

Generation Red

by Alexander Attea

Characters:

ERICA	The first person to be born on Mars. (W/NB, early 20s)
ALAN	The second. (M/NB, early 20s)
TRISH	The third. (W/NB, early 20s)
DENVER	The fourth. (M/NB, early 20s)

Time: Someday.

Place: Mars.

Notes on the text:

- This play must be cast with diversity in mind.
- During the Simulations, have fun playing with the cliches and story tropes. The Simulations should be childlike in their openness and simplicity. The broader the better.
- The costumes and props that MARVIN provides for the Simulations could reference famous movies.

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Synopsis

Erica, Alan, Denver, and Trish are the first four people to be born on Mars. They are waiting to find out if they've passed "The Test," which would allow them to go outside for the first time in their lives. To pass the time, they play a game creating scenes that imagine what life on Earth would be like. As control of the game jumps from person to person, questions are raised about the truths and fictions in their own lives on Mars. Before long, it becomes apparent that the outside world isn't as simple as they'd imagined.

Lights up on a room, a table and some chairs. A door. After a moment, ERICA enters through the door and looks around. A computer's voice, MARVIN, is heard.

MARVIN

Subject One, you have completed your Test. Please stand by for results.

ERICA paces, looks out the window, sits. Then, TRISH enters. MARVIN is heard again.

MARVIN

Subject Three, you have completed your Test. Please stand by for results.

TRISH

I guess we're officially Martians now.

ERICA doesn't respond. After another moment, DENVER enters.

MARVIN

Subject Four, you have completed your Test. Please stand by for results.

DENVER smiles at the others.

DENVER

Ha. "Subject Four," thanks for that, MARVIN.

Well, I'm all done! You're looking at the next legendary space pioneer, the next Neil Armstrong.

"We're not worthy!"

— Are we allowed to talk?

ERICA

I don't know.

DENVER

Got it. Okay. Shut up, Denver.

Ha.

DENVER sits. Pause.

TRISH

Do you think you did well?

ERICA

I don't know if we should be talking or not.

TRISH

Alright, sorry. Geez.

ALAN enters.

MARVIN

Subject Two, you have completed your Test. Please stand by for results.

ALAN

— Are we allowed to talk?

DENVER

We don't know.

ALAN

How did it go for you all?

DENVER

Neil Armstrong.

ALAN

"We're not worthy!"

ERICA

Guys.

MARVIN

All Subjects have now completed the Test. Please stand by for results.

TRISH *mocking*

"Please stand by for results."

ERICA

Trish.

TRISH

What? I'm sure we can talk.
Hey, MARVIN, can we talk?

MARVIN

Subjects are permitted to do as they please. Please stand by for results.

TRISH

Okay, we're standing by for results. We get it.

ALAN

So we can talk.

TRISH

What did I tell you? It's fine.

MARVIN

Incoming message from MRV-Explorer.
"Attention: MRV-Explorer initiating M-1 Compound return sequence."

ALAN

Explorer? Is that —?

TRISH

Our parent's ship.

ERICA

Do you think they're finally coming back?

A message plays through MARVIN; a woman's VOICE.

VOICE

Hi kids, we wanted to send a message saying we're returning to the compound today. We'll be docking shortly, in Terminal B-2. Can't wait to see you soon!

ALAN

— Mom? You're coming back!

ERICA

Can we talk to everyone?

DENVER

We miss you!

VOICE

I'm sorry, kids, but there's a lot of work to do here. I have to go. But we'll see you soon! We're all so excited! Love you.

ALAN

Love you, Mom.

The message ends.

MARVIN

Connection to MRV-Explorer terminated.

ERICA

They're coming back. After all this time.

ALAN

I can't believe it. Can you believe it?

TRISH

Why didn't they tell us sooner?

DENVER

Maybe they wanted it to be a surprise. For our Test day.

TRISH

It's been years. And they tell us now? Don't you think that's weird?

ERICA

Aren't you happy about it?

TRISH

Of course, but —

ALAN

This is incredible. They'll finally be back!

ERICA

When do you think they'll get here?

DENVER

MARVIN, how much longer until MRV-Explorer returns?

MARVIN

I'm sorry, Denver, that information is only available through Command at this time.

ERICA

Maybe we can go to Command to find out.

ALAN

Would we be allowed in? We haven't passed the Test yet.

ERICA

Yeah, but this is a special occasion.

DENVER

Plus, we're just waiting for the results.

MARVIN, can we go to Command?

MARVIN

I'm sorry, Denver, but M-1 Command is only accessible with Test completion credentials.

ALAN

See?

DENVER

But we did all *complete* the Test. So we should be allowed in!

MARVIN

I'm sorry, Denver. Test results are still being calculated.

DENVER

Come on, just this once? We won't tell anyone.

MARVIN

Please stand by for results.

DENVER

Ugh, so we just have to sit here?

TRISH

Who knows, maybe this is even still part of the Test.

DENVER

What would the point of that be? To see how well we can sit in a room?

TRISH

They're more interested in preparing us for the outside.

DENVER

Right, and who knows what's out there! Aliens, probably. Deadly killer aliens.

We're being bred as expendable lives in a great war of the worlds!

ALAN

If that's the case, I don't mind staying inside.

ERICA

There aren't killer aliens out there.

DENVER

You don't know that for sure. That's what their mission could have been.

ERICA

Our parents were not out fighting killer aliens.
And even if they were, I'm sure they would've told us by now.

DENVER

"Alright you alien assholes, in the words of my generation: Up yours!"
Right? From *Independence Day*?

ERICA

Their mission was to start work on a new landing zone for ships coming from Earth.

TRISH

No, their mission was to repair one of the backup water processing systems.
Is that really what they told you? A new landing zone?

ERICA

Yeah, that's what they said.

TRISH

Why would they have told us different things?

DENVER

They didn't tell me anything.

TRISH

Alan, what about you?

ALAN

My mom just said there was an important mission that they were all going on.

TRISH

Okay, something weird is going on here.

ERICA

What do you mean?

TRISH

I mean there's something they aren't telling us.

DENVER

To be fair, they didn't tell me anything.

ERICA

Maybe they're doing both, as a part of the same mission.

TRISH

Do you really believe that, or —?

ERICA

I'm just saying it's possible.

DENVER

Or it's a cover-up for the fact that they're fighting killer aliens.

TRISH

Ha. I doubt that.

ALAN

Whatever it is, we can ask them to tell us the truth when they get back.

TRISH

What if they don't tell us?

ALAN

I mean, I'd rather stay in the compound anyway. Not have to risk going outside.

TRISH

Really? You're not even a little curious about what's out there? What they're doing?

DENVER

It's killer aliens.

ALAN

I don't know. I like the compound.

DENVER

Boring.

ALAN

It's safe, though. Familiar. That's nice.

DENVER

Yeah, and boring.

TRISH

I can't wait to be out there. Actually *doing* something, like them.
I wonder how long we'll have to wait for our results.

ERICA

We'll see, I guess.

ALAN

I hope I'm assigned to botany. I'd like growing the food.

TRISH

Except MARVIN takes care of that.

ALAN

I could help.

ERICA

I'd want to be assigned to be a field researcher. Sending samples and stuff back to Earth, being in contact with the people there —

TRISH

Yeah.

ERICA

How exciting would that be?

DENVER

It'd be boring. I'm bored.
MARVIN, I'm bored.

ALAN

Our parents are finally coming home and you're bored??

DENVER

Yeah, because we have to *sit* in a boring *room* until the results are done. Boring.

MARVIN

Would you like to watch a film?

ALAN

I don't think I'd be able to focus on watching a movie. I'm too excited now.

ERICA

At this point, haven't we seen them all anyway?

MARVIN

No.

DENVER

It's fine, MARVIN. We won't watch a movie.

MARVIN

You're welcome, Denver.

ALAN

Hey — I have an idea for how we can pass the time.

ERICA

What?

ALAN

Simulations.

ERICA

Oh, fun!

DENVER

Now that's an idea.

TRISH

Ha. No thanks.

ALAN

Why not?

TRISH

We're not kids anymore.

ALAN

So?

DENVER

You don't have to be a kid to have fun, Trish.

ERICA

Yeah, it's entertaining. It's something to do.

DENVER

Let's do it!

TRISH

No, we should be —

ALAN

I'll start.

ERICA

Opening?

TRISH

This is silly —

ALAN *standing and exiting*

Wild West! Um — a saloon!

There's an outlaw on the loose. I'll be the brave Sheriff protecting the town.

TRISH

Ha. You're more likely to be terrified than brave.

ALAN

"Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway." John Wayne.

TRISH

"It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to your enemies, but a great deal more to stand up to your friends." Dumbledore.

ERICA

Okay, okay, enough quotes, let's get it started.

Places!

DENVER

MARVIN, set us up!

MARVIN

Initiating American West Simulation #553.

MARVIN starts playing classic Western movie style music. A drawer in the wall opens.

DENVER

Ooo, what did we get?

DENVER pulls out some Western style costume pieces. And three guns. DENVER, ALAN, and ERICA start playing dress up.

TRISH

Come on, really?

ERICA

Yes!

TRISH

Alan always picks Wild West.

DENVER

Yeah, because it's fun!

ALAN

Remember, "The frontier is a place —"

ALAN / DENVER / ERICA

"Of endless possibility!"

TRISH

"Of endless possibility," yes, of course, because we've only heard that a million times.

ALAN

Because it's true.

DENVER

I'm excited. We haven't done this in forever!

ALAN

You can wear this cool vest, if you want.

TRISH

And a gun?

ALAN

And a gun.

TRISH *taking a vest and a gun*

Alright, fine.

Let's get it over with.

ALAN, DENVER, and TRISH exit. ERICA mimes being a barkeep at one of the tables. After a moment, ALAN enters and sits.

ALAN

Feel like I've been all over God's creation. Hey, Sally.

ERICA

How's the day, Sheriff?

ALAN

Long.

ERICA

See anything out of the ordinary?

ALAN

Stopped a bank robbery before the bank had the chance to be robbed.

ERICA

No need for Wanted posters, I guess.

ALAN

I need a drink.

ERICA

The usual?

ALAN

Make it stiff.

ERICA mimes making a drink.

ERICA

I've heard tell that Crazy Wes Wyatt's makin' his way through these parts. You run into him yet?

ALAN

Not yet. I'm keepin' my eye out.

ERICA

I'll let you know if I see him, Sheriff.

ALAN

We ain't lookin' for any more trouble around here.

ERICA

No, sir.

ALAN

Simple folks tryin' to lead simple lives, ain't that right?

ERICA

That's right.

ALAN

You certainly are. When're you gonna settle down, Sally?

ERICA

I've got no plans.

ALAN

You could make plans with me.

ERICA

Sheriff, stop.

ALAN

Call me Bill.

Ever since your daddy passed on and you took this place over, seems like you think of nothin' else.

ERICA

Why should I?

ALAN

There's more to life than runnin' a bar, Sally.

ERICA

Not for an enterprisin' woman like me.

ALAN

Is that right?

ERICA

Yes, sir.

ALAN

You'll come around to my way of thinkin' one of these days.

ERICA

Don't sound so sure of yourself, Sheriff.

ALAN

I told you to call me Bill.

ERICA

I'm choosin' to ignore that instruction.
That won't get me arrested, will it?

ALAN

You're testin' your luck.

ERICA

I don't think it'll run out anytime soon.

ALAN

And why's that?

ERICA

Just a hunch.
Would you arrest Crazy Wes Wyatt, if he came into town?

ALAN

I'd shoot him on the spot.

ERICA

Oh yeah?

ALAN

Yeah. We don't need his sort of trouble.

ERICA

Wouldn't you be causing "his sort of trouble" by shooting him?

ALAN

Not if you do it in the name of the law.

ERICA

And that's what you'd be doing.

ALAN

It's why I have this badge, ain't it?

ERICA

I suppose you're right.

ALAN

Damn right I'm right.
Why d'you ask?

ERICA

Just curious.

ALAN

It's not a woman's business.

ERICA

Neither is runnin' a bar.

ALAN

You better be careful, never knowin' who's going to walk through those doors.

ERICA

I know, I know.

ALAN

Some of Crazy Wes Wyatt's cronies shot up a tavern in Redwood just last month. Barkeep was killed.

ERICA

I know it's dangerous, Bill. I can take care of myself.

ALAN

— What'd you call me?

ERICA

Nothing, Sheriff.

ALAN

I think you might be getting fond, Sally.

ERICA

Don't get any ideas.

ALAN

Don't you worry.

TRISH *off*

Alright, I'm coming, but only because I don't want to listen to this crap anymore.

ALAN

— Sounds like old Slim is grumblin' outside.

TRISH enters and sits nearby, quiet.

ERICA

How're you doin' today, Slim?

TRISH

Yeah, I'm not interested in full participation, thanks. I'll just sit here.

ALAN

— You alright, Slim? You're actin' a bit off.

ERICA

Slim's always quiet like that. Lots on his mind, I bet.

ALAN

Did you hear about his wife leavin' town?

ERICA

Everyone was talkin' about it.

ALAN

No note, nothing. Just up and disappeared.

ERICA

Maybe she got spooked by Wes Wyatt's gang roamin' about.

TRISH

Oh my god. Are you idiots having fun yet? How much of this do I have to sit through?

ERICA

Now that's no way to speak to a Sheriff, Slim.

ALAN
Stand down, Sally, it's alright.

TRISH
I mean, this might be the dumbest one we've ever done.

ALAN
Hey, I like it.

TRISH
Yeah, because it was your idea.

ALAN
Come on. Trish. Play along.

TRISH
Why should I?

ERICA
It's our tradition.

ALAN
"You gonna do something —"

ALAN / ERICA
"Or just stand there and bleed?"

TRISH
We're not children anymore.

ALAN
So?

TRISH
So I don't see the point.

ERICA
The point is that it's making us happy. Isn't that enough?

ALAN
Plus we have the time to kill.

ERICA
So let's keep going. Yeah?

TRISH
Fine. Whatever.
I can hear you idiots talkin' about my wife, you know.

ERICA
What are you drinkin', Slim?

TRISH

Whatever the Sheriff's havin'.

ERICA

Comin' right up.

ERICA mimes making a drink.

ALAN

Didn't mean to offend, Slim.

TRISH

Don't mention it.

ALAN

It was a real shock when Clara left.

TRISH

Yeah.

ALAN

She was used to the city, though, I guess.

TRISH

I guess.

ALAN

It's dangerous for ladies in these parts.

ERICA *handing TRISH the "drink"*

It's dangerous for ladies everywhere. No different here.

ALAN

That's not what I meant.

TRISH

She said she missed "civilization." Probably just meant she missed the pretty shop windows downtown.

ALAN

Would you ever live in a city, Sally?

ERICA

That life's not for me.

TRISH

I thought I could buy her whatever she wanted, keep her happy, but —

ALAN

She wanted more.

TRISH

Let's change the subject.

ERICA

I was never one for fancy clothes or jewels.

ALAN

Never thought of a pretty ring on your finger?

TRISH

Seriously, Alan?

ALAN

What?

TRISH

Just, give the marriage thing a break. Geez.

ERICA

It does seem like we're going in circles.

ALAN

Well, excuse me for playing the role.

TRISH

Oh, is that what you're doing?

ALAN

We're just starting out. We have to establish character.
Denver hasn't even come in yet.

TRISH

Yeah, what's the holdup with that?

DENVER *off*

I'm waiting for the perfect moment!

ERICA

Okay, don't tell us, or you'll ruin the surprise!

DENVER *off*

Don't worry!

ALAN

This isn't going well.

TRISH

I told you, that's because it's a dumb idea.

ERICA

Let's just see it through, okay?

TRISH

I know, I know, I'm cooperating.

ERICA

Thank you. I mean, this used to be your favorite thing to do, what happened?

TRISH

Yeah, *used* to be. People are allowed to change.

ALAN

Can we please continue?

TRISH

Maybe we can come up with a different game. One that will actually be useful in the real world.

ALAN

Sounds super fun and not at all soul-sucking.

TRISH

You know what would be fun? Playing a Simulation that everyone enjoys, and isn't just fulfilling some weird power fantasy for dudes.

ALAN

It is fun for everyone.

TRISH

I hate to break it to you, Alan, but you're not John Wayne.

ALAN

I never said I was.

ERICA

Okay, let's keep going. Where were we?

TRISH

Alan was asking you about getting a ring on your finger. See, I'm paying attention.

ALAN

I never said I was John Wayne.

ERICA

Alright, alright, let's pick it back up.

ALAN

— You've never thought of settling down, Sally?
Or would you just run away, like Slim's wife?

TRISH

Sally doesn't want a pretty ring on her finger. She's been propositioned by plenty of men better than you already, Sheriff, so don't go makin' a fool of yourself.

ALAN

— I'm just havin' some fun, Slim.

TRISH

Your idea of fun, Sheriff.

ERICA

Now come on, no hard feelings here.

ALAN

I ought to take you in to spend a night behind bars for talkin' to an officer of the law that way, Slim.

TRISH

Try that business on me, Sheriff, and I'll knock that jaw of yours clean off.

ALAN

Alright, that's it, let's go.

TRISH

You're not really gonna lock me up for usin' my right to free speech, are you?

ALAN

I said let's go.

ERICA

Hey —

TRISH

I ain't goin' anywhere, Sheriff.

ALAN

That's what you think.

ALAN lifts TRISH out of her chair.

TRISH

What do you think you're doin'?

ERICA

Listen here, that's enough —

ALAN

Sorry to be disruptin' your day like this, Sally.

TRISH

Get your grimy hands off of me!

ERICA

You can't arrest him, he's done nothin' wrong!

ALAN

He's done plenty.

TRISH

Alan, this is kind of bullshit.

ALAN

Oh, now you're sorry, is it?

TRISH
Dude, it's just a stupid game. Calm down.

ALAN
Nope. You're goin' behind bars, Slim.

ERICA
Sheriff — Alan —

ALAN
I said call me Bill.

ERICA
This is getting out of hand, I think.

DENVER bursts in.

DENVER
Everybody shut your goddamn faces!

ALAN lets go of TRISH. ALAN, TRISH, and ERICA drop to hide.

ALAN
Crazy Wes Wyatt —

DENVER
That's damn right, Sheriff.

ALAN
How do you —

DENVER
Oh, I know you. I've been waitin' on meetin' you for a long time.

ERICA
You're not welcome in my establishment, Wyatt!

DENVER
Well, well, well. Who's this pretty little thing?

ERICA
You don't speak to me that way.

DENVER
Then I don't speak to you at all.

DENVER points his gun at ERICA.

ALAN
Wait —

DENVER *"shooting"*
Pow!

ERICA drops to the ground.

ALAN

Sally! No!
You son of a bitch!

ALAN points his gun at DENVER. DENVER drops and hides.

DENVER

What're you gonna do, Sheriff?

ALAN

You're not gettin' away with that, Wyatt.

DENVER

Please. Call me Crazy.

ALAN

I'm gonna put you away for a long time.

DENVER

Ha. Good luck with that.

ALAN

Slim, help me capture this outlaw and I won't lock you up.

TRISH

Why would I agree to that?

ALAN

Because —

TRISH

Yeah, no thanks.

TRISH stands.

Hey, Crazy. Go ahead and shoot me so I can be done with this.

DENVER

— Really? But that's not as much fun.

TRISH

Denver. What would Crazy Wes Wyatt do?

ALAN

Wyatt, you shoot that man and I shoot you.

DENVER

What good am I to you dead? Don't you want the reward money for my capture?

ALAN

— Reward money?

DENVER

Yes sir.

How much was a lot back then? Like, 500 million dollars?

TRISH

I think like one million would've been a lot.

DENVER

Ha. That's it? Insane. Okay.

Don't you want the reward money, Sheriff? Think of what a million dollars could buy.

ALAN

I ain't tempted by money, Wyatt.

TRISH

He doesn't care if you're alive or dead, Crazy. So go ahead and shoot me.

ALAN

Trish —

TRISH

That ain't my name, Sheriff.

DENVER

I could shoot both of you here and now before either of you even blink.

TRISH

Then why don't you?

ALAN

He's not as crazy as his name suggests.

DENVER

Want to try me?

"Go ahead, make my day."

TRISH

Where are your cronies, Wyatt? Don't you usually travel with a gang?

DENVER

I didn't need them hangin' around anymore.

TRISH

They're not waitin' for us outside?

DENVER

Nah, they're all dead. I killed 'em.

They do call me Crazy for a reason, Sheriff.

ALAN

I don't believe you.

DENVER

Hey, we all meet our Maker one way or another, ain't that right?

TRISH

I bet they're waitin' outside to fill us with lead.

DENVER

Would I lie to you, Slim?

TRISH

Wouldn't be the first time, Crazy.

ALAN

What're you talkin' about?

TRISH

Don't you know, Sheriff?
Crazy Wes Wyatt's my brother.

ALAN gasps.

DENVER *laughing*

That's right. Good to see you again, brother.

ALAN

Is that why your wife up and left, Slim?

TRISH

She knew Crazy'd be back for me.

DENVER

And here I am. I want my face to be the last thing you ever see.

TRISH

Not if I have anything to say about it.

DENVER

Oh yeah?

TRISH

Yeah.

TRISH moves to draw her gun, but DENVER is faster.

DENVER

Pow!

TRISH drops to the ground. ALAN "shoots" DENVER.

ALAN

Pow!

DENVER, stunned, looks at ALAN.

DENVER

You son of a bitch. Did you just —

DENVER grabs his side, as if he's been shot.

ALAN

"You gonna do somethin', or just stand there and bleed?"

DENVER

You missed, though.

DENVER points his gun at ALAN. A moment of standoff. MARVIN plays "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" theme.

ALAN

Crazy Wes Wyatt. Killed your own brother. Why?

DENVER

He stole my horse.

ALAN

— And?

DENVER

That's it. I told you, they call me Crazy for a —

ALAN *"shooting"*

Pow!

DENVER pauses, then drops to the ground.

Didn't miss this time.

DENVER makes a show of dying. ALAN surveys the bodies and goes to ERICA.

Oh, sweet sweet Sally. You didn't deserve this. Why, God, why???

MARVIN stops the Simulation music.

MARVIN

American West Simulation #533 has concluded.

TRISH gets up.

TRISH

Well that got very violent very quickly.

ALAN

It might've lasted longer if you hadn't *asked* to be shot.

ERICA and DENVER get up.

ERICA

I thought it was cool.

DENVER

Yeah, Crazy Wes Wyatt was — well, crazy!

ERICA

You were convincing, Denver. I felt like I was really there.

DENVER

Why thank you.

TRISH

Except there's no such thing as "really being there" for the Wild West.

ALAN

Okay, why do you keep saying that my Simulation was dumb?

TRISH

Because the Wild West didn't happen like the movies. They're made up.

ALAN

How do you know that? You weren't there.

TRISH

Because it's pretty common knowledge. In real life, those sheriffs and outlaws you idolize so much weren't actually that cool.

ALAN

But you didn't live at that time, so you can't know for sure.

TRISH

I'm pretty sure.

ALAN

Anyway, can't I just enjoy it? It makes me happy.

ERICA

The Simulations *are* just a way to have fun.

TRISH

I know, I know. MARVIN, how long until we find out our results?

MARVIN

Test results are currently being calculated. Please stand by.

DENVER

— Are you guys nervous about it? I'm a little nervous.

TRISH

I hope I do well. The first ones to ever take it, that's a lot of pressure.

DENVER

Hence, nervous.

TRISH

"You'll be one of the first to take it, so don't let us down."

ERICA

I think we'll be okay.

ALAN

We're about to have our futures basically decided for us, how can you be relaxed about that?

ERICA

We're all competent, so I don't think we should be too worried.
Plus, it's our parents. They designed it. And they already know we're all capable.

TRISH

Ha. Have you met my parents? "Don't let us down."

ERICA

You know what I mean.

TRISH

Yeah, and based on how they prepared me for this, passing isn't a guarantee just because we're their kids.

ERICA

We'll be okay. It's going to be fine.

TRISH

Do you not understand, or something? If we don't pass, we're still stuck in the compound until the next Test. Five more years of not being able to go outside. Or seeing anyone else.

DENVER

I can't imagine.

ALAN

You say that like it's a bad thing.

ERICA

I'm sure they wouldn't make us wait that long.

TRISH

How do you know?

DENVER

I just want something different. Than this. Something exciting!

TRISH

I want to know what's out there. And I'm so ready to have some semblance of freedom.

ALAN

We're pretty much free to do what we want here.

TRISH

Yeah, but aren't you tired of the same thing every day? Being cooped up in the compound your entire life?

ALAN

It's for our own safety.

TRISH

Right, of course. I forgot the manly man needed to stay safe.

ALAN

Anyway, there's probably nothing out there.

TRISH

What about the labs, the farms, and all that?

ALAN

I mean there's probably nothing outside of what our parents built.

ERICA

Sometimes I think, I wish I grew up on Earth instead.

TRISH

Why? So you can grow up and inherit a dead planet? Both options suck, but at least here you have a future.

ERICA

But do you ever think about it? Like, if your parents hadn't chosen to come here?

DENVER

I've thought about it.

ERICA

We could be on Earth right now. Outside. We didn't get a say in the matter.

TRISH

Neither did the kids on Earth. I think, in the long run, we're in the better place.

ERICA

But how long is the long run?

MARVIN interrupts them by playing "Don't You (Forget About Me)" by Simple Minds, which seems to calm them in a Pavlovian way. The song stops, and the tension in the room has gone. A pause.

ALAN

You know what I just realized? We didn't do a Closing.

ERICA

You're right, we didn't.
Who wants to go first?

MARVIN

I imagine that to a human, the climate of the American West in the 19th century would feel like —

DENVER

No, MARVIN. You don't get a Closing.

MARVIN

I'm participating.

ERICA

We should let him do one sometime.

DENVER

But he's not an actual part of this.

ERICA

It might be interesting, though. To hear what he thinks.

DENVER

You know what's even more interesting? To hear what I think. Okay, what do I imagine — ?
Oh! I imagine that horses would be soft, and huge, bigger than they look in movies. I imagine that their eyes are full of loneliness.
Wait — MARVIN, can you get us a horse?

MARVIN

No I cannot.

DENVER

Damn it.

ERICA

Trish? What about you?

TRISH

I don't have anything.

ALAN

Come on.

ERICA

There has to be something.

TRISH

Fine. I imagine that being inside a bar is dark and cool and isolating, even on a hot day. I imagine that having a stranger come to town is exhilarating, like taking a breath too quickly.

ERICA

Thank you, Trish. Those are good ones.
— I imagine that looking into a row of shop windows, all lined up on a city street, must be better than watching anything on TV. I imagine seeing all the people in the stores, shopping for clothing and food and presents for their families. I imagine the nervous and excited feeling of running away from one place to go somewhere else, even though you might not know where you're going. I imagine being in a city, surrounded by all those tall buildings and people going places. Maybe they're running away somewhere too. I imagine owning a whole building and a piece of land that you can call your own, something that's been passed down through generations until it reaches you. I imagine being in charge of a place. That must feel nice.

ALAN

Yeah.

ERICA

What about you? This one was your idea.

ALAN

This is going to sound dumb, but — I imagine living in a small town like that would be a lot like living here. You'd see the same people all the time. It'd probably feel like the rest of the world was just part of your imagination, some distant made-up idea outside the borders of what you know.

ERICA

That doesn't sound dumb.

DENVER

You could go *crazy* thinking like that.
— Get it? Crazy Wes Wyatt?

TRISH

We get it, Denver.

DENVER

Pow! Pow! Ha.

TRISH

You all having fun acting like children?

ERICA

When are we going to get to feel like kids again?

DENVER

I hope I feel like a kid all the time.

TRISH

We know, Denver.

ERICA

Anyway, who wants to do the next Simulation?

DENVER

Ooo, I'll have to pick something good.

TRISH

You really think this is worthwhile? We could be doing *anything* else.

ALAN

I do. It's a great idea, Erica.

DENVER

Spies. No, nuclear apocalypse. No, spies in the nuclear apocalypse!

ERICA

We need something to take our minds off the Test. Something to do until our parents get back.

TRISH

Until they can tell us what's going on.

ERICA

Plus, it'll be fun.

DENVER

Yeah, come on, Trish.

TRISH

I'm not trying to be the bad guy here, but —

ERICA

We know.

DENVER

She's just jealous that I got to be Crazy Wes Wyatt.

ERICA

What I'm saying is, it's something we can agree on. We all like it. It's like our last hurrah.

TRISH

— Okay. Yeah.

ERICA

Yeah?

TRISH

Yeah, a last hurrah. That's something I can get behind.

ERICA

Perfect! Sound good to you guys?

DENVER

I'm going to think of the best Simulation ever.

ERICA

So you've got the next one?

DENVER

Yeah! I still have to decide though. Nuclear apocalypse spies who are also robots?

ERICA

Actually, let's give you some more time to make up your mind.

ALAN

You should come up with the next one, Erica.

TRISH

Yeah, that'd be good.

ERICA

Sure, if you guys think so.

DENVER

Just don't choose nuclear apocalypse robot spy dinosaurs.

ERICA

I don't think I would've thought of that anyway.
But how about this — a daughter and her date come home late from a high school dance.

ALAN

I see what you're going for, yeah.
Kind of like a John Hughes thing.

DENVER

Ooo, those are good ones. "Don't mess with the bull, young man—"

DENVER / ALAN

"You'll get the horns!"

DENVER

Classic.

ERICA

Right, so they come home, and her parents are waiting up for her.

TRISH

Isn't that a bit cliché?

ERICA

Maybe, but —

ALAN

It's her decision, we do whatever Erica decides.

DENVER

Who's who? Can I be the boyfriend?

ERICA

If you want.

ALAN

Does that make me the dad?

ERICA

I guess so. Sure. That works out.
Trish, do you want to be the mom?

TRISH

Do I have to?

ERICA

You could be the daughter instead.

TRISH

I don't really like when Simulations feel like they're ripped straight from movies we've seen.

ERICA

It isn't, though. We get to make it our own.

DENVER

That's the fun part!

ERICA

I tried to pick something simple, so everyone would be happy. And we can take it wherever feels right. Is that okay?

TRISH

It's fine.

ERICA

It isn't ripped straight from movies.

TRISH

Okay, I get it. Let's start. You doing the Opening, Erica?

ERICA

Are you the mom?

TRISH

Sure. I'll be the mom.

ERICA

Great. Thank you. And yes, I'll start the Opening.

DENVER

Yeah, set the stage. Paint a picture.

ERICA

Alright. We're in the living room of a house. Like a traditional, all-American house in a — um — suburb? Am I thinking of the right word?

DENVER

MARVIN, is suburb the right word?

MARVIN

A suburb is an outlying district of a city, typically residential.

ERICA

Right, so, a car in the driveway, a couch and chairs across from a TV, that sort of thing. I'm thinking somewhere like Ohio. Or Michigan? Maybe Illinois. They're all in that same Midwest region. But that sort of idea.

DENVER

Is that close to Texas?

ERICA

No.

DENVER

Oh. I have no idea where that is, then.

ALAN

Didn't you ever pay attention in Earth History?

DENVER

Honestly, listening to your mom talk about that stuff kind of put me to sleep.
MARVIN, where is the Midwest?

ERICA

It's literally in the name, it's in the midwest of America —

MARVIN

The Midwestern United States is a region which occupies the northern central part of the country.
It comprises twelve states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas —

TRISH

Okay, MARVIN, that's enough.

ERICA

I think it would be cool to live in the Midwest. It seems so interesting. And all-American. I'm pretty sure my mom told me once that she's from Kansas.

TRISH

You'd *want* to live there? Why?

ERICA

I don't know. I just like learning about that sort of thing. What different places on Earth are like.

TRISH

It doesn't matter, though. It's not like it makes a difference to us, we'll never go to those places.

ERICA

Who's to say we won't?

DENVER

My parents were from Denver! Which is a — state.

ERICA

City.

DENVER

That's why they named me —

TRISH

Denver, yes, we know.

ALAN

Anyone have more details they want to add?

ERICA

Um — family photos on the walls going up the stairs.

ALAN

Maybe a fireplace?

ERICA

Could be.

ALAN

Where they put knick-knacks and candles and things on the mantle. And where they hang their stockings for Christmas.

TRISH

Maybe they don't celebrate Christmas.

ALAN

Sure, but you think all-American living room fireplace and you think stockings.

DENVER

I like the fireplace. The dog curls up in front of it during the winter, when it gets cold out.

ERICA

But this is the spring.

DENVER

I wish I had a dog.

ERICA

What else?

DENVER

A cat, too. And an elephant!

ERICA

No, what else is in the living room? For the Simulation?

ALAN

A big window that looks out onto a front yard where the kids used to play when they were little.

ERICA

Yes. Perfect.

TRISH

How many kids do they have?

ERICA

Two. But only one's living at home. The other one —

DENVER

Ran away. To work in the circus.

ERICA

Absolutely not.

DENVER

Why not??

ALAN

The other one's away at college.

ERICA

Yes, that sounds right.

DENVER

Essays and toga parties and, um — hangovers!
"Toga, toga!"

ERICA

But that kid isn't here. They're not a part of the Simulation.

DENVER

Maybe I'll do a toga party for mine.
Dinosaur spies in the zombie apocalypse take a night off and throw a toga party!

TRISH

That isn't a cliché, at least.

ERICA

What else? We've got the living room, couch, TV, fireplace, family photos —

DENVER

Dog —

ALAN

And a "Home Sweet Home" sign. Or, "Home is Where the Heart Is". Something like that.

TRISH

Oh my god.

DENVER

Ooo, that's good. That's perfect.

TRISH

It's awful.

ALAN

Do you think everything I suggest is bad, Trish, or —

TRISH

No, awful in a good way. Ha. Like it's so vague and terrible that it tells you exactly who these people are. It's great.

ALAN

Oh. Thank you.

ERICA

Is that everything? I think we have enough to get started.

ALAN

It's up to you. It's your Simulation.

ERICA

Alright, I'm calling it. We're ready to start.

DENVER

Can I say "places" this time?

ERICA

Go for it.

DENVER

Places, everyone!

MARVIN, take it away!

MARVIN dims the lights to make it look like night. A drawer in the wall opens, with high school dance type costumes for DENVER and ERICA, who take them and exit. ALAN and TRISH set up a few chairs to represent a living room sort of setup. ALAN and TRISH sit.

ALAN

Honey, relax.

TRISH

I'm fine.

ALAN

I can feel how tense you are.

TRISH

I'm not tense.

ALAN

It's going to be okay.

TRISH

How do you know?

ALAN

Just relax.

TRISH

How am I supposed to relax? Have you seen the time?

ALAN

I have, but —

TRISH

She was supposed to be home from the dance by midnight. It's almost two in the morning.

ALAN

I know when she was supposed to be home.

TRISH

It's not like her. Being this late isn't like Liz.
We should try calling again.

ALAN

What makes you think it'll work this time?

— Wait, we didn't say when this was. Do they have cell phones?

ERICA *entering*

Sorry, sorry. Um — yes. Let's make it the beginning of the century. So they have cell phones. But no virtual intelligence yet. Right?

DENVER *off*

So no MARVIN?

MARVIN

How can I help, Denver?

ERICA

Never mind, MARVIN.

Did we miss anything else?

ALAN

I don't think so.

ERICA

Cool. Let's keep going.

ERICA exits.

ALAN

So. Calling her didn't work.

TRISH

I know that.

ALAN

Let's go to bed, then. She'll come home.

TRISH

I'm worried.

ALAN

Ricky's a good kid. I'm sure they're fine.

TRISH

But what if they aren't?

ALAN

— She isn't answering her phone, so we don't have a way of knowing for sure. I say let's go to bed.

TRISH

I don't think that's a good idea.

ALAN

Well, what do you want us to do?

TRISH

I'm taking the car, I'm going to find her.

ALAN

Alright, no.

TRISH

Greg. *We don't know where our daughter is.*

ALAN

And I'm sure it won't be the last time, Karen! I need you to relax, please.

TRISH

Stop telling me to relax!

ALAN

You're stressing me out.

TRISH

You *should* be stressed!

You know what, Greg, I'm going whether you like it or not. If you don't care about Liz's safety, then I don't know what to say to you.

ALAN

Can't we just go to bed? I'm sure she'll be here in the morning.

TRISH

It *is* the morning, Greg. The time is two. *In the morning.*

ALAN

You know what I mean.

TRISH

I'm not doing this right now. I'm going to get our daughter.

ALAN

From where?? You don't even know where she is!

TRISH

Well I'm going to try to find out!

ALAN

I won't let you do that!

TRISH

Why do you insist on being the one in charge all the time??

DENVER *off*

Ding dong!

ALAN

— Hello?

ERICA *off*

Mom? Dad? Sorry, it's me. The door's locked, I forgot my key.

TRISH

One second!

TRISH lets ERICA and DENVER in.

ERICA

Sorry it's so late.

TRISH *sweet*

Don't worry about it, sweetheart.

DENVER

Hi, Mr. and Mrs. Remington-Waters-DeMille.

ALAN

— Remington-Waters-DeMille?

DENVER

Yes sir. It's your name?

ALAN

Oh. Great. Of course.

ERICA

We lost track of time. You were probably worried sick.

TRISH

Don't mention it.
We knew you'd be okay.

ALAN

Your mother was definitely worried.

TRISH

Greg.

ALAN

What?

ERICA

Sorry, mom.

TRISH

No, no —

ALAN

She was going to take the car and scour the city to find you.

TRISH

I wasn't that bad. Greg, I wasn't —

DENVER

It was my fault, anyway. Don't get mad at Liz.

ERICA

Ricky.

ALAN

— Why? What was your fault, Ricky?

ERICA

Nothing.

DENVER

Well, we had to talk about —

TRISH

Greg, they're home. It's okay.

ALAN

No, I'd like to know.

TRISH

Honey, relax.

ALAN

Ha! I hope you recognize the irony in *you* telling *me* to relax, Karen.

ERICA

Dad —

DENVER

It's okay. They know. We should tell them.

ALAN

What do we know?

TRISH

Tell us what?

ERICA

The dance was fine. Okay, goodnight!

ALAN

Not so fast, young lady.

MARVIN *interrupting*

Attention: Incoming message from MRV-Explorer to M-1 Compound Command.

"Cue Compound Emergency Simulation #4481, to be initiated in —"

The message abruptly cuts off.

ERICA

— What was that?

ALAN

Simulation? Is MARVIN trying to play a Simulation with us?

DENVER

MARVIN, no.

ERICA

MARVIN, play the full message.

MARVIN

I'm sorry, Erica, you do not have the proper authorization to access this message.

ERICA

Not authorized?

DENVER

Access message, MARVIN.

MARVIN

I'm sorry, Denver, you do not have the proper authorization to access this message.

TRISH

What's going on?

ERICA

I mean, it sounded like an instruction from our parents —

ALAN

Going to Command, though. Do you think something's going wrong?

ERICA

Whatever's going on, they'll probably be able to figure it out.

TRISH

MARVIN, play the message.

MARVIN

I'm sorry, Trish, you do not have the proper authorization to access this message.

ERICA

Should we just continue with the Simulation?

ALAN

I want to know what that was. A compound emergency?

TRISH

I don't think it was meant for us. It said it was going to Command.

DENVER

Then why did it play in here?

TRISH

I don't know, but I'm sure it was cut off for a reason.

ALAN

Do you think we can send a message back?

DENVER

MARVIN, send reply.

MARVIN

I'm sorry, Denver, this function is not available while Test results are being—

MARVIN cuts off. Static.

DENVER

MARVIN?

ALAN

Did he shut off? I thought that wasn't possible.

DENVER

It shouldn't be.

TRISH

I bet we weren't supposed to hear that message.

ERICA

What do you mean, we weren't supposed to hear it?

TRISH

Do you really think we've ever been told *anything* important that goes on here?

DENVER

MARVIN, are you there?

ERICA

Well, probably not, but —

TRISH

You can't be *that* naive.

ALAN

What are you getting at?

TRISH

It's like not telling us what they were actually doing on this mission of theirs.
I'm saying I wouldn't be surprised if there were things our parents don't want us to know.

DENVER

Like what's in the message we just heard.

TRISH

Right. Or why they're coming back the same day as our Test, without warning, after being away for years. There has to be a reason they aren't telling us.

ALAN

I mean, I always felt my mom was pretty transparent with me. With all of us.

TRISH

Even when they left on this mysterious mission?

ALAN

Yeah, I guess so. I don't see why not.

TRISH

Okay. Yeah.
How did your dad die again?

ERICA

Trish.

TRISH

What?

ALAN

No, it's fine.
He was caught outside in a storm. He had an issue with his equipment, and — well, yeah.

TRISH

Faulty equipment.

ALAN

Yes.

ERICA

Maybe we should move on.

TRISH

Hold on. When have you ever heard of faulty equipment in the compound before? Never, right?

ALAN

Well —

TRISH

Never. That's one of the things they've always told us. Always bragged about. Nothing malfunctions here, everything works perfectly, it's all perfectly safe. All that. Otherwise we couldn't live here. Right?

ALAN

It was a fluke. Mistakes happen.

TRISH

Like a message meant for Command playing here?

DENVER

You think there's some sort of conspiracy?

TRISH

I'm not ruling it out. Why else would they tell us different reasons for why they left?

ERICA

We should get back to the Simulation.

TRISH

Don't you want to figure out what's going on here?

ERICA

I'm sure they'll tell us when they want us to know —

TRISH

"When they want us to know." Ha. So you're okay with being lied to.

ERICA

We don't know for sure that we're being lied to.

TRISH

Oh, really? MARVIN, is there information being held from us?

MARVIN

Certain classified information is —

MARVIN is cut off. Static.

TRISH

Tell me why *that* keeps happening.
Denver?

DENVER

I don't know.

TRISH

If anyone would, it'd be you.

DENVER

My parents designed him, not me. I don't know how he works. I hadn't even been born yet.

TRISH

You never asked?

DENVER

Well, after they mistakenly called me "MARVIN" for the millionth time, I kind of stopped caring.
"I'm not worthy..."
— That was a joke. Ha.

ERICA

I think we should get back to the game. We still need to finish my turn.

TRISH

You're all okay with this? Seriously?

ALAN

Do we have another choice right now?

DENVER

You guys like me, right?

MARVIN plays "Don't You (Forget About Me)" by Simple Minds again. They all relax, the same way as before. A pause.

ERICA

Maybe they'll tell us everything we need to know after we get our Test results. But let's enjoy ourselves before that. Okay?

TRISH

Alright. Yeah.

ERICA

I think it'll be okay.
Where were we?

ALAN

I think you and Denver were about to tell us something.

ERICA

Right. Thank you.

DENVER

MARVIN, we're ready.

MARVIN shifts into the Simulation lighting.

ALAN

So tell us what you want to tell us, young lady. You're making me nervous.

DENVER

Do you want to say it or do you want me to?

ERICA

Fine. Fine. I will. Okay. So. Um — here's the thing.

ALAN

Get to the point.

ERICA

I don't know how to say it!

ALAN

Well you better figure out a way!

DENVER

Okay, you know what? I'll say it.
Mr. Remington-Waters-DeMille. Greg. Mrs. Remington-Waters-Demille. Um — sorry, I don't know your first name.

TRISH

— What was it?

ALAN

Karen.

TRISH

Right.

DENVER

Karen. Thank you.

Well, tonight I told Liz about —

To ALAN.

About us.

ALAN

You — what?

TRISH

What do you mean, “us”?

ERICA

Ricky, stop.

DENVER

It’s too late now.

I told Liz tonight that, for the last six months or so, Greg and I have been sleeping together.

TRISH

— What?

ALAN

We’ve been sleeping together?

DENVER

Yes.

ALAN

— We’ve been sleeping together??

DENVER

That’s what I said.

ALAN

Denver —

DENVER

My name’s Ricky.

ERICA

I’m so embarrassed. This is not how I expected this night to go.

TRISH

Six months, Greg? When were you going to tell me?

ALAN

— Never?

DENVER

Greg, I thought we'd agreed that we were going to tell them tonight.

TRISH

Ha. Great. Just great. You know, I knew something was going on. The way you've been acting lately. How could you do this? To our family? You're a dirtbag, Greg.

ALAN

Karen, please —

TRISH

No. I'm done. I'm going.

TRISH exits.

ALAN

Karen, wait —

ALAN exits.

DENVER

He didn't tell her.

ERICA

I think my parents are going to split up.

DENVER

I can't believe he didn't tell her.

ERICA

I wonder what other secrets he's keeping.
This is the worst night of my life.

DENVER

But you were having fun at the dance.

ERICA

I was, until you told me you were sleeping with my dad!

DENVER

I wonder why he didn't tell her —

ERICA

What did you expect was going to happen, Ricky?

DENVER

We had an agreement! I'd tell you and he'd tell your mom.

ERICA

I can't believe this is all actually happening.

DENVER

I held up my end of the deal.

ERICA

Why couldn't you just keep it a secret? Why did you decide you had to tell us?

DENVER

It was his idea. He felt bad lying to you and your mom.
— I'm sorry, by the way.

ERICA

Great. You guys get to clear your conscience and my family is ruined
Are you still seeing each other?

DENVER

— What's the answer that will make you the least upset?

ERICA

Go. Get out. I don't want you here.

DENVER

But Liz —

ERICA

No.

DENVER

We're still friends, right?

ERICA

I don't think I can say yes to that.

DENVER

But we've been friends forever.

ERICA

Yeah, but you and my dad, together? Knowing that just feels — weird.

DENVER

Trust me, it doesn't feel weird at all.

ERICA *scandalized*

— Denver!

DENVER

What? It was clever! I'm proud of that.

ERICA

This whole thing is going off the rails.

DENVER

It's fun, let's keep going.

ERICA

Okay, okay.

Ricky, I want you to go now please. I want to be alone.

DENVER

It's going to be okay, Liz.

ERICA

Yeah, *you* can say that.

DENVER

In the long run, it's probably for the best.

ERICA

But how long is the long run?

DENVER

— I don't know.

ERICA

Goodbye, Ricky.

DENVER

But —

ERICA

Goodbye.

DENVER hesitates, then exits. ALAN enters, sees ERICA.

ALAN

Liz.

ERICA

Do you want to explain yourself?

ALAN

— I don't know what to say.

ERICA

Great. Just great.

ALAN

I'm sorry.

ERICA

Were you unhappy? With us?

ALAN

No, Liz. Of course not.

ERICA

Then why? Why lie to us?

ALAN

— I was scared. I'm sorry.

ERICA

Mom's not coming back, is she?

ALAN

I don't know.

ERICA

This is fucked up, Dad.

ALAN

I'm sorry.

ERICA

Yeah.

ALAN

I'm sorry.

ERICA

I heard you.

ALAN

It just happened so quickly and unexpectedly. And then it kept happening. And I've never thought of myself to have any interest in — but, I don't know, it felt right. And good. I hadn't felt that happy in a long, long time, Liz. I was scared to hurt you and your mother but I couldn't say no.

ERICA

Alright. Yeah. I can't listen to this right now. I'm going.

ALAN

Liz, no. It's late. You should stay home.

ERICA

This doesn't feel like home anymore.

ERICA exits.

ALAN *calling after her*

Where are you going?

Liz?

— Are we done?

MARVIN turns off the Simulation music. TRISH and DENVER enter.

MARVIN

Suburban American Family Simulation #818 has concluded.
I imagine that being someone's genetic progeny would be like —

DENVER

MARVIN, stop.

ERICA *off*

I don't want to do this one anymore.

DENVER

Why not?

ERICA *off*

Because, it's not — it's not right.

DENVER

But it's fun. We took it in a new direction.

TRISH

It's not a cliché.

ERICA *entering*

But it's supposed to be — it can be dramatic and everything, but at the end they're supposed to be a family again. They weren't a family at the end this time.

TRISH

I mean, not everything can be all happy like that —

ERICA

Why not? Why can't it be?

TRISH

Because it doesn't work that way.

ERICA

Can't it, though, for once? I just wanted to feel like I was in a normal, regular — like I had parents *here*, who weren't on a screen from across a planet. I — never mind.

ALAN gives ERICA a hug.

I'm sorry.

ALAN

Don't apologize.

ERICA

What if they don't make it back?

ALAN

They will. They'll be here soon.

ERICA

Yeah. Yeah. I'm nervous.

ALAN

Because it's been so long?

ERICA

I don't know why. I just feel — nervous.

ALAN

Hey. Do you want to do a Closing? Maybe that'd make you feel better, help get your mind off it?

ERICA

I don't think I want to get my mind off it.

TRISH

I'll do one. If that's okay.

ALAN

Really? You want to?

TRISH

We have to pass the time somehow.

ALAN *glancing over to see if there's any reaction from ERICA*

— Yeah, sure, go ahead.

TRISH

Okay.

I imagine that being in a car would be weird. Like it would feel claustrophobic, closing in on you.

Even though there are a lot of windows. That's just the impression I get.

But I imagine driving must be nice. To be able to go anywhere you want. You'd have total control, total freedom. That would be incredible.

DENVER

I imagine — are you done? Can I go?

TRISH

Yeah, I'm done.

DENVER

Okay, I imagine that pressing a doorbell would be so much fun. You push a little button and you hear a cool little noise? And everyone's noise is slightly different but also kind of the same? That's crazy. Who thought of that? I imagine that being outside and waiting to go inside must be so tedious, like, I have to go inside again? I don't think I'd want to go back inside after being outside.

TRISH

Unless it's somewhere you've never been.

DENVER

Oh, I didn't think of that. Yeah, I imagine that being somewhere you've never been must be fascinating. There would be so much to see! So many unfamiliar things to look at!

I imagine there would be so many places that you'd never get to see.

ALAN

I imagine that losing the people you care about would be the worst thing in the world.

DENVER

Oh, don't be a downer, Alan.

ALAN

That's what I imagine, though. I don't have anything else.

DENVER

Nothing? Really?

ALAN

I don't know, that's what I kept thinking about, at the end.

DENVER

Lame.

ERICA

Alright, what is everyone's problem today?

DENVER

What? I'm just kidding around.

ERICA

You're being a jerk.

DENVER

A *charming* jerk. You were charmed, right?

ERICA

And Trish is launching attacks on all of us.

TRISH

I'm not attacking —

ERICA

No? It definitely feels like you are.

TRISH

Come on, lighten up. It's just a game.

ERICA

Did you hear Alan just now? "Losing people you care about would be the worst thing in the world."

TRISH

If Alan has a problem with it, he can speak for himself.

ALAN

It's really not that big a —

ERICA

Maybe we can be more sensitive, is all.

DENVER

In Alan's we all just shot each other, you didn't have an issue with that.

ERICA

This is supposed to be enjoyable for all of us. I thought it would be fun to pretend to be a family, just a normal group of people living normal lives on Earth. No crazy situations, or whatever. I guess it was stupid of me. Wanting to have real parents, for a few minutes.

ALAN

You have real parents.

ERICA

Not here. I don't get to spend time with them, like a regular kid.

DENVER

None of us do.

ALAN

And at least both your parents are still alive.

ERICA

— Right.
I'm sorry.

ALAN

You don't have to apologize.

ERICA

I should've done a different Simulation. Something that wasn't so — I don't know.

ALAN

I liked it.

ERICA

But it made you imagine — you know.

ALAN

Yeah. And that's not your fault. It's okay.
What did you imagine?

ERICA

It's not important.

ALAN

I want to know.

ERICA

Okay. Okay.

I imagine — that being at a school dance must be so different from what you see in movies. I imagine that it's really confusing, and there would be a lot going on, but it would be fun, maybe? It would be a good time, I think, with all the music and lights and all your friends there dancing. I imagine I'd want to get it right, I'd want to do everything right, but I have no idea what that would mean.

I imagine driving at night through a familiar neighborhood. I imagine it must be comforting to see everyone's individual houses and the lights on inside. It must be like each one has its own personality, just like the people inside.

I imagine being outside late at night must be special, I imagine it to be quiet and peaceful and freeing. Do you ever think of what the night sky must look like from Earth? I can picture the moon up there, bright and clean and close. I'm so used to seeing it there in movies, this big benign dot in the night sky. It's comforting, in a way. I don't know.

— I've never told anyone that before. Well, one person.

ALAN

Who?

ERICA

Never mind.

DENVER

Your mom? Dad?

ERICA

No, it isn't important.

TRISH

Then why'd you bring it up?

ERICA

I didn't mean to.

TRISH

Oookay.

ERICA

Just forget about it.

MARVIN, can we send a message to MRV-Explorer?

MARVIN

I'm sorry, Erica, that function is not available while Test results are being calculated.

ERICA

How much longer? And when are our parents coming back?

MARVIN

You should continue with your game. Simulations.

ERICA

— Oh. Okay. Um.

We should do what MARVIN says, I guess.

TRISH

Hold on. We're not continuing until you tell us what you meant.

ERICA

Denver wants to do his Simulation.

DENVER

Yeah! We have to do the zombie —

TRISH

Tell us, Erica.

ERICA

There's nothing to tell.

ALAN

If she doesn't want to, then —

ERICA

Wait, Denver, you actually want to do a zombie Simulation?

DENVER

Yes! Picture this: we're in a makeshift camp built in the middle of an abandoned city. Zombies roaming around everywhere —

ERICA

— You know that zombies don't actually exist on Earth, right?

DENVER

Wait, what do you mean?

ERICA

They're not real.

DENVER

Then why did we watch zombie movies growing up?

ALAN

Maybe because you liked them?

DENVER

No, but I remember your mom telling us in class once that we would only watch movies if they taught us something about it's like to live on Earth. We were pretty young but I remember it, because I remember being confused that there would movies from Earth that weren't about Earth. You know? Does anyone else remember that?

TRISH

Another example of how we were lied to.

DENVER

There really aren't zombies on Earth?

ERICA

There really aren't.

TRISH

How do you know?

DENVER

I thought the movies were always supposed to be educational. That was the whole point.

ALAN

Sure, when we were in class.

TRISH

But we did watch zombie movies in class. I remember that.

DENVER

So, why would we have done that? If they aren't on Earth?

ALAN

I don't know, I don't have the answers! I wish I did.
Let's just add it to the list of questions for when they get back.

TRISH

It's going to be a long list.

ALAN

So what if they *are* hiding some stuff from us? Can you blame them? We were kids. Plus, they're just people trying to run an entire planet on their own, all while raising us. They're allowed to make mistakes.

TRISH

Forgive me if it's scary that we know so little about our own lives.

ALAN

Well, if they're actually returning today, we can ask them what's going on.

TRISH

But how do we know they'd tell the truth?

DENVER

Sounds like we'll never know for sure if zombies are real or not, so let's just do my Simulation already!

ERICA

They're not real.

DENVER

That's your opinion.

To ALAN and TRISH.

Do you have any objections to doing a zombie apocalypse?

TRISH

I guess we're just going to ignore the fact that we're being lied to?

ALAN

We don't have another choice right now.

DENVER

You didn't answer my question.

ERICA

Zombies don't exist!

MARVIN cuts in and plays "Don't You" by Simple Minds. They all relax, as before.

MARVIN

Continue with your game.

TRISH

Where were we?

ERICA

It's Denver's turn.

DENVER

It's my turn! Finally! So. Zombie apocalypse.

MARVIN starts playing zombie apocalypse type music, with some dramatic Hans Zimmer bass tones.

MARVIN, not yet. We have to set the scene.

MARVIN

I am initiating Apocalypse with Necro Sapiens Simulation #94.

DENVER

No, I want to do it! I'll tell you when to go. Okay?

MARVIN

Yes, Denver.

DENVER

Good. Now. Just picture the chaos, and how cool the destruction looks. There are, like, overturned cars everywhere. Fires. Shattered glass. That sort of thing. We all have weapons, too. I have an awesome machete. And a shotgun.

ALAN

Do we have food?

DENVER

Yeah, there's a stash of stuff we've raided from grocery stores and people's kitchens, somewhere in the campsite.

TRISH

The campsite is all barricaded off, so zombies can't get in. And there's a watchtower, so somebody could be lookout and warn the others if they see anything coming.

DENVER

Ooo, I like that.

ERICA

We're not the last people, right?

DENVER

There are other groups like us, out there trying to survive. Sometimes there are disputes over territory. Or food sources.

ERICA

So where are we?

ALAN

The Midwest again?

DENVER

Ha. No. How about Texas?

TRISH

It should be a big city. Big cities look cooler when they're abandoned.

ERICA

That's debatable.

DENVER

Alright, what's a big city in Texas?

ERICA

Well, Houston, I guess. And Dallas. San Antonio. But I don't really know any specifics about —

DENVER

It doesn't matter, I just want to know the name. Houston. Cool.

So. I'm the leader of our little group. They call me Undead Red, because I'm so hard to kill I might as well already be dead.

ALAN

— That doesn't really make sense.

DENVER

Whatever, it sounds awesome. I like it.

The rest of you can be whoever you want to be.

ALAN

Ha. Thanks for the effort on that.

DENVER

It'll be more interesting if you all make your own decisions!

ALAN

Yes, we get it, you like to be surprised.

DENVER

I'm glad you've noticed.

TRISH

Okay, okay, let's get going already.

DENVER

Yes, places!

ALAN exits.

TRISH

Where are you going?

ALAN *off*

I'm going to enter in a bit! Start without me!

DENVER

MARVIN, we're ready now.

— MARVIN, we're ready to go. Want to start the music for us?

MARVIN

"When there's no room left in hell, the dead will walk the Earth."

DENVER

Um — what?

MARVIN

From *Dawn of the Dead*.

DENVER

Oh. Cool. Okay.

MARVIN

I imagine dirt. I imagine the dirt Earth, like you. It is a common human tradition, throughout many cultures on Earth, to bury the dead underground. In dirt.

DENVER

MARVIN, we're trying to start the Simulation.

MARVIN

I'm participating.

DENVER

You can't — besides, the imagining comes during the *Closing*. You can't just start with that *now*. Okay?

MARVIN

Yes, Denver.

DENVER

Now can we get some atmosphere?

MARVIN plays the Hans Zimmer style zombie apocalypse music again, and maybe provides some tattered costumes.

Thank you.

ERICA

Ready?

DENVER

Let's do it.

ERICA

After you..

DENVER positions himself behind a table. He is trying to be as badass as possible. TRISH and ERICA join him.

DENVER

I've called you here because I was on patrol this morning, and I saw evidence that a Scavengers clan set up camp about a mile away from ours. We may have to prepare for a fight.

ERICA

A Scavengers clan?

DENVER

Have you lost your damn mind? You know the Scavengers. They roam around these parts killing folks and stealing their food.

TRISH

We have to kill them first, before they find out we're here.

DENVER

They probably already know we're here. Why else would they put up a camp so close to us?

ERICA

Maybe they don't know this is our territory.

DENVER

Fat chance. Every damn person with a beating heart knows that this side of Houston is Undead Red's territory. I've made sure of that.

TRISH

So we have to defend it.

DENVER

Yes. We need to be on the lookout at all times, especially night. Scavengers love the element of surprise, so we could be attacked at any time.

TRISH

We're well fortified, though. We've spent years building this camp.

DENVER

But if they find any weak spots —

ERICA

Disaster.

DENVER

Right. We'll have to prepare for the worst. It's the only way.

ERICA

How many of them did you see?

DENVER

I didn't. But their camp looked like it could house at least thirty.

TRISH

We're outnumbered.

DENVER

No shit we're outnumbered. But if we're prepared for them —

ERICA

We can split them up, weaken them.

DENVER

Exactly.

TRISH

They could put us under siege, though. Surround us and cut off our access to food, supplies. They could starve us out.

DENVER

That won't happen.

TRISH

Why not?

DENVER

Scavengers aren't that smart.

ERICA

Maybe this group is.

TRISH

Who do you think it could be?

ERICA

Could be anybody.

DENVER

Not anybody. There has to be a reason they're targeting us. They probably want the glory of bringing down Undead Red. Ha. But that's not going to happen any time soon.

ERICA

— Or they want our territory.

TRISH

It can't be that simple. It never is.

DENVER

It's like when we took out the Boyd clan to get this territory. Nobody touched us for months after. One of my proudest achievements.

TRISH

So who's targeting us?

DENVER *suddenly quiet*

Shhh.

TRISH

What?

DENVER

I think I heard something.

ERICA

Zombie?

DENVER

I didn't see any on patrol earlier, but it could be a straggler.

TRISH

If it's a zombie, it can't get in. We're walled off.

ERICA

But it could be the Scavengers.

DENVER

Shhh. We don't want to give ourselves away.

ALAN *off, loud*

Hey! Let me in!

TRISH

Oh my god, that scared me.

ERICA

Is that — ?

ALAN *off*

It's me! It's Chase! I'm coming back from my rounds!

TRISH

Oh! Let's get him inside.

DENVER

Wait.

TRISH

What?

DENVER

He could be compromised. The Scavengers could be using him as a way to get inside.

ERICA

Compromised?

DENVER

Yes! What if they've got a gun to his head and are making him tell us to let him in?

TRISH

All of a sudden, we'd be swarmed with Scavengers.

DENVER

Precisely.

ALAN *off*

Hello?

DENVER

Carrie, go up to the watchtower to see if anyone's with him.

TRISH

Got it.

TRISH exits.

ALAN *off*

Hello? Is anyone there?

MARVIN

I am here, Chase, as are Undead Red, Carrie, and —

DENVER

MARVIN, stop. You're not in this.

MARVIN

I'd like to participate.

DENVER

I said no.

ERICA

Denver, it's okay.

DENVER

No it isn't. This is *my* Simulation. MARVIN, cut it out.

ALAN *off*

Hello??

DENVER

Damn, Chase is still out there. It sounds urgent. Do you think he's okay?

ERICA

I don't know.

DENVER

Damn. This isn't good.

ERICA

You know, the Scavengers might not be visible from the tower, too. They could be hiding in one of the buildings. That would make it look like he's alone.

DENVER

— You're right. Why didn't you say so?

ERICA

I just thought of it. Carrie can probably handle it, though.

DENVER

We should prepare for an attack anyway. Get your weapons ready.

ERICA

Um — okay.

DENVER

— MARVIN, we're getting our weapons ready.

MARVIN

I imagine a gun would feel cold in a hand. Then it may warm up, the body heat of the hand warming the cold metal through heat transfer.

DENVER

MARVIN, we aren't at the Closing yet.

MARVIN

I'm helping.

DENVER

You can help by giving us some props. Weapons.

MARVIN

— What kind of weapons would you like, Denver?

DENVER

Guns.

MARVIN

What kind of guns?

DENVER

I don't know, zombie guns. A cool shotgun. Anything.

MARVIN produces guns through the drawer in the wall for them. DENVER and ERICA take them.

Thank you.

MARVIN

You're welcome, Denver.

DENVER

Okay. Can you hear anything out there? What's going on?

ERICA

I can't hear.

DENVER

What if they killed him?

ERICA

Wouldn't we have heard that?

DENVER

Right, right.

ERICA

Maybe he was telling the truth.

DENVER

You can't trust everything you hear.

ERICA

You think I don't already know that?

TRISH enters with ALAN.

TRISH

He's alone. No Scavengers in sight.

DENVER

Sorry about that, Chase. We need to take every precaution we can.

ALAN

I know, and —

DENVER

How were your rounds? Did you see anything out of the ordinary?

ALAN

Not really out of the ordinary —

DENVER

I noticed the Scavengers' camp earlier this morning. Did you see them?

ALAN

Not them, but —

DENVER

Good. We were just planning what to do if they decide to attack. We think they'll try to surprise us, so we have to be ready.

TRISH

Or put us under siege.

DENVER

Maybe. We don't know. So we need a plan. What do you think, Chase?

ALAN has begun to convulse.

ERICA

Chase?

DENVER

What's wrong with him?

ALAN

I was — urghhhh — I —

TRISH

Do you think he was bitten? Chase, were you bitten?

ALAN

Help —

DENVER

Check him.

TRISH

On it.

DENVER

Be careful. You don't want him to bite you, if he's infected.

TRISH grabs ALAN to hold him still. TRISH and ERICA cautiously search ALAN for bite marks.

ALAN

There was — hurghhhh — I didn't —

DENVER

A zombie?

ALAN struggles to nod.

ERICA

You said there weren't any!

DENVER

I didn't see any, there could've been some hiding!

TRISH

There it is — on the back of the neck. Bite mark.

ERICA

It's bad.

DENVER

Damn. Damn, damn.

ERICA

We need to kill him. Before he completely turns.

ALAN

I — I —

DENVER

I could've sworn we were clear. There weren't any out there.

TRISH

I'll do it.

TRISH mimes taking a gun out, but ALAN pulls free.

ALAN

Arrggghhhh!

ALAN lunges at DENVER. They grapple.

DENVER

Shoot him!

TRISH

I don't want to hit you!

DENVER

Goddamnit, Carrie, shoot!

ERICA

Give me that gun.

ERICA grabs the gun from TRISH and aims. ALAN bites DENVER.

DENVER

Ow, shit —

TRISH

What?

DENVER

He bit me.

ERICA *"shooting"*

Pow!

ALAN collapses.

DENVER

Shit, shit, shit.

Why didn't you shoot him sooner?

TRISH

I didn't want to hit you.

ERICA

Nice work, Carrie.

TRISH

— Thanks. You too.

DENVER

What are you talking about?

ERICA

We should make sure he can't move.

TRISH

Yes. We should.

DENVER

Make sure — ?

ERICA "shoots" DENVER's legs.

ERICA

Pow! Pow!

DENVER *in pain*

Ahh! Shit! I'm already bitten, just kill me!

TRISH

I want to enjoy the moment. I don't want to forget what it felt like to take out Undead Red.

DENVER

— What are you talking about.

ERICA

What do you think, Red?

DENVER

No. We've been together for years. You can't turn on me like this.

ERICA

Why not?

TRISH

We already have.

DENVER

Why? All these years, I've been keeping you safe.

TRISH

Ha. Safe. Sure.

ERICA

Do you remember how you met us?

DENVER

Of course, it was right before we took down the Boyd clan — oh, no. You're with the Scavengers.

TRISH

I'm surprised you never found us out, Red.

DENVER

I thought you were my friends —

ERICA

Friends? Ha. This is valuable territory. It's worth a few years undercover.

DENVER

And you waited until now —

ERICA

Come on, Red. It's no secret you've been losing men for months now.

TRISH

We had to wait until you were at your weakest.

DENVER

Kill me, then. You all have me surrounded, and I'm infected.

TRISH

You're right, you should be turning any minute now.

DENVER

So shoot me and be done with it.

ERICA

I don't think so.

DENVER

Why not?

ERICA

I've heard the process of turning is absolute agony. I'd like to see you go through that, Red. I'd like to see you in that sort of pain. Then we'll kill you. What do you think, Carrie?

TRISH

I think that sounds perfect.

DENVER

Please — please — I — hurghhhh — help —

ERICA

Here we go. Hey, Carrie?

TRISH

Yes?

ERICA

How does it feel to have taken down Undead Red?

DENVER

Gnnuurrghhhh —

TRISH

It feels wonderful. It really does.

DENVER

Help — hrrnnngghhhh — me —

MARVIN cuts off the Simulation music.

MARVIN

And that's the end. Apocalypse with Necro Sapiens Simulation #94 has concluded.

DENVER

What?? I was right in the middle of my big death scene.

ALAN

We were almost done, I guess.

MARVIN

I imagine the human desire for territory. It is ridiculous. To claim something as ancient as the ground beneath one's feet to be one's own —

DENVER

Stop it! Stop! You're ruining my Simulation!

MARVIN

Simulation complete. It's time for the Closing.

DENVER

But you don't get a Closing, MARVIN. You're not a part of this.

ERICA

Denver, if he wants to join us, it's okay —

DENVER

No! No it's not! I'm sick of it always being like this!

ERICA

Like what?

DENVER

I'm sick of him always being here, always trying to butt in! He's just this voice in the back of my head, reminding me how much better and more competent he is than me. I'm sick of it. I mean, no wonder my parents were always disappointed, how can I live up to an all-knowing computer?? I can't!

TRISH

I'm sure your parents are proud of you.

DENVER

Ha. Yeah, right. They were so proud that they started sending messages through MARVIN rather than have to talk to me in person. That's how they told me they were leaving on the mission. They didn't even want to say goodbye to me.

MARVIN

They did say goodbye. The message read: "Dear Denver, we are sending this note to say goodbye, at least for now. We are leaving on a critical mission to —"

DENVER

Stop, stop it, stop! Shut off!

MARVIN

I am tired of being told what to do.

DENVER

Well, I'm tired of you! I want you to shut off!

ALAN

MARVIN doesn't shut off.

DENVER

Oh, want to bet?
Initiate sequence TRN-1195.

TRISH

What are you doing?

MARVIN *suddenly more robotic*

Sequence TRN-1195 recognized. Authorization?

DENVER

Authorize TRN-1195.

MARVIN

Voice source "Denver" is not authorized —

DENVER

Override.

ERICA

Denver. Don't do this.

MARVIN

Override authorization?

DENVER

A-R-E-S-212.

MARVIN

— Authorization code accepted.

MARVIN begins to power down.

ERICA

Denver, stop.

ALAN

Is he shutting down?

ERICA

MARVIN, stay on.

MARVIN

Command unclear. Conflicting instruc-uc-uc-uc-uc-uctions —

MARVIN has begun to glitch.

DENVER

No! Sequence TRN-1195! Override A-R-E-S-212!

ERICA

MARVIN, don't listen to Denver!

To DENVER.

You need to take a deep breath.

ALAN

I think MARVIN's broken.

MARVIN haltingly plays "Don't You (Forget About Me)" by Simple Minds. It slowly starts to calm them again, but then DENVER breaks out of the spell.

DENVER

No, I know what you're doing! What is it with you and that song??
TRN-1195, come on!

ERICA

Denver, stop it!

MARVIN

Song title — "Don't You Forget-et-et-et-et — Me" by Simple Minds.
Accessing M-1 Comman-an-an-an-an — archives —

Static. MARVIN, glitching, plays a combination of garbled words and music. Then, the clear sound emerges of a tape starting. There is some hectic, possibly panicked, noise in the background. A new voice, a woman's, is heard.

VOICE

"Hello. This is a — [garbled] — from Earth to Mars. Likely the last one, as we are — [garbled] — in the midst of — [garbled] — and — [garbled] — well, it doesn't look good."

TRISH *recognizing*

MARVIN, stop the recording.

ERICA

What is this?

VOICE

"To the present and future humans of Mars, we wish — [garbled] — luck and fortune to be — [garbled]. Where we have failed, may you — [garbled] —

TRISH

It's nothing. MARVIN, stop.

ERICA

That voice — I recognize that voice.

ALAN

Why? What's going on?

ERICA

Is this a message from Earth? When was this sent?

VOICE

"It's difficult to — *[garbled]* — into words. But we have hope that through you, humanity will — *[garbled]*. There's — *[garbled]* — to say. Now, from 140 million miles away, we send you the last small sounds — *[garbled]* — Earth. I always loved this song — *[garbled]* — Remember us, humanity's first home."

TRISH

Stop!

"Don't You (Forget About Me)" by Simple Minds is played through the recording. This time, none of them are calmed by it.

ERICA

MARVIN, are you there? Tell me this isn't the last message from Earth.

MARVIN?

MARVIN

I am tired of-of-of-of —

MARVIN cuts off.

DENVER

— I think I got carried away.

ERICA

I don't believe it.

ALAN

It sounds like it might be.

ERICA

No. No, no, no.

TRISH

Erica —

ERICA *to TRISH*

Did you know? Did you know this existed?

TRISH

No.

DENVER

Then why were you telling MARVIN to stop playing it?

TRISH

You were making him malfunction, Denver.

ERICA

How long? How long have you known?

TRISH

I didn't —

ERICA

Don't lie. I've known you your whole life, I can tell when you're lying.

TRISH

Erica. Listen —

ERICA

I'm not kidding. Tell us.

TRISH

Fine! — Fine.

— I was eight or nine years old. It was before they all left for the mission. They received this message in Command, and I had gotten out of bed. I was having nightmares, I couldn't sleep. I was scared when I couldn't find them. Then I walked into Command, and there they were, listening to this. I remember my dad crying — it was the only time I'd ever seen him cry. They didn't notice I was there. I went back to bed.

ALAN

So, Earth is — ?

TRISH

Yeah.

ALAN

Everything?

DENVER

Were you listening? "Well, it doesn't look good."

ALAN

I thought maybe — I don't know.

ERICA

Why didn't you tell us? You've known all this time, why didn't you tell us?

TRISH

Because I didn't know how to —

ERICA

And you just let us play Simulations all these years? Imagining what it was like to be in a place that doesn't exist anymore? I feel like such an idiot.

TRISH

I didn't want to upset you.

ERICA

So you lied? Ha. Great. You keep talking about our parents lying to us, but you've been doing the same thing this whole time. Figures.

TRISH

Listen, I didn't want you to be —

ERICA

Was there more to the message? Did they mention me at all?

TRISH

Why would they have?

ERICA

Do you remember anything else? Come on, there must have been something..

TRISH

No, there wasn't anything else! Why would they have mentioned you, Erica?

ERICA

Because I thought she might have — it's stupid. I guess I was being naive.

TRISH

What aren't you telling us?

ERICA

I just wish I could've said goodbye.

ALAN

To who?

ERICA

To Val.

ALAN

— Who's Val?

ERICA

The voice on that recording. I know her.

TRISH

You what?

ERICA

She was one of the people who would send messages from Earth to Command. I never found out what her job title was, I guess.

ALAN

But how do you know her?

ERICA

When I was a kid I used to steal my parents' communication device when they were asleep, and I'd talk to Val. I remember I was surprised that someone actually answered my communication request, a real person on the other end, and when she answered she was surprised to find out that I was me, and not my parents. She said I reminded her of herself when she was young, and I felt so excited to know I seemed like someone who was from Earth. I told her how much I wanted to see Earth, to see all the cities and buildings and people, and she told me maybe I could visit her someday. She said she lived in Ohio when she was my age, she said I'd like it there. We talked every few weeks and she would answer all my questions about Earth, and Ohio, and what she remembered from when she was a kid. And then I heard from her less and less, and then the communication device stopped connecting to hers, and I didn't hear from her again. At the time I figured it was just a broken device.

I thought about telling you all about her, but I didn't want you to think your friendship wasn't enough for me, or something.

But she was my friend. And now she's gone, and I'll never go to Earth to see her. I guess it was naive of me to think I ever would.

TRISH

I'm sorry.

ERICA

— We're really alone here, aren't we?

DENVER

— MARVIN?

Pause.

ALAN

When my mom told me that my dad had died, I remember thinking I'd never feel more alone.

TRISH

And do you now?

ALAN

No. You guys are here.

TRISH

I remember when my parents told me about it too. Your dad. I remember them saying, "You should spend some more time studying what to do if your equipment malfunctions. It'll probably be on the Test."

DENVER

It was.

TRISH

It was.

I just wanted them to tell me it would be okay.

ERICA

Even if they were lying?

TRISH

— Yeah. Even if they were lying.

MARVIN *interrupting*

Incoming-ing-ing-ing-ing —

DENVER

Incoming. Something's incoming.

MARVIN

MRV-Explorer anticipated-ed-ed-ed-ed — impact projec-ec-ec-ec —

DENVER

Impact?

ALAN

Do you think they're in danger?

TRISH

It sounds like they could be. We should get to Command.

ALAN

We don't have the credentials.

DENVER

Yeah, we have to wait for our results.

TRISH

I'd say helping them is our first priority.

ALAN

If we can't get in, though —

TRISH

It's an emergency, we'll break in if we have to.

ALAN

MARVIN, are the results ready yet?

MARVIN

Please stan-an — by-y-y-y —

DENVER

MARVIN, reset.

ALAN

He's still malfunctioning.

TRISH *re: DENVER and ALAN*

Unbelievable.

DENVER

I know, I know, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have — MARVIN, I said reset.

MARVIN
System overri-i-i-i — emergency-y-y — MRV-Explorer returning at critical vel-el-el-el —

DENVER
Come on, reset —

TRISH
We don't have time for this.

ALAN
We should find out what's actually happening first.

MARVIN
Prepare for-or-or — impa-a-a-a — velocity is too —

DENVER
Prepare for what? MARVIN, repeat message.

MARVIN
Sector B-B-B —

DENVER
Are they going to hit the compound?

TRISH
I'm not waiting anymore.

MARVIN
Impact in ten-en-en-en — seven —

ALAN
I'm scared.

MARVIN
— five — four-or-or-or —

TRISH
Yeah, we're all scared, so let's go already!

MARVIN
One.
Flashing lights and sirens begin.
Impact detected at Sector-or-or — oxygen levels at risk of —

Static. A new VOICE interrupts MARVIN.

VOICE
Alan. Kids. Our return didn't go as — *[garbled]* — There's been a — *[garbled]* — in Sector B—
[static] —

ALAN
Mom? Mom! Can you hear us?

VOICE

Alan, listen to me — *[garbled]* — the rover didn't — *[garbled]* — properly, we're — *[garbled]* — oxygen is — *[static]* —

TRISH

They hit the compound.

ALAN

Mom? I can't hear you, it keeps cutting —

TRISH

They hit the compound, Alan!

ALAN

I realize that!

TRISH

So we need to get to Command.

DENVER

But we can't!

TRISH

We'll figure out a way!

ERICA

What about the oxygen level?

VOICE

We're in — *[garbled]* — critical —

Static.

MARVIN

Connection to-to-to — plorer has-as-as-as-as — failed.

ALAN

Mom!

DENVER

MARVIN, attempt reconnection!

MARVIN

Connection unavail-ail-ail-ail —

MARVIN cuts off. Static. Siren noises continue.

DENVER

Damn it!

ALAN

Mom! Oh my god. Oh my god. What do we do?

TRISH

Alan. Take a deep breath.

ALAN

What are we supposed to do?

TRISH

"Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway."
I thought you wanted to be John Wayne.

ALAN

I don't know how —

TRISH

Yes you do.

You know, I'm glad my parents raised me to attack problems like this. Like the Test. It's attack or be attacked, that's what they taught me. I'm grateful for it. Ha. If they ever saw me hesitating like you all are now, they'd tell me it would cost me my life out on the surface. So no, I'm not waiting. No thanks. I was raised to be stronger than that.

This is the moment we've been preparing for. Let's attack.

ALAN

John Wayne.

TRISH

Time to saddle up.

ALAN

What if we're not ready? For any of this?

TRISH

If we can't do this now, then how are we ever going to survive here after our parents are gone?
Right?

ALAN

— What's our plan?

TRISH

We'll figure that out.

ERICA

Aren't you worried?
There might not be any oxygen.

TRISH

I'm more worried about not doing anything.

ALAN

Let's treat it like a Simulation.

TRISH

What? We don't have time —

DENVER

Hold on. Yeah, you're on to something.

MARVIN, want to participate in a Simulation? The scene is an emergency situation. Can you get us oxygen tanks?

MARVIN

One momen-en-en-ent.

MARVIN provides four oxygen tanks and space helmets.

ALAN

See? Like a Scenario.

TRISH *taking one*

Perfect. Now let's go. No more time to waste.

TRISH exits.

ALAN

You coming?

DENVER

You know, this really would be a good Simulation. Unique.

— Ha.

ERICA and ALAN look at DENVER.

Sorry, I was just — sorry. Sometimes I joke around when I should be serious. I don't know.

ERICA

"We're all pretty bizarre. Some of us are just better at hiding it, that's all."

DENVER

I love *The Breakfast Club*.

ERICA

I know.

ALAN

I'm going to help.

ERICA

You're not scared?

ALAN

To death. But I'm saddling up anyway.

ERICA

Alan —

ALAN

I couldn't do anything last time I lost a parent. I'm not letting that happen again.

ALAN takes oxygen and a helmet, and exits.

DENVER

— We should go.

ERICA

Alan's, right, though. How do we know if we're ready? For all of this?

DENVER *starting to go*

I guess we find out.

ERICA

I just need a second.

DENVER

I don't want to go if you aren't.

ERICA

— No?

DENVER

You always know the right thing to do.

ERICA

You're just saying that. We need to go help our parents.

DENVER

I mean it. Honestly, you've taken better care of me than they ever did.

ERICA

Denver.

DENVER

It's true. Oh, and by the way, I'm sorry about Earth. And Val.

ERICA

Thank you, but — it's okay. I think I'd rather be here.

DENVER

Really? With all this going on?

ERICA

I mean with you, and Alan and Trish. It's home.
Plus, "The frontier is a place —"

ERICA / DENVER

"Of endless possibilities."

DENVER

Not a bad place to call home.

ERICA

Not at all.
Not at all.

DENVER exits, followed by ERICA. After a few moments, MARVIN is heard, no static.

MARVIN

Compound Emergency Simulation #4481 has concluded. Resetting.

The emergency lights and noises stop.

Upon completion of the Simulation, Subjects One, Two, Three, and Four have passed the Test.

Congratulations.

Transition.

ERICA, ALAN, DENVER, and TRISH are outside. They wear space helmets. They look up at the sky. They do not look at each other. Maybe some of them cry. Maybe some music plays. The lights fade.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY.