

MILLENNIA: TV PILOT
(PART ONE)

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FADE IN:

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

As dark and grimy as it gets. Steam from a vent casts a veil over PASSERSBY in the street.

Out there it might be noon, but it doesn't look like it here.

Smoke wafts from a different source: DOMINIC BABIN'S (30s) cigarette. Hidden in shadow, Dominic watches and waits...

Though hard to ID, the man's patience is crystal clear.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

Outside, others wait in different ways.

A PIMP keeps vigilant eyes on business down the street.

Scantly clad GIRLS cluster at one corner, approach MEN as they pass by.

DAVID and JENNA RHODES (30s) walk hand-in-hand along the sidewalk. Young son RICHARD "RICHIE" RHODES (10) bounces ahead, a shrink-wrapped BOX in his arms.

Your standard family shopping trip. Based on Richie's eager grin, he's scored something he's itching to open. Now.

A RED-HEADED PROSTITUTE WITH PONYTAILS attempts to score as well. She smiles and winks at David.

Who double-takes. Awkwardly waves back.

Jenna shoots daggers at David; doesn't approve.

The traffic light switches to GREEN. Jenna yanks her "men-folk" forward, off the curb - away from the sin-filled sight.

Back on the corner: A FAT JOHN approaches the hooker. The Pimp intervenes. He and the John tap phones.

Taking *his* arm, the Prostitute leads the John away.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

A soaring, swooping panoramic view. Buildings spear at the clouds. PEOPLE jostle for position below.

David and Jenna nestle on a bench. The sky above shines peaceful blue - contrasts the "storm" in Jenna's mind.

JENNA

I saw those girls. How could you?

David closes his eyes - picks his words.

DAVID

Jenna, we've been through this.
Work can't always be pretty.

JENNA

And *some* of it's just wrong! What
can I tell my friends? My pastor?

DAVID

About what?

JENNA

You - and them!

DAVID

That it beats the alternative?

Jenna TSKS and looks away. A gentle breeze blows her modest dress. Or is it the WHOOSH of someone zooming by?

An oblivious Richie darts past his parents - arms extended out, like a bird.

Sensored GLOVES encase his hands. Opaque GOGGLES on his face.

Richie careens into Jenna. The goggles turn transparent.
David corrals his wayward son.

DAVID

Careful there, Pilot!

Richie whirls to face his dad. His goggles turn opaque again.

DAVID

Richie, what do you say when you
bump into people?

RICHIE

Uh, sorry Mom?

David high-fives his son. Richie darts off across the lawn.

JENNA

Watch where you're going!

Richie lifts shielded eyes to the sky - searches for something in the clouds. He dodges trash cans, leaps over obstacles. Lots of near misses along the way.

A concerned Jenna watches Richie "fly away".

JENNA

(to David)

Richie's reckless. Do something.

David

Kids need to make their own mistakes.

JENNA

They need their fathers, too.
Please - take some time off.

David

We're at the park right now.

JENNA

Let's go to the beach. Richie's never been there.

DAVID

I can't. We're designing a new overlay.

JENNA

You're making *more*?

DAVID

I promise: we'll plan a vacation later. When this one's done.

David grabs Jenna's hand. She shivers, lowers her eyes.

JENNA

It's always "later".

Jenna GASPS; coughs. David's eyes scan her face.

DAVID

Everything OK?

JENNA

I told you, it's a cold. I'm fine.

Just above the trees, a MAJESTIC FALCON swoops and soars.

Richie flips a switch on his goggles.

His POV switches to: THE BIRD. The same high-flying view we saw before.

INTERCUT BETWEEN PARK AND BIRD'S POV

Richie swerves left. The Falcon banks left, too. The kid's somehow in control.

The boy LAUGHS and runs in a circle. The Falcon performs loop de loops in the sky. David and Jenna watch, amused.

DAVID

Richie doesn't need the beach. He's got Merlin.

JENNA

He won't stop playing with that thing.

Richie guides the Falcon between tree limbs. A very narrow, risky space.

JENNA

Richard Rhodes, don't you crash. And stay away from strangers!

DAVID

Honey, don't be paranoid.

David stares up at the clear blue sky.

DAVID

Everyone's a friend out here!

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

The park's a green streak on the horizon. Merlin's profile: a mere speck.

Dominic throws down his old fashioned cigarette. SPARKS fly.

He turns; reveals a handsome, dark-haired face.

Dominic gestures towards the corridor's dead end. Two figures separate from the shadows:

LARRY and AARON (40s), dressed in purposely generic clothes. The two slip SKI MASKS over their heads.

ANOTHER JOHN and the Red-Headed Prostitute approach.

JOHN
How much time do I have?

RED-HEADED PROSTITUTE
As much as you'd like. Your credit
will update in real time.

JOHN
Is this place private?

RED-HEADED PROSTITUTE
Of course.

JOHN
Is it safe?

Dominic WHISTLES (OS). Larry lunges, and pulls the Girl
toward the dead end. Aaron shoves the John aside.

JOHN
Hey!

AARON
Keep walkin'.

FAT JOHN
I paid Fifty up front. She's mine.

Aaron flashes a knife.

The Prostitute reaches for her customer. But the John
backpedals towards the exit. In seconds, he's safe and gone.

Aaron and Dominic close in on either side. The Girl wriggles -
surprisingly meek in Larry's hands.

RED-HEADED PROSTITUTE
This is illegal. Release me.

DOMINIC
Oh - I'll release you, all right.

GIRL'S POV

Dominic looms over her.

DOMINIC
Kneel.

The Girl lowers her head, and lifts calm eyes.

Dominic raises a crowbar. Shadowy steel stripes the Girl's
placid face.

The crowbar descends in a vicious ARC.

A huge GASH splits the Girl's head in two. Her ponytails flop on both sides.

Strangely, she's still not putting up a fight.

Even stranger: there's no blood - just SPARKS. Brighter than Dominic's cigarette before.

Larry and Aaron hold the Girl's arms tight.

A SCREAM rips the air.

At the alley's entrance, a SCRAWNY OLD WOMAN points toward Dominic... Her watery eyes glued to the crime.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Another SHRIEK; louder than before.

David, Jenna and Richie swivel towards the street.

Mirroring Richie's movements, Merlin the Falcon does as well.

Richie spreads his fingers in a "zoom" gesture. From above, the Falcon's POV ZOOMS in. The Bird looks down:

At the alley's entrance, the Old Woman waves scarecrow arms.

OLD WOMAN
Help! Police!

BACK IN THE PARK

RICHIE
Mom, look! A mugging!

The boy flips both palms. The Falcon pivots - plummets DOWN.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

SCREEEEEEEECH! The cry of a bird of prey - and war. The Falcon dives.

Falcon POV: Dominic's upturned face fills its frame.

Dominic side-steps the feathery "missile". Leather from his trench coat flits across Merlin's view.

The Falcon banks to avoid the barrier.

And CRASHES into the alley's wall - EXPLODES millimeters from Dominic's chest.

His coat absorbs the shrapnel. Dominic HISSES, backs away.

DOMINIC
What the Hell?

He examines a tear in his coat.

LARRY
Looks like a bird.

The three men stare at the SIZZLING remains of the Falcon.

DOMINIC
I see that. Somebody's gonna pay.

The Prostitute continues to spark, as well. She surges spastically left, accidentally knocks Aaron into a wall.

Larry yanks the Prostitute's chin down, exposes her open skull. CIRCUITS and SWITCHES glitter inside.

Dominic plunges his hand in, rummages around. Not an easy maneuver; the Girl bucks in an attempt to stand.

LARRY
You got it?

DOMINIC
Shut up.

The girl turns to Larry - lips out of sync with her voice.

RED-HEADED PROSTITUTE
It is illegal to damage personal property. Authorities have been informed.

A siren WAILS. Dominic drops the Prostitute and steps back.

LARRY
C'mon man.

DOMINIC
Hold her tight.

Dominic lifts the crowbar over his head, aims at the Girl.

DOMINIC
Darlin', if they taught you any -
say your prayers.

GIRL'S POV

The crowbar swings down. CRUNCH.

The view of Dominic's face distorts sideways. SLAMS TO BLACK.

EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS

Blind with worry for his Falcon, Richie dashes off the curb - into a wave of SPEEDING CARS.

An autonomous TRUCK swerves. HONKS its horn.

Richie ducks out of the way, into the path of a VAN.

The MIDDLE AGED MALE DRIVER spots Richie, stomps the brake. The vehicle SCREECHES to a halt, inches from the frozen boy.

Impressive reflexes. Real bad luck.

The driver's face SMACKS the windshield. He slumps down, out of sight.

JENNA (O.S.)

Richie!

In the park: David darts towards his son, Jenna close behind. Her dress flutters nervously in the wind; Merlin's box cradled her arms.

David reaches the road. Finds his view of Richie blocked... by the van. The cabin appears empty. No dents on the fender.

DAVID

Automated? Good.

Richie reaches the opposite side, jumps the curb.

DAVID

Get back here, Richard Rhodes!

RICHIE

I gotta find Merlin. He got hurt!

Jenna pushes her husband forward.

JENNA

Please, David. Go.

Richie runs towards the alley. David takes a deep, deep breath - charges into traffic after his son.

INT. FACTORY - DAY

FACTORY NOISES fill the air.

Fuzzy WORKERS flow like liquid around the line - revealing what it is:

A CONVEYOR BELT.

Hands shoot across the band and grab mechanical PARTS. They set new ones down, and recoil.

Some of the parts are small SWITCHES, identical to the ones in the Prostitute's skull.

Other items: large and tubular.

Workers move quickly - knit parts together inhumanly fast.

A METALLO-PLASTIC hand reaches the end of the assembly line.

Snatching the part before it falls, a WORKER scurries over to an ANDROID TORSO.

Only the right arm is attached - a metal stub juts from the robot's wrist.

A welding torch FLARES, welds the hand to the limb.

The worker toggles a remote. Aluminum fingers flex. They work! Arm #2 slides into place.

CHLOE STINSON (30s) and ROSALIND CONNOR (30s) glide by, dressed in black uniforms. "Millennia Corp." logos glow on their chests.

ROSALIND

Inventory fulfillment's on target.
Past all expectations, in fact.
Fifty thousand units this quarter.

CHLOE

And the Overlays?

ROSALIND

Upgrades roll out next month.

CHLOE

I "expected" better than that.

ROSALIND

Our team's making great progress.

CHLOE

So is *Cybercon*. What do we have
that's new?

ROSALIND

Tactical avoidance. They're running
preliminary simulations now.

The women stop before a naked ANDROID: too smooth and perfect
to pass for flesh.

A WORKER inserts a MODULE into a slot behind its head.

Wielding a WHITE HOT iron, the worker STAMPS a Millennia Logo
into the Android's neck. Synthe-skin SIZZLES. The robot
doesn't react.

CHLOE

Damn it, Rosalind! The Board's
anxious. I want that overlay. *Now*.

ROSALIND

Dr. White says more testing's
required.

CHLOE

A surgeon. What does he know?

Chloe circles the Android, examines every inch. The unit
flashes her a piercing, vacant stare.

ROSALIND

But Cecil -

CHLOE

Well, well. First name basis now?

Rosalind's phone CHIMES. She answers:

ROSALIND

Yes, this is her. Fantastic - *when?*

She hangs up and faces Chloe:

ROSALIND

We've got a surprise delivery. It's
the specs we've been waiting for.

CHLOE

Then don't talk about it. Go!

Rosalind scurries away.

Chloe turns back to the Android. The two lock "eyes."

5 Her fingers run down a smooth robot arm. Chloe closes her 5
eyes, lifts her chin. Arches her back in pleasure. Smiles.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

BEEEEEP. Yellow lights flash on a CLEANER-BOT. Less humanoid
than Chloe's "friend", the Cleaner nudges through a CROWD.

The alley entrance is jam-packed.

The Rhodes family trails along, the Old Woman not far behind.

Out of breath from running, Jenna COUGHS - hugs Richie tight.

The Cleaner Bot steps into the alley. A spotlight FLARES on
its chest.

Dominic, Aaron and Larry are long gone.

Richie takes one look and gasps. What's left of Merlin lies
in a heap near the wall.

Plastic Cleaner Bot Claws scoop up Falcon parts. No blood,
just circuits. Richie's pet was no Bird.

Richie tears free of Jenna and grabs a dismembered wing.

RICHIE

Let go. Merlin's mine!

The Cleaner Bot grabs the wing back. Richie kicks the
Cleaner's "leg".

RICHIE

Ow!

DAVID

Richie...

A tug of war ensues. Though smaller than the Cleaner Bot,
Richie's more aggressive, and won't let go.

The Cleaner Bot pivots away from the assault. Its chest light
illuminates something at the alley's dead end:

The Red-Headed Prostitute, half-hidden behind a garbage bin.

The Cleaner Bot pulls "the body" out.

Spectators SCREAM. David recognizes the Girl's model and
walks over.

The Cleaner Bot scans the "Girl's" remains.

CLEANER BOT
Security is now advised.

The Scrawny Old Woman rushes forward.

OLD WOMAN
See? I told you! There she is!

Kneeling by the "body", David turns its head. The "Millennia" logo stands out in bas-relief on the Prostitute's neck.

The Old Woman stares at the Girl's hacked skull.

OLD WOMAN
Just a robot. Thank God.

DAVID
Thank God?

OLD WOMAN
Well, it was dark. I weren't sure.

David fishes through the Girl's demolished circuits. What he's looking for isn't there.

A MILLENNIA SECURITY ANDROID approaches. David glances up, too distracted to honestly look.

SECURITY ANDROID
David Rhodes?

DAVID
Yes?

SECURITY ANDROID
Does the Millennia Corporation wish
to file a criminal report?

DAVID
It's no longer our Android.

The Security Android turns to the woman. She shakes her head.

OLD WOMAN
I don't use them nasty things.
(beat)
No offense.

SECURITY ANDROID
This incident has been logged and
the owner notified. Interested
parties may obtain a report online.

Lights flicker between the Security Android and the Cleaner Bot. They're communicating something. In some concealed way.

Then, the Security Android melts into the crowd. The old woman glares at its back.

OLD WOMAN

Useless.

Her attention switches to the "dead" Prostitute.

OLD WOMAN

At least no one got hurt.

David scans the alley for his son.

Richie squats by the remains of his pet. A synthetic FEATHER protrudes from his fist. Jenna brings over Merlin's box.

There's not much left to salvage. Fire's burned the toy away.

David scoops up what's left, and places it in the box.

DAVID

(to the Cleaner Bot)

Acknowledge.

The Cleaner Bot faces David. Lights blink. David places Merlin's "casket" at its feet.

DAVID

Deliver this to my residence.

CLEANER BOT

Your request is queued. I must wait for large item pickup first.

David glances at the Prostitute's remains.

DAVID

Of course. Thank you very much.

RICHIE

Dad, you can fix Merlin - right?

DAVID

Rich, I'll try. What's important is you never do anything like this again. Your Mom and I told you to stay near us. In the Park...

JENNA

Sweetie, your Dad'll do everything he can.

She glances over Richie at her husband. As they reach the alley entrance, David's phone CHIMES.

He reads the screen: a text from Rosalind.

ROSALIND TEXT:

Surgery scheduled in OR-2. Twenty minutes. Be there. Stat!

David turns guilty eyes towards Jenna.

DAVID

Work.

JENNA

Will you be home for supper?

DAVID

As soon as I can.

He gives her a quick peck on the cheek. Waves at Richie. Jenna scowls as her husband trots away.

EXT. PARK - LATER

Jenna and Richie linger sadly on the bench. A few NATURAL BIRDS soar through the dimming sky.

JENNA

See? That's what real birds do. No somersaults, or circus tricks.

RICHIE

That's boring.

JENNA

But safe. That thing could've hurt someone!

RICHIE

Merlin isn't a "thing." He just wanted to stop that man!

JENNA

Your toys only do what you tell them to. Which means you were the hero today. Just be - more careful next time.

Richie holds Merlin's feather up to his face.

RICHIE
Don't worry, Merlin. We'll fly
again.

EXT. LOADING DOCK - AFTERNOON

Your average warehouse vibe: not a place of Life or Death.
Rosalind waits at the bay door, a designer bag on her arm.

ROSALIND
Where's the Hell's that Paramedic?

She turns to a male ANDROID ORDERLY on her left. Its face:
identical to the naked one before.

ROSALIND
If they're late -

She checks her cell. David hasn't replied.
Rosalind swings to her right, and a female android NURSE.

ROSALIND
Where are they?

The Android Nurse consider the question. Literally.

NURSE
That information is not available.
Do you require medical assistance?
If so, we are programmed to help.

ROSALIND
Are you programmed to shut up?

Rosalind tosses the phone in her purse.

Male hands close on her waist. Neither Android reacts.
Rosalind SHRIEKS, and spins around.

To face DR. CECIL WHITE (30s.) Impeccably dressed and
handsome, Cecil bestows a kiss on Rosalind's lips.

ROSALIND
Damn it, Cecil! Warn me first.

CECIL
(grins)
Don't you like surprises?

ROSALIND
Not like that.

CECIL

You're the one who assembled the troops. And so - your "White Knight" is here!

ROSALIND

Maybe you. Dr. Rhodes is late.

CECIL

You sent the text. Give David time.

RED LIGHTS flash in Rosalind's face.

An ambulance glides in. Paramedic HARVEY, and sales agent DOUGLAS hop out.

Douglas guides the ambulance to the dock with his cell phone.

CECIL

And now the *calvary* arrives!

Rosalind runs to the vehicle. The Androids and Cecil follow.

Harvey opens the ambulance doors, and reveals a body bag.

ROSALIND

Where were you?

HARVEY

Joe Cool here was in an accident.
His ID coding took awhile.

Dr. White opens the black bag. ZIIPPP. He brushes ice from the corpses' face. It's the middle aged driver from before!

Rosalind pulls Douglas aside.

ROSALIND

Hurry it up. Time of death?

DOUGLAS

On record? One PM.

ROSALIND

You confirm this is Marine Major James Oliver Samuels, of Operation *Starlite*, Vietnam?

DOUGLAS

According to the paperwork. I don't know him from Adam myself.

CECIL

Male. Middle Aged. Damned good shape. Yeah. My money says this is the one.

ROSALIND

Head trauma?

Cecil twists "Major Samuels"' head to the side. He frowns.

CECIL

Some. But the important parts are all there.

DOUGLAS

Can we settle up and just go home?

Cecil motions to the Male Android.

CECIL

Transfer the package to our gurney.

The Android Orderly grabs hold of the bag. Ice chunks RATTLE to the ground. The bag lands on smooth steel. THUNK.

DOUGLAS

Hey, show respect!

HARVEY

He's dead, Doug - chill out.

Cecil hears "chill". He blinks at the ice, stifles a smile. Douglas glares at Cecil. Harvey as well.

DOUGLAS

You medical guys are freaks.

CECIL

(shrugs)

Death's natural. Part of Life.

Rosalind fixes cold eyes on Douglas.

ROSALIND

Revised offer: Twenty-Two Five.

DOUGLAS

The deal was Twenty-Five!

ROSALIND

You want that? Get here on time.

Harvey fidgets; points at his watch implant: "Time to Go."

DOUGLAS

Fine.

Douglas and Rosalind TAP phones. BEEP: purchase complete.

ROSALIND

See you next time.

There's no mistaking her meaning: That's an order. Scram.

Harvey and Douglas shuffle to the ambulance without a word.

Rosalind gives the Androids with one more command:

ROSALIND

Go to Operating Theater Two.

(to Cecil)

You - accompany the donor.

CECIL

Join me?

She shakes her head. Cecil shrugs: "Oh well."

Following the Androids and gurney to sliding doors, Dr. "White Knight Cecil" blows Rosalind a second kiss.

She turns and heads the opposite way.

INT. OPERATING THEATER - DAY

In contrast to the loading dock, everything's high tech here.

Major Samuels lies on the table. Cecil hovers over the body. A spotlight illuminates his "patient's" head.

The Android Nurse awaits orders at the foot of the bed.

David strides into the O-R, up to the corpse.

CECIL

Wow. That took awhile.

DAVID

Cecil. Glad to see you, too.

CECIL

No offense, but you're usually more punctual.

DAVID
Sorry. We bought Richard a Falcon
today. He was test flying it when
Rosalind called.

CECIL
A Falcon? The new Merlin model?

David nods. Cecil beams.

CECIL
When can we play with it?

DAVID
Never. Maybe. Richie crashed it,
bad.

CECIL
(grins)
Of course. In that case, meet
Marine Major James Oliver Samuels.
Samuels, meet Dr. David Rhodes,
Ph.D.

David turns Samuels' head; examines a deep gash.

DAVID
He's damaged.

CECIL
Not that bad... I think.

DAVID
(to Nurse)
Time of death?

Cecil jots lines around Samuels' skull with a marker.

The Android Nurse scans info off a label on the corpses' arm.

NURSE
Thirteen hundred.

DAVID
Two hours? That won't do!

CECIL
Beggars can't be choosers. Nurse,
body temperature?

NURSE
Forty-two-point-eight degrees.

CECIL
Chop chop, Dave. We're running out
of time.

He holds a saw near the skull: Yes or No?

DAVID
That's *your* part in this dance.
Don't wait for me to join in.

Cecil GRINDS through bone. Powder fills the air. Then: POP.
He evaluates his handiwork...

CECIL
Cremation or burial?

NURSE
Cremation.

CECIL
Won't need this, then.

Cecil pitches the top of Samuel's skull into a refuse bin.

The Nurse pivots the table upward, attaches electrodes to the
corpse's brain. Cecil and David stare down at the organ.

DAVID
How much compensation does the
family receive?

Cecil looks up, into the -

OPERATING THEATER GALLERY

Chloe glowers down, watches them work.

CECIL (V.O.)
Above my pay grade. No idea.

Rosalind enters the gallery, and whispers in Chloe's ear.
They leave.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Rosalind and Chloe walk down an art-decco hallway. They pass
a lone EMPLOYEE, don't bother to acknowledge he's there.

ROSALIND
Should I escort Doctor White to
your office?

CHLOE
I'll call when I'm ready. I'm
meeting with the Colonel first.

ROSALIND
Colonel Kidd? Really? Why?

CHLOE
No questions. Just do as I say.

ROSALIND
What do I do with Dr. White 'til
then?

They stop at an office. Chloe waves her hand; the door opens.

CHLOE
I'm sure you'll think of something.

Chloe steps inside. The door closes behind her - SNAP.

Rosalind continues down the hallway, glad to be alone.

INT. OPERATING THEATER - AFTERNOON

The Nurse pushes a crane-like device over the corpse.
HUNDREDS OF SHARP POINTS bristle from the machine's tip.

CECIL
Nurse, initiate Primary Motor
Cortex acquisition. Start at eighty
millivolts.

The Nurse flips a switch. Needles sink into Major James
Oliver Samuels' exposed lobes.

A MONITOR flickers on: displays a 3-D model of the brain.

David and Cecil smile at each other. This part's fun for
them. The display rotates.

CECIL
(jokes)
"It's Alive!"

The crane HUMS. A low pitched thrumming noise punctuates the
needles' never ending movement. They piston in and out.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Big. Abandoned. Creepy. A thrumming fan fills the air.

Dominic walks through aisles of rusty machinery. A wan light beckons, just ahead.

The big man steps forward. Stops.

A tap on his shoulder; Dominic whirls around. Ready to defend himself from -

DOMINIC

What the...

JASON MOSS (30's) raises a finger to his lips. His green security uniform blends into the shadows. The Cybercon patch on his muscular shoulder is the only portion that stands out.

Jason taps his phone, watches the screen change. Nods.

JASON

Clear.

DOMINIC

Don't do that again.

JASON

Got it?

DOMINIC

Yeah. Prostitute model. Brand spankin' new.

JASON

That your idea of a pun?

DOMINIC

...no.

Dominic hands over a NEURO-CHIP. Jason inspects the circuitry, and deposits it in a pack.

JASON

New? It's been out six months.

Dominic shrugs. They tap phones.

JASON

Encounter any problems?

DOMINIC

Nothing I didn't handle.

Jason retrieves a VIAL filled with blue liquid from his pack. Dominic grabs for it. Only to discover Jason won't let go.

With his free hand, Jason clamps onto Dominic's throat. Shoving him against a wall, he lifts Dominic off the floor.

JASON
I said, no problems.

Dominic mouths "okay", can't croak out the words. Jason shrugs - ultimately lets go.

Dominic collapses in a heap. Jason tosses the glowing vial in his urine stained lap.

JASON
I'll be in touch. For now, clean up.

Dominic scrambles eagerly for the vial. The thrumming from the fan covers Jason's footsteps as he walks away.

INT. OPERATING THEATER - AFTERNOON

The thrumming stops; David flips a switch. The needles excavating Samuels' brain retract.

David reaches into a slot, pulls out a different NEURO-CHIP.

DAVID
Let's see what treasures this box holds.

INT. RHODES HOME - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Fluffy pastel furniture. Knitted PRAYER QUOTES on the wall.

In one corner, a surface littered with computer parts and paper. Buried beneath that wreck - David's desk.

A BOX waits on the coffee table. The door slides open. Jenna and Richie step inside.

Richie runs over to the box.

RICHIE
Merlin's here! Can I let him out?

Jenna kneels beside the table.

JENNA
Allow me.

She carefully lifts the lid. The two peek inside, to find:

Merlin's disassembled corpse. A hopeful Richie picks up a wing. The structure crumbles. The boy's face falls.

RICHIE

He's dead.

JENNA

Sweetheart, don't say "dead."

Richie leaps to his feet, drops Merlin's Goggles in the box.

RICHIE

Can we bury him?

JENNA

Only real pets get funerals.

RICHIE

Merlin was real to me!

JENNA

He might have seemed real, but
Merlin wasn't alive.

She caresses his head.

JENNA

Baby, Merlin was a machine. He
can't die.

RICHIE

He could fly and play?

JENNA

Sweetheart, what matters is what's
inside.

RICHIE

Like a processor?

JENNA

No. More like... our soul.

RICHIE

The Soul? Do I have one?

JENNA

(chuckles)

Silly boy. All God's Children are
blessed with everlasting souls.

RICHIE

Where's mine? I can't see it.

JENNA

That because it's very deep inside.

She turns him around, searching. Her finger lingers near Richie's temple, trails down playfully to his heart.

JENNA

The last time I saw it, it was here...

Richie pokes his torso, unconvinced.

Jenna tickles his ribs as a distraction. The boy giggles, then collapses to the floor - eyes closed.

Suddenly: Jenna grabs her chest, gasps. Richie's eyes open.

RICHIE

Mom?

INT. NEUROLAB - EVENING

David and Cecil hunch over a majestic monitor.

On-screen: A MAP of Major James Oliver Samuel's brain - a diagram of synapse and neural connections. In technical terms, this is a CONNECTOME.

Cecil squints at the screen. Multi-colored threads of light paint his face.

CECIL

Hmmmm, not good.

DAVID

Be specific. What's the problem?

CECIL

Minor disruptions in the anterior cingulate cortical connections.

DAVID

He died more than two hours ago. What in the world did you expect?

CECIL

Punctuality. Speaking specifically, that is.

Cecil zooms in, examines another area.

CECIL

Temporal lobes look fine. No decay.

DAVID
Which means?

CECIL
This is *your* dance now, Doctor.

Cecil pushes his chair back, places hands behind his head.

David pulls the NEURAL CHIP from the workstation. Circuits GLITTER in dim light.

He swings around in his chair:

A TEST ROBOT hangs off a wall, attached to wires. A dismembered marionette: just head, arms and torso. Incomplete.

David flips a switch. The Robot's head swivels towards him. Synthetic eyelids blink.

On-screen, Major Samuel's connectome flares to life.

TEST ROBOT POV:

A blurry David and Cecil pull into focus. Real high def.

INTERCUT BETWEEN NEUROLAB AND ROBOT POV

The Test Robot's face twitches. Its lips move. But no voice. David rests his hand on a second switch.

DAVID
Want to hear what he has to say?

Cecil shrugs. David pulls back, waves at the Robot's face.

DAVID
Major Samuels? You in there?

Silently intense, the Robot stares over David's shoulder. *At the ceiling to floor MIRROR behind him.*

The Robot opens its mouth and SCREAMS. With no sound.

CECIL
Christ! That always creeps me out!

The Robot studies its own reflection, moves an arm. It clearly grasps what's going on.

The other arm shoots out for David's throat.

David casually slides out of reach in his wheeled chair - holds a RED CARD before the robot's eyes.

CECIL

Didn't Momma Rhodes teach her boy?
Waving red flags at bulls is wrong.

DAVID

Have respect, Cecil. It was human.

CECIL

You call *that* respect? Seriously?

ON THE MONITOR: RED THREADS light up the Major's connectome. David traces the pattern on-screen.

DAVID

Excellent Red response.

CECIL

What's that mean?

DAVID

A good start.

David TAPS a screen directory, pulls up an folder labelled "Military Functions."

In response, the display SPLITS IN HALF:

Major Samuels' brain pattern (connectome) shifts to the left. A new brain model builds on the right.

DAVID

Initiate auto-matching.

CECIL

About time!

A sequence of MILITARY IMAGES plays in the Test Robot's POV. Its head jerks. Metal arms spasm. Is it in pain?

ON THE MONITOR: Lights and patterns flicker through the 3-D brains. Slowly, the two connectomes merge.

Cecil keeps his eyes glued to the AI.

DAVID

Keep staring, you'll freak *him* out.

CECIL

Like he's not already. How's Jenna?

David glances at Cecil sharply.

DAVID

I was wondering when you'd pry. I'm worried.

CECIL

A lot?

DAVID

To say the least.

CECIL

She still got that cough? What's her doc say?

DAVID

She refuses to see him again.

CECIL

Well, can't say I blame her. There's a specialist I went to med school with. Lemme make a call.

DAVID

No good. She'll refuse.

CECIL

No way. This guy's great.

DAVID

Cecil, she won't see *any* doctor. God will heal her, so she claims.

CECIL

Oh, yeah. The religious bit again.

DAVID

You knew *that* when you set us up.

CECIL

(laughs)

A match made in Heaven and Hell. But you balance each other out. And your DNA made a pretty decent kid.

DAVID

Still, you've known Jenna longer. Maybe she'll listen to you?

CECIL

You're married. Doesn't that count?

DAVID

You spend so much time hobnobbing with management, you're a natural debater. Consider this a challenge: give Jenna's convictions the old college try?

CECIL

Stop blowing smoke. I'm a surgeon, not a pastor. Or anybody's life-coach.

DAVID

I'm serious. You talk people into things so well, I expect you to defect to marketing any day.

CECIL

Well, leverage is key to success. Twist one knob here, another there -
(leans forward)
Here's a secret: Roz has three!

David muffles a laugh, grows serious.

CECIL

If we had the right equipment, maybe Jenna'd let *me* do things.

Suddenly: the changing patterns on the screen STOP. The Test Robot droops, like a wet rag doll.

CECIL

New record. Score!

ON THE MONITOR: the connectomes have completely merged. The 3D brain model's almost completely GREEN.

Gray threads flicker on the edges, like cilia on a cell.

David grabs Goggles, and puts them on. They're similar to the ones Richie wore with Merlin - though much more high-tech.

He winks at Cecil through the lens.

DAVID

All aboard for the Brain Express.

He offers a second set to Cecil.

CECIL

No thanks. I'll pass.

David shrugs. His Goggles turn opaque.

INT. HUMAN CONNECTOME - VIRTUAL REALITY FIELD

A maze of interconnected 3-D nodes. David hovers in the middle of one "road" - shrunk down to the size of a cell.

He speaks into a glowing VR microphone. A "Menu" of Options floats on his right.

DAVID
Search "Red."

One word does the trick. ZOONOOOOM. He's off!

On the strangest roller coaster ride in the world. David's view WHOOSHES by. A few RED NODES light up his "sky".

David touches one - initiating a chain reaction. More red lights branch out like tree limbs in the brain.

David TAPS his virtual menu; selects "Language."

More lights. Different colors. New patterns.

David drills down; picks a function labeled "Soldier."

INT. NEUROLAB

David waves his arms, touches unseen objects.

Cecil LAUGHS. David looks as silly as Richie did before.

INT. HUMAN CONNECTOME

David's roller coaster cruises on, until it hits a...

DEAD-END! A brilliant green patterned node. The word "Soldier" floats over it.

On the "horizon": images of battle play non-stop; every conceivable situation that could be portrayed.

David nudges his virtual "mike".

DAVID
Filter by "tactics."

Several Green Nodes turn Orange. Others Red.

In the distance, Strategy Charts morph into military scenes.

DAVID
Accept filtered patterns.

The Red and Orange patterns vanish without a trace.

David toggles a menu. His view ZOOMS OUT until he hovers over a thousand intermingled Green and Grey Nodes.

Some are labeled "Tactics." Others read "Combat."

INT. NEUROLAB

David flails his arms around blindly.

The door opens. Rosalind quietly waves to Cecil: "Come on". Cecil SIGHS and heads for the door.

DAVID

Nodal patterns - excellent! We hit
the jackpot on this one, Cecil.
Didn't we?

Silence. David whips off his Goggles: Cecil's gone.

David shrugs, and puts the headset right back on.

INT. CHLOE'S OFFICE - LATER

Stark, efficient decor. As prim and proper as Chloe herself.

Chloe faces a wall of SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS. Black and white light bathes her face.

One image monopolizes her attention:

INSERT: A shot of the Neurolab. David's resumed his "dance."

CHLOE (V.O.)

(chuckles)

Scientists.

Chloe's watch CHIMES. She swipes an icon on her desk. The door opens.

COLONEL ANDREW KIDD (30s) strides over. Handsome and haggard, he touches his cell to Chloe's screen.

COLONEL KIDD

It's officially out.

Faster than a saluting private, Chloe's monitor springs to life. Displaying: MILITARY ROBOTS on a battlefield.

Kidd waves a hand over a sensor. DOCUMENTS replace the scene.

COLONEL KIDD
And it's all ours!

Chloe scrolls through several pages.

CHLOE
This is a Request for Information.

COLONEL KIDD
Senator Dodge pushed it through. A
personal favor just for me.

CHLOE
Well, that's impressive. I guess.

Kidd waves his arms about as he talks, unintentionally
mirroring David's lab "moves".

COLONEL KIDD
What matters is we'll be the first.
We've finally got hardware. It's
been years, Chloe! We'll catch
Cyber-Con with their pants down!

He leans closer. Chloe recoils.

CHLOE
So?

COLONEL KIDD
We need a live demo. And, not that
walkie-talkie crap. I say: we
invite old Holcombe himself. Gold
encrusted invitation. And seal the
deal with him as it goes live!

Kidd flashes a dazzling grin at Chloe. Her fingers hover over
her cell; Rosalind's number on the screen.

CHLOE
Holcomb.
(muses)
A controlled demo.

COLONEL KIDD
A field test. With live ammo.

CHLOE
Of course. We can do that.

Chloe taps her cell phone.

INSERT: "Message Sent".

CHLOE

There's one more item to discuss.

Kidd looks confused, stops pacing.

COLONEL KIDD

And that is?

CHLOE

Lisa's getting back with Dominic.

Kidd throws up his arms.

COLONEL KIDD

Damn! What do you people want?

CHLOE

Let me finish. He's out of prison,
needs a job.

COLONEL KIDD

Everybody and their brother needs a
job. What makes filth like *Dominic*
worth my time?

CHLOE

Andrew, he's willing to settle
down. I was hoping... You're her
father. I need your help.

Vulnerability flickers in her eyes: unexpected and uninvited.

CHLOE

My place. Dinner. Saturday?

Kidd opens his mouth to respond.

The door opens, too. Rosalind enters, Cecil at her side.
Chloe's face brightens. Right on time.

CHLOE

Ros, we need to schedule a full-
press demo of our new robots. Dr.
White: is the latest military
overlay prepared?

Cecil clears his throat: hobnobbing skills engaged.

CECIL

As you know, Androids are forbidden
to take offensive action. So it's
avoidance AI, matched against high
speed projectiles.

CECIL (CONT'D)

So far, it's performing well in tests. I can't imagine what would prevent--

ROSALIND

I'll get right on it. You'll assist, Dr. White?

COLONEL KIDD

(hisses at Rosalind)

I want Dr. Rhodes to supervise.

ROSALIND

But we recommend -

CHLOE

You heard the Colonel. Set it up. And make sure General Holcomb attends.

Chloe points at the door. Rosalind and Cecil scurry out.

CHLOE

(to Colonel Kidd)

I've got items to attend to. In the meantime, you'll brief Dr. Rhodes?

COLONEL KIDD

Sure thing... Boss.

Chloe scowls at his insolence, waves her ex away.

CHLOE

Saturday. Six o'clock.

COLONEL KIDD

Maybe Seven. If there's time.

Kidd storms out. Chloe collapses in her chair.

She taps her desk; an image of "Lisa" appears. The monitor chimes, and connects.

INTERCUT BETWEEN CHLOE'S OFFICE AND MONITOR CALL

LISA BABIN (20's) answers. A strikingly attractive girl, dressed in wrinkled but designer clothes.

She looks like Chloe's clone. Extra wildness in her eyes.

LISA

Mom, I didn't expect your call.

CHLOE
Darling, I talked to your father -

Dominic pops up behind Lisa. His slick hair's in disarray - the couple were doing *something* before the call.

LISA
You did it! Daddy's coming?

CHLOE
I didn't quite say that.

Lisa's face falls.

LISA
He doesn't want to see us?

CHLOE
Your father has work to do. He'll be there if he can get away.

LISA
(pouts)
Yeah, I get it.

DOMINIC
Babe, I ain't letting you get away.

Dominic kisses Lisa dramatically. Chloe frowns.

CHLOE
I see you're both busy. As am I.
Call me when - you're done?

Dominic waves at the camera and flashes his greasy grin.

DOMINIC
See ya later, Mom!

Chloe quickly disconnects, and leans back in her seat. Her normally composed face contorts in anger.

CHLOE
Andrew Kidd!

She slams her fist down, at unyielding wood.

INT. NEUROLAB - EVENING

David compares two connectomes on a screen. The door opens. Kidd storms in.

COLONEL KIDD

Rhodes.

David whirls around.

COLONEL KIDD

Stop goofing around.

DAVID

I'm not -

COLONEL KIDD

Cut the crap. I saw you dancing.

DAVID

Syncing neuro-patterns in 3-D space
can look strange, I know -

COLONEL KIDD

Whatever. We've got work to do.

Kidd slaps a bottle of scotch whiskey and two glasses on
David's desk. Pulls up a wheeled chair.

COLONEL KIDD

The demo's tomorrow.

DAVID

Wait a minute. When?

COLONEL KIDD

Holcomb's already in Yuma. Call it
fate. If we want that demo, we've
got to meet him there.

Kidd screws open the Scotch.

COLONEL KIDD

The Warriors are packed, and on
their way.

DAVID

Our overlay--

COLONEL KIDD

Yeah. Let's hear it. Where are we?

Kidd pours a glass. David shakes his head.

COLONEL KIDD

Level with me. What's the holdup?

DAVID
We got our best body in today. A
combat officer. A real leader,
experienced in combat.

COLONEL KIDD
So?

DAVID
So - it's a terrific addition to
our overlay. I'm blocking out the
patterns now.

David points to the screen. Kidd pretends to understand.

DAVID
You're familiar with the process?

COLONEL KIDD
I build robots. You give them
brains.

David flips a switch on the Test Robot.

DAVID
Look here, Sir.

An array flickers on-screen:

DAVID
These are the sensory nodes from
your robot. They match input to the
human brain.

David swipes commands. A central block of nodes light up.

DAVID
All androids have this core base.
It took hundreds of - let's call
them "samples" - to map these out.

COLONEL KIDD
Samples?

DAVID
Yes. And years of hard work.

David flips another switch. More nodes spark.

The Test Robot comes to life, stares at David and Kidd. A
hardened man, Kidd growls back.

DAVID
Resulting in basic motor functions.
Then we add overlays...

David taps folders on the screen.

DAVID
I won't elaborate on the thousands
required. But when everything
successfully aligns, the AI will
recognize the room we're in as a
room. Us as humans. Whatever space
surrounds it. It's basically a
tabula rasa person - in a sense.

Kidd gulps his scotch and nods.

COLONEL KIDD
A functional retard?

David taps another folder labeled "Military".

DAVID
Everyone's experience is unique.
But the patterns that drive our
actions are similar. When you see
something red, your sensory neurons
light up as nodes unique to you.
But when you recognize red, the
patterns of pathways that light up
look similar to mine. Our shared
culture - not to mention concepts -
determine how we interpret red. And
those linked pathways form the
pattern we call "overlays".

Kidd touches the screen: tries to connect what he sees to
David's words. He points to the Test Robot.

COLONEL KIDD
He got our military overlay?

DAVID
Colonel Kidd, meet Major Samuels.
For simplicity and safety's sake,
I've put temporary blocks on
irrelevant patterns.

COLONEL KIDD
Irrelevant?

DAVID
The "non-military" kind.

COLONEL KIDD
Can he talk?

DAVID
It would take minutes, but yes -
his full connectome is intact.

David beams at the accomplishment. Kidd focuses on the goal.

COLONEL KIDD
When's he going to be ready?

DAVID
A few weeks. His emotional content--

COLONEL KIDD
Tomorrow morning, like I said.

DAVID
But--

COLONEL KIDD
Let's see this simulation, Rhodes.

Kidd holds up a second glass and toasts. David stares -
reluctantly drinks.

Then swipes commands on the screen.

ON DISPLAY: a 3-D simulated ROBOT.

Fan-like arrays of glowing machine gun "bullets" shower the
robot from all sides.

DAVID
We're processing at eight
Gigahertz. A full pass through his
neural circuits every ten
thousandth of a second.

The robot "avatar" dodges fire easily; a gymnastic Rambo.

DAVID
Let me put this in "Robot" time.

He swipes a command. The bullets slow to a crawl, like pearls
through molasses. It's easy to see how the robot evades.

DAVID
Its speed is only limited by the
inertia of its mechanical limbs.

The screen goes blank.

COLONEL KIDD
Damn. How did he do?

DAVID
According to this, sixty-five
thousand five-hundred thirty-six
bullets. With not a single hit.

COLONEL KIDD
Not bad.

Kidd side-eyes David, takes another bracing sip.

COLONEL KIDD
But it better be even more
impressive tomorrow. The Big Brass
is getting front row seats. We
can't afford one single mistake.

DAVID
It's not ready.

COLONEL KIDD
We just saw it work. It'll do.

DAVID
If I finish blocking--

COLONEL KIDD
Rhodes, it's go time. We'll be
live.

DAVID
If I could just--

COLONEL KIDD
You block, hop, skip - whatever.
But get it done, Mister. Tonight.

Kidd hands David the bottle, grins ear to ear.

COLONEL KIDD
From the VIP Vault, Scotland's
best. Meet me here at oh-six-
hundred. Don't be late.

The colonel stands up, reeking of dismissal and top drawer
scotch. David flashes his best "team player" smile.

COLONEL KIDD
I suggest you finish up, then head
on home. Say hi to the family, and
get some shut-eye. You'll need it
when the action starts.

Kidd mutters under his breath.

COLONEL KIDD
You and me both.

INT. RHODES HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

David sneaks inside.

Jenna watches from the table, dark circles under her eyes.

Merlin's "funeral" box sits before her, alongside an empty coffee pitcher; Jenna's been there quite awhile.

JENNA
You said you'd meet us at home,
"soon."

David sits down, exhausted.

DAVID
Where's Richie?

JENNA
Where do you think? It's midnight.

She pushes the Falcon's box towards David.

JENNA
He wanted his dad's help with this.

David peeks in and surveys the damage. Then looks up into Jenna's tired eyes.

JENNA
Your son needs you, David.

DAVID
I have a project demo tomorrow -
high profile. I'll be up early.

JENNA
Again?

DAVID
If things go well, I'll be in a
position to ask for specialized
equipment. *Medical* equipment that
Cecil says might help -

JENNA
David, just - stop. Whatever God
wants, he'll provide.

DAVID

But -

Jennie lunges across the table and silences him with a kiss.

JENNA

Please. Go tuck in your son.

INT. RICHIE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Richie's fast asleep: a small lump tangled in sheets. Hallway light stripes his bed.

His father walks in silently. Richie doesn't stir.

David attempts to slide Merlin's box under the boy's bed.

As he bends down, something catches David's eye. Merlin's FALCON FEATHER - held tight in his son's hand.

David grins and takes the box back. He kisses Richie's forehead. Then, quiet as a mouse, he walks away.

He carefully closes Richie's door. Light from the hall abruptly... shuts OFF.

EXT. PROVING GROUND - MORNING

Desert. Here, the sun shines down extra hard.

A LINE OF MILITARY MEN trudge across a cratered field. Every few feet, boulders and man-made barriers block their way.

Scrub brush provides the semblance of a fence. In the distance, organic FALCONS CRY and dive.

Closer to home: a TWO STORY OBSERVATION TOWER looms. The sign beside it reads YUMA PROVING GROUND.

On both left and right, SOLDIERS climb elevated firing PLATFORMS. They load 50 caliber automatic RIFLES, stack RPGs.

In the center of the arena, a SERGEANT taps a handheld computer, wipes his brow.

A MILLENNIA FIGHTER stands before him. Bald. Very trim.

The Sergeant extracts a black chip from the device. Slipping a hand behind the Fighter's head, he pulls back skin... reveals a slot.

The Sergeant SLAMS the chip home. It CLICKS into the Fighter's neck.

The Sergeant digs in his pocket and extracts a cover plate. Fumbling, he drops it in the dirt.

SERGEANT

Shhhh--

He looks toward an observation tower. Maybe someone noticed, maybe not. He picks up the plate, blows dust off.

And places it in position behind the Fighter's head.

The cover won't quite fit.

In the military, there's just one response to that. The Sergeant WHACKS the plate. This time, it seems to stick.

Satisfied, he pats the Fighter on the back.

The Fighter snaps to attention and salutes: displaying silver metallic palms. The Sergeant eyes "him" head to toe.

SERGEANT

Close call, Buddy. It's "go" time.

The Sergeant trots off the field. In the observation tower, Digital BINOCULARS shine.

INT. OBSERVATION TOWER/PRESS BOX - MORNING

Buzzing activity everywhere.

Colonel Kidd, and GENERAL HOLCOMB (50s) survey the field through wide windows.

OFFICERS and AIDES cluster close by.

David consults with COMPUTER TECH GARY at a workstation. Quasi-HOLOGRAPHIC IMAGES twinkle on display screens:

ON-SCREEN: A map with THREE RED DOTS and THREE ROBOT POVS. Symbols and numbers scroll like the "Matrix".

A MALE WARRIOR and a FEMALE WARRIOR flank David. Both similar to the Fighter outside. Colonel Kidd walks over.

COLONEL KIDD

The General requests an update.

David's attention stays locked on his work. He moves a carrying case closer to the screen.

DAVID

The system needs time to connect.

Holcomb COUGHS. He may be old, but he's got ears. And not much patience left.

GENERAL HOLCOMB

Tell your man we ain't got all day.

Gary grins, and elbows David.

COMPUTER TECH GARY

Me neither. It's my little girl's birthday. Let's bring this ball game home.

David speaks into his phone.

DAVID

Weapons Platforms: Report.

Weapons platforms LEADERS mumble through static (OS).

COLONEL KIDD

Dr. Rhodes? It's your show.

The last Weapons platform reports "go". David takes a breath.

DAVID

Field secured. Recording.
Initiating test Three-Oh-Five A.
March Twenty-Second, Twenty-Twenty
Eight. On my -

He clicks a button on his phone.

DAVID

MARK.

The RATTLE of Machine Gun FIRE drowns his words.

EXT. PROVING GROUND - CONTINUOUS

TRACERS spit across the field from the platforms.

The Fighter weaves through them leisurely; ducks behind a road BARRIER to hide.

INTERCUT BETWEEN PROVING GROUND AND PRESS BOX.

Holcomb rolls his eyes.

GENERAL HOLCOMB
One gun? Hell, I can do that,
blindfolded. Even to take a crap.

COLONEL KIDD
Yes, Sir.

A MACHINE GUN from the opposite end of the field BARKS.

The AI Fighter's now assaulted from TWO sides!

The Fighter vaults back and forth between barriers. Bullets
RIP the ground around him. The Fighter remains unphased.

Kidd grins. It's the breathtakingly beautiful Art of War.

COLONEL KIDD
For a human soldier, two opposing
lines of fire equate to instant
death. But as you can see, Sir, our
new battlefield model adjusts
easily to changing conditions...

Yet more machine guns join the chorus. The Android's
surrounded - on all sides!

GENERAL HOLCOMB
Four attack positions?

COLONEL KIDD
Right! No avenue of retreat. And
certainly no time to think. Unless
guided by Millennia's Tactical AI.

A virtual rain of bullets, like dashed ropes of deadly lead.
Tracking, evading, deflecting. They're everywhere. No escape.

BOOM! Fiery RPG EXPLOSIONS rip into a road barrier.

The Fighter goes down into six-inch mud.

Kidd and David are shocked. THIS part of the maneuver wasn't
planned. A fact confirmed when -

The General steps to the observation window, CHUCKLES.

GENERAL HOLCOMB
You wanted to test that robot?
Well, we're going to help you out.

On the field, bullets TEAR through the Fighter's leg, ripping
Synthe-skin to expose nylon tendons and metallic bone.

The cover plate on the back of its neck tumbles to the ground. Still, the Fighter's made of... tougher things.

It recovers, calculates. In seconds, it's up and running.

Another RPG WHISTLES through the air. The Fighter feints to the left with grace.

DAVID

Wow!

GENERAL HOLCOMB

You expected less?

COLONEL KIDD

No Sir.

(whispers to David)

Right?

Another MISSILE impacts a foot away from the fighter. BOOM!

Thousands of spinning shards radiate from the explosion's center in slow motion...

FIGHTER'S POV

The Fighter pivots, ready to evade. A gleaming fragment flies (almost guided) straight for its neck.

Impact. Penetration. And Darkness.

In the press box, Display Monitors HOWL. Tech Gary grabs David's arm.

ON THE DISPLAY: Only TWO red dots remain - representations of the Warriors in the booth.

COMPUTER TECH GARY

He's off-line!

Concerned, David barks into the mike.

DAVID

Cease Fire!

GUNFIRE ceases from the sidelines. Holcombe's men relax.

GENERAL HOLCOMB

Not as tough as advertised?

David and Gary manipulate symbols on screen. Their fingers a blur, panic in their eyes.

COLONEL KIDD
Situation?

DAVID
Connection lost!

GENERAL HOLCOMB
Your Tin Can's dead already?

He eyes Kidd mischievously.

GENERAL HOLCOMB
In several ways, it seems.

On the Proving Ground: Smoke wafts through the air.

The Fighter lies motionless in the dirt. Its silver palms have lost their shine - face upwards towards the sky.

David and Gary stare at the screen in disbelief.

On Screen: The third red dot reappears. Blinks.

Holcomb turns to leave. Kidd steps in his way.

COLONEL KIDD
General, a second.

GENERAL HOLCOMB
Would the enemy give it that?

On screen: BEEEEEEEP.

DAVID
It's rebooting. Wait.

The Fighter's POV window comes on-line. The red dot steadies.

DAVID
And, contact. We're live!

In the field: The Fighter's fingers twitch. An arm moves, then a leg. It pushes up on one knee, looks around.

CHEERS shake the Observation Tower. Officers celebrate.

COLONEL KIDD
Over there!

Holcomb returns to the window.

The Fighter jumps to its feet.

Machine gun fire BARKS from one platform.

The Fighter bull-rushes forward; scales the side of the platform quicker than a monkey up a tree.

It vaults up - and inside.

CRASH! Two MILITARY MEN fly from the platform. They hit the ground - CRUNCH. Two broken dolls. Blood HALOS around their pulped heads.

COLONEL KIDD

No, we don't! David, abort!

David and Gary feverishly work the controls.

Another CRASH. Another SOLDIER flies from the platform. This one has no arms.

GENERAL HOLCOMB

What the Hell's going on out there?

Kidd tries to respond. There are no words.

EXT. PROVING GROUND

The Fighter leaps off the platform, hits the ground. Dust puffs at its feet. An RPG under one arm.

The other platforms open fire. The Fighter easily evades.

Bullets rip up the walls of the platform behind the AI. And riddle corpses on the ground.

The Fighter SHOOTs back. BOOM. A second platform burns.

SOLDIERS stagger from the wreckage, fall.

A Human Warrior would gloat in triumph. The AI Fighter advances on another platform. No emotion in its eyes.

One PRIVATE draws a gun. The Fighter hits him with the RPG, pitches the used weapon to the side.

It RIPS a fifty caliber machine gun from its anchoring. Swings around to the Observation Tower -

INT. OBSERVATION TOWER/PRESS BOX

Bullets RIP through the room. Glass windows explode into a thousand deadly projectiles.

The shots double after the window vaporizes. It's a bloodbath. Every bullet counts.

Officers and Technicians drop. Including Gary. Shredded to bloody bits in his chair.

David gapes at the corpse. Another VOLLEY hits.

He ducks under his console, as does Kidd.

The Male Warrior turns to face Holcombe, inadvertently acts as a shield. Flying glass CLIPS the General's arm.

GENERAL HOLCOMB

Dammit!

The Warrior Robots don't respond. It's just a training exercise to them.

COLONEL KIDD

Sir, get down!

He races low to David's side.

COLONEL KIDD

Didn't you hear me? Abort!

DAVID

I can't. It won't respond!

EXT. PROVING GROUND - DAY

The Fighter rushes towards the Press Tower, gun blazing.

INT. OBSERVATION TOWER/PRESS BOX - CONTINUOUS

Officers push equipment against the doors, build makeshift barricades. Holcomb glares at David through the smoke.

GENERAL HOLCOMB

What's our "soldier's" location?

David eyes the Fighter's moving red dot on screen.

DAVID

It's coming home. Sir.

INT. LOWER PRESS BOX DECK - DAY

The men inside watch the Fighter approach. Security glass mercifully blurs the view.

Toting the Fifty-Caliber, the Fighter SMASHES into the room.

SPECTATORS scatter. Slow ones get tossed aside.

The Fighter rushes the stairs. It grabs the door and pulls.
Someone pulls back -

INT. LOWER PRESS BOX DECK - OTHER SIDE OF DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Only one brave SOLDIER left. Clutching the handle, he braces his boots and yanks.

A silvery hand slices through the door.

Metal fingers grab the soldier's lapel, and pull him back through the breach. Flesh RIPS. Bones BREAK. Sounds wet.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

The Fighter bounds up stairs to the second floor. The door's locked - no surprise.

The Fighter levels his rifle.

INT. OBSERVATION TOWER/PRESS BOX

A nervous David stands before the Warriors.

DAVID
Acknowledge.

The AI Warriors snap to attention.

GENERAL HOLCOMB
You want *us* to trust *them*?

A THUMP grabs their attention.

A bulging boot-print puffs out metal on the door. Whatever's behind it kicks real well.

David snatches goggles from the carrying case. He quickly slips on sensory gloves, and straps sensors to his feet.

DAVID
They're our only hope. Trust *me*.

David searches the faces of the Warriors. Despite the chaos around them, they're both completely calm.

DAVID
Unit One-A: primary mission.
Protect humans.

THUMP. Another boot print. David jumps.

DAVID

Unit One-B. Disengage autonomy.

David lifts his arms, the Female Warrior mirrors the move.

Hinges on the door buckle. Barricades jitter away.

David and the Warriors swivel towards the entrance, barehanded. Unlike the Fighter, they're not armed.

Holcombe pulls out an antiquated REVOLVER. Kidd stares.

COLONEL KIDD

Sir, please step away from the door.

GENERAL HOLCOMB

Thanks for the concern, Son. But I'll be damned if I'll retreat.

DAVID

We don't know how he'll respond!

COLONEL KIDD

Did you anticipate *this*?

DAVID

Whatever happens, don't point-

BAM. BAM. BAM. BAM. The doorknob rockets outward: a shiny missile that almost takes off David's head.

David's goggles go opaque.

It impacts the wall behind him like a BOMB. Metal flies in Kidd's face.

The door bursts open. The Prodigal Fighter has returned.

Manipulating it like a metal puppet, David remotely guides the Male Warrior to the Fighter's right.

The Fighter whirls like a ballerina. Fires. Rounds twirl in a graceful circle of death.

With Holcombe in their path. The General fires his pistol, too wounded and old to dodge.

The Male Warrior quickly reroutes; deflects each bullet with a silver palm.

The Female Warrior leaps. Ripping the gun from the Fighter's hand, it effortlessly bends the barrel in a Gordian knot.

The Fighter pile-drives the Female Warrior into the wall. The robots DROP and roll - demolishing everything in their path.

The Fighter twists the Female Warrior's head. SNAP. "She" drops to the side, limp.

Terrified Officers and Aides turn to David: "What Next?"

David switches control to the Male Warrior instead.

The Male Warrior grabs the Fighter in a sumo clinch. But who can win in an *identical* match of strength?

The Female Warrior reboots. David divides his attention, scrambles to keep track.

With a thrust of his arm, he guides the Female Warrior to scalp Synthe-Skin from the Fighter's neck.

And RIP out it's neural chip!

The Fighter spasms and dies. Though deactivates is more apt.

David removes the goggles. Blood drips down his face.

The Warriors stand over their defeated comrade, and relax into "at ease". Mission accomplished. Their job is done.

Kidd grabs Holcombe's arm.

COLONEL KIDD

Let's get you to the Medics, Sir.

GENERAL HOLCOMB

I'll walk solo. No thanks to you.

The Warriors jump to attention and salute as Holcombe staggers by. The General sneers at David through the smoke.

He reaches the door, turns to Kidd.

GENERAL HOLCOMB

You know what to do.

COLONEL KIDD

Sir?

GENERAL HOLCOMB

Destroy those damned machines.

COLONEL KIDD
The Fighter? Of course.

GENERAL HOLCOMB
No. All three.

INT. RHODES' LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Richie mopes on the couch. His bare feet jammed against the coffee table; Merlin's feather in his hand.

Jenna dusts around him, movements frail. She tickles Richie's left foot. He smirks and flinches away.

Giving Jenna the opening she needs to polish another spot.

RICHIE
Mom!

JENNA
I had to make you move somehow.

Richie eyes the feather.

RICHIE
Will *Merlin* ever move again?

JENNA
Ask your Dad when he gets home.

RICHIE
When's that gonna be?

JENNA
I'm not sure, Honey. He had a special project to do today.

RICHIE
Last night, I saw him in a dream.
He took Merlin's box away.

JENNA
Maybe that's his project?

Jenna waves a hand across a sensor. A wall TV flickers on.

She COUGHS, and muffles the sound with her hand - turns sideways so Richie doesn't see.

JENNA
(mutters)
Baby-sitting with TV. Some mother I turned out to be.

The TV SCREECHES: BREAKING NEWS!

On Screen: A WORRIED REPORTER at his desk. Flashing behind him - chaotic scenes from before.

The recorded rogue Fighter darts across the field.

WORRIED REPORTER

What you're about to see are SHB exclusive clips of an AI battle simulation that played out at Seven AM this morning...

RICHIE

Look, Mom! A Fighting Robot.

JENNA

You know what that is?

RICHIE

Dad showed me pictures once!

WORRIED REPORTER

At Yuma Testing Grounds, owned by Millennia Corp.

RICHIE

Dad works on those.

WORRIED REPORTER

We warn you, this footage is graphic. Not recommended for kids.

The Fighter tosses a SOLDIER aside. The man falls, his spine SNAPPED. Jenna's eyes widen.

JENNA

Heavens! What was that?

RICHIE

He said it's a "simulation", Mom. Don't be such a scaredy cat!

The video skips: to a view of the Fighter blasting windows in the Observation Tower. Glass flies like heavy rain.

JENNA

It *looks* real.

WORRIED REPORTER

Though the malfunctioning unit has been disabled, on-scene witnesses report seventy confirmed casualties, both Civilian and Army.

Jenna catches a glimpse of David's face at the Observation window. A bloody blur obscured by smoke.

JENNA

No!

She grabs her cell and dials David. The call transfers immediately to voicemail.

On TV: more death and destruction.

Jenna drops her phone. She shields her eyes with a hand; can't stand a second more.

RICHIE

Mom, is Dad in trouble?

WORRIED REPORTER

In other news, labor riots Downtown have intensified. According to SHB's Snapshot Report, unemployment has risen to thirty percent. Most abolished jobs are blue collar. Some claim Automation is to blame.

Jenna blinks.

JENNA

Honey, perhaps we all are.

FINAL FADE OUT: