

OVER BLACK:

QUOTE:

"Can the synthesis of man and machine ever be stable, or will the purely organic component become such a hindrance that it has to be discarded?"

-Arthur C. Clarke.

QUOTE FADES OUT:

WE STAY ON BLACK:

The following nursery rhyme sung by children:

Ring-a-Round the Rosie,
A pocket full of posies,
Ashes, Ashes,
We all fall down!

FADE IN:

EXT. ENTRANCE TO A MILITARY FACILITY - NIGHT

The facility is covert. Built deep underground. The only clue to its existence is the entrance through a tunnel nestled into the side of a rock formation.

SUPER: UPSTATE NEW YORK.

INT. MILITARY FACILITY - SECURITY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

BUD, Middle-aged, fat, and LARRY, Middle-aged, fatter, sit in a small office. A bank of screens in front of each.

Something flits in front of one of the screens.

BUD
What the hell?

LARRY
What's up?

BUD
I thought I saw something on the
outer perimeter.

Larry spins around in his chair, has the most cursory glance before returning to his own monitors.

LARRY
Fifty bucks, it's just a glitch.

A BEAT

BUD

That's weird. I just saw the same thing. Only this was in zone 3.

LARRY

Well, there you have it. Nothing can move *that* fast over *this* terrain. It's a glitch.

BUD

Yeah. Maybe you're right. I'll just call the Sentries. You know, just in case.

Larry smiles to himself, shakes his head.

INT. ENTRANCE TO THE MILITARY FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

CORPORAL DILLMAN, (20s), slim stands with CORPORAL MAYHEW, (30s), slightly bulkier.

Dillman fidgets on the spot.

DILLMAN

You know, just standing here for hours really makes your back ache.

MAYHEW

Pussy.

DILLMAN

What? I'm just saying. You can buy this matting to stand on. It makes standing still less stressful on your back.

MAYHEW

Would you like me to see if I can find you a chair? Or maybe we can get a cot put in here.

Dillman's scowl is short-lived as Bud's voice crackles over the radio.

BUD

Hey, Guys? I've just seen something on the monitors. It's probably nothing but better keep an eye out, just in case.

DILLMAN

(into his radio)

Okay, copy that.

(MORE)

DILLMAN (CONT'D)
(to Mayhew)
Whoa. Might be some action, huh?

MAYHEW
Nothing ever happens here. It's
probably just a cougar.

DILLMAN
A cougar?

MAYHEW
Yeah. Or a grizzly.

Dillman turns to Mayhew.

DILLMAN
Do you even know where you are?

Something moves outside.

Both Men stiffen. Rifles raise.

Mayhew types a code and the gates unlock.

Dillman and Mayhew stand at the entrance, eyes struggling
to adjust to the dim light afforded by the half-moon.

They step out into the cool night air.

Another movement.

MAYHEW
That ain't no grizzly.

DILLMAN
No shit.

The bushes all around seem to be alive.

Multiple, incredibly fast, assailants burst from nowhere.
They smash Dillman and Mayhew to the ground with ease.

The clatter of the Corporal's guns hitting the floor is
drowned out by their screams.

The sound of their terror echoes down the tunnel walls.

EXT. SUBURBAN BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT - DAY

SUPER: BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT.

INT. MARK'S HOUSE - DAY

The house is quiet. A poster of the film "Predator" on the
wall.

Sunlight is filtered by a yellow blind which accentuates its morning glow.

Clothes strewn on the floor.

A photo of Mark at graduation from high school.

A photo of Mark taken at university.

A photo of Mark with friends.

On the opposite wall to the predator poster the Terminator stares out across the room, gun in hand.

The radio ALARM bursts into life.

An arm reaches out from under a cocoon of bed covers. The hand slaps a button and disappears whence it came. A moment later the ALARM sounds again:

The covers are thrown off. MARK ADAMS, Mid-twenties, good-looking, lies on the cover-less bed in just boxers.

MARK

Okay, already! I'm up.

INT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN MARK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

BATHROOM: Mark brushes his teeth with an Iron Man toothbrush.

LIVING ROOM: He skips through the untidy mess and leans on a book rack to put on his shoes. The DVDs and books are a mix of action and Super Hero.

KITCHEN: He grabs his keys from a plastic Spider-Man in mid-web-sling pose-

MARK

Thanks, Spidey.

-shoves a piece of last night's pizza into his mouth and heads for the door.

EXT. MARK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mark's front yard is in stark contrast to the rest of the neighborhood. Overgrown lawn, weeds growing between the concrete slabs of the driveway.

The door of a tatty 80s Volvo station wagon groans as Mark opens it. He throws an arm full of paperwork and folders and then jumps in.

The fan belt squeals as the engine coughs into life. The dilapidated Swedish stalwart clatters away down the street.

EXT. DOMINION CYBERTRONICS - DAY

Most of the parking spaces out front are still empty. The sun dominates a clear blue sky.

The melodic DAWN CHORUS of a scattering of birds who sit high in the trees.

This almost idyllic scene is completely ruined as a busted old Volvo squeals its way into the lot. The birds scatter from the trees as a single entity. Mark swings into a space and a grateful engine is shut off.

The door opens and what looks like the contents of an art store with legs emerges. Mark tries to wrestle some order into the paperwork and folders. He jumps and loses some papers at the BLAST of a loud car air horn.

A bright red MIATA, SCREECHES into the lot and parks next to Mark.

SERRANO

Hey, Mark.

SERRANO, (20s), Mexican, wearing flashy clothes jumps out of the car.

MARK

Damn it, Serrano. You almost made me drop half this stuff.

SERRANO

Oh, here let me help you.

Serrano grabs some paperwork from Mark. And, in doing so, exposes a flashy new wristwatch.

MARK

Serrano? What is that on your arm?

Serrano pulls his sleeve back to properly show off the watch.

SERRANO

What this? This is my new ROLEX. I picked it up from my contact last night.

MARK

I see. Contact. So it's not a Rolex, it's a Stolex.

SERRANO
Hey. I don't deal in stolen
goods. This is genuine, my man.

MARK
Wait a minute, the second hand
isn't moving.

Serrano quickly pulls his sleeve back down.

SERRANO
Yeah, well. I said it was
genuine, I didn't say it worked.

MARK
(laughing)
C'mon, Elon Musk, let's get to
work.

They make their way to the building.

SERRANO
Anyway, it doesn't matter. Once
a chick sees the name Rolex,
you're as good as in.

MARK
Yeah. And once she asks you the
time, you're as good as out.

Serrano swipes a card and the heavy glass door slides
open.

INT. DOMINION CYBERTRONICS CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The two men make their way through various corridors and
security smart gates.

INT. PATHOGEN LAB - CONTINUOUS

The Lab has industrial sealing around every aperture and
airlocks at the doors. Everyone who works in the Lab wears
full HAZMAT suits.

AMY RAWLINS, mid-twenties, pretty, watches Mark and
Serrano through a large window. They share a wave with her
as they pass by.

Amy makes her way to the exit.

INT. DOMINION CYBERTRONICS CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

SERRANO
I know you've got a thing for
her.

MARK

So what?

SERRANO

So, maybe you get yourself some bling. Show her you're a serious player.

MARK

How does having a broken watch make me a serious player?

INT. MARK'S LAB - CONTINUOUS

The lab is a large, open space. INTERNS work at benches that line either wall.

Robotic bodies, in various stages of completion, lay on benches like a mechanoid operating room.

At the end of the pristine benches sit Mark's and Serrano's desks.

Mark's looks as though it has sustained a blast from an I. E.D. A fully finished Robot stands next to Mark's desk, head bowed.

SERRANO

All I'm saying is that women can spot guys with expensive lifestyles. Take these shoes for instance. Hand-made Italian.

MARK

Where did you get Italian shoes?

SERRANO

Some Guy on eBay was selling them.

MARK

You bought handmade shoes that were made for someone else?

SERRANO

Yeah. To be honest they pinch like a son-of-a-bitch. But You can't say that you are wearing handmade Italian shoes, Can you, Mr. Nike?

MARK

(laughing)

No, but I can say that I'm comfortable.

When one of the INTERNS sees Mark, she immediately makes her way to him.

INTERN

Mark. Can I have a moment?

MARK

Yeah, sure.

Serrano takes the rest of Mark's papers and continues to their desks.

The Intern shows Mark the torso of an automaton which hangs from shackles on its shoulders.

INTERN

We are having trouble with the sheer amount of wiring in these things. When we come to final assembly this could cause a major problem.

Mark ponders the issue for a moment.

MARK

Try shifting the integrator unit further up into the chest cavity.

The Intern smiles, nods, and returns to her work.

Mark joins Serrano at his desk. He picks up a photo of the two of them at Comic-Con.

MARK

So why keep this old Comic-Con picture where all the *chicks* can see it?

Serrano snatches it back.

SERRANO

Hello? Have you heard of cosplay? Have you seen some of those women?

Mark gently kicks the bottom drawer of Serrano's desk.

MARK

Yeah, but it's not just for show. I know that you have two action figures in here. You've got a Hulk and a Spidey.

Serrano looks furtive.

SERRANO
Yeah. Well, we've all got
secrets.

Amy enters the Lab. Even her starched, white, lab coat
can't detract from her slim, attractive figure. She makes
her way to Mark and Serrano.

SERRANO
Speaking of which. Here comes
Amy. Shall we tell her your
secret?

MARK
Shut up. You say anything to her
and I will kill you. I will
literally kill you.

Mark hurriedly jams as much of the paperwork into draws as
he can. He sits and turns on his computer and other
equipment.

Amy passes Serrano and they share a nod. She stands
behind, Mark.

AMY
Hi, Mark. That looks
interesting.

Spinning your head around any faster would result in
whiplash. Mark springs to his feet.

MARK
Hey. How are you?

AMY
I'm good, thanks.

MARK
Take a seat.

They both do.

AMY
I like your arm.

Mark raises his arm to examine his hand.

Amy gestures to the desk.

AMY
I mean the mechanical one.

Amy pokes the lifeless arm.

AMY
So, what is the deal with this?

MARK

Until now, robots have been
built to achieve certain things.

Mark clicks a video file on his desktop.

SERIES OF SHOTS: FROM ARCHIVE FOOTAGE

A robot that is just legs and a pelvis, walks unaided.

A robot with a body walks and is pushed off balance by
someone walking next to it but it regains its balance.

A robot performing a somersault.

A robot running.

A robotic arm performing complex tasks.

AMY

So, what does yours do?

MARK

Our AI Allows us to put all of
those tasks together. Our robots
can do everything.

AMY

Everything that a person can do?

MARK

Yeah. But this is like no AI
that you've ever seen before.
Okay. Imagine this. A mechanic
is working on an engine...

INT. MECHANIC'S WORKSHOP - DAY

The workshop is exactly what you would expect. There is a
car with the hood open.

The MECHANIC, slim, thirty, oily, dirty, works a wrench
through the engine compartment. He slips the socket onto a
badly rusted nut. With all the pressure that he can apply,
nothing happens.

He drops the wrench and grabs a bigger one. This, however,
will not fit through the myriad of wires, hoses, and other
obstructions.

The Mechanic drops the bigger wrench and wheels in a
robotic arm.

The arm nimbly works its way around the engine to the nut.
It applies pressure. More, More, and still more until,
with a loud SQUEAK, the nut releases. The dexterous
fingers spin off the nut as easily as if it were new and

well-oiled. The arm deposits the nut in the Mechanic's hand.

MECHANIC

Thanks. Oh and now can you hand me that fragile, uncooked, egg?

The arm spins to a table next to the car and carefully collects and hands the egg to the Mechanic with absolutely no cracks.

INT. MARK'S LAB - CONTINUOUS

Amy stares blankly at Mark. From behind her, so does Serrano.

A BEAT:

MARK

Okay, so the chances that both of those things would be needed by the same guy at the same time are unlikely. But you get my point.

Amy relents.

AMY

Yeah. I get the point.

Amy picks the hand from the desk. She turns it slowly to examine the back then turns it to inspect the wrist.

A Face replaces the data on the monitor. The arm springs to life and the hand grabs Amy's.

Amy shrieks out a gasp of panic.

MARK

What's up? Are you okay?

AMY

I'm fine. I'm fine. It just took me by surprise when the arm gripped my hand.

MARY

Hello, Amy. My name is Mary. I'm pleased to meet you.

The arm gently shakes Amy's hand.

Amy's face is a picture of wonderment.

AMY

Oh wow. That is amazing!

Mark can't hide his sense of pride.

MARK

This is Mary. She is the
personality that we have created
using the AI

AMY

Why Mary?

MARK

We tried many versions of this
software and all had varying
amounts of issues.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. MARK'S LAB - MONTHS EARLIER

Mark sits in front of the computer screen. A different
face to Mary's fills the screen. The robotic arm holds a
can of cola.

MARK

Pass me the can.

The arm crushes the can.

RESET.

MARK

Pass me the can.

The arm cannot raise the can.

RESET.

MARK

Pass me the can.

The face on the screen continually screams and the arm
just spins the can around at an increasing speed.

Mark is drenched in soda. It drips from his chin as he
stares, blankly at the computer screen.

BACK TO SCENE:

INT. MARK'S LAB - DAY

AMY

Shit!

MARK

But as soon as we finished Mary
and turned her on. She just
(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)
seemed to be right. Like she
understood everything. As the
film says; There's something
about Mary. Hence, the name.

SERRANO
I came up with that.

Mark guides Amy from Mary's earshot.

MARK
She is basically the point of
interaction between us and what
we want the AI to accomplish.
She makes sense of what we say
and becomes the bridge to the
mechanical part of the process.
Mary is the AI Her higher brain
function--

AMY
Wait. Higher brain function?

MARK
I know it sounds crazy. But the
brainpower needed to run, jump,
maintain balance, and think, all
at the same time, is incredible.

In the background, Serrano swells with pride.

AMY
Don't we all do that with ease,
every day?

MARK
Yes. But no one has ever managed
to produce AI that can
accomplish what we can do. We
have recreated life. In
mechanical format.

Amy's look of awe dissolves into fear.

AMY
I'm going back to my own lab
where people are still good old-
fashioned flesh and blood.

She walks away.

AMY
(looking back)
See you in the canteen later?

MARK
Sure.

Mark watches her all the way out.

EXT. FORT BRAGG - ESTABLISHING - EVENING

The large wooden sign, announcing the military base, stands by the side of the entrance. A security gatehouse denies ingress to all unauthorized persons.

A dark blue Tesla pulls up to the checkpoint. An I.D. is shown and the red and white striped barrier opens. The car roars off inside.

INT. FORT BRAGG. RECEPTION DESK - CONTINUOUS

The building is spotless. Long, well polished, corridors echo with GENERAL DALTON's footfalls. Dalton is mid-50s, 6ft, stocky with short, buzz-cut hair and a steely visage. He approaches a CORPORAL, (20s), clean and smart, who sits behind an immaculate desk.

DALTON

General Dalton to see Major
General Thomas.

CORPORAL

Yes, Sir, General. He is
expecting you.

He points down a corridor.

CORPORAL

The last door on the right,
General. Knock and go right in.

Dalton regards the long, shiny passageway then turns on his heels and strides away. Dalton stops at a door that reads: MAJOR GENERAL IRVIN THOMAS.

Dalton KNOCKS and enters.

INT. MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The office has a large wooden desk, leather chairs, and large flags; Stars and Stripes and Military.

MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS is similar to Dalton in appearance except a few years his senior. He rises as Dalton enters.

THOMAS

General Dalton. Good to see you.

Thomas gestures, to his left. There stands GENERAL HENDERSON, a large, Jolly-looking man in his late forties. Portly due to a sedentary desk job.

THOMAS

I had General Henderson join us.

Dalton and Henderson share a nod.

DALTON/HENDERSON

General.

THOMAS

How is Washington?

DALTON

About a million miles from the action. Which is about a million miles from why I joined the army, Sir.

Thomas chuckles to Himself.

THOMAS

Well, Dalton. I'm not sure how close to any action this assignment will get you, but at least it's a change of scenery.

DALTON

What did you have in mind, Sir?

Thomas' countenance changes from jovial to somber.

THOMAS

We've got a mission for you, Dalton.

DALTON

A mission, Sir?

HENDERSON

What do you know about robotics and AI?

DALTON

Almost nothing.

HENDERSON

That's okay.

Henderson picks a folder from Thomas' desk.

HENDERSON

You can familiarize yourself with everything that you need to know on the way.

DALTON

On the way where?

HENDERSON

There is a company called Dominion Cybertronics in Bridgeport, Connecticut. They have developed a new, advanced version of AI that is capable of fully controlling a mechanical device in a way that has not been attempted before. This could be a major leap forward in this field.

DALTON

Now I see why you called me.

THOMAS

It's what you've done Several times. This is the same brief. We need you to go to Dominion Cybertronics and assess whether their research poses any danger or threat to the citizens and security of this country.

Dalton's face creases as it is wrestled into a half smile.

DALTON

And to assess if it is something that we can use.

INT. MARK'S CAR - MORNING

Mark cruises down the usual route to work. Rain sluices down and across the windshield.

Mark turns up the speed on the wipers. As he peers through the screen his attention is caught by a disturbance on the sidewalk. A WOMAN, Black, mid-thirties, pretty, is trying to stop an ATTACKER, White, early-twenties, powerfully-built, from making off with her bag.

Mark swings the Volvo to the curb and jumps out. He runs to them.

MARK

Hey! Leave her alone!

The Attacker turns, with the woman clutched tightly to him.

Mark pats his pants pockets. Nothing there.

MARK

Shit, my phone. Someone, help.
Call 911!

Nobody bothers to help.

Mark can now see that the Attacker has a gun pushed into the woman's side.

Mark stands frozen on the spot, attention divided between the attacker and the gun.

ATTACKER
What's up, Homes?

The attacker smiles at Mark.

Mark is still catatonic with fear.

ATTACKER
I said what's up, Clark Kent.

Mark breaks his suspended animation and accosts a PASSER-BY.

MARK
Hey, Call the police.

The Passer-By gives Mark a "leave me out of this" look and hurries past.

Mark turns back to the attacker. He trembles as he speaks.

MARK
Look. Just don't hurt her okay?

ATTACKER
Maybe I'll hurt you.

At that, Mark takes an involuntary step back.

The attacker shakes the woman violently. She lets out a terrified scream. But adrenaline clamps her hand tighter around the bag straps.

MARK
You don't have to do this. Just take off.

ATTACKER
What are you, my fucking guidance counselor? Get lost before I put a bullet through your head.

Mark looks for any assistance from the pedestrians but, other than giving a wide-berth to the situation, nobody is interested.

The Attacker jams the gun in harder.

ATTACKER
(to the Woman)
Give me the bag or I'll blow one
of your fucking kidneys out,
Bitch!

The woman finally does as ordered.

The attacker grabs the bag and sprints away.

The woman falls to the ground in fits of sobs.

Mark rushes to her, bends, and puts an arm around her.

MARK
Are you okay? I'm so sorry. I'm
so sorry.

The woman grabs Mark's arm and uses it to pull herself up.
She buries her head in his chest and bawls.

Somebody had bothered to call the Police after all. Sirens
transition from remote to near. And, as the echo fills the
streets, a CRUISER SCREECHES to a halt.

Two COPS rush over to Mark and the woman.

COP#1
Are you two okay?

MARK
Yeah. I'm okay and I don't think
the attacker hurt her. I tried
to stop him but he got her bag

COP#1
That was brave but dumb. Always
let them take what they want.
What's in the bag isn't worth
your life.

Mark bows his head in relief and defeat. Rain drips from
his hair. His sodden clothes cling to his body.

EXT. DOMINION CYBERTRONICS PARKING LOT - DAY

A MILITARY-GREEN CADILLAC roars into the lot and swings,
confidently, into a vacant space. The driver's door swings
wide and General Dalton steps out.

The rain doesn't faze him as he smooths the front of his
jacket, takes the cap from under his arm. The slammed door
provides a mirror in the glass. General Dalton carefully
dons his cap and strides towards reception.

INT. DOMINION CYBERTRONICS - CONTINUOUS

The reception area is vast and has a stark, cold, and sterile look. Immaculately polished floors reflect the light to the white walls. The lobby is designed to impose and to wow.

General Dalton marches to the reception desk.

The RECEPTIONIST is a dour woman in her mid-fifties. She peers at Dalton over half-rimmed spectacles.

RECEPTIONIST

You must be General Dalton. We are expecting you. I will inform Mr. Fredersen that you have arrived. Please feel free to take a seat while you wait.

Dalton looks at the white, plastic, molded chairs.

DALTON

I'll stand.

Dalton moves to an exhibition stand to the side of reception.

A glass case houses bacteria, sandwiched between two perspex sheets. A gold plaque under it reads "Nierenberg Prize - Winner 2017".

Next to that, a photo shows a MAN in his fifties, JOE FREDERSEN, shaking hands with the PRESIDENT, and in the next picture Fredersen is accepting an award from him.

Next is a robotic eye on a stand. Next to it, a plaque reads "Benjamin Franklin Medal - Winner 2014".

Doors swing open at the other end of reception. JOE FREDERSEN, a pleasant-looking man in his early-sixties with gray hair, walks to greet Dalton.

Dalton stands close, and towers over the wizened Joe.

JOE

General Dalton.

DALTON

Fredersen.

It's a ginger handshake from Joe. He leads Dalton through the lobby. He gestures to its grandeur as they walk.

JOE

What do you think of our building?