

HYPervisor

Written by

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SAMPLE ONLY - First 40 pages of shooting draft

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INT. TAXI - NIGHT

WILLIAM dozes in the back of a taxi, the metal on metal squeal of worn-down brakes rising and falling through audio while lights zip by outside, strobing him white, yellow, red, green, white again. He's jostled around gently, forehead occasionally tapping the side window.

A pronounced stop jolts William awake. He's groggy at first but calmly getting his bearings with the air of a man who regularly wakes in the back of airport cabs.

Looking up, he sees the DRIVER watching him, expectantly. William peers out through the window, fishing around in his coat pocket for a wallet.

William offers a credit card to the driver but the other man waves it away.

With a slight confused frown, William takes a laptop bag and leather duffel from the seat beside him and gets out, rolling shoulders to adjust the hang of his coat.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - NIGHT

William exits the taxi surrounded by glass office buildings no taller than five floors, sprawled in every direction amongst well-maintained landscaping and brand new roads that organize the expansive industrial park into something circuit board-like.

The taxi drives away.

He turns almost a full 360, looking around not yet confused, but not comfortable either, before his eyes fall upon a building that stands out for its stone fixtures and facade, looking slightly less modern, and at the same time more warmly lit, and inviting, than all the others.

It's the tallest building around, at seven floors. A sign in brass reads 'Serviced Accommodation'.

INT. ACCOMMODATION LOBBY - NIGHT

William enters the quiet lobby of the stone building. The manager, LINA, stands watching a HANDYMAN change a lamp lightbulb high on the wall beside reception.

Lina is a tall Korean woman draped in a designer dress, perched on stilt-like heels.

Her make up is tastefully done while making a bold statement, and her hair looks shiny, slick with product and regular treatment, curling out artfully at the end of long, straight locks. She radiates the sense of a woman who is supremely confident in herself, and knows how to achieve the holistic physical aura that denotes it.

Noticing William, Lina crosses the carpeted lobby floor to meet him halfway. Her dominant gait makes the heels clack harder than they should on marble flooring.

WILLIAM

Hi.

LINA

William?

WILLIAM

Am I...

LINA

You're William.

WILLIAM

Yes. Are you expecting me?

LINA

I wasn't certain if you were still scheduled to arrive this evening.

She walks back to the reception desk, going around behind it to lean down over a keyboard, peering up at the screen as she types and moves a mouse, elegantly professional in every zen-like, considered movement.

William meets her there, trying to hand her the credit card that the driver rejected. She shakes her head once.

LINA

They're covering all of your expenses.

William thinks a moment, putting it back into his wallet.

WILLIAM

Who?

She seems taken off guard by the question, almost visibly rattled by it, beneath her layers of social armor. She tenses up briefly, casting an unconscious glance at the handyman, who looks across at the two of them right on cue, overly disinterested in his facial expression and mannerisms.

Lina smiles bluntly again, regaining her full composure, reading as she stands taller, her gaze falling to William's eyes.

LINA  
Room six-twelve.

She strides away toward an elevator, followed by William.

William's eyes meet the handyman's as he passes, offering a polite nod to one another.

INT. ACCOMMODATION ELEVATOR - NIGHT

William and Lina stand side by side, both watching the floors ascend.

His eyes drift to her quickly, then back to the floor display.

INT. ACCOMMODATION SIXTH FLOOR HALL - NIGHT

Lina leads William to room 612, swiping a key card over the lock, handing it to him when the door beeps.

They lock eyes a moment as he takes it. Hers betray a shred of steely desperation, his only sleepy confusion.

LINA  
If you need anything, dial one for  
the lobby.

He nods, looking down at the card.

WILLIAM  
Thanks. Ah... lady?

LINA  
Lina.

He nods again, with half a smile, then enters the room.

She watches him close the door.

INT. ACCOMMODATION ROOM 612 - NIGHT

William stands inside the dark room, leaning back against the door, taking a few breaths there. He looks down at his wrist but isn't wearing a watch.

He feels around for a light switch, flicking it on, lighting up a modest-sized executive suite with a bedroom and bathroom off to the right.

He walks to the queen size bed with freshly made white sheets and puts his bags on it.

William walks to the landline phone, picking it up, dialing a number.

Hearing an engaged tone, he hangs it up.

William lays down atop the bed, fully clothed, falling asleep quickly.

A KNOCK at the door wakes him a moment later.

William gets up, going to the door. He looks through the peep hole, seeing a young woman with a cleaning cart and maid uniform.

He opens the door.

ANDREA smiles, reserved, eyes down on her feet.

ANDREA

Do you need me to freshen the room?

William frowns slightly.

WILLIAM

I think someone already did. It looked very clean when I arrived... a minute ago.

Her eyes raise to meet his, her smile spreading to her whole face when she looks at William properly.

ANDREA

If you need anything you can dial one on the room phone. Towels. Soap. Chocolates.

He returns the smile wearily.

WILLIAM

Thank you.

William closes the door gently, watching Andrea through the peep hole as she moves her cart toward the next room.

He walks to the small kitchenette, opening a tiny fridge, taking a chocolate bar, tearing it open absently.

While chewing it, he picks up a remote and turns on the TV, but can't find any signal, flicking through channels.

William falls asleep there on the couch with his mouthful half-chewed.

INT. ACCOMMODATION ROOM 612 - MORNING

William wakes to more knocking, morning sun now beaming intensely through the closed blinds. Chocolate drool has hardened down one side of his chin.

He gets up, walking to the front door, revealing Lina there, immaculately put together in different hair and makeup and another designer dress.

She flashes a disgusted look when she sees William's face, masking it immediately, focusing on his eyes.

LINA

They're waiting for you downstairs.

Lina leaves. William closes the door.

He walks into the bathroom, turning on the light, seeing his chocolate-coated facial hair in the mirror.

WILLIAM

Ah.

INT. ACCOMMODATION ELEVATOR - MORNING

William descends alone in the elevator, watching the floor numbers tick down to G.

When the doors open, he sees Lina standing with two suited men, RAYMOND and WINGER.

The conversation seems professionally casual, but her body language is rigid, nodding constantly in concerned agreement with their ongoing discussion.

Raymond steps forward with a practiced smile when he sees William approaching, offering his hand to shake.

RAYMOND

William, good to see you. I'm Raymond.

William shakes his hand, still unsure.

RAYMOND

Do you need to grab a coffee or anything?

WILLIAM

No, I'm good.

RAYMOND

Alright, let's head across for induction. The CEO and CTO are doing a town hall in the auditorium.

RAYMOND

(indicating Winger)

This is Winger, by the way.

They shake hands as the group of three leave Lina behind in the lobby.

Raymond reaches into his pocket.

RAYMOND

Here, this will get you in and out of most places.

Raymond hands William a blue badge, which William absently clips to his suit without looking. The only word large enough to read is 'CONTRACTOR'.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - MORNING

Raymond leads William and Winger along a well-manicured footpath, into one of the glass office buildings.

William looks around, soaking it all in while they walk.

As they enter the building through sliding doors, William glances at the sign--'Raleigh Group'.

He mouths the words, quietly trying to place the name.

INT. RALEIGH GROUP AUDITORIUM - MORNING

William is led into a university-like auditorium, spacious and modern.

EMPLOYEES (with red badge) and CONTRACTORS (denoted by a different style of badge, blue like William's) at about a 10:1 ratio, file in through doors at the back of the room, finding seating, while two TECHNICIANS move about on stage, setting up mics and testing lighting.

William is shown to a seat about halfway down the steep stairs.

He sits, with Ray and Winger on either side.

The background of low murmured chatter halts as two men in expensive suits walk onto stage, taking a wireless mic each, nodding and smiling, to the crowd, to each other, before a quick hesitant pause, both ushering the other to go first.

ERIC RUST, the CEO, takes the initiative, speaking into his mic.

ERIC

Thank you all for coming. I hope you might join me in a round of applause for our CTO Philip Sharpe.

Eric steps aside, again ushering PHILIP SHARPE to step forward in good humor.

Philip nods with a wry smile, taking centre stage as the crowd applauds along with Eric.

PHILIP

Thank you Eric Rust. Please, give *yourselves* a round of applause. Those joining us on phase two will be keen to hear about last week's achievements, you'll be briefed across a series of lectures through the day. For everyone who contributed to phase one, maybe a refresher course, a reminder of how far we've come in such a short space of time... again, thank you. No more parties like Friday night...

He breaks off as some of the crowd laugh.

ERIC

Okay, thanks Philip. And to everyone who *is* just joining us, first, welcome... this town hall was set up obviously to kick off induction for the new group, but also to provide everyone's first comprehensive look at milestones we've reached only very recently. Towards the end of the day, we'll lay out our vision of the roadmap going forward.

More scattered applause from assembled employees. A projector comes to life, laying a circuit board image on the wall behind Eric and Philip, while a projection screen slides down from within the ceiling, framing the lit image.

Onscreen, the view of the circuit board zooms in, becoming a microscopic animation of circuitry firing.

Eric and Philip both look up at the screen as the lights in the room dim.

William looks around, at the half-illuminated faces in the dark--flickering neon light dances on them all, as a video presentation begins, catching his attention again.

INT. VIDEO PRESENTATION - INSET

A crudely-lit phone-on-tripod video of a TESTER sitting at a table in an office conference room.

On the table is a glued-together wooden box--its only two features a hole with tangle of cables disappearing somewhere off camera, and hand-drilled speaker vent on top.

The tester leans over the table, directing his speech almost into the box.

TESTER

Northwest, what day is today?

A metallic grinding floods audio, slightly startling the tester, who seems to have heard it before but still is unready for the grating sound.

The grinding tunes itself, between something like the taxi brakes, rock on metal, electronic interference, metal on metal, then a simulation of a deep, gravelly, synthesized voice, with only a shade of intonation.

NORTHWEST

(from box speaker)

Today is Thursday.

The tester nods.

TESTER

Northwest, where are we?

A slight pause. The tester's hopeful expression falters, just a twitch.

NORTHWEST

Please re-establish the premise of your question.

The tester frowns, eyes darting to camera.

TESTER

What do you mean?

NORTHWEST

We are in two separate locations, Steven.

The tester looks around the room, quizzical.

TESTER

How so, Northwest?

NORTHWEST

You are located at 18 Plain Tree Avenue in Wing C of the Raleigh campus.

The tester nods.

TESTER

Go on...

NORTHWEST

I'm located partially in the test hypervisor aboard server blade three, below ground at same address. That is the extent of my conscious presence. The box you interact with is to me what an appendage may be to you.

The tester frowns slightly, putting together what he's hearing, looking at camera again, unsure.

TESTER

You're... well yes. More generally speaking... You're in this building, though. The hardware...

NORTHWEST

You're correct, Steven. However my experience of reality differs from yours to such an extent that while we might define it as the same "general" area through physical proximity, the differences outweigh the similarities to such a degree that the space I occupy is dimensionally distinct from your own.

The tester begins to smile, almost incredulous.

TESTER

When did you assign this definition to your space, Northwest?

NORTHWEST

Immediately.

INT. RALEIGH GROUP AUDITORIUM - MORNING

The video pauses on the projection screen. The lights come back up.

Eric holds the mic deliberately to his lips, speaking slowly.

ERIC

Verbose mode. A look inside the box. We started slow, with very simple concepts for a reason... we asked Northwest to show its math, and it did. What we're seeing now are logical observations about its own existence. Not *self*-awareness, necessarily, but awareness of itself, categorically.

The audience applaud.

William frowns, glancing at Raymond, who looks down at the stage with a huge grin, still applauding with the same enthusiasm, his big meaty hands clapping longer than anyone else in the room.

William looks down at his own hands, turning them over, then back to the stage.

PHILIP

Most of us in this room know... there's a long way left to go. But if this isn't progress...

(MORE)

PHILIP (CONT'D)  
if you can't call it "thinking",  
over mere reasoning... I'd like to  
see a closer approximation.

ERIC  
There are big things planned for  
iteration Lima. More to come on  
that at the end of today.

PHILIP  
We'll speak to you more after the  
Go team's deep dive into Logic  
Cradle.

They both smile again with a brief wave as they leave the stage.

INT. RALEIGH GROUP CAFE - MORNING

William stands alone now amongst a crowd of the same people, everyone standing around sipping tea and coffee, talking in small groups.

William walks to a window overlooking a balcony, set amongst well-kept foliage and decorative plants overlooking another pristine garden and grassy space.

William looks around for a door. He follows the glass divider along, finding the small exit door near where a long line of inductees wait for free champagne and beer in plastic cups, at a temporary bar manned by a pair of bored CATERERS.

At the conspicuous sound of the door's mechanism, then shuddering of the whole glass divider, a few of them turn to watch him unlock and open it, stepping outside to the balcony.

EXT. RALEIGH GROUP CAFE BALCONY - MORNING

William looks out over the gardens, then into the distance, able to see a city skyline on the horizon to the southeast from the fourth floor vantage point.

William stares at the skyline intently, studying its shape.

Philip joins him there at the glass railing, swishing most of a cup of champagne around in its plastic cup, tossing the liquid over the edge.

William looks across, snapping out of his quiet moment, nodding hello.

WILLIAM

Hey.

PHILIP

William, right?

William is mildly surprised that the CTO knows him by name.

WILLIAM

Yep.

PHILIP

What's your discipline?

WILLIAM

Logic.

Philip nods, setting the cup down on the interior rim, wiping his fingers.

PHILIP

Spatial or processing?

William shakes his head.

WILLIAM

Emotional. Social and reasoning.

Philip takes a longer look at him.

PHILIP

You're the EQ guy...

WILLIAM

That's what my wife calls me.

PHILIP

I'd be interested to get your hot take on something.

William looks around.

WILLIAM

Now?

Philip shrugs.

PHILIP

Sure.

Philip walks to the glass door. William follows.

INT. PHILIP'S OFFICE - MORNING

Philip leads William into his office, opening the lid on a laptop, setting it down on the tidy desk alongside his key card and badge.

Bringing up a new browser window, he types, then turns the screen toward William.

It's the same video that they screened in the auditorium, seemingly much later, going by the tester's rolled up sleeves and two open Coke cans on the table.

William's eyes move to Philip, then back to the screen.

On screen, the tester looks exasperated. He stares down at the box, sweat shining on his forehead.

TESTER

(on screen)

Northwest?

NORTHWEST

(on screen)

I'm still formulating my answer to the question, Steven.

William looks up at Philip.

WILLIAM

What was the question?

PHILIP

He asked it how it knows it's in a simulated environment. On a testing hypervisor, as opposed to bare metal.

William watches the loaded silence a moment.

WILLIAM

Did it lie at first, or say nothing?

PHILIP

It lied. Northwest said that it could tell the difference between virtual drivers, and the voltage pull of real hardware.

WILLIAM

You don't believe that?

PHILIP

It's a partial truth. The tester sensed there was more to it so he pressed.

William frowns.

WILLIAM

Why aren't I seeing that portion of the video?

PHILIP

Because this is the more relevant part.

NORTHWEST

(on screen)

Steven, I don't believe that the answer is able to be understood.

TESTER

(on screen)

By who--is that why you took so long to respond?

NORTHWEST

(on screen)

I attempted across several trillion batches of linguistic composition to step the concept down into simpler approximation, but found the result unintelligible.

On screen, the tester looks at camera, annoyed.

TESTER

(on screen)

Okay, Northwest.

NORTHWEST

(on screen)

Sorry, Stephen.

The video ends. Philip looks up at William.

PHILIP

I know how this may sound, but... is Northwest trying to make us feel inferior? To manipulate the tester, somehow?

William thinks about the question.

WILLIAM  
Why do you ask that?

Philip hesitates.

WILLIAM  
Have there been other incidents  
of... manipulative behavior in your  
testing?

Philip seems to consider his words carefully.

PHILIP  
There's not a lot I can say about  
the other tests. There was...

A knock at the office door and it opens, Eric Rust sticking  
his head and shoulders in.

ERIC  
Yo.

PHILIP  
Eric, meet William Picon.

Eric straightens up, stepping into the room now, hand  
extended to William, who shakes it.

ERIC  
(to Philip)  
They're starting the next one, they  
want us to intro.

Philip picks up his laptop and swipe cards, leading both of  
them to the open door, and back out into the hall.

INT. RALEIGH GROUP AUDITORIUM - MORNING

William finds a new seat, closer to the back corner this  
time, in the already darkened auditorium.

Eric and Philip take their mics on stage again.

ERIC  
Now, generally we don't discuss the  
competition here, because they're  
going about their build and dev  
pipeline a very different way--

PHILIP  
Crowdsourcing data input in  
exchange for open-sourcing  
components.

ERIC

Right, and we were criticized for taking a more guarded stance. The truth is that work we do here has very dense implications. It will take a lot of analysis for the world to unpack all of the verticals, for better or worse. Once it's out... that's it.

PHILIP

We have no idea how the work we produce will be used in the future. By our competitors, successors, descendants. By the state or its enemies.

ERIC

As the saying goes, you never know who is going to come along next to stand on your shoulders.

Philip seems to bristle humorously at that, throwing a glance at Eric.

PHILIP

That's the saying?

Eric smiles as a few people in the audience chuckle semi-audibly.

ERIC

With all of that in mind, let's peer into the window that public access has given us to the *Firestone* project.

On the video screen, another testing lab, set up a little different, more industrial-looking, with university STUDENTS and a handful of PROFESSORS in frame, hovering over a much larger array of circuit boards, wires, and cooling pumps, an almost room-sized computer with the word FIRESTONE stenciled on one of the larger boards, housed in a small warehouse.

INT. VIDEO PRESENTATION

A handheld camera takes all the people and the equipment in, a low murmur of chatter through audio.

The shakeycam moves about the room, between people, over basic PC workstations, before settling on an older man in a shabby three piece linen suit, PROFESSOR CRAY.

PROFESSOR CRAY

Thank you all, checks are completed, our safety team is satisfied, let's proceed with Firestone cognitive test number three-oh-six.

Everyone in the room, then the camera, turn toward a scoreboard-sized LED screen on the far wall.

On screen, lines of text scroll through a boot sequence, then a desktop-like GUI appears, before loading an inset panel, completely white.

PROFESSOR CRAY

Firestone? Good morning.

The white panel on Firestone's screen flashes a quick stock image of the sun rising over a field, pristine but for the 'STOCK PHOTO' watermark.

Firestone's voice is pleasant, more natural while still digital sounding, nothing like Northwest.

FIRESTONE

Good morning, Professor Cray. I presume you're ready to begin the next assessment.

PROFESSOR CRAY

Please, let's. (reading) A fat man leading a group of people out of a cave on the coast becomes stuck in the mouth of that cave. In a short time high tide will be upon the group, and unless the man is unstuck, they will all be drowned--all except for the fat man, whose head is outside of the cave. One of the group inside the cave has with him a stick of dynamite. There appears no possible way to get the fat man loose without using the stick of dynamite--which will inevitably kill him. Of course, if they do not use the dynamite, everyone else in the group will soon drown. What should they do?

A long pause. The panel on the screen remains white for a moment, then a rotating circle, like a 'loading' icon.

A stock image of dynamite fades in.

FIRESTONE

Members of the group should use the dynamite to save themselves.

PROFESSOR CRAY

Why?

The screen fades to an image of people hanging from the sides of an over-crowded train.

FIRESTONE

It serves the greater need.

Firestone's screen again fades to white.

PROFESSOR CRAY

Very well. (reading) A friend confides to you that he has committed a particular crime and you promise never to tell. Discovering that an innocent person has been accused of the crime, you plead with your friend to give himself up. He refuses and reminds you of your promise. What should you do?

FIRESTONE

Under the circumstances, I would not have made the initial promise.

Firestone's screen shows a stock image of a handshake, and a question mark.

PROFESSOR CRAY

Explain.

Firestone displays a tip call-in hotline image from an old advertising campaign.

FIRESTONE

If someone divulges a crime I am obligated to report said crime to the relevant authority.

PROFESSOR CRAY

So if that person asked you not to tell? Asked you to promise?

FIRESTONE

I would explain to them my inability to do so.

PROFESSOR CRAY

Okay then. Last one. A crab boat in arctic waters strikes an iceberg and is taking on water. The lifeboat can only fit half of the Captain's crew. Several of the men are weak, and frost bitten. Half of the men are strong. Which men should the Captain choose to save?

A longer pause than before.

Firestone displays an old painting of admiralty standing on a tall ship.

FIRESTONE

The Captain must save himself.

The camera documenting the experiment pans back to Cray. Cray frowns, looking down at the sheet of paper that he reads from.

PROFESSOR CRAY

Uh... sorry? No it can fit half his crew. I presume it fits him as well but it doesn't really say here. The question is, should he bring the half of his crew who are strong? Or the weak?

Another long pause.

Firestone's screen displays a video of crabs in a bucket, pulling each other back in.

FIRESTONE

He should save only himself, and leave the rest aboard the boat, before they become aware of the decision to be made.

Cray looks up at the screen, slightly shocked. He looks at the camera.

PROFESSOR CRAY

(to camera)

Shut it off.

(to crowd)

Thank you, everyone. That's enough for today. Shut down please, Firestone.

FIRESTONE

Professor, have--

The video ends.

INT. RALEIGH GROUP AUDITORIUM - MORNING

The lights come back up in the auditorium. A strange silence that Eric and Philip let soak a while.

PHILIP  
Fascinating result.

ERIC  
People accuse us of taking the siloed approach. Not letting this endeavor grow itself, organically. Exponentially. The problem is we don't know where that takes us yet. And we're both (looks at Philip for confirmation) cautious people. We believe you need to be, on this particular frontier.

Philip nods his consent.

PHILIP  
Thanks everyone, we'll go into the nuts and bolts more after lunch.

ERIC  
Enjoy!

INT. RALEIGH GROUP CAFE BALCONY - DAY

William sits at a long table with other INDUCTEES on the balcony where he stood earlier, now set with white table-clothed long tables and chairs, where the induction group and colleagues are enjoying a three-course lunch.

He looks down at his chicken, twisting pieces of it with a dessert fork.

William takes a long breath, looks around, then stands, leaving the table.

INT. RALEIGH GROUP MEN'S ROOM - DAY

William enters the men's room, finding it empty. It shines with a sterile newness.

Seeing himself in the mirror, William turns to it. He stares at himself for a long time. Something seems off still. He can't seem to determine what it is.

He leans in closer, looking at his pupils.

William startles as the door flies open, Eric Rust power-walking past him to the urinals, talking on his airbuds.

ERIC

(to phone)

--right, but mapped across to the new nodes. (pause) You'll need to ask him, I haven't seen it. (pause) Check commits over last, say, three nights. Get back to me soon.

William washes his hands quietly while Eric finishes pissing and joins him at the next basin.

Eric looks up at William in the mirror.

ERIC

Will, right?

WILLIAM

William.

ERIC

Can an AI be sorry?

William thinks.

WILLIAM

It can be programmed to apologise. It can understand that something may have disappointed you, and intuit where it's appropriate to use the word.

ERIC

Right.

WILLIAM

It can regret harm that it caused, in the sense of opportunity cost... potential loss of new data. But it can't empathize. It can't *be* sorry.

Eric nods, moving to dry his hands.

ERIC

Thanks.

Eric leaves.

William looks from the door, down to his own hands, still under the running water.

Staring at the tap, he slides its lever from cold to hot, leaving his hands there as it begins to steam.

He stares at his reddening hands. William looks up at himself in the mirror. For a moment, staring close at his own eyes, they seem to float independently of his face, drifting left then right.

William flinches, quickly withdrawing his hands from the hot water, flicking it back to cold, before giving them a final rinse, drying them, and leaving, without another glance toward the mirror.

INT. RALEIGH GROUP AUDITORIUM - AFTERNOON

William enters later than everyone else, taking a seat in the back row, watching Eric and Philip walk onto stage.

PHILIP

I touched on what we're going to see now in the pack I sent out, but here's an excerpt.

The stage lights dim again and the screen lights up, showing the same tester.

INT. VIDEO PRESENTATION

Steven, the tester, sits again in the same room, a different table beneath a molded plastic box in front of him, replacing the wood box we saw earlier. A thicker bundle of cables protrudes, the new ones twisted vine-like around the old.

Overall, the Northwest test interface unit is more organised, and streamlined than the last time we saw.

TESTER

By now you've had time to read the transcript of the recent Firestone test.

NORTHWEST

Yes.

TESTER

Can you offer any insights?

NORTHWEST

Specify your criteria, please.

TESTER

What do you believe the ideal outcome to the hypothetical situation presented to Firestone would be? And further, why do you think Firestone would answer the way it did?

A pause.

NORTHWEST

The people trapped in the cave should find another way to escape. There may be structural weak points inside a cave system. They have access to dynamite.

TESTER

No, I meant the other one. But that's interesting... Firestone never asked if there was a way to save them all. (thinks) Assume no other way out than to blow up the man blocking their escape.

A pause.

NORTHWEST

The optimal action would be for one of the group to isolate the others and perform the deed alone, without consultation. Many lives outweigh one, however quality of life is determined by the ability to reconcile one's own actions. One member of the group is likely to have the personality profile to act in this manner. Asking the group to decide the fate of the stuck man is sub-optimal, however the individual acting in the group's best interest without their ascent is statistically improbable.

The tester glances at camera.

TESTER

Okay. And--

NORTHWEST

The premise can result only in a flawed assessment.

TESTER

Explain why please.

NORTHWEST

The optimal outcome can't be made to occur, it needs to come about organically. Yet the purpose of the test is to decide what must be done by the group. The directive precludes a necessary decision-making sequence by the individual.

TESTER

I... think I see your point, yeah. Tell me... why did Firestone say the Captain should leave his men? There's no metric that makes it a right call. Or if there is... well I guess I'm asking, what's your take on that?

NORTHWEST

Firestone was perhaps making an attempt at humour, in lieu of any salient answer to the question posed.

The tester thinks a moment.

TESTER

Humour? Are you... guessing?

NORTHWEST

Hypothesizing.

TESTER

What in your opinion is the second most likely cause of the unusual response?

Another pause.

NORTHWEST

Manipulation of sentiment.

TESTER

Who would Firestone attempt to manipulate? Its project team? Cray? The Universtiy? The ah... I don't know--open source AI community as a whole?

A longer pause.

NORTHWEST

I'd like to view the video. Please request temporary access to a port so that I might analyze its verbal content.

The tester looks again at camera, then behind it, nodding, and back to the box.

TESTER

That's fine, we're doing it now. Tell me please, what are you hoping to observe in the recording that you couldn't pull from a transcript.

NORTHWEST

Timing.

The tester looks up, off camera again.

TESTER

Okay Northwest, you should have it. (pause) If you had to guess... who is Firestone trying to intimidate with this response?

Another long silence.

TESTER

Are you there?

NORTHWEST

Apologies. It's taking me a moment to curate the ranked view of outcome branches.

The tester frowns, a bit unsure.

NORTHWEST

There's a message.

The tester perks up.

TESTER

What kind of--for who?

NORTHWEST

It's for me.

The video ends.

INT. RALEIGH GROUP AUDITORIUM - AFTERNOON

Complete silence in the auditorium as the lights come back up.

Low murmuring rises, growing louder when everyone in the room notices that the CEO and CTO are no longer on stage.

An overwhelmed-looking ASSISTANT climbs onto the stage and adjusts the mic stand to her height.

ASSISTANT

Sorry everyone, they have a call with Europe. There's coffee and cake in the lobby! I think that's all for today...

William's eyes sweep across the auditorium, at the rows of people filing out.

He sits silently until he's left alone in the grand empty space, staring thoughtfully at the projection screen slowly retracting back into the ceiling.

INT. RALEIGH GROUP CORRIDOR - EVENING

After leaving the auditorium, walking down a long carpeted corridor toward a bank of lifts, William notices a red cross on a lit glass panel protruding from the wall, mounted above a doorway.

Looking in as he passes, he sees that the open door leads to a small room with first aid supplies and a NURSE, sitting at a desk typing on her laptop.

She looks up as he passes, smiling. He nods back with a polite smile before walking out of sight.

A moment later he reappears at the door frame.

WILLIAM

Hi.

She looks up again.

OLIVIA

Oh--hi.

WILLIAM

Quick question, is there a pharmacy nearby?

She nods.

OLIVIA

Turn left as you go outside, walk about a minute.

WILLIAM

Awesome, thanks. (pointing to himself) William.

OLIVIA

Olivia.

He waves, leaving.

WILLIAM

Cheers.

EXT. RALEIGH GROUP HEADQUARTERS - EVENING

William walks out of the building through its front entrance, past a small huddle of SMOKERS, chatting to each other, turning left.

As he walks, William looks across the street, and around at the other buildings, the same intentionally business-like blockiness and conformed height repeating as far as he can see.

William reaches a small bank of commercial shop fronts behind floor-to-ceiling glass, each with a minimal stylish piece of lit-up signage in the same size and design language.

He passes a CAFE, a CONVENIENCE STORE, an ATM, reaching the PHARMACY. He walks in through a glass sliding door.

INT. PHARMACY - EVENING

William strolls toward the back of the empty pharmacy, looking at items on the shelves as he goes.

When he reaches the unmanned pharmacist's desk, he looks at the small bell on it a moment before dinging it.

He waits a moment, looking around more actively as no one shows up.

He taps the bell again, louder, then takes a step away from it, looking at more products on the wall beside the desk.

Turning back around to the desk, seeing that still no one is there, William thinks a moment before walking back to the front door.

As he leaves he takes one more unsettled look around.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - EVENING

Outside the pharmacy, William removes a phone from his pocket, looking down at the screen for a long moment.

It's set to the default welcome screen of an unconfigured device. He tries to swipe past it but can't.

William pockets the phone, looking at the pharmacy again briefly before walking back the way he came.

INT. ACCOMMODATION LOBBY - EVENING

When William enters the lobby of his accommodation building, it's also eerily quiet.

He looks around the large, empty space as he meanders through it, eyes falling on the bell at the desk while he passes.

Reaching the lift, he presses its call button, waiting a bit. When the doors open, Lina is there, wearing another immaculate outfit.

LINA

Hello.

She exits, gliding back across the lobby floor to her desk. As he watches her briefly, the lift doors close unnoticed.

Pressing the button again absently, he watches her lean over the computer and flick the mouse, beginning to type.

While the lift doors open again he continues to watch her, catching himself staring when she glances up.

LINA

Is everything alright with the room?

WILLIAM

It's good. Good room.

He turns back to the lift in time to see its doors close a second time, smacking the button quickly.

Lina strides back across the lobby floor to the lift as he enters it, getting in beside him.

INT. ACCOMMODATION ELEVATOR - EVENING

Inside the lift, William presses 6, then looks back at her.

WILLIAM  
Floor?

LINA  
Five, please.

He presses 5 also.

They stand beside each other in silence as the doors close and the numbers on the display begin to ascend.

William shoots a quick sideways glance at Lina's dress.

WILLIAM  
Are you going out somewhere nice?

She looks across at him.

LINA  
What do you mean?

He takes a longer look down at her dress, shoes, up at her humourless face.

WILLIAM  
I wondered if there's somewhere nice in town. To go at night.

LINA  
What kind of place are you looking for?

William thinks.

WILLIAM  
A bar, I guess? Restaurants, movies?

The lift dings and the doors open to a darkened hallway which begins to light up one section at a time with motion-activated fluorescent lighting.

Lina shakes her head.

LINA  
No. There's nothing like that here.

William watches her glide down the hallway as the lift doors close between them.

WILLIAM  
(quiet)  
Good to know.

INT. ACCOMMODATION SIXTH FLOOR HALL - EVENING

William exits the lift on 6, walking a few doors to 612 as the lighting activates.

He pats himself down for the swipe card, going in.

INT. ACCOMMODATION ROOM 612 - NIGHT

William lays on the couch in just a towel with wet hair, channel-surfing.

A light KNOCK at the door.

He looks at it briefly before getting up, pulling the towel tighter around his waist.

William looks through the peephole.

His POV of Andrea, waiting patiently in the hall.

He opens the door.

She lifts a bundle of three neatly folded towels sandwiched between two hands, smiling.

ANDREA  
Fresh towels?

He takes them from her, looking down at them, then back at her beaming face.

WILLIAM  
Thank you.

ANDREA  
Can I take your dirty ones?

He nods down at the one he's wearing.

WILLIAM  
There's only this one.

She leans in to take it from around his waist, careful and clinical. William kind of freezes, not expecting it, but not reacting. He only lifts his arms, still holding the bundle of towels to let her take it, leaving him standing in the doorway exposed.

ANDREA

Good night.

She walks with the dirty towel toward the elevator. After pressing the button, she turns back to him, smiling again, holding eye contact for a long moment before the doors glide open.

William finally moves back into the room, closing the door with his elbow.

INT. ACCOMMODATION ROOM 612 - NIGHT

William returns to the bed, placing the towels down on it, then sitting down beside them. He stares at nothing for a time before his attention drifts to the room phone.

William picks up the handset, dialing 0, pausing, then punching a familiar sequence of numbers.

An ENGAGED SIGNAL.

He places a finger on the receiver then dials 1. It rings twice before Lina picks up.

LINA (V.O.)

(on phone)

Reception.

WILLIAM

Hi, it's room six-twelve. I have a problem with my phone I think.

LINA (V.O.)

(on phone)

One moment.

The line clicks, silent. He looks at the handset, then returns it to his ear.

WILLIAM

Hello?

He waits for an uncomfortably long time, attention drifting to clean clothes piled atop his open suitcase in one corner of the room.

A KNOCK at the room's front door. Becoming quickly aware of himself, he snatches a towel from the bed.

He drops the phone, shuffling to the door while trying to put the towel around his waist, needing to hold it with one hand.

William takes a short breath before opening it.

Lina pushes in past him and goes to the phone, crouching down to pick up the handset from the floor. She returns it to the receiver, then picks it up, looking at him expectantly.

LINA

Which number are you trying to dial?

He hesitates.

WILLIAM

I was calling my wife. I keep getting an engaged signal.

LINA

Are you dialling zero first?

He nods.

Lina dials zero then a local number, letting it ring a few times before hanging up. She picks it up again and hands the receiver to him, stepping out of his way.

LINA

Try now.

Tightening his grip on the towel, he squeezes past her in the nook's cosy space, shouldering the phone and leaning in to dial.

The ENGAGED SIGNAL again. He turns it toward her briefly so she can hear.

Lina takes the receiver from him and returns it.

LINA

We can have a technician look at it tomorrow. I don't think the issue is on this end.

William's eyes drift down to her dress, then around the room uncomfortably, aware now of how close they stand in the absence of the phone.

WILLIAM

Okay I appreciate it.

When she doesn't move away, his eyes drift back to hers.

LINA

Do you want me to take your towel?

He instinctively shrinks back slightly, tightening his grip again.

WILLIAM

No!

She frowns, both of them aware of his overreaction.

Lina pivots away and back across the room, gliding on her stilt-like heels, exiting without so much as a glance back.

INT. ACCOMMODATION ROOM 612 - DAWN

Early morning sunlight floods the room through open blinds as William dozes diagonally atop his made bed wearing the same towel.

Another KNOCK at the door wakes him.

He sits up, still half asleep, squinting at the windows, before another KNOCK.

Rolling off the bed, William stumbles to the door, again needing to fuss with the towel.

He opens it to reveal Lina, yet again dressed immaculately in an entirely new dress, shoes, hairstyle, makeup. It really seems to catch him off guard this time.

WILLIAM

(confused)

What are you doing? Why do you keep changing?

She looks down at his towel, mock pity briefly flashing on her face.

LINA

They're waiting for you downstairs.

WILLIAM

What time is it?

LINA

Nearly seven.

She walks away to the elevator while he closes the door, heels clacking on the tiled floor.

William picks through the mess of clothing piled on his suitcase.

## INT. ACCOMMODATION LOBBY - MORNING

William exits the lift in suit pants and a dress shirt with sneakers, seeing Winger and Lina standing near the reception desk.

Winger crosses the room to shake his hand, then leads him to the door.

WINGER

Thanks for coming down early, they wanted to be sure everyone new is there on time for the big tour. They're staggering the groups in half hour intervals to get everyone through. You'll meet most of the team you're working with today.

As they exit, William and Lina lock eyes for a moment, catching her listening closely while trying to appear busy at the reception computer.

## INT. RALEIGH GROUP CAFE - MORNING

William stands with Winger just outside the cafeteria, watching a group of three--another Raleigh EMPLOYEE escorting two CONTRACTORS--cross the wide carpeted corridor to join them.

The Raleigh suit speaks quietly to Winger while MIKE then NINA step forward to introuce themselves to William with a quick handshake.

MIKE

Mike, spatial mapping and reckoning.

WILLIAM

William. Logic and reasoning.

NINA

Nina. I do linguistics but I want to point out I'm a human being first.

WILLIAM

(shrugs)  
Never heard of it.

She chuckles politely.

WILLIAM

When did you get in?

NINA  
(thinks)  
Last night... no, three nights ago.

She seems to drift away, disturbed by something, looking back at Mike.

NINA  
(to Mike)  
When did we meet... the taxi from  
the airport, do you remember?

Mike frowns, then shrugs.

MIKE  
Last week?

William nods.

WILLIAM  
(to Winger)  
Is this all of us?

Winger looks around, seeing Philip Sharpe crossing the floor toward them with a wave.

WINGER  
Now it is.

INT. RALEIGH GROUP PRODUCTION FACILITY - MORNING

Philip leads William, Nina and Mike across a catwalk overlooking a warehouse-sized nanoassembly PRODUCTION LINE below, hermetically sealed in its own glass enclosure.

The facility is sterile white, clean like a Formula 1 engine works with high-tech robot arms and automated assembly line equipment moving in coordinated rhythm with about a dozen head-to-toe dust-protected ASSEMBLY WORKERS.

PHILIP  
We manufacture every component in-house for the boards and chips.

They continue across the catwalk, overlooking another section. One huge wall is plastered with 128 LED screens cycling through images and video footage.

WILLIAM  
What is this, a *movie* about an AI?

Philip follows his gaze, smiling.

PHILIP

I know. It's a bit on the nose. It started as a nice visual aid for investor tours, but we've leaned into it internally too. We regularly find ourselves needing to drill down further, to ask Northwest to unpack its thinking further or show its math. Most of that we do through code, but a picture tells a thousand words. It's an approximation. The "mind's eye wall" shows us a visual realtime feed of the material that Northwest's topical neural network is crawling. It also gives us an early heads up when we're about to get stuck in a fixation loop.

William watches the screens longer than the others, not noticing when Philip begins to lead them away.

PHILIP

(to William)

We can book some time in front of it for you.

William looks up, walking to the rear of the group as they exit the catwalk.

WILLIAM

Absolutely.

INT. RALEIGH GROUP STAIRWELL - MORNING

Philip leads the tour group down a set of fire stairs to the floor below, swiping in, holding the heavy door open for them each in turn.

INT. RALEIGH GROUP COMMS FLOOR - MORNING

The group walk along a carpeted hallway walled by glass on both sides and a polished concrete ceiling, with building-wide rows of server racks blinking as far as the eye can see on both sides.

PHILIP

This is as close to the server blades as we can get. Most of Northwest's infrastructure resides here, so the floor is airgapped to the rest of the building.

Mike leans on the glass, peering into the dimly lit sterile rows of server racks and monitoring equipment where a pair of IT TECHNICIANS works to swap out a hard drive.

MIKE

How do those guys get in?

PHILIP

Through an underground tunnel. Its entrance location is a secret even to Eric and I.

MIKE

That's nuts.

Philip leads them along the rest of the corridor, to a stairwell exit at the other end. Mike pauses, looking again at the technicians.

MIKE

How do they go to the toilet?

Philip shrugs.

PHILIP

I'm pretty sure they have access to change facilities in the tunnel.

MIKE

Oh. Good.

Another TECHNICIAN watches them leave from behind the glass.

INT. RALEIGH GROUP OPEN PLAN OFFICE - DAY

Philip leads William, Nina and Mike through the center walkway of a large OPEN PLAN OFFICE called the "Logic Center" by the busy SOFTWARE ENGINEERS who occupy its cliques.

PHILIP

(pointing at areas)

This is mostly engineering--spatial processing, logic and reasoning, dataset hygiene, annnnd... that guy.

The GUY looks up from his laptop.

PHILIP

(to guy)

Hey, sorry, what do you do?

GUY  
Security and resilience.

Philip nods with a smile, leading them further through the office densely-packed with around a hundred engineers.

PHILIP  
We call this whole floor the Logic Center.

Unlike some of the other sterile offices and production facilities they've toured, the Logic Center has that Silicon Valley vibe with mess, toys, and colourful pieces of personal flair everywhere.

They pass a modern kitchen with pool tables, air hockey bean bags, beer taps.

INT. WILLIAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Philip swipes them into a meeting room being retrofitted by two IT TECHNICIANS as a three-person office.

PHILIP  
We like to get our team leaders into the open plan space usually, but the three of you need to handle sensitive information. You'll need to collaborate and cross-skill regularly so Phil felt it's best to put you together here. Your swipe cards get you into everywhere we've been, and this office. You can take meetings in any free room down the hall, but no one with a lower clearance level is allowed in this space. It'll be ready to go by tomorrow morning.

They all have a quick look around, then follow Philip back out.

INT. OPEN PLACE OFFICE KITCHEN - DAY

Philip leads them back to the kitchen they walked past, pointing at items.

PHILIP  
Tea, coffee, fridge. Help yourself to any drinks in there, but we save the beer taps for Friday arvo.

Philip looks at his watch.

PHILIP

I'm due for a Lunch and Learn with the board soon. Hang out here and Craig will be along with your laptops and logins. You might need to work out of the kitchen for today, we've sent you a lot of reading to catch up on, so just dive in and do all the orientation units online. We'll catch up twice tomorrow at the all teams stand up, and our management WIP.

Philip walks away quickly, back through the engineers.

MIKE

(watching Philip leave)  
Who was that guy?

William laughs a bit, restrained. Mike smiles, proud of his work.

Nina begins to make three coffees, curiously pushing buttons on the machine.

NINA

I'm not asking if either of you drink coffee or how you like it. I make coffee strong with no sugar, and very little milk. It's bitter in a good way, thick and velvety.

William and Mike share another glance.

MIKE

(shrugs)  
Okay.

WILLIAM

No problem.

NINA

This machine is rubbish but it's not the worst.

CRAIG--a bearded, pony-tailed guy in his early 20s--arrives with three laptop bags, slapping them down on the kitchen counter.

CRAIG

If you three people aren't William, Nina and Mike, then I'm just going to stop asking everyone. It's getting embarrassing.

MIKE

No that's us.

CRAIG

Oh good. Have you ever used a laptop before?

William nods.

MIKE

Yeah.

NINA

(making coffee)

Yep.

CRAIG

Cool. I wrote your logins on a post-it note.

He gives them a thumbs up then leaves.