our client?

PETER  
That's a way to put it.

MARTHA  
Helen was about to break out to meet her.

PETER  
And you knew?

MARTHA  
I tried to dissuade her, but she was determined, and I ...

Martha grabs Peter's hands and draws closer to him.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I felt trapped in a horror movie.

Martha smiles sadly.

PETER

You'd told me Hans was being an absolute jerk.

MARTHA

Yes, and if it worked, however slim the chances, it would solve it all.

PETER

But, Martha, stop and listen to yourself for a second. What about the risks involved? It's, from all angles, a terrible call!

MARTHA

That doesn't matter anymore.

PETER

What do you mean it doesn't matter? It's the only thing that matters right now!

KNOCK at the door.

Peter turns around to look at the door and then back at her.

PETER (CONT'D)

Did you invite someone over?

Martha's face turns white.

MARTHA

No.

HANS (O.S.)

Martha, it's Hans!

PETER

Hans?

Martha looks paralysed.

PETER (CONT'D)

(while holding her)

Hey, hey, hey, what's up?

Martha gulps down the shock.

MARTHA  
Sorry, all good.

She stands up, goes to the door and opens.

Hans and Hasan are at the other side.

HANS  
We would like you to come with us  
now.

MARTHA  
Now?

Peter stands up and starts walking to where Martha is standing.

HANS  
Yes, it's important.

MARTHA  
And my visit?

Martha points at Peter.

HANS  
Hasan will escort him out.

HASAN  
I'll just show him to the door, but  
I'm like super cool, like, with  
everything.

MARTHA  
Can I have a second to say goodbye?

HASAN  
Sure, right?

Hasan looks at Hans for approval.

HANS  
But leave the door open.

Martha pushes the door, leaving it ajar.

She turns towards Peter, standing next to her, and starts whispering something muffled and barely audible in his ear.

She stops whispering, slides her cheek against his and kisses him, tenderly, at first, and then, with increased passion.

HANS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Ok, let's go now.

Hans enters the cabin and stops close to Martha.

MARTHA

Jalla.

Hans is stumped.

Martha becomes, for a split second, HER CARICATURE, a computer-generated version of her with overdramatised features, verging on grotesque.

Without being seen by Hasan and Hans, Peter grabs Martha's purse and drops it into his open backpack, which he proceeds to close and hang over his shoulder.

They all leave the cabin. Hans throws one last look at the empty interior before turning off the lights and closing the door behind him.

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Peter sits on the couch. The table in front of him has several signed documents scattered around.

He starts to read out loud a handwritten letter he holds in his hands.

PETER

Dear Peter,  
You're the love of my life, you've  
always been him.

Peter seems worried.

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Martha and Peter lie together under white sheets, naked, in bed.

Martha looks at him, while caressing his forearm.

She draws closer to his ear and starts whispering in it with a husky and erotic tone of voice.

MARTHA

Since we met, I knew, because you  
knew how to make space for me in  
you, that you were the one. And  
now, I need you to listen, once  
again, I know, to me rationalise a  
decision you disapprove of.

Martha pulls the sheet from over them, leaving them exposed to the sun that shines from the window.

She sits up.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

But you've not seen the other side as I have, and hence, not what comes to surface with some of the light only I can shine on the problem, ...

INT. PETER AND MARTHA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Peter is on the couch, as seen previously.

His world starts spinning around him.

PETER

... if only, in order to reduce the bias.

Peter puts his hands on the couch to regain balance, with one hand still holding the page he's reading from.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE BAKERY "UNA PISTOLA, POR FAVOR" - DAY

Martha and Bill chat inside the bakery.

On the table in front of them, Martha has a cup of coffee and Bill has a cup of coffee, a big fresh-pressed juice and a croissant on a small plate.

MARTHA (V.O.)

And I think it proved to be an effective strategy. Bill, former Susie, the patient, turned out to be Margot Simpsons' daughter, ...

INT. DAYTIME TV TALK SHOW SET - DAY

A woman, in her 50s, dressed in a suit, sits among the other business magnates who have been invited to serve as a panel of experts in the debate-slash-talk being held in front of the cameras.

She stands up and approaches the audience holding a microphone to her mouth.

MARTHA (V.O.)(CONT'D)  
 ... the main investor of the  
 corporate group Rewrite your Story  
 belongs to.

The clip REWINDS to right before Martha's voice STARTED to be heard in the scene where she could be seen inside the bakery from the outside.

INT. INSIDE THE BAKERY "UNA PISTOLA, POR FAVOR" - DAY

Martha sits with Bill in front of a table with two half-drunk coffees and two half-eaten slices of pie.

MARTHA  
 Let me tell you a story.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

PELOTOBRONTUS, Martha in her early teens, sits on the toilet and looks down on a sheet of toilet paper stained with blood. She stares at it in terror. She gets more toilet paper and cleans herself again, thoroughly. She repeats the process until the sheet comes out clean.

She then stands up, goes to the sink and starts cleaning her hands obsessively. She proceeds to wash her face.

She wipes it dry with a hand towel, looks at herself in the mirror and assumes a stern look.

She steps out of the bathroom and BRONCOTOTUS, Martha's two-years-younger sister, runs towards her, barely able to contain her excitement.

BRONCOTOTUS  
 Come, let's play barbies!

Pelotobrontus stares at her with a sad but serious look on her face.

PELOTOBRONTUS  
 I can no longer play barbies.

EXT. GARDEN IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - SUNSET

Hans, followed by Martha, starts heading towards the housing complex' main building and Hasan, with Peter, towards the exit.

Martha turns around and her eyes meet Peter's, who happened to have turned around at the same moment.

PETER  
(inaudible)  
Love you.

Martha smiles and turns back to face the direction she's walking in.

Hans and Martha walk up to the building's entrance and cross it.

INT. HALLWAYS INSIDE THE HOUSING COMPLEX'S MAIN BUILDING - NIGHT

Hans and Martha get lost in a dimly lit labyrinthian layout of hallways, until, finally, Hans stops in front of a door.

He opens it.

HANS  
After you.

Martha steps inside the room.

INT. OFFICE AT THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Diane and Cesar sit on the same side of a big desk in the middle of the room. They stand up as they see Martha enter.

Martha sees them and freezes.

DIANE  
Hi, Martha, how have you been?  
Here, sit down.

She points at the chair at the opposite side of the desk to where they're seated.

Hans, who has followed Martha inside the room, takes place next to Diane, who sits in the middle of the row.

Martha sits down on the only chair left empty.

DIANE (CONT'D)  
We wanted to have a brief catch-up with you. Hans tells us you've not quite been yourself this past couple of months.

MARTHA

We're in the refining stages of the process.

Diane smiles.

CESAR

And don't get us wrong, your performance has been impressive, like, top-notch, during the entire programme.

HANS

Which I've pointed out in numerous occasions.

DIANE

Exactly. It's just that, lately, you've been more distracted, and we know the pressure can seem overwhelming at times, we completely get that.

MARTHA

I've not been distracted.

CESAR

Pardon?

MARTHA

I said, I wasn't distracted.

INT. MARTHA'S APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Martha writes code on her laptop.

MARTHA (V.O.)

I was ...

INT. MEETING ROOM AT AN OFFICE - DAY

Markus, Theodora, Hans and Martha are in a meeting.

HANS (V.O.)

NO!

INT. MARTHA'S APARTMENT IN THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Martha writes a documentation page including several graphs.

INT. MEETING ROOM AT AN OFFICE - DAY

Markus, Theodora, Hans and Martha are in a meeting.

HANS (V.O.)

NO!

INT. OFFICE AT THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Cesar, Diane and Hans sit on one side of the desk, opposite Martha, like in the previous scene.

CESAR

Perhaps 'distracted' isn't the correct term for what Diane meant to say. But why did it take so long for you to submit a final prototype for the transcribed version of ...  
?

INT. STUDY ROOM - DAY [ANIMATED]

Minimalistic white study room, with almost empty walls and stylish functional Nordic design in animated manga clip. SUSIE is an eleven-year-old girl dressed in a simple, black kimono, resembling a *mofuku*. She wears a shoulder-long haircut. She is with MARGOT, late 30s, her mother, functionally dressed in grey and black hues. Margot is teaching her daughter Spanish, while with a piece of chalk writing on a black board behind her. The board has the following already written on it:

"Semantics:

Lo come todo.  
Se lo come todo.  
Cómelo todo.  
Cómeselo todo.  
Come de todo.  
Se lo come todo.  
Me se lo come todo.  
A comérsetemelo to'."

Margot stops writing, turns around to face her daughter and points at the board.

MARGOT

Susie, the differences, now.

Susie looks terrified. She takes a sip of the beverage she has in a cup next to her and chokes on it.

INT. OFFICE AT THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Cesar, Diane and Hans sit on one side of the desk, opposite Martha, like in the previous scene.

DIANE

Yes, that incident that drove the patient to slip into an almost catatonic state where she remained for several months, which is also probably at least to some extent what catalysed her adamant view on who she was, gender-wise.

MARTHA

The semantic nuances, it didn't make it easy.

CESAR

Care to explain yourself?

The clip STARTS running at FAST-FORWARD SPEED. Martha tries to illustrate what she means, animatedly, waving her arms around.

Four to five seconds later, the clip RETURNS TO NORMAL SPEED.

HANS

You realise that didn't come with any visual aid, right? Could you try and give us an outline of what you meant?

MARTHA

Sure.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE BAKERY "UNA PISTOLA, POR FAVOR" - DAY

Martha and Bill are chatting inside.

MARTHA (V.O.)

I was ... enlightened.

INT. OFFICE AT THE HOUSING COMPLEX - NIGHT

Cesar, Diane and Hans sit on one side of the desk, opposite Martha, like seen previously.

Martha stands up, ...

... circles the desk to go over to where Hans sits, ...

... pulls down her panties ...

... and lifts the skirt of her dress.

ANGLE ON: A massive dick.

EXT. STREET BY A CANAL - DAY

Martha and Peter stroll down the street in silence. The tension between them is palpable.

Peter stops abruptly.

PETER

You don't mean that.

Martha stops, turns around, grabs his hands, draws him closer to her, kisses him tenderly, looks him in the eyes and smiles.

MARTHA

I do and I don't.