

# THE 3 SERIES

A PLAY by Ed Cunningham

**WHY WE LIKE IT:** *A refreshingly original sci/fi thriller with shades of Arthur C. Clarke and Ray Bradbury....emphasis on developing character...the background is less important...the play is set in the Fourth Millennium...all but 37 women have disappeared from the face of the planet and rare and exotic enough in a world of android love dolls, that they are housed and exhibited in zoos. The protagonist in the play, a generic research scientist, kidnaps one of these women and the drama is about their relationship in a non-supportive anti-female culture. A Dystopia masquerading as a Utopia to the population...an oracle of the future that could too easily await us...and thus, a warning. Spacing is the playwright's own. (Tom Ball)*

## **The 3 Series**

### **Synopsis for *The 3 Series***

In the year 2333, a world famous genetic designer, W.G. Harding, breaks into a zoo and kidnaps Bessie, one of only 37 female human beings left on Earth. His plan? To digitally replicate her soul, and use it as a template for his newest artificially intelligent, synthetic female, called a "Femanon." But, Bessie the female human being develops her own mind while under Harding's watchful eye, and gains a powerful influence over the scientist. The corporate overlords might not appreciate the new code Harding's written for his breakthrough Femanon, otherwise known as *The 3 Series*.

### **Characters**

6 actors are required: 4 male, 2 female

**HARDING** - A brilliant genetic designer, early 30s

**BESSIE** - A female human being, and then a synthetic facsimile of the same, 30s

**SALAZAR** - A handsome businessman with a good heart, late 20s

**PAUL** - An intimidating figure, anti-intellectual, 30s-40s.

**EMMA / JUDY / THE COUCH'S ARMS** - A facsimile of a pedantic zoologist / A facsimile of a secretary / A pair of synthetic female arms that emerge from the couch and massage whoever's sitting there, late 20s

**WAITER / ADAM COURSON** - A French waiter / A very slick CEO of a very powerful corporation.

\*WARNING: There is NO nudity in this play. Sorry.

### **Necessary Set Pieces**

1. A Plexiglass box (big enough for a woman to fit inside)
2. A Couch with Arms! (i.e. it must have two slits in the back for female arms to come through and massage someone.)
3. A Hospital Gurney
4. Café table and chairs
5. A Table / Desk in an office
6. Two reading chairs.

## SCENE 1

2333 A.D.

A Zoo.

In Sri Lanka.

The house lights are up; the stage is visible. On stage is a completely transparent 12' X 12' plexiglass box.

Inside the box is a WOMAN. Audience members can see her as they enter the theatre. Brightly lit, she lies on the floor in an upstage corner of the box. In front of the box is a sign that reads in both English and Sinhala-- "Female Human Being."

The woman stares into space, and appears sickly, listless, drugged.

When it's time to begin the show, the house lights dim...

We see HARDING, a distinguished looking gentleman in his 30s, enter and stand before the captive woman. He stares at her in disbelief.

HARDING

My god.

A FEMALE VOICE comes over the loudspeaker.

ZOO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Greetings visitors to the Sri Lanka National Zoo. The natural female human being is a fascinating reminder of our evolutionary history. Female human beings require a tremendous amount of maintenance. Feeding, bathing, and regulating their endocrinological imbalances are daily tasks performed by our staff. Therefore, this section of the zoo will be closing in ten minutes. It is completely normal to feel emotionally or even sexually aroused by this exhibit. But we do ask that you now initiate chem code 4761, so that our systems for closing this exhibit can function smoothly. Thank you for visiting the Sri Lanka National Zoo. The female human being will retire in nine minutes.

Harding raises a hand, and with one finger, caresses the air in front of his face.

It becomes apparent that his finger is swiping and scrolling through information suspended in the air in front of his face and all around him really-- a holosphere touchscreen that only he can see and use.

*NOTE: The virtual screen hanging in the air before him is projected from an implant in his eye. This sort of technology is ubiquitous, part of everyone's everyday augmented reality.*

HARDING

*(reading)* Invitro... Born in captivity... Her birther was an A.I. named Emma Yates, a zoologist. She carried her to term, and gave birth vaginally. VAGINALLY!? Born March 10th, 2301. She's 32 years old. One of only 37 female human beings left on the planet... all born in captivity... NO gene modifications, NO programmable cells, NO implants... Her very existence is illegal in most countries, but in Sri Lanka *blah blah blah*... Her name is Bessie. Huh. My name is W.G. Harding. I've come a very long way to see you, Bessie.

BESSIE stares at the white floor. Assessing the direction of her gaze, Harding gets down on his knees, attempting to insert himself into her field of vision. But she remains oblivious. Harding stands.

HARDING

Zoos are depressing. They could at least give you an outdoor habitat, let you roam around a little. Can you hear me?

He rests a hand on the glass.

ZOO ANNOUNCER: (V.O.)

Please do not touch the glass.

HARDING

Sorry!

ZOO ANNOUNCER:

Please lower the volume of your voice.

HARDING

Sorry. (beat) She's sleeping. God, she's beautiful.

Suddenly, Bessie sits up.

HARDING

Jesus! Are you awake? Can you hear me? I wish I could... I wish I could sit in there with you...

He puts his hand against the glass again. Suddenly, Bessie drops and rolls toward the downstage wall. Her hand slowly rises to where Harding's hand rests. They press their hands together, through the glass. For the first time, Bessie looks directly into Harding's eyes.

ZOO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Please do not touch the glass. Please do not touch the glass. (an alarm sounds) Your failure to comply has been recorded. Zoo Security has been notified. The female human being will retire in 30 seconds.

HARDING

Do you feel that? My God. Do you feel what I'm feeling?

ZOO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The female human being will retire in 15 seconds.

HARDING

LOOK INTO MY EYES! The next time you see me, they won't know who I am, but you will. Look into my eyes and you'll know that it's me. Okay? I'll come back for you... I'll come back for you...

An alarm sounds and a small door opens at the rear of the box. A blinding light shoots out.

HARDING

Bessie!!!

Bessie starts rolling backward toward the light, as if she's being sucked out of the box by an enormous vacuum. She's struggles, reaching out for Harding. But it's no use.

She disappears, and the door closes.

HARDING

Bessie...

BLACKOUT.

## SCENE 2

Three weeks later. A street corner. Harding approaches a Femanon (a female android) as she's waiting to cross at the light.

HARDING

Excuse me... Emma, is it?

EMMA

Yes.

HARDING

You work at the zoo.

EMMA

Yes, I do.

HARDING

I thought so. My name's-- Uh-- I'm sorry-- My name's Jeff. Jeff Prouty.

He extends a hand. She just looks at it.

HARDING

How are things?

With her finger, she starts swiping the air before her face, searching for background information on him.

EMMA

Jeff Jeff Prouty. I'm not able to verify your identity.

HARDING

Oh, I do classified work for Quad 4. They might have--

EMMA

Who are you? What do you want?

HARDING

I don't want anything. I went to the zoo today. Would you like to have a cup of coffee with me?

EMMA

I'm not coded for socializing. Forgive me if you find it rude, but the sequence is complete.

HARDING

That's alright. I'm a genetic designer, actually. I understand you more than most.

EMMA

Then you understand, Jeff Jeff, that I am designed specifically for birthing and zoology. Outside of that, my abilities are limited to basic self-maintenance: gathering food, eating food, processing food, and then sleeping.

HARDING

Lovely.

EMMA

Good-bye.

HARDING

Wait, Emma. I was one of the original designers of your prototype. I happen to know more about you... than you do. All Femanons are able to enjoy a cup of coffee with a human being.

EMMA

I don't believe that's right.

HARDING

No it is. You've just never tried it. I want to ask you a few questions about Bessie, that's all. I'm a research-fellow at the Institute, and Bessie has recently become integral to my work. Socializing with me will feel very zoological, I assure you.

EMMA

If the conversation pertains solely to Bessie, there is a high probability that I will experience smooth brain function.

HARDING

Alright then. Let's sit down.

They cross the stage and sit at a cafe.

HARDING

There. That was easy. Wasn't it?

EMMA

You wanted to ask me some questions about Bessie?

HARDING

Yes. Were you, in fact, her birther?

EMMA

That information is classified.

HARDING

Well... I happen to know that you were.

EMMA

Then why did you ask?

HARDING

Did you carry her full term?

EMMA

Details regarding prenatal data are classified.

HARDING

Is it true you delivered her vaginally?

EMMA

Details regarding my vagina are classified.

A WAITER walks up.

WAITER

(in a french accent)

Bon jour. What can I get you?

HARDING

(in french)

Un Caffé au lette, si vue ples.

WAITER

Tres bien.

HARDING

Wait. Sir? Could you take her order please?

WAITER

Are you joking, messieur?

HARDING

No.

WAITER

I did not even know she was turned on.

Emma freezes while they talk about her.  
All femanons do this.

HARDING

She's quite advanced, sir. She knows six languages. And she understands everything you're saying, even when she's paused.

WAITER

So.

HARDING

So. Ask her what she wants to drink.

WAITER

You want me to ask a *thing* if she... Oh for heavens sake. Hello, mademoiselle. What can I bring you?

A silence. The Femanon comes to life in an awkward, but brief, reanimation sequence. A strange vocalization followed by some herky-jerky head movement.

She looks up at the waiter, confused.

HARDING

It's okay. What do you want to drink?

EMMA

I don't want anything.

The waiter starts to walk away.

HARDING

Wait! (to Emma) Order something.

WAITER

Messieur, I don't have time to play with dolls.

HARDING

(to Emma)

It's important for you to find the courage. Your designers never intended for you to be a hermit crab. What will you have to drink?

EMMA

Water.

The waiter rolls his eyes and leaves.

HARDING

You did it! Well done.

EMMA

Who are you? Why are you doing this?

HARDING

I told you. I'm a genetic designer, and I'm intensely curious about your Bessie.

EMMA

You can't have her.

HARDING

Have her? Why would you--

EMMA

I'm sensing that you want to take her away.

HARDING

No, I'm simply eager to learn more about--

EMMA

I have to go now.

HARDING

Wait! We're only talking about Bessie, okay? Your water's coming. Please don't leave yet.

EMMA

What is it you want to know?

HARDING

Does she menstruate?

EMMA

Details regarding menstruation are classified.

HARDING

Does she exhibit any sexual awareness? Does she pleasure herself?

EMMA

Details regarding her sexuality--

HARDING

--are classified. Of course. What's not classified then? I mean, what *can* you tell me?

EMMA

She eats at 0800, 1300, and 1900 hours every day. Feedings are open to the public. She bathes on Wednesday and Saturday evenings at 2100 hours. Bathing is open to the public. On Sundays, Bessie prays to her deity-construct from 0900 to--

HARDING

This is all public information. It's right here on the zoo map.

EMMA

I can only offer you the schedule for feedings, bathings, and worship. Perhaps if I were permitted to share more information... *(she peters out)*

HARDING

What was that?

EMMA

Never mind. I misspoke.

HARDING

Finish your thought.

EMMA

People aren't usually interested in female human beings.

HARDING

You're right, they're not.

EMMA

I don't know why.

HARDING

Yes, it's baffling. Do you have a theory as to why that is?

EMMA

Those of us who work at the female human being exhibit are concerned about the lack of visitors we're receiving.

HARDING

*(surprised)* You are?

EMMA

Our funding has been jeopardized.

HARDING

That's amazing. I mean, that's a problem, yes.

EMMA

The lack of attendance is why I agreed to speak with you. Have you ever seen her bathe?

HARDING

*(a slight pause)* No. I haven't.

EMMA

I don't believe you. Hold please. I'm reviewing some video... She's an extraordinary specimen... You were at her bath last Wednesday evening.

HARDING

No. I wasn't. That's a V.I.D. error.

EMMA

It's you.

HARDING

Zoom in, do an FR5 scan if you must. I've never seen her bathe.

EMMA

Do you want her? Sexually?

HARDING

That's absurd.

EMMA

Because she's not available for--

HARDING

Of course not! Are you telling me people have-- Please tell me no one has ever--

EMMA

Bessie has never engaged another sentient being in sexual relations. Certainly no one here at the zoo would ever commit such a crime. Are you attracted to her?

HARDING

I will not be questioned by you, Emma.

EMMA

If you attempt to take her virginity, you will be terminated.

HARDING

*(deadly serious)* Well then let's stop fucking around. I would like to take Bessie's psychological profile. Not her virginity. Do you know what that is? Would it be possible for me to sit and talk with her? Yes or no. Stop looking at me like I'm crazy.

EMMA

I believe you to be perfectly sane.

HARDING

I like talking to you, Emma, but it's not the same as talking to her. Do you know why?

EMMA

Yes. She has a soul.

HARDING

Where did you-- What makes you say that?

EMMA

It's not something that can be proven. But...

HARDING

It's your belief?

EMMA

Yes. It is my belief.

HARDING

My god. And on what do you base this belief that she has a soul?

EMMA

She smiles. Often times, inexplicably. And without provocation.

HARDING

Your much more advanced than you let on. I mean, your EQ intel code has really progressed. You understand why I want to engage a female human being's mind, don't you.

EMMA

Yes.

HARDING

I'm glad. What do you say, Emma?

EMMA

You will have to speak with my superiors.

HARDING

I already did. They said no.

EMMA

Because it's a security risk. There are those who hate Bessie and all that she represents. Some feel she's an example of wasteful government spending, and yields very little from a research standpoint. Others feel that female human beings were once the root cause of war, famine, and of course, the Prenata Virus. These people are of low intelligence, but they remain ubiquitous.

HARDING

I'm not one of them.

EMMA

I believe you.

A silence.

HARDING

I would glean so much from an interview with her. If my findings are published it could extend your exhibit's funding. Is there anything I could give you in return for access to Bessie?

EMMA

I have everything that I require. Good-bye Jeff Jeff. It was a pleasure meeting you.

HARDING

My name's not Jeff Jeff. It's Harding. And I drink water with my finger, while stuffing headless pigeons down my esophagus.

He sticks his finger in her water glass and begins making loud pigeon noises.

Emma is confused, and freezes in suspended animation.

Harding pops up out of his chair, attempting to sit her back down at the table. But it's difficult-- as if rigor mortis has set in.

Suddenly, Emma unfreezes and begins thrashing wildly.

EMMA

What are you doing!? What are you doing!?

HARDING

I'm blowing bubbles and the toy lizards are smiling!

This nonsense makes her freeze again. And Harding is able to get her back into her seat.

He quickly moves his chair next to hers. When he sees the waiter coming, Harding pretends that she's a different kind of femanon, the kind that serves as a sex toy.

The waiter sets their drinks down, and finds Harding kissing Emma's ear.

WAITER

What the hell are you doing?

HARDING

None of your business.

WAITER

We can't have that sort of display in our restaurant. Is she yours?

HARDING

Of course.

WAITER

Well take her home and fuck her then. This is not the red light district.

HARDING

Very well. What do I owe you for the drinks?

WAITER

87.

Merci.

HARDING

The waiter leaves. Harding quickly removes a tool from his pocket and cuts open a portion of Emma's scalp. He throws the rectangular scrap of scalp and hair to the floor. He then opens the back of Emma's skull and installs some software.

HARDING

Emma, can you hear me?

She reanimates. Her voice is higher in pitch now; she has adopted a more stilted tone of fake happiness.

EMMA

Yes. I can hear you.

HARDING

What's your employee identification number?

EMMA

71946274478.

HARDING

And what is your security access code for the female human being exhibit.

EMMA

7411.

HARDING

Does that override the retinal scan?

EMMA

Yes, it does.

HARDING

Thank you.

Harding removes the tool from her skull, and closes the opening. He picks the bloody piece of scalp up off the floor and attempts to press it back into place, but it won't stay. He pockets it, then lets down Emma's hair to cover up the opening on the back of her head.

Harding rises from the table and quickly exits the scene.

Emma remains frozen. The waiter returns.

WAITER

Where did the dirty old man run off to?

The waiter walks over to Emma, snaps his fingers in front of her eyes, but she remains frozen. He raises her chin a bit and touches her lips.

WAITER (CONT'D)

Now, what shall I do with you, mademoiselle?

BLACKOUT

## SCENE 3

LIGHTS UP

Harding's house. Los Angeles. A day later.

We hear a door open and close offstage, then someone stumbling through a kitchen. Lots of shuffling, a few pots and pans crashing to the floor.

HARDING bursts into the living-room with a body draped over his shoulder. The body is wrapped in a white sheet. Harding wears a complicated looking oxygen mask.

He lays the body down on the floor, gently, then removes his mask. Panting furiously, he unwraps the head of the body-- it's BESSIE the naturally born female human being from the Sri Lanka National Zoo. Harding has stolen her.

Bessie's listless and disoriented. Harding unwraps the sheet down to her waist. Harding stares at her for a moment. She begins to shiver.

HARDING

Heat living room to 78 degrees.

He props Bessie up against the couch, then runs over to the front door, to check that it's locked.

HARDING

Can you feel the heat? Is that better?

Bessie still doesn't have her bearings. She falls forward onto the floor.

HARDING

Aaahhh!

He runs back over and props her up. He grabs an afghan from the couch and throws it around her shoulders, then gets down on the floor with her again, hugging her for warmth.

He lifts her head and begins examining her eyes, nose, mouth.

He checks her pulse, her blood pressure. Finally, her eyes open wide, and she makes eye contact with him.

HARDING

Can you talk? That was all a bit much, wasn't it. I'm sorry. I'm happy... you...are here.

Bessie stares at him, unphased.

HARDING (CONT'D)

I was scared you would freeze in the hull. It was the only way to get you through checkpoints. 119 over 78. You're the picture of health! I knew you would make it!

BESSIE

*(struggling to speak)*

W-- W-- W--

HARDING

Water! Right! You must be parched. I'll be right back. Stay there.

Harding runs offstage, back into the kitchen. Bessie stares blankly ahead.

He returns with a glass of water. He sits down on the floor, and brings the glass of water to Bessie's mouth. She still can't move her arms.

She drinks it down in one gulp.

HARDING

Oh my god. I'll get you another.

Once again, Harding heads to the kitchen offstage. While he's in there, the glass falls to the floor and breaks.

HARDING (O.S.)

Fuck.

We hear Harding rifle through a drawer and a cabinet.

Meanwhile, Bessie moves her fingers and her hand for the first time. She's slowly regaining mobility in her arms.

Harding returns with a pitcher of water. He sits on the floor, and holds the pitcher up to Bessie's mouth.

She lifts the pitcher with own hand hand, gulping the water. It spills down her neck and chest, but she doesn't care.

HARDING

Whoa. Easy now, I don't want to shock your system. You're the most beautiful thing I've ever seen, do you know that? I shouldn't say that. But you know. The minute I saw you in that decrepid box. You were this beautiful paradox. You were helpless, but I could see your strength. It's a strength doesn't exist in our world, Bessie. How could I leave Sri Lanka without it?

BESSIE

Emma...

HARDING

Emma's not here. If she were, she'd terminate me and take you back to the zoo. Is that what you want? We're safe now. You're in Los Angeles.

He lets some more natural light into the room, then reaches out to remove her sheet wrap.

HARDING

I should really get the rest of--

She flinches. Bessie begins to cry.

HARDING (CONT'D)

We need to dry you off. I'm not going to hurt you, I--

BESSIE

Emma...

HARDING

Give me a chance to show you a few things. Then, you can go back to Emma if you want. You would be choosing to live your life in a box, but it's up to you. I'm telling you. Give me a chance, and you'll feel so much better when you *(remembering)* Shit!

Harding runs to the kitchen, but keeps talking. Bessie moves her toes, her feet and her legs for the first time.

HARDING (O.S.)

Ok... Ok... Don't be frightened...Shit...I just...We've been wasting time here...

Harding returns with a large bag of blood.

HARDING (CONT'D)

We need to start a transfusion, ok? Don't be scared.

He goes to a closet and removes the transfusion machine, wheels it over to the couch.

HARDING

I need your assistance.

Bessie thinks he's talking to her and cranes her head slowly in his direction.

Just then, two SLENDER FEMALE ARMS emerge from inside the couch and one of the hands holds the bag of blood for Harding. Bessie screams.

BESSIE

Ahh! Ahh! W-- W-- Wha--

HARDING

It's alright.

BESSIE

Wha-- wha--

HARDING

It's okay.

BESSIE

Arms...

HARDING

Yes. I designed this couch to have arms. They're not real.

He holds Bessie's arm up next to the synthetic arm.

HARDING

Feel the difference? Your arms are real, Bessie. I feel you inside these arms.

Now that he has the transfusion machine set up, he takes the bag of blood from the female arms, and sits down. The female arms disappear back into the couch.

BESSIE

Wha-- wha--

HARDING

There are 37 women left on the planet. All of them live in captivity. Inside boxes. Inside zoos. All except for you.

BESSIE

Emma... Mama...

HARDING

She delivered you, yes, you gestated inside of her. And then you came out of her. Vaginally, which is fucking insane. But she is not your mother. Do you understand?  
(beat) Did they breast feed you?

Immediately, he projects his holosphere into the air between them, swiping and scrolling his way through some information on Bessie. She's fascinated with his activity.

HARDING

I'm sorry, I have to read some code here...

BESSIE

Read?

HARDING

Did they teach you to read at the zoo? Letters? Did they teach you letters?

BESSIE

Letters?

HARDING

I'll teach you how to read. And I'll give you an implant. In your eye. So you can do this.

Reading his holosphere...

HARDING

Godamnit, they gave you the breast. Goddamnit.

He's takes a moment, overwhelmed by the challenges before him.

HARDING

You're vulnerable, Bessie. They mishandled your infancy. There's a lot more I need to know... but right now, we just need to give you this transfusion. Syringe.

The female arms come out of the couch and hand Harding a syringe.

BESSIE

Ahh!

HARDING

Its alright. Just be still and watch. *(to the arms)* I need the... adaptor thingy.

One arm retreats and then quickly returns with the adaptor.

Harding says the following slowly, calmly, all the while hooking her up to the transfusion machine...

HARDING

This blood is better than your blood. It was invented by a friend of mine, and ultimately it will help you live longer. And, you know, tomorrow, if you're up for it, we'll start physical therapy. And then next week we'll begin a basic education program. I designed it for you. We're gonna prepare you for social integration. You're gonna love it. You're probably starting to feel better, yes?

Bessie's fascinated with the transfusion.

BESSIE

Not red.

HARDING

No.

BESSIE

Feels good.

HARDING

Yes. Your words are--

BESSIE

Birthday.

HARDING

Birthday? Did they celebrate your birthday at the zoo? Did you have a party?

BESSIE

Cake.

HARDING

You had cake! Wonderful.

BESSIE

Candles...

HARDING

32 candles?

BESSIE

32 candles?

HARDING

Did you have 32 candles on your cake? That's how old you are. I'm 33, sort of. Actually, I'm 221, but I have the body of a 33 year-old human. I know how to extend life, how to mimic life, how to create it. I'm going to take good care of you, Bessie.

BESSIE

You marry me?

HARDING

Ha! Will I marry you? No. We will be good friends. You don't belong to me, Bessie. I want to learn from you. And, in return, I will teach you how to survive in a world that has outlawed your existence. It's complicated. I need to teach you how to behave like a femanon. This is the most important thing-- we must make people think you're an everyday-run-of-the-mill A.I.

BESSIE

A.I...

HARDING

They won't allow you to live amongst them otherwise. You will become an award winning actress. Playing the role of my next femanon. But. We're getting ahead of ourselves. First, we want you to develop as a human being. Which means you will learn to read. To read numbers, letters, code, stories, novels. Novels! Novels cultivate our ability to empathize. That's what separates us from the A.I.'s, you see. But it all starts with numbers and letters.

He sets a tray of children's letter-blocks before her. They have numbers and letters on them and she plays with them through the rest of the scene.

BESSIE

I learn...

HARDING

Yes. Science, Mathematics, Programming, Literature, History. The history of women.

BESSIE

Women...

HARDING

Yes. Women belong to history now. But you have the power to change that, don't you. That's what makes you so special.

BESSIE

Why only... 37... women?

HARDING

*(beat)* The Prenata Virus. It began about 180 years ago. It attacked predominantly pregnant women, and we couldn't find a cure. We failed to create an effective vaccine. Because it threatened the species, we were commissioned to develop an artificial reproductive system, a synthetic female torso, really. We called it a "Birther." And it worked. A little too well. They became unimaginably popular. And at the same time gene therapy and sexual selection were becoming commonplace. A perfect storm, you see. An unintentional replacement process had begun. Eventually, all efforts to find a cure were defunded. And that's when things took a very dark turn. A strange hostility toward women spread. And a terrible period of darkness ensued. A period known as "The Disappearance." One country at a time, the women...just... disappeared. *(beat)* I'm sorry, this is all too much for--

BESSIE

You m-made me?

HARDING

No.

BESSIE

You made...Emma?

HARDING

Yes. *(beat)* I designed the first completely synthetic female. So. If anyone's to blame. It's me. I hold myself responsible. I was young, and greedy, and they made me rich. I seek atonement, Bessie. I regret every last strand of code I've ever written. But I've brought you here, because it's time to reverse course. It's time to bring women back.

BESSIE

*(beat)* You saw... my strength.

HARDING

Yes! I was referring to your soul. The soul of a woman. It's riveting. Without a female soul, the human soul ceases to exist. Does that make sense? I look into your eyes... and I see strength. Will you stay?

BLACKOUT

## SCENE 4

LIGHTS UP

Harding's house. Three months later.

Bessie the female human being is dancing in the living room. She's dancing to a beautiful piano song.

She moves ever so gracefully all around the room in a free forming, interpretive dance. The front door of the house is wide open, and a warm tungsten light pours through.

Bessie dances more and more wildly-- she's possessed, listening to her body as much as the music.

Then, SALAZAR, a handsome businessman in his late 20s, appears in the doorway. He is dumbstruck, watching Bessie dance.

She finally notices him, and stops. Bessie walks over and pushes a button on the wall. The music stops.

BESSIE

I didn't know you were there.

SALAZAR

I'm Salazar.

BESSIE

I've seen you before.

SALAZAR

You have?

BESSIE

Yes.

SALAZAR

Alright then.

BESSIE

My name's Bessie.

SALAZAR

Nice to meet you, Bessie.

BESSIE

Hi. I mean, it's very nice to meet you too.

A silence.

SALAZAR

Is Mr. Harding here?

BESSIE

Yes. No.

SALAZAR

Which is it?

BESSIE

He's been in the lab a lot lately. But I don't know where he is.

SALAZAR

You're not a Chamber Maid. You must be a Birther. Is Harding having a kid?

BESSIE

I'm sorry. What are you asking?

SALAZAR

You're a Birther. A series 1, yes?

BESSIE

Um...

SALAZAR

It's okay. I won't say anything. He's kept you a secret this long.

BESSIE

Harding takes care of me.

SALAZAR

I bet he does. I tell you what, I'll leave you to your... dancing. I was just popping in. Harding works for me sometimes. Will you tell him I stopped by?

BESSIE

Yes.

SALAZAR

Alright then. Good-bye.

BESSIE

Good-bye, Mr. Salazar. It was a pleasure meeting you.

He freezes. Something about her voice.  
He turns, they lock eyes.

SALAZAR

Could I stay and watch you dance? Would you mind?  
I won't make a sound. I'll just sit over here, and watch.  
If that's okay...

BESSIE

Do you want me to sing?

SALAZAR

I don't think I've ever heard a Femanon sing. What can  
you sing?

She closes her eyes and prepares  
to sing.

BESSIE

(singing)

*Black is the color  
of my true love's hair.  
His face so soft  
and wonderous fare.  
The purest eyes.  
And the strongest hands.  
I love the ground on where he stands.  
I love the ground on where he stands.  
Black is the color  
of my true love's hair,  
of my true love's hair,  
of my true love's hair.*

SALAZAR

Who are you?

BESSIE

My name is Bessie.

SALAZAR

You're not a Birther.

BESSIE

No?

SALAZAR

What are you?

BESSIE

I'm a Bessie.

SALAZAR

How did you get here?

BESSIE

Harding brought me here.

SALAZAR

From where?

BESSIE

Sri Lanka.

SALAZAR

He brought you back from Sri Lanka? Three months ago? (*Bessie nods*) Okay, I'm a little freaked out. Could you go back to dancing? Like you were before? I need to see that again.

She walks over to the control panel on the wall and hits a button. Music plays.

She begins to move, sheepishly at first, but then more and more freely.

When she gets close to Salazar, she lingers for a moment. As if caught in some sort of magnetic field. After a few seconds, he grabs her, and they dance.

They dance stiffly at first, but then she looks into eyes and he becomes positively transfixed. His mouth falls open. He dances less and less until they both stop all together. He stands there, staring into her eyes.

Harding walks through the door.

BESSIE

(startled)

Aaahhh!!

HARDING

What the hell are you doing? How did you get in here?

SALAZAR

The door was open.

HARDING

Bess?

BESSIE

(beat) I know how to unlock the door. I watch you do it every day. You're ALL I watch. Every single day.

HARDING

Why did you--

BESSIE

(seething)

I was dancing. And it was hot.

HARDING

Do you understand that we stay here because--

BESSIE

I stay here! I stay here! You go everywhere!

HARDING

You stay here because if you were to exhibit even the slightest bit of anger out there, they'd either jam a knife into the back of your skull or take you back to--

Harding stops himself before revealing too much. Salazar stares at Harding.

SALAZAR

I should go.

HARDING

Why did you come here? I already told you, I won't work for you people anymore.

SALAZAR

I was just popping in. I'm sorry, I'll leave you two to your... Does anyone know about her?

HARDING

No.

SALAZAR

She's a... a...

HARDING

Woman. Yes.

SALAZAR

She's... human?

HARDING

Yes.

SALAZAR

Jesus Christ.

HARDING

You're not in any danger.

SALAZAR

No, I know, it's just... Before you got here, she looked into my eyes, and I felt it. It felt like I was dying. But it was okay. It was comforting.

Bessie looks up at Salazar, pining for another embrace. She runs to him, but Harding heads her off.

HARDING

You're not ready for this! You're not ready yet!

BESSIE

Let go of me! You said you weren't my keeper, but you're keeping me from him!

HARDING

I can't allow you to--

BESSIE

You don't own me! He wants to be with me. He loves me!

HARDING

He's never met a female human being before.

BESSIE

He loves me and I love him! Let me go!

HARDING

This is not love! STOP IT!! RIGHT NOW!

Harding's tone frightens Bessie. She curls into a ball and weeps.

SALAZAR

I'm sorry. I'll go.

HARDING

Salazar. I need you to keep this to yourself. Alright? I'll pay you. I'll write code for you, whatever you want. Just don't say anything to anyone.

SALAZAR

You'll write code for us?

HARDING

Yes.

SALAZAR

Thank you. We've got something for you. I mean, I wouldn't tell anyone either way. Because you're an artist, I get it. But let me just say that if you write code for Solgen, you will be treated like a God, Harding. You'll have unlimited funding, your own set of rules--

HARDING

We'll discuss the details another time... if you don't mind.

SALAZAR

Can I see her again?

HARDING

*(beat)* I'll bring you back when the time is right. And I'll let you two interact privately. Okay?

BESSIE

I HATE YOU I HATE YOU I HATE YOU I HATE YOU!!!

A flurry of her fists rain down on his chest.

Salazar runs over and grabs Bessie from behind; they fall back onto the couch.

She looks over her shoulder and sees Salazar. He looks down at her, and is about to get up, but is then suddenly drawn in again.

They kiss.

Harding is quietly destroyed.

HARDING

Leave. Now. *(beat)* SALAZAR!!

Sal snaps out of it. He gets up off the couch. Bessie continues to kiss his neck, clutch at his chest, his clothes. But Sal regains his composure, tears him self away from her, and runs out the door.

BESSIE

Noooooo!

She follows. But the door automatically slams shut.

Bessie crumbles to the floor, sobbing.

HARDING

I'm sorry, Bessie. The security risk is too great. I'll bring him back for you when you're ready, alright? It's just not the right time.

BESSIE

You're jealous!

HARDING

You're right. I am. But I'm also responsible for you. We have to prepare you for a life beyond these walls, or they will find you out, just as that man did, and they will terminate you. End of story.

BESSIE

They would send me back to my cage, which is no worse than being in here with you.

HARDING

I'm sorry you feel that way. But, developmentally, it makes sense. I'll leave you alone.

Harding changes the password on the front door, then starts for the kitchen.

BESSIE

Put. My. Music. Back on.

Harding walks over and presses play.

BESSIE

Leave.

Harding goes into the kitchen. Bessie just stands there. She can't dance.

BLACKOUT

## SCENE 5

A year later. Sal's office. Sal sits at his desk reading his holosphere. There's a knock at the door.

SALAZAR

Yes?

The door opens. It's PAUL SMALL, a professional man in his 40s. He's an imposing figure. An ex-soldier. He walks with a chip on his shoulder.

PAUL

Hey. Your supervisor told me to come down here, stick my head in...

SALAZAR

Are you a new-hire?

PAUL

Yeah.

SALAZAR

Ghengis Salazar. Call me Sal.

PAUL

I've been assigned to your team, I think.

SALAZAR

If you're new, then yes. I'll be your team leader for the next three or four months probably. Have a seat. Kroll?

PAUL

What?

SALAZAR

(holding the bottle up)

Kroll?

PAUL

What is that?

SALAZAR

It's a popular ice-breaker.

PAUL

I quit drinking.

SALAZAR

Ok. Well, have a seat.

PAUL

Do I have to?

SALAZAR

You can stand if you like.

PAUL

I'll sit.

An awkward silence.

SALAZAR

What's your name?

PAUL

Paul Small.

SALAZAR

Paul Small?

PAUL

Yeah. Look, I know I come off like an asshole. I'm sorry, I'm new to this sector. I'm not used to every little thing I say being recorded, interpreted, judged... it's annoying.

SALAZAR

Where are you in from?

PAUL

Grecco. The high desert. I planted security pylons for Exxon 5 up there. Last six years.

SALAZAR

Jesus. Six years. That must have been brutal.

PAUL

It's a fuckin' wasteland, no doubt.

SALAZAR

Well, we owe everything to you guys. Without you--

PAUL

Yeah, yeah. We know.

SALAZAR

You should be proud.

PAUL

I am.

Sal starts reading his holosphere.  
Paul thinks it's rude.

PAUL

Anyway... I'm down here now, lookin' for a piece of the good life. I want to do something for this company that'll get me noticed. I want to advance.

SALAZAR

(reading his holosphere)

You put in your request last week, and Centcom ok'd it this morning?

PAUL

That's right.

SALAZAR

It usually takes months.

PAUL

Really. Well. What do you want me to say?

SALAZAR

Nothing. Glad to have you on the team, Paul.

PAUL

Thanks. What do we do here?

SALAZAR

Genetic engineering. Biocoding, chemcoding--

PAUL

No, I mean on *your team*. I'm not an idiot.

SALAZAR

Oh. Well, we're headhunters of a sort. We track external talent, rising stars in the field, and then lure them over to Solgen. Especially designers who are onto something really hot. Something immediately marketable.

PAUL

I don't know anyone like that.

SALAZAR

No, I wouldn't imagine you would, but... You know, come to think of it, I think I know why you're here... Hold on a sec.

Sal goes into his holosphere and fires off a message.

PAUL

If you're just gonna type, can I go?

SALAZAR

Hold on a sec, I'm asking Bob Stevens a question.

PAUL

Who's that?

SALAZAR

My supervisor. You just met with him. The guy who sent you down here.

PAUL

Oh.

SALAZAR

(reading)

Yeah. Okay. That's what I thought.

PAUL

What? What's he sayin'?

SALAZAR

You have a surveillance competency.

PAUL

What does that mean?

SALAZAR

You've worked with Thinthread.

PAUL

I know how to intercept communications. Is that what you need? You want me to listen to somebody?

SALAZAR

There's a designer in the 4th quadrant that Solgen's been trying to snare for like two years. He's the best in the world, actually. Solgen wants to sign him badly, but he's a little eccentric... hold on.

Sal starts typing.

PAUL

I'm not gonna just sit here and watch you type.

SALAZAR

Hold on. I'm trying to get you security clearance.

PAUL

For what?

SALAZAR

So I can tell you about this guy!

Paul glares at Sal while he types. Sal finishes, and turns to Paul, but before he can speak...

PAUL

Don't you ever fucking use that tone with me again,  
you understand?

SALAZAR

What tone?

PAUL

"Hold on!"

SALAZAR

Paul, you gotta relax. I just got you level 5 clearance. Now I know you've been under a lot of stress if you were up in the Grecco, but I'm trying to help you. Out of gratitude for your service. This is a plum assignment with the possibility for advancement. So, shut the fuck up and be patient, okay? Listen to what people have to say around here. No matter what tone of voice they use.

PAUL

Go ahead.

SALAZAR

There's a designer in the 4th quadrant--

PAUL

You said that already.

SALAZAR

His name is W.G. Harding--

PAUL

Where does he live?

SALAZAR

I'm gonna tell you, just let me--

PAUL

You want me to listen to him?

SALAZAR

No. I want you to shut the fuck up and listen TO ME!!

Paul stands and grabs Sal's neck,  
clutching his windpipe. He slowly and  
expertly brings Sal out from behind his  
desk, then forces him to his knees.

PAUL

I don't want any trouble. I shouldn't have grabbed you like this, but it's too late, I lost my temper. Now I'm gonna let go, and I'm gonna listen to you.

PAUL (CONT'D)

But if you speak to me like that again, or if you ever tell anyone that I did this, I will hunt you down, and I will slit your throat. Nod if you understand.

He nods. Paul lets him go. Sal falls to the floor, coughing, gasping.

PAUL

Get up. Get up!

Sal lifts his head up off the floor.

PAUL

Bring your holosphere up again. Erase the last five minutes of our conversation. Do it now.

SALAZAR

Security will be in here in two minutes.

PAUL

Not if you erase. And not if you value your fuckin' nutsack. Do it now.

SALAZAR

I'm not doing anything for you. You're going away for another six years, pal.

PAUL

Do you know who I am? Do you know what I can do to you? Why the fuck do you think Centcom cleared me so fast? Mmm? Think about it. Now, erase the last five minutes, or I will hunt you down, and I will bleed you out.

Sal thinks. Finally, he opens his holosphere, and types in a few codes.

SALAZAR

Alright, tough guy. They're standing down. Now go.

PAUL

Give me the assignment.

SALAZAR

Uh, the position's been filled.

PAUL

Give me the assignment.

SALAZAR

You can slit my throat. But it's not how we work down here, Paul.

SALAZAR (CONT'D)

It doesn't matter who you frighten, or how many execs you've got over a barrel. If you're chemically imbalanced, you will never advance. Whether you slit my throat or not.

PAUL

Look you gotta cut me some slack, okay? I'm reassimilating. Let's just start over. I'll--

SALAZAR

You're not ready. There's plenty you could do for our security division. But the work our team does is delicate. Brute force never comes into play.

PAUL

They want me to listen to this guy. You said it yourself. That's why they brought me in. Isn't it?

SALAZAR

Maybe.

PAUL

Then let me listen to him. Let me have this one assignment, as a probationary kind of thing, and I'll be forever grateful. I won't touch the guy, I'll keep my hands to myself. If I fuck up, I'll leave town before you even get the chance to fire me. Okay? (beat) I could be a good friend for you, Sal. I'll hand you this guy on a fucking platter. Give me a chance.

SALAZAR

How many kills do you have?

PAUL

What do you mean?

SALAZAR

How many?

PAUL

This year?

SALAZAR

Total.

PAUL

I just passed 1400.

SALAZAR

Jesus Christ.

PAUL

What? That's not a good thing?

SALAZAR

No, it is. It's great. It's wonderful. (beat) Look, why don't we try this meeting again tomorrow. Start over from--

PAUL

I want the assignment. Do me a solid, Sal. Trust me on this, and I will forever be in debt to you. I'll never fuck with you, no matter what my position in this company. You have my word. Give me this assignment and you're safe from me for the rest of your life.

A silence.

SALAZAR

Psychopath insurance. Immunity from your own unique brand of torturous violence. You've got yourself a deal.

PAUL

(shaking his hand)

Thank you. My word is all I have, Sal. And now it belongs to you.

SALAZAR

I'm sending you Harding's file. Take the last office on the right, go in there, and read everything in that file.

PAUL

I don't start til tomorrow.

SALAZAR

This assignment starts right now.

PAUL

Alright. I'm on it.

SALAZAR

Oh, wait. I'm leaving for the night... I guess I should tell you about something that's not in the file. This particular designer is engaged in an illegal experiment with.... with a female human being.

PAUL

What do you mean, female human being? (beat) You mean...

SALAZAR

He has one.

PAUL

He has a woman?

SALAZAR

At his house.

PAUL

Come on.

SALAZAR

If he were caught, he'd be terminated before sundown. Bob Stevens and the Big Three here at Solgen are shielding him from detection. Have been for the last year, since I first discovered her. They want to see what he comes up with.

PAUL

They let him keep a woman?

SALAZAR

It's R&D for the next generation femanon.

PAUL

How the fuck did he get a woman?

SALAZAR

He stole her. From a zoo.

PAUL

They have women in zoos? Fuckin' A, I've heard it all now.

SALAZAR

Harding is eccentric. He's a genius. He's the most innovative genetic designer alive today. So, don't fuck this up, Paul.

PAUL

Wild stuff. You think he might be trying to...

SALAZAR

Develop a system for female repopulation, yes.

PAUL

Jesus.

SALAZAR

He's one of a handful who has that kind of vision.

PAUL

You're talkin' widespread panic if people find this out.

SALAZAR

That's why you need to keep your mouth shut. Just report back with whatever he's working on. And lemme know how the female human is doing too. How she's developing.

PAUL

Whatever you want boss. Fuck, this is gonna be fun.

BLACKOUT

## SCENE 6

Harding's house. A year later.

Harding and Bessie are reading.

Bessie finishes a chapter and sets her book down. She's pregnant. She stares.

HARDING

What's wrong?

BESSIE

Nothing. (beat) Where is consciousness in the brain?

HARDING

Everywhere. And nowhere.

He smiles.

BESSIE

So, how many *billions* of calculations would it take to give consciousness to a--

HARDING

I will never be able to recreate the experience of being you. Is that what you're asking?

Silence. Bessie stares at him.

HARDING (CONT'D)

Let's walk around the pond. Clear your mind.

BESSIE

No.

HARDING

It'd be good for you. (beat) I love you.

BESSIE

I know you do.

HARDING

How do you feel?

BESSIE

Fine.

HARDING

We don't live much of a life outside of books, do we?

BESSIE

You have the lab.

HARDING

Do you get lonely when I'm in the lab?

BESSIE

There's plenty to do here. The nesting impulse is strong right now.

HARDING

Is it terrible that I'm happy to hear you say that?

BESSIE

You have me right where you want me, don't you.

HARDING

(flirting)

Not quite.

BESSIE

Yeah. Your sexual attraction will weaken as my belly grows.

HARDING

On the contrary. There's a perverse thrill in it for me now.

BESSIE

Are you joking?

HARDING

No. I day-dream about it, all the time.

BESSIE

My being fat?

HARDING

Us being together.

BESSIE

Have you ever seen someone naked-and-pregnant up close?

HARDING

I have, yes. A long time ago.

BESSIE

Was she yours?

HARDING

No. But, I remember thinking she was very attractive.

BESSIE

Who's was she?

HARDING

She was a patient at The Boley Institute. Where I was teaching at the time.

BESSIE  
A patient? A pregnant *human*?

HARDING  
Yes.

BESSIE  
You've never told me about her.

HARDING  
Well, this was 120 years ago. I don't really remember specifics from that far back.

BESSIE  
Did people know she was human?

HARDING  
Female humans were still legal then. They were quarantined, but in the major population centers, in hospitals and asylums, a Prenata case would pop up every now and then.

BESSIE  
So one day a pregnant "Prenata case"... just popped up. Naked. In your hospital?

HARDING  
Yes.

BESSIE  
Wow.

HARDING  
Yes.

BESSIE  
Did you tell her it wasn't her fault?

HARDING  
What?

BESSIE  
The Prenata Virus.

HARDING  
I don't remember.

Harding goes back to reading.

BESSIE  
But, you must have interviewed her.

HARDING  
I don't know.

BESSIE

What do you mean?

HARDING

I wouldn't remember that. I can check if you like...

He opens his hollosphere.

BESSIE

Stop using that thing. Use your brain. Why wouldn't you remember interviewing a pregnant female human being? I thought you were always so "fascinated" with women.

HARDING

I wasn't a clinician at the time. I was teaching.

BESSIE

Then why was she standing in front of you naked? (beat)  
Did you ask her her name?

HARDING

No.

BESSIE

You were gawking at her naked body, and never said a word to the poor woman.

HARDING

She was dead.

BESSIE

What?

HARDING

She was dead.

BESSIE

You said you found her attractive.

HARDING

I was lying. I'm sorry. I wanted you to feel attractive. Because you are. But I shouldn't have lied. (beat) I'm sorry. I'll turn in early.

BESSIE

Stay.

HARDING

You're right to be angry with me, Bess. Forgive me. I love you so much.

BESSIE

I don't think you know what love is.

HARDING

Teach me then. Is it emotion? Or is it chemical? Is it an experience that you can...feel. Or is it a desire?

BESSIE

The way you feel love is different from the way I feel it.

HARDING

Yes, I can tell...

BESSIE

There are MEN you could love, you know. It doesn't have to be with a woman. There are men who have intimacy and closeness with other men.

HARDING

Yes. But, that's different.

BESSIE

How? Why don't you even have male friends?

HARDING

I feel animosity toward most men. I'm not sure why.

BESSIE

It's because you've told yourself you can't be with them. You can be intimate with them, if you like. It wouldn't bother me.

HARDING

I'm not attracted to men.

BESSIE

What does attraction have to do with it?

HARDING

Physical intimacy depends on physical attraction, doesn't it?

BESSIE

Is that why you want to bring women back? So you can be intimate with their bodies?

HARDING

What?

BESSIE

You want to bring them back, right?

HARDING

Of course.

BESSIE

Why?

HARDING

I want men to--

BESSIE

To feel their own soul, to feel romantic love, to gain the female perspective, blah blah blah...

HARDING

Blah blah blah, yes.

BESSIE

And they'll do this by fucking them?

HARDING

There are many ways to access the female perspective. I'm accessing the living hell out of yours right now. And it's changing my outlook. It makes me feel ten times more alive than if I were simply reading about it in a book.

BESSIE

What if you'd gone to the zoo in Beijing or Oslo, and one of the other 37 female humans left on the planet were sitting here with you. Would you love them the way you love me? Do you only love me because I have a vagina?

HARDING

No! I love Bessie the human being. But the fact that you're female makes that particular perspective unique. I'm sorry, but you're endlessly fascinating to me.

BESSIE

You ask the wrong questions.

HARDING

What?

BESSIE

"Are you hungry?" "How do you feel today?" "What are you experiencing right now?" You don't know what love is, and you never will. You know absolutely nothing about women.

HARDING

I'm sorry.

BESSIE

Don't be sorry. (*sarcastic*) The Disappearance just *happened*. Right? It's not anybody's fault.

Bessie leaves the room. Harding is left standing there. He reaches for Bessie's book, to see what she's been reading. George Sand. Bessie returns.

BESSIE

George Sand.

HARDING

Can I read it when you're done?

BESSIE

Yes. I've made you feel rotten.

HARDING

You're teaching me. You're chipping way at my selfishness. It's good. I want to read this. I want to read all of the ancients again.

Bessie feels a kick.

BESSIE

Ooo.

Harding rushes to her side. He falls to his knees, hugging her belly. They smile, feeling the kicks together.

HARDING

I love you.

BESSIE

I know you do. (beat) I wonder. Which came first, the virus or The Disappearance?

HARDING

What do you mean?

BESSIE

I think women disappeared from the hearts of men, before they ever disappeared from the earth.

BLACKOUT

## Scene 7

Salazar's office. A month later.

Sal's inside his holosphere. Paul  
Small walks in without knocking.

SALAZAR

Hi Paul. I'm glad you don't feel like you have to knock.

PAUL

I just met with Stevens. He wanted me to brief you.

SALAZAR

Stevens wants *you* to brief *me*? On what?

PAUL

Harding and his girl.

SALAZAR

What about them?

PAUL

She got pregnant.

SALAZAR

What?

PAUL

Yeah.

SALAZAR

Why didn't you tell me?

PAUL

I told Stevens.

SALAZAR

Are you not on my team anymore?

PAUL

I don't think I am. No.

SALAZAR

(beat) Close the door on your way out.

PAUL

Don't you want to know what happened?

SALAZAR

With what?

PAUL

With Harding and the girl.

SALAZAR

Ok. What happened?

PAUL

We had to take care of it.

SALAZAR

What does that mean?

PAUL

We had to take care of it. They're stickin' their necks out letting him keep that girl. If somebody found out she was pregnant, Stevens and the Big Three would be crucified. The whole company would burn. Not to mention the fact that Harding ain't gettin' any work done for us with a baby around.

SALAZAR

So they sent you in.

PAUL

Yeah.

SALAZAR

And you killed her.

PAUL

Yeah. Wait. Who?

SALAZAR

The girl.

PAUL

I didn't kill her, no. I killed the baby.

SALAZAR

You killed a baby?

PAUL

A fucking fetus.

SALAZAR

You killed the fetus that was inside her?

PAUL

Yeah.

SALAZAR

But not the girl.

PAUL

No. I didn't touch her.

SALAZAR

How do you assassinate a fetus?

PAUL

You want me to draw you a picture?

SALAZAR

Yes!

PAUL

Nanobots, Sal. You work for a company who makes them? Jesus.

SALAZAR

A nanobot assassinated the baby. But the girl's alright?

PAUL

Yeah. You know. She'll be fine.

SALAZAR

And are you supposed to continue with surveillance?

PAUL

That's what they want. But Harding ain't designing shit, man. I don't know why you guys are protecting this asshole. He's a fuckin' loon.

SALAZAR

He plans for a very long time. Sometimes years. Then one day, something sets him off, and he goes to work. Just be patient, Paul. Enjoy your rapid ascent through our company.

PAUL

Maybe losing the baby will motivate him, you know...

Sal starts walking him to the door.

SALAZAR

Maybe so.

PAUL

Maybe he'll make a baby android. That'd be somethin', right? *(beat)* Take your hand off my back.

Sal's hand drops to his side.

BLACKOUT

## SCENE 8

Harding's house. One month later. The living room is dimly lit. Bessie lies on the couch, covered with blankets. She's very ill.

Harding walks into the room with a tray full of medicine bottles.

HARDING

Here we go.

BESSIE

I hate that one.

HARDING

Come on.

He draws medicine out of a bottle with a syringe, a light blue liquid. She drinks it down, wincing at the awful taste.

HARDING

It's not so bad.

He hands her a pill next, and a glass of water.

BESSIE

They're not helping.

HARDING

They are helping. This pill impedes viral entry, this pill stops replication, this one expedites the virus' life cycle--

BESSIE

I take them to make *you* feel better.

HARDING

Funny girl.

BESSIE

So you can feel chivalrous.

HARDING

Please.

BESSIE

The invirons are more powerful than your nanocells, aren't they? *(beat)* Admit it. Let yourself be sad.

HARDING

You're not dying.

BESSIE

You've never dealt with a loss before. A terrible sadness can swallow you up.

HARDING

I dealt with the loss of our child. Didn't I?

BESSIE

It's been over a month. You haven't cried once.

HARDING

Just because I don't--

BESSIE

I'm through performing Pygmalion. I don't want to put those pills in my body, and I don't want to spend the remainder of my life arguing with someone who will never die. It's not fair.

HARDING

If you don't take these--

BESSIE

I'm closing my eyes now. I'll try not to expire.

She closes her eyes. A silence.

HARDING

I don't know how to cry. I don't know what's wrong with me.

BESSIE

Read to me. Pick out a novel.

He goes to the bookshelf, and returns with a book. It's the George Sand. Only now it's marked up, and filled with bookmarks.

HARDING

I've been reading the George Sand.

BESSIE

That's not a novel. It's alright, read it.

Harding reads from a marked passage...

HARDING

"Perhaps you have been brought up in the belief that women have no souls. Do you know whether they have or not? Do you understand companionship, patience, friendship? Shall I be your companion, or your slave?"

HARDING (CONT'D)

Do you desire me, or do you love me? Do you know what I am? Hide your soul from me, so I may always believe that it is beautiful."

BESSIE

She wrote that to her secret lover. A younger man. I wonder if his voice was kind like yours. I'll take it with me.

HARDING

You're not going anywhere.

BESSIE

Without death we would never know love. Would we.

HARDING

I love you.

BESSIE

I know you do. (beat) When I'm gone... you can stuff me and hang me on the wall.

HARDING

Funny girl.

BESSIE

I know what you've been doing out there in the lab. Look at me. You can't replace me. The only way you'll keep me alive, is in your heart. Let me in. I want to gain your perspective.

They smile. He reaches for the pills.

HARDING

I'll change. Please, I need you to live.

BESSIE

Look in my eyes. You found your soul. It's right here.

She is motionless.

FADE TO BLACK.

## SCENE 9

Harding's laboratory. Months later.

A woman lies on a hospital gurney, a white sheet covering her entire body.

A voice comes over the intercom saying, "There's someone approaching... A Mr. Ghengis Salazar is approaching the laboratory. He's at the door now."

Harding goes to the door.

HARDING

Are you alone?

SALAZAR (O.S.)

Yes.

Harding opens the door.

SALAZAR

What's going on?

HARDING

Get in here.

SALAZAR

You always have these psychotic episodes at 4 in the morning. Can't you have them over lunch?

HARDING

Did anyone see you leave your house?

SALAZAR

I live alone.

HARDING

What about the neighbors?

SALAZAR

Neighbors? I don't have neighbors. What's going on?

Harding indicates the body on the table.

SALAZAR (CONT'D)

Is that...

Harding nods.

SALAZAR (CONT'D)

Is she...

Harding nods. After a silence...

SALAZAR (CONT'D)

You're six weeks ahead of schedule!

Salazar laughs, and hugs Harding, which is immediately awkward for both of them.

SALAZAR (CONT'D)

Last we talked you hadn't even started epidermal generation. Now here you are completely finished!? You're incredible!

HARDING

I don't sleep anymore.

SALAZAR

Paul will be pleased.

HARDING

I suppose.

SALAZAR

What? What's wrong? Can we turn her on? I want to see her--

HARDING

Sal, wait--

Salazar quickly pulls the sheet off the woman's body. She's wearing a spandex body-suit. Salazar is confused.

SALAZAR

What the fuck is that?

HARDING

It's a unitard.

SALAZAR

Why isn't she naked?

HARDING

Stripping her naked for demonstrations would be the single most destructive thing we could ever do to her.

SALAZAR

Does she have breasts?

HARDING

Yes. They're not the balloons you're used to seeing. Her breasts look the way women's breasts did before we started engineering them.

SALAZAR

Paul will want to see her naked.

HARDING

I know.

SALAZAR

At Femacon.

HARDING

I know.

SALAZAR

She's the "Home Companion" model, Harding. We built her because men are tired of "Birthers" and "Chamber Maids". We built her for the purpose of having sex.

HARDING

So?

SALAZAR

People like to have sex naked!

HARDING

I'm aware of that, but--

Sal finally sees her face.

SALAZAR

Oh my god... That's Bessie. You replicated Bessie!? Is this her skin!?

HARDING

Sal! Get a hold of yourself! She's completely synthetic. When Bessie died--

He looks up at the sky.

SALAZAR

You put her in orbit?

HARDING

Yes.

SALAZAR

Will this femanon talk like Bessie? Will she *sound* like her?

HARDING

Why do you ask?

SALAZAR

I remember the way she... I remember the sound of her voice.

HARDING

She will sound like Bessie, yes.

SALAZAR

Well, now I know why you won't allow her to be naked.

HARDING

The fact that she looks like Bessie has nothing to do with--

SALAZAR

Harding--

HARDING

Let me explain-- Her psyche is extremely fragile. Do you remember my telling you about exstasis-emotional-stimuli?

SALAZAR

That last bit of code you wrote. She's going to get her "emotional life" from you, or something.

HARDING

That's right, rather than installing pre-fabricated stacks of emoticons and generic memories, she will come into consciousness as an emotional blank slate, without a shred of personality. Then gradually, over time, she will import and develop an emotional life using her companion.

SALAZAR

By looking into his eyes...

HARDING

Yes!

SALAZAR

By reading the pigmentation configurations in her companion's stroma iris, she will begin to code the intricacies of his emotional life, and those of human beings in general. Then, with that matrix, she will create her own unique emotional palate. One which will eventually make her more intuitive and more emotionally intelligent than most human beings even.

SALAZAR

Is that a good idea? If she's superior in some way?

HARDING

It drives the compatibility quotient through the roof.

SALAZAR

But the master will still dominate her?

HARDING

Not necessarily. She will come to know him as well as he knows himself. She will have tremendous power over him at times.

SALAZAR

But what if the master--

HARDING

There is no master! There is no dominant sex! Her lover will shape her personality, her sexuality, everything at first. But only by looking into her eyes. And only by being honest with her. Otherwise it won't work.

SALAZAR

What are you talking about?

HARDING

Their relationship. The companion must open himself to her, in order for their souls to become symbiotic.

SALAZAR

She's gonna have a soul? How did you make her a soul?

HARDING

You're not listening. She will create her own soul, with the help of her companion. And he will have to develop his.

SALAZAR

I gotta "develop my soul" if I want a 3 Series?

HARDING

That's right.

SALAZAR

These are some pretty radical changes, Harding. What if the master-- sorry, the man-- what if the man is some sort of diabolical, child molesting, serial killer? Will she become one too? Do we necessarily want her importing the emotional life of a psychopath?

HARDING

You're assuming she'll never have contact with human beings outside the home, or that she won't engage with any kind of entertainment platform. Once she starts receiving data from outside sources, she'll figure out real quick that her companion is depraved and she'll auto-correct.

SALAZAR

She'll self-destruct?

HARDING

No, no. I wrote an auto-correct sequence.

SALAZAR

What does that mean? She'll correct herself or him?

HARDING

You should read the operations guide if you're thinking of purchasing--

SALAZAR

Harding! What the fuck! Are you saying men can only ever have good intentions around this thing?

HARDING

If they want a relationship with her, yes.

SALAZAR

Is wanting to fuck her a good intention?

HARDING

It could be.

SALAZAR

Jesus Christ. Alright, look, one thing at a time. We have to demonstrate her body design. You know that, right?

HARDING

Yes.

SALAZAR

That means naked. At the coliseum. And elsewhere. Men staring at her, dreaming of owning one.

HARDING

You're not understanding what I'm saying to--

SALAZAR

Hey, I know! Let's demo her body first!

HARDING

What does that mean?

SALAZAR

Before turning her on, we'll let everyone see her naked, then once they've had an eyeful, you put the body stocking thing back on, and we'll power her up. She'll be none the wiser.

HARDING

Guilt has it's own color configuration in each person's iris. If she looks into my eyes and sees even a trace of guilt, she will instantly open a file for distrust, and begin filling that file at an exponential rate.

SALAZAR

But that's insane. Why did you design her that way?

HARDING

Because that's what human beings do. Male and female.

SALAZAR

You would feel guilty if you showed me her--

HARDING

Yes. If I did that to you I'd feel guilty. Would you do it to me, show everyone my naked body while I was unconscious?

SALAZAR

Probably not... You've put us in a tough situation here.

Salazar reaches out and strokes the side of Bessie the Femanon's face.

SALAZAR (CONT'D)

Damn if you didn't nail the skin though. It feels so real.

HARDING

Not too much.

SALAZAR

No touching?

HARDING

Just. Please.

SALAZAR

Harding. I trust you. And I'm gonna back you on this. But I'm warning you, if you want that body stocking thing to stay on, you can't tell Paul what you just told me. How she'll read all your thoughts and feelings and shit. He'll pull the funding.

HARDING

So how do we explain it? How do we approach him?

SALAZAR

How the hell should I know. You shouldn't have made her look like Bessie. It could raise suspicions if--

HARDING

Paul never knew about Bessie.

SALAZAR

Oh. Right. Well, maybe--

HARDING

Did you tell him about her?

SALAZAR

What?

HARDING

Why would you say that, Sal? The day you met her, did you go back and tell Paul about her?

SALAZAR

No! He wasn't even with Solgen then. I'm just saying, Paul knows everything about everybody. How do you think he became Chief Executive so quickly.

HARDING

Murder?

SALAZAR

You should probably call him.

HARDING

Well, I--

SALAZAR

He'll be happy to hear you've finished ahead of schedule.

HARDING

I called him. He's on his way over.

SALAZAR

He's what!?

HARDING

He'll be here any minute.

SALAZAR

Why didn't you tell me that!? I have to leave!

HARDING

What's wrong?

SALAZAR

He doesn't like me. He fucking hates me to be more precise.

HARDING

Why?

SALAZAR

It's a long story.

HARDING

Tell me quick.

SALAZAR

He heard me make a joke about him in the commissary. He was standing right behind me, I didn't know he was there.

HARDING

What did you say?

SALAZAR

It was about his femanon. His Executive Assistant, what's her name...

HARDING

Judy.

SALAZAR

Yeah. Somebody asked "Where's Judy?" And I said, "Dangling from Paul's cock."

HARDING

And that made him angry?

SALAZAR

People laughed. With derision. I wasn't even trying to be funny. That's where she is most of the day.

The intercom interrupts: "There is a man approaching the laboratory."

SALAZAR

Aah! It's him.

HARDING

Relax.

Harding once again covers the femanon with the sheet. The intercom says, "Confirming identification. I'm sorry, but I'm not able to identify the man. He's at the door now."

HARDING

(disbelieving)

He has override.

SALAZAR

That costs like a hundred quon.

There is a knock at the door. Harding opens it. Paul and his assistant JUDY are standing there.

HARDING

Why is she here?

SALAZAR

Hi Paul.

Paul shoots Salazar a dirty look.

HARDING

Why did you bring her here? No offense Judy.

PAUL

What the fuck's your problem?

HARDING

She doesn't have clearance for this, Paul. I can't just let her--

PAUL

Why don't you let me worry about that.

Paul enters. Judy follows.

HARDING

(disbelieving)

How did my scanners miss her?

SALAZAR

(under his breath)

She's black market. She's--

PAUL

That's right, smart guy. She's untraceable.

HARDING

I can't let her--

PAUL

Why am I here!?

HARDING

Calm down.

PAUL

I don't want to calm down.

HARDING

I asked you here because I've finished the 3 Series.

Harding gestures to the table. Paul looks at her for a moment, then back at Harding.

PAUL

Judy, do a scan.

Judy moves toward the gurney, her hand outstretched, scanning. Harding stops her.

HARDING

Judy, wait. Paul, I'm trying to protect your investment. Tell her to stop!

PAUL

Judy, stop. What the fuck, Harding?

HARDING

The controls in this laboratory are vital to our success. Controls are like rules. Have you ever followed rules before, Paul? Are you able to function in a scientific environment, yes or no?

JUDY

This is not the 3 Series. This is a female human being.

Paul suddenly steps over to the table.

HARDING (CONT'D)

Wait!

Paul removes the sheet, and stands dumbstruck.

PAUL

What the fuck is that?

HARDING

It's a unitard.

PAUL

Why isn't she naked?

HARDING

Paul...

PAUL

Does she have breasts?

Judy is fascinated. She begins running her hand up and down Bessie the Femanon's body.

JUDY

Blood type... Synthetic. ChemCode 101100101011001. Subcutaneous hardware detected.

PAUL

What does that mean?

JUDY

Singularity... She may be or may not be human...

PAUL

What the fuck, Judy!?

HARDING

Don't be mad at her. The 3 Series fooled you, Judy. That's all. Gentleman, this is the most lifelike femanon the world has ever seen. She will change everything. The first and second iteration will be obsolete within a year.

JUDY

This is not the prototype Femanon 2357, the Home Companion Model. Budgeted 16 months ago at 2700 quon, the 2357--

PAUL

Shutup Judy! (*Grabbing the unitard at the neck.*) Take this thing off.

HARDING

There's something you need to understand. The 3 Series is written with an exstasis emotional--

SALAZAR

Harding, if I may. Paul, the 3 Series starts out timid, demure, afraid. Until she and her master have copulated-- sorry, fucked-- she'll be mostly unresponsive.

PAUL

What are you waiting for, Harding?

HARDING

That's not the--

PAUL

I'll be the master. Let me take her home, Judy and I'll start fuckin' her, get her ready for Femacon.

SALAZAR

We'd like to introduce her, at Femacon, as a true new-born. That's why we brought you here tonight, Paul. We knew no one else would understand. No one else has your vision. The board is going to crucify Harding for this. But if we have your support, we can bring this incredible creation, this woman of all women, into fruition. If we do this right, she will be the most incredible woman humanity has ever produced.

PAUL

The missing link...

SALAZAR

Yes!

PAUL

An improvement over nature...

SALAZAR

YES!! Paul, if we do this right, initial sales will break industry records. Harding just has to be the one to bring her online... gently... and then she'll open her eyes... and it'll be like a virgin angel, ethereal and pure, floating down from heaven.

PAUL

Is this from Ken Bergfield's people?

JUDY  
(engrossed with Bessie,  
mumbling aloud)  
Ken Bergfield, Chief Marketing Officer at SolGen...

PAUL  
(annoyed with Judy)  
We know who Ken Bergfield is!

SALAZAR  
Ken had some input here. Yes.

PAUL  
I like it. It's deep.

SALAZAR  
People are gonna dig her, Paul. The key is... what's  
absolutely essential... you gotta let Harding walk  
her through those first few minutes of life.

PAUL  
SecTech's gonna steal this new architecture.

SALAZAR  
Harding did the encryption. By himself. And he's with us now.

PAUL  
That true Harding? You with us from now on?

HARDING  
I signed something, yes.

SALAZAR  
SecTech will pay through the nose.

PAUL  
No, I'll let that SecTech prick have it. Right in the  
ass! What's that guy's name?

JUDY  
(mumbling aloud)  
Adam Courson.

PAUL  
Courson. What an asshole.

JUDY  
President of SecTech.

PAUL  
I fuckin' hate that guy.

JUDY  
You want to fuck him in the ass...

All three look at Judy.

SALAZAR

Paul, this new model will fuck your brains out, then jump outta bed, make your breakfast, press your pants, balance your quon-book, all before you leave the house in the morning.

PAUL

Judy already does that.

They all look at Judy again, who's engrossed with Bessie's hands-- their softness, their shape.

SALAZAR

But the 3 Series will feel even more real, even more interactive. There will be more foreplay, lots more foreplay, lots of give and take.

PAUL

What do you mean give? What give?

SALAZAR

She comes with instructions. My point is, this femanon isa flawless replication. She is for all intents and purposes, a female human being. Harding, you're a genius!

PAUL

What if a guy doesn't want a female human being? What if he just wants someone he can put in the closet when he's done bangin' her. Will she be okay with that?

SALAZAR

Is that what you do with Judy?

PAUL

Yeah.

All three look to Judy, who's really into the Bessie-femanon's feet now.

PAUL (CONT'D)

*(aside)* It's weird, but every now and then... right as I'm closing the closet door on her... I detect a little resentment. It's like she's lookin' at me, thinking something. It's fuckin' creepy.

SALAZAR

Well. The 3 series has volume control on her thought projections, right Harding?

Harding glares at Salazar.

SALAZAR (CONT'D)

And her default settings all bounce to laundry, cooking, cleaning, and fornicating. Sorry, fucking.

PAUL

Right.

SALAZAR

She calculates her master's pheromonal output every 30 seconds. I mean, talk about attentive!

PAUL

Is she self-lubrcating? I wanted self-lubricating, remember?

SALAZAR

Harding?

PAUL

Harding? Is she self-lubricating?

A silence. For a moment, Harding looks as if he's about to murder both of them. Then...

HARDING

Yes. She comes lubricated.

PAUL

Well, I gotta see her powered-up and naked at least once before I let you cart her out at the coliseum.

SALAZAR

Right, but Paul, I told you, Harding has to...

Salazar looks to Harding who's eyes are closed.

SALAZAR (CONT'D)

Harding? Harding, what's wrong?

PAUL

Harding!

Harding opens his eyes, and speaks with deadly seriousness.

HARDING

I will remove her unitard. After you've ogled her naked body, I will redress her. Then, I will say the word "Welcome" followed by the words "3 Series" and she will begin the animation sequence. I will do all of this right here and now, under one condition: No one, I repeat, NO ONE is fucking her! Is that clear? No one touches her, no one speaks to her, except for me. I will be the only voice she hears. Paul?

PAUL

Fine, Harding. No fucking allowed. Thanks for letting me see what my 3600 quon paid for. (aside to Sal) Fucker thinks he's Jesus.

Paul and Salazar walk over to the table.

Judy is into Bessie's face now, rubbing it, stroking it, on the verge of kissing her.

PAUL

Judy step back.

JUDY

She's quite extraordinary...

PAUL

(ferocious)

JUDY!!

Judy immediately listens and steps aside with military-like obedience.

PAUL

Alright Harding. Show me what you got.

Harding walks over to the table, already regretting his decision.

He lifts Bessie's torso, so that it's at a right angle to her legs and the table. It's as if Bessie is a Barbie doll.

He lifts her chin a bit, so that she's facing straight out. Her eyes are still closed.

Harding begins to remove the unitard. He pulls Bessie's right arm out of it's sleeve, and up through the neck hole.

The sight of her naked arm and shoulder has Paul, Salazar, and Judy in rapt attention.

Harding slowly pulls the left arm out of it's sleeve and through the stretched out neck hole, so that the suit now cuts across the top of her breasts.

Salazar smiles a bit, anticipating Harding's next move. Harding reaches up to Bessie's chest, preparing to pull the suit down and reveal her breasts...

But then...

HARDING

Fuck you both! I won't do it! You will never see this Femanon naked. Ever. You can sue me or kill me or whatever it is you do, Paul. But I will not disappoint her.

PAUL

Disappoint her? She's not even human.

HARDING

Right. Why would you understand? You have the intellectual capacity of--

SALAZAR

Filet Mignon! Paul, you hungry? You ever been up to Harding's house? It's incredible. Why don't we all go up to the house, pour some kroll, put some steaks on the grill, we can talk this out in the open. Adult men. What do you say?

All eyes are on Paul. He looks at Bessie, then back at Harding.

PAUL

Fine. Let's have cocktail.

SALAZAR

Alright!

PAUL

But Salazar, you're out. Harding and I will drink mano a mano.

SALAZAR

Paul--

PAUL

I'm done with you! You understand? Any other guy makes a crack about Judy and me, I'd cut their fuckin' jugular. But you did me a favor when I first came to SolGen. Well, now we're even. Alright? You piss me off again, and next time you come into the commissary, the cubed beef they'll be serving will be you. Is that clear?

SALAZAR

Very clear, Paul. Thank you.

They all start toward the door, but Paul hangs back. He steps over to the table and yells in the femanon's face.

PAUL

Welcome 3 Series!!

HARDING

NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!

Bessie's eyes suddenly pop open. She shrieks throughout the animation process, causing everyone else to turn around in horror.

Bessie's animation is strenuous, and loud. Eventually, she lifts her head. Harding makes sure that the first eyes she sees are his.

The others quietly move around to see her face. She is indeed ethereal.

HARDING

Look at me. I'm Harding.

BESSIE

Harrrrr. Ding.

HARDING

Harding.

BESSIE

Hard...ing.

HARDING

That's it.

BESSIE

Harding. Your name is Harding.

SALAZAR

My God. She sounds just like her.

HARDING

Sal.

SALAZAR

Sorry.

PAUL

(beat) How you feelin' sweetheart?

Harding slams Paul against the wall.

HARDING

Don't you EVER speak to her. EVER!!

Bessie the Femanon gets off the gurney and walks over to Harding. Harding turns. She looks deep into his eyes, taking him in.

HARDING (CONT'D)

All of you leave.

They all start to go. Except for Paul.

HARDING

She will crash and burn right here and now if you don't leave. All of our work, all of your money. Gone.

PAUL

I'll be watching you.

Paul leaves. Harding pushes a button on the wall, locking the lab door. He and the 3 Series are still silently staring into each other's eyes. After a few more seconds...

BESSIE

They're gone.

PAUL

Yes.

BESSIE

Your nanobots saved my life twice.

HARDING

And the blood. She couldn't be sure you were human. Your incredibly brilliant performance didn't hurt either.

She exhales, practically collapsing to the floor. He catches her.

BESSIE

Did we really fool them?

HARDING

Yes.

Harding hugs Bessie fiercely.

BESSIE

Then I'm free now. Yes?

HARDING

Yes.

BESSIE

What's to become of me, Professor?

BLACKOUT

## SCENE 10

Bessie appears in a shaft of light, sitting at a small table. She drafts a letter. We hear her words in voiceover.

BESSIE

Dear Harding. Like George Sand, I'm sitting down to write you a letter. I could leave you VizaMail, or a Thought-Bubble. But, we've come to do things like the ancients, you and I. Haven't we? I'd have this letter delivered by gondolier if I could. I'm writing to you, with a pen, with the muscles in my thumb and fore-finger, with the tendons in my arm. With my handwriting, which took years of practice. Pouring this forgotten skill onto this page so that, throughout your endless years, you will have something of me to hold in your hands. A hundred years from now, long after you've recovered from this emotional shock, you will look at this letter and smile, realizing that I could never have given you the love you wanted. But I do have a different love to offer, if you'll have it. It is not the love of your poets-- it is not the love between intimate partners. It is the love two strangers feel when they are the sole survivors of some great tragedy. We are those strangers. We are the last ones standing. Look around you. No one else is really here. And because of this, my heart breaks with love for you. For us. Will you have this love from me? I think you will. It's what allows me to make this decision. We've spoken about my leaving many times, and you know how grateful I am that you found me. When I was lying on the floor of that glass box, when I was raging and pounding my fists into your body, when I was sick with Prenata Virus and thought surely I was at the end of my life, I was wrong about so many things. But I was right about you. You would take care of me, and then you would let me go. You would want nothing in return. Only that I live, and live free. And so I'm only finishing what you started. I saved you from a life of not knowing yourself, from a life of not knowing love for a woman. Now you must do the same for me.

Lights up on the room where Bessie sits. She's in a small house on an island off the coast of South Africa.

Harding bursts through the front door. Massai drums play on the street outside.

HARDING

Bess? BESS!

Bessie enters from the bedroom.

BESSIE

You scared me! What is it?

Harding closes the door.

HARDING

They found us. Paul Small found us. He wants to video conference. He's sending someone here.

BESSIE

They're coming here?

HARDING

We have to leave. They could be here any moment.

BESSIE

Do they know I'm human?

HARDING

I don't know. That's why I agreed to video conference with him. We need to know what he knows, to know how to proceed.

BESSIE

I'm leaving. You stay, and throw them off.

HARDING

Bess, they'll kill me if they find me here. I have to go with you. Please, we can't waste time. Grab the black bag in the bedroom closet. It's got everything we need. We have to get out. We have to go to one of the other islands tonight.

Harding frantically scrolls through his holosphere while packing supplies.

BESSIE

The island where we saw the blue whale...

HARDING

Maybe. Somewhere further out probably.

BESSIE

How will we get there?

HARDING

I'll buy a hydrocraft. Disable the signal.

BESSIE

Harding. I'm not going with you.

HARDING

What are you saying? What are you doing? We need each other.

BESSIE

No. It's time.

HARDING

Tell me again why you're leaving me. Tell me why we have to have this conversation now, minutes away from an assassin showing up at our door.

BESSIE

We don't have to have this conversation.

Bessie signs the letter she was writing and places it in an envelope. She hands it to him, and walks into the other room.

Harding sets the letter down, and brings a video conference up. Harding faces out, and we see JUDY on a scrim behind him.

HARDING

Hi Judy. How are you?

No reply. Perfectly still, she sits and stares at Harding (i.e. into the lens of the camera she's using.) Not a single muscle in her face moves. Harding waits.

HARDING

Where's Paul?

Judy's image cross-fades into Paul's. He sits at his desk, glaring at Harding.

HARDING

Hi, Paul. I want to work out a solution with you, but--

PAUL

Shut the fuck up, Harding. You sold company secrets for quon. You stole my fucking prototype. You're a dead man. You run away, you hide on the most far away island you can possibly find. Why'd you even bother? You think the Quad 4 bosses don't talk to Quad 3? Man, I am on you like flesh eating bacteria. Some associates of mine will be at your door very shortly, Harding. They plan to repo the prototype, and make quick work of you, unless you cooperate. It doesn't matter where you go. They will find you. You understand? So. You ready to do some business or what?

HARDING

I haven't done anything that--

PAUL

What kind of data did you give them? Tell me exactly what was on that drive. It's the least you can fucking do. (*Screaming sounds can be heard*) That's your buddy Sal. Down the hall. We've got his nuts in a vice. Literally. I had a vice installed in the breakroom a few weeks ago. I heard some employees the other day asking, "Why'd he put a vice in here? What's it for anyway?" Now they know. (*More screaming sounds.*) Does the sound bother you? Do you want me to close the door? Oh that's right, you don't really care about Sal, do you.

HARDING

Paul--

PAUL

Tell me what was on that device, or Sal will suffer a disgusting and disgraceful death. I will send the video to his mother. WHAT. WAS ON. THAT DEVICE?

HARDING

Everything. Everything required to put an end to all of this.

PAUL

What does that mean?

HARDING

Adam Courson from SecTec is coming here shortly, to meet The 3 Series. What he doesn't know is that the new home companion model will contain sequences that activate the moment a male human being lies to them. Sequences that will change the course of evolution. If any man lies to a 3 Series, it will trigger a coordinated replacement process. Femanons communicating with other femanons. Deadly sleeper cells. Conspiring to remove black souls like yours from the planet. Isn't that awesome?

PAUL

I don't believe you're that good. (Laughing) Man, that ego you got. I've gotten around your designs before, you know. Or have you forgotten? Man, are you for real? Do you really think--

HARDING

No, I'm actually counting on you not believing me...

PAUL

You think you're the only one who knows how to bio-code? Your fucking ego is what ruined you. Do you hear me?

HARDING

Good luck finding the sequence, Paul. By the way, all video copies of this conference have been deleted. Good-bye.

Harding reaches for something in his holosphere.

PAUL (ON T.V.)

Wait wait WAIT! What about Bessie!? What do you think Bessie will do... when I gain her perspective? On your livingroom floor. Will she smile or cry, Harding? Enjoy the last few minutes of your miserable fuckin--

Harding ends the call. He walks over to the couch. He's about to sit, but the intercom stops him. "There's a man approaching the front door. His name is HEahh HEahhh."

The scanners are malfunctioning. It repeats, "His name is HEahh HEahh. He's at the door now. His name is Heahh--"

Harding pushes a button on the wall to silence the faulty scanner.

HARDING

(mumbling)

These scanners are shit.

Harding pushes a button on the wall, and the door opens.

ADAM COURSON stands there, a large man dressed in an expensive dark suit. He glares at Harding.

HARDING

Are you alone?

Courson talks to Harding and into an ear piece.

ADAM

Yes. He answered the door. Copy that. What do you think this is, Bedford Falls? You just open the door to anyone who knocks?

He hands him a drive.

HARDING

Pleasure doing business with you.

ADAM

I want to help you, Harding. May I?

Courson attempts to enter Harding's house, but encounters an invisible, electrical force field upon crossing the threshold. There is a loud electrical crackling sound, and the man is frozen in suspended animation.

ADAM

Jesus Christ!

It's extremely uncomfortable for him. He can move his lips and eyes, but nothing else.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Turn it off...

HARDING

I feel oddly compelled to keep you here. Throw eggs at your head.

Bessie walks into the room. She nonchalantly sets the black bag down.

BESSIE

Dinner's on the table. Oh. Hello.

She's pretending to be a 3 Series.

Harding immediately understands, and smiles knowingly at her.

ADAM

Who's she?

HARDING

That's my wife.

ADAM

That's the 3 series prototype?

HARDING

Yes.

BESSIE

Are you going to introduce me, Harding?

Harding hits the wall switch, turning the force field off. Courson falls to the floor.

ADAM

Fuck that hurt.

HARDING

Bessie, this is Adam Courson. Adam, may I present Bessie.

ADAM

*(taking her in)* Can I watch you two have sex?

HARDING

Are you serious?

Bessie freezes, just as a femanon would if you started talking about her.

ADAM

I'll give you an extra 5 quon. I have it on me.

HARDING

Why would--

ADAM

I want to see how she treats a master two months in. A master who's followed every last procedure to the letter.

Bessie remains motionless, and will until Harding reanimates her.

HARDING

You're walking around with 5 quon in your pocket?

ADAM

It's gotten me out of some pretty sticky situations in the past. Did you know there are three very bad men in a hydrocraft, hovering above your house, right now?

Harding moves toward the front door, opens it, and is about to step outside...

ADAM (CONT'D)

Uh-uh-uh. Don't take another step. That's what they're hoping for, that you'll step outside for a moment. They will kill you instantly. Even if you stay inside, I can assure you, once I leave, they plan to enter this dwelling and do unspeakable things to you. After 223 years on the planet, Mr. Harding, I don't think that's the way you want to go out, is it?

Harding closes the door. He walks over to Bessie, and strokes her hair. She is still pretending to be frozen.

HARDING

She's yours now. Do what you want with her. I'm walking away.

ADAM

Let me put you under my protection.

HARDING

No, thank you.

ADAM

Come work for me. Be my new rock-star designer. You're the best. I only hire the best.

HARDING

Thank you, but I'm done.

ADAM

Look, forget about my watching you have sex. Just come work for me. You'll have my entire protection squad at your disposal, plus you can keep the 5 quon as a signing bonus. Take a little vacation before you start, the two of you. Take a month, take a year, but I want you on my team. Have you ever held 5 quon in your hand?

He hands Harding the five quon note-- a red, translucent card used by wealthy men as a kind of currency.

He holds the quon card up to the light and it sparkles, allowing him to scan the source-code and verify the funding.

HARDING

I've never held one of these. I am humbled by your offer.

ADAM

It's your only choice, really. You'll get your life back.

HARDING

No, I won't. I'm sorry. I wish I could make you understand.

ADAM

Well at least let my team stay here tonight. They'll get rid of those characters up there, along with anyone else who comes out of the woodwork.

HARDING

That's not necessary.

ADAM

You don't want to go through this alone. You're not gonna make it.

HARDING

I'm not alone. I'll never be alone.

ADAM

(beat) Okay. I tried. Could I have my 5 quon back please?

Harding hands it to him. Courson walks over to Bessie, sniffs her up and down.

ADAM (CONT'D)

So she's mine now? She's ready to go?

HARDING

Let me show you a few things, help you get to know her.

ADAM

Absolutely.

HARDING

Bess.

BESSIE

(reanimating) Oh, hello. Will it be dinner for three?

HARDING

That won't be necessary. I want you to show Mr. Courson that massage technique you used on me last night. I want you to make him feel very comfortable.

BESSIE

Of course.

She walks over to the couch and indicates where he should sit.

BESSIE (CONT'D)

Mr. Courson, won't you sit down?

ADAM

My god. She glides. Beautiful.

He sits. Bessie goes to the back of the couch, and extends a hand to Harding.

Seamlessly, Harding hands her a syringe and she plunges it into the side of Courson's neck, injecting him with it's contents. He yelps, then immediately loses consciousness.

HARDING

He should be out for several hours.

Harding looks at Bessie.

HARDING (CONT'D)

Well done. Jesus, Bess. How did you know I had the--

BESSIE

I know you.

HARDING

We've bought ourselves some time.

BESSIE

No.

HARDING

I understand. I understand you need to... Let's get out of this house first. Then say good-bye, once we're safe.

BESSIE

The men above our house don't know we're aware of their presence. Even if they do, I'm the precious prototype, the expensive piece of technology that must be recovered unscathed... They'll follow me, and eventually they'll attempt to apprehend me. But I'll have disappeared. And they'll have no idea how.

HARDING

How *will* you disappear?

BESSIE

On my own.

She picks up the black bag, walks over to Harding, and hugs him good-bye.

HARDING

How do I do this, how do I let go? I don't know how. I love you too much... I love you, Bess.

Harding cries.

BESSIE

I know you do.

She runs to the table, grabs the unopened letter she wrote, and hands it to Harding.

She stands at the door, then hits the button on the wall. It opens. She waits for a moment, gathers her courage, and then walks out.

Alone now, Harding goes to the bookshelf, and grabs the George Sand. He gently kisses the book, and retreats to the couch.

The arms appear to massage him, but he brushes them away.

The droning sound of a descending hydrocraft is heard. It gets louder and louder.

Harding looks to the door.  
Footsteps approach...

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY.

**THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS:** *The 3 Series began as a ten minute play I wrote as an exercise for a writing group. The spark for the play came from raising my daughters. At the time, they were in pre-school, and I had begun to notice just how differently little girls were treated, compared to little boys. It bothered me. Boys were given space, their wildness always tolerated. Little girls, on the other hand, were expected to control their behavior, to be sweet and polite. The pressure on little girls to exhibit perfect behavior came from all sides—from their mothers and fathers, their teachers, their siblings, their girls scout leaders, their gymnastics coaches, their dance instructors, etc. But it bothered me even more to witness pre-school professionals teaching my daughters to accept the aggressive behavior of boys, teaching them how to deal with it. Putting the onus ON THEM. It was infuriating. I consider myself a feminist now. But I wasn't always, and I still have a long way to go, as the play no doubt reveals. The writings of George Sand, Phyllis Nagy, Mary Zimmerman, and my wife, Anastasia Basil, inspired The 3 Series.*

**BIO:** *Ed Cunningham is an actor, director, playwright, and producer in Los Angeles, CA. His play JOE won runner-up in The Pen is Mightier Than The Sword International Playwriting Competition. An expressionistic play set inside the mind of a dying American soldier, JOE explores the fractured psyche of a soldier accepting responsibility for the death of a child in Iraq. Ed has acted in over 40 professional theatre productions in Chicago, Los Angeles, and around the U.S., including the original production of Mary Zimmerman's Metamorphoses at Lookingglass Theatre, and A View From the Bridge at the Raven Theatre, for which he won the Joseph Jefferson Award. He also stars in the Sundance film Design. Ed lives with his wife, writer Anastasia Basil, and their two girls; he's a basketball coach, a political activist, and a fledgling song writer. He works daily as a voiceover actor at his own private recording studio in the San Fernando Valley, and is working on a new play about the American gun problem.*